Arcanabula

for bassoon

Chris Dench

Arcanabula

(2020)

for bassoon

from the **iso-études (#4)**

for James Aylward

This work has been assisted financially by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.

When pondering a title, and thence character, for the new bassoon piece I had agreed to write for my friend James Aylward, in a moment of caprice I coined the term 'arcanabula' by analogy with *incunabula*, and imagined the work as a mosaic of fragments. I was not particularly surprised when this amusing word turned out to already exist (its archaic neuter plural ending having seemingly become a feminine singular):

"An Arcanabula, sometimes known as an *orizon*, is the term used for a wizard's working spellbook; often a hodgepodge of spells (including some that were unusable by the author) and research notes for both the completed spells therein and for spell concepts still in progress. ... An arcanabula differs in concept from a "travelling spellbook" in that the latter is generally a distilled copy of one or more arcanabulae, lacking the research notes for the sake of compactness, though most travelling spellbooks with blank pages remaining almost inevitably become arcanabulae".

—from https://forgottenrealms.fandom.com/wiki/Arcanabula

Duration: about 13-14 minutes

Performance notes:

1 **Arcanabula** is a mosaic of 38 short sections, each one of which is a single self-contained cell, varying in length from about a second to over a minute. The cells are highly contrasted, but virtually all of them are interlinked in one way or another. Performers should try to maximise the differences between the cell types, and the non-sequiturs, while also revealing whatever resemblances they find.[1]

2 This piece is notated at roughly 3 centimetres = 1 second, excepting some sections where the scale is larger for clarity. Whatever the scale the spacing is *always* proportional to elapsing time.

That ratio is solely a guide, however; performers should bend the tempo and apply judicious *rubato* as they see fit.

3 Accidentals only apply to the notes they immediately precede, except in the case of rapid repetitions of single notes, in which case they continue until another pitch is introduced. For reasons of space natural signs are occasionally omitted, but modifiers are always present.

4 **Microtones**: much of this piece uses a nominal 24-note octave. Quartertones need not be precisely tuned, but wherever possible they should be fingered. In those places where, for reasons of register, dynamic, or other consideration, the fingerings cannot be used, lipped ¼-tones will suffice, including unavoidable slight bendiness.

Arrows added to top or bottom of any accidental indicate a transitional pitch between ¼ tones, eg ♭. These need not be precisely pitched, the effect is colouristic.

Circled fingerings above a pulsed pitch indicate the use of alternative fingerings for the pitch (slight microtonal deviations are welcome). They should be used in increasing order of deviation: ② being less in tune and more timbrally divergent than ①, and so on. When used as a group, the pitch *without* the superposed number is the standard fingering.

As is probably evident from the text, microtones function differently in different sections, sometimes harmonically, sometimes structurally, sometimes colouristically …and sometimes are completely absent. Players should adapt their playing solutions to the local context, rather than seeking an overall microintervallic strategy.

[1] There is no objection to performers of any gender donning a wizard's hat or attire while performing this work. The Unseen University should provide the model.

5 There are eight dynamics levels in this piece; the word *POCO* next to a dynamic means not to overstate it.

ppp—pp—p—mf—f—ff—fff—ffff

6 In this score an emphasis mark (**-**) indicates a flat, slightly detached attack on a single note, but not foregrounded; an attacca mark (**<**) indicates a sharp attach, foregrounded. These apply irrespective of dynamic or register.

An *inciso*—'etched'—sign also appears occasionally (**◤**); these should be a sharper, slightly harsher, version of **<.**

7 The tremolo ⫽ sign on a stem always means *fluttertongue*. Fluttertongue is used sparingly in this piece; it is *optional* and may be omitted altogether—the fluttertongue ⫽ is therefore bracketed when it first appears, but not subsequently.

Rapid repeated or alternating notes are always notated as such, without shorthand.

8 **Pauses**: there are three types of pause used in this piece. Exact durations should be decided by the performer.

indicating a very brief suspension of activity;

indicating a hiatus—sound should continue;

meaning a longer, or more emphatic, pause.

No pauses between sections, please, other than those indicated.

9 The signs

and

serve to indicate momentary *accelerandi* and *rallentandi*, respectively. Only the material directly beneath the diagonal is affected, and normal tempo resumes immediately after the end of the modified material.

10 The double-slash symbol 𝍪 here just indicates the end of a note—it reinforces the notated duration. Breath marks are given by the usual comma: **'** . Breaths (commas) in brackets are best omitted if feasible. Note that there are

many unindicated places in this piece the performer will have to insert a space for breathing: the consequent bending of rhythm is anticipated.

11 **Multiphonics**: in most cases multiphonics utilise a variant fingering for the immediately preceding pitch. For instance, multiphonics 1 and 2—**M1** and **M2**—use variant fingerings for the preceding B natural to develop into two different multiphonics. Suggested fingerings for these can be found below. Where this happens the note from which they develop has an arrow above: →, and the actual multiphonics have **M*n*** followed by a brace indicating their duration. A few loose multiphonics also occur. All are identified by their **M** number, and multiphonics that reappear retain their original number.

When two or more consecutive multiphonics devolve from the same pitch, as in **M1** and **M2**, each should be sonically lower than its predecessor.

Fingering suggestions for all the multiphonics are below: **15**.

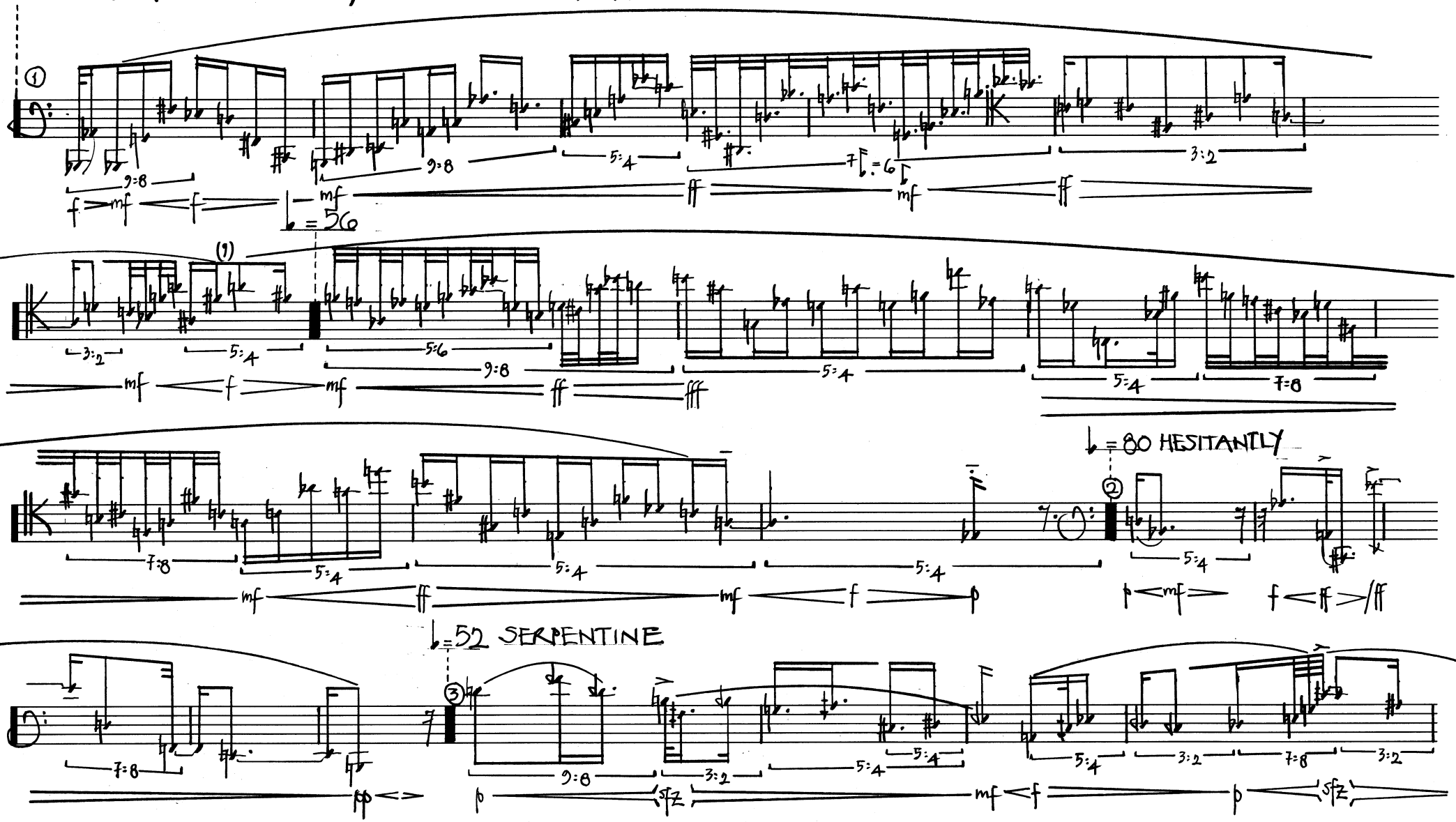
Players of French-system bassoons will need to find comparable solutions.

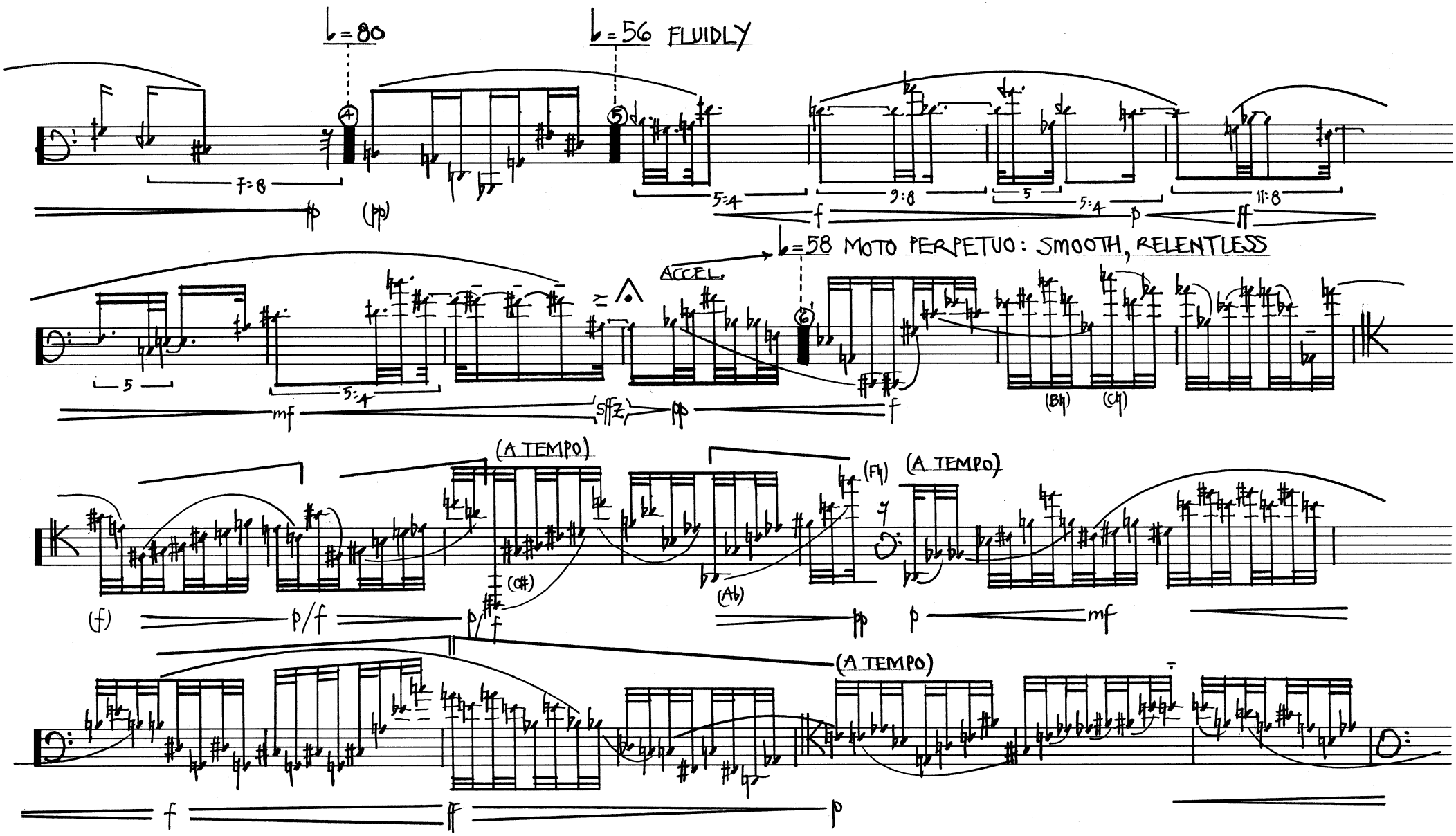
12 In **section 30**, on pages 15-16, the long slow material is intended to highlight the variant tone colours of non-standard fingerings. The superposed circled integers—① etc—indicate alternative fingerings that have different timbres to the standard fingerings (see note **4** above); please do not revert to standard fingerings. ¼ tone fingerings will have their own intrinsic timbres.

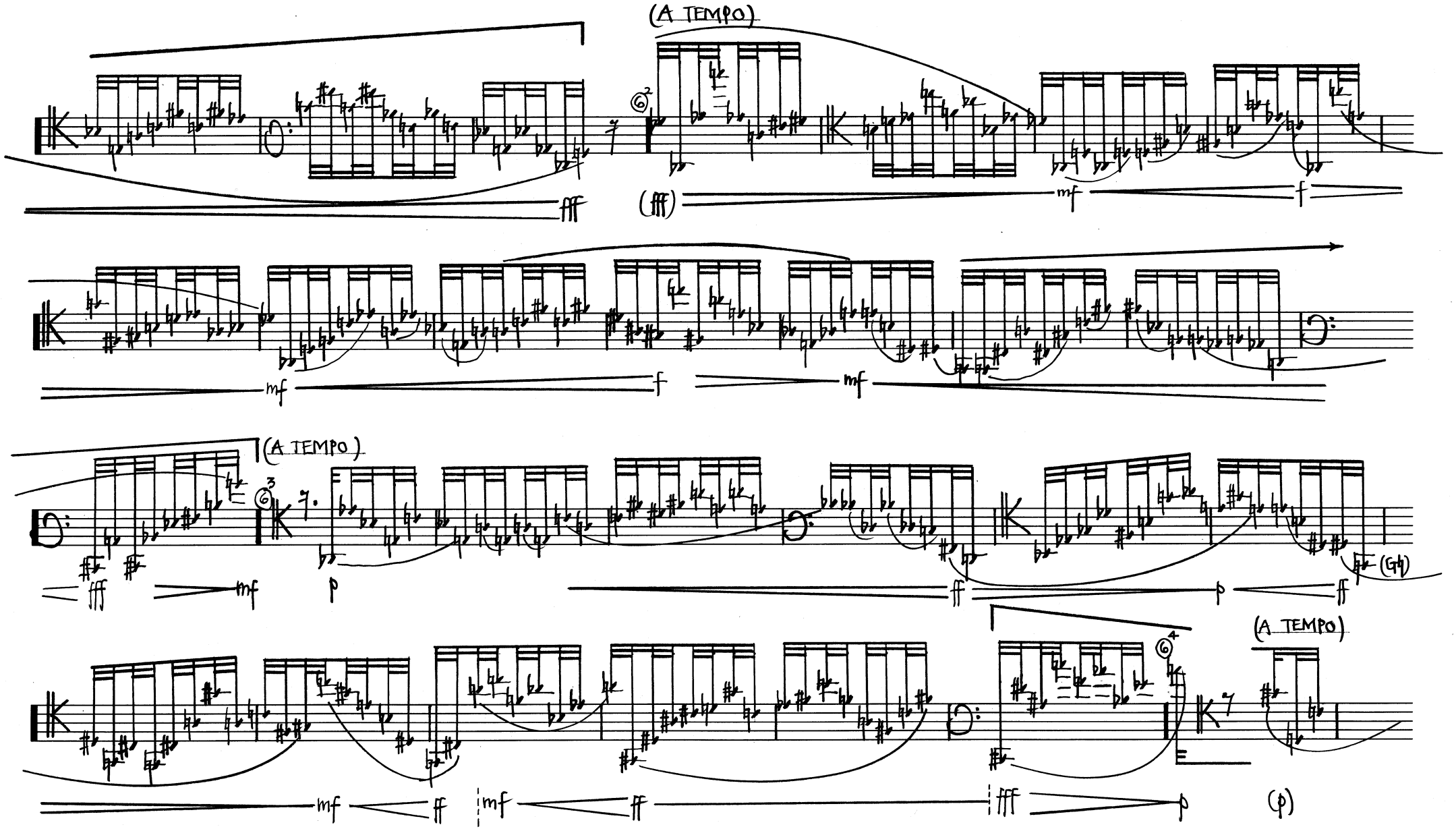
13 In the only singing/playing moment—sections **35/36**—the vocal pitch is indicated by ⬦.

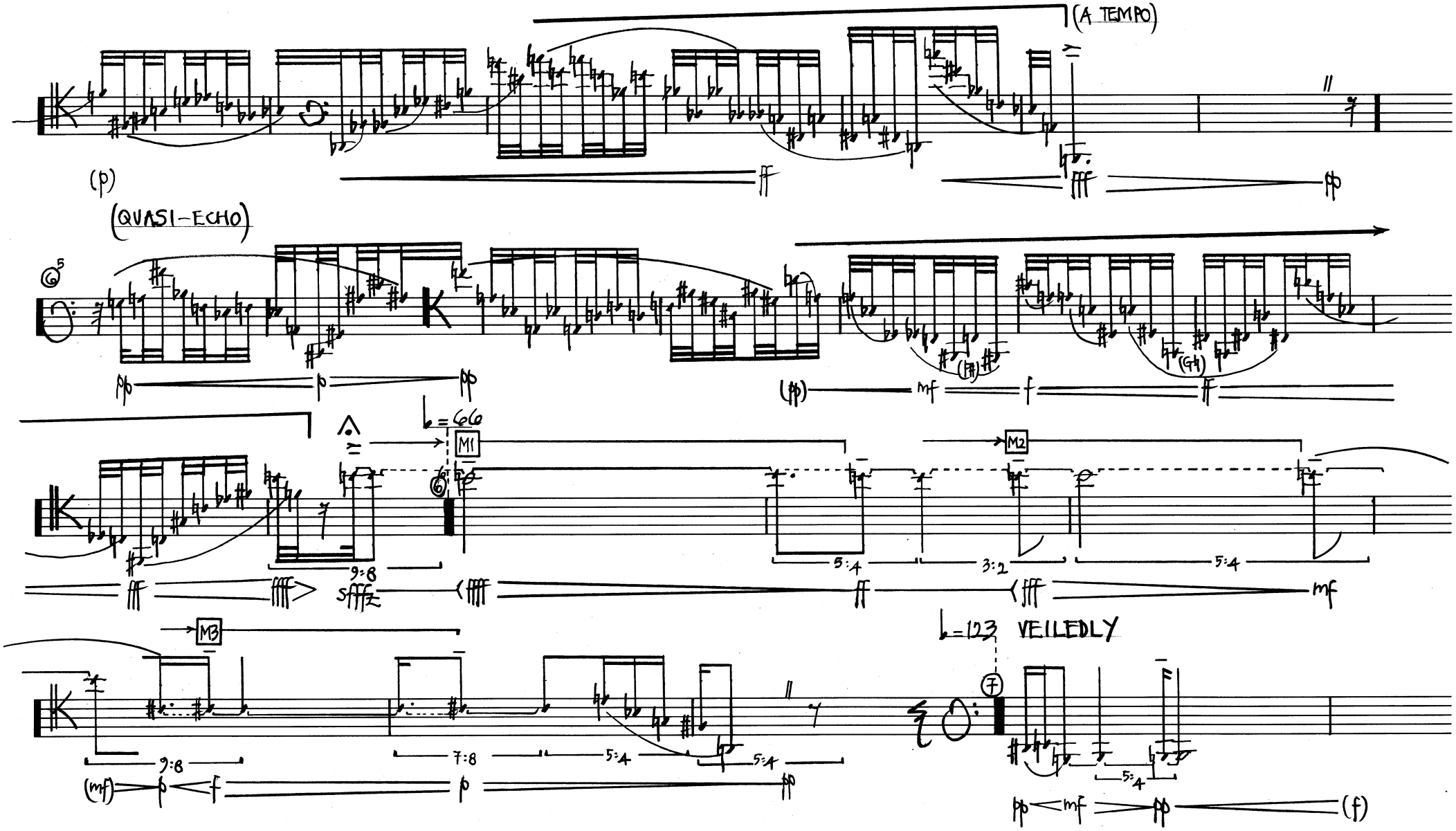
14 **Please note that for two years from the date of public première only James Aylward may perform this piece. After that date the piece becomes available for all performers. To determine whether the exclusivity period has ended contact the composer at https://chrisdench.com/contact/.**

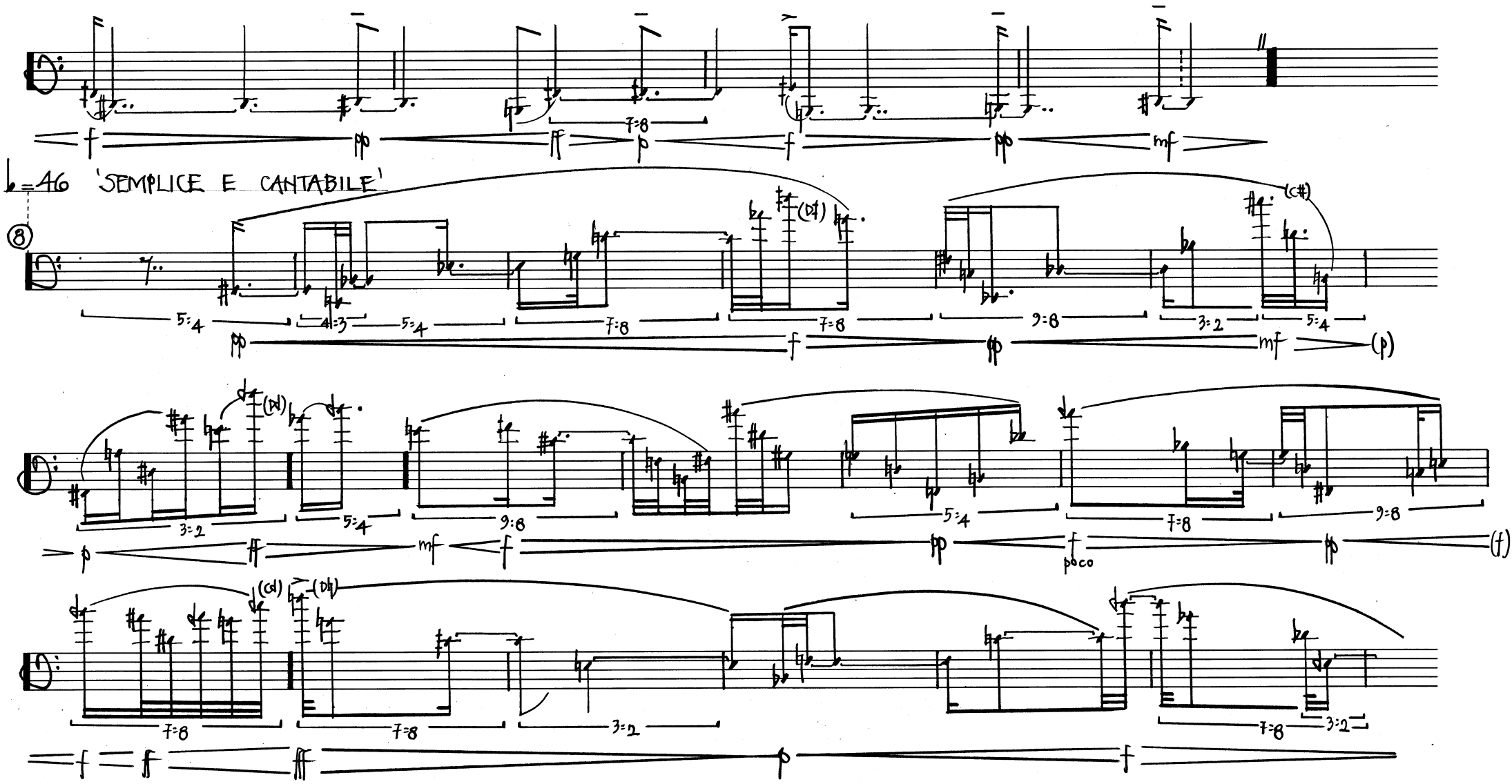
♩= 40 'THEME' — SINUOUS, SMOOTH & MELLOW

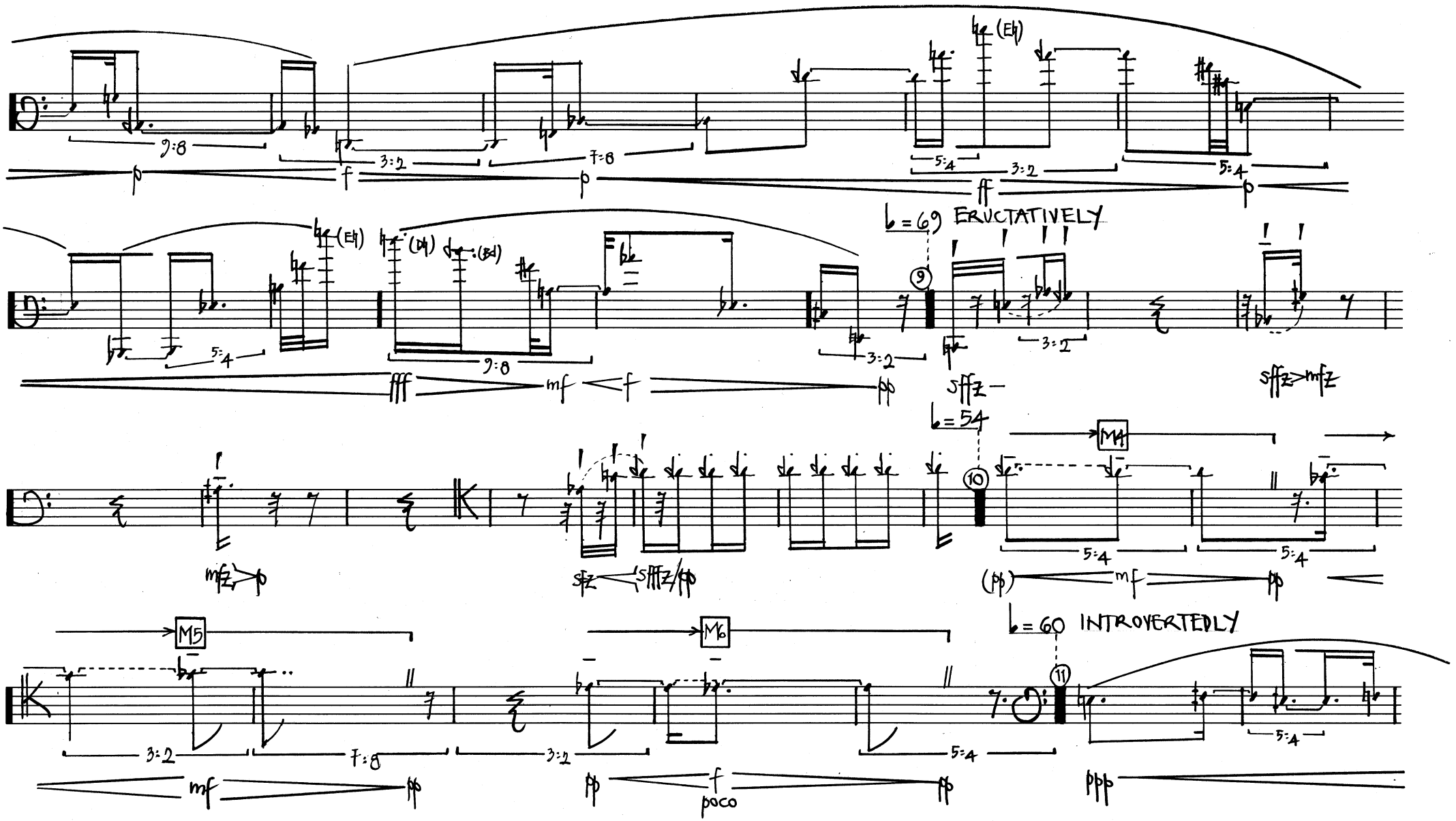


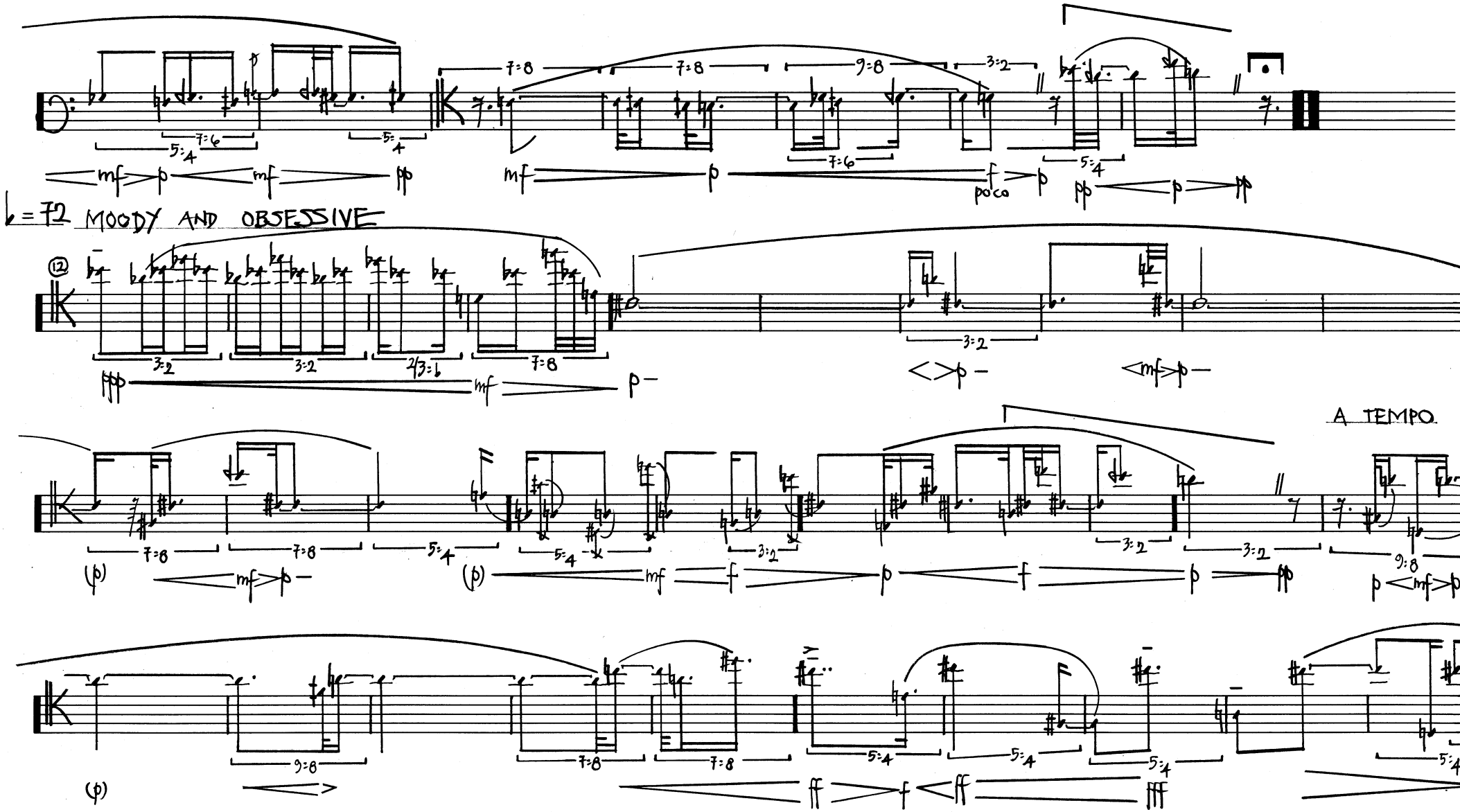

♩=80
♩=56 FLUIDLY
7:8
5:4
9:8
5
5:4
11:8
(pp)
f
p
ff
♩=58 MOTO PERPETUO: SMOOTH, RELENTLESS
ACCEL.
5
5:4
mf
sffz
pp
f
(B♮)
(C♮)
(A TEMPO)
(C♯)
(f)
p/f
p
f
(F♮)
(A TEMPO)
(A♭)
pp
p
mf
(A TEMPO)
f
ff
p

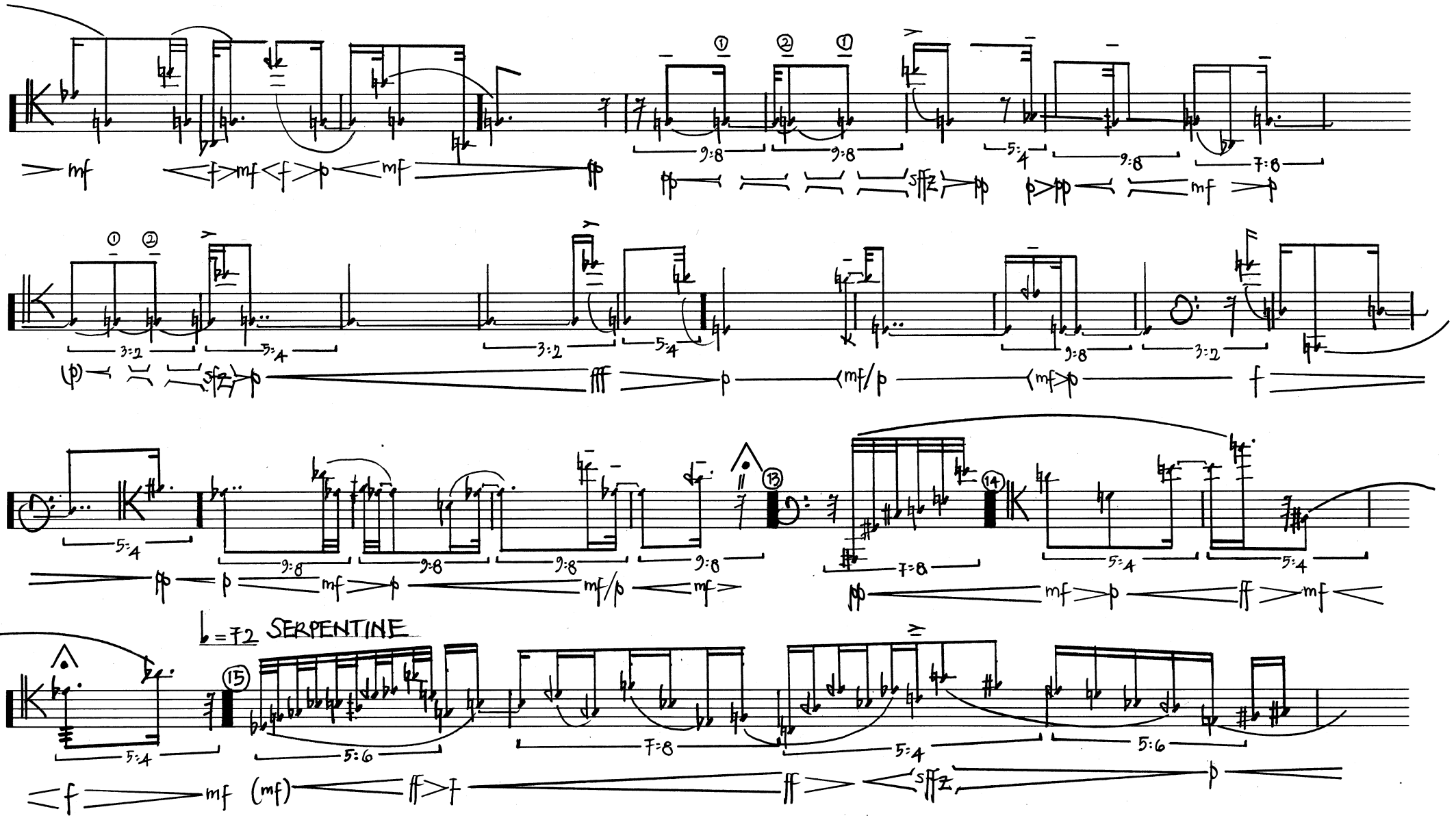

(A TEMPO)
fff
(fff)
mf
f
mf
f
mf
(A TEMPO)
fff
mf
p
ff
p
ff
(Gli)
(A TEMPO)
mf
ff
mf
ff
fff
p
(p)

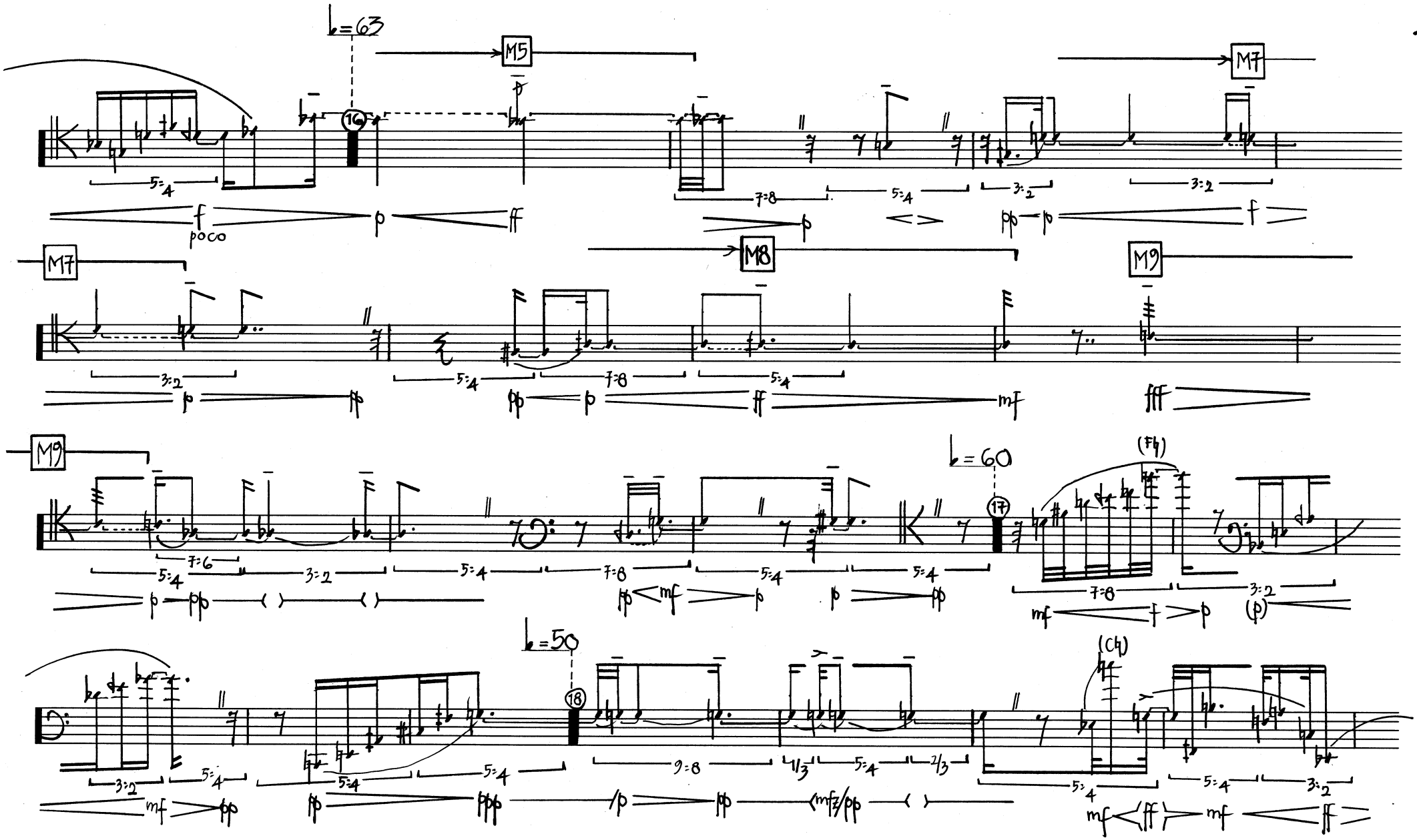

(A TEMPO)
(p)
(QUASI-ECHO)
M1
M2
M3
9:8
5:4
3:2
5:4
9:8
7:8
5:4
5:4
5:4
VEILEDLY
(mf)
(f)

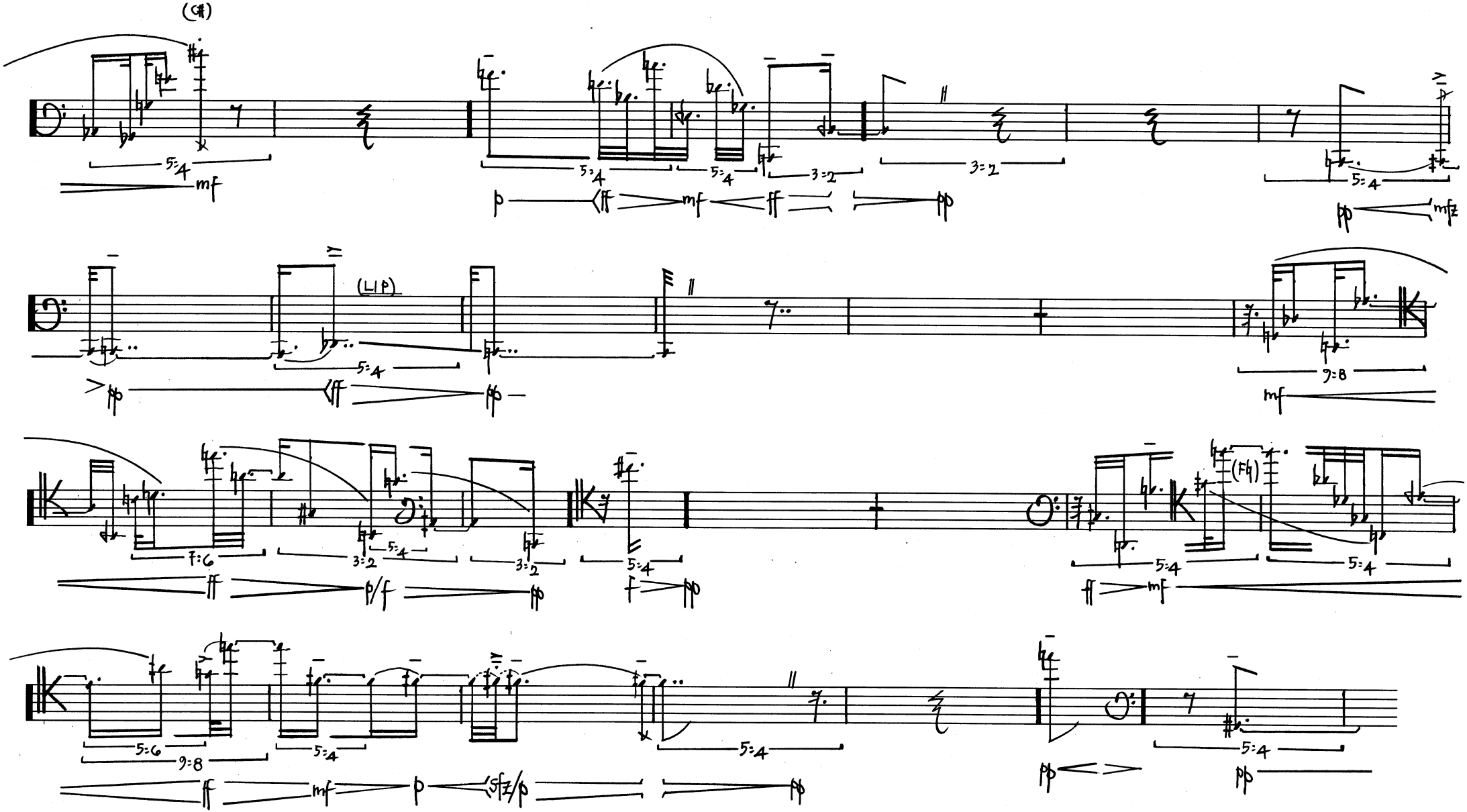

♩=46 'SEMPLICE E CANTABILE'
poco

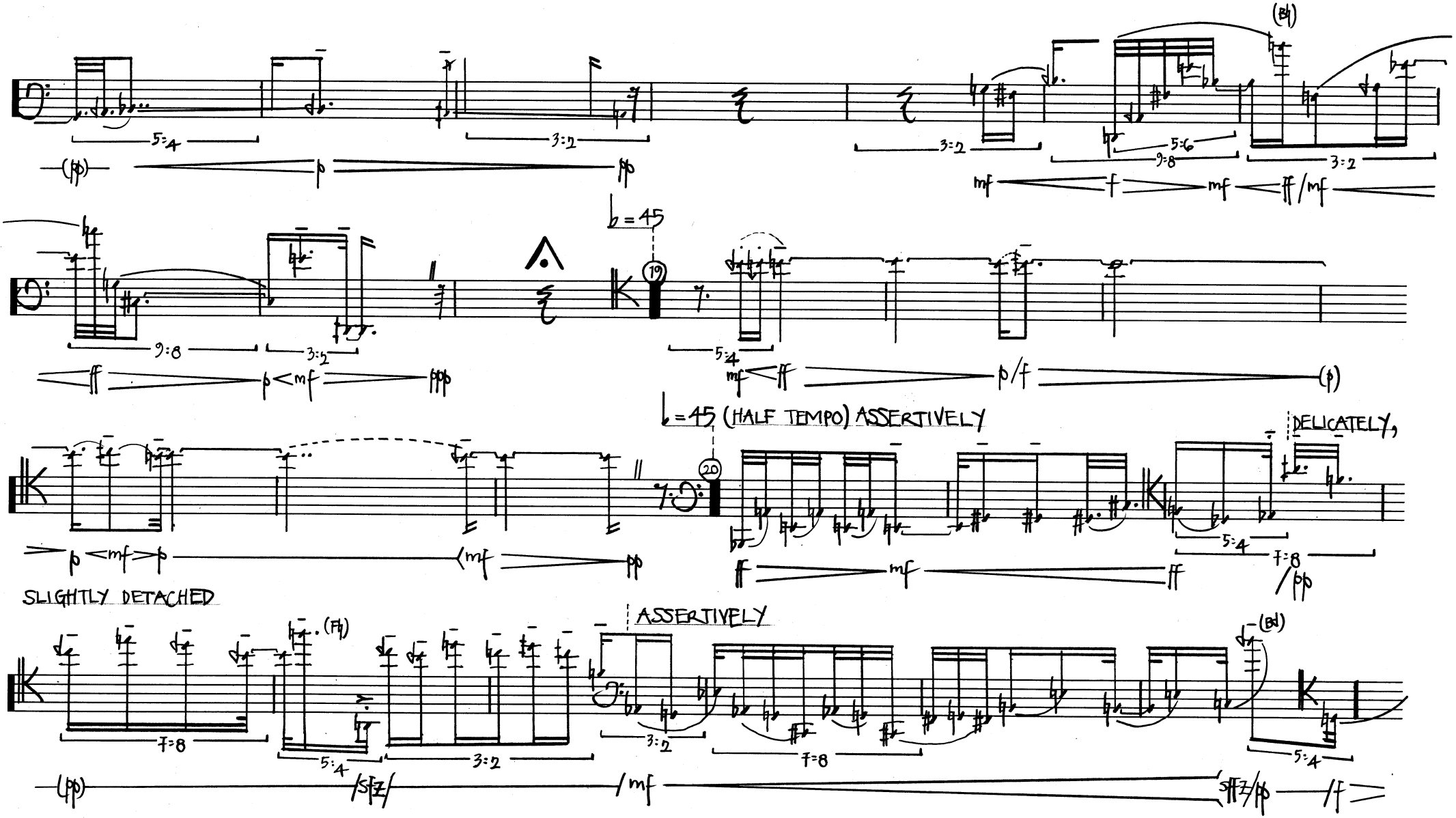

9:8
3:2
7:8
5:4
3:2
5:4
p
f
p
ff
p
(E♮)
♭ = 69 ERUCTATIVELY
(E♮)
(D♮)
(B♮)
5:4
9:8
3:2
3:2
fff
mf
f
pp
sffz
sffz>mfz
♭ = 54
M4
10
5:4
5:4
mfz>p
sfz<sfffz/pp
(pp)
mf
pp
M5
M6
♭ = 60 INTROVERTEDLY
11
3:2
7:8
3:2
5:4
5:4
mf
pp
pp
f
poco
pp
ppp

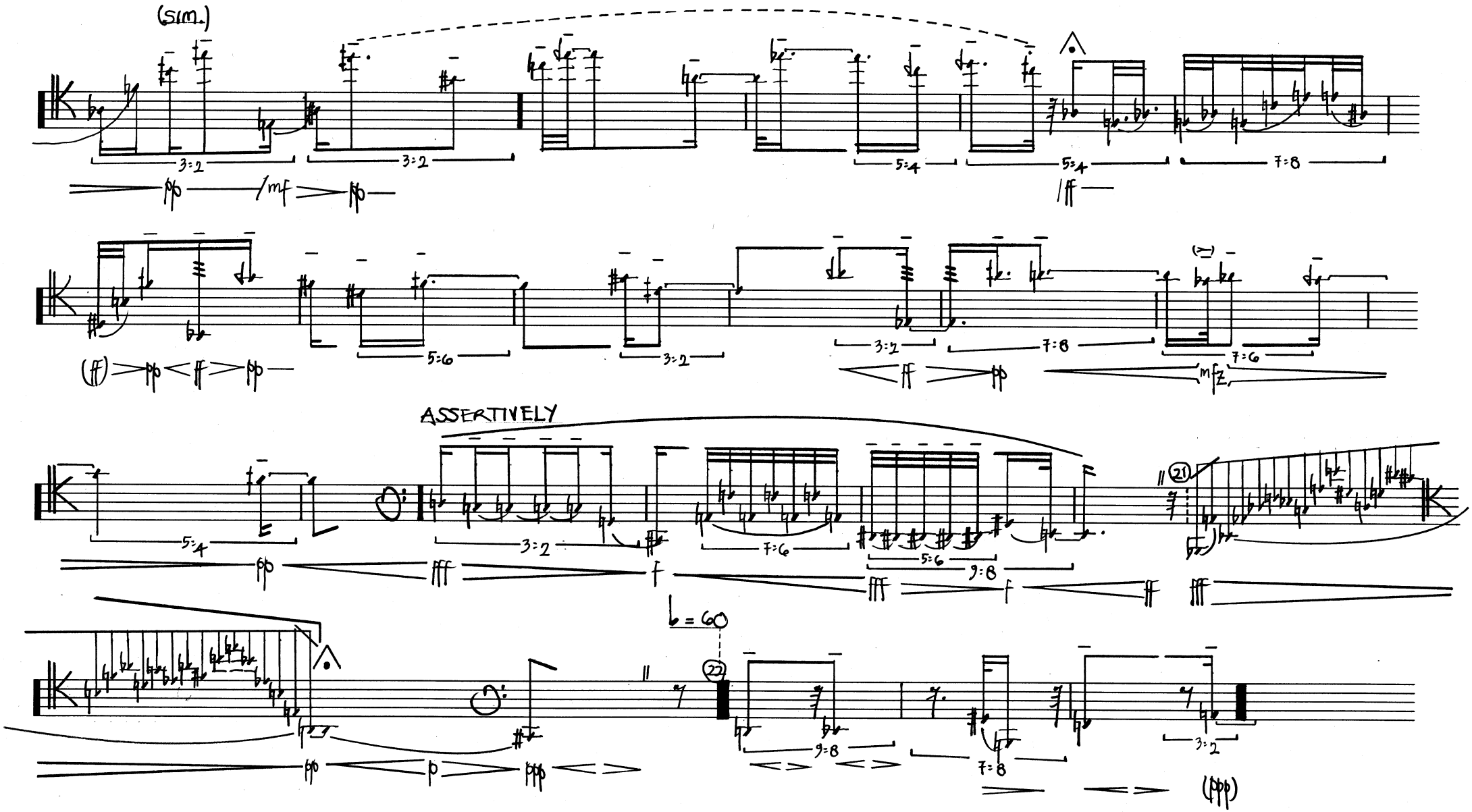

♩=72 MOODY AND OBSESSIVE
12
A TEMPO

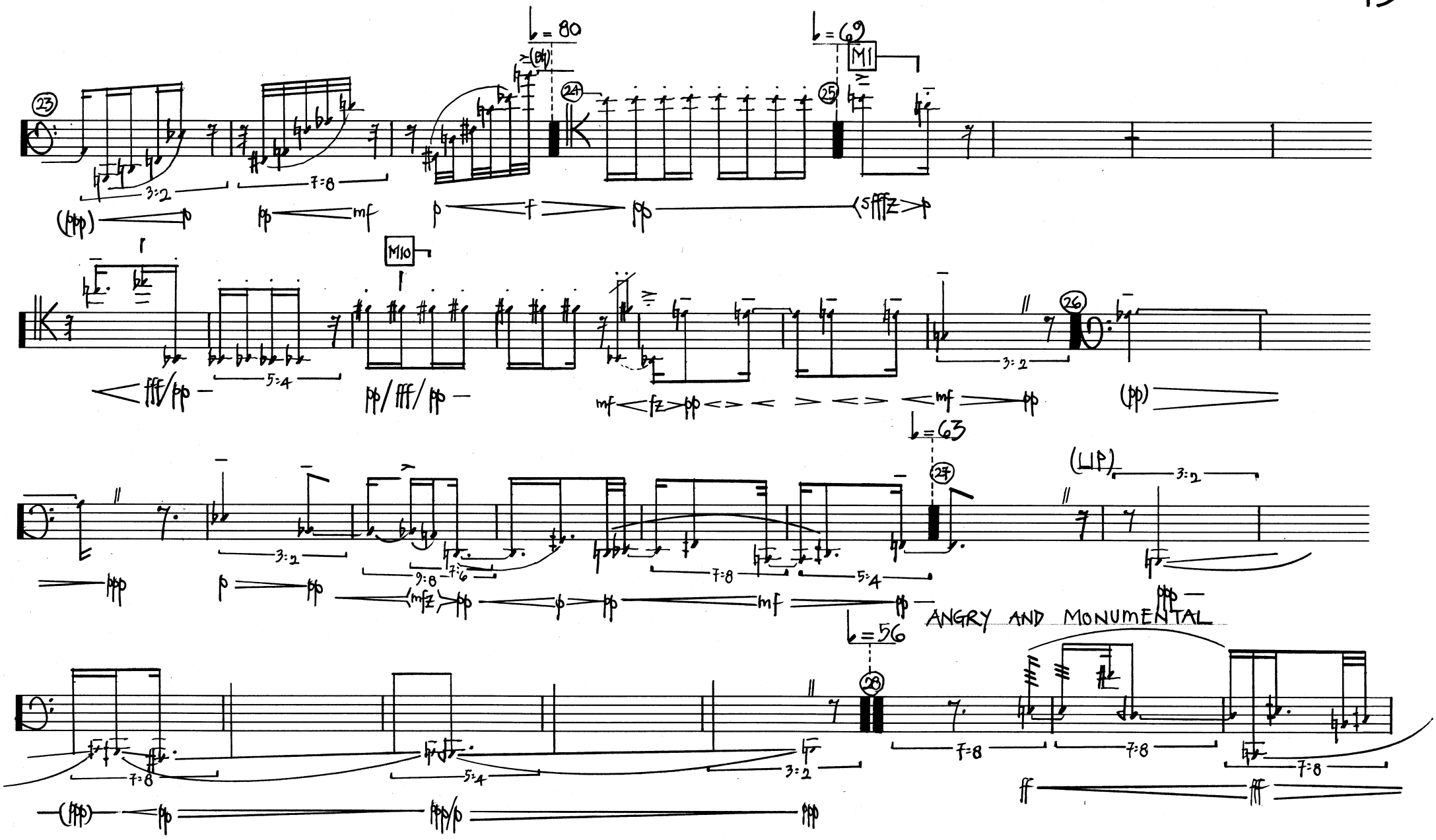

mf
9:8
9:8
5:4
9:8
7:8
3:2
5:4
3:2
5:4
9:8
3:2
5:4
9:8
9:8
9:8
9:8
7:8
5:4
5:4
♩=72 SERPENTINE
5:4
5:6
7:8
5:4
5:6

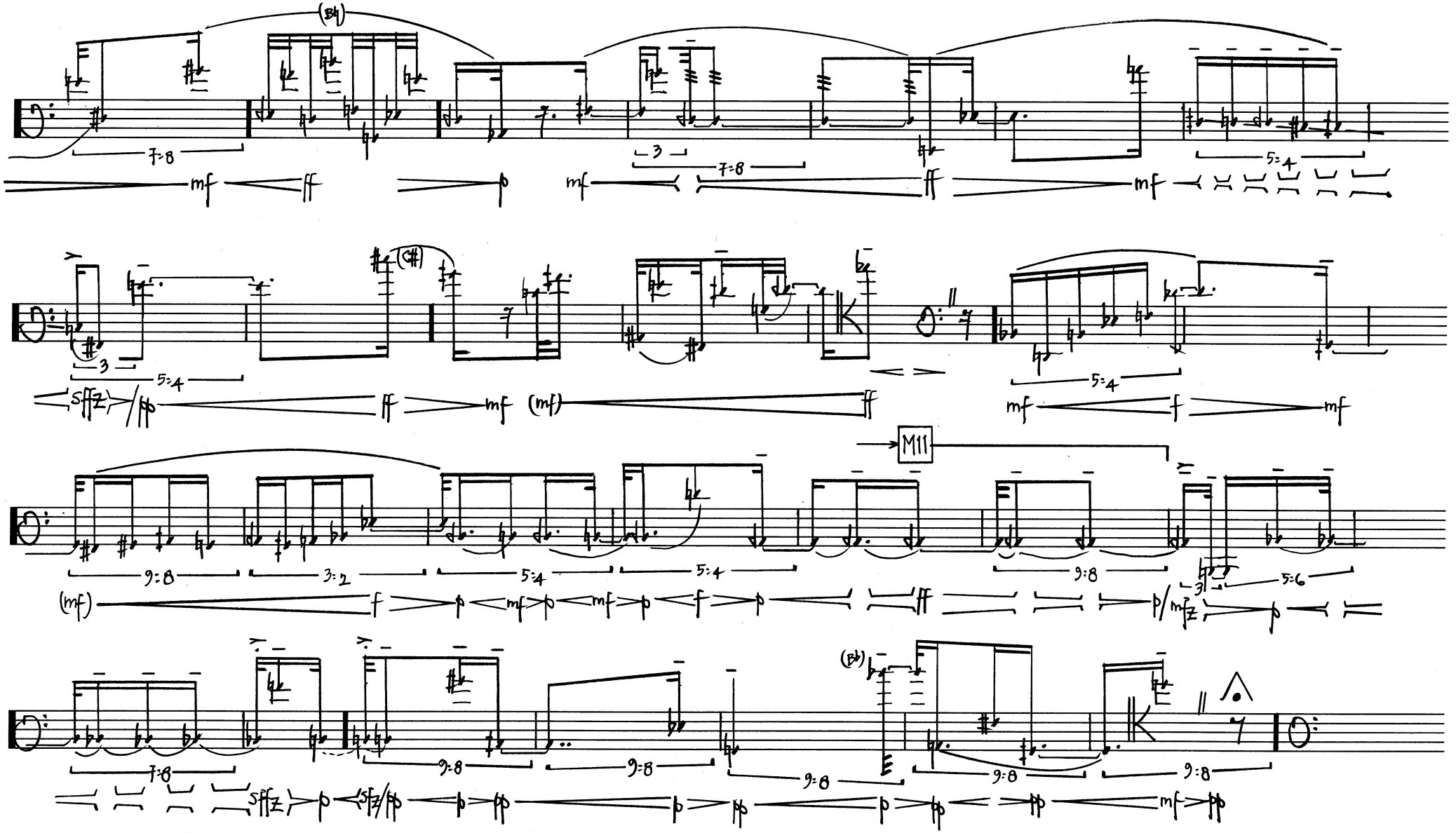

♩=63
M5
M7
16
poco
M7
M8
M9
M9
♩=60
17
(Fl)
18
♩=50
(Cl)

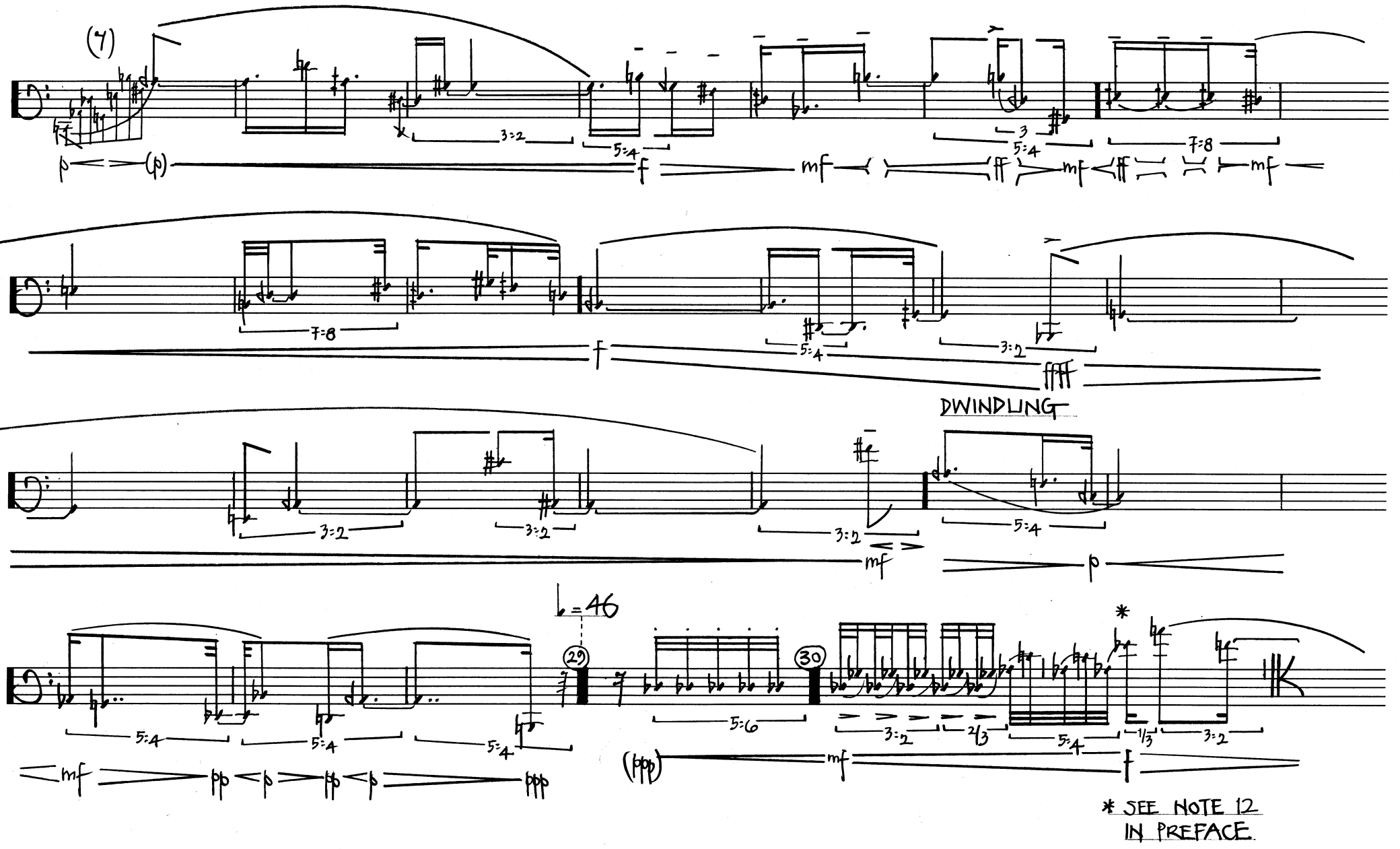

(Cl)
5:4
mf
5:4
5:4
5:4
3:2
3:2
p
ff
mf
ff
pp
5:4
pp
mfz
(Fl)
7:8
mf
7:6
3:2
5:4
3:2
5:4
p/f
pp
f
pp
5:4
ff
mf
5:4
5:6
9:8
5:4
5:4
ff
mf
p
sfz/p
pp
pp
5:4
pp


(Bb)
5:4
3:2
3:2
5:6
9:8
3:2
(pp)
p
pp
mf
f
mf
ff/mf
♩=45
19
9:8
3:2
5:4
ff
p<mf
ppp
mf<ff
p/f
(p)
♩=45 (HALF TEMPO) ASSERTIVELY
20
DELICATELY,
p<mf>p
mf
pp
ff
mf
ff
5:4
7:8
/pp
SLIGHTLY DETACHED
(Fb)
ASSERTIVELY
(Bb)
7:8
5:4
3:2
3:2
7:8
5:4
(pp)
/sfz/
/mf
sffz/fp
ff

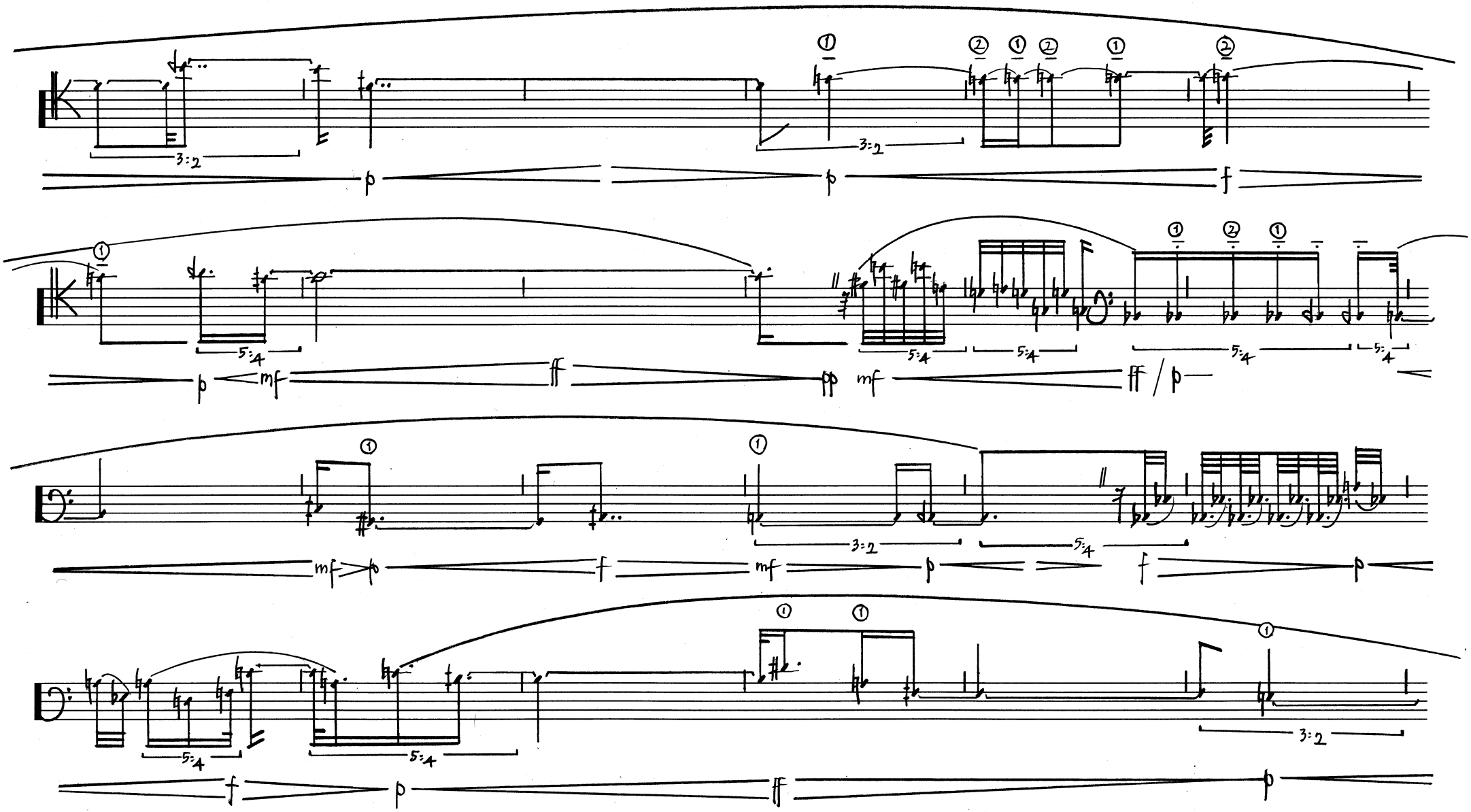

(sim.)
3:2
3:2
5:4
5:4
7:8
pp
mf
pp
ff
(ff)
pp
ff
pp
5:6
3:2
3:2
7:8
ff
pp
mfz
7:6
ASSERTIVELY
5:4
3:2
7:6
5:6
9:8
21
fff
f
fff
f
fff
♩ = 60
22
9:8
7:8
3:2
pp
p
ppp
(ppp)

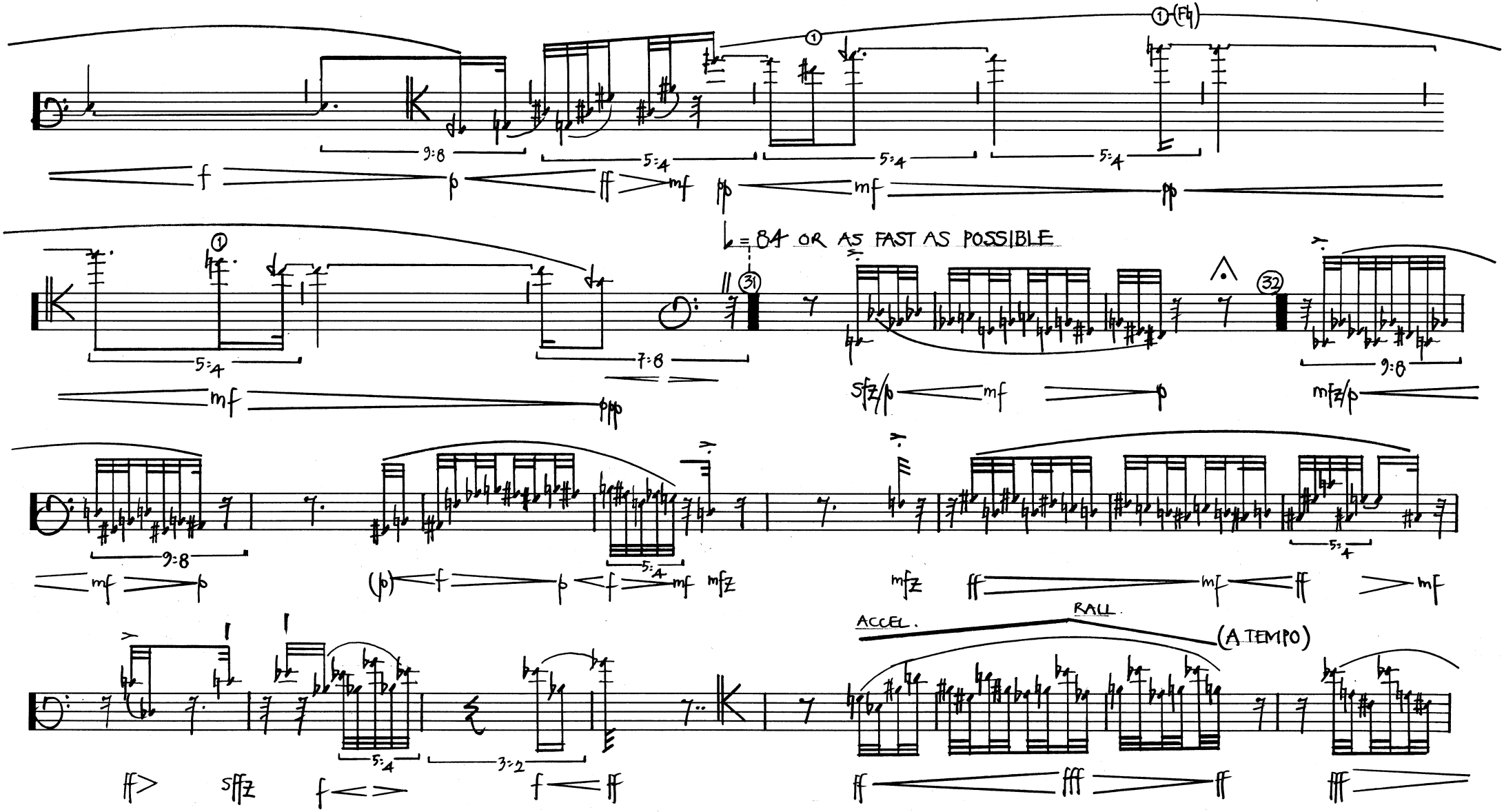

♩= 80
♩= 69
M1
M10
♩= 63
(LIP)
♩= 56
ANGRY AND MONUMENTAL

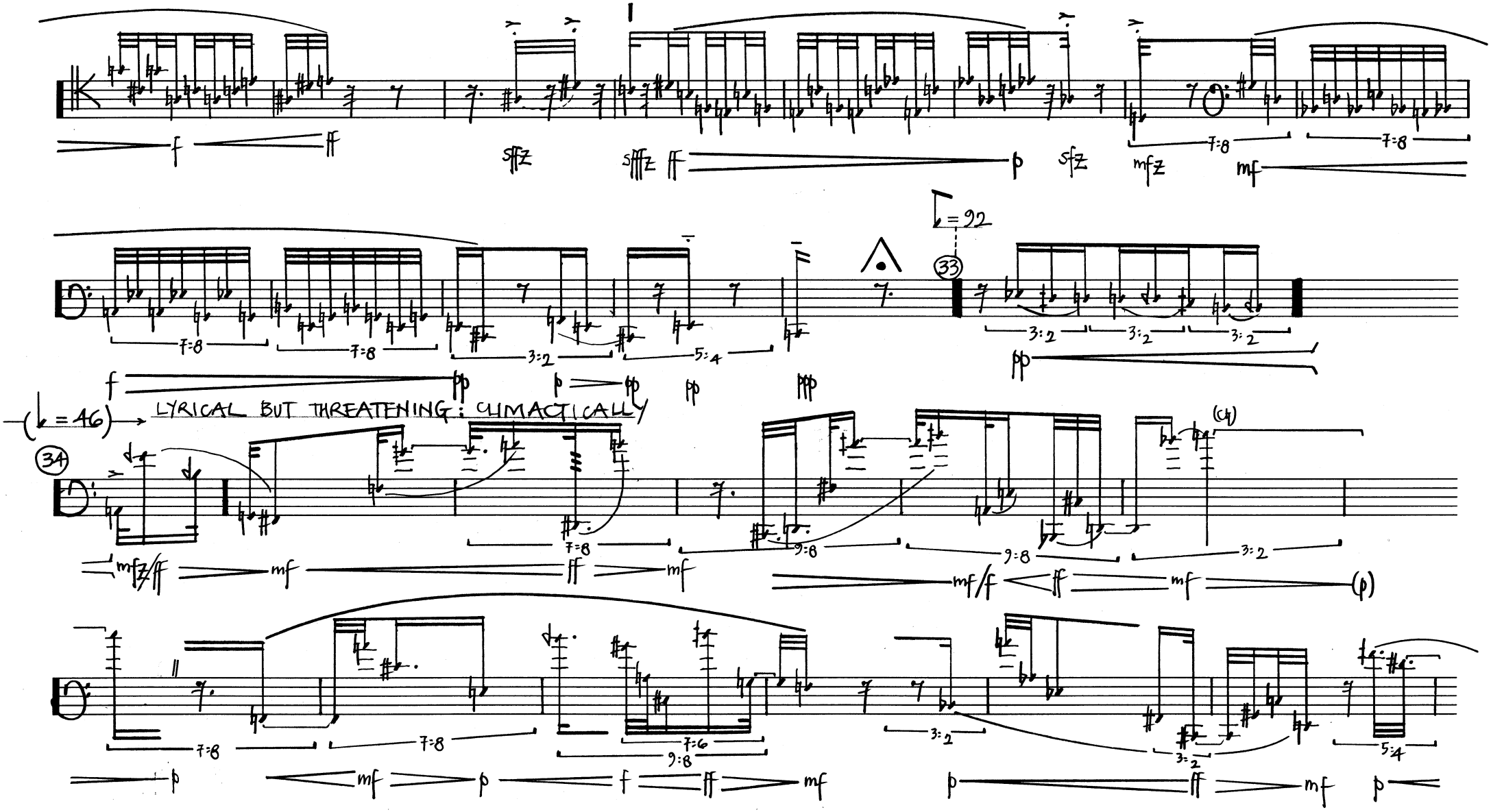

(♮)
7:8
mf
ff
p
mf
3
7:8
ff
mf
5:4
(♯)
3
5:4
sffz
ff
mf
(mf)
ff
5:4
mf
f
mf
M11
9:8
3:2
5:4
5:4
9:8
3
5:6
(mf)
f
p
mf
p
mf
p
f
p
ff
p/mfz
p
7:8
9:8
9:8
9:8
(♭)
9:8
9:8
sffz
p
sfz/♭♭
p
♭♭
p
♭♭
p
♭♭
mf
♭♭

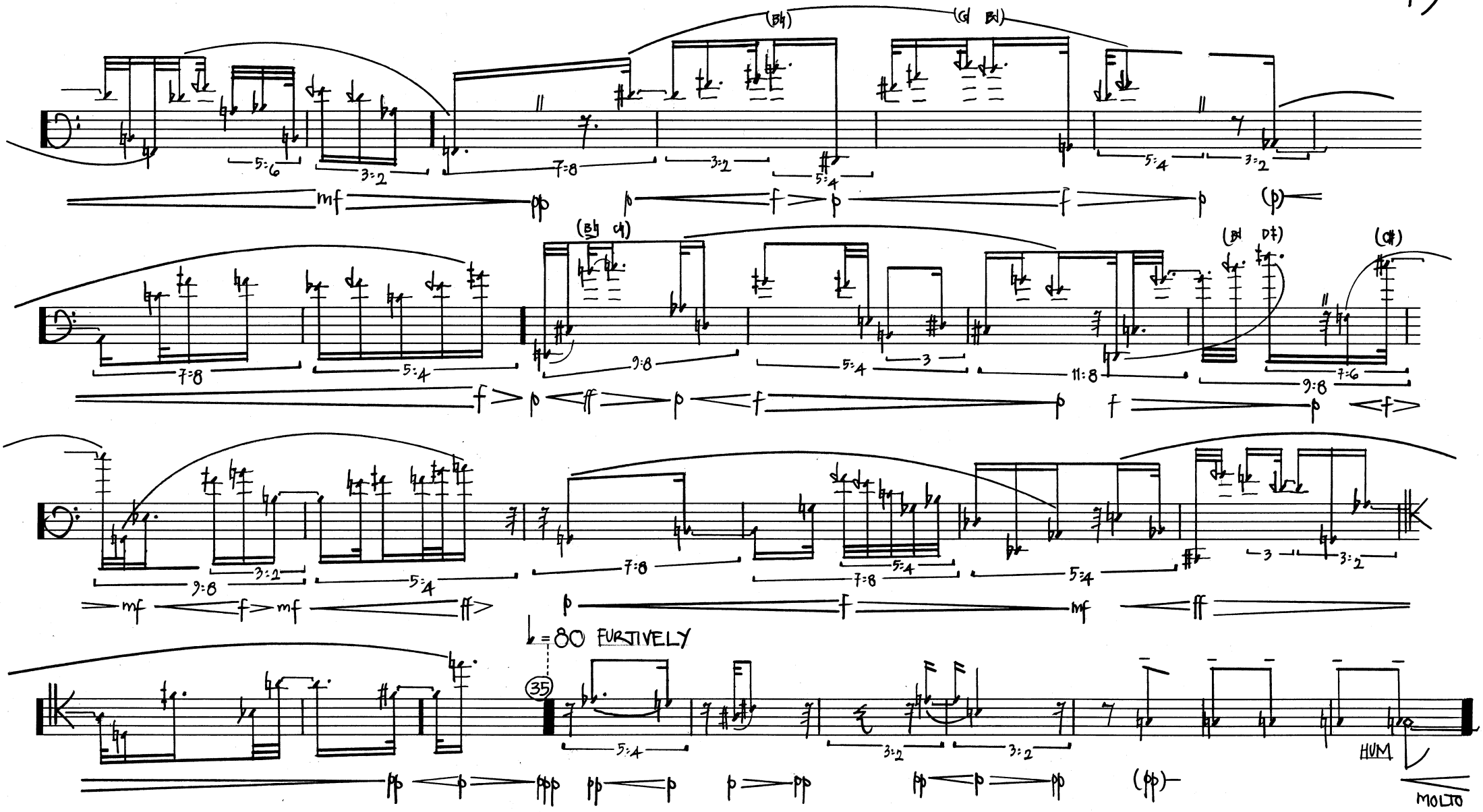


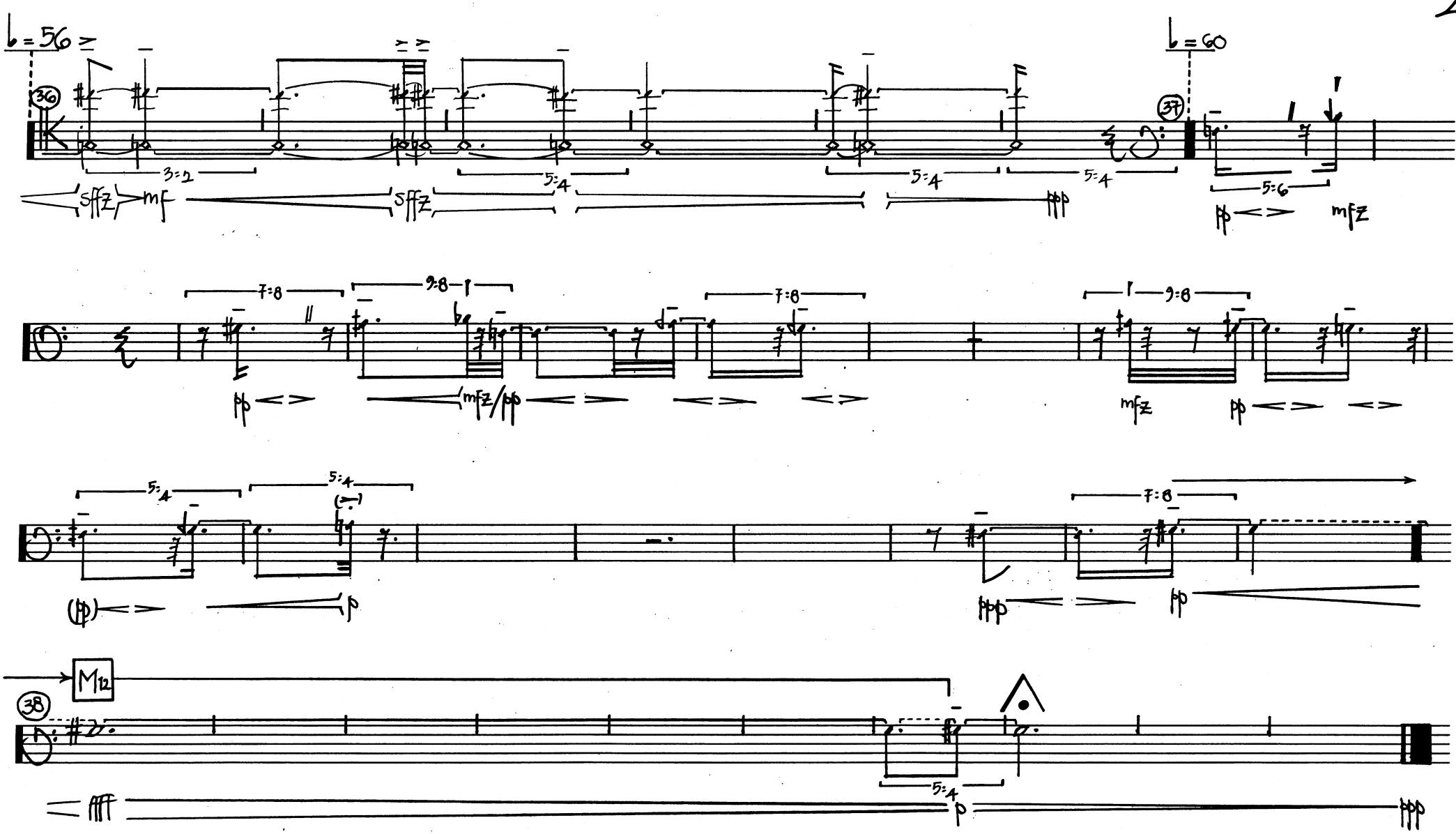
* SEE NOTE 12 IN PREFACE


3:2
p
3:2
p
f
5:4
p
mf
ff
5:4
pp
mf
5:4
5:4
5:4
ff / p
mf
p
f
3:2
mf
p
5:4
f
p
5:4
5:4
f
p
3:2
ff
p


9:8
5:4
5:4
5:4
f
p
ff
mf
pp
mf
pp
♩= 84 OR AS FAST AS POSSIBLE
31
32
5:4
7:8
mf
ppp
sfz/p
mf
p
9:8
mfz/p
9:8
mf
p
(p)
f
p
f
mf
mfz
5:4
mfz
ff
mf
ff
mf
ACCEL.
RALL.
(A TEMPO)
5:4
3:2
ff>
sffz
f
f
ff
ff
fff
ff
fff


♩= 92
33
(♩= 46)
LYRICAL BUT THREATENING; CLIMACTICALLY
34
(cl)


(B♭)
(G B♭)
5:6
3:2
7:8
3:2
5:4
5:4
3:2
mf
pp
p
f
p
f
p
(p)
(B♭ C)
(B♭ D♯)
(C♯)
7:8
5:4
9:8
5:4
3
11:8
9:8
7:6
f
p
ff
p
f
p
f
f
p
9:8
3:2
5:4
7:8
7:8
5:4
5:4
3
3:2
mf
f
mf
ff
p
f
mf
ff
♩=80 FURTIVELY
35
5:4
3:2
3:2
7
HUM
MOLTO
pp
p
ppp
pp
p
p
pp
pp
p
pp
(pp)



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