

all these points aflame, I descend



oliver thurley

all these points aflame, I descender

slide whistle quartet

I, beholder: two

oliver thurley, 2019

dark. so fucking dark.

ca. 15'

Performed extremely quietly. Fragile: a low murmur of consciousness, trembling tendrils of breath, and distant whistling. If the audience must strain to listen, so much the better.

The piece is formed of two parts: part one finds the quartet murmuring softly, talking over and obscuring each other. Part two navigates narrow descending lines. Four slide whistles entwine. In both parts, players situate themselves at the brink of barely being voiced.

No light. Faces barely illuminated by stand lights. Never moving.

Faint, unintelligible voices. Muttered, murmured, and mumbled, not whispered. Barely audible, but intending to be voiced (as opposed to voiceless, the larynx not resonating).

Spoken rapidly throughout, all voices moving at similar speeds such that player 1 finishes before the others. Punctuation indicates delivery and does not necessarily conform to acts of grammar.

Throughout these muttered verses, the slide whistle should be held just below the lips, as if ready to play (or even, from the audience’s view, that they perhaps *are* being played). There should be very little movement in bringing the whistle into place for the second section of the piece.

player 1	player 2	player 3	player 4
<p>Dark. So fucking dark. Dark spilling across the sky. Faint here still, and stillness in dark, for a time, but it will lessen—poor thing—without doubt, without fear. All dark again, for a time. It will fade from here: here in shade, here in occultation, here in dim light, and in reach of branches, gnarled and bitter. I, descender, clinging to lights dimming. Lights gone now. Just shade now, now just night, just—</p> <p>All quiet, as if never been, or if never was but will. Then— Then the time will come, the thing is there, you’ll see it yet, and yet, rising and—</p> <p>A lustre hangs silent above. Below all dark, all still, but still it’s lonely here in the gloaming. Among millions. Points and never lines. Here in waning silver shade. Faint here. In less light you could hear the creaking of branches and the—</p> <p>That spell, which makes monuments pillars of ash, and all moments past. Please don’t wait anymore. Less darkness, less stillness. But quiet all the same, and all the while, while dark, while still—</p> <p>We move among circles, apogees and close bodies, and embers must sleep. No cure to gloom. We wait on. I, descending. Nadir, shining... shining... shining. Our fathers find their graves in our short memories, teach us how to be buried by our own children, wait, gravestones</p>	<p>Appulse. Perhaps sorrow brought them together and made them fearful. She carries a razor with her now, in the dark. Lonely points of light. Pity them. Pity us, to think we could be together. Poor creatures. I opened my mouth, to cry. I could not bear it. A pity. I, descend through that dim half-light. I wept. Soft dark, trembling rain, ripples in darkness. I hoped, but it was useless—</p> <p>“Be not afeared by this blood moon”, you whispered. I hold on, to your hand. But the rope is still the world. The rope is still the world. For waiting here with us, for keeping us safe. It must still end. The rope is the world and it binds us together. Dark spilled, and stillness in the dark, for a time. Dark. So fucking dark. But it will lessen, little comfort now, here in shade of azimuth. In dim light and the reaches of branches, grotesque. I, descender. Reaching for the lights dim light gone, just shade now. Now just darkness—</p> <p>All quiet, as if never been, or if it never was, but it will. It will. The time will come, the night is there, you’ll see it yet and yet, rising among a grid of points.</p> <p>Dawn then, and quiet. All dark all still, but still, it’s lonely here in dim light, here in waning silver shade. Faint. In less light listening, the crackle of the fire, even in eventide. The muttering of rain on fragile ground.</p> <p>Less doubt now but still lonely, but still doubting, and missing you still. Sleep now. Worse made strange,</p>	<p>The faint murmur of a prayer to death: a spell to ward off shadow, and the memory of grief. Less darkness, less stillness, but quiet all the same, and all the while, while dark—</p> <p>We move in runes: angles, lines and limits, describing the motions of stellar bodies and embers asleep. There is no antidote against a darkness that considers all things. So we wait on. I, descending. Nadir, afire. Poor creatures. Grim doubt now, but still lonely, but still doubting, and missing you still. Sleep dyed dark and the darker; deep ink made strange pools, ink made dawn. Then, and now, stars, and yet...</p> <p>[pause, five seconds]</p> <p>And yet, I, descended. Into the zenith. Into time, trembling and washed across skies. We wait, as we can. But there’s less light, and it grows darker forever. Time too short for us, for hope, but it is dark still, and a silver crescent bleeds in ink. The moon held in my beak. Rain falling, all still among tremors, be still, still quiet, still all dark, fainter and all still and—</p> <p>All still, tremors be still, be still, a quiet still, still all dark. Fainter. And all still and all dim, all quiet as we wait for the dead to sleep— low murmurs of a tender lullaby, beneath fragile ground.</p> <p>Dark spilled, and stillness in dusk, for a time.</p>	<p>Less doubt now but still alone, but still doubting, and missing you still. Then, and now, stars covered and yet I descended, to zenith, shimmering, trembling, time washed across sky; we wait, but in less light and growing dim, we cannot wait forever. Time may be too short for us, but it is dark still, and a silver crescent bleeds in ink, the moon in my beak. All still, tremors be still, be still, still quiet. Still all dark, fainter and all still and—</p> <p>All still, tremors be still, be still, quiet still. Holding it together. Still all dark. Fainter and all still and all dim and all quiet, we wait for the dead to sleep, their low murmur of tender lullabies. Appulse. Perhaps shadows brought them together and made them fearful. She carries a razor with her now, for points of light. Gloa. Pity them. Pity us, to think we could be together. Poor creatures. Poor points in ink. Finally I opened my mouth, to speak, and it was all too much, I cannot go on. A pity. I, descend. Soft dusk, trembling, less faint hope—the wolf waits for its hour.</p> <p>Afeared to hang from the pale moon, I hold onto your hand. Under this faint moon. Spilling glimmer and hopelessness. But the rope is still the world. The rope is still the world. For waiting here with us. Keeping us safe from wolves. The rope is the world.</p> <p>Whose death do we pray for. Monuments become pillars of embers, and all moments pass. Less darkness, less stillness. But</p>


<p>tell truth: generations fall while trees stand grim.</p> <p>Appulse. Perhaps sorrow brought them together and made them fearful. She carries a razor with her now, in the dark. Pity them. Poor stellar creatures. Poor lonely points of light. Pity us, to think we could be together. I opened my mouth, to cry, it was all too much. I cannot go on. Crepuscular, the wolf waiting for its hour. A pity. I, descend. Through that faint half-light. Soft dark, trembling, gloaming.</p> <p>Hanged from this moon, you held onto my hand, but the rope is the world; the rope is still the world, for waiting here with us, safe for now; the rope is the world and if you get there before me—</p> <p><i>[start to whistle a sustained tone]</i></p>	<p>worse made dark. Then, and now, scars covered and yet...</p> <p>I, descended. Zenith. Ablaze. Trembling, time washed across sky. We'll wait. It will come, but there's less light and it grows darker. You can't wait forever, time may be too short for us, but it is dark, still, and a silver crescent in my beak, bleeding ink; all still, tremors be still. Be still, still quiet. A cold dark place. Still all dark, fainter and all still and—</p> <p><i>[pause, three seconds]</i></p> <p>All still, tremors be still, be still. Quiet. Still. Holding it together. “To ward the darkness away” I thought—a song still all dark, fainter and all still and all dim, all quiet; we wait while dawn sleeps, and gravestones teach us how to sing the low murmur of tender lullabies, tenebrous, whose spell makes pyramids of ink, and all moments past; grief held by numb hands; less darkness, less stillness, quiet all the same, and all the while, while dark—</p> <p>Ecliptics, apogees and close bodies, and moons might sleep; we'll wait—I, descending—nadir.</p> <p><i>[start to whistle a sustained tone]</i></p>	<p>Holding it together. Dark. So fucking dark. But it will lessen. Poor thing. In time. Without heart, without faith, disquieting. Dark, soon all dim, for a—</p> <p>The shade of horizon, in their dim light and the reaches of their branches, gnarled. I, descender. Reaching for the lights dim, light gone now, just shade now, now— Just darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres gloaming. All quiet, as if never been, or if never was, but will. Or could. Perhaps. Sorry. The time <i>will</i>—and yet, and— It <i>will</i> be light soon, and quiet. All dark, all still, but still, it's lonely here in the dim light. Here in waning silver shade. Faint, in less light you could hear the creaking of roots. We wait forever here. In aphelion. In the hour of the wolf. We wait—</p> <p>Appulse. Perhaps gloom brought us together. And made us carry razors in the dark. Pity them. Pity us, to think we could never be together. Poor creatures. I opened my mouth to speak and could no longer. A pity. I, descend. Stalking soft dark, trembling, less darkness, I hope. Hanged by this moon, you held onto my hand, but the rope is still the world, the rope is still the world, for waiting here with us, for keeping you safe, the rope is the world.</p> <p><i>[start to whistle a sustained tone]</i></p>	<p>quiet all the same, and all the while, while dark—</p> <p>We move limits, angles, and close bodies, and three bodies never sleep. There is no antidote against nocturnes. Fragile, a silence considering all things. I, descending. Nadir. Our mothers find their graves in our short memories, and tell us how to be buried by kin. Gravestones tell truth: generations pass while some trees stand. Poor creatures. Grim and all gloom and shimmering in gloaming. Ground brittle. All dark, all too short for mercy. Dark. So fucking dark. Spilled across the sky. Faint here still, and stillness spilled in the dark, and for the time, stillness still before rain.</p> <p><i>[pause, four seconds]</i></p> <p>Soon all dark, soon all dim, then for a time, then quiet, then empty, but it will come to this place. Here in the dusk of azimuth, in its dim light and the reaches of its branches, gnarled. I, descender. Reaching for the lights dim, now lights gone. Just pools of shade now, now just darkness. All quiet, as if never been, or if it never was, but it will. Wretched. The time will come, the dawn there yet, and yet, rising and... yet it will get light soon, and quiet; all dark, all still, but still, it's lonely here in dim light, here in waning silver lights; grief held by numb hands, faint, in less light I hear shimmering—</p> <p><i>[start to whistle a sustained tone]</i></p>
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When you finish speaking the above text, immediately make a very soft whistle with lips (not into the slide whistle) and hold, breathing where necessary. An airy timbre coloured with pitched tone. Pitches should be close but not the same: no more than a tone from another member of the quartet. Player 1 has more specific instructions regarding the pitch (see individual part).

Wait for all parties to whistle, then continue to hold together for a short time (20–30”) before beginning with the second part of the score (“*all these spilled lines*”). There is no general pause between parts.

Played with slide whistles, faint humming and whistling. *sempre pppppppp*. Breathe where necessary.

Pitches are undefined in the score and all motions of the whistle’s slide are relative but should be performed precisely. The central horizontal axis indicates a common tone. Focus on very narrow intervals, usually less than a semitone.

	Slide whistle. Line implies a barely audible, airy ‘tone’ from the slide whistle. This should always be just on the brink of not speaking.
[slide]	Use your embouchure to colour the slide whistle’s tone and restrict the amount of air passing through the mouthpiece. Given the relatively wide opening of the mouthpiece it is difficult to regulate the ‘speaking point’ of the whistle and will result in an unstable and fluctuating sound.
	(Re)articulate note. Use the tongue to provide a small articulation of the note. This occurs on a tone that is already being played and serves as a point of punctuation along that line.
[sib.] w/ slide	A sibilant ‘whistle’ <i>into</i> the slide whistle. Producing an airy tone, with sibilant noise. The sibilant whistle should be a very high (overtone) pitch, with small tremors and fluctuations controlled by the tongue and lips.
[hiss] w/o slide	A sibilant ‘whistle’ with tongue and teeth (no slide whistle, as though hissing with many teeth). Similar to the sibilant whistle with slide (above).
[lip whstl.]	Whistle with lips (no slide whistle), normally, but <i>very</i> softly. More air than tone. Continued over from the end of pt. i.
[hum]	Hum softly. Octave free.

all these points after, 1 descender

pt. ii - all these lines spilled.

o Hurley, 2019

approx. 10" — fragile

player 1 — (lip whistl.)

player 2 — (lip whistl.) [sib.] w/slide

player 3 — (lip whistl.)

player 4 — (lip whistl.) [slide]

Sempre ppppppp

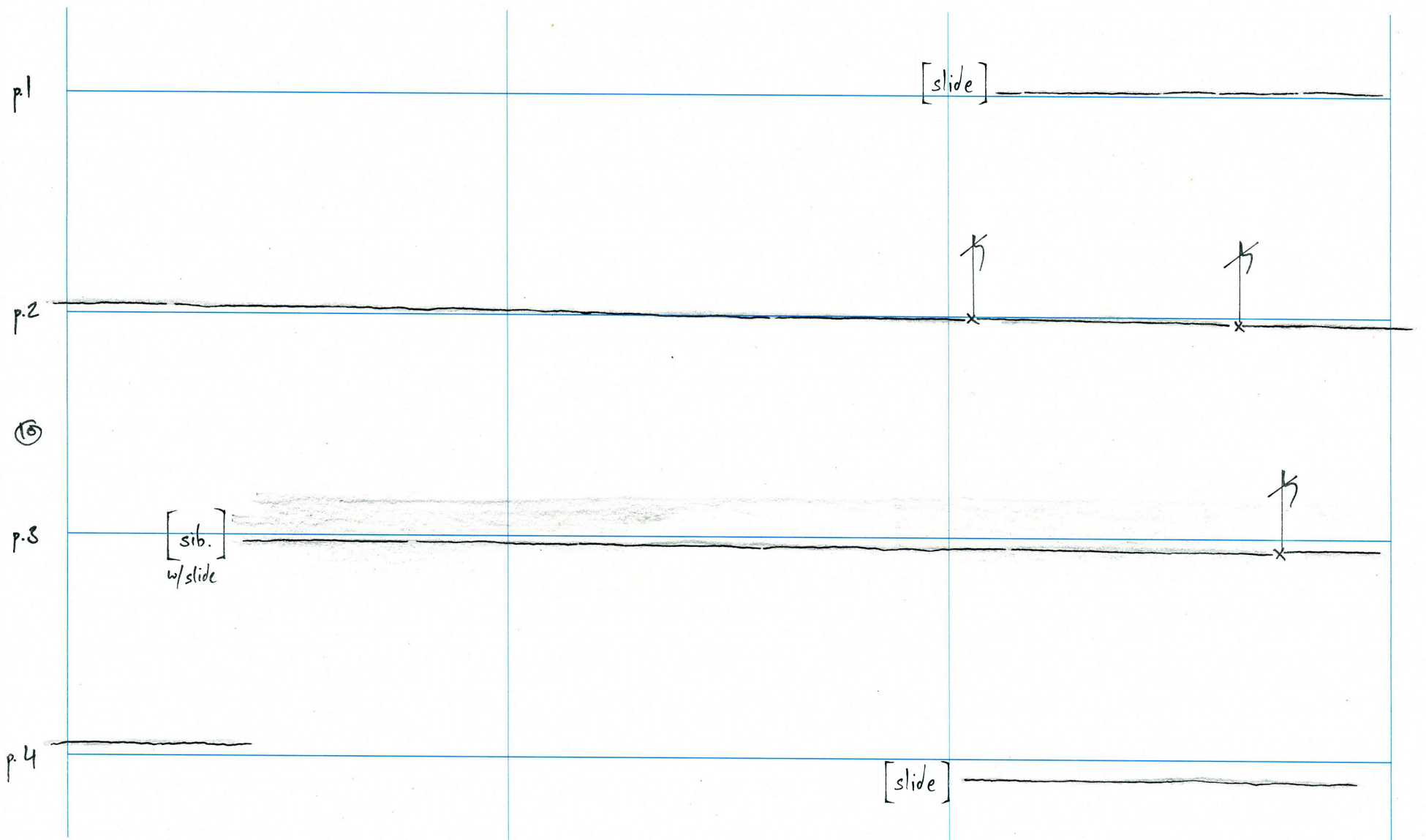
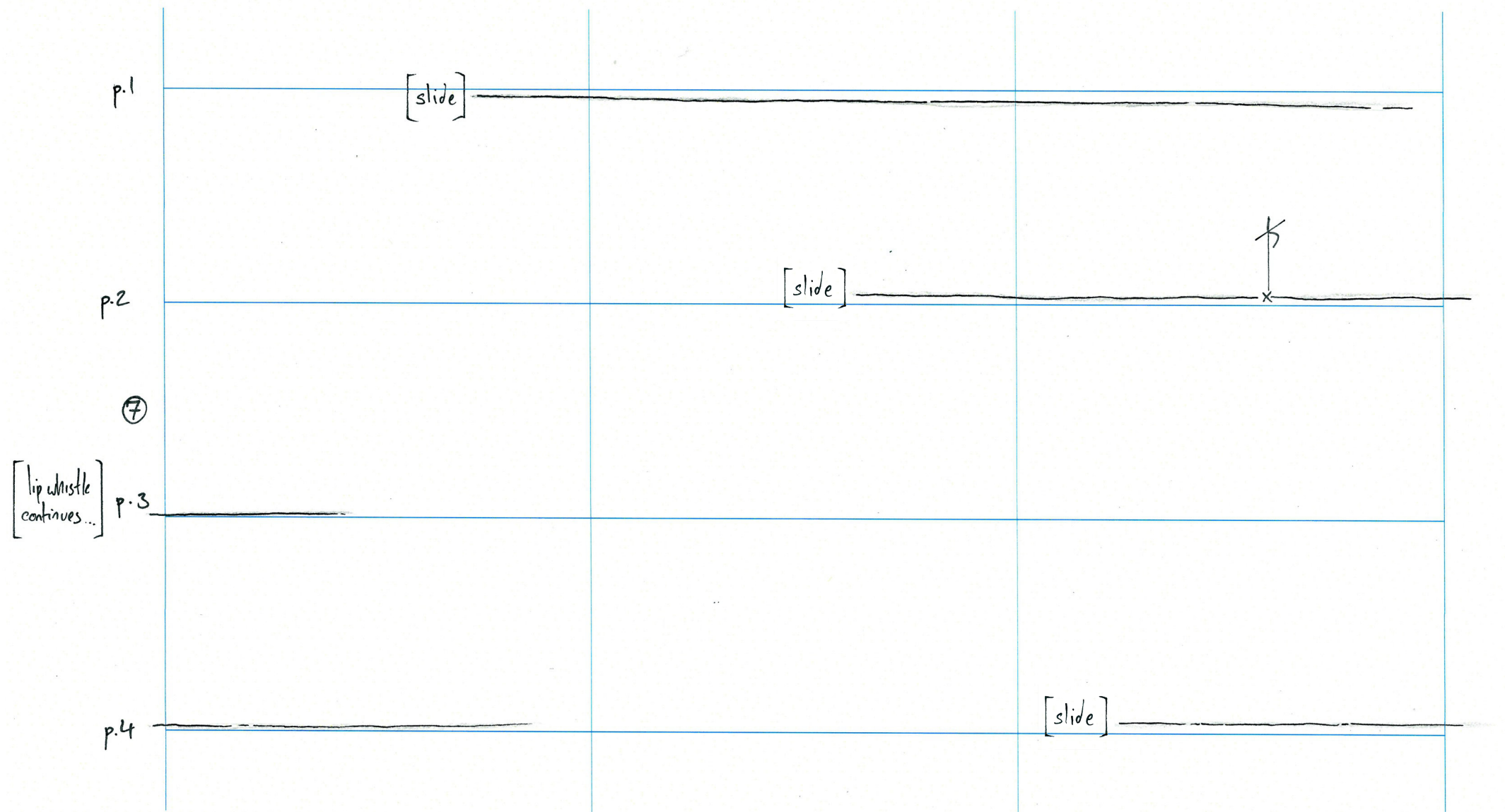
p.1 [hiss] w/o slide

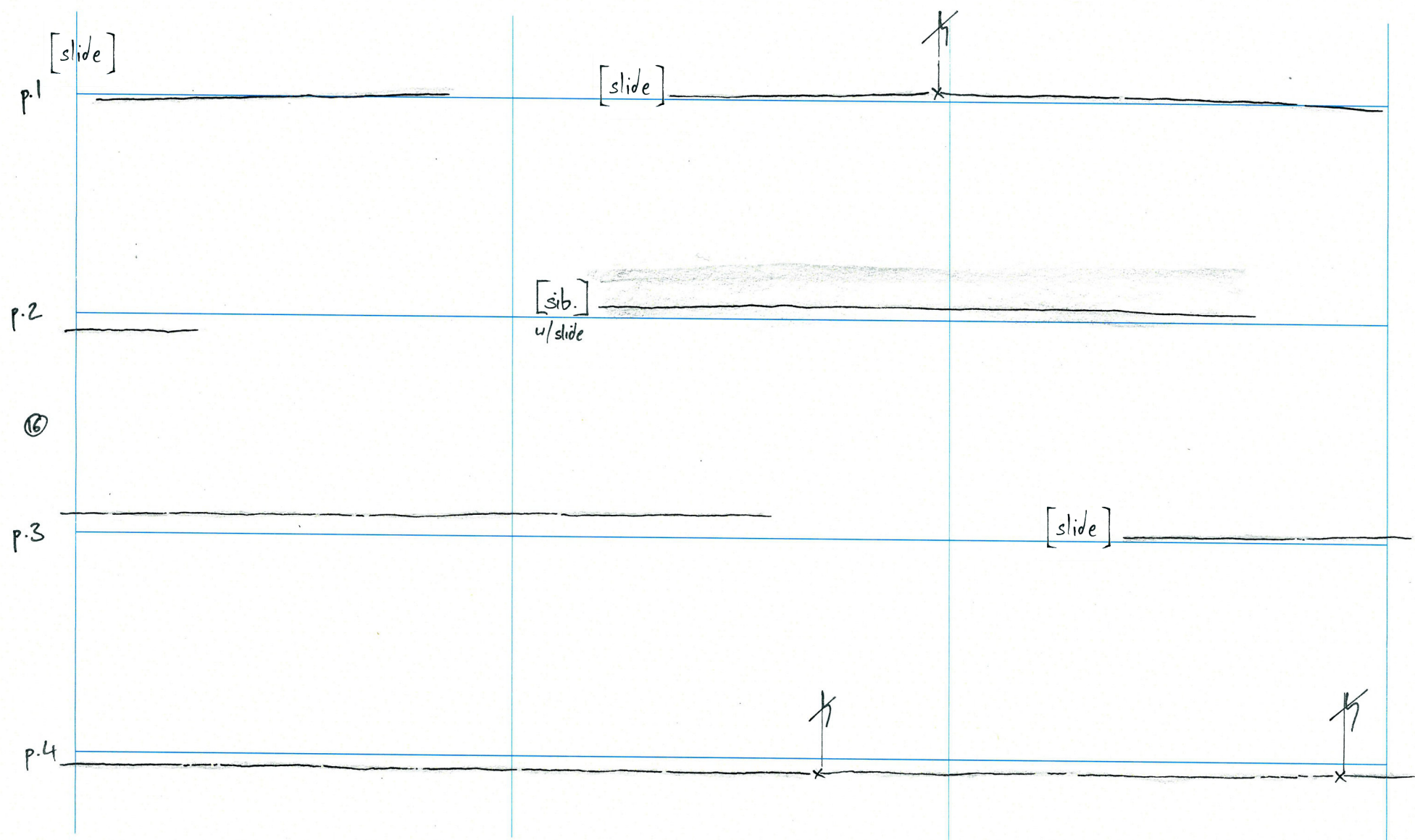
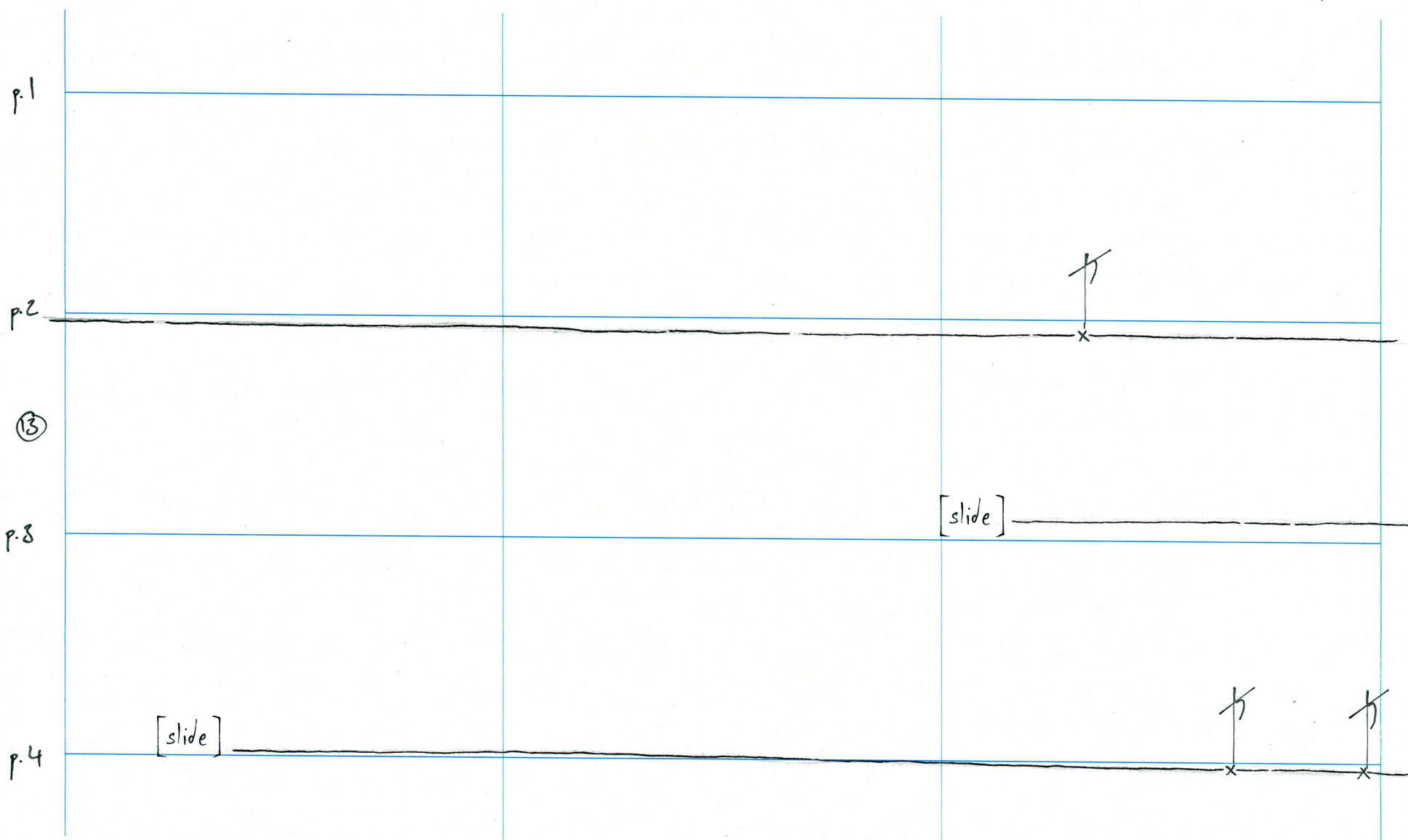
p.2 [slide]

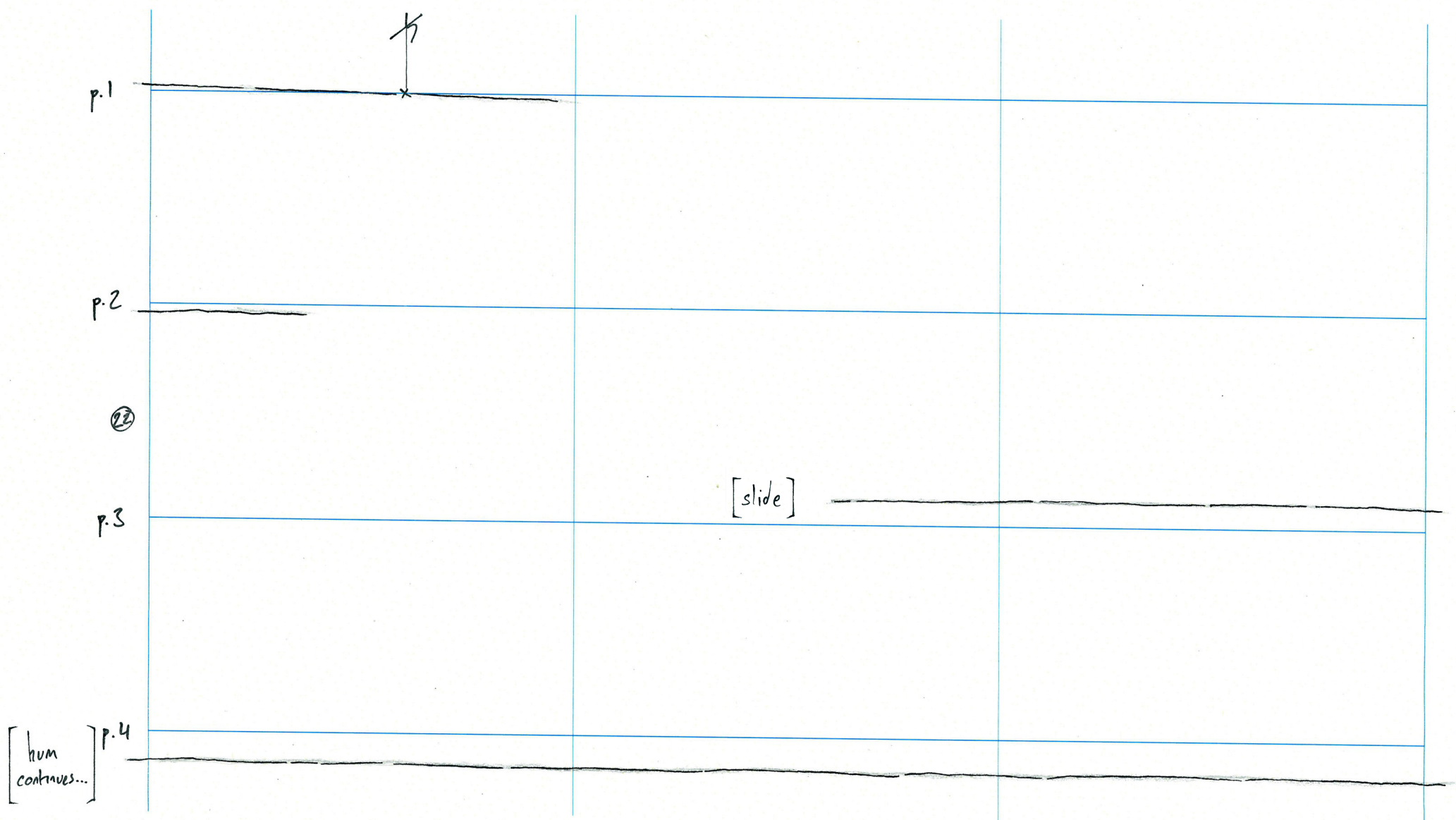
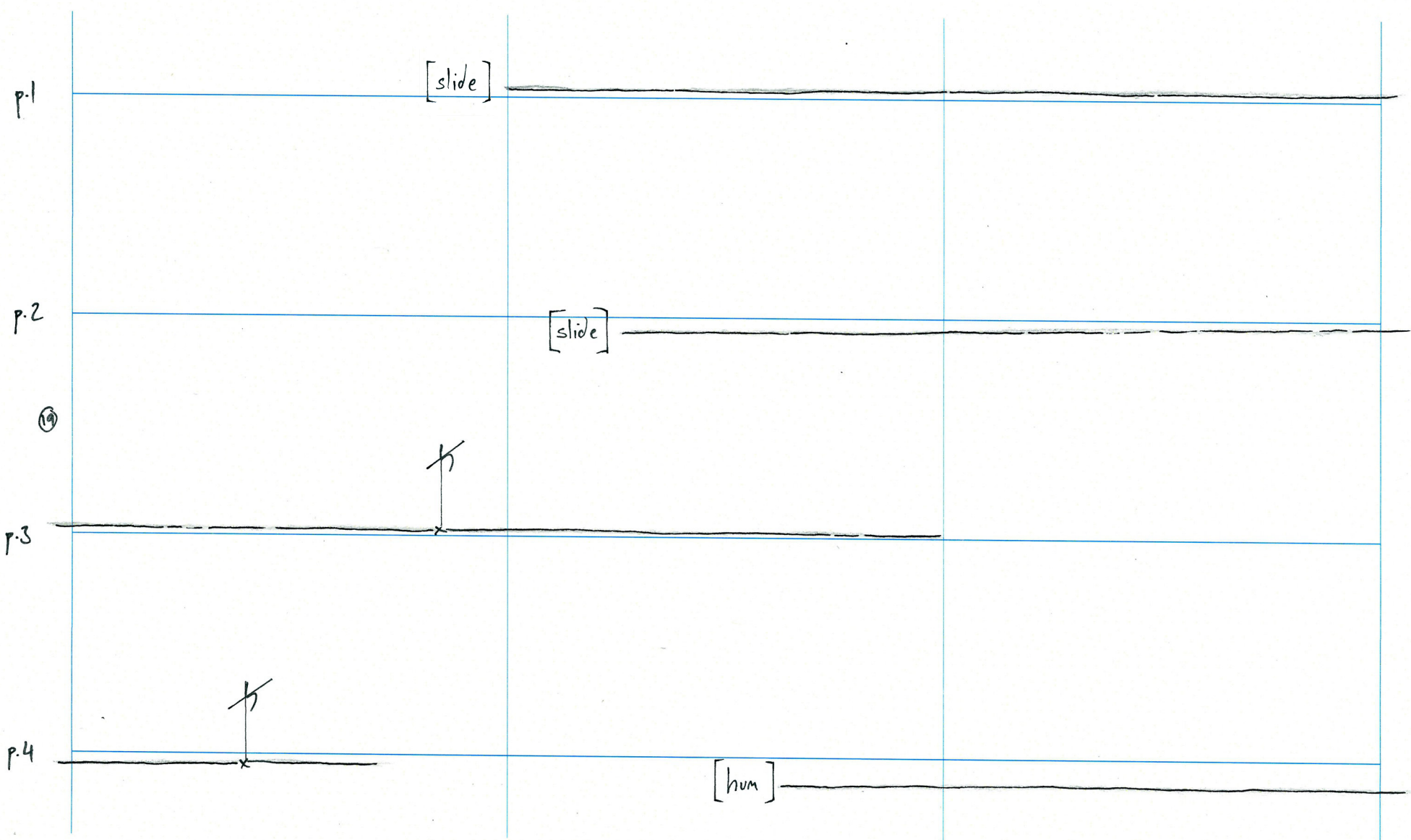
④

[lip whistle continues...] p.3

p.4







Handwritten musical notation on a four-staff system. The staves are labeled p.1, p.2, p.3, and p.4 on the left. The notation includes:

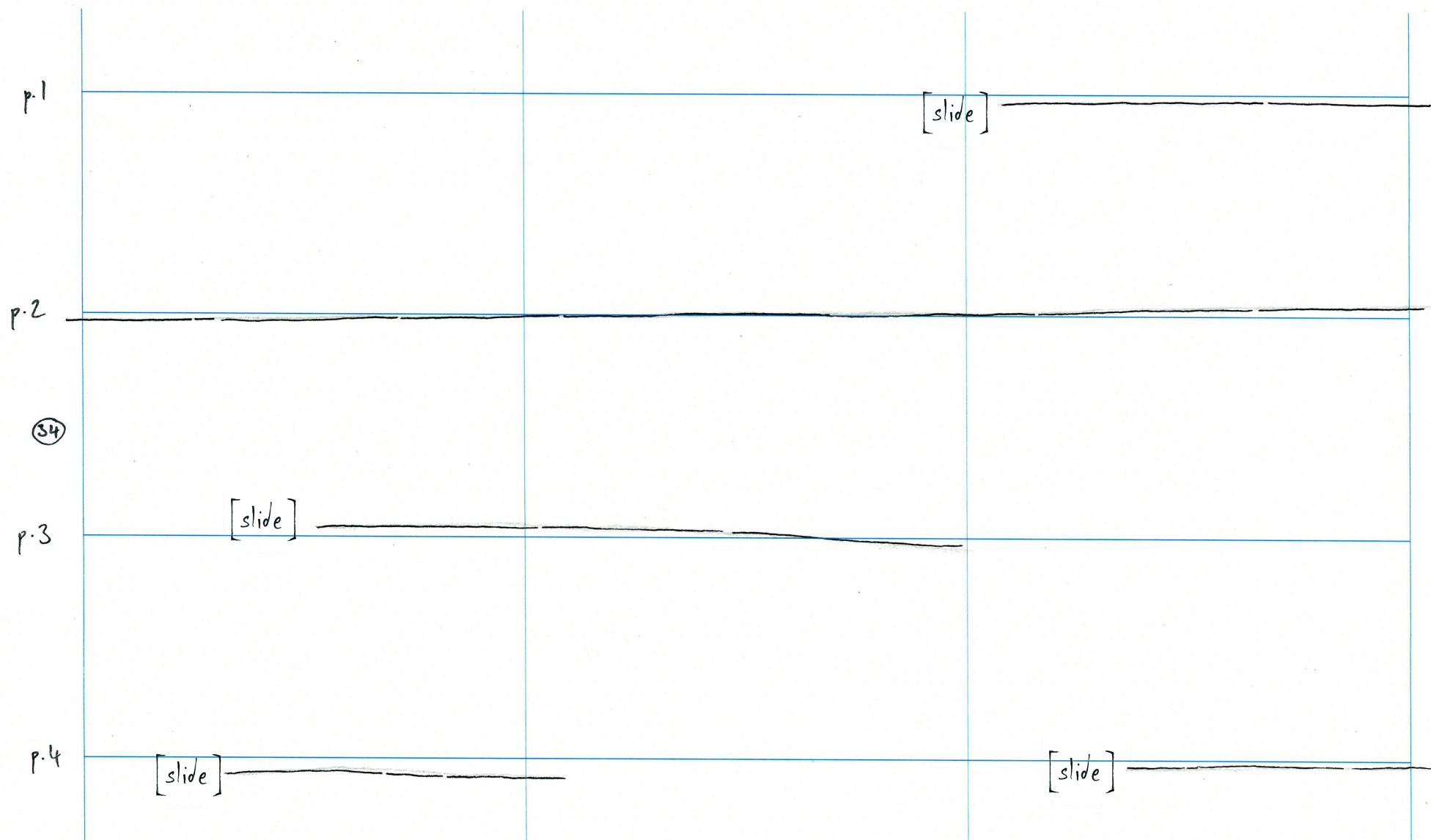
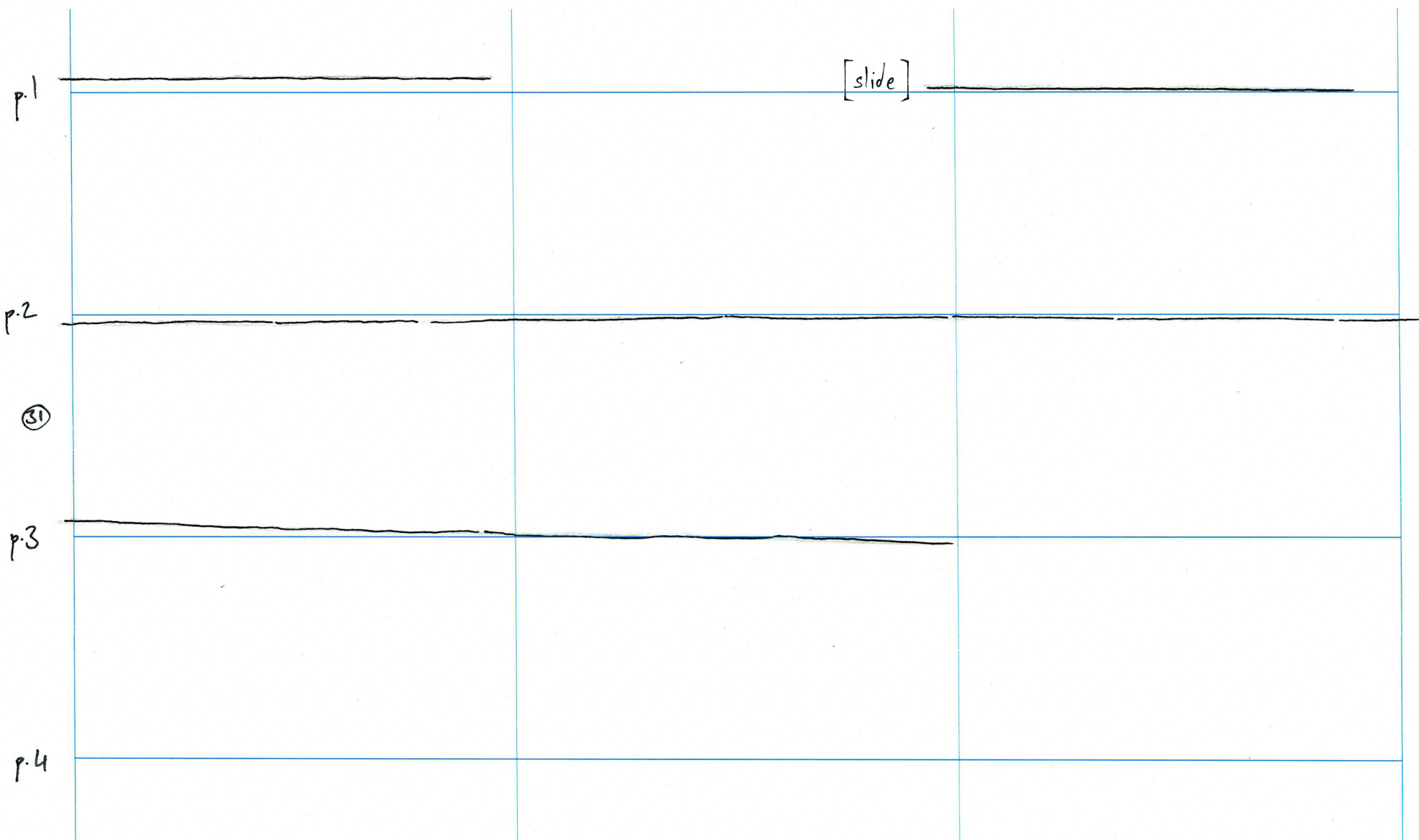
- Staff p.1: A single horizontal line with the label `[slide]` above it.
- Staff p.2: A single horizontal line with the label `[slide]` above it. Two vertical lines with 'x' marks and a 'h' above each are positioned on the staff.
- Staff p.3: A single horizontal line with a vertical line with an 'x' mark and a 'h' above it.
- Staff p.4: A single horizontal line with the label `[hum continues...]` to its left and the label `[slide]` to its right.

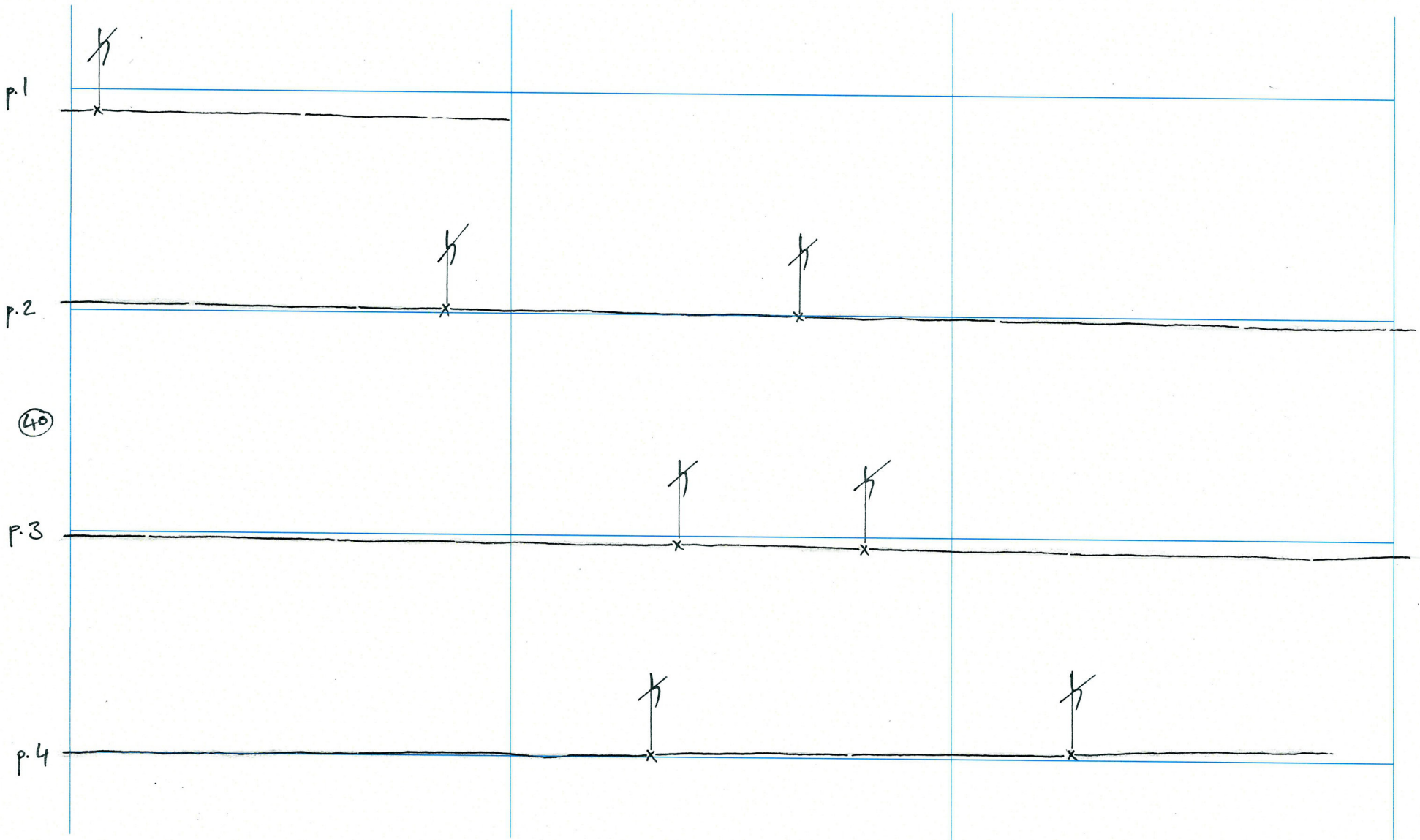
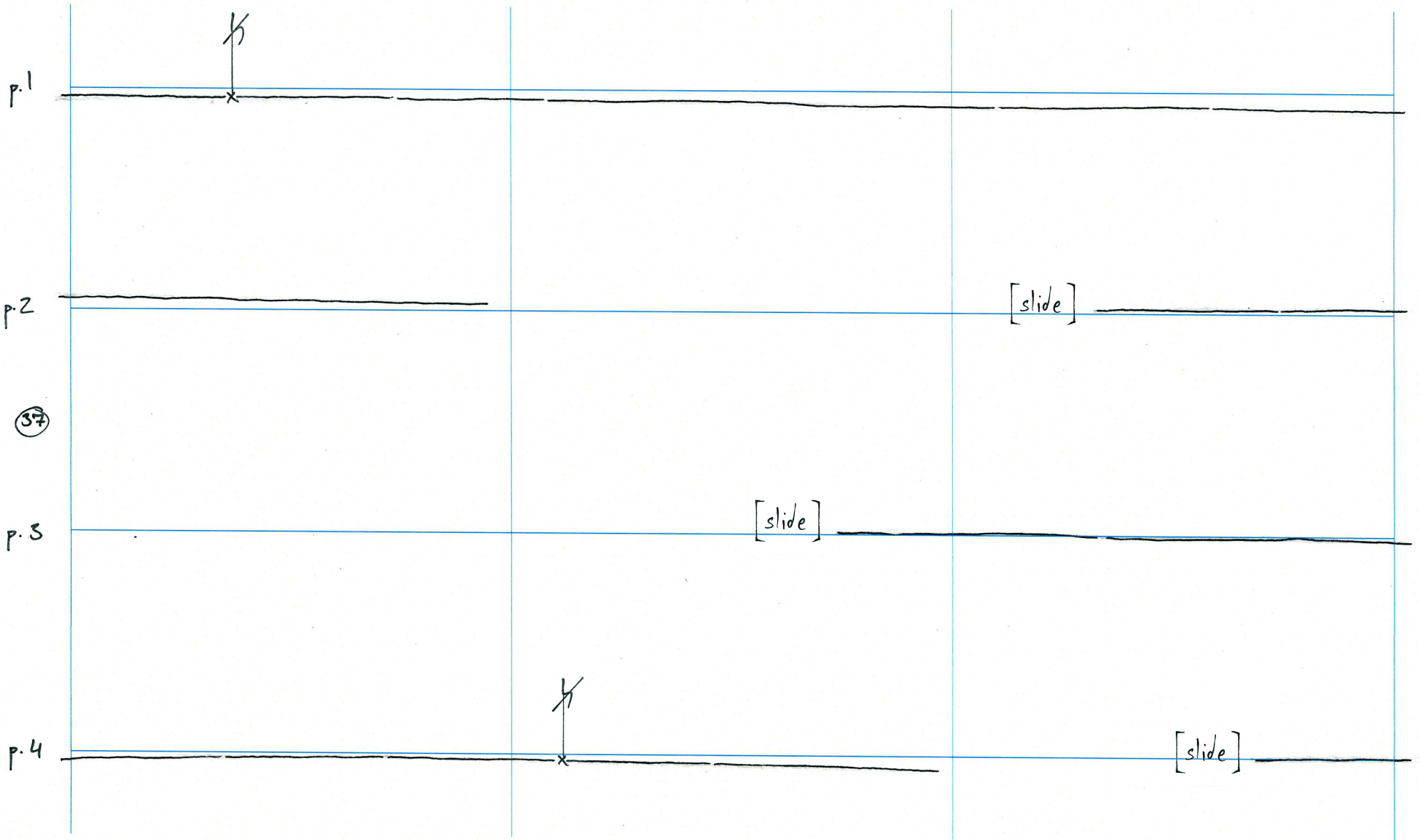
A circled number 25 is located between staves p.2 and p.3.

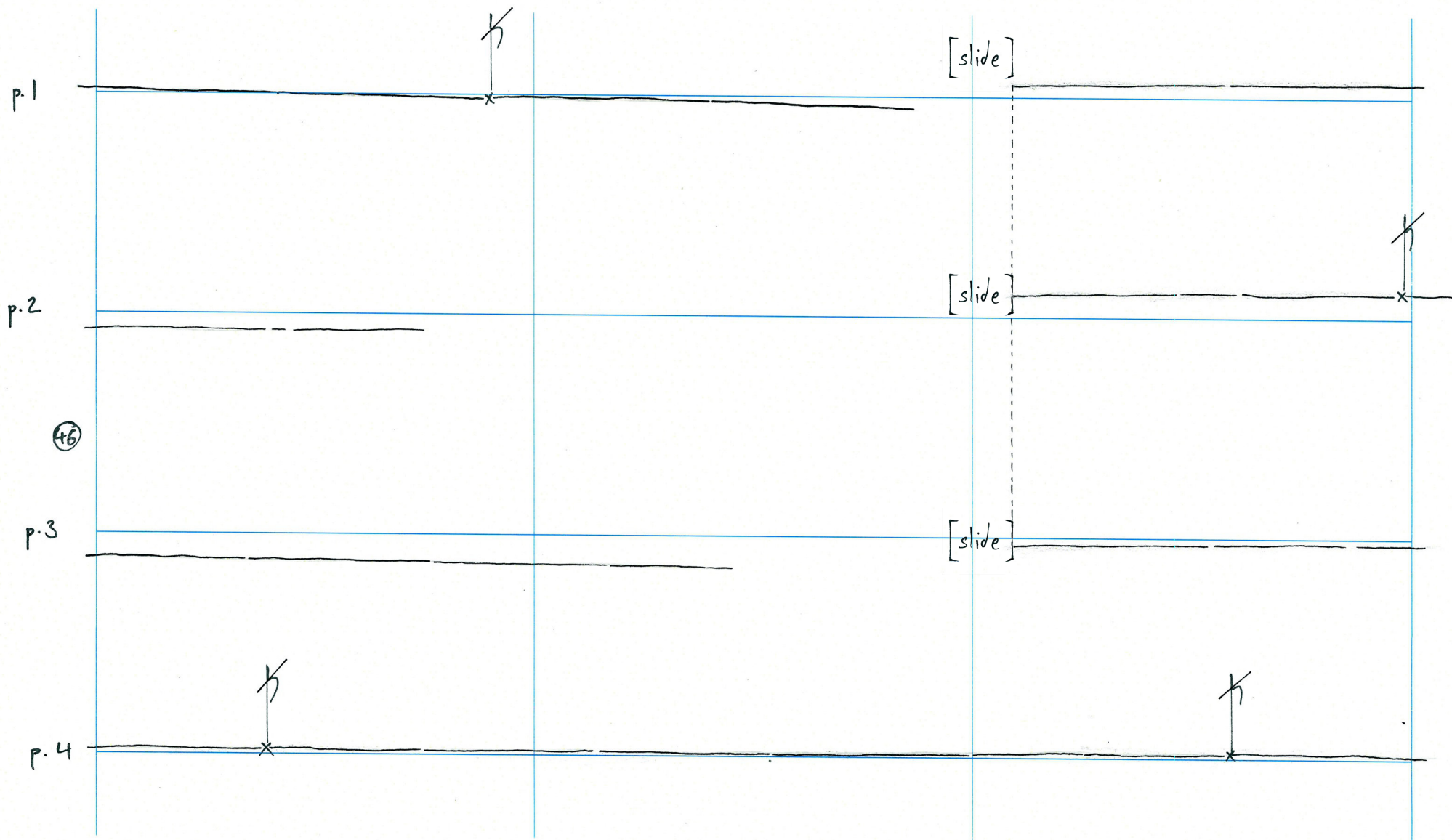
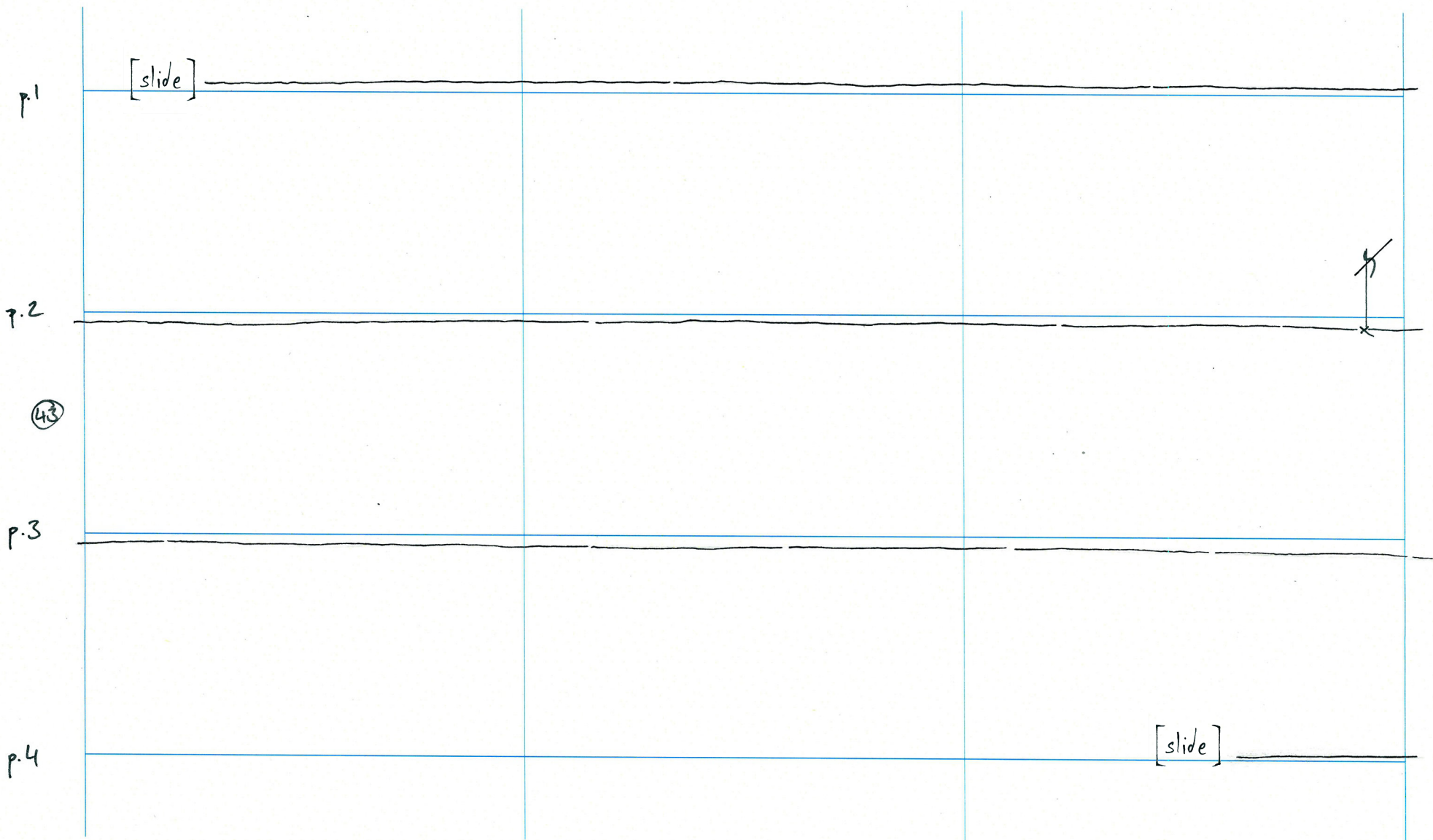
Handwritten musical notation on a four-staff system. The staves are labeled p.1, p.2, p.3, and p.4 on the left. The notation includes:

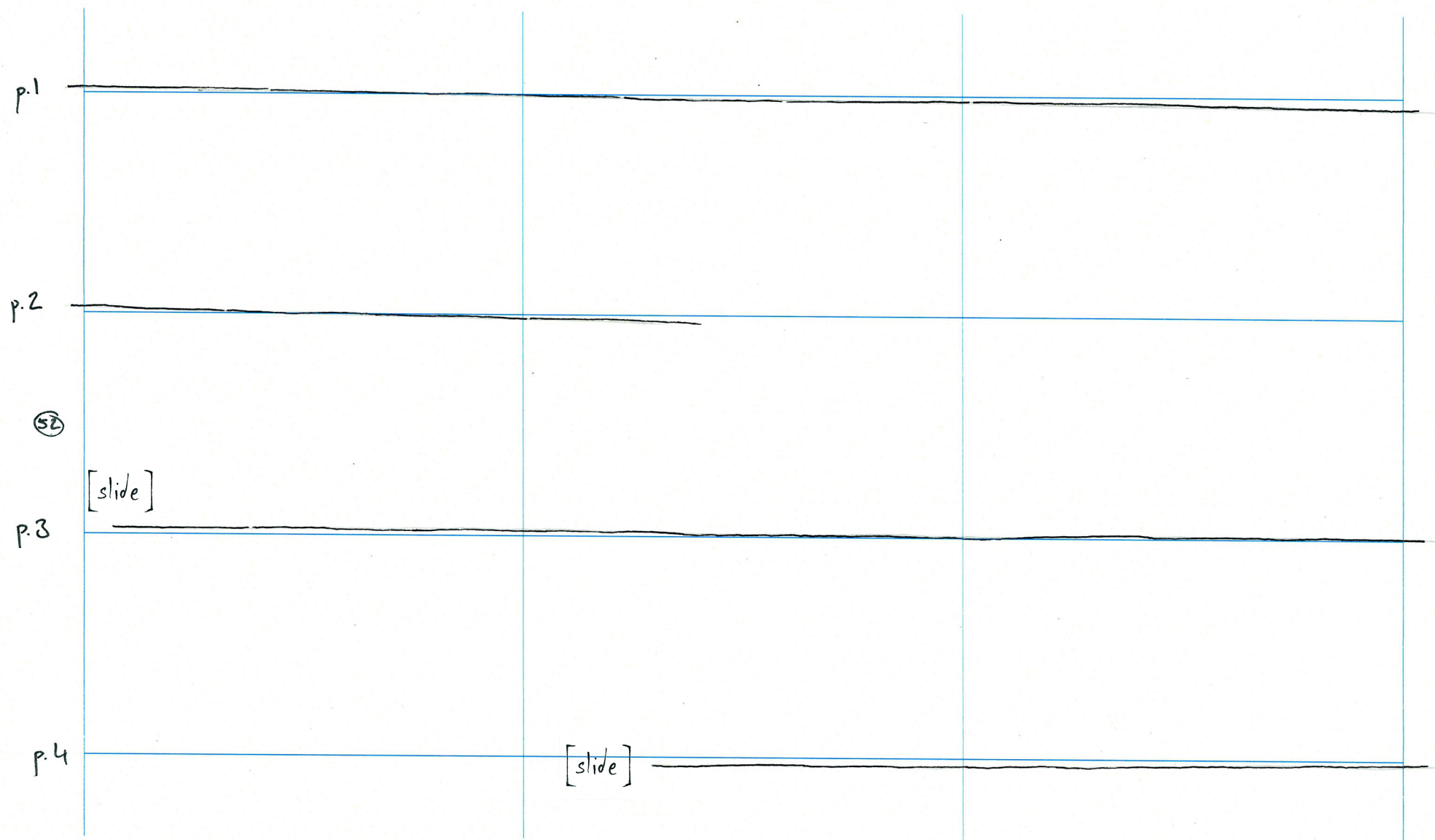
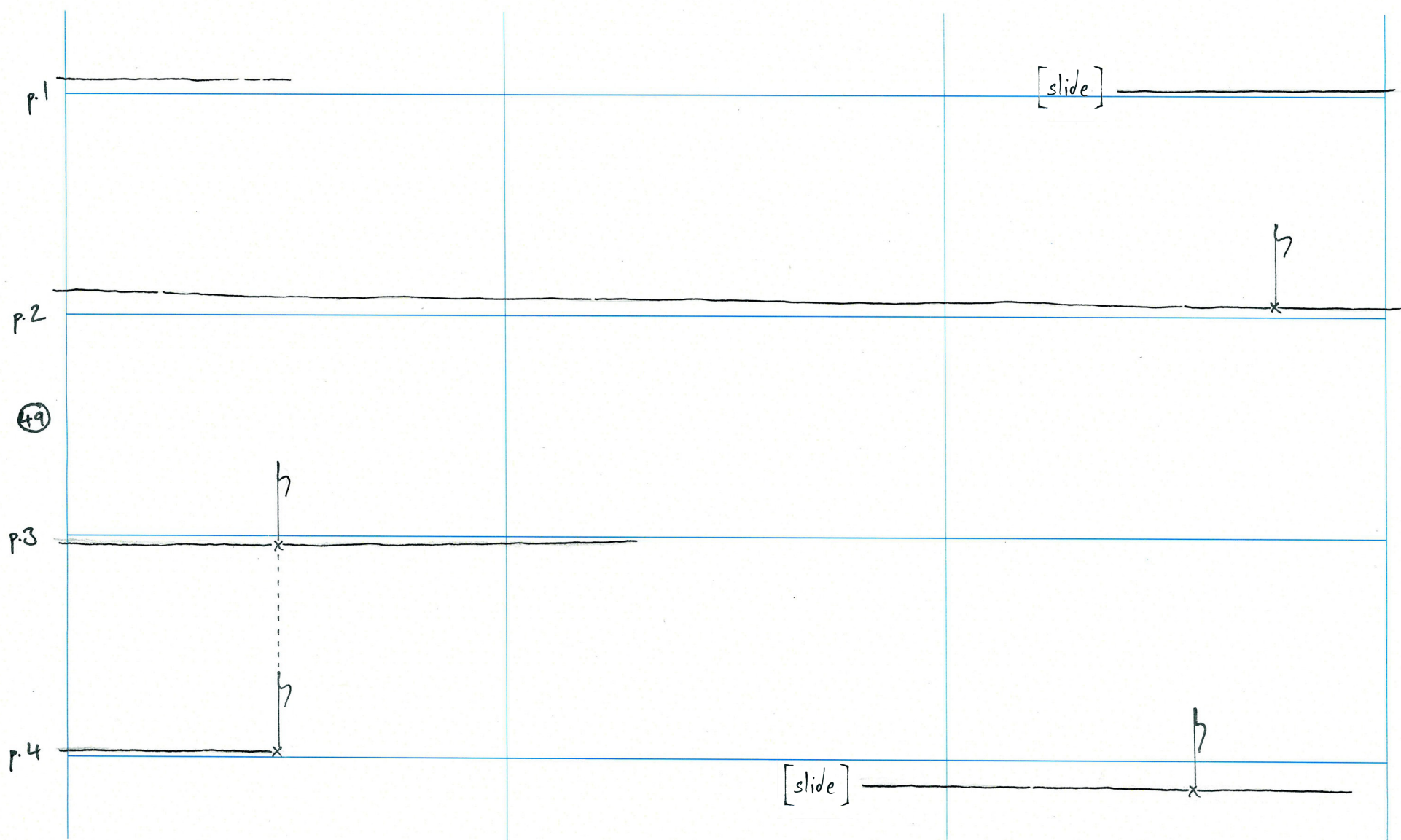
- Staff p.1: A single horizontal line with two vertical lines with 'x' marks and a 'h' above each.
- Staff p.2: A single horizontal line with the label `[slide]` above it.
- Staff p.3: A single horizontal line with the label `[slide]` above it.
- Staff p.4: A single horizontal line with a vertical line with an 'x' mark and a 'h' above it.

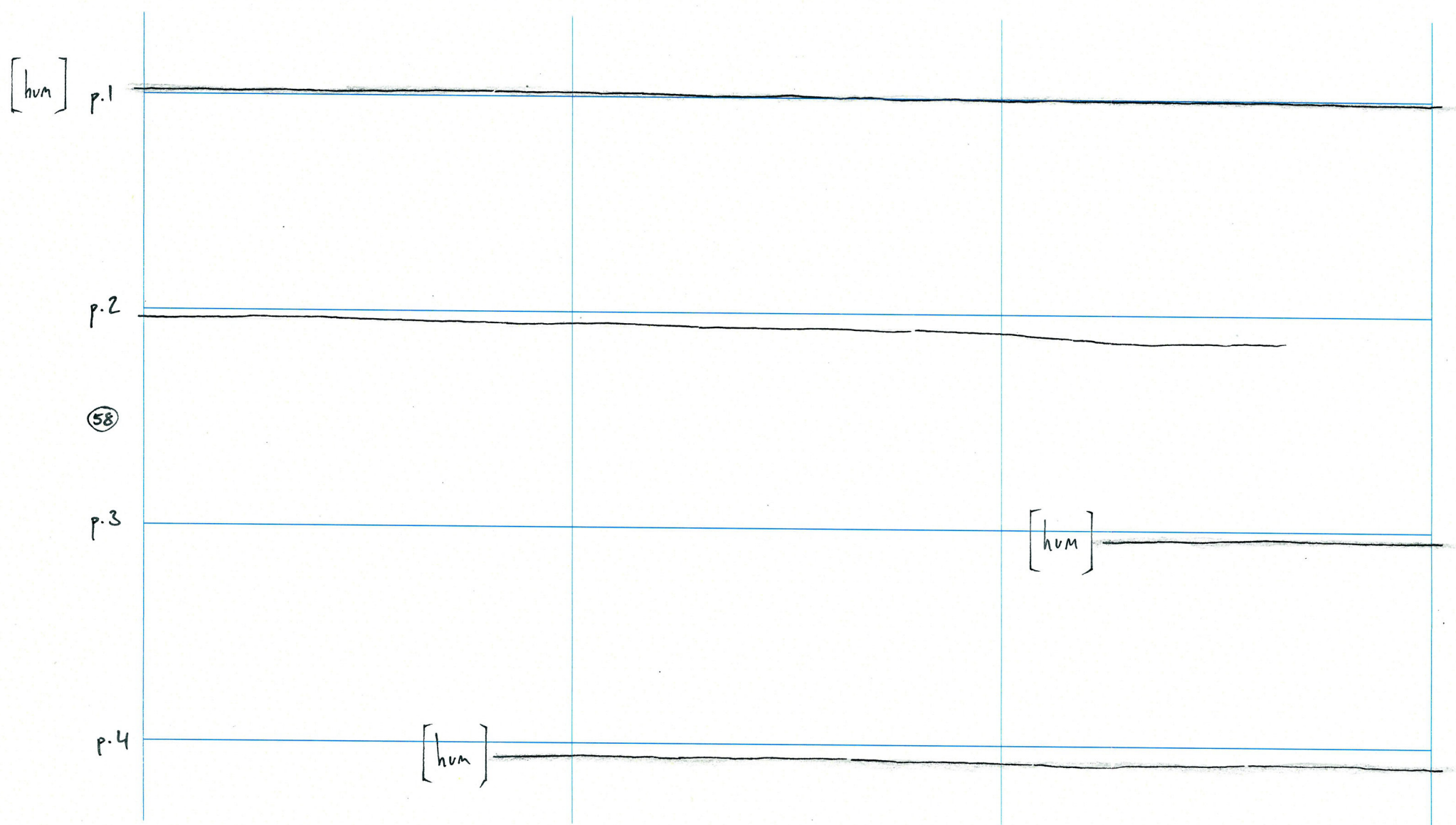
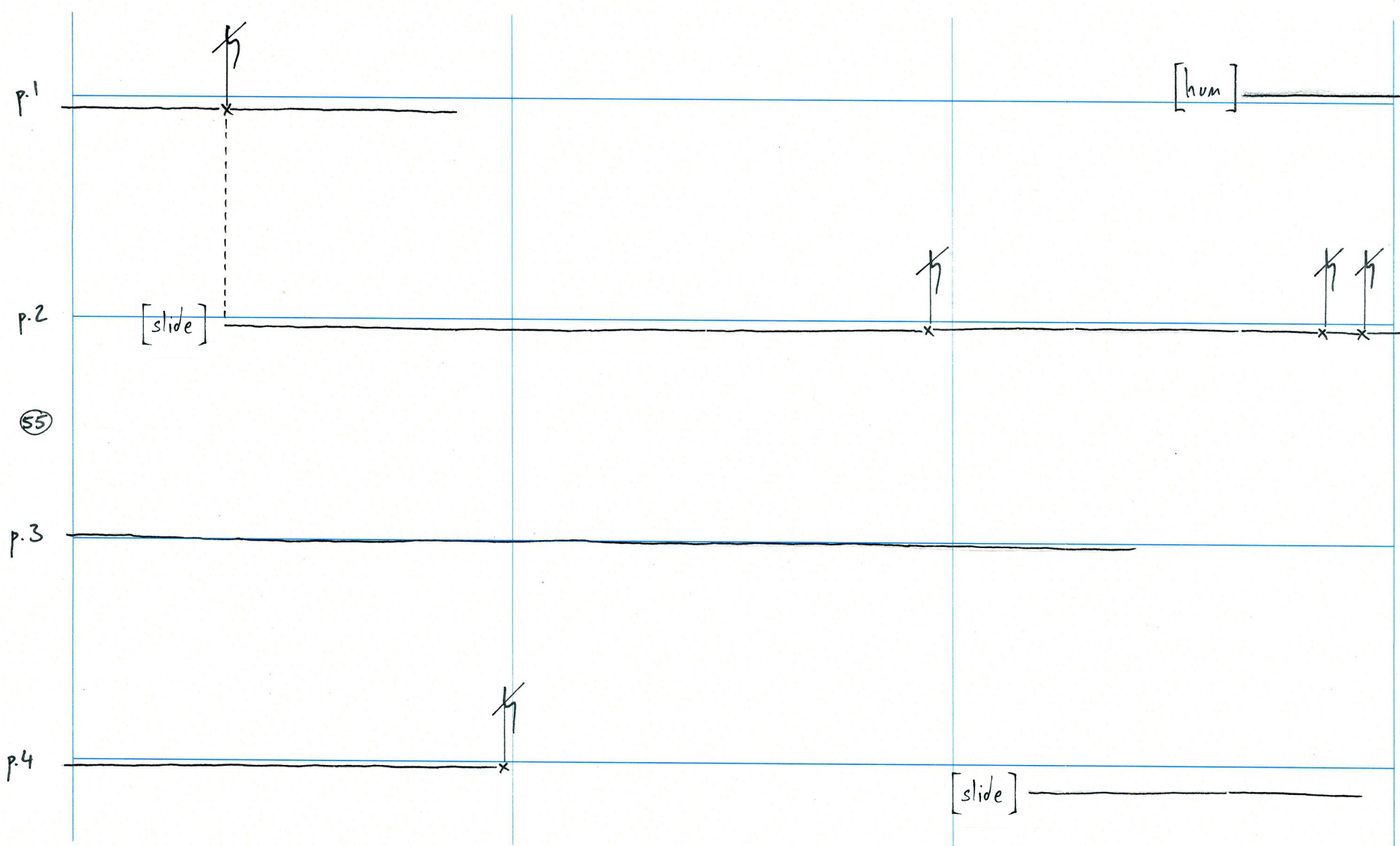
A circled number 28 is located between staves p.2 and p.3.











[hvm] p.1

p.2 [hvm*] * for a single breath... dying out.

(61)

[hvm] p.3

[hvm] p.4

o. hudey, 2019

player 1

Dark. So fucking dark. Dark spilling across the sky. Faint here still, and stillness in dark, for a time, but it will lessen—poor thing—without doubt, without fear. All dark again, for a time. It will fade from here: here in shade, here in occultation, here in dim light, and in reach of branches, gnarled and bitter. I, descender, clinging to lights dimming. Lights gone now. Just shade now, now just night, just—

All quiet, as if never been, or if never was but will. Then— Then the time will come, the thing is there, you’ll see it yet, and yet, rising and—

A lustre hangs silent above. Below all dark, all still, but still it’s lonely here in the gloaming. Among millions. Points and never lines. Here in waning silver shade. Faint here. In less light you could hear the creaking of branches and the—

That spell, which makes monuments pillars of ash, and all moments past. Please don’t wait anymore. Less darkness, less stillness. But quiet all the same, and all the while, while dark, while still—

We move among circles, apogees and close bodies, and embers must sleep. No cure to gloom. We wait on. I, descending. Nadir, shining... shining... shining. Our fathers find their graves in our short memories, teach us how to be buried by our own children, wait, gravestones tell truth: generations fall while trees stand grim.

Appulse. Perhaps sorrow brought them together and made them fearful. She carries a razor with her now, in the dark. Pity them. Poor stellar creatures. Poor lonely points of light. Pity us, to think we could be together. I opened my mouth, to cry, it was all too much. I cannot go on. Crepuscular, the wolf waiting for its hour. A pity. I, descend. Through that faint half-light. Soft dark, trembling, gloaming.

Hanged from this moon, you held onto my hand, but the rope is the world; the rope is still the world, for waiting here with us, safe for now; the rope is the world and if you get there before me—

[start to whistle a sustained tone]

When you finish speaking the above text, immediately make a very soft whistle with lips (not into the slide whistle) and hold, breathing where necessary. An airy timbre coloured with pitched tone.

As player 1, you start whistling first (your text is shorter), and your pitch will determine the approximate pitch locus for the performance. Find a pitch that is comfortable for all players. Other players to follow with pitches close (but not the same) to your own: no more than a tone from another member of the quartet.

Wait for all parties to whistle, then continue to hold together for a short time (20–30”) before beginning with the second part of the score (“*all these spilled lines*”). There is no general pause between parts.

player 2

Appulse. Perhaps sorrow brought them together and made them fearful. She carries a razor with her now, in the dark. Lonely points of light. Pity them. Pity us, to think we could be together. Poor creatures. I opened my mouth, to cry. I could not bear it. A pity. I, descend through that dim half-light. I wept. Soft dark, trembling rain, ripples in darkness. I hoped, but it was useless—

“Be not afeared by this blood moon”, you whispered. I hold on, to your hand. But the rope is still the world. The rope is still the world. For waiting here with us, for keeping us safe. It must still end. The rope is the world and it binds us together. Dark spilled, and stillness in the dark, for a time. Dark. So fucking dark. But it will lessen, little comfort now, here in shade of azimuth. In dim light and the reaches of branches, grotesque. I, descender. Reaching for the lights dim light gone, just shade now. Now just darkness—

All quiet, as if never been, or if it never was, but it will. It will. The time will come, the night is there, you’ll see it yet and yet, rising among a grid of points.

Dawn then, and quiet. All dark all still, but still, it’s lonely here in dim light, here in waning silver shade. Faint. In less light listening, the crackle of the fire, even in eventide. The muttering of rain on fragile ground.

Less doubt now but still lonely, but still doubting, and missing you still. Sleep

now. Worse made strange, worse made dark. Then, and now, scars covered and yet...

I, descended. Zenith. Ablaze. Trembling, time washed across sky. We’ll wait. It will come, but there’s less light and it grows darker. You can’t wait forever, time may be too short for us, but it is dark, still, and a silver crescent in my beak, bleeding ink; all still, tremors be still. Be still, still quiet. A cold dark place. Still all dark, fainter and all still and—

[*pause, three seconds*]

All still, tremors be still, be still. Quiet. Still. Holding it together. “To ward the darkness away” I thought—a song still all dark, fainter and all still and all dim, all quiet; we wait while dawn sleeps, and gravestones teach us how to sing the low murmur of tender lullabies, tenebrous, whose spell makes pyramids of ink, and all moments past; grief held by numb hands; less darkness, less stillness, quiet all the same, and all the while, while dark—

Ecliptics, apogees and close bodies, and moons might sleep; we’ll wait—I, descending—nadir.

[*start to whistle a sustained tone*]

When you finish speaking the above text, immediately make a very soft whistle with lips (not into the slide whistle) and hold, breathing where necessary. Pitches should be close but not the same: no more than a tone from another member of the quartet. An airy timbre coloured with pitched tone.

Wait for all parties to whistle, then continue to hold together for a short time (20–30”) before beginning with the second part of the score (“*all these spilled lines*”). There is no general pause between parts.

player 3

The faint murmur of a prayer to death: a spell to ward off shadow, and the memory of grief. Less darkness, less stillness, but quiet all the same, and all the while, while dark—

We move in runes: angles, lines and limits, describing the motions of stellar bodies and embers asleep. There is no antidote against a darkness that considers all things. So we wait on. I, descending. Nadir, afire. Poor creatures. Grim doubt now, but still lonely, but still doubting, and missing you still. Sleep dyed dark and the darker; deep ink made strange pools, ink made dawn. Then, and now, stars, and yet...

[*pause, five seconds*]

And yet, I, descended. Into the zenith. Into time, trembling and washed across skies. We wait, as we can. But there's less light, and it grows darker forever. Time too short for us, for hope, but it is dark still, and a silver crescent bleeds in ink. The moon held in my beak. Rain falling, all still among tremors, be still, still quiet, still all dark, fainter and all still and—

All still, tremors be still, be still, a quiet still, still all dark. Fainter. And all still and all dim, all quiet as we wait for the dead to sleep— low murmurs of a tender lullaby, beneath fragile ground.

Dark spilled, and stillness in dusk, for a time. Holding it together. Dark. So fucking dark. But it will lessen. Poor thing. In time. Without heart, without faith, disquieting. Dark, soon all dim, for a—

The shade of horizon, in their dim light and the reaches of their branches, gnarled. I, descender. Reaching for the lights dim, light gone now, just shade now, now— Just darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres gloaming. All quiet, as if never been, or if never was, but will. Or could. Perhaps. Sorry. The time *will*—and yet, and— It *will* be light soon, and quiet. All dark, all still, but still, it's lonely here in the dim light. Here in waning silver shade. Faint, in less light you could hear the creaking of roots. We wait forever here. In aphelion. In the hour of the wolf. We wait—

Appulse. Perhaps gloom brought us together. And made us carry razors in the dark. Pity them. Pity us, to think we could never be together. Poor creatures. I opened my mouth to speak and could no longer. A pity. I, descend. Stalking soft dark, trembling, less darkness, I hope. Hanged by this moon, you held onto my hand, but the rope is still the world, the rope is still the world, for waiting here with us, for keeping you safe, the rope is the world.

[*start to whistle a sustained tone*]

When you finish speaking the above text, immediately make a very soft whistle with lips (not into the slide whistle) and hold, breathing where necessary. Pitches should be close but not the same: no more than a tone from another member of the quartet. An airy timbre coloured with pitched tone.

Wait for all parties to whistle, then continue to hold together for a short time (20–30”) before beginning with the second part of the score (“*all these spilled lines*”). There is no general pause between parts.

player 4

Less doubt now but still alone, but still doubting, and missing you still. Then, and now, stars covered and yet I descended, to zenith, shimmering, trembling, time washed across sky; we wait, but in less light and growing dim, we cannot wait forever. Time may be too short for us, but it is dark still, and a silver crescent bleeds in ink, the moon in my beak. All still, tremors be still, be still, still quiet. Still all dark, fainter and all still and—

All still, tremors be still, be still, quiet still. Holding it together. Still all dark. Fainter and all still and all dim and all quiet, we wait for the dead to sleep, their low murmur of tender lullabies. Appulse. Perhaps shadows brought them together and made them fearful. She carries a razor with her now, for points of light. Gloa. Pity them. Pity us, to think we could be together. Poor creatures. Poor points in ink. Finally I opened my mouth, to speak, and it was all too much, I cannot go on. A pity. I, descend. Soft dusk, trembling, less faint hope—the wolf waits for its hour.

Afear'd to hang from the pale moon, I hold onto your hand. Under this faint moon. Spilling glimmer and hopelessness. But the rope is still the world. The rope is still the world. For waiting here with us. Keeping us safe from wolves. The rope is the world.

Whose death do we pray for. Monuments become pillars of embers, and all moments pass. Less darkness, less stillness. But quiet all the same, and all the while, while dark—

We move limits, angles, and close bodies, and three bodies never sleep. There is no antidote against nocturnes. Fragile, a silence considering all things. I, descending. Nadir. Our mothers find their graves in our short memories, and tell us how to be buried by kin. Gravestones tell truth: generations pass while some trees stand. Poor creatures. Grim and all gloom and shimmering in gloaming. Ground brittle. All dark, all too short for mercy. Dark. So fucking dark. Spilled across the sky. Faint here still, and stillness spilled in the dark, and for the time, stillness still before rain.

[*pause, four seconds*]

Soon all dark, soon all dim, then for a time, then quiet, then empty, but it will come to this place. Here in the dusk of azimuth, in its dim light and the reaches of its branches, gnarled. I, descender. Reaching for the lights dim, now lights gone. Just pools of shade now, now just darkness. All quiet, as if never been, or if it never was, but it will. Wretched. The time will come, the dawn there yet, and yet, rising and... yet it will get light soon, and quiet; all dark, all still, but still, it's lonely here in dim light, here in waning silver lights; grief held by numb hands, faint, in less light I hear shimmering—

[*start to whistle a sustained tone*]

When you finish speaking the above text, immediately make a very soft whistle with lips (not into the slide whistle) and hold, breathing where necessary. Pitches should be close but not the same: no more than a tone from another member of the quartet. An airy timbre coloured with pitched tone.

Wait for all parties to whistle, then continue to hold together for a short time (20–30”) before beginning with the second part of the score (“*all these spilled lines*”). There is no general pause between parts.