S T E R L I N G M A N
or
GENEROSITY REWARDED

Chamber Opera in One Act, Four Scenes

by

Klaus George Roy

Op. 30, 1955-56

Libretto translated and adapted from a short story by the Russian humorist

Arkady Averchenko (1881-1925)

The time: November 10th, the night before St. Martin's Day (Martinmas), the saint who divided his cloak with a beggar but has become known as the patron of feasting and convivial gatherings. In many countries, it is customary to prepare a "Martin's goose". The Place: A small town, in a country where the saints' days are observed.

CAST

The Old Man. . . . . .tenor (buffo)
(Jonathan -- Jon.)

The Old Woman. . . . . mezzo-soprano or soprano
(Jacqueline -- Jac.)

A Stranger. . . . . .baritone

A Beggar. . . . . bass
(or Vagabond -- Vag.)

ORCHESTRA

Woodwind Quartet (Flute, Oboe, B-flat Clarinet, and Bassoon) and Piano

(The work is so scored that it may be rehearsed and, if absolutely necessary, performed with the accompaniment of the Piano alone. The full score serves also as the vocal score. Total duration c. 43 minutes.)

The completion of the opera was made possible by a generous grant from a private foundation, November 1954. Sketches had been begun in May of 1952, and the draft was completed on June 15, 1955, at the Cummington School of Arts, Cummington, Massachusetts. The score is dated September 9, 1956, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

The first performance took place on April 18, 1957, as a television production over WGBH-TV and FM, Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, produced by Sarah Caldwell and David M. Davis. Miss Caldwell directed the Boston University Opera Department, with the following cast: John King, Gwendolyn Belle, Robert Mesrobian, and Herbert Gibson. The woodwind players were Josef Cobert, Milton Hamilton, Sherman Friedland, and Lawrence Intravaia; Merle Puffer was the pianist and vocal coach.

The first stage performances were given on May 26-27-28, 1960, at the Eldred Theatre of Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, as the seventh program in the Second Cleveland May Festival of Contemporary Music. Eugene Kilinski of WRU conducted, and the stage director was Elsa Findlay of the Cleveland Institute of Music. The cast was as follows: Keith Mackey as the Old Man; Gloria Shafran and Mary Eileen Fogarty alternating as the Old Woman; George Kleinfeld and Stephen Szaraz as the Stranger, and John Dietz and Stephen Szaraz as the Beggar. The woodwind ensemble was constituted by Walter Mayhall, Virginia Poole, Frederic Cohen, and Margaret Perry; David Gooding was pianist and vocal coach.

The opera has also been performed at Karamu Theatre (18 performances) and at Iowa State University (on a double bill with "Amahl and the Night Visitors").

NOTE to person in charge of performance publicity:

In order to preserve the surprise elements of the story, it is suggested that only the following comments, and not a synopsis, be provided to newspapers etc. in advance of performance:

"The story of Sterlingman deals with an elderly and impoverished couple visited on St. Martin's eve by a mysterious stranger with an appealing proposition. In the ensuing events, the quality of mercy is severely strained."

(May add:) "The opera is a somewhat bitter satire on a variety of human foibles, including gullibility, avarice, and hypocrisy. Nobody comes off too well in the piece, but - as in all satire - the shoe need pinch only whom it fits. At the same time, the work is intended to be funny and entertaining. The scoring of the instrumental ensemble which accompanies the four singers - woodwind quartet and piano - contributes to the sharp and pointed effect of the story."

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Between 1948 and 1957, the composer was librarian and instructor at the Boston University College of Music (School of Fine and Applied Arts). Since 1958, he has been Program Book Editor and Director of Publications for The Cleveland Orchestra. Born in Vienna in 1924, he has been an American citizen since 1944, when he served in the U. S. Army. He is a graduate of Boston University and Harvard.

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PRESS COMMENTS on the TV première and stage première of Sterlingman:

"The story is a perfect basis for a short opera ... The music is light and bouncy, carefully adjusted to the pace and amount of action, and never developed for its own sake..."

Cyrus Durgin, The Boston Globe, April 19, 1957

"An inventive, quicksilver score that flutters lightly and imaginatively from mood to mood...Subtle and truly comic musical observations ... Both in writing and production an exciting and brilliantly mastered experiment in musical drama..."

Melvin Maddocks, The Christian Science Monitor, April 19, 1957

"The tale is amusing. It is entertainingly embellished with witty music. As might be expected in so cynical and compact a drama, there is little room for lyric flights. But it moves with dispatch in declamatory lines of much rhythmic interest, fresh harmonies and distinctive sonorities."

Herbert Elwell, Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 27, 1960

"Roy's most effective work to date ... well presented ... fast-moving production ..."

Bain Murray, Cleveland Heights Sun-Press, June 2, 1960

"Keeps a biting, cynical satire alive from title to closing chord ... Sharp, brittle musical style ... A contemporary idiom of musical speech, veering more toward polytonality than atonality, more toward angular than lyrical expression... The small orchestra of woodwinds and piano provided just the right tight pithy commentary ... For freshness and inventiveness this could be the brightest event of the series"... (Second Cleveland May Festival of Contemporary Music)

Frank Hruby, The Cleveland Press, May 27, 1960

"One of the high points of the nine (Cleveland May Festival) programs ... The work is a natural for the many college and university workshops across the nation."

Musical America, July 1960

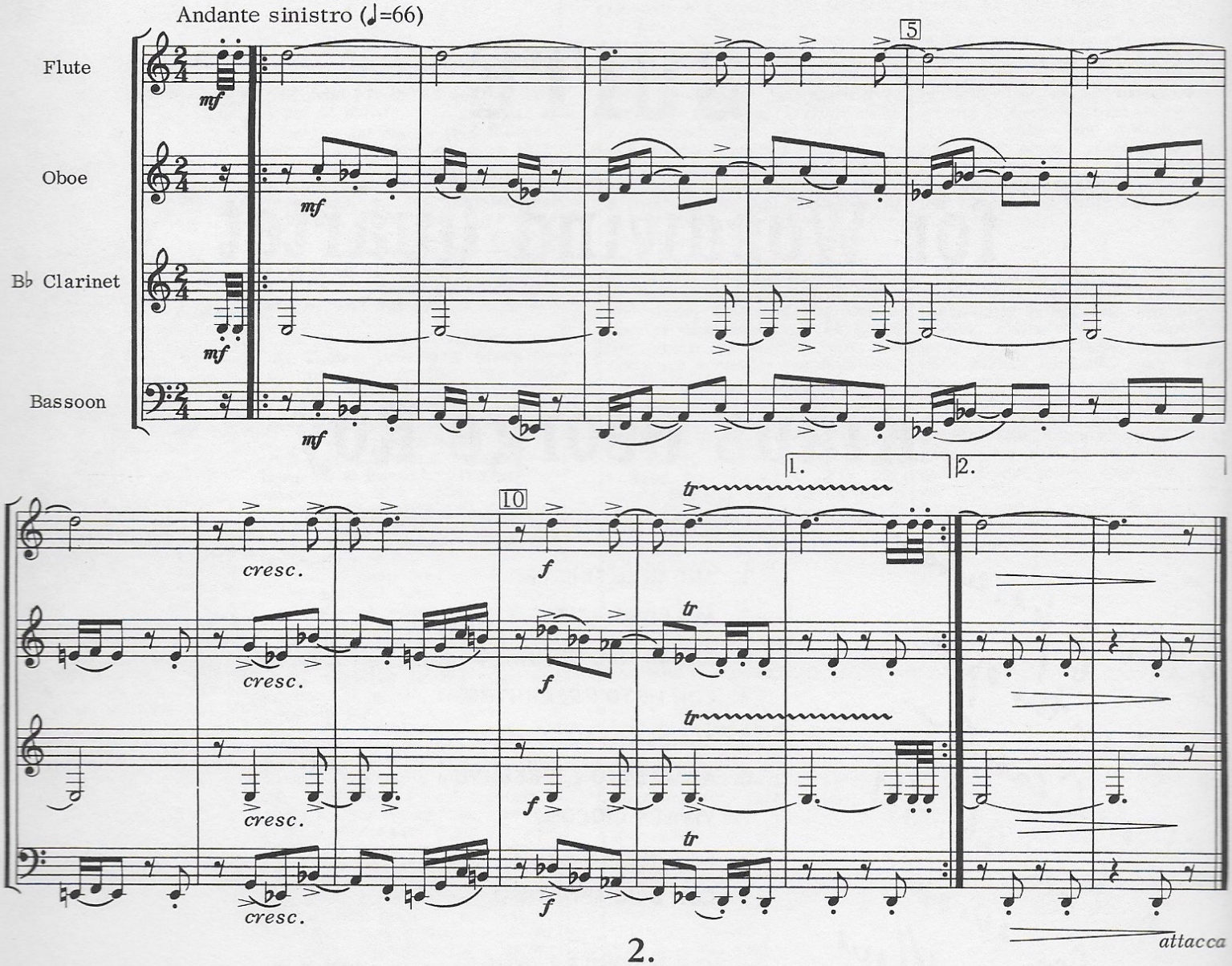
"STERLINGMAN" SUITE

for Woodwind Quartet

Score

1.

KLAUS GEORGE ROY
Op. 30a (1955)



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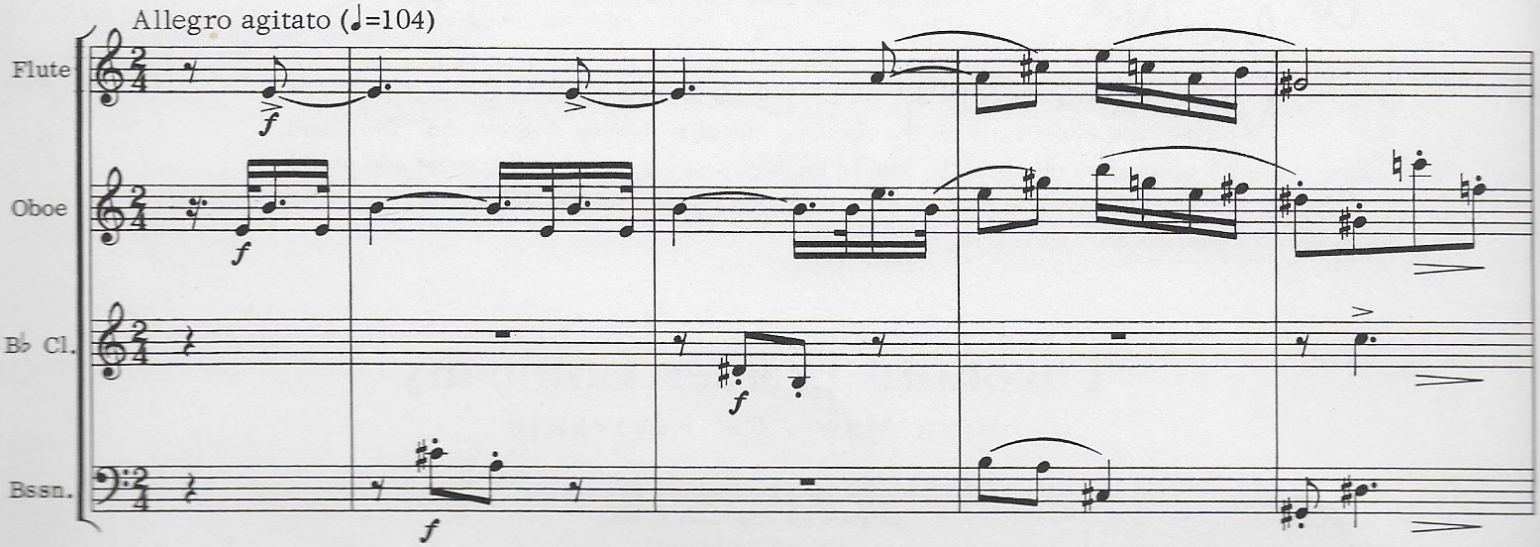
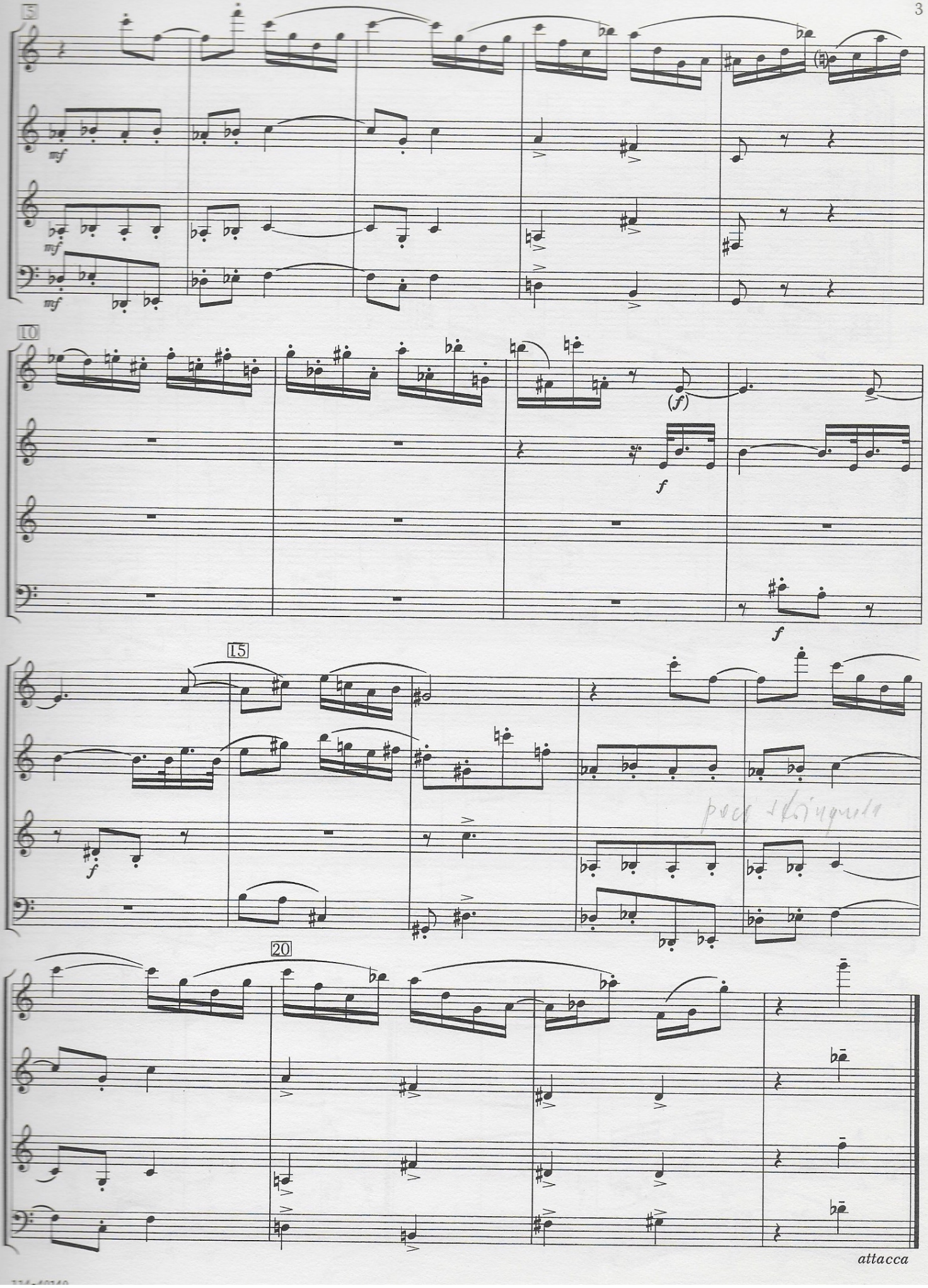
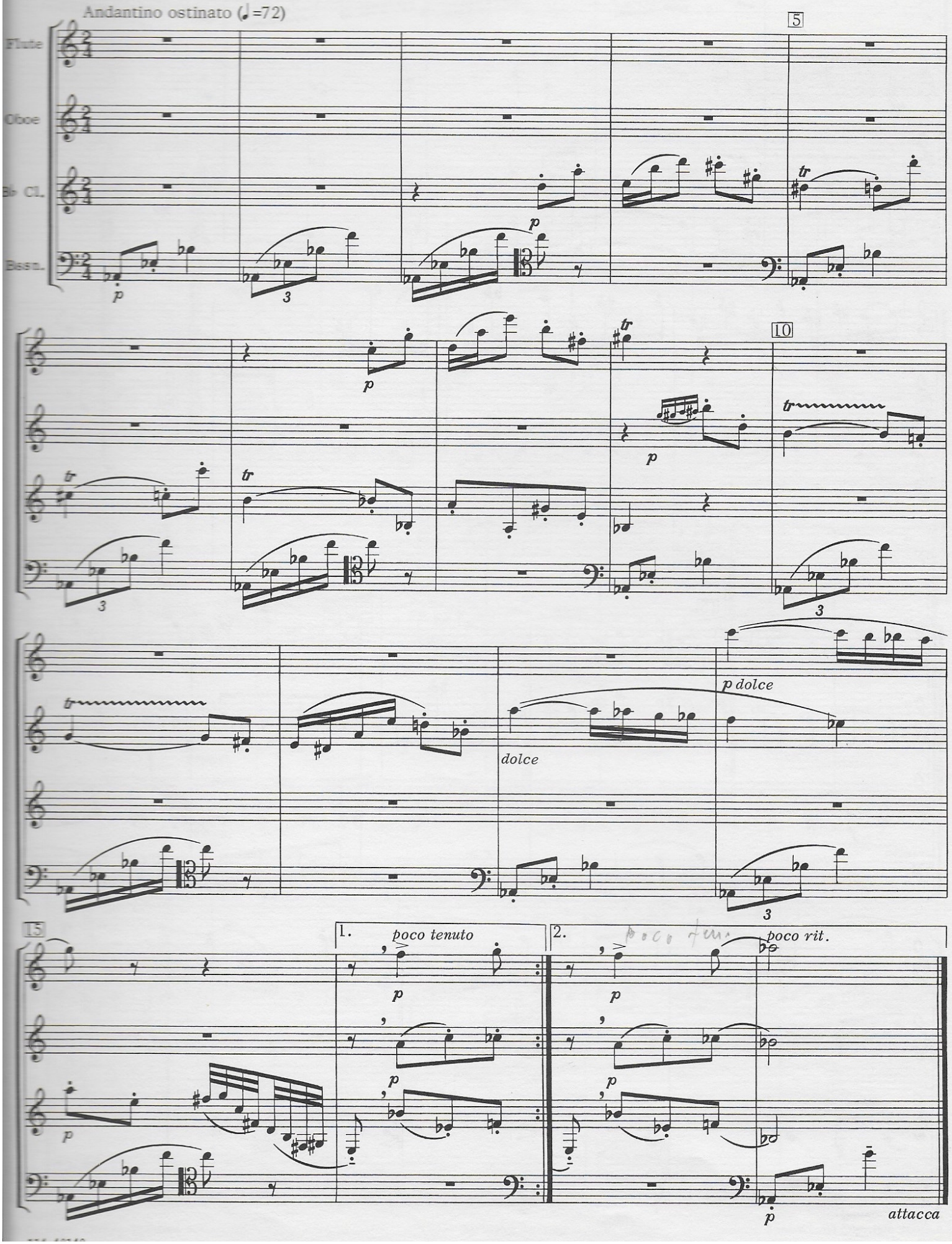
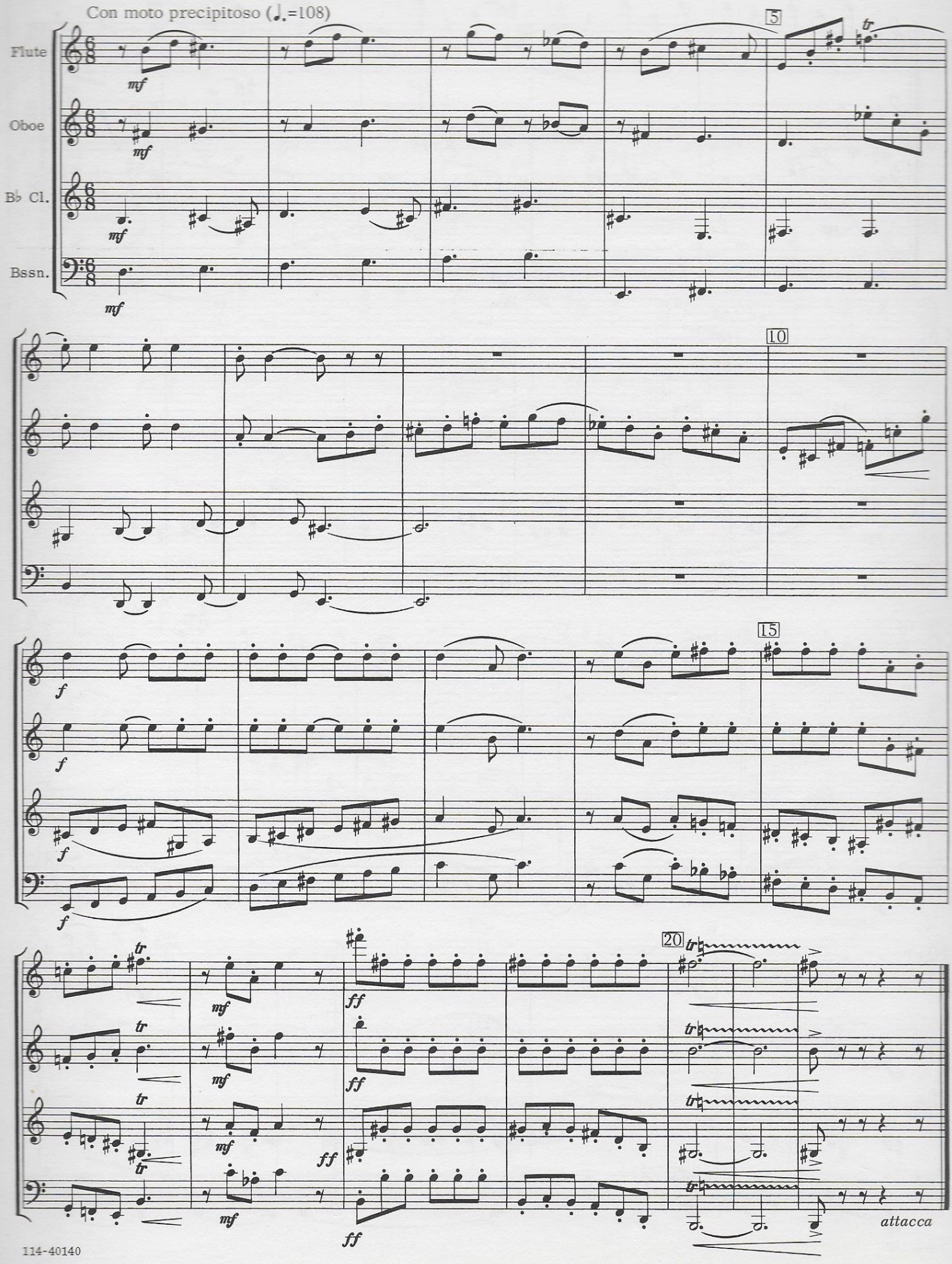
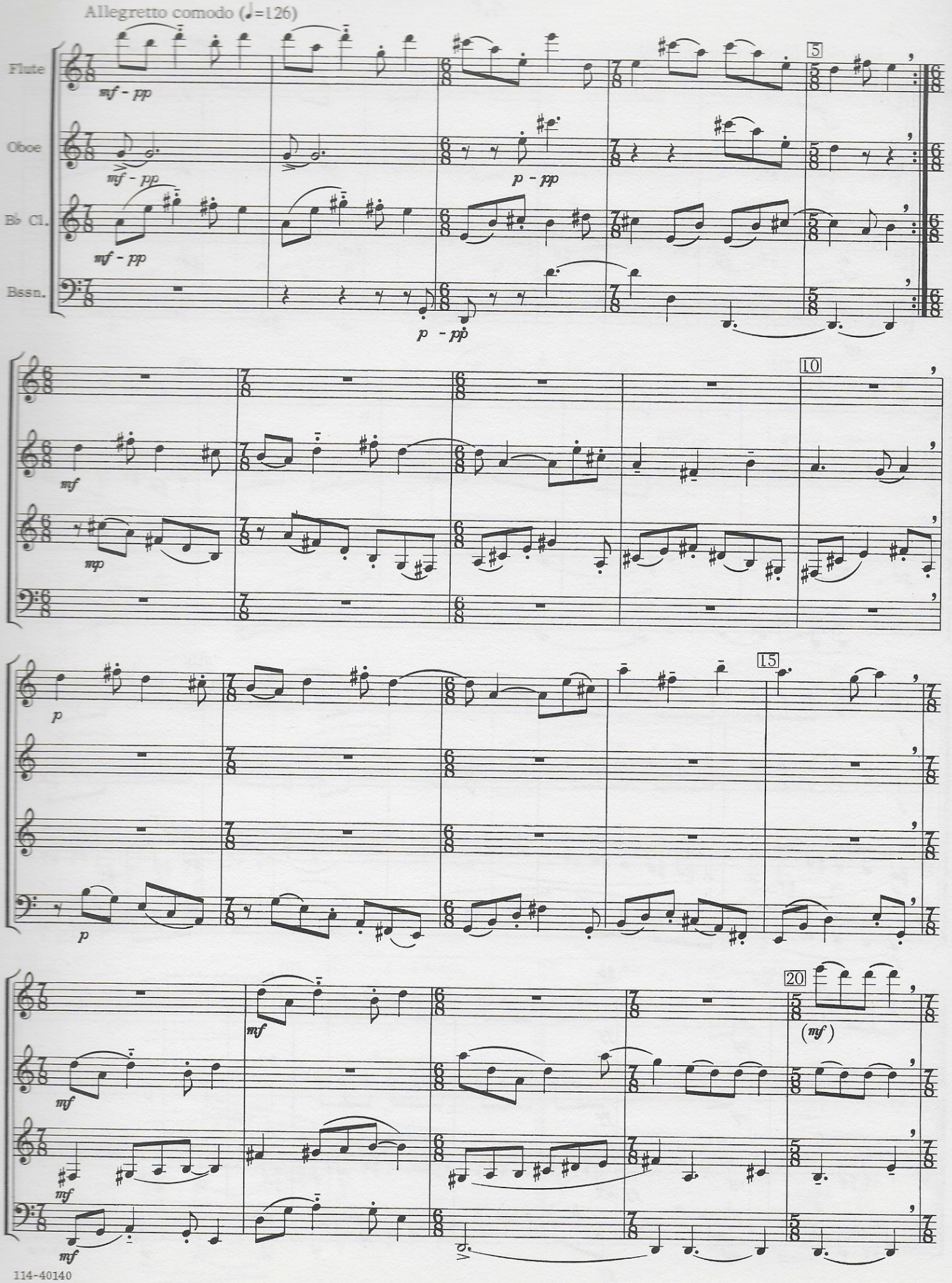
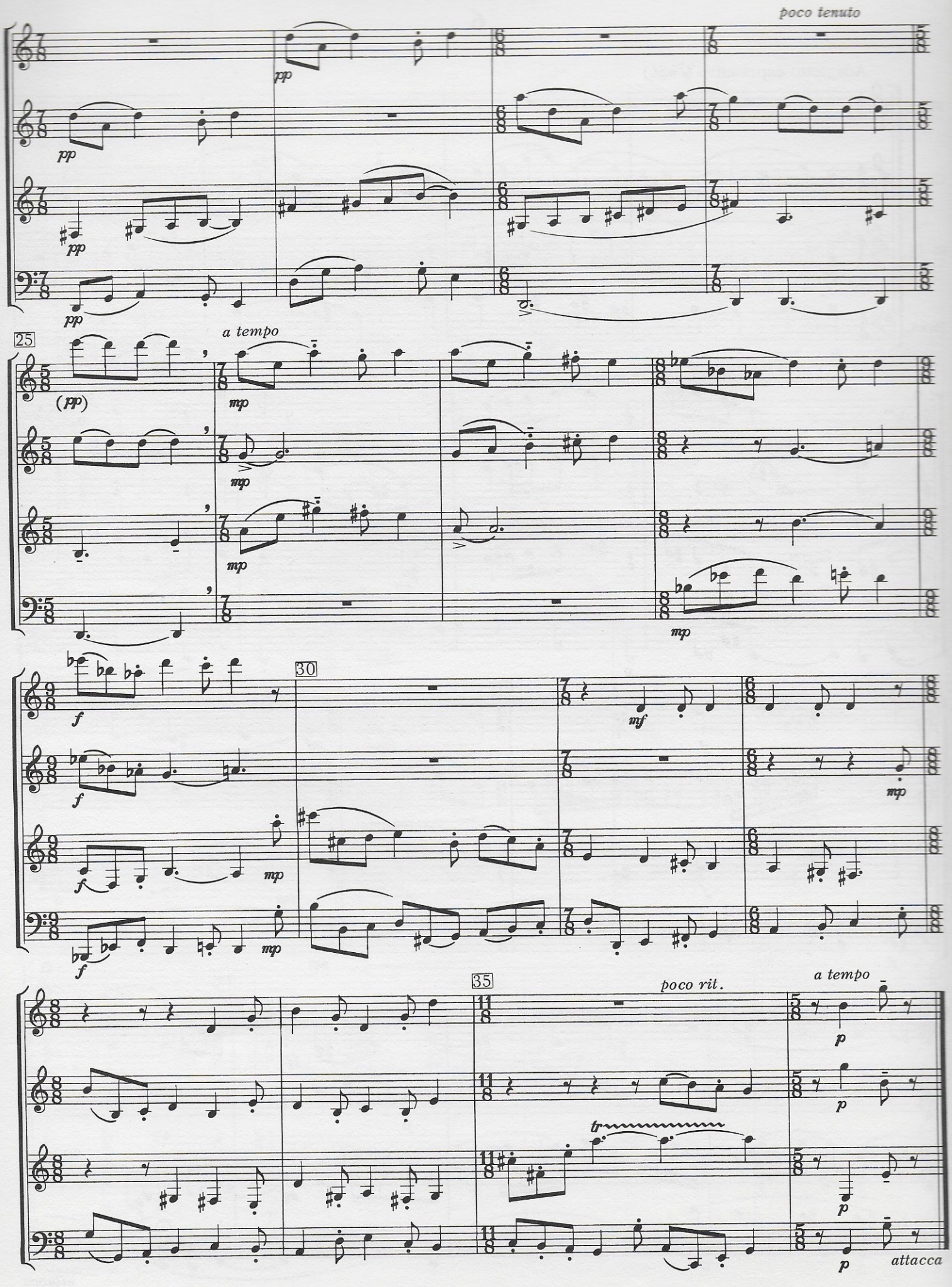


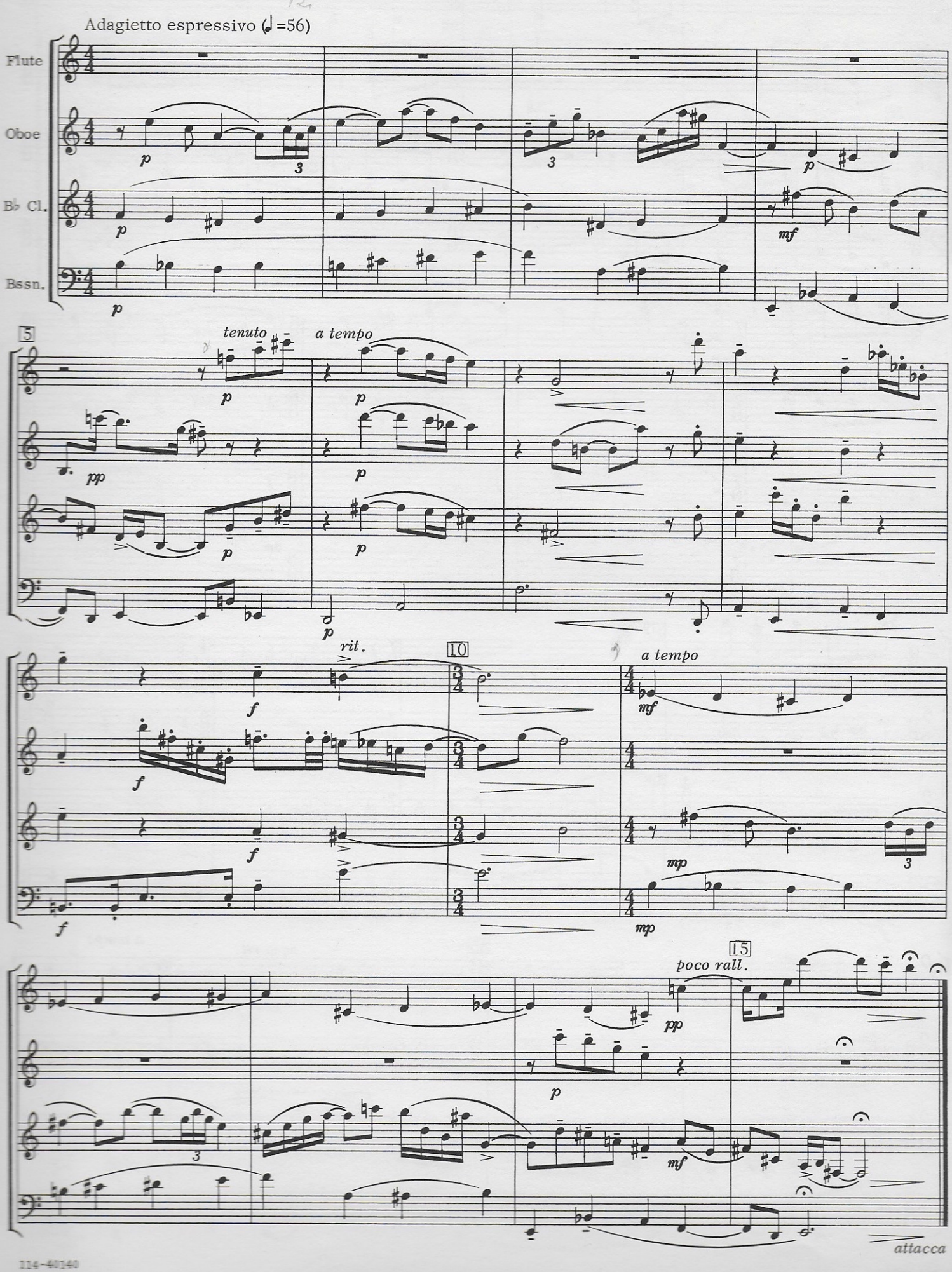

5
mf
mf
mf
10
(f)
f
f
15
f
20
attacca

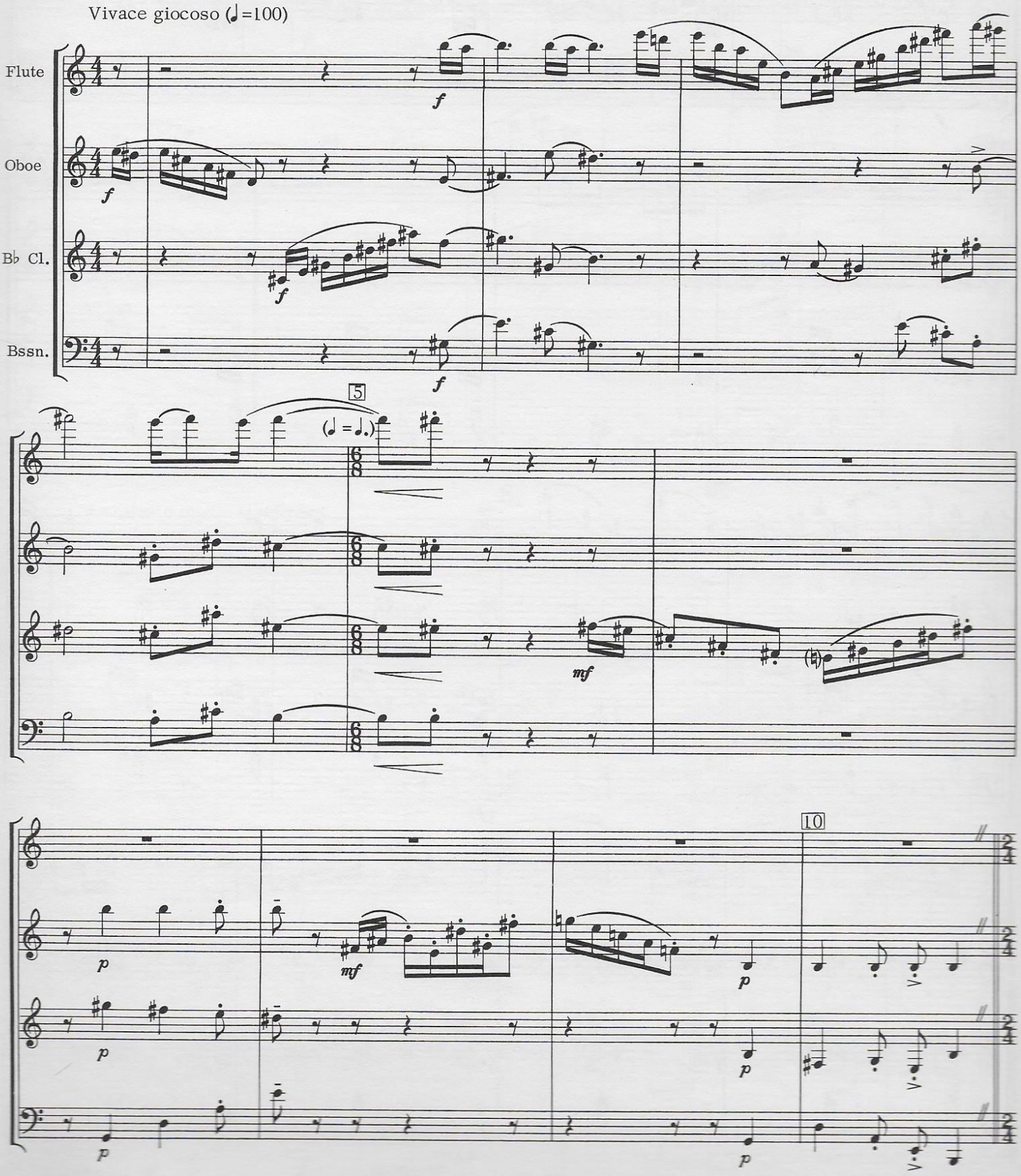

Andantino ostinato (♩=72)
Flute
Oboe
B♭ Cl.
Bsn.
5
10
15
p
tr
3
p dolce
dolce
1.
poco tenuto
2.
poco rit.
attacca

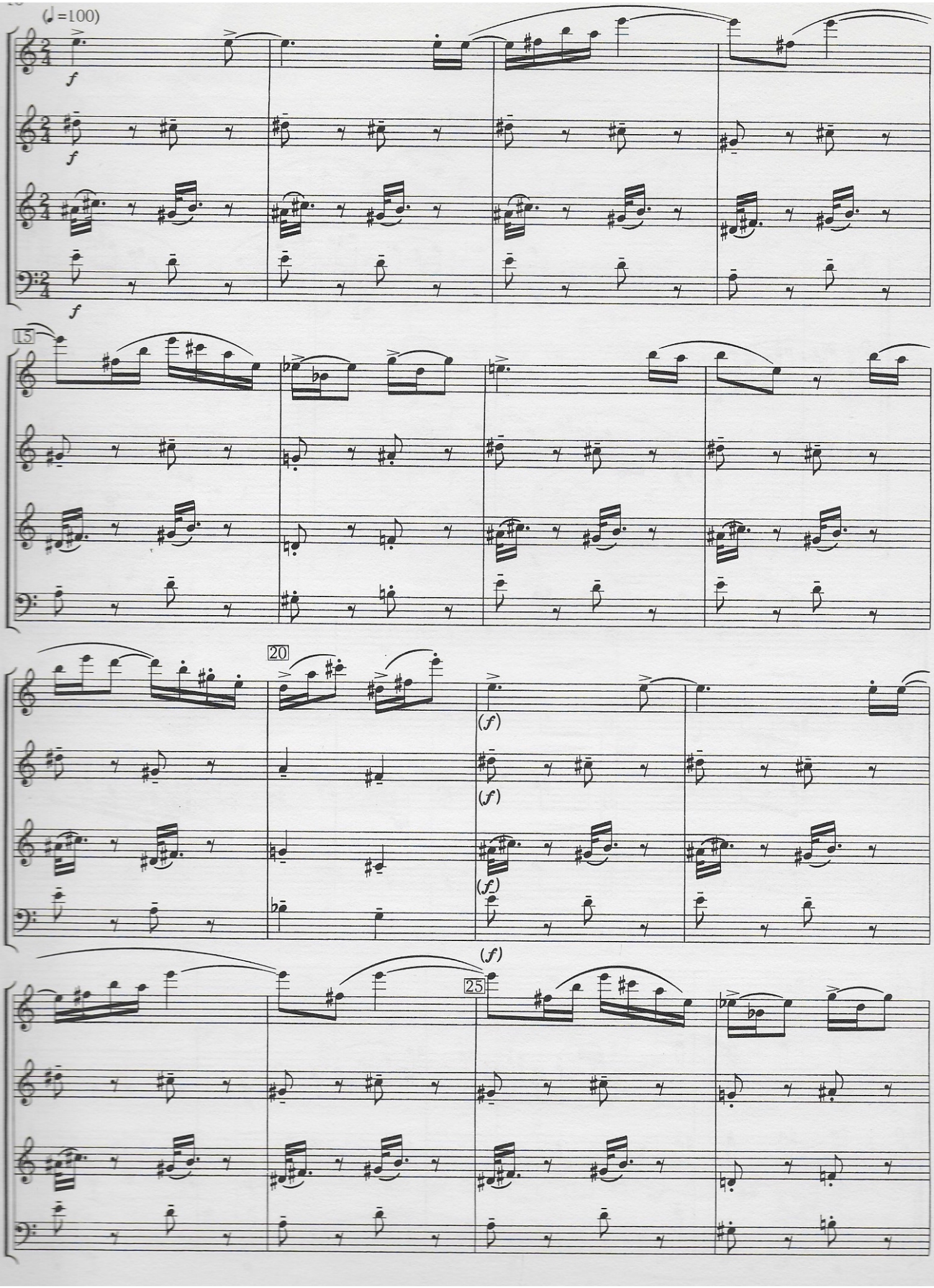

Con moto precipitoso (♩.=108)
Flute
Oboe
B♭ Cl.
Bssn.
mf
5
tr
10
f
15
ff
20
attacca

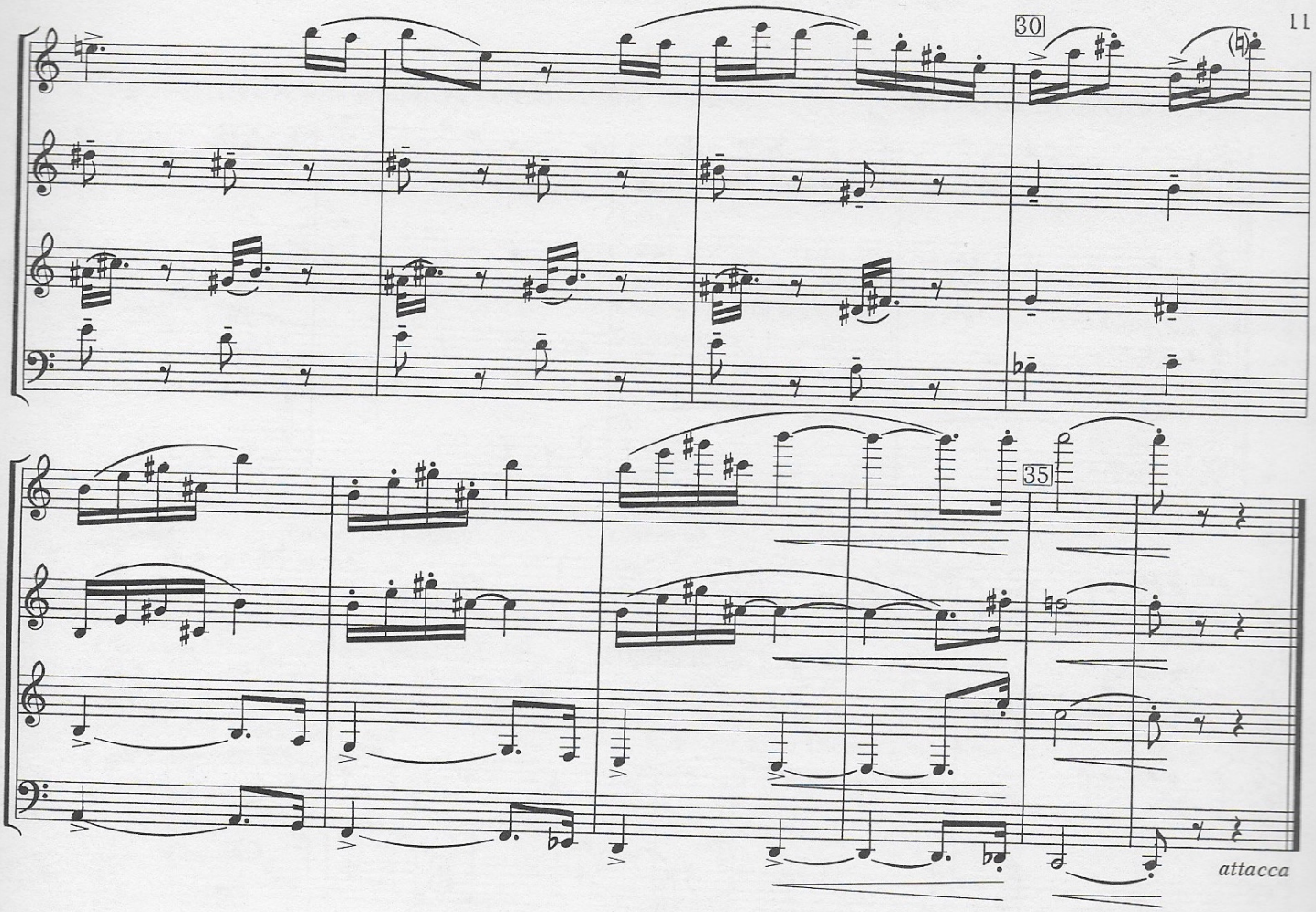

Allegretto comodo (♩=126)
Flute
Oboe
B♭ Cl.
Bssn.
mf - pp
p - pp
5
10
15
20
mf
mp
p
(mf)


poco tenuto
pp
25
a tempo
(pp)
mp
30
f
mf
35
poco rit.
a tempo
tr
p
attacca


Adagietto espressivo (♩=56)
Flute
Oboe
B♭ Cl.
Bssn.
tenuto
a tempo
rit.
a tempo
poco rall.
attacca

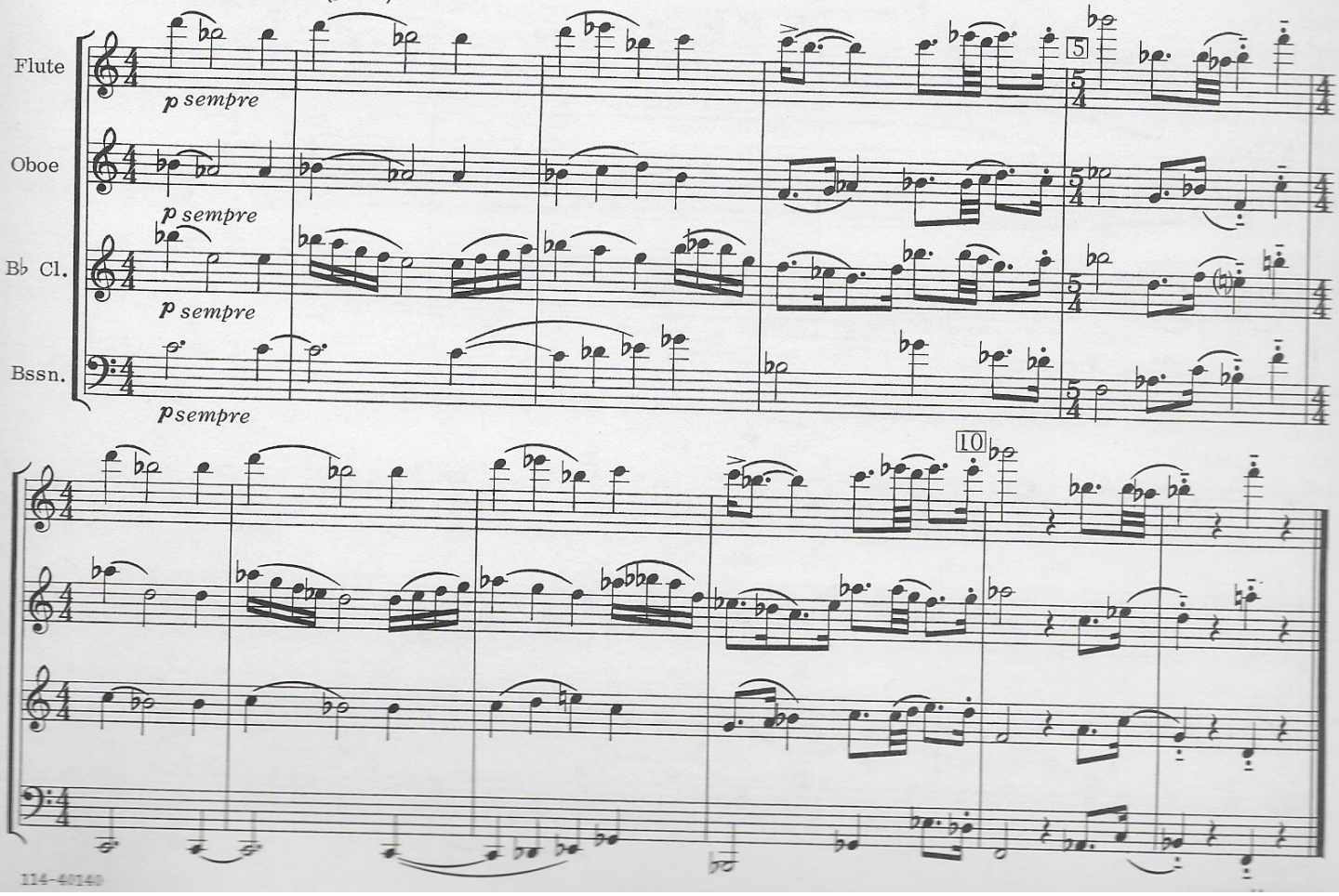
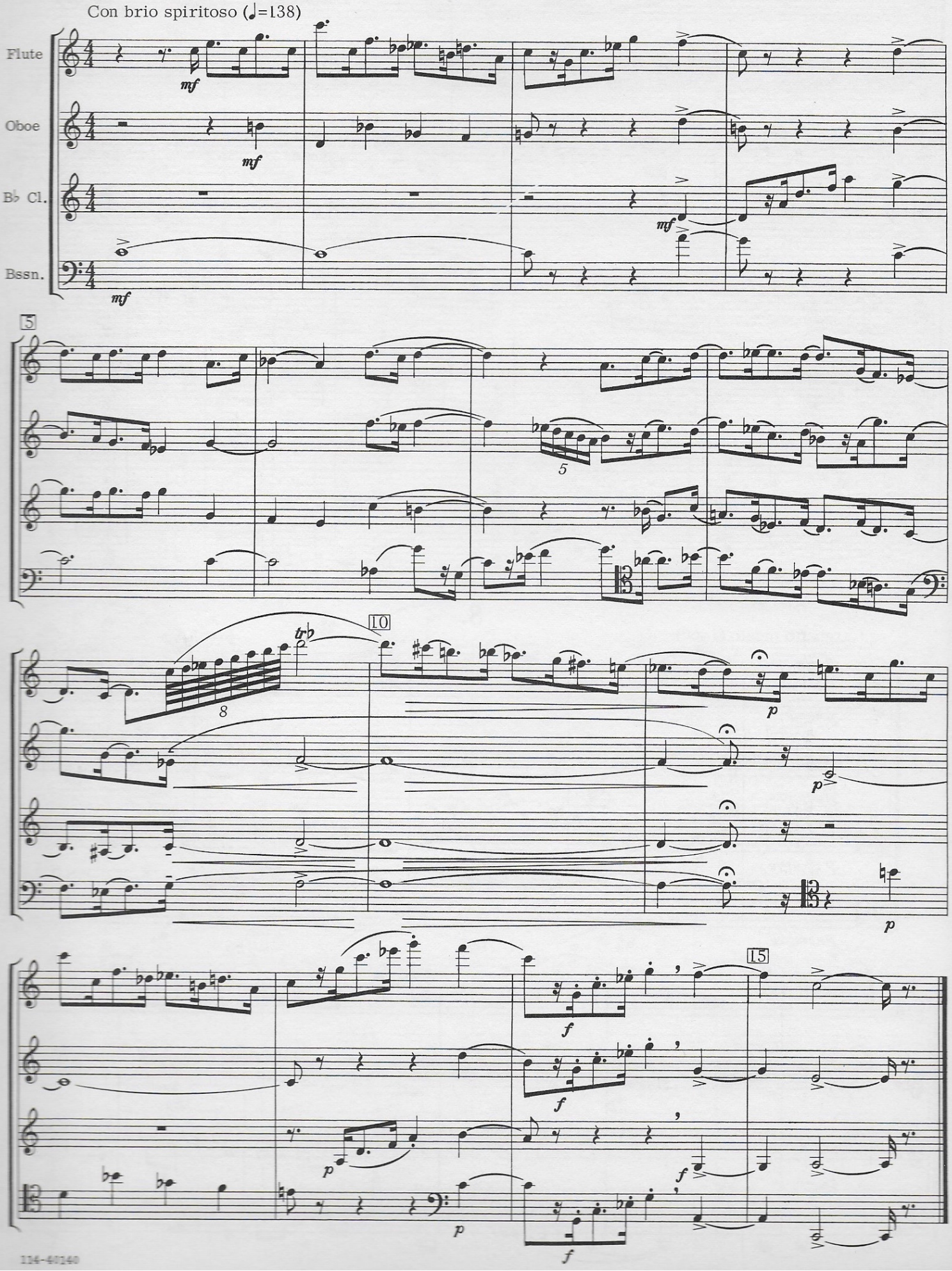

Vivace giocoso (♩=100)
Flute
Oboe
B♭ Cl.
Bssn.
f
5
(♩ = ♩.)
mf
10
p


(♩=100)
f
15
20
(f)
25



8.

Larghetto mesto (♩=60)



9.