Shit Around The World

for flute and percussion

Aaron Gervais

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September 2007

Duration: 11’00

Première performance:

Solomiya Moroz – Flute
Nicholas Jacques – Percussion
Banff Centre for the Arts
Banff, Canada
12 March 2009

About the Piece

This piece is based on the sound of the word *shit* in twelve different languages. It travels from west to east geographically across the world: starting in North America and ending in Japan. The languages were chosen either because I speak them, or because I could find a native speaker of that language to teach me how to say *shit*. I did, however, attempt to keep a somewhat even spacing between geographical areas, although a completely even distribution would have been, of course, impossible to realize.

Instrumentation

- Flute and Piccolo

- Orchestral Crash Cymbals: use the largest cymbals that the performer can handle.
- Sandpaper Blocks
- Woodblock, medium
- Shakers: two distinct pitches. Avoid coarse-grained shakers like maracas. Must be able to hold both in one hand.
- Claves
- Bamboo Wind Chimes
- Triangle, small
- Suspended Cymbal, medium
- Glockenspiel
- Temple Blocks, set of five

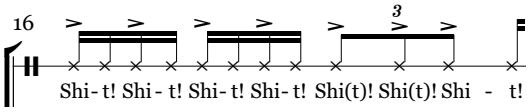
How to Speak the Text

A one-line staff is given to each performer, on which the spoken rhythm of the text is shown. Durations for these rhythms apply to all sounds that can be prolonged—evidently, a "t" or "d" sound cannot be sustained, so it has no duration.

It would be counterproductive to try to describe the proper pronunciations of all twelve languages; the performers should try to find native speakers who can coach them in the proper pronunciation whenever possible. Roman characters have been used to notate all languages, and the name of the language being used is also given in the score.

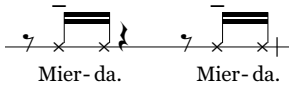
Clear diction is, of course, beneficial to the proper realization of the piece, but it is unavoidable that certain performers will be able to speak certain languages more clearly than others.

Rapid pronunciation at fast speeds also diminishes the ability to enunciate. There are sections in the piece where the music has been composed expressly to take advantage of this difficulty. At such places—for example, mm.16–19—the end of the word may have to be omitted in order to stay in tempo. The sounds to be omitted are placed in parentheses. In this example, "Shit!" spoken rapidly becomes "Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shit!", to show that it may not be possible to fit in the "t" sound.

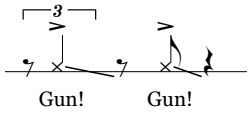


Certain syllables have been divided rhythmically into phonemes in the score. For example, "shit" becomes "shi-t". This is done to make it easier to enunciate the word. However, this does not imply that the "t" should be emphasized. All words in the piece should be pronounced as naturally as possible for the given tempo and dynamic indications.

Accents and tenutos are used to show stress in multi-syllable words, where appropriate to the language.



Tonal aspects of certain languages are shown by placing the notehead directly above or below the staff, as well as with glissando lines (in the case of Mandarin). These relative pitch indications should fall within the range of normal speech; they should not be exaggerated.



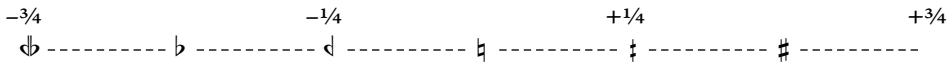
Six general kinds of speech indications are used in the piece. These are as follows:

- whisper – spoken without the use of the vocal chords.
- murmur – very quiet speaking voice with the lips hardly opened.
- low voice – quiet speaking voice.
- speech voice – conversational speaking voice.
- loud voice – speaking voice for a loud environment, but not shouting.
- shout – shouting voice.

Notation

Accidentals are used in the conventional manner, although cautionary accidentals are added occasionally.

The following chart demonstrates the quartertone notational system used:

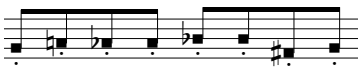


Most other non-standard notation is explained in the score using footnotes. The exceptions are printed below.

Flute

Airy breathy sound with as little pitch as possible.

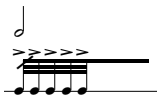
Repeat the given notes in the given order as quickly as possible, for the duration of the small notehead above the staff.



Lip buzzing – Remove the headjoint. Hold the body of the flute facing forward, pressed against the lips, as if it were a brass instrument. The opening left by the removal of the headjoint should be touching the lips, but the instrument should remain outside of the mouth. The lips should completely seal the opening. While maintaining this position, buzz the lips, mimicking the embouchure of a brass instrument. With this technique, the flute should sound like it is some kind of strange trumpet or didgeridoo. NB: The pitch produced with this technique will not match the notated pitch; it only indicates the fingering.

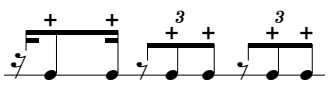
Percussion

All resonant instruments are to be muted at rests, unless marked with a *laisser vibrer* slur. At certain key points, a mute symbol ⌖ has been used for emphasis as well.

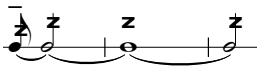


Repeat the given notes in the given order as quickly as possible, for the duration of the small notehead above the staff.

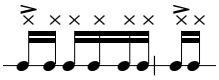
Play the crash cymbals in the usual orchestral manner.



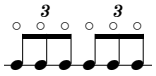
Strike the cymbals together as if they were a hi-hat, so that the cymbals remain against each other after the attack and do not vibrate freely. This should be a dry staccato attack. For quick pianissimo passages, it may be easier to leave the cymbals partially closed and only strike a small portion of the cymbals together.



Place the cymbals together fairly tightly and rub in a circular motion, so that a grinding sound is produced.



Place the cymbals together fairly tightly and rub in a quick horizontal motion, so that a fast scratching sound is produced.

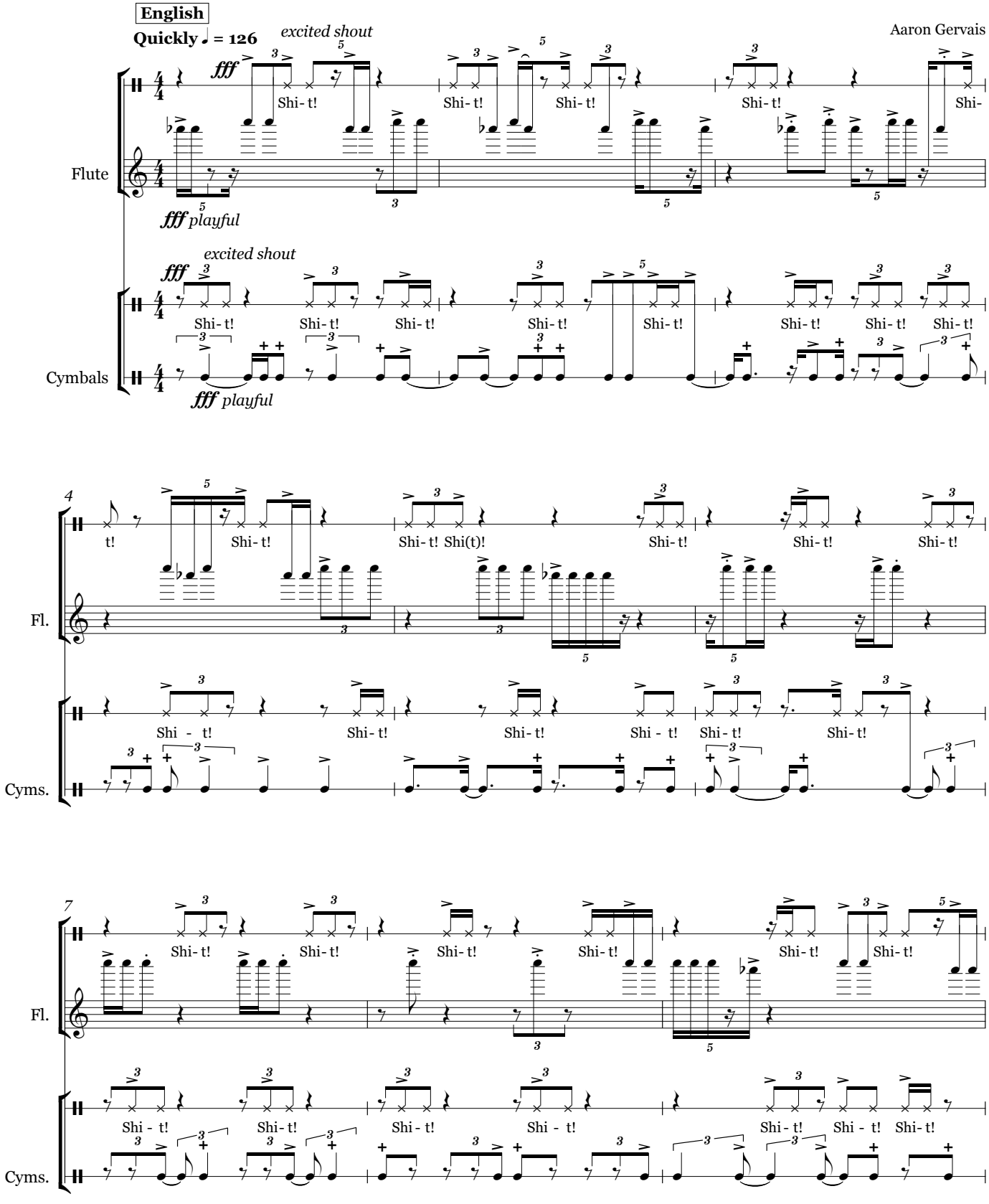


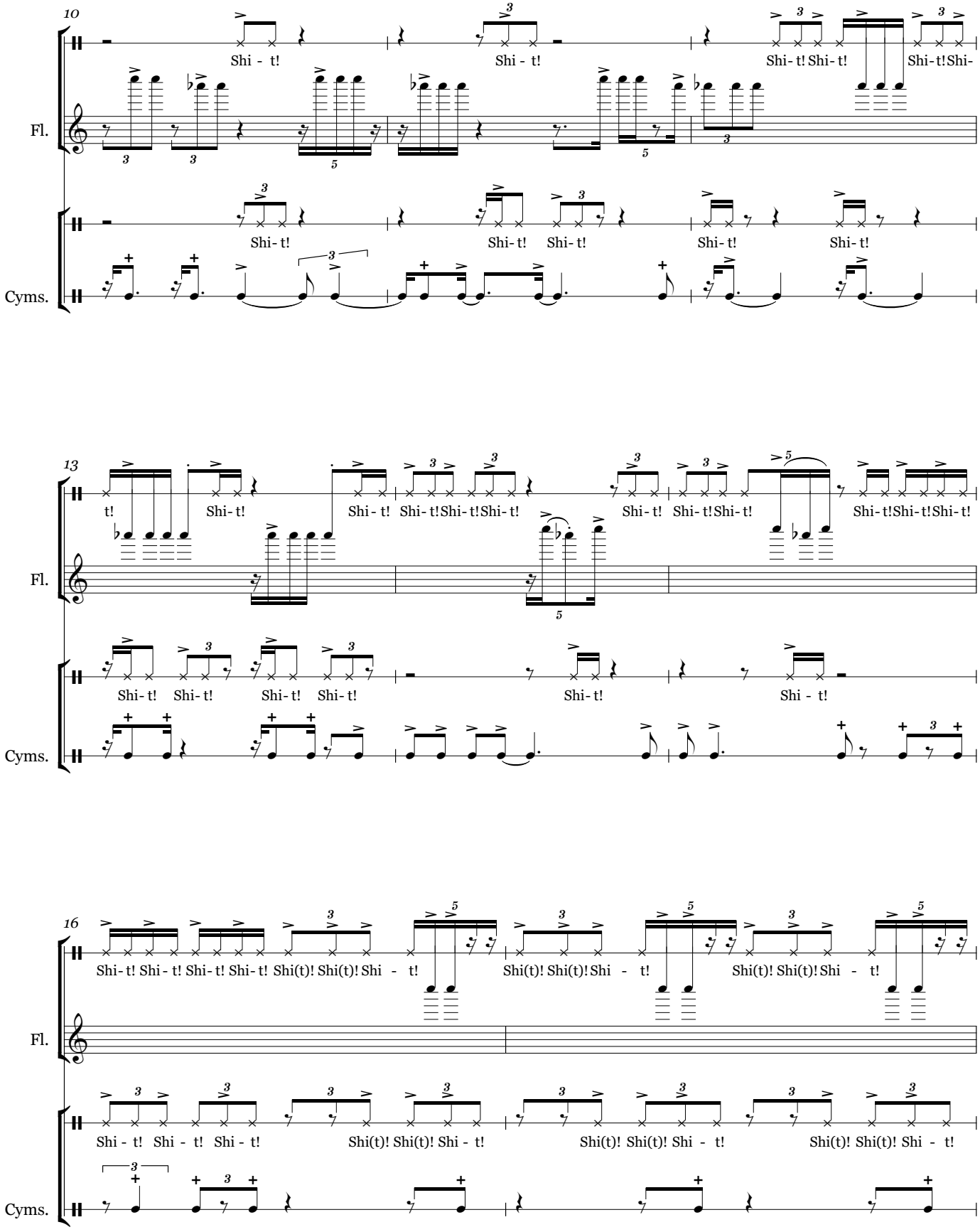
Place the cymbals together loosely and rub in a quick horizontal motion, so that a rhythmic sloshing sound is produced, similar to a partially-open hi-hat.

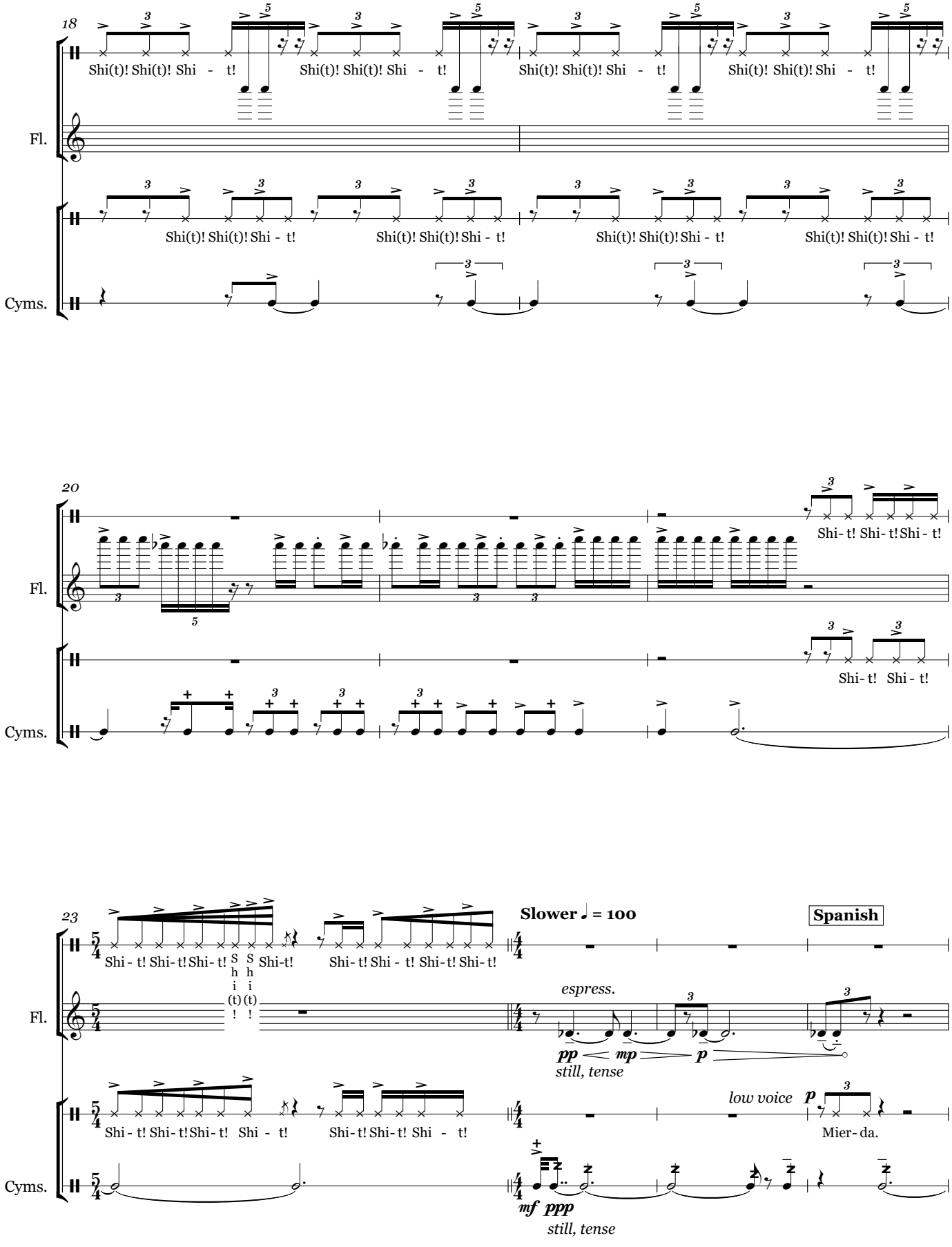
for Reiko Manabe

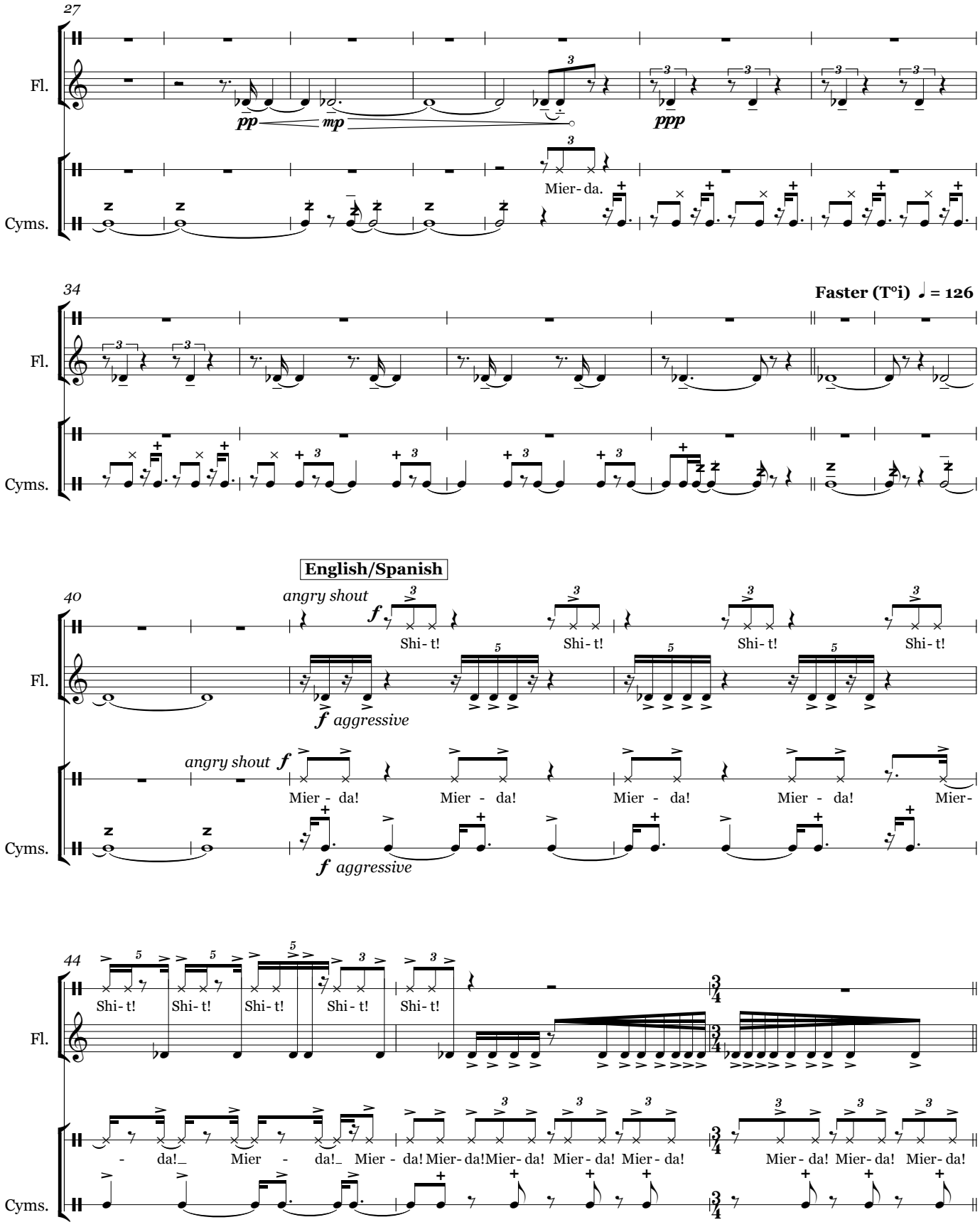
Shit Around The World

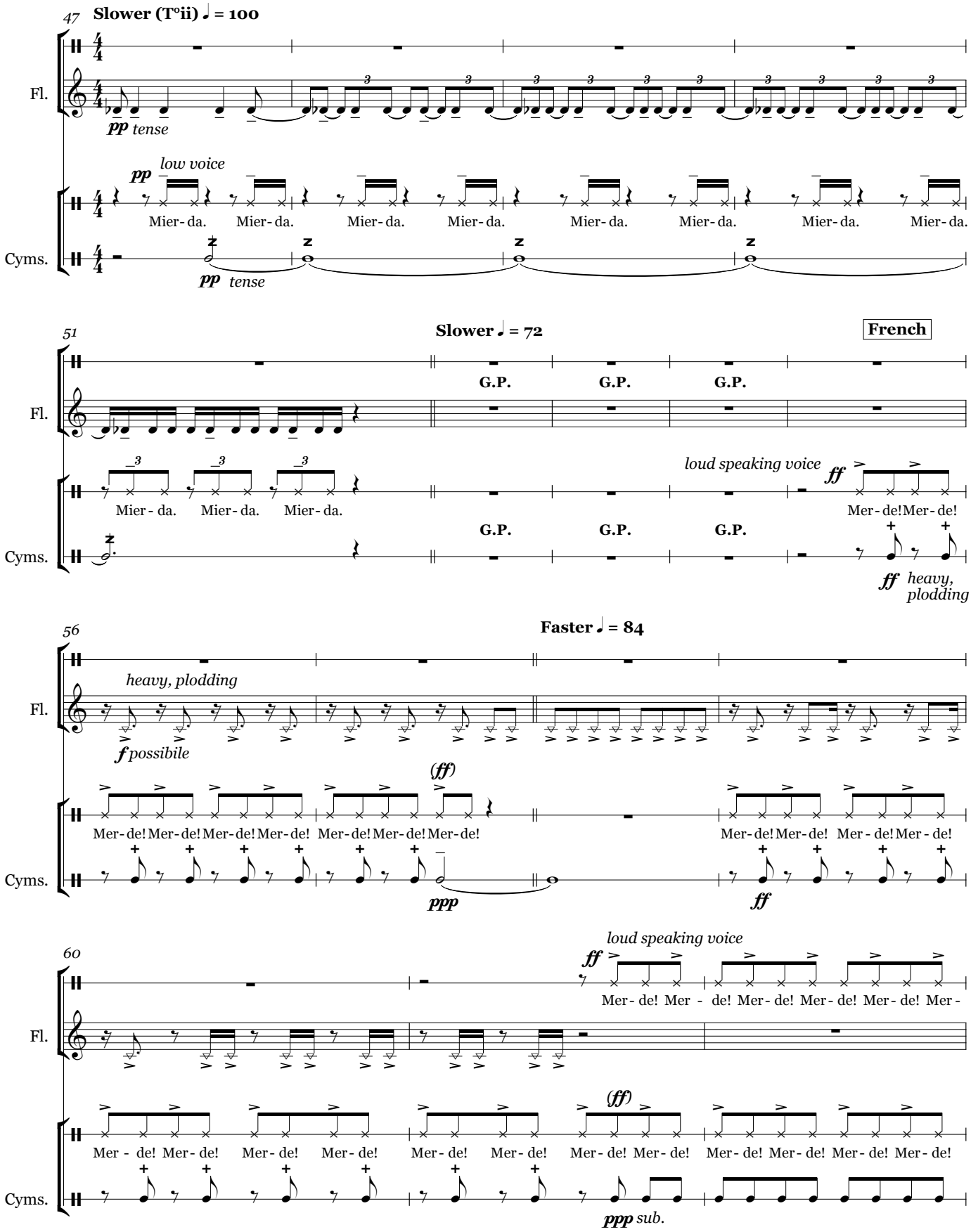
Part I: English, Spanish, French, German

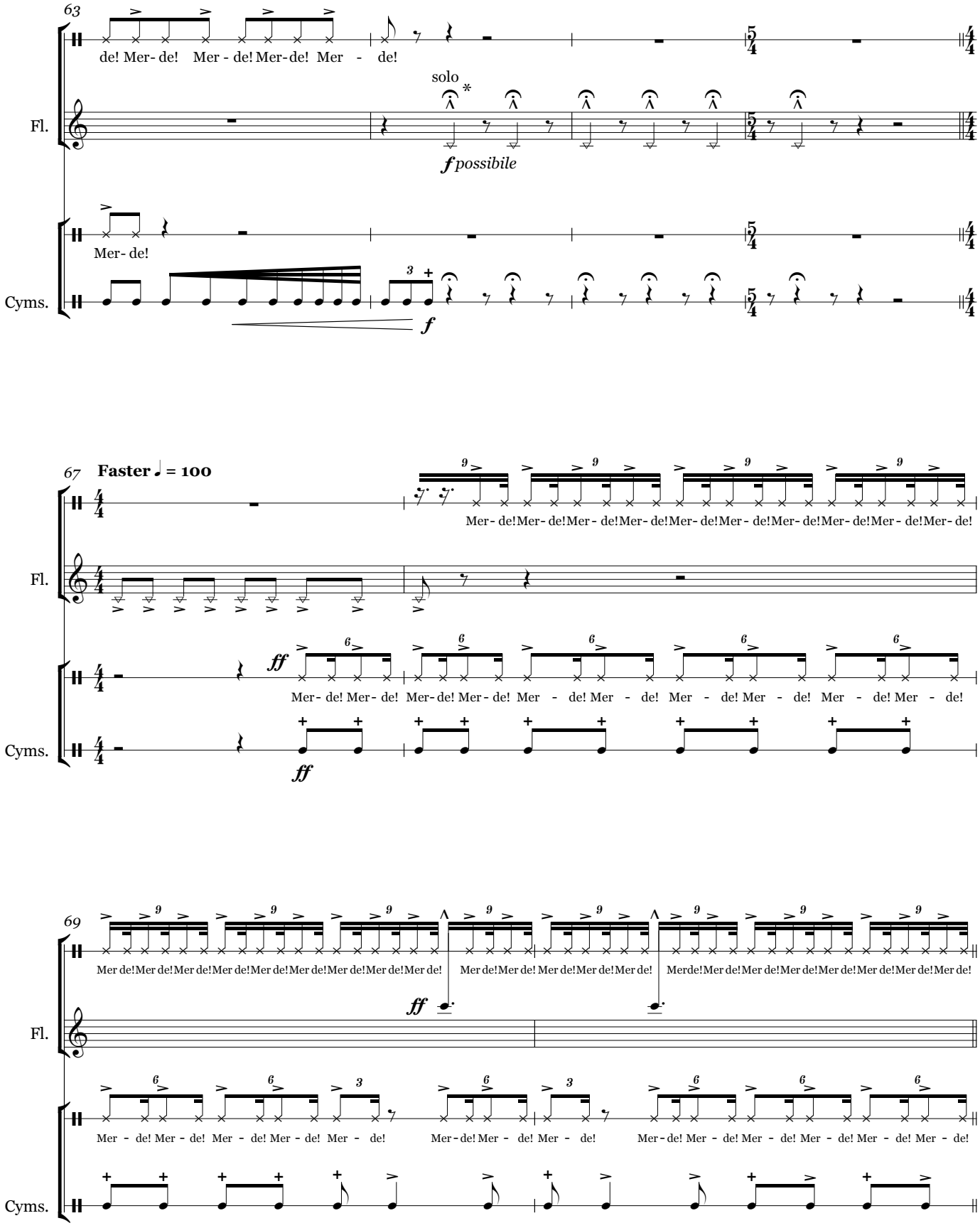



10
Shi - t!
Shi - t!
Shi- t! Shi- t!
Shi- t! Shi-
Fl.
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Cyms.
13
t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t! Shi- t! Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t! Shi- t!
Shi- t! Shi- t! Shi- t!
Fl.
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi - t!
Cyms.
16
Shi- t! Shi - t! Shi- t! Shi- t! Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Fl.
Shi - t! Shi - t! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Cyms.

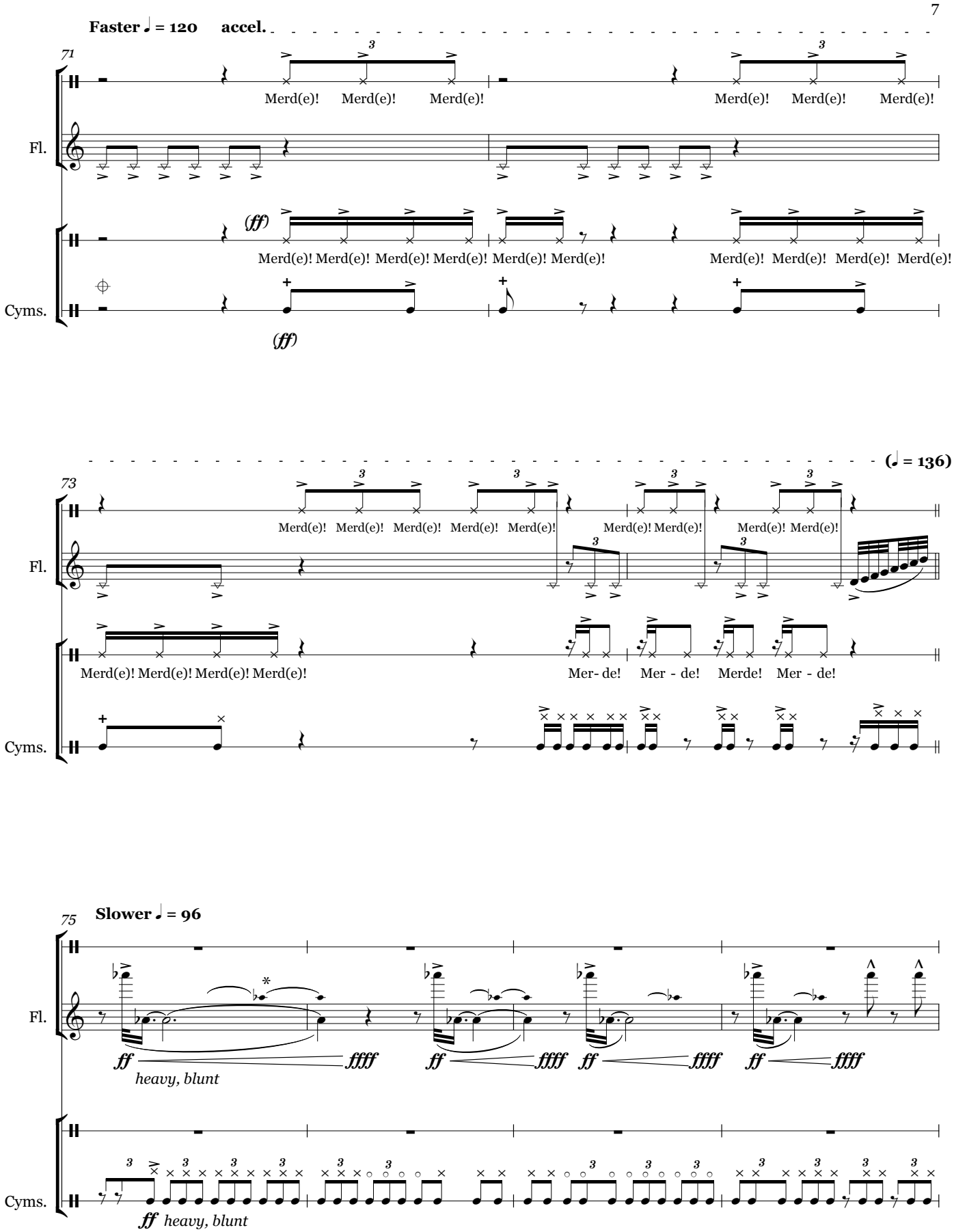

18
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Fl.
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Shi(t)! Shi(t)! Shi - t!
Cyms.
20
Shi- t! Shi- t! Shi - t!
Fl.
Shi- t! Shi - t!
Cyms.
23
Shi - t! Shi- t! Shi- t!
Shi-t!
Shi- t! Shi - t! Shi- t! Shi- t!
Slower ♩ = 100
Spanish
Fl.
espress.
pp mp p
still, tense
Shi - t! Shi- t! Shi- t!
Shi - t!
Shi-t! Shi- t! Shi - t!
low voice p
Mier- da.
Cyms.
mf ppp
still, tense


27
Fl.
pp
mp
ppp
Cyms.
Mier- da.
34
Faster (T°i) ♩ = 126
Fl.
Cyms.
English/Spanish
40
angry shout
f
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Fl.
f aggressive
angry shout f
Mier - da!
Mier - da!
Mier - da!
Mier - da!
Mier-
Cyms.
f aggressive
44
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Shi- t!
Fl.
- da!
Mier - da!
Mier - da!
Mier- da!
Mier- da!
Mier - da!
Mier - da!
Mier - da!
Mier- da!
Mier- da!
Cyms.


47
Slower (T°ii) ♩ = 100
Fl.
pp tense
pp low voice
Mier- da. Mier- da. Mier- da. Mier- da. Mier- da. Mier- da. Mier- da. Mier- da.
Cyms.
pp tense
51
Slower ♩ = 72
French
G.P. G.P. G.P.
Fl.
Mier - da. Mier - da. Mier - da.
loud speaking voice
ff
Mer - de! Mer - de!
G.P. G.P. G.P.
Cyms.
ff heavy, plodding
56
Faster ♩ = 84
heavy, plodding
Fl.
f possibile
(ff)
Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de!
Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de!
Cyms.
ppp
ff
60
loud speaking voice
ff
Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer -
Fl.
(ff)
Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de! Mer - de!
Cyms.
ppp sub.

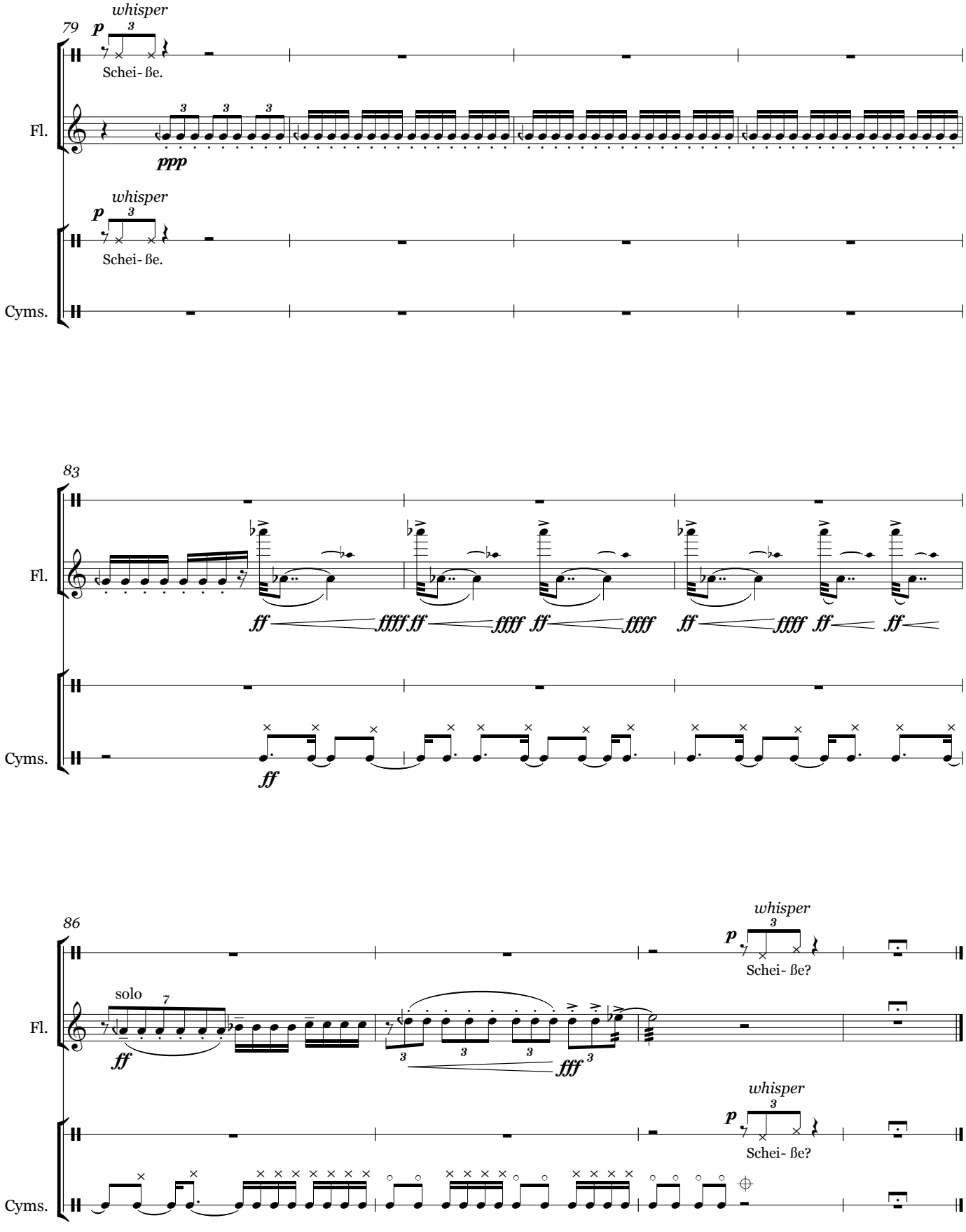


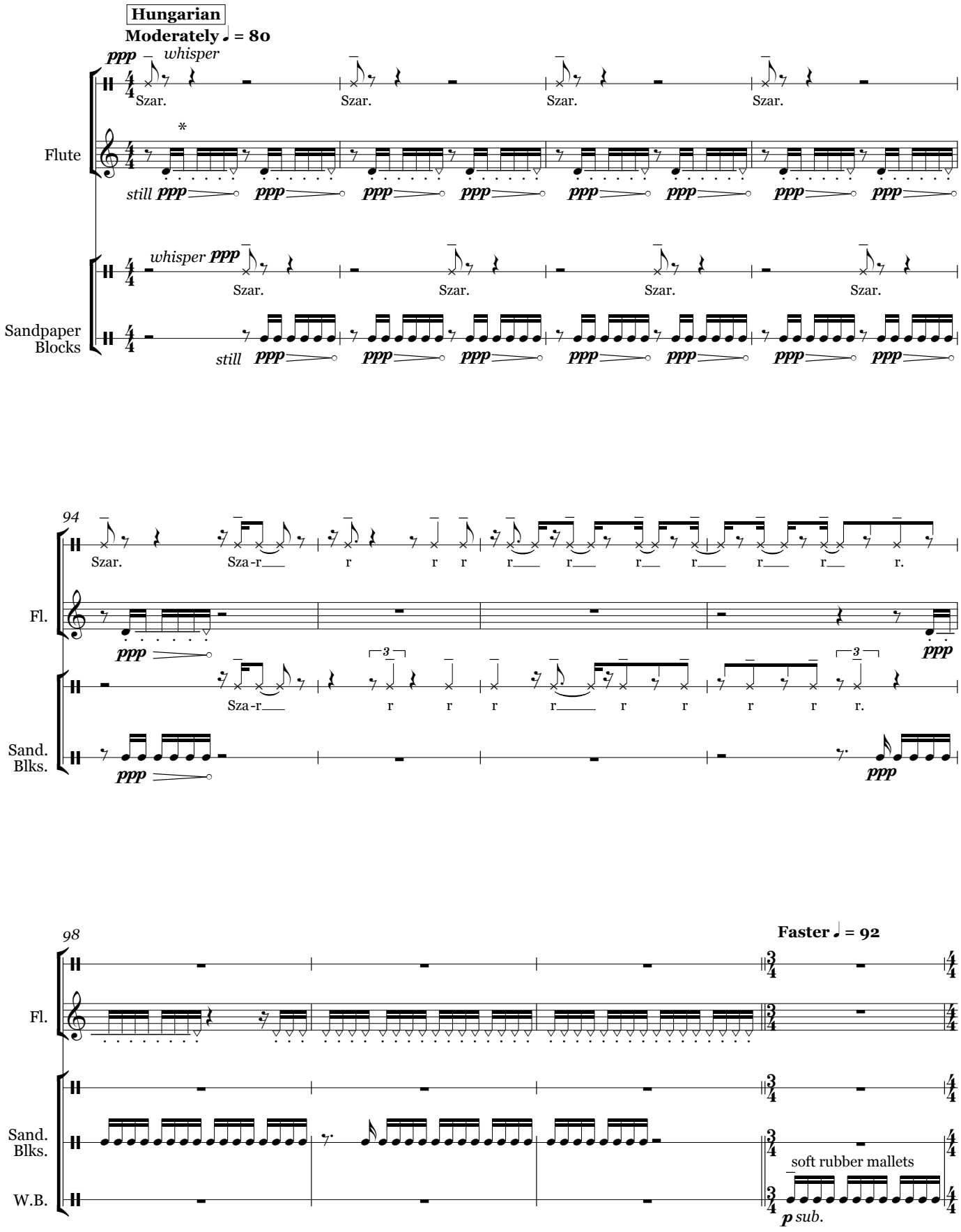
* Blow as much air as possible, very quickly. When completely out of air, end the fermata and go on to the next note. Each fermata should not be too long; at most 2-3 seconds.



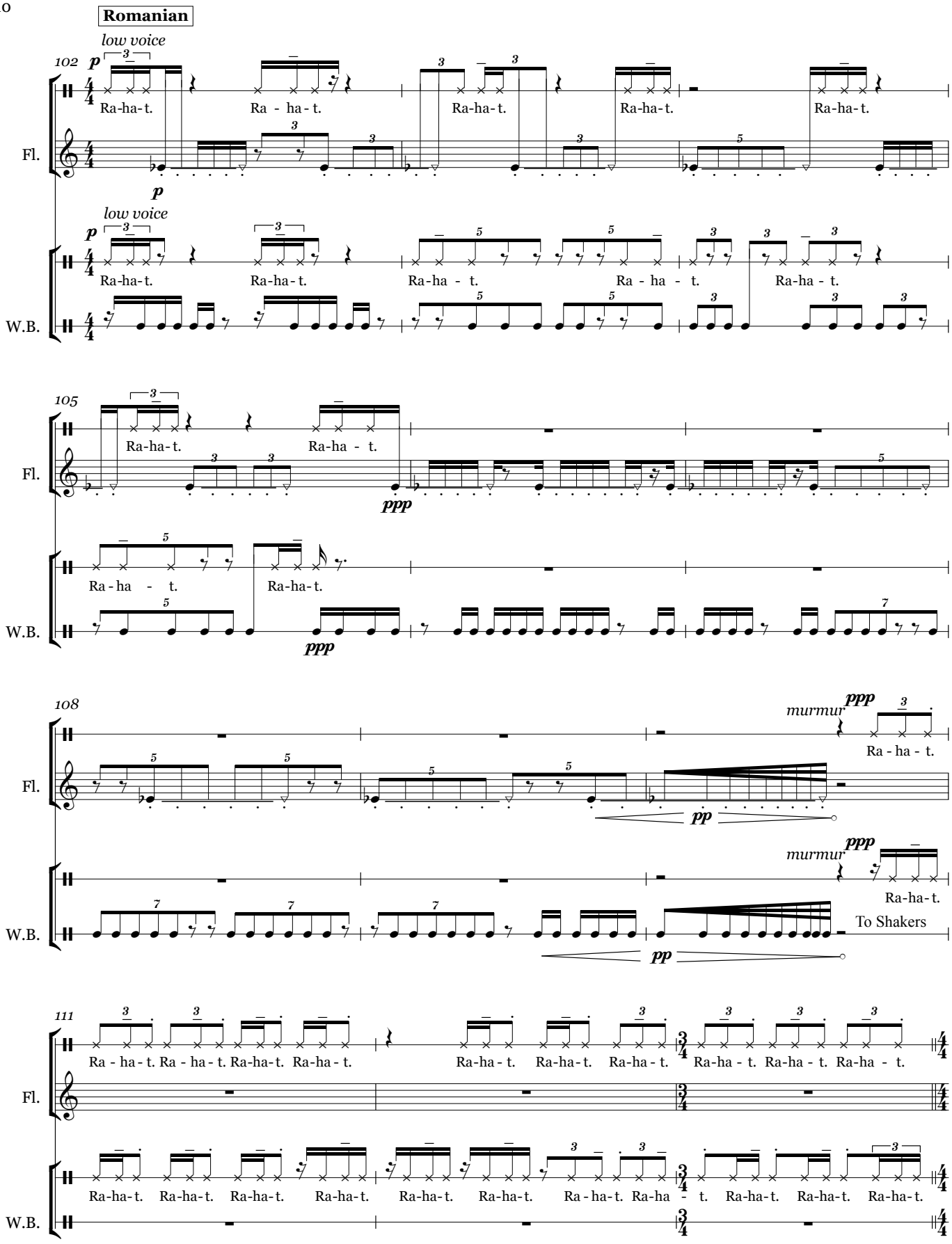
* While crescendoing, overblow the bottom note so that the octave harmonic gradually appears.

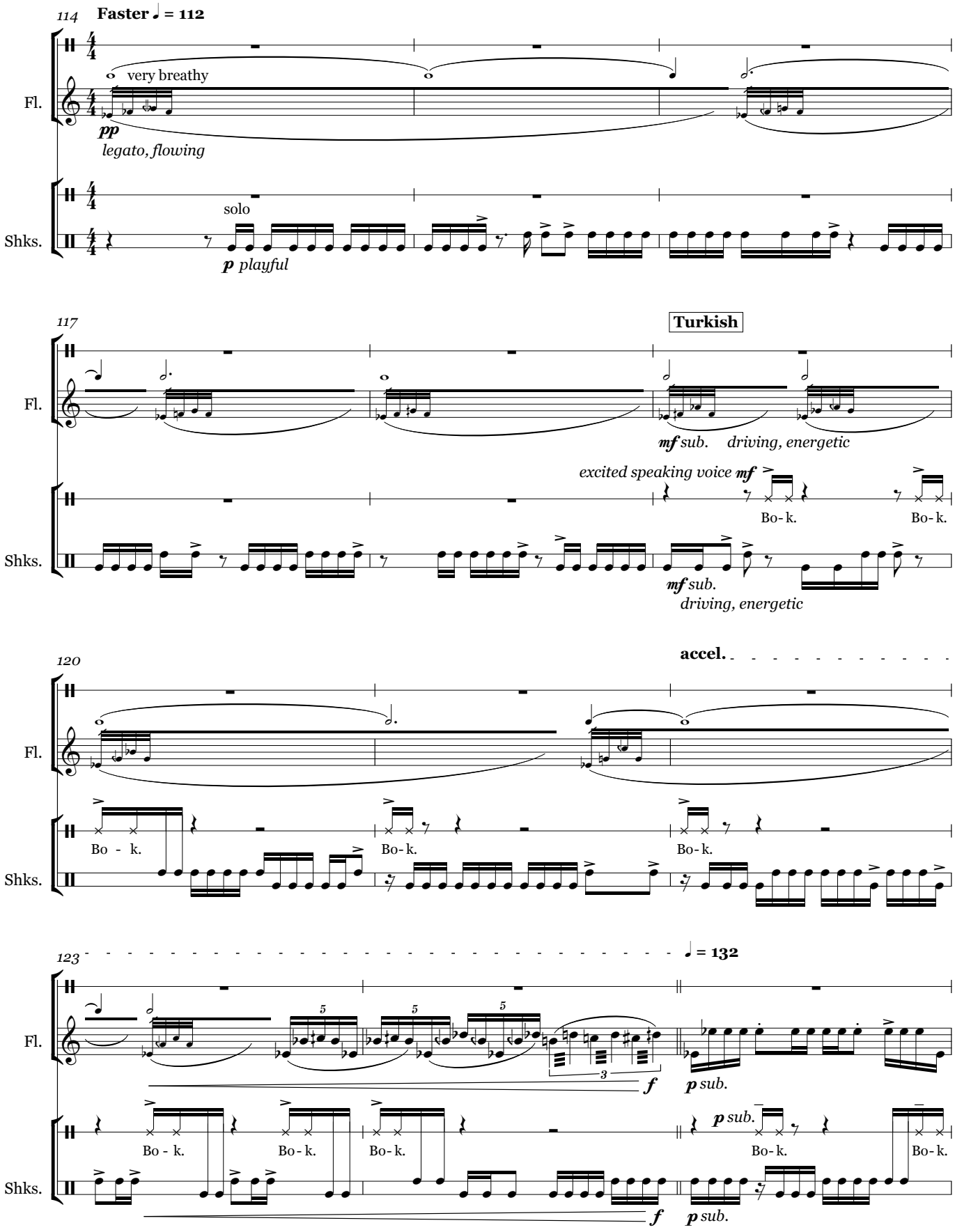
German

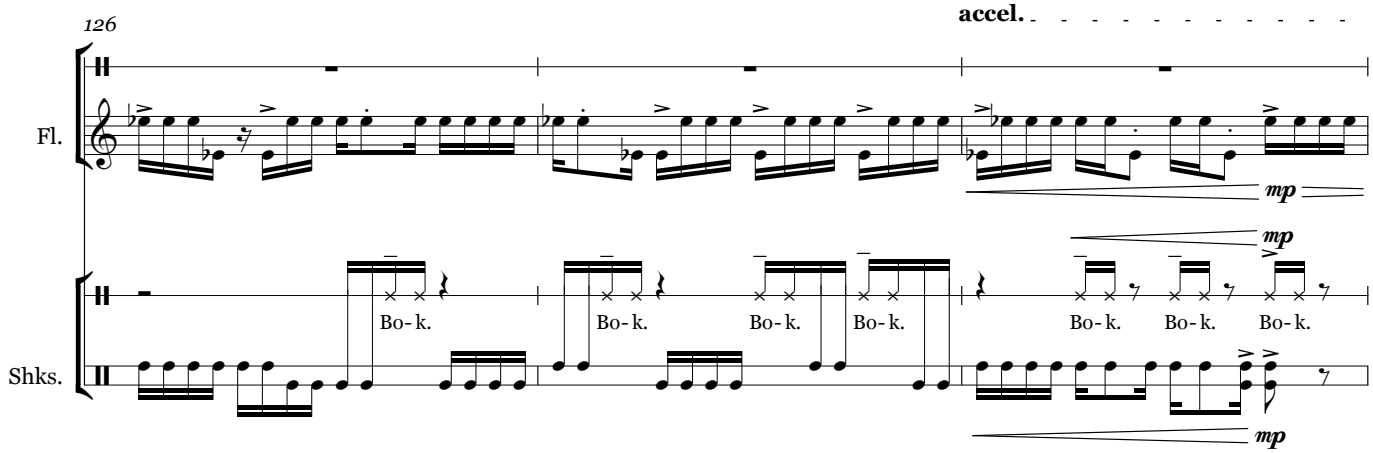

79
whisper
p
Schei- ße.
Fl.
ppp
whisper
p
Schei- ße.
Cyms.
83
Fl.
ff
ffff ff
ffff ff
ffff
ff
ffff ff
ff
Cyms.
ff
86
whisper
p
Schei- ße?
solo
Fl.
ff
fff
whisper
p
Schei- ße?
Cyms.

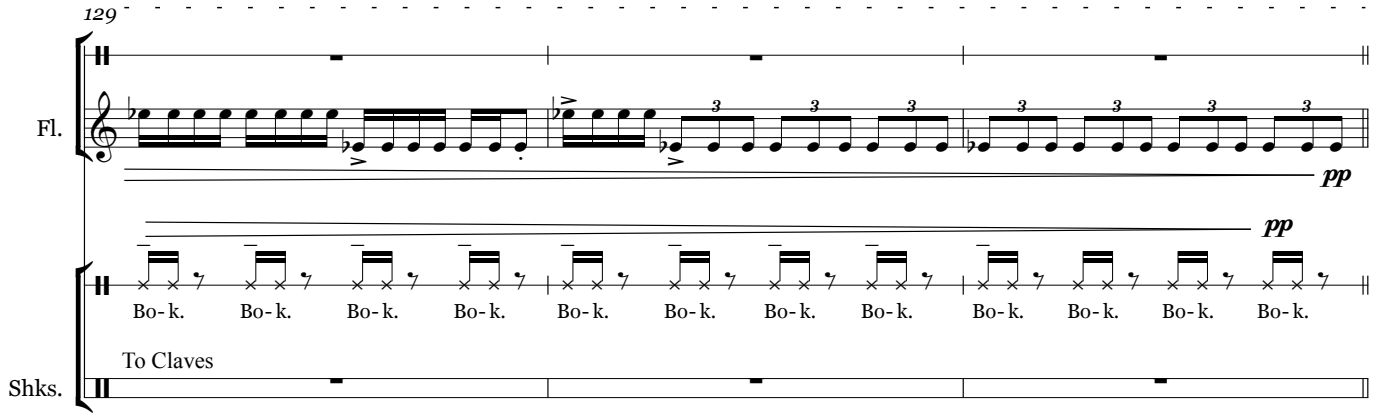


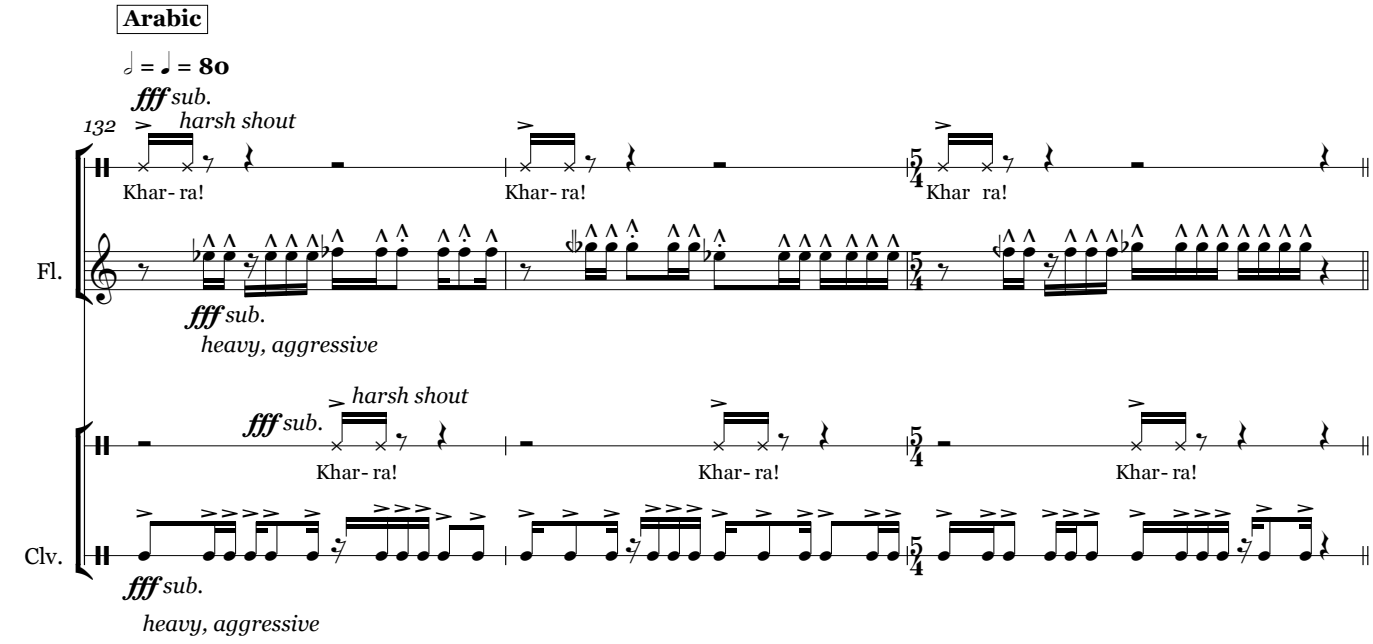
* Gradually change from a normal attack to a very breathy sound.

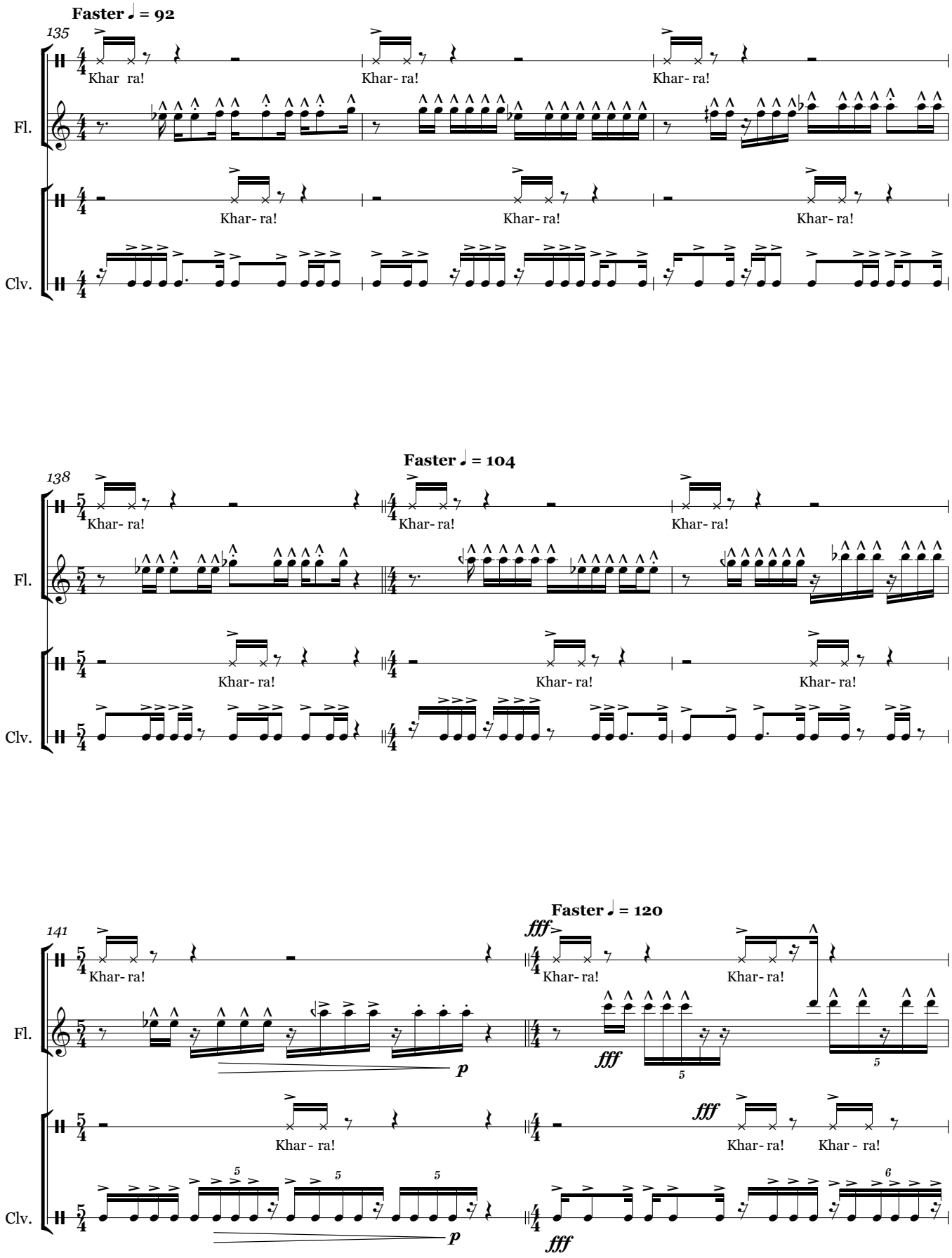

Romanian
low voice
102
p
Ra-ha-t.
Ra - ha-t.
Ra-ha-t.
Ra-ha-t.
Ra-ha-t.
Fl.
p
low voice
p
Ra-ha-t.
Ra-ha-t.
Ra-ha - t.
Ra - ha - t.
Ra-ha - t.
W.B.
105
Ra-ha-t.
Ra-ha - t.
ppp
Fl.
Ra - ha - t.
Ra-ha-t.
ppp
W.B.
108
murmur
ppp
Ra - ha - t.
Fl.
pp
murmur
ppp
Ra-ha-t.
To Shakers
W.B.
pp
111
Ra - ha - t. Ra - ha - t. Ra-ha-t. Ra-ha - t.
Ra-ha - t. Ra-ha-t. Ra-ha-t.
Ra-ha - t. Ra-ha - t. Ra-ha - t.
Fl.
Ra-ha-t. Ra-ha-t. Ra-ha-t. Ra-ha-t.
Ra-ha-t. Ra-ha-t. Ra - ha-t. Ra-ha - t. Ra-ha-t. Ra-ha-t. Ra-ha-t.
W.B.

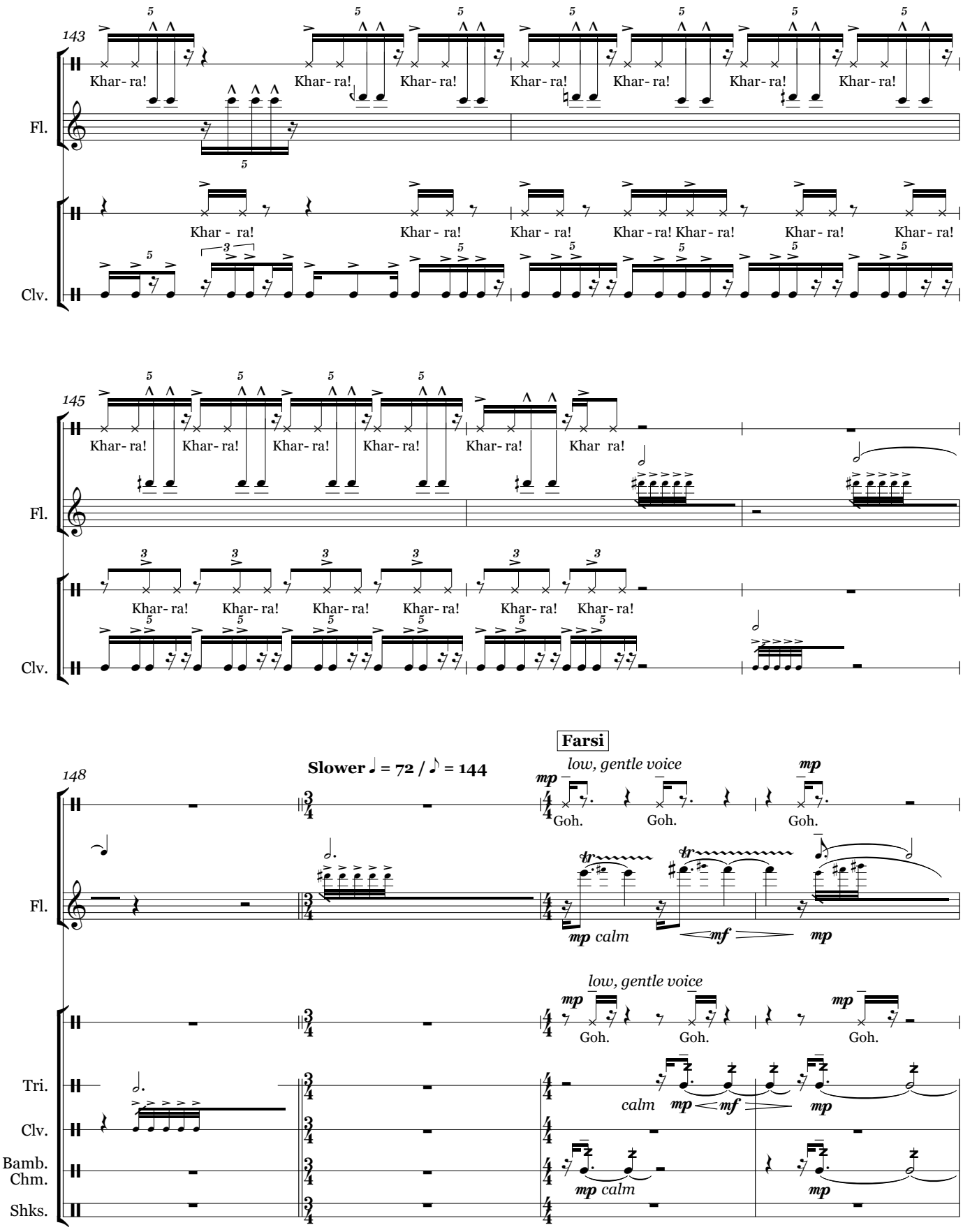

114
Faster ♩ = 112
Fl.
very breathy
pp
legato, flowing
Shks.
solo
p playful
117
Turkish
Fl.
mf sub. driving, energetic
excited speaking voice mf
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Shks.
mf sub.
driving, energetic
120
accel.
Fl.
Shks.
Bo - k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
123
♩ = 132
Fl.
5
5
5
3
f
p sub.
Shks.
Bo - k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
p sub.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
f
p sub.

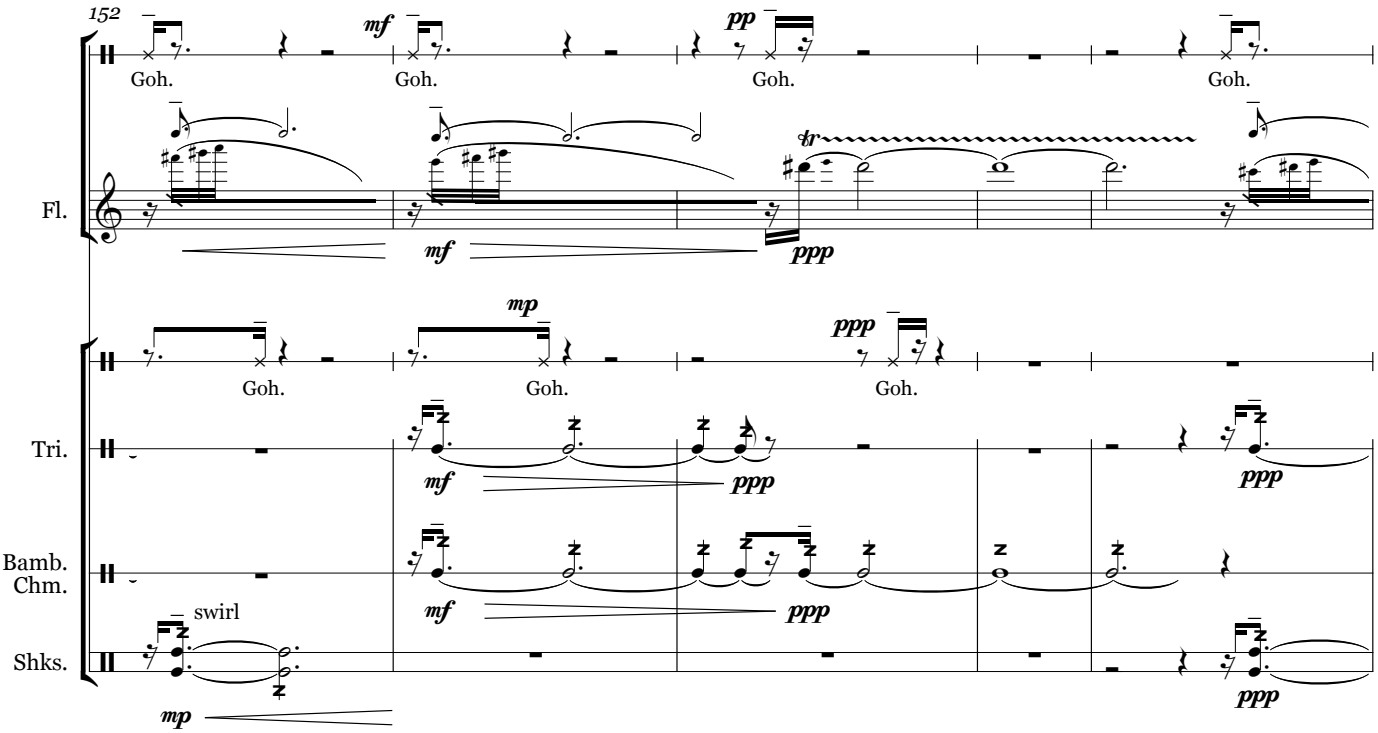

126
accel.
Fl.
mp
mp
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Shks.
mp

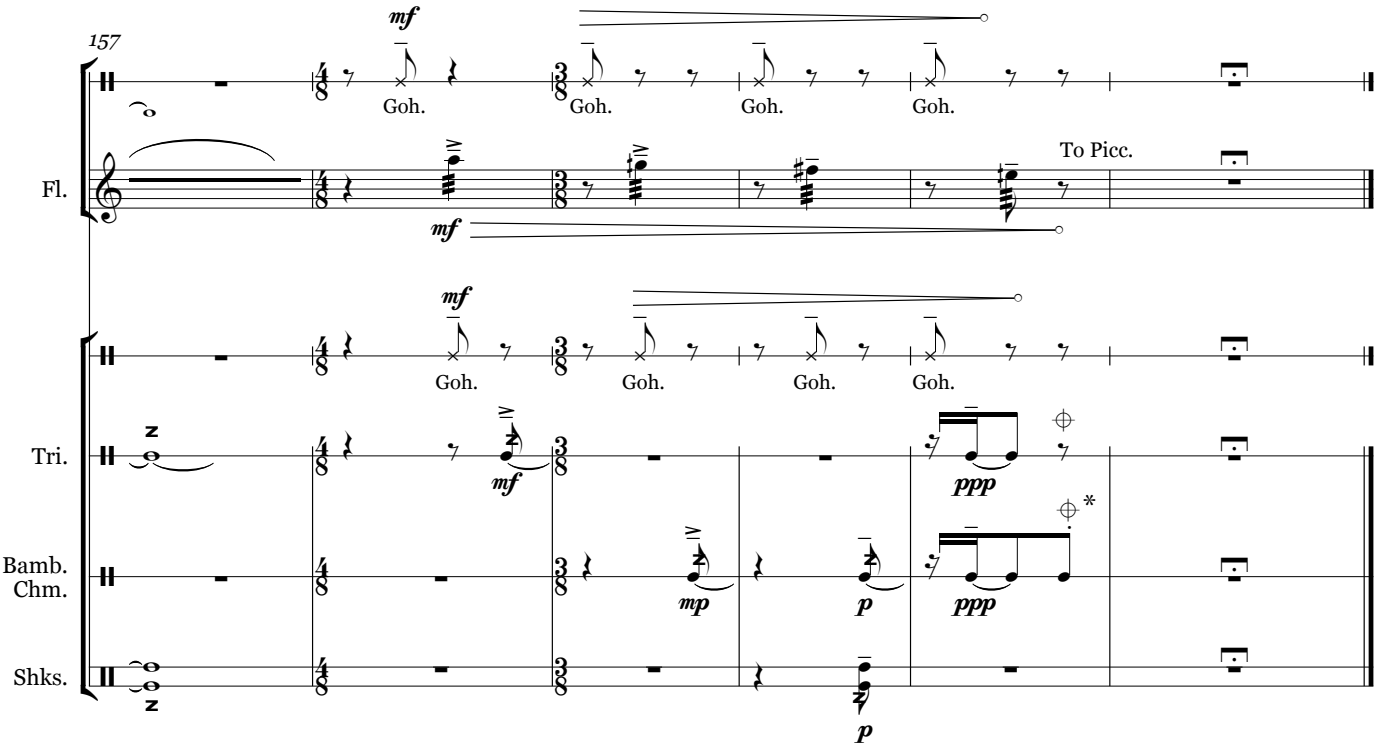

129
Fl.
3
pp
pp
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
Bo- k.
To Claves
Shks.


Arabic
♪ = ♩ = 80
fff sub.
132
harsh shout
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Khar ra!
Fl.
fff sub.
heavy, aggressive
fff sub.
harsh shout
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Clv.
fff sub.
heavy, aggressive


Faster ♩ = 92
135
Khar ra!
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Fl.
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Clv.
Faster ♩ = 104
138
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Fl.
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Clv.
Faster ♩ = 120
141
fff
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Khar- ra!
Fl.
p
fff
5
5
Khar - ra!
fff
Khar- ra!
Khar - ra!
Clv.
5
5
5
p
fff
6


143
Khar- ra!
Khar - ra!
Fl.
Clv.
145
Khar- ra!
Khar ra!
148
Slower ♩ = 72 / ♪ = 144
Farsi
low, gentle voice
Goh.
mp calm
mf
mp
Tri.
Clv.
Bamb.
Chm.
Shks.
calm



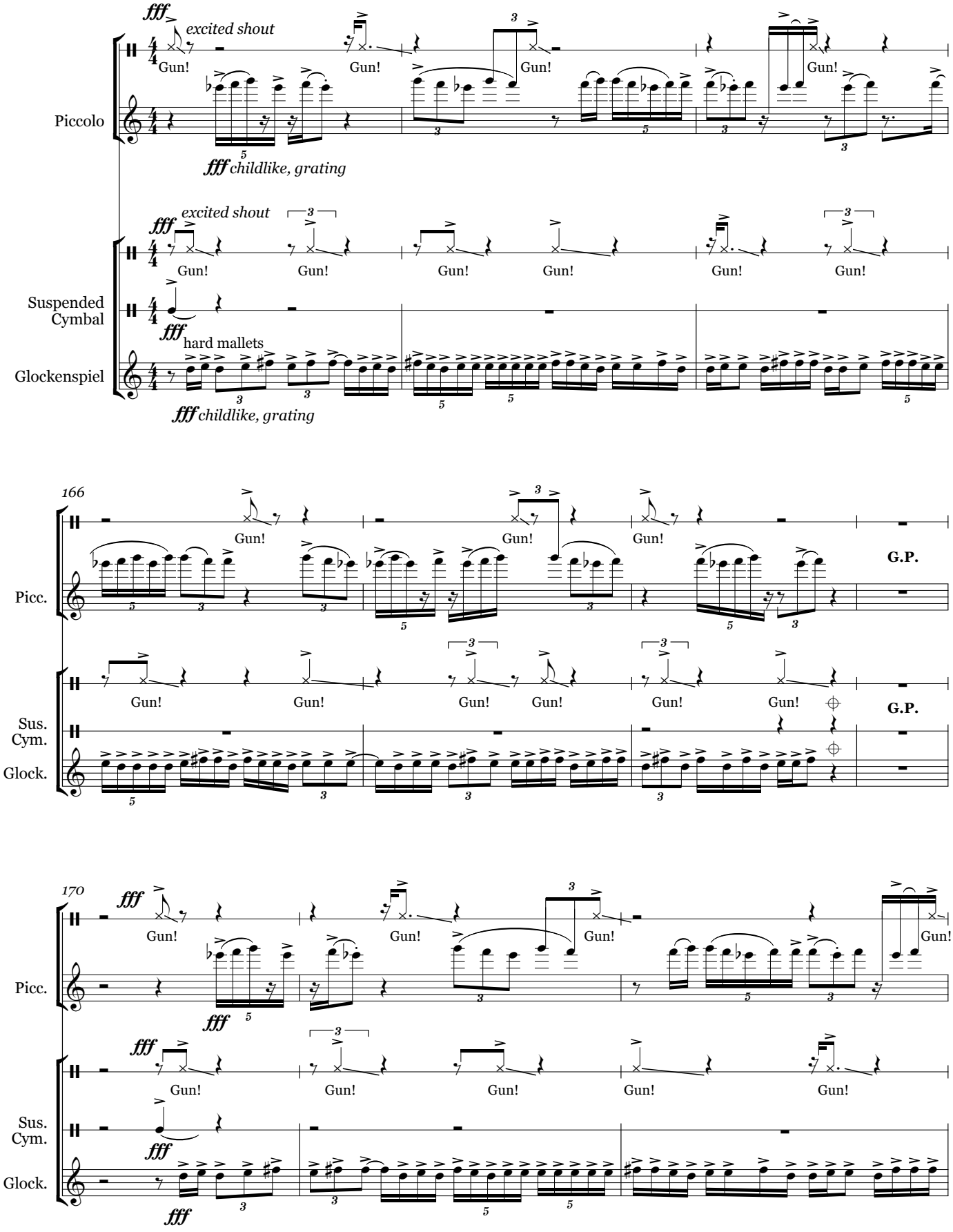


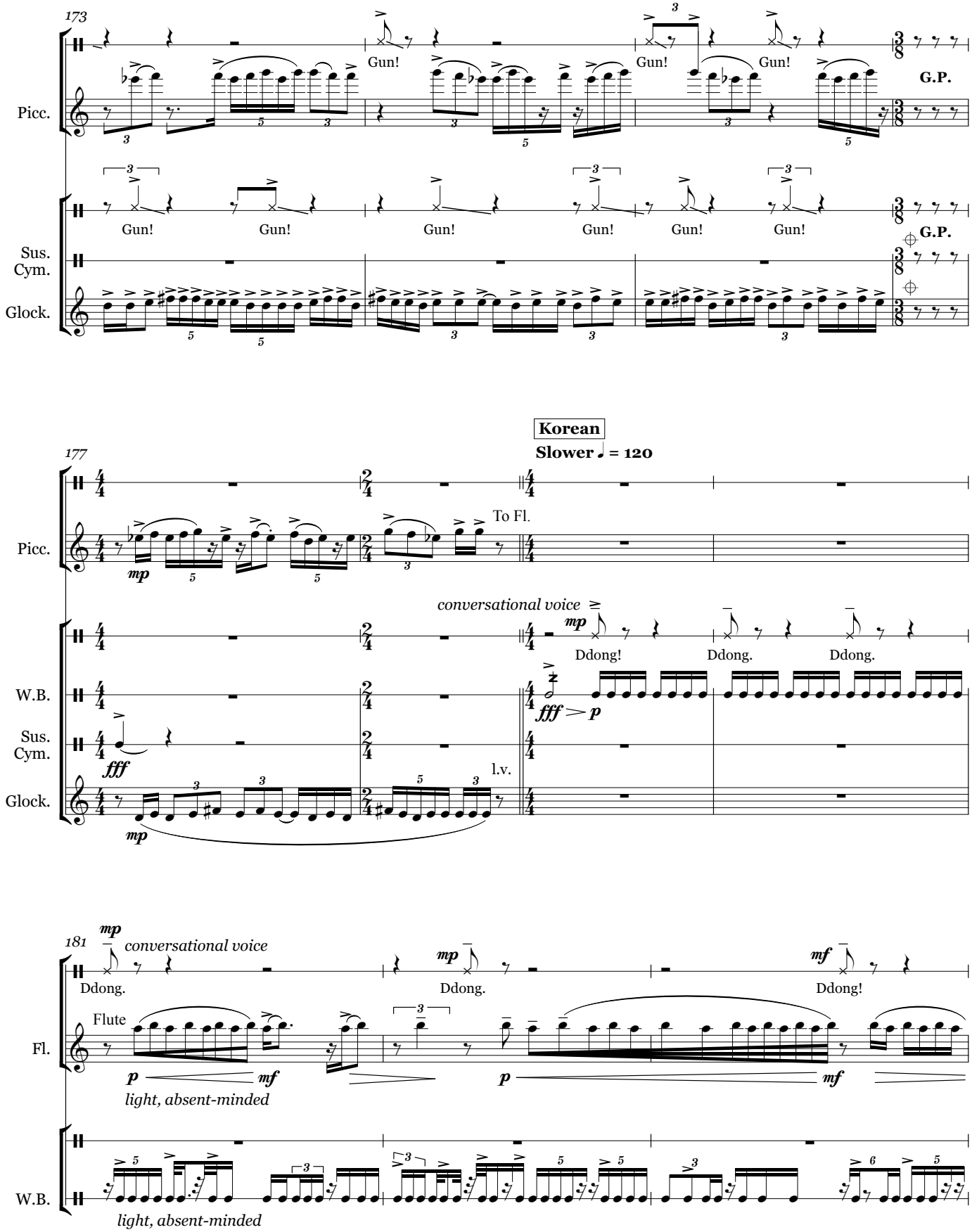
* Choke and hold chimes as quietly as possible. Release after the fermata.

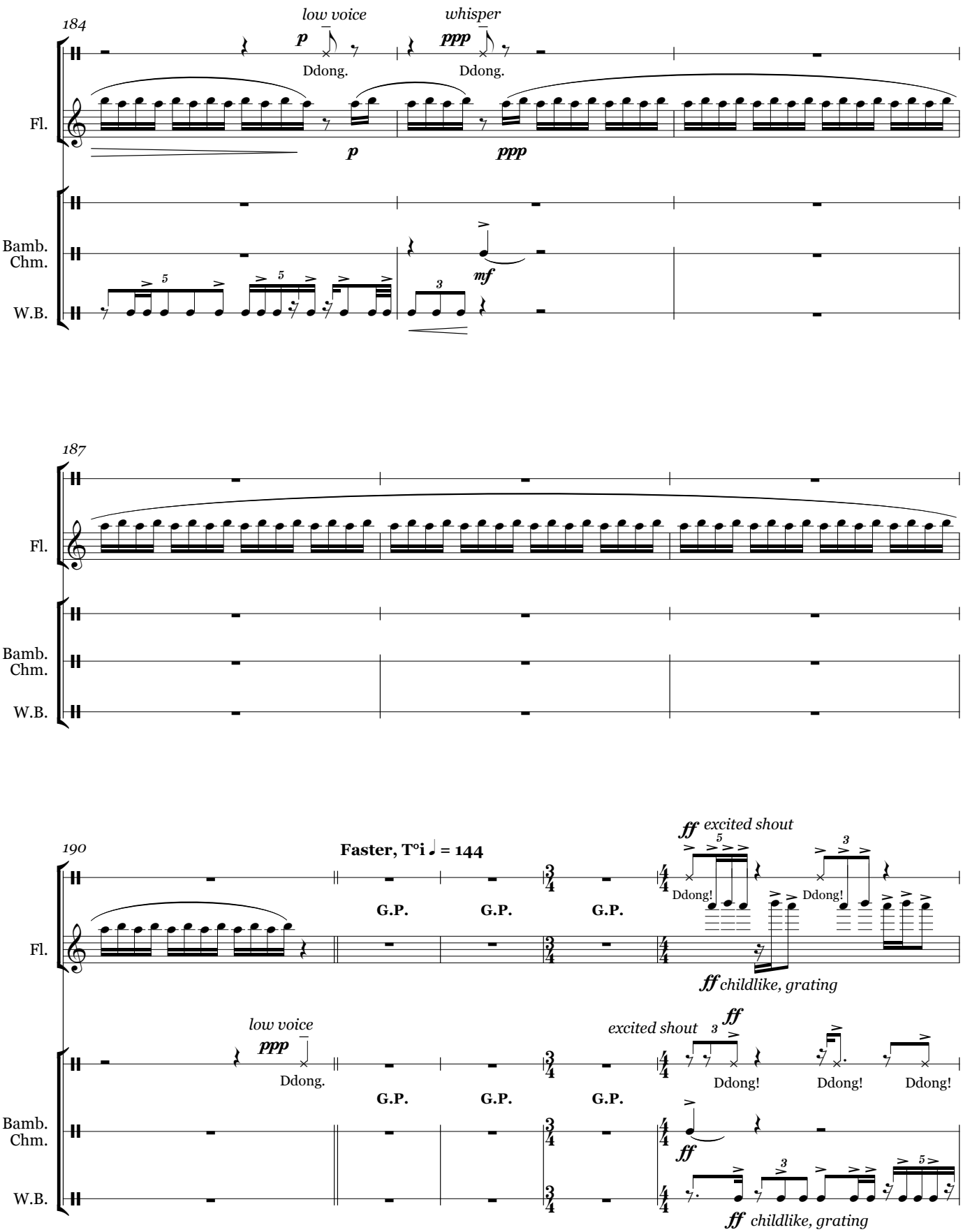
Mandarin

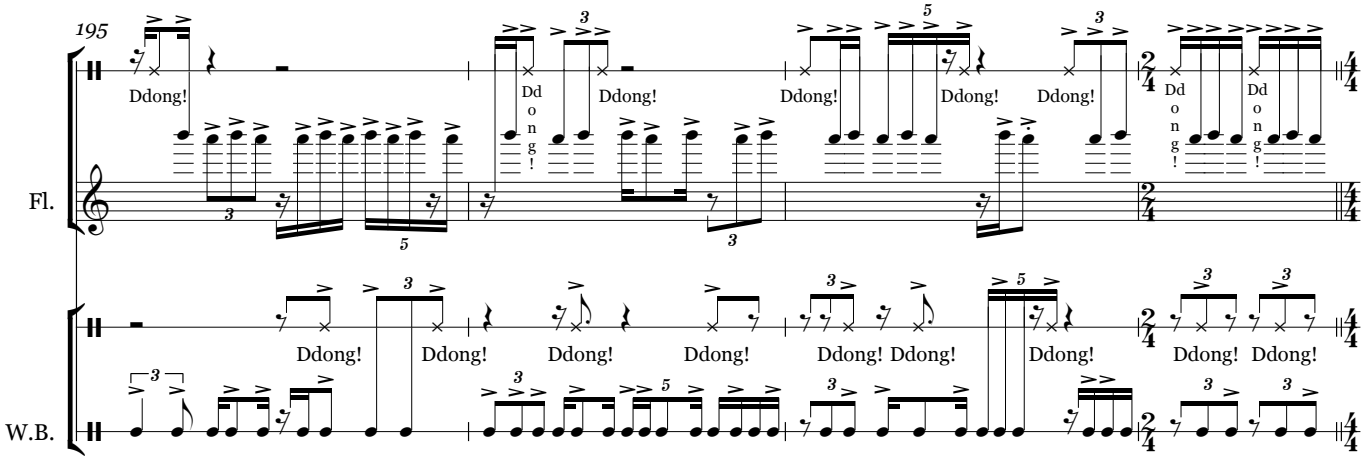
Fast ♩ = 144

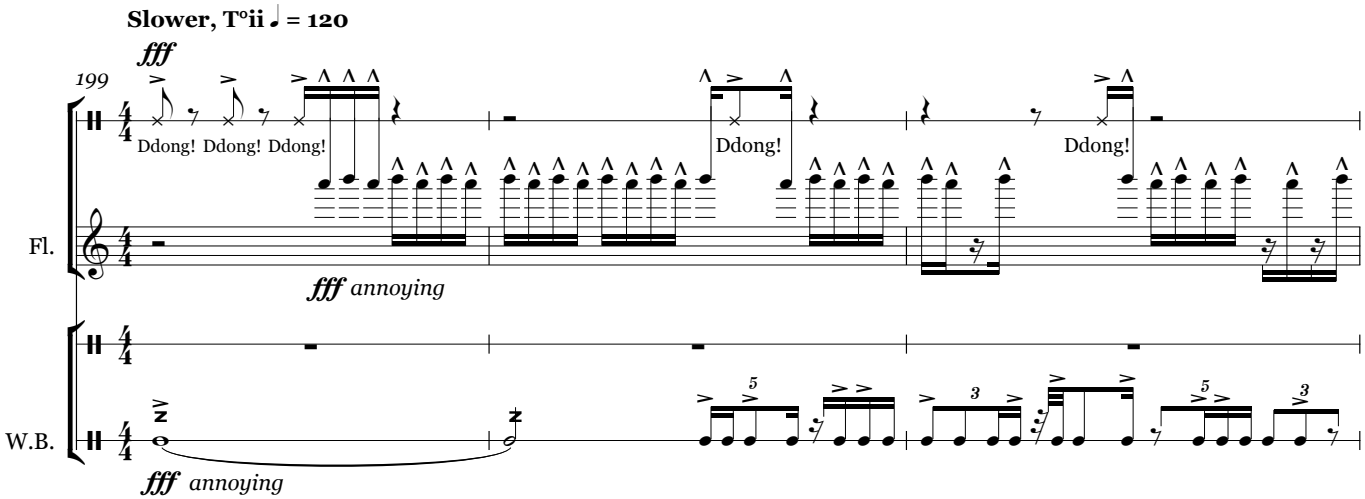
Part III: Mandarin, Korean, Japanese

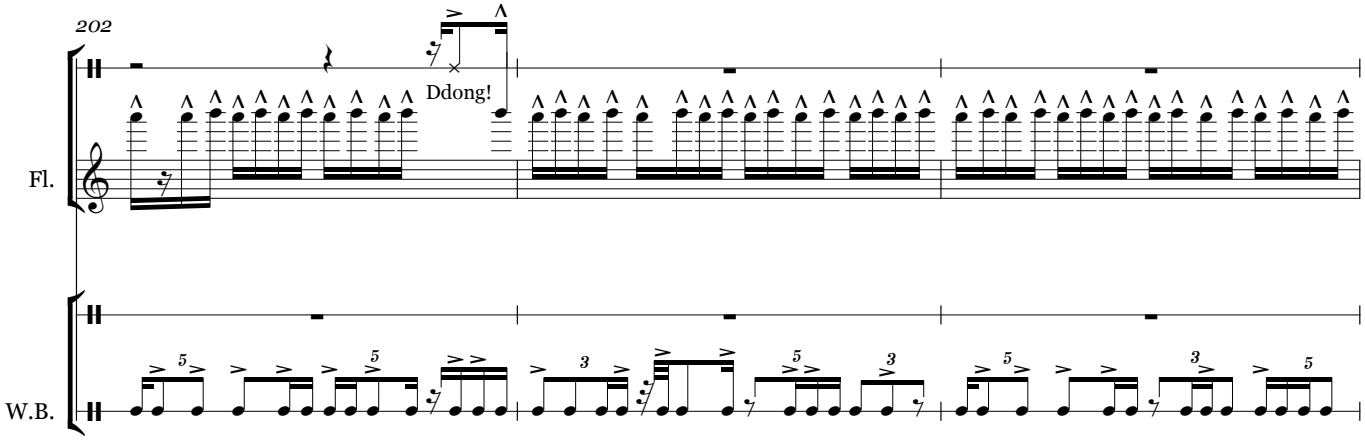


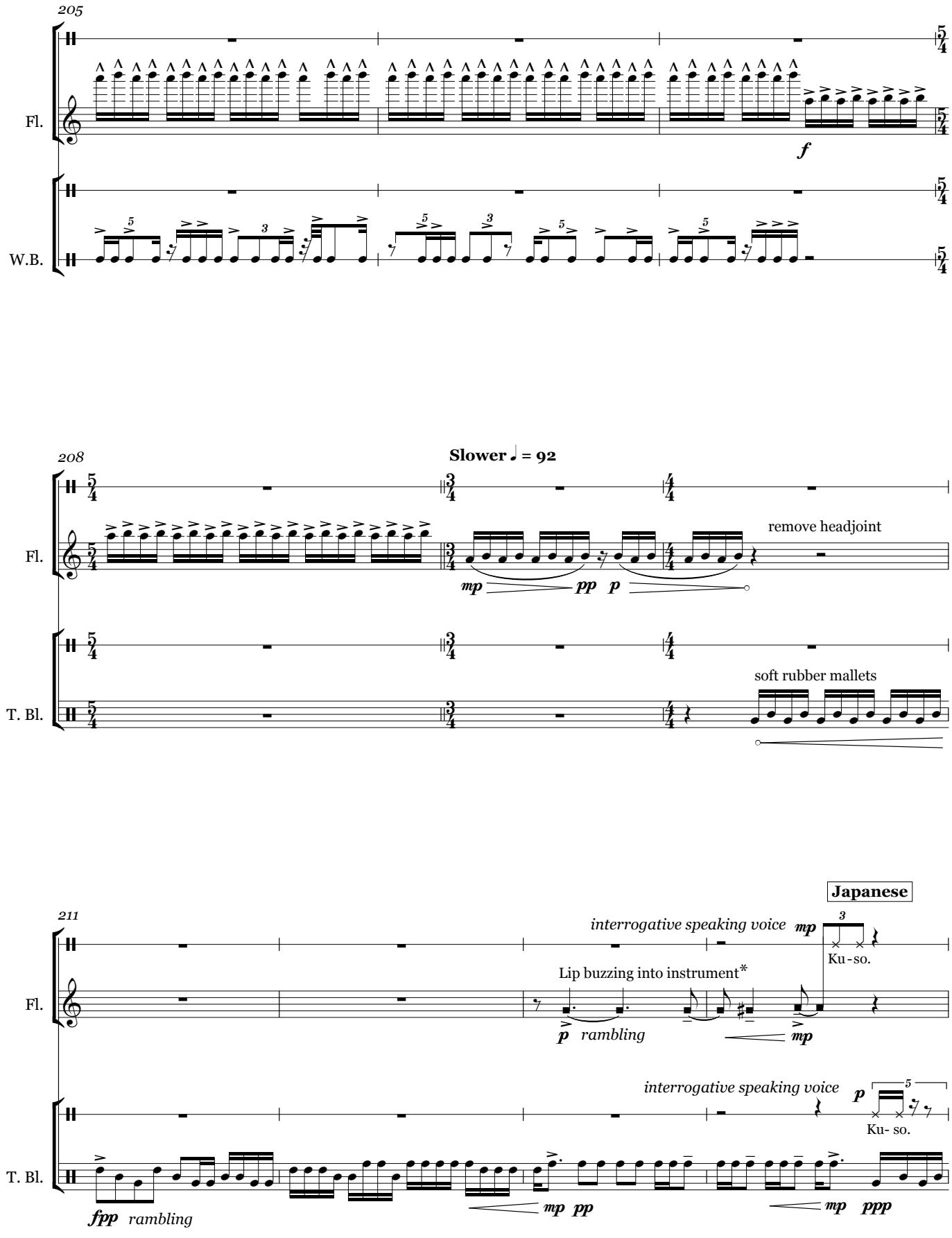

173
Picc.
Gun!
Gun!
Gun!
G.P.
Sus. Cym.
Glock.
177
Korean
Slower ♩ = 120
To Fl.
conversational voice
Ddong!
Ddong.
W.B.
l.v.
181
Ddong.
Fl.
Flute
light, absent-minded


184
low voice
p
Ddong.
whisper
ppp
Ddong.
Fl.
p
ppp
Bamb.
Chm.
W.B.
mf
187
Fl.
Bamb.
Chm.
W.B.
190
Faster, T°i ♩ = 144
ff excited shout
Ddong!
Ddong!
G.P.
G.P.
G.P.
Fl.
ff childlike, grating
low voice
ppp
Ddong.
excited shout
ff
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
G.P.
G.P.
G.P.
Bamb.
Chm.
ff
W.B.
ff childlike, grating

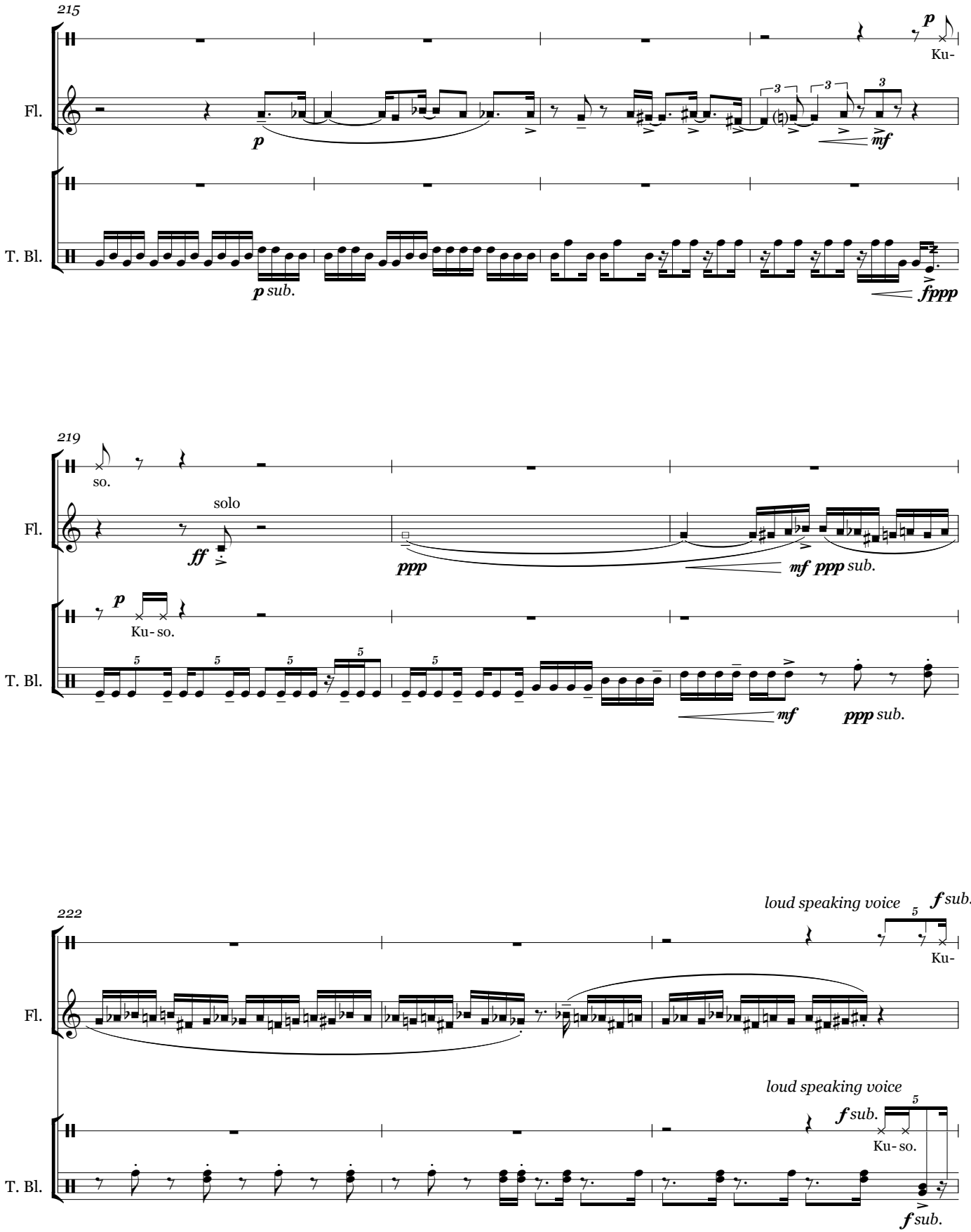

195
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
Fl.
W.B.

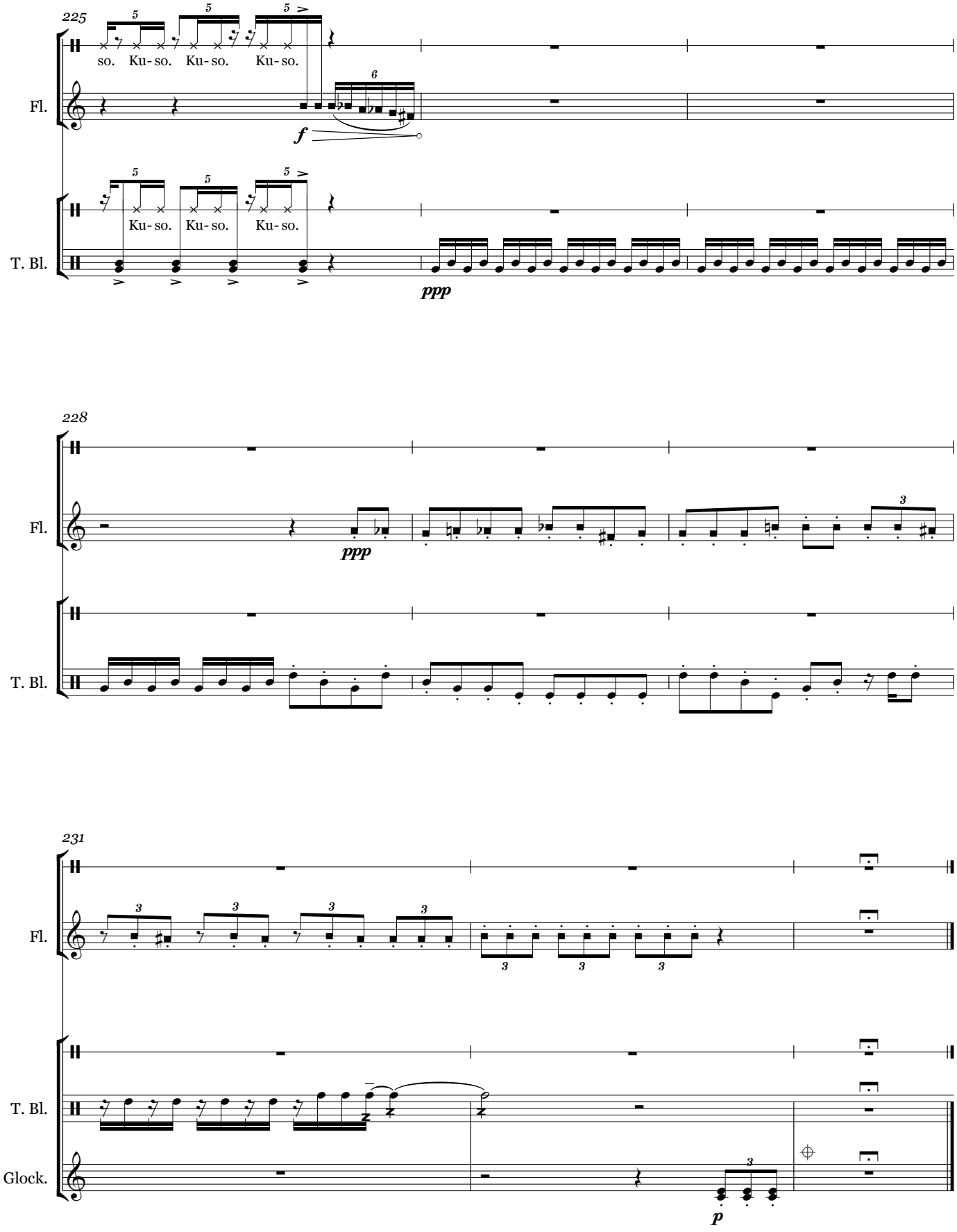

Slower, T°ii ♩ = 120
fff
199
Ddong! Ddong! Ddong!
Ddong!
Ddong!
fff annoying
fff annoying
Fl.
W.B.


202
Ddong!
Fl.
W.B.



* See note in introduction.


215
Fl.
T. Bl.
p
Ku-
p
mf
p sub.
fppp
219
so.
solo
ff
ppp
mf ppp sub.
p
Ku- so.
mf
ppp sub.
222
loud speaking voice
f sub.
Ku-
loud speaking voice
f sub.
Ku- so.
f sub.


225
so. Ku- so. Ku- so. Ku- so.
Fl.
f
Ku- so. Ku- so. Ku- so.
T. Bl.
ppp
228
Fl.
ppp
T. Bl.
231
Fl.
T. Bl.
Glock.
p