STILL LIFE

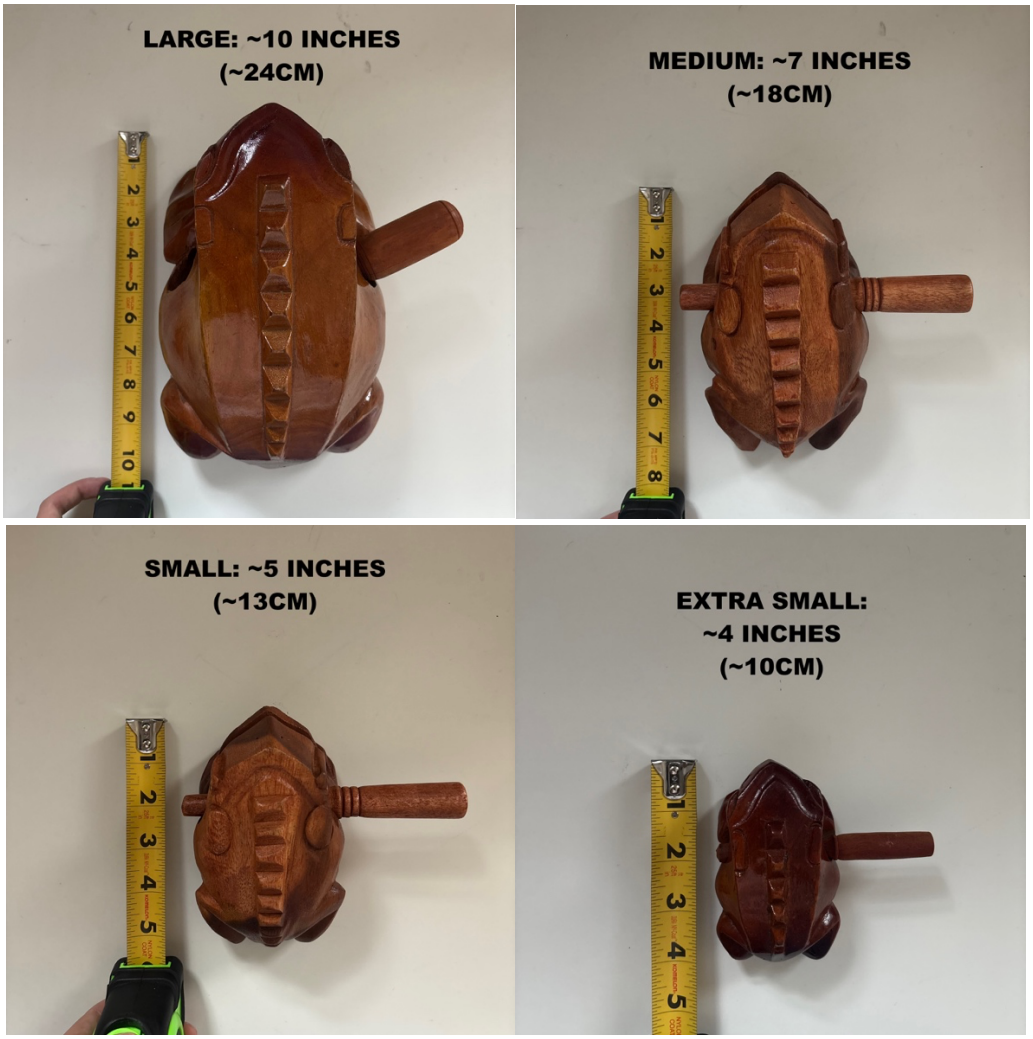
FOR FLUTE, ALTO SAXOPHONE, PIANO, VIOLA, CELLO, DOUBLE BASS, AND CONDUCTOR

BY OLIVER DUBON

Instrumentation:

Flute
Alto Saxophone
Piano (doubling Large Frog Guiro)
Viola (doubling Medium Frog Guiro)
Violoncello (doubling Small Frog Guiro)
Double Bass (doubling Extra Small Frog Guiro)

The frog guiro sizes should be approximately the following dimensions:

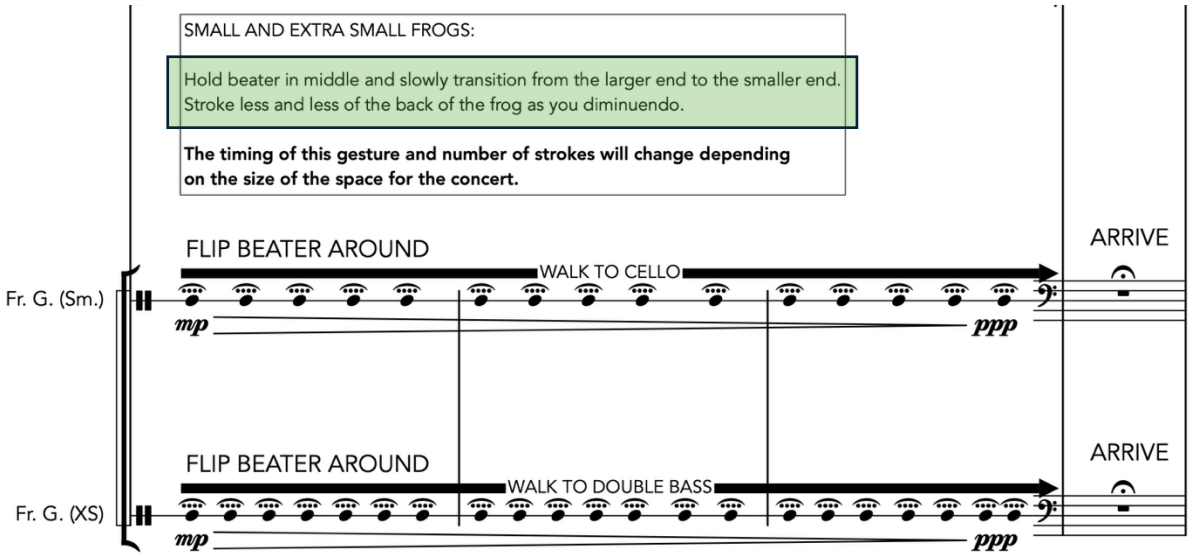


Generally, hold the beater like this when playing the frog:



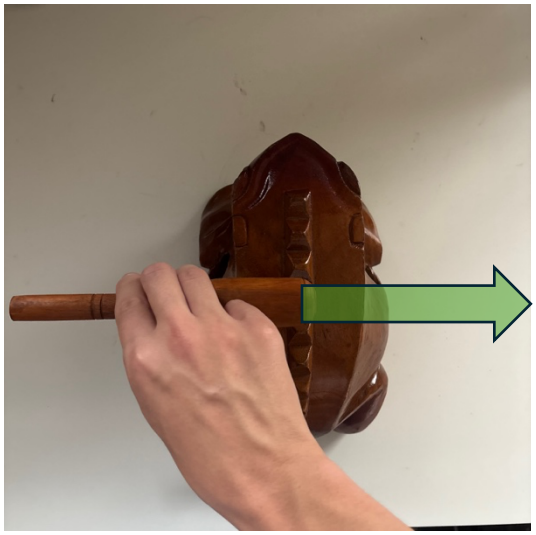
On pages 10 and 12, I have indicated to flip the beater around. Hold it this way:





The text highlighted in green refers to this:

Begin like this and **while stroking upwards on the back of the frog**, move in the direction of the arrow. The result should be a color shift and general diminuendo in the sound.



End like this. Still stroking upwards

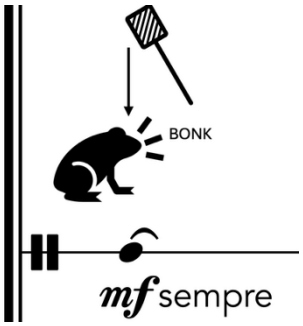


Playing techniques:

Stroke back of frog with beater
to produce croaking sound –



Tap frog's nose to produce
a sound similar to a woodblock –

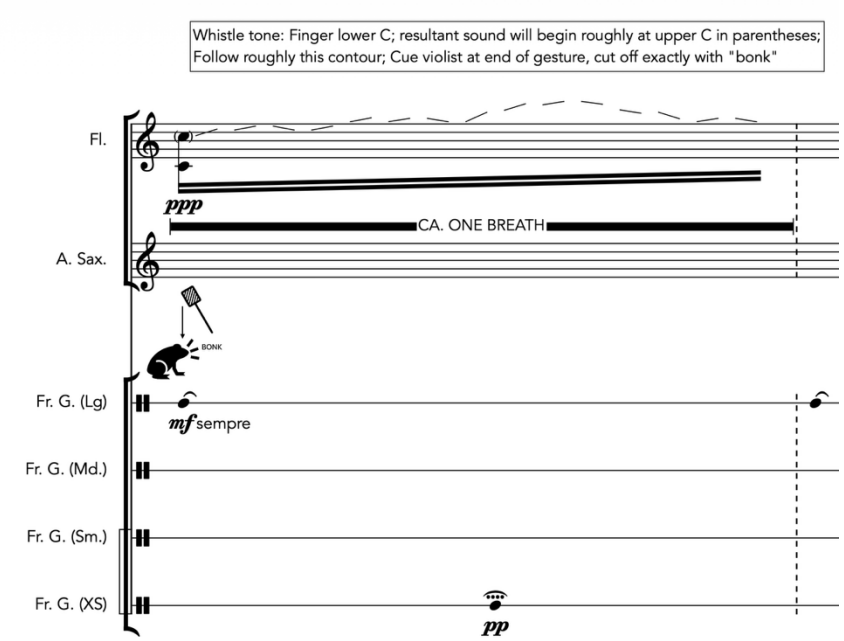


All other playing techniques are described in the score where they appear to prevent having to turn back to this page too often.

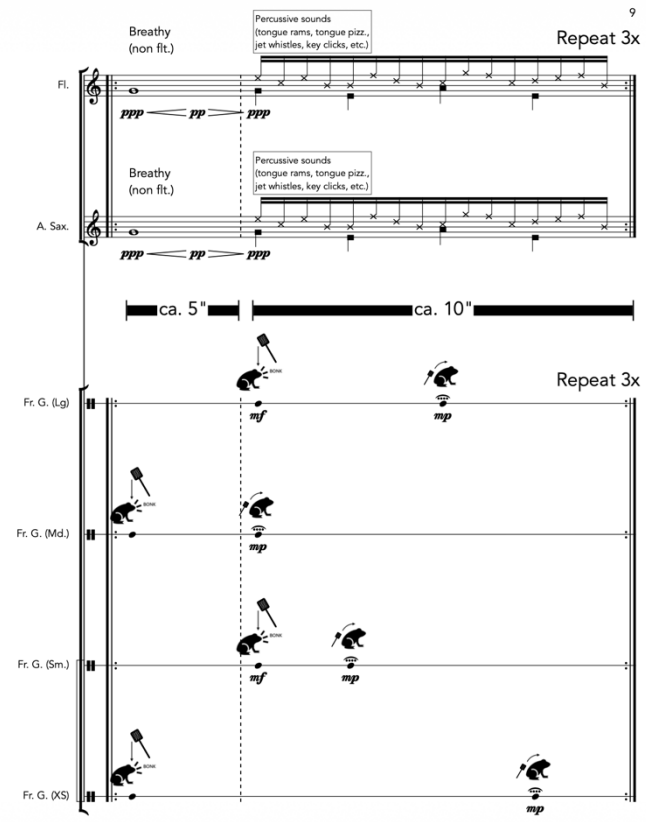
General performance notes:

This work is largely senza tempo.

For moments like this example to the right, there is no strict coordination between the bottom frog (XS) and the flute's gesture at the top. Even though it is indicated as occurring approximately half-way through the gesture, the performer should not worry if it happens nearer to the beginning or end.



In the case of more complex gestures such as the one to the right, the timing should be more thoroughly rehearsed. The order of the sounds should follow how it is presented on the page, but the actual durations between the sounds are to be decided by the performers. The bars indicating ca. 5" are included to help with coordinating these gestures.



About this piece:

Several years before I began composing, I began to get interested in dreams. A friend of mine from college, Libby George, had taught me methods of lucid dreaming (that I never quite mastered or even got good at). As I began composing, I often found that large parts of my music would iterate themselves in my dreams. Weirdly, I felt very little control over this process and sometimes felt like my music was just happening ***to me*** instead of being brought into existence ***by me***.

Hence the somewhat ironic name of this work, *Still Life.* With this title I hope to communicate this sense I have always felt of my work "writing me" as though I were a still life being painted by a painter. The work presents a sort of theatrical enactment of this idea: the frogs bring material (a four-note motif, repeated over and over) to life, which is then elaborated on by the saxophone and flute. This all happens while the conductor (a representation of myself) is lying down "asleep" in the middle of the stage.

Formally, this work is a sort of "negative variations." The four-note motif glacially reveals itself through obfuscated iterations up until the moment the conductor gives a single downbeat, unleashing an explosive tonal sweep over the ensemble which resolves into the conductor "writing" the four notes down and playing them. The "theme" finally revealing itself.

Dedication:

This work is dedicated to Libby George.

“Everybody is a poet because everybody dreams.”

- Pablo Neruda

SECTION 1 SETUP:



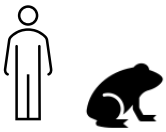
VIOLA
(INSTRUMENT ALONE)



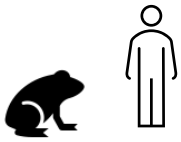
MEDIUM FROG
(WITH VIOLIST)

LARGE FROG
(WITH PIANIST)

SAXOPHONIST



CONDUCTOR

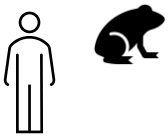


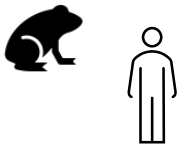
FLUTIST











EXTRA SMALL FROG
(WITH DOUBLE
BASSIST)

SMALL FROG
(WITH CELLIST)





DOUBLE BASS
(INSTRUMENT ALONE)

VIOLONCELLO
(INSTRUMENT ALONE)

STAGE
RIGHT

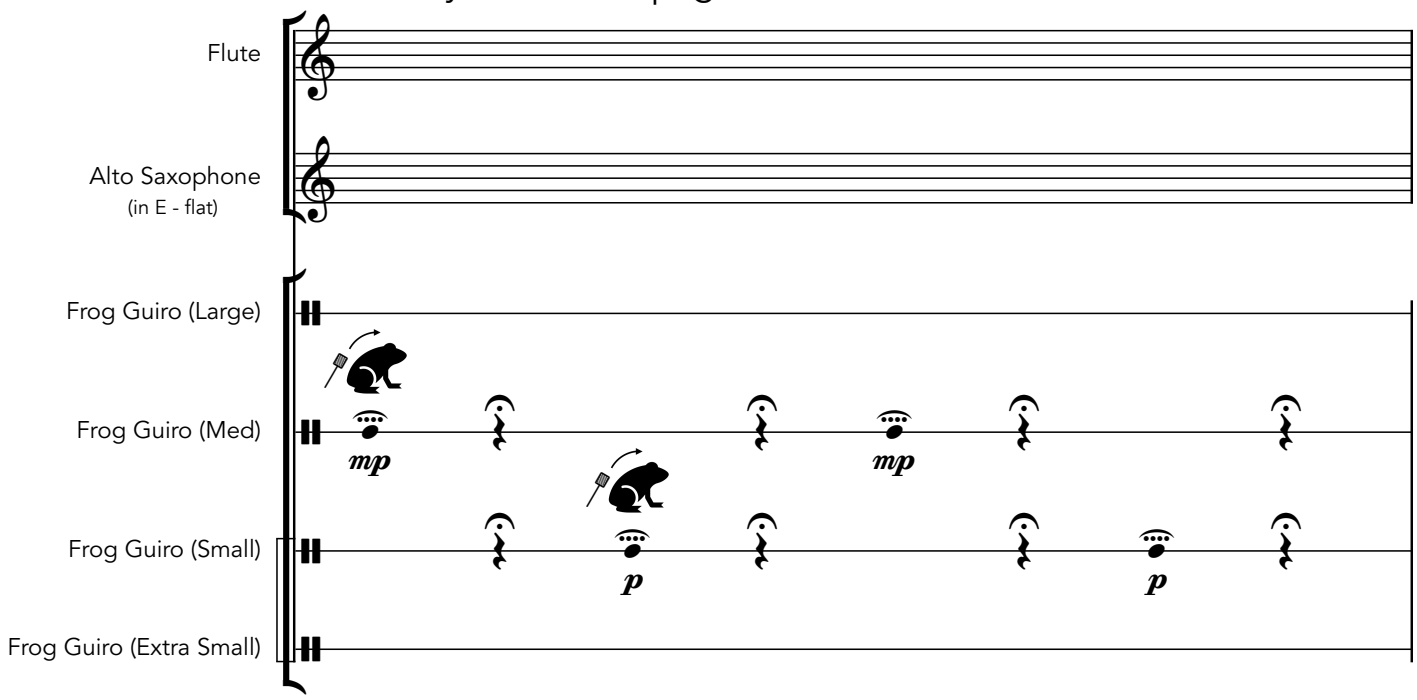
STAGE
LEFT

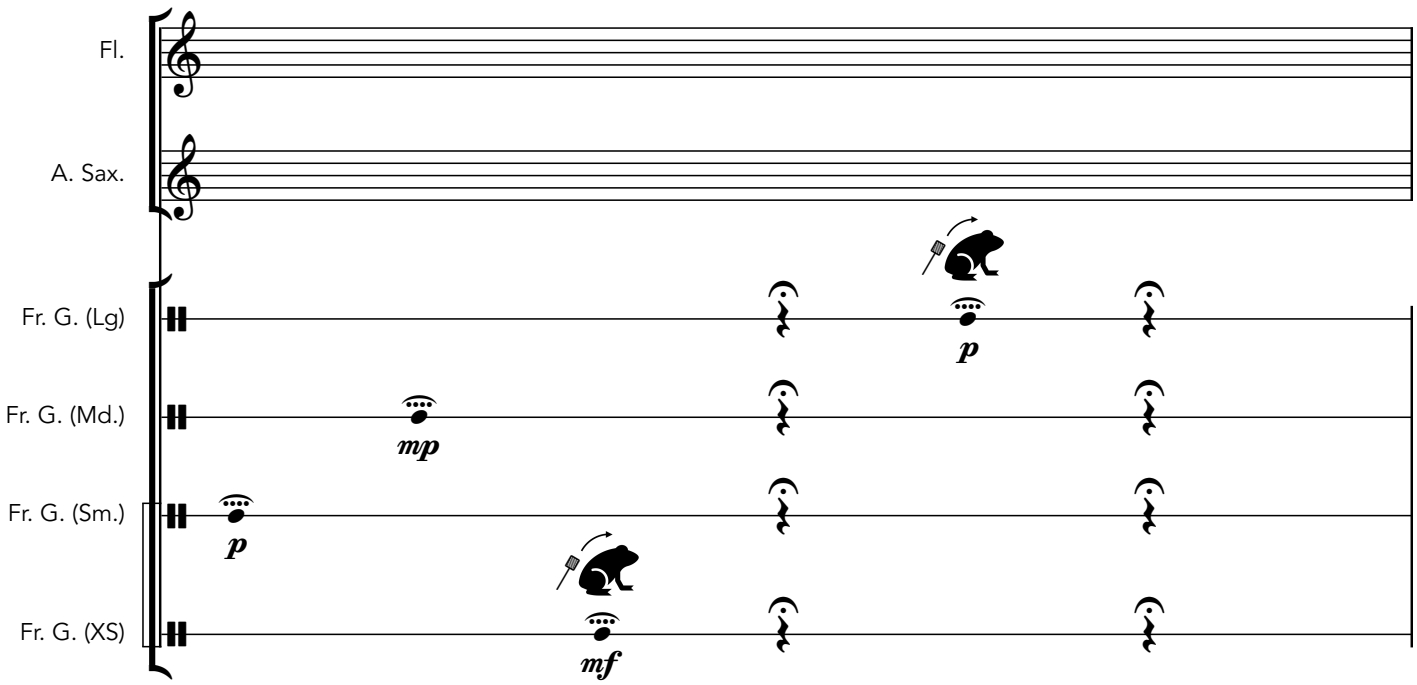
STILL LIFE

Transposing Score

Oliver Dubon

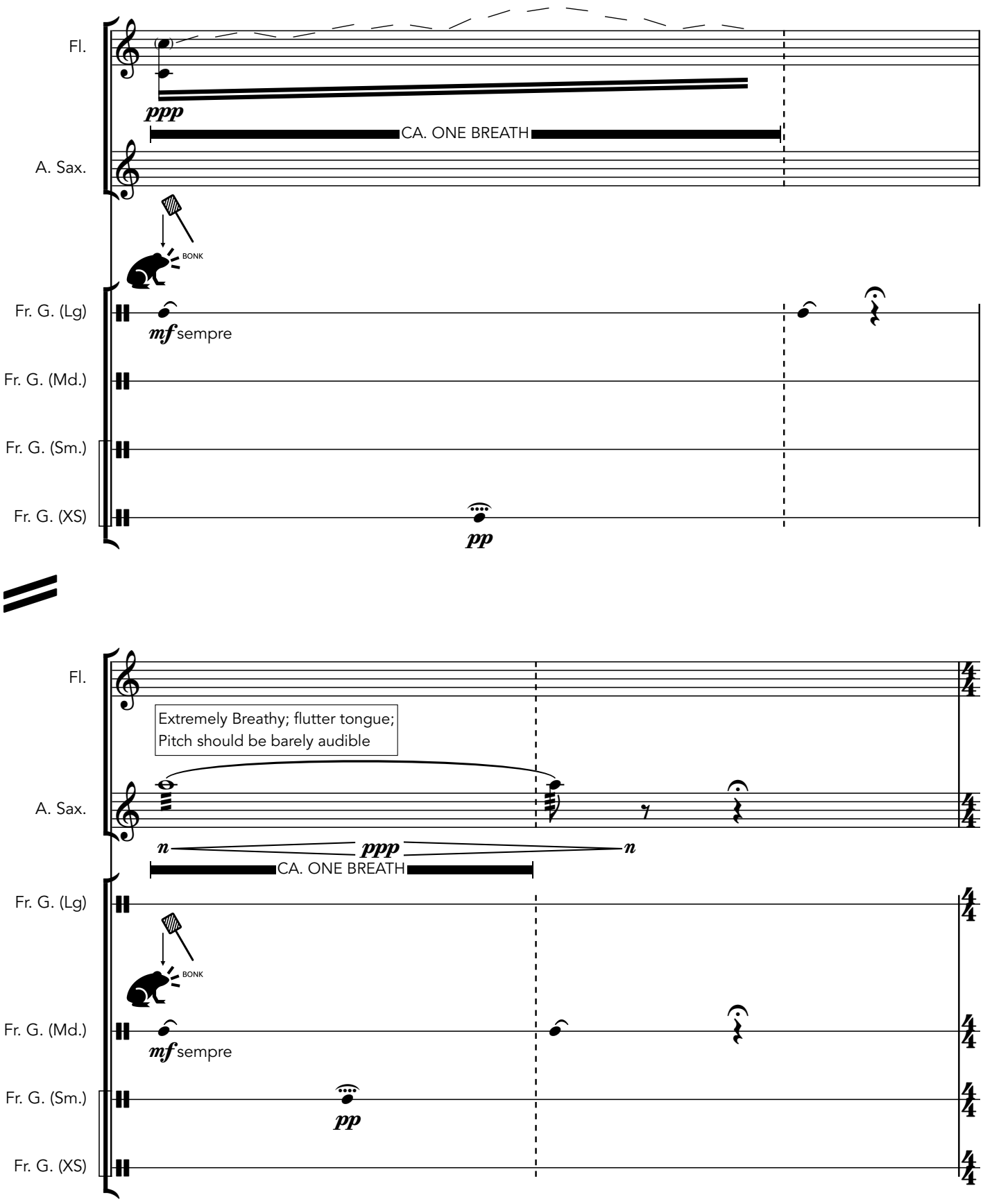
Freely; Slow (this page should take 20 - 40 seconds)

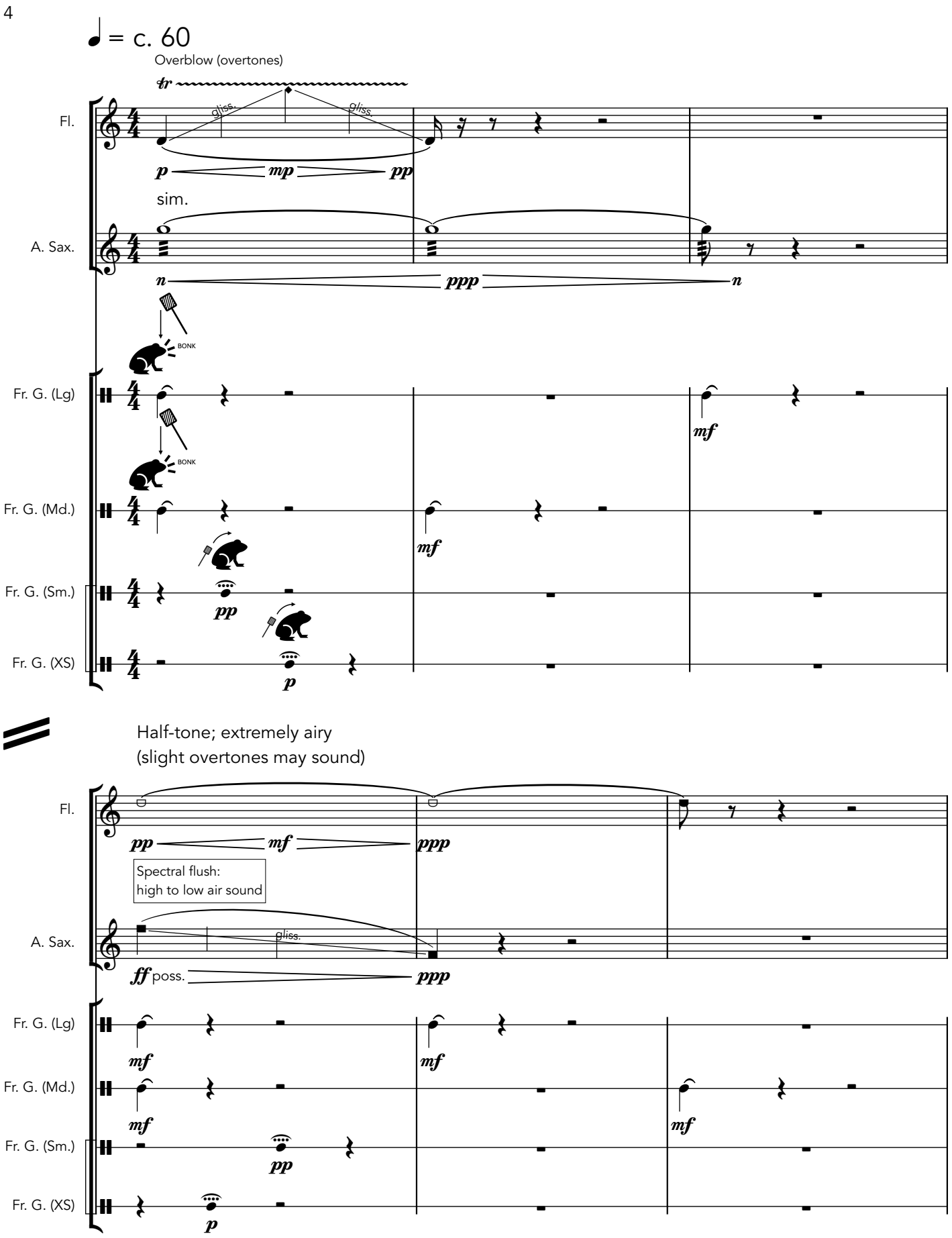


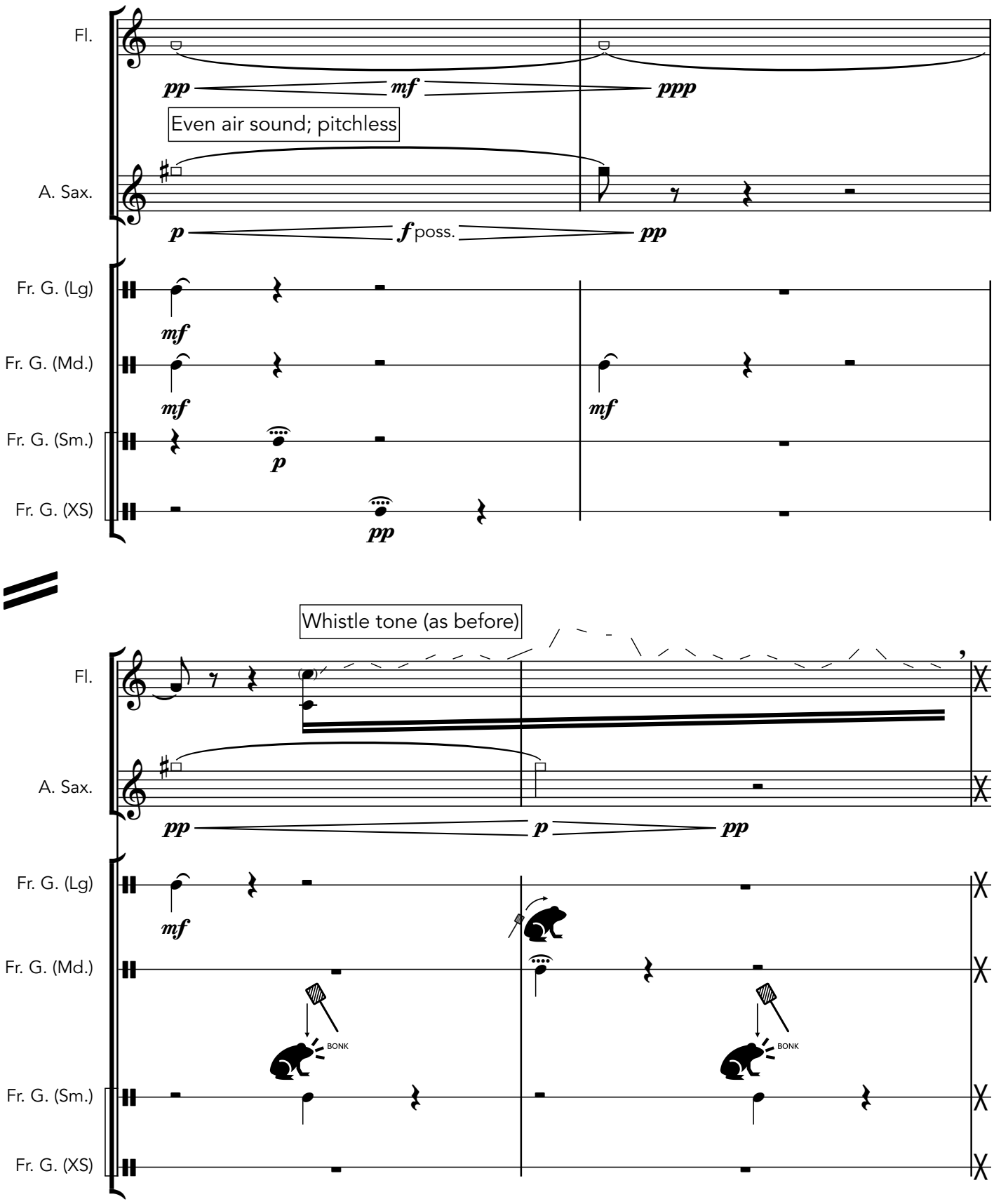


Version 102026

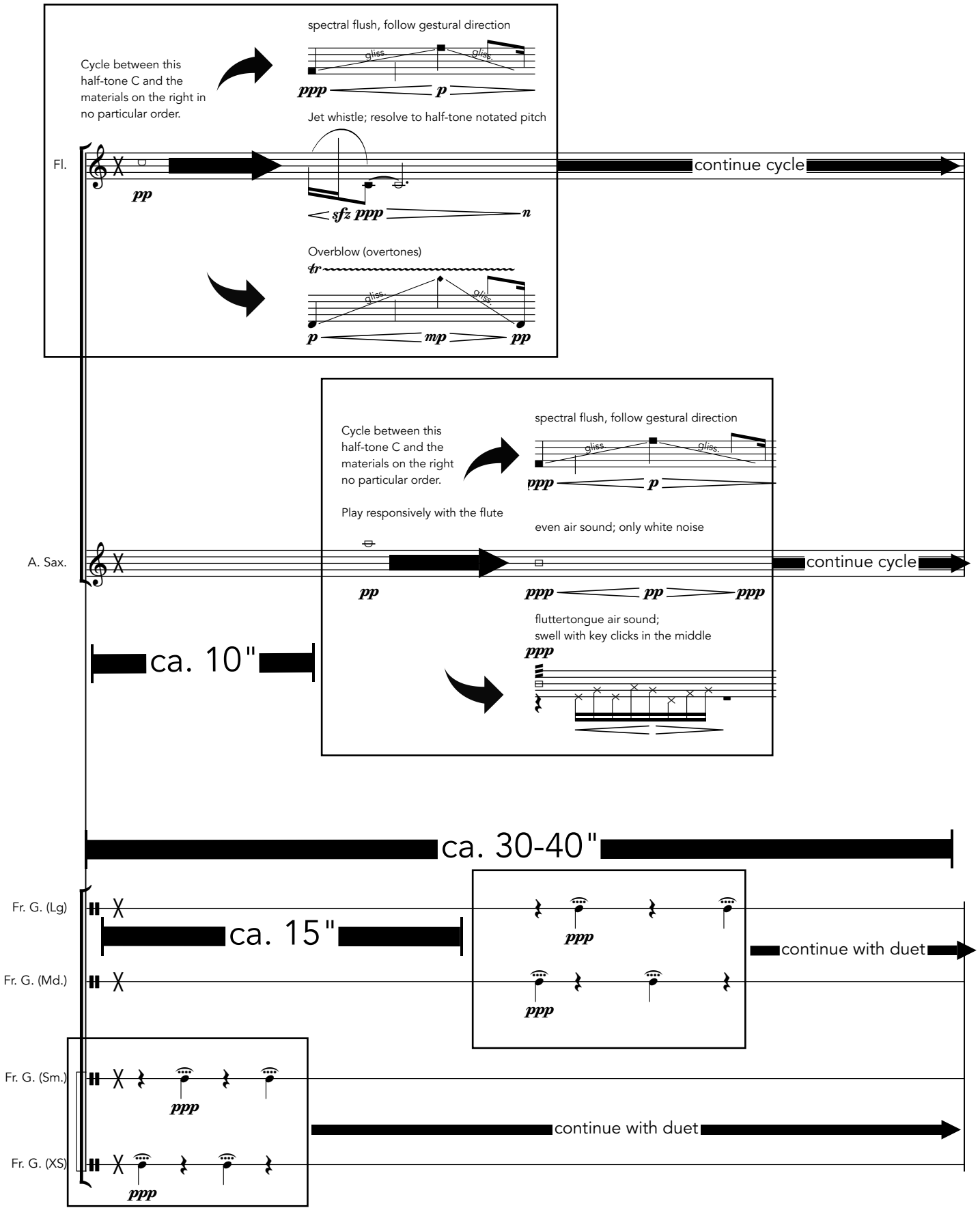
Whistle tone: Finger lower C; resultant sound will begin roughly at upper C in parentheses;
Follow roughly this contour; Cue violist at end of gesture, cut off exactly with "bonk"

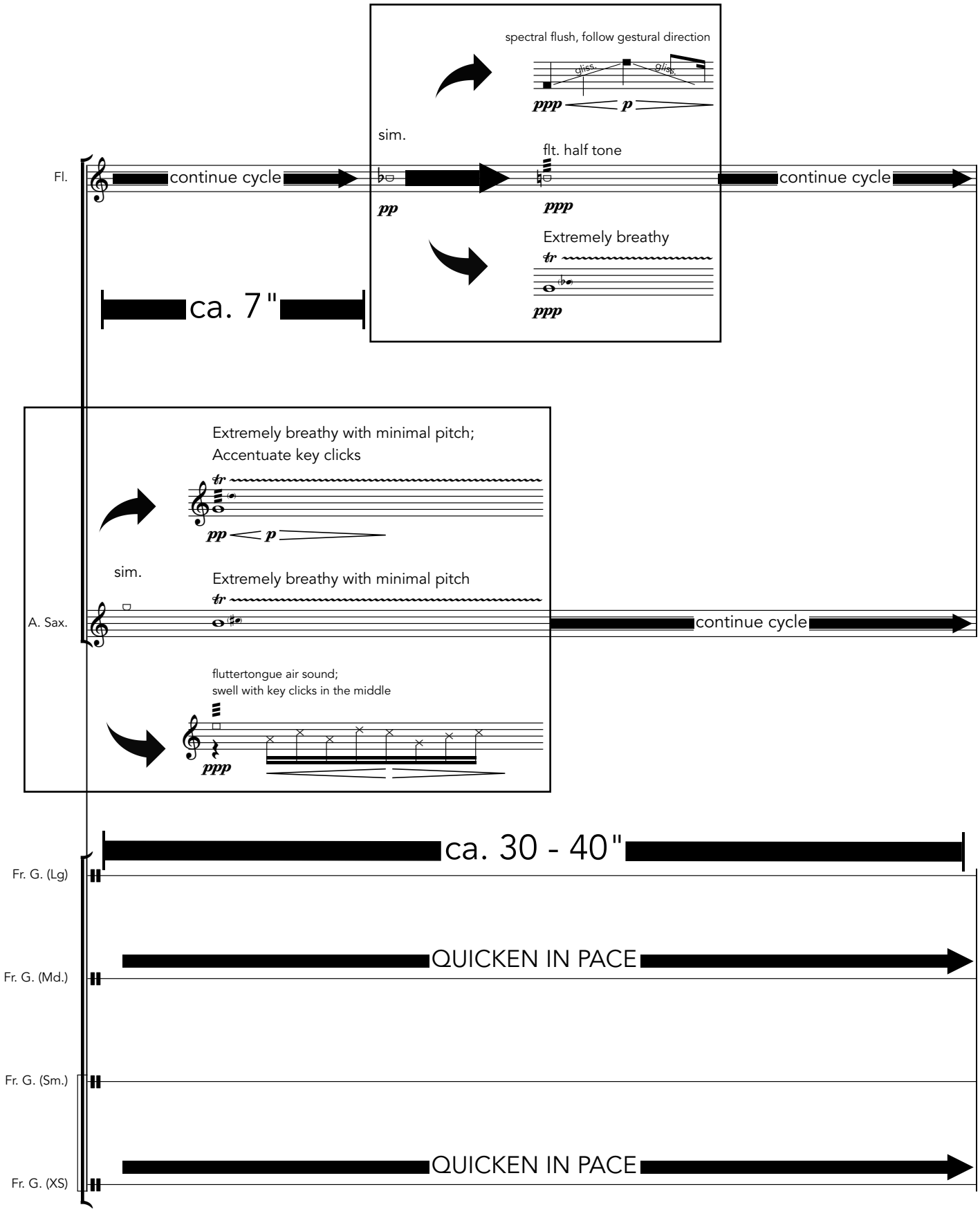


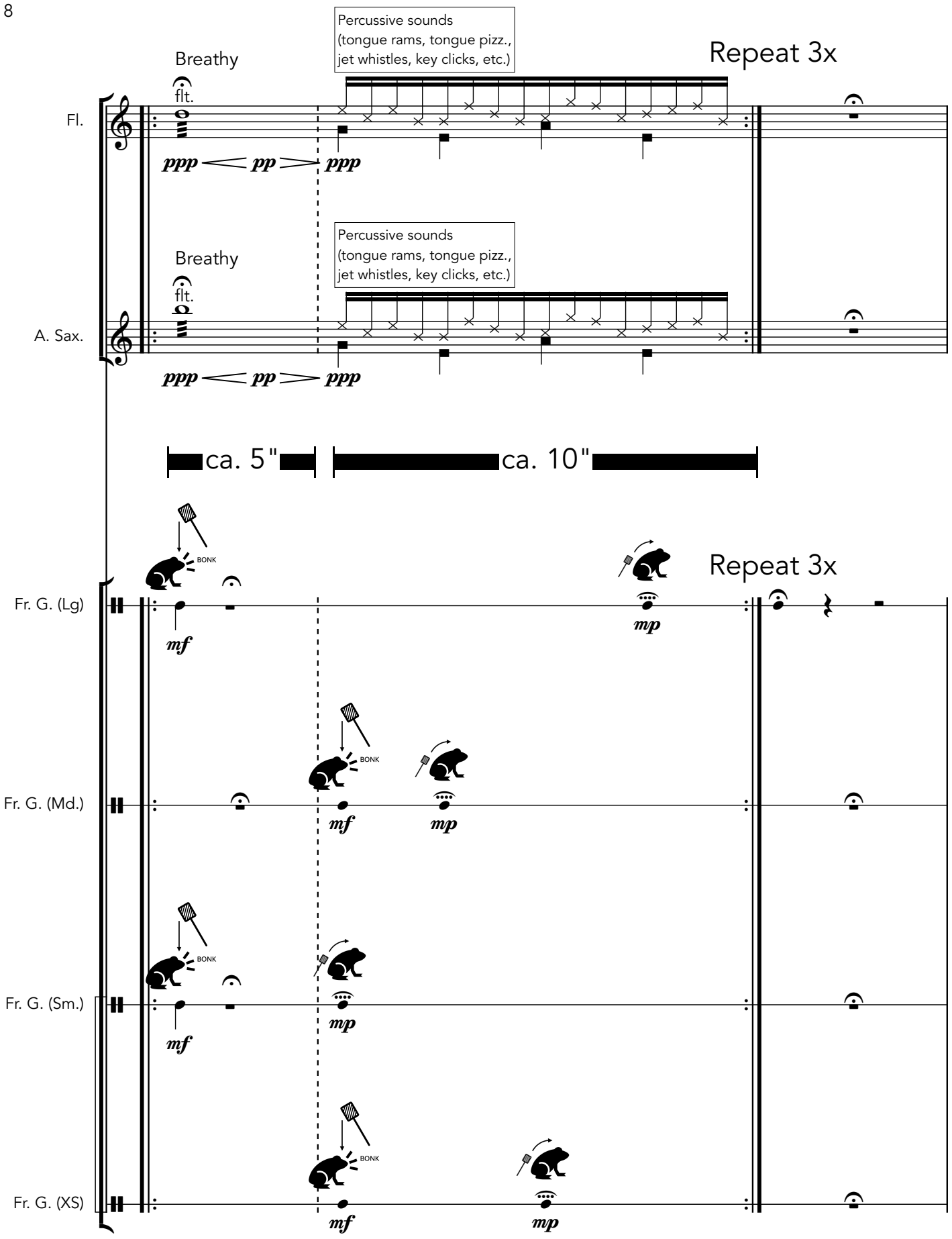

♩ = c. 60
Overblow (overtones)
tr
gliss.
gliss.
Fl.
p
mp
pp
sim.
A. Sax.
n
ppp
n
BONK
Fr. G. (Lg)
mf
BONK
Fr. G. (Md.)
mf
Fr. G. (Sm.)
pp
Fr. G. (XS)
p
Half-tone; extremely airy
(slight overtones may sound)
Fl.
pp
mf
ppp
Spectral flush:
high to low air sound
A. Sax.
gliss.
ff poss.
ppp
Fr. G. (Lg)
mf
mf
Fr. G. (Md.)
mf
mf
Fr. G. (Sm.)
pp
Fr. G. (XS)
p

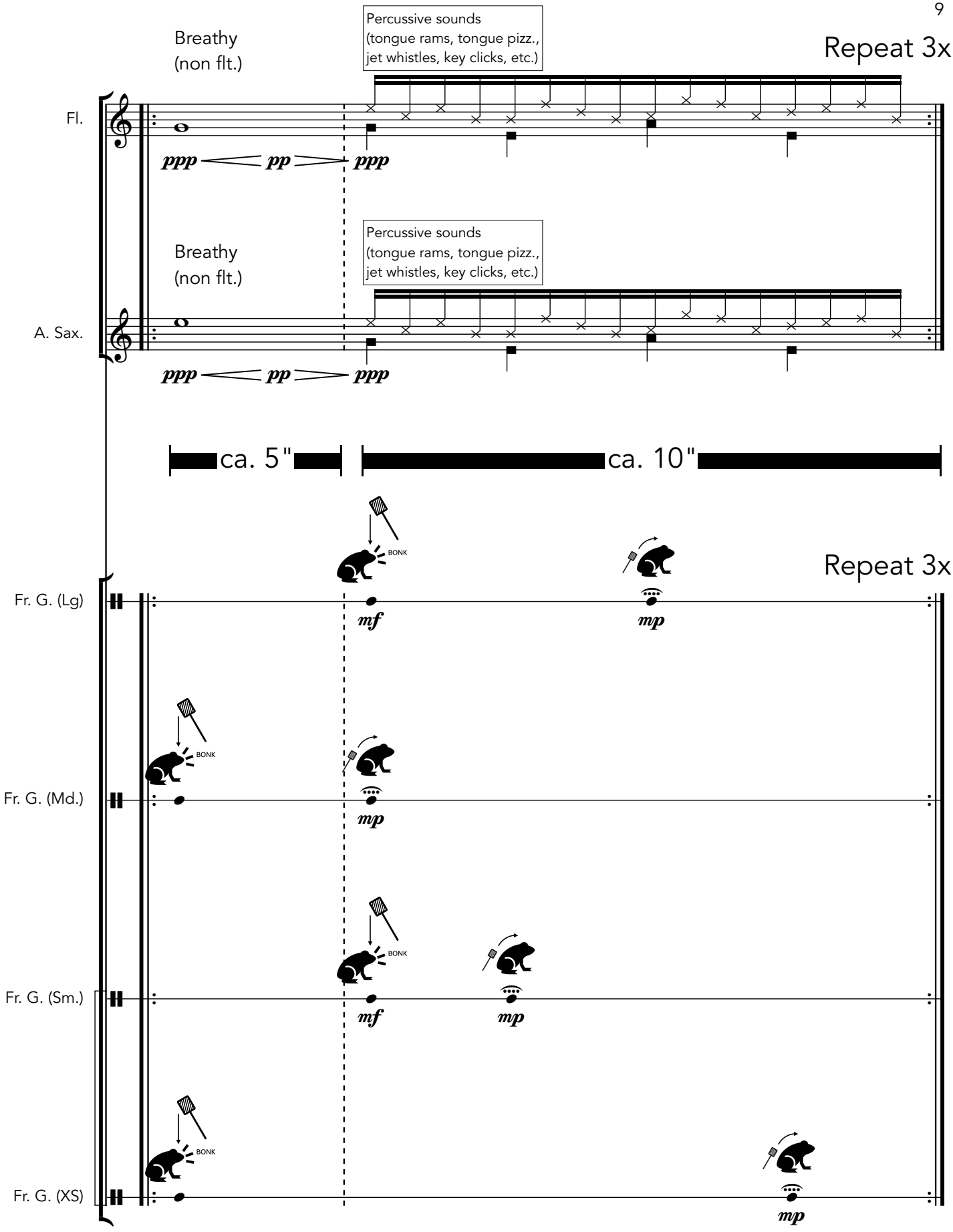

Fl.
pp
mf
ppp
Even air sound; pitchless
A. Sax.
p
f poss.
pp
Fr. G. (Lg)
mf
Fr. G. (Md.)
mf
mf
Fr. G. (Sm.)
p
Fr. G. (XS)
pp
Whistle tone (as before)
Fl.
A. Sax.
pp
p
pp
Fr. G. (Lg)
mf
Fr. G. (Md.)
BONK
BONK
Fr. G. (Sm.)
Fr. G. (XS)

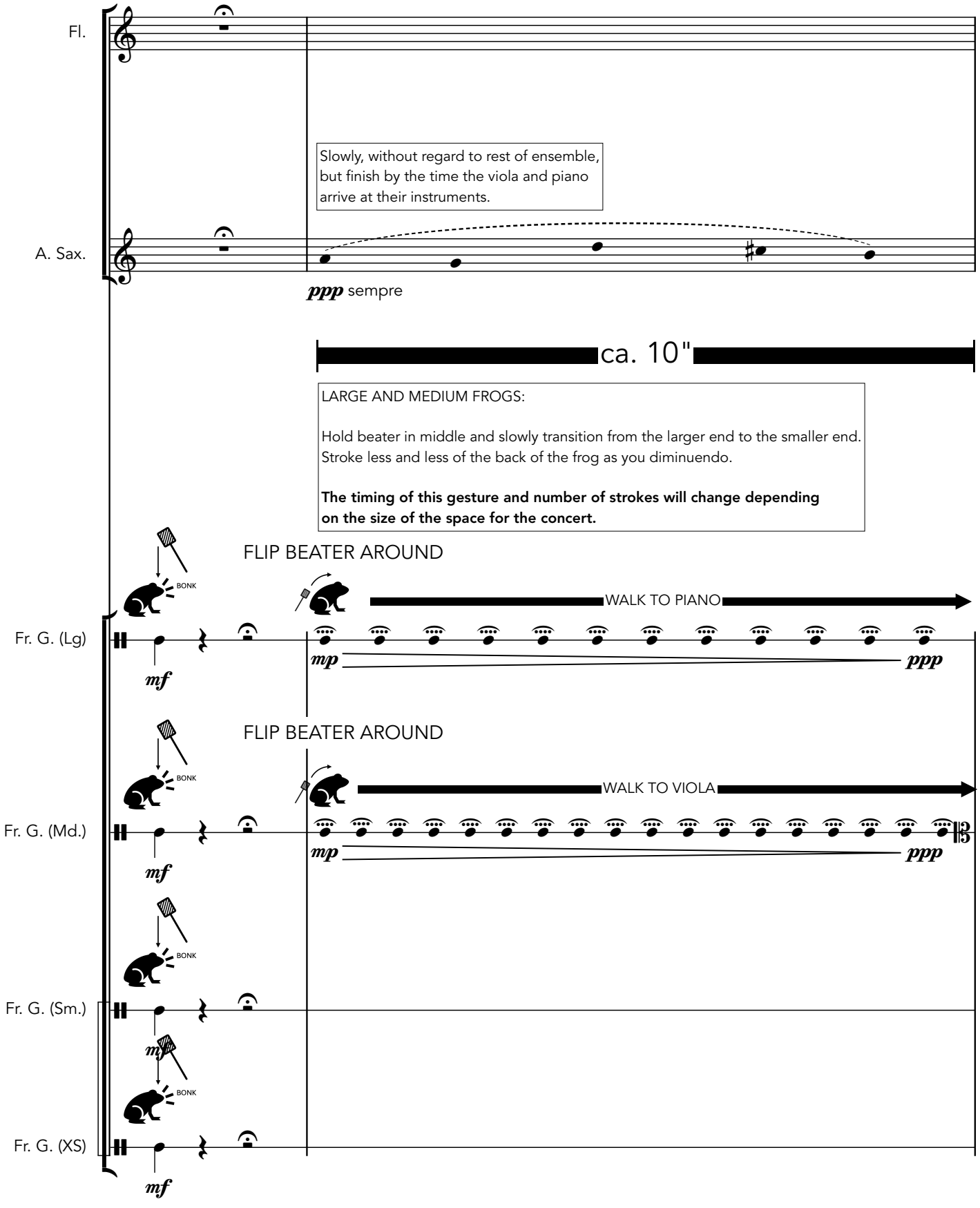
Senza tempo

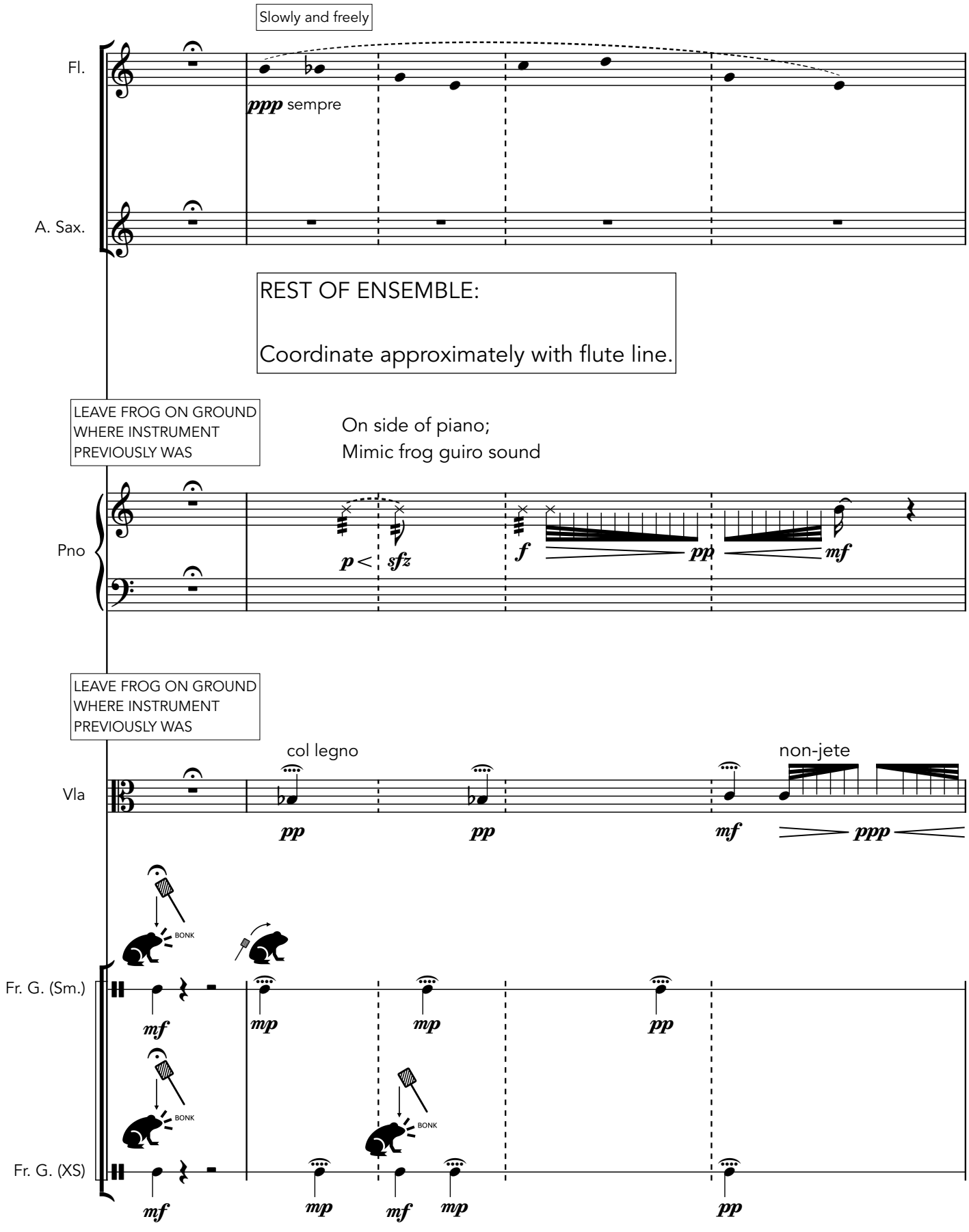

Cycle between this half-tone C and the materials on the right in no particular order.
spectral flush, follow gestural direction
gliss.
gliss.
ppp
p
Jet whistle; resolve to half-tone notated pitch
Fl.
pp
continue cycle
sfz ppp
n
Overblow (overtones)
tr
gliss.
gliss.
p
mp
pp
Cycle between this half-tone C and the materials on the right no particular order.
spectral flush, follow gestural direction
gliss.
gliss.
ppp
p
Play responsively with the flute
even air sound; only white noise
A. Sax.
pp
ppp
pp
ppp
continue cycle
fluttertongue air sound;
swell with key clicks in the middle
ppp
ca. 10"
ca. 30-40"
Fr. G. (Lg)
ca. 15"
ppp
continue with duet
Fr. G. (Md.)
ppp
Fr. G. (Sm.)
ppp
continue with duet
Fr. G. (XS)
ppp

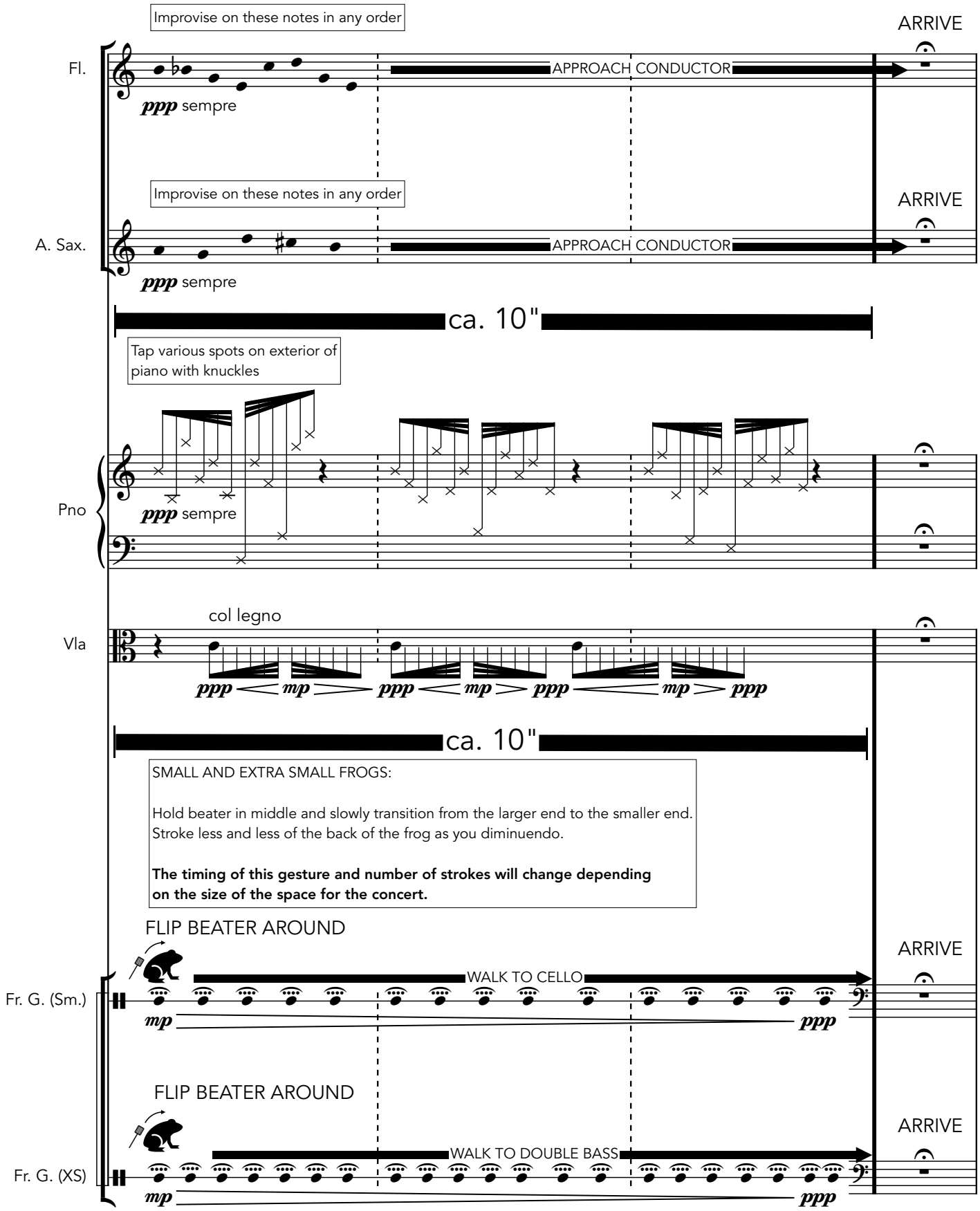

spectral flush, follow gestural direction
gliss.
gliss.
ppp
p
sim.
flt. half tone
Fl.
continue cycle
pp
ppp
continue cycle
Extremely breathy
tr
ppp
ca. 7"
Extremely breathy with minimal pitch;
Accentuate key clicks
tr
pp
p
sim.
Extremely breathy with minimal pitch
tr
A. Sax.
continue cycle
fluttertongue air sound;
swell with key clicks in the middle
ppp
ca. 30 - 40"
Fr. G. (Lg)
QUICKEN IN PACE
Fr. G. (Md.)
Fr. G. (Sm.)
QUICKEN IN PACE
Fr. G. (XS)

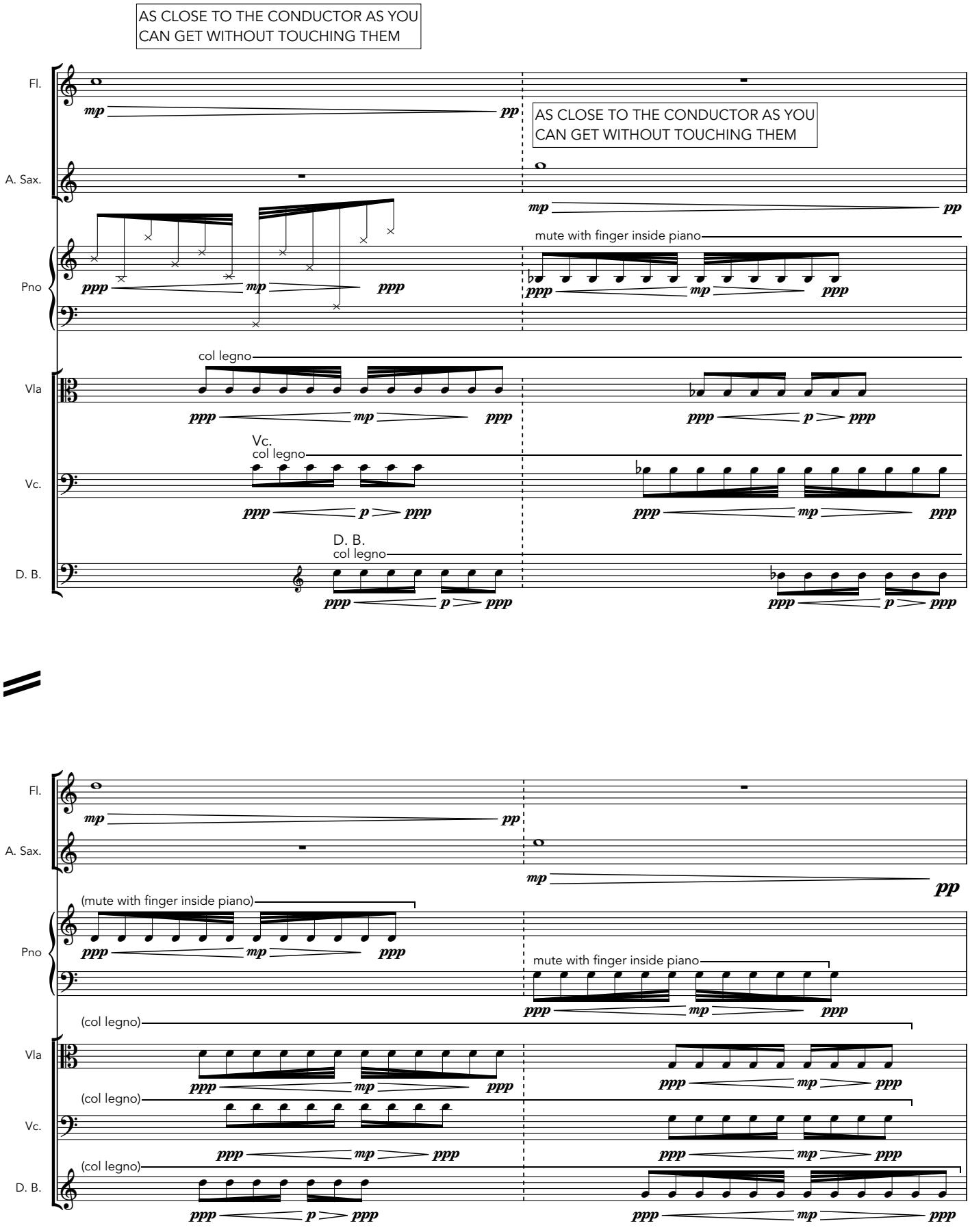

Breathy
flt.
Percussive sounds
(tongue rams, tongue pizz.,
jet whistles, key clicks, etc.)
Repeat 3x
Fl.
ppp pp ppp
Breathy
flt.
Percussive sounds
(tongue rams, tongue pizz.,
jet whistles, key clicks, etc.)
A. Sax.
ppp pp ppp
ca. 5"
ca. 10"
BONK
Repeat 3x
Fr. G. (Lg)
mf
mp
Fr. G. (Md.)
mf
mp
Fr. G. (Sm.)
mf
mp
Fr. G. (XS)
mf
mp

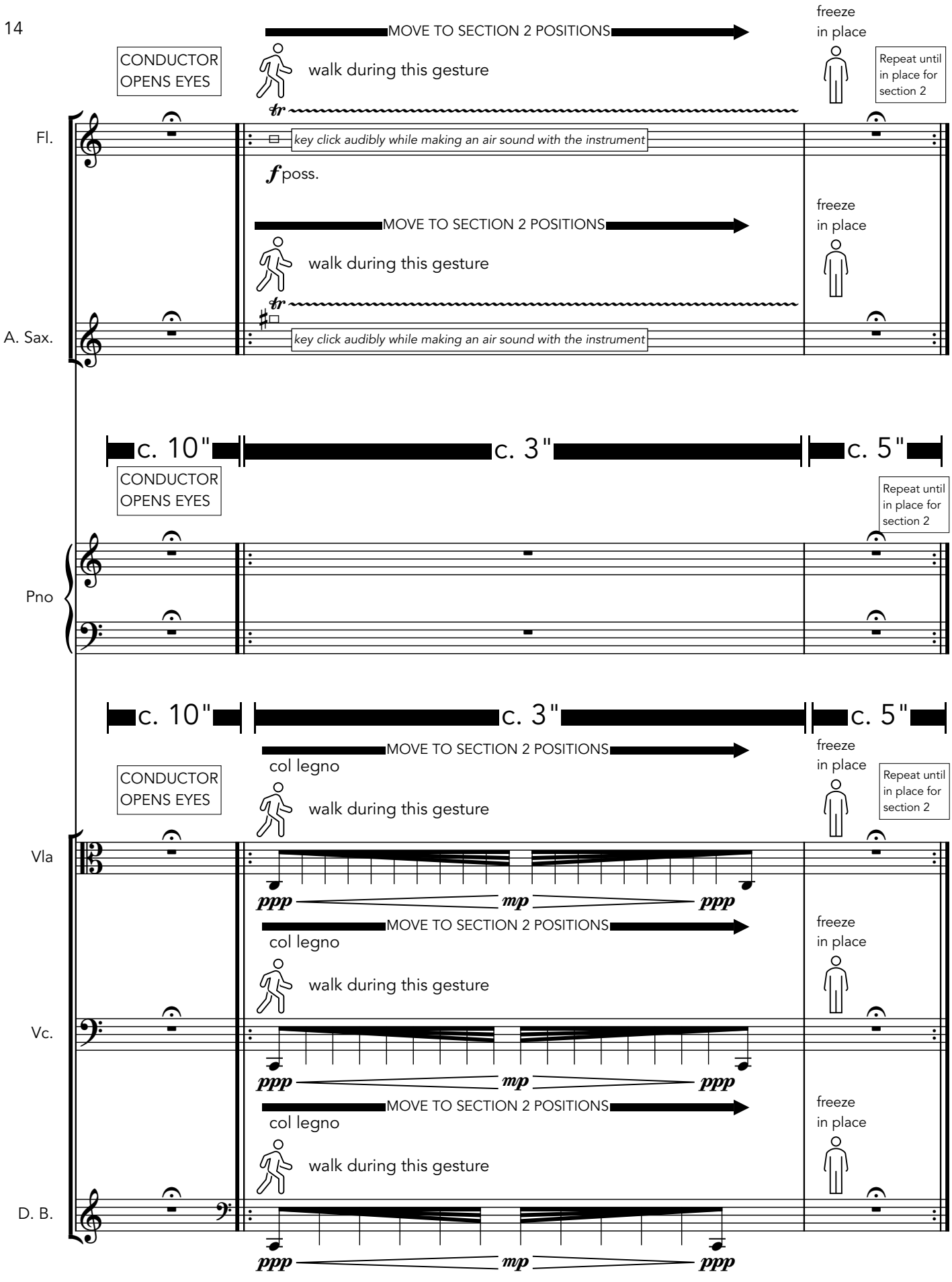

Repeat 3x
Breathy
(non flt.)
Percussive sounds
(tongue rams, tongue pizz.,
jet whistles, key clicks, etc.)
Fl.
ppp
pp
ppp
Breathy
(non flt.)
Percussive sounds
(tongue rams, tongue pizz.,
jet whistles, key clicks, etc.)
A. Sax.
ppp
pp
ppp
ca. 5"
ca. 10"
Repeat 3x
Fr. G. (Lg)
BONK
mf
mp
Fr. G. (Md.)
BONK
mp
Fr. G. (Sm.)
BONK
mf
mp
Fr. G. (XS)
BONK
mp


Fl.
A. Sax.
Slowly, without regard to rest of ensemble, but finish by the time the viola and piano arrive at their instruments.
ppp sempre
ca. 10"
LARGE AND MEDIUM FROGS:
Hold beater in middle and slowly transition from the larger end to the smaller end. Stroke less and less of the back of the frog as you diminuendo.
The timing of this gesture and number of strokes will change depending on the size of the space for the concert.
FLIP BEATER AROUND
BONK
WALK TO PIANO
Fr. G. (Lg)
mf
mp
ppp
FLIP BEATER AROUND
BONK
WALK TO VIOLA
Fr. G. (Md.)
mf
mp
ppp
BONK
Fr. G. (Sm.)
mf
BONK
Fr. G. (XS)
mf

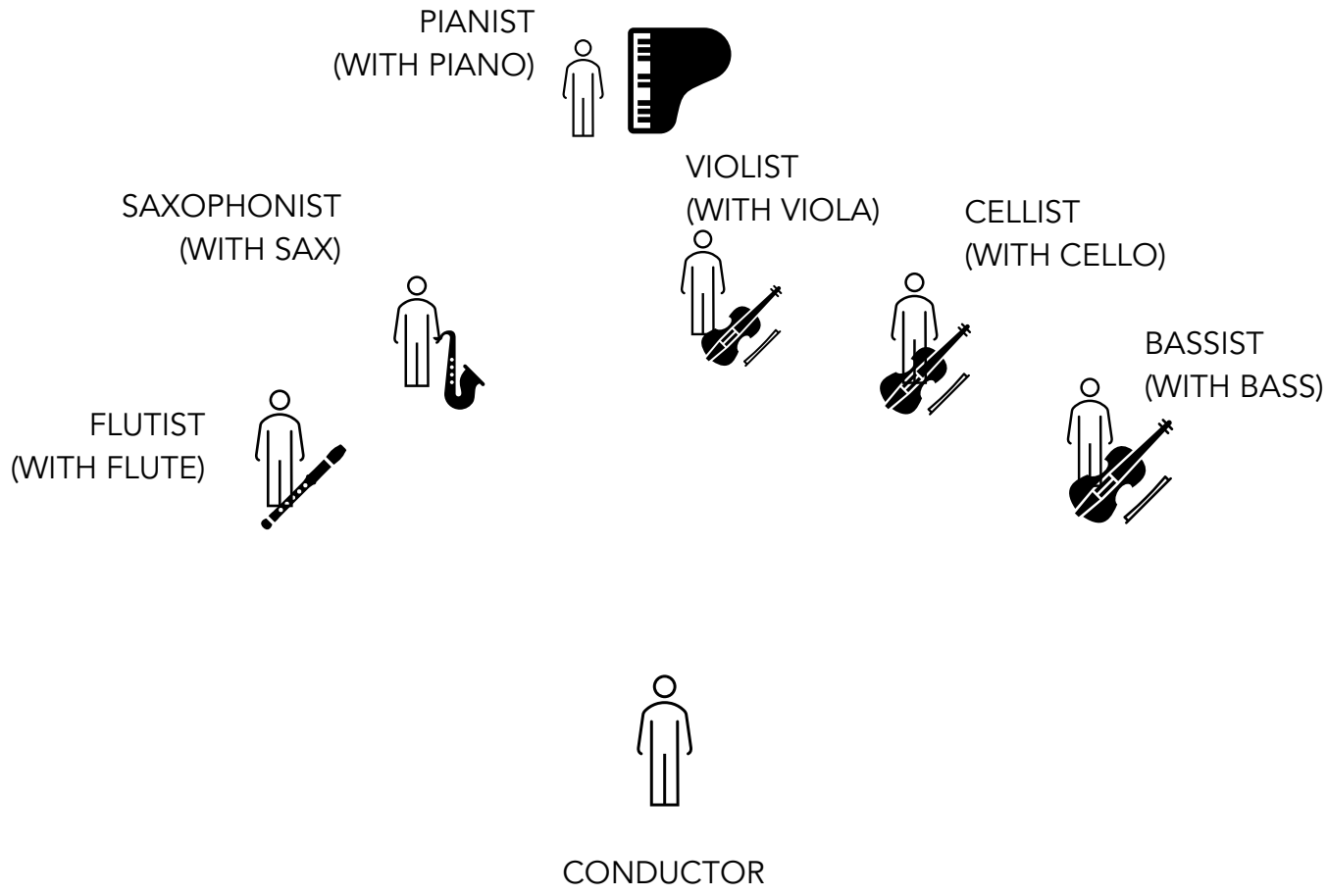

Slowly and freely
Fl.
ppp sempre
A. Sax.
REST OF ENSEMBLE:
Coordinate approximately with flute line.
LEAVE FROG ON GROUND WHERE INSTRUMENT PREVIOUSLY WAS
On side of piano;
Mimic frog guiro sound
Pno
p <
sfz
f
pp
mf
LEAVE FROG ON GROUND WHERE INSTRUMENT PREVIOUSLY WAS
col legno
non-jete
Vla
pp
pp
mf
ppp
BONK
Fr. G. (Sm.)
mf
mp
mp
pp
BONK
BONK
Fr. G. (XS)
mf
mp
mf
mp
pp


Improvise on these notes in any order
ARRIVE
Fl.
APPROACH CONDUCTOR
ppp sempre
Improvise on these notes in any order
ARRIVE
A. Sax.
APPROACH CONDUCTOR
ppp sempre
ca. 10"
Tap various spots on exterior of piano with knuckles
Pno
ppp sempre
col legno
Vla
ppp mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp
ca. 10"
SMALL AND EXTRA SMALL FROGS:
Hold beater in middle and slowly transition from the larger end to the smaller end.
Stroke less and less of the back of the frog as you diminuendo.
The timing of this gesture and number of strokes will change depending on the size of the space for the concert.
FLIP BEATER AROUND
ARRIVE
WALK TO CELLO
Fr. G. (Sm.)
mp
ppp
FLIP BEATER AROUND
ARRIVE
WALK TO DOUBLE BASS
Fr. G. (XS)
mp
ppp


AS CLOSE TO THE CONDUCTOR AS YOU CAN GET WITHOUT TOUCHING THEM
Fl.
A. Sax.
Pno
Vla
Vc.
D. B.
mp
pp
ppp
mute with finger inside piano
col legno
p
AS CLOSE TO THE CONDUCTOR AS YOU CAN GET WITHOUT TOUCHING THEM
(mute with finger inside piano)
(col legno)


CONDUCTOR OPENS EYES
MOVE TO SECTION 2 POSITIONS
walk during this gesture
freeze in place
Repeat until in place for section 2
Fl.
key click audibly while making an air sound with the instrument
f poss.
A. Sax.
c. 10"
c. 3"
c. 5"
Pno
col legno
Vla
ppp
mp
Vc.
D. B.

SECTION 2 SETUP:

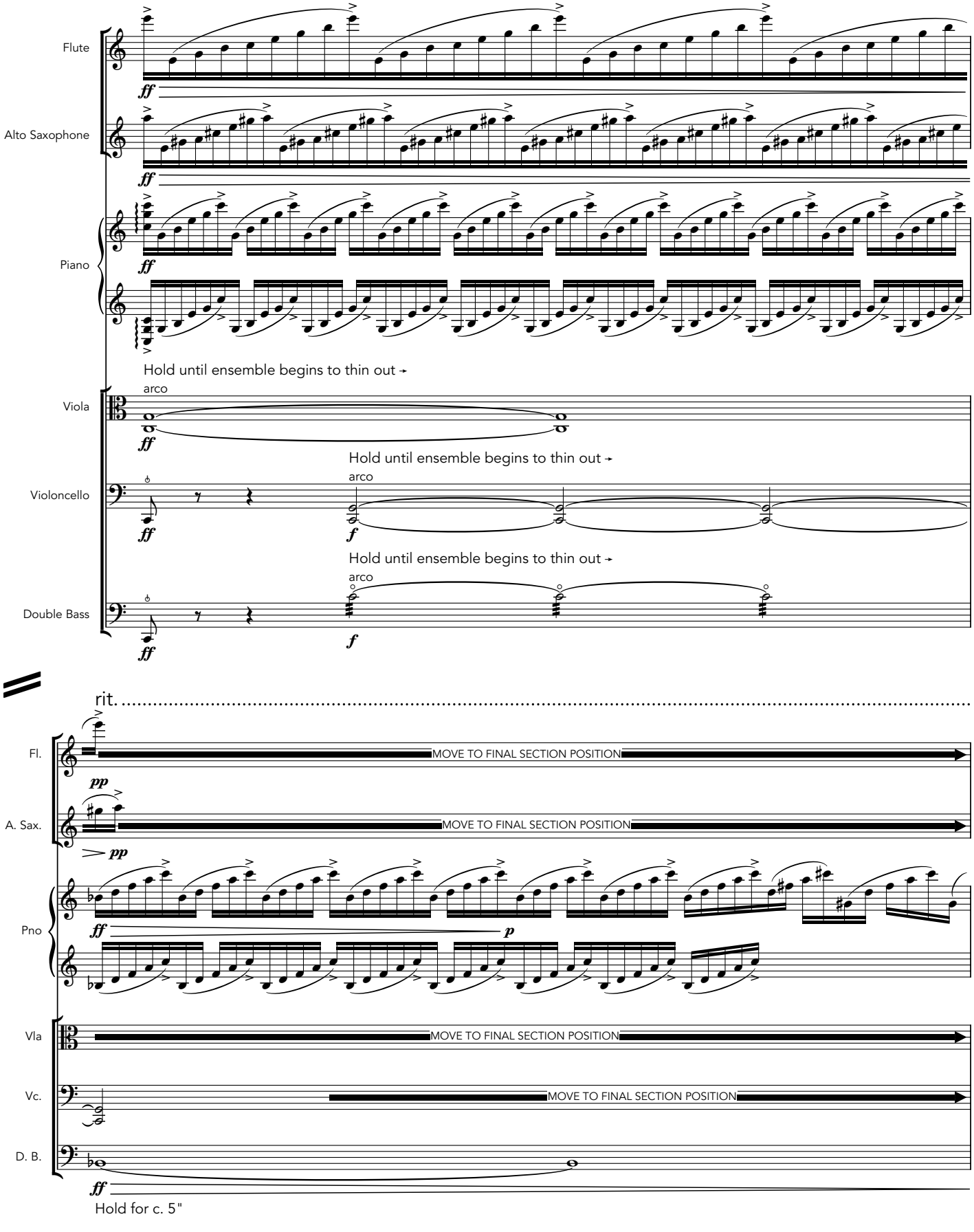


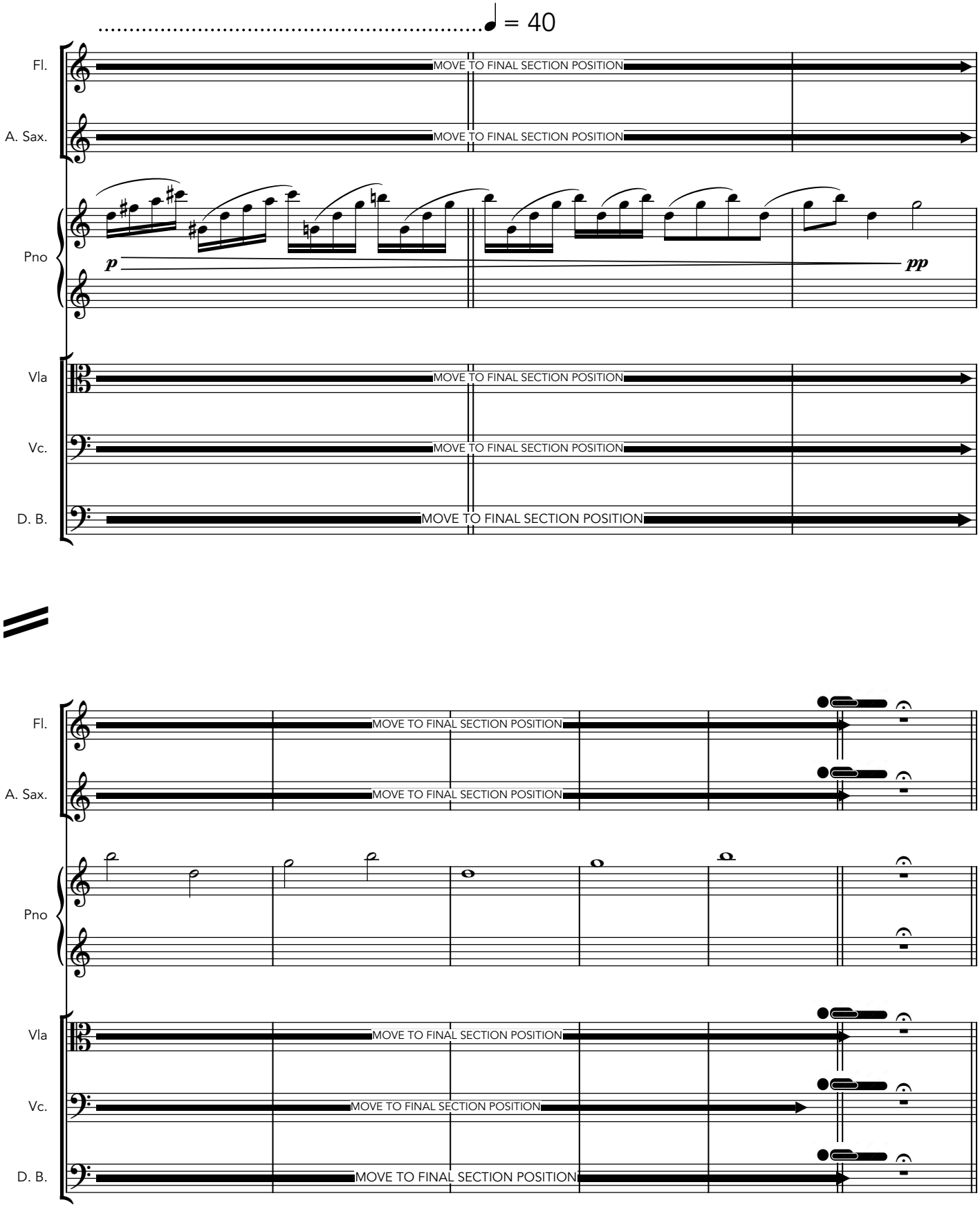
STAGE RIGHT

STAGE LEFT

CONDUCTOR CUES THIS PAGE WITH ONE BIG DOWNBEAT

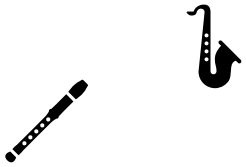
Explosive; All parts move independently as quickly as possible




♩ = 40
Fl.
A. Sax.
Pno
Vla
Vc.
D. B.
MOVE TO FINAL SECTION POSITION
p
pp

FINAL SECTION SETUP:





INSTRUMENTS
LEFT BEHIND



VIOLIST



PIANIST



SAXOPHONIST





FLUTIST

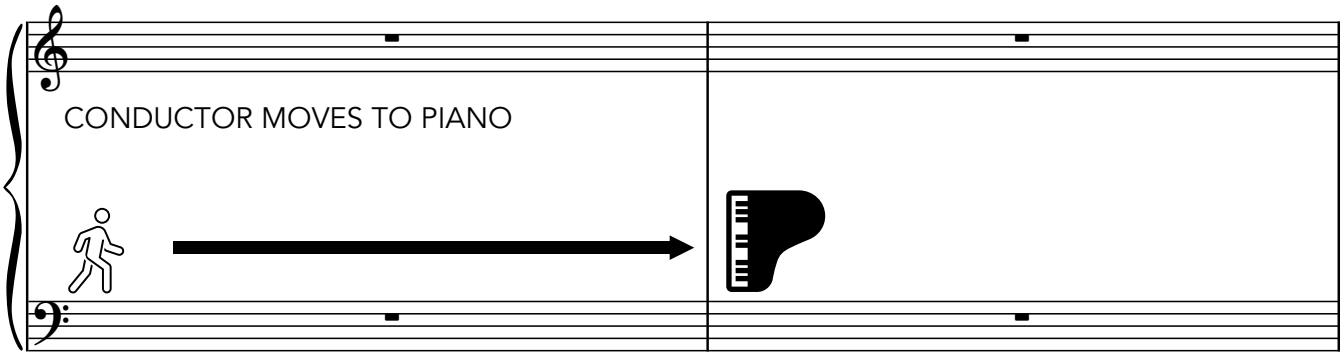


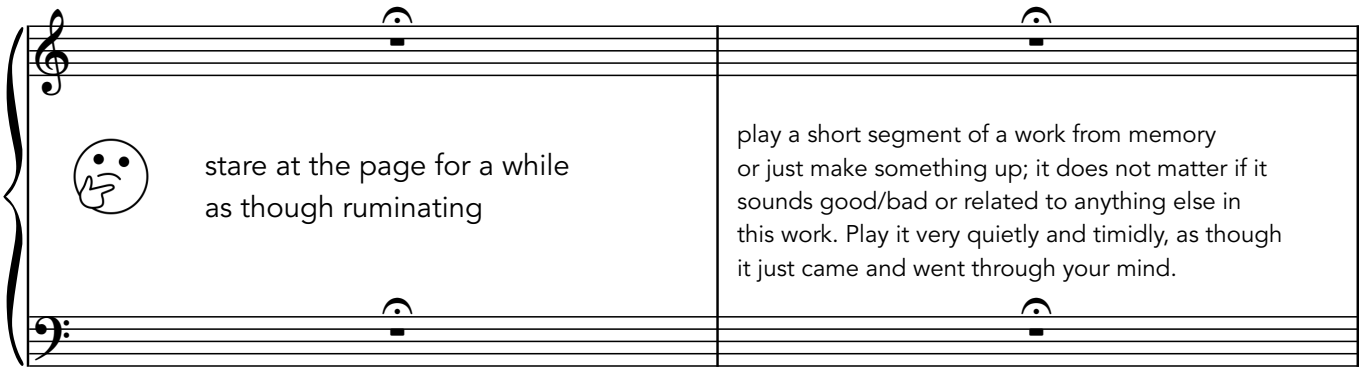
BASSIST

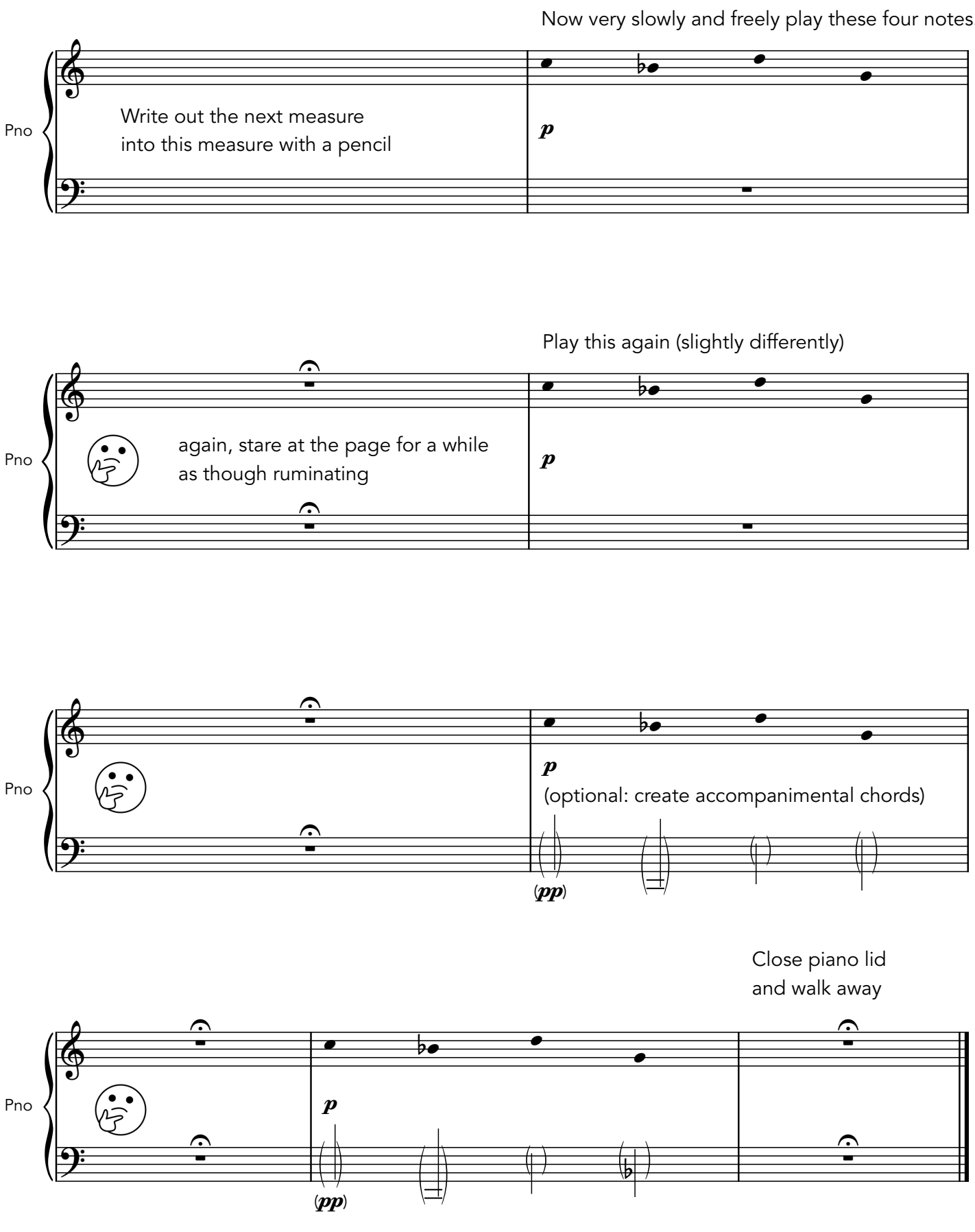


CONDUCTOR

CELLIST






Now very slowly and freely play these four notes.
Pno
Write out the next measure
into this measure with a pencil
p
Play this again (slightly differently)
Pno
again, stare at the page for a while
as though ruminating
p
Pno
p
(optional: create accompanimental chords)
(pp)
Close piano lid
and walk away
Pno
p
(pp)