The Classic, Irish Beethoven!
Five Folksong Settings

arranged for chamber orchestra
by Steven K. Gerber

Instrumentation:

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B-flat
Bassoon
2 Horns in F
Harp
Strings

Duration:

approximately 7:45

THE CLASSIC, IRISH BEETHOVEN!
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Among Ludwig van Beethoven's lesser-known works in the smaller forms are several volumes of folksong settings. Edinburgh music publisher George Thomson, gambling on demand from domestic musicians in the British Isles and the marketability of anything to which Beethoven's celebrity name was attached, commissioned arrangements of several sets of traditional Scottish, English, Welsh, and Irish folk songs. Seven albums of these song settings were published without opus numbers between 1810 and 1820, scored as vocal solos or duets with piano trio (i.e., violin, cello, and piano). In many cases Thomson provided Beethoven with only the melodies without their English- (or Gaelic-) language texts (which Beethoven might not have understood in any case; indeed, their correspondence was in French). Additionally, Thomson typically commissioned (or appropriated) new words for the old songs, and Beethoven rather enjoyed this new link to the poems of Walter Scott, Robert Burns, and other admired literary figures, whether he could read them or not.

The Irish tunes in particular seemed to fascinate Beethoven, for he arranged over 60 of these, far more than the English, Scottish, and Welsh songs in these collections. In spite of Thomson's insistence that the accompaniments be easy enough for amateurs, Beethoven did not simplify the technical requirements, and while not virtuosic, the piano parts especially demand skilled and sensitive musicianship, inasmuch the settings are quite artful. The melodies are often modal in musical character and typically of 12 or 16 measures in length, some of 20 or 24 measures, few as long as 32 measures. For these, Beethoven carefully constructed introductions and codettas that often doubled their lengths. His challenge was to preserve the modal and folk-like qualities of the melodies while harmonizing them with classical tonalities and enhancing them with evocative accompanying motives.

The five Irish folksongs presented here, as a medley for an ensemble of modest size, are just a small sampling from a treasury of these gemlike miniatures—which, to Thomson's chagrin, did not sell particularly well. The source used was Breitkopf and Härtel's 19th-century edition of *Beethovens Werke*, vols. 258, 261, and 262 (freely available online at International Music Score Library Project, or IMSLP). The songs are:

WoO 154, No. 8 - "Save Me From the Grave and Wise" (William Smyth)
WoO 152, No. 18 - "They Bid Me Slight My Dermot Dear" (William Smyth)
WoO 153, No. 19 - "Judy, Lovely, Matchless Creature" (Alexander Boswell)
WoO 152, No. 1 - "The Return to Ulster" (Sir Walter Scott)
WoO 153, No. 3 - "The British Light Dragoons" (Sir Walter Scott)

The opening stanzas only for each appear after the last page of this score.

The tempo indications here differ slightly from Thomson's indications to Beethoven, and all metronome suggestions are the arranger's. Although conceived for instrumental performance, these *could* also be presented with a vocal soloist after consulting the above sources, marking up relevant sections to repeat desired verses, and rebalancing dynamics as needed. I'd like to think that these could alternatively be *danced* as balletic vignettes.

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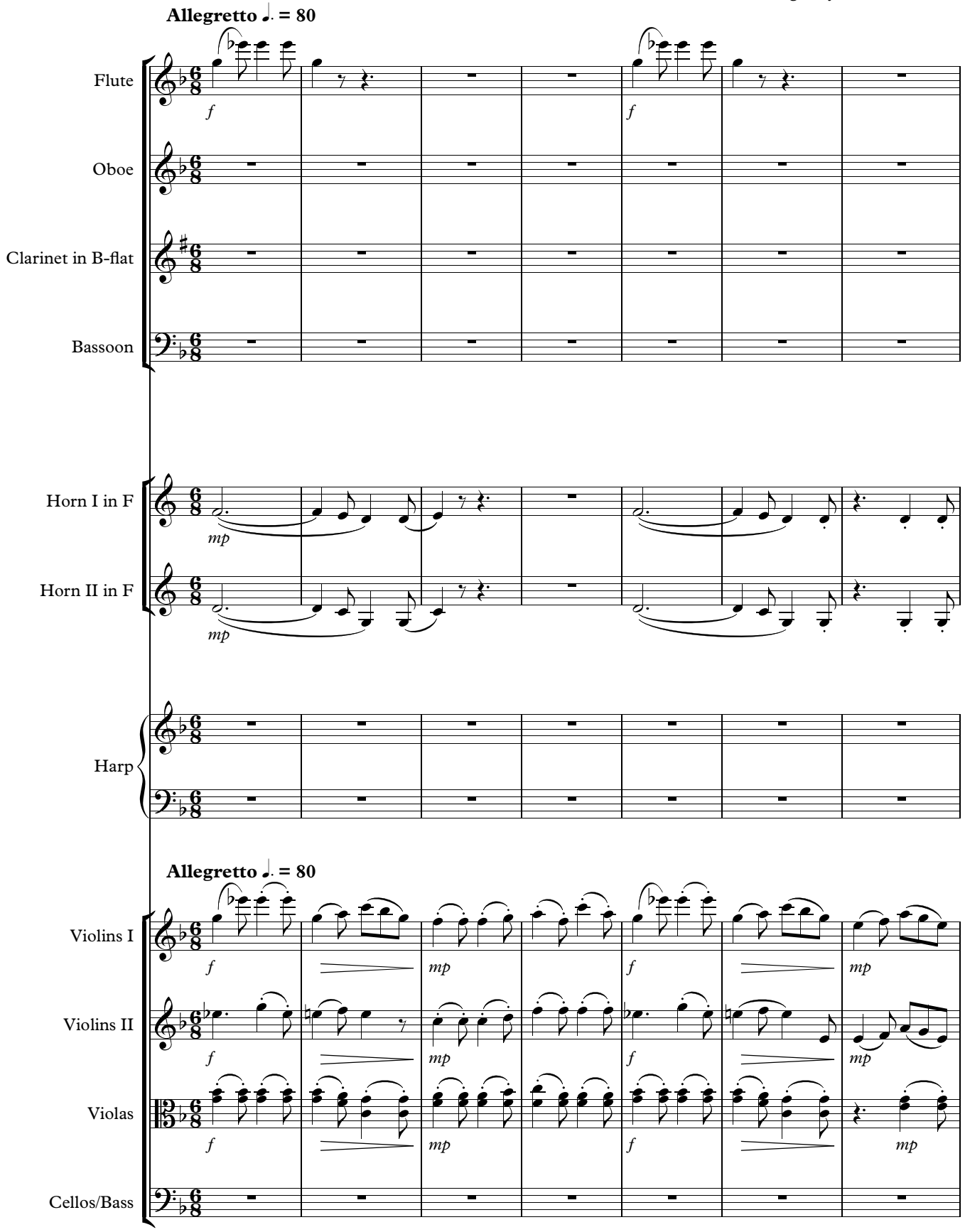
The Classic, Irish Beethoven!

Five Folksong Settings

Ludwig van Beethoven
arranged by Steven K. Gerber



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WoO 154 no. 8, "Save me from the grave and wise"

A (2nd time a bit faster)

8

Fl.

Ob.

mf

Cl.

mp

Bsn.

Hn. I

Hn. II

Hp.

WoO 154 no. 8, "Save me from the grave and wise"

A (2nd time a bit faster)

Vlns. I

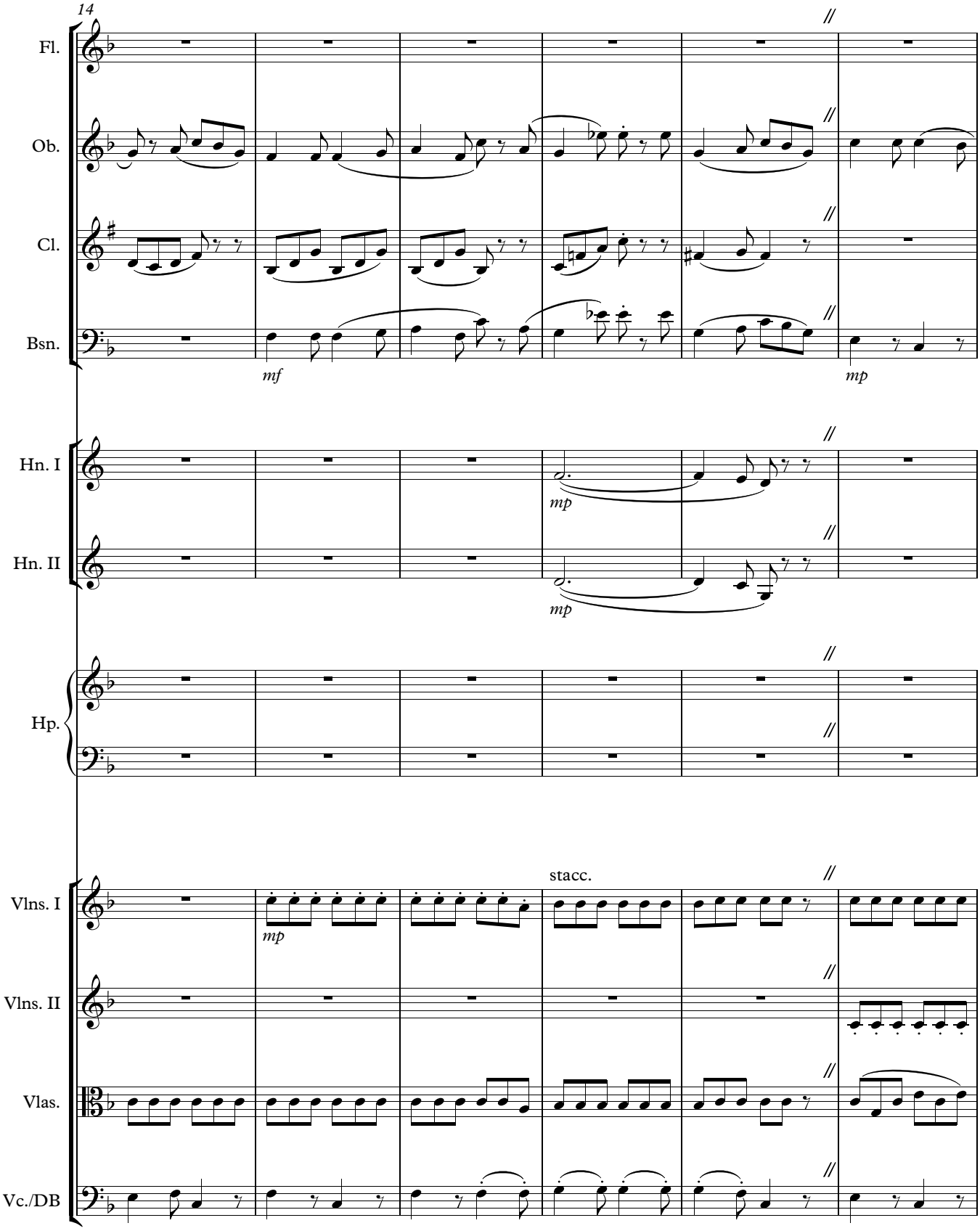
Vlns. II

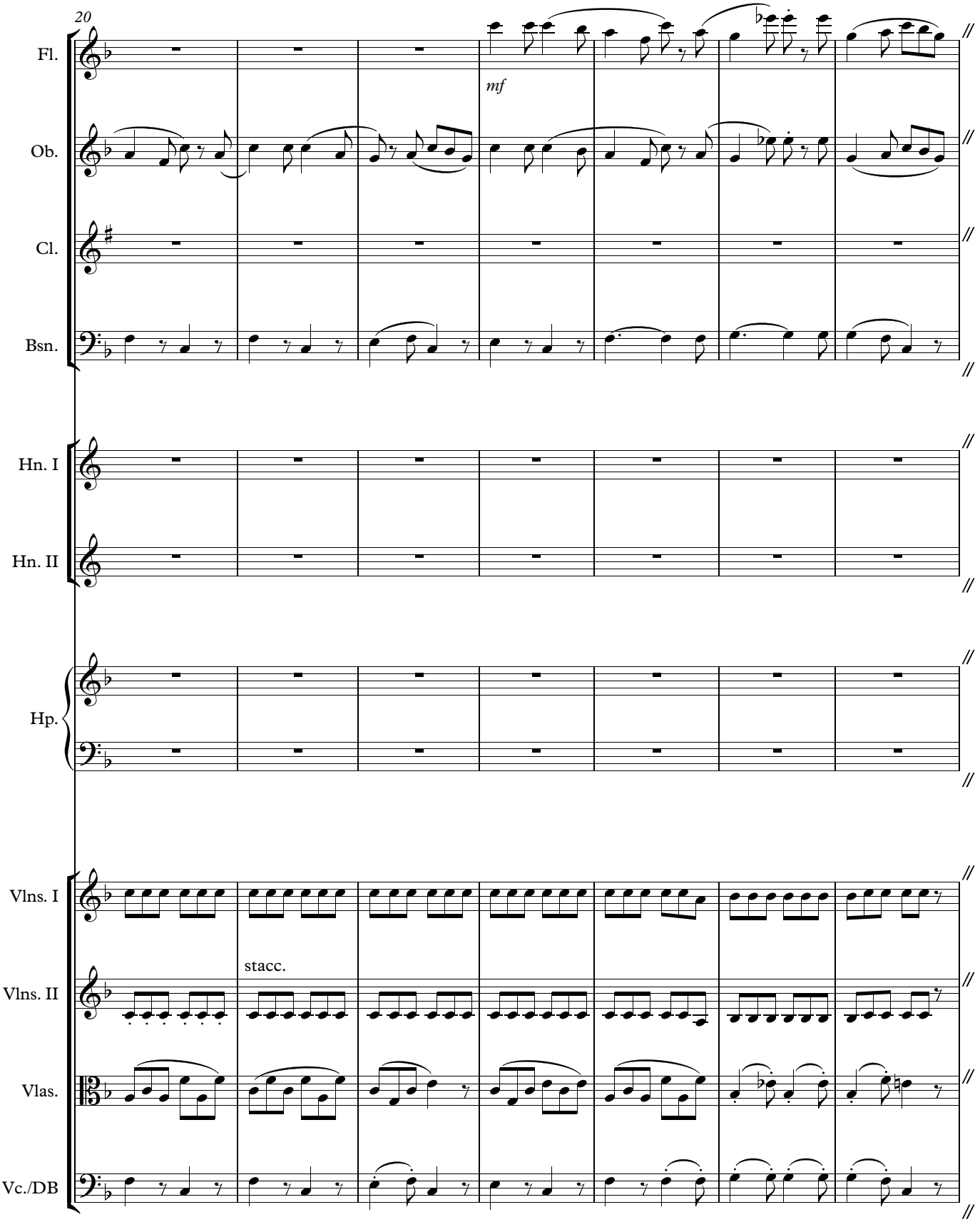
Vlas.

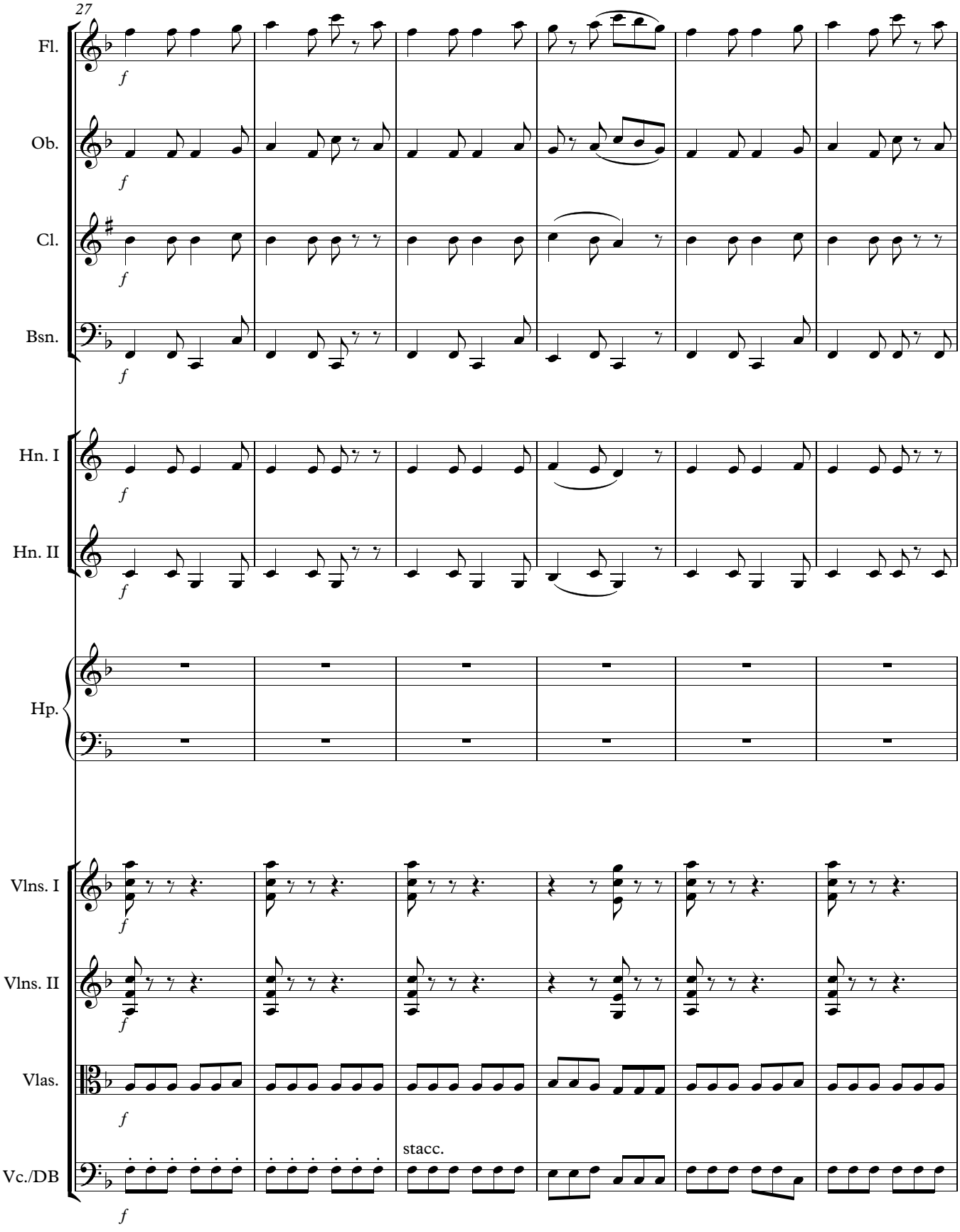
stacc.

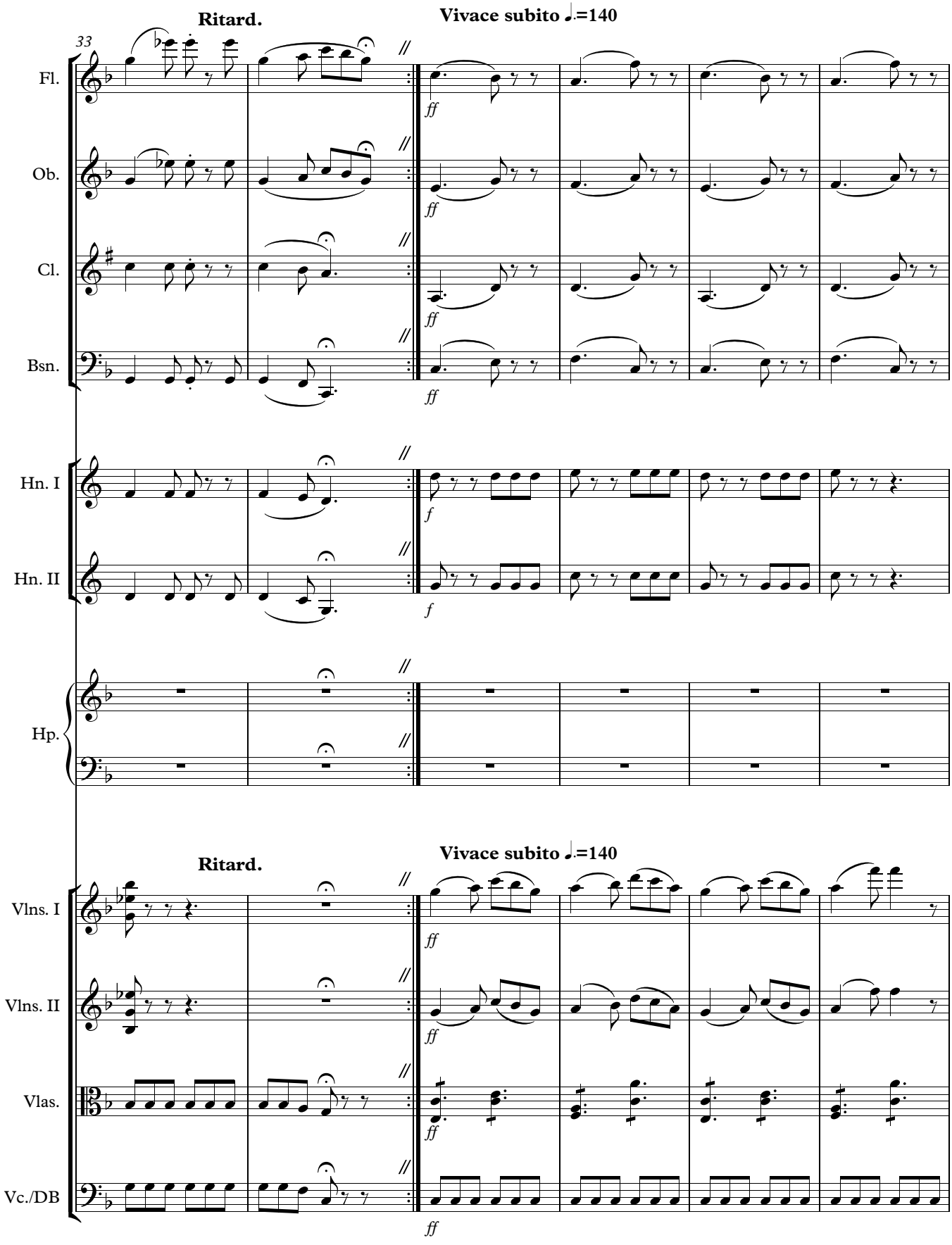
Vc./DB

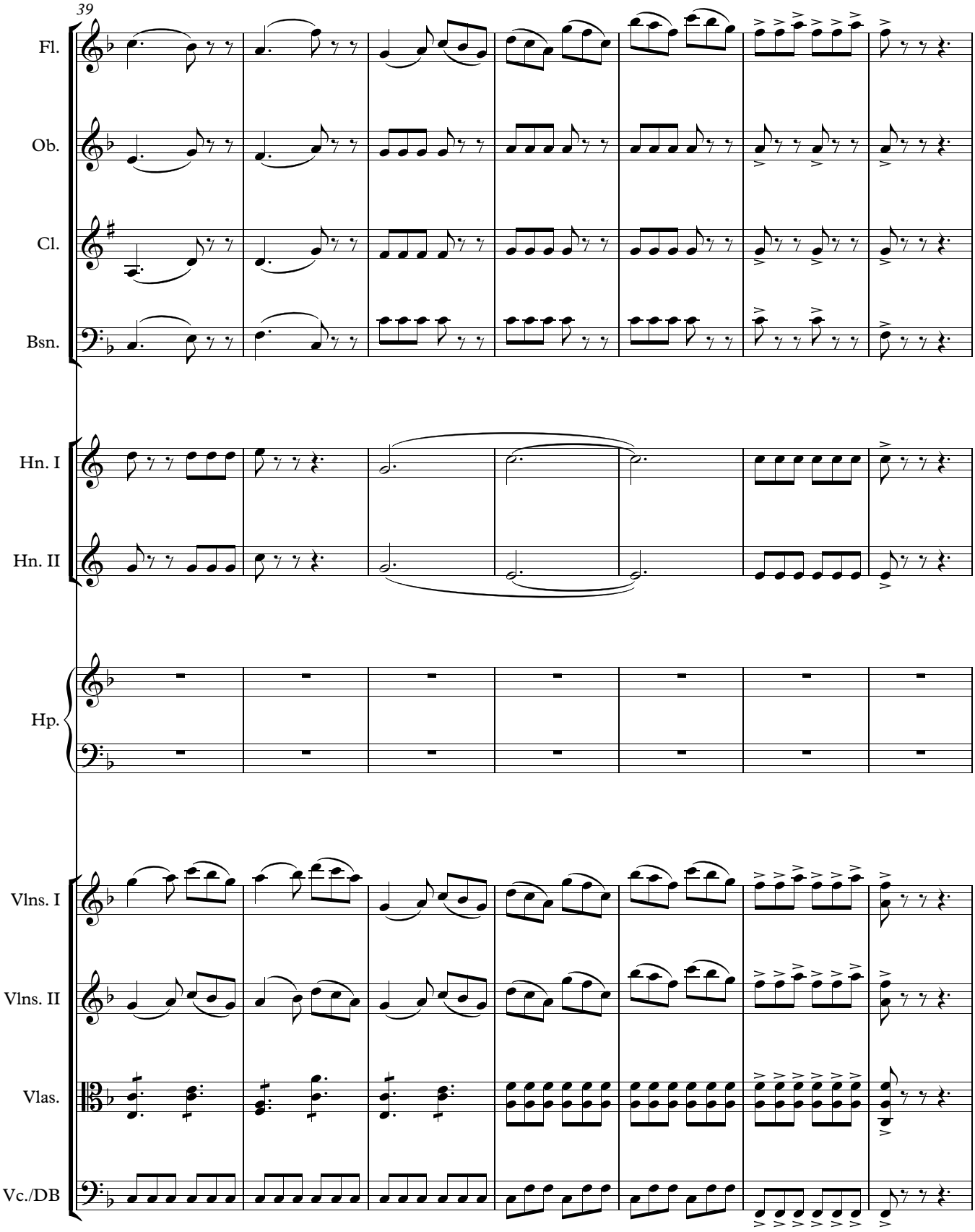
mp

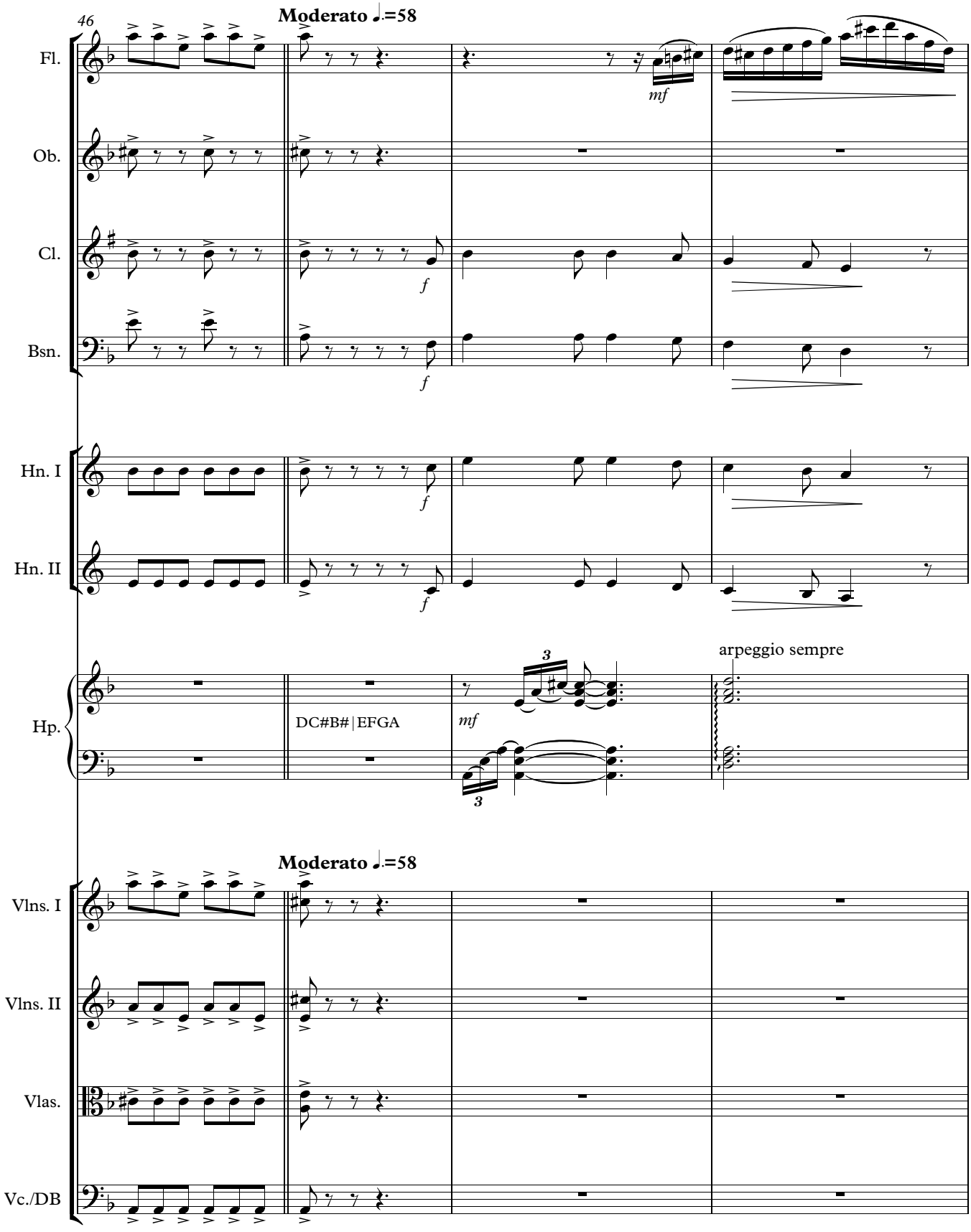

14
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
mf
mp
Hn. I
Hn. II
mp
mp
Hp.
Vlns. I
stacc.
mp
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB

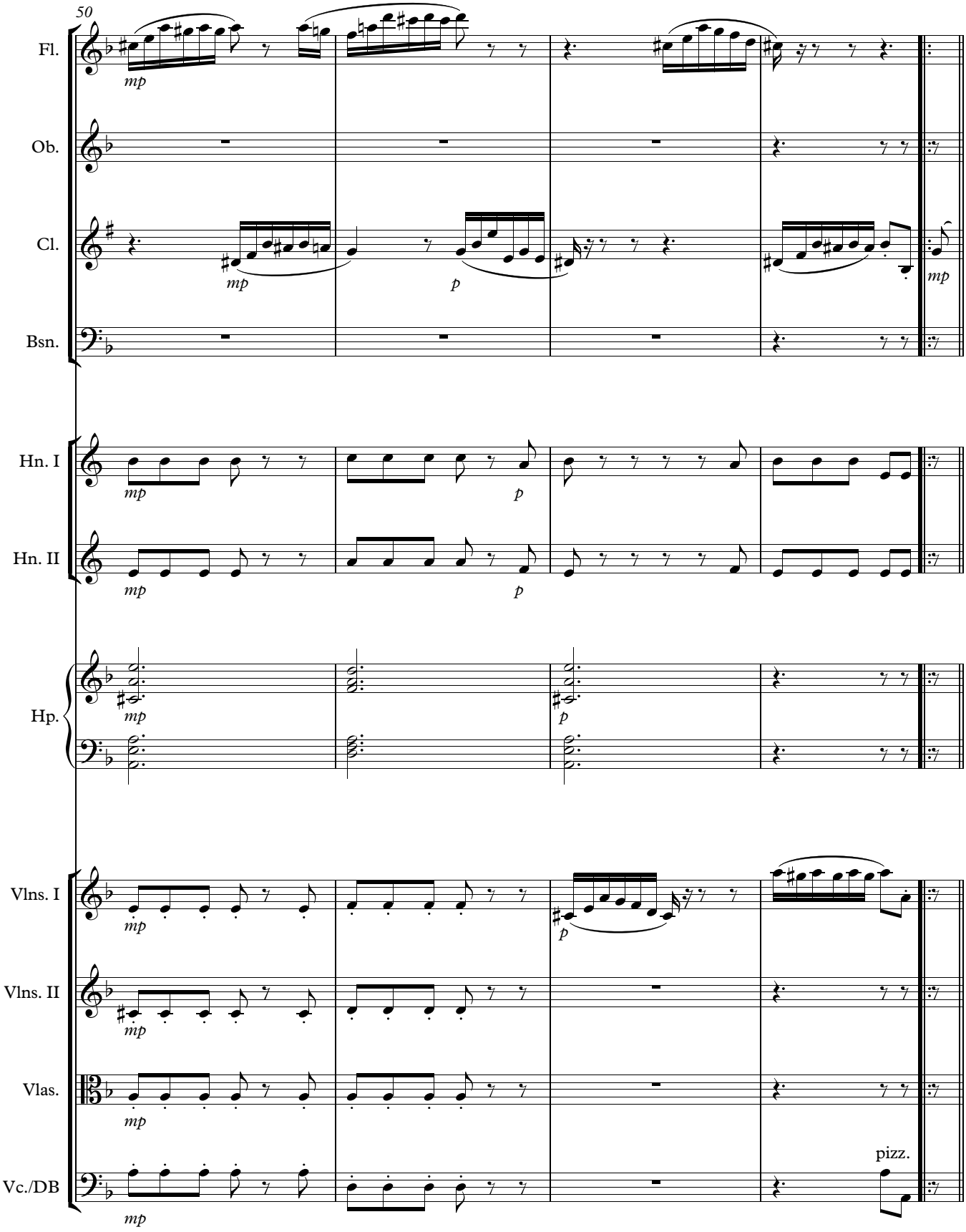

20
Fl.
mf
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
stacc.
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB

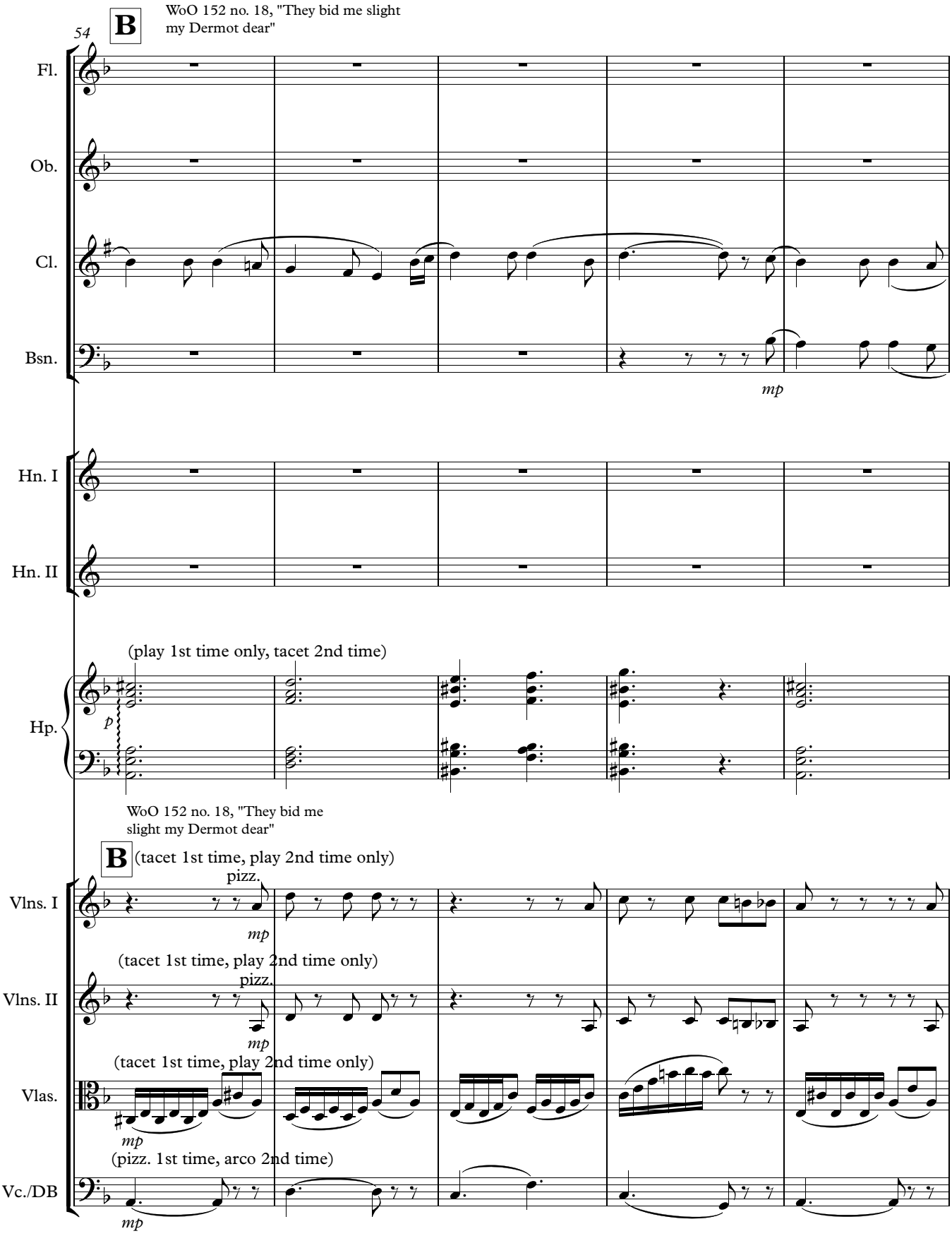

27
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
f
stacc.

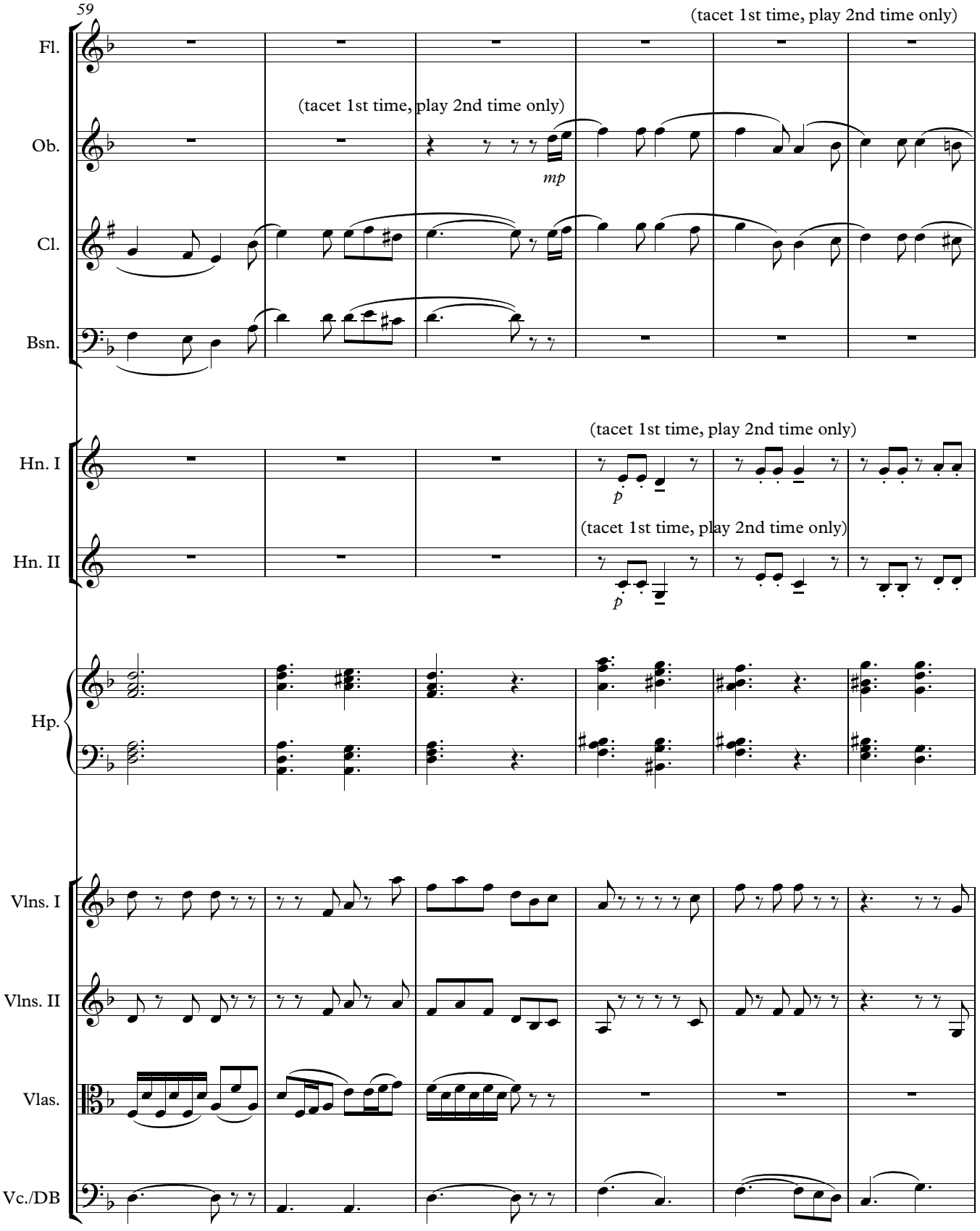

Ritard.
Vivace subito ♩.=140
33
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
ff
f

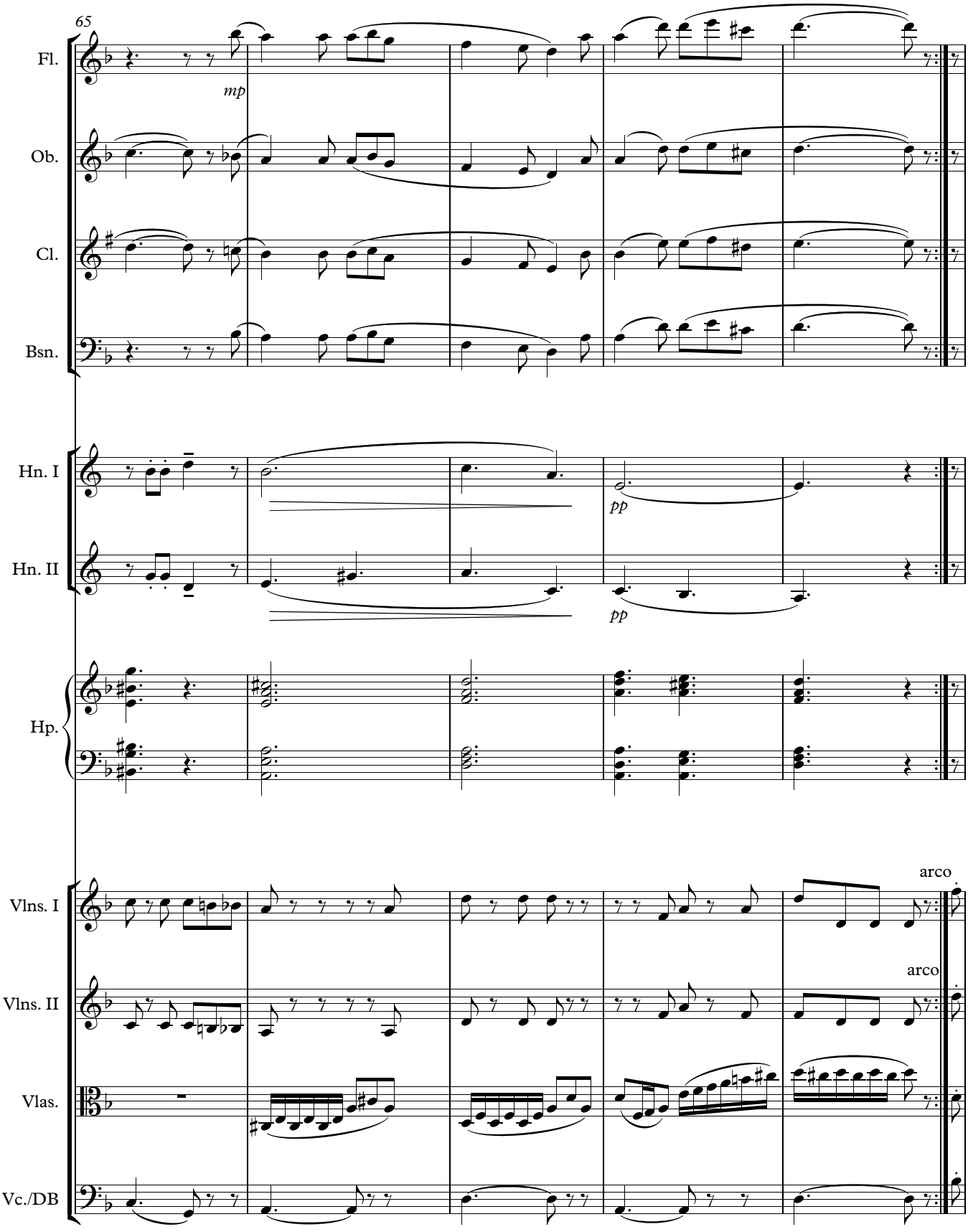

39
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB

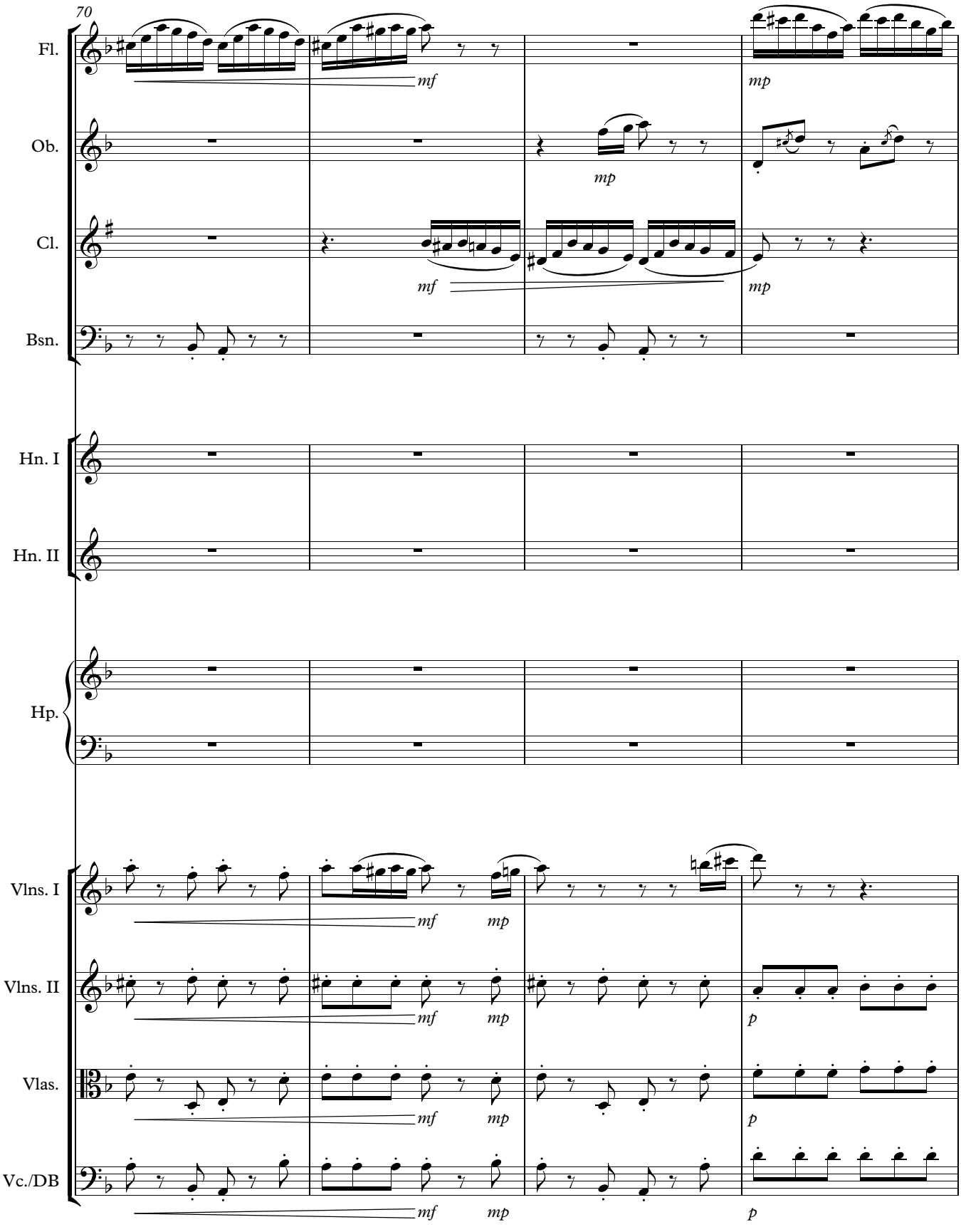

46
Moderato ♩.=58
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
mf
f
DC#B#|EFGA
arpeggio sempre
3

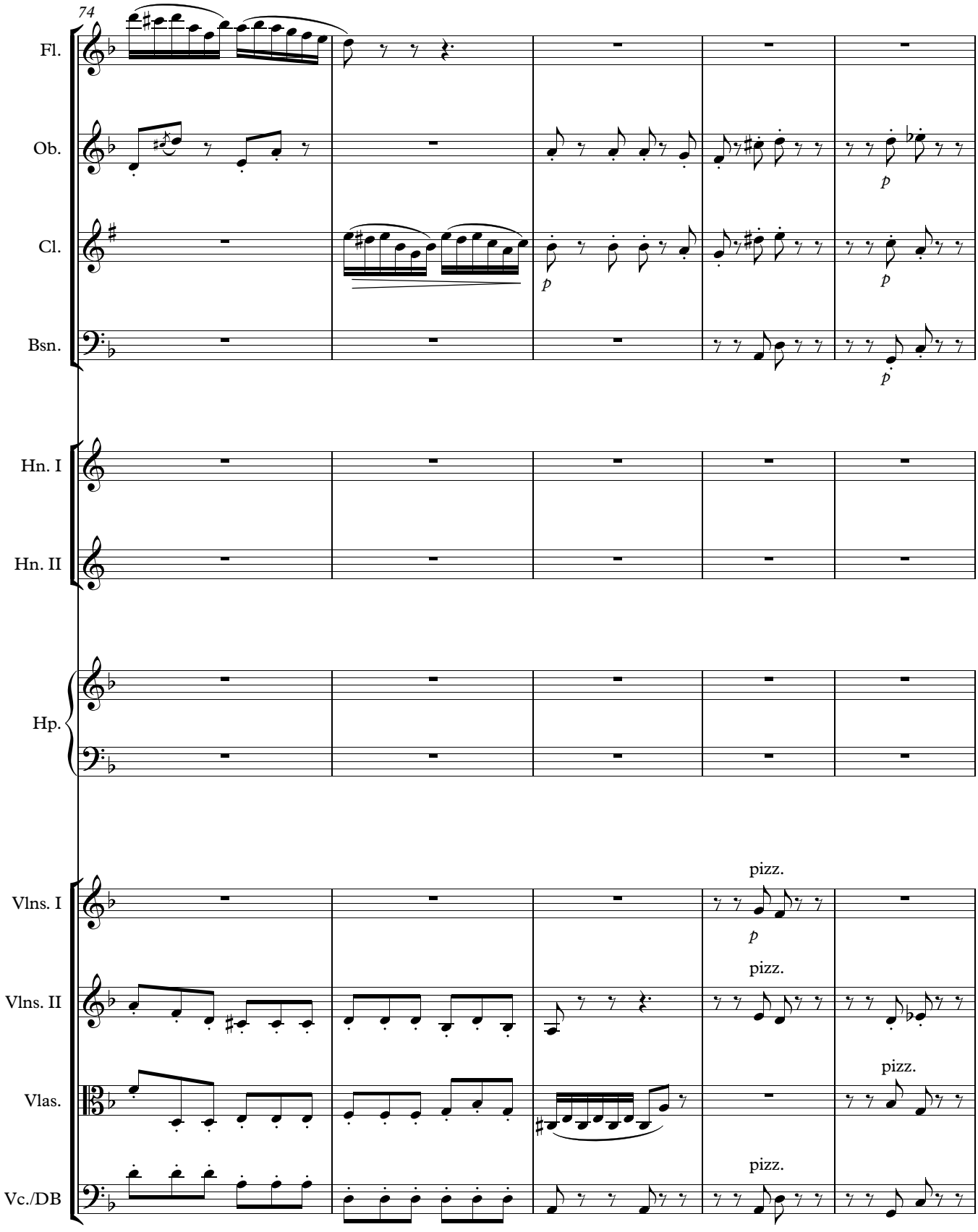

50
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
mp
p
pizz.

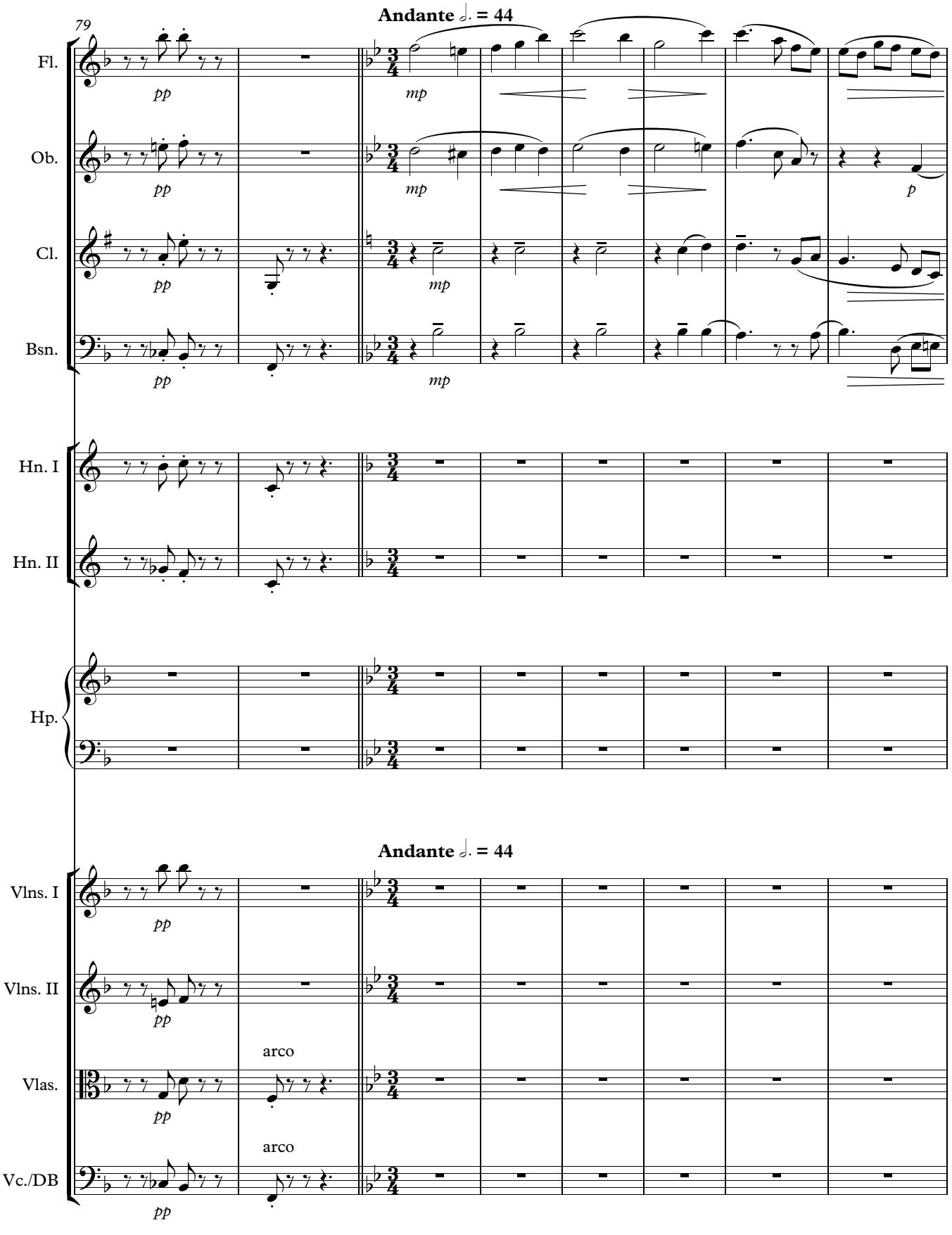

54
B
WoO 152 no. 18, "They bid me slight my Dermot dear"
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
mp
Hn. I
Hn. II
(play 1st time only, tacet 2nd time)
Hp.
p
WoO 152 no. 18, "They bid me slight my Dermot dear"
B
(tacet 1st time, play 2nd time only)
pizz.
Vlns. I
mp
(tacet 1st time, play 2nd time only)
pizz.
Vlns. II
mp
(tacet 1st time, play 2nd time only)
Vlas.
mp
(pizz. 1st time, arco 2nd time)
Vc./DB
mp

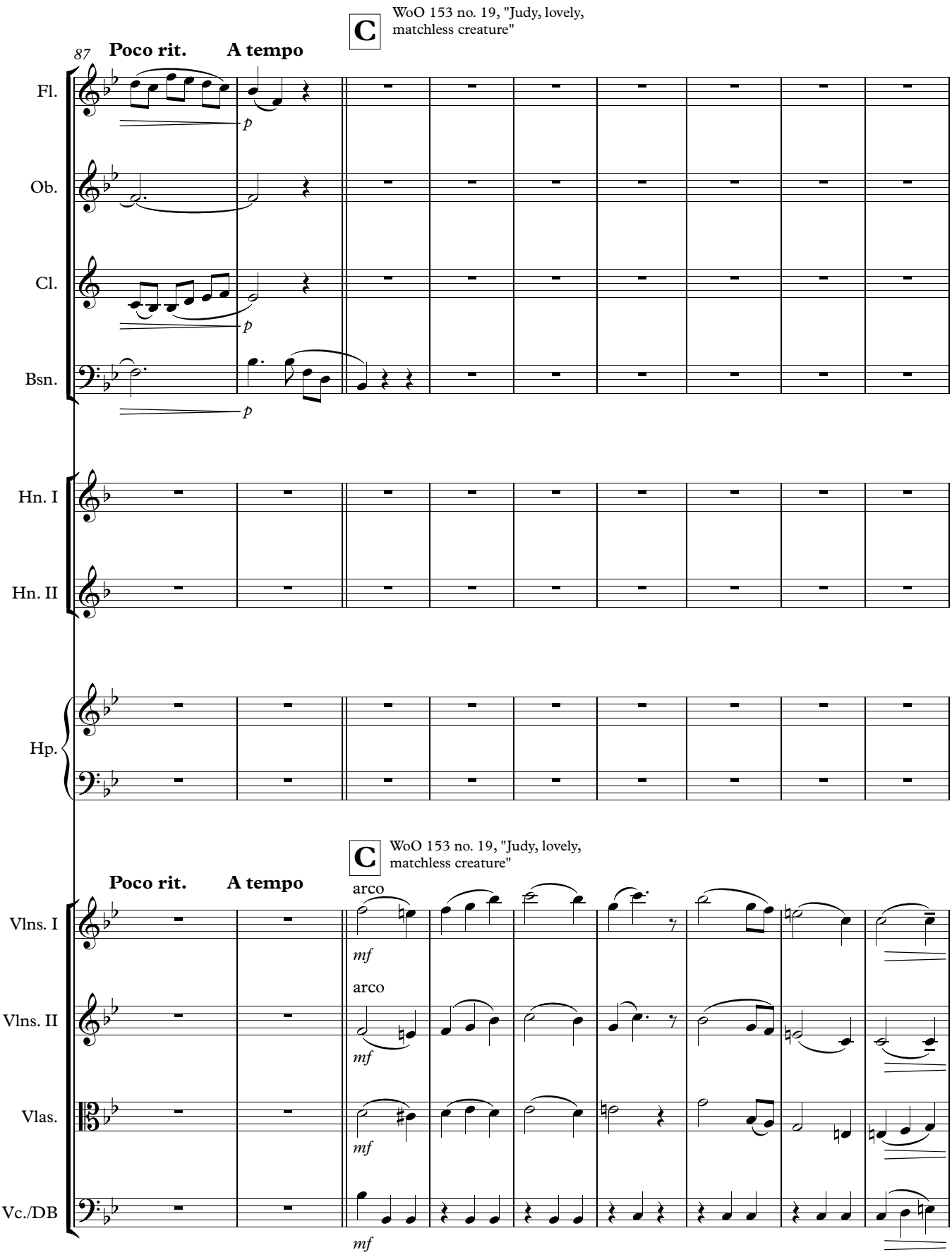

59
(tacet 1st time, play 2nd time only)
Fl.
(tacet 1st time, play 2nd time only)
Ob.
mp
Cl.
Bsn.
(tacet 1st time, play 2nd time only)
Hn. I
p
(tacet 1st time, play 2nd time only)
Hn. II
p
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB

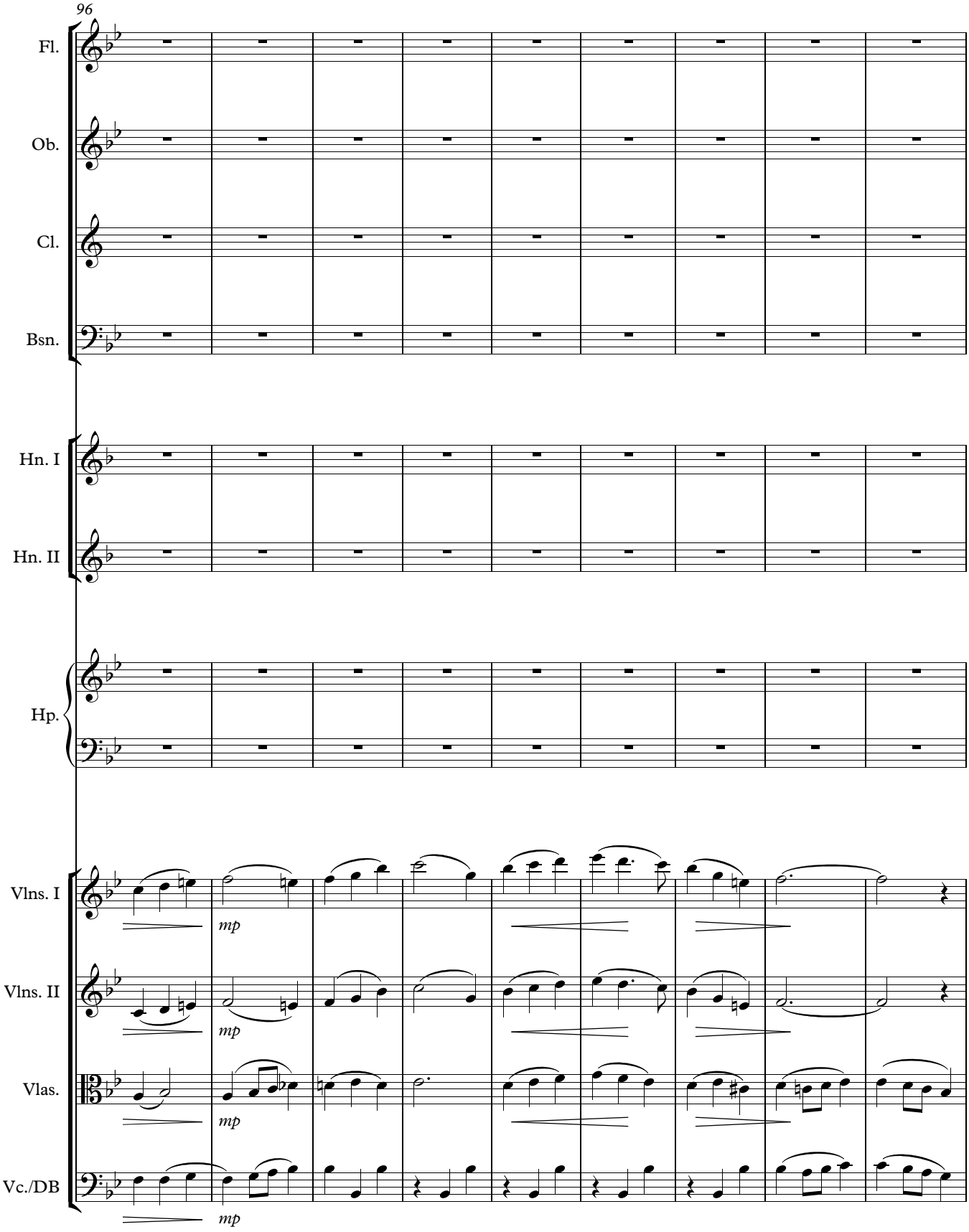

65
Fl.
mp
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
pp
Hn. II
pp
Hp.
Vlns. I
arco
Vlns. II
arco
Vlas.
Vc./DB

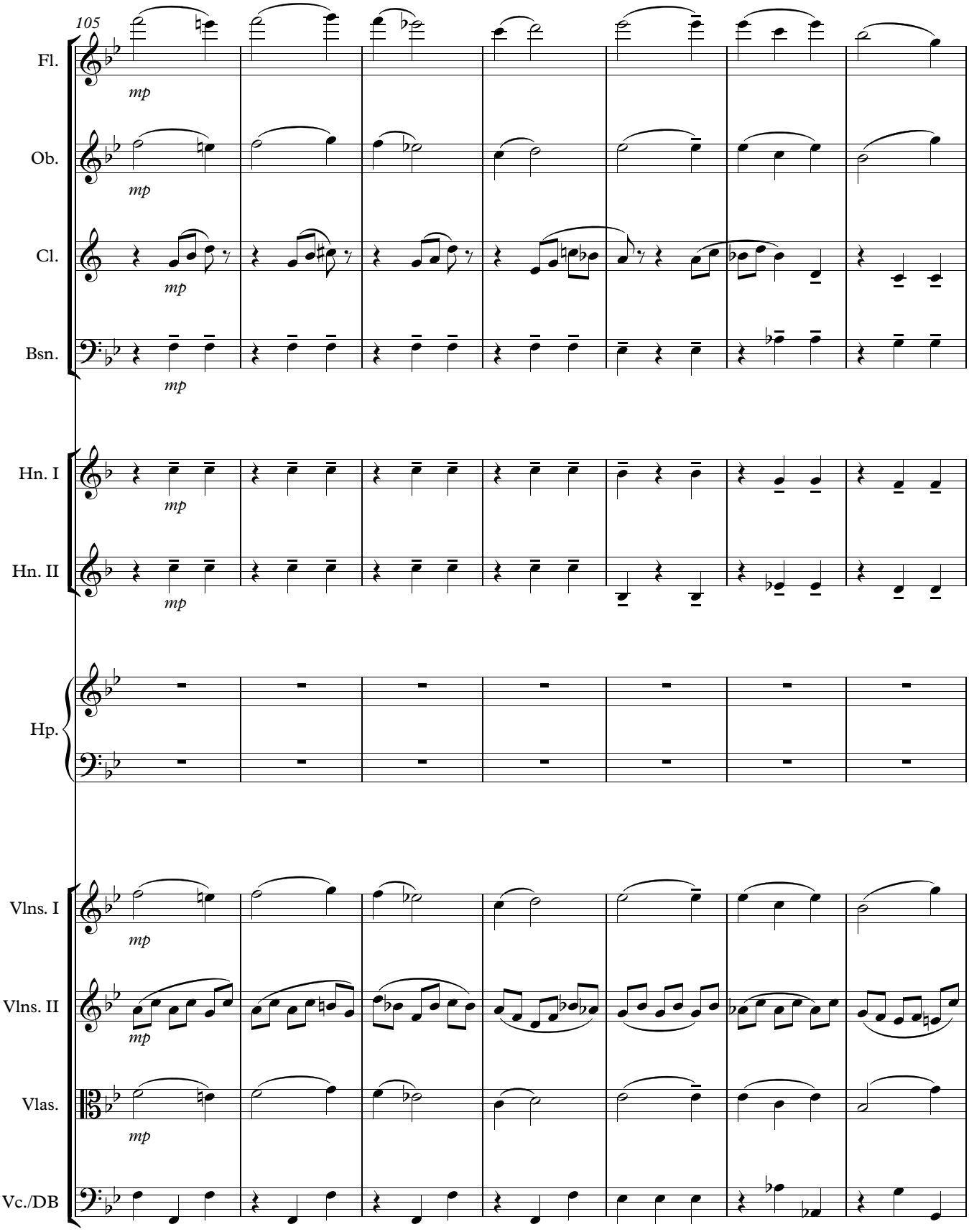

70
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
mf
mp
p

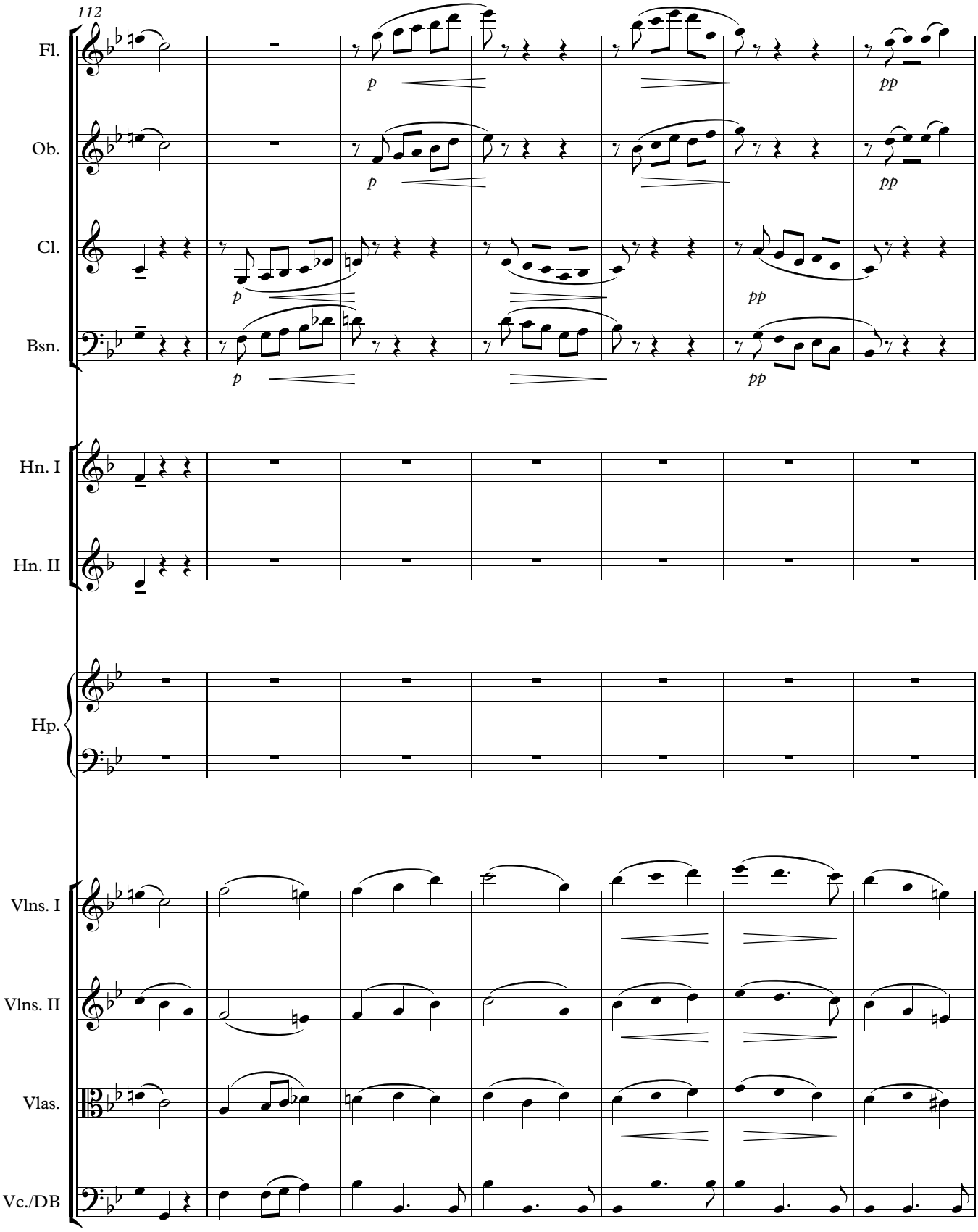

74
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
p
pizz.

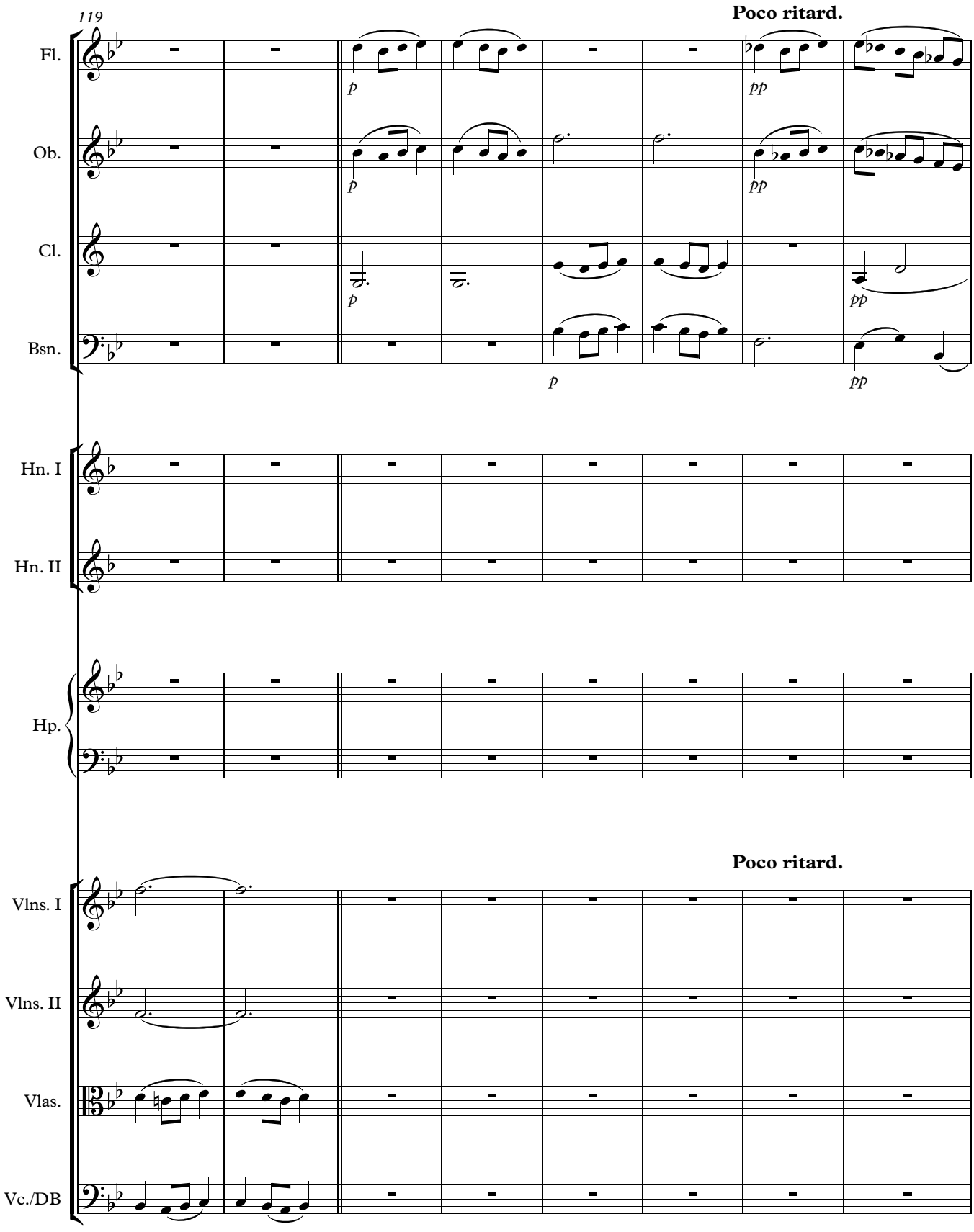

79
Andante ♩. = 44
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Andante ♩. = 44
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
arco
arco
pp
mp
p

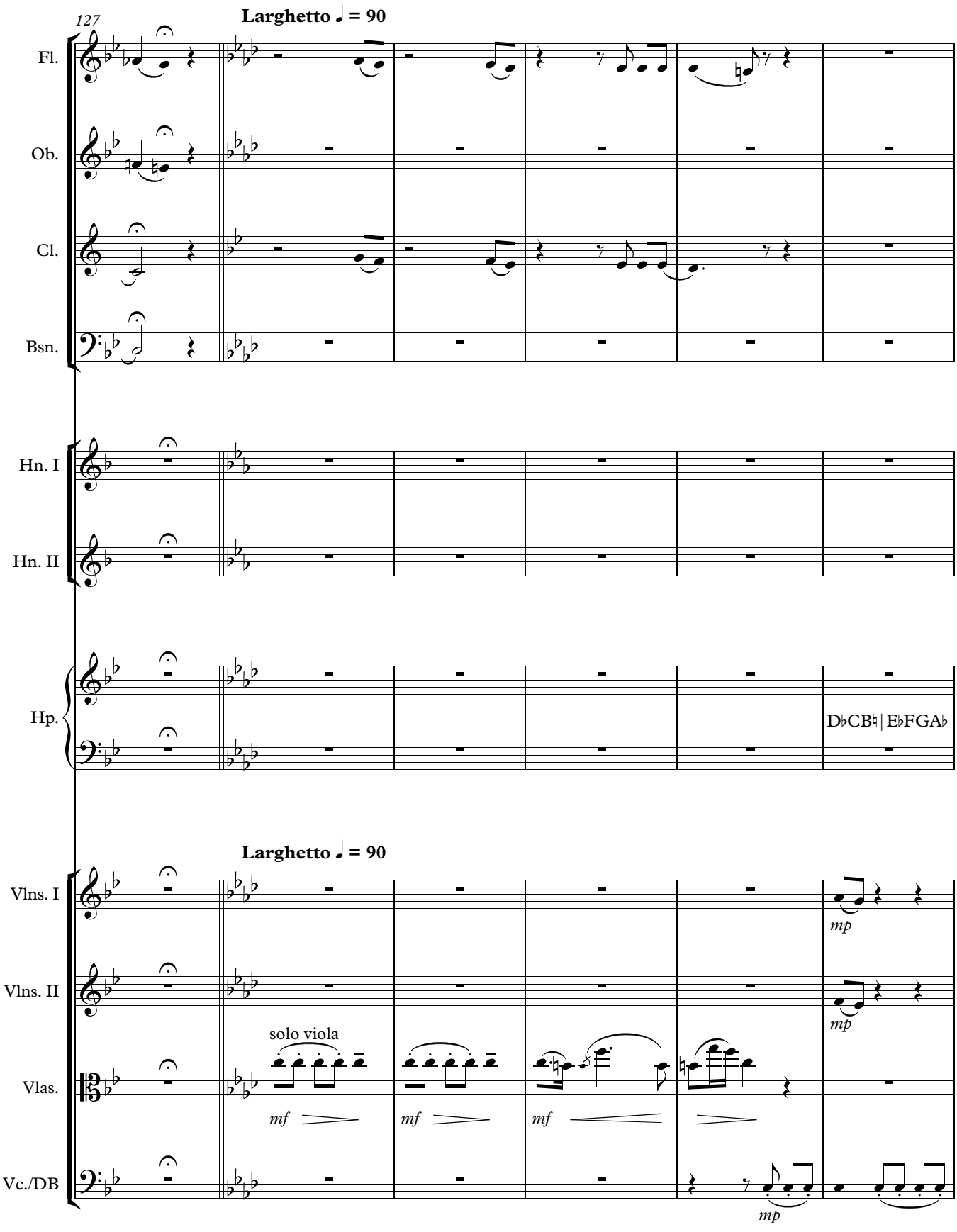

C
WoO 153 no. 19, "Judy, lovely, matchless creature"
87
Poco rit.
A tempo
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
p
mf
arco

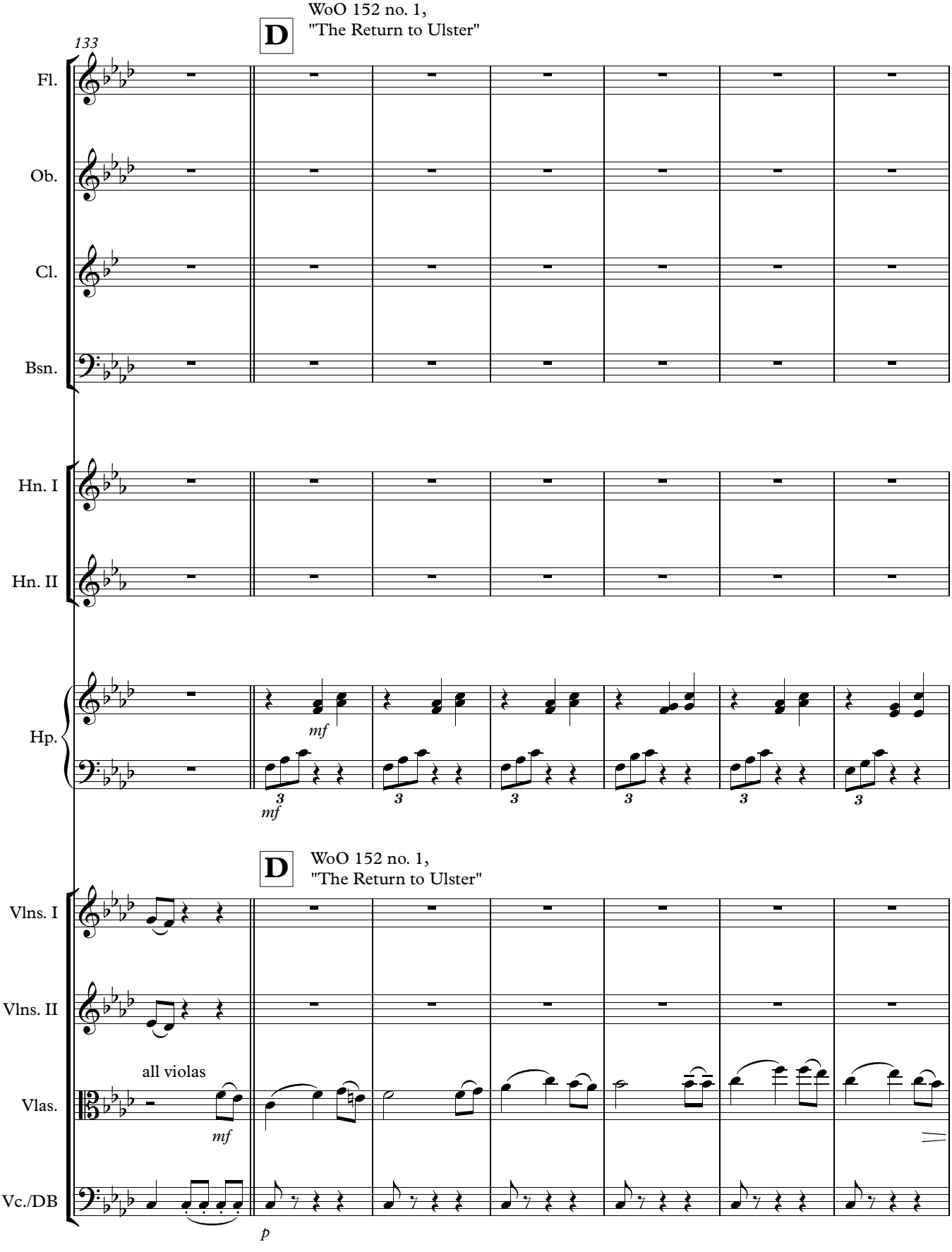

96
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
mp
mp
mp
mp

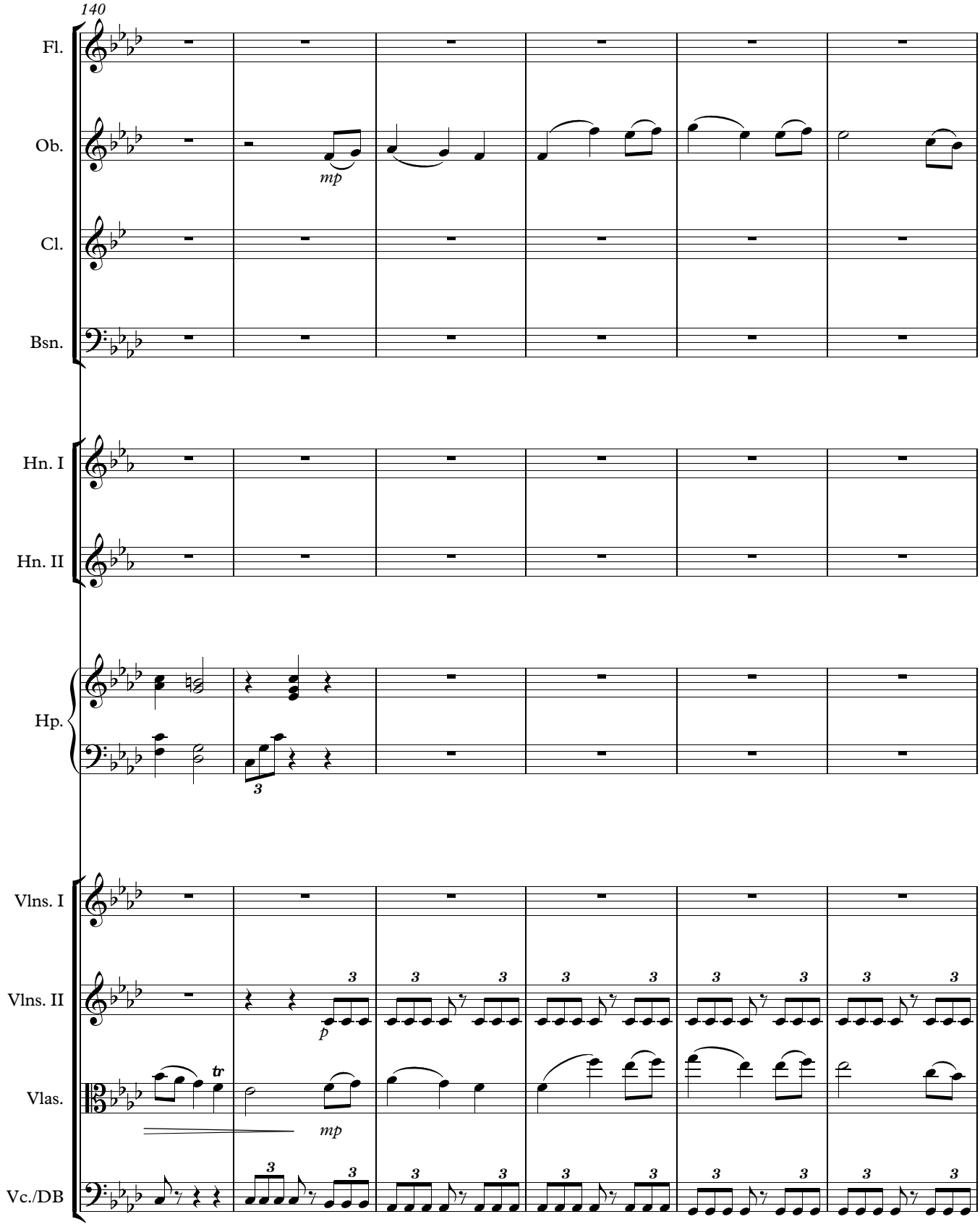

105
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
mp

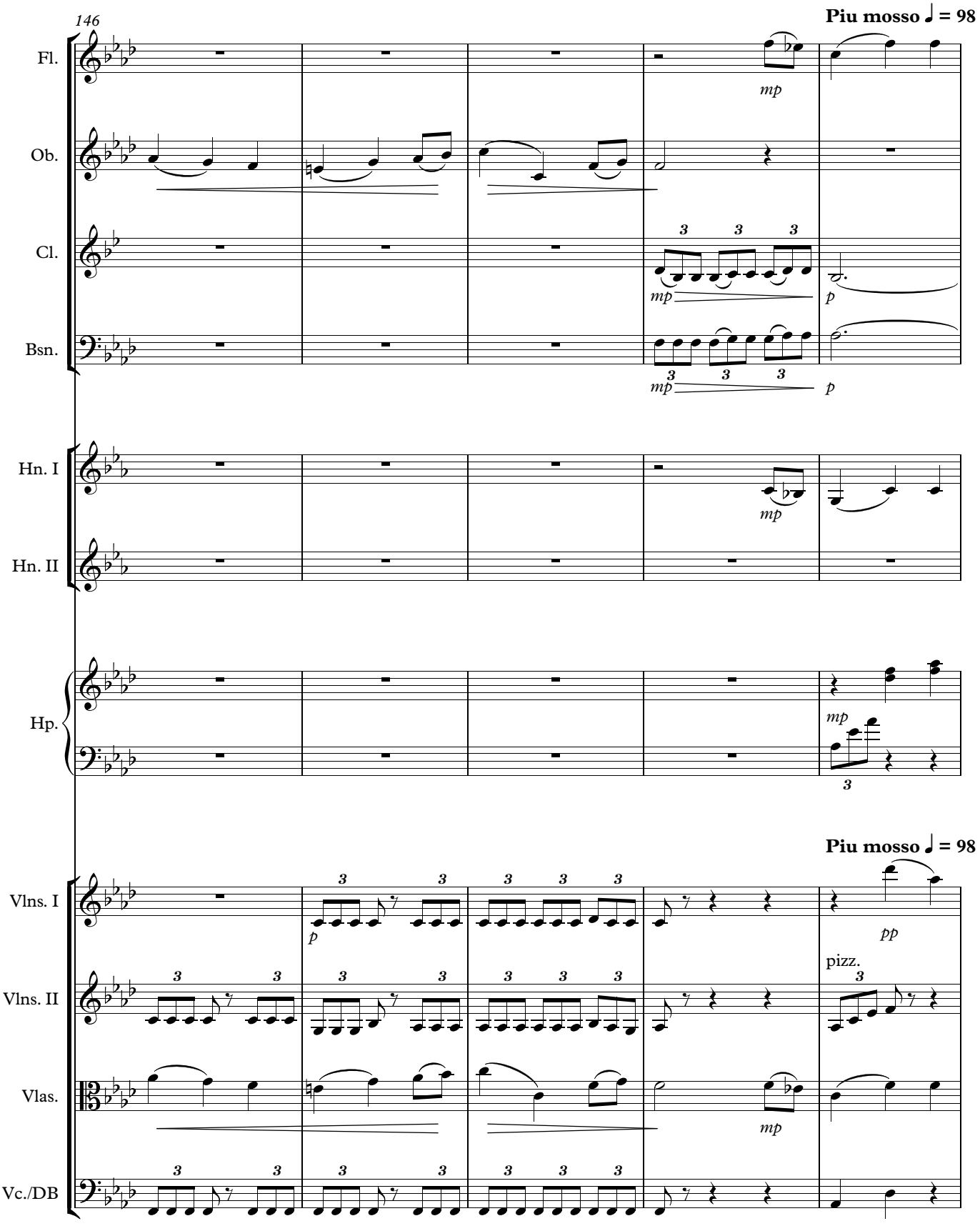

112
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
p
pp

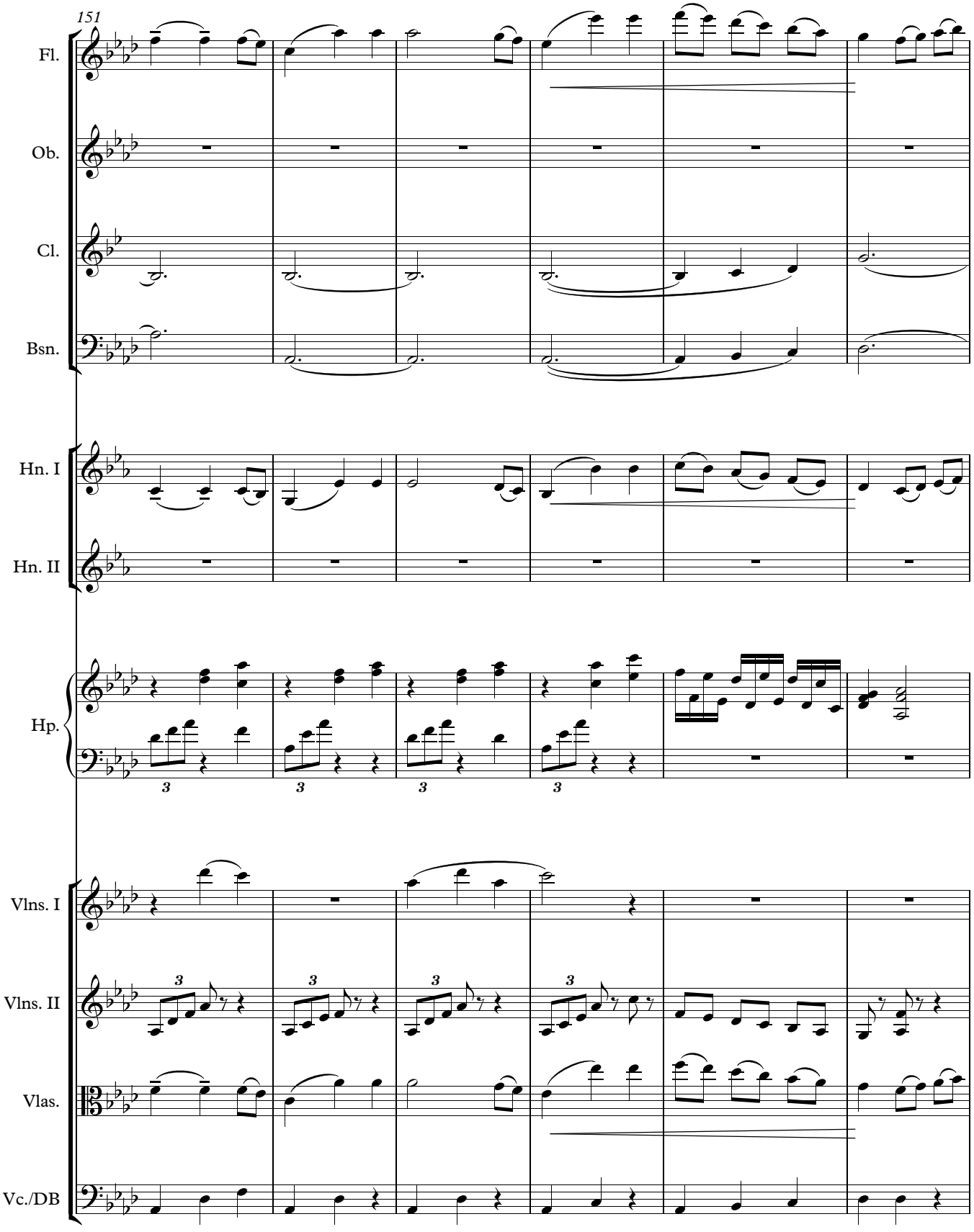

119
Poco ritard.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Poco ritard.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB

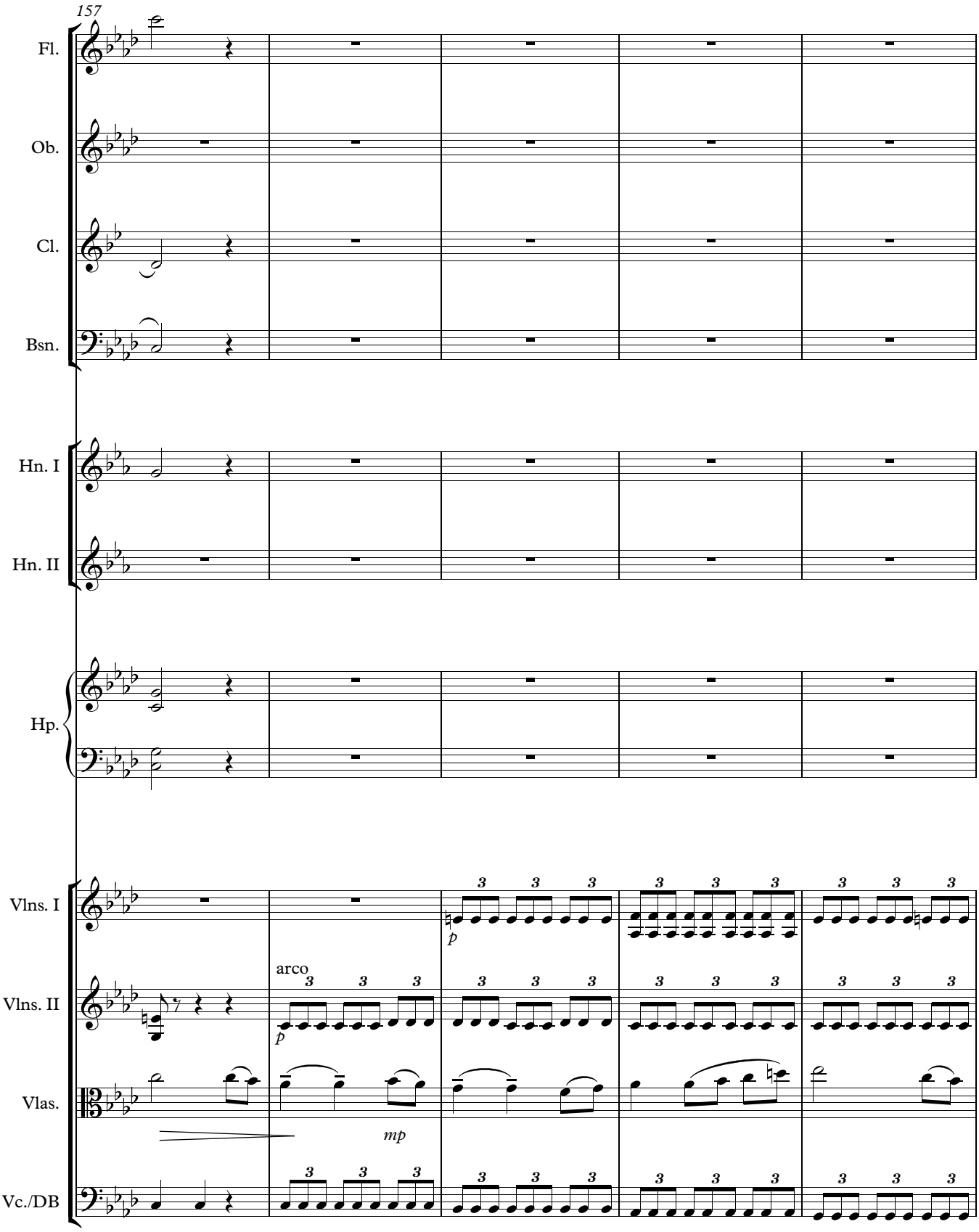

127
Larghetto ♩ = 90
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
D♭CB♮ | E♭FGA♭
Larghetto ♩ = 90
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
solo viola
mf
mf
mf
mp
mp
mp

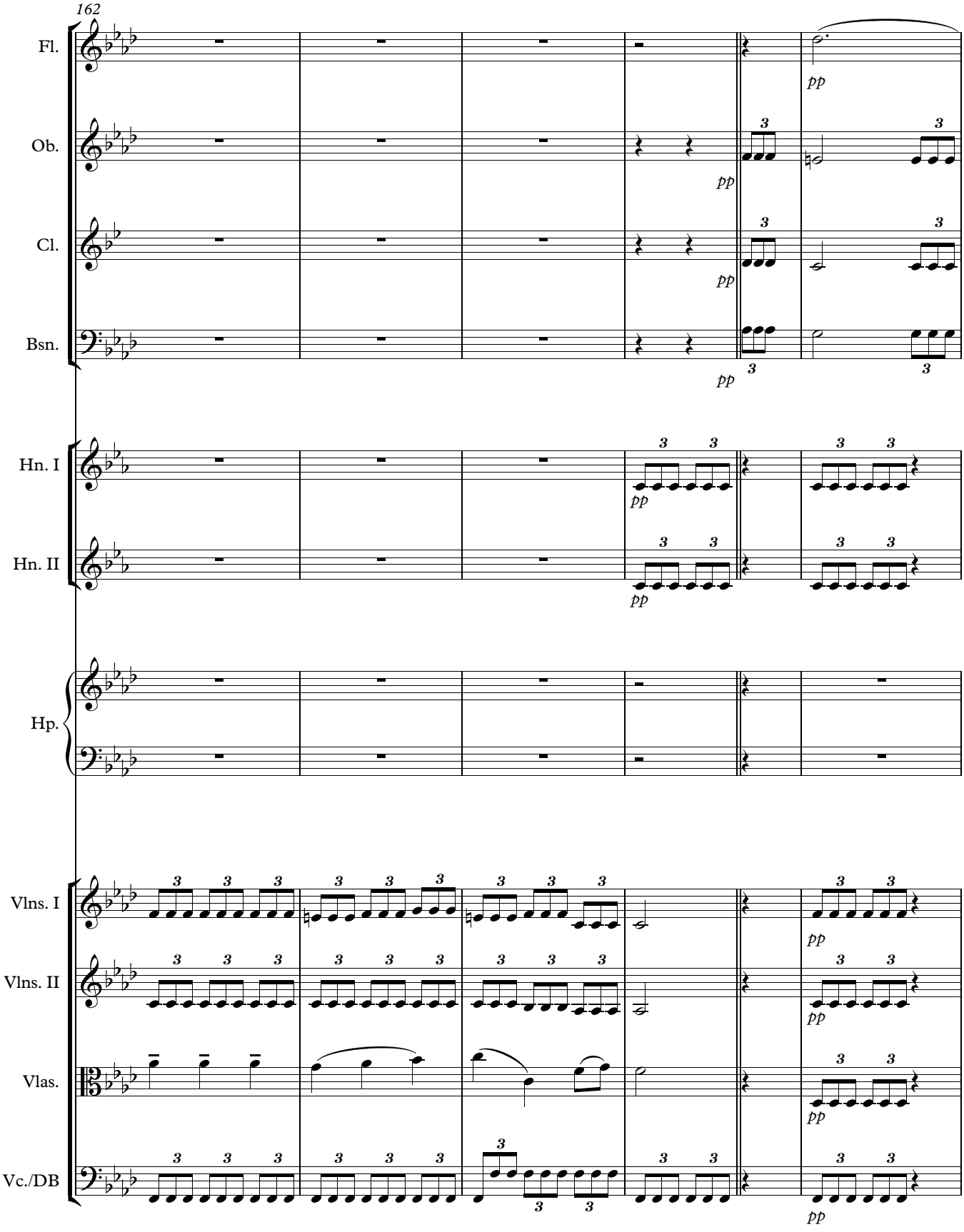

133
D
WoO 152 no. 1,
"The Return to Ulster"
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
mf
mf
3
D
WoO 152 no. 1,
"The Return to Ulster"
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
all violas
Vlas.
mf
Vc./DB
p

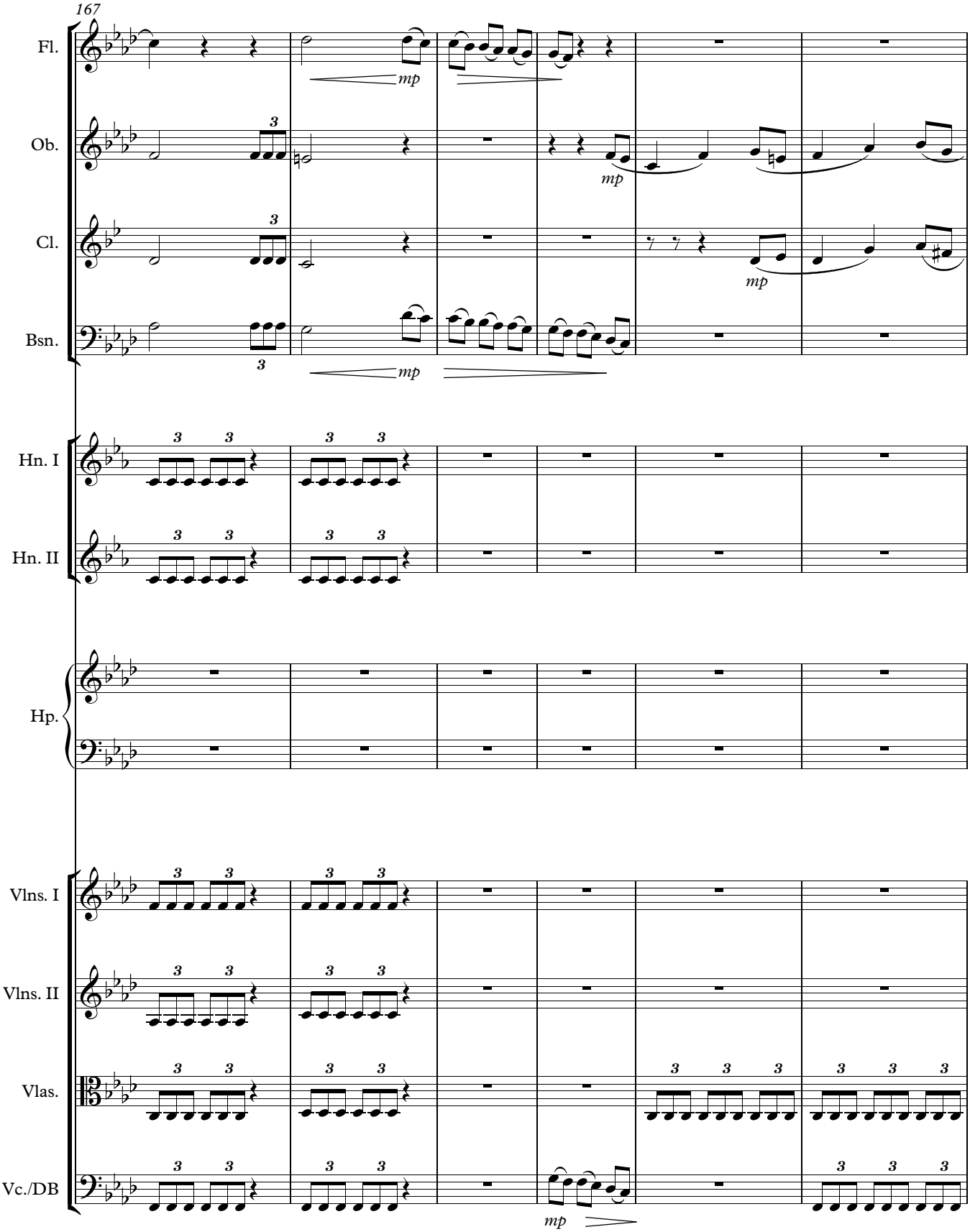

140
Fl.
Ob.
mp
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
3
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
p
Vlas.
tr
mp
Vc./DB

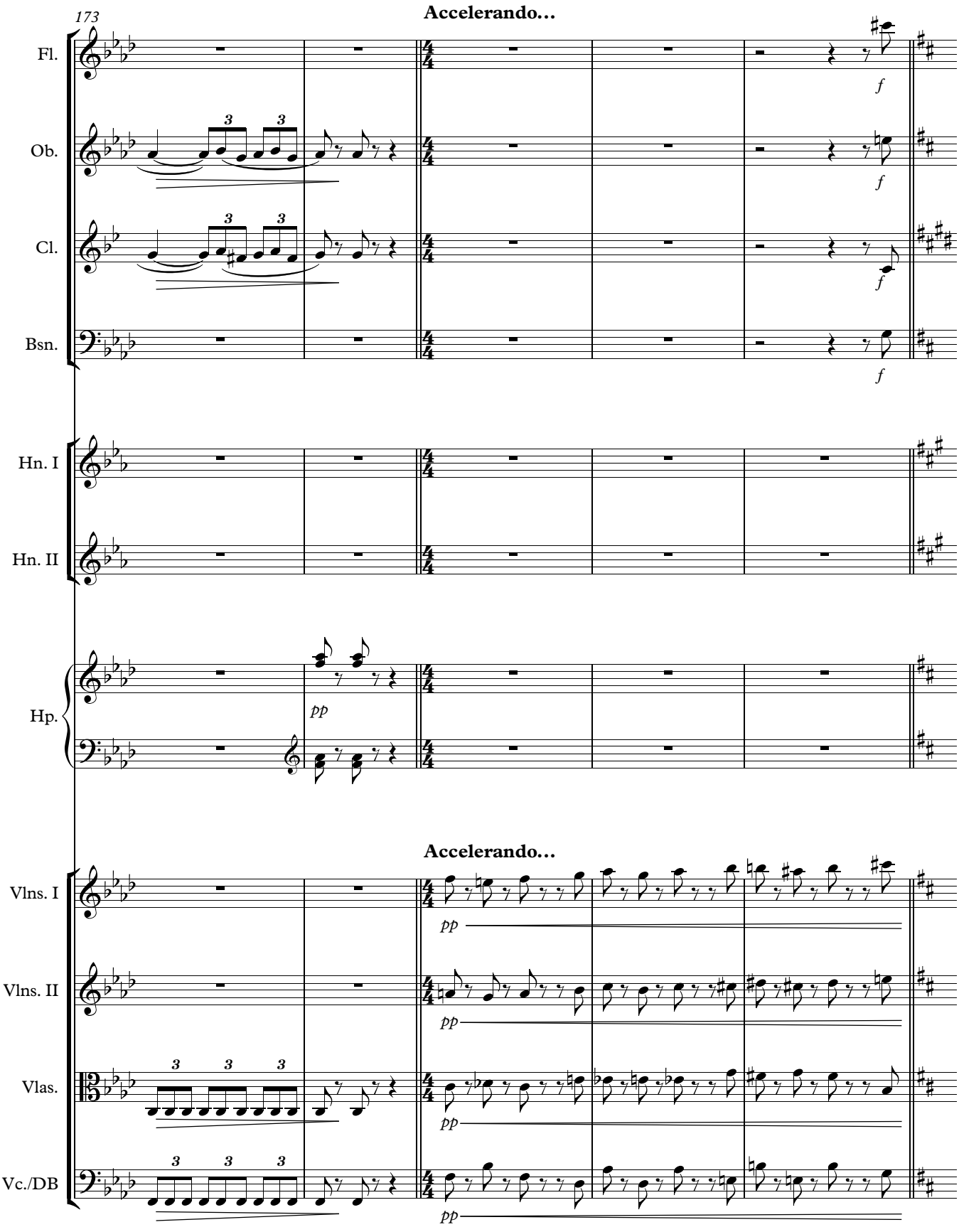

146
Piu mosso ♩ = 98
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
mp
p
pp
pizz.

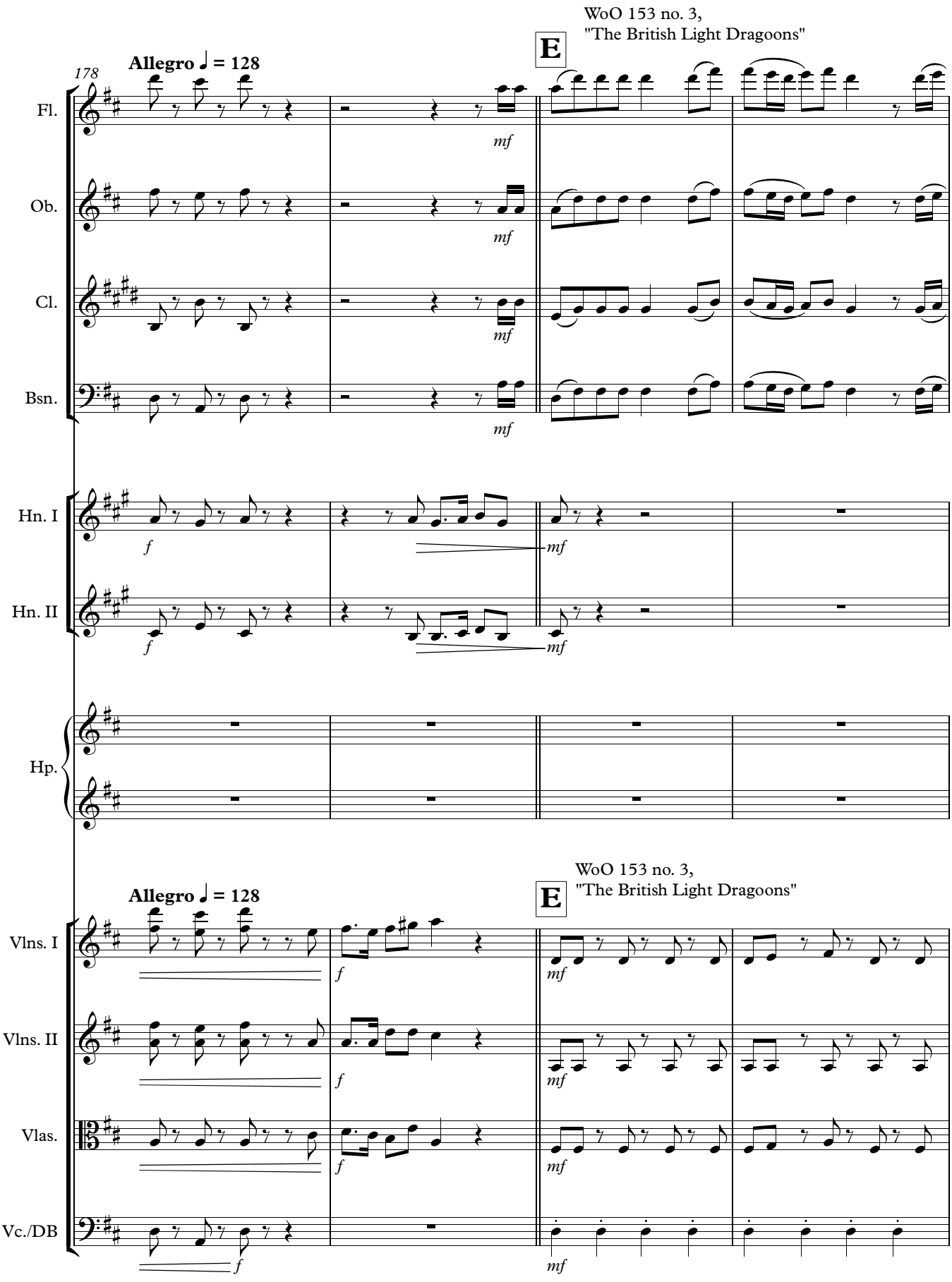

151
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB

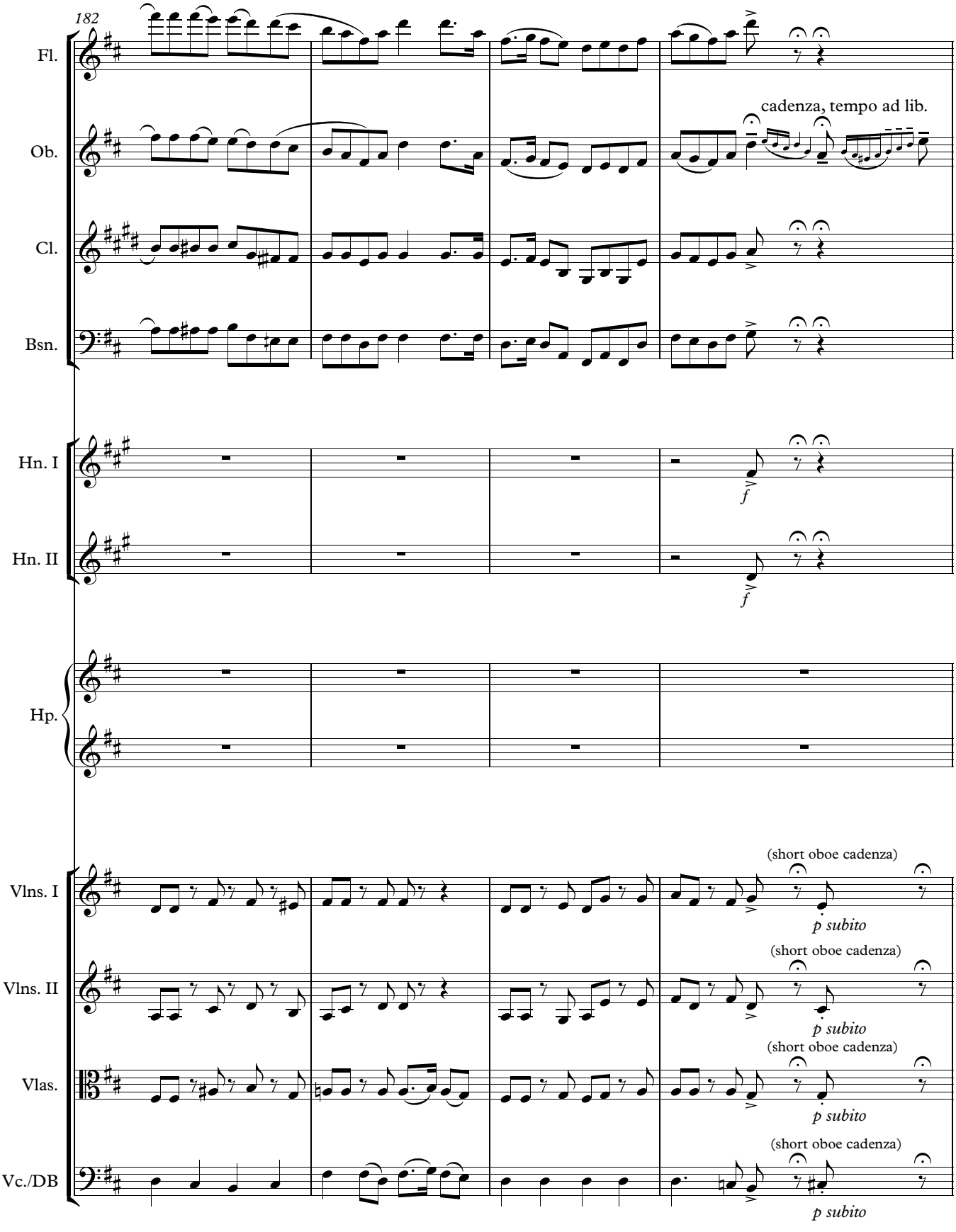

157
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
arco
p
mp

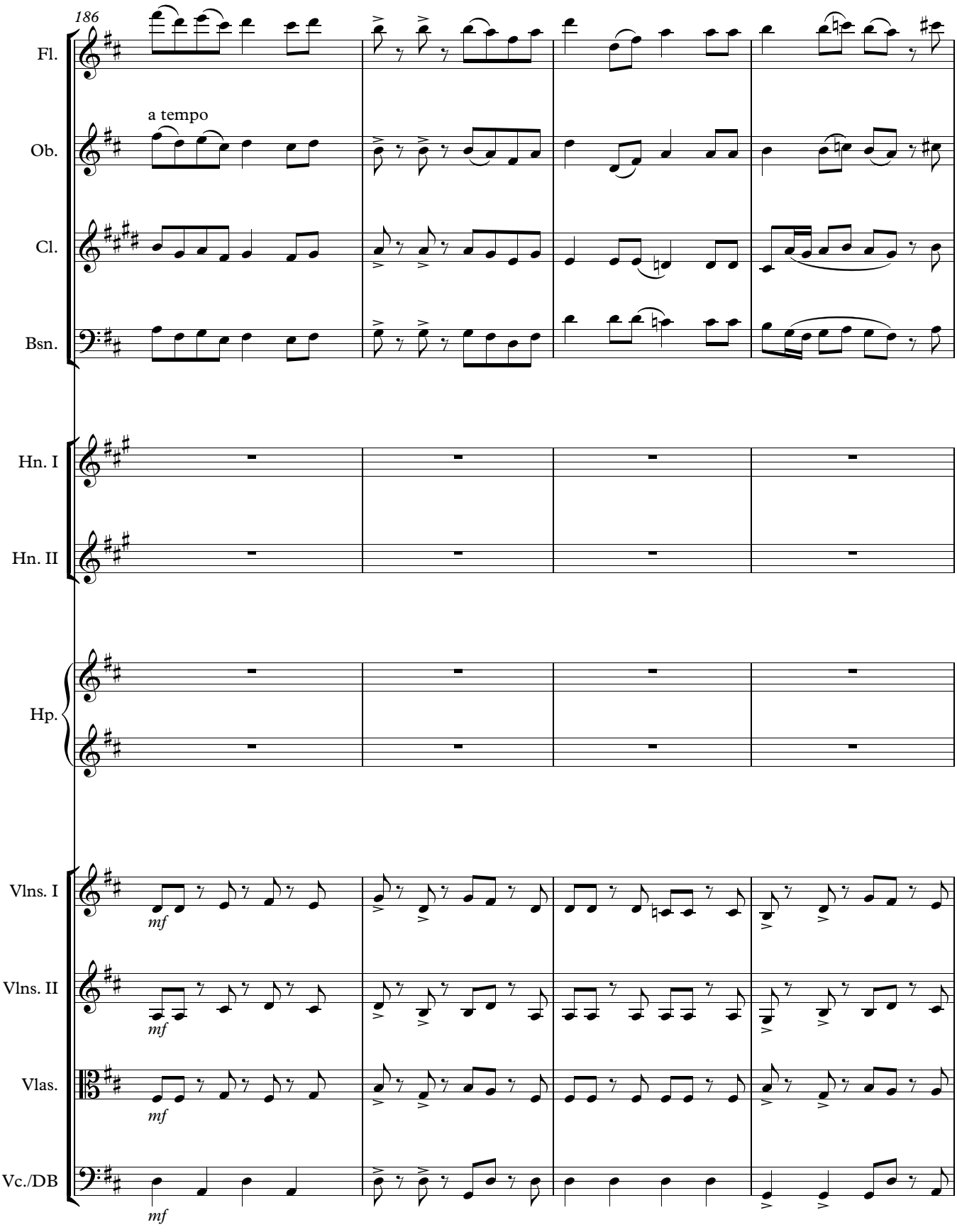

162
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
pp

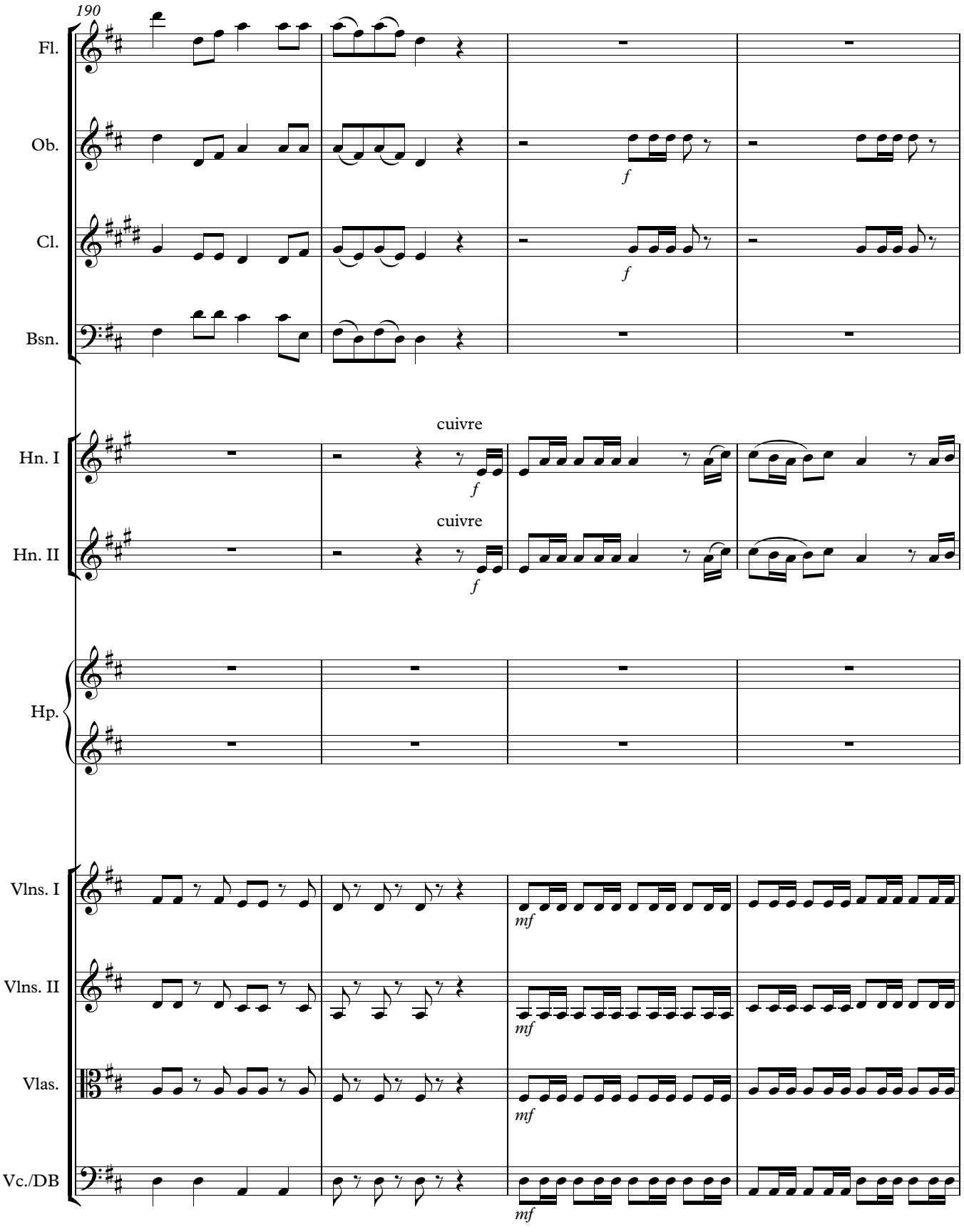

167
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
mp

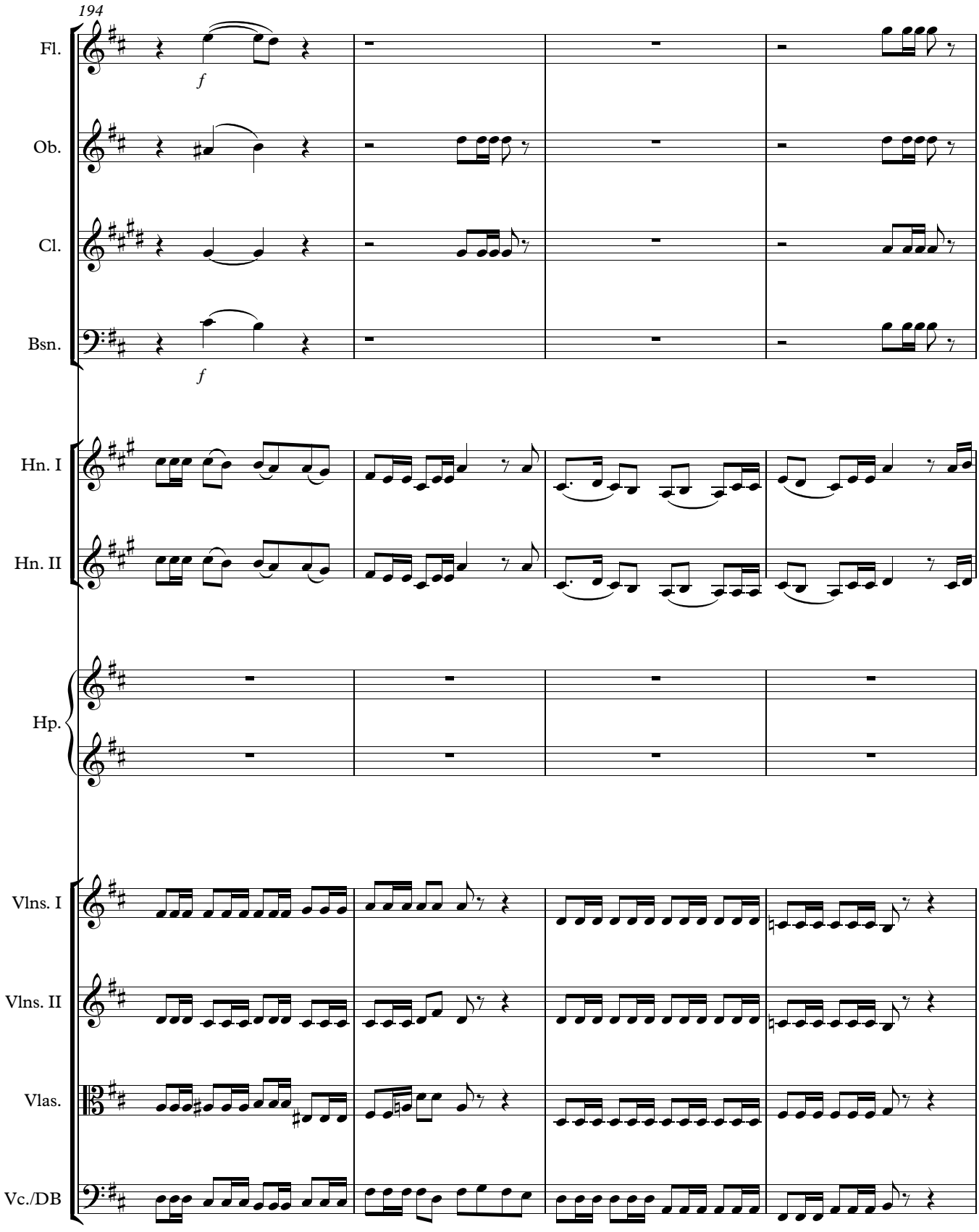

173
Accelerando…
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Accelerando…
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
f
pp


178
Allegro ♩ = 128
E
WoO 153 no. 3,
"The British Light Dragoons"
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
mf
f


182
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
cadenza, tempo ad lib.
f
f
(short oboe cadenza)
p subito
(short oboe cadenza)
p subito
(short oboe cadenza)
p subito
(short oboe cadenza)
p subito


186
Fl.
a tempo
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
mf
Vlns. II
mf
Vlas.
mf
Vc./DB
mf


190
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB
cuivre
cuivre
f
mf


194
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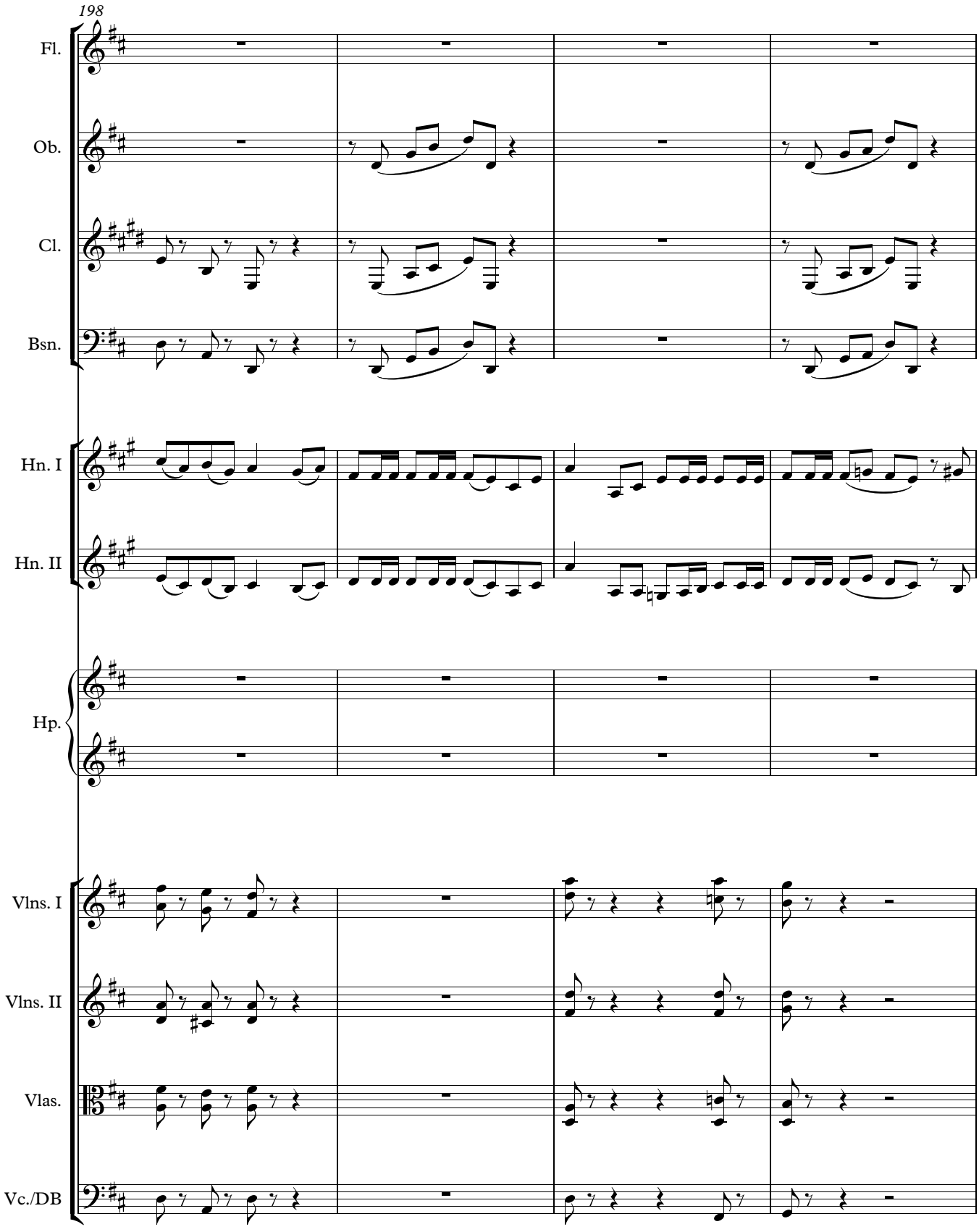
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB


198
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Hp.
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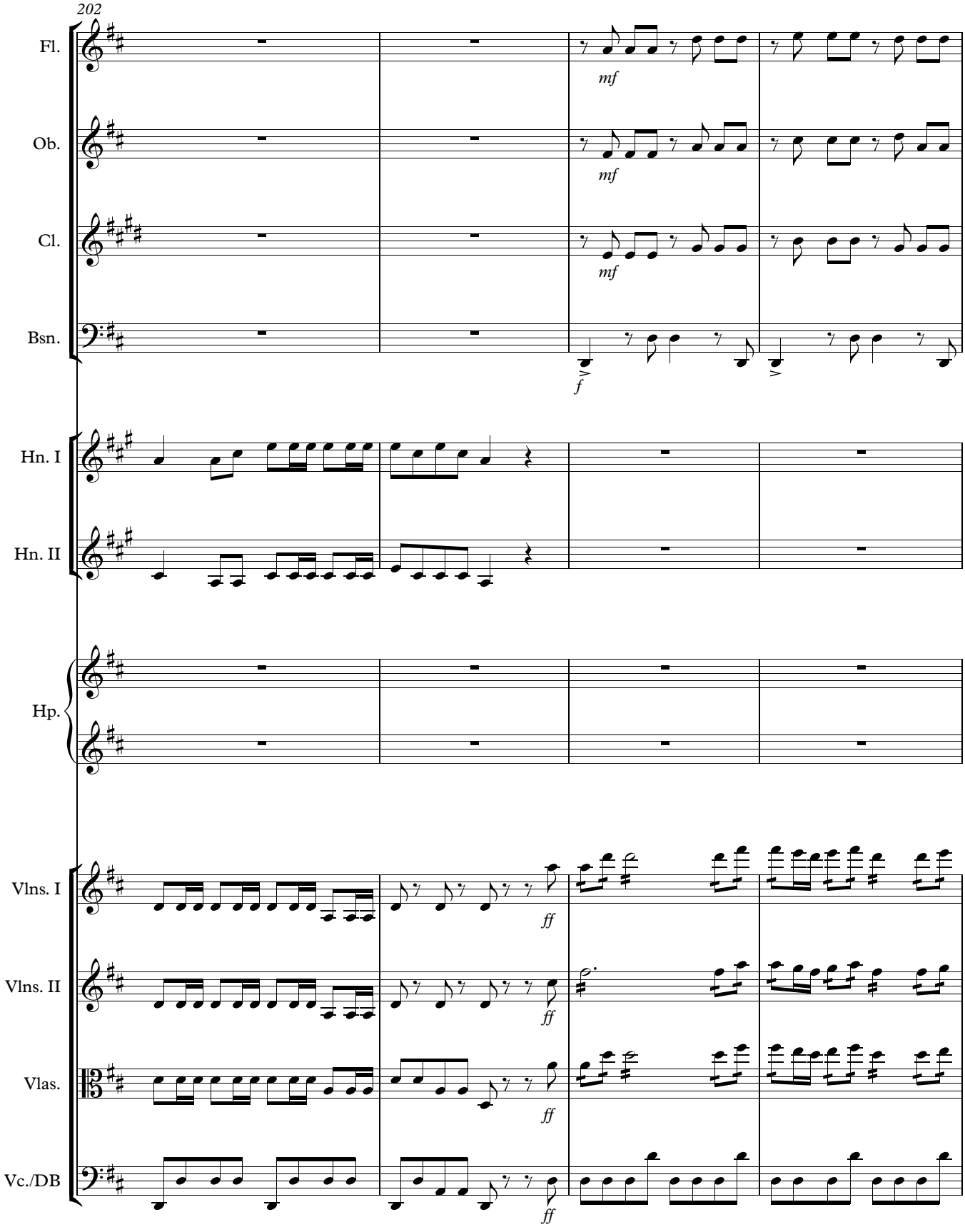
Vlas.
Vc./DB


202
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Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
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Vlns. I
Vlns. II
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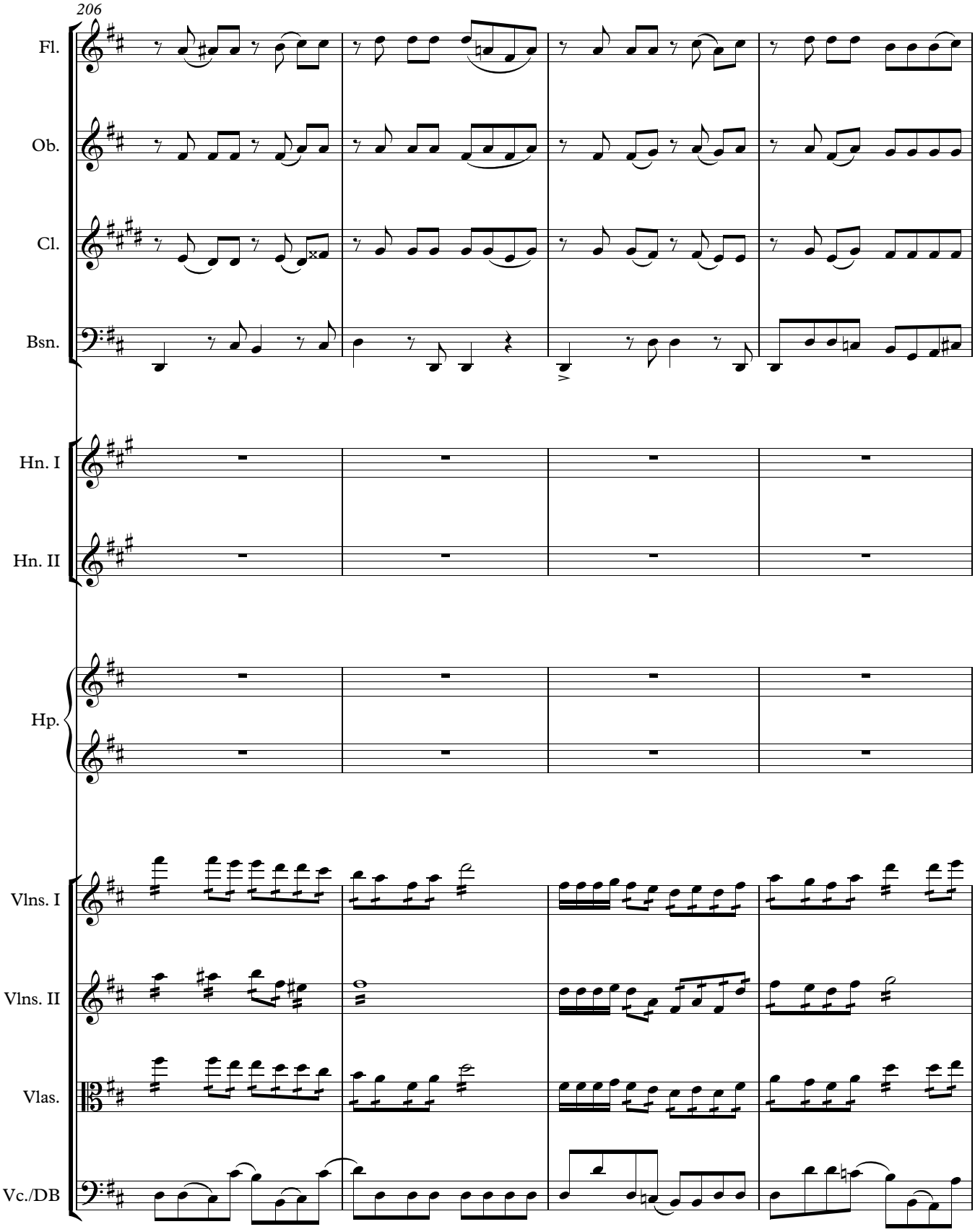
Vc./DB
mf
mf
mf
f
ff
ff
ff
ff


206
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
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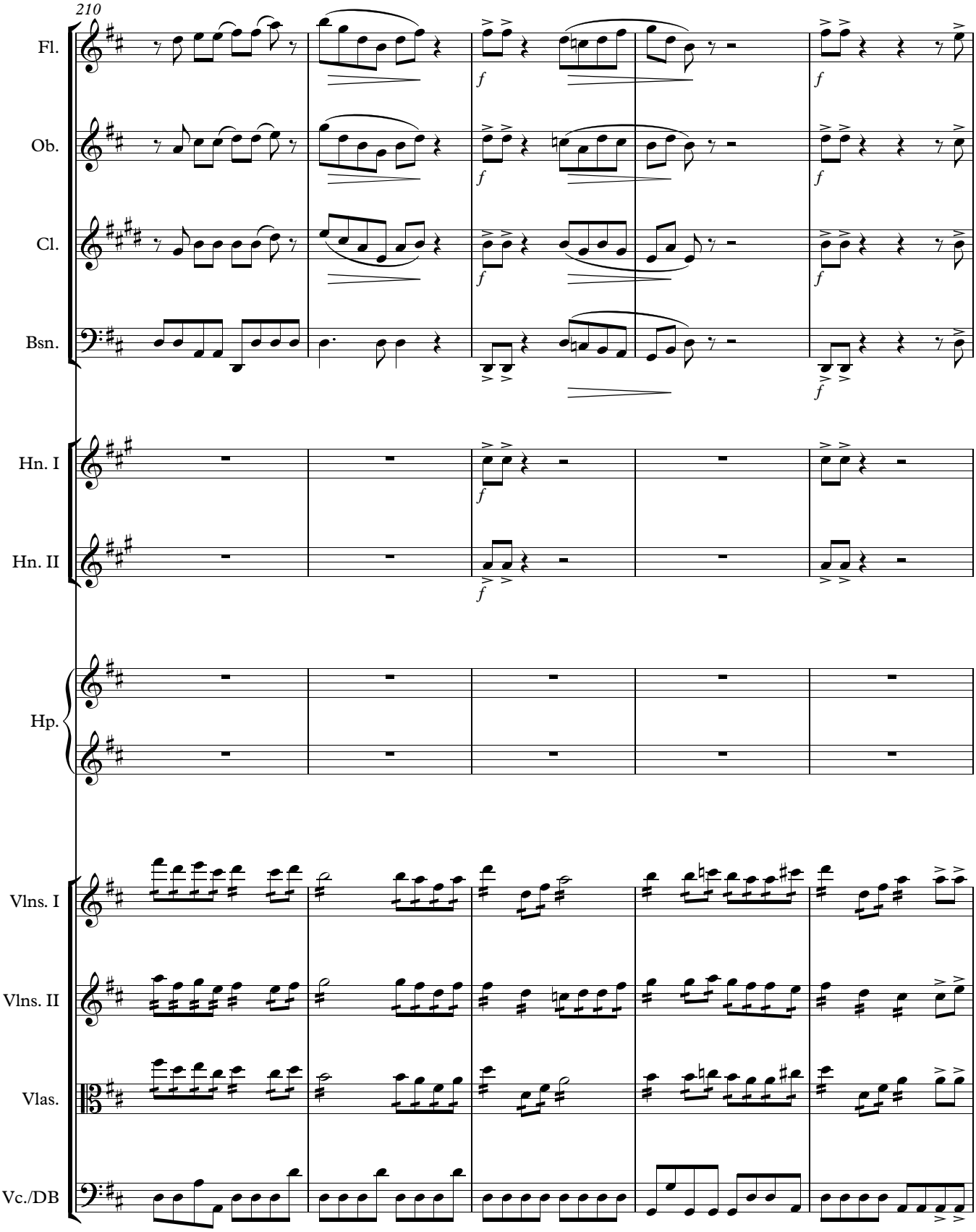
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB


210
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
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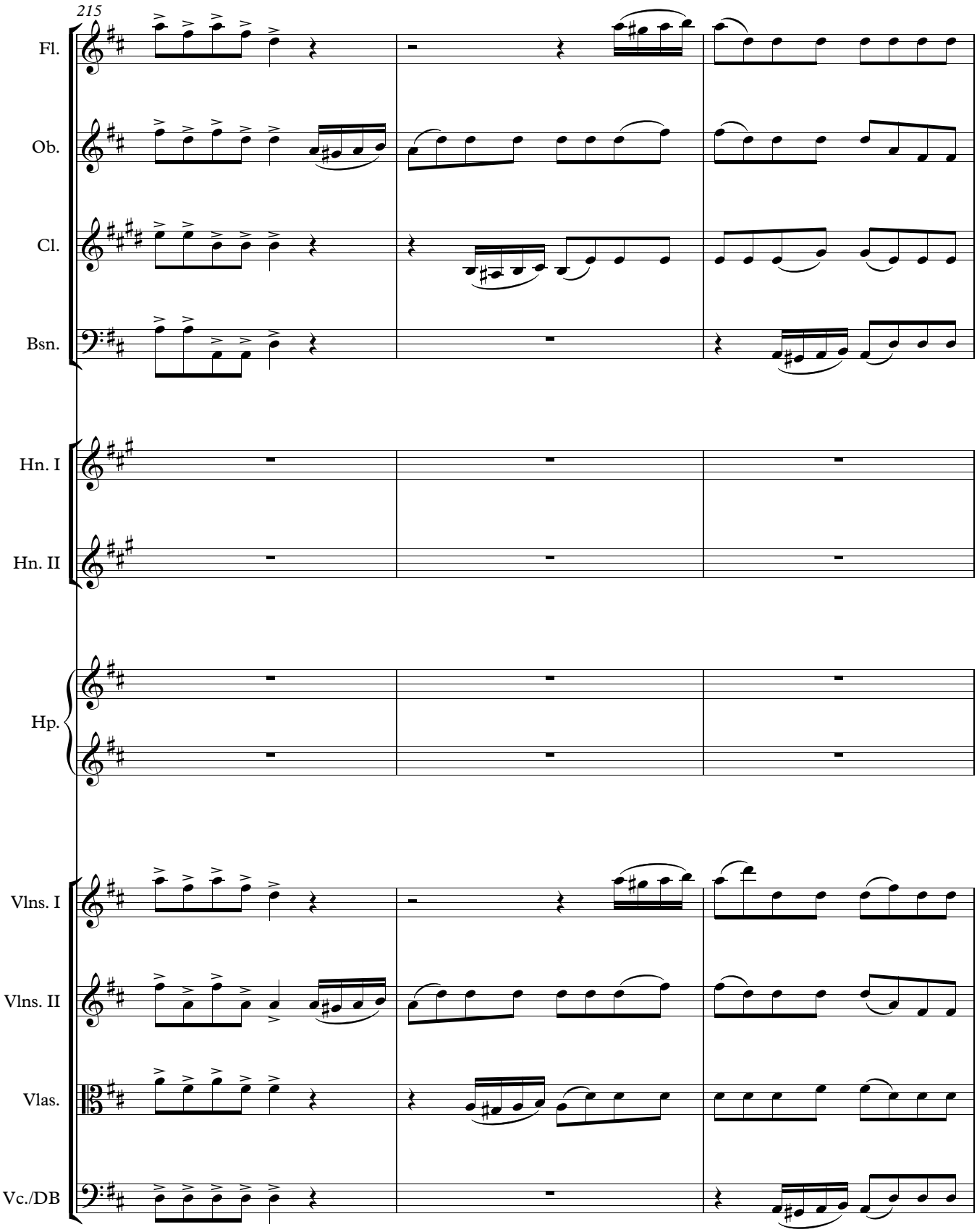
Vc./DB
f


215
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
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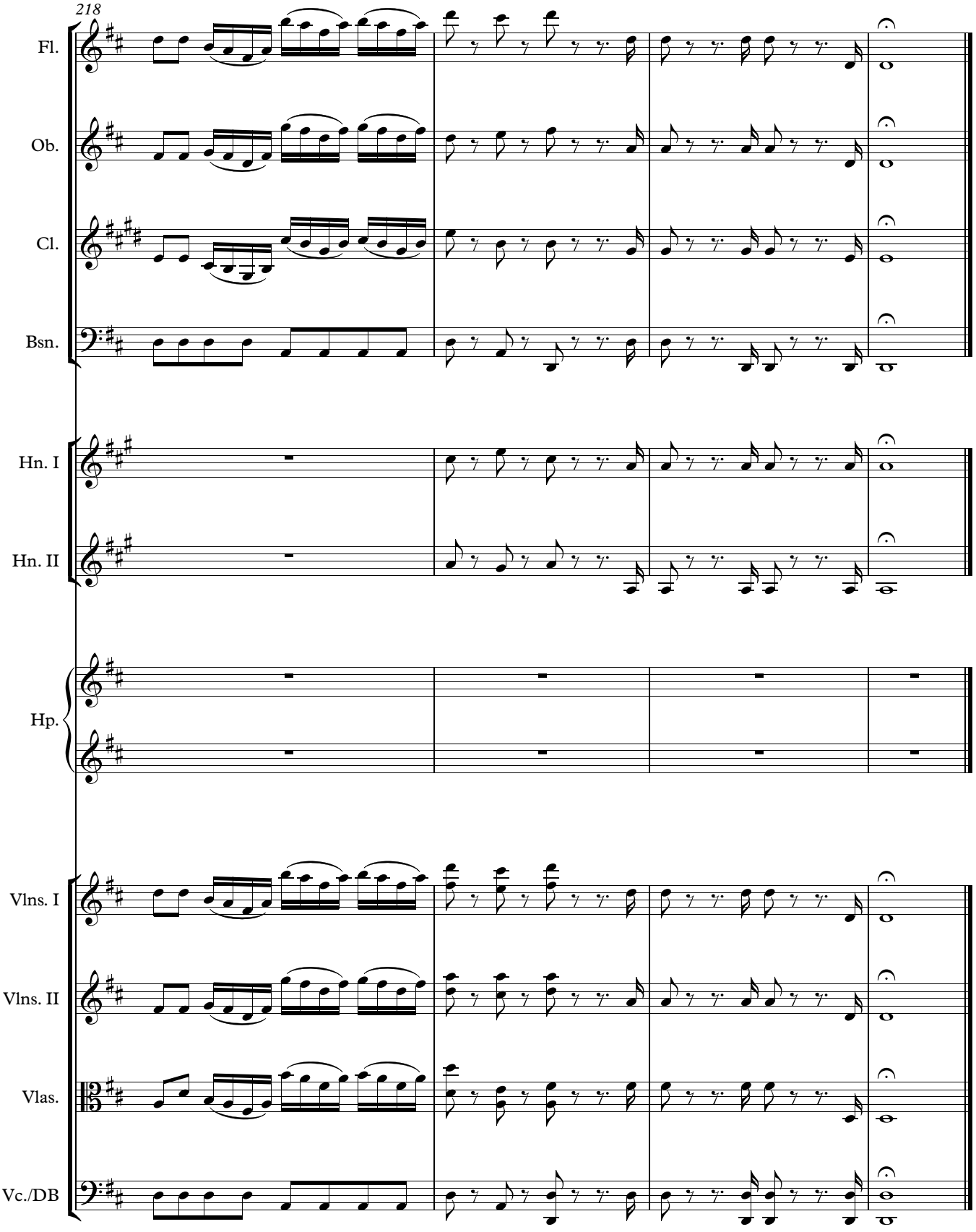
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB


218
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn. I
Hn. II
Hp.
Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vlas.
Vc./DB

Appendix. First verses of the five songs in this medley.

Save me from the grave and wise, for vainly would I tax my spirit,
Be the thing that I despise, and rival all their stupid merit.
On! My careless laughing heart, o dearest Fancy let me find thee,
Let me but from sorrow part, and leave this moping world behind me.
Speak ye wiser than the wise, breathe aloud your welcome measure,
Youthful Fancy well can prize the words that counsel love and pleasure.
William Smyth

They bid me slight my Dermot dear, for he's of low degree,
Tho' I my lady's maid am here, and of the quality.
But if my mother would not grieve, and if the truth were known,
Well pleased would I this castle leave, and live for him alone.
William Smyth

Judy, lovely, matchless creature, beauty shines thro' ev'ry feature,
Like you light, the pride of nature, thro' the morning dew.
Come, then, to your Patrick's dwelling, all around the buds are swelling,
Ev'ry little linnet's telling, 'tis the time to woo.
Alexander Boswell

[The Return from Ulster]
Once again, but how chang'd, since my wand'rings began,
I have heard the deep voice of the Lagan and Bann,
And the pines of Clanbrassil resound to the roar
That wearies the echoes of fair Tullamore.
Alas! my poor bosom, and why shouldst thou burn!
With the scenes of my youth can its raptures return?
Can I live the dear life of delusion again,
That flow'd when these echoes first mixed with my strain?
Sir Walter Scott

[The British Light Dragoons]
'Twas a Marechal of France, and he fain would honour gain,
And he long'd to take a passing glance at Portugall from Spain,
With his flying guns this gallant gay, and boasted corps d'armee,
O he fear'd not our dragoons with their long swords boldly riding,
Whack fal de ral la la la, la la la la, and
Whack fal de ral la la la la la la la.
Sir Walter Scott