Self Portrait (2002)

In Seven Parts

Nigel Morgan

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Self Portrait (2002)

In Seven Parts

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This score for seven parts is a staging post between the *Quatuor de Timbre* (2001) and the *Six Concertos (*2003-5). In this music the continuo trio developed for BBC commissions *Conversations in Colour* and *Schizophonia* joins the quartet of woodwind, brass, strings and percussion of *Quatuor* to make a seven-layer ensemble. This seven-layer approach to composing and the organization of timbre has become the compositional heart of each of the *Six Concertos*. Many of the technical features that have made the realization of the Concerto series possible had their inception in this work.

The music was composed as 'blocks' or 'panels'. The latter was used by Franco Donatoni, whose scores sometimes demonstrate a very particular approach to the use of 'open form'[1]. In *Self-Portrait*, as with a number of other compositions devised in collaboration with the Lisp-based computer environment *Symbolic Composer*, the composition is imagined in sections that are not necessarily in linear sequence but exist as autonomous 'blocks' having the potential for being placed in different orders, or indeed repeated, in part or complete. The music, however, should play continuously. Whereas Donatoni would have made a final decision about the sequence of his 'panels' before writing his full-score, *Self Portrait* makes use of the emerging technology of Active Notation to enable the real-time organisation of blocks and the application of repeats and rescored sections – by the performers themselves. This is achieved by presenting a performing score in a digital format on computer screens linked together on a network.

This means that an enterprising ensemble can re-order the music to explore the material from different perspectives. And this is not all. The music has been written to allow for realisations by ensembles of differing sizes and instrumentations, as long as an ensemble represents a mix of diverse timbres: this is not a work to be played by seven solo strings! Although the version presented here is the composer's 'best fit' ensemble, and parts are available for it, musicians can request a pair of part-books in C: one for the quartet, the other for the continuo trio, from which to build their own versions. Midifiles are also available to enable performers to create their own parts within the standard score writing applications (*Finale*, *Sibelius,* etc).

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[1] For a concise introduction to the theory of 'open form' Dr John Dack's The Open Form – Literature and Music is available as a download from the ScambiProject website. http://www.scambi.mdx.ac.uk/

A Guide to Performance

1. *Self Portrait* is presented in the composer's 'best-fit' ensemble. However, this should not deter performers from working with other instrumental combinations. Octave transpositions in both directions – common in the invertible counterpoint found in renaissance music - will often work very well, and are encouraged, not only to make a particular part come within the range of an instrument, but to highlight the musical material itself.

2. This kind of flexibility does bring with it a few problems in the notation of articulation specific to an instrument. For example, in this version the bass trombone represents the brass timbre and its material is often shadowing the soprano sax. The articulations marked for both instruments are identical. In practice here the players of these two instruments will have to decide how their articulation can best be matched . . . or not. Clearly a trumpet and bassoon would be able to play this material 'as is'.

3. The continuo parts should have the same freedom found in the continuo group used in the *Six Concertos*. The mallet player may extend the part to include un-tuned percussion and / or digital samples played from a MIDI KAT. The mallet part may also sound particularly well on electric guitar with small adjustments to chord voicings. The keyboard player may also use a range of instruments and sounds. The use of a volume pedal to vary the attack and envelope on sustained chords is recommended.

4. The music may also be 'scaled down': to just one instrument from the quartet of timbres (playing a synthesis of the 4 parts) and the complete continuo trio.

5. When players have chordal material that repeats over a period of more than a bar, this should be treated like an echo and the repeated chord should take on an independent tempo as it dies away. Instances of this 'effect' can be found in bars 6–8, 86-92, and 230-234.

6. The music is presented in 4 panels or 'blocks'. These are marked on the score as Block 0, (*Luminare*), Block 1 (*Dolce e Preciso*) , Block 2 (*Articulare con Anima*), Block 3 (*Enfatico*). They may be arranged in any order and repeated. Material from within each block may also be repeated (and its orchestration, content varied and even free solos interpolated) at any point in the score.

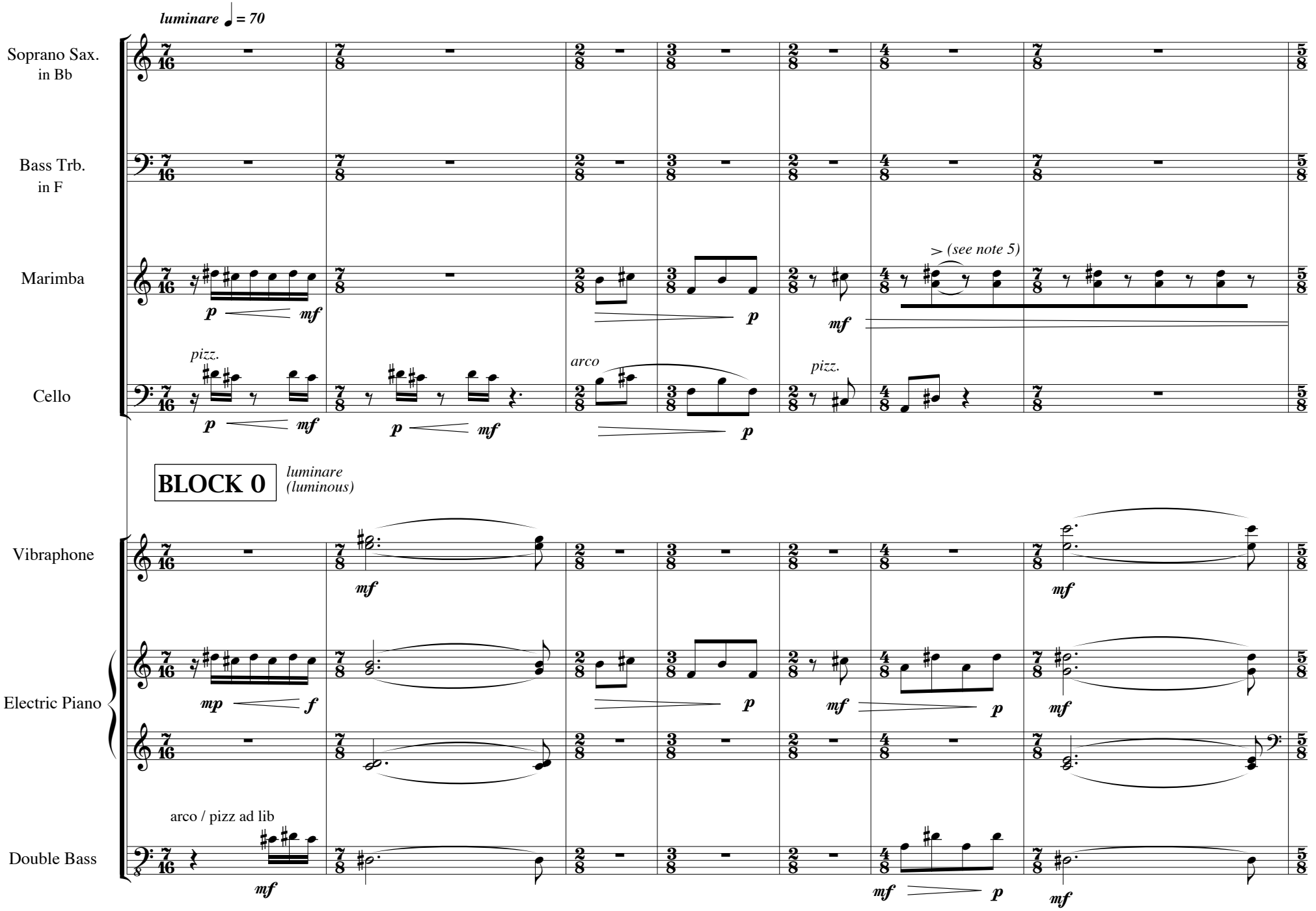
7. Performers can begin experimentation with different orderings of the material interactively on the composer's website www.nigel-morgan.co.uk where a web presentation designed by Phil Legard enables a simulation of the work to be auditioned in a sequence of 'blocks' chosen by the listener.

8. The web presentation indicated above also provides full information in the form of a user manual for those wishing to work with Active Notation on a network of computer visual displays acting as virtual music stands. This software is available to interested parties upon request. There is also documentation on the rehearsal preparation for the premiere of the networked version of *Self Portrait* given by students from Manchester Metropolitan University in January 2006.

9. All musical detail of tempo, expression, dynamics and articulations should be considered as a guide or starting point, no more.

10. The score is written in C with the bass part notated an octave higher than it sounds.

As in the *Six Concertos* the intention is that this music should not be conducted but led by one of the ensemble.



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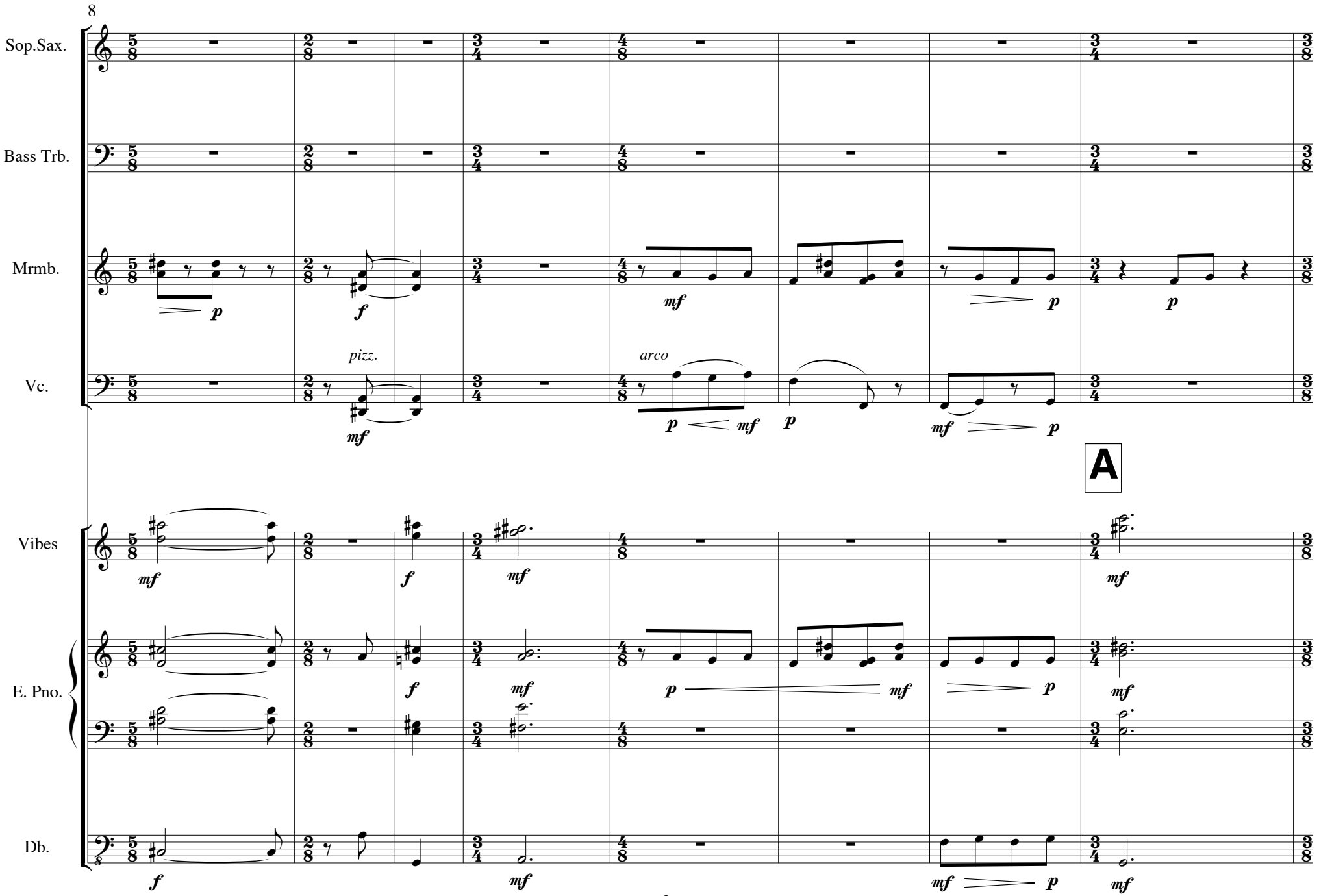
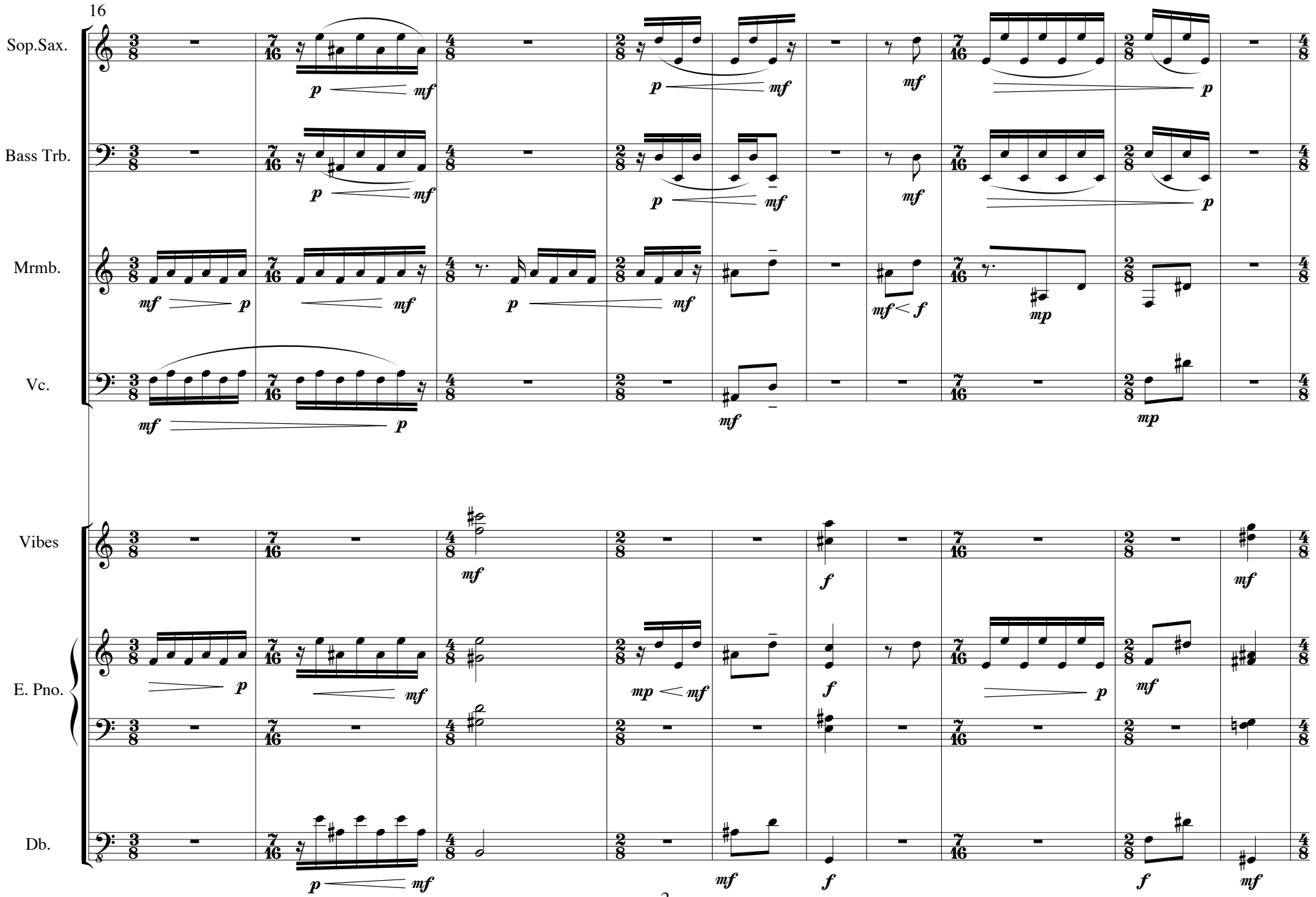

8
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
pizz.
arco
A
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.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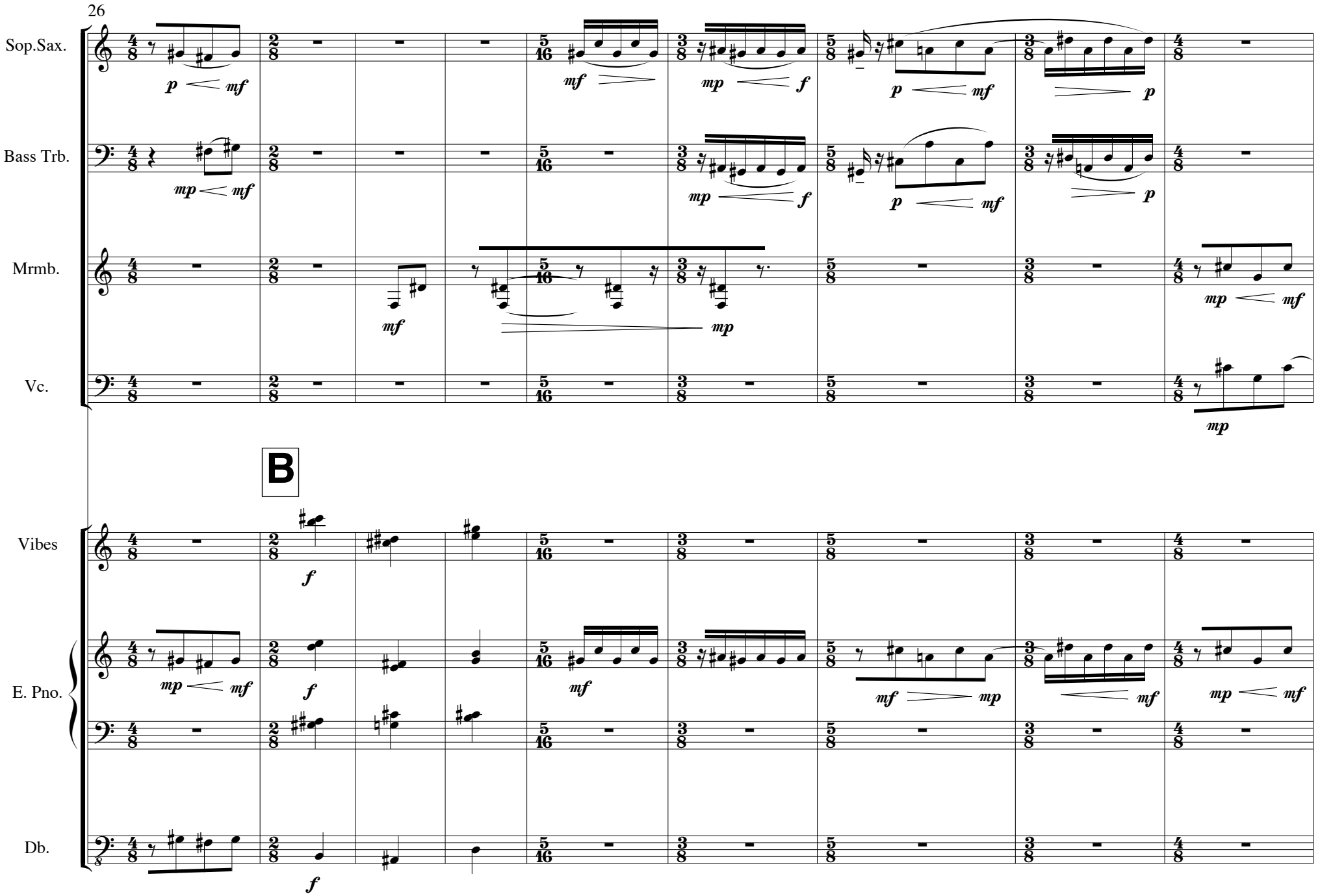
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.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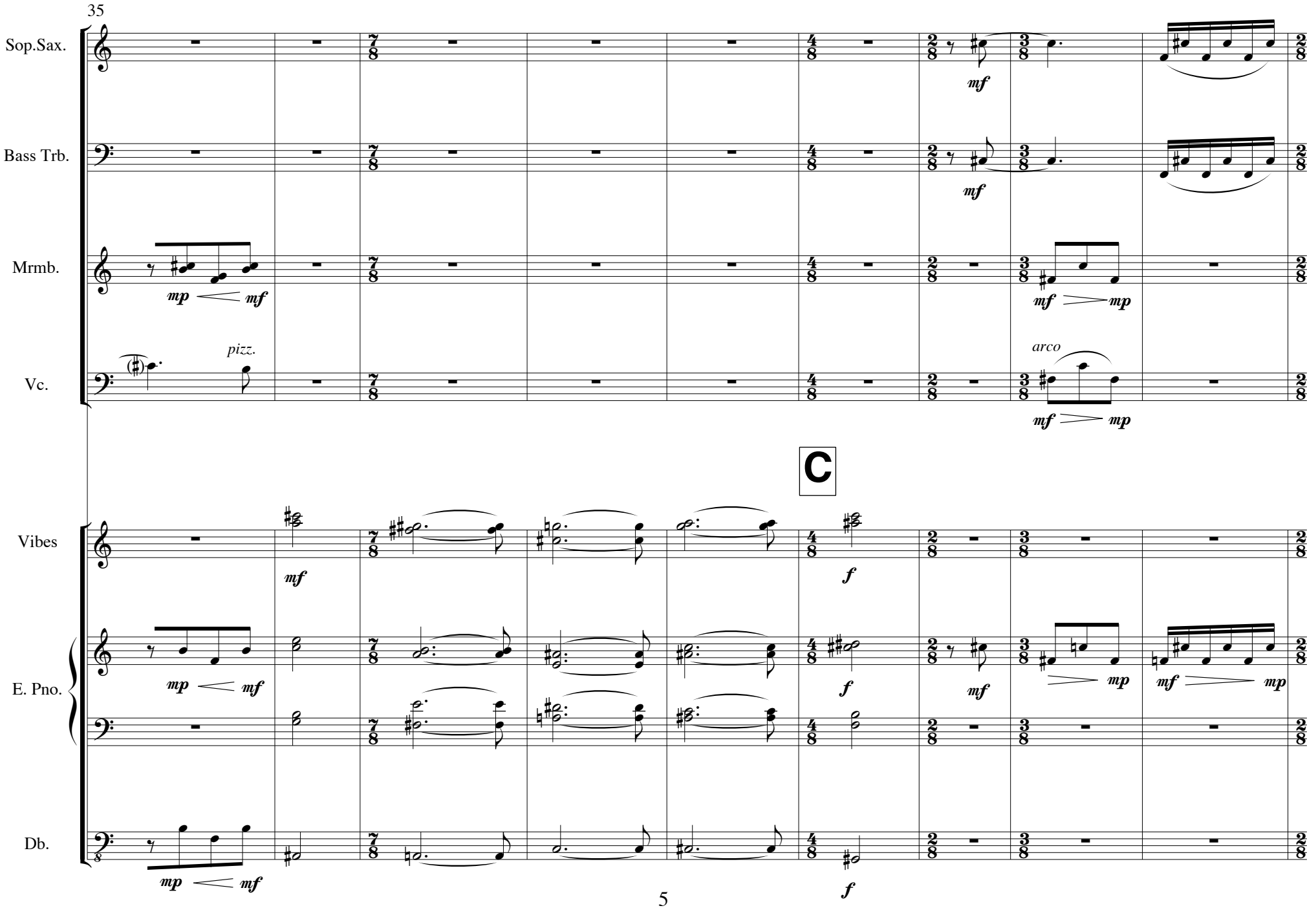
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
B
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.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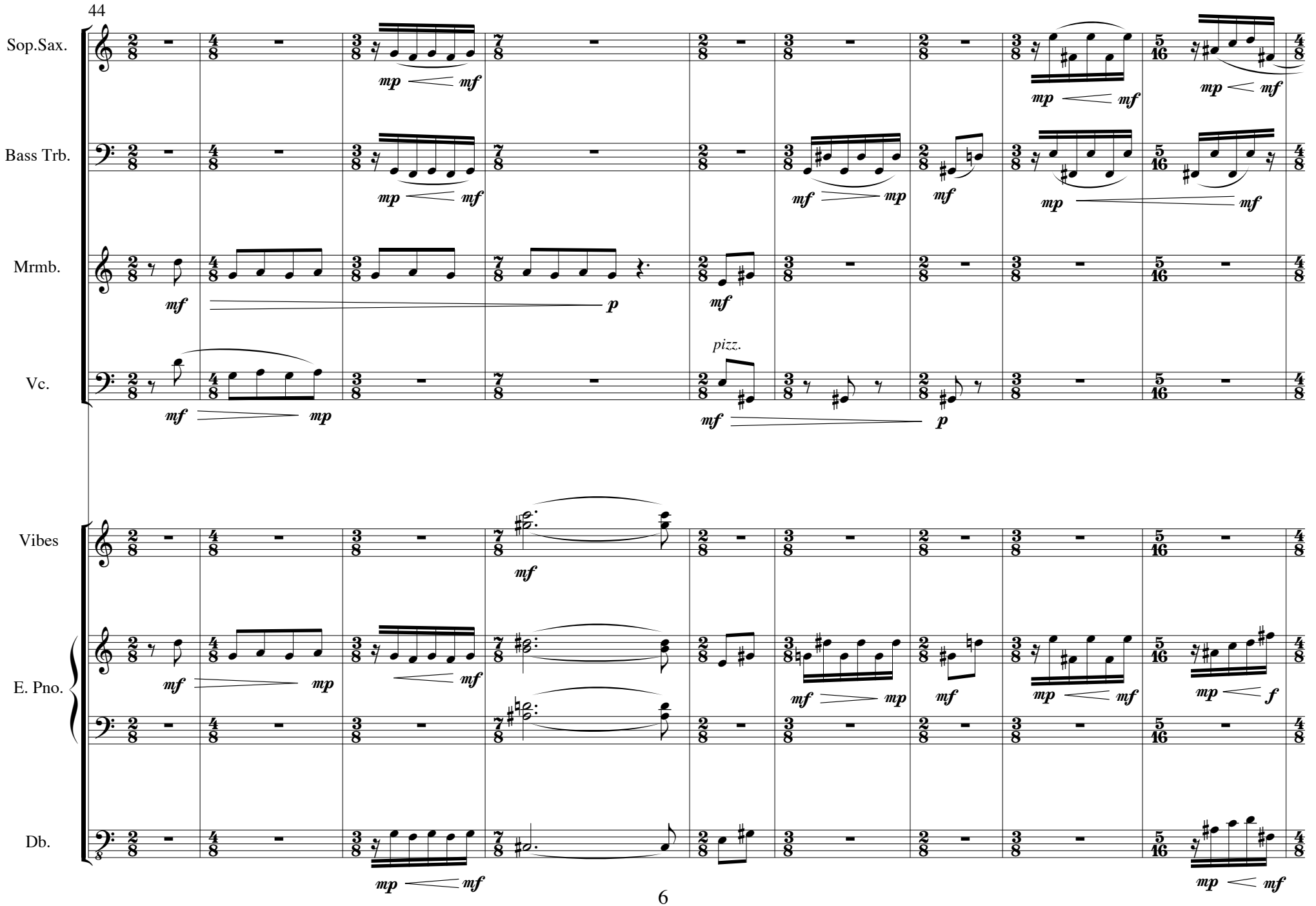
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
pizz.
arco
C
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.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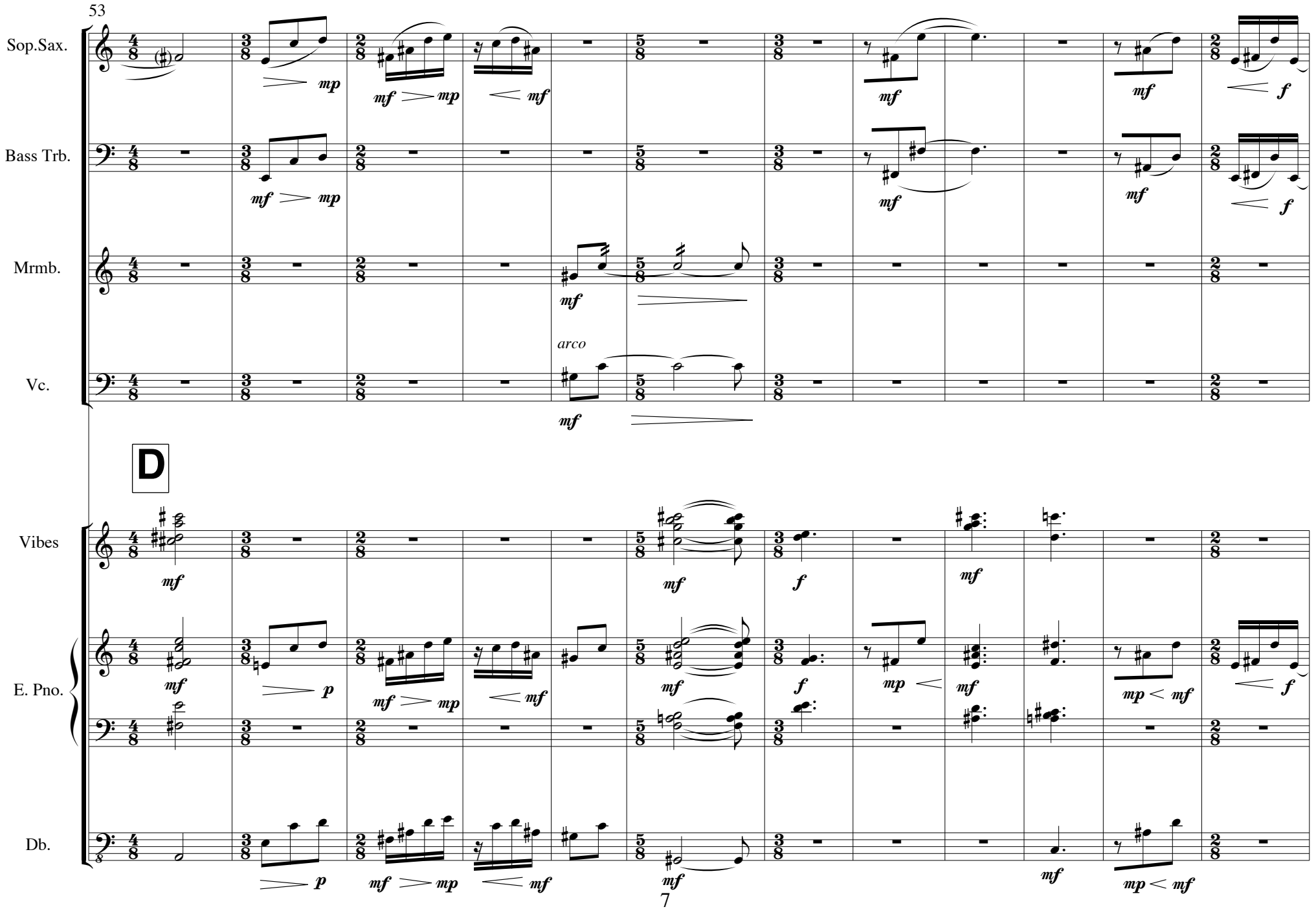
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
pizz.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.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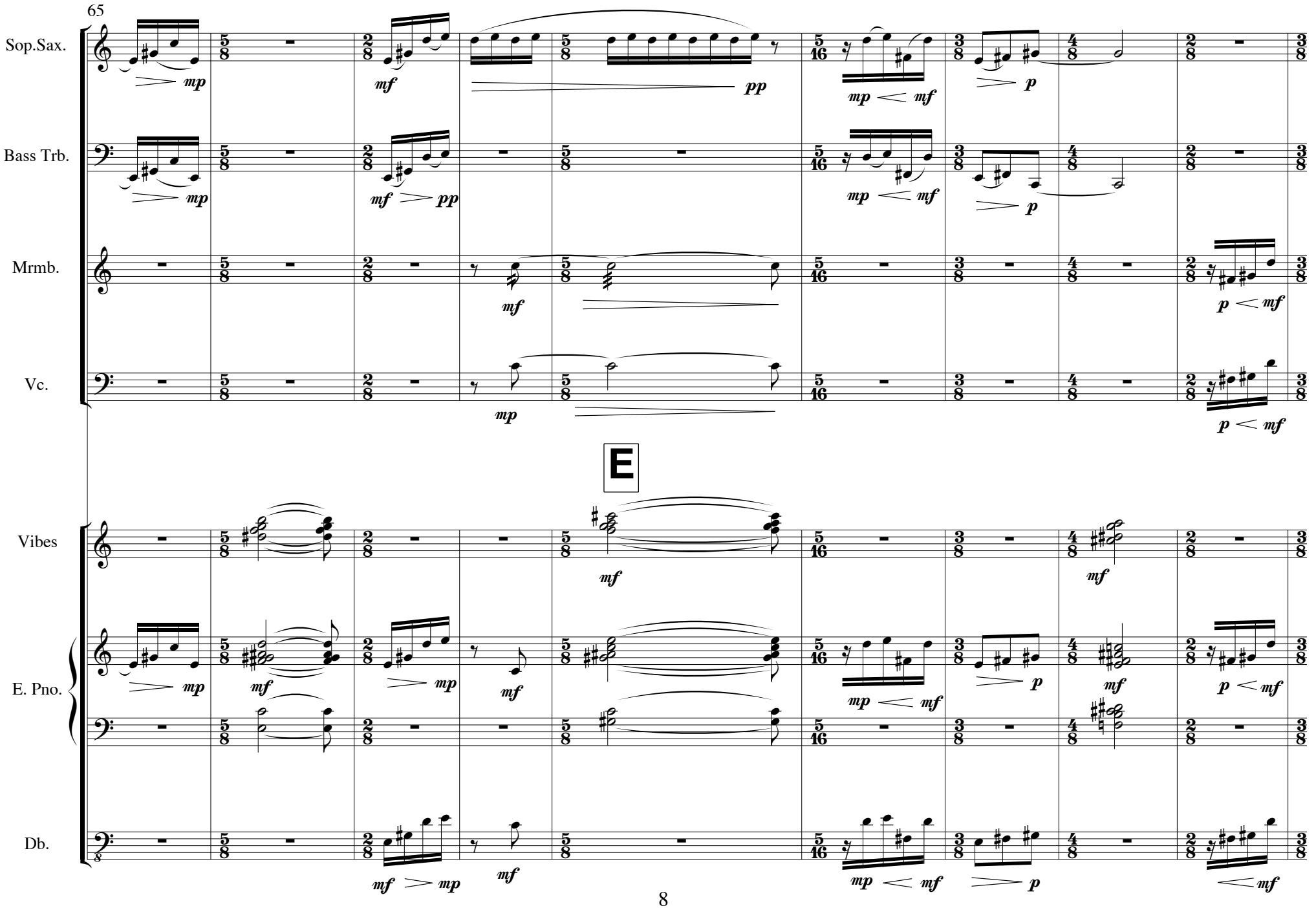
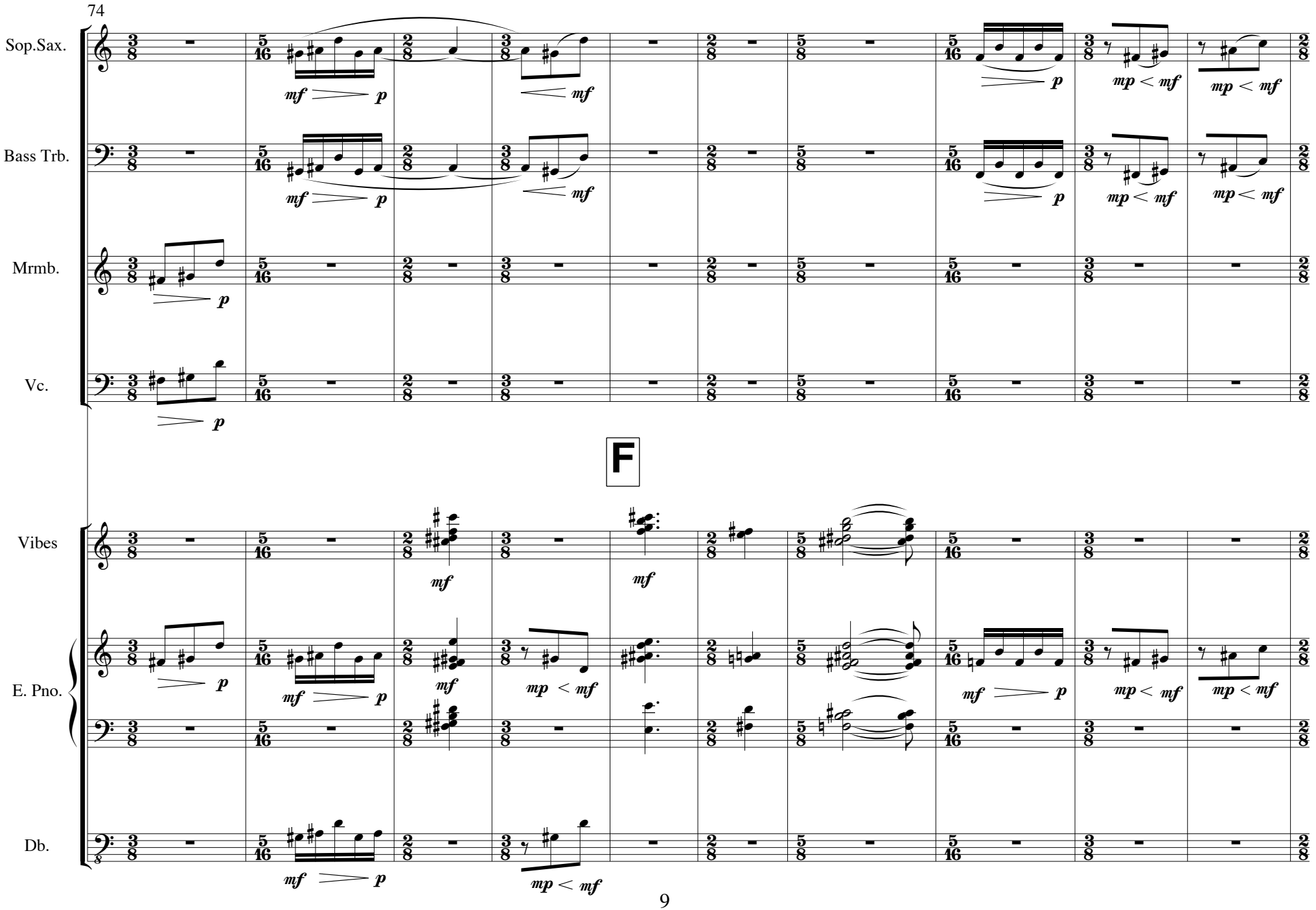
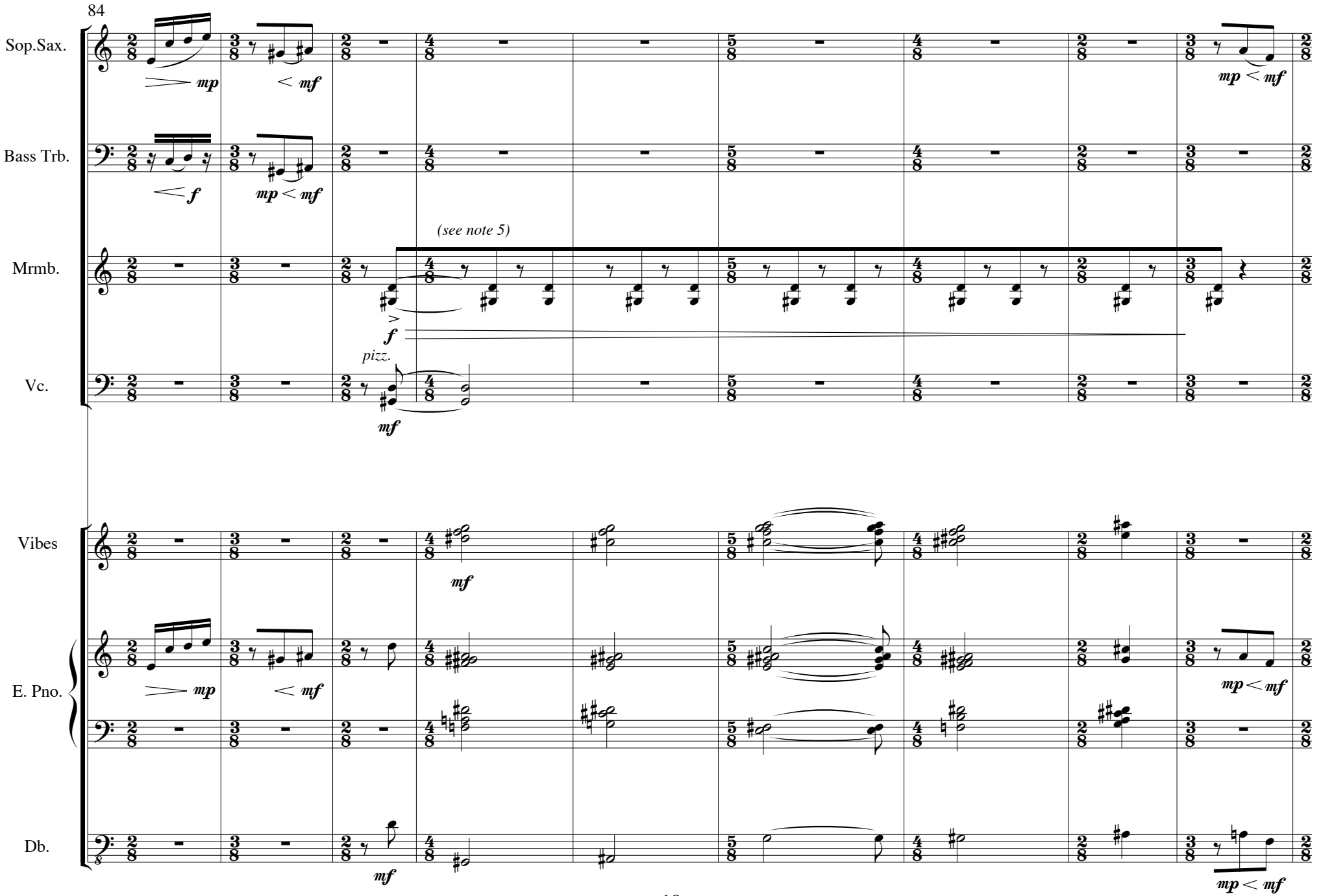
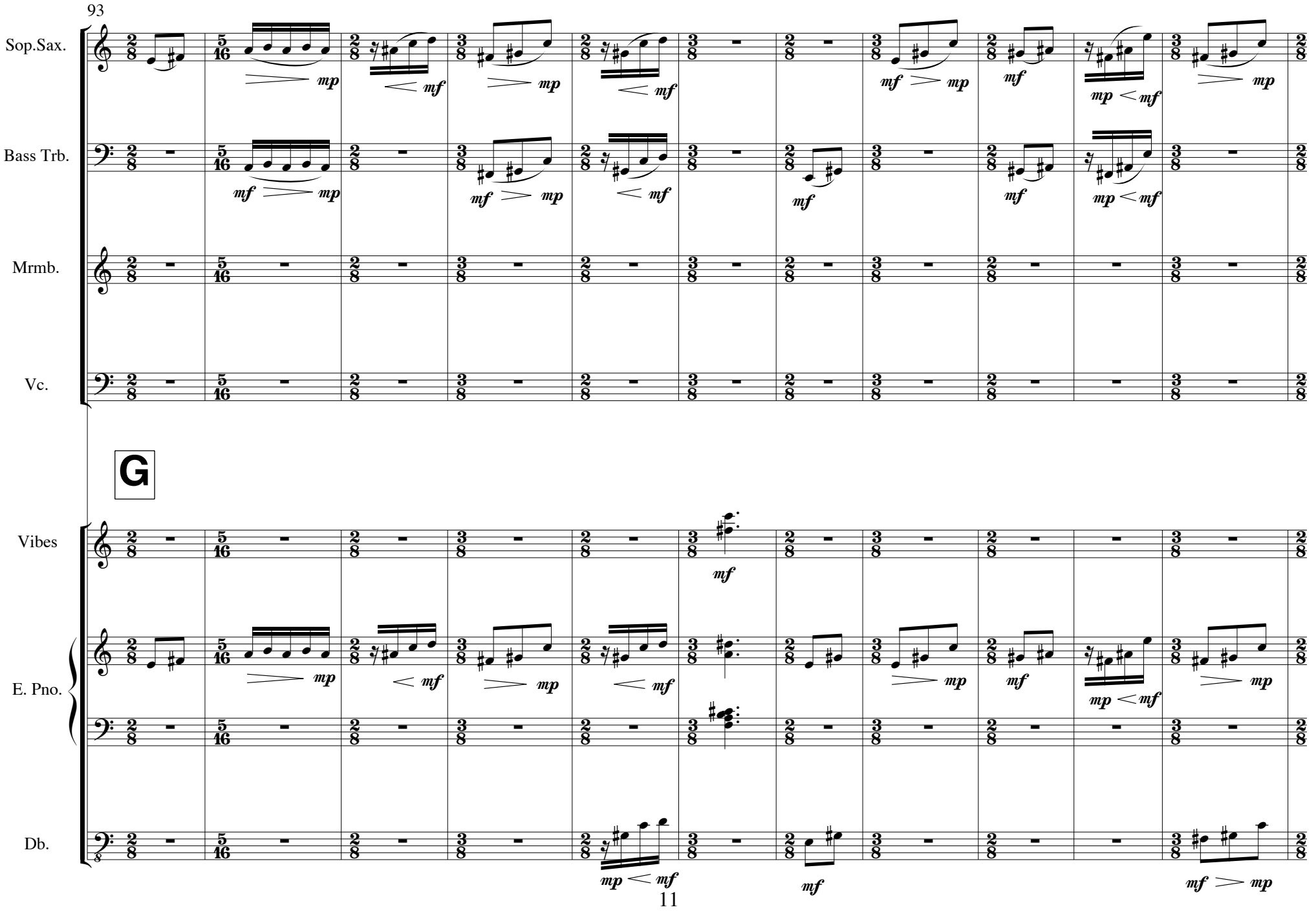
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
arco
D
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


65
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
E
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
F
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


84
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
(see note 5)
pizz.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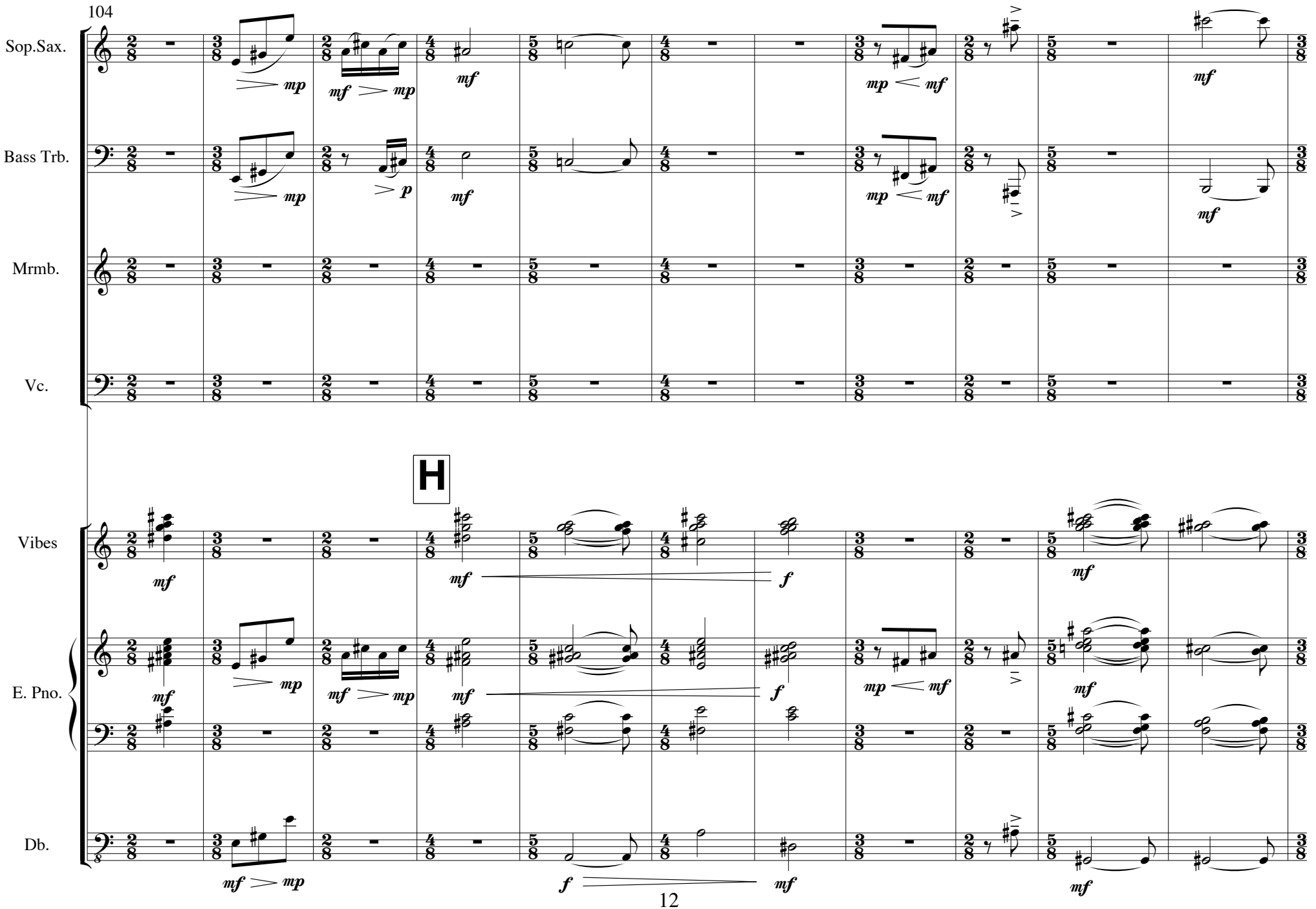
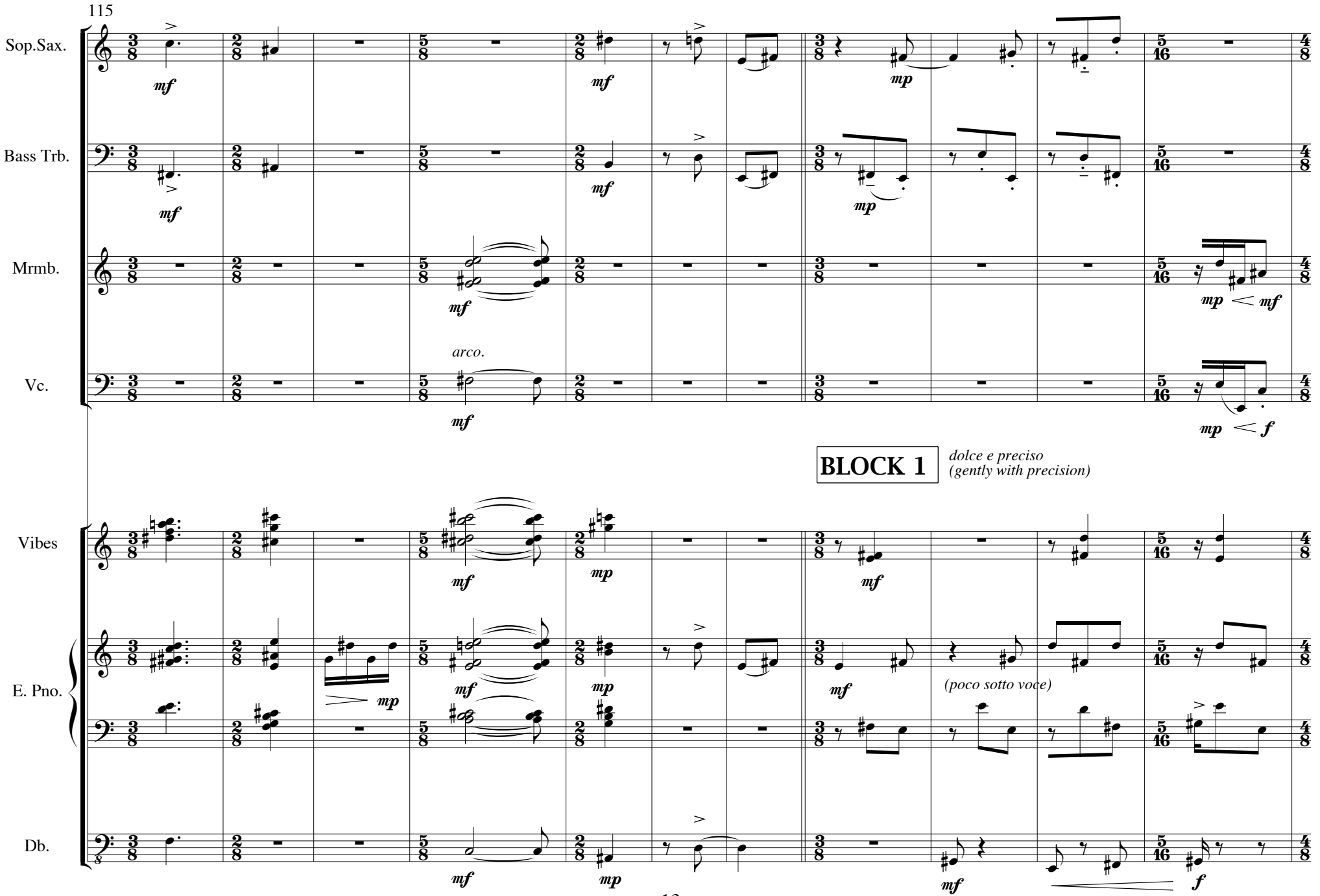
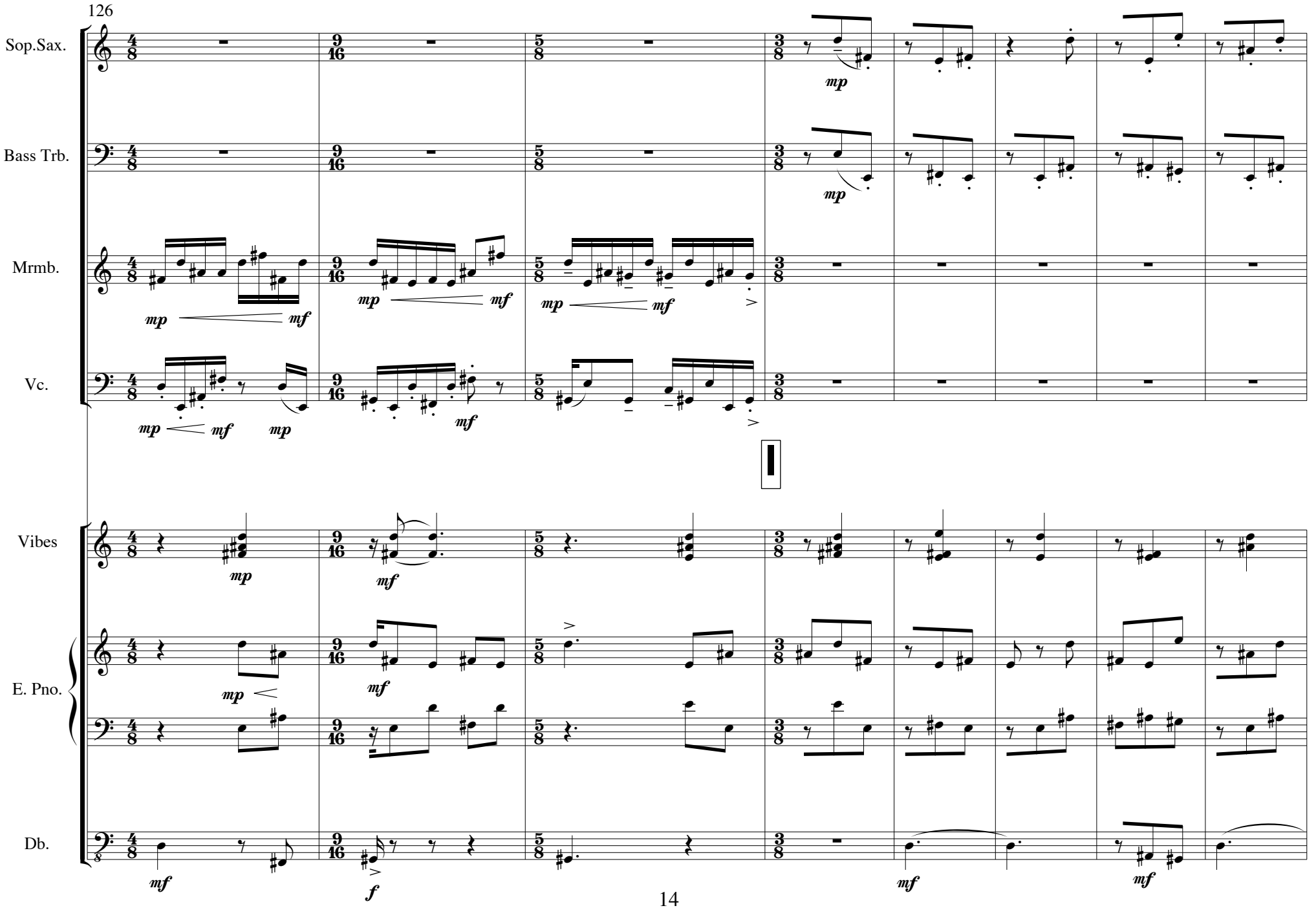
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
G
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


104
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
H
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


115
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
arco.
BLOCK 1
dolce e preciso
(gently with precision)
Vibes
E. Pno.
(poco sotto voce)
Db.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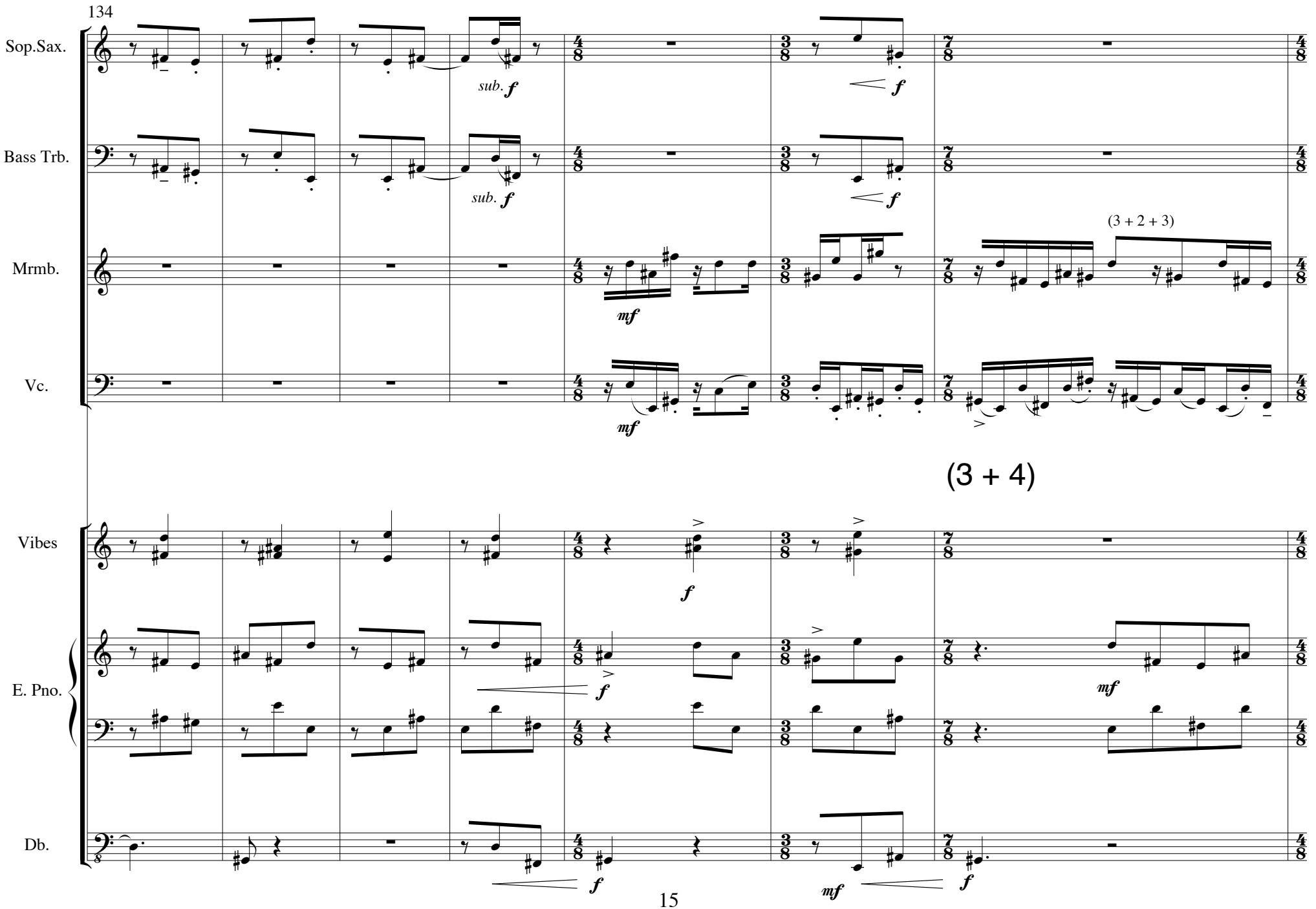
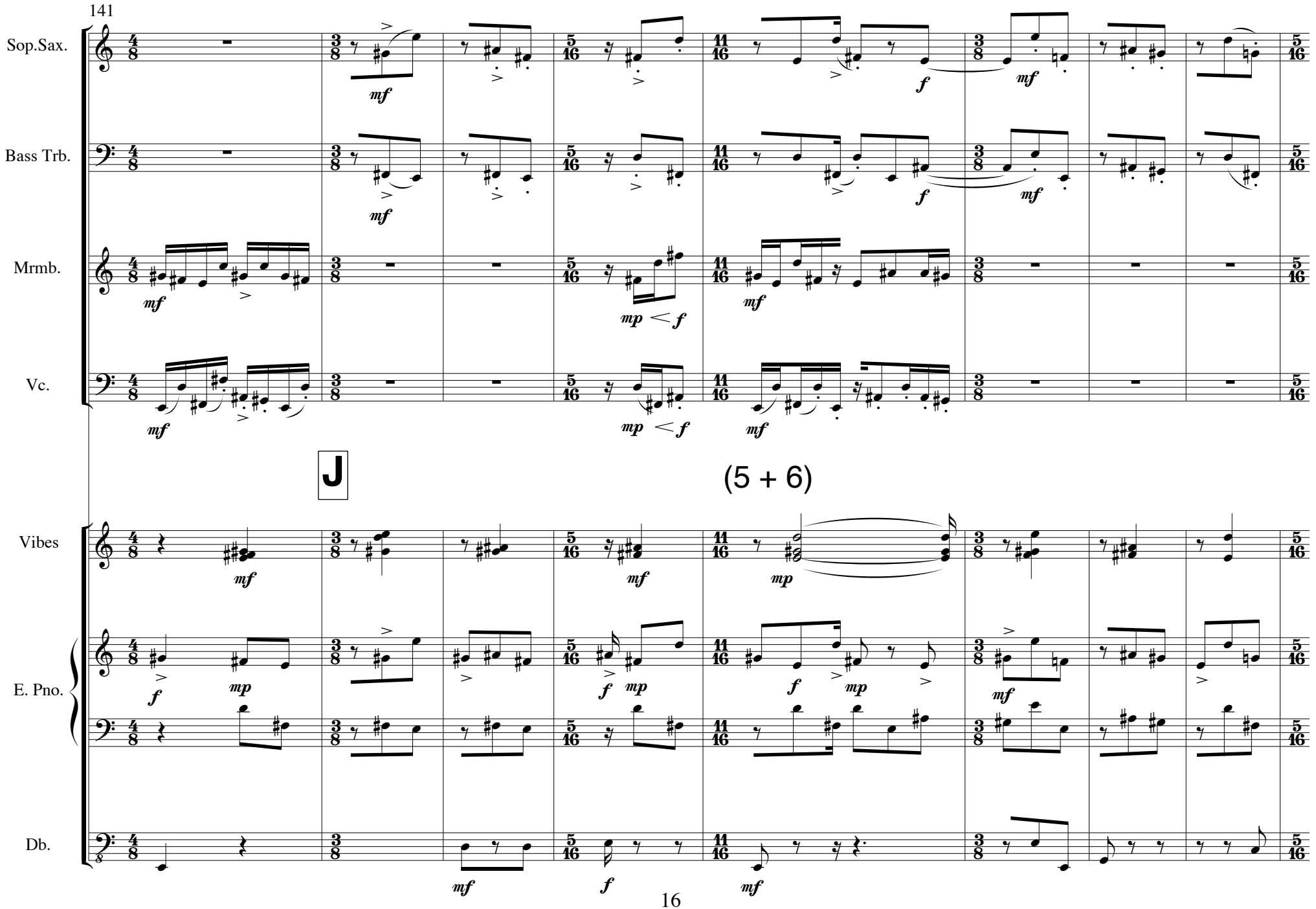
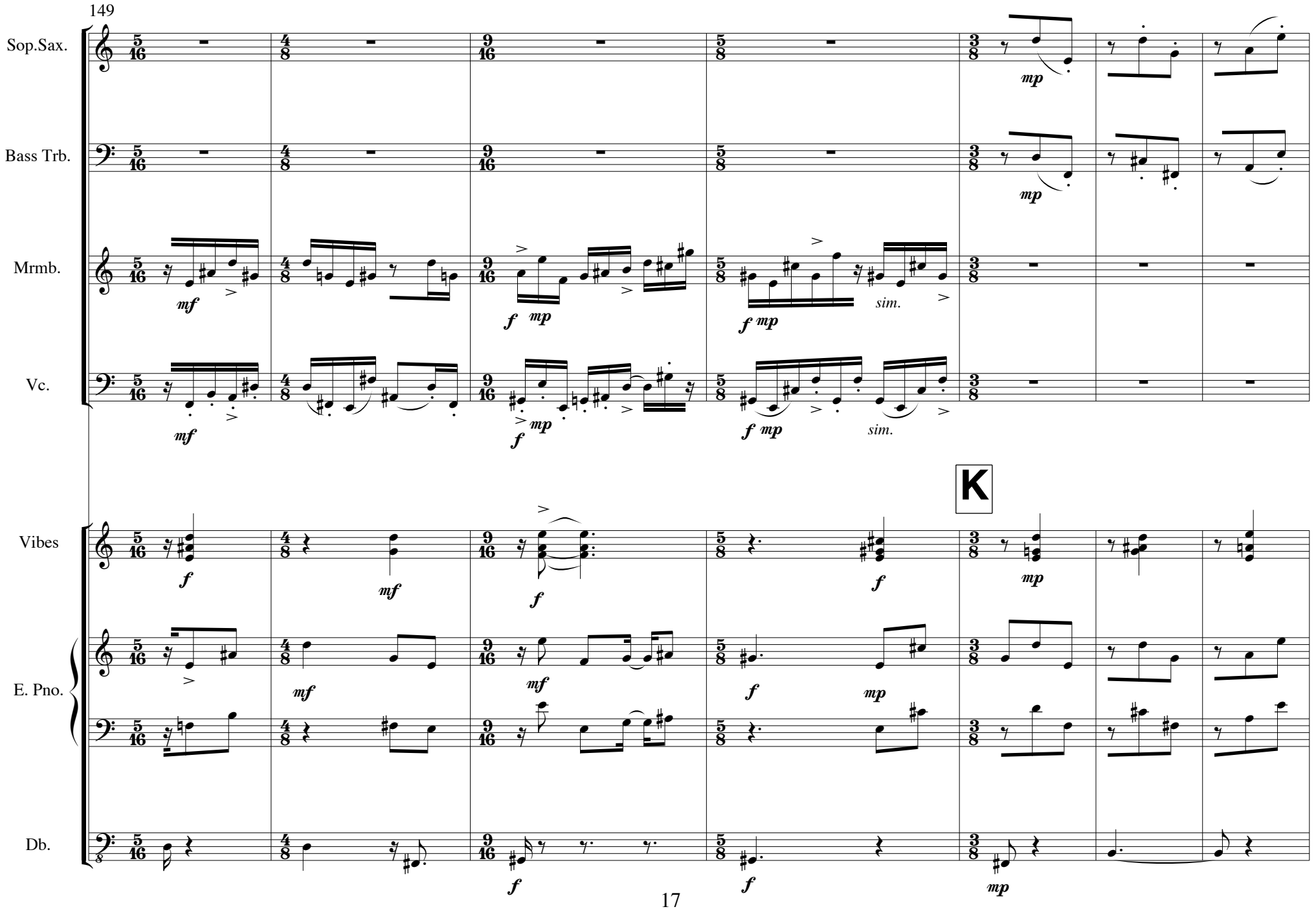
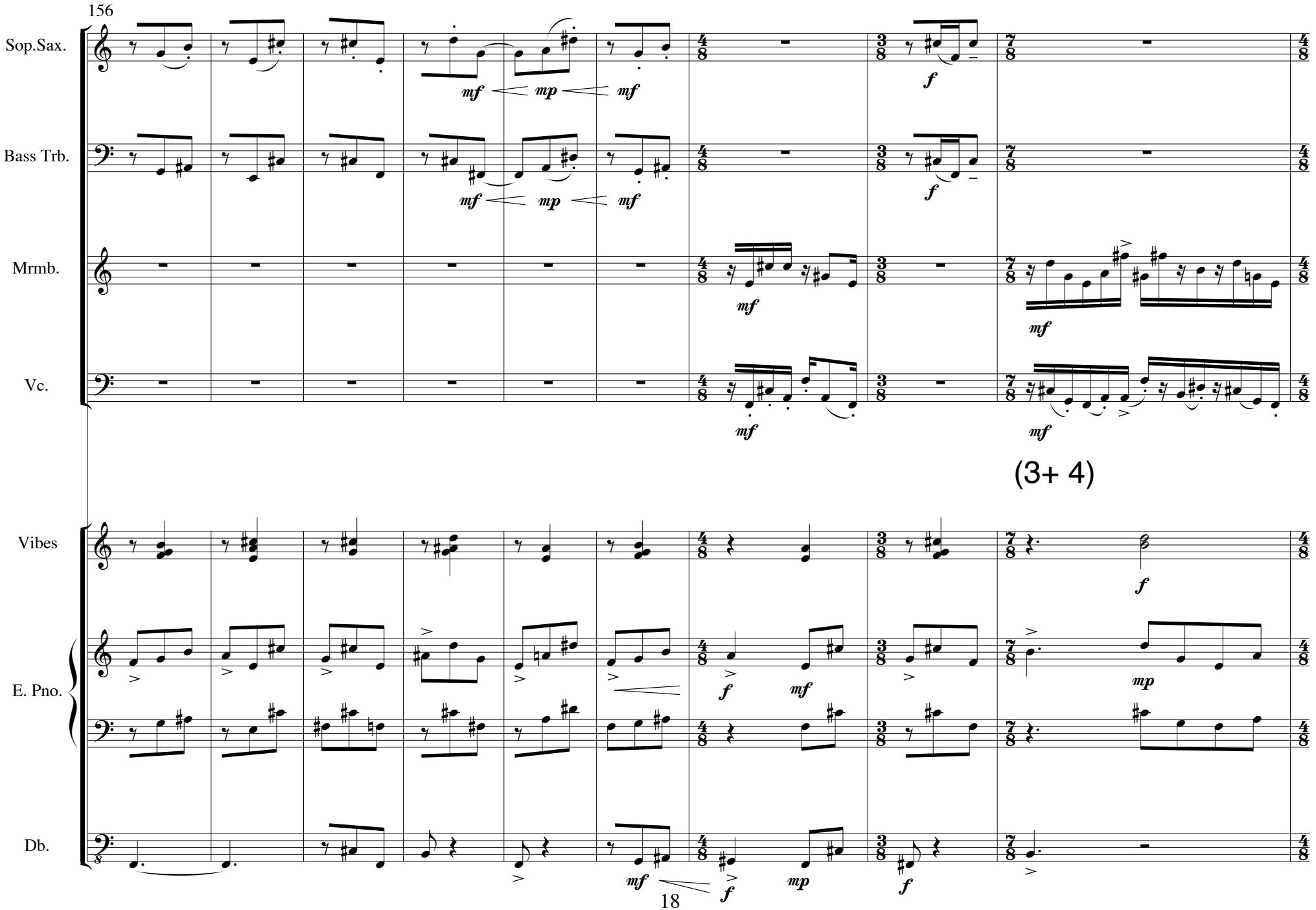
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
mp
mf
f


134
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
sub. f
f
mf
(3 + 2 + 3)
(3 + 4)


141
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
J
(5 + 6)
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


149
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
mp
mf
f
sim.
K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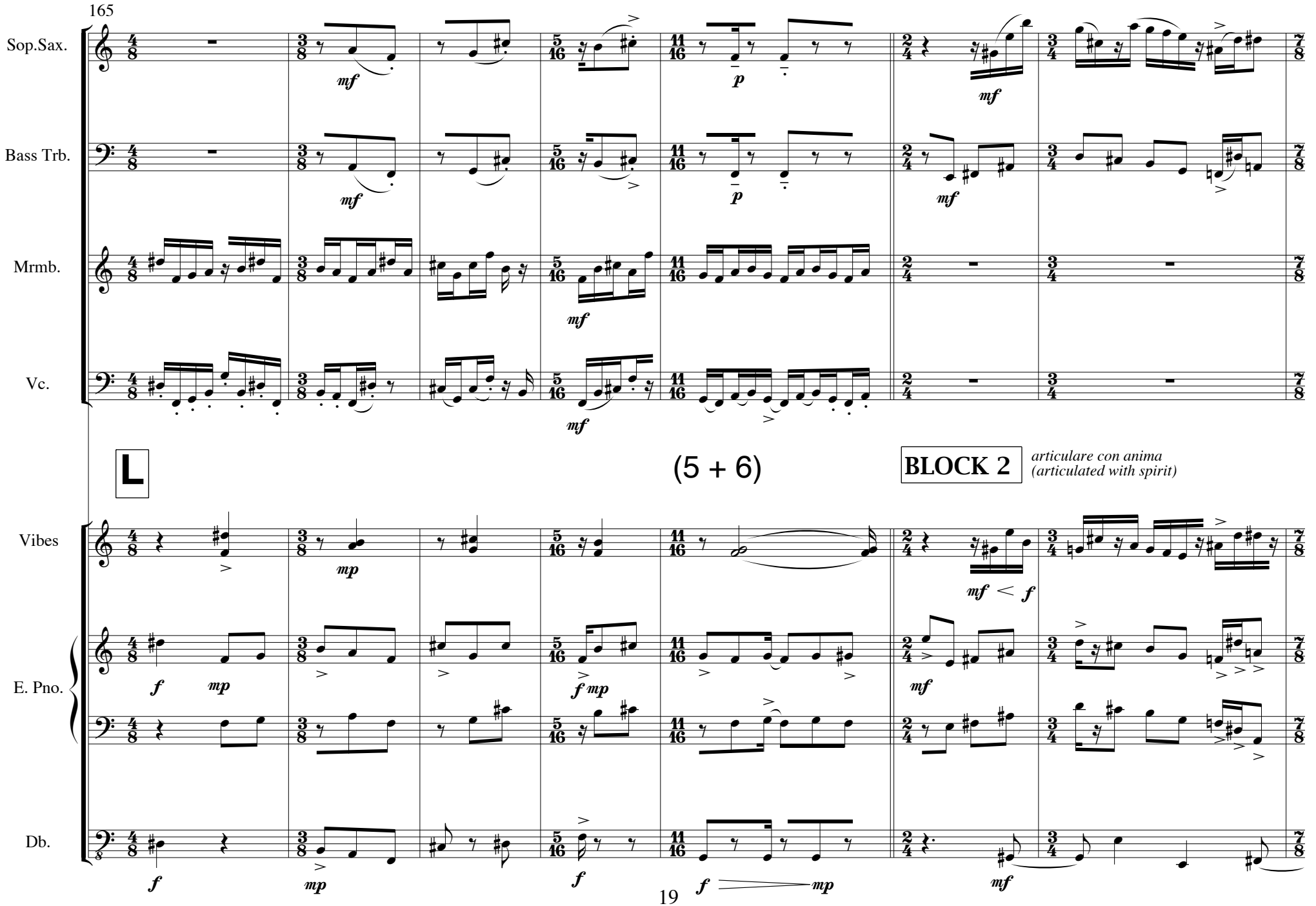
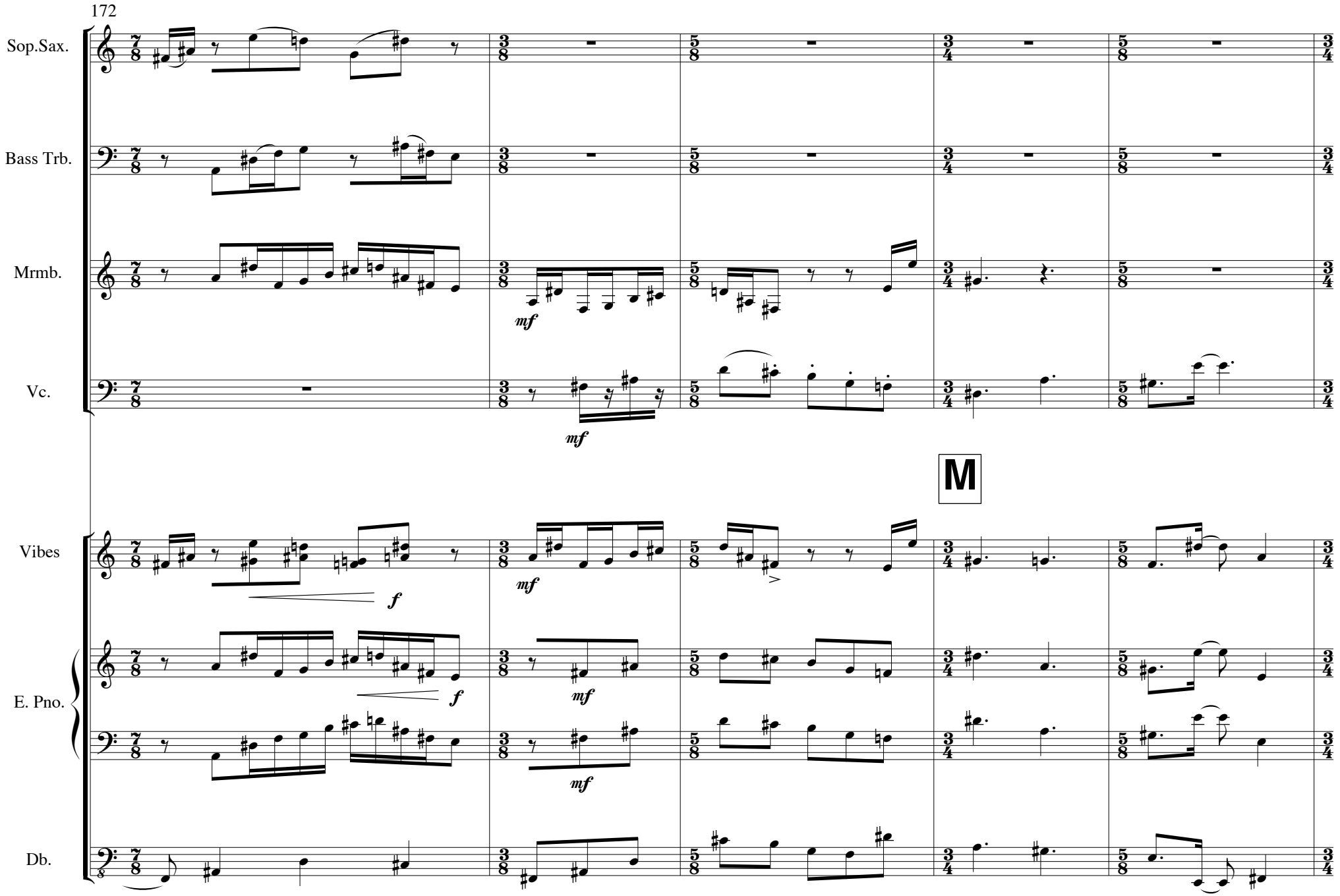
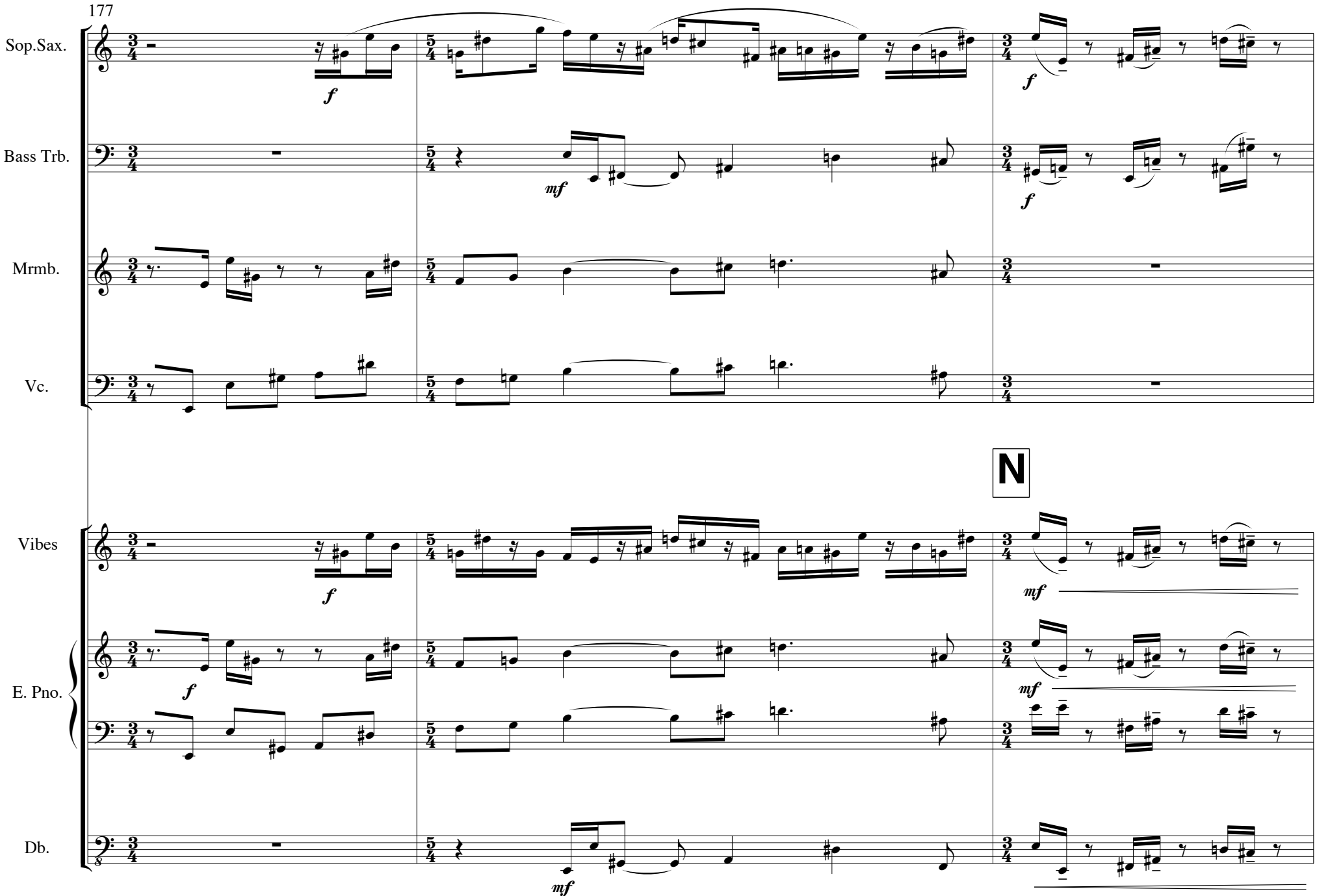
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
(3+ 4)


165
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
L
(5 + 6)
BLOCK 2
articulare con anima
(articulated with spirit)
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


172
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
M
mf
f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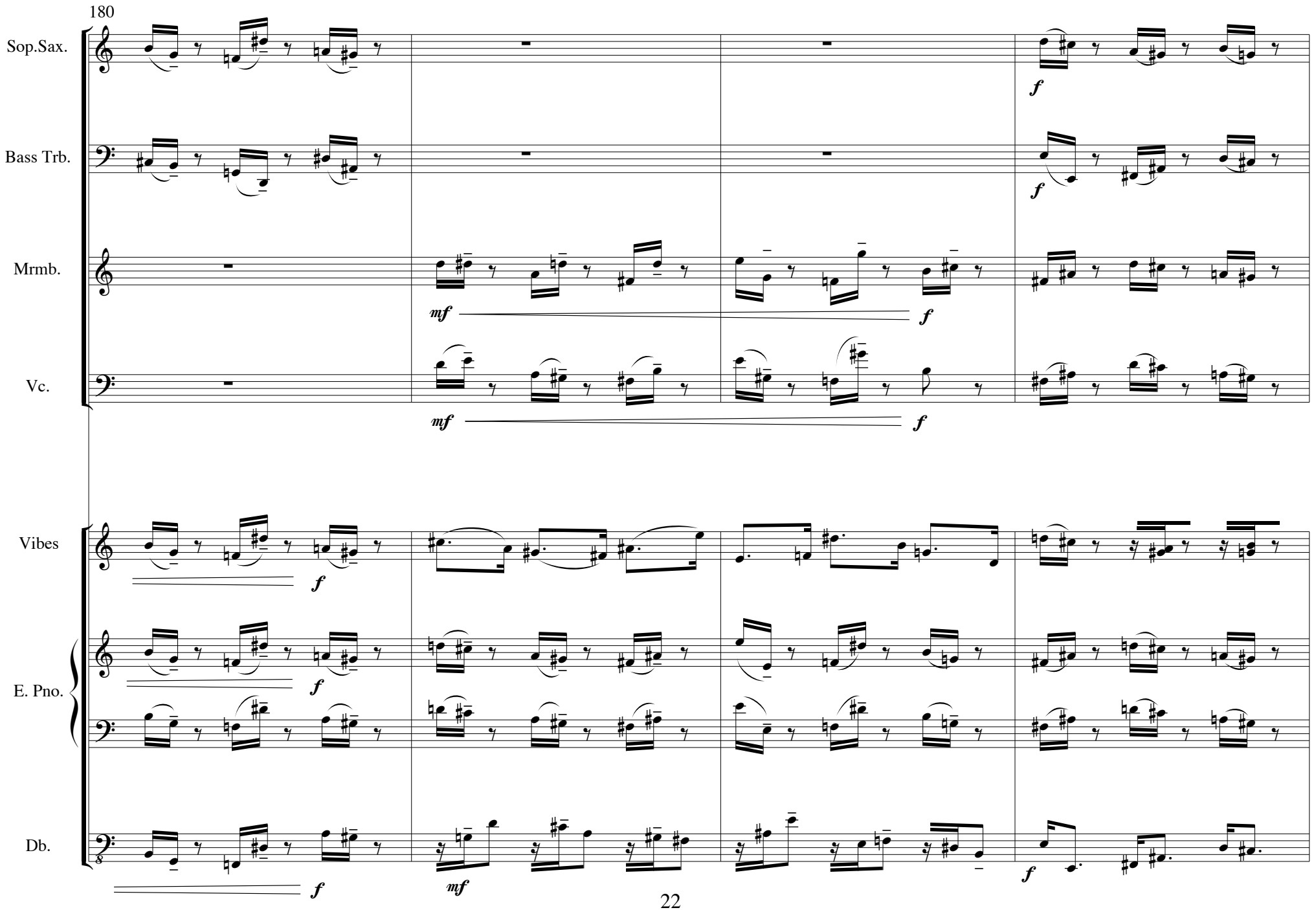
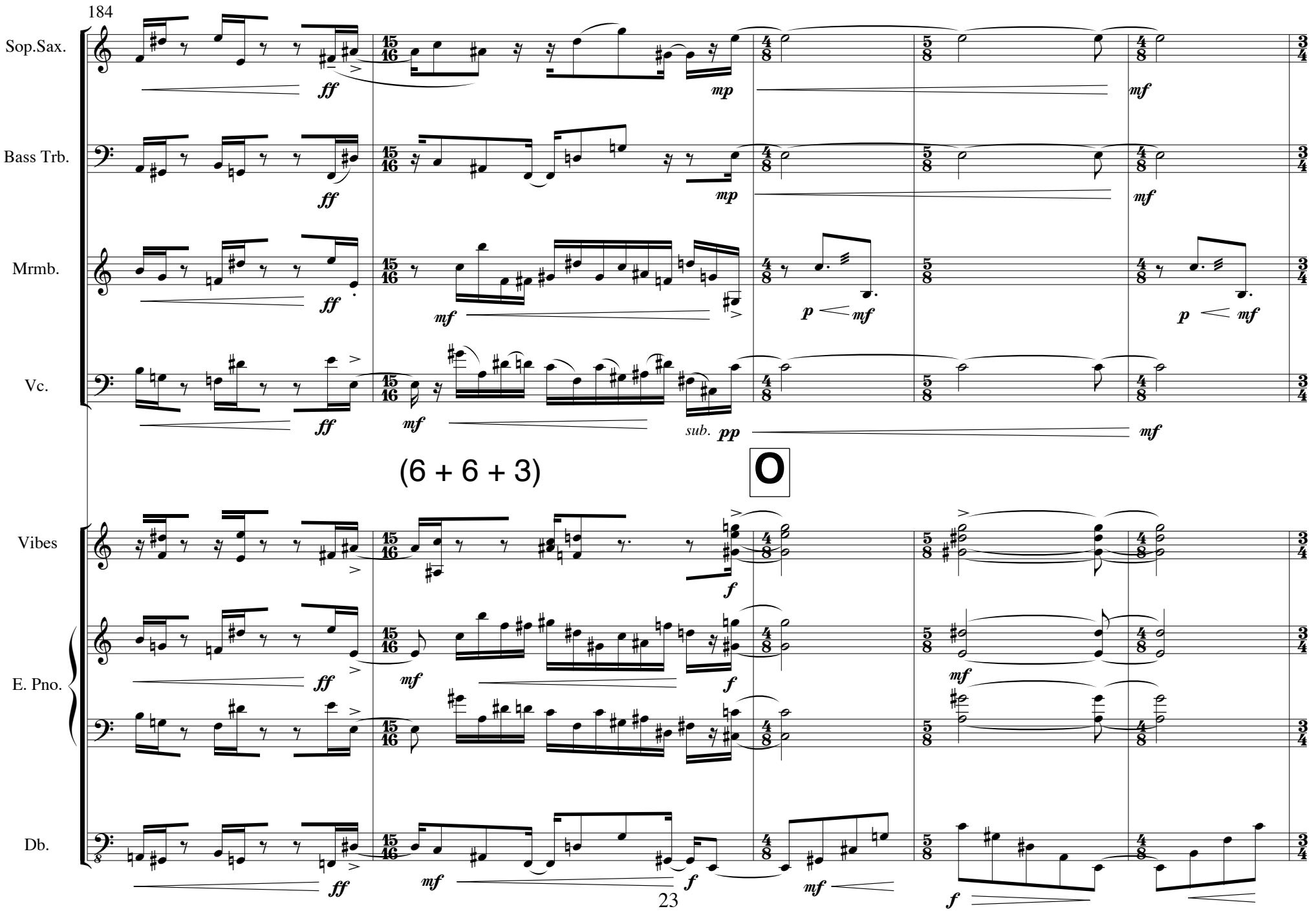
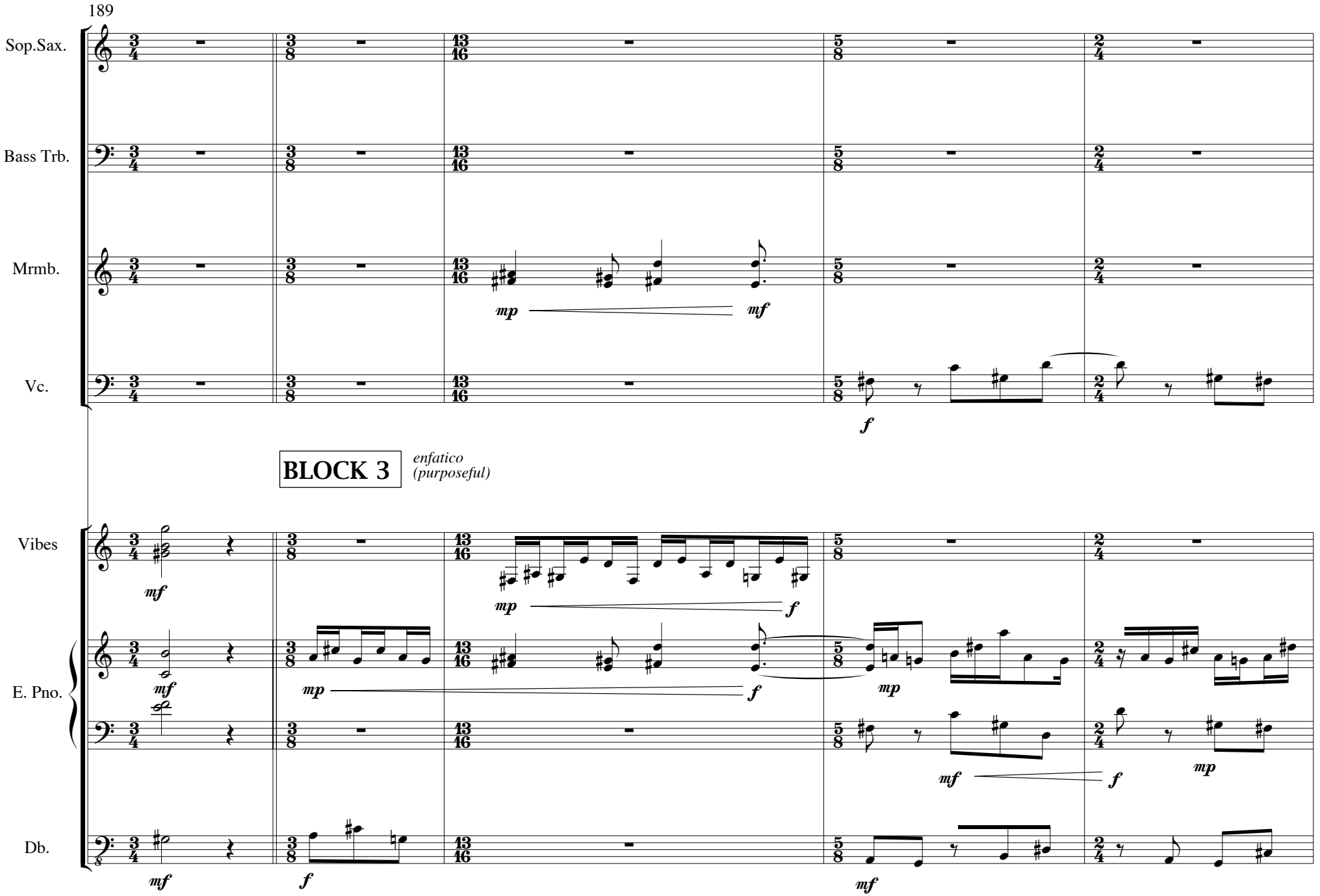
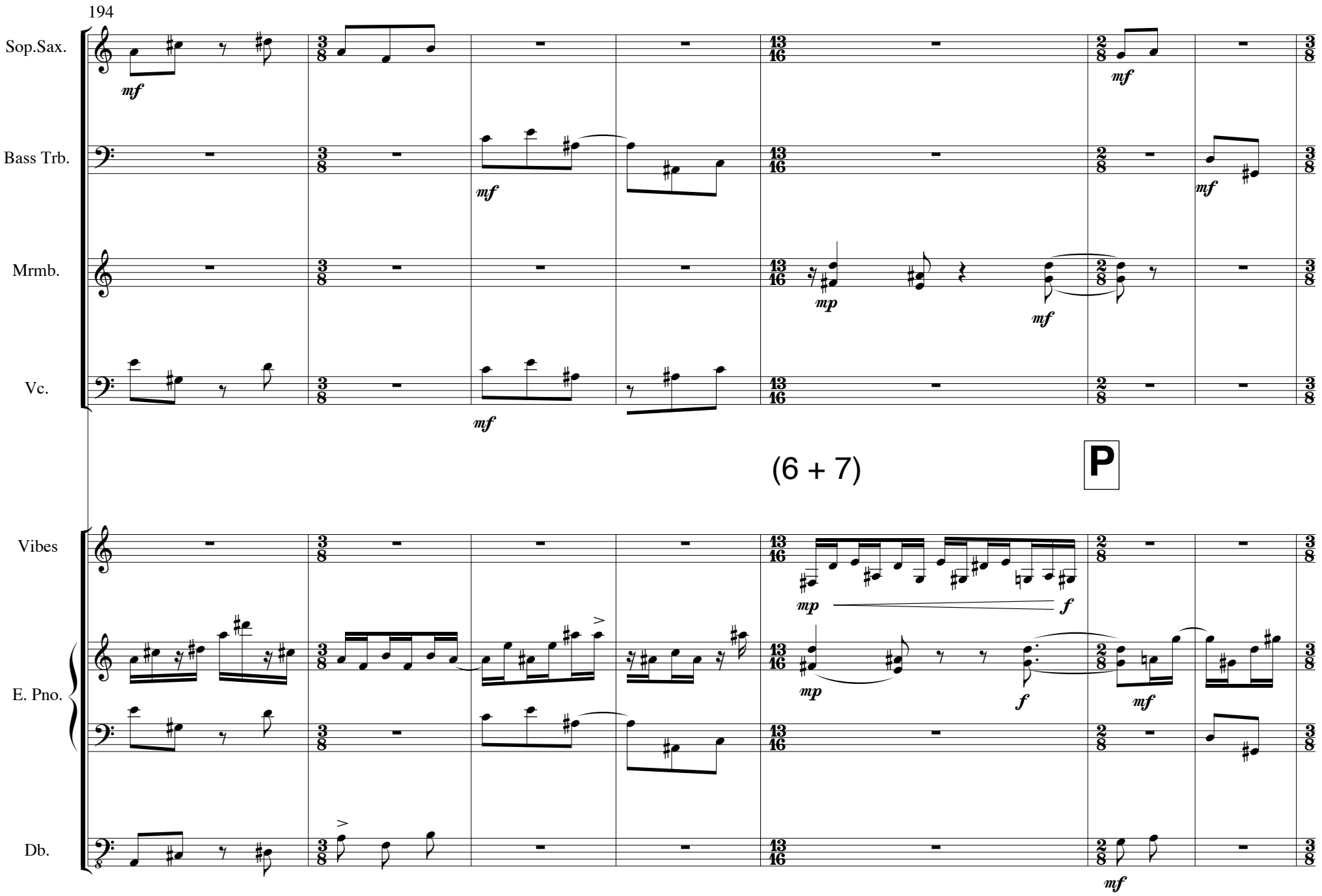
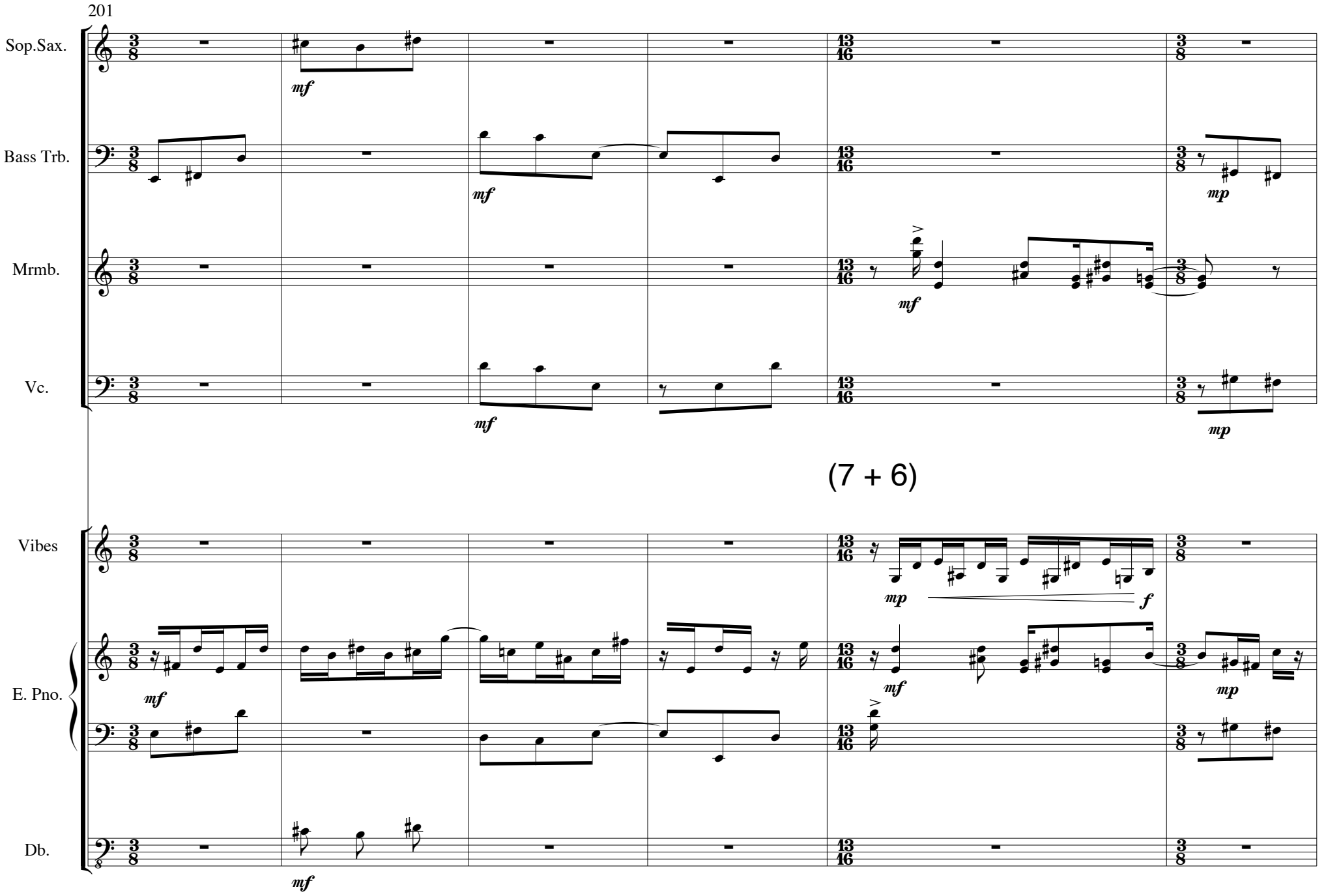
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
N
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


180
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
f
mf
f
mf
f
f
f
f
mf
f


184
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
(6 + 6 + 3)
O
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


189
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
mp
mf
f
BLOCK 3
enfatico
(purposeful)
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
mf
mp
f


194
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
mf
mp
f
(6 + 7)
P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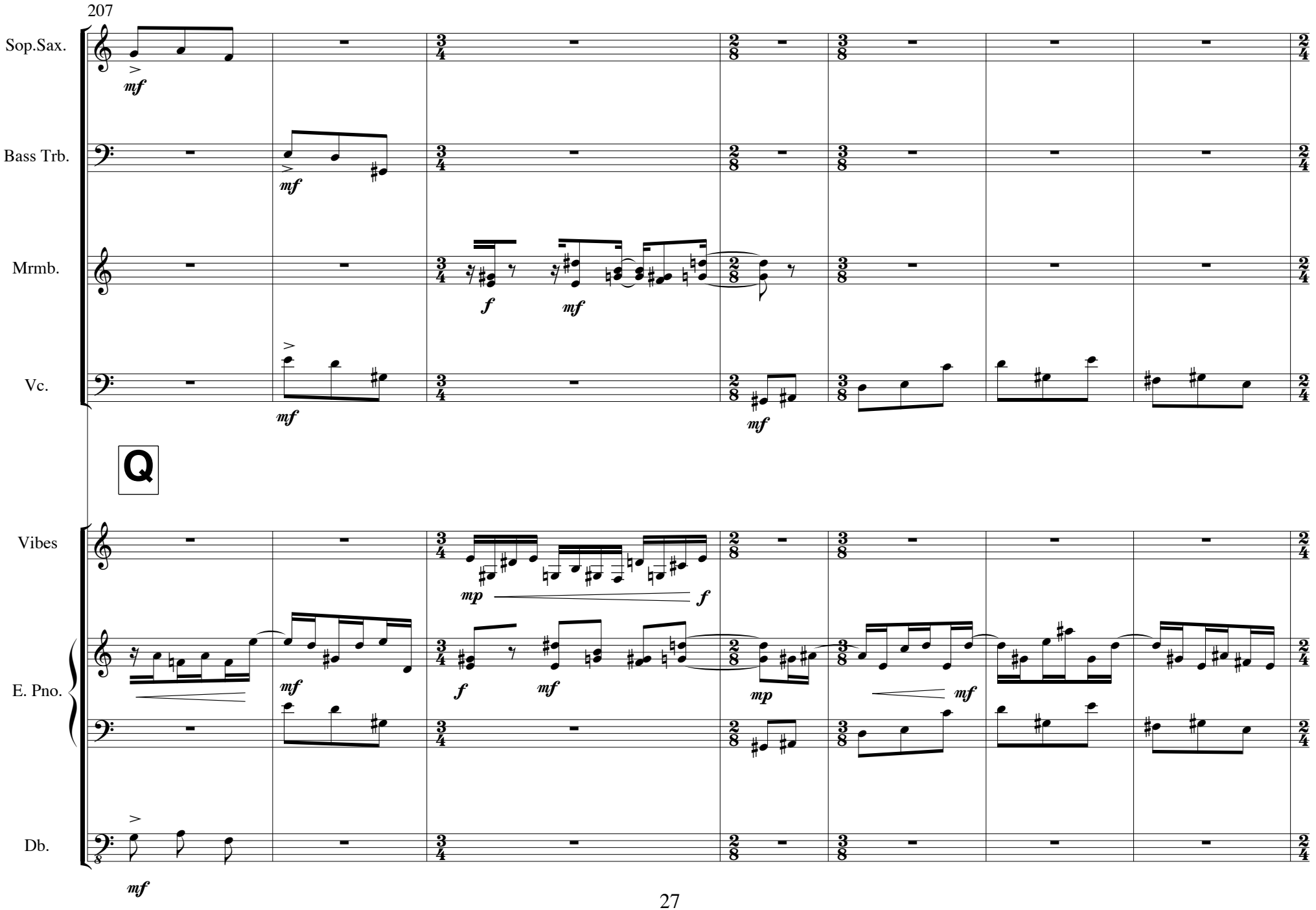
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
(7 + 6)
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.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Vc.
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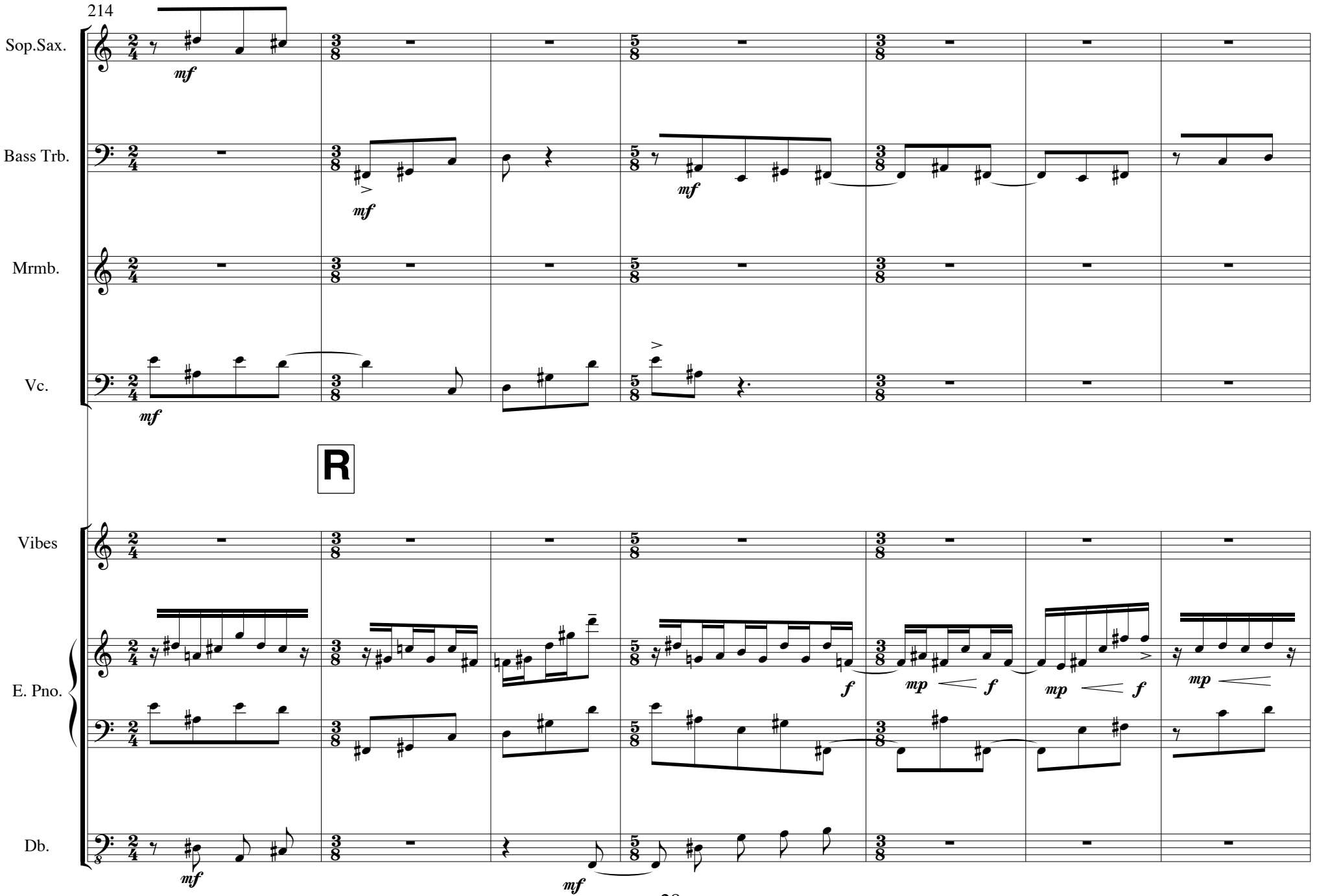
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.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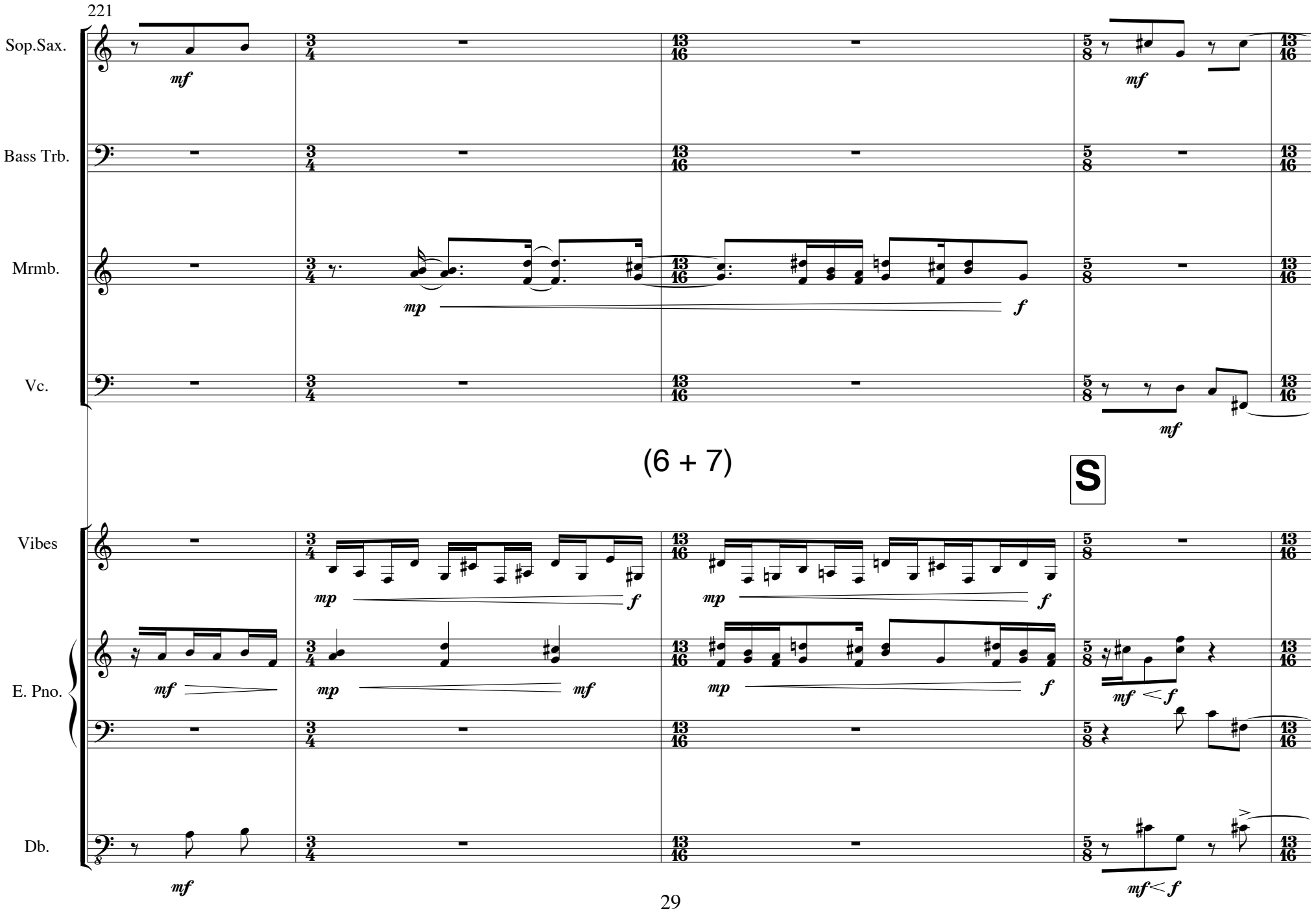
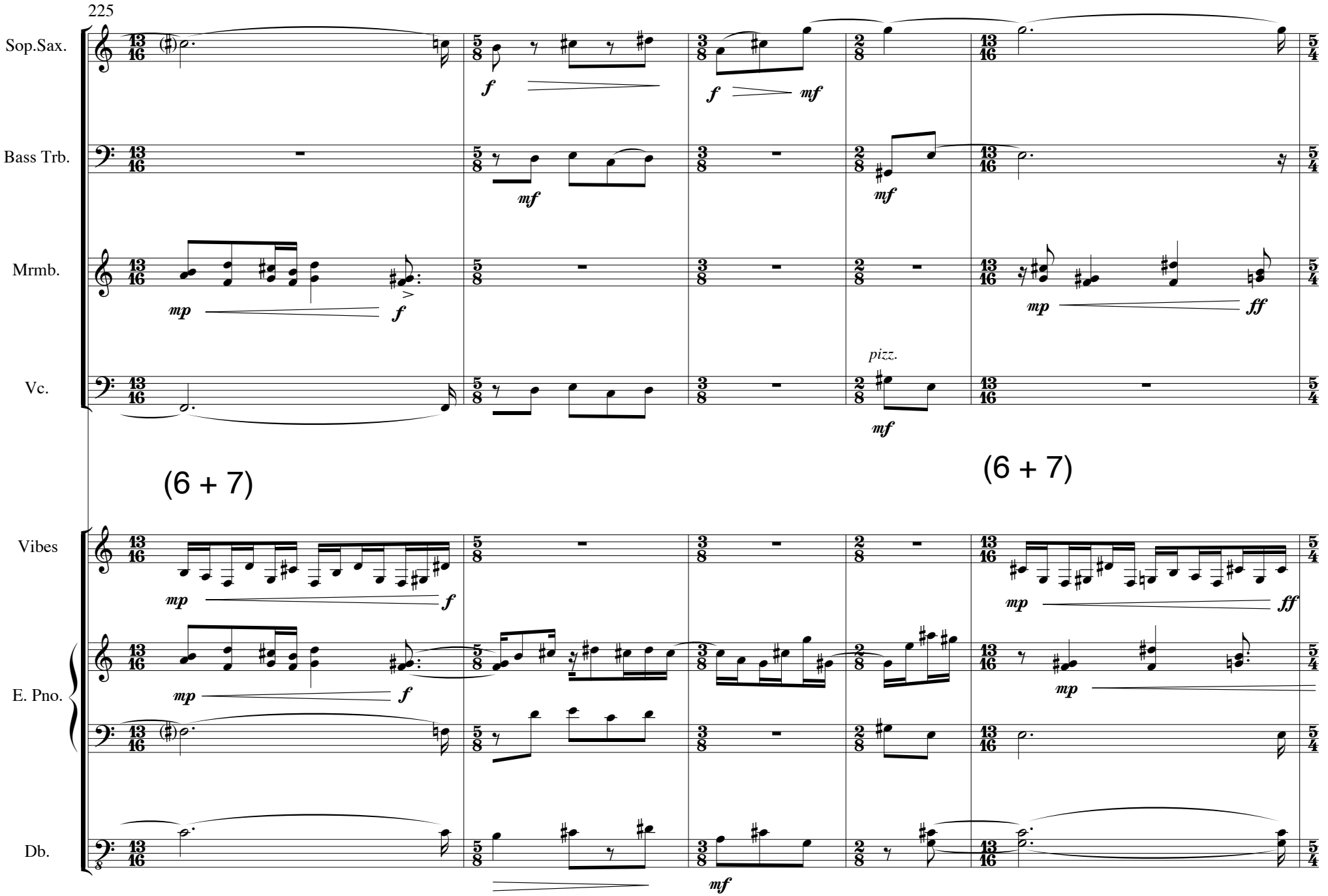
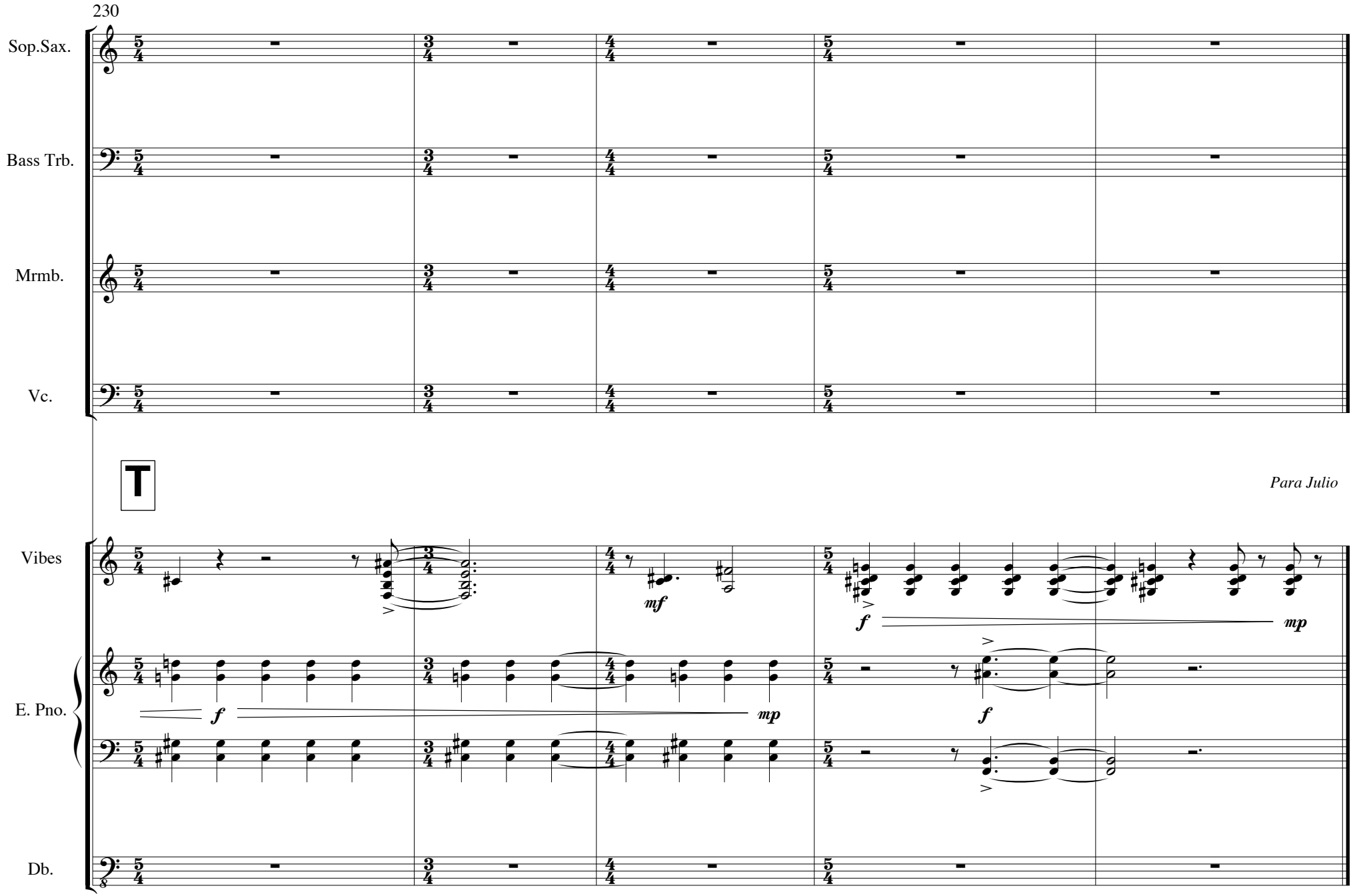
Vc.
R
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
mf
mp
f


221
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
(6 + 7)
S
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


225
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
pizz.
(6 + 7)
(6 + 7)
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.


230
Sop.Sax.
Bass Trb.
Mrmb.
Vc.
T
Para Julio
Vibes
E. Pno.
Db.
mf
f
mp
f
mp
f