La Serenissima

Concerto for violin and strings

Viola

Nigel Morgan

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La Serenissima

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About the Music

In November 2013 I made my first visit to the city of Venice, *La Serenissima*. I had long wanted to experience its magic and was not disappointed. Although music is no longer as important and prolific in the city's life as in past centuries, it is difficult to ignore the legacy of Monteverdi and Vivaldi: the latter's music being admired and arranged by Bach and Handel for the daring of its harmonic invention.

This string concerto is unashamedly based on a concerto from Vivaldi's *L'Estro Armonico*, the A minor concerto for violin Op.3 No.6. It follows the technique of another work modeled on music by a Venetian composer; my *Gloria* in 12 parts, based on the *Gloria a 12* by Giovanni Gabrieli. In both pieces the music follows the play of sound and silence, and in some instances the original rhythm as well. Such a practice has its antecedents, notably in Mozart's re-workings of symphonies by C.P.E. Bach.

In *La Serenissima* Vivaldi's ordering and dimensions of *solo* and *tutti* are followed with some precision and so too the unusual scoring of the slow movement. Here, Vivaldi's original does without a *basso* and adds an additional violin part. This orchestration in *La Serenissima* supports a highly decorated solo part created from an analysis of the intervals present between each chord. Enterprising performers may repeat this movement and supply an improvisation above the sustained string texture.

It is in its harmonic language that *La Serenissima* engages with the present day. This is one of a number of pieces beginning with my *String Trio* of 2012 that explore novel approaches to harmony as a sequence of musical objects. Chords are created from streams of pitch material generated by white-noise algorithms. In *La Serenissima* sixteen such chord objects are 'in play', arranged and ordered in different ways throughout each movement of the piece. The challenge was to fashion from such objects solo violin figures that could resonate with Vivaldi's. Rhythmically too the music begins in a 21st century world, but as the piece progresses, the rhythms of Vivaldi's Op.3 concerto gradually play an active part in the music, until by the last 35 or so bars Vivaldi's original rhythmic scheme is present in all parts.

La Serenissima claims to be the first complete composition wholly written using the Opusmodus music system and language, itself developed in the city of Venice by the Polish composer Janusz Podrazik.

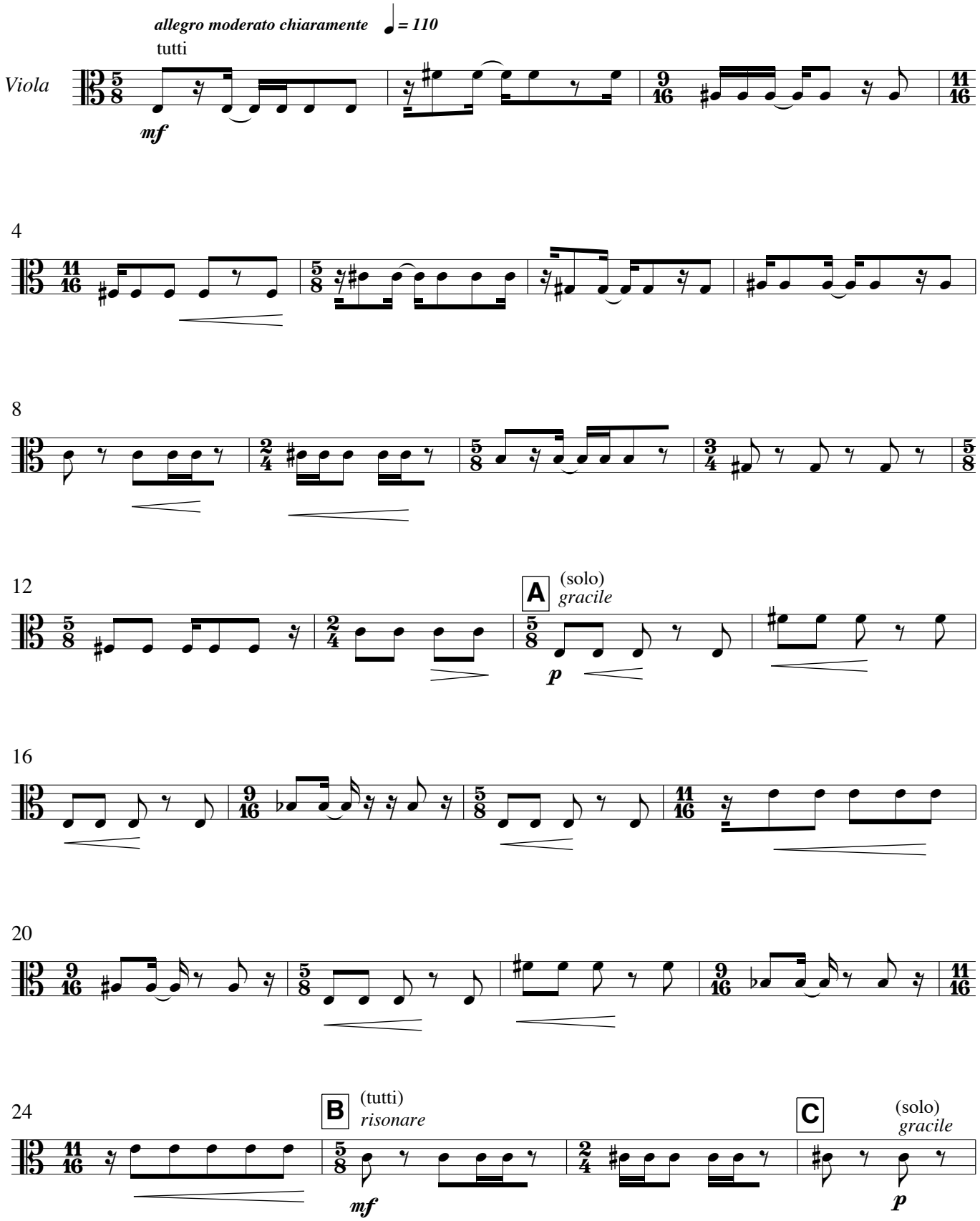
Performance Notes

As in the music of Vivaldi's time, the markings for dynamics and tempo are kept to a minimum. Predominantly, dynamics are terraced, but there are occasional *crescendi* and *diminuendi* marked. When these occur the target dynamic is often not indicated, but left to the wisdom of the performers.

The use of the *glissando* / *portamento* markings in the first and third movements are again a matter for the performers' judgment. Experiment with the effect and find the best solution.

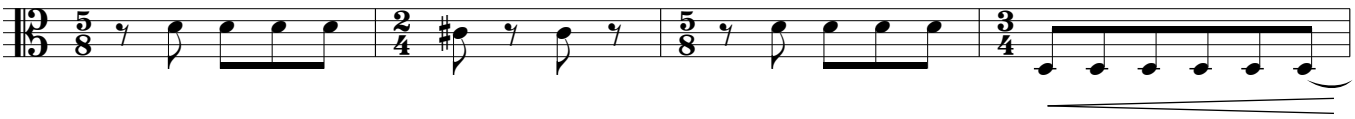
As with Baroque performance practice in the 18th century, matters of scoring may be changed, particularly in the *basso*. Although there is no continuo part as such, the keyboard reduction of the string *ripieno* should suffice. Though in no means obligatory, the composer has a preference for the Fender Rhodes type of electric piano rather than a harpsichord.

La Serenissima
I



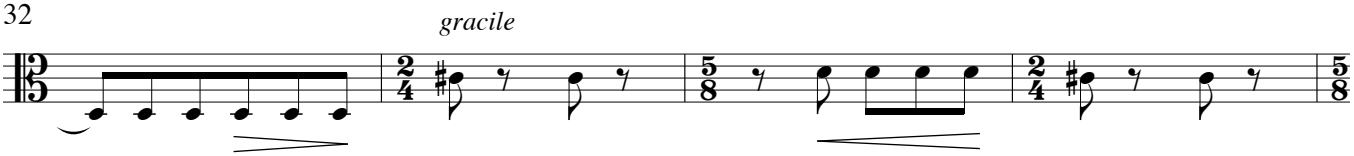
28

deliberato



32

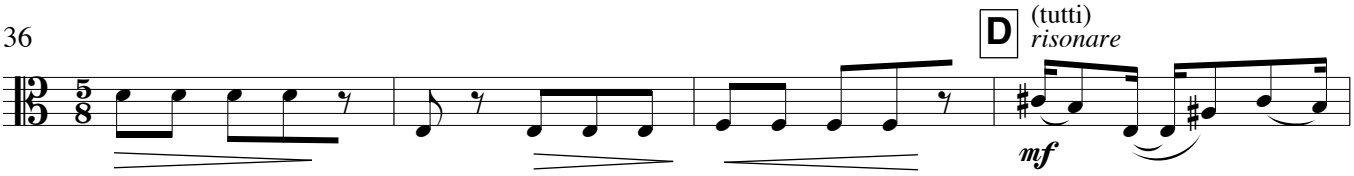
gracile



36

D (tutti)
risonare

mf



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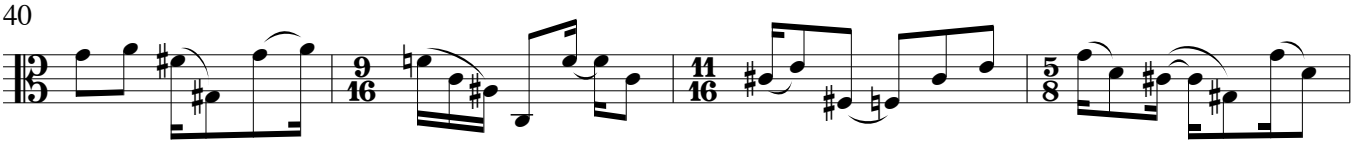

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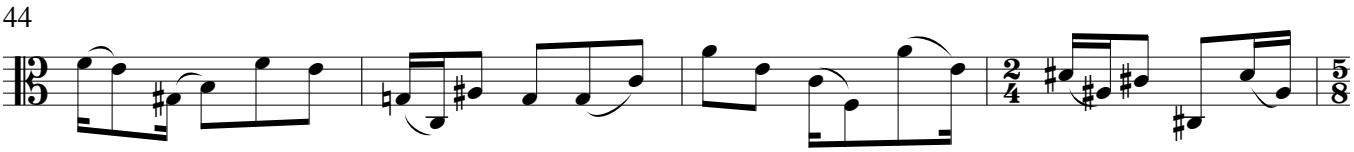


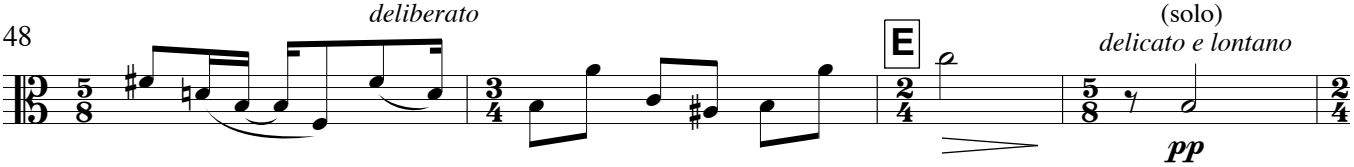
48

deliberato

E

(solo)
delicato e lontano

pp



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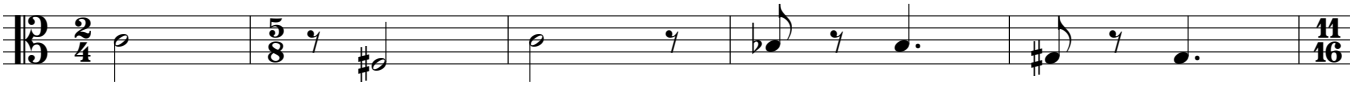

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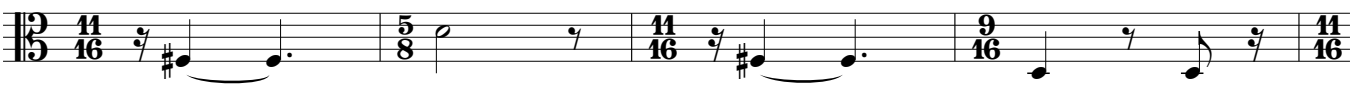
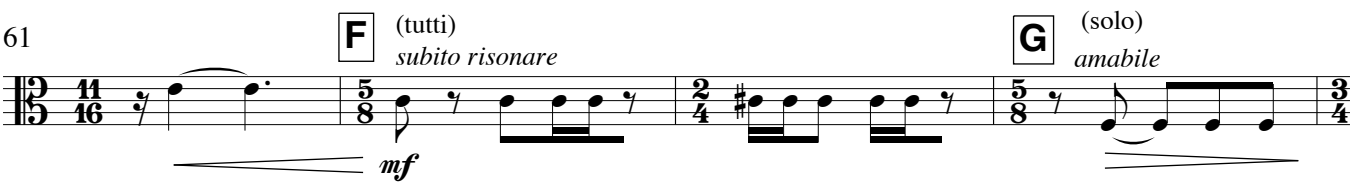


61

F (tutti)
subito risonare

mf

G (solo)
amabile



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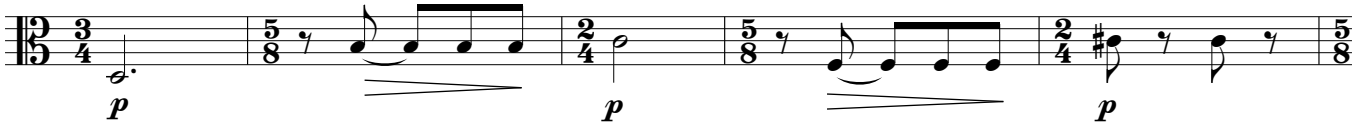

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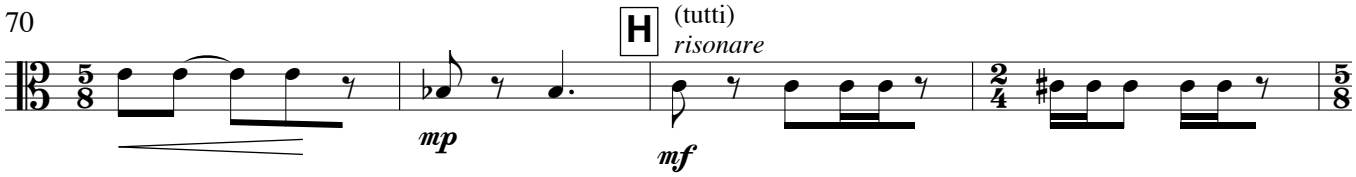

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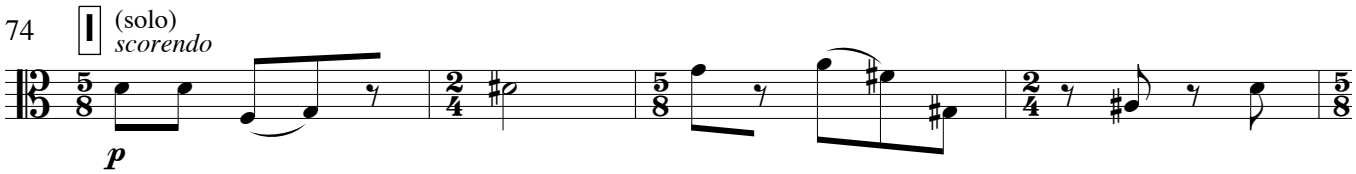

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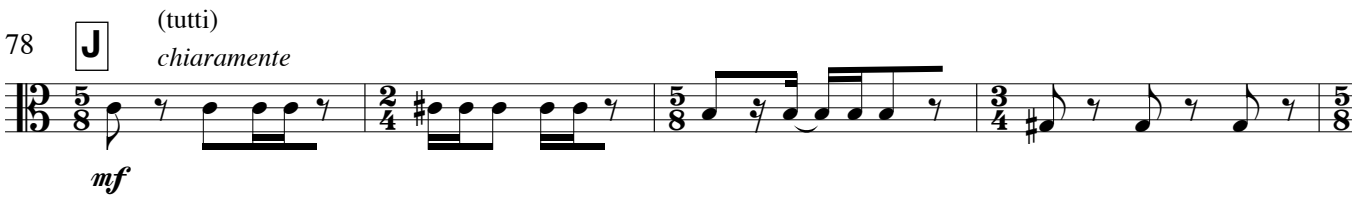

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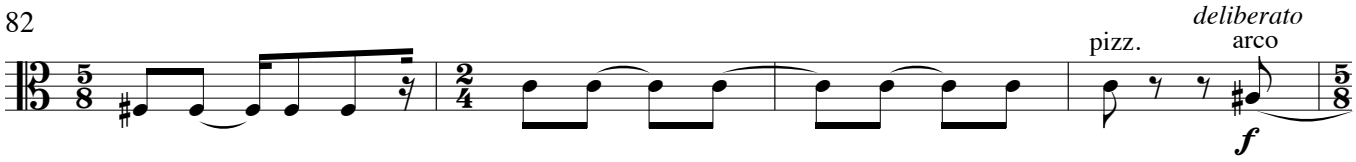

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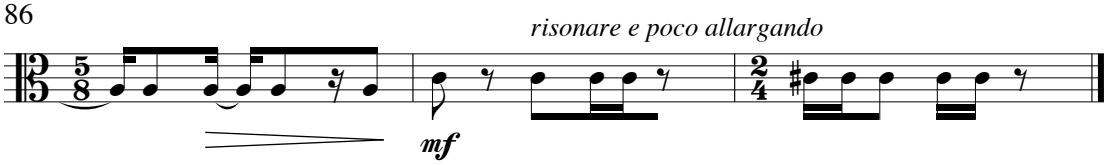
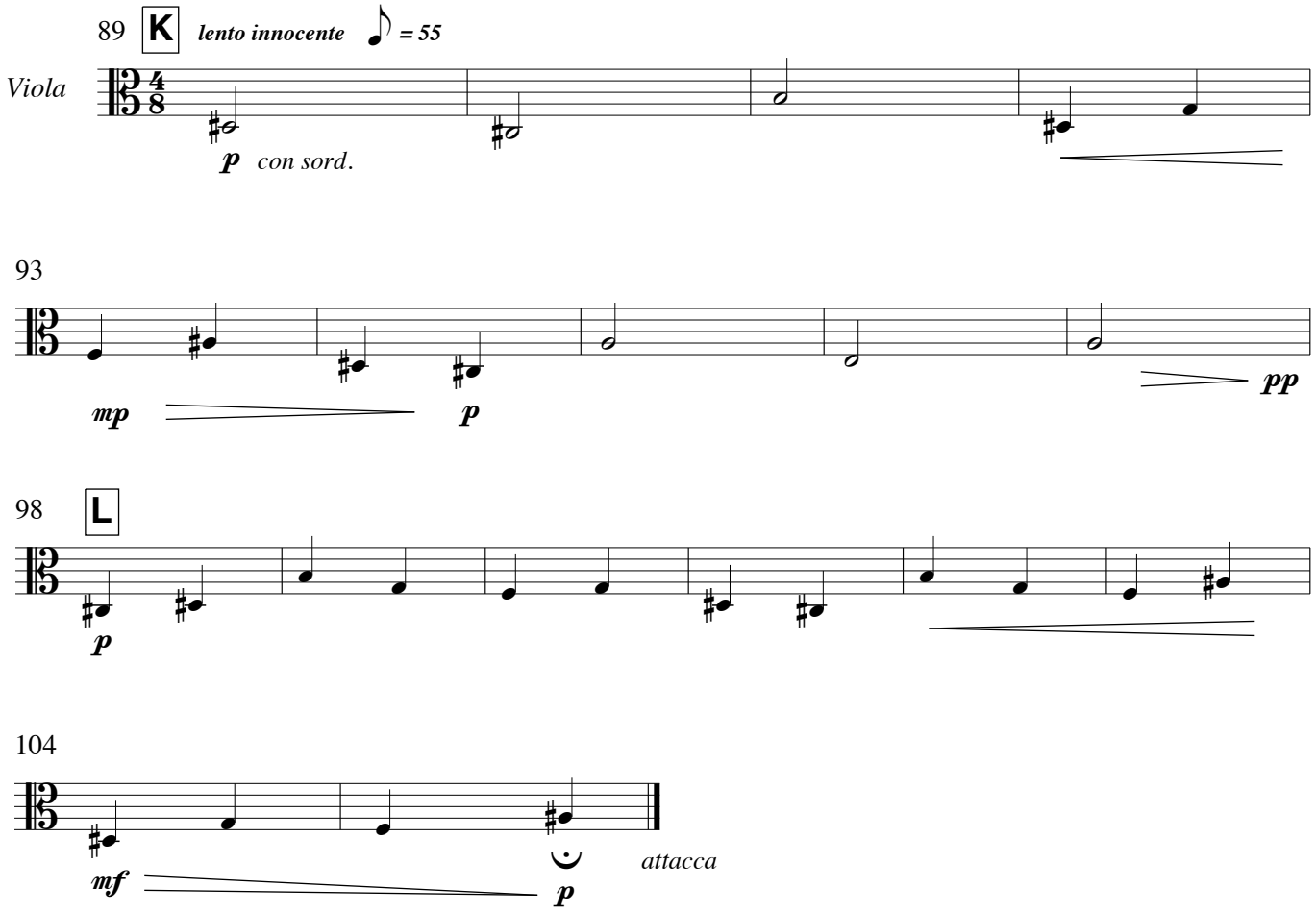
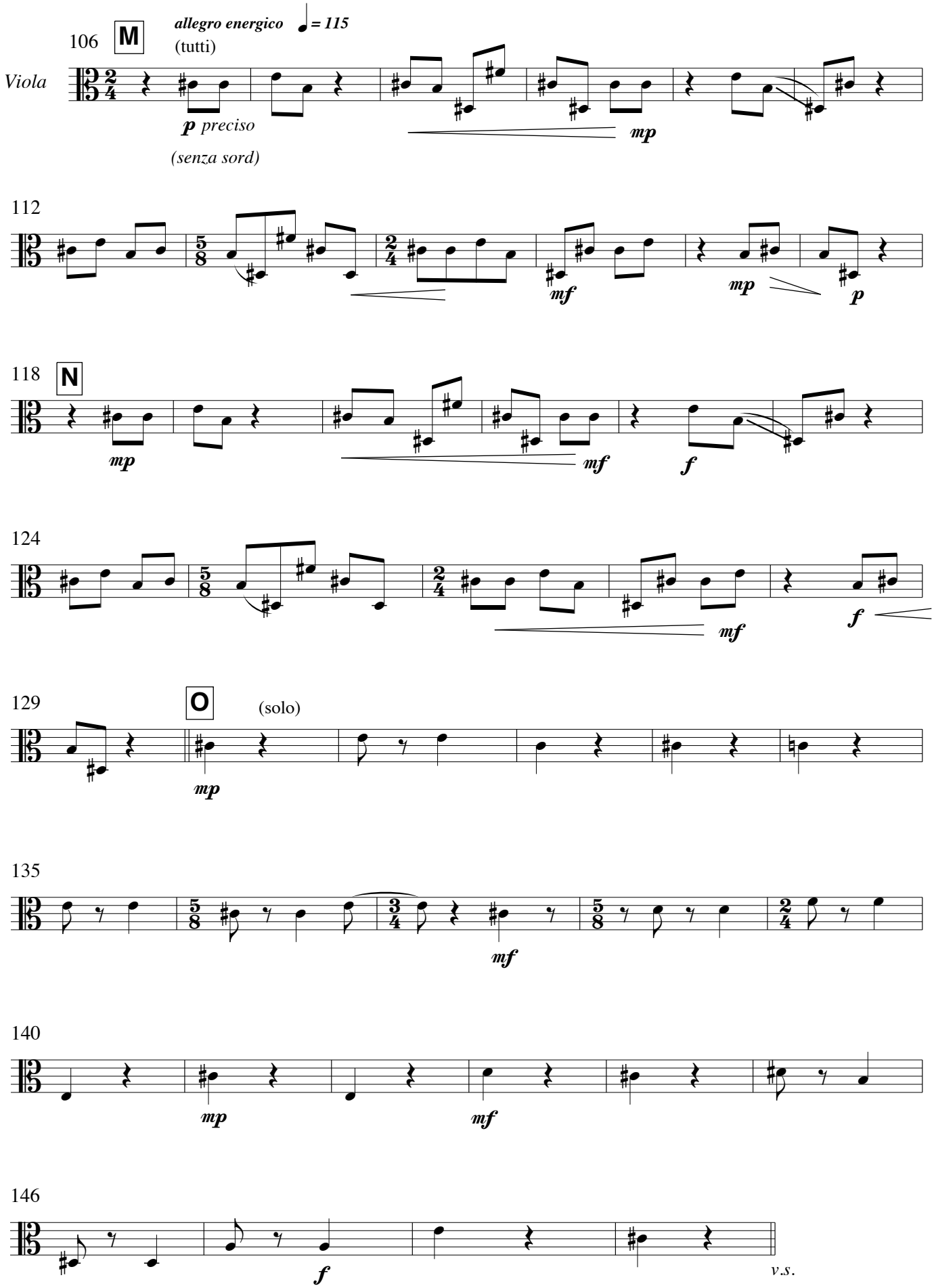
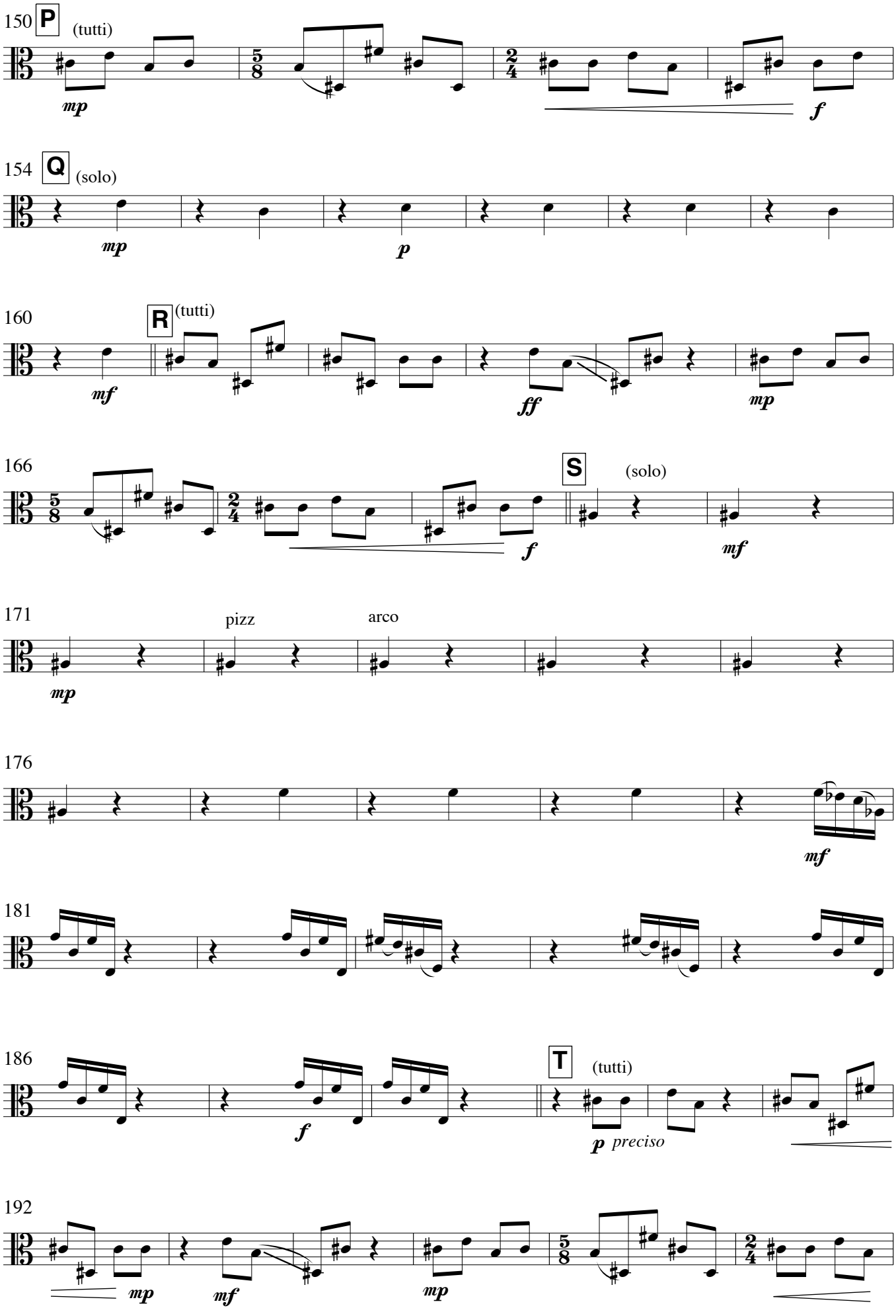


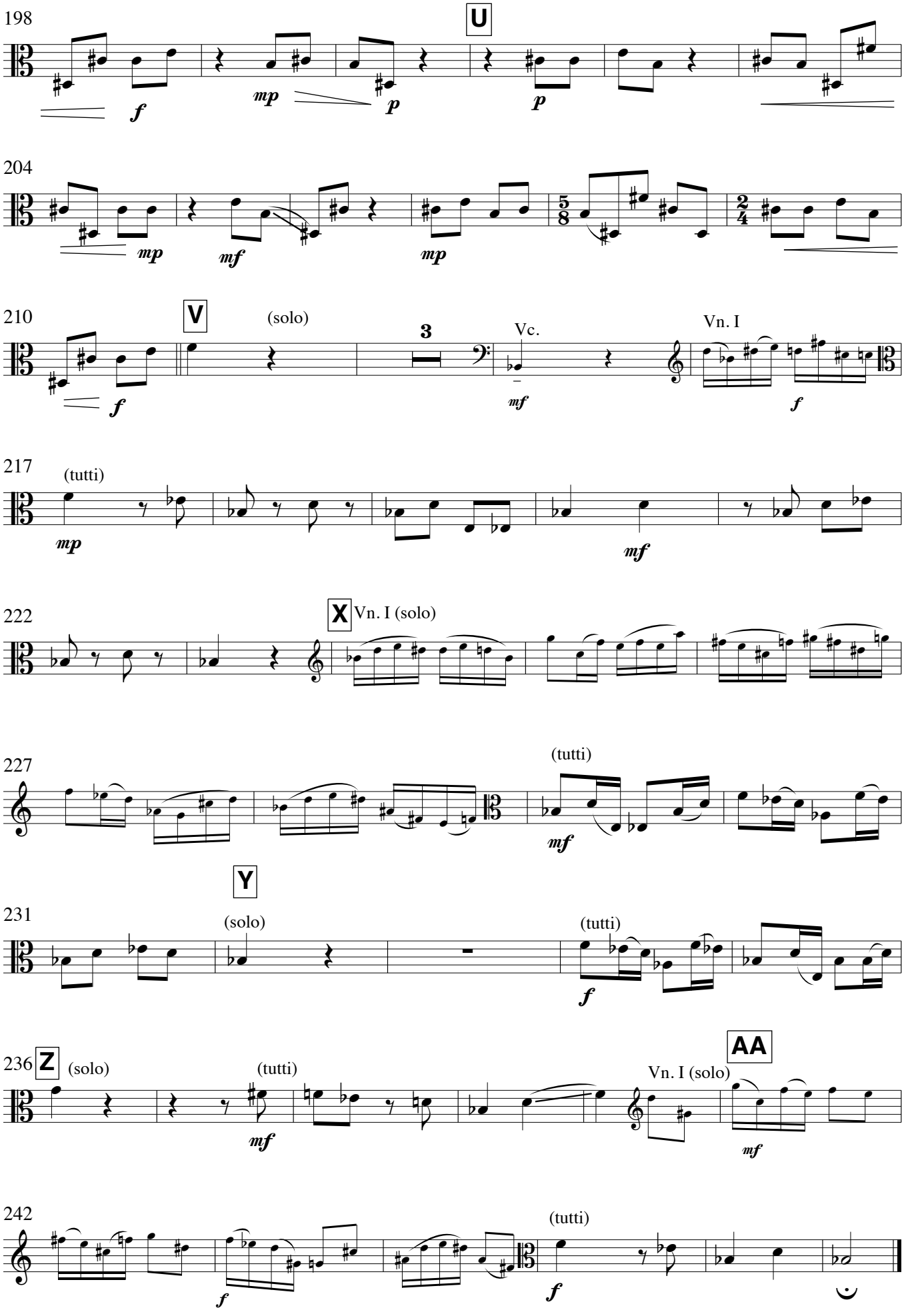
II


89
K
lento innocente
= 55
Viola
p
con sord.
93
mp
p
pp
98
L
p
104
mf
p
attacca

III


106
M
allegro energico
♩ = 115
(tutti)
Viola
p preciso
(senza sord)
mp
112
mf
mp
p
118
N
mp
mf
f
124
mf
f
129
O
(solo)
mp
135
mf
140
mp
mf
146
f
v.s.


150 P (tutti)
mp
f
154 Q (solo)
mp
p
160 R (tutti)
mf
ff
mp
166 S (solo)
f
mf
171
pizz
arco
mp
176
mf
181
186 T (tutti)
f
p preciso
192
mp
mf
mp


198
U
f
mp
p
p
204
mp
mf
mp
210
V
(solo)
3
Vc.
Vn. I
f
mf
f
217
(tutti)
mp
mf
222
X
Vn. I (solo)
227
(tutti)
mf
Y
231
(solo)
(tutti)
f
236
Z
(solo)
(tutti)
mf
AA
Vn. I (solo)
mf
242
(tutti)
f
f