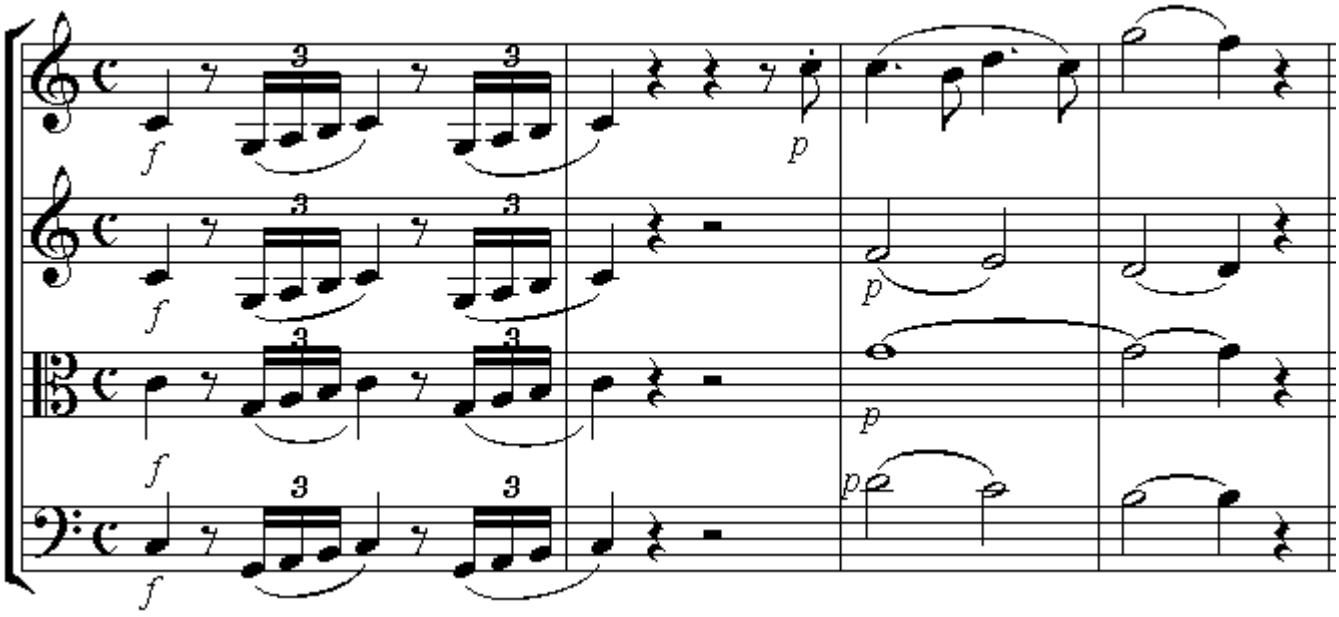
Mozart Symphony 41

I will take a number of short extracts from this piece and give performance suggestions for each.

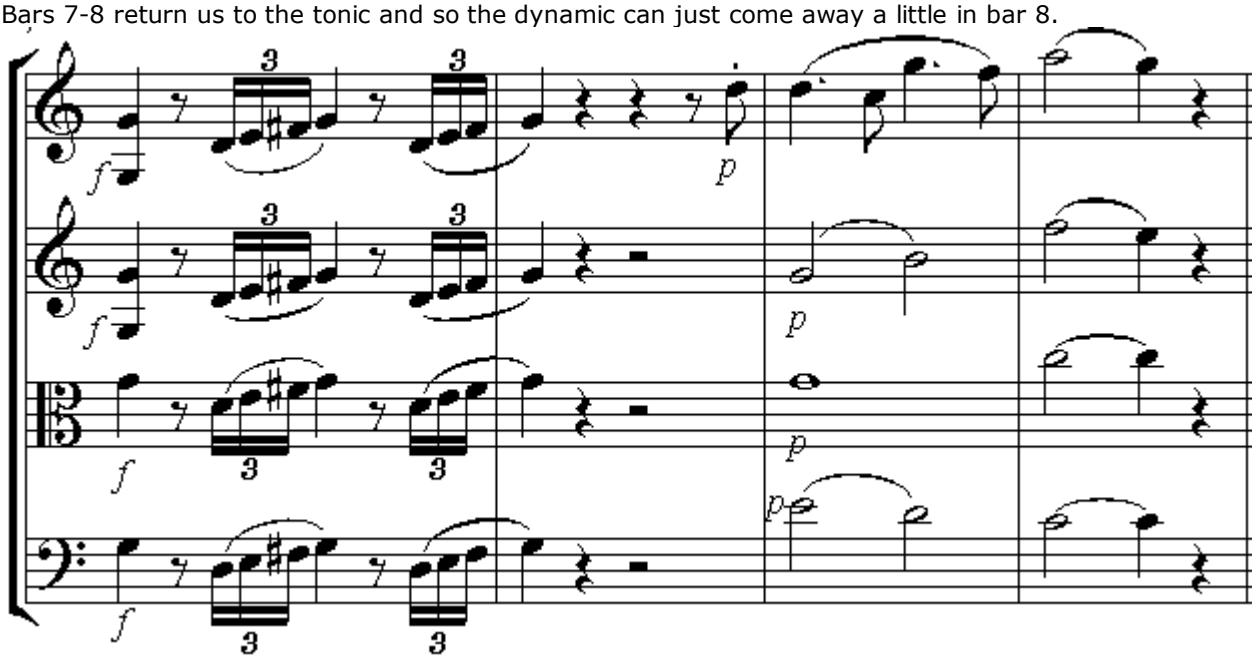
1. 1st Movement: Bars 1-4

Mozart gives us two strongly contrasting motifs in the first four bars. I like the first motif, which strongly reinforces the tonic, to crescendo and its final note is sent into the stratosphere. Bars 3-4 give us contrast in texture and volume, but also take us straight into the dominant, G. The final note of the 1st violins in bar 4 should not be too short or quiet as it is the 7th of G which is not resolved until the final note in the 2nd violins in bar 8.



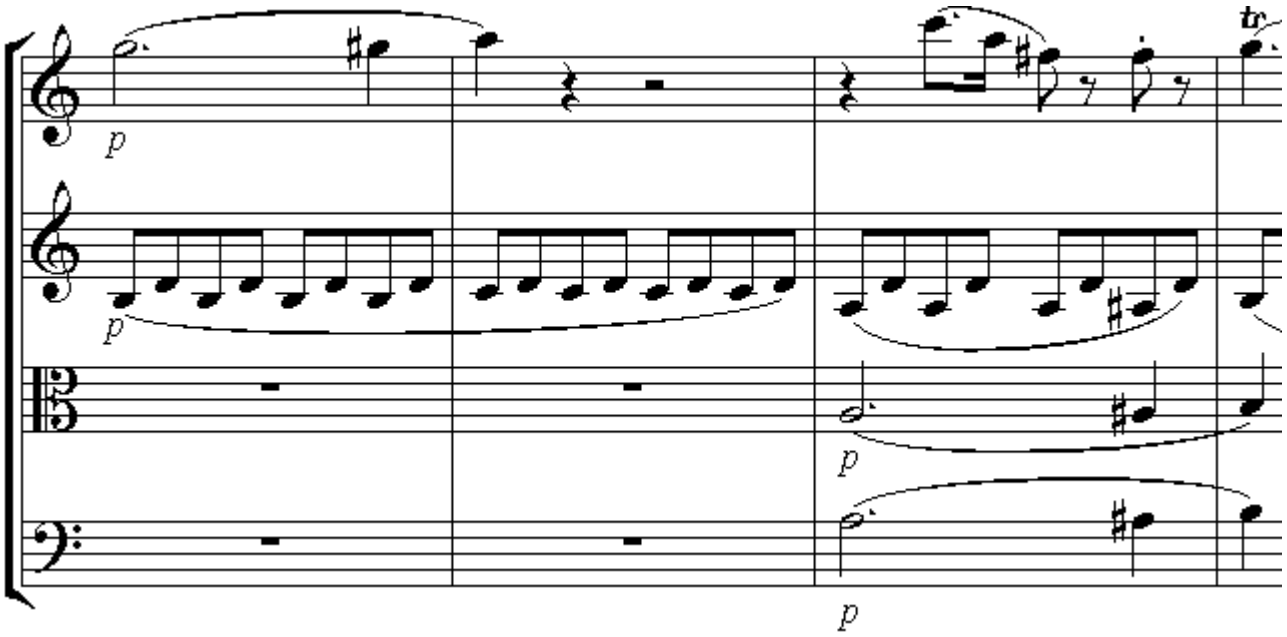
2. 1st Movement: Bars 5-8

Again crescendo in bar 5. This works well whenever this motif comes - whether in forte or in piano. When in piano (e.g. 24-25) the crescendo helps to set the woodwind off on their downward scales. Bars 7-8 return us to the tonic and so the dynamic can just come away a little in bar 8.



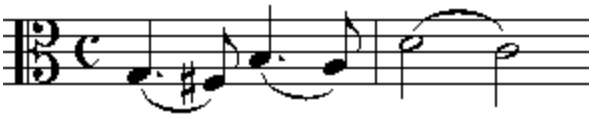
3. 1st Movement: Bars 56-59

Here's a great example of competing principles! If you follow the common idea of Mozart's day that slurs diminuendo, then bar 1 diminuendos to bar 2. But if you go with the principle of giving more weight to the 'away' feeling of the dominant it would be the other way round. You could perhaps ask the firsts to dim and seconds to cresc, but I don't think that works. In general I think it better to go with the harmonic if there's a conflict of interests and that is what I would recommend here. So the first bar goes to the second, and the third comes away to the forth. But please note this is only a subtle thing, I'm not advocating huge dynamic changes! Also note that in the third and fourth bars there is no tension between these principles as they work together. Whatever your solution you need at least to be aware of the issues.



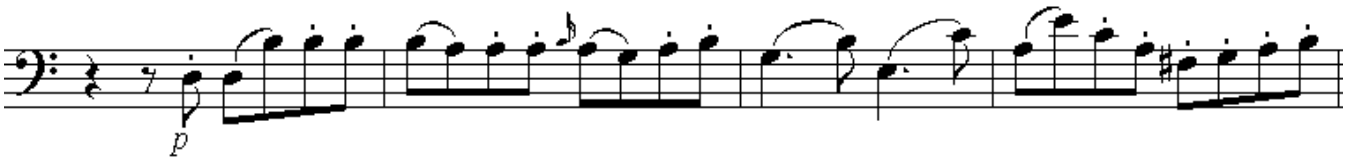
4. 1st Movement: Bars 71f

Here's a wonderful fragment for the violas (and bass section) taken from the motif in bars 3-4 at the very start of the movement. Mozart is getting very operatic here. The bars just before this are very gentle and light and then these bars interrupt with a miniature outburst of passion. The violins reply with a delicate and almost nonchalant tune, and the process is repeated. Hence I like these bars to come out strongly from the texture. At the same time the whole bar should not be completely legato as there are two slurs.



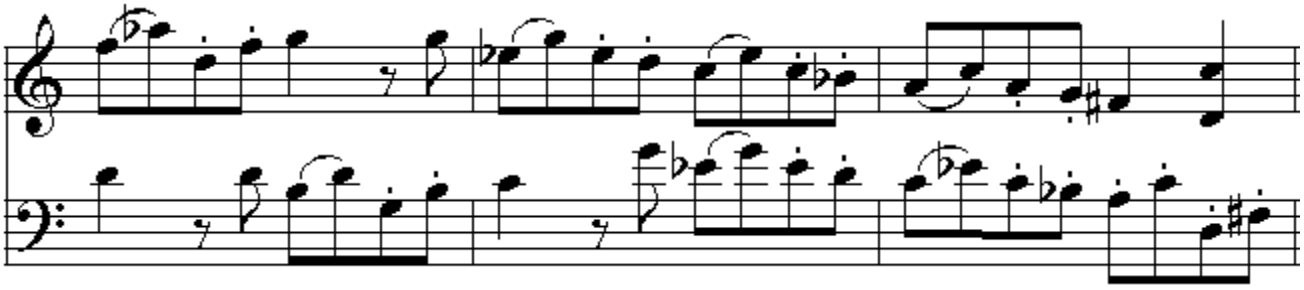
5. 1st Movement: Bars 105-108

The harmony of this passage suggests that the second and forth bars should be stronger than the first and third. Also care should be taken not to make the third bar sound as if the slurs are one note later than written. In other words observation of slurs as phrasing should be employed.



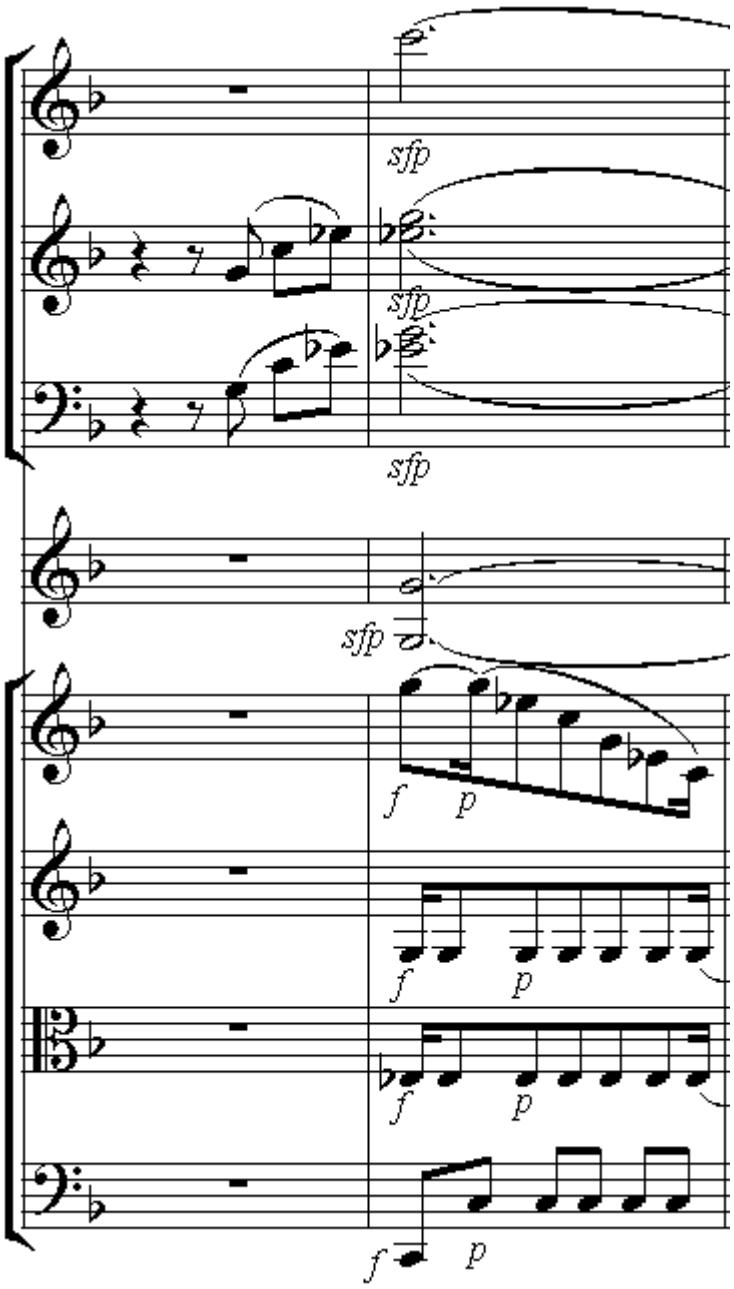
6. 1st Movement: Bars 144-46

A good example of how Mozart uses dots as articulation. In the first bar I would diminuendo in each group of four notes: the slur suggests it, and the dots are only there to stop a second slur being added (so I would bow it out and not do two up-bows on the dotted notes). In the third and fourth bars the dots again caution against adding slurs.



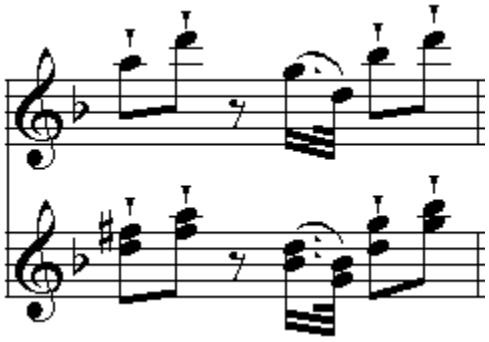
7. 2nd Movement: Bars 18f

In the string parts it seems most likely that a diminuendo is intended. No difference should be inferred from the fact that the second violin and viola pianos are written a semiquaver after those of the firsts and basses. But how should we treat the sfp in the wind? Again a diminuendo seems most likely, though with a lower dynamic than in the strings. An abrupt 20th century style sforzando sounds quite out of place here.



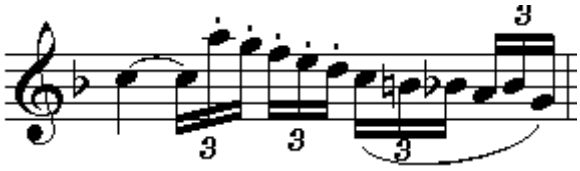
8. 2nd Movement: Bar 68

Mozart very clearly marked some notes with wedges in this symphony. Here he shows that these two quavers should have equal weight, and perhaps also something of an accent. The inference is that he would normally expect there to be a diminuendo on such quaver pairs (i.e. when there are no such articulation marks). There is normally a hierarchy of weight even within a beat.



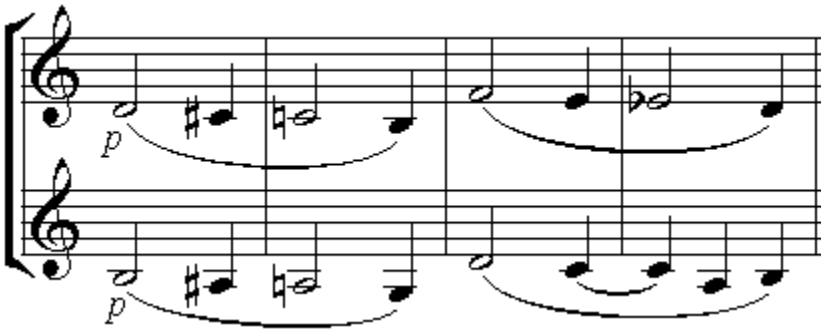
9. 2nd Movement: Bar 91

The five dotted triplet notes should be played lightly, but without being exceedingly short as that brings unnecessary attention to them. On the string works well.



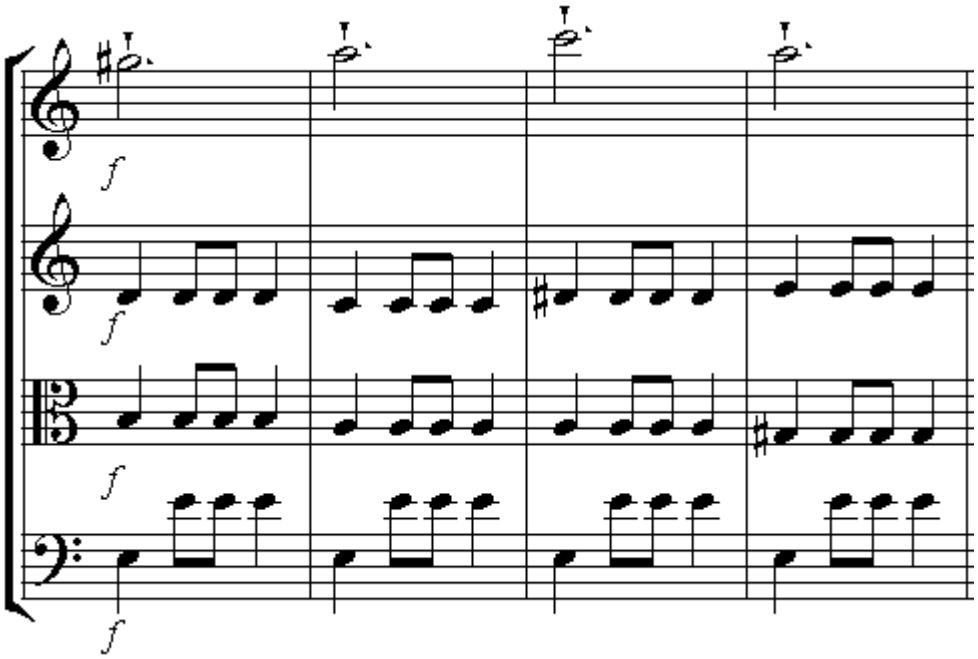
10. 3rd Movement: Bars 17-20

Making use of the slurs here gives this passage a swing: give an impulse on the beginning of the first and third bars (slightly more on the third than the first).



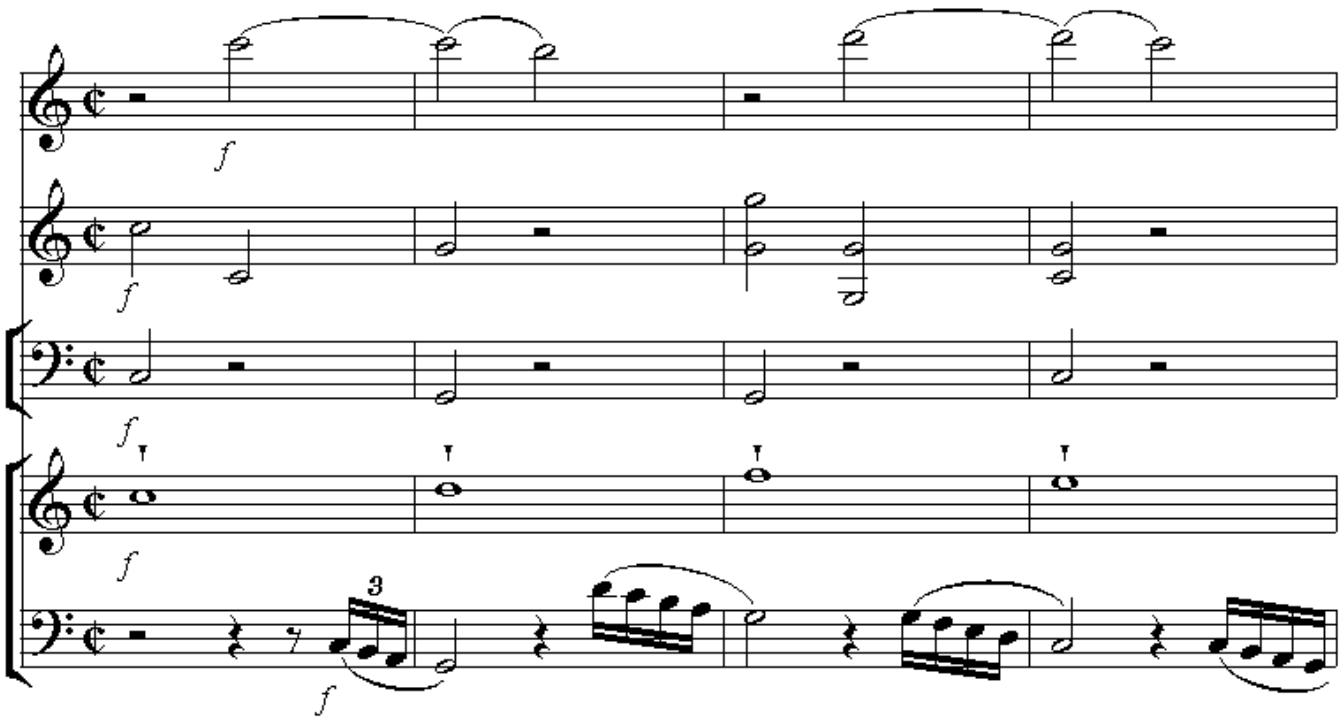
11. Trio: 9-12

A clever little foreshadowing in the first violin part of the last movement's first theme. Due to the use of daggers each note should receive a 'dig' (probably best done with extra bow speed and vibrato at the start of the note). But also contour needs adding to the line so that the third bar is the strongest (strongly suggested by the harmony).



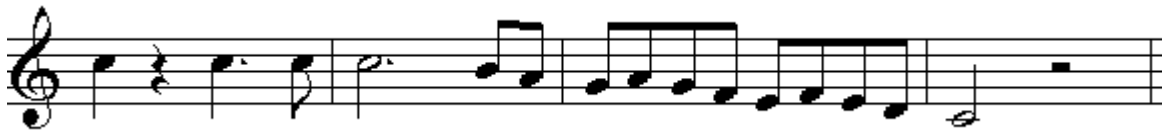
12. 4th Movement: Bars 9-12

I've reduced the parts here. The top line (played by the woodwind) shows an appoggiatura and resolution on the second and forth bars. Hence the first note in those bars should be stronger then the second. The violin parts have the wedge, just as in the earlier trio. The bass part shows that the harmony is again going to the third (dominant) bar and away to the forth (tonic) bar.



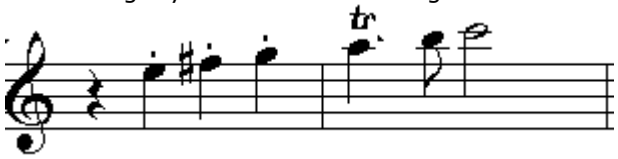
13. 4th Movement: Bars 19-21

Although there is no marking on the dotted crotchet it would be natural to shorten it (notes of the same pitch often need shortening - brass parts in the Classical and early Romantic eras often require this treatment). Also it acts as an upbeat to the dotted minim following, and so it makes good sense to give this longer note the most weight in this phrase, with the quavers trailing off slightly in volume (though not in excitement!). Treat this phrase the same way whichever part of the bar it comes in.



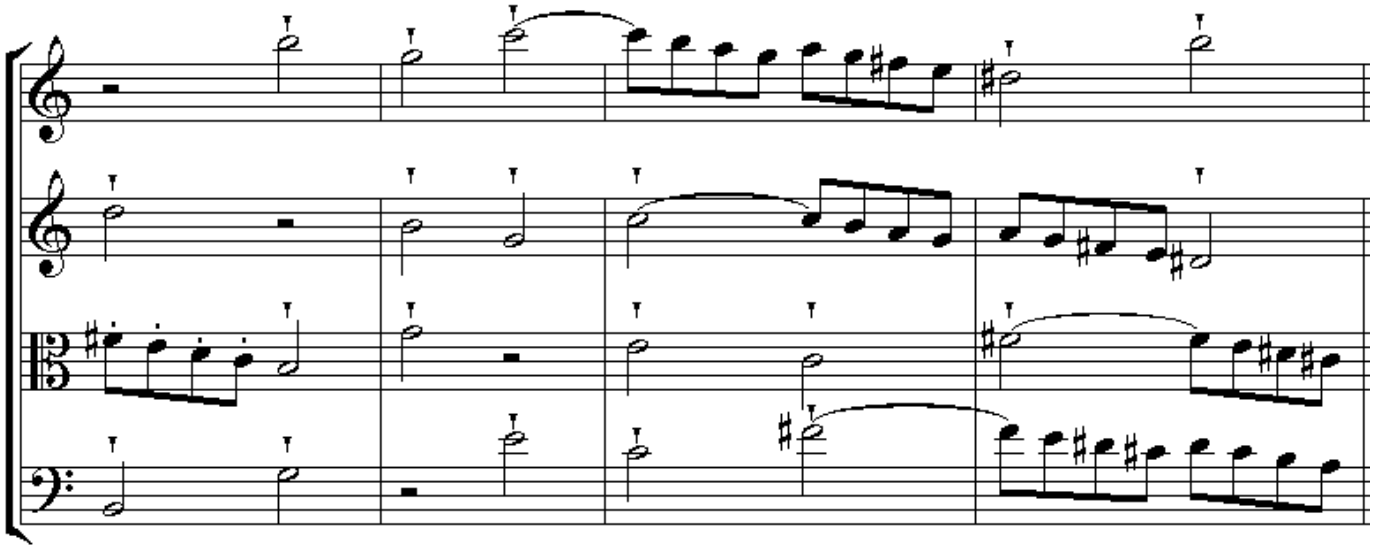
14. 4th Movement: Bars 56f

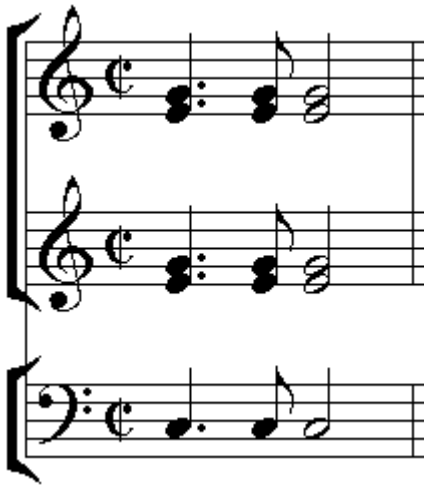
Treating this as a simple crescendo and diminuendo works well. The dotted crotchet is the strongest point, with the minim slightly less than its full length.



15. 4th Movement: Bars 102-106

The three notes with the wedges can be accented, but the quavers are less important. Again it makes no difference whether a point comes on the first or second beat (minim) of the bar - it should start loud each time (and therefore down bow in the string parts).



16. 4th Movement: Bar 183

This is part of the motif discussed in 13 above for the brass and timps. As such it should crescendo to the minim.