Questions of Travel

For Cello and Piano

2009

Lawrence Kramer

lkramer@fordham.edu

The title *Questions of Travel* alludes to a poem (and a book) of the same name by Elizabeth Bishop. The metaphor involved is traditional, indeed Homeric: the external voyage away from home maps a voyage of self-discovery. Although in latter-day versions the sense of discovery is often equivocal, the determination to come to terms with otherness and claim a sense of arrival is--lucky for us—almost irresistible, as Bishop's lines attest:

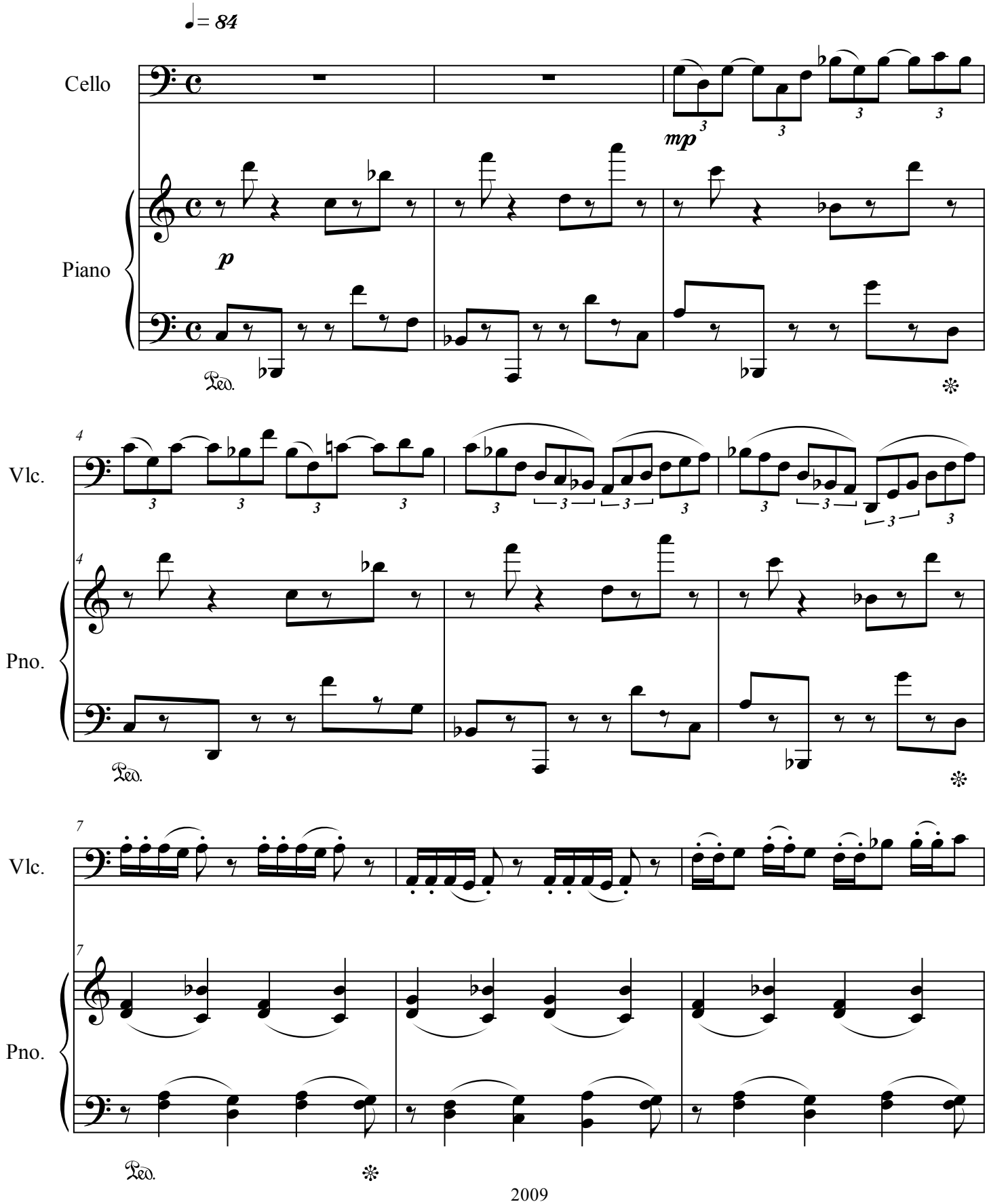
> But surely it would have been a pity
> Not to have seen the trees along this road,
> Really exaggerated in their beauty.
> Not to have seen them gesturing
> Like noble pantomimists, dressed in pink.

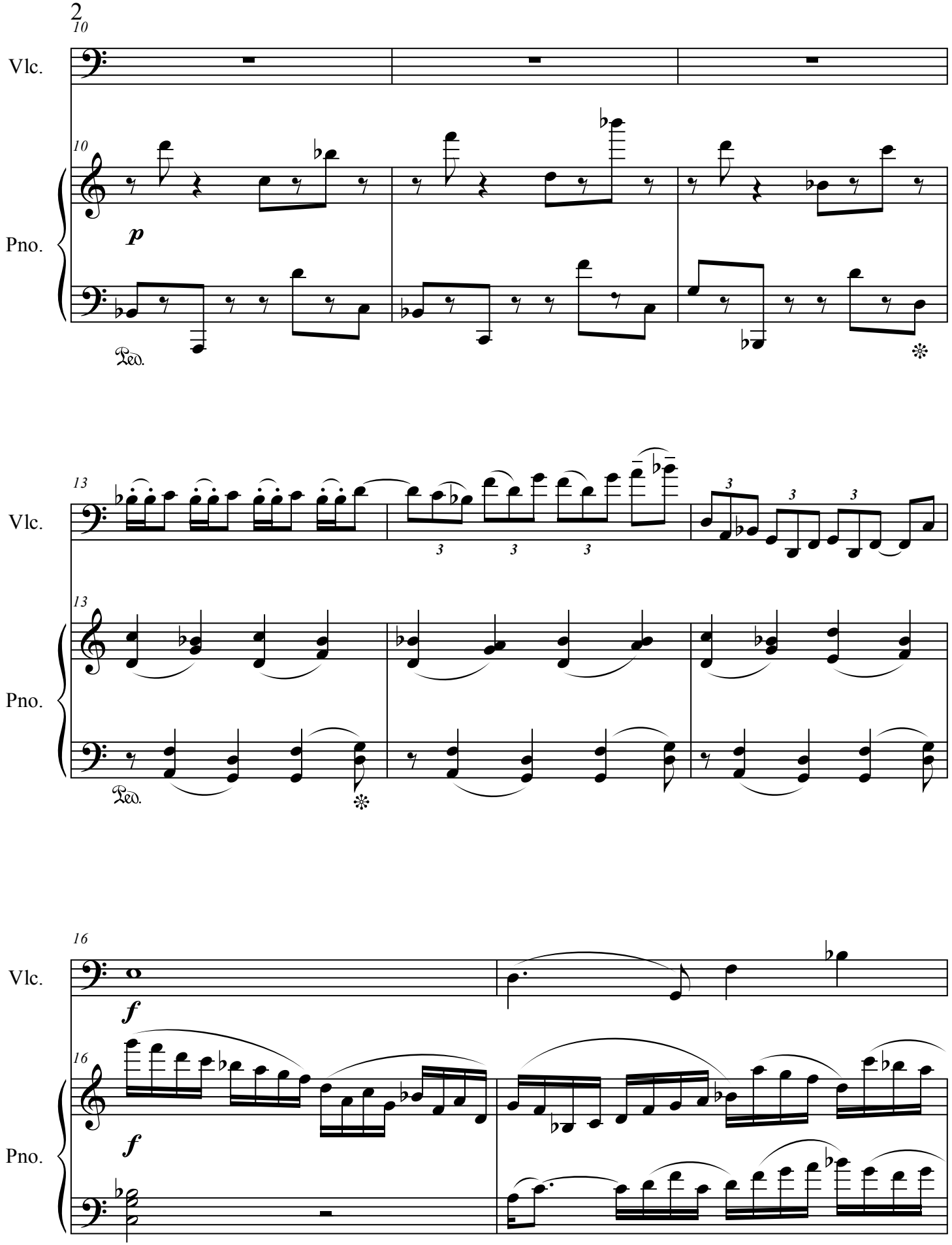
The irony of the noble pantomimists is palpable, but so is the not-so-exaggerated need for them.

My own *Questions of Travel* is a musical imagining of the same troubled but finally unregretted journey. The first of the work's two movements, "In the Distance," responds to the call from afar; it traces a gradual recession in tonal and rhythmic space until the point of departure drops from the horizon. The second movement, "At the Threshold," continues the movement (adopting the tempo at which "In the Distance" arrives) in a different, more urgent tone. Its question, the true question of travel, is how to come home to oneself from a more inner distance by learning to stand still.

Both the fascinations of the two-movement format, understood as a frame for relationship, not conflict or contrast, and the cello's capacities for both lyricism and nimbleness, gave the impetus to this piece, which is about twelve and a half minutes long.

In the Distance

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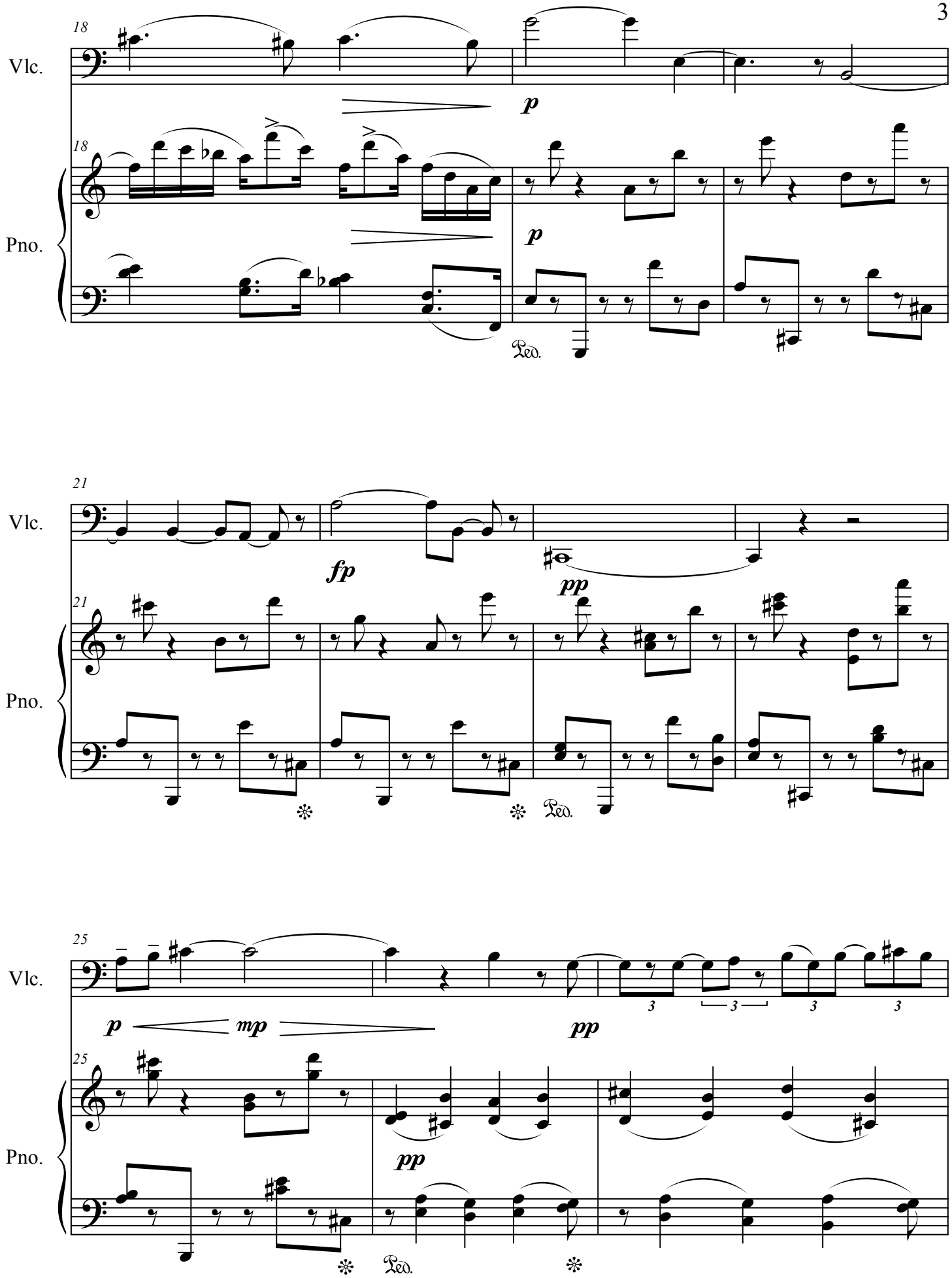
Vlc.
13
Pno.
Ped.
16
Vlc.
f
16
Pno.
f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Pno.
p
Ped.
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Vlc.
fp
pp
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Pno.
Ped.
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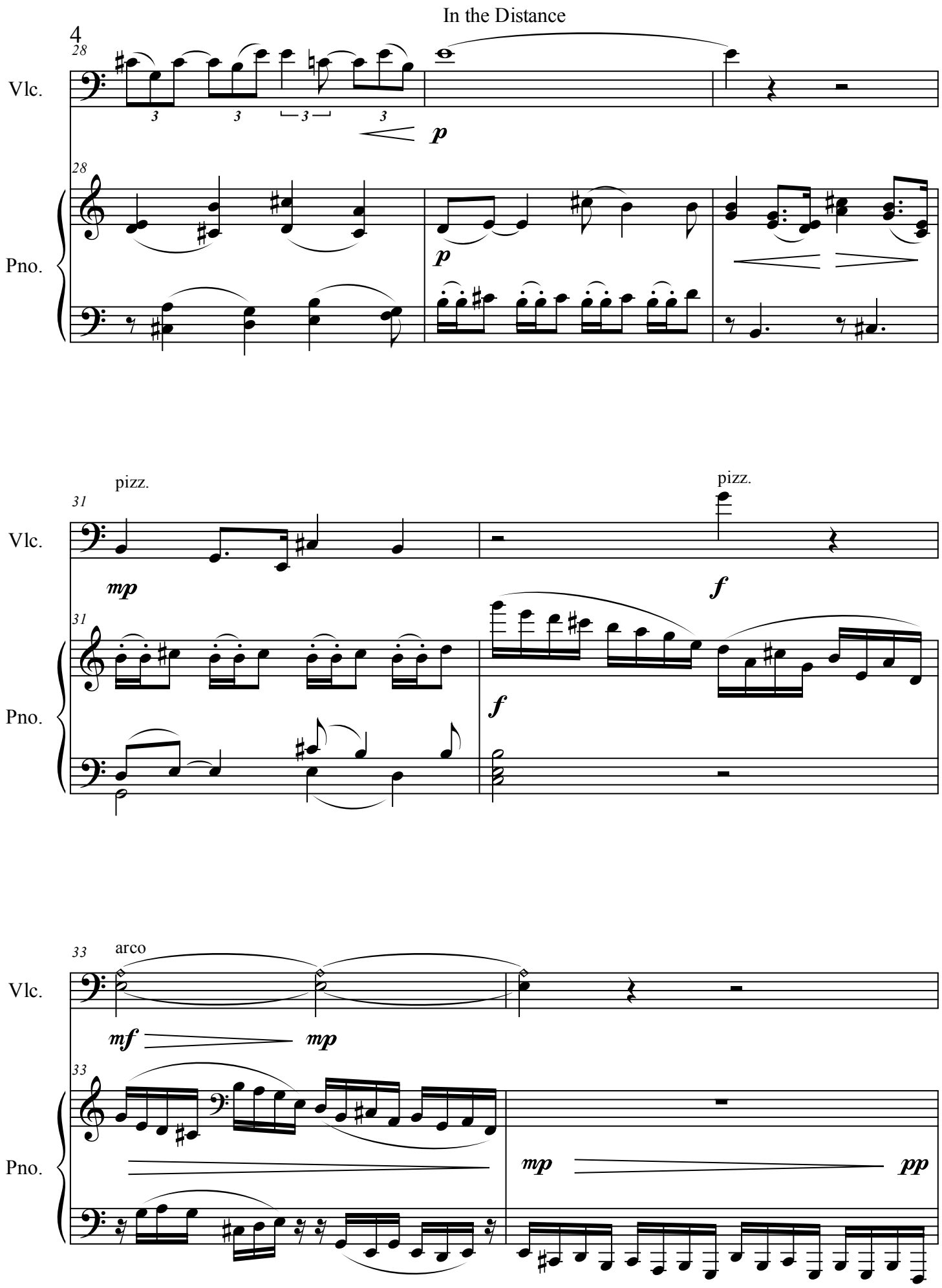
Vlc.
p
mp
pp
3
3
3
3
25
Pno.
pp
Ped.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3
3
p
28
Pno.
p
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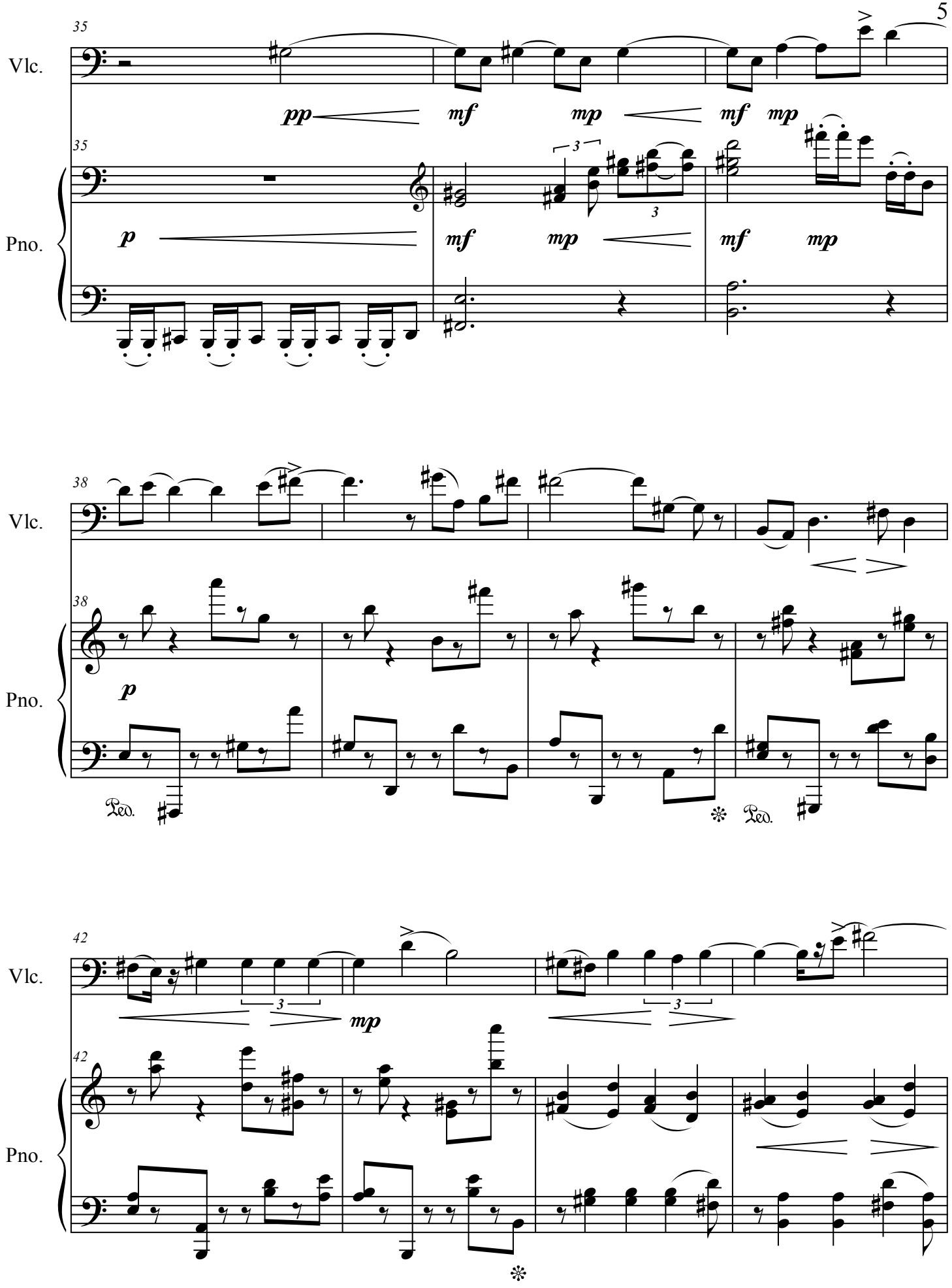
pizz.
Vlc.
mp
31
Pno.
pizz.
f
f
33
arco
Vlc.
mf
mp
33
Pno.
mp
pp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mf
mp
mf
mp
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mf
mp
mf
mp
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Vlc.
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p
Ped.
Ped.
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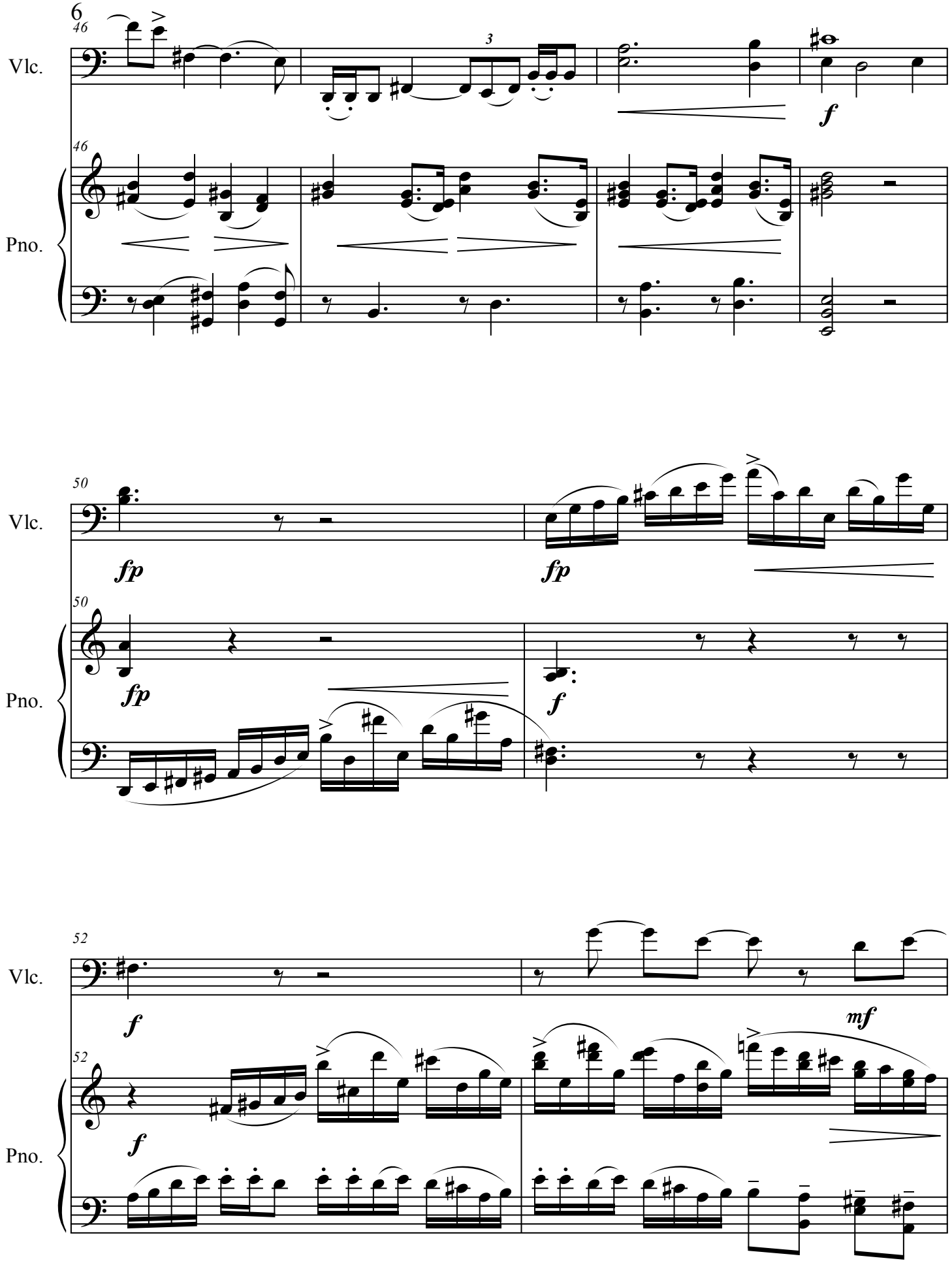
Vlc.
mp
42
Pno.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fp
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fp
Pno.
f
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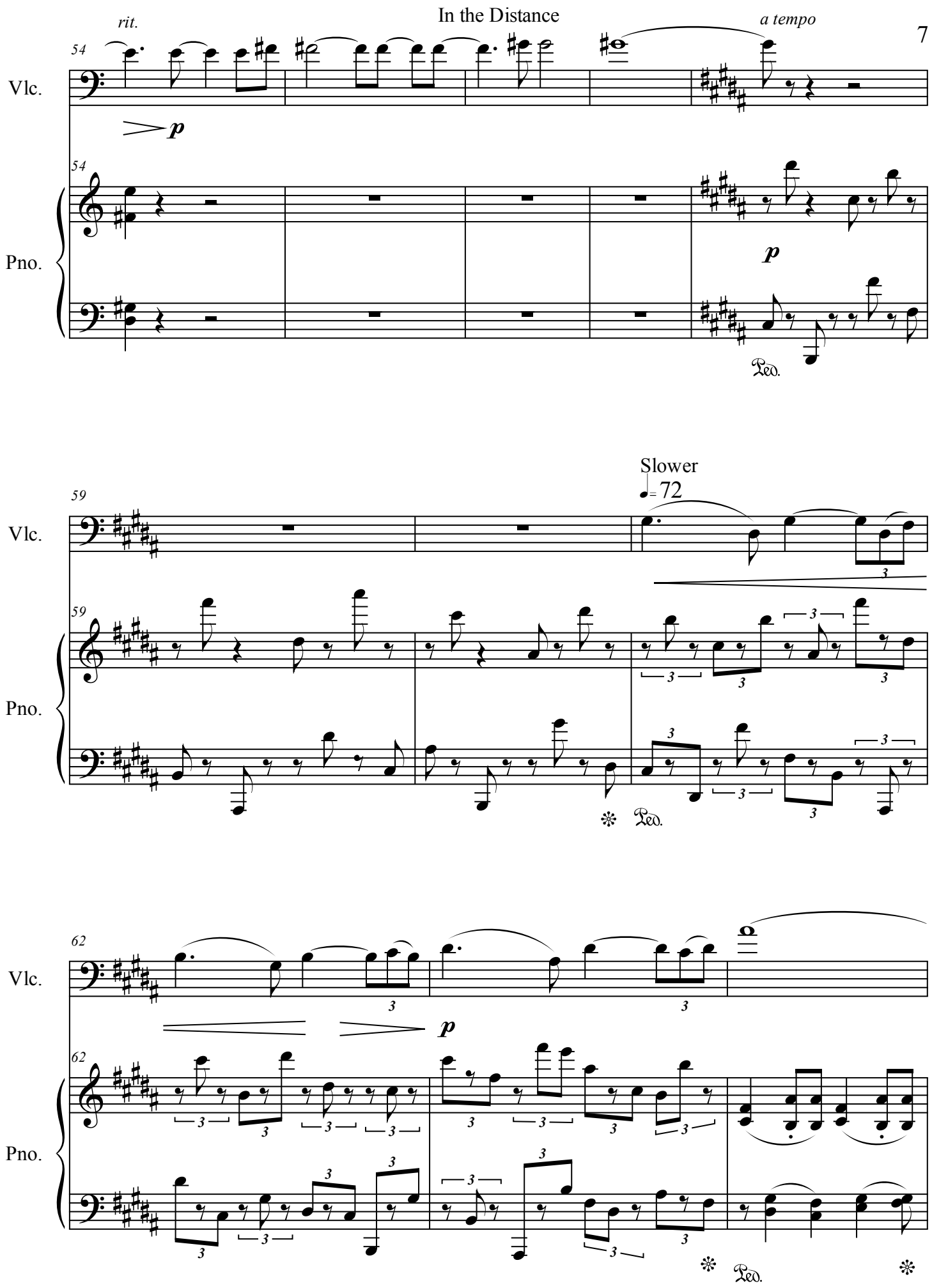
f
mf
52
f
Pno.


rit.
a tempo
54
Vlc.
p
54
Pno.
p
Ped.
Slower
♩= 72
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Vlc.
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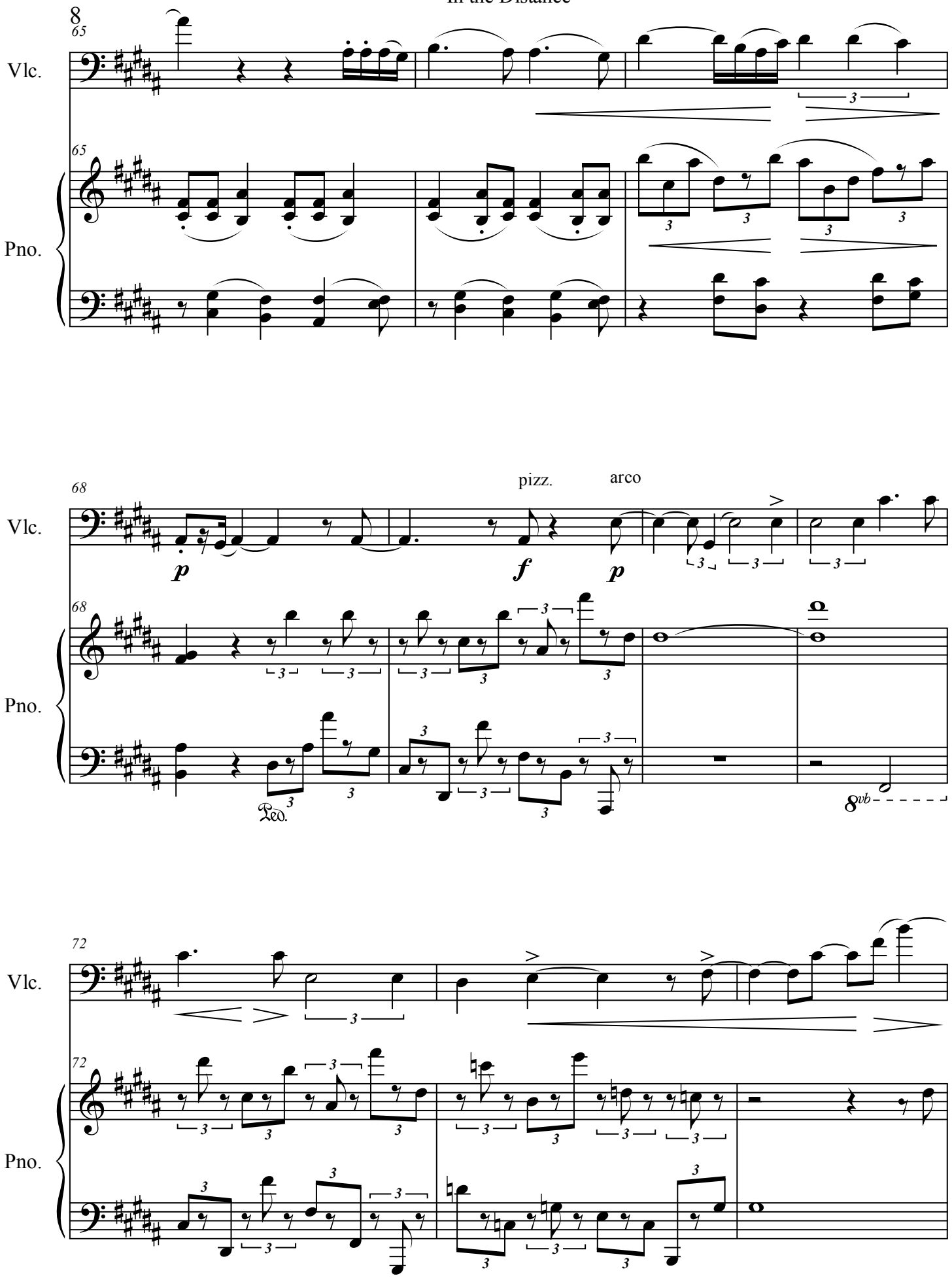
Pno.
Ped.
62
Vlc.
p
62
Pno.
Ped.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Vlc.
65
Pno.
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arco
Vlc.
p
f
p
68
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Ped.
8vb
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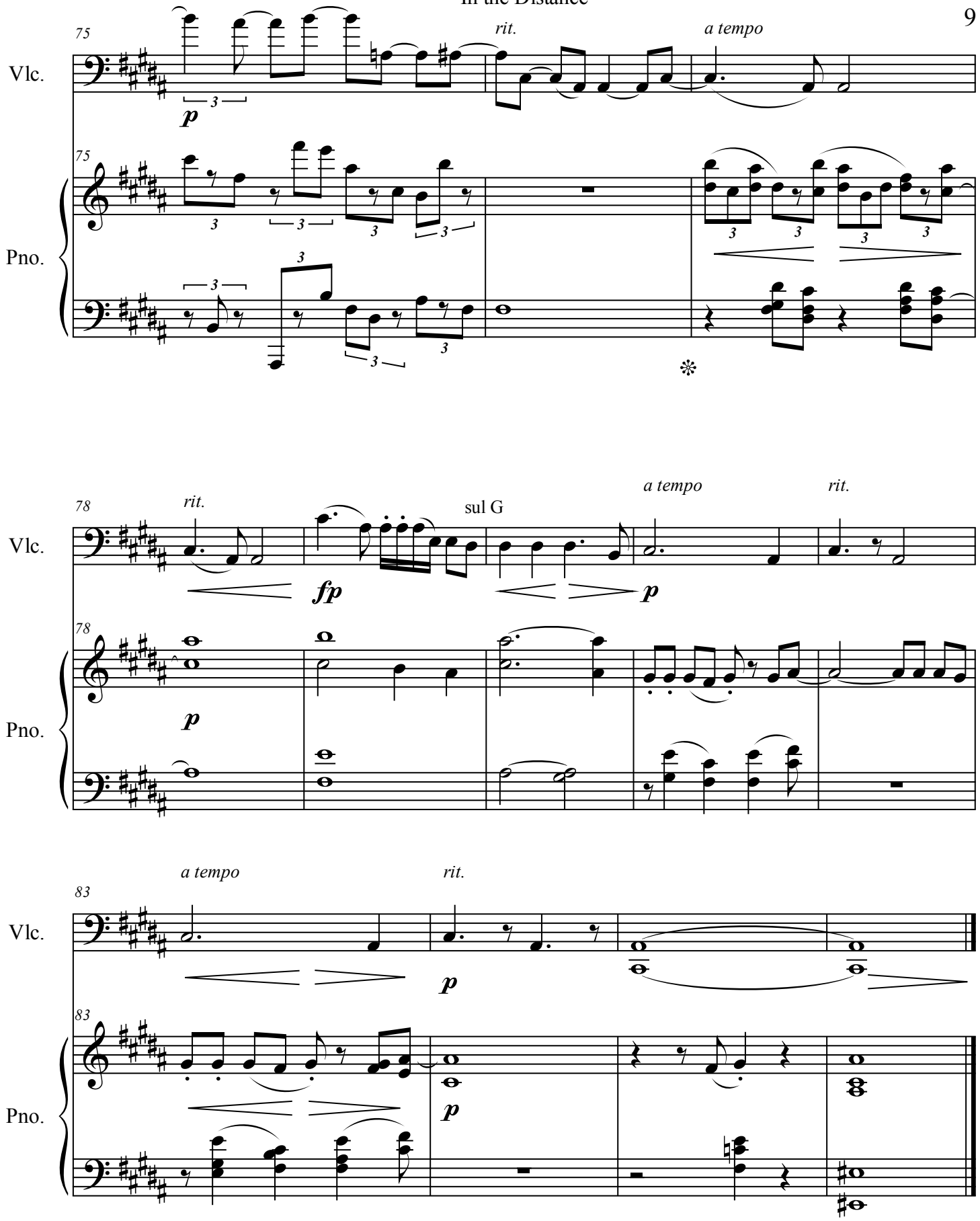
Vlc.
72
Pno.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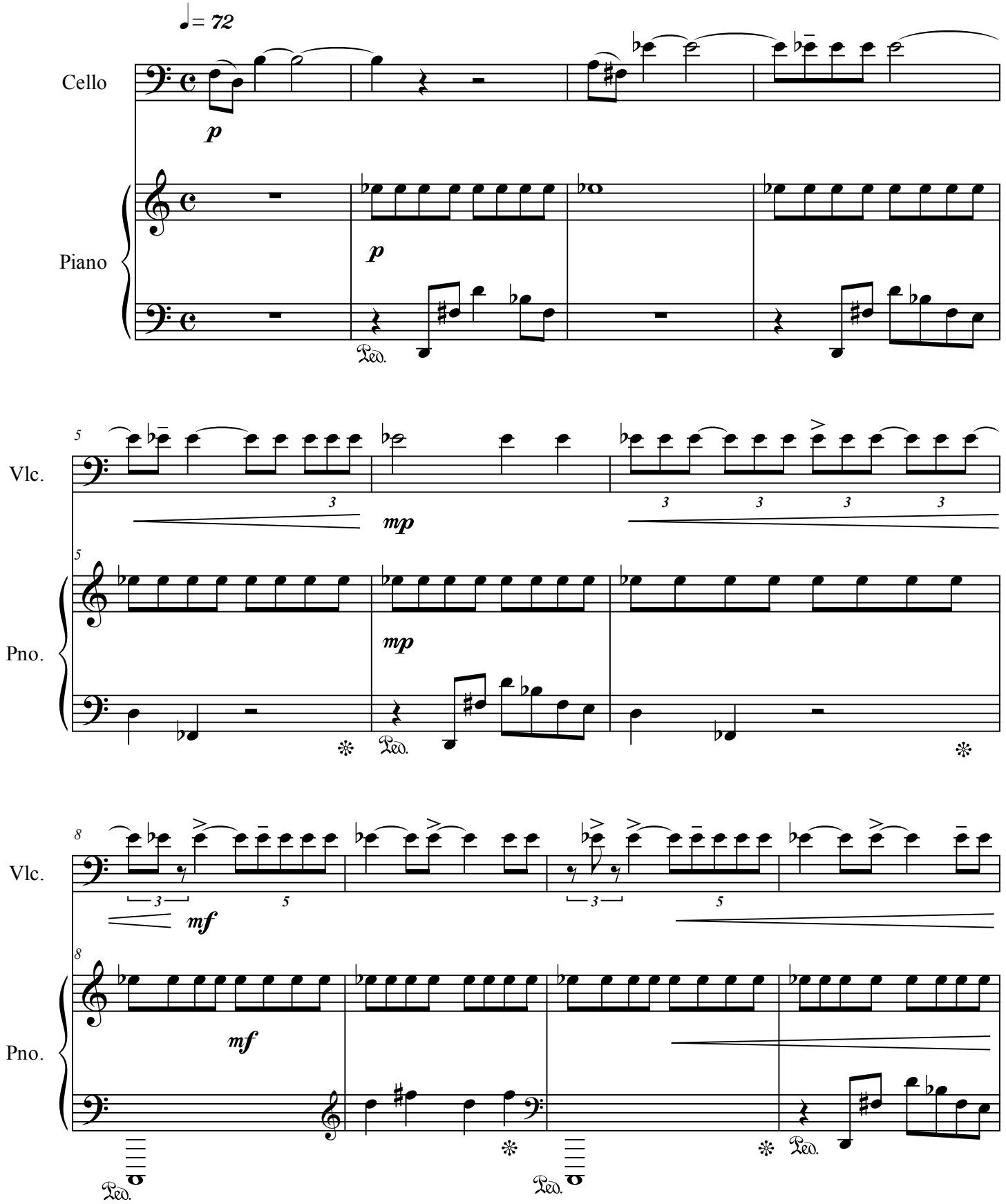
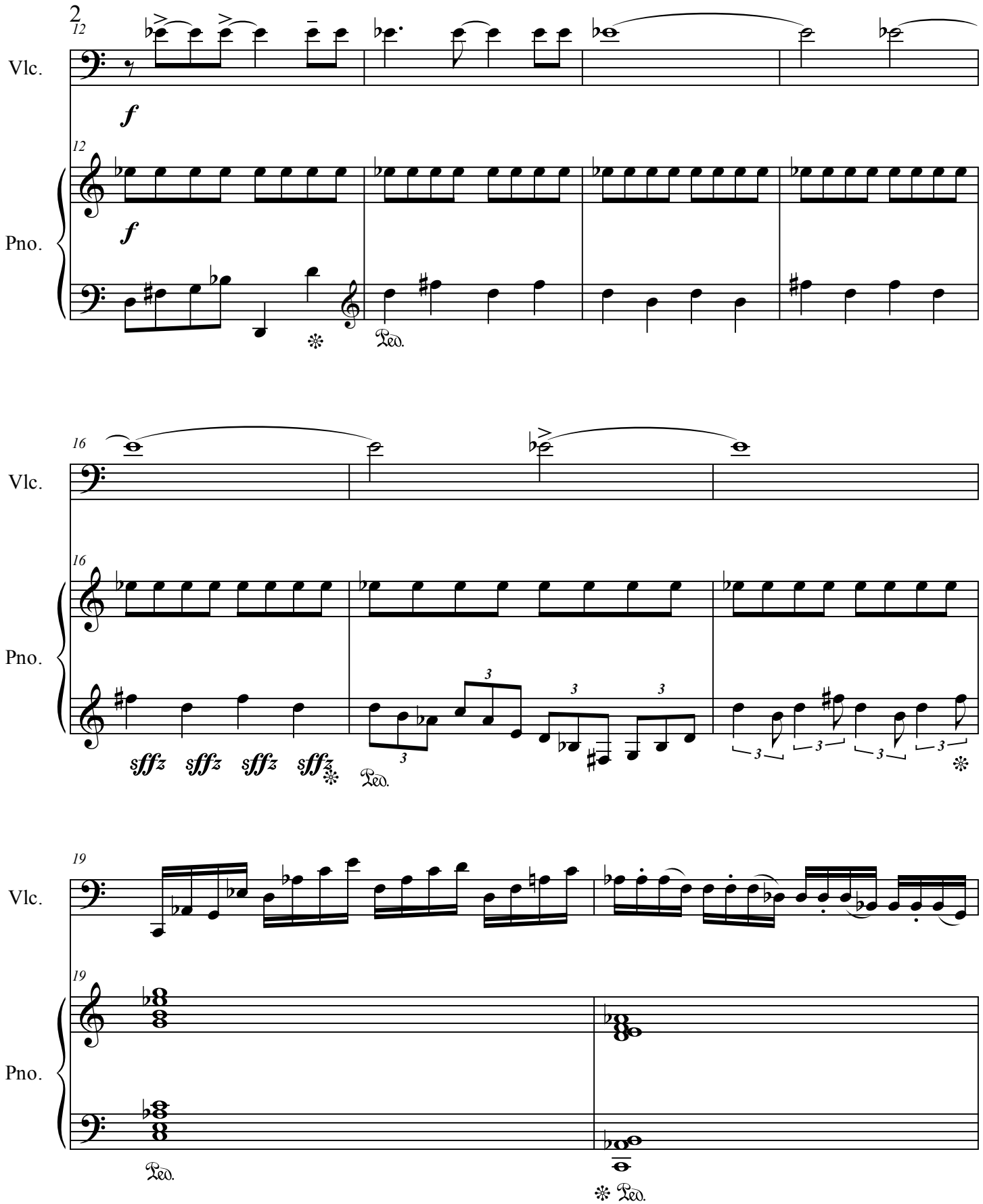
Vlc.
rit.
a tempo
p
75
Pno.
78
rit.
sul G
a tempo
rit.
fp
p
78
Pno.
83
a tempo
rit.
p
83
Pno.

At the Threshold

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f
12
Pno.
f
Ped.
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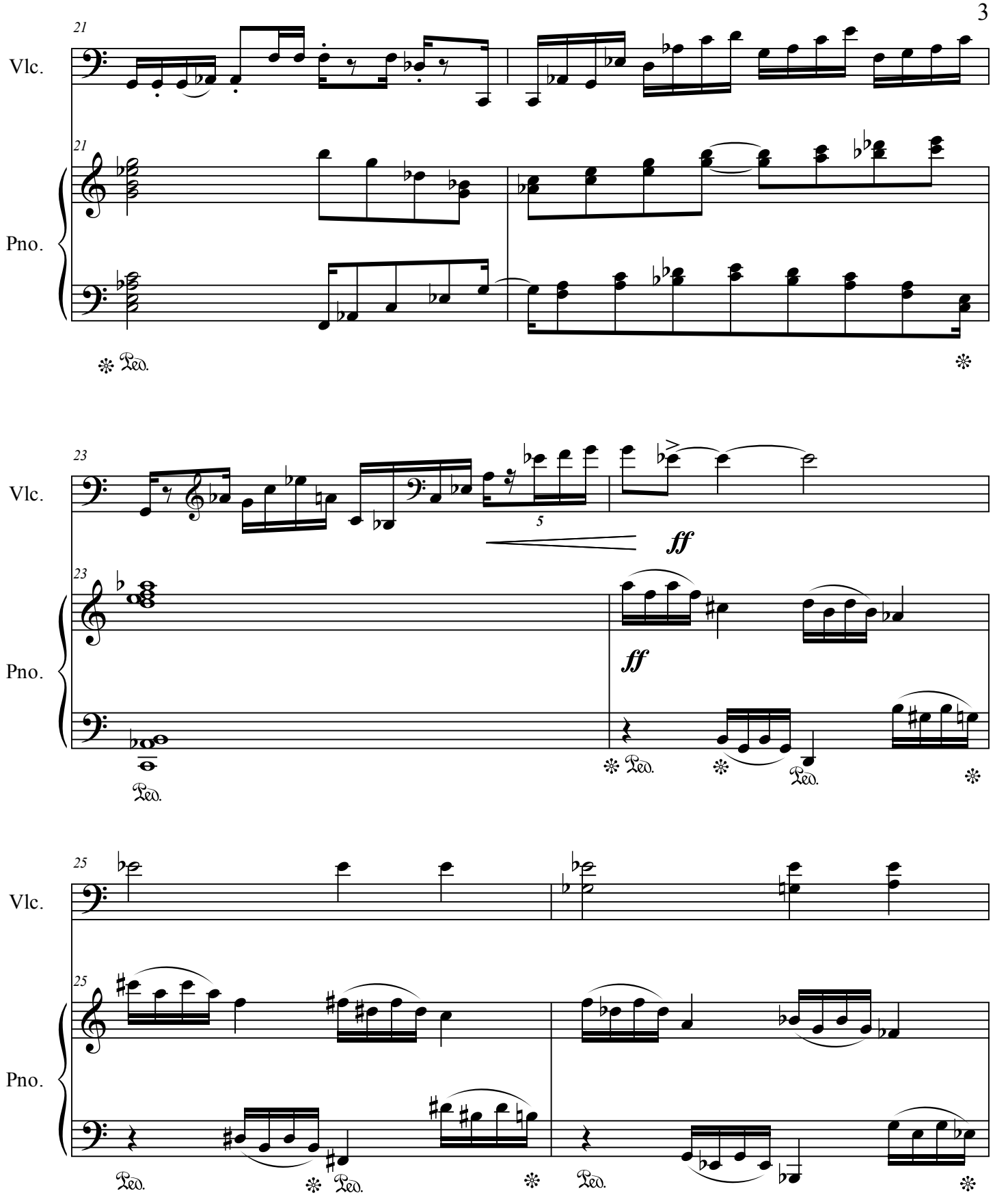
Vlc.
16
Pno.
sffz sffz sffz sffz
Ped.
19
Vlc.
19
Pno.
Ped.
Ped.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Vlc.
21
Pno.
Ped.
23
Vlc.
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ff
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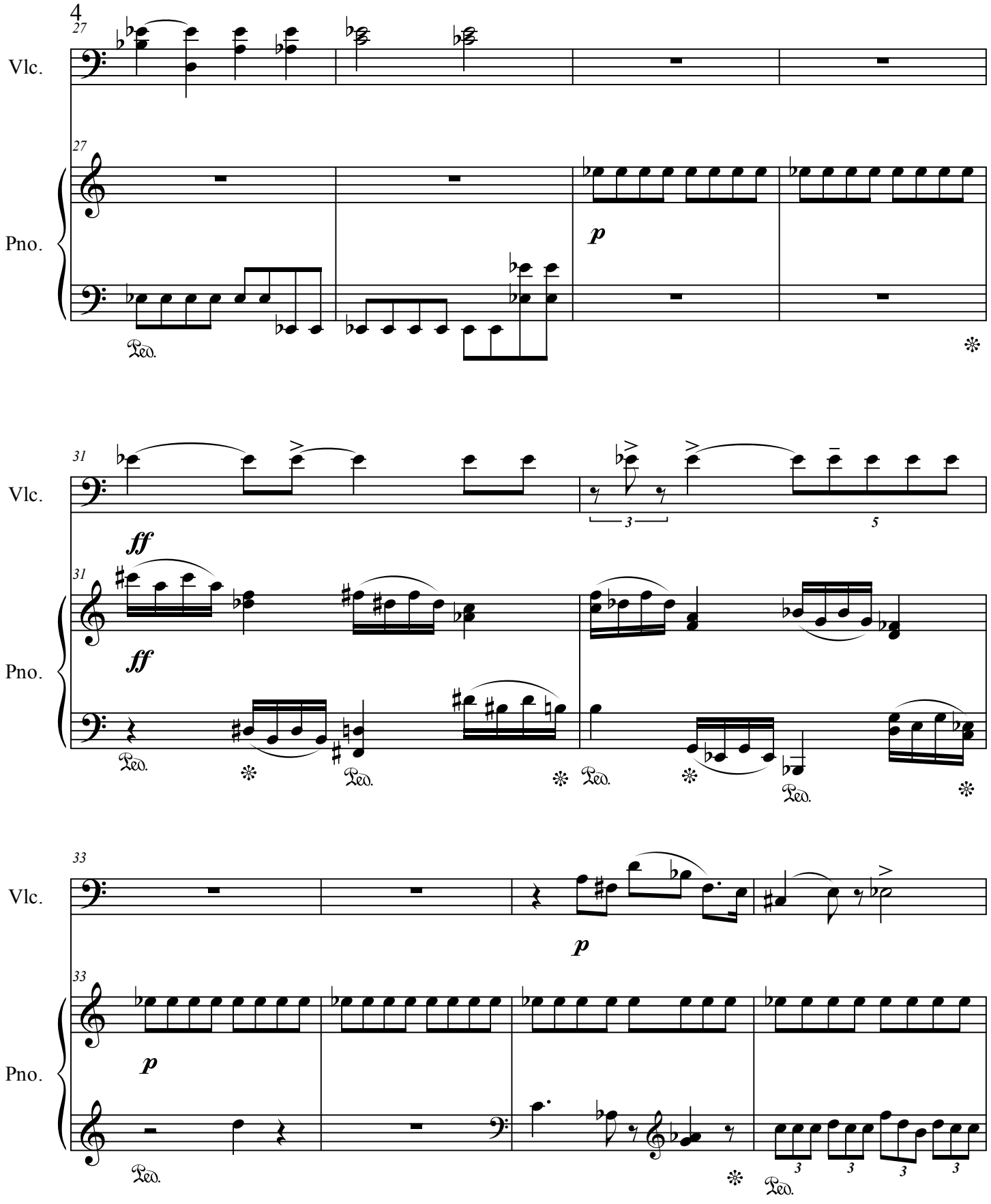
Pno.
ff
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
25
Vlc.
25
Pno.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.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Ped.
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Pno.
ff
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Ped.
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Vlc.
p
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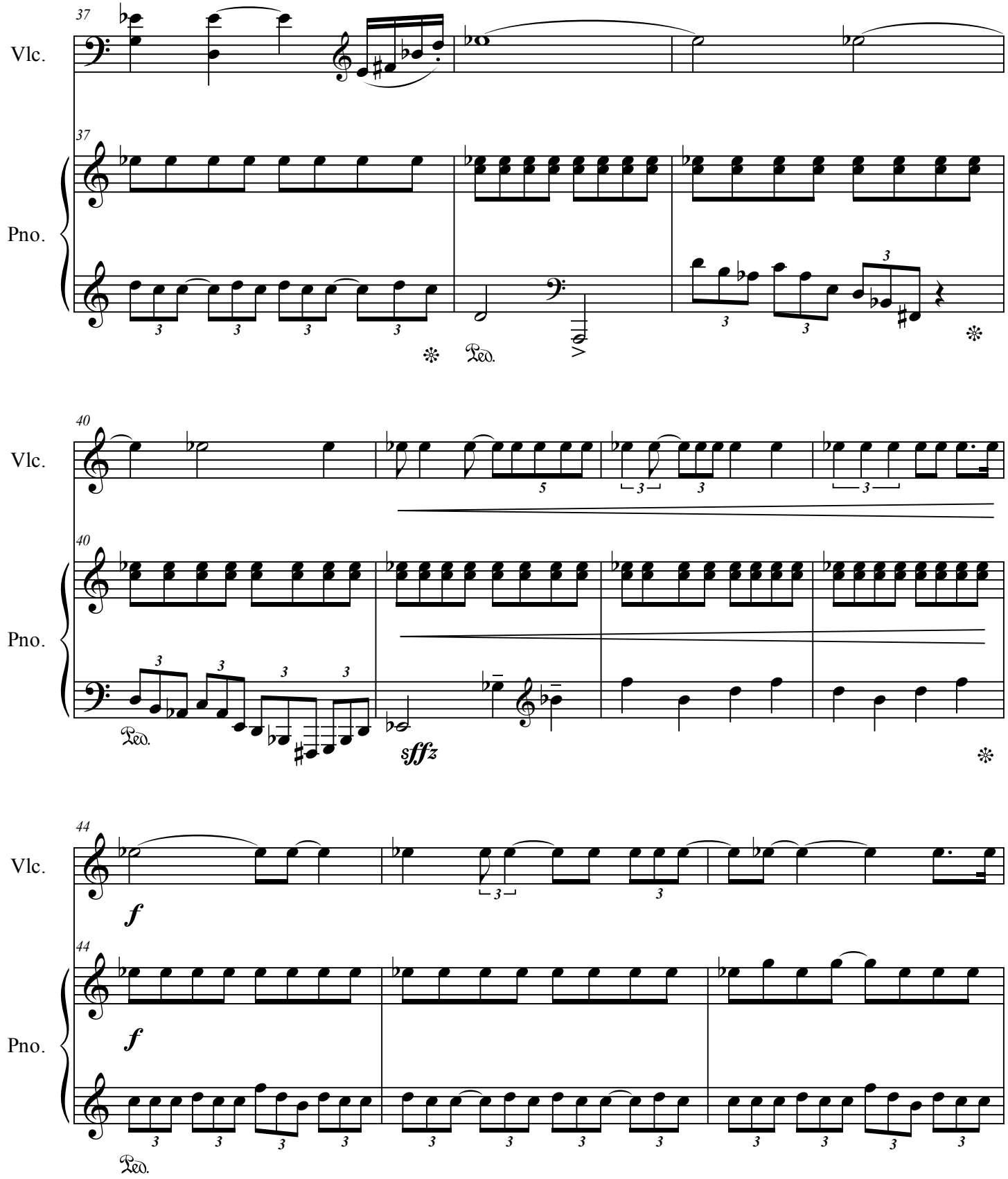
Pno.
p
Ped.
3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Ped.
sffz
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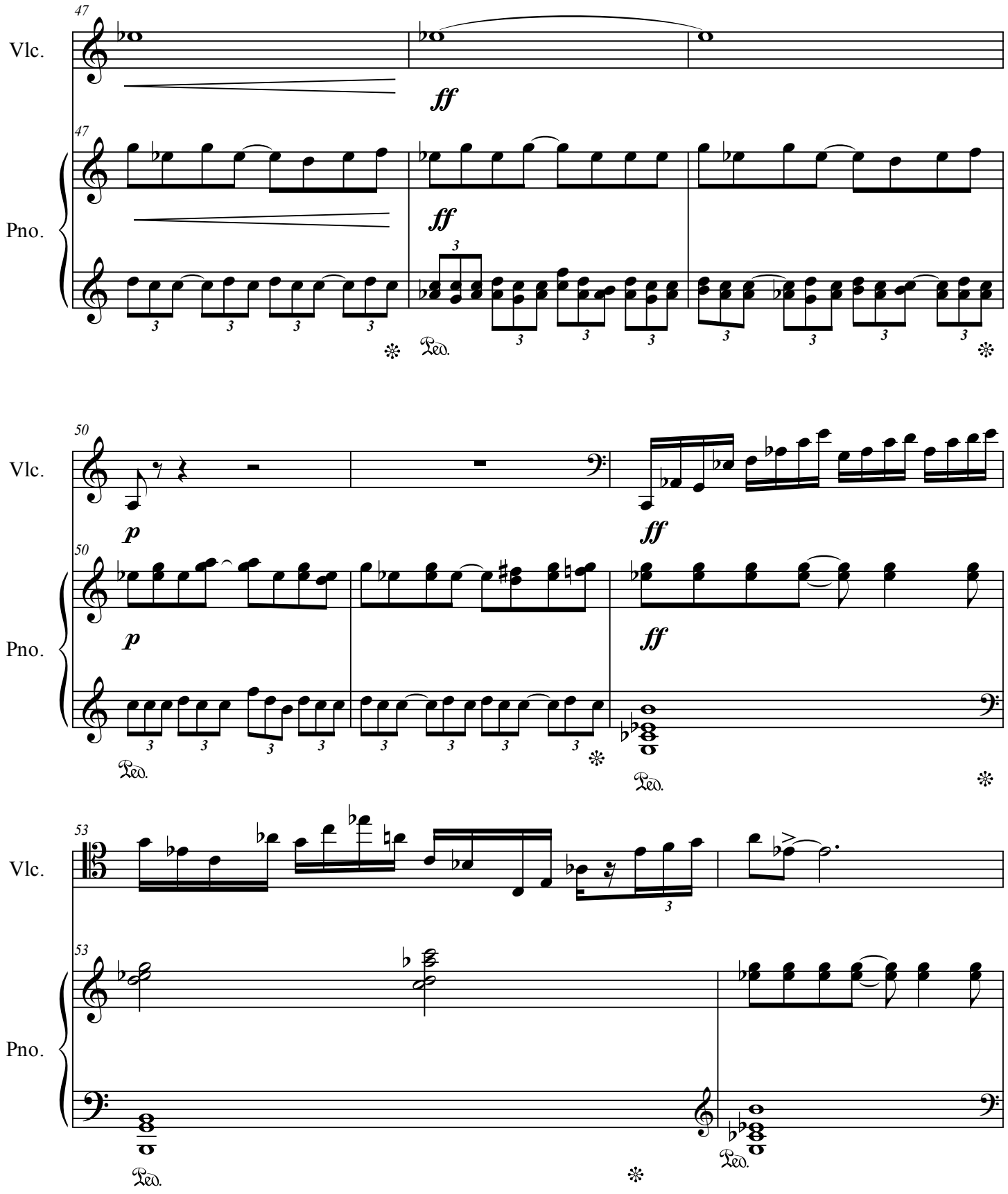
44
Pno.
f
Ped.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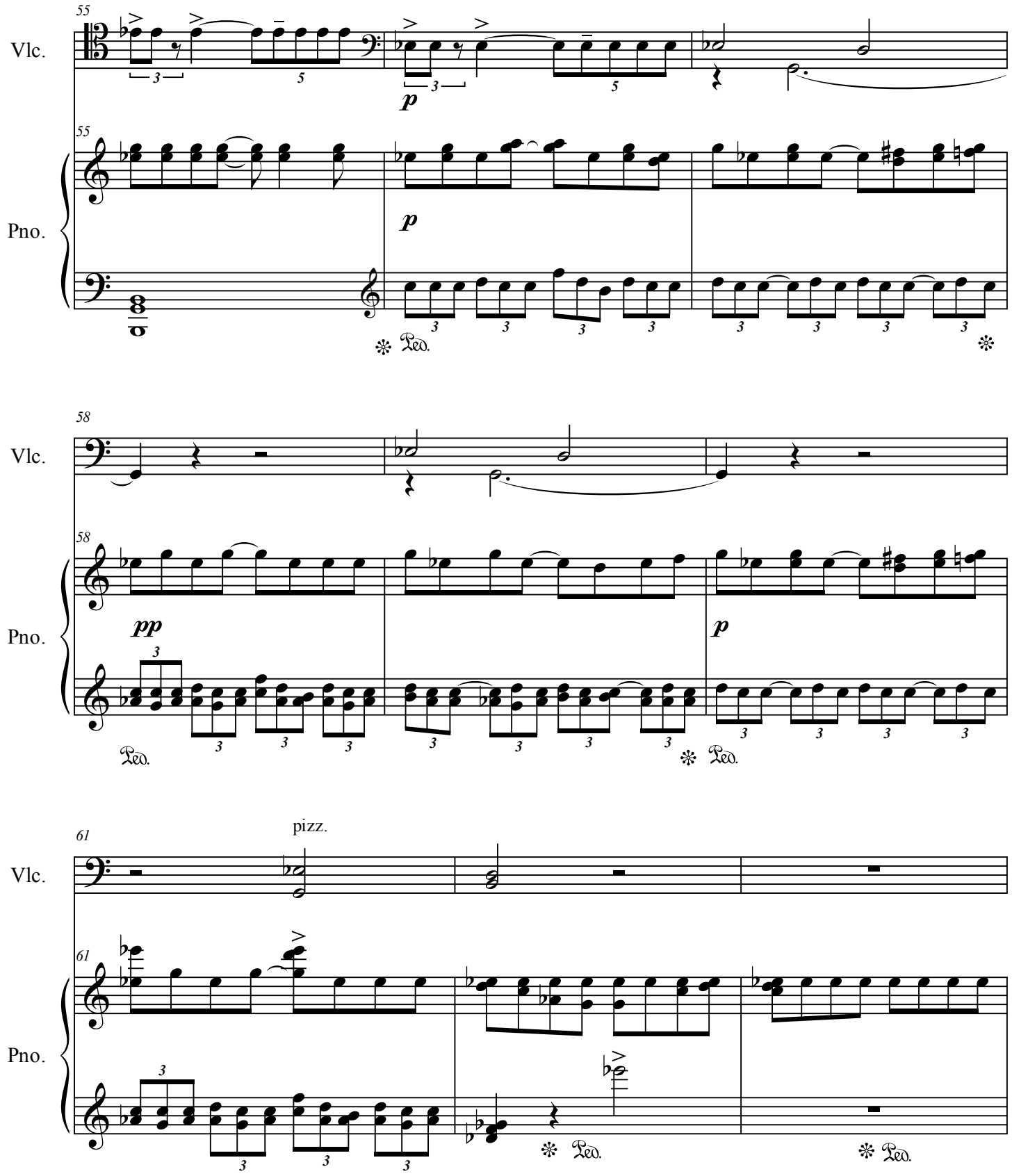
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Vlc.
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Pno.
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Vlc.
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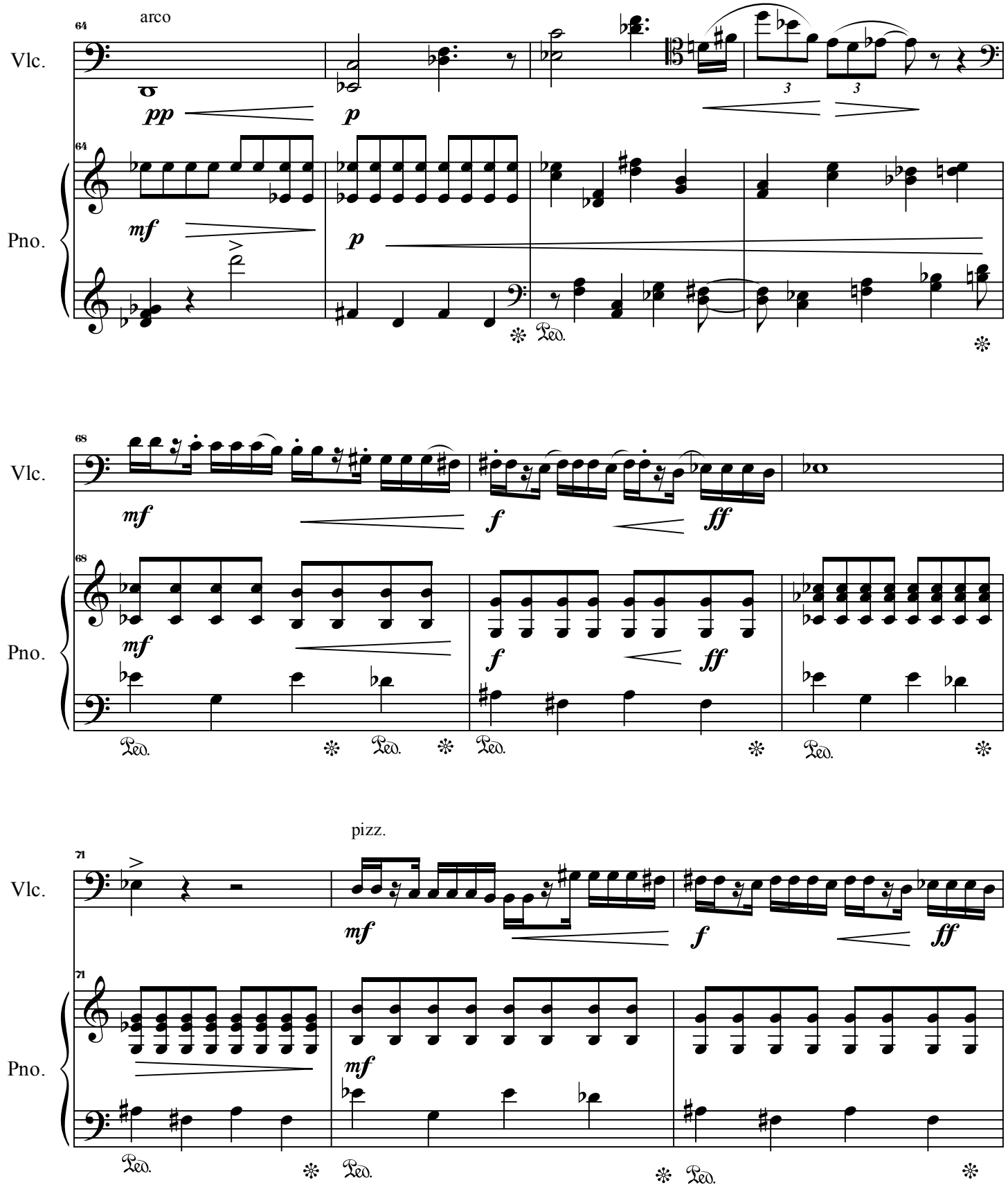
Ped.
Ped.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pp
p
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Pno.
mf
p
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Vlc.
mf
f
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f
ff
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mf
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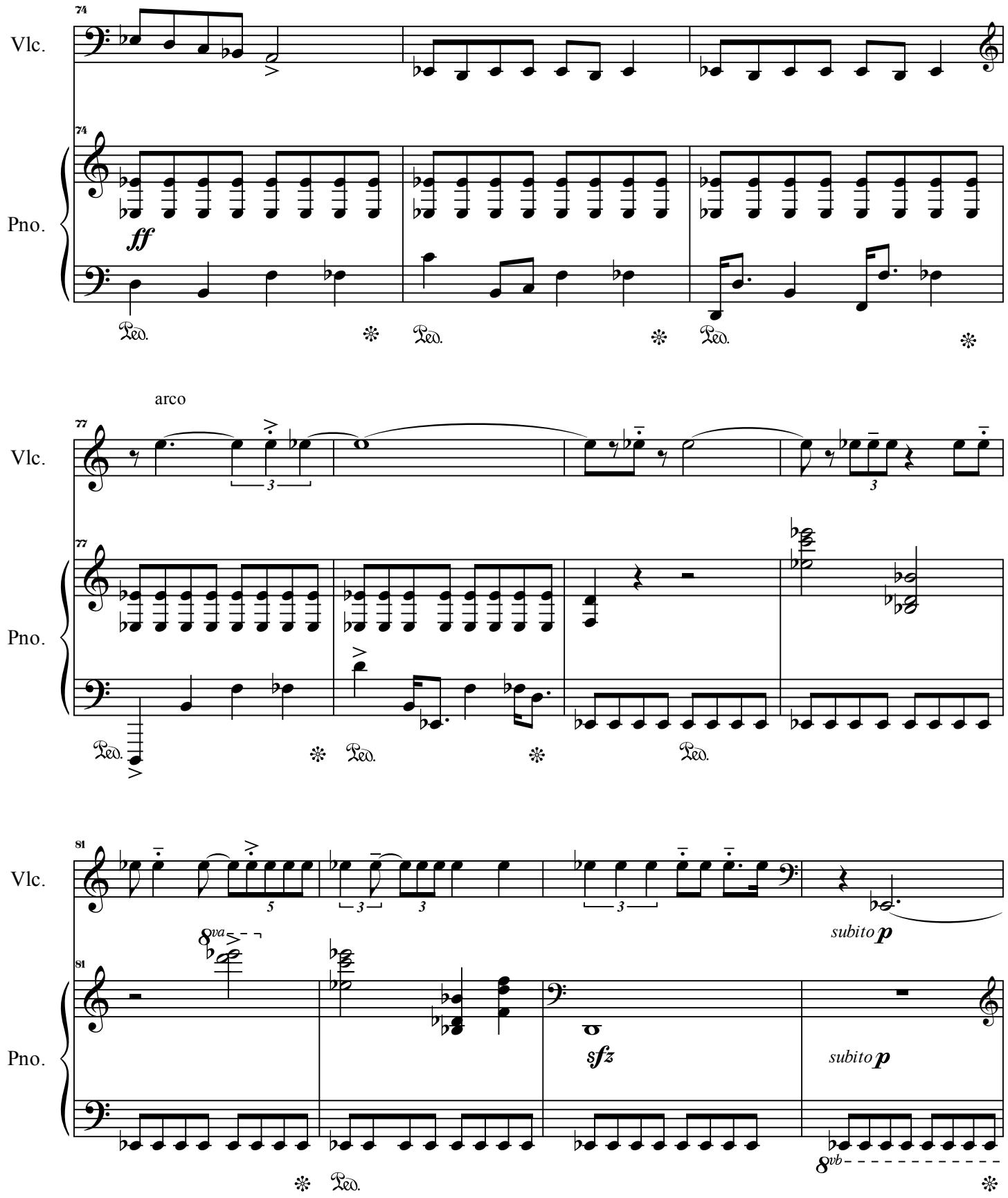
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Vlc.
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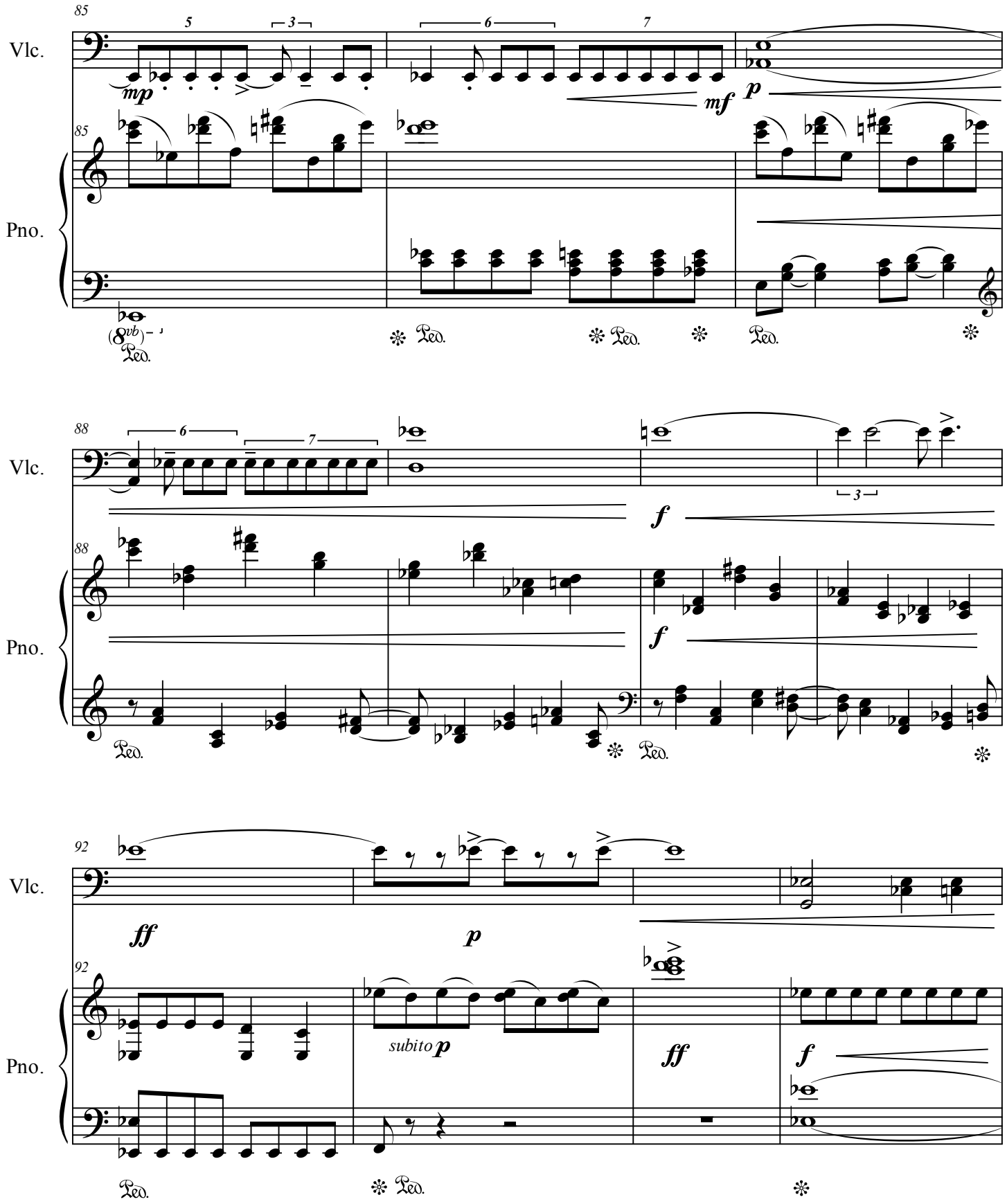
Ped.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p
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Pno.
(8vb)
Ped.
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subito p
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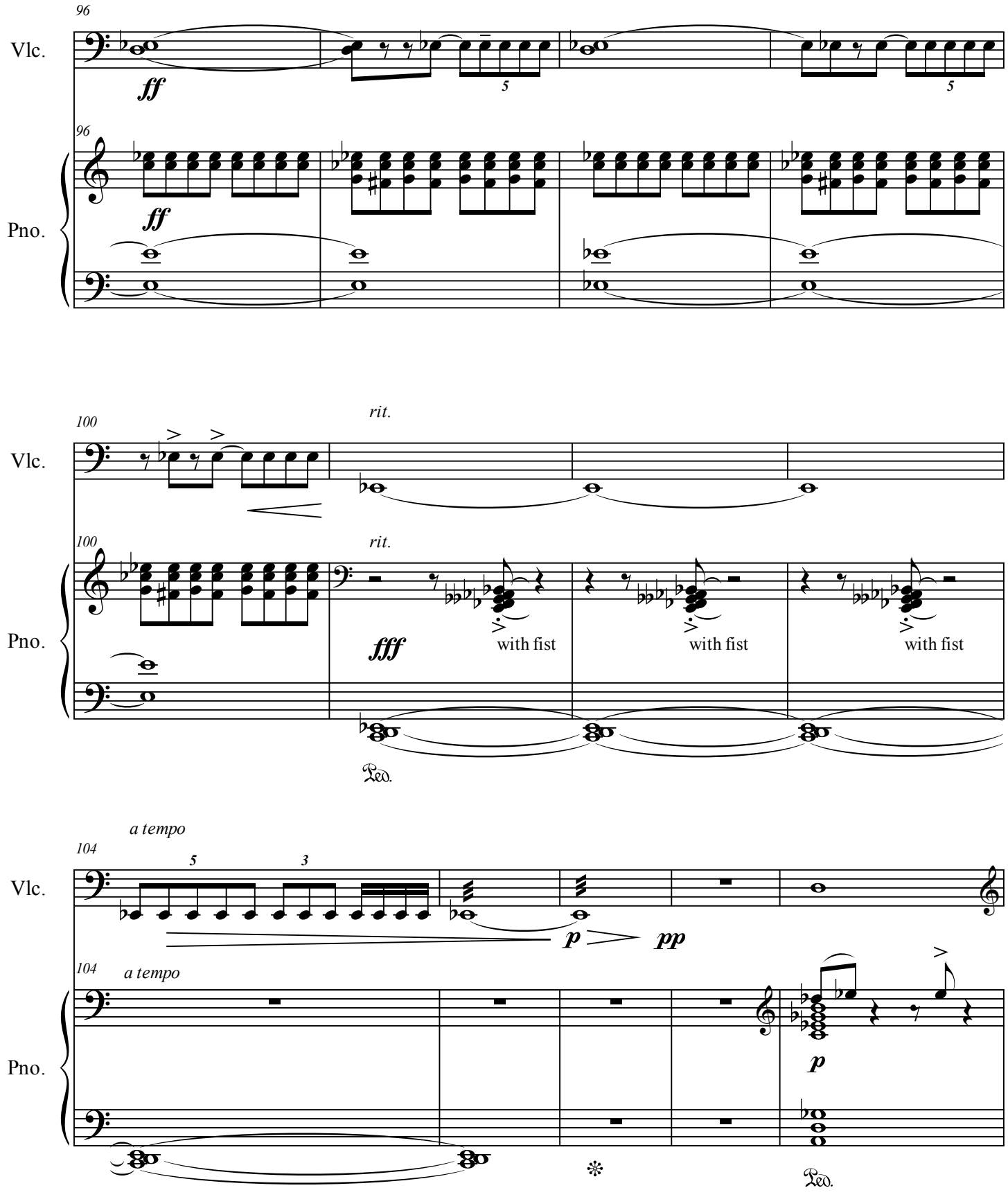
f
Ped.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Vlc.
100
rit.
Pno.
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with fist
with fist
with fist
Ped.
a tempo
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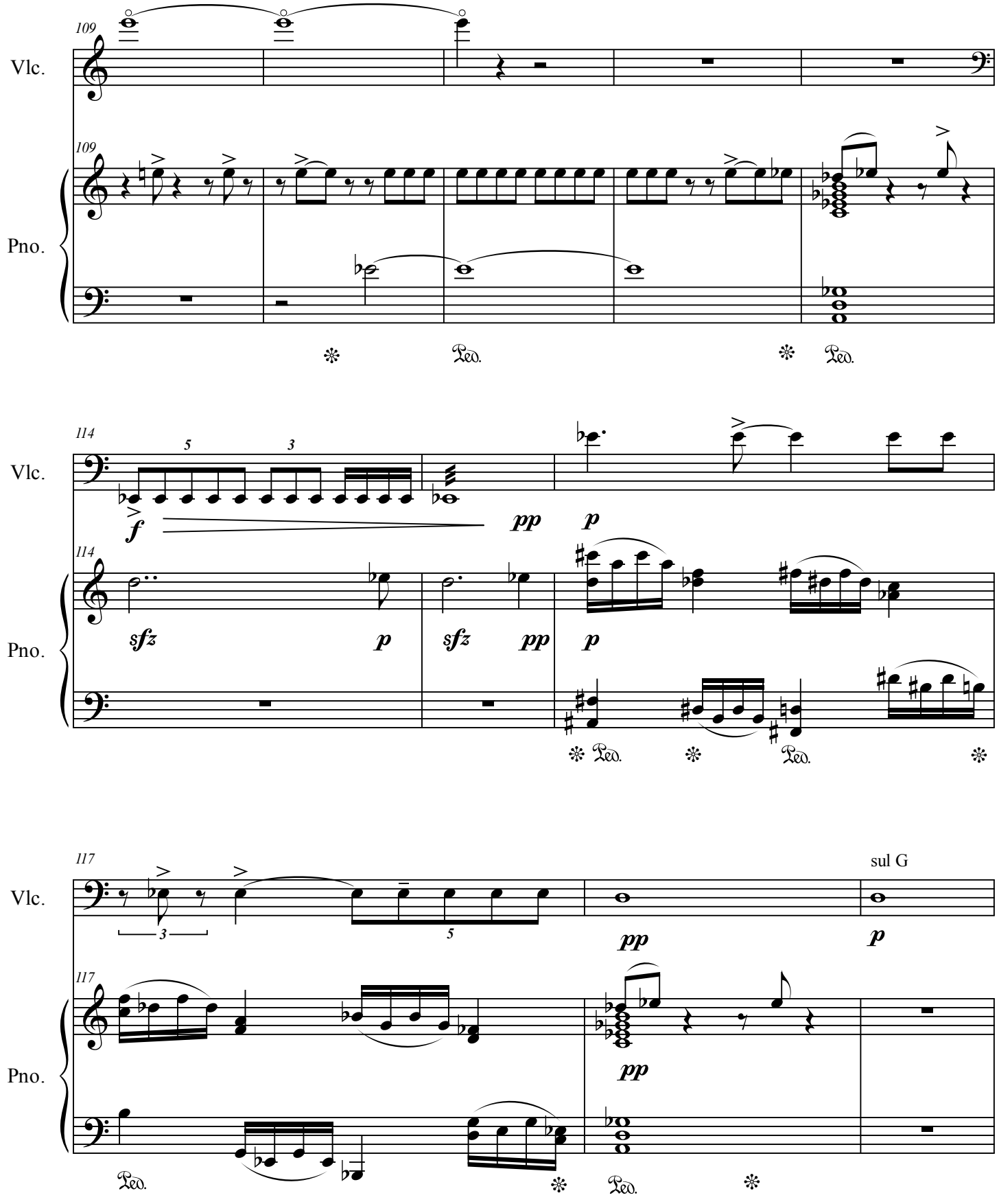
5
3
Vlc.
p
pp
104
a tempo
Pno.
p
Ped.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p
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p
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p
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Pno.
pp
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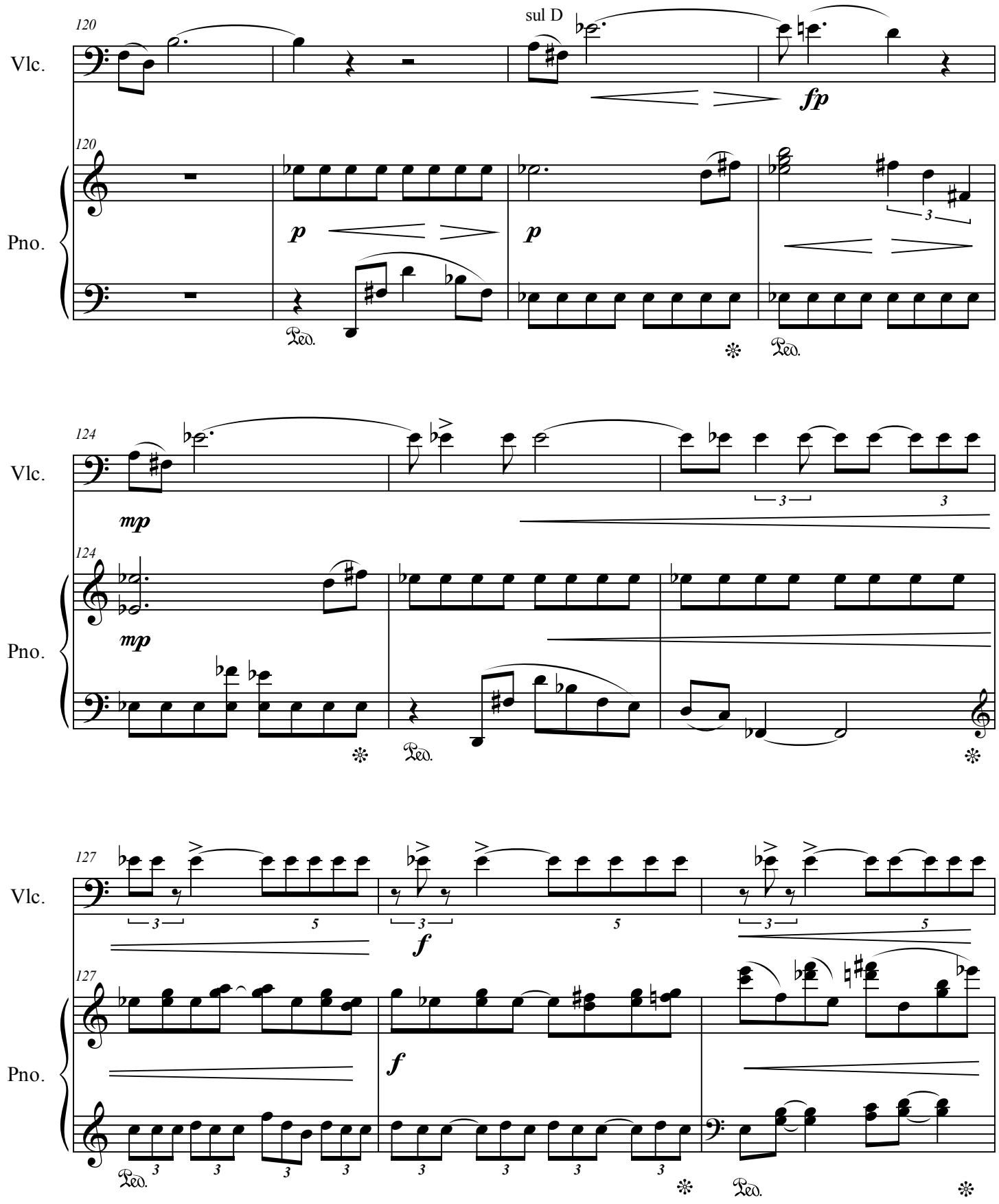
Ped.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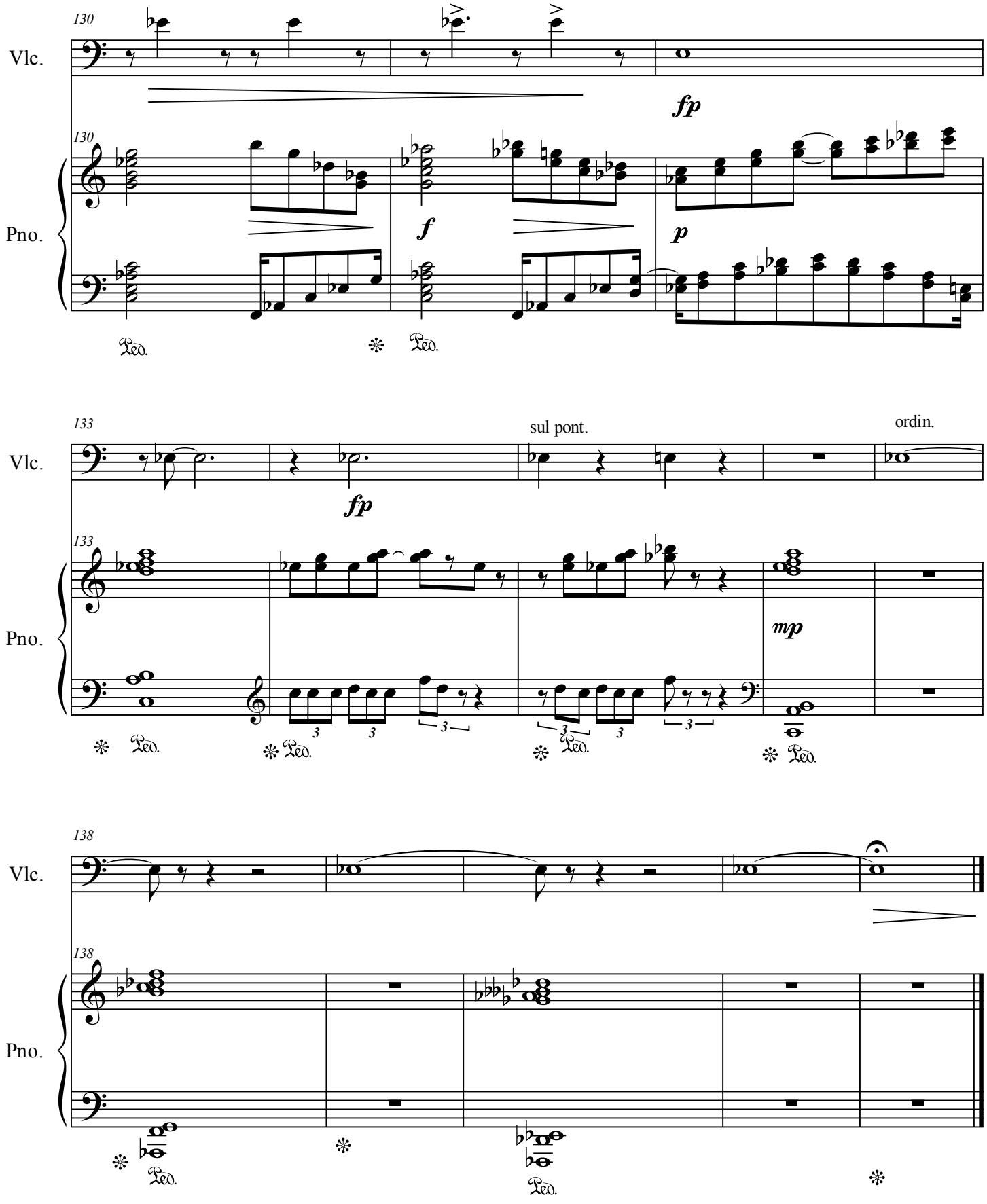
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