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Carol L. Matthews Whiteman

ROOMS IN THE WILDERNESS

for soprano and chamber ensemble

Text by Carol L. Matthews Whiteman

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
The City University of New York

1997

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Rooms in the Wilderness

by

Carol L. Matthews Whiteman

Advisor: Thea Musgrave

Rooms in the Wilderness is a four movement work for chamber ensemble. The forces consist of flute, clarinet, tenor saxophone, trumpet, two percussion, piano, two violins, viola, cello, bass, and soprano. The work is approximately 20 minutes long with sections of senza mesura in the first movement as well as a free candenza for the soprano in the last movement. Some extended technique is required of all instruments and the soprano must be able to sing, speak, and use sprechstimme.

Each movement is generated from several sources: a pitch class cell of three pitches, a particular tempo, a particular style, and a variation on the theme of wilderness. The first movement is entitled "The Desert From My Bedroom Window," and is an impression of the actual desert as experienced by a child. Pointillistic, angular, and dry it relies on the

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piano, percussion, and the percussive effect of the strings to create the spare landscape. The second movement has a jazz effect of light swing. "Soup Kitchen" is about the wilderness of the inner city, poverty, homelessness, loneliness. It moves from a deliberate insouciance to high tension and back again. The third movement, "Late Night Television," is a ballad, a song for the wilderness of the heart and is scored for soprano and strings. Here the soprano only sings and the strings are full and melodic. The last movement is scored for the entire ensemble and looks at the wilderness of the mind and soul. "Hydra: Cold Water Dreams" has only vocables for text until the very last when the they coalesce into "anima mea."

This work was created on a non-narrative premise that presents each movement as a separate picture, a room where the listener is central to a particular landscape.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the members of my committee for their consideration of this work and in particular Thea Musgrave for her years of guidance and encouragement. If this or any of my writing is of interest it is due primarily to her great gift of knowledge and her careful reading of my manuscripts. I would also like to acknowledge Professor emeritus Harold Owen, of the University of Oregon, for his unflagging encouragement, and Professor Christian Rosman of Southwestern Community College in Coos Bay, Oregon, without whose insight and great sensitivity there would be no manuscripts. There is no greater gift than a teacher who sees and cares.

Many thanks are also due to Randy McKellip for the great task of putting this work on computer. Finally, as always, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Elizabeth Gould for her support of every kind. For critical readings, for running copy, for daring to take on the performance of this work, for her faith in my creative ability, I am deeply grateful.

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Instrumentation

Score is notated in C. All instruments are at sounding pitch, except the double bass, which sounds one octave lower. Sounding pitches of string harmonics are indicated. Because of the complexity of the senza mesura sections the first movement also includes a conductor's line.

Instruments

Flute
Bb clarinet
Bb tenor saxophone
Bb trumpet
Percussion 1 and 2
Piano
Soprano
Violins 1 and 2
Viola
Cello
Double bass

Arrows in first and last movements

Conductor's right hand cue. Begins section of senza mesura. In last movement cues instruments in cadenza.

Conductor's left hand cues within the unmeasured passages.

Instrument cue.

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Percussion

Player 1:

Five metal bowls small to large, high to low
    Aluminum knitting needles, medium sized
Guiro
Five toms, small to large, high to low
    Yarn mallets
Hi-hat cymbal
    Bamboo sticks

Player 2:

Suspended cymbal
    Snare sticks
    Wire brushes
Shakare
Vibraphone
    Yarn mallets
    Bass bow

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Rooms in the Wilderness

I. The Desert from My Bedroom Window

Child
Sky
Empty
Glassy heat
Cricket
Grains of sand
Sere grasses
Brush bends and whispers
Child
Fragile wings of life
Hung upon the wind

II. Soup Kitchen

Bein' poor in the city,
On the move.
Subway stations, old hotels,
Air conditioned doorways.

Bus stops and missions,
Cardboard boxes,
Air conditioned shoes.

Night, cold winds,
Hunger, pain,
Violence, fear!
An air-conditioned soul.

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III. Late Night Television

He waits for me
No longer eagerly
But rather like one traveling
An empty road at day's end waits to see a light.
His hands are blind
And seeking to be kind
Wander over lands he still
Believes responds when all he feels is dust.

His mouth is dry.
His silences imply the nomad
Moving down the ancient trails across my wilderness
I drift.
I feel the desert shift
Its endless sands across my body filling me with desiccation.

I draw him near
And make the light appear
A trick that makes him sure the journey
Has been made this one time more.

The grains of sand blow in beneath the door
And the wilderness creeps just a little further in
Across the floor.

IV. Hydra: Cold Water Dreams

Anima mea.

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for Jeannie

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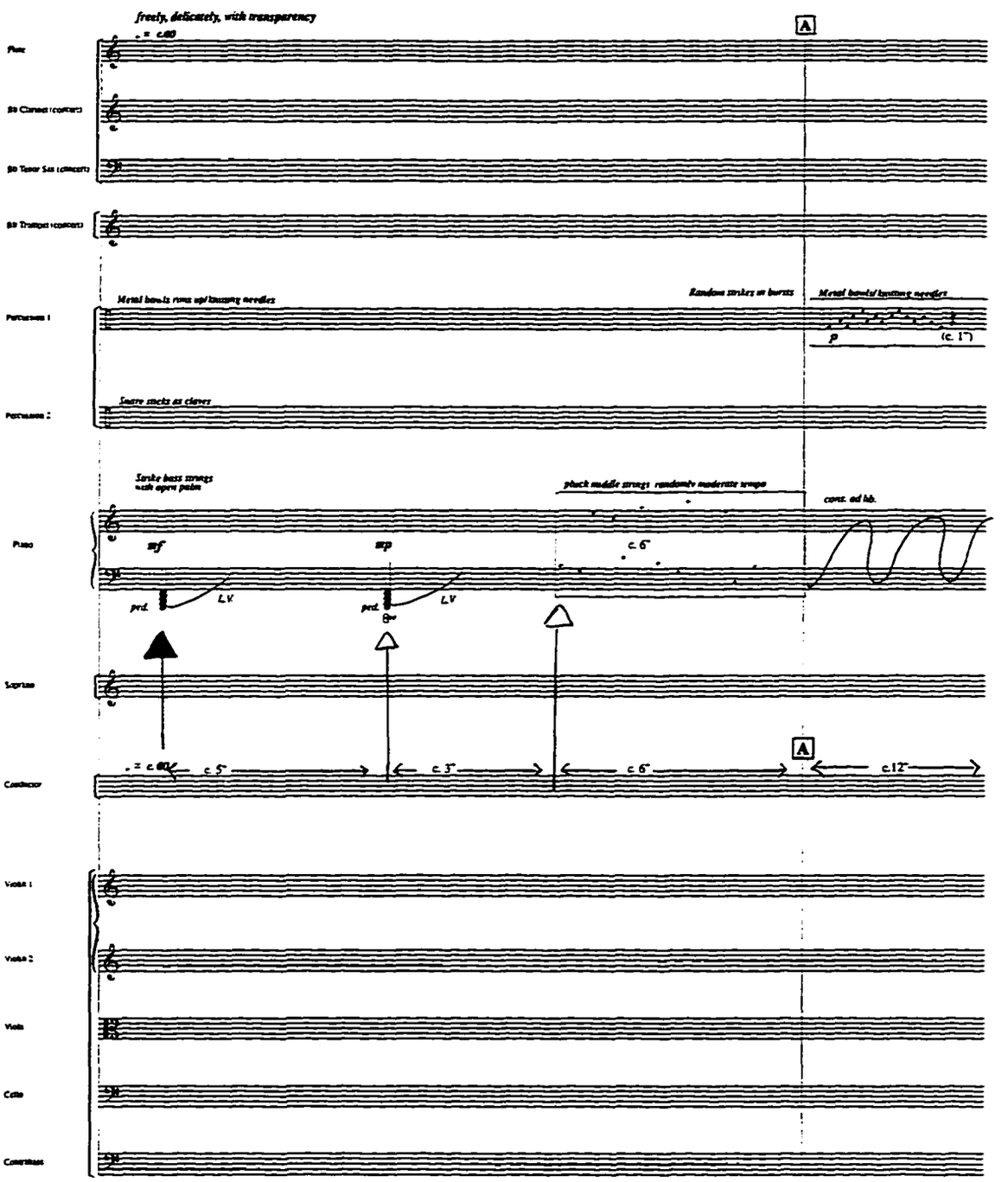

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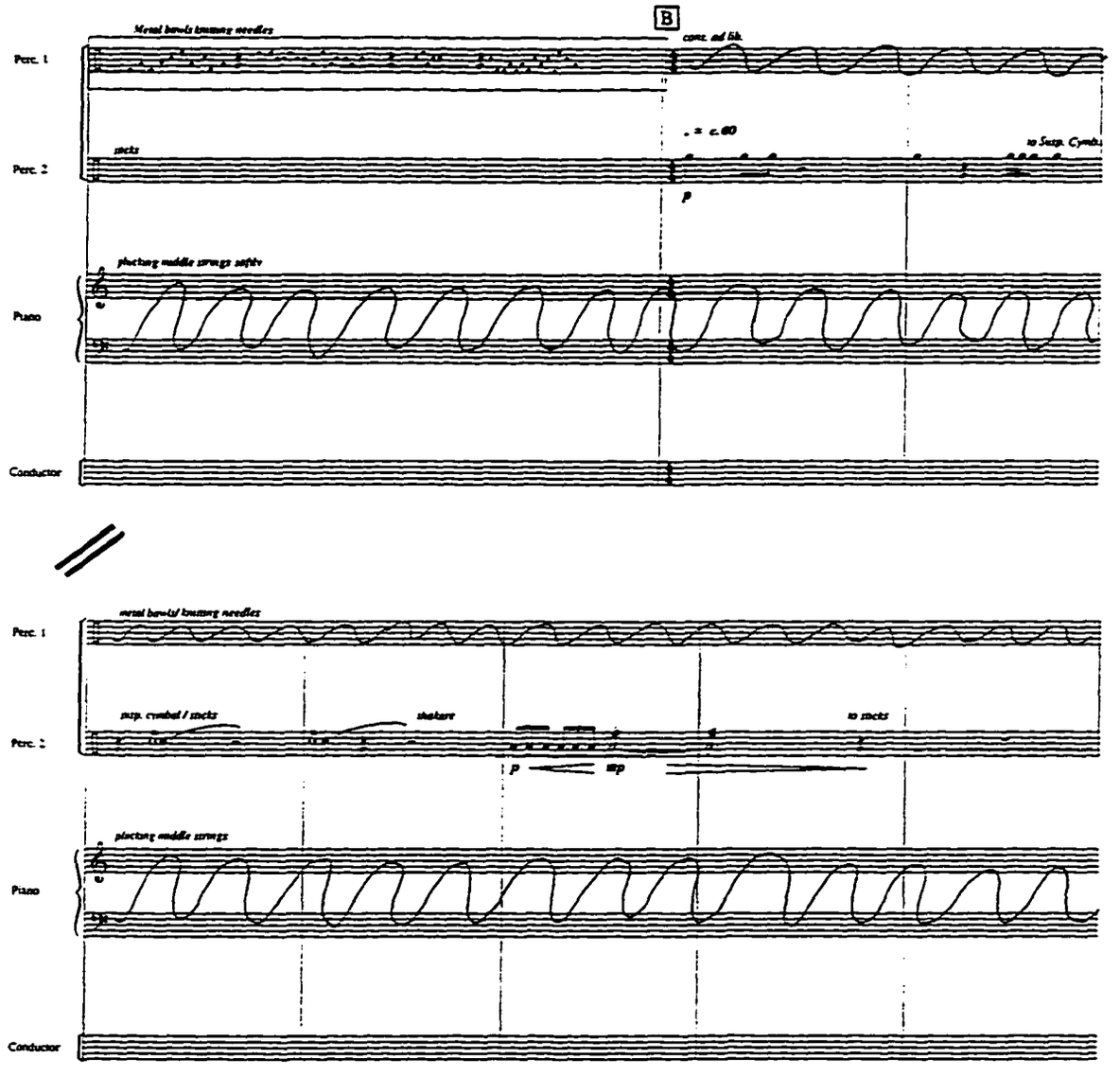

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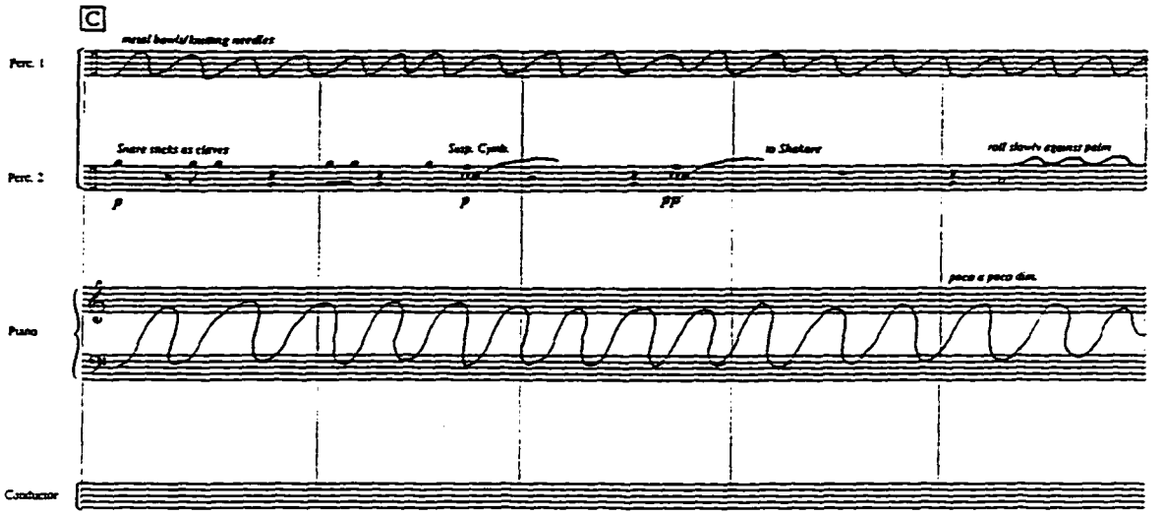

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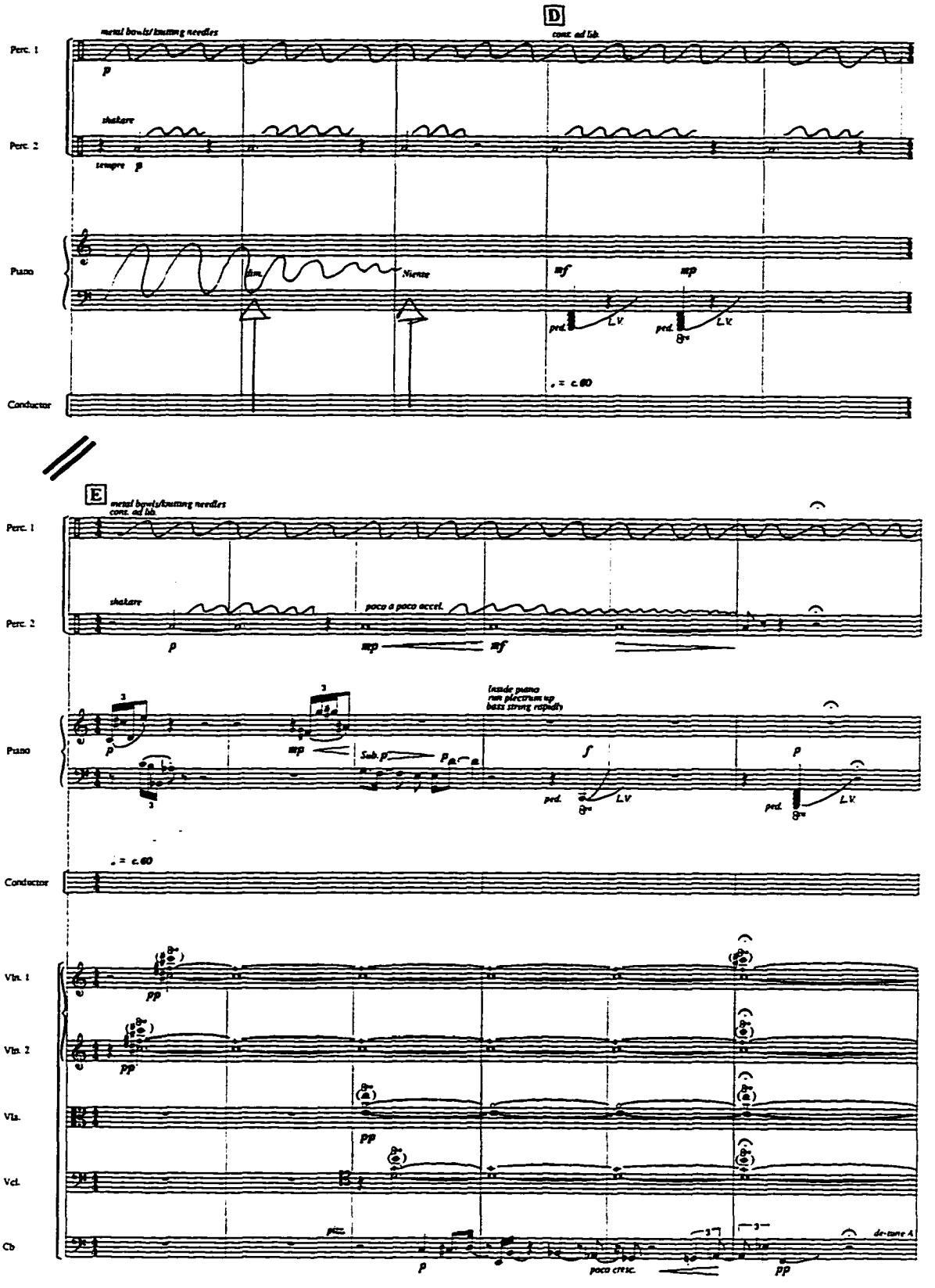

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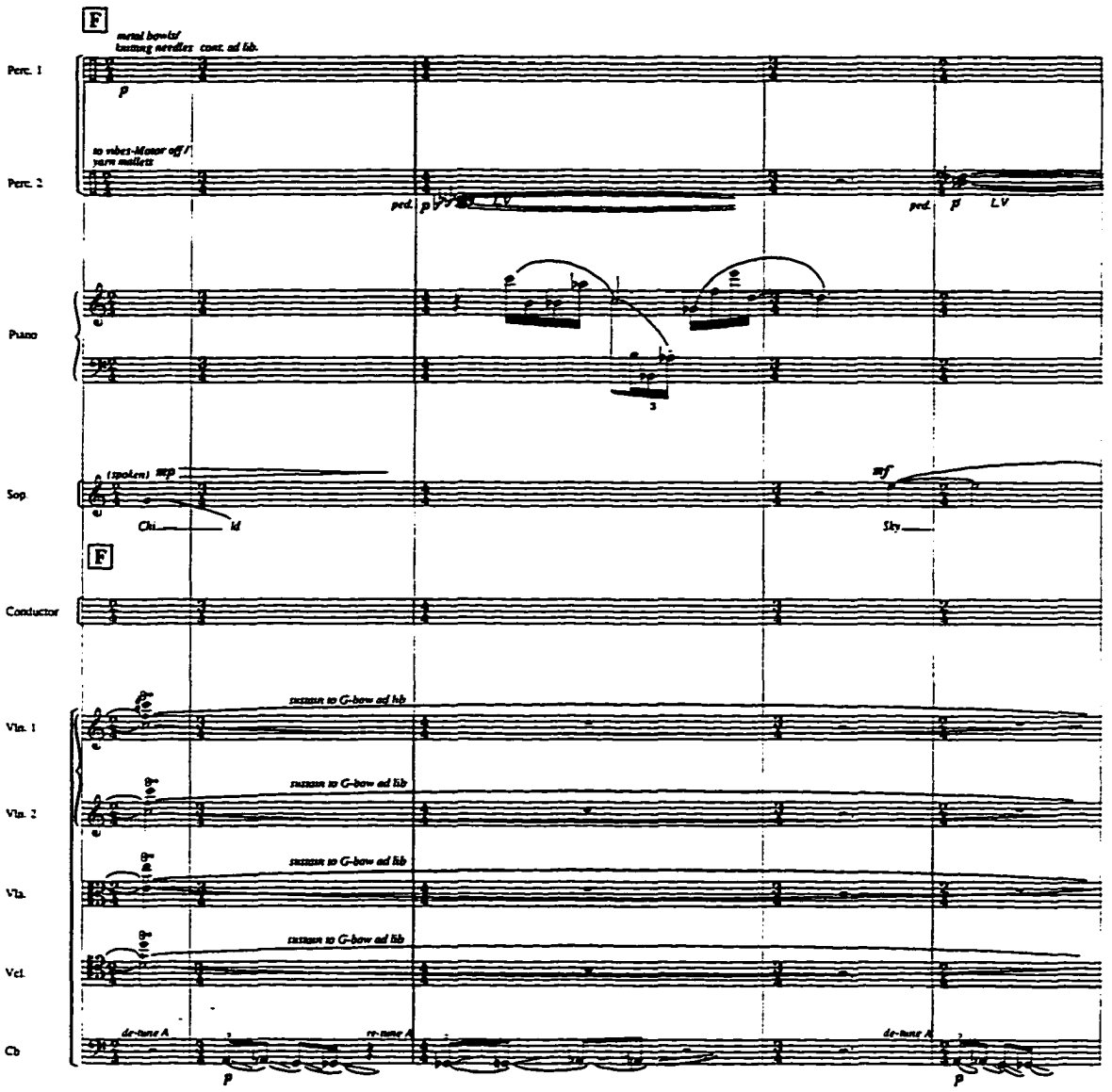

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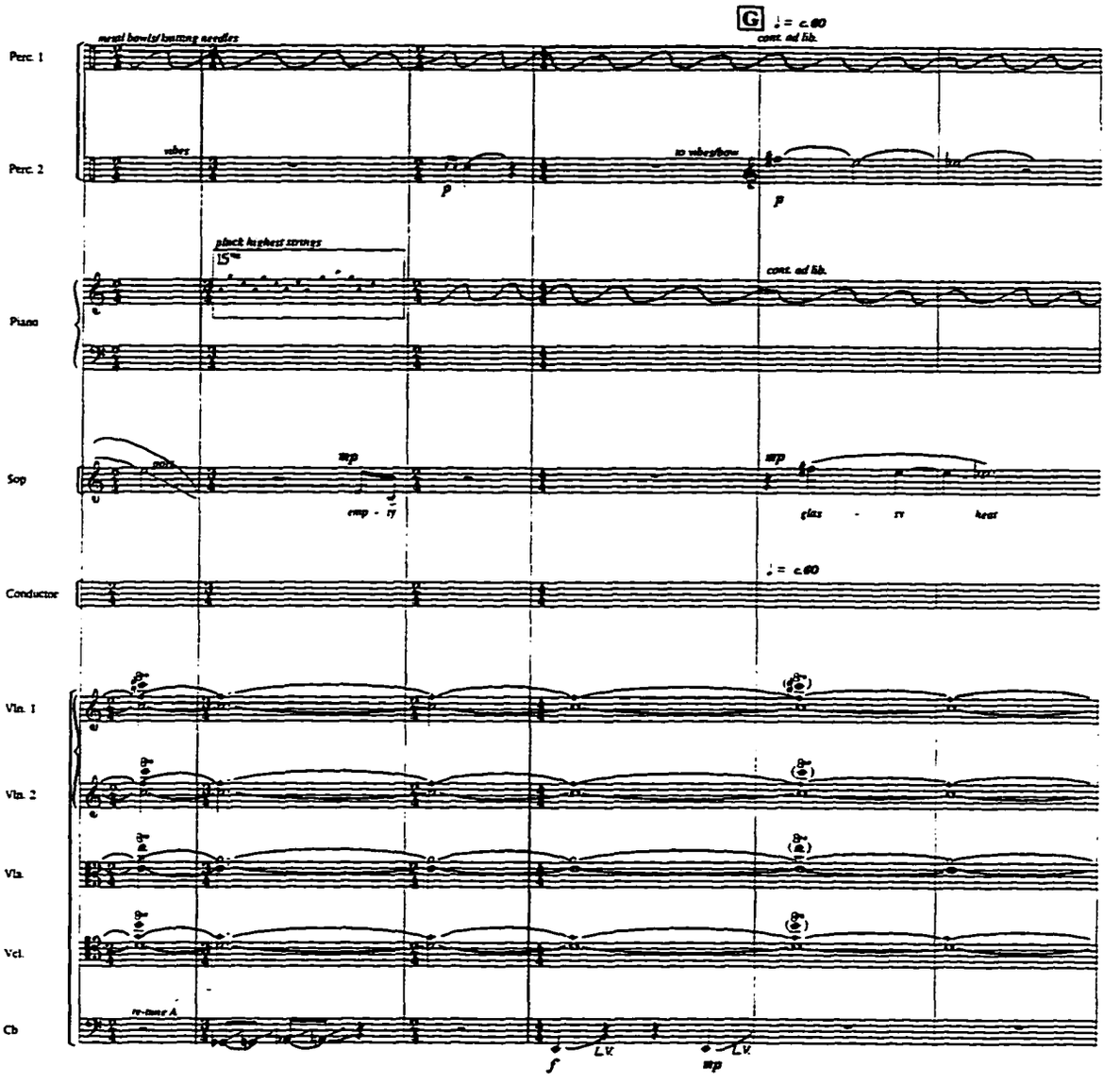

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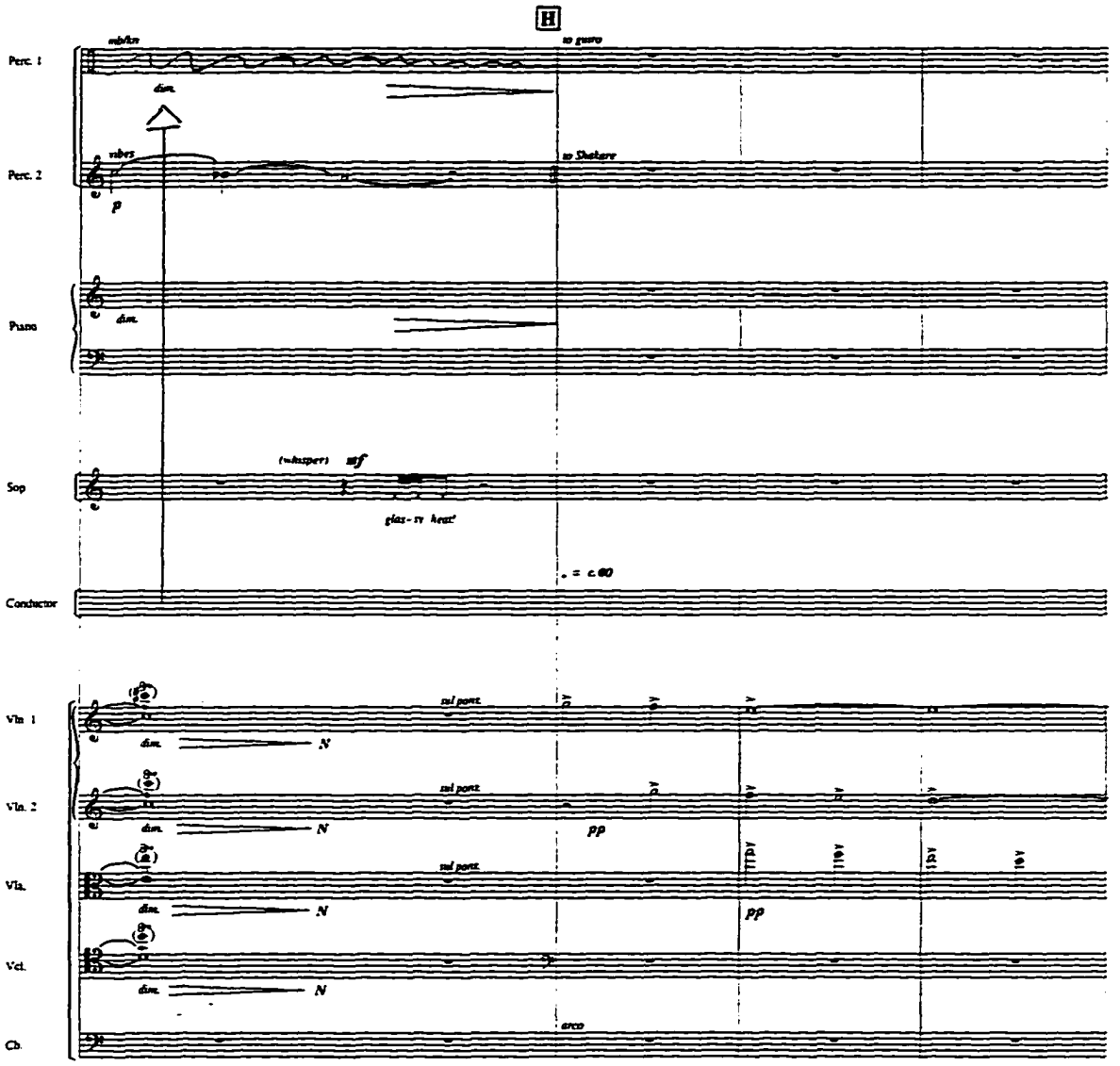

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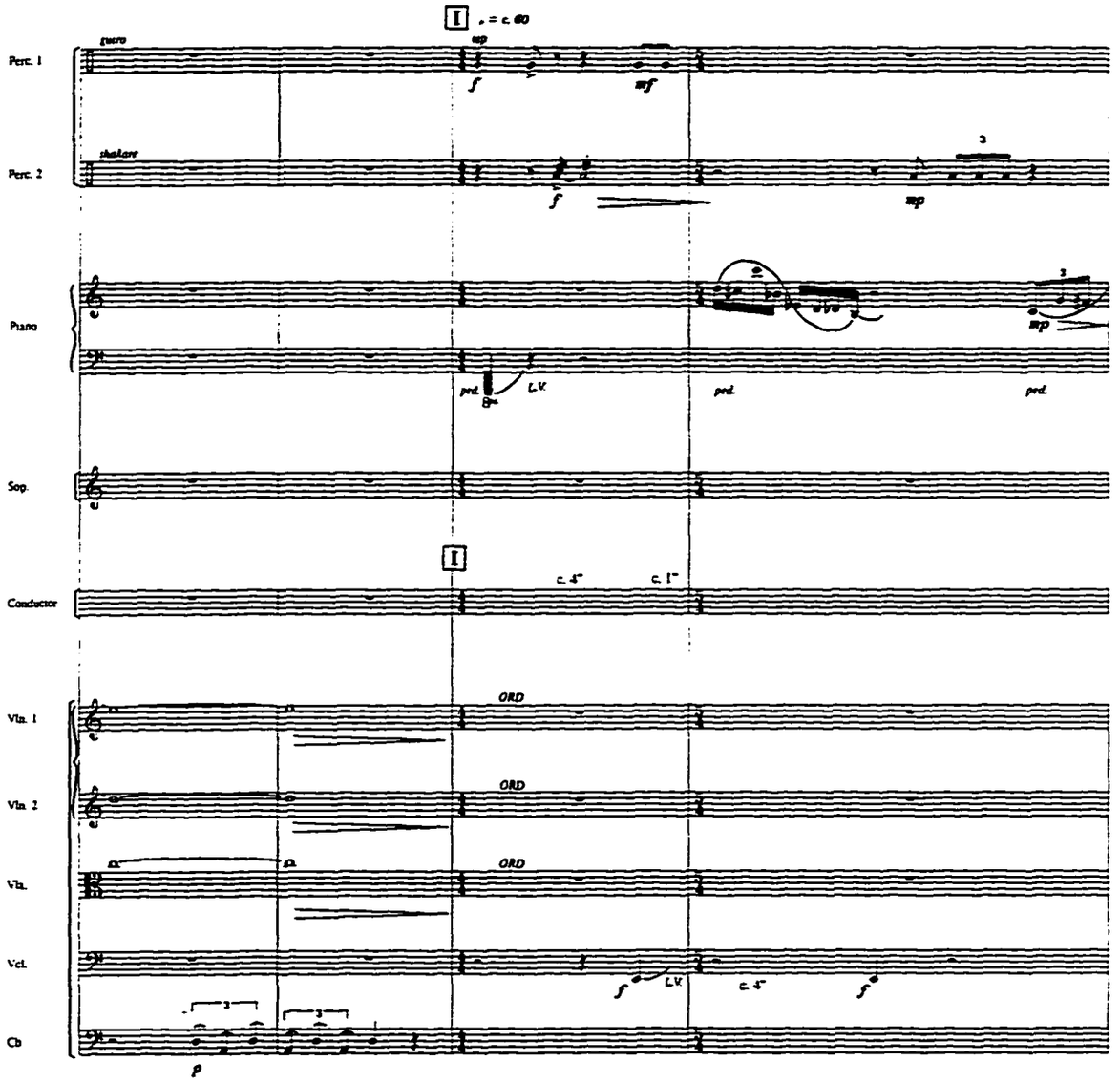

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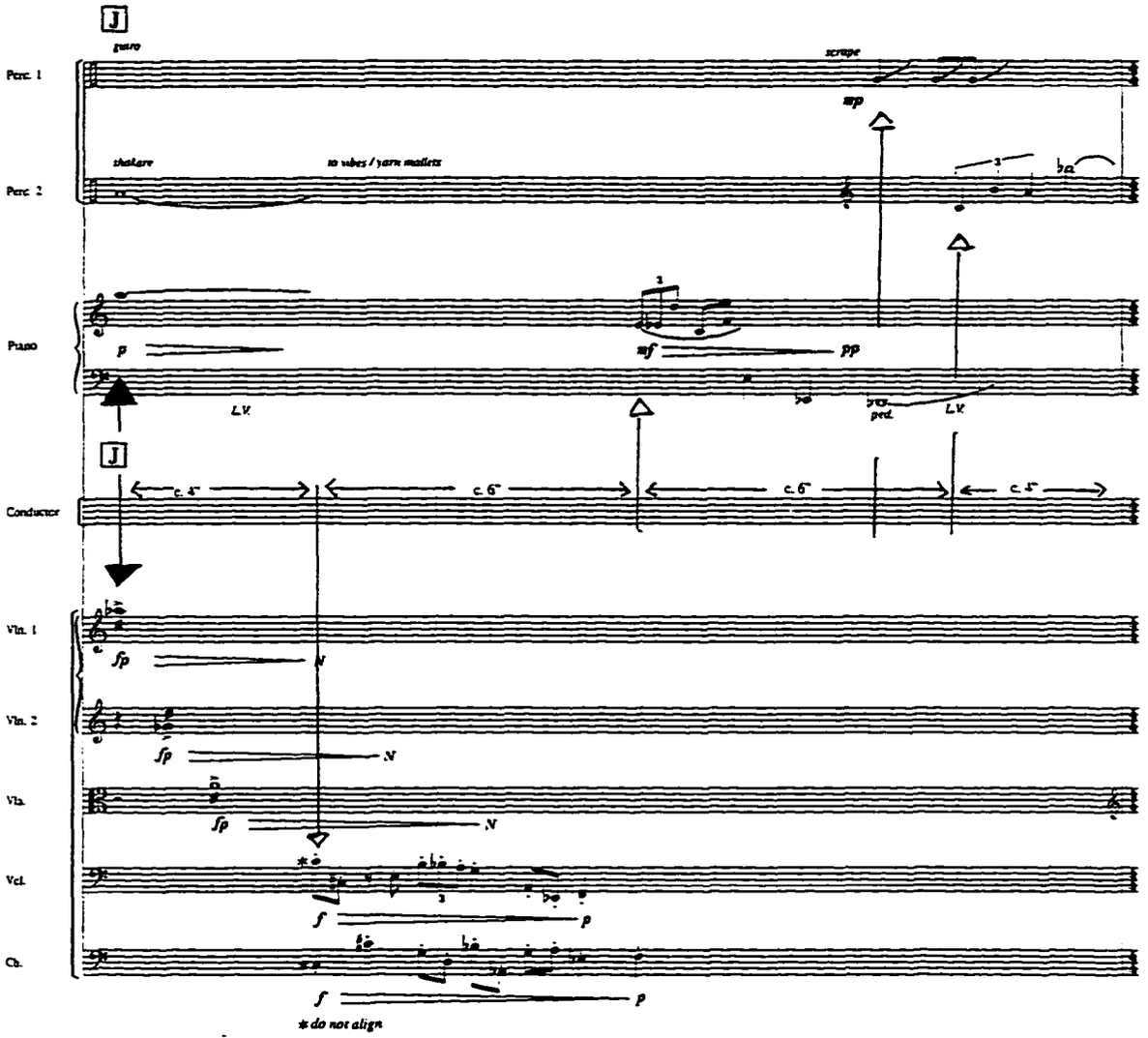

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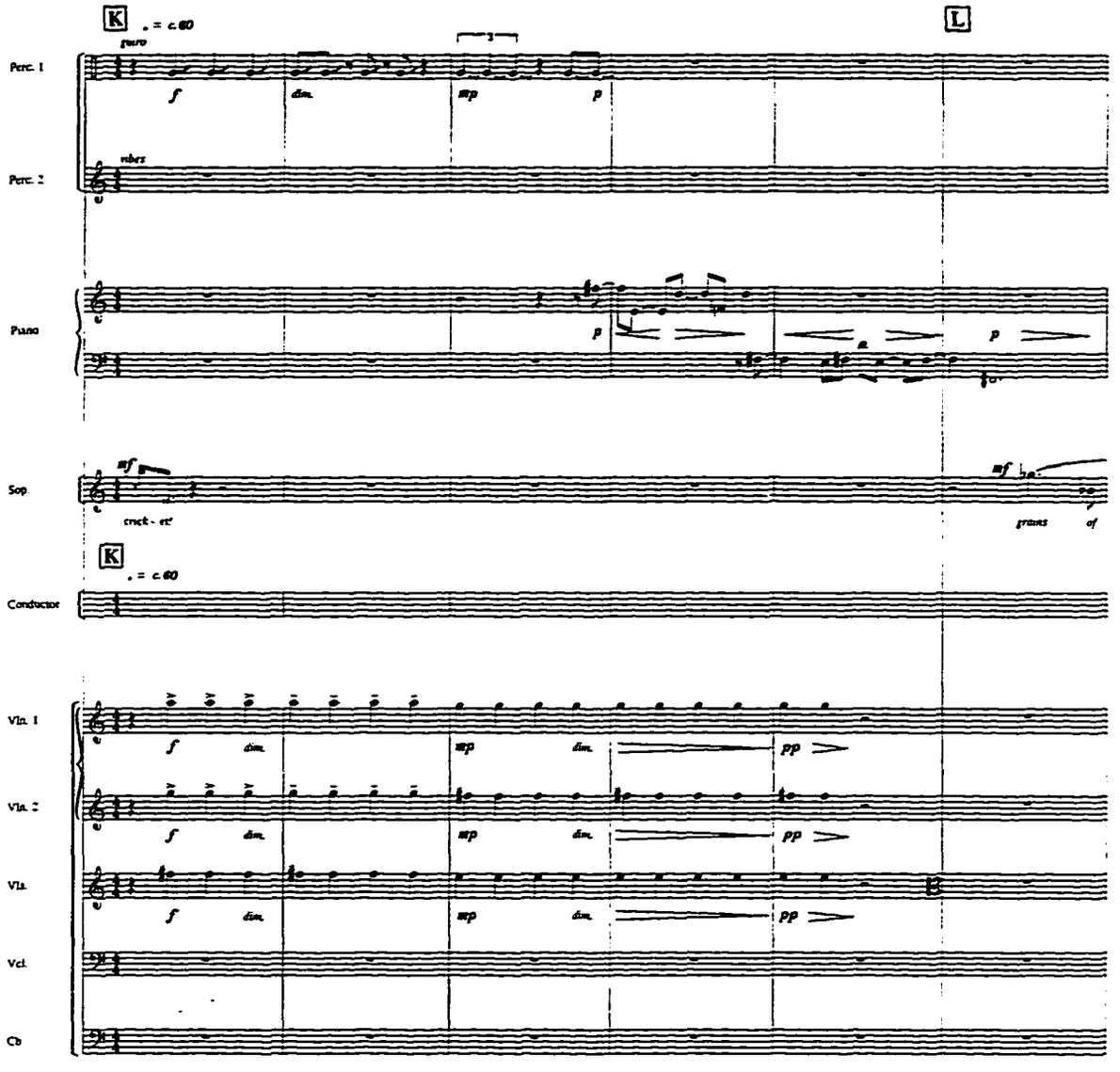

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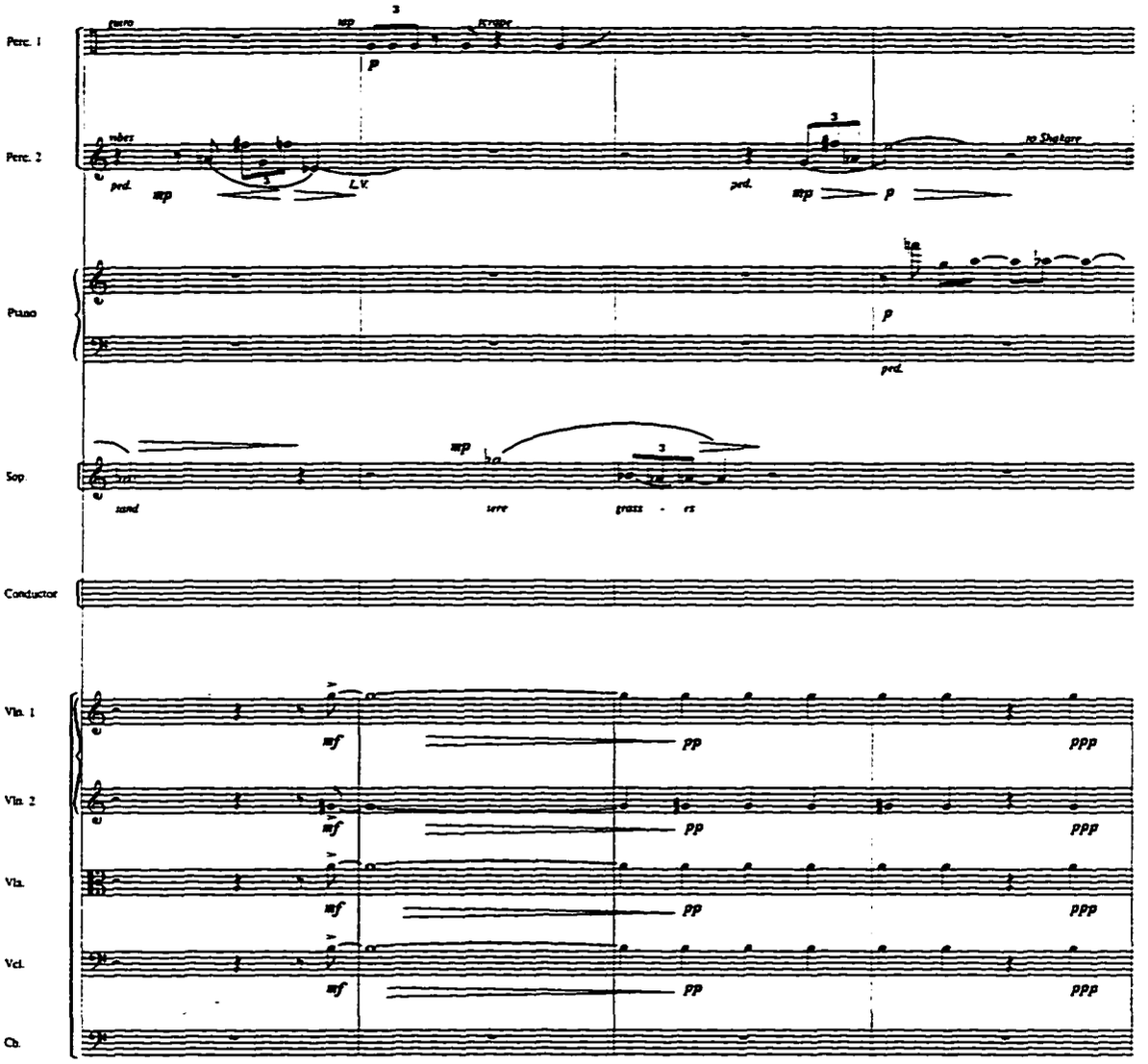

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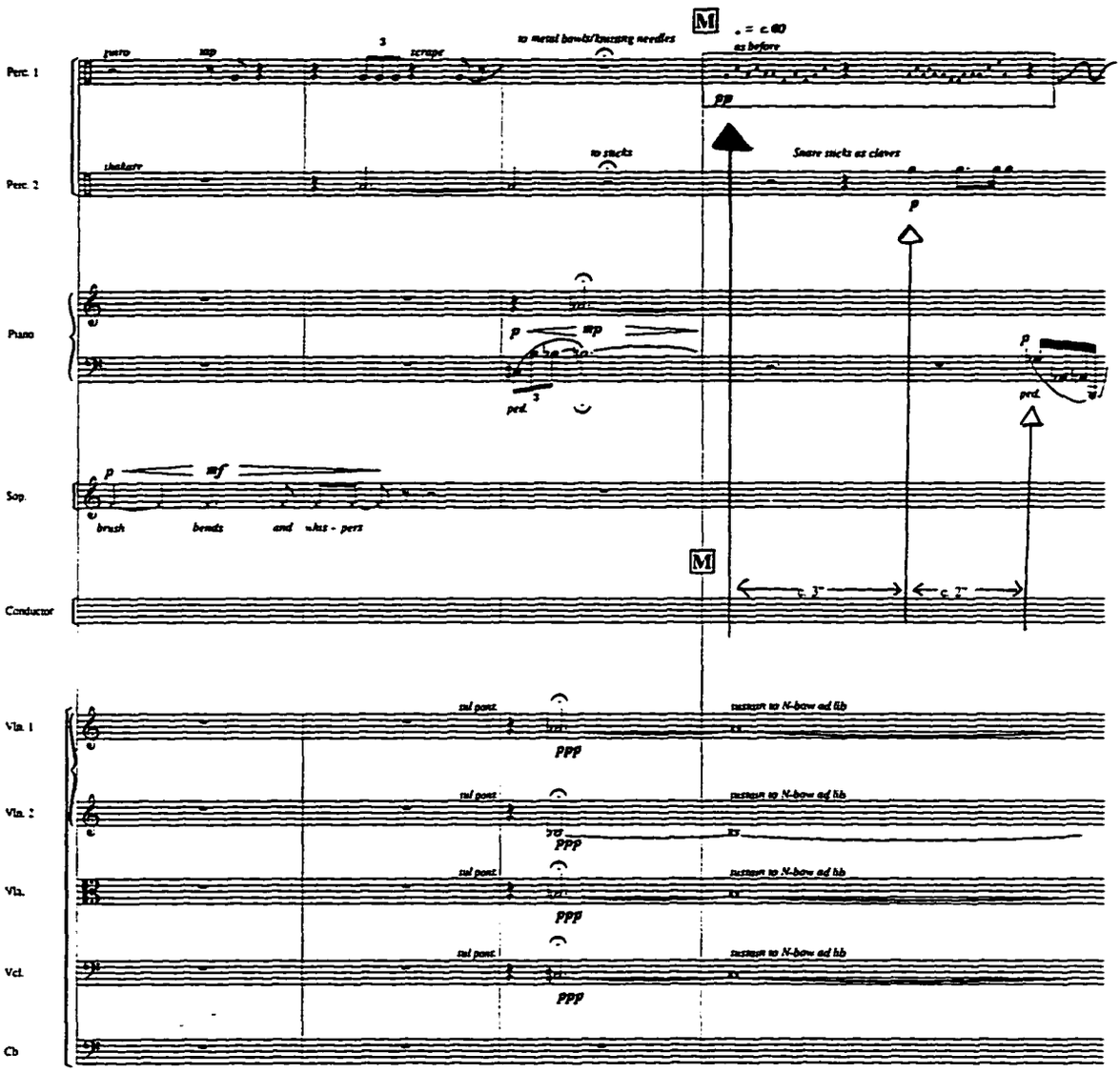

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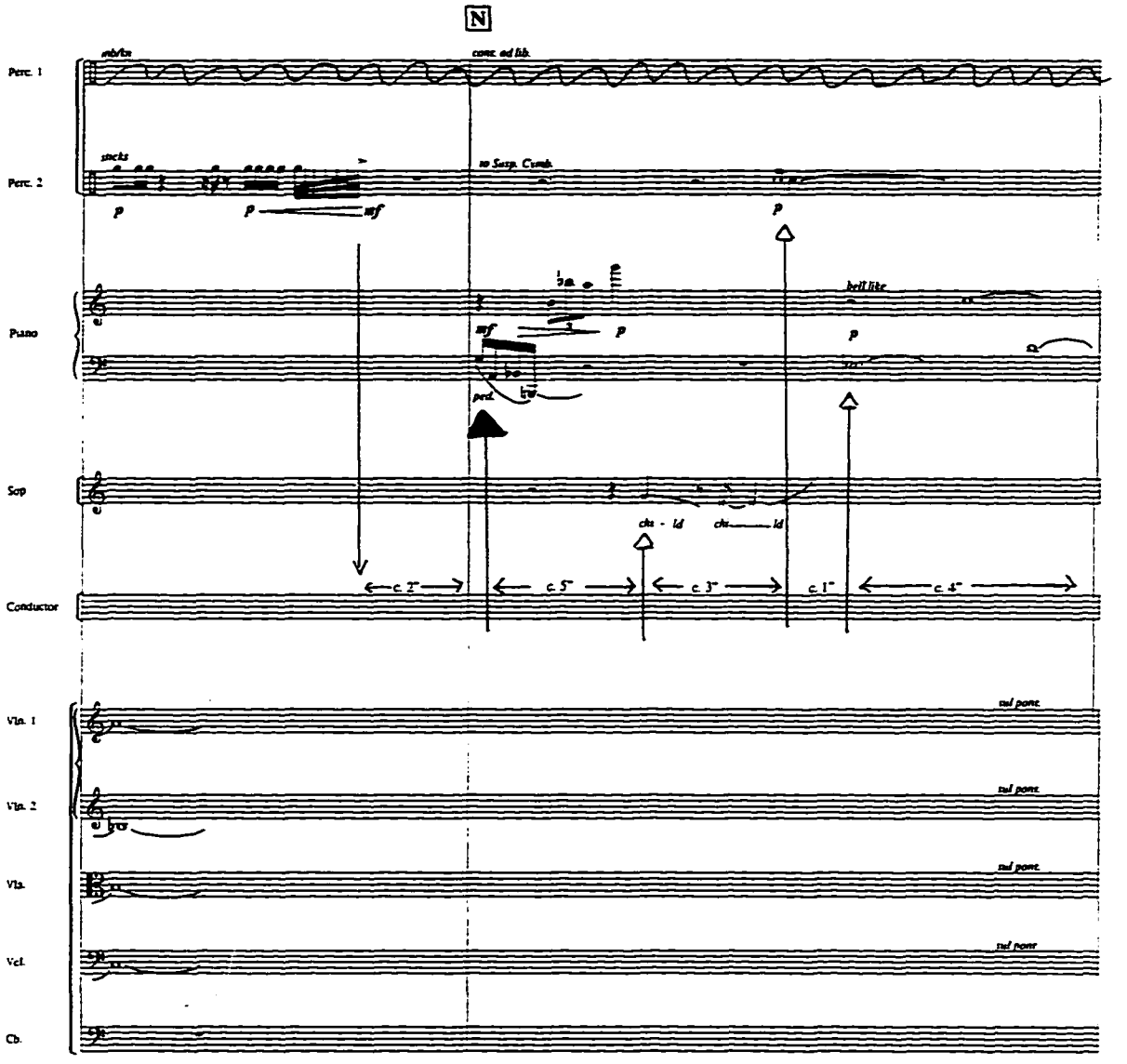

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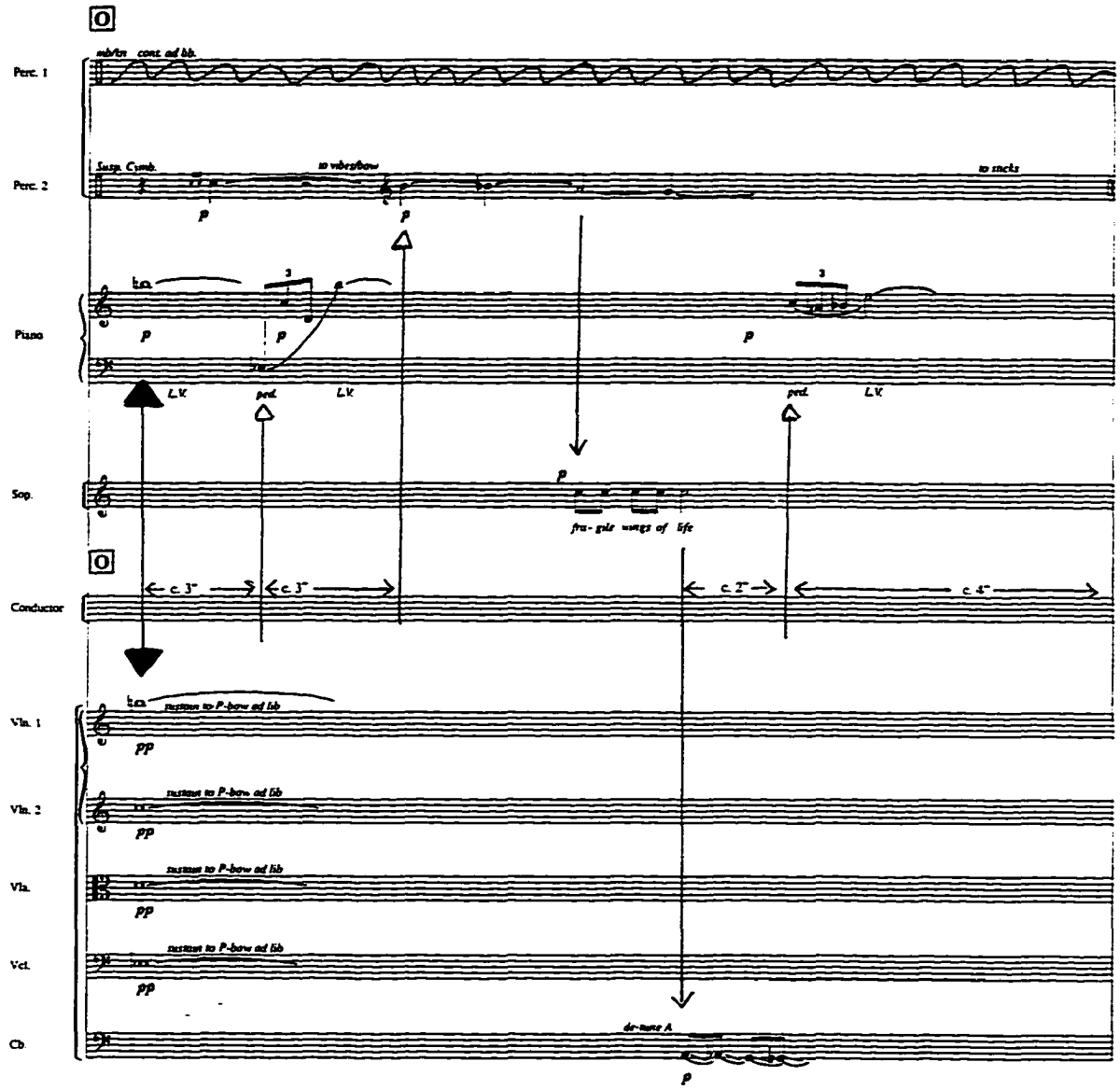

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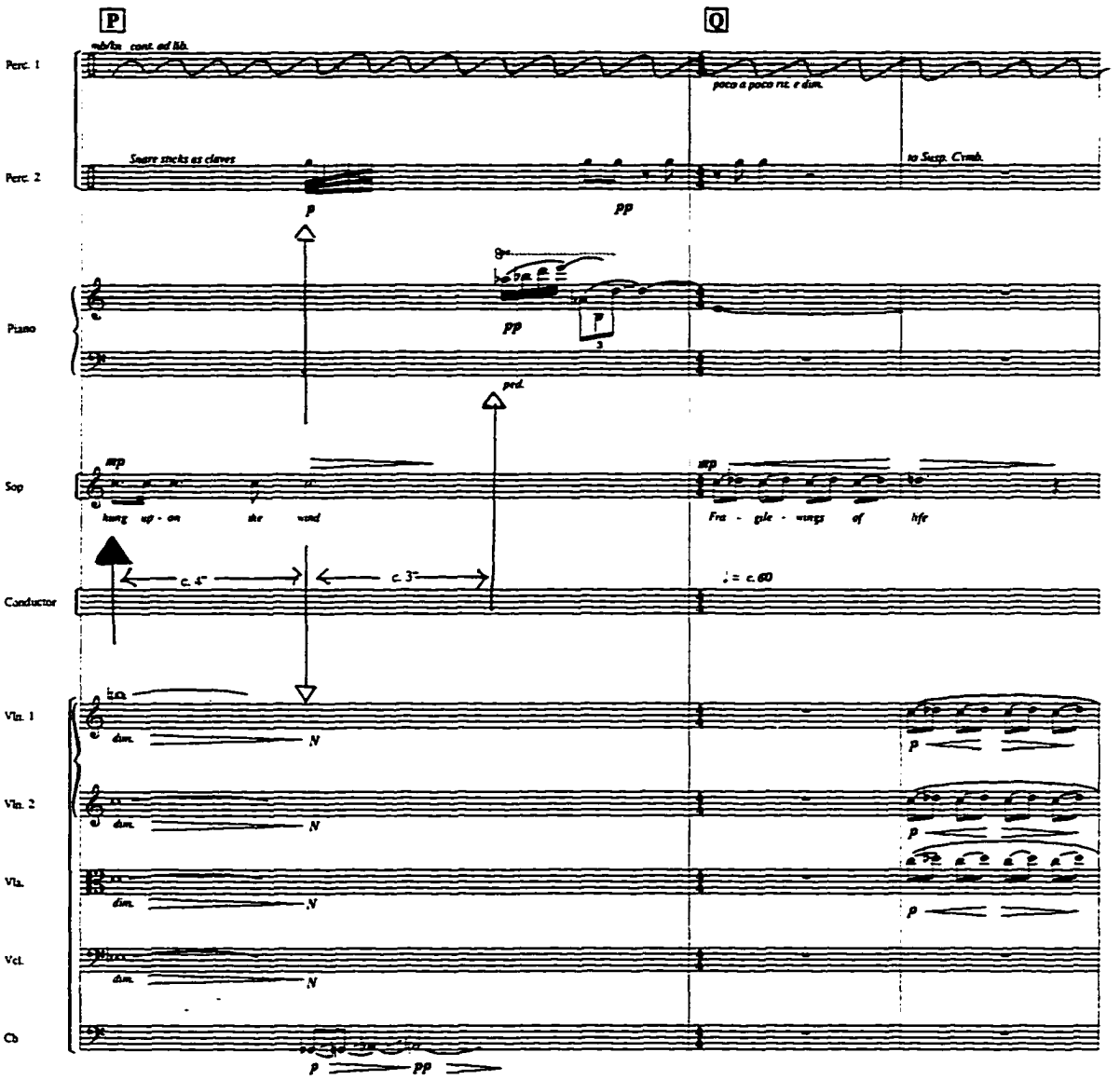

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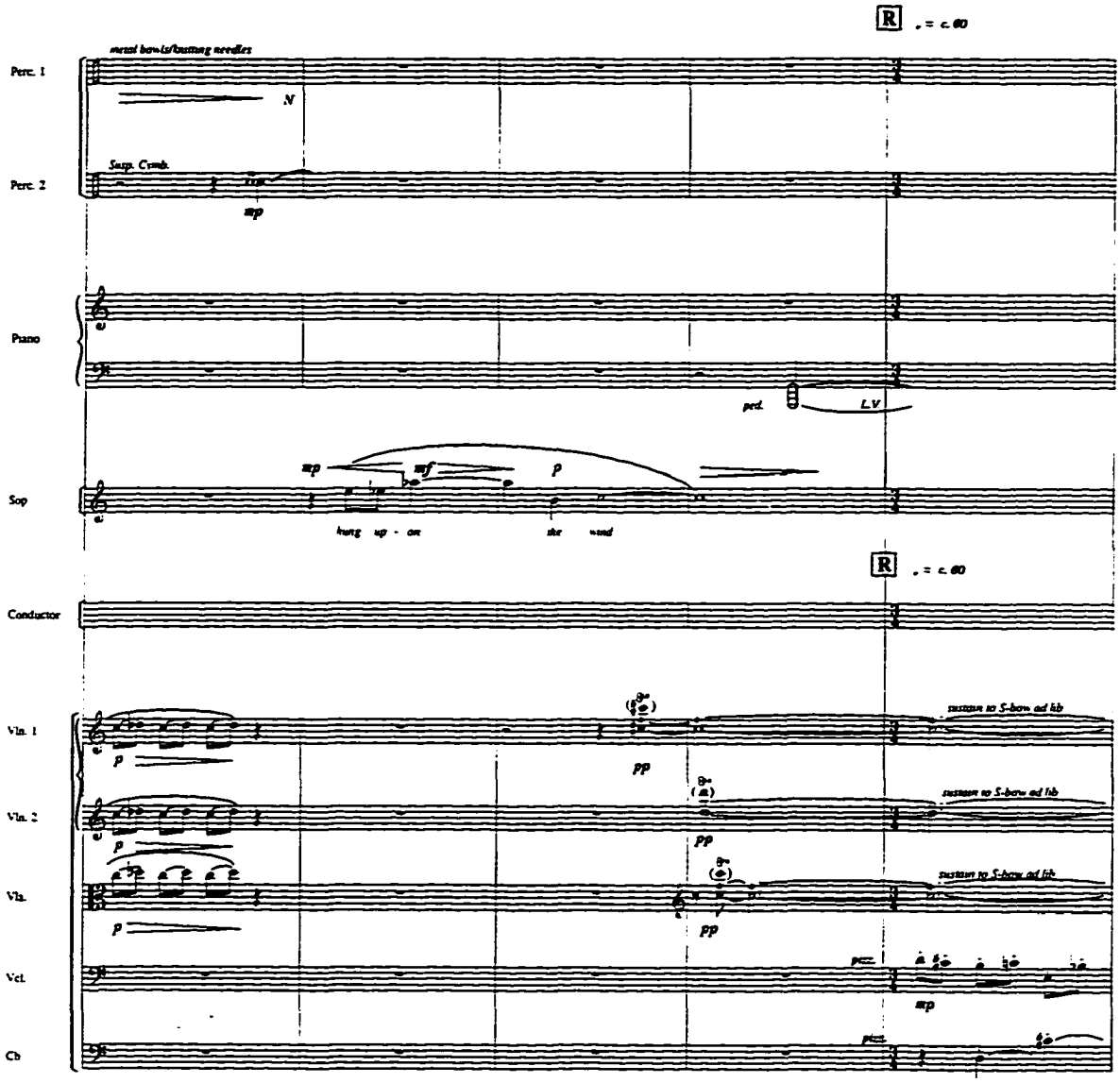

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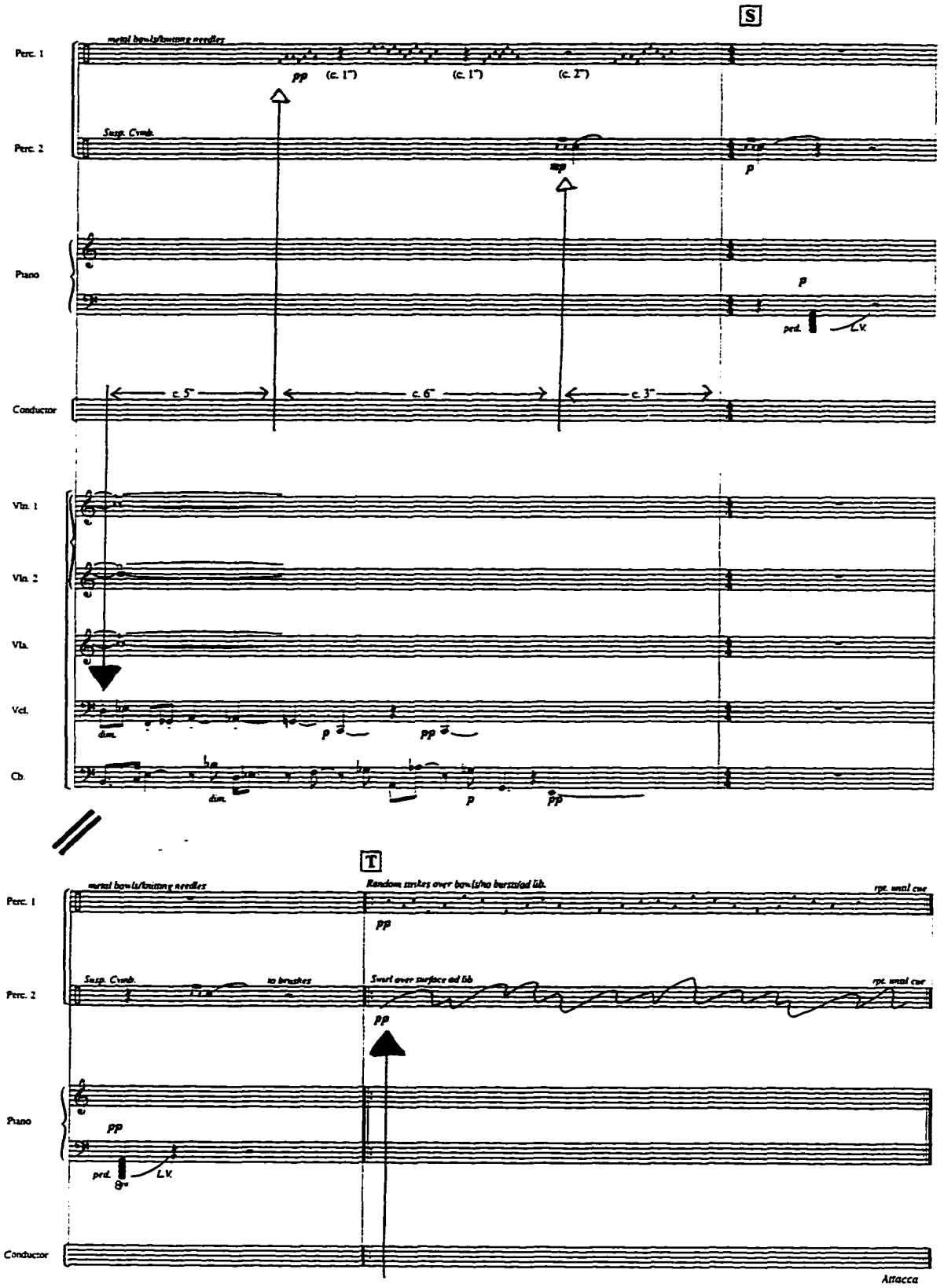

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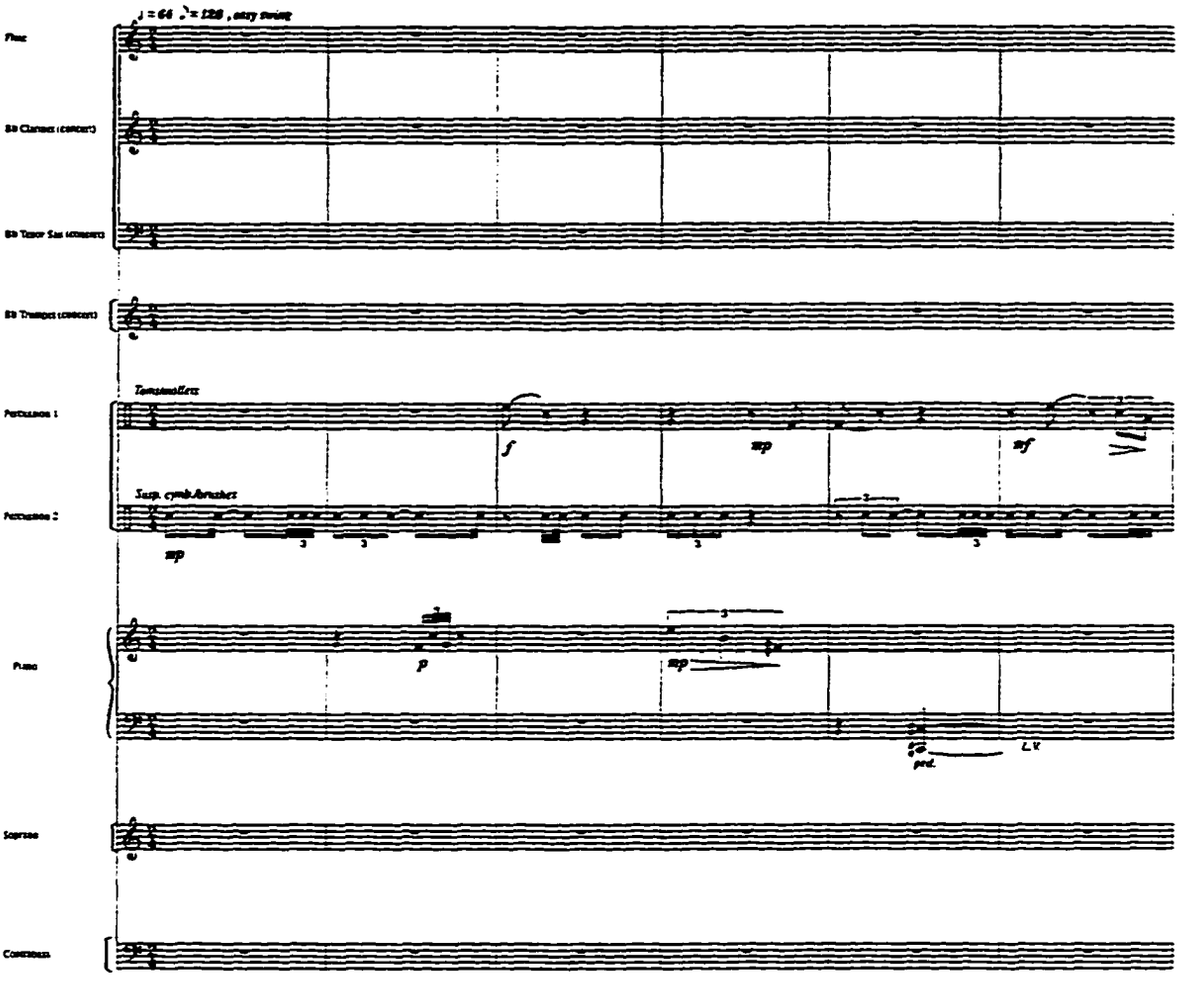
II Soup Kitchen



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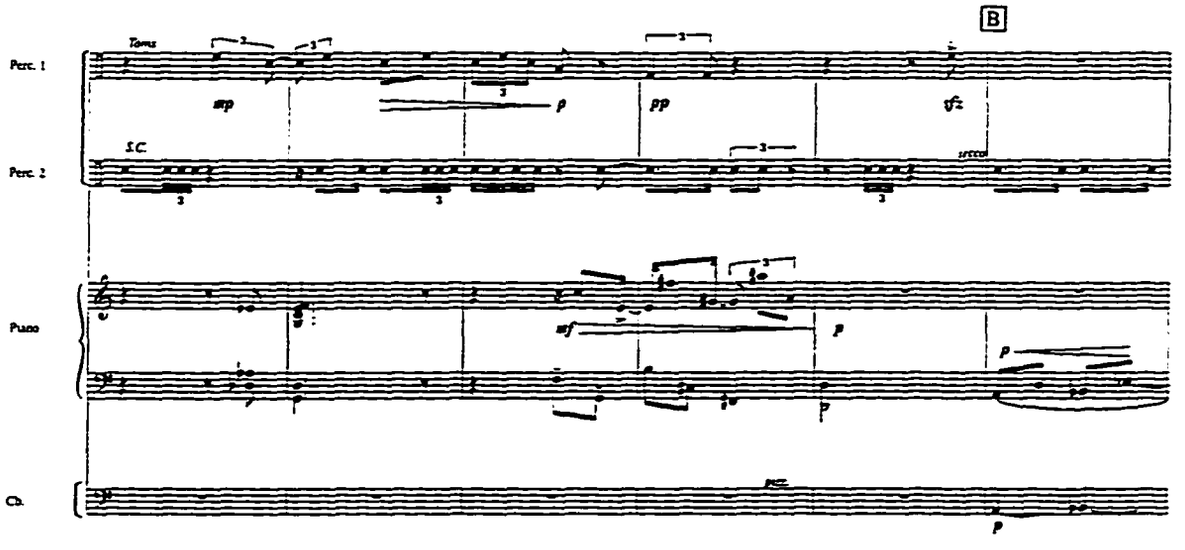

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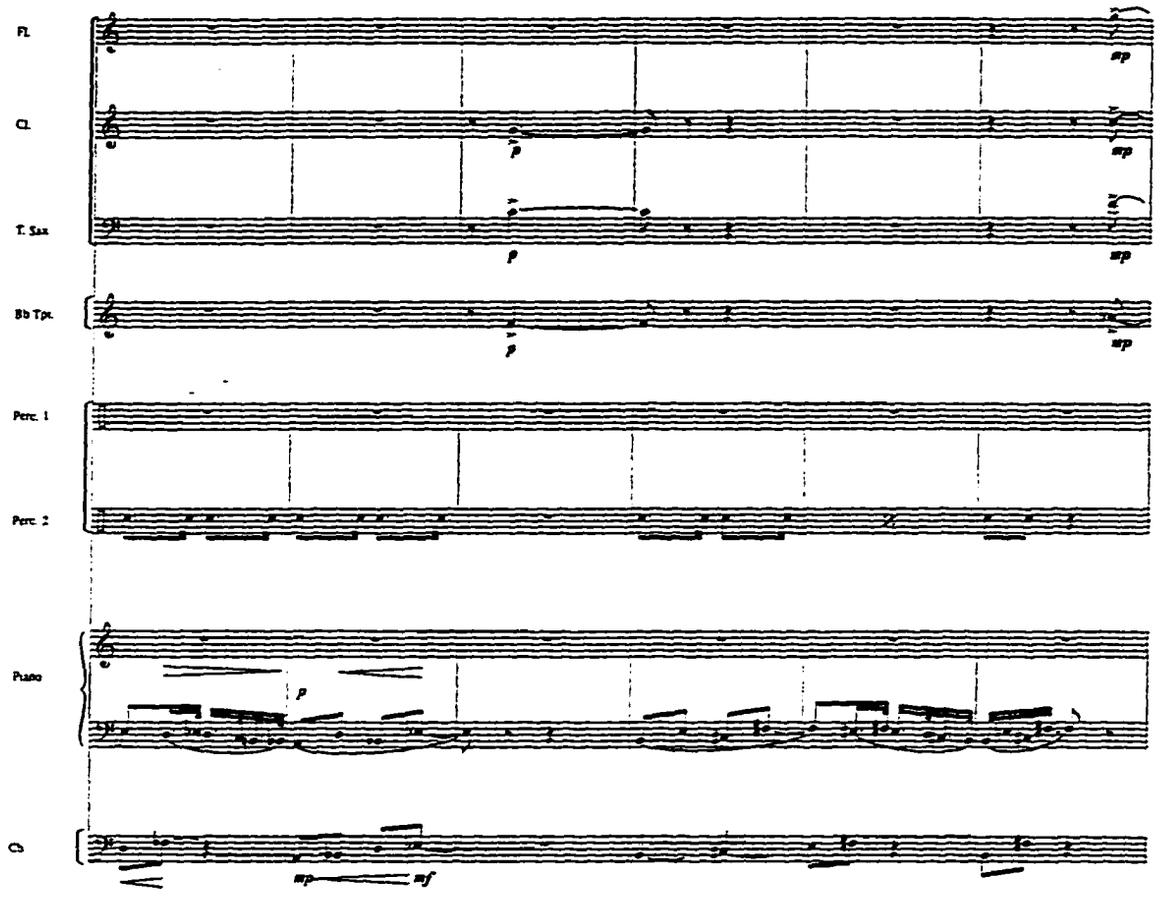

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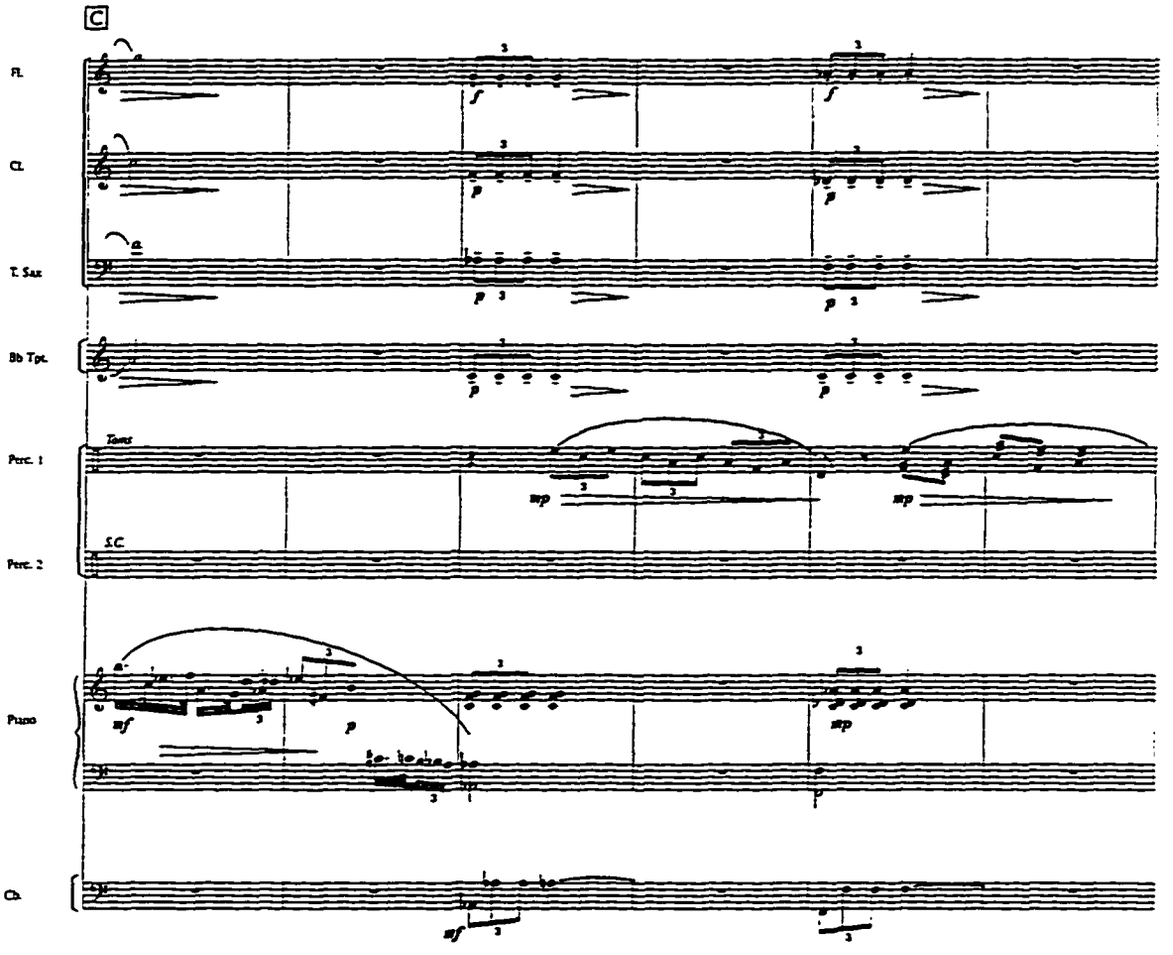

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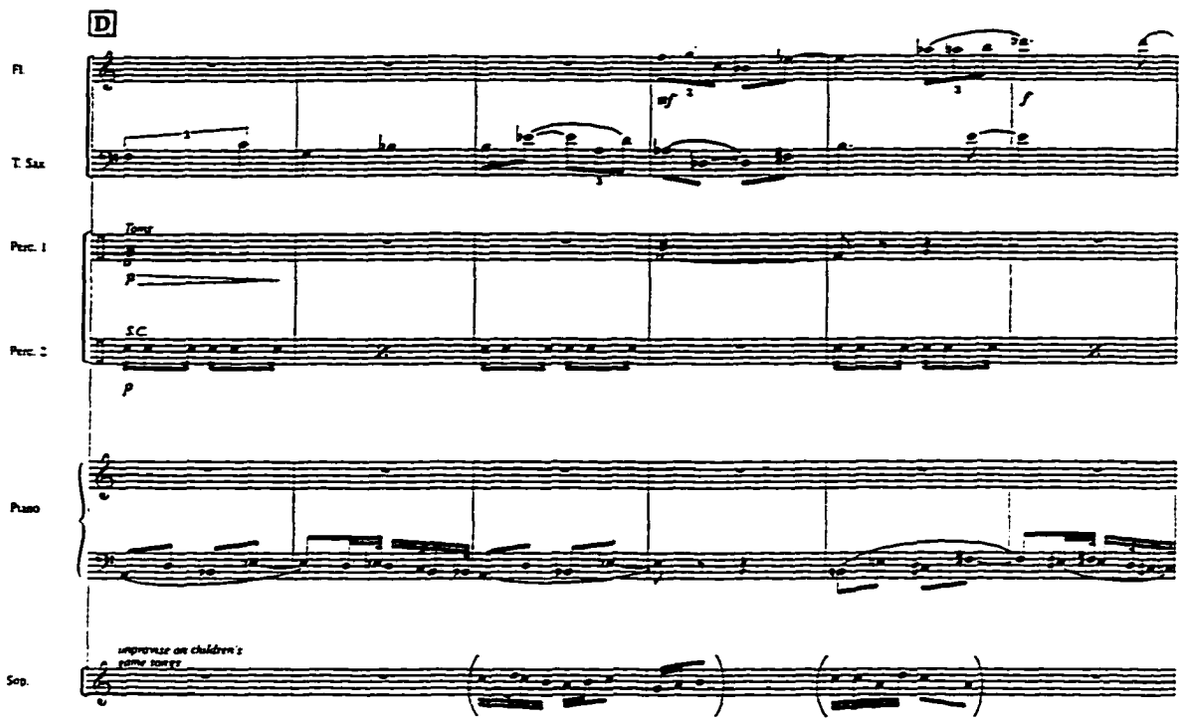

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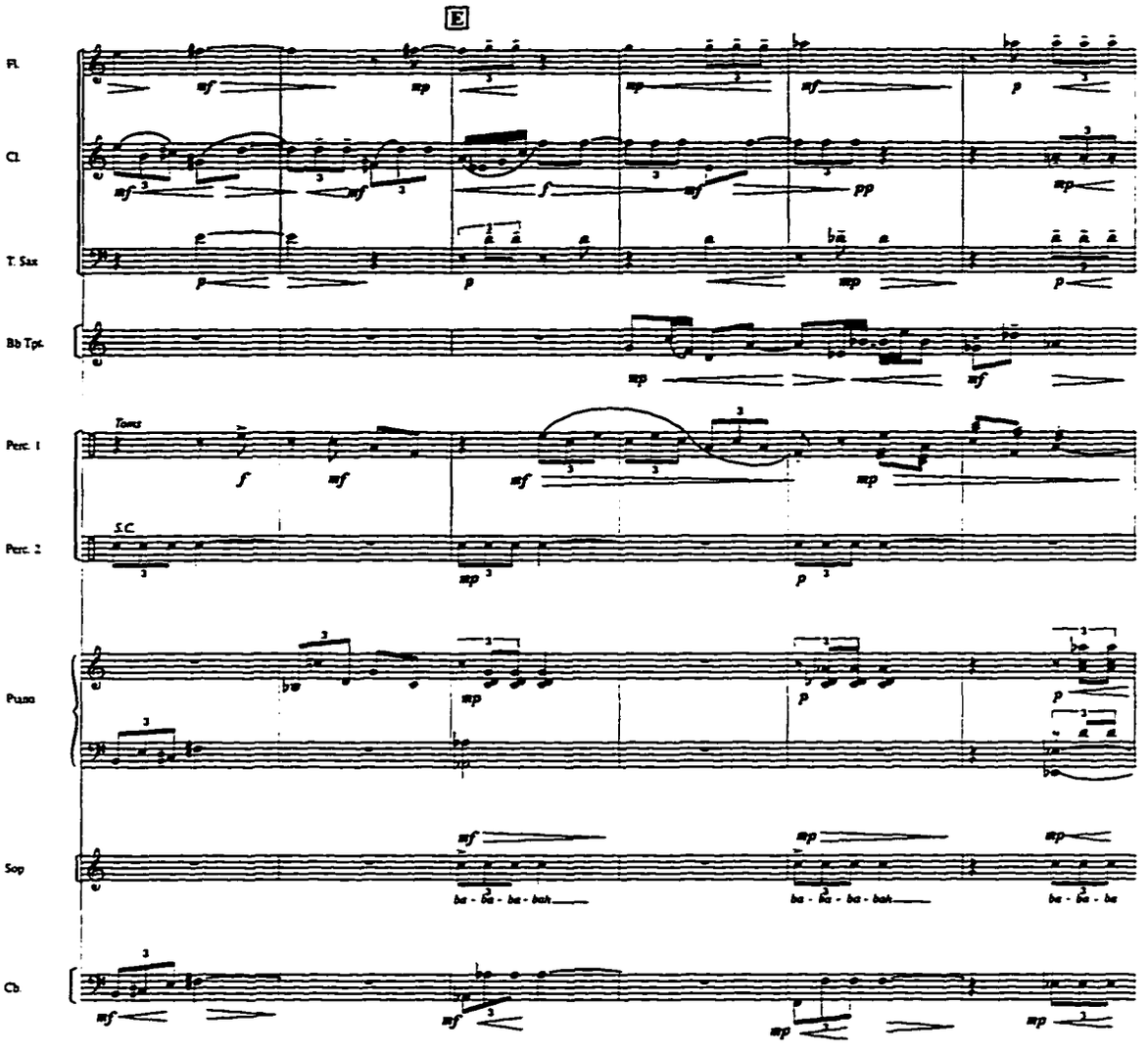

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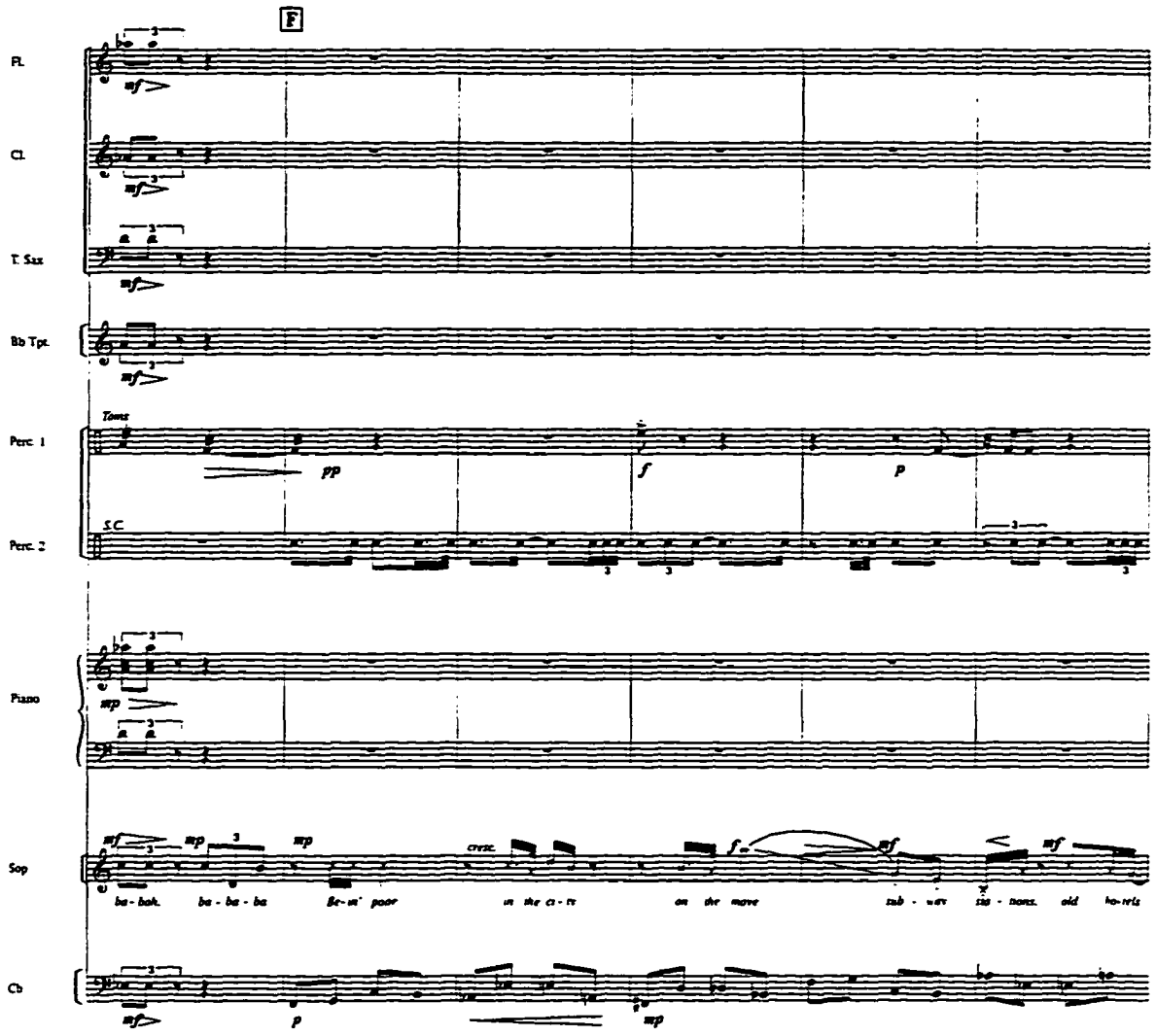

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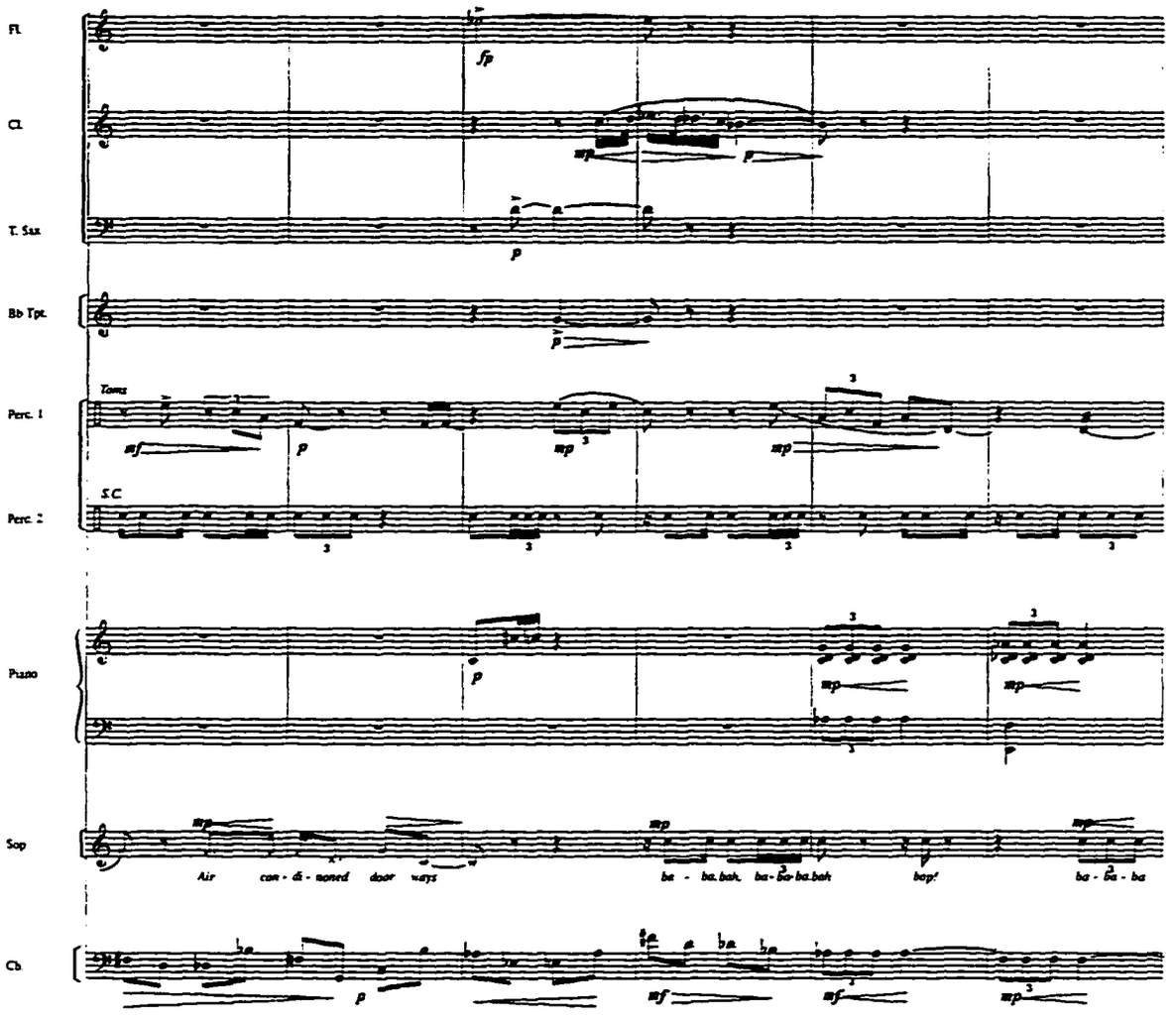

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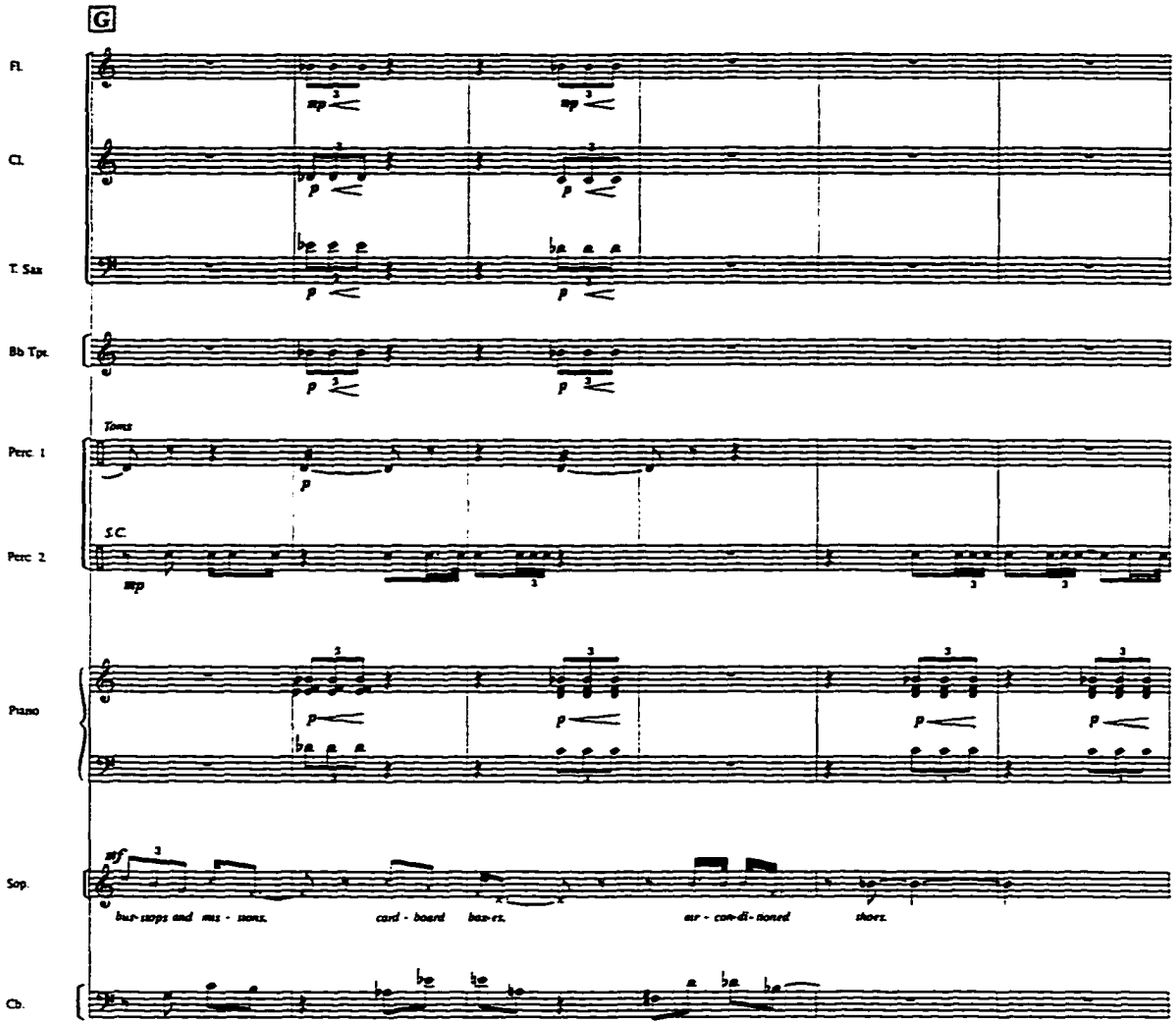

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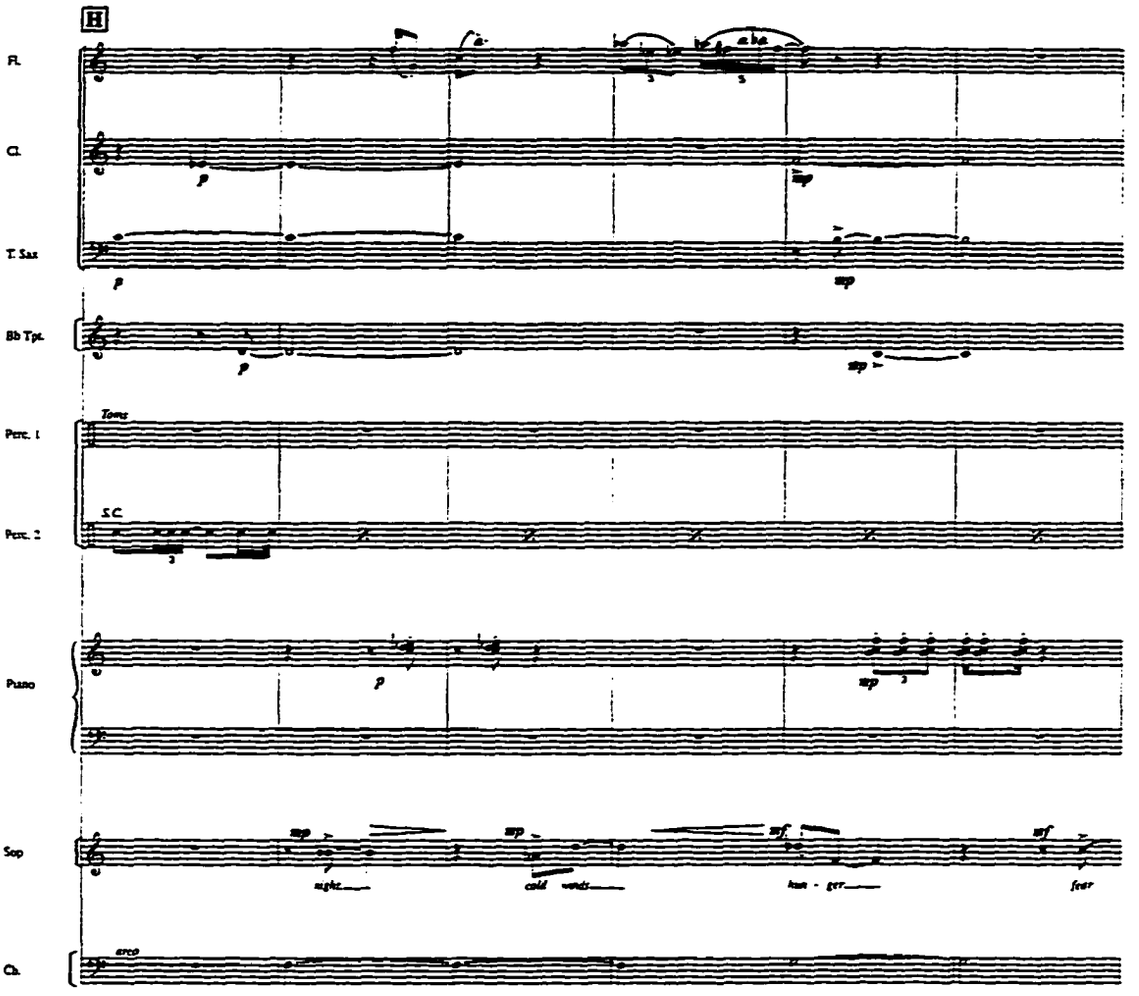

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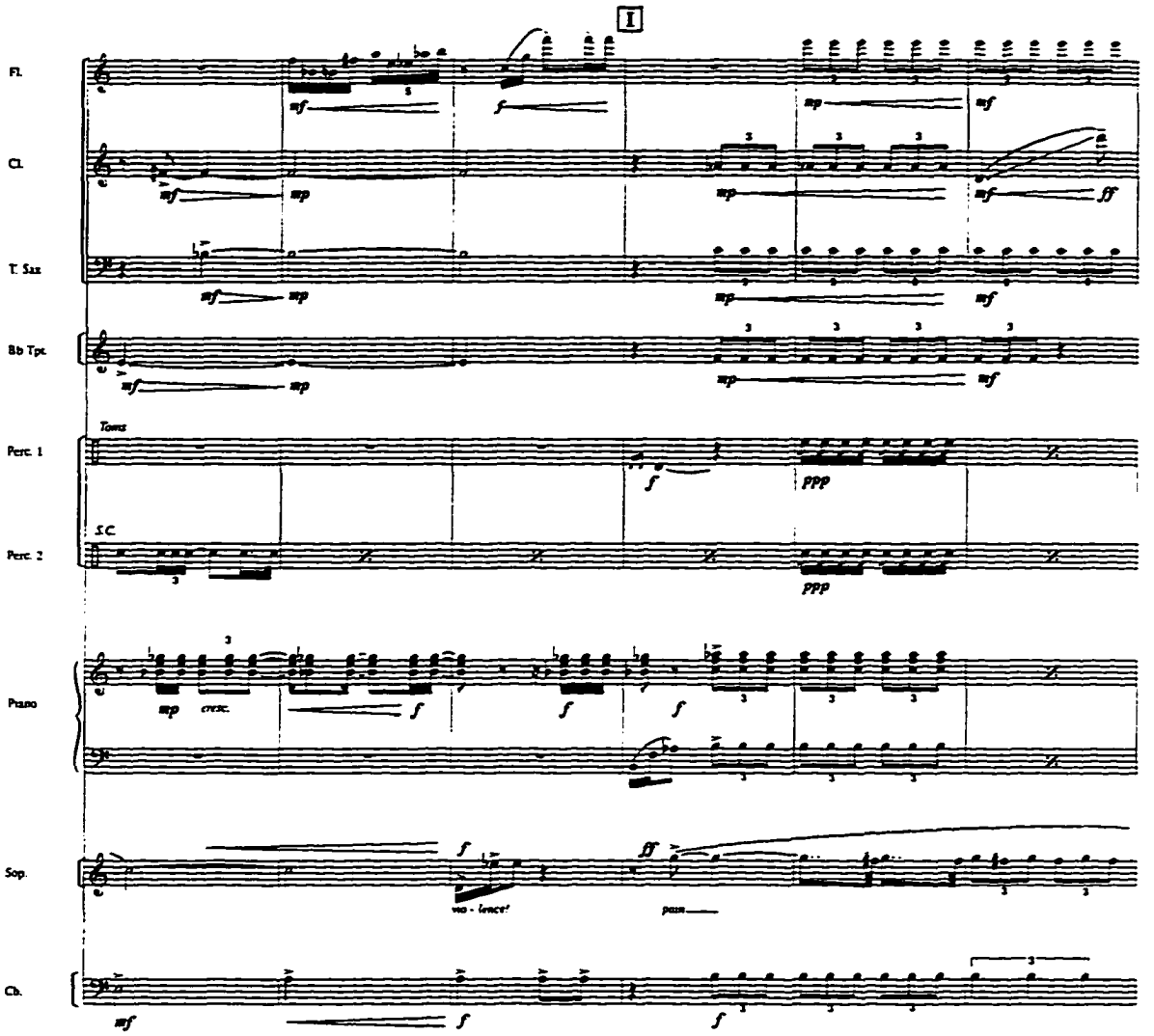

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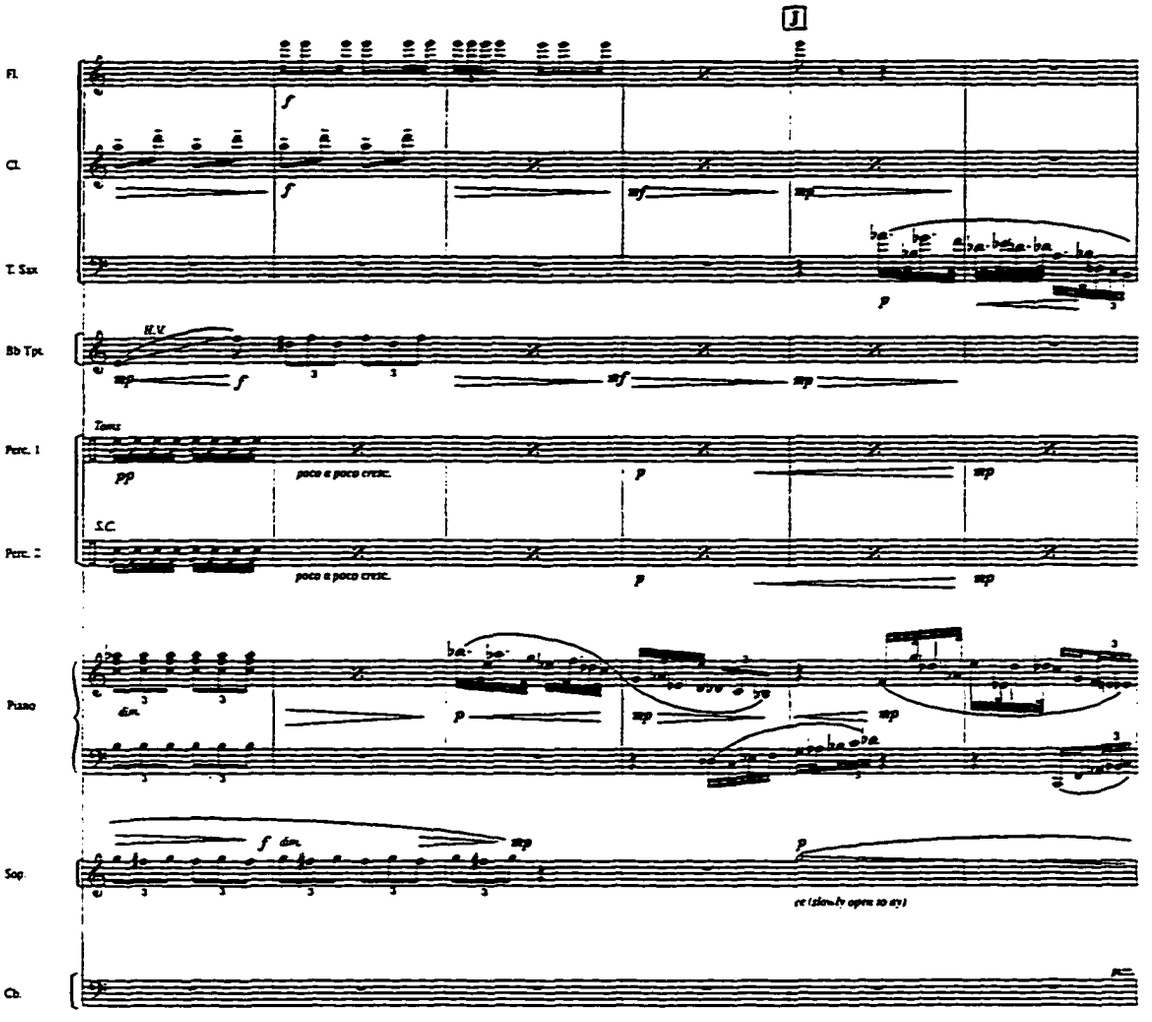

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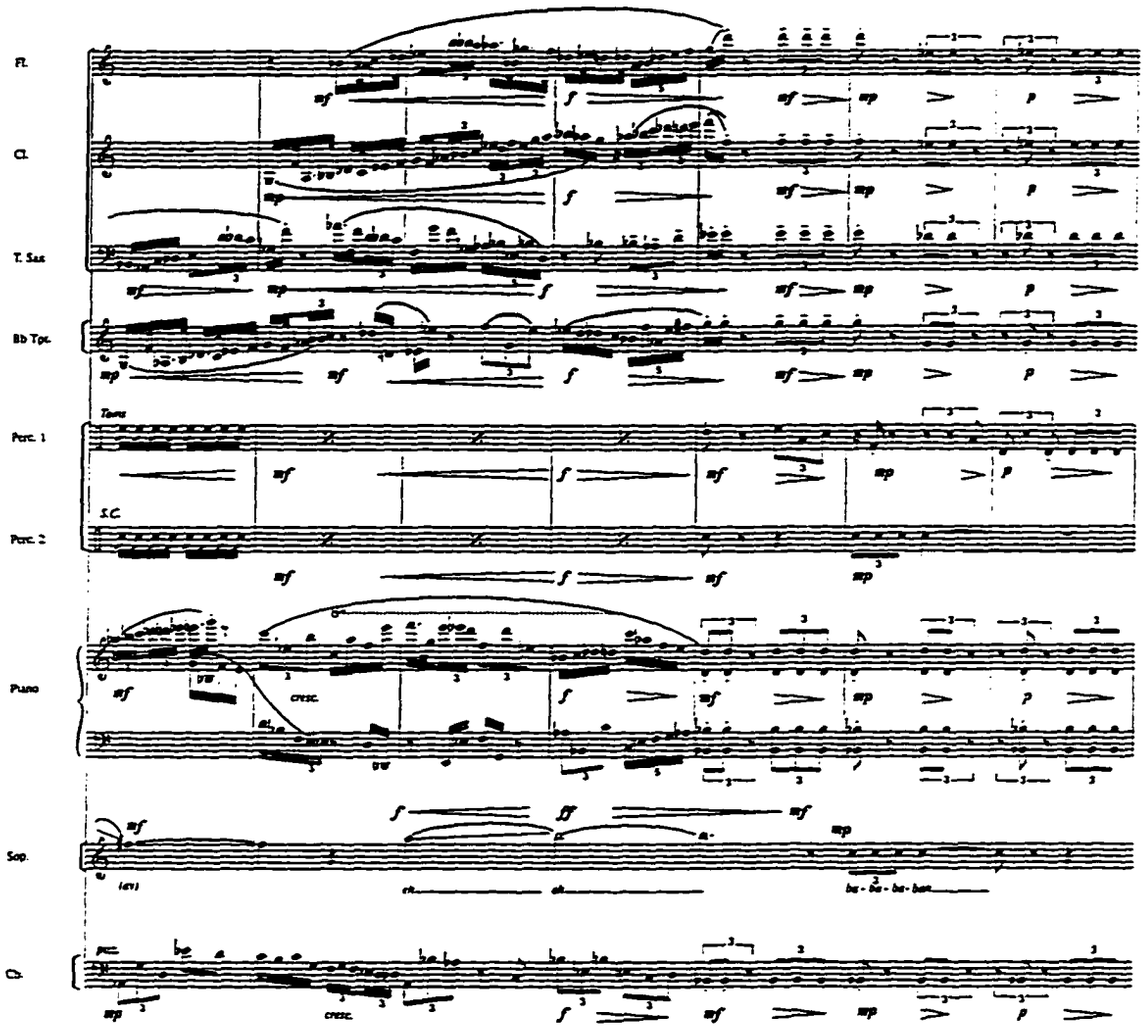

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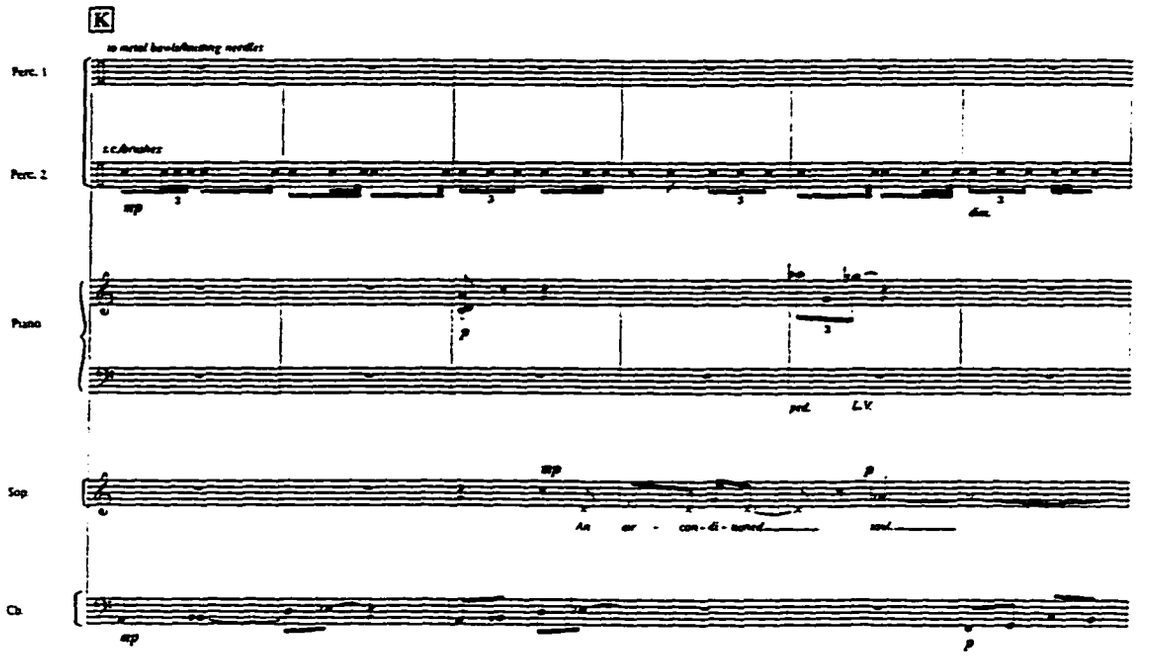

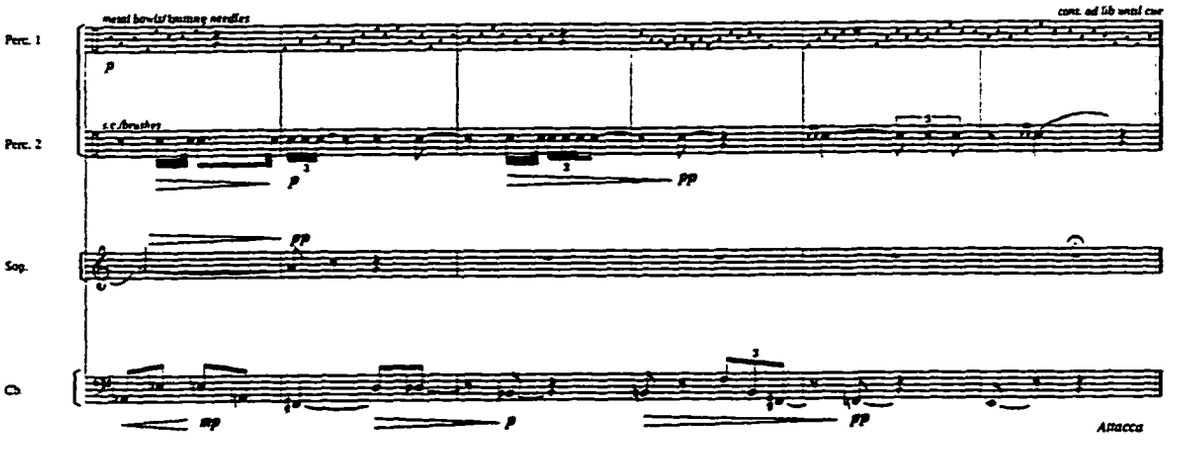

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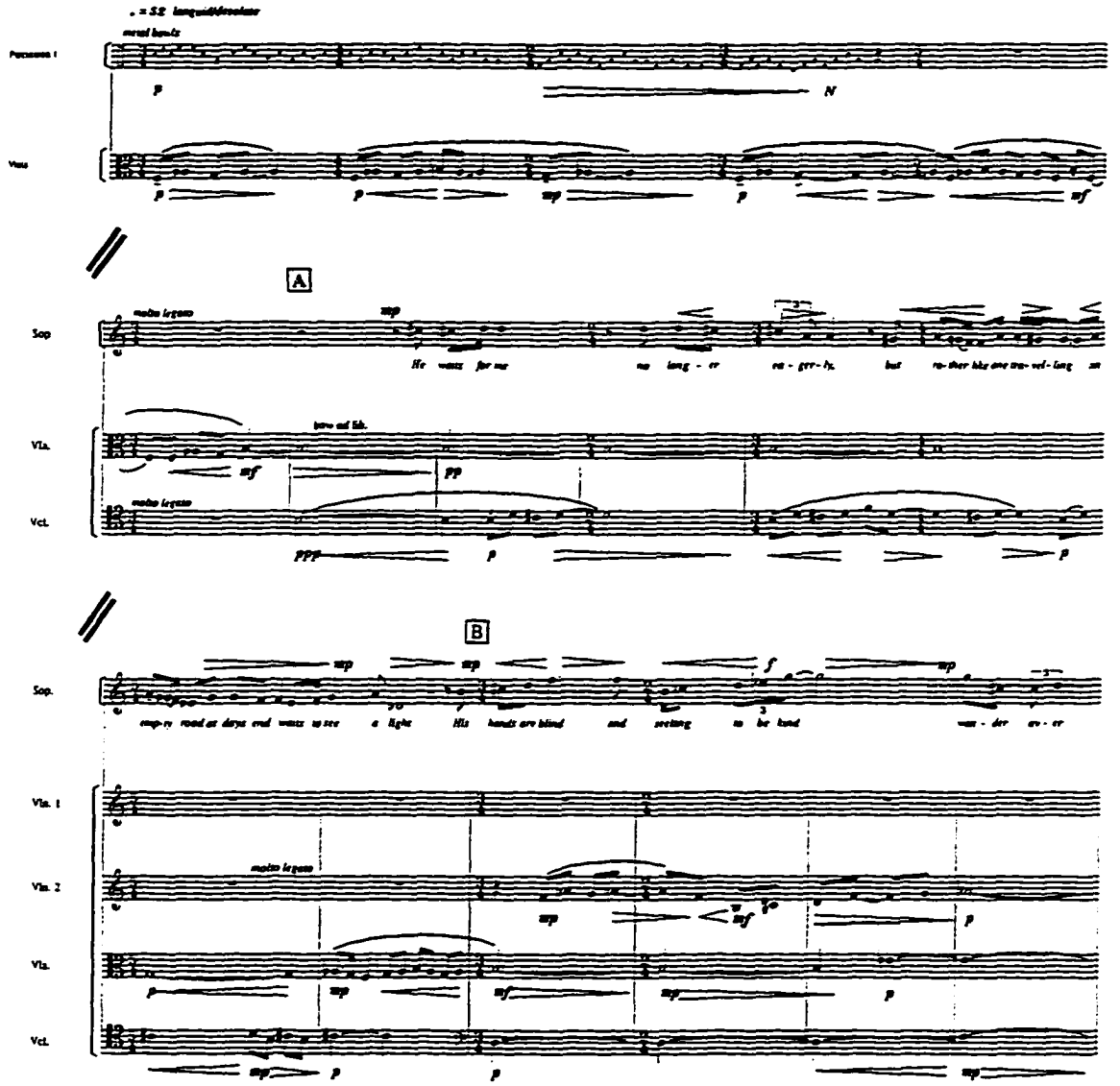
III Late Night Television



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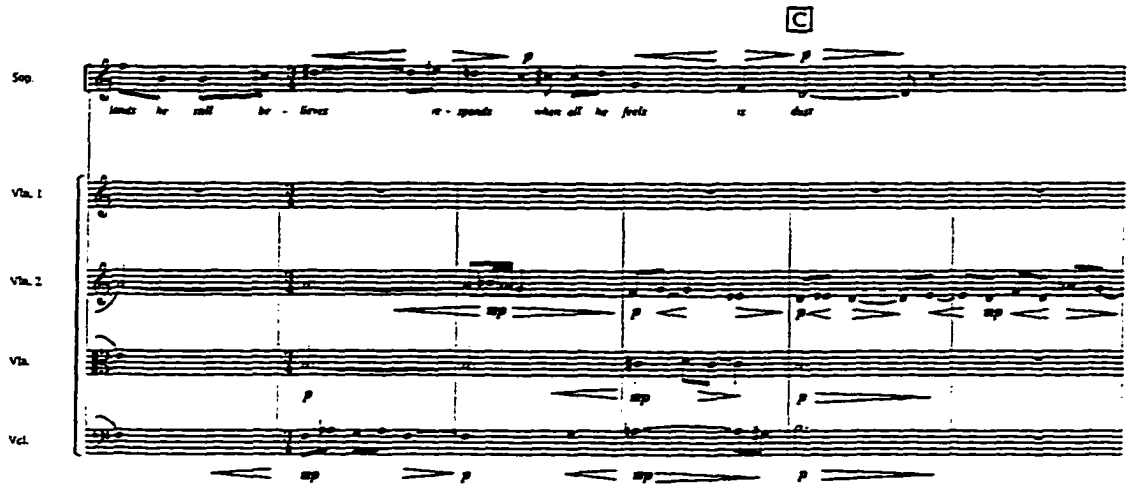

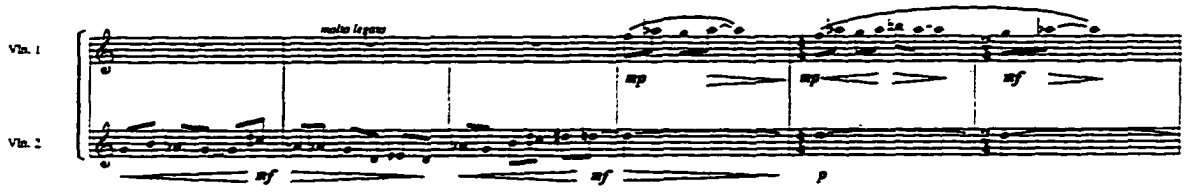

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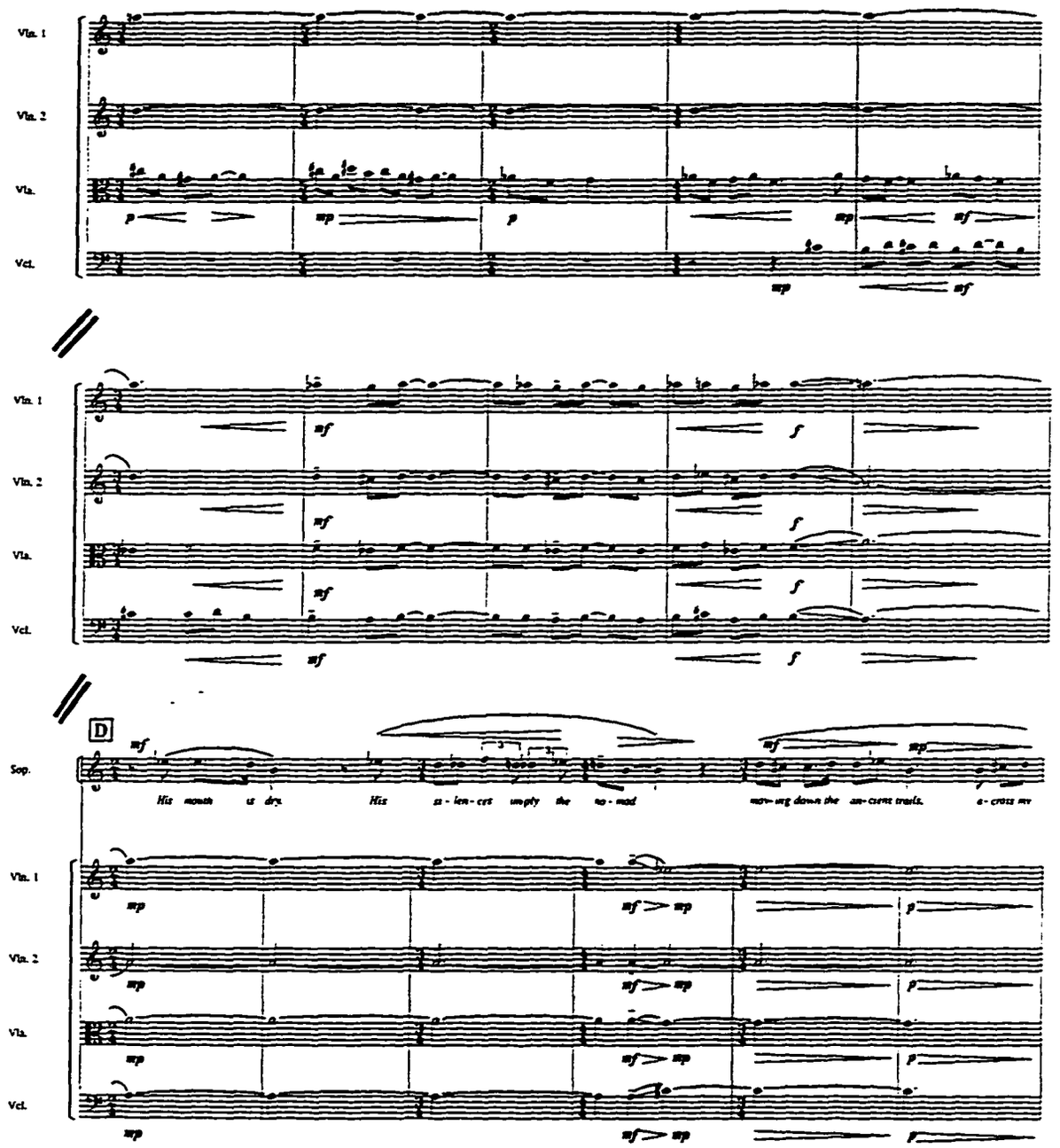

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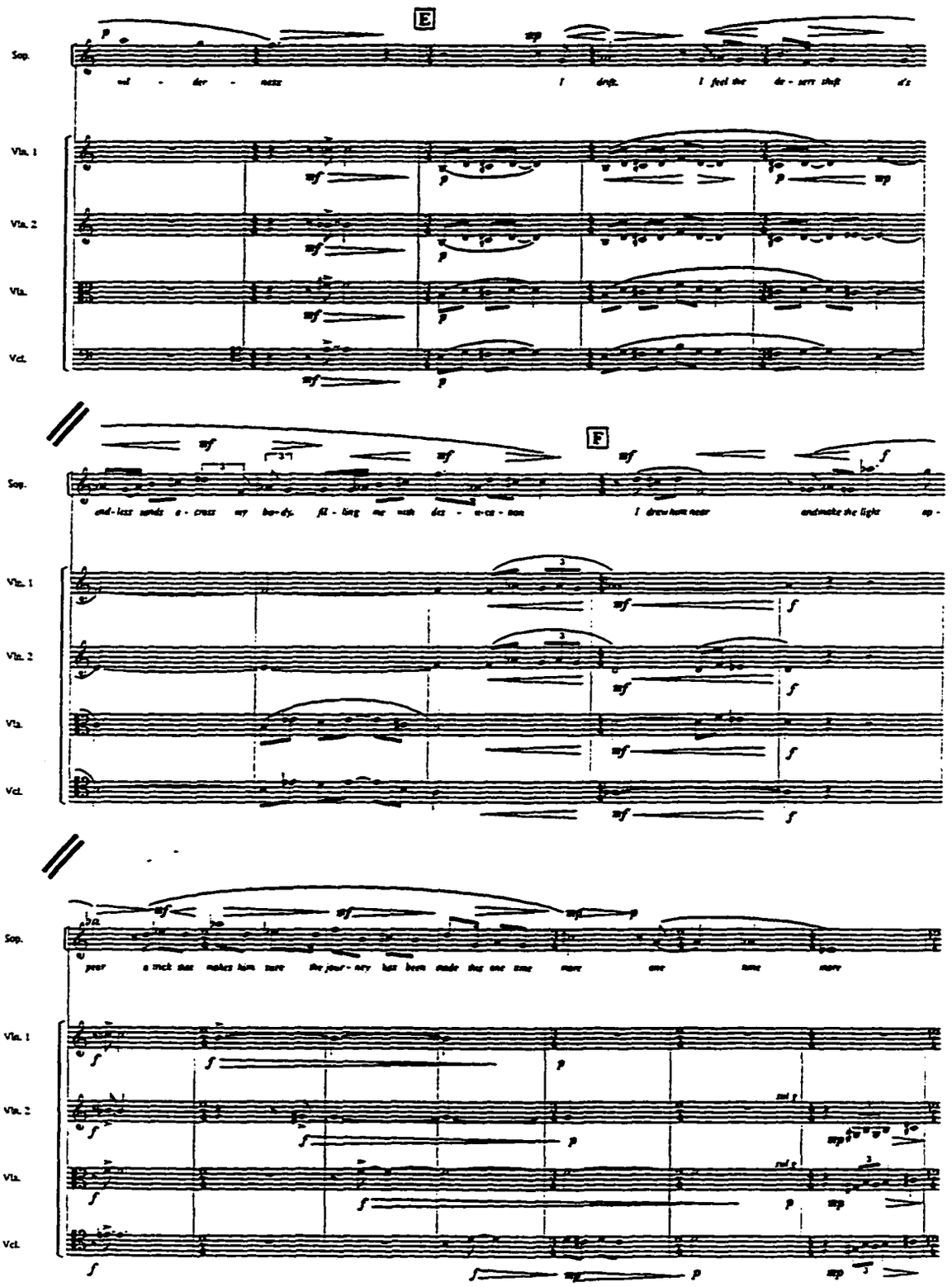

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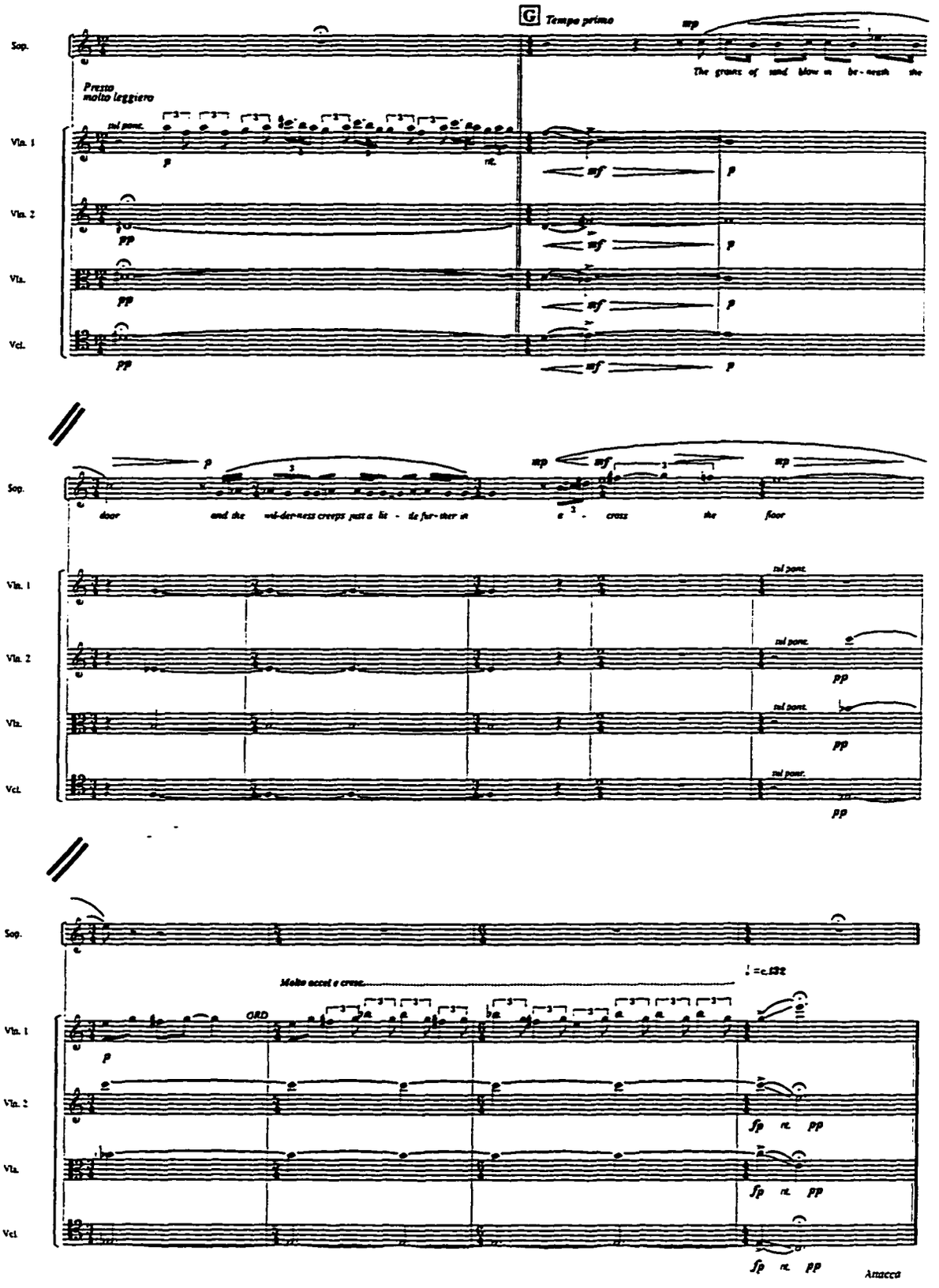

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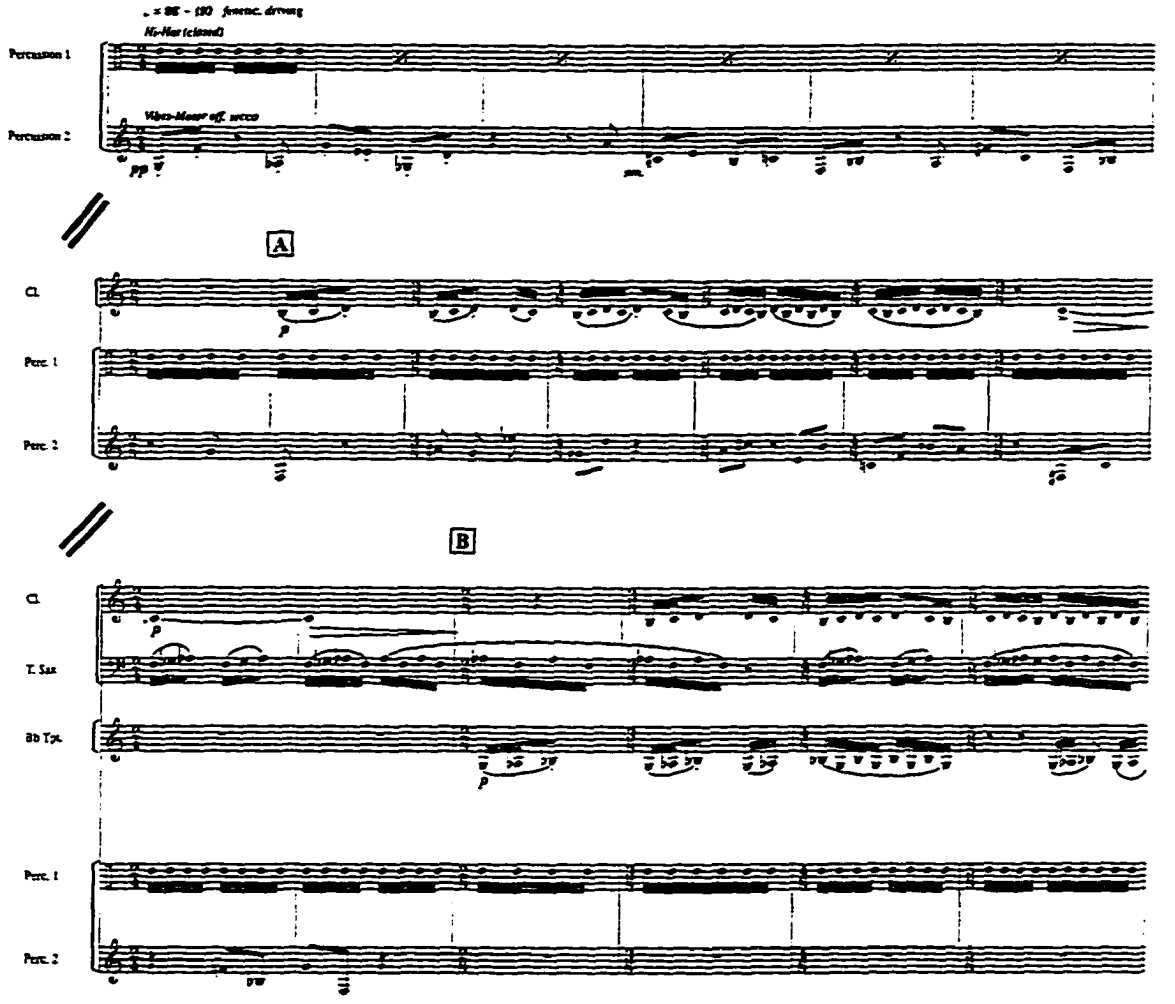
IV Hydra: cold water dreams



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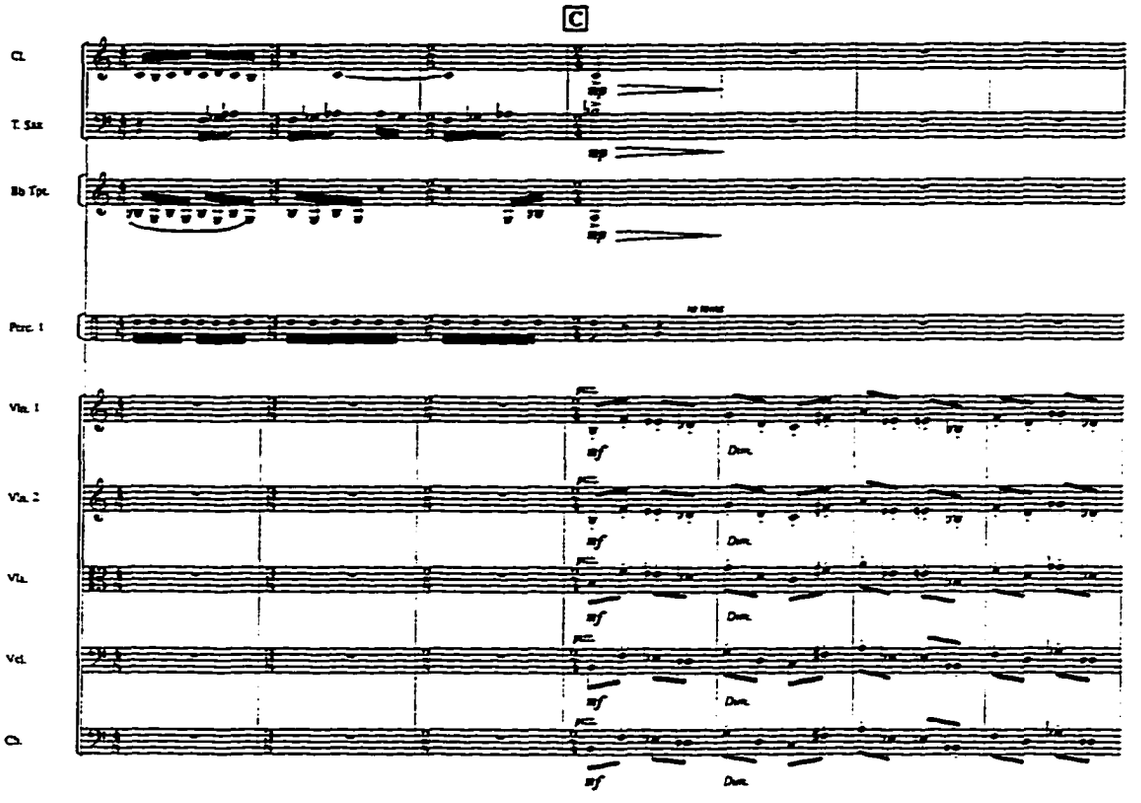

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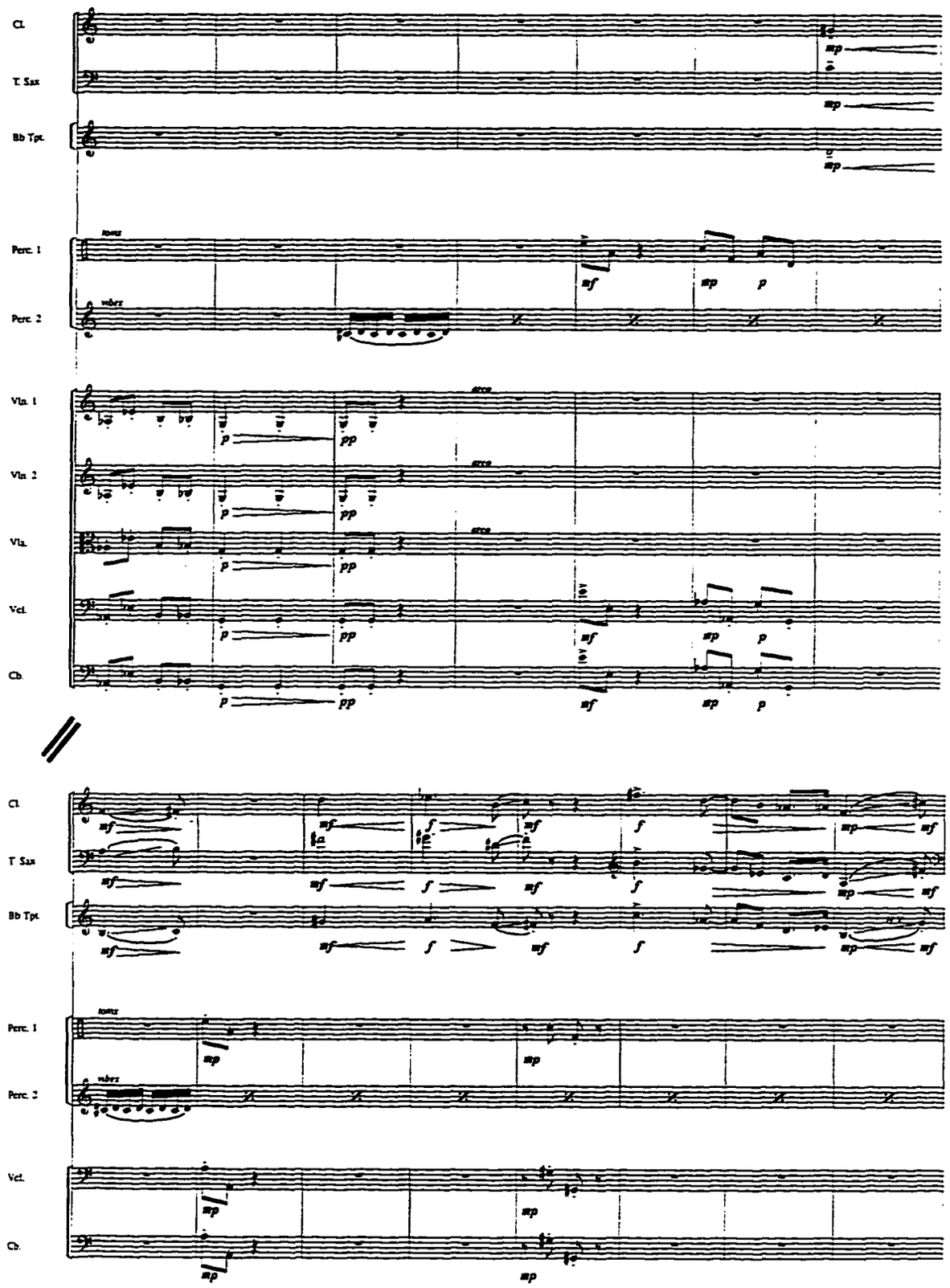

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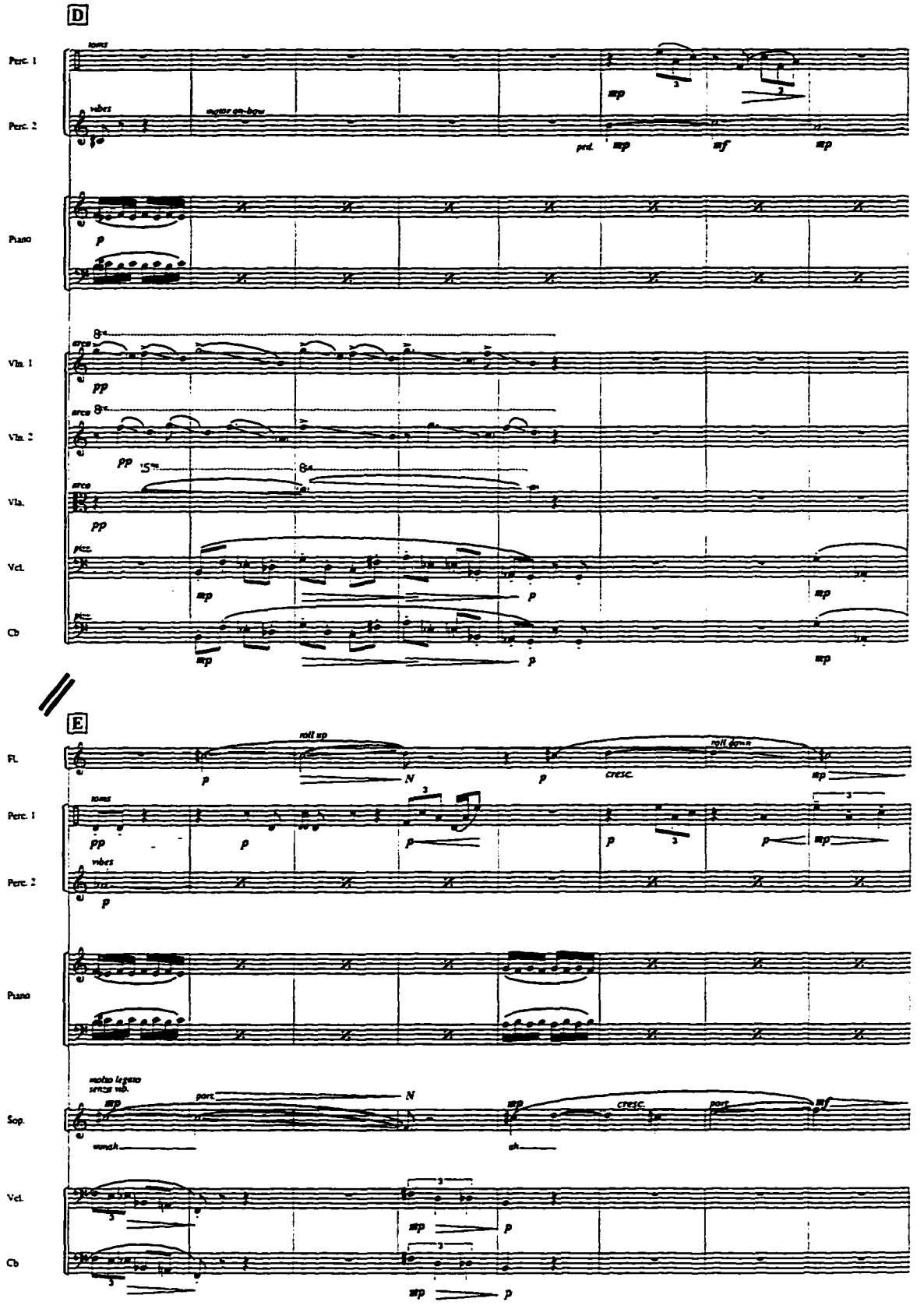

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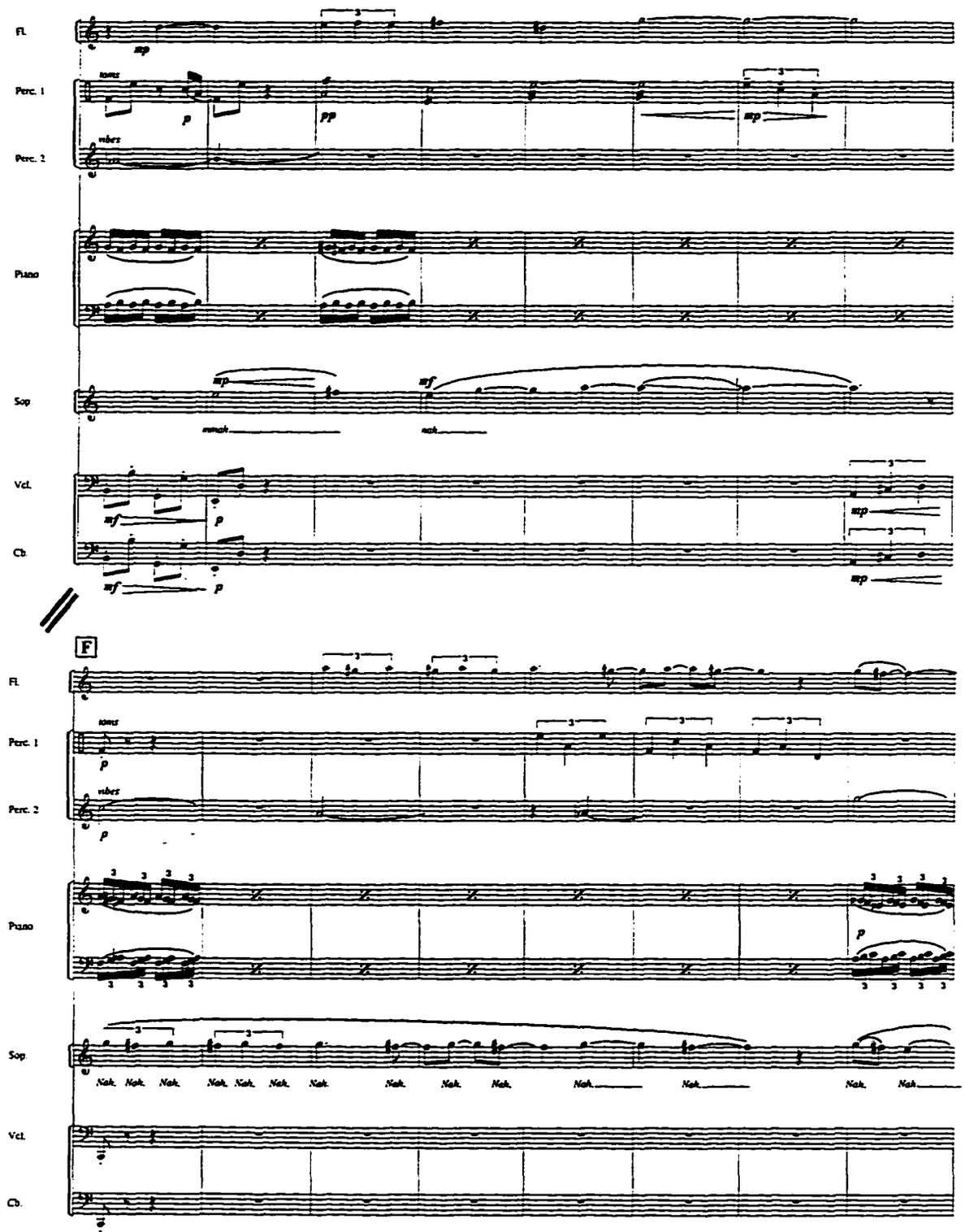

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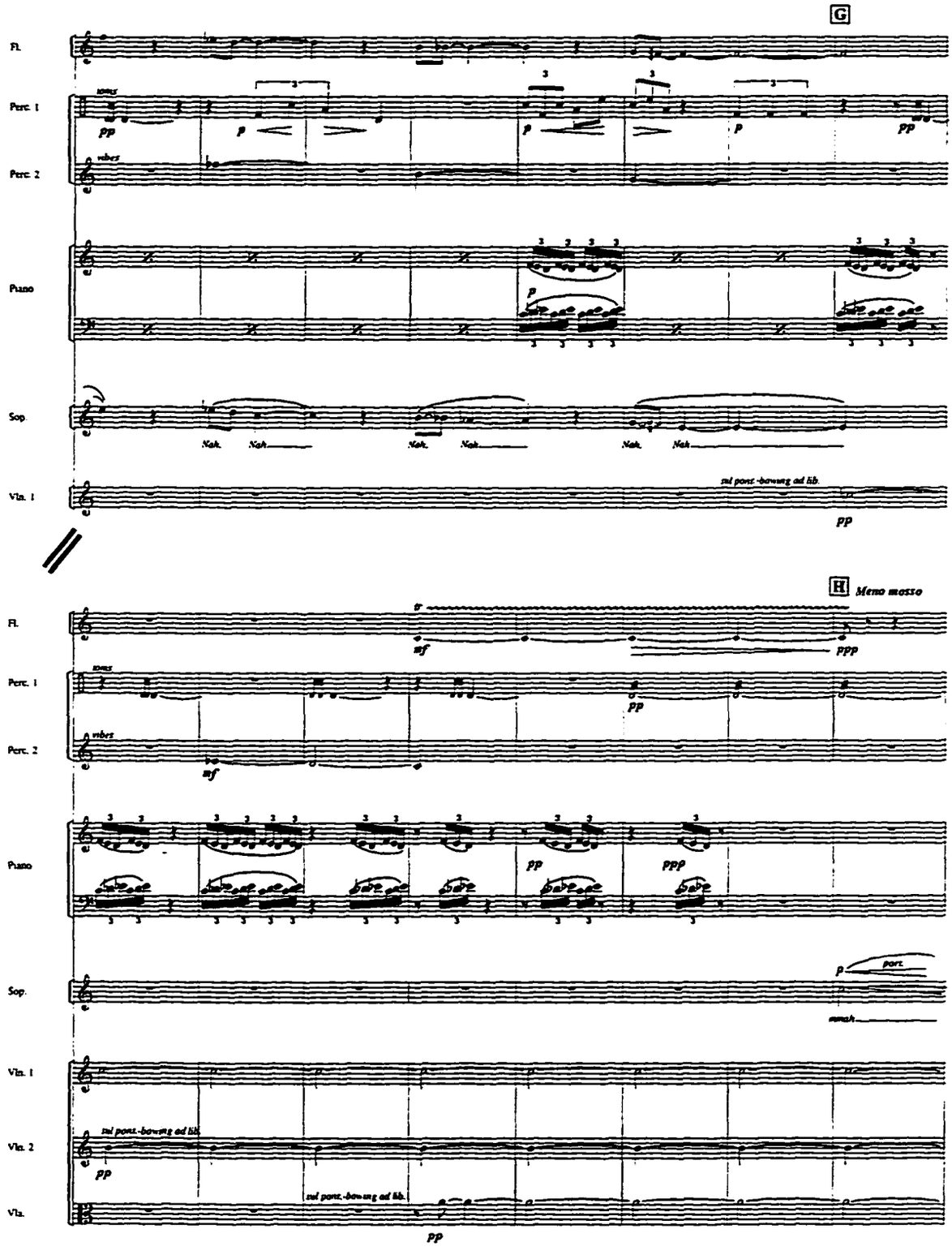

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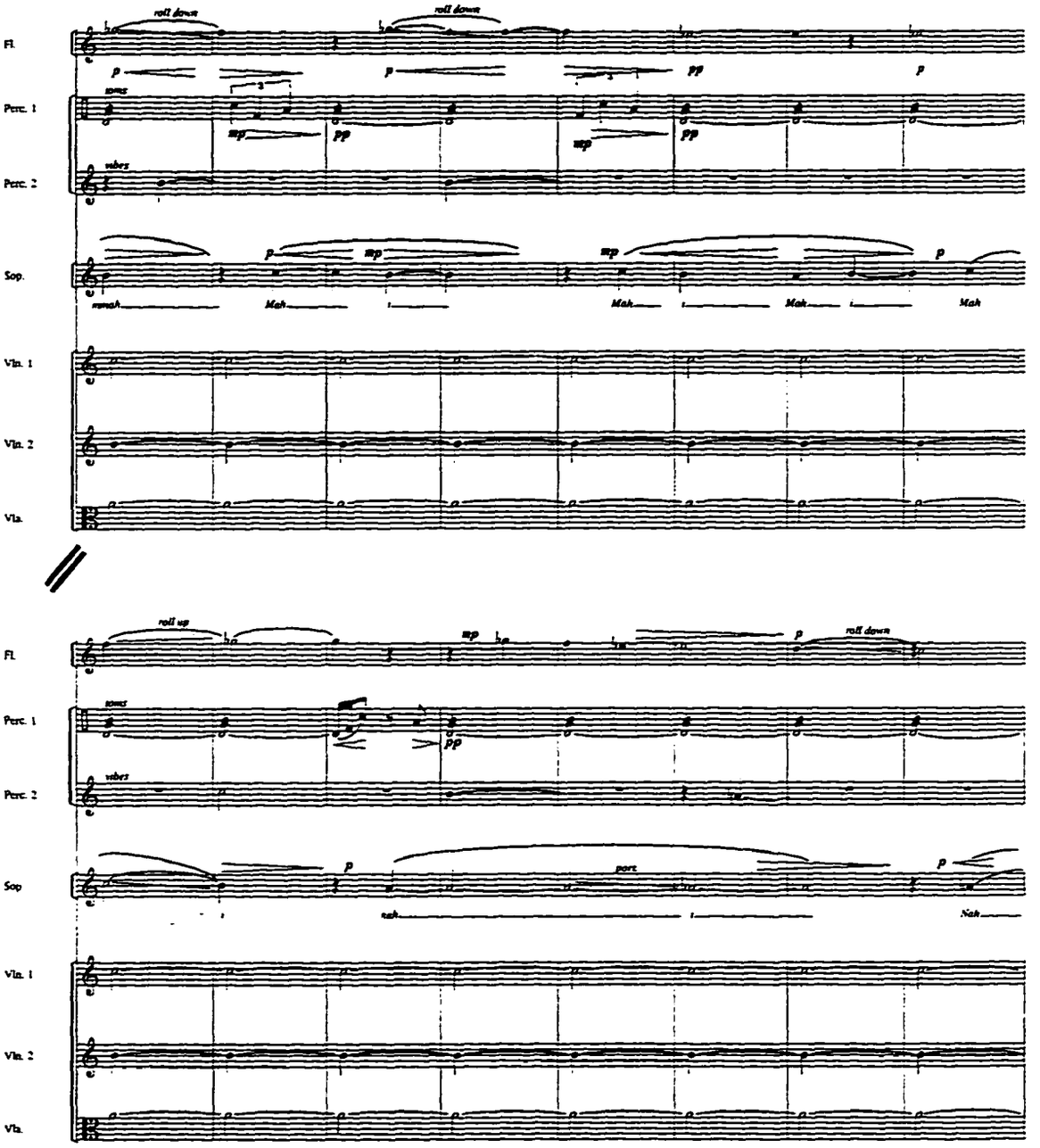

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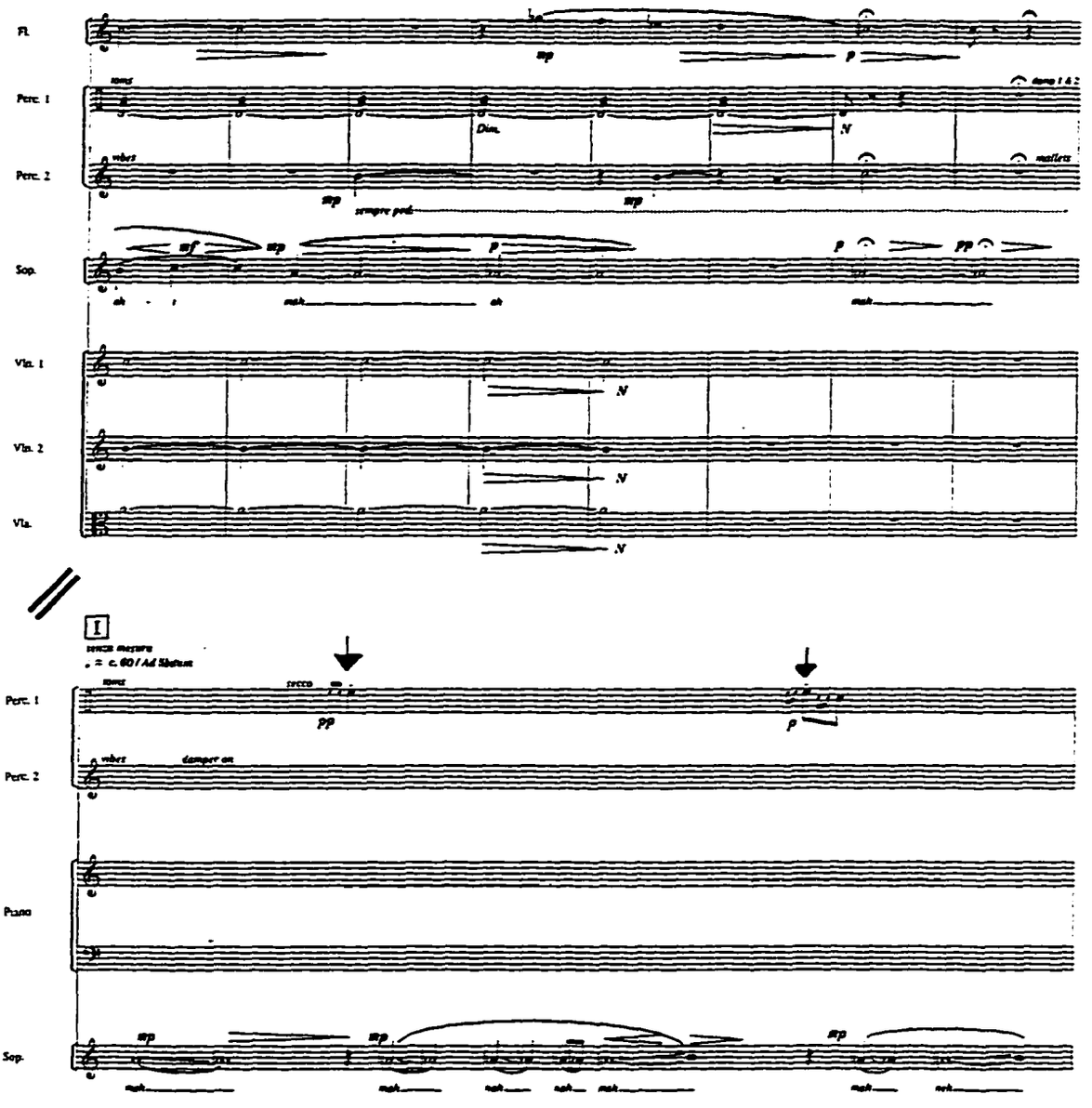

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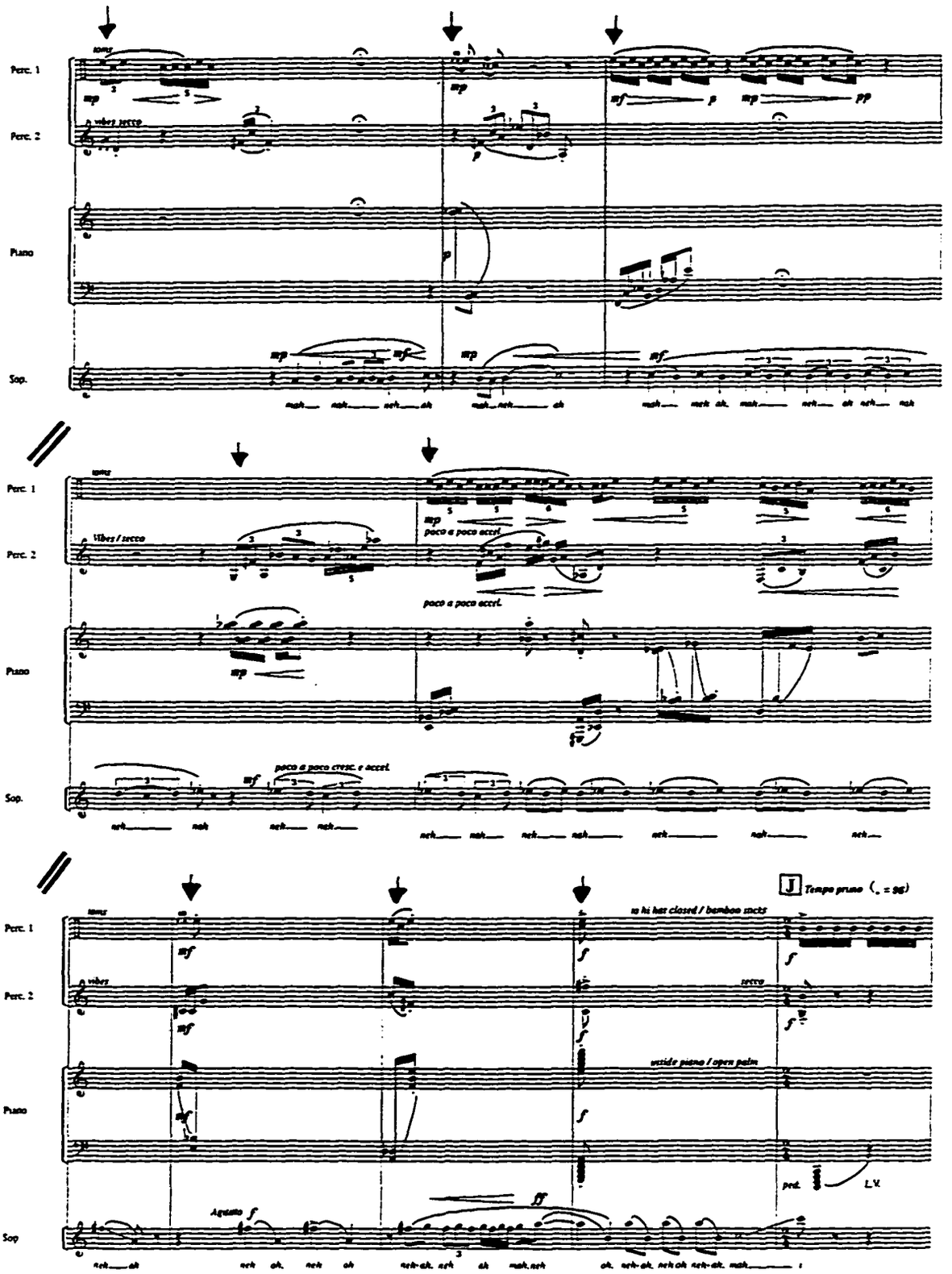

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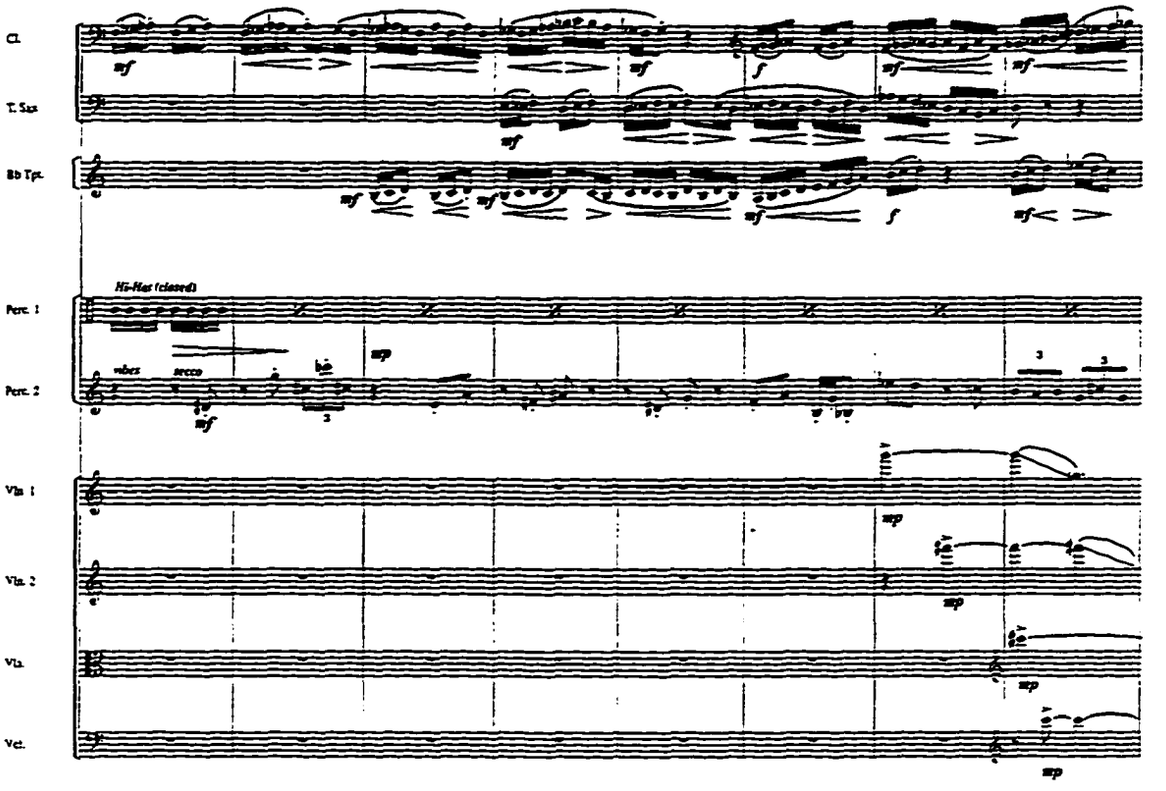

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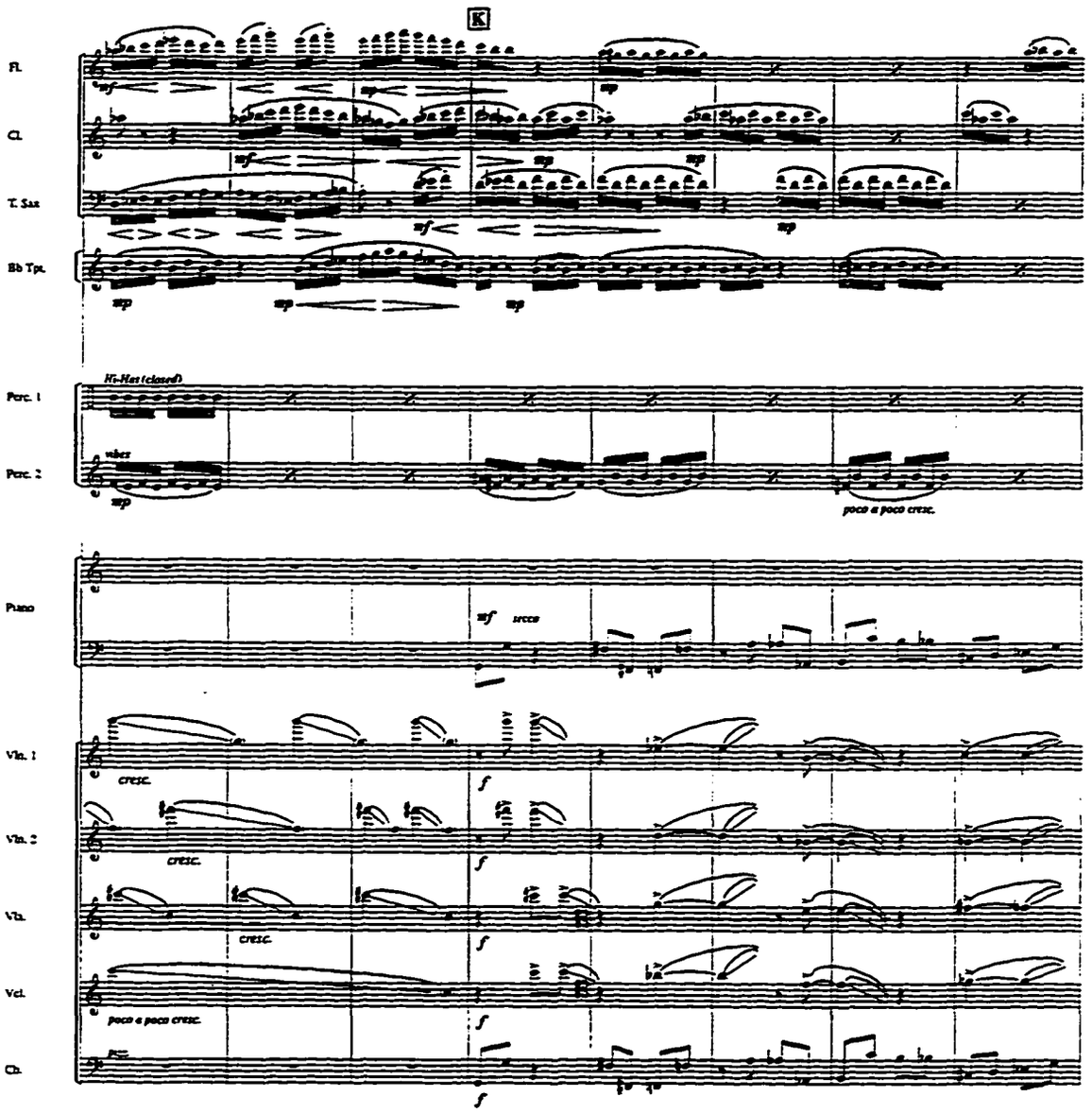

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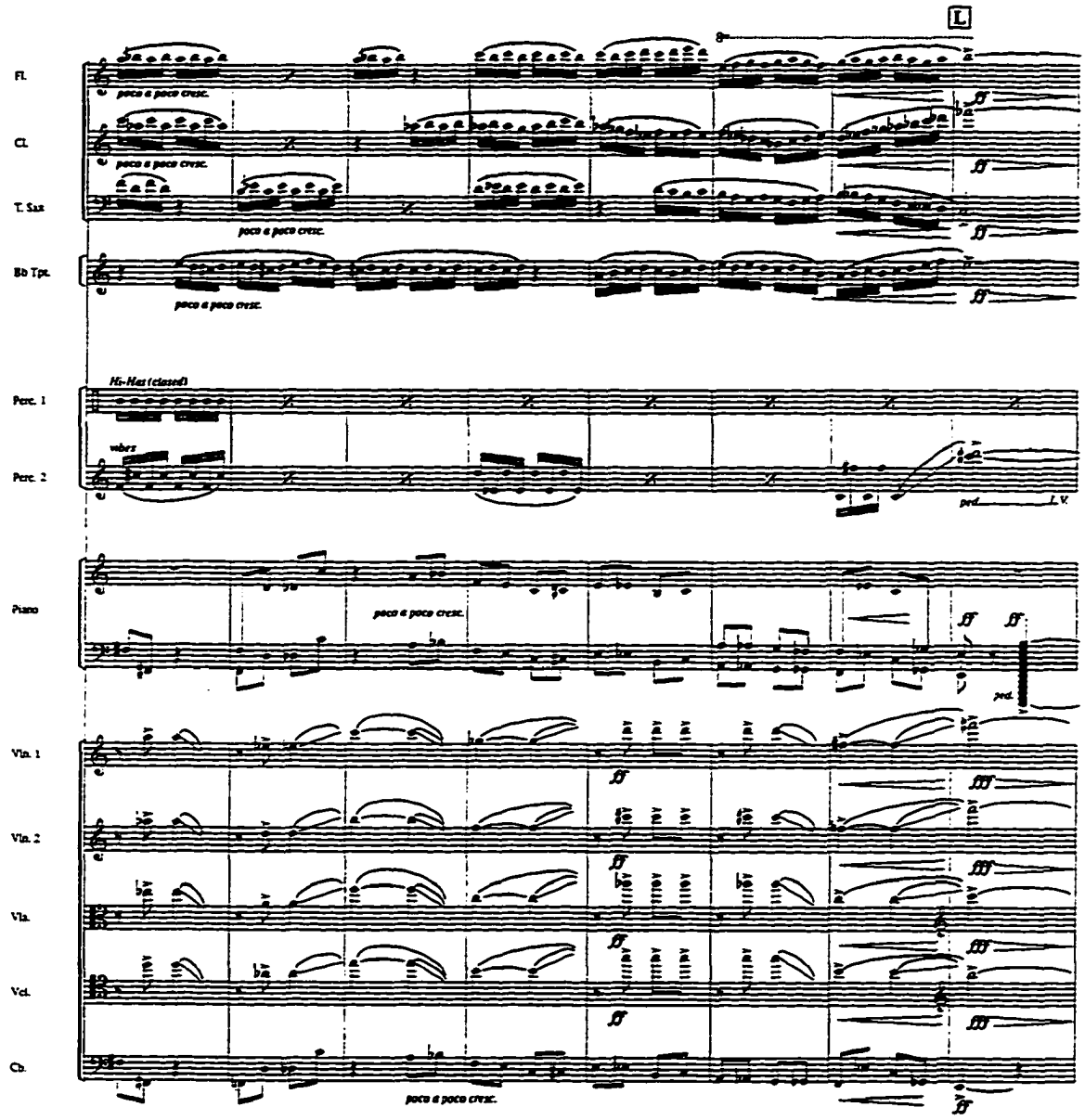

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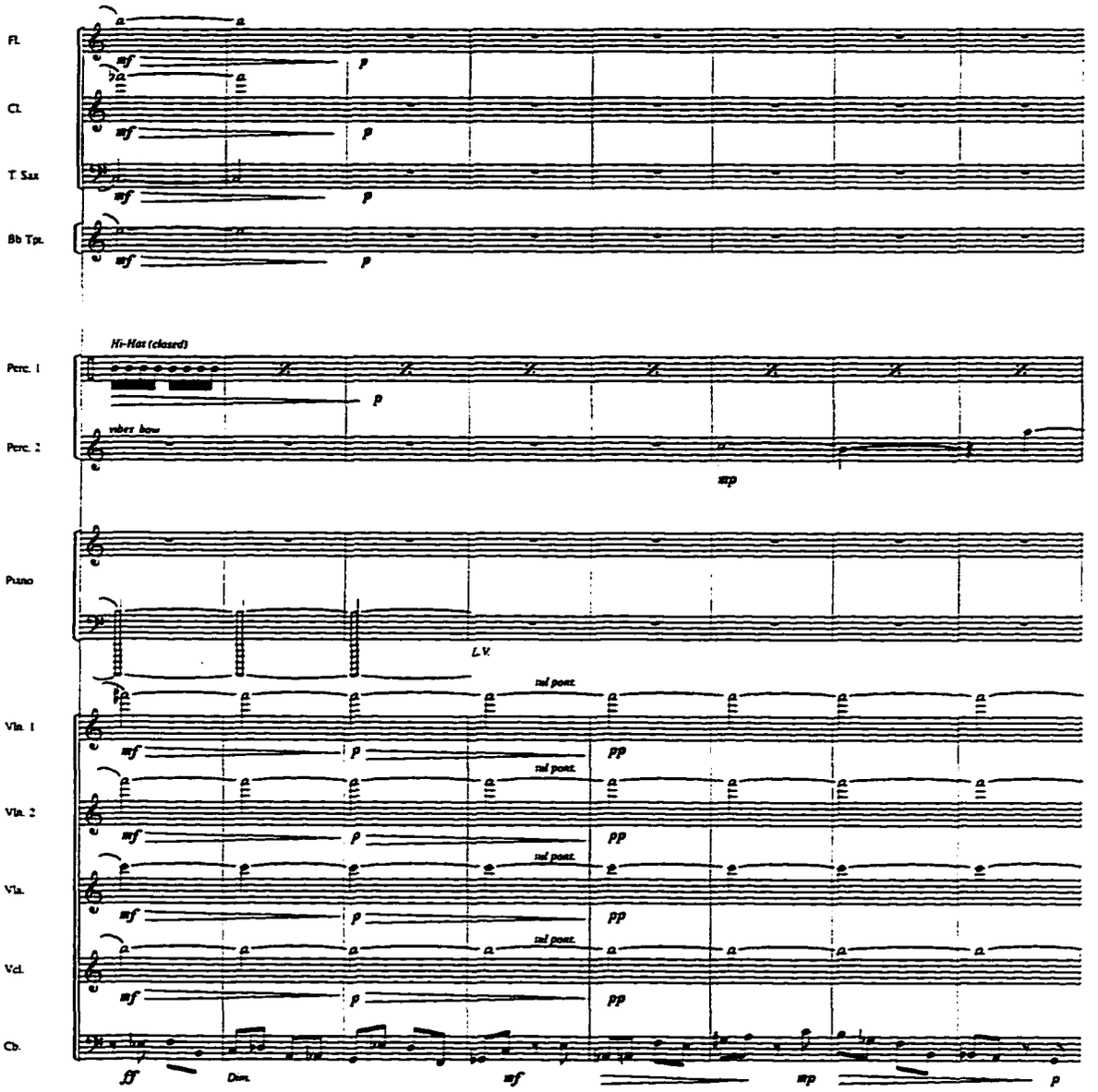

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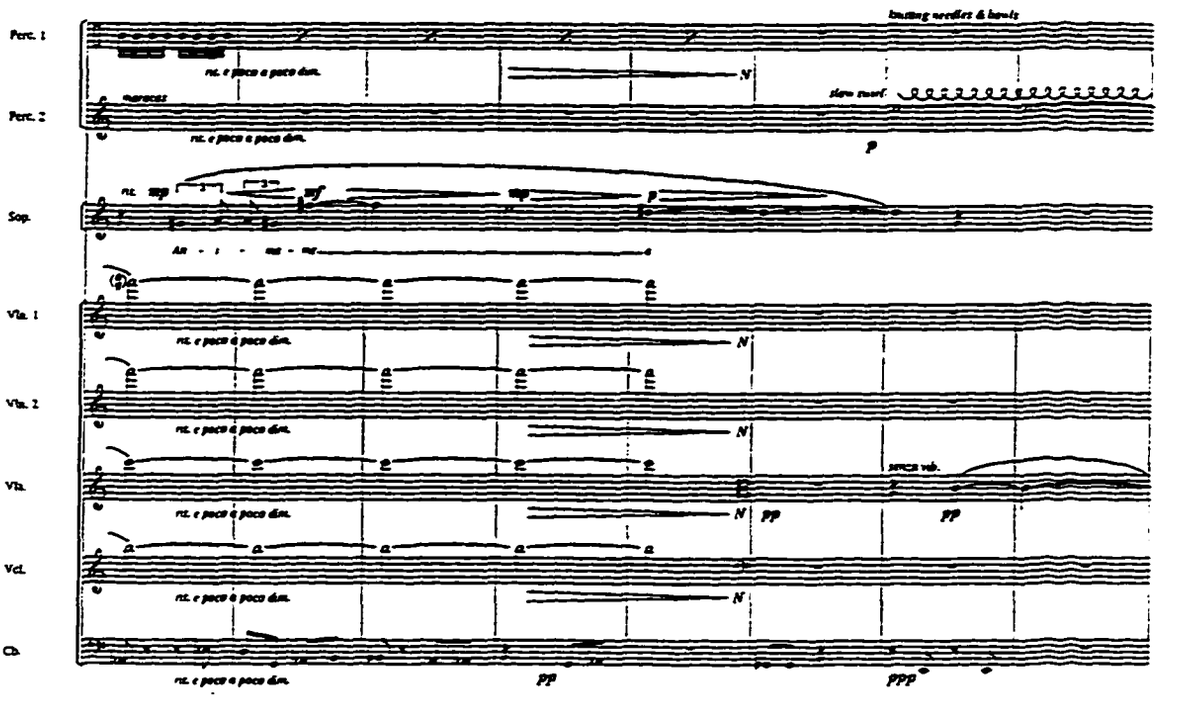

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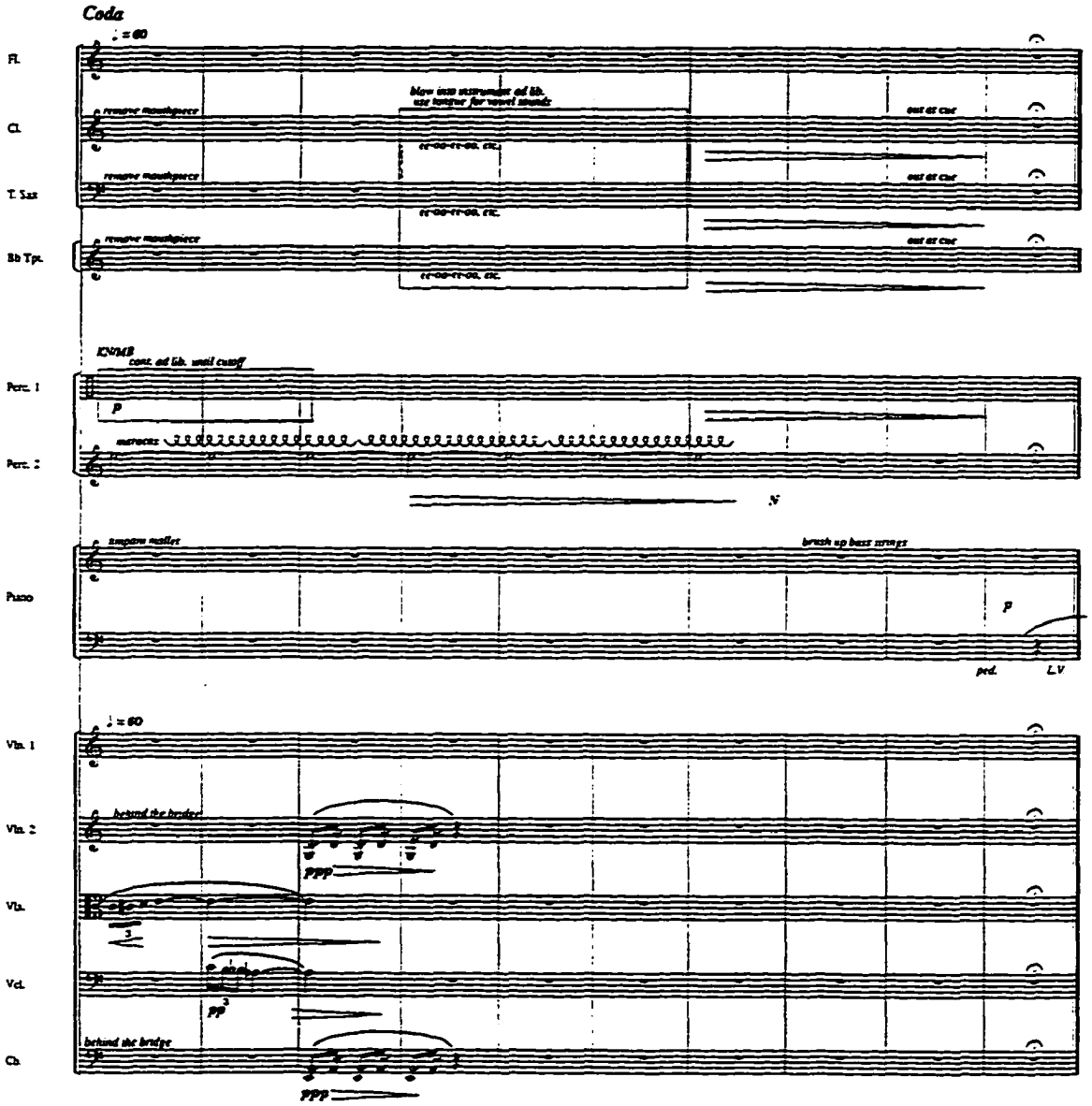

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