the effort to return to the cities of the sane

for bass clarinet

Chris Dench

the effort to return to the cities of the sane
(2022)

from the **iso-études (#9)**

for bass clarinet

for Drew Gilchrist

In the cabinets are displays of tableware and china from the old hospital. Beneath the sign 'Art at St Elizabeth's' … are lopsided figurines in glazed clay, a teddy bear, a bus, a sunken house. They are marked 'favourite places', 'favourite animals' and 'trusted people'. … the activity of making was held to be curative, and what is celebrated here is not the objects but that activity, long ago, and the effort to return to the cities of the sane.
—*The Bughouse*, Daniel Swift, 2017, p123 .

duration: ~10'

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Note: Drew Gilchrist has exclusivity on this work for **two years** from the date of first performance

Performance notes:

1 **Accidentals** only apply to the notes they immediately precede, except in the case of rapid repetitions or pulsing where they continue to apply until a new pitch is introduced.

2 Metronomic tempi given in the score are abstract reflections of the architecture, and consequently ***suggestions***. Take all sections at speeds that seem idiomatic rather than slavishly follow the metronome—effect is more important than exactitude—with interpretative tempo choices and a judicious use of *rubato*.

3 The **tempi** are also performance indicators. The five tiers are:

♪ = 96: these sections are the least linear and should be performed somewhat disjunctly;
♩ = 90: should be the least seemingly preconsidered—the performance should veer towards 'disorder';
♩ = 63: the first transitional ones, they should oscillate between 'order' and 'disorder';
♩ = 56: second transitional ones, where 'orderliness' slightly dominates over 'disorder';
♩ = 58: the most 'orderly', with the least sense of strain.

No matter what actual tempo the player ends up adopting, these characteristic behaviours should be borne in mind.

4 **Microtones**: certain sections of this piece use 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. 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.

5 **Dynamics**—there are ten degrees of dynamic in this piece:

pppp—ppp—pp—p—mf—f—ff—fff—ffff—fffff

Dynamics should be not be treated as a simple linear soft→loud: they function as variations in the *local* context. Note that there is no *mp* dynamic: ***mf*** is midway between ***p*** and ***f***. The extreme dynamics are rarely used and should be considered primarily rhetorical, as 'stage-whisper' and 'cry out' respectively. *Sforzati* increase in loudness: ***mfz—fz—sfz***, etc. Adjacent dynamics, whether or not separated by a slash [/], mean an abrupt change.

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

A **o** at either end of a hairpin indicates emergence from or a fade to silence.

6 A double-slash // indicates a complete absence of linkage between the preceding and the subsequent music. Note that no pause is required, just a psychological reset.

7 **Fluttertongue** is indicated by ≋ in the stem. Rapidly repeated notes are written out in full.

8 The dagger notehead ➢ indicates **slaptongue**. The slaptongue action is considered to have an intrinsically brief duration.

9 **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*.

10 **Prosodic indications**: the indications above the beam have to do with metric stress. The dagger mark ˊ indicates a strong stress, and ˘ indicates a weak; they can appear in either order. The dynamics should underline these patterns.

11 The symbol 🄿 indicates that the attack is to be untongued. Some glissandi are pulsed; these are indicated by stems at the 'push' point, and the symbol 🄿 above to mark diaphragm only.

12 There are three kinds of **multiphonic** used in this piece:

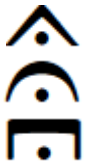
1 harmonics—all harmonics are to be treated as multiphonics; the fundamentals should be audible, and if possible some additional sound complexes. These are all marked with a filled-in circle: ●. There are no plain harmonics.

2 transition multiphonics—these use the fingering of the tied-in pitch, or one close to it, so that they can be elided into (and often out of) without discontinuity. They are indicated by a capital **M** in a box and arrows to indicate the transitions. These should be very dense, with too complex an interior to resolve into specific pitches. Given the sonic differences between makers, and even specific instruments, I have chosen to leave the details of these to the player.

3 dyad multiphonics—these are quiet close-intervallic multiphonics that consist (primarily) of two discernible pitches. I have made no attempt to notate these very precisely; they will differ slightly from instrument to instrument. As these are specific dyads I have provided fingerings below, three of which are to be found on Heather Roche's bass clarinet dyads list. Thanks Heather!

① Heather Roche 101 ② with low C♯ + register key ③ HR 107 ④ HR 279

13 There are three degrees of **pause** in this piece:



indicating a brief suspension of activity;
indicating a medium-long hiatus, a rhetorical beat of several seconds; and
meaning a long pause.

The pause signs vary in size as a rough guide to duration, but the details are left to the player.

14 There are a pair of idiolectic signs that are specific to this piece:

A glissando-like line with no indicated start pitch but a notated rhythm is a **scoop**, a slide up to the succeeding pitch, starting wherever is comfortable for the player. Similarly a line extending from the note that rises slightly and then falls—or vice versa—is a microtonal pitch bend; just how extensive is left to the player's discretion.

The sign indicates that the player should hit the initial pitch square, but then appear to struggle to maintain it—slight discontinuous microtonal and dynamic wander is required, the microdetail being left to the player. The gesture should suggest *impatience* or '*barely under control*'-ness. If the dark and light blobs are reversed start the pitch disturbedly and become stable.

15 **Cleanness**: where notes are clearly configured as distinct, *détaché*, they should be played cleanly. Large intervallic, cross-register leaps do not need to be so precise; a certain amount of "noise" is acceptable, directly proportional to the difficulty/extremeness of the material.

Interpretative remarks:

The subject matter of this piece is obsession and melancholy. The music has a manic, incessant, character and should always feel a tad more driven than is tolerable. This 'hyper' quality can be allowed to retreat in the slower sections, but should always resume prematurely. The ending should feel like an abrupt cessation.

Microtones should be sensed as a momentary instability, a dizziness. The large leaps should have a whiplash-like quality, and the built-in discontinuities of the musical texture should be emphasised.

But, please, also try to bring out the beauties of the pitch and rhythmic shapes—the lyricism just under the surface..

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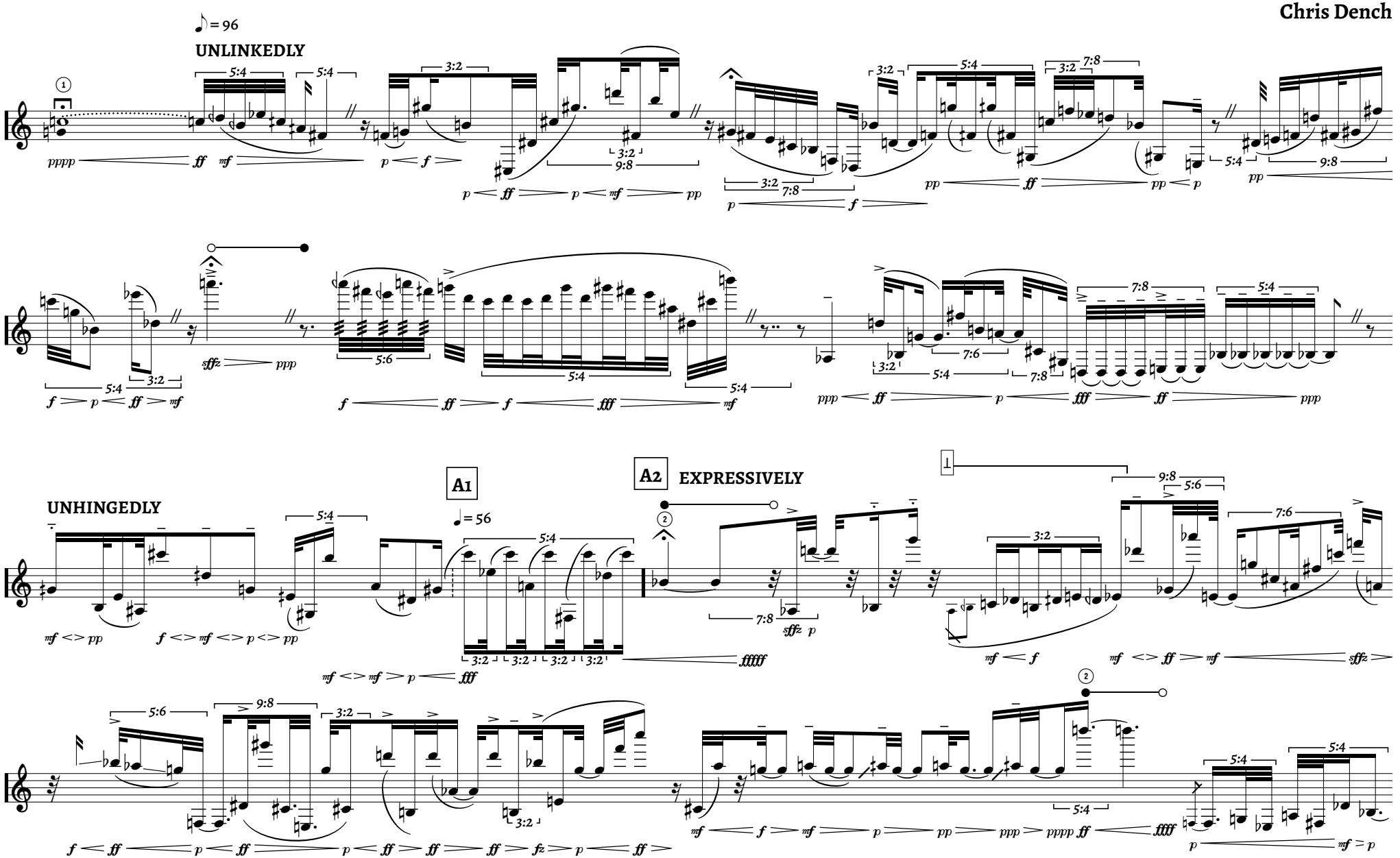
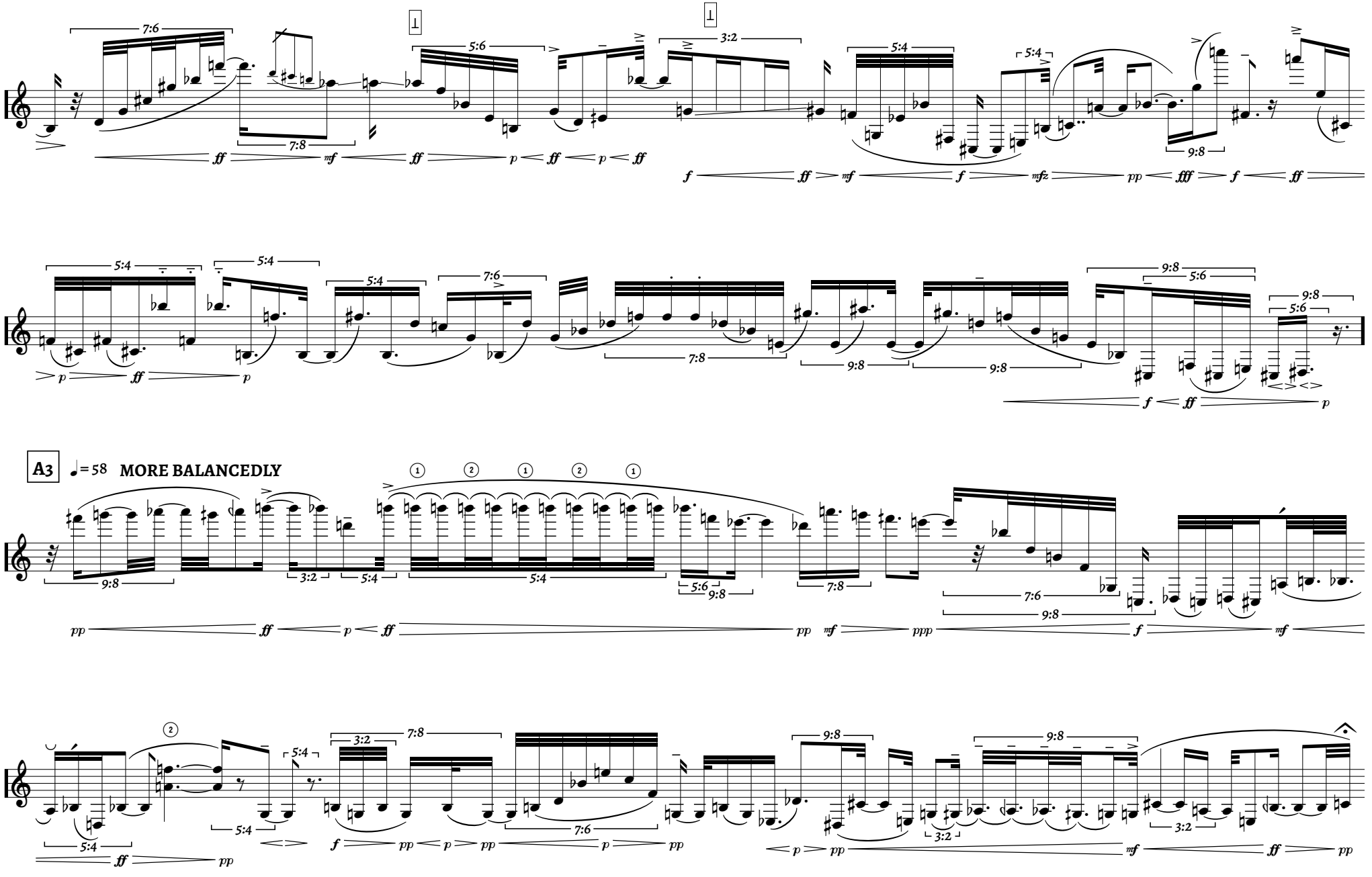
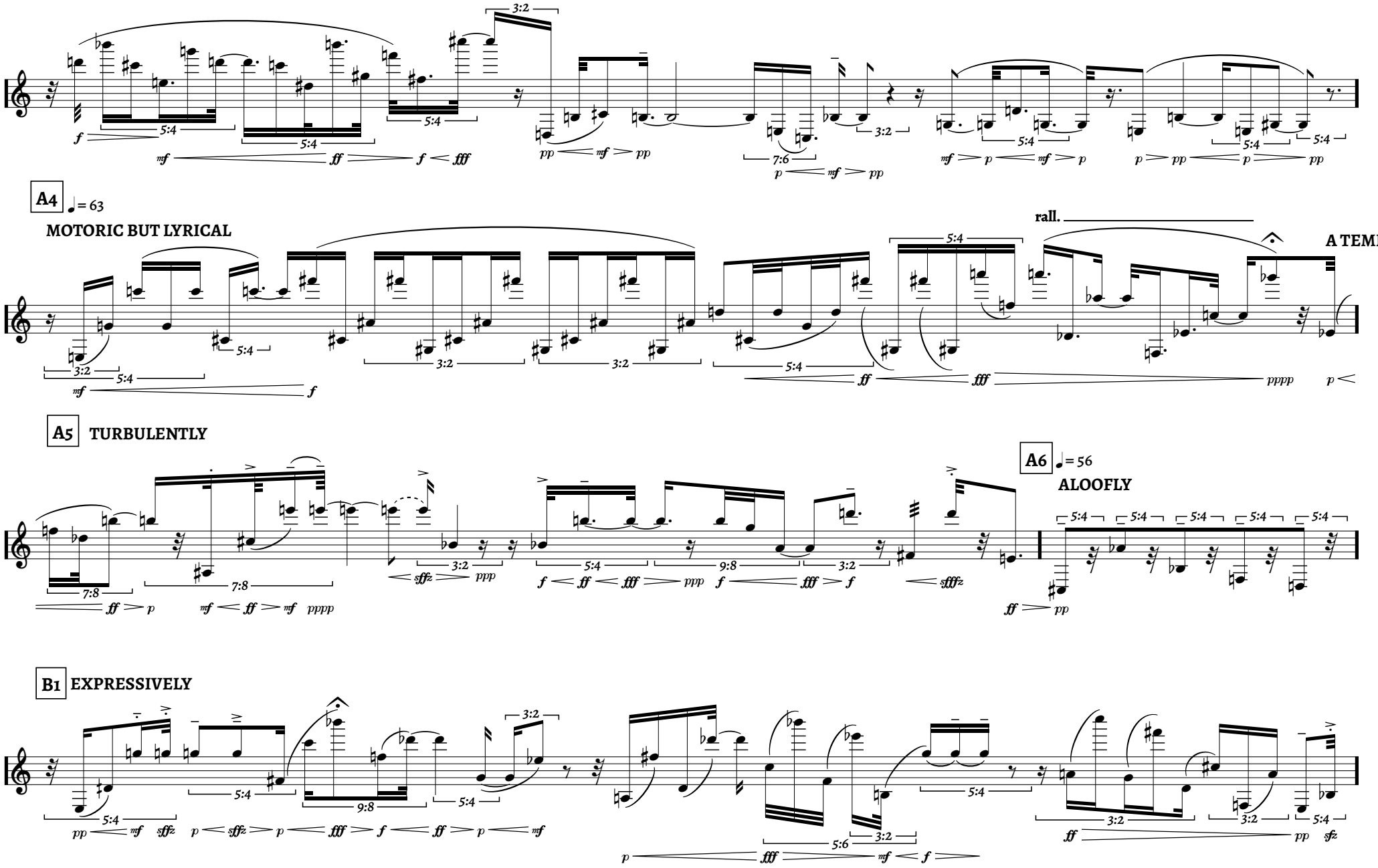
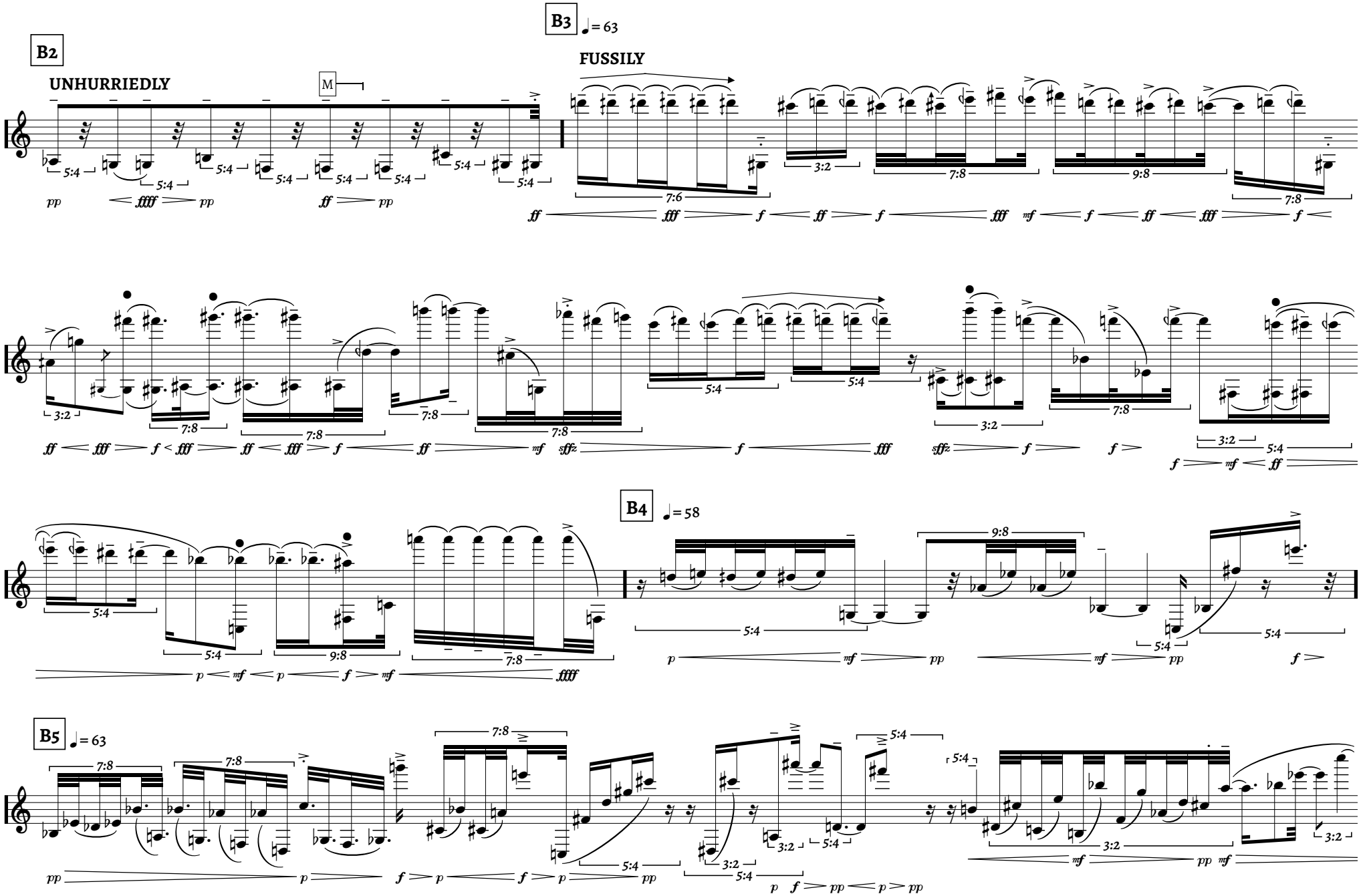
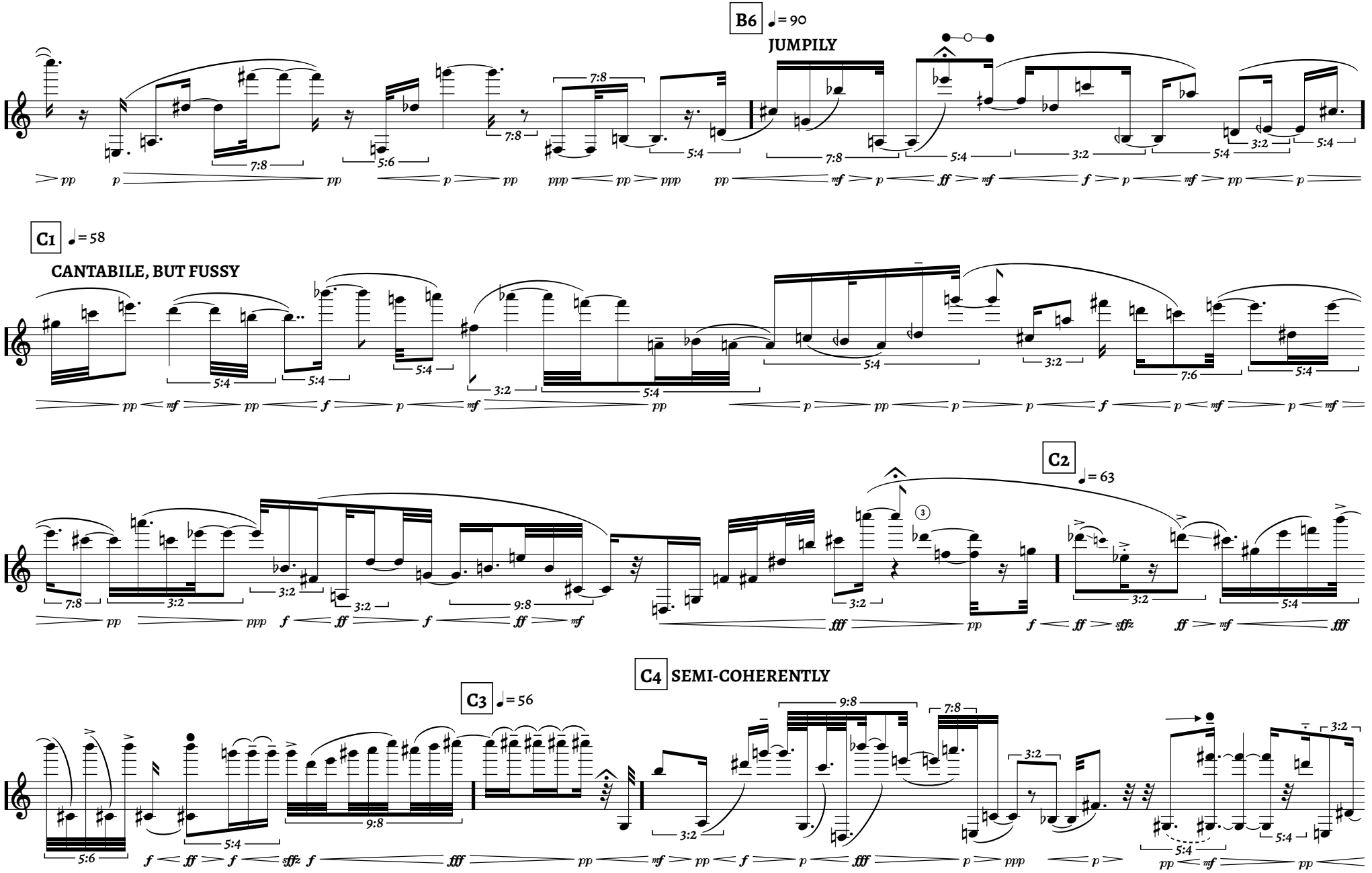
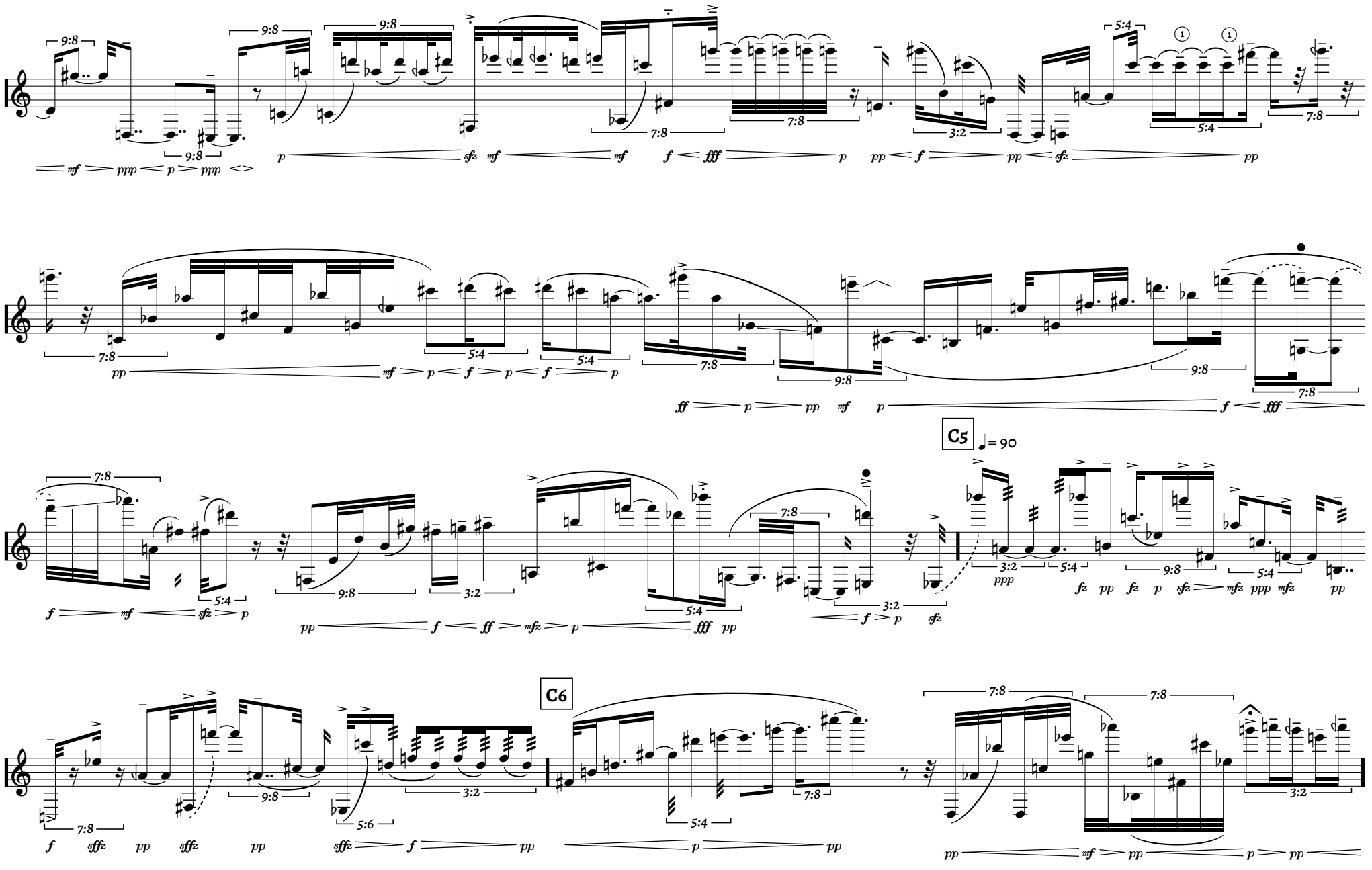


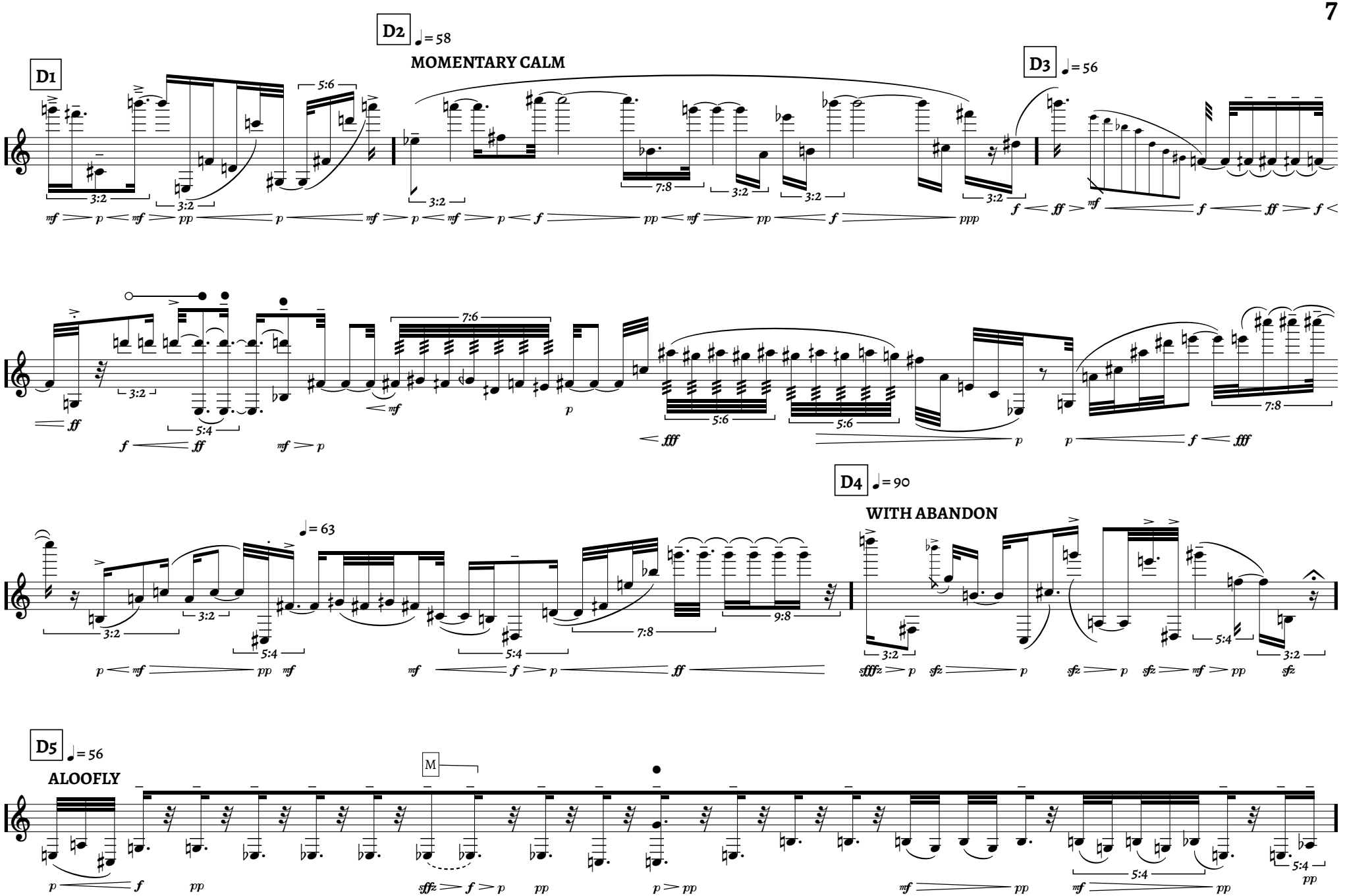

A3
♩= 58
MORE BALANCEDLY


A4
♩= 63
MOTORIC BUT LYRICAL
rall.
A TEMPO
A5
TURBULENTLY
A6
♩= 56
ALOOFLY
B1
EXPRESSIVELY


B2
UNHURRIEDLY
M
B3
♩= 63
FUSSILY
B4
♩= 58
B5
♩= 63

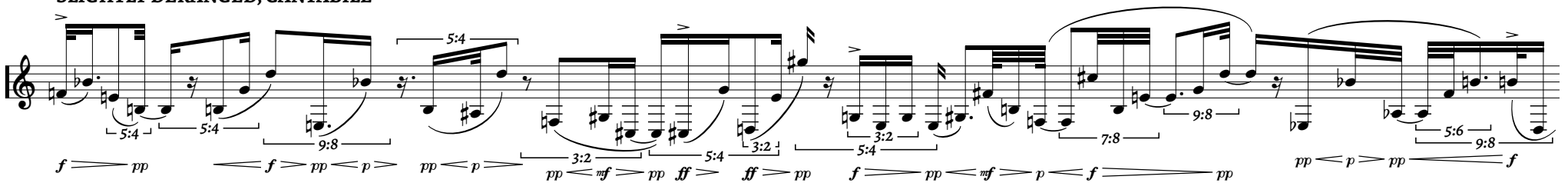

B6
♩= 90
JUMPILY
C1
♩= 58
CANTABILE, BUT FUSSY
C2
♩= 63
C3
♩= 56
C4
SEMI-COHERENTLY


C5
♩= 90
C6

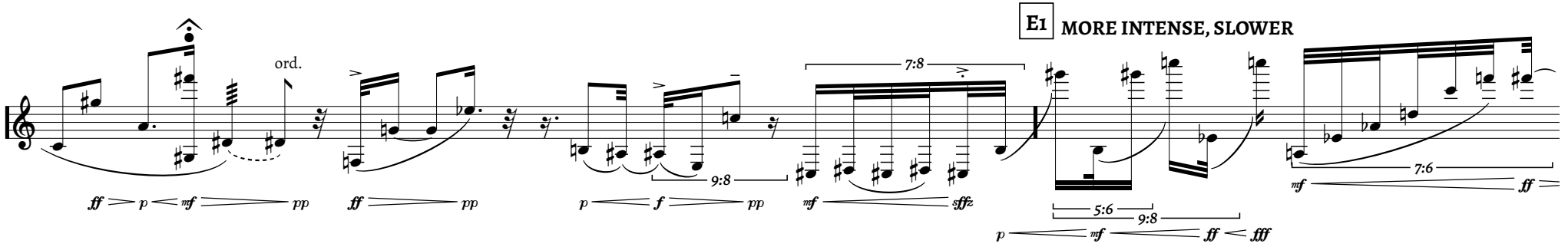

D1
D2
♩= 58
MOMENTARY CALM
D3
♩= 56
D4
♩= 90
WITH ABANDON
♩= 63
D5
♩= 56
ALOOFLY
M

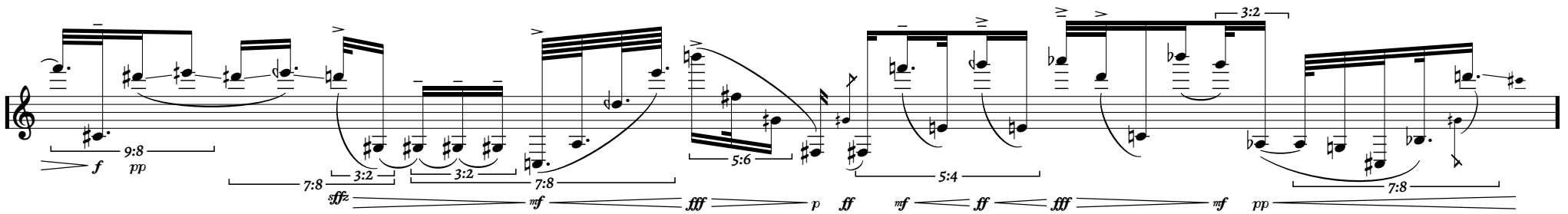
D6 ♩= 63 or slower

SLIGHTLY DERANGED, CANTABILE



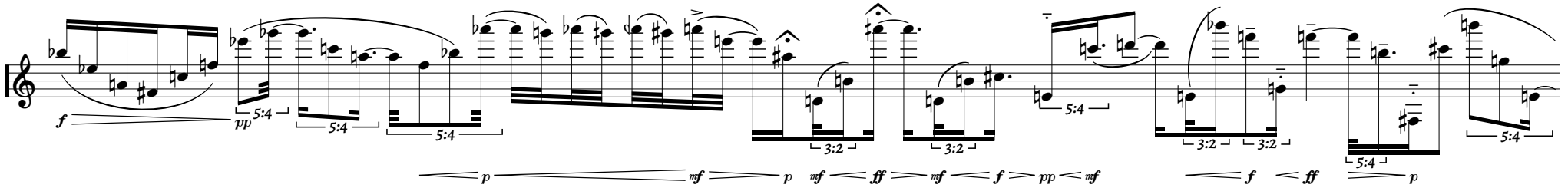
E1 **MORE INTENSE, SLOWER**

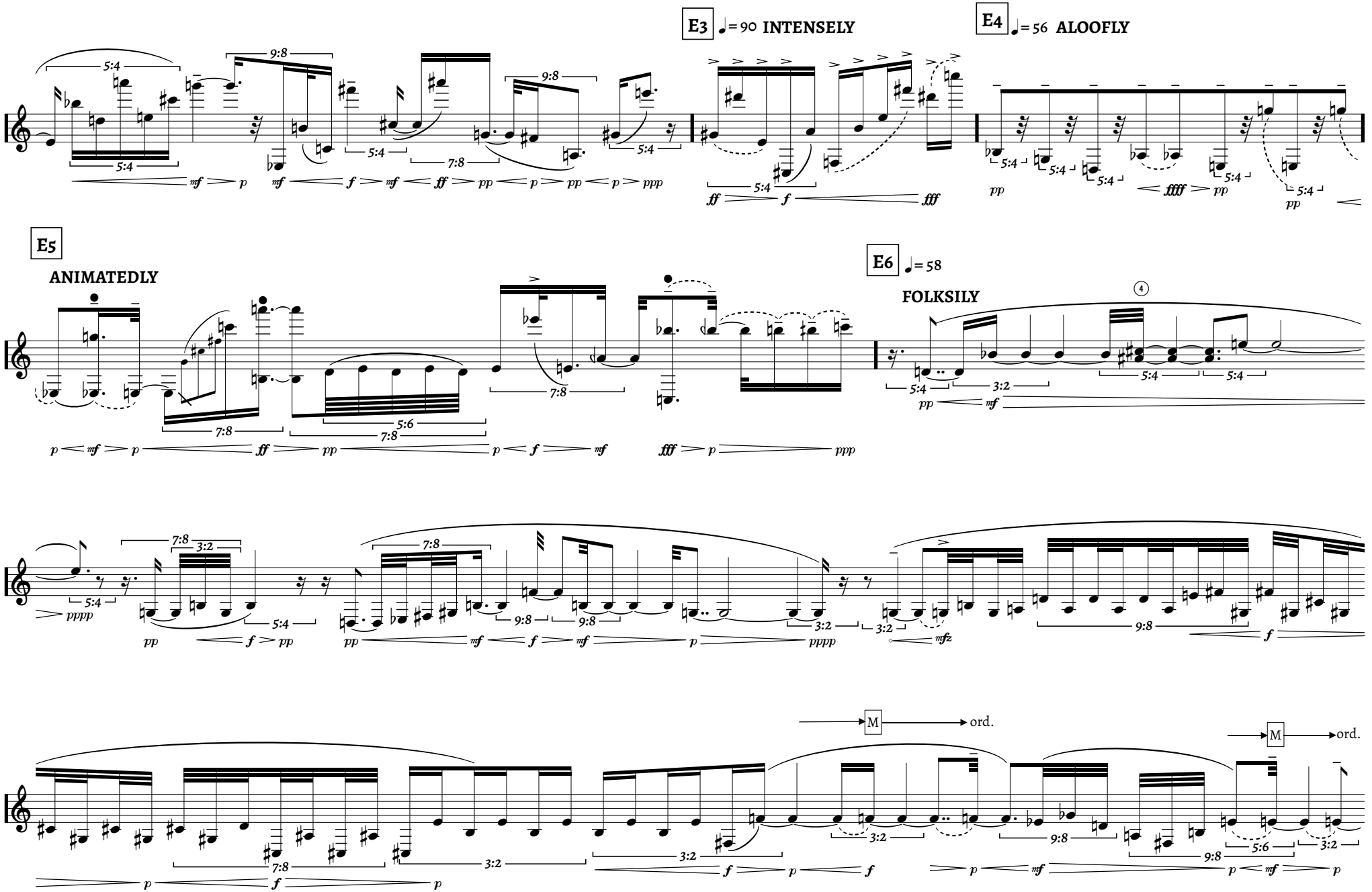


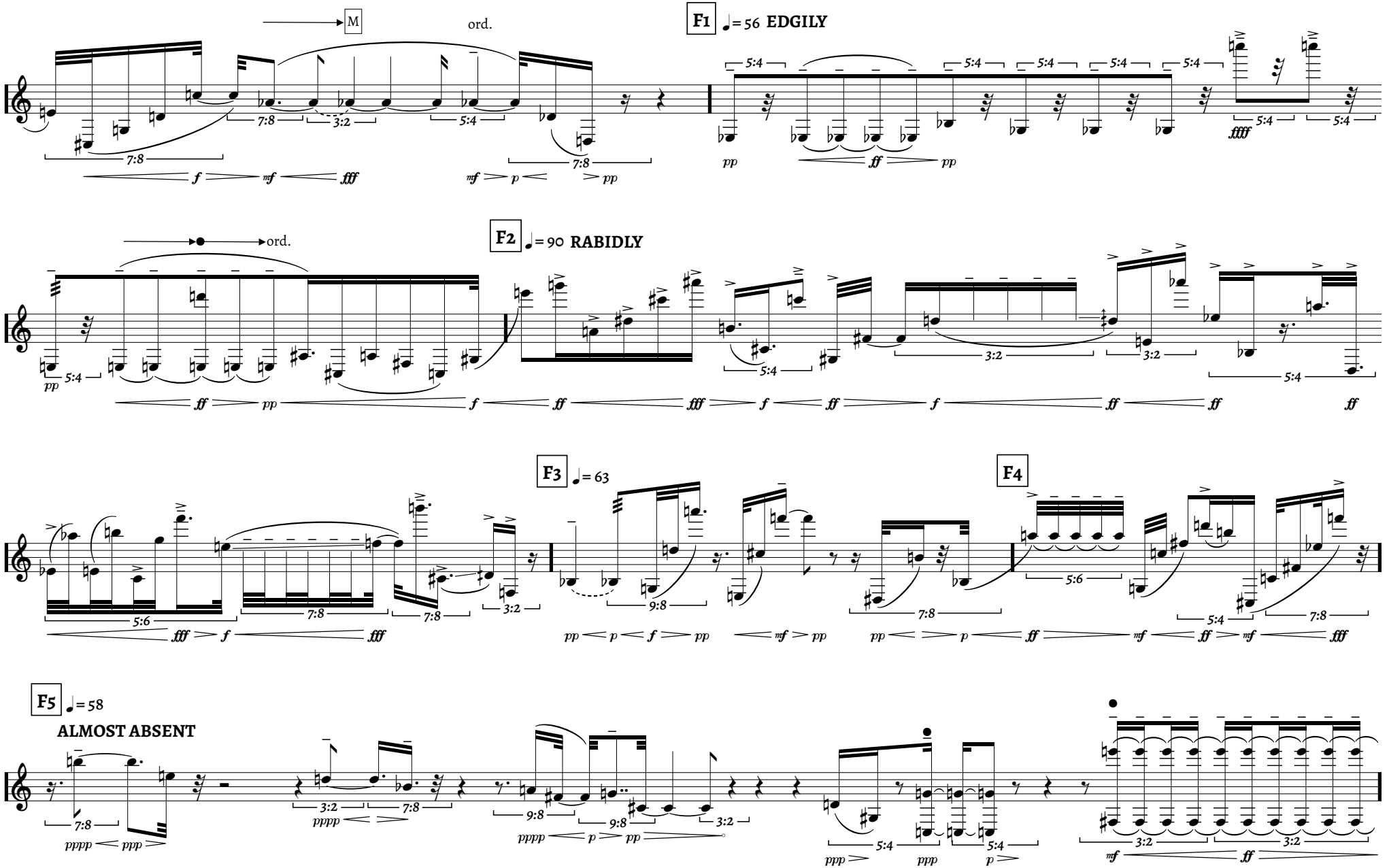


E2

MORE FLUIDLY

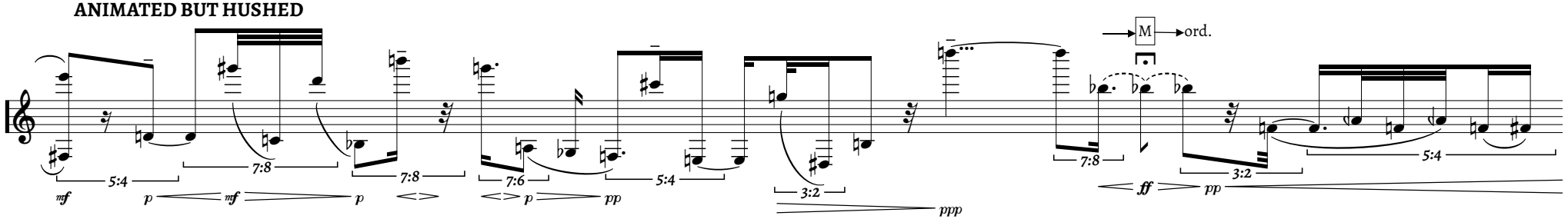



E3 ♩= 90 INTENSELY
E4 ♩= 56 ALOOFLY
E5
ANIMATEDLY
E6 ♩= 58
FOLKSILY
M
ord.


M
ord.
F1 ♩= 56 EDGILY
F2 ♩= 90 RABIDLY
ord.
F3 ♩= 63
F4
F5 ♩= 58
ALMOST ABSENT

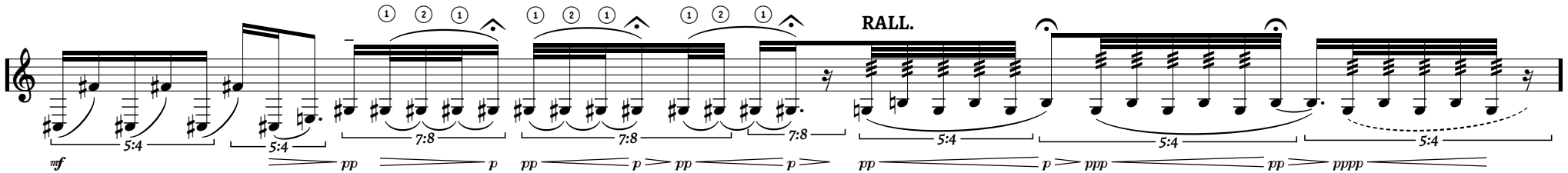
F6 ♩= 56

ANIMATED BUT HUSHED



PAUSES GET LONGER

RALL.



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