A Workbook for Studying Orchestration

by

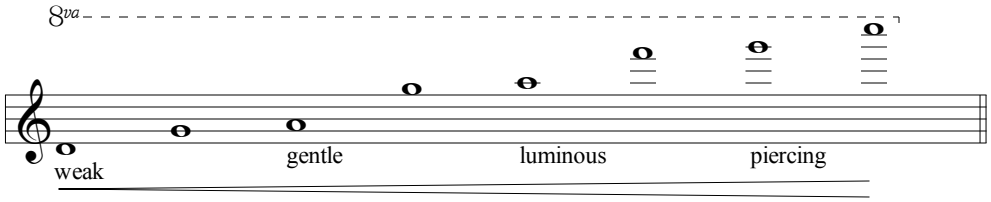
Alan Belkin

© copyright Alan Belkin, 2015

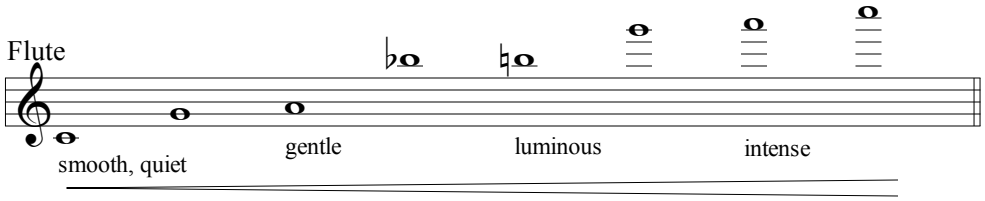
Registers of wind instruments

(note that the hightes and lowest notes may vary slightly,
depending on the country or the maker)

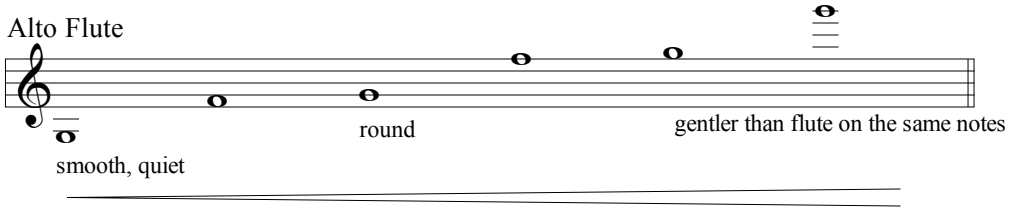
Piccolo



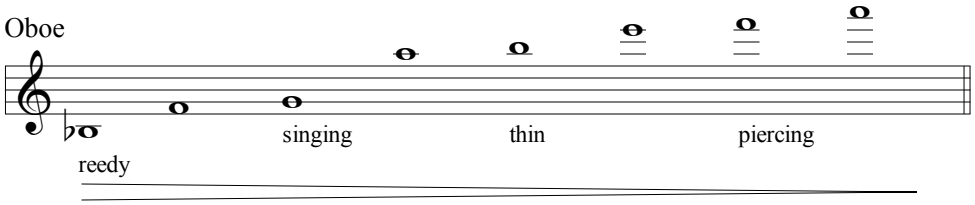
Flute



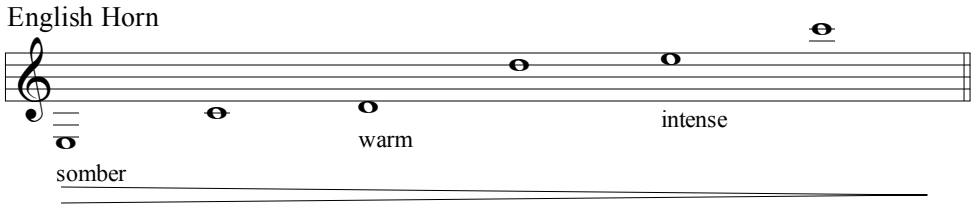
Alto Flute



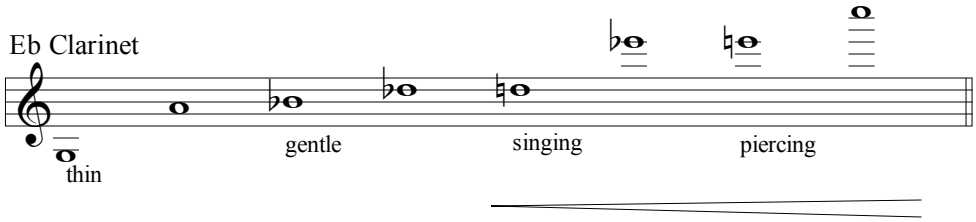
Oboe

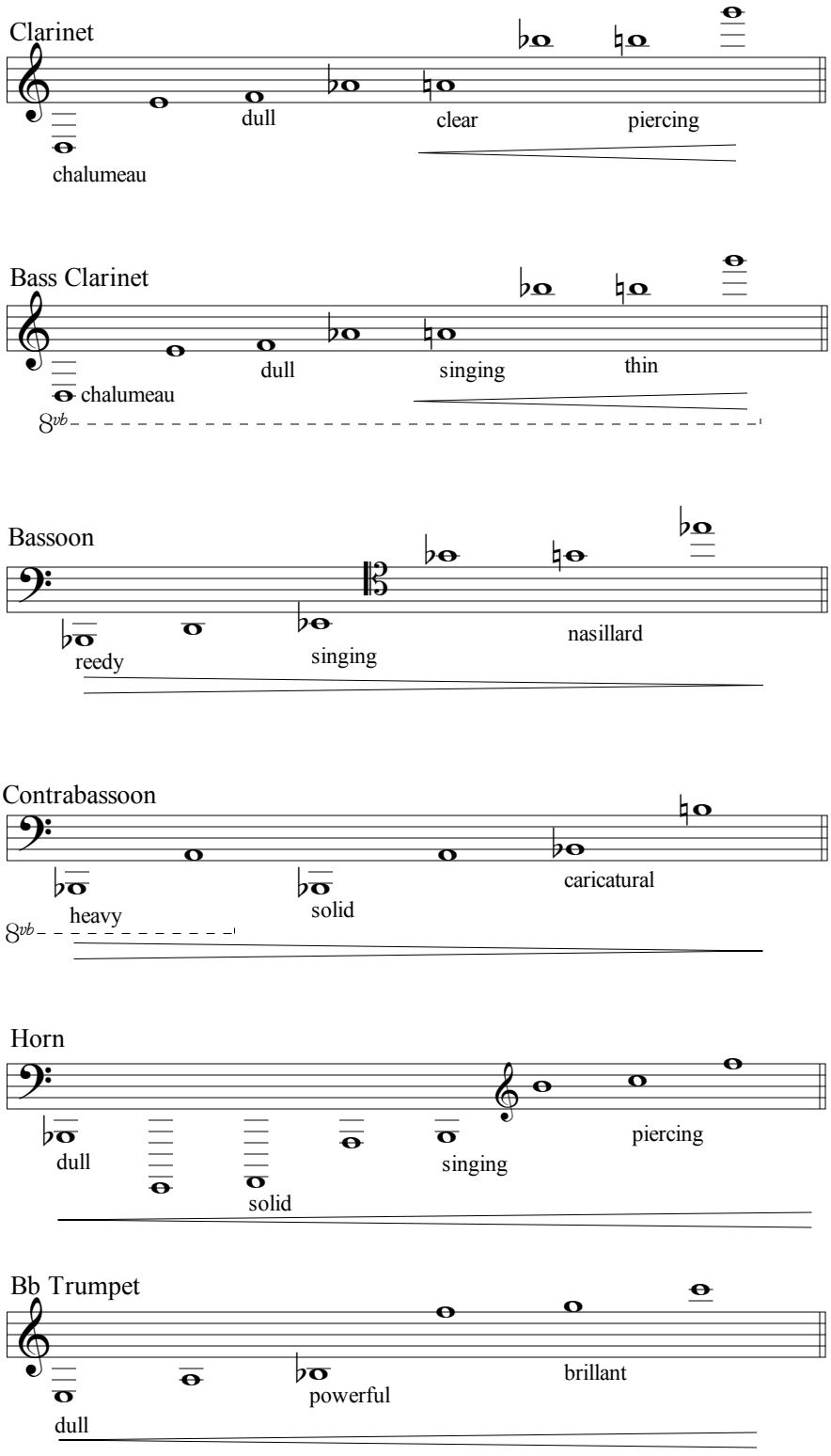


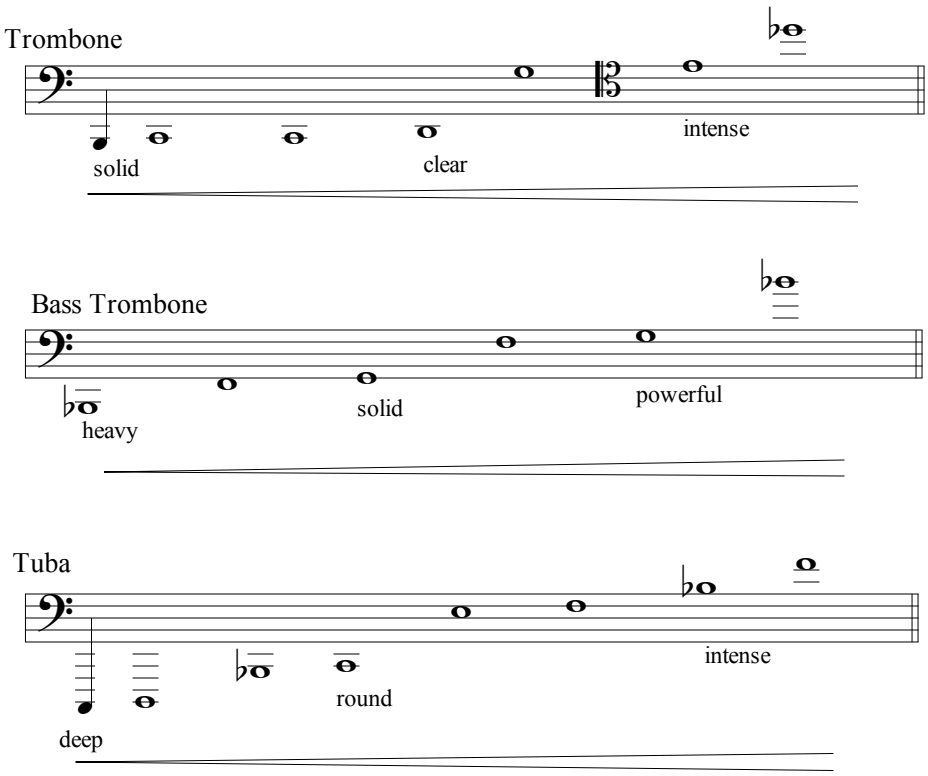
English Horn



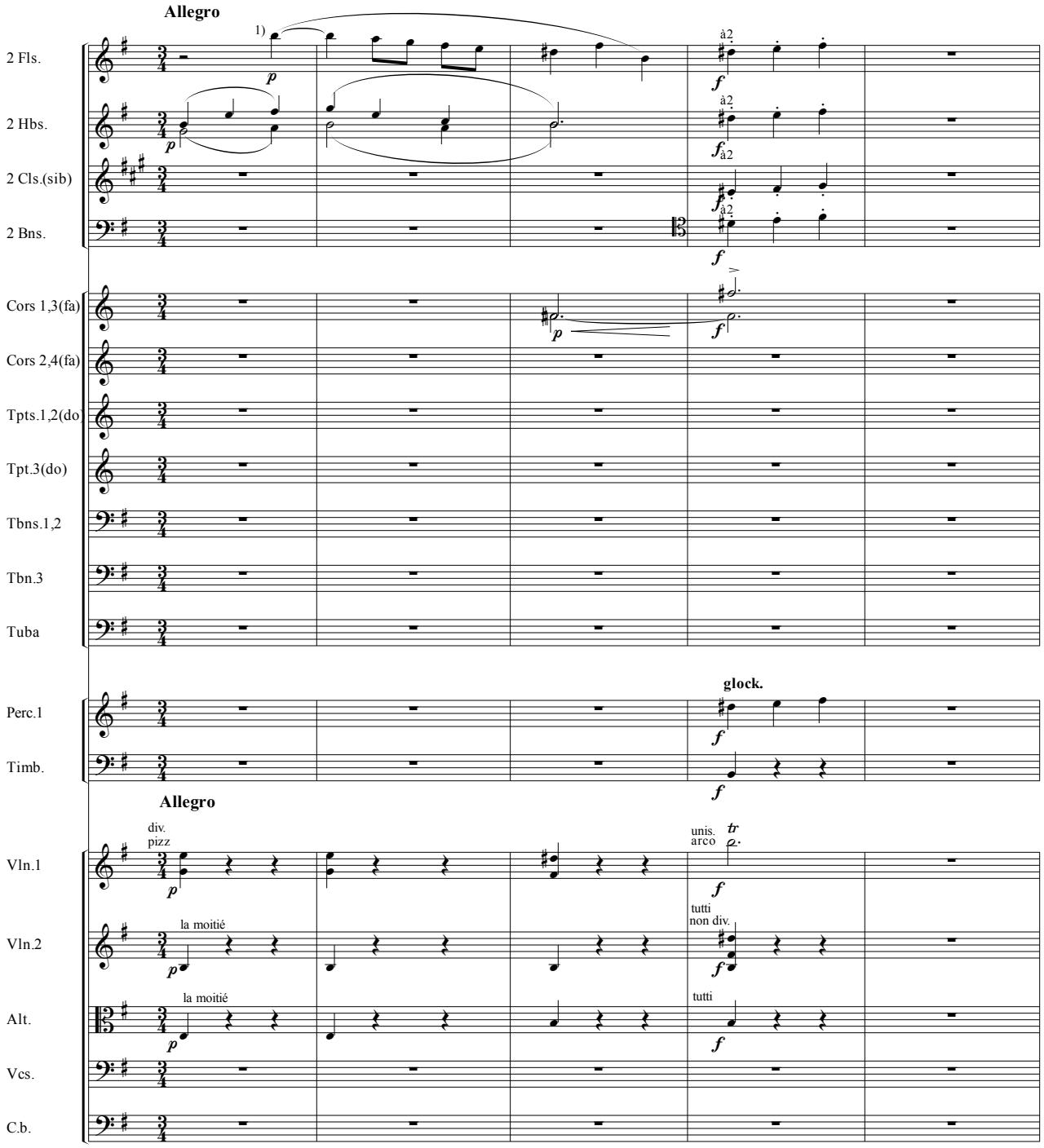
Eb Clarinet




Clarinet
chalumeau
dull
clear
piercing
Bass Clarinet
chalumeau
dull
singing
thin
8vb
Bassoon
reedy
singing
nasillard
Contrabassoon
heavy
solid
caricatural
8vb
Horn
dull
solid
singing
piercing
Bb Trumpet
dull
powerful
brillant


Trombone
solid
clear
intense
Bass Trombone
heavy
solid
powerful
Tuba
deep
round
intense

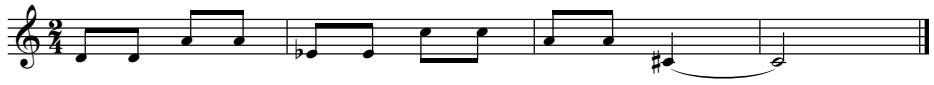
The layout of an orchestral score



Orchestrating a given melody: 2 versions

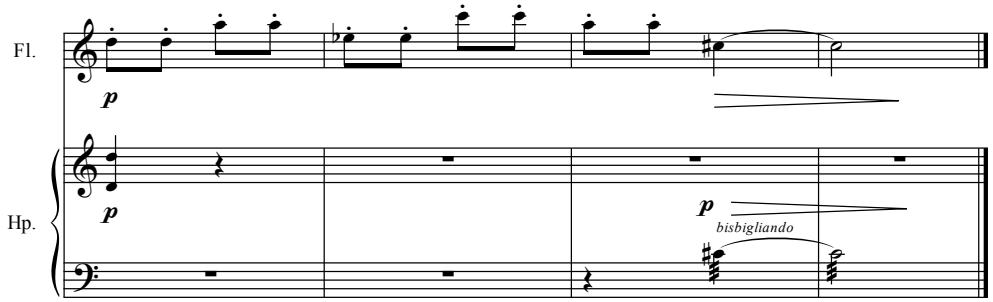
Alan Belkin

Given melody



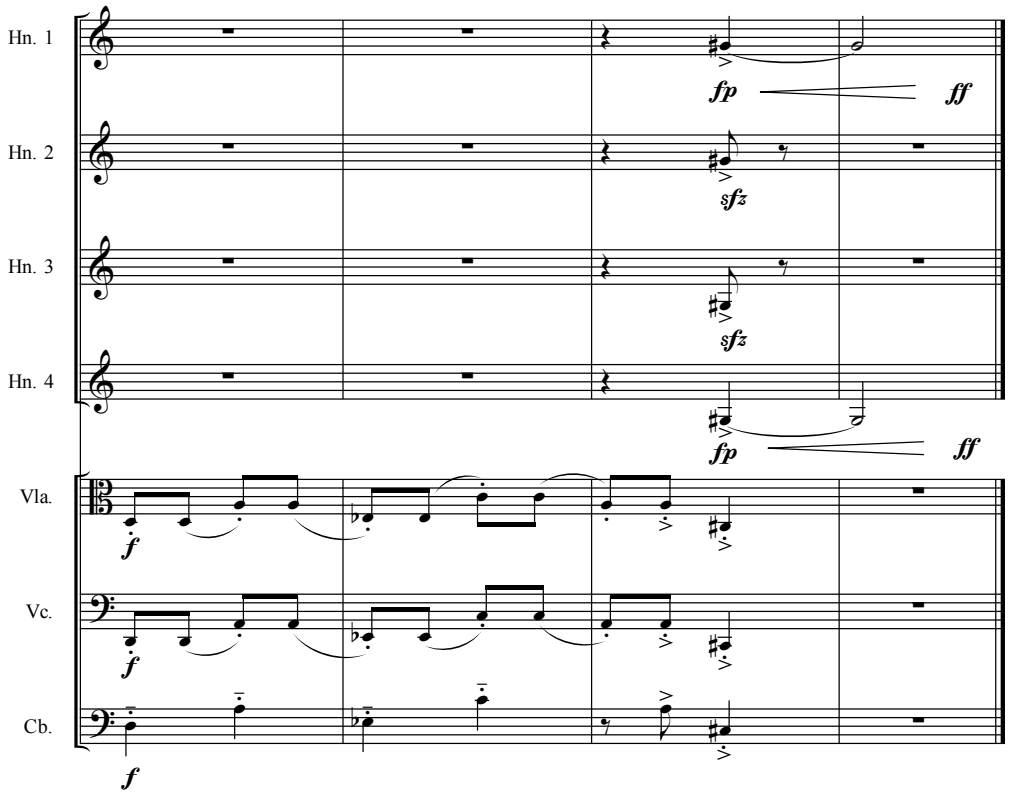
version 1

Presto ♩= *140*



version 2

Adagio ♩= *50*

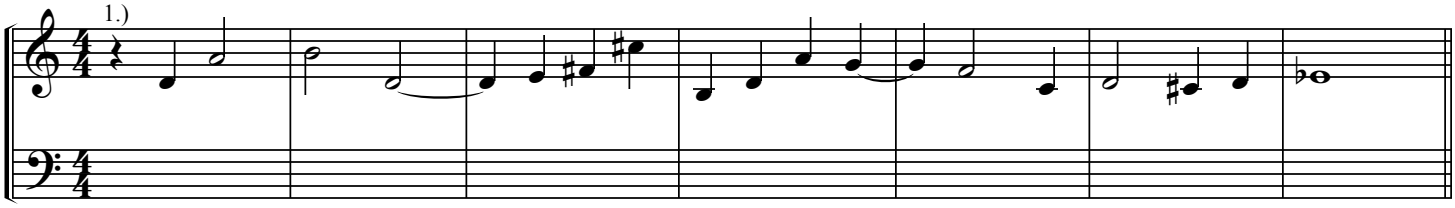


© Alan Belkin, 2007

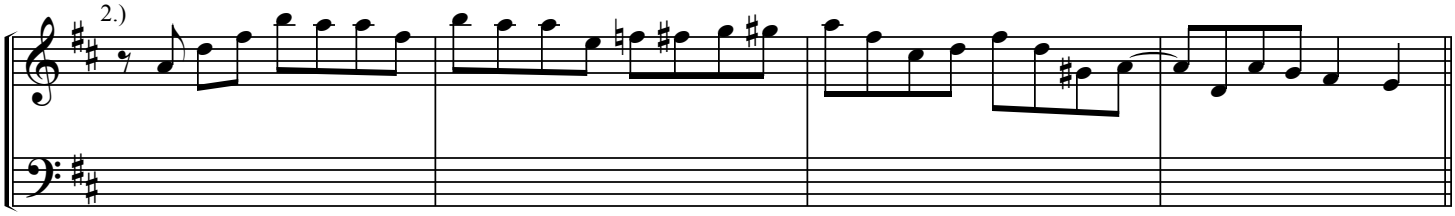
Melodies (monophonic) for Orchestration

Orchestrate each of these melodies two ways, aiming at different characters.
Do not add any other lines (harmony, bass, or counterpoint). You can however transpose and double at will.
Supply all necessary performance indications.

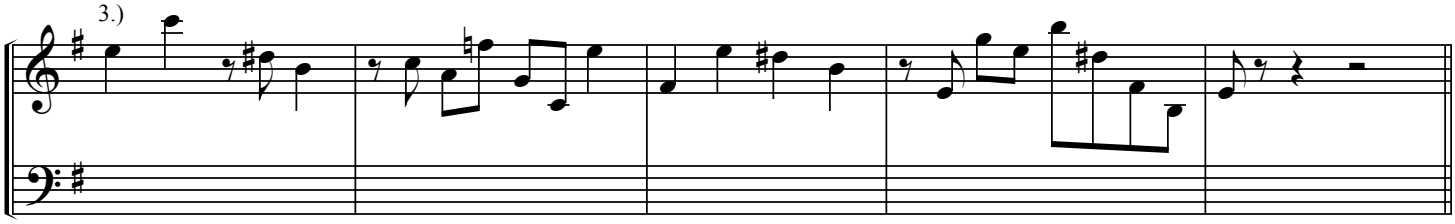
1.)



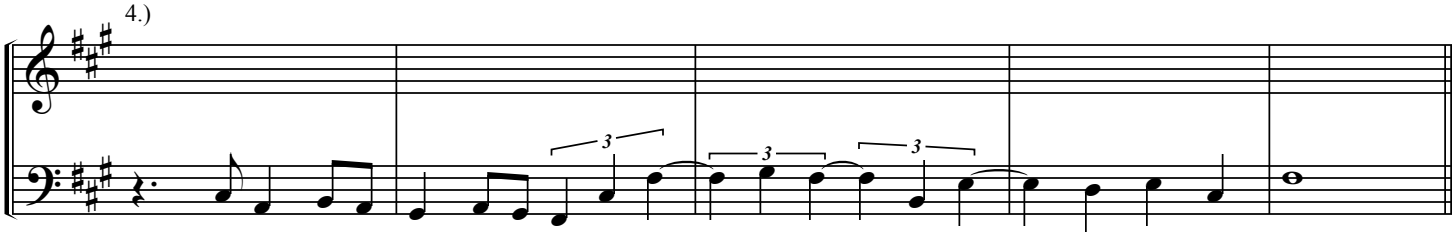
2.)



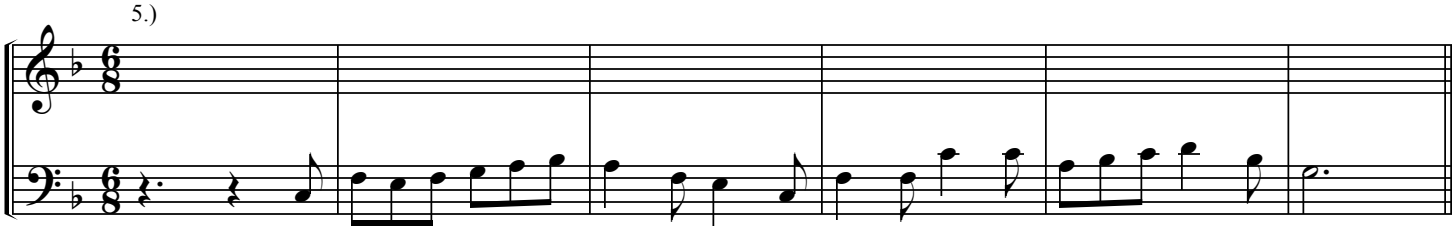
3.)



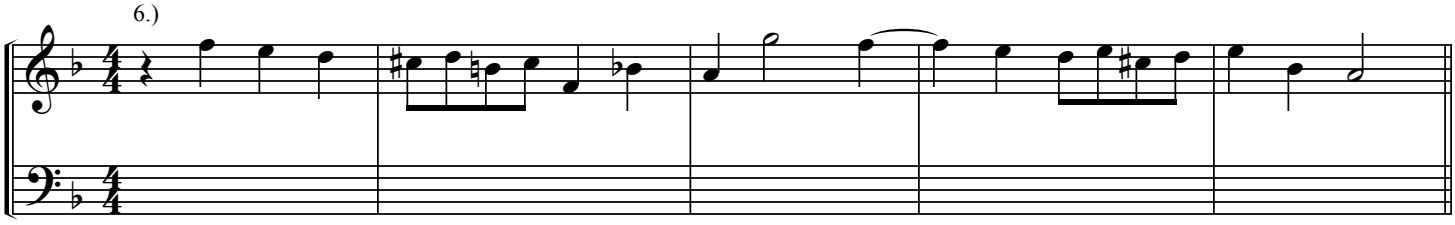
4.)



5.)

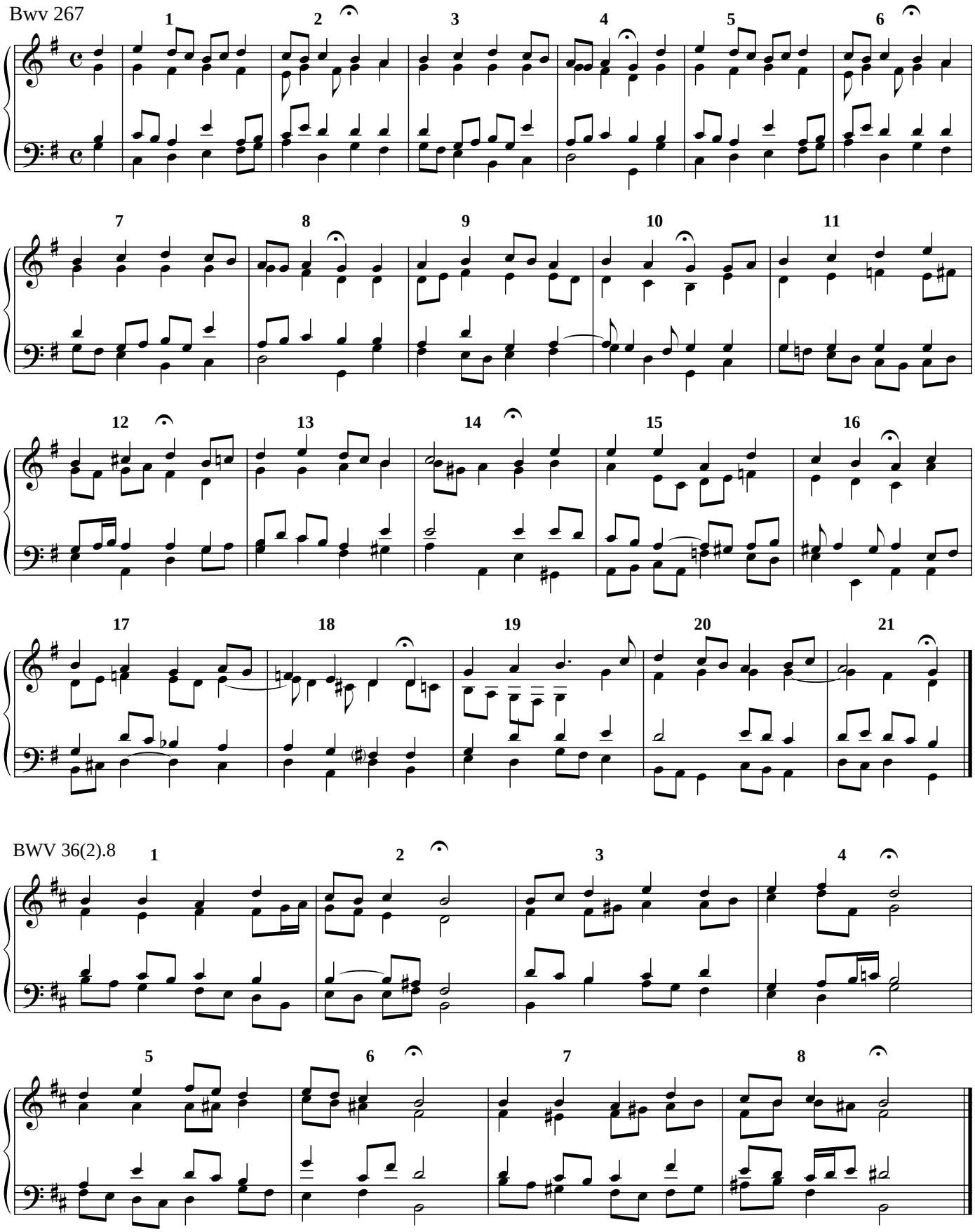


6.)



© Alan Belkin, 2007

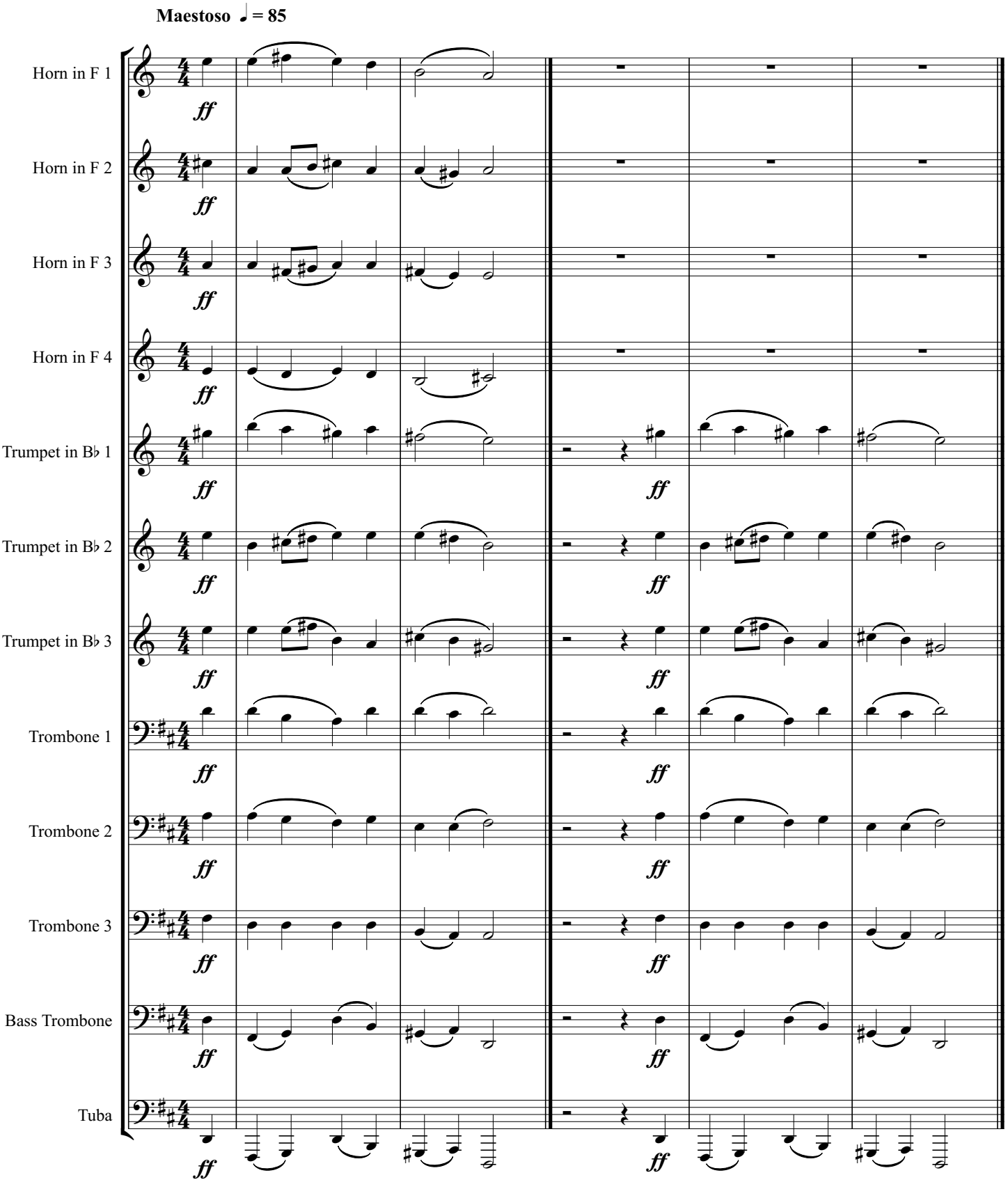
Bwv 267



BWV 36(2).8

Brass chorale harmonization
(with horns and without horns)

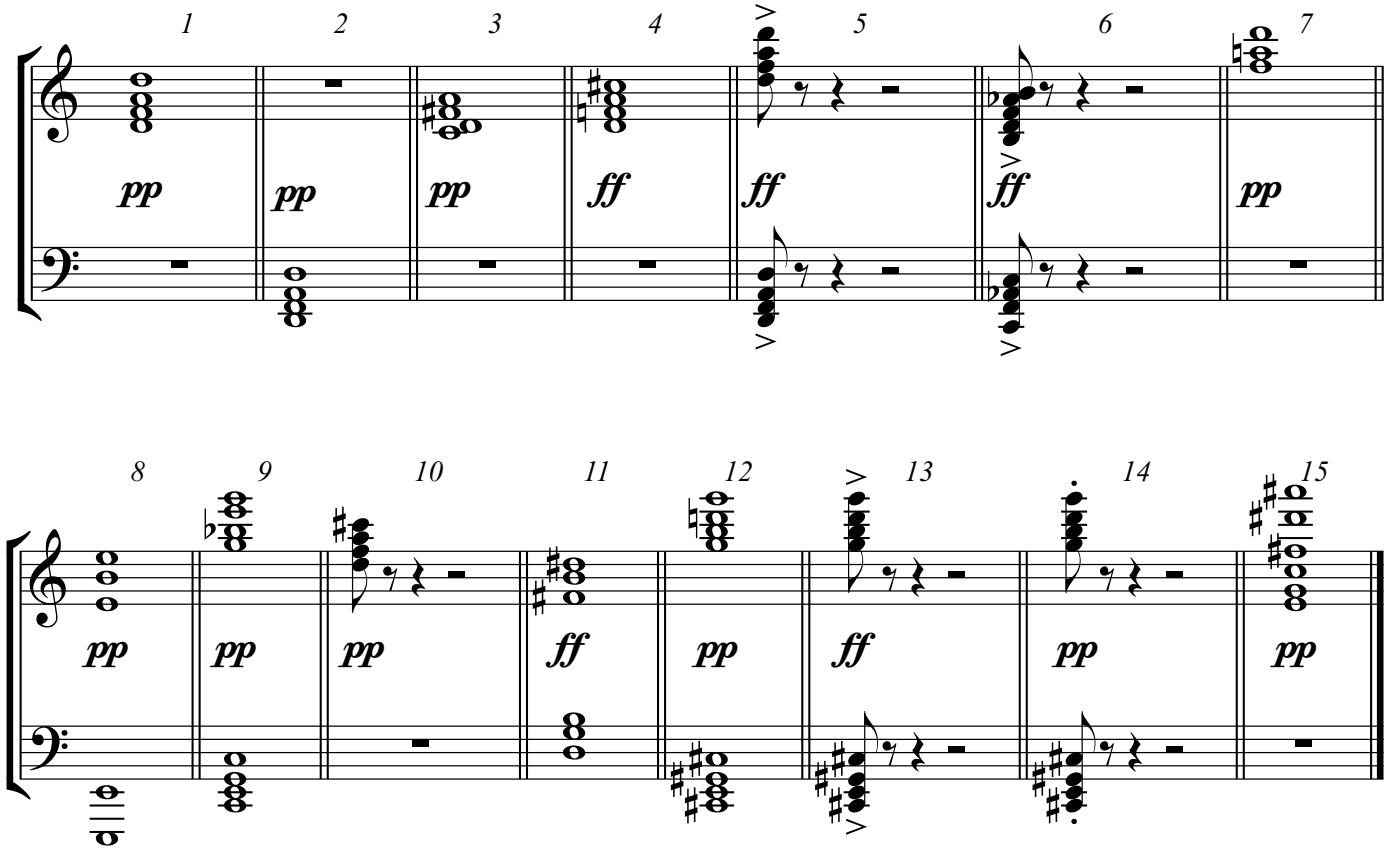
Alan Belkin



© Alan Belkin, 2007

Orchestrating single chords

These chords are presented here in pianistic spacings. Some can be orchestrated more or less as is; others need major rearrangeing. They student should try several different orchestrations of each one. In each case, start from the requested dynamic, as well as a clear idea of the character you want. Compare the different versions, evaluating them in terms of the character intended



© Alan Belkin, 2010

Learning orchestration through composition sketches

by Alan Belkin

Learning all the basic musical disciplines – harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration – must start and end with ear training. The student needs to learn, first, what to listen for, and, then to reliably make subtle aural distinctions.

In the case of harmony and counterpoint, the listening part has always been fairly simple: everyone has a voice, with which to sing lines, and basic keyboard skills permit checking harmonies. Listening, in orchestration, however, has up till recently been limited to existing scores and recordings. In a "listen and score" type of exercise he may be supplied with a skeleton sketch of the passage, and attempt to re-orchestrate it. These methods remain useful and necessary. However, with the arrival of affordable simulation technology, it is now become possible for the student to try and to compare his own solutions. This has the advantage of learning directly through experimentation, including trying out less than perfect solutions. Only when the **sound** of each attempt at his own orchestration has been thoroughly absorbed can the student really be said to have learned by experience.

Most orchestration training, once the basics of instrumentation have been mastered, is usually done through transcriptions of piano music. Although transcription is a useful method, there are problems with this method:

- transcription is an exercise in translation. By definition, the starting piece is not really conceived for orchestra. The adaptation may be more or less successful, but it does not teach the student to **think for orchestra** from the start.
- transcription requires being faithful to the original text. This is exact opposite of real orchestration, where details get filled in as part of a process of invention.
- transcription does not help the student to develop a sense orchestration as an integral part of composition.

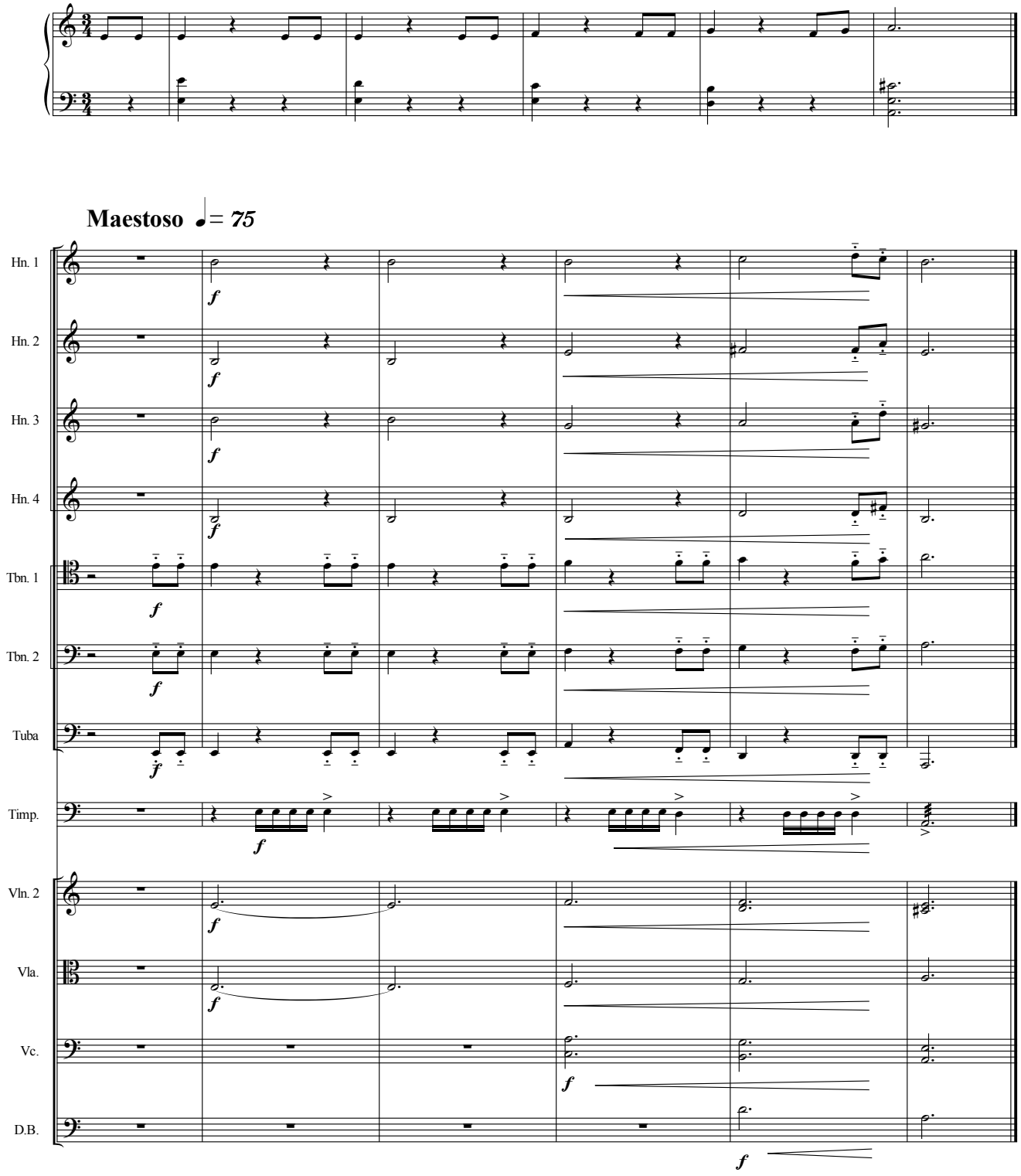
What is needed for beginners, in addition to transcriptions, is something freer, but which nonetheless provides a framework to help the student organise his work. Our approach here, which has been proved in teaching over many years, overcomes these difficulties. (Walter Piston's classic text on orchestration proposes something similar to our approach, but with much less varied exercises, and, of course, without benefit of simulation technology.)

I here supply the student with musical sketches – melodies, harmonic progressions, etc. - in a neutral, "generic" form: no tempo, no dynamics, no articulations. Such exercises admit of many different solutions, and therefore can be reused many times. The student decides on the character desired, and then fills out the sketch accordingly, to whatever detail is appropriate for the ensemble in question.

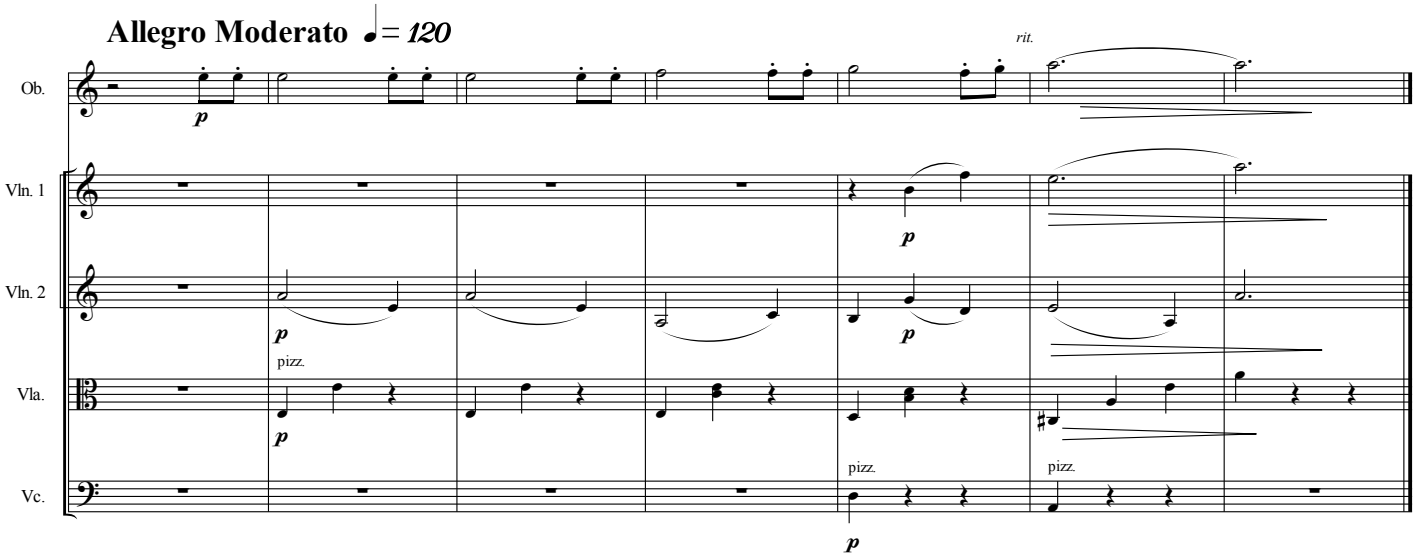
Only when the student has explored multiple characters and solutions to each sketch, can he then attempt phrases or sections where he composes the musical substance as a whole.

Working out a sketch
2 versions

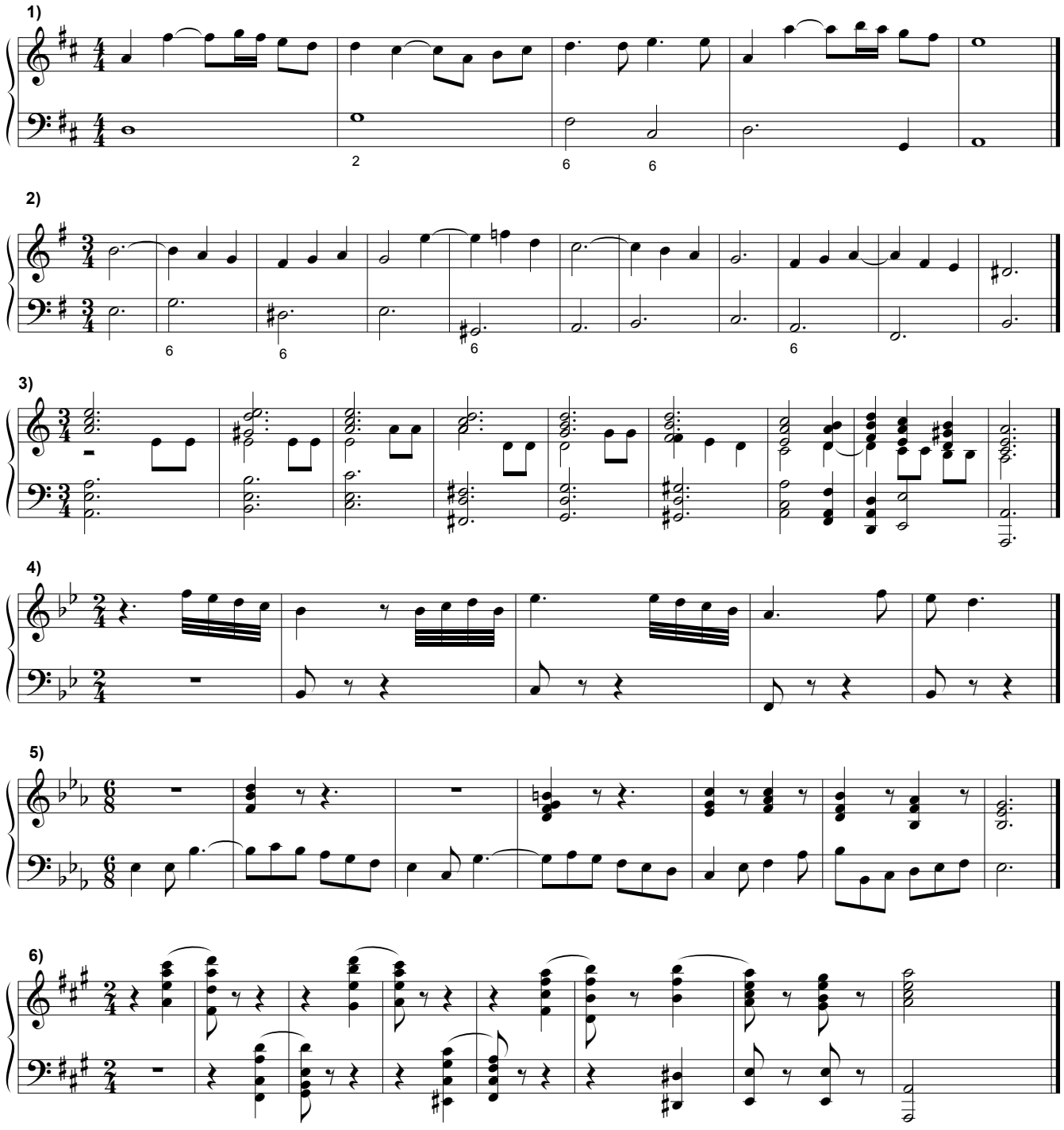
Alan Belkin



© Alan Belkin, 2007


Allegro Moderato ♩= 120
rit.
Ob.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
p
pizz.

Sketches for orchestration



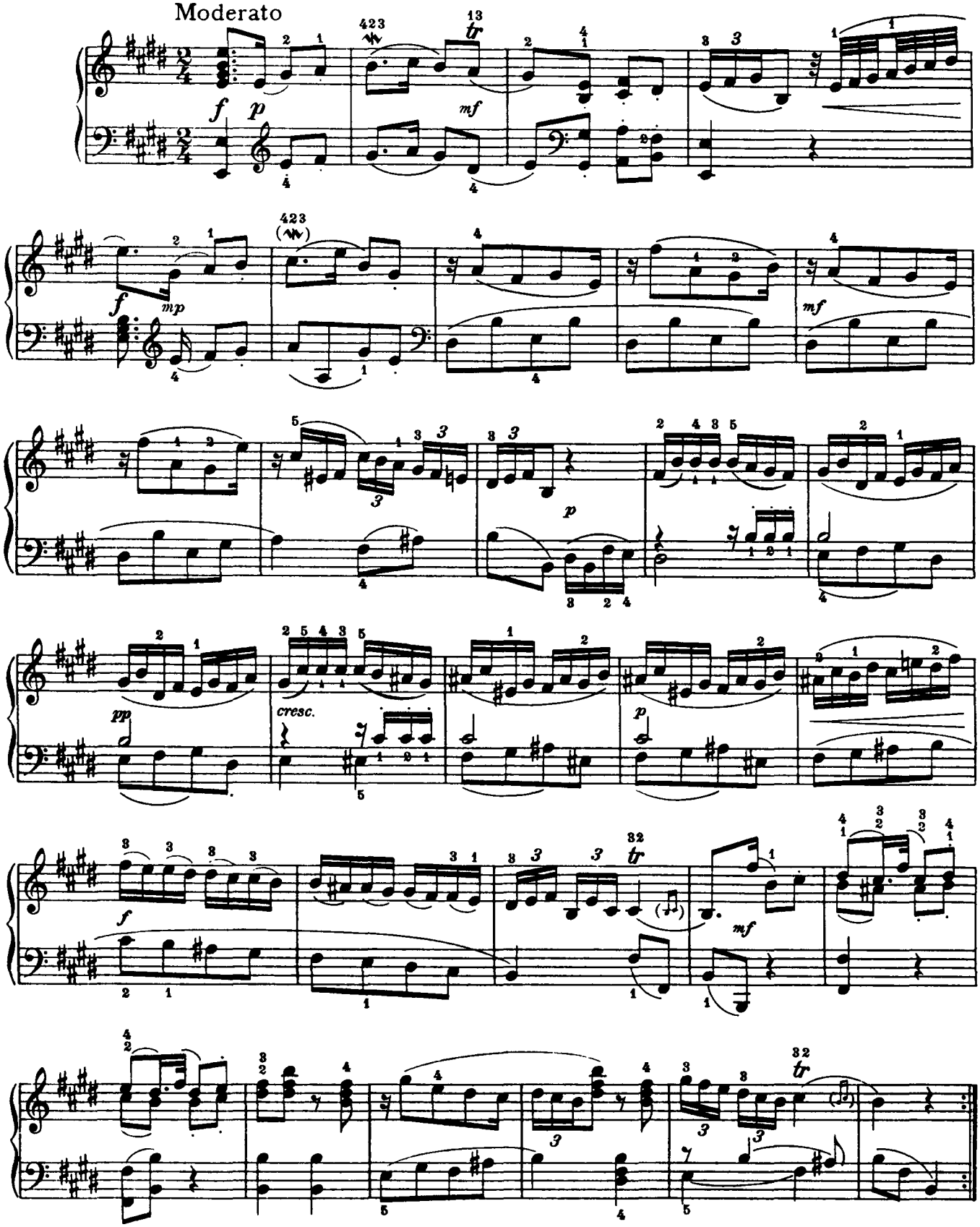
Starting from the sketch above, work out a full orchestration. You can transpose, add doublings, change note values, and add/modify secondary parts (but not the melody or the bass line), and add acompaniment figuration. Aim at a precise musical character and include all necessary performance indications. Aim for more than one solution for each sketch.

copyright Aan Belkin, 2007

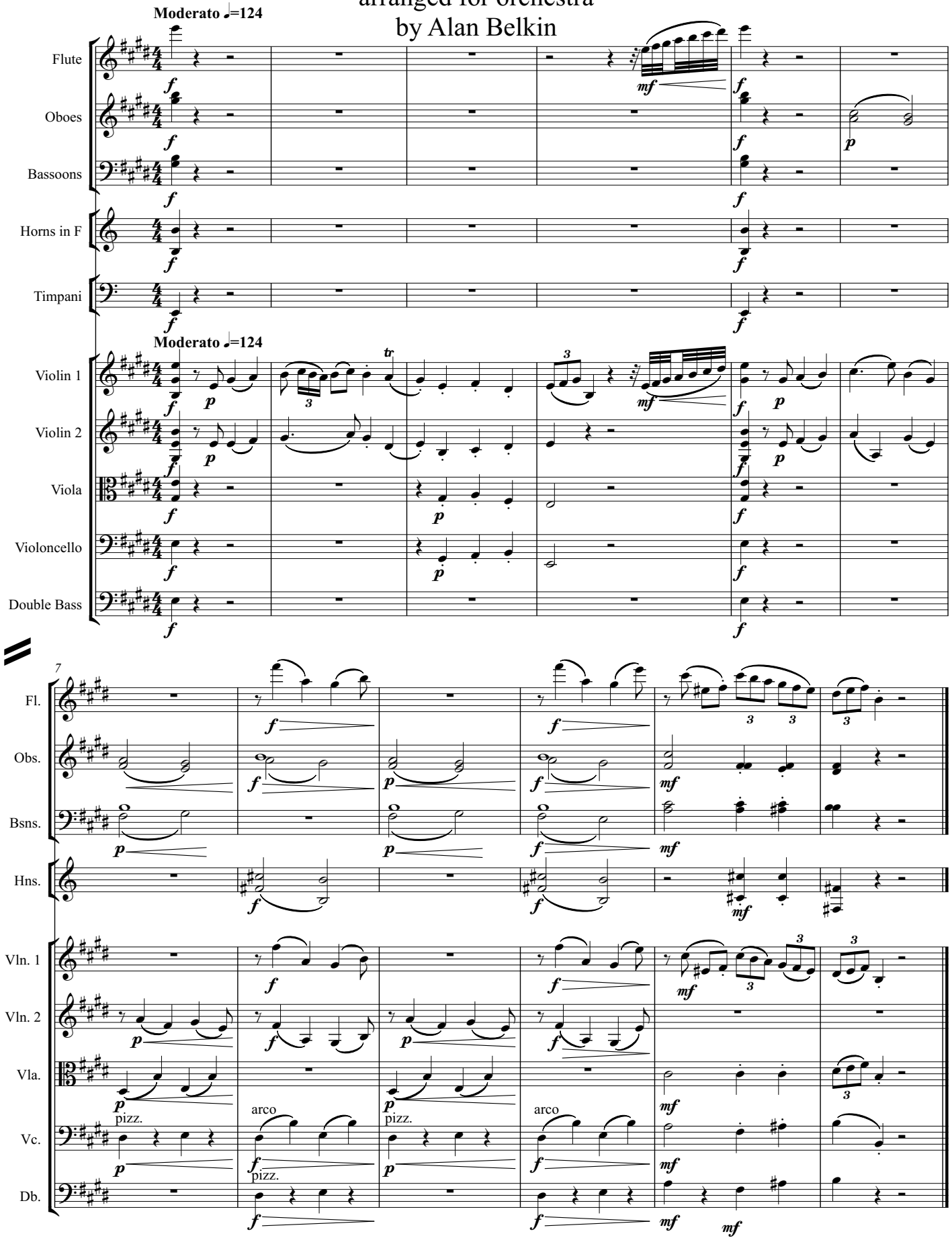
Franz Joseph Haydn
15

Sonata in E Major

(Parthia/Divertimento, 1767)



Haydn Sonata in E major
arranged for orchestra
by Alan Belkin



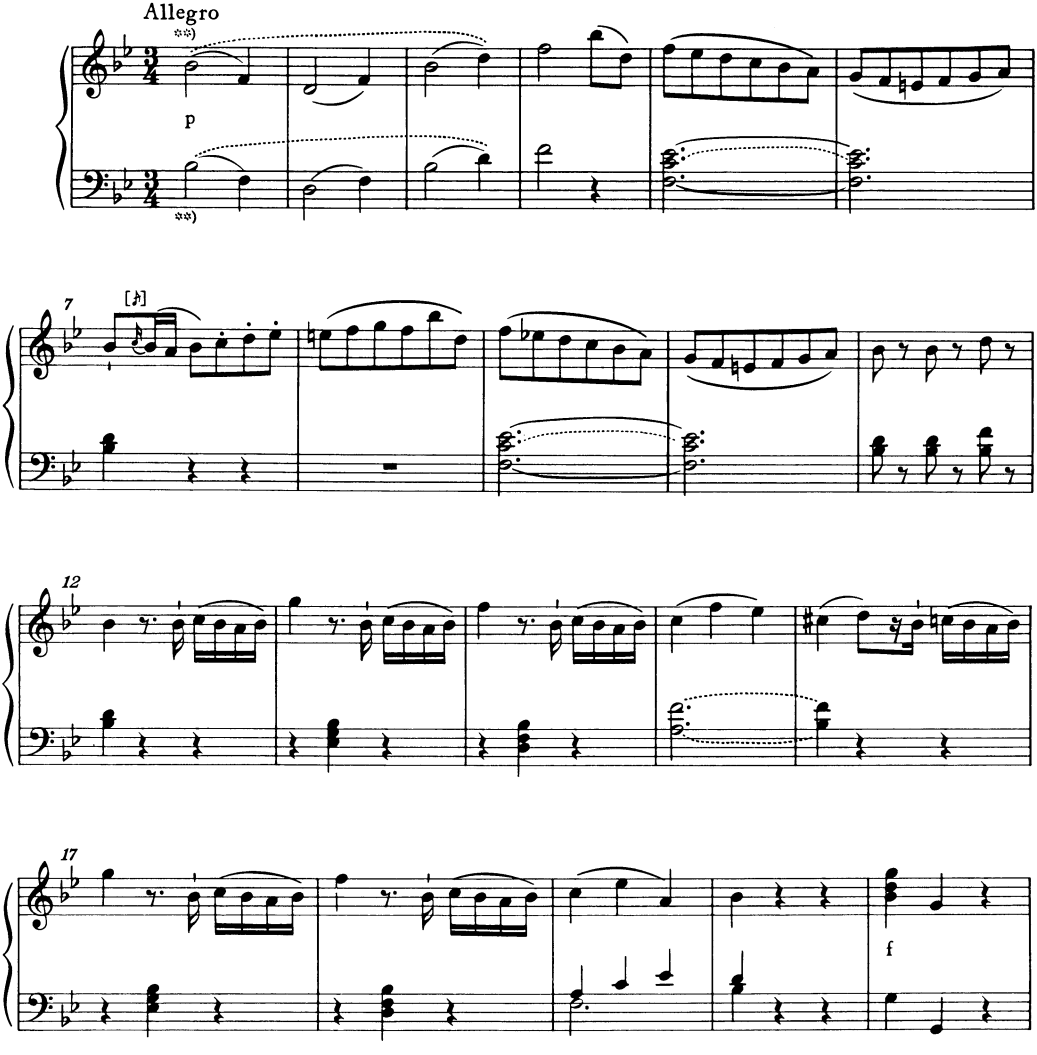
orchestration copyright Alan Belkin 2007

17

17. Sonate in B

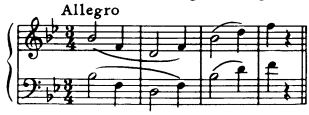
KV 570*)

Datiert: Wien, Februar 1789



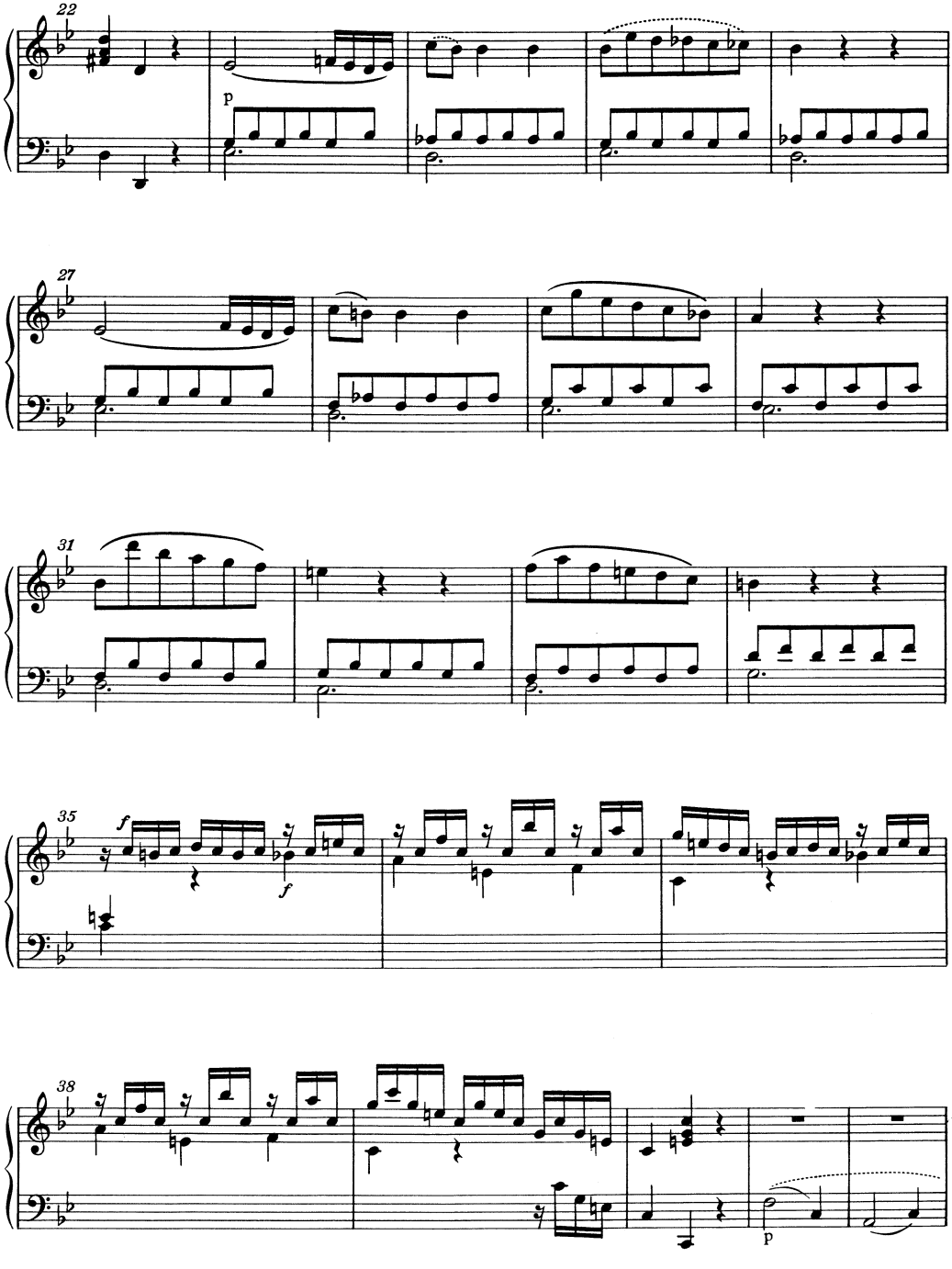
*) Zur Überlieferung vgl. Vorwort.

**) T. 1-4 in Mozarts eigenhändigem Werkverzeichnis:



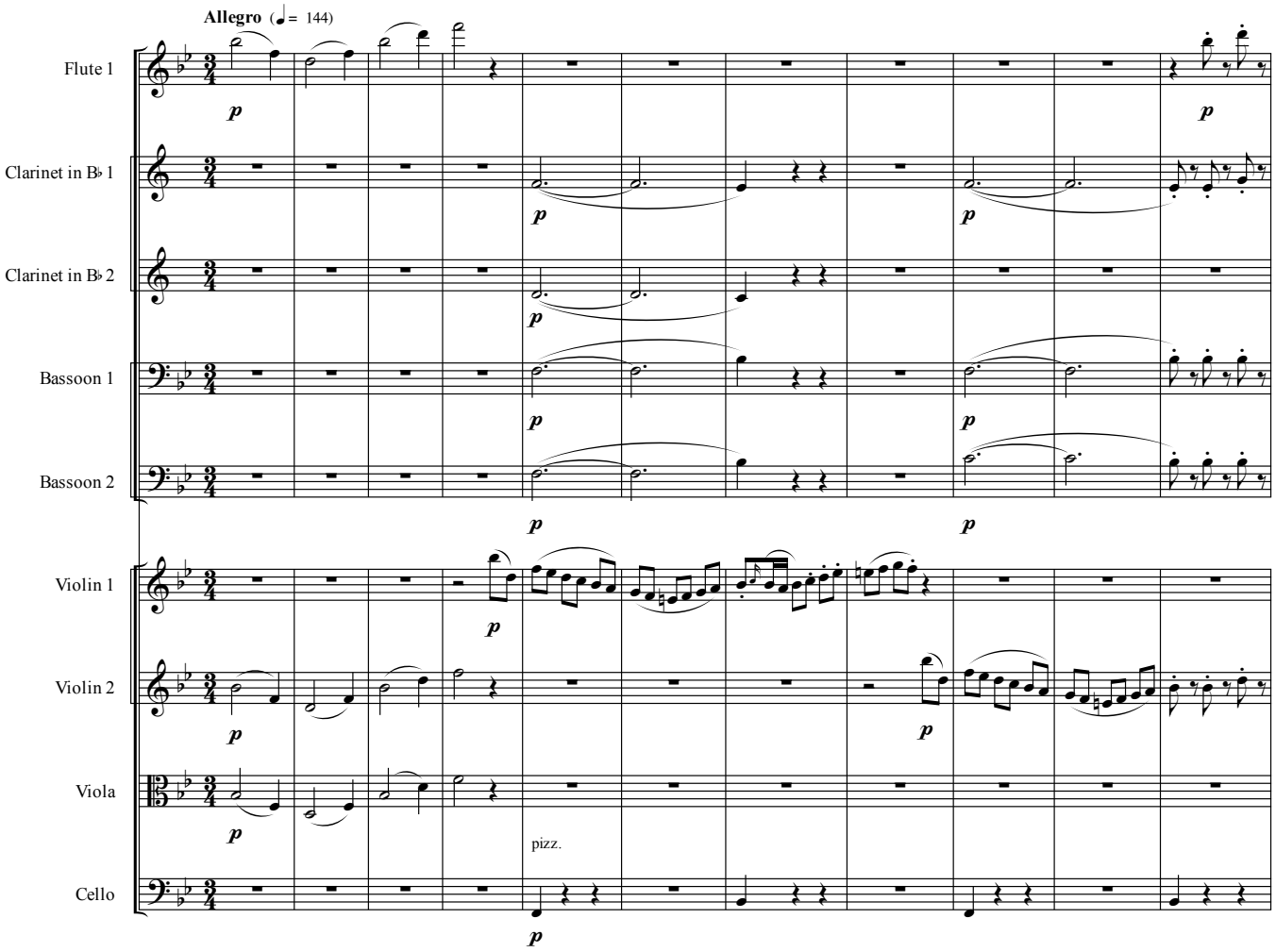
Zur unterschiedlichen Artikulation des Themenkopfes vgl. Vorwort.

© 1986 by Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel


22
p
27
31
35
f
f
38
p

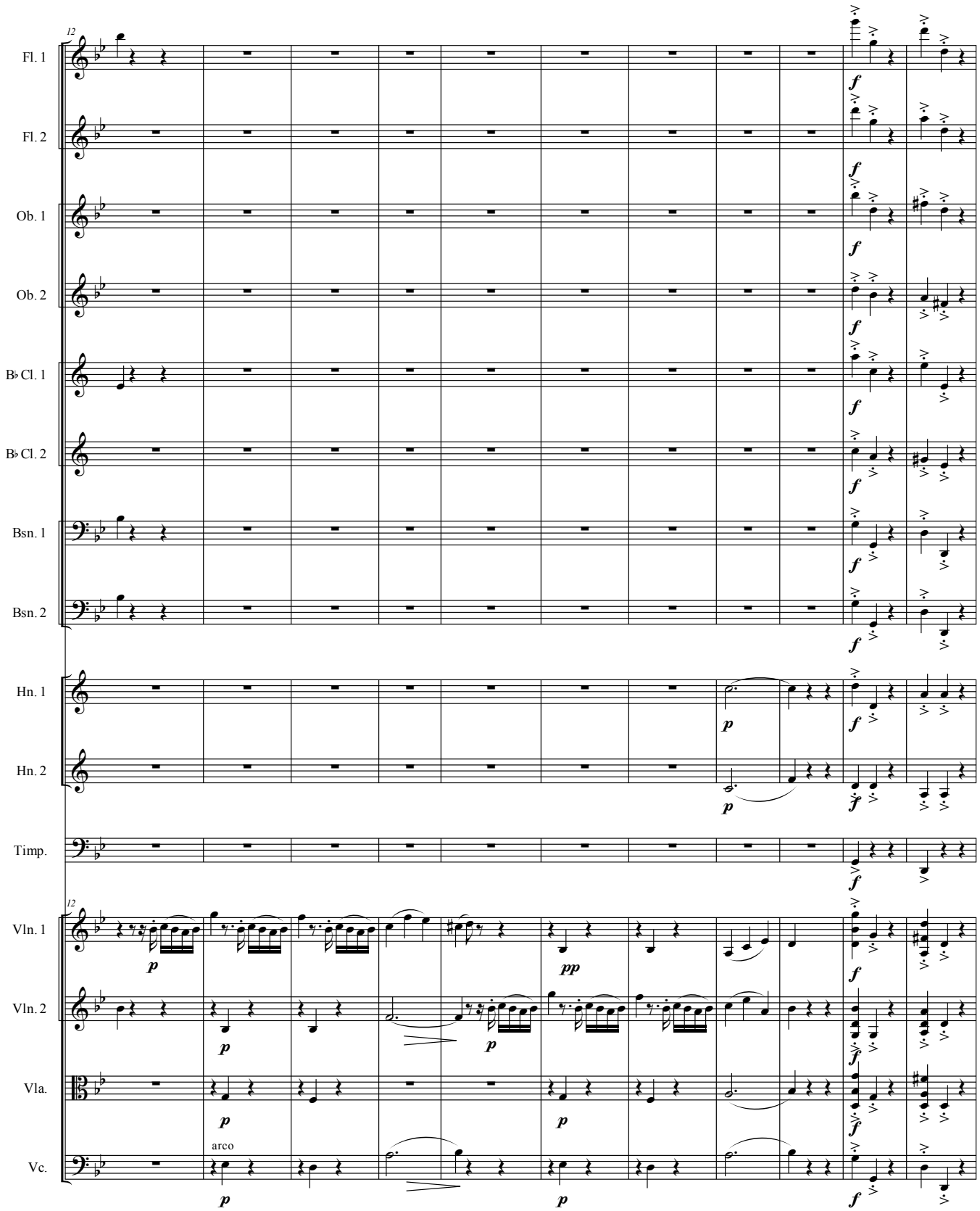
Mozart - Sonata in Bb

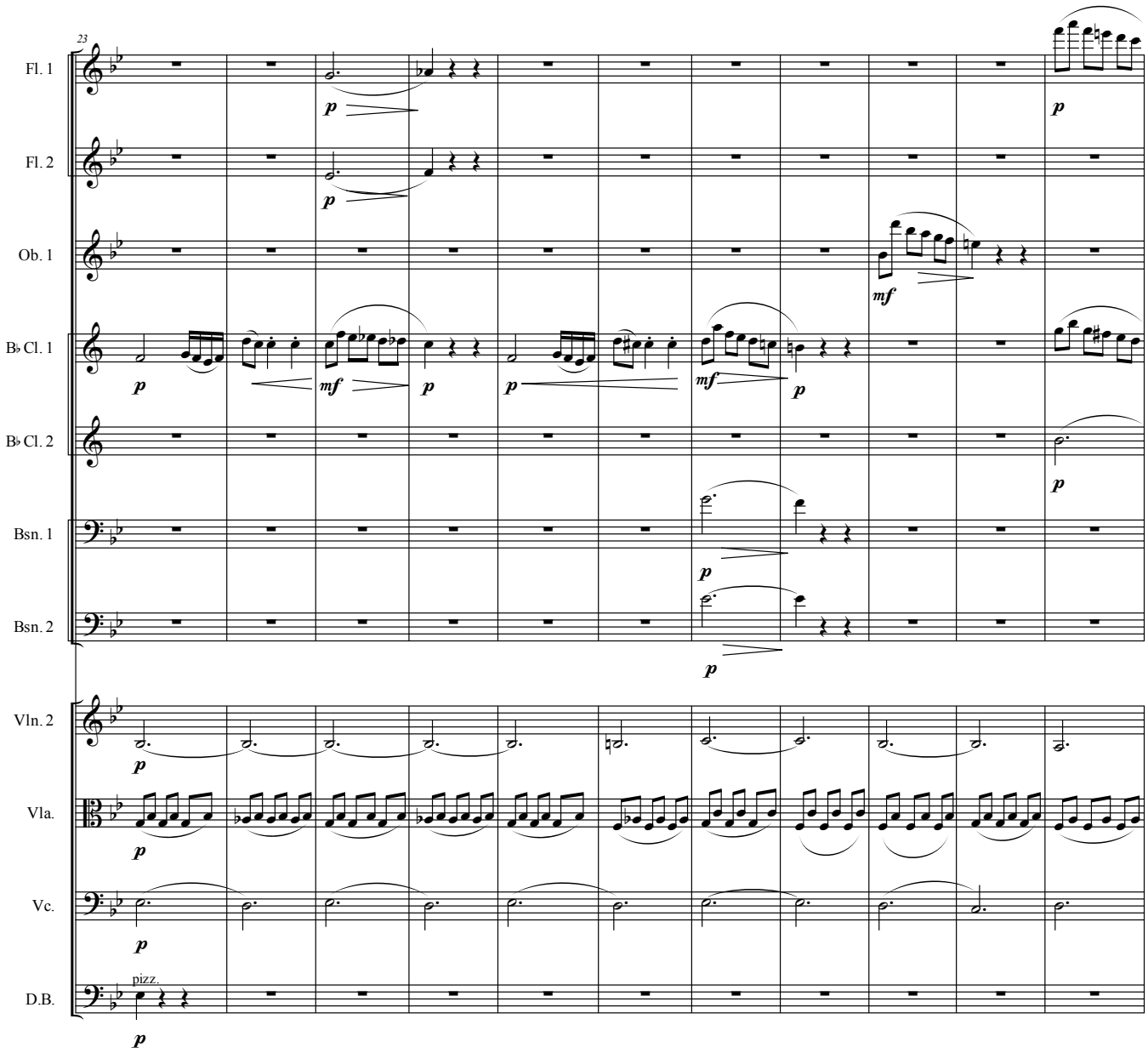
Orchestration: Alan Belkin

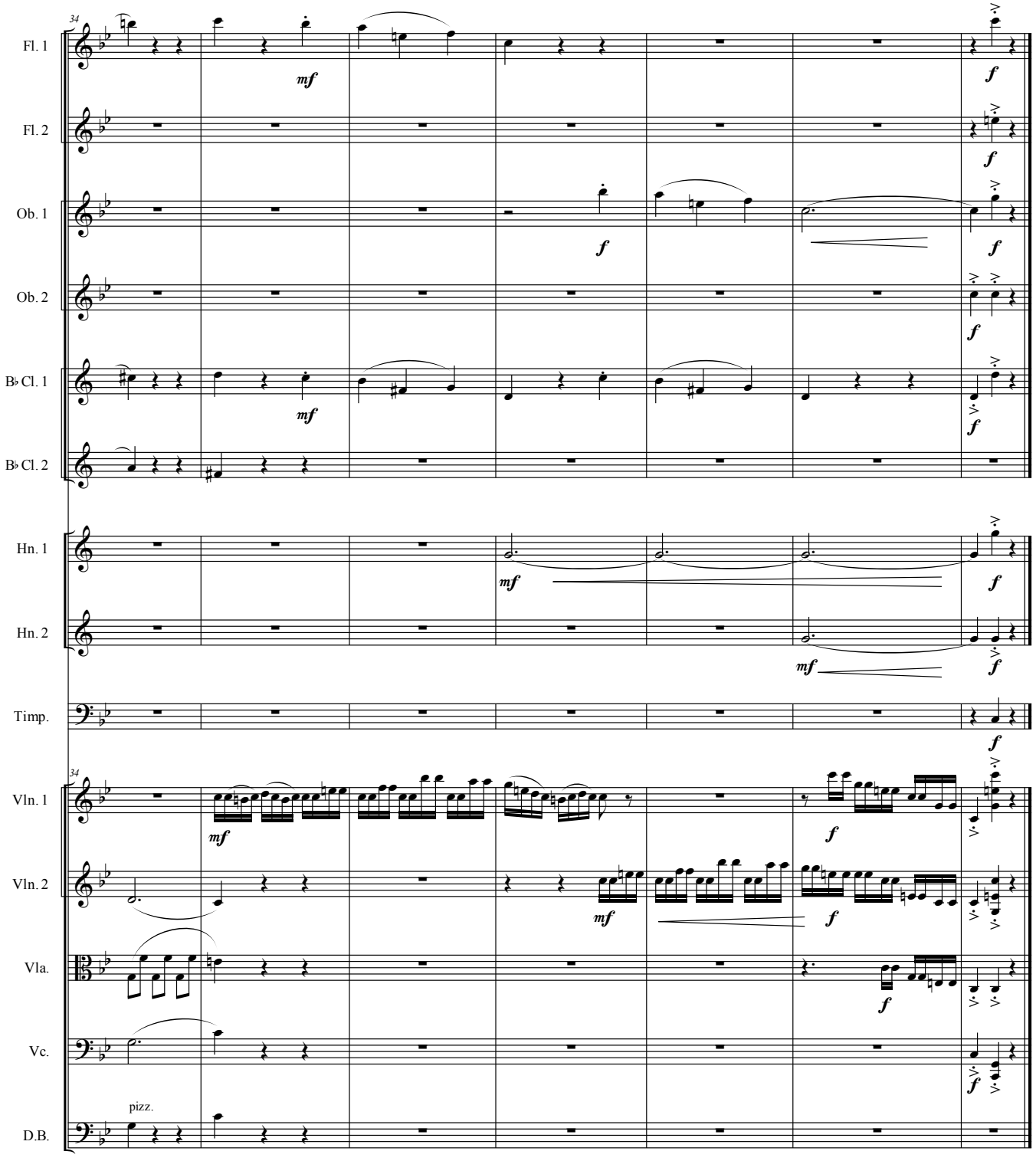


© Alan Belkin, 2007

20


12
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
B♭ Cl. 1
B♭ Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Timp.
12
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
arco
f
p
pp


23
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Ob. 1
B♭ Cl. 1
B♭ Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
D.B.
pizz.
p
mf


34
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
B♭ Cl. 1
B♭ Cl. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Timp.
34
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
pizz.
D.B.
mf
f

Extra Exercises and Final Project

In the following exercises, the composition of the orchestra is indicated as **S** (small) or **L** (large). **S** means a classical orchestra: winds by 2, 2 horns, 2 trumpets (if needed), timpani, and strings. **L** means a moderate sized romantic orchestra: winds by 3 (with auxiliaries, if desired), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, percussion, harp, and strings. You are not required to use all the instruments in each exercise!

Each exercise should be presented in a professional fashion, with appropriate instrumental transpositions, and should include all necessary performance indications.

Compose musical phrases, according to the indications below:

1. A playful melody for one solo woodwind instrument, with a light homophonic string accompaniment. **S**
2. A lyrical melody for strings in octaves, with a rhythmic accompaniment in the winds. **S**
3. Melody and harmony in the woodwind, with touches of color in the strings. **S**
4. A loud homophonic chord progression, tutti. **L**
5. A broad, singing melody for strings, with brass accompaniment. **L**
6. A vigorous melodic motive, doubled in strings and woodwind, punctuated by chords in the brass and percussion. **L**

Procedure: do sketches first, in the following order:

1. *main line (foreground)*
2. *accompaniment (background)*
3. *touches of color (optional)*

Final Projet:

Transcribe the beginning of Beethoven's Sonata op. 10 #3 for a classical orchestra,

© copyright Alan Belkin, 2015

122

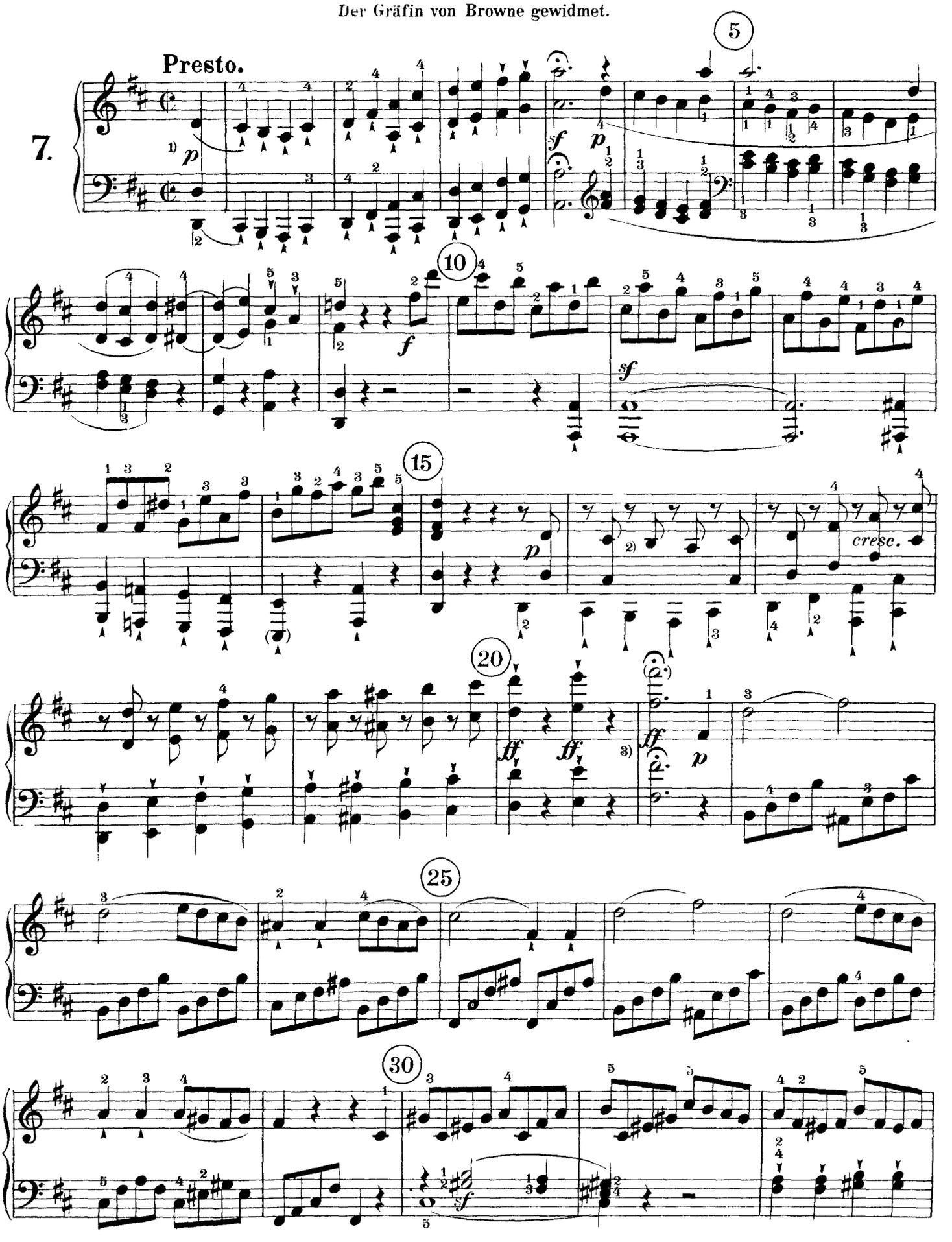
Sonate.

Op. 10. Nº 3.

Der Gräfin von Browne gewidmet.

7.

Presto.



1) The fingering in italics is Beethoven's. 2) The octaves are lacking here in the original edition, Eder 1798. They are given in the later editions, although this makes performance unnecessarily difficult. 3) Beethoven's piano reached only up to *f*‴.