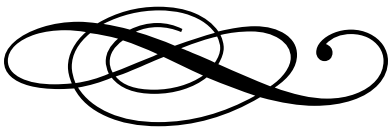
Conducting Insights

Moving from Technique to Artistry



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Little Things Mean a Lot

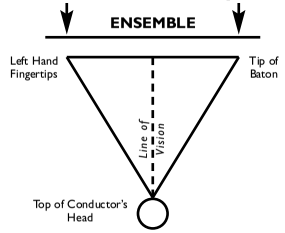
TOPIC #1 LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

- THE STUDY
  Participants were asked to identify and categorize personality differences between two identical twins.
- OBSERVATION/CONCLUSION
  The results of the study and the impact it has on how conductors are perceived on the podium

The Line of Vision

TOPIC #2 LINE OF VISION

- Tip to tip vs. hand to hand
- Give the baton credibility



- Conducting without a baton
- Conducting with a baton

Adjusting Planes and Stance

TOPIC #3
USING THE THREE PLANES
AND STANCE EFFECTIVELY

- Horizontal – adjust height perception
- Vertical – adjust width perception
- Saggital – adjust depth perception
- Stance – face the music properly

The Left Hand Rest Position

TOPIC #4
LEFT HAND REST POSITION

- Consider the "posture of the left hand"
- Rest near mid-section
- Off the body
- Neutral character/posture/shape
- No tension or relaxation

Left Hand Technique

TOPIC #5

ENHANCING/IMPROVING LEFT HAND INDEPENDENCE

- Geometric shapes – square, rectangle, triangle, single and double circles
- Group participation with above shapes
- Vary starting points
- Experiment with combinations of the planes and shapes to align with the musical demands of the score

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #1 – *see this handout, page 4*
- Conduct 2 against 3, 3 against 4, etc.
- Example of 2 against 3: *Variations on a Korean Folk Song* – John Barnes Chance, 215 to end
- Example of phrasal conducting: *My Country 'Tis of Thee*

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #2 – *see this handout, page 5*
- *Variations on America* – Charles Ives for Symphony Orchestra/Band, slow section

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The Long "Float"

TOPIC #6

THE LONG FLOAT

- The loss of time
- Demonstrate the hitch, click, flick motion
- Applications in asymmetrical meters, slower compound meters, and fractional pickups

MUSICAL EXAMPLE #3 – *see this handout, page 5*

- *Greensleeves* (sing and conduct with me)
- *Lincolnshire Posy* (3rd and 6th movements) – Percy Grainger

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Transitions

TOPIC #7

TRANSITIONS

- Square off the beat pattern
- Angular approach – more wrist and fingers, less arm
- PLAN AHEAD – Stop where you want to start, especially with fermati
- The "away stroke" / "upward stroke"
- The moveable 2nd beat (12 to 3, 3 to 12)

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #4 – *see this handout, page 6*

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #5 – *see this handout, page 7*

- Example for conducting a transition from 1 to 3: *Lincolnshire Posy* (6th movement, last section) – Percy Grainger
- Supermetric – combining downbeats for greater clarity
- Example of supermetric conducting: *Lincolnshire Posy* (6th movement) – Percy Grainger | *Symphony #5* (1st movement) – Beethoven

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Conducting the Musical Phrase

TOPIC #8

TO BEAT OR NOT TO BEAT

- Example for conducting the musical phrase: *Overture to Candide* (83–123) – Leonard Bernstein
- Sing and conduct
- ONE IS NOT ALWAYS DOWN

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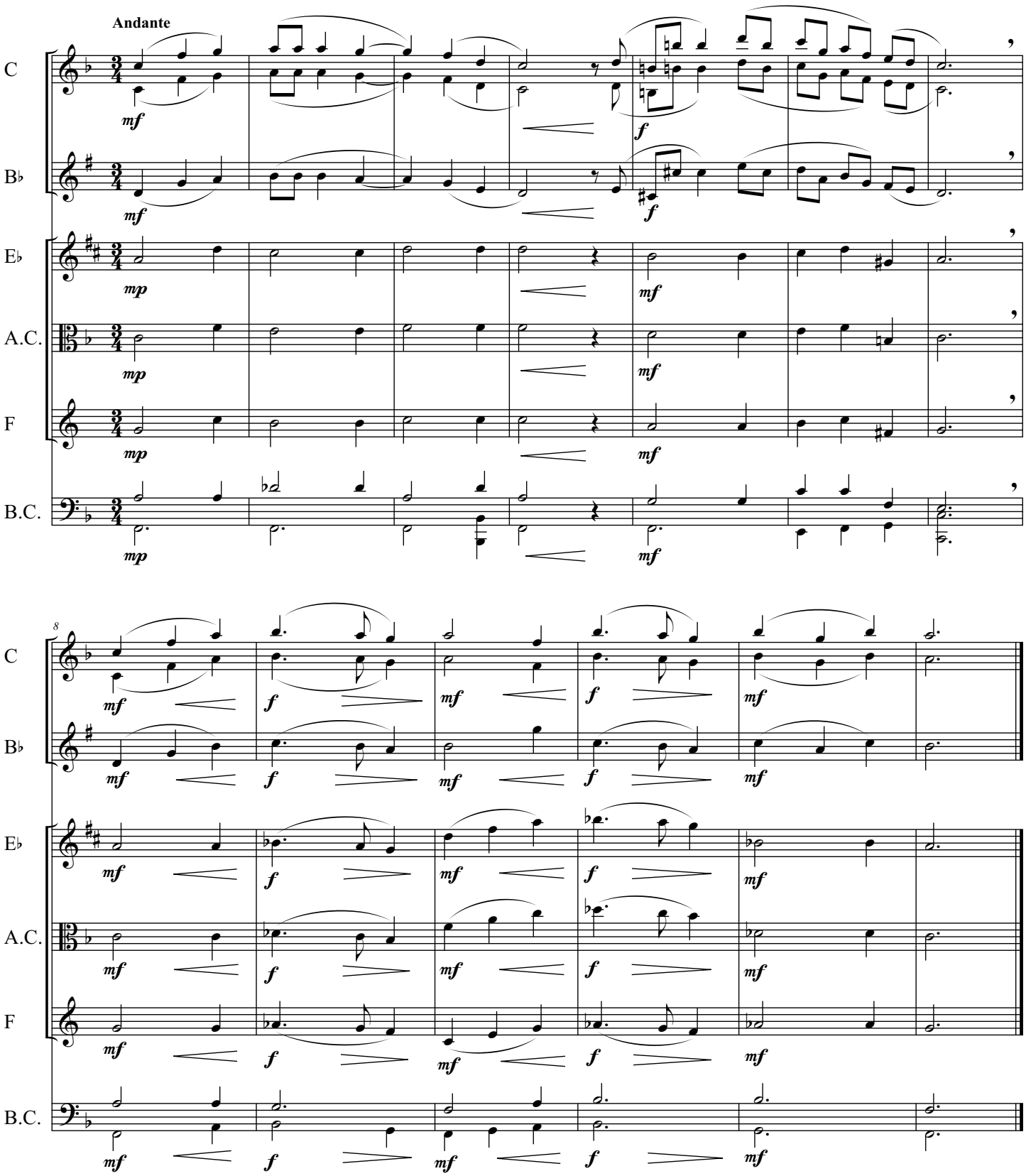
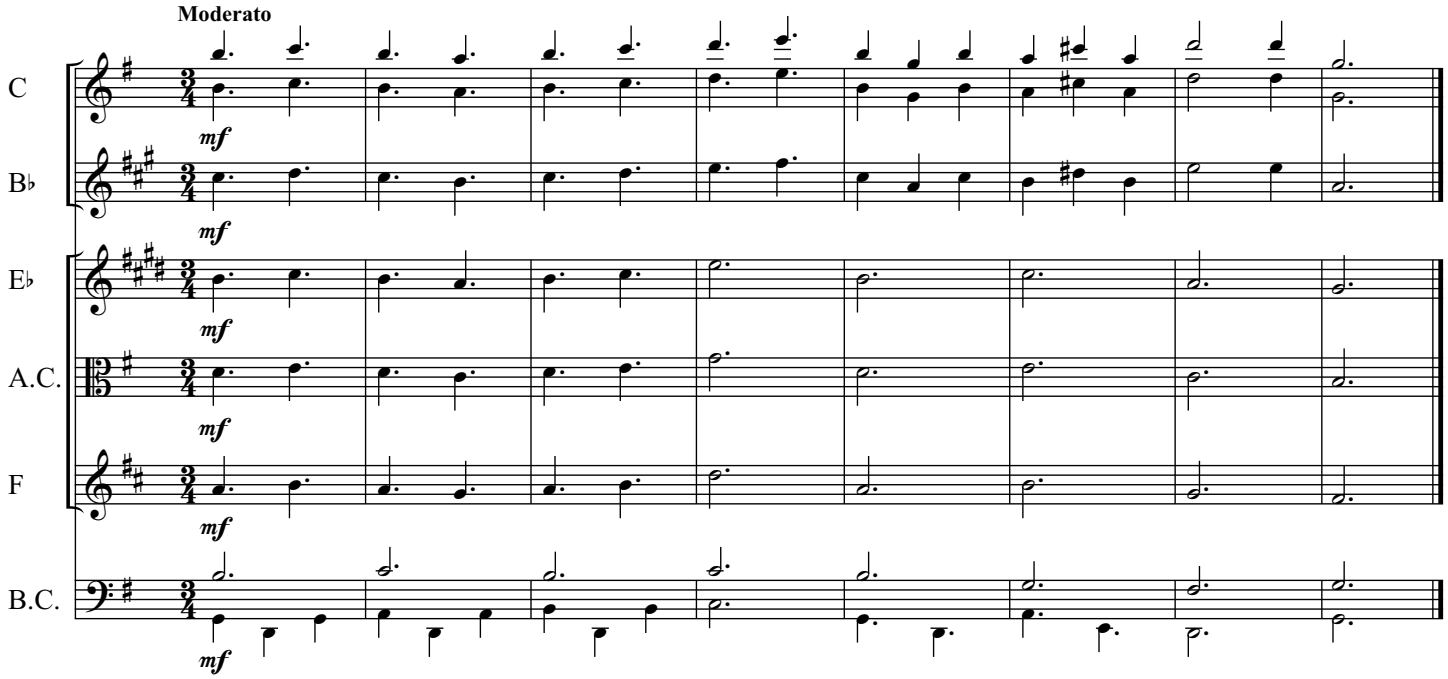
MUSICAL EXAMPLE #1

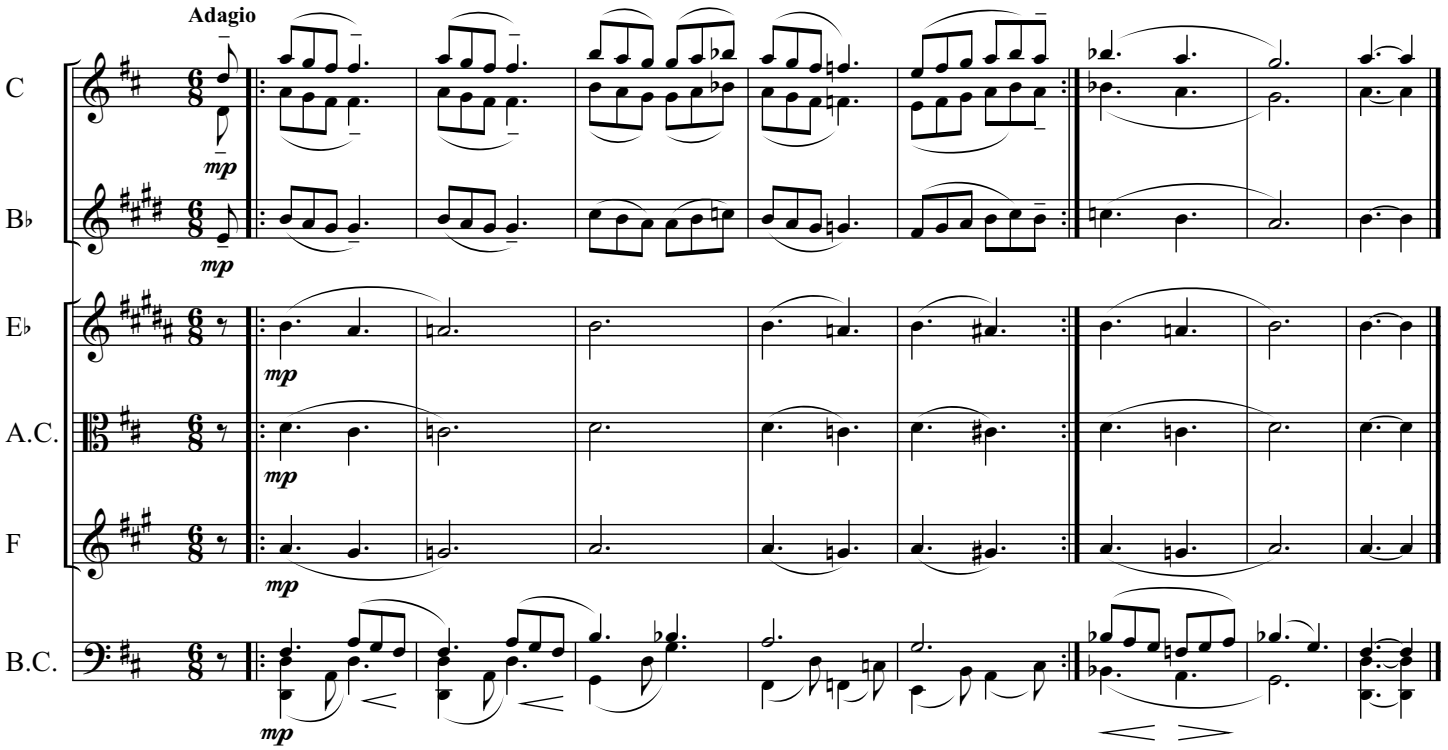


MUSICAL EXAMPLE #2

3 vs. 2 - Switcheroo

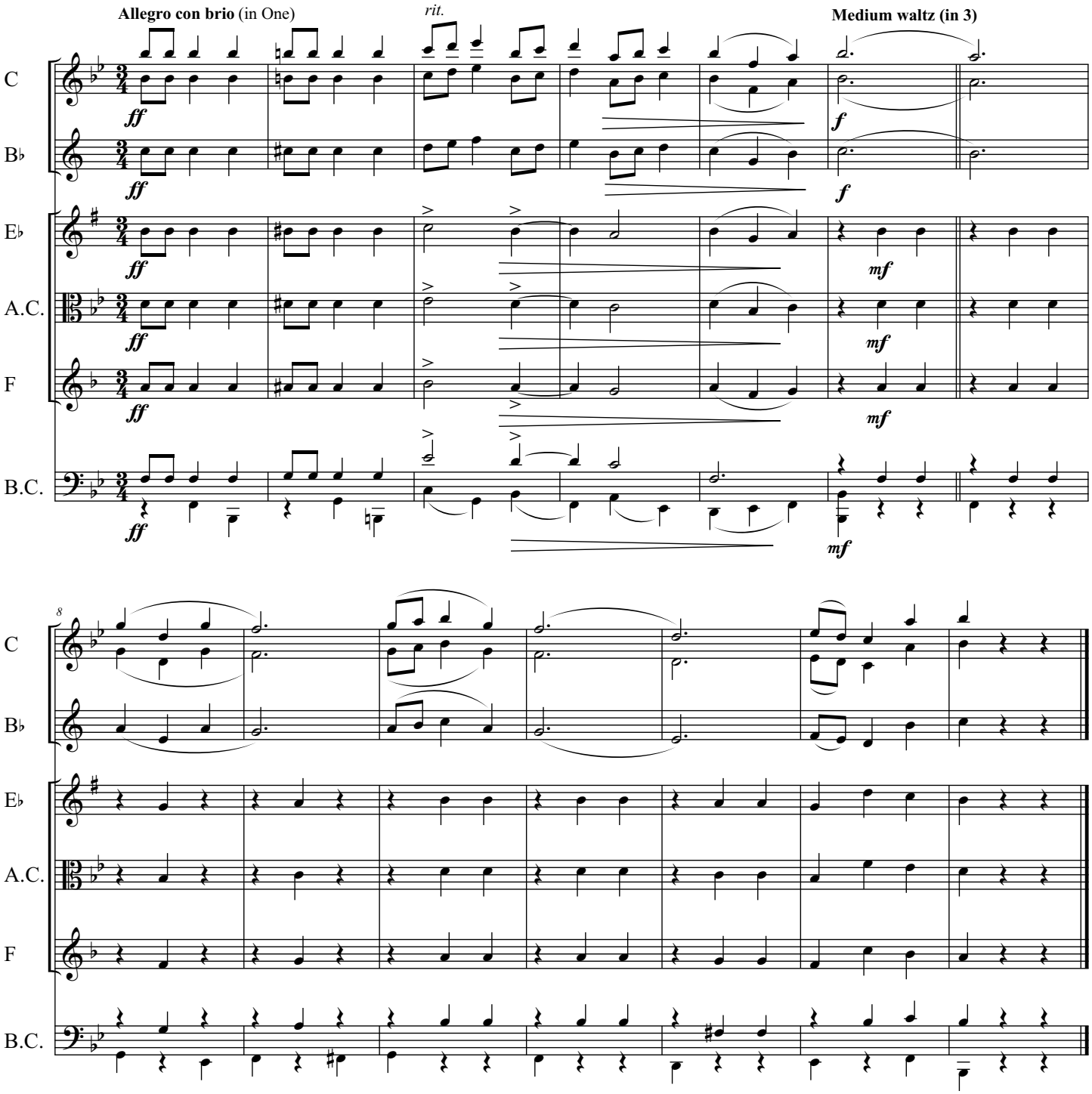


MUSICAL EXAMPLE #3



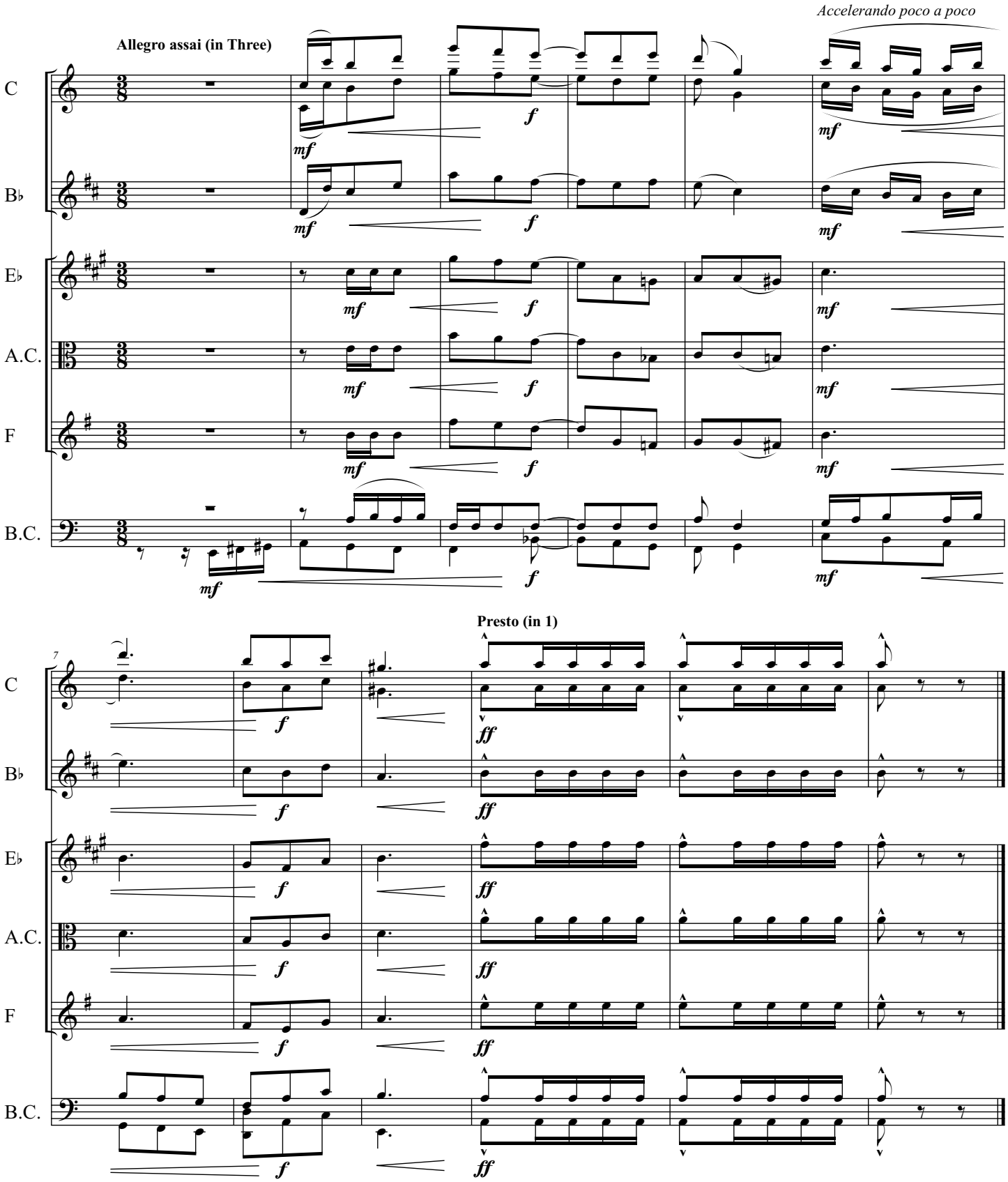
MUSICAL EXAMPLE #4

One to Three



MUSICAL EXAMPLE #5

Three to One



The Power of G.O.S.!

TOPIC #9
GESTURE OF SYNCOPATION

- The closer the entrance to the ictus, the harder the stroke
- The further away the entrance to the ictus, the softer the stroke
- Variations on this concept in compound and common time
- Example: *Symphony #5* – Beethoven

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Fractional Entrances

TOPIC #10 FRACTIONAL ENTRANCES

- Use only 1 preparatory beat whenever possible
- Dictate entrances: *La Forza Del Destino* – 3/8 dotted eighth rest followed by 3 sixteenth notes conducting in "1"

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #6 – *see this handout, page 9*
- *Overture to Barber of Seville* – 32nd note entrance followed by bar line then dotted quarter note and 4 32nd notes conducting a subdivided 4 pattern

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #7 – *see this handout, page 9*
- 2-beat preparatory gesture (fractional anacrusis at a fast tempo)

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #8 – *see this handout, page 10*

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Fractional Cut-Offs

TOPIC #11
A "DICTATORSHIP" WORKS BEST

- Float the cut-off, catch the last note (i.e., 2 & or 4-e-&-a)

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #9 – *see this handout, page 11*
  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #10 – *see this handout, page 12*
- Alternative technique, employ the "opposite direction wrist flick" no arm or cut-off gesture

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #11 – *see this handout, page 13*
- *Nutcracker* (3rd bar from the end, fermata on 2nd beat) – dictate the fractional pickup with double downbeat

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Subdivide only when necessary!

TOPIC #12 SUBDIVISION

- Extra motion may generate excitement, but it is difficult to read
- 3 techniques
- full to _ (double strokes)
- _ to full (double strokes)
- Wrist/finger hitch motion within the rebound of the beat (single stroke)

  MUSICAL EXAMPLE #12 – *see this handout, page 14*
- Practice employing this motion every other beat; vary this technique to fit the music

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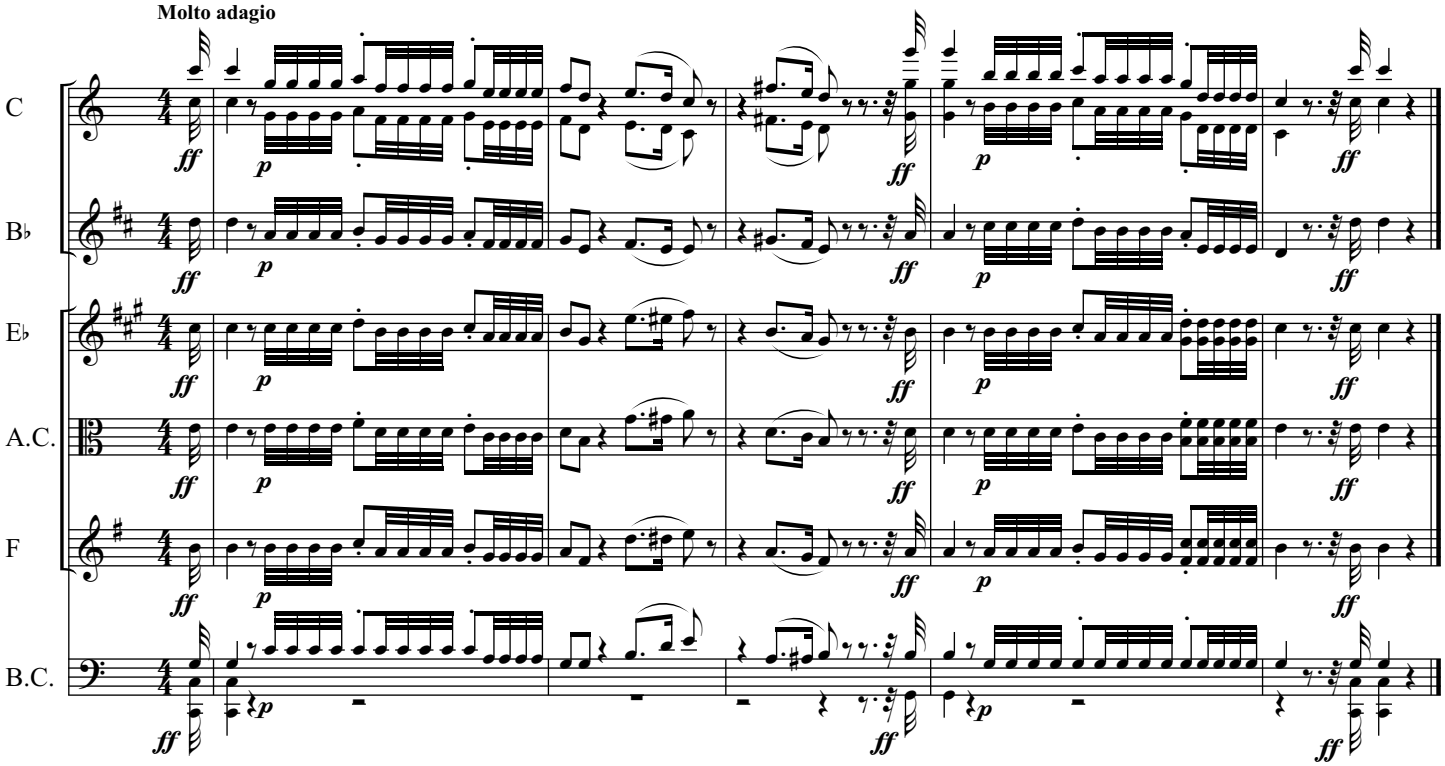
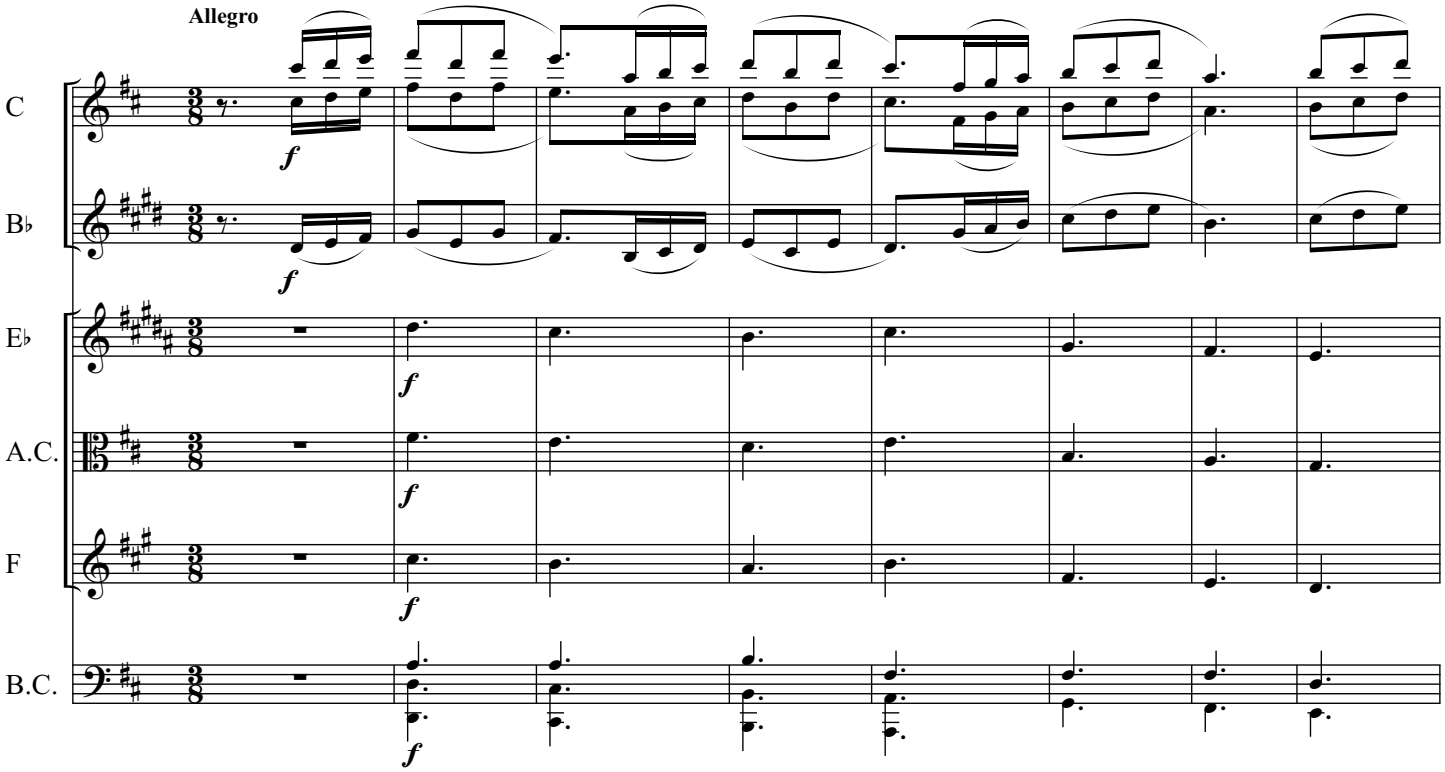
MUSICAL EXAMPLE #6

Subdivide

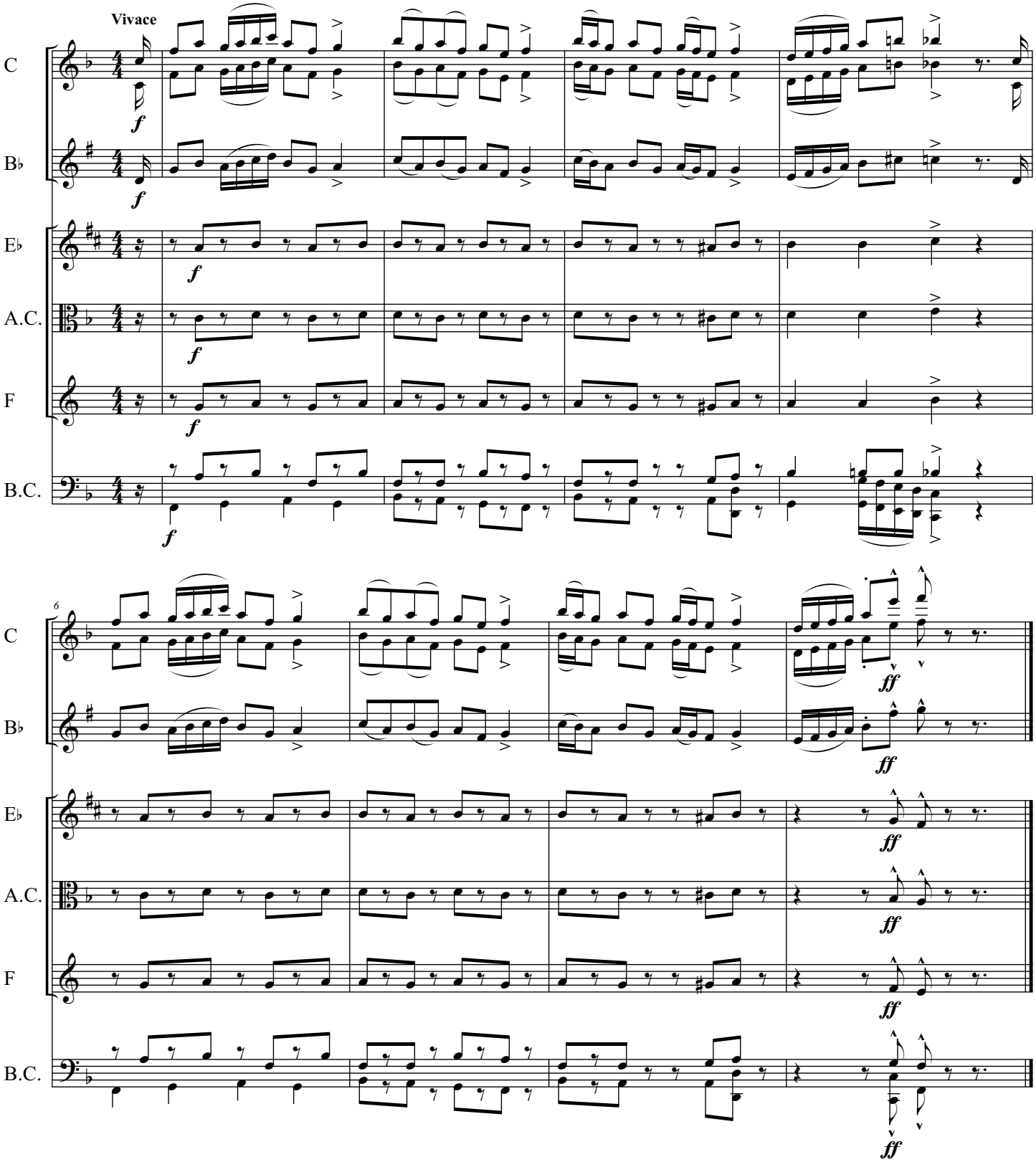


MUSICAL EXAMPLE #7

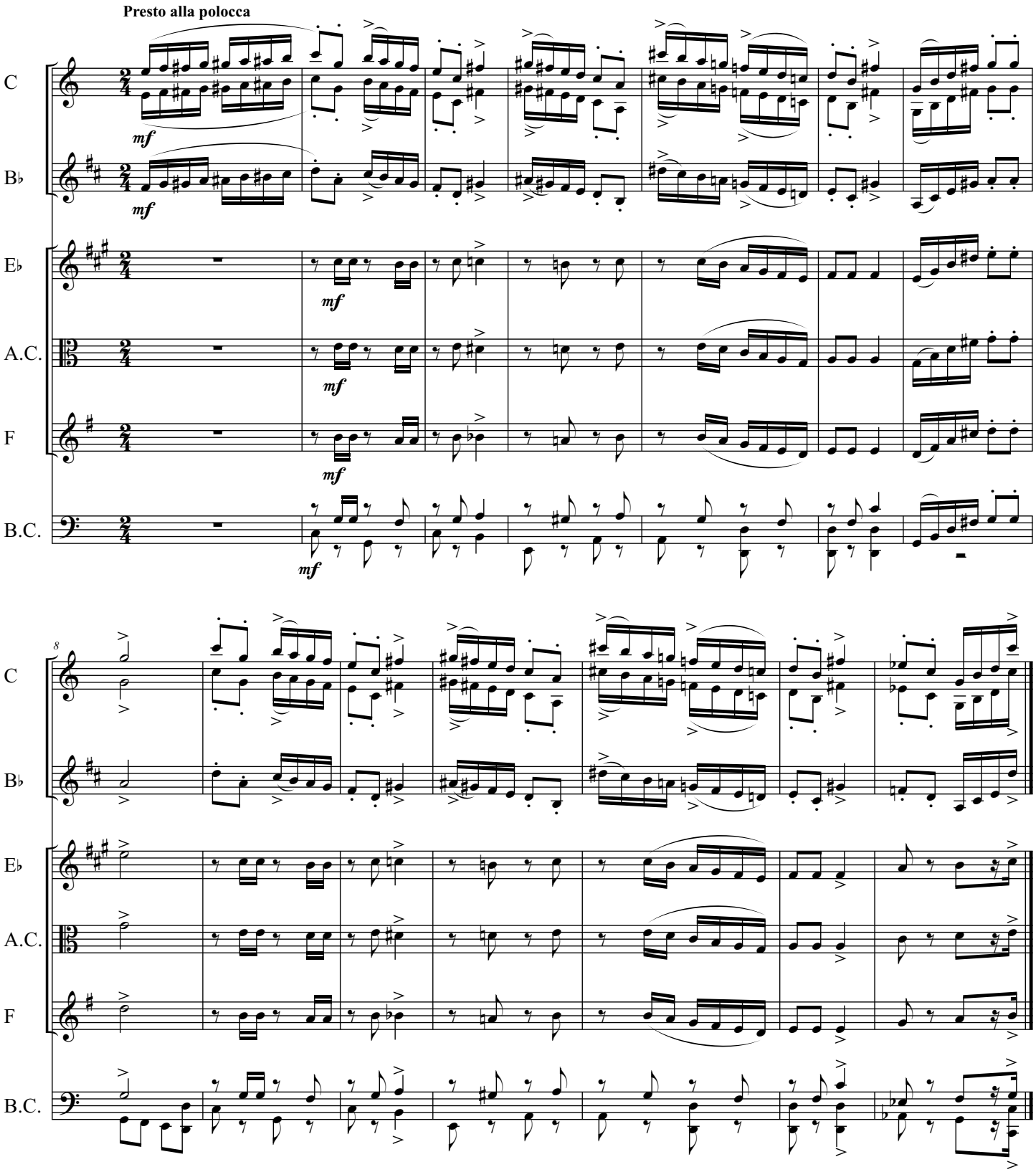
Example 3.10



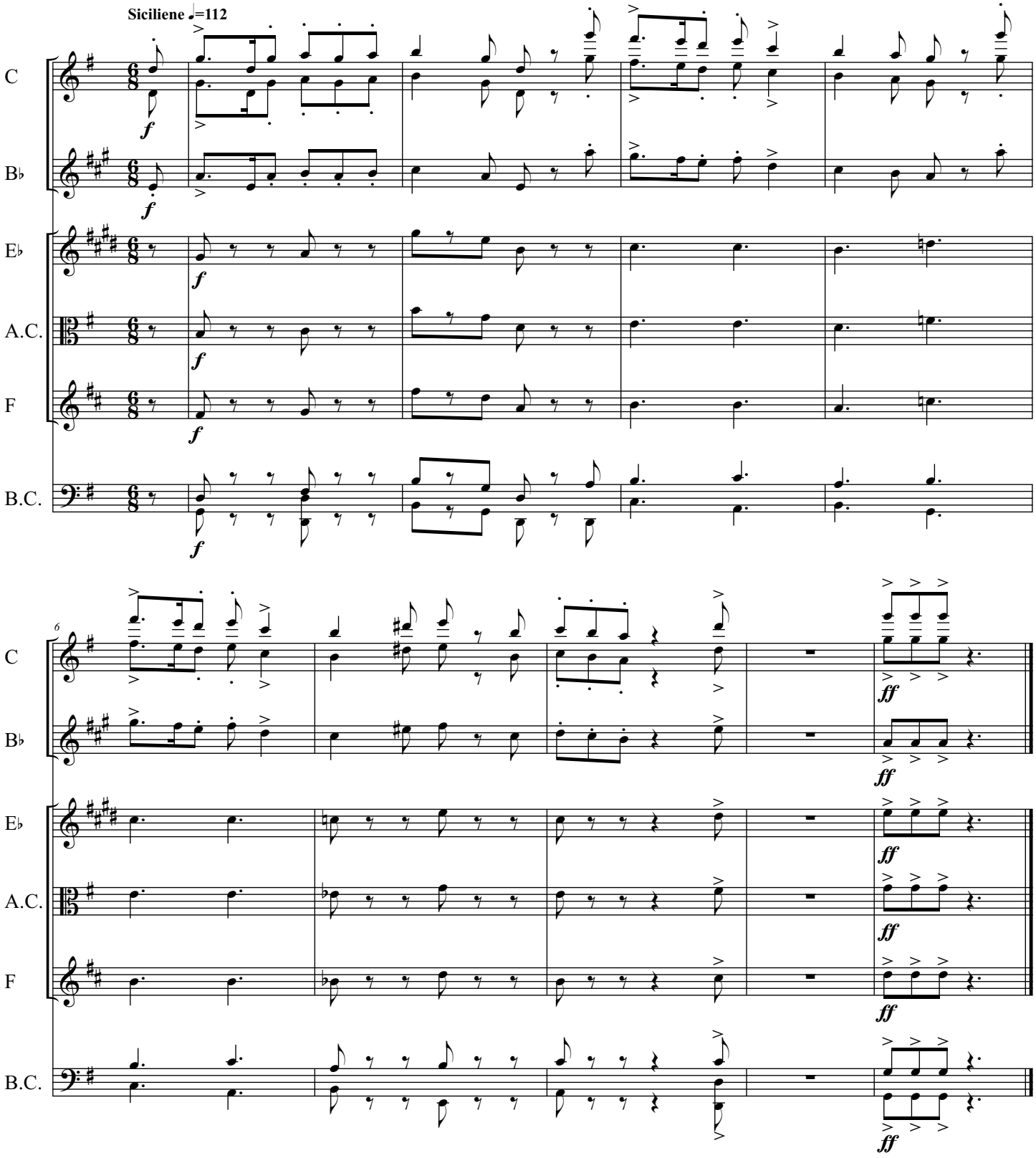
MUSICAL EXAMPLE #8



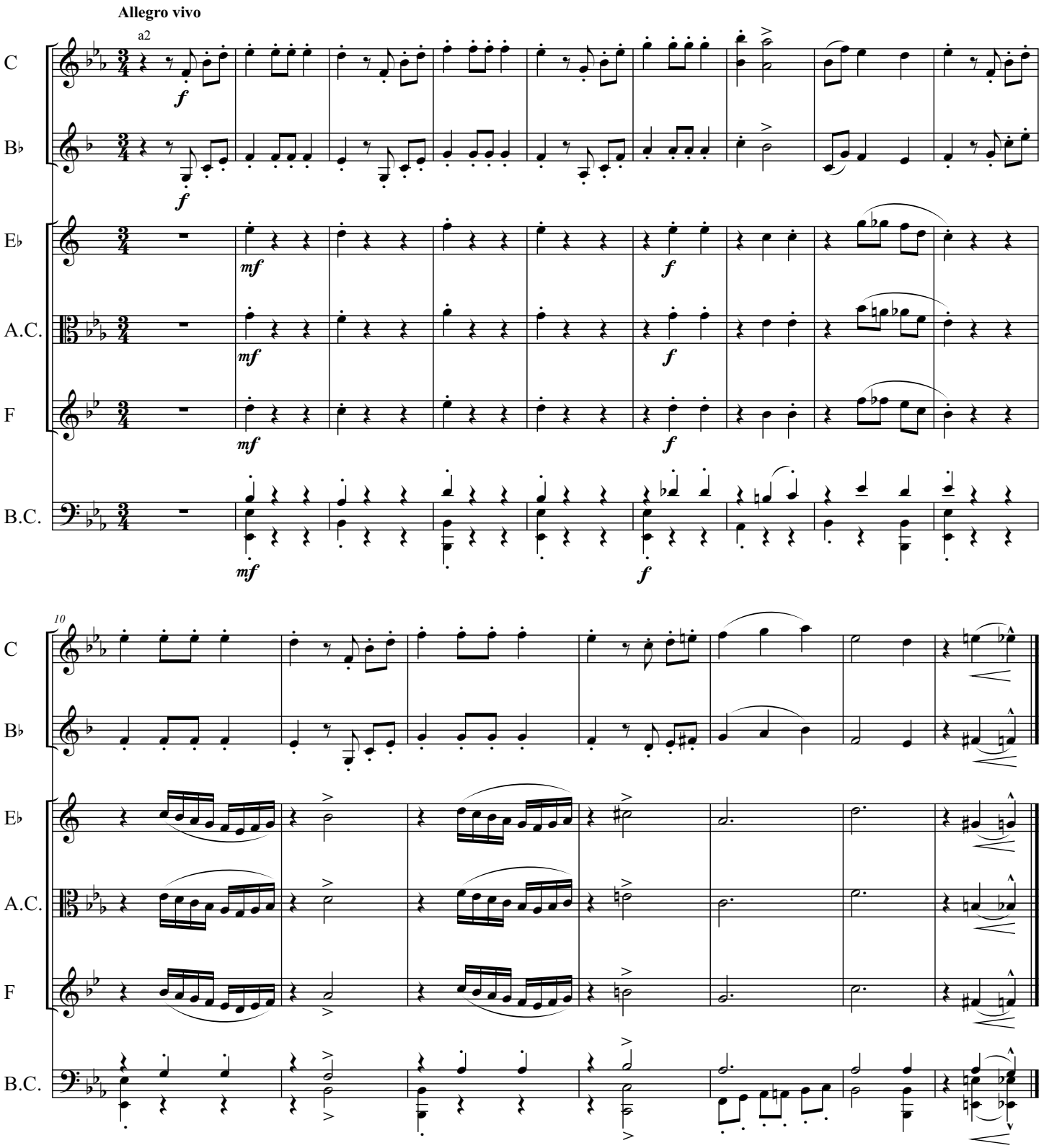
MUSICAL EXAMPLE #9



MUSICAL EXAMPLE #10

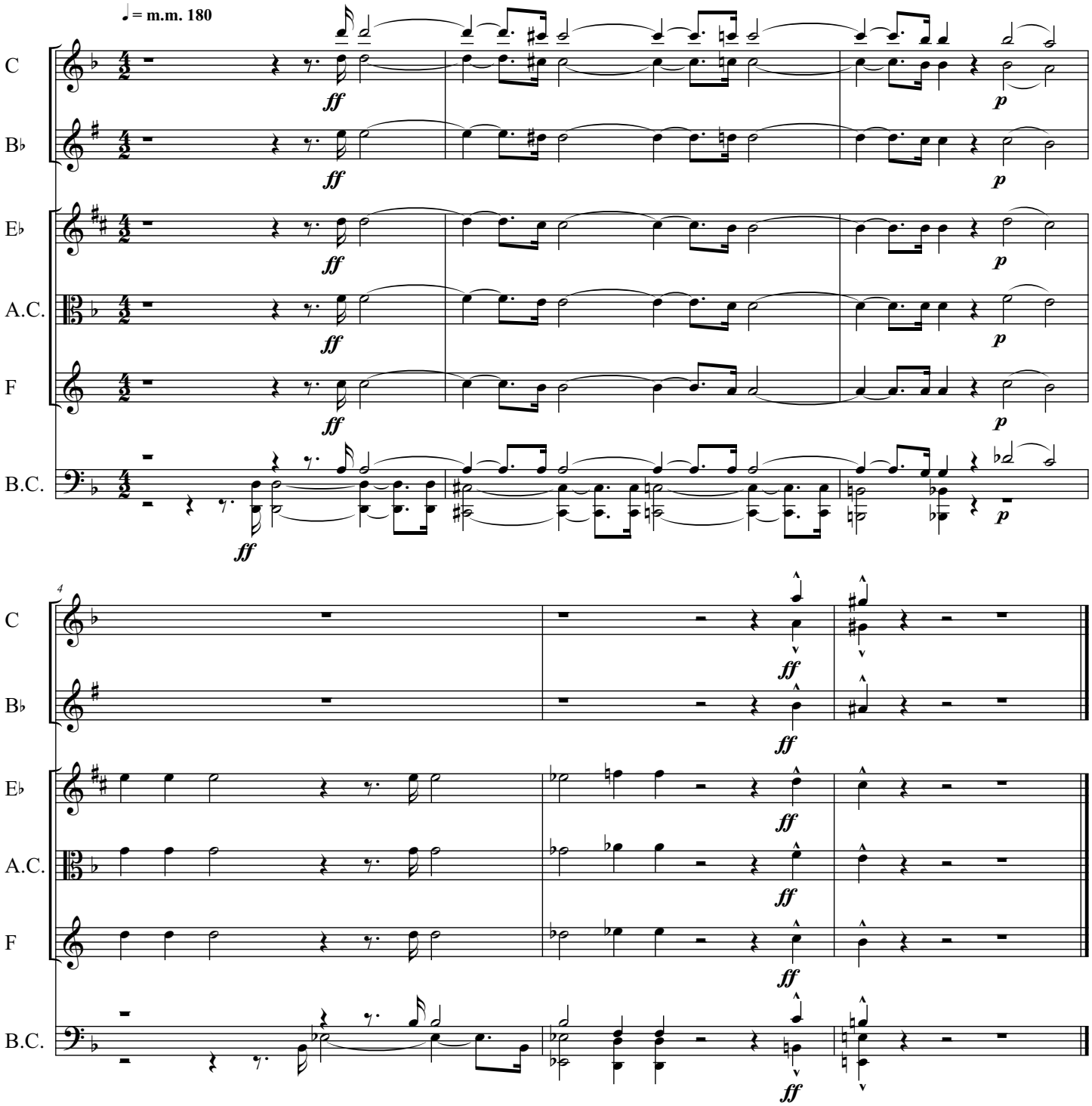


MUSICAL EXAMPLE #11



MUSICAL EXAMPLE #12

Subdivide



The Value of Wrist/Finger Technique

TOPIC #13

FINGER-WRIST/ARM TECHNIQUE

- Review hinge points
- Right hand thumb and finger technique holding the baton at the fulcrum point
- Thumb and right hand index finger move as one independently from the rest of the right hand – practice on flat surface
- Rotate the wrist (thumb nail facing upwards) vs. palm down facing the floor

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Changing the Focal Point

TOPIC #14

CHANGING THE FOCUS

- Cue from the tip of the baton to the elbow depending on the musical demands in the score
- Tip to elbow – bar of 4/4 time followed by cue on 1st beat
- Employ the line of sight

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Topics for Review

- Brief Points for Consideration
- Reminders / Helpful Suggestions
- Questions and Answers

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Transposition Timesavers

CONSIDER MOVEABLE "C" CLEFS

- Common band transpositions
- Use tenor clef for B-flat transpositions, read in concert key
- Use mezzo soprano clef for F transpositions, read in concert key
- Use bass clef for treble clef E-flat transpositions, remember + 3 flats / cancel out sharps
- Double transpositions "bring the instrument to the music" – E-flat saxophone reading F horn part – E-flat to F (up one whole step)

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The Preparatory Beat

CONSIDER THE POWER
OF THE PREPARATORY BEAT

- Achieves 5 things simultaneously: tempo, dynamics, style, who/what plays, on what beat (try a 1-hand approach)
- Always incorporate the breath
- The "AWAY" stroke – start at point "A" and return to point "A" (adjust the horizontal plane to fit the music)

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Bring the Ensemble to YOU!

- Consider reducing the size of the beat pattern when rhythmic phrasing occurs
- Rather than conducting larger, conduct smaller, consolidate, and focus movements and motions
- Expect the ensemble to come to YOU, instead of YOU going to THEM
- Achieve this by consolidating and focusing movements and motions

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Ultimate Legibility

- Crossing of hands when conducting the 2nd beat in a 4 pattern tends to convolute clarity and precision (3 points of focus)
- Consider adjusting the size, height, velocity, and character of the rebound for the sake of ultimate legibility

19

Make every movement count

- Minimizing the use of the entire arm motion on lighter stylistic/articulations/ passages
- Consider using the finger/wrist technique gestures for more delicate, subtle nuances

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The "In Limbo" Left Hand

- Control the left hand from hanging / dangling at the left side near the thigh
- Consider placing it near the mid-section, slightly away from the body with a "neutral" character / posture (neither passive or aggressive) ready for immediate use

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Give Yourself to the Ensemble

- Eliminate the crouching down / hunching inward motion for soft *piano* dynamic markings (backside view is unflattering) – This takes the conductor away from the ensemble.
- Consider bringing the ensemble closer "into you" by employing a more focused, smaller beat pattern and gestures that are closer to the facial area.
- Employ the use of the left-hand index finger close to the face and mouth – This gesture connects the hands and face.

22

Utilize the Beat Pattern

- Use more than one style when beating basic beat patterns. One size does not fit all!
- Consider varying the beat pattern to reflect legato and non-legato styles / articulations.
- Accomplish this by controlling the rebound.

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Rhythmic Independence

- The TEE – KO exercise
- Keep the float "tight"

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