Edvard Hagerup Grieg was the son of Gesine Hagerup and Alexander Grieg. Alexander was British Consul in Bergen and the son of John Grieg, whose father Alexander Greig emigrated from Aberdeen in 1745 after the battle of Culloden, and changed the spelling of his name to approximate its Scottish pronunciation better in Norwegian. Gesine was from an indigenous Norwegian family with music in the blood - she taught Edvard the piano, starting at the age of six.

Edvard was sent to the Leipzig Conservatoire (founded in the year he was born, by Mendelssohn) as a result of a visit by the violin virtuoso Ole Bull to the Griegs' house in 1858, when he heard Edvard play some of his own compositions. At Leipzig Grieg was homesick, unhappy with some of his teaching (though excited by the piano playing of the famous Ignaz Moscheles, which often took the place of a lesson) and initially lazy. However contact with other talented students (such as Arthur Sullivan) encouraged him to work harder to learn basics which they already knew. In fact, a swing to overwork may have exacerbated a severe chest infection which led to collapse of one lung, damaging his health for the rest of his life. His mother came to take her 16-year-old son home to recover, but he returned in the autumn (with his younger brother) and completed his studies in 1862 with good marks. He later regularly bemoaned the failings of his Leipzig education however.

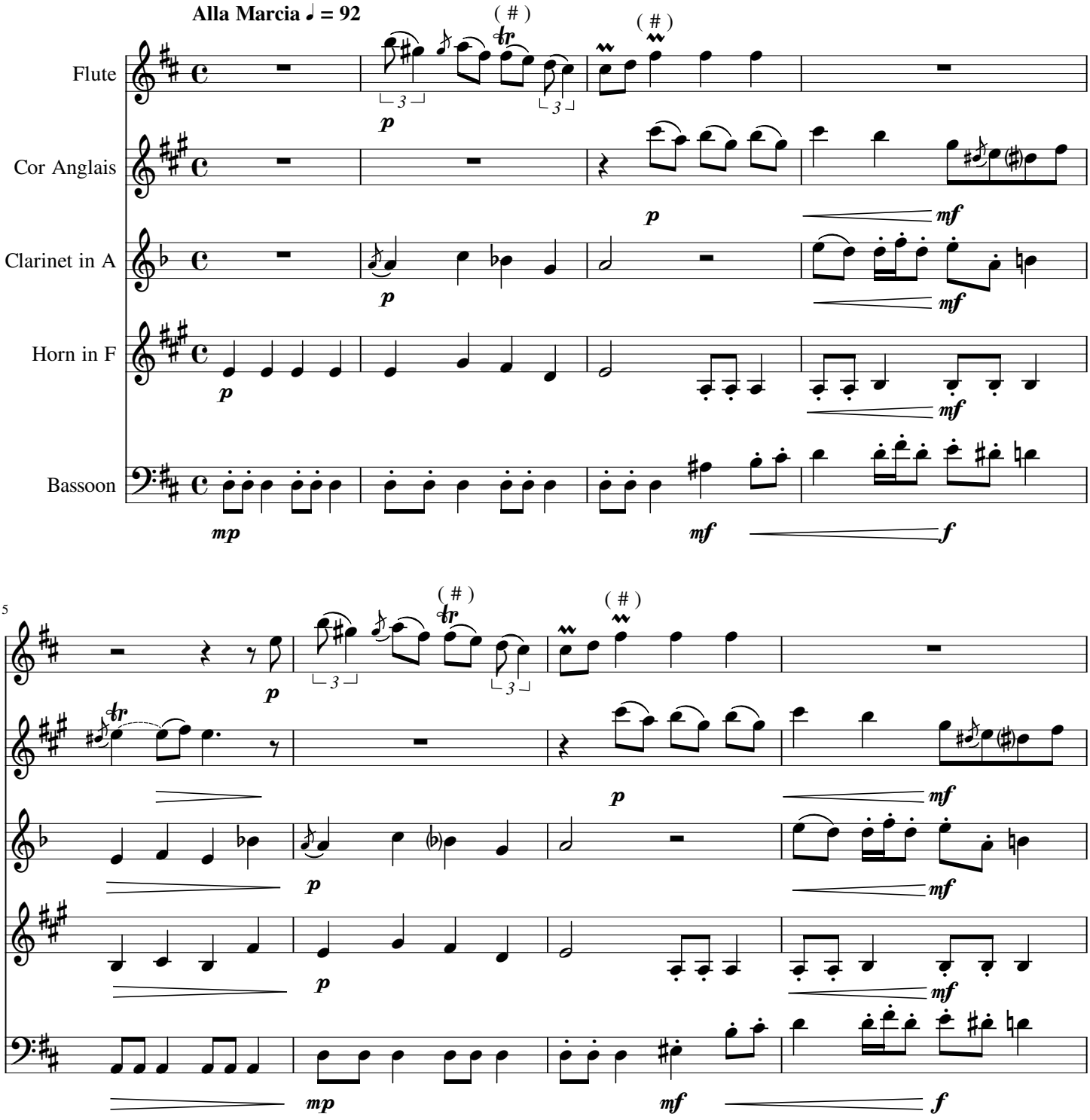
In 1863 he went to Copenhagen, then centre of Scandinavian musical life, meeting several important people including his Hagerup cousin and future wife (they were secretly engaged in 1864) the singer and pianist Nina, as well as composers Niels Gade and Rikard Nordraak. With Nordraak, Grieg founded the Euterpe Society to establish a Norwegian national music. He retained this pre-occupation all his life. In a letter to his biographer Henry T Finck, he commented: “It is difficult for me to talk of harmonic innovation. The realm of harmony has always been my dreamworld, and the relationship between my sense of harmony and Norwegian folk tunes has always been an enigma to me. I have found that the obscure depths of our folk tunes have their foundation in unexplored harmonic possibilities. In my arrangements in op. 66 and elsewhere, I have sought to give expression to my awareness of these hidden harmonies in our folk music. In doing so, I have been especially attracted by the chromatic lines within the harmonic texture”.

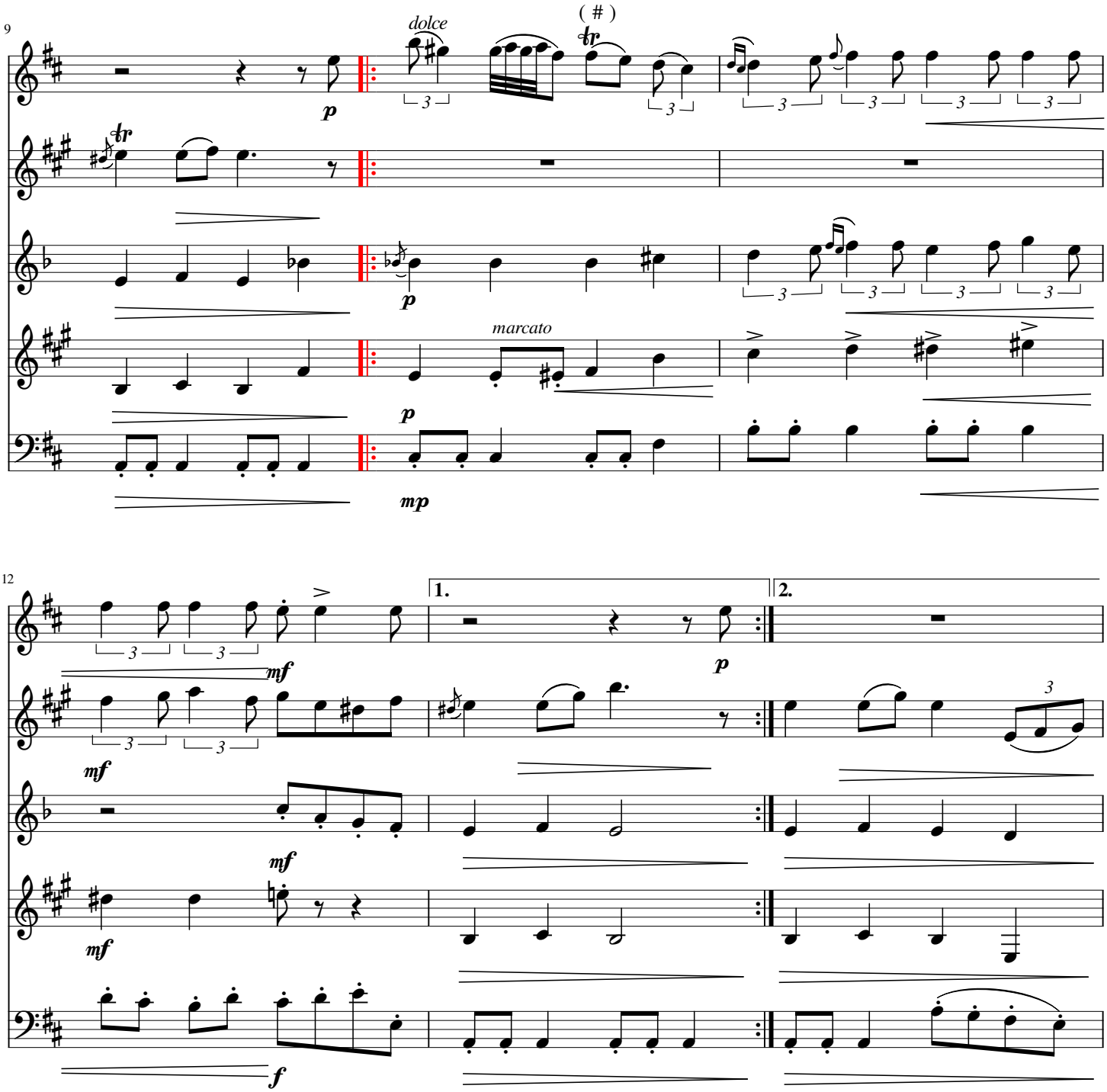
A slått is a generic word for a Norwegian peasant dance. These 17 pieces originate in live performances by Knut Dale on the Hardanger fiddle, the most characteristic rural folk instrument of southern Norway: a violin with extra sympathetic strings, giving rise to a sort of drone self-accompaniment. Dale had approached Grieg, but the initial transcriptions were made by Grieg’s friend Johann Halvorsen. Grieg wrote to Halvorsen: ‘as you say, this oddity with G# in D major was what drove me wild and mad in 1871… It is a ghost from one or other ancient scale. But which?’ (cue for lament about gaps in his training at Leipzig). Grieg insisted that Halvorsen's violin transcriptions be printed in the same volume as his piano version. It seems that Grieg was unsure about the reception this music would get. He was right: Op.72 was coolly received in his home country. However in Paris the young impressionists were excited by some of the rhythmic complexities and non-standard harmonies, saying 'is this the new Grieg?', while Bartok the keen folk transcriber had a copy and is thought to have been inspired by it. Numbers 3 and 4 are among the more straightforward pieces in the collection. There is a strong similarity with Scottish folk music: prominent Scotch snap rhythms, bagpipe-like skirls and drone.

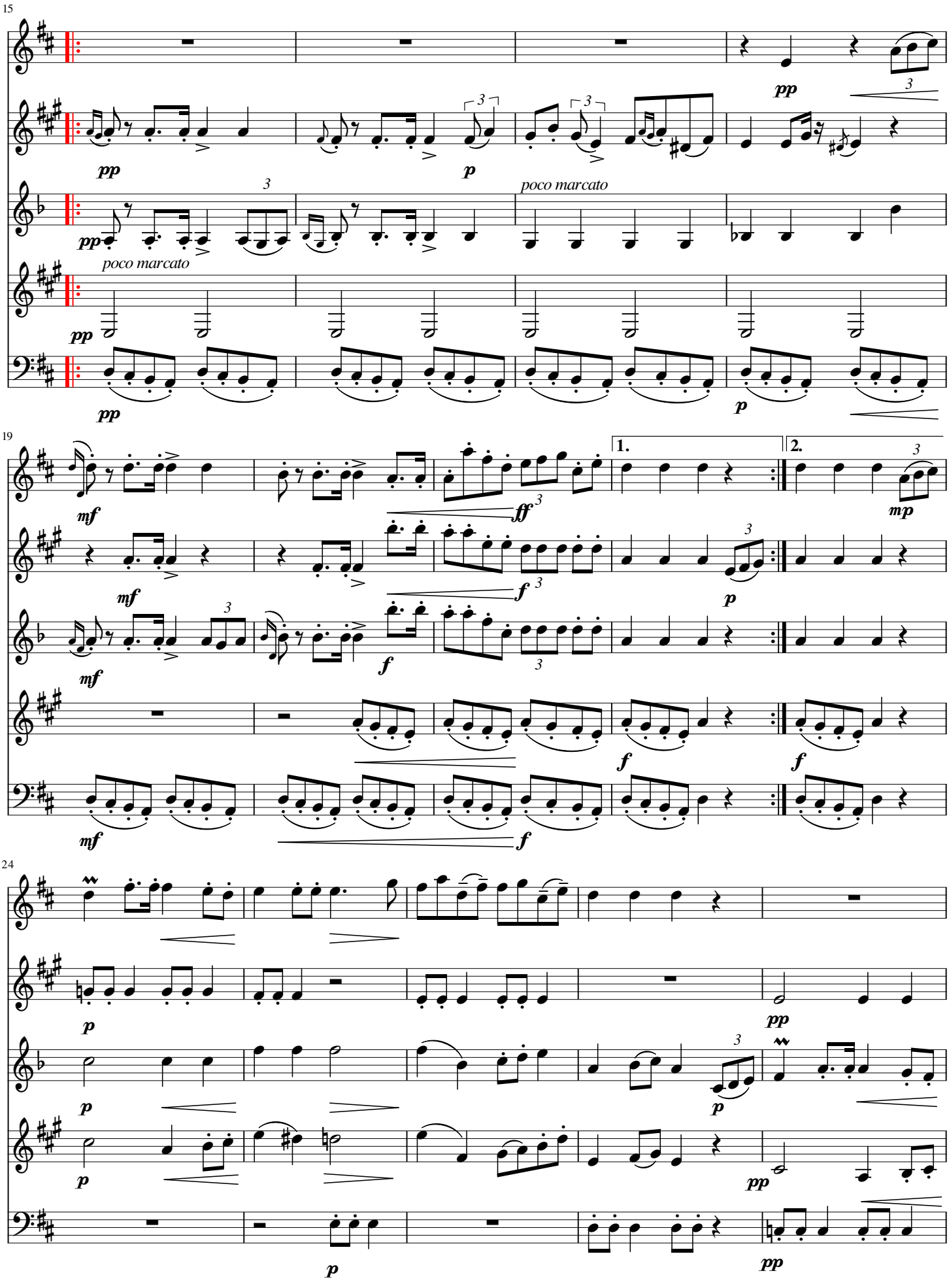
Wedding March from Telemark no. 3 from Slåtter Op.72

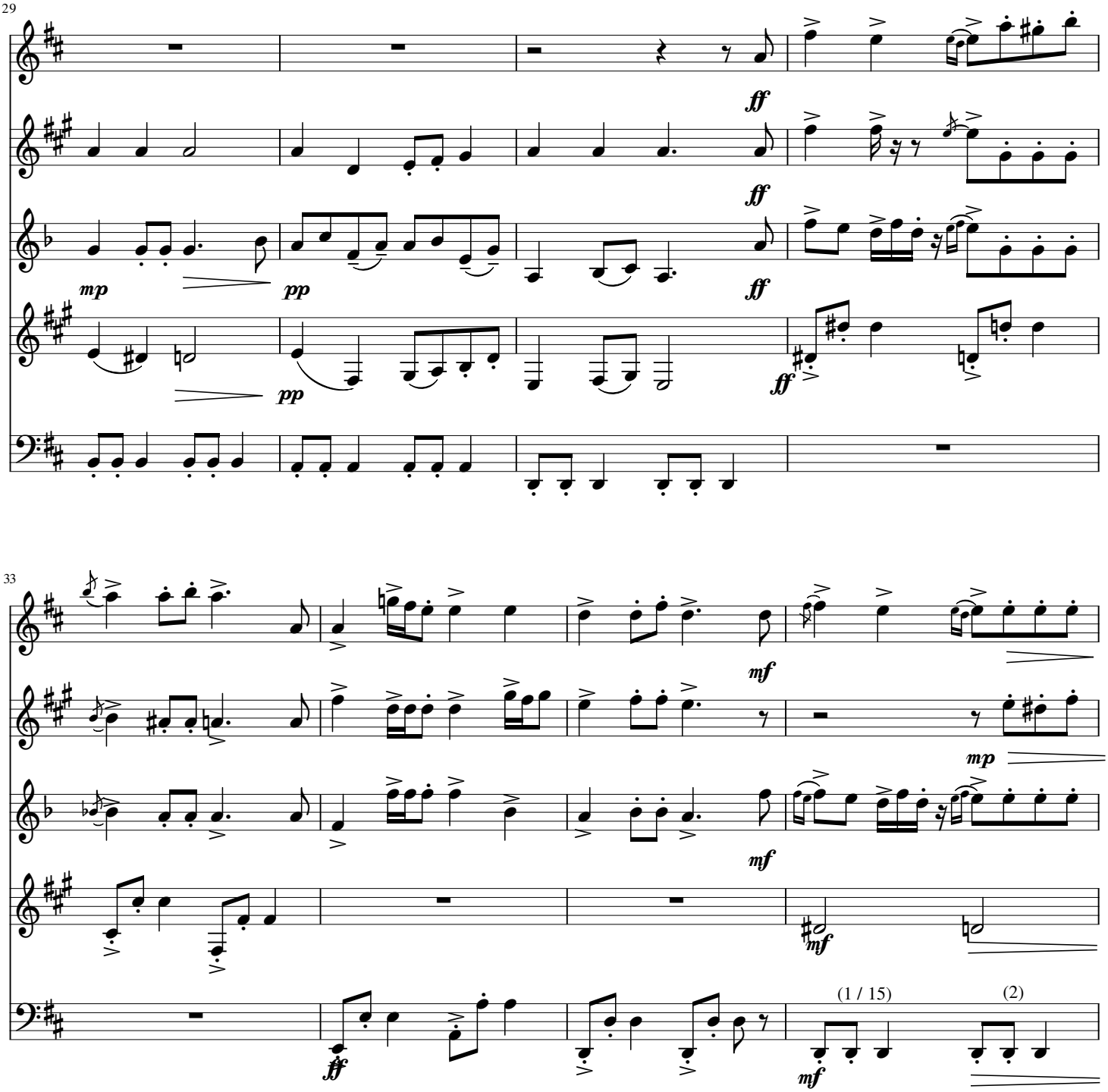
arranged for Wind Quintet by Toby Miller

Grieg

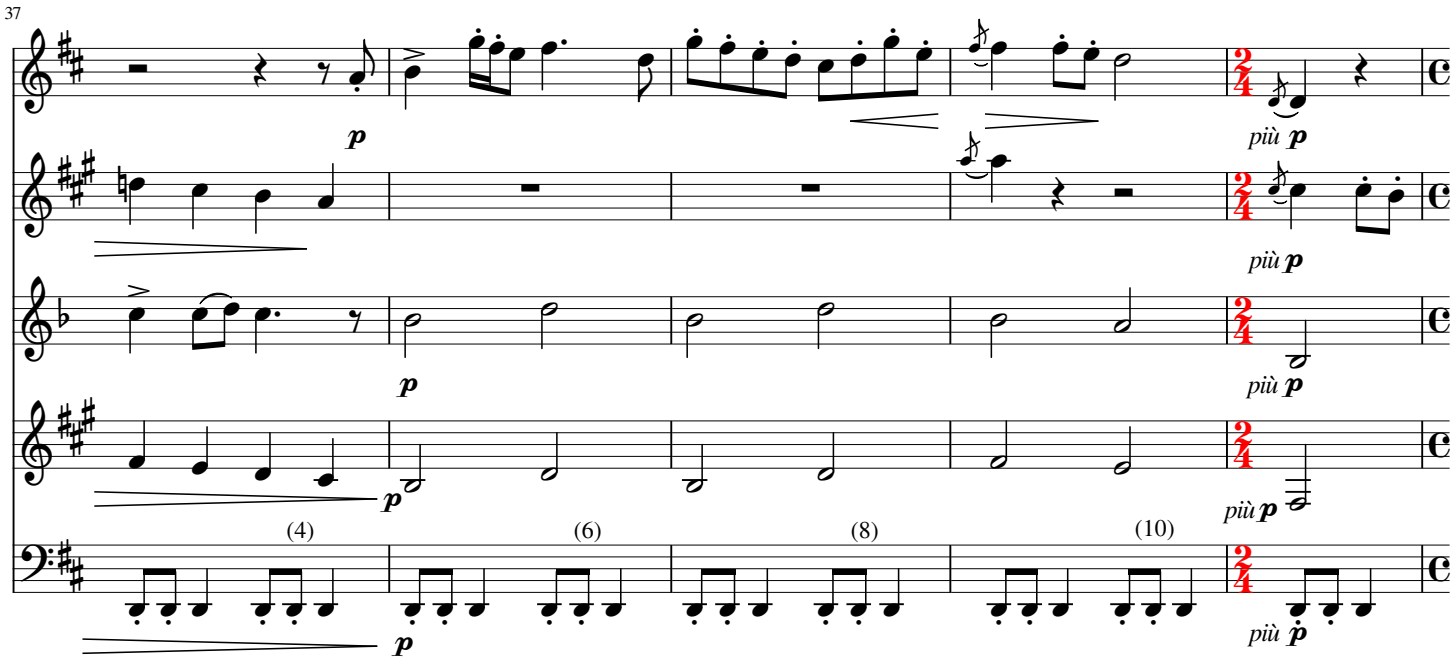


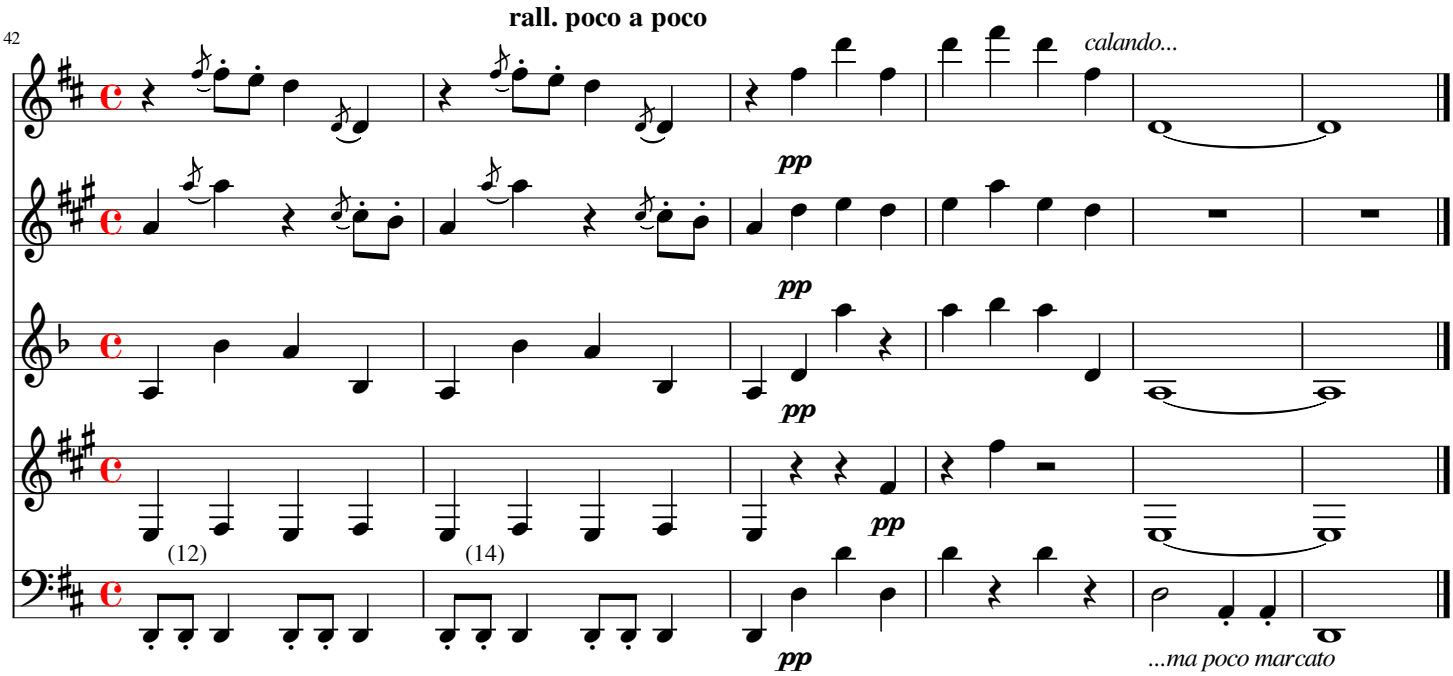

9
dolce
(#)
p
marcato
mp
12
1.
2.
mf
f


15
pp
p
poco marcato
19
mf
ff
f
1.
2.
mp
24
pp


29
ff
ff
mp
pp
pp
ff
ff

33
mf
mp
mf
mf
ff
(1 / 15)
(2)
mf

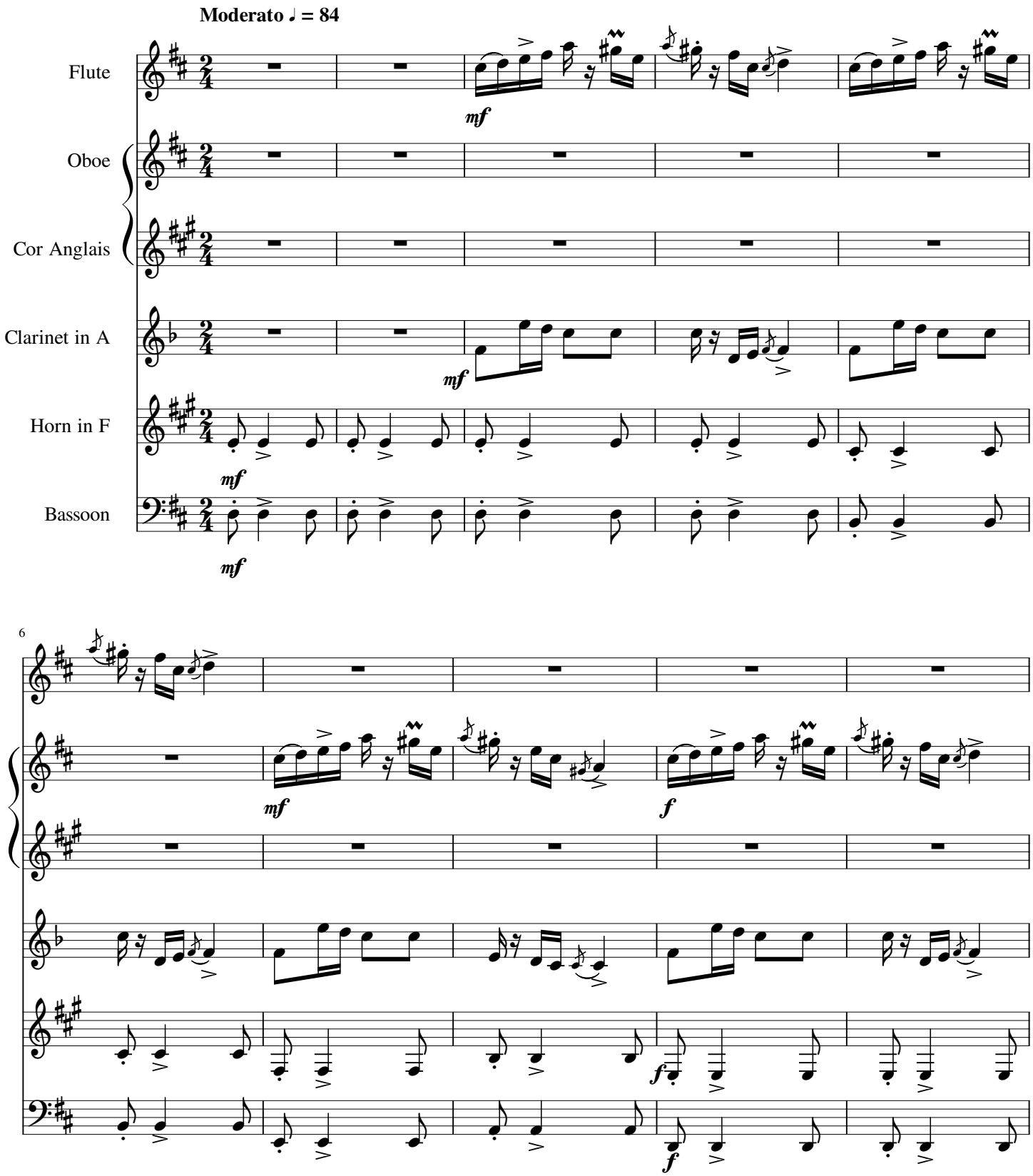

37
p
più p
(4)
(6)
(8)
(10)

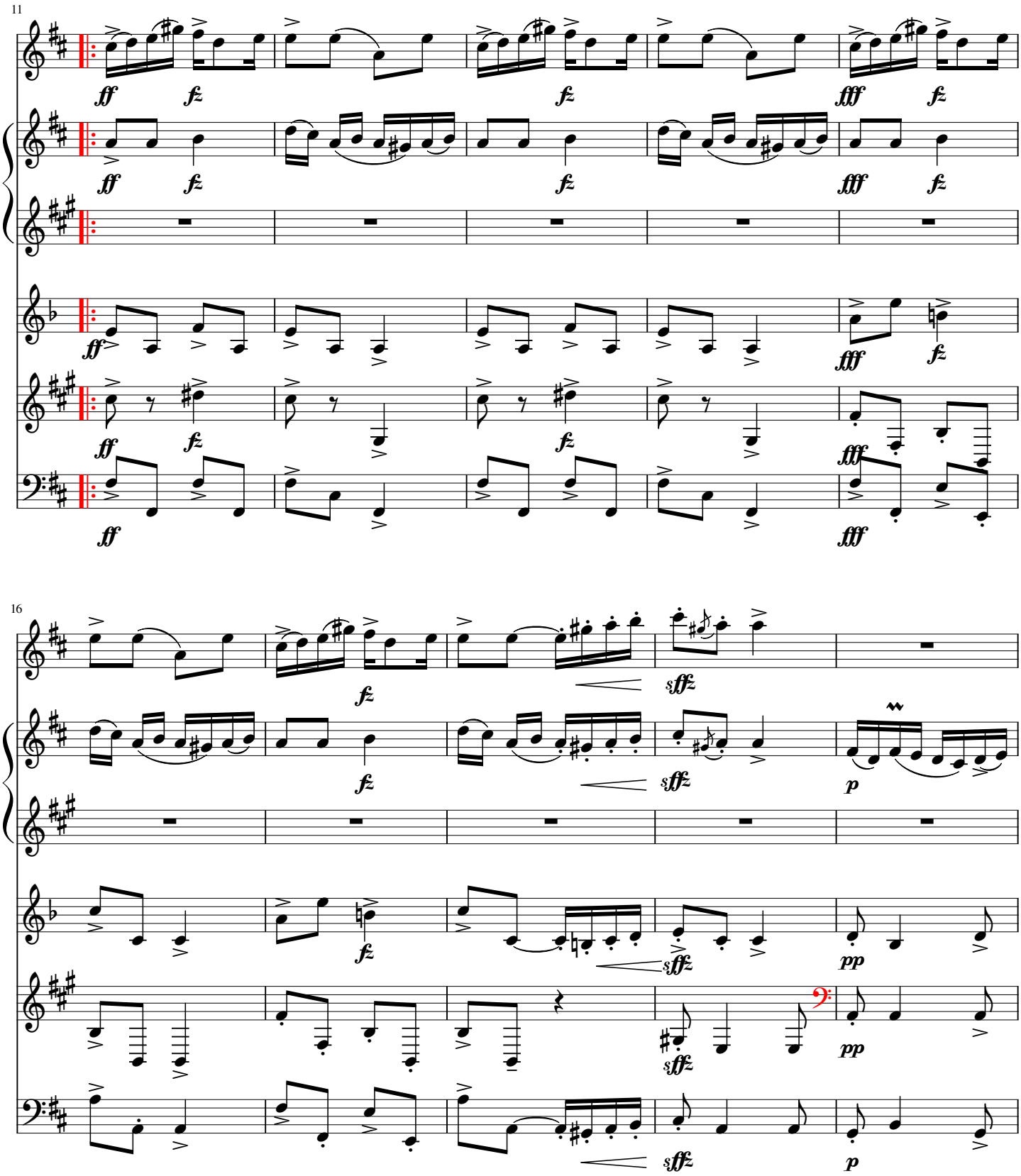

rall. poco a poco
42
calando...
pp
(12)
(14)
...ma poco marcato

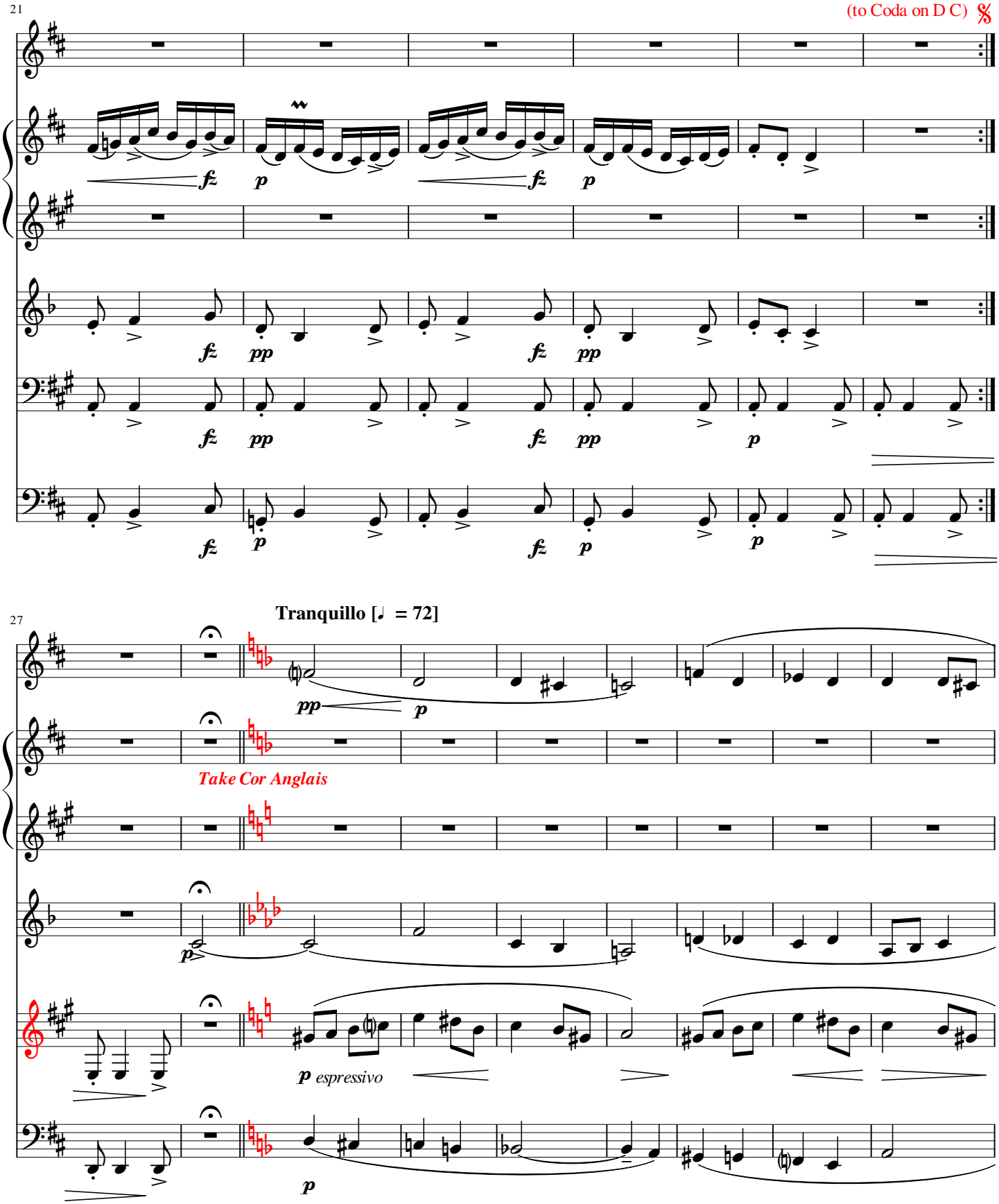
Halling 'from the Hill' no. 4 from Slåtter Op. 72

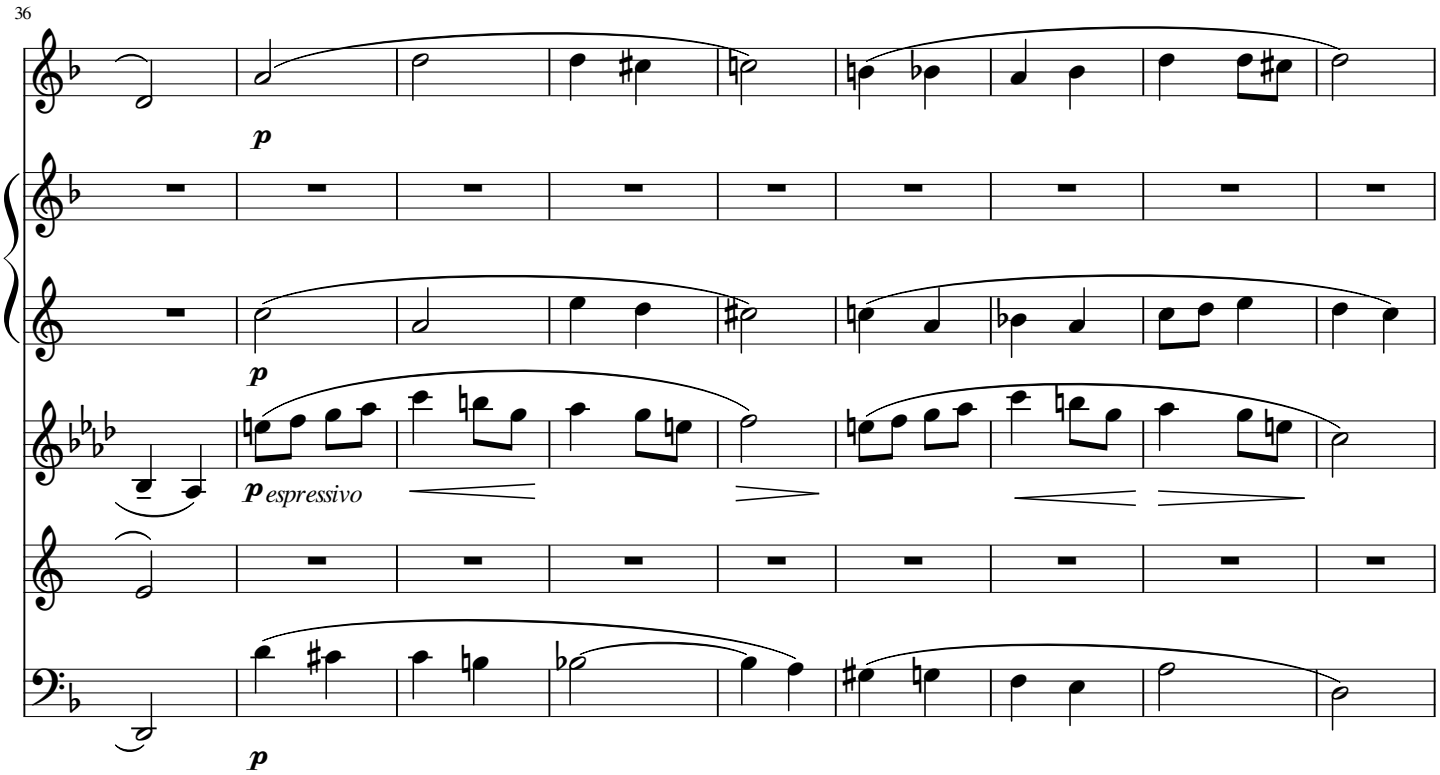
arranged for Wind Quintet by Toby Miller

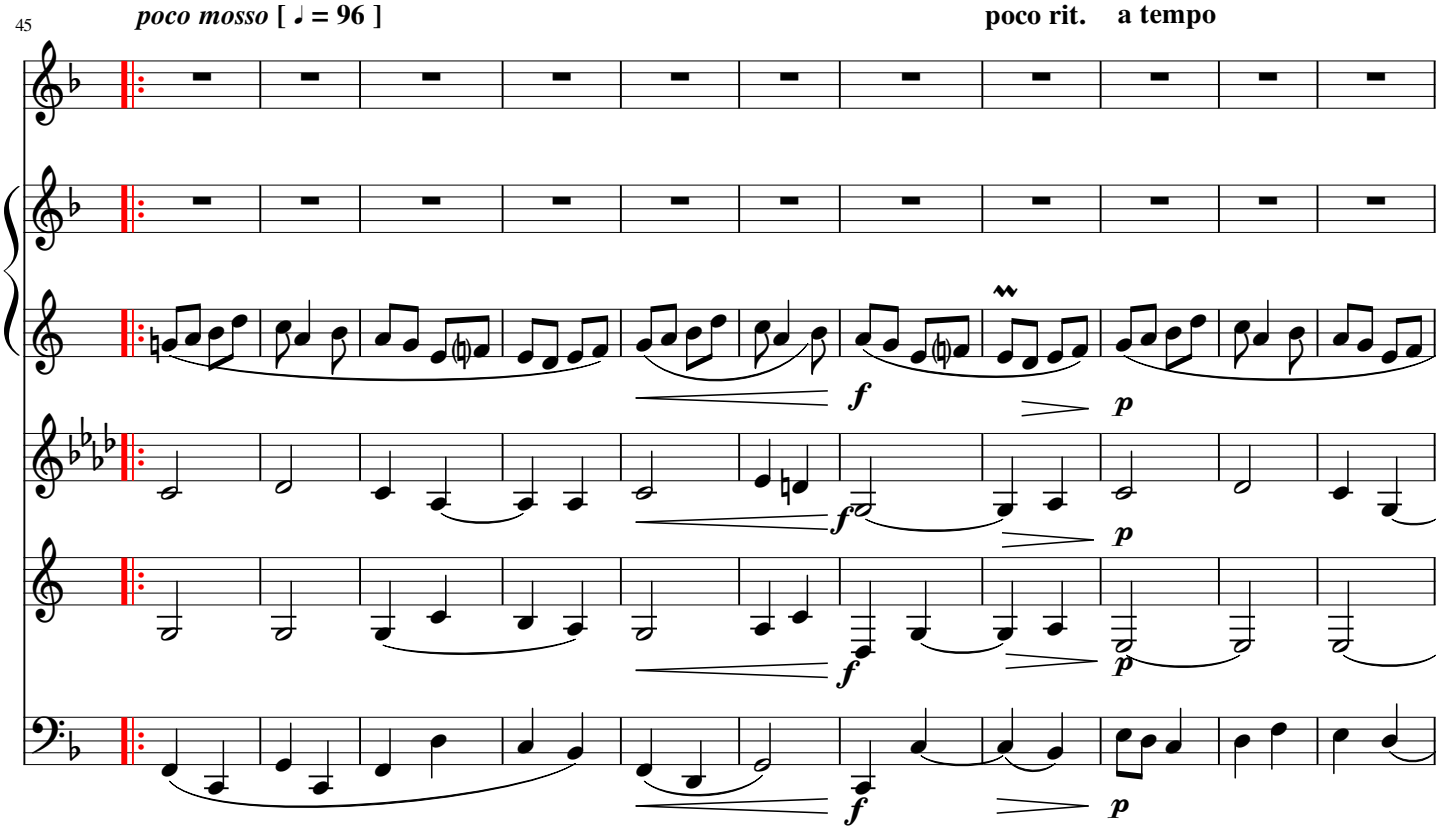
Grieg

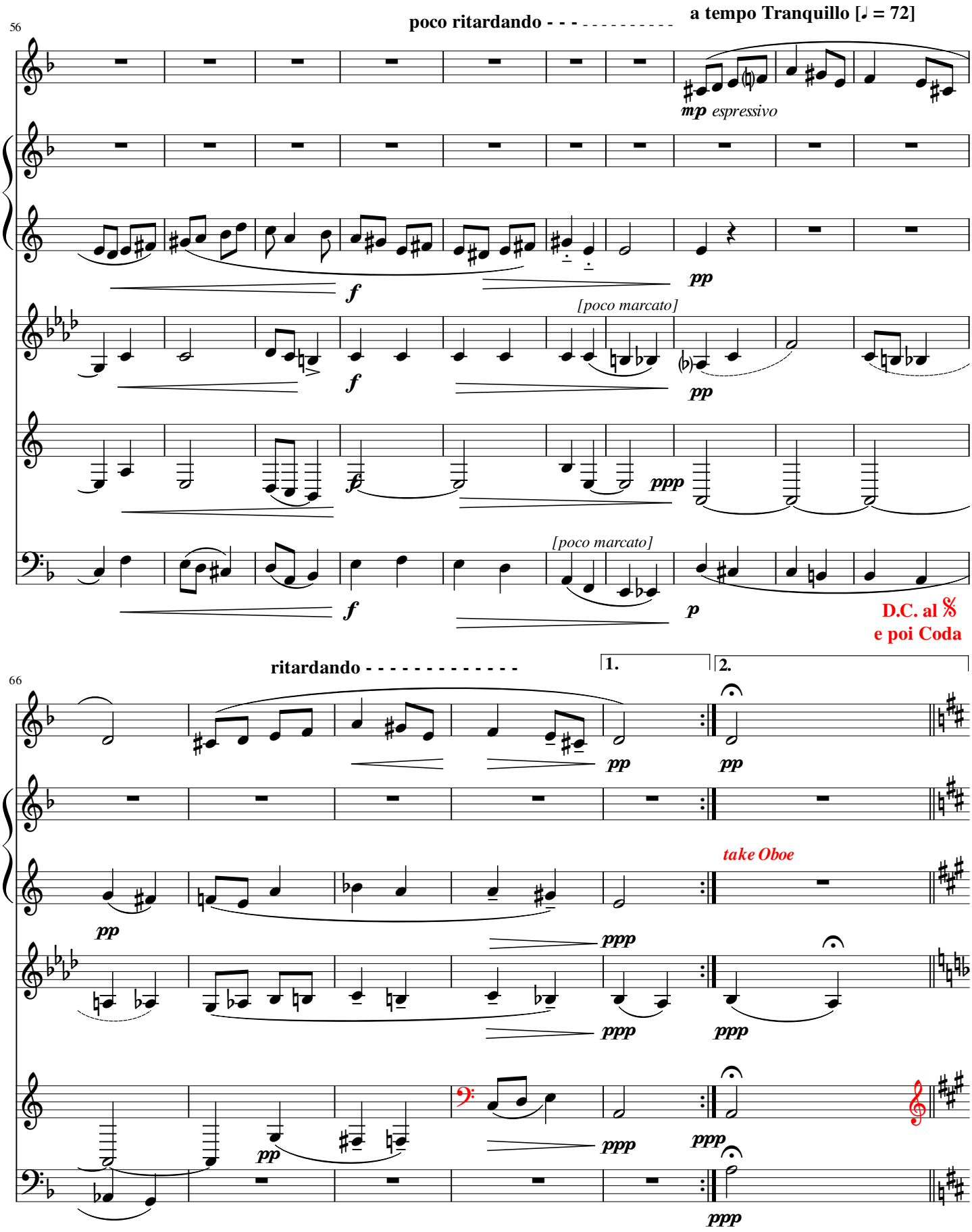


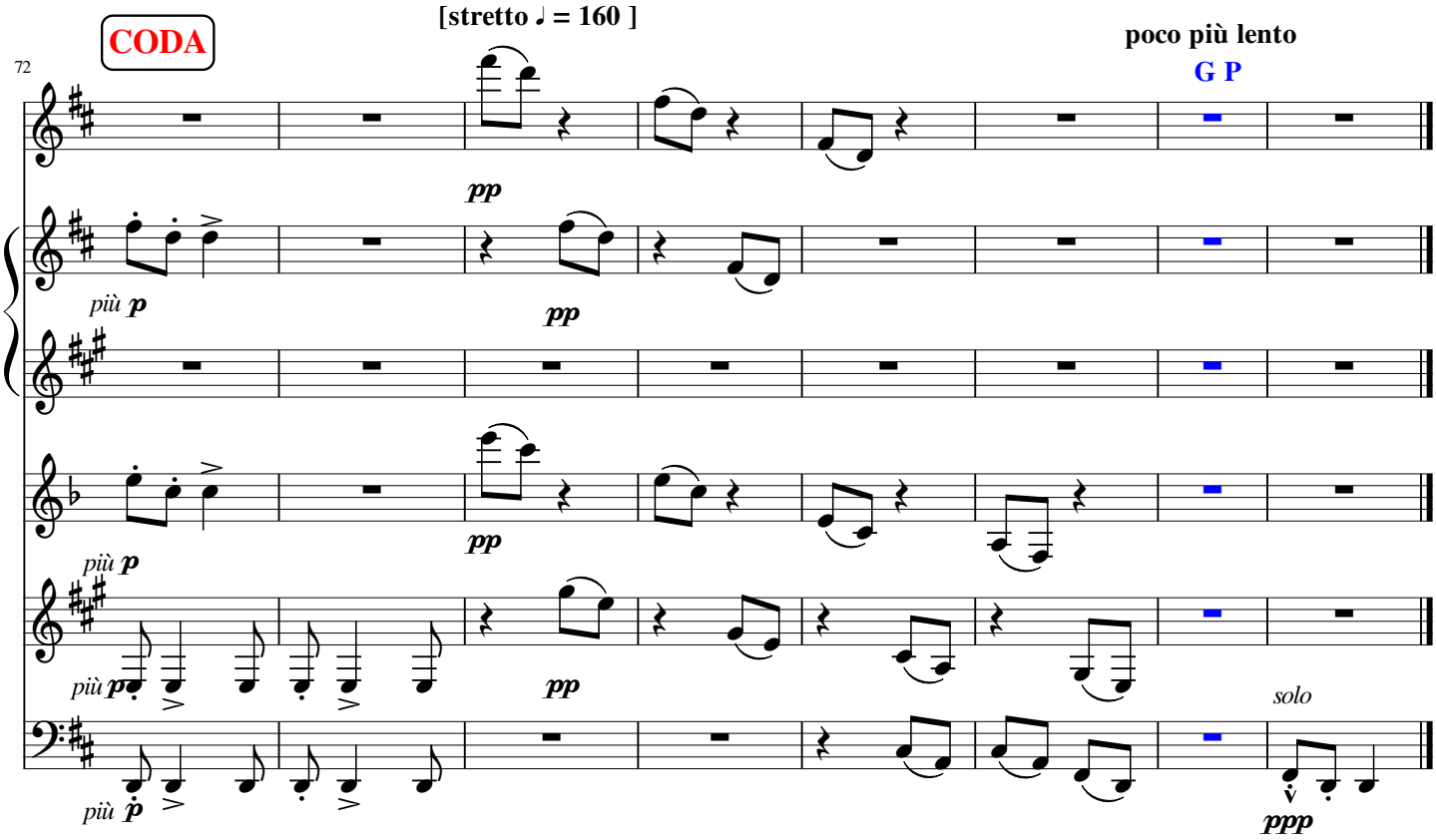

11
ff
fz
fff
16
sffz
p
pp


21
(to Coda on D C)
fz
p
pp
27
Tranquillo [♩ = 72]
Take Cor Anglais
p espressivo


36
p
p
p espressivo
p


45
poco mosso [♩ = 96]
poco rit. a tempo
f
p
f
p
f
p
f
p


56
poco ritardando - - - - - - - - - - -
a tempo Tranquillo [♩ = 72]
mp espressivo
pp
f
[poco marcato]
ppp
p
D.C. al 𝄋
e poi Coda
66
ritardando - - - - - - - - - - - - -
1.
2.
take Oboe


CODA
[stretto ♩ = 160]
poco più lento
G P
72
più p
pp
più p
pp
più p
pp
più p
pp
solo
più p
ppp