LISZT'S "BAGATELLE WITHOUT TONALITY:" ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES

by

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The present text is an analysis of Franz Liszt's *Bagatelle without tonality*, the first self-proclaimed atonal piece ever written. The main analytical techniques used as a starting point are derived from 'paradigmatic' and 'reductive' analysis, both applied freely according to the features of the piece. A review of Robert Morgan's analysis of the piece in his 1976 article "Dissonant Prolongation" prompts an alternative reduction. The role and limitations of this analytical technique, the potential for creating misleading analogies with tonal music, and its general adequateness for the piece are discussed.

Also visited is the technique of tonal composition that eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries theorists coined as *Mehrdeutigkeit*—'multiple meaning'—because of David C. Berry's thesis that the *Bagatelle* is a continuous outgrowth of it. With an independent review of this technique, and of the theory around it, Berry's thesis is refuted as a possible technical account of the piece.

Finally, by a reflection on the possible compositional process in the creation of the *Bagatelle*, I maintain the thesis that Liszt had no precompositional design of any kind: on the one hand, abandoning tonality in this piece meant abandoning the relationship between tonic and dominant altogether, not replacing them with something else; on the other, there is no sign of a general preconceived planning on the part of Liszt in the image of what twentieth-century atonality would experiment with, or of what many of the relationships revealed by analysis could suggest.

Fulfilling the composition requirements of the Ph.D. degree in Composition and Theory, my *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* follows the essay from page 60 on.

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PREFACE

The present essay was originally conceived as an exploration of Liszt's *Bagatelle ohne Tonart* from two points of view: the technical and the historical. In short, the double approach was similar to the one that David C. Berry pursued in a previous study of the piece: the inquiry into, on the one hand, 'how' this piece is atonal, and, on the other, 'why' it is so—i.e., why Liszt (or anyone else) would set out to compose a piece 'without tonality' in 1885.[1]

Since an early stage, the conclusions that emerged—in both spheres—of my attempt with the piece were very divergent from those reached by Berry. In the analysis of the piece, Berry was interested above all in a "nineteenth-century view," and thus was led to dismiss many analytical techniques that—anachronistic or not—shed light on the facts of the piece. Thus, his account of the piece's 'how'—of the piece as a musical composition rather than as a historical document—results less than fully informed. In fact, it reached conclusions that stood in direct contrast with my own analysis (which, in any case, was not based either on nineteenth-century or twentieth-century views, or indeed on any view that did not suggest itself from the score).

This imposed a fairly obvious course of action: with an eye on explaining the divergence, a detailed and independent review of the techniques of analysis invoked as "nineteenth-century view" was in order. The main such technique was the notion of *Mehrdeutigkeit*, theorized mainly by Georg Vogler and Gottfried Weber in the decades around 1800, and made widely available and accessible today by the recent exegesis of Weber expert Janna Saslaw.

[1] David Carson Berry, "The Meaning of 'Without': An Exploration of Liszt's *Bagatelle ohne Tonart*," *19th. Century Music* XVII/3 (2004).

The unforeseen result of this review was an important insight into the nature of the tonal system (more precisely, into the meaning of the very word 'tonality'). This was immediately felt to be a key piece of the puzzle of the 'collapse' of tonality (or its 'exhaustion,' or its 'breakdown:' the choice of the best term is still beyond my knowledge and, in my opinion, far from any convincing consensus to date). My first, enthusiastic impulse was to add this piece to other intuitions on the same issue that had been conceived earlier (in connection with the Schoenbergian revolution), and attempt—as an account of the *Bagatelle*'s 'why'—a model for the rise of atonality (as an alternative to tonality, rather than in any of its particular forms). My final conclusion—and I quote it here just to show how tentative and contentious it is—stated that "Schoenberg realized that tonal music could no longer be composed; Liszt realized that atonal music could." Clearly, the task of developing and defending such a thesis was far beyond the scope and the reach of such a project as a monograph on Liszt's *Bagatelle without Tonality*.

If for the historical side of this undertaking I was indebted to David Berry's article on the piece, for the analytical side I was subject to the major influence of the relevant portion of Robert Morgan's article on dissonant prolongation.[2] His account, an impressive Schenkerian reduction of the *Bagatelle*, is, in the end, 'refuted' here (or so I claim). But the extent to which Morgan's model directed my own analysis surpassed all my initial predictions. When, following his lead, I decided to try my own alternative reduction, my understanding of the piece grew in all directions and dimensions. Traces of my internal debate around the role, the possibilities, and the limitations of the reductive approach are—I am afraid—readily perceived in these pages. In my view, any contribution to this issue is relevant and important.

The two sides of my original approach grew robust, self-contained, and—in a way sadly—more and more apart. In the end the deep bond between them succumbed to practical (but not for that less valid) needs—organization, clarity, argumentative order. After discerning, with the help of my dissertation committee, what of the original discussion belonged to the 'analytical' part, what to the 'historical,' and after developing them

[2]Robert Morgan, "Dissonant Prolongations: Theoretical and Compositional Precedents," *Journal of Music Theory* 20/1 (1976).

separately, I came to realize that the two discussions were different projects. The first result of this is the present text—the analysis of the piece. The other side—a history of the collapse of tonality—having taken a few, key initial steps in connection with and because of the *Bagatelle*, is now a research project of its own.

The present study is submitted as the theoretical requirement for my degree in Composition and Theory at the University of Pittsburgh. The other part is my *Violin Concerto*, appended here starting on page 60 (and then following its own page numbering). Written for Roger Zahab and 'his' orchestra (that in a way I consider emotionally also mine), the piece is a repository of several threads of my recent compositional development. Much of it is based on my previous *Canon for violin and piano* of 2002. In that way, orchestration—whose practical pursuit in my personal story has been conducted essentially at Pitt and for the orchestra, with the experiences of my *Passacaglia* and my *Fandango*—played a role in the composition of the *Concerto*. To a large extent, although this actually threatened at some point to become more of a hindrance, it is a continuation of my *Septet* from 2004. It too starts hesitatingly and develops into a thematic section that apparently reaches a climax; but then, without seemingly having noticed the latter (cf. the strings at O), it simply moves on and eventually finishes. It was as a graduate student that teleology and its compositional manifestation—the climax—came to the front of my concerns. The contempt for it in *Septet* was, I feel, successful. I am looking forward to hearing what it sounds like in the *Concerto*. In any case, since Roger has been present at all times in all these years, it does seem especially fitting that my final landmark piece at this stage has been written for him.

Only well into the writing of this essay did I become aware of a small trick that irony seems to have played on me: it was around the same time, and around the same people, that I started dreaming of, on the one hand, systematically studying Liszt's *Bagatelle*, and, on the other, writing a program for music typesetting directed to the needs of the professional composer and the professional musicologist (i.e., a program defined by the absence of anything like 'the standard'). It is nice to see both dreams materialized today, in a first

stage, as parts of the same project. I cannot resist taking credit for the program with which all the musical examples and text—with the exception of the most beautiful one, that of Morgan—were created for the present document. TEX*muse*[3] has been a working project of mine for some years now (although since much later than those primeval dreams), and I have counted on the invaluable support and interest of the TEX community. The TEX User's Group awarded me a grant for work on the program in the summer of 2005. To its (our) president Karl Berry, standing for the whole of the TEX world (but I must also mention my uncle Rodrigo De Castro), I express my sincere and honored gratitude.

So, to those people who heard my fantasies, Rodolfo, Eduardo, Carolina, I present this text as a token of friendship. To Leonora for Gellner, to Dr. Lewis for Treitler, to Eric and Mathew (each in his own way), for Nattiez; to my father for Kuhn and Cassirer, and to my mother for Freud. To my brother too, for Ende. This text would be rather different without those thinkers in the background. Special thanks too to David Brodbeck and Dennis Looney, quite necessary (if occasional) interlocutors throughout.

And, of course, to my friends. Michael and James, Susana and Andrés yesterday and Matt today. And with love to Jen.

[3]The 'official website' of TEX*muse* is `www.fedegarcia.net/TeX/TeXmuse.html/`.

1.0 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Franz Liszt's *Bagatelle Without Tonality* is very clearly a binary form, whose second half is a varied, elaborated version of the first. The two parts, here referred to with the open-face capitals $\mathbb{A}$ and $\mathbb{A}'$, are separated by a *cadenza*, and the piece is closed by a *codetta*.

Each part, after a hesitant introduction, features a further division into two sections ($\mathcal{A}$ and $\mathcal{B}$), the first of which is itself composed of two distinguishable subsections ($\mathfrak{a}$ and $\mathfrak{b}$). Figure 1.1 shows these divisions, with starting measures.

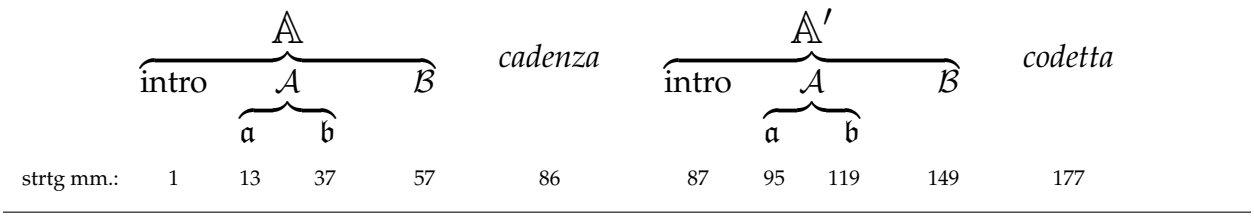


Figure 1.1: The *Bagatelle*'s form

1.1 A PARADIGMATIC SEQUENCE

The preliminary analysis of the piece will start with a close look at $\mathcal{B}$ (the second section of each part). This section consists of a sequence, which—apart from an elaboration that will be treated later—remains unchanged from $\mathbb{A}$ to $\mathbb{A}'$. Figure 1.2[1] shows the first four

[1]The published edition of the piece (by Editio Musica, Budapest, 1956, prepared by István Szelényi) features all the contents of the right hand as block chords, and represents Liszt's manuscript.

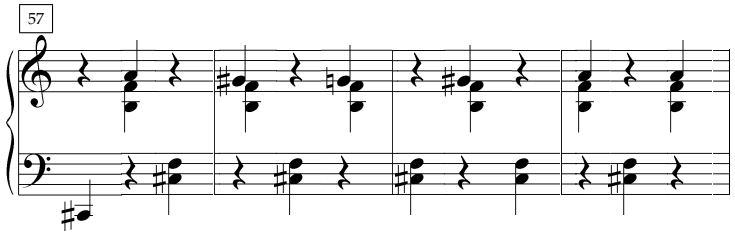


Figure 1.2: The basic cell of the sequence

measures (mm. 57–60) of the section. These constitute the basic cell of the sequence, i.e., the sequenced material: a chord of three pitch-classes (bass in octaves and mezzosoprano doubling tenor) sustained under a chromatic melody.

The first transposition of this basic cell occurs in measures 65–8. There the sequence is transposed a semitone up, with the melody starting on B♭ (whereas it starts on A in the original iteration).

Between the first iteration of the cell and its first transposition, there is a repetition of the original melody. The accompaniment, however, is not repeated *verbatim*: a second pedal note (D) is interpolated. This is an anticipation of the pedal note that would 'naturally' belong in the following statement of the cell (where the chord is D–F♯–C). Understanding this anticipation as such, the whole of the first eight measures of the sequence becomes a single unit: the melody starting from A, and the chord C♯–F–B.

Summarizing the basic cell in this way (as a melody and a single chord, with foreign notes functioning as anticipations), Figure 1.3 provides a condensed overview of the whole sequence. Each measure represents one of the transpositions of the basic cell (repeated or not).

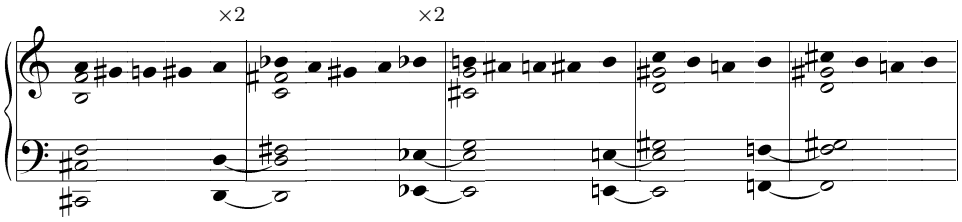


Figure 1.3: Summary of the sequence

Letting x stand for a statement of the melody without the anticipation in the bass, and x' for one with the anticipation, and in addition using subscripts for the starting notes of the melody (so that Figure 1.2 is x_a), the first three iterations of the cell (in Figure 1.3 the three first measures) can be represented by the following matrix:[2]

$$\begin{matrix} x_a & x'_a \\ x_{b\flat} & x'_{b\flat} \\ & x'_b \end{matrix}$$

Later transpositions, on the other hand, involve changes to the melody itself. Figure 1.4 shows the versions of the melody as starting from B at measure 73 and from C at measure 77. The second halves of both versions, taken out of context, are identical (A♯–B). But in their context they are essentially different: in the first case, those notes respond to a previous A (i.e., A♯ is an ascending step), while in the second they respond to A♯ (i.e., there is a repetition rather than an ascent).

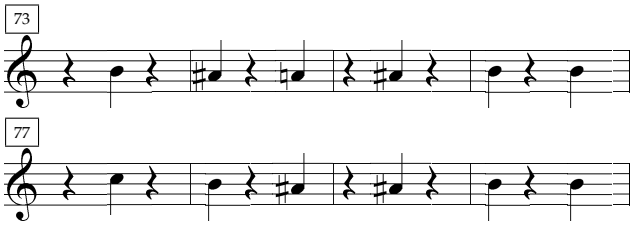


Figure 1.4: Melodic cells as starting from B and C

With that criterion for the classification, the whole sequence can be laid out as in Figure 1.5, where the inner chord, the rhythmic detail, and the anticipations in the bass are abstracted.[3] Black notes, on the other hand, stand for tones that are implied by analogy but not actually struck (the one in line 5 is clear enough; the reason for those in lines 1–3 will become apparent shortly). Thus Figure 1.5 is a completed and 'zoomed in' version of the matrix above, which in fact can still be recognized in lines 1–3.

[2]The array is laid out following the practices of 'paradigmatic' analysis: the music (or motives, chords, parts, etc.) can be read—as usual—serially from left to right and from top to bottom, but the vertical alignments show relationship of identity (i.e., they are the same) between different elements.

[3]Again, it is a 'paradigmatic' layout: the music can be read from left to right and top to bottom (and the barlines actually represent measures in the piece), but vertical alignments show the correspondences between elements.

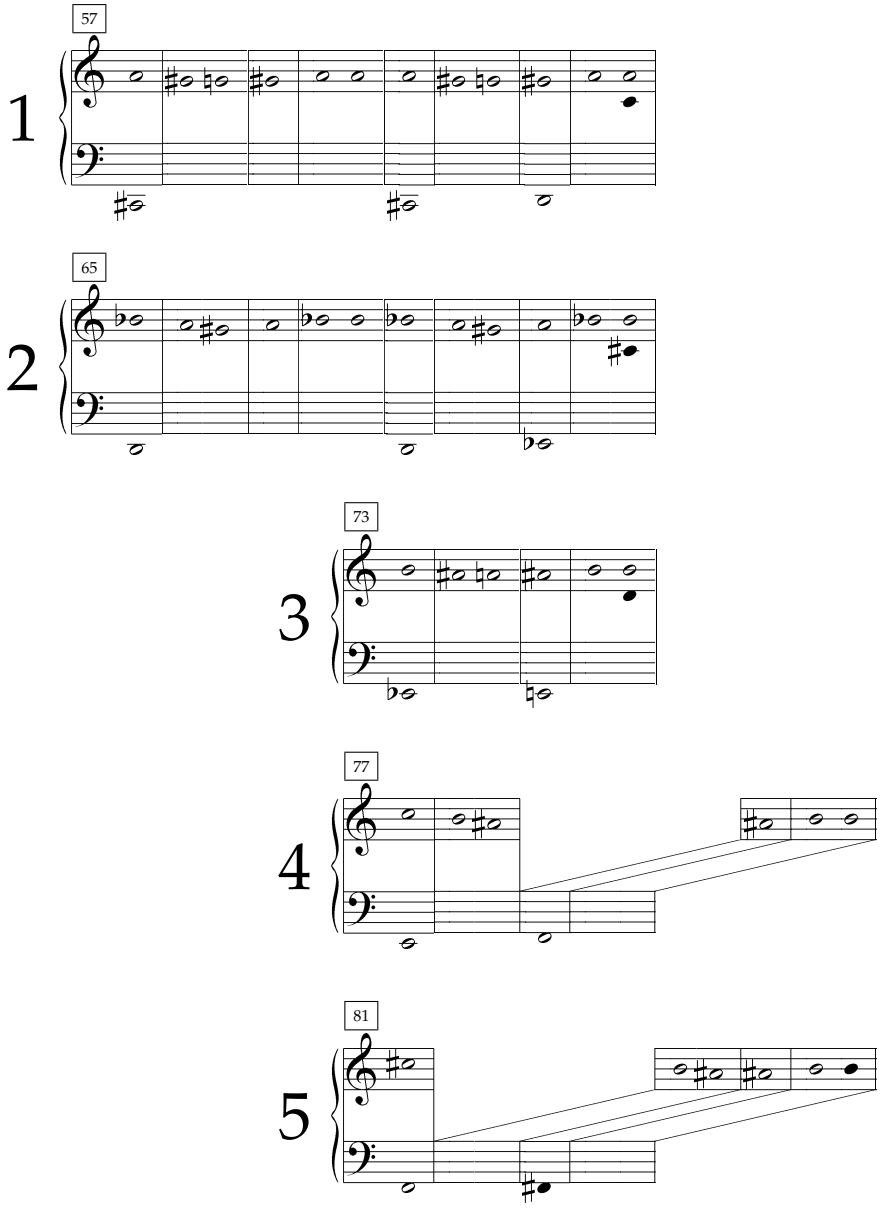
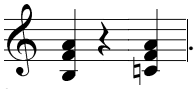


Figure 1.5: A paradigmatic layout of the sequence

The two last measures of line 4 are separated to the right because the notes involved start from a repetition, and not, as in previous instances, from a chromatic ascent. Line 5 features a further separation (measure 82), because it is not a semitone descent, but one of a *whole* tone.

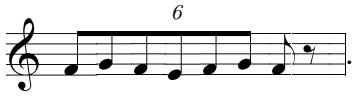
Thus the different 'paradigms' progressively separate from a central one. This separation is not only a logical necessity of the criterion of classification followed (i.e., taking repetition to be different from ascent, regardless of the actual pitches that result on the surface), but finds independent grounds in the piece itself. As has been mentioned, the sequence is repeated virtually without change in the second part of the piece (i.e., as $\mathfrak{B}$ of $\mathbb{A}'$ in measures 149–76), only collapsed into the left hand while the right hand embellishes the notes of the melody.

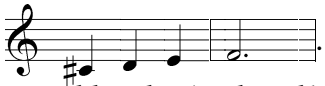
The repetition would be exact but for one modification, minor but consequential. In measure 156, the equivalent of measure 64 in $\mathbb{A}$ and the last measure of the first transposition (line 1 in Figure 1.5), the inner chord (B–F) changes:  . The intruding C♮ (represented in Figure 1.5 by the black note in line 1) is of course part of the inner chord in the next transposition—it is a further anticipation, that adds itself to the one present in the bass since the beginning. The same anticipation happens also in lines 2 and 3, when the sequence is at the transposition levels of (melody starting from) B♭ and B. It does *not* happen, on the other hand, in the corresponding measures of lines 4 or 5. These are indeed different 'paradigms,' just as the intervallic-relationship criterion had suggested.

Eventually, the central 'paradigm' becomes, at measure 81, completely isolated. The process of the sequence is thus one of singling out C♯.[4] Other facts of the piece are quickly granted relevance by this. The treble trill of measures 143–8, that precedes the second sequence, is a trill on C♯; the sequence *starts*, to begin with, on C♯ in the bass. But perhaps the most interesting C♯-related 'coincidence' is what results from a different thread in the analysis of the *Bagatelle Without Tonality*, a thread that is the topic of the following sections.

[4] I am aware (and in favor) of certain inconsistencies that do exist in Figure 1.5. For example, the very first note of each transposition should be classified together with other notes that also appear by themselves in a measure, either as repeating the previous note or ascending from it. Other considerations, silent in the main text, play a role in my forgoing this further complication: the whole 4-measure units are perceived, without doubt, as self-contained (cf. also mm. 143–146 for independent grounds for this), and therefore their intervallic relationship with the previous note is of less importance. Also, the 'paradigms' in Figure 1.5 do not really coincide with measures. The final measure of each line, for example, is not a 'paradigm' in itself, but is attached to the previous measure into a single 'paradigm' (and thus the final B-B in line 4 is not aligned below the one in line 3). The explicit statement of what the paradigms are would only obscure the situation, and does not seem to contribute much. In any case, the privileged position of C♯ would not suffer much from it.

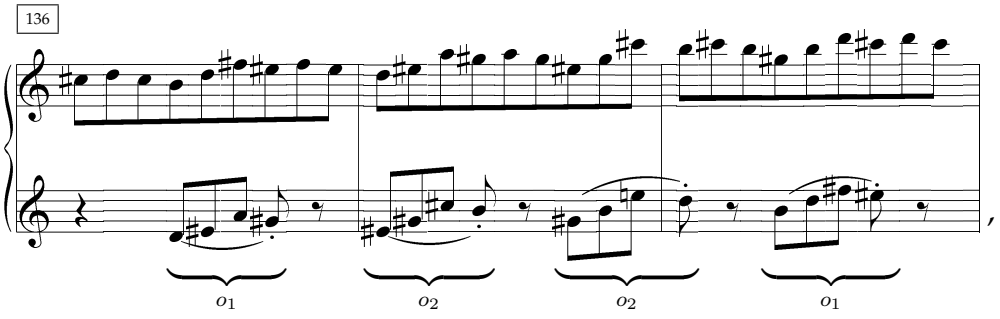
1.2 AN OCTATONIC DIGRESSION AND THE PROMINENCE OF F AND A♭

The first motive that is really perceived as thematic material in the piece is stated at measure 13:  . Its entrance is the piece's 'taking off' after the hesitant introduction with longer rhythmic figures and interrupting rests, on the whole very much in the style of the introductions to Liszt's piano pieces. From then on the piece takes on its character: a *scherzando* waltz with lively triplets and short, contained motives, in a fabric of melody and block-chord accompaniment.

The motive sparks from the F at which the last figure of the introduction arrives and had already arrived two measures earlier:  . Here, interestingly, we see a coupling of C♯ and F like the one suggested by the 'isolated' paradigm of Figure 1.5. The nature of the relationship between these two notes will be addressed later on. At this point a reflection of the role of octatonicism in the *Bagatelle* is suggested by the fact that, in the motive from the introduction, the interval between the two is filled in octatonically.

1.2.1 On the relevance of the octatonic scale

That the octatonic scale had a role in the composition of Liszt's *Bagatelle* is undeniable. Apart from passages where there are obviously other constructions at play (notably the chromatic scale or the diminished chord), the alternation of half and whole tones is manifest throughout. Octatonicism seems to be prominent, for example, in the left hand of the next passage:



where o_1 is the octatonic scale starting with F–F♯ and o_2 the one starting with F–G. One could even point out that the right hand is all built on o_1 but with C♯ substituted for the

'normal' C. It is tempting to find here one more instance of the prominence of C♯, but the argument seems stretched. After all, an octatonic scale with one note changed can turn into virtually anything—a minor melodic scale with an added ♭6, for example. On the other hand, the left hand in the quoted passage features *arpeggiation* of minor triads, followed by step-wise descents. Minor triads and a step-wise descent will *always* produce an octatonic set, of one kind or another. Liszt's spelling is intriguing (why E♯ instead of F?), but the claim that octatonicism in this passage is a principle, rather than a result, is hard to substantiate.

In general, the *Bagatelle* does not feature any systematic use of the octatonic scale. Analysis can identify octatonic constructions, but it never seems to be a concern of Liszt's that the scale is actually perceived. Octatonic thinking is insufficient to provide us with either structural or perceptual insights into the piece. This is not to say that Liszt did not think of it—we would not be surprised to learn that he in fact was aware of octatonicism in some of the melodic cells, and even that when devising some of them, in the absence of other leading ideas, he consciously appealed to the octatonic scale. But it seems unlikely that his structural planning (conscious and pre-compositional or otherwise) was affected by octatonicism to any noticeable degree.[5]

On the other hand, pursuing octatonicism can make the analysis blind to other factors that might have a more important role. An illustration of this danger is the piece's inner *cadenza* separating 𝔸 from 𝔸′ (quoted in Figure 1.6). David C. Berry, who devotes one of the sections in his article on the piece to "octatonic set classes," discusses this *cadenza* in these terms:

> Each four-note, beamed group is bounded by tritone-distant members of the diminished tetrachord. Within the tritone span is one other chord tone and a passing tone placed a whole step above either the first or second tone.... The result is a series of four-note groups that can be thought of as "gapped" scalar-octatonic segments—that is, as five-note

[5]There are examples in other pieces by Liszt of a more structural use of abstract ideas such as scales: *Unstern!* and *Richard Wagner—Venezia* are experiments with the augmented chord and the related whole-tone scale. From these examples we do know how Liszt behaved when his main compositional idea was the exploitation of a non-tonal scale. In *Unstern!* there is a whole passage—mm. 47–58, almost a tenth of the piece and more than a tenth of the part that is built *only* on augmented chords, a relation of the whole-tone scale—where the whole-tone scaled is presented slowly, step-wise, and making sure that it is heard as such, not as an inflected major scale. It is the listener, and not the analyst, that in this case perceives the melodic construction. This piece is much closer to representing Liszt's 'study' of his speculative theoretical constructs and those of his time than is the *Bagatelle*.

scale segments with either the second or second-to-last element deleted. Each tetrachord is thus a member of either set-class 4–12 [0236] or 4–13 [0136].[6]

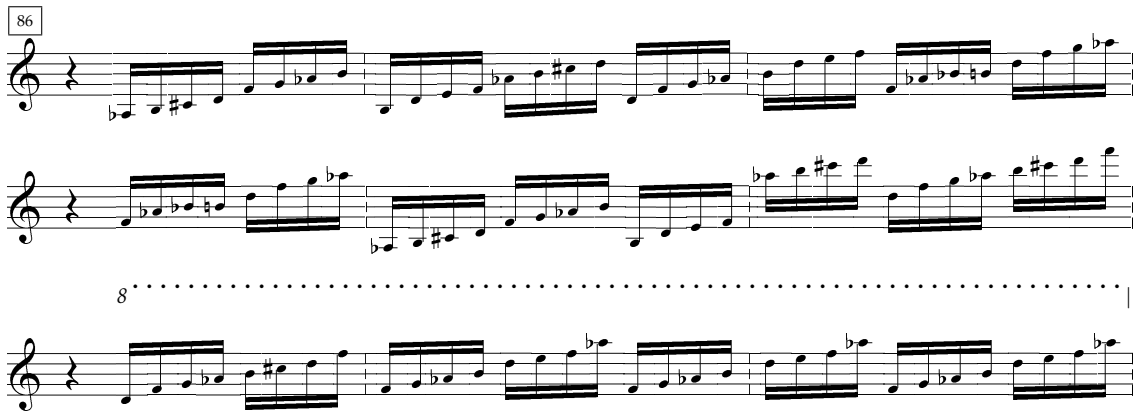


Figure 1.6: The *cadenza* of measure 86

As with the passage quoted in page 6, it is hard to say what is a 'principle' and what is a 'result' in the facts pointed out by Berry. After all, *any* group of four notes that are a diminished triad with a passing tone will always be octatonic—by definition. There could be many other such 'conclusions:' they are always going to be bound within a tritone, always delineate minor thirds, and so on, down to more obvious tautologies: be 'gapped' chromatic scales, for example. All of these observations are subject to the same problem: their relevance is in need of support from independent grounds. In the case of the 'gapped' octatonic scales that Berry finds, the distribution of 4–12 and 4–13 set-classes in the *cadenza* is little short of random, and in my view does not grant relevance to the octatonic scale in the passage.

1.2.2 F and A♭ in the *cadenza* and the *codetta*

Later on, Berry turns his attention (rightly) to the *beginning* notes of each tetrachord. His findings are summed up by him in a chart:[7]

[6] David Carson Berry, "The Meaning of 'Without': An Exploration of Liszt's *Bagatelle ohne Tonart*," *19th. Century Music* XVII/3 (2004), p. 237.

[7] *Idem*, chart of ex. 2d, p. 236.

relationship of each section's tetrachord-initiating tones:

section 1: T_0 =<A♭, F, B, A♭, D, F, D>
section 2: T_9 =<F, D, A♭, F, B, A♭, F, B, A♭, D, B>
section 3: T_6 =<D, B, F, D, (F, D, F, D)>

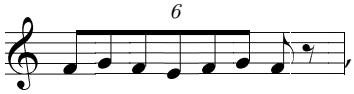
or, section 2 is a rotation of section 1:
order numbers $<01234567>$ of 1 $=<67012345>$ of 2

It is in fact perfectly clear that the passage is built on the diminished-seventh chord of D–F–A♭–B—all the four-note groups start (and end) with one of those pitches. But the real significance of this conclusion, in my view, can be appreciated only when the analysis 'zooms out' a step further: from the level of the beam-groups to the level of the entire 'flourish,' as separated by quarter rests (and, in Figure 1.6, separated into the three lines).

The first flourish starts on A♭ and ends on A♭, while the second one starts in F and ends in F. The third one, however, does not follow the same pattern: it interrupts the pattern, and fades out by repeating its last ascent, with a *crescendo-diminuendo* marked in the score. The interruption, however, occurs *precisely* when the next note was going to be A♭. On the other hand, the last ascent (the repeated one) goes from F to A♭. The whole *cadenza* appears to be an elaboration of the relationship F–A♭: it starts on A♭, reaches F, and returns, by implication, to A♭.

There are independent grounds to support this interpretation. The corresponding passage in the second part of the piece, the *codetta* of measures 177–183, is also built out of parallel diminished chords. It starts with the diminished triads of F°, F♯°, G°, and G♯°—and then there is a leap, the sequence *not* following with A°, but jumping to B°. The result of the leap is that it is the top voice now that delineates F–F♯–G–G♯. All of this is next repeated again: an octave higher and in a different chordal disposition, first the bass and then the soprano go F–A♭. By now the diminished triads have turned into diminished-seventh chords, and there follows, in a richer disposition, a sequence of these chords that go—what else?—from A♭ to F. The soprano is configured in such a way that in the last chord, when the bass plays F, it sounds A♭. As if to confirm matters, this last chord is repeated, after a pause, to end the piece.

1.2.3 F and A♭ in the statements of the main motive

F and A♭, in addition, are not simply any two notes. The main motive of the piece, the already quoted  , is built on F. But when the time comes in 𝔸′ for the motive to reappear, it does so transposed to A♭.

The symmetries created by this transposition are surprisingly varied, as will be seen in the different readings of the piece. Berry, again focusing on the octatonic scale, has noted that the motive itself is octatonic, and that the chord that accompanies it in its first presentation—a major triad of G in second inversion—also fits the same octatonic scale. By then, six of the eight pitches of the posited scale have appeared: F, G, and E in the motive, C♯ and D in the figure that leads to it, and B (in addition to G and D) in the accompanying chord. Berry goes on: "The two notes needed to complete this particular octatonic collection are A♭ and B♭. Strikingly, when the opening melody is repeated at the beginning of Part II [𝔸′], these notes are added and a fully octatonic melodic segment is produced."[8]

It is, in fact, 'striking' at first sight. But, once the principles have been distilled from the results, the completion of the scale becomes quite natural. The main principle is the prominence of the notes F and A♭, and their relationship. They happen to be a minor third apart (because, in turn, their important relationship is connected to the diminished triad), and therefore happen to be part of the same octatonic scale. Since the motive itself is octatonic, it is only natural that one transposition would complete the other.[9]

It is important to mention that Berry is not proposing the "octatonic set classes" as convincing explanatory models of the piece. His intention in this part of the article is actually the contrary: to show that "current," "analytically anachronistic" models,[10] albeit useful, cannot account adequately for the piece, and that an analysis stemming from the theory of the piece's time is more to the point. I shall have more to say about this claim.

[8] *Idem*, p. 235.

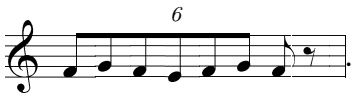
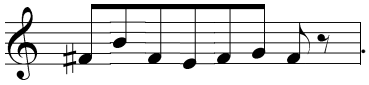
[9] It could have been otherwise, to be sure: had the important relationship been F–B (also derivable from the diminished chord) rather than F–A♭, the transposed motive would not have featured G♯. But this is all: it could *not* have happened that the newly transposed motive had notes that did not belong in the same octatonic scale. In order to make other notes appear, the motive would have to be changed; but the change would apply also to the original statement in F, and the relationship would be restored.

[10] Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

Let it suffice for the moment to point out that the reason for the inadequacy of octatonic analysis has little to do with time, with being 'anachronistic' or not: analysis in such terms is inadequate, quite simply, because it is wrong—at any rate incomplete. Similarly, anyone would presumably fail to account for a piece by Boulez in tonal terms. But this is not because tonality is nineteenth-century and Boulez twentieth—it is quite simply because the two things are not about each other.

To sum up what has been found so far: there is a prominence of C♯ in the sequences (parts $\mathcal{B}$) of the piece, and a structural relationship between F and A♭ in its parts $\mathfrak{a}$, the *cadenza* and the *codetta*. The three notes, in their own regions of the piece, appear as extremes of melodic and harmonic movements, with transfers from bass to soprano and a general model of 'wrapping up' both in the horizontal direction (starting/ending with) and the vertical one (registrally spanning from/to). Moreover, they are given structural (and arguably perceptual) importance by focusing on them the changes and variations that occur within sections.

1.3 OSCILLATING DYADS AND THE PLAN OF THE PIECE

I want to return to the main thematic material, the motive  . Immediately after it is first presented in measure 13, it is answered by its closely related variation  . The sounding result of this (for the alternation is repeated over measures 15–16) is an oscillation between F and F♯. Also analytically, the motives are essentially a prolongation of those notes. The oscillation claims the biggest share of the ear's attention: the accompaniment is static (on G^6_4), there is no rhythmic discourse, and register is not relevant in the passage.

This four-measure oscillation is followed by a chromatic passage with a different construction, but at measure 25 comes a new, varied statement of the same oscillation F–F♯. Turning now to the passage between measures 44 and 52 (quoted in Figure 1.7), we see similar oscillations between several chromatic dyads, now intermingling, expanded into

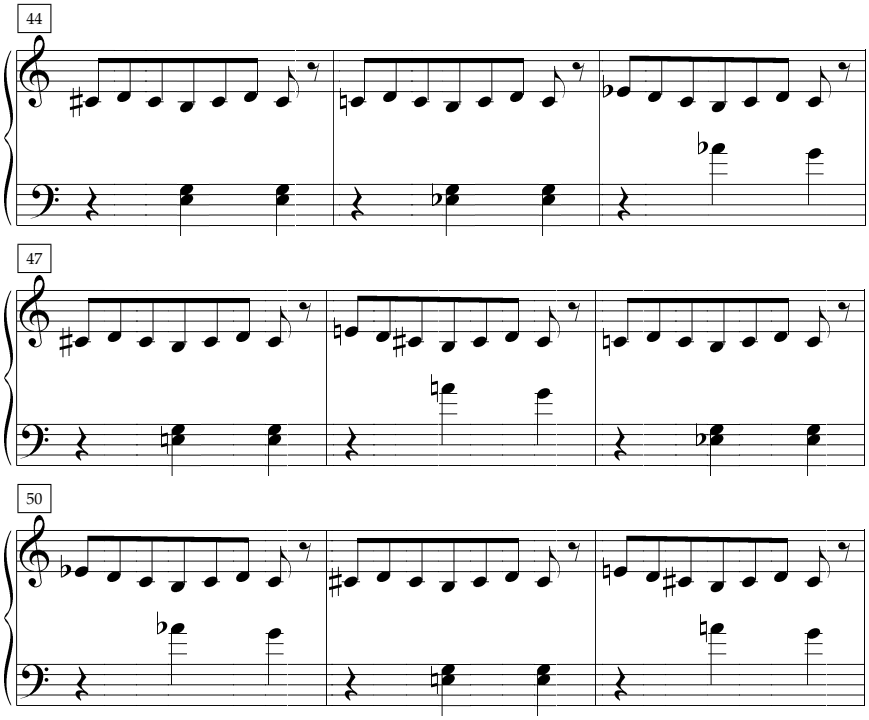


Figure 1.7: Measures 44–52 and their oscillating dyads

two-measure units. To begin with, the left hand, reaching over to the high register every two measures, oscillates between A♭ and A (each resolving to G). It is worth noting that the oscillations so far mentioned involve the pitches F and A♭—and indeed this judgment is confirmed by another one of the oscillating dyads in the same passage, C♯–C. There are, however, oscillations also around E and E♭, two tones that had not been prominent yet. (In any case, the E♭ is associated with the C, and the E with C♯, both appearing as substitutions in the right-hand motives.) The oscillation between E and E♭ also takes place in the accompanying chords of the left hand.

Both A♭ and E♭ are answered twice and upwards, as was F in the main motive. C♯, on the other hand, is unique: first, it is answered *downwards*, by C—and second, it is left without an answer at the end of the passage (where the piece then turns to a different section).[11]

[11]It could be argued that in the passage quoted in Figure 1.7 C♯ is not related to C, but to the D in the previous measure. However, an essential element of the relationship of 'oscillating dyads' is the *repetition*

Thus the oscillating dyads reinforce the importance of C♯ as a structural point singled out in the sequence (cf. section 1.3). On the other hand, as will be remembered, A♭ had been left 'unplayed' in the *cadenza*, due to the modification of its final part. In that case, the 'evasion' was made up for by the next section, that restates part 𝔞 on A♭, the avoided note. Something similar but in a sense opposite happens here regarding C♯. The oscillation that was left 'suspended' (C♯ awaiting an answering C♮) is not actually resolved, but rather *dissolved*, by the next section: this latter is the sequence analyzed in the first part of this chapter, all of it embodying a process on that 'hanging' C♯ (see pages 2ff. above). In this light, it is not only the second sequence that is prepared by a structural arrival at C♯ (as we saw above, the second sequence is preceded by a long trill on C♯); the first one is prepared too.

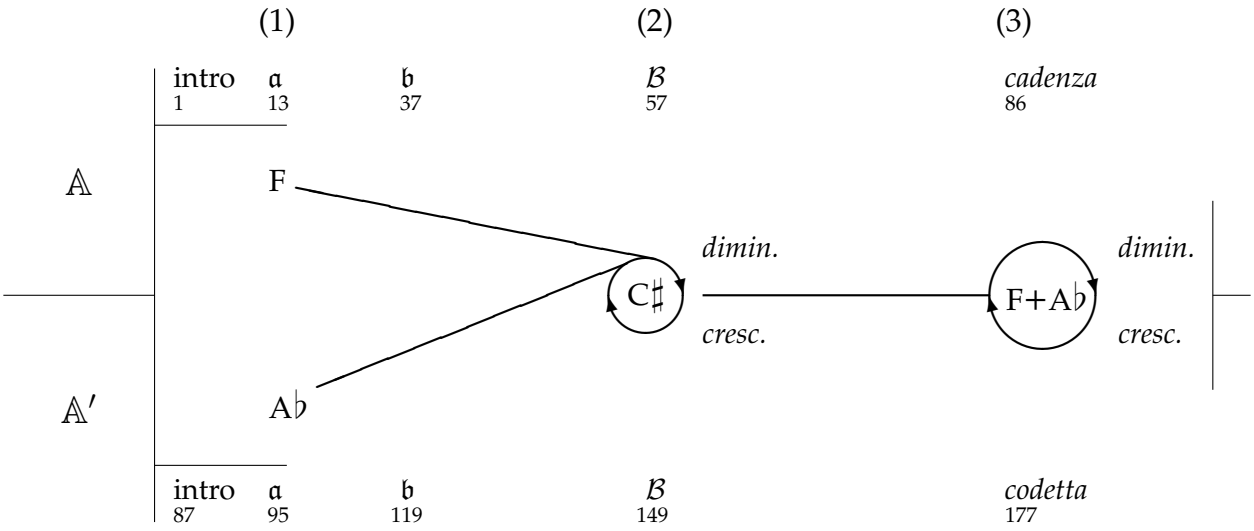


Figure 1.8: The general scheme of the *Bagatelle*: F/A♭ → C♯ → F + A♭

This discussion leads to the completion of a general scheme for the organization of the *Bagatelle Without Tonality*. Both parts of its binary form, 𝔸 and 𝔸′, follow a similar, three-stage history: (1) from either F or A♭, (2) through C♯, (3) to the compound F–A♭ (symbolically, 'F/A♭ → C♯ → F + A♭'). The first stage leads to the second in a fairly smooth way,

of the oscillation, which does not happen between D and C♯. Let it be said that I was led to the dyad C–C♯ (just as to the dyad F–F♯) by my hearing of the piece, which in addition singles it out as the only *descending* dyad—the one between D and C♯, on the contrary, was seen when I focused *my eye* on the passage. The dyad C♯–C, in addition, is featured with prominence in the remainder of the piece (cf. for example mm. 107–116).

somewhat setting the stage for it. But the second revolves around itself and fades out. The third stage then resumes the piece, and revolves around itself, first to fade out, and finally to conclude. This general plan is summarized in Figure 1.8.

2.0 AN EXERCISE IN PROLONGATION

We now turn to the work of Robert Morgan, who devoted a passage of his article "Dissonant Prolongation" to Liszt's *Bagatelle without tonality*.[1]

2.1 SUMMARY OF MORGAN'S ANALYSIS

Morgan presents an impressive account of the piece with a Schenkerian reduction of it. Figure 2.1 reproduces the final three-level chart, where Morgan's main thesis on the *Bagatelle* is clearly represented: namely, that the piece features a prolongation of the diminished-seventh chord F–A♭–B–D.

This is the chord at the end of the piece, and the one around which the inner *cadenza* is constructed (see Figure 1.6 above). Morgan's thesis, however, faces the recalcitrant fact that the diminished-seventh chord is not stated until well into the piece. In order to account for this, Morgan appeals to a certain 'flexibility' on Liszt's part:

> [S]till more subtle in realization [than previous examples of 'dissonant prolongation' in the article] is the "Bagatelle ohne Tonart"... The basic sonority is a diminished seventh, but here the chord is not stated explicitly at the opening: it unfolds only gradually during the course of the first half of the piece (to m. 86).[2]

This configures the nature of the 'general plot' that Morgan sees in the piece. If the analysis in chapter 1 rendered the conclusion that the two halves of the piece share a common

[1] Robert Morgan, "Dissonant Prolongations: Theoretical and Compositional Precedents," *Journal of Music Theory* 20/1 (1976). The piece is treated in depth on pages 75–9.

[2] Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 76. The text is scattered with similar concessions to Liszt's greater freedom: cf. for example "also indicative of Liszt's more flexible approach," in the same page.

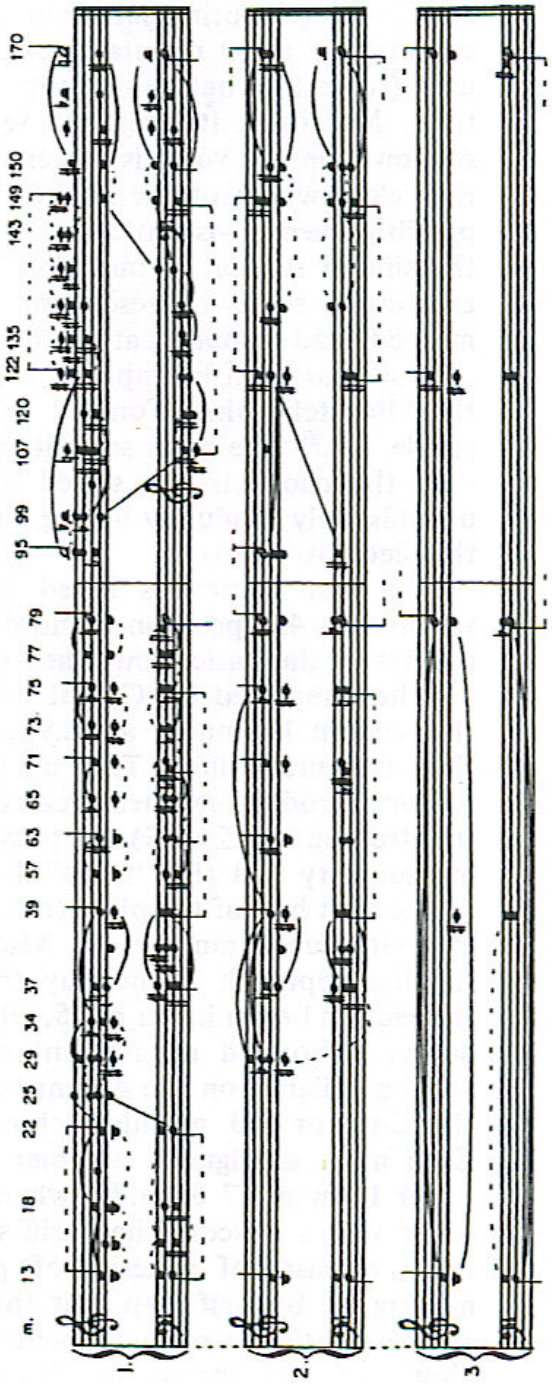


Figure 2.1: Robert Morgan's Schenkerian analysis of the *Bagatelle*

general plan (F/A♭ → C♯ → F + A♭; see Figure 1.8), in Morgan's picture the plan differs from part to part: in 𝔸, the basic sonority is 'gradually unfolded,' to be the object of prolongation proper only in 𝔸′.

Very telling in this view is, for example, the reprise of 𝔞 after the introduction to the second part, between measures 95 and 98. In the corresponding section in the first part, "only A-flat is missing [from the basic chord], here replaced by G; but compare the altered return of the section beginning at m. 95, where A-flat replaces G as the structural tone."[3] The image, quite compelling, is that the chord of the first part (D–G–B–F) is a large-scale *appoggiatura* of F–A♭–B–D, the 'basic sonority' of the piece.

Morgan pursues the diminished-seventh chord in more depth. He identifies measures 29–75 as based on the chord C♯–E–G–B♭ (itself only reached at measure 39) and thus as a "passing chord between the opening sonority and the 'tonic' diminished seventh at the end of the first half of the piece (measures 79–85)."[4] Moreover, the corresponding passage in the second half of the piece (starting at measure 107) also moves to the same "passing chord," which this time is eventually reached at measure 122.

If in the first half this chord was simply a link, a "passing chord" into the basic diminished seventh, in the second half it takes on an importance of its own: its C♯ is itself prolonged "over some fifty measures" and

> plays an important part in the climax of the composition, where it is suspended over from the C-sharp–E–G chord (in which it was chordal) and heard as a dissonance in conjunction with the F–G-sharp–B–D chord (mm. 135–48). The latter is the basic referential sonority of the piece. Thus Liszt produces a striking structural overlap at the moment of greatest tension, carrying over an element of the main prolongation chord in both outer voices after the other voices have resolved.[5]

This completes Morgan's basic reading of the piece: (1) a first chord where the 'basic sonority' is slightly obscured (2) finds its way to its 'clean' version through a related passing chord; (3) the 'basic sonority' is then, at last, stated, (4) but it is later contrasted dra-

[3] Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 76. As will be remembered, this reprise is incorporated into my view of the piece as providing the 'complementary' A♭ focus to what had been the focus on F in the first half of the piece; Berry, on the other hand, had identified the completion of the octatonic scale. It is truly an impressive demonstration of Liszt's superb intuition.

[4] Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

[5] *Idem*, p. 78.

matically, and in due time climactically, with the passing chord itself; (5) the piece ends with the return to the basic sonority.

2.2 ON THE RELEVANCE OF THE DIMINISHED-SEVENTH CHORD

Morgan's reading is very suggestive indeed.[6] The author has accomplished what, in effect, is a coherent and insightful description of the 'neutral level' of the piece, to use the terminology of paradigmatic analysis: what the analysis points out can in fact be found in, and argued from, the piece—the score—itself.

Choosing the terminology of paradigmatic analysis is not without risk in this context. In a Nattiezian methodology, "when describing a symbolic form, one is confronted with a number of configurations present in the object of study, *but whose relevance is unknown a priori*. Of some of them it is immediately confirmed that they are poietically or estesically relevant, but there are others for which it is necessary to appeal to specific tools in order to determine their relevance."[7] In his analysis of the *Bagatelle*, Morgan is doing quite the contrary: he has a priori *assumed* the relevance of the diminished-seventh chord (and, in the article at large, of dissonant chords as structural bases of prolongation). His analysis, as a consistent logical construction, results from this axiom.

How much justice to the piece, however, does the decision to take the diminished-seventh chord as an exclusive point of departure for analysis do? This question is addressed in the following pages.

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[6] Incidentally, it sheds light on the passage reproduced in page 6 above, that I had addressed in connection with octatonicism but ultimately (and deliberately) left without a satisfying interpretation. A good one is to be found under Morgan's general picture: C♯ is prolonged over the diminished-seventh chord F–G♯–B–D.

[7] "[D]escrivendo una forma simbolica, ci si confronta con un certo numero di configurazioni presenti nell'oggetto studiato, ma di cui si ignora la pertinenza a priori. Ve ne sono alcuni per i quali si constata immediatamente che sono pertinenti poieticamente o estesicamente, ma ve ne sono altri per i quali bisogna ricorrere a degli utensili specifici per determinare questa pertinenza."

The tri-partition of 'neutral,' 'poietic,' and 'esthesic' levels, adopted from Molino's semiotics, has been most systematically developed for music by Nattiez in *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, translated by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). The concise exposition quoted comes from Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Isabelle Schulte-Technoff, "L'etnomusicologia: strutturalismo o culturalismo?," *Musica/Realtà* 61 (2000), p. 12. My italics.

2.2.1 The diminished-seventh chord in the sequences of the *Bagatelle*

Positing the diminished-seventh chord as the piece's point of both departure and arrival has an impact on the sequences of the piece with which my own analysis started (see pages 1ff.). Morgan's chart (Figure 2.1) cites the starting point of the sequence (measure 57, with the chord C♯–B–F–A) only at level 1, as a double, outer-voice *appoggiatura* to the diminished-seventh chord D–F–B–G♯. As such, the sequence chord disappears entirely from level 2, where the sequence is already a fairly direct movement toward F–A♭–B–D at measure 79. This latter chord is the only entity that represents the sequence in the *Ur*-level (3).

This reveals a direct opposition between Morgan's analysis and the preliminary analysis offered above in chapter 1. There, the move from A into G♯ and from C♯ into D, interpreted by Morgan as a foreground-level resolution, was presented as the result of an *anticipation* of the bass during the repetition of the sequence cell (in what was called x', p. 3). The roles of essential and non-essential tones are exactly reversed from one reading to the other. Of the pitches involved, A can very well be perceived as an *appoggiatura* with a tendency toward G♯—more about this in section 2.3.2—but the other component of the 'resolution,' namely D, certainly rings foreign to the passage. Its effect is that of *opening* a motion, not fulfilling it. If one of the two tones in the bass (C♯ and D) is essential, it is, judging from my perception of the piece, C♯.

On the other hand, A (the other non-essential *appoggiatura* in Morgan's analysis) has been quite important in the piece since measure 18. But for the variation of the opening gesture in measures 25–28, the melody has continually returned to this note (and when the melody eventually recedes into the middle register, the left hand revolves around the same A), and the link that immediately precedes the sequence establishes A as a reference point. In fact, A could have been posited as the axis of an important melodic prolongation, one that takes place between measure 17 and the start of the sequence.

The same is true, moreover, not only of A, but indeed of the *entire* chord from which the sequence takes off (C♯ in the bass, F–B in the inner voices, and A in the melody). This chord has been stated and revolved around in preceding passages. Each of its previous

appearances (at measures 18, 20, 22, 30, and 32) is far more prominent—more the result of prior movement or the start of a new one—than is the presentation of the diminished-seventh chord (m. 63), i.e. the temporary goal assigned to the sequence chord in Morgan's chart.

It is then a bold decision to deny any structural importance to this chord, which is perceptually relevant by all accounts at the beginning of the sequence, and analytically retrievable at several points in the piece. The decision is justified logically by Morgan's commitment to the diminished-seventh formation, but the fact that the latter is firmly attested to only at measure 79 (and then only as an *interrupted* movement, as noted by Liszt with a fade-out) puts into question the preeminence that it has been granted.

2.2.2 The 'passing' diminished-seventh chord

The suggestion in the previous paragraphs of the structural import of the chord C♯–F–B–A will be developed more fully in section 2.3. Here we will finish the review of the details of Morgan's analysis.

Another logical consequence of the commitment to the diminished seventh is seen in the identification of a 'passing chord' as the basis of measures 29–75.[8] This chord, that would function as the equivalent of the dominant for tonal music (i.e., the chord that neighbors the initial and final statements of the tonic) is in fact presented as such in the *Ur*-level of Morgan's chart. To fulfill that role Morgan has found a second diminished-seventh chord, namely E–C♯–G–B♭.

As it happens, this chord is very hard to find at all in the score of the *Bagatelle*. Morgan concedes that "it is not stated until mm. 39–40" (see Figure 2.2), but even then it is far from convincing: the C♯ is, in measure 39, a melody tone, admittedly accented but clearly ornamental. C♯ is more prominent at measure 40, but the chord there is incomplete, missing the diminished seventh itself, i.e. B♭.[9]

[8]The identification of this chord as a temporary structural basis has consequences that are in themselves regrettable, as it requires passing in silence the start of $\mathcal{B}$ and then forcefully breaking this section before it ends. This is related with the topic of the previous section.

[9]There is, to be true, a simpler explanation for this omission: the melody is playing an ornamental B♮ in the same register, and Liszt might have decided not to obscure the texture by keeping the B♭ in the left hand. But then again, is it normal that a chord with such structural importance as is proposed for this one

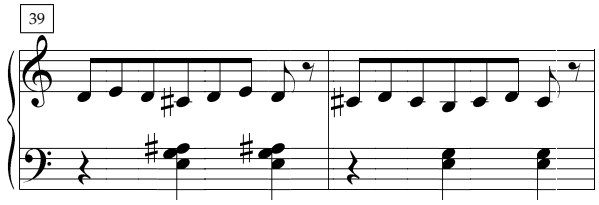


Figure 2.2: Measures 39–40

It is in this incomplete version (without B♭) that the chord makes it into the *Ur*-level in Figure 2.1. Interestingly, level 2 of Morgan's chart implies that the chord has been complete before, at measure 29. This is due to a minor mistake, for B in that measure (as can be seen at level 1 of the chart) is natural, not flat. This raises a pertinent question: why not consider that the passing chord is the *half*-diminished chord C♯–E–G–B (instead of the fully diminished chord with B♭)?

In fact, the half-diminished seventh with B is in many respects much more compelling for a starring role in a reduction. Apart from its occurrence in measure 40 just cited, the chord is clearly stated right after the presentation of the main motive, at measure 17. This measure and the next revolve around this chord, with a double neighbor in the tenor voice, before returning to it at measure 19 (Figure 2.3). The chord appears also in a parallel passage, between measures 29 and 31.

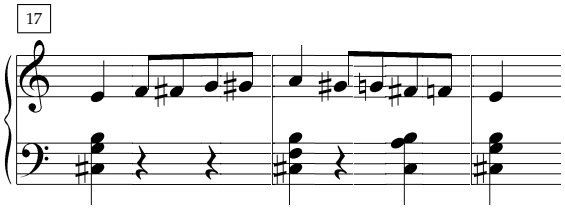


Figure 2.3: Measures 17–19

However, taking this chord into the structure of the piece is incompatible with Morgan's aim of finding a 'passing chord' that mediates, like a dominant in tonal music, between

would be so poorly represented in the piece, and so subject to registral, textural contingencies in its only appearance?

the outer statements of the 'basic sonority.' It is not simply that it disturbs the symmetry and unity of an all-diminished model; more importantly, the half-diminished chord identified in the previous paragraph stops being the governing entity after its last appearance in measure 44 (which is parallel to measure 40, quoted in Figure 2.2). That means that, if the chord is accepted into the structure of the piece, then measures 45–79 (this latter being the return of the basic diminished seventh) are not accounted for. Morgan's solution, by focusing on a chord that can be argued to appear (slightly varied) as early as measure 29 and as late as measure 75, is not subject to this problem.

The problems of this solution have been already mentioned: both boundaries posited for Morgan's passing chord C♯–E–G–B♭ are questionable (in measure 75 it occurs as a transposition of the chord at measure 65, a chord that is itself dubious in light of the previous section), and in general there are few arguments—other than its *being* a diminished seventh—to support the claim that it is a structural pillar.

A third alternative for the problem of the passing chord is, naturally, to accept the chord that introduces the sequence at measure 57 (and which can be found, with prominence beyond doubt, before this measure): namely, C♯–F–B–A. Section 2.3 pursues this alternative systematically. The reasons why it would not fit Morgan's model are of a historiographical nature, and are treated in some depth in section 2.5.

2.3 AN ALTERNATIVE REDUCTION

The review of Morgan's reduction of the *Bagatelle* in the previous section suggests the possibility of considering chords other than the diminished seventh as bases of melodic and harmonic prolongation—in particular, a) the chord in measure 57, that opens the sequences of part $\mathcal{B}$ in both halves of the piece, and b) the half-diminished chord on C♯. These chords can be proposed as more representative poles than the passing chord posited by Morgan (a diminished-seventh chord on C♯).

2.3.1 The reduction up to $\mathcal{B}$

A provisional reduction of the first part of the piece under these alternative premises is shown in Figure 2.4. It remains a provisional reduction because of two main reasons: on the one hand, it focuses on what happens in part $\mathcal{A}$—that is, before the sequence that constitutes part $\mathcal{B}$—forgoing detailed analysis of the sequence itself;[10] on the other, it does not take into account the fact that, in perception, the A of the chord at measure 57 (but not the one in the identical chords in measures 18, 22, 30, and 32) can, and even tends to, be heard as an *appoggiatura* of G♯. The complications and multiple references generated by this latter fact will be discussed later.

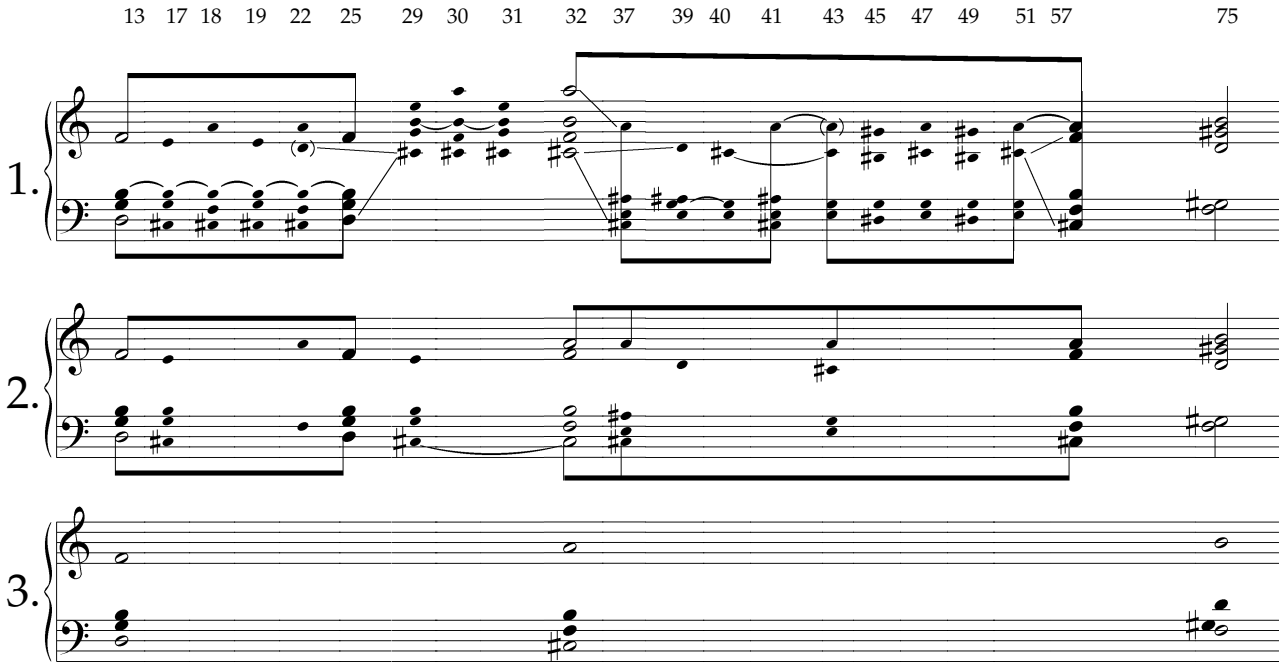


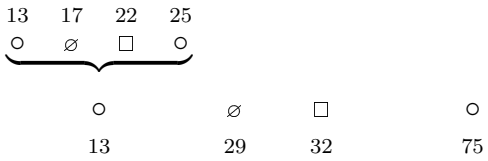
Figure 2.4: Provisional reduction of the first part

Figure 2.4 reveals some important facts about the first part of the piece. Level 2 of the chart shows a parallelism between the harmonic progression at the small and the large scales. The general plan of the whole section, on the one hand, is the interpolation of the

[10] This is in part because the analysis of the sequence does not lend itself to more reductive detail than simply showing the movement of the voices from the starting chord at m. 57 and the final one at m. 75. The sequence was detailed, following a 'paradigm'-oriented approach, in chapter 1.

chords C♯–B–G–E (the half-diminished) and C♯–F–B–A (the 'sequence' chord) between two statements of the basic diminished-seventh chord—the first one, as explained, 'varied' with G. On the other hand, the same structure is observable at a smaller scale in the first part of the piece, between measures 13 and 25.

Thus, if '○' stands for the diminished seventh, '⌀' for the half-diminished, and '□' for the sequence chord, the double-scale manifestation of this harmonic plan can be visualized as follows:



The large-scale occurrence of the half-diminished ('⌀' at m. 29) comes, in the actual score, with an upward shift of an octave. The piece then returns to its original register, but the momentary transposition has a lasting consequence: the bass of that chord, C♯ in the treble clef, having entered the range of the originally soprano part, results from that point on in what can be seen (and is diagrammed) as a fifth part.

The nature of this fifth part, that for convenience we will call 'mezzosoprano,' is interesting in a number of respects. It is most immediately related to the bass, with which it performs a voice exchange that will be treated shortly. But this mezzosoprano part results not only from an octave shift of the bass. It is also related to the previous motion of the soprano: the D in measure 22 (in parentheses in the chart) is an addition by Liszt that does not respond to the 'basic' harmonies involved, but which confers continuity to this 'composite' fifth part throughout the chart: F–E–D–C♯–C♮–C♯–F (level 1). At measure 57, on the other hand, the fifth part converges into a doubling of tenor, and from that point on, as has been noted, the two voices are octave doublings of each other.

Thus a 5-part texture occurs only between measures 32 and 57. During those measures, Figure 2.4 shows the bass as periodically 'punctuating' C♯. This note is also the axis of the mezzosoprano part discussed above, which performs a clear prolongation of it. This section can therefore be interpreted as featuring a voice exchange, whereby the bass continues its discourse in a higher register, between soprano and alto.[11]

[11]The voice exchange is apparent in the chart in Figure 2.4. In the score, the bass twice has low C♯ connecting, through a D, to the tenor's E. This voice leading could have been consistently read as the bass

Pursuing in this way the behavior of the parts (rather than that of the chords), what can be seen is a special kind of motion between the initial and the finishing diminished-seventh chords: each part follows its own, individual pattern. The soprano moves a tritone up, from F to B; the tenor stays on its original (implied) A♭; the alto and the bass both move up a minor third, but they proceed in two different ways: the alto prolongs its original B—the only tone common to the three chords identified as basic—and then proceeds upward to D. (Incidentally, alto thus outlines the major triad G–B–D, that is present vertically in the original, 'varied' version of the diminished-seventh chord.) The bass, on the other hand, moves early and very definitely down to C♯, to start from there an ascending major-third motion to F.

2.3.2 Incorporation of $\mathcal{B}$

As has been mentioned, the '□' chord of measure 57, from which the sequence departs, tends in truth to be heard as a non-essential chord: A in the top part might very well be perceived (and so it is in my hearing) as an *appoggiatura* to A♭. It is a possibility that analysis should take into account.

Two things, also mentioned already, must be especially underlined in relation to this A functioning as an *appoggiatura*: first, this is *not* the case in the previous statements of the same chord (measures 18, 22, 30, 32). These previous appearances are what make the chord the object of prolongation for such a reduction as the one presented in Figure 2.4. That the prolongation is one of that chord (and not of its 'resolution' with A♭) is beyond doubt, as has been argued above (page 19). Projecting the 'resolution' (that is a fact of measure 57, but of measure 57 only) into the previous instances of the chord is untrue to the piece. In other words, the chord of measure 57 relates in different ways to what comes before and what comes after it. It is, on the one hand, the culmination of a process

having a double motion C♯–D–E. (In that case, the added mezzosoprano in the chart would be alto, and the alto would be tenor.) It is a perfectly possible, indeed more immediate reading of mm. 37–57. The alternative chosen here assigns the bass-clef E's to tenor in view of the F in m. 57, which is both clearly the tenor part and related directly to those E's, and, ultimately, to the tenor's G in the opening chord (see level 3). The ambiguities and alternatives result not least from the very punctual occurrences of a texture in five essential parts (mm. 22 and 39), which open up several possibilities for interpretation. The effort here has been to relate the decisions to other factors in the general unfolding of the piece, but it is not intended as the only possibility.

of prolongation of, mainly, the chord at measure 32; but, in the context of what happens later—the sequence—it is a non-essential chord. This kind of duality is observable throughout the *Bagatelle* in a variety of spheres, and it will be treated directly in the final chapter of this text.

Second, this resolution is not necessarily to be understood as generated by a 'pull' toward the diminished-seventh chord, as it is read by Morgan (see page 19). The C♯ in the bass (which would 'resolve' into the diminished seventh's D) is actually stable, not only as a result of its establishment since measure 29 (if not 17) and of its very clear role in the design of the bass, but, unlike the top voice, also arguably in perception.

The resolution of A into A♭ should therefore be taken as a feature of the soprano part, rather than as a fact of the harmonic essence of the piece. The large-scale motion of the soprano (from the opening F to the B at the end of the first part) proceeds through intermediate A and A♭. (Note that the E of measures 17 and 19 have been assigned to the putative mezzosoprano—see page 24.) Adding these intermediate steps to the soprano, and collecting the descriptions of the individual parts at the end of the previous section, a general voice-leading chart emerges as in Figure 2.5. The mezzosoprano is understood as a voice exchange of the bass, but the chart incorporates also its relationship to the soprano.

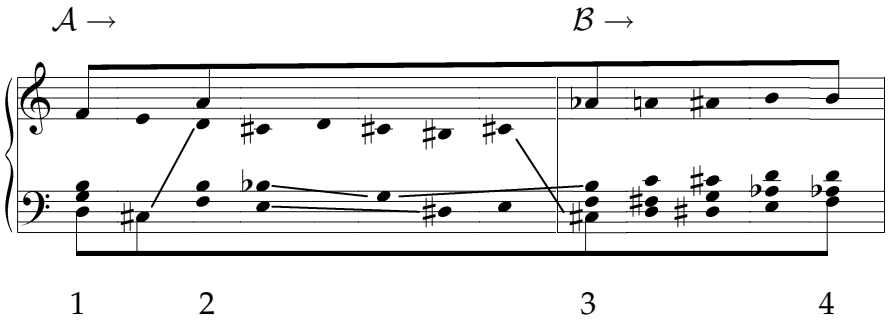


Figure 2.5: Overall voice leading in the first part

The soprano detail completes an additional aspect of the handling of the diminished-seventh chord in the *Bagatelle*: the tenor had modified one of the notes in the opening chord (replacing A♭ with G—half a tone lower—in 1), and here the soprano mirrors the

modification in the second stage, 2, with the substitution of A—a semitone *higher*—for A♭. Both modifications are 'resolved' with the presentation of A♭ in the soprano in 3. This happens, moreover, when the tenor takes the F from the soprano, precisely by converging with the mezzosoprano part onto that tone. At this point, the only note that is not part of the diminished seventh is the C♯ in the bass. In fact, all voices move upward chromatically, and finally the upper voices, having reached another disposition of the diminished seventh, wait for the bass to reach F at *iv*.

2.3.3 Conclusions

The voice-leading reduction in Figure 2.5 is very suggestive in connection with the preliminary analysis of the *Bagatelle* presented in chapter 1. The three notes highlighted by the description of this chart in the previous section are, precisely, F–A♭ (in conjunction), and C♯ (in contrast)—i.e., the three notes that had been singled out in the previous chapter.

Moreover, the chart reveals the existence of a close relationship between C♯ and E. Such a relationship had already been noticed in connection with the 'dyads' (pages 12ff.), and here takes on a meaning outside of that context: as seen in Figure 2.5, the two notes appear in $\mathcal{A}$ systematically related to each other, involving first the mezzosoprano and the bass (between 1 and 2) and later the mezzosoprano and the tenor (between 2 and 3). Incidentally, for the return of section $\mathfrak{a}$ in the second part of the piece, E will lead (from the introduction) to the presentation of the main motive on A♭, just as in the first part C♯ led to F.

The reduction has thus provided confirmation and completion for some aspects of the piece that are also suggested by other analytical means. In the process, the focus has gradually shifted from the chords of the piece, the initial motivation of reduction, to the movement of the parts. What is then the status of the three basic chords—i.e., the diminished seventh, the half-diminished, and the 'sequence' chord—in this last stage of reductive analysis? All of them do in fact appear in Figure 2.5. But harmonic constructs in general have become less of a principle, and more of a result (of voice leading). The 'prolongation' of the diminished seventh is described here in terms of the movement

of the individual parts—a movement that is bound to create, as by-products, different harmonic agglomerates along the way. Harmony, in this reading, is accounted for by counterpoint, rather than the contrary.

This is opposite to the identification of a chord, the positing of its possible harmonic prolongations, and the explanation of the contrapuntal foreground in terms of them. In a way, the conclusions of the alternative reduction here proposed are truer to the Schenkerian paradigm—where, after all, V is nothing but the harmonic manifestation of the voice-leading of bass and soprano. Even then, however, the *Urlinie* is for Schenker the *arpeggiation* of the 'chord of nature,' and in any case the more practical side of actual application of Schenkerian reduction tends to account for—'reduce'—counterpoint and voice leading to foreground phenomena governed by the harmonic essence of music. It is chords that explain voice leading, not voice leading that creates chords—and in this sense Morgan's approach is more genuinely Schenkerian.

2.4 REDUCTION AND ATONALITY

Whether it is counterpoint that creates harmony or the other way around is a potentially never-ending discussion, as is the ultimate stance of Schenkerian reduction on the matter. But there are other aspects of the relationship between Schenkerian reduction and tonality that are worth reflecting upon, as they do have a material bearing on its application to contexts other than tonal music.

To repeat an expression used by Richard Crocker (in a related but different context), reduction alone is ultimately little more than "juggling with given facts."[12] Indeed, all analysis is—that is what is *called* 'analytical judgments.' On the other side of the divide are the 'synthetical judgements,' those that actually involve the world and bring something from it into the reasoning. Nattiez's urge for a complement of the description of the 'neutral level' with an account of the poietic and esthesic poles—the complementary aspects of the reality of the symbolic form—is ultimately an urge for synthesis, and the

[12]Richard Crocker, "Hermann's Major Sixth," *JAMS* 25 (1972), p. 35.

methodology of 'paradigmatic analysis,' most systematically developed by him in the realm of music, is proposed as a tool to do just that.

If, in general, the paradigmatic method goes from analysis to synthesis, Schenker's method goes from synthesis—the postulation of the tonic triad and related structures—to analysis. This opposition stems from the fact that paradigmatic analysis is intended to deal with the symbolic form in general, and therefore it cannot assume the analyst's familiarity with it—cf. the relevance of this model for ethnomusicology, and Nattiez's own interest in that discipline. But in the particular case of tonal music familiarity is a given. Tonality has automatically provided the synthetic complement to Schenker's theory: the decision to consider the tonic triad a relevant element in music is itself a synthetic judgement—one that comes from the object of study, not from analysis itself. After all, it is the relevance of the tonic triad that *defines* (major/minor, functional) tonality. When dealing with the kind of music on which Schenker's method was erected, it is safe, indeed compulsory, to start from the assumption that the triad is poietically and esthesically relevant. The synthetic phase of Schenkerian reduction is foundational, and very swift—so much so, in fact, that it can be assumed and even pass unnoticed. Thus an analysis of the neutral level in terms of the tonic triad is complete (or, more precisely, can pass as complete).

This is no longer true outside of tonality. An inevitable effect of emancipating the Schenkerian method from the tonic triad is that the method is divorced from reality. In fact, in the absence of tonality, what does it really *mean* to say that a chord, be it what it may, is "the basic sonority" of a piece (as Morgan says of the diminished-seventh chord in Liszt's *Bagatelle*?[13] Compare, for example, the immediate validity of such an assertion when a tonal piece is concerned: 'the basic sonority of Beethoven's *Eroica* is the triad of E♭ Major.' Yes, this piece was indeed supposed to have a tonality, whose triad was at all times relevant, both for Beethoven and for the listener. What exactly is to be done with that in the process of analysis is of course still an open question, but the initial point of departure is not a deduction or a thesis—it is an observation.

[13]Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

At the other end, compare cases where the relevance of a 'basic sonority' is so clear that it becomes trivial: other atonal pieces by Liszt, already mentioned, such as *Unstern!* and *Richard Wagner—Venezia*. In both of them there is an obviously conscious exploration of the augmented triad, and related structures like the whole-tone scale. With this observation at the basis of the procedure, it would be quite a contention to *reduce* the whole of the pieces to the augmented chord, even more so to one *particular* augmented chord. Were this reduction to be done, the resulting description, made of both synthesis and analysis, would be a complete, non-trivial model. It would be, in fact, a miniature version of what Schenker attempted, and to an impressive degree achieved, with tonal music.

Thus it is a feature of Schenker's method that it applies to tonal music—preferably German, ideally *Meisterwerke*. He himself, confronted with the non-universality of its system, went as far as implying that only 'good' music was susceptible of it. Morgan's article starts with a critique of this view, arguing that there would be in principle no reason to limit the application of the method to the music accepted by Schenker. But the situation appears to be more complicated than that. As has been argued, the relationship between Schenkerian reduction and tonality is far deeper than a mere matter of opinion or ideology. This is not to say that regarding non-tonal music it is useless—by no means—or that other ties to reality are not possible or conceivable. But the move to non-tonal music *does* render the Schenkerian method a purely analytical one, which is in this sense incomplete: it is still in need of synthesis.

Thus it is not that reduction is useful for tonality and useless outside of it, or that non-triadic prolongation is wrong in principle. No analytical method by itself is either useful or useless. The critical issue is rather what synthetical complement can be added to it. For tonal music, tonality itself is a sure step (although not necessarily a sufficient one) in that direction; for non-tonal music, the absence of such a complement is a circumstance to be borne in mind when applying Schenkerian reduction, or in fact any analytical method.

In the case of the *Bagatelle*, the identification of the diminished-seventh chord at the end of each part is an inescapable observation. Morgan's main insight consists in establishing a compelling relationship between this chord and the beginning of the piece. But it is

dangerous to posit the diminished seventh as the 'basic sonority'—in a context where the meaning of such an expression is more than dubious—and then proceed to operate with it in close analogy with 'basic sonorities' in tonal music. The reality of the piece, in the end, does not warrant such an analogy: the detailed perils of choosing that particular chord have been reviewed in the preceding sections. But the main unwarranted assumption is that the piece, just as tonal music, should *have* a 'basic sonority' at all. There is no reason (other than the choice of a Schenkerian methodology) to posit a 'basic sonority' for the *Bagatelle* on the image of what the tonic triad is for tonal music.

It is, for example, conceivable that in composing the *Bagatelle* Liszt successively discovered new structural factors which a section had generated (but not been generated by) and then applied them to the sections to come. The initial chord, that in the reprise of the first section appears modified into the diminished-seventh chord, might be a case in point. The modification—the substitution of A♭ for G—might have occurred to Liszt when he realized that the *cadenza* revolved around the diminished chord. The diminished seventh might thus have *emerged* as a structural axis as the piece was being composed, and might not necessarily have been 'basic' from the start.

Chapter 5 will argue for the kind of reading just suggested: a reading in terms of 'process,' whereby there is no single global constructive basis for the whole composition, but rather a changing set of threads that converge in different ways from section to section. In such a process, what resulted initially from ideas that were locally in force in one section becomes part of the ideas of a later one. Morgan's analysis, on the contrary, assumes the existence of a single compositional pillar, and moreover that it was *always* the diminished seventh. The general impression is that the composition of the *Bagatelle* was not a constructive process, with a history of its own, but a demonstrative execution of a timeless plan (and one, in addition, that the context of his article makes a general plan of Music—of History?—itself). It is in the sphere of the history of music, in fact, that Morgan brings synthetical judgements into the discussion—not judgements about the particular pieces treated in his article, but about the historical period of which the pieces are part. To complete the review of what Morgan's analysis, we now briefly turn to this less analytical, more historical part of his argument.

2.5 THE HISTORICAL READING

The general thesis of Morgan's "Dissonant Prolongation" is that the nineteenth century provides "theoretical and compositional precedents" (the subtitle of the article) of the prolongation of dissonance. Morgan takes good care not to generalize unduly, but his article allows the reconstruction of an underlying historical paradigm:

1. Prolongation of dissonance was possible since the beginning, if mainly subordinated to non-thematic sections ("[these passages] represent only 'passing moments,'… in motion between stable harmonic regions"[14]), particularly transitions and development sections.
2. With the gradual growth of the development section itself, and the conquest of the entire musical form by developmental techniques, dissonant chords started to appear, "already in the early nineteenth-century music,"[15] as bases of prolongation in expository sections (first, moreover, in introductions where "the opening dominant is prolonged to control a quasi-independent formal segment comprising part or sometimes all of the principal thematic material"[16]).
3. Dissonant prolongation eventually emancipated completely from the development, and joined consonant prolongation as its equal. Thus "Schenker's example has unwittingly provided the foundation for a theory of twentieth-century tonal structure based on 'dissonant tonics'."[17]

Again, there is no explicit statement by Morgan that this is a historical 'process.' But the chronological order of Morgan's examples (Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart for point 1, Schumann and Brahms for point 2), as well as certain expressions ('precedents,' '*already* in the early nineteenth century music,' etc.) reveal that this three-point argument is an eminently historical account.

This account, among other things, explains Morgan's focus on such a chord as the diminished seventh, and why a chord like the 'sequence' chord (C♯–F–B–A) does not fit

[14] *Idem*, p. 54, 56.
[15] *Idem*, p. 56.
[16] *Idem*.
[17] *Idem*, p. 53.

the paradigm of his article. This latter chord is in fact dissonant, but it is not one of the dissonant chords that were primevally prolonged in developments—in other words, it cannot be accommodated in history.[18] Morgan's search is mainly a search for historical continuity.

However, if there is anything at all obvious about the rise of atonality—no matter what exactly this latter is taken to stand for—it is that it supposes a historical discontinuity, a break in the history of music. Atonality is different from tonality, in essence and not in degree, and this difference is the most important and significant fact about it, and the very question that it raises for the understanding of the history of music. The attempt to incorporate the *Bagatelle without tonality* into the flow of a history of tonality that, no matter how ragged, is in the main continuous, could not only prove false, but, more importantly, vacuous. Even if it were successful—which a detailed analysis of Liszt's *Bagatelle* tends to disprove—the result would not be a contribution to the historical understanding of atonality: it would only show that the piece, after all, was not 'atonal' in the full, significant sense. That would certainly be an achievement, but it would not entail a clarification of the connection of tonal music to the music of the twentieth century.

Even if it were conceivable, in other words, to incorporate—for example—the whole of Schoenberg's free atonal music into a scheme of smooth development from Schenkerian tonality, that would not solve the problem of *change* from tonality to atonality: in the end, presumably, there will always be pieces that do not conform to this incorporation. The problem of change—in my view the most important and significant fact about atonality—would not have been resolved, but simply postponed.

[18] Interestingly, this chord can indeed be found in other pieces by Liszt (and doubtlessly by other composers too), if the right theoretical apparatus is adopted. The chord reduces to set 4-24 (0, 2, 4, 8), which can also be seen in *Via Crucis* (Station 5), and appears as the last sonority of *Nuages Gris* of 1881. In both these pieces, as well as in *Unstern!*, it is structurally related to 4-19 (0, 1, 4, 8). See Allen Forte, "Liszt's experimental idiom," *Nineteenth-century music* 10/3 (1986). There is no occasion here to comment on this in depth. But, in general, the relevance of reducing chords to sets in this context—and the operation, in spite of Forte's suggestion that it is simply a convenient shorthand, carries *much* meaning and consequence—is still open to question. (Note, in connection with section 2.4 above, that set analysis too is successful when it *leads* to proving this relevance, rather than when it starts from it.) The sequence chord in the *Bagatelle*, in my view, is not simply 4-24, but the particular disposition we find it in (as many of its relevant features depend on this disposition). It is *not* the same entity as the chords in the other pieces cited.

On the other hand, Morgan could have used the dominant-seventh chord, which is found in the usual tonal vocabulary. Both modifications of the diminished seventh, one by the tenor at m. 13 and one by the bass at 57, create a dominant-seventh chord. Sadly, these chords cannot be held to be 'prolonged' in the piece, and thus they also fail to conform to Morgan's beautifully simple model.

This discussion reduces ultimately to another one that is quite beyond the scope of the present text, namely the factual inadequateness of teleology. Put shortly, at least in the view I adhere to, history cannot be explained as a single process of development, because—this appears established beyond doubt by now—it is simply not one. *Portions* of it are, and they must be explained as such. But if the recognition of the discontinuities in history's course is avoided rather than pursued, the whole edifice threatens to collapse. A historically continuous line is, most likely, not promising as an account of how atonality might have been born, and indeed of what it might be.

I contend that Liszt's *Bagatelle* does feature the main aspect of atonality: it cannot be entirely accounted for as a derivative of tonality or through methods derived directly from tonal analysis. The present chapter has exposed the technical problems of trying to do so, not directly by refuting such an attempt, but by carrying it out to its full consequences and proving it incomplete and in a sense misleading. This last section argues that, historically, the task imposed by this piece (and other primeval non-tonal pieces) is not that of reducing it to the history of tonality, but rather on the contrary, to face the break that it represents by its very nature. There is, in other words, more to the *Bagatelle* than what it inherited from the tonal tradition, and it is this, in my view, that makes the piece an important object of study. The following chapters will develop this approach, eventually attempting an exploration of the extra-tonal element of the piece.

3.0 THE SECOND PART OF THE PIECE

The analysis of Liszt's *Bagatelle without Tonality* in the previous chapters was concerned mainly with the first half of the piece. The analytical threads developed there will be complemented in this chapter with a closer look at the second half. This will proceed primarily as a comparison with the findings of the previous chapters, a comparison that is granted by the fact that the second part of the piece is an elaboration of the first, and almost all passages in one correspond to passages in the other. The main objective of this brief chapter is to use these corresponding passages in the second half to corroborate, and modify as necessary, the facts discovered about the first.

Since the sequence of part $\mathcal{B}$ is repeated virtually unchanged from part to part (the differences have already been treated in section 1.3), this chapter will focus almost exclusively on $\mathcal{A}$.

3.1 SECTION $\mathfrak{a}$

Between measures 95 (that is, immediately after the introduction to the second part) and 134, the primary mechanism of elaboration is transposition. The main motive is played twice, in different transpositions: first, in measure 95, it starts on A♭; in measure 107 it is stated on E. It is this latter transposition that is more exactly parallel, measure by measure, to the original statement in the first part. Unlike what happens in the transposition to A♭, from measure 107 on the accompaniment too is virtually a repetition of the first part (transposed, like the melody, up a major seventh). Thus measures 107–116 correspond note by note to measures 13–24.

This being already the second presentation of the main motive in the second half, Liszt forgoes its elaborated repetition (in the first part measures 25–32), and uses the link that originally led to it to transition, this time, to 𝔟.

However, section 𝔟 (a diatonic descent and subsequent versions of the main motive) appears transposed upwards not a major seventh, but a perfect octave. The literal transposition has been broken at measure 117, the beginning of the link, where instead of B♭ Liszt uses A, even notating it with a 'courtesy' natural sign (in addition to an accent that did not exist in the first part).

The immediate effect of this adjustment is the return to the original pitch (though not octave) levels. From that point on, the variation from half to half is not based on transposition, but on elaboration.

3.2 THE FUNCTION OF CHORDS IN THE *BAGATELLE*

The transposition of two different sections at two different levels has consequences for the reductive analysis of the piece. This asymmetry deeply modifies the general 'prolongation' scheme of the piece in the second half, because one of the main prolongations of Figure 2.4—that of the chord at measure 32—is invalidated by it. Owing to the different transposition levels, the points that correspond to the beginning and the end of that prolongation feature, in the second half, two different chords.

In addition, there is a further, more subtle modification in the course of 𝔞. The left hand at measure 116 (still within the major-seventh transposition) plays the chord C♯–E–A♯, where literal transposition would have indicated C–E–A♯ (that is, C instead of C♯, like in the previous measure). The modified chord is identical to the first chord of section 𝔟 in the first part (see Figure 2.4, measure 37). With this substitution of C♯ for C—consistent, on the other hand, with the general discourse of the bass throughout the piece—the harmonic situation is complicated, because the very chord that was to be prolonged (the equivalent of measure 32) appears changed into one of the neighboring chords that had participated in its prolongation. As a general result of this manipulation, the second part

of the piece does not feature prolongations proper—no chord is seen to 'frame' a harmonic progression in such a way that would allow the reduction of the progression into a single harmony.

This, of course, does not mean that the chords are simply irrelevant or merely the result of counterpoint. The modification at measure 116, whereby a transposition is broken to produce a chord that was prominent in the first half (and that, furthermore, will be prominent in the next section), shows that harmonic entities function, sometimes at least, as constructive elements in the piece. In other words, Liszt has noticed that only one note differed between the chord created by the transposition—C–E–A♯—and one of the chords of the already composed ♭ section, and has decided to highlight—in fact, to *realize*—the relationship.

This points to an interpretation of the chords that should not be limited to the notion of prolongation. At play is not a hierarchy of chords whereby chords are classified as ends or means of prolongation, as the reductive paradigm suggests.[1] Rather, chords that arise as the result of one or another compositional procedure may be found used in different functions as the context of the sections changes.

This interpretation of the function of chords in the *Bagatelle*, moreover, suggests itself already in the first part, even when it is possible to postulate relationships of prolongation. Thus the three main chords that in section 2.3 were referred to as ○, ⌀, and □ occur, between measures 13 and 25 in the following order:

○ ⌀ □ ⌀ □ ○

In level 2 of Figure 2.4, this structure was reduced into '○–⌀–□–○,' reading the first □ as a neighboring chord that prolonged ⌀. And in fact the chord *does* very clearly arise in

[1] The present paragraphs refer mainly to the reduction presented in Figure 2.4, rather to the one worked out by Morgan (Figure 2.1). In the latter, there is, in either half of the piece, no suggestion of prolongation of chords beyond that of the diminished seventh. This is mainly due to the fact that, apart from the final one, no other diminished-seventh chord can be claimed to be prolonged in the piece in any way. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, this ignores many important and recurring chords, such as those whose prolongation is shown in Figure 2.4. Some of these do appear in Morgan's chart, but no relationship between them is pointed out. The 'alternative reduction' proposed in section 2.3 offers one such relationship, based on the notion of 'prolongation.' In light of the second half, as this section explains, this notion needs revision and qualification.

precisely that function: the tenor's F is part of a double neighbor on the G of ⌀ , while the melody moves chromatically between E and A and backwards (the complete passage appears in Figure 2.3). But when the three measures involved are immediately repeated (mm. 19–21, with elision), neither tenor nor the melody return to ⌀, but to □ itself.[2] This creates difficulties for a reductive reading: is □ a neighbor of ⌀, or is it the other way around?

Both kinds of problem—the breaking of a prolongation through different transposition levels, and the emancipation of the □ chord from its function of neighbor of ⌀—are ultimately an index to the same issue: there are relationships and internal references in the piece that would bridge the boundaries of the different levels of reduction. The 'passing chord' at the center of level 3 in Figure 2.4, for example, is the one and the same as the chord at measure 22 in level 2, and this in turn is equally related to the chord at measure 30 in level 1. But the reductive method, assigning to each of these chords a neighboring function in three different prolongations, cannot account for this identity—in fact, it has to ignore it. That these relationships are very clearly part of the compositional process (for not only are they consistent with similar constructive elements in other spheres, but show signs of awareness on the part of Liszt) confirms that reduction can uncover facts about the piece, but not provide a complete basis for a poietical understanding of it.

3.3 SECTION ♭

Once the original pitches are restored with the key modifications to the transposition in measures 116–7, the beginning of ♭ is repeated exactly (although an octave higher) as it was in the first part of the piece, measures 119–126 being parallel to measures 37–44. From that point on, however, the second half is a highly elaborated variation of the first.

The original version of this passage was quoted in full in Figure 1.7. In the second half of the piece, the discourse is structurally similar—featuring the same harmony, as well as

[2] Importantly, as a glance at the score will show, it is not simply that the original prolongation of ⌀ is left incomplete, but positively modified.

the oscillating dyads C–C♯ and E♭–E—but its realization is different. The former dyad is still in the right hand, but played with flourishing gestures related to the elaboration of the main motive between measures 25 and 32. These flourishes expand every measure of the original passage into two measures of the variation. The harmonic rhythm is thus augmented, and the left hand follows the augmentation by playing—for two measures rather than one—chords that are equivalent to those in the original passage (plus a doubling of the melody's C or C♯). Thus measures 45–48 (quoted above in Figure 1.7) are mirrored in the second part by measures 127–134. In the first part, the passage is repeated; in the second, it is augmented.

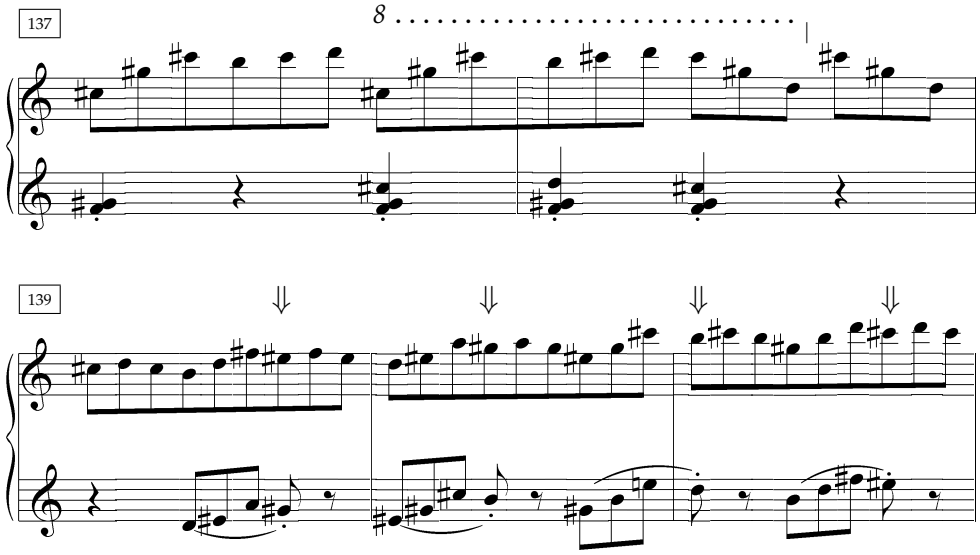


Figure 3.1: The link between $\mathcal{A}$ and $\mathcal{B}$ in the second half

What follows between measures 135 and 148 is a completely new passage, that corresponds to the link leading from ♭ to the sequence in $\mathcal{B}$. Figure 3.1 shows measures 137–141, the first part of this new link (measures 135 and 136, the beginning of the link, are identical to measures 137 and 138). The right hand continues the flourish with which it had oscillated between C and C♯ in the previous passage; but in the link the oscillation stops, and the melody focuses (initially) on C♯ alone. The left hand features, for the first time, a chord made of F, A♭, and C♯—the three pitch classes that have repeatedly recurred as structural pillars at several levels of analysis.

The second part of the link, measures 139–141 (the object of the 'octatonic digression' in section 1.2.1) also displays the chord formed by those three notes (plus B), with the melodic gestures and the binary meter (superimposed on the $\frac{3}{4}$ since measure 127, as shown by the beaming) emphasizing in succession E♯, G♯, B, and C♯ (under '⇓' in Figure 3.1). The left hand expresses the diminished-seventh chord G♯–B–D–E♯, i.e., a disposition of the 'basic' chord of the piece.

3.4 THE CLIMAX OF THE PIECE

The passage just described combines two chords that have been separately established as structural in multiple ways—voice leading, formal opposition, melodic prolongation, harmonic substrate. As explained in section 2.3.2, the diminished seventh is implied throughout measures 13–57 by a sort of incomplete double neighbor (the tenor's G and the soprano's A), but it was never actually stated until the end of the sequence in the first half. Immediately after that, it provided the basis for the improvisatory gestures in the *cadenza*. It is here, concretely at measure 142, that the chord is outlined in its bare form, i.e., not as the basis of construction, but directly as its surface and for its own sake.

The chord F–A♭–B–C♯, also outlined by the link in the second half (Figure 3.1), emerges in the piece first as the result of the use of a previously established chord (C♯–F–B–A) in a new context that made the top A resolve into A♭. Its previous presence in the piece is, for a number of factors that have been highlighted before, more 'contrapuntal' than 'harmonic,' more the result of independent part motions than of harmonic essence. The same is true of other chords that acquire importance in various degrees. But this particular one, above all when considered as F–A♭–C♯ (the B being an additional tone due to 'filling in,' both vertically in the sequence and melodically at measure 141), is highlighted by the structural import of each of its tones, not only in the formal dimension of the piece (see section 1.3) but also in the voice leading of the prolongation of the diminished seventh (section 2.3.3). Again, however, as with the diminished-seventh chord, it is only in the link of measures 135–148 that the chord appears directly and for its own

sake. This passage—clearly the climactic point of the *Bagatelle*—is not simply a summary of the piece, but indeed the definitive crystallization of many previously open processes and structures.

Morgan describes this passage as the suspension of a dissonant C♯ over the 'referential' sonority of the diminished seventh. This involves the dangerous—in this context—notions of 'dissonance' and (perceptual) 'reference.'[3] For one thing, B and D are far less important in the passage than the other tones involved, and they both function, at least at the beginning, in the orbit of C♯. This should not be overlooked: the focus here is on F–A♭–C♯.

But, more importantly, is C♯ truly "heard as a dissonance"? Technically, of course, it is a dissonant tone. But so is the diminished seventh on its own. In fact, the end of the piece itself—which revolves entirely on the diminished seventh of D—can hardly be held to be (or to sound) 'conclusive' in the way a tonic chord is. In other words, if the piece is understood to end at all, it is probably because of formal, rather than harmonic, factors: all the passages of $\mathbb{A}$ have been repeated in $\mathbb{A}'$.[4] The kind of gesture in the *codetta*, a *crescendo* repetition of a self-contained unit, itself superficially not very related to the main contents of the piece (so that the discourse of the piece is understood as having been completed) would be in themselves suggestive of an ending in many (non-tonal) contexts.

Returning to the climax, the gestures involved in it are similarly well designed to be perceived as climactic in themselves. Dissonance/consonance, dominant/tonic (or even 'dominant'/'tonic') are not the main topics in this passage, and discerning whether the climax of measures 135–48 is the realization of discourse or the exacerbation of structural conflict is largely an analytical matter. In my analysis, at any rate, several factors lead to think that the passage is the distilling and presentation, in their pure form, of constructive ideas that have had a role throughout the piece.

[3] Robert Morgan, "Dissonant Prolongations: Theoretical and Compositional Precedents," *Journal of Music Theory* 20/1 (1976), p. 78. See page 18 above.

[4] It is very much conceivable that the piece is *not* understood to end but for the fact that it just does. Cf. the same phenomenon throughout non-tonal music. It is very often not harmony, but aspects of form and surface effects (fade-outs, goal-directed *crescendi*, etc.) that suggest to the listener that a piece has ended, and even then the only safe criterion is what the conductor does next. As regards Liszt's *Bagatelle*, I prefer not to assert either that the piece is felt to end or that it is not—the fact that it is known to end here is simply too much of an interference for an impartial judgement on this issue.

4.0 ON THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF 'WITHOUT'

Section 2.5 above referred to the search for historical continuity between tonality and atonality in Robert Morgan's article "Dissonant Prolongation." The present chapter is devoted to another published study of Liszt's *Bagatelle*: David C. Berry's "The Meaning of Without."[1]

In this article, Berry pursued a different kind of continuity—one that could be called 'synchronic continuity.' Instead of looking for ties and genetic relationships between techniques and procedures of different times, the search is for links between the *Bagatelle* and the musical-aesthetical context of which it is a manifestation. In this approach, the essence of the piece—its "why" and its "how" in Berry's terms—must be looked for in the contemporaneous musical world: the work and speculations of nineteenth-century theoreticians.

4.1 'MULTIPLE MEANING' IN THE *BAGATELLE*

This approach leads Berry to explore *Mehrdeutigkeit*—'multiple meaning'—a theoretical notion developed between the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, and whose culminating account in the work of Gottfried Weber (1799–1839) has been researched extensively by Janna Saslaw in recent years.[2] This notion, that involves a wealth of elements,

[1] David Carson Berry, "The Meaning of 'Without': An Exploration of Liszt's *Bagatelle ohne Tonart*," *19th. Century Music* XVII/3 (2004): 230–262.

[2] Saslaw's definitive account is *Gottfried Weber and the Concept of Mehrdeutigkeit* (Ph. D. diss.), Columbia University, 1992, hereafter referred to as 'Weber and Mehrdeutigkeit.' Additional references are her previous "Gottfried Weber and Multiple Meaning," *Theoria* 5 (1990–1) ("Multiple Meaning"), and the entry on "Weber, Gottfried," in L. Macy (ed.), *Grove Music Online*, http://www.grovemusic.com/ (accessed October 5, 2005).

is a systematic study of the possibility of musical entities, and in particular chords, to be used in several different ways. The paradigmatic example (that by no means exhausts Weber's concerns and those of his predecessor Georg Vogler, but nonetheless constitutes the cornerstone of the theory) is the well-known possibility of a German augmented-sixth chord to be interpreted as a dominant chord. Detailed analysis of this theory and of its history is beyond the scope of the present text, and we will focus here mainly of Berry's use of it in connection with Liszt's *Bagatelle*.

Berry's understanding of the piece is based on the thesis that Liszt achieved atonality through an extreme use of 'multiple meaning.' The general argument can be summarized in three main points:

1. Gottfried Weber had already arrived, in his exploration of multiple meaning, at an intimation of what the absence of a tonality would be like: the continued refusal of the music to fulfill the 'meanings' of what would, in other contexts, be tonal chords.
2. Weber is one of the sources of technical speculation about atonality on which Liszt was likely to draw when he set out to compose a piece 'without tonality.'[3]
3. Accordingly, the *Bagatelle* can be explained as a realization of Weber's insights: it features key implications in the form of triadic constructions, tritone delineations, etc., but it consistently deviates from those implications to achieve atonality.

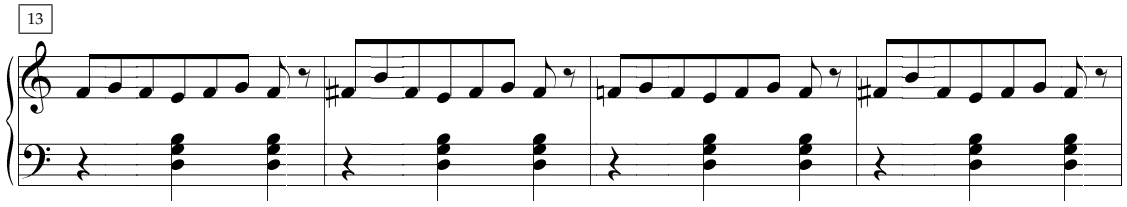
4.1.1 Berry's analysis

The most substantial of Berry's examples (his Example 5) is reproduced in Figure 4.1. Since the text associated with it is representative of his complete analysis of the piece, it is quoted below in full:

[3]This point is actually the topic of a later section of the article, entitled "*Why* Without" (pp. 248–51). There Berry mentions other sources of speculation that were available to Liszt, notably Fétis. The latter's serialization of the history of harmony into four '*ordres*,' for the purposes of exploring the birth of atonality, is ultimately reconciled by Berry with Weber's *Mehrdeutigkeit*. Given this relationship, Berry's argument is actually more Fétisian than Weberian: it is in Fétis that 'extreme cases' of multiple meaning (as the motion from the '*ordre pluritonique*' to the '*ordre omnitonique*') are given a historical status much like Berry would (see Berry, *op. cit.*, pp. 253–5). But Berry's general thesis is that Liszt drew on 'multiple meaning,' be it in Weber's form or any other one. Since it is Weber who carried out a systematic, *technical* account of the procedure, it is by confronting *him* that an insight could be gained into the 'how' of the *Bagatelle*—and that is how the 'technical' discussion in Berry's article is exclusively Weberian.

In m. 13, G^7 is formed by the harmony-melody combination, suggesting V^7 of C (ex. 5b). But if the tritone is reinterpreted as B–E♯, we have an altered $C♯^7$, or V^7 of F♯ (ex. 5d). Weber might also have thought of the latter tritone as part of an augmented-sixth chord, which he would explain as an altered $C♯^{\circ 7}$ or $ii^{\circ 7}$ of B minor (ex. 5c). Note that two of these interpretations, V^7 of either C or F♯, correspond to the implications of $intro_1$ [mm. 1–12, where dominants of C and of F♯ can be found] and so might be considered more contextually reasonable. Nonetheless, the main point is that there is still no *confirmation* of these keys. Measure 14 problematizes matters by inflecting F to F♯. Now we have a major-seventh tetrad, which suggests I^{M7} of G or IV^{M7} of D. G is the key most closely related to the prior C implications. Neither G nor D, however, offers one of the *resolutions* expected of the harmonies in the prior measures, which since the beginning seem to have been insinuating the keys C and/or F♯.[4]

a. mm. 13–16



b.–d. Three interpretations of "G^7."

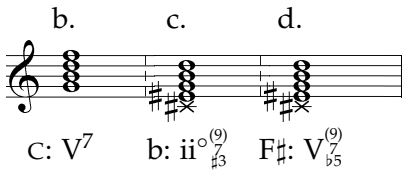


Figure 4.1: Berry's Example 5

It is from this example and others to the same effect that Berry extracts his main technical account of Liszt's *Bagatelle*. In his words:

This is precisely how Liszt's Bagatelle operates. It is not a piece "without tonality," but rather one "without the fulfillment of a tonic." It maintains harmonic tension not only by avoiding anticipated resolutions but by preserving a sense of ambiguity as to what the actual "missing" key is.[5]

[4] Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 243; Berry's italics.
[5] *Idem*, p. 246.

4.1.2 The multiple meanings of measure 13

The three chords in Berry's example 5b.–d. (see Figure 4.1 above) represent three putative 'meanings' of measure 13 of Liszt's *Bagatelle*. This analysis follows directly the model of Weber's treatment of another major-minor seventh chord,[6] that of B♭ (Figure 4.2).

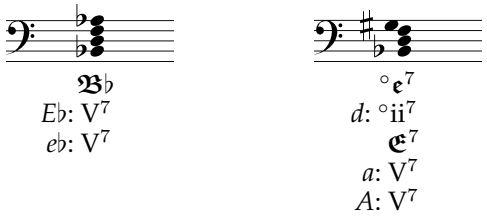


Figure 4.2: Weber's different meanings for the B7 chord[7]

Weber reads this chord, on the one hand, in its most natural and immediate meaning, namely as a dominant to E♭ (either major or minor). Following the notational conventions established in the treatise, this meaning is written as "𝔅♭." On the other, the chord is assigned four additional meanings, all of them as altered forms of the seventh-chord on E ("°𝔢" and "$\mathfrak{E}^7$") as follows:

1. As an altered form of E°_7, "with raised third (G♯), omitted root, and minor ninth (F) added" (Saslaw),[8] the chord can function as ii of D minor (meaning 1).
2. As an altered form of E^7, it can be the dominant to A major or of A minor, or further as the dominant of the dominant in D Major (meanings 2–4).

Thus Weber sees no less than six different meanings in this chord. Incidentally, a seventh one could be added to the list: the dominant of the dominant in D—if Weber did not add it, it is because his extremely detailed nomenclature system did not provide a symbol for the dominant of the dominant.

But these manifold meanings, potentially infinite, reduce to only two genuinely different meanings (the two sides of Figure 4.2). Note that, whether it is read in D minor or

[6] I.e., a major triad with an added minor seventh. This is naturally a 'dominant-seventh,' but this nomenclature is not exactly precise when discussing different 'meanings:' the meaning of 'dominant' is only one of the possibilities.

[7] Saslaw, *Weber and Mehrdeutigkeit*, adapted from example 39.

[8] *Weber and Mehrdeutigkeit*, p. 256.

in A, the items on the right side resolve to the same chord (namely A). Nothing, apart from the fact that Weber's nomenclature includes no symbols for such a chord, prevents it from being, say, a chromatic emphasis to vi in C major, or to ii in G major, etc. Similarly, when read as a dominant (rather than an augmented-sixth chord), the chord could be V/IV in A♭ major, or as V/vi in G minor, ... All these sub-items of the main division are 'derivative' from the two (and only two) 'genuine' meanings.

Weber was aware of this distinction between what I have called 'genuine' and 'derivative' multiple meaning (he called the latter "multiple meaning of position," which was the "second principal kind of multiple meaning"),[9] but he certainly obscured the difference. The main differentiating criterion is whether the multiple meanings involve *different resolution* (in which case they would be 'genuine') or not ('derivative'). This criterion is mentioned explicitly both in the tangential references to multiple meaning by Rameau and Fétis, and in the systematic study of it by Weber's predecessor Georg Vogler. Weber, however, does not mention it, and in his search for completeness and generalization his examples become misleading to say the least.[10]

Berry, drawing exclusively on Weber (and furthermore on one of his examples, not on the theory itself), inherits the same problem. The three meanings assigned by it to measure 13 of the *Bagatelle* are in fact only two (chords c. and d. in Figure 4.1 are two derivatives of a single meaning). Behind the clouds of reference to not-too-well-known and in some senses confusing eighteenth-century theorizations, the contention that emerges from applying *Mehrdeutigkeit* to measure 13 of Liszt's *Bagatelle* is very clear: that chord is either a dominant seventh chord of C, or a German augmented-sixth chord implying a resolution to F♯.

[9] *Idem*, pp. 137ff.

[10] An instance of the confusions created by this is to be seen in Saslaw's comment to Weber's treatment of the dominant-seventh chord. She wonders why the other meanings of the half-diminished chord were not contemplated by Weber, if he was treating the chord as $^{\circ}ii^{7}$ in D minor: "a fundamental half-diminished seventh on E could also be registered as $^{\circ}vii^{7}$ in F major... However, Weber clearly does not recognize the F major possibility in this particular case" (p. 258). She then speculates on reasons for this. But the explanation is much simpler: despite what his notation suggests, Weber does not conceive of this chord as a half-diminished at all. At that time, augmented-sixth chords were all traditionally notated as altered diatonic chords (the Italian chord deriving from iv, the French from ii°_{7}, and the German from VI). It is therefore not that Weber read the German augmented sixth as ii, but that he *wrote* it as such. Berry falls victim of this confusion too, when he says that "[Weber] would explain [the augmented-sixth chord] as an altered... $ii^{\circ}7$" (Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 243). It is in truth not Weber, but Saslaw, who 'explained' it in this way.

4.1.3 'Multiple' or 'no' meaning

And now—clouds removed—the contention can be empirically confronted: should this chord, as it appears in the *Bagatelle*, be interpreted as an ambiguous dominant-or-augmented-sixth?

I contend it should not. To begin with, it hardly *sounds* like either one or the other possibility. Could this be because, as a twenty-first-century listener, I am not expecting all music to sound tonal? A much-quoted review of the 1885 premiere of the piece would lend support to such an explanation: Alexander Wilhelm Gottschlag described the *Bagatelle* as "a highly capricious tone picture which whirls through all the keys and then ends abruptly on a chord of the diminished seventh."[11] Did Gottschlag really hear "all the keys" (or some, at least)? Does the piece, on the other hand, really end "abruptly"? There is of course no way to answer these questions objectively. But in any case, Gottschlag's testimony should not be given undue weight. After all, there is a counter-testimony—and one with particular authority: Liszt himself, after much debating, decided to maintain for the piece: "Bagatelle *without* tonality."

To return to firmer ground, consider the opening of the piece. The delineation of the tritone B–F might very well be perceived as a tendency harmony, and expected to resolve into C–E(♭) or even into A♯–F♯. But the expectation is destroyed at measure 6 (C♯–F). This is not simply a surprising, confusing, ambiguity-generating re-interpretation: it is a full denial of *any* expectations, indeed of the *paradigm* of harmonic expectation and resolution on which 'true' multiple meaning depends. By the time measure 14 does the same with the possible tonal meanings of the chord D–G–B–F of measure 13 (itself a harmonically weak second-inversion chord), the ear has already faced the fact that the chords of this piece will not be resolved, and all but gives up the pursuit of any harmonic implications, tonal at least.

If, as has been mentioned, it is resolution that confers meaning to chords in tonal music—multiple resolution conferring 'multiple meaning'—the fact that the chord in

[11] This is probably the place to refer, for the anecdotal aspect of the *Bagatelle*, to the story connected with its composition and performance in 1885: see Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt, vol. 3: The Final Years 1861–1886* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), pp. 444–6. It is him who quotes Gottschlag (and, from him, Berry does).

measure 13 is not resolved (pointed out by Berry himself) is precisely the reason why this is *not* a case of *Mehrdeutigkeit*. The chords of the *Bagatelle* are, in effect, meaningless (tonally): they do not have 'multiple' meanings, but directly no meanings at all. There is an absolute difference—of essence and not of degree—between the *Bagatelle*'s harmonic behavior and the procedures of *Mehrdeutigkeit*. The lack of any significant enharmonicism in the piece is an index to how much the piece does not function through the multiple meaning of chords (for enharmonicism is an essential result of *Mehrdeutigkeit*, as witnessed by all relevant theorists).

Allow me to quote once more Berry's analytical conclusion:

> It is not a piece "without tonality," but rather one "without the fulfillment of a tonic." It maintains harmonic tension not only by avoiding anticipated resolutions but by preserving a sense of ambiguity as to what the actual "missing" key is.[12]

The problematic reference here is to "anticipated resolutions:" there *are* no such expectations in the piece—there is no "missing key." The anticipations and expectations have been—somewhat clumsily—read into the chords by Berry's historical search. But by doing that, Berry provides the piece *with* exactly what he will then claim it is *without*. The argument is simply circular.

4.2 ON THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF 'TONALITY'

Point 1 in my summary of Berry's general thesis is represented in his article by the following quotations from the work of Janna Saslaw (italics mine):

> [Saslaw] concluded: "According to Weber's view, the ear is beset repeatedly with confusion, and must keep making choices in each bar in accordance with the Principles of Simplicity and Inertia. Once these choices have been made, *the ear finds that none of its expectations are satisfied*... Weber's techniques show us clearly that mounting confusion and surprise are the results of this [composition's] progression." *In extreme cases*, wherein "several events occur in succession that have more than one meaning," then not only do

[12] Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

"expectations multiply, resulting in confusion for the ear," but *ultimately there can be a "loss of any sense of key."*[13]

These passages do seem to suggest that the 'extreme cases' are the deviation from *all* resolutions—precisely what in the previous section was referred to as 'no' meaning—and that Weber had already considered, and included in his treatment of multiple meaning, what I considered above to be a sufficient reason for its rejection in connection with Liszt's *Bagatelle*.

A look at what Weber (and Saslaw) are actually referring to dispels all doubts. The context of the two last quotations from Saslaw is Weber's own *Polimeter* (for vocal quartet and piano), and more precisely its opening, and Weber's extended analysis of it.[14] The introduction to the piece is in fact a superb example of multiple meaning, and Weber's analysis is admirable (figure 4.3 features a reduction of the harmonically most complex passage). Without the need to go into the details of the piece or of its analysis, it is clear that *Polimeter* cannot be held to be an instance of atonality in any sense (and it is not held to be one, either by Weber or by Saslaw). What Weber refers to as 'the loss of any sense of key'—never in so many words, in any case—is that the chain of dominants (and other chords implying resolution) never lastingly establishes a single key. The ear wanders from one to the other, never being able or led to settle down in any one in particular. But there is no doubt that the piece is tonal moment to moment, in the 'micro' scale of the connections from chord to chord: *all* chords resolve, many in digressive ways, but by all accounts tonally.

When Weber wonders what the 'tonality' of his piece is—and what has been said about *Polimeter* is true of other analyses of his, including the seminal one of Mozart's *Dissonant Quartet*, out of which grew his systematic study of *Mehrdeutigkeit*—he is talking about 'tonality' in a sense that is different from the one that Liszt uses in the title of his *Bagatelle*. There seem to be, in fact, two senses of the word 'tonality.' The first one refers

[13] *Idem*, quoting Saslaw first from "Multiple Meaning," pp. 102–3 and later from *Weber and Mehrdeutigkeit*, p. 282.

[14] The discussion about the multiple meanings of the dominant-seventh on B treated above in section 4.1.2 stems from this analysis. As a whole, Berry's references to Weber are pretty well all derived from this example and from Saslaw's commentary on it.

The introduction to *Polimeter* is reproduced in full by Saslaw, *Weber and Mehrdeutigkeit*, p. 254.

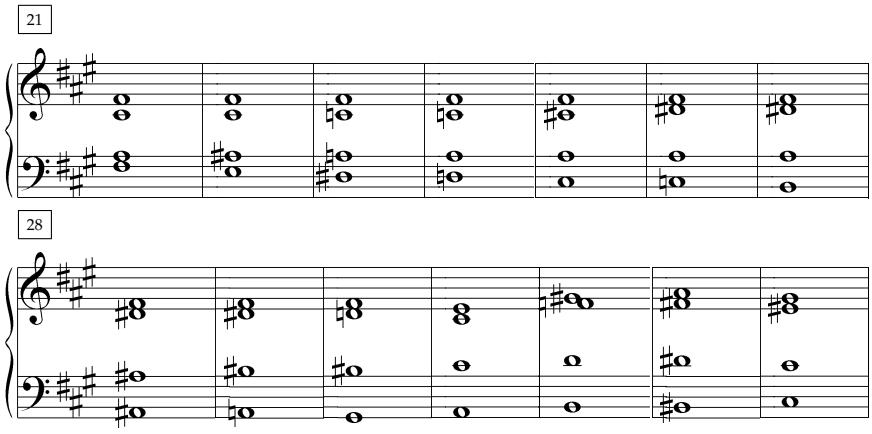


Figure 4.3: Measures 21–34 of Weber's *Polimeter* (reduction).

to the 'macro' level: tonality is a 'family' of chords, related to one another, and which by virtue of this relationship can be referred back to a central, 'generating' one. The other sense is concerned with the 'micro' level: the connection, through tendency tones and their resolutions, between chord and chord.

The two senses must not be confused. It is quite clear that Weber was referring, in the passages relevant to this discussion, to the first sense, 'tonality' as a family of chords. In addition to his concrete examples, his general outlook on 'tonality' is also suggestive of this interpretation:

> The sense of a certain key, centered on a particular tonic, arises when the ear perceive harmonies that belong to that key. Only certain chords may belong to the "family" of harmonies characteristic of a key (II, 5). "Among these, some emerge as especially allied with the key, as forming a particularly intimate, close bond with the tonic harmony, as its primary supports…".[15]

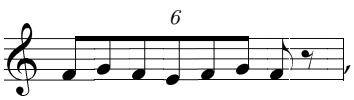
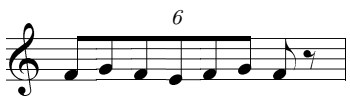
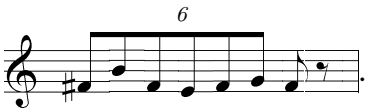
On the contrary, Liszt's '*without*' refers to the second sense: tonality as governing the connection from chord to chord. What the *Bagatelle* lacks is not a central chord to which all others are subordinated (although it lacks that too), but the immediate relationship between a chord and the next: tendency tones and resolutions. It is, to put it in a single sentence, a '*Bagatelle Without Dominants*.'

[15]Saslaw, *Weber and Mehrdeutigkeit*, p. 139, quoting from Weber's *Versuch*.

5.0 SYNTHESIS AND FINAL ACCOUNT

5.1 BINARY STRUCTURING

There is a thread that has run throughout my analysis of Liszt's *Bagatelle* but has not been pointed out directly: a general 'binary structuring' in the piece. This points not only to the fact that the piece is in binary *form*, but that it is, in general, composed of binary structures, both successive to and nested inside one another.

The main theme provides a first illustration. Made of two motives, it is not simply  , but  *plus*  . In all its expository versions (as opposed to variations of it through motivic work), both members appear side by side. The second member is a variation of the first, and the two are perceived as two different things (a motive and its variation), but structurally they form an indivisible unit: whenever the theme is 'stated' (rather than 'developed'), it is a $x + y$ construction.

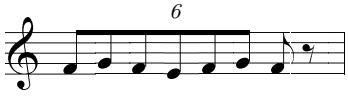
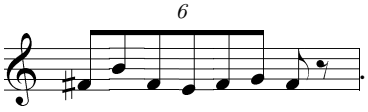
Moreover, this binary unit is *open*: it is not an antecedent-consequent structure, and it does not close a cycle. On the contrary, the first member is self-contained—to the point that, so far, reference to the first of the two motives alone has been sufficient for analysis—and the result of the addition of the second is that the structure is opened up.

The same is true when the piece is considered as a whole. The two halves, one a variation of the other, do not stand in a relationship of question and answer. As has been mentioned before, the 'openness' of the first part and the 'conclusiveness' of the second are due to factors that are not exactly structural or constructive, but gestural: fade-out as opposed to crescendo, hesitation as opposed to insistence. The subtle relationships

between the two halves, and in particular the ones pointed out in chapter 3, are not, in my view, to be read as the resolution of a conflict from one part to the other. In fact, the first half in itself is a better example of conflict-resolution, with the final establishment of a diminished-seventh chord that was implied at the beginning. The second half highlights and demonstrates further relationships, but this not as an answer or a relief, but as an elaboration and a deepening.

This binary $x + y$ reading, implying not a closure but an opening up of discourse, applies elsewhere in the piece. Section 3.2 above devoted some time to the interpretation of the sequence of 'basic chords' at the beginning of the piece, measures 13–25, which follow one another in the order ○–⌀–□–⌀–□–○ (see pages 37ff.). When understood within the binary structuring, this sequence (that, as will be remembered, was problematic for prolongation-oriented analysis)[1] groups very naturally as follows:

$$\circ; \quad \varnothing + \square; \quad \varnothing + \square; \quad \circ.$$

Both ○'s, as has been mentioned, are themselves repeated $x + y$ structures, made of the two motives  and  . Since the second ○ in the diagram is part of a varied restatement of measures 13–24, the whole first part of the piece—section 𝔞—follows a multi-level scheme of $x + y$ structures. This is visualized in Figure 5.1, where the two motives of the main theme are called 'm_1' and 'm_2' respectively.[2]

The kind of relationship between x and y in each of the pairs is variable: sometimes y is a variation of x (as in the measure-to-measure level), while sometimes the two are different. Similarly, in some pairs each of the parts appears repeated, while in others they do not. What *is* fixed, however, is that y is always an 'opening up' of the form. Thus—as is seen in the diagram—y is the most natural environment of links (in fact it can be argued that *all* the y's are, in one way or another, links toward their following x's).

[1] The difficulties for reductive analysis can therefore be explained with reference to the fact that 'reduction' presupposes a *tri*-partite basic structure, where two framing entities are 'prolonged' by an inner one. Given the actual binary structuration of the *Bagatelle*, applying prolongation to it is bound to create inconsistencies.

[2] It is important to note that x and y here do not stand—as admittedly is usual in formal diagrams of music—for the same musical material each time they appear. Figure 5.1 shows the relationship $x+y$ (where the important part is actually the '+') at different levels, from the individual measure to the individual section.

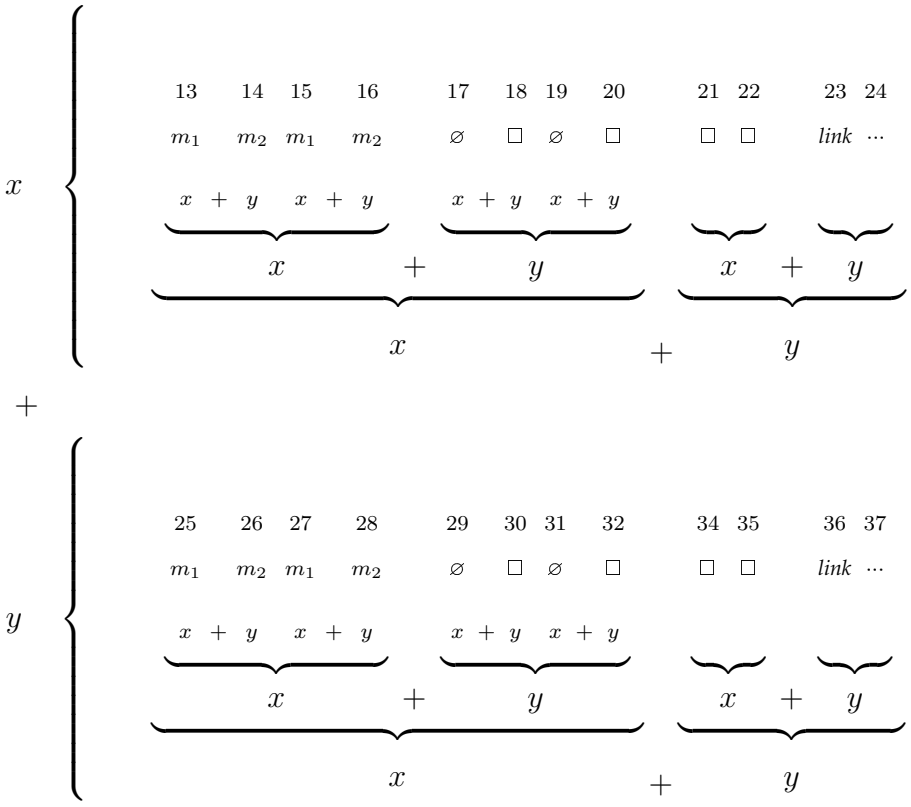


Figure 5.1: Binary structure of section 𝔞 (mm. 13–38)

The scheme can be extended analogously to the entire piece. Section 𝔟, although the units are not one, but two measures long, shows an identical structure: by the avoidance of some repetitions the section is broken, as is 𝔞, into an exact $(8 + 4) + (8 + 4)$. The two sections 𝔞 and 𝔟 function themselves as $x + y$, in turn forming the x to which the sequence—part $\mathcal{B}$—is y.[3]

Figure 5.2 shows a composite diagram of the piece, that attempts a synthesis of the different analytical perspectives that were applied to it.

[3]The sequence shows a more complicated structure, since only one motive is dealt with, and the discourse is not about order of gestures, but about sequencing and modification (see section 1.1).

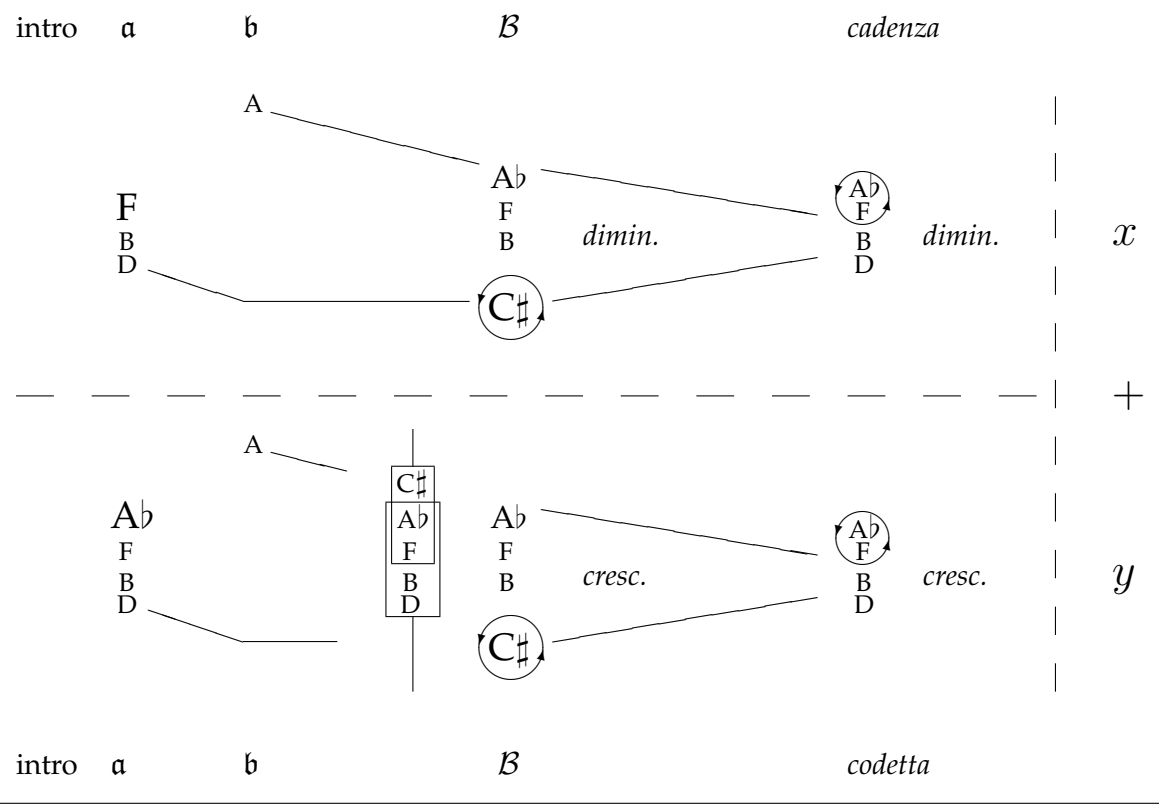
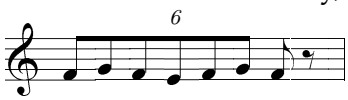
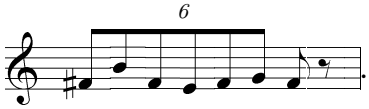


Figure 5.2: Visual summary of the analysis

5.2 SYNTHESIS: COMPOSING 'WITHOUT TONALITY'

The content of the previous section is, once more, 'pure' analysis. How does the binary structure, or indeed the findings of all the previous chapters, relate to the image of Franz Liszt deciding in 1885 to compose a piece without tonality?

The most important fact about $x + y$, already insisted upon above, is that y is not an 'answer,' a 'follow-up,' or—more technically—a 'consequent' of x. On the contrary, it opens the discourse up. Consider the main theme: the motive  is followed by its variation  . At this point (measure 14), the music is completely open—there are no implications about what can follow, and the question of 'what next' is entirely open. In this sense, the situation is not analogous to the statement

of tonic followed by the statement of dominant, where it is not true that 'anything can follow'—tonic being strongly implied, and the discourse revolving around this implication.

This kind of implication does not obtain in the *Bagatelle*. Moreover, Liszt positively avoids both the direct implication of tonic *and* any scheme of antecedent-consequent analogous to the tonal one (after all, this kind of scheme would defeat the purpose of the piece). For example, when measure 16 features a chromatic ascent between A and A, and measure 17 'answers' it with the corresponding descent from A to E, this comes close to raising antecedent-consequent implications. But Liszt prevents them definitely, by immediately repeating the descent alone, allowing it an existence of its own, independent from the ascent.

Thus Liszt knows exactly what his self-imposed task—not to appeal to the conventional relationships of tonality—means: it is not about replacing the functions of tonality with something else that repeats or mimics the relationships, only with different chords, but about really, truly doing without those relationships altogether.[4]

And therefore the problem is always there: after each y—'what next'? It is in the light of this question, in my view, that the relationships pointed out by the different analytical techniques displayed in previous chapters must be considered. As any composer knows, a profitable way of approaching the question of 'what next' is to consider and ponder what came before: to look for, identify, and choose from the relationships that emerge in what has been already composed, to carry them further and take them as starting points for later passages. It is in this way that a chord—and, in general, a musical gesture—that emerged with a specific role in one context, can instantly change functions and reappear with a different meaning in another one. As a result, the manifold relationships are not a

[4]It is indeed a big disfavor to Liszt to overlook this, for example by positing a 'tonic diminished-seventh chord' or—much more brusque—by picturing him pursuing the tonal relationships 'in the extreme.' Why do we show such a difficulty in taking Liszt at his word when he says he is composing *without tonality*? It is us, the twentieth and twenty-first century, that have struggled with this: from the new tonal system of Hindemith, through the polytonality of Milhaud, to the dream of restoring 'harmonic progression' through spectral analysis, we long for the tonal past—not to talk, of course, of such faceless renunciations as the fashionable '*new romanticism*.' It is perhaps natural that stepping 'out' is easier and truer coming from someone that is completely 'in' (Wagner, Strauss, Liszt, Schoenberg, Skriabin)—but looking back at them and proving them unable to do it is a rather myopic take on history.

goal or an essence, but a means and an outcome. The 'basic sonorities' or the 'pillar tones' are not the discoveries of the analyst, but those of the composer. There is no starting point, no preconceived structures or processes; rather, the piece itself is a process, and provides the structures in a kind of 'through-composition.'

This is not intended as a universal description of non-tonal composition. The two poles of complete preconception and complete through-composition allow for a continuum in between. But the facts revealed in the analysis of the *Bagatelle* lead me to the conclusion that this piece tends very much toward the side of through-composition. There are other non-tonal experiments by Liszt, already mentioned, where there is an obvious constructive idea—a scale or a chord—and comparison with these shows that the *Bagatelle* is of a different nature. On the other hand, the reports on the composition of the piece indicate that the successive sections were composed one after another, in the order in which they appear in the score, and that the score was completed in a few weeks.[5] Knowing this, and knowing that Liszt's attested purpose was to base the piece on no conventional leading ideas, the interpretation proposed here is that the piece itself was naturally and even expectedly to be the source of all its own constructive ideas.

It is impossible to ascertain which of the relationships pointed out in the previous pages were the *conscious* result of this process. Some are obvious (one of the most consequential and far-reaching being the modification of the chord in measure 115, in connection with the breaking of the transposition at measure 117, as described on page 36); some are probably the product of intuition (like the restatement of the main motive on A♭, or the consistency of C♯–F at all levels); many more, for certain, are illusions created by analysis, or downright coincidences.

These unsolvable uncertainties are ultimately unimportant. My main contention is about the use that can be made of the discoveries of analysis: they are a vehicle to the understanding of the compositional process of the piece. By its very nature, but also by the conclusions of the analysis proposed here, the *Bagatelle* obeys no language, no unconscious 'syntax' that works 'through' the composer beyond his knowledge and his control, like for example Schenkerian *Urlinien*, perfect-fifth-directed harmonic progression,

[5] Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 444–6.

or plain-chant improvisatory uses *á la* Treitler. If I am correct—if Liszt did not follow any kind of 'rule,' either by convention or by precompositional design—the decisions (conscious or otherwise) involved in the *Bagatelle* are entirely his, in a stronger sense than the decisions of a tonal piece. In that way, the *Bagatelle* is a document of the purest kind illustrating the way composition unfolds: the blank staff and the different procedures, conscious or otherwise, that a composer has available to fill it in. In this respect, the piece ranks in my view with Schoenberg's free-atonality compositions, which for that reason alone justify the amount of ink that has been spilled about them.

This image of the piece requires two further qualifications. On the one hand, what has been said should by no means be understood as meaning that tonal music does not feature these issues (or, much less, that the piece is 'better' or in any way more meritorious than tonal music). On the contrary, it is more and more important to recover the issues of 'pure' compositional process from the corner to which our ever-more-sophisticated theories of the tonal system have all but relegated them. But it appears clear that the question of 'what next' applies differently in the *Faust Symphony* than it does in the *Bagatelle*. At the chord-to-chord, measure-to-measure level, tonality is all-too powerful to allow a direct and independent investigation of the 'general' compositional process.

The second qualification concerns binary structuring. Is binary structuring itself not a 'rule,' a precompositional design? It appears that this is not the case. There are deviations from the rule that cannot be accommodated within a credible precompositional idea. The introductions to both halves, as well as their conclusions (the inner *cadenza* and the final *codetta*) follow the $x + y$ scheme internally, but they do not function as either x or y in relationship to their surrounding parts.

These, admittedly, are less than consequential to the binary structuring: after all, introductions and *codas* are 'appendix-like' in nature. But the rule breaks again at what is arguably the most important point of the piece: the climactic link between $\mathcal{A}$ and $\mathcal{B}$ in the second half (described in detail in section 3.4). This passage, as the corresponding link in the first part, falls out of the binary scheme. In the first part, it was 'simply' a link, but in the second part it features the most dense array of cross references and convergence of multiple ideas to be found in the piece. This sheds doubt on any contention that what

the piece *is* is the binary, open-ended, $x + y$ structure. Rather than a formal irony worthy of Berio (whereby Liszt would have designed a set of rules with the express intention of breaking them), what this passage suggests is that a different, in some way more powerful constructive idea has driven Liszt's composition. And again, it is not surprising that synthesis and climax would occur precisely at this point: the link is the only passage of the first half that does not bear relationships of symmetry and proportion to the other sections. In other words, if Liszt wanted to follow the model of the first half in the second one (as is clearly the case), the only place for such a climax was the passage corresponding to the link of the first part.

In conclusion, binary structuring does not appear to be a precompositional decision, and it is certainly not one dictated by convention. The main contention in this analysis is, precisely, that it emerges 'naturally,' when both convention (tonality) and precompositional design (such as the intended focus on the augmented triad in *Unstern!*) are explicitly avoided. Having Liszt forgone both convention and precomposition, binary structuring guided the process 'by default.' Thus it emerges clearly in an analysis of the piece, but on the other hand it is not to be understood as what the piece is about. The piece grew from binary structuring and eventually *out* of binary structuring. The system of changing constructive ideas and cross references in Liszt's *Bagatelle* resembles an organism more closely than a set of axioms or rules of syntax.

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CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

to roger zahab,

concerto
for violin & orchestra

federico garcia

2005

This piece was completed in Pittsburgh in October of 2005, for Roger Zahab and 'his orchestra,' the University of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. The composer played in the UPSO since the times when it was still the University Chamber Orchestra, i.e., before it performed Mahler's first. Also *Fandango*, *Ex Tenebris*, and *Divertimento for strings* where written for it.
Also *Canon*, out of which the present piece grew, was for Roger.

instrumentation

2 flutes (fl)
2 oboes (ob)
2 clarinets in b♭ (cl)
2 bassoons (fg)

2 horns in F (cor)
2 trumpets in b♭ (tpt)
1 trombone (tbn)

3 timpani (timp)
- also 2 gongs (gongs) or tam-tams
high- and low-pitched

percussions (perc):
1) suspended cymbal (susp-c)
5 wood-blocks (w-bl)
rain-stick (r-st)
vibraphone (vib)
2) triangle (trg)
5 drums (drums) - tom-toms, bongoes, congas, etc.
bass-drum (b-d)

solo violin (solo)

strings (vl I, vl II, vla, cello, c-b) - min. 6, 6, 4, 4, 2

harmonics are notated with a regular note-head for the base note (open string when natural harmonics) and a diamond-shaped note for the touched pitch.

an arrow ↓ indicates whether an *appoggiatura* or *grupetto* is to be played on or before the beat.

cover design by jen gallagher

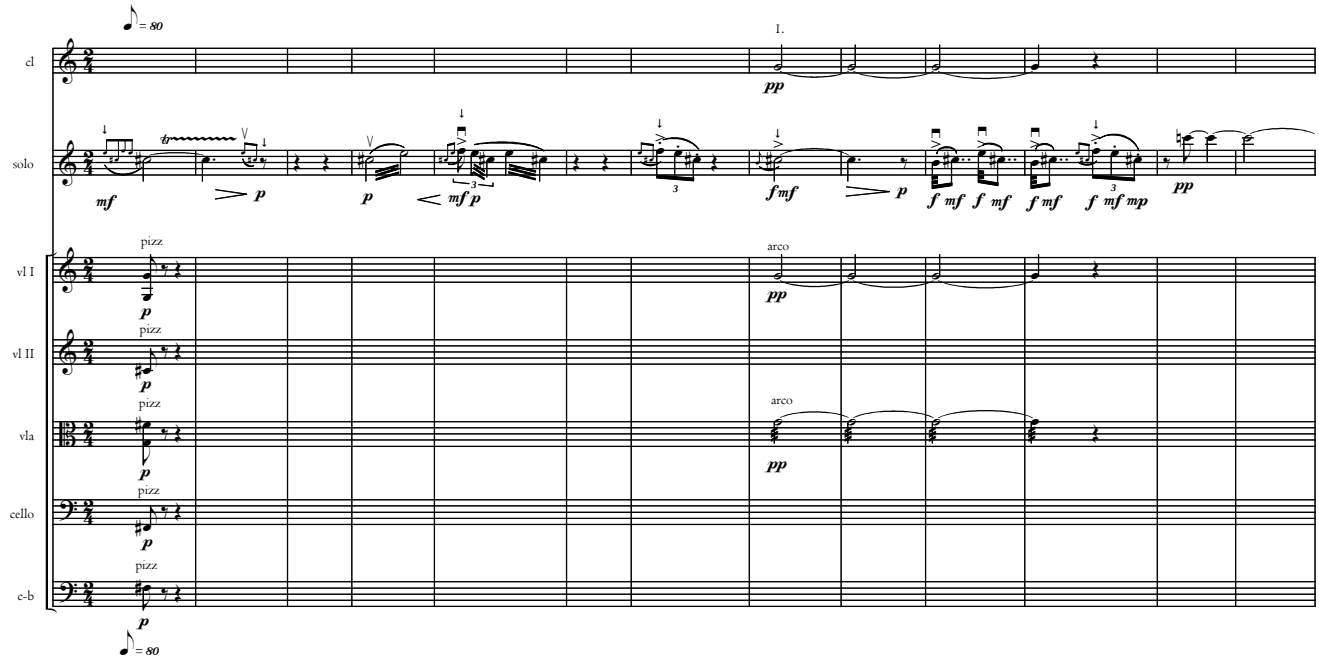
score in c

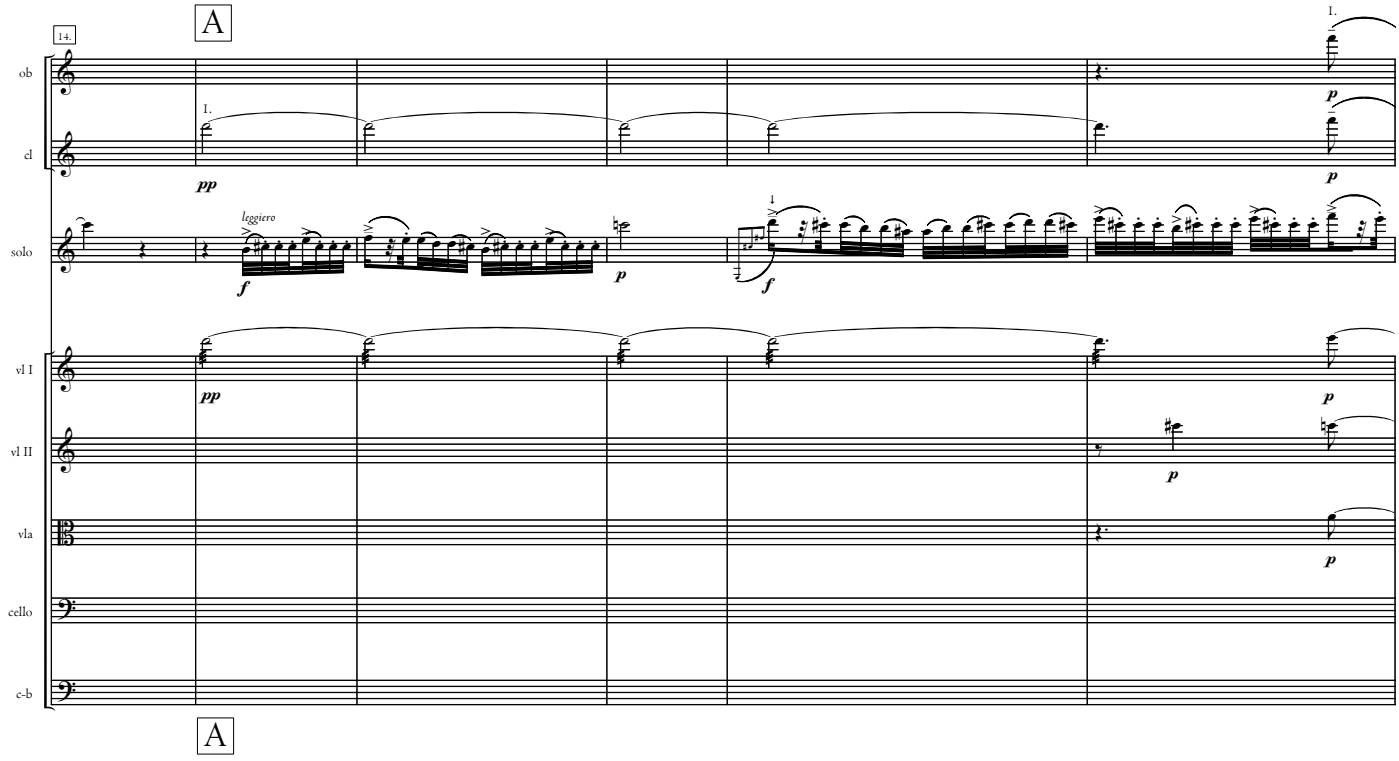
to roger zahab,

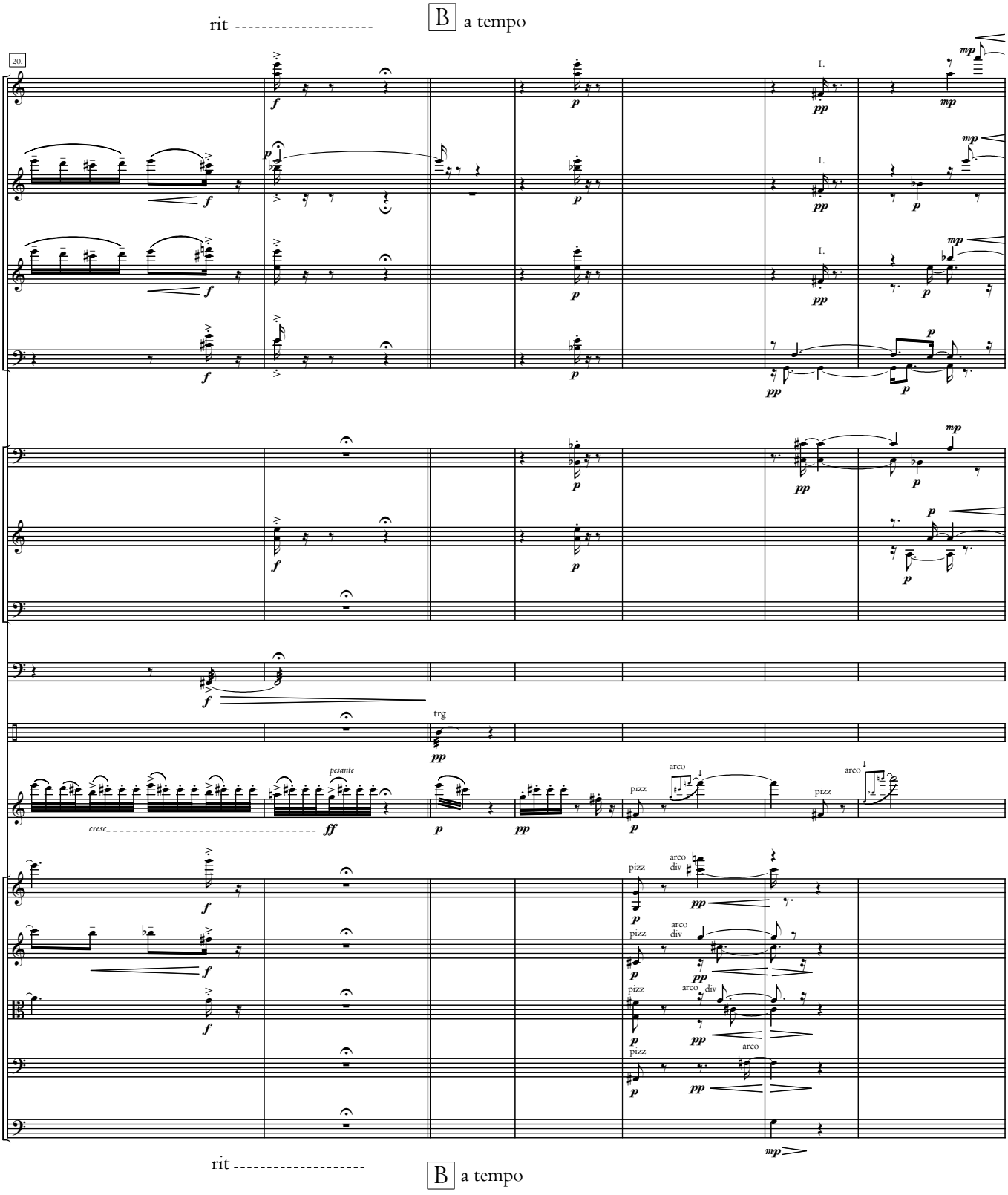
concerto *for violin & orchestra*

federico garcia

2005



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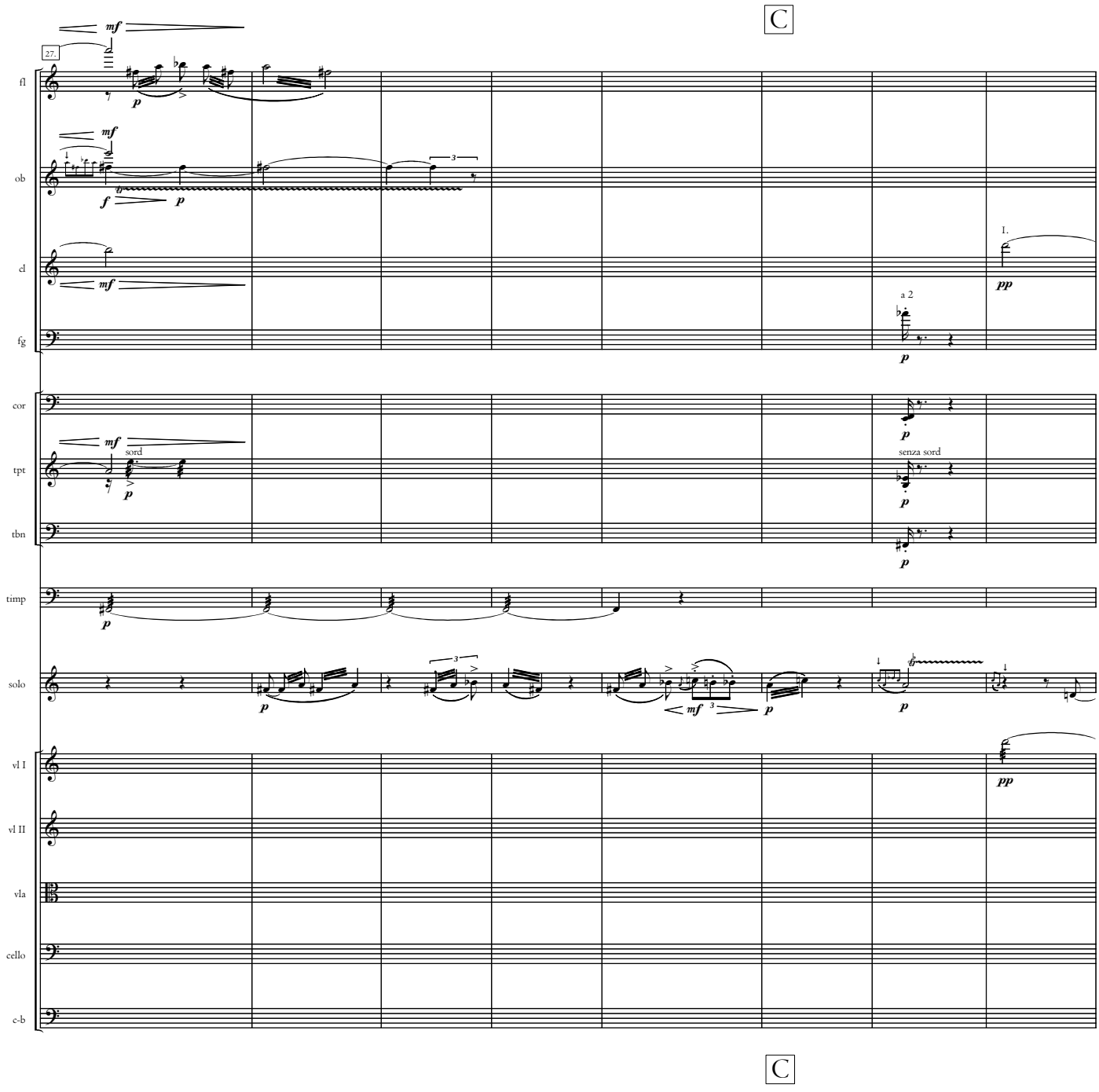
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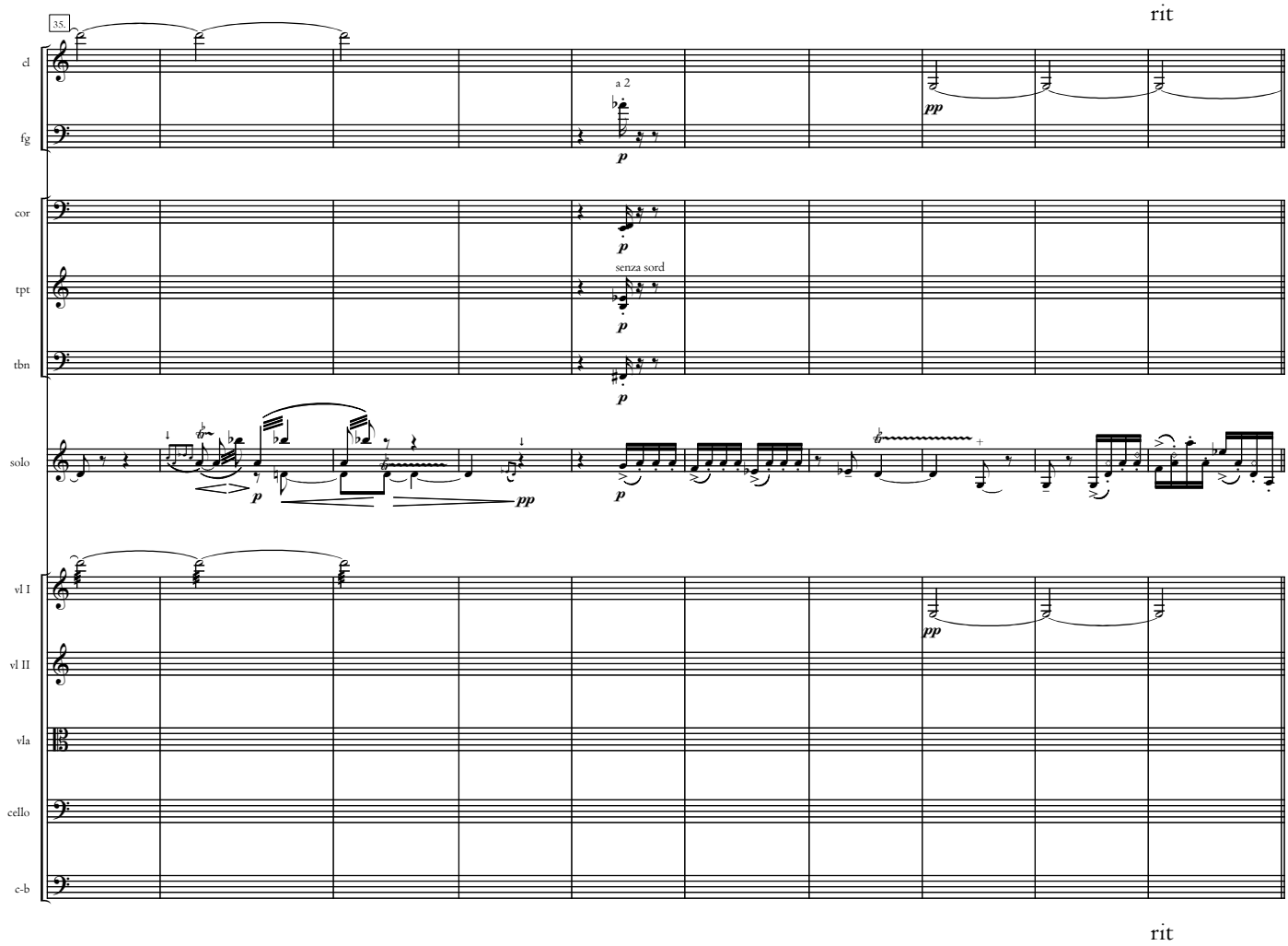
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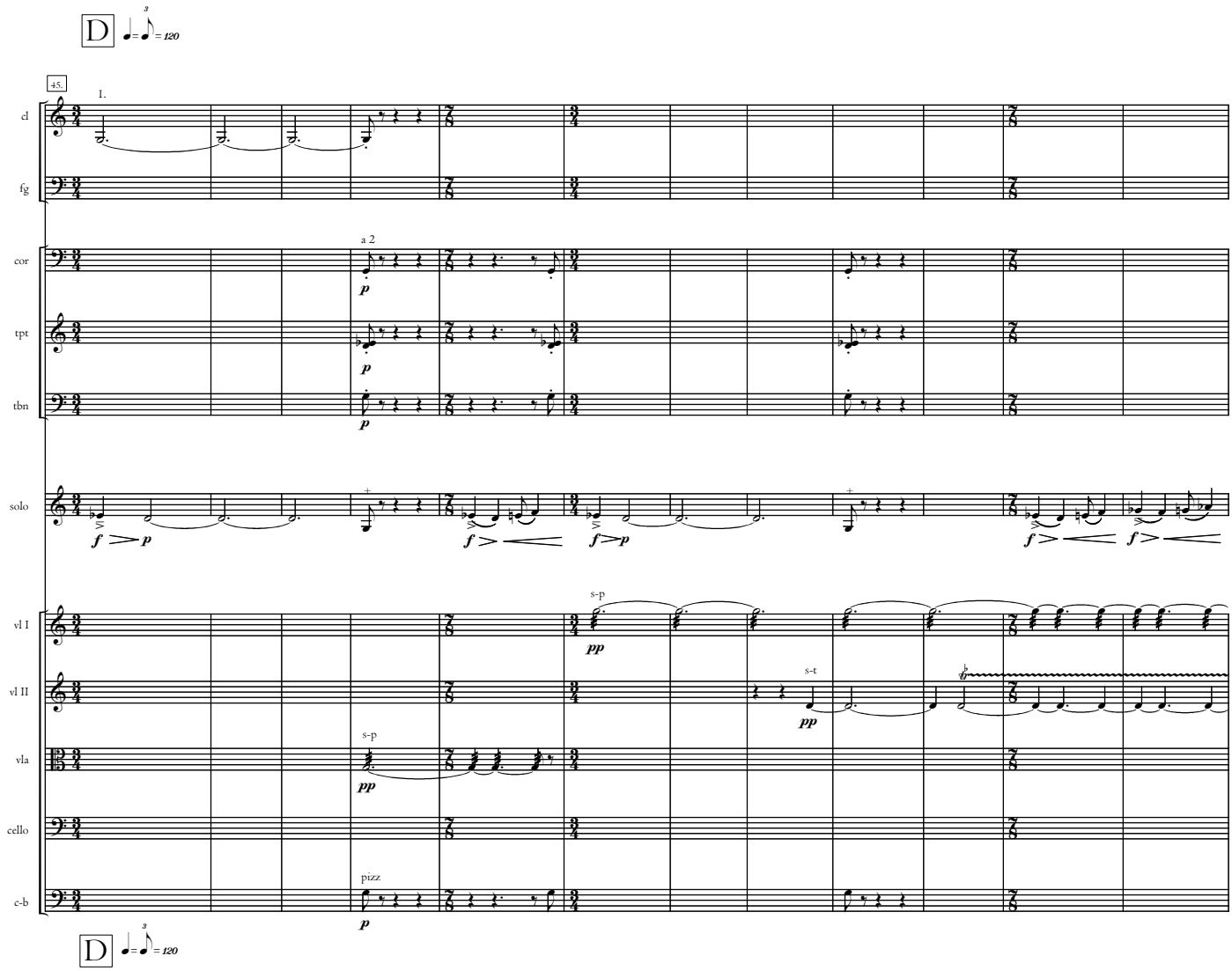
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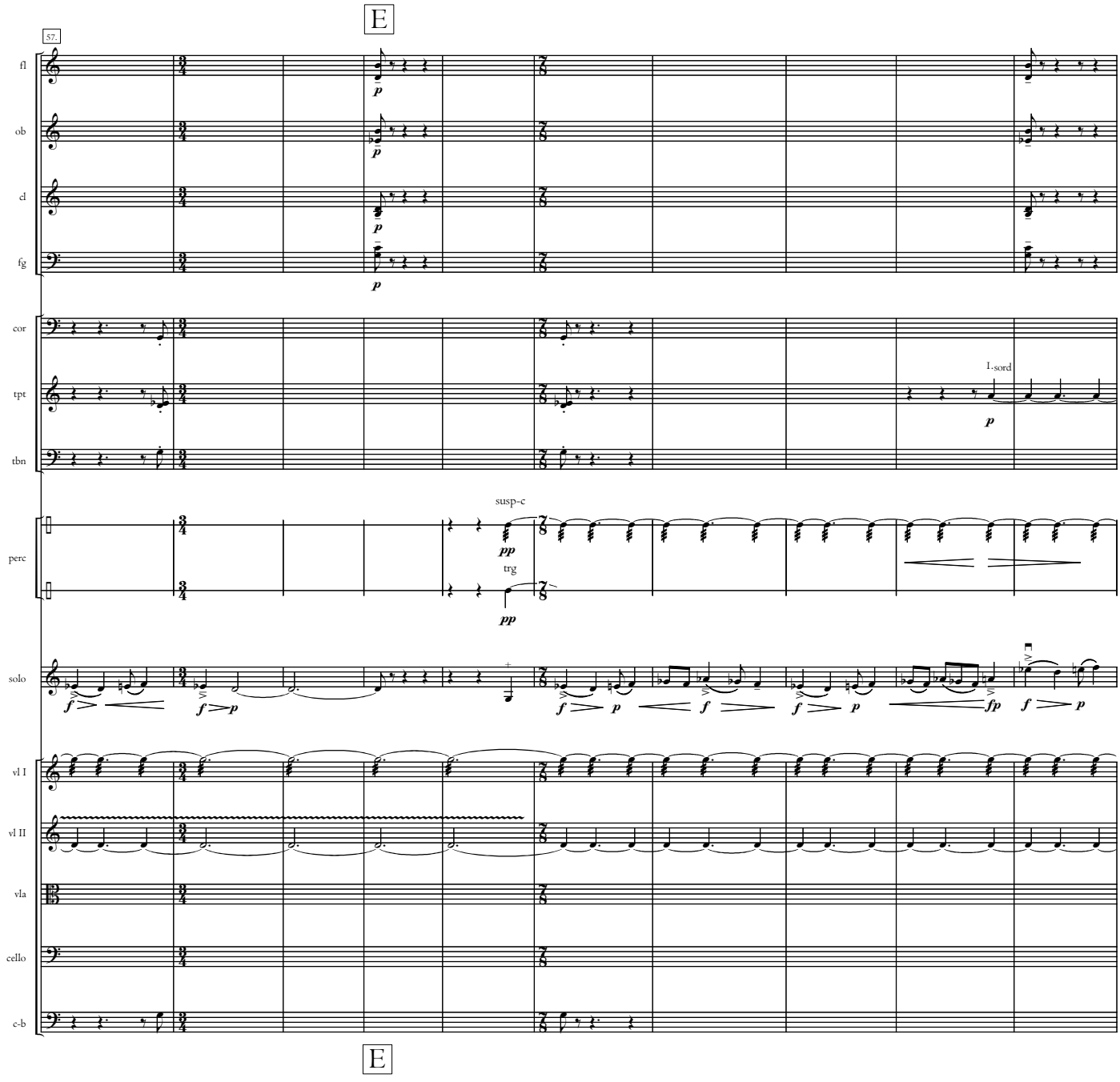
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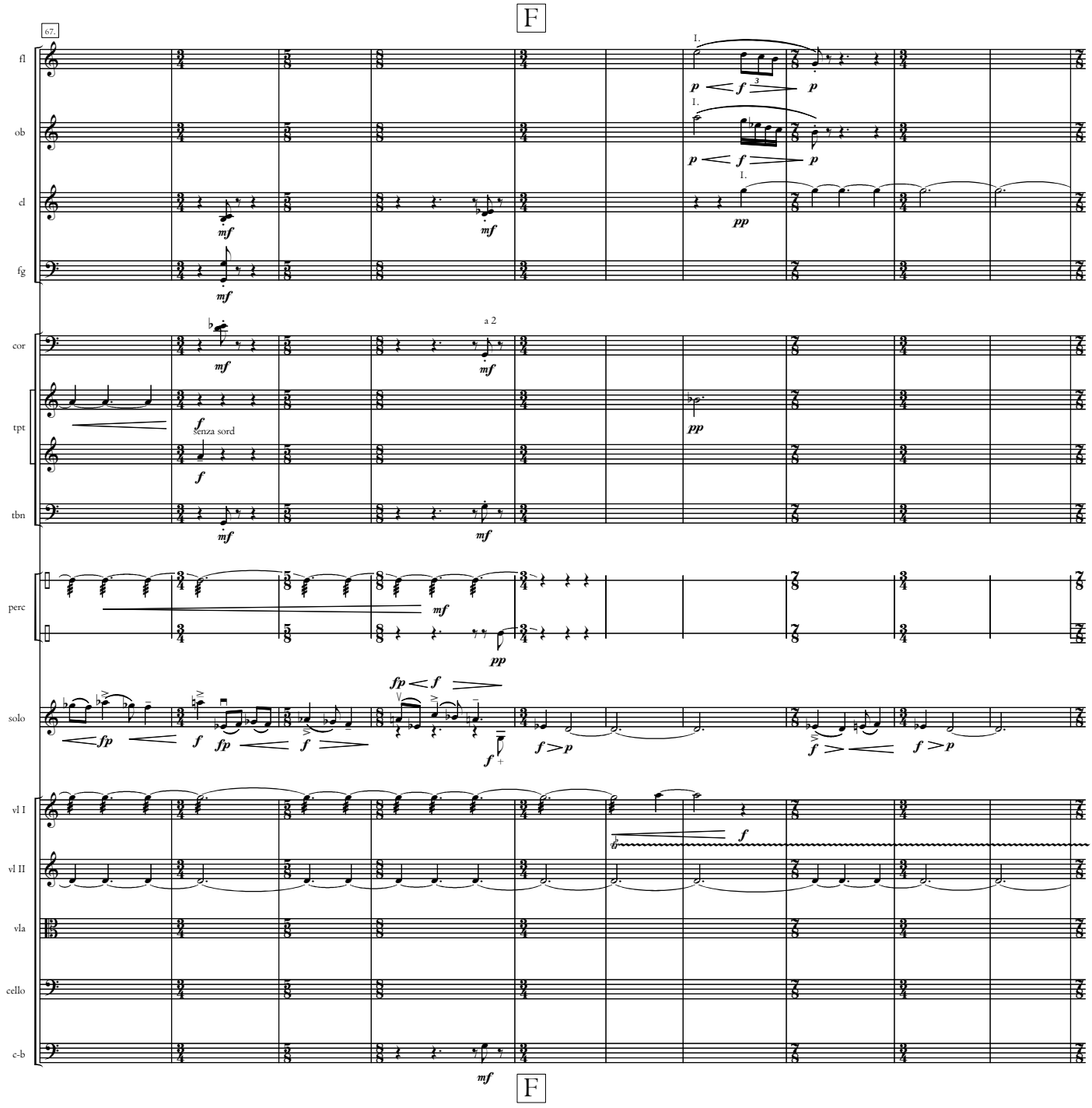
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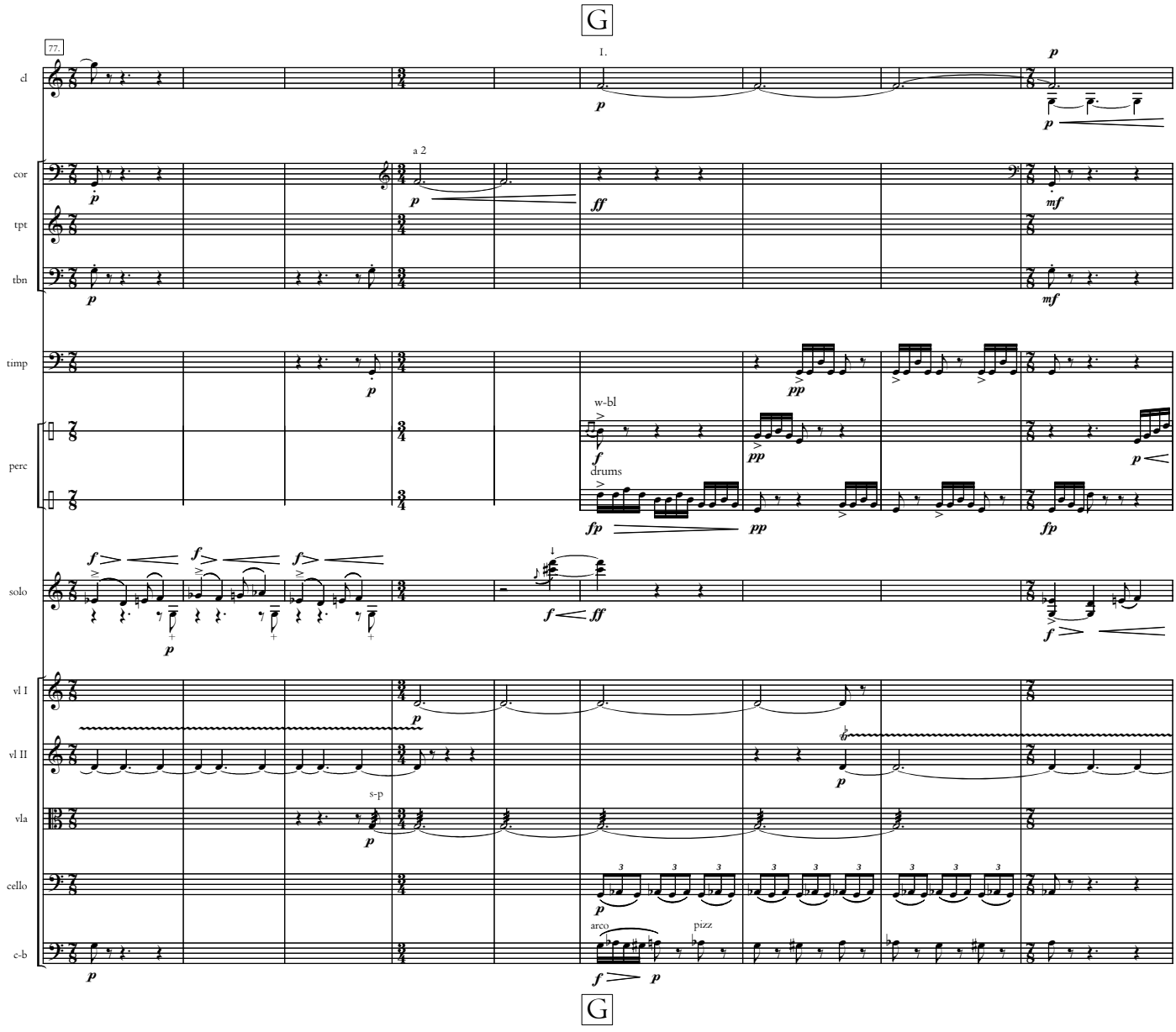
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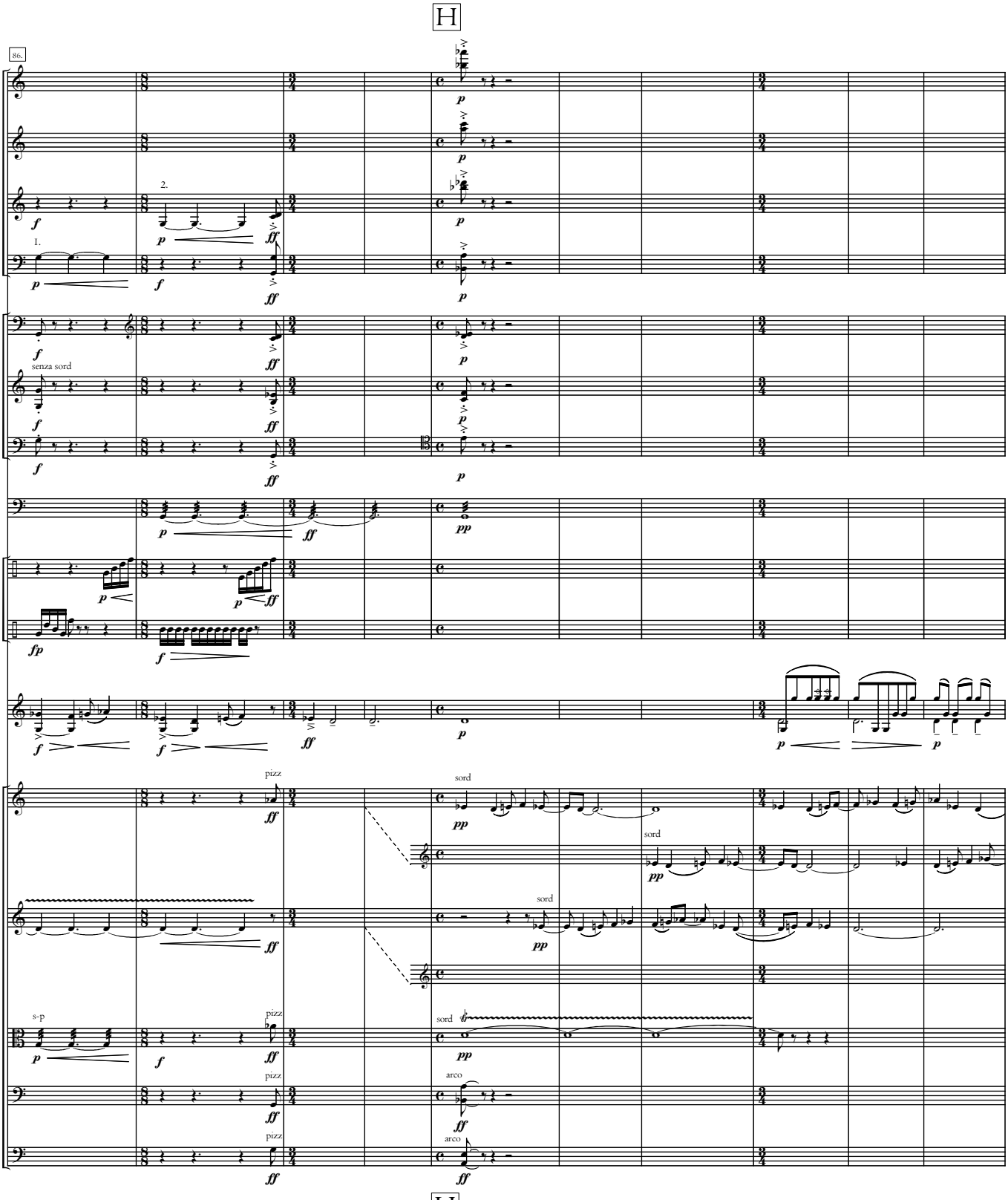
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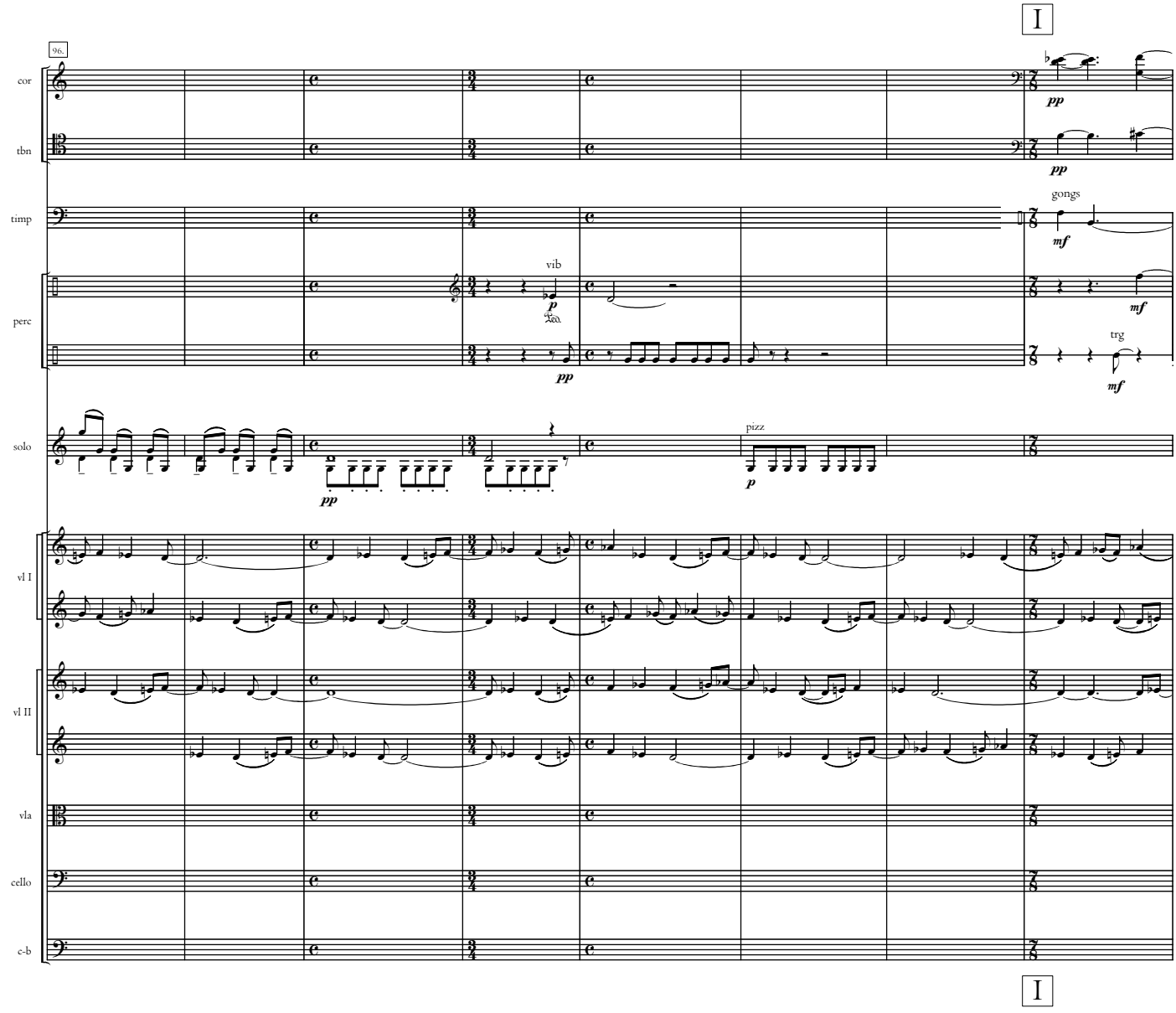
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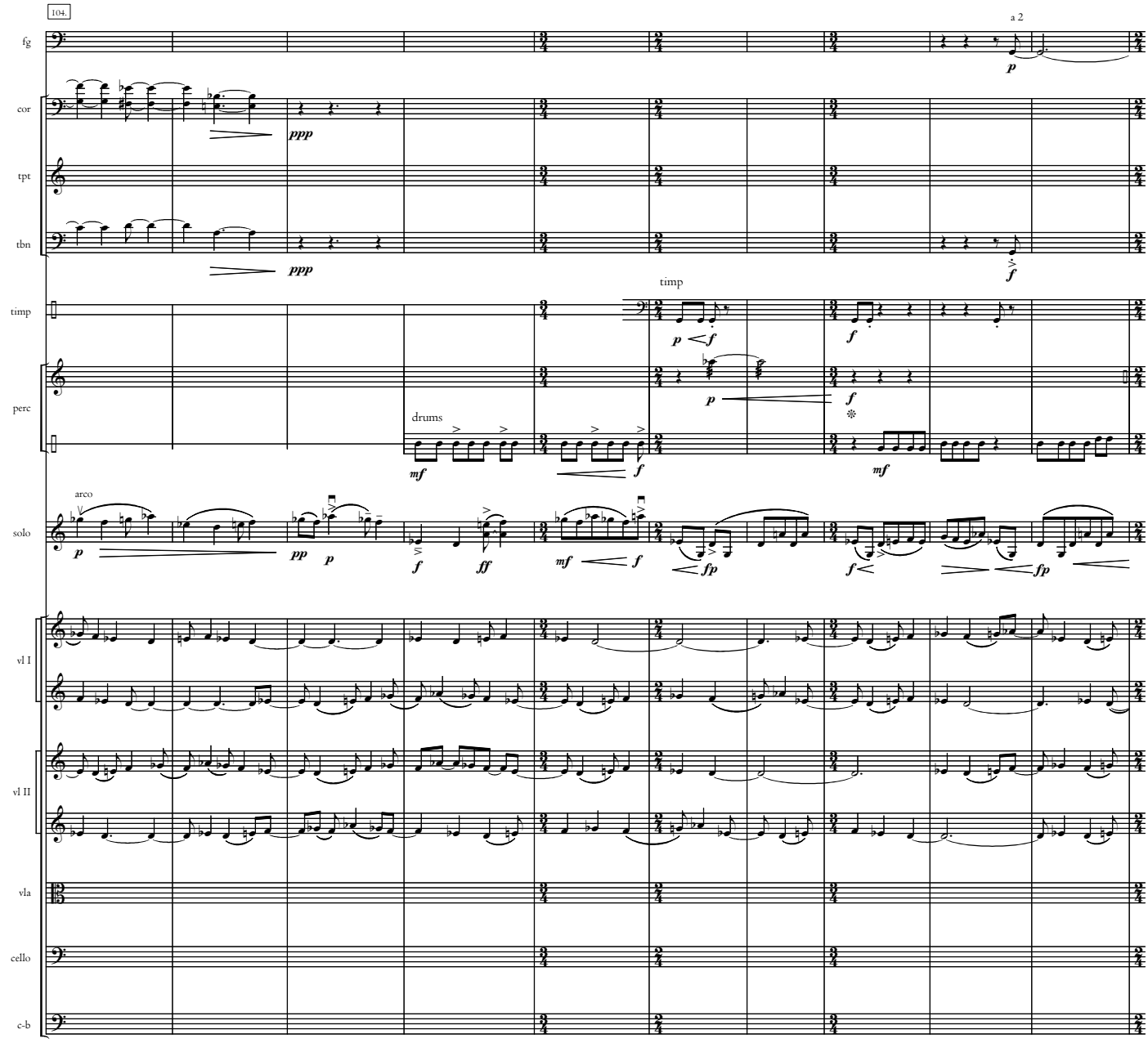
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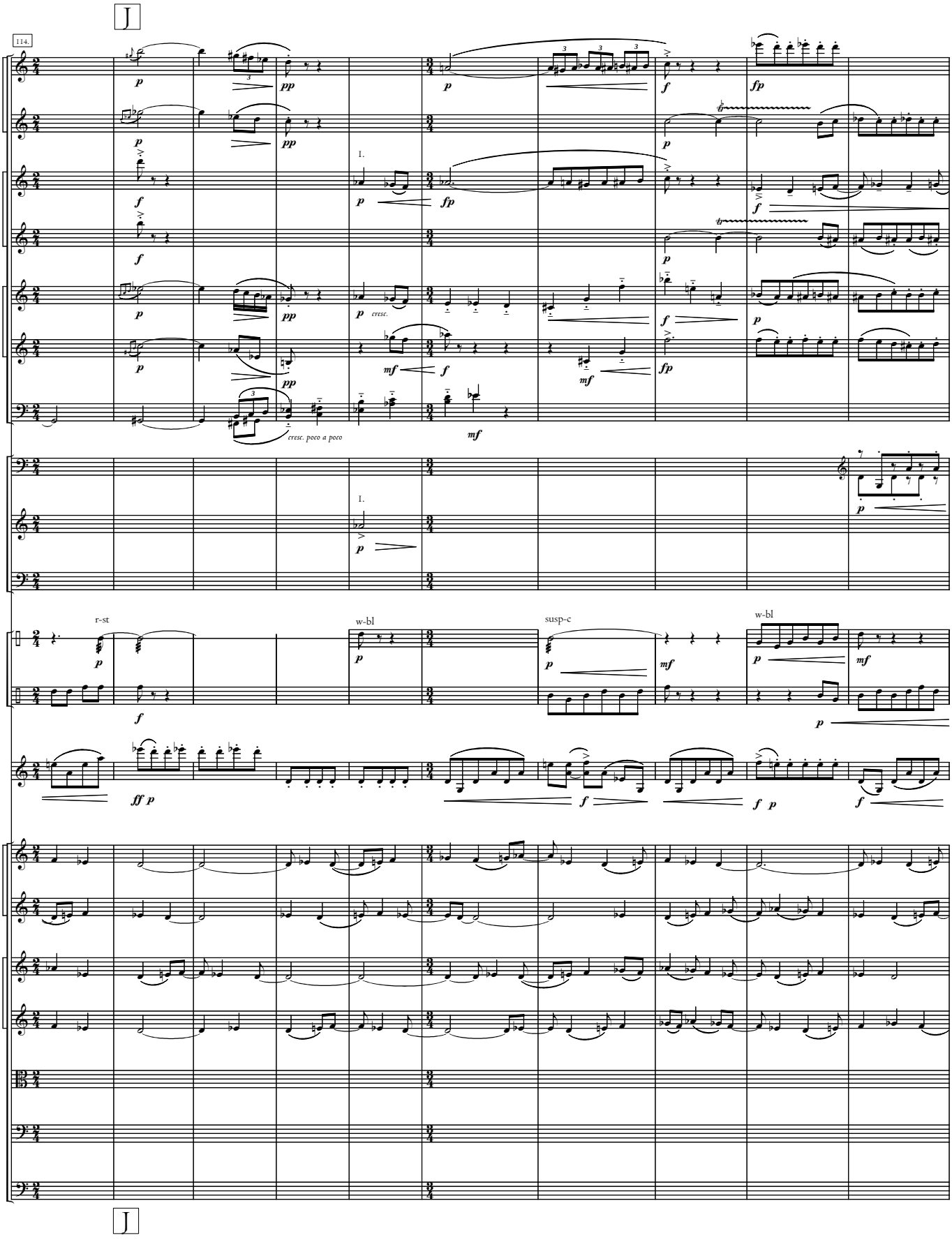
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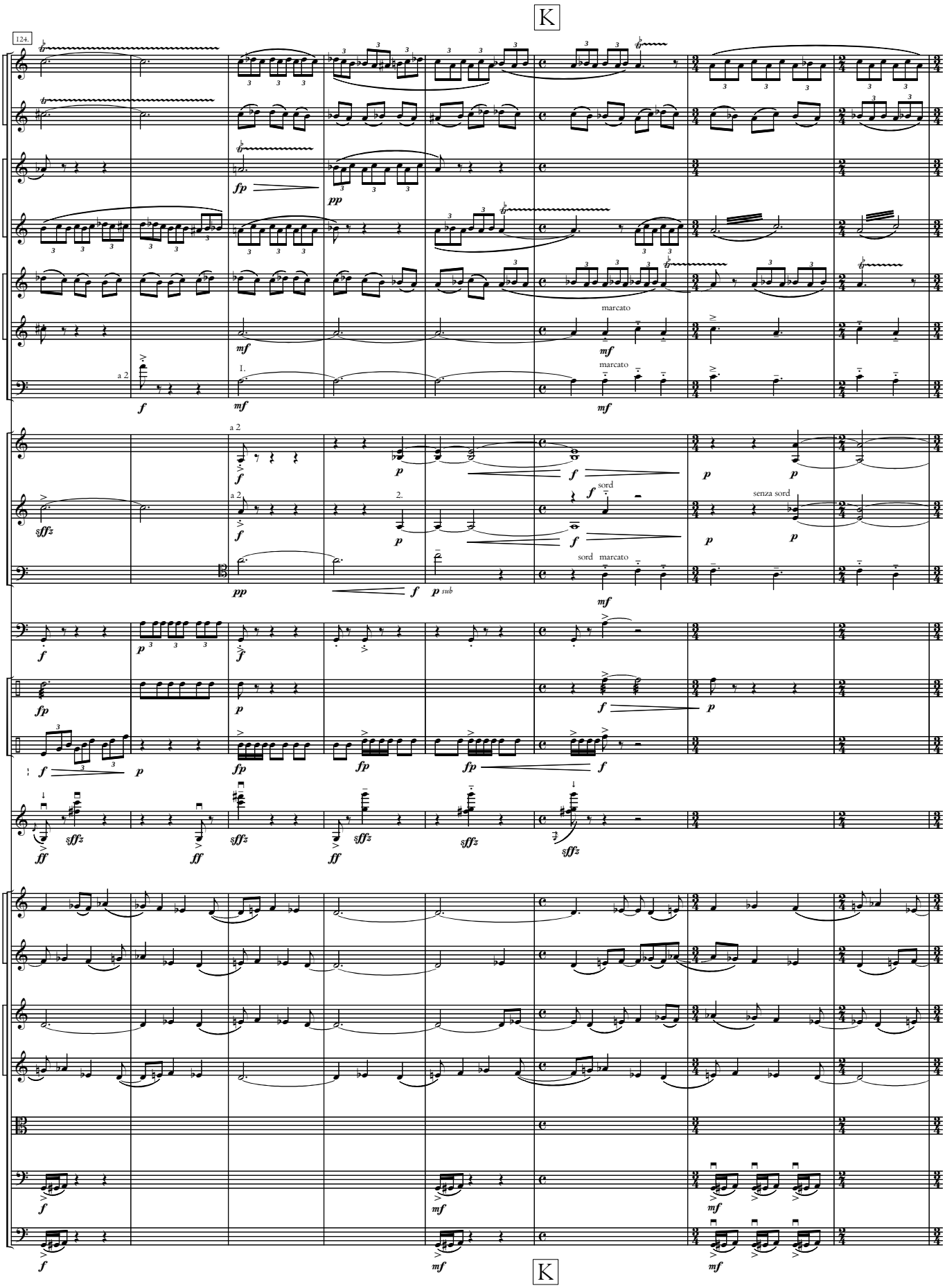
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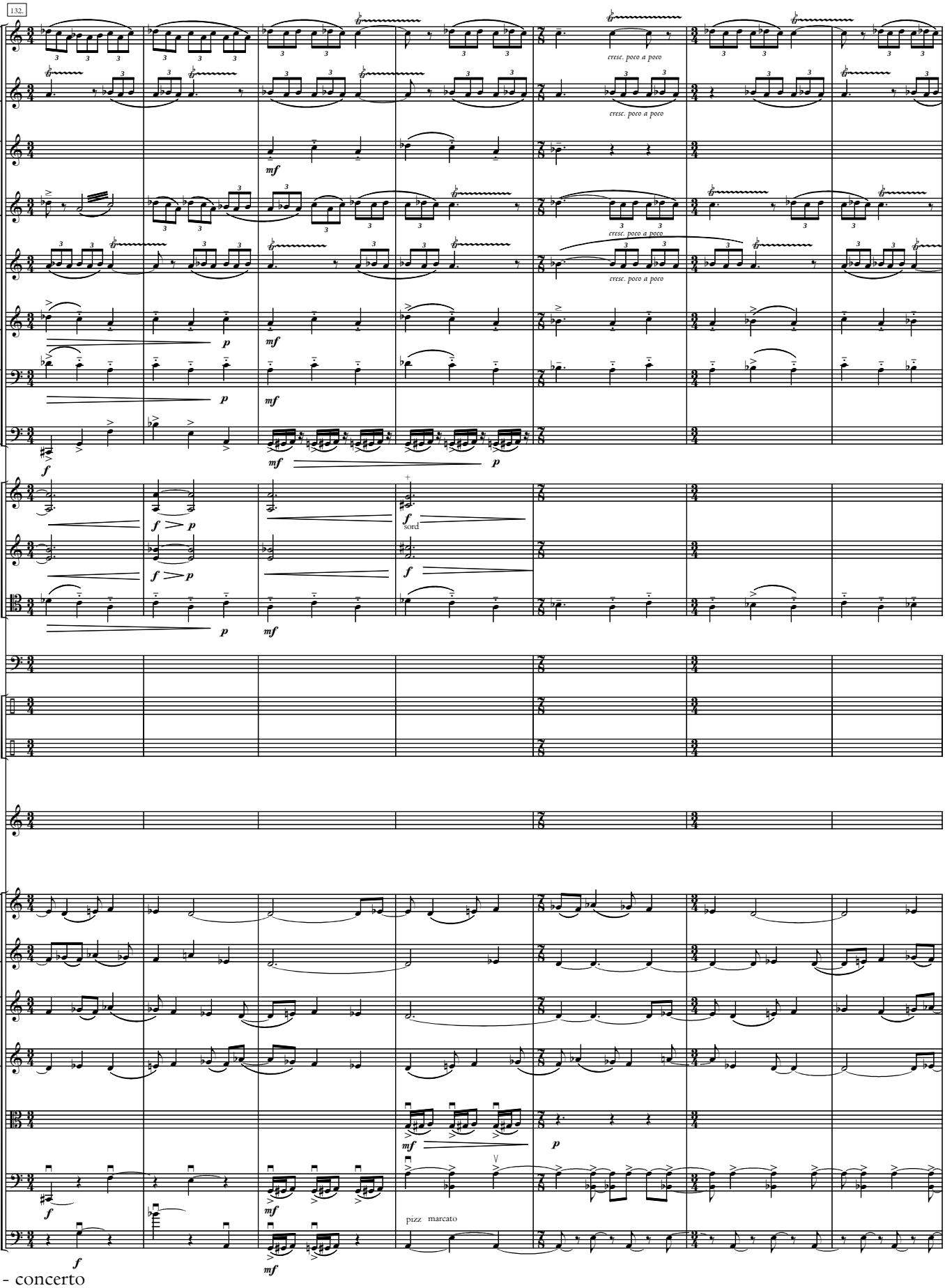
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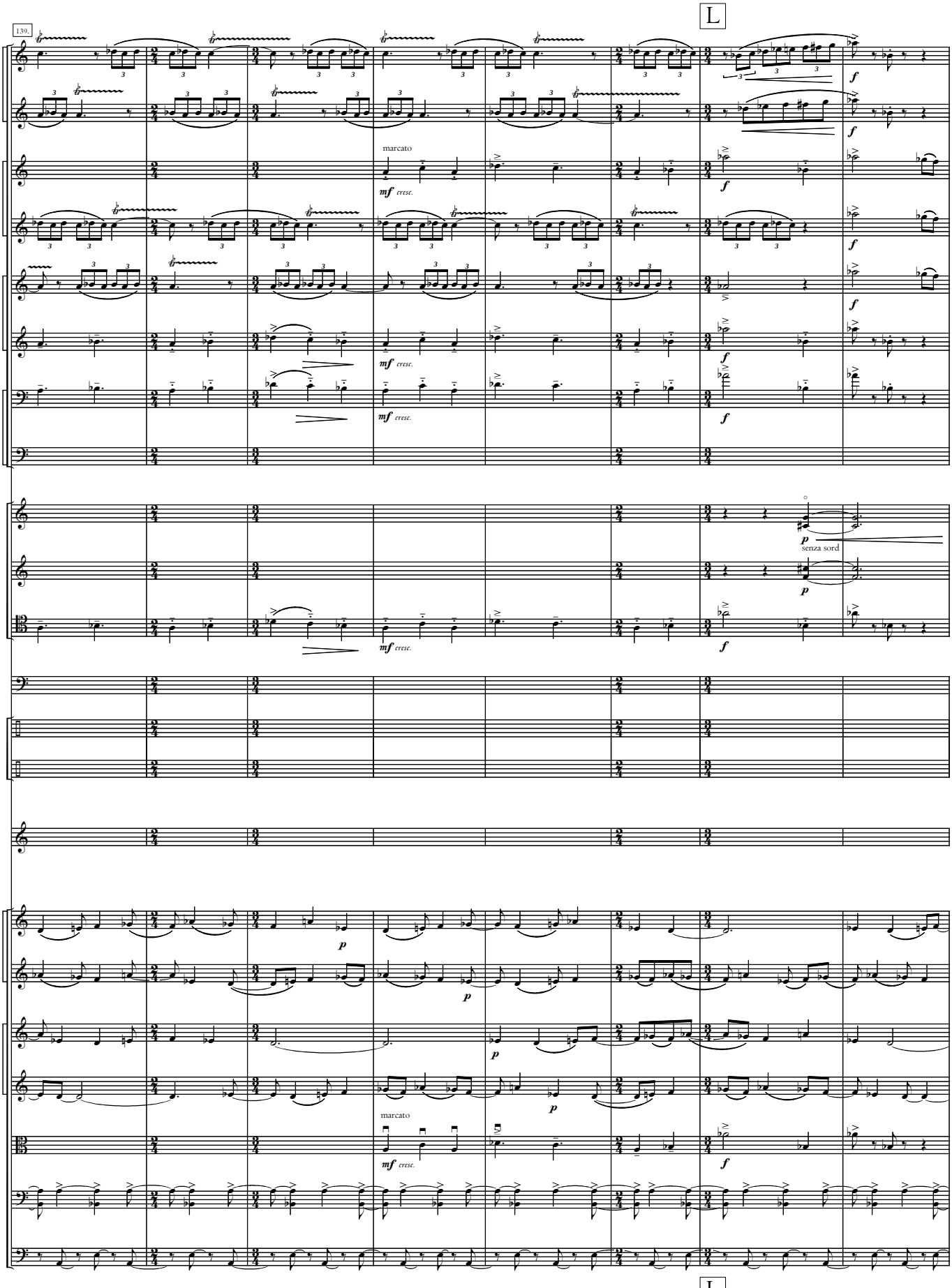
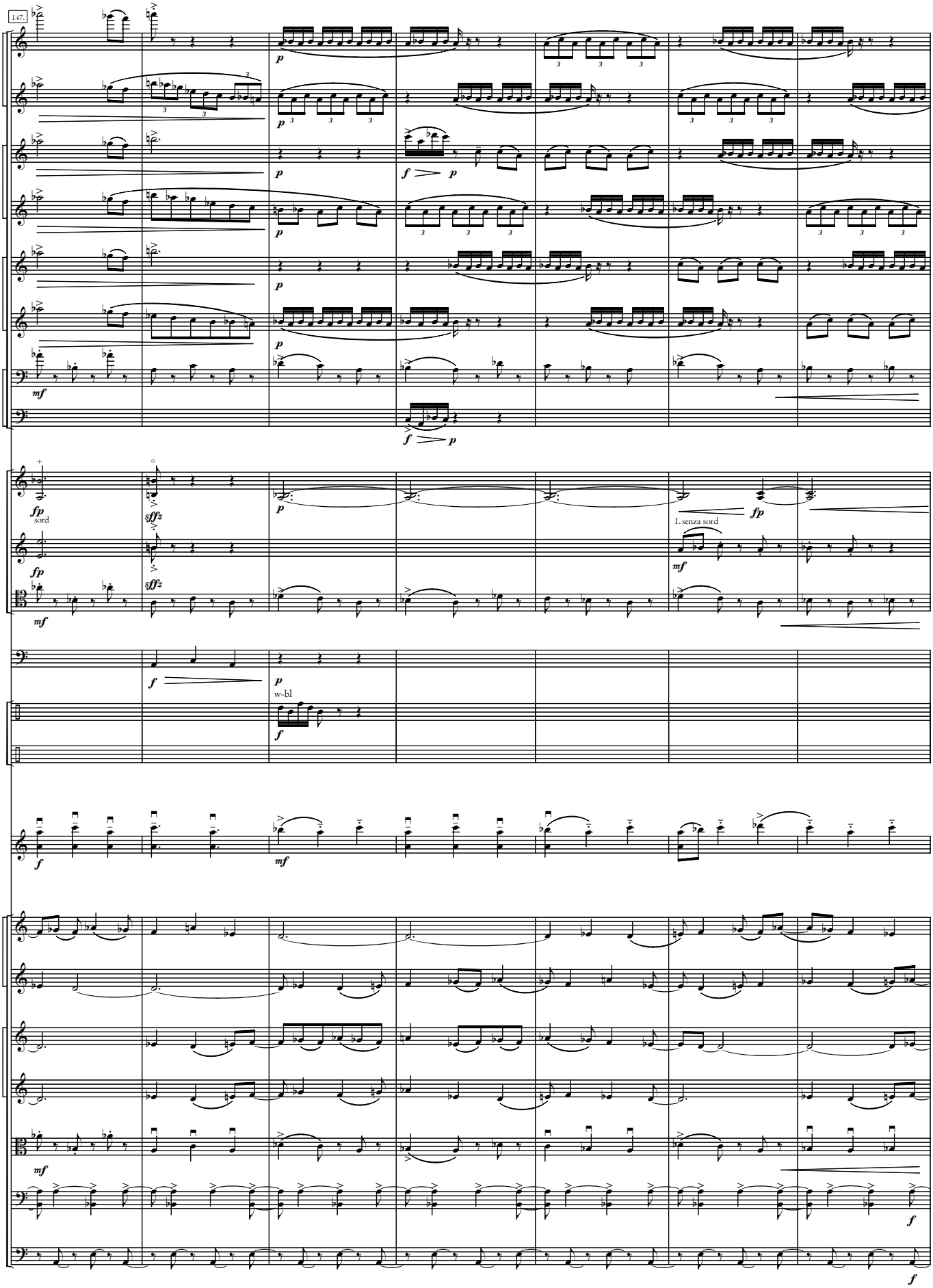
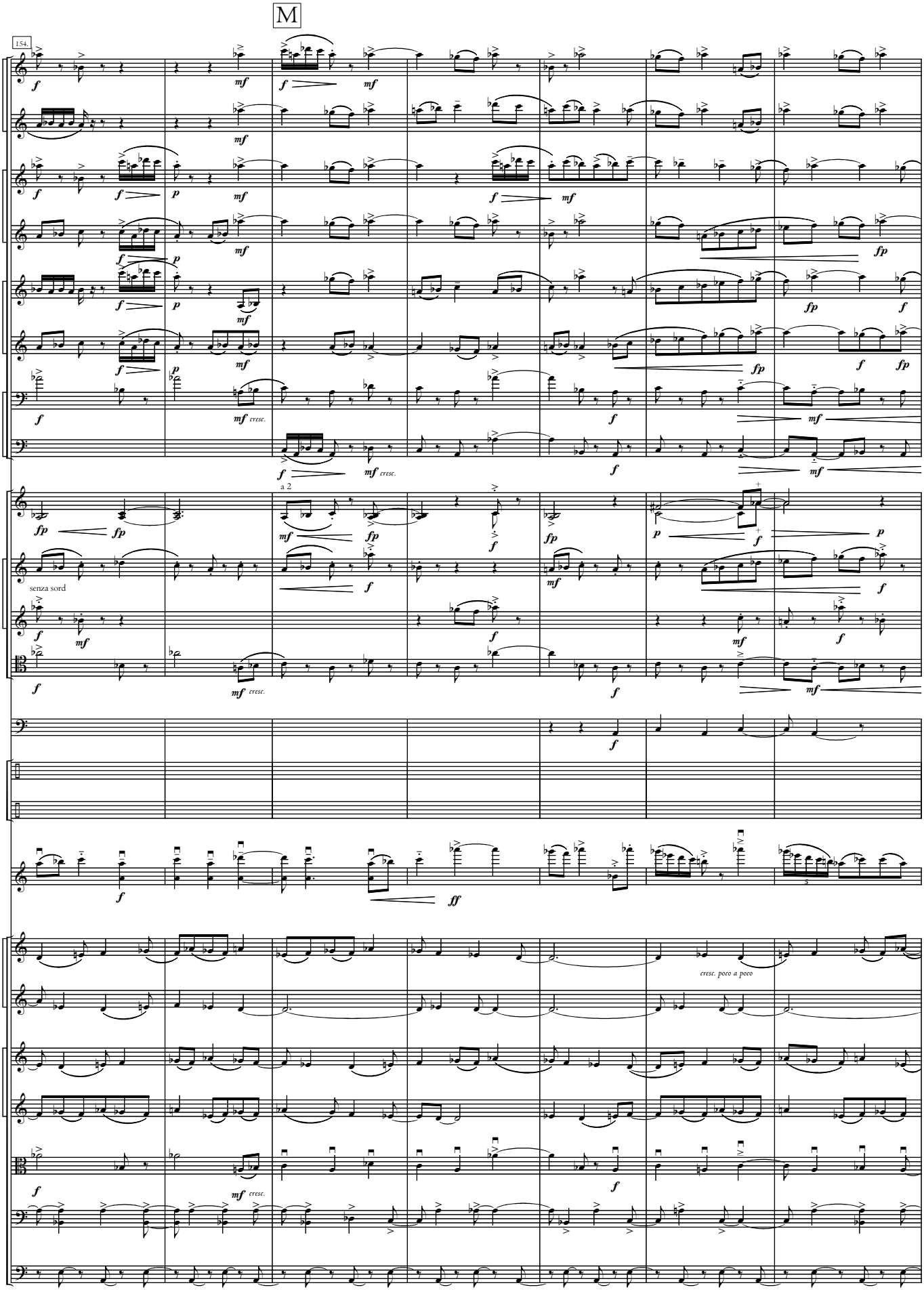
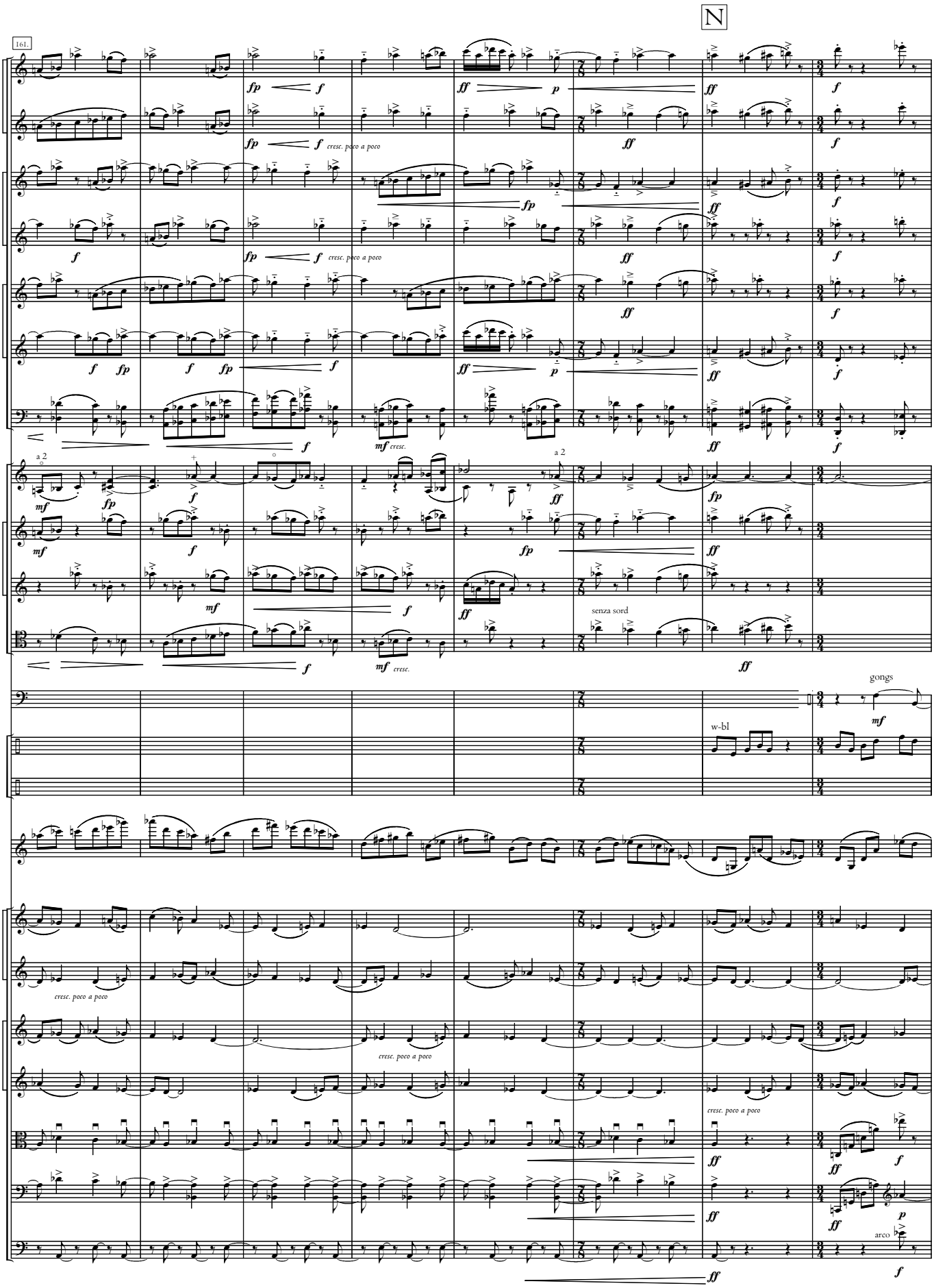
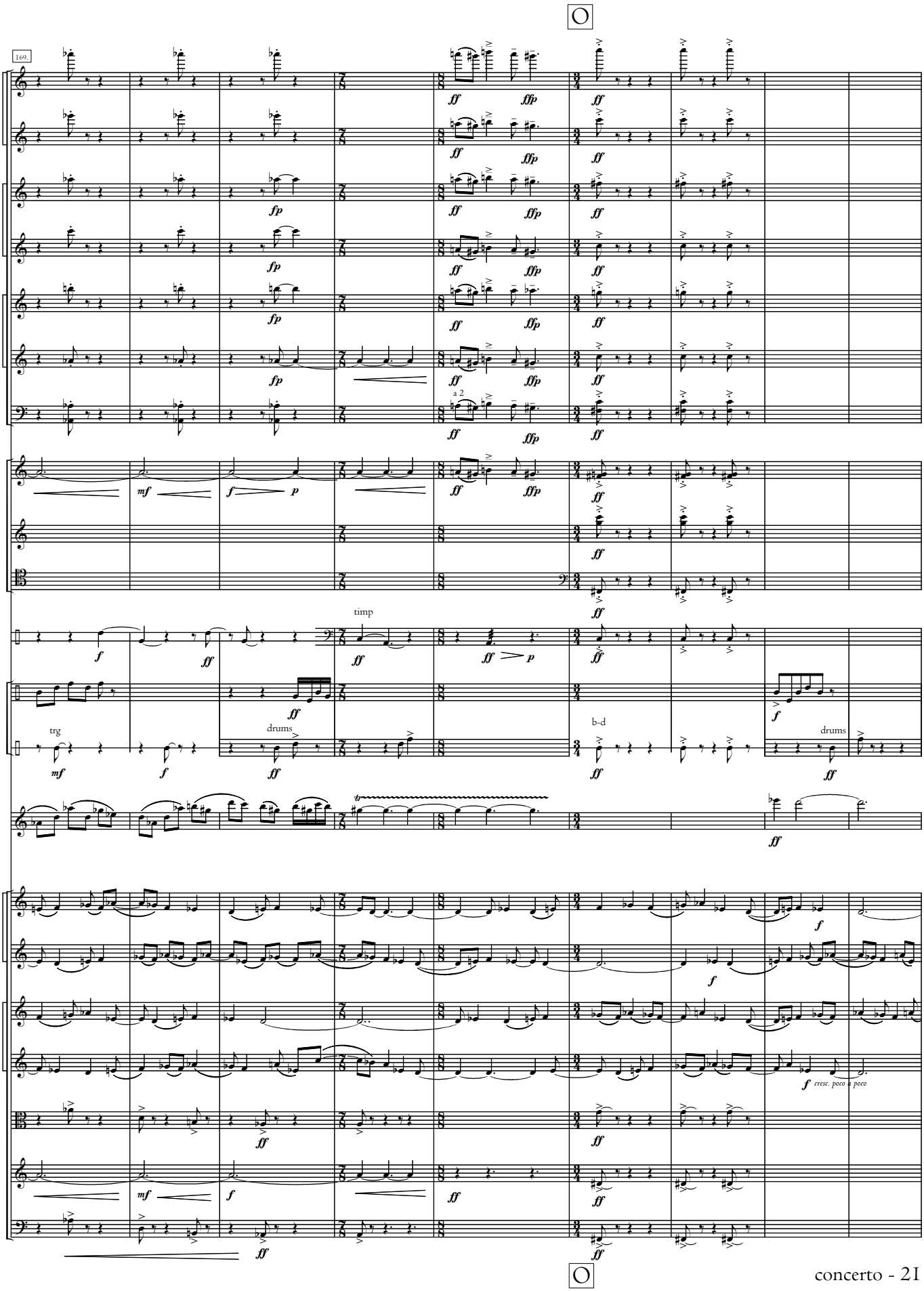
cresc. poco a poco
sord
pizz marcato

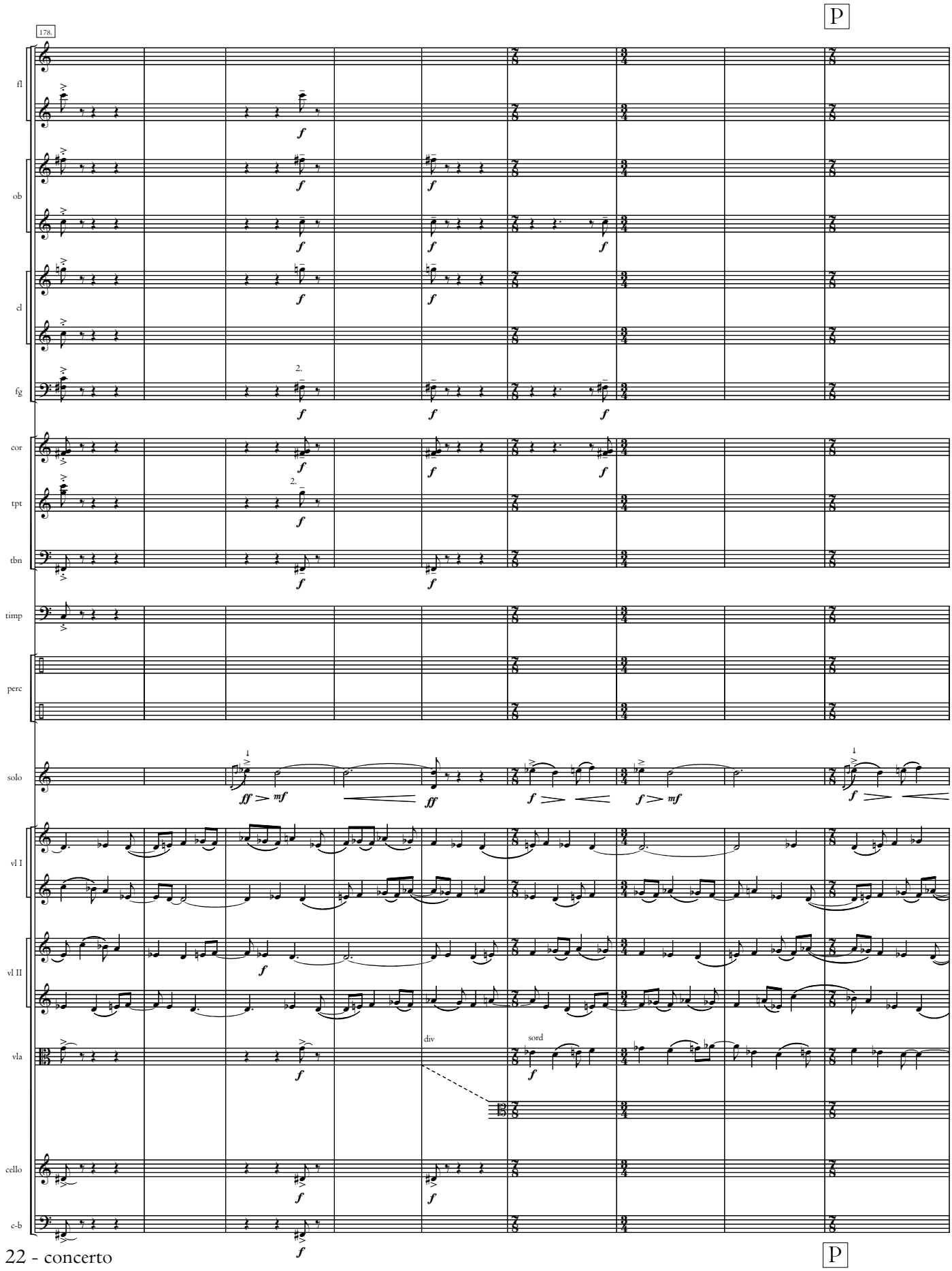

L
139.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
marcato
mf cresc.
f
p
senza sord
L

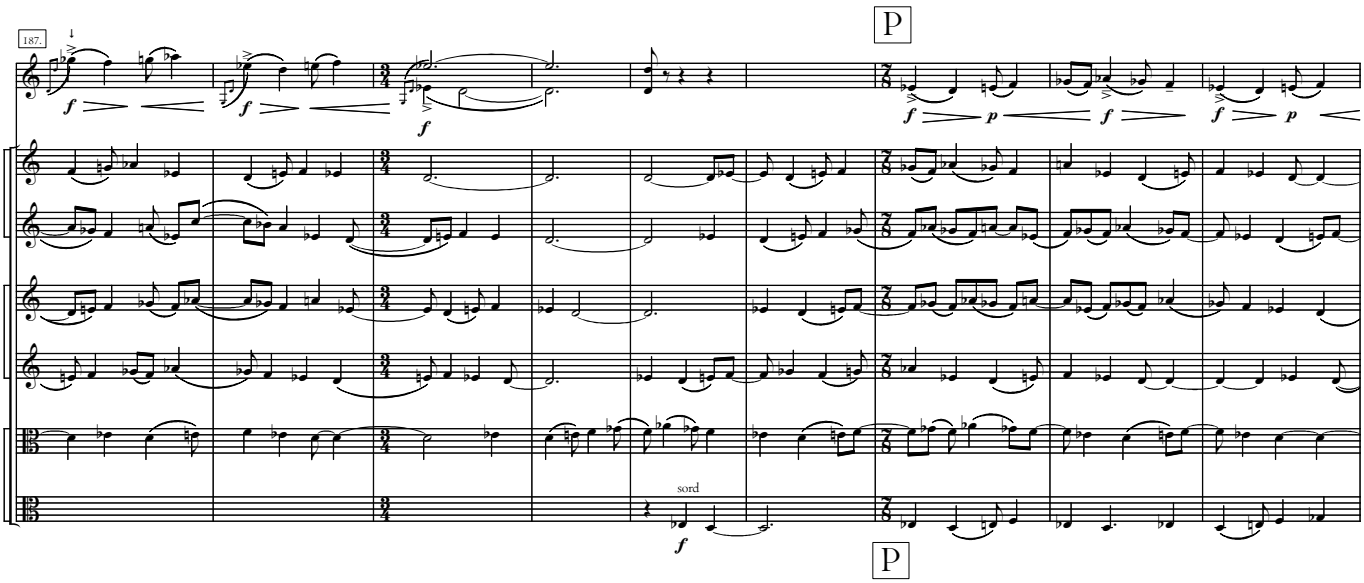

147.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
sord
1. senza sord
w-bl

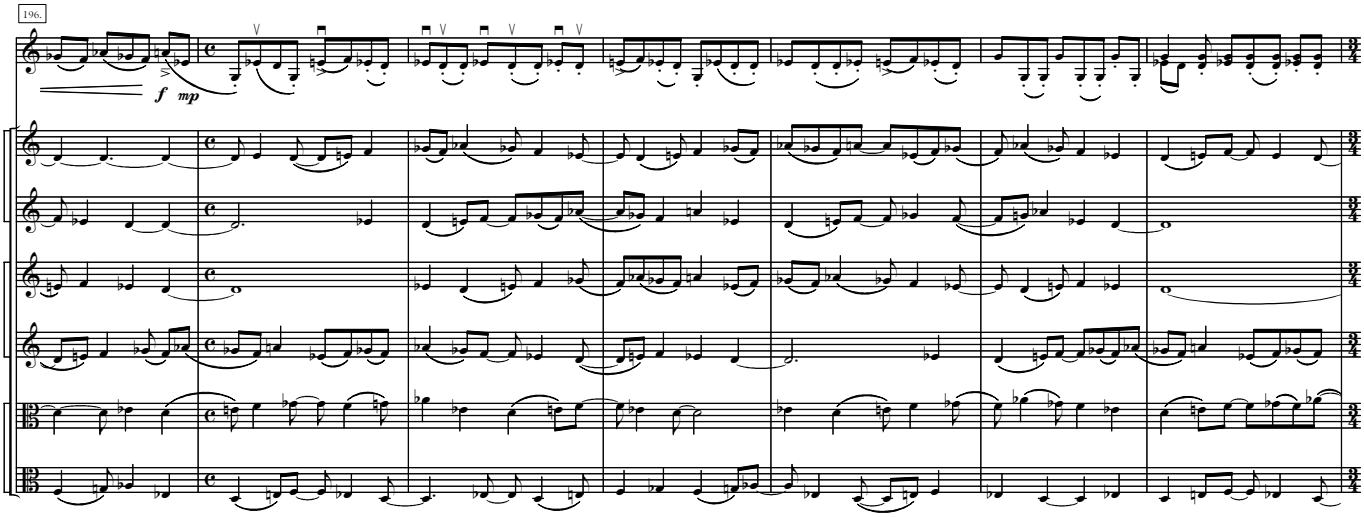

M
154.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
a 2
tpt
senza sord
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
cresc. poco a poco
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
M

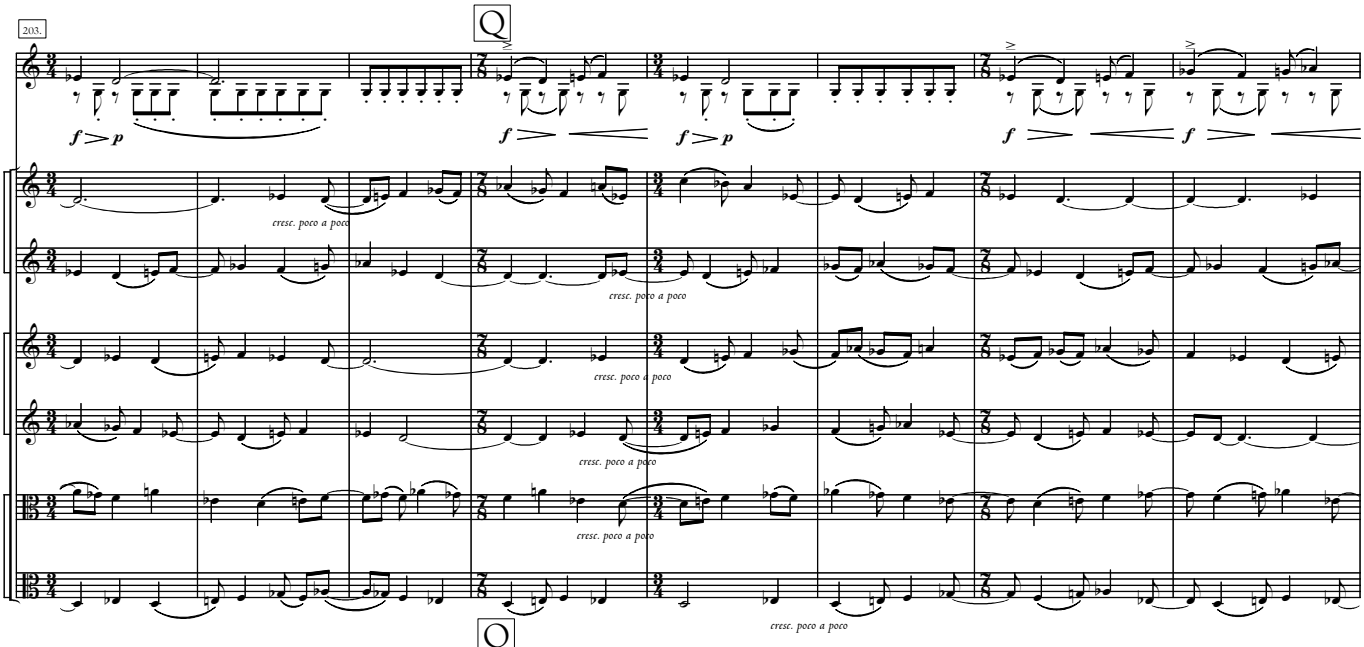

N
161.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
a 2
a 2
senza sord
w-bl
gongs
arco
cresc. poco a poco

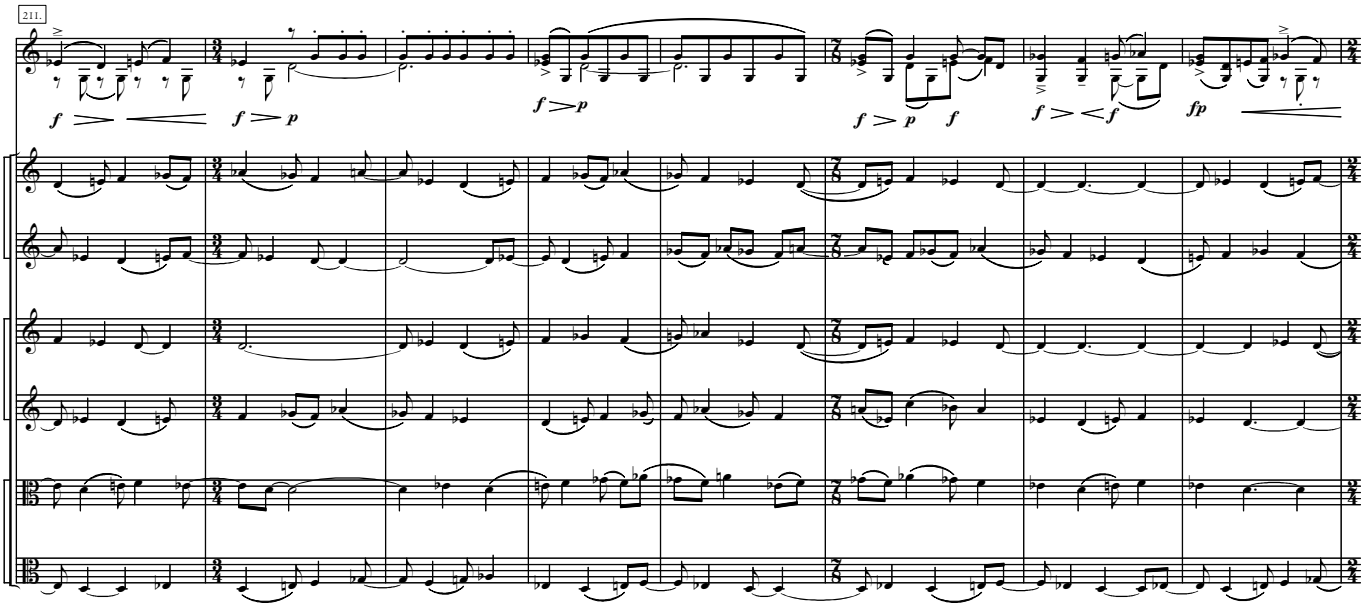

169.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
a 2
trg
drums
b-d
cresc. poco a poco


P
178.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
2.
div
sord
P

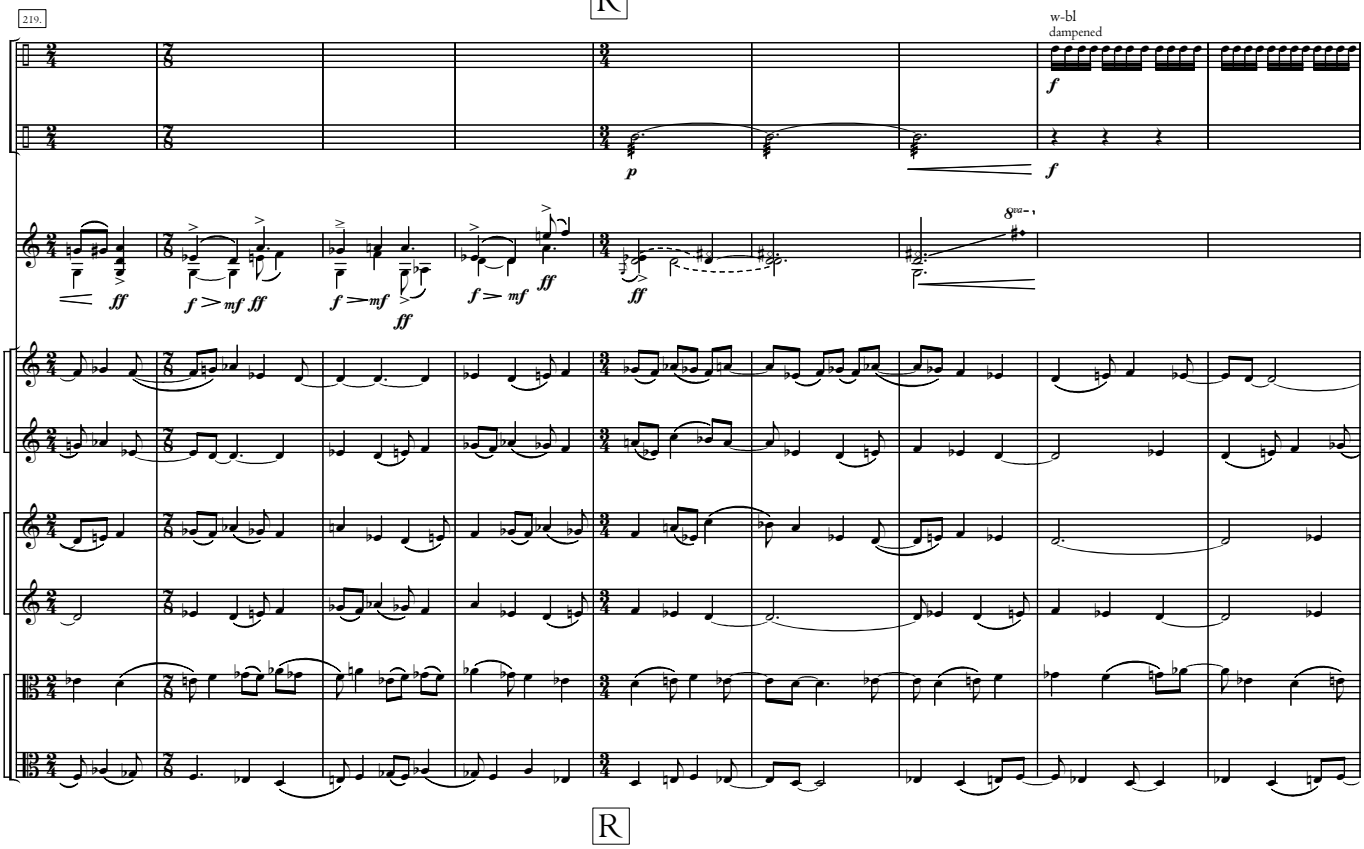

187.
P
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
sord
P


196.
solo
vl I
vl II
vla

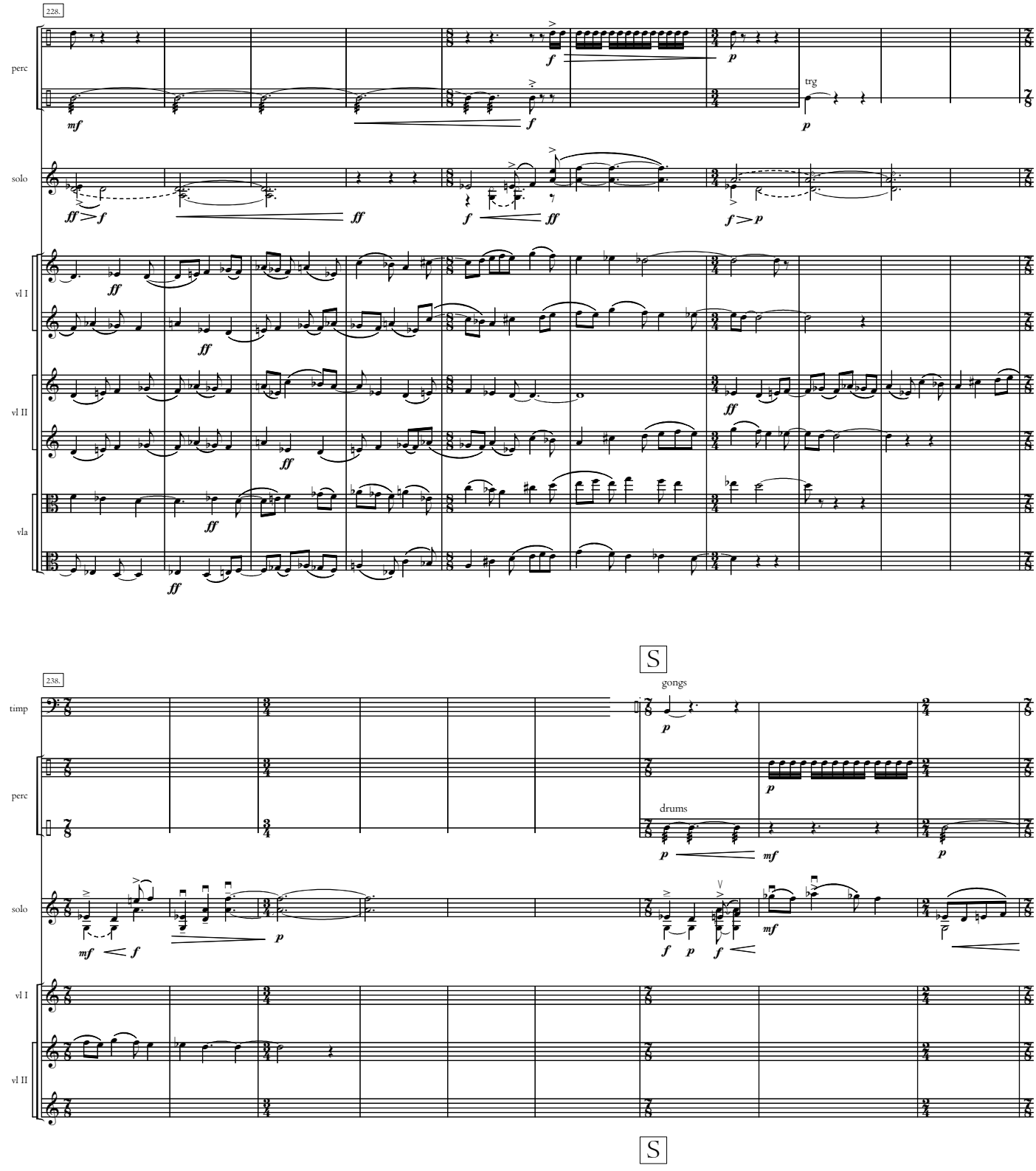

203.
Q
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cresc. poco a poco
Q

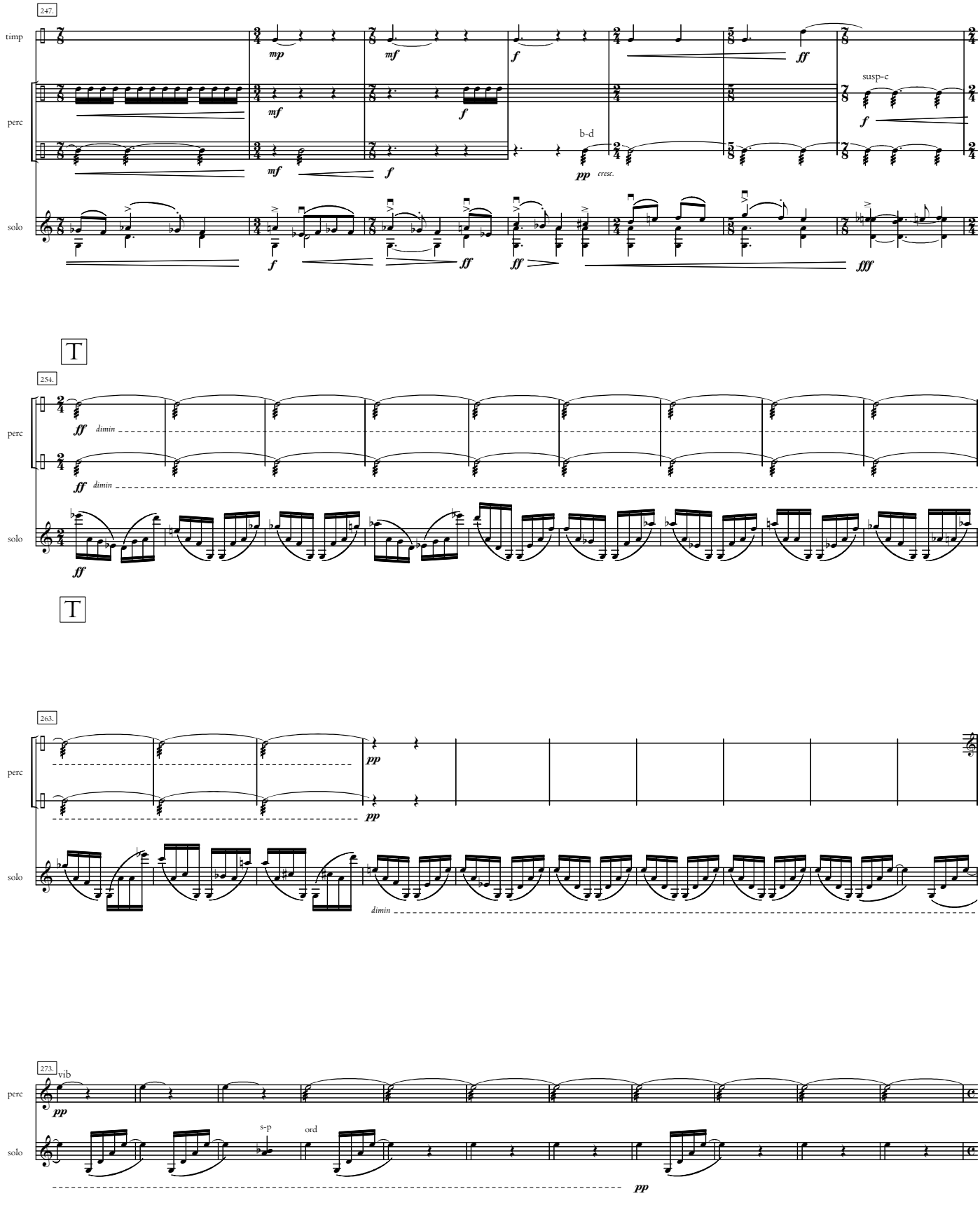


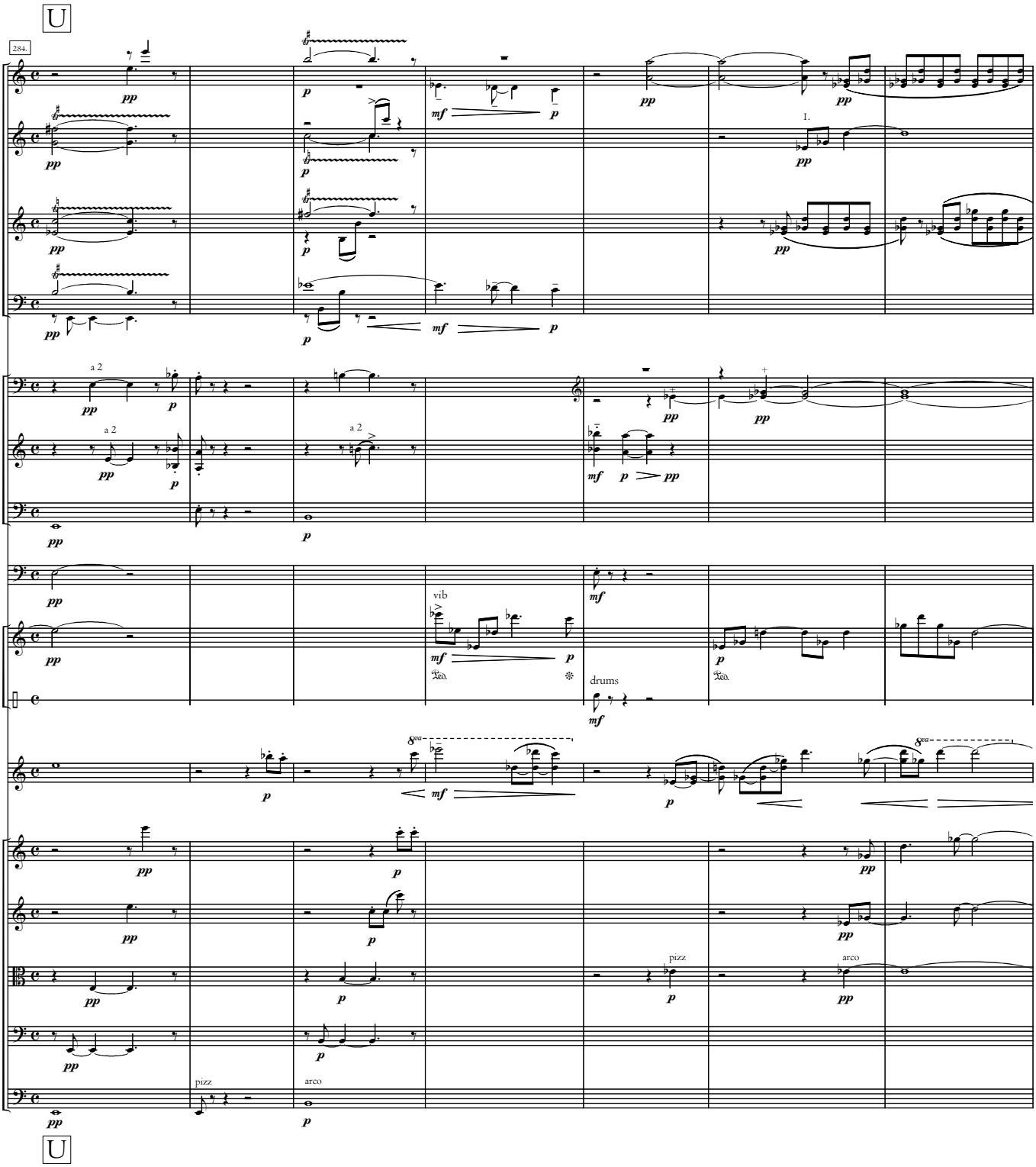
R

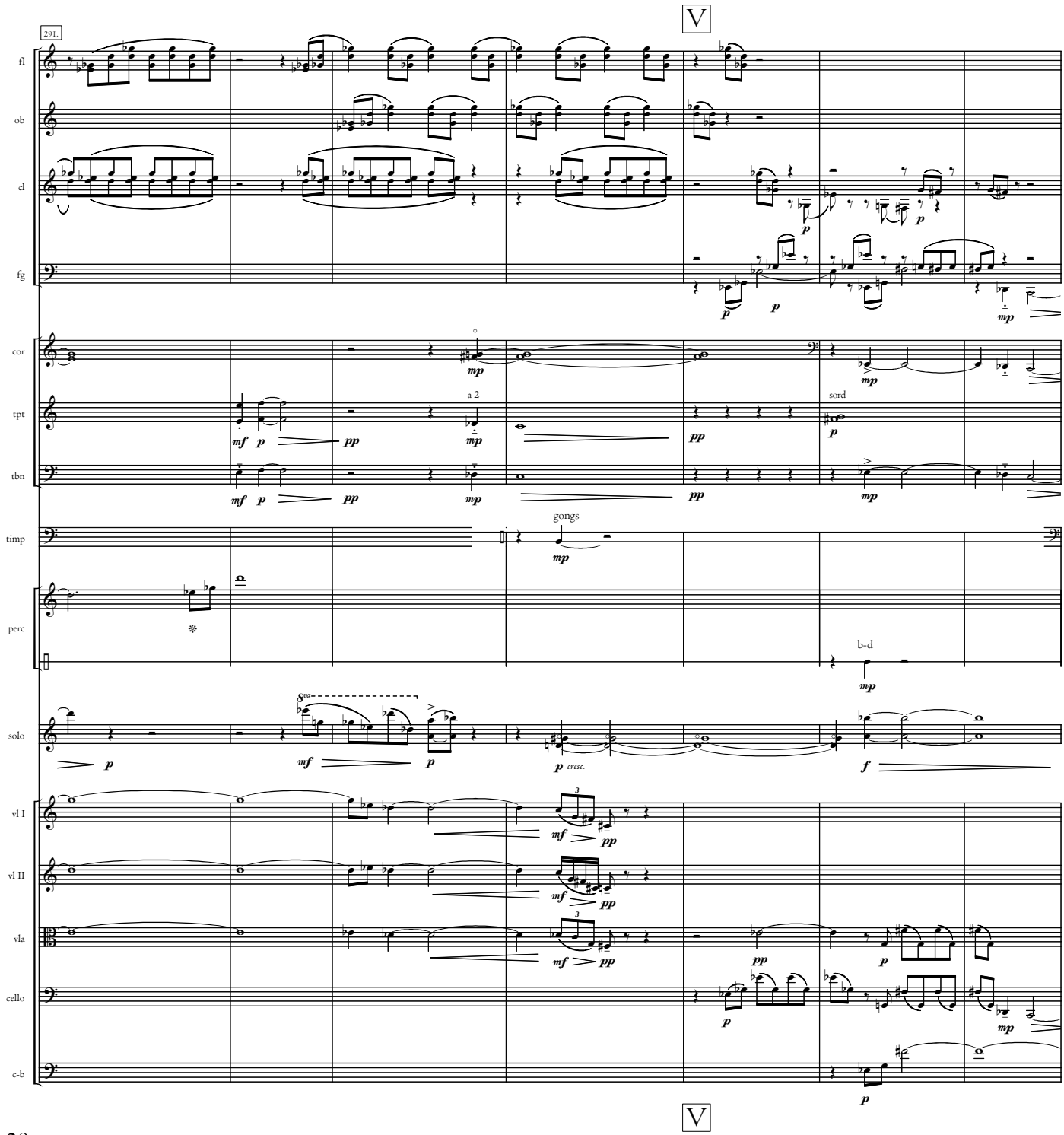


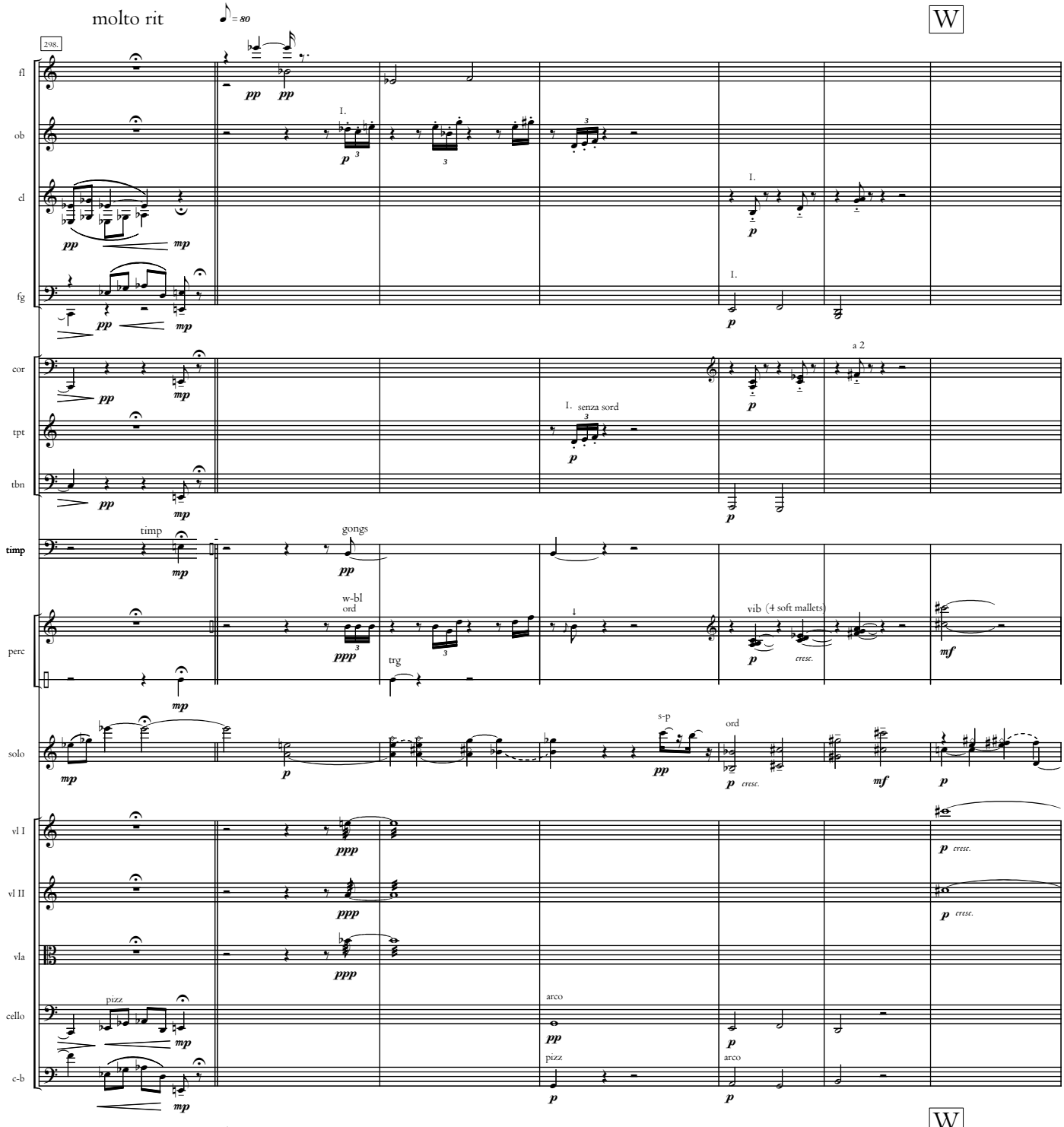
R

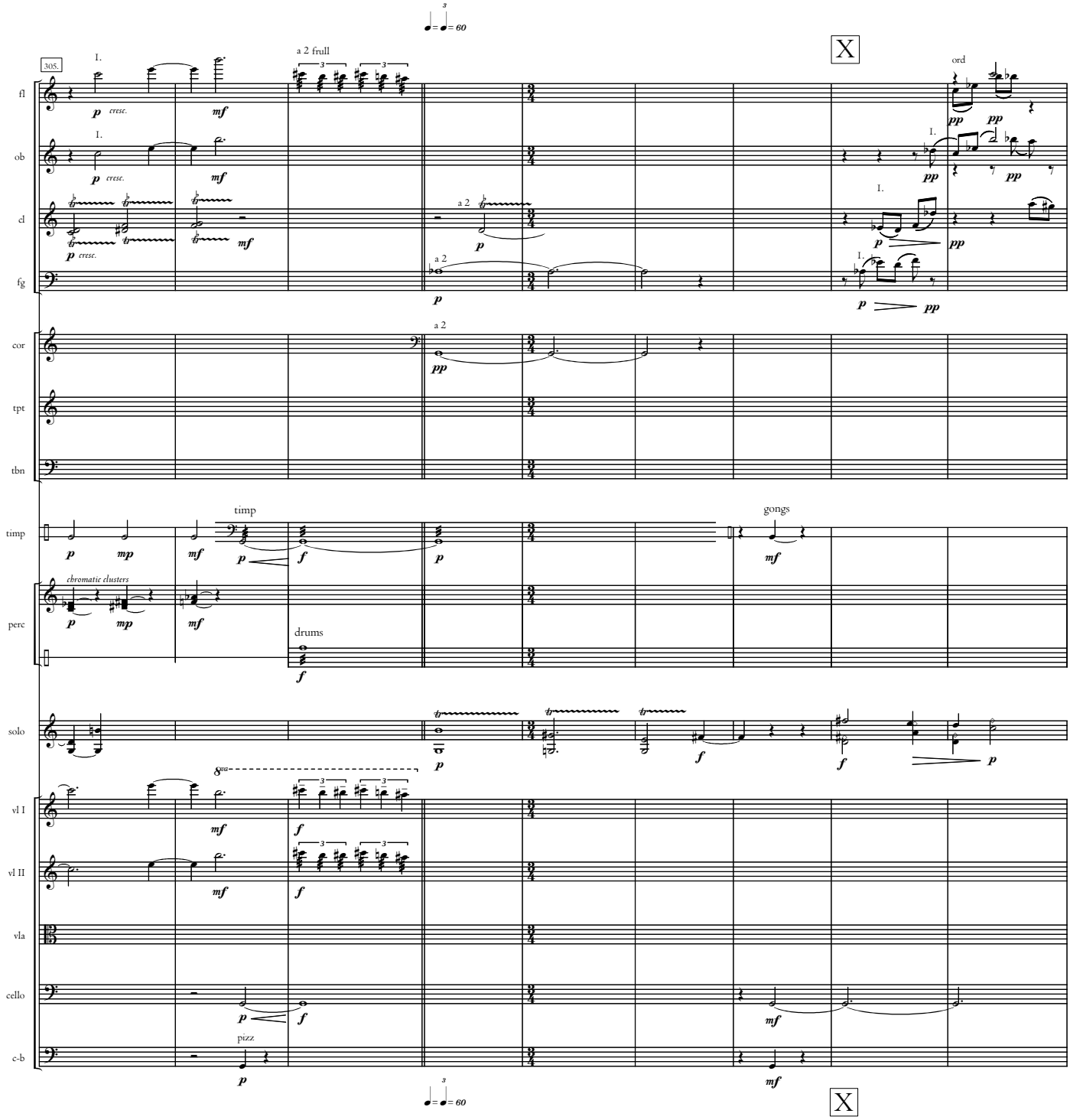

228.
perc
trg
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
S
238.
timp
gongs
drums
S

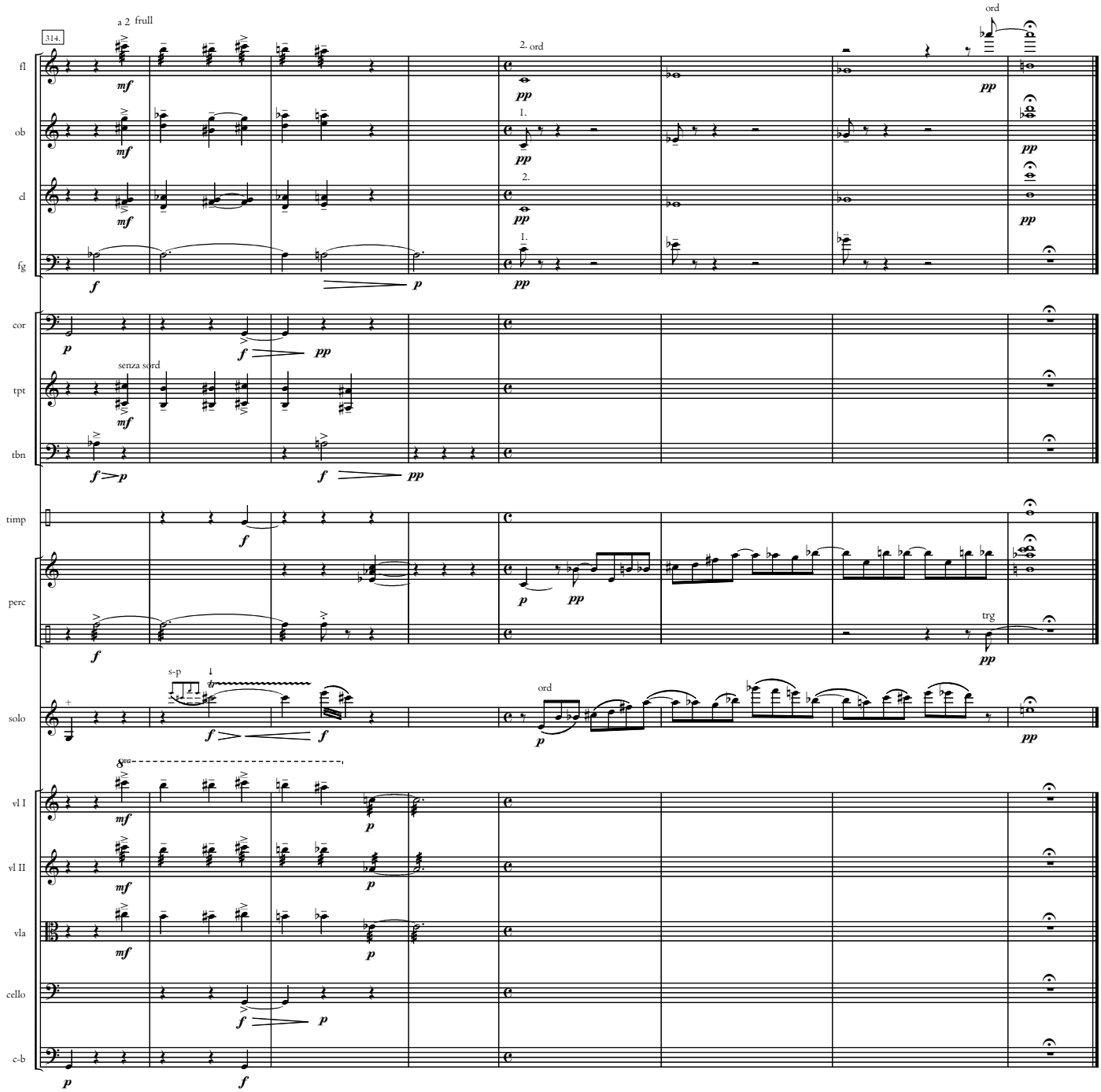

247.
timp
perc
solo
susp-c
b-d
cresc.
T
254.
dimin
T
263.
dimin
273.
vib
s-p
ord


U
284.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
a 2
vib
drums
pizz
arco
I.
U


291.
V
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
a 2
sord
gongs
b-d
cresc.
V


molto rit
♩ = 80
W
298.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
I.
senza sord
a 2
gongs
w-bl
ord
trg
vib (4 soft mallets)
s-p
ord
pizz.
arco
molto rit
♩ = 80
W


305.
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b
a 2 frull
ord
timp
gongs
drums
cbromatic clusters
pizz
X
X


314.
a 2 frull
2. ord
ord
1.
2.
senza sord
s-p
ord
trg
8va
fl
ob
cl
fg
cor
tpt
tbn
timp
perc
solo
vl I
vl II
vla
cello
c-b