String Quartet Texture Models

The twenty-seven examples of string quartet textures in this document are here for you to steal and adapt!

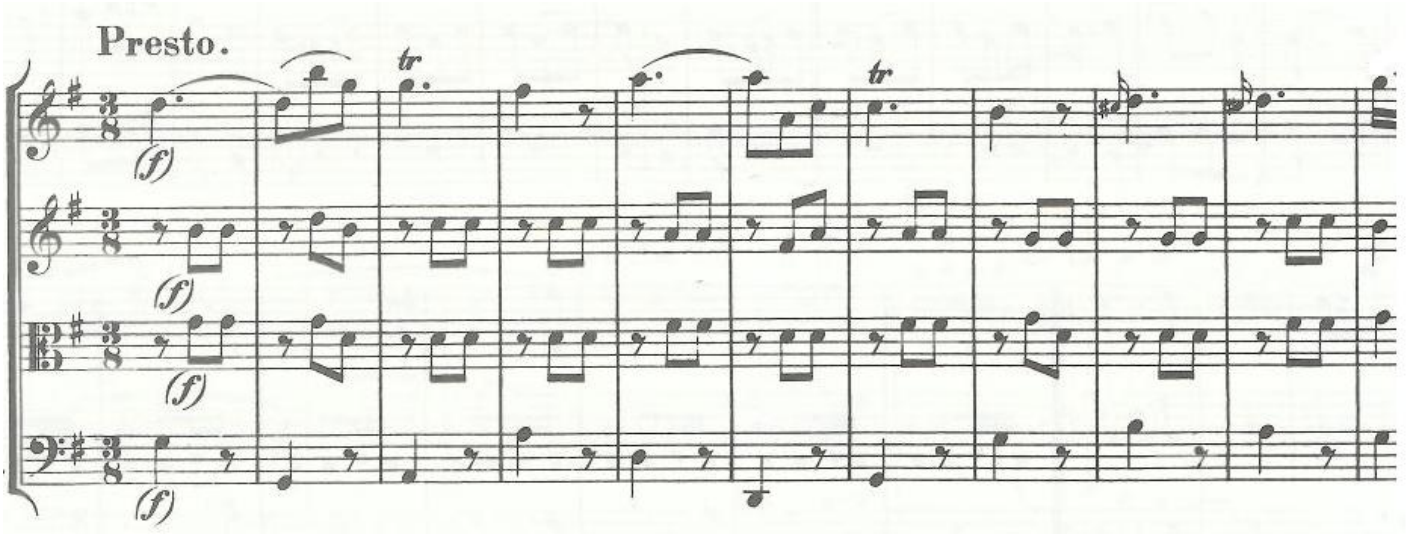
You can hear many of these extracts in the Tracks(MP3) folder (they have a corresponding SQ number).

The first ten or so models are relatively straightforward, after which they become more contrapuntal. The last six offer some more complex twentieth models.

Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

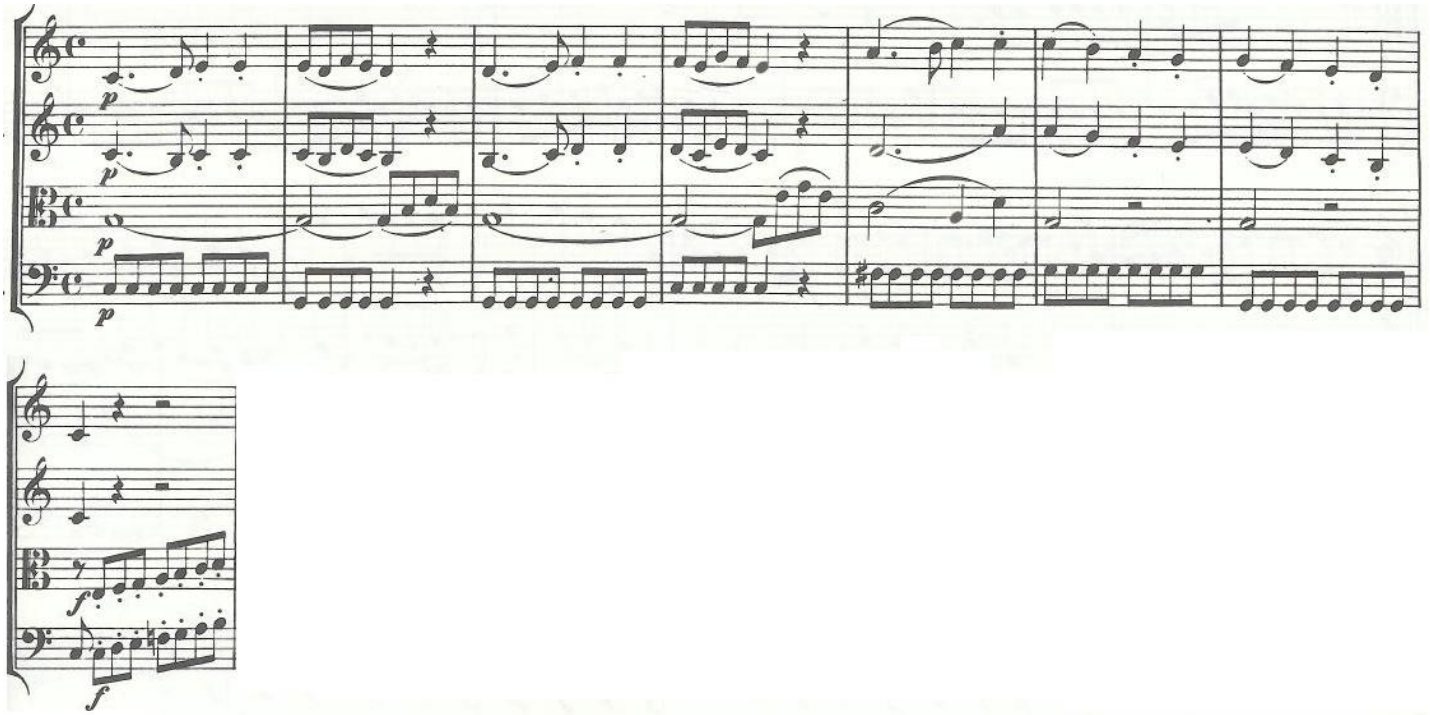
Composer	W. A. Mozart	*ID*	SQ1
Extract	String Quartet KV 156, I: Presto, bb. 1-19		
Notes	• Basically melody dominated homophony with melody in first violin • Lower three parts enliven chordal texture with rhythmic idea		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

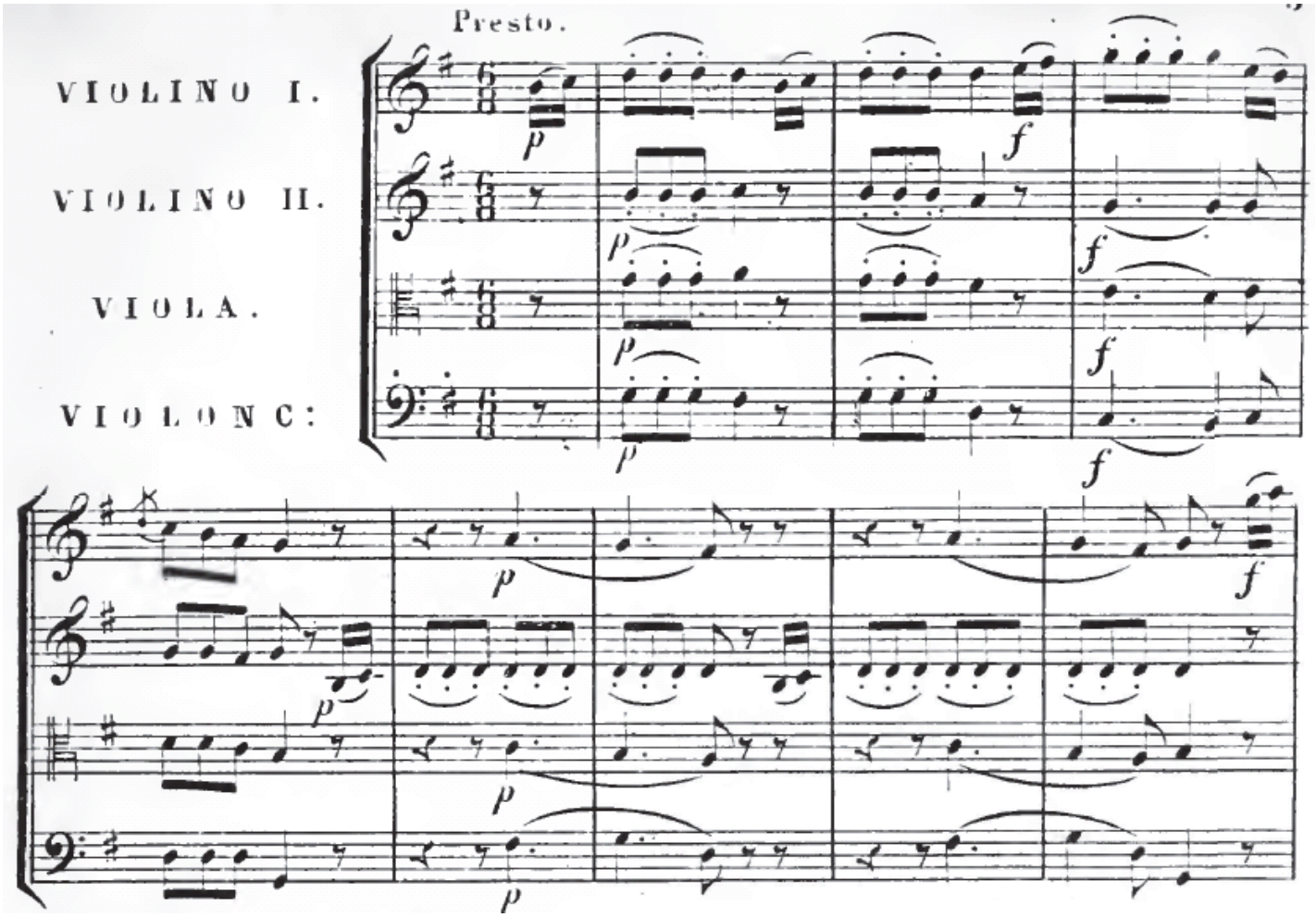
Composer	W. A. Mozart	*ID*	SQ2
Extract	String Quartet KV 157 I: bb. 1-8		
Notes	• Top two parts mostly in thirds • Simple bass line enlivened by quavers • Note how viola fills in the gaps at the end of the second and fourth bars.		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

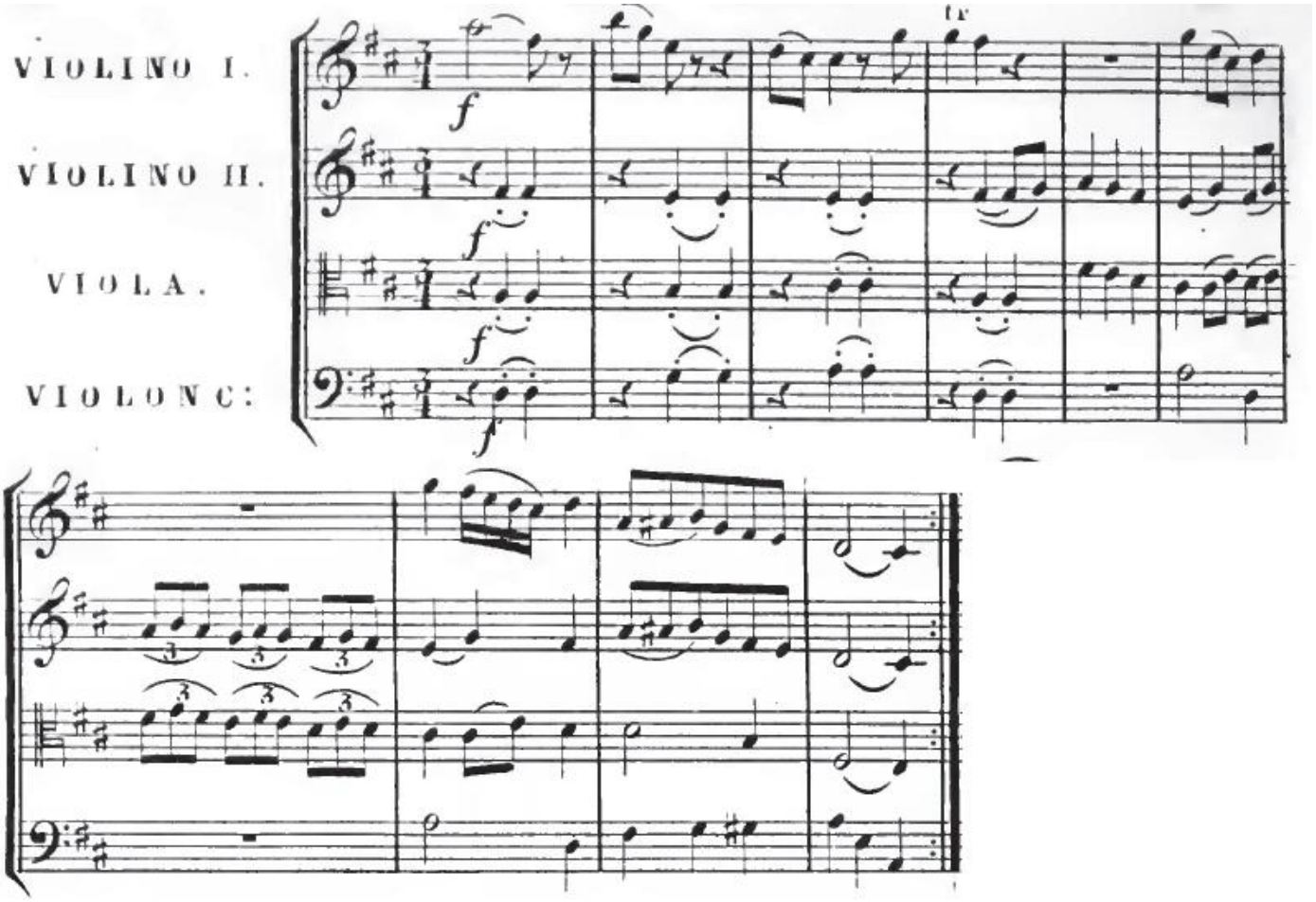
Composer	Joseph Haydn	*ID*	SQ3
Extract	Quartet op. 3 no. 3, Presto, bb. 1-8		
Notes	• Simple melody-dominated homophony at opening with some rhythmic variety in third full bar. • Melody switches to second violin in bar 5 but then the interest passes back up to the first violin when it renters.		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

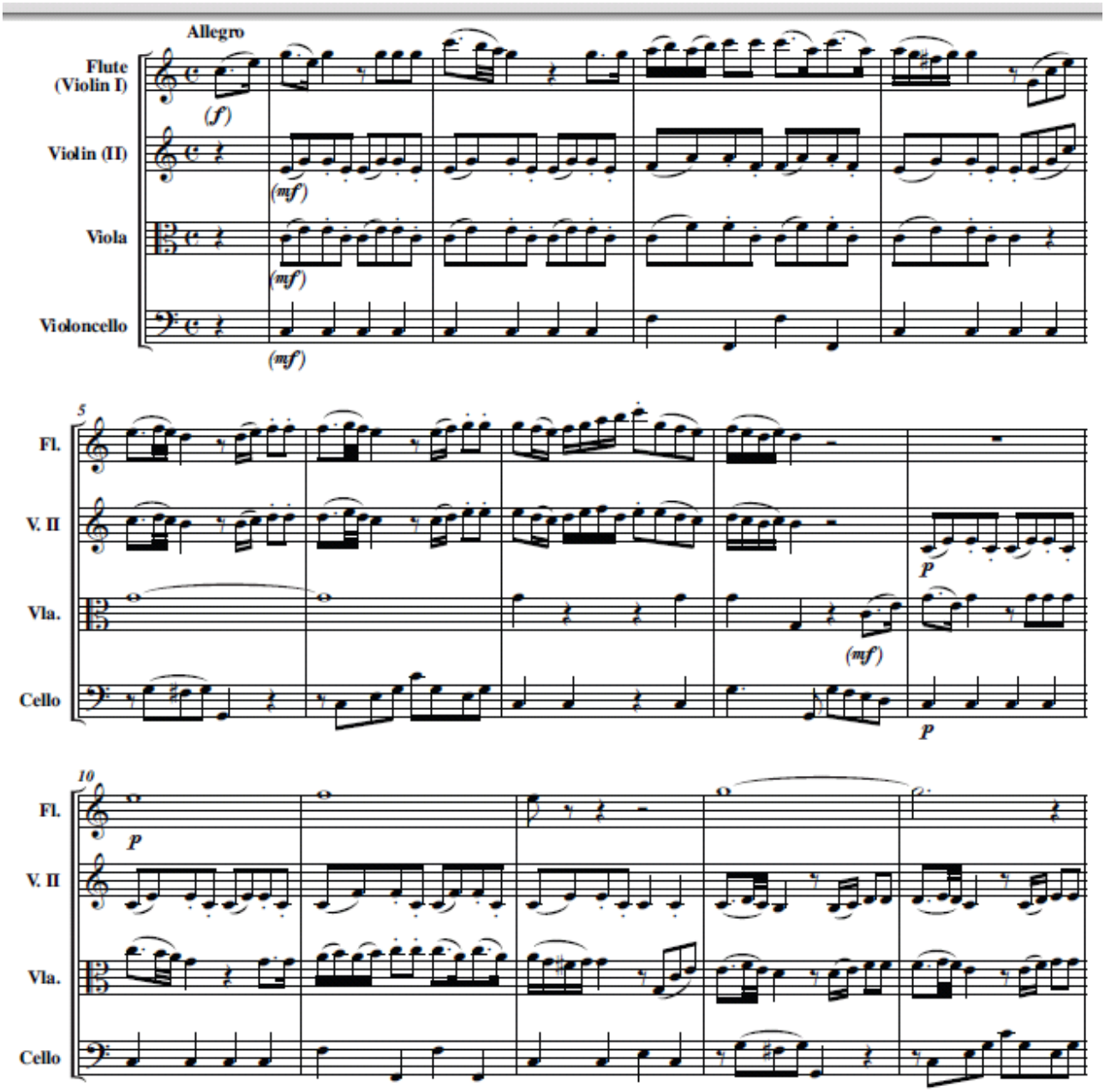
Composer	Joseph Haydn	*ID*	SQ4
Extract	Quartet op. 2 no. 5, Menuetto, bb. 1-10		
Notes	• Simple melody-dominated homophony at opening • Nice use of parallel thirds between second violin and viola • Melody passes between second and first violin in second phrase – second violin is octave lower than first..		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

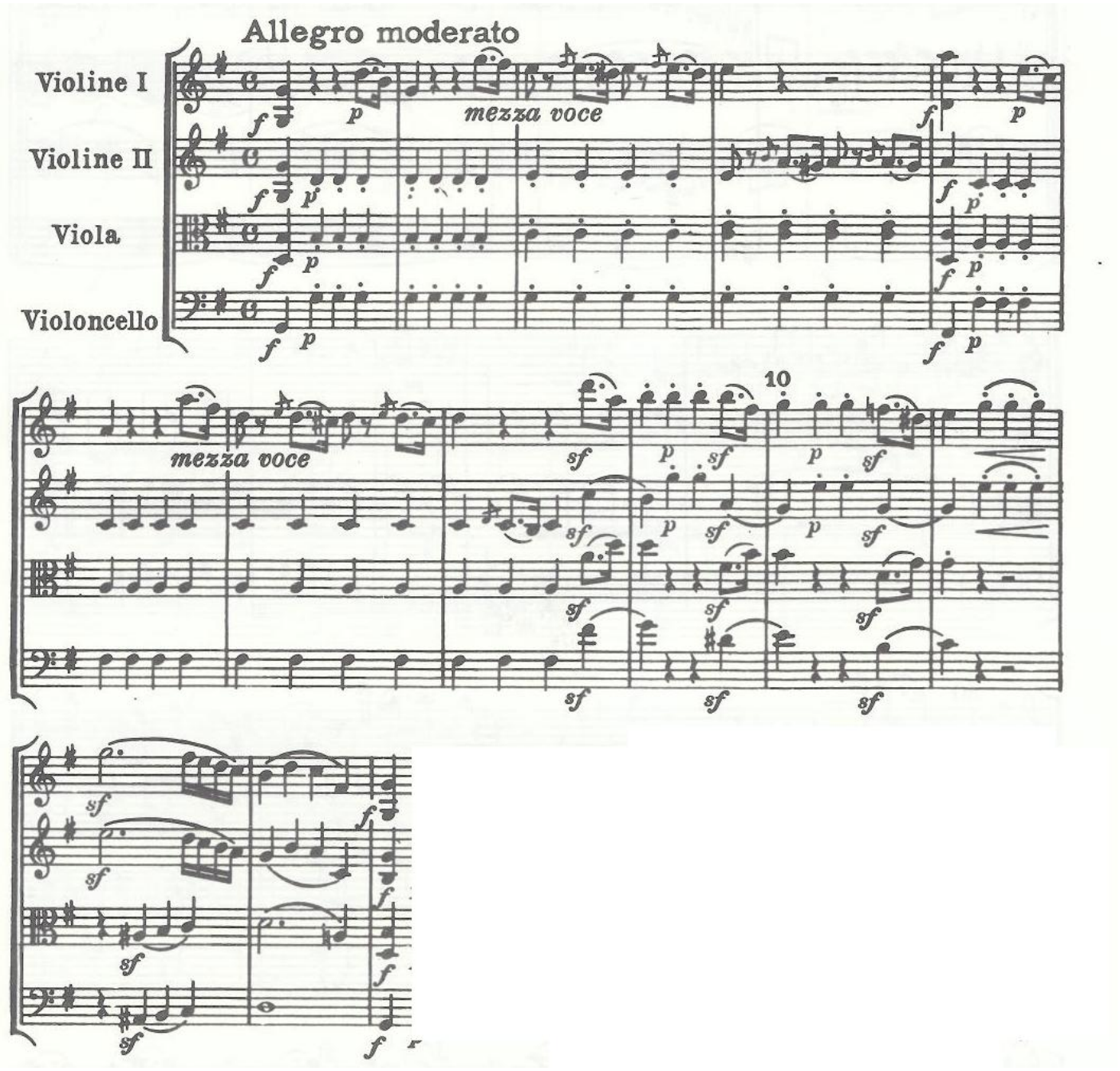
Composer	Johann Christian Bach	*ID*	SQ5
Extract	Quartet in C major, Allegro		
Notes	• Effective rocking motion in the middle of the texture (2nd violin and viola) for first four bars • Thirds between first and second violin in second phrase • Modification of first phrase in bar9, with melody in viola and rocking accompaniment reduced to one instrument.		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

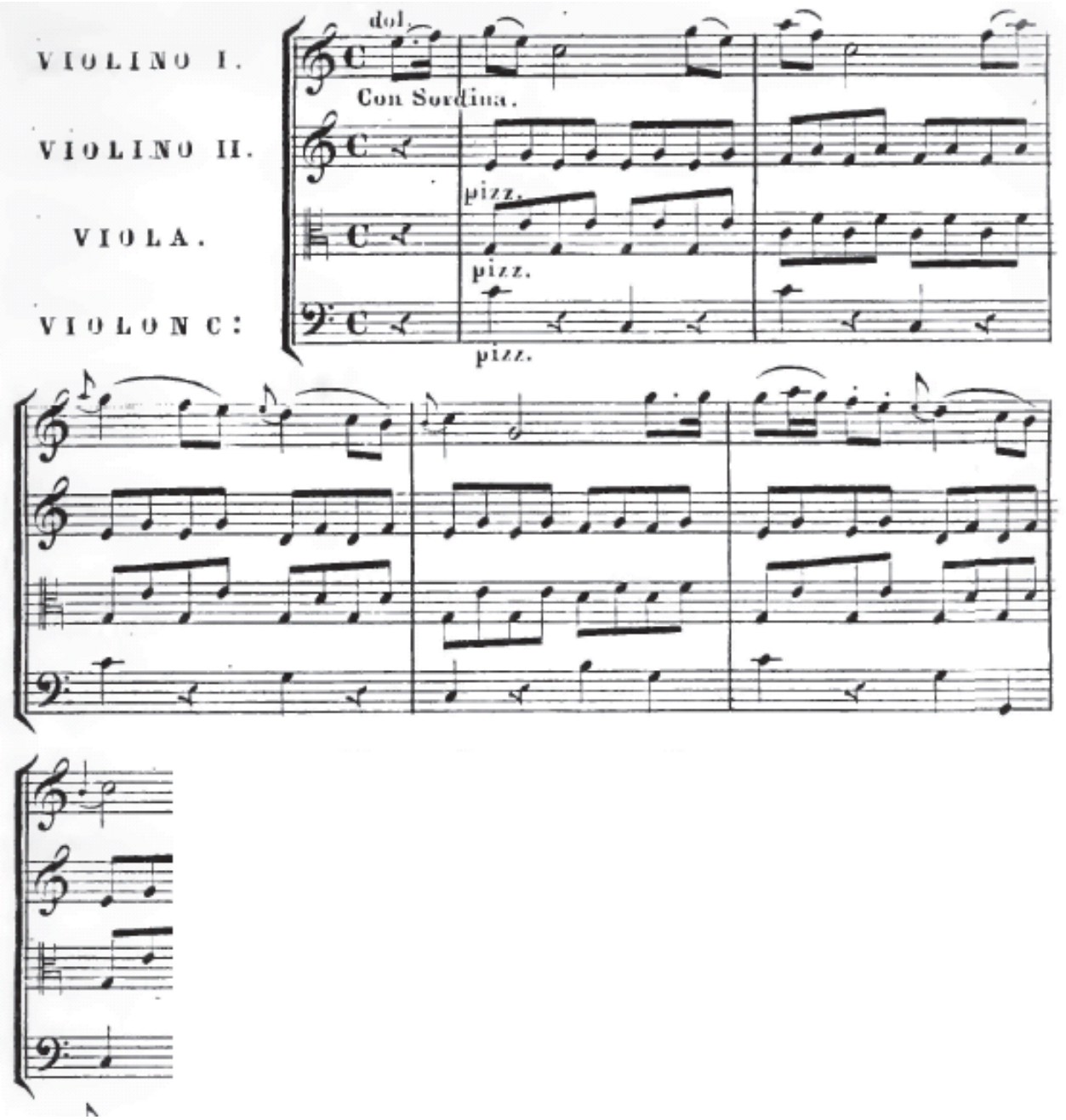
Composer	Franz Josef Haydn	*ID*	SQ6
Extract	Quartet op. 77 no. 1 I: Allegro moderato, bb. 1-20		
Notes	• Simple homophonic texture enlivened by staccato crotchets • Note echo of main melody in second violin in bar 4 • Note how the idea and texture is developed from the upbeat to bar 9 for the second half of the phrase.		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

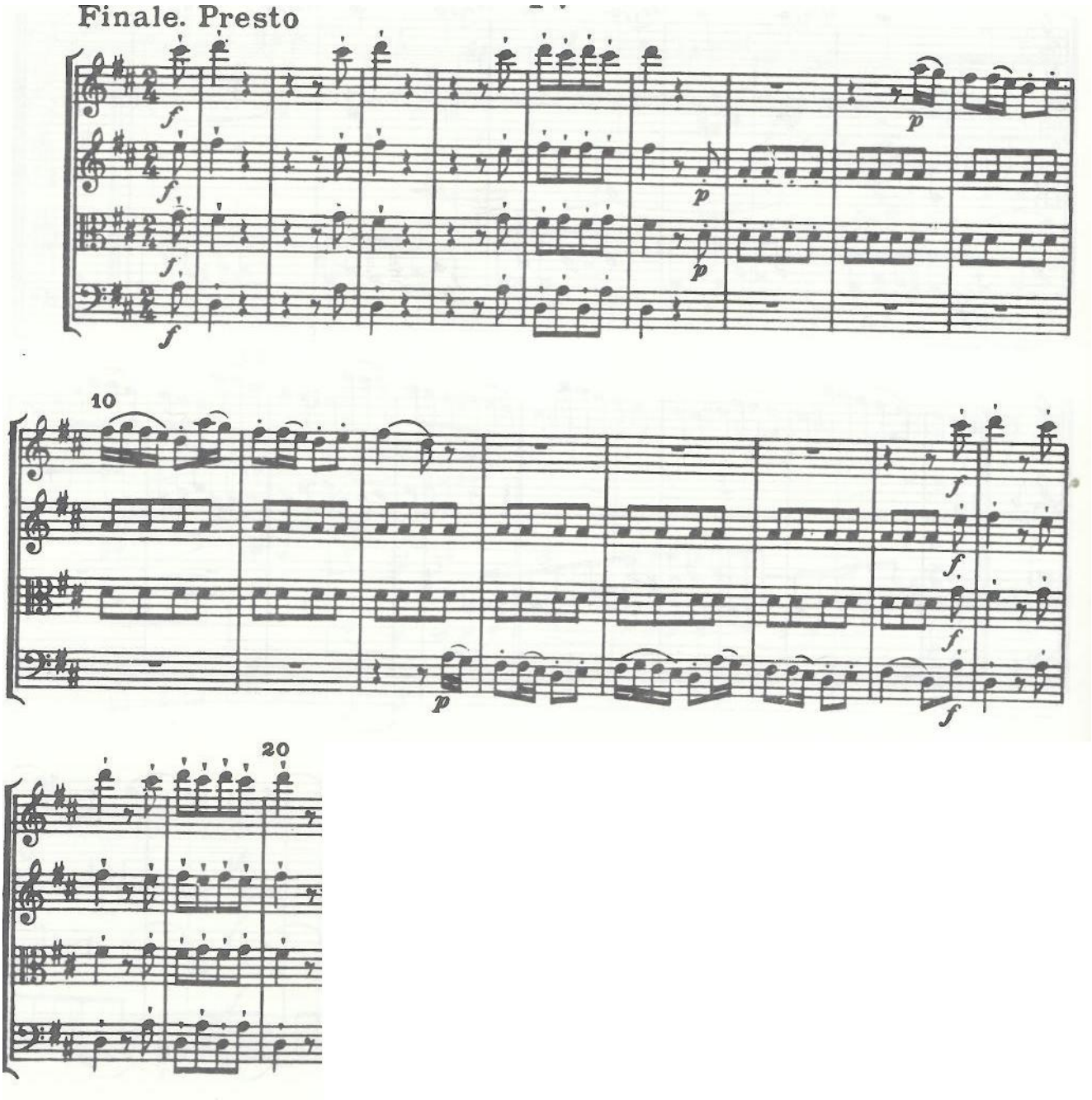
Composer	Joseph Haydn	*ID*	SQ7
Extract	Quartet op. 3 no. 5, Andante Cantabile		
Notes	• Gentle pizzicato accompaniment		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

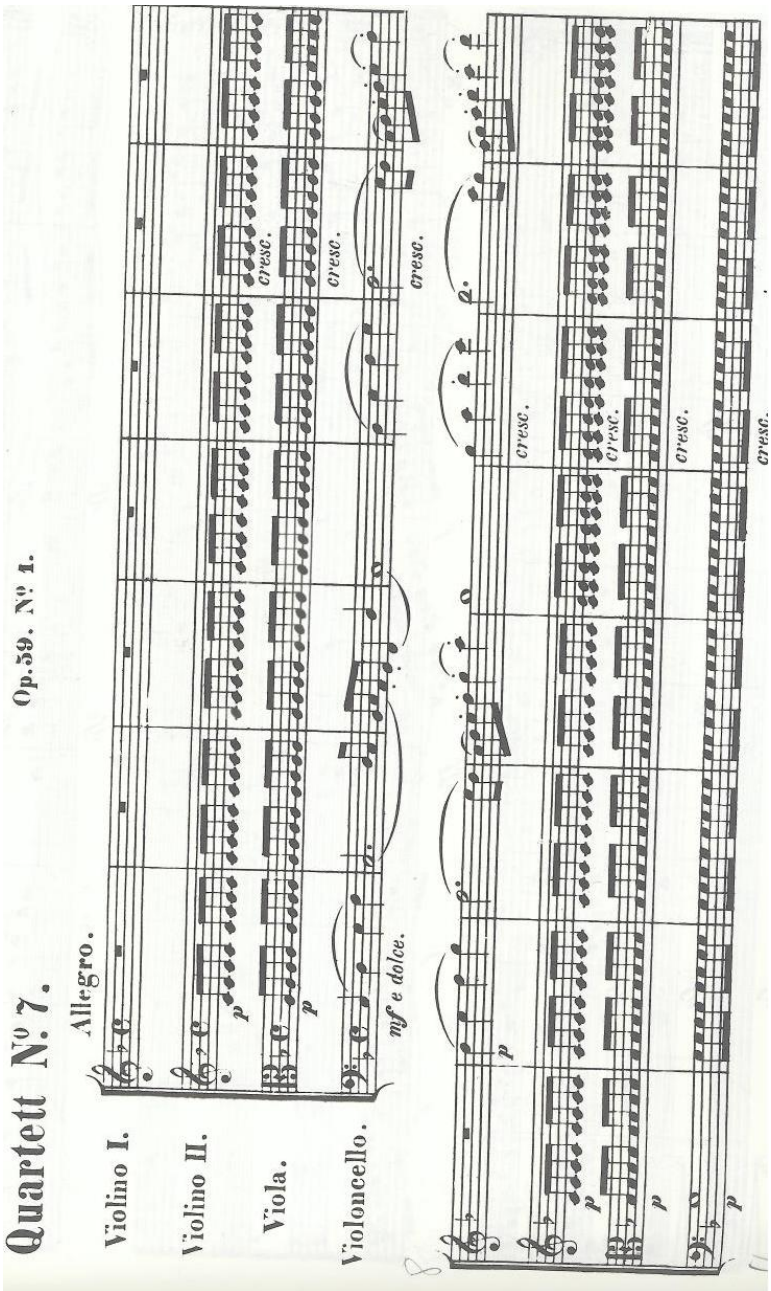
Composer	Franz Josef Haydn	*ID*	SQ8
Extract	Quartet op. 76 no. 5 IV: Presto, bb. 1-20		
Notes	• Alternation of two contrasting ideas: o Homophonic repeated cadential idea (bb. 1-6) o Double pedal with melody first over the top in the violin and then underneath in the cello		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

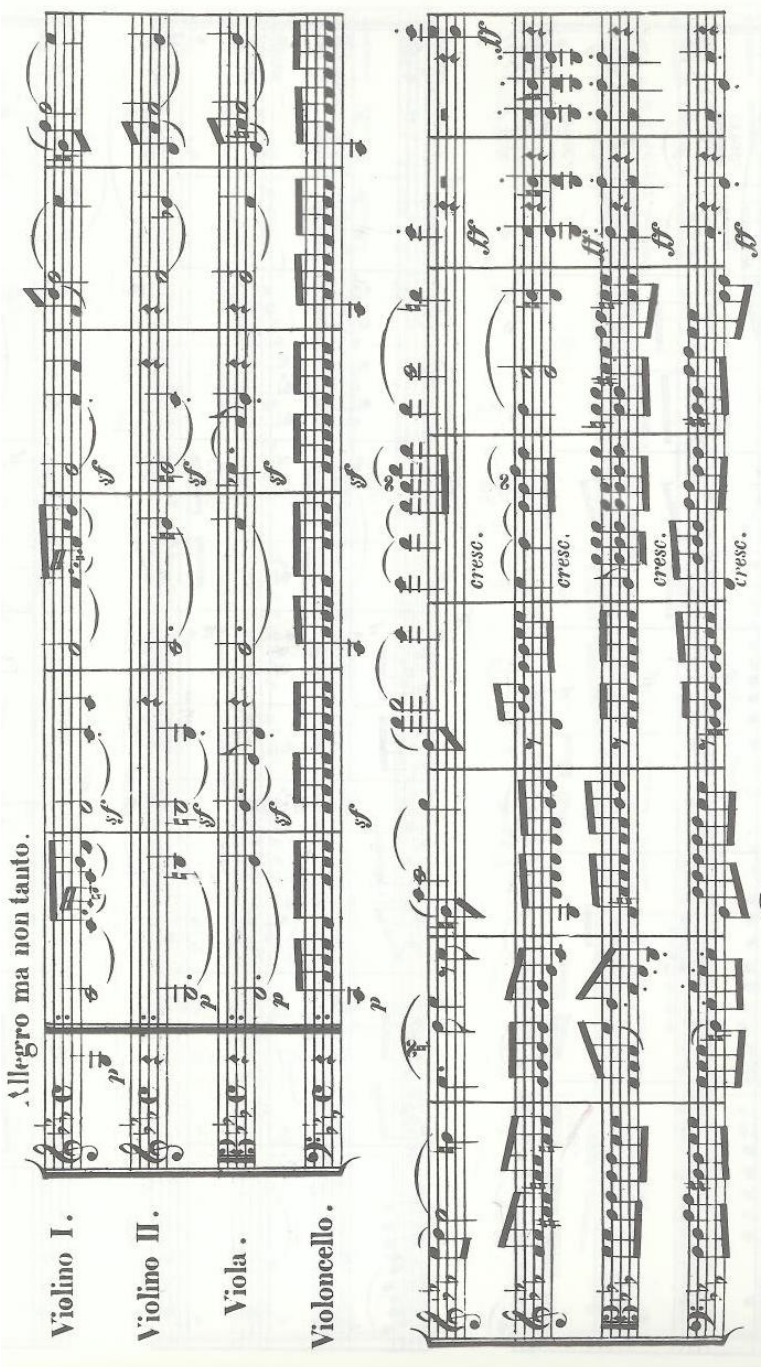
Composer	Ludwig van Beethoven	*ID*	SQ9
Extract	Quartet op. 59 no. 1, I bb. 1-19		
Notes	• Melody appears first in cello and then in first violin with quaver accompaniment		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

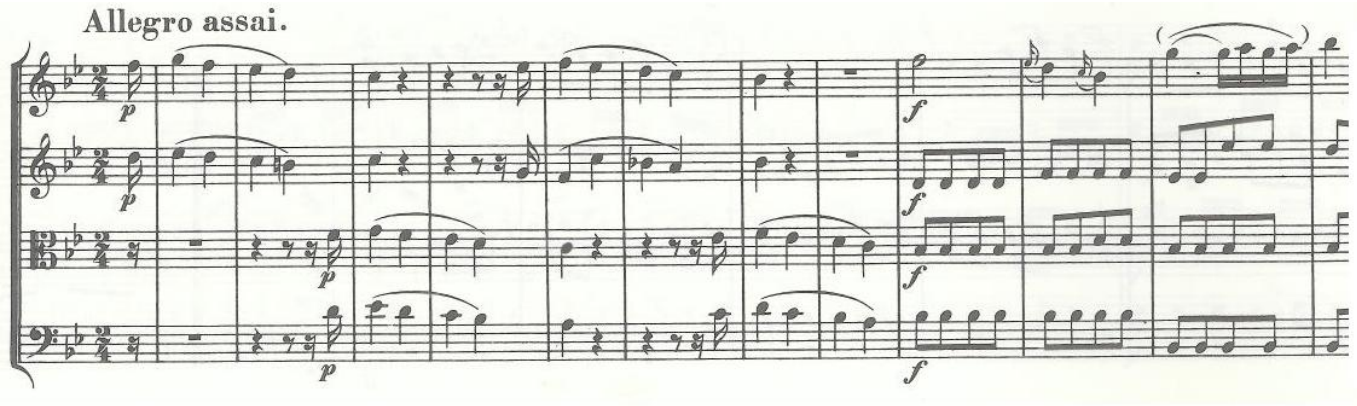
Composer	Ludwig van Beethoven	*ID*	SQ10
Extract	Quartet op. 18 no. 4, I bb. 1-13		
Notes	• Tension created by quaver pedal in cello • Note how the passage builds to a climax, going up in both volume and pitch		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

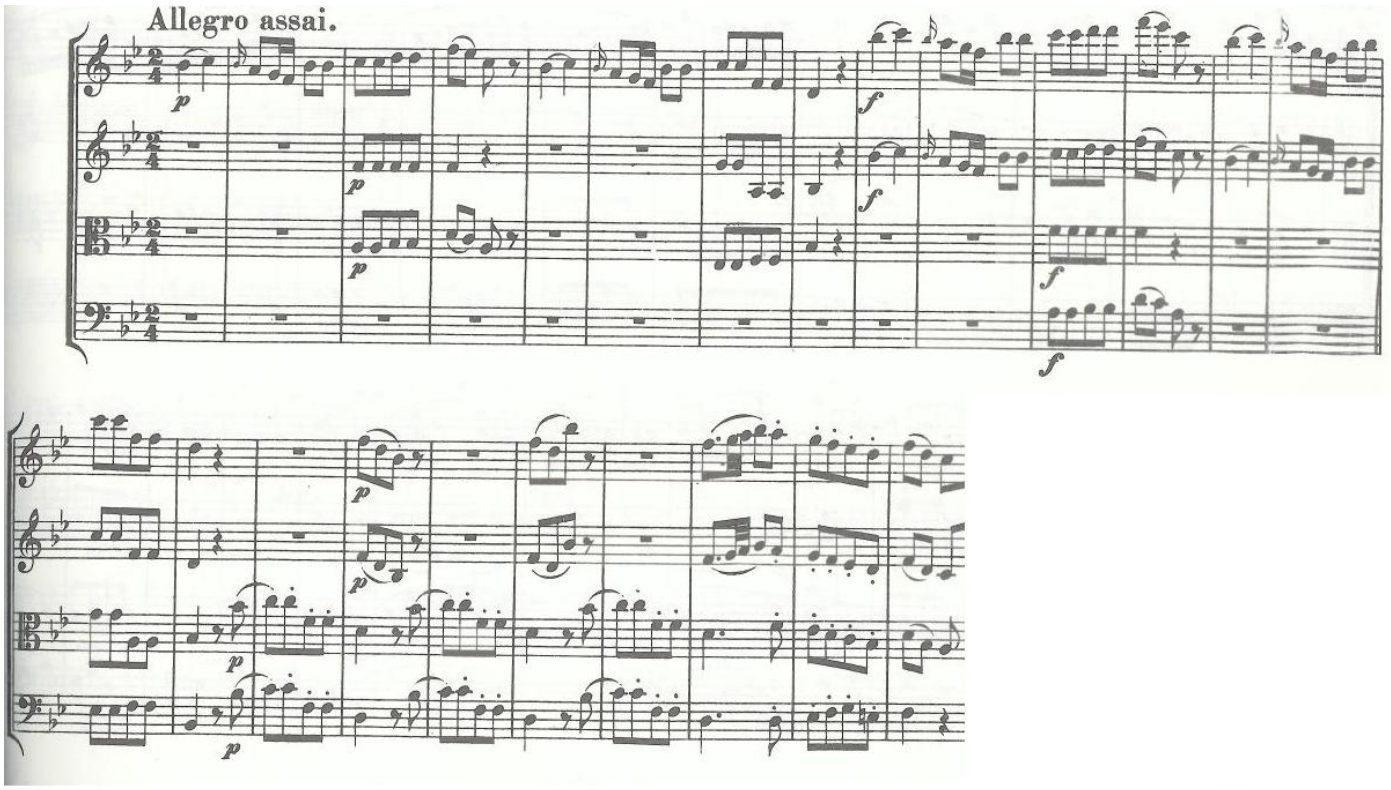
Composer	W. A. Mozart	*ID*	SQ11
Extract	String Quartet KV 172 IV: Allegro bb 1-12		
Notes	• Overlapping pairs of imitation in first eight bars • Note how this phrase is then rounded off by a simpler homophonic texture		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

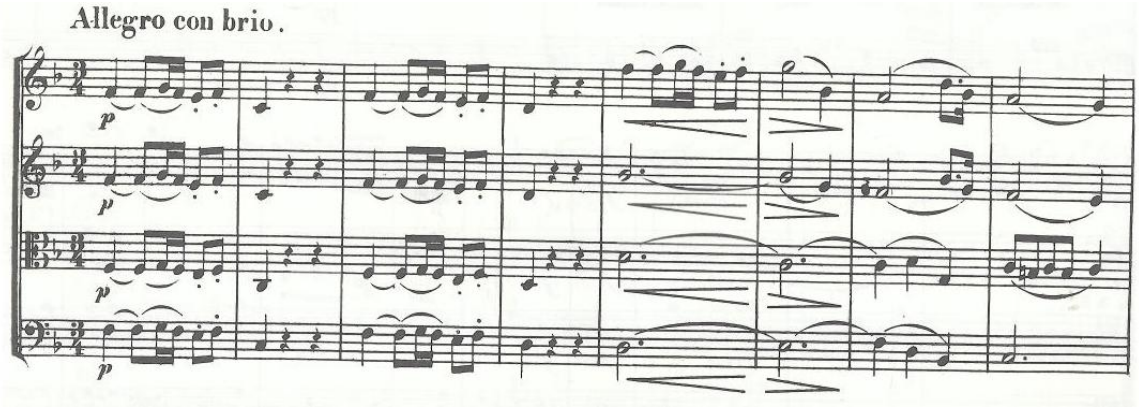
Composer	W. A. Mozart	*ID*	SQ12
Extract	String Quartet KV 458 IV: Allegro assai, bb 1-24		
Notes	• Note how second eight bars develops the texture of the first eight by reinforcing the melody in a higher octave and moving the accompaniment down onto the lower instruments • From bar 17 the question and answer texture is basically two-part writing for four instruments.		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

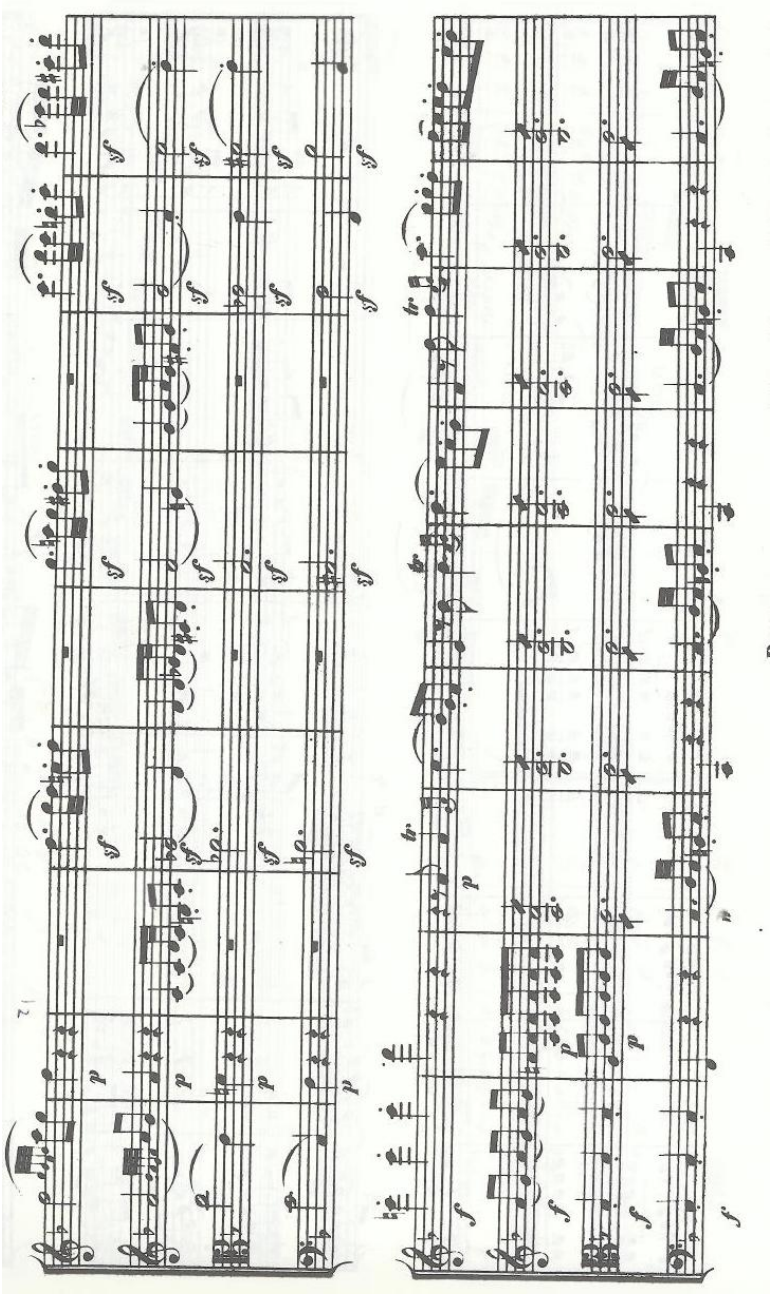
Composer	Ludwig van Beethoven	*ID*	SQ13
Extract	Quartet op. 18 no. 1, I bb. 1-8		
Notes	• Octave unison texture in first four bars contrasts with fuller homophonic texture in second half of phrase • Note how the second half of the extract takes the opening motif as its starting point • See SQ18b to see how Beethoven develops this idea		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

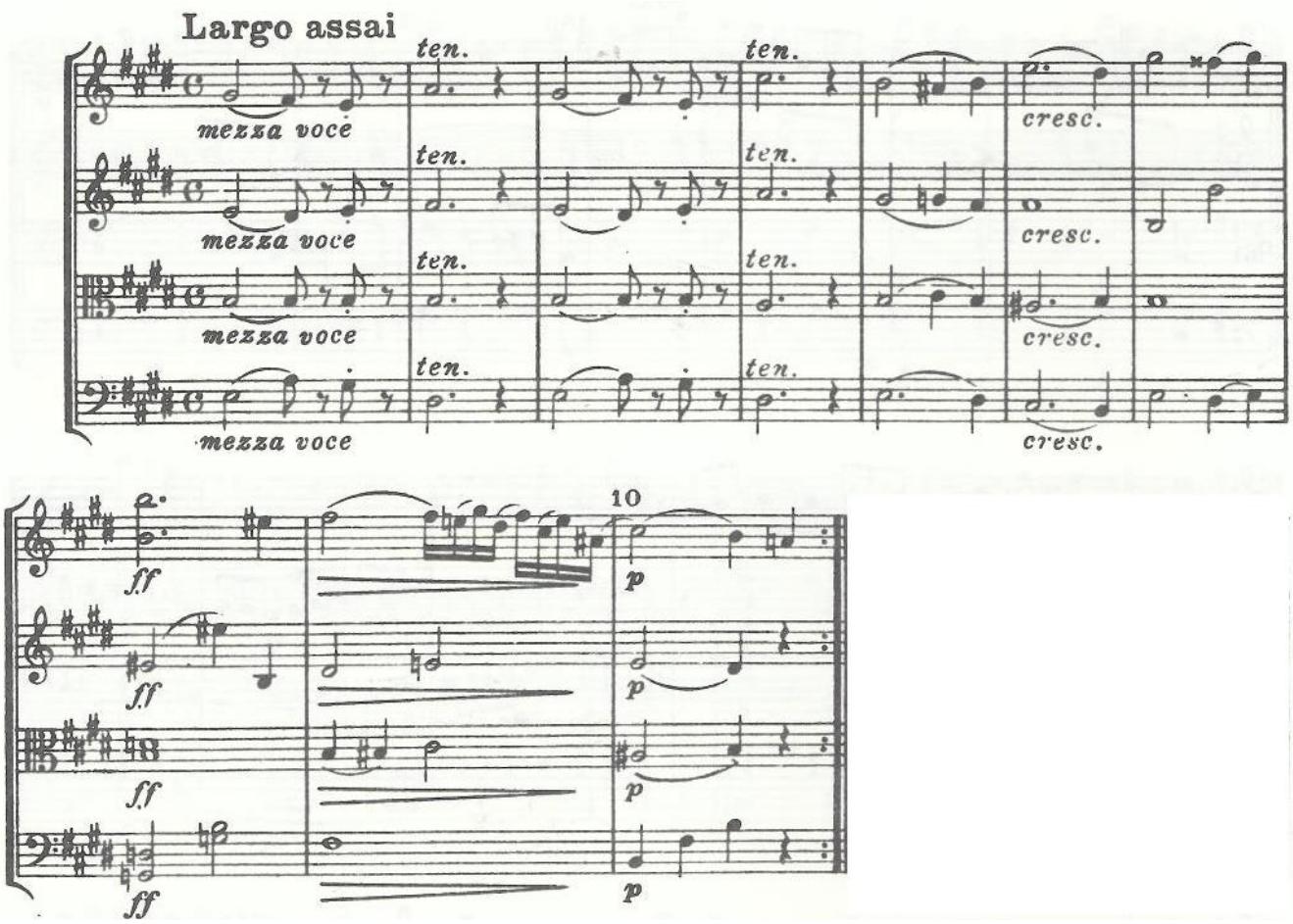
Composer	Ludwig van Beethoven	*ID*	SQ14
Extract	Quartet op. 18 no. 4, I bb. 21-29		
Notes	• Note how the motif from SQ13 is repeated and developed in this extract		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

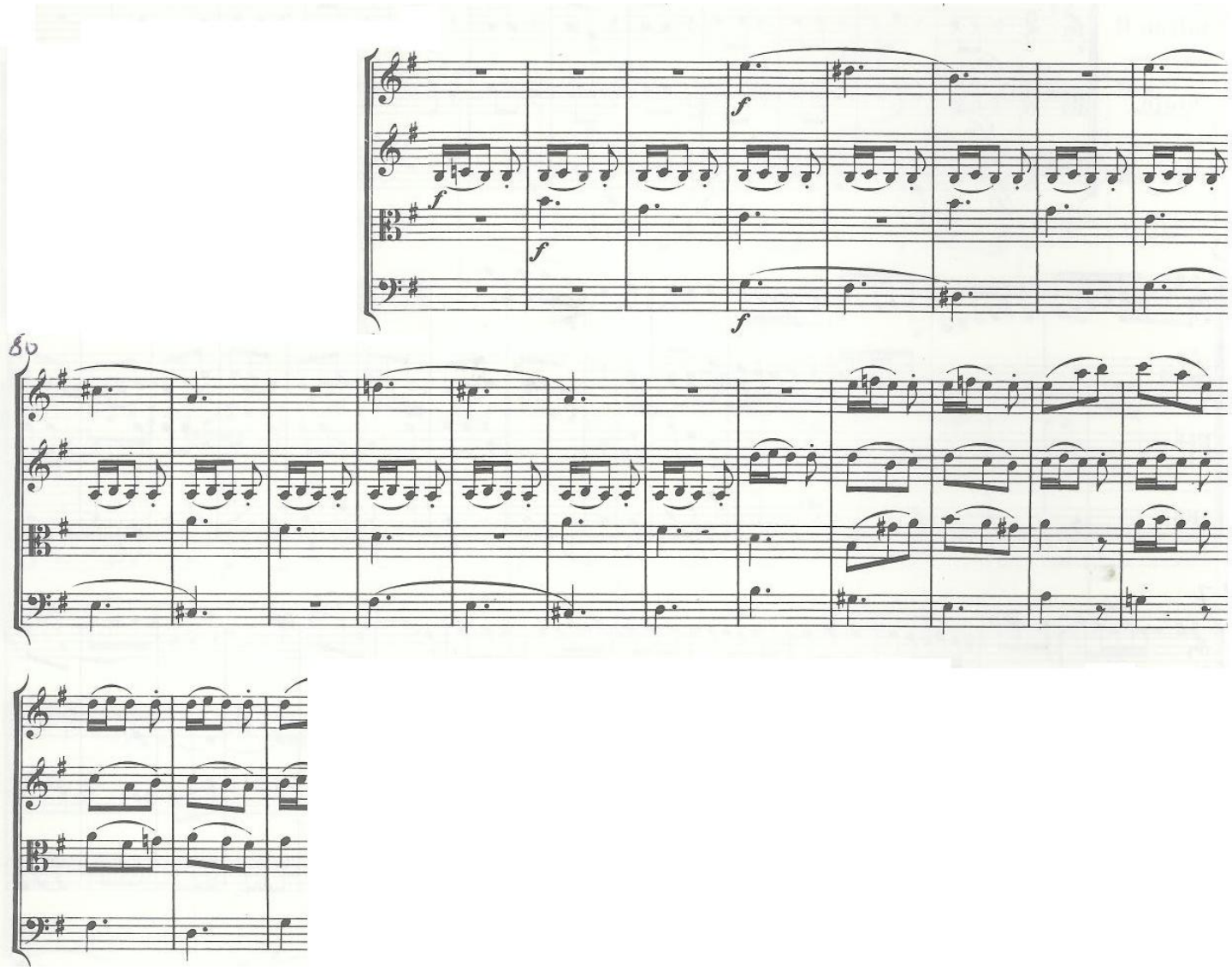
Composer	Franz Josef Haydn	*ID*	SQ15
Extract	Quartet op. 74 no. 3 II: Largo, bb. 1-10		
Notes	• Simple but effective homophonic texture • Gradually moves to melody dominated homophony in second half of phrase • Note that harmony has to be very strong to make this sort of writing effective.		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

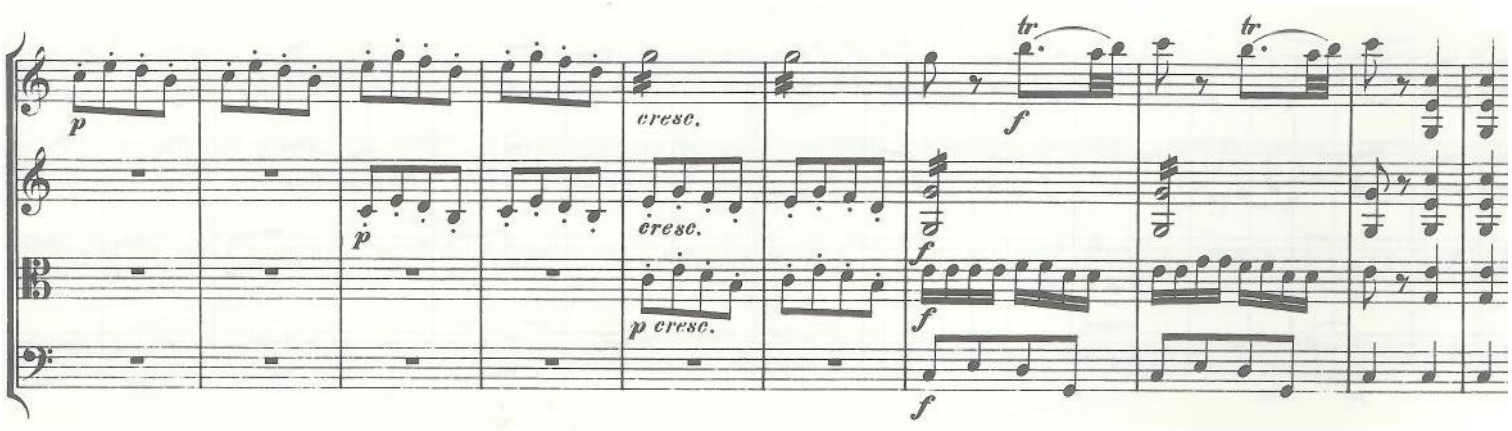
Composer	W. A. Mozart	*ID*	SQ16
Extract	String Quartet KV 156, I: Presto, bb. 72-94		
Notes	• Ostinato idea in second violin • Simple motif is imitated between other three parts, with cello and first violin working as a pair		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

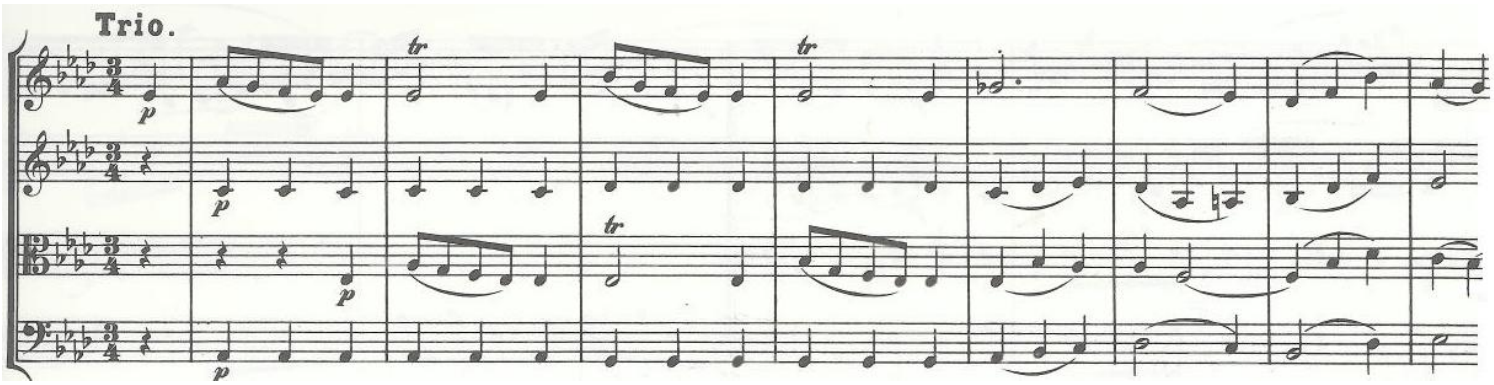
Composer	W. A. Mozart	*ID*	SQ17
Extract	String Quartet KV 157 IV: Presto, last 10 bars		
Notes	• Note how the opening idea is passed down through the instruments as the texture builds towards the end.		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

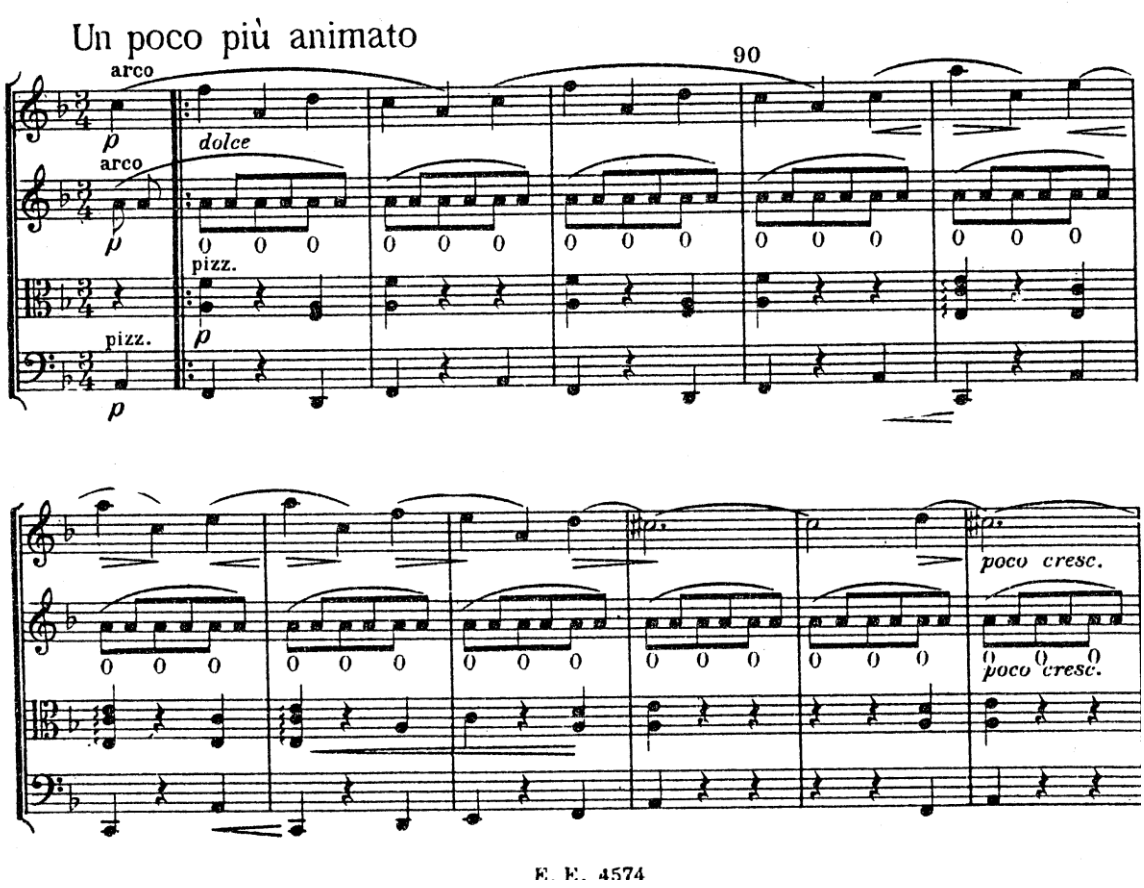
Composer	W. A. Mozart	*ID*	SQ18
Extract	String Quartet KV 171 III: Trio. bb 1-8		
Notes	• Imitation between first violin and viola with chords filled in by the other two parts		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

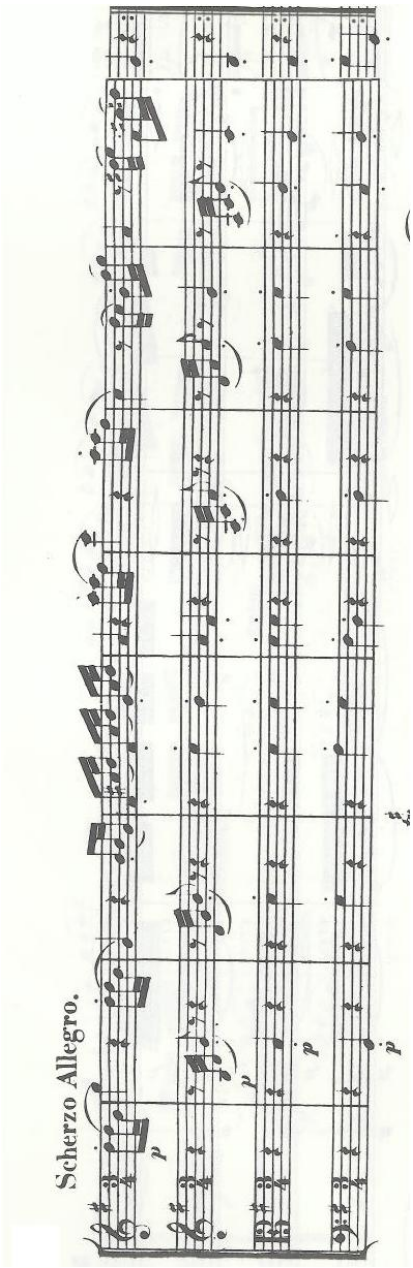
Composer	Johannes Brahms	*ID*	SQ19
Extract	Quartet op. 51/1, II: Trio		
Notes	• Basic texture is melody in violin plus chordal accompaniment in viola and cello • Texture is enlivened by alternate stopped and open string As in quavers in the second violin		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

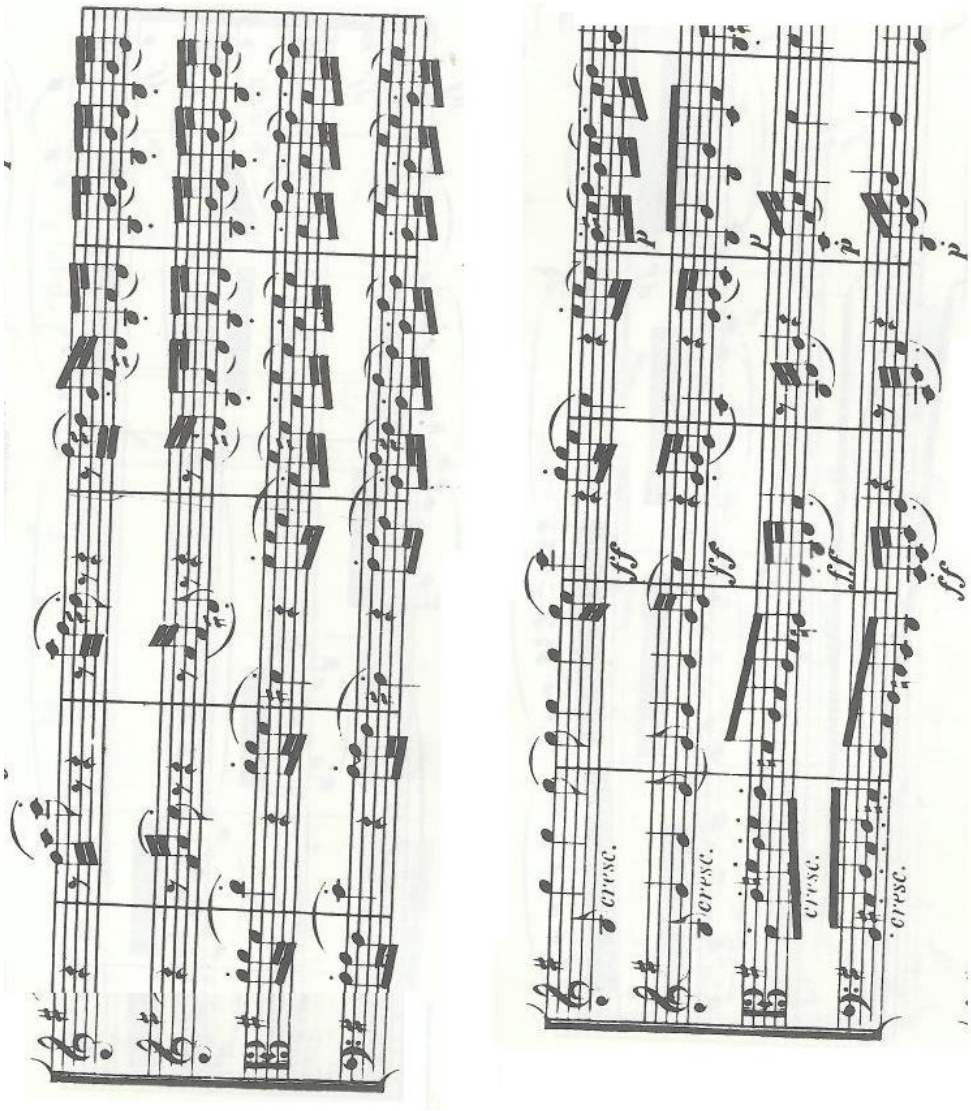
Composer	Ludwig van Beethoven	*ID*	SQ20
Extract	Quartet op. 18 no. 2, III bb. 1-8		
Notes	• Interplay between first and second violins • Note how the end of the first phrase breaks up this interplay with a more continuous melody • Note how the opening idea is developed in SQ19b		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

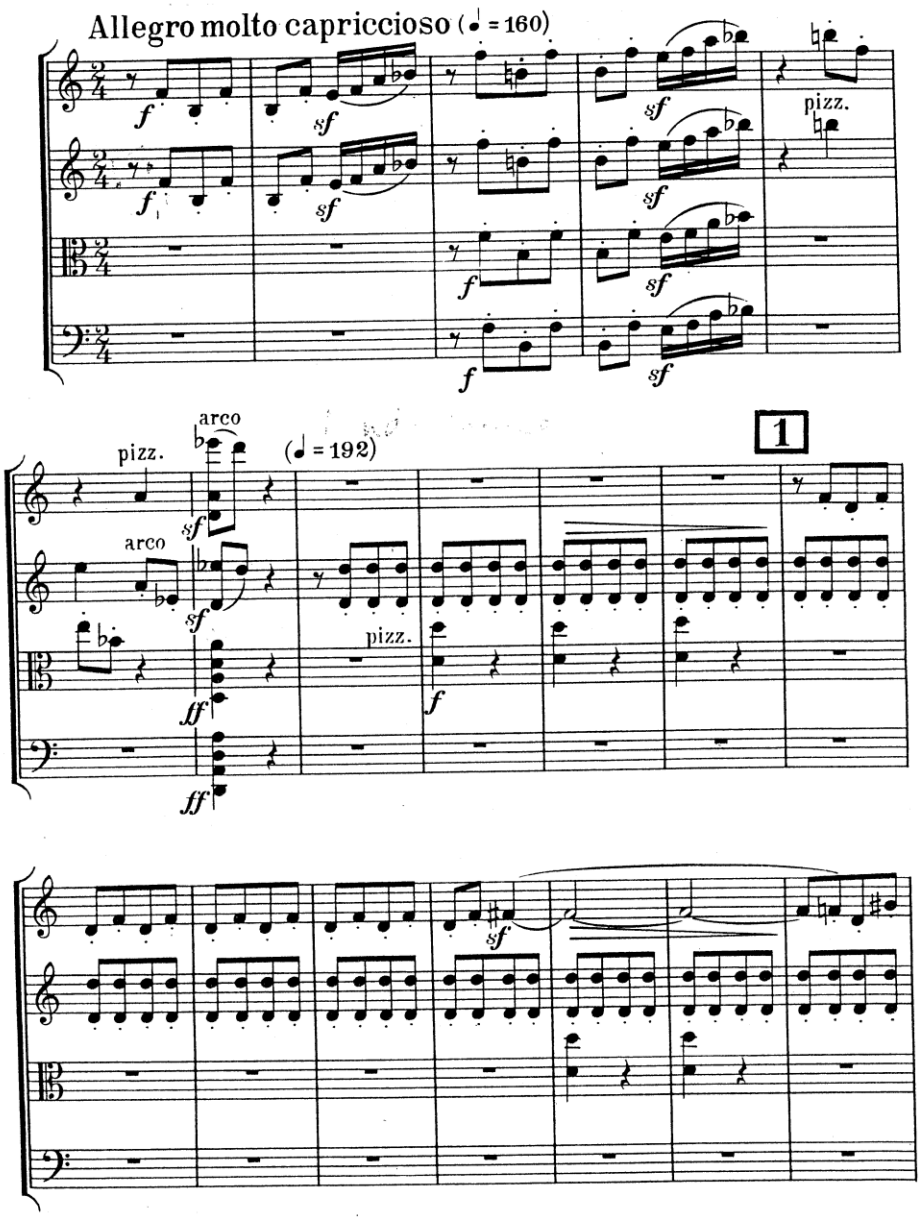
Composer	Ludwig van Beethoven	*ID*	SQ21
Extract	Quartet op. 18 no. 1, I bb. 16		
Notes	• Note how Beethoven develops the idea from SQ19a in various ways		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

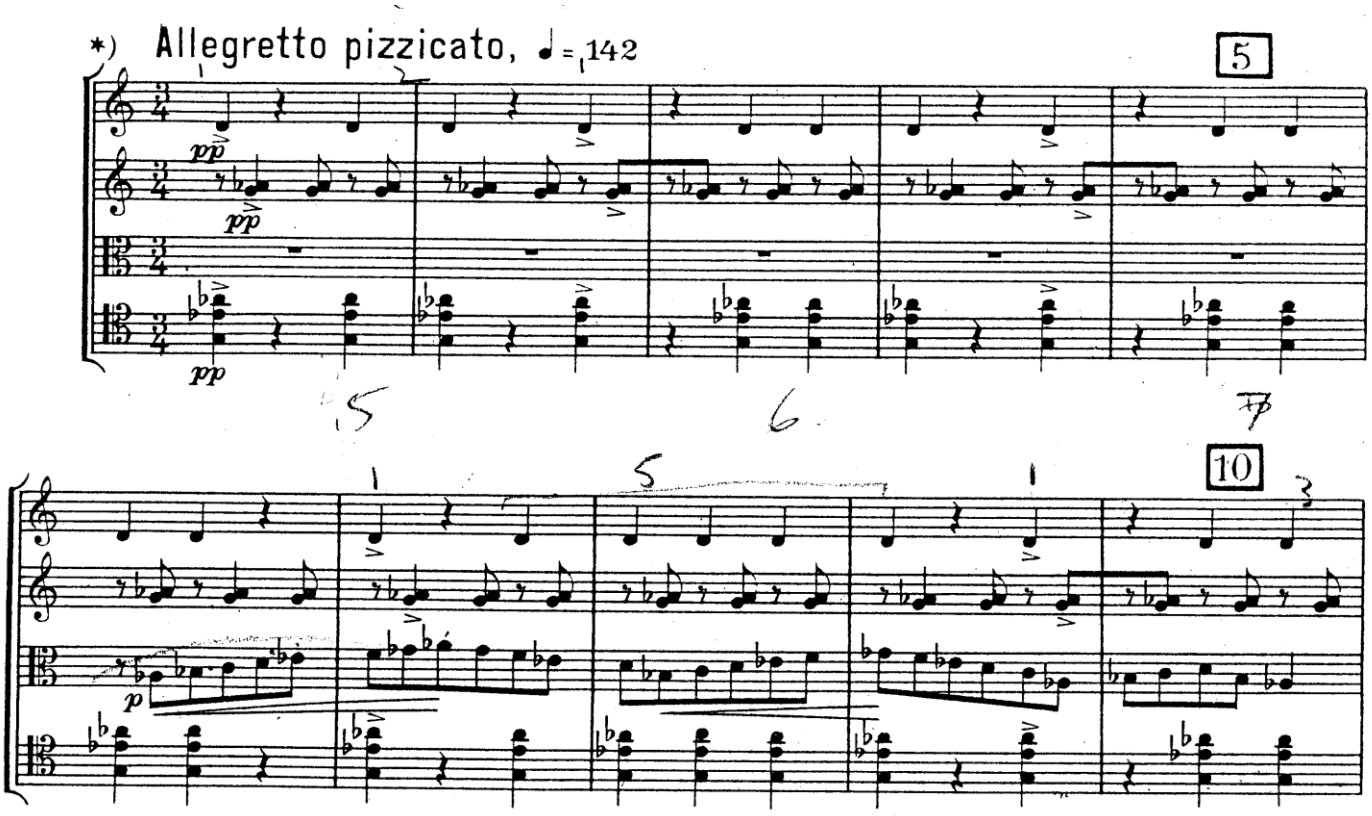
Composer	Bela Bartok	*ID*	SQ22
Extract	Quartet no. 2, II: Allegro molto capriccioso, bb. 1-19		
Notes	• Spiky twentieth century texture • Octave unison in first four bars • What is going on in the fifth and sixth bars? • Strings can occasionally quadruple stop as in bar 7, but check carefully that you chords are easy to play. • Insistent repeated pedal in second violin against repetitive melody in first violin four before Figure 1		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

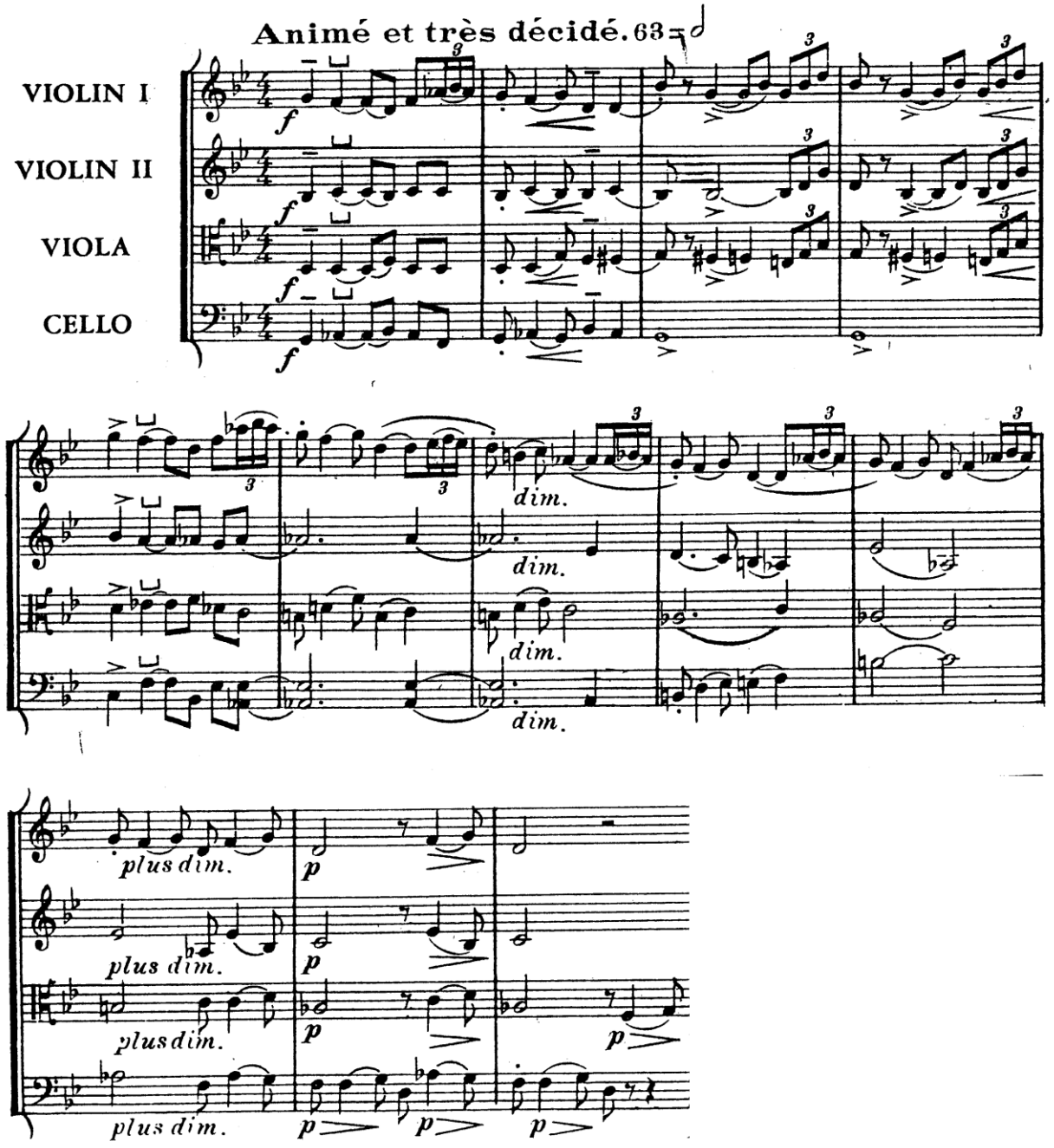
Composer	Bela Bartok	*ID*	SQ23
Extract	Quartet no. 4, IV: Allegro pizzicato, bb. 1-10		
Notes	• Gentle but irregular rhythms of the pizzicato accompaniment • Note the effect of a pizzicato melody moving in the middle of the texture in the viola part from bar 6 • Note the triple stops in the cello – chords like this work well on string instruments, but you need to check they are playable. Not all spacings are equally easy to play.		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

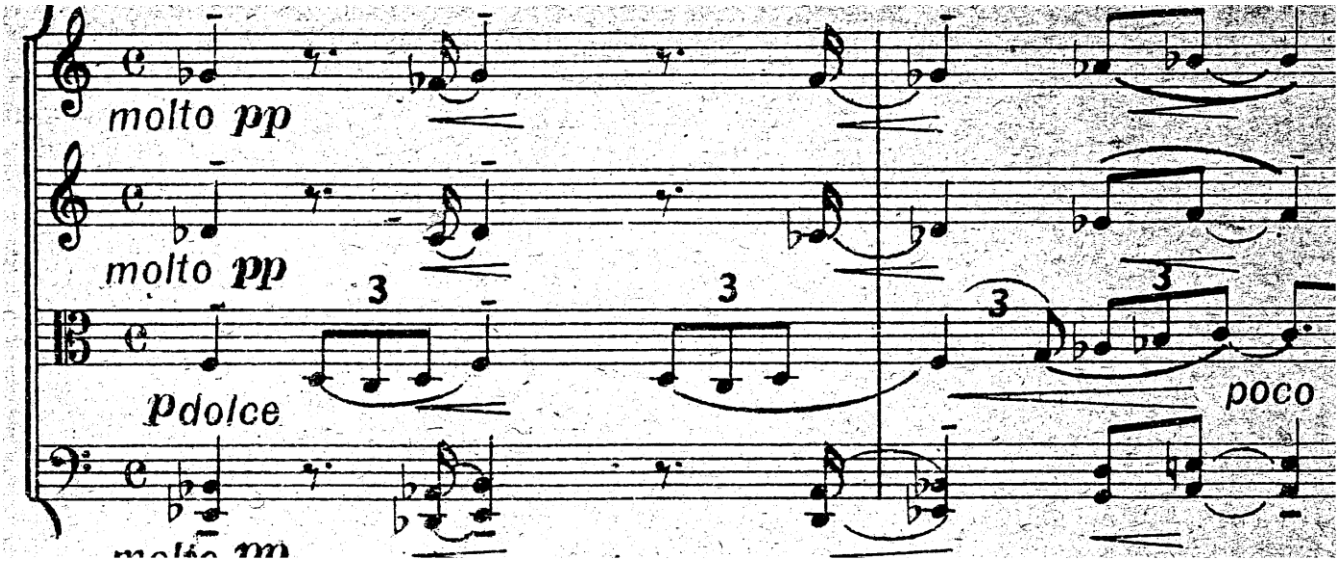
Composer	Claude Debussy	*ID*	SQ24
Extract	String Quartet Op. 10, I: Animé et très decide, opening		
Notes	• Opens with homophonic texture (but with interesting rhythms) • Note how parts gradually gain independence • Phrygian mode on G		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

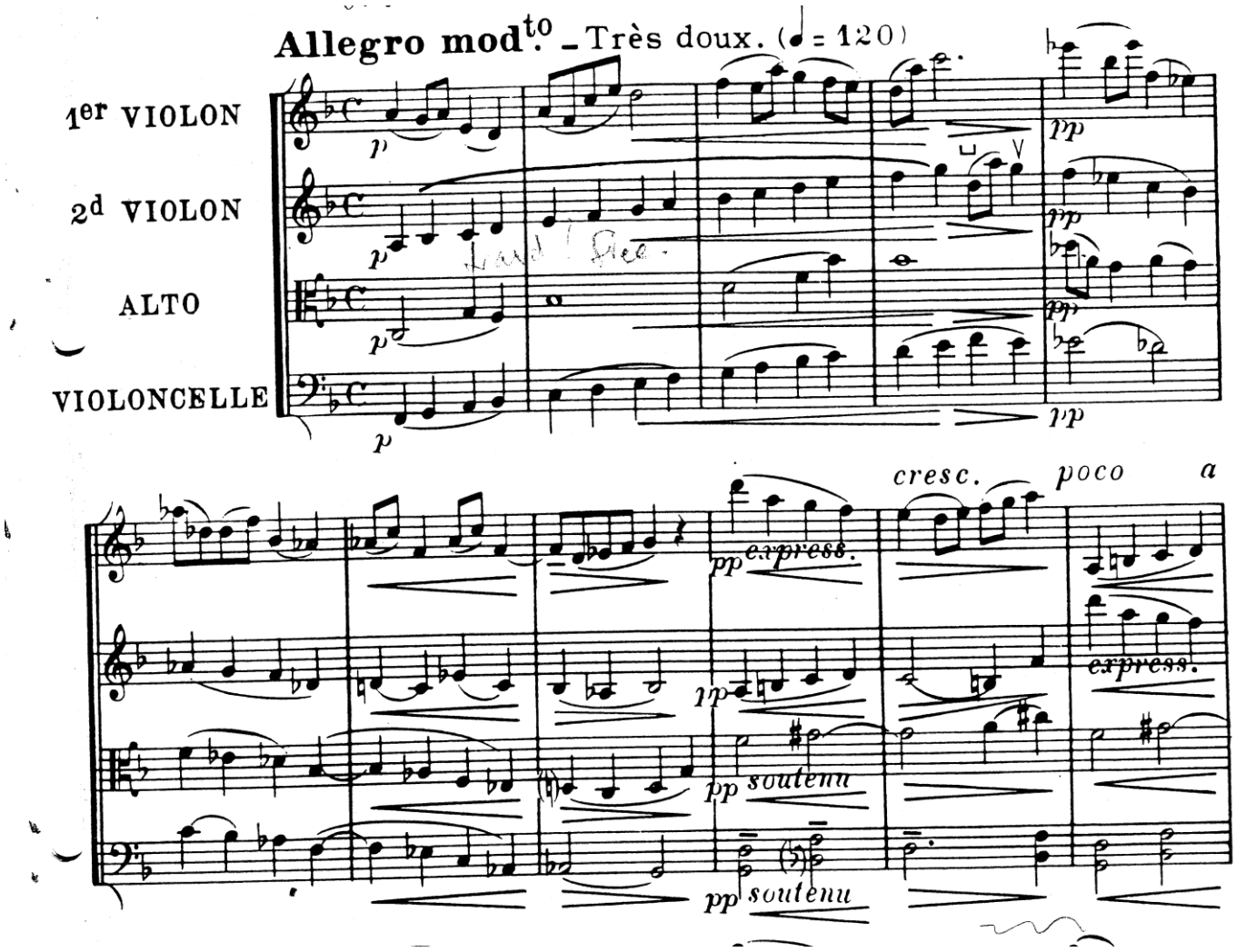
Composer	Bohuslav Martinu	*ID*	SQ25
Extract	String Quartet no. 3, II: Andante		
Notes	• Dark, hushed texture • Melody is in viola in the middle of the texture • Accompanying parallel chords (a bit like Debussy) in violins and cello		



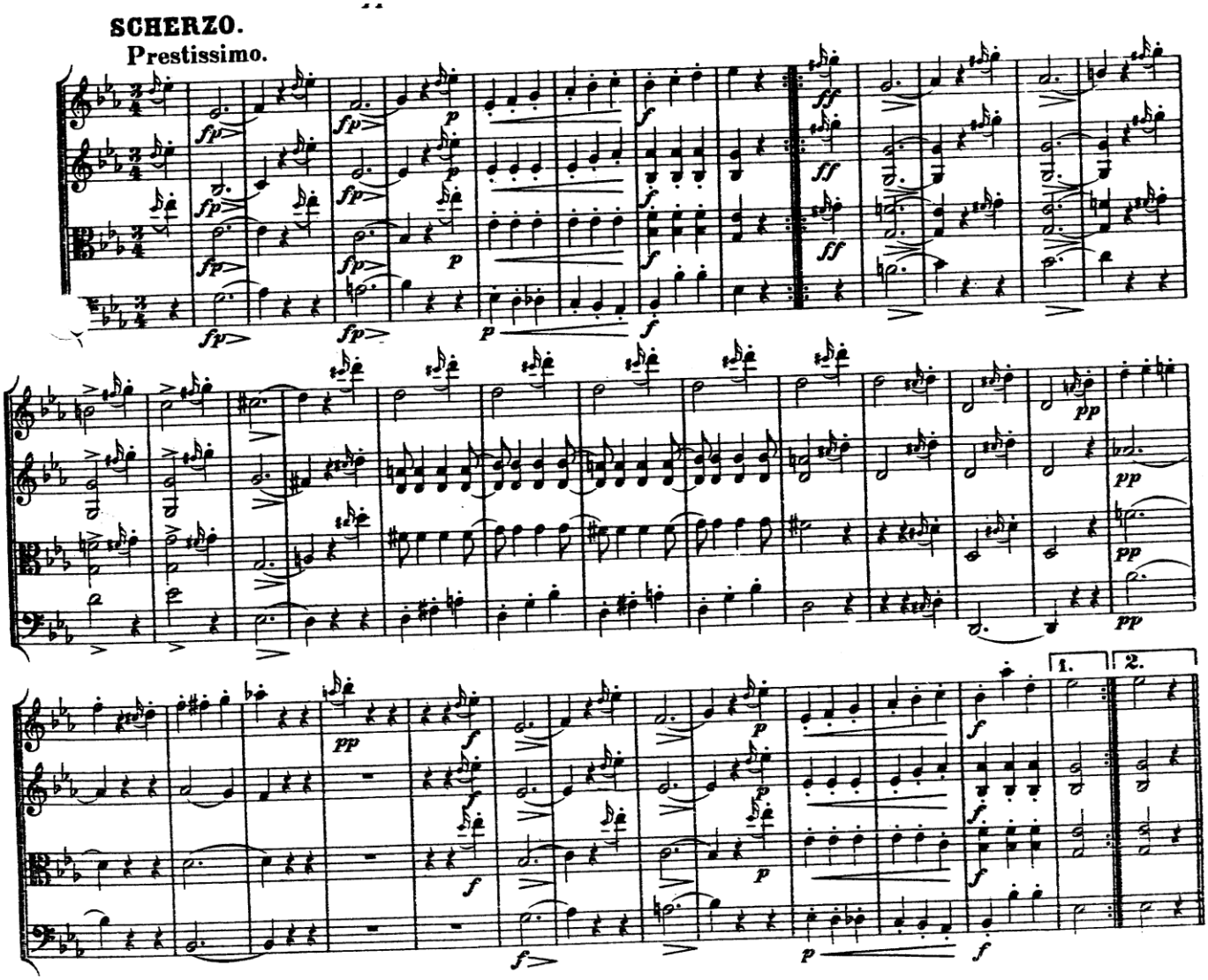
Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

Composer	Maurice Ravel	*ID*	SQ26
Extract	String Quartet, I: Allegro moderato, opening		
Notes	• Full, warm texture • Main accompanying idea is in second violin and cello, with upwards movement in 10ths across first four bars, followed by descent in the following four bars		



Models for A level Composition

String Quartet Extracts

Composer	Franz Schubert	*ID*	SQ27
Extract	String Quartet op. 125 no. 1, III: Scherzo		
Notes	• Note simple but effective repetition and development of opening idea • Clear tonal structure: statement of tonic at beginning, moves to relative minor in the middle before preparing return of tonic with dominant seventh • Homophonic texture at beginning • Bars 17 onwards sees a basically chordal texture enlivened by arpeggios in cello and syncopation in inner parts