J. N. Redelinghuys

'It isn't a noise...'

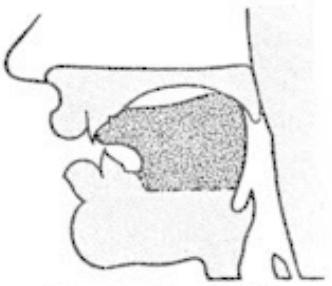


Fig. 42. Dental Click.

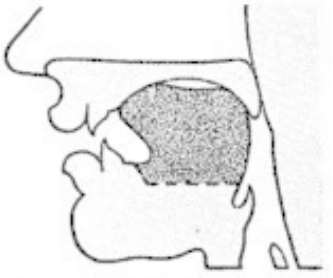


Fig. 43. Palato-alveolar Click.

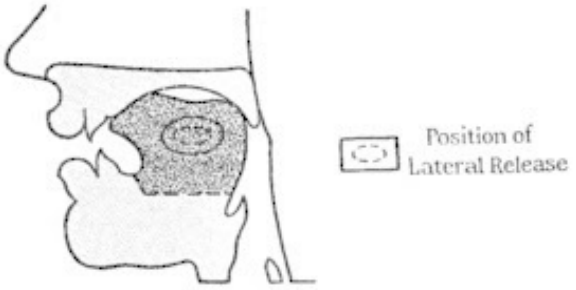


Fig. 44. Lateral Click.

for 9 performers

Everywhere we go, people often ask me, 'How do you make that noise?' It used to offend me because it isn't a noise, it's my language. They didn't understand that Xhosa is my langue, and it's a written language. We use the same Roman alphabet in writing. The only difference is we pronounce certain letters differently, such as the letter Q ... the letter X ... the letter C ...'

- Miriam Makeba (1932-2008)

Despite my embarrassingly limited knowledge of the Bantu languages, click consonants (which are unique to Africa) fascinate me. However, European audiences are seldom exposed to them (or the languages to which they belong), and they have historically been wrongly viewed as primitive: representative of unsophisticated languages. This piece is an attempt to celebrate the click consonants of the Nguni languages, particularly Xhosa and Zulu, both as pure sound, and in the context of their respective languages.

I. Ncinci - *Small* (Xhosa)
for 3 performers (c. 7 minutes + 1 minute improv. *ad lib.*)

II. Xaxa - *Greater* (Zulu)
for 6 performers (c. 6 minutes)

III. Qongqothwane - *A Wedding Song* (Xhosa)
for 9 performers (c. 6 minutes + 2 minutes improv. *ad lib.*)

Performance Notes

It is important to understand that the focus of this piece is the click consonants (and the words and syllables which employ them) - the body percussion exists to mirror and enhance them. It is therefore vital that they be spoken correctly. They can be initially difficult for non-native speakers, or people who do not have a ear for them. The easiest way to learn them is to first learn each phone by itself, before combining them. For this, YouTube has a number of excellent resources. A playlist of these resources is available at goo.gl/LQe1tx.

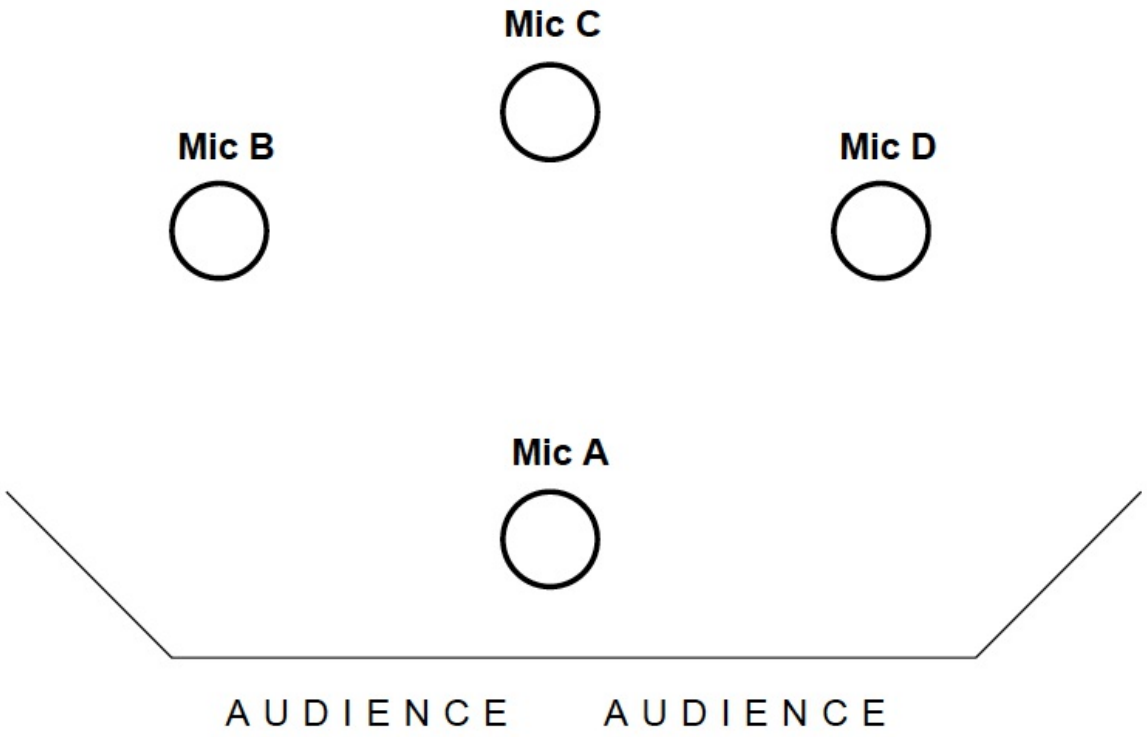
I would also encourage the performers to note the references to the song Qongqothwane (also known as the 'Click Song', made famous by Miriam Makeba), and to gumboot dancing (a style of dance originally created by gold miners). I would strongly encourage performers to watch and listen to examples of these.

The piece is constructed in phrase units, rather than bars. I have chosen to omit rests wherever possible to encourage freedom in the performance, particularly in the freer, sustained sections: here attacks and releases can be regarded as somewhat approximate. More rhythmic passages necessitate more exact rhythms, co-ordinated or not as indicated. The durations above double barlines indicate the length of pause in-between the phrases. The length of these double barlines can be read as approximate (e.g. short/medium/long).

There is no restriction on the sex of the performers, however there should be a gradation from high to low voice (performer 1 being the higher, performer 9 the lowest). Sung passages should be performed very plainly, without vibrato.

Staging

The performance moves between 4 points on ideally a wooden stage. Each point should have microphones and music stands enough to accommodate 3 performers. Microphones *b*, *c* and *d* need to be switched on and off during performance. Performers 1, 2, 3 begin standing a *Mic a*. Performers 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 begin sitting offstage. Movement around the stage should be fluid and quiet. When at the same microphone, performers with a lower number stand on stage right.



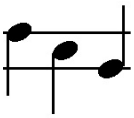
Performers should all wear casual black (perhaps with a little colour), or clothing made of Shweshwe. They should all be either barefoot, or wear gumboots (the latter can be helpful for 'thigh slaps' and 'foot stamps', especially on less resonant stages, but performers should be careful that no unwanted sounds are produced when walking).

Alternate versions:

The piece is designed to be performed in its entirety. However, the following selections may be performed: movement 1 alone, movement 3 alone, movements 1 & 3, or movements 2 & 3.

All Parts

spoken

 sung high/medium/low

Parts 1, 2, 3

rub 2 fingers on ball of thumb

hit 2 fingers on ball of thumb

click fingers

Dynamics range from ***ppp*** to ***p***. This is relative to other parts; therefore body percussion at ***p*** should be as loud as possible.

Parts 4, 5, 6

calf slap; R is accented, L is unaccented

calf slap, rapid R/L tremolo

Dynamics range from ***p*** to ***mf***.

Parts 7, 8, 9

sung; absolute pitch does not matter, but the pitch relations should be observed

foot stamp; R is accented L is unaccented

clap

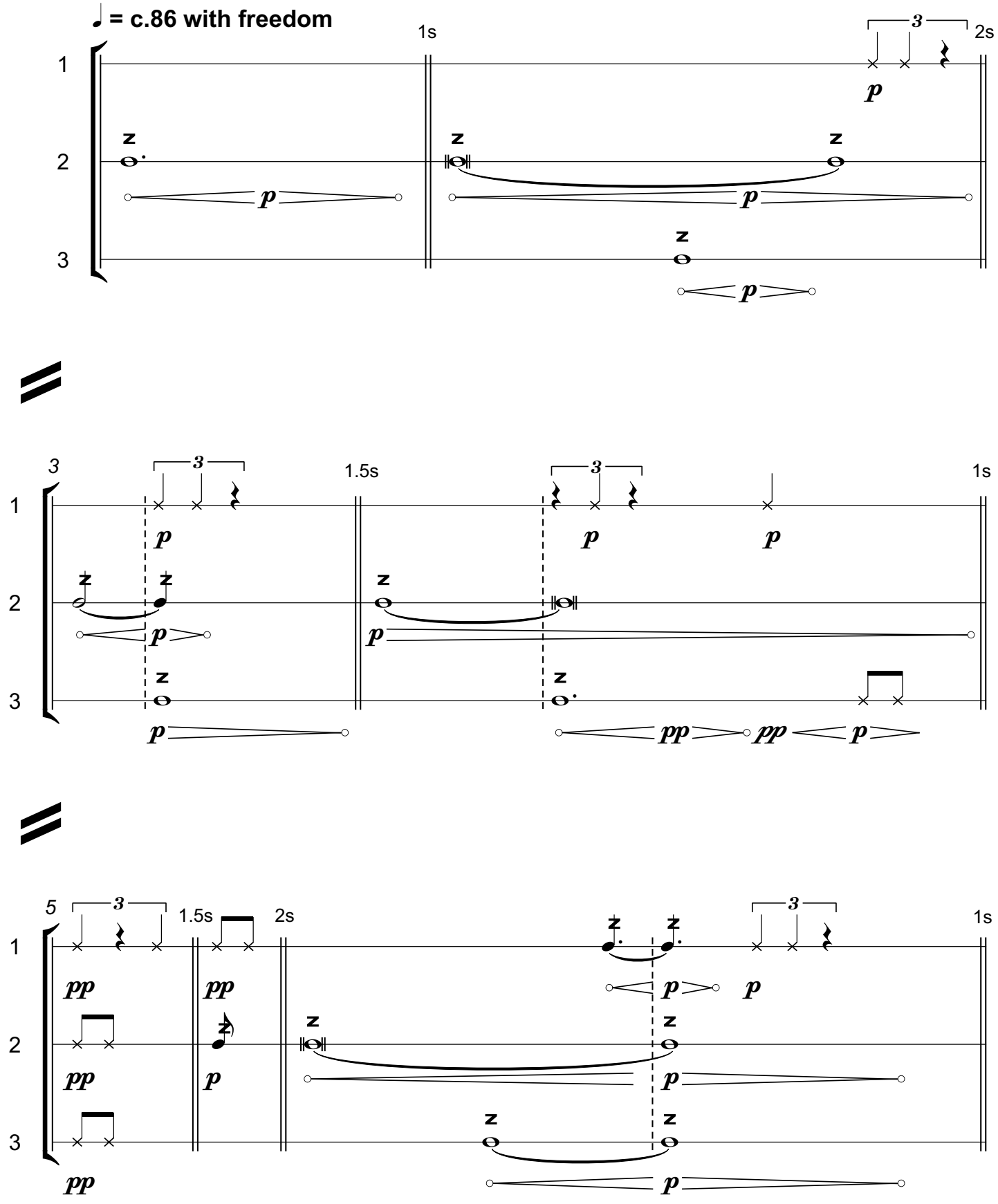
Dynamics range from ***mp*** to ***ff***.

'It isn't a noise...'

I. Ncinci - *Small* (Xhosa)

J. N. Redelinghuys

Mic a on
Mics b, c, d off



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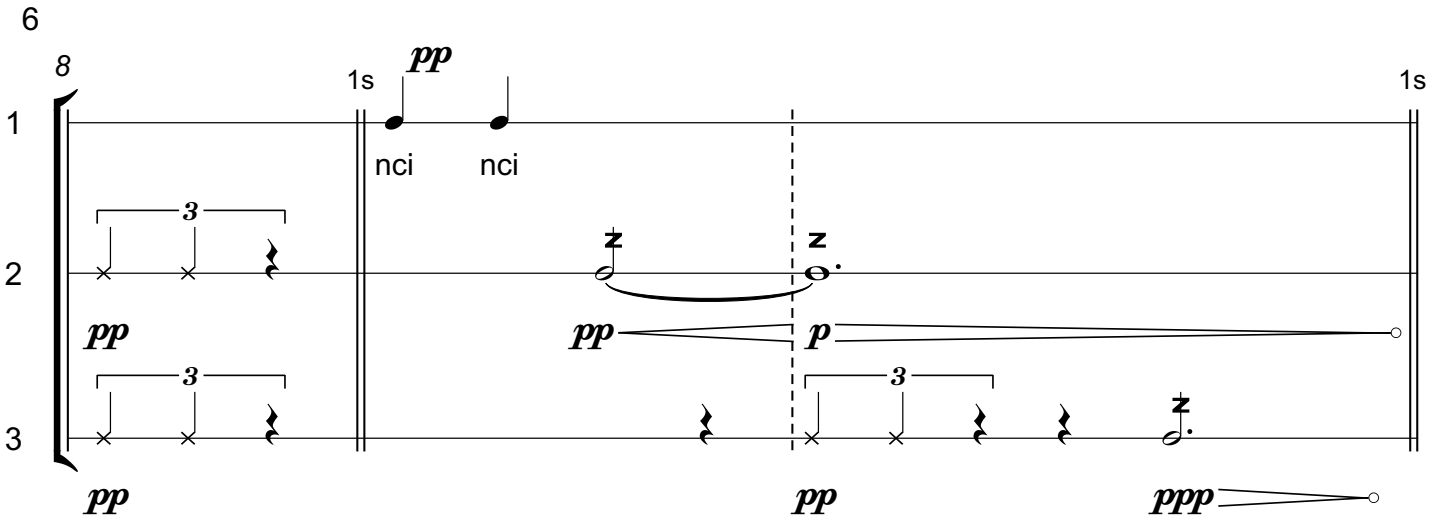
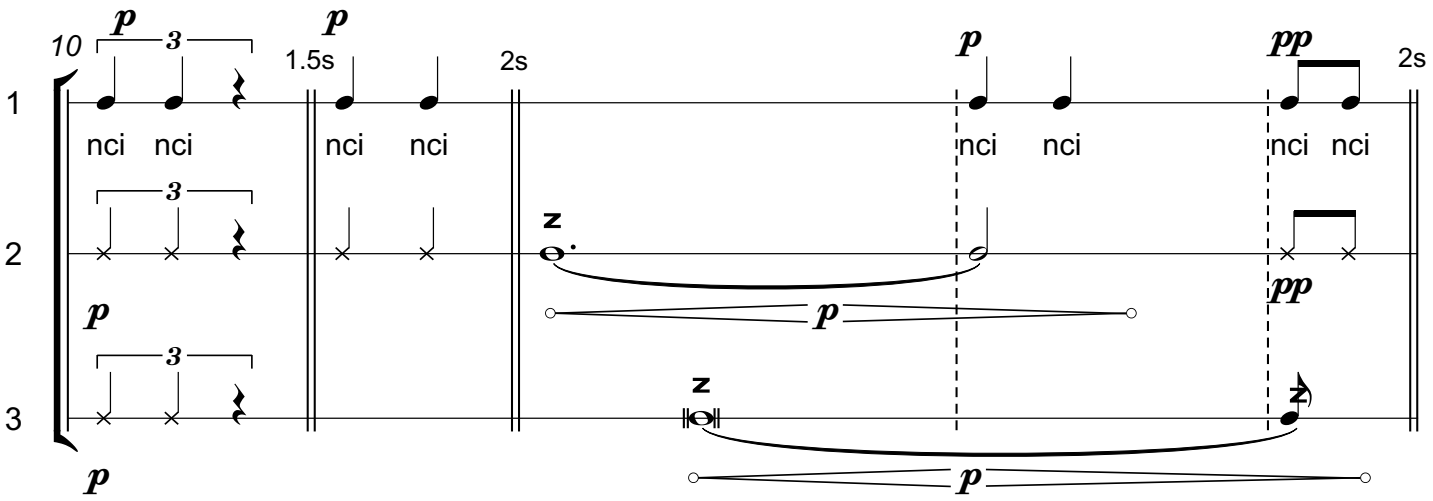
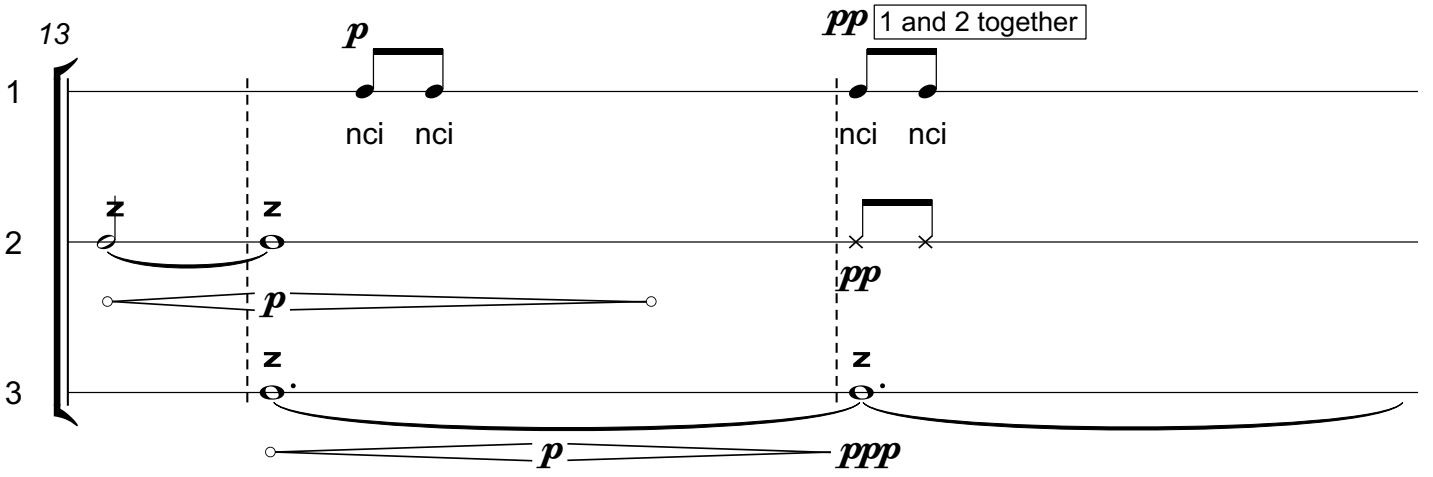
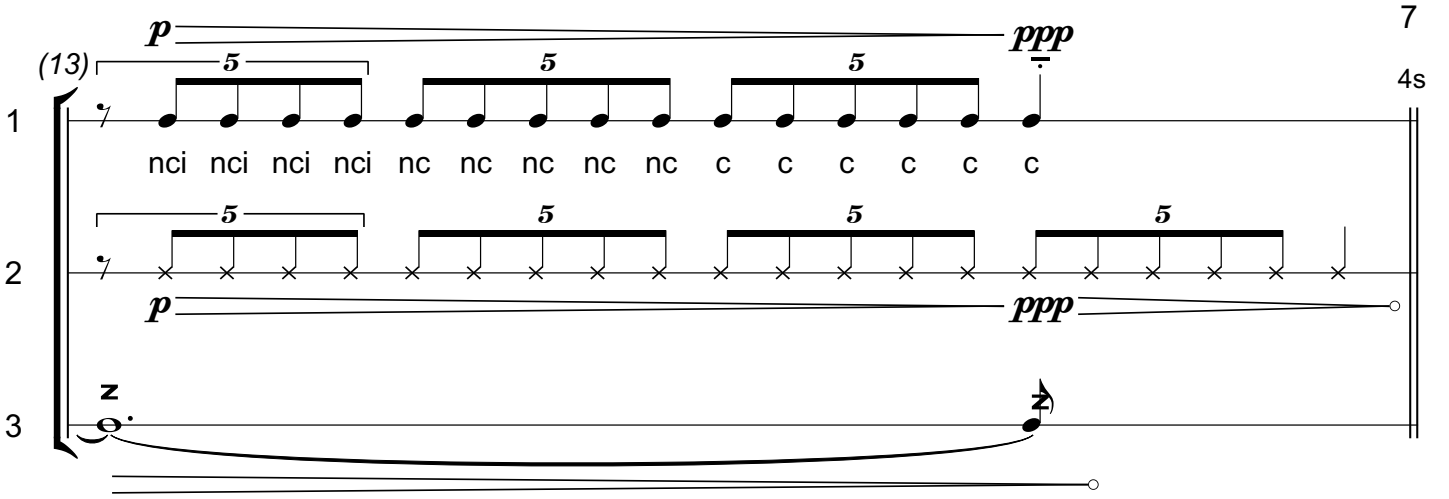
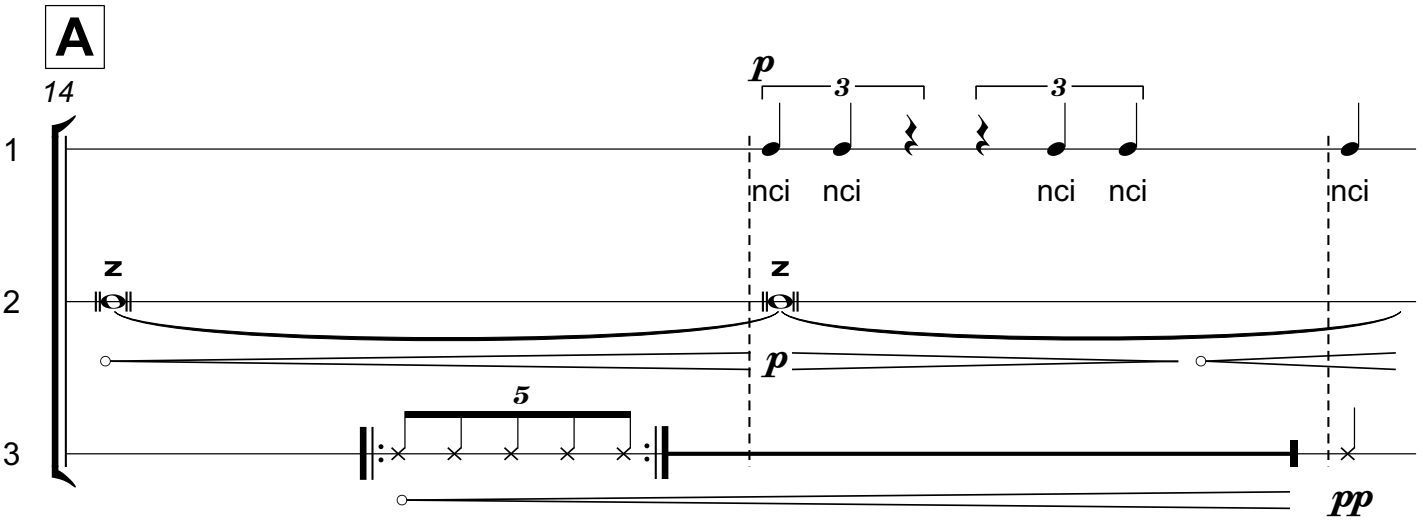
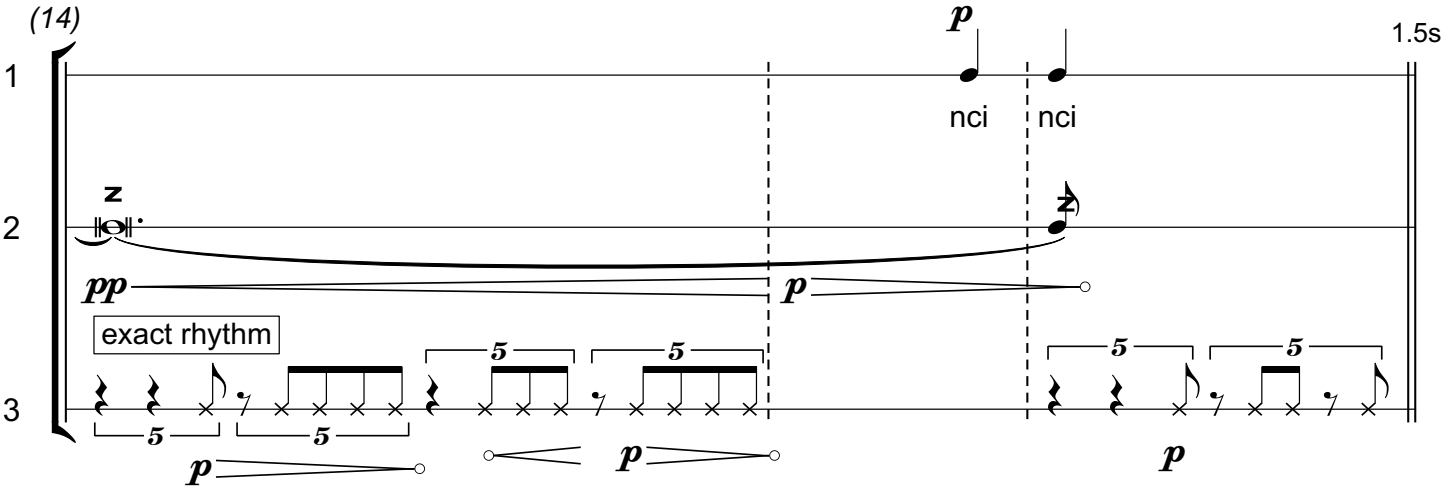

8
1s
1s
nci
nci
1
2
3

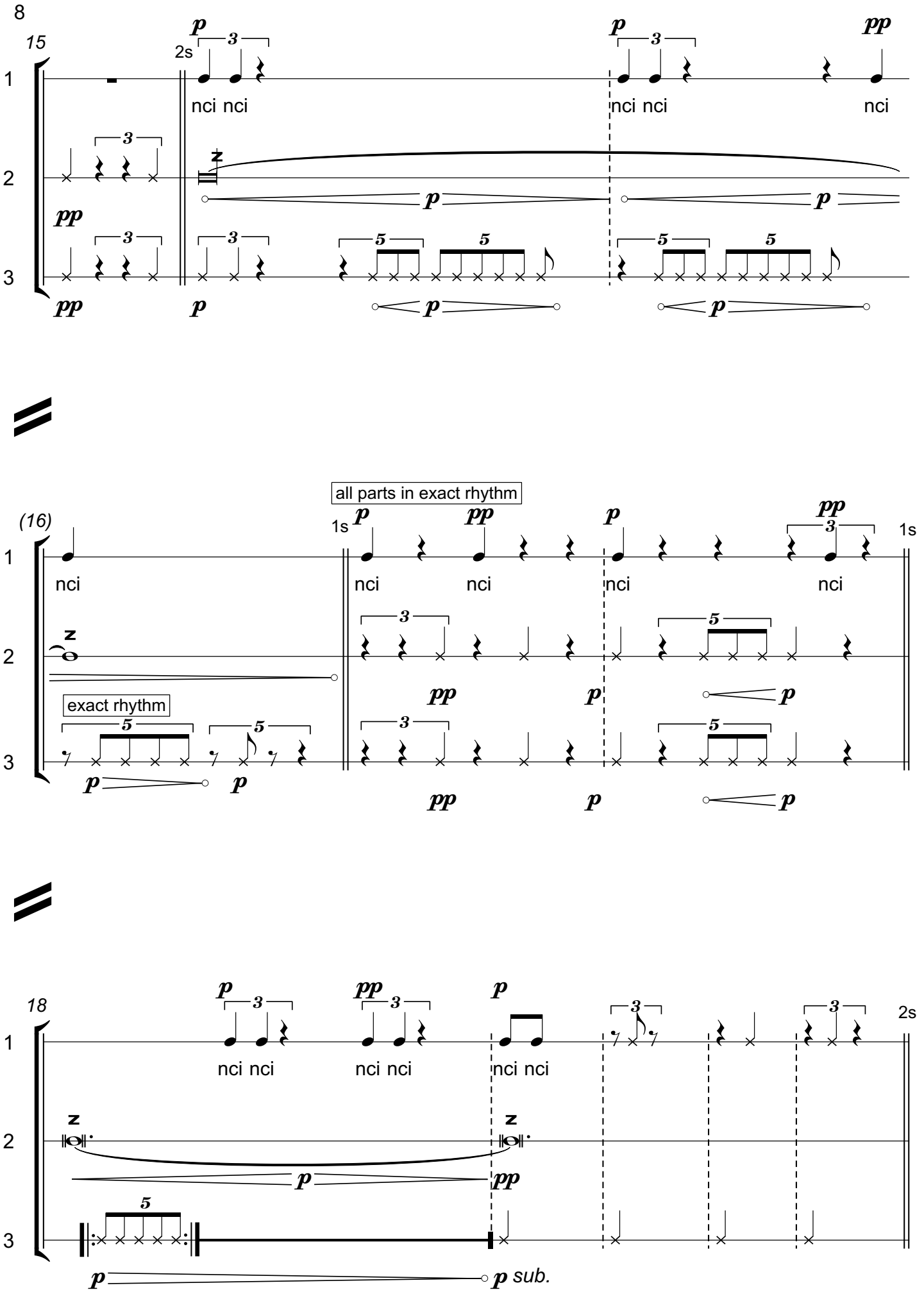

10
1.5s
2s
2s
nci
nci
nci
nci
nci
nci
nci
nci
1
2
3

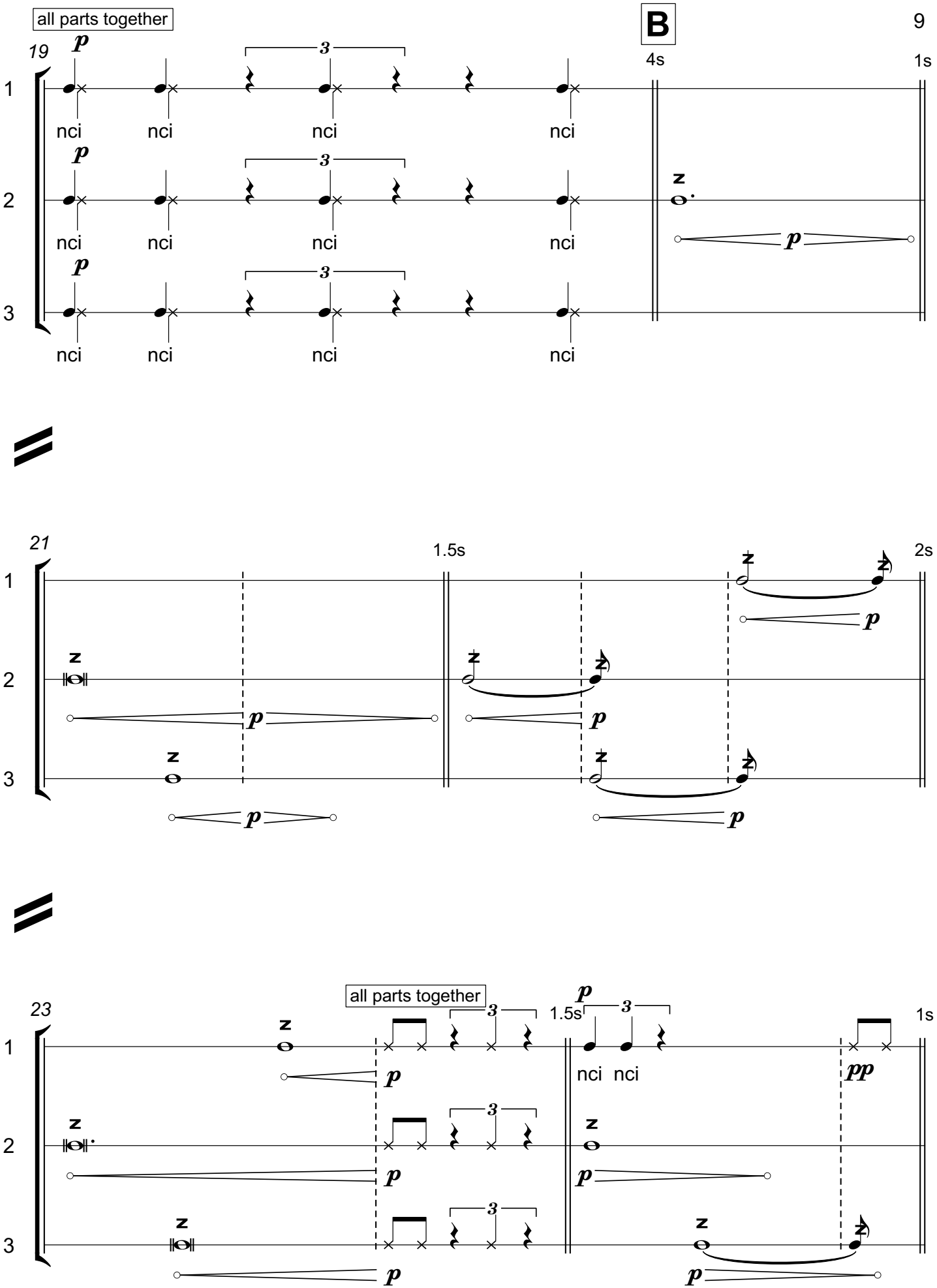

13
1 and 2 together
nci
nci
nci
nci
1
2
3

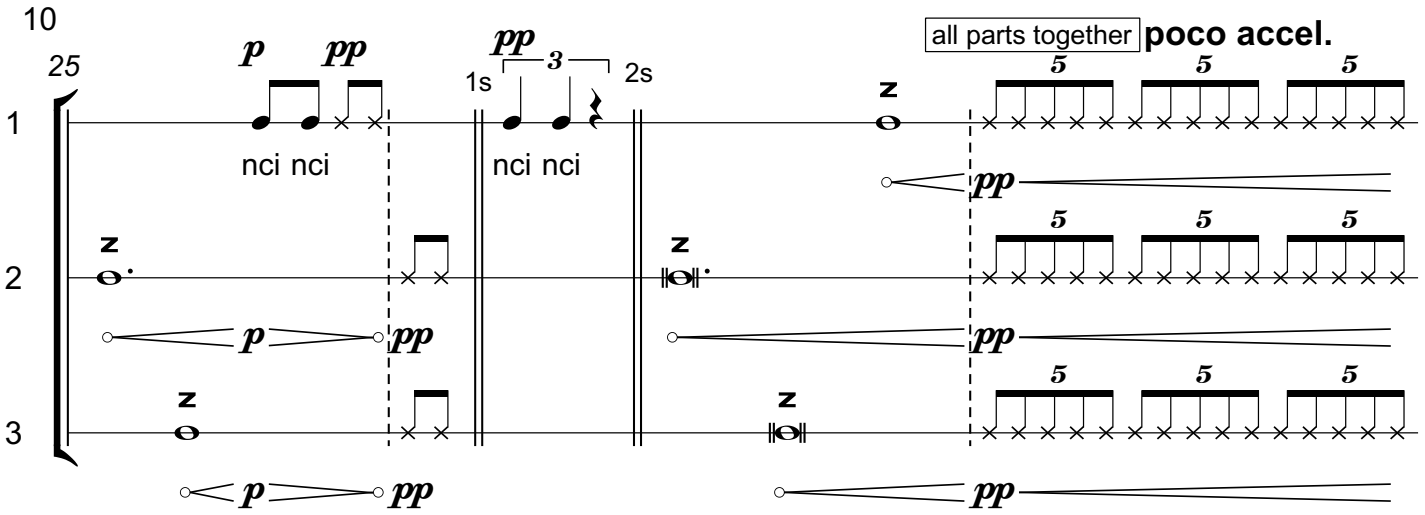

(13)
4s
1
2
3
nci nci nci nci nc nc nc nc nc c c c c c c

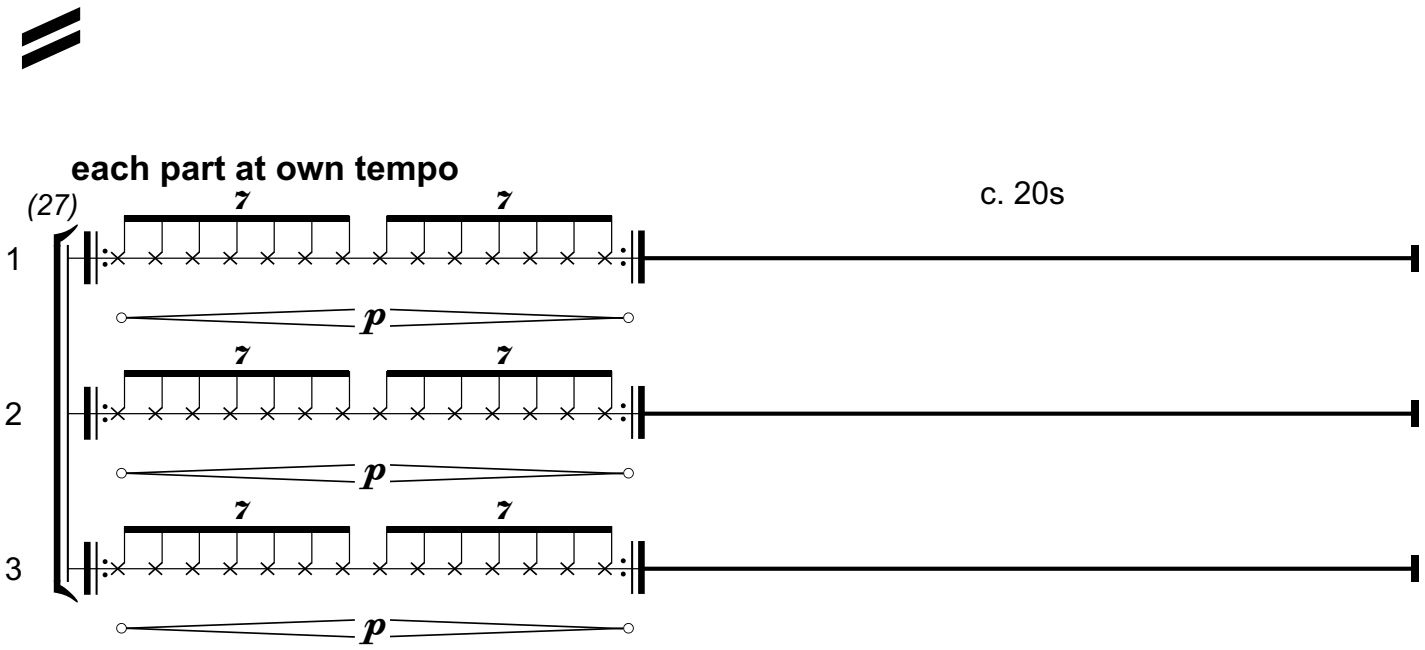

A
14
1
2
3
nci nci nci nci nci

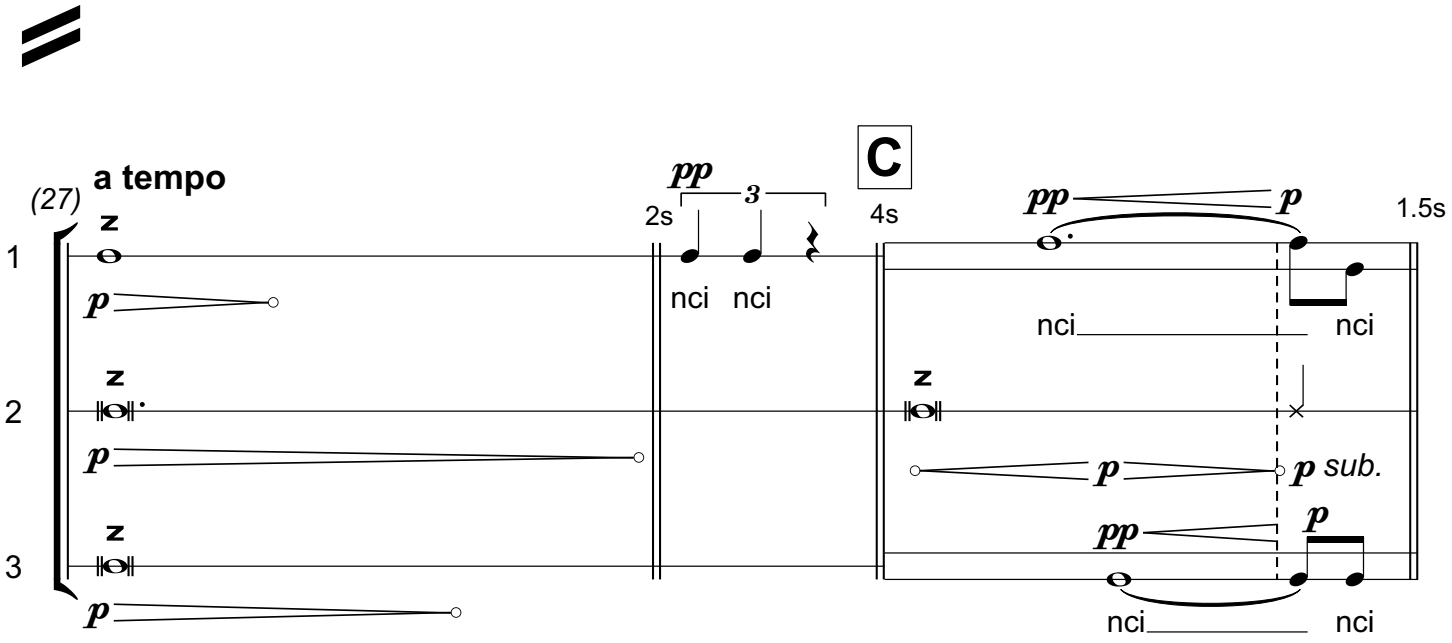

(14)
1.5s
1
2
3
nci nci
exact rhythm

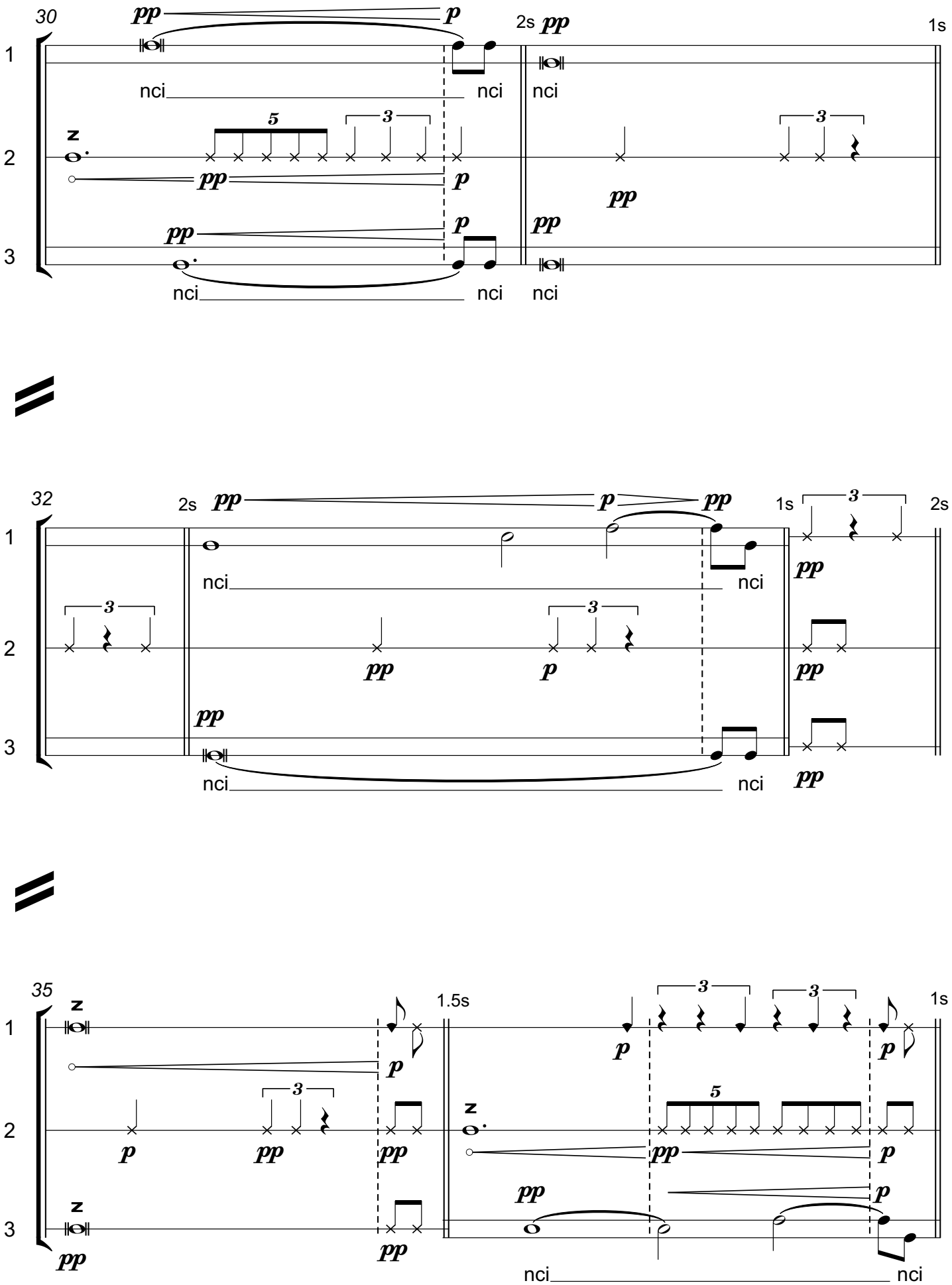

8
15
2s
1
2
3
nci nci
nci nci
nci
(16)
all parts in exact rhythm
1s
1s
exact rhythm
18
2s
nci nci
nci nci
nci nci
sub.

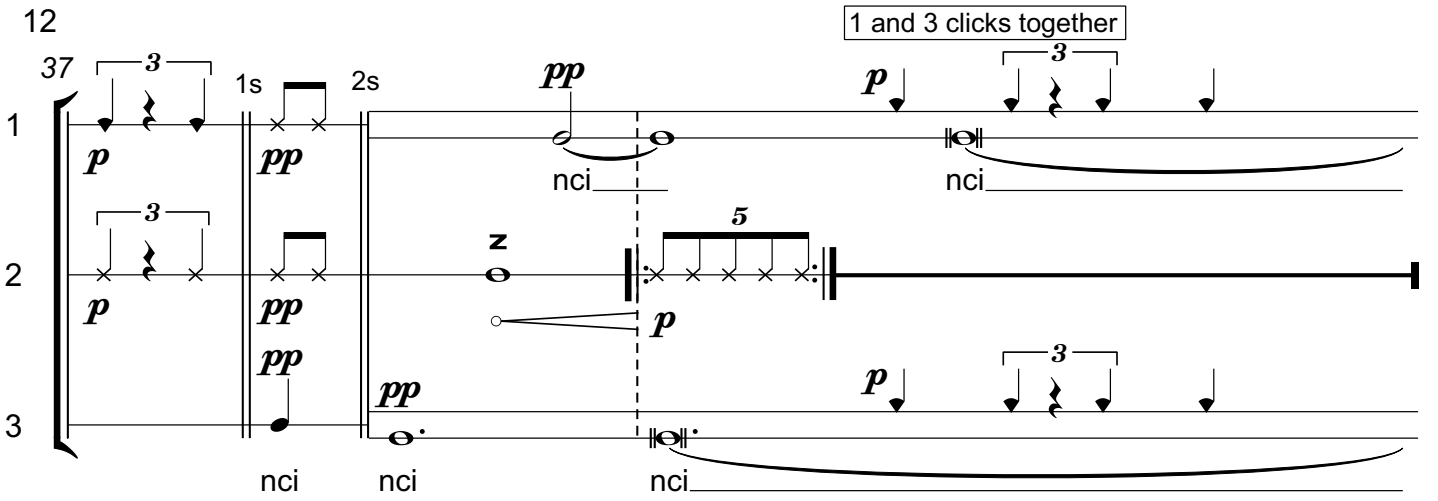

all parts together
19
B
4s
1s
1
2
3
nci
21
1.5s
2s
23
all parts together
1.5s
1s

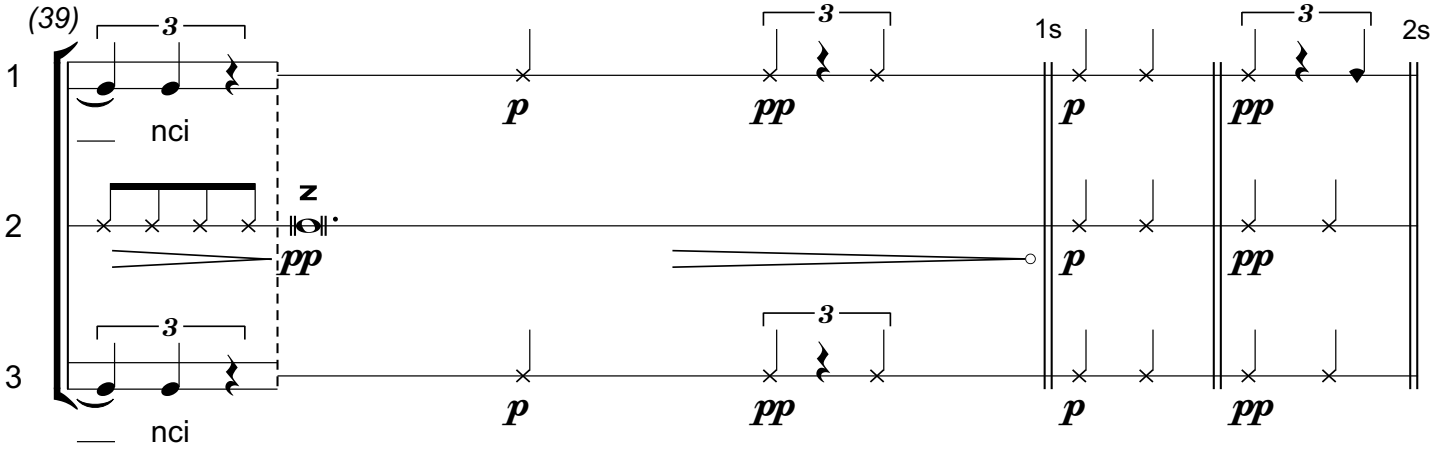

10
25
1
2
3
nci nci
1s
nci nci
2s
all parts together
poco accel.

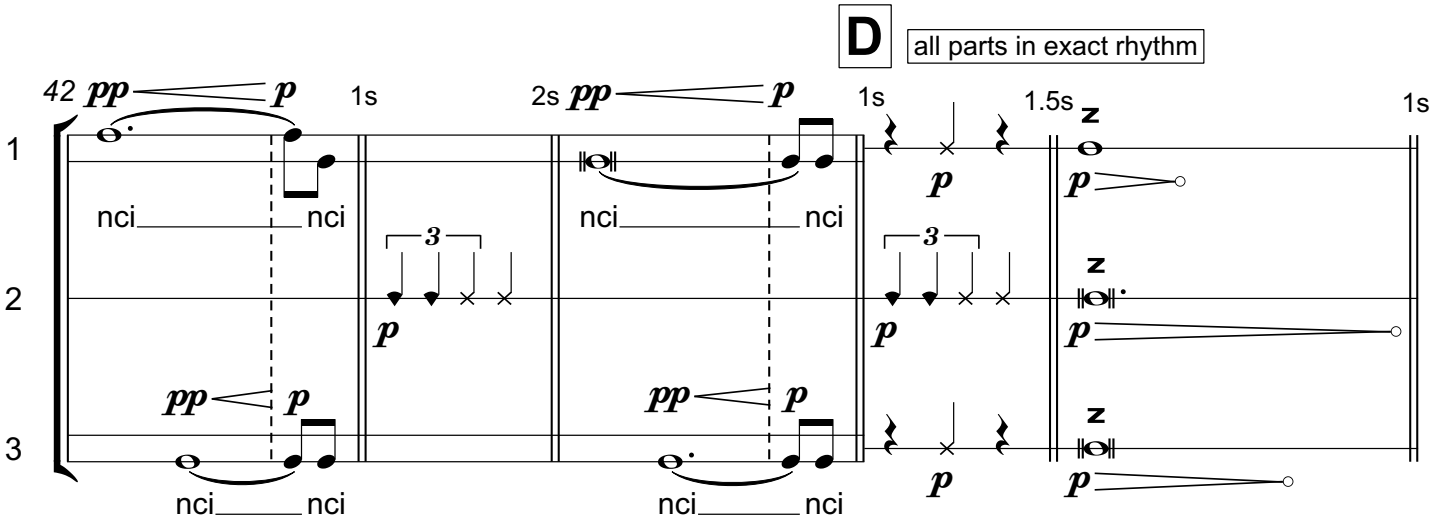

each part at own tempo
(27)
c. 20s
1
2
3

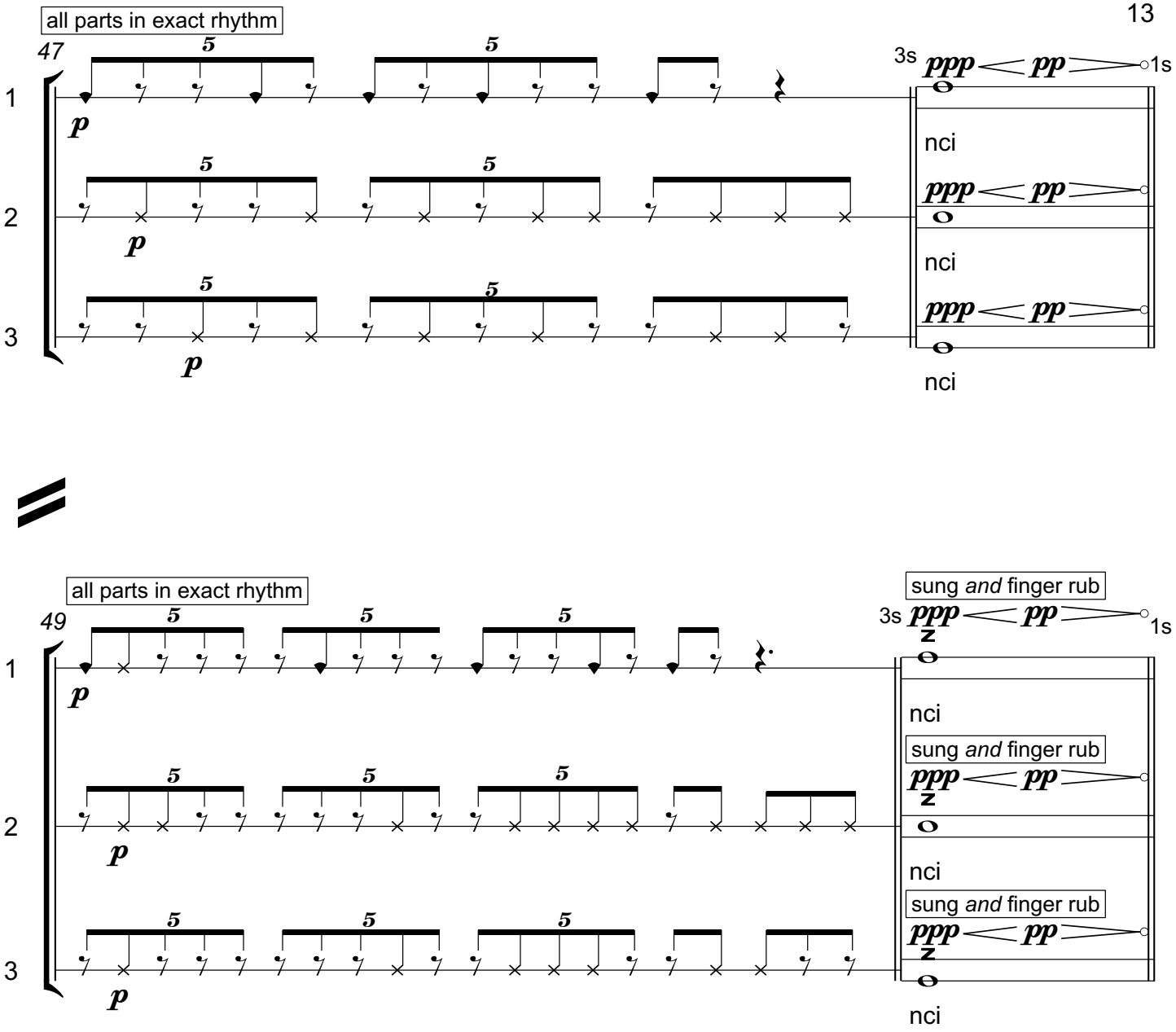

a tempo
(27)
C
2s
4s
1.5s
nci nci
nci nci
p sub.
nci nci

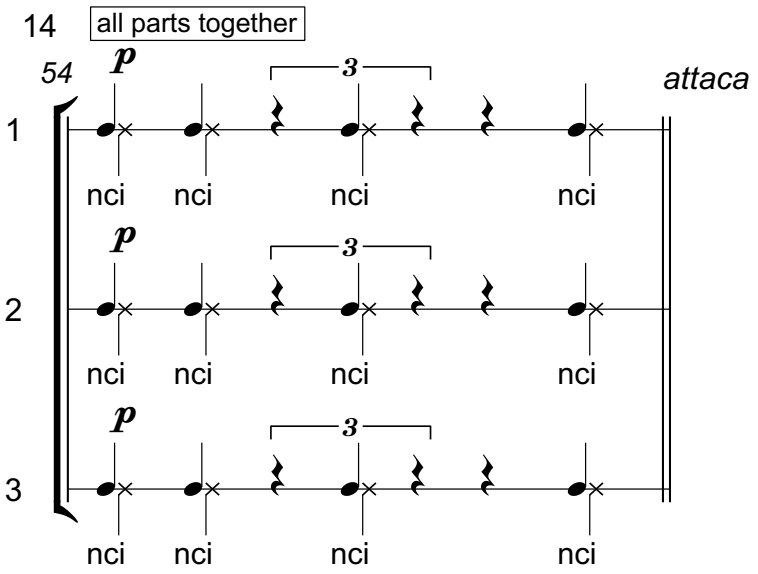

30
pp
p
2s
pp
1s
1
nci
nci
nci
5
3
3
z
2
pp
p
pp
pp
p
pp
3
nci
nci
nci
32
2s
pp
p
pp
1s
3
2s
1
nci
nci
pp
3
3
2
pp
p
pp
pp
3
nci
nci
pp
35
z
1.5s
3
3
1s
1
p
p
p
3
5
z
2
p
pp
pp
pp
p
pp
p
z
3
pp
pp
nci
nci


12
37
1 and 3 clicks together
1s
2s
nci


(39)
1s
2s
nci


D
all parts in exact rhythm
42
1s
2s
1.5s
nci


all parts in exact rhythm
47
1
2
3
3s
ppp
pp
1s
nci
nci
nci
all parts in exact rhythm
49
sung and finger rub
sung and finger rub
sung and finger rub
all parts together
51
2s
2s
2.5s

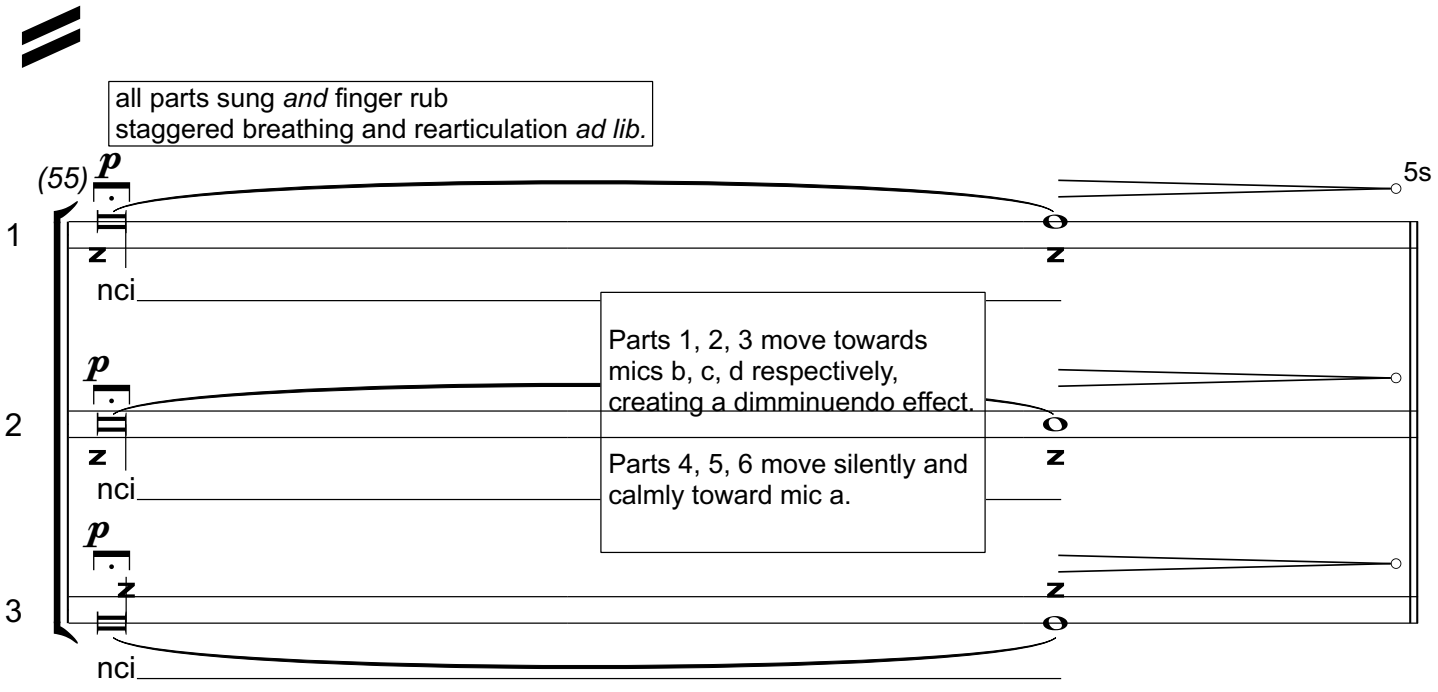


E

55

Ad lib. improvise using any of the material, techniques and sounds introduced so far.

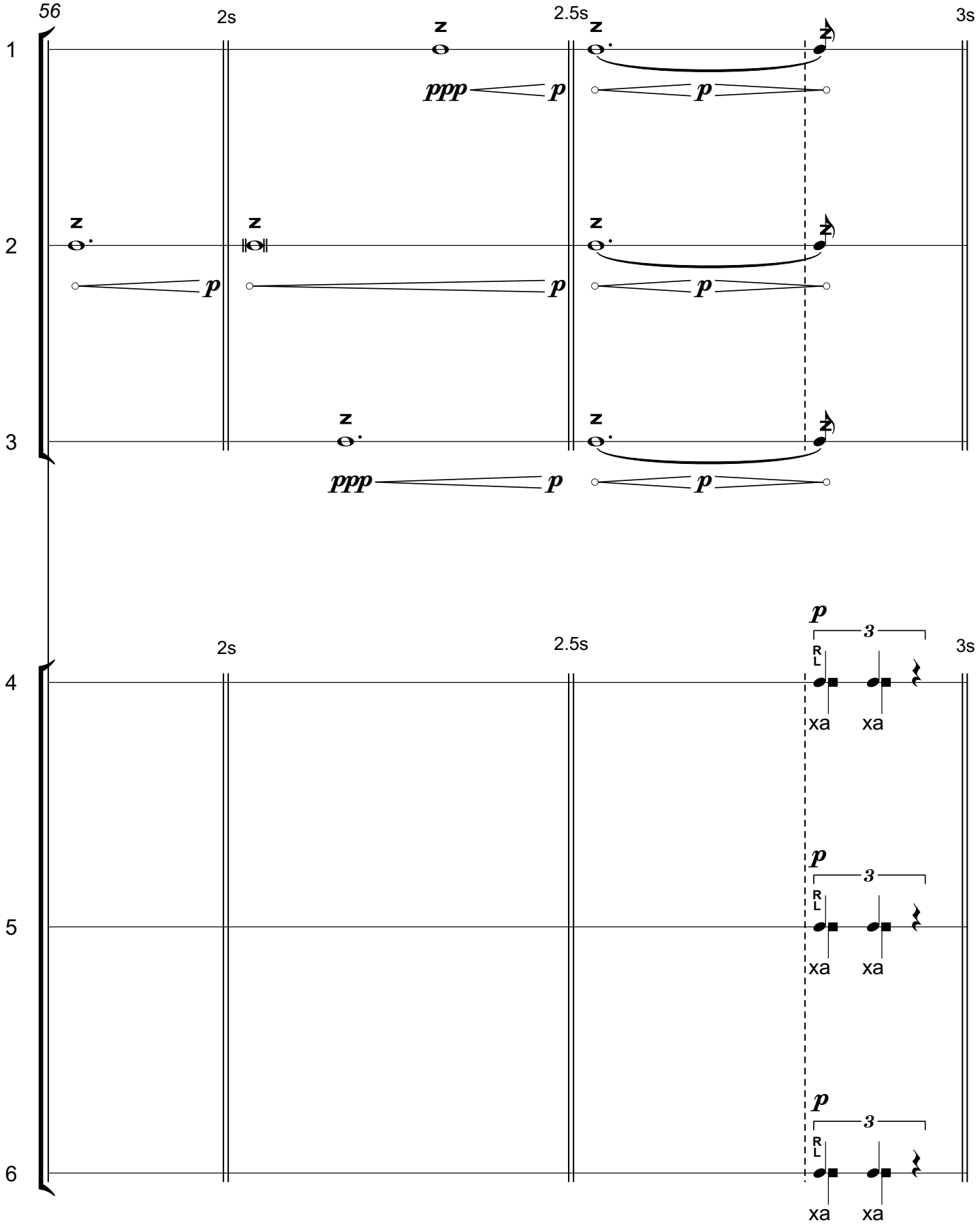
As a restriction, the improvisation should last no more than a minute, should place significant emphasis on the '*nci*' syllable, and vary between sustained sounds and faster, polyrhythmic passages

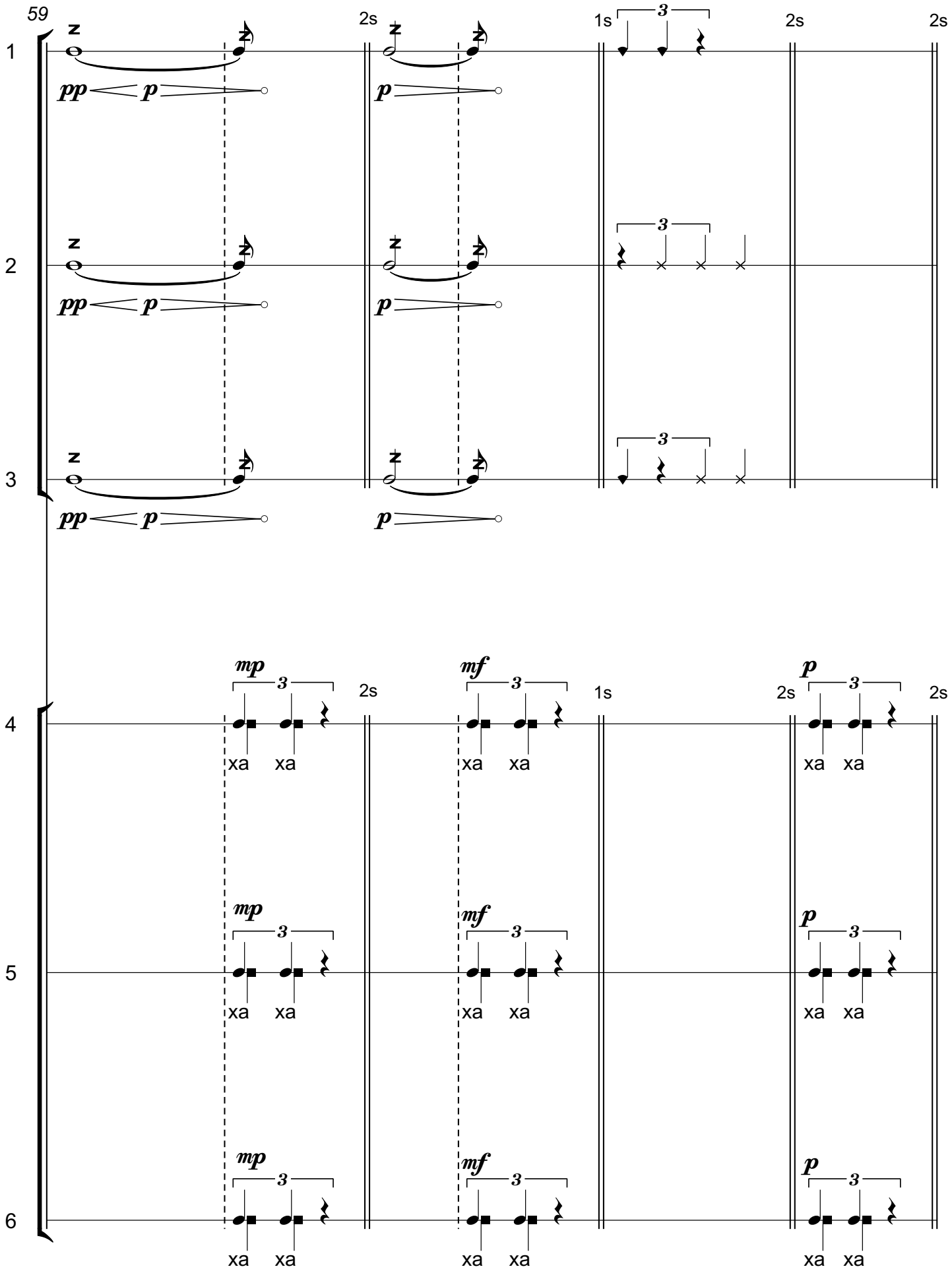


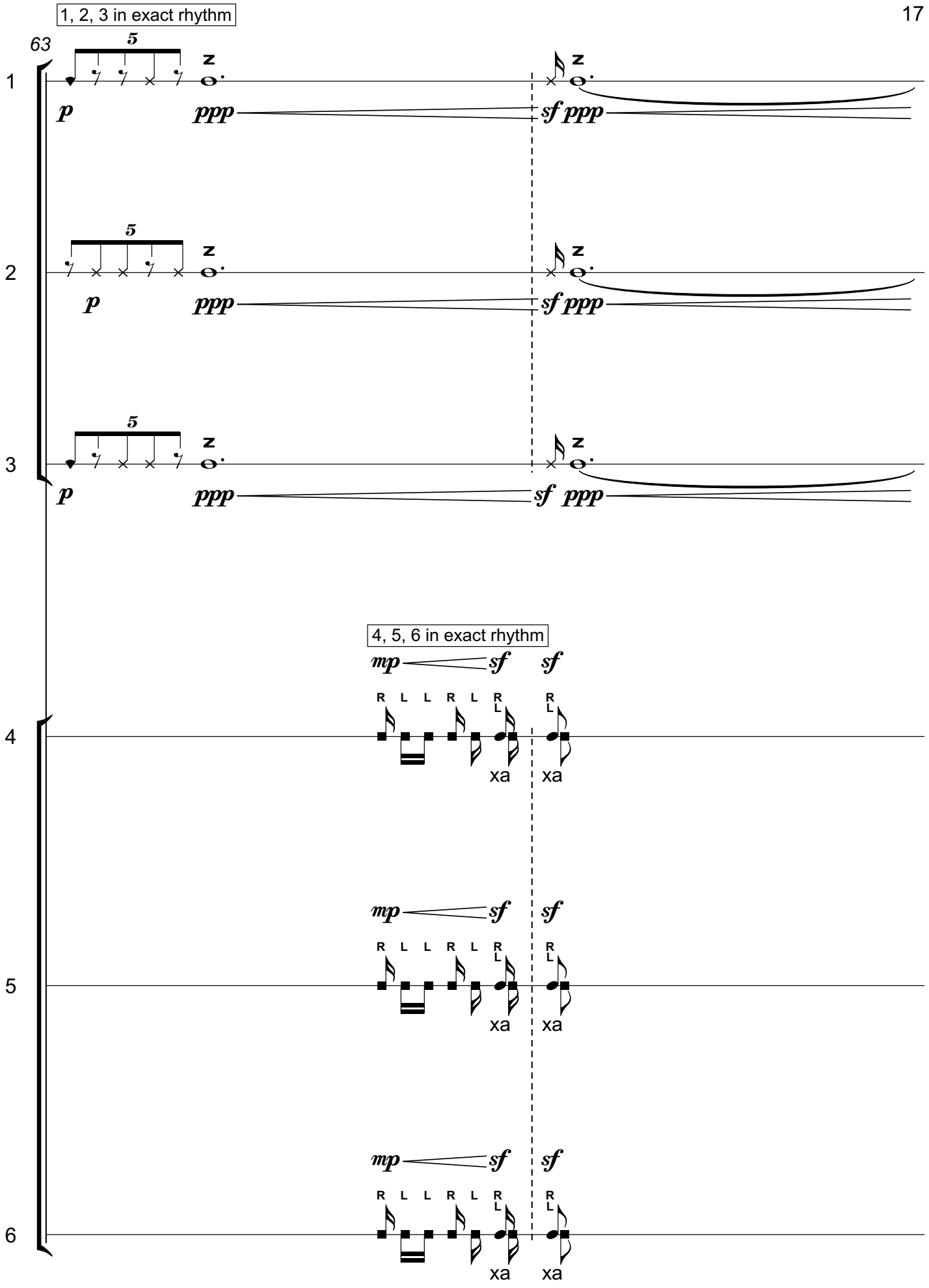
II. Xaxa - *More* (Zulu)

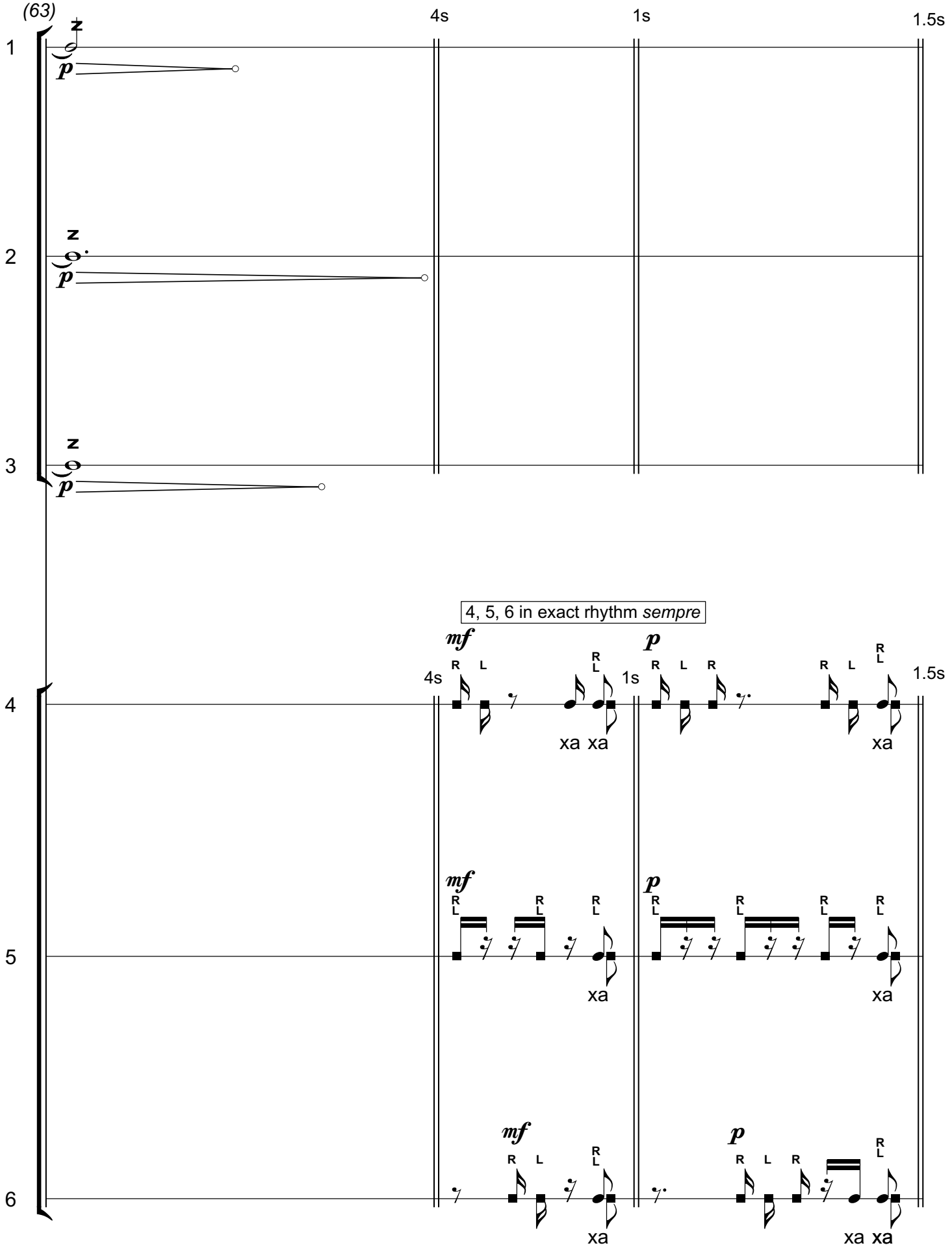
Turn mics b, c, d on

F **L'istesso tempo ♩ = c.86**

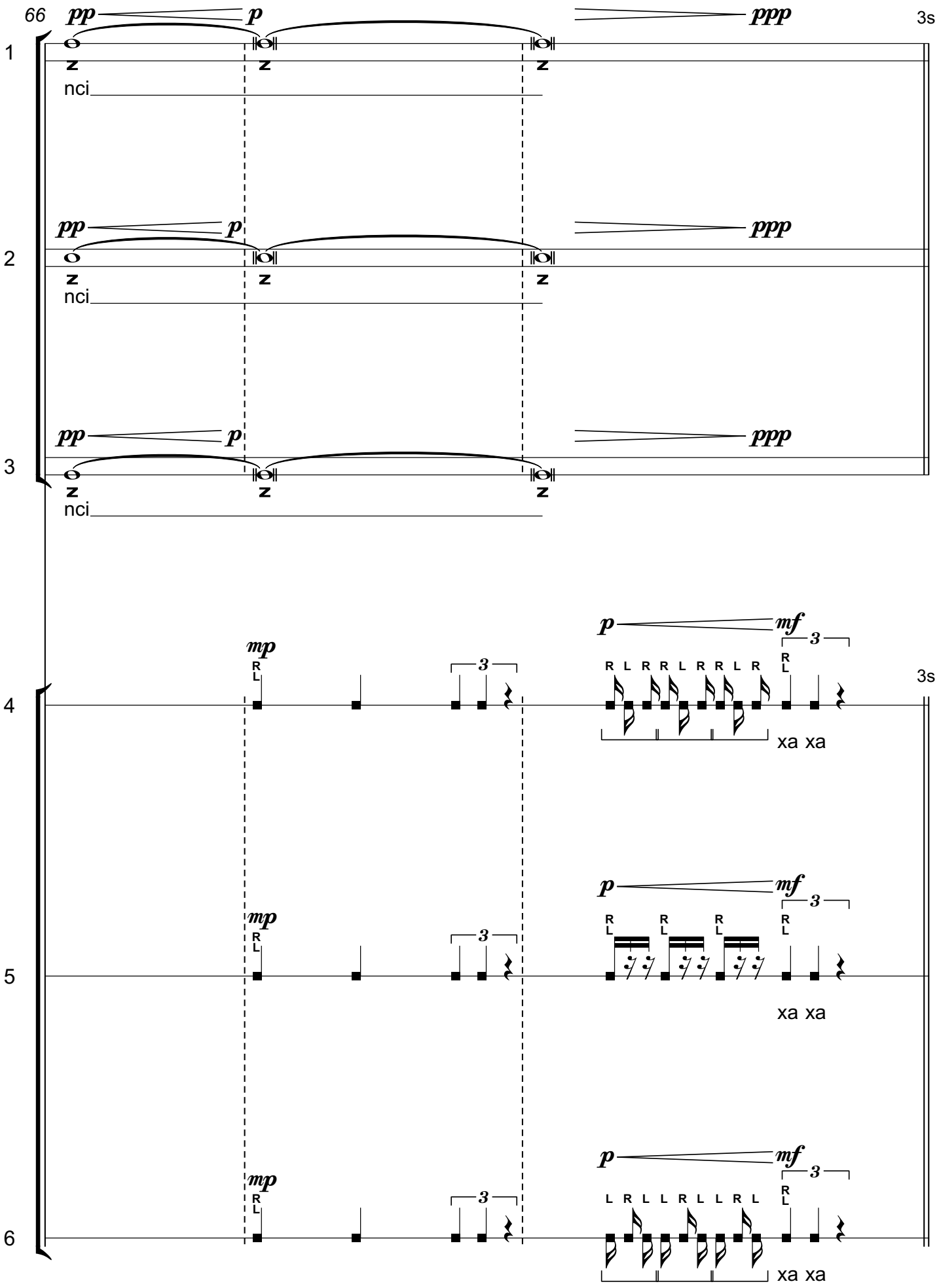


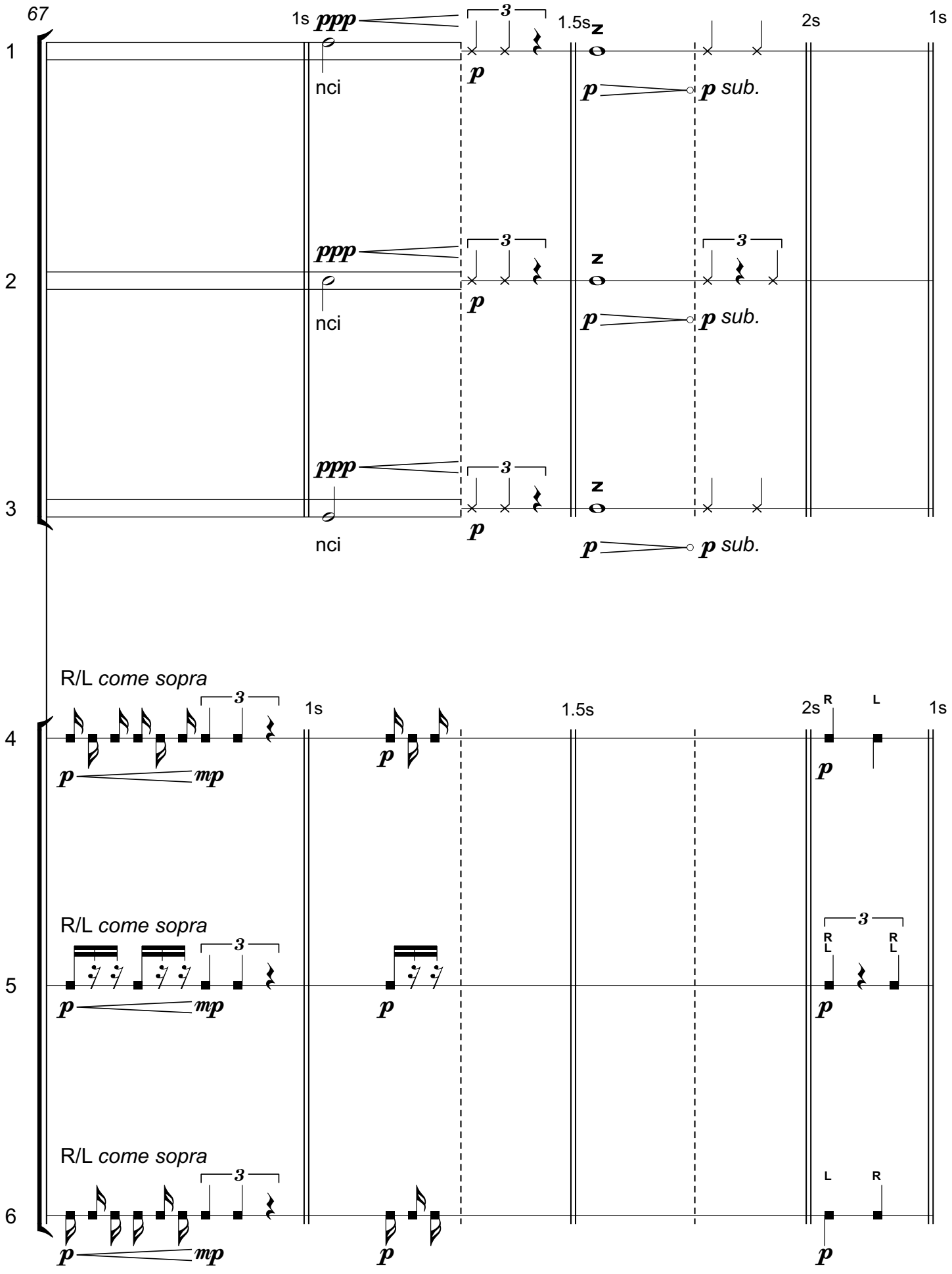

59
1
2
3
4
5
6
2s
1s
2s
2s
pp
p
mp
mf
xa
xa

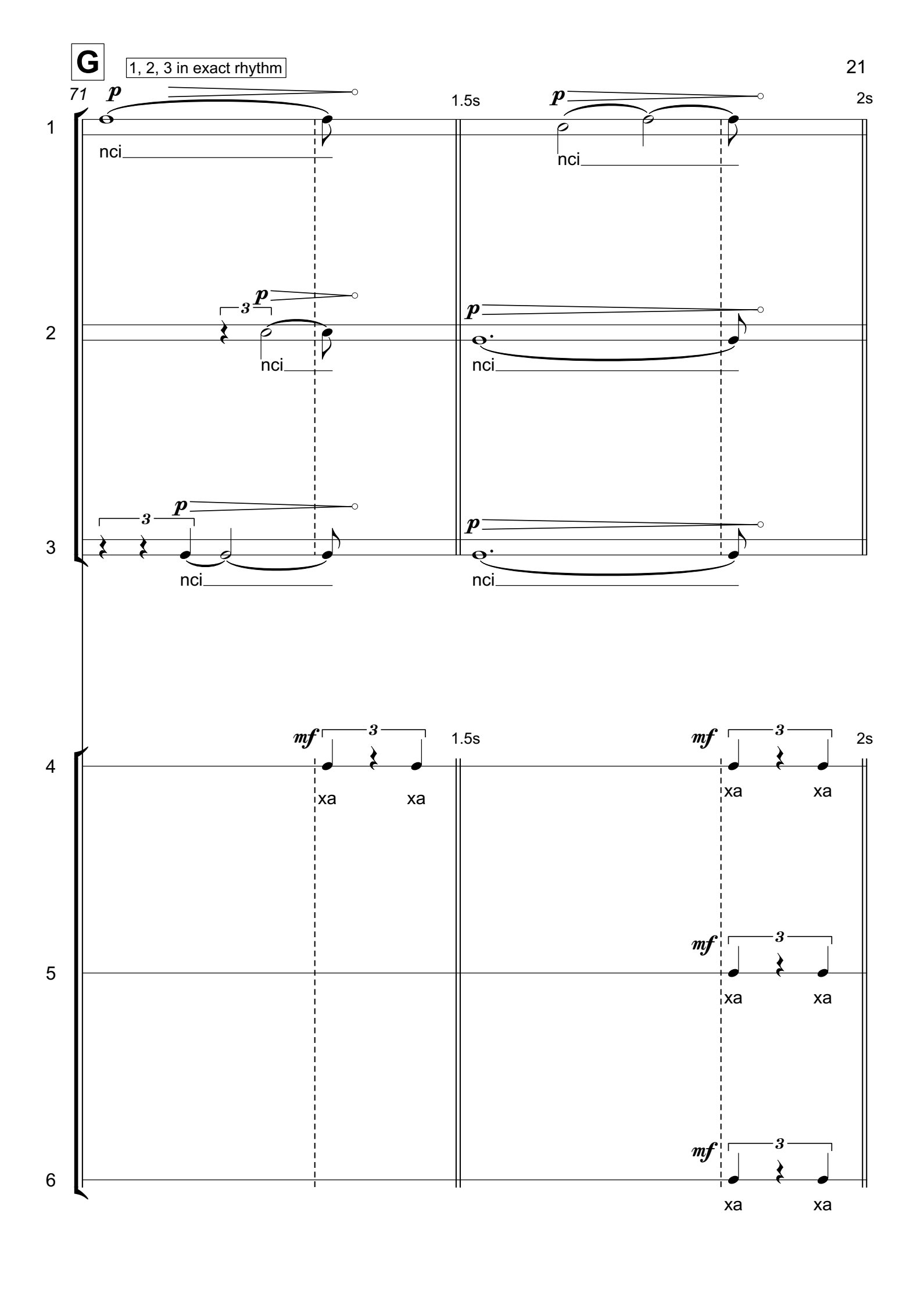

1, 2, 3 in exact rhythm
63
1
2
3
5
p
ppp
sf ppp
sf
4, 5, 6 in exact rhythm
mp
sf
R L L R L R L
xa
4
5
6

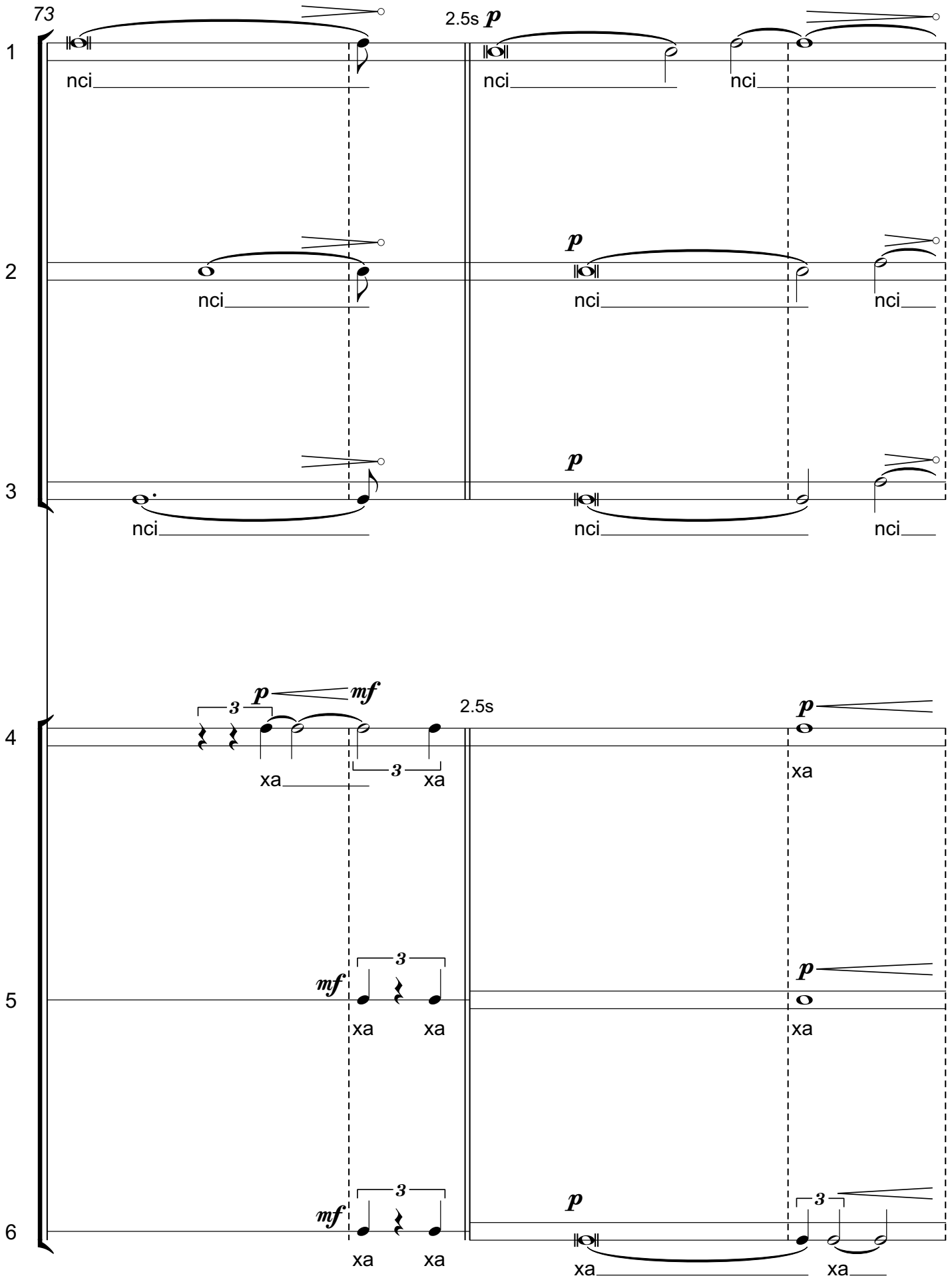

(63)
4s
1s
1.5s
1
2
3
4
5
6
p
mf
4, 5, 6 in exact rhythm sempre
R
L
xa

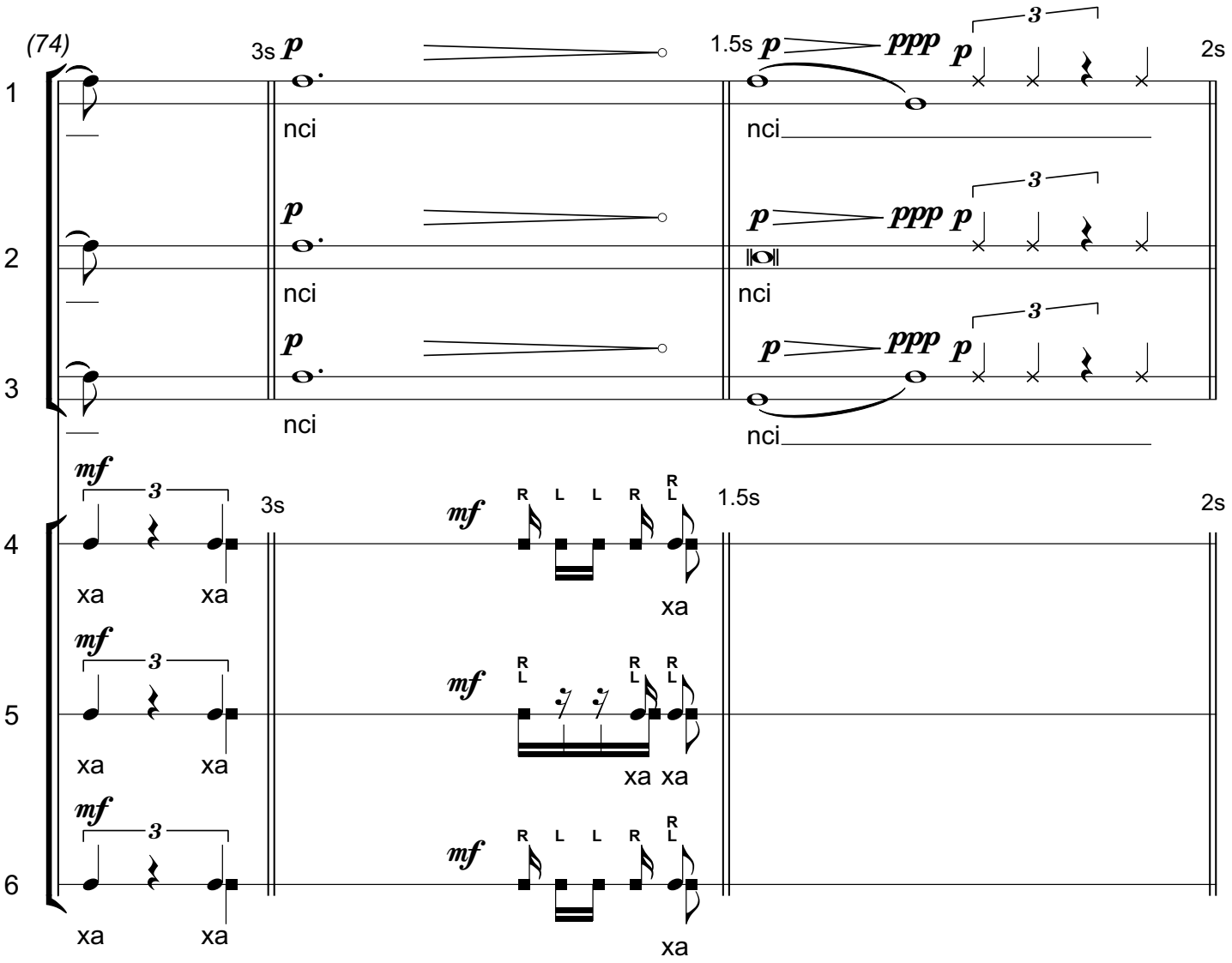
1, 2, 3 sung *and* finger rub
staggered breathing and rearticulation *ad lib.*

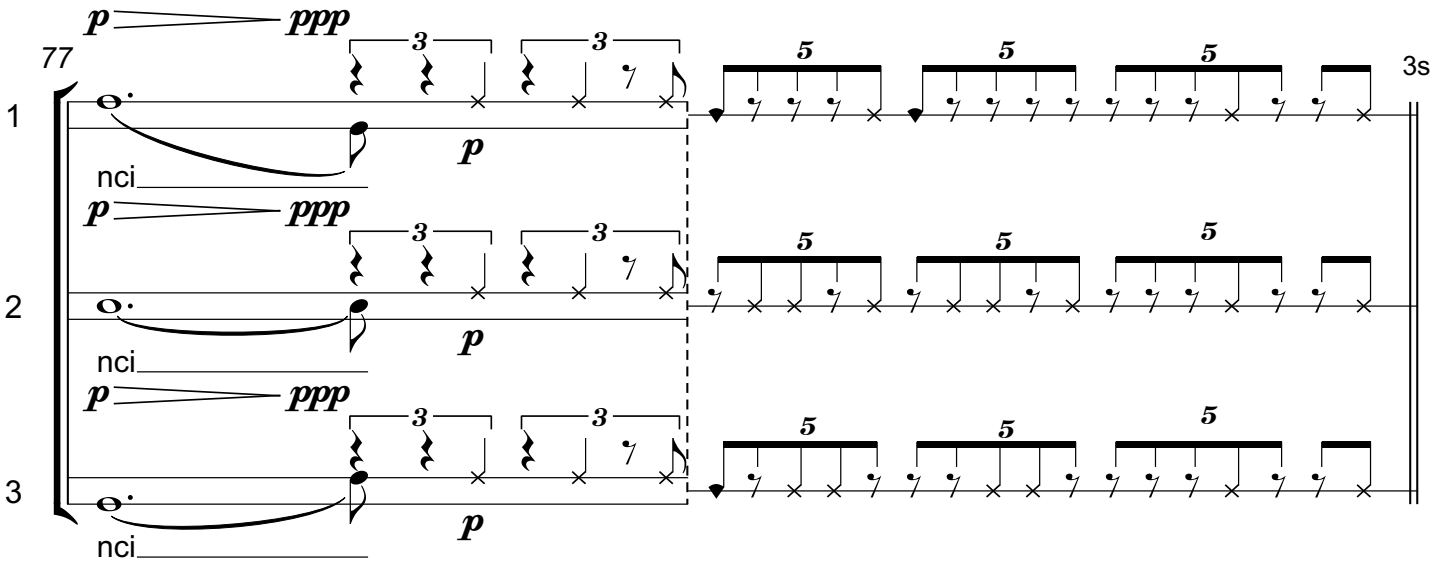


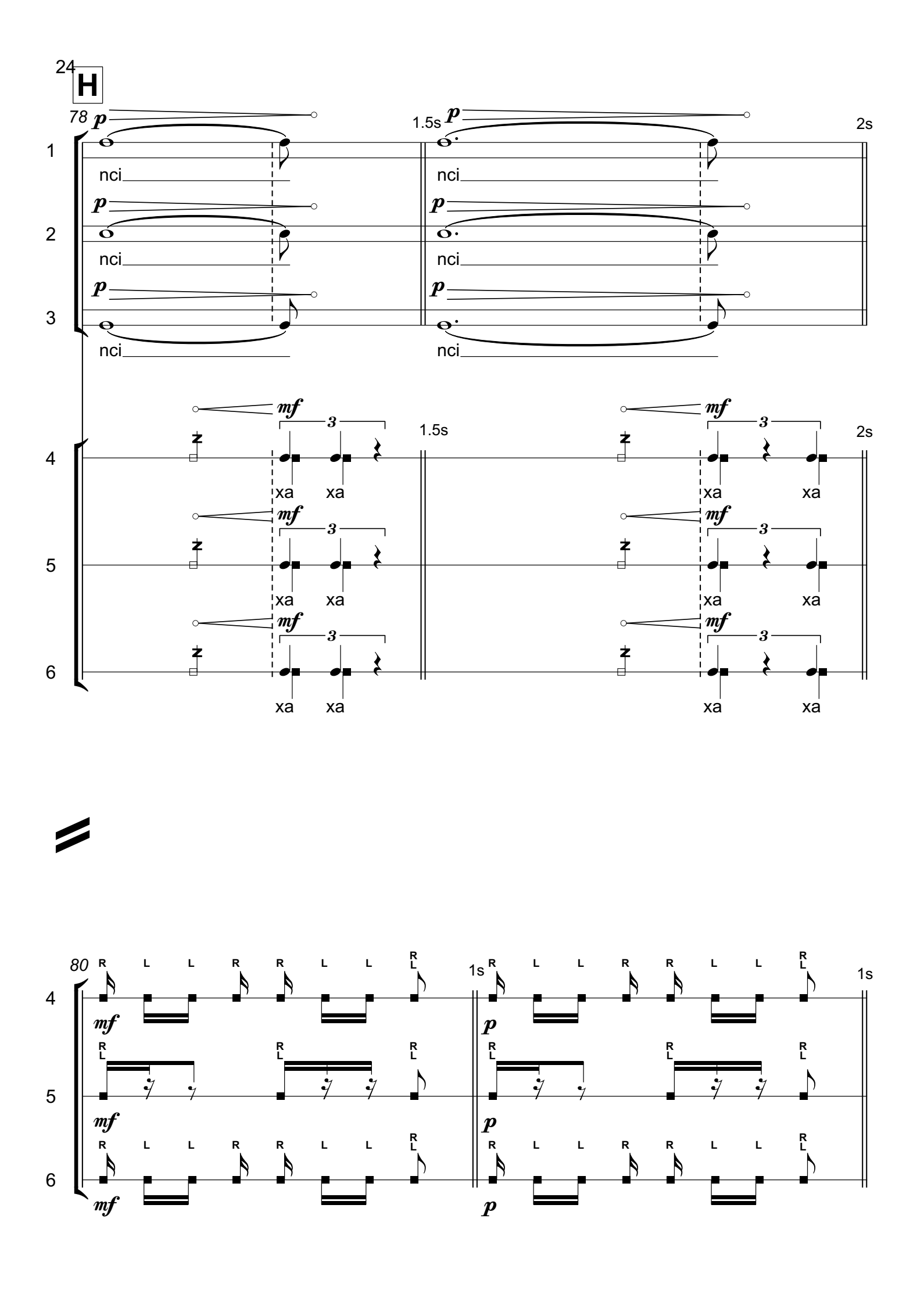

67
1
2
3
4
5
6
1s
1.5s
2s
1s
ppp
p
mp
nci
sub.
R/L come sopra
R
L

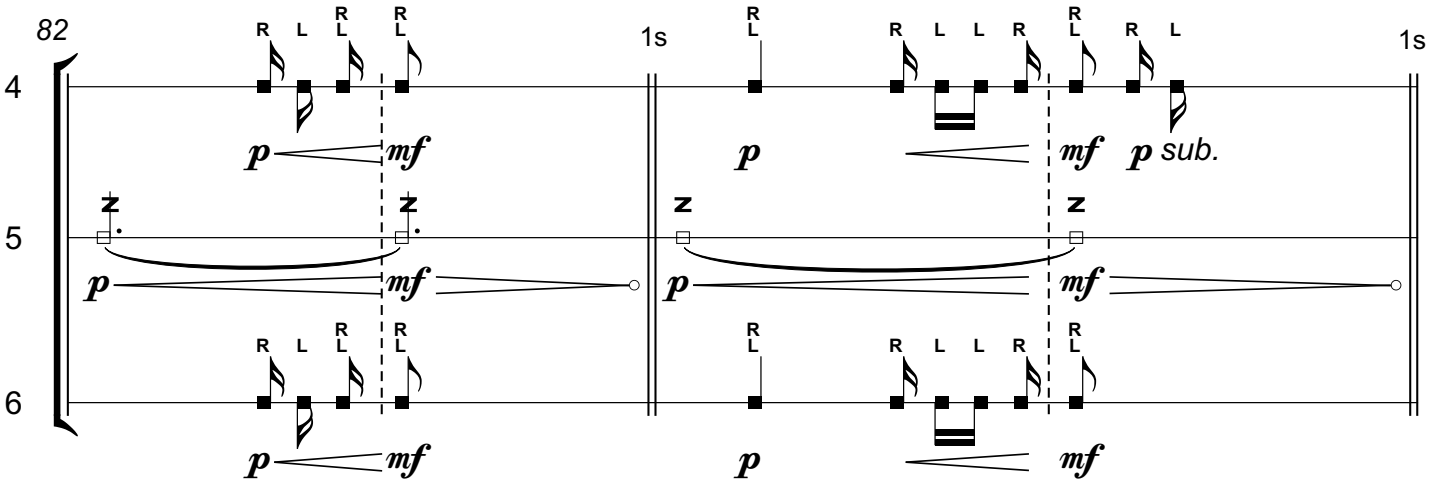

G
1, 2, 3 in exact rhythm
71
p
1.5s
2s
1
nci
2
3
4
mf
xa
5
6

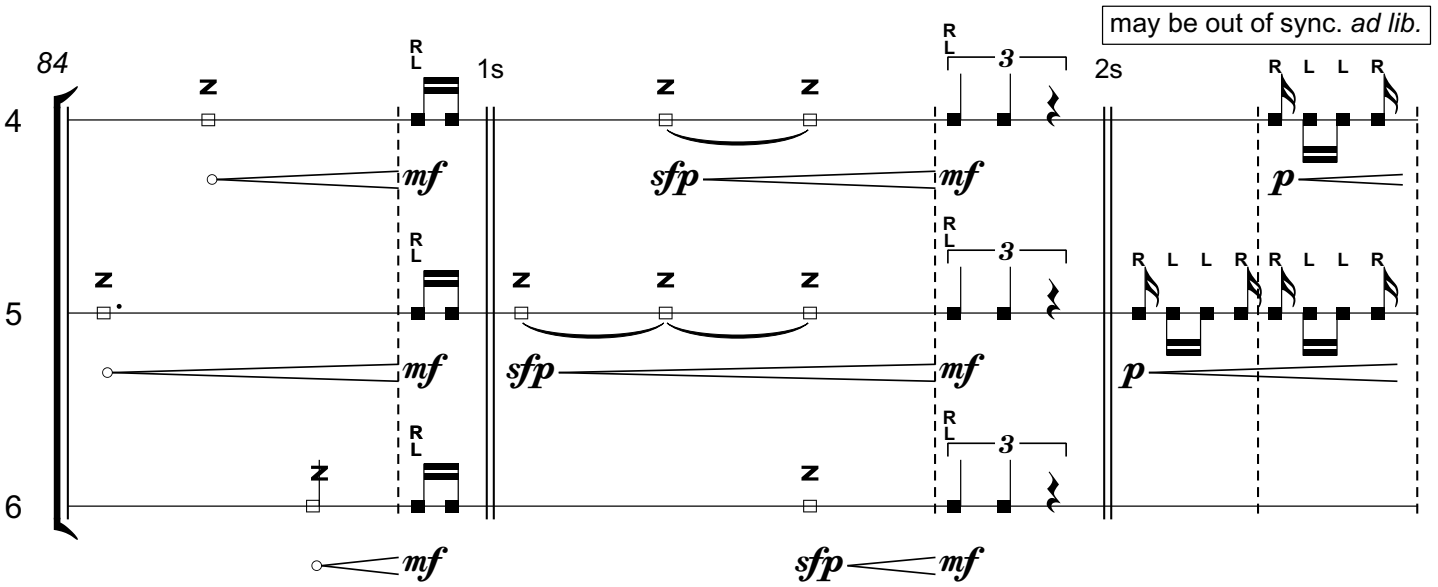

73
2.5s
p
1
nci
nci
nci
2
p
nci
nci
nci
3
p
nci
nci
nci
4
p
mf
3
2.5s
p
xa
xa
xa
5
mf
3
p
xa
xa
xa
6
mf
3
p
3
xa
xa
xa
xa

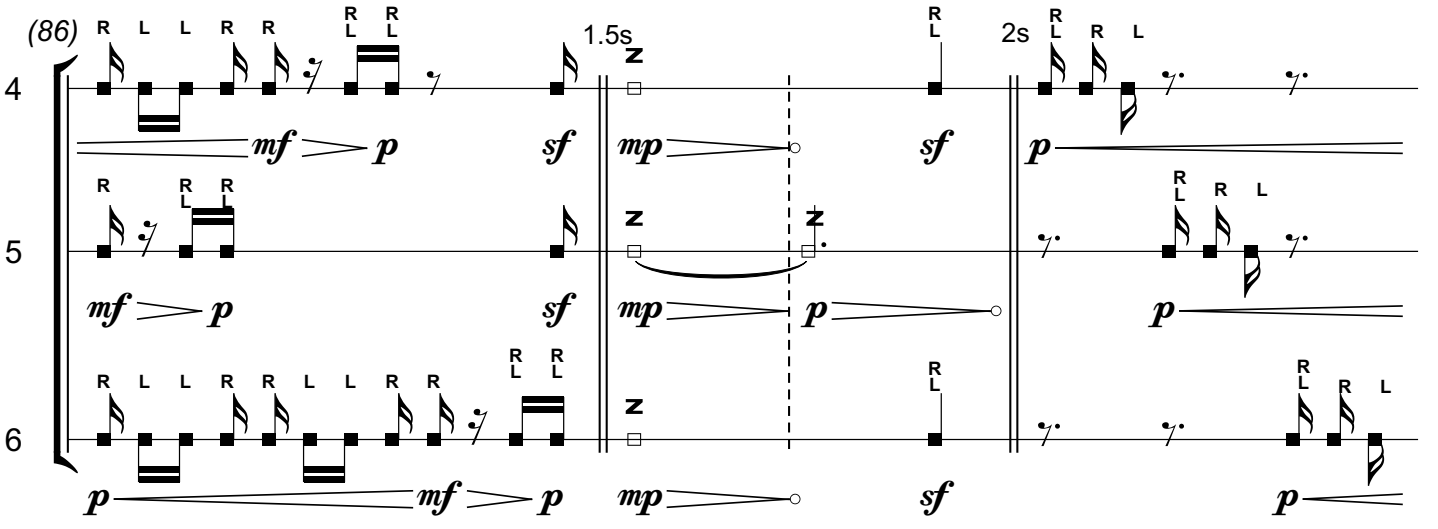

(74)
3s
1.5s
2s
nci
xa
R L L R R L

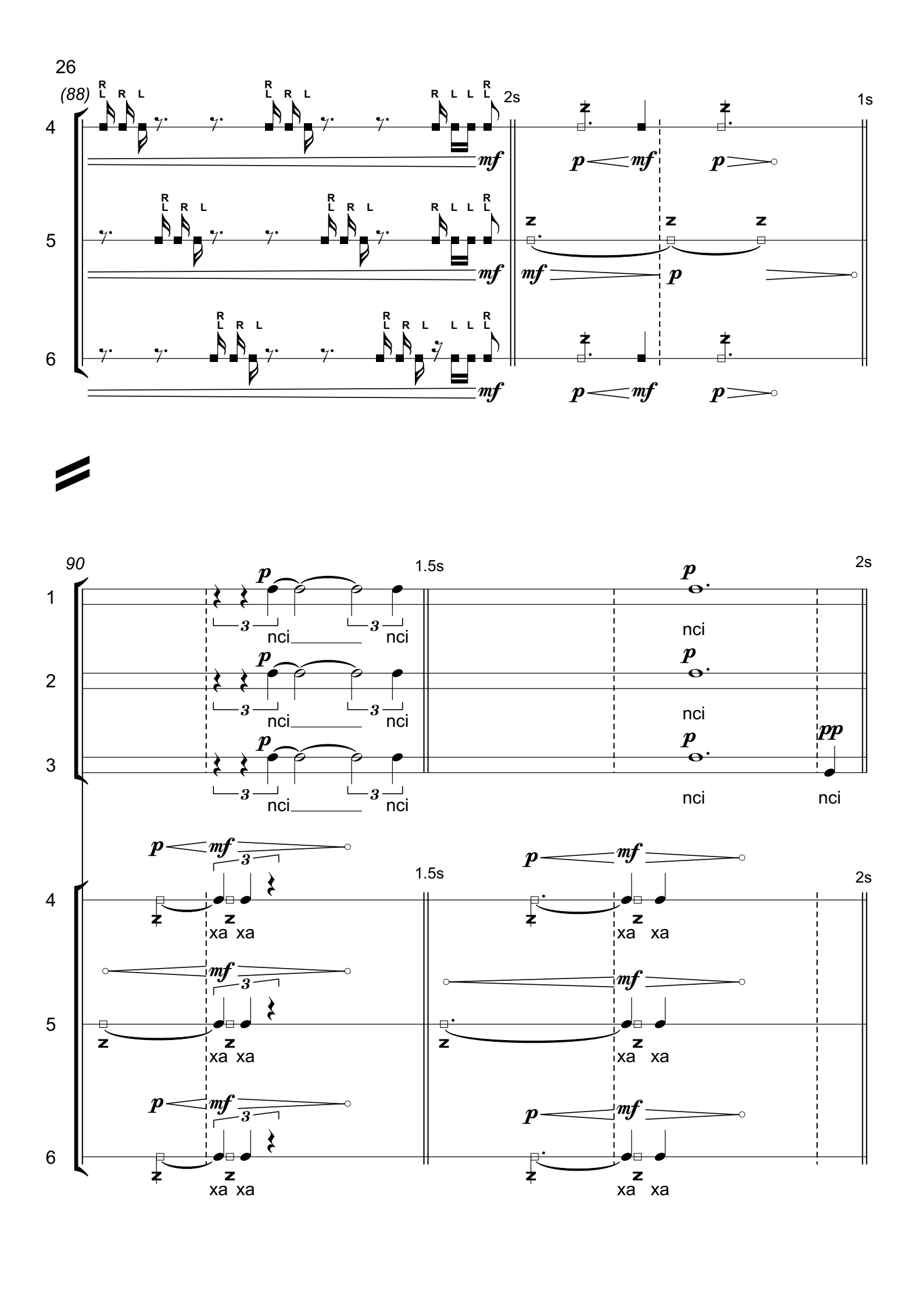

77
3s
nci

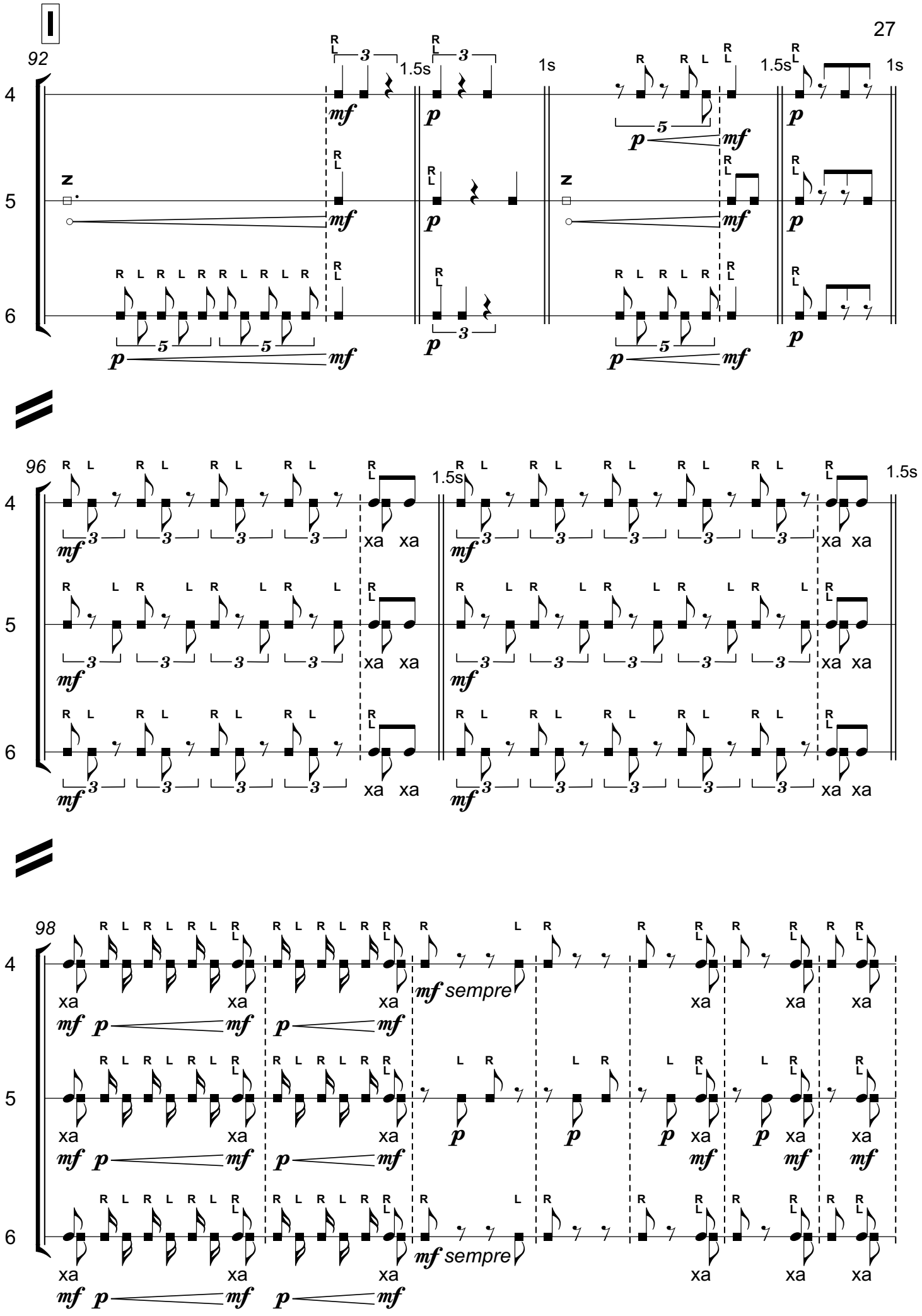

24
H
78
p
1.5s
2s
1
2
3
4
5
6
nci
mf
3
xa
80
R
L
1s

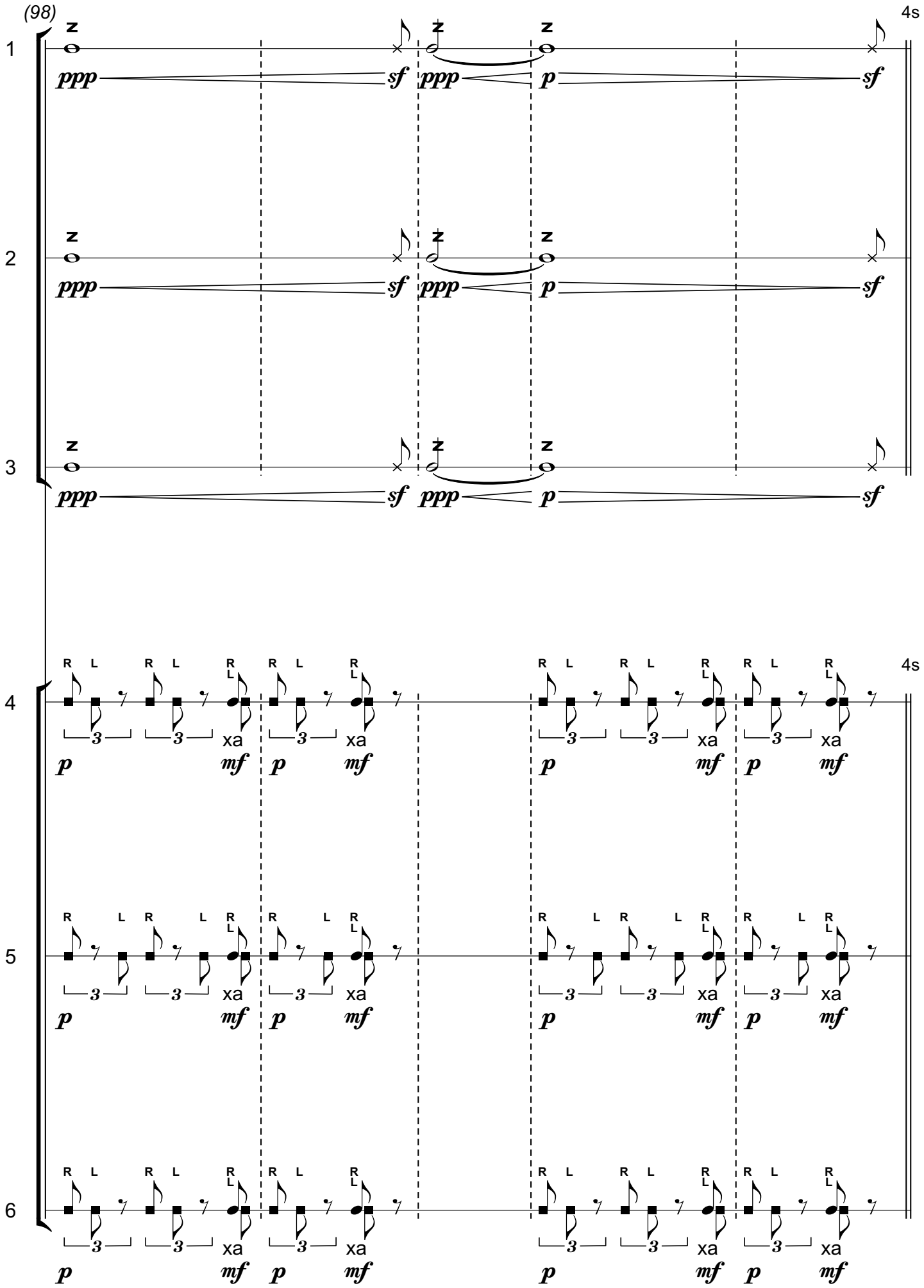

82
4
5
6
1s
1s
p
mf
p sub.

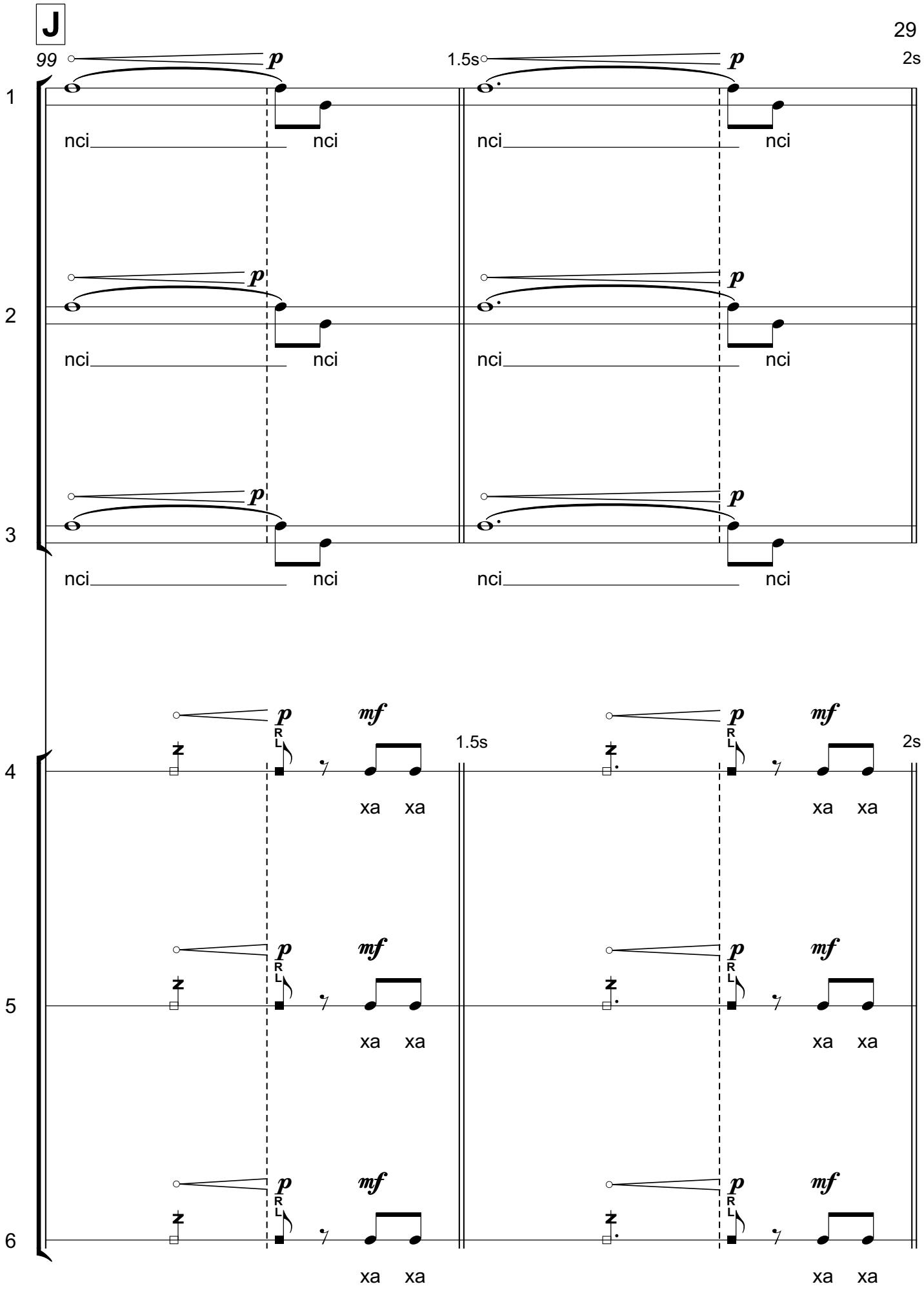

may be out of sync. ad lib.
84
4
5
6
1s
2s
3
mf
sfp

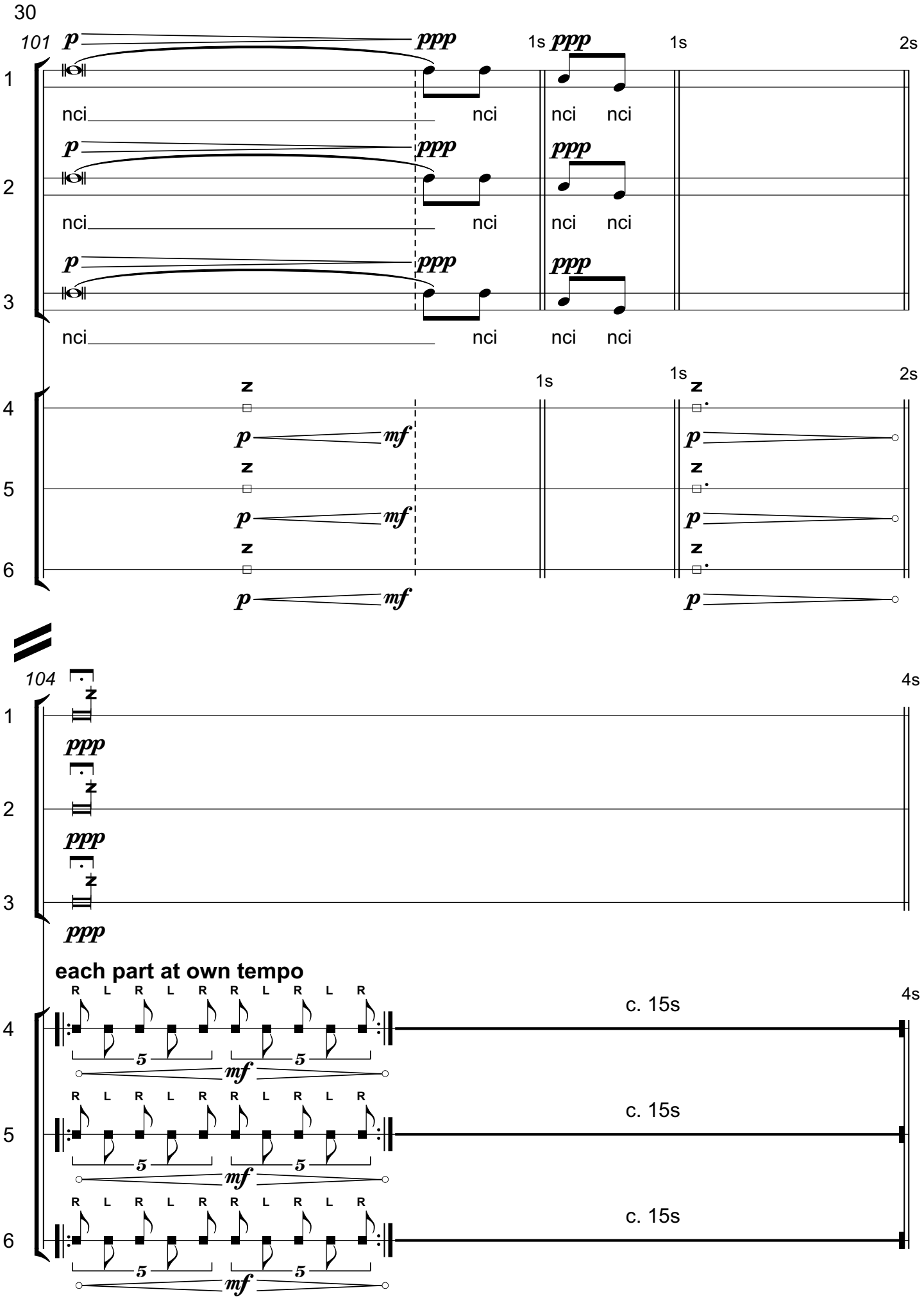

(86)
4
5
6
1.5s
2s
mf
p
sf
mp

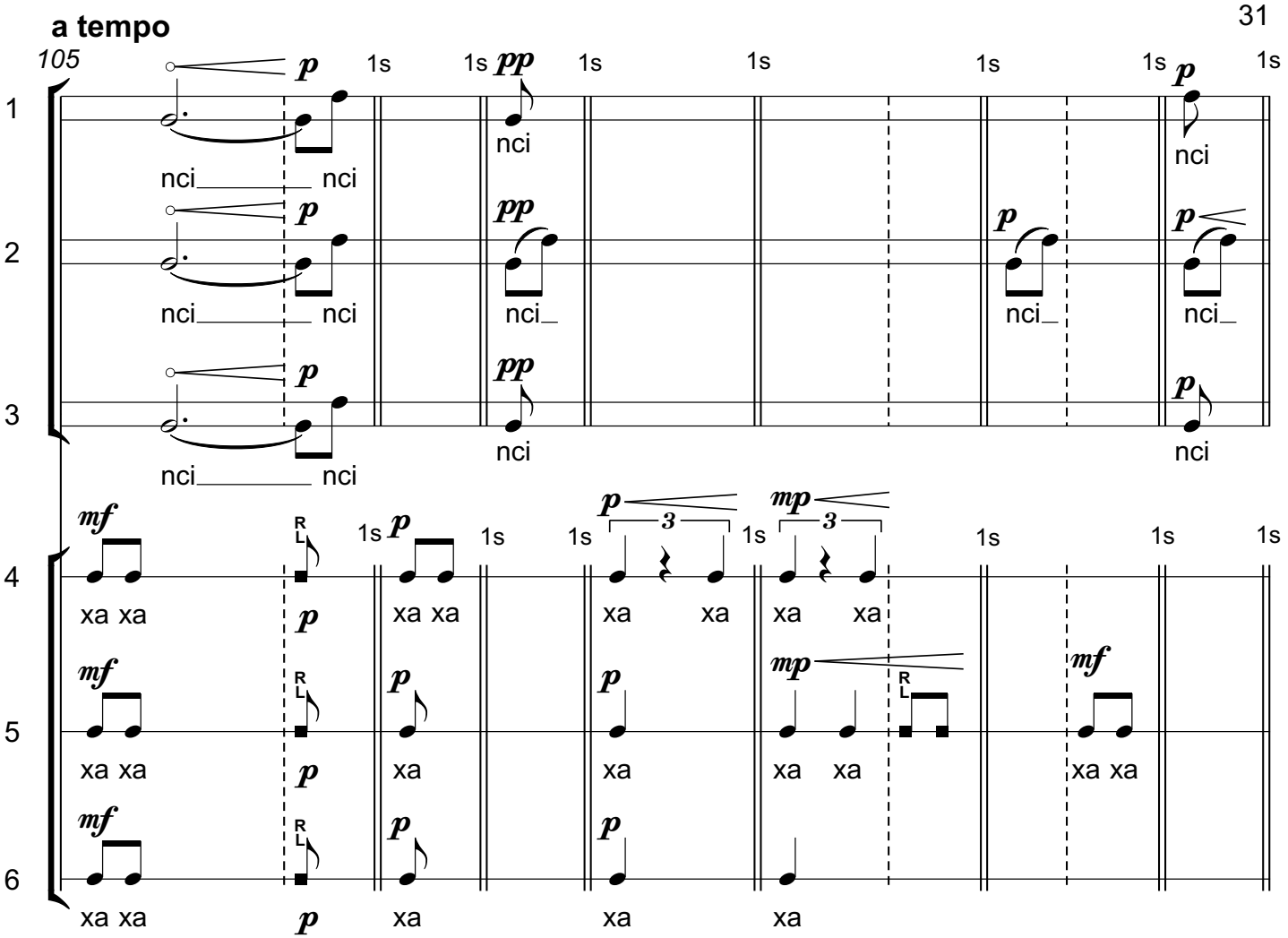

26
(88)
2s
1s
4
5
6
90
1.5s
2s
1
2
3
4
5
6
nci
xa

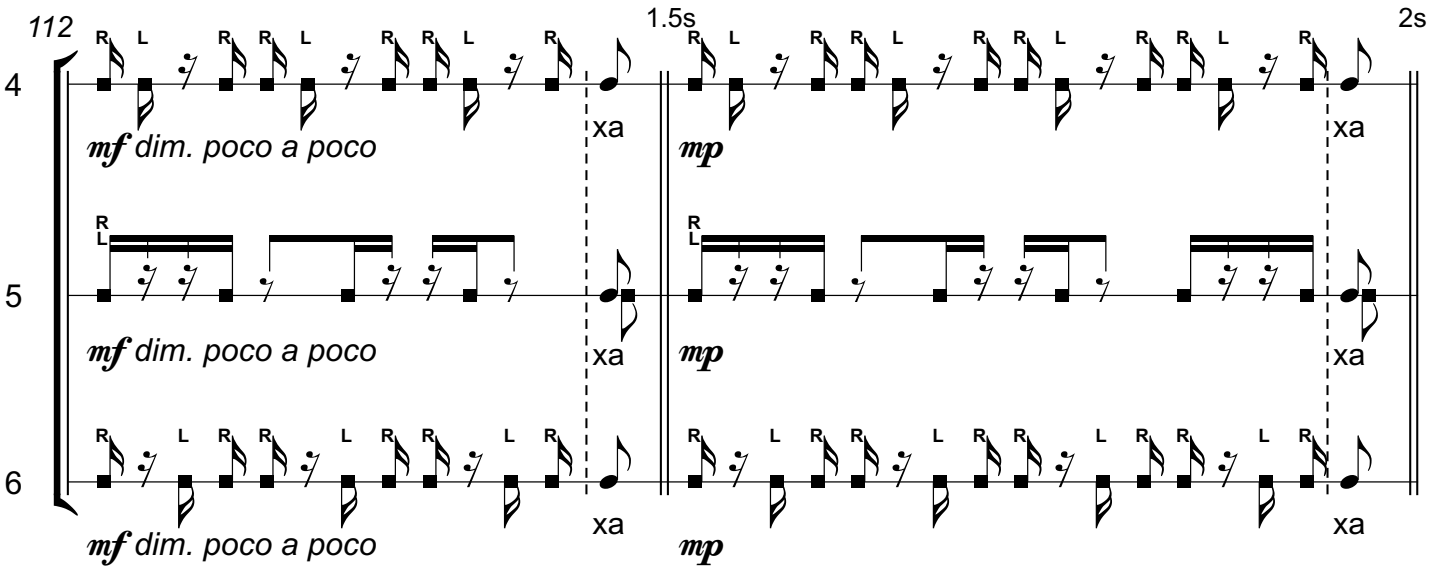

I
92
96
98
1.5s
1s
xa
mf sempre

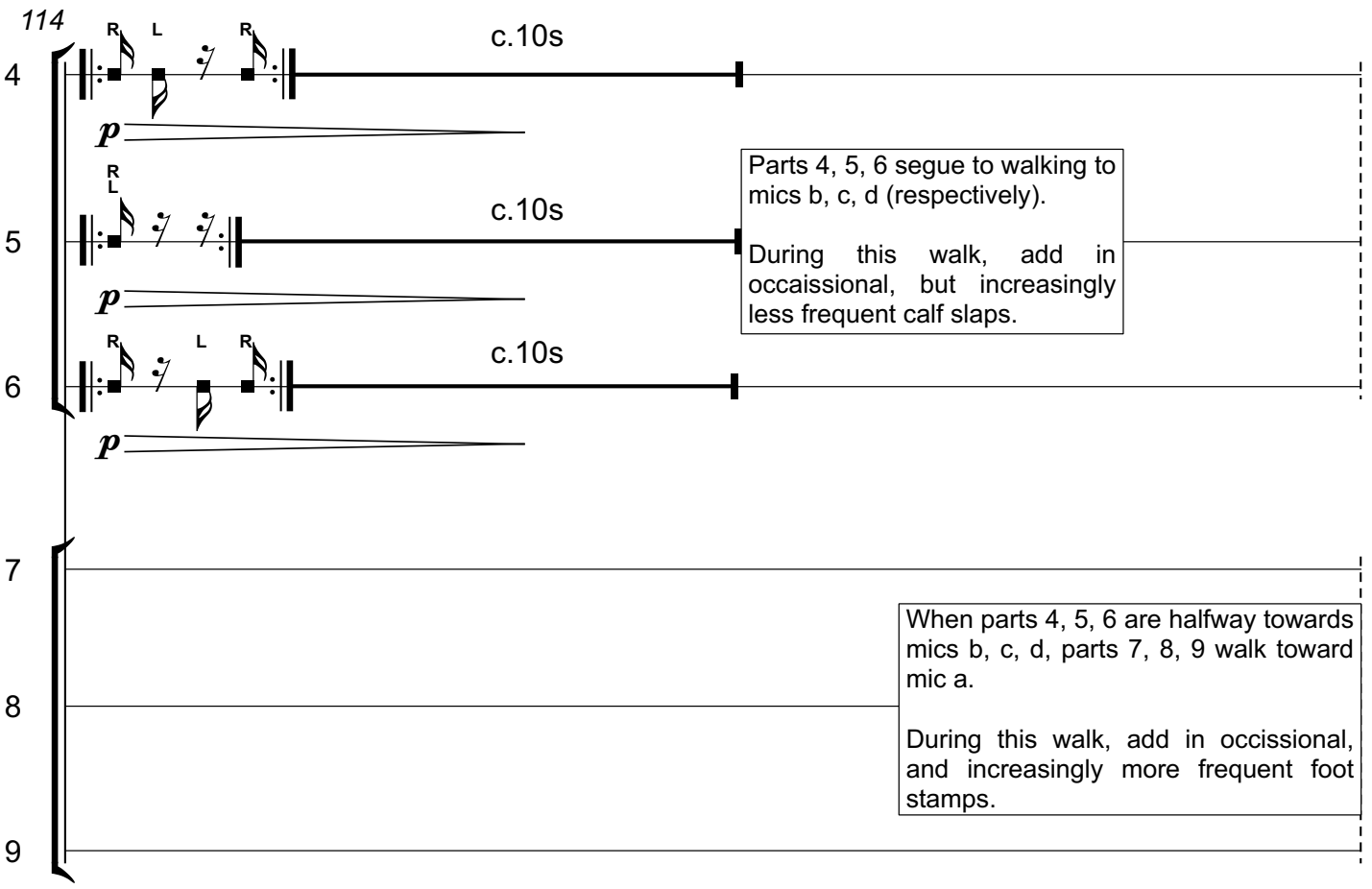

(98)
4s
1
2
3
4
5
6
z
ppp
sf
p
R
L
3
xa
mf


J
99
1.5s
2s
1
2
3
4
5
6
p
nci
mf
R
L
xa


101
1s
1s
2s
104
4s
each part at own tempo
c. 15s
c. 15s
c. 15s


a tempo
105
1s
nci
xa xa
xa

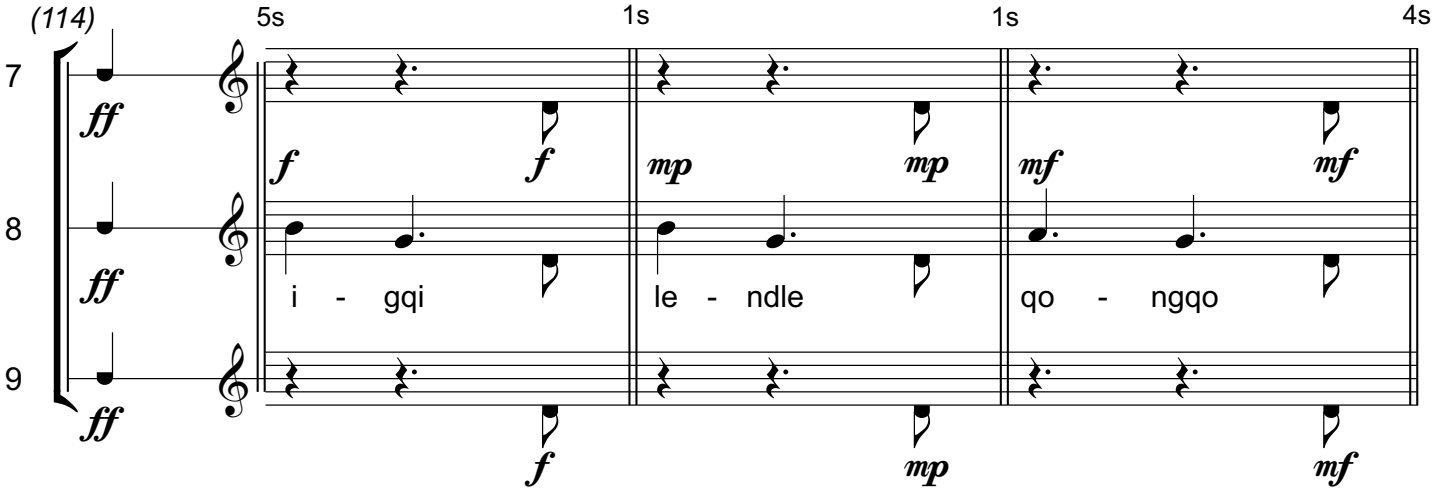

112
1.5s
2s
mf dim. poco a poco
mp
xa

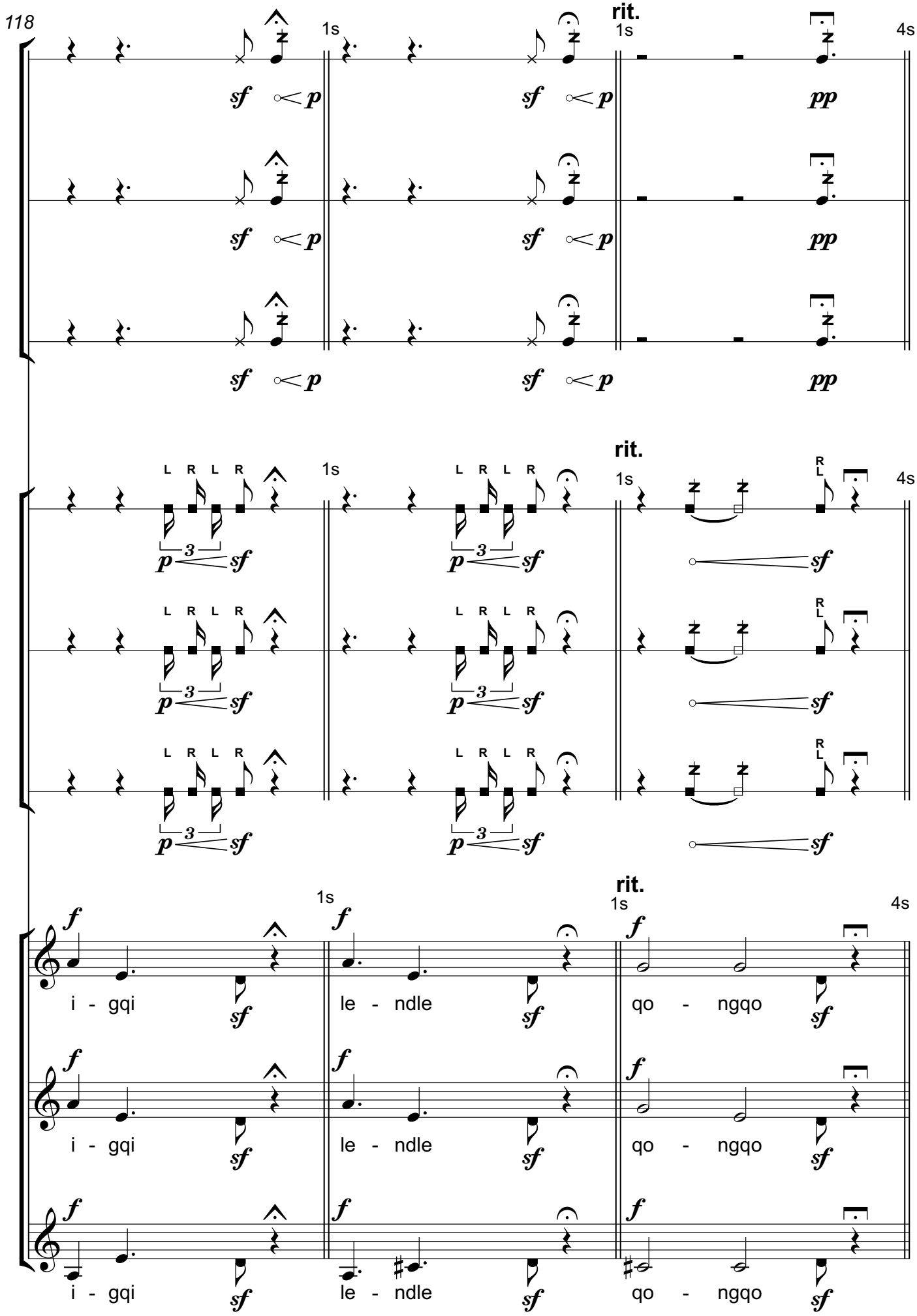


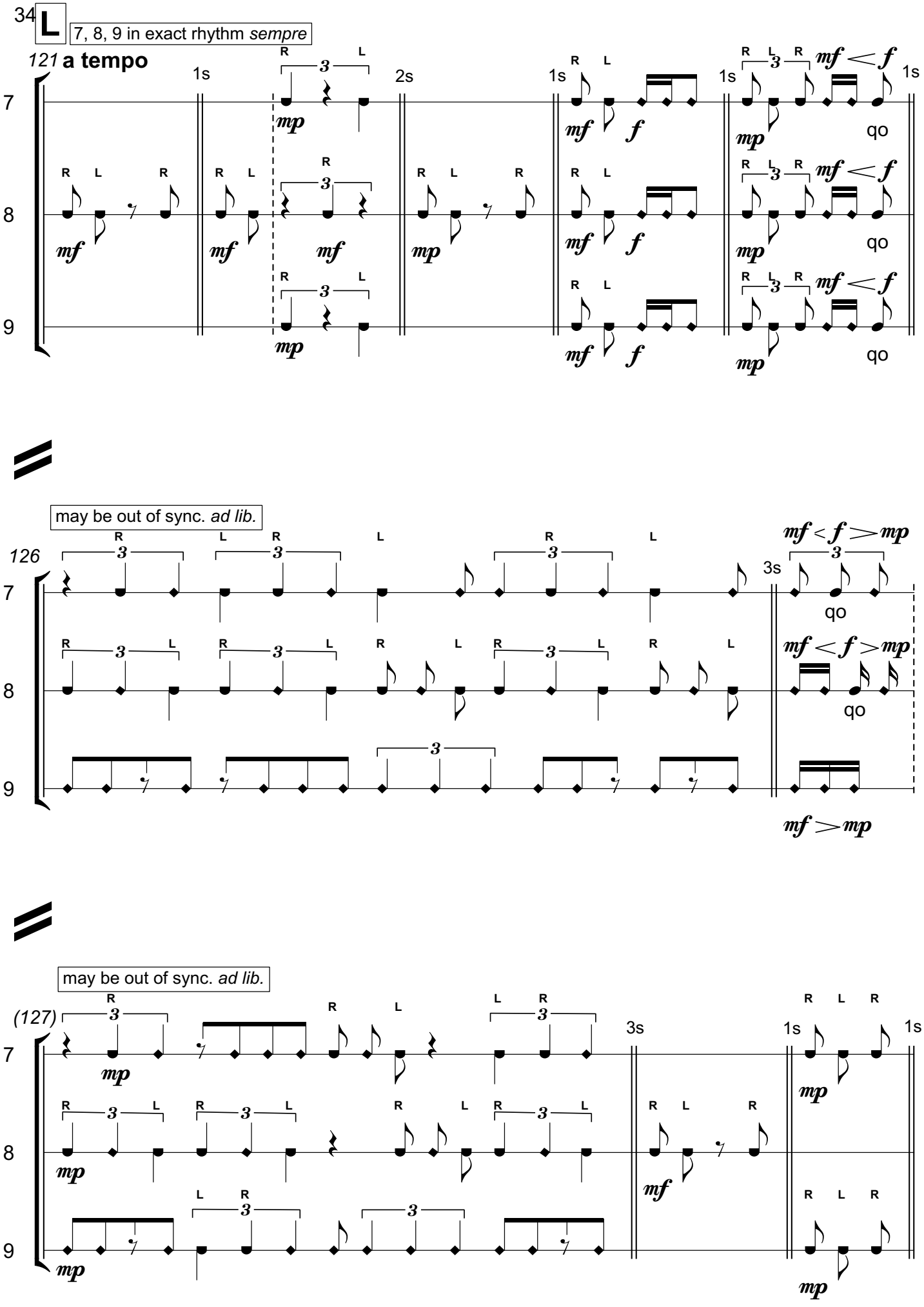
III. Qongqothwane - *A Wedding Song* (Xhosa)

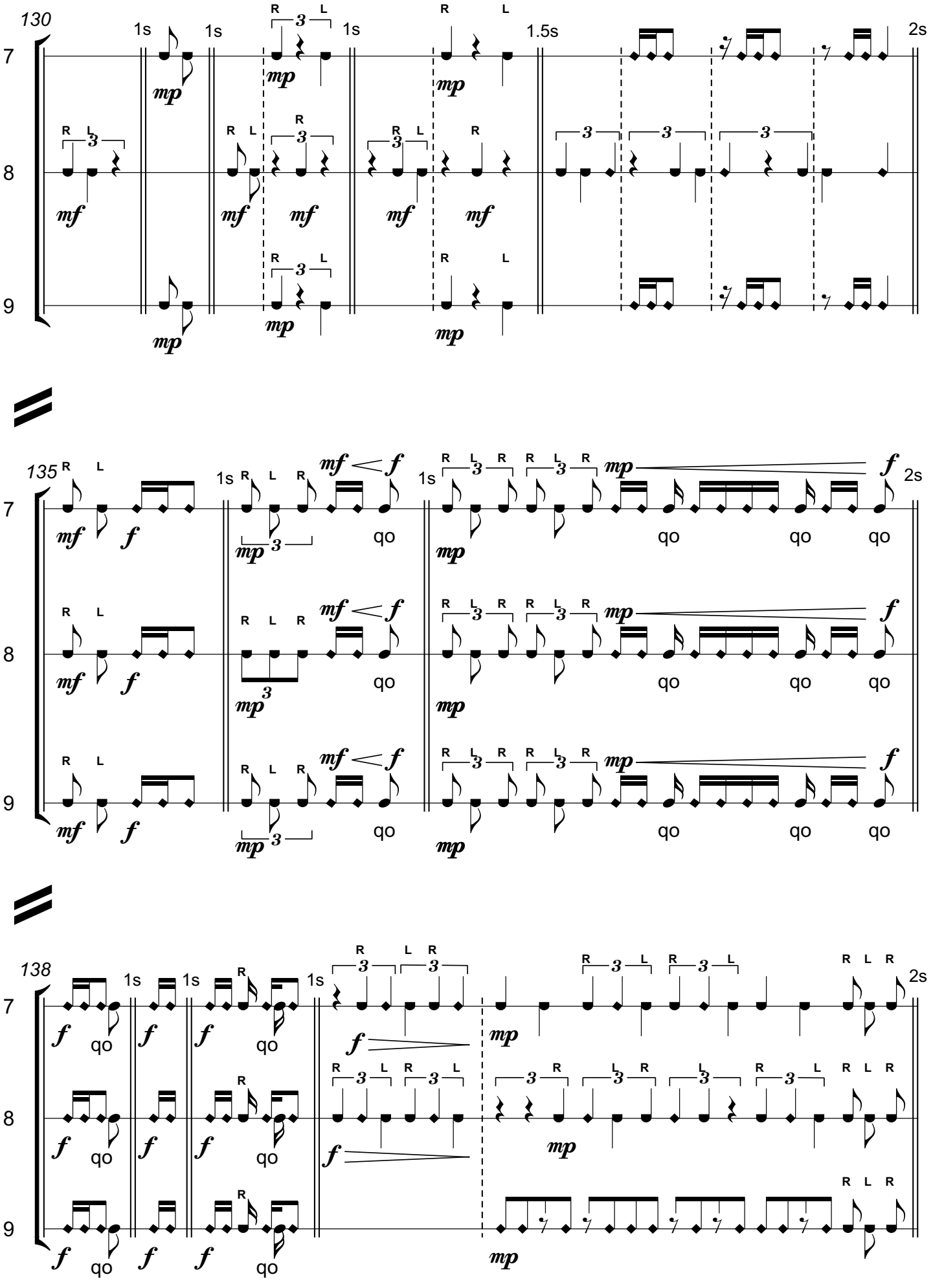
K

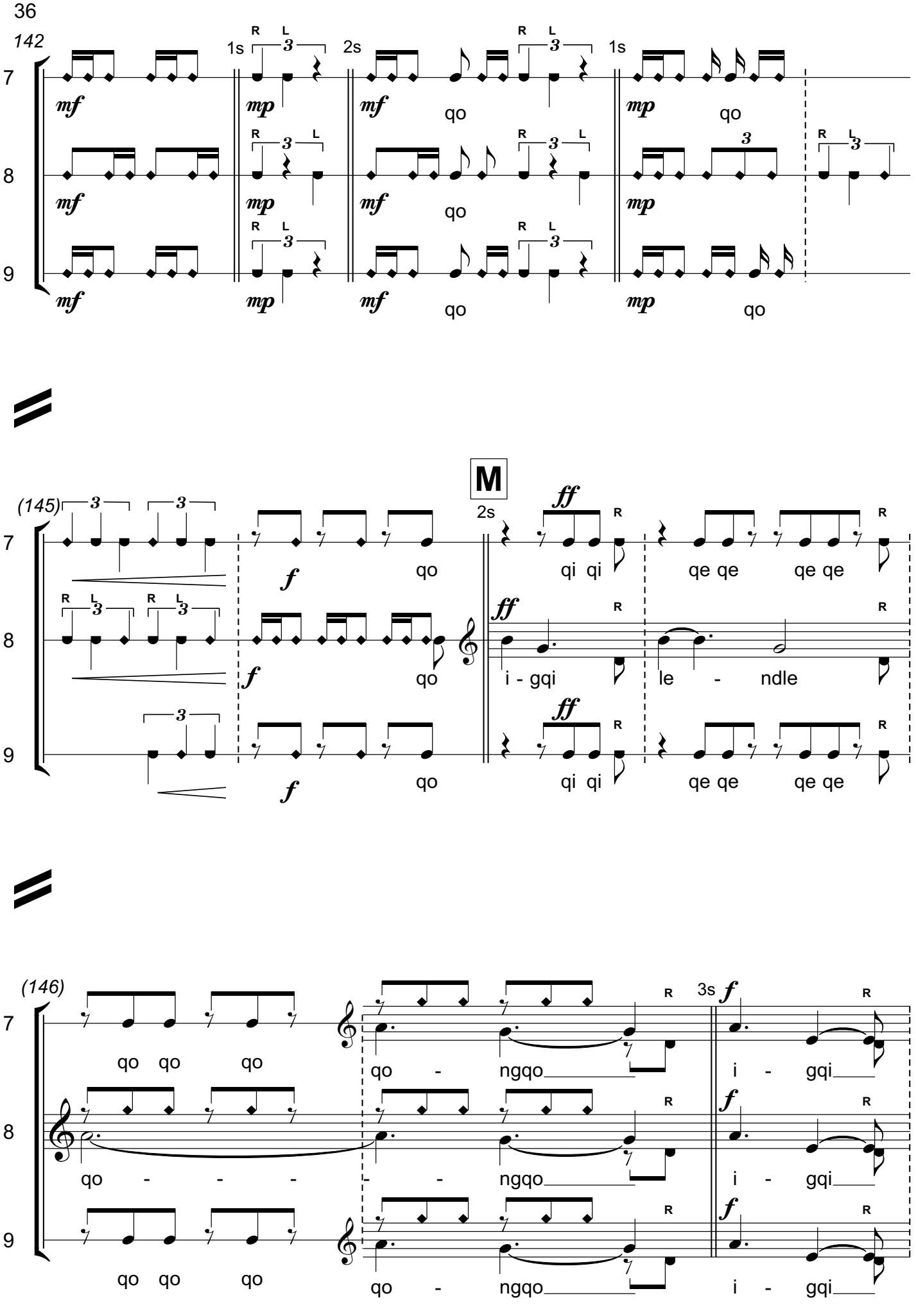
L'istesso tempo ♩ = c.86

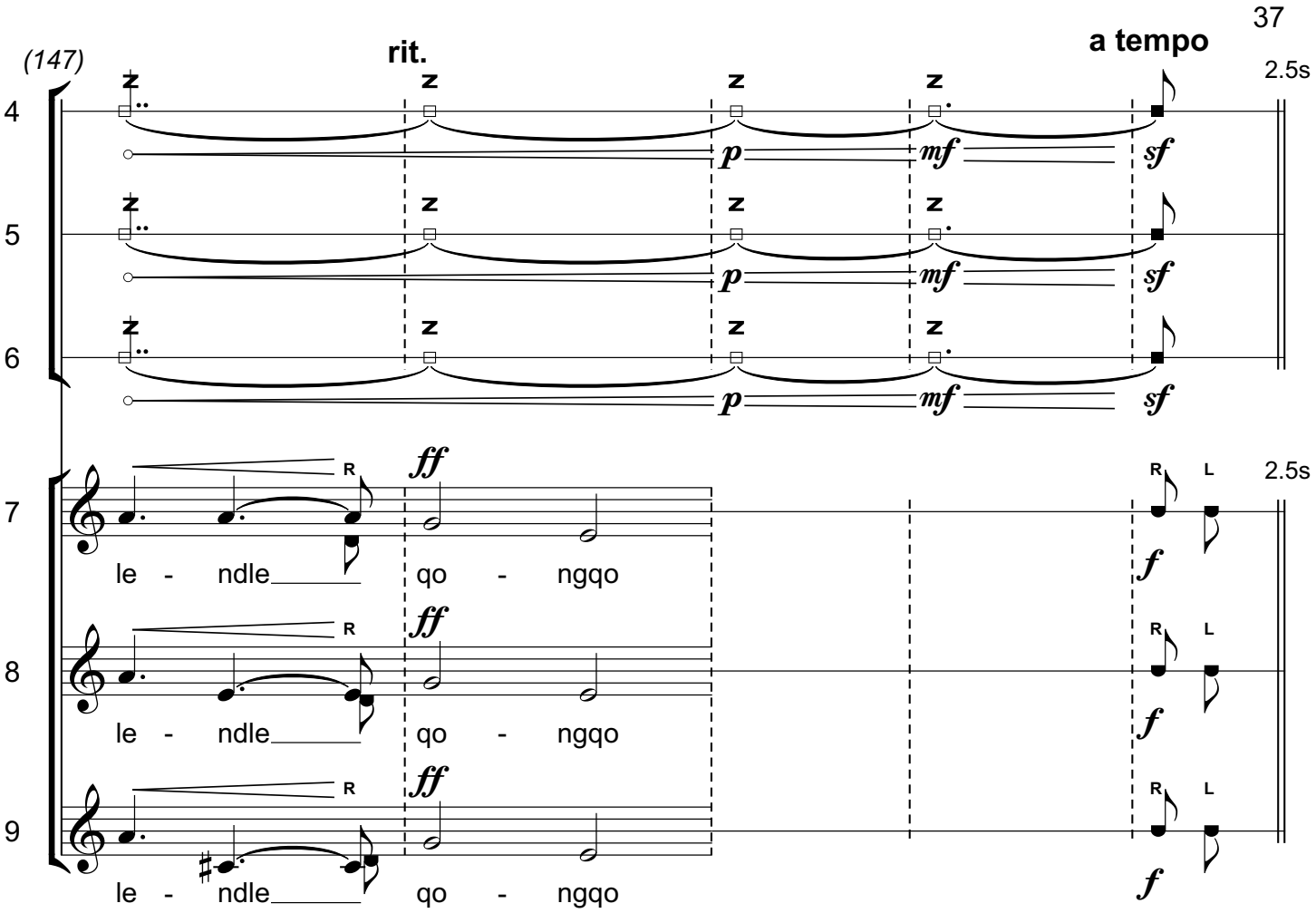


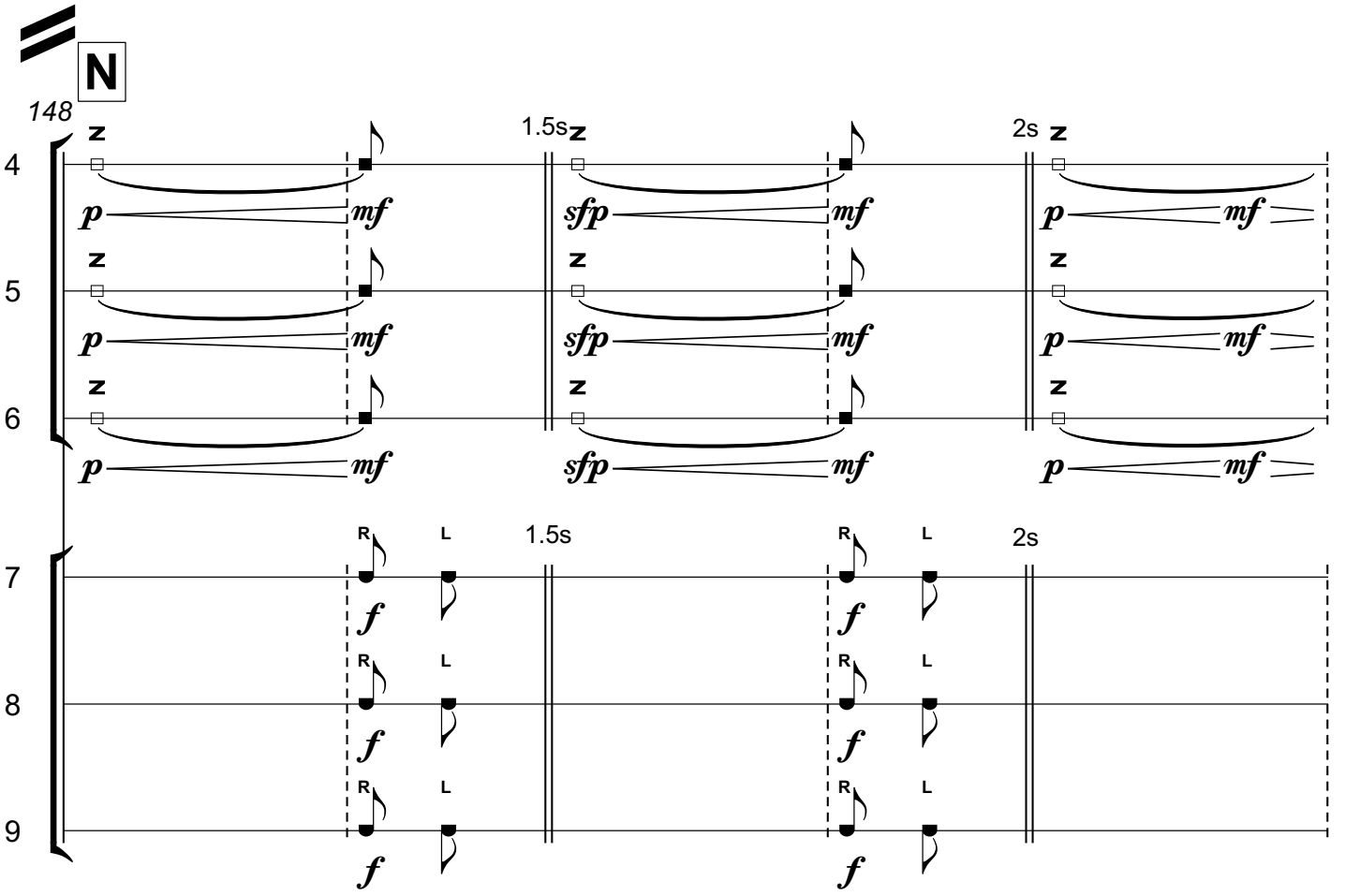

118
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
rit.
1s
4s
sf
p
pp
L R L R
3
i - gqi
le - ndle
qo - ngqo
f

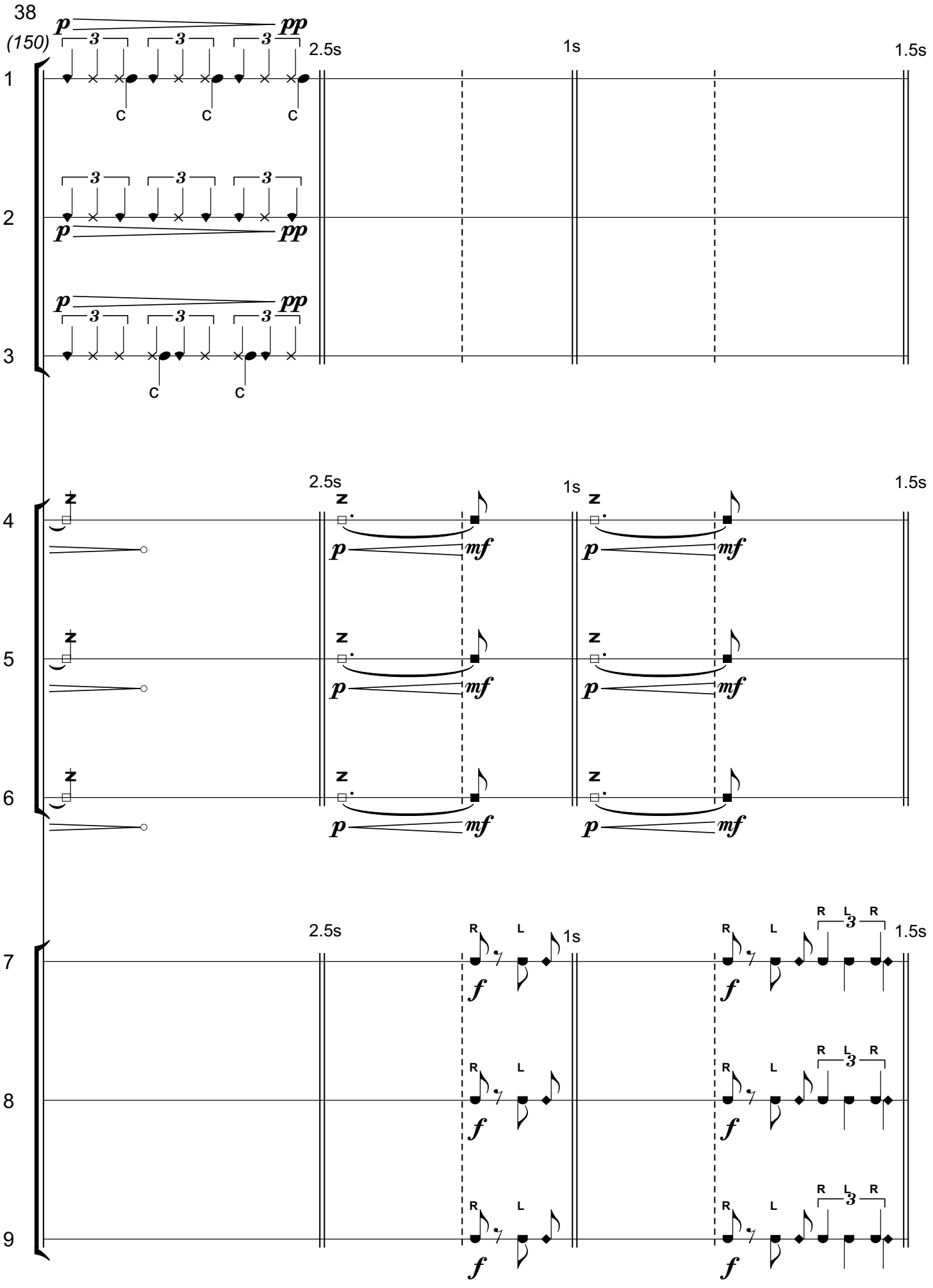

34
L
7, 8, 9 in exact rhythm *sempre*
121 **a tempo**
1s
2s
qo
may be out of sync. *ad lib.*
126
3s
mf > mp
may be out of sync. *ad lib.*
(127)

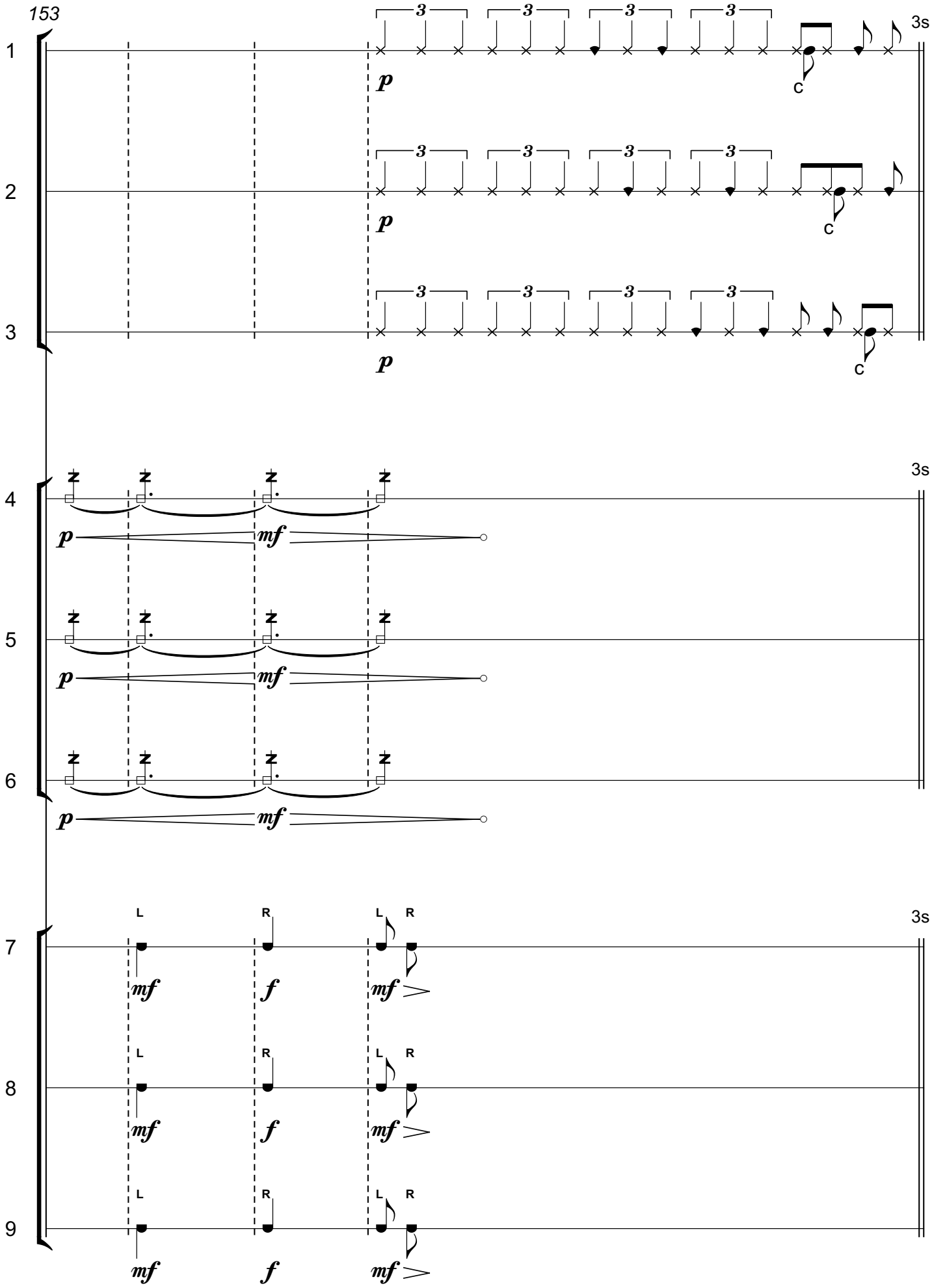

130
135
138
1s
1.5s
2s
qo
7
8
9

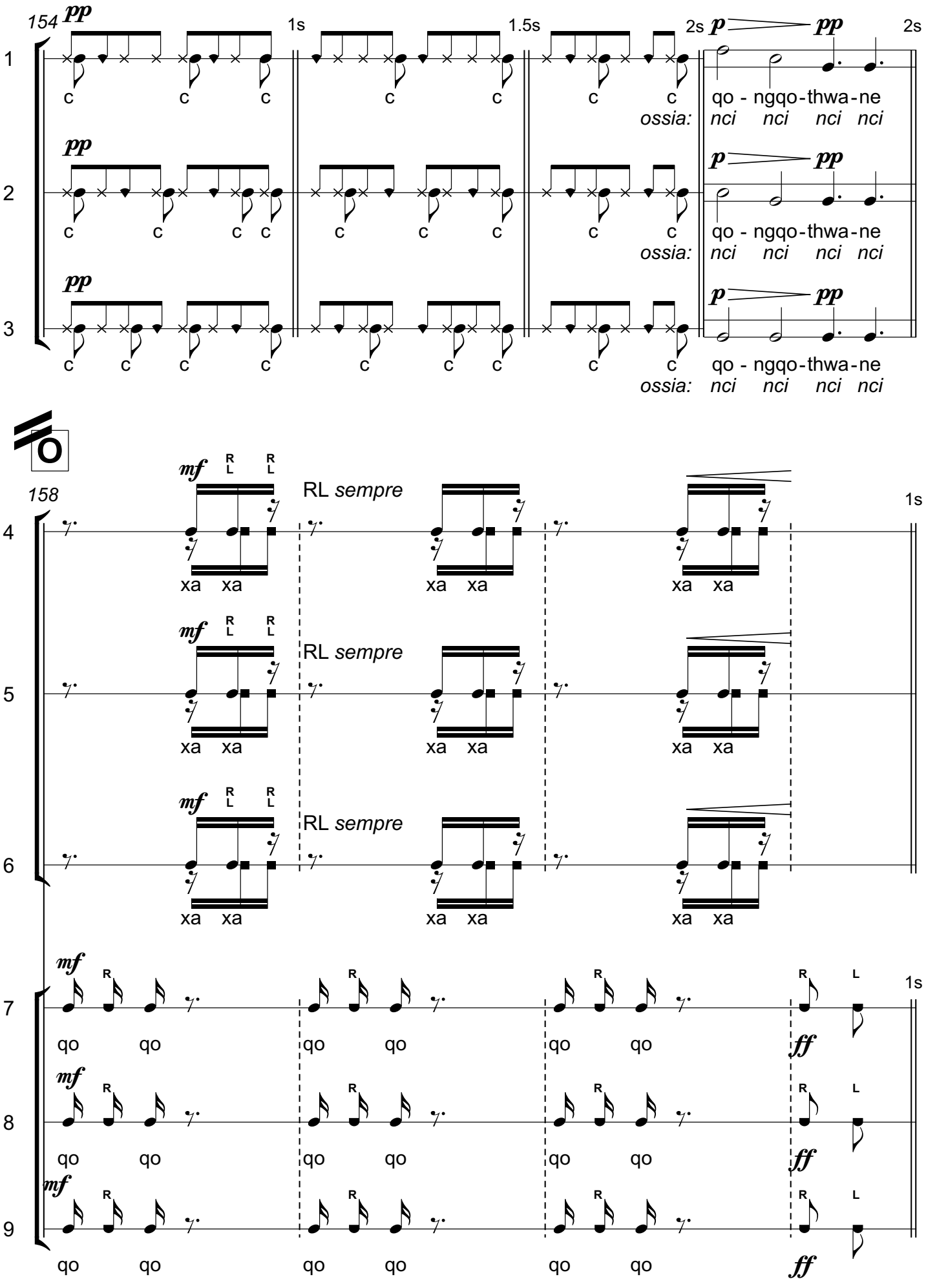

142
7
8
9
mf
mp
1s
2s
qo
(145)
M
ff
f
2s
qi qi
qe qe
qe qe
i - gqi
le - ndle
(146)
3s
qo qo qo
qo - - -
qo - ngqo
i - gqi

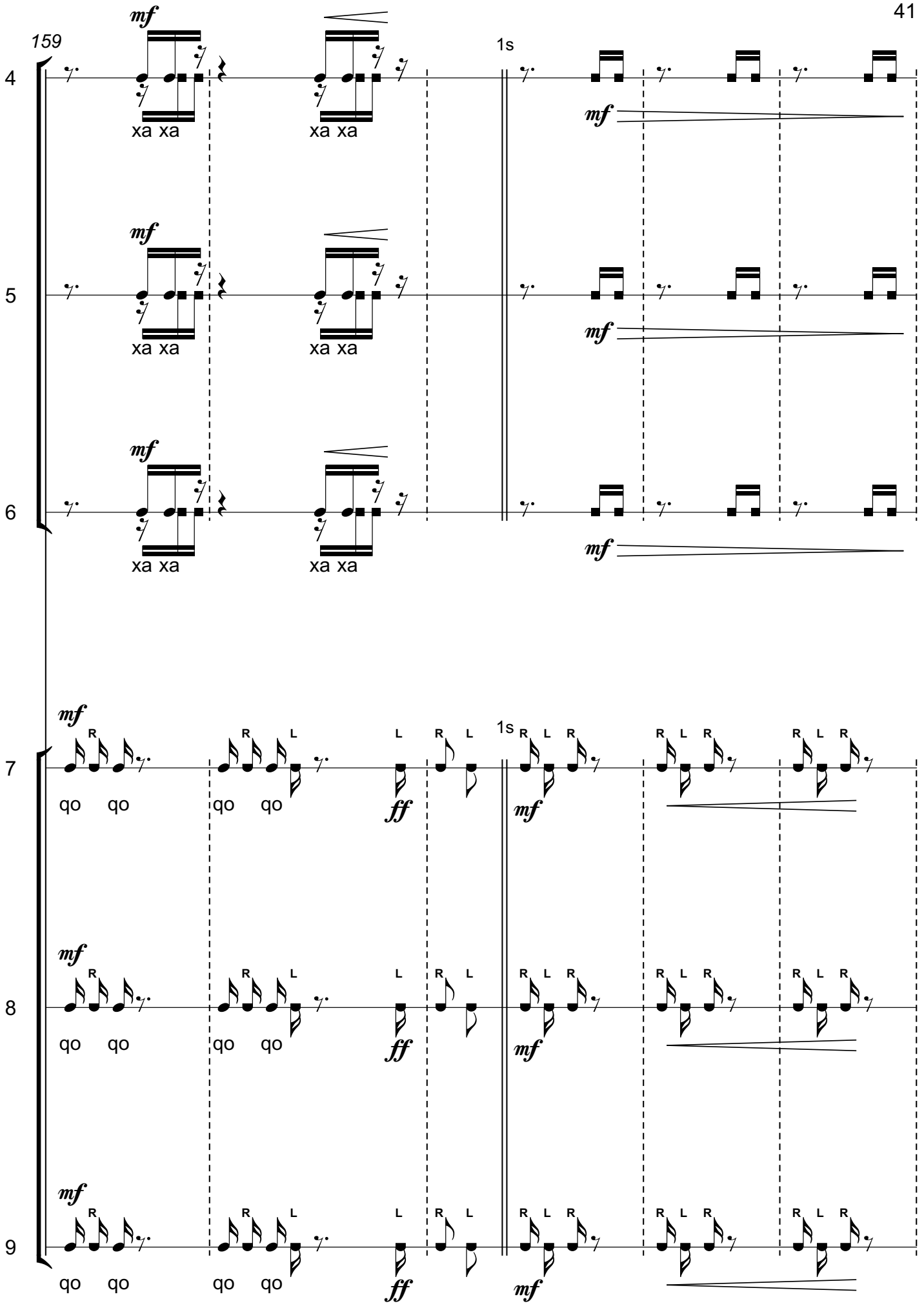

(147)
rit.
a tempo
2.5s
4
5
6
7
8
9
le - ndle qo - ngqo
le - ndle qo - ngqo
le - ndle qo - ngqo
2.5s

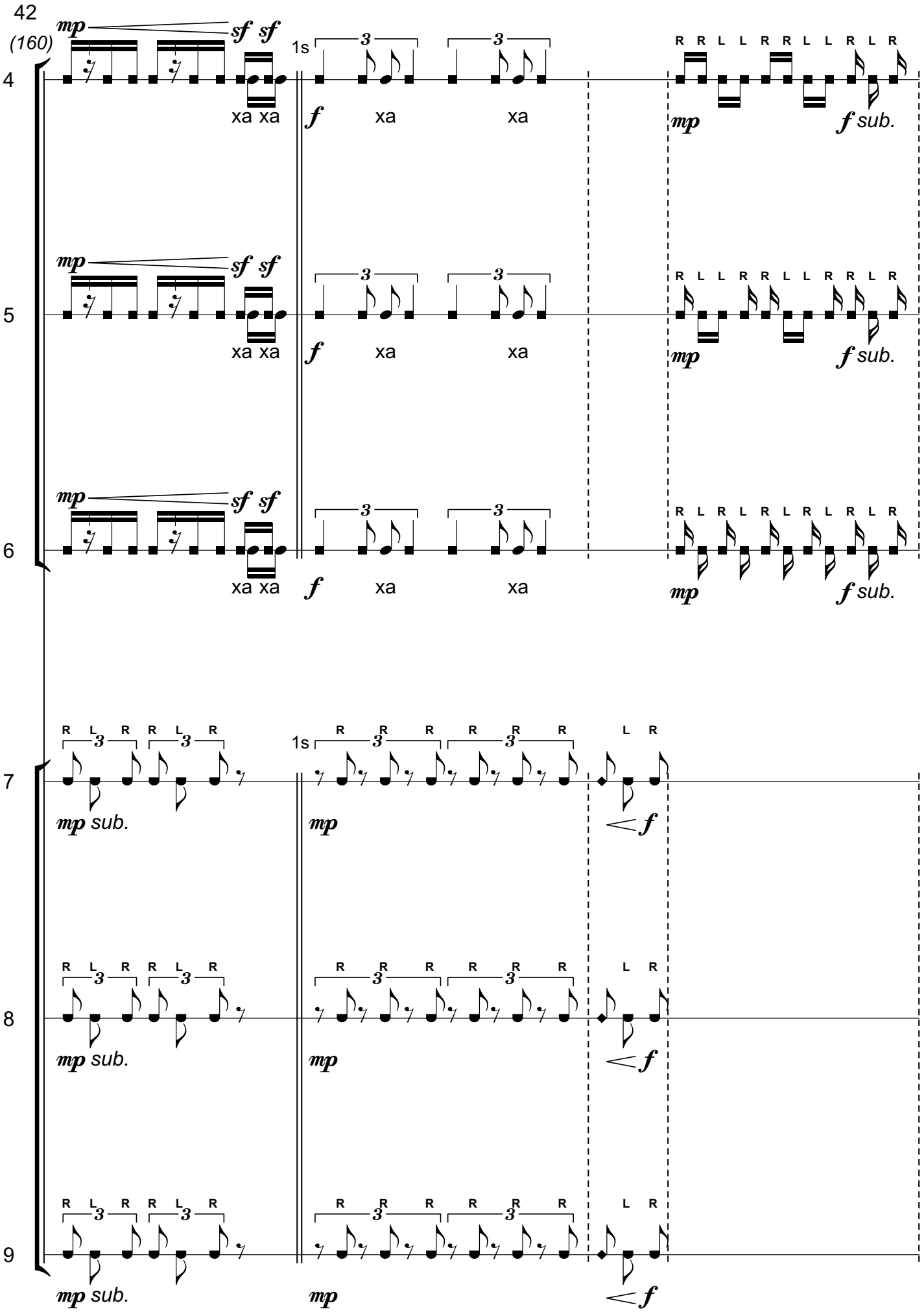

N
148
1.5s
2s
4
5
6
7
8
9

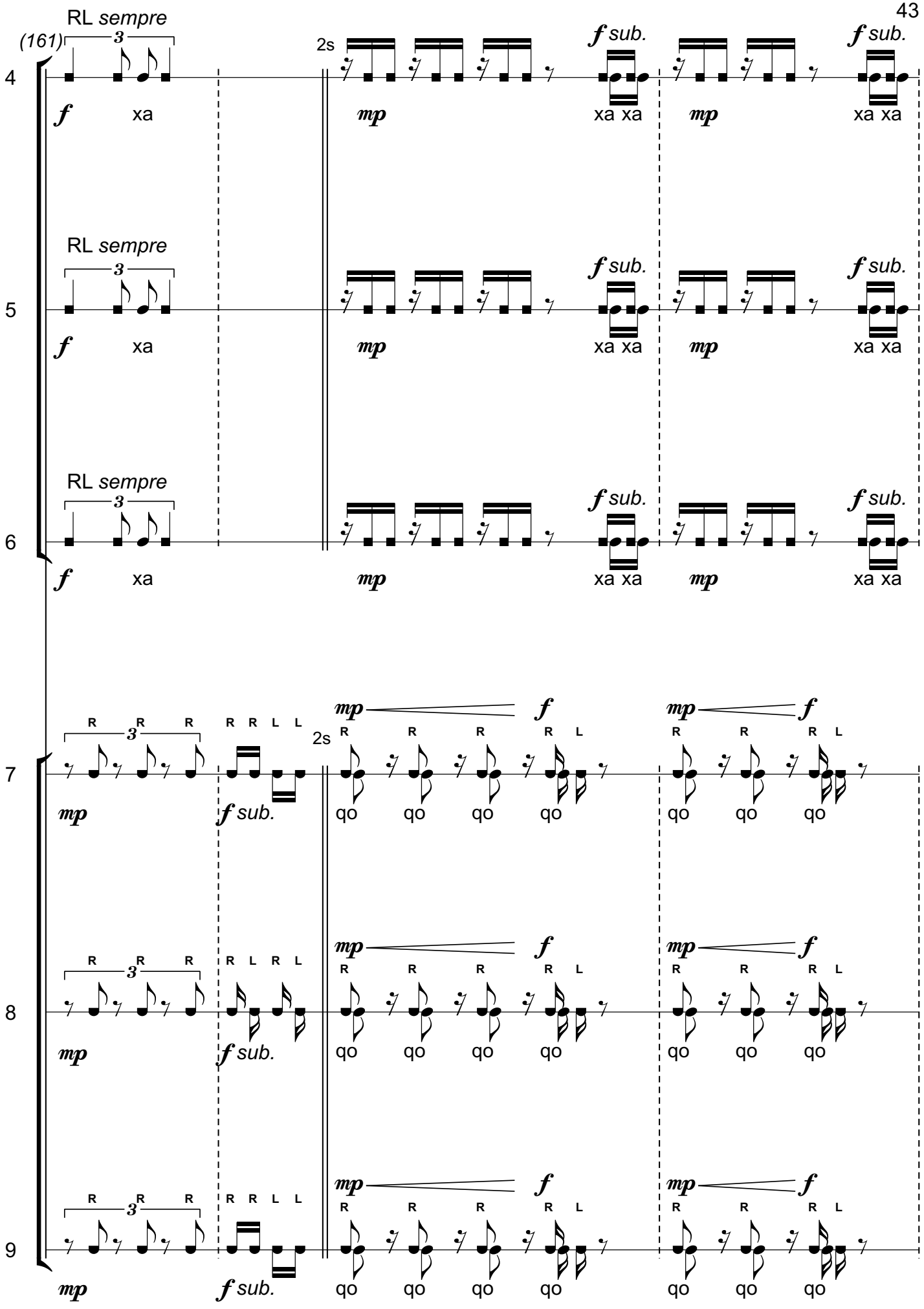

38
(150)
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
p
pp
3
c
2.5s
1s
1.5s
z
mf
R
L
f

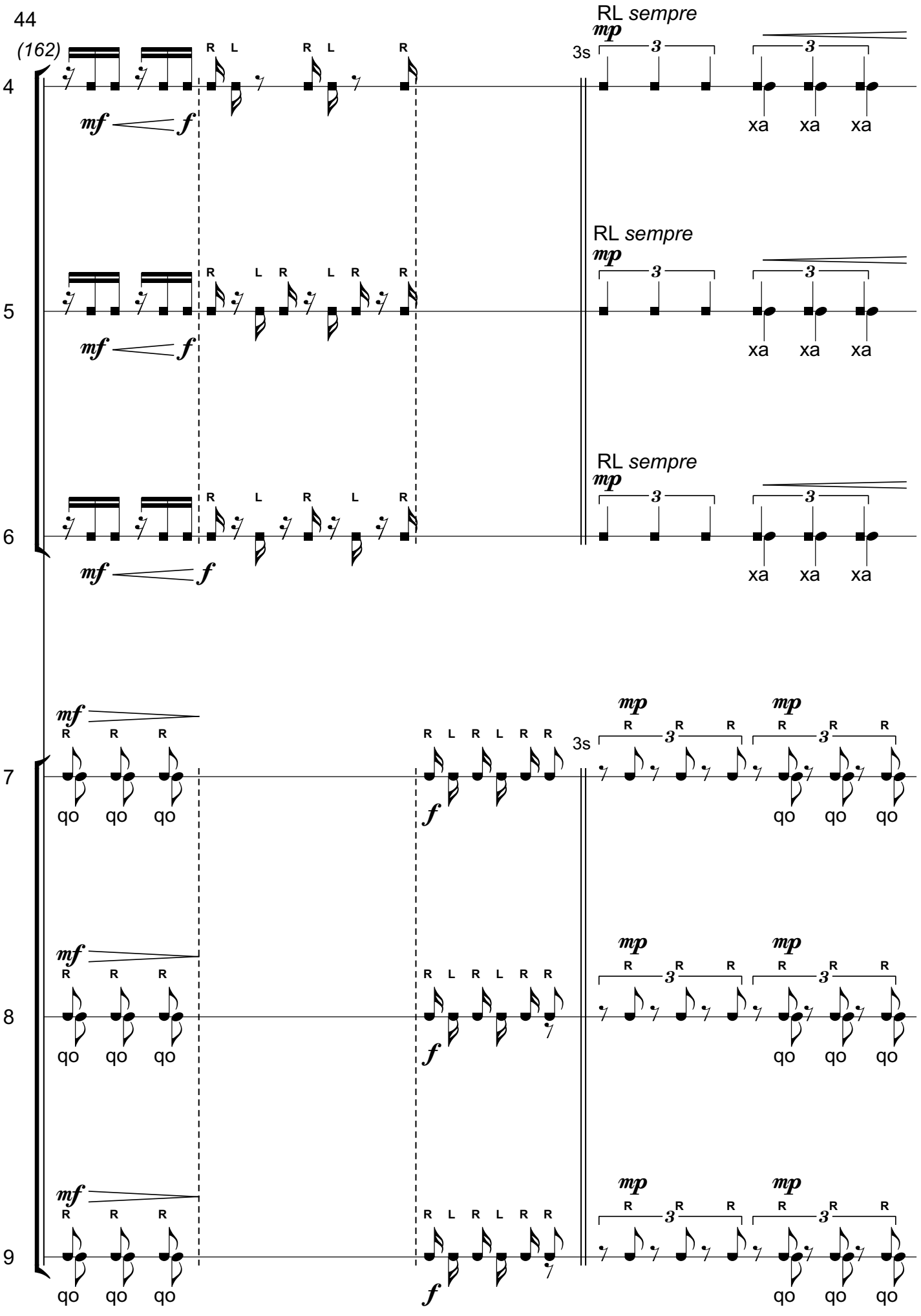

153
1
2
3
3s
p
C
4
5
6
z
mf
7
8
9
L
R
f

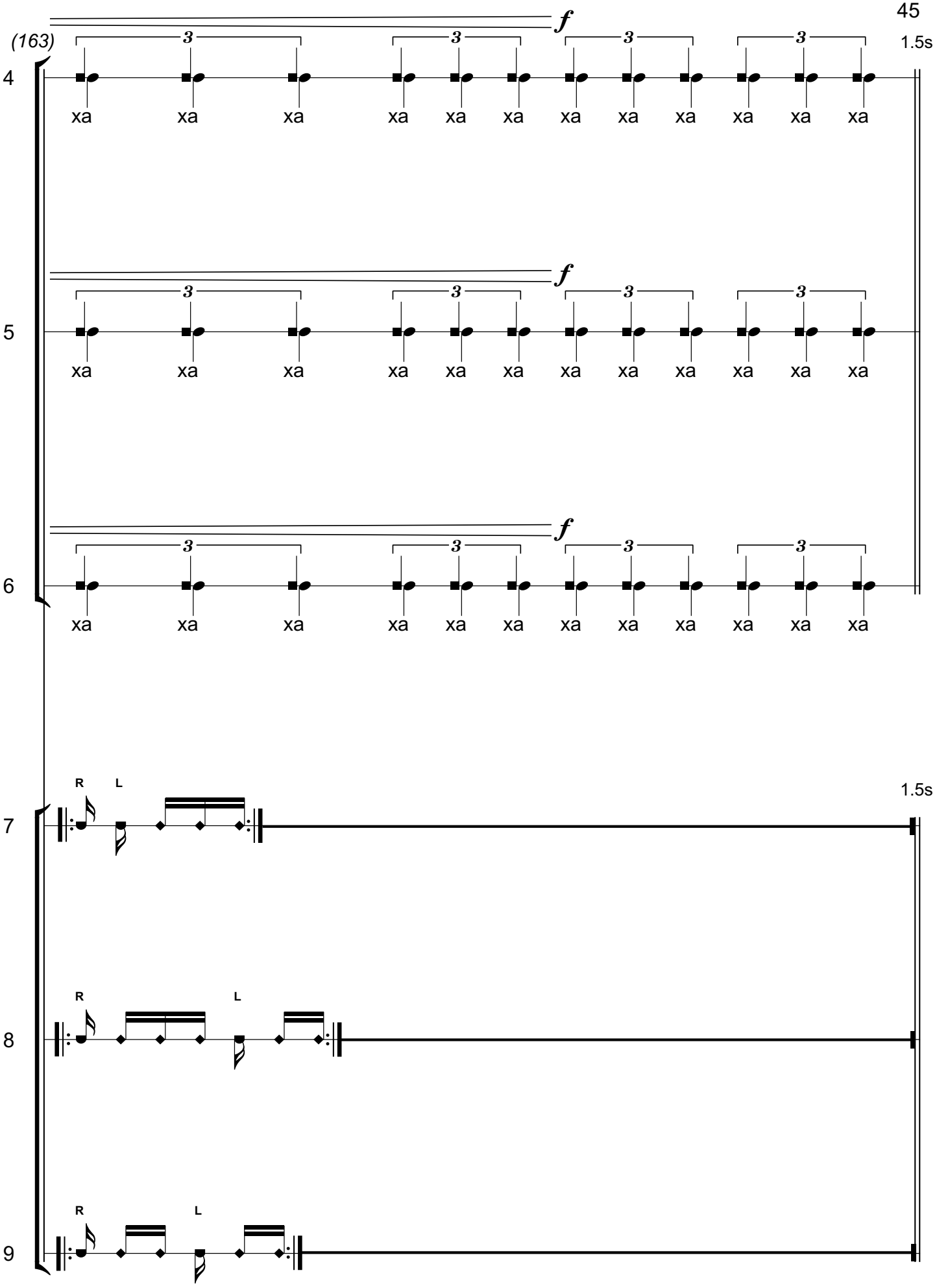

154
pp
1s
1.5s
2s
p
pp
2s
1
2
3
c
qo - ngqo-thwa-ne
ossia: nci nci nci nci
158
mf
R
L
RL sempre
xa xa
1s
4
5
6
qo qo qo qo qo qo
ff
7
8
9

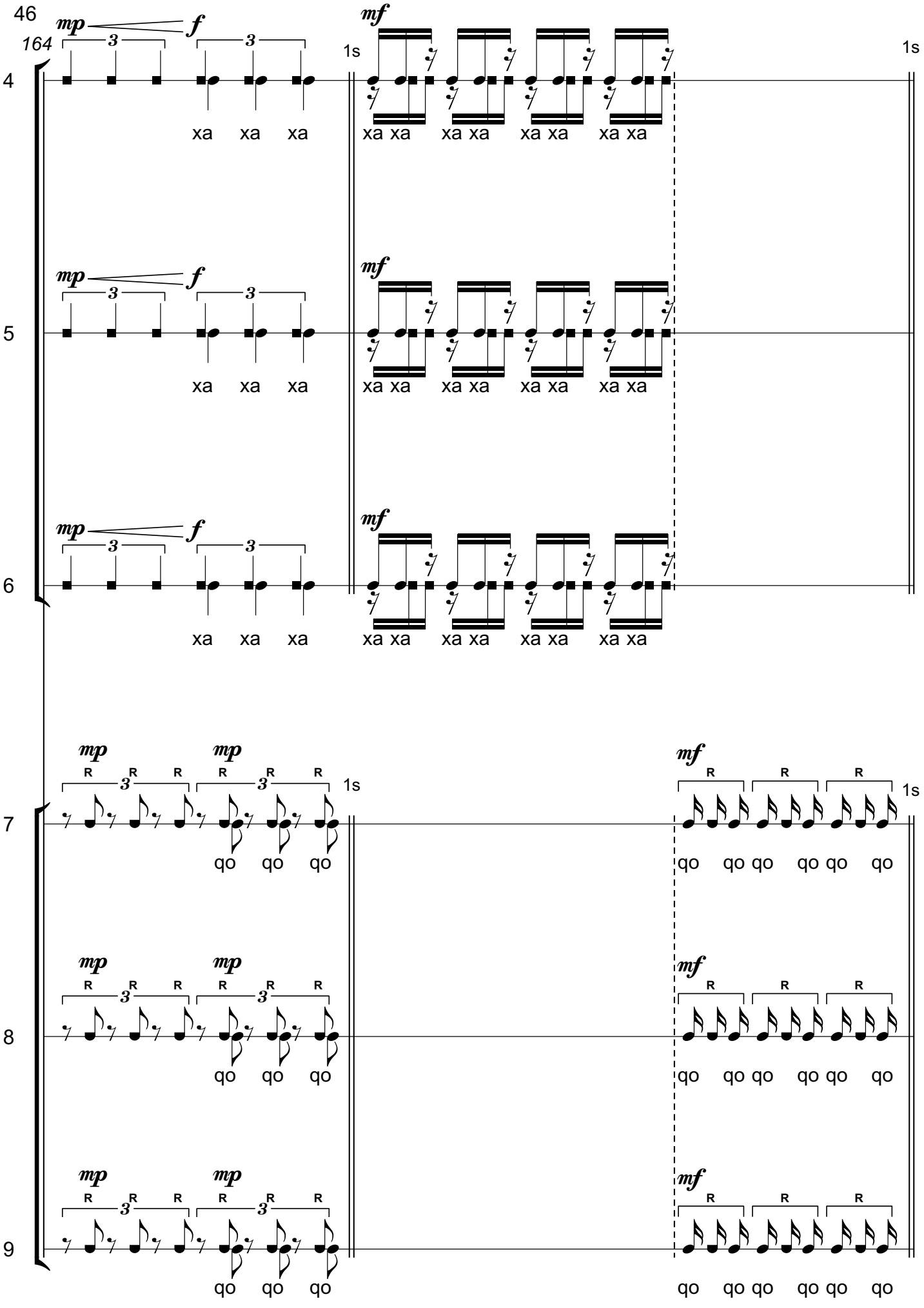

159
4
5
6
7
8
9
mf
xa xa
1s
qo qo
R
L
ff

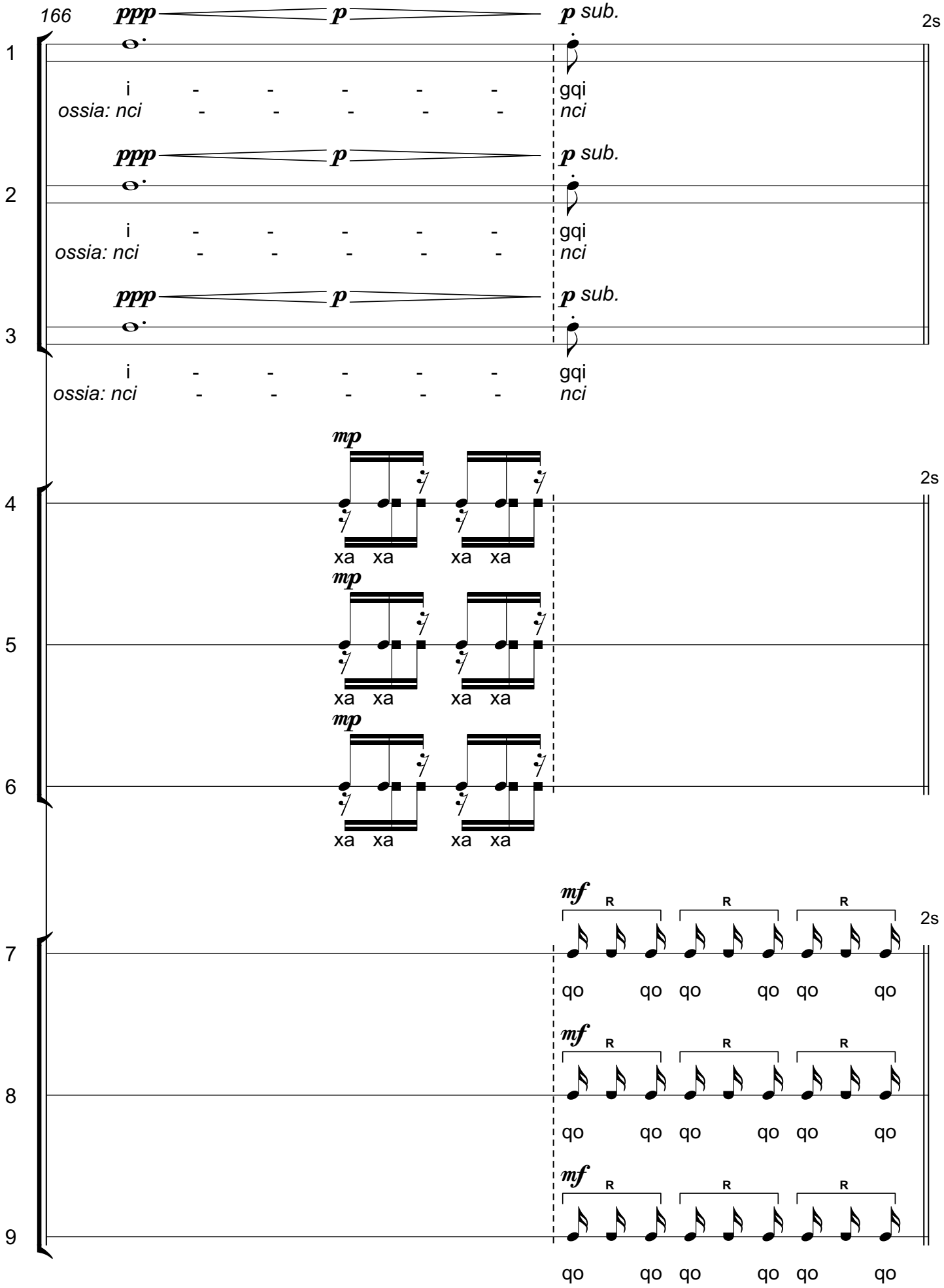

42
(160)
4
5
6
7
8
9
mp
sf sf
xa xa
1s
f
xa
xa
R R L L R R L L R L R
mp
f sub.
R L L R R L L R R L R
R L R L R L R L R L R
R L 3 R R L 3 R
mp sub.
R R R 3 R R 3 R
L R
< f

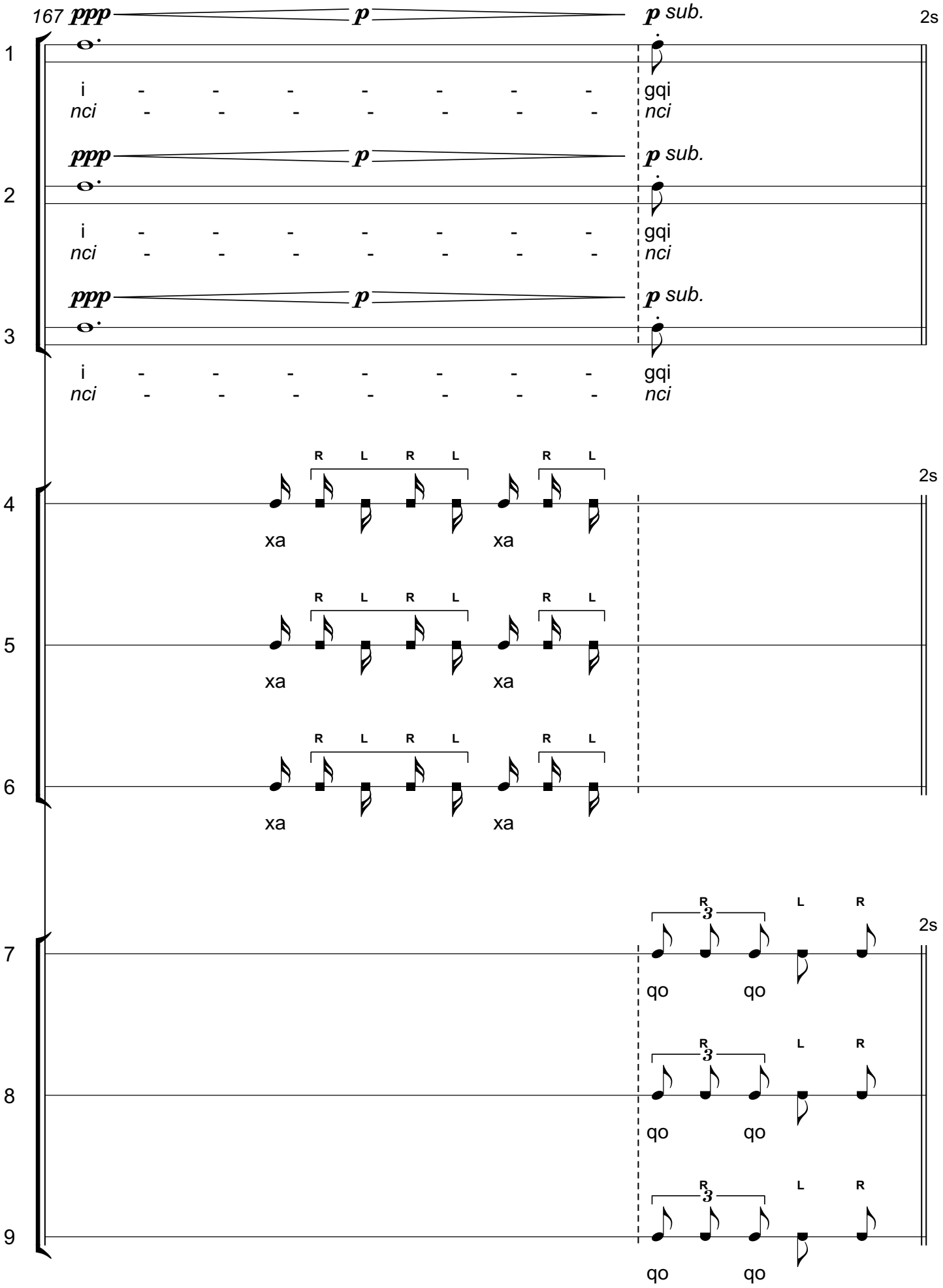

RL sempre
(161)
2s
f sub.
f
xa
mp
xa xa
4
5
6
7
8
9
R R R R R L L
R R R R L
qo qo qo qo qo qo qo
R L R L

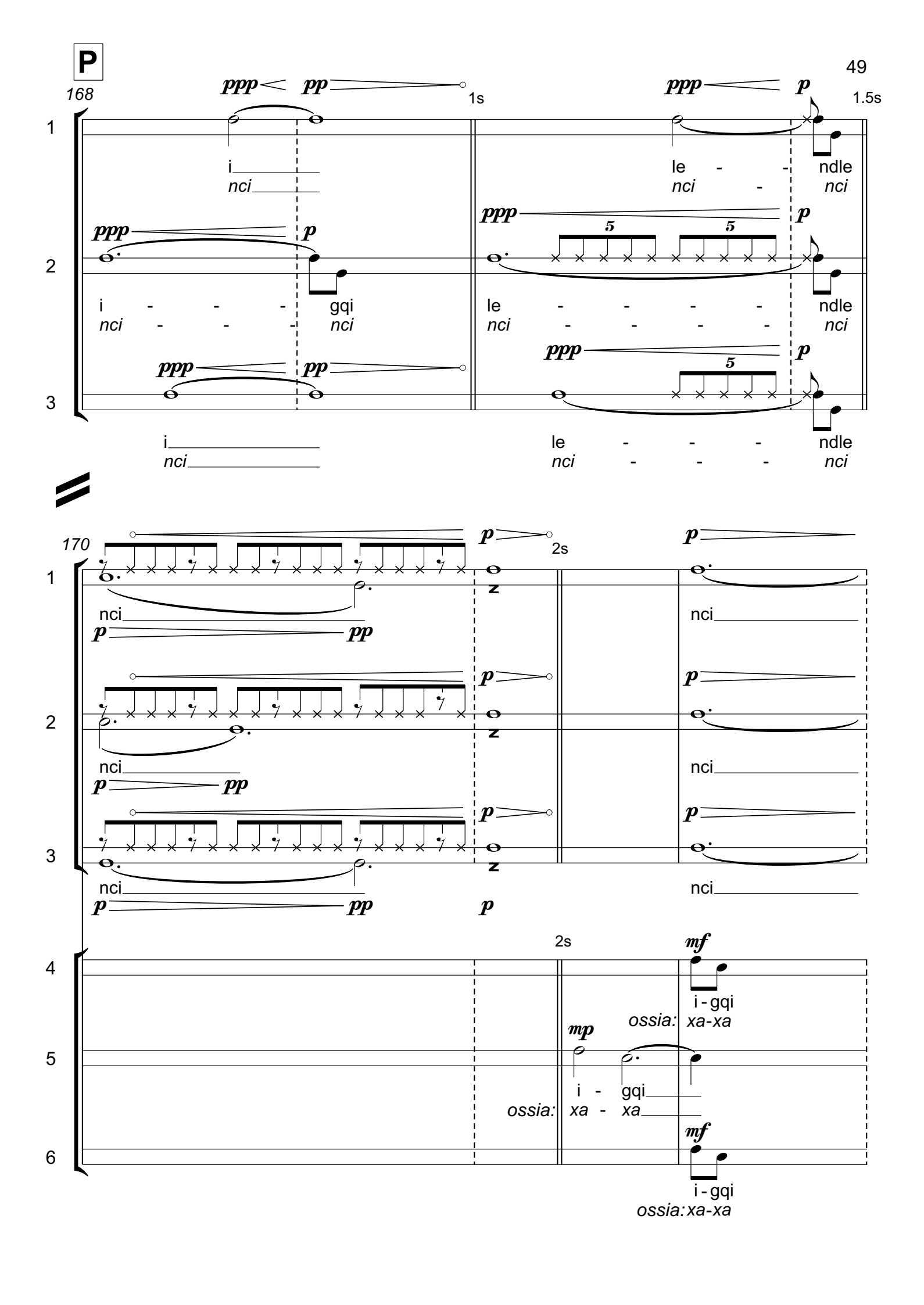

(162)
4
5
6
7
8
9
RL sempre
mp
3s
mf
f
R L R L R
xa xa xa
qo qo qo

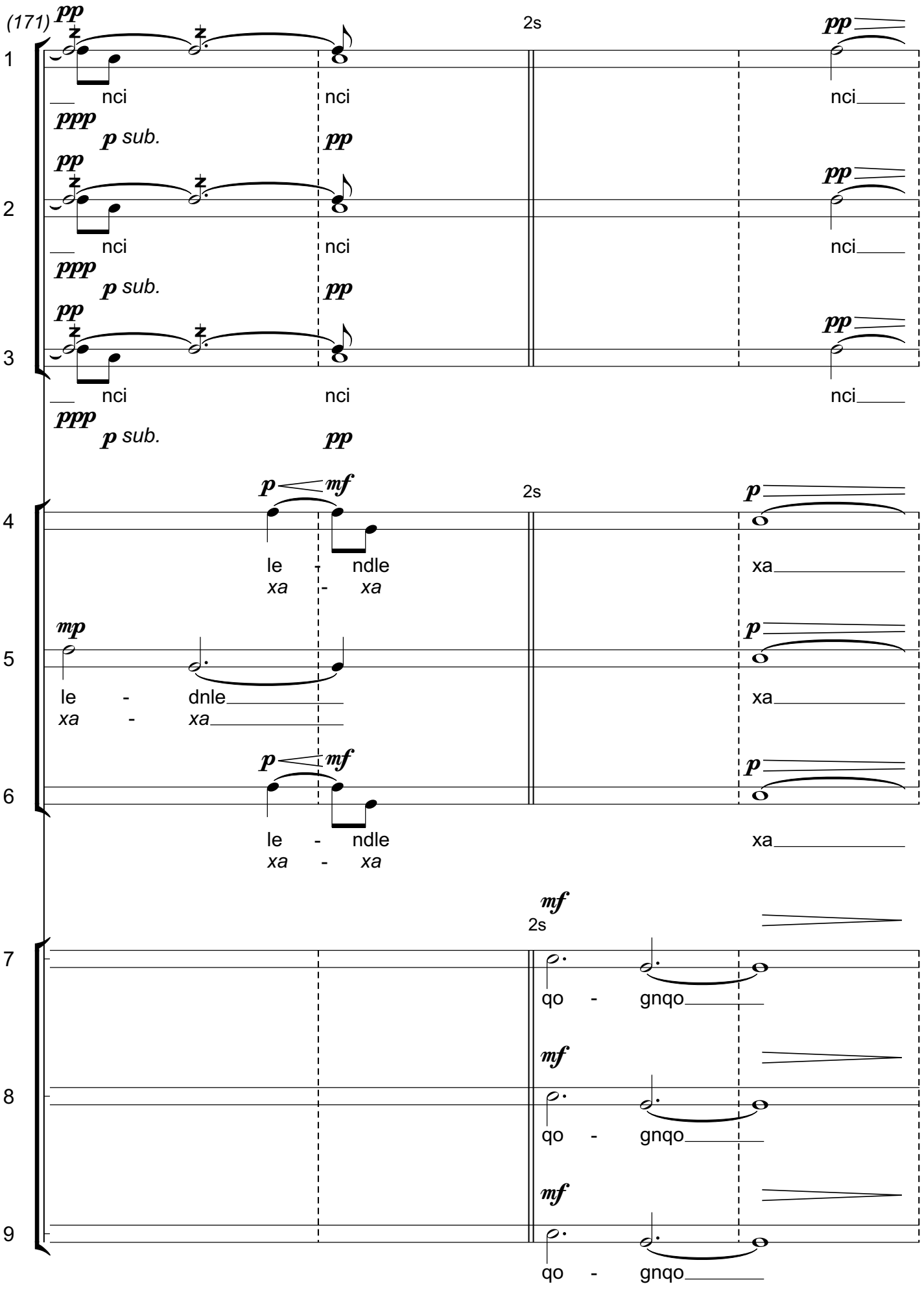

(163)
1.5s
4
5
6
xa
f
3
7
8
9
R
L
1.5s

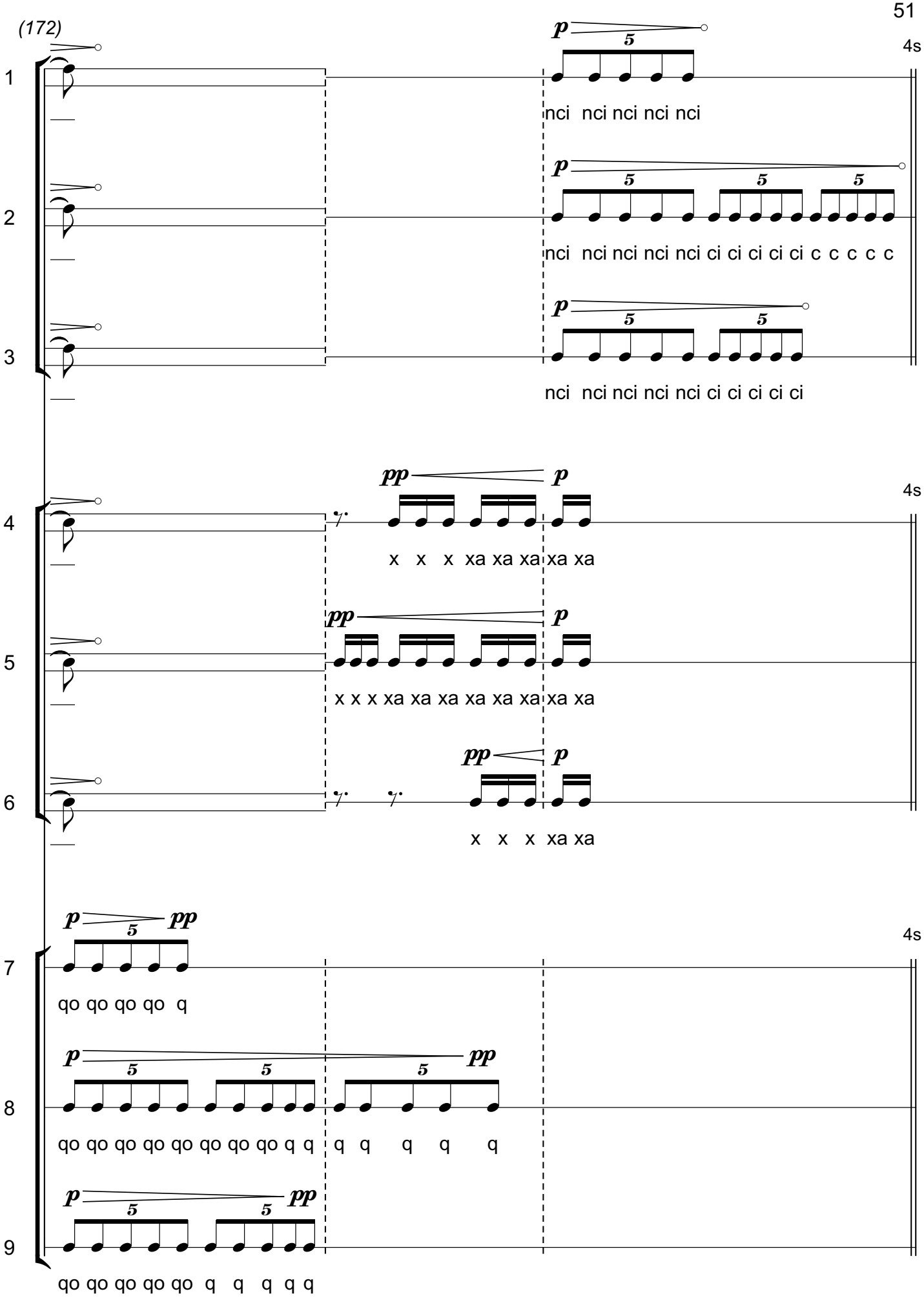

46
164
4
5
6
7
8
9
mp
f
mf
3
xa
1s
R
qo


166
ppp
p
p sub.
2s
1
i - - - - -
gqi
ossia: nci - - - - -
nci
2
3
mp
xa xa xa xa
4
5
6
mf
R
qo qo qo qo qo qo
7
8
9


167
ppp
p
p sub.
2s
1
i - - - - - - -
nci - - - - - - -
gqi
nci
2
3
4
R L R L
R L
xa
5
6
7
3
L R
qo
8
9


P
168
1s
1.5s
i
nci
le - - ndle
nci - nci
i - - - gqi
nci - - - nci
le - - - - ndle
nci - - - - nci
i
nci
le - - - ndle
nci - - - nci
170
2s
nci
nci
nci
nci
nci
nci
2s
i - gqi
ossia: xa-xa
i - gqi
ossia: xa - xa
i - gqi
ossia: xa-xa


(171)
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
pp
ppp
p sub.
nci
2s
p
mf
mp
le - ndle
xa - xa
dnle
xa
qo - gnqo


(172)
4s
1
p
5
nci nci nci nci nci
2
p
5 5 5
nci nci nci nci nci ci ci ci ci ci c c c c c
3
p
5 5
nci nci nci nci nci ci ci ci ci ci
4s
4
pp p
x x x xa xa xa xa xa xa
5
pp p
x x x xa xa xa xa xa xa xa xa
6
pp p
x x x xa xa
4s
7
p 5 pp
qo qo qo qo q
8
p 5 5 5 pp
qo qo qo qo qo qo qo qo q q q q q q q
9
p 5 5 pp
qo qo qo qo qo q q q q q

52 **Q**

173

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

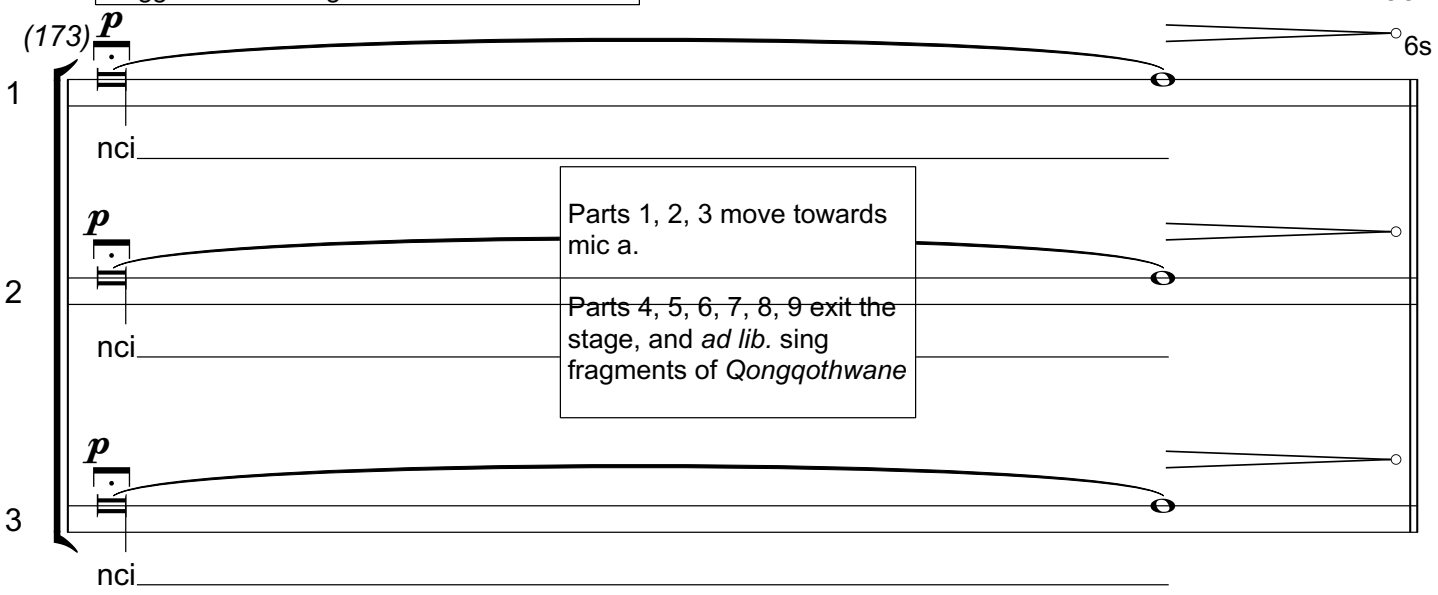
Ad lib. all parts may improvise for up to 2 minutes using any of the material, techniques and sounds previously used.

Parts 1, 2, 3 should perform fairly continuously. Parts 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 should be more judicious in their actions, so their relatively loud effects do not overpower parts 1, 2, 3's softer percussion.

All parts should aim for elements of interplay and clarity, rather than 9 complex polyphonic voices. Similarly, it is important for the improvisation not to be continuously intense, but vary in dynamic and texture.

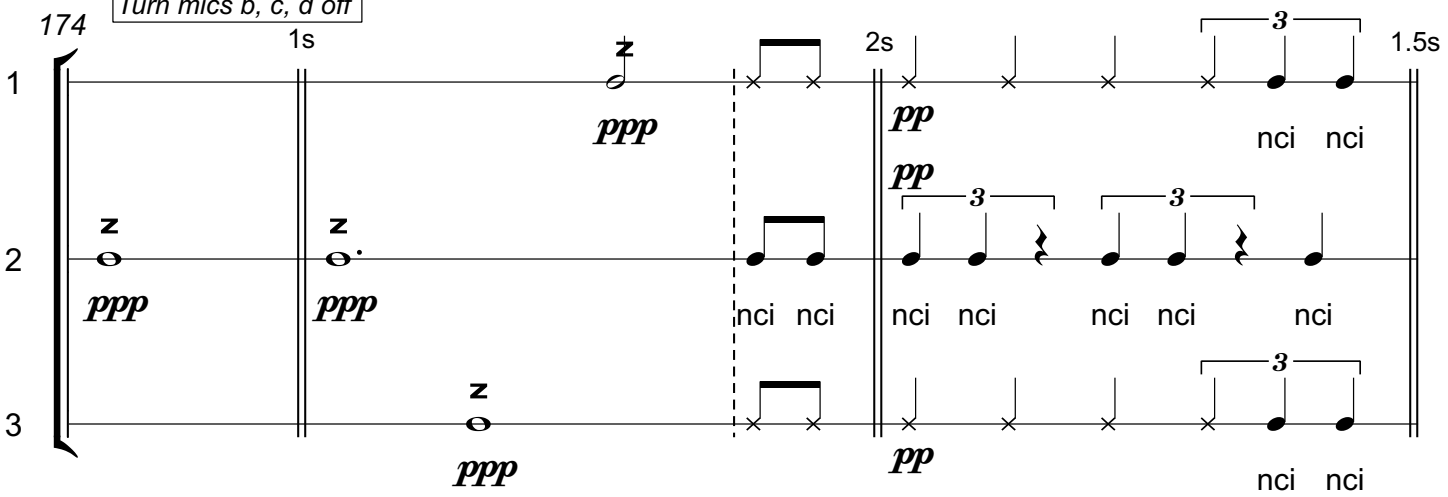
Finally, the click consonants should be evidently the most important element; they should be prominant and abundant.

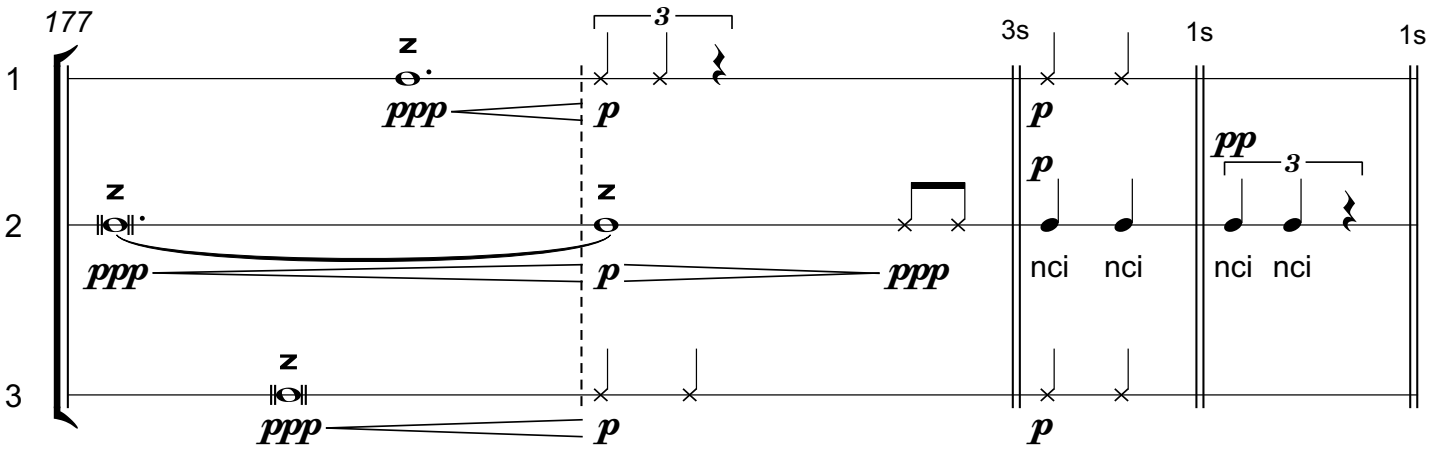
staggered breathing and rearticulation *ad lib.*

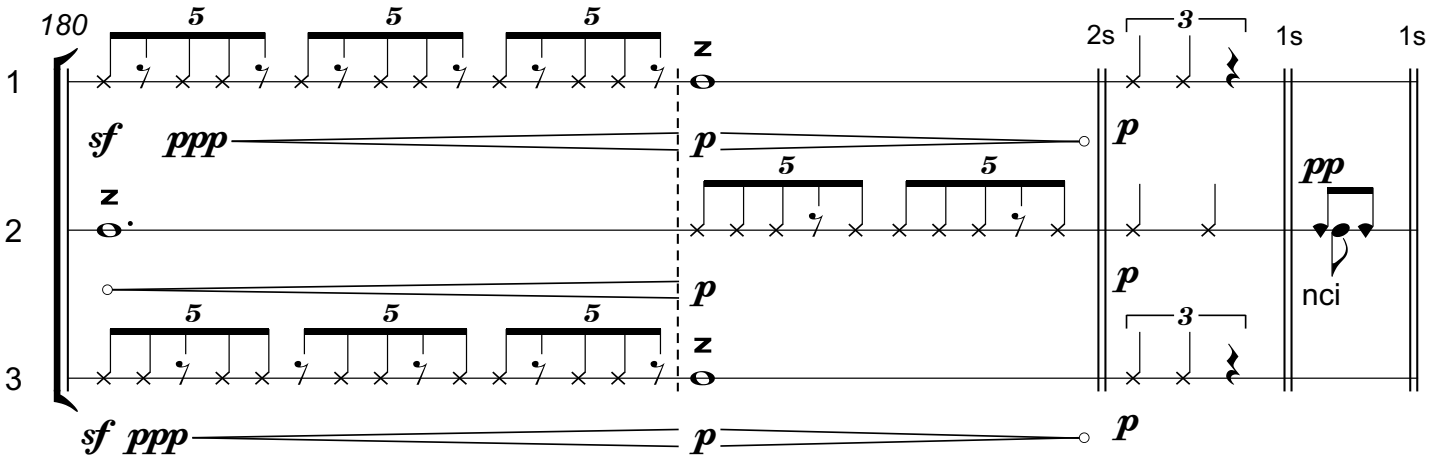


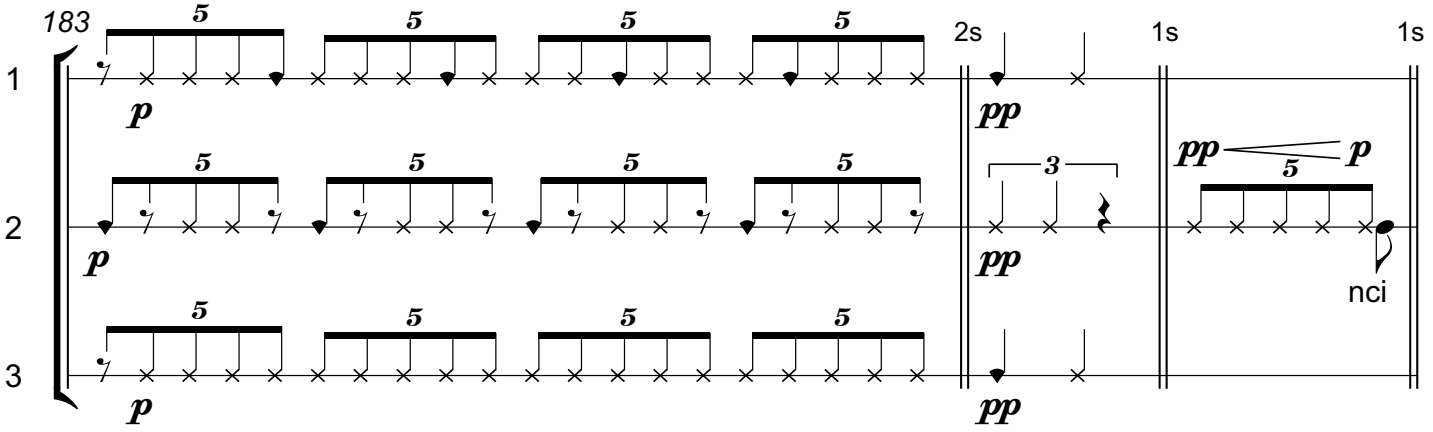
R

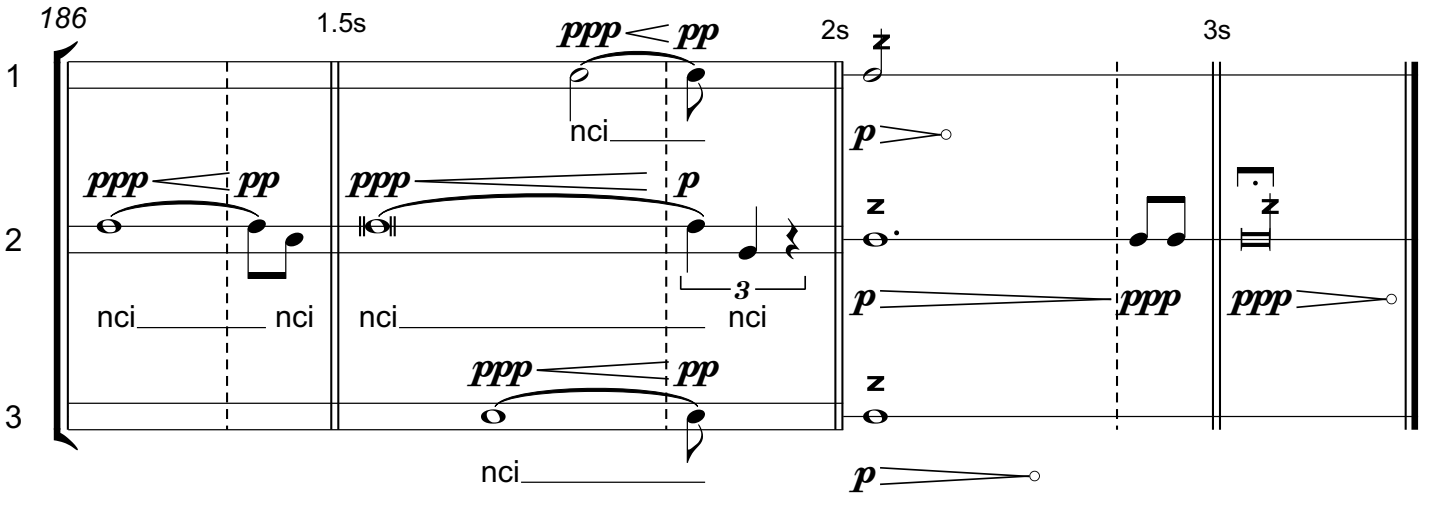
Turn mics b, c, d off






180
1
2
3
sf ppp
p
2s
1s
1s
pp
nci


183
1
2
3
p
pp
2s
1s
1s
nci


186
1
2
3
1.5s
2s
3s
ppp
pp
p
nci