SCORE IN C

SONG BOOK

for Alto Saxophone and Marimba

David Maslanka

SONG BOOK for Alto Saxophone and Marimba

"Song Book" was commissioned by Steven Jordheim and Dane Richeson of the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music, and was composed in the summer of 1998.

The Bach four-part chorales have become a central part of my music study. Playing and singing a few of them each day has become my way of making the transition into composing time. I sing the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass successively while playing all the parts at the keyboard. At this writing I am on my ninth pass through the collection. With each pass I am drawn deeper into the relationship of line to line – how one borrowed melody (the chorale tune) generates three other beautiful melodies in the same space, and how all parts together generate a pattern of harmonic movement. I am fascinated by the process of these pieces and they have become a strong influence on my composing.

Three chorale melodies appear in "Song Book." I have taken them quite out of their liturgical context. Their titles inspire an emotional response in me, and out of this comes a music that expands on the original tune. My feeling for quotation is twofold. First, when a pre-existing melody comes to mind or hand while I am writing a new piece, it is a suggestion that the tune has something more to say, and that it will unfold differently in the new context. Secondly it allows for the process of "going underneath" the old tune to find something quite different and new. I let this happen because it seems that deeper connections are trying to work themselves out over many years and across many pieces. Folk and jazz artists do this as standard procedure.

The movements of "Song Book" are relatively brief. They have a particular thing to say, a particular mood and attitude to express, and then they are done. I think of the pieces as emotional scenes.

1. "Song for Davy" is a reworking of the chorale melody "Das alte Jahr vergangen ist" ("The Old Year is Past"). This is a song for my young self, written at a time of personal transition. The music touches a very old memory chord and has a wistful and haunting character.
2. "Lost" is based on the chorale "Herr, Ich habe misgehandelt" which translates roughly as "Lord, I have done the wrong thing." Out of this sensibility comes the feeling of being lost and needing help.
3. "Hymn Tune with Four Variations" is the only movement that uses a hymn tune verbatim. The melody is "Werde Munte, mein Gemute" ("Be strong, my heart"). Each variation is a successive speeding up of the chorale statement, with the last being a chaotic scramble.
4. "Serious Music – In Memoriam Arthur Cohn" is the longest and soberest piece in the set. Arthur Cohn was for many years Director of the Serious Music Department of Carl Fischer, and over a lifetime a stalwart champion of living composers and new music. My association with Fischer began through Arthur in 1974, and over the years he became both mentor and friend. His death in 1998, though not untimely, was a great sadness for me. The designation "Serious Music" by the Carl Fischer Company of what would otherwise be called "Concert Music" has always amused me. And so I have written a VERY serious piece for Arthur and hope that he appreciates the little joke.
5. "Summer Song" is a sweet piece that needs no further explanation.
6. "Song for Alison" is for my wife, who has been a grounding influence on me for many years. She is not a musician, but has, through her kindness, steadiness, and love, provided a safe haven for my flights of fancy.
7. "Evening Song" brings to mind some of my favorite music, the Op.116 Intermezzos by Brahms. "Evening Song", like other pieces in the set, is an openly Romantic music. It is ultimately quiet and resigned, but has, over its course, an urgent and passionate statement to make.

Song Book

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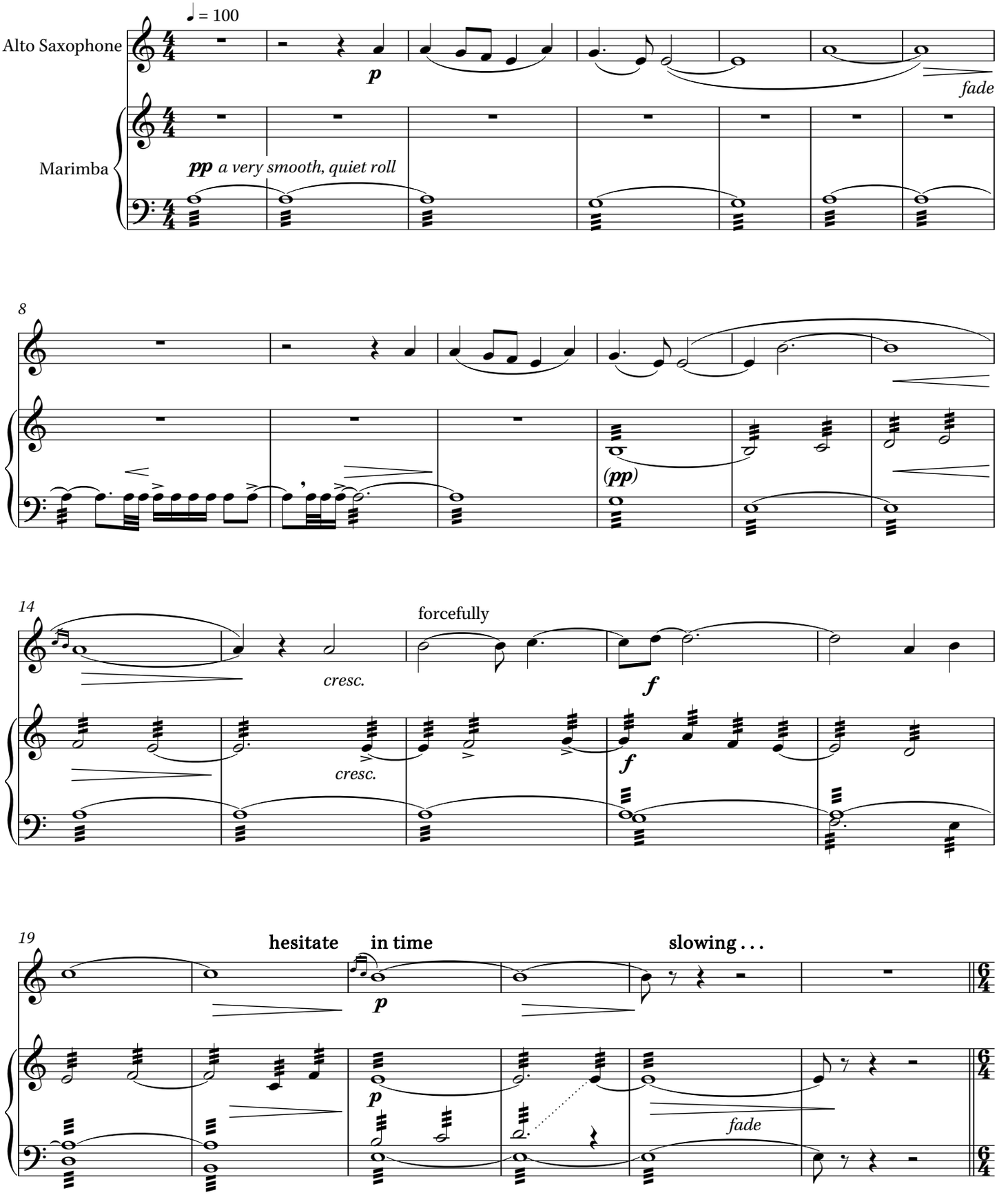
I. Song for Davy - The Old Year Is Past



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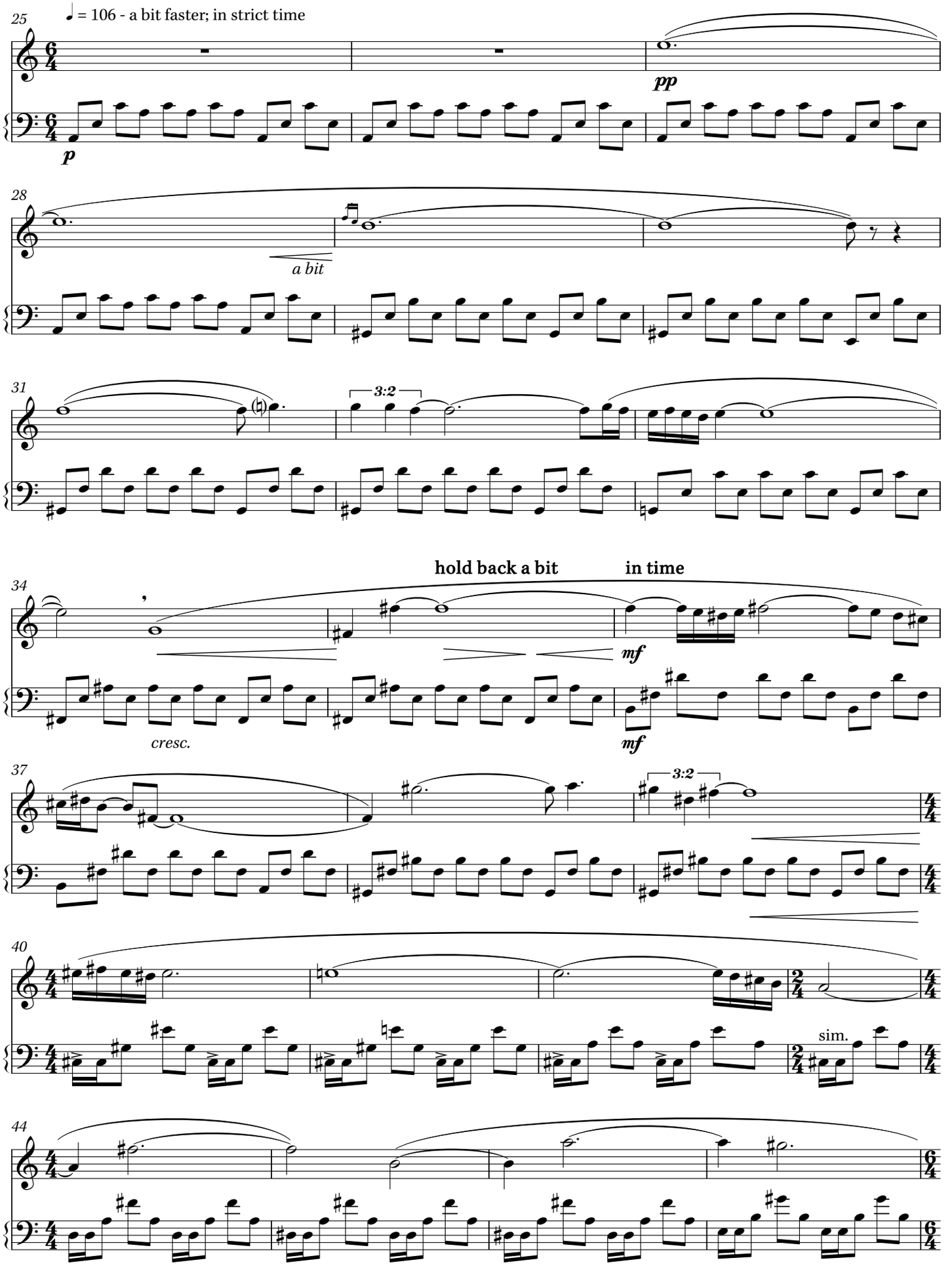
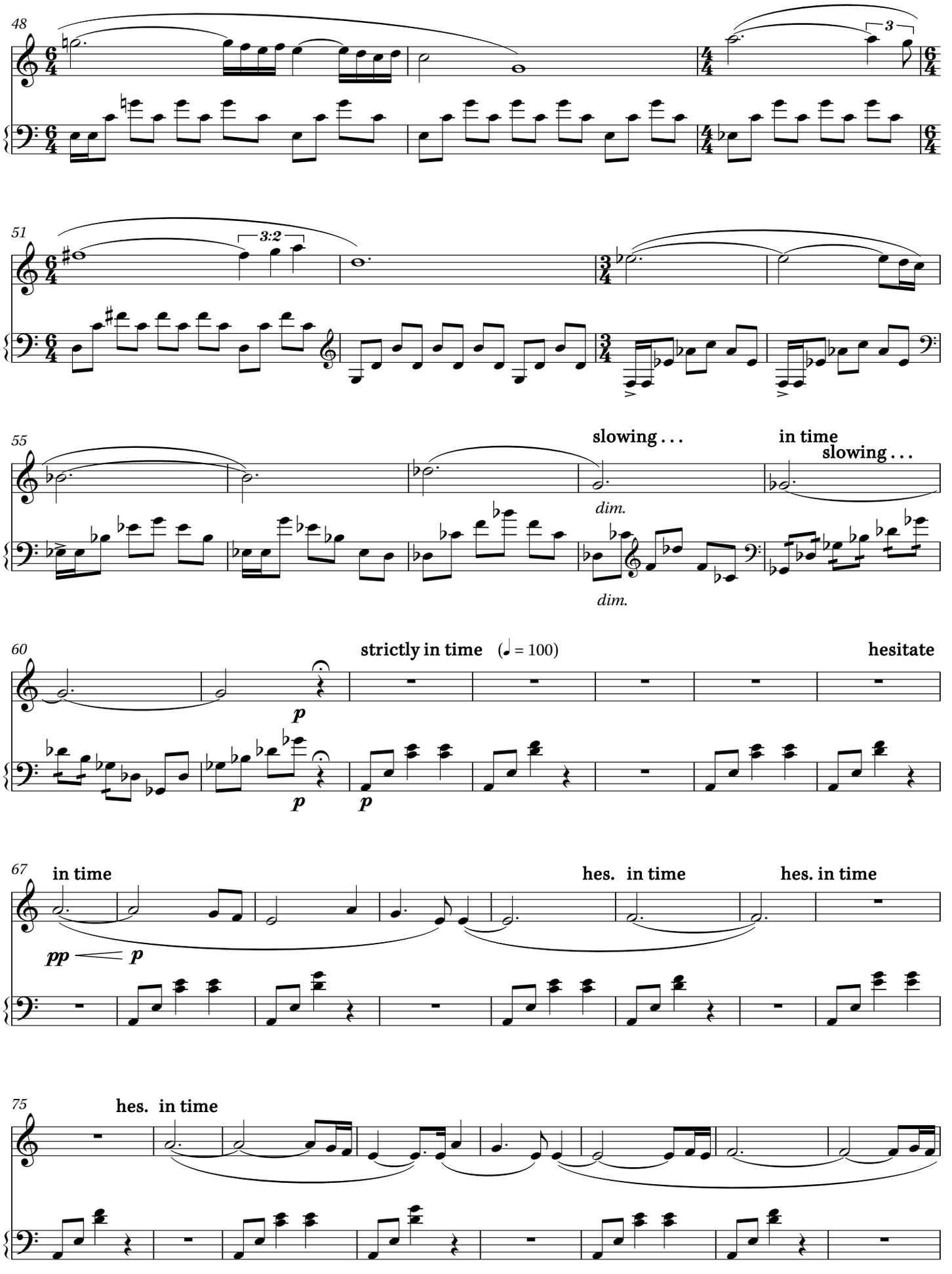

25
♩ = 106 - a bit faster; in strict time
pp
p
28
a bit
31
3:2
34
hold back a bit
in time
mf
cresc.
mf
37
3:2
40
sim.
44


48
3
51
3:2
55
slowing . . .
dim.
in time
slowing . . .
dim.
60
strictly in time
(♩ = 100)
hesitate
p
p
p
67
in time
hes. in time
hes. in time
pp
p
75
hes. in time

83

91

slowing . . . in time

99

slowing . . . in time

106

slowing - - - - - - - - - - -

2. Lost

♩ = 48 - very slowly and freely

hes. in time hes.

Alto Saxophone

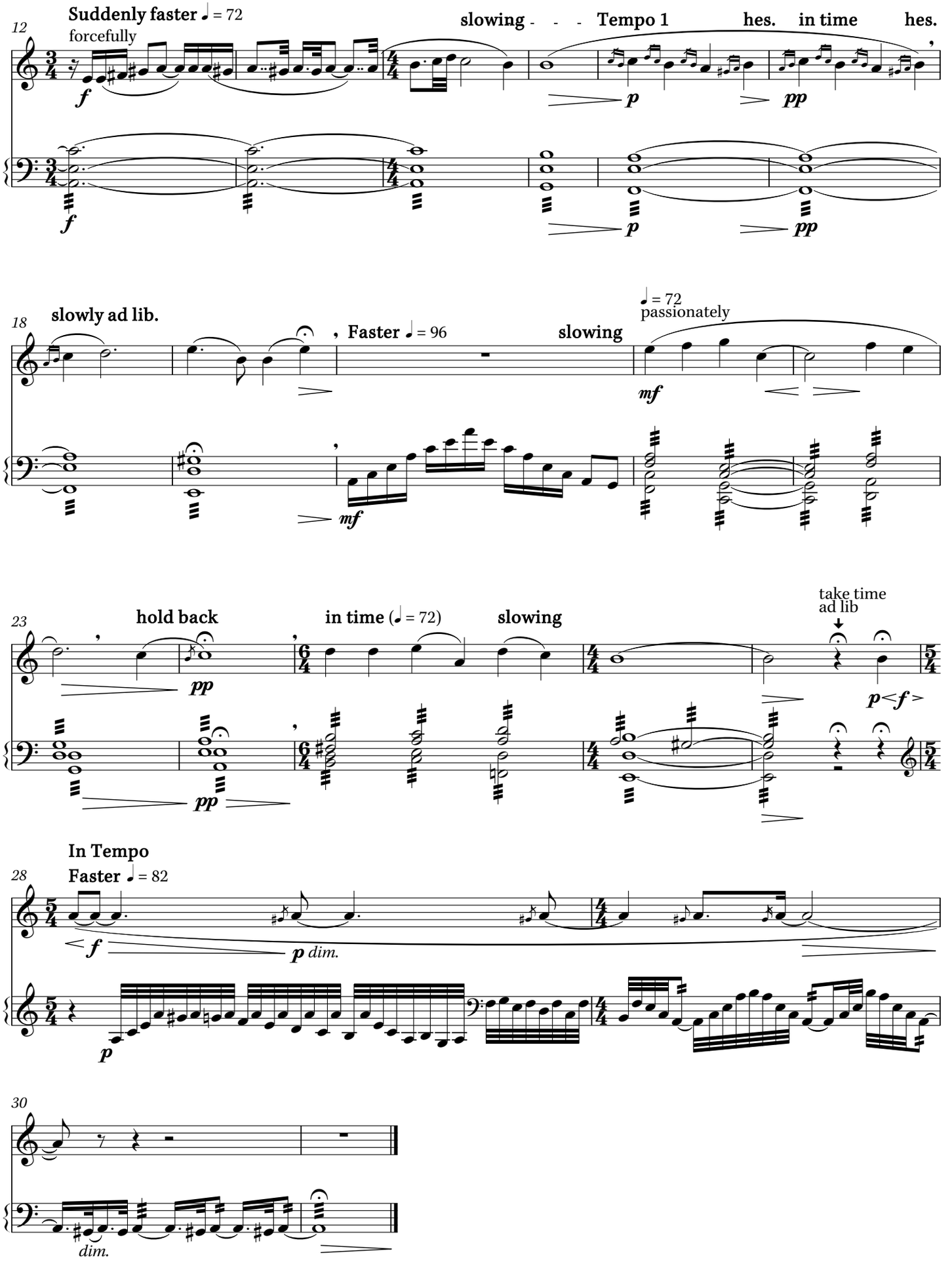
Marimba

p *p*

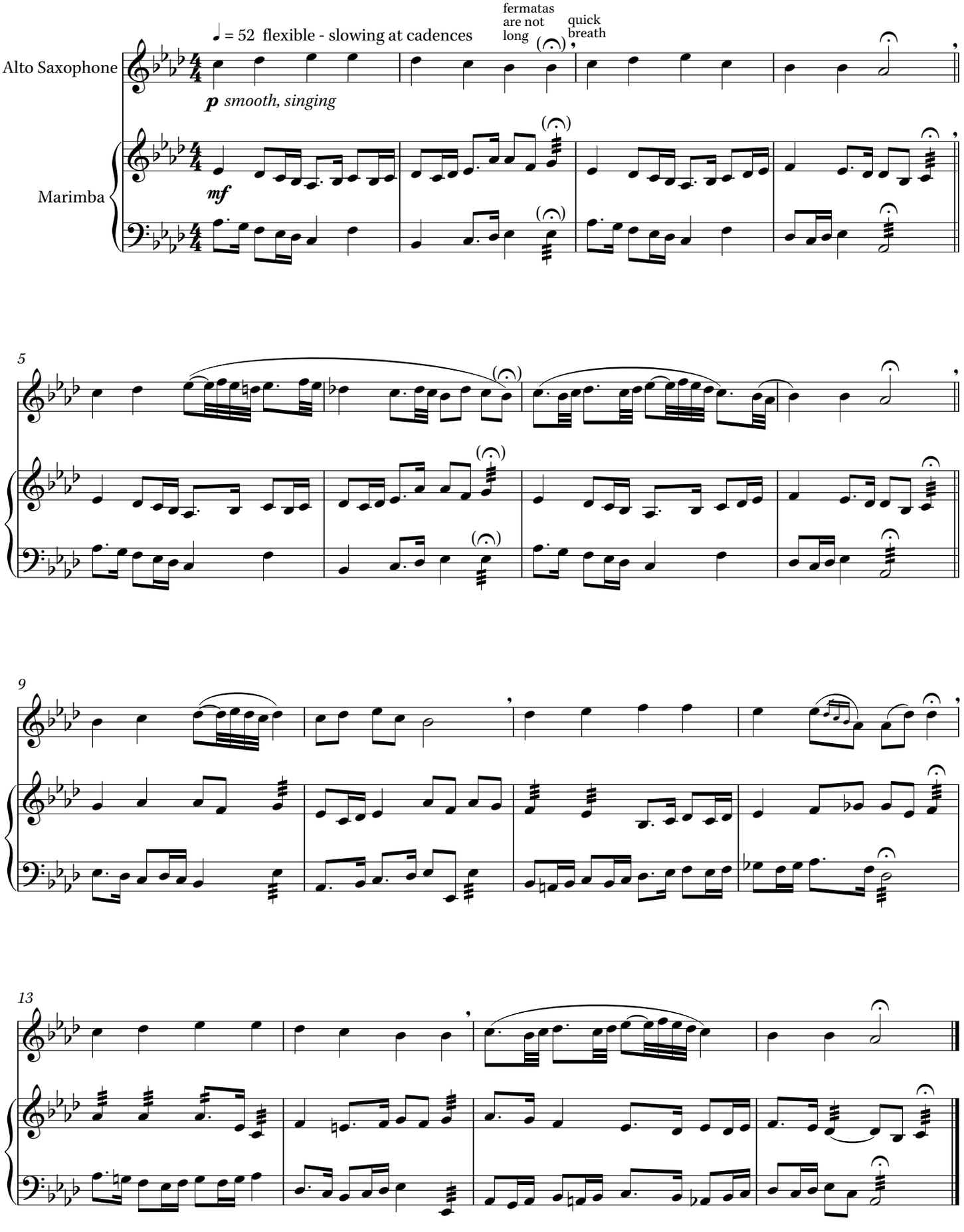
pp

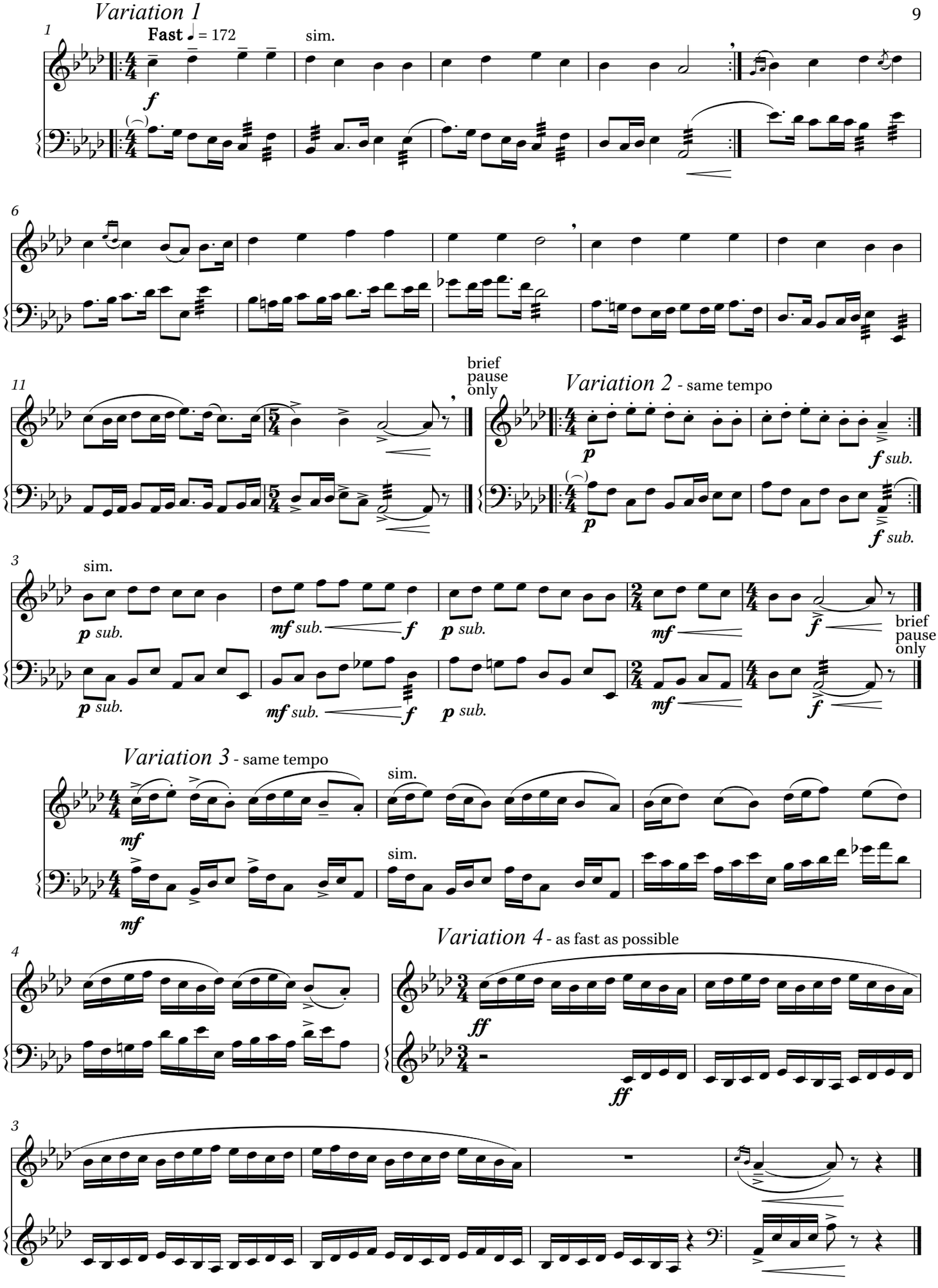
6

big

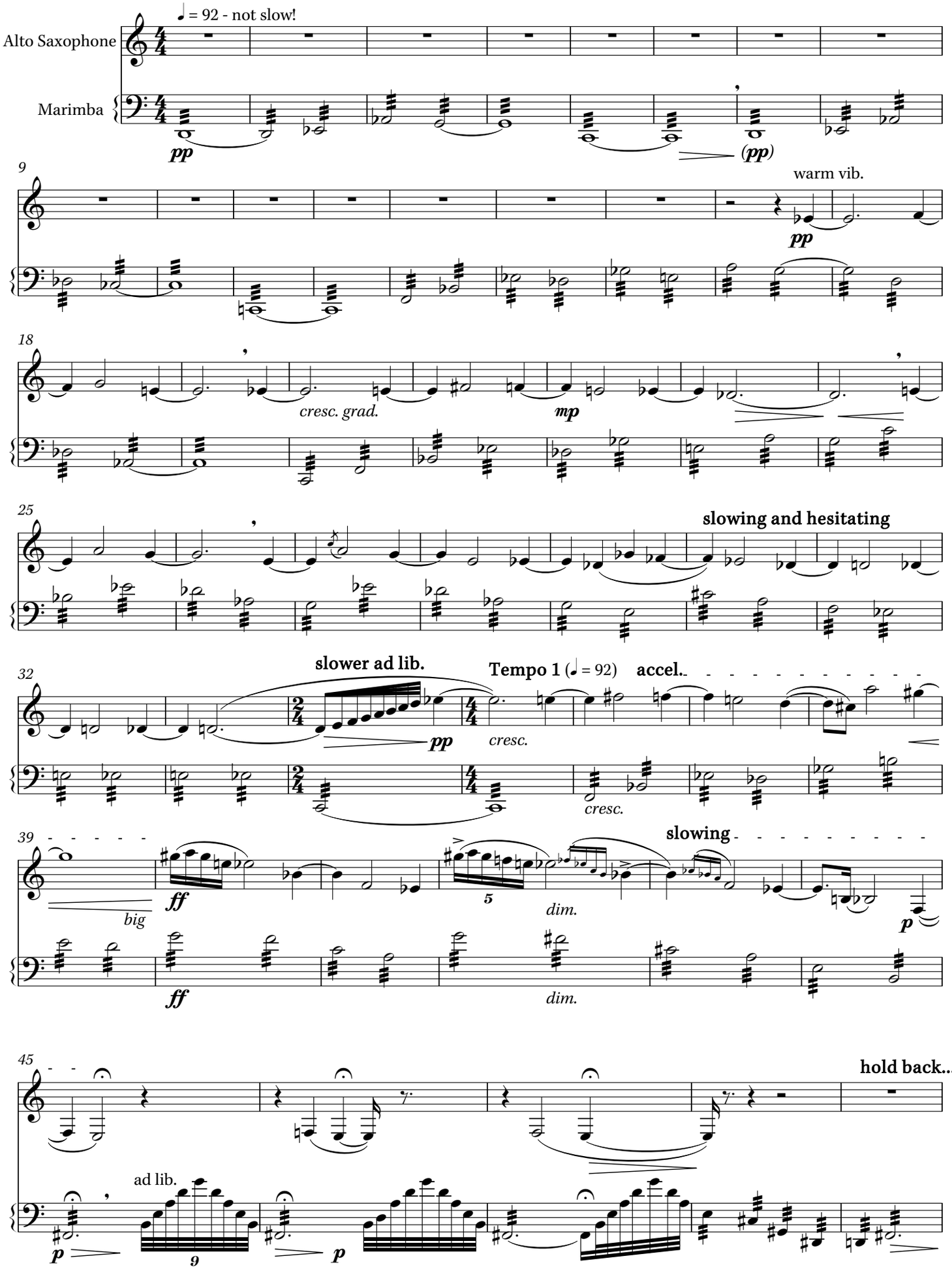

12
Suddenly faster ♩ = 72
forcefully
slowing - - - Tempo 1 hes. in time hes.
18
slowly ad lib.
Faster ♩ = 96
slowing
♩ = 72
passionately
23
hold back
in time (♩ = 72)
slowing
take time
ad lib
28
In Tempo
Faster ♩ = 82
dim.
30
dim.

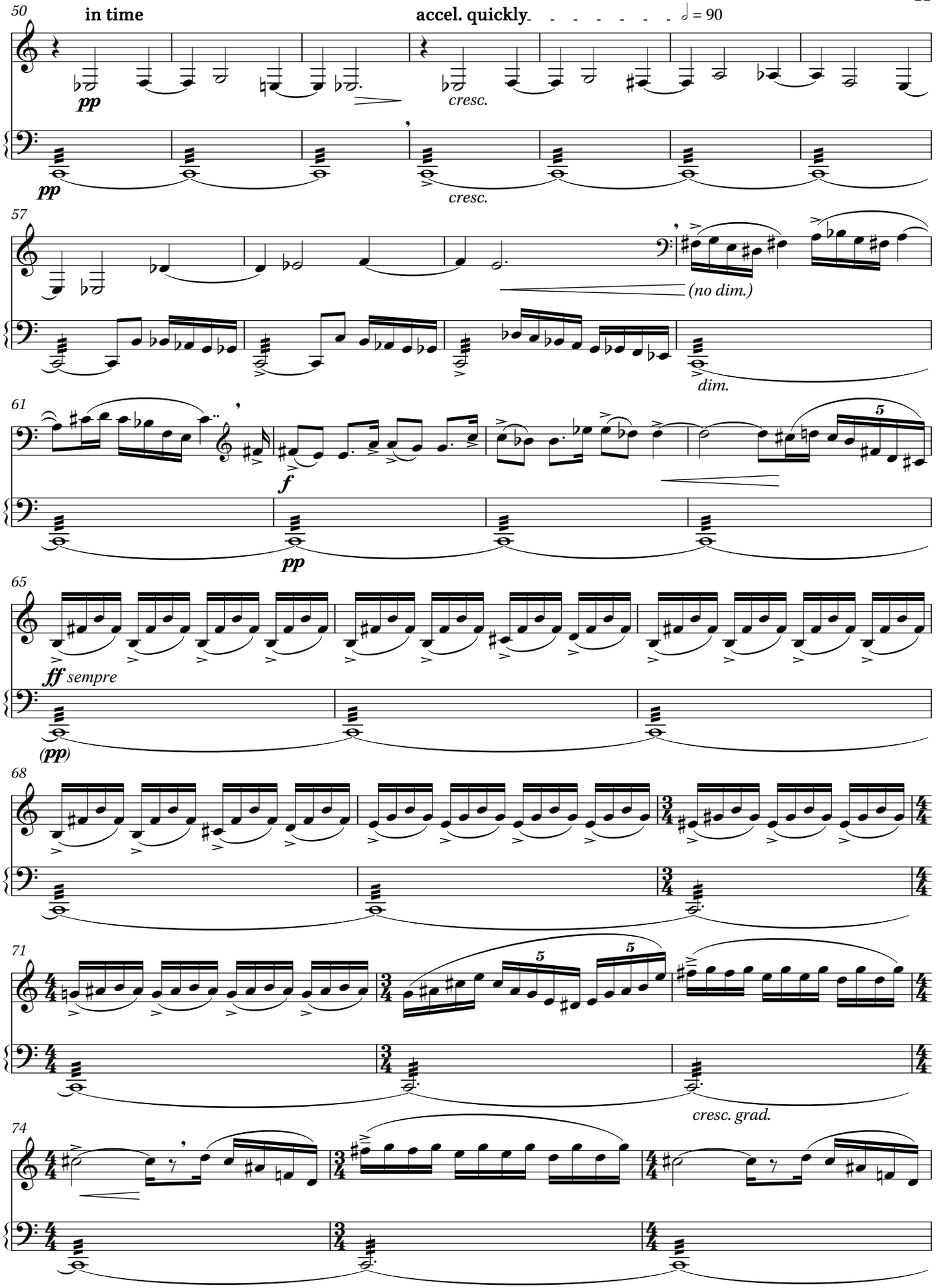
3. Hymn Tune with Four Variations

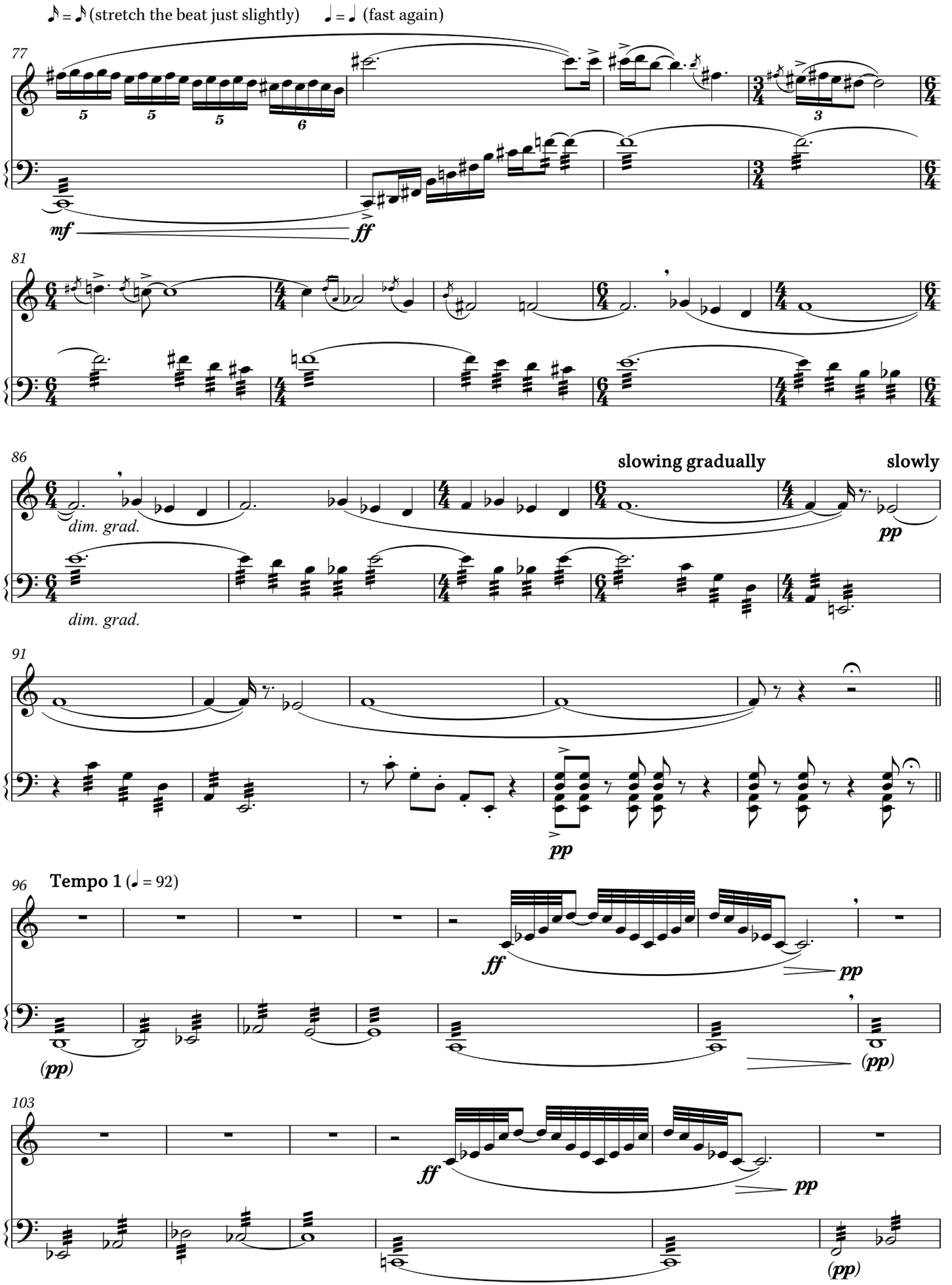


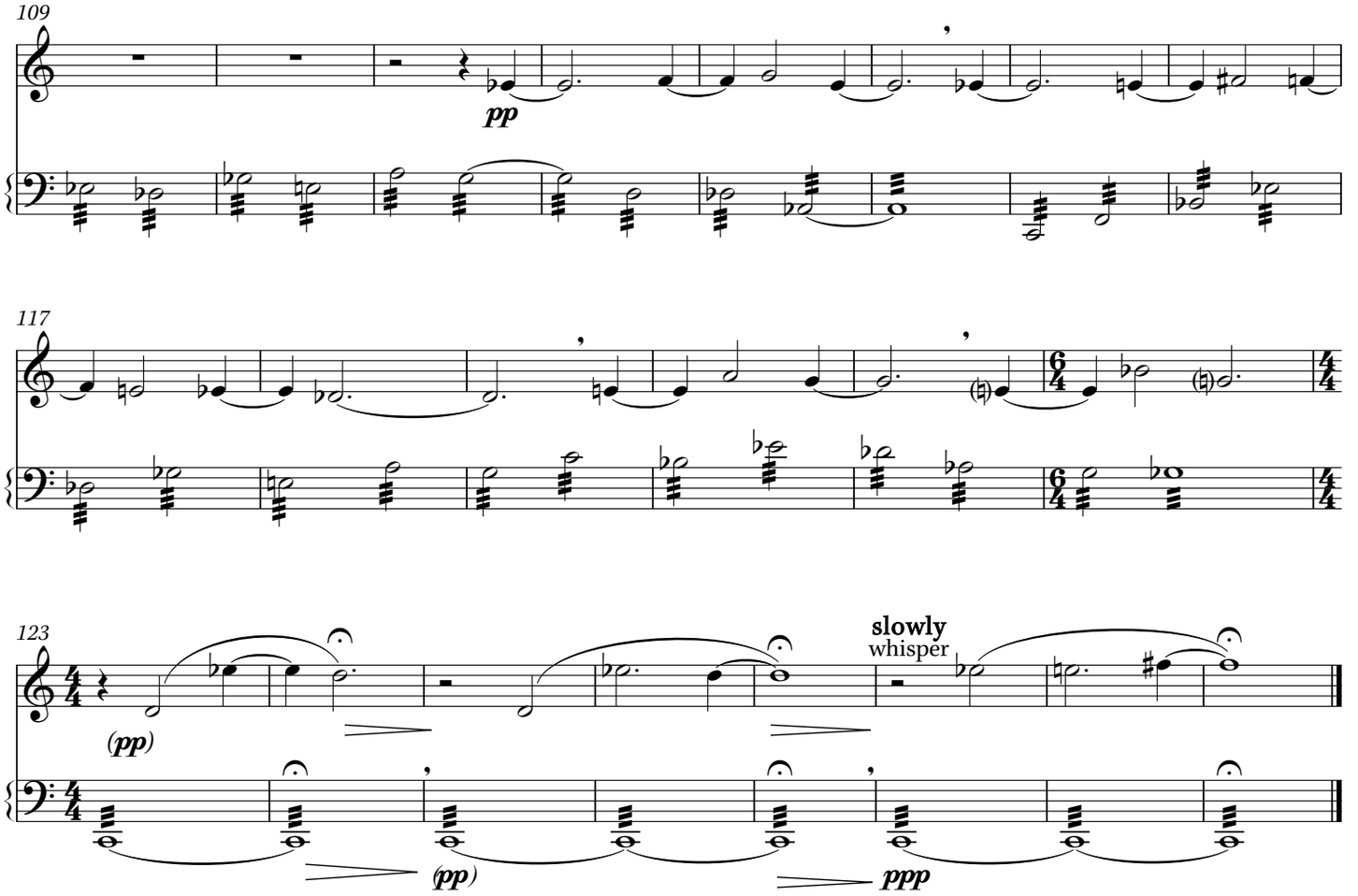

Variation 1
Fast ♩ = 172
sim.
Variation 2 - same tempo
brief pause only
Variation 3 - same tempo
Variation 4 - as fast as possible

4. Serious Music - in Memoriam Arthur Cohn

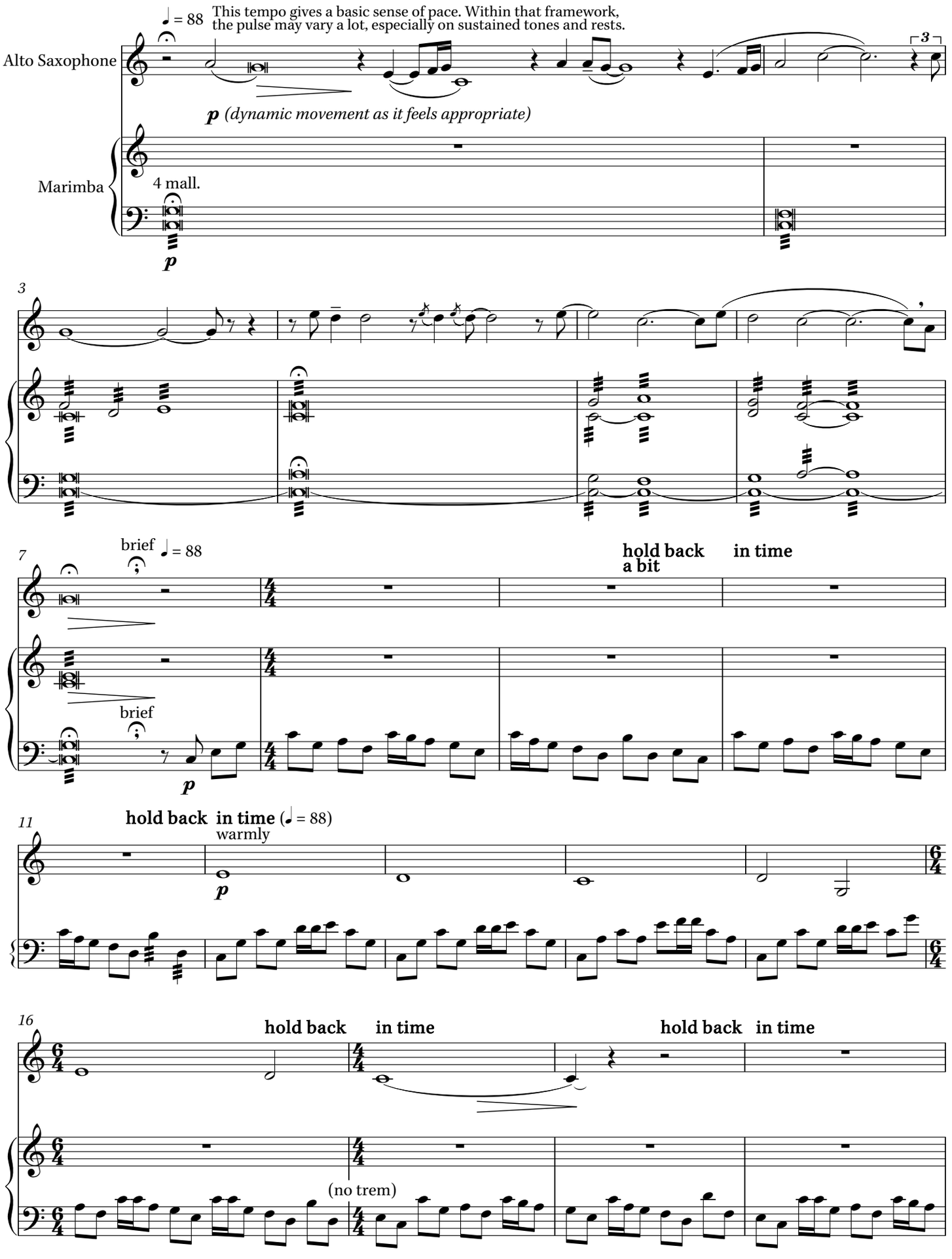


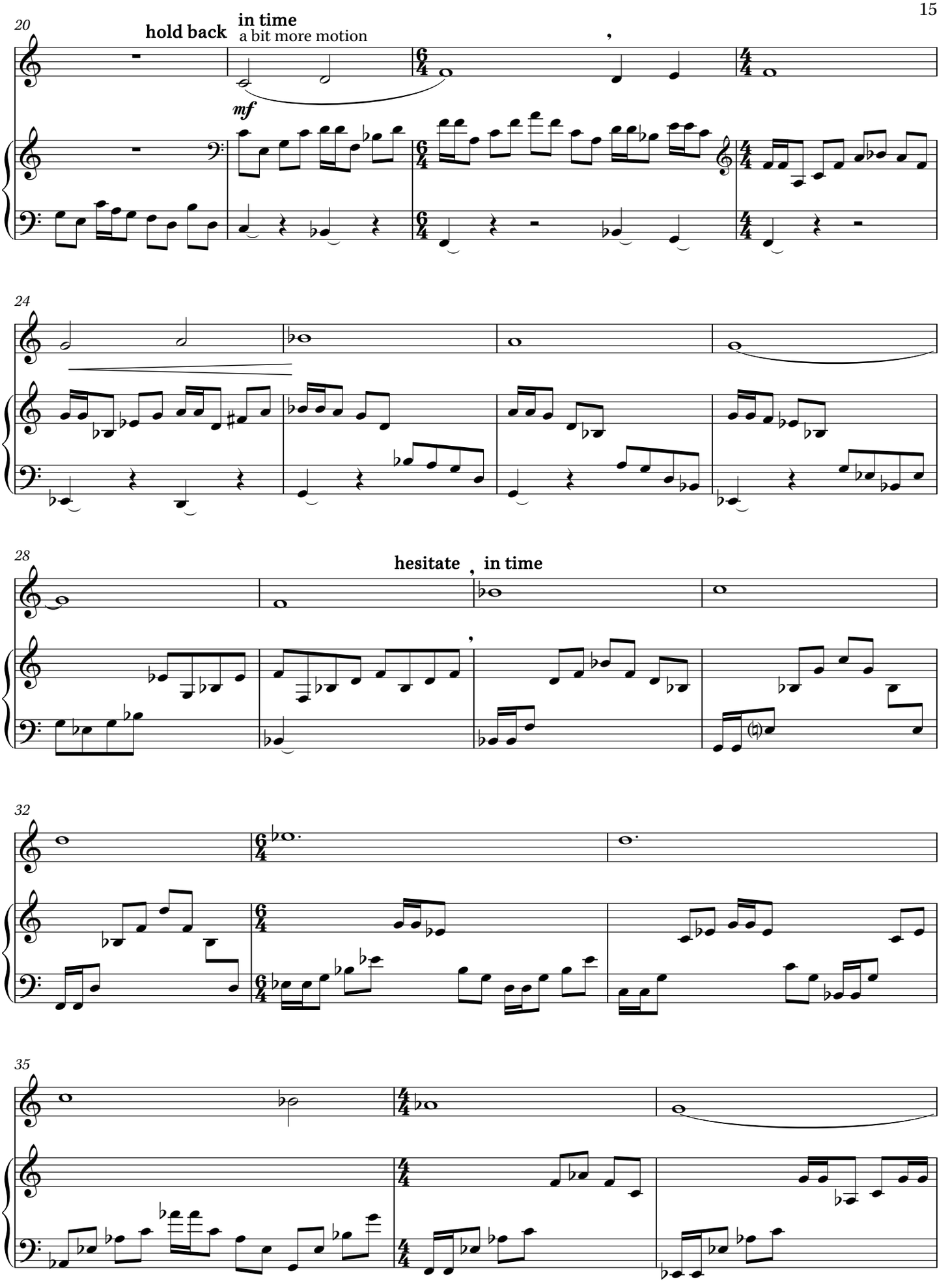

50
in time
accel. quickly
= 90
pp
cresc.
pp
cresc.
57
(no dim.)
dim.
61
f
pp
65
ff sempre
(pp)
68
71
cresc. grad.
74

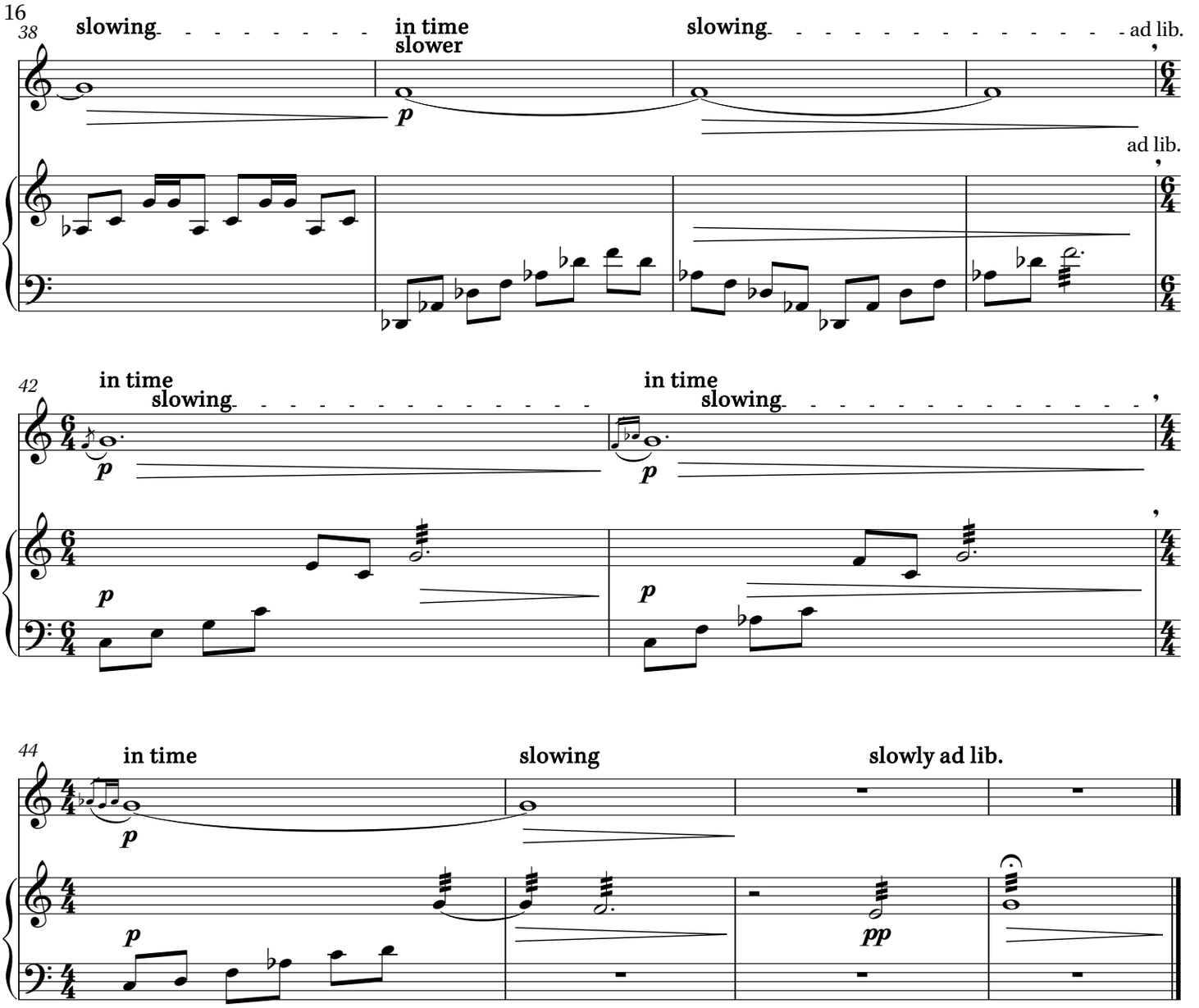

♪ = ♪ (stretch the beat just slightly)
♩ = ♩ (fast again)
77
mf
ff
81
86
dim. grad.
slowing gradually
slowly
pp
91
96
Tempo 1 (♩ = 92)
ff
pp
(pp)
103

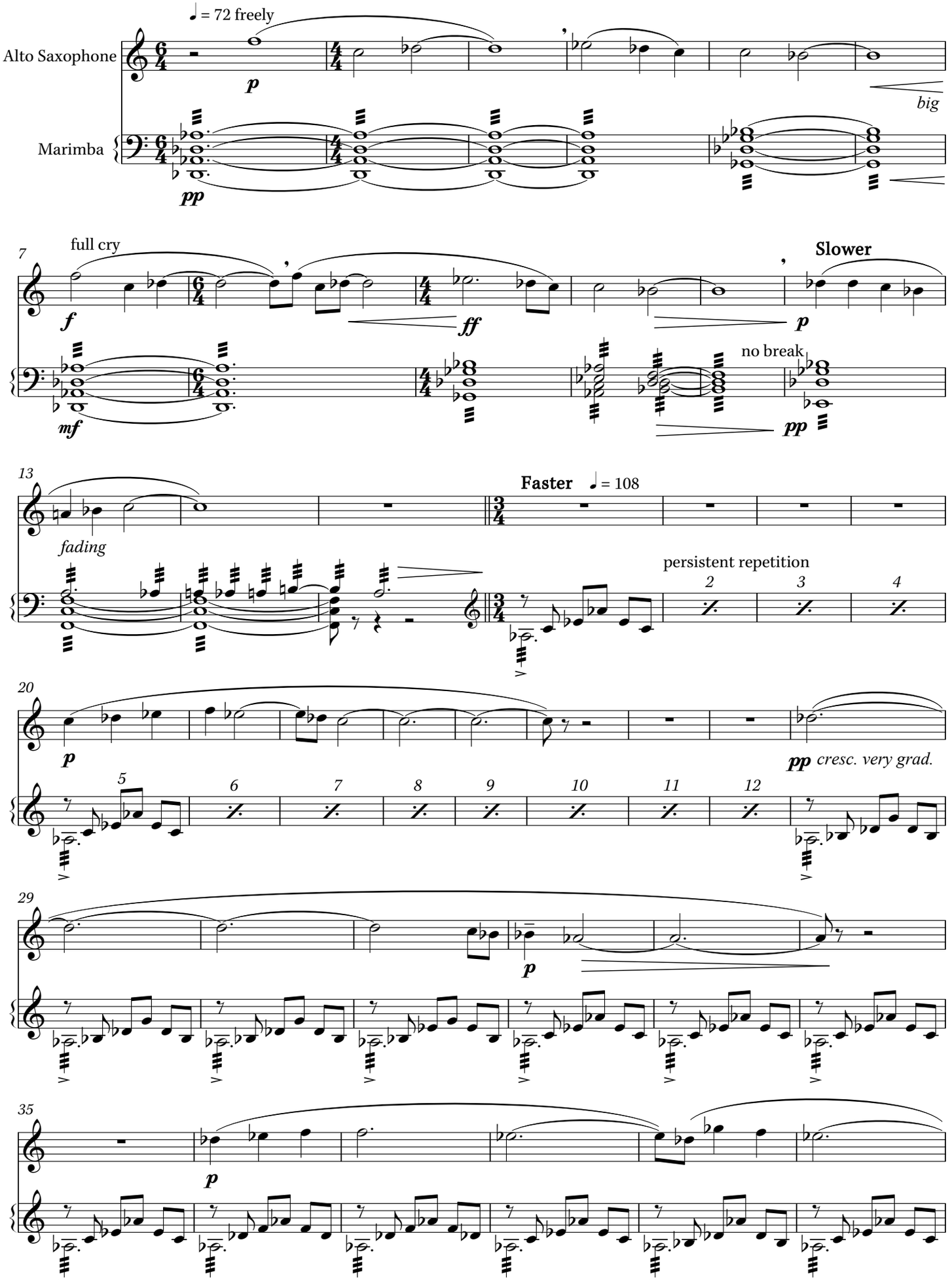

109
pp
117
123
(pp)
slowly
whisper
(pp)
ppp

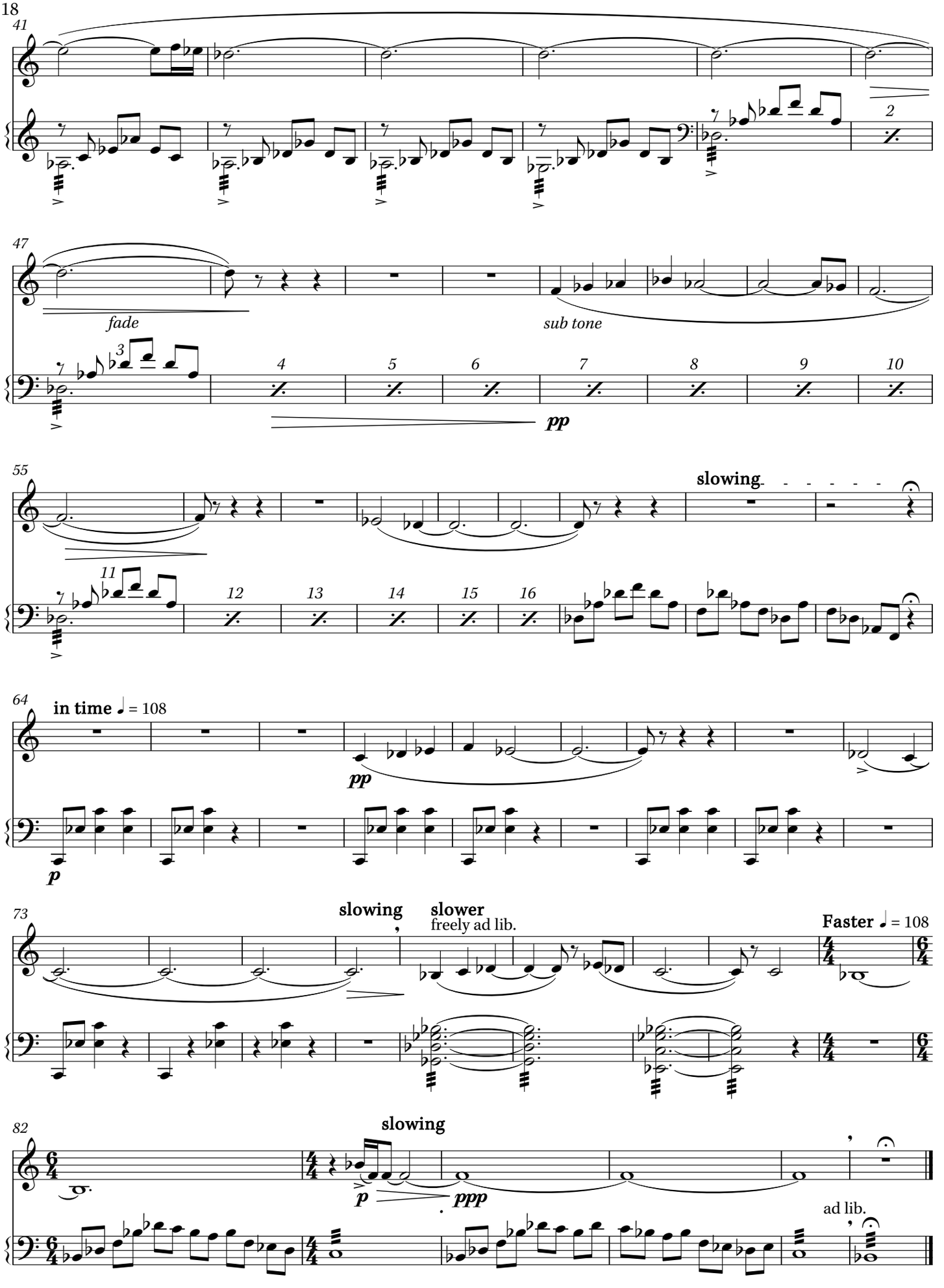
5. Summer Song

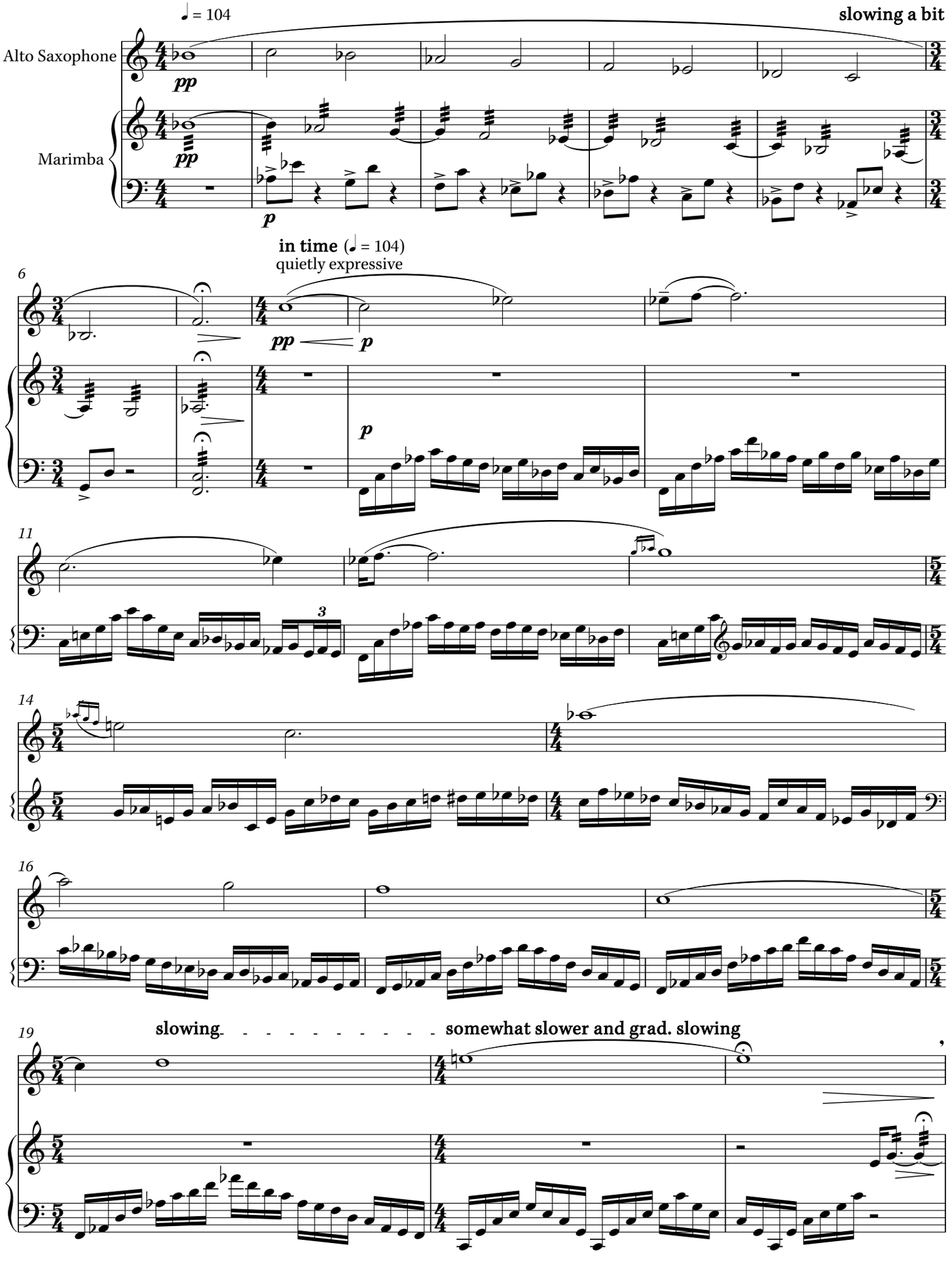


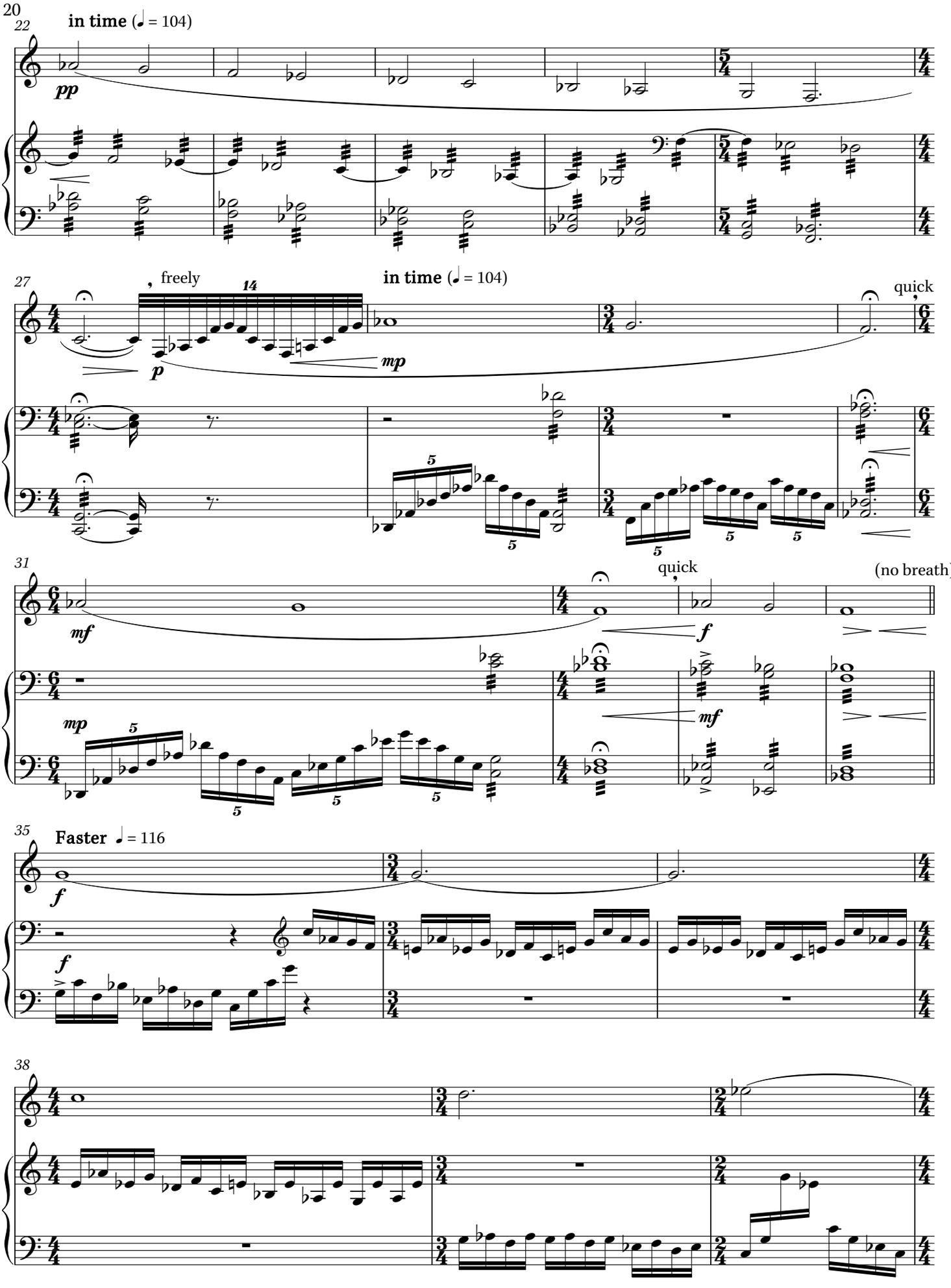

20
hold back
in time
a bit more motion
mf
24
28
hesitate
in time
32
35

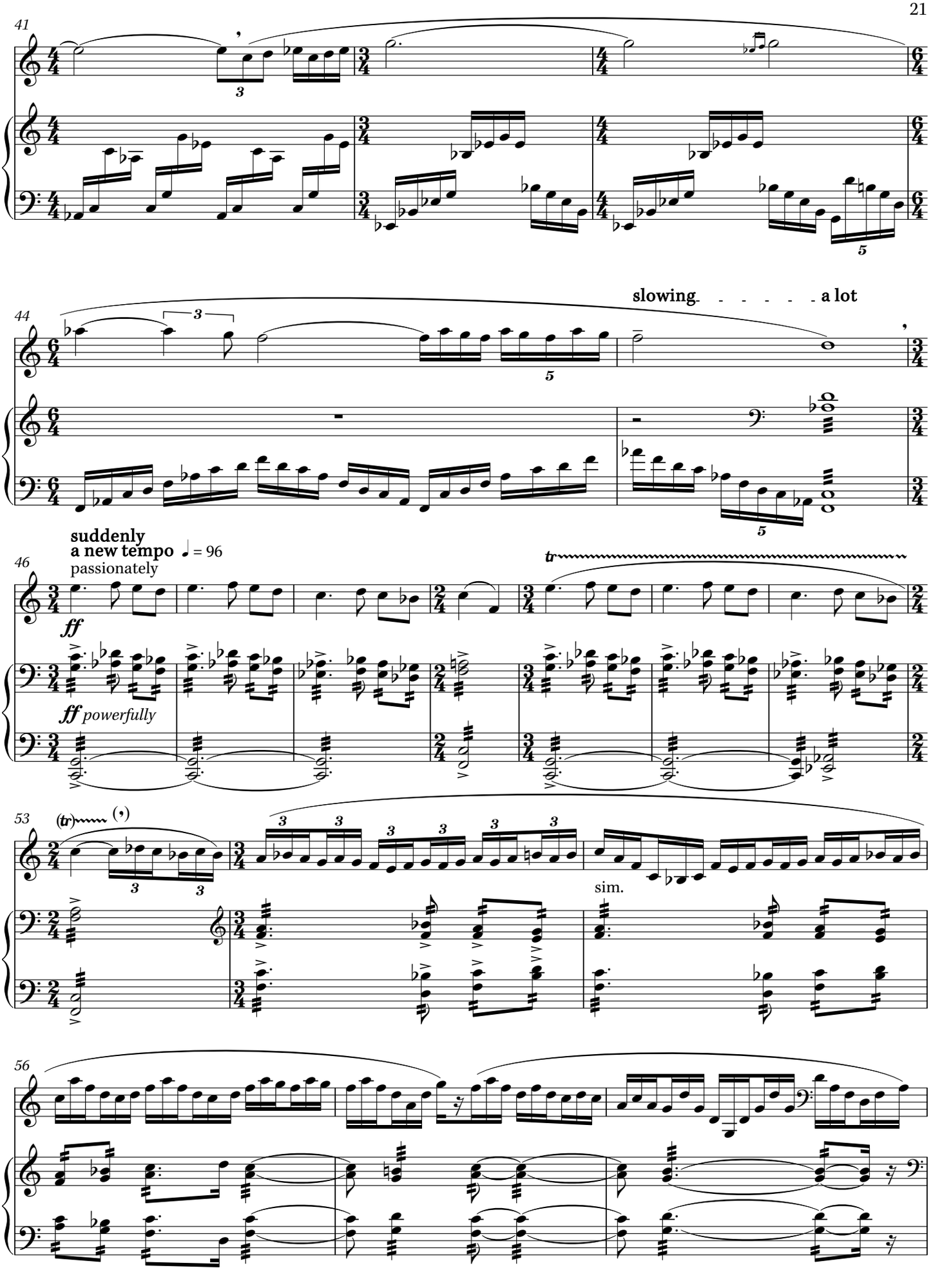

38
slowing
in time
slower
slowing
ad lib.
ad lib.
p
42
in time
slowing
in time
slowing
p
p
p
44
in time
slowing
slowly ad lib.
p
p
pp

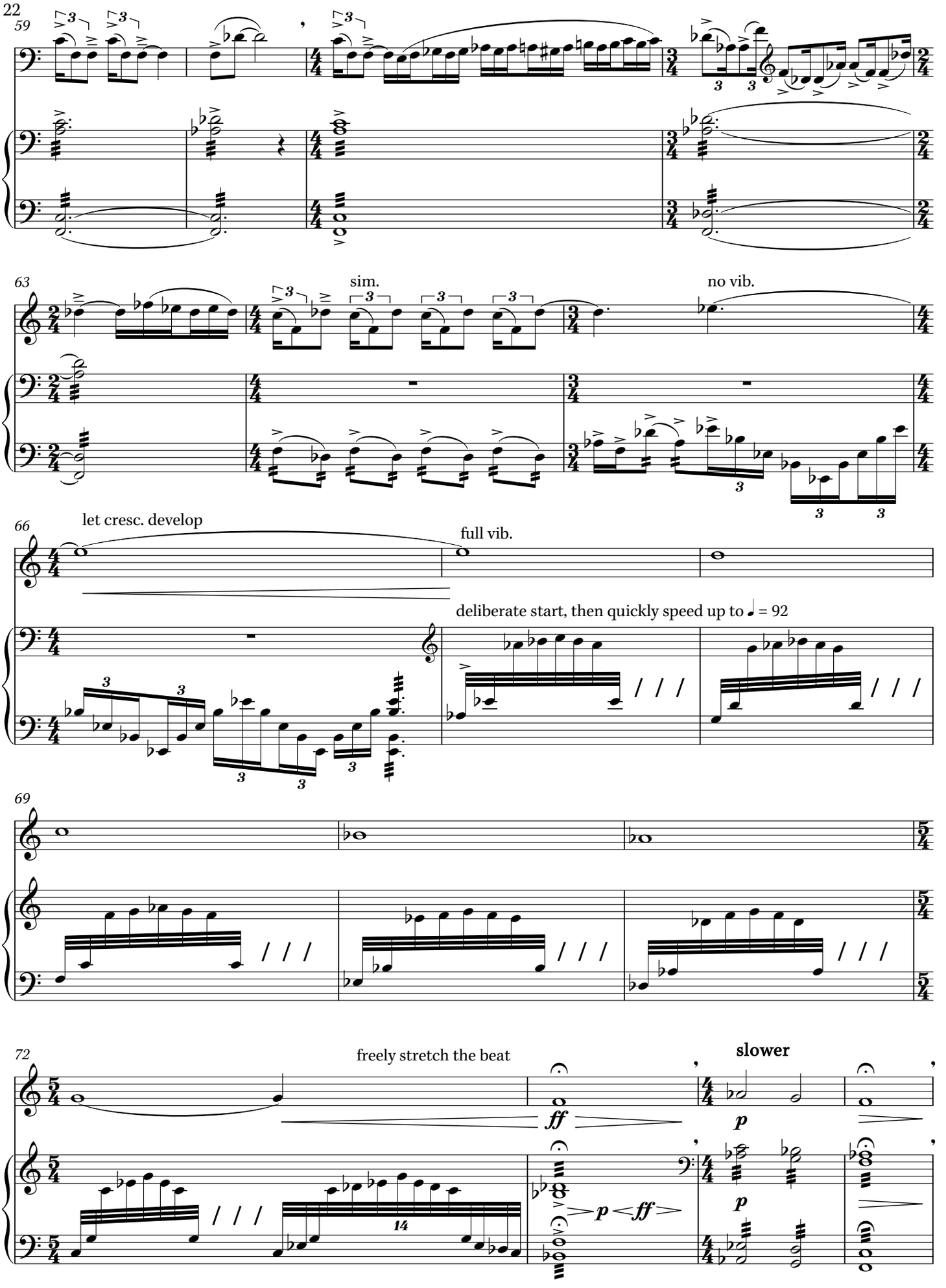

♩ = 72 freely
Alto Saxophone
Marimba
p
pp
big
full cry
f
ff
mf
Slower
p
no break
pp
Faster ♩ = 108
fading
persistent repetition
2
3
4
p
pp cresc. very grad.
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
p
p

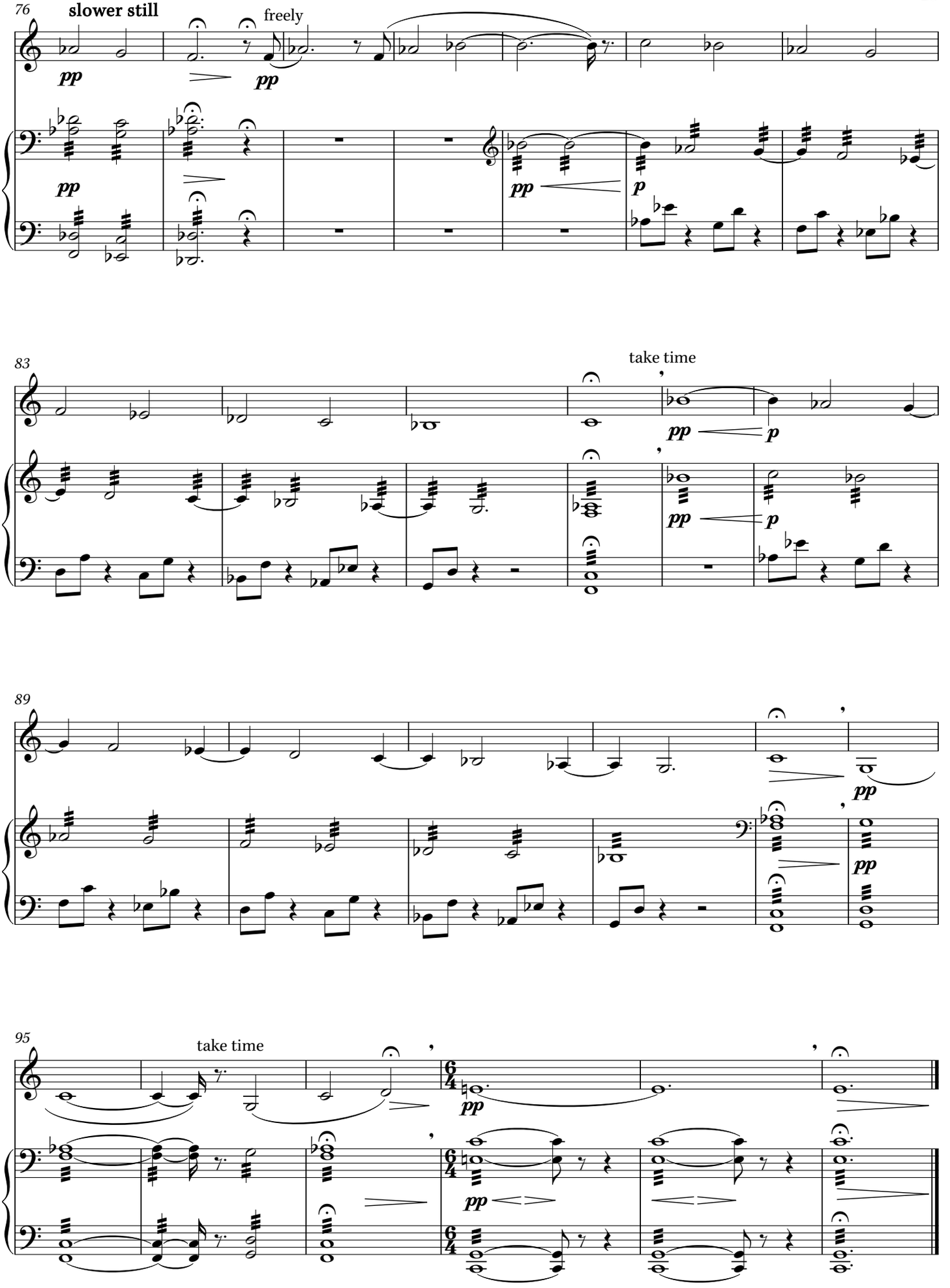

41
2
47
fade
sub tone
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
pp
55
slowing
11
12
13
14
15
16
64
in time ♩ = 108
pp
p
73
slowing
slower
freely ad lib.
Faster ♩ = 108
82
slowing
p
ppp
ad lib.


♩ = 104
slowing a bit
Alto Saxophone
Marimba
pp
p
in time (♩ = 104)
quietly expressive
6
11
14
16
19
slowing
somewhat slower and grad. slowing


22
in time (♩ = 104)
pp
27
freely
14
p
in time (♩ = 104)
mp
quick
31
mf
quick
f
(no breath)
mp
mf
35
Faster ♩ = 116
f
f
38


41
44
slowing a lot
suddenly
a new tempo ♩ = 96
passionately
ff
ff powerfully
46
tr
53
(tr)
sim.
56


59
63
sim.
no vib.
66
let cresc. develop
full vib.
deliberate start, then quickly speed up to ♩ = 92
69
72
freely stretch the beat
slower
ff
p
ff
p


76
slower still
freely
83
take time
89
95
take time