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Preludes. [Original composition]

Clay, David E., M.A.

San Jose State University, 1993

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PRELUDES

A Master's Project Score
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Music
San Jose State University

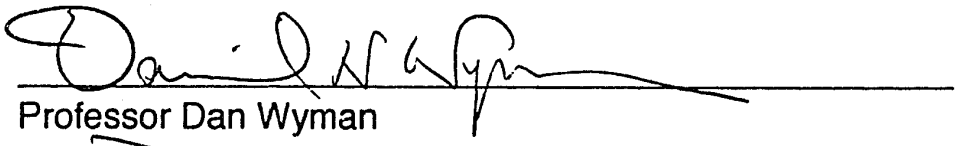
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

David E. Clay
December, 1993

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC



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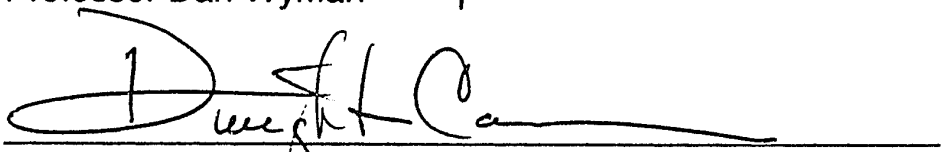

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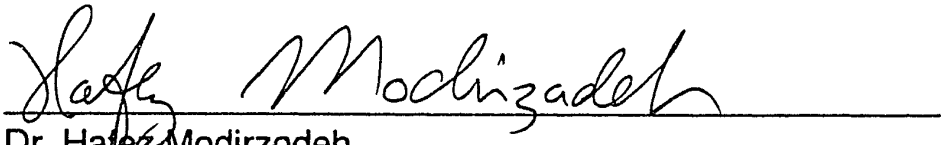

Dr. Hafez Modirzadeh

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ABSTRACT

PRELUDES

by David E. Clay

"Preludes" is music for a theater piece performed on November 30th and December 2nd, 1992, at San Jose State University. The project was a collaboration with Richard Andrews, concurrently a candidate for Master of Fine Arts at San Jose State University. The music is scored for percussion (2 players), Harp, keyboards, and singer. It makes use of digitally sampled sounds, pre recorded music, and specially designed percussion instruments; improvisation is an important element of the work's structure.

INTRODUCTION

"Preludes" is music for a theater piece called "Fluid Discontinuities, or Living Life Backwards", a collaboration of the composer and Richard Andrews, a visual artist. The music and visuals are separate works, but were both conceived as elements of the collaboration. This joint thesis project was performed at the Morris Dailey Auditorium at San Jose State University on November 30, and December 2, 1992. The complete stage piece uses actors, lighting, and sculptural stage sets in addition to five musicians playing traditional and original instruments. The audience occupies the stage with the action and music surrounding them; the work is a large scale environment which the audience enters to view and interact.

"Fluid Discontinuities" is a presentation of images and actions which sometimes overlap and blend together. First is a death scene - the first actor, who is the central character/ narrator/ seeker/ observer of his own life, rides a carousel sort of sculpture as he goes through the agony of dying. He enacts the uncertainty and anguish of not understanding what his life has been. Second, another actor enters. He is dressed as a businessman and wears a collar to which is fastened a large chain. The chain ties him to a large brief case which he laboriously drags across the stage. The case is filled with toys and other relics of childhood.

Third, the businessman and a 'primitive' man enter from opposite sides of the stage. The primitive man is dressed in animal skins. The two characters slowly walk toward each other, meet, embrace, undress, and exchange clothing. The seeker watches this action.

The fourth scene takes place on an elevated platform behind the audience. The modern man and the primitive man approach each other in slow motion and the modern man tries to take the early man's hand. The primitive finally refuses to meet the other and turns away.

Scene five takes place in front of the audience. A sculpture which looks like a crucifiction setting moves to the center of the stage. On it is suspended a limp person. The piece is illuminated from below and behind so that the figure is seen only in outline. The seeker sees the figure, becomes alarmed, summons the other two characters to help, and together they remove the figure from the crucifix. They take the figure, now fully visible, to a couch and try to revive it. At this point we realize that she is a woman. The seeker tries to bring her back to life, but he fails. During this section the singer has become visible. She stands in a pulpit-like construction, elevated somewhat above the action and the musicians. She is like a Greek chorus, commenting on the play.

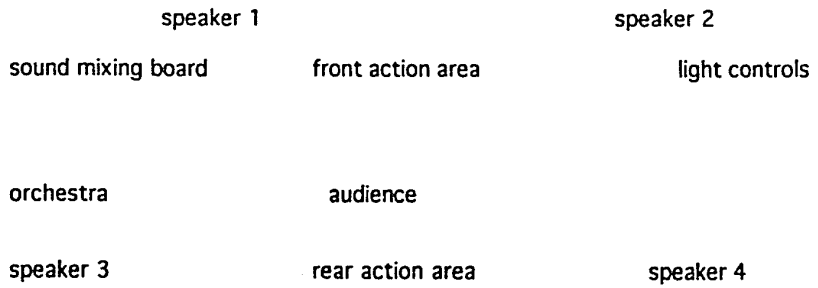
In the closing action the seeker tries to attach himself to the crucifix, fails, and dejectedly leaves the stage. The other actors enter with large fragmented photographs of the seeker

which they hold together and show to the audience. The first photograph shows the seeker upright and fully clothed, the second photograph shows him prone and naked. The lights dim. (See, Richard Andrews, "Fluid Discontinuities" in the San Jose State University Library)

The music is similar to the stage action in that different sections of the composition overlap and blend together. The intention is to present a sound collage rather than a through-composed piece. The music parallels the stage images in a loose way, synchronizing with the stage action only at a few key points - the beginning, the end, and during scene five when the seeker and his other selves try to rescue the feminine figure. The music, some of which is taped, is amplified with a quadraphonic sound system. The piece is without text, except for the vowels and sounds used by the singer.

Structured improvisation is a key element of the music. The sensitivity and ingenuity of the performing musicians is relied upon as a formative principle of the piece. Improvised sections are given form and coherence in three ways: First, the instruments and sounds to be used are carefully designated. Second, imitation is used as an organizing principle. Performers are sometimes asked to mimic each other or to imitate a composed section of music. Third, the performers are directed and rehearsed to interact with each other (and the actors) with particular attention to motivic continuity and musical space. The performers are to be partners in the process of composition.

STAGE LAYOUT



PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Standard notational practice is followed where measure lines are present.

All metronome and duration markings are approximate.

In sections without measure markings (proportional notation) durations are indicated by time designations, proportional placement, and extended beams. Open note heads are to be played roughly twice as long as solid note heads.

Care must be excercised in setting up the amplification system and in mixing sound. Quadraphonic sound is very useful, especially in blending the overlapping sections of the piece.

Sound processing should be used where desired. Reverb, delay, and echo effects are effective for the voice and the oak chimes. The judgment of the live mixer is an important element of the performance.

The various sections of "Preludes" overlap or blend together. This process requires special attention to dynamics and pacing as the sections are conducted in and out.

Specific instructions are given at the beginning of each section.

CUE POINTS

The music should synchronize with the following stage actions. The stage actions are referenced in the score by the appropriate letters (enclosed).

A Action begins. Lights come up suddenly, revealing the turning carousel and actor.

B The carousel stops, stage darkens, second actor enters.

C Stage front darkens, the action on the back stage wall begins.

D Actors remove the tied figure from the crucifix structure.

E First actor tries to revive the woman.

F The first photograph is displayed at stage front.

G The second photograph is removed, lights down.

H Lights up.

INSTRUMENTS

Conductor:
May be one of the musicians or the sound mixer

Voice:
mezzo soprano, prepared to improvise with wordless sounds, clicks, animal sounds, and percussion noises

Percussion 1:
kalimba
12 redwood chimes*
2 suspended cymbals, 19 and 22 inches
floor tom tom
contact pick-up to be used with any of the instruments at the player's discretion

Percussion 2:
6 oak chimes*, amplified with pizzo contact pick-ups
mallet midi driver (Kat), connected to the synthesizer and sampler

Harp:
amplified with pizzo contact pick-ups

Keyboards:
Piano
Korg O1W Pro (or other similar synthesizer capable of producing "orchestral" sounds and a piano-like patch
EPS Keyboard Sampler or similar keyboard capable of live playback of samples (particularly the voice samples in section 5)

*The wooden chimes, designed and built by the composer, are open tubes suspended vertically. The redwood chimes are 2.5 inches in section and 8, 6, 4.5, 3.75, 3, and 2.5 feet in length. The oak chimes are 3 inches in section and 6, 4.5, 3.75, 3, and 2.5, and 2 feet long. Thus the resonant lengths of the tubes decrease by the rough ratio of 4-3. The oak chimes can be easily played with fingers or hands as well as mallets, sticks, or other chimes, and are amplified by means of simple contact pick-ups fastened at the upper ends. Timbre changes can easily be effected by striking on or away from the resonant points (3/4 of the length and the ends).

I: OPENING

INSTRUCTIONS:

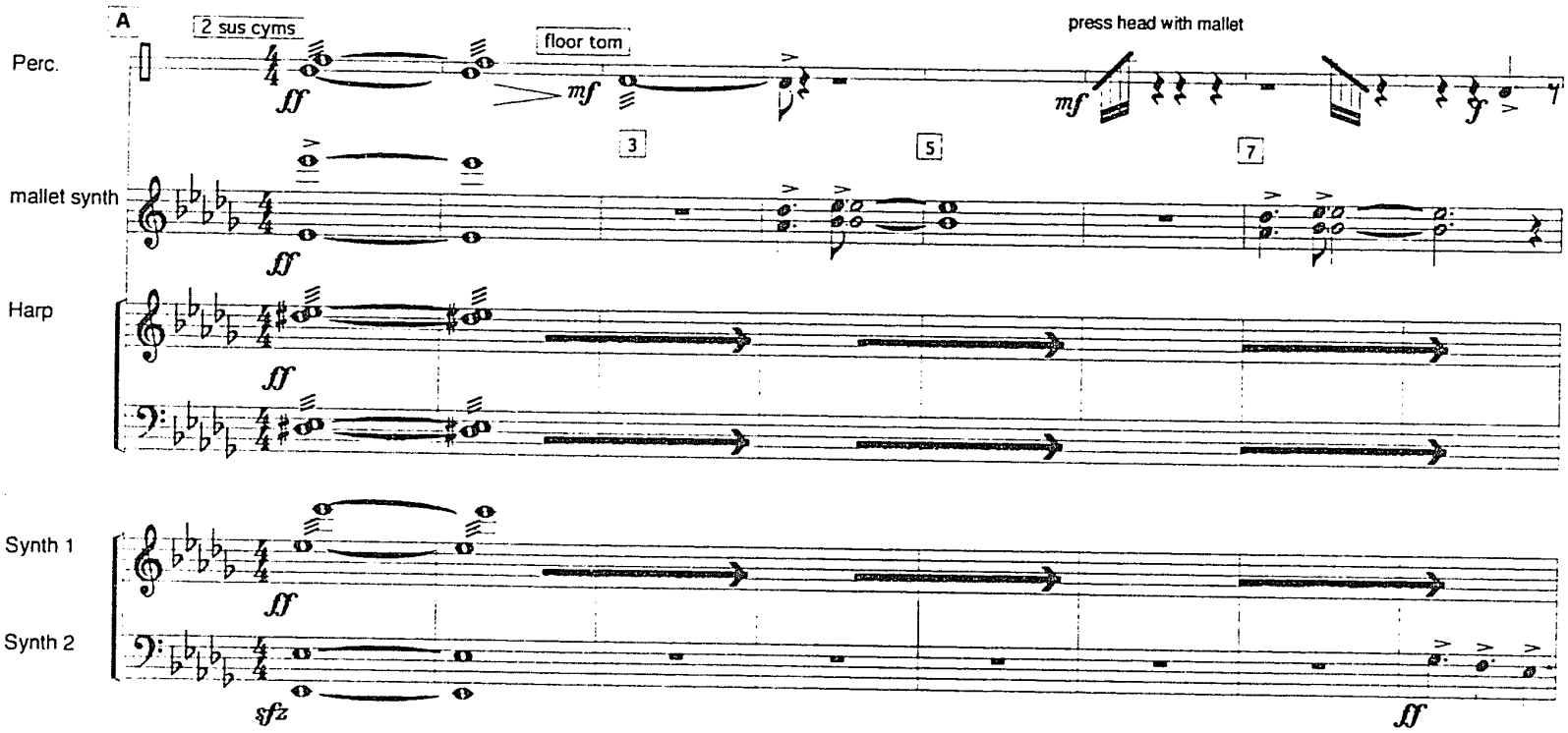
Synthesizer 1 plays a composite program with flute, bells, solo flute (upper part of keyboard).

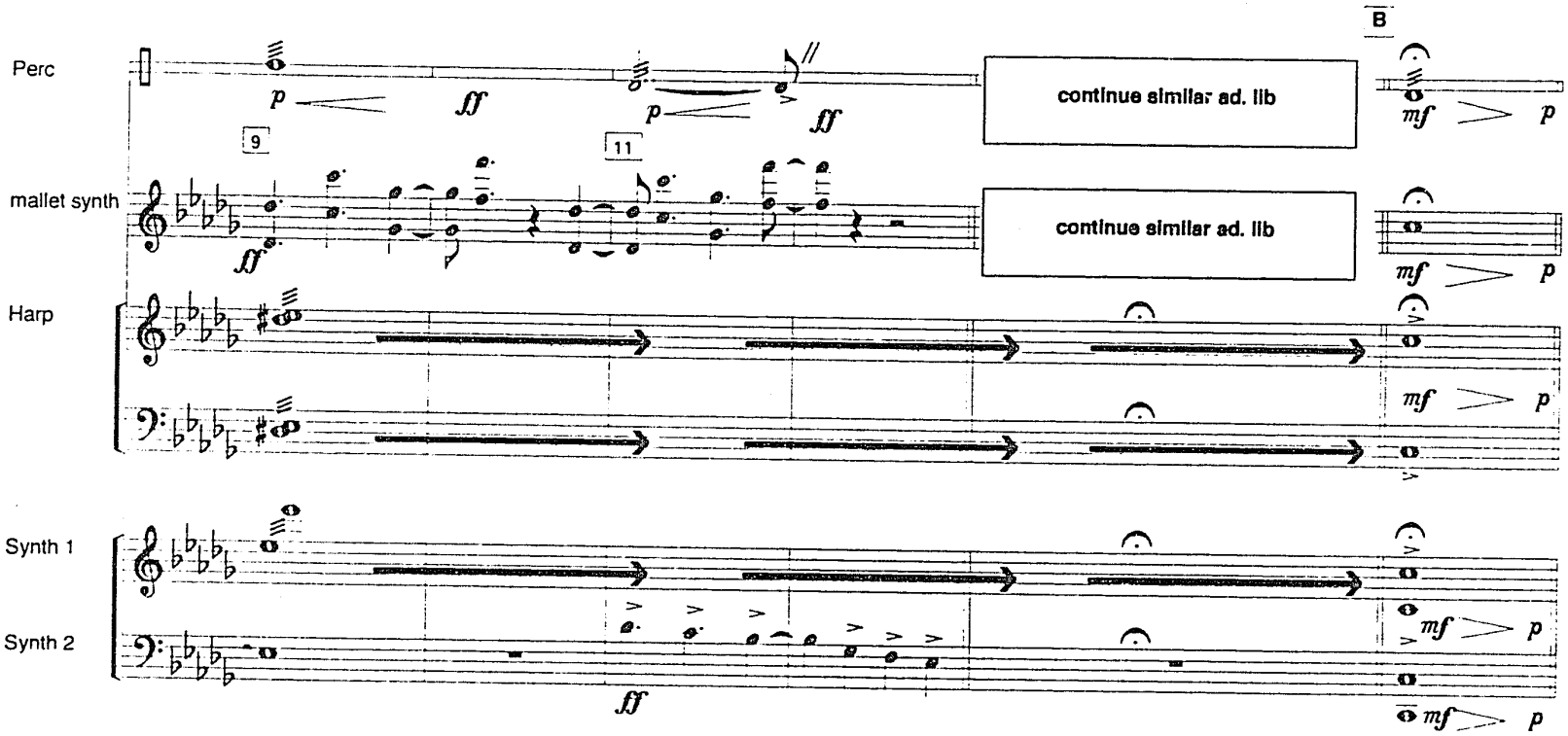
Synthesizer 2 plays a composite program with gong, bell and tympani (at lower velocities only).

The Kat midi driver plays the same program as Synthesizer 2.

The beginning should synchronize with lights up and the start of stage action. Loud, dramatic, even melodramatic.

The final fermata must sustain until the beginning of Section 2.

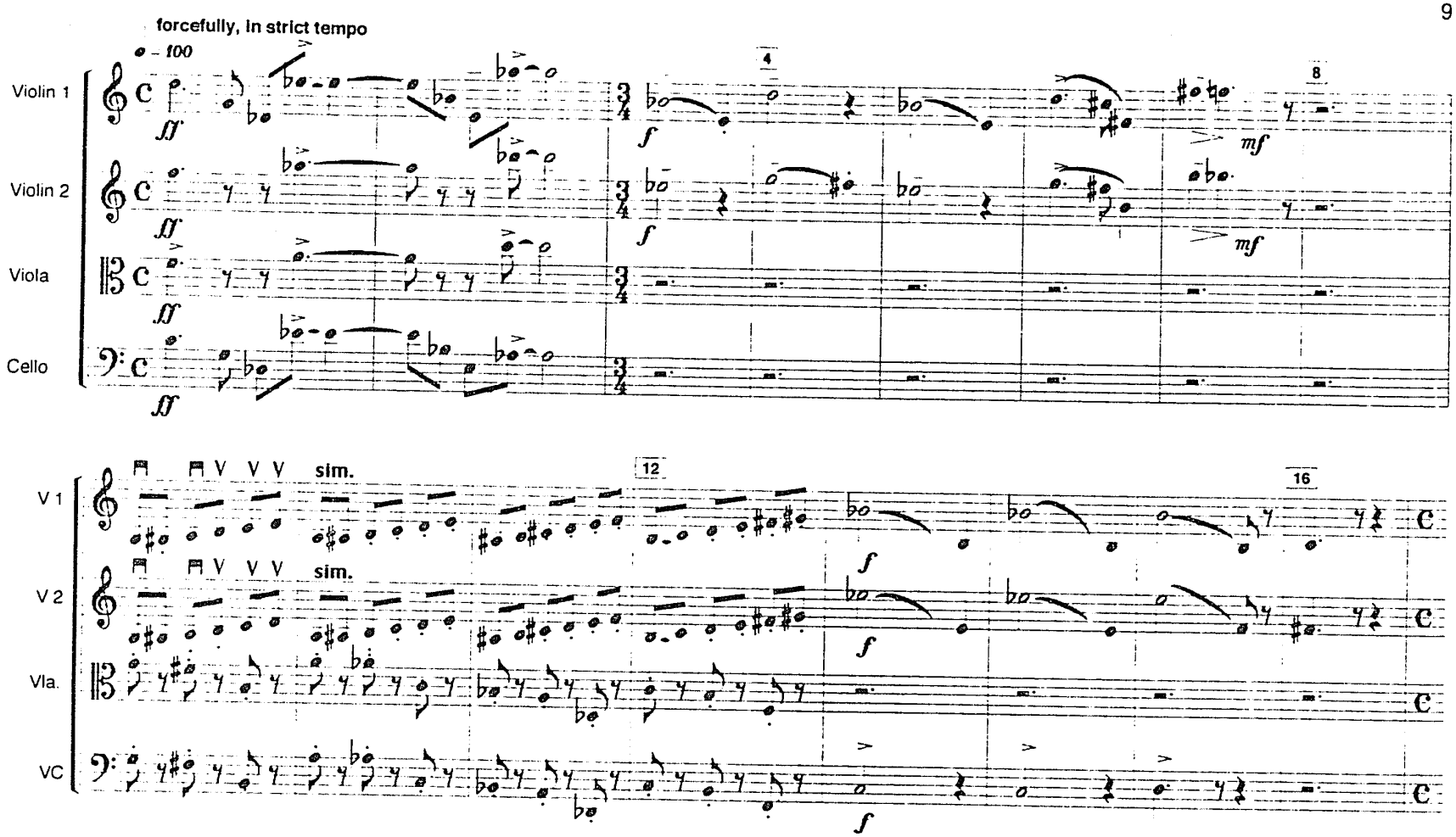

A
2 sus cyms
floor tom
press head with mallet
Perc.
mallet synth
Harp
Synth 1
Synth 2
ff
mf
sfz
3
5
7

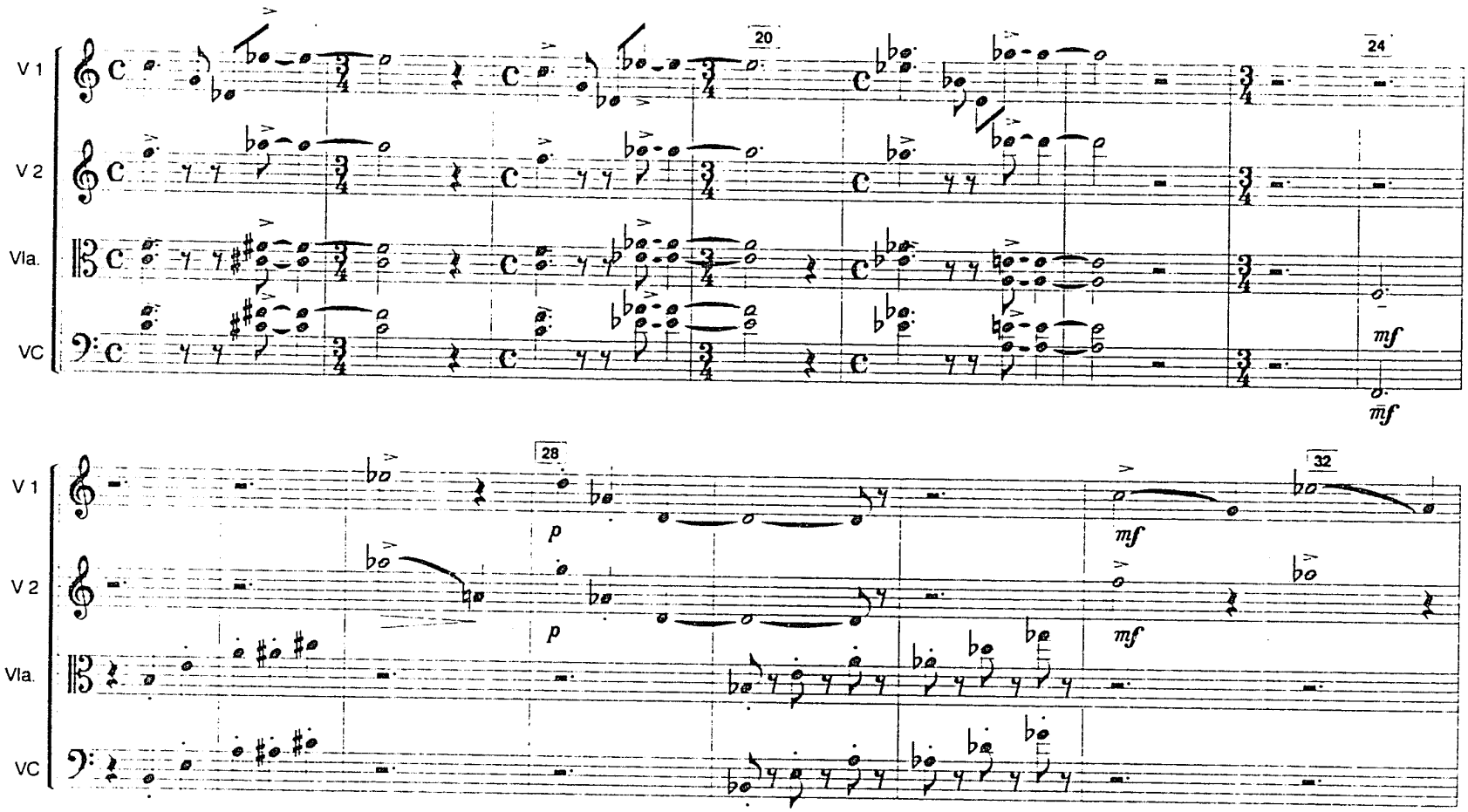

Perc
mallet synth
Harp
Synth 1
Synth 2
B
9
11
continue similar ad. lib
continue similar ad. lib
p
ff
mf

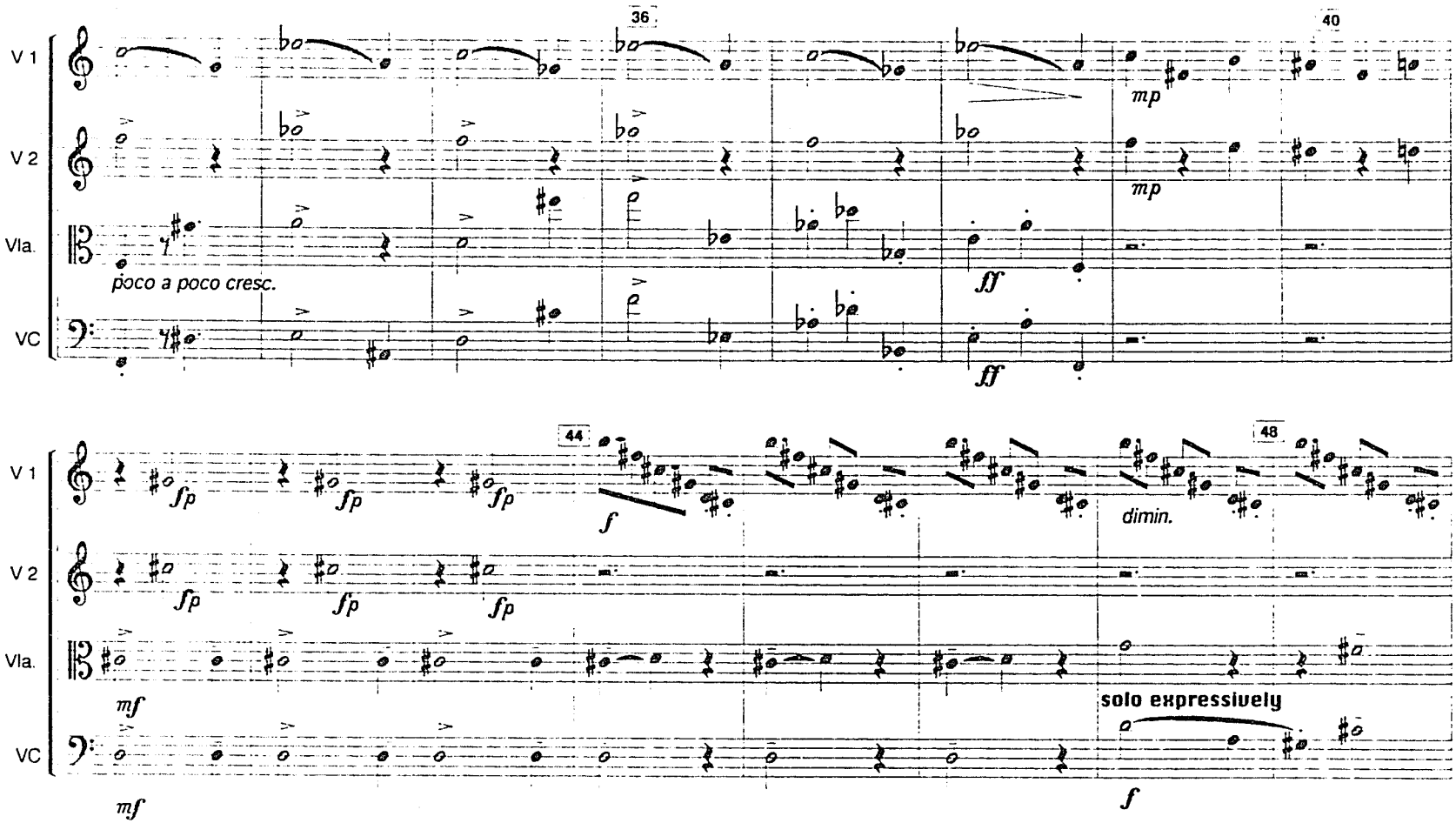
2: QUARTET

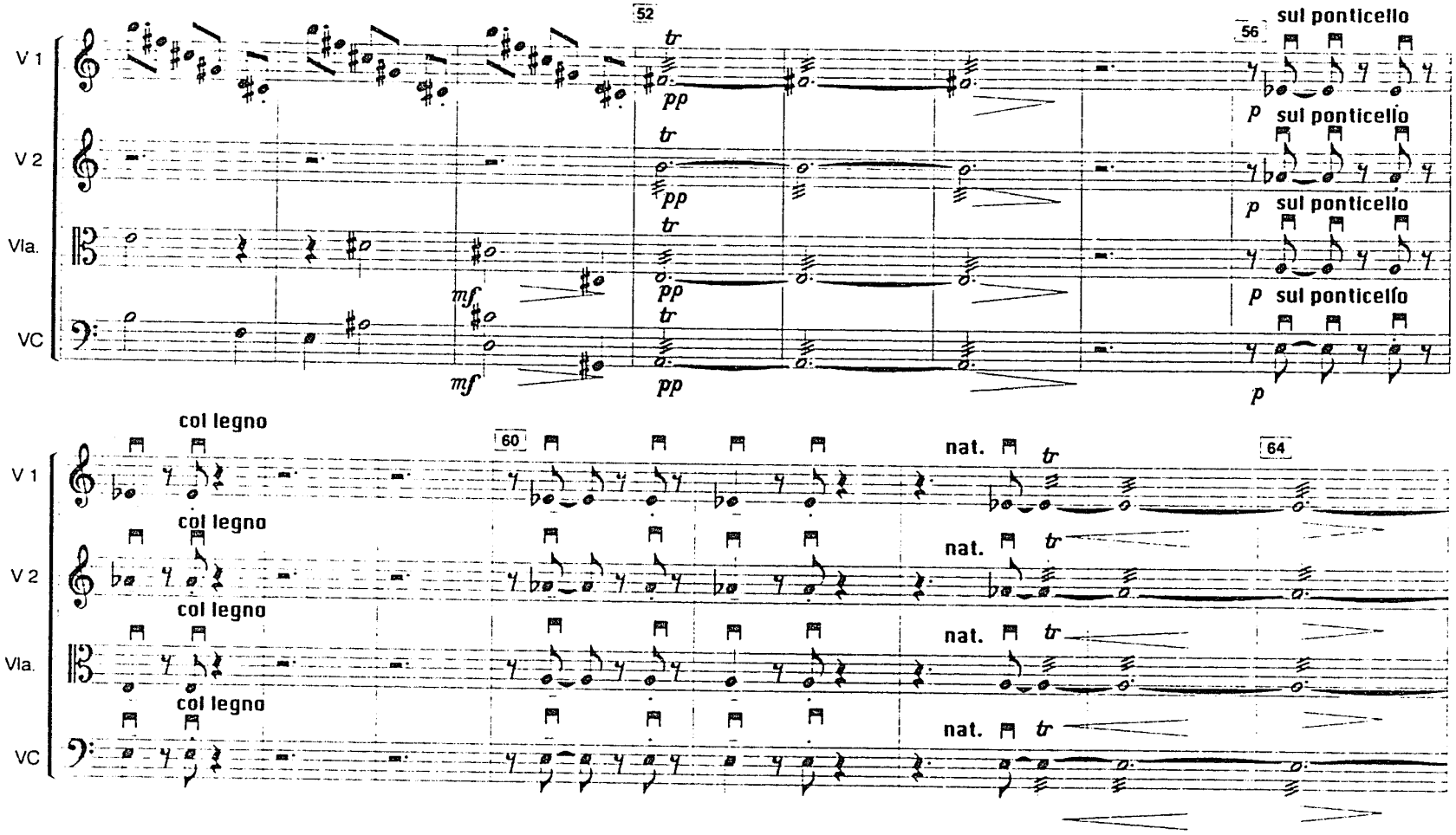
INSTRUCTIONS

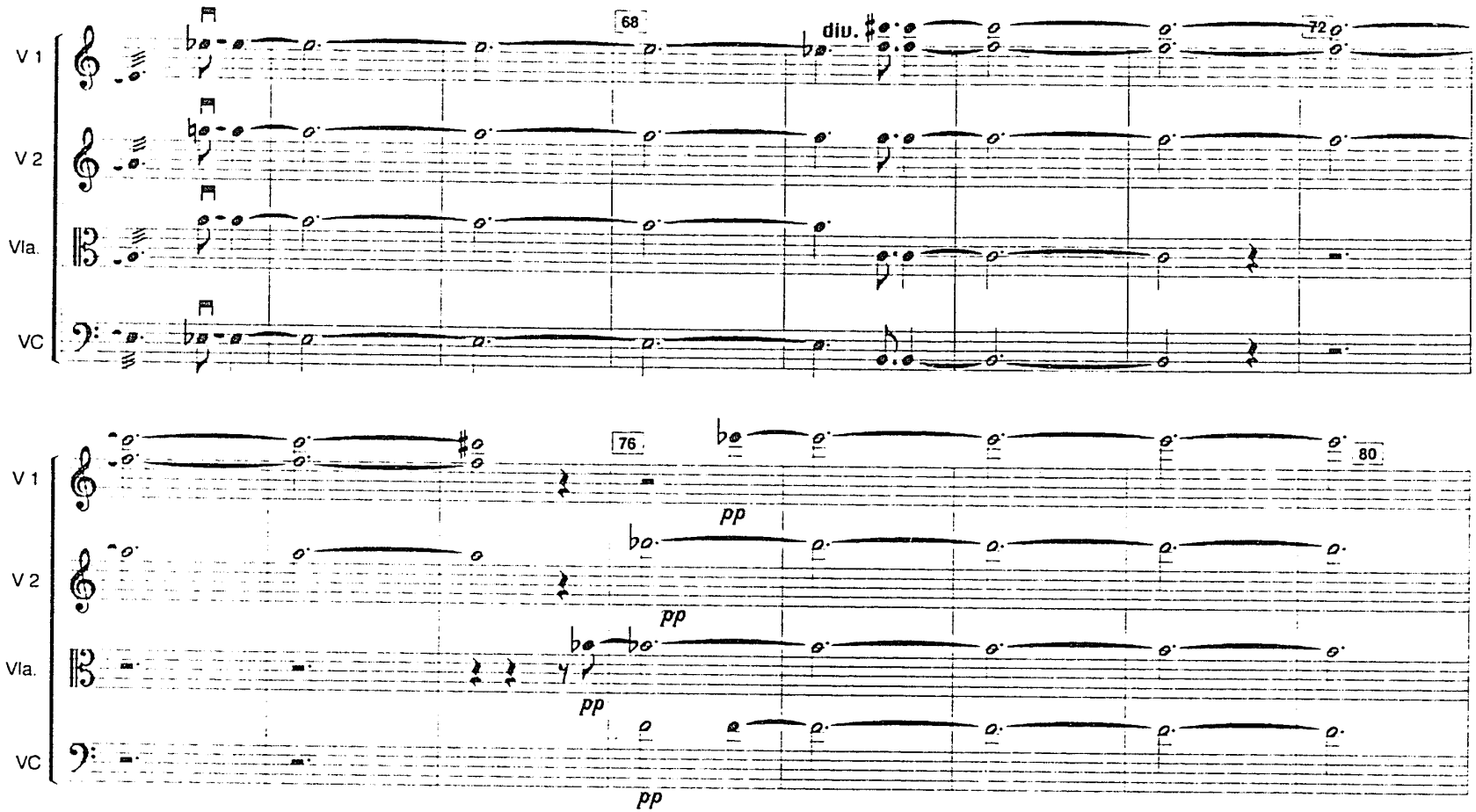
The performance should be in fairly strict tempo, with limited vibrato. The last passage - mm 76 to end -- must be played with a very subdued quality. The last harmonics should almost disappear as section 3 begins over them. This last section should also be faded to one side of the sound system as the harp enters from the other side.

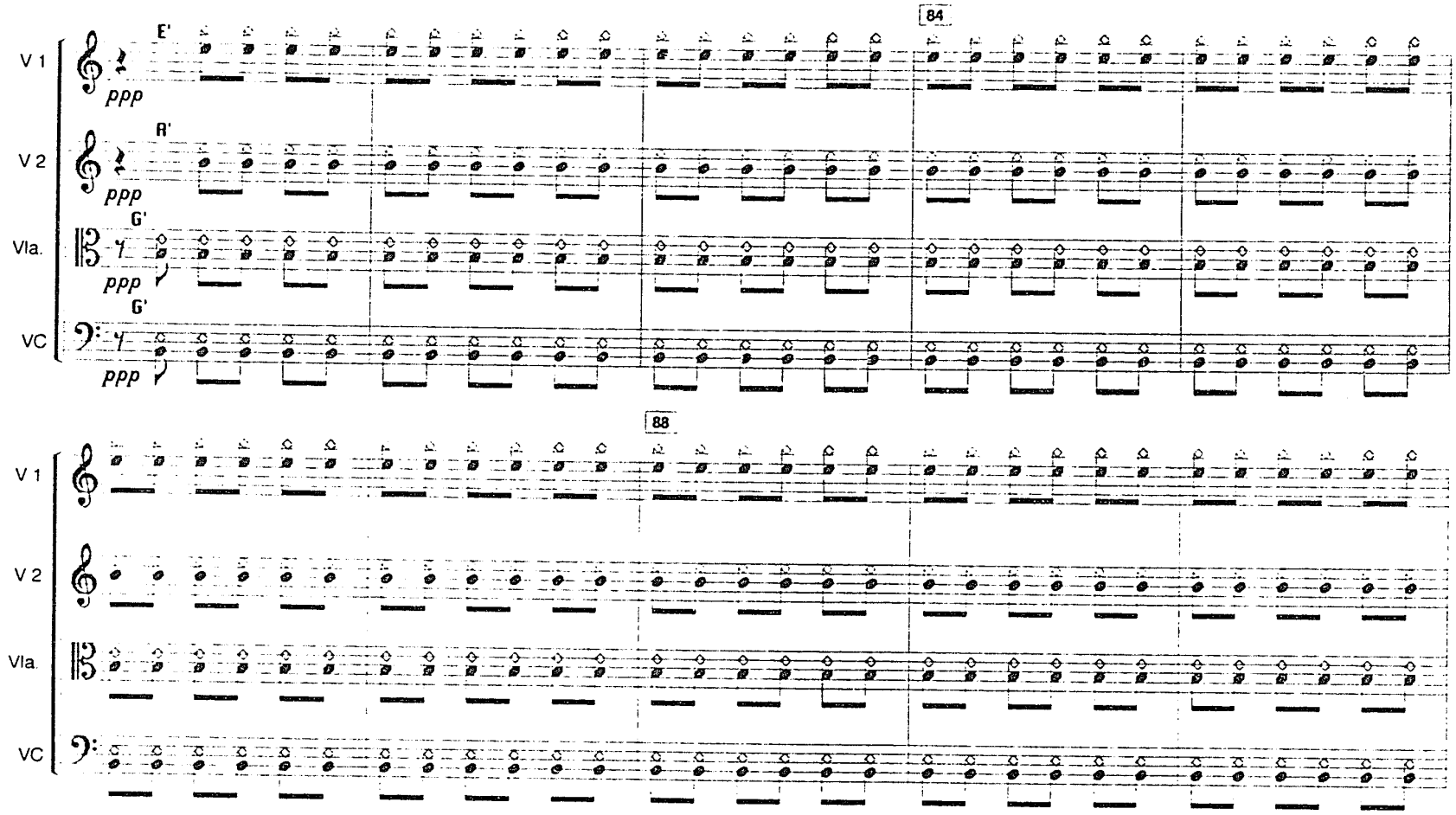

forcefully, in strict tempo
♩ = 100
Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello
ff
f
mf
4
8
V 1
V 2
Vla.
VC
sim.
12
16

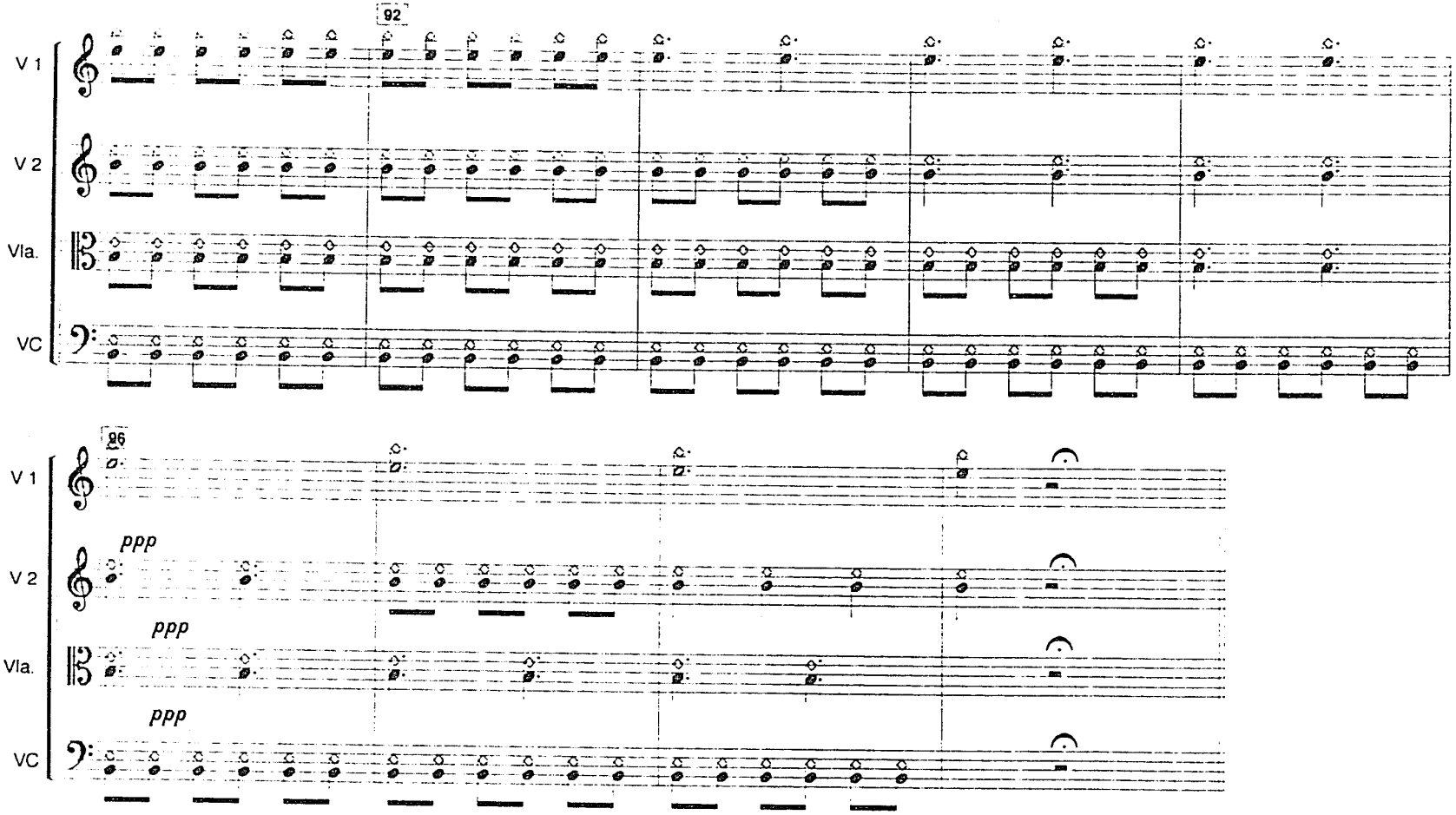

V 1
V 2
Vla.
VC
20
24
mf
mf
28
32
p
p
mf
mf


36
40
V 1
V 2
Vla.
VC
poco a poco cresc.
mp
mp
ff
ff
44
48
fp
fp
fp
f
dimin.
mf
solo expressively
mf
f


52
56
sul ponticello
V 1
V 2
Vla.
VC
tr
pp
mf
p
sul ponticello
60
64
col legno
nat.


V 1
V 2
Vla.
VC
68
div.
72
76
80
pp
pp
pp
pp


84
88
V 1
V 2
Vla.
VC
E'
R'
G'
G'
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp


92
V 1
V 2
Vla.
VC
96
ppp
ppp
ppp

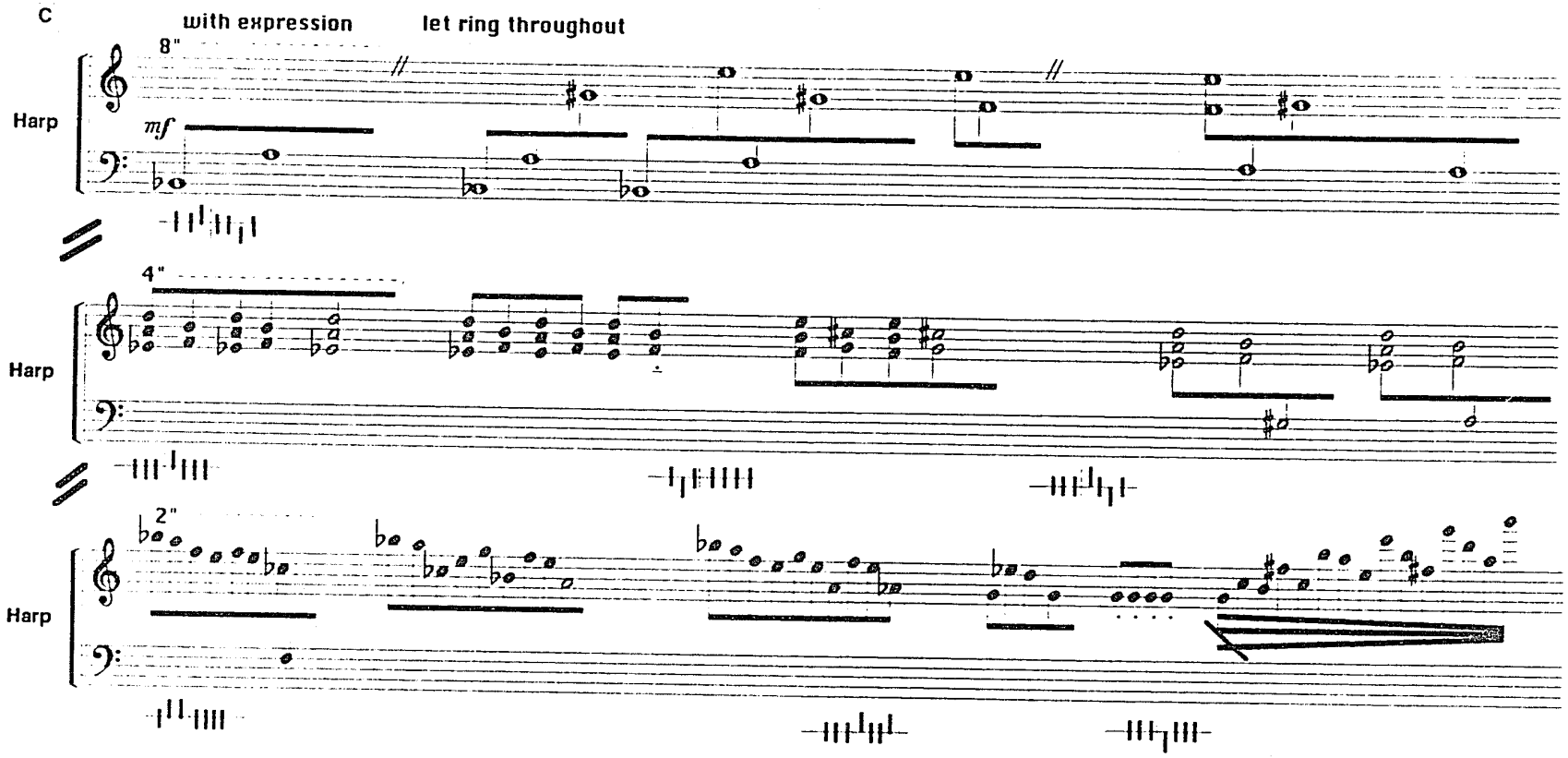
3: CADENZA

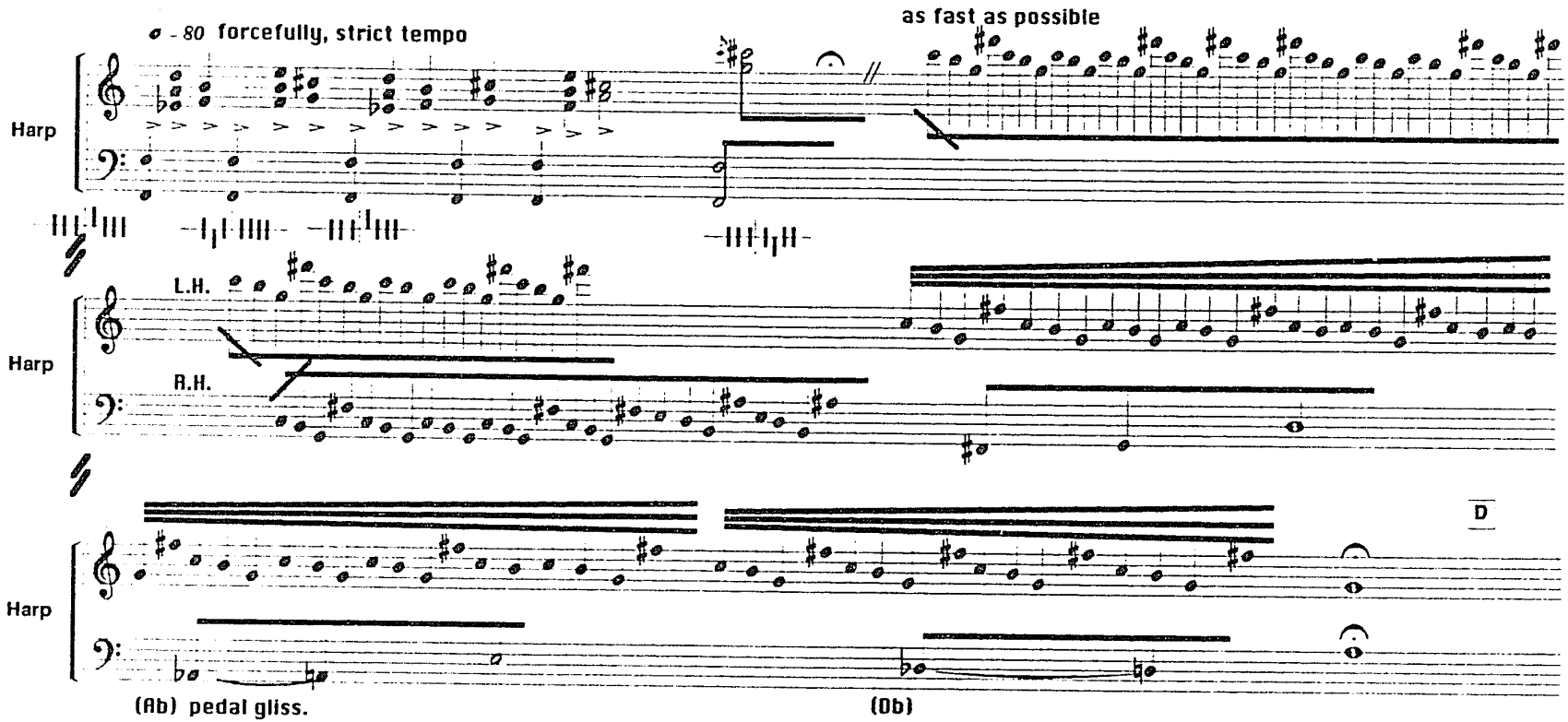
INSTRUCTIONS

This section must be played very freely, in an exaggerated 'cadenza' style.

Beams tapering narrower indicate decelerando.

One percussionist may be directed to mimic the harp sounds with a kalimba and continue this improvisation into the next sections


C
with expression
let ring throughout
8"
Harp
mf
4"
Harp
2"
Harp


♩ - 80 forcefully, strict tempo
as fast as possible
Harp
L.H.
R.H.
Harp
D
Harp
(Ab) pedal gliss.
(Db)

4: CHORUS (in two sections)

INSTRUCTIONS

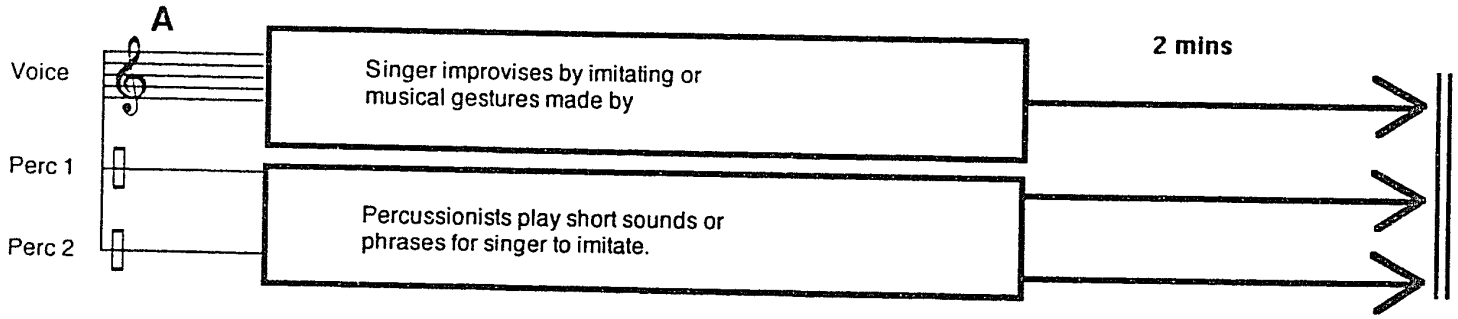
A: The percussionists begin by presenting short individual sounds or short phrases which the singer will imitate. It is important that there be ample time for the vocalist to respond dramatically to each event. As the piece progresses, tension can be increased by playing longer phrases and reducing the singer's response time.

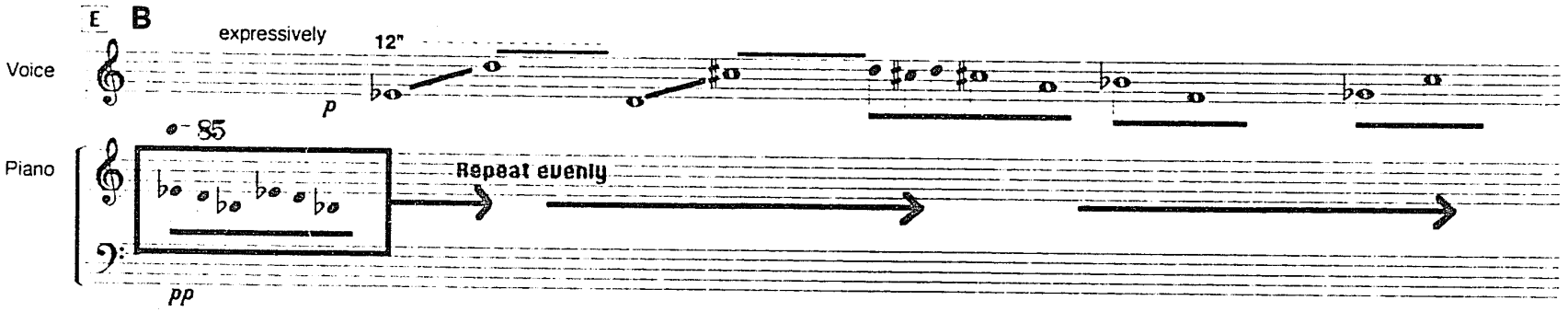
Percussionist 2 will use the oak chimes, but also the midi driver to trigger a set of samples which can be made from the singer's voice, the chimes, or any other 'abstract' sounds the players choose.

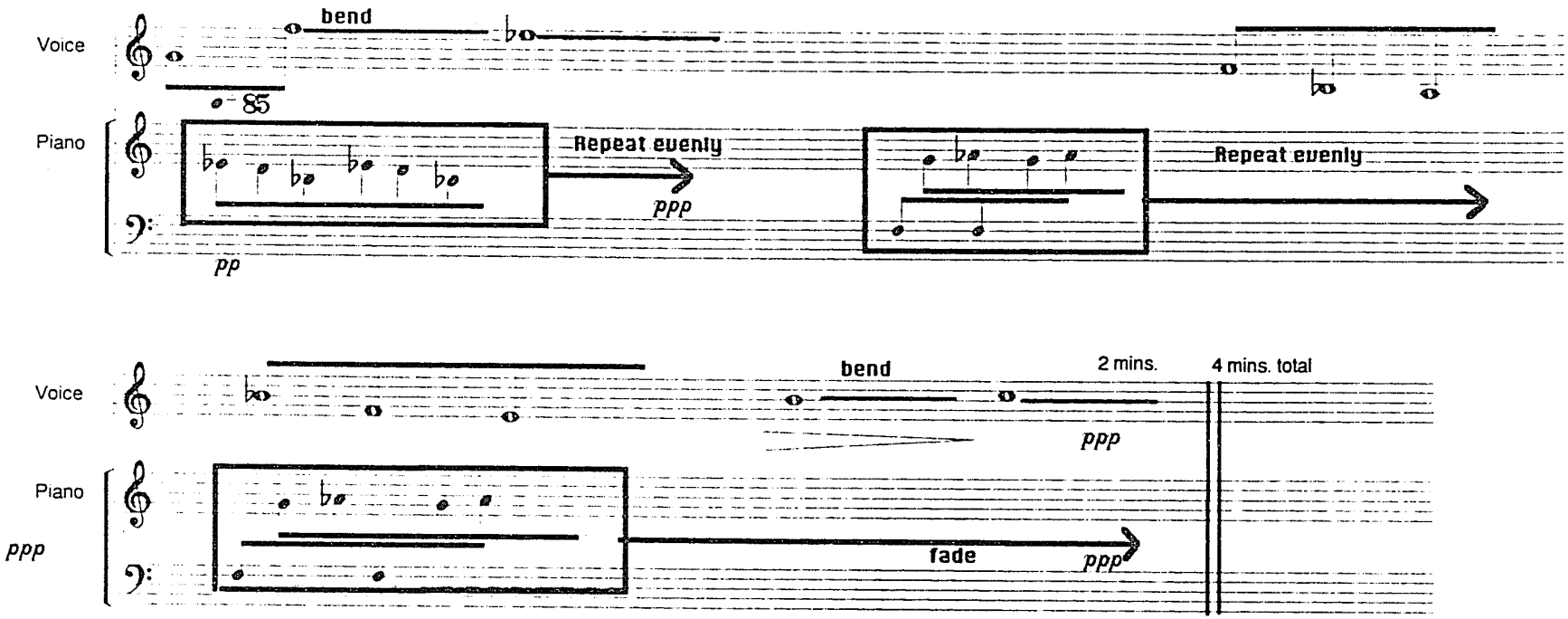
Duration may be 2 minutes or more.

B: The piano - or synthesized piano - begins the first ostinato very slowly, the percussion sounds fade, then the singer begins the melody as notated. The singer uses the notated pitches, but improvises vowel sounds to use. This section should contrast with part A not only in tempo and feeling, but in the linguistic materials used. Here there should be only long vowel sounds.

The end must be very soft, follwed by a period of silence.


A
Voice
Perc 1
Perc 2
Singer improvises by imitating or musical gestures made by
Percussionists play short sounds or phrases for singer to imitate.
2 mins


E
B
expressively
12"
Voice
p
85
Piano
Repeat evenly
pp


Voice
bend
85
Piano
Repeat evenly
ppp
pp
Repeat evenly
Voice
bend
2 mins.
4 mins. total
ppp
Piano
ppp
fade
ppp

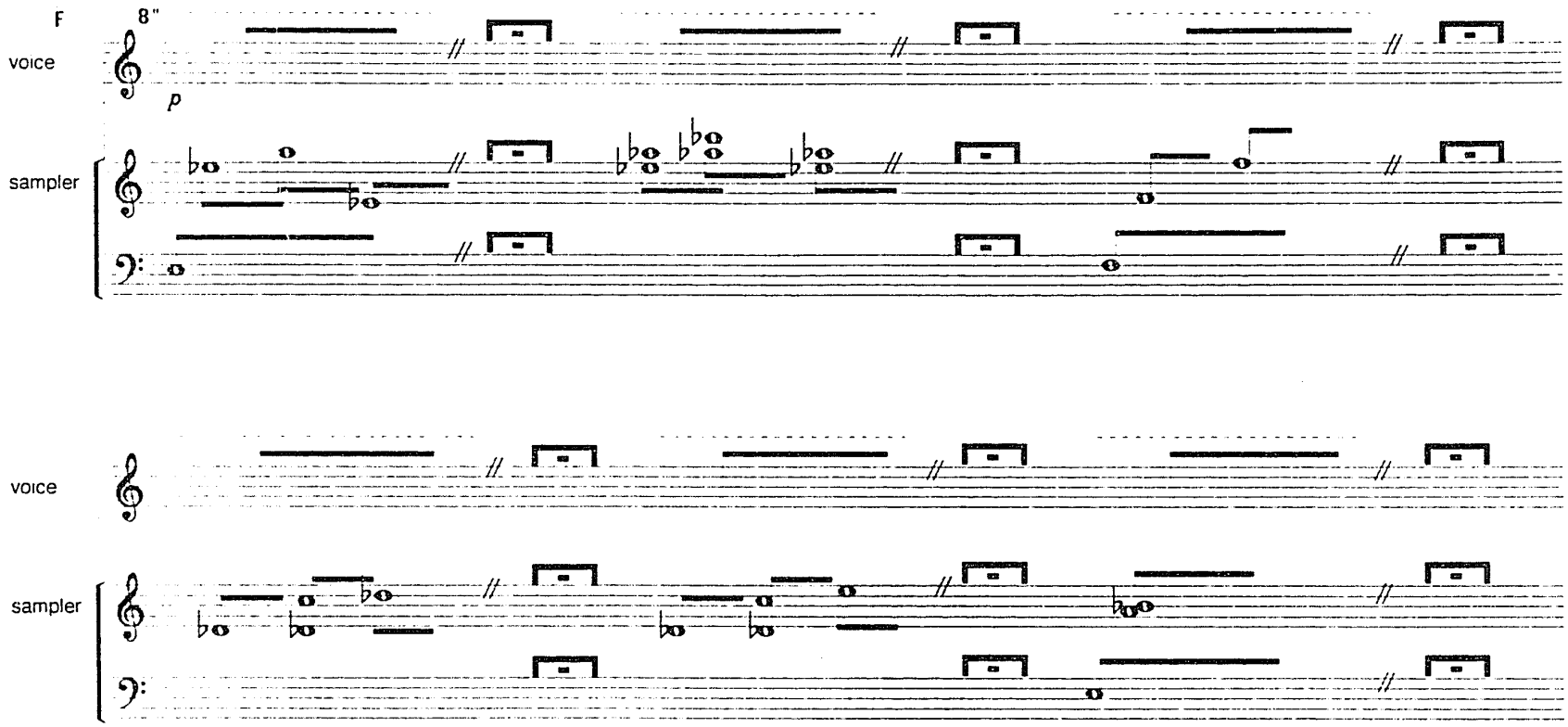
5: ARIA

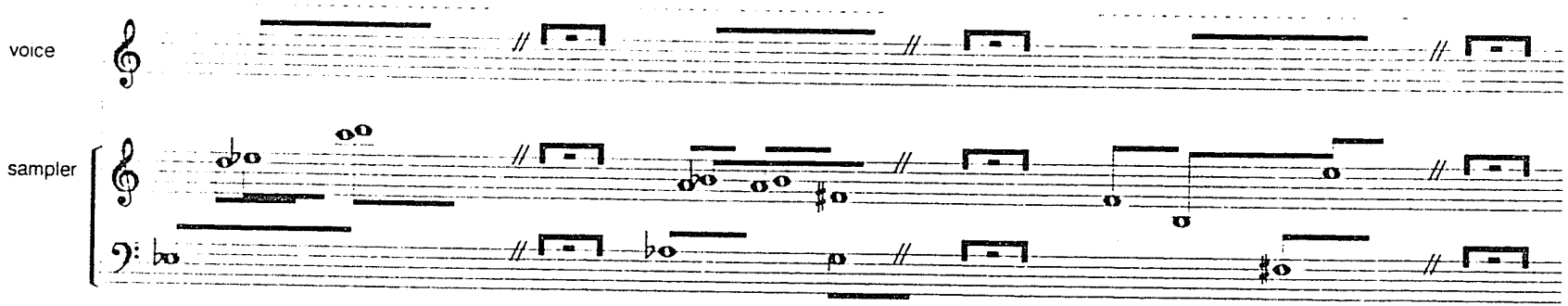
INSTRUCTIONS

The keyboard player plays each cluster as notated, very slowly, sustaining the pitches long enough to allow the singer's note to fully sound and decay. The singer chooses one pitch from the cluster and sings that pitch in imitation of the sample program. The singer may wait for the cluster to be complete or enter before all of the cluster notes are established. The singer may choose to not sing with some of the clusters.

The sample program is made from samples of the singer intoning the long vowels 'Oh' and 'Ah'. It is important that the microphone used for sampling be the same as that used for the performance. The samples are combined into a patch with a very slow attack - up to 2 seconds - and a very slow release time - up to 4 seconds. The patch should sound like a human voice, but with a very dry quality.

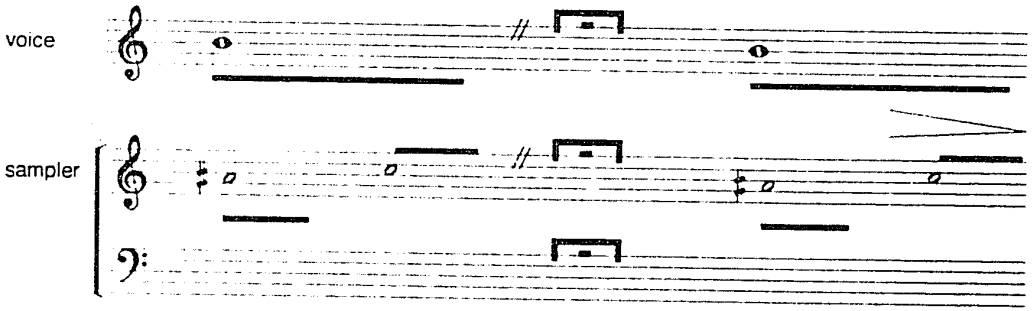
Singer imitates any one pitch played by sample player.





As written.

As written.



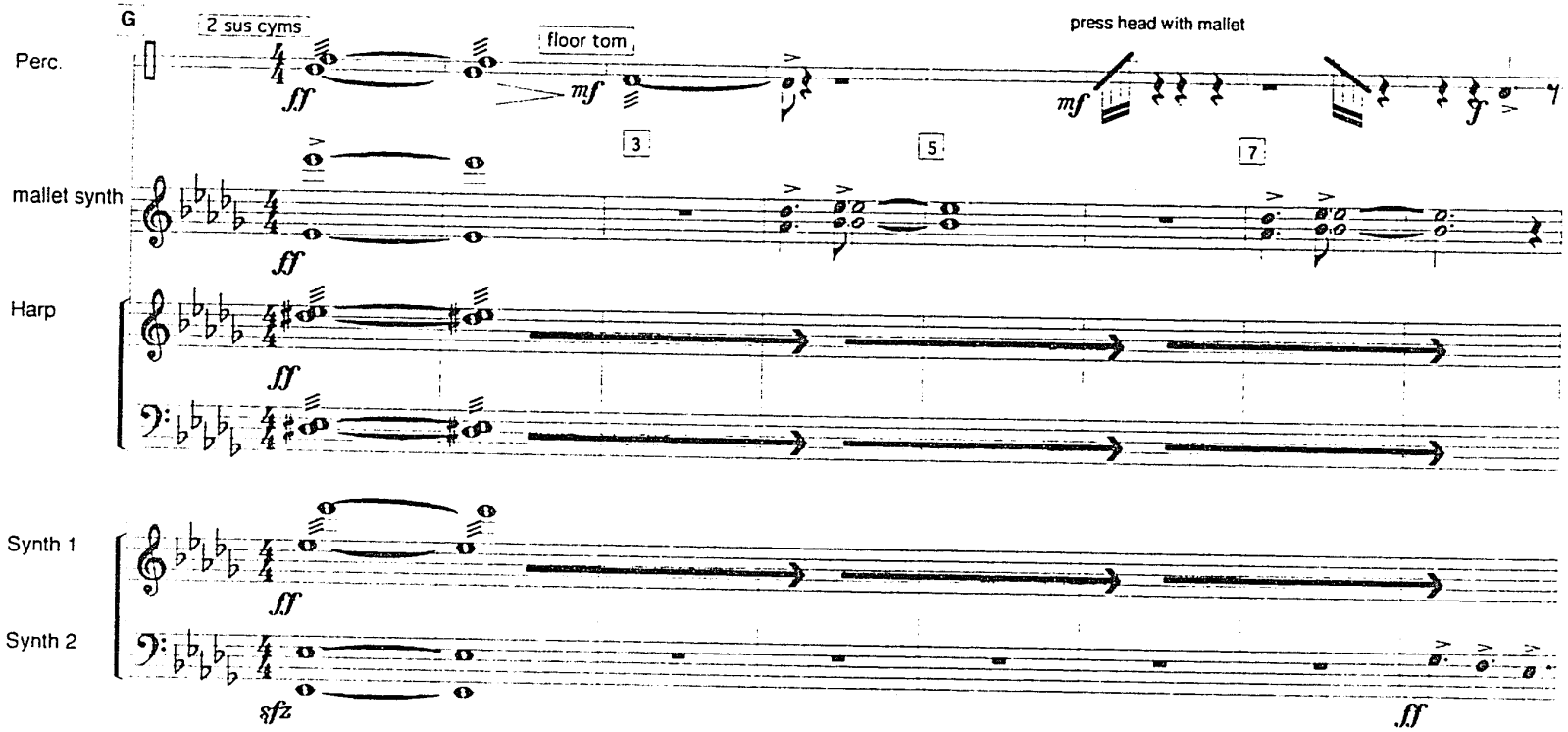
6: CLOSING

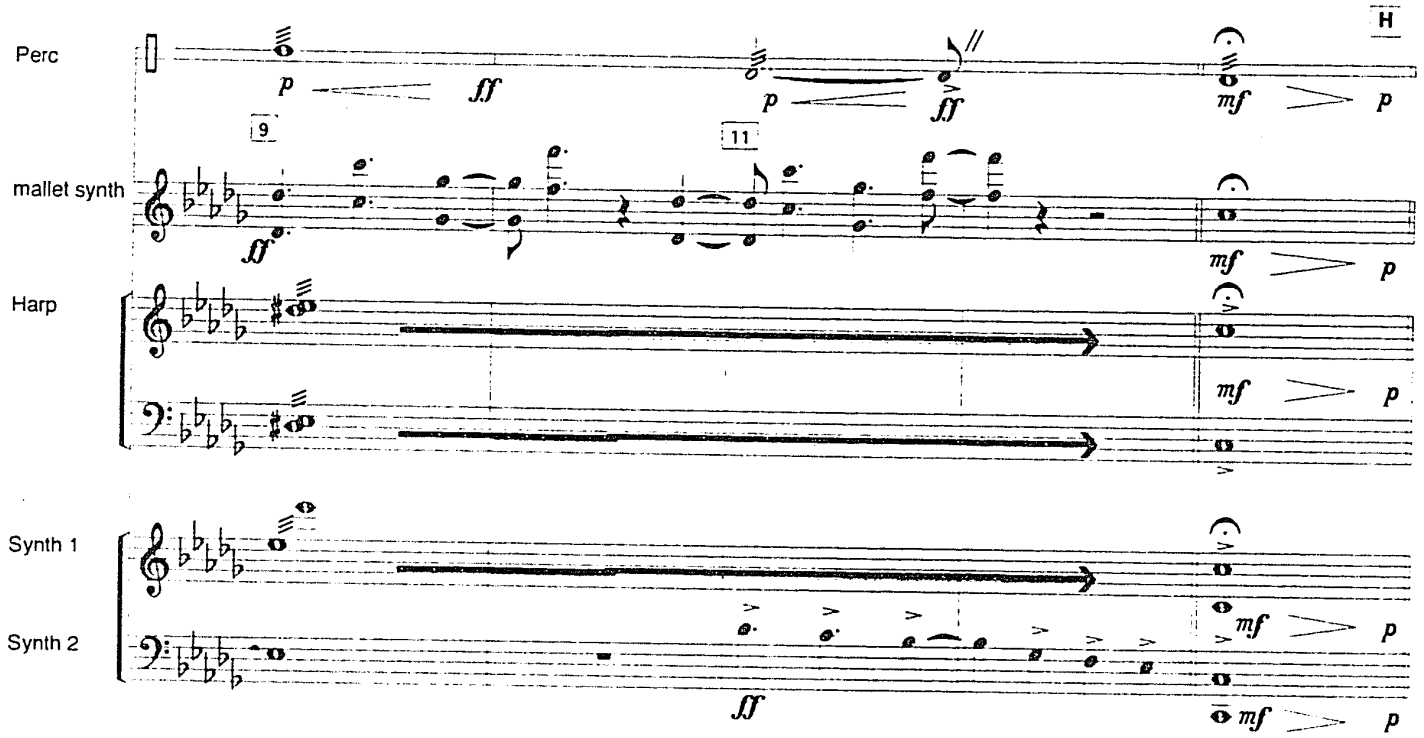
INSTRUMENTS

Percussion: 2 suspended cymbals
tom tom
Mallet Midi Driver: plays Synth 2
Harp
Synth 1: composite patch with flute, bells, solo flute (upper part of keyboard)
Synth 2: composite patch with gong, bell and tympani (at lower velocities only)

INSTRUCTIONS

This is a reprise of the opening, and should be as much like the opening as possible - without the improvisation section.


G
2 sus cyms
floor tom
press head with mallet
Perc.
mallet synth
Harp
Synth 1
Synth 2
3
5
7
fff
mf
sfz


Perc
mallet synth
Harp
Synth 1
Synth 2
H
9
11
p
fff
mf
ff