Alexander Wu

September 2023

strained

for two saxophones and electronics

duration: 6′

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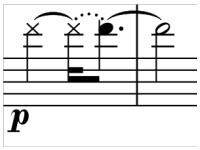
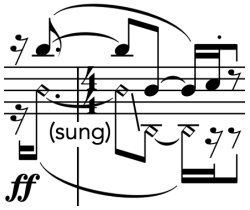
Program Note

Strained is an honest but reluctant negotiation with my [R|r]omantic tendencies. Dramatic gestures are often hollowed out and detuned, sometimes sabotaged by the impersonal vocoder. Quotidian details surround and undermine these figures, as if to foreshadow their failure. Ideas emerge but would not evolve without a digression.

Technical Notes

Score is transposed.

Saxophones

slap	A standard slap should be played with the normal embouchure. It produces a clear pitch.
secco slap	A secco slap should be played without blowing into the saxophone. The pitch should be barely audible.
	A cross notehead indicates blowing into the mouthpiece from a distance of 1–2cm. It produces an airy noise.
	(sop. sax only) Singing only occurs once in the soprano part in mm. 91–92. Diamond noteheads are the sung notes. The desired sound is distorted and crude.

Electronics

Both saxophones should be miked (but not amplified). The microphone inputs are fed into the Max patch, serving as a modulator for the vocoder. The speakers should be placed as close to the saxophones as possible.

The percentages below the vocoder part roughly indicate output levels, which do not always correlate with its absolute loudness.

The velocity of the MIDI keyboard controlling the vocoder is designed to have no effect on loudness or timbre.

transposed score

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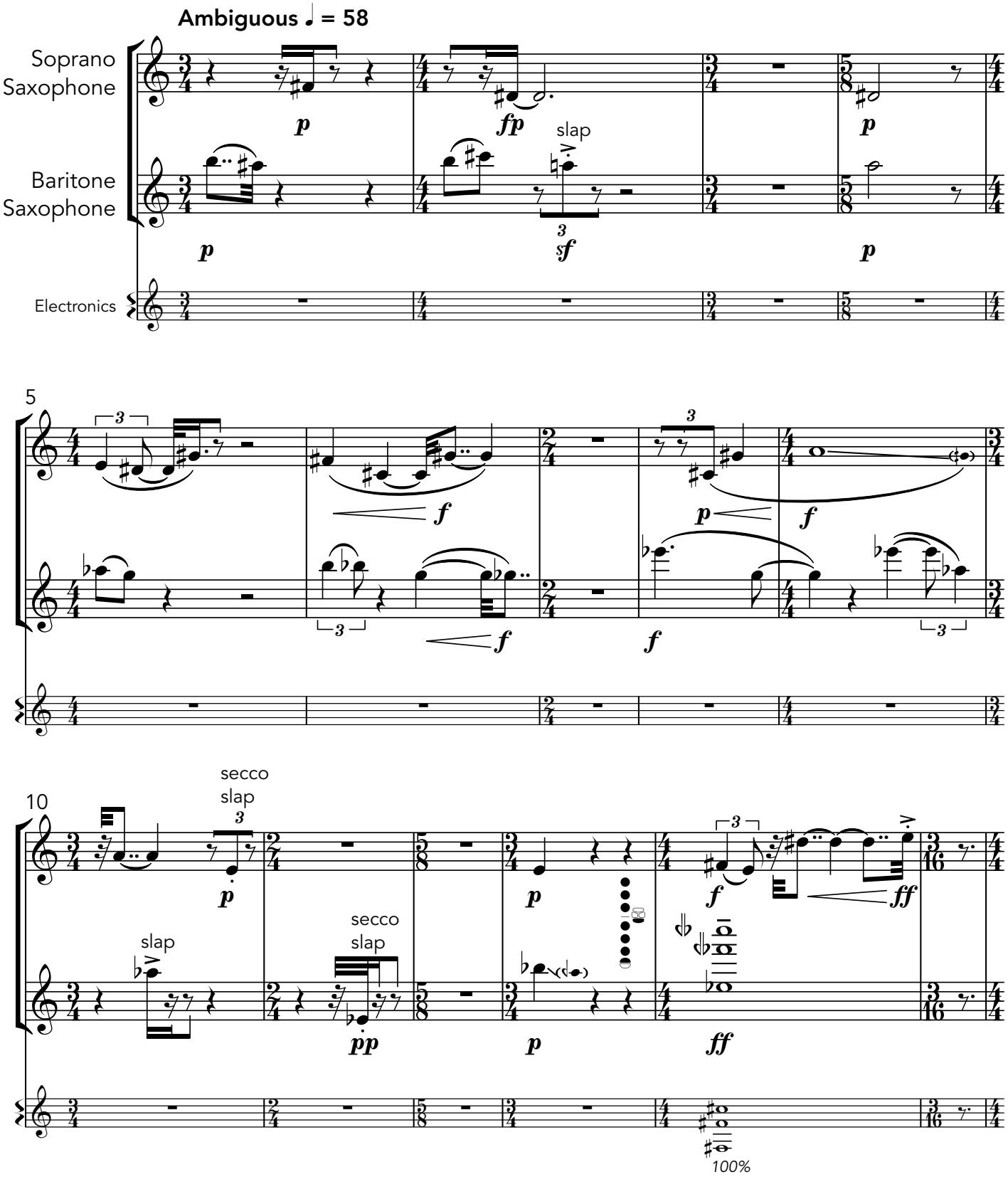
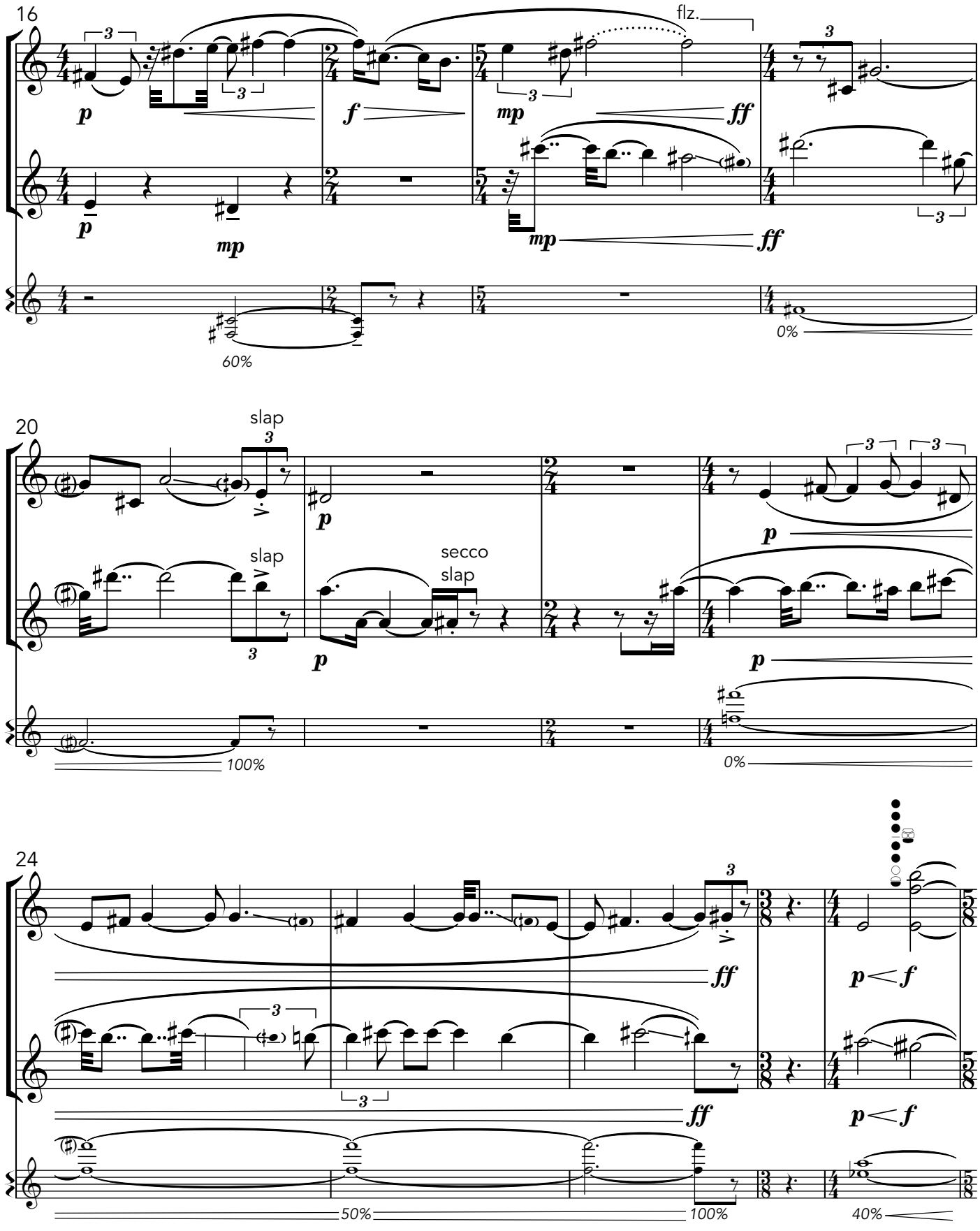
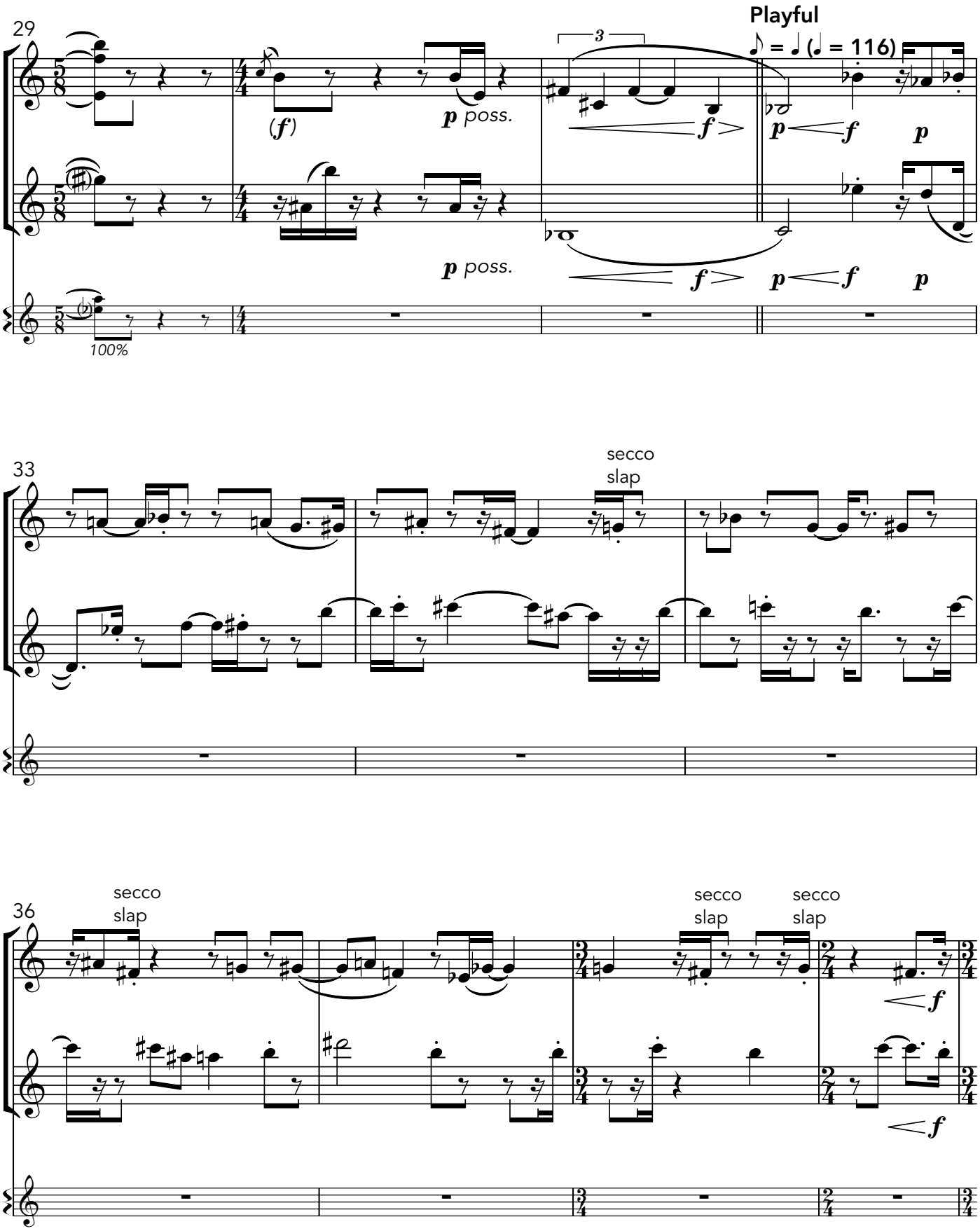
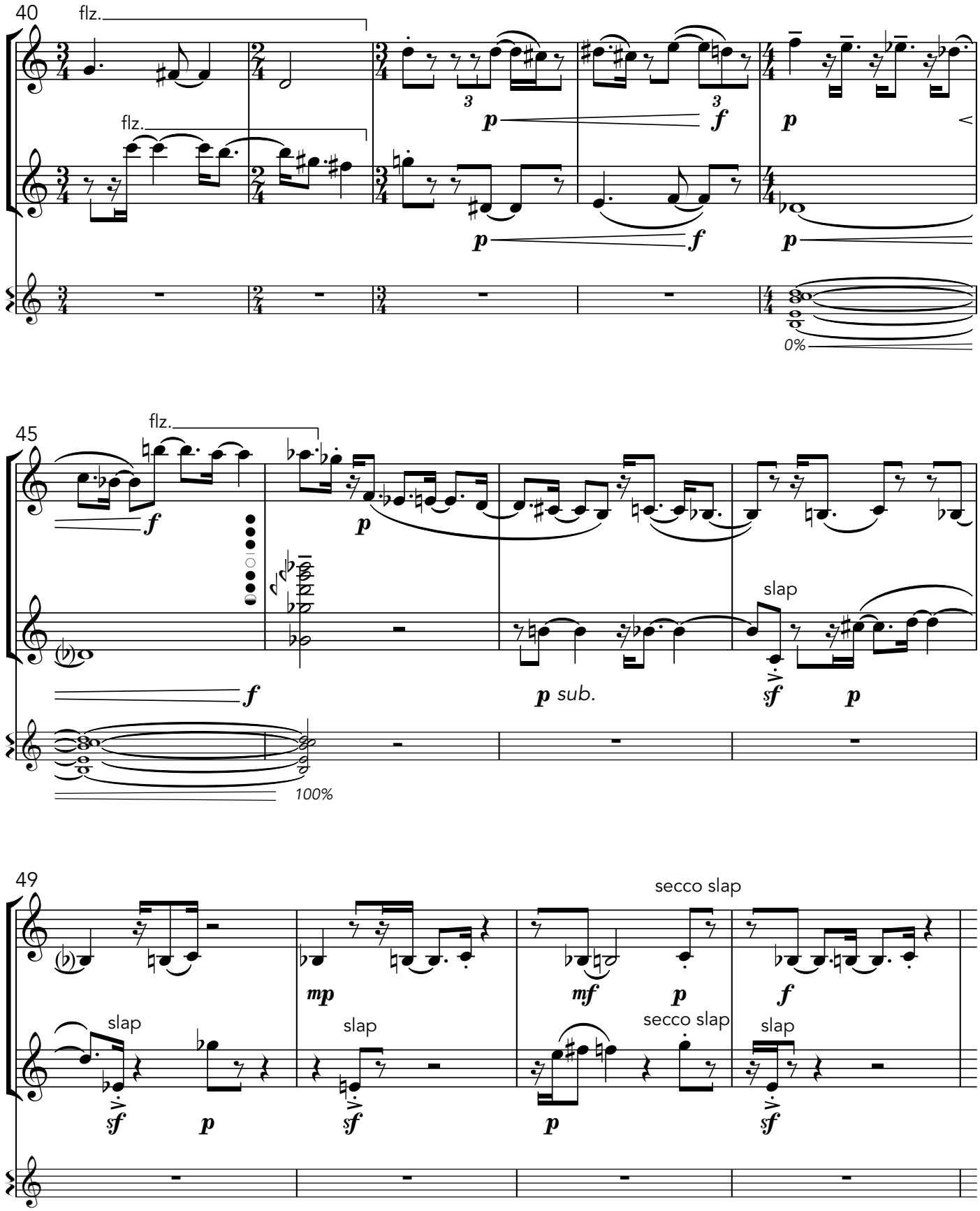
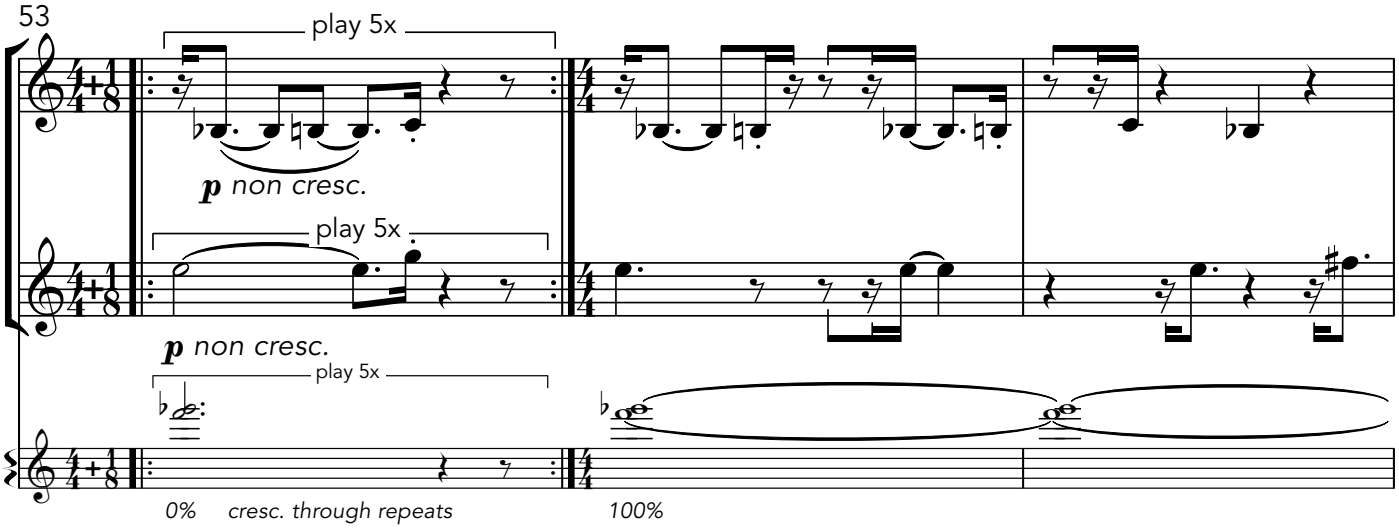
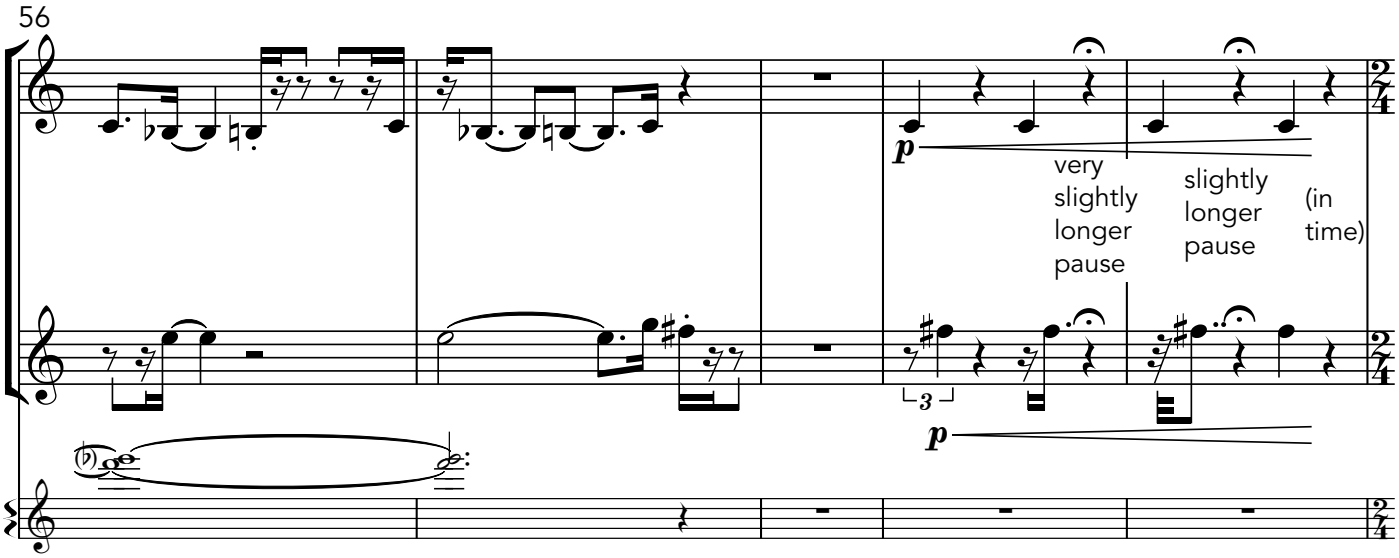


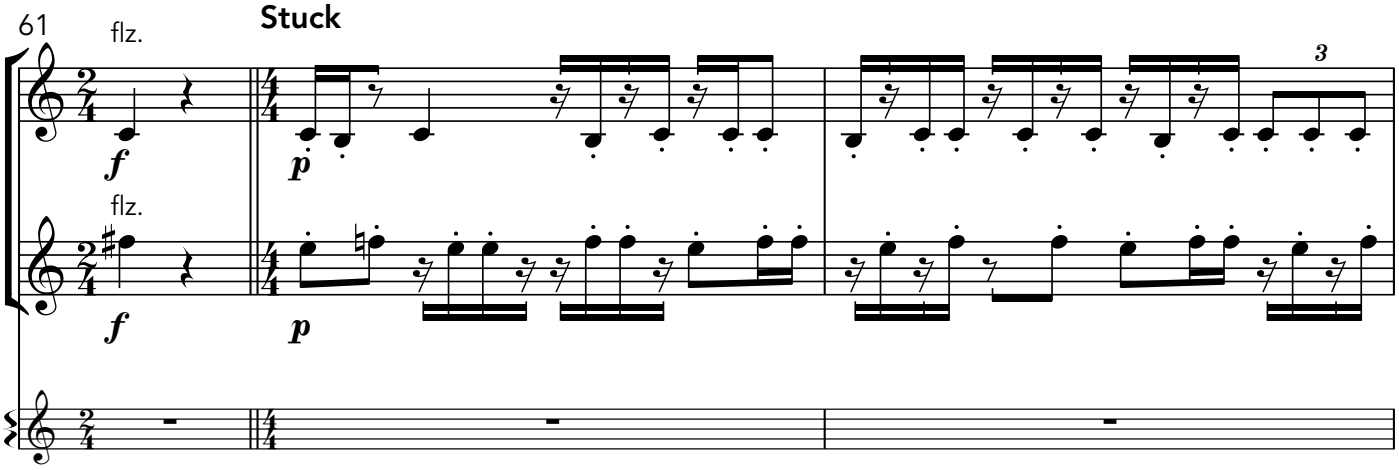

16
flz.
60%
0%
20
slap
slap
secco
slap
100%
0%
24
50%
100%
40%

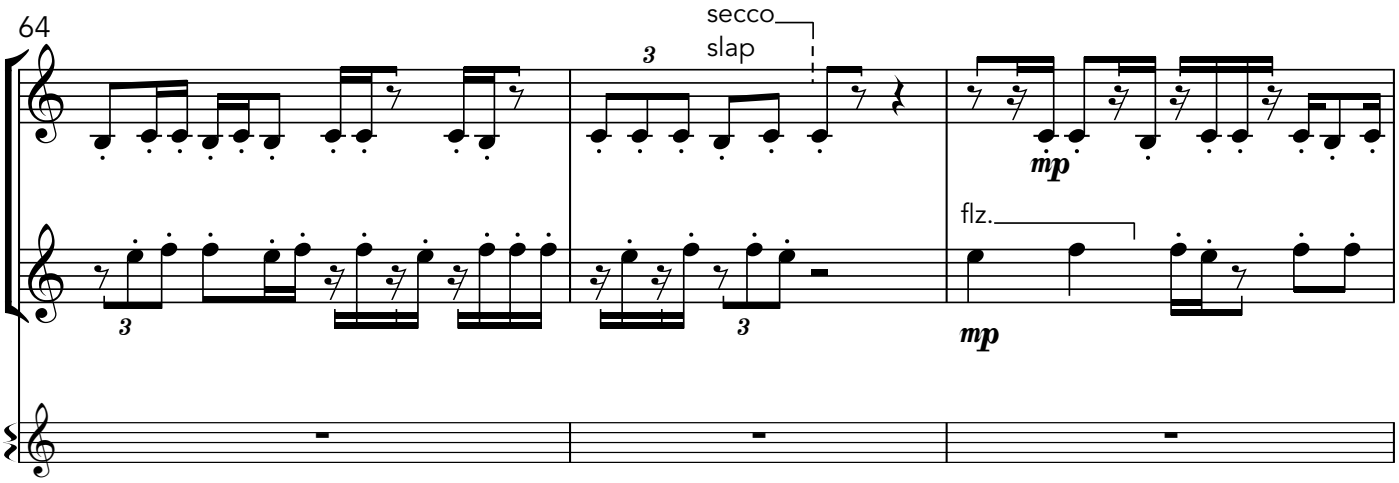

29
Playful
♪ = ♩ (♩ = 116)
3
(f)
p poss.
f
p
f
p
p poss.
f
p
f
p
100%
33
secco
slap
36
secco
slap
secco
slap
secco
slap
f
f

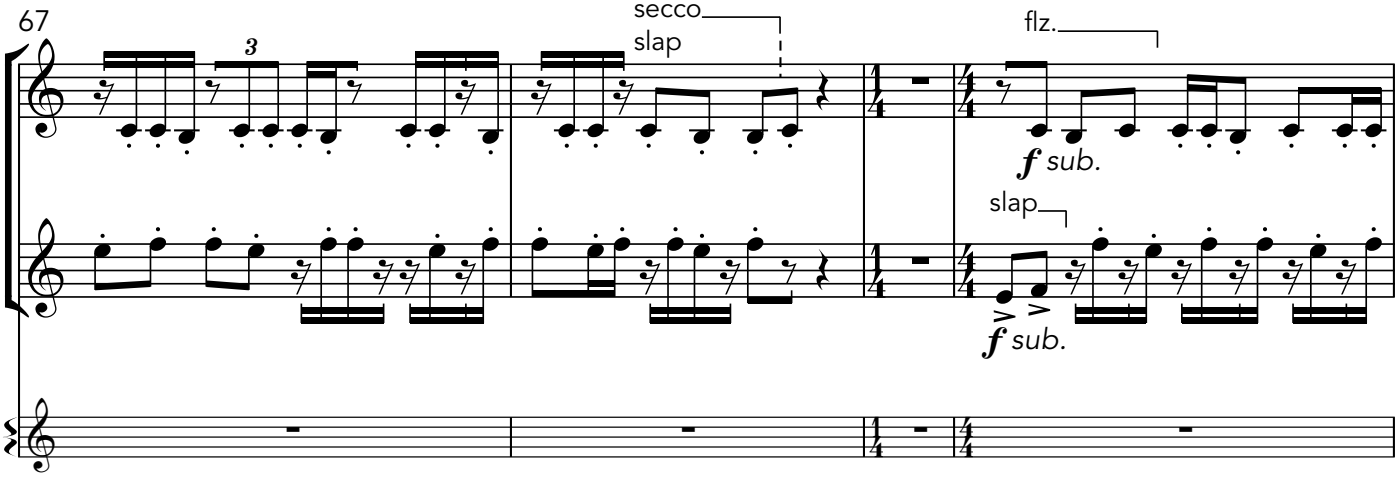

40
flz.
flz.
3
3
p
f
p
p
f
p
0%
45
flz.
f
p
f
p sub.
slap
sf
p
100%
49
secco slap
mp
mf
p
f
slap
slap
secco slap
slap
sf
p
sf
p
sf

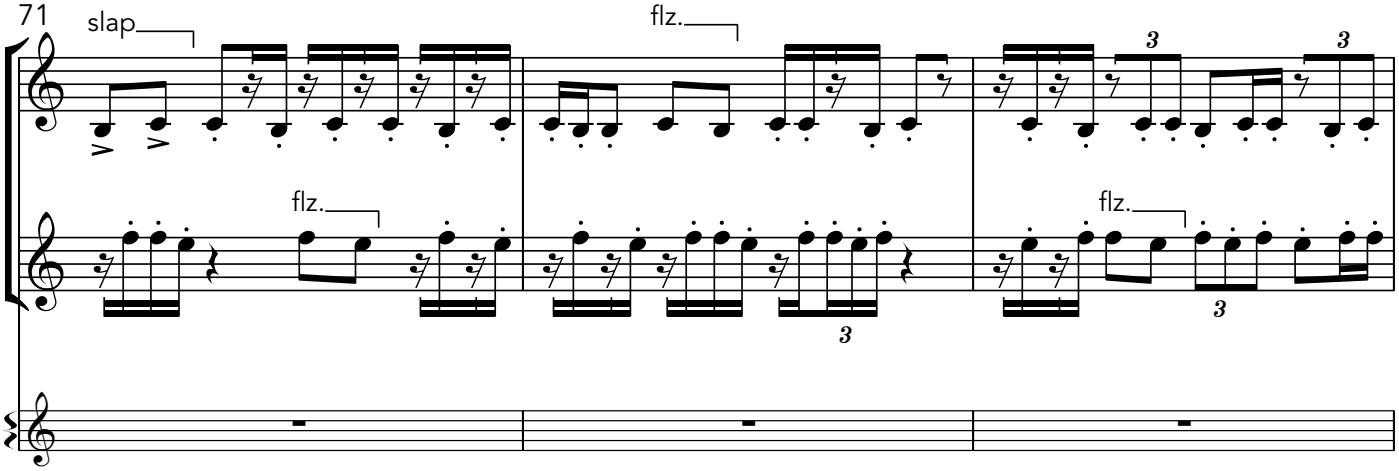

53
play 5x
p non cresc.
play 5x
p non cresc.
play 5x
0% cresc. through repeats
100%

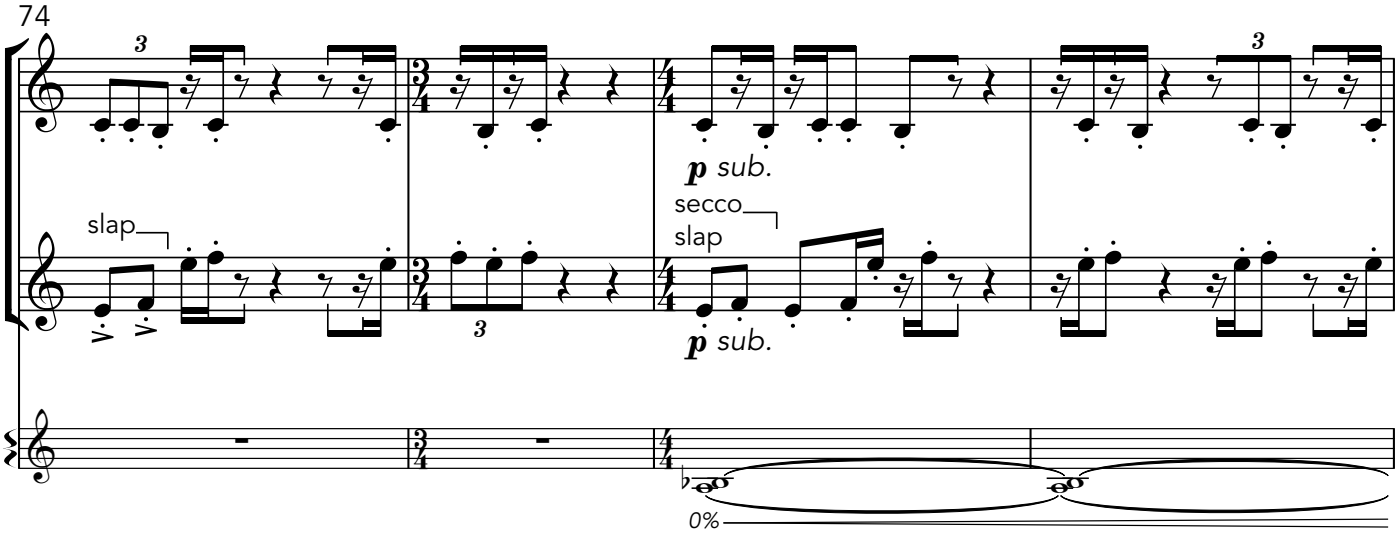

56
p
very slightly longer pause
slightly longer pause
(in time)
3
p

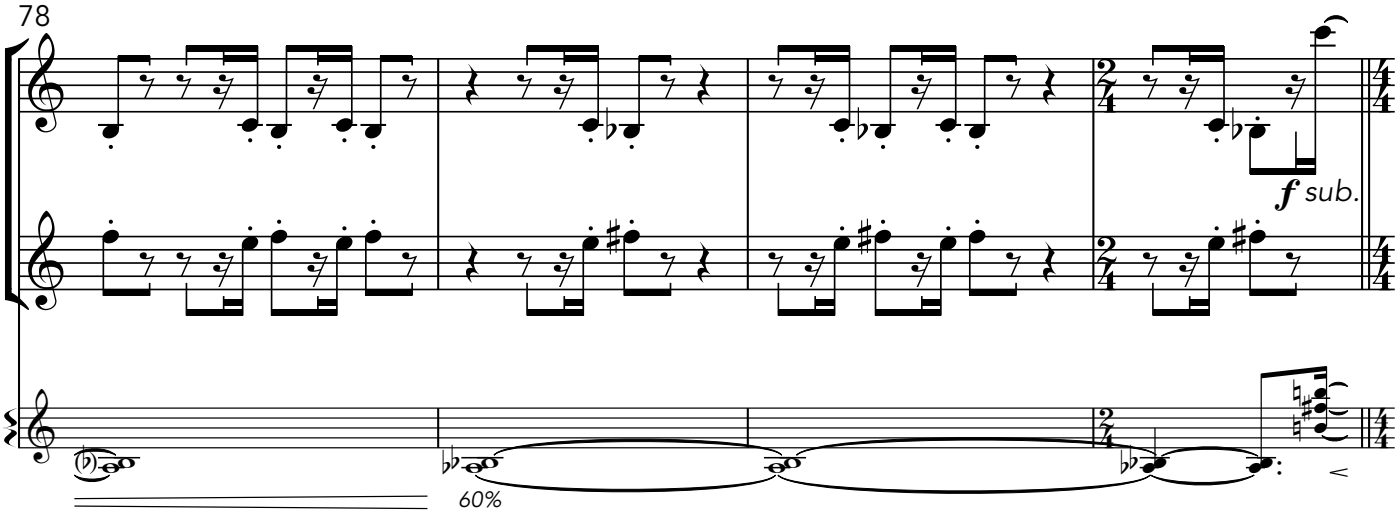

61
flz.
f
Stuck
p
flz.
f
p
3


64
secco
slap
mp
flz.
mp

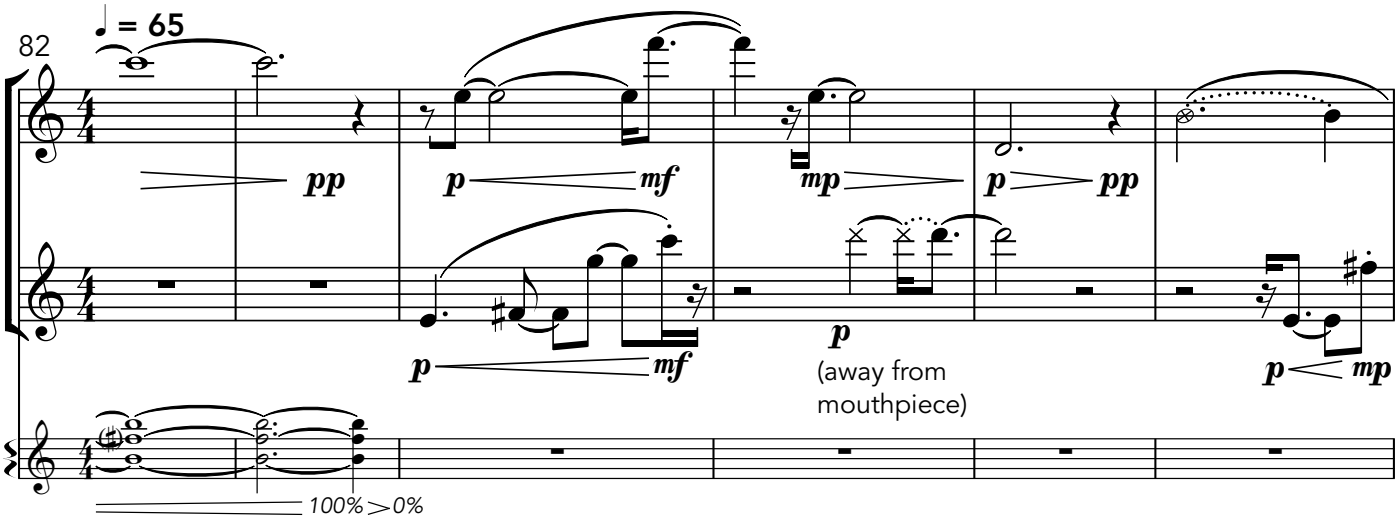

67
secco
slap
flz.
f sub.
slap
f sub.

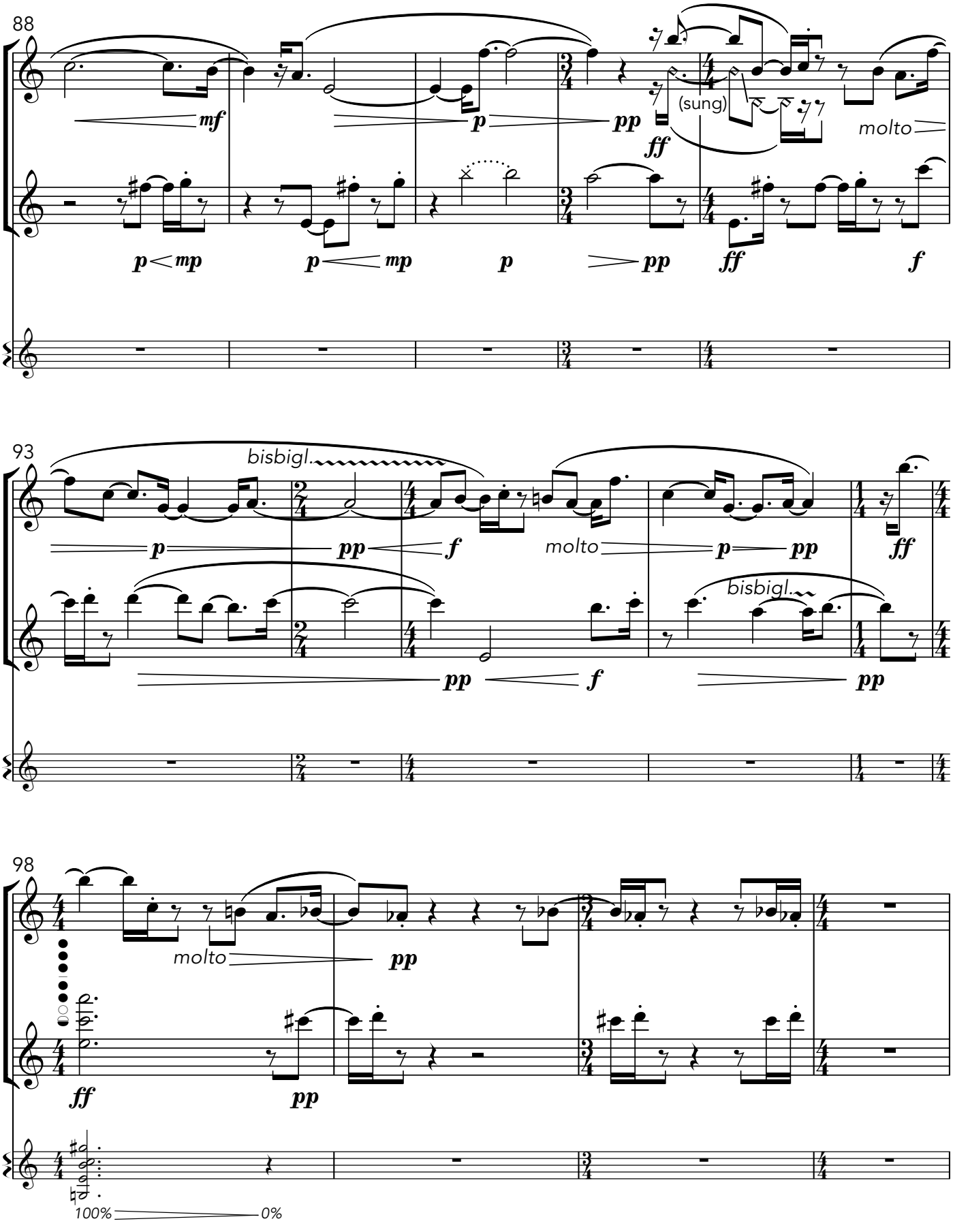

71
slap
flz.
flz.
flz.

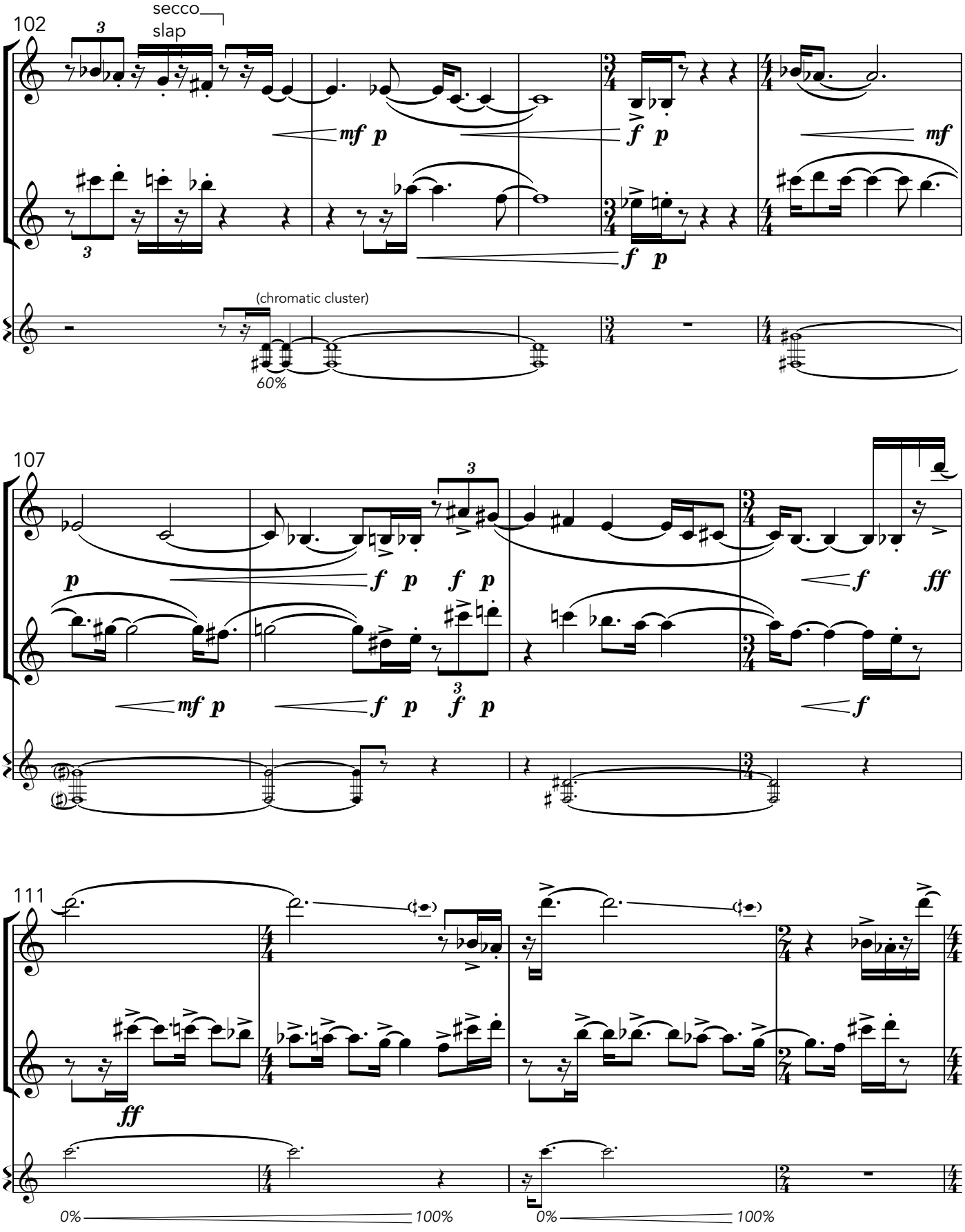


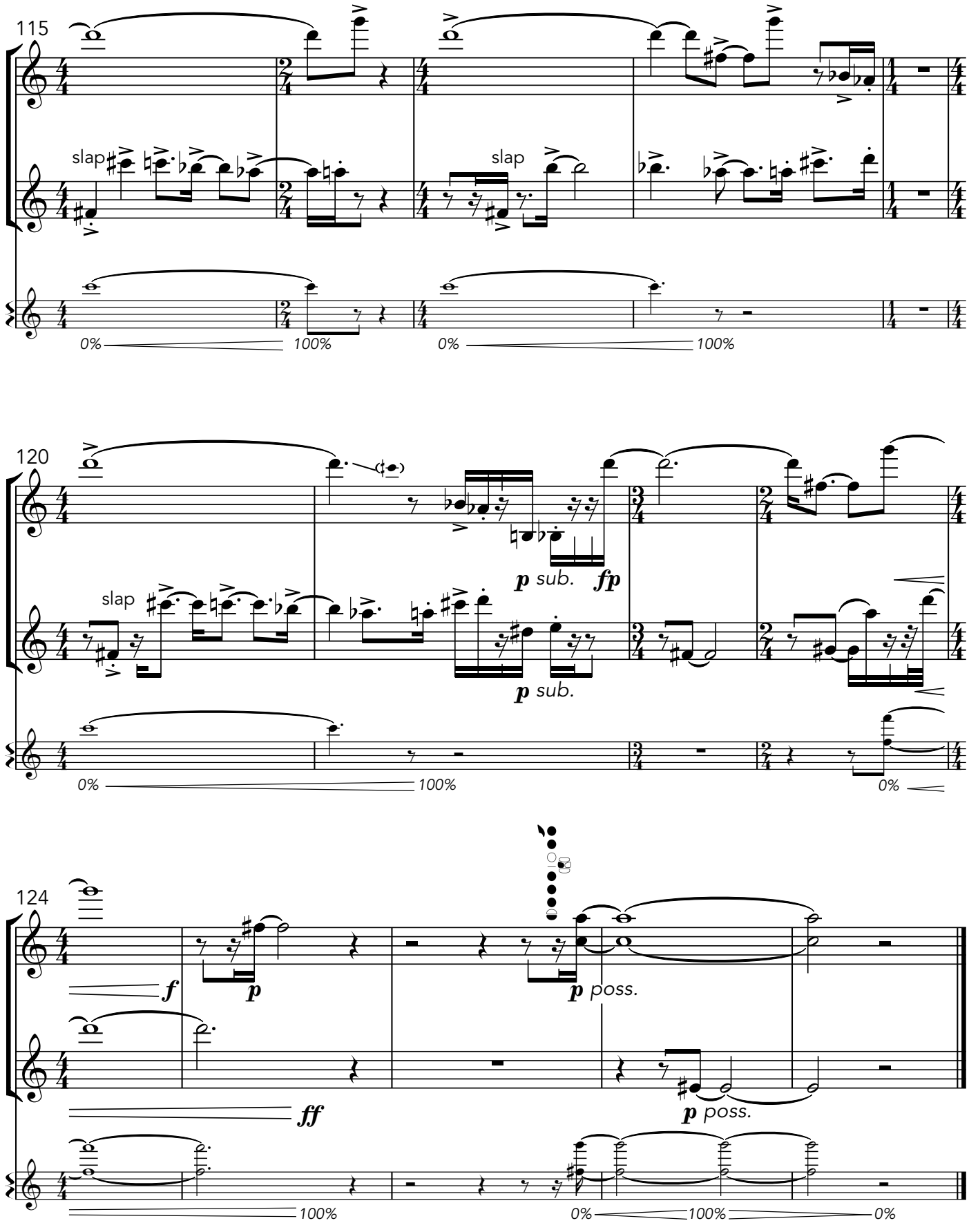


Lyrical, much slower (but faster than double time)




88
mf
p
pp
ff
(sung)
molto
p < mp
p < mp
p
pp
ff
f
93
bisbigl.
p
pp
f
molto
p
pp
ff
bisbigl.
pp
f
pp
98
molto
pp
ff
pp
100%
0%


102
secco
slap
mf p
f p
f p
mf
(chromatic cluster)
60%
107
p
f p
f p
f
ff
mf p
f p
f p
f
111
ff
0%
100%
0%
100%


115
slap
slap
0%
100%
0%
100%
120
slap
p sub.
fp
p sub.
0%
100%
0%
124
f
p
p poss.
ff
p poss.
100%
0%
100%
0%