David Avshalomov

Diamond Variations

(on an original melody)
Revised Version

String Orchestra with Harp*

SCORE

(*opt.)

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Acknowlegements

This work was co-commissioned in 2005 by two conductors: Tracey Rush, for her Dubuque (Iowa) Community String Orchestra's gem-themed concert celebrating the 140th anniversary of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, *and* (2) Emily Ray, for her Mission Chamber Orchestra in San Jose, California, for the opening concert of their 10th Anniversary Season Celebration.

DURATION: Ca. 12 minutes [*Theme* 1:00; *Cutter* 0:40; *Best Friends* 1:15; *Temptation* 0:20; *Yearning* 1:30; *Smugglers* 0:20; *Forever* 2:30; *Blood Diamonds* 1:45; *Perfect Gem* 2:20]

PERFORMANCE NOTES: This music has been shaped to be accessible for performance by the string sections of both community orchestras and advanced high school or college orchestras, without sacrificing artistic content. It is a romantic work, and can benefit from a sentimental (but not sloppy) approach to playing in its lyrical passages. There are occasional spots that specify the use of open strings even in mixed harmonies, an effect the composer likes in his darker music. The conductor may choose to end the work with "Blood Diamonds" and omit "Perfect Gem." (Movements 3, 5, 7, 8, and 9 are also suitable for separate use.)

Groups with few violas may use the cues in other parts to strengthen them. If none of the double basses has a low C extension or fifth string, at least one player needs to tune down to the low C and cope—it's well worth the trouble. The rest may occasionally transpose up the octave for notes below the low E—but *only* where needed.

The harp part is *technically* optional, but adds a lot to the music in the movements that include it. There are harp cues in the string parts in "The Cutter". Worth finding a harpist. They abound. Use of a piano is *not* recommended.

PROGRAM NOTE

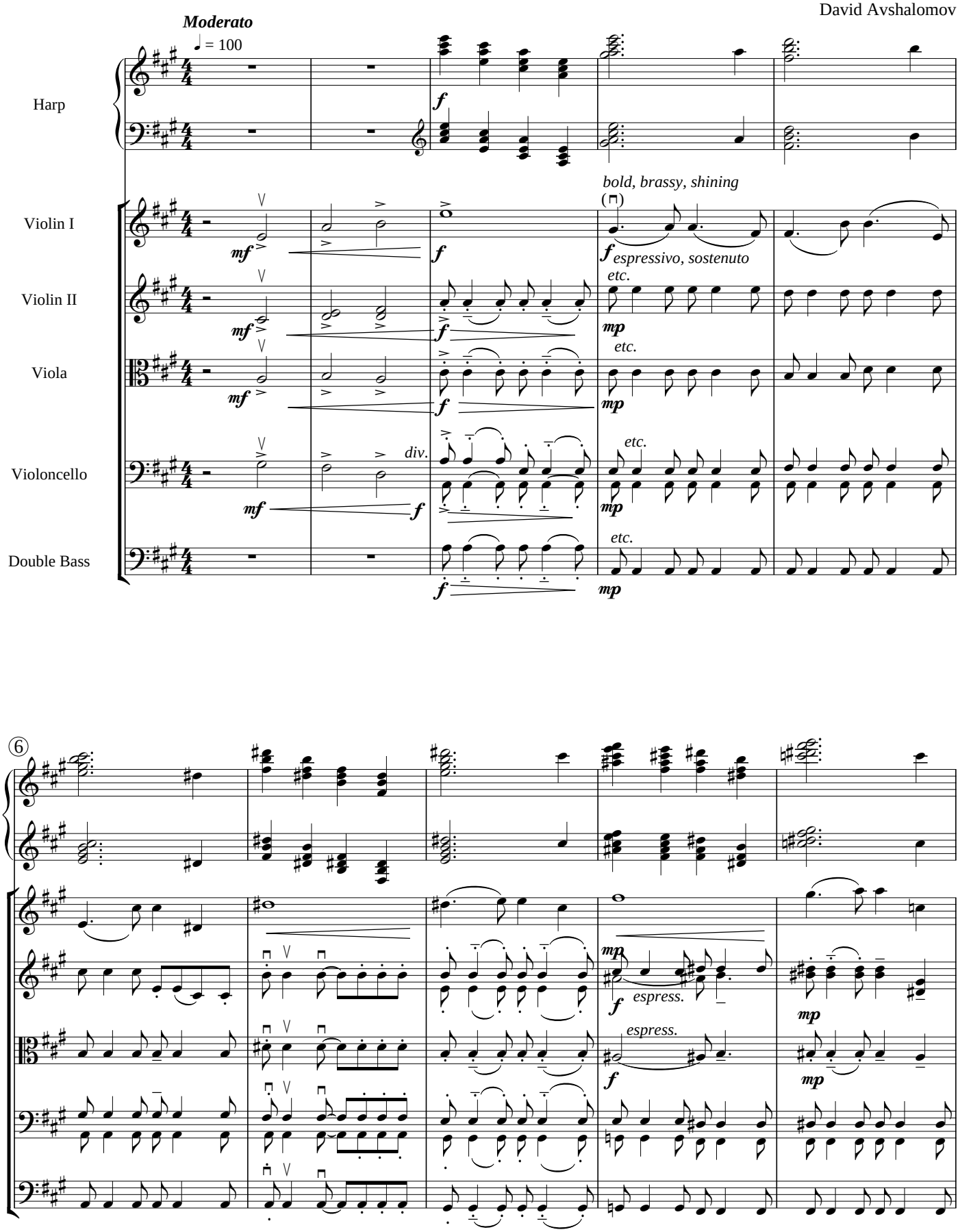
This set of variations grew from the "seed crystal" of an original theme with two other variations on it written in the early 1990s for the Gemological Institute of America, then in Santa Monica, California, as theme music for an audio-book course about diamonds (their mineralogy, mining, grading, distribution, cutting—and selling). The cues I created were a little rich and "arty" for background music, the harmonies lush and neo-romantic, so I kept them aside for future use, planning to write several more variations when the occasion arose, as it did in 2005. The present set represents the final form of the work.

The simple theme, which widens melodically in an angular way, by moving from its first note up a step, then down a third, up a fourth, down a fifth, etc. to the octave, suggests the clean triangular or trapezoidal shapes (or *faces*) that are found both on fully-formed rough diamond *octahedra*, and as the many tiny facets that cutters grind onto the surface of a fashioned stone to reveal the total brilliance of a full-cut gem.

This brilliance is both beauty and a snare. My variations thus alternately follow two interwoven but emotionally divergent tracks: One represents the beauty, symbolism, idealism, yearning, and romance that diamonds now evoke as gems, gifts, and tokens of love (both historically and through massive modern marketing). Along the way you hear a light-hearted courtship waltz ([a girl's] "Best Friends"), a climax in the deeply-felt *adagio* troth of "Forever" (another of my Mahler tributes), and resolution in the serene beauty of the final variation, essentially a slow dreamy recap of the theme, titled "Perfect Gem" (or, if you like, "Diamond Anniversary"). The other line represents the greed, smuggling, theft, and violence often associated with the mining, movement, hoarding, and trade in diamonds over the centuries, culminating in the bitter intensity and brutal haste of the late variation titled "Blood Diamonds." (Modern students of human rights can learn more about recent atrocities with a quick online search. It is not a pretty story.) The combined effect of the two interwoven tracks is to set the beauty of the diamond in sharp relief: Just how at ease are we with such perfect beauty, knowing its true human cost?

The Diamond

David Avshalomov



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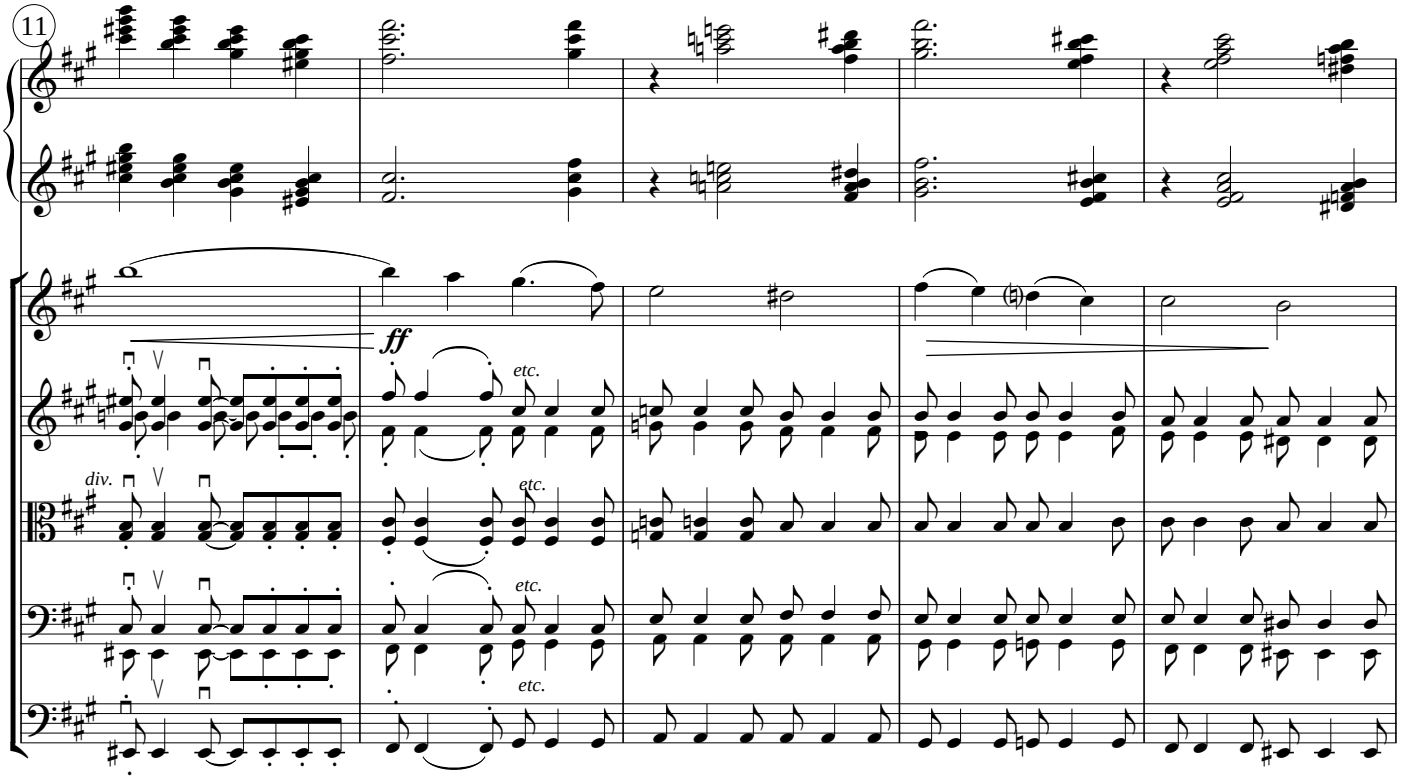
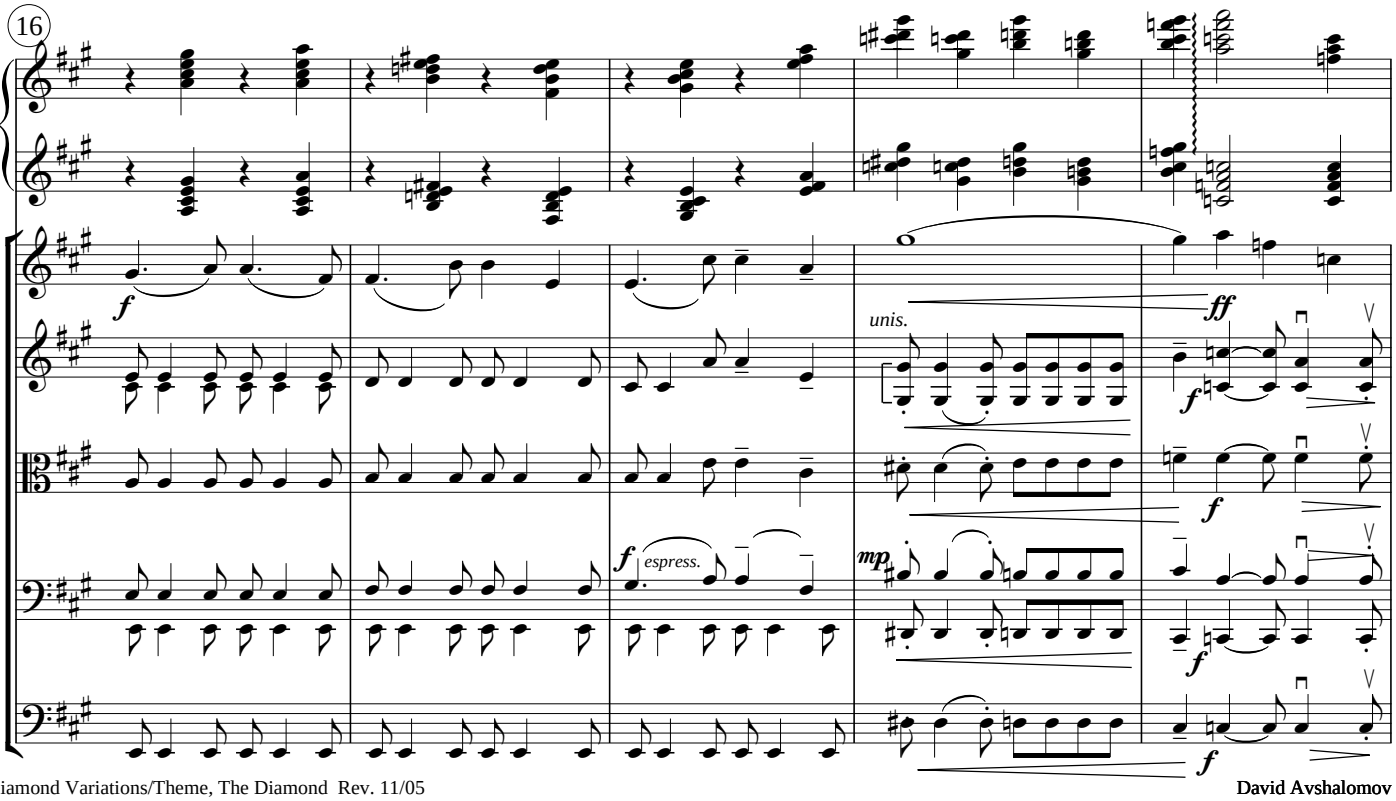
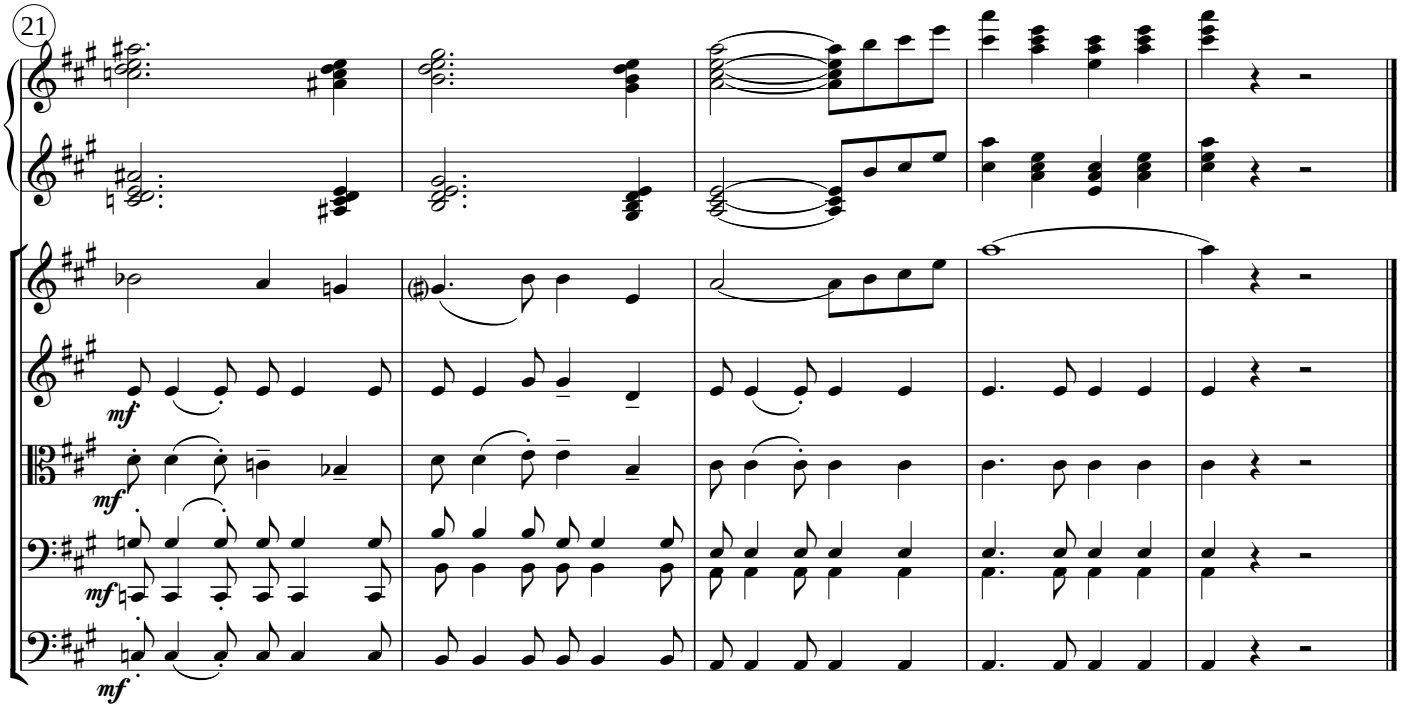

11
ff
etc.
div.
etc.
etc.
etc.


16
f
ff
unis.
f
f
espress.
mp
f
f


21
mf
mf
mf
mf

The Cutter

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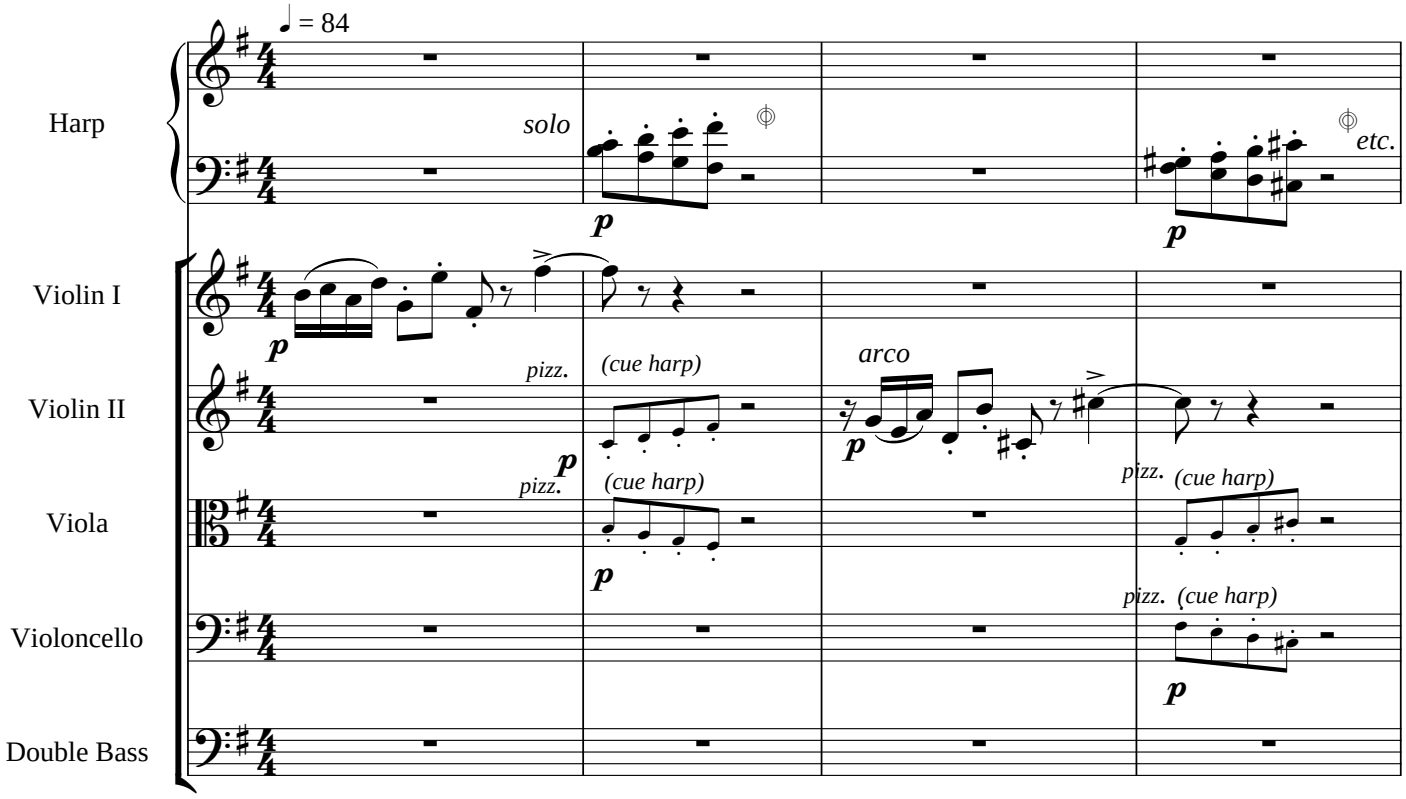
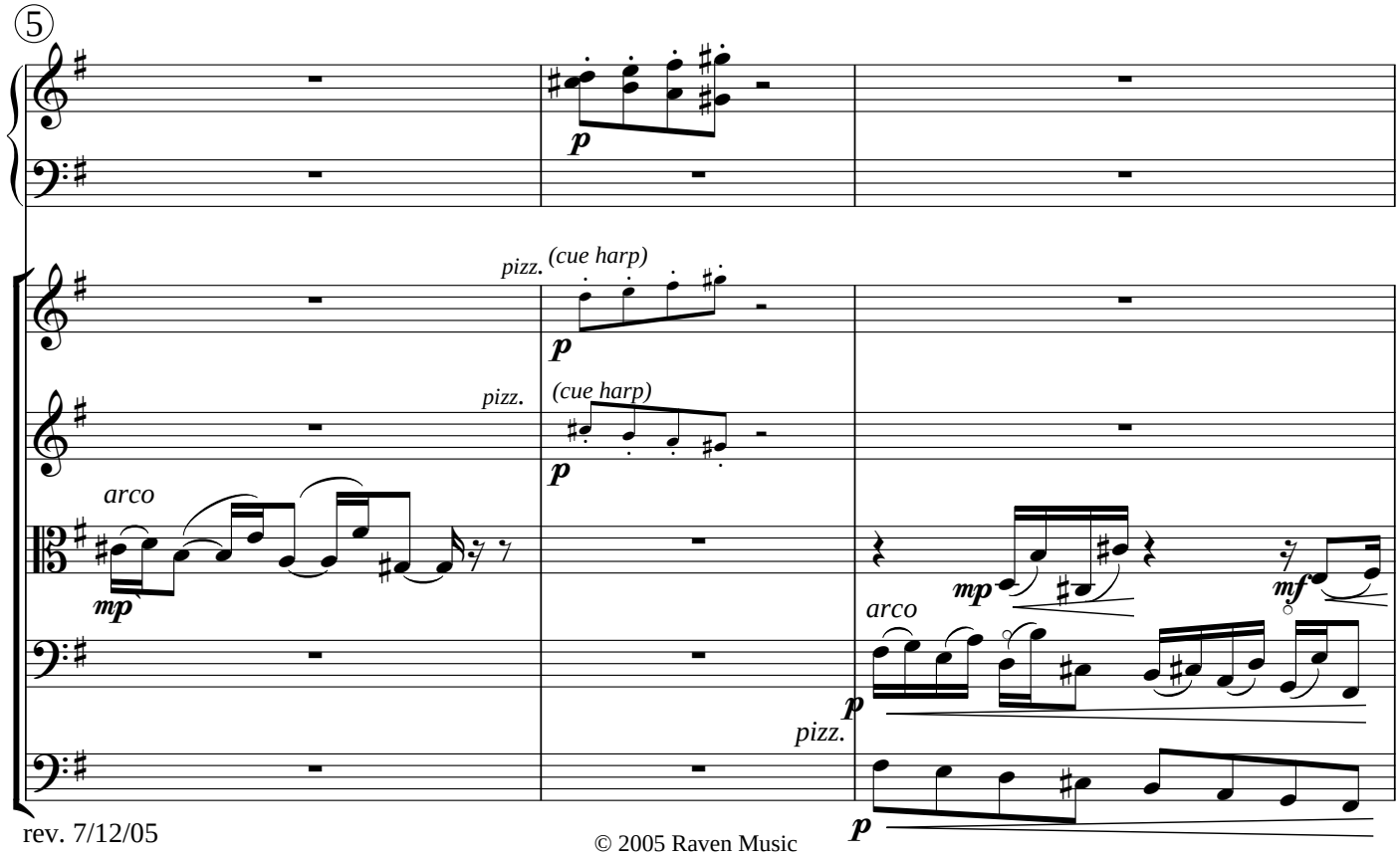
Moderato

♩ = 84





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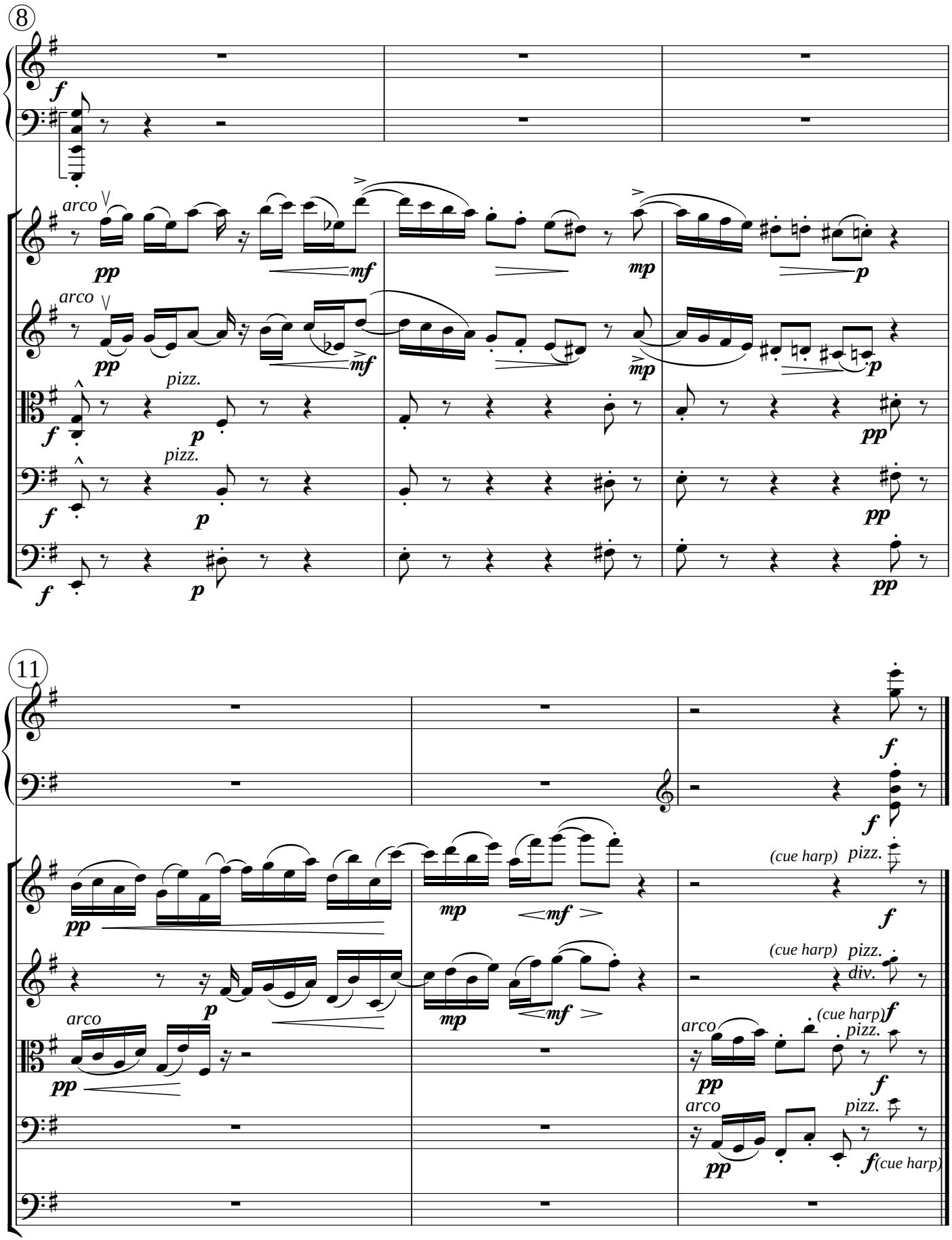
8
arco
pizz.
11
(cue harp)
div.

"Best Friends"*

Valse

In 1

♩. = 50

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Harp

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

p leggiero

etc..

mp dolce, grazioso

pizz.

⑥

mf

mp

poco espressivo

poco

(*"Diamonds are a Girl's . . .")

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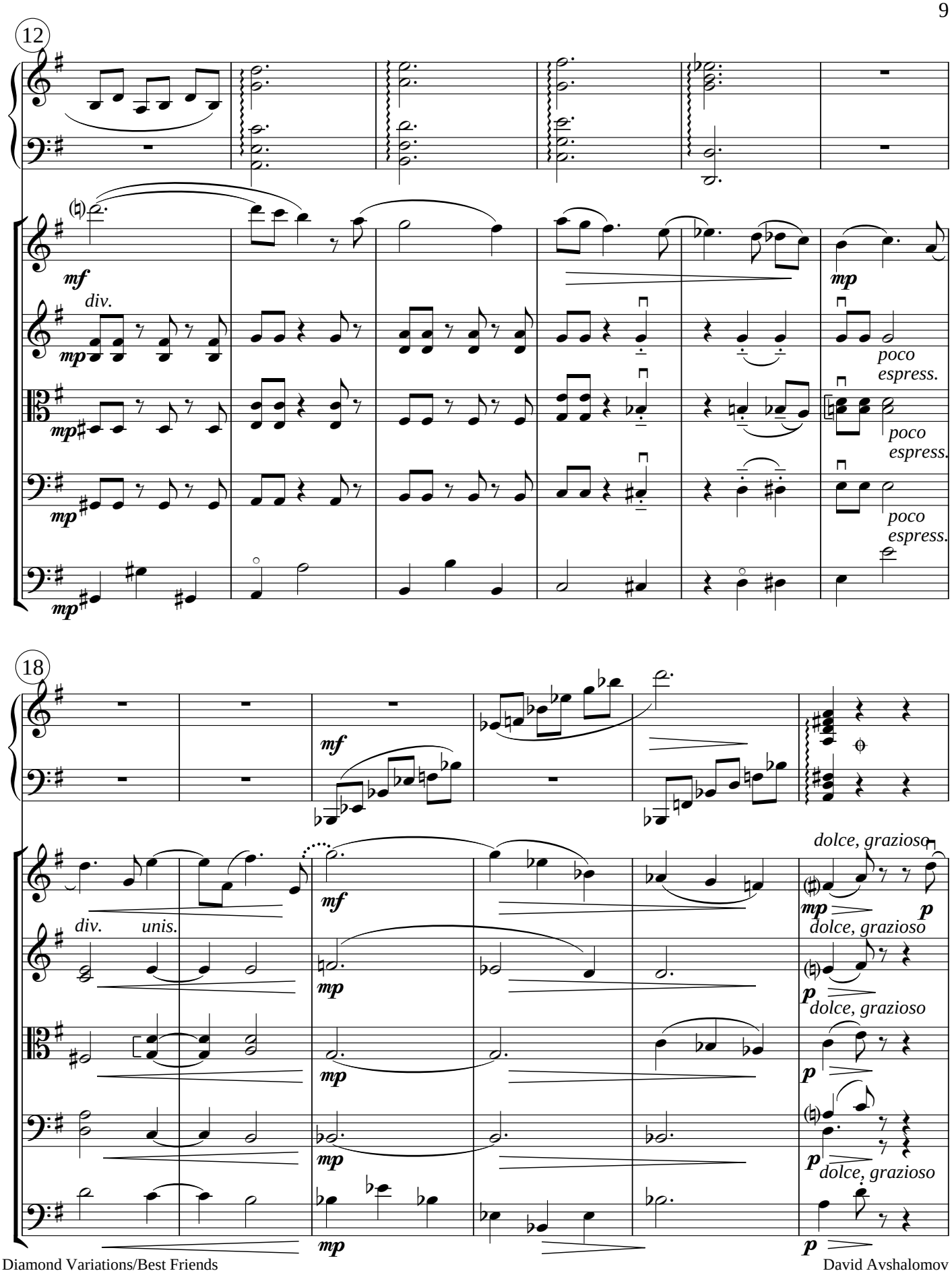
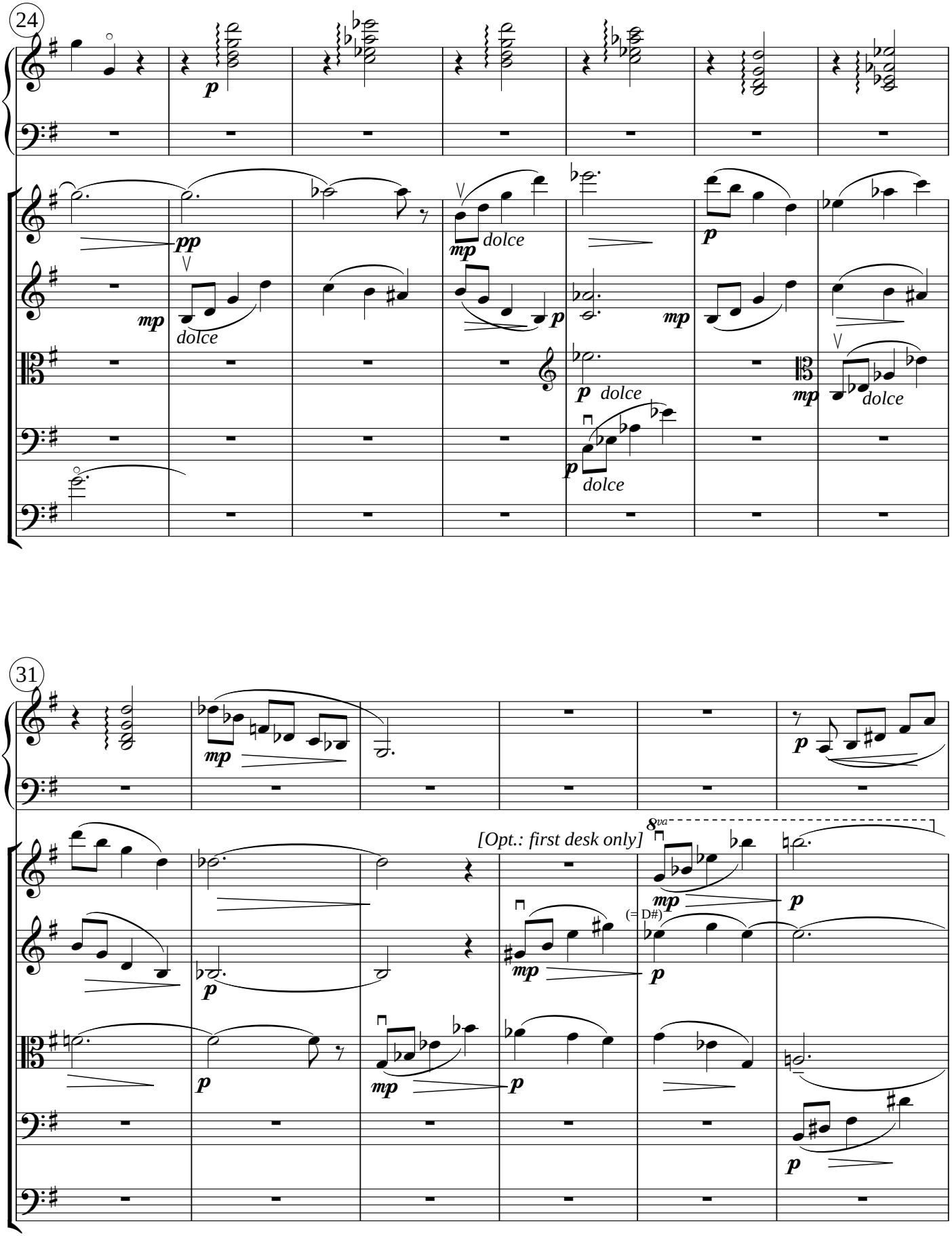
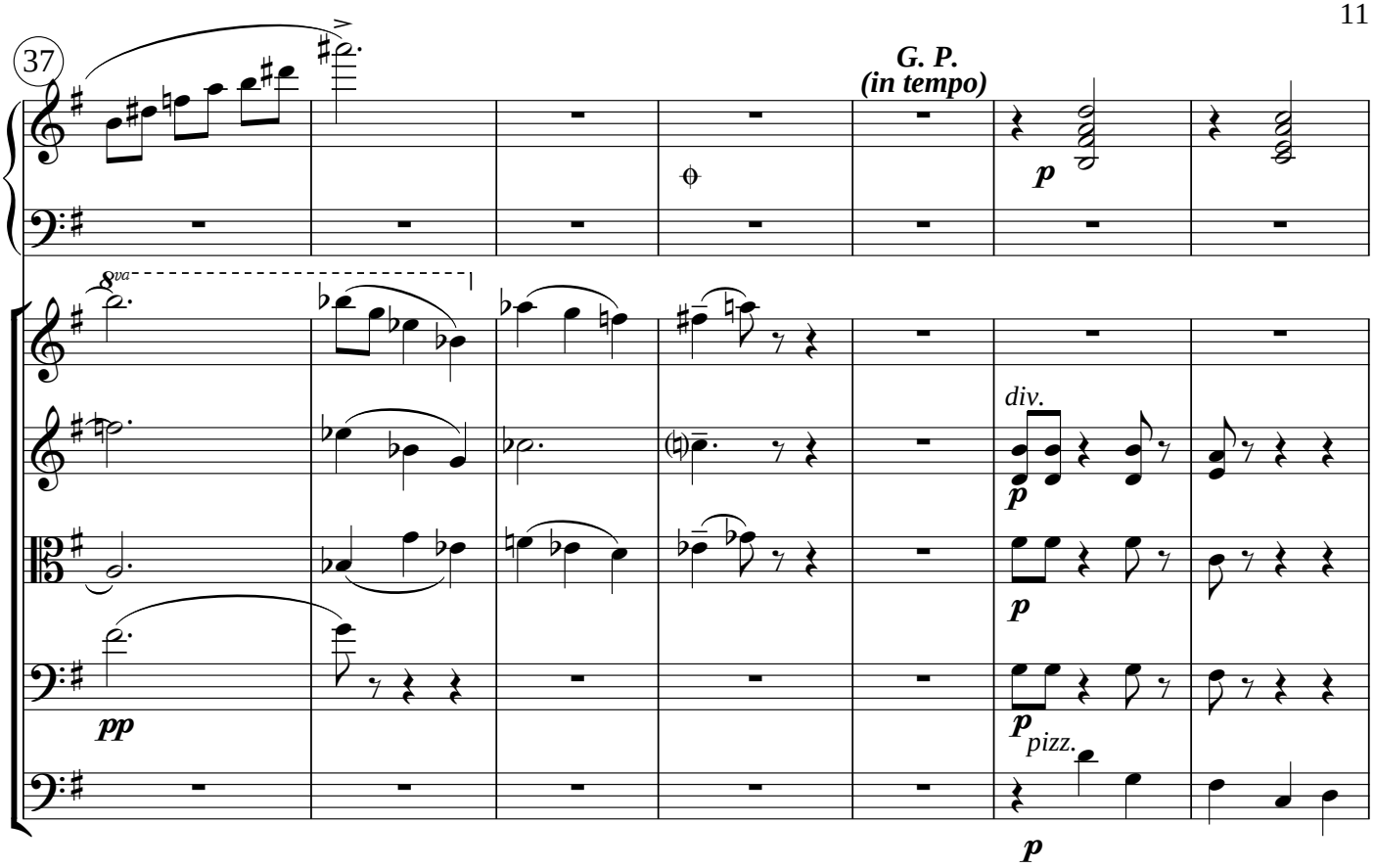
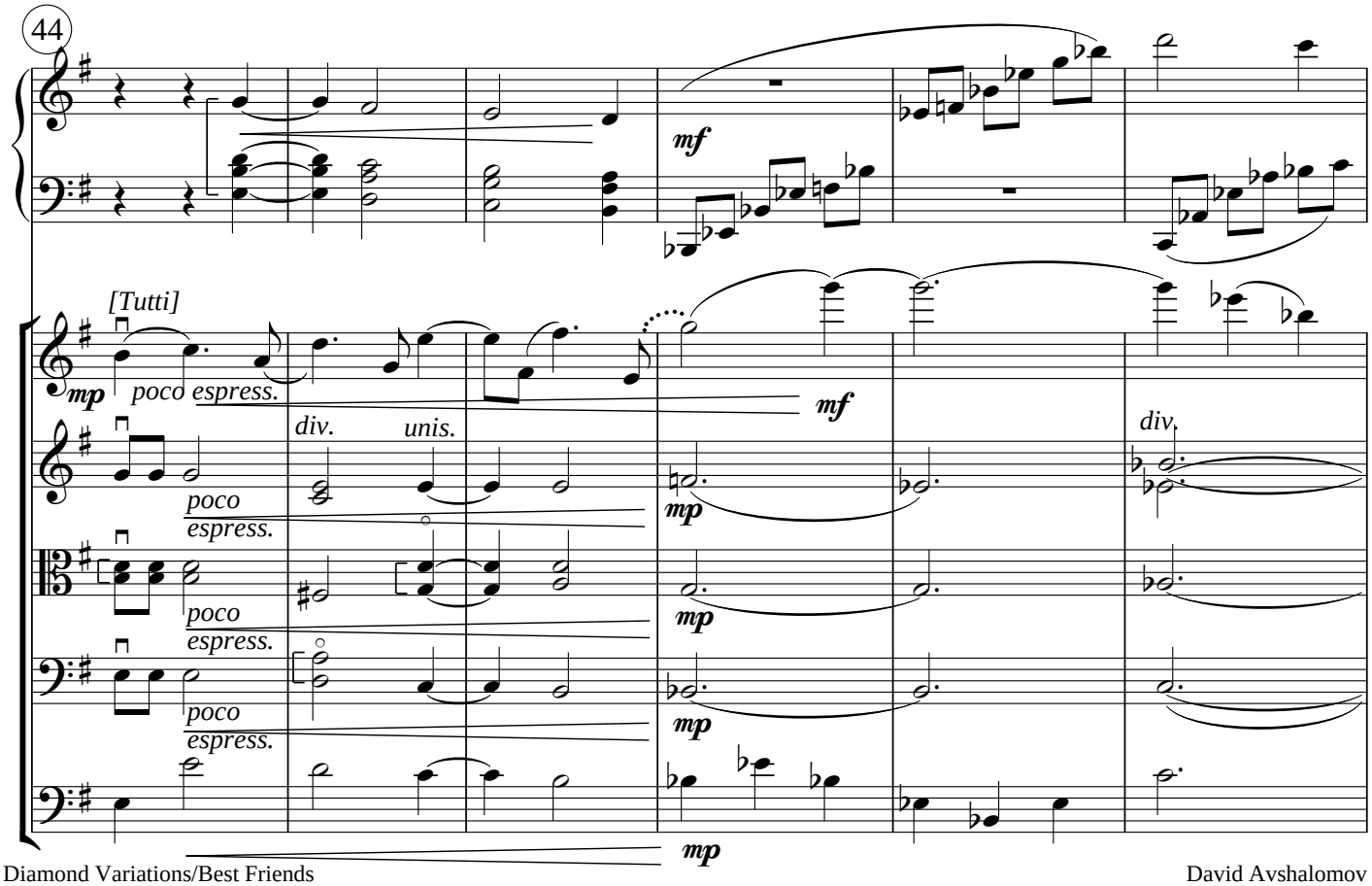
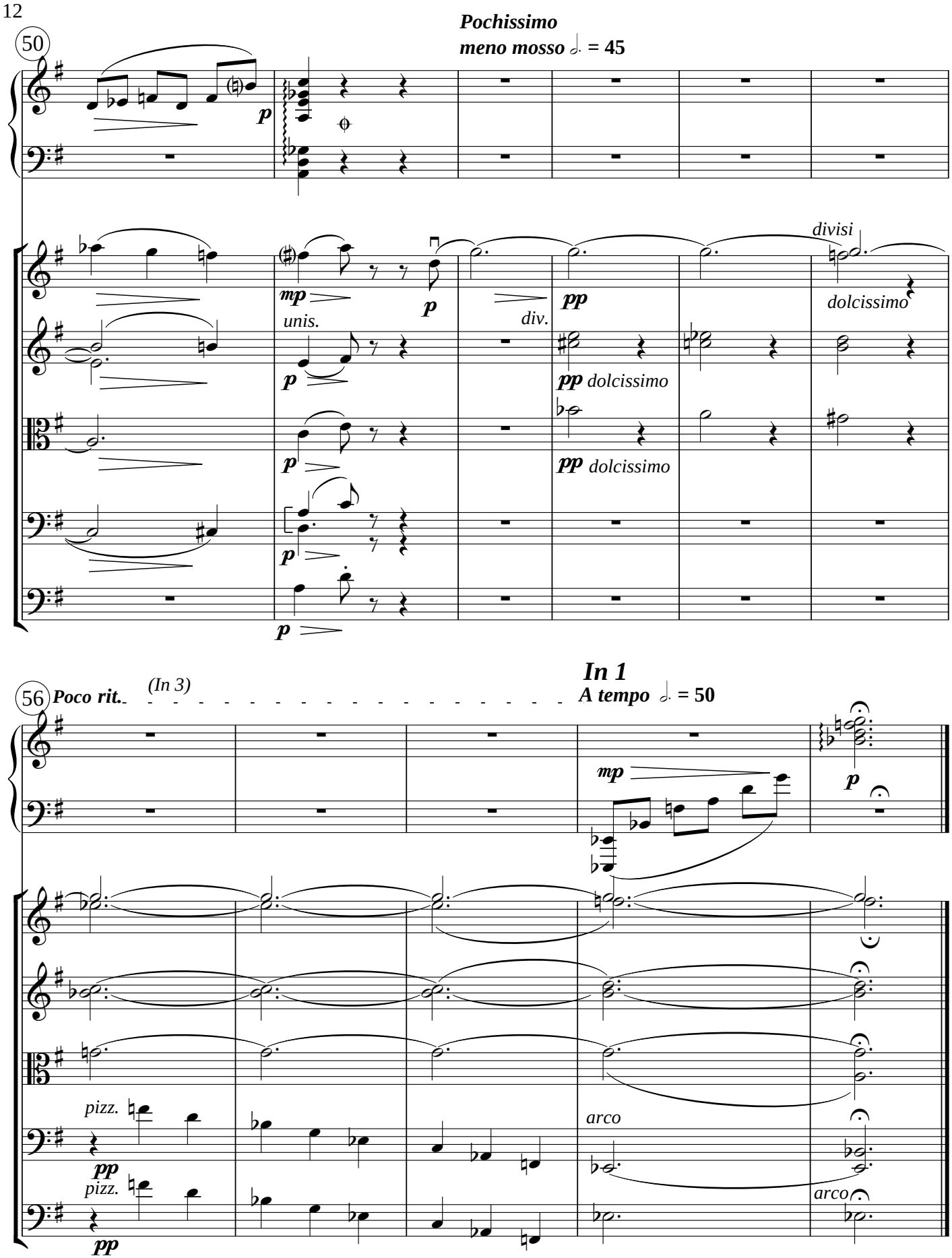

12
mf
div.
mp
mp
mp
mp
mp
poco espress.
poco espress.
poco espress.
18
mf
div.
unis.
mf
mp
mp
mp
mp
dolce, grazioso
mp
p
dolce, grazioso
p
dolce, grazioso
p
p
dolce, grazioso
p


24
p
pp
mp
dolce
mp
dolce
p
mp
p
dolce
mp
dolce
p
dolce
31
mp
p
[Opt.: first desk only]
8va
mp
p
(= D#)
mp
p
p
mp
p
p


37
G. P.
(in tempo)
8va
pp
p
div.
p
p
p
pizz.
p


44
mf
[Tutti]
mp
poco espress.
mf
div.
unis.
poco
espress.
mp
poco
espress.
mp
poco
espress.
mp
div.
mp


50
Pochissimo
meno mosso 𝅗𝅥. = 45
p
mp
unis.
p
div.
pp
divisi
dolcissimo
pp dolcissimo
pp dolcissimo
56
Poco rit.
(In 3)
In 1
A tempo 𝅗𝅥. = 50
mp
p
pizz.
pp
pizz.
pp
arco
arco

Temptation

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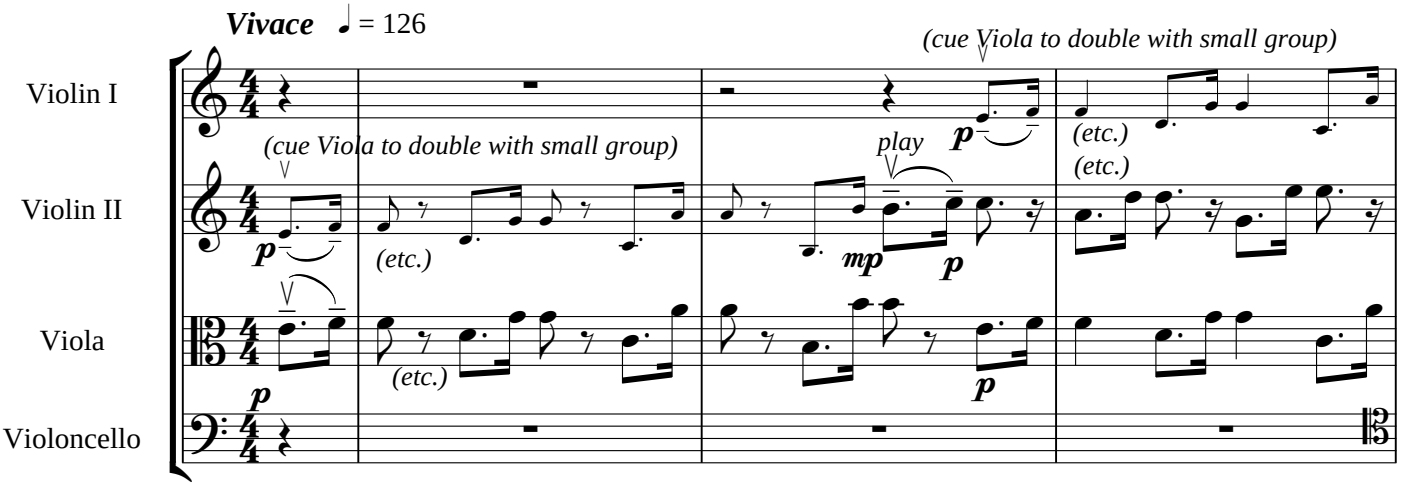
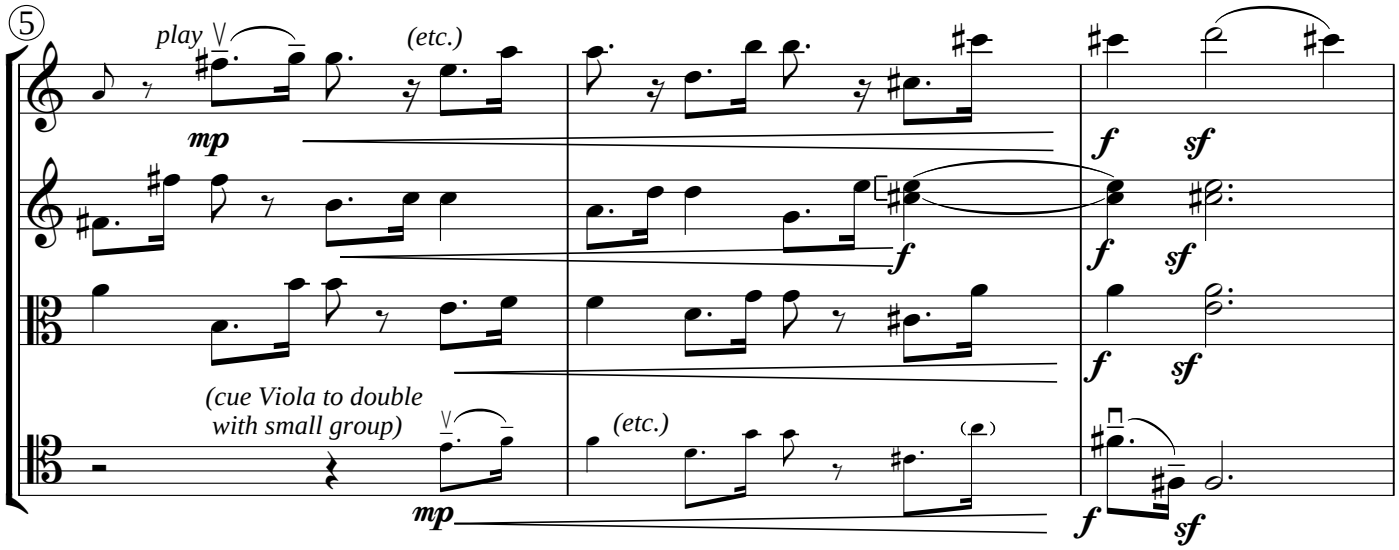
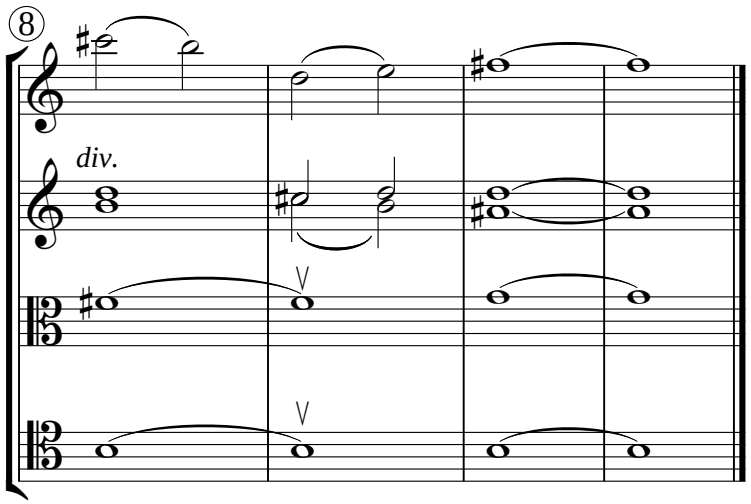


(Double Bass Tacet this movement)





Yearning

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Andante

♩ = 60

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

(Double Bass TACET this mvt.)

(cue I to double with small group)

(cue Vcl. to double with small group)

play

play

meno mosso

♩ = 52

rit.

A tempo I

♩ = 60

⑤

(Vn II divisi to cue Viola in parts, mm. 6-13)

(Viola cued in Vn. IIB in parts, mm. 6-13)

(Cello cued in Viola in parts, mm. 6-13)

poco stringendo

⑨

cresc.

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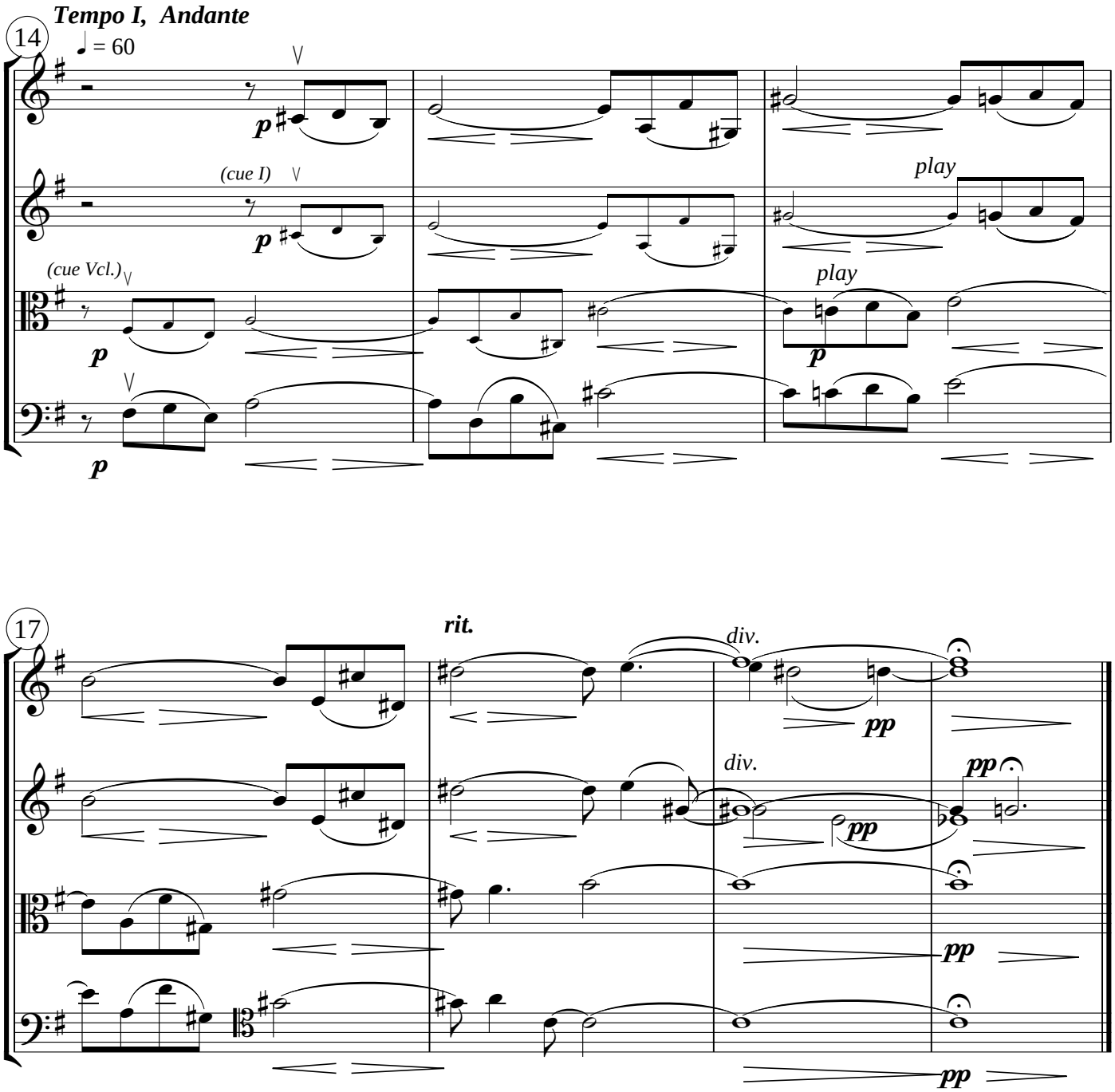
Tempo I, Andante
14
♩ = 60
p
(cue I)
p
play
(cue Vcl.)
p
play
p
p
17
rit.
div.
pp
div.
pp
pp
pp
pp

Smugglers

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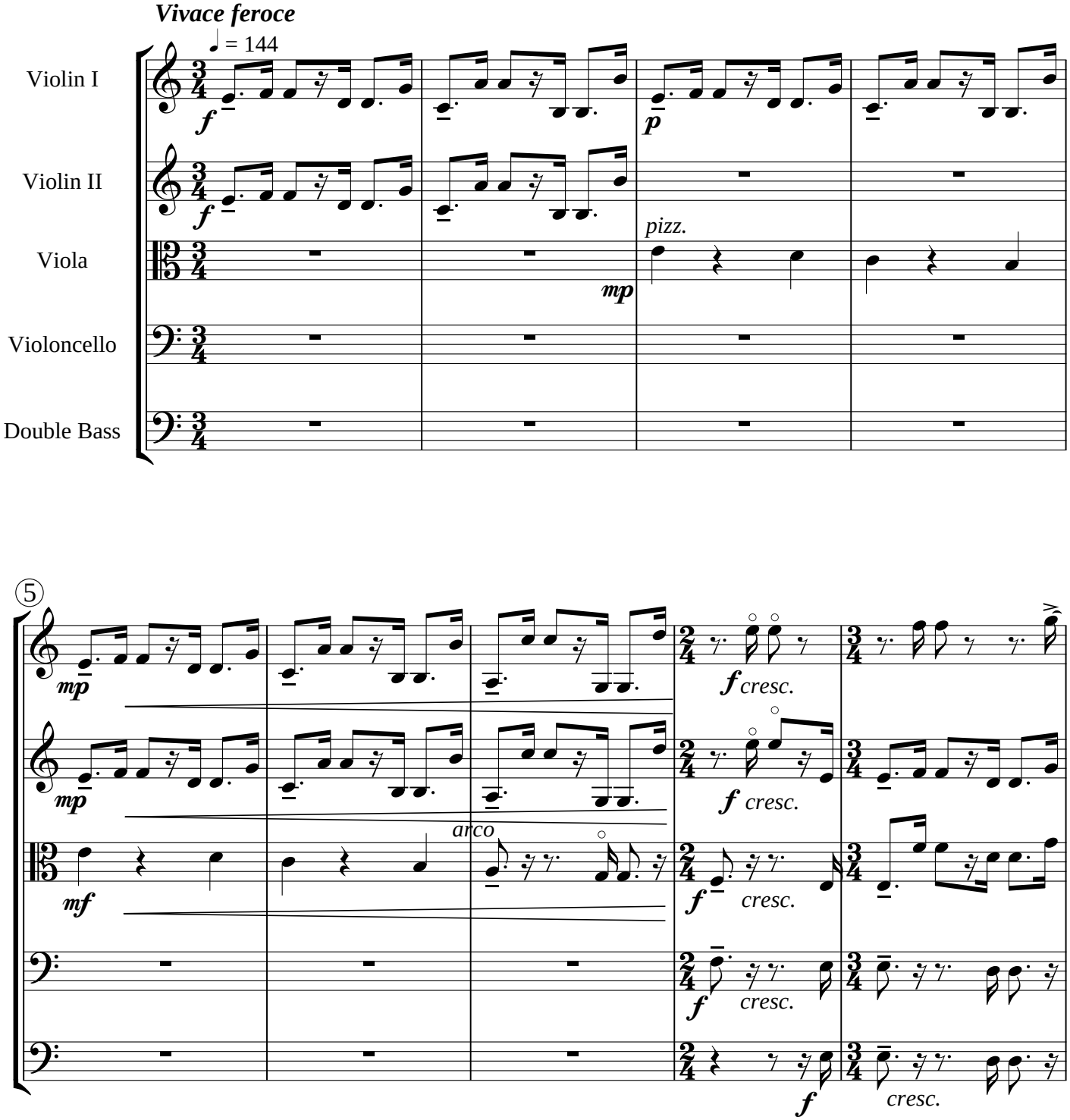

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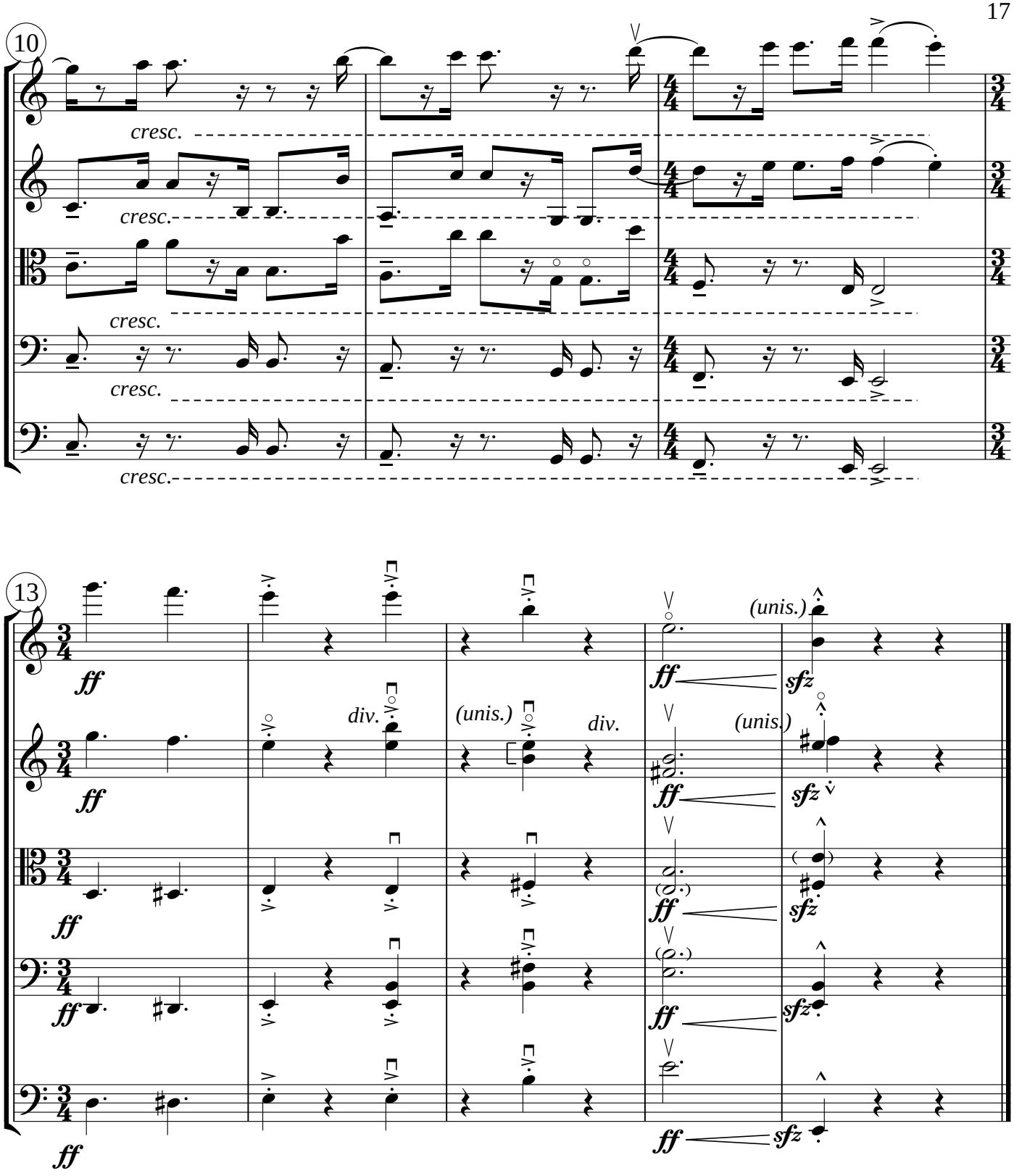
10
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
13
ff
div.
(unis.)
div.
(unis.)
sfz

Forever

(hommage a G. M.)

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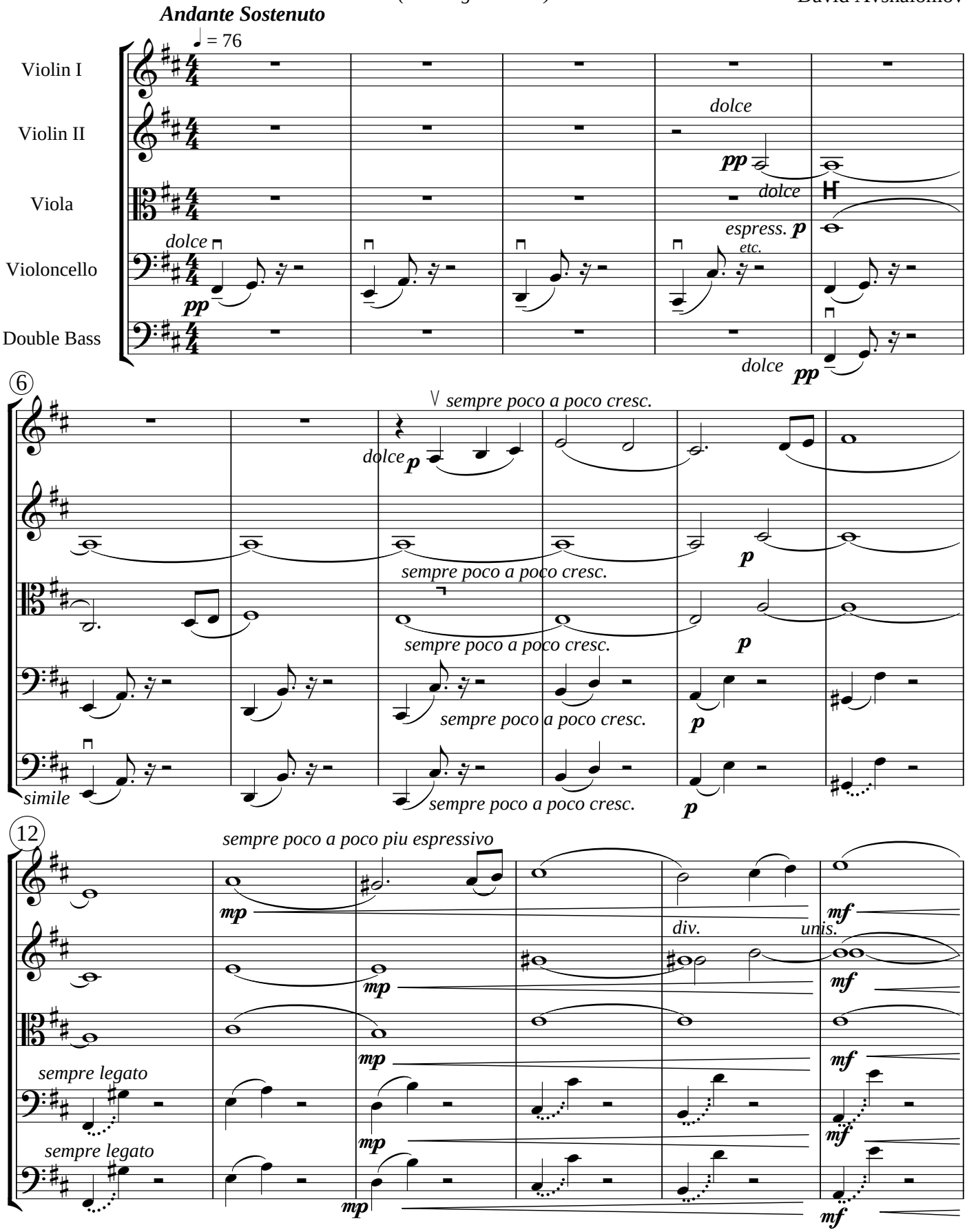

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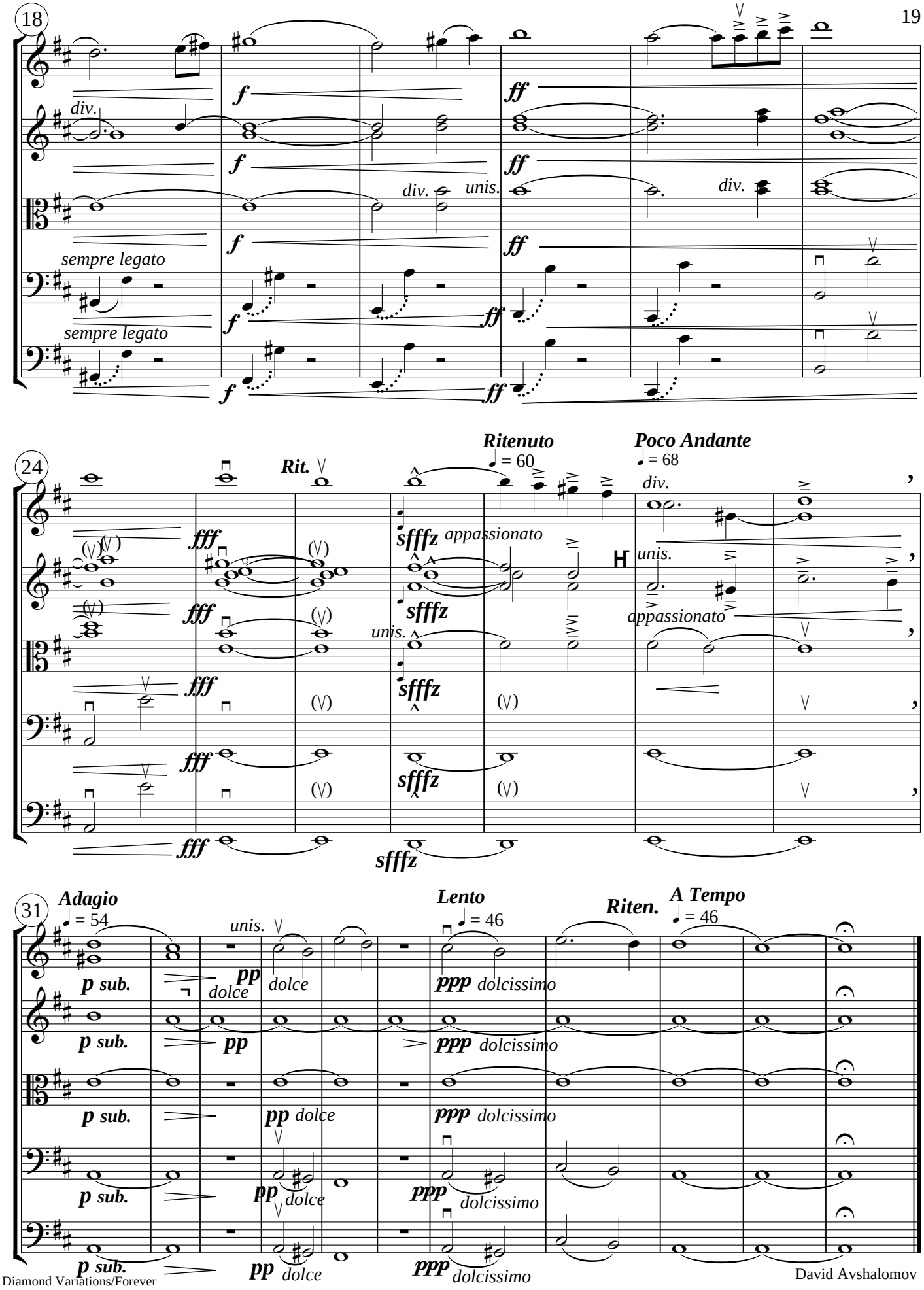
18
div.
f
ff
unis.
sempre legato
24
Rit.
Ritenuto
= 60
Poco Andante
= 68
fff
sfffz
appassionato
31
Adagio
= 54
Lento
= 46
Riten.
A Tempo
= 46
p sub.
pp
dolce
ppp
dolcissimo

Blood Diamonds

David Avshalomov

Vivace feroce

♩ = 158

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

etc.

⑤

⑧

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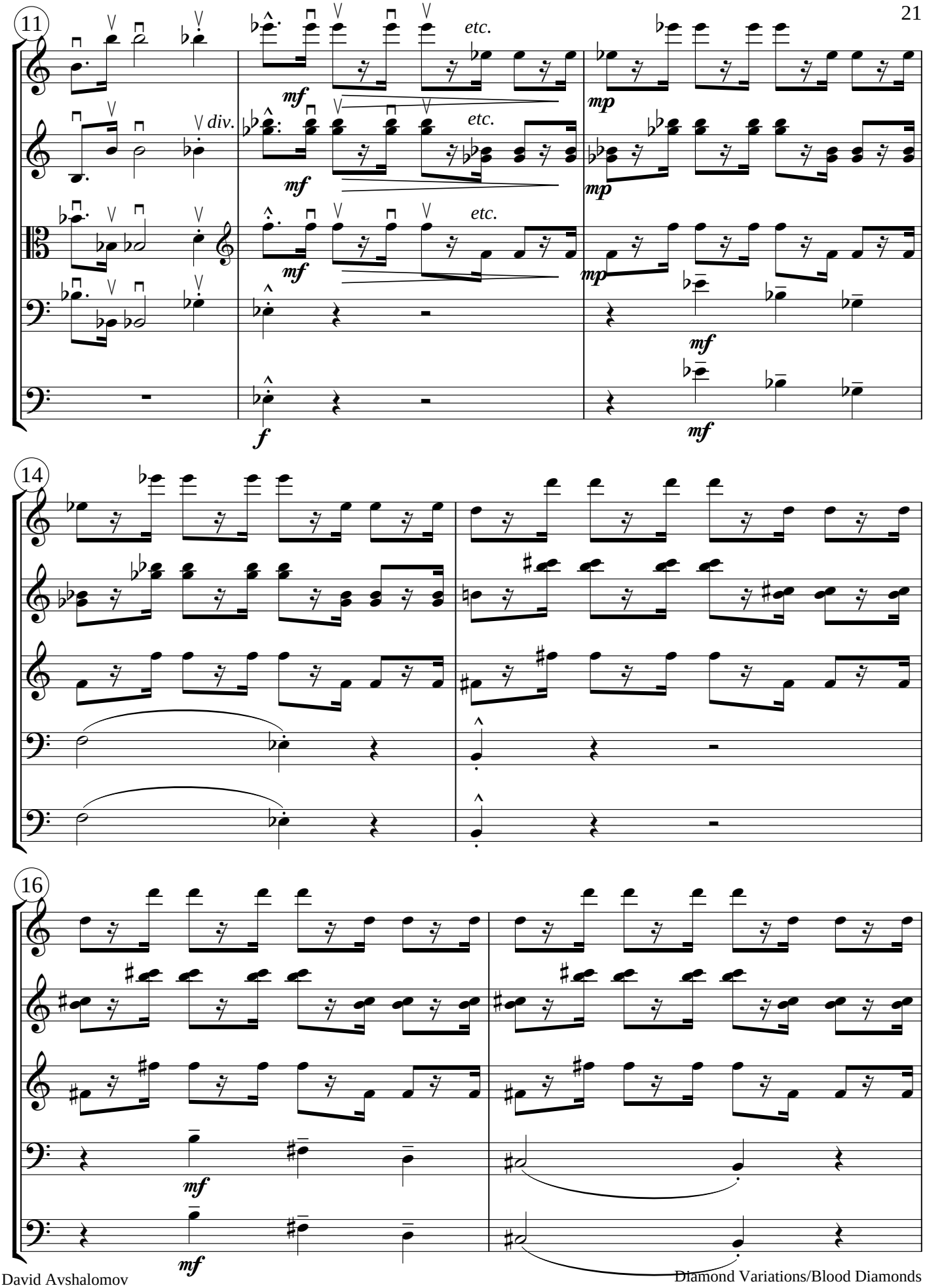
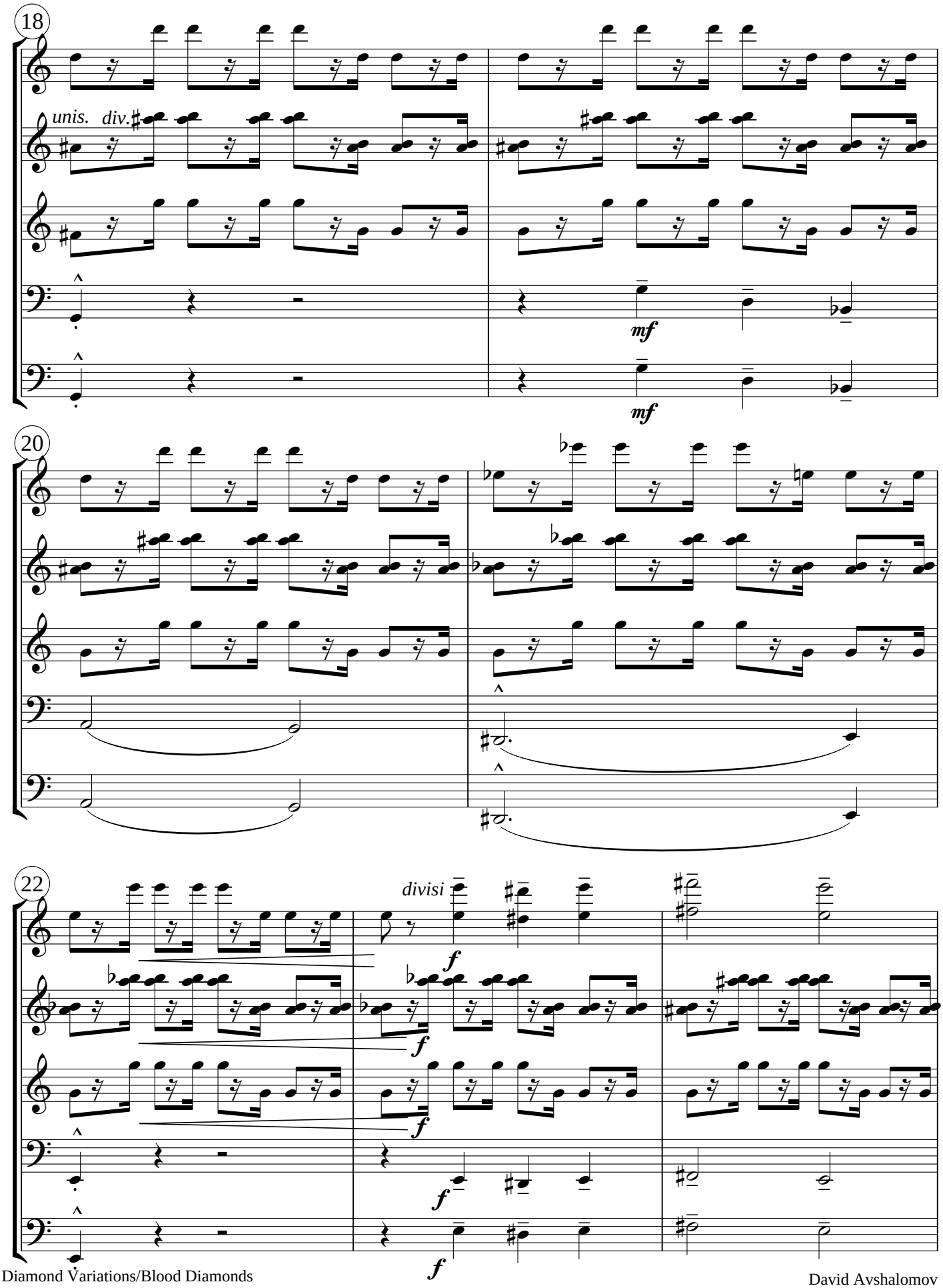
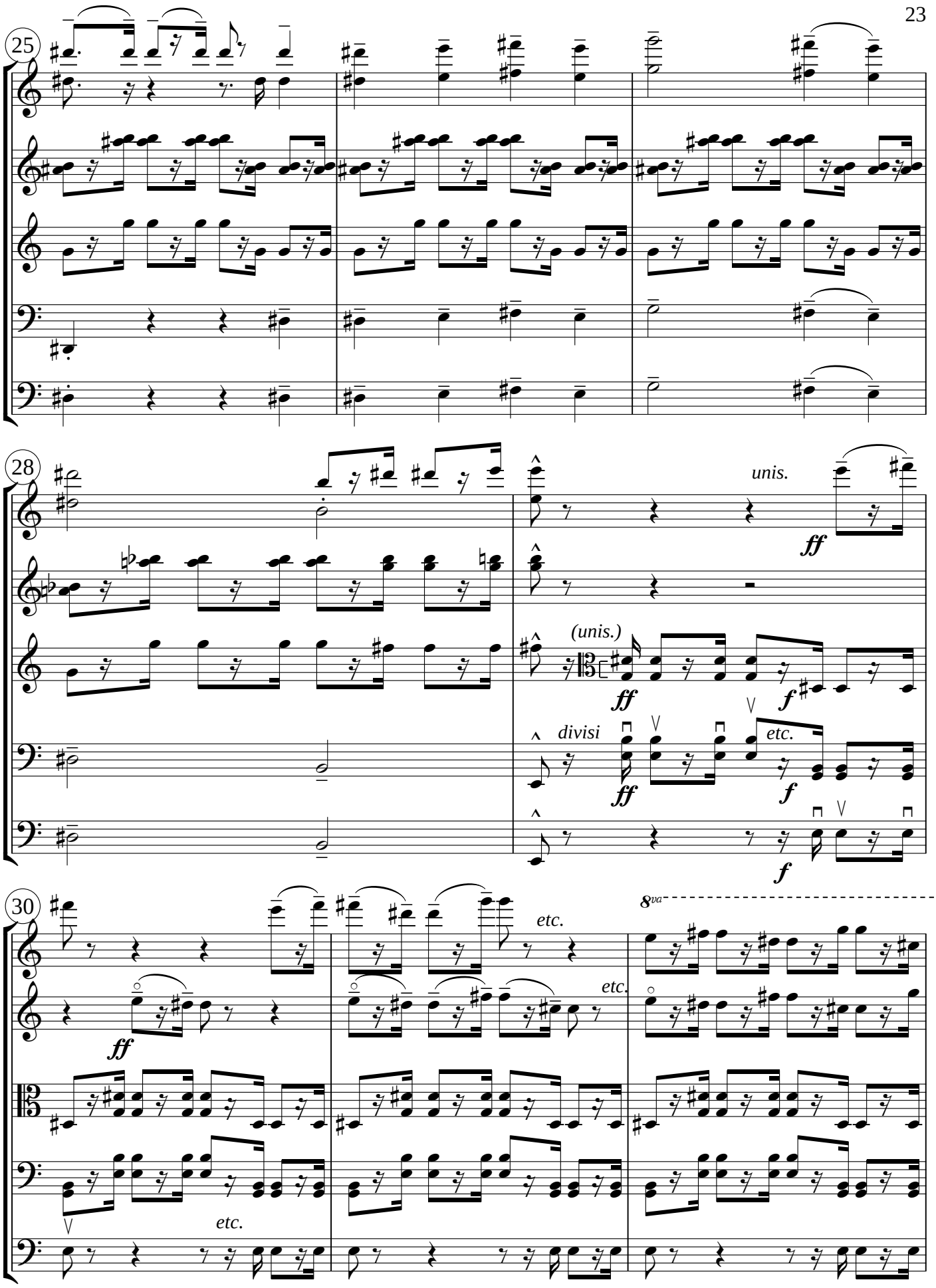
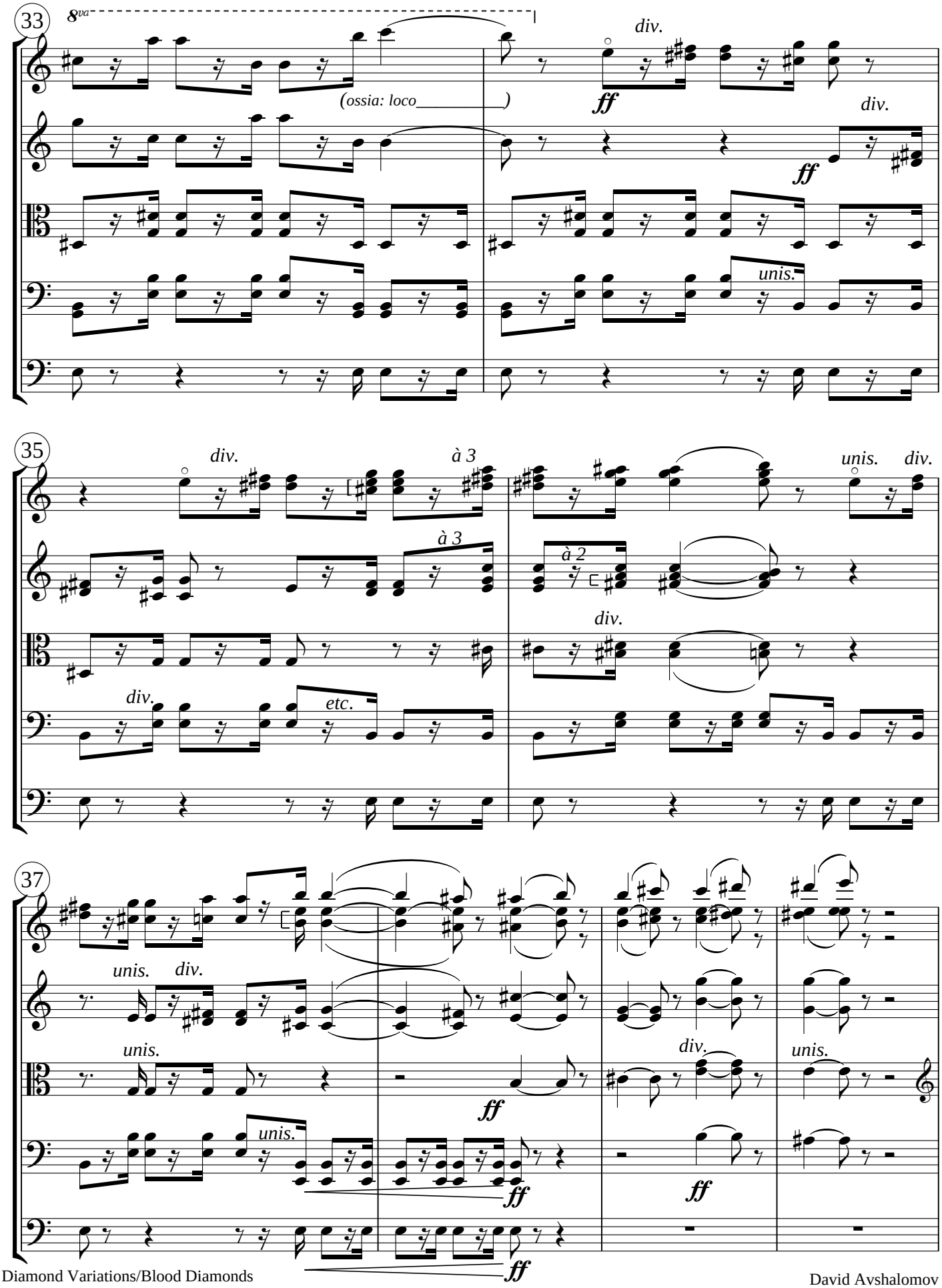
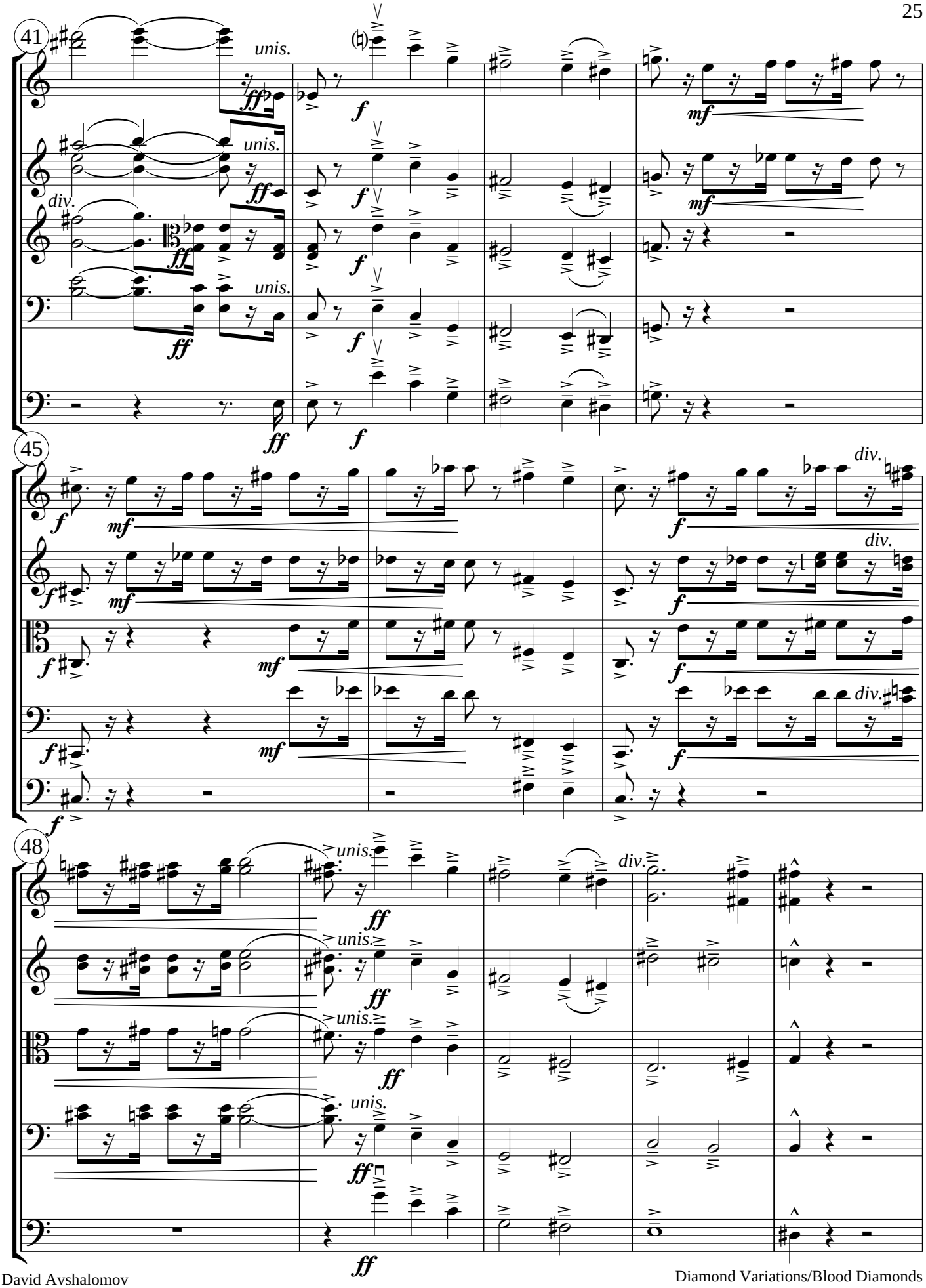
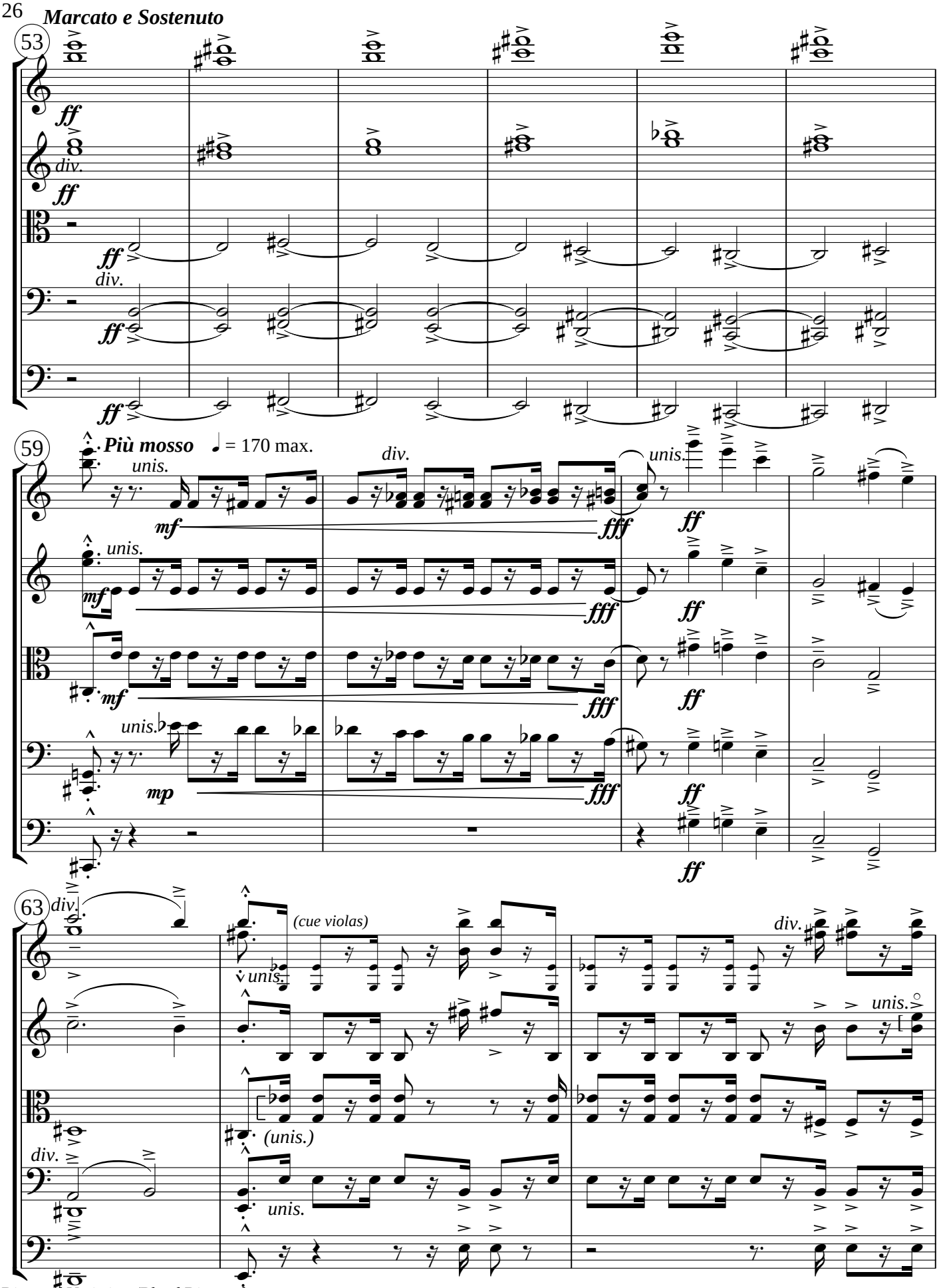

11
div.
etc.
etc.
etc.
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
f
mf
14
16
mf
mf

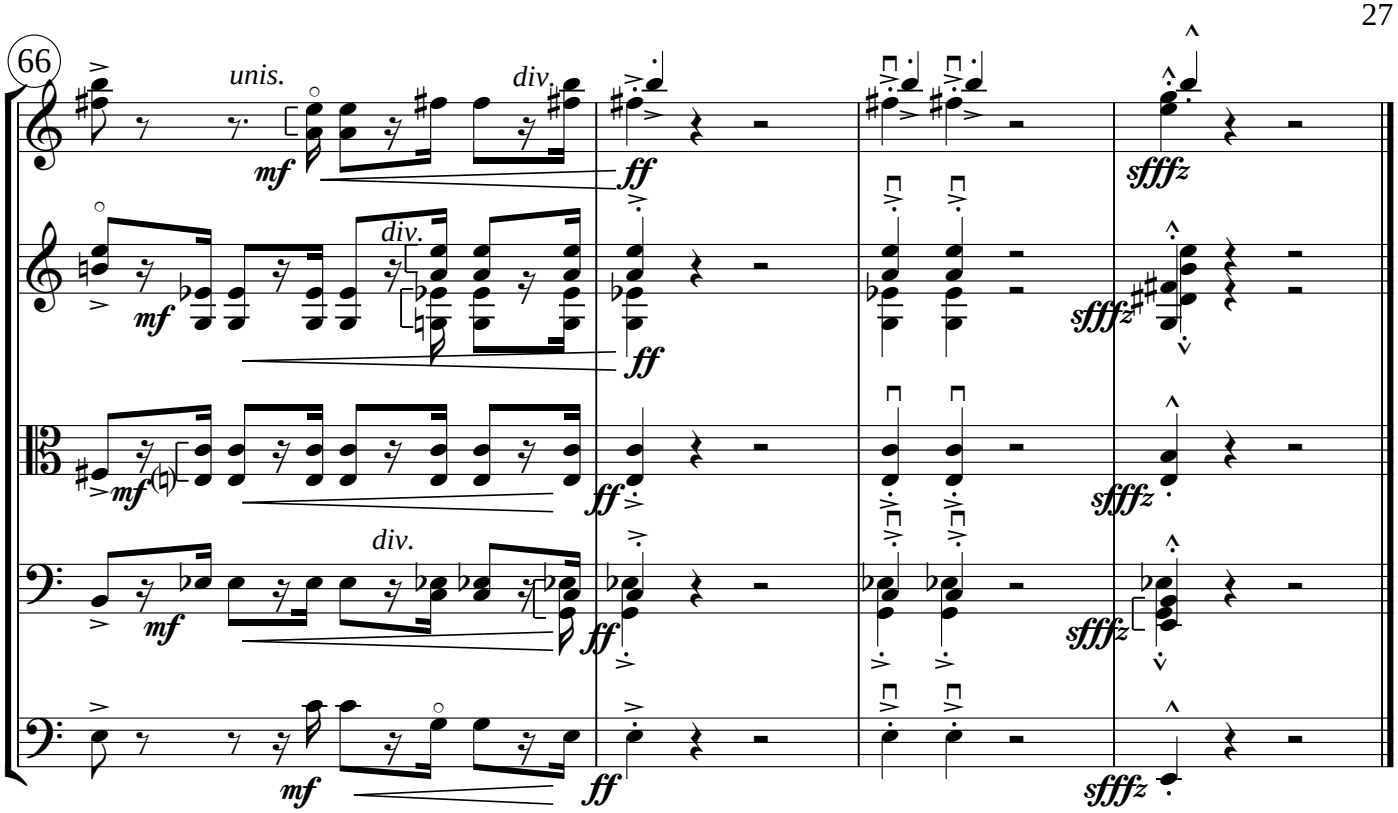

18
unis.
div.
mf
mf
20
22
divisi
f
f
f
f
f


25
28
unis.
ff
(unis.)
ff
f
divisi
etc.
ff
f
f
30
8va
etc.
etc.
ff
etc.


33
8va
(ossia: loco)
div.
ff
div.
ff
unis.
35
div.
à 3
à 3
à 2
unis.
div.
div.
etc.
div.
37
unis.
div.
unis.
ff
div.
unis.
unis.
ff
ff
ff


41
unis.
div.
45
48


Marcato e Sostenuto
53
ff
div.
59
Più mosso
= 170 max.
unis.
mf
fff
mp
63
(cue violas)
(unis.)

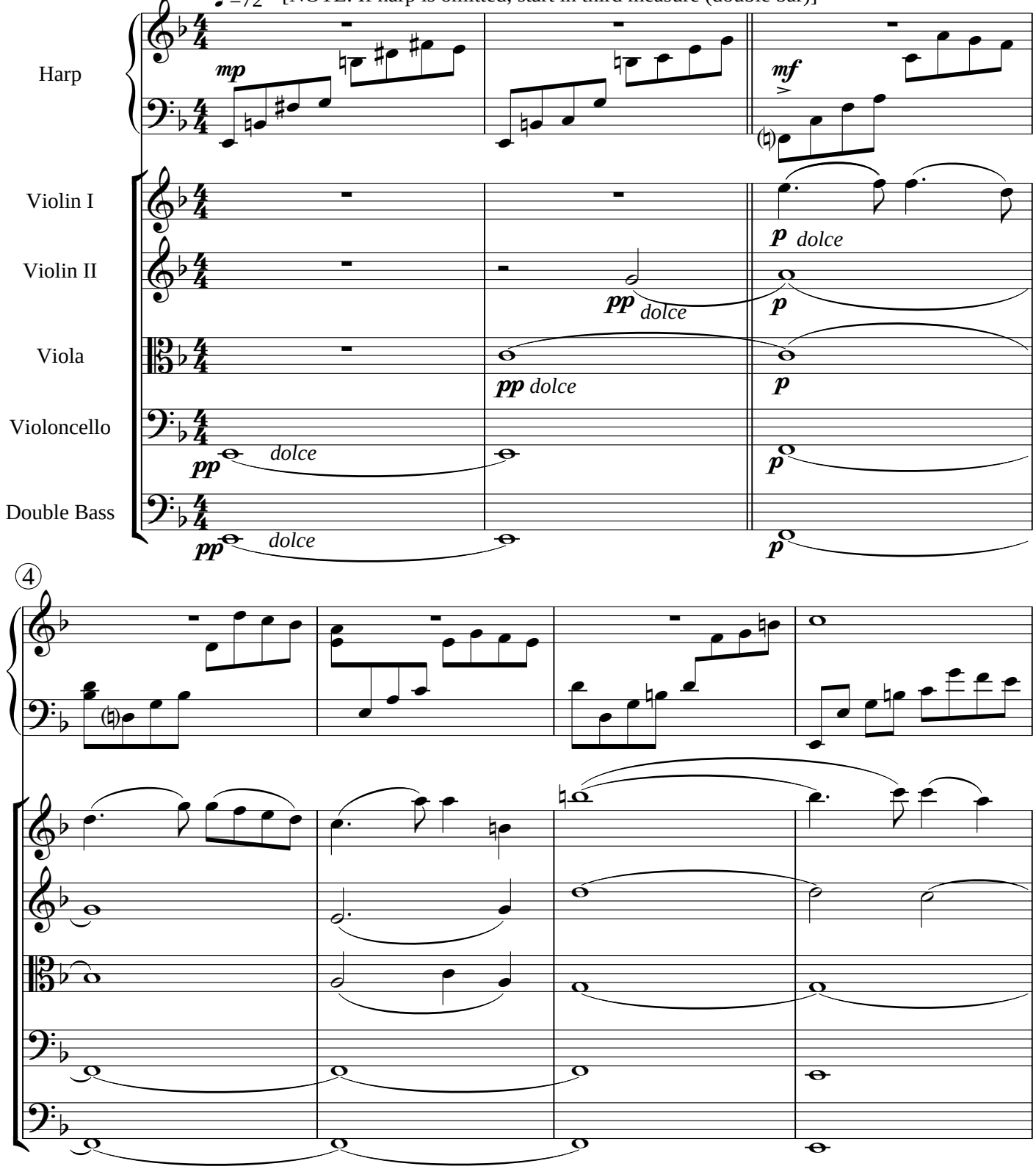

66
unis.
div.
mf
ff
sfffz

Perfect Gem

David Avshalomov

Moderato

♩ =72 [NOTE: If harp is omitted, start in third measure (double bar)]



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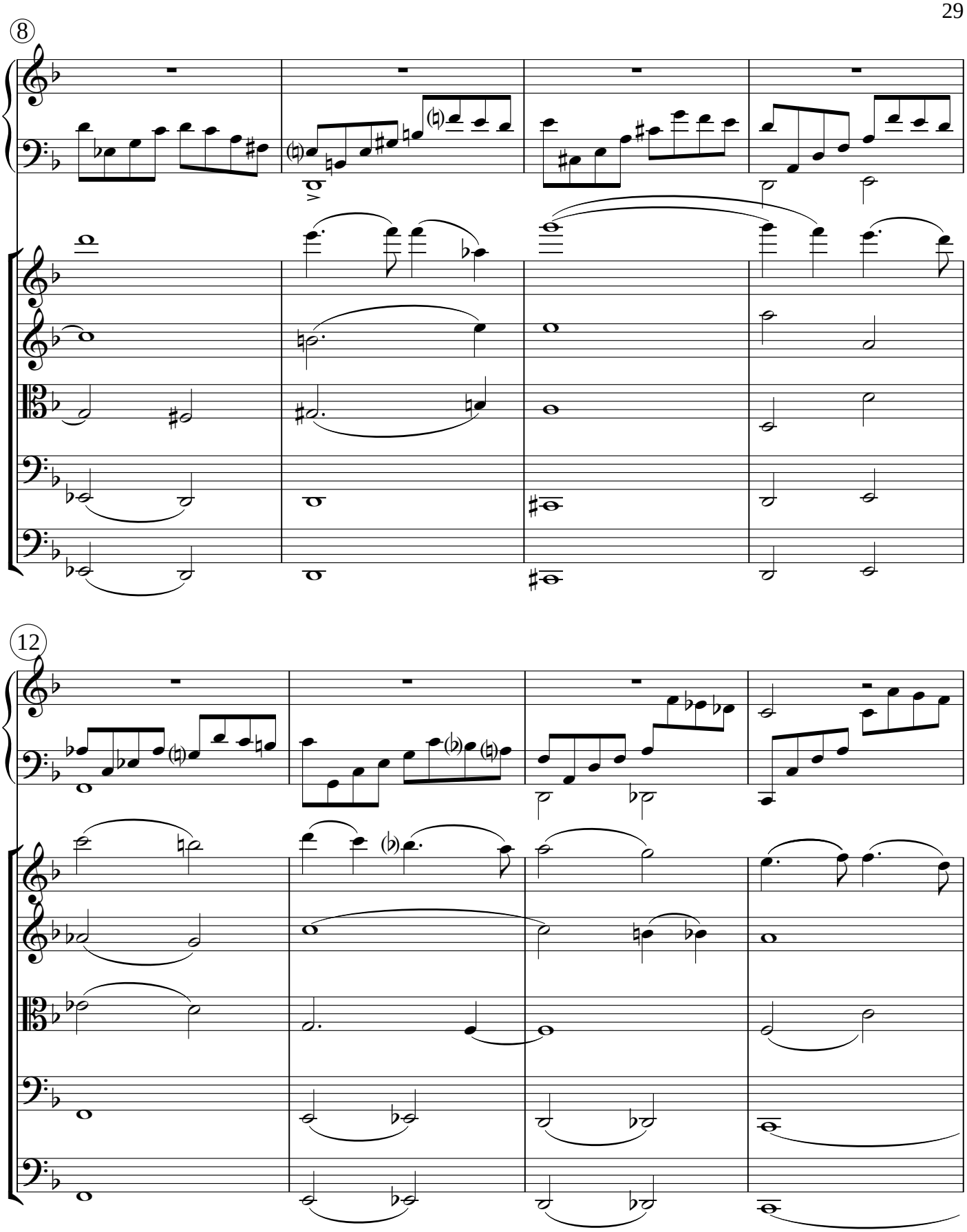
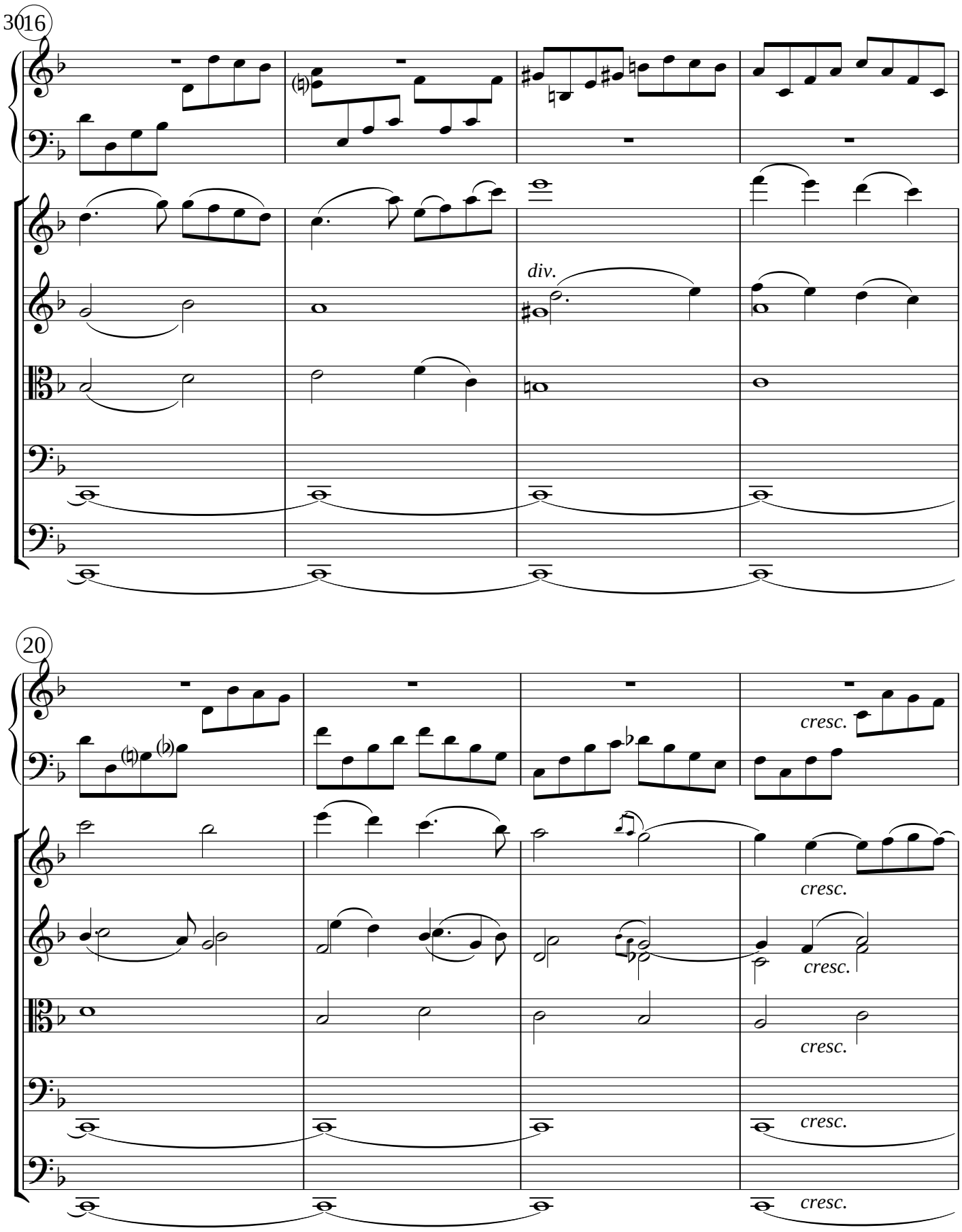
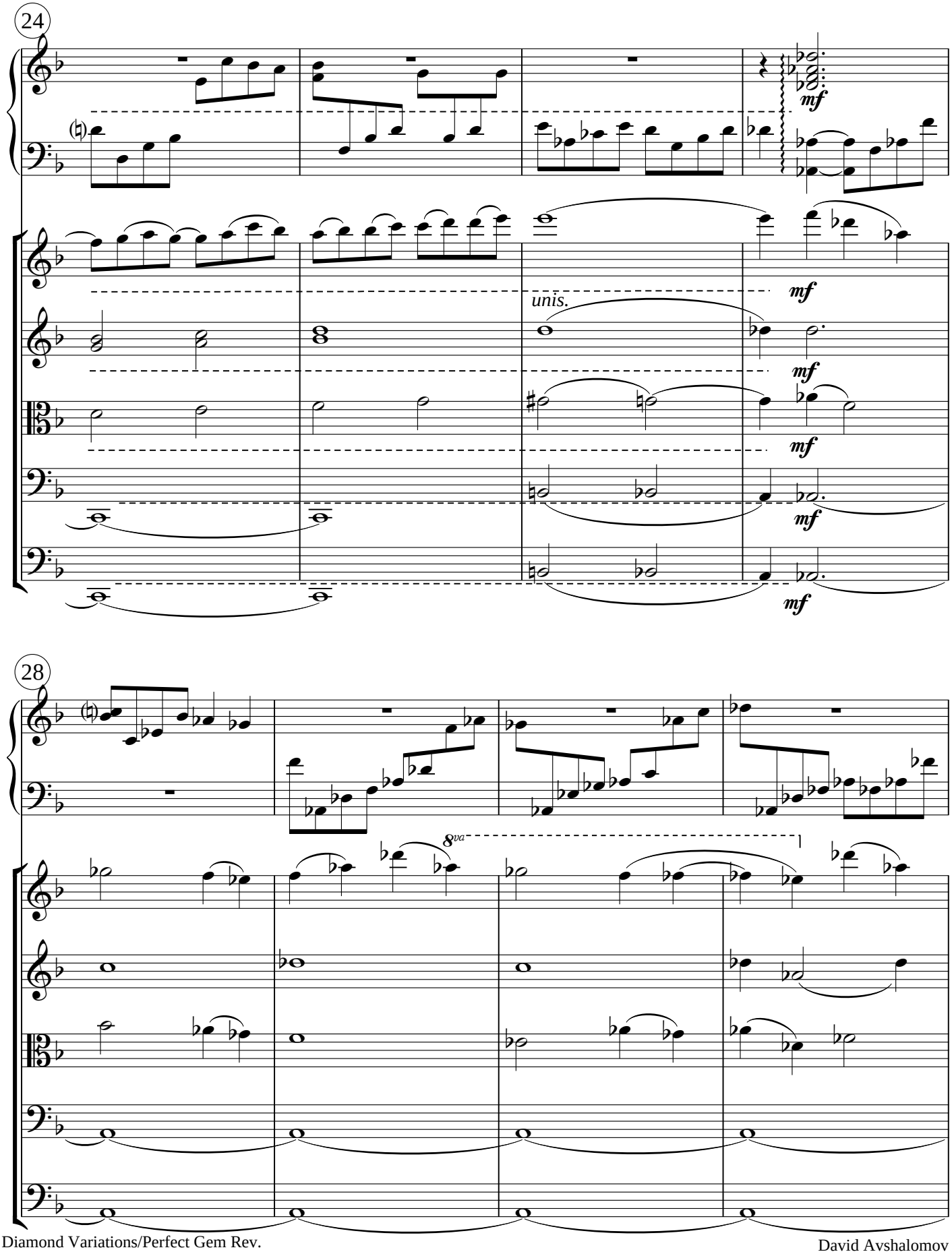

8
12


3016
div.
20
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.


24
mf
unis.
mf
mf
mf
mf
28
8va

32

8va

8va

36

allargando

meno mosso

♩ = 60

rit.

p

8va

p

p

p

p

div.

pp *dolcissimo*

ppp

div.

pp *dolcissimo*

ppp

pp *dolcissimo*

ppp

DAVID AVSHALOMOV

Works for/with Strings

Elegy - string orchestra [9]
Pangs of Love - string orchestra [32]
(Romantic variations on a Rachmaninoff Love Theme)
Diamond Variations on an original theme,
string orchestra with opt. harp [12]
Concerto con Timpani (baroque) - timp., strings, harpsichord [12]
Arietta - flute and strings (opt. 2nd flute) [2]

String Quartet [23]
Trotsky's Train, piano sextet (string quartet with double bass) [32]
Also: version for string orchestra and piano

The Last Poet's Farewell - solo violin [22]
Elegy arranged for solo violin with piano [9]
Dance - violin (intermediate) and (student) piano [3]
Diversion - violin and timpani [5]
Torn Curtain suite - viola with piano [32]
Sonata for Violoncello with piano [28]
Variations on a Beethoven Theme - solo violoncello [12]

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