Samuel Messer

# in negative

for alto flute, cello and piano

# in negative (2017)

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## Notes

Ensemble co-ordination
Each of the two movements consists of a freely-performed solo part superimposed upon a duo, who play together in strict time. Precise relationships between the instruments are indicated in boxed text. A full description of the interaction between instruments is given here:

In **movement I)**, the cello & piano begin first, playing together in strict time; after a few seconds, the alto flute begins playing freely in a separate tempo. When the cello & piano have finished, the alto flute is asked to continue playing freely for a short time (approximately 3/4 phrases). The alto flute should begin in the background, gradually coming to the fore, before being left to play alone at the end of the movement.

In **movement II)**, the alto flute & cello begin first, playing together in strict time; after a few seconds the piano begins, playing freely in a separate tempo. The piano should remain in the background throughout, playing alone for a short time at the end of the movement.

* * * * * * * *

*in negative* (a short work written for the Marsyas Trio) takes as its form two distinct movements, each consisting of a freely-performed solo part superimposed upon a duo, who play together in strict time. The form and title of the piece naturally invite the listener to compare the two halves, and one strand of the work explores the splintering & displacing of connections between different types of material.

In the first movement, the two instruments linked by a common pulse are the cello and piano, which share and decorate a bright melodic line. As this flowing, constellation-like series of figurations unfolds, we progressively become aware of the presence of the alto flute, whose shadowy gestures gradually unravel into a plaintive, folk-like melody. The second movement presents a different image: here the alto flute is accompanied by pizzicato cello, playing a melody which seems more closely linked to its opening material. Behind this, unnervingly distorted echoes of earlier gestures are heard in the piano.

Other influences on the composition of the work were the quality of the light on the dim, cold mornings in early 2017 in which it was composed, and Junichirō Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*, both of which suggested the possibility for beauty to be found in a different, more subdued luminescence.

Duration: c. 5'.

Score in C.

# in negative

for alto flute, cello and piano

## I.

Cello & piano begin first. Alto flute begins a few seconds afterwards, playing independently.

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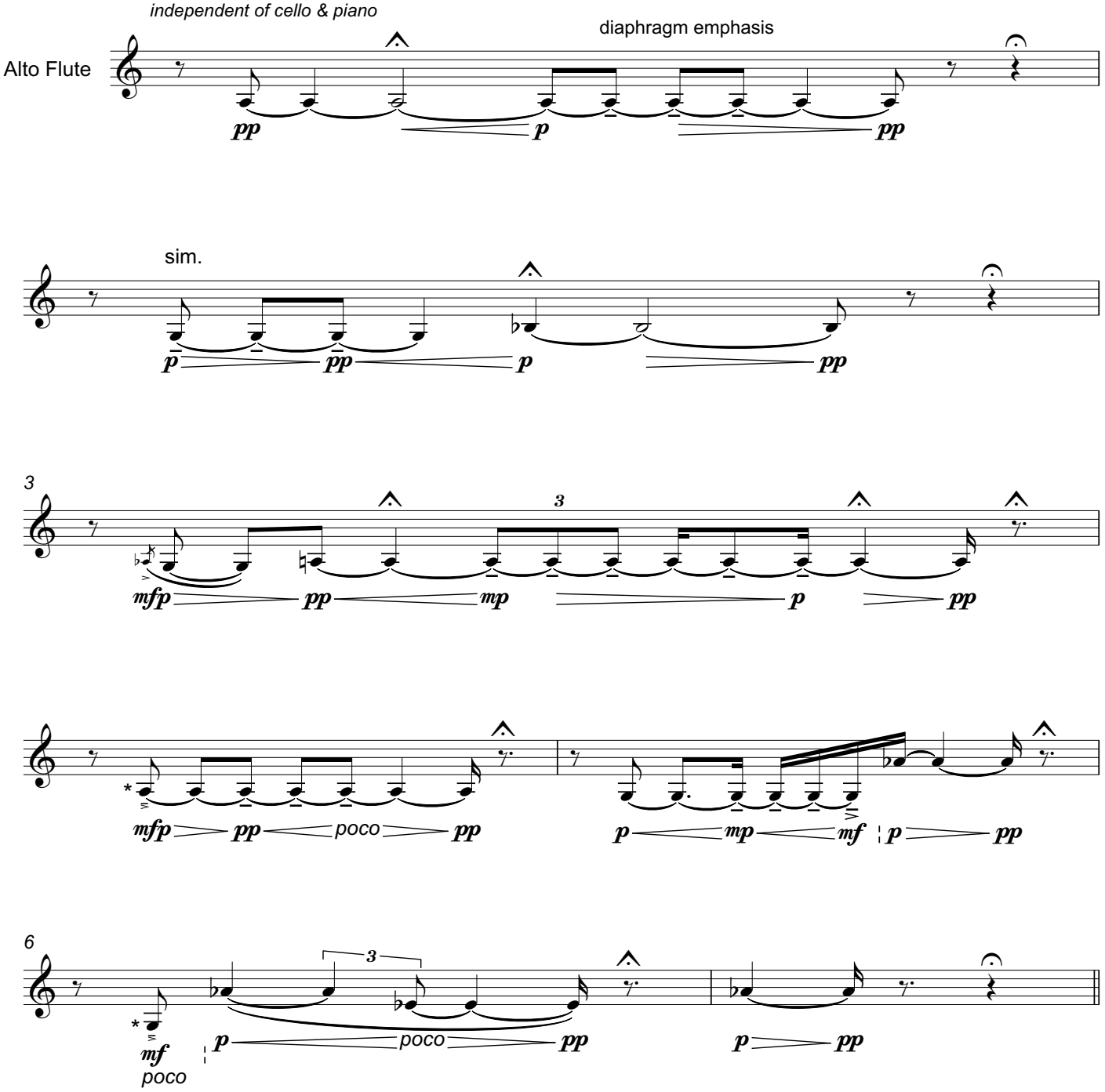
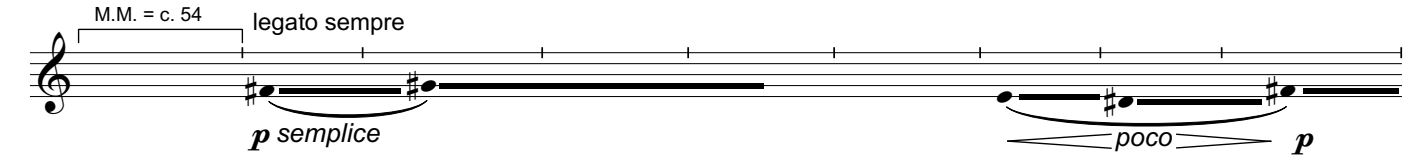
**♩ = c. 54; emerging gently**

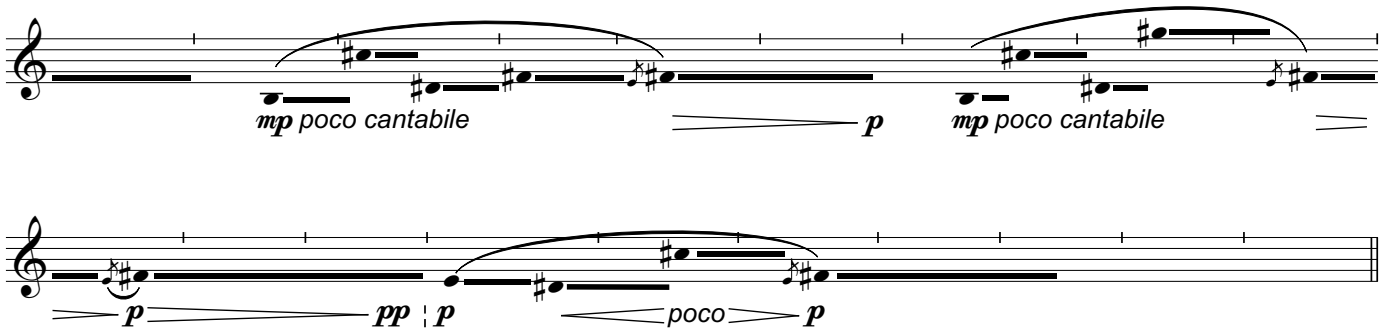
*independent of cello & piano*




**freely, softly, but in foreground**



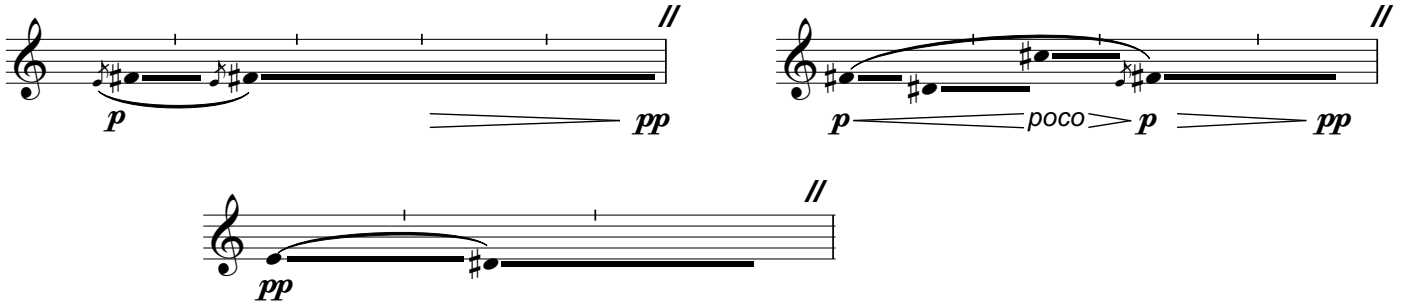

* Soft accent using diaphragm pressure only (do not tongue).







Play following phrases ad lib., in any order, repeating as desired. When piano stops, play solo for a little while (3/4 phrases), then finish.



Cello & Piano

# in negative

for alto flute, cello and piano

I.

Cello & piano begin first. Alto flute begins a few seconds afterwards, playing independently.

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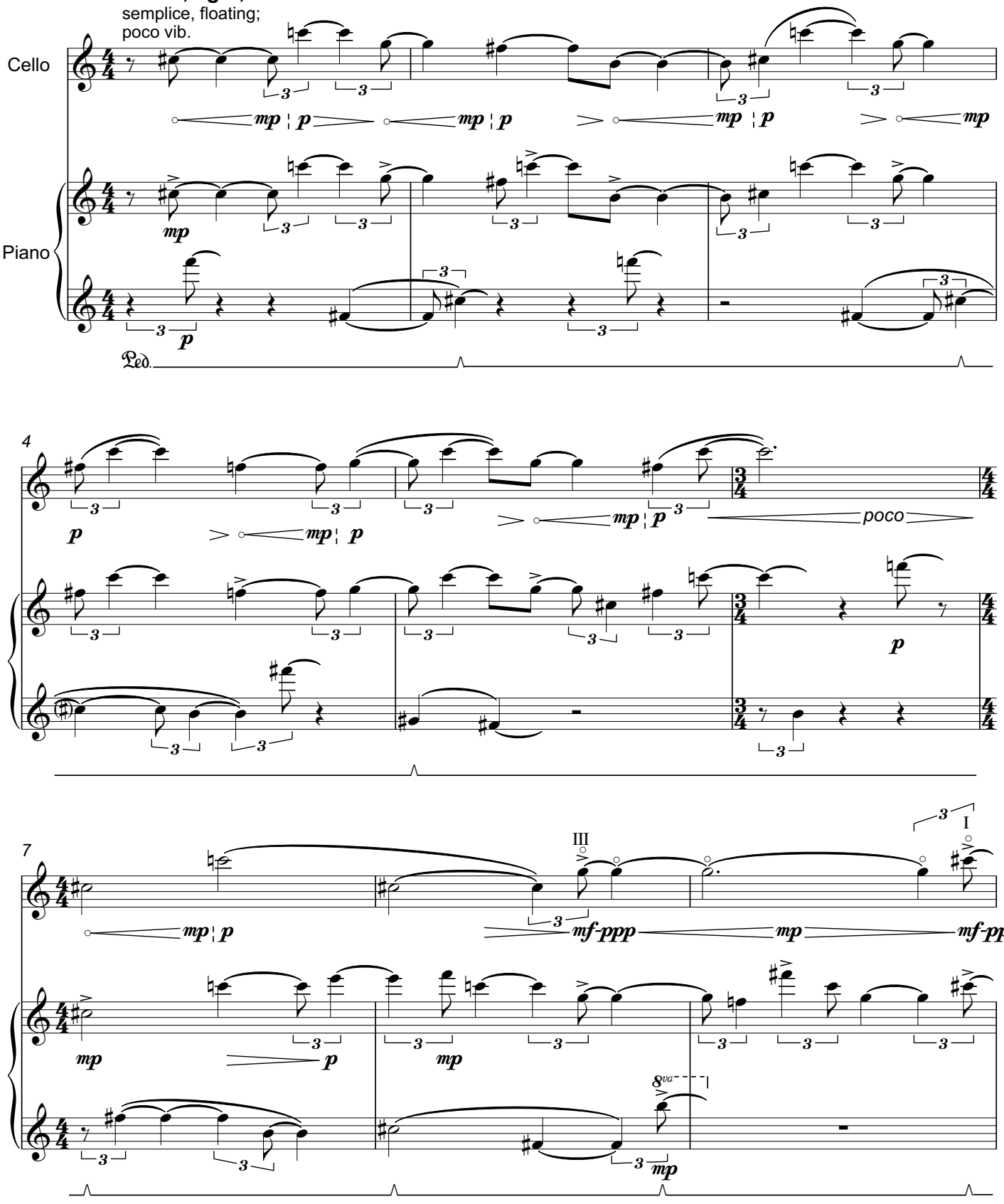
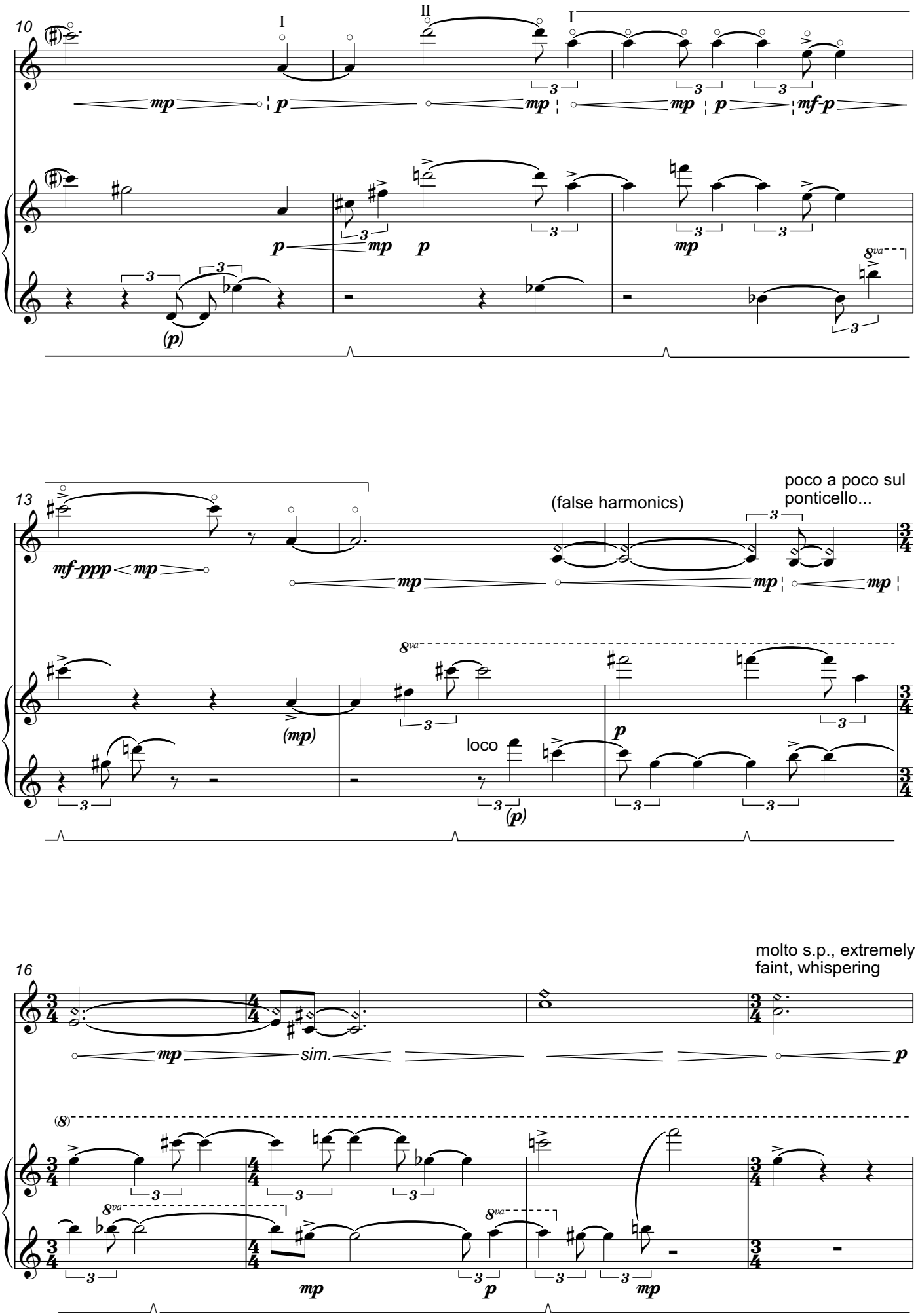
♩ = c. 84; light, resonant

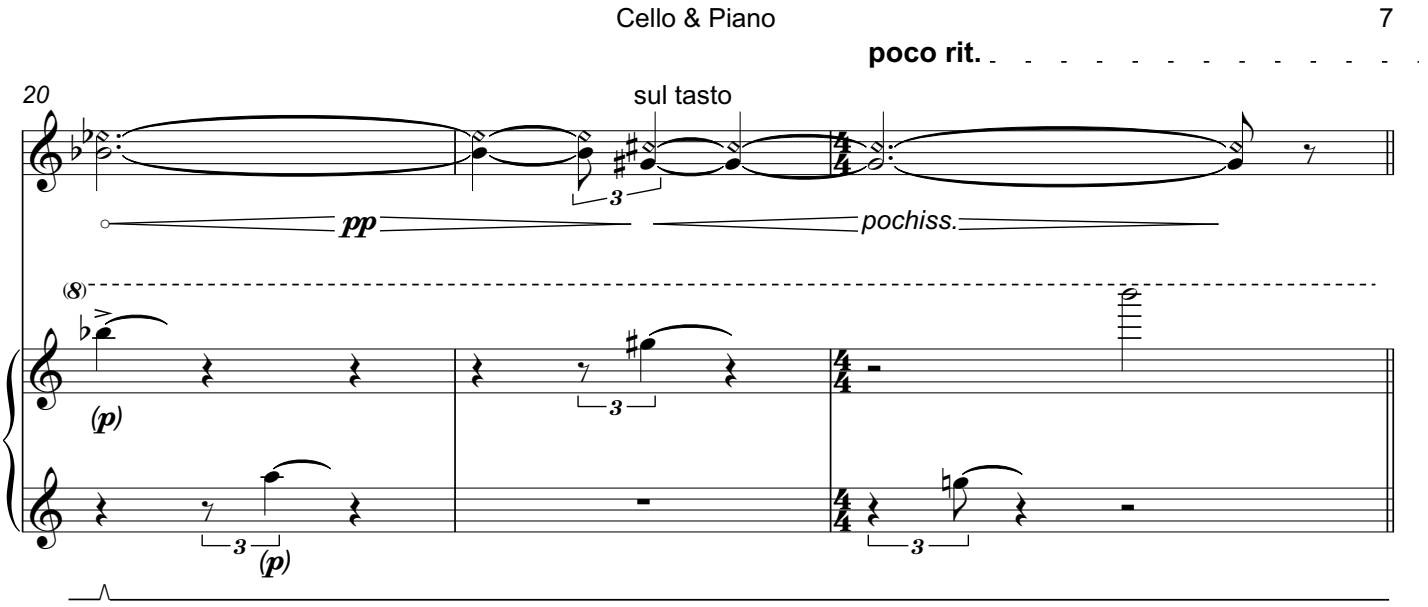
semplice, floating;
poco vib.

Cello

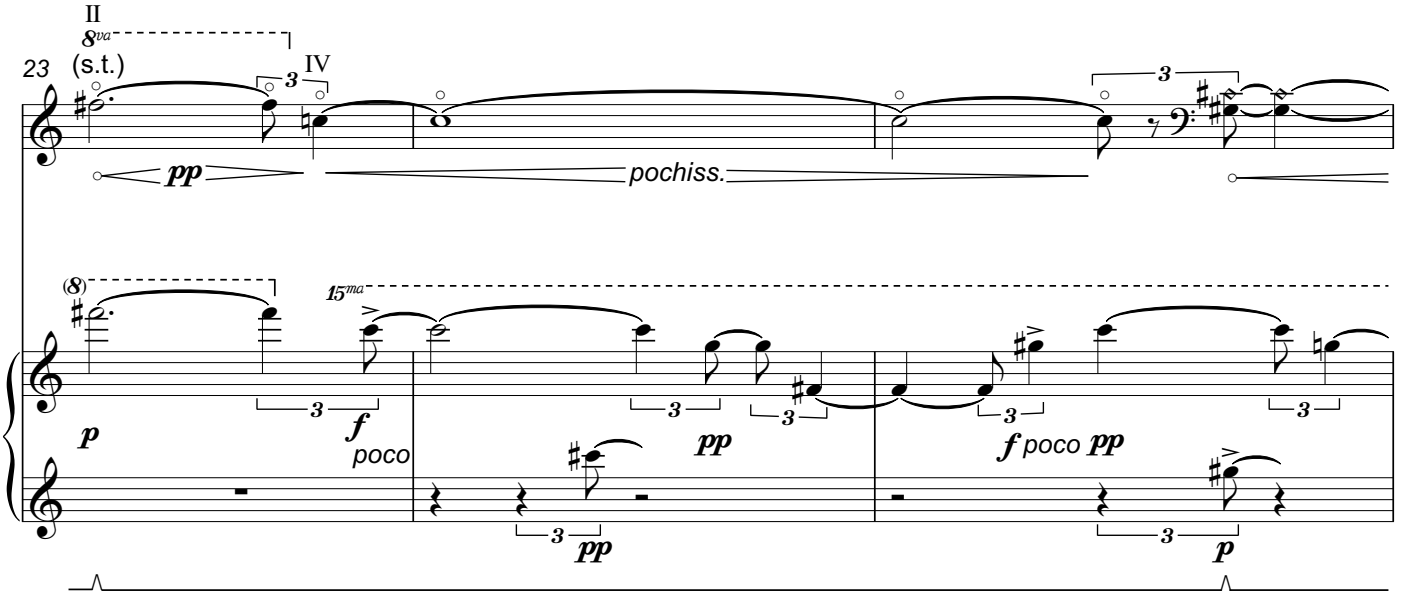
Piano

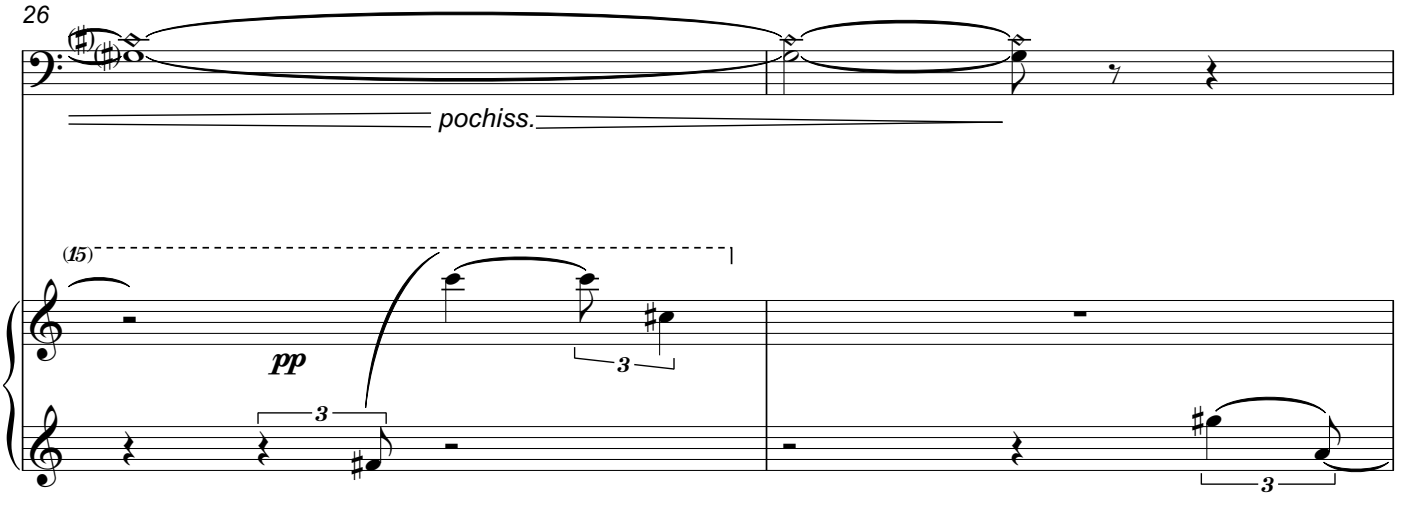



10
I
II
I
13
(false harmonics)
poco a poco sul ponticello...
loco
16
molto s.p., extremely faint, whispering
sim.

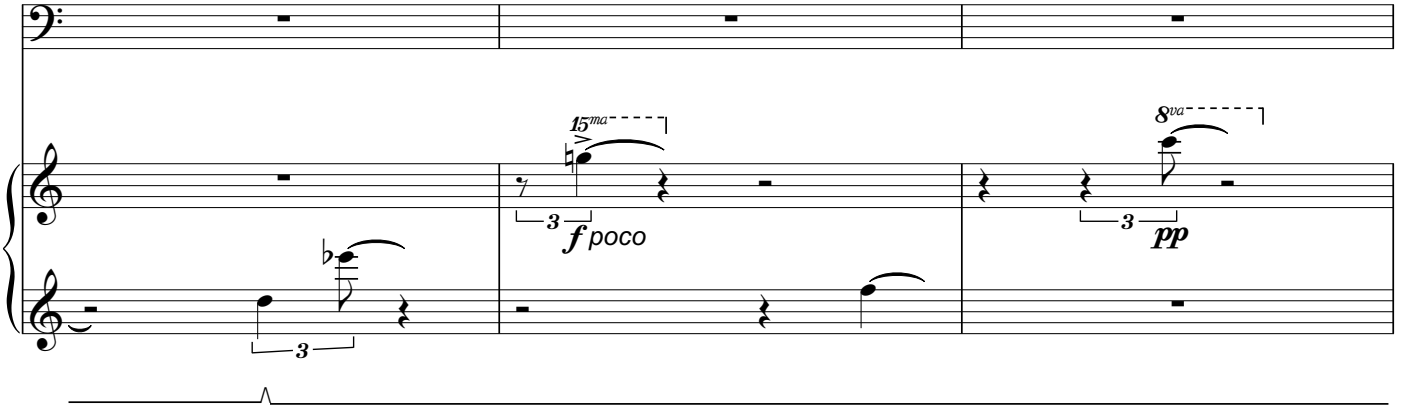



♩ = c. 72; echoing, becoming more brittle

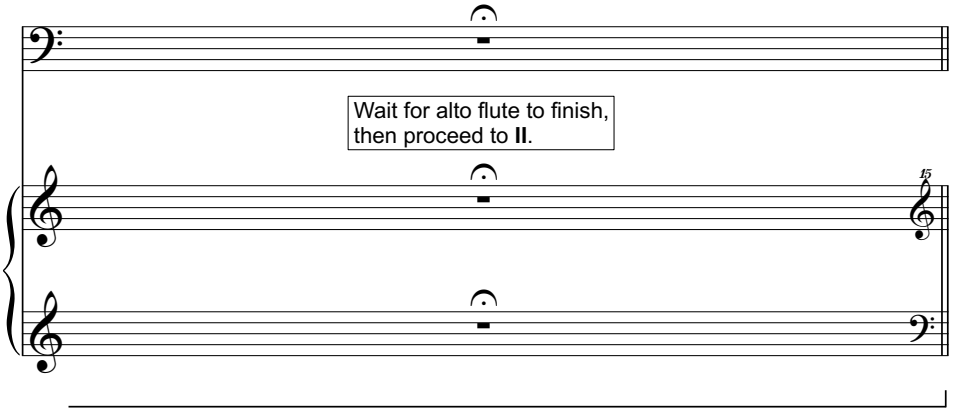


28


15ma
8va
3
3
3
f poco
pp

31

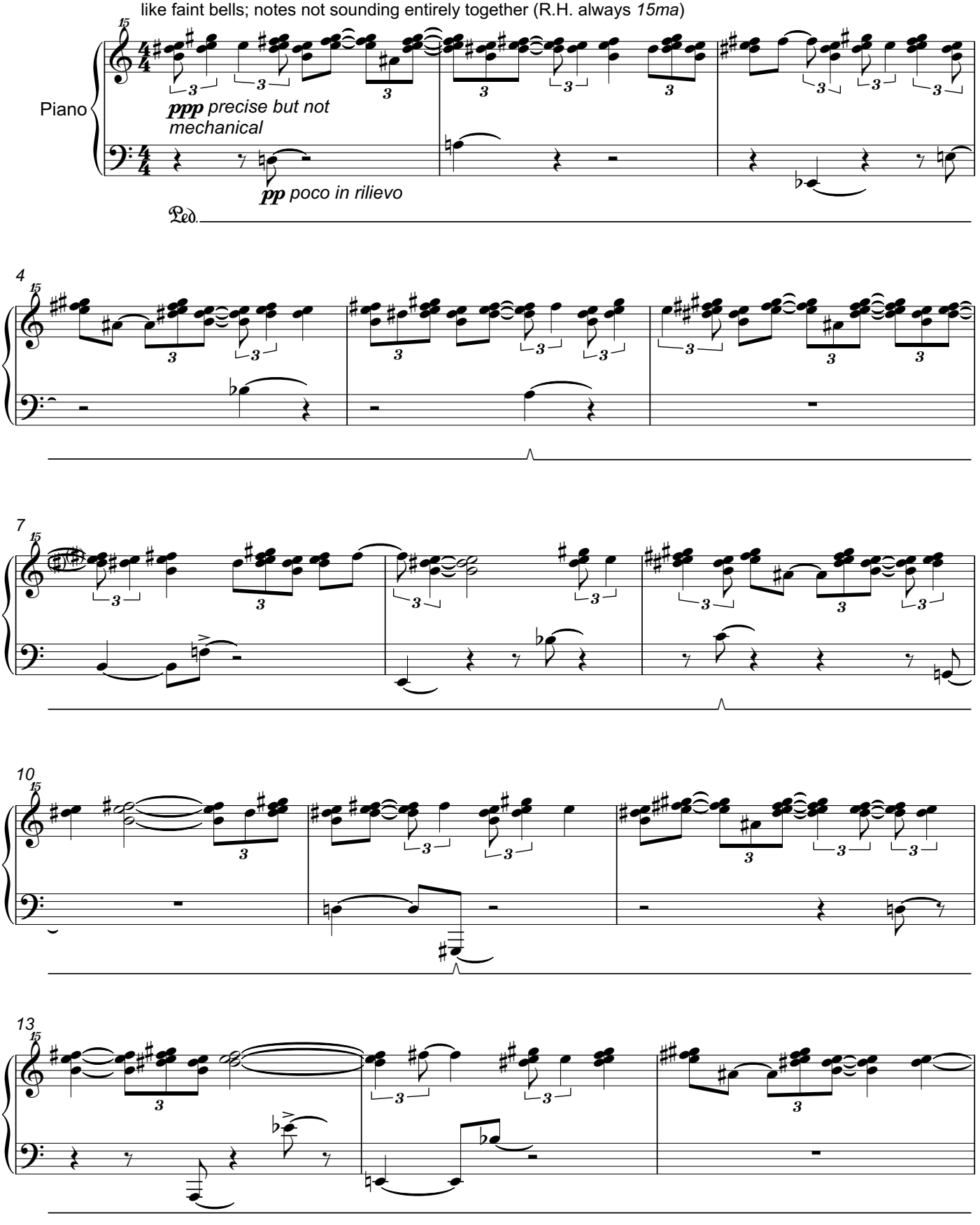

Wait for alto flute to finish,
then proceed to **II**.
15

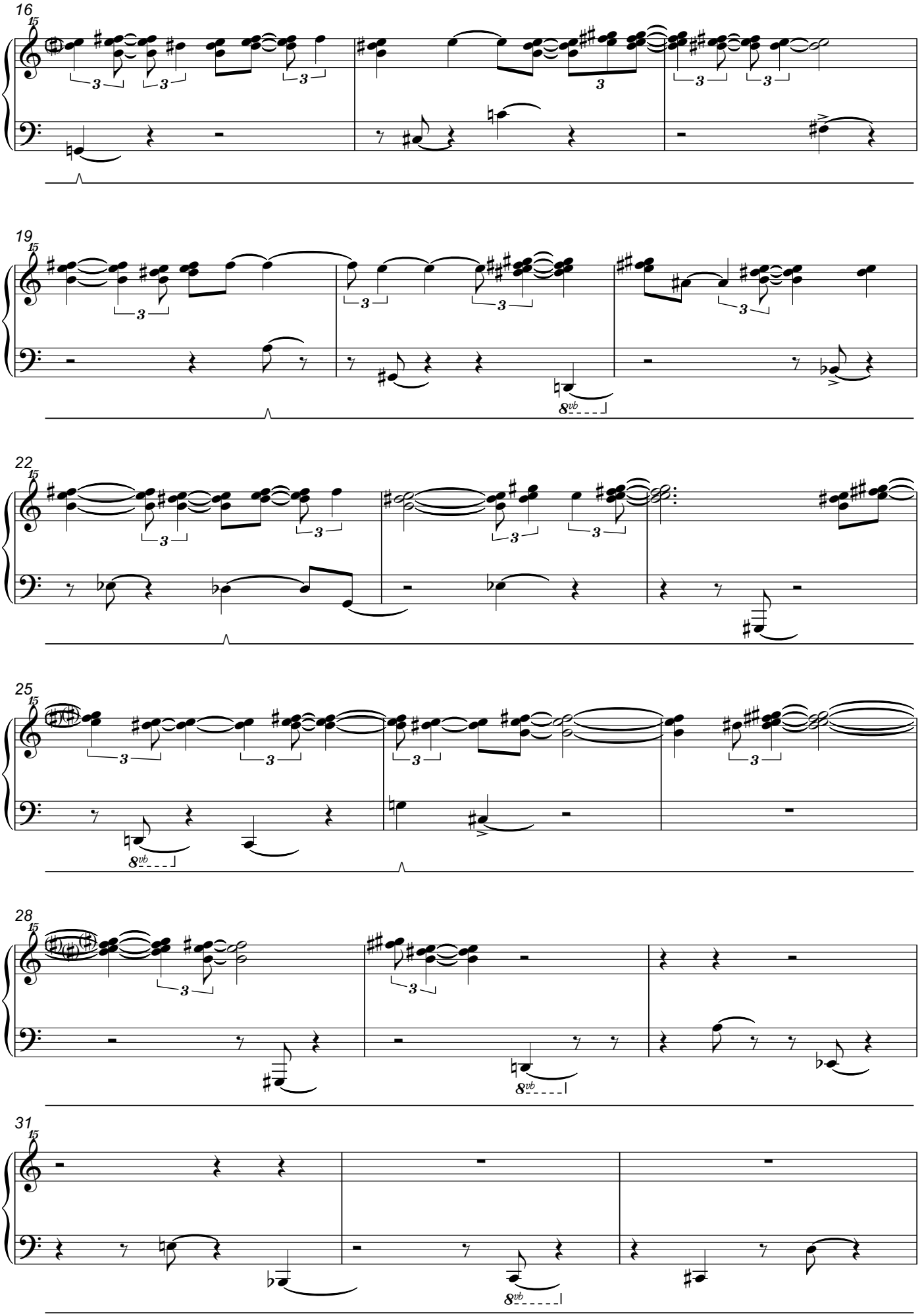
# II.

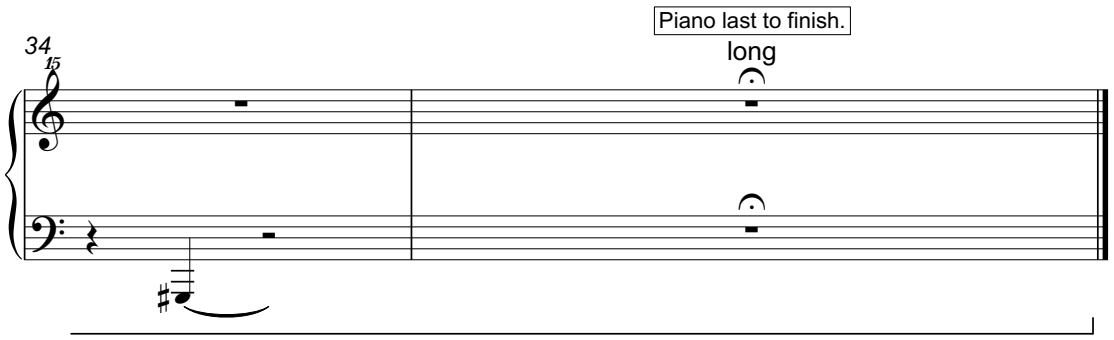
Alto flute & cello begin first. Piano begins a few seconds afterwards, playing independently.

**♩ = c. 54; shadowy, sotto voce**

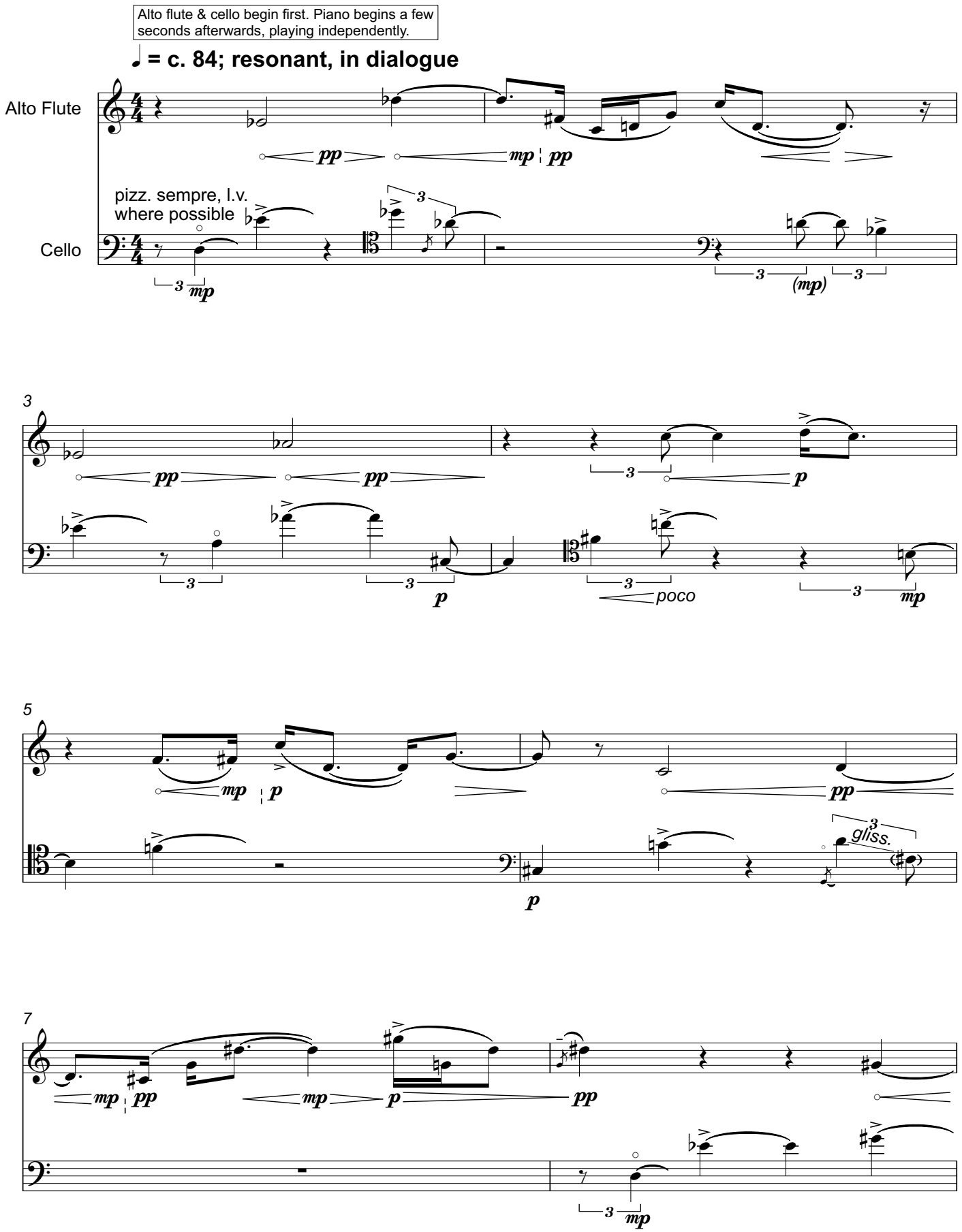
like faint bells; notes not sounding entirely together (R.H. always *15ma*)

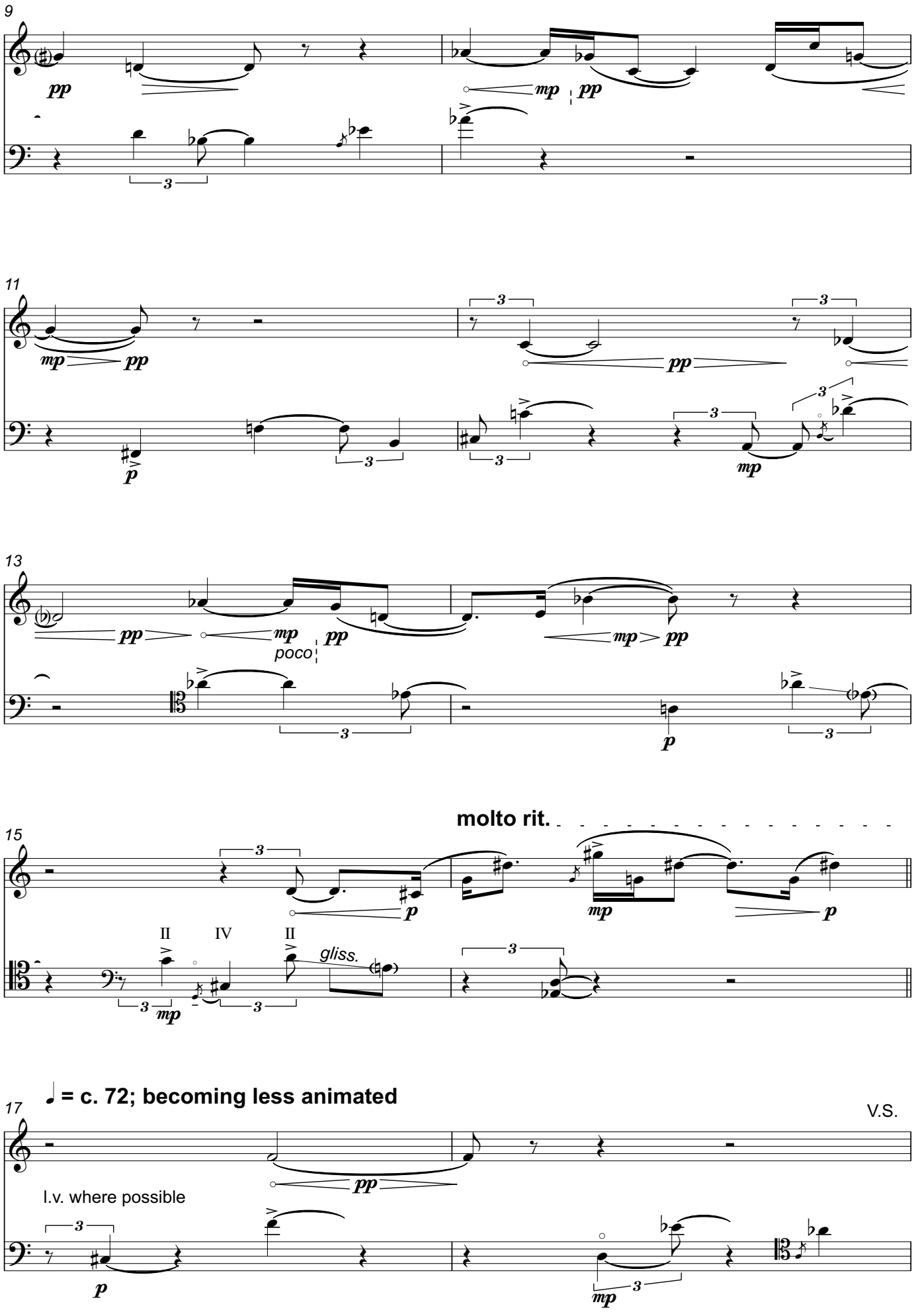


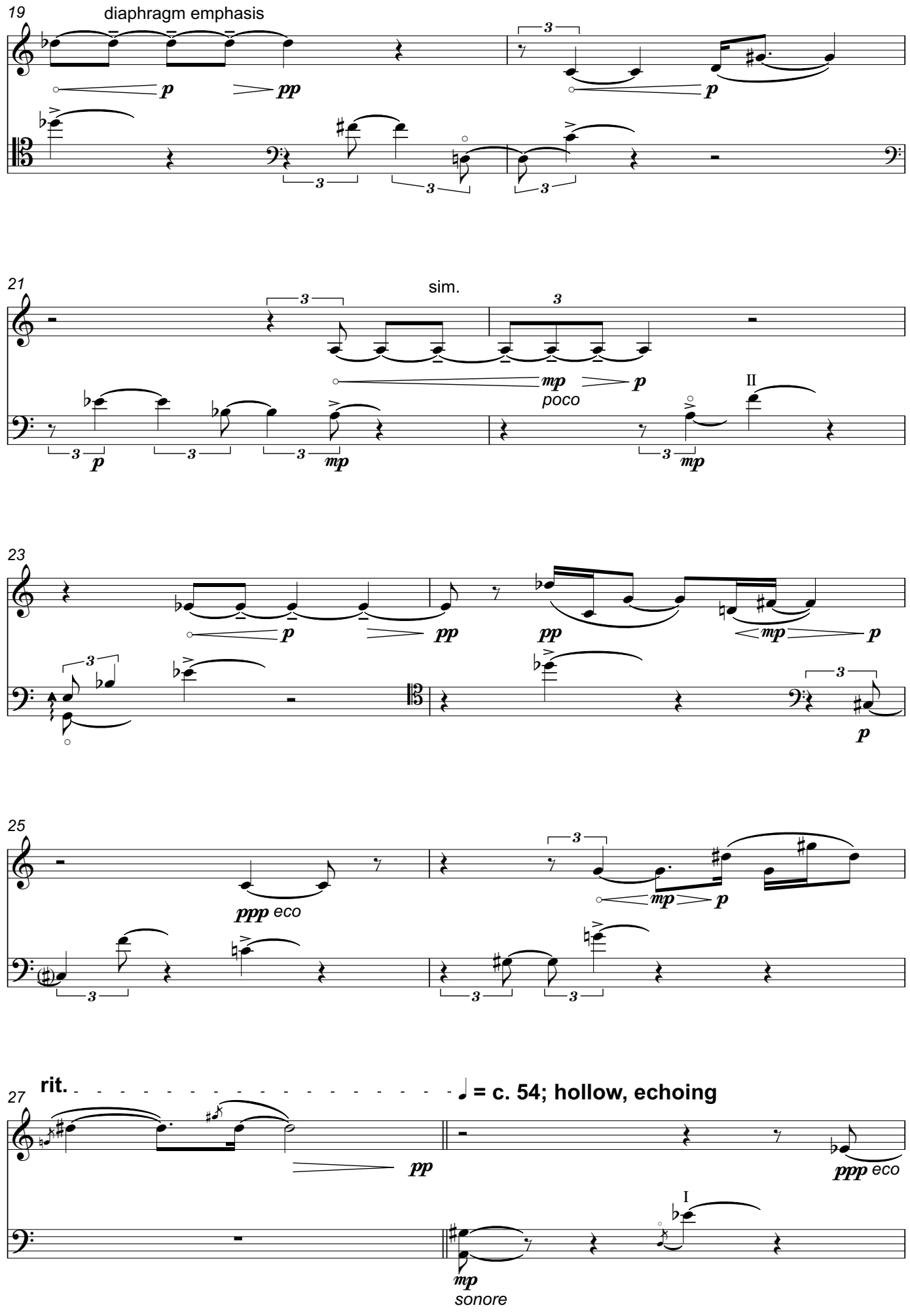

16
19
22
25
28
31

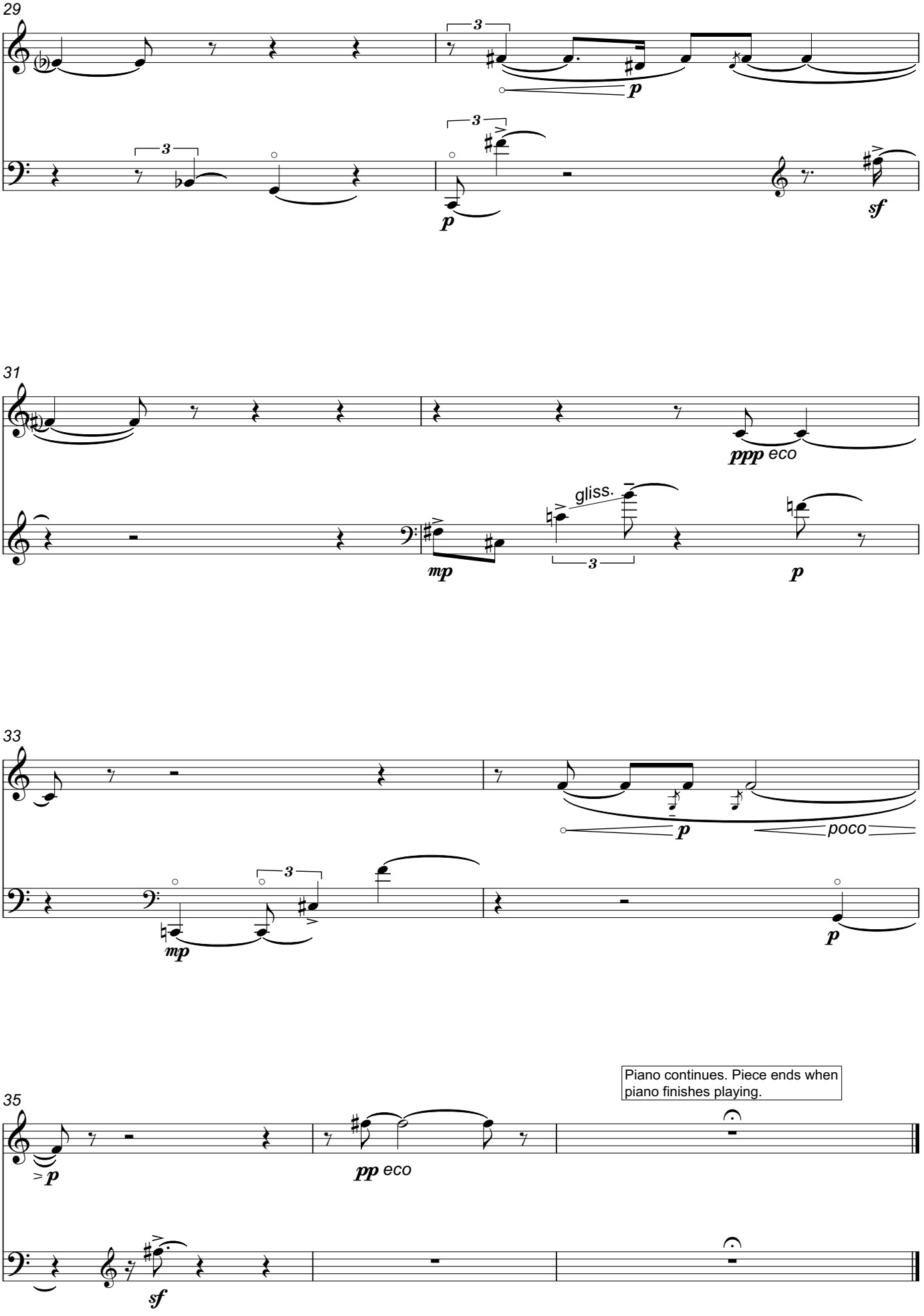

Piano last to finish.
long
34
15

# II.


Alto flute & cello begin first. Piano begins a few seconds afterwards, playing independently.
♩ = c. 84; resonant, in dialogue
Alto Flute
Cello
pizz. sempre, l.v. where possible
poco
gliss.


9
pp
mp
pp
11
mp
pp
pp
p
mp
13
pp
mp
poco
pp
mp
pp
p
molto rit.
15
p
mp
p
II
IV
II
gliss.
mp
17
♩ = c. 72; becoming less animated
V.S.
pp
l.v. where possible
p
mp


19
diaphragm emphasis
p
pp
p
21
sim.
mp
p
poco
II
p
mp
mp
23
p
pp
pp
mp
p
p
25
ppp eco
mp
p
27
rit.
♩ = c. 54; hollow, echoing
pp
ppp eco
I
mp
sonore


29
3
p
3
p
sf
31
ppp eco
gliss.
3
mp
p
33
p
poco
3
mp
p
35
Piano continues. Piece ends when piano finishes playing.
p
pp eco
sf