After a Reading of
The Rider on the White Horse

for bass trombone and harp

Israel Lai (2016)

After a Reading of The Rider on the White Horse (2016) for bass trombone and harp is inspired by the German novella *Der Schimmelreiter* by Theodor Storm, where the North Frisian protagonist ascends to dykemaster and insists on building a new dyke, only to find it clashing with the old one. As a storm rages, the sea floods the damaged dyke, taking his family, and he desperately drowns himself, thus fulfilling the curse of his mythical white horse and haunting the dyke ever since.

Without depicting every detail of the plot, the piece aims to paint the eerie and tragic atmosphere of the novel and highlight monumental events, such as the clash of the dykes and the protagonist's swansong. When writing the piece, the composer limits himself to a self-defined seven-tone scale in each section, incidentally tailored to the harp, making small changes gradually to ultimately 'resolve' it to a conventional tonality during the final recitative. These modes, aleatory in nature as they originate in an arbitrary loosening of harp strings, present harmonic possibilities that, despite certain dissonances and occasionally anti-traditional progressions, generally sound eerily familiar, adding to the mood of the piece.

The trombone and harp present vastly contrasting timbres and possibilities of articulation. While the trombone is posed to lead the melody, they form a surprisingly effective dialogue. Their juxtaposition allows their individual characteristic sounds to shine through.

Performance Notes

Strum harshly with the back of the hand from an arbitrary, slightly higher note towards the notated pitch.

Percussive attack: slam with the hand approximately the pitches notated.

Octave harmonic, notated at pitch *played.*

for Mackay Chan, the unyielding bass trombonist

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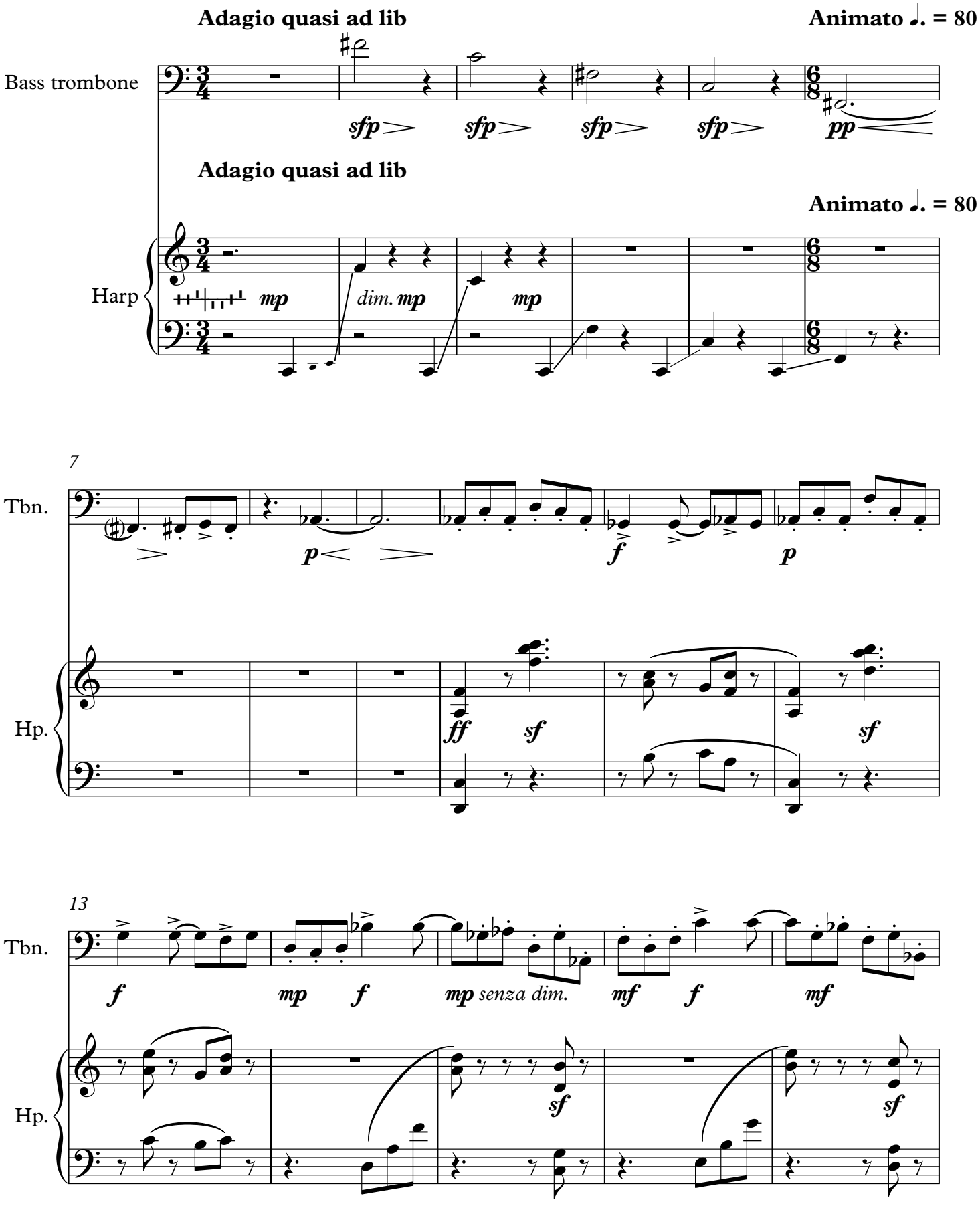
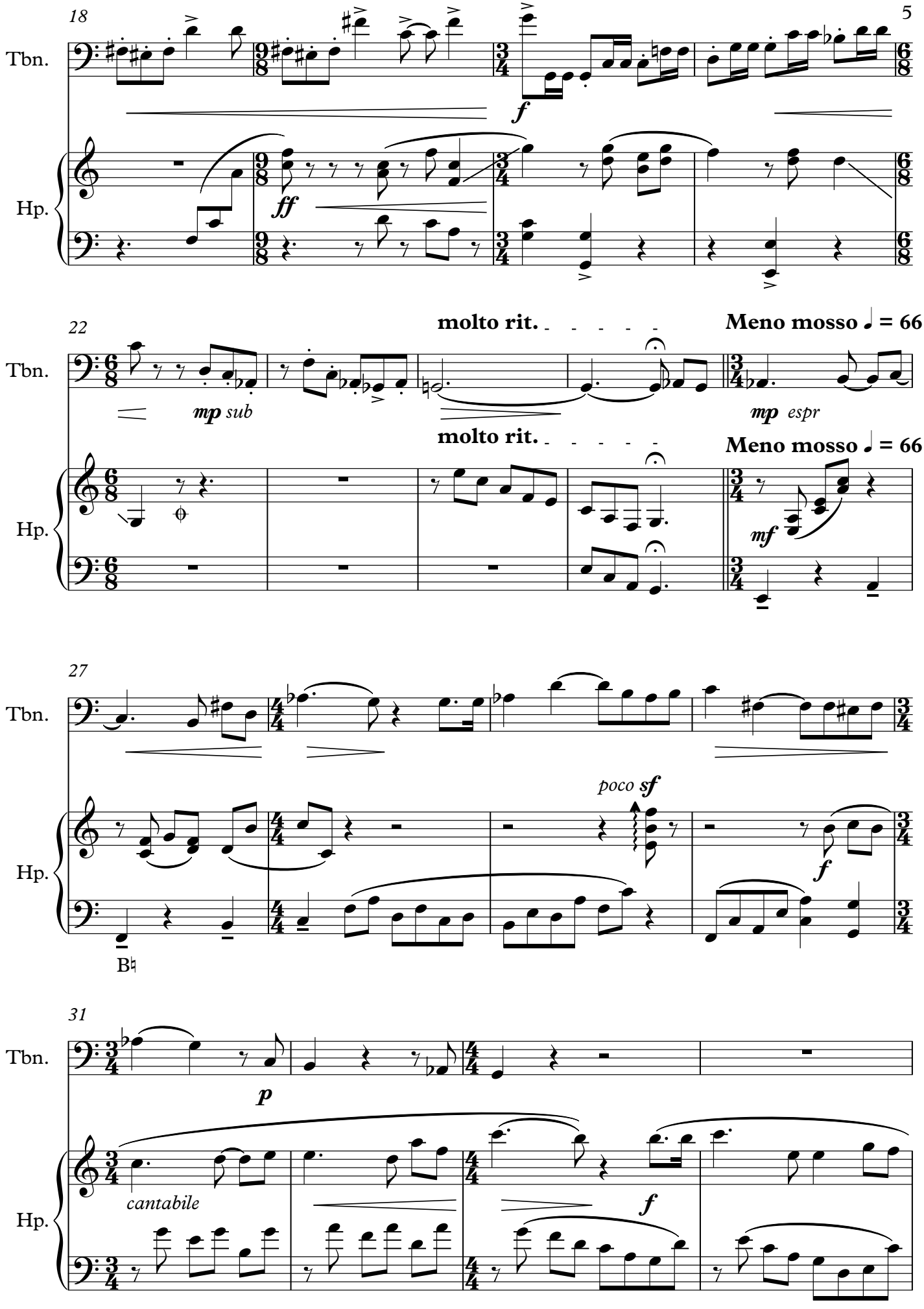
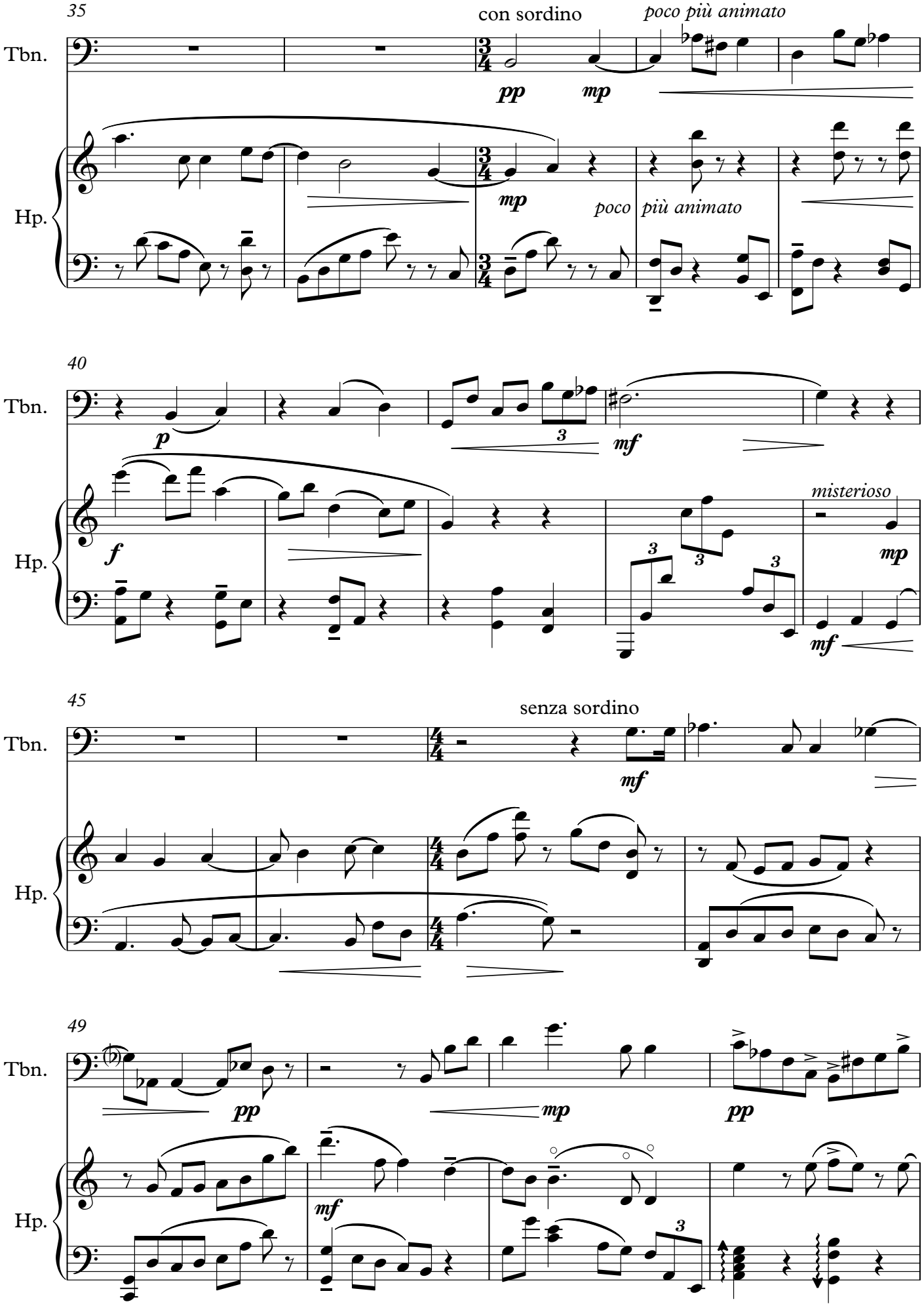
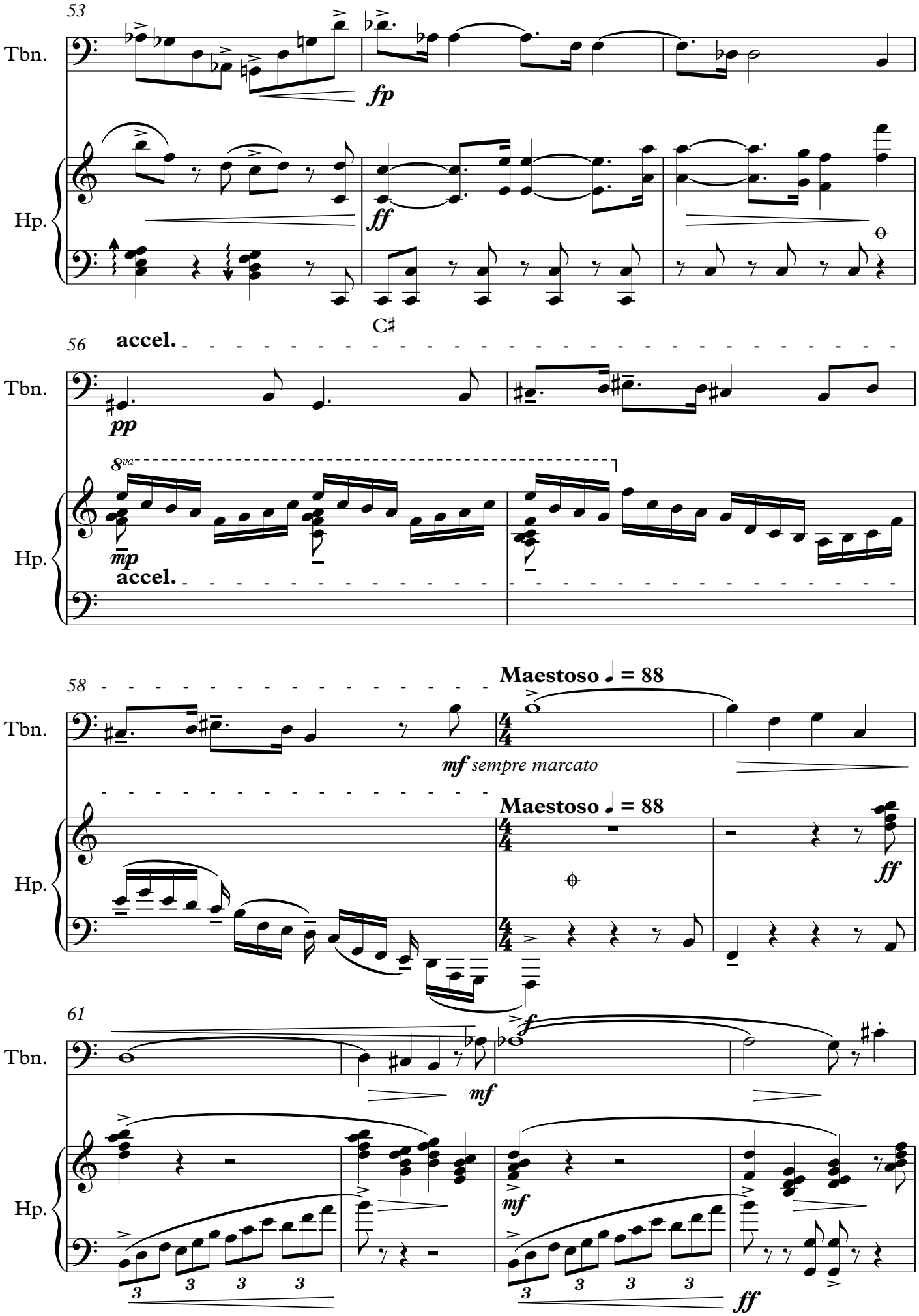
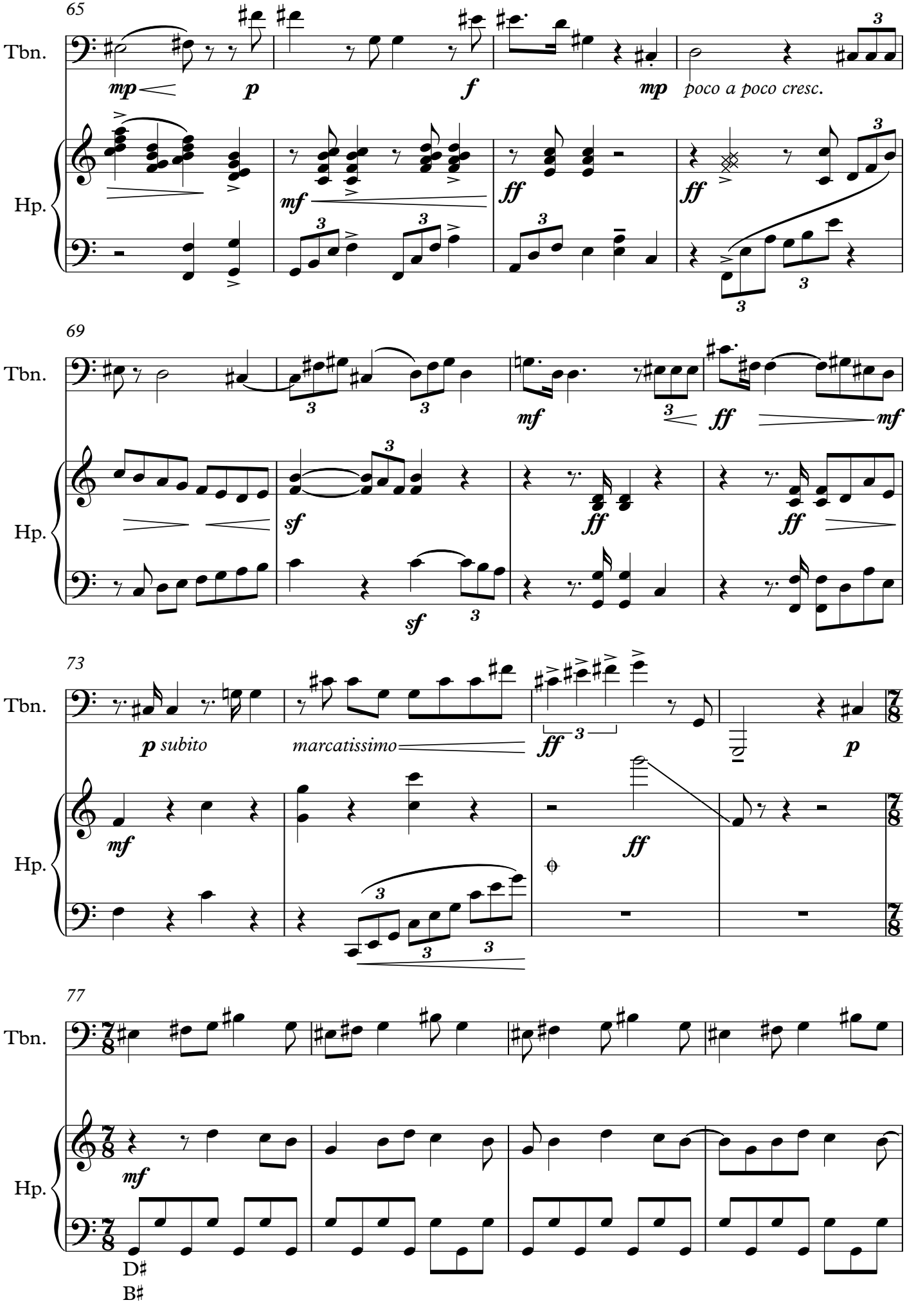
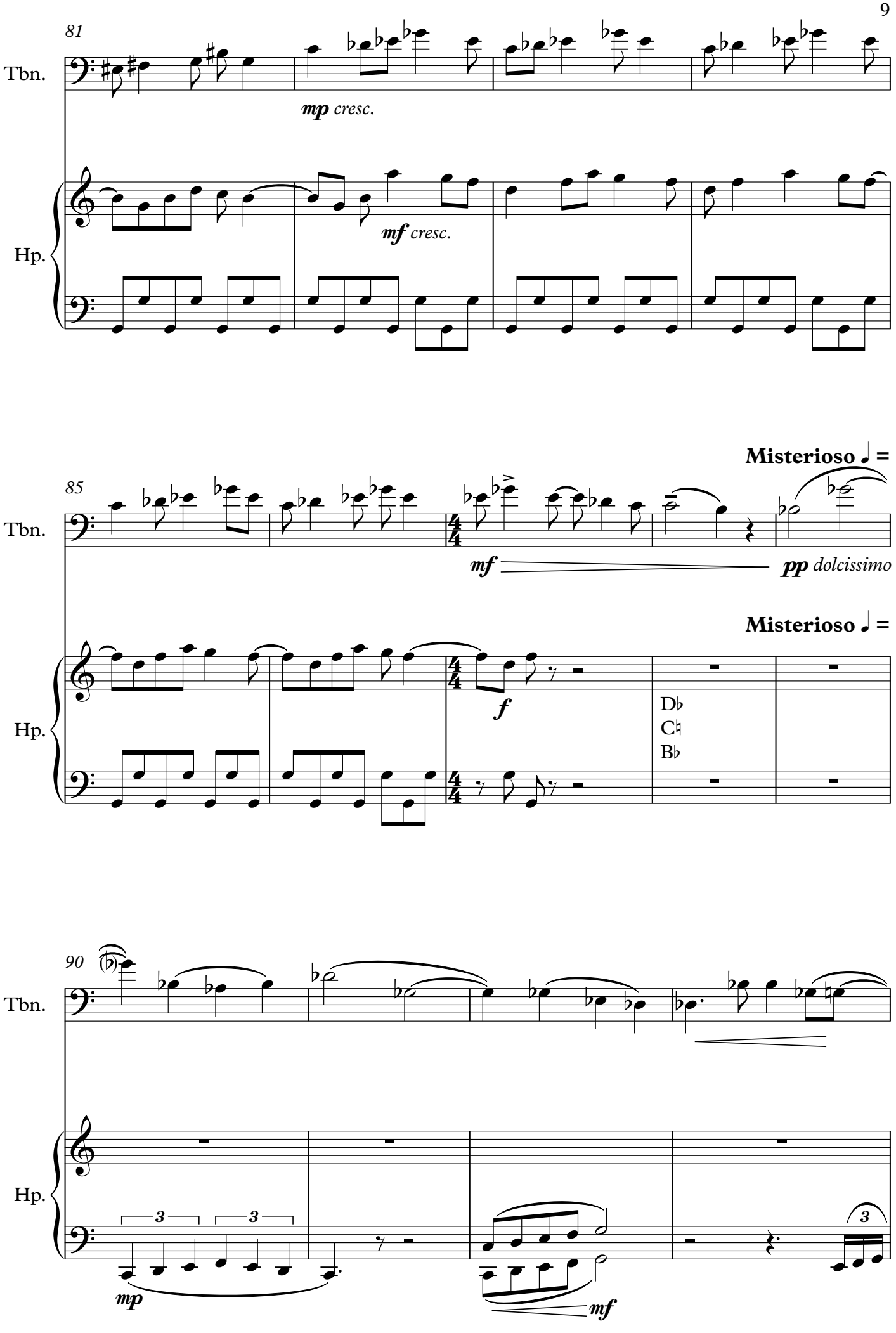


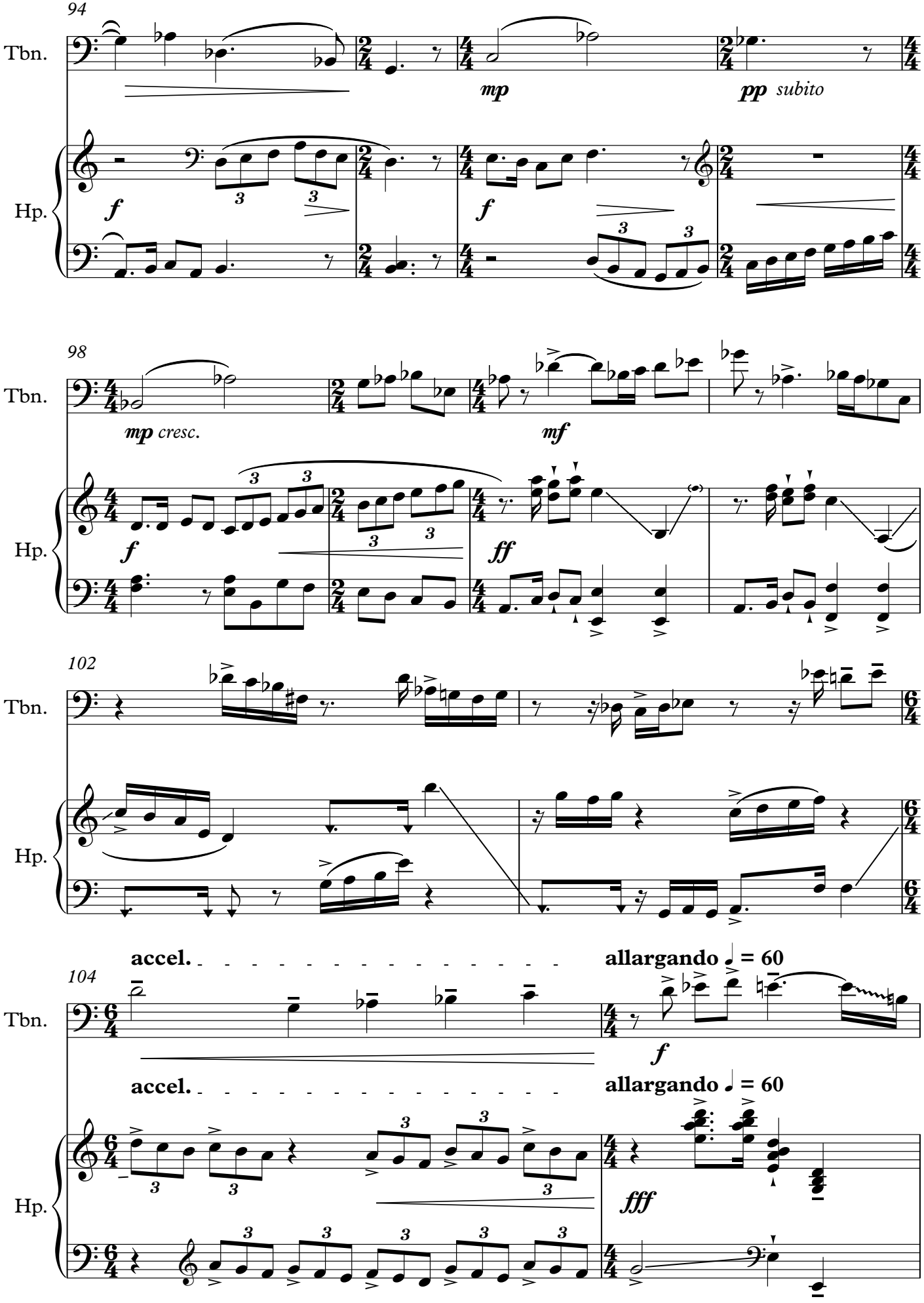

18
Tbn.
Hp.
f
ff
22
molto rit.
Meno mosso ♩ = 66
mp sub
mp espr
mf
27
poco sf
B♮
31
p
cantabile

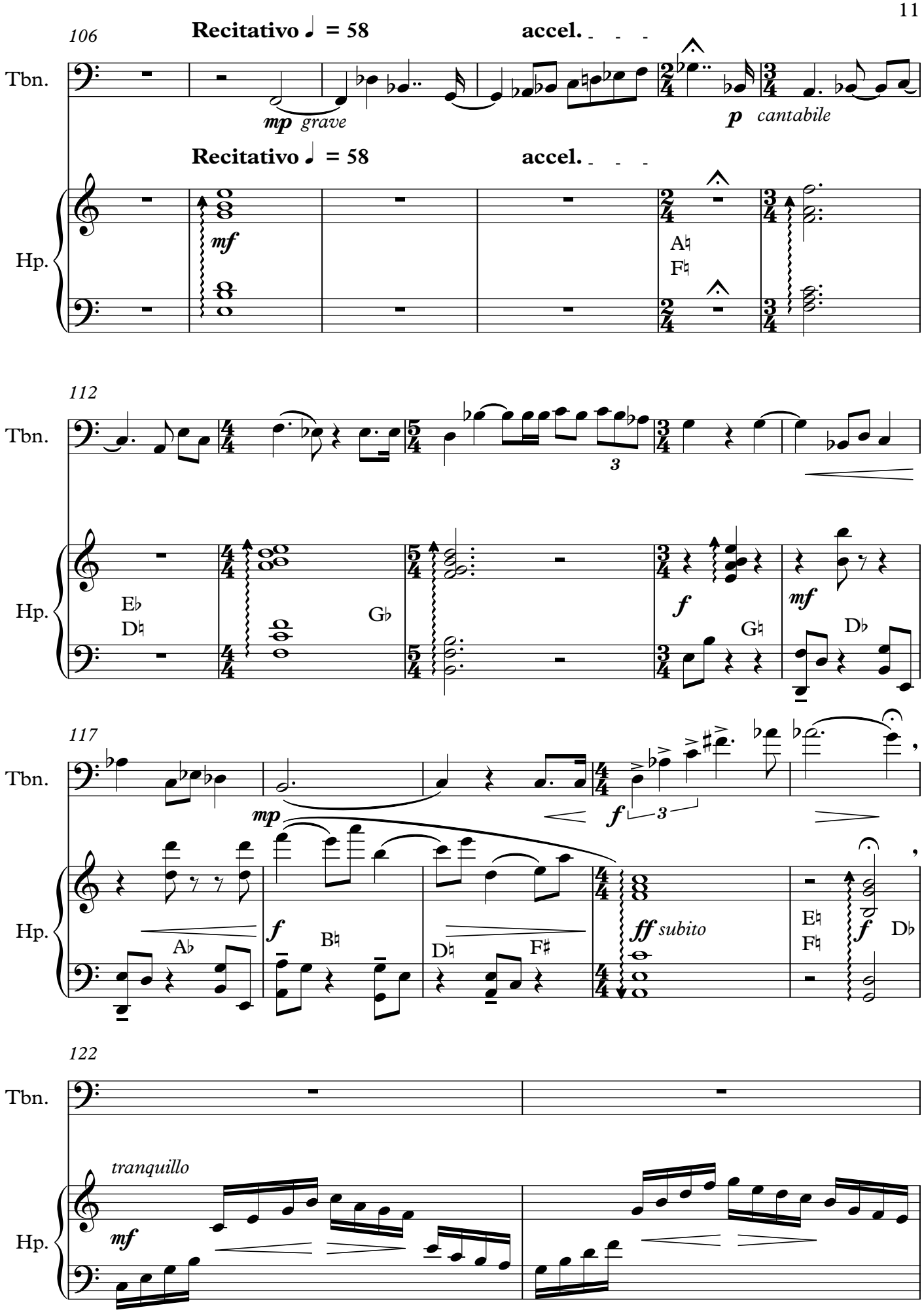

35
Tbn.
Hp.
con sordino
poco più animato
pp
mp
mp
poco più animato
40
Tbn.
Hp.
p
f
3
mf
misterioso
mp
mf
45
Tbn.
Hp.
senza sordino
mf
49
Tbn.
Hp.
pp
mp
pp
mf
3

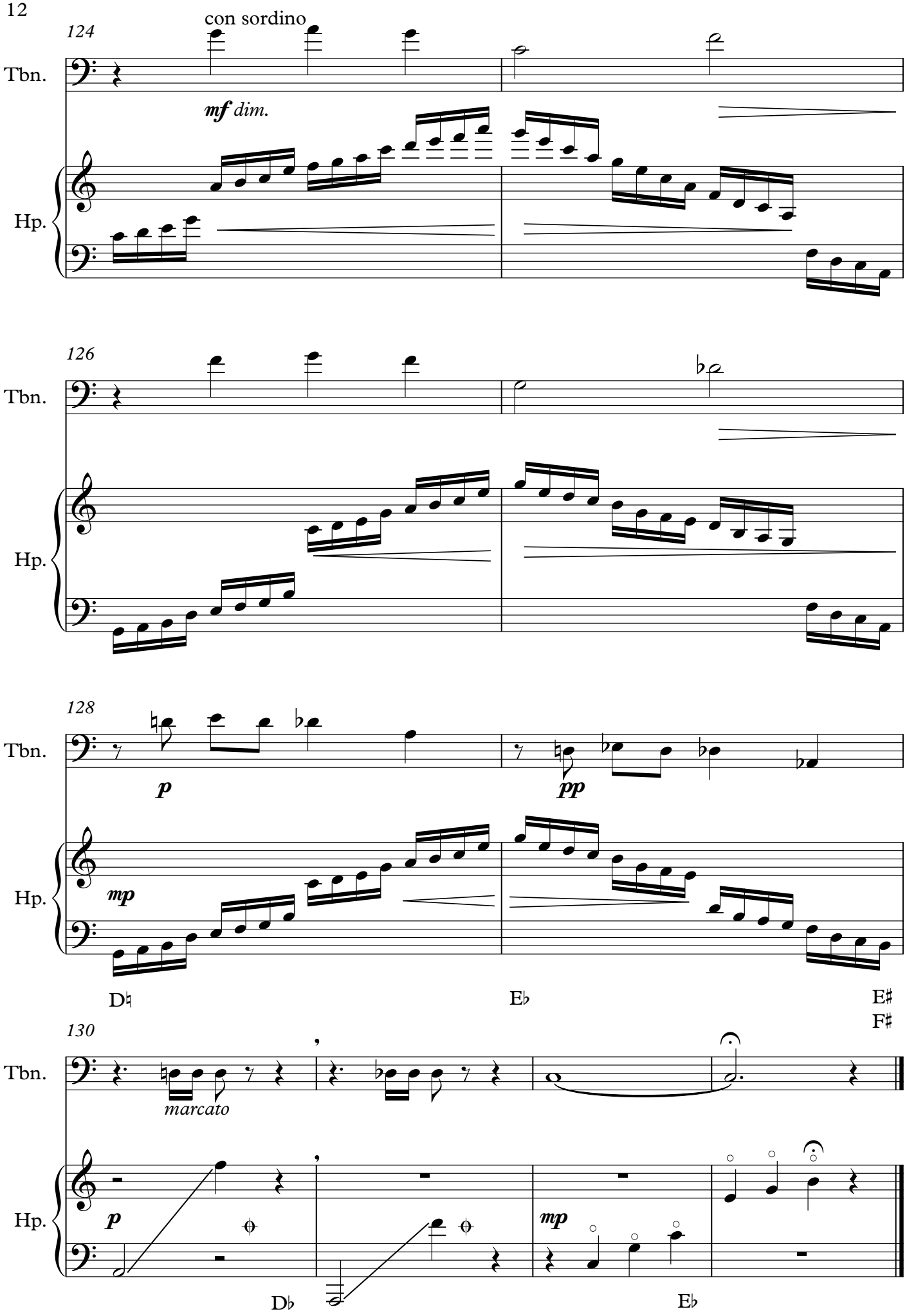

53
Tbn.
fp
Hp.
ff
C♯
56
accel.
Tbn.
pp
8va
mp
accel.
Hp.
58
Maestoso ♩ = 88
Tbn.
mf sempre marcato
Maestoso ♩ = 88
Hp.
ff
61
Tbn.
mf
f
Hp.
mf
ff


65
Tbn.
mp
p
f
mp
poco a poco cresc.
Hp.
ff
mf
ff
69
Tbn.
mf
ff
mf
Hp.
sf
ff
ff
sf
73
Tbn.
p subito
marcatissimo
ff
p
Hp.
mf
ff
77
Tbn.
Hp.
mf
D♯
B♯


81
Tbn.
mp cresc.
Hp.
mf cresc.
Misterioso ♩ = 80
85
Tbn.
mf
pp dolcissimo
Misterioso ♩ = 80
Hp.
f
D♭
C♮
B♭
90
Tbn.
Hp.
3
3
mp
3
mf


94
Tbn.
mp
pp subito
Hp.
f
f
98
Tbn.
mp cresc.
mf
Hp.
f
ff
102
Tbn.
Hp.
accel.
allargando ♩ = 60
104
Tbn.
f
accel.
allargando ♩ = 60
Hp.
fff


106
Recitativo ♩ = 58
accel.
Tbn.
mp grave
p cantabile
Recitativo ♩ = 58
accel.
Hp.
mf
A♮
F♮
112
Tbn.
3
Hp.
E♭
D♮
G♭
f
G♮
mf
D♭
117
Tbn.
mp
f
3
Hp.
A♭
f
B♮
D♮
F♯
ff subito
E♮
F♮
f
D♭
122
Tbn.
tranquillo
Hp.
mf


124
con sordino
Tbn.
mf dim.
Hp.
126
Tbn.
Hp.
128
Tbn.
p
pp
Hp.
mp
D♮
E♭
E♯
F♯
130
Tbn.
marcato
Hp.
p
mp
D♭
E♭