City Faces~SQ

for String Quartet

IV Partition

Music by
Vanessa McClintock

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City Faces

for Viola & Cello Duet, or String Quartet

City Faces is an episodic conversation between two storytellers in the original version for viola and cello, and four with the expanded string quartet version. A third version is an extraction of the fourth “partition” of the string quartet, with an ending suitable for a standalone version.

The piece is a continuous succession of several sections divided into five partitions (not movements), and each with its own personality. All contribute to a greater whole, not unlike William Saroyan's "The Human Comedy." Each episode or section eventually can be traced to the original motif, presented at the very beginning by the cello, or to one of its conversions.

The original working title was "The City Has Many Faces," with a subtitle of "Themes and Permutations." Each permutation—or variation—in some way depicts elements of any city or town but leaves it to the imagination of the listener to visualize, imagine, or perhaps sense what each one is. The segments might be about people, places, ideas, emotions—all depending on the individual's responses to the music. It was written originally as a duet for viola and cello; with the quartet, the music has expanded linearly, vertically, and harmonically.

Each listener will have unique experiences. At least a few elements likely will emerge: anxiety, joy, faith, fear, compassion, love, and hope, as each person will hear, see, imagine, and sense similarly and differently.

In the string quarter version, with the expansion from two to four instruments, the physical demands placed on the viola and especially the cello are considerably mitigated. Nevertheless, the cello is the “Atlas” throughout the entirety. The endings of each section are marked with fermati and double-bar lines, and in the quartet adaptation, an empty measure to provide a three second pause. This is to allow the musicians the option to pause for page turns and—especially for the cellist—to rest. From a purely musical standpoint, they may choose to continue *attacca*. The original viola part is now shared with the two violins but retains much of its original presence.

Tempi and dynamics are relative to the music hall, and the skill and interpretation of the musicians. The music must *BREATHE*.

Throughout the performance, the governing concept is that of *conversations* and interactions between the performers.

The original duet version was started in August 2021 and completed in March 2022. The string quartet version was completed in August 2021 but received minor tweaks through to August 2022.

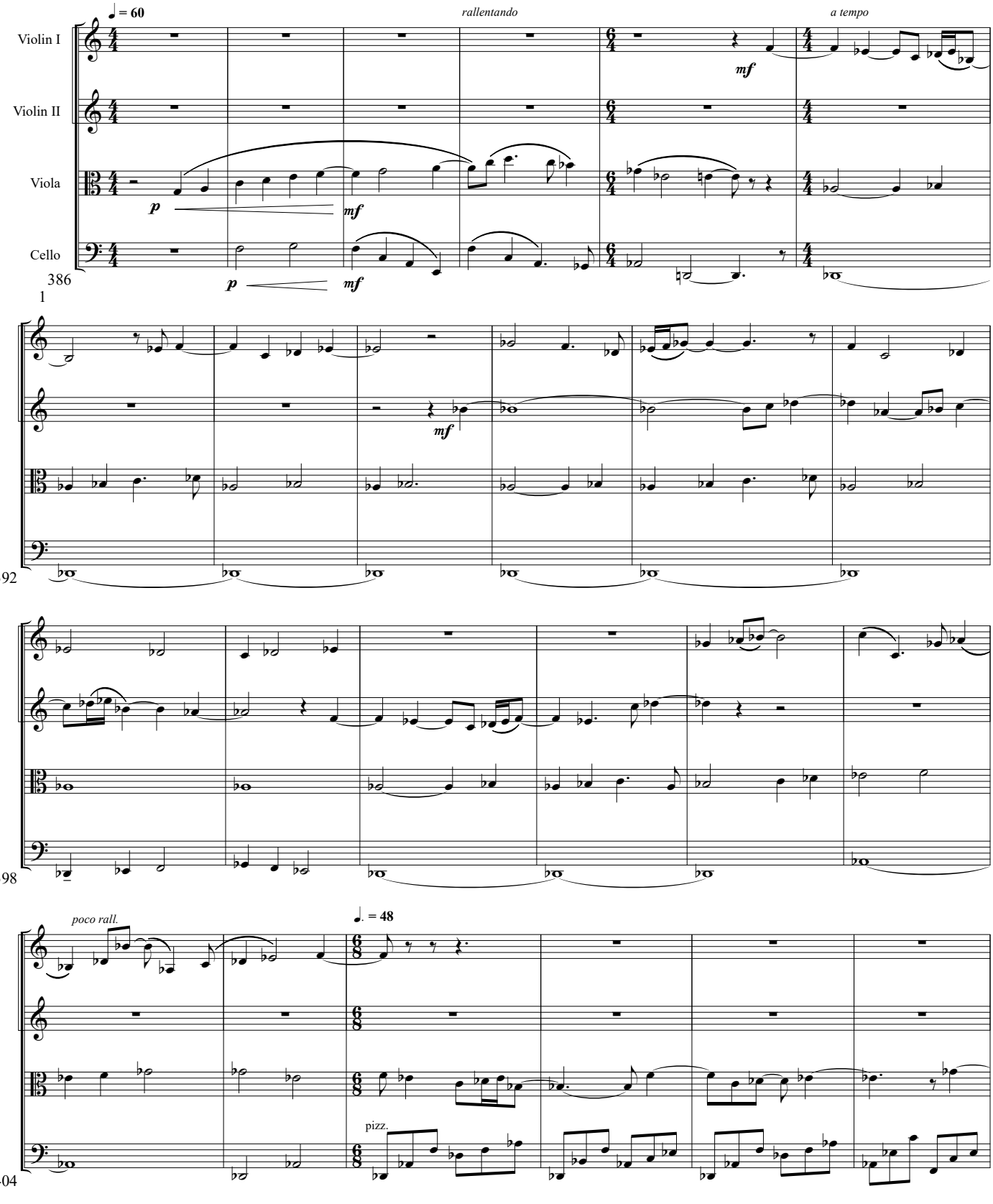
Performance time is approximately twenty-three minutes.

Vanessa McClintock

City Faces

for String Quartet
(extracted partition IV)

Vanessa McClintock



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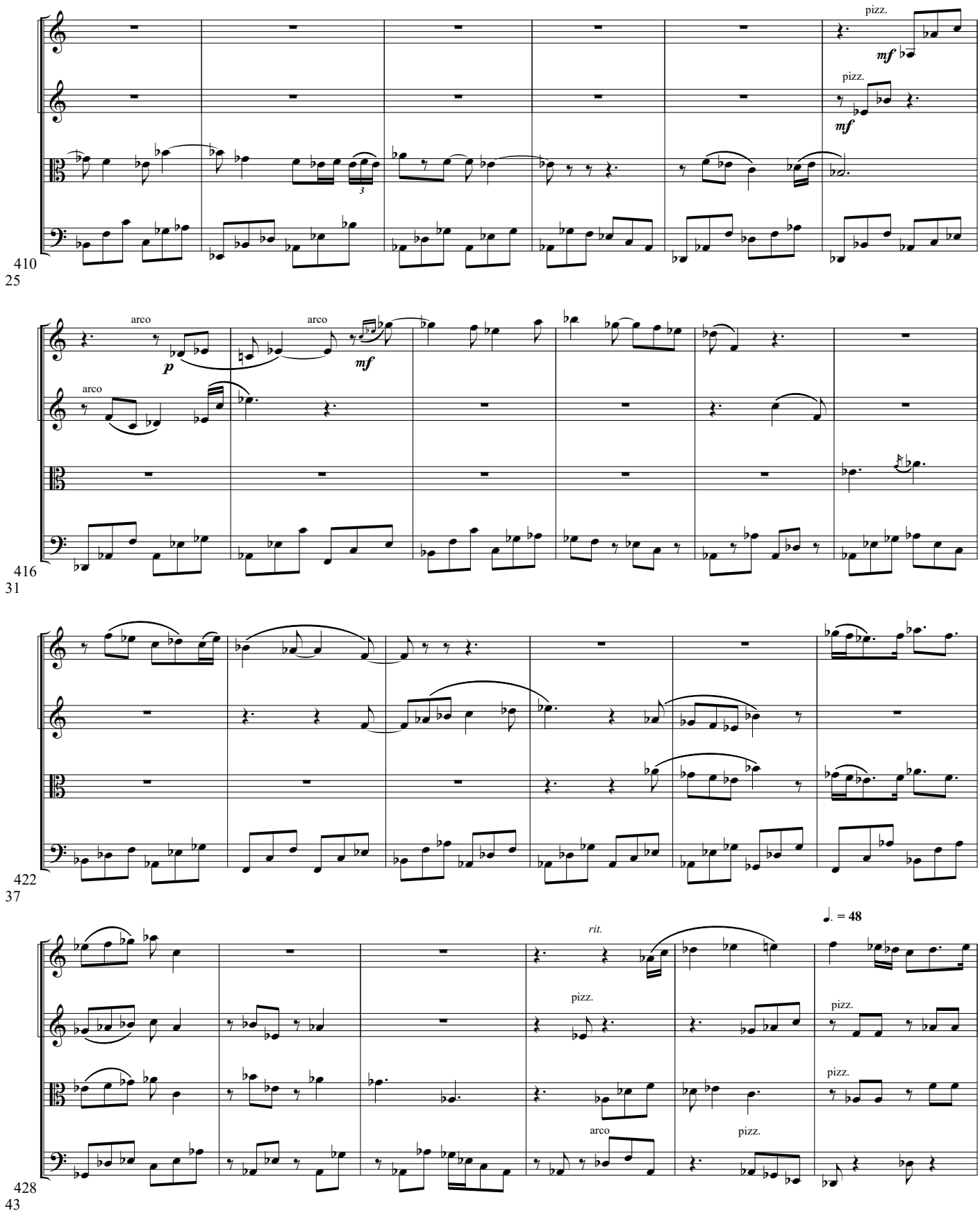

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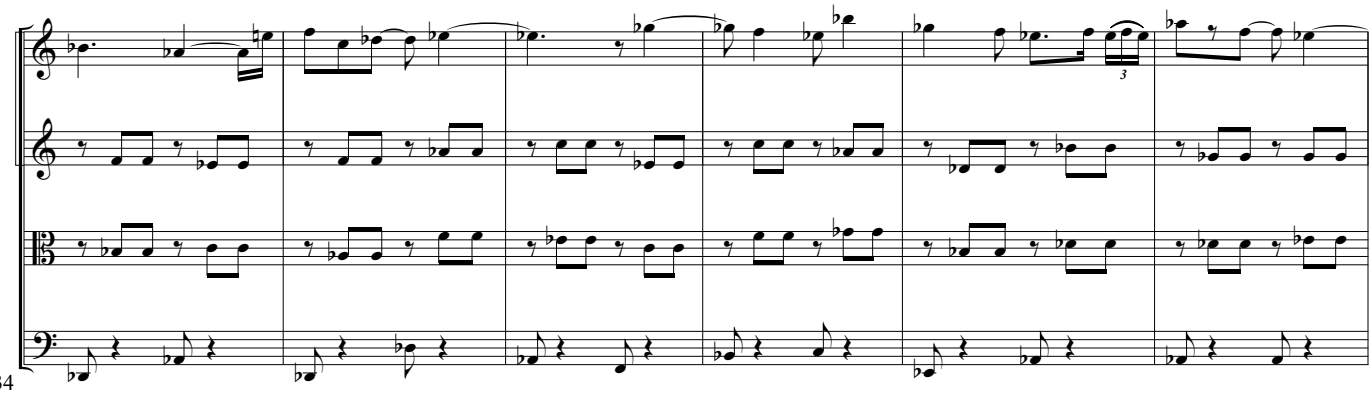

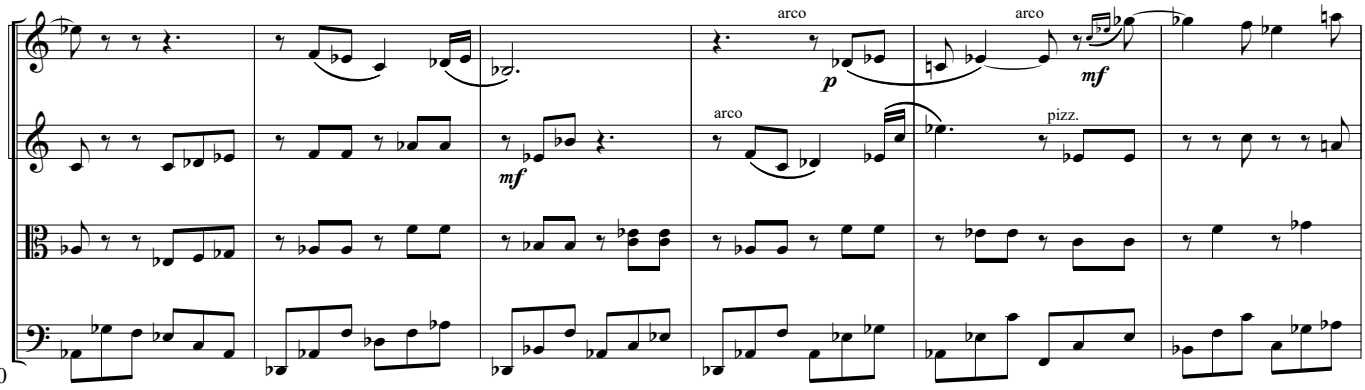

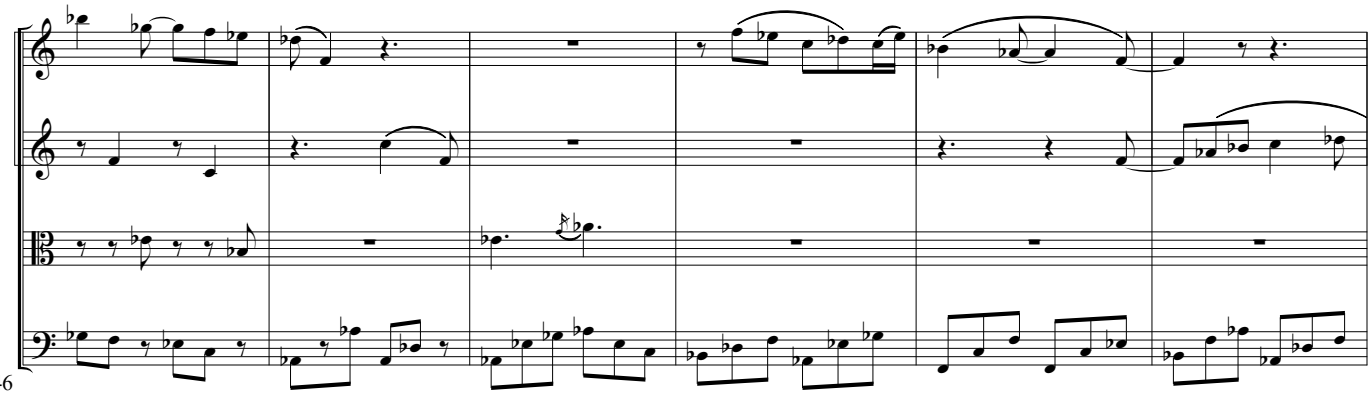

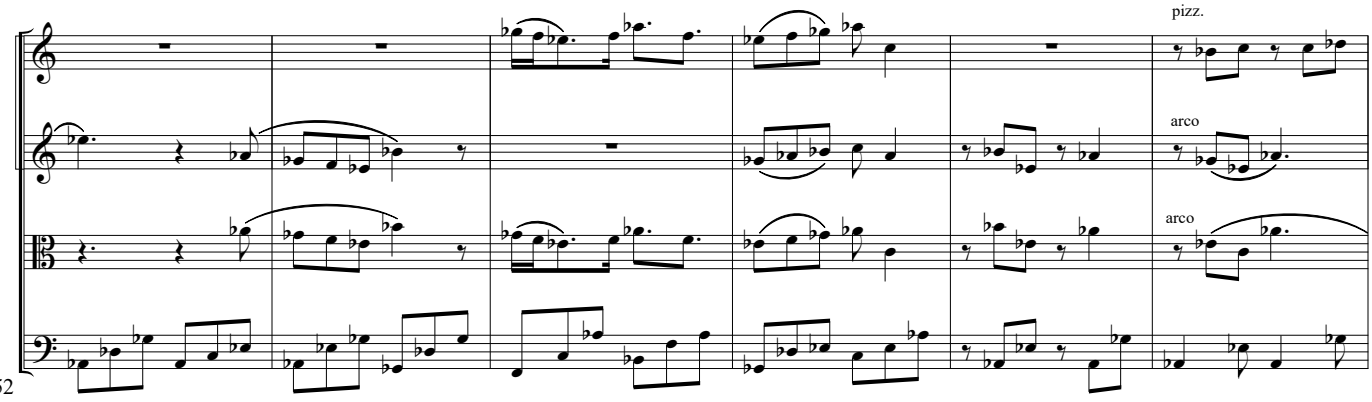

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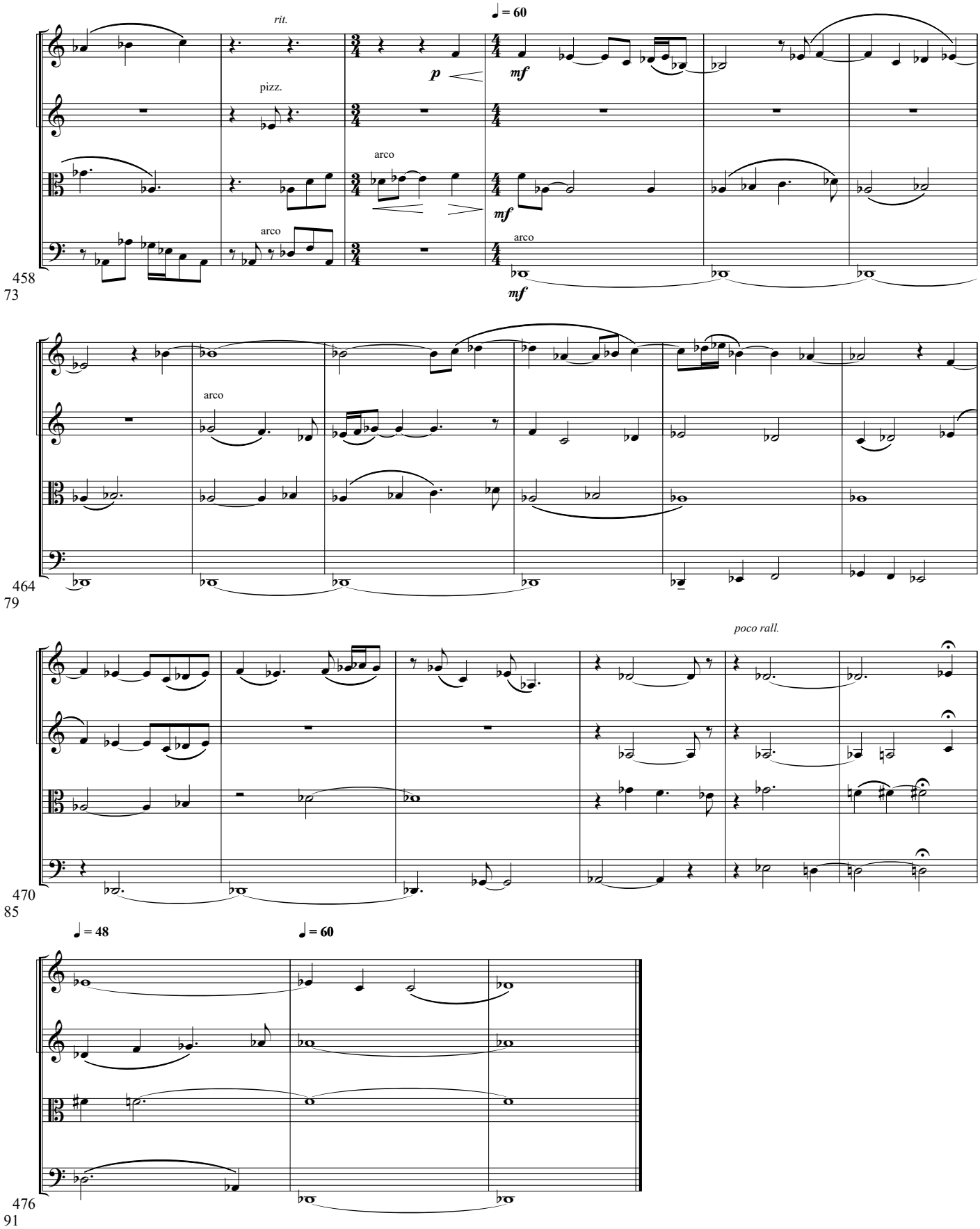

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