COMPOSITION ANALYSIS OF STRING QUARTET IN FOUR MOVEMENTS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN VIOLIN

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF

FINE ARTS

BY

SHELLEY CLIFFORD, B. M.

DENTON, TEXAS

MAY, 1974

Texas Woman's University

Denton, Texas

April 9, 19 74

We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under our supervision by Shelley Clifford entitled "Composition Analysis of String Quartet in Four Movements"

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Committee:

Chairman

Accepted:

Dean of Graduate Studies

342136

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

BACKGROUND STUDY 2

ANALYSIS OF STRING QUARTET 7

PERFORMANCE DIFFICULTIES 13

BIBLIOGRAPHY 15

INTRODUCTION

The composition of a string quartet in four movements is the main part of this thesis. The composition is tonal, and employs several newer techniques of twentieth century music. Its movements are in traditional form: fugue, scherzo, ternary song form, and theme and variations. The string quartet is bound under separate cover.

The composition is accompanied by a stylistic analysis, movement by movement, contained in this portion of the thesis. A study of contemporary compositional techniques was made from available theoretical and aesthetic sources, as well as from scores of contemporary quartets. A short summary of the history of the development of this form is included.

BACKGROUND STUDY

The history of the string quartet does not begin much before 1750. Most chamber works written prior to this date rely heavily on the continuo. The Baroque trio sonata was the favored media, usually consisting of two treble instruments, a bass instrument, and the harpsichord to realize the figured bass and provide the harmony. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, several composers began writing for four stringed instruments, although most of these works are conceived for a small orchestra, instead of a quartet. Some of the more prominent names of composers are Tartini, Samartini, Pugnani, Boccherini, and Stamitz.[1]

Haydn has long been called the inventor of the string quartet. Rosemary Hughes quotes Marion Scott by saying, "Haydn did not invent the form: he made it--an infinitely higher achievement."[2] The early quartets of Haydn, often titled divertimenti, are of small dimension, frequently contain five movements, and are extremely homophonic with most emphasis placed on the first violin

---

[1]Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 713.

[2]Alec Robertson, ed., Chamber Music (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1960), p. 14.

part. It is not until Op. 33 (1781) that one can see a definite chamber media emerge. Pauly states that this group of quartets are not revolutionary, but they do incorporate more than ever before the principle of thematic fragmentation, manipulation, and development.[1] The later quartets take these new ideas and refine them so that each quartet becomes an individual entity, with interesting soloistic lines given to each of the four instruments.

Mozart had moved to Vienna in 1781, where he met Haydn and heard the Op. 33 quartets. Mozart's ten years of friendship with the older composer led to a reciprocal influence. In 1785, Mozart published six quartets dedicated to Haydn, all of which are very unified and concentrated. Grout points out the romantic harmonies of the Adagio of K. 458, and the cross-relations of the slow introduction to the first movement of K. 456, the "Dissonant."[2] The last three quartets of Mozart are dedicated to Frederick William II, King of Prussia, who was a competent cellist. In these quartets a new element of virtuosity is introduced. Two basic differences between Haydn and Mozart are stated by Ulrich: Mozart intensified his works by the use of

---

[1]Reinhard G. Pauly, Music in the Classic Period (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 153.

[2]Donald J. Grout, A History of Western Music (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), p. 317.

short, chromatic fragments; Haydn had a more open, diatonic style, almost completely devoid of any chromatic writing. Also, Haydn's recapitulations in the sonata form movements often recur in an unorthodox fashion intended to shock or amuse the listener; Mozart always does the expected thing, but in new and different ways.[1]

Most musicians would place Beethoven's string quartets at the highest level in the entire range of chamber music. These sixteen quartets plus the Grosse Fugue, Op. 133, reveal Beethoven's maturation of style and technique more than any other series. According to Grout, the Op. 18 demonstrate how well Beethoven had learned from Haydn the art of developing motives by contrapuntal devices. Yet these six quartets are not mere imitations of Haydn, with such typical characteristics of Beethoven as unconventional modulations, motivic themes, changes in formal structure.[2] The middle quartets, Opp. 59, 74, and 95, are the first quartets where Beethoven begins to treat the quartet in new and experimental ways: shifting rhythms, emphasis on the Neapolitan chord, sharp contrasts of mood. The last five quartets, with the exception of Op. 135,

---

[1]Homer Ulrich, Chamber Music (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 200-202.

[2]Grout, p. 327.

expand the dimension of form, reaching as many as seven movements. Beethoven increased the importance of contrapuntal textures, created new sonorities, concealed the cadential effect, and freed the tonal system for each new movement. As Roger Fiske says,

> It has always seemed to musicians that these late quartets were the expressions of a man who was spiritually no longer as other men, and their technical and emotional difficulty for performers long prevented their either being played or understood.[1]

Whether or not intimidated by Beethoven's tremendous accomplishment, the composers of the nineteenth century did not add any great milestones to the quartet literature, with the possible exception of the three Brahms quartets which expand the quartet to almost symphonic proportions. Apel lists Schubert, Dvorak, Reger, d'Indy, Debussy, and Ravel as notable contributors to the quartet literature of the Romantic period.[2]

In the twentieth century, Schoenberg, Berg and Webern employ atonality and the twelve-tone technique. Ulrich mentions that rhythmic development reached a new level in the two string quartets of Elliott Carter.[3] However, the bulwark of contemporary quartet writing is

---

[1]Robertson, p. 127.

[2]Apel, p. 712.

[3]Ulrich, p. 375.

comprised of the six works of Bartok. Ulrich states,

> Bartok created a series of works that are unsurpassed in their variety of sonorous effects, in the power of their rhythmic appeal, but more especially in the rich expressiveness they achieved in their dissonant, atonal idiom.[1]

The first two quartets rely on rhythmic and melodic folk influences. The third and fourth quartets reveal the growth of the arch pattern. Deri describes the fourth quartet as having two arches around the central third movement: one arch consists of the first and fifth movements which share motivic material; another arch consists of the second and fourth movements, both scherzo-like in nature.[2] The fifth quartet is again in arch form with five movements centered on a scherzo. The sixth returns to a classical scheme of four contrasting movements. Bartok uses a motto-theme which is given before each of the first three movements and becomes the thematic material of the fourth. Mosco Carner draws a parallel between Bartok and Beethoven by marking these six quartets as the peak of the modern genre, while the sixteen quartets of Beethoven are the heighth of the classical form.[3]

---

[1]Ibid., p. 355.

[2]Otto Deri, Exploring Twentieth Century Music (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 250.

[3]Robertson, p. 221.

ANALYSIS OF STRING QUARTET

The analysis of the string quartet will be done for each movement separately. Each section will contain comments on style, structure, and general harmonic basis. Referrals to the score will be made by rehearsal letters (L. B) and by measure numbers (M. 20). Following the analysis will be a brief discussion of rehearsal difficulties and problems in performance.

I. Moderato

The first movement is a fugue, with the cello stating the principal theme first. The other three instruments enter in strict imitation at the intervals of the fifth and the octave. The principal theme hints at the Ionian mode because of the emphasis given to the notes C# - D# - F#. The emphasis given to the tritone C - F# reinforces the feeling of atonality because the tonic triad is destroyed. Tonal centers are clearly present, but tonality in the traditional sense of the word is avoided. The countermotive to the theme consists of chromatic broken octaves.

A transitional section begins at L. B with a slower harmonic rhythm, chromaticism, and a crescendo functioning

to set up the restatement of the principal theme. A new half-step motive is introduced in this transition. At L. C, the principal theme returns in the first violin one half-step lower than the first hearing. This time the viola does not state the principal theme, but merely fills in harmonically.

Increased chromaticism and fragmentation in the cello develops the principal theme starting at L. D. The last statement of the theme in imitation is prepared by violent, falling octaves and ninths descending chromatically. A long crescendo leads into a stretto section comprised of fragments of the theme. The final return to the fugue theme has the voices introduced using the pyramid effect of spacing the entrances one measure apart.

The coda of the movement starts at L. F. The tension of the final theme statement is resolved by descending dotted half-notes. There is a return to the original tonal center of C.

II. Allegro Vivace

This is the scherzo movement in a traditional ABA ternary form with an abbreviated B section. It is written in primarily eight-measure periods, which are conceived as phrases at the allegro vivace tempo. The first eight measures serve as a vamp to introduce the first theme at L. A.

At L. C, the A theme is rescored by giving the cello the theme and using a pizzicato accompaniment. A hocket effect is used in the upper three voices. A fragmented, pyramid version of the A theme appears at L. D.

The middle section of the movement starts at L. E. There is a humorous use of rests occurring at unexpected times. Ascending scales in seconds reach the climax of loud tone clusters, and lend a feeling of the finale of this section. However, instead of immediately returning to the A theme, a brief andante melody appears with the same general melodic curve as the A theme. In its lyrical "sweetness" and harmonic simplicity, it offers a distinct parody of the first rather rough theme.

At L. I, there is a return of theme A in a mysterioso style; but instead of continuing it at length as had been done before, the andante melody of the B section returns, only now up to the original tempo of the piece. The coda uses the A theme varied somewhat rhythmically, and ending in an ascending scale in half-step clusters.

III. Andante

This movement opens with a simple three-voice chorale with a tonal center of C. The quarter-note is the fastest note value. An eighth-note countermelody is introduced by the first violin at L. A. The texture becomes

increasingly more contrapuntal, yet at the same time very free flowing. The tonal center is now on D and leads to one at A.

At L. B, a triplet variation of the theme starts with an even freer violin obbligatto. The chorale, which has remained basically the same, now introduces an eighth-note line in the second violin. The tonal center moves to F, but with a sense of expanded tonality--an F-major scale with the addition of F#, Ab, and Eb. The triplet motive becomes fragmented while the first violin and cello answer each other. Chromaticism, trills, and a long crescendo build to the climax of the movement.

After a complete measure of silence, the opening chorale returns at L. D, now in four-part harmony instead of three. The tonal center of D shifts to one of A at the end of the movement, giving the effect of a half cadence.

IV. Allegro Moderato

The final movement is in the form of a theme and variations. It begins with a unison statement of the theme in all four instruments. The theme begins as a twelve-tone statement, but the sequence is broken after eight notes. The rhythm is reminiscent of Bartok. The tonal center is G. There is a notable use of a leap of a major seventh, which is used as a unifying factor throughout the movement.

The theme is then restated a second time exactly like the first time with the two violins. The viola and cello, also in unison, introduce a new countermotive in an eighteenth-century species counterpoint.

At L. B, the complexity of the movement becomes much greater. The second violin and viola carry out a slight variation of the theme with several ornaments, while the cello provides a chromatic ground bass. The first violin plays a sixteenth-note contrapuntal line with a rhythmic acceleration that leads to a statement of the theme in extreme registers. The tonal center has now moved from G to C#.

A pizzicato section begins at L. D. Fragmentation and pyramid effects are used. Several novel string effects are used, such as col legno, snap pizzicato, pizzicato glissandi, and jeté bowing. This variation is followed by a rather subdued chorale. The second violin has the melody, which, although derived from the theme of this movement, is very much reminiscent of the first theme of the second movement. Another short variation starts at L. G. The theme is in octaves in the two violins by using octaves and artificial harmonics. A unison running eighth-note countermelody compliments the harmonics very softly.

The final variation starts at L. H with the lower three instruments on a pedal-point G, and a tranquillo statement of the theme in the first violin. The lethargic mood is interrupted by a fortissimo sequence of eighth-notes taken from M. 13 of the principal theme. However, the tranquillo feeling returns to draw the movement to a quiet close.

PERFORMANCE DIFFICULTIES

Rehearsing and performing the quartet brought on many problems not anticipated when composing the work with a conscientious effort to strictly arrive at the sound conceived in the mind. Sometimes the ideal sound became impossible due to purely mechanical problems. Other times the performers did not perceive sections in the same way as the composer, so they superimposed their own individual musical taste on the composition.

The largest problem with the entire quartet was the fact that many of the sounds were very different from traditional music. Since many string players tend to avoid contemporary music, it is very difficult for them to acquire an ear for the different harmonies and compositional devices. There are two places in the quartet where the group had trouble remaining together. The first is three measures after L. D in the first movement. Because of the clashing intervals in the upper strings spaced one beat apart with no definite downbeat, this made it hard for the lower strings to remain steady with the theme. The second place is at L. D in the last movement. Here the notes are pointillistic with no clear rhythmic or tonal relationship. This is difficult to remain in correct time and also keep

track of the special effects. Since these effects are not used as much in traditional music, they sound strange to the player, and further serve to disorient him from the whole.

Certain problems evolved from merely demanding some things which did not fit the instrument well. There are several examples of this throughout the work. The false harmonics in the last three measures of the first movement are not good because of the octaves between viola and cello and the augmented intervals in the line. In the second movement the opening double stops for viola are practically impossible at the correct tempo. Also in that movement four measures from the end, the leap in the cello line from the low F# to the treble E is extremely awkward. Another example is the chromatic sixteenth-note passage for first violin in the fourth movement, L. B - L. D. This section is much too high for good intonation at the right tempo.

Rehearsing and performing the quartet taught the composer more than the actual composition of the work, for it is only in playing a piece of music that one can really see and hear the difficulties and revise them. There is a vast difference between the conception of music in the mind and the realization of the same in performance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Apel, Willi. Harvard Dictionary of Music. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Austin, William W. Music in the Twentieth Century. New York: W. W. Norton, 1966.

Boyden, David D. An Introduction to Music. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967.

Cobbett, Walter W. Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music. Volumes I and II. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

Dallin, Leon. Techniques of Twentieth Century Composition. Dubuque, Iowa: W. C. Brown, 1957.

Deri, Otto. Exploring Twentieth Century Music. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1968.

Grout, Donald J. A History of Western Music. New York: W. W. Norton, 1964.

Hansen, Peter. An Introduction to Twentieth Century Music. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971.

Hanson, Howard. Harmonic Materials of Modern Music. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960.

Maitland, J. A. Fuller, ed. Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Volume IV. Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1916.

Marquis, G. Welton. Twentieth Century Music Idioms. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1964.

Middleton, Robert E. Harmony in Modern Counterpoint. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1967.

Nallin, Walter E. The Musical Idea. New York: Macmillan Company, 1968.

Pauly, Reinhard G. Music in the Classic Period. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965.

Persichetti, Vincent. Twentieth Century Harmony. New York: W. W. Norton, 1961.

Reti, Rudolph. Tonality, Atonality, Pantonality. London: W. and J. Mackay and Company, Ltd., 1958.

Robertson, Alec, ed. Chamber Music. Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1960.

Salzman, Eric. Twentieth Century Music: An Introduction. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1967.

Ulehla, Ludmila. Contemporary Harmony. New York: Free Press, 1966.

Ulrich, Homer. Chamber Music. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

Vincent, John. The Diatonic Modes in Modern Music. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951.

STRING QUARTET

A COMPOSITION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS, VIOLIN

IN THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF

MUSIC

BY

SHELLEY CLIFFORD, B.M.

DENTON, TEXAS

MAY, 1974

Texas Woman's University

Denton, Texas

December 19 73

We hereby recommend that the Composition prepared under our supervision by Shelley Clifford entitled String Quartet

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Committee:

Chairman

Accepted:

Dean of Graduate Studies

String Quartet

Shelley Clifford

I

Moderato

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

p

A

mp

cresc.

B

C

tu

tu

tu

tu

mp

D

pp

ppp

tu

pp

ppp

tu

pp

ppp

pp

f

f

f

f

E

sfz

sfz

p

f

p

f

mp

mp

F

pp

mp

p

mp

p

Allegro vivace

p

secco

A

mf

mf

A tempo

rit.

A tempo

rit.

mp

mp

mfp

mf

B

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

mf

f

p

ff

f

p

ff

f

p

ff

C

pizz.

mf

pizz.

mf

pizz.

mf

mf

f

f

f

D

arco

arco

arco

f

f

f

f

dim

dim

dim

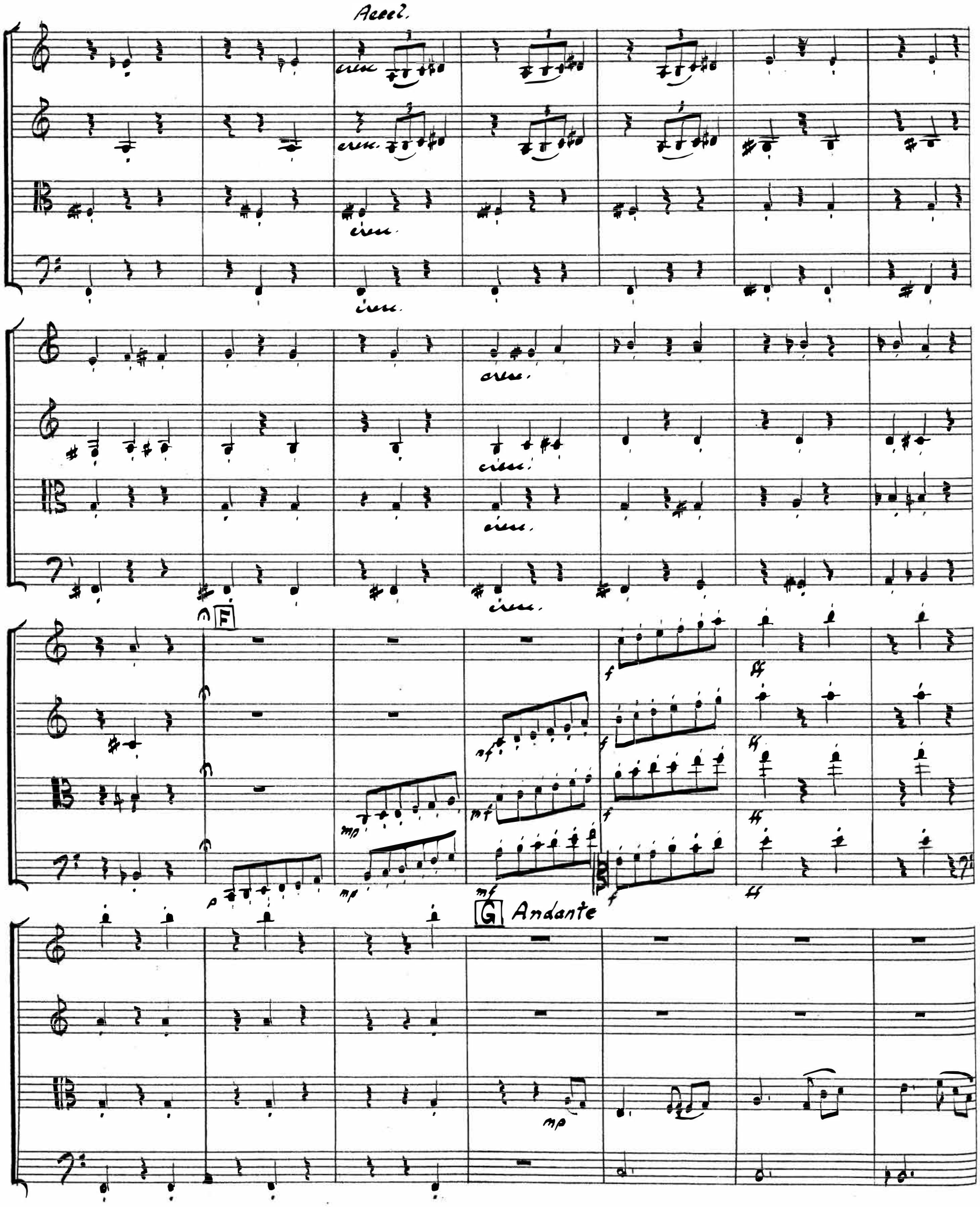
E

p

p

p

p


Accel.
cresc.
F
G
Andante

H A Tempo

f

I Tempo I

pp

div.

Rit.

J

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

K

arco.

arco

Rit.

A Tempo

f

f

f

f

ff

ff

ff

ff

Andante

p

p

p

A

p

B

mf

mf

mf

C

pp

pp

cresc.

pp

cresc.

f cresc.

f cresc.

f cresc.

f cresc.

ff

ff

ff

D

mp

mp

mp

mp

Rit.

ff

ff

ff

ff

IV

Allegro moderato

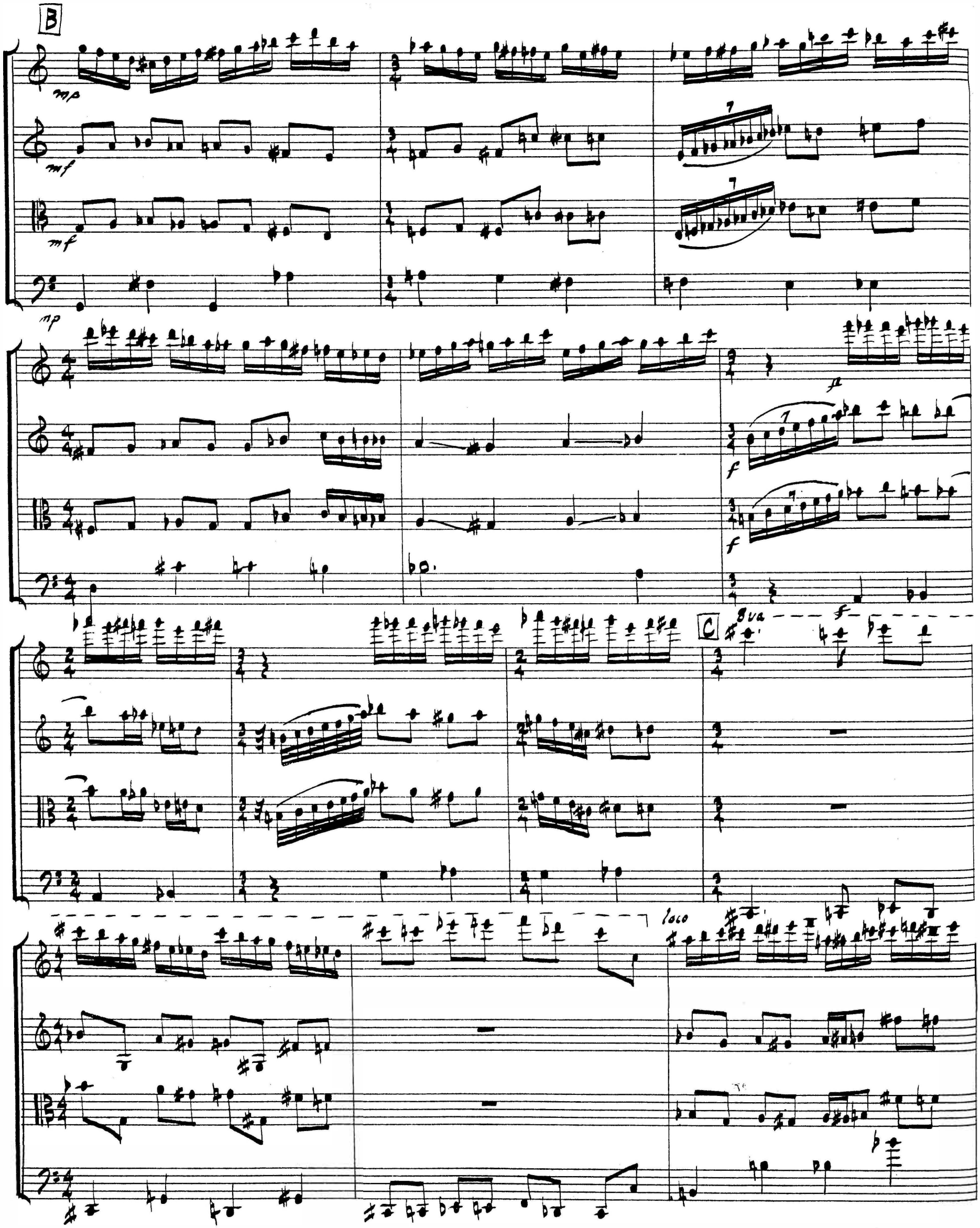
f marcato

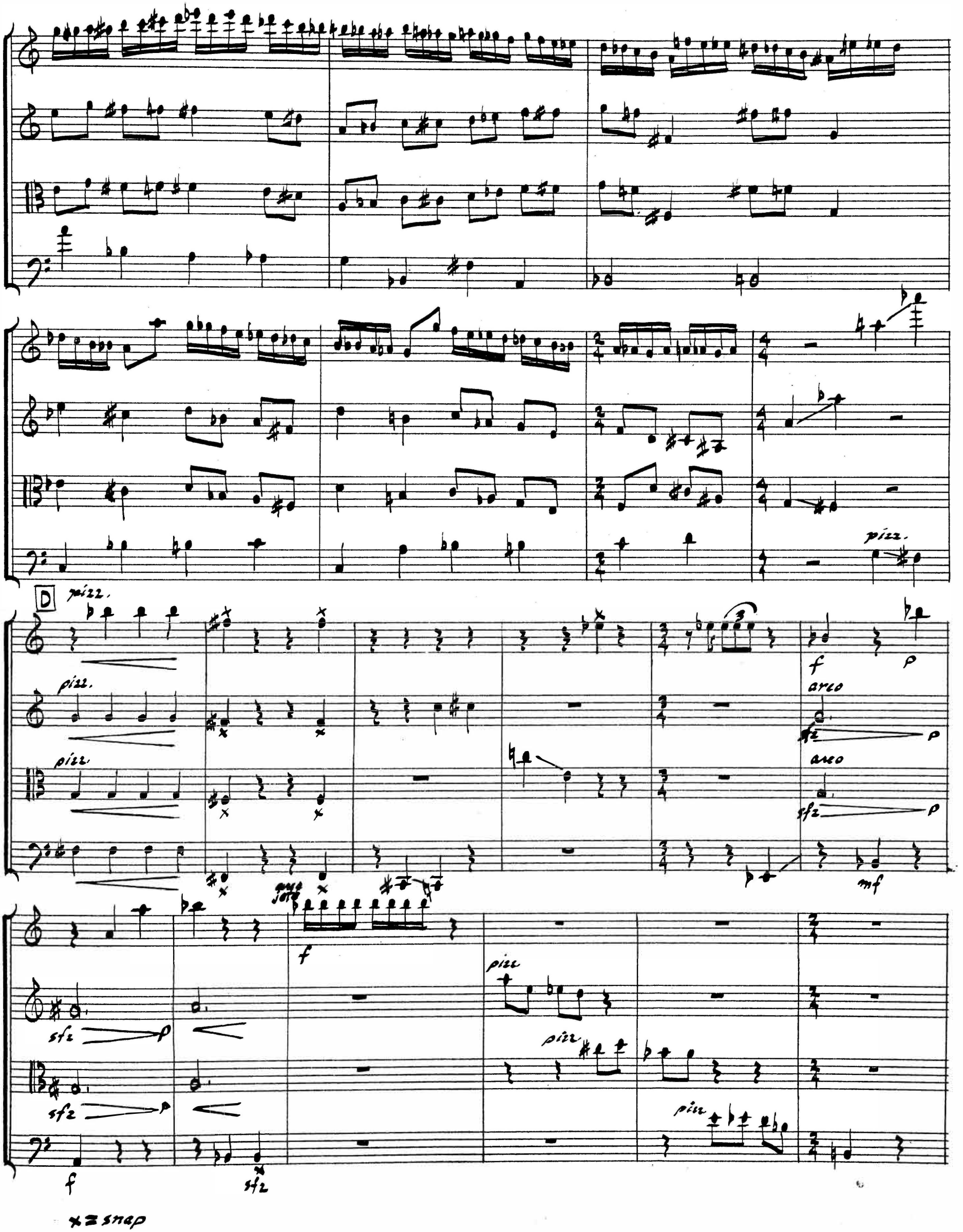
f marcato

f marcato

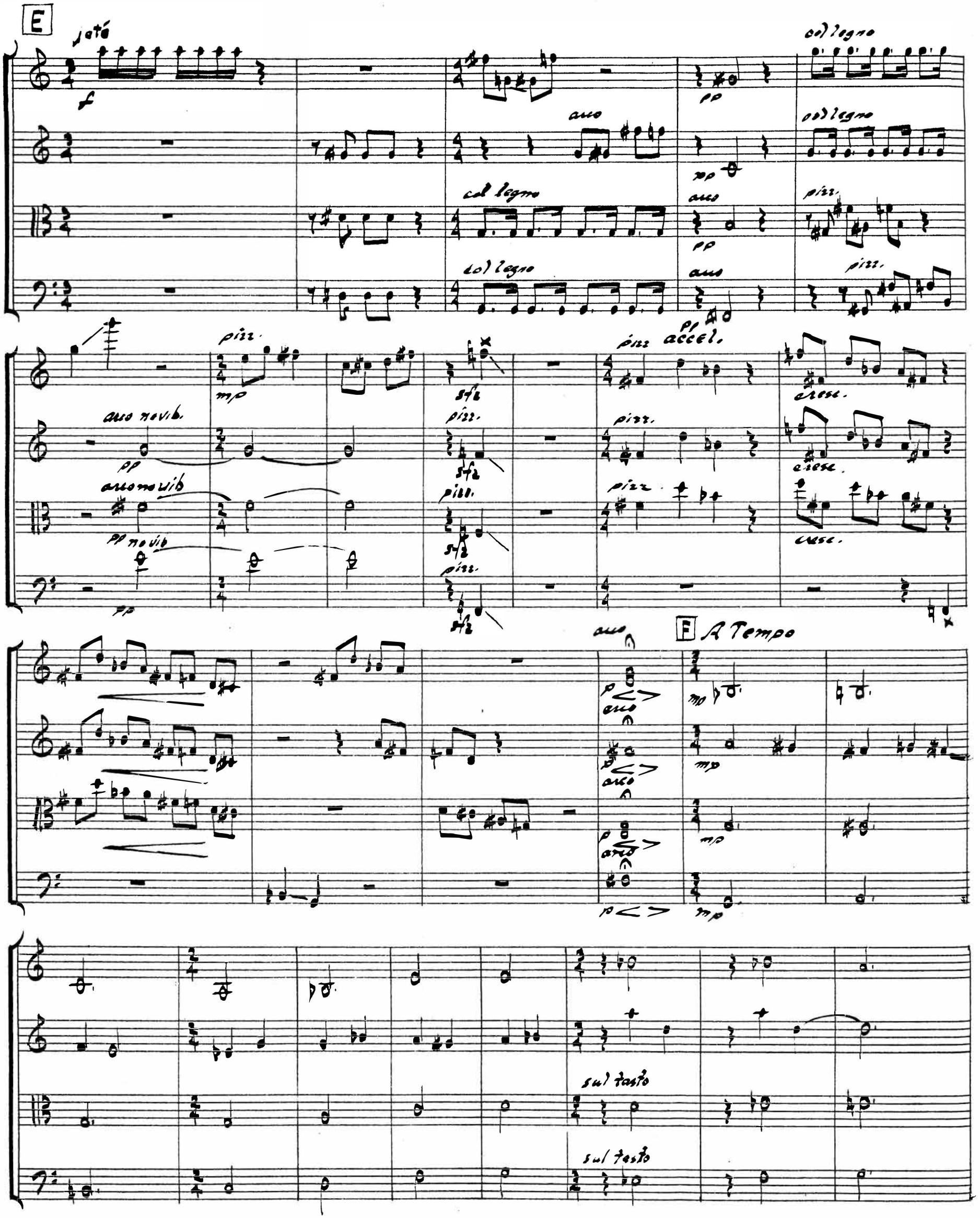
f marcato

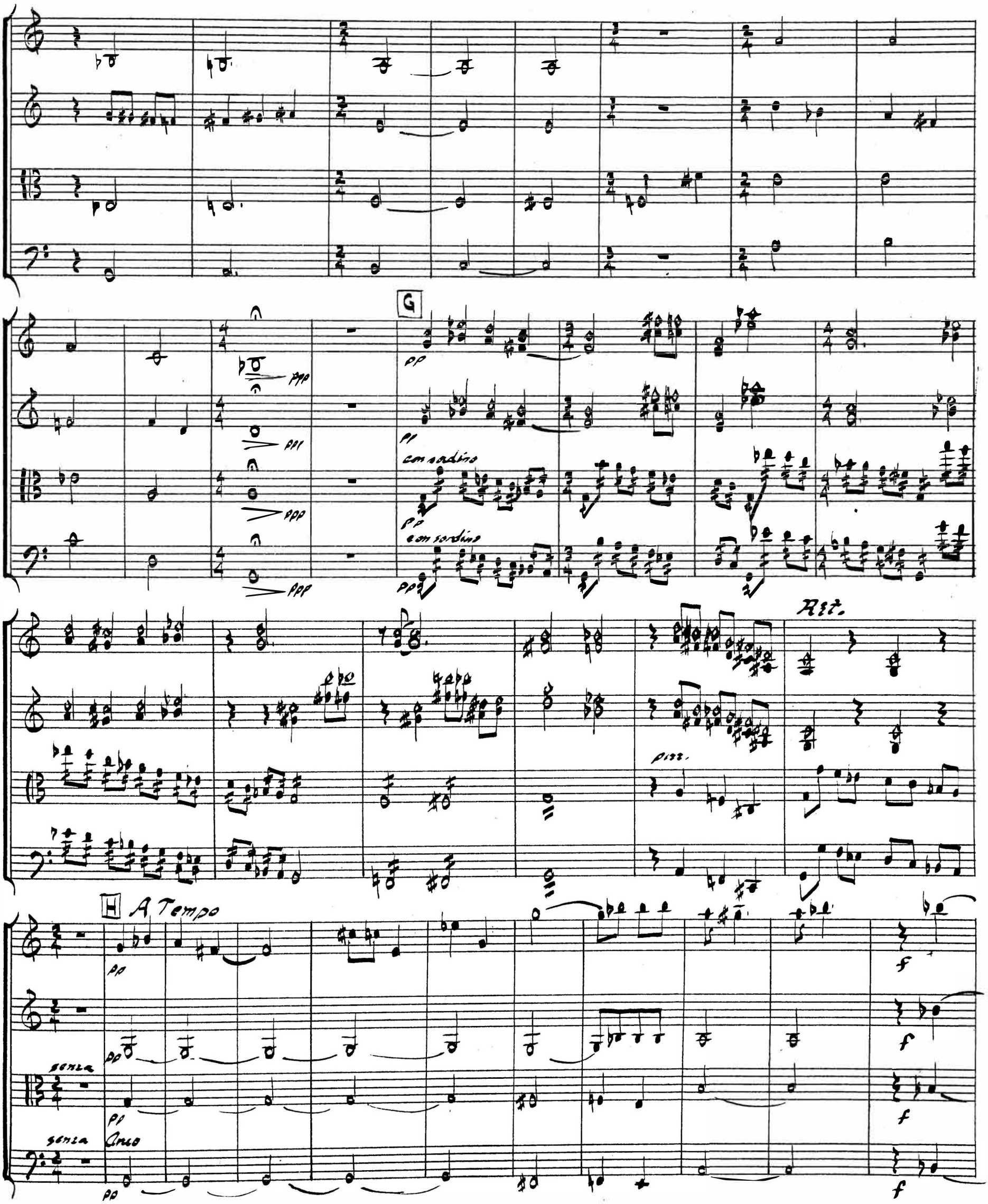
A


B
mp
mf
mf
mp
f
f
f
C
8va
f
loco


pizz.
D
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
arco
arco
f
p
sfz
mf
arco solo
f
pizz
pizz
pizz
sfz
f
sfz

x = snap


E
jeté
f
col legno
arco
pp
pizz.
mp
sfz
accel.
cresc.
arco no vib.
F
A Tempo
p
sul tasto


G
pp
ppp
con sordino
Rit.
pizz.
H
A Tempo
senza
Arco
f

I

sul ponte

au talon

sul ponte

au talon

sul ponte

au talon

sul ponte

au talon

sul ponte