CHAPTER 4

TONGUING AND ARTICULATION

4.1 Introduction

The definition of articulation according to Keller (1973:4) is the following: "The function of musical articulation is the binding together or the separation of individual notes; it leaves the intellectual content of a melody line inviolable, but it determines its expression".

Articulation for woodwinds is executed by means of tonguing. Wind players adopt the word to define the action required for joining notes by a consonant that interrupts the continuity of sounds. This is a vital part of tone production on the oboe and cor anglais. Eighteenth century performers considered the variable forms of articulation as the most important aspect of phrasing and characterisation. (Goossens & Roxbourgh 1980:76.) Rothwell (1968:33) equates tonguing with the bowing on a stringed instrument. When the player has real tongue control, guided by a sense of style and musicianship, the effect is like a fine string player using the bow.

Various authors on Orchestration differ greatly on the oboist's capability to double and triple-tongue. These different views will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Double-tonguing ("Ter-Ker") or even-triple tonguing ("Ter-Ker-Ter") is frequently introduced into flute passage work, whereas it is a rarity in clarinet writing and even more so for oboes and bassoons, though there is a notorious passage of double-tonguing for all the woodwinds in the third movement of Hindemith's "*Mathis der Maler*" symphony (Del Mar 1983:193).

According to Forsyth (1982:208) the oboe player can use single-tonguing only, due to the position of the reed in the mouth. This, however does not in any way interfere with his power of staccato playing. Piston (1982:150-151) states that double and triple-tonguing are

in the nature of emergency resources, used only when the tempo demands are too fast for single-tonguing. Double and triple-tonguing are not idiomatic features of the instrument, as they are in the case of the flute.

The author of this dissertation is in agreement with Goossens and Roxbourgh (1980:78-79) who say that some players use double and triple-tonguing consistently. There is no hard and fast rule about this. The individual jaw, teeth and mouth formation will dictate to a player which form is best. Goossens (Goossens & Roxbourgh 1980:79) relates the following: "My own experience tells me that any method adopted, providing the sound produced fulfils the requirements of lucid, expressive articulation, will be satisfactory. For most of my life I have rarely used double and triple-tonguing, for I have felt firmer control from the development of my single-tonguing. However, since the re-formation of my embouchure, following an accident, I have used double-tonguing far more than ever before." If the player chooses to double-tongue or triple-tongue a passage, care must be taken to avoid uneven accents.

Double-tonguing is produced by pronouncing two syllables alternately, "Ter" and "Ker", the "Ter" with the tongue on the reed, and "Ker" just as when spoken. The reason for unevenness when double or triple-tonguing is because of the difficulty of making the "Ker" sound as clean and sharp as the "Ter", resulting in over-accentuation of the "Ter", particularly when playing wider intervals. All the notes must be equally balanced in length and in dynamic level as it is easier to control double-tonguing at very fast speeds than those notes which can normally be negotiated by single-tonguing. Triple-tonguing is very similar to double-tonguing and is achieved by saying "Ter-Ker-Ter" or "Ter-Ker-Ter/Ker-Ter-Ker" alternately. (Goossens & Roxbourgh 1980:78; Rothwell 1968:32-33.)

Similar disparity exists between authors about flutter-tonguing. Flutter-tonguing is again a speciality of flautists, and has become one of the more colouristic effects written for the instrument. Although theoretically possible for the other woodwinds, flutter-tonguing is very much less practical on account of the reeds, and is therefore rarely prescribed (Del Mar 1983:194). Flutter-tonguing is difficult on the oboe but avant-garde composers often ask for

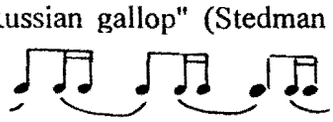
it. It is produced by rolling an R while playing with a relaxed embouchure and very little reed in the mouth (Rothwell 1968:33). According to Piston (1982:151) flutter-tonguing has been employed on the oboe with no more than moderate effectiveness. One of the few examples of flutter-tonguing is found in Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Shostakovich, fortunately for the oboist, does not prescribe flutter-tonguing in any of the symphonies.

The length of detached notes may be varied by the consonant pronounced by the tongue on the reed. "Ter" will produce a short sound and "Der" a longer and gentler one. All variations in the length of detached notes and types of attack may be obtained by pronouncing the "Ter" and "Der" sounds slightly differently. For example, a very soft and gentle attack, or a melodic singing type of detached note, may be made with the tongue rather relaxed, touching the reed with a stroking movement. A *forte-piano* needs a very sharp attack from the tongue accompanied by a sudden momentary increase of breath and the muscles of the embouchure must relax and contact again instantaneously. The faster the music, the lighter the tongue must be in its action against the reed (Rothwell 1968:30-31.) The oboe staccato is superior to that of all the other winds for its sharp, dry, light quality, a point to realise when using woodwind combinations (Piston 1982:151.)

The author decided to include the aforementioned information for the convenience of the reader, as articulation for woodwind instruments differs greatly from that of other instrument-groups or the keyboard.

4.2 Legato

Shostakovich indicates legato articulation with a legato phrase or slur. Legato articulation, especially in solo material, is accompanied by the words *espressivo*, *dolce*, and less seldom, *semplice*. Legato articulation is evident throughout the 15 symphonies, and certain characteristics have been consistently used and developed as initiated in Symphony No. 1.

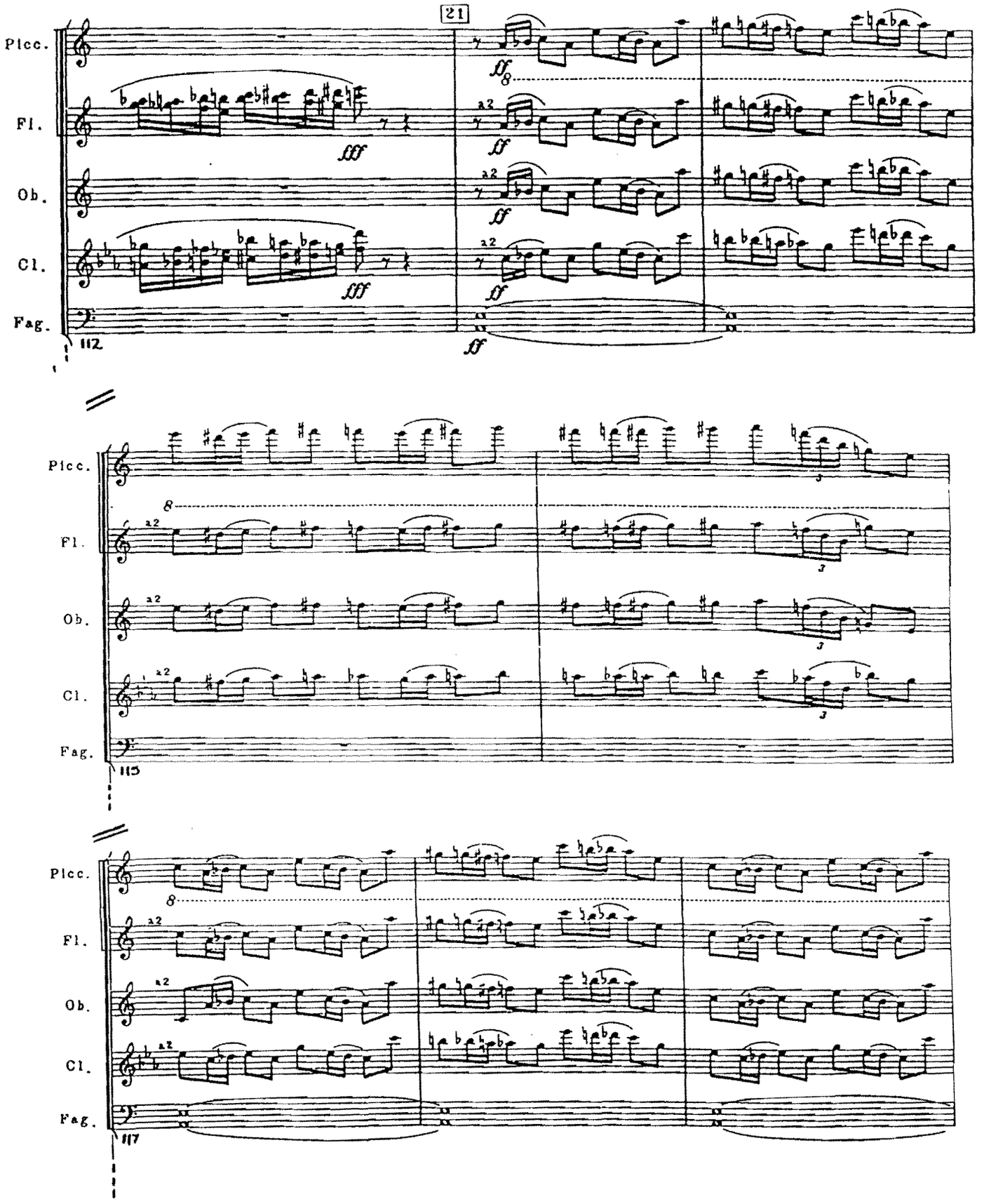
The following figure, "a typical Russian gallop" (Stedman 1979:303), is Shostakovich's favourite rhythmic ostinato device:  . This figure is first used in

Symphony No. 1 and is also found and articulated in the same way in Symphonies No. 4, 5, 6, 10, 12 and 13. The fascinating aspect of this rhythmic figure is that the particular articulation accompanying the rhythm results in a syncopated effect as the emphasis is always on the first semiquaver of the group or the weak beat.

There are more legato ascending passages than descending ones, possibly because legato ascending passages create an atmosphere of tension or apprehension, qualities prevalent in most of the symphonies. Most semiquaver figures are articulated legato. There are chromatic semiquaver ascending and/or descending legato passages found in every symphony. With the exception of solo passages, Shostakovich does not write long and difficult legato phrases, the average length of a legato figure being 2-3 bars. Symphony No. 10 contains predominantly more legato phrases than the other symphonies, whereas Symphony No. 15 has the fewest. Symphonies No. 8:1; 13:1, 13:4 and 15:4 have very similar legato passages consisting of demisemiquavers (see Example 4-3).

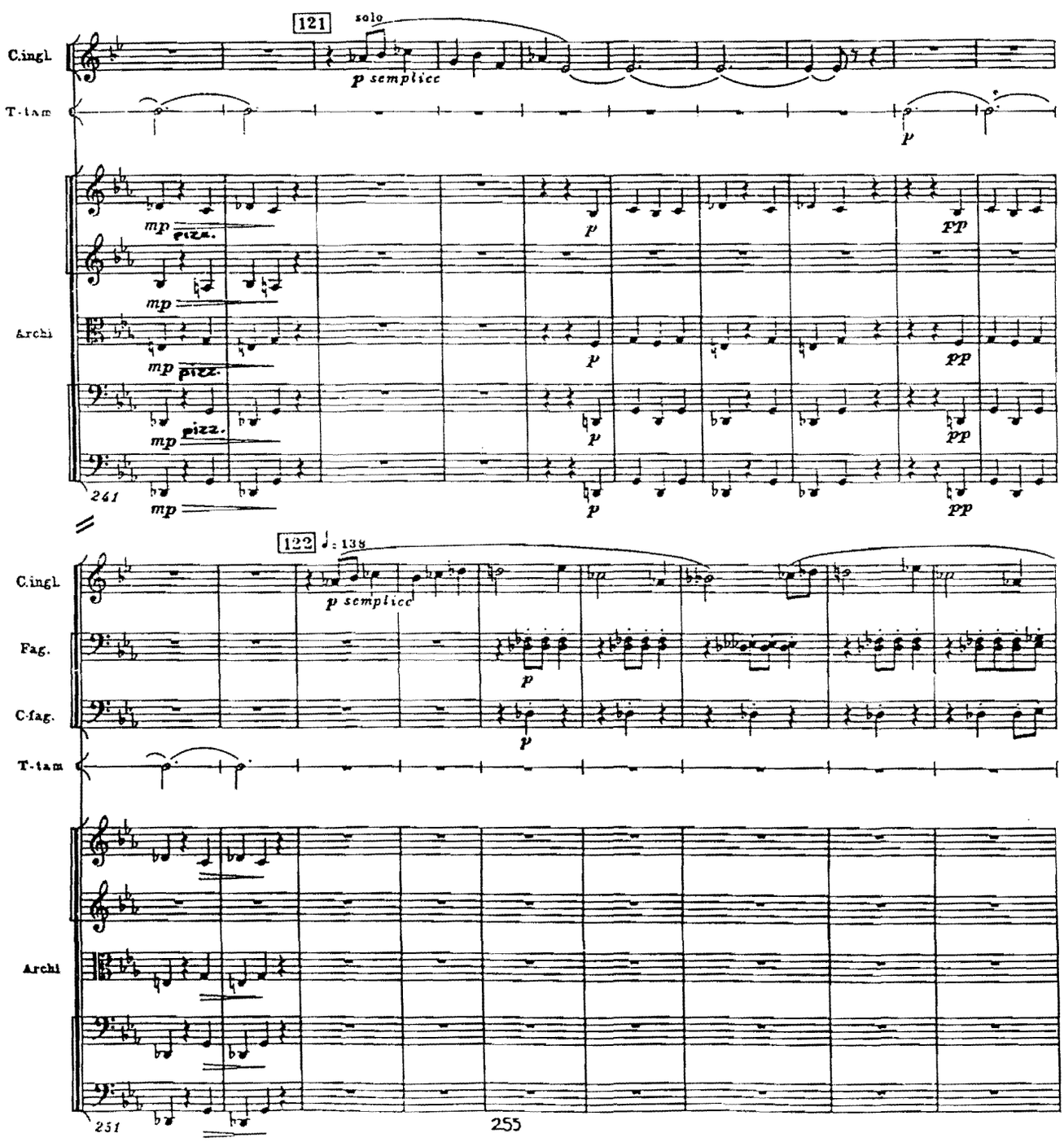
The next example (Ex. 4-1) is taken from the second movement of Symphony No. 1. As mentioned above, the particular manner of articulation employed in Symphony No. 1 (the Russian gallop) is used repeatedly throughout the later symphonies. In this example two themes are presented simultaneously. The "gallop" is scored for high woodwinds, strings and piano which surge ahead in octave unison at a *ff* dynamic level for 12 bars. The second theme is scored for the brass in a stately *fff* melody in crotchets resulting in an interesting texture of two conflicting ideas. An open fifth as a pedal point is held by bassoons, trombones, tuba, cello and basses.

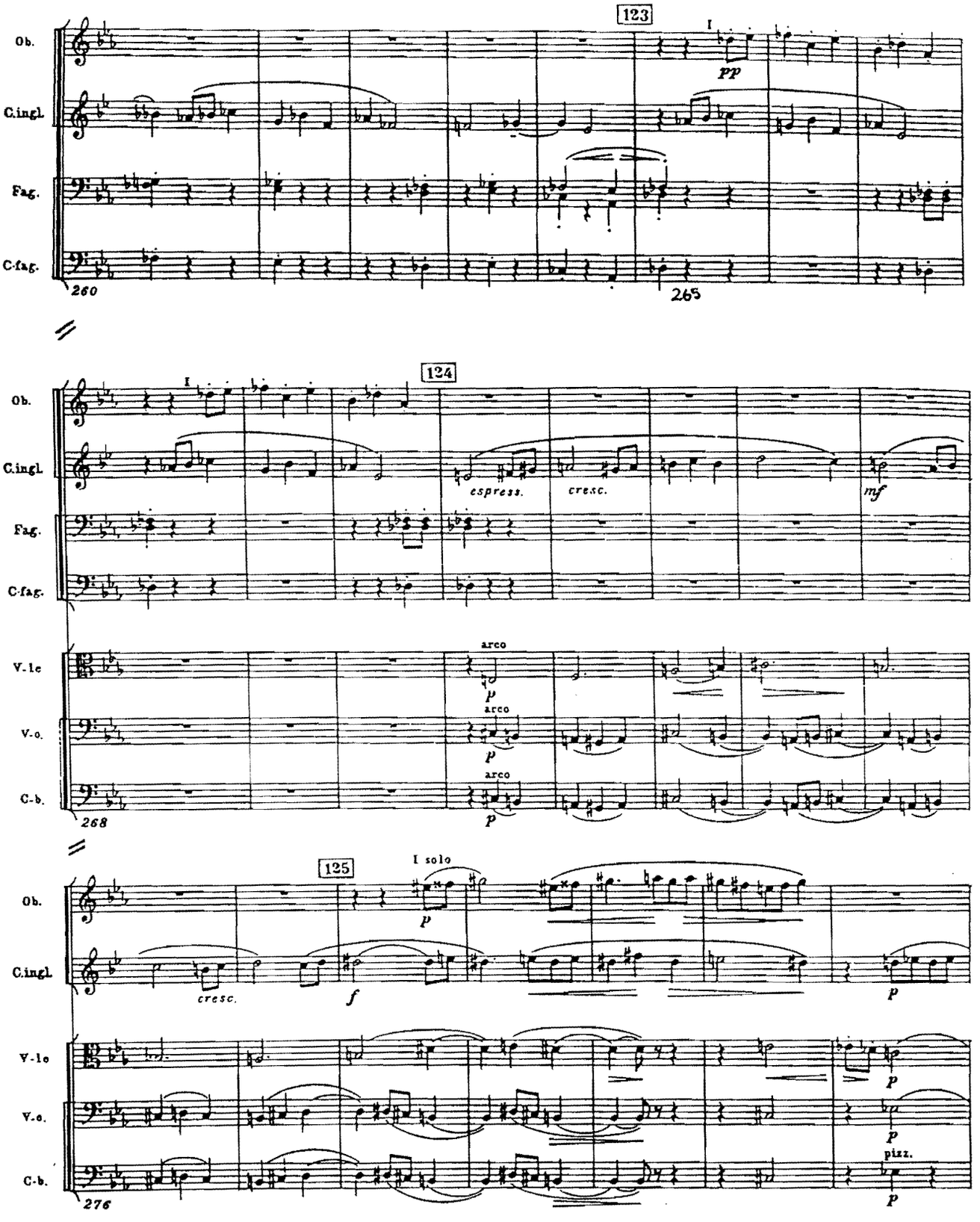
Example 4-1: Symphony No. 1, second movement, mm. 112-119



A beautifully characterful legato solo for cor anglais and oboe is found in the third movement of Symphony No. 10 (Ex. 4-2). The solo for cor anglais is written in a very comfortable range and is supported by Shostakovich's characteristic pizzicato string accompaniment in mm. 245-252. A warm timbre is achieved between mm. 255-271 by the bassoons and contrabassoon which accompany the cor anglais solo with staccato articulation, enhancing and supporting the mostly legato solo. The oboe joins in as soloist in m. 265 with a *pp* staccato canon that becomes legato in m. 278. The delicate combination of instruments and subtle articulation creates the atmosphere of an elegant waltz.

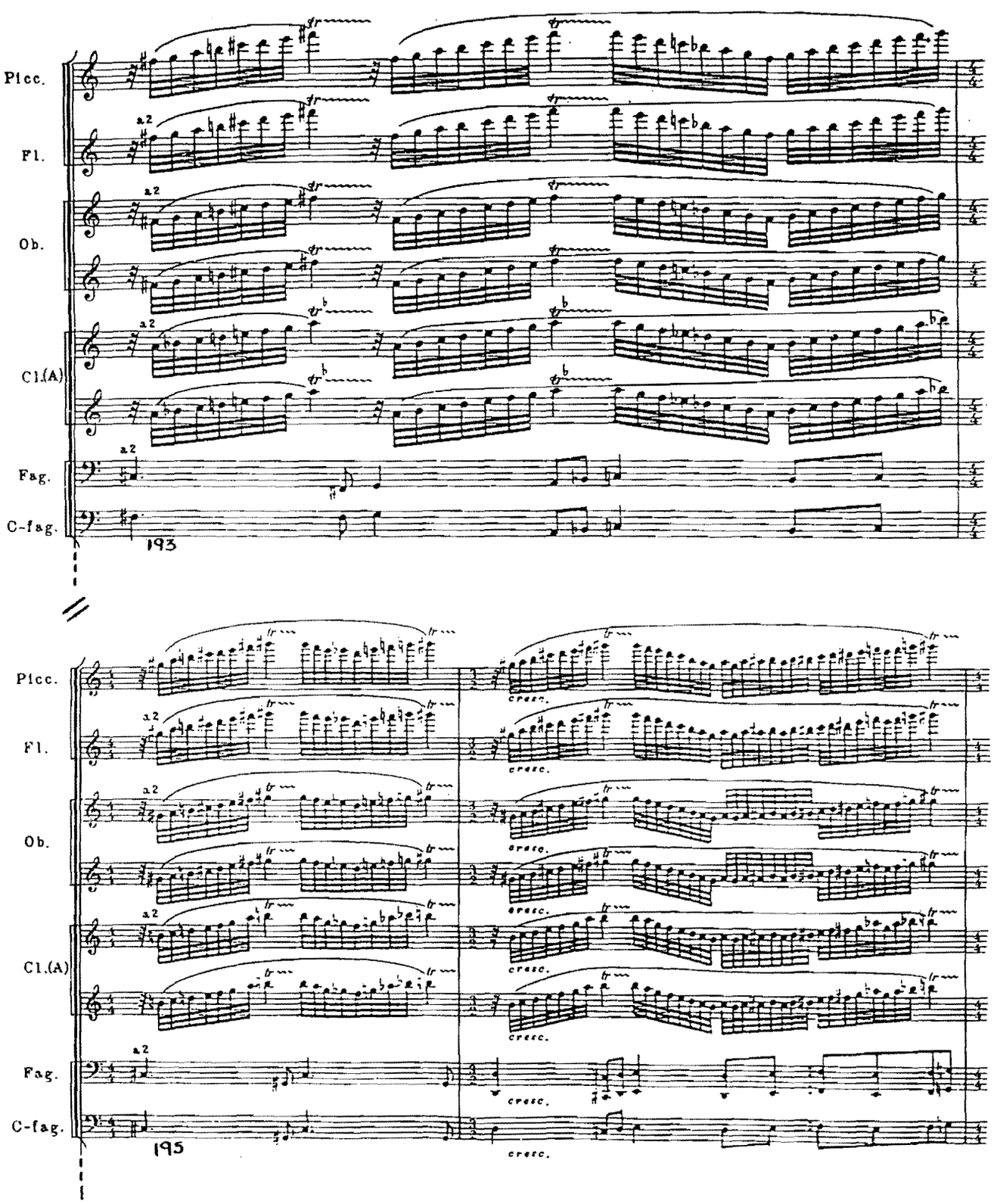
Example 4-2: Symphony No. 10, third movement, mm. 241-282





The fourth movement of Symphony No. 13 (Largo) includes an example of legato demi-semiquaver figures of which similar material is also found in Symphonies No. 8:1, 13:1 and 15:4. It is very significant to note that this particular figure is always used in slow tempi. In this example the high woodwinds and strings have unison legato material.

Example 4-3: Symphony No.13, fourth movement, mm. 193-195

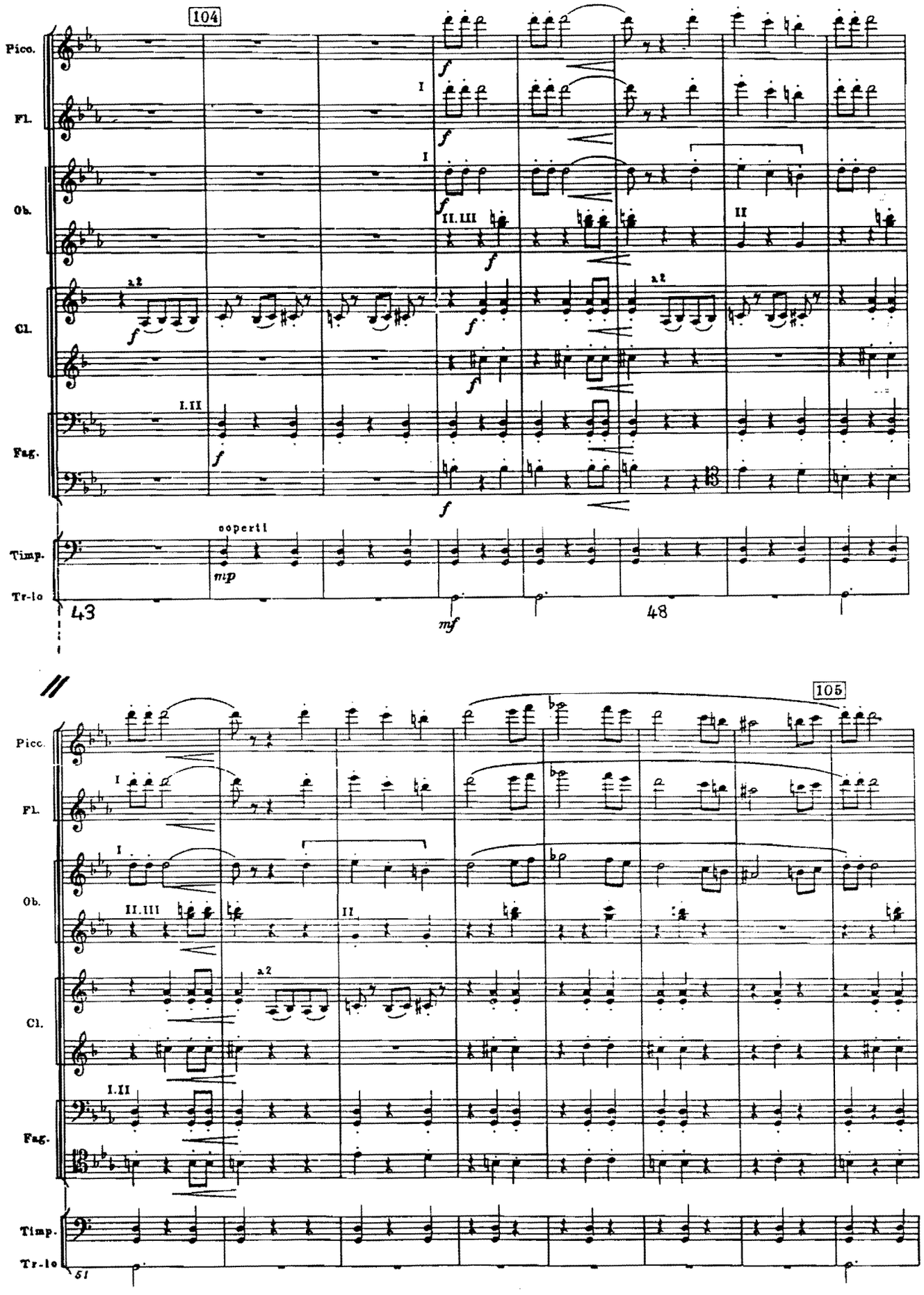


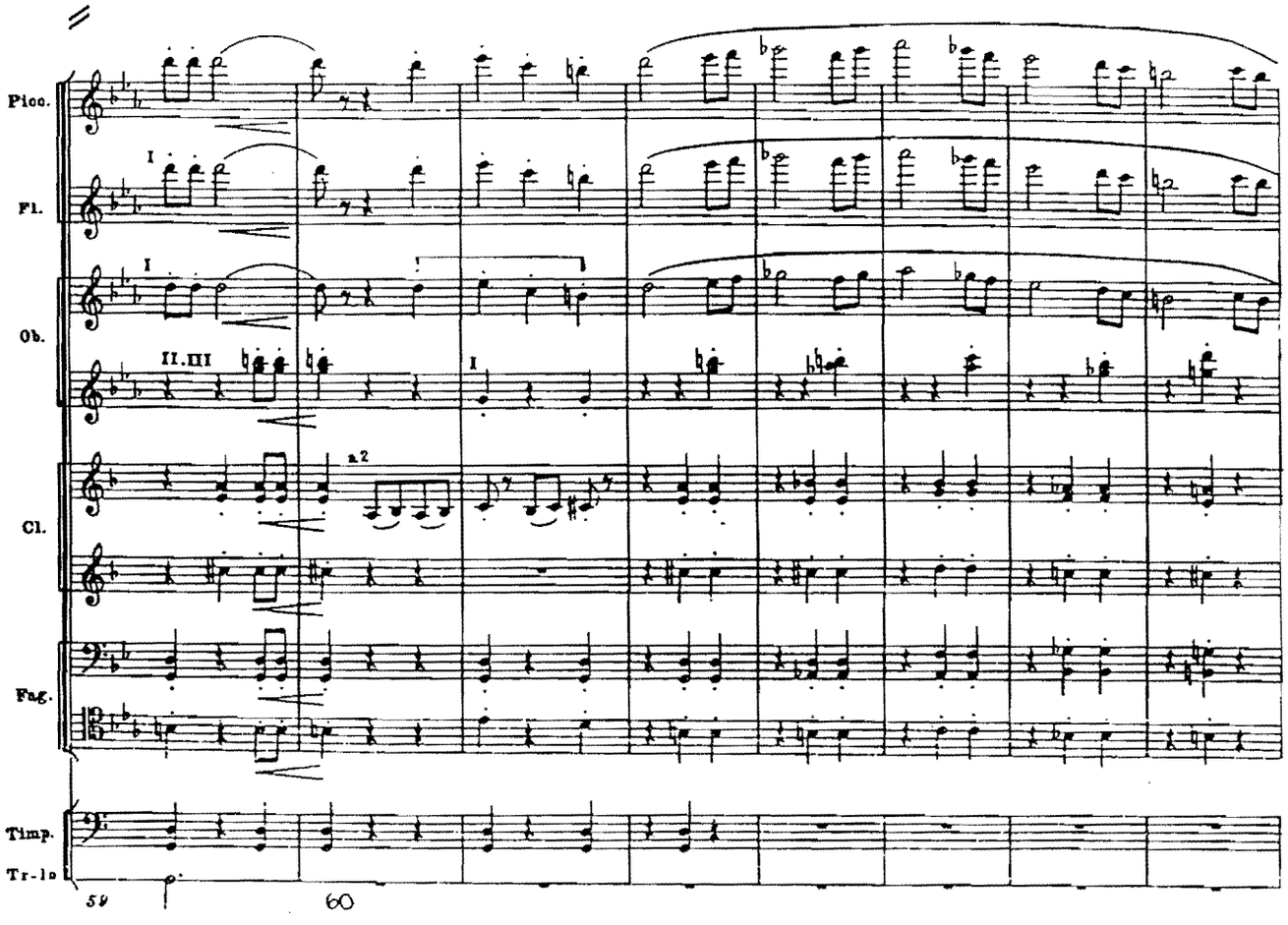
4.3 Staccato

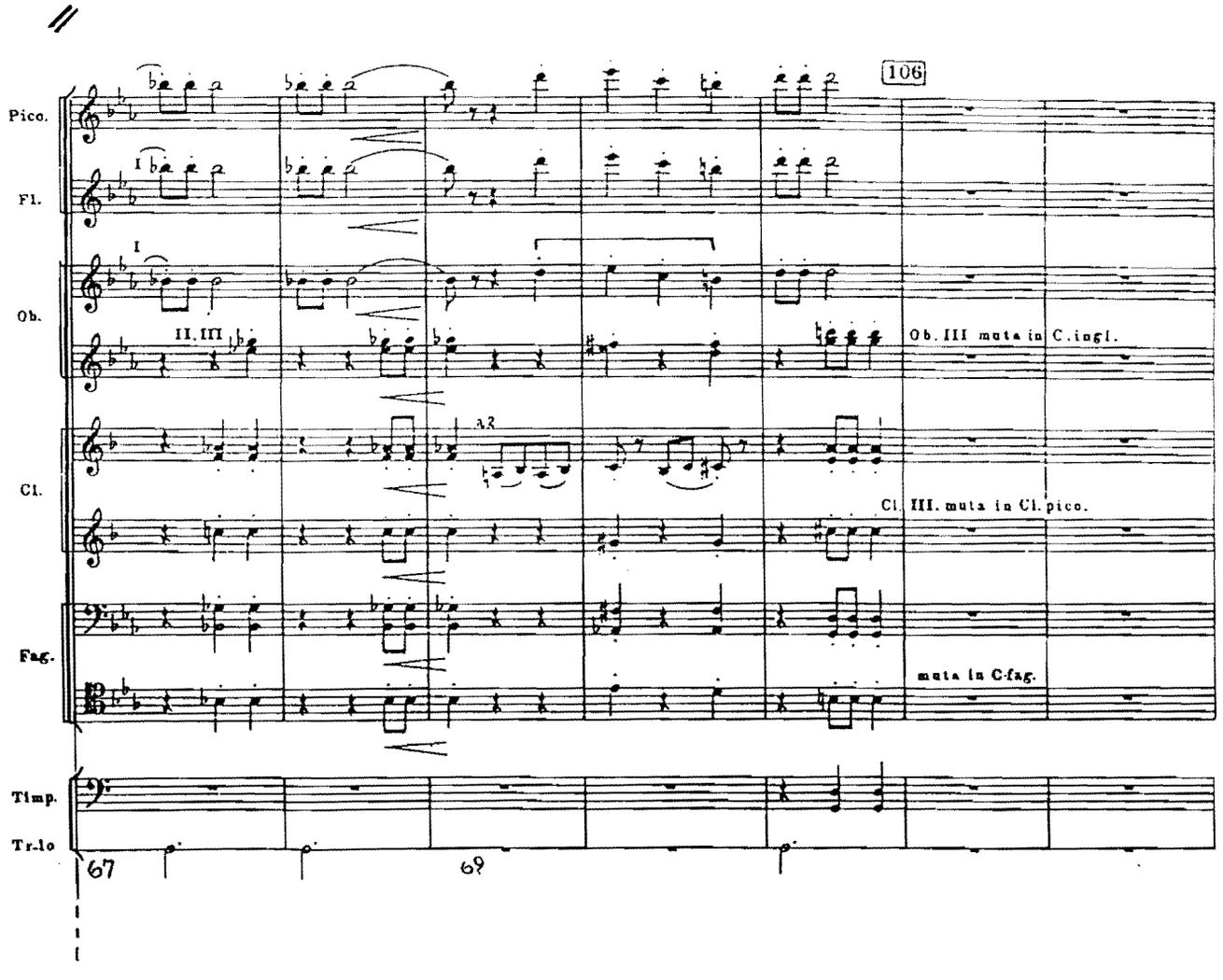
Shostakovich has written some delightful staccato passages for the oboe and cor anglais, but most fascinating is the growth of staccato material seen between the early and later symphonies. Staccato articulated passages are seldom found in the early symphonies. Symphony No. 3 has no staccato figures. From Symphony No. 4 the staccato is used in solo material, tutti passages, as well as at the end of short legato phrases. In the second movement of Symphony No. 7 Shostakovich scores 50 bars of uninterrupted staccato material. It is, however, from Symphony No. 8 that Shostakovich begins to write delicately witty passages that bring out the charming characteristics of the instrument.

During the third movement of Symphony No. 10 (Ex. 4-4) Shostakovich introduces his autobiographical four note motive for the first time in the symphonies. (Blokker & Dearling 1979:116.) The motive is based on his initials D.S.CH = D E-flat C B. In the following example this motive is introduced in staccato by the piccolo, flute and oboe in octave unison in mm. 48-49, 52-53, 60-61 and again in mm. 69-70. The texture is transparent with the absence of strings, allowing the motive to stand out with only a sparse staccato accompaniment from the clarinets and bassoons. Later in the movement the motive is articulated non legato.

Example 4-4: Symphony No. 10, third movement, mm. 43-73

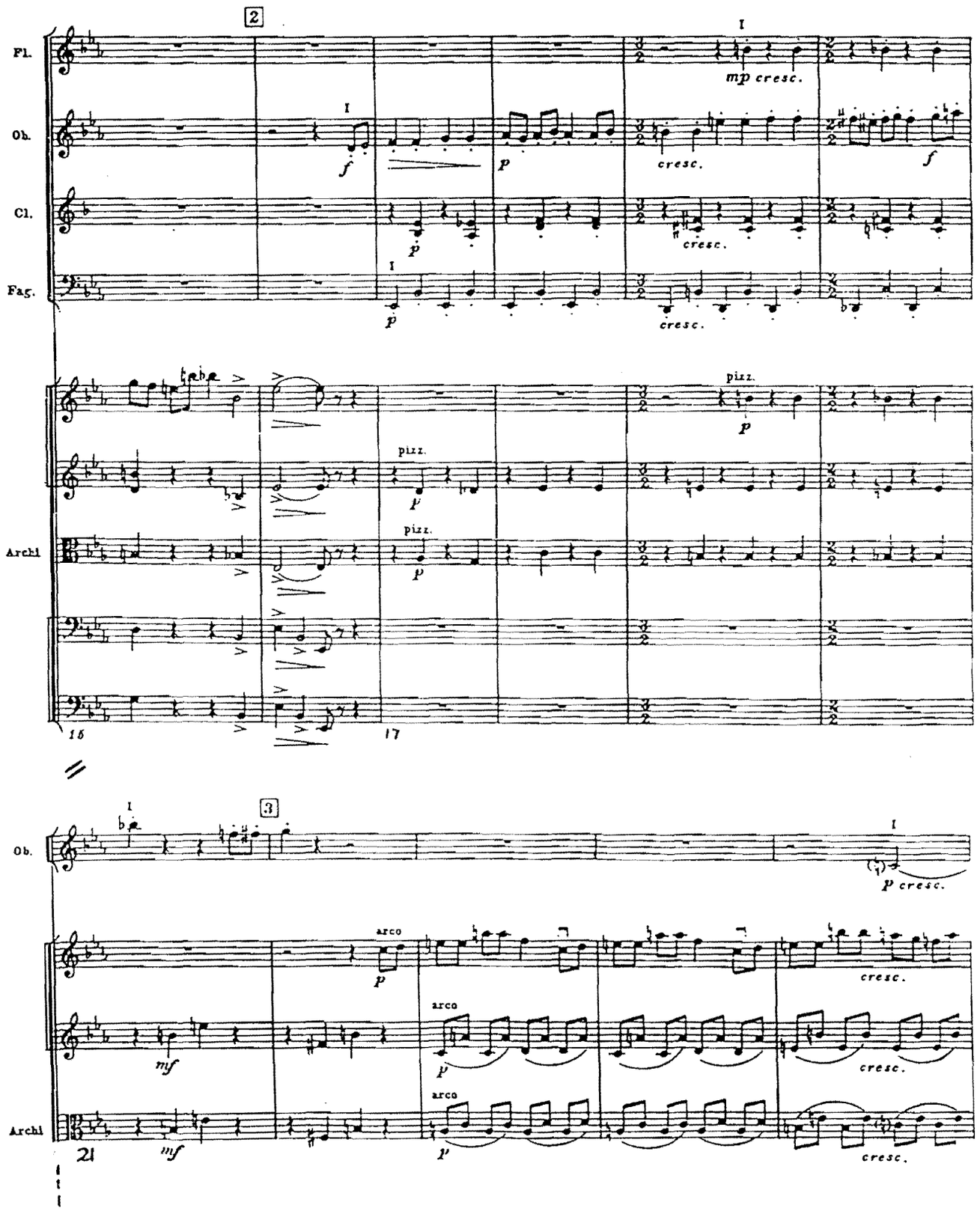






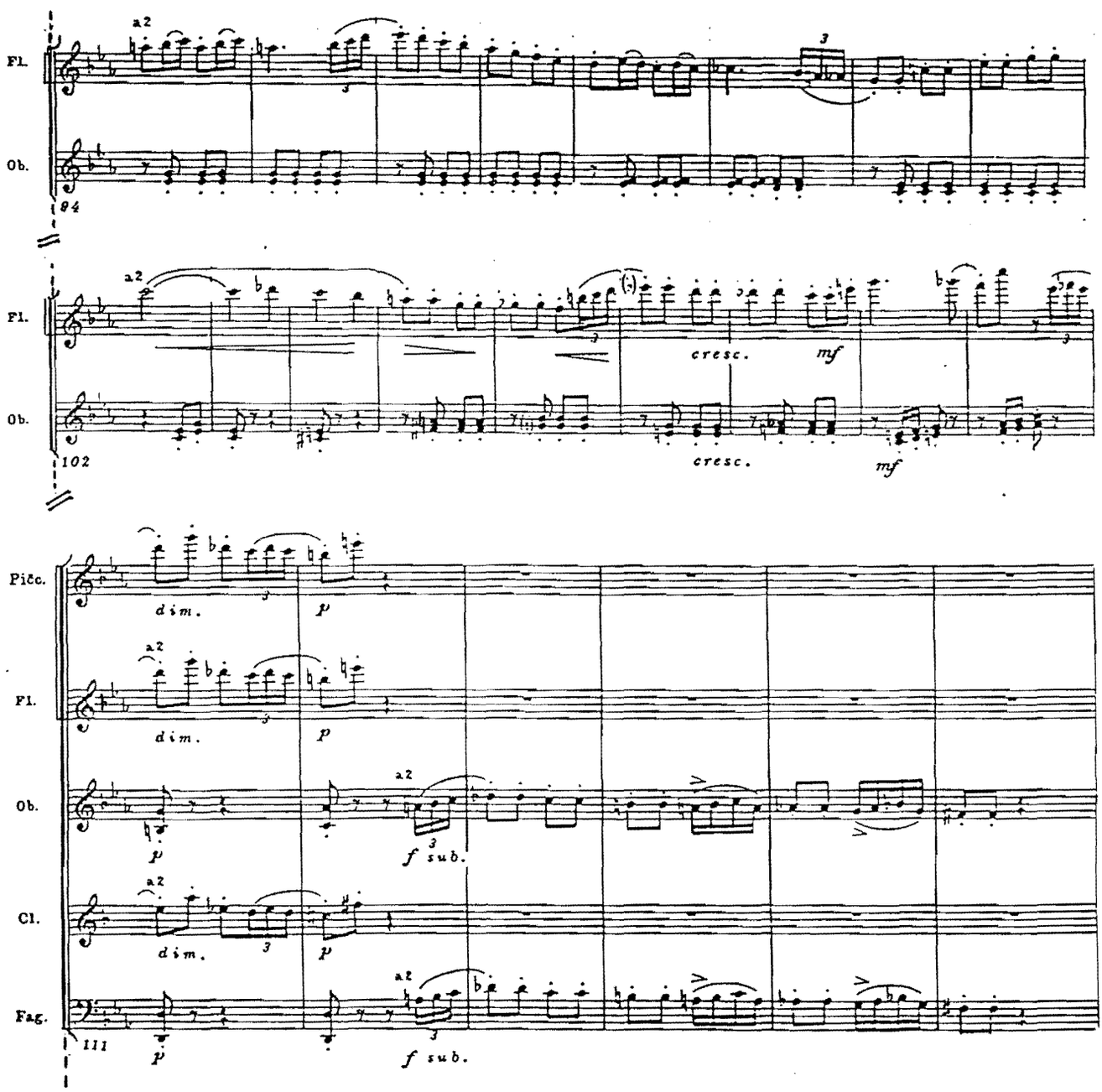
Shostakovich returns to a more classically oriented style in Symphony No. 9 (Stedman 1979:306). In the first movement the secondary theme is set as a march tune. In the following example the first oboe is awarded this characteristic march tune as a staccato solo. Note once again the characteristic pizzicato accompaniment from the strings in mm. 17-22.

Example 4-5: Symphony No. 9, first movement, mm. 15-25



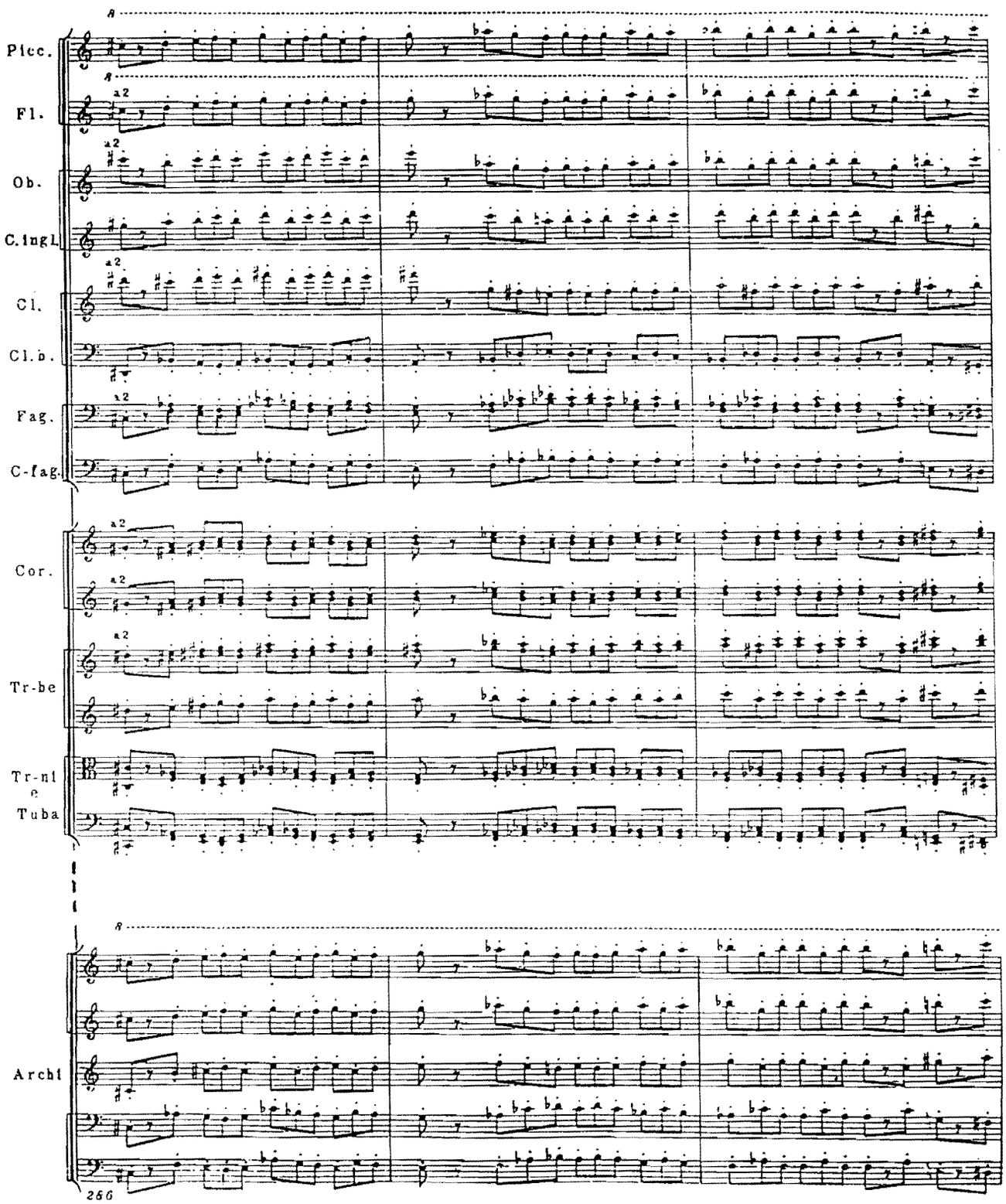
On several occasions during the later symphonies the oboes are used as accompaniment in a frivolously humorous manner as seen in the following example taken from the fifth movement of Symphony No. 9. The chattering staccato oboes create a light-hearted accompaniment to the solo in the piccolo, flutes and clarinets, also supported by pizzicato strings. The accompaniment ends in m. 112 as the oboes and bassoons resume solo material initiated by a *subito forte* dynamic indication. Very similar accompanimental material as seen in the example below is also found in Symphonies No. 13:2 and 15:1.

Example 4-6: Symphony No. 9, fifth movement, mm. 94-116



A comprehensive example of staccato for the full orchestra is found in the first movement of Symphony No. 13. The dynamic indication is *ff* throughout this passage which appears to act as a link to an Adagio section. (To conserve space the percussion section has been omitted.)

Example 4-7: Symphony No. 13, first movement, mm. 286-288

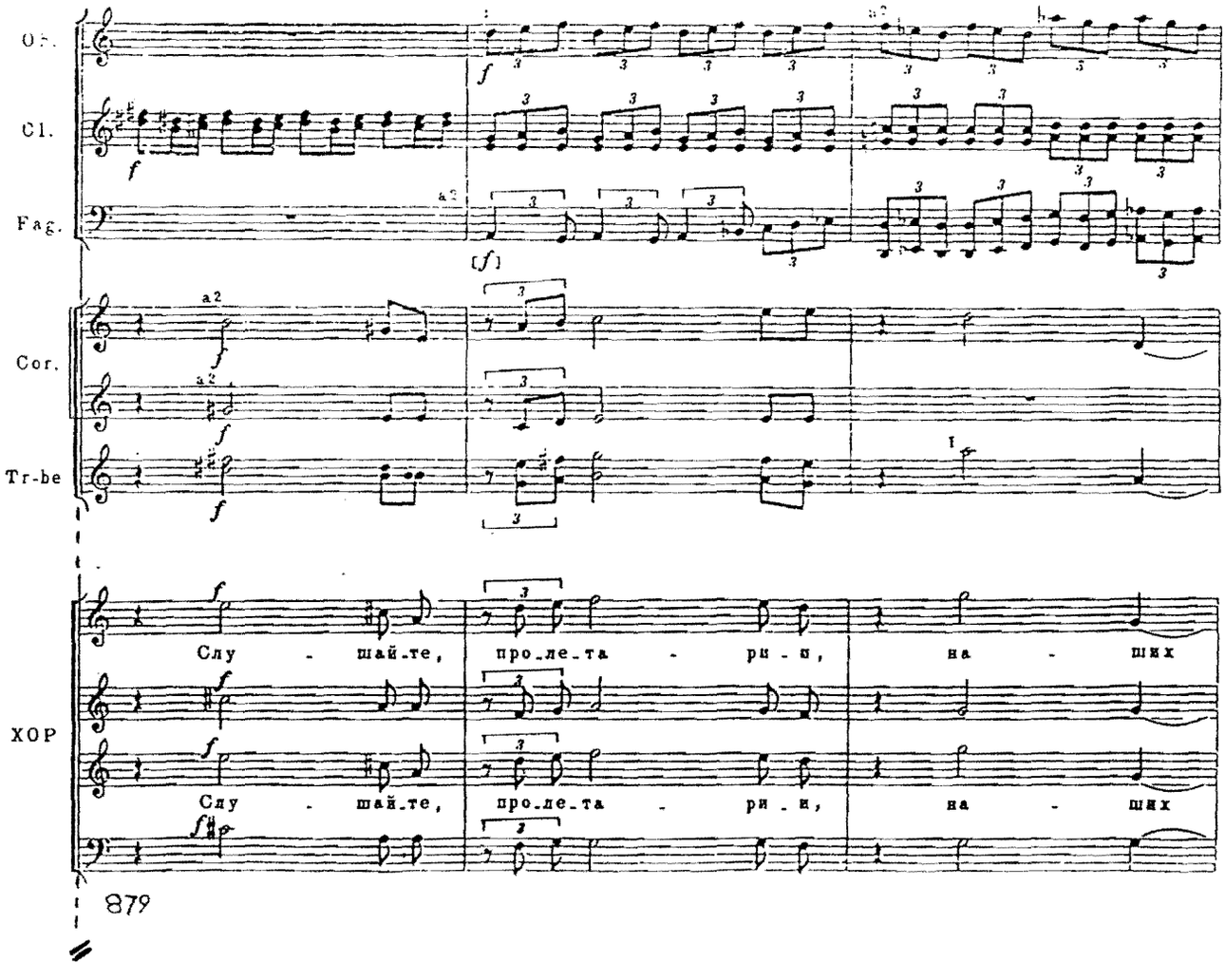


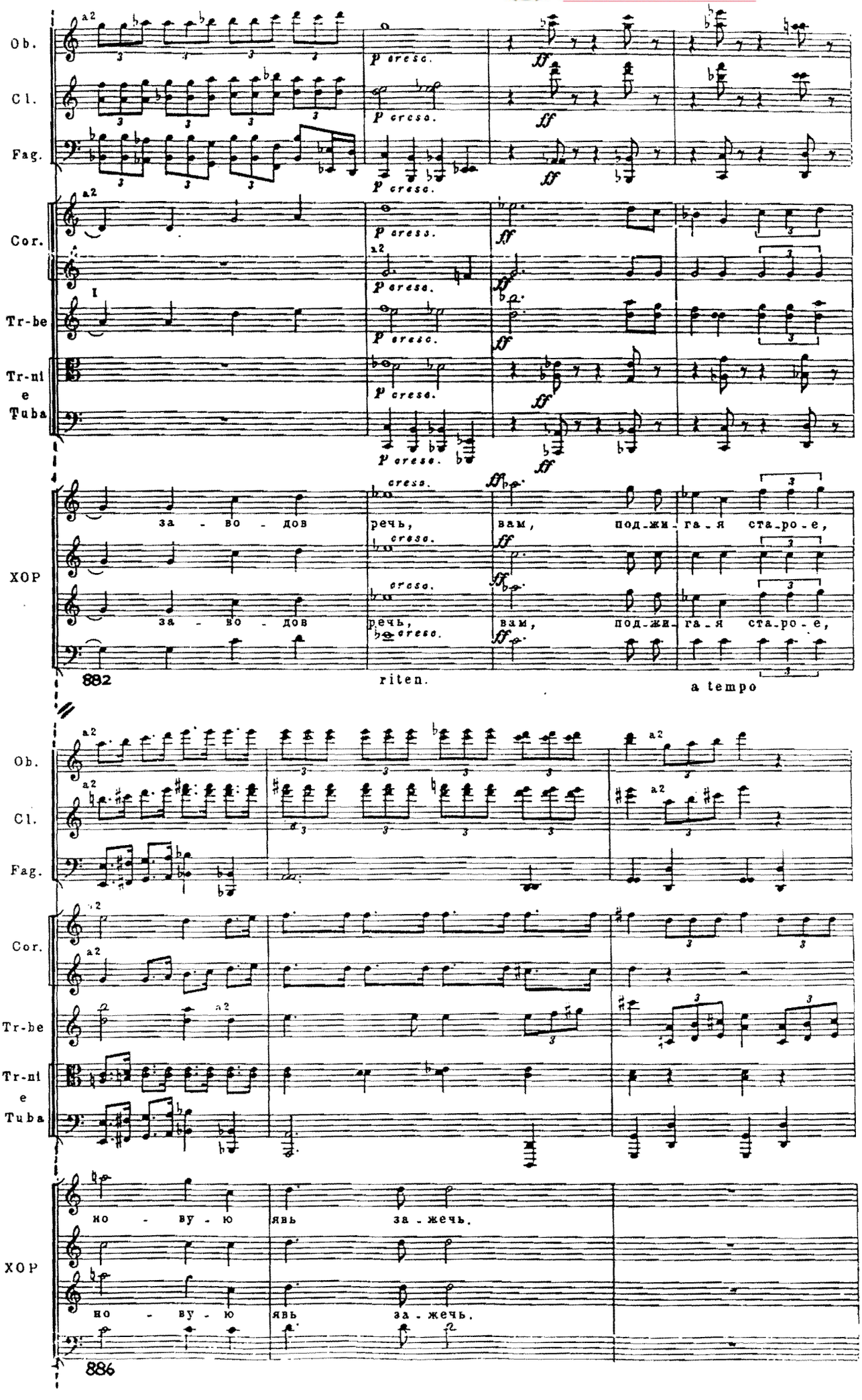
4.4 Non legato

Contrary to his use of staccato more toward the later symphonies, Shostakovich makes more use of non legato articulation in the early symphonies and less toward the later ones. Most repeated notes and motives are articulated non legato. Symphony No. 2 is articulated predominantly in non legato and legato whereas Symphony No. 4 contains many non legato or accented non legato phrases. The fourth movement of Symphony No. 5 (Allegro non troppo) presents the player with an exhausting 66 bars of uninterrupted non legato playing.

A typical example of non legato is found in Symphony No. 3, the one movement symphony scored with chorus which is subtitled "First of May". Non legato articulation is given to the whole orchestra. It is unusual that the horns and trumpets have been allocated similar material to the chorus, which in this example is marked XOP. The woodwind and string sections both have similar material consisting of repeated motives contrasting with the legato of the choir and the brass.

Example 4-8, Symphony No. 3, mm. 879-888





4.5 Double and triple tonguing

There are several opportunities in the symphonies where the oboist can use double or triple tonguing instead of single tonguing, especially in the fast movements and tutti sections. The following example taken from the first movement of Symphony No. 4 contains a section Stedman calls a "woodwind toccata" (1979:303) in which the first oboe might consider using double tonguing, especially on the demisemiquavers in mm. 499, 510, 511 and 512. Due to the exposed nature of the ensemble the oboist must ensure a very clean and even performance.

Example 4-9: Symphony No. 4, first movement, mm. 497-515