WHAT A “THUMP” MEANS: MORTON FELDMAN’S TREATMENTS OF SAMUEL BECKETT’S TEXTS
AND
THIS REPORT MUST BE SIGNED BY YOUR PARENTS FOR ORCHESTRA

by

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University of Pittsburgh, 2012

Samuel Beckett provided the text for Morton Feldman's "opera," *neither*, in which the lack of characters, setting, definite plot or apparent musical development raises the question of whether such a piece can be considered "dramatic." Feldman later collaborated with Beckett again on a very different project – composing the musical portion of a radio play, *Words and Music*, in which "Music" is a character, interacting with the other characters through musical "speeches." While quite different in format from *neither*, there are not only stylistic similarities between the two works, but significant overlapping in techniques between Beckett and Feldman. Furthermore, the musical character in the radio play raises interesting questions about the possibility of reinterpreting drama in *neither*. In this paper I analyze both the Beckett/Feldman version of *Words and Music* and *neither*; I also compare techniques and philosophies of Beckett and Feldman to better understand the paradoxical nature of these collaborations.

The orchestra piece *This Report Must Be Signed By Your Parents* represents a personal evolution of style over several years. Both movements attempt to explore the aural space of the orchestra, each employing a different strategy for doing so. The movements are subtitled with areas marked as "needs improvement" on an old report card of mine from kindergarten – an ironic gesture at the long-anticipated conclusion of my formal education.

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PREFACE

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My greatest thanks go to my family: my parents and parents-in-law, for all the countless means of moral and physical support they've given me over the years, and especially in the last year; to my son Talan, for motivating me to finish my dissertation as nothing else could; and most of all my husband Jonathan, who has been wonderful through everything.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Anyone interested in analyzing the music of Morton Feldman would do well to remember that wise old German saying: *Wenn der Hahn kräht auf dem Mist, dann ändert sich das Wetter, oder es bleibt wie es ist* (When the rooster crows on the dungheap, then the weather will change, or stay as it is). So it can be with Feldman's music: just when it seems as though you have found the key to a particular Feldman piece – be it an earlier piece using graphic notation, or a later piece shaped by an internal "grid" – the pattern will change, and your perception of Feldman's apparent purpose will be derailed or disintegrated. In other words, when analyzing the music of Morton Feldman, the analysis will reveal clear patterns that change according to Feldman's internal principles, and yet at the same time reveal elements that seem to directly contradict those principles. It is easy to feel that in such cases the essence of Feldman's music eludes the theorist's grasp.

Many theorists have found the works of Morton Feldman difficult to analyze due to their intuitive nature; the composer Walter Zimmerman once told Feldman that his music was so enigmatic that "If one tries to find out, he won't find out."[1] Despite this general pessimism, in the last ten years there has been a surging interest in analysis of Feldman's music, especially following groundbreaking works such as Sebastien Claren's treatise[2] focusing on Feldman's middle-to-late works. Many Feldman analyses balance technical descriptions with prose that attempts to pinpoint the phenomenological experience of listening to his music. One prominent theorist in this vein is Catherine Costello Hirata, who attempted to explain "the sounds of the sounds themselves" in her eponymous essay. Dora Hanninen has recently embraced statistical models inspired by research in the biological sciences to categorize and draw connections between Feldman's pitch and interval collections.[3] And the recent writings of musicologist Catherine Laws represent yet another approach – a multidisciplinary one, beginning from the fascinating intersection between Feldman and playwright Samuel Beckett.

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[1] Zimmerman, Walter. Interview with Morton Feldman. First printed in *Desert plants: conversations with 23 American musicians* (Vancouver: Aesthetic Research Center Publications, 1976). Reprinted in Printed in *Morton Feldman Says,* Chris Villars ed. (Oxford: Hyphen Press, 2006), pg. 51.

[2] Sebastien Claren. *Neither: Die Musik Morton Feldmans* (Berlin: Freie Universitat Berlin, 1996).

In 1976, Morton Feldman arranged a meeting with Samuel Beckett in Berlin through a mutual friend, taking Beckett to lunch to ask him to provide a libretto for an opera. The result was a lengthy setting for soprano and orchestra of a short poetic text, entitled *neither*. Ten years later, an American theater director, Everett Frost, began a new production series of the entire set of Beckett radio dramas written in the 1950s and '60s, including two plays in which "Music" is a character: *Words and Music* and *Cascando*. Upon Beckett's recommendation, Frost asked Feldman to provide the score – essentially, half the "dialogue" – for *Words and Music*. Feldman was enthusiastic but cautious about the project, noting that the concision of the dialogue was a constraint that directly clashed with his current tendency to compose on an increasingly large timescale. Feldman's contribution to *Words and Music* was completed in late 1986, and the complete production was recorded the following spring. It was also planned that Feldman would compose the musical provision for the last play in the series, *Cascando;* however, Feldman was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer in the summer of 1987, and died before he was able to begin work on *Cascando* – Feldman's colleague William Kraft would later provide the score for this production.[4]

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[3] Dora Hanninen, "Feldman, Analysis, Experience," in *twentieth-century music,* vol. 1/2 (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), pg. 225.

[4] Feldman did complete his penultimate work, *For Samuel Beckett* for large chamber ensemble, in 1987. While some definite influence from *Words and Music* can be found in the later piece, my paper addresses only those works that include Beckett texts; an extensive analysis of *For Samuel Beckett* can be found in Sebastien Claren's *Neither,* as well as in the recent dissertation of David G. Matthews (University of Pittsburgh, 2011).

The collaborations between Feldman and Beckett are unique as intersections between two strongly independent and highly influential artists. Since both the “opera,” *neither*, and the play *Words and Music* place unique dramatic burdens on music (well beyond that of incidental music or a typical operatic score), a study of how the musical aspects interact with Beckett’s texts, and how that interaction succeeds or fails in creating drama, is a starting point for a new approach to analysis of the rest of Feldman’s late music as well. My initial aim was to examine our altered perceptions of time while listening to music and while watching or listening to certain types of drama. For this purpose I considered the ancient distinction between *mimesis*, or “showing,” and *diagesis*, or “telling.” Both dramatic and narrative works incorporate elements of mimesis and diagesis; however, an important distinction lies in the flexibility more commonly found in narrative to present events according to an altered perspective of time, through retrovision and anticipation, or through ellipsis or prolongation of unfolding events. I conjectured that looking at music as a kind of self-mimesis, or real-time presentation of its own development, could be a useful supplement or even an alternative to diagetic analysis of music (that is, emphasizing narrative properties), perhaps becoming a fruitful point of inquiry from which to develop new perspective on the perpetual dialogue on narrative and music.

However, my speculation about a musical dialectic between dramatic and narrative is a starting place, rather than a destination, for this dissertation. My studies of *Words and Music* and *neither* have revealed some profound paradoxes within these works and the collaborative processes that created them. Beckett’s dramas seem potentially fertile for musical interpretation – structured according to the Aristotelian unities of time, place, and purpose, requiring a minimal amount of staging but rather emphasizing speech, and filled with dialogue imbued with rhythmic organization and musical allusion. Many, many composers have worked with Beckett texts using a vast panorama of approaches. And yet Feldman told Beckett in their meeting in Berlin that none of his extant texts would work for the opera Feldman wished to compose based on a Beckett text, that he “had read them all, that they were [im]pregnable, they didn’t need music.”[5] The resulting work, *neither*, is ostensibly called an “opera,” but that lacks characters, setting, and intelligible dialogue – in fact, the work deliberately defies most operatic conventions. Similarly, Feldman’s music for the radio play *Words and Music* is problematic in that “Music” encompasses much more than incidental music: in this play, “Music” is a character in his own right, named Bob, who must make speeches at the behest of the other characters. Furthermore, in the case of *Words and Music,* Feldman met compositional challenges that seemed to stem precisely from Beckett’s script directions, which are sparse and often vague, opening the play up to interpretive confusion.

In this dissertation I have analyzed these works in order to answer the questions that arise from the paradoxes between Beckett and Feldman. How should we think of a radio play in which half the “dialogue” is provided by a third party (and a non-verbal one at that?) What are the conditions necessary for a purely musical character to be convincing? In the case of *neither,* can the music be dramatic even if the text appears not to be? By addressing these questions I have tried to better understand the intersection of Beckett and Feldman, and thereby begun to find new ways of thinking of dramatic music.

Rather than proceed chronologically, I have chosen to give my first and more extensive chapter of analysis to the radio play *Words and Music*, written by Beckett in 1961 with music provided by Feldman twenty-five years later. Relatively little published research exists concerning the singular history and the unique collaborative possibilities of the play complete with music; many of the published writings available on this topic are inadequate discussions of music's full impact as part of the drama, undoubtedly due to the play's withdrawal from public performance and recording for several decades after its premiere. My research, including comparison of two recent recordings of the complete play, has enabled me to present a more detailed analysis of *Words and Music* than has been previously published, as well as discussion of Feldman's approach, the relationship between his musical materials and the speaking parts, and critical reception of the radio play. Chapter two is an overview of *neither*, composed by Feldman in 1976 with a text specifically written for this collaboration by Beckett. The opera has been comprehensively analyzed by both Sebastien Claren and Catherine Laws;[6] to that end, this chapter focuses on a limited number of aspects, with a particular focus on the roles which different types of musical material play in relation to the text, and how this musical and textual interaction can be thought of as dramatic, especially in the context of Samuel Beckett's dramatic catalogue. I follow the chapter on *neither* with a survey of Feldman's and Beckett's similar artistic techniques, particularly repetition and variation techniques, thereby gathering further evidence to assess the often-made claim that Beckett and Feldman are linked on a deeper philosophical level. A brief conclusion discusses this possibility of a deeper aesthetic link that ultimately resolves the inherent paradoxes. Feldman himself often spoke of a sense of kinship with Beckett and his writings; on one occasion saying, "I spent one afternoon with Beckett; it will be with me forever. Not his work; not his commitment; not his marvelous face, but his attitude."[7]

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[5] Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett.* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), pg. 557.

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[6] Catherine Laws, "Morton Feldman's *Neither*: A Musical Translation of Beckett's Text." In *Samuel Beckett and Music,* Mary Bryden ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[7] Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras, Interview with Morton Feldman, first published in *Soundpieces: Interviews with American Composers* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982). Printed in *Morton Feldman Says,* pg. 94.

2.0 FELDMAN, BECKETT, AND *WORDS AND MUSIC*

Words and Music, taken as a complete production, defies simple categories of either "radio play" or "musical drama." While related to Beckett's previous works (particularly his sketch *Rough for Radio I*), *Words and Music* is distinct from the earlier Beckett radio dramas in the importance of music to the story itself. Along with the radio play *Cascando* (which Beckett wrote soon afterwards), *Words and Music* includes the unusual feature of music, played from a score provided by an unspecified composer, comprising "Music," a character in its own right, addressed by the main character as a person named Bob (although referenced in the written script as "Music"). During the course of the play, Bob must give musical commentary upon, or explanations of, three abstract topics: Love, Age, and The Face (with a specific face in mind), at the behest of the main character, a dictatorial old man called Croak. Bob's rival and counterbalance is "Joe," an orotund and peevish character referred to in the script as "Words," who openly despises Bob while mindlessly rehearsing bits of meaningless prose. As the play progresses, Bob and Joe must work together (under coercion from Croak, who thumps a club and abuses them) to create a unity of music and words by setting two poems to music, through a process of suggestion and improvisation between the two characters. Afterwards, the play ends ambiguously: "Words" and "Music" seem to have united at last in their poetic efforts, yet Croak, apparently disturbed by what has happened, departs abruptly, leaving Bob and Joe alone together as in the beginning of the play, uncertain of whether or not they have succeeded in interpreting Croak's topics.

"Music" as a character is a fascinating concept, and many composers have contributed different realizations of Bob since the play's publication; almost certainly the best-known interpretation is Morton Feldman's (which is also the only existing realization explicitly sanctioned by Beckett himself). Because of the play's interdependence with the score provided by the composer, the music Feldman provided is not easily categorized as simply "incidental music." The play is incomprehensible without the musical fragments that comprise an entire character's existence; without Bob's "Statements" (thirty-three in Feldman's score), the characters of Joe, Bob, and Croak could not interact and no plot advancement could be made. Yet, like one side of a conversation, the music by itself is too fragmentary, too incoherent to stand alone outside the context of the script, and is not intended to be performed as concert music separate from the play. Despite the unusual limitations resulting from its unique form, *Words and Music* (like *neither*) is significant as a conjunction of Feldman's and Beckett's aesthetic views; unlike *neither*, the overall form of the work was largely controlled by Beckett, and should be considered in the context of his prior history with radio plays such as *All That Fall, Embers* and *Rough for Radio II*.

This chapter will begin with some background discussion of Beckett's radio plays, his intentions for *Words and Music*, Feldman's interpretation of those intentions, and the structural and aesthetic challenges Feldman faced in composing the score. This will provide a context for subsequent analysis of the play section by section. Finally, this chapter will synthesize both background and analyses to address the intersections or contradictions between Beckett's ideals and Feldman’s interpretations; the significance and effectiveness of “Music” as a character with autonomy more or less equal to the others; and whether or not *Words and Music* succeeds dramatically, considering its dependence on collaboration with an unknown composer.

2.1 BECKETT’S RADIO WORKS AND FELDMAN’S CONTRIBUTION

2.1.1. History of *Words* and other Beckett radio plays

Following World War II, BBC Radio was organized into three networks: the Light Programme and Home Service, which programmed popular music and newscasts respectively, and the Third Programme, a separate network devoted specifically to airing “high-brow” culture such as classical music, discussions of intellectual topics by the current intelligentsia, and contemporary dramatic and musical works. Throughout the 1950s and ‘60s, the Third Programme began commissioning original dramatic works from contemporary dramatists such as Harold Pinter, Joe Orton, Dylan Thomas and, following his success with *Waiting for Godot,* Samuel Beckett. The BBC first requested a play by Beckett in 1956, resulting in the radio play *All That Fall*, followed by *Embers* in 1959, and *Words and Music* and *Cascando* in 1961.

When working on *All That Fall*, Beckett’s ideas centered on sounds from his childhood: train stations, farm animals, footsteps, carts rolling down dirt roads, all forming the backdrop of his childhood in Ireland. The result was a bleak tale of elderly Mrs. Rooney and her journey down a rural Irish road to meet her husband at a railway station. With each subsequent radio play Beckett wrote, the characters became less flesh-and-blood persons in their own environment and more abstractions within a formless void, no longer to be thought of as people described by sound effects with projected physical presences, but abstractions self-contained in their own voices. Hence, within each subsequent play, the sounds of dialogue, as well as the sound effects such as footsteps and waves on the shore, become further muted and emptied of emotional or evocative content. As Marjorie Perloff put it, "After *All That Fall*, whose characters are still represented as "real" people in a "real" Irish country setting, Beckett's radio art becomes more abstract and mediumistic, engaging in a dialectic of disclosure and obstacle, information and noise, in which the soundscape -- which includes silence-- provides conflicting, and hence tantalizing, testimony."[8]

Beckett's tendency toward abstraction increased as radio technology improved, with the advent of FM radio and the newly-formed BBC Radiophonic Laboratory improving sound quality and broadcast capability. By the time he wrote *Cascando* in 1961, Beckett had reduced his cast of characters to their minimal functions; in this, his last radio play, Voice and Music are disembodied streams of sound controlled by a vague third character known as Opener. As it closely followed *Words and Music* and has a similar trio of characters, *Cascando* can be seen as taking the essential logic of the earlier play to its extreme, removing the last vestiges of personality from the characters and focusing entirely on the structural interplay between sound and silence, spoken words and music. Some critics argue that both plays are dramatized mental processes, where the controlling characters (Croak and Opener) and their subordinates represent different aspects of consciousness and creativity within one mind. Within the format of radio, creating such an internal soundscape is certainly possible, and would be similar to other Beckett plays that dramatize characters' inner thoughts and memories, such as *That Time* or *Eh Joe*.

---

[8] Perloff, Marjorie. "The Silence That Is Not Silence: Acoustic Art in Samuel Beckett's *Embers*," in *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts, and Non-Print Media,* Lois Oppenheim ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

2.1.2. Feldman's approach to *Words and Music*

Morton Feldman was not the first composer to provide the music for *Words and Music*. Samuel Beckett's cousin, John Beckett, was commissioned by the BBC for the initial production in 1961. However, after the complete play was aired in 1962 by BBC and French radio services, both playwright and composer were dissatisfied with the finished product. Samuel Beckett later withdrew his cousin's score, effectively prohibiting the play from public performance. Consequently, the play existed only as an incomplete and therefore unperformable script-only version. With the exception of a few unaired versions (such as a 1973 production by Katharine Worth with music by Humphrey Searle and a 1979 production with music by Mark E. Miller), this was the status of *Words and Music* until 1985, when Beckett was approached by Everett Frost, producer and director of *The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays*. Frost produced all five complete radio plays (*All That Fall, Embers, Rough for Radio II, Words and Music*, and *Cascando*) for broadcast through various companies, and was particularly concerned to have Beckett's approval in all performance decisions, consulting with him at length about "a great many particulars," including selection of composers for the two productions that called for musical scores.[9] It was Beckett himself who suggested Feldman as composer for the two musical characters; Beckett and Feldman had met years previously when Feldman sought Beckett's provision of a text for the opera *neither*.

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[9] Frost, Everett. "Fundamental Sounds: Recording Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays," in *Theatre Journal* vol. 34 no.3, October 1991, pg. 364.

In reading the play without an accompanying score, the virtual-aural experience of music is absent, and therefore imagining a fully-realized musical character from the printed text is rather difficult. Reading the script, it seems clear that Beckett intended for "Music" or Bob to be a real character, interactive with the other characters, and possessing "his" own distinct personality. However, Beckett's concept for how that character should be represented, in terms of musical style and strategy, is unclear. Feldman admitted later to Everett Frost that he found it difficult to begin from the text alone, because of its incompleteness: "I hardly read it. Oh, of course, I read it. But I started at the end, I started in different places. That was my way to get to know Beckett. Because I couldn't read it without the music, and there was no music. And so I couldn't get the total experience."[10] Furthermore, the script alone gives little sense of what specific style(s) of music are appropriate to Beckett's instructions, which are quite general, if not deliberately vague. Many of the stage instructions for Bob's statements are minimal; for example, when Bob is commanded to describe Age, the stage instructions merely say "*Age music.*" No technical descriptions, other than occasional dynamic suggestions such as "*fortissimo*" and *"softly"*, are given in any of the instructions. In a few places, Beckett suggests the return of specific music from earlier statements, such as the repeat of the "aria" at the end of the Age section; but this gives no real instruction as to what the original material should be like, except more or less repeatable. Only occasionally does Beckett give instructions about the emotional tone the music should have. For example, on the first page Bob's first real statement (a bowing acknowledgement of Croak) is scripted as "*humble muted adsum.*" A page later, Bob's first extensive "speech" on Love (at Croak's command) is described in somewhat more detail: "*Soft music worthy of foregoing, great expression*…[then next, when ordered to repeat himself louder]…*as before fortissimo, all expression gone*…”.[11] While these instructions give some idea of dynamic range, they leave open the question of what “great expression” means precisely. Feldman found Beckett’s emotional descriptions such as *“warmly sentimental”* to be less than helpful in approaching this composition. Such descriptions are vague in themselves, in terms of musical content; they are further obscured in the context of Beckett’s style and highly nuanced meanings. As Feldman put it,

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[10] Frost, Everett. "The Note Man on the Word Man: Morton Feldman on Composing the Music for Samuel Beckett's *Words and Music* in *The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays*". From *The Modern Word* website, <http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/beckett_feldman_wam.html>. Accessed 8/10/10.

> …if I would use [Beckett’s] terminology, that he would use in asking for music, I never could have written it, because I don’t know what that terminology means. I know what it means in terms of Puccini. If he says he wants something sentimental, I have no idea what that means, because it’s like a ‘thump’…With Beckett, you realize how much you don’t understand the simplest word like ‘thump’.”[12]

Related to understanding the subtleties of Beckett’s language is the issue of understanding the overall meaning of the play. *Words and Music* concludes with the sudden and unexplained departure of Croak; it is unclear whether this should be interpreted as a dramatic emotional outburst, a reaction to Words’ and Music’s succeeding (or, possibly, failing) to unite satisfactorily, or as having some other motivation. Furthermore, the play is unclear about the power struggle between Words and Music; at the end when they are left alone, Joe begs Bob for “music!” regardless of all Joe’s previous violent protests at Bob’s earlier utterances. This could be interpreted as Music ultimately triumphing over Words’ inadequacy. Ultimately, Feldman’s interpretation reflected the pressure to adapt his compositional style and approach to scale to Beckett’s aesthetic and the technical requirements of the play:

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[11] Beckett, *Words and Music*. From *Samuel Beckett: The Complete Dramatic Works*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), pg. 288.

[12] Frost, “The Note Man,” Chris Villars website, <http://www.cnvill.net/mfefrost.htm>. Accessed 2/23/12.

> I understand him to some degree as an artist. I know that there is a clinical approach and then he's learned how to lose it, or to work with it, or to change it.…I took it to the quintessence of it. The fact that in very prosaic terms, there was a situation where two people were having some problems, you know, as prosaic as that. And music essentially had to bend.[13]

In this light, one could certainly consider the story of *Words and Music* as presented by Beckett and Feldman to be a self-reflecting metaphor for collaboration, possibly even for this specific collaboration; yet the reality, for the elderly Irish playwright and the American composer, was different from this fanciful ideal. Unlike Bob and Joe, both Beckett and Feldman seemed content with the other's interpretation of their work and aesthetic views, with virtually no personal interaction or constructive dialogue between the two of them. Furthermore, unlike the real-life relationship between writer and composer, where Feldman molded his music to Beckett's existent work, in *Words and Music* it is Bob who sets the pace and tone for the Aria section; Bob who interrupts Joe but is oblivious to Joe's groans and complaints; and Bob or "Music" to whom "Words" ultimately turns for solace in the end. It is easy then to think that when Feldman reflects on the play being about "music…[having] to bend," he is actually describing his own co-creative relationship to Beckett.

Because of difficulties not only in adapting his own compositional style but also in understanding Beckett's intentions, Feldman spent much of the last year of his life in completing *Words and Music* to both his and Frost's satisfaction. While the specific stage directions may not have been adequate compositional starting points for Feldman, his composition still originated with the play itself. Frost recalls phone conversations between Feldman and himself during the year of the work's composition:

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[13] Ibid.

> …once Feldman had begun working on the music, we rarely discussed it directly. What seemed to help him most was reading lines from the play back and forth to each other (almost always on the telephone) as we heard them in our heads.[14]

Beckett, who personally obsessed over the rhythm and pacing of his dialogue, often reading his scripts aloud as he was writing them and on one occasion forcing an actress to rehearse her part in tempo with a metronome, would certainly have approved of Feldman's approach. Feldman remarked that hearing the lines read aloud was particularly helpful—more helpful than Beckett's script instructions—when composing music for the Age section, a section whose sentiments Feldman rather questioned:

> I didn't pick up, you see, on Age. I mean, I feel – especially when he wrote this: he wrote this when he was approximately–he was younger than I am now. He was in his mid-fifties. So, I wasn't taking his idea of age because I think at eighty, except for some arthritis, he looks and seems to feel okay. But it was the fact that the language was halting that created me that pizzicato section where it was more or less, not focused really on one place; and in the balance, so to speak, gave me an aspect of age.[15]

Undoubtedly, a final consideration for Feldman would have been the unusual presentation of writing music for a radio play, as opposed to a live performance. There are virtually no other examples of fixed-media or other direct-to-recording compositions for Feldman, for whom physical space in performance was essential. Feldman once wrote of a chance encounter on the street with Edgard Varese, who told a young Feldman "Make sure you think about the time it takes [sound] from the stage to go out there in the audience."[16] This leads us to the question: what kind of stage would Feldman have imagined for *Words and Music*?

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[14] Frost, "Fundamental Sounds," 373.

[15] Frost, "The Note Man…" It is also worth noting that Feldman's observation notwithstanding, Beckett was by 1987 (according to James Knowlson) suffering from several illnesses associated with his advanced age, including emphysema and what may have been the onset of Parkinson's disease.

[16] Feldman, Morton. "The Future of Local Music." In *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, B.H. Friedman ed. (Cambridge: Exact Change, 2000), pg. 170.

What would the time required for the sound to reach the audience be, and how would that sound then return to the performers? A radio broadcast as final product suggests a virtual stage, with the sound reaching the audience only through the artificial, indirect means of radio. The result is that the musical performers become virtual versions of themselves; the divorcing of the physical presence of the musicians from the music levels the playing field between Joe and Bob in terms of characterization by masking the music's point of origin, preventing the composer, conductor and the individual musical performers from having any intrusive presence in the play.[17] This negation of the physical reality of the musicians, combined with the time restrictions imposed on Feldman by the pacing of the script, undoubtedly forced Feldman to approach composing for *Words and Music* much more on Beckett's terms than was the case with *neither*.

2.2. ANALYSIS

2.2.1. Structure in *Words and Music* and Feldman's adaptation of scale

The story of *Words and Music* is essentially that of two servant characters, Joe (called "Words" in the script) and Bob (called "Music"), presenting discourse on three themes – Love, Age, and the Face – at the behest of a controlling character called Croak. The play is divided into three main sections for these three themes, framed by an introductory section before Croak enters and an epilogue section after Croak leaves. In these sections where Croak is absent, the other two characters either prepare for his entrance, or try to interact with each other in light of his absence. Stefan-Brook Grant described the sections of the play in musical terms – a prelude, leading to a "fugue" section on the topic of Love, two "Arias" in which Bob and Joe come together to present two poems by Beckett in song form, and a postlude after Croak has shuffled out of the scene.[18] Vivian Mercier first referred to the song-poems as "Arias;"[19] this paper will refer to the two as the "Age Aria" and the "Face Aria." Within these three thematic sections, Bob has thirty-three musical speeches or "Statements" composed by Feldman (not including the three interjections of the ensemble tuning up at the beginning of the play, which Feldman did not include in the score).

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[17] Recently, a live staged production of *Words and Music* by Ensemble Interface employed a dramatic strategy in which Joe and the musicians playing Bob are present on stage, while Croak is a prerecorded offstage voice. A brief interview with conductor Scott Voyles in the Appendix discusses this arrangement; not only does it distance Croak from the other two characters, but the visibility of musicians reduces the perception of "Music" as self-contained.

Feldman's approach to scale in composing the Statements reflects his late style of extension of material, constrained by the pacing of the dialogue between Bob and the other characters. The score is premeasured with nine spatially equal bars in each system, displaying Feldman's grid precompositional approach which first became pre-eminent with *neither*, and features in most of Feldman's other late works – quite possibly the defining feature of Feldman's late style. However, in the case of *Words and Music* the grid is much further removed from the actual experience of the music than is the case with Feldman's other late works. Because the score consists of Statements that function like lines in a play, a single empty measure between two of Bob's Statements might contain several minutes of dialogue between the other two characters, or only a few seconds' pause, with no written or visual indication as to the length of time it indicates. Furthermore, within the Statements themselves Feldman frequently employs repeats and time signature changes to manipulate the predetermined grid to contain more material or less. Given the sonic results, the presence of the grid at all seems unnecessary; possibly it is only Feldman's habit of formatting, or possibly it shows the difficulty Feldman had in adapting his increasingly larger-scale approach (resulting in longer and longer works) to creating music on the same scale as spoken dialogue in a play.

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[18] Grant, Stefan-Brook. "*Words and Music* & *Cascando*", from *Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays: Music of the Absurd*. www.samuel-beckett.net/ch4.html (Thesis, University of Oslo 2000).

[19] Mercier, Vivian. *Beckett/Beckett.* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), pg. 155.

2.2.1.1. Proportions between music and speech

As mentioned previously, Feldman based much of his composition on the rhythm and pacing of the lines as read out loud between himself and Everett Frost. Quite notably, Feldman does not include any initial or subsequent tempo markings in the score. One might interpret this apparent oversight as a concession by Feldman, suggesting that the musicians representing "Music" must follow the pace of the speaking actors rather than any predetermined tempo.

While the overall tempo of the music is flexible to accommodate different interpretations of the script, it is reasonable to assume that Feldman carefully planned the proportion of his Statements to create appropriately dramatic dialogue for Music. Listening to recordings of *Words and Music,* there is generally a consistency in the relative length in Music's Statements compared to the lines of the other characters. As a first examination of this effect, the chart below shows the comparative lengths in seconds between the lines of the speaking characters (Joe and Croak combined) and the Statements of Music, during the first back-and-forth segment between the three characters, when Croak makes his entrance. The excerpt analyzed in Figure 1 below is from the first interchange between Joe, Bob, and Croak, immediately after Croak's entrance (the green numbers represent the Evergreen Review/ Everett Frost recording):

Lines	**Time in seconds (all spoken dialogue)**	**Time in seconds (Feldman's music)**
CROAK: Joe. WORDS: [*Humble.*] My lord. CROAK: Bob.	5" 4"	
MUSIC: *Humble muted adsum.*		15" 13"
CROAK: My comforts! Be friends! [*Pause.*] Bob.	9" 9"	
MUSIC: *As before.*		11" 9"
CROAK: Joe. WORDS: [*As before.*] My lord. CROAK: Be friends![...] Joe. WORDS: [*As before.*] My lord. CROAK: Bob.	about 30" (including Croak's line about "the face…on the stairs" and numerous pauses) about 45" (over the same lines from Croak, with much longer pauses)	
MUSIC: *As before.*[20]		13" 15"
Totals:	**44" 58"**	**39" 37"**

Figure 1. Relative lengths of time between spoken lines and musical Statements.

In the passage analyzed above, all three musical Statements are Bob's "*humble muted adsum*", and all three lines for Words are simply "My lord." It seems that if Feldman had intended for Bob's obeisance to match Joe's in either length or semantic weight, it would have been simple to write a single chord in the piano and vibraphone, or a very short melody in the flutes and strings. The nearly equal time between spoken words and music in the original Frost production suggests that Feldman timed these three opening Statements not to merely balance Joe's lines, but to equal the composite speaking parts of Joe and Croak, giving Music an equivalent “stage time” to all prose-speaking characters. While there is an apparently large difference in proportion between the original Everett Frost production and the subsequent Ensemble Recherche recording, most of this difference is due to David Warrilow, the actor portraying Croak in the Ensemble Recherche production, taking extremely long pauses throughout Croak’s line: “…I am late, forgive. [*Pause.*] The face. [*Pause.*] On the stairs. [*Pause.*] Forgive. [*Pause.*]…”[21] Otherwise, the pacing of the Ensemble Recherche production is fairly similar to that of the Everett Frost production.

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[20] Beckett, Samuel. *Words and Music.* Printed in *Samuel Beckett: The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), pg. 287 – 288.

Another example of deliberate proportioning on a slightly larger scale is the passage where Joe and Bob offer their respective recitations on the topic of Love. The graphic representation below (Figure 2) reveals a rough equivalence in length between Joe’s speeches (including Croak’s interruptions) and Bob’s Statements. (The lower line is the Evergreen Review recording, the upper line Ensemble Recherche.) In the Ensemble Recherche production, the pace of the spoken dialogue is slower, again largely due to longer pauses taken by the speaking actors whenever called for in the script; this is matched by a slower tempo by Music.

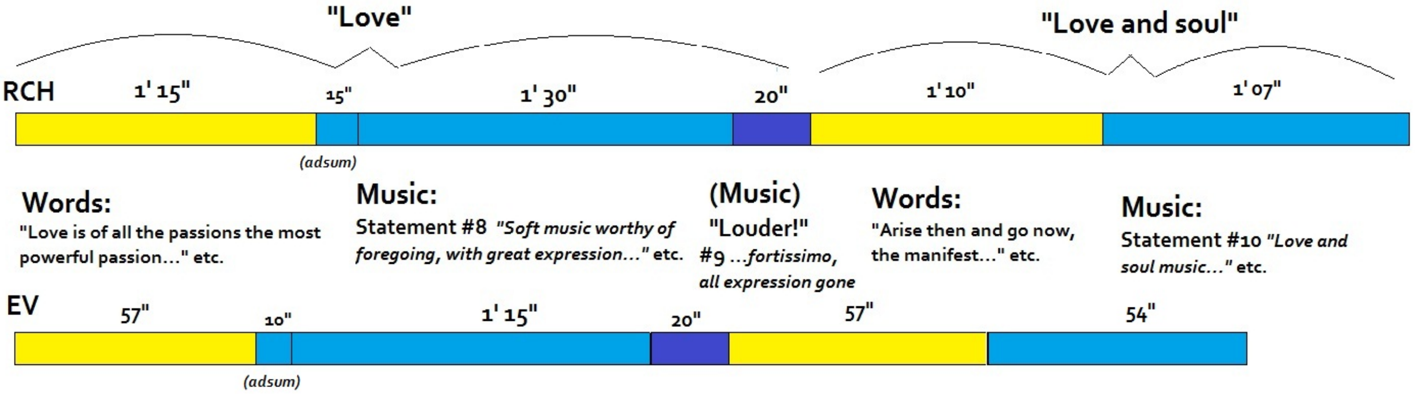
"Love"
"Love and soul"
RCH
1' 15"
15"
1' 30"
20"
1' 10"
1' 07"
(adsum)
Words:
"Love is of all the passions the most powerful passion…" etc.
Music:
Statement #8 "Soft music worthy of foregoing, with great expression…" etc.
(Music)
"Louder!"
#9 …fortissimo, all expression gone
Words:
"Arise then and go now, the manifest…" etc.
Music:
Statement #10 "Love and soul music…" etc.
EV
57"
10"
1' 15"
20"
57"
54"
(adsum)

Figure 2. Proportions between spoken dialogue and musical Statements 8 – 10.

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[21] Beckett, *Words and Music, Complete Dramatic Works*, 288.

As the play progresses, the exchanges between Words and Music evolve from a simple back-and-forth orchestrated by Croak to a more complex relationship in which Joe and Bob alternately overbear each other, then work together to complete Croak's reverie as he loses command of the situation. In the opening section on the Face, Bob presents several "warmly sentimental" musical ideas (Statements 26 – 28), only to be coldly rebuffed by brusque answers from Joe. Joe then launches into a verbose yet detached description of the woman of Croak's youth for several minutes, culminating in a description of her breasts "spreading[…] and subsiding to their natural…aperture--" at which point Bob can no longer contain himself, excitedly interrupting Joe with "*spreading and subsiding music*". From the beginning of the "Face" section to the interruption, Words and Music have three "speeches" each. While the lengths of these speeches do not correspond directly between characters, the total length of spoken lines once again matches the total length of musical Statements (based on the Evergreen Review recording):

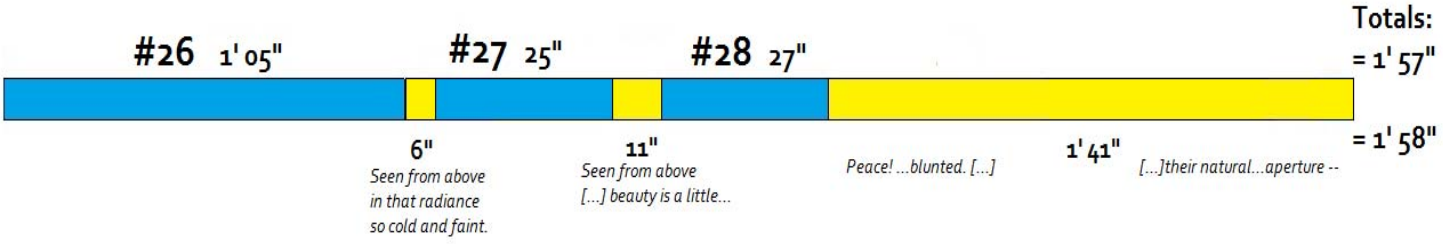

Figure 3. Proportions between musical Statements 26 - 28 and Joe's corresponding speeches

Statement 11, which is essentially a reprise of Statement 10 ("Love and soul music"), is the one significant instance of a Statement from Bob that seems out of balance with the dialogue.

At this point, both Bob and Joe have said all they have to say about the theme of Love; having exhausted that topic, Croak begins a new section of the play by returning to the opening acknowledgements of Bob and Joe. Once again, Bob is supposed to reply to Croak's "Bob," with a "*humble muted adsum*" much as Joe replies "My lord" to Croak. Instead, Bob replies with a second version of Statement 10, lasting about 45 seconds. While this seems out of place, there are several reasons why Feldman would choose to make this Statement disproportionately long. Since the lengths of the speaking characters' lines (and the silences between) depend on the actors' subjective decisions about pacing, it is hard to precisely predict what the total time proportions between speech and Music in any production of the play might be. For that reason, making one of Bob's speeches longer than necessary ensures that the spoken dialogue will not overwhelm the musical speeches, either by amount or by semantic weight. Another consideration is that Statement 10 features two simple but very important melodic themes – a rising-and-falling pattern of minor 7ths (F5 to G4), and a descending three-note pattern (B♭ – A – G). These themes return at the climactic final synthesis of Words and Music together during the third theme of the play. Repeating these melodies back-to-back in Statements 10 and 11 gives them greater significance, and makes them more recognizable when they appear after the "Age Aria." Yet another reason for Bob's "chattiness" in Statement 11 might be Feldman's interpretation of Bob's wish to defy his speaking counterparts; having been harassed by Joe and ordered about by Croak, Feldman gives the character "Music" an additional degree of personality (whether or not Beckett intended it that way) by providing music to play in defiance of the script. Indeed, there are several other points in Bob's speech (to be discussed later in this chapter) when it seems as if Feldman is endowing Bob with his own feelings, and possibly going against Beckett's scripted instructions by doing so.

2.2.2. “Love” and harmonic language

The musical body of work in *Words and Music* consists of thirty-three individual Statements, each one representing one of Bob’s “lines” in the script, varying in length between a few seconds at the shortest, and nearly two minutes at the longest. All of Bob’s Statements, including the segments of collaboration with Joe (but not counting the opening “tuning” segments), fall into two broad categories of material: the “monologue” material, which typically features dense harmonic layers, contrapuntal rhythms, wide registers and varied timbres; and the “Aria” material, which is very linear, melodically suggestive, generally monophonic and deceptively simple-sounding (while in actuality very sophisticated in rhythm and timbre). In their fully developed forms, these two material types are generally used quite separately from each other. The rising-and-falling scale-like melodies of the “Aria” material have a specific dramatic function as Bob’s “suggestions” for Joe, made when Joe is forced by Croak to sing. By contrast, the more rhythmically and harmonically complex Statements are usually generated by Bob in response to Croak’s prompting on the three topics (Love, Age, and the Face) and could be considered to be “monologues” by Bob, equivalent to Joe’s orotund monologues.

The appearance and development of the two material types reflects the dramatic development of the play. In the first section (Love), Joe and Bob recite their thoughts separately at Croak’s promptings, and we are consequently introduced to several forms of the “monologic” material; in the second section (Age), where Bob and Joe are ordered by Croak to work together, we hear the most extensive use of the “Aria” material; and in the final part of the play (the Face), Bob and Joe must decide for themselves how to work together to fulfill their purpose, and we hear both material types juxtaposed, achieving (or coming very near to achieving) a final synthesis during the second poetic improvisation. Additionally, in the last section of the play on “the Face,” thematic material that was first suggested in the earlier section on “Love” now returns more explicitly to support this poetic climax.

Returning to the first or “monologic” category of material, the frequent use of dissonant layers primarily built from major and minor 2nds make these Statements much more recognizably “Feldman” – comprised of layered events forming not only timbrally thick dissonances, but also complex, uncoordinated rhythms, often employing clustered pitch collections that disorient the listener, offering no real pitch center but only stratified layers of sound. Much similarity exists between this material type and that which characterizes much of *neither*. However, the Statements considered most like Feldman’s other late works (particularly in their layered and staggered use of harmonic materials) are by no means uniform, nor is the treatment of materials homogenous within each Statement. Within the general “layered” or “monologue” type, some Statements are more unified while others are disjunct, containing distinct and even contradictory elements. Furthermore, while the various Statements either originate from or share harmonies based on 2nds and 7ths, their levels of dissonance and consonance are quite varying depending on Feldman’s addition of “warmer” intervals (such as perfect 5ths and major 3rds) and pitch collections that at times seem surprisingly diatonic.

The very first Statement, for example, is comprised of the pitch collection C D E F G A, with a strong emphasis on minor 7ths – between the two flutes, between cello and viola, the harmonic piano notes and the alternating violin pitches. At the same time, the first measure contains a stack of perfect fourths between viola, violin, and second flute (Figure 4):

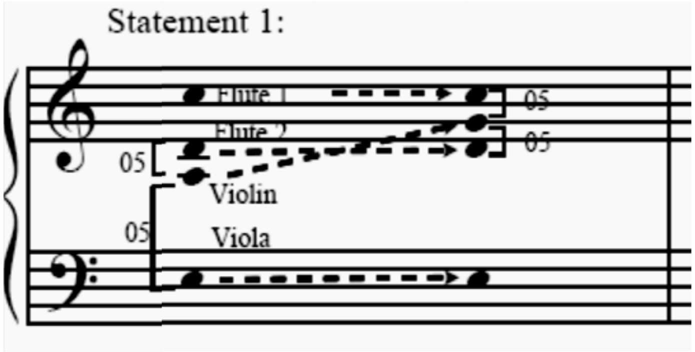

Figure 4. **Harmonic exchange in Statement 1.**

Feldman uses melodic motion in the violin, rising from A to G, to create both a modulation of the stack of perfect 4ths (up a minor 7th), and also a buried C Major triad.

A very unified and unusually (for Feldman) warm and consonant sound not only permeates this Statement, but also ties it closely to the next two – the three Statements being Bob's obeisances to Croak's repeated recognitions, noted in the script as "*humble muted adsum*". In the next statement, a more explicit melodic motion appears, as a descending 7th from C to D, played in the flutes. The third statement passes the melodic 7ths to the piano. However, while the pitch collection stays the same throughout the first three sections, the implied diatonicism is unclear; the lack of B natural in the first two Statements suggests a sort of F Major (with the repeated Cs heard as a dominant pedal), while in the third Statement the appearance of B suggests less ambiguously that the harmony is C diatonic.

Furthermore, while the first three opening segments (Figure 5) are Bob's automatic polite responses to Croak's recognition, the fourth response has a question mark implied, for Croak is about to make his first demand that Bob perform "Love" for him. The falling C – D motive remains in the piano, but the sustaining instruments have added D♭, A♭ and B♭ to the collection, obscuring the implied diatonic ideas from before, essentially creating two joint clusters, A♭ – A – B♭ in the strings dovetailing with B and D♭ in the flutes. The sustaining instruments (flutes

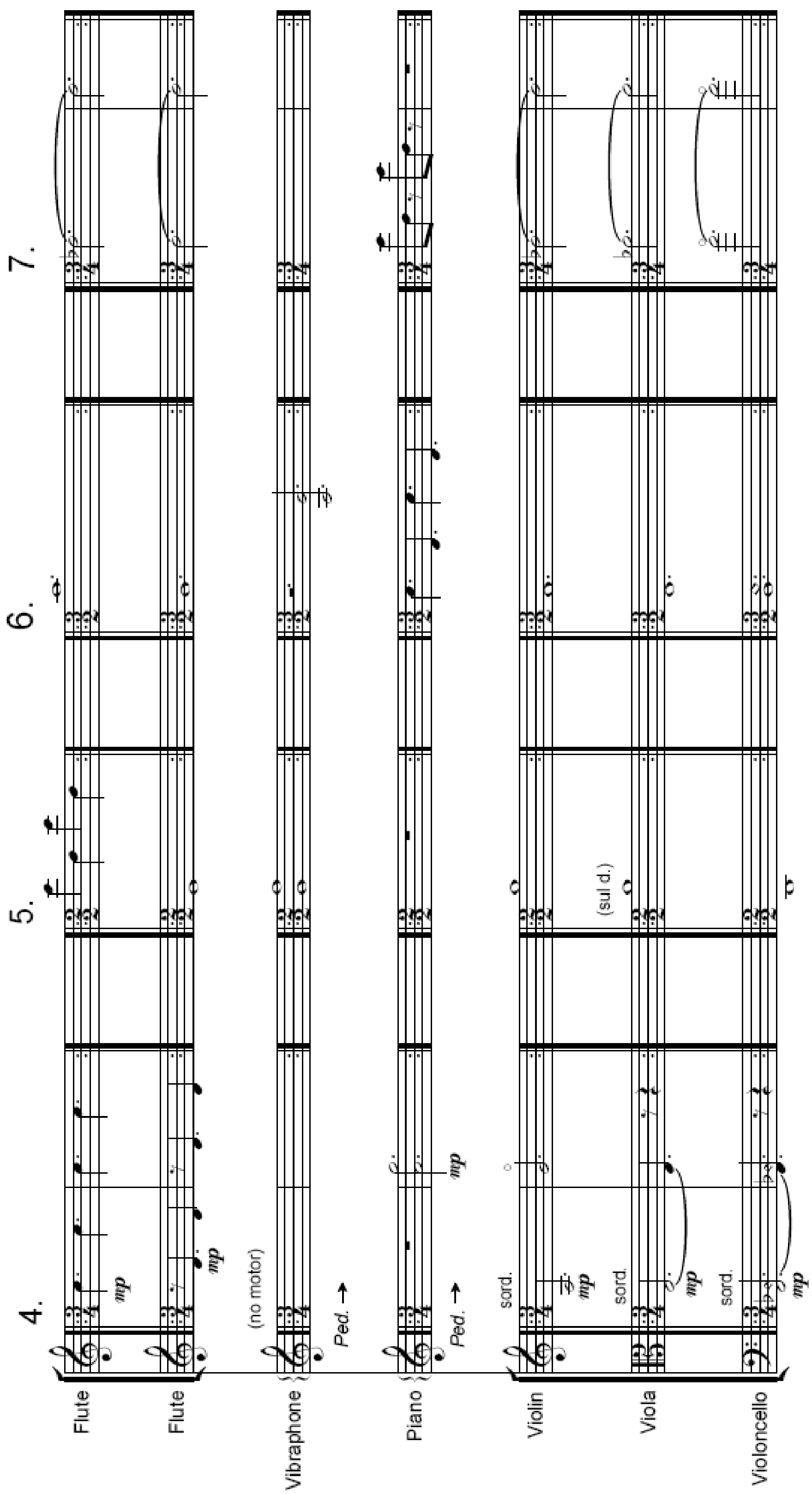
4.
5.
6.
7.
Flute
Flute
Vibraphone
Piano
Violin
Viola
Violoncello
mp
(no motor)
Ped.
sord.
(sul d.)

Figure 5. ***Words and Music,*** **Statements 4 – 7.**

and strings) tightly pack into a single registral tritone, with the piano completing the chromatic space with the C – D motive. Particular among the other pitches, the high C in the piano, a 7th or more above the rest of the massed pitches, is clear and punctuative, offsetting the timid, shrunken quality of the registral contraction in the other parts. The emotional coloring created by the contracted register and influx of chromatic pitches, compared to the openness and harmonic warmth of the previous three statements, is one of hesitation or slight anxiety, as though Bob, while still respectful and attentive, is also anticipating an unreasoning demand from Croak.

After all the characters have been introduced, Croak instructs Joe and Bob to address his first theme, that of "Love". In this section Music has three Statements (numbers 8 through 10) which answer Croak's demands. All three Statements fall into the "monologic" category, and are therefore densely layered, harmonically complex, and prominently feature Major and minor 7ths and 2nds; however, within the general description as "monologic" the three Statements are thematically, harmonically, and emotionally quite different.

The first of these three monologic passages, Statement 8 (Figure 6), which is the response to Croak's first demand for "love" music, has a distinct introductory segment with a four-note ascending chord in the vibraphone alone which occurs four times before the other instruments join to create a section of staggered harmonic layers. This four-note idea is reprised (but not literally repeated) by the piano alone to close the section. This arrangement of introduction – main section – epilogue, which reflects the "prelude – three themes – postlude" breakdown of the play's structure, is one of several ways in which Statement 8 is an interesting microcosm of the entire work. Another example of this is the opening four pitches in the vibraphone, G3 – D♭4 – F#4 - E♭5. This tetrachord contains two large overlapping intervals, one major 7th (G – F#) and one Major 9th (D♭ – E♭); essentially, Major and minor 2nd expanded to create distinct harmonic

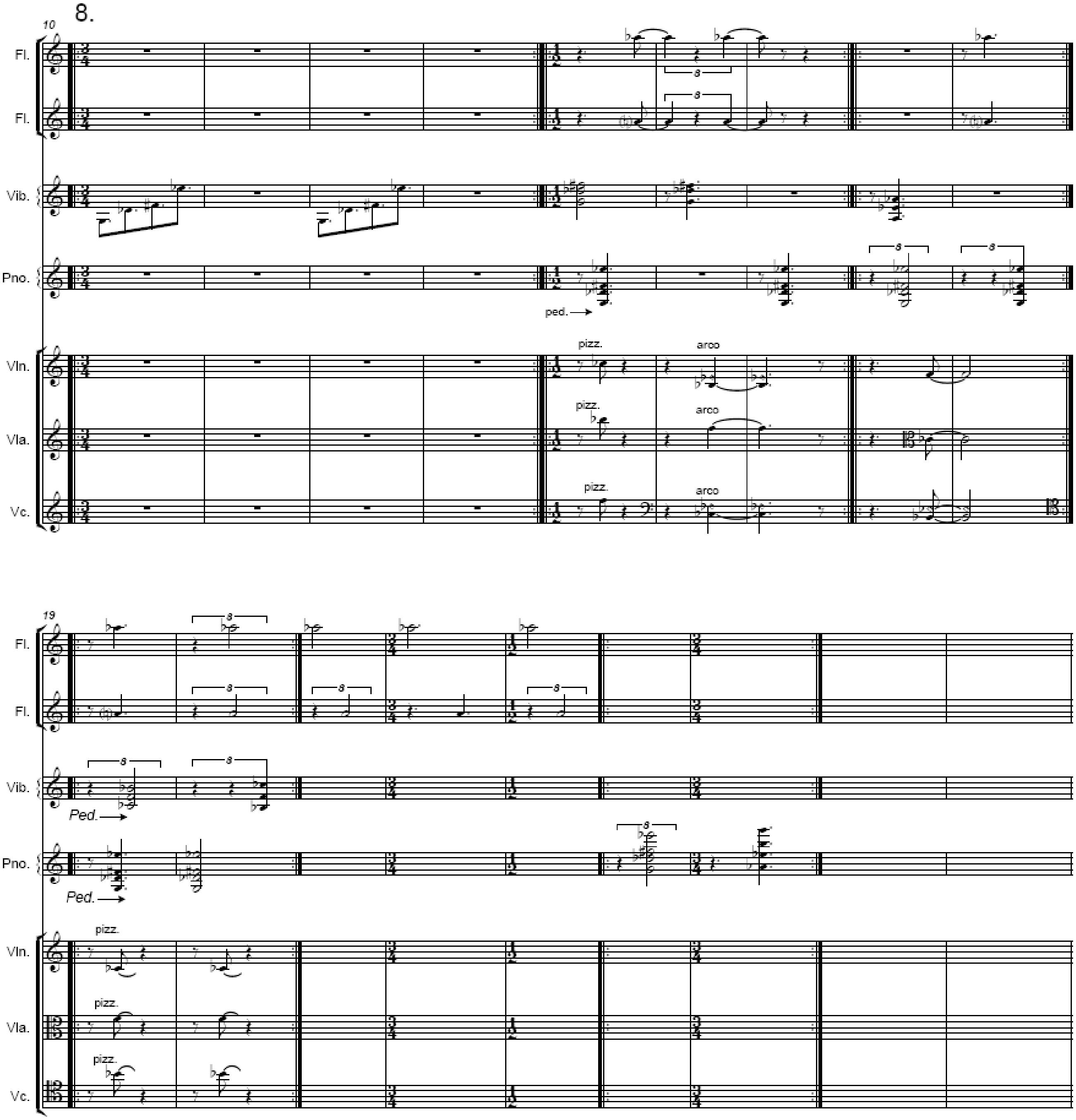
8.
10
Fl.
Fl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
ped.
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
19
Ped.
Ped.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.

Figure 6. ***Words and Music,*** **Statement 8.**

layers, much as Feldman did in *neither*. In addition to the dissonant 7th and 9th, however, the tetrachord also contains a rewritten (and thereby disguised) perfect 4th between D♭ and F#, as though Feldman wished to conceal the more consonant interval that makes many of Bob's monologic Statements seem less Feldman-ish.

The harmonic relationship between the first four notes permeates the rest of Statement 8, as the opening chord begins a pattern of intervals (reduced to their smallest form in Figure 7.1):

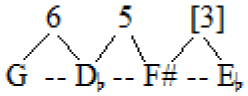

Figure 7.1. **Interval pattern in Statement 8.**

In measure 5, these original four notes are transferred to the piano, while strings and flutes enter according to the pattern both above and below the four pitches:

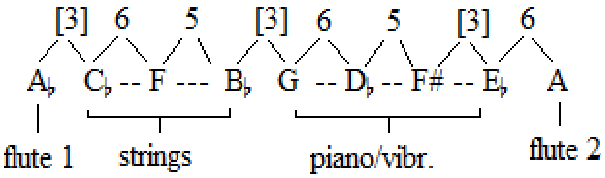

Figure 7.2. **Extension of the interval pattern in Statement 8.**

The entrance of instruments in the middle section is therefore a direct development of the opening vibraphone motive. Feldman creates an additional level of complexity in the strings by permutating the pitches among violin, viola, and cello (Figure 8):

	m. 5	m. 6 - 7	m. 8 - 9	m. 10	m. 11
Violin	C♭	B♭	F	C♭	C♭
Viola	B♭	F	C♭	F	F
Cello	F	C♭	B♭	B♭	B♭

Figure 8. **Permutation of pitches between strings, Statement 8.**

Until measure 10, no note in the strings is repeated (except when the entire measure or two measures is repeated), and each note moves upward through the cycle of instruments. Both the careful construction of harmonic materials, such that one pitch collection is orchestrated into different instrument groups and registers for the entire Statement, and the switching of pitches among related instruments to create textural variety within a block of harmonic material are two common techniques Feldman uses to create Bob's "monologue" speeches.

While other material from Bob's various "monologues" (that is, not counting the Bob/Joe collaboration sections) have varying melodic qualities, Statement 8 stands out because of the solo instrument passages that frame the Statement. An instrument solo happens again only in Statement 24, a very brief six-note piano line. The effect is one of startling intimacy, almost a glimpsed nakedness; small wonder that Joe finds this candid simplicity hard to bear following his over-rehearsed, pompous rhetoric. Despite the lack of strongly melodic material, Statement 8 also possesses an additional quality of "eventfulness," a quality that Laws claims is deliberately avoided by the majority of Feldman's Statements: "…we perceive no development, only the same object viewed from different perspectives…the use of pitch space often evokes the sense of circling around an unlocatable origin, an origin that may not even exist."[22] Although the main section falls into this description, with its undirected, non-hierarchical layers of repetitions, the framing solo segments within Statement 8 create a sense of purpose to the entire Statement. The main passage seems like a response to the question-like vibraphone line, while the gradual thinning of instrumentation to only the flutes (which change from synchronized to staggered Major sevenths as the Statement nears the end) gives the passage the feeling of winding down toward the piano solo as a logical conclusion. While the listener may not hear any climactic moment, there is a sense that the layered material emerged and then dissolved, exhausting itself without reaching a definite conclusion.

2.2.2.1. Statements 9 and 10

The next two Statements (9 and 10) in the "Love" section are very different in character, each containing thematic material that is reused and developed in significant ways, particularly in the final "Face" section of the play. Statement 9 is a short, angry outburst from Bob in response to Croak's prodding, "Louder!" following Bob's soft and delicate portrayal of Love (Statement 8). Despite Beckett's instruction "*as before*", Statement 9 is by no means a straightforward-but-louder repetition of Statement 8. Nor does it sound emotionless, as Beckett also specifies ("*all expression gone…*"); if anything, Statement 9 has a distinctly resentful quality to it. Unlike the previous Statements, Statement 9 is harshly dissonant; Feldman creates a harmonically dense counterpoint using dyads of minor 2nds above or below central clusters of two dyads (such as F# - G, A – B♭) in the piano. This pitch density masks the perfect 4ths and

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[22] Laws, Catherine. "Music in *Words and Music*: Feldman's Response to Beckett's Play." In "Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000," vol. 11 of *Samuel Beckett Today*, ed. Angela Moorjani and Carola Veit (New York: Rodopi, 2002), pg. 285.

5ths that softened the earlier layered clusters; furthermore, the dissonance is emphasized by grace notes in the piano outside the range of the main cluster, which complete the twelve-tone set. In addition, above the clustered pitches in mid-range, flute and piccolo are doubled in a melodic minor 2nd dyad – a two-pitch, four-note melody (C♭, C♭, B♭, B♭) that repeats with rhythmic variations for a furious 30 seconds or so.

Above all else, the doubled flute and piccolo give Statement 9 its frustrated and aggressive sound. It is notable that a similarly piercing octave doubling of flute and piccolo, with all other instruments clustered in a lower register, appears in other Statements where Bob is agitated, such as Statement 29, where Bob interrupts Joe in frustration to offer "spreading and subsiding music". Very few other moments of unison pitch *and* rhythmic doubling occur throughout *Words and Music*; even in the Aria section, melodies that at first seem like unison instruments are carefully asynchronized. Like the dynamic marking *mf* (which is the loudest dynamic Feldman uses in the entire score), the doubled piccolo is reserved for Bob's most violent moments.

After the impassioned outburst of Statement 9, we return to the default *mp* dynamic marking and to a warmer, more "sentimental" harmonic language. Statement 10 is a lengthy passage following Joe's musings about both "Love" and "the soul": "Is love the word?...Is soul the word?...Do we mean love, when we say love?...Soul, when we say, soul?"[23] Similar to Statement 8 ("Love"), Statement 10 consists of a short introductory passage—three measures, or about 15 seconds long—followed by a 10 measure- (50 second-) long materially different main section. Both the introductory and main sections feature important monologic motives built on major and minor 2nds. In the first three measures, the background instruments play a tight whole-tone cluster of C4 (viola), D4 (cello), E4 and G♭4 (flutes 2 and 1 respectively), punctuated by an ostinato C5 eighth note in the piano at the end of every measure. Above this, violin and vibraphone play two melodic patterns based largely on the opposite whole tone collection: the violin plays a falling-then-rising minor 7th (F5 to G4 back to F5), which repeats twice with rhythmic variations; while, highest of all, the vibraphone plays an obbligato-like four-note descent, E♭6 - D♭6 - C♭6 - B♭5. This short melodic line ties directly to the "Aria" material, as it shares the same prime form as the first four notes in the descending Aria lines; for example, Statement 18, which begins B – A – G – F# , reduces (like the line in Statement 10) to a prime form of (0135).

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[23] Beckett, *Words and Music, Complete Dramatic Works,* 289.

The second and larger part of Statement 10 is dominated by a three-note repeating melody in the first flute (B♭5 – A5 -- G5), harmonized in the second flute at the ninth (A – G – F). This is recreated in violin and cello harmonics (m. 5 in this Statement) followed by violin and viola (m. 7). While not the same ordered set of relative pitches as the four-note vibraphone melody from the previous three measures, the combined set of F – G – A – B♭ does reduce to the same prime form as both that melody and the related descending Aria material, (0135). Supporting this prominent theme, the harmonic quality of Statement 10 has now changed; pitches such as G♭ and C♭, which added to the chromatic clash between whole-tone collections, have been eliminated, and overall the section has a vague F/B♭ Major diatonicism similar to that in F/C Major during the opening Statements. The only contradictory element is the vibraphone, playing a repeated perfect 4th A♭ – D♭. However, this contradiction to the rest of the pitch collection is a background element, in part because of the relatively low register of the vibraphone; it seems like a distant voice, unconnected with the rest of the ensemble, rather than a conflicting one.

It seems strange (yet dramatically appropriate) that Feldman would choose to make Statement 10, which immediately follows Joe's string of over-serious rhetorical questions on the meaning of "love" and "soul" comparatively consonant and melodic. By the same token, Statement 8, which is supposed to feature "great expression" and follows Joe's proclamation about the supreme power of love, seems surprisingly vague in its melodic goals, not to mention complex and uncoordinated in its rhythmical layerings. Feldman's composing music for Bob that contradicts Joe's oratorical tone seems quite deliberate. This is particularly plausible considering how Feldman read the story, as "two people having some problems." Despite Croak's orders, Joe and Bob are not "friends" at this point in the play—and in this sense, Feldman shows that he understands Beckett's dramatic direction by his musical choices for "Love" and "Love and soul music." Should Bob start agreeing with Joe at this point, or even slightly lessen the antagonism between the two, the later dramatic moment of unity when Words and Music come together during the "Face Aria" would be weakened; it would be the culmination of a trend toward unity, instead of a dramatic reversal.

Both Statements 9 and 10 are thematically important, introducing materials that make significant returns later in the play; moreover, Statement 10 is the first explicit melodizing of the rising-and-falling 7ths motif present from the earliest Statements of the play. While virtually all musical material in *Words and Music* is generated from or related to major and minor 2nds or 7ths, the melodic falling-and-rising 7ths present in many of Bob's monologic Statements have a significance of their own. The melodic idea is introduced quite early in Statement 5 (the second Statement of the play, not counting the "tuning up" events) in the first flute; echoed in Statements 6 and 7 by the piano; returns in Statement 10 as a countermelody in the violin; and is abstracted into a contrapuntal line between the two flutes in Statement 12. After the central "Age

Aria" section (which is dominated by a different material), the motive reappears in Statement 26 played by the second flute, identical in pitch and contextually similar to the first part of Statement 10 -- without the high vibraphone line, which makes it a solo melody rather than a counter-line. Statement 27 pushes the motive even further into the foreground, making it explicitly a soprano melody in the first flute over a chorus of strings and second flute, and Statement 28 presents the motive (now always minor 7ths) as a violin solo. With each return, the melodic fragment seems to be more prominent and more self-contained as a "real" melody rather than a melodic expansion of range.

The pinnacle of this emergent process of melody is Statement 33, a restatement or reassembly of materials from Statements 26 through 28. Dramatically, this is the climax of the entire play; Words and Music seem to have finally reached some sort of mutual understanding, as Bob and Joe have joined together to sing the second "Aria". Likewise, it is the closest approach to a true moment of unity between the lyrical "Aria" material and the layered harmonic "monologue" sections. Statement 33 begins with Bob inviting Joe to sing using the ascending-scale motive from the "Age Aria", then launches into a passage where the first flute soars over a minor 7th that falls from B♭5 to C5 and rises again, over a scalar cluster E♭ - F – G - A♭ in the strings and second flute, implying either A♭ or E♭ Major tonalities, similar to the ambiguous consonance in the opening Statements. This pattern is repeated, then modulated up a half-step in the flute, supported by a cluster containing both G and G#, implying both D Major and A Major; then it repeats yet again, modulated this time down to A5 and B4 in the flute over a cluster similar to the first, in D/G Major. Vibraphone and piano are both absent from this part of Statement 33 (as they were in Statement 27), giving it a more sustained, vocal quality, emphasizing its singing nature.

In getting to Statement 33 and this ultimate moment of synthesis, Feldman builds the significance of the melodic 7ths motive each time it reappears in a new context, by presenting the melody with slight variations of rhythm, instrumentation, and register. These variations are meaningful in relation to the action of the play, especially as expressions of Bob's reactions to the other characters. Some variations of this motive are quite extreme; particularly when Bob feels most put upon by Croak, the instrumentation becomes restrictive. For example, in Statement 9 ("Louder!") the flutes, which in Statement 8 on "Love" were rhythmically staggered a major 7th apart in mid-register, are now in unison in a slightly higher register, emphasizing the futile loudness of this forced restatement. The unison flutes return in other Statements where Bob is agitated, such as Statement 29, where Bob interrupts Joe in frustration to offer "spreading and subsiding music". Regardless of specific stage instructions (such as Statement 9 being "emotionless"), Feldman seems to interpret both Statements as filled with Bob's distress, and the flute doubling is uncomfortably penetrating for the listener, particularly as very few other moments of unison pitch *and* rhythmic doubling occur throughout *Words and Music*. The doubled flutes stand out as a melodic line, but in this case it seems that Feldman is deliberately parodizing the original rising-and-falling 7ths melody.

Besides the clear segmentations of register or pitch collection that create structural points within the Statements, there are also subtle qualities of directedness that arise from Feldman's manipulation of layered patterns. In addition to texture and instrumentation, the layered Statements by Bob are differentiated by metric variations. For example, Statement 28 presents alternating 7/8 and 3/4 measures; in the strings, piano, and vibraphone, the 3/4 measure is a non-literal repetition of the 7/8 measure (one eighth-note value is taken from the longest notes). The first two bars are then literally repeated in the strings, piano, and vibraphone. A further 7/8 bar gives the impression that this pattern will continue indefinitely.

Apart from the other instruments, the flutes wait until the fourth eighth-note of the second measure to enter, and then begin a separate repeating pattern, best described as an eighth note of silence plus six eighth notes of a sustained major ninth (B flat above A flat) beginning on beat 2 of the second measure. This unit repeats, creating an overlapping pattern on top of the 7/8 + 3/4. Because the flute pattern repeats at a faster rate, the primacy of the first pattern as the form-giving unit of the segment is somewhat masked. Furthermore, only two repetitions of the strings-piano-vibraphone pattern occur before they are interrupted by a 2/4 bar, essentially a truncated version of the 3/4 measure: here the three violin quarter notes (a variant of the falling and rising minor 7th motive) have been compressed into a triplet. Following the shortened measure, the 3/4 and 7/8 measures reappear, reversed; the flutes, piano and vibraphone, and cello are suddenly coordinated in their entrance on the fourth eighth note of the 3/4 bar. This unexpected doubling, plus the similarity to the first flute entrance, gives this point a sort of structural weight; the material that follows it has the feeling of a short phrase extension, a quick concluding of the corrupted pattern.

2.2.3. "Age", Feldman's symmetry and Beckett's poetry

As discussed above, in *Words and Music* a number of "Music's" Statements have features of Feldman's typical late style, particularly layers of clusters (usually major and minor 2nds and their inversions and expansions; but also, strikingly, fourths and fifths are quite common) arranged in instrumentally similar groups to create shifting layers of sound, characterized by pitch-class density, yet with a sort of orchestrational transparency to them.

Related to the harmonic layers and dissonant clusters are the melodic fragments consisting of falling and rising 7ths, which occur when Bob is giving a more reflective or calm response to Croak, and occasionally melodic 2nds, found typically in Statements that are Bob's more agitated responses. Aside from these related kinds of material, the second section of *Words and Music* features a material type not typically associated with Feldman's later work – the linear melodic fragments that comprise the first "Aria" of cooperation between Joe and Bob, in which Joe improvises a setting of the centrally-embedded "Age is when to a man" poem, based on cues and suggestions from Bob. At first glance, this extensive use of apparently simple single-line melodies based on scale patterns seems unusual, if not outright un-Feldmanesque. However, a closer examination reveals that, as in the other Statements, there are instances of Feldman's deliberate defiance of symmetry that are evocative of his other late works.

The rising and falling phrases in the "Age Aria" section of *Words and Music* are Feldman's solution to the script's instructions:

> WORDS: [*Trying to sing.*] Age is when…to a man…
> MUSIC: *Improvement of above.*
> WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] Age is when to a man…
> MUSIC: *Suggestion for following.*
> WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] Huddled o'er…the ingle….
> [*Pause. Violent thump.*] [24]

Beckett's instructions for Bob continue in this way throughout the section. Through this process of Music making "suggestions" or "improvements" and Joe imitating them, the two characters are discovering, with great reluctance, how to work together at Croak's demand.

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[24] Beckett, *Words and Music, Complete Dramatic Works,* 290.

Throughout the “Aria” parts of the section, we find a recurring theme played by two primary voices from the same instrument family (typically cello and viola together, flutes together, and piano and vibraphone together) beginning a third apart, moving up a staggered line resembling a scalar fragment at two separate paces, sometimes with coloristic echoes added by a third or fourth instrument. While these segments may seem rather simple and straightforward to a casual listener, a closer examination reveals some interesting depth of detail in the construction of these segments, the most tune-like bits of the piece, to produce specific effects in combination with the text. Rather than a single instrument playing each line, or a simple doubling or regular echoing voice, Feldman sets irregular rhythms in two voices over a very similar sequence of pitches. Laws describes this as “a staggering, faltering effect”[25] while Feldman related the effect of the two voices to the halting language of the lines on Age, beginning even before Bob and Joe work “together”:

> WORDS: *(faltering)*. Age is…age is when…old age I mean…if that is what my Lord means…is when…if you’re a man…were a man…huddled…nodding…the ingle…waiting….[26]

This staggering pattern continues as Bob makes “suggestions” and Joe interprets those suggestions as further lyrics. The pattern culminates twice in the first presentation of the Aria as complete rise-and-fall scalar arcs, first in the flutes (Statement 20) and then in vibraphone and piano (Statement 22). Both of these Statements are Bob’s prompting Joe to repeat and elaborate upon his last line; and both feature the melodic ascent beginning a minor third apart, contraction of the counterpoint as the line descends, and a final descending melodic minor third replacing the opening contrapuntal one. The overall effect of the complete rise-and-fall Statement is one of approach and withdrawal, a conclusion to the previous repeated assertion of the rising scale, with a final widening step that seems like the final note has fallen out of place, perhaps as a note of despair at old age (or at the futility of Joe and Bob’s efforts to combine in communicating the line of text). Figure 9 shows the rising pattern and complete rise-and-fall (Statements 17 and 20).

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[25] Laws, “Music in *Words and Music*,” 282.
[26] Beckett, *Words and Music, Complete Dramatic Works*, 289.

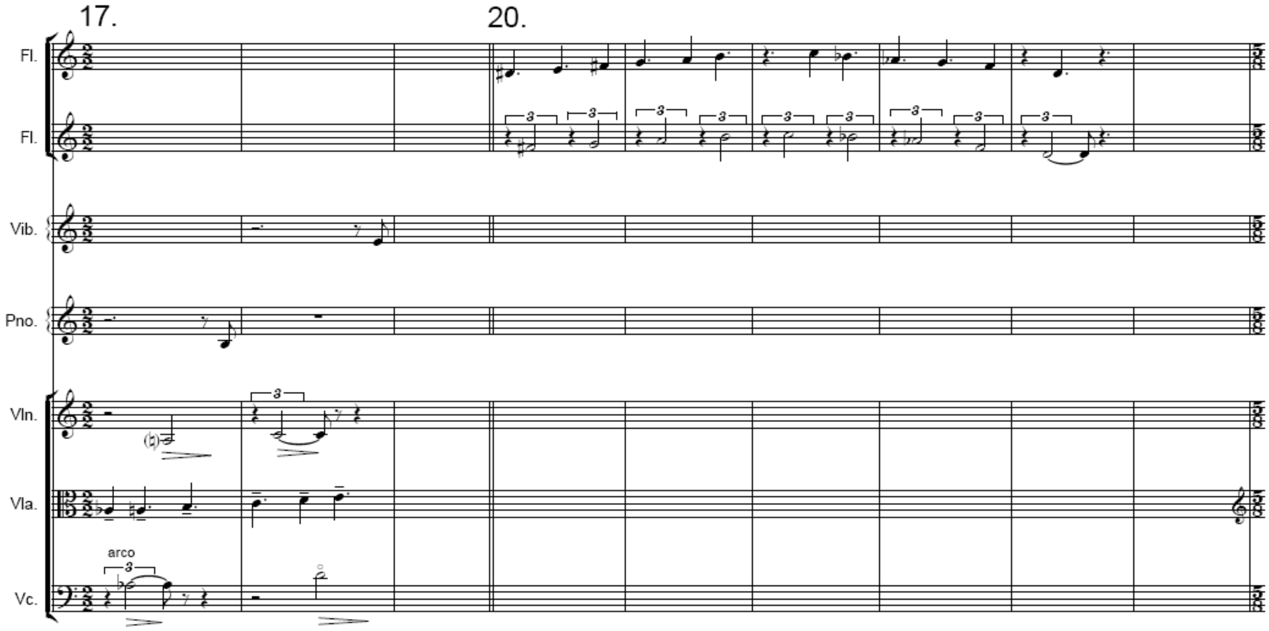


Figure 9. **Statements 17 and 20.**

Looking at the first complete rise-and-fall (segment 20), we find an uneven three-against-two pattern (♩.+♩.+♩ in Flute 1 against two quarter-note triplets, with a rest on the first quarter note in each triplet, for Flute 2) that shifts in the second measure (the Flute 1 rhythm becoming ♩.+♩+♩.) to give the impression that the voices are gradually falling into rhythmic alignment. Likewise, Flute 1 starts a third below Flute 2 but plays two more notes in the same two measures, so that the two voices give the impression of proceeding through a gradual convergence from interval size 3 to 0, although this does not happen in a completely linear way, but rather in a staggering of interval sizes that corresponds to, and is the result of the staggered rhythm:

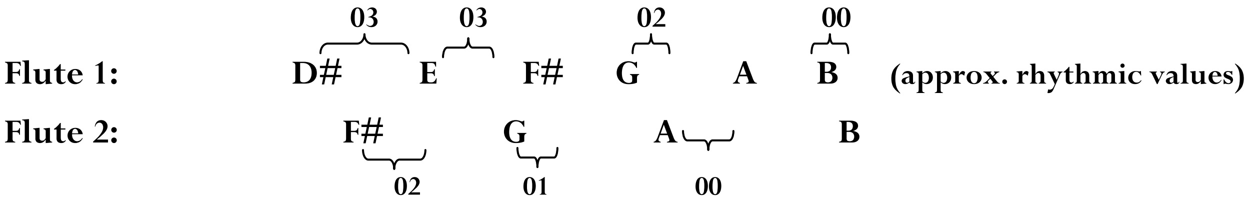


Figure 10. **Interval relations of Statement 20, m. 1 -2**

The two flutes reach a unison at the top of this rising line, at the moment when their attacks most nearly coincide, giving the impression of a near miss in coordinating the last note. After a brief pause, the voices (still in unison) reenter on a C, descending down a scale a half-step higher than the ascending one. Furthermore, Flute 2 is initially the leader of the descent, but is quickly overtaken by Flute 1, as a degree of rhythmic symmetry occurs -- measure 1 and measure 2's rhythms recur in opposite order from the ascent, ordering the entire segment as 1-2-2-1 plus an additional measure. Since both flutes begin their descent on C, the downward scale is crowded with unisons; and at first it seems plausible that the two lines would expand from unison to seconds to their starting interval of a minor third; however, this does not happen, at least not in a literally symmetrical sense:

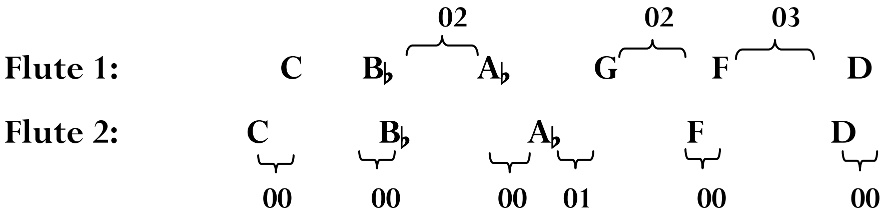
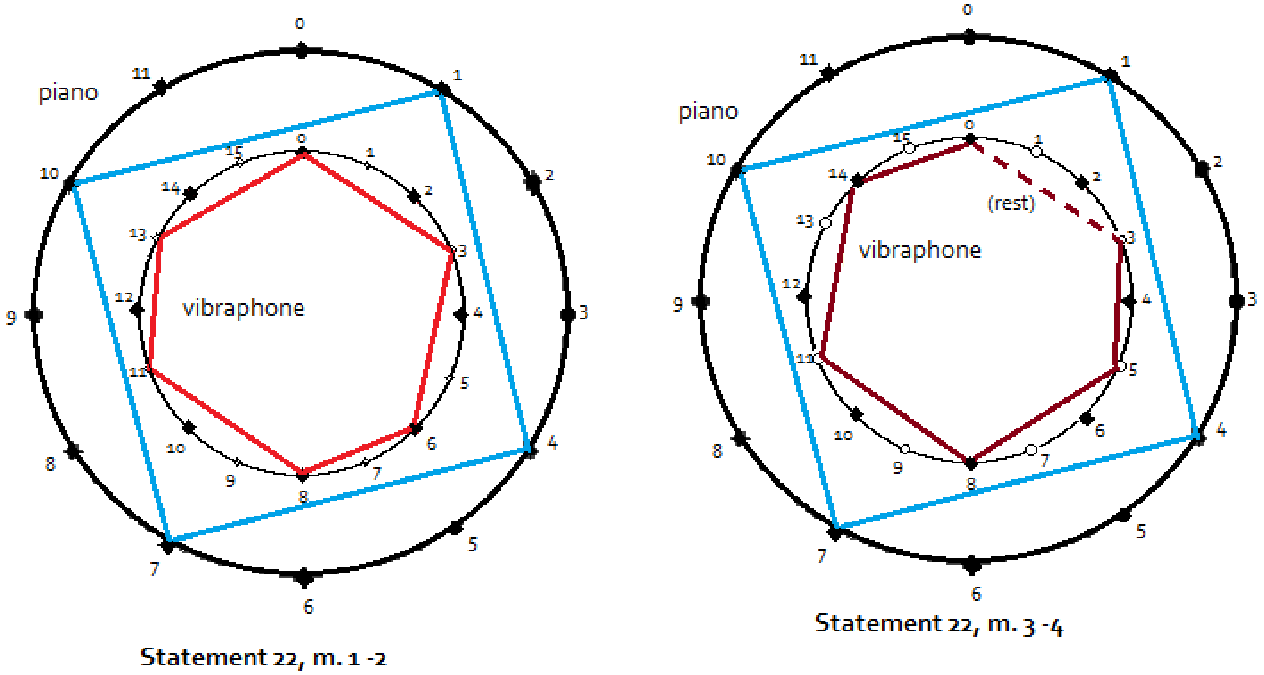


Figure 11. **Interval relations of Segment 20, m. 3 - 4**

While the flutes conclude in harmonic unison, the minor third does return, and rather strikingly, for it has been changed to a linear feature, incorporated into the conclusion of the flutes' statement. When we hear the C in the piano and vibraphone starting the next statement, our expectations of the previous statement are fulfilled, but then immediately negated as the C is revealed to be a leading tone to D♭, a leading tone to a new transposition of the scale pattern.

Statement 22, which is Bob's suggestion for the lines "Comes in the ashes / like in that old light", follows a nearly identical rhythmic pattern to Statement 20, although the intervallic pattern is slightly different (Statement 22 has a final drop of a perfect 4th in the piano, from E to B, instead of a descending minor third). As before, the staggered counter-rhythms give the impression of faltering attempts to coordinate the two parts. Rhythm circles representing measures 1 – 2 and 3 – 4 in Statement 22 (see Figures 12.1 and 12.2) give graphic representations of the uneven composite pattern of events. The piano rhythm is homogenously divided into quarter-note triplets, offset by a triplet-quarter rest, while the vibraphone rhythm (subdivided into eighth notes) creates an asymmetrical 6 against 4, because of the switch in measure 2 to a pattern of ♩.+♩+♩. As in the flutes in Statement 20, this rhythmic switching creates a moment of almost-simultaneous events at the height of the ascent. The next two measures (3 and 4) are a rotation of the vibraphone rhythm, displacing the pattern by a measure, beginning the pattern at count 8 rather than 0; one could also think of the six-sided figure representing this rhythm as "flipped" twice, once vertically and once horizontally. This rotated or flipped version of the rhythm from the first two measures is partially masked by the dotted-quarter count of rest at the beginning of measure 3.



Statement 22, m. 1 -2

Statement 22, m. 3 -4

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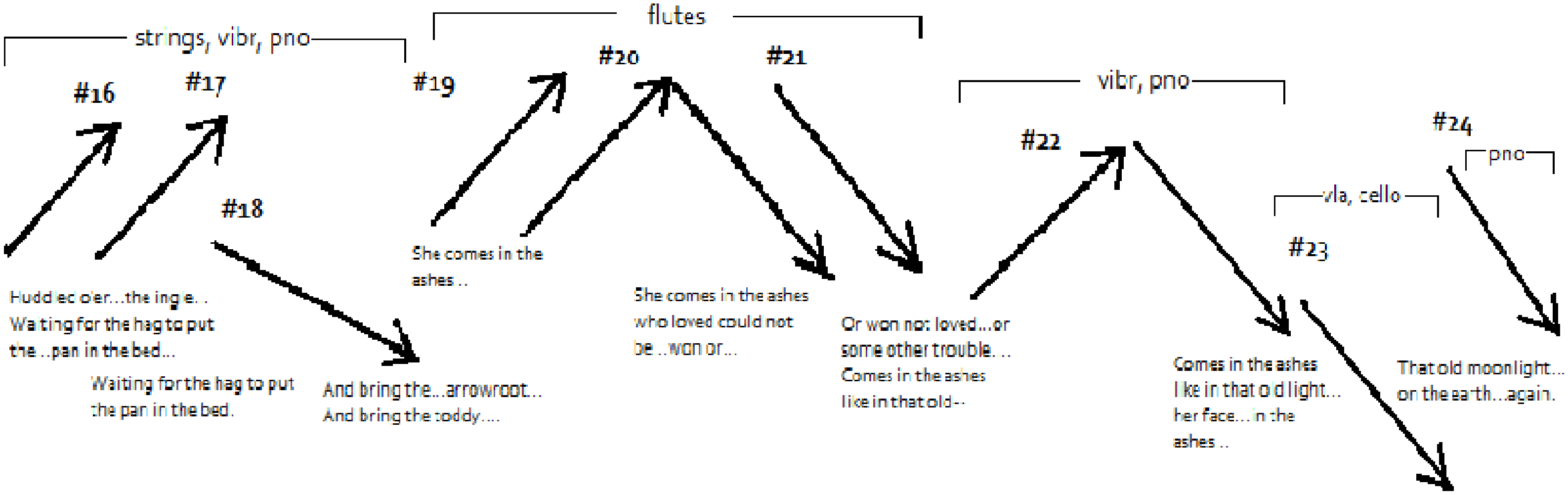
Figures 12.1 and 12.2. **Rhythm circles comparing piano and vibraphone rhythms, Statement 22.**

Beginning with Statement 16, the central poem of the “Age” section is first presented in fragments, lasting through Statement 24. Overall, the first presentation of the complete poem follows a roughly symmetrical pattern of rising and falling lines, including two “complete” rising and falling arcs in Statements 20 (in the flutes) and 22 (in piano and vibraphone). All Statements in this section are presented in groups of strings (with a few coloristic vibraphone and piano notes), flutes, and piano / vibraphone. Figure 13 on page 44 shows not only the symmetry symmetry of the scale patterns, but also shows roughly how the lines of text correspond to Bob’s suggestions and improvements. Figure 14 gives a more detailed picture of a complete performance of Bob and Joe’s first rendition of the poem, including one possible version of Joe’s semi-improvised responses to Bob (in this case, following the Ensemble Recherche recording).

In the Ensemble Recherche production, the actor begins the first version of the Aria by singing in unison with Music's "La", then singing lines that follow Feldman's scalar patterns very closely in direction, pacing, and pitch. As the poem is further assembled, and as Joe's lines somewhat longer, the actor becomes slightly more inventive and less rigidly imitative—still following Feldman's music closely, but with some recycling and reinterpreting of patterns from earlier in the poem. For example, between Statements 21 and 22, Joe has a longer stretch of text: "Or won not loved…or some other trouble…Comes in the ashes…like in that old-" which is interrupted by Bob. The first part ("Or won not loved…") is a continuation of a previous line, and follows the flute suggestion that precedes it closely. For the next line, Joe casts back for earlier material; "Comes in the ashes" echoes an earlier sung line "She comes in the ashes" between Statements 20 and 21. Interestingly, both sung "comes in the ashes" lines are slight corruptions of Statement 20, in which the actor changes the rising E minor line (which starts with a D# leading tone) to E♭ Major (by hearing and singing D# scale degree $\hat{7}$ into E♭ scale degree $\hat{1}$), unconsciously changing the tonality of the ascending part to match that of the descending line. This kind of "adjustment" by Joe happens several times on the recording of the Ensemble Recherche production.

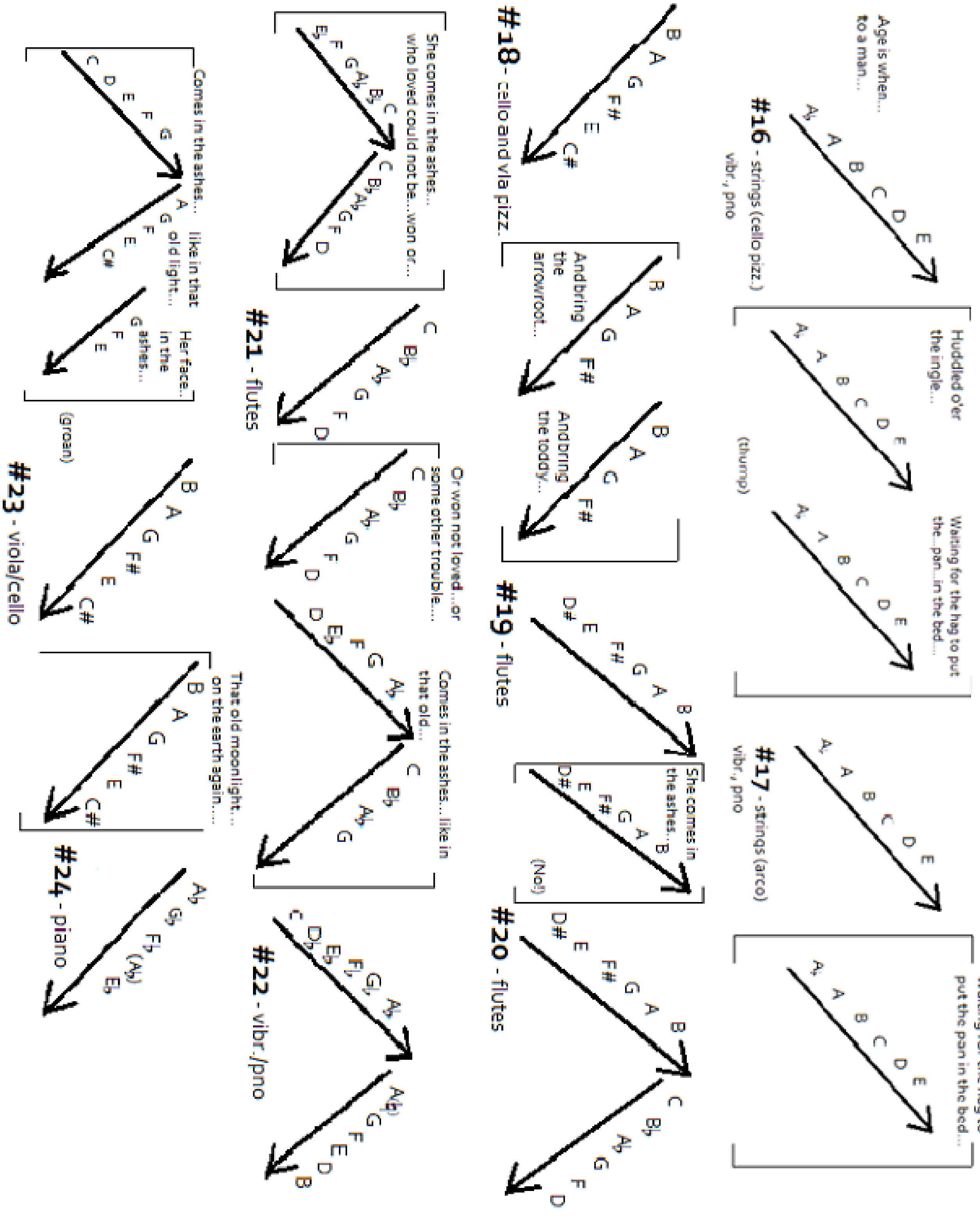
It seems quite possible that Stephen Lind, the actor playing Words in the Ensemble Recherche production, listened to the earlier Evergreen Review recording of the Everett Frost production and took some direction from David Warrilow's interpretation. Both actors take a similar approach to timing, slowly intoning the words of the poem at a slow pace similar to Bob's tempo for the scale patterns. One important difference between the two actors' interpretations is how they fit the suggested scale patterns to the verses of text. While Stephen Lind frequently sings more than one syllable on a pitch in order to fit the entire line of


strings, vibr, pno
flutes
vibr, pno
vla, cello
pno
#16
#17
#18
#19
#20
#21
#22
#23
#24
Huddled o'er...the ingle..
Waiting for the hag to put
the ..pan in the bed...
Waiting for the hag to put
the pan in the bed.
And bring the...arrowroot...
And bring the toddy....
She comes in the
ashes ..
She comes in the ashes
who loved could not
be ..won or...
Or won not loved...or
some other trouble. ..
Comes in the ashes
like in that old--
Comes in the ashes
like in that old light...
her face... in the
ashes ..
That old moonlight...
on the earth...again.

Script instructions:

16. *Suggestion for following.*
17. *Improvement of above.*
18. *Suggestion for following.*
19. *Suggestion for following.*
20. *Repeats suggestion.*
21. *Repeats end of previous suggestion.*
22. *Interrupts with improvement of this and brief suggestion.*
23. *Suggestion for following.*
24. *Further brief suggestion.*

Figure 13. **Relative symmetry and the direction of Bob's suggestions in the "Age Aria"**



#16 - strings (cello pizz.) vibr., pno
Age is when... to a man...
A♭ A B C D E
Huddled o'er the ingle...
A♭ A B C D E
(thump)
Waiting for the hag to put the...pan...in the bed...
A♭ A B C D E
#17 - strings (arco) vibr., pno
A♭ A B C D E
Waiting for the hag to put the pan in the bed...
A♭ A B C D E
#18 - cello and vla pizz.
B A G F# E C#
And bring the arrowroot...
B A G F#
And bring the toddy...
B A G F#
#19 - flutes
D# E F# G A B
She comes in the ashes...
D# E F# G A B
(No!)
#20 - flutes
D# E F# G A B
C B♭ A♭ G F D
She comes in the ashes... who loved could not be...won or...
E♭ F G A♭ B♭ C
C B♭ A♭ G F D
#21 - flutes
C B♭ A♭ G F D
Or won not loved...or some other trouble...
C B♭ A♭ G F D
Comes in the ashes... like in that old...
D E♭ F G A♭
C B♭ A♭ G
#22 - vibr./pno
C D♭ E♭ F♭ G♭ A♭
A♭ G F E D B
Comes in the ashes...
C D E F G
like in that old light...
A G F E C#
Her face... in the ashes...
G F E
(groan)
#23 - viola/cello
B A G F# E C#
That old moonlight... on the earth again....
B A G F# E C#
#24 - piano
A♭ G♭ F♭ (A♭) E♭

Figure 14. Direction and pitch content of Statements 16 – 24 and Words' improvised responses, Ensemble Recherche recording (Stephen Lind as Words).

the poem into the range of the scale, David Warrilow tends to sing only one or at most two syllables per pitch, which requires him to alter the scale pattern slightly. A typical pattern is for Warrilow is to sing one syllable per pitch until he reaches the top of his scale, and then sing the remaining syllables on the top pitch. Figure 15 is a transcribed example, in which Warrilow's Joe repeats the last pitch several times to complete the line:

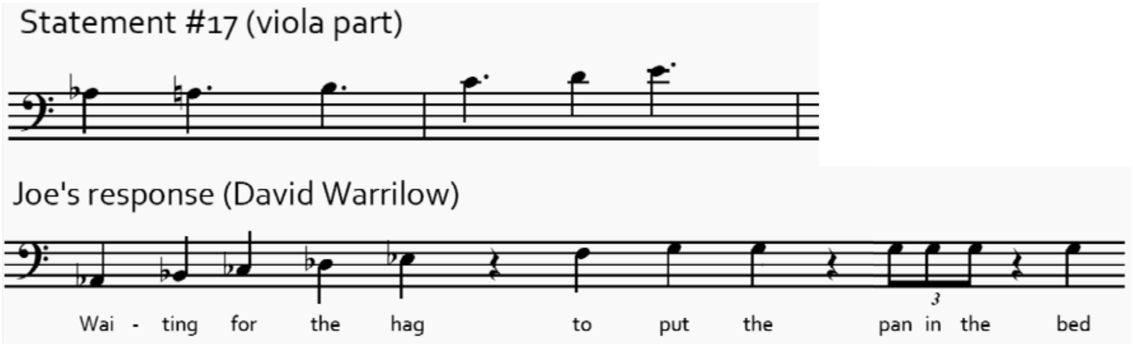

Statement #17 (viola part)
Joe's response (David Warrilow)
Wai - ting for the hag to put the pan in the bed
3

Figure 15. David Warrilow's improvised response to Statement 17.

Another tendency peculiar to the Everett Frost production is that Joe's scales tend to start in different places from Bob's suggestions. Many of the ascending scales finish beyond Warrilow's range, and he often begins the scale on a lower pitch than was played by the ensemble in order to fit in the entire scale. For the same reason, Warrilow tends to start his downward scales from near the last pitch in Bob's suggestions, rather than imitate Bob exactly by beginning the descending patterns from the same pitch. In fact, Warrilow seems to have some difficulty finding comfortable pitches; often, he seems to have trouble distinguishing Major and minor seconds, with the frequent result that he turns the first note in Bob's ascending scales, which functions like a leading tone, from $\hat{7}$ into $\hat{1}$ by singing a major 2nd instead of a minor 2nd (which is also present in the above example).

After Bob and Joe stumble through the poem the first time, a pause and a groan from Croak follow: Bob then "plays air through alone, then invites WORDS with opening pause, invites again and finally accompanies very softly."[27] This second presentation of the poem is continuous, more polished, with fewer hesitations and some verbal edits—several repetitions have been omitted, such as "She comes in the ashes," while alternate versions of other lines are changed ("moonlight" becomes "starlight", "waiting" becomes "shivering") or deleted altogether ("and bring the arrowroot").[28] To match the edits to the poem, Feldman first presents the complete rise-and-fall scale pattern as a brief version of the "air" played through alone (Statement 25, m. 1 – 5); this is a reprisal of Statement 22 with the pattern switched between piano and vibraphone.

2.2.3.1. Incompleteness and interpretive problems in the "Aria"

While *Words and Music*, taken as a whole, presents interpretive difficulties in light of the incompleteness of the script and vagueness of the scripted directions, the Age section is perhaps the most problematic part of the play, in terms of the composer being able to make reasonable assumptions about Beckett's intended effect. In the "Age Aria" section of the play, the nonspecificity of Music's dialogue contributions is both amplified and restricted by the developing relationship, and forced collaboration, between Bob and Joe. "Music" is in one sense fully in control of the situation; from a dramatic point of view, Bob is the one directing the construction of the poem, leading the way by subtly suggesting rhythmic patterns that "Joe" then interprets as words. Furthermore, the dramatic impact of Words and Music "working together" is largely shaped by the composer, who determines both the style and pacing of the characters' interactions through this section. However, the music behind “Music” (that is, the composer of Music’s suggestions) must have the ultimate goal of the joint creation of the poem in mind beforehand; not only must the music in this passage evoke the imagery of the poem, but must do so in a way that “Joe” can easily imitate and respond to. While “Music” sets the tone for the Aria section, in actuality (and reiterated in the script) Bob can only “suggest” and offer “improvements” of Joe’s interpretations; how exactly the actor playing Joe interprets those musical suggestions is left to him.

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[27] Beckett, *Words and Music, Complete Dramatic Works,* 291.
[28] Ibid.

Another issue to consider is how much rehearsal or preemptive arrangement Joe’s responses should receive. As noted previously, Joe’s singing of the lines of the poem depends on Bob’s musical suggestions for style, contour, and pacing; and to be ultimately effective, Bob’s musical suggestions must originate from the complete poem, as it already exists, in the script. Yet at the same time, the performers must give the impression that the verses emerge spontaneously from Words’ and Music’s efforts to work together – not only that Joe is improvising tunes that mimic Bob, but that he is also inspired to create new lines of the poem based on Bob’s suggestions. The dilemma seems to be that Music must give the impression of being the leader of the two collaborators, guiding both Words’ prose and singing, while at the same time being utterly dependent on Joe to interpret his promptings in a musically effective way; which reflects the way that, at the most fundamental level, Bob is completely dependent on the musical contribution from a third party, a composer, in order for the character (and by extension, the play) to exist at all.

For a composer who looks only to the literal word of the script for guidelines, numerous interpretations of the “Age Aria” section (and of course, the entire character of “Music) are certainly possible. As an example, in a 1979 production by the group Theater For Your Mother, composer Mark E. Miller's score relies heavily on jazz idioms, and the "Age Aria", which features a comically-voiced Joe with trumpet and cowbell, seems highly parodic of a vaudeville-era softshoe. In this version, Bob's "suggestions" are frantic nudges to return Joe from motor-mouthed sound effects to a repeated, and possibly clichéd, dance-hall ditty setting of the poetic lines. This exaggeratedly comic relationship, in which Music is essentially an aural sheepdog for Words, is radically different Feldman's interpretation. As mentioned before, Feldman's best guess as to what Beckett had in mind for the collaboration between Joe and Bob stemmed primarily from the pacing of the lines read aloud, and only secondarily on the meaning of the words. The apparent simplicity of the scale patterns allow for an actor who may not have musical training to comfortably perform the required singing; the repetitive use of the materials increases the impression of expansion and clarification of a single organic musical gesture which emanates organically from both Music and Words, giving Music a convincingly spontaneous feeling in its Statements to match that of Joe.

Both the Ensemble Recherche and the Evergreen Review actors playing Joe/Words adhere to a strategy of roughly imitating Feldman's cues. There are, however, some interesting differences between the two actors' interpretations of Joe's responses. While both versions follow scale patterns, Stephen Lind's responses for Joe seem much more closely connected to Feldman's musical fragments, both in terms of timing and in pitch content. In the recording of the Ensemble Recherche performance, Lind's attempts to imitate Music's suggestions not only adhere quite closely to the Statements that precede each improvised response, but also incorporate recycled fragments from earlier Statements to create variations upon Bob's suggestions and improvements. Consequently, the Ensemble Recherche version sounds much more polished than the Evergreen Review recording, as though the responses to the suggestion and improvement Statements were not only performed by a more musically apt singer, but also pre-planned and rehearsed ahead of the final recording. In fact, it is plausible that a listener without a copy of the script or score would be unable to tell that Joe's singing is not fully notated as part of the score. The Evergreen Review recording, on the other hand, presents us with a version of Joe that is at times clearly uncomfortable with his orders to imitate and improvise based on the guidance of his rival. In a sense, this is more in line with Beckett's scripted instructions, which always describe Joe as "*trying to sing*", but not necessarily succeeding.

What could Beckett's motivations be in creating a dramatic scenario where not only would a collaborator have strong influence over the style and structure of the dialogue, but the aesthetic outcome would depend on widely varying abilities and interpretations by more-or-less musically inclined actors? The open-ended nature of the "Age Aria" section makes it difficult for analysis, in the way that improvised music is frequently difficult to analyze; that is, the analyst must inevitably make speculation about all possible performances based on a limited number of recordings, and that which is actually studied is not the conception of the music, or the composer's intentions, but a limited interpretation taken out of context. Some concession can perhaps be given considering the larger context of *Words and Music*. Being a radio play, a CD recording is not so remote from how it was first presented to an audience via broadcast; and as half of the exchange between Joe and Bob is in the fully-notated score, we can resort to a more traditional analytic approach and compare the improvised segments to the pre-composed music on which they were based. However, in both listening to and analyzing this section of the play, I am still left with an uncomfortable feeling; it is disconcerting to think that Beckett might have purposely made the effectiveness of the climactic moment of his play, as will be discussed in the next section, dependent on a *second*, non-specialist, improvising musical collaborator, and it is even more odd to consider that this feeling of discomfort, this sense of potential confusion and unsureness transmitted from Joe to the audience, might be exactly the effect Beckett intended.

2.2.4. “The Face” and synthesis between words and music

After Joe and Bob finish the Age “Aria”, a long pause follows, marking the end of the section; Croak then murmurs, “The face,” four times in a row, emphasizing the beginning of the play’s final section, centered on Croak’s final theme of (as one might guess) “the Face.” It is implied that this refers to the same face seen by Croak “in the tower” before his entrance near the beginning of the play, causing him to be late (with its implied double meaning of both tardiness and death). Very soon afterward it becomes apparent that Croak, having engaged his own memories rather than another abstract theme such as “Love” or “Age”, is no longer fully in control of Bob’s and Joe’s utterances. Bob “speaks” first (Statement 26) without a direct order from Croak; he and Joe then begin a descriptive back-and-forth dialogue in which Bob’s Statements are increasingly consonant with a vague diatonicism similar to that of the opening Statements, while Joe’s speeches are cold clinical descriptions of a passionate encounter with a mysterious woman from Croak’s past.

As discussed before, Statements 26 through 28 are developments of the rising-and-falling minor 7ths theme that first became unified in Statement 10. By contrast, Joe’s interjected speeches are very short and specified as “cold,” perhaps even passive-aggressively so, in response to Bob’s “*warmly sentimental*” Statements. Eventually, Joe cuts off Bob at the end of Statement 28 with a violently snapped, “Peace!” However, Bob returns the favor by interrupting Joe’s detailed description of the motion of the woman’s breasts “spreading…and then subsiding to their natural…aperture--" with an outburst of what Beckett notes should be an "*irrepressible burst of spreading and subsiding music*"[29] in Statement 29.

Statement 29 (Figure 16) is striking for its agitated mood, conveyed most prominently through the doubling of flute and piccolo at the octave similar to Statement 9. As before with Statement 9, Feldman is interpreting Bob's emotional state beyond Beckett's script, which only specifies that the music be "irrepressible"; in this case, the "spreading and subsiding music" seems like an angst-filled backlash against Joe's excessively dry and deadpan description of "the Face," or perhaps against Joe's straying from a description of purely "the Face" into peripheral topics (such as breasts).

Regardless of Feldman's reasoning behind his compositional choices here, Statement 29 has numerous features that link it to Statement 9. In addition to the return of the piccolo, the heavy chromaticism (all pitches but F and F#) evokes a very similar sound, reinforced by the organization of pitch into similar sub-collections, either within one instrument or a particular subgroup. The prime form (014), for example, seems to permeate every part in Statement 29: it comprises every triad in both the vibraphone and piano parts; every horizontal triad in the strings (for example the initial C in violin, E in viola, and E♭ in cello); and marks the contour boundaries of the flute line, in which a pattern starts on C♭, drops immediately to G and rises chromatically to B♭, repeating throughout the Statement. Furthermore, when paired with corresponding notes in the flute line, the combined set between piano (or vibraphone or strings) and flute frequently adds up to (0145), such as at the second eighth note of the second measure, where B – D – E♭ in the vibraphone is synchronous with B♭ in the flutes; or the third eighth note

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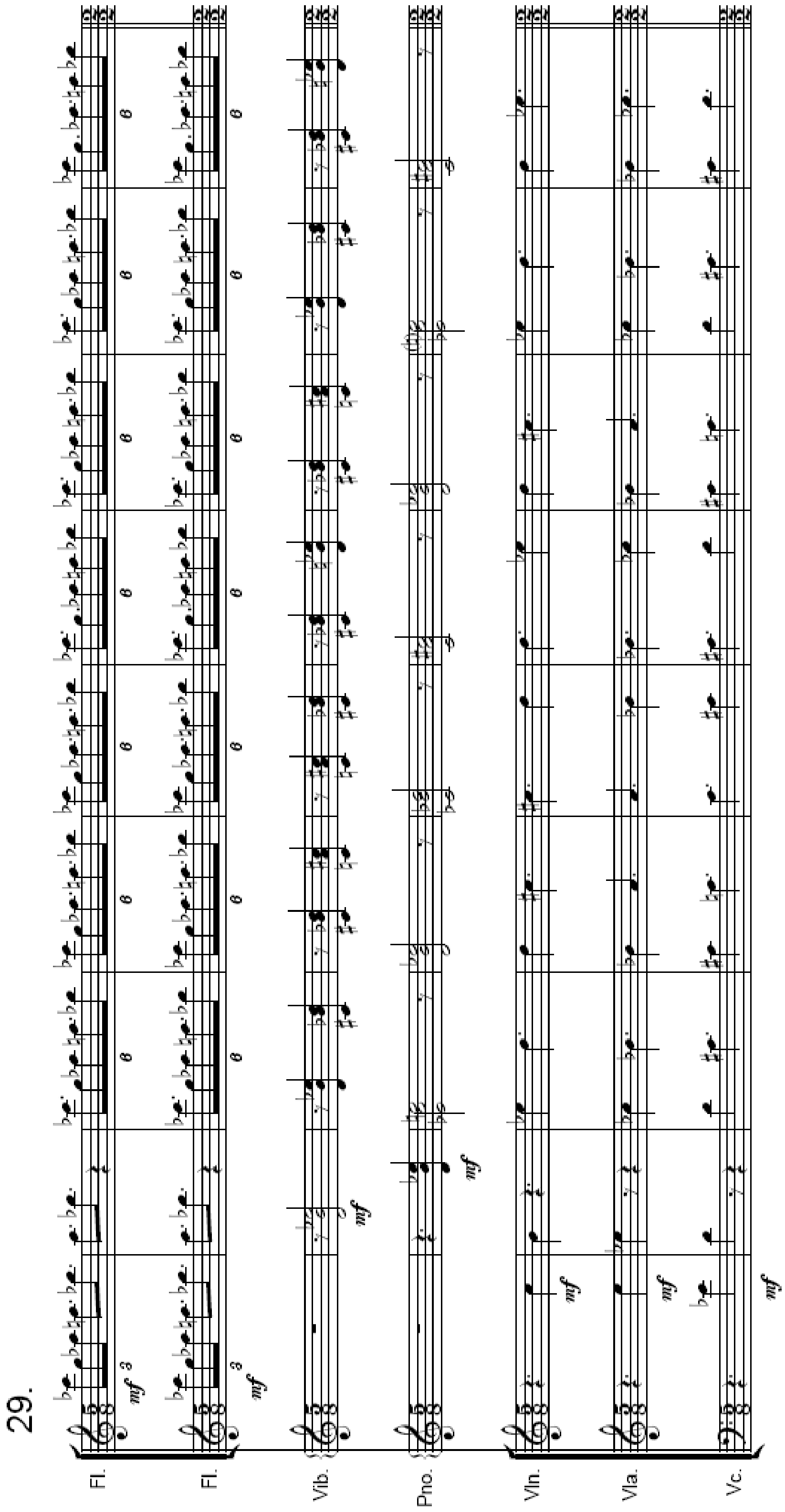
[29] Beckett, *Words and Music, Complete Dramatic Works*, 292.



29.
Fl.
Fl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
3
3

Figure 16. Statement 29.

of measure 4, where A – C – C# in the strings added to A♭ in the flutes. Statement 9 also has extensive use of (0145), particularly in vibraphone (C – D♭ – E – F) and piano (G – A♭ – B – C).

While the (0145) pitch class set is mainly a vertical harmonic relationship, the horizontal melodic movements in Statement 29 tend to be highly chromatic. Immediately apparent is a set of five chromatic pitches, from G to C♭, in the flute and piccolo line. This five-pitch collection is paralleled in Statement 9 by a five-note chromatic cluster in the piano (F# - G – A♭ – A – B♭), found in measure 1 and recurring throughout the Statement. More chromatic collections can be found in Statement 29; the vibraphone uses all the pitches in a chromatic 7-pitch set, A – B♭ – B – C – C# - D – E♭, and the piano uses a set of eight (A through E). Likewise, while Statement 9 uses complimentary chromatic sets in strings plus vibraphone (B – C – C# – D – E♭ – F♭) versus piano (F# - G – Ab – A – B♭) in a harmonic cluster fashion, those clusters are expanded by horizontal movement in piano and vibraphone, so that larger collections (such as F# through C in the piano, measures 4 and 5) are formed by sequential smaller clusters.

Further structural reinforcements of the repeating pattern of five chromatic pitches in the flute and piccolo underlie the melodic surface of Statement 29. For example, in the strings, we find that each instrument plays within a set of three different chromatic pitches: C# - D – E♭ for violin, A – B♭ – C♭ for viola, and C – C# - D for cello (not counting the first two measures in which the collections for violin and cello are reversed), creating a rhythmically alternating pattern of quarter- and dotted-quarter notes. In every measure of Statement 29 the strings together play a total of five different pitches, such as E♭ and D in violin, C♭ and B♭ in viola, and D and C# in measure 3. Every measure can be reduced to the prime form (01245), creating a pattern of sets with five pitches, similar to yet different from the five-note repeating flute melody. Of course, it is no coincidence that the Statement is in a five-meter, although the regularity of the meter is masked by the unevenly dotted sextuplets in the flutes. The pervasiveness of both rhythmic and pitch groups of five in Statement 29 makes one wonder if other collections of five can be found throughout the rest of the Statements. A quick examination of the score shows that five different pitches can be found in the three-note descending melody in Statement 32 between the two flutes (B♭ – A – G in flute 1, A♭ – G – F in flute 2). Another group of five can be found in Statement 33— a set of five chromatic pitches in the rising-and-falling minor sevenths theme in the first flute, A – B♭ – B/C♭ – C – D♭ in this instance. Other examples of groups of five include the repeating eighth-note quintuplet (five repeating Ds) in the vibraphone in Statement 12; the isolated piano phrases in Statement 35; and the five-note chord in the strings and flutes toward the end of Statement 36, the final Statement. The "Face" section of the play seems especially to be filled with groupings of five, which could reflect Feldman's desire to avoid rhythmic regularities as the theme of the dialogue becomes more emotionally fraught for Croak (and by extension for Joe and Bob). While uneven patterns (such as quarter note/dotted-quarter alternations) are ubiquitous throughout *Words and Music*, the five-pattern seems to signify anxiety in a special way in Statement 29 and also Statement 34, a short reprisal of 29 in which Bob replies to Joe's prodding.

A valid question can be asked about Statement 29; it isn't apparent in what way it fulfills Beckett's description as "*spreading and subsiding music*", as there is no significant change in register or expansion of thematic material during the Statement's brief length (only about 20 seconds); nor does it have a definite "*Triumph and conclusion*" as is also described in the script. The ending is an abrupt cutoff of the patterns after seven or so repetitions, and it does not strike the listener as being particularly triumphant. Again, it seems as though Feldman has taken a broader interpretive license regarding the description of the music in the script, interposing Bob's distress and anxiety where Beckett may have intended only exuberance or flustered excitement. This is especially likely given that Feldman reused an abbreviated version of Statement 29 for Statement 34, specified by Beckett in the script as a "*brief rude retort.*"[30] In this case, Feldman may possibly be imbuing the music with his own frustration at Beckett's instructions, perhaps with the emotionally vague words "spreading and subsiding."

2.2.4.1. Return of the "Aria"

Going into the climactic moment of the play, Joe and Bob begin their process of suggestion and improvisation to work together once again, this time without a direct order from Croak. Here, Feldman reuses the linear scale pattern from the earlier "Aria" section, but with a few new developments. Statement 30 begins in the same meter as the earlier suggestions for Joe (2/2), but now with an additional 3/8 measure at the end; also, while the E-minor scale beginning on D# played by two flutes strongly resembles Statement 19, in this instance the flutes are joined by viola harmonics. Furthermore, the viola does not simply double one or the other of the flutes; it adds another rhythmic layer contrapuntal to the two flutes, in the form of half-note triplets. Neither flute is playing half-note triplets, nor does the second flute skip notes in the scale pattern to create the shifting echo pattern as it did before; in this version, both flutes play every note in the scale pattern. To that end, the flute 2 rhythm is substantially different from the earlier version; instead of regular partial triplets, we have quarter and dotted-quarter notes similar to those of flute 1. This, combined with the triplets in the viola, creates a complex new composite rhythm, represented by the rhythm circle below. In Figure 17, the shapes created by the attack points in each instrument are juxtaposed, in order to illustrate the passage's rhythmic density:

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[30] Beckett, *Words and Music, Complete Dramatic Works*, 294.

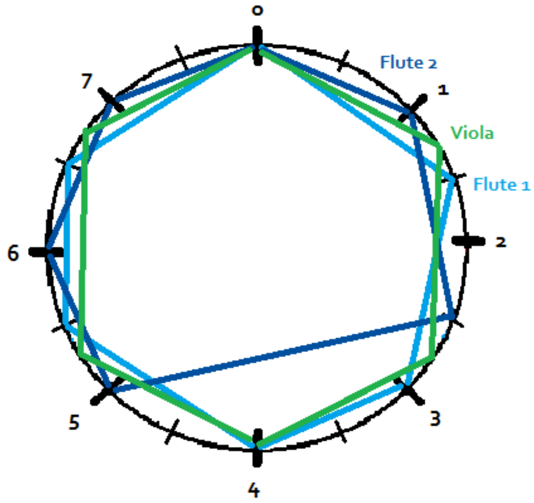

Figure 17. **Rhythmic layers in Statement 30**

Because of the rewritten flute 2 part and the addition of viola, the density of counterpoint in these two 2/2 measures is much higher than in the earlier "Aria" Statements. The increased number of attack points in tight groups, combined with the similarity in timbre between flutes and viola harmonics in the same register, makes Statements 30 and 31 sound *less* contrapuntal than the previous version in Statement 19; each cluster of attack points sounds like a single indistinct articulation blurred by layers of heterophony.

Having reached Joe's second spate of poetic musings, we are fast approaching the climactic moment of the play, Statement 33 (Figure 18), in which Bob and Joe present the second poem or "Face Aria". Leading into that are three reiterations of the "Aria" type material from before (Statements 30, 31, and the beginning of 33), with an intervening occurrence of material similar to Statements 10 and 11, containing the prominent descending three-note theme (Statement 32). At this point, it is clear that Bob's musical dialogue throughout the "Face" section of the play is a collection of both "monologic" and "Aria" material types, and that we can further divide Bob's monologic lines into Statements oriented on the two pervasive melodic

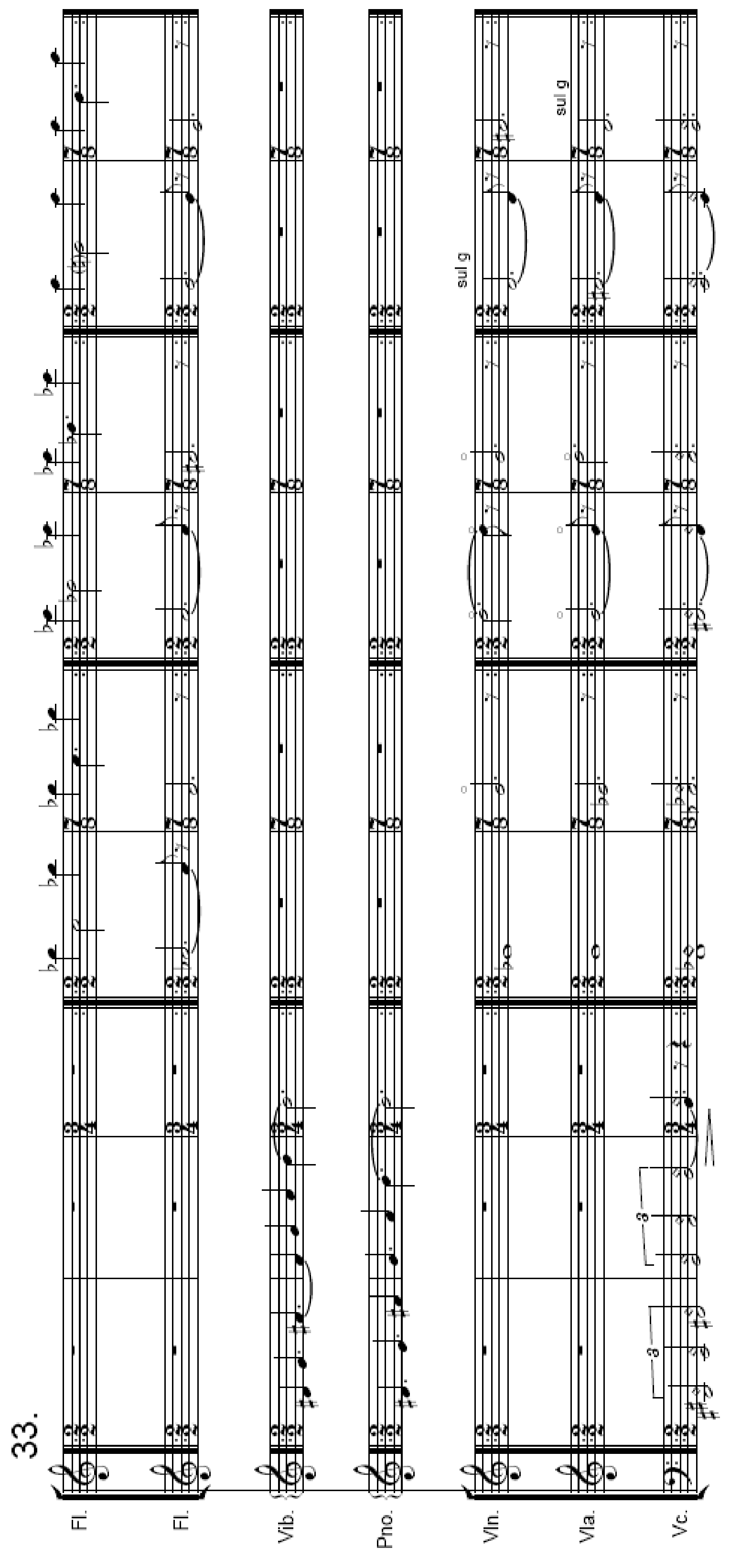
33.
Fl.
Fl.
Vib.
Pno.
Vln.
Vla.
Vc.
3
3
sul g
sul g

Figure 18. **Statement 33.**

themes (the rising-and-falling sevenths, and the descending three-note theme) and the two chromatic Statements characterized by tone clusters and the harsh piccolo doublings. In Figure 19 on the next page, I have represented the different material types in the "Face" section with different colors: blue represents the consonant, melodic themes; yellow represents the angst-filled Statements featuring piccolo; and red represents the returning "Aria" theme. Different shades represent different variations of thematically linked material, and the spacing is an approximation of the timing of Bob's dialogue, averaged between the Evergreen Review and Ensemble Recherche recordings. One of the advantages of this graphic representation is that it reveals a rough overall symmetry to the entire "Face" section. While not evenly distributed across time, the pattern in which material appears and reappears is more or less centered on Statement 32, which is the final occurrence of the descending three-note melody. Bob suggests this theme to Joe as a "more confident" setting for the last lines of the poem, "Through the scum/ Down a little way/ To where one glimpse/ Of that wellhead."[31] This is the only suggestion from Bob that is not a version of the linear scale material, and unlike the familiar scale motive, it does not return in Statement 33, where Bob and Joe are supposed to repeat their improvised poetic lines to create the climactic performance of the entire wellhead poem. Instead, the second half of Statement 33 is another version of the rising-and-falling minor sevenths theme at its most melodic. At this point, the previous materials from before Statement 32 reappear in an altered symmetry, with the second half of 33 and Statement 34 (the chromatic set-of-five-pitches material) reversed from their original order of appearance. It is as though the second half of Statement 33, the culmination of all the forced collaboration and poetic developments between Joe and Bob, has been moved from its symmetrical position to an earlier location.

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[31] Beckett, *Words and Music, Complete Dramatic Works,* 294.

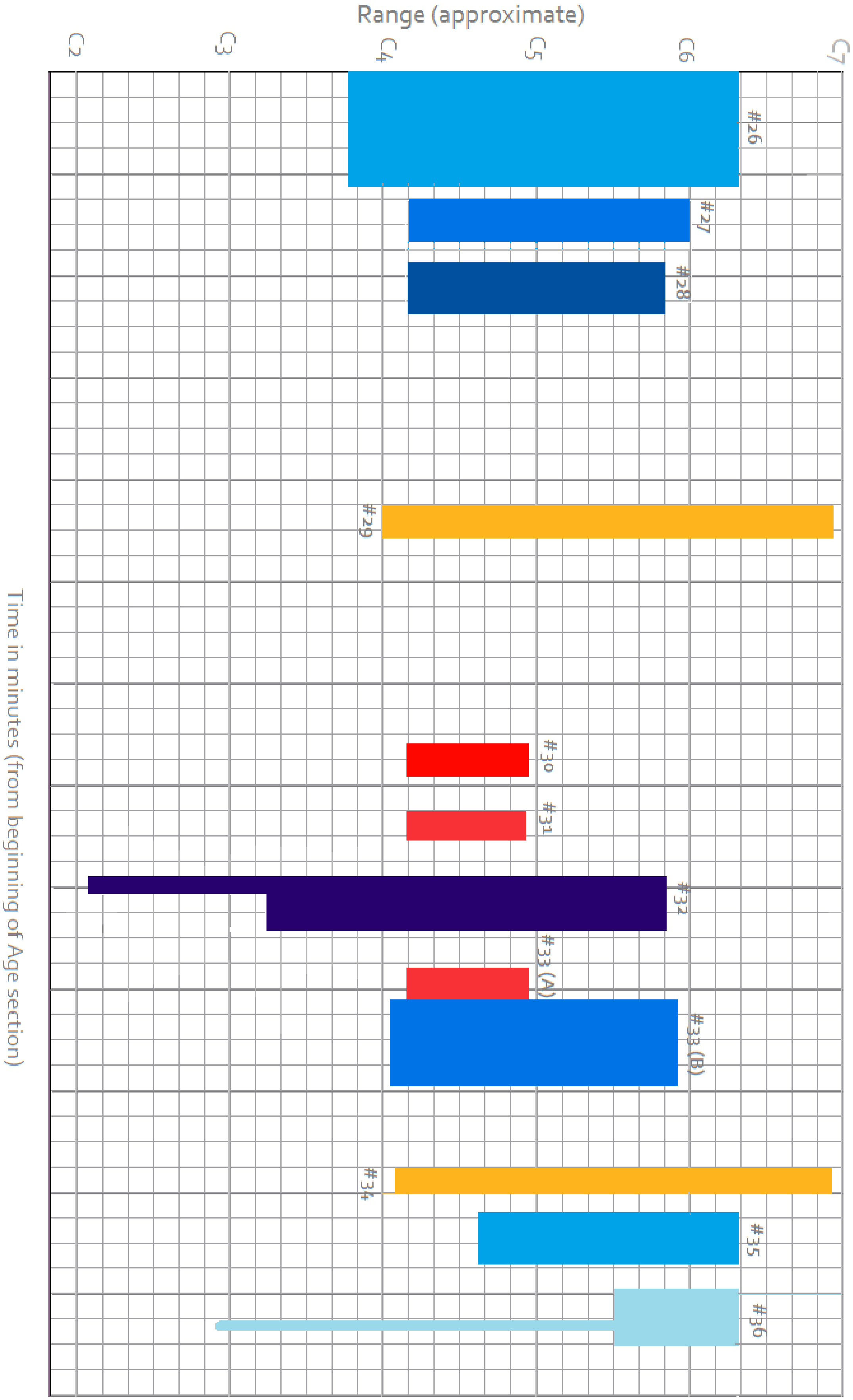

Figure 19. Relative duration and register of Statements 26 – 36.

2.3. EVALUATION AND CRITICAL RESPONSES TO *WORDS AND MUSIC*

If Feldman's music for *Words and Music* is still recognizably Feldman, but with concessions to the time constraint and obligation to respond to the other characters in the play, is the play a similar compromise on the part of Beckett? One often-made interpretation of the play is as an allegory for its own collaborative process, essentially self-reflective in nature. If so, then it is odd to compare the hands-off approach between Beckett and Feldman with the emotionally charged head-to-head forced collaboration between Joe and Bob. This detachment from Feldman was quite unlike Beckett's direct collaboration with other musicians, such as his discussion and adjustment of his original text for Marcel Mihalovici's operatic setting of *Krapp's Last Tape*, which was largely done with Beckett seated at the piano as Mihalovici played different vocal lines for his consideration. Perhaps *Words and Music* is a better metaphor for these earlier collaborations; perhaps the lack of direct involvement with Feldman at this time was simply due to Beckett's age and health; or perhaps in this instance Beckett was unwilling to step in to play the part of Croak by telling the composer what to do.

And yet, as the script seems insufficient to convey Beckett's specific vision, the success of *Words and Music* seems to depend on some sort of mutual unspoken understanding between playwright and composer. "The problem for me," Catherine Laws writes, "has always been that although the Music remains unspecified, the play seems to proceed as if its role is clear and understood…"[32] In discussing the Beckett/Feldman version, critics and analysts are divided in their opinions of both the overall effectiveness of the play and Feldman's success in carrying out Beckett's vision. Allen B. Ruch's review suggests the end result is unsatisfactory:

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[32] Laws, "Music in *Words and Music,*" 279.

> [Feldman's] music is something of a let-down, if not source for outright puzzlement, when it comes to conveying the warmer aspects of Bob's "voice". His *warmly sentimental* passage sounds anything but, and his "love and soul music" seems to drift in from another world altogether… "warmly sentimental" music should be just that, or it takes away from the interplay between the "characters" of Joe and Bob. At its worst, Feldman's score obscures some of the tension between these opposing voices, and makes an already abstruse play more opaque….Though I understand that Feldman wanted to meet the work free from cliché and the burden of tradition, a somewhat more traditional scoring might better convey Beckett's suggestions, many of which depend on musical familiarity, if not cliché, for their effect."

I would venture that such a criticism reflects an assumption on Ruch's part about the definition of "sentimental" in terms of Beckett's works, which Ruch seems to define as similar to "nostalgic", implying elements of cliché and the past, and perhaps furthermore a superficiality of feeling. It is not clear that Beckett means this nostalgic superficiality by "sentimental" –certainly if Beckett had wanted music that evoked some past period, he would not have hesitated to make a specific reference to a particular piece of music in the script, like his inclusion of "Death and the Maiden" in *All That Fall.* In that instance, the tragicomically-suffering Mrs. Rooney has an implied past about which she (and the audience) can be "sentimental"; however, since the characters in *Words and Music* are more likely to be interpreted as highly abstract projections of the creative process, rather than caricatures of "real" persons, it seems acceptable that the music be less referential to real-world items of nostalgia.

It is also possible, as does critic Jonathan Kalb, to question whether or not Music can succeed as a character regardless of the musical style, given the format of the drama:

> …[T]he play's production difficulties run far deeper than questions of agreement in style; unless Music convinces us that it has at least held its own in the strange mimetic competition with Words, the action of the play lacks dramatic tension…Yet far from proving the superiority of music as pure sound, liberated from rational ideas and references, the play confines it to a function very similar to that of a filmic signature score.[33]

Kalb contradicts himself, saying that "Music" should, on the one hand, have a mimetic quality that puts it on a conversational level with the other characters; yet, on the other hand, prove itself superior to that conversational level by shedding all mimetic qualities. Perhaps this is what Feldman saw as the inevitable outcome when he said "…music had to bend": that the very framework of the play, with music engaged in something close to verbal dialogue, means that "Music" is doomed to fail from the very beginning, giving up some sort of purity of abstraction in order to interact with the hopelessly limited speaking characters.

An important point to keep in mind is that the critics making such observations are making an assumption: that Beckett intended for the composer to be able to correctly interpret his instructions. As numerous analysts and critics have concluded, Beckett's fundamental viewpoint is the impossibility of communication. As I discuss more extensively in the next chapter, Beckett's characters speak in vague fragments, use misleading points-of-view or substitute alternative voices for their own, recite their lines at unintelligible speeds, and stand as silent, inscrutable, listening figures – all in evidence of the uselessness of words. In light of this pessimism toward words, surely Beckett would have fully expected his limited instructions ("*warmly sentimental,*" etc.) to be inadequate for any composer to create appropriately responsive music. Kevin Branigan speculates in his study of *Words and Music* that Beckett was simply naïve about how much instruction would be needed to successfully communicate his intentions to the composer.[34] But this view belies Beckett's considerable training as an amateur pianist, not to mention his close working with composers on technical problems in other projects – Beckett would have been well familiar with both the need for specificity of detail in musical composition, and the terminology to provide that kind of precision. One possible explanation is that Beckett's vagueness is quite intentional – which opens the question of what exactly "success" for a production of *Words and Music* would be like. It is not known whether Beckett ever heard a recording of the Everett Frost production with Feldman's music, nor whether he would have found the play to be successful with any new musical interpretation. Everett Frost recalled that Beckett felt that the flawed first production of the play was due to himself, in an unspecified way: "He was uneasy about *Words and Music*, blaming himself for the failure of the first attempt at it, and describing the problems involved in setting it as formidable and perhaps insurmountable. Yet it seemed to me that he had a special fondness for it and was pleased that it might be revived with what he called "a fresh go.""[35]

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[33] Kalb, Jonathan. "The mediated Quixote: the radio and television plays, and *Film*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*, ed. John Pilling (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 132.

Having studied two different productions of the play, I find a great deal of emotional significance in Feldman's version of *Words and Music*, particularly in the improvisatory uncertainty of the Aria sections. I believe that the listener who judges a successful unity of "Words" and "Music" to mean only a highly polished, believeable, and emotionally transparent interaction between Bob and Joe will have missed Beckett's intentions. Finding an actor who both sings and improvises well enough to spontaneously present a truly sublime setting of the Arias is unlikely at best, a fact which Beckett must have realized. And while Beckett did work closely with composers in other circumstances, his distancing himself from his composer-collaborators—Feldman, Mihalovici, and his cousin John Beckett[36]—seems particular to the two radio plays in which Music is an independent character (*Words and Music* and *Cascando*). Beckett left the interpretation of his instructions in their hands in much the same way Feldman allowed interpretive room to his performers with his earlier graphic scores; and it is possible that much as Feldman became disenchanted with graphic notation because of the unsatisfactory results of performers' interpretations, so did Beckett allow *Words and Music* to remain incomplete because it was, in his view, a failed experiment in collaboration.

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[34] Branigan, Kevin. *Radio Beckett: Musicality in the Radio Plays of Samuel Beckett* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 229.
[35] Frost, Everett. "The Note Man," from the Apmonia website, accessed 3/8/12.

Rather than expecting some preconceived ideal synthesis of words and music from such an open-ended arrangement, Beckett may have introduced a dramatic format beyond his immediate control in order to express his belief in the impossibility of such a result, or to represent his own perceived inadequacy to bridge the gap between dramatic speech and music, even in his most musically influenced works (such as *Play*, which immediately followed the radio plays). On the other hand, *Words and Music* might be considered an opportunity for Beckett as much as it was a challenge for Feldman. Beckett may well have intended for *Words and Music* to be open to multiple interpretations, in the hopes that he, like Voice from *Cascando*, could find that "—this time…it's the right one…finish…no more stories…."[37]

Beckett did not write *Words and Music* with Feldman's music in mind, nor did he have any later interest in making specific suggestions for Feldman. It also seems that Feldman was only somewhat willing to adjust his musical style to suit the play, and (as we have seen) in some places deliberately contradicts the script's limited instructions. Given the lack of real interaction or cooperation between the two artists, the overall success of the collaboration between them

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[36] Accounts of how closely Beckett worked with his cousin on the score are conflicting; Branigan claims Beckett worked quite closely with his cousin John (Branigan 158), while James Knowlson says John wrote his score "totally independently of Beckett."(Knowlson,443.) I find Knowlson's account more believeable, given the short time to completion of the entire play (less than two months).

[37] Beckett, Samuel. *Cascando.* In *The Complete Dramatic Works,* 304.

(such as it was) depends to a great degree on the compatibility of their materials, techniques, and philosophies. In the next chapter, I will briefly discuss *neither*, the “opera” on which Beckett and Feldman first collaborated; and in the third chapter I will consider whether or not Feldman and Beckett were successful in their collaborations, focusing on an examination of technical similarities and disparities between Beckett and Feldman, including their respective approaches, treatments of materials, and aesthetic statements.

3.0 *NEITHER*

3.1. THE "OPERA" IN CONTEXT

Musical storytelling runs a broad gamut between narrative forms, typically thought of as *song*, and dramatic forms, falling under the broad banner of opera. Resulting from the dialectic between diagetic song and mimetic drama have been numerous works combining music and story that fall somewhere in between the two traditional genre definitions of *opera* and *art song*. Among these works, we find musical settings that employ radically nontraditional elements, redefining concepts of character presentation, perspective, and narratorial authority. The "dramatic monologue" or one-voice opera, a subgenre increasingly produced in recent years, often places a dramatic burden upon a single performer equivalent to that previously given to an entire opera company; one singer is the dramatic performer for the entire story, responsible for a multiplicity of perspectives, including the role of narrator. A balance is often sought between a multiplicity of characters played by one actor, taken to the extreme by Judith Weir's *King Harald's Saga* where the solo soprano portrays seven or more characters in ten minutes, and a monologic work told entirely from the point of view of a single character. Giving the soloist the role of narrator can help expand the story's point-of-view, but does so at risk of turning the work into a narrative related to an audience with accompanying music rather than a portrayal of events carried out by and upon dramatic agents. However, a lack of mimesis has not prevented recent works from being identified as "theatrical," or from being categorized as dramas.

Eric Moe’s one-woman and chamber ensemble work *Tri-Stan* avoids the problem of mimetic character interaction altogether by presenting a single narrative monologue, David Foster Wallace’s “Tri-Stan: I Sold Sissee Nar to Ecko,” a retelling of the Narcissus/Echo myth. The soprano is the voice of a detached meta-narrator, who presents the story indirectly, by recounting an intermediate narrative written by “Ovid the Obtuse,” a fictional chronicler of the pseudo-epic story; occasionally, however, the meta-narrator makes self-referential remarks about Ovid’s account of the story, suggesting that Ovid and the meta-narrator might be the same person. While the story is told entirely from a single viewpoint, Ovid’s/the meta-narrator’s hyper-erudite descriptions of the characters’ thoughts and actions throughout are adequate for “seeing” the drama unfold (aided by Susie Silver’s video of corresponding images and texts). *Tri-Stan* convinces us to accept the singer as a sort of ancient Chorus, slyly returning to a form that echoes the ancient Greek tradition it parodies, rather than attempting to approximate traditional operatic staging. Because this epic narration is parodic and self-referential, *Tri-Stan* is best considered a dramatic monologue, despite its heavy reliance on narrative summary rather than mimetic scene. In fact, *Tri-Stan* is so satirical in its exaggerated use of narrative that it creates a reversal of normal dramatic-narrative function; the one moment of true mimesis – the one event that unfolds in “real time” – is a “dream-aria,” sung (ostensibly as the protagonist dreams of the singing) by the disguised goddess Codependae, creating a sudden slowing of time and intensity of focus that counteracts the normally frantic narrative pacing of the story.

Another dramatic work that bends operatic convention is Judith Weir’s *The Consolations of Scholarship.* In this two-act work for soloist and chamber group, we hear seven different characters voiced by the same singer. Although this seems potentially confusing, Weir creates a successful opera by making the characters musically distinct and dramatically quite independent of each other, emphasizing this independence by distinctive musical material, self-introduction of characters (to the point of self-satire, such as a silent Hermit singing "I am a silent Hermit") and shifting of time and perspective for each character, ranging from narratives about events in the distant past to "real-time" dialogue. In this case, a blending of mimetic action with narration is an effective portrayal of the action of the story; while large periods of time and some significant events are summarized in narrative, those narrations seem to be set within the drama, as each monologue belongs to a character (the Traveler, the General, the Hermit) and is given from his point-of-view, addressing the audience directly. Listeners have the sense of being drawn into the story to hear the character's mind, rather than being addressed in an aside or other break in the dramatic stream.

While works such as Moe's and Weir's have carved a recognized niche for new approaches to the musical monodrama, *neither* has several particular features that make it difficult to categorize. *neither* bears a resemblance to *Tri-Stan*, as both could be considered monologic speeches put into dramatically staged musical productions. However, the differences in the texts of *neither* and *Tri-Stan*, as well as the musical treatments of those texts in terms of scale, instrumentation, and vocal presentation, are quite drastic. *neither* is not a verbally dense self-satirizing narrative substituting for mimetic action; in fact, it is unclear that the text of *neither* constitutes a narrative at all. The aim of this chapter is to examine the narrative and dramatic potential of the "libretto," and to consider whether or not Feldman successfully fulfilled that potential through his musical interpretation of Beckett's "one theme." To make that assessment, we must consider how such a text fits into Beckett's dramatic oeuvre; how staging and presentation might strengthen the perception of the work as "operatic;" and how Feldman's treatment of the text and his overall musical approach support the limited actions of the text – or else contradict them. This chapter begins with the background of Feldman and Beckett's meeting, followed by a brief survey of Feldman's "grid" approach and his material types. I will then discuss how the opera might be presented in the context of some of Beckett's other stage works, particularly *A Piece of Monologue, Rockabye* and *Not I.*

3.2.THE MEETING OF THE MINDS IN BERLIN

That Feldman wrote a work labeled "opera" at all seems uncharacteristic of him, given his often-remarked distaste for the genre as a whole. Had it not been for a careless conversation Feldman most likely had (according to Sebastien Claren) in March of 1976, possibly at the Holland Festival where his *Oboe and Orchestra* was being premiered, such a piece would probably never have been written. As it happened, Feldman was asked by an unidentified party about his future compositional plans; he indicated interest in doing something with a Samuel Beckett text. Claren claims "[…]this response must have been distorted in reports to G. Tomasi, then director of the Rome Opera, who called Feldman and asked some days later: 'I hear you have written an opera with Samuel Beckett. Can we have it?' Feldman would regardless have said 'of course' even though he hadn't written a note of the work, nor had any contact with Beckett."[38]

Having turned a miscommunication into a commission, Feldman then arranged to meet Beckett in Berlin in September of 1976, Beckett being in town for the performance of several of his plays, including a stage adaptation of *Cascando*. Feldman came to see Beckett at the

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[38] Claren, Sebastien. *Neither.* (Berlin: Freie Universitat Berlin, 1996), pg. 15. trans. K. Livengood.

Werkstatt Theater, traveling down from Glasgow where he had attended the premiere of *Orchestra.*[39] Feldman, well-known for his poor eyesight, later told an interviewer that, being blinded by the darkness of the theatre, he shook Beckett's thumb instead of his hand, then tripped over a curtain and fell.[40] At lunch, Feldman described the project to Beckett, who responded with some hesitancy:

> He [Beckett] was very embarrassed – he said to me, after a while: "Mr. Feldman, I don't like opera." I said to him, "I don't blame you!" Then he said to me, "I don't like my words being set to music," and I said, "I'm in complete agreement. In fact it's very seldom that I've used words. I've written a lot of pieces with voice, and they're wordless." Then he looked at me again and said, "But what do you want?" And I said "I have no idea!" He also asked me why I didn't use existing material….I said that I had read them all, that they were pregnable, they didn't need music. I said that I was looking for the quintessence, something that just hovered."[41]

Beckett then stated that there was "only one theme in his life." He took some manuscript paper from Feldman and began writing "To and fro in shadow, from outer shadow to inner shadow. To and fro, between unattainable self and unattainable non-self."[42] While writing this, Feldman reportedly exclaimed "That will work, to get started," whereupon Beckett offered to send Feldman a revised and completed version of the poem at a later time.[43] (It is unclear how much of the text Feldman received from Beckett that day; however, Claren claims that Feldman left that meeting with at least a rough draft of the complete text.) In any case, Beckett mailed Feldman a postcard at the end of the month with the following lines:

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[39] Claren, Sebastien. "A Feldman Chronology." (trans. Christine Shuttleworth). Printed in *Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964 – 1987*, Chris Villars ed. (London: Hyphen, 2006), pg. 270.

[40] Dwyer, John. "In the Shadows with Feldman and Beckett," "Lively Arts" section, *Buffalo News*, Nov. 27th 1976. Cited by James Knowlson in *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove, 1996), 556.

[41] Skempton, Howard. Interview with Morton Feldman in *Music and Musicians*, May 1977, pg. 5. Cited by James Knowlson in *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove, 1996), pg. 557.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Claren, Sebastien. *Neither: Die Musik Morton Feldmans.* (Berlin: Freie Universitat Berlin, 1996), pg. 15. trans. Kerrith Livengood.

"neither"

to and fro in shadow from inner to outer shadow
--
from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself by way of neither
--
as between two lit refuges whose doors once neared gently close, once away turned from gently part again
--
beckoned back and forth and turned away
--
heedless of the way, intent on the one gleam or the other
--
unheard footfalls only sound
--
till at last halt for good, absent for good from self and other
--
then no sound
--
then gently light unfading on that unheeded neither
--
unspeakable home[44]

Meanwhile, Feldman had already begun working on the music, sketching the first ten pages leading up to the soprano's entrance, which he jokingly called the "overture:" "That's why the piece begins textless. I was waiting for the text. I discovered what an overture is: waiting for the text!"[45] However, even before Feldman wrote his anticipatory "overture" – in fact, even before meeting Beckett – Feldman composed several pieces including *Orchestra* and *Elemental Procedures*[46] as practice working with Beckett texts; Claren pinpoints the date of Feldman's writing *Elemental Procedures* as July 1976, well before Feldman requested from Beckett the text he would use.[47] It would seem Feldman had some sort of conception of the piece well in advance of his actually receiving the text from Beckett**.** Yet Feldman also alludes to *neither* being closely linked to Beckett's restatement of a single idea, essentially extending Beckett's technique of translation from French to English by translating the text "into a pitchy situation,"[48] or trying, as Catherine Laws puts it, "…to recreate parallel traces in musical notes."[49] This opens up the question of whether *neither* is intended as a literal setting of Beckett's poem (as Feldman put it, as a translation of the poem), or is partly informed by the general tone of the poem (the "one theme" of Beckett's, which Feldman took away with him from their meeting), or if in fact this juxtaposition of text and music, labeled an "opera," is really two separate artistic streams running in parallel— with either stream (of words or music) ostensibly the reason underlying the other's existence, but the two never actually intersecting in any definite way.

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[44] Beckett, Samuel. "Neither." Preface to *neither,* (London: Universal Edition, 1977).

[45] Skempton, pg. 5. Reprinted on the Modern Word website, http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/beckett_feldman_neither.html. Accessed 3/01/12.

[46] Knowlson noted that Feldman showed Beckett a setting of text from Beckett's *Film* at their meeting; this would be *Elemental Procedures* (Knowlson 556).

3.3. ANALYSIS OF *NEITHER*

3.3.1. Feldman's "grid" and structure

Years later, while beginning work on *Words and Music*, Feldman mentally summarized the radio play as "two people having some problems" and then focused on the sounds and rhythms of the lines read aloud as a starting point. Similarly, Feldman began his composition of *neither* by assuming an understanding of the basic theme of "neither" and subsequently engaged the text on the level of both visual and auditory rhythm. Reading the text sent to him a month after the Berlin meeting, Feldman felt that the first line of the poem "fell into a grid." Consequently, *neither* marks the beginning of a distinct compositional approach for Feldman, as the "grid" first became prominent in Feldman's compositions at this time. Feldman's original manuscripts fully display his reliance on a premeasured grid with a certain number of measures in each system, with equally spaced barlines; and in the case of *neither,* each stanza translates (at least initially) into one system, usually containing twelve measures, which is typically the basic "unit" of Feldman's grid; major changes in instrumentation and musical material are generally determined by the system and page endings.[50] The visual aspects of the poem, particularly the dashes after each stanza, were also striking to Feldman. The dashed bullets marking a blank line are especially rhythmically significant, possibly interpreted by Feldman as similar to the numerous indications of "*Pause*" in Beckett's plays.

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[47] Claren, "A Feldman Chronology," 270.

[48] Feldman, Morton. "Darmstadt Lecture, July 1984." From *Morton Feldman Says: Selected Interviews and Lectures, 1964 – 1987*, Chris Villars ed. (London: Hyphen Press, 2006), 194.

[49] Laws, Catherine. "Morton Feldman's *Neither*: A Musical Translation of Beckett's Text." In *Samuel Beckett and Music*, Mary Bryden ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 60.

The grid is most literal in its expression during the beginning section of *neither*; throughout the first dozen pages or so, materials enter and exit strictly in accordance with the ends of systems and pages. Likewise, Feldman sets the first line of the poem very rigidly in line with the system- and page-grid. The six syllables in the words "To and fro in shadow…" are each set on a single high G, each note lasting nearly two measures with a triplet-eighth rest in between each syllable (thereby filling the entire system or grid-width). The second half of the line ("…from inner to outer shadow") is similarly distributed throughout the next system; Feldman assigns one note each to the words "inner" and "outer," effectively treating them as monosyllabic. "Shadow," being important and a repetition of the end of the first half of the line, still received two isolated notes for "sha-" and "-dow," making the total six notes in twelve measures, with rests separating each note, completely filling the system (Figure 20). After the first line is sung, the soprano has an entire system of rest before the next line of the poem.

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[50] While earlier pieces, such as *Elemental Procedures*, have a premeasured number of regular barlines in each system, the system and page endings are not as structurally important, as changes in material do not correspond as strictly with these endings.

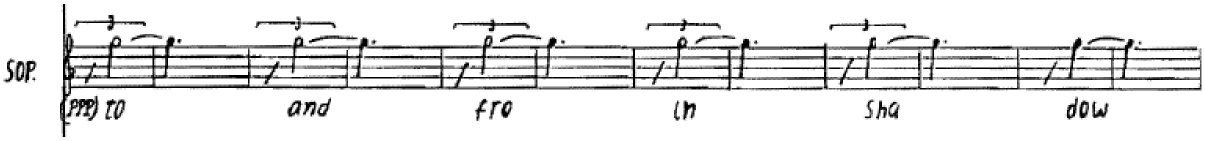

Figure 20. **Soprano's first entrance, page 11.**

When Feldman claims that he perceived the first line of the poem as "falling into a grid," he means the line exhibits both visual and aural rhythmic regularity. Treating the short syllables in "inner" and "outer" enables Feldman to treat the two halves of the line as two equal objects, each a basic block of meaning. Each "block" of meaning can then be interpreted as a unit of time equivalent to Feldman's unit of the grid (the system). Furthermore, the system intervening between lines 1 and 2 can easily be interpreted as corresponding to the visual "pauses" Beckett placed after each line of the poem. Feldman, it seems, is translating the grid he perceived in the text by establishing a predictable pattern which, it seems, will be applied to the rest of the piece.

However, it soon becomes clear that Feldman's use of the grid is not so cut-and-dried as it appears at first; for if Feldman were to have adhered strictly to this guideline of "one line of the poem = one system," then the opera would have been a fraction of its actual length. In actuality, while there are very few exceptions to the general rule of twelve measures in each system, and while large thematic changes do almost always happen at the ends of systems and pages, the regularity with which Feldman sets the first two lines of text is frequently disrupted as the piece continues. In order to achieve his desired length for the "opera," Feldman increased the scale of the poem, in part through fragmenting several lines with long and unpredictable rests; in part by adding lengthy instrumental interludes between lines; and later in the piece by using verbal repetitions and extended vocalise passages. There are also a few places in which Feldman expands the number of measures in a single system, to 15 measures and 18 measures (pages 43 and 55). While other pages may have more than one system or a polymeter with more measures per system in one part of the ensemble, in general the grid remains more or less constant with the exception of these pages listed here. All three expanded systems are part of instrumental interludes, and in all three expanded systems all members of the orchestra are united in their efforts to prolong either layers of pulses or else a static mass of layered prolonged pitches.

3.3.2. Instrumental material types

Compared to *Words and Music*, in which Feldman's Statements were constrained by the need to be proportionate to the speaking parts, *neither* seems a much better opportunity for the development of different materials. The opera is comprised of many passages of different thematic materials, typically circumscribed by the boundaries of the "grid." In some cases, these thematic sections are very distinctive and tie directly to earlier and later instances of the same material. In other cases, the material is more generic, and its function seems less overtly symbolic and more dependent on context for significance. It should be noted that frequently two or more types of musical material are layered to create a sort of harmony of thematic areas, and that distinctive material, heard once, commonly reappears later in a new system or page with different orchestration.

At the very beginning of the opera the "overture" (before the soprano enters) introduces several of these material types. After a pizzicato upbeat in the strings, we hear the woodwinds and trumpets sustaining layers of crescendo and decrescendo pitches, organized in chromatic trichords and orchestrated by instrument type: G – A♭ – A in the oboes and flutes versus B – C –

D♭ in the horns and D – E♭ – F♭ in trumpets and bassoon. These chromatic trichords, similar to the layered “monologic” harmonies based on 2nds and 7ths in *Words and Music*, are inverted to 7ths and 9ths, which expand each cluster into a wider texture of sound. As the winds sustain these clusters, the various parts independently surge in volume, come slightly more to the foreground of the layered sounds, and immediately recede. These hairpin dynamics have a different rhythm in each part, creating a pulsing effect emphasized by different rhythmic subdivisions tied together to create the effect of a continuous mass of sound.

At the end of the first page, the woodwinds and trumpets stagger out to be replaced on page two by low brass (trombones and tuba) and rolling timpani, following the same scheme of sustained notes with uncoordinated pulses created by hairpin dynamics. Just as the layered sustained clusters continue, so does a second material type present from the beginning: a low staccato pulse in the contrabasses and harps (F or E#). This eighth-note pulse is made unstable by Feldman’s use of polyrhythms over the changing meter; the harps typically play every other eighth note in a 5:4 pattern (in a 2/4 bar), then a 4:3 pattern (in a 3/8 bar). This pulse seems to approach regularity but is periodically disrupted, as though time were being slightly stretched or contracted. On page 2, the contrabasses are replaced by celli with the addition of bass clarinet and double bassoon; this is reduced to harp 1 and celli after the first system. This beat is placed in deliberate opposition to the dynamic swells in the sustained clusters above; together, they immediately convey a sense of contradicting pulses, creating a restless but constrained motion.

Both the layered soundmass with dynamic pulses and the staggering beat beneath it are what I consider to be “generic” musical materials. While sections that are clearly identifiable as versions of these materials reappear throughout the piece, they tend to be presented in a wide variety of contexts, with variations in pitch content, rhythmic relationships, instrumentation, and texture. But in addition to their frequent recontextualizations in *neither*, these two types of material are very similar to passages in other Feldman works, especially other pieces for large ensemble such as *Oboe and Orchestra* and *Flute and Orchestra*. Other sections feature textures and motives that are more idiomatically Feldman –they resemble elements from several other Feldman works and unfold through common processes. However, certain motives and textures I will identify as "iconic," for several of them are strikingly unique to *neither* despite being related to other works. One example is the nine-note motive that first appears on page 29; when it begins, this chromatic theme is striking for its dense orchestration – with trombones, English horn and bass clarinet all in unison. The theme returns several times, but never with the same singularity of instrumentation. When it appears again on page 32 through 34 in the strings, the intensity is mitigated by percussion and woodwind tremolos. On page 40 - 41 it is sung by the soprano accompanied by high piano above a noisy polyrhythmic background of repeated notes in the woodwinds, percussion, and brass—a variation of the beat in the low harp and contrabasses from the "overture" – and sustained strings with hairpin dynamics, also from the very beginning of the opera. Finally, the nine-note theme makes its last and most imposing appearance on page 48, played in unison in all woodwinds, trumpets, celesta and violins.

Although there are many combinations and variations of musical ideas as the opera proceeds, I have distinguished seven key types of instrumental material and some notable variations or subtypes. Below, the types are presented in roughly the order we encounter them:

A. layered sustained clusters, with dynamic swells, based on minor seconds
    A1. sustained rolls in timpani, tam-tam or bass drums
    A2. layered glissandi (especially in strings/woodwinds)
    A3. long sustained clusters, staggered entrances
B. a low, regular pulse based on short, isolated sounds
    B1. a regular pulse in higher instruments or the entire orchestra
    B2. a regular pulse embellished with fluttered notes

C. **three-note motive (descending m 3rd, ascending M3rd) in strings or woodwinds**
D. **two-note motive (descending m2nd)**
    D1. isolated repeated pitches (borrowed from the soprano)
E. **nine-note theme**
F. a prolonged but uneven and fragmentary tune (similar to the soprano vocalise segments) based on minor/Major seconds
G. Repeated single A♭s in the English horn (happens twice)

This list is by no means exhaustive of the variations of each material type; rather it represents the most salient uses of each musical idea. The three motives in boldface are ideas that I feel are "iconic"; as discussed before, while these ideas are not unrelated to elements of Feldman's other compositions, they are uniquely tied to *neither* in a way that the other materials are not, and they have special suggestive functions relating closely to the text. The non-bold or "generic" materials are more similar in style and usage to elements in other Feldman works, especially those that closely preceded *neither*. Feldman's preparatory compositions *Orchestra* and *Elemental Procedures* have many instances of motives such as type A (long layered dynamic swells)[51] or B (low regular pulses), while Feldman's solo-and-orchestra works from the early to mid-70s[52] have lines for the solo instrument that strongly resemble *neither*'s vocalise sections (or material type F), such as the cello part on page 2 and 3 of *Cello and Orchestra*, which uses clustered minor 2nds and polyrhythms to create a quasi-lyrical rise-and-fall contour similar to the soprano, even in range.

Furthermore, while Feldman makes clear and strong associations between material, instrumentation and pitch selection, the "iconic" types tend to show much more rigid adherence to these associations than the generic types. The descending two-note motive, for example, is G♭

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[51] Page 11 of *Elemental Procedures* features layered swells in the strings, albeit with rests at the dynamic peaks; page 14 has similar swells in the entire orchestra.

[52] Feldman himself describes these works as all related, belonging to what he calls his "Berlin period" between 1972 (when Feldman lived in Berlin for about a year, writing *Cello and Orchestra, Chorus and Orchestra I,* and *Five Pianos* among other works) and 1977, when Feldman composed *neither.*

to F in all cases, and appears most prominently in the solo cello or soprano; the three-note theme in the strings always has the melody D♭– B♭ – D formed by the highest pitches in three-note clusters of D♭ – C – B, B♭ – A – A♭, and D – E♭ – E (described here from highest to lowest pitch), appearing primarily in the high strings (and occasionally the high woodwinds). And while the instrumentation of the nine-note theme varies, the theme itself is always the same nine pitches, and is usually played in unison by both winds and strings in the range F4 – A4.

Another factor that makes these materials "iconic" is the context in which they appear, tying them closely to the sung texts. The staggered three-note theme in the strings first appears on page 10, immediately before the soprano entrance. On page 13 it returns, accompanying the soprano as she sings "from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself/ by way of neither/ as between two lit refuges/whose…," a drawn-out setting of the words sung on a repeated high G. Frequently the soprano pauses for several measures, with the strings continuing their pattern all the while. After a sudden silence for most instruments after the word "whose," the three-note pattern resumes, now doubled in the high woodwinds; and once again the soprano seems to be a response to this repeating pattern when it reenters on page 17 with the words "doors once neared gently close," during which the three-note pattern finally comes to a halt. Later in the opera the singer is less closely tied to the three-note theme, especially as the music becomes much more orchestrationally dense and the soprano sings long passages of wordless, lyrical vocalise; but for the first third of the opera this theme serves as an inescapable point of continual return, its constancy reinforced by virtue of it always having the same three pitches in the highest register, D♭ – B♭ – D.

While I have singled these motives out as being "iconic," as compared to the "generic" nature of the other materials, I do not mean to suggest that the other materials are not carefully constructed by Feldman to convey a specific effect, or that they bear no resemblance to the theme of the opera.[53] Indeed, much of the treatment of these materials is calculated to strongly evoke what Feldman saw as the elusive but singular message of the text. In conceiving of the opera during their Berlin meeting, Beckett indicated to Feldman that the poem he was providing as libretto represented the "one theme in his life," and began writing the words: "To and fro in shadow, from outer shadow to inner shadow…." Feldman considered this and the subsequent lines of the completed poem: "I'm reading it. There's something peculiar. I can't catch it. Finally I see that every line is really the same thought said in another way. And yet the continuity acts as if something else is happening. Nothing else is happening."[54] If Feldman's three-note motive in the strings, with its back-and-forth motion of rising and falling thirds, is representative of this "to and fro" motion, then arguably so are the dynamic swells, moving different clusters slightly to the fore and background of the layers of sound; and if the two-note theme, repeated extensively by a solo cello on pages 21 – 23 (see Figure 21), is the embodiment of "the same thought said in another way," then so also is the static passage of staggered sustained clusters on page 43, in which congruent intervals are exchanged across all instrumental groups. Art Lange writes:

> Feldman once acknowledged that, in this way, the music for *Neither* hovers in between what was, for him, a personal style (the "impenetrable self") and an impersonal style (the "impenetrable unself,") as can be heard in the alternating episodes ("to and fro") of static chords (at times thinned out to single notes) and flowing melody.[55]

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[53] Not surprisingly, both types of material (iconic and generic) bear more than a passing resemblance to motivic ideas from the pieces Feldman composed in July of 1976, particularly *Orchestra, Elemental Procedures, and Routine Investigations,* the three of which Sebastien Claren identifies as Feldman's "preparing himself to work with a Beckett text." (In *Morton Feldman Says,* pg. 270.) Prominent examples of familiar ideas (without going into excessive detail here) include sustained clusters with low irregular pulses, extensive timpani and tam-tam rolls, and repeated isolated notes oriented around minor seconds.

[54] Feldman, "Darmstadt Lecture," 194.

[55] Lange, Art. Liner notes for *neither* (Hat Art, 1997). Accessed from Apmonia site, <http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/beckett_feldman_neither.html >. 3/9/12.

Yet out of all the musical ideas that could be categorized as either “self” or “unself” from Feldman’s point of view, the iconic musical types convey this distinction and the meanderings between most effectively. The extra element that makes these types iconic is their consistent pitch content and instrumentation, combined with Feldman’s tendency to present them alone for extended passages, displaying their self-sufficiency as musical patterns. While the generic material types are also used extensively, it is usually in combination with one or more types; or else they seem intrinsically background or transitional, such as the prolonged passage of tam-tam rolls on page 37 – 38, which anticipate and then provide accompaniment for the soprano.

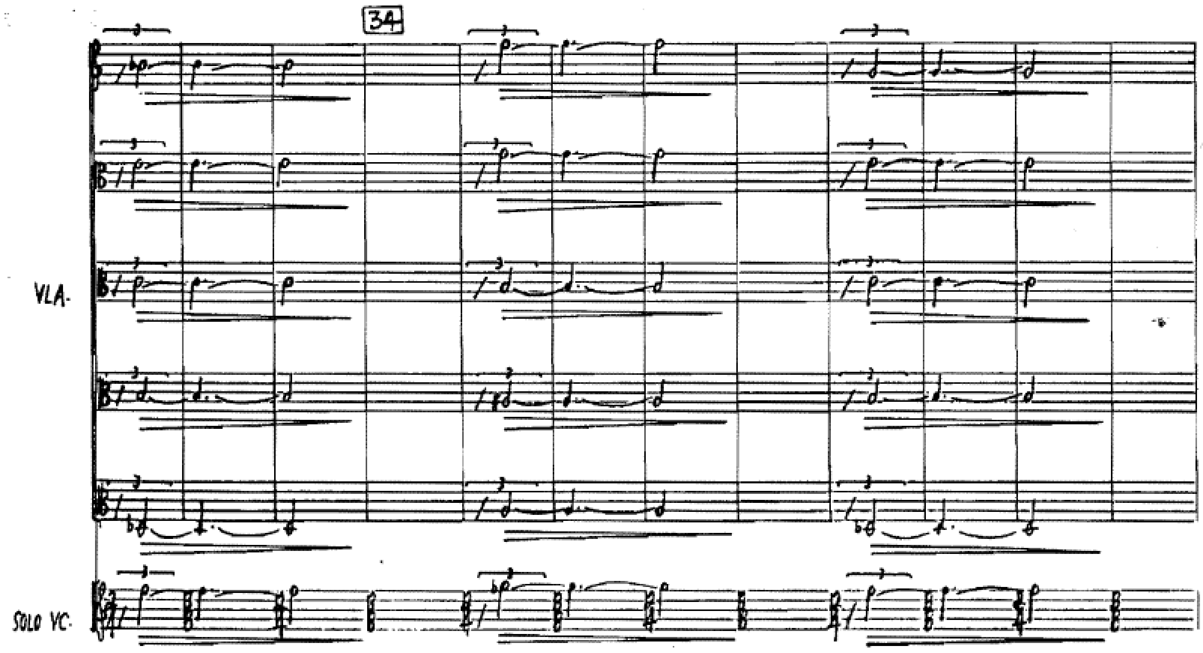

Figure 21. **The two-note iconic motive, page 22.**

The music of *neither* could also be reflective of the text on a higher-order level. Catherine Laws notes a claim by Feldman that all musical material in *neither* is derived, directly or indirectly, from three chromatic pitches, and that “…other notes are like shadows of the basic notes."[56] Such a claim is affirmed by the strategic omission of pitches from large layered conglomerations. Laws points out that Feldman tends to use three clusters of three pitches each in his most densely orchestrated passages, and that other instruments fill in one or two of the missing chromatic pitches, typically leaving one pitch conspicuously absent. An example of this is found page 18, just before rehearsal 27. Immediately before the soprano's entrance, we find a collection of D – E♭ – E in the bassoons, B – C – D♭ in the horns, and a low A in the contrabassoon. Cello harmonics and the soprano soon enter, providing a F# - G – A♭ trichord, leaving only F and B♭ absent. In the second half of the system, the horns reappear in a B♭ – A – G# trichord (which answers the earlier D – E♭ – E and B – C – D♭ trichords, providing the missing part of the three-note theme), and finally the tuba enters on a repeated low F to complete the collection, matching the low F pulses from the opera's opening pages. Arguably, there is a similar scenario on page 10, before the soprano entrance (Figure 22); all pitches are technically present, but G is only found in a brief celesta note and the rolling timpani. When the soprano enters on a G on the next page, the sense of complement to the preceding notes is quite audible.

3.3.3. Vocal material types

Besides the primarily instrumental materials, the soprano has a similar array of distinctive musical motives and variations of those motives. There are a few broad characteristics to all of the soprano's singing: it is almost without exception near the top of her range, yet frequently (and paradoxically) accompanied by relatively dense orchestrations that downplay her role as soloist, especially as she is marked as *ppp* for the entire opera (including page 50, where various

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[56] Feldman, Morton. 'XXX Anecdotes and Drawings.' In *Essays*, ed. Walter Zimmerman (Kerpan: Beginner Press, 1985), pg. 169. Quoted by Laws in "Feldman – Beckett – Johns: Patterning, Memory and Subjectivity," published in *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on new music*, Björn Heile ed. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pg. 145.

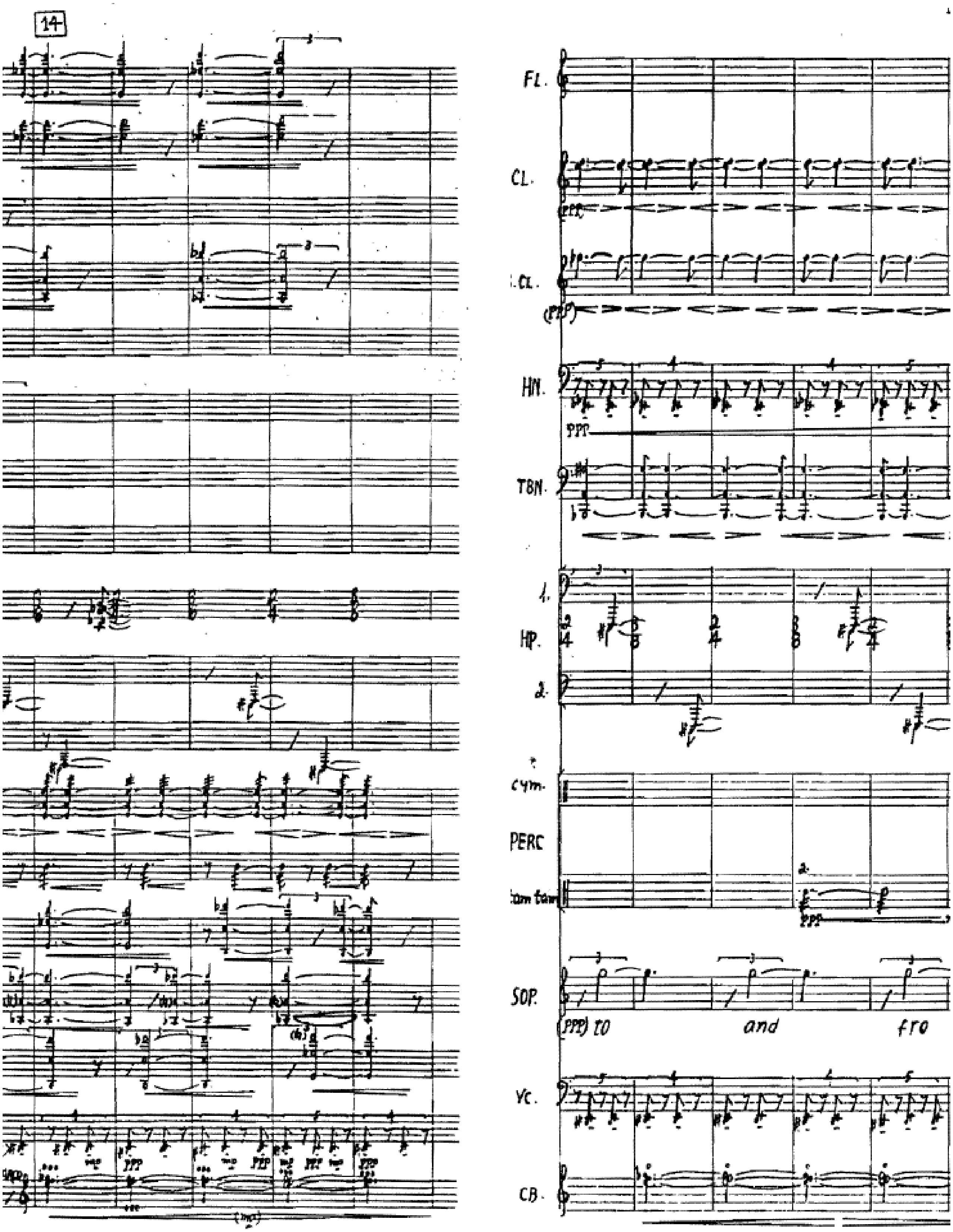
14
FL.
CL.
(ppp)
B.CL.
(ppp)
HN.
ppp
TBN.
1.
HP.
2.
CYM.
PERC
tam tam
ppp
SOP.
(ppp) to
and
fro
VC.
CB.
ppp
(mp)
3
4
5

Figure 22. **Rehearsal 10, just before the soprano's first entrance.**

winds are marked *ffffz* as the soprano appropriately sings the words “unheard footfalls…”). The result is the nearly complete unintelligibility of the “libretto”; only here and there do we catch hard-voiced syllables as being recognizable. The obscurity of the words is increased by Feldman’s use of vocalise passages, which in some instances can easily be confused with the sung text, and by his overall treatment of the text (to be discussed at length later in this chapter). Additionally, the soprano’s motives are much more obvious in their interconnectedness—the pitch and intervallic contents are quite similar, and shorter ideas are gradually subsumed into larger ones that emerge in later sections.

The soprano’s first appearance on page 11 begins with the words, “to and fro in shadow from inner to outer shadow,” and is sung on a repeated high G, with each syllable sung separately, about one note per measure with a triplet-quarter-rest before each successive note. This extreme monosyllabic treatment I call vocal type *A*; this kind of broken periodic repetition of a single note as soloistic line reappears numerous times. As the soprano continues into the second stanza on page 13, the five syllables in the word “impenetrable” in the line “from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself” are sung as a quick eighth-note quintuplet in order to fit into the space of the other syllables, preserving the one-pulse-per-bar feeling. On page 17, the vocal line changes, becoming a chromatic triplet on each word: “…doors once neared gently close…”. Although this is minimally melismatic singing, it immediately stands out as a drastic change from the monotone syllables preceding it. This is type *B*, and it reappears in several other places, with and without text. On page 56 the same three-note motive returns, but now each pitch is much longer and the phrasing is nearly continuous; subsumed within the orchestral texture, the three-note motive now resembles the vocalise material.

Types *A* and *B* dominate the soprano part throughout nearly the entire first half of the piece, which encompasses the first half of the poem. At almost the halfway point (page 37, Figure 23) we first hear a new type of vocal line: an extended wordless vocalise, much more lyrical than anything heard in the soprano (or in any instrument, for that matter) thus far. This vocalise (which I will refer to as *V*) is pervasive throughout the second half of *neither,* exhibiting Feldman's desire to employ the soprano without relying on the text.

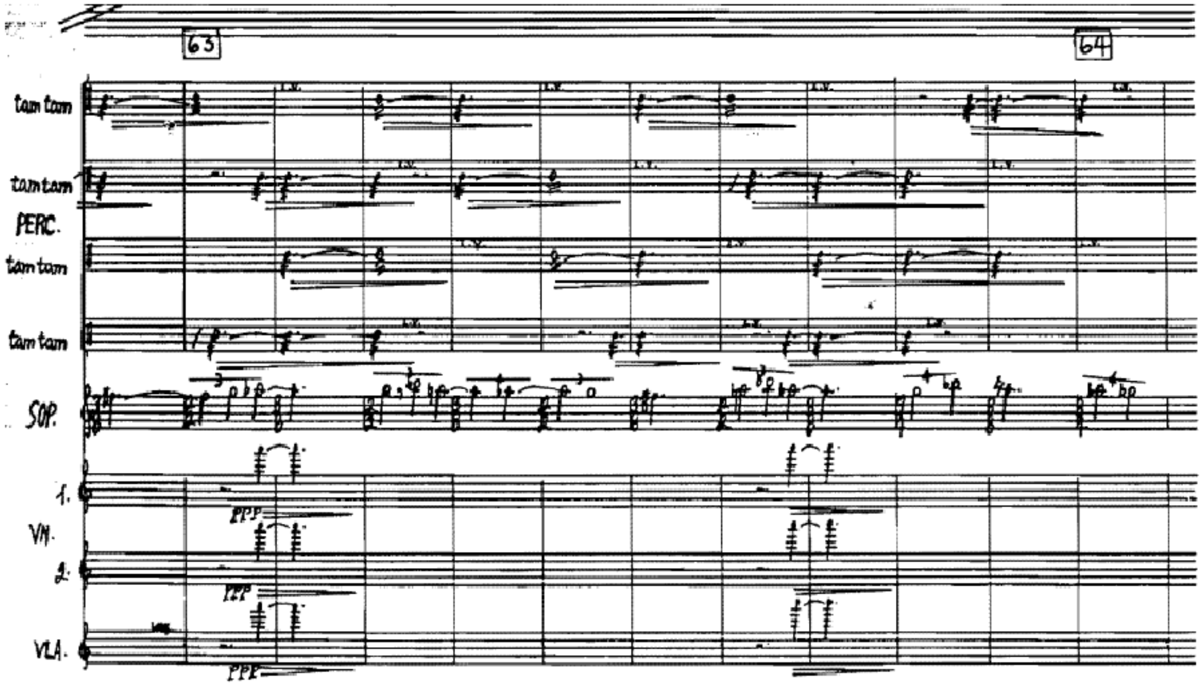

Figure 23. **First presentation of vocalise, page 37.**

Appearing in many different contexts, the vocalise passages have an ever-shifting lyricism to them. Feldman's mixed meters, polyrhythms, and the ubiquitous major and minor 2nds and minor thirds comprise a different meandering line each time such passages return. By extended use of wordless singing, Feldman is able to maintain the singer's presence within the ensemble and expand her material without too quickly exhausting Beckett's scanty text (scanty, that is, relative to the scale of work Feldman wished to create). An isolated final vocal motive occurs on page 53, where the soprano sings a four-note motive, reminiscent of the countless other four-note motives in other Feldman works such as *Crippled Symmetry, Why Patterns?, Turfan Fragments, For John Cage*, and many others.

The rest of the vocal material in *neither* can be considered variations of the four main types, such as on page 46 where the soprano "borrows" material type D from the orchestra, singing the repeated falling two-note theme previously heard in solo cello and violin. Notably, the orchestra sometimes returns the favor and "borrows" from the soprano; frequently this is done simultaneously with the soprano, such that the singer and a small number of instruments (typically high woodwinds or strings) form a noticeable subgroup within the larger ensemble. A notable example of this is page 56 (Figure 24), where flutes, oboes, and clarinets play a high-pitched, differently-metered interchange (similar to the example in the next chapter from *String Quartet*) based on the vocalise material, which is sung at the same time by the soprano, creating a dense heterophony in which the singer is merely one voice among many.

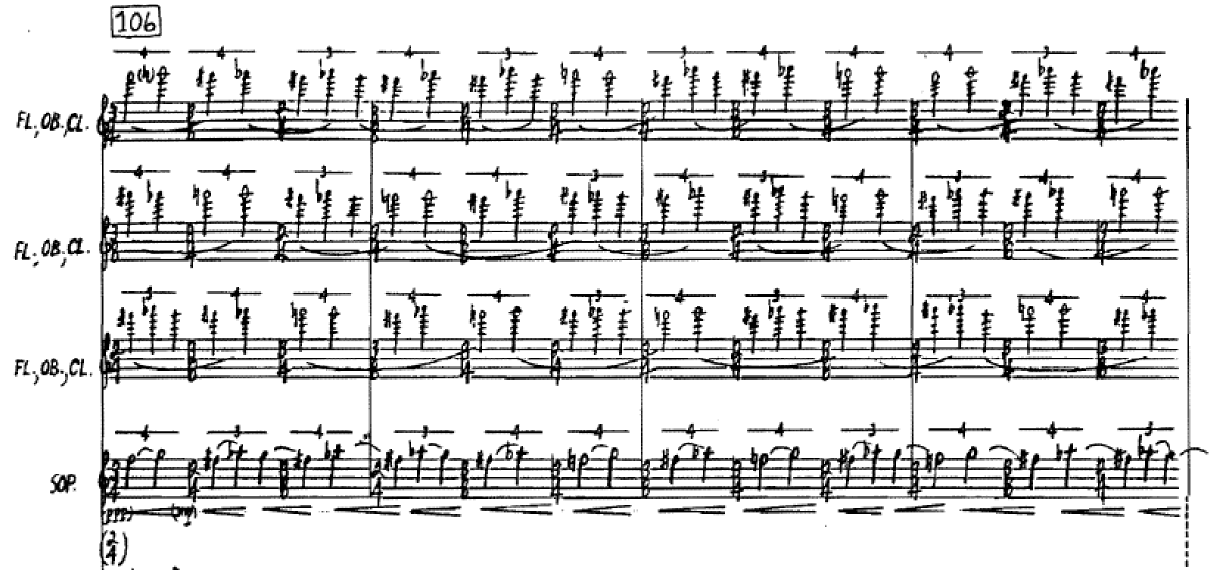

Figure 24. Soprano and high woodwinds, page 56.

As with the instrumental themes, each type of vocal theme is present in more than one variety; moreover, there are (as mentioned previously) strong similarities between the soprano solo lines and the melodic lines for the solo instruments in other Feldman works written around that time, such as *Oboe and Orchestra, Flute and Orchestra,* and *Cello and Orchestra.* However, while the soprano's segments are essentially variations on a handful of musical ideas, the material is flexible enough to appear in a wide array of forms and variations. In the case of the vocalise, the full significance of the material is not realized until the final variation at the end of the piece, where the vocalise line sets the last line of the poem, beginning on page 74. The one vocal motive in *neither* that stands out as "iconic" is the rising three-note theme, F# - G – A♭, which quite possibly consists of the generative three pitches to which Feldman alluded, and of which all other configurations are shadows. The iconic materials "borrowed" from the orchestra are present in this list as well, and should be considered equally iconic when presented by the soprano.

A: isolated repeated notes on a single pitch, generally long in duration
  A1: isolated repeated long notes on more than one pitch
***B*: rising three-note theme**
  Bv: rising three-note theme without text
C: four-note theme (D♭ – C – A – B)
V: vocalise (variable rhythm and pitch content, based on m2nds/M2nds/m3rds)
  V1: staccato notes with similar pitch and rhythm content to vocalise
  Dv: two-note instrumental theme "borrowed" by soprano
  Ev: nine-note instrumental theme "borrowed" by soprano

In this list of vocal materials, the two types "borrowed" from the orchestra appear in limited but important circumstances. On page 46, the soprano sings the same two-note pattern as was played by the solo cello on page 21, G♭ – measure of rest – F, with nearly identical background chords in the violas as before. Like the earlier version of the pattern (and also like the repeated notes in her opening line), every note the soprano sings begins on the second quarter in a quarter-triplet, leaving the downbeat of every measure silent. On page 40, the soprano sings the nine-note theme, accompanied by the piano; however, instead of being featured as a soloist substituting for a solo instrument, here the soprano sounds as though she were battling nearly the entire orchestra pulsing and fluttering around her in layers of polymeters and polyrhythms, as though trying to navigate her way out of a storm. The soprano's borrowing of these two types gives them additional significance, as it makes them universal between soloist and orchestra.

3.3.4. Feldman's use of materials and structure of the piece

Having made useful distinctions between different material types, I provide on the following page a chart (Figure 25) of what I have determined to be the large form of *neither.* While this chart is not a comprehensive map of all divisions and musical types in the piece, it highlights the most important sections in order to convey an immediate visual understanding of *neither's* use of materials and overall form. Based on the most significant changes in musical type, as the timing of the lines of the poem, I conceived of three large sections subdivided into two smaller sections each. The boundaries of the larger sections are relatively clear-cut, corresponding to major changes in both text and music. In most cases, the sectional endings are determined by the grid marked by the page or the system. The end of the first section, for example, is the end of page.19; the first measure of page 20, although it is a measure of silence following the words "…gently part again" and a decrescendo into nothingness, belongs to the second section.

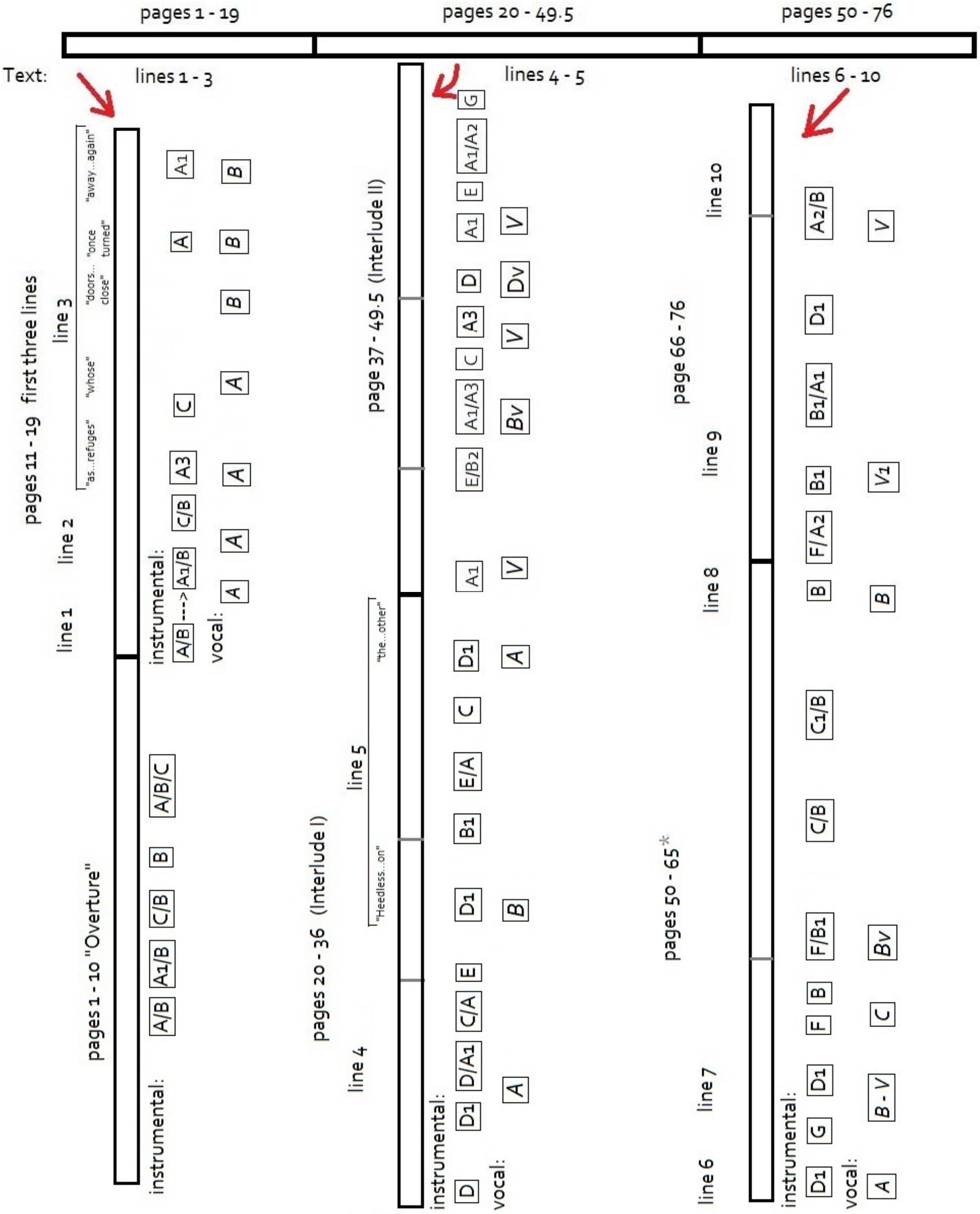
pages 1 - 19
pages 20 - 49.5
pages 50 - 76
Text:
lines 1 - 3
lines 4 - 5
lines 6 - 10
pages 1 - 10 "Overture"
pages 11 - 19 first three lines
line 1
line 2
line 3
"as...refuges"
"whose"
"doors... close"
"once turned"
"away...again"
instrumental:
A/B
A1/B
C/B
B
A/B/C
A/B ---> A1/B
C/B
A3
C
A
A1
vocal:
A
A
A
A
B
B
B
pages 20 - 36 (Interlude I)
page 37 - 49.5 (Interlude II)
line 4
line 5
"Heedless...on"
"the...other"
instrumental:
D
D1
D/A1
C/A
E
D1
B1
E/A
C
D1
A1
E/B2
A1/A3
C
A3
D
A1
E
A1/A2
G
vocal:
A
B
A
V
Bv
V
Dv
V
pages 50 - 65*
page 66 - 76
line 6
line 7
line 8
line 9
line 10
instrumental:
D1
G
D1
F
B
F/B1
C/B
C1/B
B
F/A2
B1
B1/A1
D1
A2/B
vocal:
A
B - V
C
Bv
B
V1
V

Figure 25. **Large-scale divisions and use of material types in *neither*.**

The first section consists of two nearly equally long subsections: the “Overture” (that which Feldman composed while waiting for the text) which introduces motivic types A, B, and C in the orchestra; and the first three lines of the poem, which combines these orchestral materials with vocal types *A*, the isolated notes on a single pitch, and *B*, the rising three-note motive, which first appears with the word “doors,” nearly at the end of the section. These first five types are used exclusively in the first section, each type appearing multiple times with several varieties of instrumentation. While the first two lines of the poem are set using *A*, the third (and much longer) line not only introduces *B*, but also deviates from the absolute regularity of the grid. The line begins, curiously, on the last measure of page 14 (the word “as”) instead of the downbeat of page 15. This becomes a pattern with the word “refuges” deliberately placed on the last measure of the first system of page 15, and the word “whose” on the last measure of the page, followed by six measures of silence (except for a rolled piano/harp chord and a single cello harmonic). The sudden sentence break is unsettling; having received the text phrase by phrase thus far, the isolation of “whose” is very unexpected. One way of considering this entire section (from “as” through “whose”) is that Feldman is deliberately creating an offset verbal rhythm by moving each clause forward a measure. Consequently we hear the words at the ends of pages 14 and 15 as upbeats, waiting to be answered by subsequent clauses, and Feldman exploits this anticipation with the large near-silence on page 16, which both catches our attention and breaks the thread of material continuity, followed by the first instance of melismatic singing on page 17.

The second large section I have divided into two parts, labeled Interlude I and Interlude II. This is quite different from the divisions in other analyses, such as Sebastien Claren’s, in which the sections are strictly demarcated by the sung text, in which case a division would occur on page 26, where line 4 of the text is sung. In my view, the large middle section of *neither* can be considered a prolonged instrumental-dominated interlude between the more textually dense opening and concluding sections, with subdivisions created primarily by the presentation of new material types rather than the singing of subsequent lines. The beginning of Interlude I is marked by the long-delayed introduction of a new pattern in the winds and strings – type D, the descending two-note motive from G flat to F, which reduces on page 21 to a solo cello, haloed with a cloud of violas. The strings continue repeating the two-note theme, each time with a different non-resolute chromatic cluster in the violas, filling six full systems before they arereplaced by rolled tam-tam and solo cello. This is the first extended instrumental interlude since the "Overture" – here it is Feldman's portrayal of the movement "between two lit refuges," which gradually weakens rather than ending decisively. The simplicity and inevitability of the two notes, each separated by a brief silence, makes each repetition distinct and yet unidentifiable in a seemingly endless string of separate but nearly identical musical events. Feldman mused in his interview with Howard Skempton:

> What made me determine the length of the instrumental interlude? I can't answer. It's almost as if I'm reflecting. I didn't want a cause-and-effect continuity, a kind of glue that would take me from one thought to another. I wanted to treat each sentence as a world.[57]

The type D material eventually loses its back-and-forth momentum, evolving into a single chord built around what remains of the two-note pattern – the G flat played by the solo cello. On page 26, the repeated G flats are carried over into line 4 of the poem, "beckoned back and forth and turned away," returning the soprano to her type *A* single-note setting. On page 29 a new theme suddenly starts, moving from one small group of mixed woodwinds and brass to another. Nine notes comprise this theme, arranged in an asymmetrical pattern across two 3/4 measures:

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[57] Skempton, "Beckett as Librettist." From the Apmonia website 3/3/12.

F G F# G# A F G G# F#

At first, the listener is aware that the pattern is repeating, but has trouble discerning at what point the repetition happens, or even how many pitches are in the series. Partly, the repetitive pairing of pitches (F and G, F# and G#) and placement of the largest interval, A to F, in the center of the pattern contribute to this aural confusion. This disorienting effect is increased by Feldman's use of polyrhythms to create an unbalanced distribution of notes; the first measure has four notes (F G F# G#) in the time of three, and the second measure has five (A F G G# F#). There is a sort of hemiola effect to this rhythmic arrangement; it sounds at first as though the cycle should restart on the note following the largest interval (F), but the placement of the A on the downbeat of the second measure defies this, effectively functioning as an accented upbeat. Furthermore, with the quintuplet in the second measure Feldman creates the sense that the F that actually marks the beginning of a new cycle is slightly ahead of the downbeat. Consequently the F sounds as much attached to the end of the previous cycle as it does the beginning of the next one. Feldman adds a further element of aural uncertainty by systematically varying the phrasing from one instrument to the next. One of the trombones rearticulates every third note, one trombone every fourth, and one every fifth note; while the bass clarinet slurs six notes together at a time, and the English horn seven. No two instruments share the same point of rearticulation, which increases the perception of the cycle as seamless, without end or beginning.

The nine-note theme (Figure 26) is disorienting, relentless and perhaps even slightly menacing in its regularity, and it is also perhaps the most "iconic" of all the musical types in *neither*; it represents a deliberate attempt by Feldman to bring non-idiosyncratic music into his composition. Whereas Feldman's music generally draws the listener in by focusing upon the qualities of each moment, the nine-note theme keeps the listener at arm's length with its

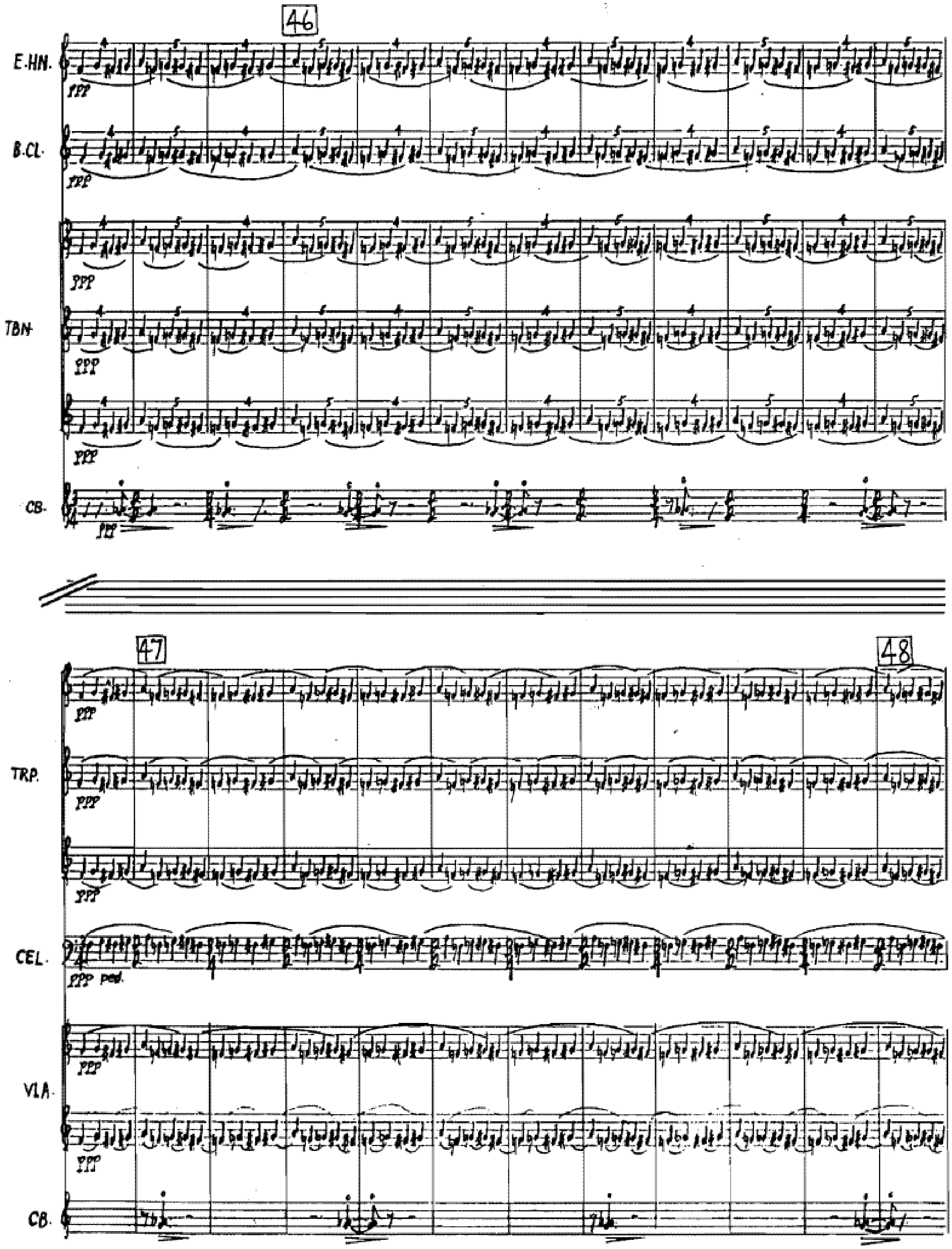
46
E.HN.
ppp
B.CL.
ppp
ppp
TBN
ppp
ppp
CB.
ppp
47
48
ppp
TRP.
ppp
ppp
CEL.
ppp ped.
ppp
VLA.
ppp
CB.

Figure 26. **The nine-note theme, page 29.**

uniformity; and while the other musical types in *neither* depend on phrasing shaped by the natural decay of sound framed by silence, the nine-note theme is a *perpetuum mobile* moving from instrument to instrument, filling every moment with sound until it is cut off by the constraint of the grid. Feldman explained to Skempton why this musical type appears here:

> It wasn't until page 30 that I had a glimpse of what *To and fro* is in the text. What he's talking about is the impossibility of fathoming either the "self" or the "unself." You're back and forth, back and forth. Well, I said to myself, I certainly know more than anybody else in my generation what the "self" is in terms of personal music. I had to invent the "unself". I saw the "unself" as a very detached, impersonal, perfect type of machinery. What I did was to superimpose this perfect machinery in a polyrhythmic situation. So there's a new element here, a periodic element, which eventually emerges.[58]

Compared to the first section of the piece, the musical types of the middle section exhibit much greater extremes, both in density of texture and rhythmic variety. Not only are types A, B, and C revisited in different variations, but two new types are introduced – D and E. If Feldman intended type E, the unrelenting nine-note theme, to represent “impersonal machinery,” then he might well have intended the hesitant, constrained, and silence-filled two-note theme to specifically stand as its opposite, that together these two types of musical material represent the extremes of “self” and “unself.”

The juxtaposition of opposites is the main motivation for the middle section of the opera, providing a kind of non-linear development that takes place almost entirely in the instrumental interludes. Meanwhile, the frequency of sung text is markedly decreased in the second half of the middle section, Interlude II; when the soprano enters (beginning on page 37), no text is used at all – and yet the soprano is considerably busier throughout Interlude II than she was in Interlude I. The vocalise (type *V*) is the defining element of the second Interlude section, marking its beginning in the third system on page 37. All other materials, both instrumental and vocal, are reflected in or components of the vocalise; however, the vocalise material is not restricted to one or a small number of versions of itself. Furthermore, Feldman frequently uses wordless versions of other musical types, including instrumental motives, in the soprano, effectively posing her in different roles in relation to the ensemble. On page 40, the soprano doubles the piano with the nine-note theme, creating a thin obbligato above a dense array of fluttering pulses (type B2), with the orchestra rearranged in the score to create a subgroup (of clarinets, horns, trumpets and cellos) playing a double-time mixed-meter against the rest of the orchestra, further complicated by every instrument in the group playing an array of complex polyrhythms. On page 42, this overwhelming cloud of sound vanishes, leaving only sparse single notes (D1) and a faint rolling cymbal as the soprano sings a wordless, lengthened version of the rising three-note theme (*Bv*).

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[58] Skempton, Apmonia site, 3/4/12.

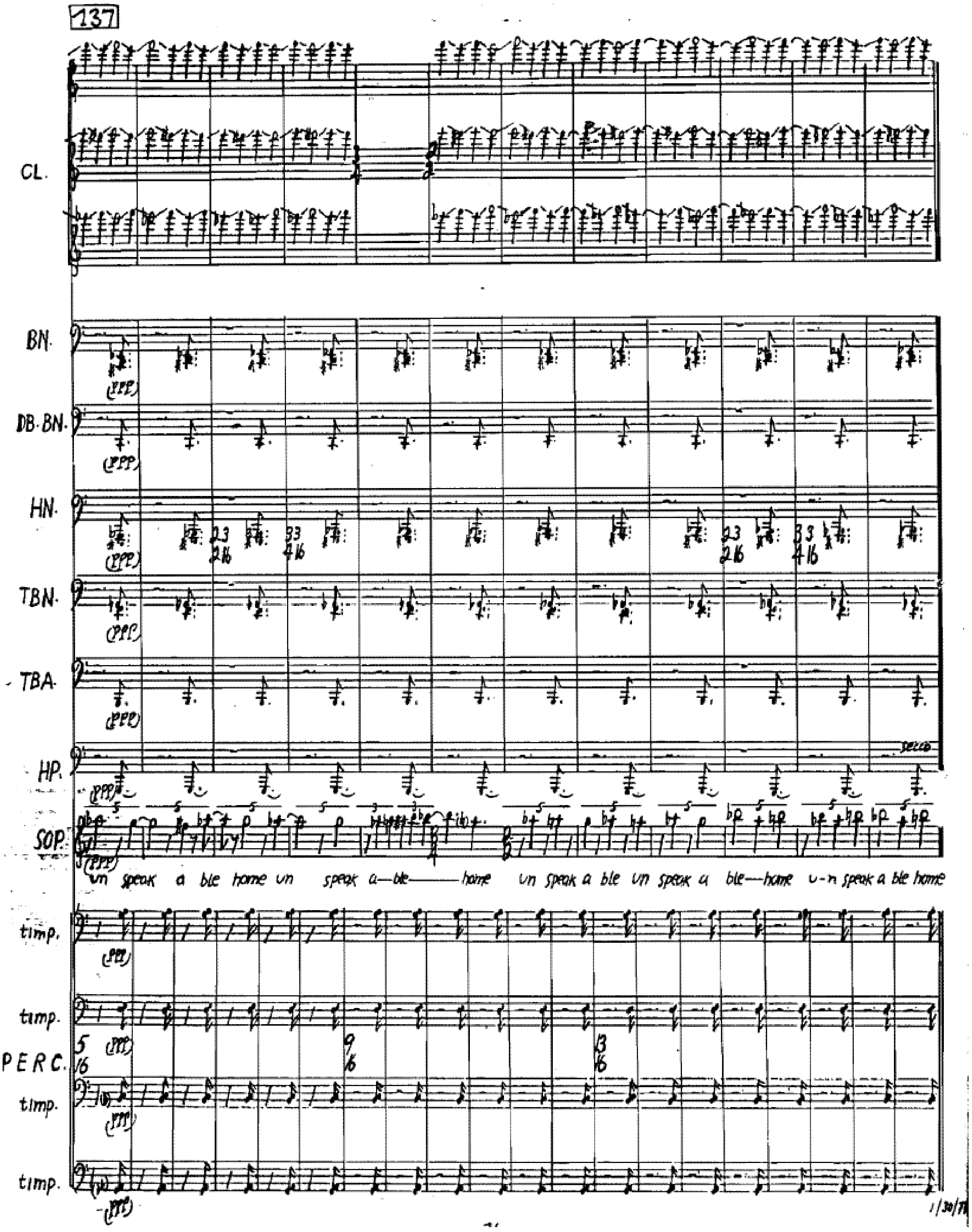
At page 50 the listener is startled by one of the few loud moments in the piece (following an extended section of very quiet low brass and rolled timpani). This outburst marks the beginning of the last section of the opera, corresponding to line 6 and the words “unheard footfalls only sound.” That the “only sound” is “unheard” is a contradictory line, and these words are set in a contradictory way by Feldman; the soprano is deliberately marked *ppp* (as elsewhere) and sings roughly a 4th lower than usual (on a D) so as to be covered by the *ffffz* winds – unheard indeed, except for the tail-ends of her phrases, which emerge as the instruments immediately decrescendo back to their customary *ppp*. Feldman also repeats words for the first time in the piece; the soprano repeats the entire line, drawing attention to the pattern of four syllables, then two, then one in each measure – a sort of withdrawal back to the original motive of the soprano, the single pitch repetitions of the word “sound.”

Following this dramatic outburst and fadeaway we hear the next line, “till at last halt for good,” set using vocal type *B*. The words “halt for good” mark a turning point in the poem: the restless abstract motion “to and fro” has come to a halt, and as the soprano sings these words, she gradually slips from the three-note material back into the vocalise, as if an invisible constraint limiting her to the three-note theme were dissolved away. Immediately afterwards, the high strings play a G♭, then an F, suggesting a return of the two-note “self” theme – only to continue on with an A♭, B♭, B natural, etc. The two-note theme, which for Feldman represents the motion towards the “self,” does not appear again in the opera. This disappearance is key: in the same way that the middle section was defined by high contrast from system to system (between continuous sound and silence, words and vocalise, density and sparseness of sound), the last section of the opera is defined by the removal of the more clear-cut thematic materials (or else their assimilation into larger, more complex conglomerations of sound).

Looking at page 55, we can see this removal of thematic material taking place over an extended passage, the longest single passage of continuous material in the opera. It begins with a regular staccato beat in the winds and keyboards, pulsing every eighth note in a 2/4 bar. The regular pulse is punctuated at irregular intervals by a second pulse in the strings and percussion – high guiro providing a new and penetrating sound. After a prolonged period with only these competing beats, the high woodwinds abandon them to form a net of mixed meters with the soprano, which evolves into the three-note theme (C), in both high strings and winds by page 58. The chords of the three-note theme contract into a single chord on page 59, with longer notes that crescendo into a sort of counter-pulse resembling material type A. More and more instruments abandon the staccato pulse and join the crescendos at page 60; on page 61, all brass except tuba have joined the woodwinds and high strings; by page 62 all of the strings have joined the swells, and the different instrumental families begin to split into asynchronized groups, so that the long crescendos are no longer a single competing pulse, but a disintegrating flow and ebb which seems to drag on the percussion, harp, and tuba, who are still continuing the original pulse with increasing time between each attack. At this point the C theme has been fragmented transmuted, existing only as static harmonies with similar pitch content but without the melodic motion and clear instrumentation that made type C iconic.

While all of this changing of groups and gradual deterioration of the two pulses is taking place, the soprano sings an extremely prolonged version of the three-note theme, which eventually transforms into the vocalise, yet makes one final appearance at the setting of line 8, with the words “then no sound.” After this we hear the further dissolution of the iconic motivic types – (C, D, E, or *B*)—which have lost most of their instrumental and rhythmic integrity; we hear all of them now as static harmonies lost in a wash of other harmonies, instead of distinct instrumentation with independent rhythmic motion and a melodic dimension as well. The harmony in the oboes and trombones on page 70 demonstrates a last remnant of type C; while the repeated pattern of rising and falling staccato seconds in the soprano on the repeated word “neither” on pages 71 and 70 echoes both the two-note motive (D) and the nine-note theme (E), fading out into nothingness.

The aftermath of the long slow degradation of the pulses seems to be a chaotic despair, as the soprano sings an undirected and wide-ranging staccato variation of the vocalise material, competing with high clarinet and piccolo playing in the same range to make her short, sharp utterances intelligible at the setting of line 9. After the fade into nothingness, the soprano and orchestra are briefly paired with a last reminiscence of D1; but, like the staccato vocalise, the soprano seems powerless to reconstruct any definite material type. At the last three pages of the piece, the orchestra's materials have been reduced to crippled, sinister versions of the motives from the very beginning of the piece: the high glissandi in the clarinets (A2) harsh in their high register and timbral monotony, with the bassoons, horns, low brass and harp roughly, almost brutally, belching out a return of the low pulse (B1), counterpointed by the timpani. Meanwhile the soprano sings the last line of the poem, "unspeakable home," with a final version of the vocalise – beginning with the pitches F# – G – A♭ repeated three times, emphasizing the relationship between the generative three pitches and this extreme outgrowth. Not until the last page does the soprano sing more than these three pitches; meanwhile, the instruments play three different pulses, each group differently metered but coordinated at certain points: the clarinets in 2/2, the low winds in 3/4 + 3/16, and the timpani alternating between 5/16, 9/16, and 13/16 in near-symmetrical patterns. Because of this partial discoordination the last few pages feel strongly chaotic, and yet each rhythmic part is also reminiscent of the sinister machinery of the "unself," particularly given the absence of the strings (the iconic instruments of the inward journey). As the piece reaches its final moments (Figure 27), the soprano adds notes rising frantically upwards toward B natural, and the timpani pulse becomes regular and slows down; the high glissandi in the clarinets and the extreme lowness of the brass and low winds ensure that we hear few if any distinct pitches. Gone are any last reminders of either the "self" (two-note theme), the "unself," or any sort of existential motion; all that remains is the "unheeded neither" expressed in the distortion of pitch in all instrumental parts, and the desperate, near-hysterical soaring of the soprano ever higher.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(ppp)
23 / 216
33 / 416
secco
un speak a ble home un speak a—ble——home un speak a ble un speak a ble—home u-n speak a ble home
5 / 16
9 / 16
13 / 16
1/30/7

Figure 27. **The final line, "unspeakable home," page 76.**

3.4. DRAMATIC CRITICISM OF *NEITHER*

As the opera lurches to a halt, what feelings does the listener have about what has been heard? Feldman suggests that as he read the poem, "it became much more tragic. It became unbearable, while here [referring to the interlude preceding line 5, page 30] it's tolerable."[59] And yet it may not be immediately clear that Feldman's score increases in tragic content as it continues. Odd, perhaps, that Feldman would claim to have this insight into Beckett's text at this earlier point in time, yet have such trouble understanding Beckett's instructions in the script of *Words and Music* ten years later. To my ear, there is a definite sense of despair conveyed by the obliteration of the relationships between musical ideas; however, to pinpoint a single moment from which this dissolution begins seems impossible. Indeed, Laws concludes that Feldman has either misinterpreted the text or deliberately defied it:

> Despite the ineffable character of the libretto and the apparently goalless, pendular movement depicted by its greater part, some kind of closure *is* finally achieved…the concept of some kind of end to the continual wandering has been posited, but Feldman does not seem to want to allow for this.[60]

At the same time, the cumulative effect for the listener is that something has happened; this feeling is especially strong in light of the extreme pitch distortion in the winds, following the prolonged section of a unified pulse disintegrating among subgroups of strings and winds into cacophonous surges of sound. Even though all changes in instrument group were coordinated strictly with the grid throughout the last twenty pages, the aural sensation is still that of continuous, gradual dissolution. If this is the listener's impression, can we say that the music has exhausted itself and come to a resting place, as has supposedly the protagonist in the text? Has the music reflected the progression of "events," or obscured them the same way the soprano's high range and *ppp* markings obscured the sung text? Perhaps the constant reuse and recontextualization of material contradicts the text by making it impossible to say what the musical transformations of the "self" and "unself" represent, despite my (and even Feldman's) identification of the iconic materials as representing those two opposites. And if the dramatic success of *neither* hinges on a clear progression following the thread of the text, then it might still be unclear that success has been achieved.

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[59] Skempton, Apmonia site, 3/6/12.

[60] Laws, "Morton Feldman's *Neither*," 60 – 61.

Perhaps we can say that *neither* succeeds within the tradition of monodrama if Feldman has created a psychologically supportive musical environment for the meaning of the text. We can certainly find a few things *neither* has in common with *Erwartung*, the archetype of psychologically fraught monodramas. A cursory list would include the lone female performer (and, plausibly, lone female protagonist); a bleak, surreal setting filled with psychologically symbolic shadows (and resulting similarities in staging); restless motion in search of something that may or may not be real; and occasional textual similarities – lines from *Erwartung* vaguely echoed in *neither* include "Shall I go here? I cannot see the way…"[61] "I am alone in the heavy shadows."[62] "I can't go further…and then they won't let me in…"[63] Feldman himself noted a technical similarity, that "…in Schoenberg's duplication of the irregular prose of *Erwartung*…we find that the partitioning is concentrated enough in time to hear the mosaiclike

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[61] Pappenheim, Marie. *Erwartung* (libretto) (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1922), pg. 3
[62] Ibid., pg. 6
[63] Ibid., pg. 17

process of the grid at work."[64] But despite Feldman's familiarity with *Erwartung*, it seems unlikely that any aspect of *neither* is a conscious attempt to emulate the earlier work; not only is the text of *neither* not conducive to extreme emotional display, it also reflects both Feldman and Beckett's distaste for what they perceived as artificiality endemic to opera and monodrama. And while Schoenberg may have clear mosaic-like patterns setting *Erwartung*'s libretto, Feldman's grid is arguably as much an outgrowth of his earlier graphic scores, which extend and segment sounds using measured rectangles, as a response to the poetic meter of Beckett's text.

While *neither* may still be considered tragic, it is not melodramatic; some other expression of tragedy is taking place here. Does that mean we, the listeners, do not feel some emotional response to the music? Or is it that only Feldman appreciates the significance of the "self" and "unself" material, having the advantage of the composer's point of view? Roger Thomas called the text "quaintly old-fashioned existential baggage"[65] and suggested the listener would be better off not to try to feel any sense of tragedy, but only to "step outside conventional notions of time-span and unfolding musical events." If the listeners discard the text as the source of dramatic power, or accept the music as a mediator between the limited (and unintelligible) lyrics and the audience, what kind of drama do we end up with?

3.4.1. Feldman, Beckett, repetition and memory

Recent attempts to analyze Feldman's music have resulted in different theorists coining terms that describe a similar aspect of Feldman's treatment of repetition: microvariations, Coptic

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[64] Feldman, "Crippled Symmetry," in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 2 (Autumn 1981), 91.

[65] Thomas, Roger. "*Neither* Review." In *Gramophone*, October 1998. Accessed from the Apmonia site, 3/8/12.

variations, “crippled symmetries,”[66] “population thinking,”[67] perceiving a musical object from different viewpoints, etc. While each description implies a slightly different interpretation, most analyses agree that a primary purpose of Feldman’s variation technique is to expand musical material by manipulating memory. By presenting slight variations of a musical moment, Feldman refers back to what we’ve already heard while at the same time causing us to question the accuracy and significance of our memories. Expecting a simple repetition in many cases, the listener’s perception of past events is changed as Feldman redefines segments through slight variations in rhythm, pitch, ordering of elements, or instrumentation. Each new altered segment evokes the memory of the preceding phrase or segment. Catherine Costello Hirata cites Feldman’s own description of his music as “a departing landscape”: “*This* expresses where the sound is in our hearing,” he said, “leaving us rather than coming toward us.”[68] But that memory is now itself altered by the changes in the pattern. Was the first part of this phrase like this? we ask ourselves; or like this? and which version is the “real” version? Hirata expands on this idea:

> Exactly what we do with each sound after we hear it is a hard question. For what must characterize… an experience in which everything between the sounds gets projected onto each of the individual sounds, must be the sensation of each sound’s, after we hear it, becoming strikingly absent.[69]

Since Feldman’s music typically does not develop in any usual way, so it is argued, his music cannot be considered “dramatic” because it lacks not only dramatic features such as climax and resolution, but also any sense of causal relationship between one musical event and subsequent ones. Instead, Feldman relies on the extension and patterning of material types to manipulate the listeners' memories as a strategy for creating stasis, or the perception that one moment in time is equivalent in significance to every other moment while listening to the same music. Listening to *neither*, there are many sections in which repetitive materials create a sense of stasis. In passages such as page 21 the two-note pattern (type D) in the solo cello backed by the higher strings extends for considerably longer than a listener would expect, given the regular pacing of two or three systems for each material type preceding it. Although the background strings change chords, there is no sense of a goal to their progression. After a few minutes, the listener is lulled into a feeling of timelessness, reflecting the "to and fro" motion in the text. When the higher strings drop out to be replaced by tam-tam rolls, the change is surprisingly seamless; it is as though the background strings have been obscured by a layer of fog rather than removed completely. By the time the two-note theme is reduced to a single cello note against the tam-tam rolls, we are immersed in a timeless world of repetition of a single element.

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[66] A term coined by Feldman himself in his eponymous article.

[67] Hanninen, Dora. “Feldman, Analysis, Experience.” In *twentieth-century music*, Spring 2004 (1/2), 237.

[68] Feldman, “The Anxiety of Art..” in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, pg. 25. Quoted in Catherine Hirata, “The Sounds of the Sounds Themselves: Analyzing the Early Music of Morton Feldman.” *Perspectives of New Music* vol. 34 no. 1 (Winter 1996), 13.

[69] Hirata, 12.

Repeated and sustained single events can be interpreted (some would argue, inevitably become interpreted) as preludes to change, creating expectation rather than a genuine feeling of stasis. In that context, a sustained note can be as much a linear-time process to the listener as a pattern of repetition; suspension of change in music does not necessarily create true stasis, but instead may change the marking of time for the listener into something anticipatory, measuring the increase of expectation rather than its fulfillment, denial, or overhaul. Yet as a repetition is prolonged, the listener's level of attention changes, and a different expectation is created: that significant changes will occur over a longer timescale than was initially expected. The duality of anticipation and adjustment, however, creates a contradiction. When we began listening, we quickly developed an expectation that changes in the music could happen at any time, as we did not yet know the scale of events. When we now hear prolonged static passages, we come to accept that change happens on a larger level – that of measures, phrases, or even pages— and not-change generally persists from note to note; and yet, after some amount of time elapses, we expect stasis on both levels to last throughout the entire piece. That is to say, we reshape our expectations continually as we gather more information about the piece, and in the case of many kinds of repetitive music, we come to perceive the larger-scale changes as equally low in information value as the note-level repetitions.

In process-oriented minimalist pieces such as Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians*, we see that a large-scale repetitive pattern creates a decrease in the amount of information given over time. This does not mean that the number of events decreases, for a repetitive pattern can have a large *number* of events; it does however mean that the overall *value*, in terms of information, of each individual event is greatly reduced. This is in the nature of large-scale "process" pieces that are thought of as typifying minimalism, such as works by Reich or Glass or the drone pieces of Charlemagne Palestine. Feldman's late works are different, and in the case of *neither* the difference lies in the constraint of the grid. *Feldman's grid provides development in the sense of determining scale and consequently shaping the nature of the materials in relation to that scale.* The opening of *neither* prepares the listener for the rest of the piece by fixing in his or her mind certain expectations and perceptions about scale and *texture* – in the sense that Catherine Hirata uses the word, to connote patterns made into fixed objects: "To picture a pattern as a texture is to snatch it from the arms of time. It is to picture the pattern as an object, which, we could say, *does not take time.*"[70] The complex layering of dynamic swells, the use of polymeters and polyrhythms, and chromatic pitch density diffused through wide registration all contribute to a perception of Feldman's musical materials as textural, almost a textile – Gelleny uses a striking image from carpet-weaving, with Feldman's repetitive materials as "weft," woven against the vertical "warp" of the barlines[71] – as being interwoven, yet containing so many diverse juxtapositions of material (both vertically and horizontally) that seem contradictory, so that each element of the material retains a degree of independence and consequently a higher degree of informational value than in a process-oriented minimalist work.

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[70] Hirata, Catherine Costello. "Analyzing the Music of Morton Feldman." Dissertation (Columbia University 2003. Accessed through Proquest Digital Dissertations February 24 2012), pg. 220.

This is the crucial distinction between Feldman and his contemporaries. Feldman's repetitions do not build into a continuous process, in which change is an ongoing, forward-looking motivation for the sounds, nor does his large-scale approach depend on the listener engaging in a constant mental plotting of how each moment relates to a directed process. If anything, Feldman's material manipulations simultaneously divide and unite sounds that are expressively complete in themselves. Our brief memory of the first instance is overwritten by the second, blurring both segments together into a mental approximation that eludes them both. These alterations, therefore, undermine the past while focusing the listener's attention on the present moment; we can't hold on to what we have already heard, because what we are hearing now makes us question the accuracy and significance of our memories of the earlier music. Yet because we depend on the accuracy of our memories to predict future events, our perception of the musical future is unclear at best. We expect that at some point the soprano will sing the next line, but we cannot predict how that singing will relate to what we have just heard, or even to our immediate experience of the present music. Instability of memory and uncertainty of our present location within the music go hand in hand with the shadowy blurring of self and other in Beckett's text; as Laws puts it, "…through the juxtaposition of different techniques [Feldman] acknowledges that the attempt to articulate a sense of self is dependent upon memory, and that remembering involves a perpetual re-creation of the self and fragments of other selves which become as much self as other."[72]

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[71] Gelleny, Sharon. "Variation Techniques and Other Theoretical Issues in Morton Feldman's 'Carpet' Compositions," Dissertation (SUNY Buffalo, 2000), pg.16.

The staging of the Rome Opera premiere of *neither* was very much a visual extension of the static nature of the music:

> …In the text the ambiguity of the self and the unself, of perception and imperception and the breaking down of communication is further underlined by the immobility of the singer, who, clad in a very wide white robe, with lights attached to the forearms, sings only one single note… On an empty stage and in front of a blank background, which from dark becomes gradually lighter, the immobile singer with an 'immobile' voice is accompanied by an 'immobile' orchestra – immobile insofar as there is no progression, no dialectic and no direction, just sound."[73]

The sensation of timeless immobility may very well be the most appropriate feeling in response to *neither.* Within its brief ten lines, the text of *neither* succinctly summarizes the situation of many (if not all) Beckett plays. Mercer describes Beckett's characters as increasingly immobile throughout the progression of dramas, from the tramps obliged to wait in one spot in *Godot*, to Hamm confined to his wheelchair in *Endgame*, to the Man and Women encased in urns except for their heads in *Play.*[74] And, as in the extended musical passages of *neither,* seldom is there any significant development in the individual characters or specific situation in a Beckett play. Beckett's characters, much like "The Woman" from *Erwartung* inhabit lonely worlds which they populate with their own speeches and memories; but unlike "The Woman," they seem increasingly detached from these memories, increasingly unable to control or reflect on their own speeches, and ultimately void of any real sense of themselves.

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[72] Laws, "Feldman, Beckett, Johns," 157.

[73] Brigitte Schiffer, "Review of *Neither*," *Music and Musicians* 25 no. 12 (August 1977), 50.

[74] Vivian Mercer, *Beckett/Beckett* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pg 185.

The futile situations of Beckett's characters are not only a reflection of his pessimistic worldview, but moreover the expression of an extreme asceticism in his dramatic works. When we think of works like *Breath* as part of Beckett's dramatic catalogue, then it can be argued that setting, character, and action need not be clearly identifiable for *neither* to be considered in a similar category. Compare the solo soprano, dressed in white with lights on her arms, to the white nightgown-clad narrator standing with his lamp in *A Piece of Monologue.* Pushing farther along this line of thinking, perhaps we could consider the soprano as "Soprano," a character whose identity is no more than her function, essentially an embodied version of Voice in *Cascando* or some combination of Voice and Music, stopping and starting her lines at the behest of an unseen Opener.

If the soprano (or "Soprano") is indeed a character as much as Mouth from *Not I* or "W", the unnamed woman in *Rockaby,* then we can interpret her words as occupying a tenuous gray area between autobiographical dramatic monologue, deliberately misleading narrative, and quasi-biographical stream-of-consciousness. Mouth and "W" are indirectly telling their own stories, by speaking in misleading fragments in a point-of-view that points away from the speaker, or by listening to the recitation of a similar stream of description (and implicitly identifying as the subject of that description). Similarly, the soprano could be telling "Soprano's" story, or Beckett's, or no one's in particular; so long as it is implicit that "Soprano" is in some way the subject of the text and not merely its reciter.

To symbolically point to the speaker as subject, Beckett includes a "listener" in his dramas based on the monologue-narrative – the onstage presence of a character who simply listens. In *Not I* a silent shrouded listener shrugs with indifference periodically as Mouth rambles; in *Happy Days,* Willie is both the listener and a crucial topic of Winnie's discourse; in

Play the listener is offstage, implicitly the spotlight operator, while in *Rockaby* the listener is the woman visible onstage (and subject of the narrative). Even in *A Piece of Monologue* the flickering lamp functions as a symbolic listener. Who is “Soprano’s” listener, if she is the subject of her own text? The answer nearest at hand is the orchestra, or possibly “Orchestra,” if we expand our view of the stage to encompass all performers. Or perhaps the orchestra symbolizes Feldman’s role as listener; if Feldman is a translator, then the music is his translation; at the very least, it is evidence that a listener exists somewhere between the original conception of the text and its presentation.

As a final consideration, the key to understanding the dramatic shape of *neither* may well be present in Beckett’s other plays. Within *Happy Days* Winnie’s already-restricted movement in Act 1, where she is buried to the waist, is nearly eliminated when she is buried so that even her head cannot move in Act 2. In *Rockaby* the movement of the rocking chair comes gradually to a halt as the text is exhausted; in *Endgame* Nell dies, while Nagg withdraws permanently into his trashcan; and in *Act Without Words I* the scenario is resolved by the protagonist’s tools being removed one by one from his reach. Again and again in Beckett dramatic scenarios are not so much resolved as halted; and this not by a change of action or scene, but by simple removal of an element as it “dies.” As the iconic materials cease to return in *neither*, we can also see them as “dying”; not only is this entirely reflective of the “halt for good” in the text, but it may also be the most acceptable resolution of an operatic scenario on Beckett’s terms.

4.0. A COMPARISON OF FELDMAN AND BECKETT'S TECHNIQUES

Having examined both *neither* and *Words and Music*, I have found some clear similarities between the two pieces, not just in terms of material composition (most notably the use of layered clusters of two or three notes a major or minor second apart) but also in how Feldman uses those materials. Both works have materials sorted into large categories ("monologic" and "Aria," "generic" and "iconic"), and those categories reflect a clear distinction in function, particularly between static layered soundmasses (arguably more typical of Feldman), and lyrical directed lines that approach melody. In both pieces the lyrical quasi-melodic segments are associated with an element or idea external to Feldman's personal sound world. The "Aria" material in *Words and Music* is designed to serve as a basis for Words' improvised singing, and insofar as it points to a translation of Feldman's music into words, the lyricism is as much "other" as the iconic nine-note theme from *neither*, deliberately constructed to represent the "impenetrable unself."

Feldman's interpretations of both Beckett texts tend to fall into these kinds of vague dichotomies: self and unself, conflict and compromise, statement and restatement. Various remarks of Feldman's on *neither* make it clear that he saw himself expressing Beckett's ideas, not merely his own musical ideas beneath a veneer of Beckett text: "…I wanted slavishly to adhere to *his* feelings as well as mine. Yet there was no compromise because we were in complete agreement about many, many things."[75] However, following the composing of *Words and Music,* Feldman made very different statements commenting on the difficulty of modifying his personal approach to accommodate Beckett's text:

> "What happens is what a psychoanalyst might call "adult compromise," in terms of the appropriateness of, of how I would bend, for example, and try to attempt to realize essentially someone else's experience. That's what happens in something like this. Especially in this project [*Words and Music*]."[76]
>
> **EF:** [*Words and Music*] has never been properly, adequately set. Did that scare you?
>
> **MF:** It didn't scare me; but when I read it, I understood why.
>
> **EF:** Why?
>
> **MF:** Because it was interpreted conventionally. Someone had to have had a language of their own in order to give it up. That's essentially what I did here. You couldn't just go looking for a style, because all you're going to do is your memory's going to go into this composer, into that composer; and it'll just be a cliché ridden score. It's very difficult; Beckett is very difficult.[77]

The difficulties Feldman attested to facing, both in understanding Beckett's meaning and in adjusting his own technical approach to fit Beckett's needs, are much more prominent with *Words and Music* than with *neither*. Not only did Feldman find it difficult to constrain his own tendencies within the short timeframes within *Words and Music*, but he almost certainly found it more difficult to express Beckett's ideas without his customary long stretches of time in which to present and vary material. Feldman remarked on this as well:

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[75] Skempton, "Beckett As Librettist," in *Morton Feldman Says*, 75.

[76] Everett Frost, "The Note Man on the Word Man." From Chris Villars' Morton Feldman website, <http://www.cnvill.net/mfefrost.htm>, accessed 3/18/12.

[77] Ibid.

> Here, I needed time; and yet, I didn't have it. So the metaphors that I picked, were metaphors where, where, after just five seconds, I'm in the world. There's no setup; there's no preparation. It was very, very difficult.[78]

4.1. THE FELDMAN = BECKETT CLICHÉ

About the intersection of Beckett and Feldman, conductor Hans-Peter Jahn writes: "Perhaps the only common denominator here is the irreconcilable contrast between two works of art in music and literature that possibly were created along the same working methods. Morton Beckett and Samuel Feldman would certainly have felt at ease with this paradox."[79] The paradoxical nature of *neither* reaches to all levels—as a collaboration between two artists who had virtually no communication after the initial meeting, as an opera with no action, as a text setting with nearly unintelligible presentation by the soprano, and as an expression of the aesthetic value of repetition for both Feldman and Beckett, whose respective uses of restatement and recombinations of materials were arguably at cross-purposes with each other.

As discussed previously, the limited nature of Beckett's "libretto" for *neither* places a large burden of interpretation on the music provided by Feldman. Furthermore, the project of *neither* was initiated by Feldman's soliciting a new text from Beckett to complete a commission for the Rome Opera—opera being a genre that was not Feldman's compositional preference, let alone a feature of Beckett's oeuvre. There is evidence to suggest that Feldman knew that Beckett's libretto would be little more than a pretense for an "opera" that was, in most ways, closer to an orchestral piece with added soprano than a traditional opera. Yet, at the same time, Beckett seemed to approve not only of Feldman's final product, but also to echo Feldman's ignorance of his own aims in selecting a text and composing an opera, as expressed at their initial meeting. Feldman described this later to Frost:

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Jahn, Hans-Peter. "Isn't Morton Beckett…Samuel Feldman…?" From the Chris Villars Morton Feldman website, < http://www.cnvill.net/mfjahn.htm>, accessed 9/6/11.

> People think that you have this subject and then you superimpose the whole compositional or the structural process, which might be true for someone that's doing a cartoon strip. But for most artists the structural concerns are uppermost and out of it comes the content which you yourself to some degree are ambiguous about. And in this conversation with Beckett he [Beckett] was a little bit ambiguous about exactly what his subject was.[80]

Words and Music is to some extent a resolution of these contradictions between the worlds of Beckett and Feldman, since by its very nature the play represents its own collaborative processes, and the characters of Joe, Bob and Croak are little more than thinly veiled representatives of the artists themselves. However, as we have seen, *Words and Music* is itself problematic; not only did Feldman feel stylistically constrained by the structural requirements of the score, but likewise Beckett's purview is limited by the incompleteness of the script and its consequent vulnerability to interpretation and misinterpretation. With *neither*, it seems Feldman was better able to express or "translate" Beckett's text because of its poetic vagueness, being "the quintessence, something that just hovered;"[81] yet Feldman's avoidance of intelligibility testifies to the inaccessibility of the meaning behind the words.

Looking at both *neither* and *Words and Music,* we find Feldman in a paradoxical relationship to Beckett, insofar as static textures allowed Feldman to fully express a sense of detachment from time and the lack of subject in *neither*; and yet extended scale may be the feature of Feldman's composition most in conflict with direct representation of the script in *Words and Music*; even though many of Beckett's other texts typically embrace development of a single idea over prolonged, static intervals, *Words and Music* relies on short exchanges between characters that meander within the shallow confines of each topic. However, even within the foreshortened scale of *Words and Music* the techniques of Feldman and Beckett seem to correspond. Feldman described their mutual tendency to "play things or look at things over and over and over…to get the content to some degree a little less evasive."[82] Yet, because similarity of technique between Feldman and Beckett suggests but cannot prove shared aesthetic goals or outlooks on life, this chapter will discuss the various technical treatments of material, in order to better understand the extent of shared techniques between the two artists; this I consider a necessary step before drawing any conclusions about intersections of meaning in the works of Feldman and Beckett.

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[80] Frost, "The Note Man"
[81] Skempton, "Beckett as Librettist," in *Morton Feldman Says*, pg. 75.

4.2. SHARED TECHNIQUES OF FELDMAN AND BECKETT

4.2.1. Symmetry

Both Beckett and Feldman are frequently cited for their uses of balanced structures.[83] However, it is uncertain that both Feldman and Beckett use symmetries on the same structural levels. One example on the level of complete works for Beckett is *All That Fall*, for which Rosemary Pountney charted a symmetrical recurrence of themes (Figure 28):

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[82] Ibid.

[83] It should be noted that Beckett is known for cyclical structures as much as (or more than) symmetrical ones. The repeating two-act play, in which the second act is a variation on the first, can be found in *Waiting for Godot, Happy Days,* and *Play,* among others.

To station	From station
1. Footsteps	12. Footsteps
2. *Death and the Maiden*	11. Dead child
3. Hinny	10. Wild laughter
4. Dung	9. Hardy
5. Mrs. Rooney's language	8. *Death and the Maiden*
6. Laburnum	7. Dung
7. Hardy	6. Hinnies
8. Rural sounds	5. Laburnum
9. Wild laughter	4. Mrs. Rooney's language
10. Dead hen – killed by car	3. Rural sounds
11. Up station steps	2. Down station steps
12. Up mail passes →	1. Down train draws in

Figure 28. **Pountney's themes from *All That Fall*** [84]

While Pountney's chart illustrates Beckett's balanced use of thematic elements, I find there are some flaws; the items are very hand-picked, eliminating linear themes such as vehicles (mule cart → bicycle → car → train) and ignoring recurrences of themes that do not match Pountney's scheme, such as Mrs. Rooney's mention of a donkey and a manure pile right after meeting Mr. Rooney, alluding to the hinny and the dung mentioned at the beginning of the play. Still, there is a sort of rough mirror-symmetry to the main action of the play: Mrs. Rooney's journey to the station, essentially alone but aided by acquaintances, is reflected by her return home, now with the company but also the hindrance of her husband.

Perhaps a better example of thematic balance in Beckett drama is the pantomime for a single performer, *Act Without Words I.* In this speechless short play, a character is shoved roughly onstage into the setting of a blazing, merciless desert, where he is tortured by life-sustaining gifts lowered from on high (a shade-giving tree, a carafe of water) that are flawed or out of reach. Nearly all of the limited number of events are physical actions with counteractions that must happen for the play to continue: the protagonist falls and must stand, thinks and must act, stacks boxes incorrectly and then restacks them, and exits the stage and is forced back on, while objects are lowered into his environment and then hoisted away. The height of action falls where the protagonist tries most actively to get the water using a lasso, only to be thwarted by the water being yanked back offstage. Following this, he tries to kill (remove) himself, only to be again stymied by the removal of all other objects one by one. A graph of the plot arc below (Figure 29) shows appearances of objects balanced by their disappearances, framed at either end by the arrival and departure of the water carafe and the tree.

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[84] Pountney, Rosemary. "Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama, 1956 – 1976." In *Irish Literary Studies* vol. 28 (Oxford: OUP, 1988), pg. 41.

Feldman argued that large-structural-level symmetry, such as that used by Webern and Berg, was no longer relevant in light of his extension of materials to make static perception of scale the determining structural feature of his music:

> This question of *scale,* for me, precludes any concept of symmetry or asymmetry from affecting the eventual length of my music…The scale of what is actually being represented, whether it be of the whole or of the part, is a phenomenon unto itself. The reciprocity inherent in scale, in fact, has made me realize that musical forms and related processes are essentially only methods of arranging material and serve no other function than to aid one's memory.[85]

Yet much analysis of Feldman still focuses on his "crippled symmetries," which typically occur on a sub-sectional level. In his eponymous article, Feldman described several ways in which he created phrase-length "crippled symmetries." One technique involves taking a symmetrical number of events (in other words, an even number) but skewing their presentation by framing them with asymmetrical rests on either side, is used by Feldman in virtually every

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[85] Morton Feldman, "Crippled Symmetry," in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 2 (Autumn 1981), pg. 94

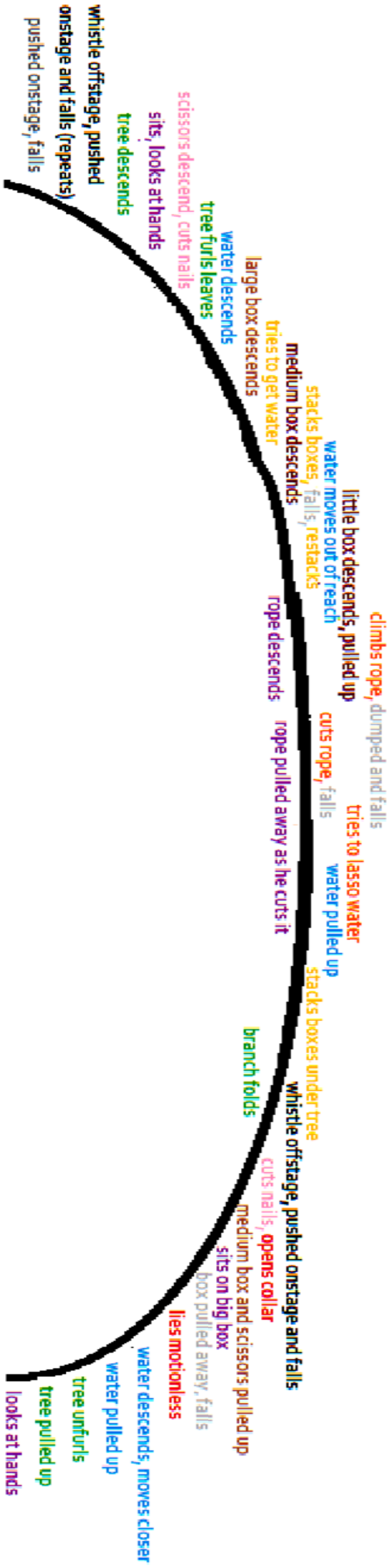
pushed onstage, falls
whistle offstage, pushed onstage and falls (repeats)
tree descends
sits, looks at hands
scissors descend, cuts nails
tree furls leaves
water descends
large box descends
tries to get water
medium box descends
stacks boxes, falls, restacks
water moves out of reach
little box descends, pulled up
climbs rope, dumped and falls
rope descends
cuts rope, falls
rope pulled away as he cuts it
tries to lasso water
water pulled up
stacks boxes under tree
branch folds
whistle offstage, pushed onstage and falls
cuts nails, opens collar
medium box and scissors pulled up
sits on big box
box pulled away, falls
lies motionless
water descends, moves closer
water pulled up
tree unfurls
tree pulled up
looks at hands

Figure 29. Chart of symmetrical elements in *Act Without Words I*

"grid" piece. As a variant on this technique, Feldman will change metric markings to add or subtract very short lengths of time to a repeated figure, thereby creating a pattern – this is essentially Feldman's technique for creating linear processes. For example, at the very beginning of *Crippled Symmetry*, the vibraphone begins a chromatic five-note pattern, E♭ – D♭ – D natural – D♭ – C, which first appears in 5/16 meter, then in 6/16 preceded by a sixteenth-note rest, then 7/16 preceded by an eighth note rest, and so on until an 11/16 meter is reached by the sixth repetition. The pattern then reverses, with the meter decreasing in length by removing a sixteenth-length from the rest at the beginning of each measure. Thus, while the material within the measures is never retrograded to create a true mirror-image symmetry, the changing meters create a symmetrical expansion and contraction of pacing.

Feldman "cripples" his symmetrical phrases not only by varying pitch content, but also by making unequal rhythms through compound meters and polymeters. *For Bunita Marcus* for solo piano features numerous phrases built from patterns of polymeters – for example, the 1/8 – 5/16 – 1/8 – 3/8 – 1/8 – 5/16 – 1/8 series of measures at the beginning of page 28. In this case, the phrase features somewhat symmetrical contour features and a constant pitch collection, but its rhythm is skewed by both the placement of the E ♭ / E dyad on the second eighth note of the 3/8 bar and the literal (not retrograde) repetition of rhythm in the second 5/16 measure. Nonetheless, the contour and uniformity of pitch content are enough for the listener to hear this phrase, and others like it through the piece, as symmetrical.

Kathleen George observes that "a writer can and often does juggle sounds much like a composer does melodies, playing them backward or upside down…Such juggling of sounds in playwriting is just another illustration of the principle of repetition and change at work."[86] With its rough symmetry, the passage from *For Bunita Marcus* seems to have a form not unlike many passages in Beckett's plays. An exchange between Vladimir and Estragon from *Waiting for Godot* shows symmetry of both theme and movement:

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[86] George, Kathleen. *Rhythm in Drama*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), pg. 46.

VLADIMIR: Oh, pardon!
ESTRAGON: Carry on.
VLADIMIR: No no, after you.
ESTRAGON: No no, you first.
VLADIMIR: I interrupted you.
ESTRAGON: On the contrary.
[*They glare at each other angrily*.]
VLADIMIR: Ceremonious ape!
ESTRAGON: Punctilious pig!
VLADIMIR: Finish your phrase, I tell you!
ESTRAGON: Finish your own!
[*Silence. They draw closer, halt.*]
VLADIMIR: Moron!
ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's abuse each other.
[*They turn, move apart, turn again and face each other*.]
VLADIMIR: Moron!
ESTRAGON: Vermin!
VLADIMIR: Abortion!
ESTRAGON: Morpion!
VLADIMIR: Sewer-rat!
ESTRAGON: Curate!
VLADIMIR: Cretin!
ESTRAGON: [*With finality*.] Crritic!
VLADIMIR: Oh!
[*He wilts, vanquished, and turns away*.]
ESTRAGON: Now let's make it up.
VLADIMIR: Gogo!
ESTRAGON: Didi!
VLADIMIR: Your hand!
ESTRAGON: Take it!
VLADIMIR: Come to my arms!
ESTRAGON: Your arms?
VLADIMIR: My breast!
ESTRAGON: Off we go!
[*They embrace. They separate. Silence.*][87]

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[87] Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot.* From the collection *Samuel Beckett: The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), pg. 70.

In the above passage, Estragon and Vladimir move closer together, then separate and square off for the insult battle, then physically return to a close location as they embrace to conclude the exchange. Taking the line of symmetry of this exchange to be the midpoint between the lines "Abortion" and "Morpion" (which sound similar enough to be reflective of each other), we see other pairings – "Moron" and "Crritic", "Vermin" and "Sewer-rat" which hint at being synonymous. We also "hear" rhythmic elements, such as the alliterative pairings "Punctilious pig" and "Finish your phrase!" Furthermore, each section of the dialogue closes with a long "-o" sound: *own, Oh,* and *go,* creating a cadential pattern that gives each group of lines a similar rhythmic weight. (In the French version, a similar pattern uses the long "-i" sound: *si, ceremonie, allons-y.*)

4.2.2. Repetition

Symmetry is a limited shared idiom between Feldman and Beckett; repetition is a stronger area of aesthetic dovetailing. Both composer and playwright use patterns of repetition and varied repetition in ways that often seem analogous. Repetitive elements of Beckett plays include words, phrases, discrete actions, and entire sections, or in the case of *Play,* the entire drama. Corresponding elements repeated by Feldman are single notes, small motives of two or more notes, groups of a few measures, entire systems, and even multiple systems.

Looking first at small-scale repetitions, Beckett frequently uses repetitions on the level of a single word, such as the name "Woburn" that appears again and again in *Cascando* during Voice's stream-of-consciousness storytelling. One might compare this recurrence to the four-note motive C – G – A♭ – E♭, a slightly shuffled spelling of the name "Cage," that appears at the beginning of the flute part of Feldman's *For Philip Guston* and afterwards reappear periodically throughout the piece. At a step up in scale, Beckett repeats short phrases or sentences, creating rhythmic verbal patterns that create a sense of inescapability. Another very poetic segment of *Waiting for Godot* illustrates this:

ESTRAGON: Toutes les voix mortes. [All the dead voices.]
VLADIMIR: Ca fait un bruit d'ailes. [They make a noise like wings.]
ESTRAGON: De feuilles. [Like leaves.]
VLADIMIR: De sable. [Like sand.]
ESTRAGON: De feuilles. [Like leaves.]
[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR: Elles parlent toutes en même temps. [They all speak together.]
ESTRAGON: Chacune à part soi. [Each one to itself.]
[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR: Plutôt elles chuchotent. [Rather they whisper.]
ESTRAGON: Elles murmurent. [They rustle.]
VLADIMIR: Elles bruissent. [They murmur.]
ESTRAGON: Elles murmurent. [They rustle.]
[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR: Que disent-elles ? [What do they say?]
ESTRAGON: Elles parlent de leur vie. [They talk about their lives.]
VLADIMIR: Il ne leur suffit pas d'avoir vécu. [To have lived is not enough for them.]
ESTRAGON: Il faut qu'elles parlent. [They have to talk about it.]
VLADIMIR: Il ne leur suffit pas d'être mortes. [To be dead is not enough for them.]
ESTRAGON: Ce n'est pas assez. [It is not sufficient.]
[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR: Ca fait come un bruit de plumes. [They make a noise like feathers.]
ESTRAGON: De feuilles. [Like leaves.]
VLADIMIR: De cendres. [Like ashes.]
ESTRAGON: De feuilles. [Like leaves.][88]

In this poetic flight of dialogue, the verses show symmetry of stanzas, with four- and five-line groups – the first, third, and fifth stanzas— creating a rondo-like structure. These beginning, middle, and ending stanzas are linked together by the repeated lines from Estragon. The repeated lines (such as “Like leaves,”) always signal an imminent pause in the dialogue. In the context of the play, this reluctance on the part of Estragon to think of new similes is typical of his resistance to Vladimir's flights of verbal fancy. Kathleen George describes this as a patterning of positive versus negative attitude, where positive verbal attitudes are active attempts to reach a conversational goal, while negative attitudes "include avoidance of another character, resistance to another character…and simply the 'secondary position' in a conversation."[89] A strikingly similar pattern of alternation and silence is found in Feldman's *Piano and String Quartet.* On the last two systems of page 7 (Figure 30), the piano plays a rolled hexachord, followed by a D5 harmonic in the first violin, followed by a revoiced version of the same chord, then a second D5 harmonic, now in the viola. A measure of silence follows, then two different rolled piano chords, now synchronized with two D♭s in the second violin and cello. In other words, the alternating exchange between piano and strings is a dialogue between repetition and variation. One might argue that, similar to the passage from *Godot*, the repeated notes in the string harmonics are a form of negating pattern, impervious to the piano's variations.

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[88] Beckett, Samuel. *En attendant Godot, texte intégral suivant l'édition de 1970 avec des remarques sur l'auteur et son oeuvre et une notice sur le théâtre de l'absurde*. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1971).

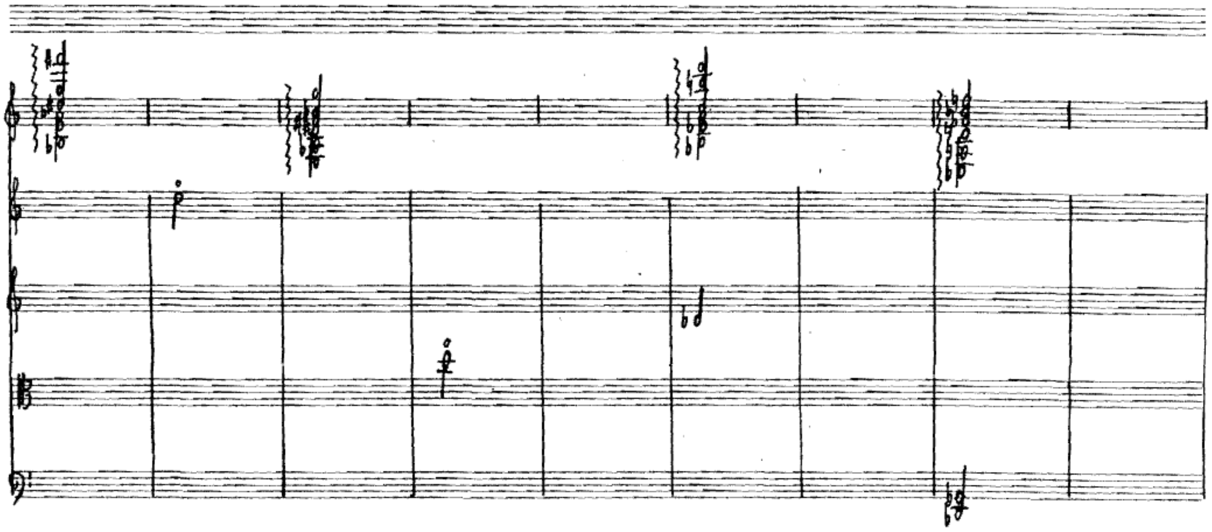

Figure 30. ***Piano and String Quartet,* page 7.**

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[89] George, 82.

Returning once again to Beckett and Feldman's collaboration, at the very end (or "postlude") of *Words and Music* we hear Joe's repeated exclamations at Croak's sudden exit:

WORDS: […]My lord! [*Sound of club let fall. As before.*] My lord! [*Shuffling slippers, with halts. They die away. Long pause.*] Bob. [*Pause.*] Bob!
MUSIC: *Brief rude retort.*
WORDS: Music. [*Imploring.*] Music!
[*Pause.*]

MUSIC: *Rap of baton and statement with elements already used or wellhead alone.*
[*Pause.*]

WORDS: Again. [*Pause. Imploring.*] Again!
MUSIC: *As before or only very slightly varied.*
[*Pause.*]

WORDS: *Deep sigh.*

CURTAIN[90]

These repetitions have a specific dramatic effect. Joe's entreaties are an echo of Croak's earlier demands; yet at this point, the repetitions give a sense of the action grinding to a halt rather than continuing with a new master at the helm. With Croak having departed the scene, the weak ability of Joe to determine events cannot maintain any real plot. Once Joe's possible interactions with Bob have been exhausted—bullying him throughout the play to be silent, grudgingly collaborating with him during the Arias, and then finally commanding him to console him about Croak's departure— the play must necessarily end, and does so with a long sigh from Joe. Feldman supports this inevitable ending by having Bob reply to Joe's requests for music with simplified versions of the rising-and-falling sevenths theme from Statement 26. Feldman reduces the number of pitches to three pitches (F, G, and A) for most of Statements 35 and 36; likewise, the textures of both Statements compared to Statement 26 are thinner and less contrapuntal. By the end of the final Statement, only the F and G of the rising-and-falling motive remain, as sparse bell-like notes played by the non-sustaining instruments (piano and vibraphone). Like Joe, Bob has run out of new material, and has nothing more to say –and is therefore fading out of existence.

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[90] Beckett, *Words and Music*, Complete Dramatic Works, 294.

Although these examples of repetitive material by Beckett and Feldman are stylistically similar, Feldman's and Beckett's common uses of repetition are not completely analogous. Feldman's repetitive material tends to be extensive rather than rhetorical in many cases. In *For Philip Guston* and also *Crippled Symmetry*, which begins with a similar four-note motive to the "Cage" motive from *Guston*, Feldman repeats the four-note ideas numerous times whenever they appear, creating sections of material rather than single utterances. Furthermore, in *Crippled Symmetry* Feldman does not use only one four-note motive which is definitively a repeated single musical object or gesture; rather, numerous similar and not-so-similar four-pitch collections permeate the piece, creating distinctive sections through prolonged repetition while blurring the boundary between "variations," making it hard to distinguish between the shades of directly and indirectly related materials.

4.2.3. Varied repetition

Besides simple repetitions, Feldman and Beckett both make extensive use of varied repetitions in their works. Sharon Gelleny discusses Feldman's variation technique in works such as *Why Patterns?* and *Patterns in a Chromatic Field* at length in her dissertation, in which she identifies a multitude of variables manipulated by Feldman: "durational space of motives (or rests), the motivic rhythm, the pitch-class content, the ordering of specific pitches, the registration of pitches, and the number of attacks and/or notes in a motive."[91] Gelleny compares the gesture in measures 685 - 686 in the piano part of *Patterns* to subsequent measures such as 712-713, where a similar gesture using the same pitch collection (but with different registration and pitch doubling) creates an iteration of the same gesture with different nuances. This is reminiscent of the varied sentences about the "buzzing" in Beckett's *Not I*, where Mouth repeats this idea again and again, with slightly different phrasing each time: *"for she could still hear the buzzing", "…what?...the buzzing?...yes…all the time the buzzing…", "…all silent but for the buzzing", "…all dead still but for the buzzing,"*[92] each rephrasing creating subtly different emphases on stillness or death. About halfway through the play, Mouth settles on one version, "*all the time the buzzing,*" retaining it in all subsequent repetitions until the fadeout at the end.

Other examples of variations in Feldman's music can be found in pieces such as *Spring of Chosroes* (Figure 31), which Feldman discusses in his article "Crippled Symmetry":

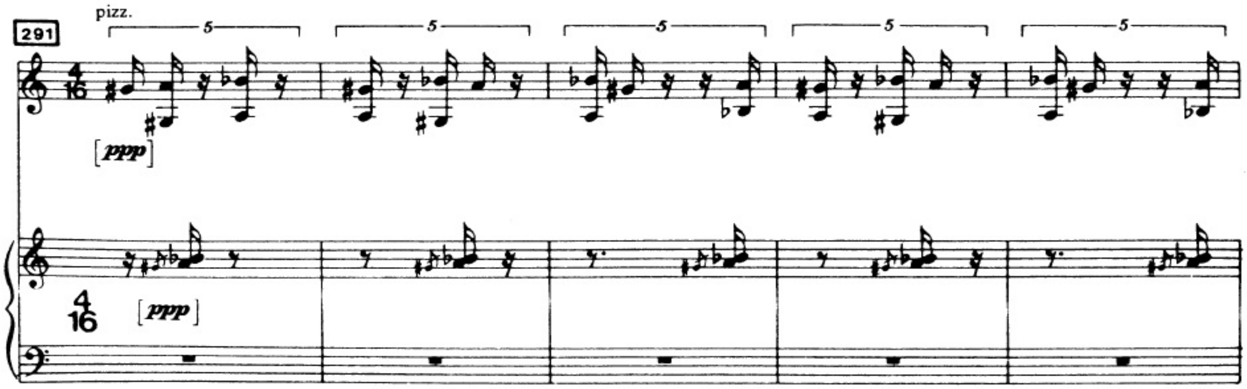

Figure 31. **Variation within the quintuplet, *Spring of Chosroes* rehearsal 291.**

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[91] Gelleny, "Variation Techniques and Other Theoretical Issues in Morton Feldman's 'Carpet' Compositions," (Dissertation, SUNY Buffalo, 2000), 174.
[92] Beckett, *Not I,* Complete Dramatic Works, 376 – 381.

> In *Spring of Chosroes* for violin and piano, the “pattern” of one section consists of heightening the effects of the plucked violin figure (encompassing three pitches) by not establishing any clear-cut rhythmic shape except for its constant displacement within the quintuplet.[93]

On a larger level, Beckett and Feldman both reuse thematic passages and devices; one might compare a Beckettian dramatic device such as (in *Endgame*) Clov’s repeated attempts to look out the windows (only to realize halfway to the window that he has left behind the footstool needed to see out), to the reoccurring nine-note theme in *neither*. This kind of repetition asserts a pattern of events that will implicitly never change: Clov will never remember to take the footstool with him, and the listener will never satisfactorily hear a starting or ending point to the eliding nine-note phrase, nor will the phrase ever truly become part of the past “action” of the opera, for its open-ended nature suggests that it may return at any point in the piece.

“I seem content to be continually rearranging the same furniture in the same room,” wrote Feldman.[94] Indeed, reappearances of material in both Beckett and Feldman both suggest a sealed, unchanging environment in which time is subsumed by changelessness. Something to consider, however, is that motives that reoccur after intervening other materials are relatively rare in Feldman’s late works. Much more common for Feldman is varied repetition of a few motives or a single motive many times consecutively to create an extended field of sound, changing to a new idea only when the correct scale of section has been reached, and sometimes layering different fields of sound in different instruments. This is the kind of repetition typically studied in later pieces such as *String Quartet II, Piano and String Quartet,* and *Crippled Symmetry;* and in these contexts, Feldman’s goal of creating stasis seems substantially different from the purpose behind much of Beckett's repetitions. While Beckett's repetitions emphasize the trapped existence of his characters, they also serve to emphasize a formal structure. One might even argue that whereas Beckett's repeated words and events are largely efforts to establish artificial rhythms in his dramas, Feldman's varied repetitions frequently intend to mask any kind of metric regularity.

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[93] Feldman, “Crippled Symmetry,” 96.
[94] Feldman, “Anxiety of Art,” in *Eighth Street,* 30.

4.2.4. Permutations

The point at which Feldman and Beckett overlap the most in their respective arts might well be their uses of permutations – essentially, the taking of varied repetition to its logical extreme. Earlier in this chapter, a brief analysis discussed Feldman's continual revoicing of a chord in Statement 8 of *Words and Music* by algorithmically exchanging pitches among the three string players. This extending of brief musical ideas by means of exchange of rhythms, pitches, or complete motives between instruments is pervasive throughout many of Feldman's late works. Feldman himself describes this compositional approach in his article "Crippled Symmetry," referring to a passage from his *String Quartet* (Figure 32): "The rhythmic structure of the block consists of four uneven bar lengths with four permutations that incorporate the instrumentation of the quartet…This passage becomes rhythmically obscured by the complicated nonpatterned syncopation that results."[95]

Each instrument plays four measures in 9/8, 3/2, 2/2, and 7/4 – each instrument playing the differently-metered measures in a unique order, and no two instruments playing in the same meter at the same time. The "nonpatterned" syncopation Feldman describes results from the instruments moving from measure to measure at different paces from each other, yet completing the “block” of permutations at the same time, since each instrument plays the same total number of beats over the four measure span.

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[95] Feldman, "Crippled Symmetry," 96.

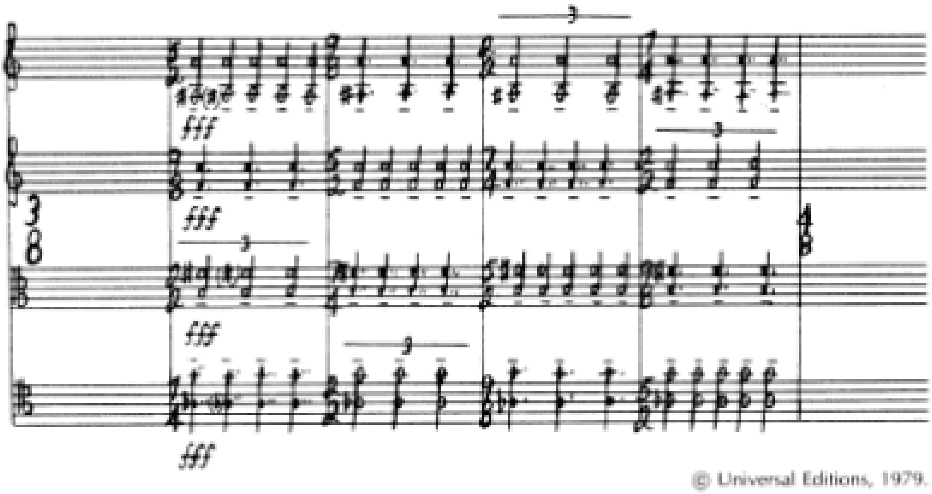

Figure 32. **Block of permutations from *String Quartet.***

A similar sort of exchange is found in *neither*; at rehearsal 56 (page 35 of the Universal Edition score) the strings rotate through a series of pitches in a manner much like in the Statements discussed before. The theme is the familiar three-note theme from the “overture” section, which has already reappeared a couple times before this point in the score, and which is once again characterized by three clusters of three chromatic pitches each. Violins 1 and 2 and violas, divisi in threes, each play one group for several repetitions and then move to the next cluster in the rotation at the end of each system, and also at one or two points within each system (typically where the rhythm between one or more parts overlaps). Numbering measures from the beginning of the page for convenience, we can see how the pattern proceeds through two measures past rehearsal 59, or the bottom of the page (Figure 33).

	m. 1 - 6	**7 – 12**	**13 – 18**	**19 - 22**	**23 – 24**	**25 - 30**	**31 - 33**	**34 - 36**
Violin 1	B♭ A A♭	D♭ harm.	D E♭ E	B♭ A A♭	D E♭ E	D E♭ E	B A A♭	D E♭ E
Violin 2	D♭ harm.	D E♭ E	B♭ A A♭	D♭ C B	B♭ A A♭	D♭ C B	D♭ C B	B♭ A A♭
Viola	D E♭ E	B♭ A A♭	D♭ C B	D E♭ E	D♭ C B	B♭ A A♭	D E♭ E	D♭ C B
Bass	C B	C B	---	---	---	F# G	F# G	F# G

Figure 33. Permutations of pitches between strings in the type C material of *neither*, pg. 35

Throughout the first 18 measures of page 35, the rotation of trichords between instruments is quite regular; each pitch collection is transferred to the next highest instrument every six measures, wrapping around from violin 1 to viola. (As a further instrumental nuance, Feldman orchestrates C and B from the D♭ – C – B group as high harmonics in the double basses for the first system; however, the D♭ follows the permutation pattern, effectively "standing in" for the other members of the trichord.) On the second eighth note of m. 22 the viola unexpectedly breaks this pattern by moving backwards through the cycle, and it seems momentarily as though the rest of the page will be a mirror image of the process to this point. However, at the beginning of the third system (m. 25) the symmetry is "crippled" by switched trichords between the first and second violins. From m. 23 to the end of the page, therefore, it seems unclear that any definite pattern determines the order of permutations, although the shuffling of pitch groups still has more or less the same aural effect – that is, subtle differences in timbre add layers of nuances to the repetitions, like the gradual shading of a woven pattern in one of Feldman's carpets. This mix of patterning and deliberate violations keeps listeners' attention, encouraging them to perceive the material on an extended scale that surpasses the proportions of ordinary musical development.

Not all of Feldman's permutative passages in his late works result in such complicated asynchronous composite sounds, nor are all such passages equally mathematically rigorous in their construction. In *Words and Music,* Statements 8, 9, and 12 all feature permutations in the strings in the form of pitch exchanges. However, Statements 9 and 12 are much less regular in their rotation of material than Statement 8; in some measures, only two instruments exchange voices, while in others all three are permutated, and in still others the voices do not change at all.

Feldman's permutations are a means of stepping beyond the boundaries of either repetition or variation alone, and for Beckett strategies of permutation serve nearly the same function. Beckett is well known for emphatically observing the three Aristotelian unities of drama in his playwriting—all of his plays feature unity of *place, time,* and *action*. In a Beckett play, everything happens in one place (albeit often a very vaguely defined place), within a single day (or at most, with *Godot* and *Happy Days*, two days forming parallel acts), and with one single main action or unchanging situation. At the same time, Beckett eludes the threat of becoming overly mimetic by discarding ordinary discourse in favor of highly stylized exaggerations of speech and thought. Often the effect is comic, such as the previously described mock insult battle from *Godot*, or Krapp's fixation on the sound of the word "spool"; and sometimes the effect is rhythmic, as results from Mouth's breathless fragmentation of phrases in *Not I.* In all the examples discussed below, permutations of words and actions create either comic interruptions of mood or formal impositions of artificial rhythm. The permutations are in some cases manipulations of multiple parameters – visual, aural, and semantic – and in all cases, they act as deliberate devices for suspending the normal pace or rhythm of the dialogue or narrative. Drawing viewers or readers into the permutating pattern, therefore, immerses them in stylized extensions of events, language, or actions – extensions that evoke both *comedy* and *ritual* – that momentarily sidestep dramatic unity.

In the second act of *Waiting for Godot*, the two tramps act out a shtick in which they rotate between three hats:

> VLADIMIR:…Here.
> ESTRAGON: What?
> VLADIMIR: Hold that.
>
> > [ESTRAGON *takes Vladimir's hat.* VLADIMIR *adjusts Lucky's hat on his head.* ESTRAGON *puts on Vladimir's hat in place of his own which he hands to* VLADIMIR. VLADIMIR *takes Estragon's hat.* ESTRAGON *adjusts Vladimir's hat on his head.* VLADIMIR *puts on Estragon's hat in place of Lucky's which he hands to* ESTRAGON. ESTRAGON *takes Lucky's hat.* VLADIMIR *adjusts Estragon's hat on his head.* ESTRAGON *puts on Lucky's hat in place of Vladimir's which he hands to* VLADIMIR…] (etc.) [96]

This exchange repeats for some time to comic effect, increasing in absurdity as the hat-swapping continues. A chart of the entire exchange (Figure 34), including all states of the three hats (on Vladimir's head, on Estragon's head, each tramp adjusting his current hat, and each tramp passing a hat to the other one) is more complex, but still bears a sort of cyclic similarity to the permutations between strings in *Words and Music* and *neither*:

Estragon's head	***E***	***V***		***L***		***E***		***E***	***E***	***E***
Estragon adjusts hat			***V***		***L***		***E***			
Estragon passes to Vladimir		***E***		***V***		***L***		***V***		***V***
Vladimir's head	***L***		***E***		***V***		***L***		***L***	***L***
Vladimir adjusts hat		***L***		***E***		***V***		***L***		
Vladimir passes to Estragon	***V***		***L***		***E***		***V***		***V***	

E = Estragon's hat ***V*** = Vladimir's hat ***L*** = Lucky's hat

Figure 34. Permutation of hat positions in *Waiting for Godot*

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[96] Beckett, *Godot, Complete Dramatic Works,* 67.

Very much like the interchange from *neither*, the permutation breaks after a number of cycles, and a new pattern is suggested but quickly fails. In this case, the cycle is altered when Estragon tires of trying on any hat other than his own and hands Vladimir's hat back to him, who hands it back to Estragon, who hands it back to Vladimir, who throws it away.

The hat exchange is a visual one; its humor emerges from the visual impact of the absurdly rhythmic and prolonged ritualistic passing of hats. In his novels, Beckett evokes not only humor but also the disjointed mental states of characters by permutating textual passages to the point of absurdity, creating exchanges that are simultaneously visual, aural, and semantic. Beckett's novel *Watt* is frequently discussed in terms of its long passages of verbal games, such as the chorus of frogs, who croak in three different regular cycles which coincide every 120 beats (with a page-long chart of the croaking patterns included in the text, arranged not unlike a score of Feldman's with eight measures in every system):

Krak! __ __ __ __ __ __ __
Krek! __ __ __ __ Krek! __ __
Krik! __ __ Krik! __ __ Krik! __

Krak! __ __ __ __ __ __ __
__ __ Krek! __ __ __ __ Krek!
__ Krik! __ __ Krik! __ __ Krik![97] etc.

Reading this passage in context, as Watt's recollection of lying in a ditch listening to frogs, we are drawn into transcribing the visual representation into an internal pattern of imagined sounds. The visual aspect (the page layout) of the rhythmic croaking pattern ensures that we empathize with Watt by virtually hearing what he once heard. In other instances, Watt's unconstrained thinking produces patterns that progress to absurdity to achieve a comic, disjointed, or hysterical effect, much like the hat exchange from *Godot.* When the narrator reflects on the futility of his past on

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[97] Beckett, Samuel. *Watt.* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1959), pg. 137.

> “the poor old lousy old earth, my earth and my father’s and my mother’s and my father’s father’s and my mother’s mother’s and my father’s mother’s and my mother’s father’s and my father’s mother’s father’s and my mother’s father’s mother’s and my father’s mother’s mother’s and my mother’s father’s father’s and my father’s father’s mother’s and my mother’s mother’s father’s and my father’s father’s father’s and my mother’s mother’s mother’s and other people’s fathers’ and mothers’ and fathers’ fathers’ and mothers’ mothers’….”[98] [etc.]

we are struck by the ridiculousness of the enumeration of ancestors in such an odd, mathematically determinate fashion. The repeat of the obsessive permutations by extrapolating this enumeration to other people’s ancestors is likely not so much out of any desire on Beckett’s part to express the universality of human experience as to extend the visual pattern of words on the page by repeating the process with the apostrophe moved to the plural position.

A short dramatic work in which the entire story is a permutation of actions is *Come and Go*. In the opening scene three female characters sit side by side in silence; then Vi, the character seated in the middle, exits to stage right, and Flo (seated on the right) moves to the middle seat to whisper in Ru’s (the third woman’s) ear about Vi. Vi then returns and sits in the empty place on the right, and the pattern repeats: Flo leaves the stage and is whispered about by Ru, who then leaves the stage and is whispered about by Vi. At each turn, the dialogue (whispers and reaction) consists of variations of “Oh! Does she not know?” After all three characters have performed the equivalent movements and speeches, Vi, Flo, and Ru hold hands “in the old way,” crossing hands according to a pattern specified by Beckett (Figure 35):

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[98] Ibid., 47 – 48.

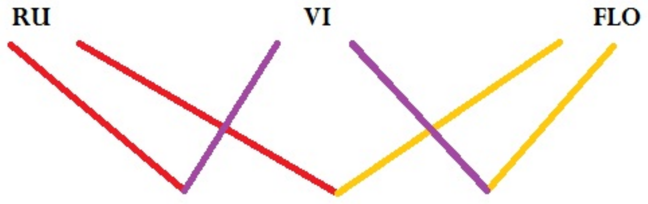

Figure 35. **Hands crossed in the final tableau of *Come and Go.***

This tableau epitomizes all of the limited events of the play in a single timeless moment: the braid-like weaving of movement and dialogue among the three characters is symbolized by the elaborate linking of hands. Altogether, the formal pattern of movement suggests an interweaving of fates between the three old friends. This meeting is implied to be neither the first nor the last of its kind; Vi begins the play by asking, “When did we three last meet?” Besides the allusion to *Macbeth*, such a statement suggests that these women have met and performed this ritual of friendship in their shared past, and will conduct their lives in parallel hopelessness and ignorance until their next meeting.

The ultimate absence of both story and emotion in favor of pure permutation of action could very well be Beckett’s *Quad*. This short film piece begins with a silent cloaked figure walking the edge of a square six paces in length. The figure then follows an algorithm to determine his or her further path (Figure 36): at every corner of the square, he or she turns as sharply left as possible, including the choice of a path across the diagonal. The result is a pattern of edge, diagonal, edge, diagonal, etc., which results in eight straight movements before the pattern is complete (along each edge once and each diagonal twice, in opposite directions).

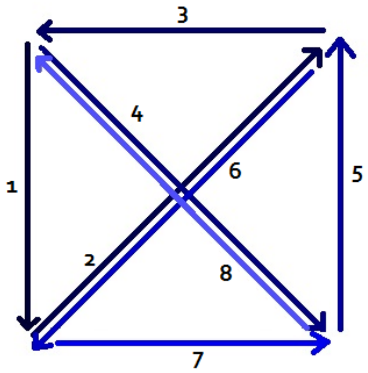

Figure 36. **Movement in *Quad.***

The pacing figure is joined by another, starting from a different corner of the square, at the beginning of each new cycle. Each figure paces this pattern until all four have completed a full cycle; then each leaves the stage in the order they entered (while the others continue the cycle), except the last figure to enter, who begins a new series of cycles. The play concludes when every figure has occupied a different position in the series of cycles, and no figure oocupies the same position twice. *Quad* is Beckett's reduction of expanding events through time using permutation to a staged minimum. In this way, it more resembles a highly abstract formal dance or performance art (again, evoking *ritual*) than a stage play.

On the level of phrases or system-length passages, it is possible to find materials in Feldman's music that are largely mathematically determined, such as the instrumental interchanges described above. As the scale of the musical structure increases, Feldman's music becomes less predictable. While little of Feldman's music, either small-scale or large, is so absolute in its permutations as to be mathematically exhaustive (producing *n*! orderings for *n* elements such as pitches or instrumental choices), the permutations of longer sections are more difficult to pin down to any clear rule. In *Turfan Fragments*, a long section of staccato chords from rehearsal 24 through 31 undergoes transformations along multiple parameters – pitch collections, instrument groups, phrase length, rhythmic frequency – that suggests logical sequences. The repeated single staccato chords are played by two groups of instruments, and instruments change groups at each rehearsal number. A pattern of play between the two groups emerges: first one group plays a system, then the other, and then the two groups play together in patterns offset by an eighth note or more (Figure 38, on the next page, shows this pattern at rehearsal 27). This pattern (of the two groups playing) is quite regular. Yet for most parameters, it is difficult to pinpoint a rule by which Feldman makes his changes. The chart below (Figure 37) shows the movement of the string instruments (viola, cello, and contrabass) between two groups of instruments that play either separately for several measures at a time, or in syncopated counterpoint with each other.

Rhl #	**Group 1**	**Group 2**
24	Vla Vc Cb	
25		(winds only)
26	Vla Vc Cb	
27	Vla Vc	Cb
28	Vla Vc	Cb
29		Vla Vc Cb
30	Vla Cb	Vc
31	Vc Cb	Vla

Figure 37. Group membership for strings in *Turfan Fragments,* rhl. 24 – 31.

Looking at these changes between groups, it is hard to say that any mathematical guidelines are in place. On the one hand, it seems as though Feldman creates these changes to produce every possible subset of the three strings over the entire section; but on the other hand,

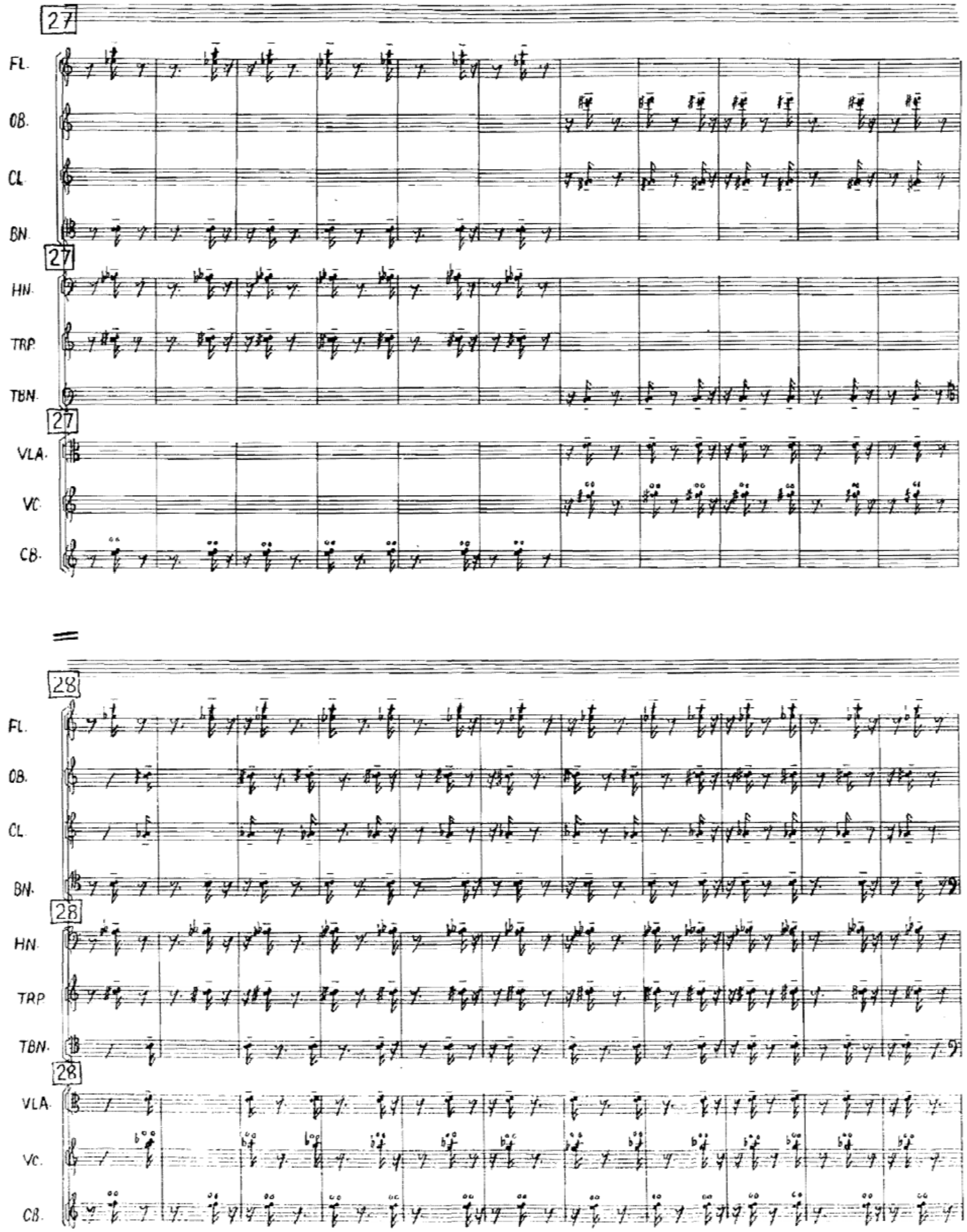
27
FL.
OB.
CL.
BN.
27
HN.
TRP.
TBN.
27
VLA.
VC.
CB.
28
FL.
OB.
CL.
BN.
28
HN.
TRP.
TBN.
28
VLA.
VC.
CB.

Figure 38. ***Turfan Fragments,*** **rehearsal 27 – 28.**

the changes seem unpatterned; why do the contrabasses appear without the other strings twice, but the others appear alone only once? In some cases, as with the cellos at rehearsal 29, the group change coincides with note changes (from G/A♭ to F/G♭), but in other cases this does not occur; and the instrumental groups themselves are vague at best. Above, Group 1 represents all groups with oboe, while Group 2 is initially the group with flute as its highest wind instrument; however, at rehearsal 30 flute joins the oboe group, making it unclear which group is now which. The pitch collections in *Turfan Fragments* undergo a similar process of blurring. At rehearsal 24, the two groups of instruments have complimentary hexachords. As the passage continues, the number of pitches played by each group increases, and accordingly so does the number of shared pitches, making it increasingly difficult to identify a particular group with a distinct pitch collection.

The rigidly mathematical permutations of *Quad* present an obvious pattern; once the audience has figured out the algorithm, the subsequent movements of the pacing figures can be anticipated. The section from *Turfan Fragments*, by contrast, has no single rule, or even an absolute collection of rules, determining how the material changes. The result for the listener is a sense that some logic dictates Feldman’s choices, but that any purely permutative process is altered or masked by intuitive deviations.

5.0. CONCLUSION

One important point of intersection between Morton Feldman and Samuel Beckett goes beyond shared creative techniques; while it actively shapes the formal characteristics used by both artists, this mutual aspect bridges the gap between technical approach and philosophical point-of-view. That aspect is their use of silence, which underlies all of Beckett's dramatic works and especially Feldman's later music. Silence is so deeply intertwined with the works of both Feldman and Beckett that it often functions as the ineffable foundation of their other techniques (of symmetry, variation, and permutation). Both artists use patterns of sound and silence to structure their thoughts; and for both, silence is a viable, equal participant in the conversation. In Beckett's *Come and Go* the silence between each iteration of the pattern of movement and gossip frames and clarifies the plight of the three characters – a description that equally applies to *Words and Music*. In Feldman's *Palais de mari*, silence not only shapes the symmetrical structures of different phrases, but also creates an audible pattern of articulation and decay of piano notes. Likewise, the ever-changing lengths of silence in *Piano and String Quartet* invite us to compare the decaying piano chord with the silent strings. And in *Not I*, the silent listener offers the only relief from Mouth's endless stream of verbiage, with its four helpless shrugs as cadences – as mental and physical breathing places.

Beyond forming both structural and emotional pauses, silence is the point of both departure and inevitable destination for both Feldman and Beckett. For Feldman, silence developed consecutively with the increase in scale of his later pieces. "There was silence throughout [*String Quartet*]. There was never silence in a twenty minute piece of mine."[99] The increase in scale beginning with *neither* freed Feldman from a need for development in ways that constrained repetition in favor of continuity. Feldman's *ppp* markings throughout *neither* not only keep the physical presence of the instrumentalists at a minimum, but also emphasize the gradations between sound and silence, reflected in the stage lighting creating a continuous gradation between light and shadow at the Rome Opera premiere. Silence is the inevitable outcome in *Waiting for Godot,* where the tramps find themselves unable to leave, and in *Happy Days*, where Winnie and Willie simply stare blankly at each other in the end. In the case of the radio plays, the long silent moment has an extra significance; when the characters stop speaking, they effectively cease to exist; therefore each silent moment in *Words and Music* casts a doubt over the play's continuing, creating the sense that at any moment the world of Croak, Bob, and Joe may be absorbed back into silence.

Silence, the residual of both music and words' limitations, is directly linked to a more fundamental philosophical characteristic of both artists: a sense of futility and failure in communicating with words or art. "I think my tendency now toward longer and longer pieces is actually a tendency away from a piece geared for performance,"[100] Feldman once said. This echoes sentiments found in Beckett's early critical work *Proust and Three Dialogues*: "...to be an artist is to fail as no other dare fail…" "…this submission, this admission, this fidelity to failure…" "the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express."[101] This echoes John Cage's famous preface to *Silence* – "nothing is accomplished by writing a piece of music / " hearing " / " playing " } our ears are now in excellent condition,"[102] as well as Feldman's own assertion that "For art to succeed, its creator must fail."[103] A crucial difference exists between failure for Beckett and failure for Feldman, however; for Feldman's statement implies a possibility of success for the artwork at the personal cost of the artist.

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[99] Feldman, "Johannesburg Lecture I, August 1983," in *Morton Feldman Says,* 169.
[100] Gagne and Caras, 64.

A further difference lies in Beckett's and Feldman's concept of what exactly it means to fail. Feldman's statements seem to suggest failure within a historical tradition of art – the peculiar failure of the artist in a hermetically closed environment. Beckett's failure is much more universal: it is a failure of existence, of both expressing and comprehending the most elemental aspects of human life; and its tragedy is derived from its inevitability. Beckett's characters do not fail out of artistic risk or the quest for the "anxiety of art" which Feldman advocates, but because it is the condition of their existences. Catherine Laws makes the comparison that " …both [Feldman and Beckett] attempt the impossible in seeking to render both existential experience and its very ungraspableness….In Feldman's case, however, the sense is always of the wealth of possibilities inherent within reduced circumstances…."[104] Or to put in another way, Feldman's austerity – his limitation of materials and perpetual quiet dynamic structured by silence – is entirely by choice in a way that Beckett's is not; the characters in Beckett's works are trapped within a tragic, diminishing universe of Beckett's creation, where all conditions are subject to the law of inescapability. "[A composer] doesn't have the problem of truth," Feldman himself wrote.

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[101] Beckett, Samuel. *Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* [with *Proust*]. (London: John Calder, 1987), pg. 103.
[102] Cage, John. *Silence.* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), xii.
[103] Feldman, Morton. "The Anxiety of Art." In *Eighth Street,*
[104] Laws, Catherine. "Morton Feldman's *Neither*." In Bryden, pg. 82.

“What I mean is, he doesn’t work with the impossibility of ever reaching it, like the painter or the poet. For the composer the truth is always the process, the system.”[105]

The affinity and paradox of Feldman and Beckett’s views of art and expression are infinitely interlinked and yet seemingly balanced in perpetual self-contradiction. *Words and Music* and *neither* both demonstrate this paradox admirably, as both works are exceptional to both Beckett’s and Feldman’s oeuvre, yet epitomize both artists by the very same way that each “bends” to allow for the other’s expression. When Everett Frost asked Feldman about why Beckett was such a significant figure for Feldman, he replied: “…when you get a world…like Beckett’s, the reference to some degree is closed to any other experience but his own. Now, to me the exciting thing is that neither Jasper Johns nor Beckett are narcissistic: you don’t feel the sense of an egoism there. But at the same time you feel a complete and closed artistic experience. That is the contradiction. And that’s the contradiction that I identify with.”[106]

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[105] Feldman, “Conversations Without Stravinsky,” in *Eighth Street*, 55.
[106] Everett Frost, “The Note Man,” in Bryden, pg. 49 – 50.

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APPENDIX

Email interview with Scott Voyles, conductor of Ensemble Interface on their recent live performance of *Words and Music*

1. *You mentioned a staged production of Words and Music which you recently conducted. Could you describe the presentation of the characters as "on stage" instead of radio voices?*

Words/Joe was presented as a human figure (as in an opera production). He interacted with the ensemble/conductor (Music/Bob) on stage. Croak was presented as a pre-recorded vocal track (with incorporated sounds: club, etc) that was directed to the audience via speakers placed behind and under the seats.

The interaction between Words/Croak remained very classical, in that they reacted to each other as one would do in a play. The interaction between Music/Bob and the others remained much more abstract. We made it a point not to overtly react to either character, but instead be much more ambivalent.

2. *We talked briefly about the lack of tempo indications in Feldman's score, which placed an additional responsibility on you as conductor. Can you tell me a little about what different tempi and conducting strategies you applied to very different sections -- Statements 29 compared to Statement 8, for example?*

At first, my natural tendency was to relate all the tempi in the score via a kind of spectrum. However, I found in the end that a better and more satisfactory result came from simply finding the most natural tempo for each statement.

Statement 29 was the most challenging to conduct, by far. My final solution was to beat five eighth notes (tempo 120) for the first two measures, and immediately change into a three pattern for the flutes (superimposed over the ongoing grouping of 5 in all other instruments).

3. *How much rehearsal or pre-planning was given to the improvisations in the "Age Aria" by the actor playing "Words"? What did you feel made this section successful?*

I made two musical rehearsals with the actor alone for this very section. In the end, we created a strategy of where he would begin the text and a certain point, and follow in a very natural reading style based on the rhythm and meter of Beckett's text.

4. *Several reviewers criticized Feldman for providing music that wasn't sentimental or emotionally overt enough to match Beckett's script directions. Do you feel the audience finds emotional relatability in the music? What kind of audience feedback did you receive during the staged production?*

I must say that I can't speak for the audience, in fact I don't really care what the audience finds in the music. But for me, as in all of Feldman's music, I find glorious restraint and immense character in the music. He had great respect for Beckett, the man and his words, and I believe he truly sought to not battle with the text in any way. And he does so with totally convincing, true to form Feldman sounds.

This Report Must Be Signed By Your Parents

for orchestra (2012)

Kerrith Livengood

Instrumentation:

Flutes 1,2,3 (1 doubles picc., 3 doubles alto fl.)
Oboes 1,2
Clarinets 1,2,3 in B flat (1 doubles E flat, 3 doubles bass clar.)
Bassoons 1,2

Horns in F 1 – 4
Trumpets in C 1,2
Trombones 1,2,3 (3 doubles bass trombone, all double "whirlies")
Tuba

Percussion (marimba, vibraphone, crotales, glockenspiel, vibraphone, brake drum, steel drum, tam-tam, metal shakers, toms, sus. cymbals)
Harp
Piano

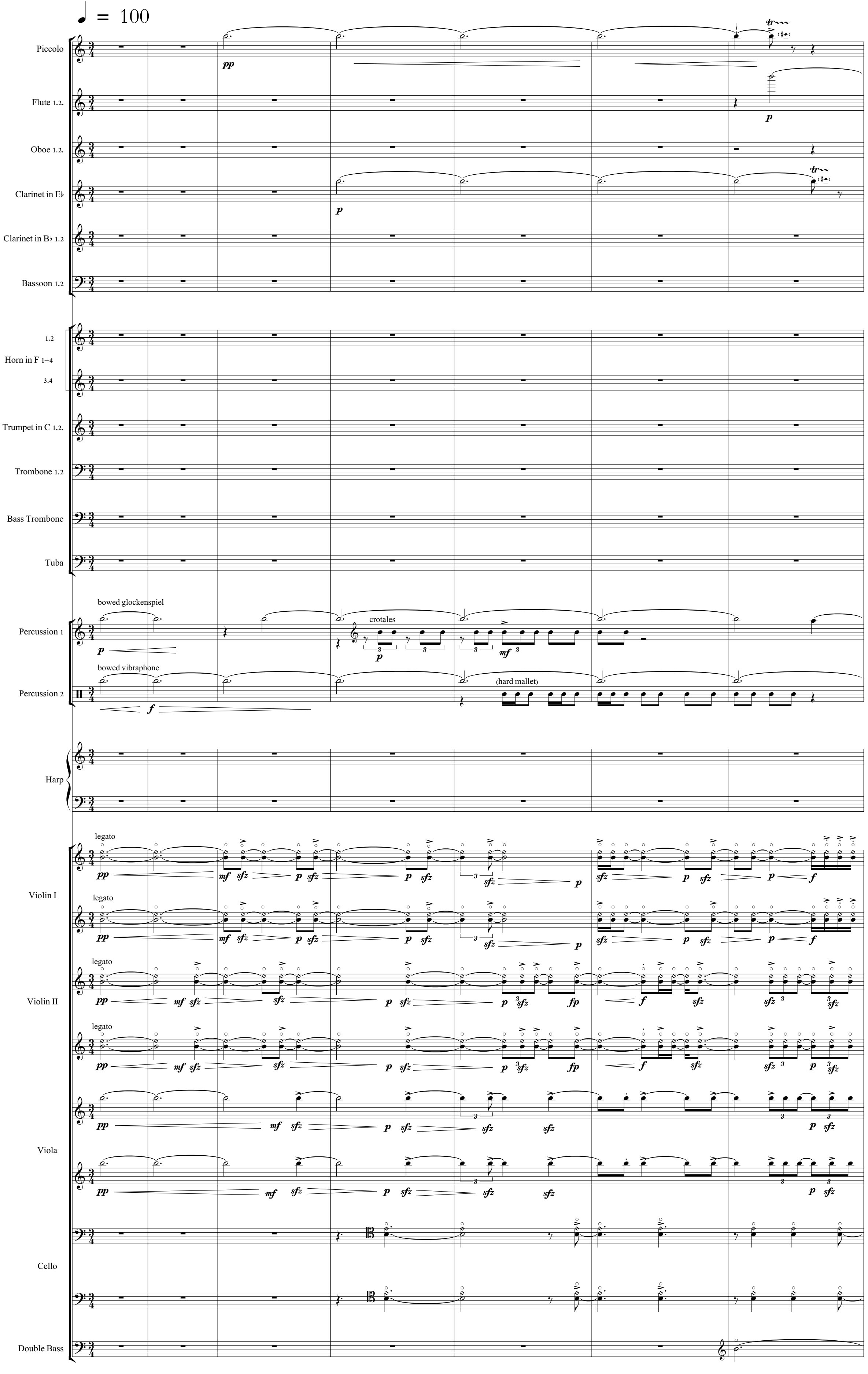
Strings

This Report Must Be Signed By Your Parents represents a personal evolution of style over several years. Both movements attempt to explore the aural space of the orchestra, each employing a different strategy for doing so. The movements are subtitled with areas marked as "needs improvement" on an old report card of mine from kindergarten – an ironic gesture at the long-anticipated conclusion of my formal education.

This Report Must Be Signed By Your Parents

1. cuts on the line

Kerrith Livengood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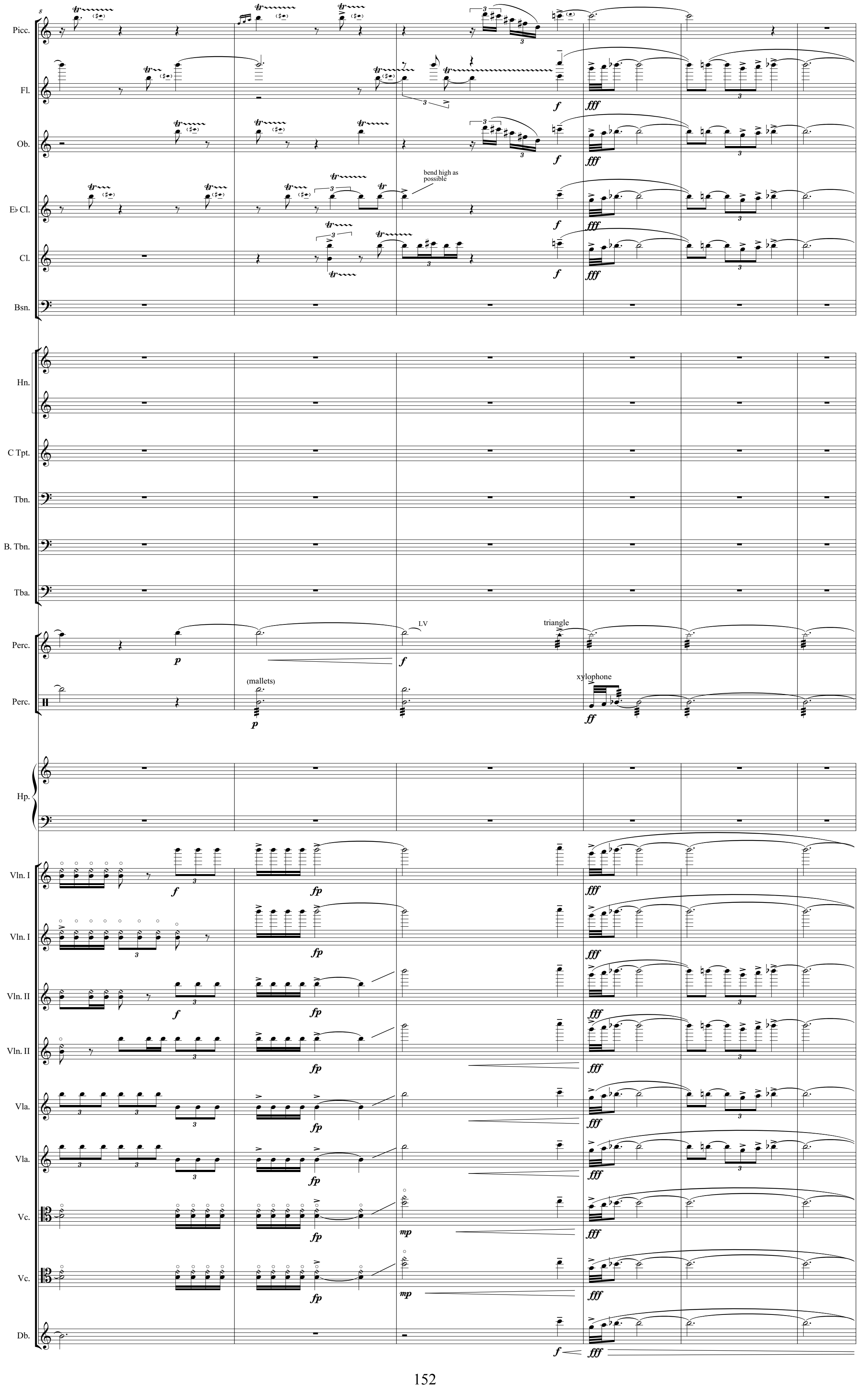
Piccolo
Flute 1.2.
Oboe 1.2.
Clarinet in E♭
Clarinet in B♭ 1.2
Bassoon 1.2
1.2
Horn in F 1–4
3.4
Trumpet in C 1.2.
Trombone 1.2
Bass Trombone
Tuba
bowed glockenspiel
crotales
Percussion 1
bowed vibraphone
(hard mallet)
Percussion 2
Harp
legato
Violin I
legato
legato
Violin II
legato
Viola
Cello
Double Bass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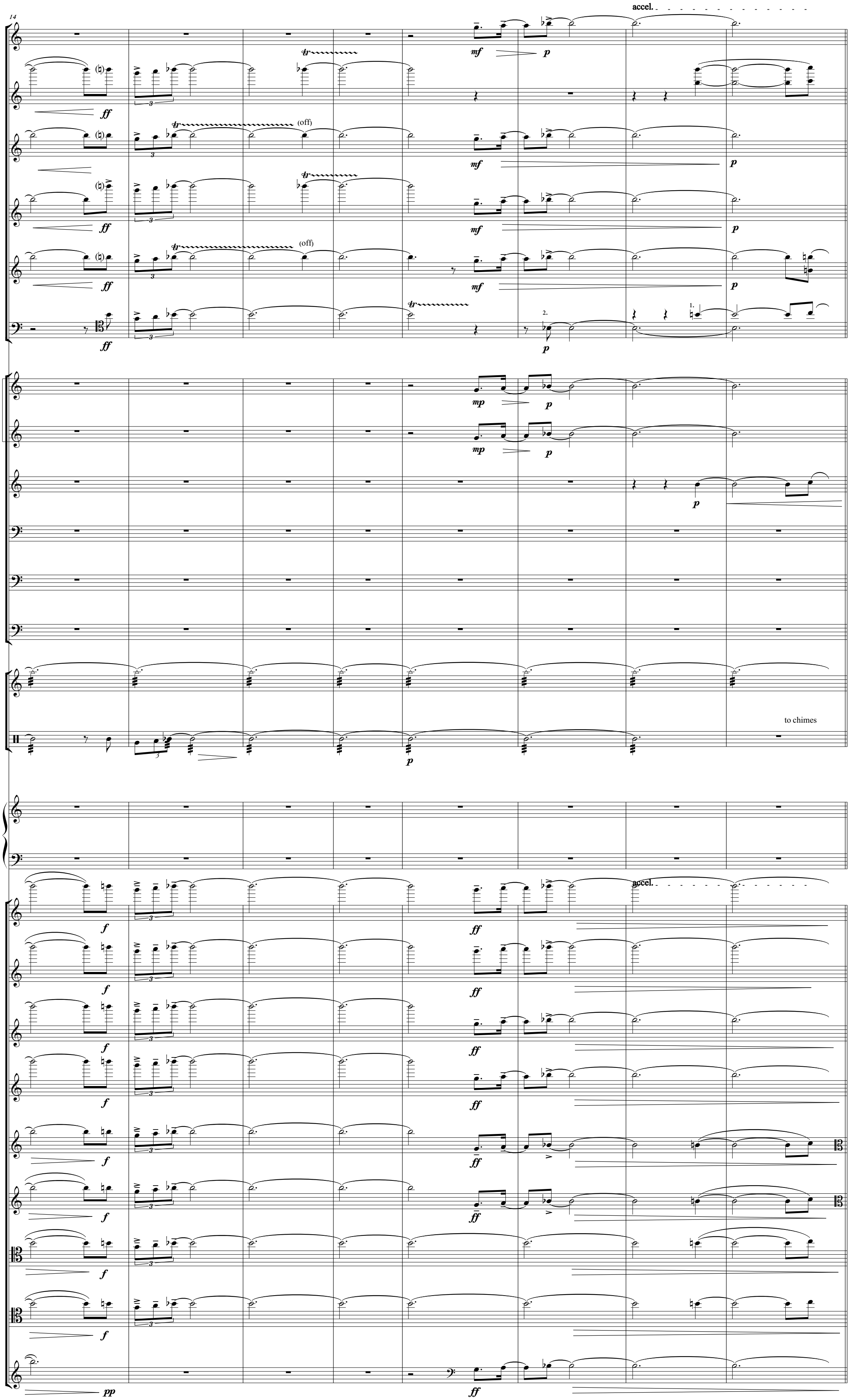
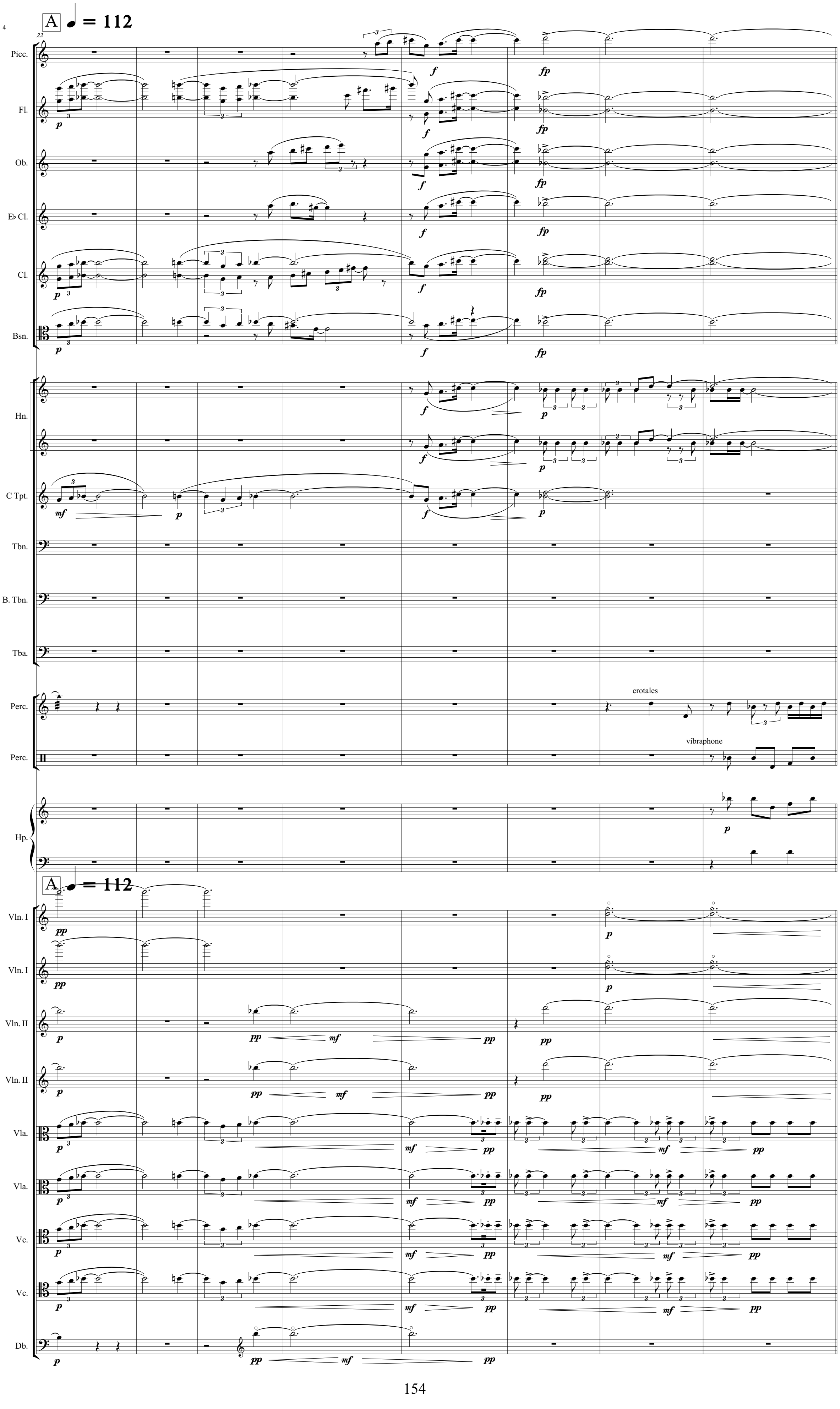
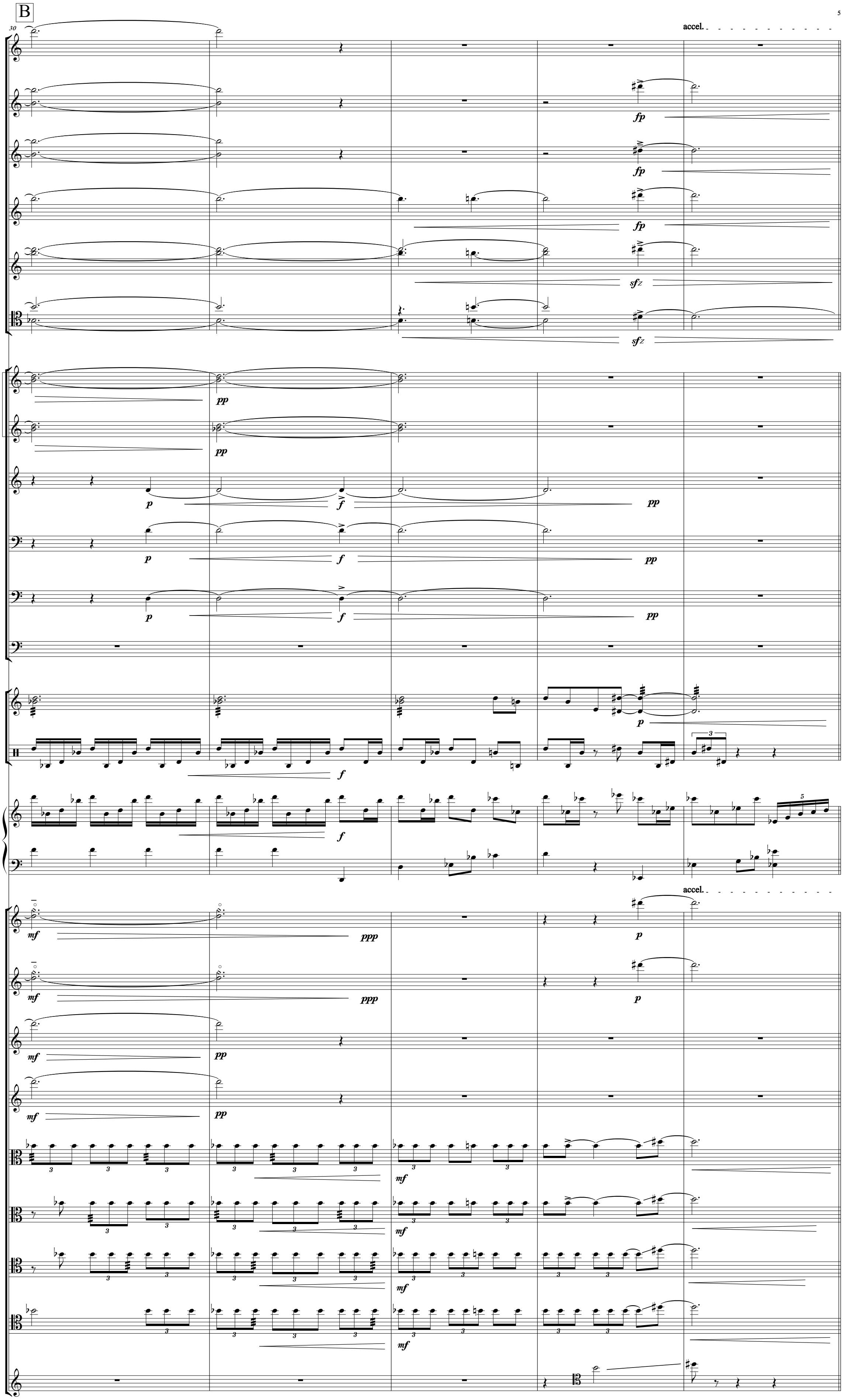
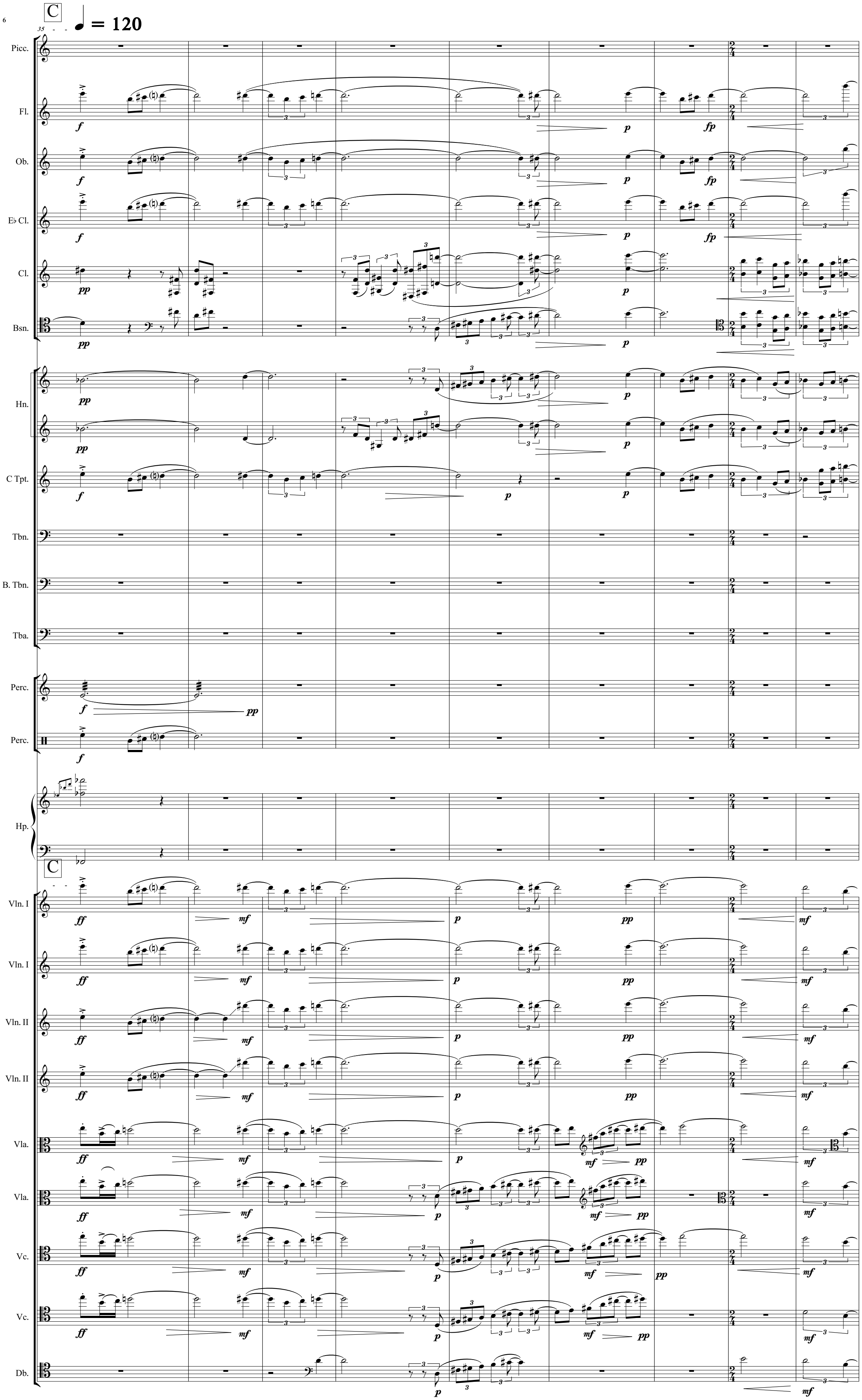
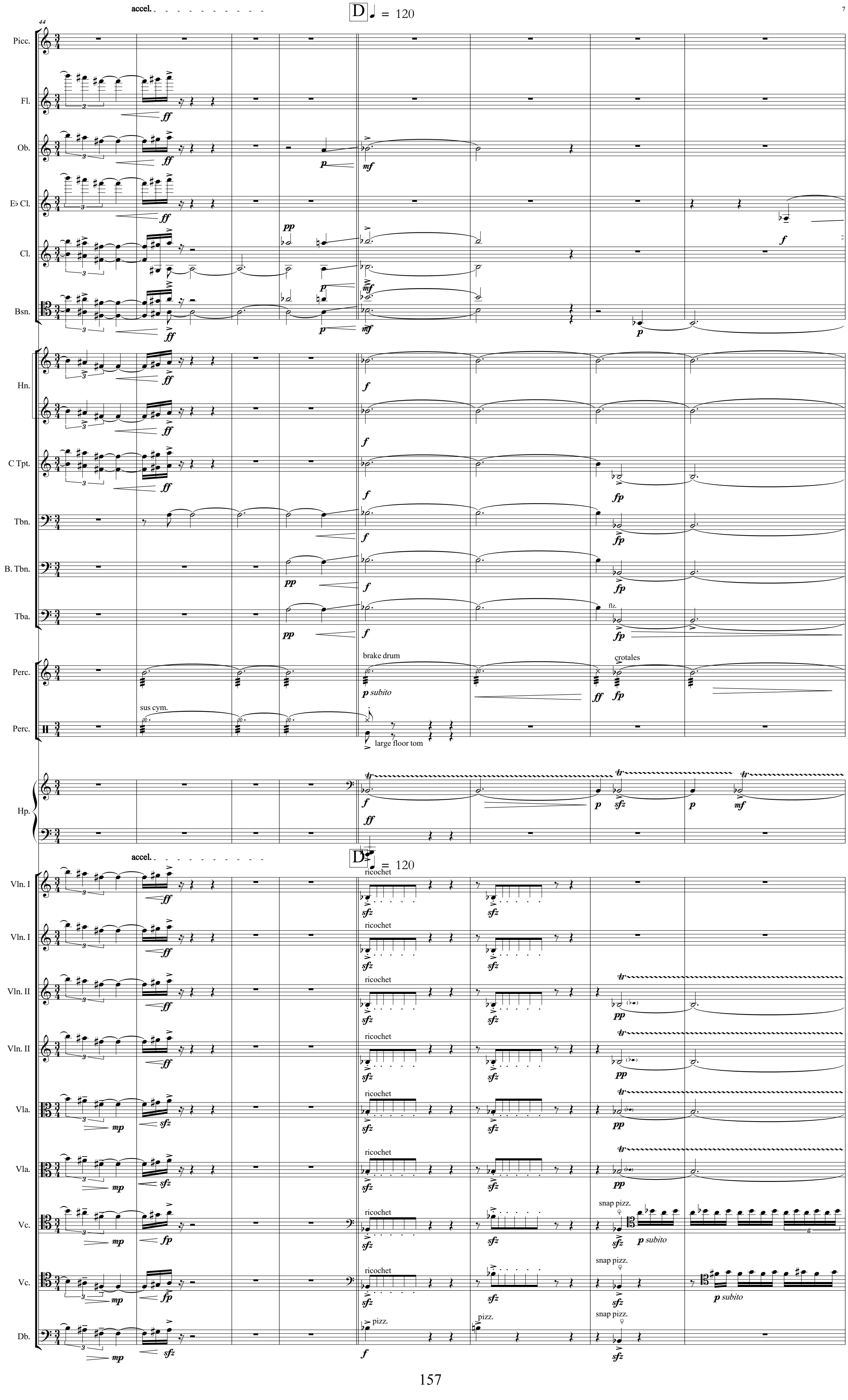
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
bend high as possible
LV
triangle
(mallets)
xylophone
f
fff
p
ff
fp
mp

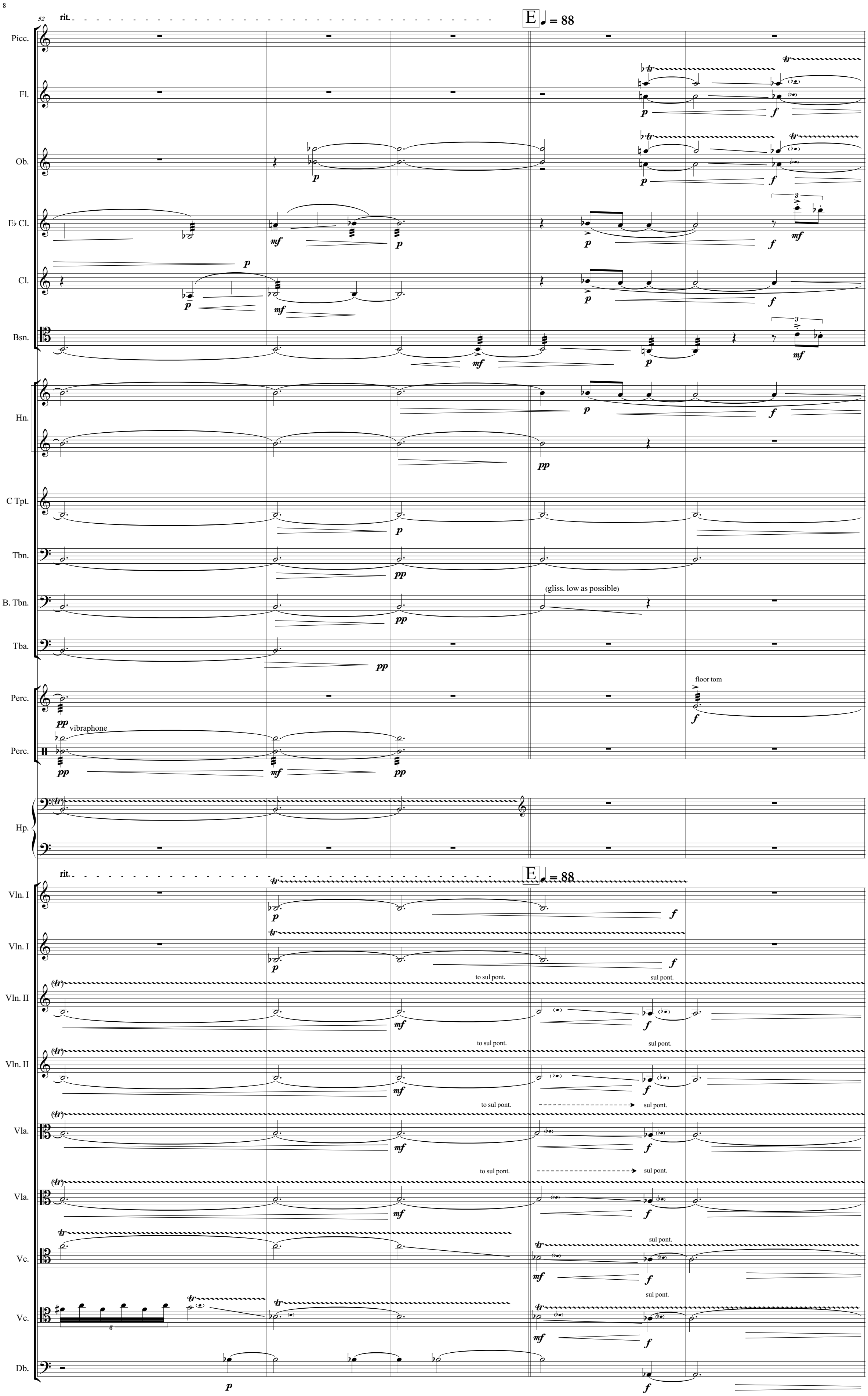

accel.
14
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
ff
mf
p
mp
f
pp
(off)
1.
2.
to chimes

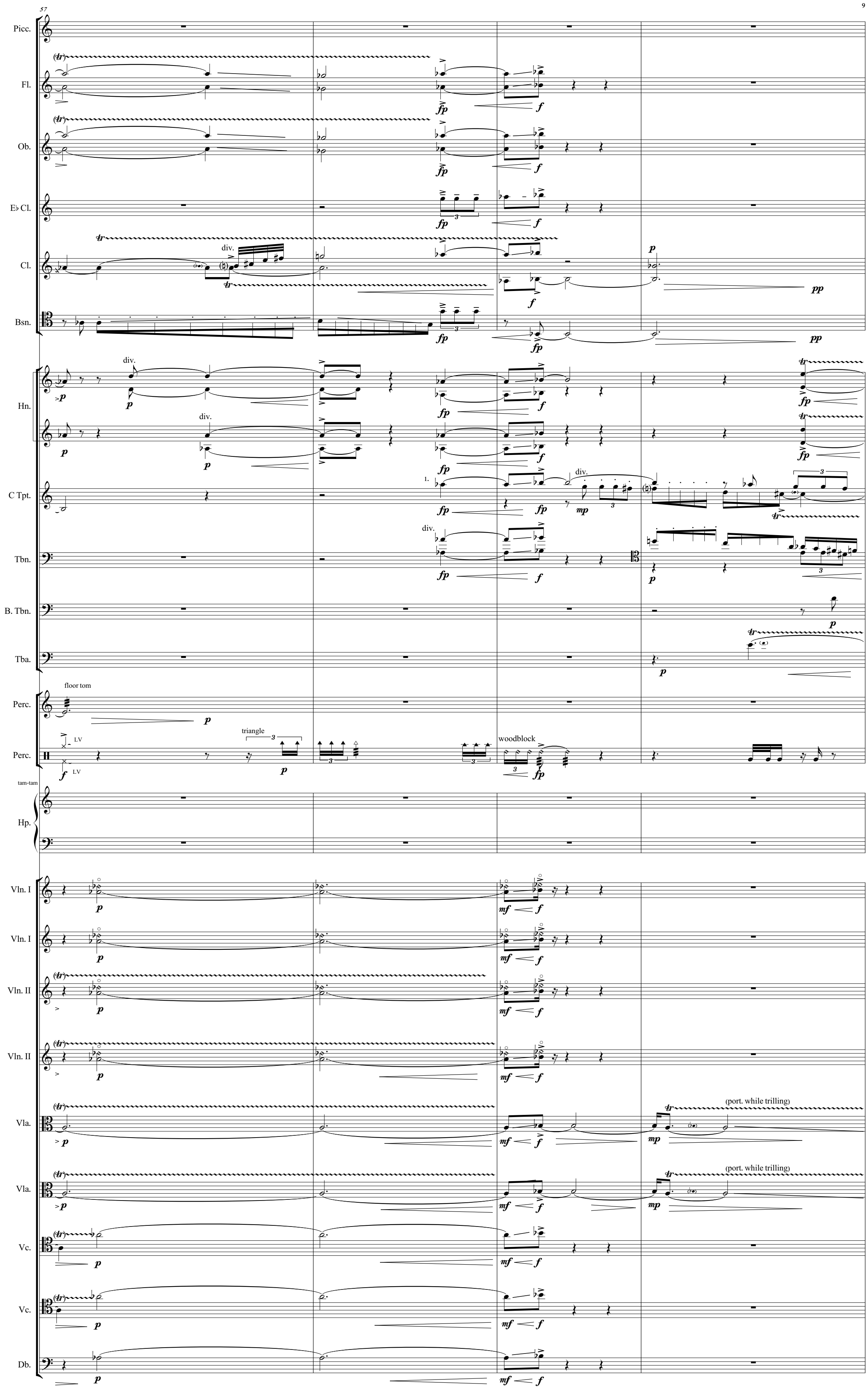

A
♩ = 112
22
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
crotales
Perc.
vibraphone
Hp.
A
♩ = 112
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
3
p
f
fp
mf
pp


B
30
5
accel.
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
fp
sfz
pp
p
f
mf
ppp
3


C
35
♩ = 120
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
f
p
fp
pp
ff
mf
3
2
4


accel.
D
♩ = 120
44
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
ff
p
mf
pp
f
fp
flz.
brake drum
p subito
crotales
sus cym.
large floor tom
sfz
mp
ricochet
pizz.
snap pizz.
6


52
rit.
E
♩ = 88
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
p
f
mf
pp
(gliss. low as possible)
floor tom
vibraphone
to sul pont.
sul pont.
6
3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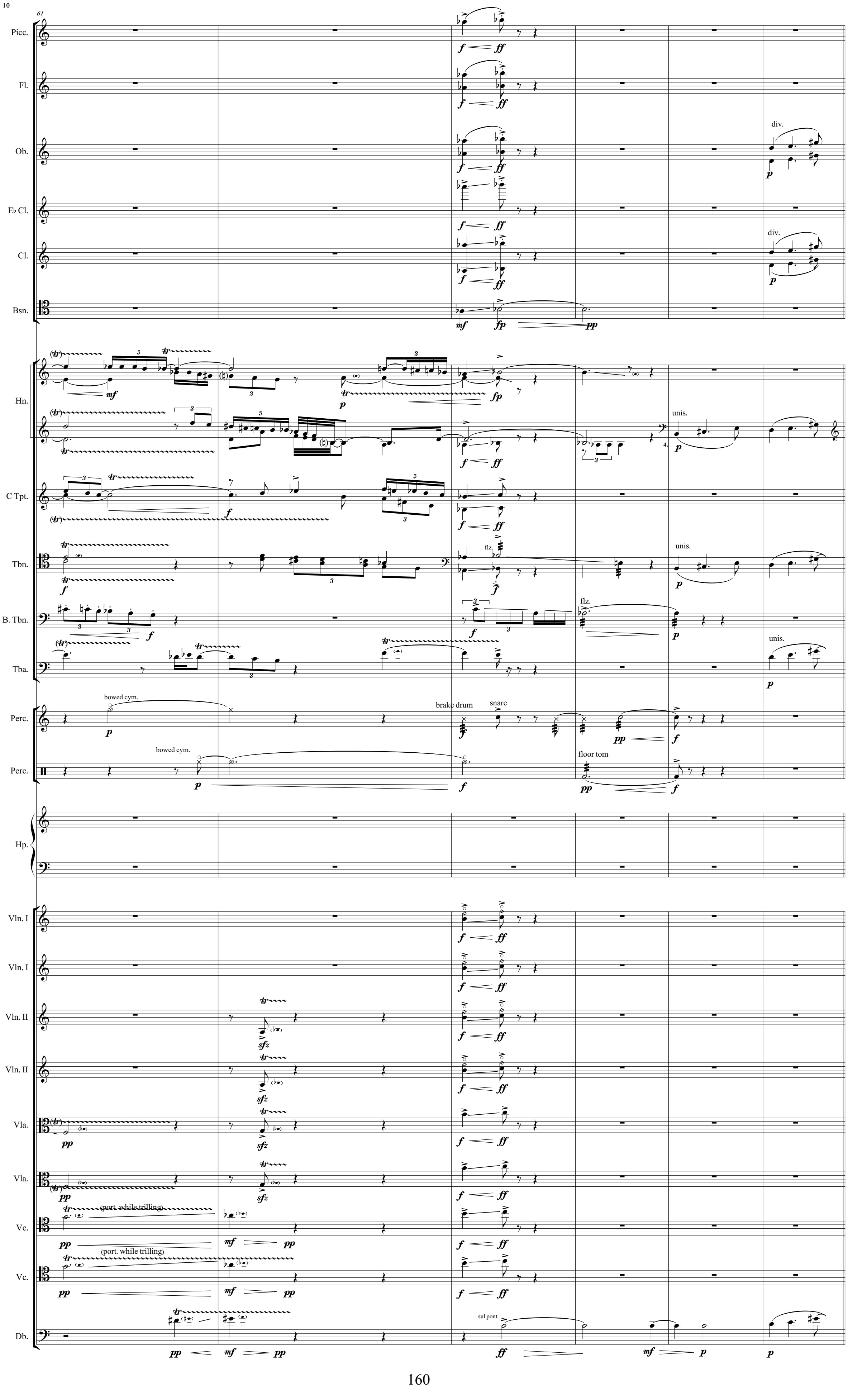
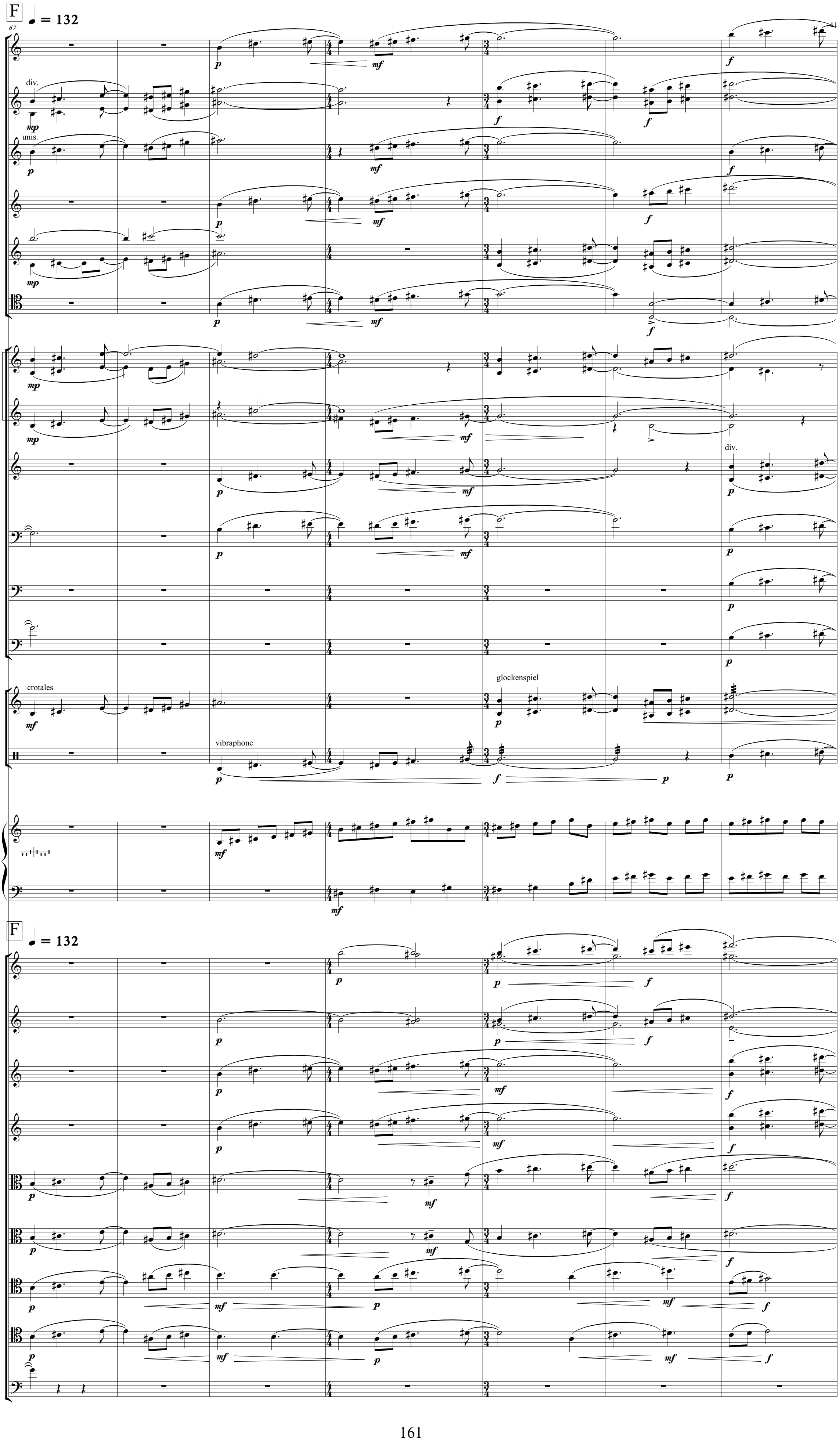
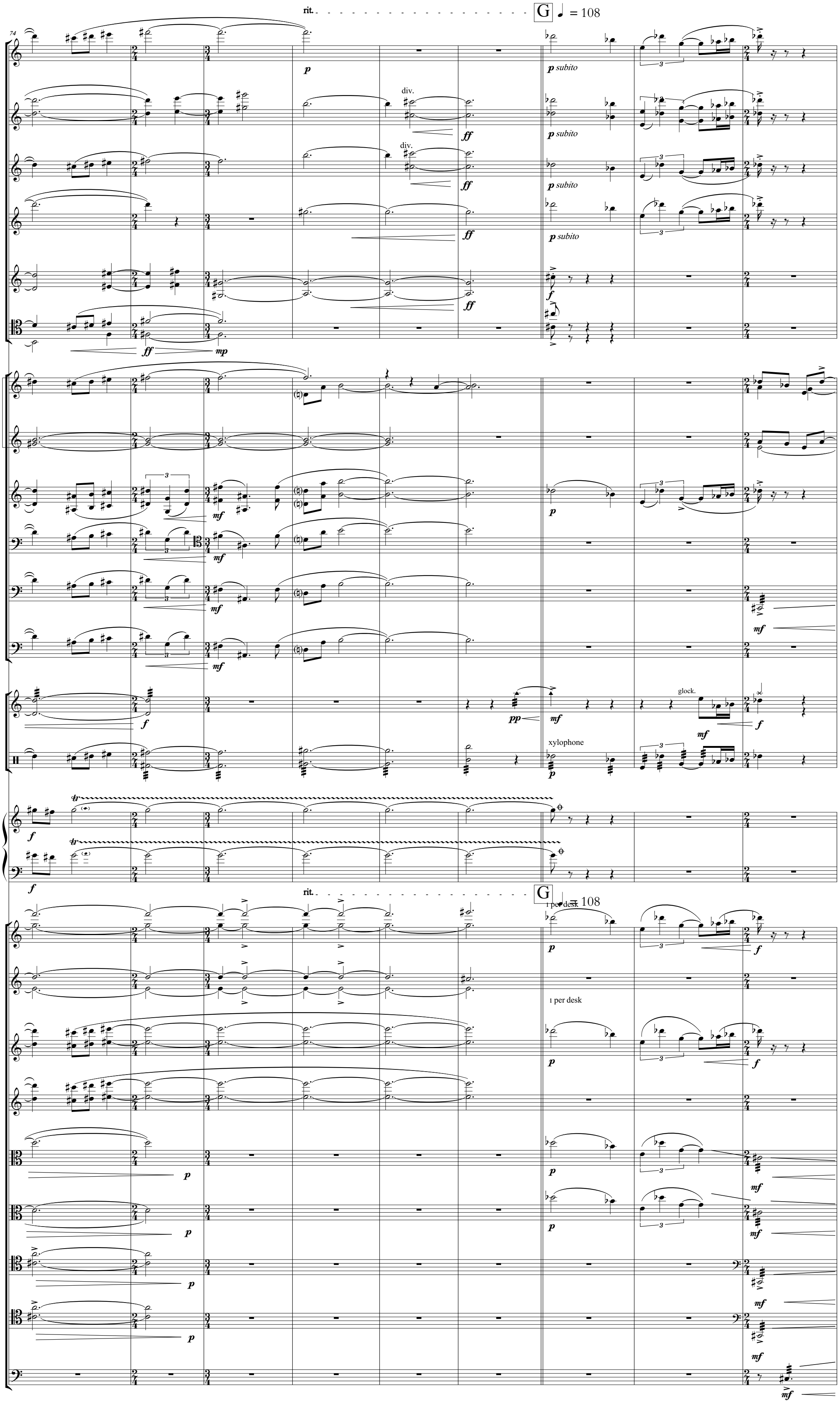
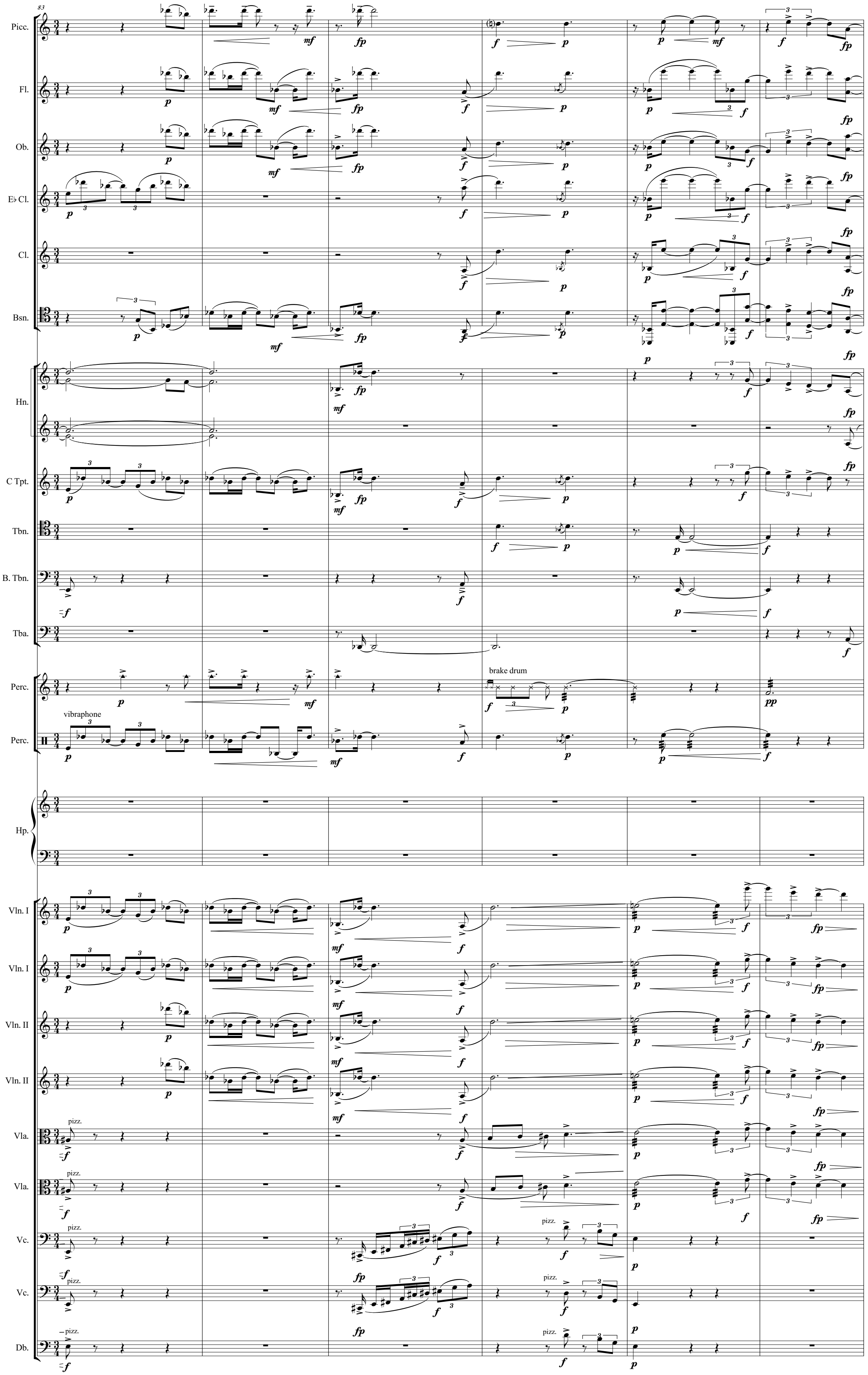
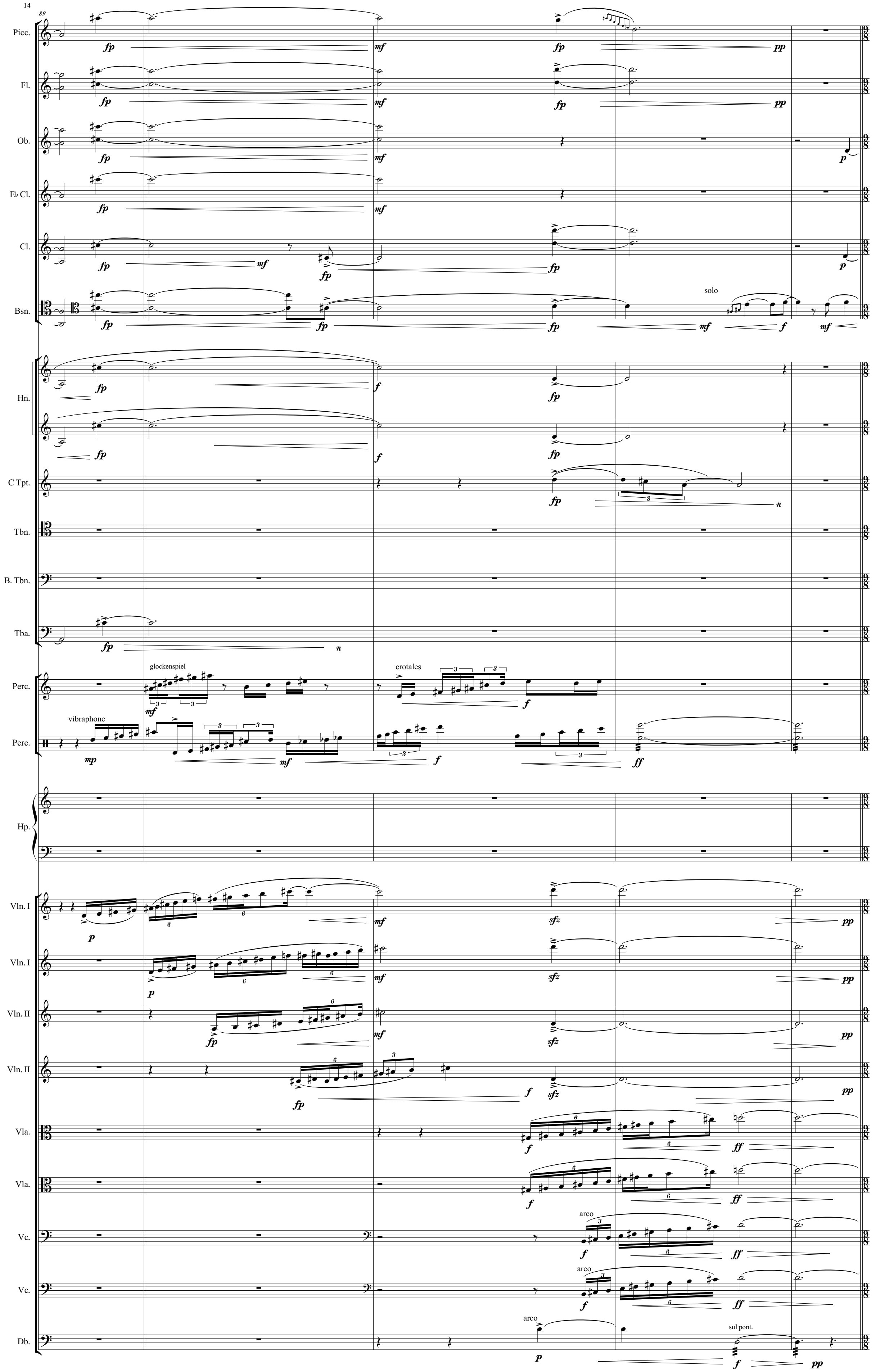
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
(tr)
tr
div.
1.
floor tom
triangle
woodblock
tam-tam
LV
LV
(port. while trilling)
(port. while trilling)
3
fp
f
p
pp
mp
mf

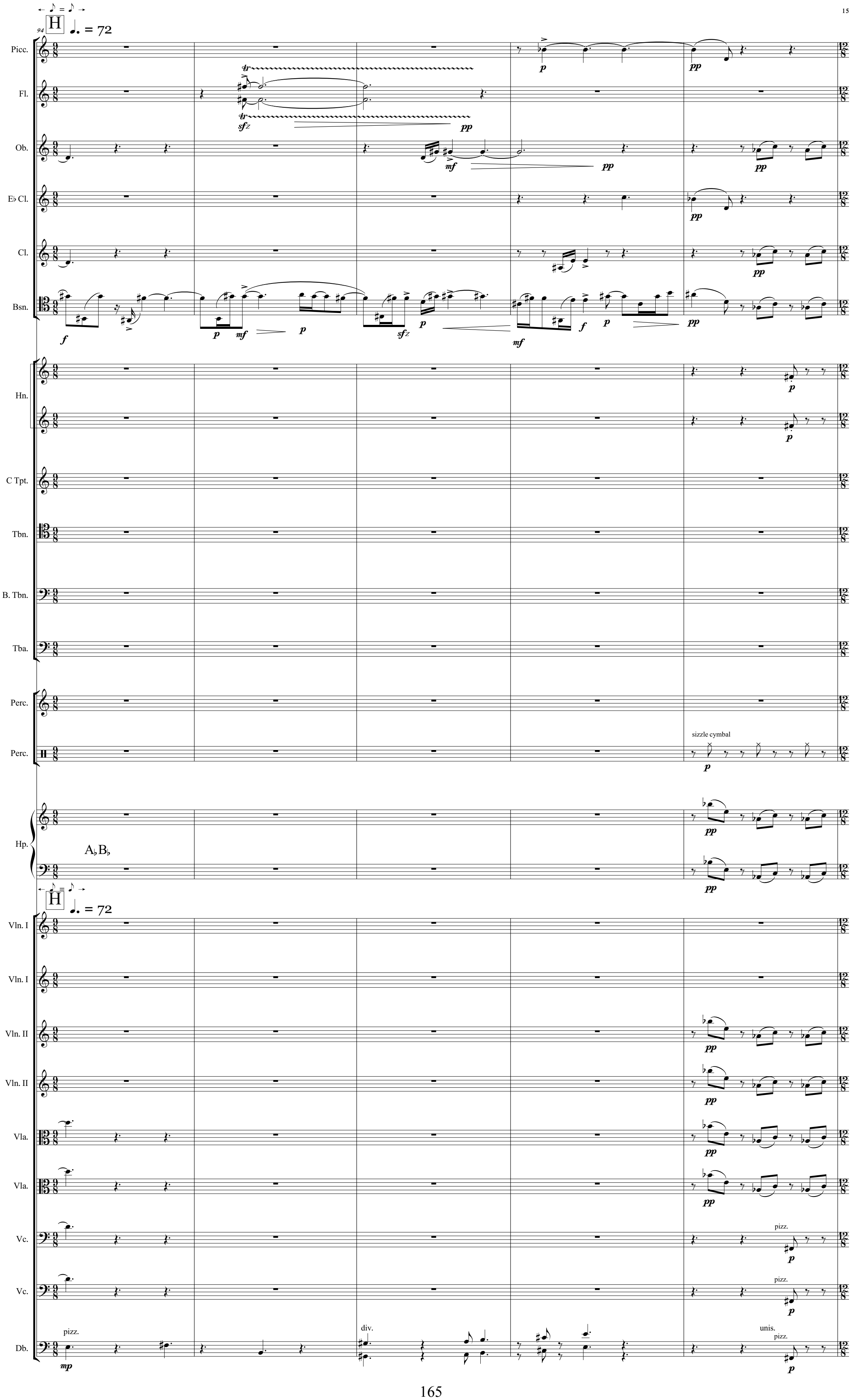

61
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
div.
div.
unis.
unis.
unis.
flz.
flz.
4.
bowed cym.
bowed cym.
brake drum
snare
floor tom
(port. while trilling)
(port. while trilling)
sul pont.
f
ff
mf
fp
pp
p
sfz

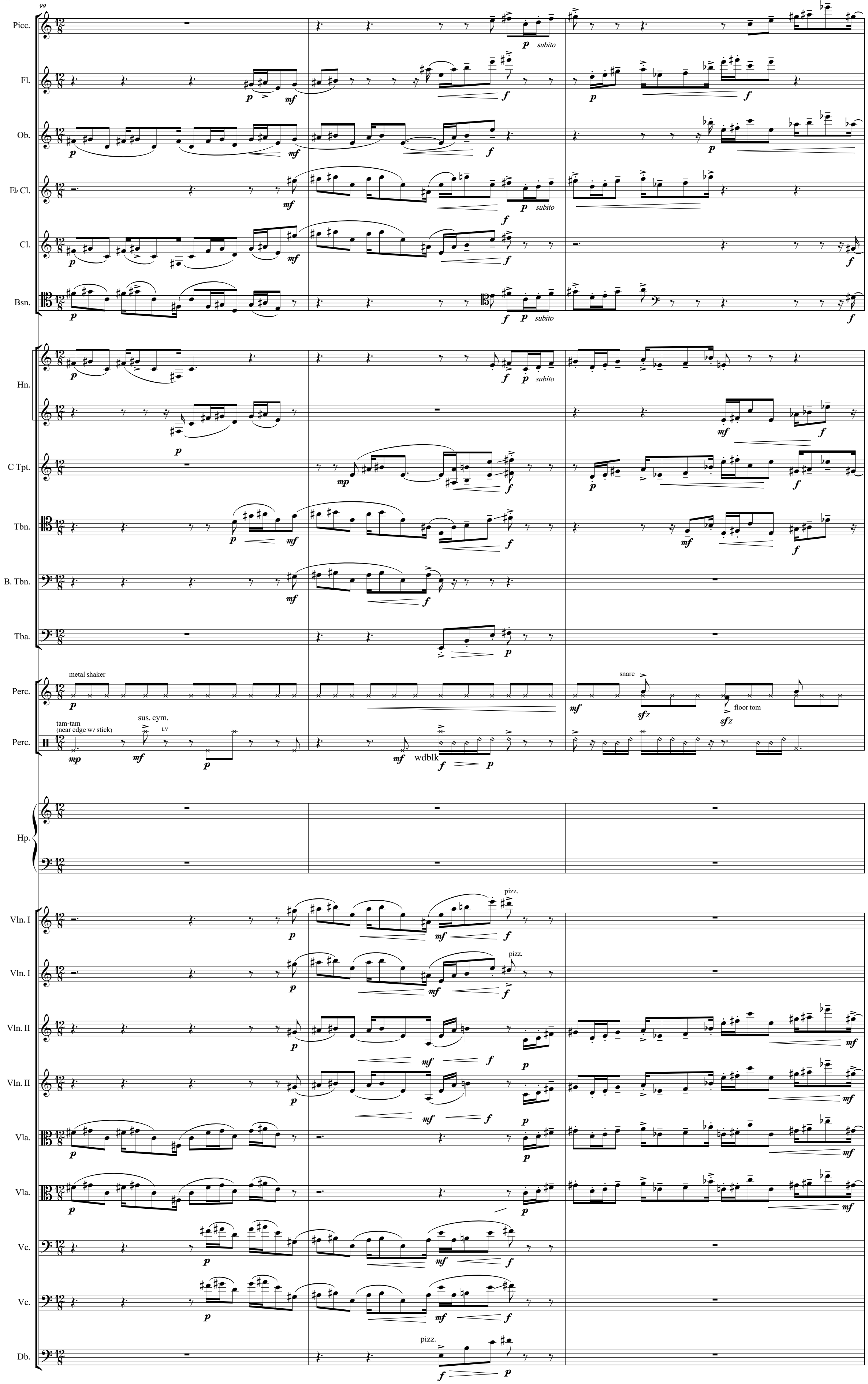

F
♩ = 132
67
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
div.
unis.
crotales
vibraphone
glockenspiel
p
mp
mf
f

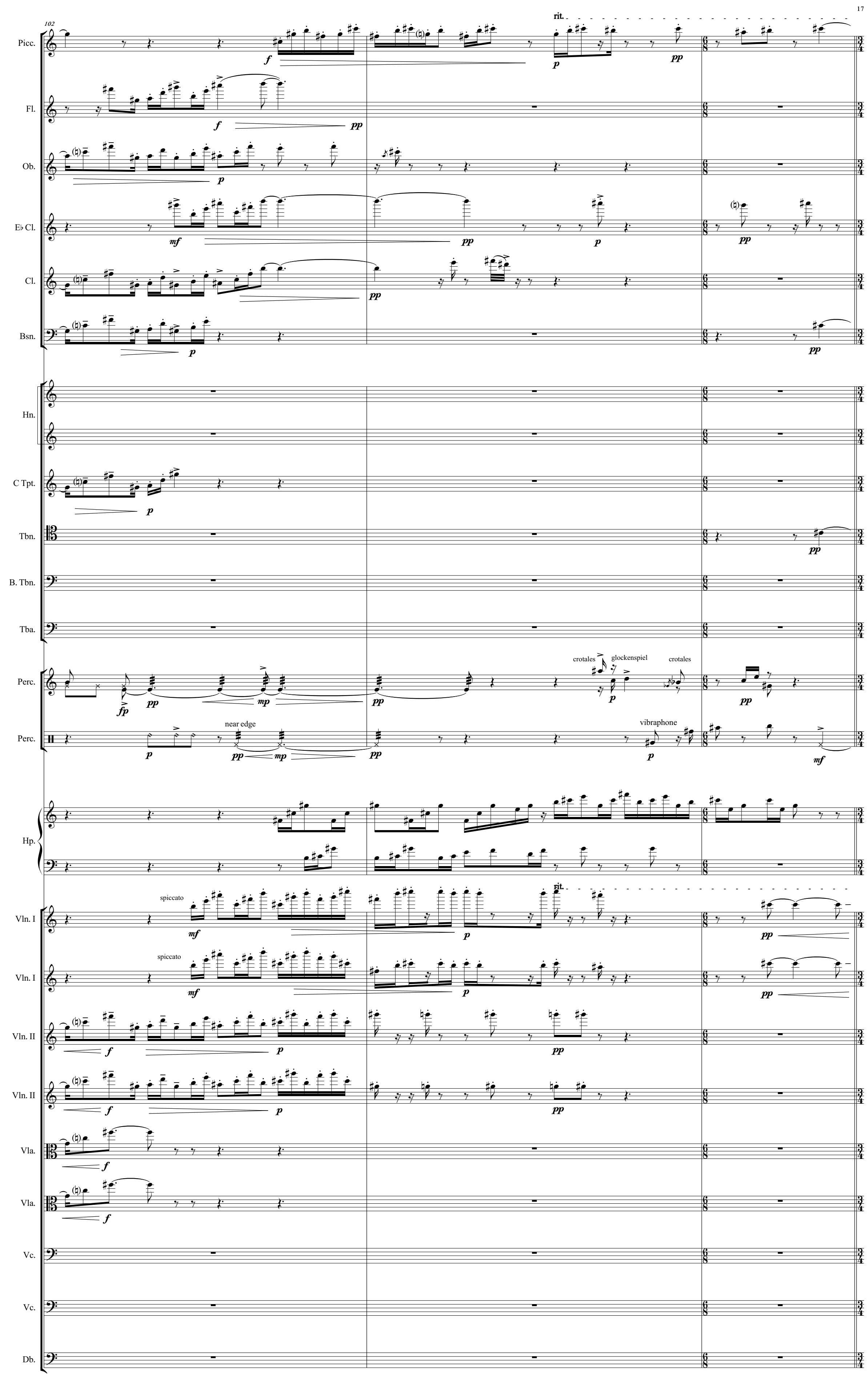

rit.
G
♩ = 108
74
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
div.
div.
p
ff
ff
ff
ff
ff
mp
p subito
p subito
p subito
p subito
f
p
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
pp
mf
glock.
xylophone
f
f
1 per desk
1 per desk
3

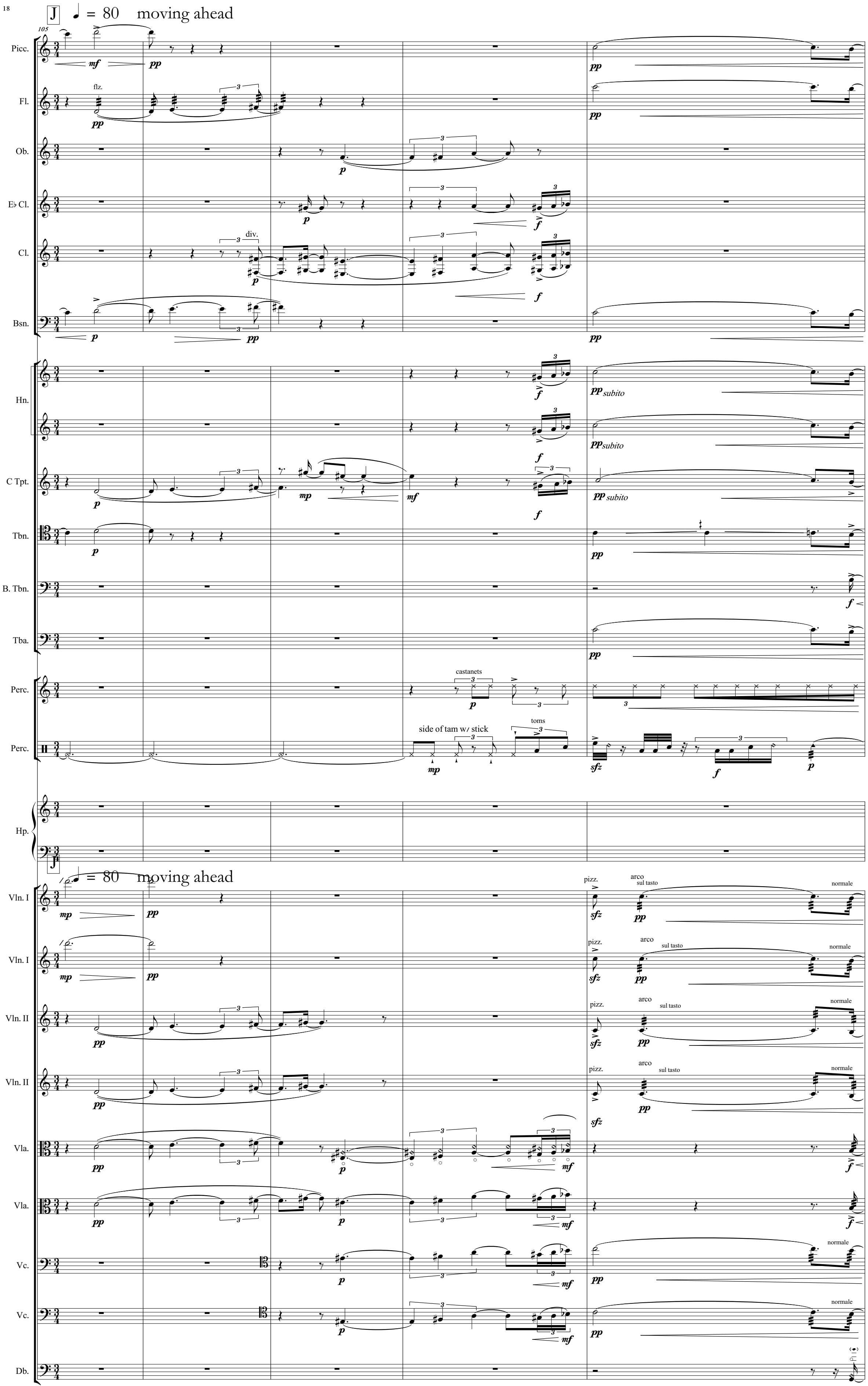

83
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
brake drum
Perc.
vibraphone
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
pizz.
p
mf
fp
f
pp

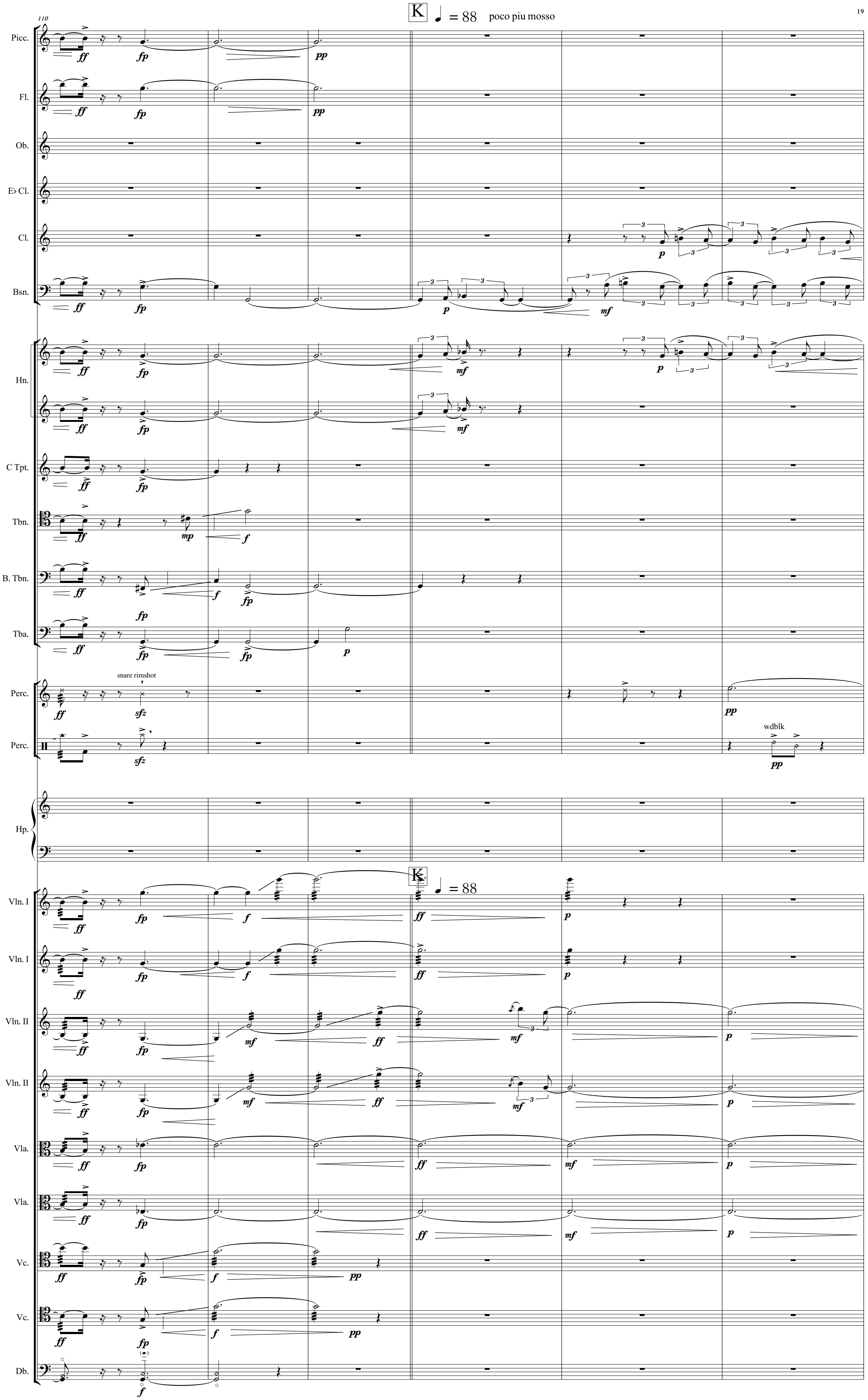

89
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
solo
glockenspiel
crotales
vibraphone
arco
arco
arco
sul pont.
fp
mf
pp
p
f
n
mp
ff
sfz

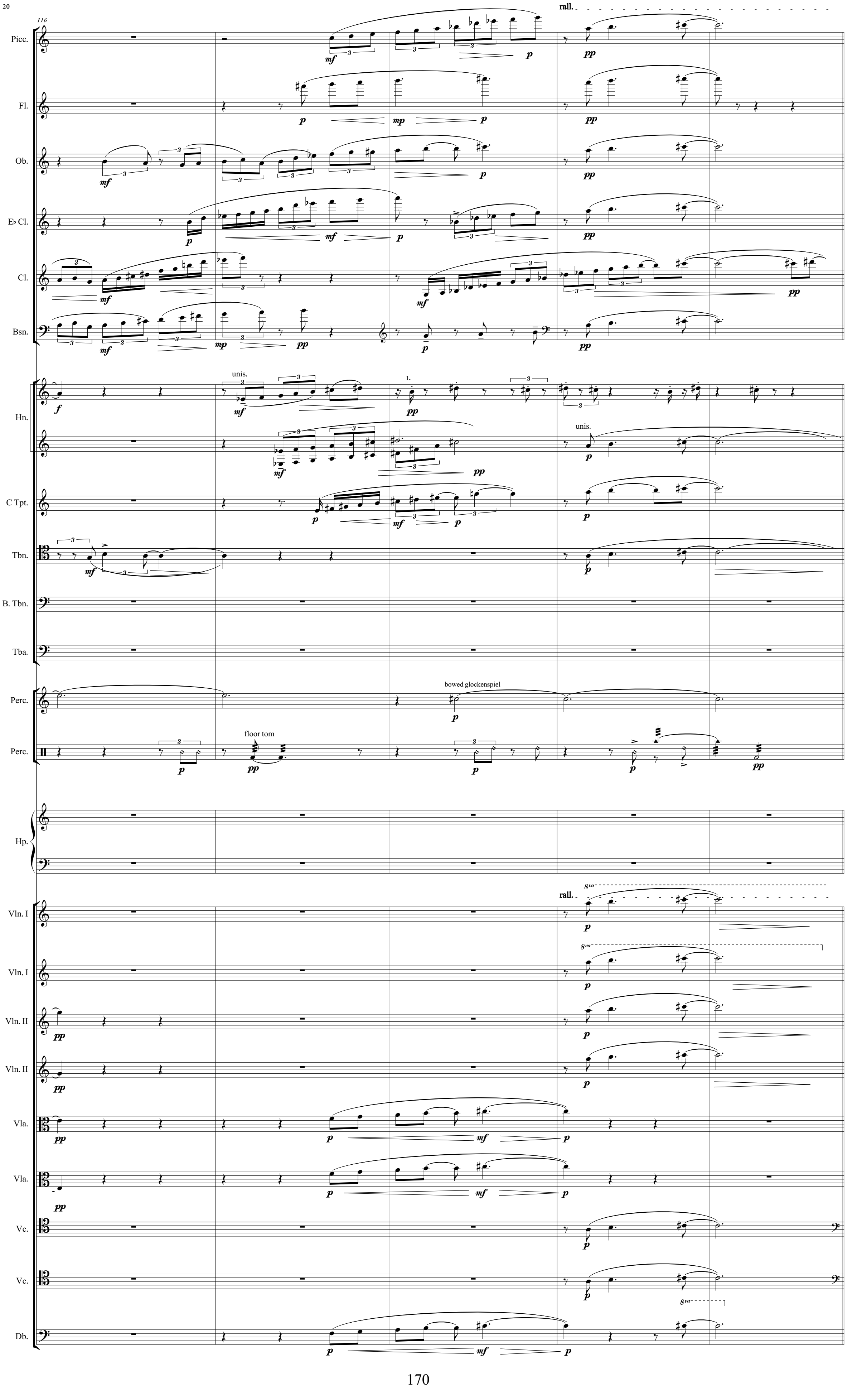

94
H
♩. = 72
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
A♭,B♭,
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
tr
sfz
pp
p
mf
f
mp
sizzle cymbal
pizz.
div.
unis.

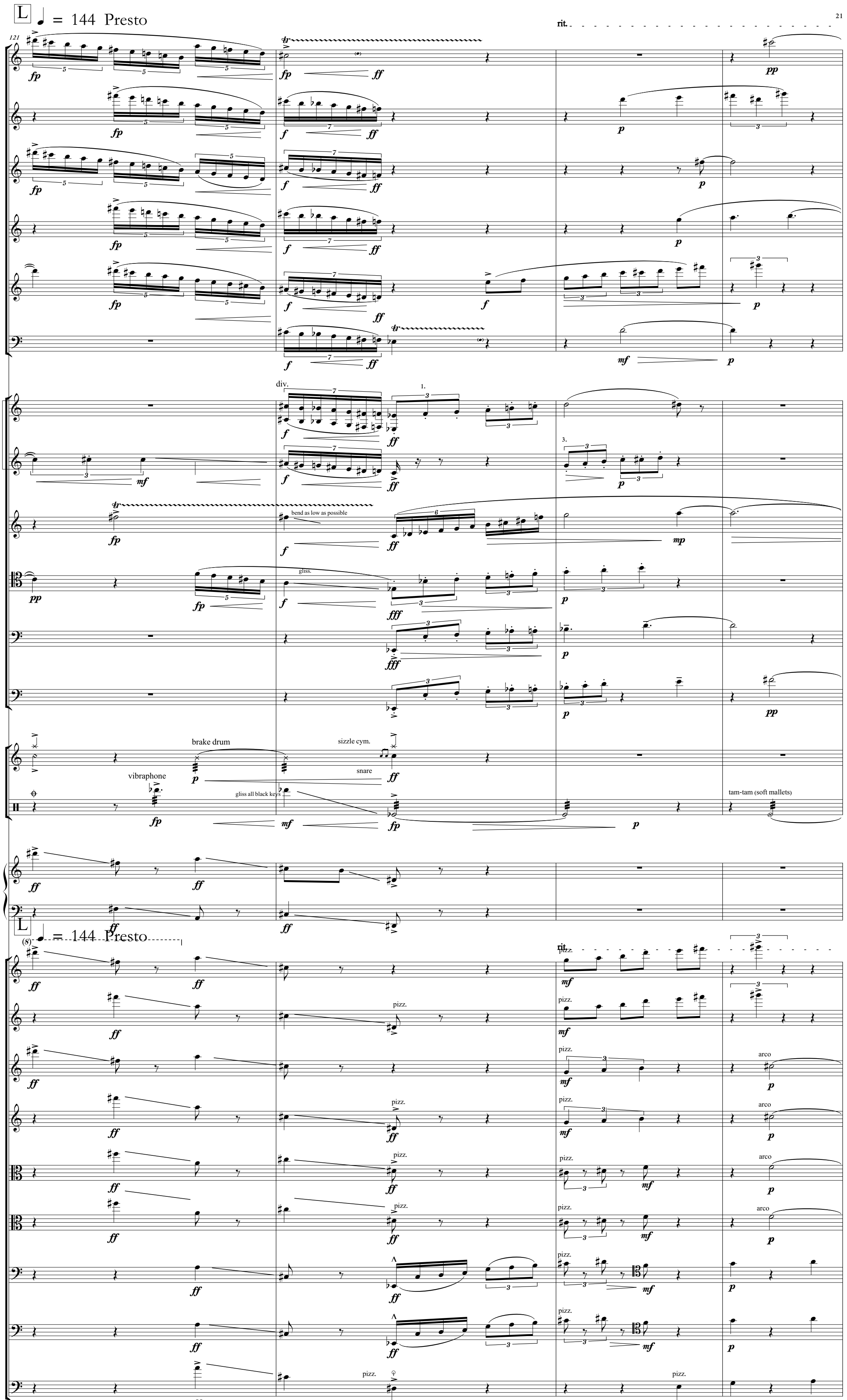

99
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
metal shaker
snare
floor tom
tam-tam (near edge w/ stick)
sus. cym.
LV
wdblk
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
subito
subito
subito
subito
p
mf
f
mp
sfz

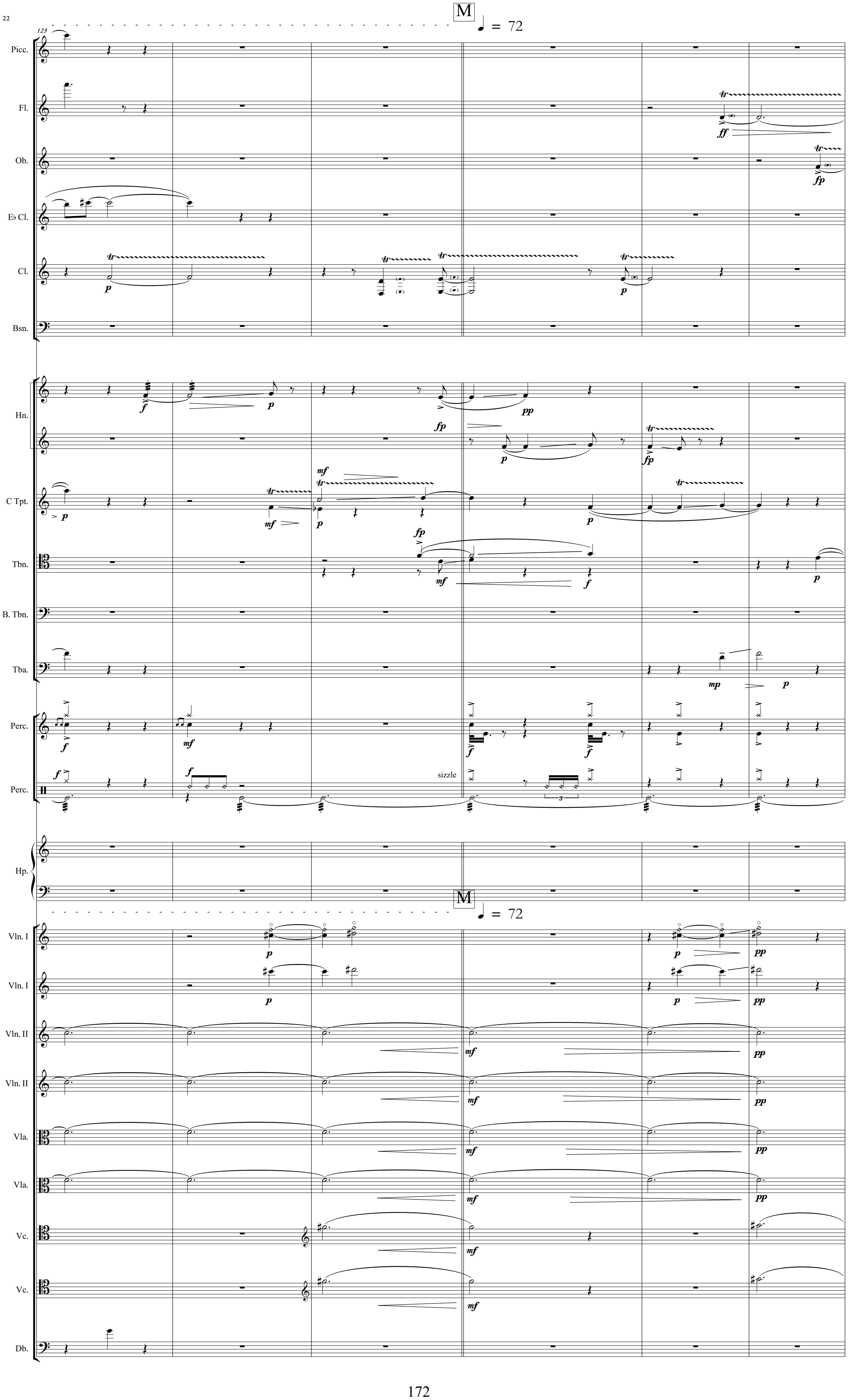

102
rit.
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
crotales
glockenspiel
crotales
near edge
vibraphone
Hp.
spiccato
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
f
pp
p
mf
fp
mp

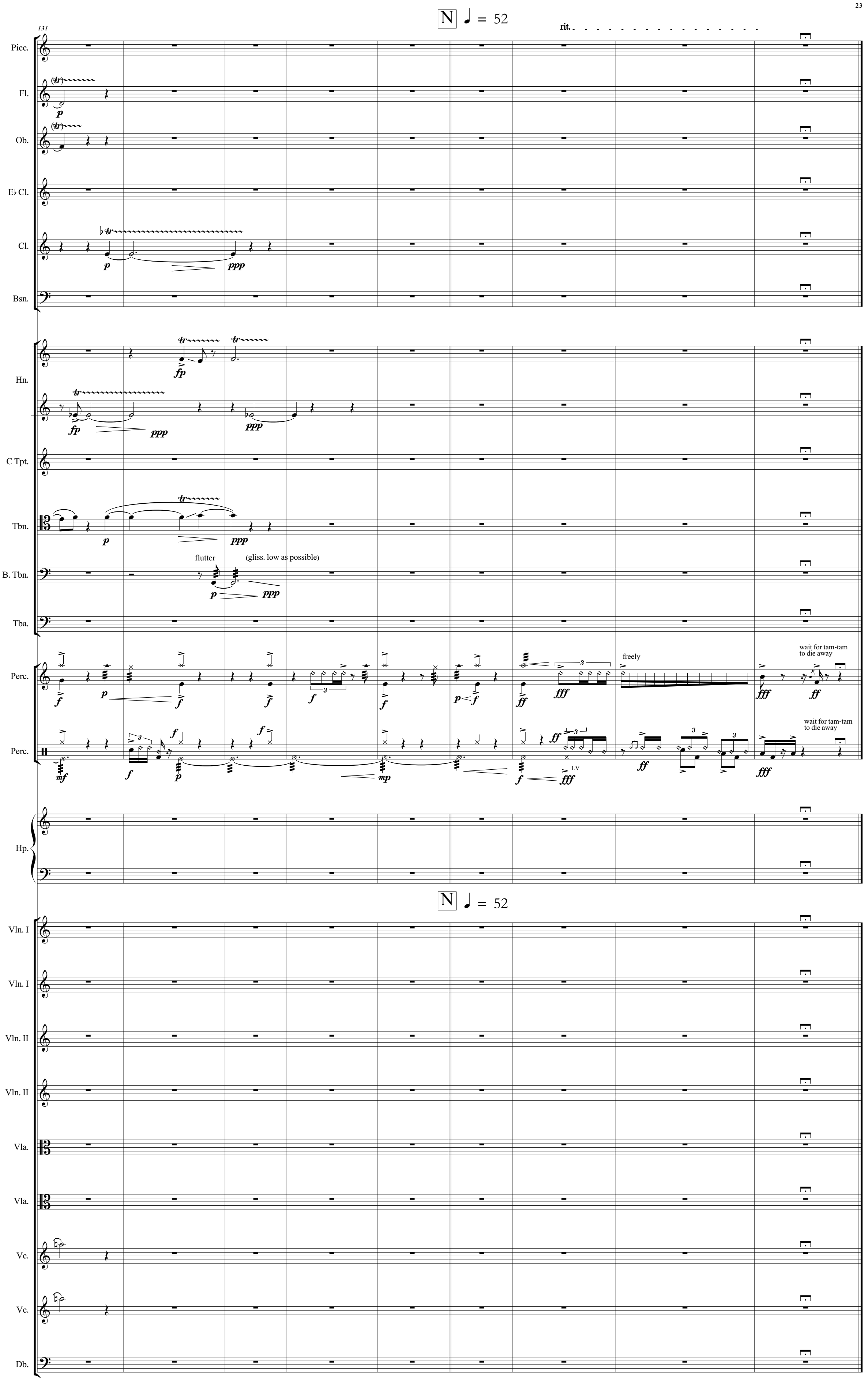

J ♩ = 80 moving ahead
105
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
flz.
div.
castanets
side of tam w/ stick
toms
pizz.
arco
sul tasto
normale
mf
pp
p
mp
f
sfz
pp subito


K
♩ = 88
poco piu mosso
110
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
snare rimshot
wdblk
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
ff
fp
pp
p
mf
mp
f
sfz

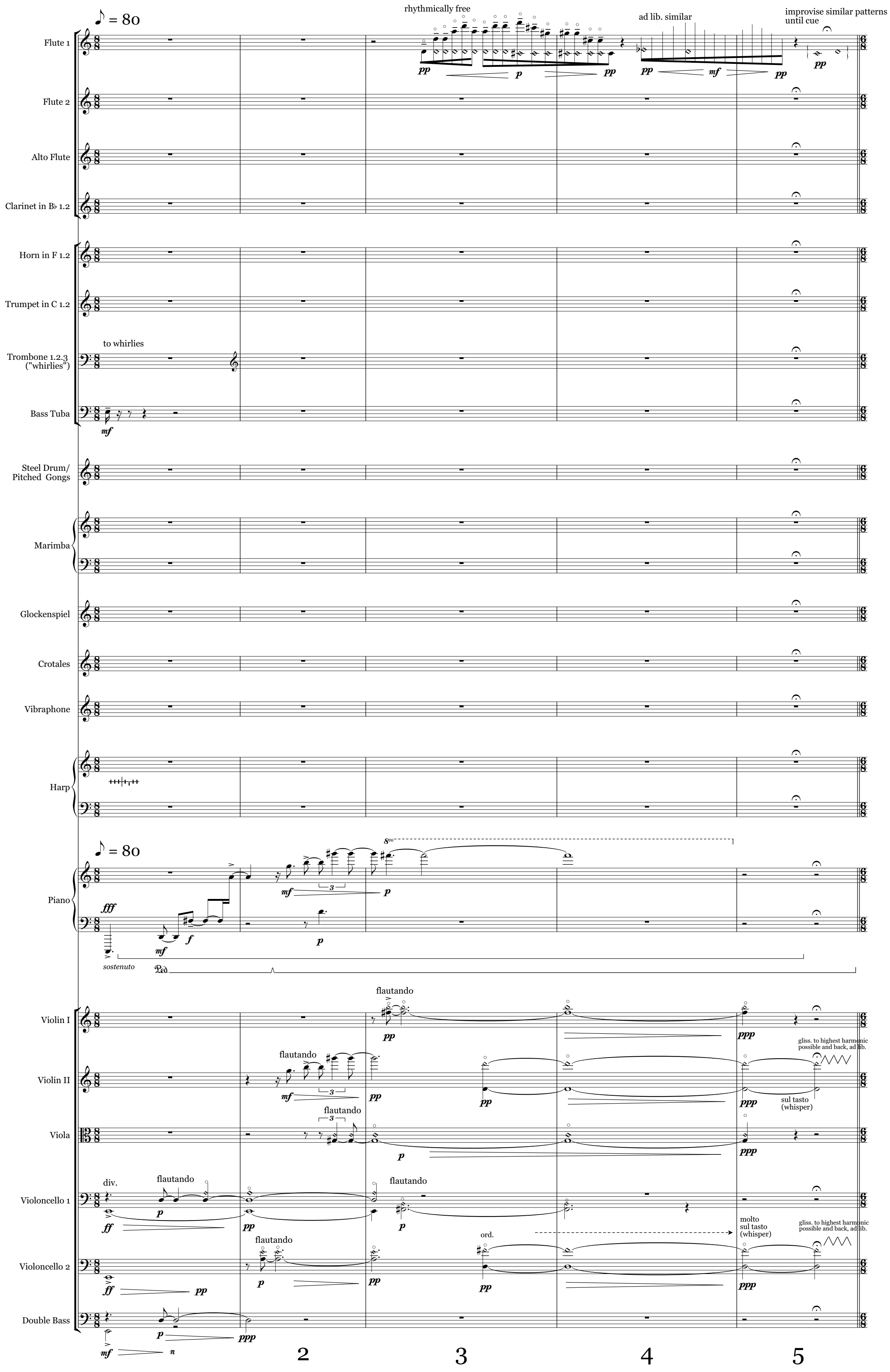

rall.
116
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
unis.
1.
unis.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
bowed glockenspiel
Perc.
floor tom
Hp.
rall.
8va
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
8va
Db.
mf
p
mp
pp
f

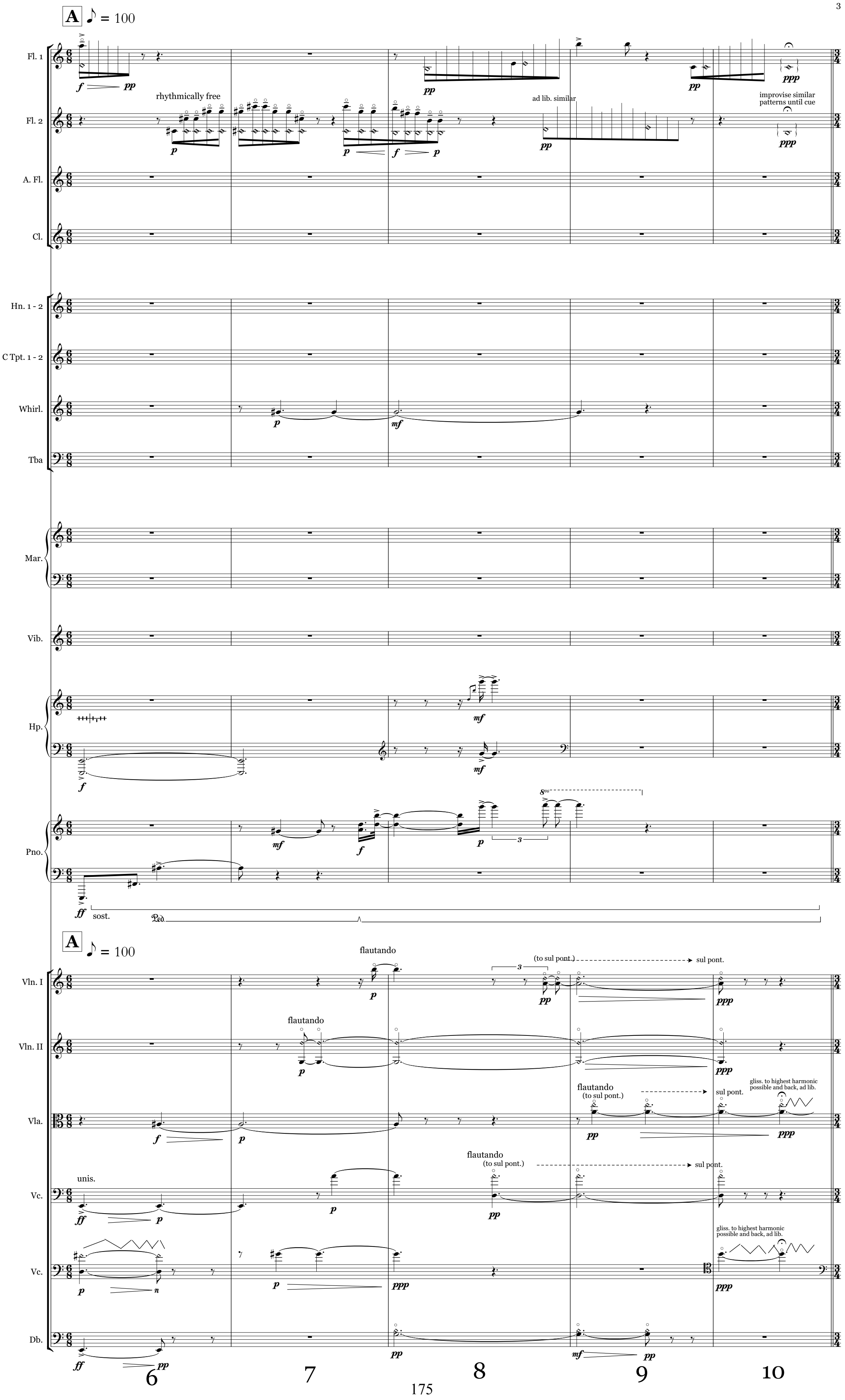

L
♩ = 144 Presto
rit.
121
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
div.
1.
3.
C Tpt.
bend as low as possible
Tbn.
gliss.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
brake drum
sizzle cym.
snare
vibraphone
gliss all black keys
tam-tam (soft mallets)
Perc.
Hp.
L
♩ = 144 Presto
(8)
rit.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
pizz.
arco

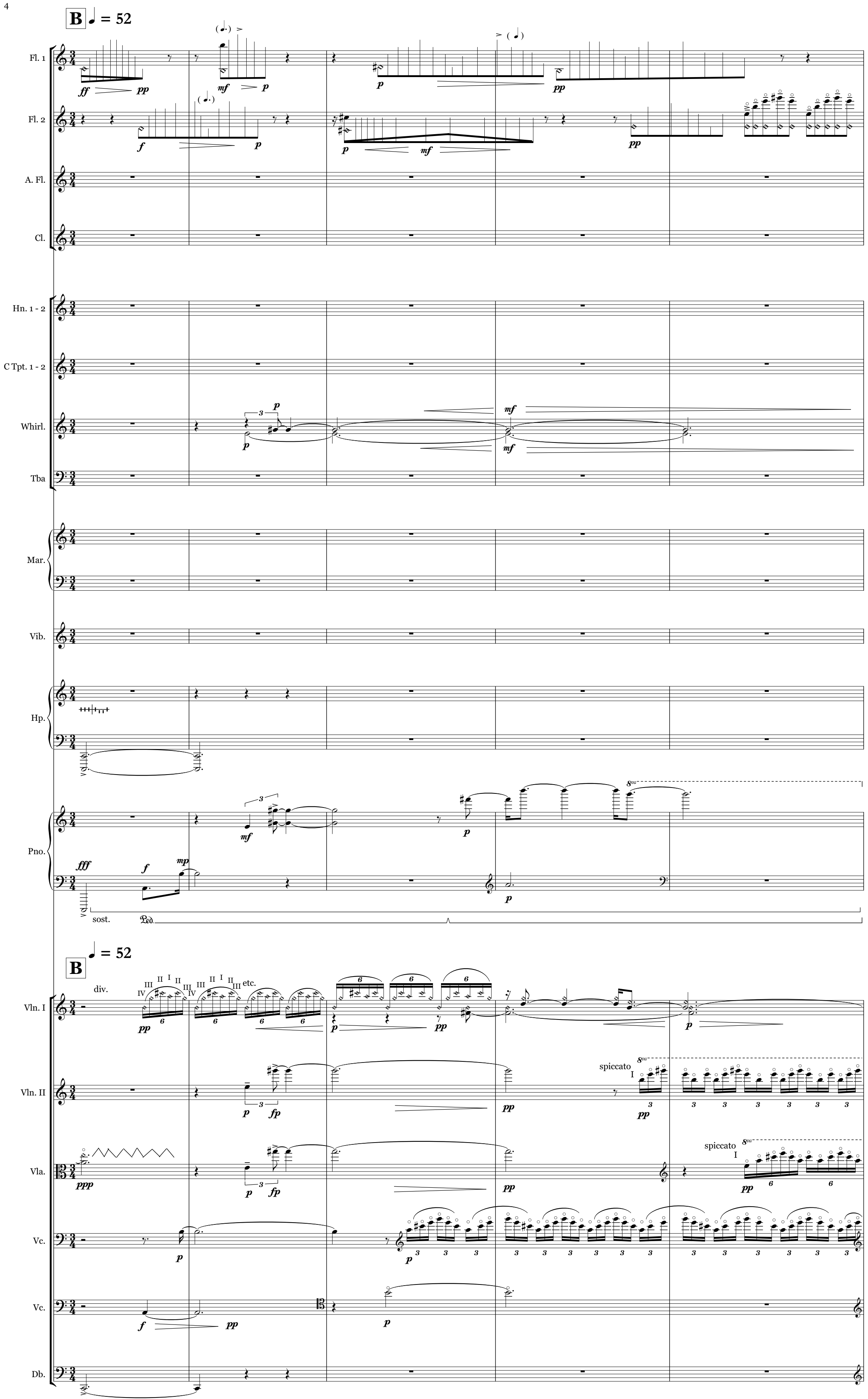

M
♩ = 72
125
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
sizzle
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
ff
fp
p
f
mf
pp
mp
3

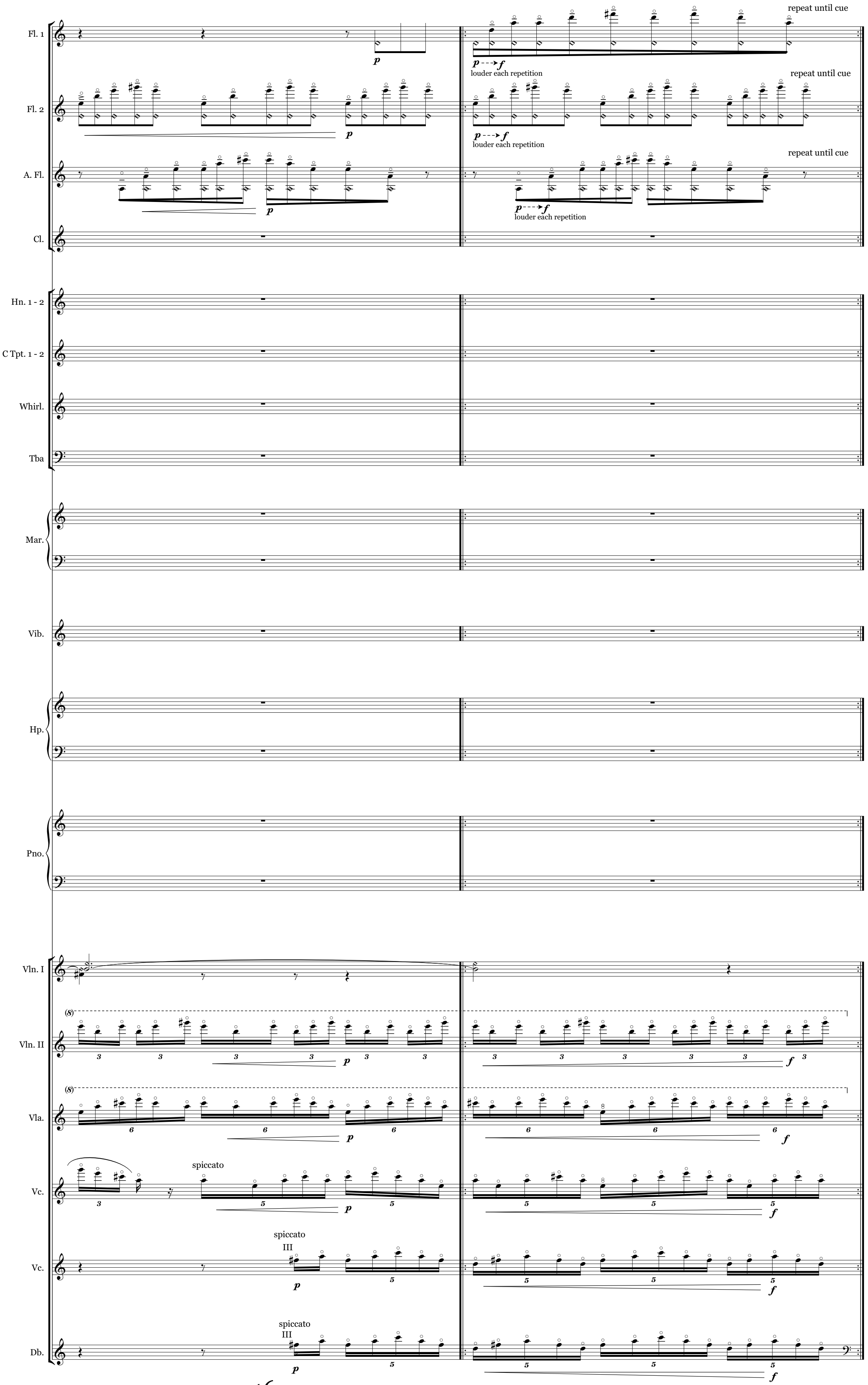

N ♩ = 52
rit.
131
Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
E♭ Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Tba.
Perc.
Perc.
Hp.
Vln. I
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vln. II
Vla.
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
p
p
ppp
fp
fp
ppp
ppp
p
ppp
flutter
(gliss. low as possible)
p
ppp
f
p
f
f
f
f
p
f
ff
fff
freely
fff
ff
wait for tam-tam to die away
mf
f
f
p
f
mp
f
fff
LV
ff
fff
wait for tam-tam to die away

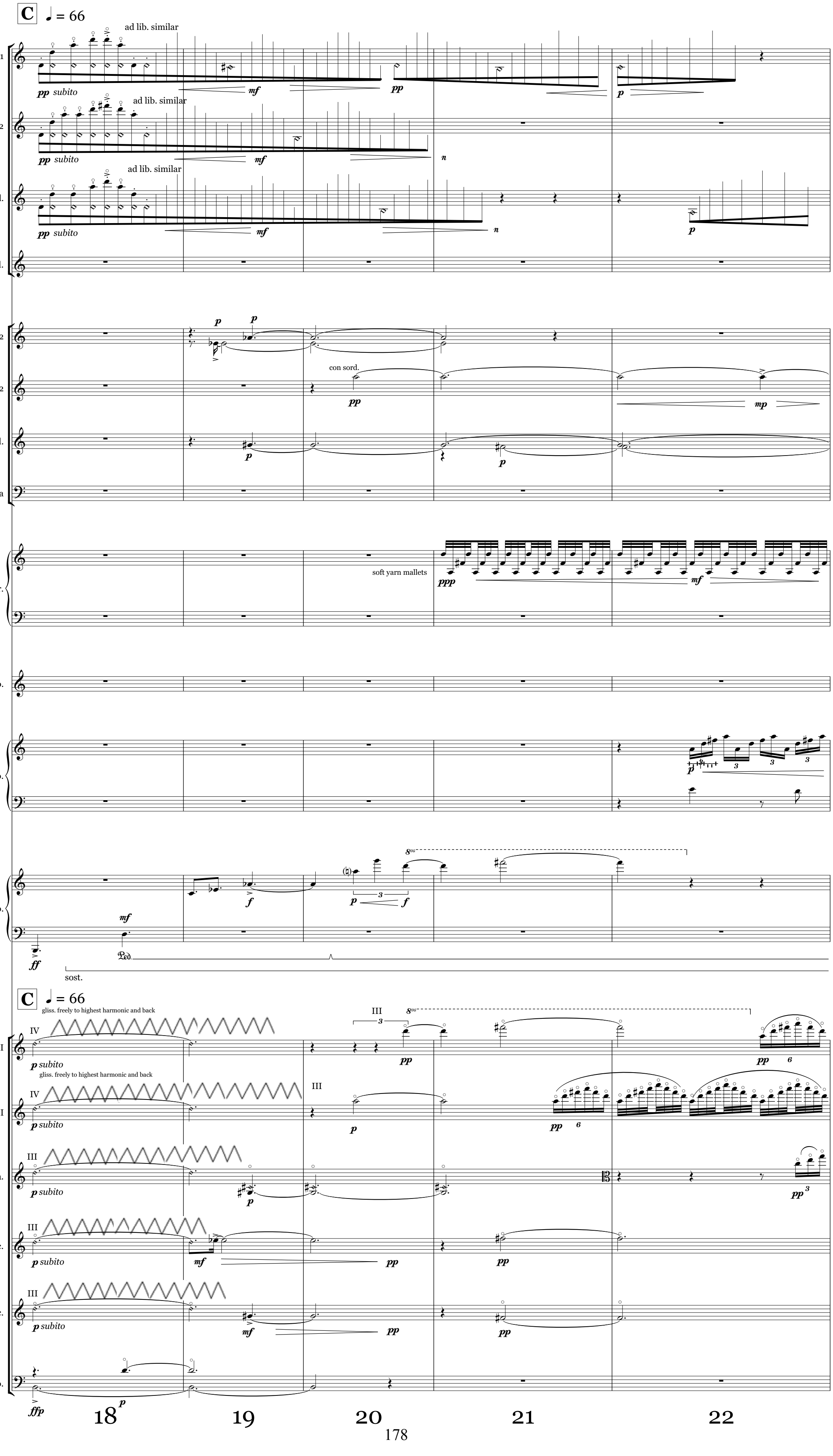
2. completes work on time

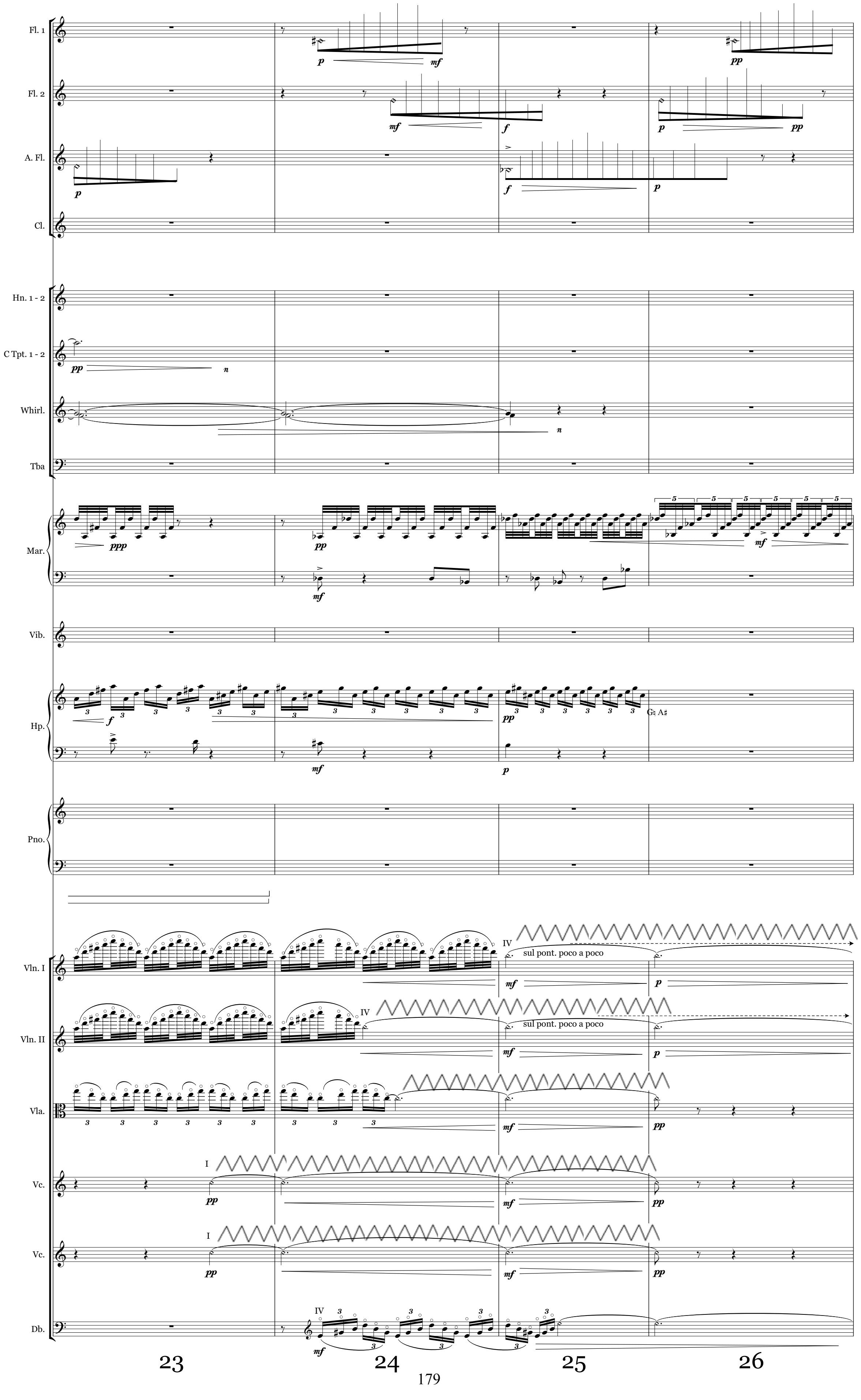

♪ = 80
rhythmically free
ad lib. similar
improvise similar patterns until cue
Flute 1
Flute 2
Alto Flute
Clarinet in B♭ 1.2
Horn in F 1.2
Trumpet in C 1.2
to whirlies
Trombone 1.2.3 ("whirlies")
Bass Tuba
Steel Drum/ Pitched Gongs
Marimba
Glockenspiel
Crotales
Vibraphone
Harp
♪ = 80
Piano
sostenuto
flautando
Violin I
gliss. to highest harmonic possible and back, ad lib.
Violin II
sul tasto (whisper)
Viola
div.
Violoncello 1
molto sul tasto (whisper)
ord.
Violoncello 2
Double Bass
2
3
4
5

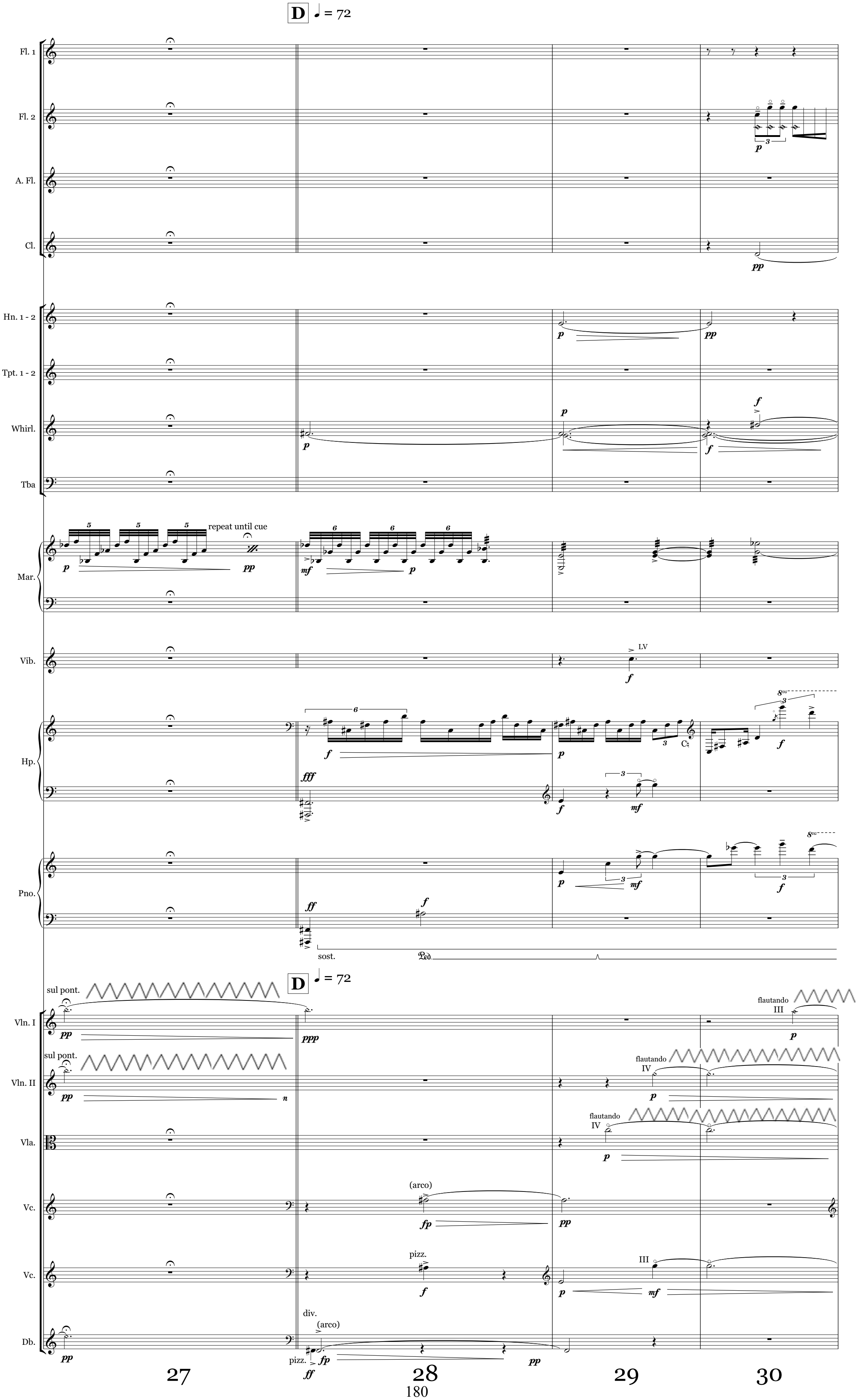

A ♪ = 100
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Mar.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
rhythmically free
ad lib. similar
improvise similar patterns until cue
f
pp
p
mf
ff
ppp
sost.
Ped
8va
3
flautando
(to sul pont.)
sul pont.
gliss. to highest harmonic possible and back, ad lib.
unis.
n
6
7
8
9
10

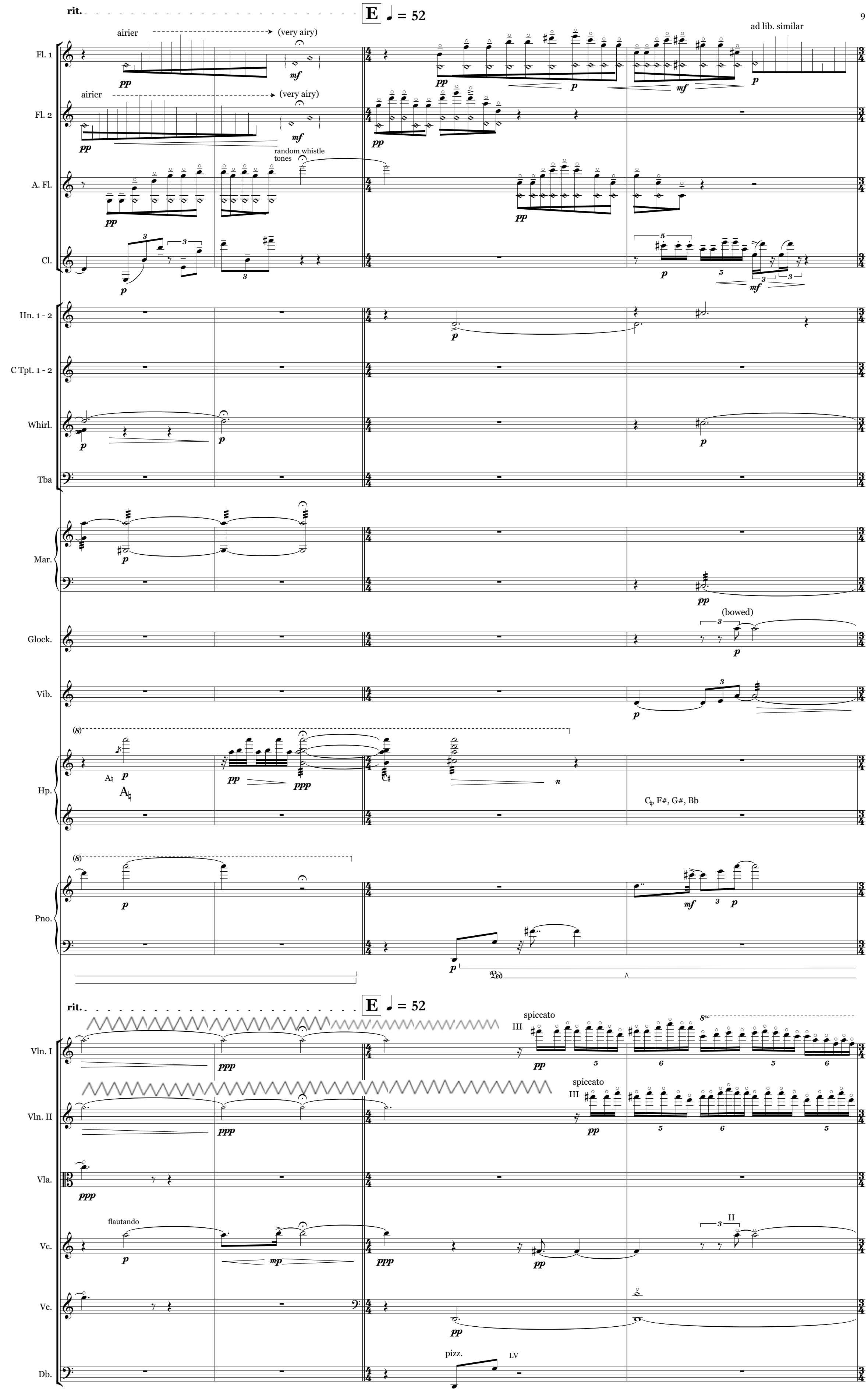

B
♩ = 52
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Mar.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
ff
pp
mf
p
f
fff
mp
ppp
fp
sost.
Ped
8va
div.
III II I II III II I II IV IV III etc.
spiccato
I
11
12
13
14
15


Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Mar.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
repeat until cue
louder each repetition
spiccato
III
16
17

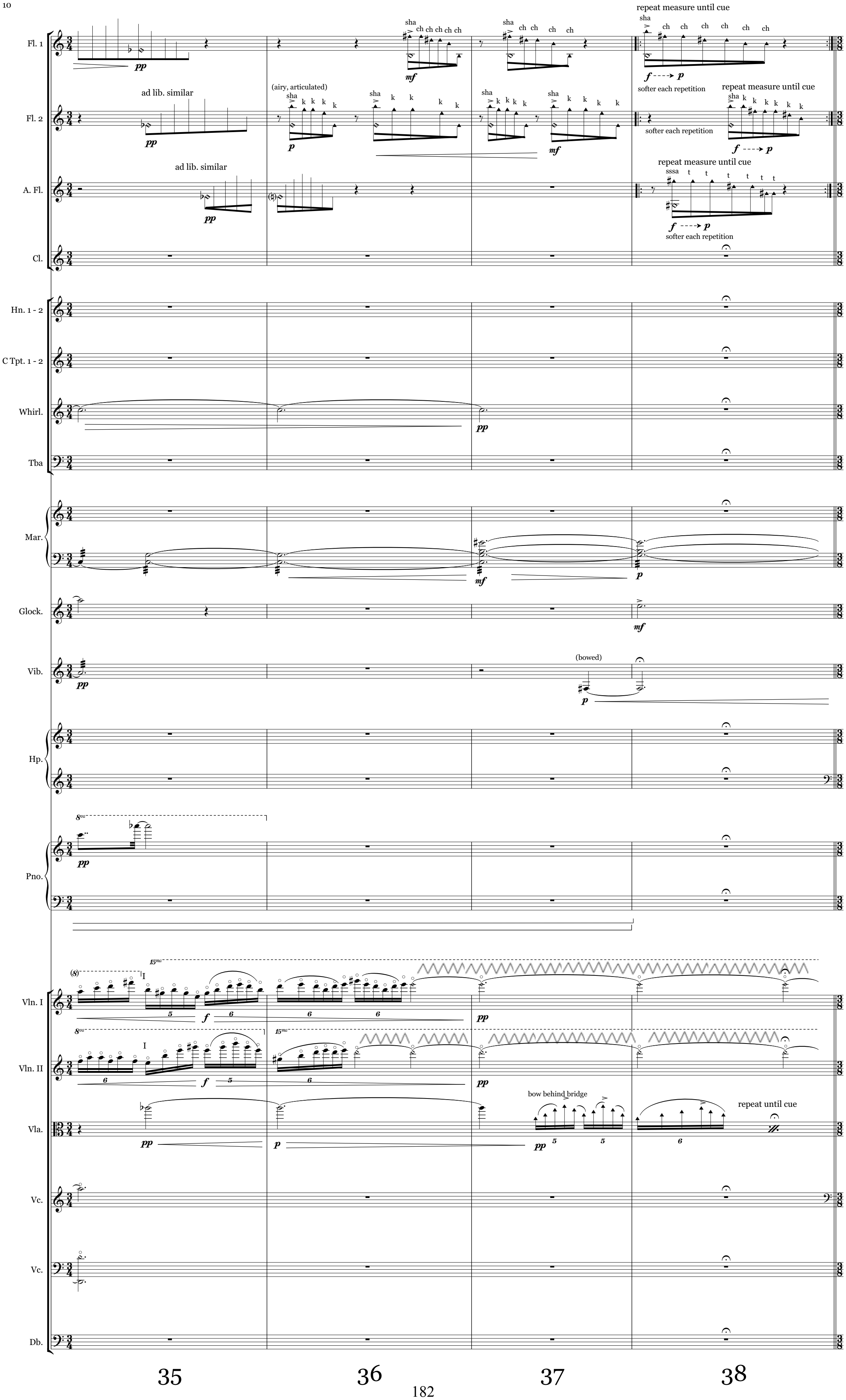

C
♩ = 66
ad lib. similar
Fl. 1
pp subito
mf
pp
p
ad lib. similar
Fl. 2
pp subito
mf
n
ad lib. similar
A. Fl.
pp subito
mf
n
p
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
p
p
C Tpt. 1 - 2
con sord.
pp
mp
Whirl.
p
p
Tba
Mar.
soft yarn mallets
ppp
mf
Vib.
Hp.
p
3
3
3
Pno.
mf
ff
p
3
f
f
8va
Ped.
sost.
C
♩ = 66
gliss. freely to highest harmonic and back
IV
Vln. I
p subito
III
3
8va
pp
pp
6
gliss. freely to highest harmonic and back
IV
III
Vln. II
p subito
p
pp
6
III
Vla.
p subito
p
pp
3
III
Vc.
p subito
mf
pp
pp
III
Vc.
p subito
mf
pp
pp
Db.
ffp
p
18
19
20
21
22

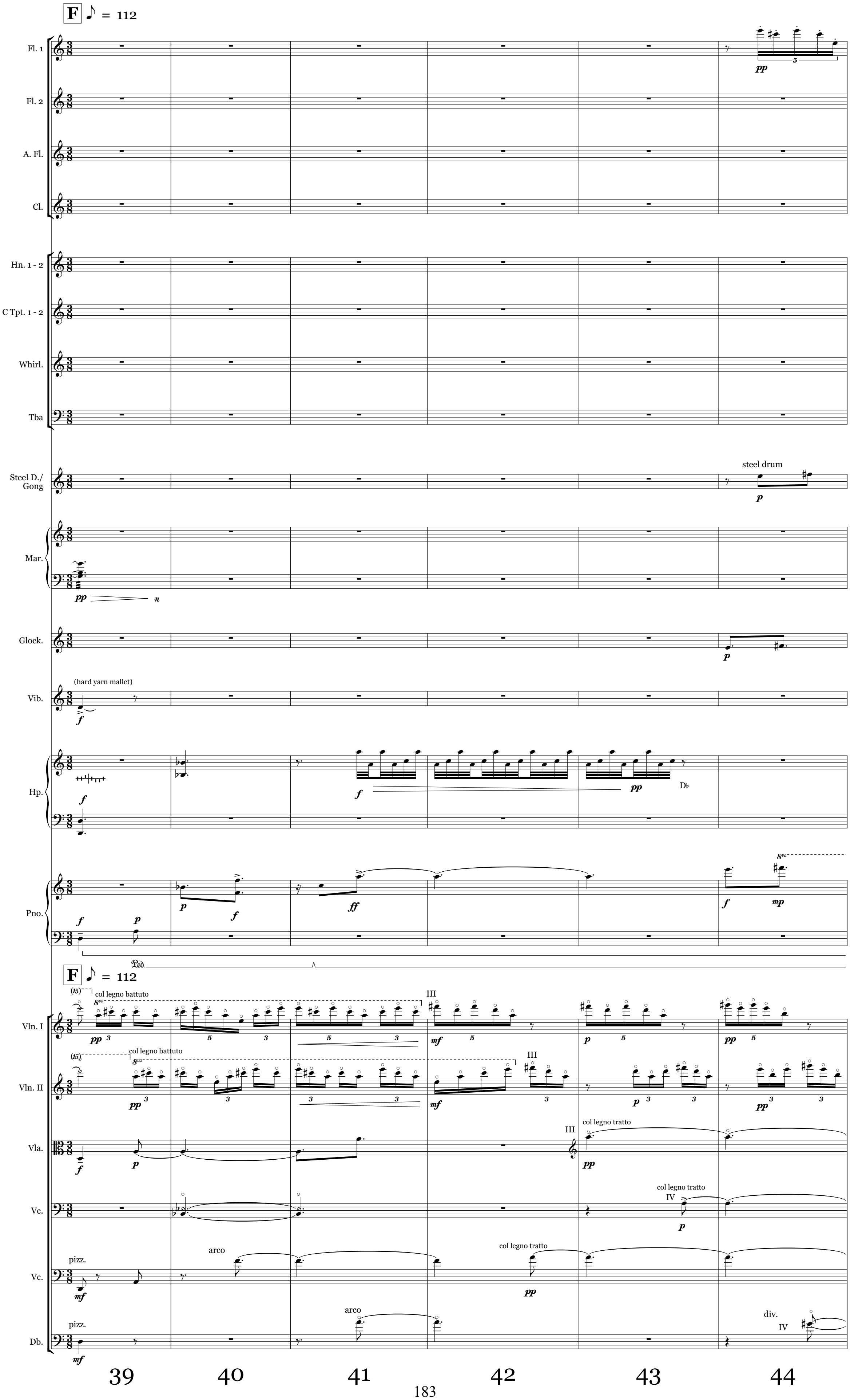

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Mar.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
p
mf
pp
mf
f
p
pp
p
f
p
pp
n
n
ppp
pp
mf
mf
5
f
pp
mf
p
G♮ A♯
IV
sul pont. poco a poco
mf
p
IV
sul pont. poco a poco
mf
p
mf
pp
I
pp
mf
pp
I
pp
mf
pp
IV
mf
3
23
24
25
26

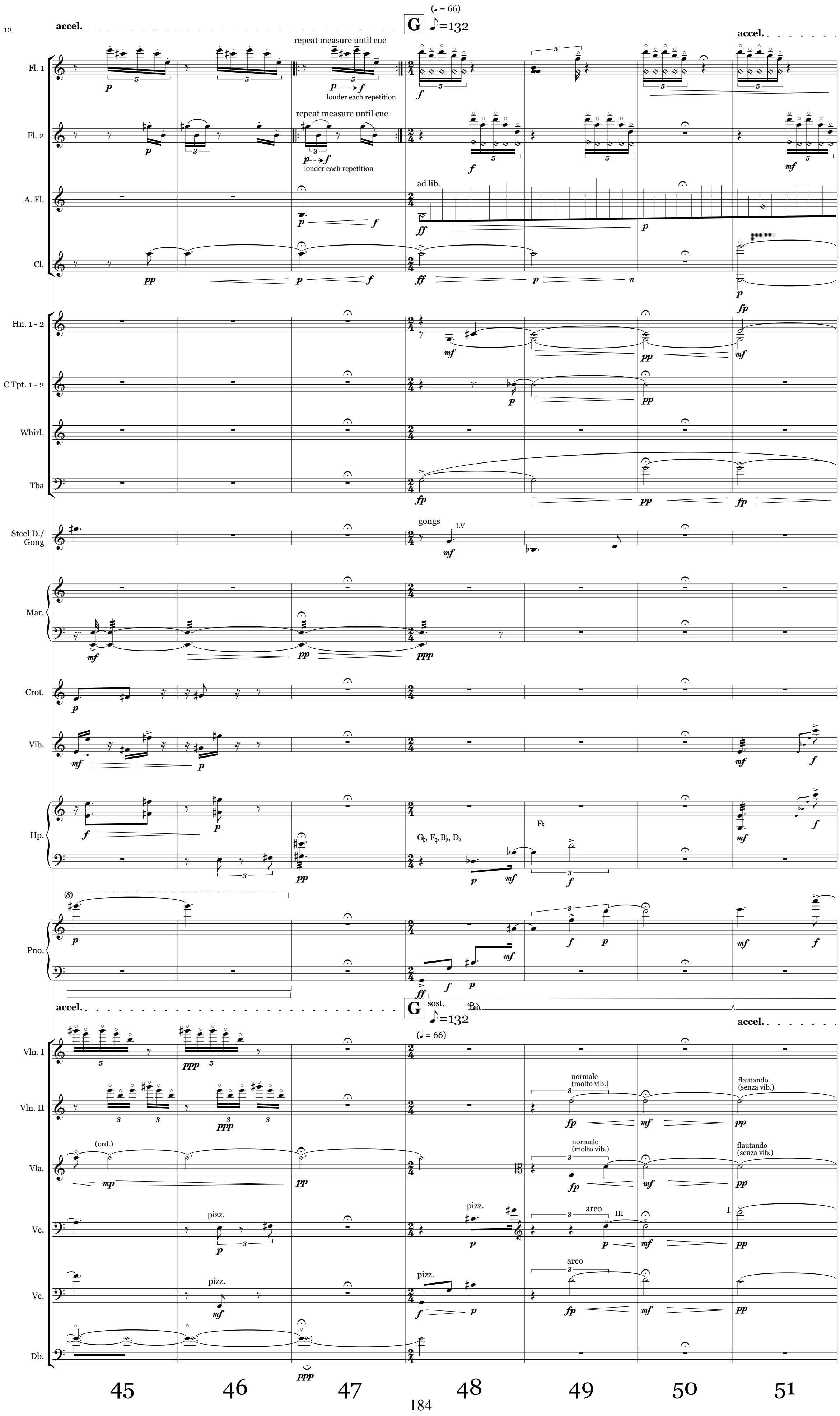

D ♩ = 72
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Mar.
repeat until cue
Vib.
LV
Hp.
Pno.
sost.
Ped.
8va
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
sul pont.
flautando
III
IV
(arco)
pizz.
div.
p
pp
ppp
mf
f
ff
fff
fp
n
27
28
29
30

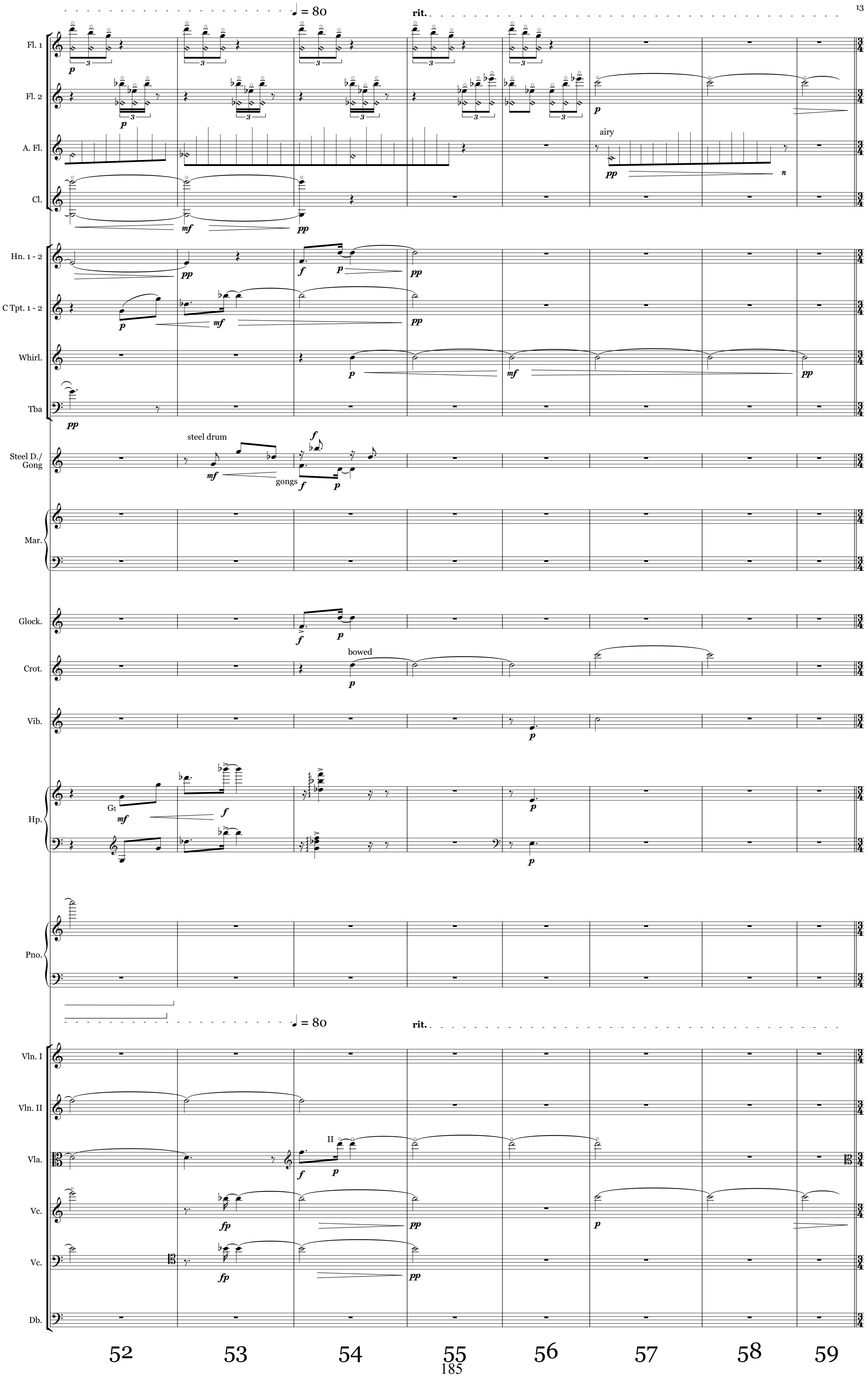

rit.
E
♩ = 52
airier
(very airy)
ad lib. similar
random whistle tones
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Mar.
Glock.
(bowed)
Vib.
Hp.
C♮, F#, G#, Bb
Pno.
Vln. I
spiccato
III
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
flautando
II
Vc.
Db.
pizz.
LV

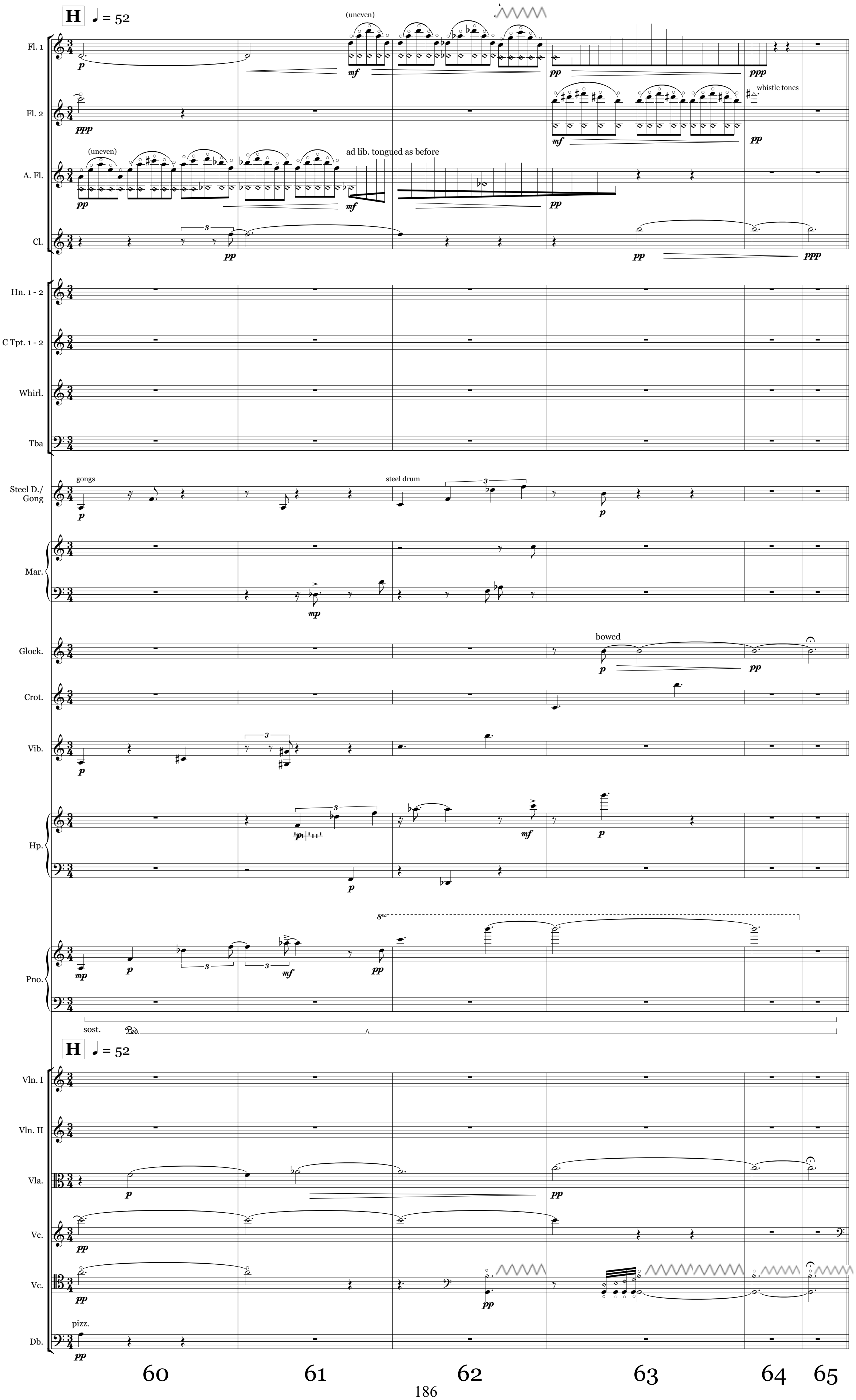
31 32 33 34

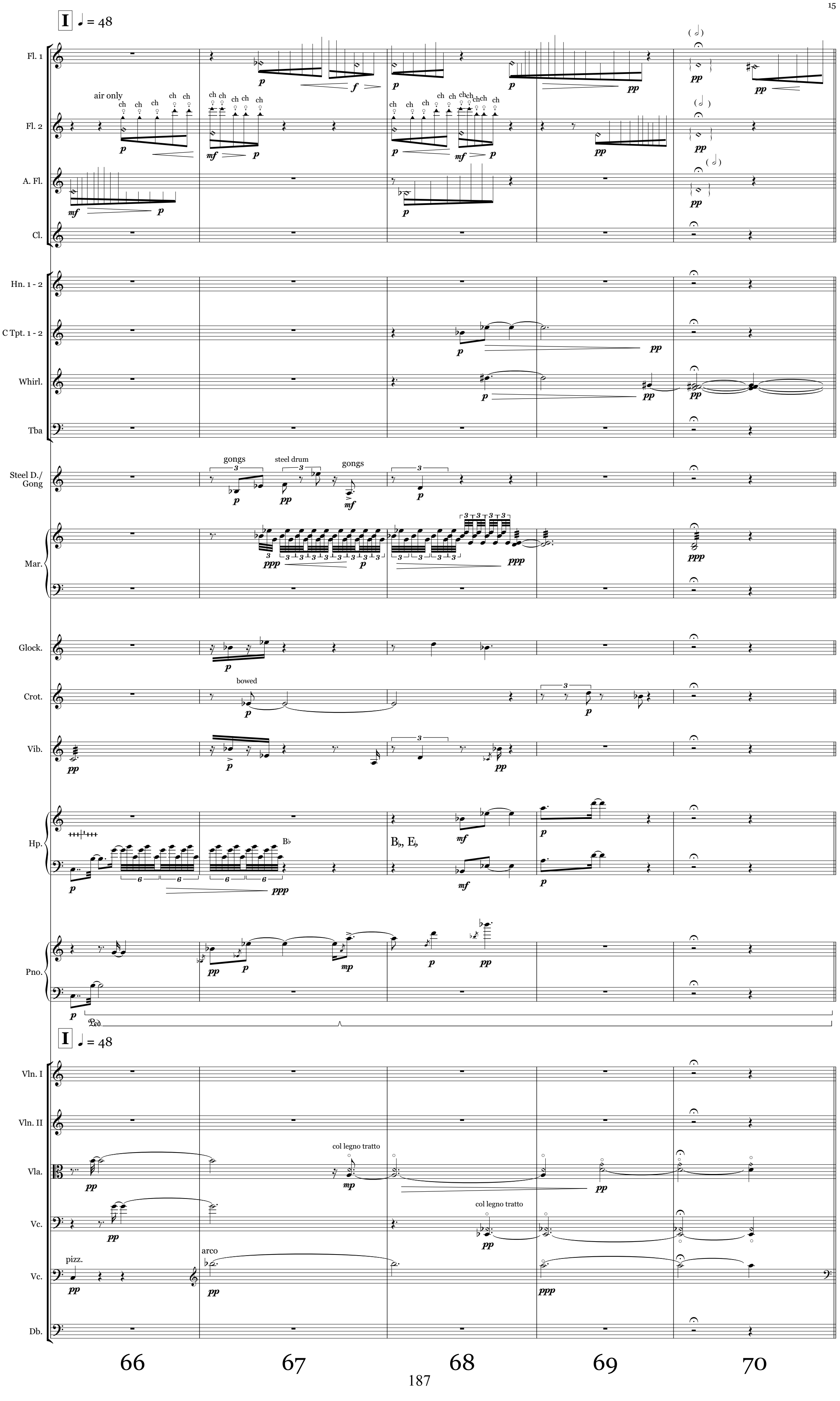

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Mar.
Glock.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
repeat measure until cue
sha
ch
k
sssa
t
ad lib. similar
(airy, articulated)
softer each repetition
f ----> p
pp
p
mf
(bowed)
8va
15ma
(8)
I
bow behind bridge
repeat until cue
35
36
37
38

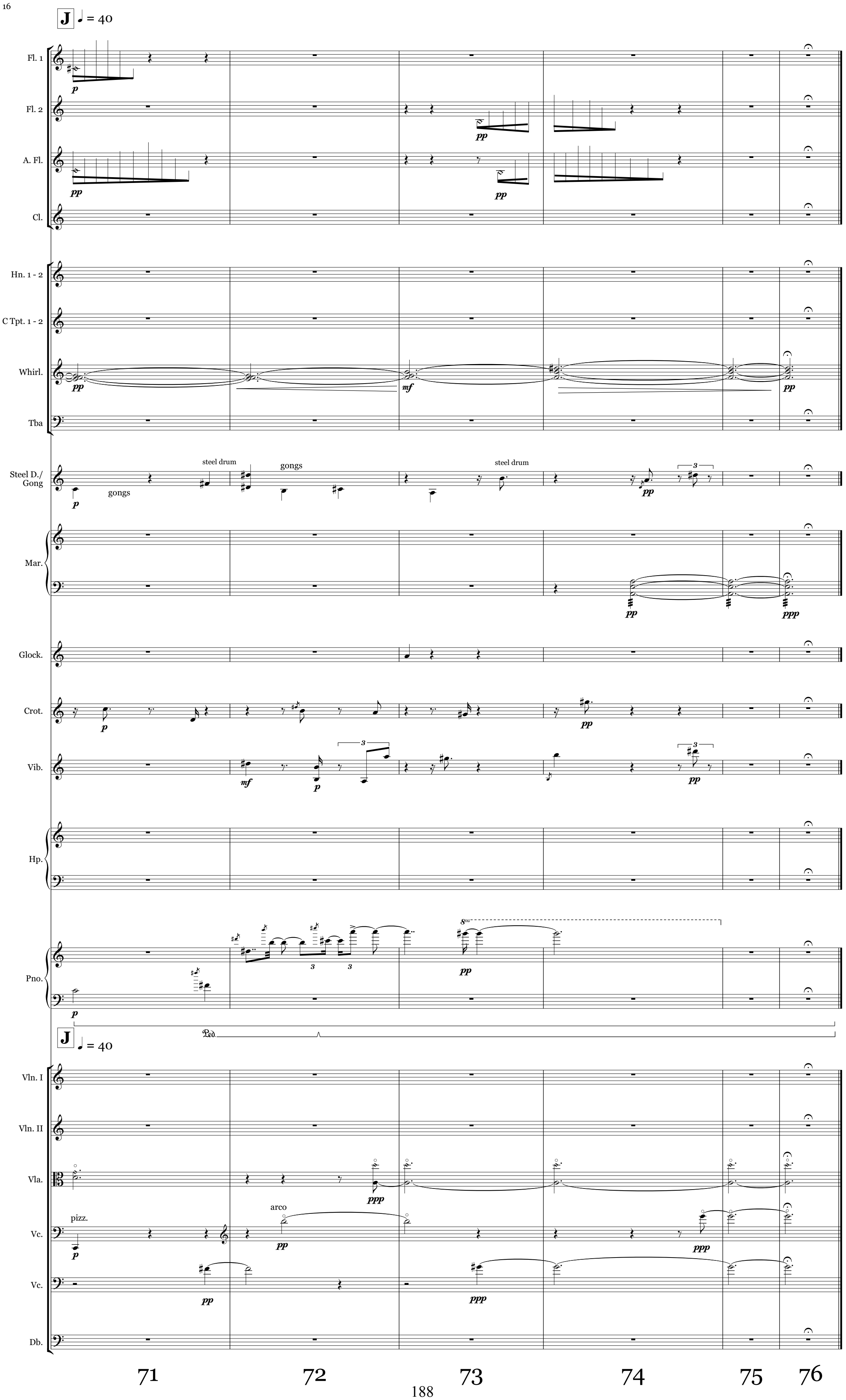

F
♪ = 112
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Steel D./ Gong
Mar.
Glock.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
pp
5
steel drum
p
pp
n
p
(hard yarn mallet)
f
f
f
pp
D♭
f
p
p
f
ff
f
mp
8va
Ped.
col legno battuto
8va
III
pp
3
5
3
5
3
mf
5
p
5
pp
5
col legno battuto
(15)
III
mf
3
3
3
3
col legno tratto
III
f
p
pp
col legno tratto
IV
p
pizz.
arco
col legno tratto
mf
pp
arco
div.
IV
pizz.
mf
39
40
41
42
43
44


accel.
G
(♩ = 66)
♪=132
accel.
repeat measure until cue
louder each repetition
repeat measure until cue
louder each repetition
ad lib.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Steel D./ Gong
gongs
LV
Mar.
Crot.
Vib.
Hp.
G♮, F♮, B♭, D♭
F♮
Pno.
(8)
sost.
Ped
Vln. I
Vln. II
normale (molto vib.)
flautando (senza vib.)
Vla.
(ord.)
Vc.
pizz.
arco
III
I
Db.
45
46
47
48
49
50
51


♩ = 80
rit.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Steel D./ Gong
Mar.
Glock.
Crot.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
airy
steel drum
gongs
bowed
G♮
II
p
pp
mf
f
fp
n
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59


H
♩ = 52
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Steel D./ Gong
Mar.
Glock.
Crot.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
(uneven)
(uneven)
ad lib. tongued as before
whistle tones
gongs
steel drum
bowed
sost.
Ped.
pizz.
8va
3
p
pp
ppp
mf
mp
60
61
62
63
64
65


I ♩ = 48
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Steel D./ Gong
Mar.
Glock.
Crot.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
air only
ch
gongs
steel drum
bowed
B♭
B♭, E♭
col legno tratto
pizz.
arco
p
f
pp
mf
mp
ppp
66
67
68
69
70


J
♩ = 40
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A. Fl.
Cl.
Hn. 1 - 2
C Tpt. 1 - 2
Whirl.
Tba
Steel D./ Gong
steel drum
gongs
gongs
steel drum
Mar.
Glock.
Crot.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
8va
Ped.
J
♩ = 40
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
pizz.
arco
Vc.
Vc.
Db.
p
pp
mf
ppp
71
72
73
74
75
76