Symphonic Dances from

WEST SIDE STORY

Notes on the Symphonic Dances.

West Side Story opened on Broadway in September, 1957 to glorious critical and public acclaim. It became a major artistic landmark and proof of a new kind of operatic synthesis that fused complex vocal and instrumental ensembles, ballet, classical and jazz styles, with powerful and ancient tragic themes (love versus hate) played out by streetgangs in urban New York. The Symphonic Dances are a concert suite of nine connected movements that recall the dramatic events and their inspired music. The order of the material is based more on "feel" than on the plot sequence of the show, and the whole thing manages to be both "serious" and "popular." As arranger Sid Ramin wrote (1992), "This suite brings the music of Broadway into the concert hall, orchestrating with symphonic character the music every theater-goer loves." This is a standalone musical work in its own right.

1. Prolog (Allegro moderato): The growing rivalry between two teenage gangs, the Jets and the Sharks.

2. Somewhere (Adagio): In a dream ballet, the two gangs are united in friendship.

3. Scherzo (Vivace e leggiero): In the same dream, the gangs break away from the city walls, suddenly finding themselves in a playful world of space, air and sun.

4. Mambo (Meno presto): In the real world again, the competitive dance at the gym between the two gangs.

5. Cha-cha (Andantino con grazia): The star-crossed lovers, Tony and Maria, see each other for the first time. They dance together.

6. Meeting Scene (Meno mosso): Music accompanies their first words spoken to one another.

7. Cool Fugue (Allegretto): An elaborate dance sequence; Riff leads the Jets in harnessing their impulsive hostility, figuratively "cooling their jets."

8. Rumble (Molto allegro): Climactic gang battle; the two gang leaders, Riff and Bernardo, are killed.

9. Finale (Adagio): Maria's I have a Love develops into a procession that recalls the vision of Somewhere.

Notes on the piano transcription.

The songs from West Side Story are among the most re-interpreted art music of the twentieth century, and a quick internet search turns up dozens of recordings in print (Josh Bell (violin); Richie Cole (sax); Oscar Peterson, Dave Brubeck, AndrØPrevin (jazz piano); the Falla guitar trio; Buddy Rich and Stan Kenton (big bands); and many more out of print). A few classical pianists have made West Side Story albums (John Bayless' arrangements; the Labeque duo). John Musto made a two-piano arrangement of the Symphonic Dances for the Murray Dranoff two-piano competition (Florida, 1998; Boosey & Hawkes, M-051-26166-6, 2001). The only solo transcription appears to be by the eclectic Swiss pianist, Dag Achatz, at the personal behest of Leonard Bernstein. It is not published in score, but is available on CD (BIS #352, 1994). Unlike Liszt's opera transcriptions (which tend to be virtuosic vehicles) or the "free" fantasy-transformations of Godowsky or Rachmaninoff or Earl Wild, both the Musto and Achatz follow the symphonic score, and are more like sparse pen-and-ink architectural drawings than sprawling impressionist canvases. After all, the Symphonic Dances are already a free metamorphosis of the Broadway show, and are carefully wrought. I recommend that students and lovers of this music consult those scores and recordings. This arrangement follows them pretty closely, as well as the orchestral score and particularly Bernstein's own recording of it. Mary Farbood helped immensely in drafting big sections. It was made for the 2002 Van Cliburn competition for outstanding amateur pianists in Fort Worth, Texas.

The up-to-date version may be found at: http://www.mike-hawley.com/scores/bernstein/wss.pdf I have indicated fingerings and pedallings ("u.c."= una corda, "m.p."=middle pedal) in a few key places, and have labelled some of the instrumental voicings to keep their character in mind. Most tempo and expression marks come from the orchestral score. I have laid out the score in a compact format, to contain phrases and sections within line and page breaks. Pianistically, this arrangement is not a "finger breaker," but the minimalist lines lend themselves to very graceful expression and help to render a handsome and emotionally rich concert suite. Knowing the lyrics by heart, and knowing what it takes to to get a symphony orchestra to dance, will help bring this music to life. It is my sincere hope that lovers of piano literature will find here an enjoyable, fresh perspective on Bernstein's wonderful West Side Story.

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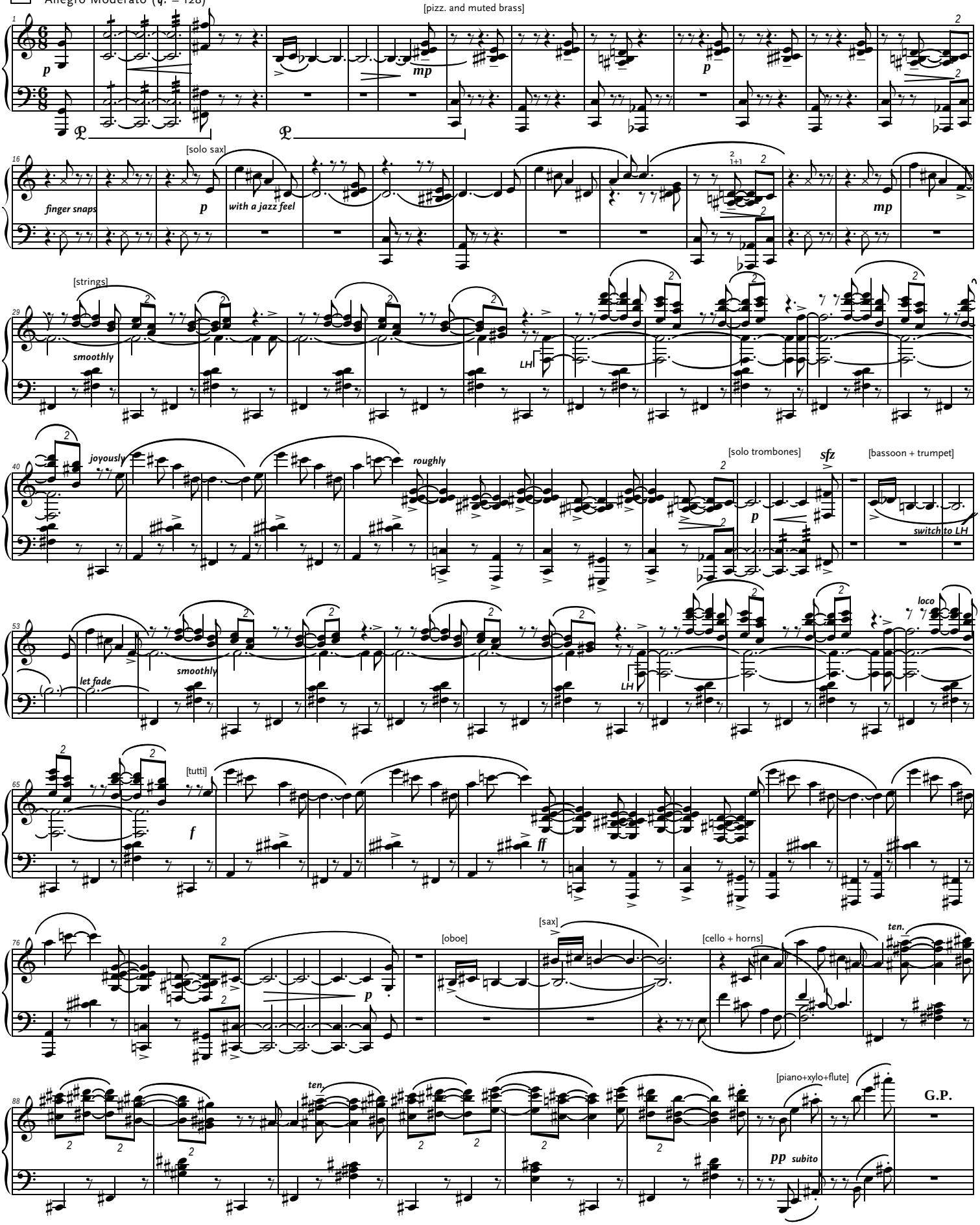
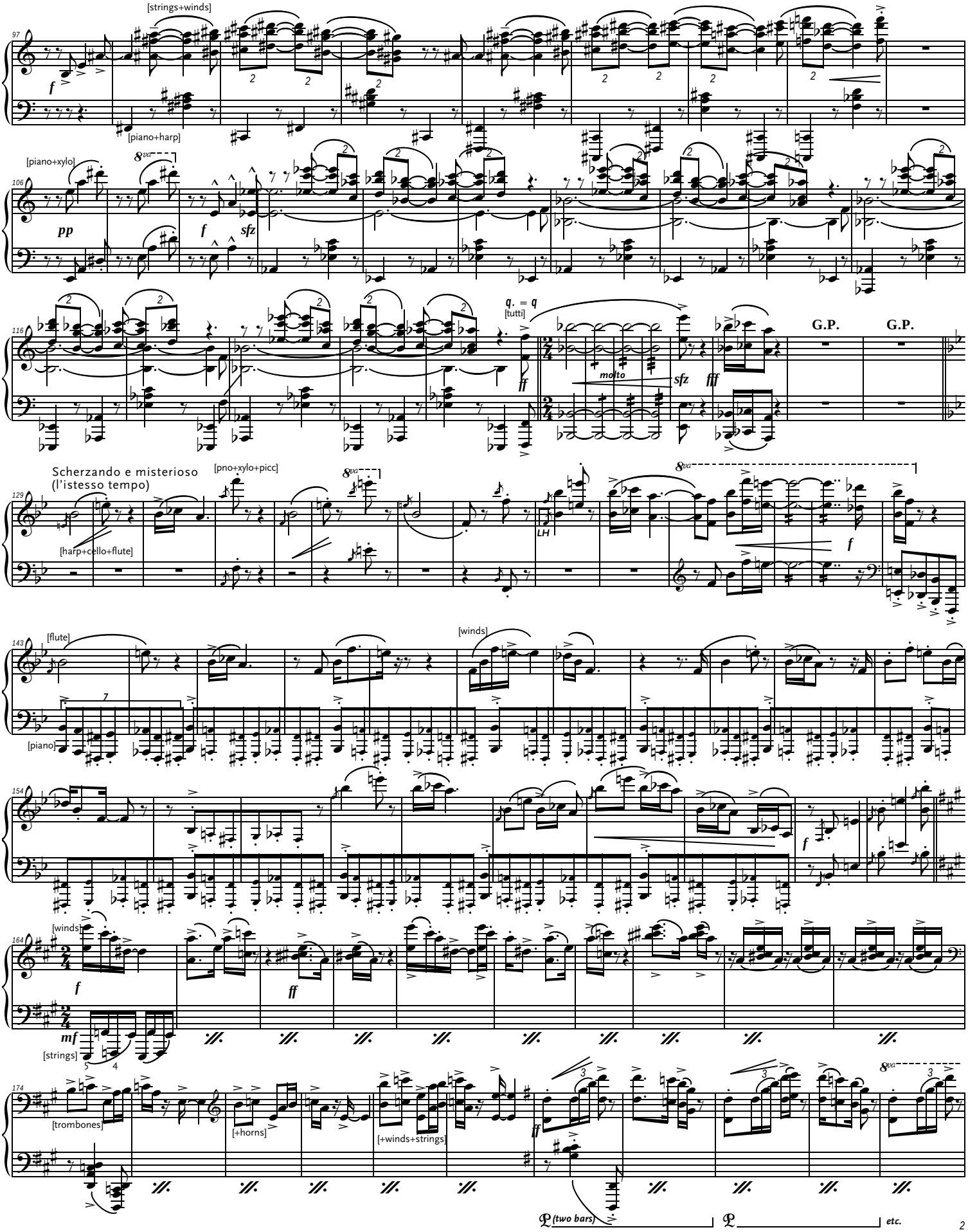
Cambridge, Massachusetts
June 1, 2002

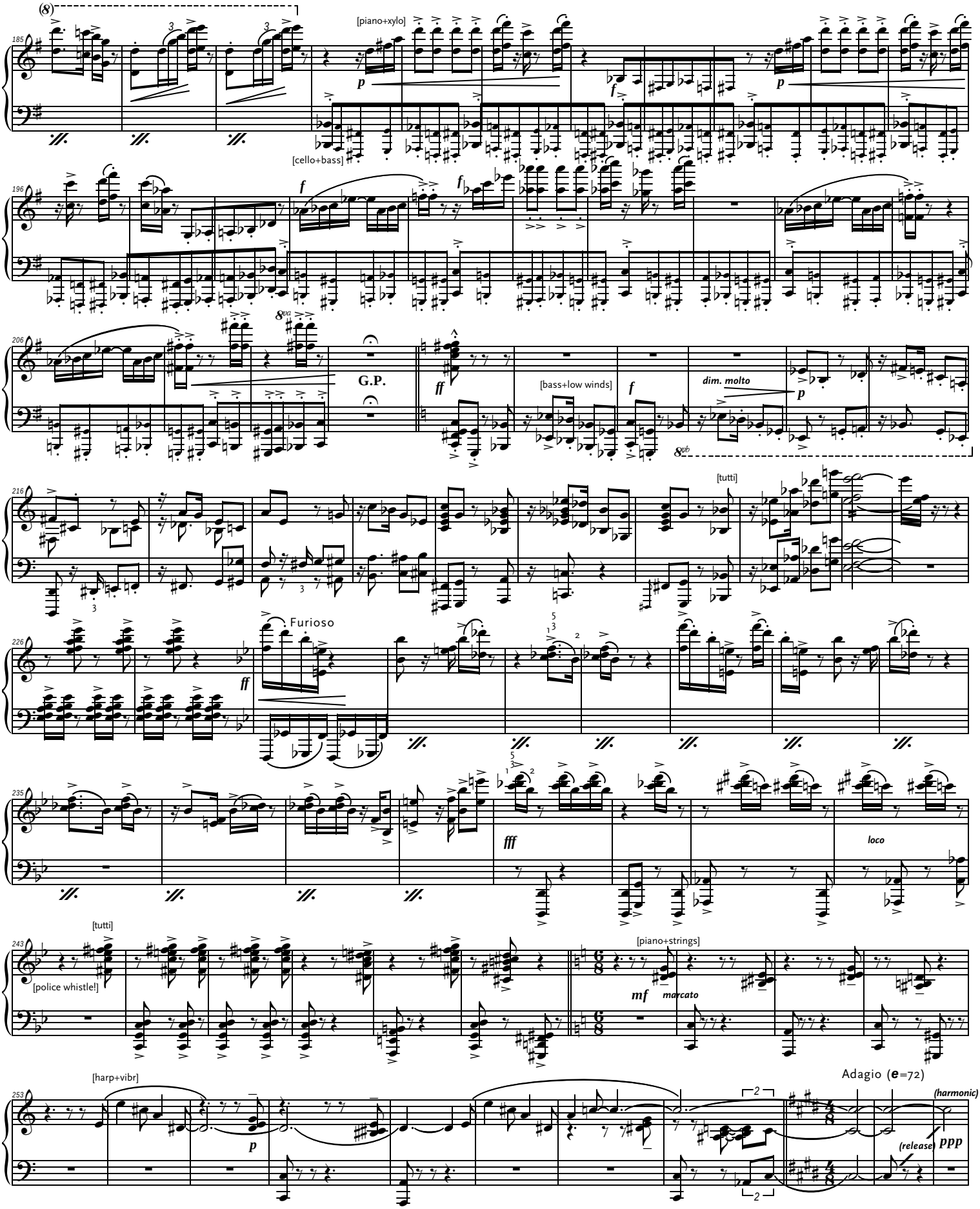
Symphonic Dances from WEST SIDE STORY

Leonard Bernstein
arranged by: Michael Hawley
www.mike-hawley.com/scores/bernstein/wss.pdf

1 Prolog. (the growing rivalry between the Sharks and the Jets)
Allegro Moderato (♩. = 128)

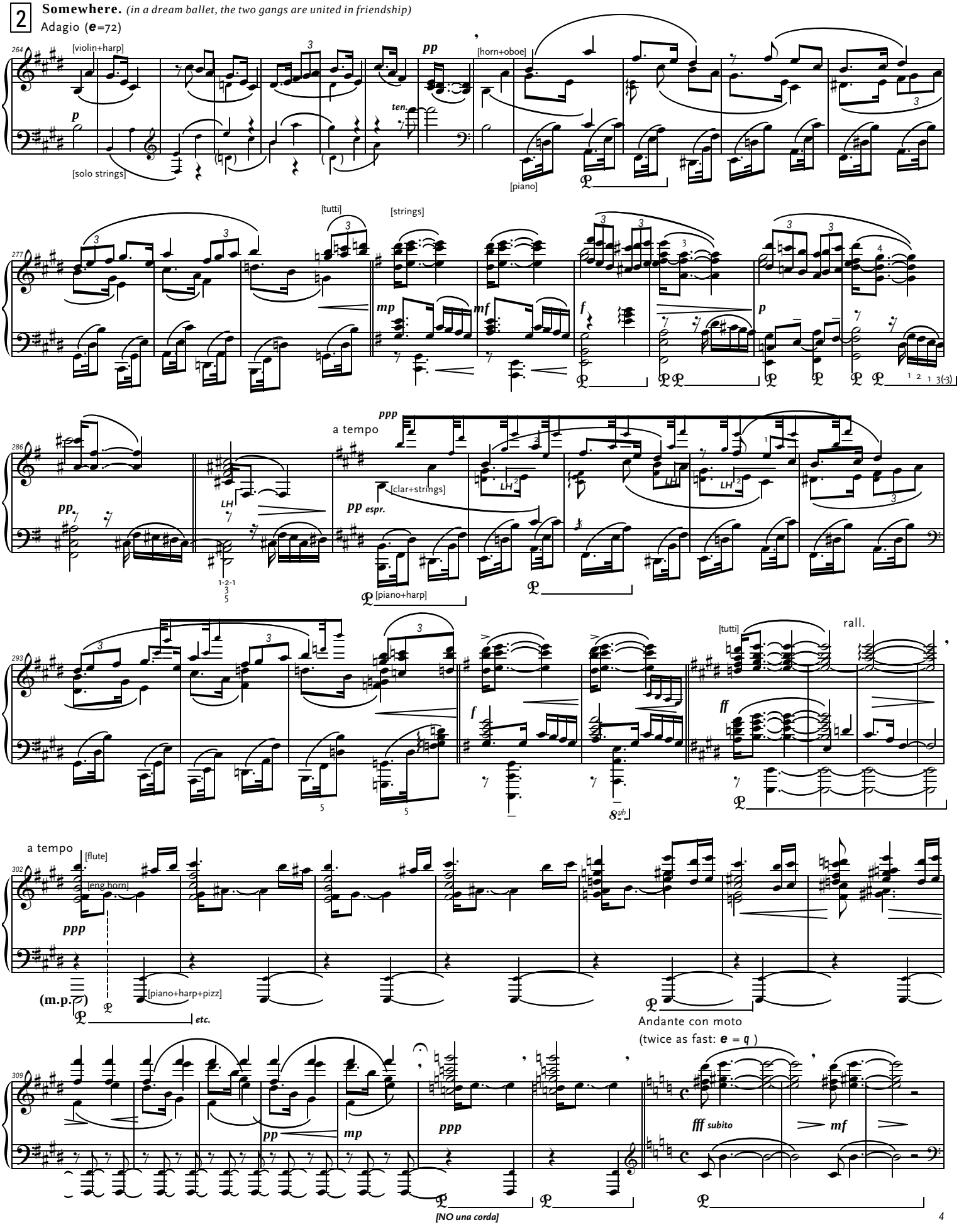



[strings+winds]
[piano+harp]
[piano+xylo]
[tutti]
G.P.
G.P.
Scherzando e misterioso
(l'istesso tempo)
[pno+xylo+picc]
[harp+cello+flute]
[flute]
[winds]
[piano]
[winds]
[strings]
[trombones]
[+horns]
[+winds+strings]
(two bars)
etc.

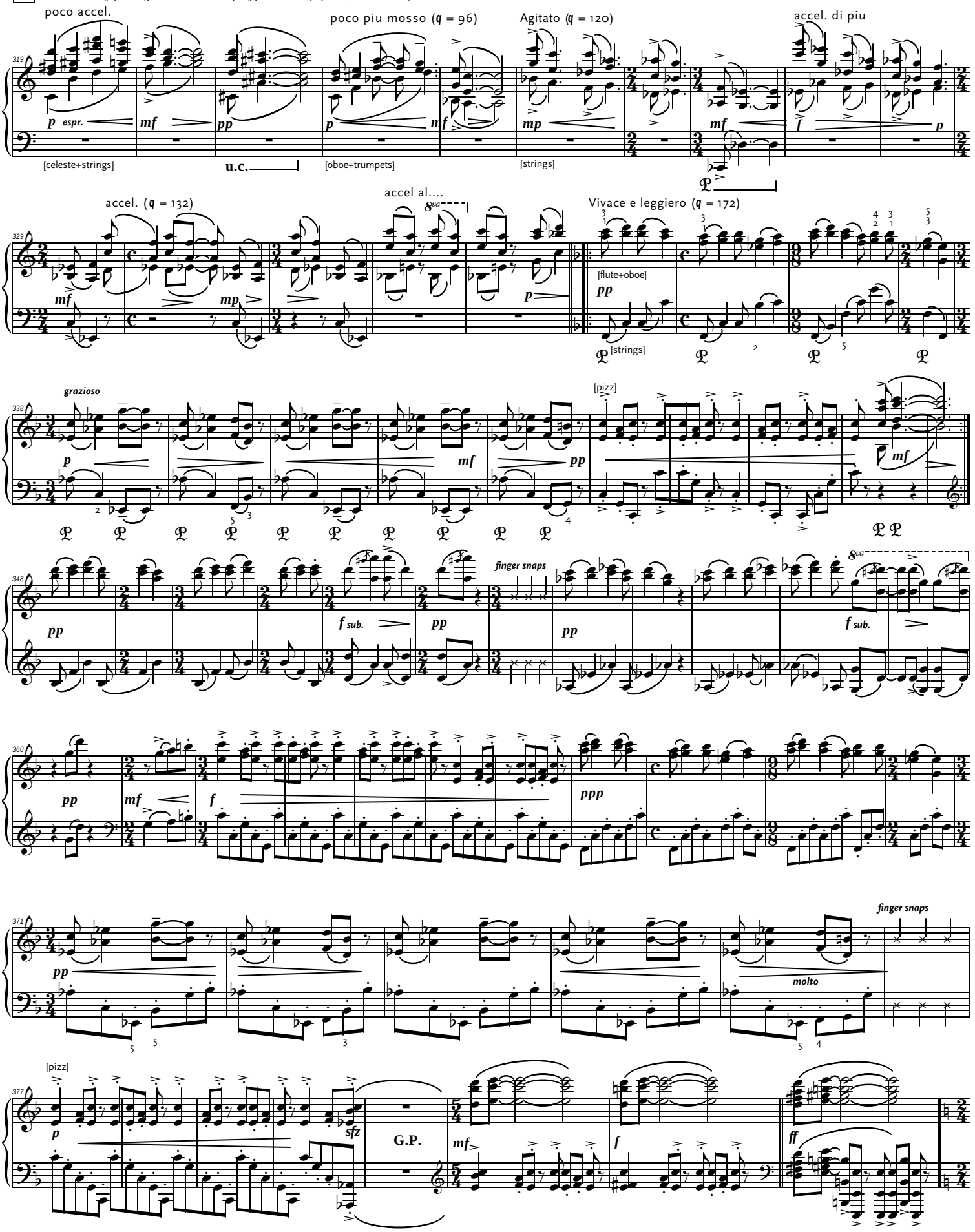

185
[piano+xylo]
[cello+bass]
196
206
G.P.
[bass+low winds]
dim. molto
216
[tutti]
226
Furioso
235
loco
243
[tutti]
[police whistle!]
[piano+strings]
mf
marcato
253
[harp+vibr]
Adagio (♩=72)
(harmonic)
(release)
ppp

2 **Somewhere.** *(in a dream ballet, the two gangs are united in friendship)*

Adagio (♩=72)

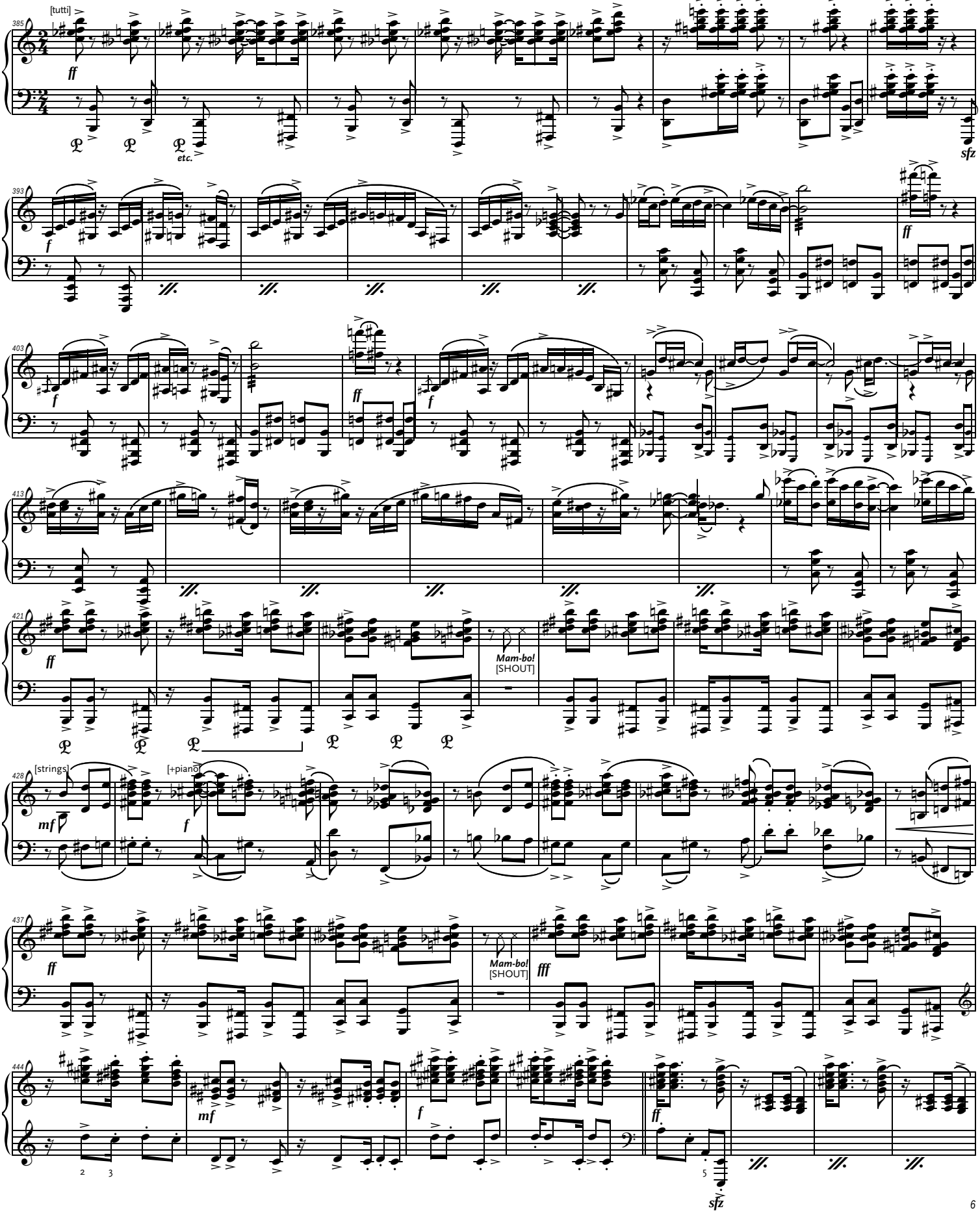


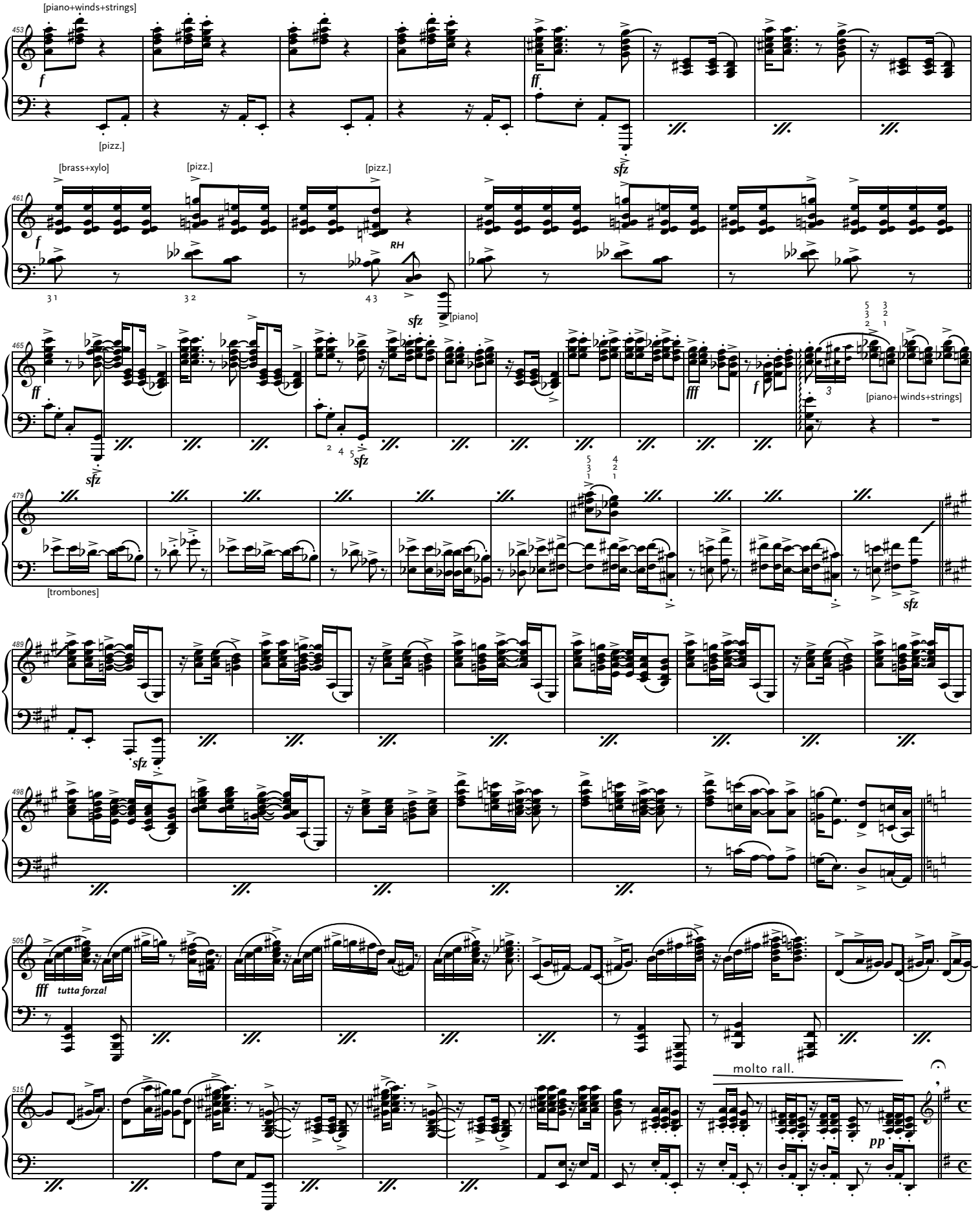
3 **Scherzo.** *(in the same dream, the gangs break away from the city walls suddenly finding themselves in a playful world of space, air and sun)*



4 **Mambo.** *(in the real world again, the competitive dance at the gym between the two gangs)*

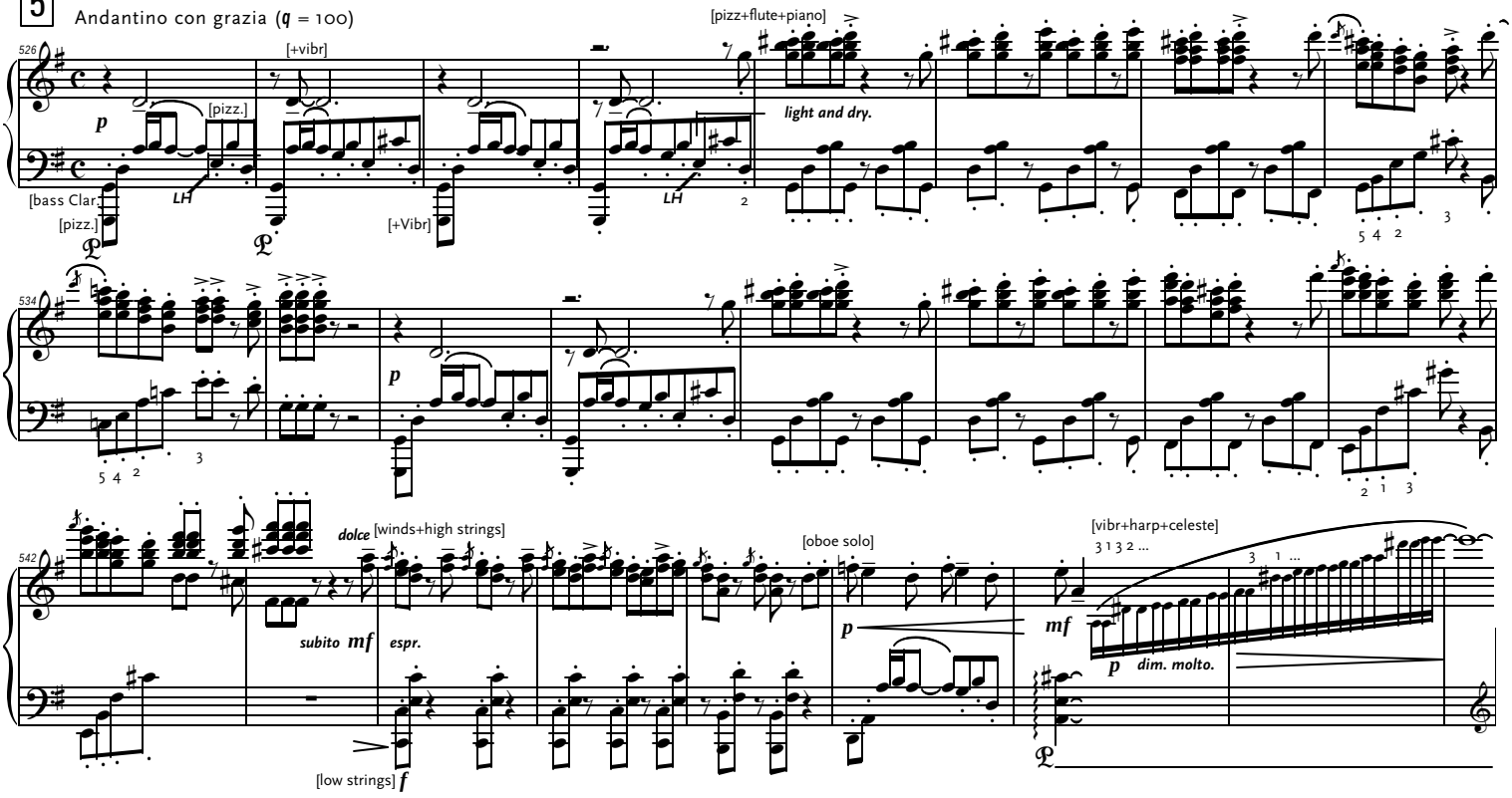
Meno presto (♩ = 132)




[piano+winds+strings]
453
f
[pizz.]
ff
sfz
[brass+xylo]
[pizz.]
[pizz.]
461
f
RH
sfz
[piano]
465
ff
sfz
fff
f
[piano+winds+strings]
479
[trombones]
sfz
489
sfz
498
505
fff
tutta forza!
515
molto rall.
pp

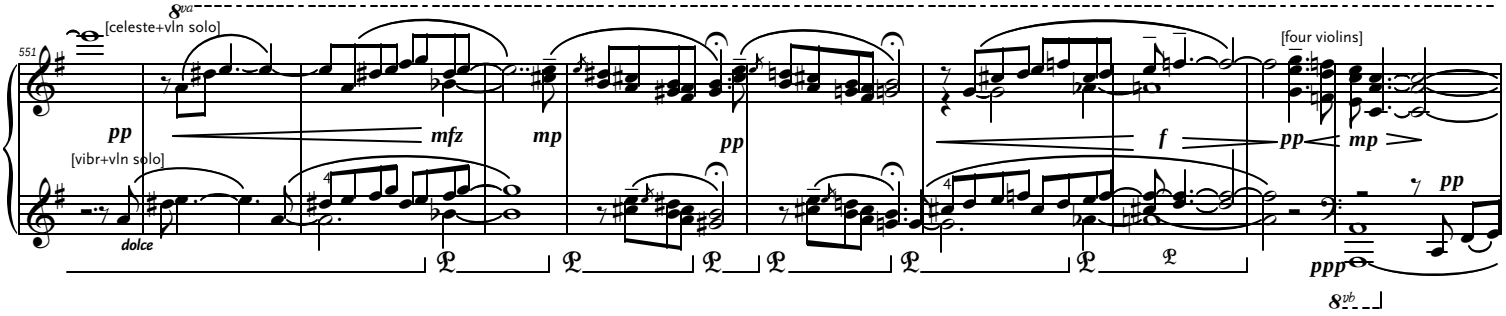
5 **Cha-Cha.** *(The star-crossed lovers, Tony and Maria, see each other for the first time. They dance.)*

Andantino con grazia (♩ = 100)



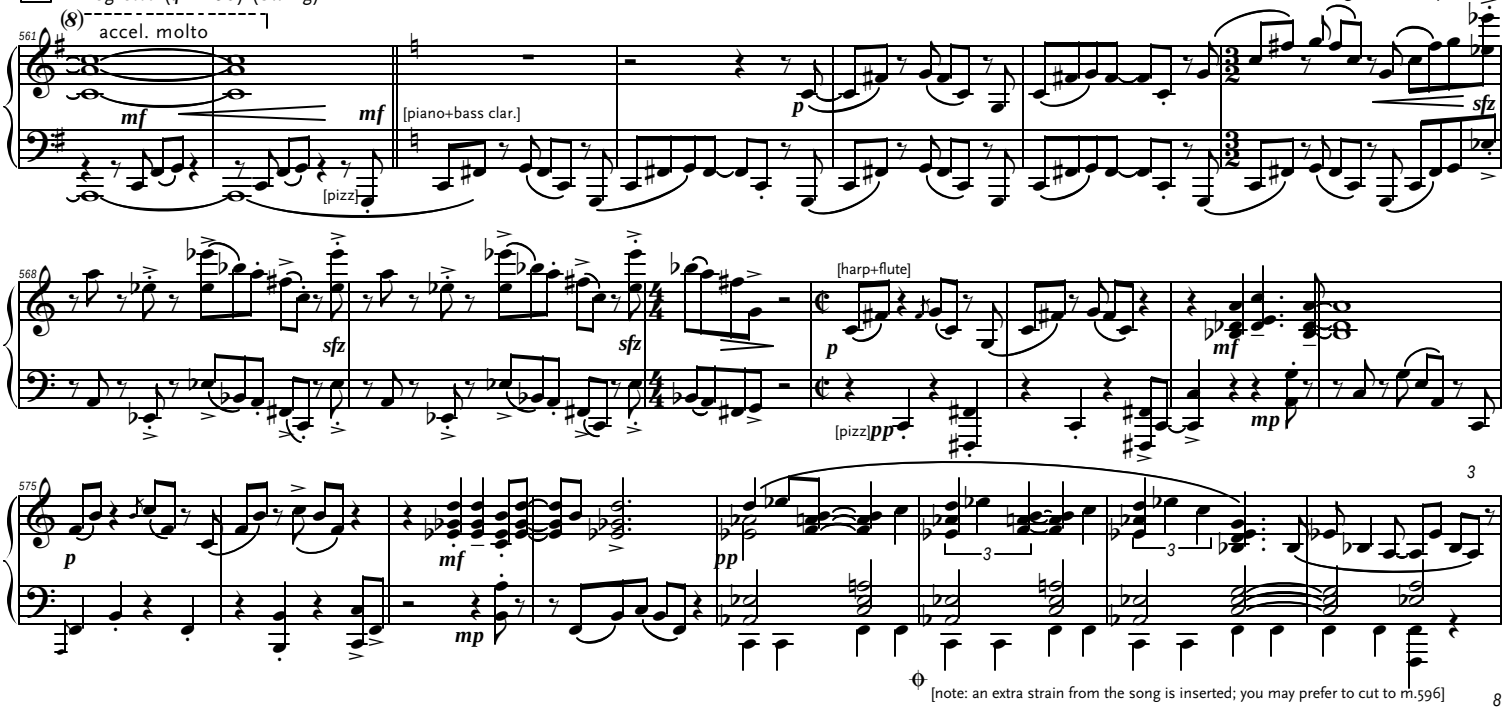
6 **Meeting Scene.** *(Music accompanies their first words spoken to one another.)*

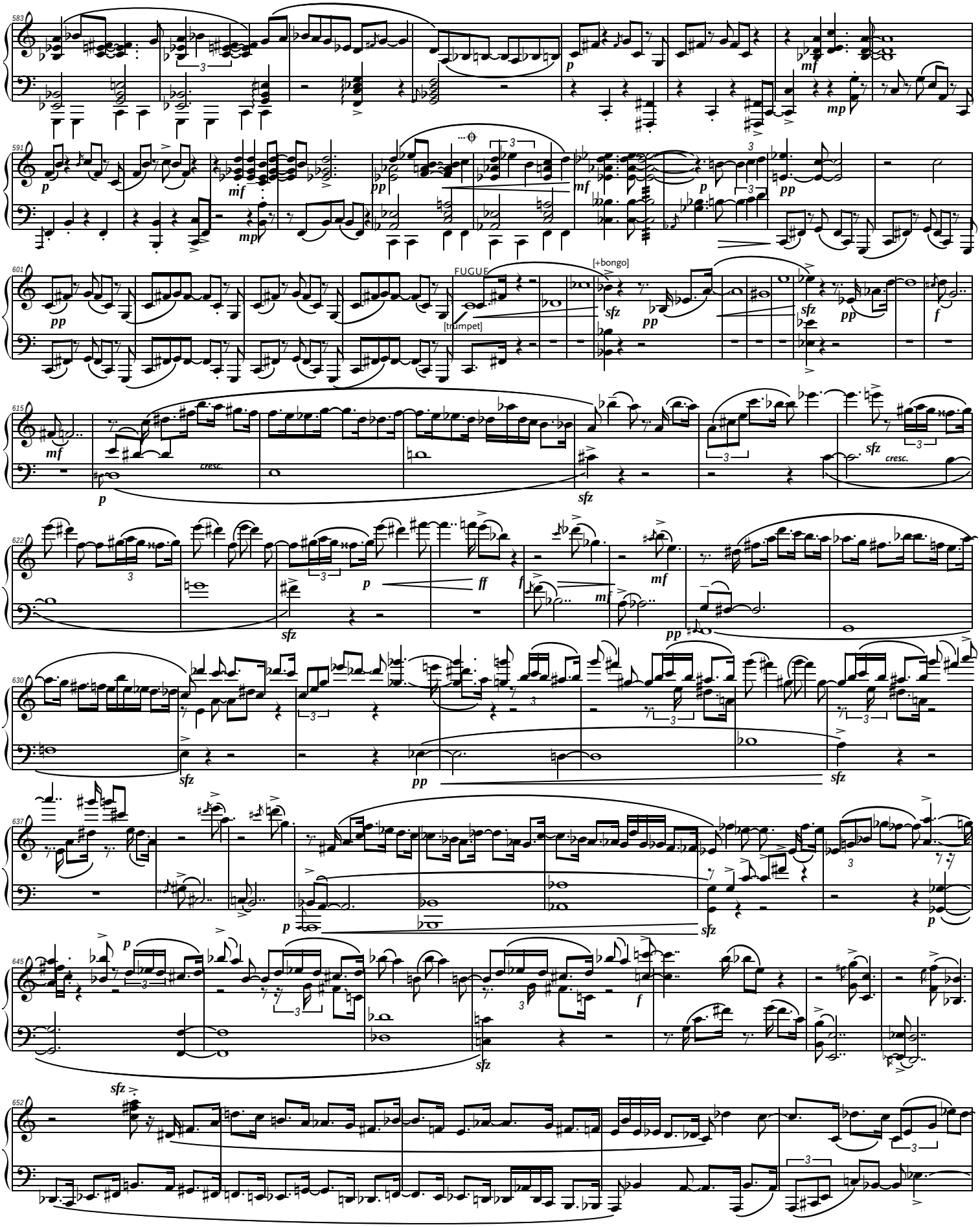
Meno mosso (♩ = 72) sempre rubato poco rall. a tempo rit. a tempo

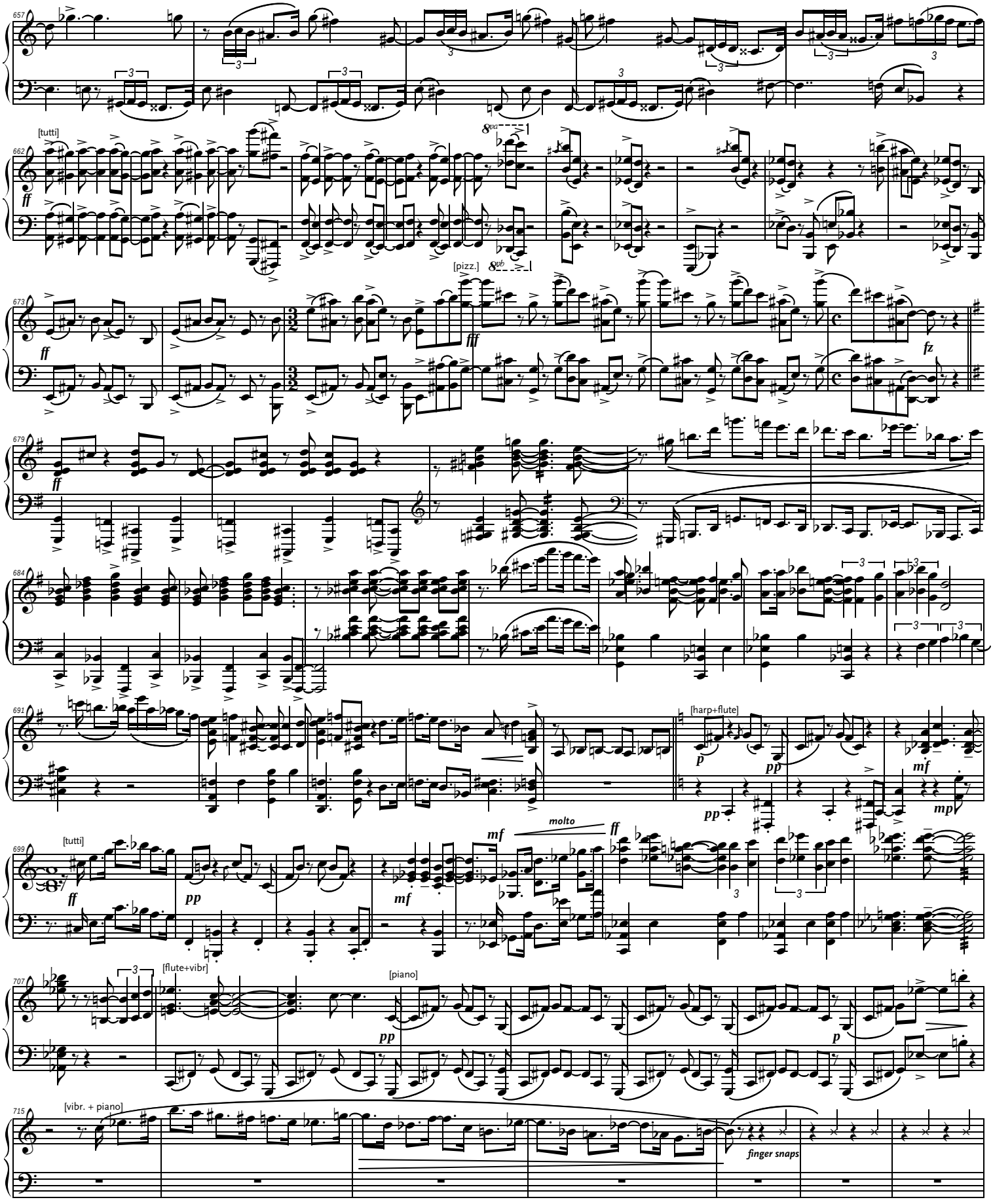


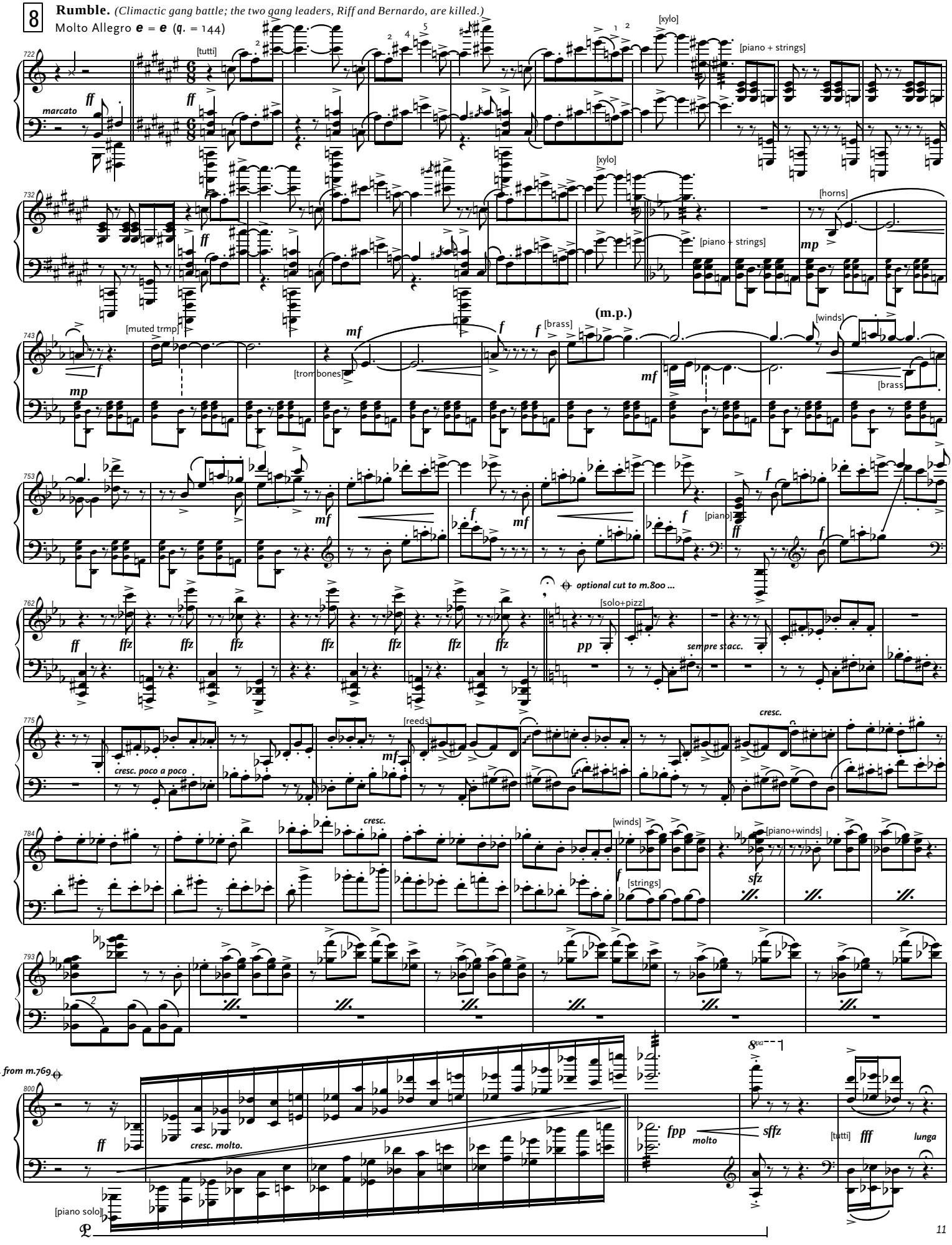
7 **Cool Fugue.** *(An elaborate dance sequence in which Riff leads the Jets in harnessing their impulsive hostility, figuratively "cooling their jets.")*

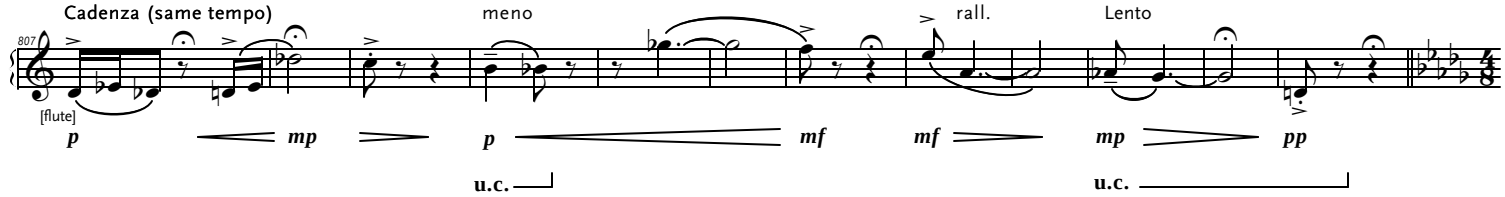
Allegretto (♩ = 160) (Swing)

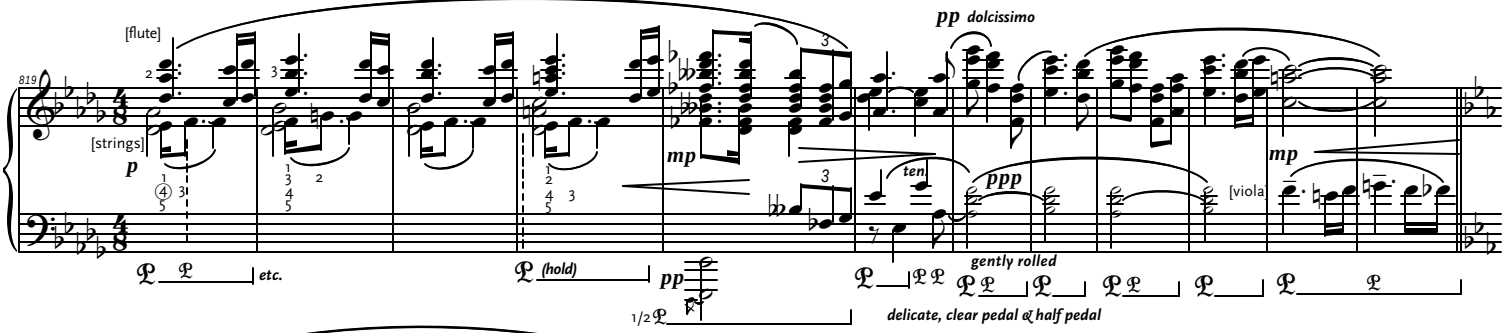
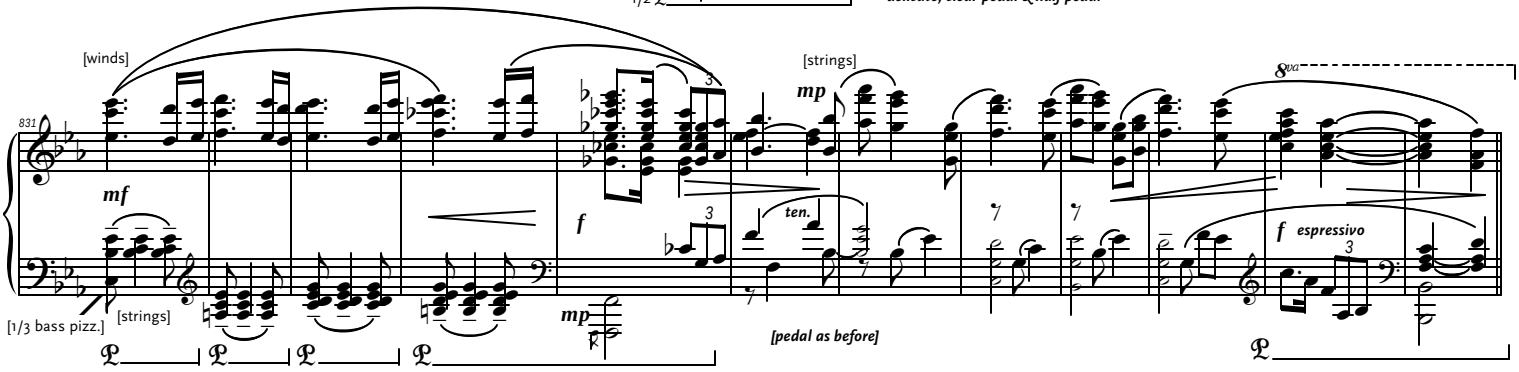
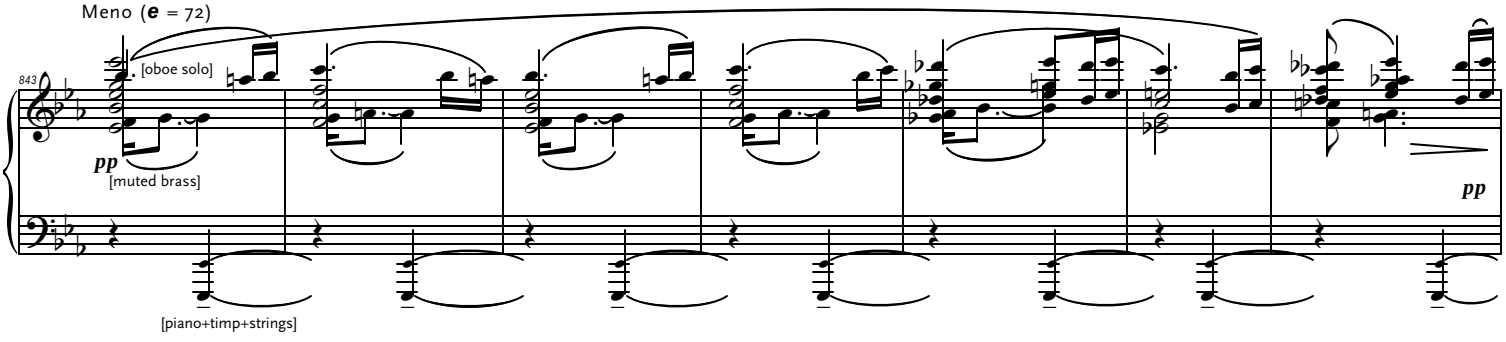
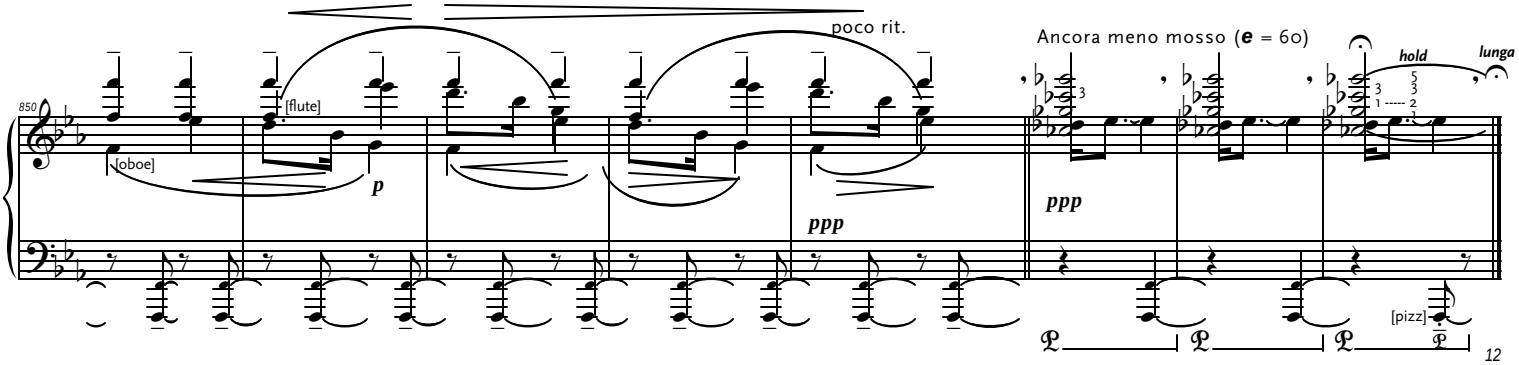



583
591
601
FUGUE
[trumpet]
[+bongo]
615
622
630
637
645
652


657
[tutti]
662
ff
[pizz.]
fff
673
fz
679
684
691
[harp+flute]
p
pp
mf
mp
699
molto
707
[flute+vibr]
[piano]
715
[vibr. + piano]
finger snaps


8
Rumble. (Climactic gang battle; the two gang leaders, Riff and Bernardo, are killed.)
Molto Allegro e = e (q. = 144)
722
[tutti]
[xylo]
[piano + strings]
marcato
ff
732
[horns]
mp
743
[muted trmp]
[trombones]
[brass]
[winds]
(m.p.)
mf
f
753
[piano]
762
optional cut to m.800 ...
[solo+pizz]
sempre stacc.
pp
ffz
775
[reeds]
cresc. poco a poco
cresc.
784
[winds]
[piano+winds]
[strings]
sfz
793
... from m.769
800
cresc. molto.
fpp
molto
sffz
[tutti]
fff
lunga
[piano solo]



8 **Finale.** *(Maria's* "I Have A Love" *develops into a procession, which recalls the vision of* "Somewhere.")

Adagio (♩ = 80)