Arpisms

for flute

Chris Dench

Arpisms

(2025)

after Hans Arp

for flute with B foot

for Elizabeth McNutt & Laura Chislett

A **rainpagodas**
B **flowersphinx**
C **withered bells**

Regenpagoden nach regenpagoden ... stürzen aus Wolken nieder
Rainpagodas upon rainpagodas ... plunge down from the clouds
Hans (Jean) Arp
from *Three Painter-Poets*, translations by Harriett Watts, Penguin 1974

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Duration: about **13′**

Performance notes:

- Flute requires B foot. The multiphonics and quartertone usage requires that it also be open-hole.
- Accidentals only apply to the notes they immediately precede except in the case of rapid repetitions where the inflection continues until the pitch changes.
- This work is presented in proportional notation; the spacing on the page closely reflects the relative durations of material within sections. The absolute tempi are at the discretion of the performer, but should reflect the performance instructions and local character of the music. Intuitive rubato is appropriate throughout.
- The fundamentals of harmonics should always be as audible as possible.
- Quartertones are better fingered, for the different tone-colours they possess; use lip-bends only where necessary or indicated. In a few cases lip-bends are indicated above the stave as a continuous process; the direction of pitchbend is indicated by arrows. In these instances the pitch changes are too subtle to be reflected in the stave notation.
- Fluttertongue is indicated by FL over the stave (not always boxed), and ≡ in the stems of fluttertongued notes. It is cancelled by ORD.
- In this score:

  Accel(erando), with an upward arrow, means *gradually get faster*
  Rall(entando), with a downward arrow, means *gradually get slower*

  All only persist as long as the extension line indicates, or until contradicted.

- **Dynamic profile**: there are **eleven** dynamic steps in this work:

  o—pppp—ppp—pp—p—mf—f—ff—fff—ffff

These are rendered in the score as

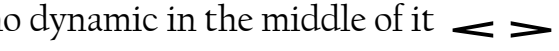
o—p4—p3—p2—p—mf—f—f2—f3—f4

excepting ***sfzs*** (etc.), which are notated in full

There is no ***mp*** dynamic; ***mf*** is considered to be midway between ***p*** and ***f***. Occasionally a dynamic will have a + after it; this just indicates that the level should be subtly louder than the previous appearance of the same dynamic.

Th ***o*** dynamic means no air at all, that the sound should be caused solely by the tonguing. If this is ineffective a small amount of air is permissible. Occasionally a fluttertongued breathy sound (see below) with ***o*** is specified; in these instances the fluttertongue should make the flute resonate with minimal air.

Dynamics should be not be treated as a simple linear *soft→loud*: they function as variations in the *local* context. A dash — after a dynamic means that it continues unchanged until contradicted, and a slash / means the dynamic changes abruptly.

A double-hairpin with no dynamic in the middle of it  should be treated as a slight swell.

- All multiphonics are *suggestions*. The notated pitches are very approximate and may well differ from instrument to instrument; no attempt has been made to indicate microtonal variations. Players are encouraged to experiment with the fingerings to find more stable or richer alternatives, while conforming roughly to the notated suggestions.
- Breathiness is used frequently in this piece, notated by a closed diamond notehead (unlike the ¾ diamonds for the fundamentals of harmonics) and above the stave. No attempt has been made to notate transitional sounds, the initial sound is given and the destination, and an arrow above the stave indicating the change. If no arrow appears above a series of diamond-heads they should all be breathy. Breath sounds are cancelled by NAT.
- **Emphases** are used to indicate either slight stresses or a hint of detaché, or both; context will be the guide. Hard attacks are used to indicate pitches that need to be brought out—context will govern the extent to which these pitches need to be martellato. Parentheses around either glyph indicate that the dynamic level is low.
- + over a stem indicates that the note underneath should be given a more percussive 'click' than usual, but it need not be excessive.

- In the closing gesture, the circled number ① over stems indicates that an alternative, “colour”, fingering should be used for that pitch, in alternation with the standard fingering.
- **Pauses**: there are three main types of pause used in this piece. Exact durations should be decided by the performer; pause sizes are a very approximate guide.

indicating a very brief suspension of activity;

indicating a relatively short hiatus—the size of the triangle is a rough guide to duration;

meaning a longer, or more emphatic, pause.

Program note:

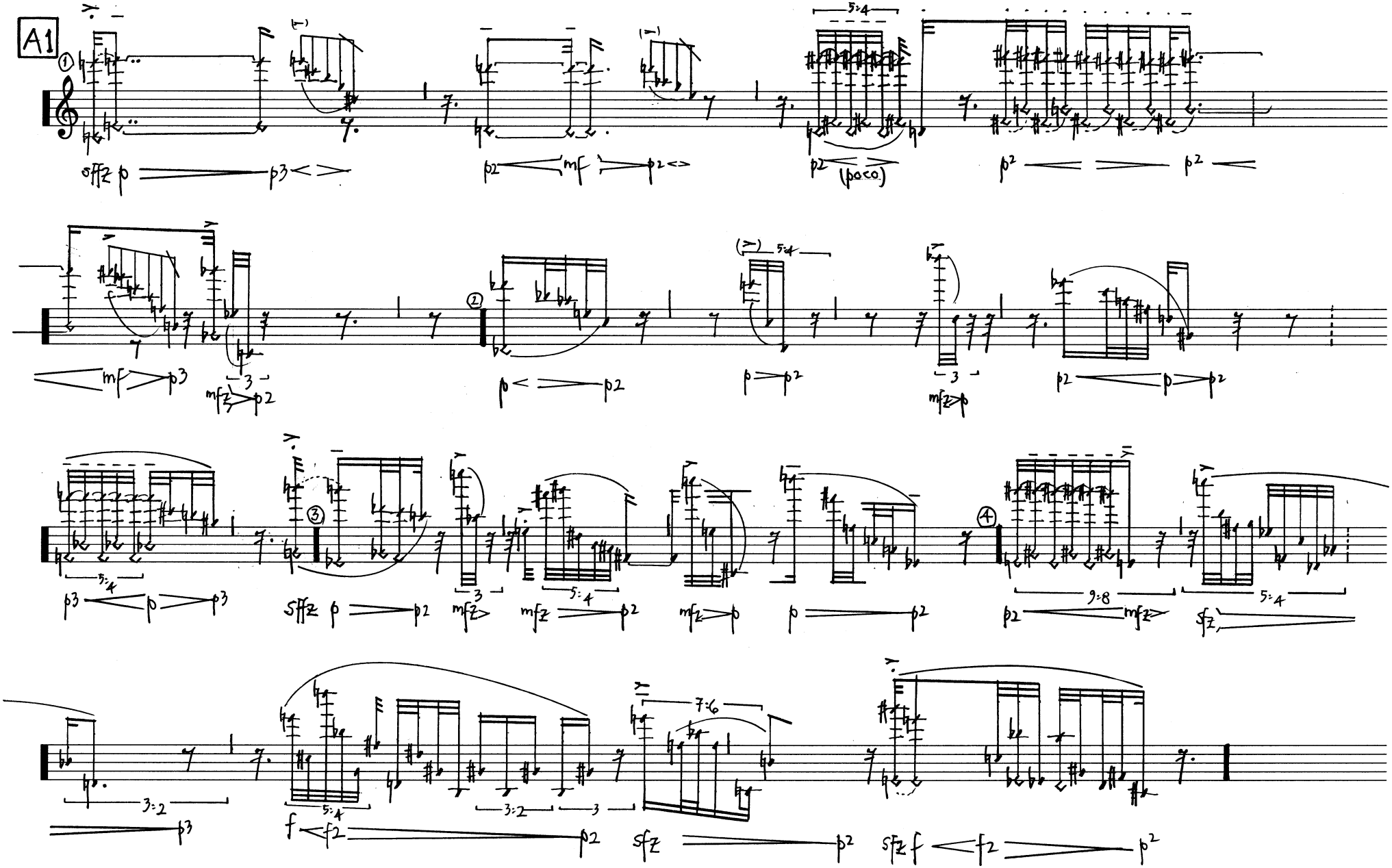
It was in the mid '70s that I first came across the book *Three Painter-Poets*, translations by Harriett Watts of poetic writings by Hans Arp, Kurt Schwitters, and Paul Klee. I say 'poetic writings' because their works are barely 'poems', in the traditional sense of the word. Among the texts of Hans Arp I came upon three evocative neologisms, *rainpagodas*, *flowersphinx*, and *withered bells.* I considered searching out the original German words, but that would have been dishonest—my rudimentary German would have been nowhere near adequate to grasping the complex imagery implicit in each word, so I chose to respond to the English translations. The brief German epigraph to the score, 'Regenpagoden nach regenpagoden ... stürzen aus Wolken nieder' (*Rainpagodas upon rainpagodas ... plunge down from the clouds*), is present because it appears in Harriett Watts' book.

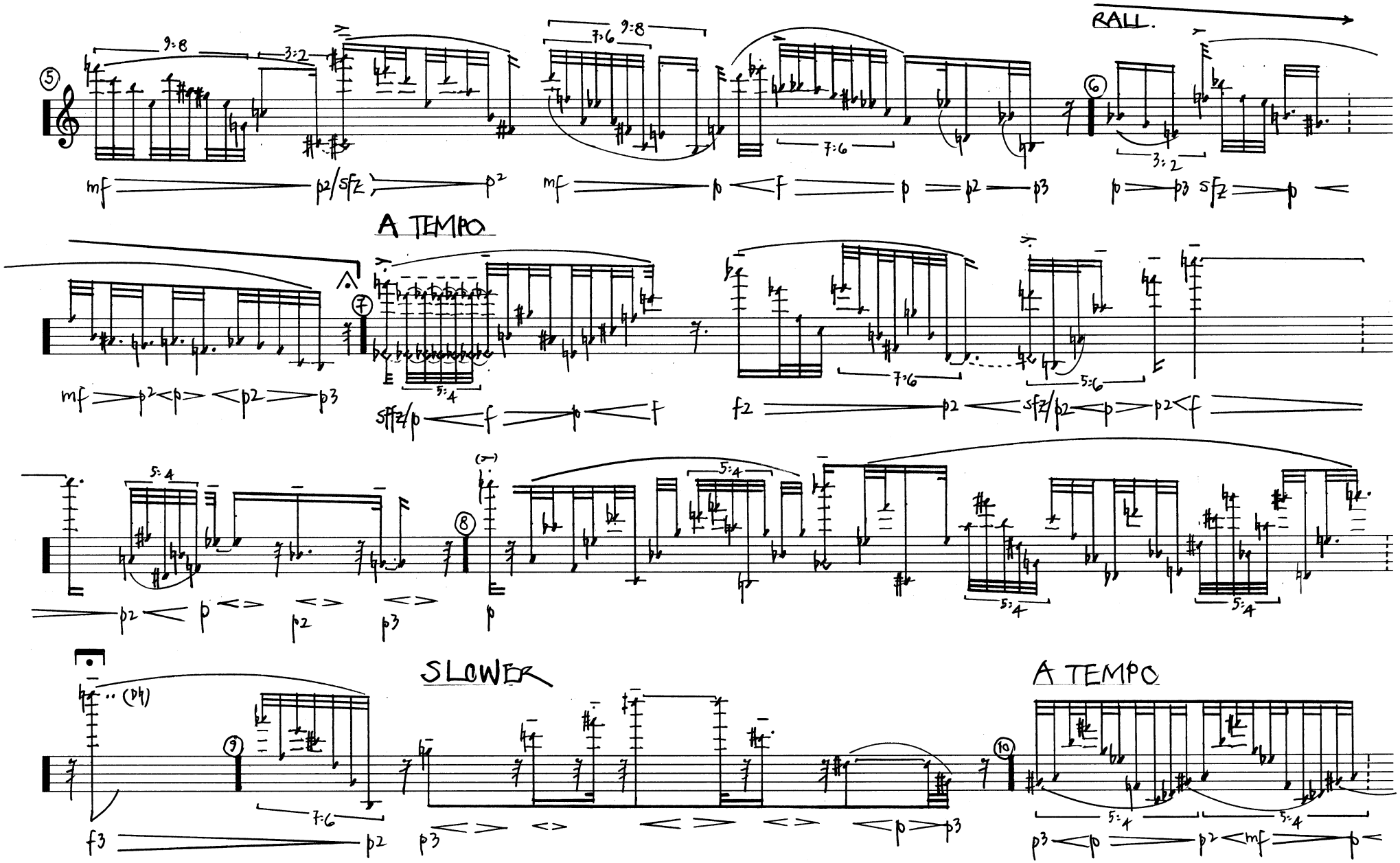
In Arp's 'poems', the words function quite differently to standard parsable language; they coexist as a mosaic of sounds and images that combine to evoke an ambiguous, indeterminate mood. Similarly, in the piece the music is a mosaic, constructed out of brief phrases that vary in their degrees of resemblance: some are identical and repeated, some are kin in various ways, and some are contrasting. Each little corpuscular wiggle of pitches is an 'atom' of the music. The neologisms have distinct characters: the *rainpagodas* material is dominated by cascades; the *flowersphinx* by microtonal melodic wisps; and the *withered bells* by disintegrating sonorities. All three are further segmented into subsections, three apiece, and the piece alternates them, in the order:

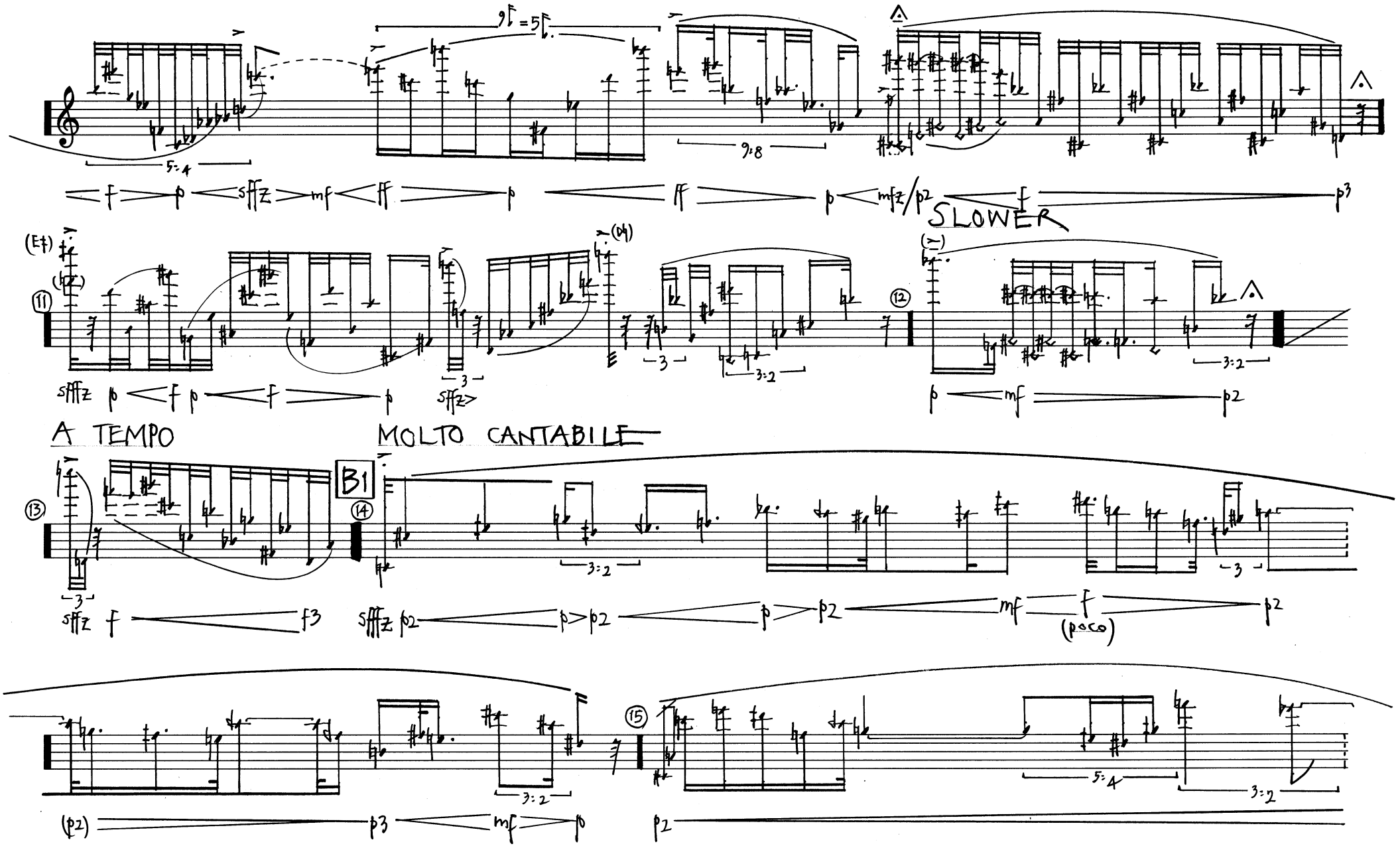
rainpagodas 1, *flowersphinx* 1,
rainpagodas 2, *flowersphinx* 2, *withered bells* 1,
rainpagodas 3, *withered bells* 2, *flowersphinx* 3, *withered bells* 3

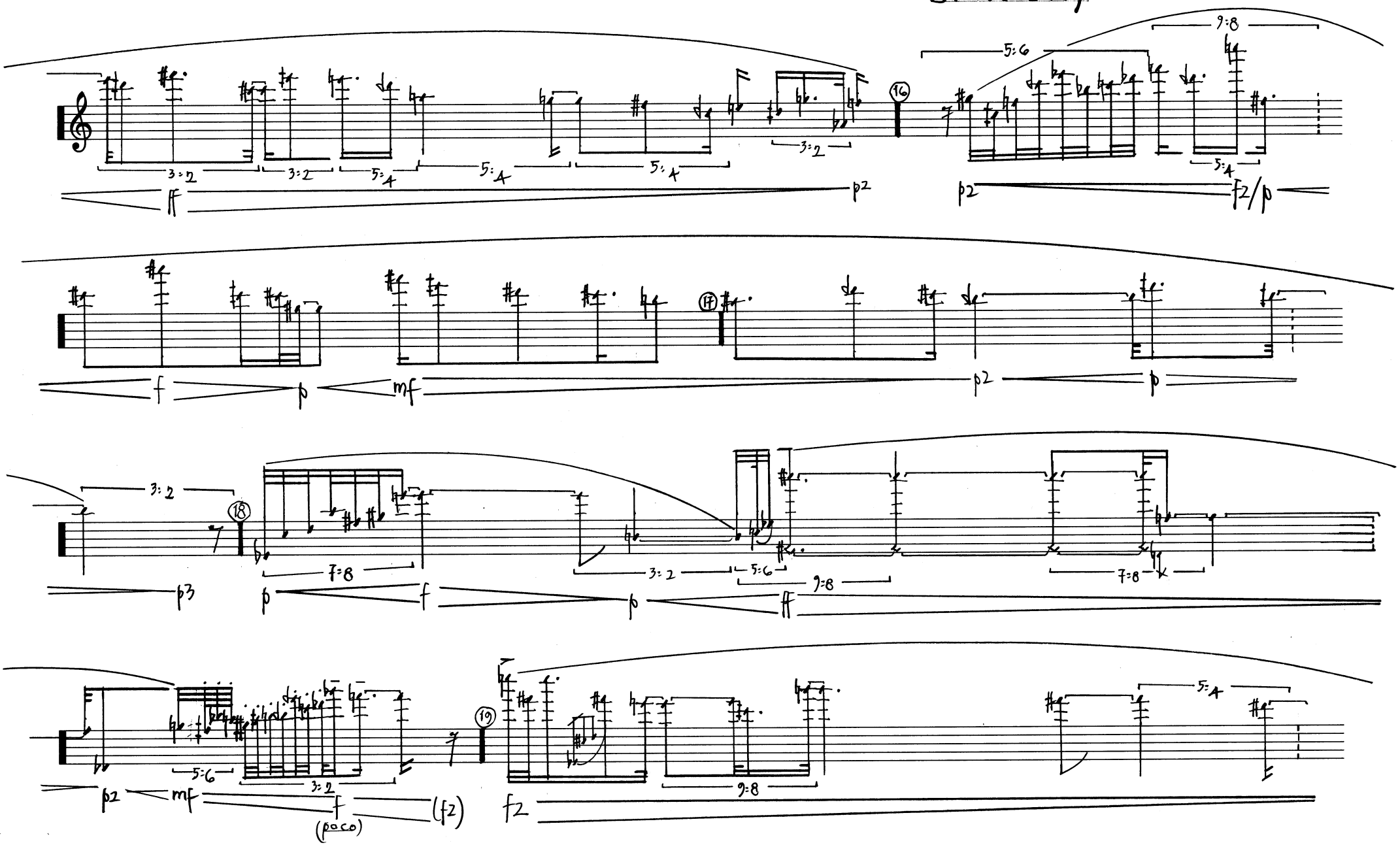
In Hans Arp's relief sculptures he makes considerable play with types of framing, the content of his work restrained by an arbitrary outer limit. Similarly I have used the top and bottom of the flute register as 'frames' and the music either bumps against or launches from these outer edges. Arp's poetry is densely florid with hyperbolic imagery, and the flow is often caused to falter under the weight of its complexity; at the same time his texts are frequently extended to the point of breathlessness. I have shaped this piece to try and reflect all these aspects of Arp's poetic language, the overloaded, the fitful, and the flamboyant.

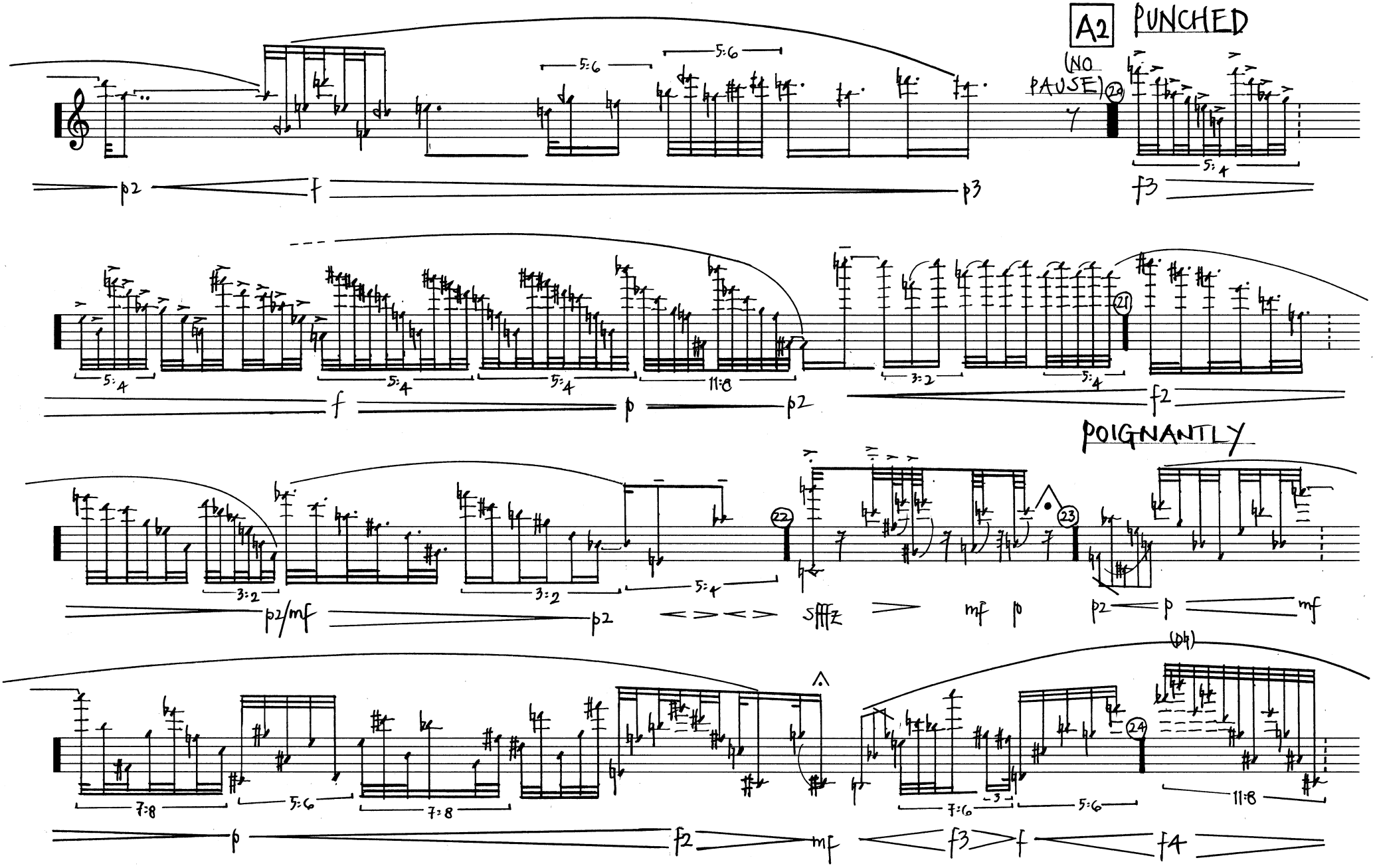
FLOATINGLY

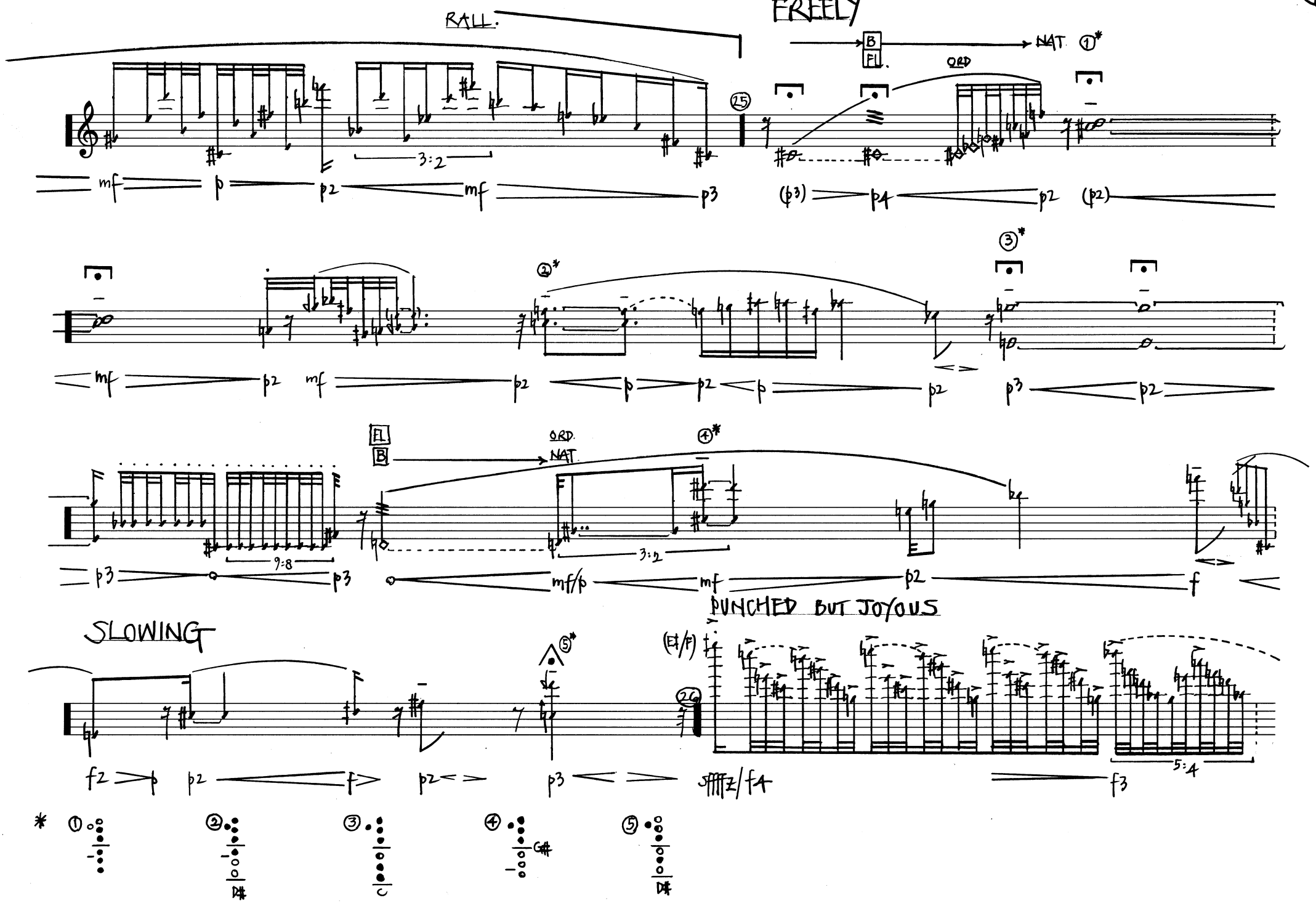


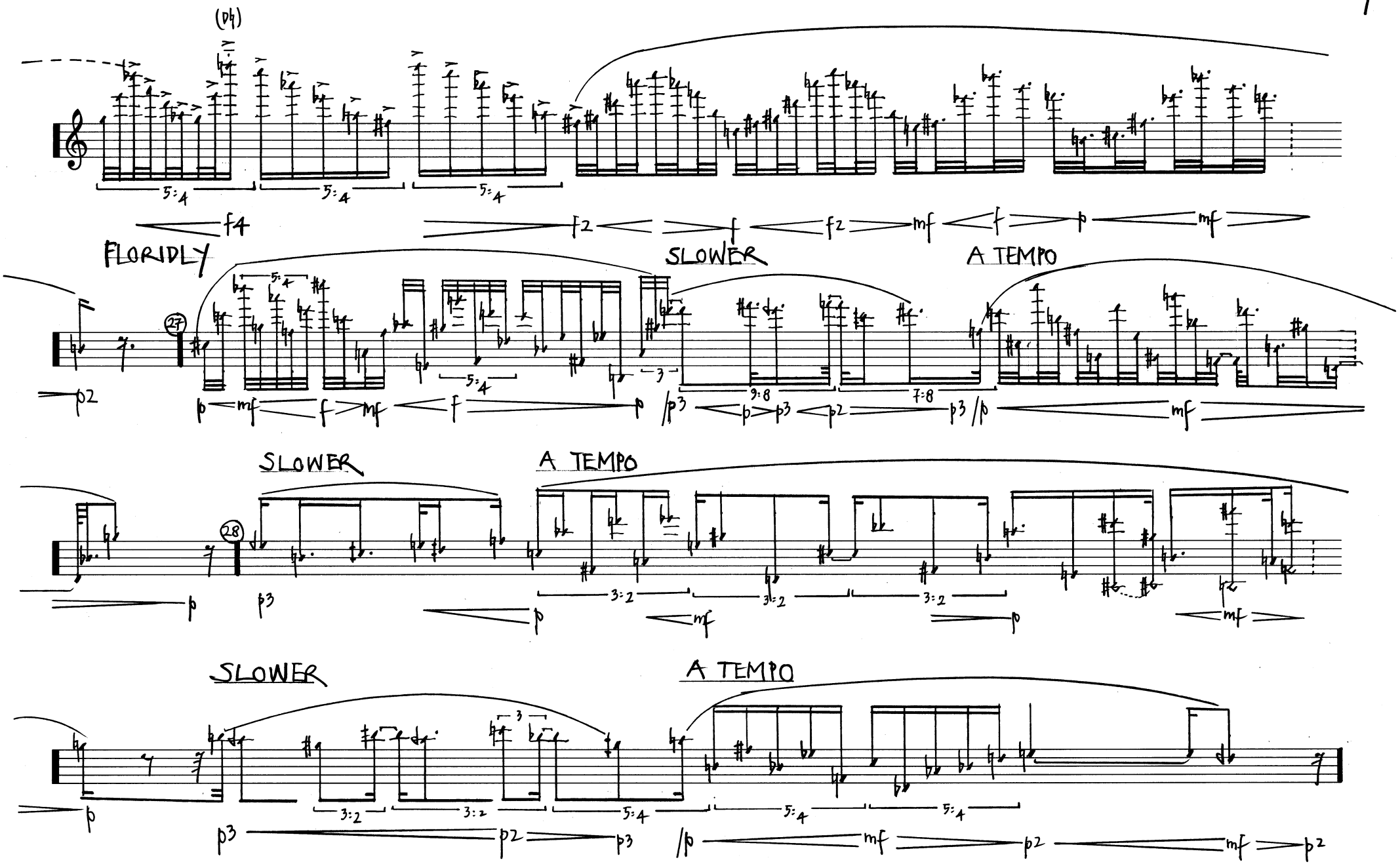

RALL.
A TEMPO
SLOWER
A TEMPO

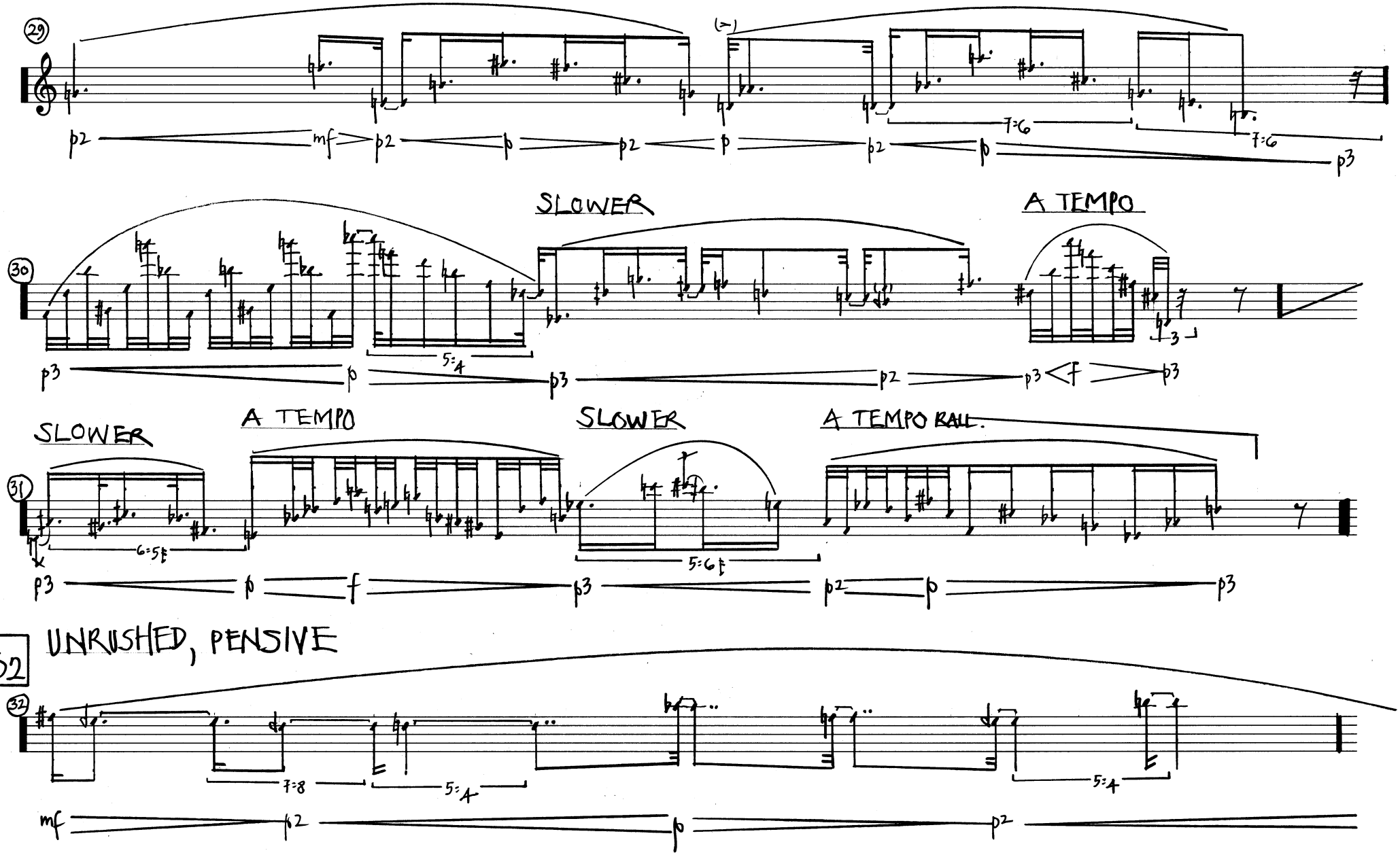

SLOWER
A TEMPO
MOLTO CANTABILE
B1
(poco)

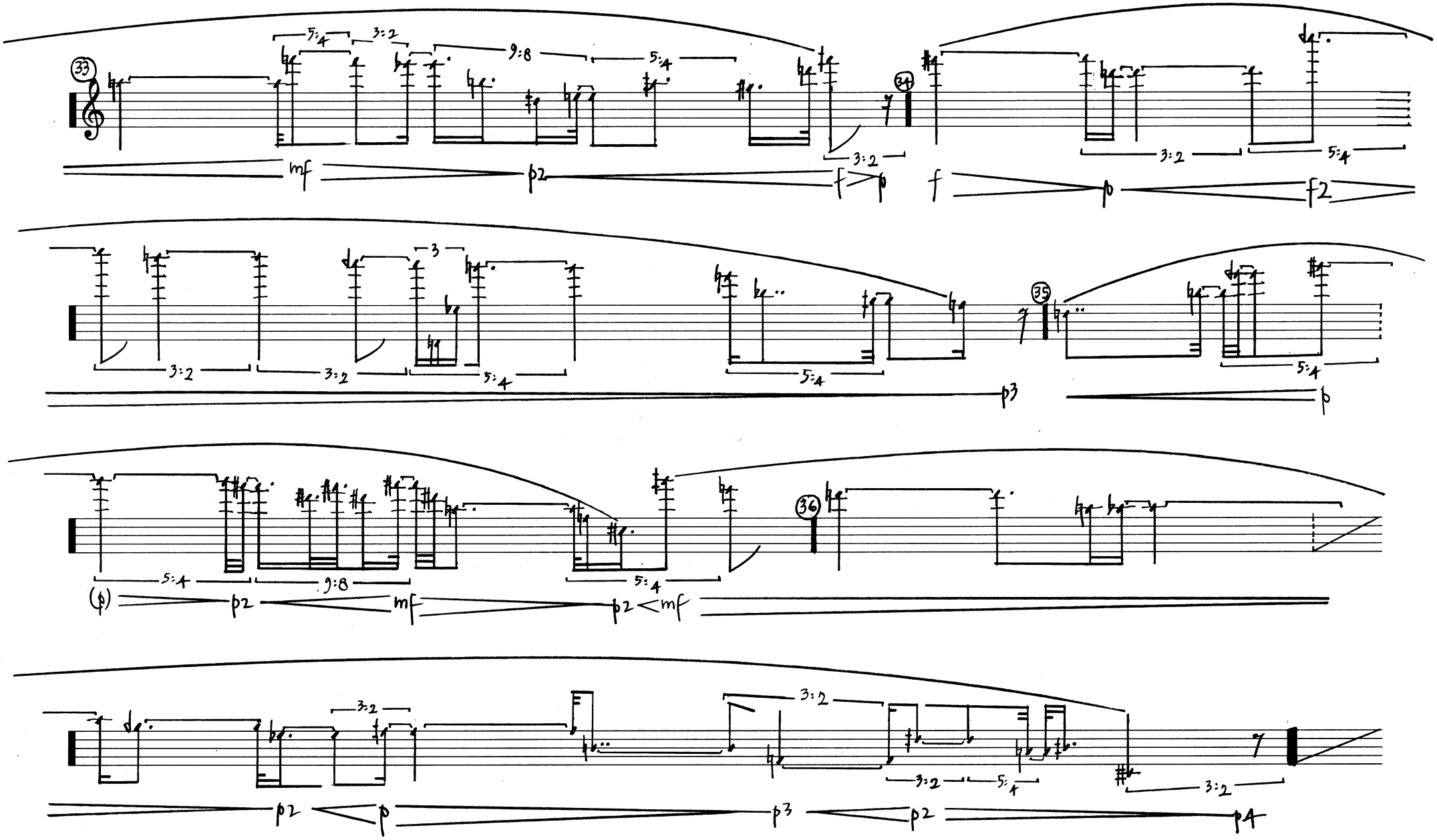

3:2
3:2
5:4
5:4
5:4
3:2
16
5:6
9:8
5:4
ff
p2
p2
f2/p
f
p
mf
17
p2
p
3:2
18
7:8
3:2
5:6
9:8
7:8
p3
p
f
p
ff
5:6
3:2
19
9:8
5:4
p2
mf
f
(poco)
(f2)
f2

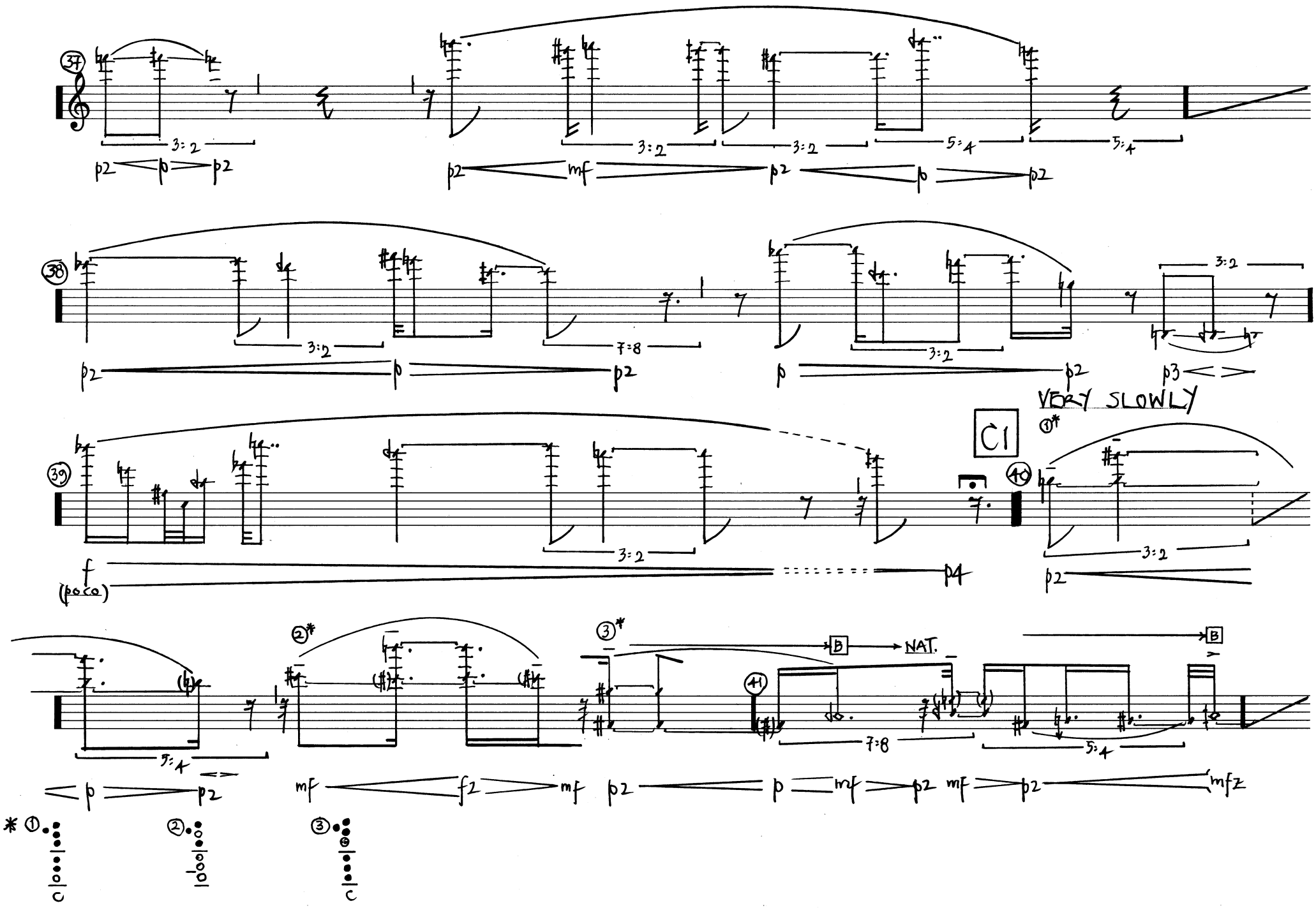

A2 PUNCHED
(NO PAUSE)
POIGNANTLY
(ph)


RALL.
FREELY
B
FL.
NAT. ①*
ORD
25
3:2
mf p p2 mf p3
(p3) p4 p2 (p2)
②*
③*
mf p2 mf p2 p p2 p p2
p3 p2
FL.
B
ORD.
NAT.
④*
9:8
3:2
p3 p3
mf/p mf p2 f
PUNCHED BUT JOYOUS
SLOWING
⑤*
(ff/p)
26
5:4
f2 p p2 f p2 p3 sffffz/f4 f3
* ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
G#
C
D#

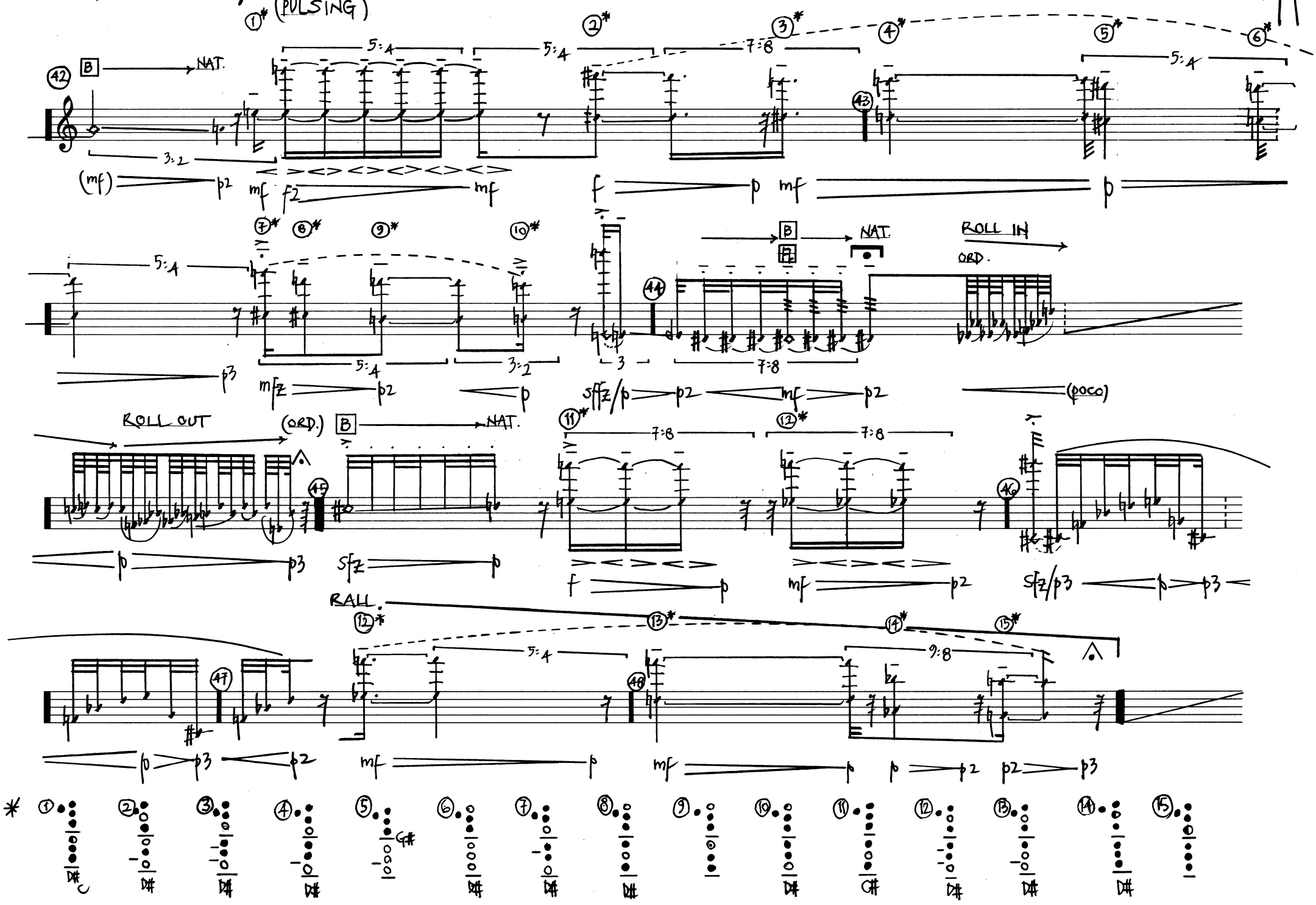

(ph)
5:4
5:4
5:4
f4
f2
f
f2
mf
f
p
mf
FLORIDLY
27
5:4
5:4
3
9:8
7:8
SLOWER
A TEMPO
p2
p
mf
f
mf
f
p
p3
p
p3
p2
p3
p
mf
28
SLOWER
A TEMPO
3:2
3:2
3:2
p
p3
p
mf
p
SLOWER
A TEMPO
3
3:2
3:2
5:4
5:4
5:4
p
p3
p2
p3
p
mf
p2
mf
p2


29
mf
7:6
7:6
30
SLOWER
A TEMPO
5:4
31
SLOWER
A TEMPO
SLOWER
A TEMPO RALL.
6:5
5:6
B2
UNRUSHED, PENSIVE
32
7:8
5:4
5:4

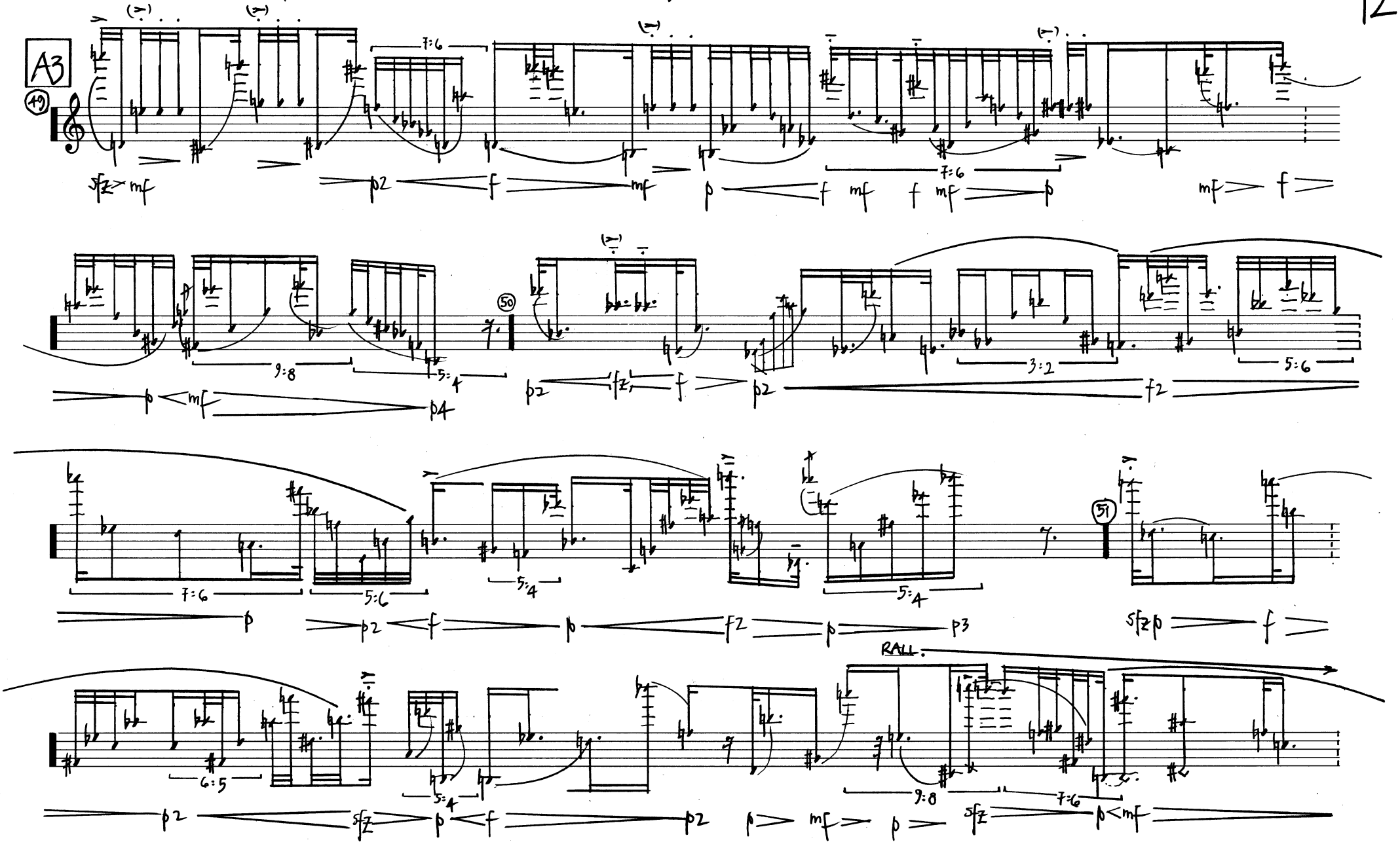

33
34
35
36
5:4
3:2
9:8
3
mf
p2
f
p
f2
p3
p4

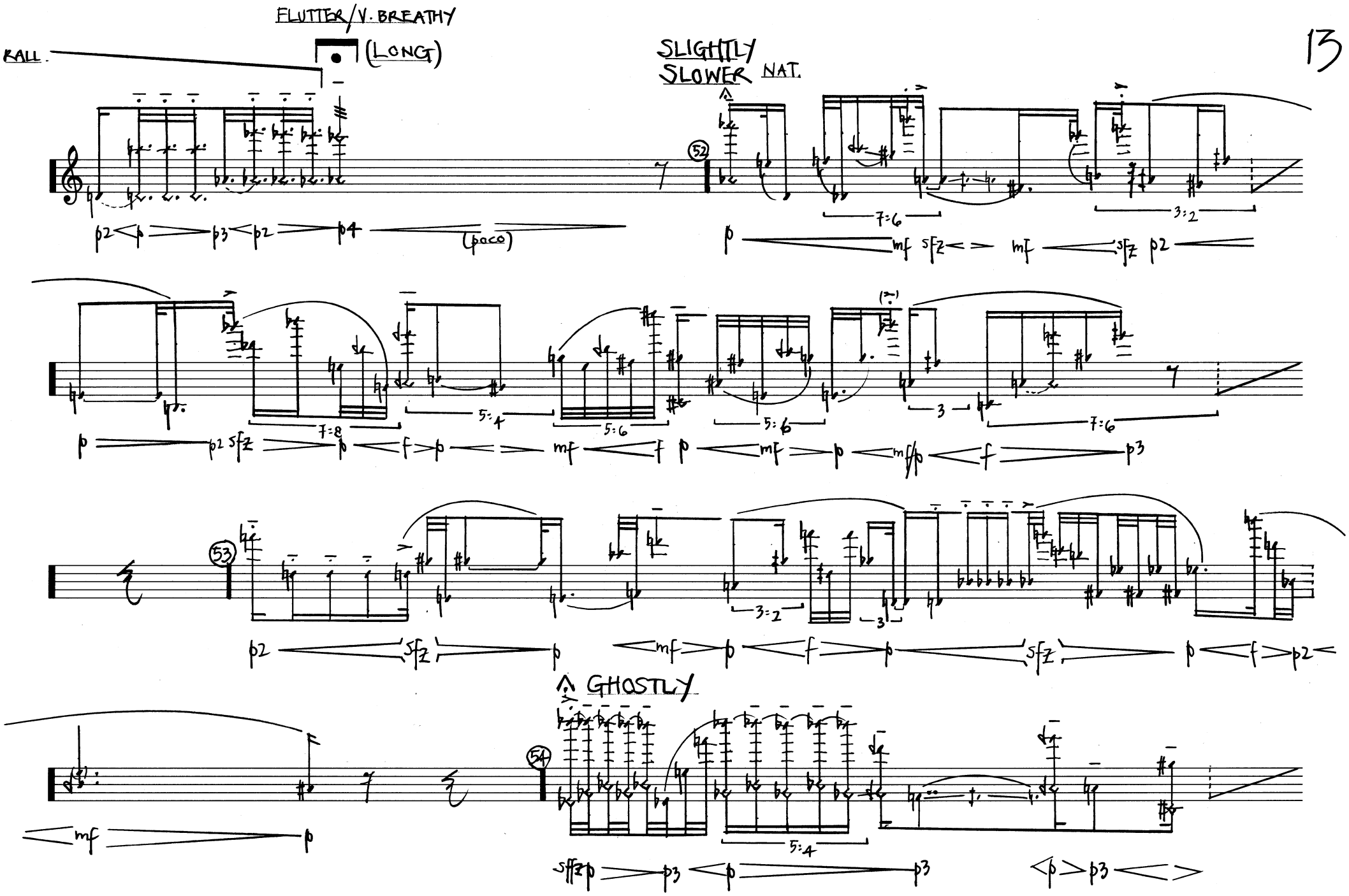

37
3:2
3:2
3:2
5:4
5:4
p2
p
p2
p2
mf
p2
p
p2
38
3:2
7:8
3:2
3:2
p2
p
p2
p
p2
p3
39
3:2
f
(poco)
p4
C1
VERY SLOWLY
40
3:2
p2
7:4
p
p2
2*
mf
f2
mf
3*
B
NAT.
41
7:8
p2
p
mf
p2
mf
p2
B
5:4
mfz
* 1
2
3
C
C

FRAGMENTARILY

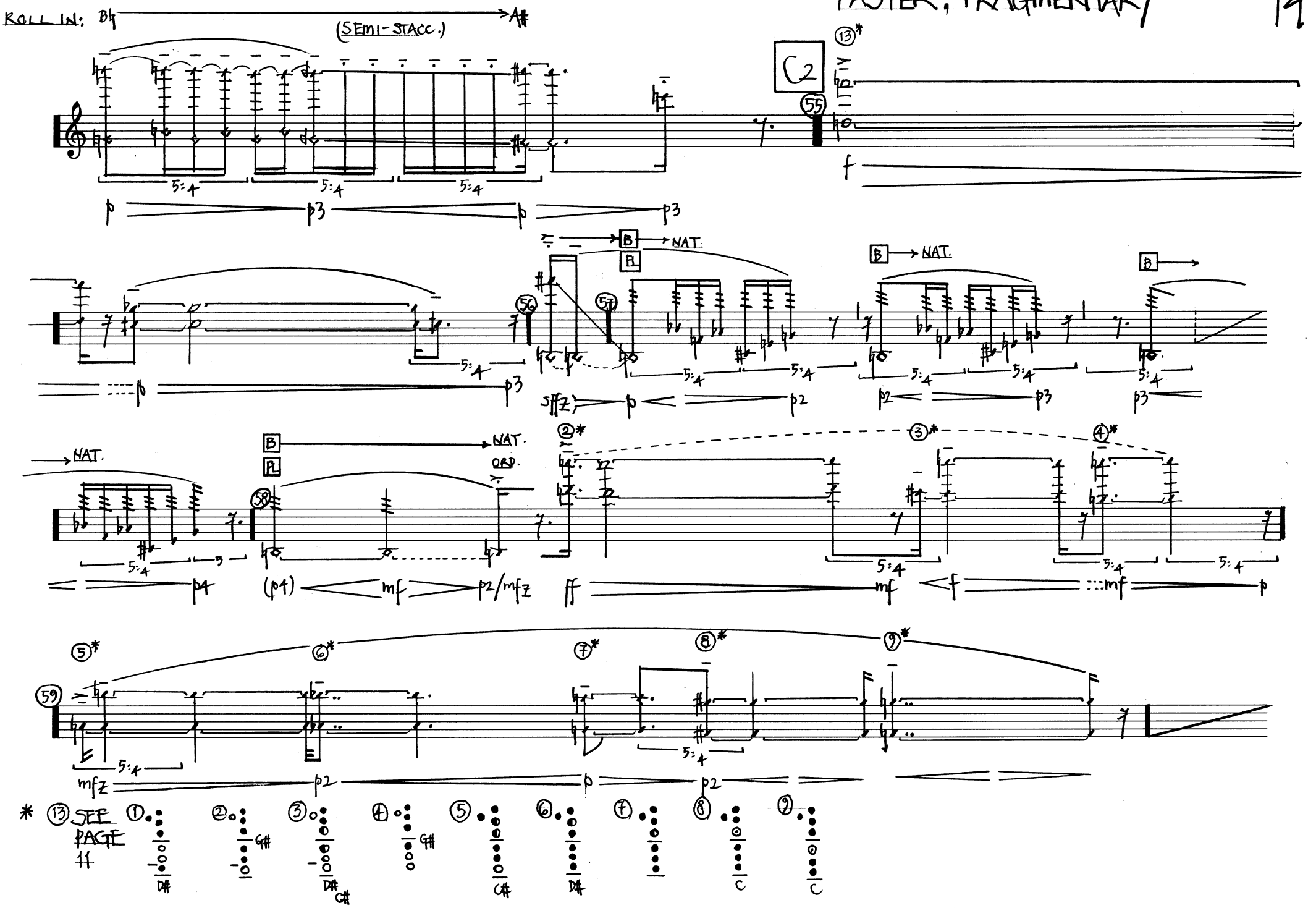


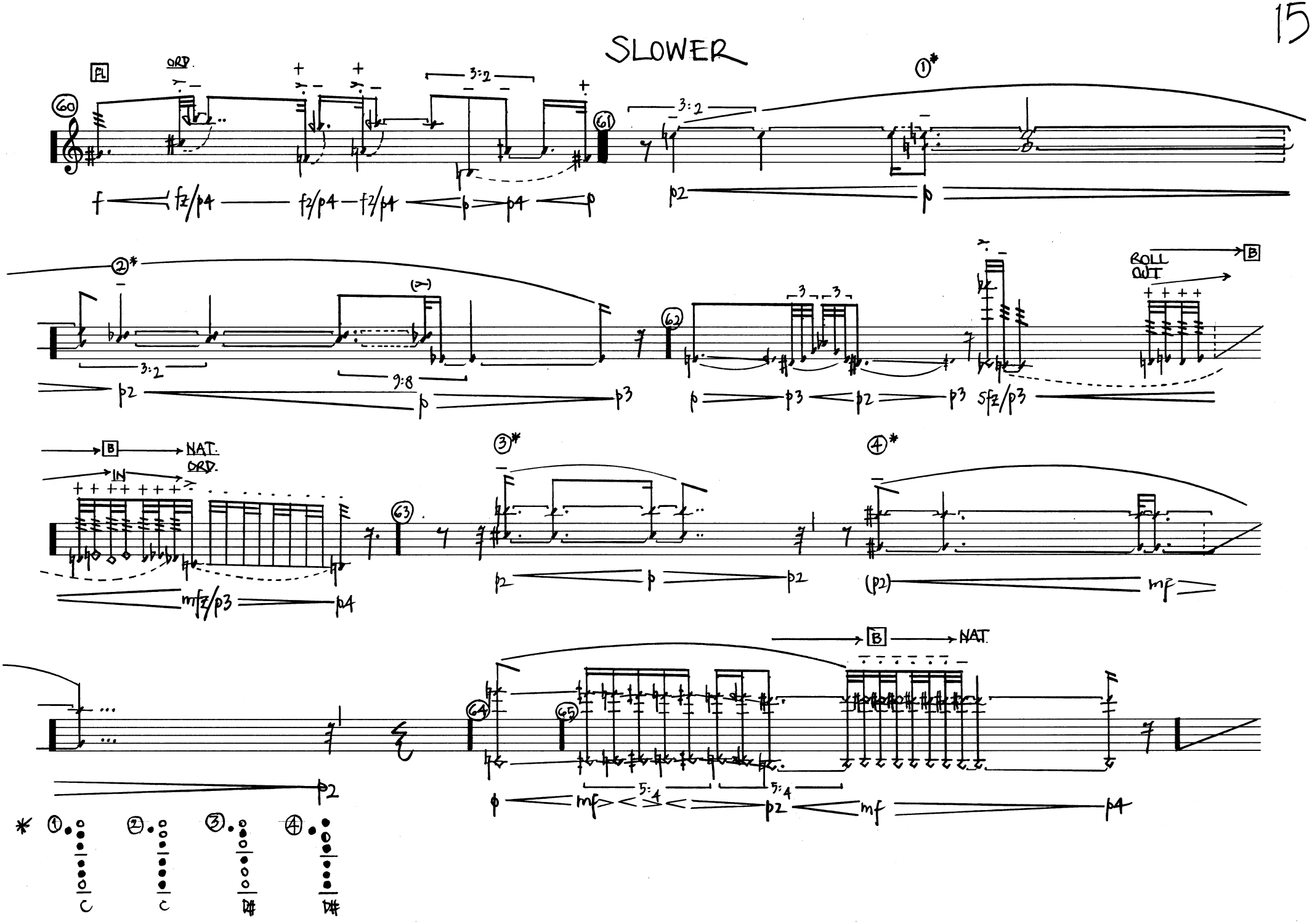
SIGIL-LIKE; SLOW ENOUGH FOR CLARITY

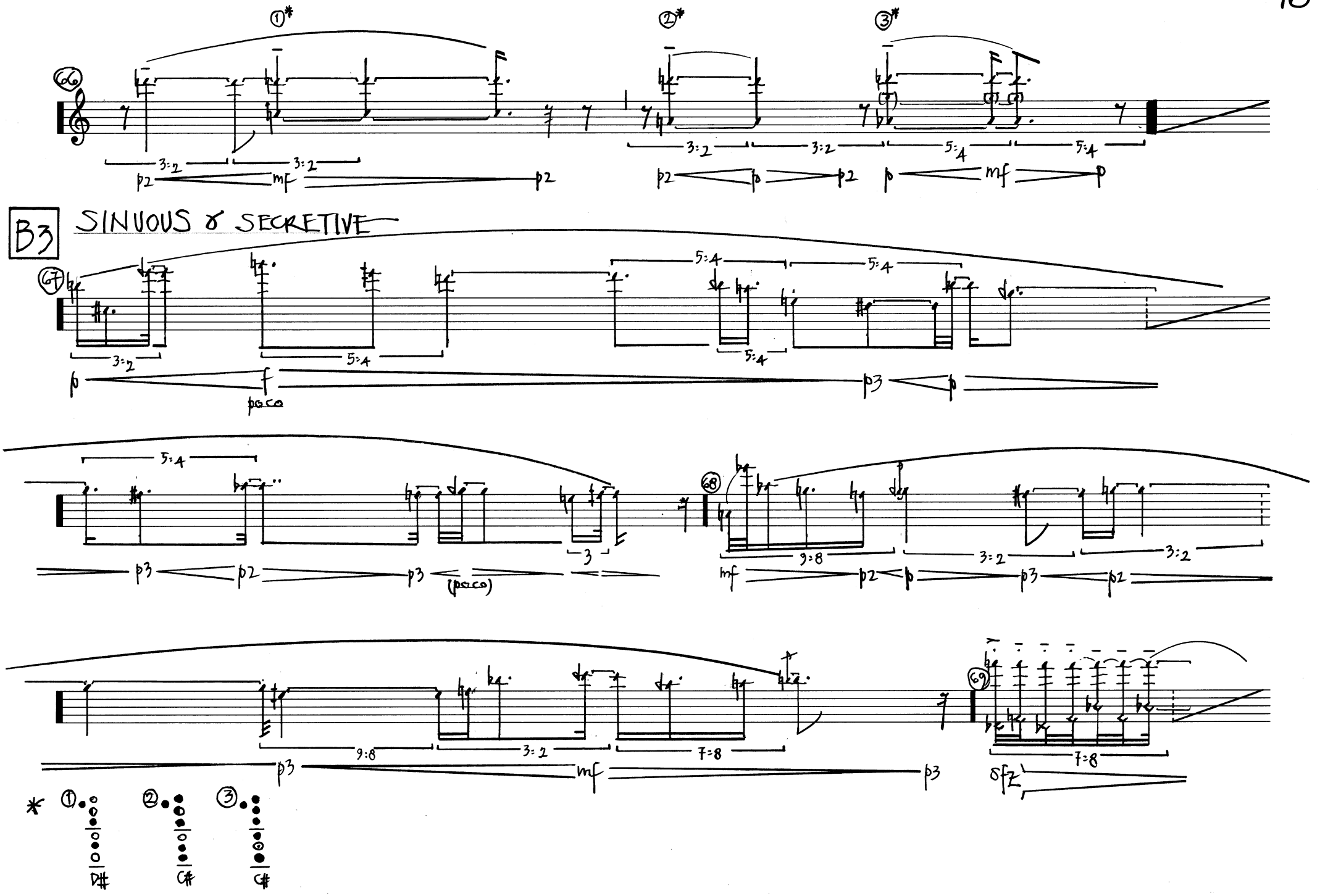



FLUTTER/V. BREATHY
RALL.
(LONG)
SLIGHTLY SLOWER NAT.
52
7:6
3:2
7:8
5:4
5:6
5:6
3
7:6
53
3:2
3
GHOSTLY
54
5:4
(poco)

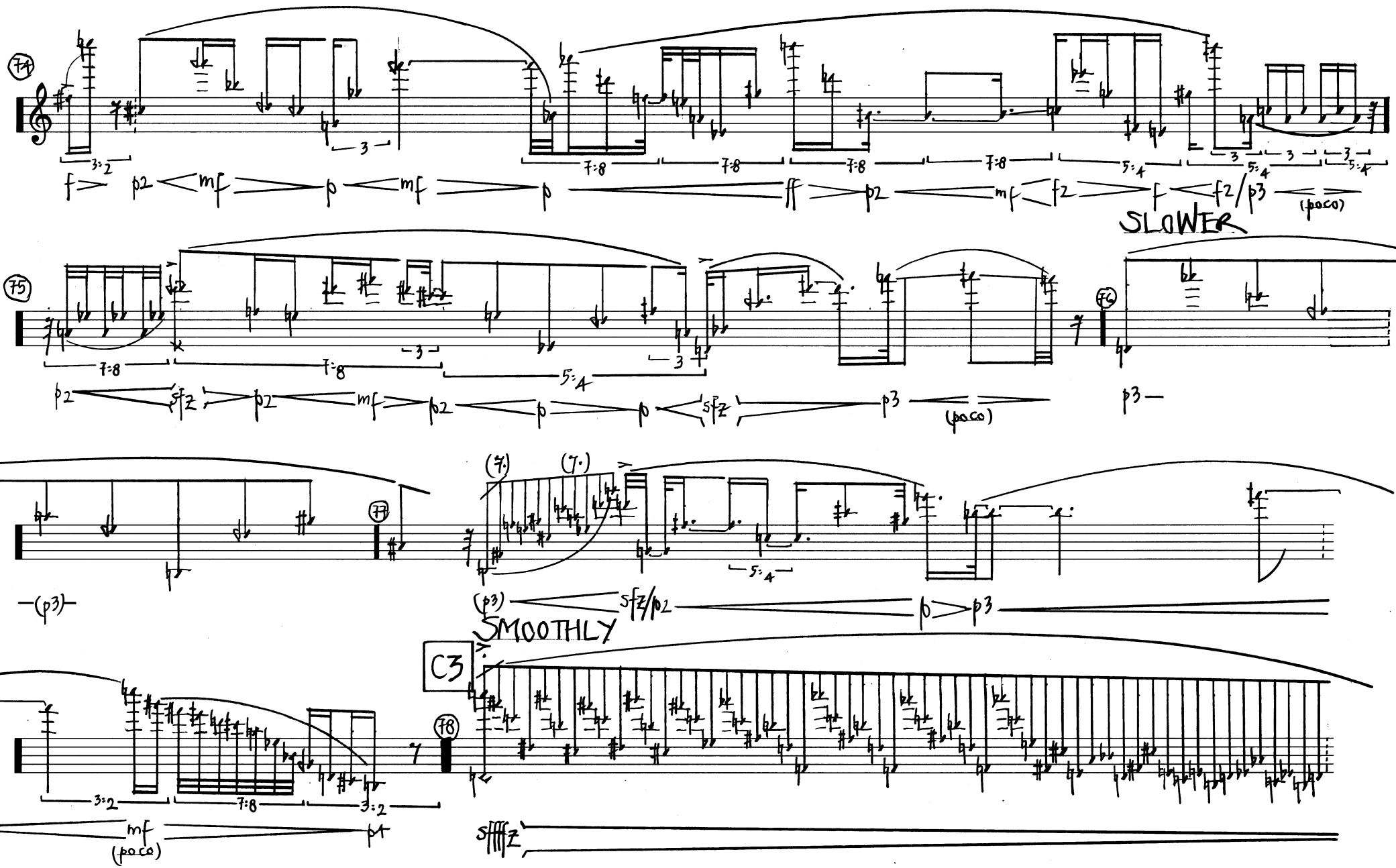
FASTER, FRAGMENTARY

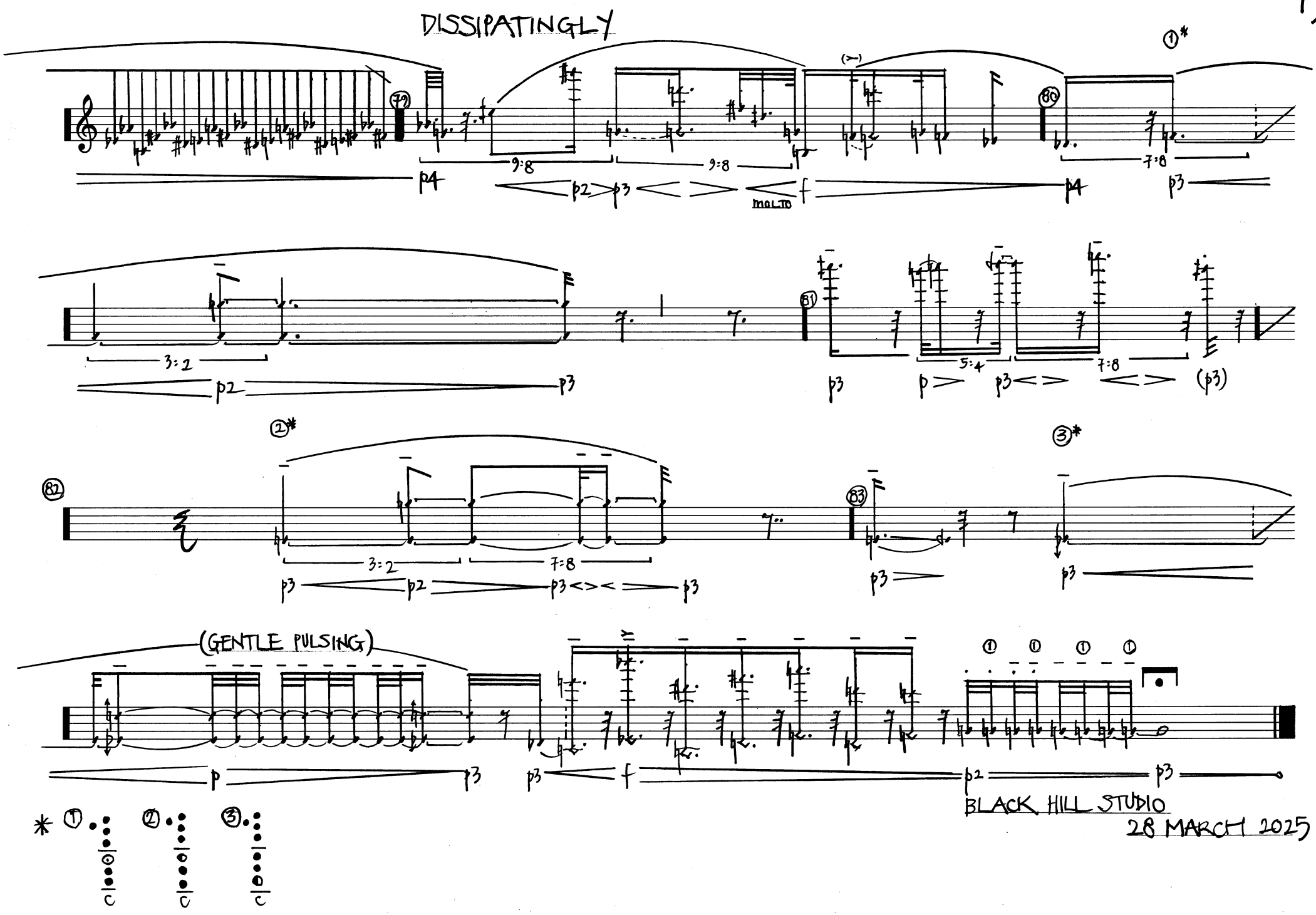



SLOWER
FL
ORD.
60
61
3:2
f
fz/p4
f2/p4
f2/p4
p
p4
p
①*
p2
p
②*
3:2
9:8
p2
p
p3
62
3
3
p
p3
p2
p3
sfz/p3
ROLL OUT
B
B
NAT.
ORD.
IN
63
mfz/p3
p4
③*
p2
p
p2
④*
(p2)
mf
B
NAT.
64
65
5:4
5:4
p2
mf
p2
mf
p4
* ① ② ③ ④


B3
SINUOUS & SECRETIVE
66
67
68
69
3:2
5:4
9:8
7:8
p2
mf
p
f
poco
p3
(poco)
sfz
D#
C#
C#

70
71
72
73
SLOW ENOUGH FOR FLUENCY


74
3:2
3
7:8
7:8
7:8
7:8
5:4
3
5:4
3
3
5:4
f
p2
mf
p
mf
p
ff
p2
mf
f2
f
f2/p3
(poco)
SLOWER
75
7:8
7:8
3
5:4
3
p2
sfz
p2
mf
p2
p
p
sfz
p3
(poco)
76
p3
77
(7.)
(7.)
5:4
(p3)
(p3)
sfz/p2
p
p3
SMOOTHLY
C3
78
3:2
7:8
3:2
mf
(poco)
p4
sffffz


DISSIPATINGLY
79
80
81
82
83
9:8
9:8
7:8
3:2
5:4
7:8
3:2
7:8
MOLTO
(GENTLE PULSING)
BLACK HILL STUDIO
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