GIOVANNI GABRIELI

c. 1554/57–1612

Canzon terza a 4

Ch. 188

for two Trumpets in C or B♭ and two Trombones

from Canzoni per sonare con ogni sorte di stromenti
Venice: Alessandro Raverii, 1608

Edited, with editorial dynamics, preface, and commentary,
by Christopher Delgado

SCORE

Performing edition. Musical text not collated with the 1608 partbooks.

TRUMPETOWN EDITION

Giovanni Gabrieli, *Canzon terza a 4*, Ch. 188. From *Canzoni per sonare con ogni sorte di stromenti* (Venice: Alessandro Raverii, 1608).

Performing edition. The musical text is a modern arrangement for brass quartet and has not been collated with the 1608 partbooks. The dynamics, which are all editorial and printed in square brackets, and the preface and commentary are the present editor's.

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Parts available: Trumpet 1 and Trumpet 2, each in C and in B♭; Trombone; Bass Trombone.

TRUMPETOWN EDITION

TE-002

Arrangement after M. Rondeau, IMSLP (Werner Icking Music Collection), CC BY-SA 4.0.

PREFACE

The source, the instruments, and the question of dynamics

The source

The *Canzon terza* is the third of four four-part canzonas by Giovanni Gabrieli that open Alessandro Raverii's anthology *Canzoni per sonare con ogni sorte di stromenti a quattro, cinque, & otto, con il suo basso generale per l'organo*, printed in Venice in 1608 (Plate 1). The collection gathers thirty-six canzonas by Gabrieli, Claudio Merulo, Gioseffo Guami, Girolamo Frescobaldi, and others, with a *basso generale* for the organ. Gabrieli is represented by the four canzonas *a 4* (Ch. 186–189, the first of them "La Spiritata") and by two canzonas *a 8* (Nos. 27 and 28). The catalogue numbers are those of Richard Charteris.[1]

The title page calls for performance *con ogni sorte di stromenti*, "with every kind of instrument." In Venetian practice around 1600 that meant, above all, cornetts and trombones, the core of the instrumental establishment at San Marco, alone or doubled by strings and organ.[2] A quartet of two trumpets and two trombones is a modern descendant of that sound, and the present edition is written for it.

The question of dynamics

The 1608 print contains no dynamic indications of any kind (Plate 2). That silence is not evidence that the music was played at one level. As Matthias Thiemel puts it in *Grove Music Online*, dynamic variation "can normally be assumed even when indications for it are mainly or even entirely absent from the notation," and already in the Renaissance "dynamic values were reflected in changes in the number of voices and their registers."[3] Gabrieli himself is the best witness. In the *Sacrae symphoniae* of 1597 he printed the words *Pian* and *Forte* in the parts of the *Sonata pian e forte* (Plate 3), and the placement is systematic: a single choir sounding alone is marked *pian*, and the two choirs together are marked *forte*. Dynamic level follows the number of choirs sounding.

Michael Praetorius, writing in 1619 for German musicians learning the new Italian music, confirms the principle. The Italians, he reports, mark *forte* and *piano* in their parts "because of the changes in both voices and choirs," a practice he approves, provided it is used with moderation.[4] The instruments were equal to it. Girolamo Dalla Casa, the first director of instrumental music at San Marco, wrote in 1584 that the cornett "is played piano and forte and in every sort of key, just as the voice." Jamie Savan, who translates the passage, suggests that the two words described tone quality, soft and hard, as well as level.[5]

Every dynamic in this score is therefore editorial, every one is printed in square brackets, and each is justified in the Commentary. The edition follows the practice Thomas Hiebert singled out for praise, in which editorial suggestions are "clearly differentiated" from the source.[6] Players who prefer the bare text can ignore the brackets.

1 Richard Charteris, *Giovanni Gabrieli (ca. 1555–1612): A Thematic Catalogue of His Music with a Guide to the Source Materials and Translations of His Vocal Texts* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1996).

2 For the instrumentalists at San Marco see Eleanor Selfridge-Field, "Bassano and the Orchestra of St Mark's," *Early Music* 4, no. 2 (1976): 153–58, at 155 (for Christmas 1602, six trombones, three cornetts, two violins, and violone were hired), and her *Venetian Instrumental Music from Gabrieli to Vivaldi*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1994). See also Denis Arnold, *Giovanni Gabrieli and the Music of the Venetian High Renaissance* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), and, on the divided choirs of San Marco, David Bryant, "The *cori spezzati* of St Mark's: Myth and Reality," *Early Music History* 1 (1981): 165–86.

3 Matthias Thiemel, "Dynamics," *Grove Music Online* (2001; bibliography updated 2013), §1, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.08458. Thiemel cites Josquin's *Missa "Pange lingua"*, where paired imitation builds from two voices to four.

4 Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum III* (Wolfenbüttel, 1619), trans. and ed. Jeffery T. Kite-Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); quoted from Hans Lampl, trans., "Praetorius on Performance: Excerpts from *Syntagma Musicum III*," selected with commentary by S. E. Plank, *Historic Brass Society Journal* 6 (1994): 244–68, at 248–49.

5 Girolamo Dalla Casa, *Il vero modo di diminuir* (Venice: Angelo Gardano, 1584): "Questo stromento si adopera piano, & forte, & in ogni sorte di Tuono, si come fa la voce"; trans. Jamie Savan, "Unlocking the Mysteries of the Venetian Cornett: *ad imitar piu la voce humana*," *Historic Brass Society Journal* 28 (2016): 31–56, at 50. On Dalla Casa's post see Selfridge-Field, "Bassano and the Orchestra," 153.

6 Thomas Hiebert, review of *Salzburger Hornduette*, ed. Johannes Brand, *Historic Brass Society Newsletter* 10 (1997): 38.

Principles of the editorial dynamics

Gabrieli's *Sonata pian e forte* is written for two choirs; this canzona is written for one. The edition extends the principle of the sonata to a single four-voice texture by analogy, and states openly that it does so. The rules are those of the first volume of this series (TE-001), applied to a shorter and more sharply sectional piece.

Texture determines level. Where voices drop out and a new point of imitation is entered by single voices, the level is [*p*] or [*mf*]. Where all four parts join in rhythmically unified writing, it is [*f*]. Where the scoring alone produces the increase, as in the opening exposition, no marking is printed; [*f*] appears only where the voices also move together.

Changes of level fall at the seams. Changes of level fall at cadences and at the start of new points of imitation, not in the middle of a phrase. Where a voice runs on across a cadence, its marking is placed at the start of its next phrase. This is not a claim that the music was played in flat blocks of sound. Thiemel calls the twentieth-century idea of "terrace dynamics" erroneous, and the period sources describe the swelling and fading of the voice and of wind instruments: Caccini's *crescere e scemare della voce*, and Fantini's instruction of 1638 that long notes on the trumpet be held "in a singing fashion," swelling to the middle of the note and fading again.[7] The brackets mark only the level from which such shaping starts. No hairpins are printed; the shaping is left to the players.

The triple-time passage. Bars 5–10 are the only passage in triple proportion. The partbooks set it off with the sign 3 and restore duple time with C (Plate 2), and the arrangement renders it as a section in 3/4 joined to its surroundings by proportional tempo equations. Here, for the first time in the piece, the writing is predominantly chordal, all four parts moving together in largely the same rhythm, and the passage therefore receives [*f*]. The marking follows from the texture, not from the change of metre.

Thin texture, low level; full texture, middle level. After the triple passage the canzona falls into three points of imitation. The first (bars 11–19) is repeatedly reduced to two voices: the trombones alone in bar 12, the trumpets alone in bars 15–16. It is marked [*p*]. In the second (bars 20–27) the texture never falls below three voices, and it is marked [*mf*]. The third opens with a rhythmically unified block (bars 28–30) and continues in full four-voice texture to the cadence in bar 34; it is marked [*f*]. The result is a rise in three steps from [*p*] to [*f*] across the middle of the piece, each step falling at a cadence and each justified by the number of voices sounding and how they move. The opening exposition is also thin, yet it is marked [*mf*]: [*mf*] is the edition's neutral level for presenting a subject, and it is the same in every volume of the series. The [*p*] of bar 11 is a step down from the [*f*] that precedes it, into a section that is not only thin but repeatedly reduced to a single pair.

Balance on modern instruments

The trumpet and trombone of today are louder and more brilliant than the cornett and sackbut, and the cornett in particular was prized for its likeness to the human voice. The bracketed dynamics should therefore be read as relationships, not as absolute levels. A bracketed [*f*] in this music is the full, rounded sound of a cornett and sackbut ensemble, not a modern orchestral forte. Period-instrument players have argued for more range, not less: the cornettist Jean Tubéry, recalling "what Dalla Casa says about playing loud and softly," suggested that players "can go further in that direction."[8] Modern players should explore the full range between [*p*] and [*f*] while keeping the relationships between the parts.

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7 Thiemel, "Dynamics," §§1–3; Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (Florence, 1602), preface, ed. H. Wiley Hitchcock (Madison: A-R Editions, 1970; 2nd ed., Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2009); Girolamo Fantini, *Modo per imparare a sonare di tromba* (Frankfurt, 1638), 3, as translated in Steven E. Plank, "Trumpet and Horn," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. Stewart Carter, rev. and expanded by Jeffery Kite-Powell, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 143–44. A sign for the swell and decay of a single note appears in print only later, in Domenico Mazzocchi's madrigals of 1638.

8 Susan Smith, "A Cacophony of Cornettists," *Historic Brass Society Newsletter* 9 (1996): 26–32, at 28. Conversation with Michael Collver, Bruce Dickey, Stephen Escher, Douglas Kirk, Jean Tubéry, and Jeremy West.

Dynamics in the hands of players

Musicians of Gabrieli's own generation added dynamics to his music where the print had none. In a score book begun in 1599, the Augsburg composer and teacher Adam Gumpelzhaimer copied Gabrieli's ten-voice motet *Domine exaudi orationem meam* from the *Sacrae symphoniae* of 1597. The book names its players, on instruments that include cornetts, trombones, and a bassoon, and Gumpelzhaimer supplied dynamic indications throughout, alternating *Pian* and *Forte*. Richard Charteris, who describes the source, reads it as "a record of how the instrumentalists treated this work."[9] Bruce Dickey notes that *piano* and *forte* in music of the period usually mark echo effects or the contrast of tutti and solo sections, and Gary Towne writes that dynamic markings of the period "merely signal to players the size of the ensemble playing at any given moment," and warns against over-interpreting them.[10]

The instruments and their model

In their practical guide of 1975, Clifford Bartlett and Peter Holman observe that Gabrieli and his contemporaries treated the cornett and the violin as alternatives, and conclude that it is "far better to replace them with violins than with anachronistic oboes or trumpets."[11] This edition answers the objection in how the trumpets are played. Dickey, writing for players of the cornett and sackbut, names the human voice as "the principal model (and not the modern trumpet or trombone!)" for tone, articulation, and dynamic range.[12]

The title page advertises *il suo basso generale per l'organo*, and Bartlett and Holman call the organ "the obvious accompanying instrument" in church music of the period.[13] The arrangement omits it; an organist reading from the *basso generale* would restore a sound the print provides for.

Articulation

Dickey identifies articulation as the area in which modern and historical playing differ most. Wind players of the period used pairs of unequal syllables, *te che*, *te re*, and *le re*, in a kind of double tonguing whose aim was not evenness but inequality: metrically strong, consonant "good" notes slightly stressed, weak and passing "bad" notes unstressed. Dickey recommends a compound tonguing for "all notes of the speed of eighth notes or faster," with repeated and leaping notes single-tongued; for *re* he suggests the soft *t* of a relaxed American "water."[14] The arrangement halves the note values of the print (its semiminims appear here as quavers), so Dickey's eighth notes are the semiquavers of this score.

Tempo

The print gives no tempo. Its notation, under the cut C and full of semiminims and fusae, is what George Houle calls "canzona style." Houle explains that such music was beaten with the tactus on the semibreve, and that this tactus was taken slower than in music notated in long values, "so as not to rush the fast notes"; he cites Marin Mersenne's normative tactus of 1636, "about MM 60."[15] One original tactus is thus one minim of this score, and the arranger's crotchet = 110 puts the tactus at about 55 a minute, slower than Mersenne's norm. The editor suggests a minim pulse, one to each tactus.

9 Richard Charteris, "The Performance of Giovanni Gabrieli's Vocal Works: Indications in the Early Sources," *Music & Letters* 71, no. 3 (1990): 336–51, at 342. The score book is Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Mus. ms. 40028.

10 Bruce Dickey, "Ornamentation in Early Seventeenth-Century Italian Music," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. Stewart Carter, rev. and expanded by Jeffery Kite-Powell, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 308; Gary Towne, "Choral Music in Italy and the Germanic Lands," ibid., 63.

11 Clifford Bartlett and Peter Holman, "Giovanni Gabrieli: A Guide to the Performance of His Instrumental Music," *Early Music* 3, no. 1 (1975): 25–32, at 27.

12 Bruce Dickey, "Cornett and Sackbut," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, 109.

13 Bartlett and Holman, "Giovanni Gabrieli," 27.

14 Dickey, "Cornett and Sackbut," 111–12.

15 George Houle, "Meter and Tempo," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, 353.

Christopher Delgado
New Jersey, November 2026

COMMENTARY

The editorial dynamics, bar by bar

Sources. *R* = *Canzoni per sonare con ogni sorte di stromenti* (Venice: Alessandro Raverii, 1608), partbooks Canto, Alto, Tenore, Basso, Basso generale; consulted for the absence of dynamics only; the musical text has not been collated. *SS* = Giovanni Gabrieli, *Sacrae symphoniae* (Venice: Angelo Gardano, 1597), *Sonata pian e forte*, cited as the model for texture-based dynamics. *T* = the modern arrangement used for the musical text (see imprint).
Abbreviations. Tpt 1, Tpt 2 = Trumpets (parts in C and in B♭); Tbn = Trombone; B Tbn = Bass Trombone (in the score: Tpt. in C 1, Tpt. in C 2, Tbn., B. Tbn.); all = all four parts. Bar numbers follow *T*.

Bar	Part	Marking and rationale
1, 1, 2, 3	Tpt 1, Tpt 2, Tbn, B Tbn	[*mf*] at each entry of the subject (Tpt 1 bar 1, Tpt 2 bar 1 beat 3, Tbn bar 2 beat 3, B Tbn bar 3). The exposition builds from one voice to four; the increase is written into the scoring, so no further marking is printed.
5	all	[*f*]. The passage in triple proportion (bars 5–10; *R*: sign 3, Plate 2). The writing is predominantly chordal, the first rhythmically unified writing of the piece (the B Tbn's running quavers in bars 7 and 9 decorate it without breaking it), closing on the B-flat cadence at the start of bar 11. *SS*: both choirs together = *forte*.
11	Tbn, B Tbn	[*p*]. After the triple-time cadence the trombones begin a new point alone (Tbn on the downbeat, whose first note is both cadence and start of the new figure; B Tbn in beat 3). Tpt 1 only sustains its cadence note and Tpt 2 completes its cadence figure; both rest in bar 12, so the trombones sound alone: in effect a single choir (*SS*: *pian*).
13, 14	Tpt 2, Tpt 1	[*p*]. The trumpets take up the point in turn. The section stays thin: the trumpets alone in bars 15–16, the trombones re-entering in bars 17–18 at the same level.
20, 21	Tbn, B Tbn; Tpt 2, Tpt 1	[*mf*]. A new point after the cadence on F in bar 20, while the trumpets hold the cadence chord: Tbn bar 20, B Tbn bar 20 beat 3, Tpt 2 bar 21, Tpt 1 bar 21 beat 3. From here to bar 27 the texture never falls below three voices, unlike the two-voice stretches of bar 12 and bars 15–16, so this point takes the middle level.
28	all	[*f*]. On the cadence on C, all four parts begin a rhythmically unified block (bars 28–30), and the full texture continues to the cadence on B-flat in bar 34. No step down is printed inside this span, since changes of level fall at cadences.
34–36	Tpt 1, Tpt 2; Tbn, B Tbn	[*mf*] at each entry of the closing reprise of the opening subject, now in stretto (Tpt 1 bar 34 beat 3½, immediately after the cadence; Tpt 2 bar 35; Tbn bar 36; B Tbn bar 36 beat 3): the same marking as the exposition. The B Tbn's B-flat at the start of bar 35 is its last note of the [*f*] span.

Markings deliberately not added

No hairpins (see Preface). No echo effects. No dynamic at the proportional changes themselves other than the [*f*] that the texture of bars 5–10 requires. No final [*f*]: the reprise builds by accumulation of voices, as the exposition does, and the closing chord, sustained by all four parts, needs no marking. No dynamic for the final fermata. No articulation has been added to *T*.

Editorial method

This is a performing edition. The musical text is a modern arrangement for brass quartet (see the imprint page), which sets the four partbooks for two trumpets and two trombones. Its pitch level, note values, barring, metre signatures, tempo indication (*Allegro*, crotchet = 110; the arrangement gives *circa* 110), the proportional equations at bars 5 and 11, the alto clef for the trombone from bar 5, and the final fermata belong to the arrangement and do not appear in this form in the 1608 print, which is notated in the long note values and unbarred partbooks of the period. The text has not been collated with the four Raverii partbooks, and the assignment of the partbooks to the four modern parts has not been verified. The present editor's contribution is confined to the bracketed dynamics, the preface, and the commentary.

SOURCES AND LITERATURE

Works cited in the preface and commentary

Musical sources

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Plate 1. *Raverii, Canzoni per sonare (Venice, 1608), title page of the Canto partbook.*

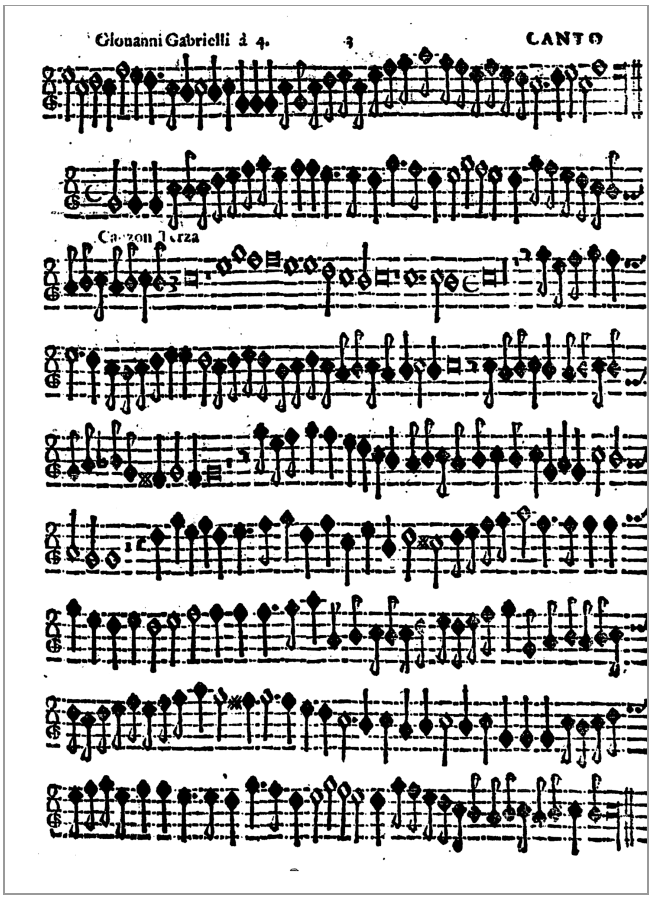


Plate 2. *Raverii 1608, Canto partbook, p. 3: the close of the Canzon seconda and the whole of the Canzon terza, from the third staff. In that staff the sign 3 opens the passage in triple proportion and C restores duple time. The print carries no dynamic indications.*

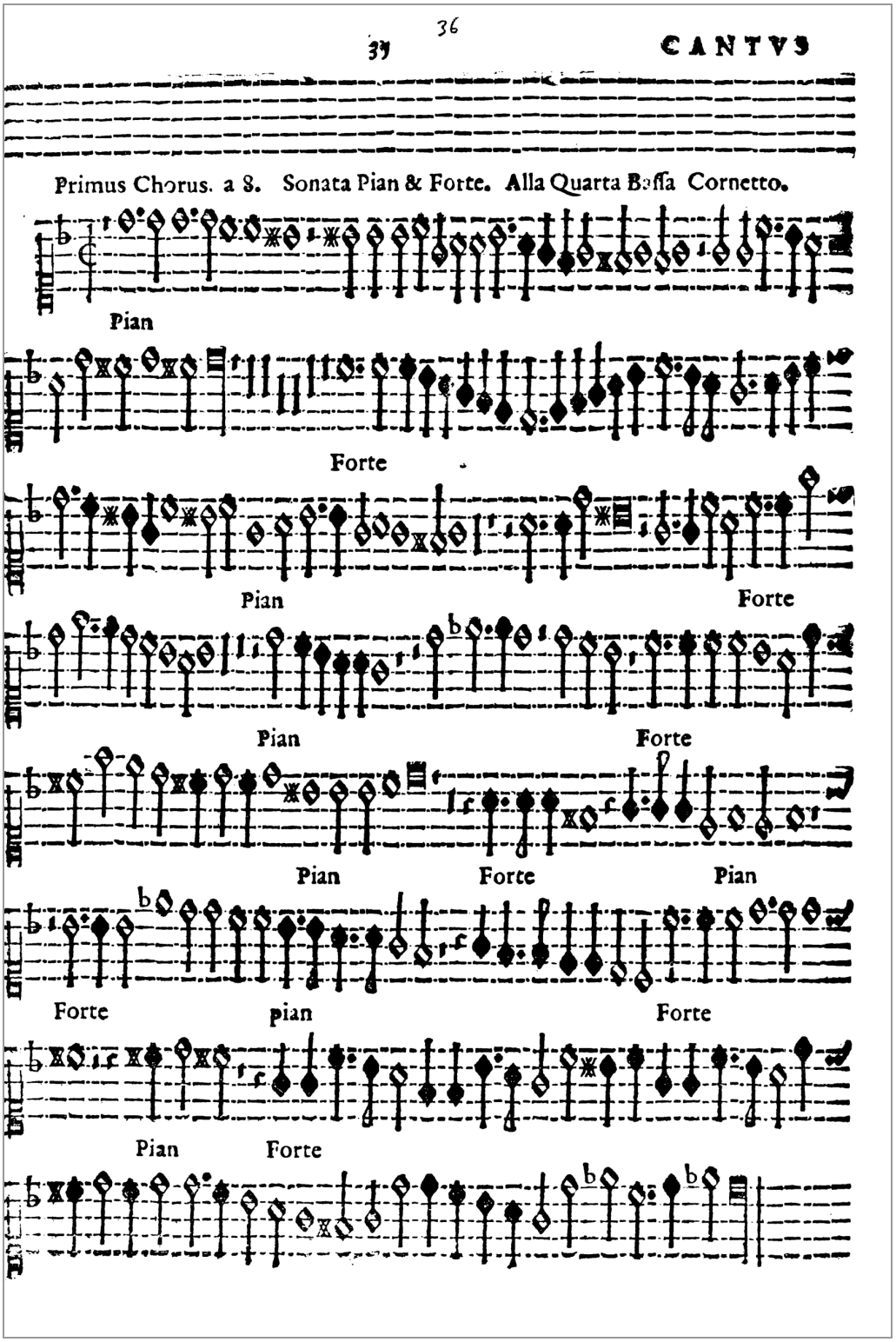
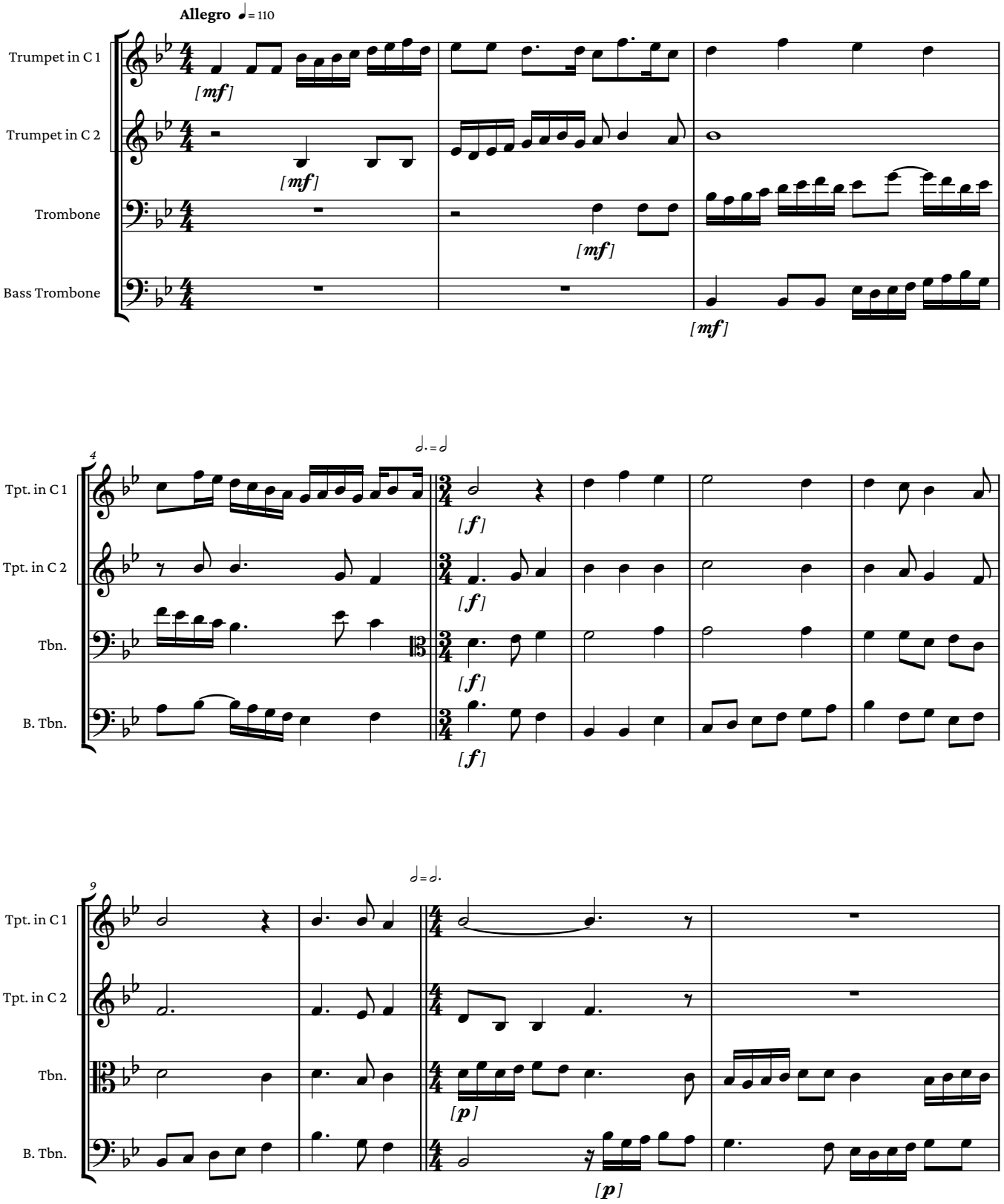


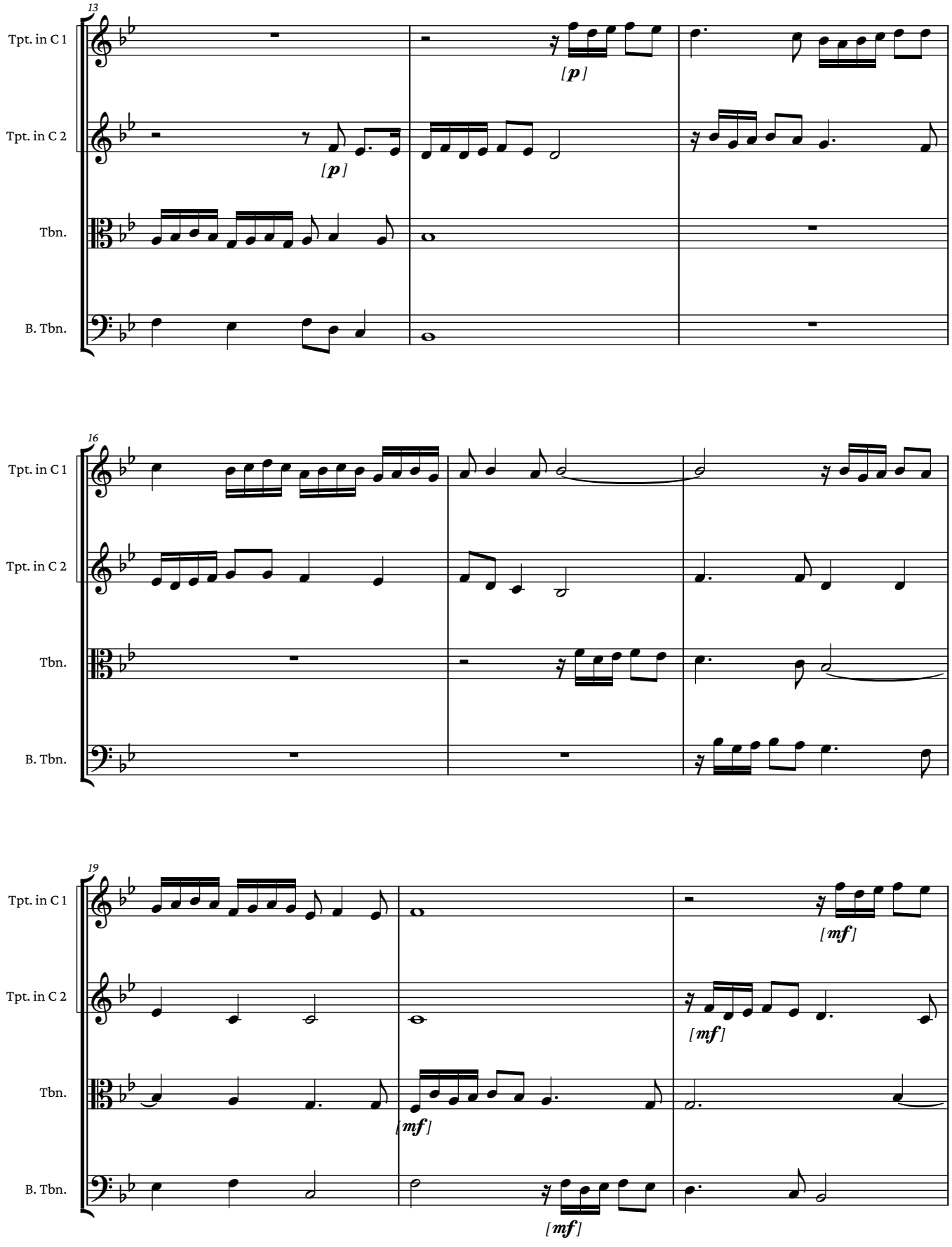
Plate 3. *Gabrieli, Sacrae symphoniae (Venice, 1597), Cantus partbook, Sonata pian & forte, Choir I cornetto part: the printed Pian and Forte mark where this choir plays alone and where both choirs sound. Vienna, ÖNB.*

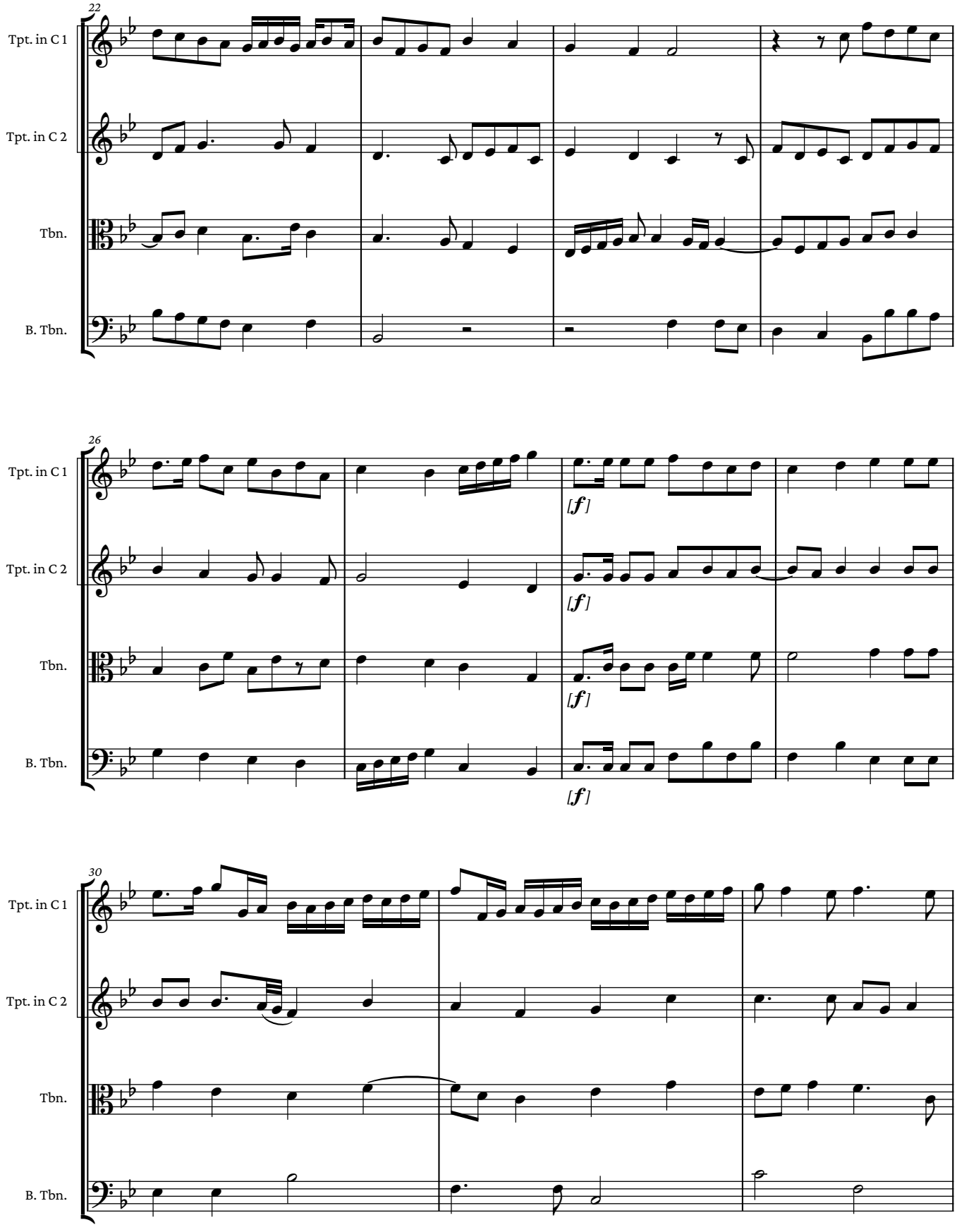
Canzon terza a 4

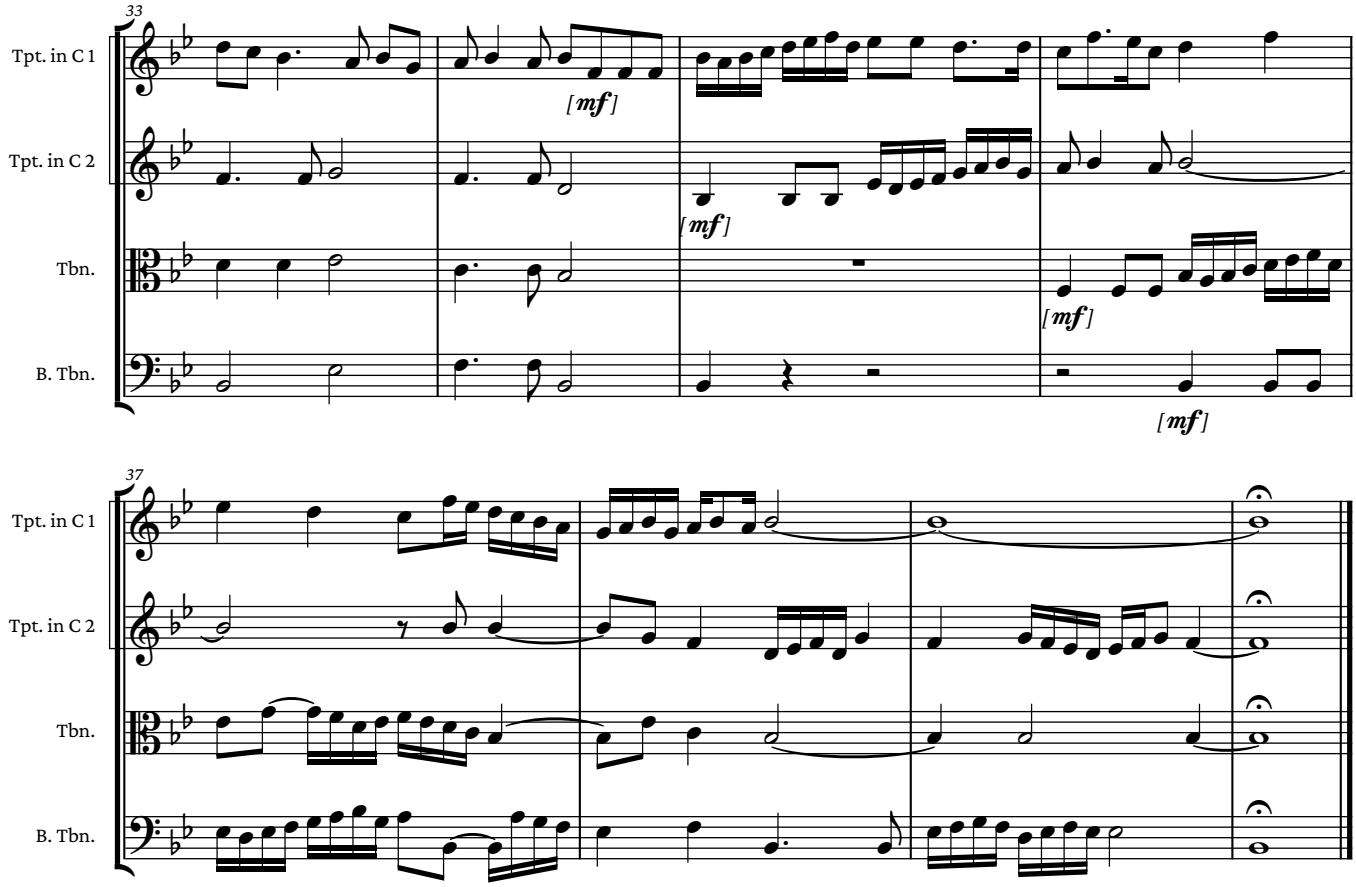
Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
Edited by Christopher Delgado



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13
Tpt. in C 1
Tpt. in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[p]
[p]
16
Tpt. in C 1
Tpt. in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
19
Tpt. in C 1
Tpt. in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[mf]
[mf]
[mf]
[mf]


22
Tpt. in C 1
Tpt. in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
26
Tpt. in C 1
Tpt. in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[f]
[f]
[f]
[f]
30
Tpt. in C 1
Tpt. in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.


33
Tpt. in C 1
Tpt. in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[mf]
[mf]
[mf]
[mf]
37
Tpt. in C 1
Tpt. in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.