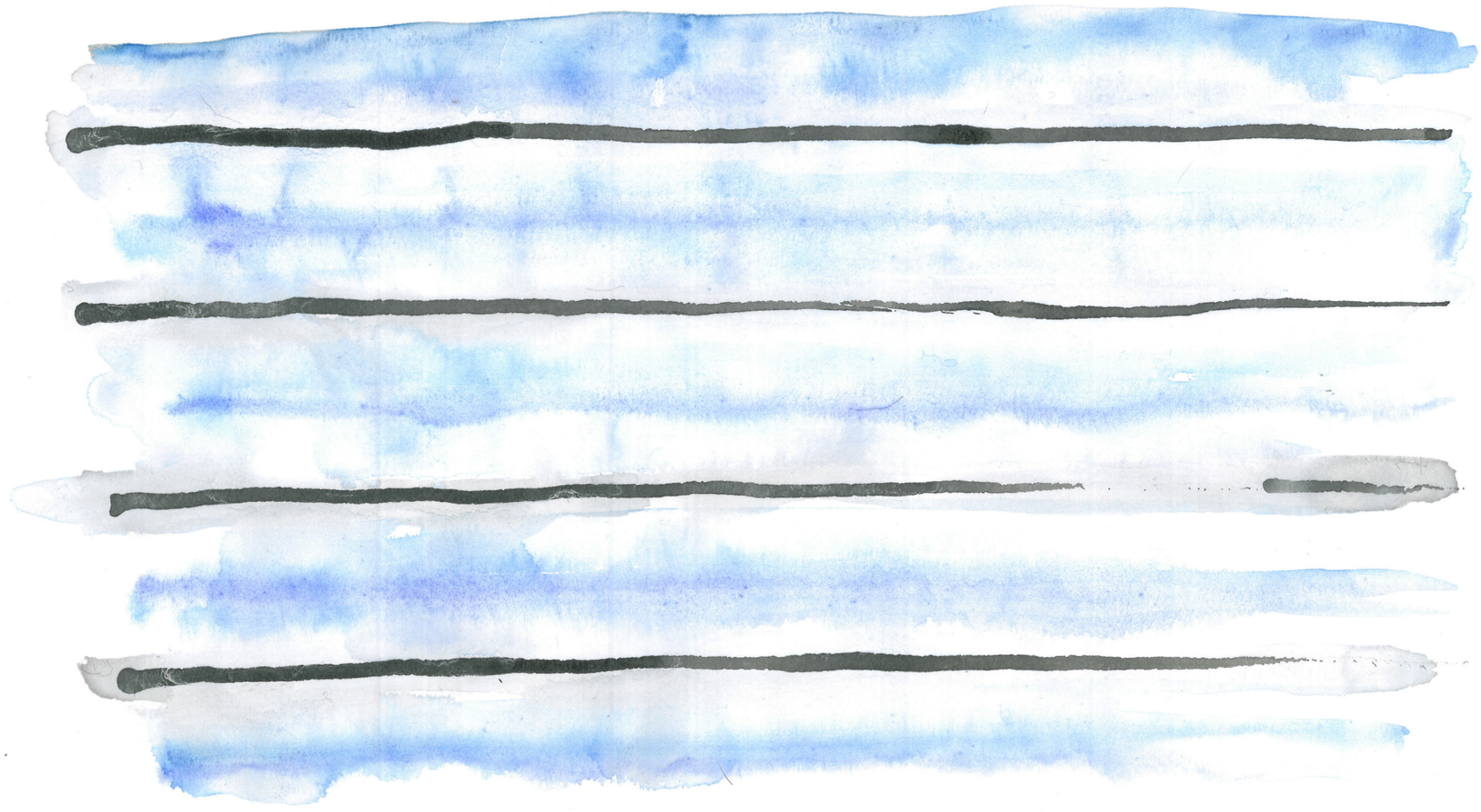

whose veil remains inscrutable

written for Ensemble Nikel, at the Impuls academy, 2015

Oliver Thurley, 2014

performance notes

for tenor saxophone, electric guitar, percussion and piano.

Masked. Extremely quiet. Faltering, always unstable.

'And lo…'

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instrumentation

tenor saxophone

electric guitar

requires EBow (plus) and screwdriver

percussion

objects:

two glass test tubes, wine glass, small tin box,
glass tumbler, crotales, bass drum

beaters:

milk frother, two thin metal beaters, bow,
two soft timpani mallets

piano

requires nylon thread *(see notes)*

tenor saxophone

Slap – remain quiet, but still forceful.

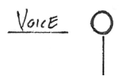
Tongue ram – against reed. dark, resonates quietly.

Flutter-tongue – with a slight acceleration and deceleration.

Teeth on reed – place teeth gently on reed and (gently) bite to cause the pitch to break and 'squeak'. Only the very beginning of the note should be articulated with teeth on reed. As soon as the note 'breaks' and becomes unstable, the performer should quickly return to a normal playing position/pitch.

Breath tone – where a pitch is given, the faintest trace of that pitch (even as a tonal coloration) should be heard through the air noise.

Half breath tone – roughly 50:50 pitched tone to air noise.



Voice – acts as a disruptor to the saxophone's tone. Pitches are relative: as high or low as the performer can reach while playing.

N.B. Multiphonics have been taken from Weiss and Netti's book, *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing*†.

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electric guitar

general remarks

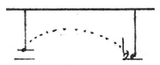
Clean tone; smooth and bright, but not overly sharp. A slight amount of reverb may be used at the player's discretion if the performance space's acoustics are too dull. Wherever possible, efforts should be made to let strings ring out. If available, adjacent strings should be utilised to allow this.

A volume pedal may be useful for some elements of gain control, although they may be performed with the guitar's own gain potentiometers.

A plectrum is not required for this piece.

String number

Fret number



Hammer-on / pull-off

Vibrato – no right hand attack, vibrato is used to sound and sustain the tone. Rapid, unstable movement.

† Marcus Weiss and Giorgio Netti, *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing*, 2nd edn (Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2012)

EBow — a clean and even sustained tone, being careful not to place the EBow too near the active pickup which causes overdrive.

EBow+ — distinguishes the EBow in 'harmonic' mode. Only the note to be fretted is indicated, different harmonics depend on the lateral placement of the EBow.

Screwdriver

Using a screwdriver (or similar object), place lightly across the strings and move up and down rapidly across the strings. The effect is of an unstable vibrato; some strings may be struck or let ring as the screwdriver loses contact, whist the pitch may fluctuate as the performer makes slight transverse motions.

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percussion

general remarks

All objects should be allowed to ring as much as they are capable, and should not be dampened.

Objects should be arranged on a hard surface (such as a table top) which is not softened. As the performer picks up or puts down objects, the inevitable sounds will form part of the piece. Efforts should still be made to pick up items quietly (as is the nature of the piece), but some noise *is* intended.

Crotales are played with either the fingertips, knuckles, or are bowed. No beaters should be used on the crotales.

glass test tubes

↓ — Strike the tubes together, gently. Allowing as much 'ring' as possible (with occasional ricochet).

↑ — Scraping the open end of one tube against the table top. Circular movement.

'Pop'! — Place the tip of a finger inside a tube and quickly pull the finger out, creating a soft "pop".

○ — Blowing very gently over the open lip of a tube, allowing whispered harmonics and whistle tones to emerge freely. Each breath should be as long as possible, but breath whenever necessarily.

Wine glass

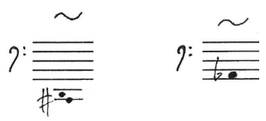
A wine glass is tuned to A↓4 (427.65 Hz). With a wet finger, slowly rub the lip of the glass in a slow and even circular motion. The movement should be just fast enough to produce the desired pitch, but slow enough to occasionally break up or falter.
It may be useful to secure the base of the glass so that it may be played using only one hand.

'Milk frother'

The "milk frother" device features a long metal extension which vibrates or oscillates rapidly. The metal extension is held against (or close to) an object, striking it quickly as it vibrates. By holding the device approx. 1mm from an object, the chance of striking is reduced, yet still occurs due to the movement of the device and small muscular irregularities as the performer holds both objects.

piano

Prepare the following strings with bunches of rosined nylon thread:



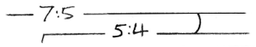
Performer 'bows' the piano strings by holding the threads taut and drawing them back and forth under the string. Alternatively, the threads themselves can be bowed by a violin or 'cello bow (the latter option may be preferable as it prevents the rosin coating the piano string.)

The *una corda* pedal should be depressed throughout; performers may wish to place a wedge under this pedal. The sustain pedal is depressed for the majority of the performance, it is only raised in section II.

Tremolo as quickly as possible, keeping in mind the extremely quiet dynamic. The hammer-action will be inconsistent, failing to strike the string most of the time.

general notes

notation



Rhythmic layers are distributed throughout the piece, frequently overlapping. Where possible, these have been distributed vertically to indicate the scope of discrete layers.

Tuplets may be nested within other tuplets. In these cases, the brackets are tied together with a curved line (shown). If tuplets are **not** tied, they are assumed to be independent of one another, but acting concurrently.

No note head on a stem signals a repeat or continuation of the previous note.

Re-articulation of tied note.

A note in parenthesis is played with less energy than others. Sound is somewhat masked.

Slow, even transition from one state to another.

remarks on quietness

The volume for this piece is extremely low. It is intended that many of the notes (particularly in the saxophone part) will *not* sound as written. Indeed, many pitched tones will only sound as a faint breath tone. Notes should always be attempted as notated, taking into account the dynamic. In many cases, the note will inevitably fail to sound clearly.

remarks on rhythmic execution

The score uses a precise scale throughout and may be viewed as 'time-space' notation. This may prove useful when decoding relationships between overlapping tuplets.

'And We said:
Look at that fucker Dance…'

Guitar harmonics corrected: 7-2-15

version: 0.2 corrections
[31st January 2015]

Oliver Thurley
Autumn, 2014

whose veil remains inscrutable

I

5/4 ♩ = 40

Tenor Saxophone

3:4 — 3:4 — 3:4 — 5:4

Electric Guitar

Neck plug ('fingerstyle')

5:4 — no r.h. attack — vib — Vol. swell

r.h. ② XVII — r.h. ① XIII

4:5 — flick to bridge plup! — fz! — All strings un-dampened. Action causes string to resonate. Let ring...

let ring... — 7:6 — XII — no r.h. attack.

EBow →

Percussion

test tubes

3:4 — 'Pop'! — finger in end of tube; pull out with 'pop'.

9:10 — 4:3 — Blown* — 3:4 — 5:6 — scraping on table

* Blowing softly over top of tube, allow harmonics to emerge

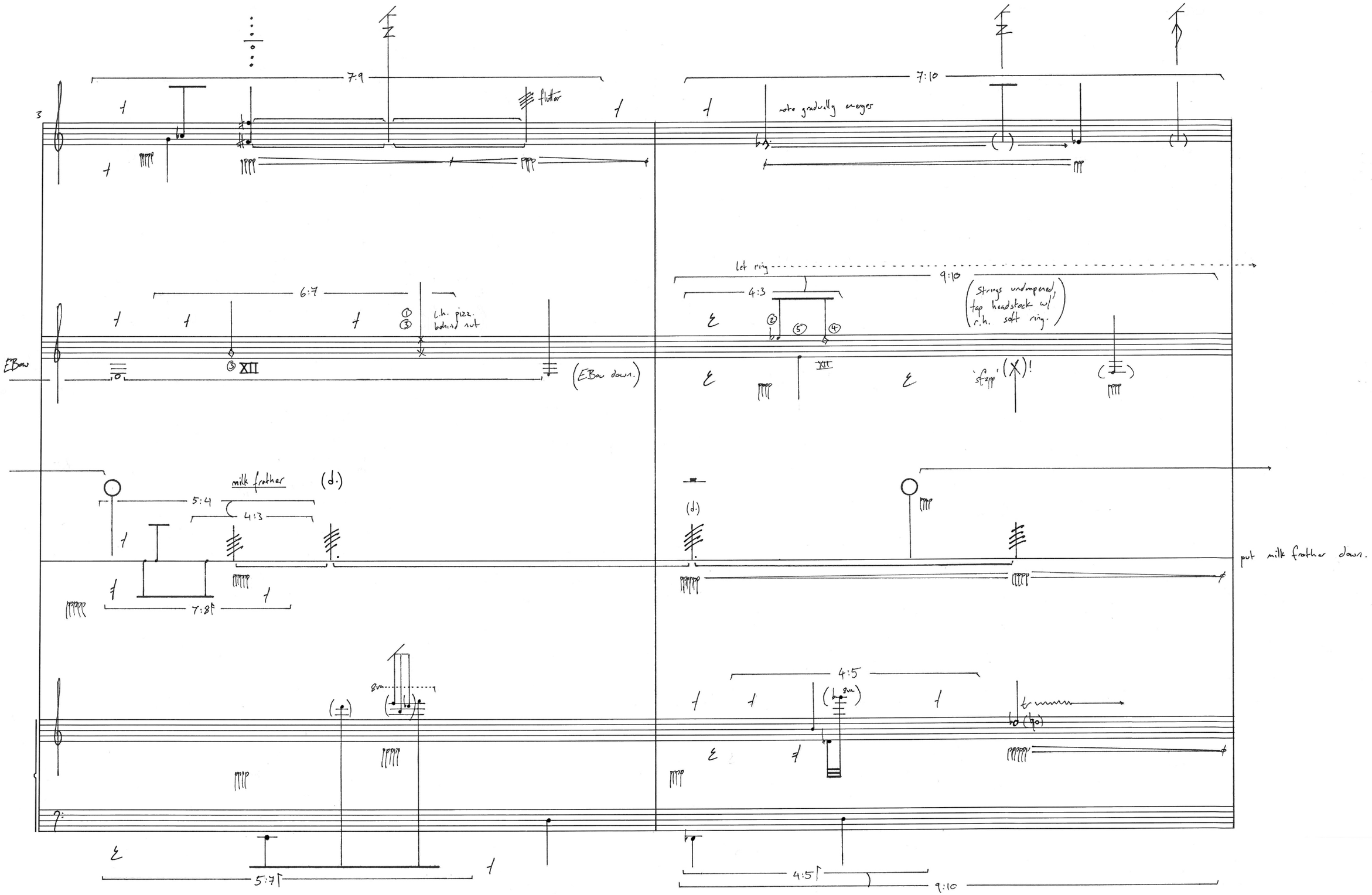
Piano

5/4

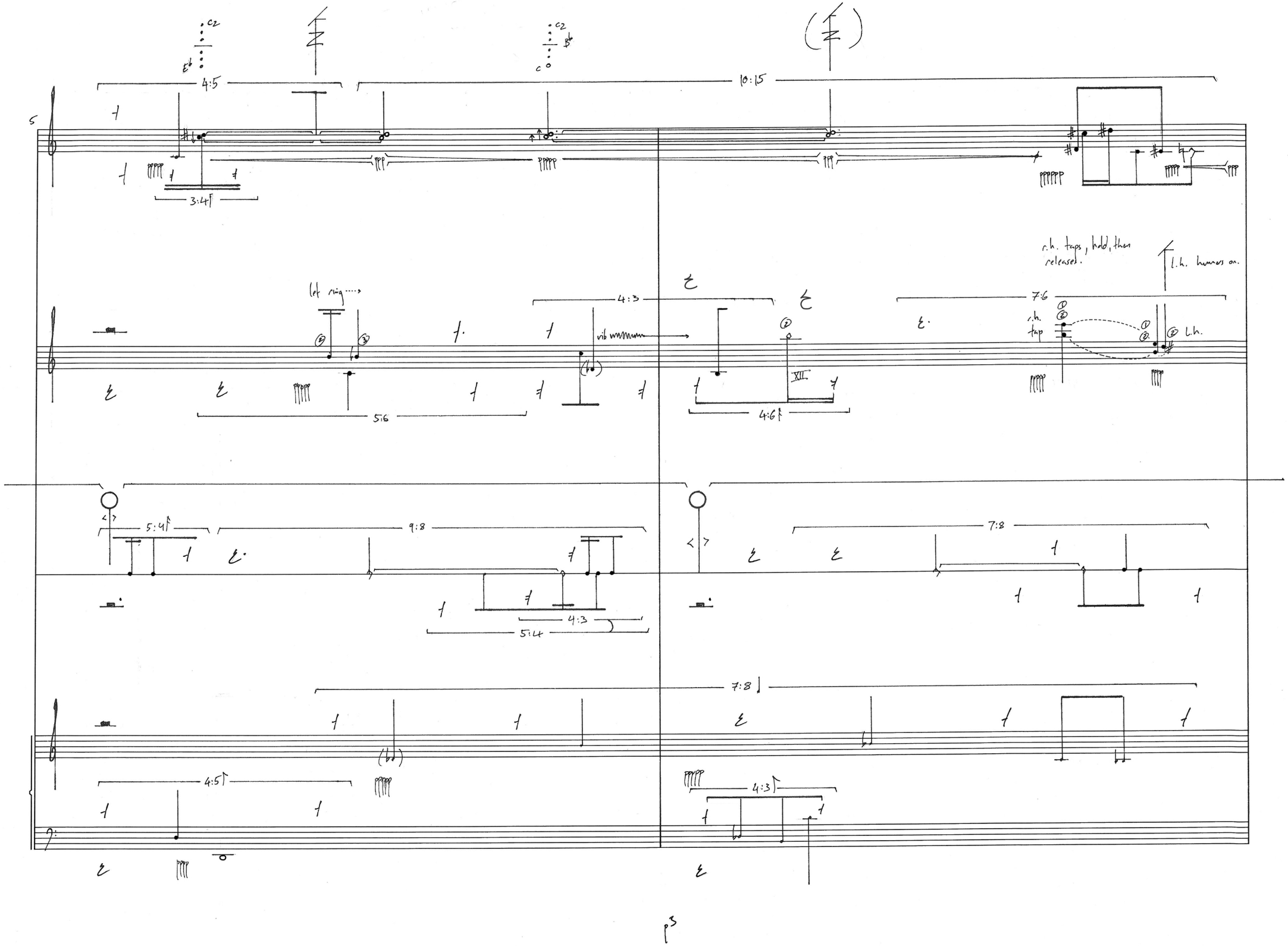
9:10 — 4:5 — 6:7

6:4 — 4:3 — 13:14

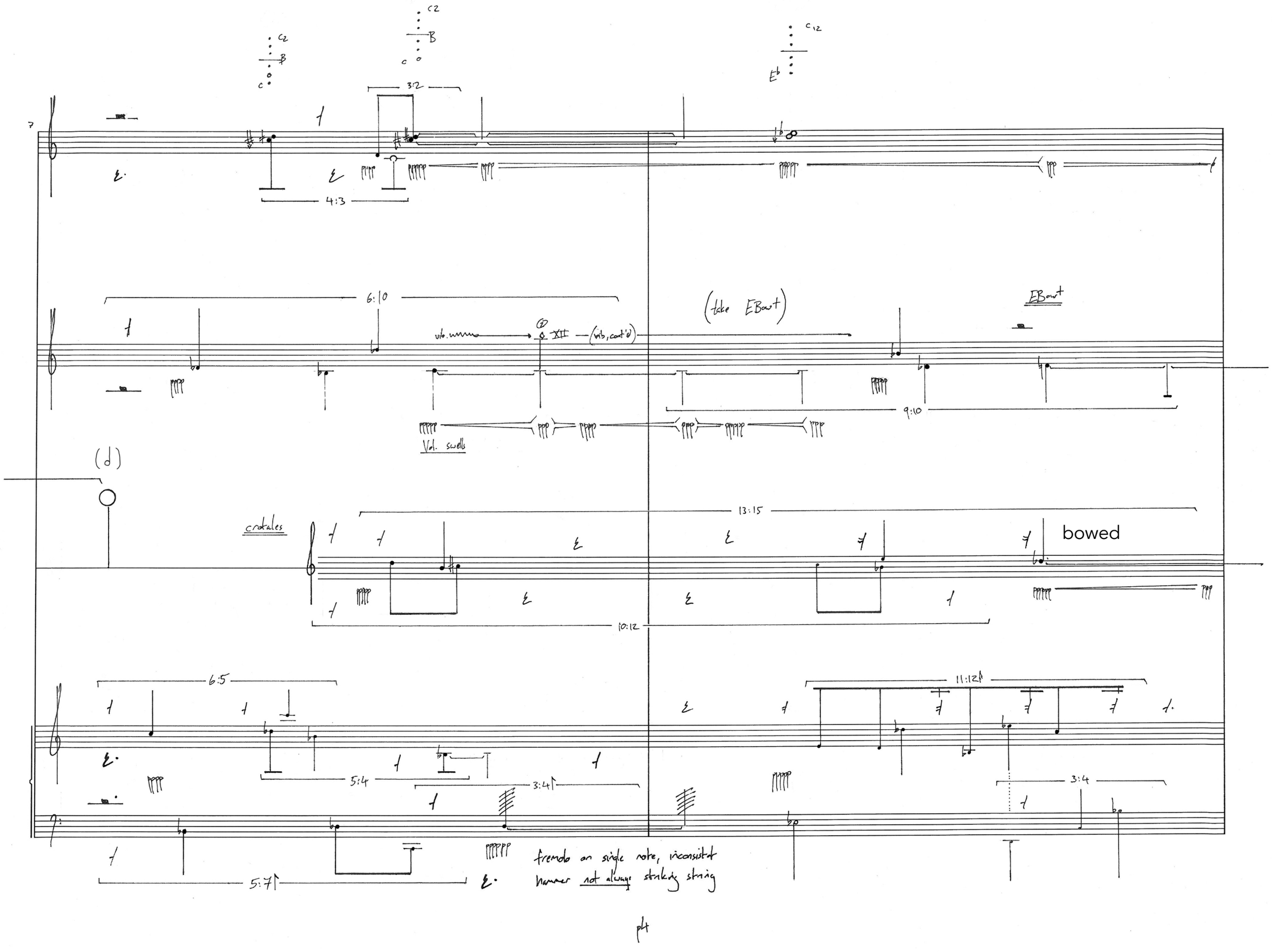
Una Corda, sustain sempre


7:9
flutter
7:10
note gradually emerges
let ring
6:7
l.h. pizz. behind nut
EBow
XII
(EBow down.)
9:10
4:3
(Strings undampened, tap headstock w/ r.h. soft ring.)
'stopp'
milk frother
(d.)
5:4
4:3
7:8
put milk frother down.
8va
4:5
(go)
5:7
4:5
9:10

p2


4:5
10:15
3:4
let ring
4:3
vib
5:6
4:6
r.h. taps, hold, then released.
l.h. hammers on.
7:6
r.h. tap
l.h.
5:4
9:8
4:3
5:4
7:8
7:8
4:5
4:3

p3


7
C2
B
C
C2
B
C
C12
E♭
3:2
4:3
6:10
vib.
XII
(vib, cont'd)
(take EBout)
EBout
9:10
Vol. swells
(d)
crotales
13:15
bowed
10:12
6:5
5:4
3:4
11:12
3:4
5:7
tremolo on single note, inconsistent
hammer not always striking string
pt

9

5:4

Keep EBow+ on, in hand if poss.

6:7

EBow+

9:10

EBow+

* Move EBow+ to a new harmonic node.

13:14

(bowed)

w/ knuckle

9:8

bass drum w/ fingertips

wine glass

$A^{\natural} = 427.65\,Hz$

7:8

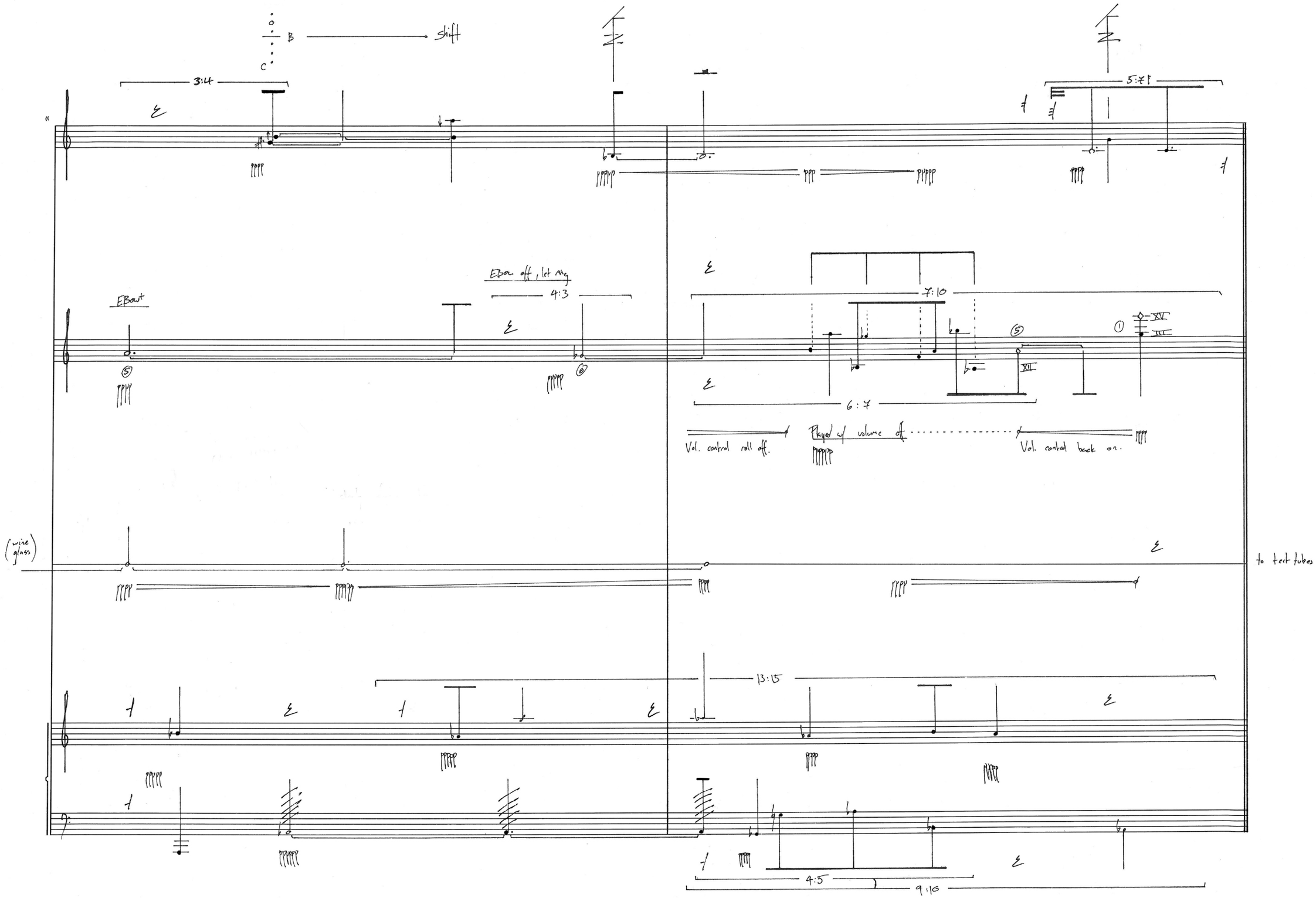
9:10

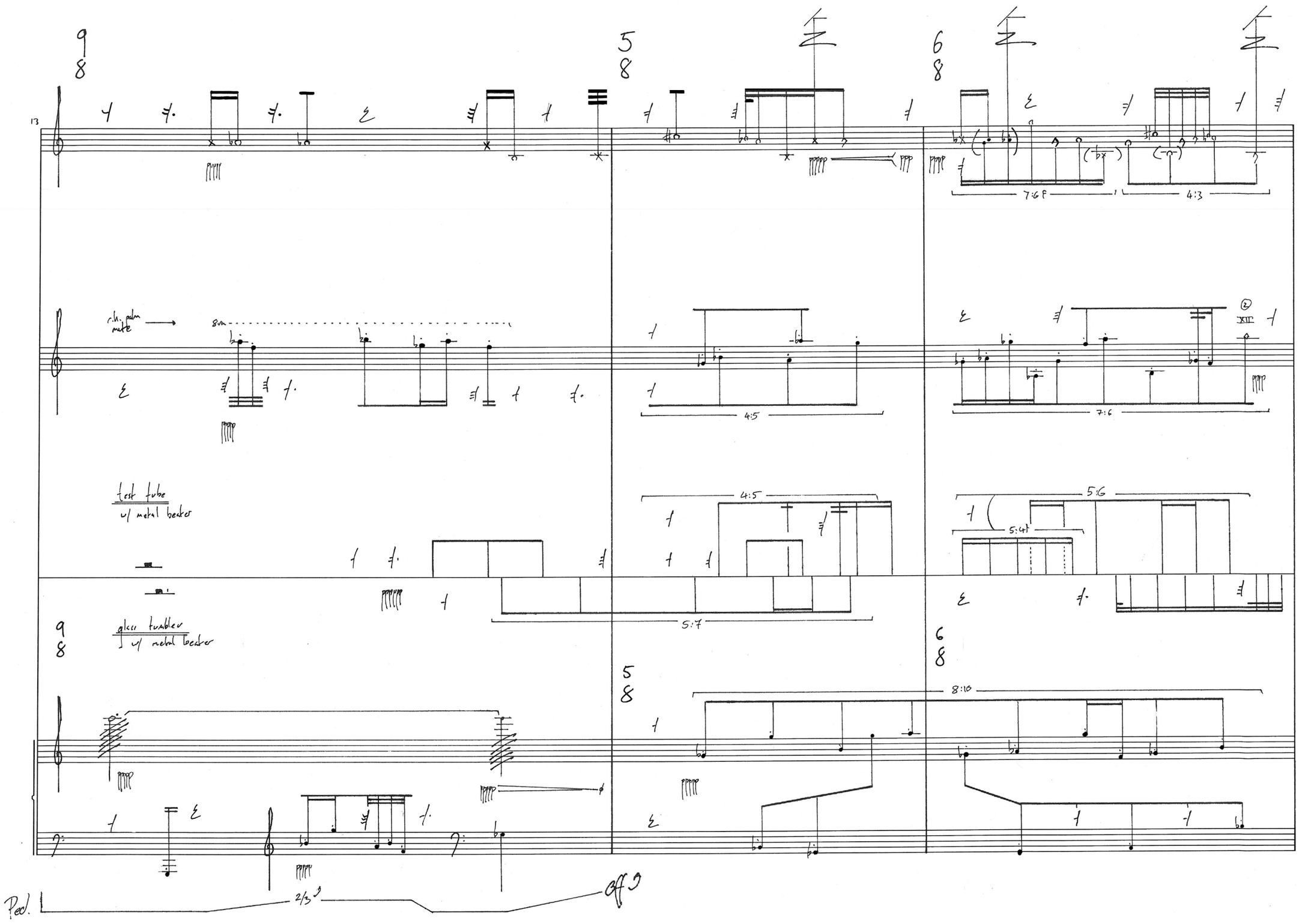
rapid tremolo. hammer inconsistent.

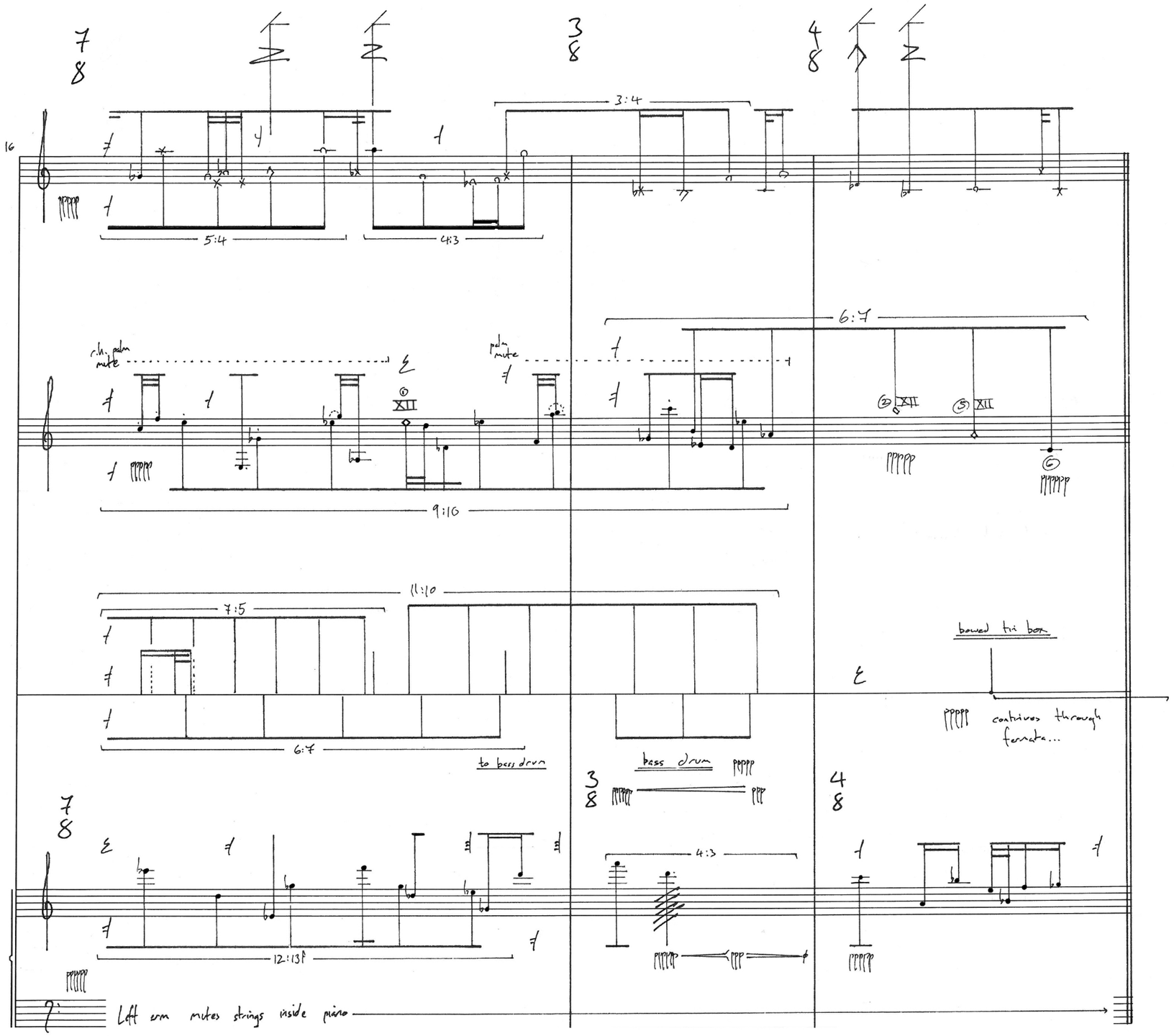
3:4

4:3

4:5

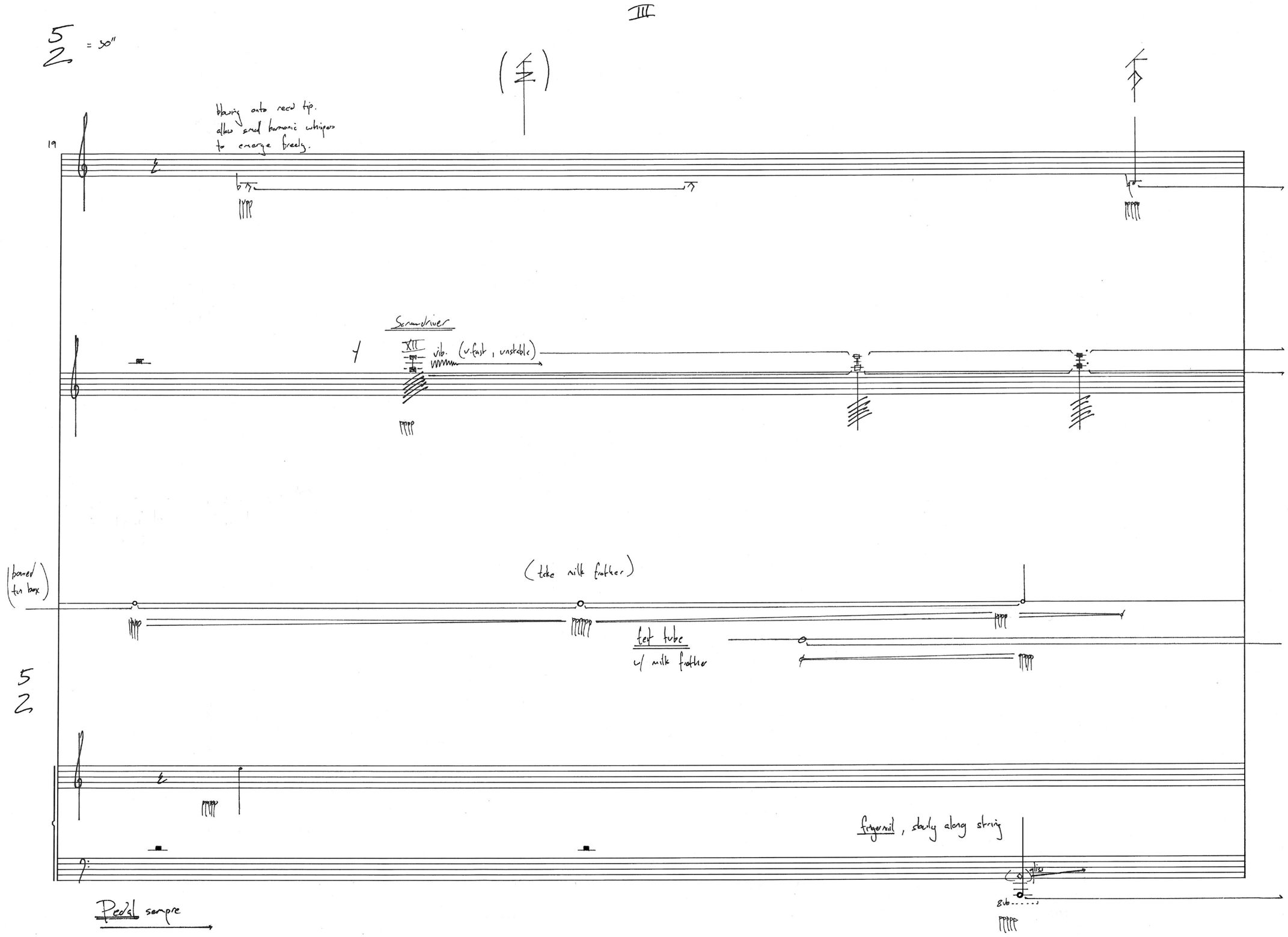

B
C
shift
3:4
5:7
EBout
Ebar off, let ring
4:3
7:10
6:7
Vol. control roll off.
Played w/ volume off
Vol. control back on.
(wine glass)
to test tubes
13:15
4:5
9:16


9/8
5/8
6/8
13
rh. palm mute
8va
7:6
4:3
4:5
7:6
test tube
w/ metal beaker
4:5
5:6
5:4
glass tumbler
w/ metal beaker
5:7
8:10
Ped.
2/3
off



Unplug guitar (allowing jack to make 'connection' noise.)
Amp hums. slight noise.
Crackling, plug guitar back in at end of fermata.
(take screwdriver)

bowed tri box
continues through fermata...


5/2 = 30"
19
blowing onto reed tip.
allow small harmonic whispers
to emerge freely.
Screwdriver
vib. (v.fast, unstable)
(bowed tin box)
(take milk frother)
feet tube
w/ milk frother
5/2
fingernail, slowly along string
gliss
8vb
Pedal sempre

20

5:7

gliss.

(take EBow)

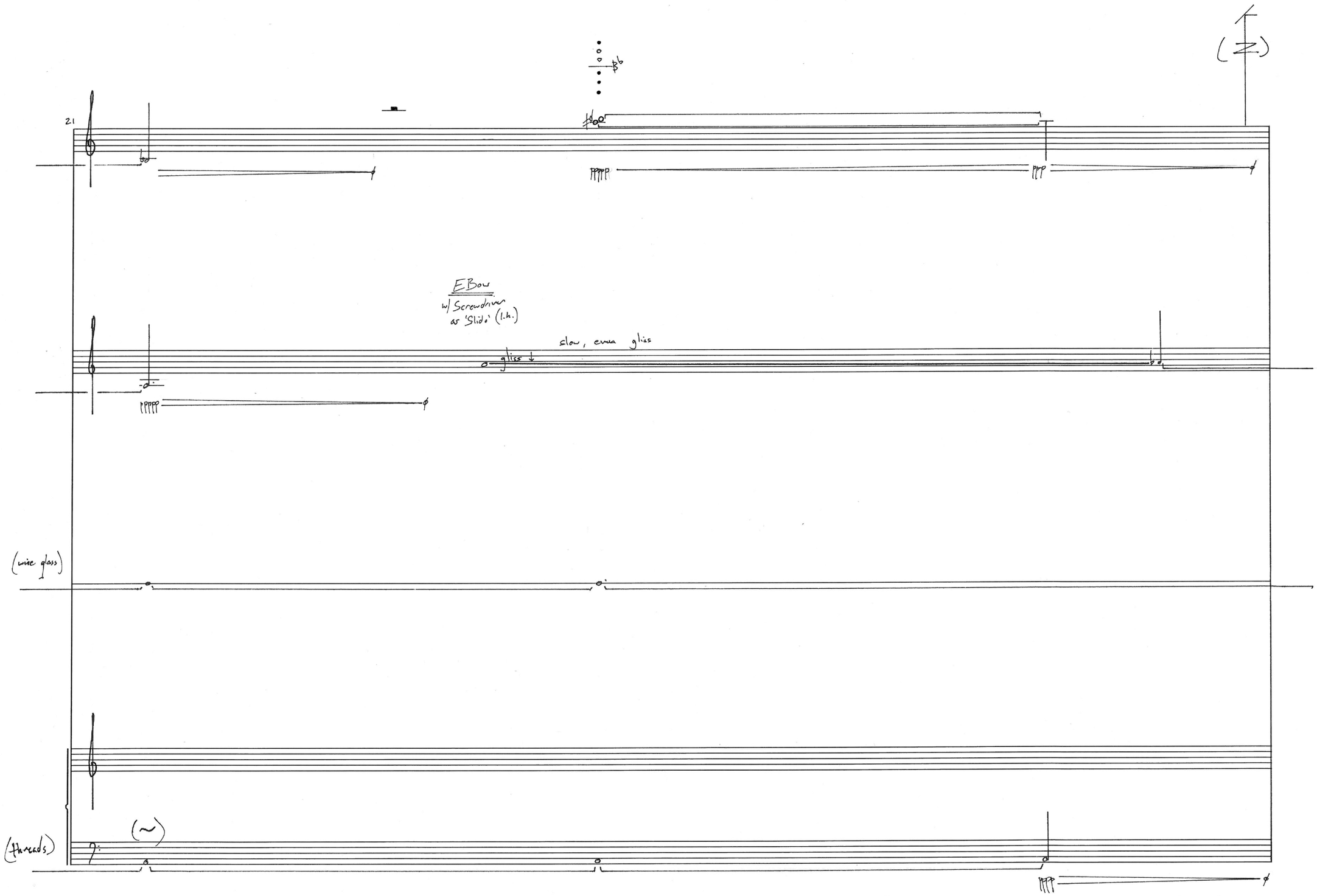
EBow

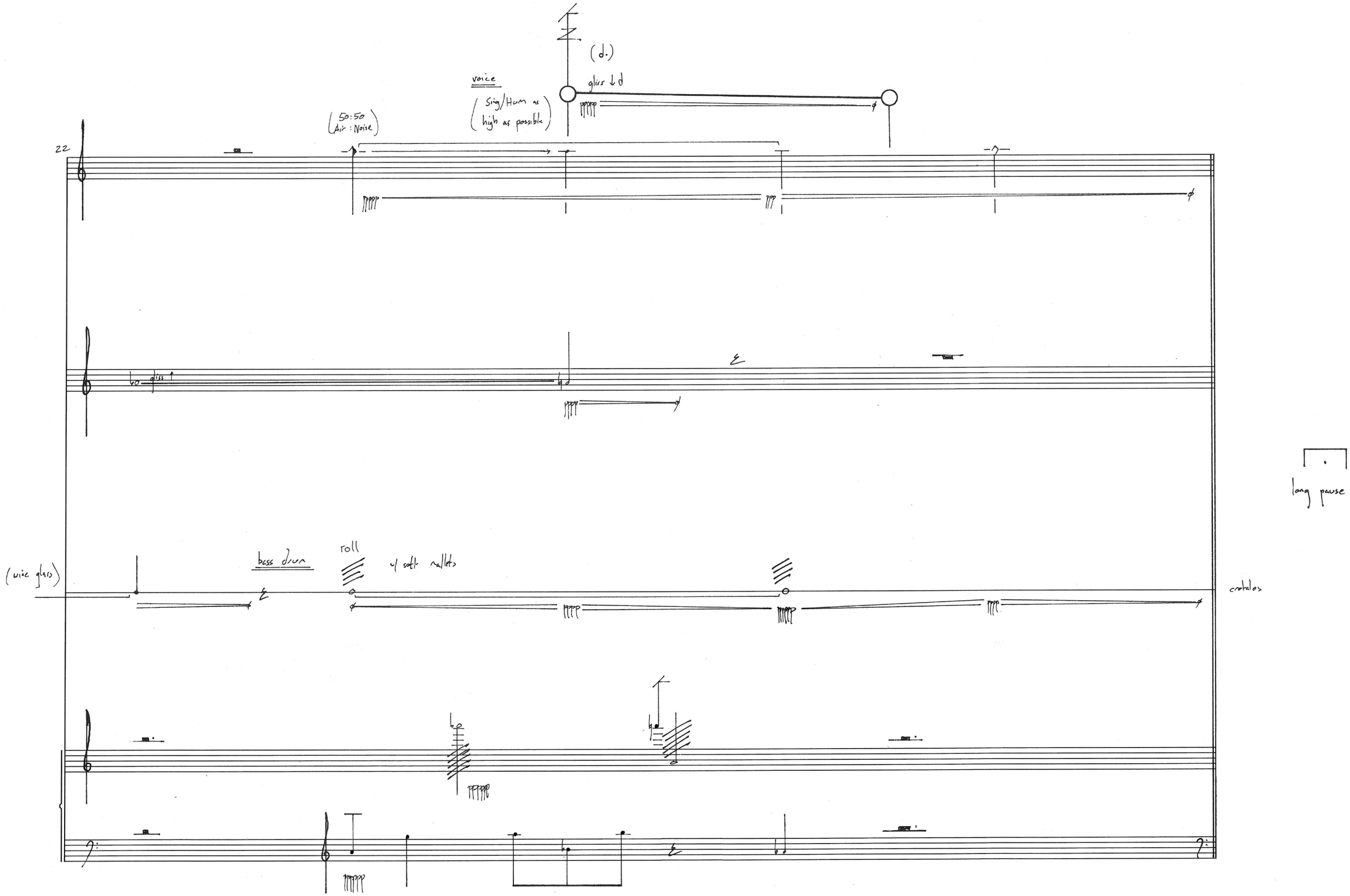
3:4

(test tube)

wine glass

~ bowed w/ threads


21
(Z)
EBow
w/ Screwdriver
as 'Slide' (l.h.)
slow, even gliss
gliss
(wine glass)
(threads)
(~)


22
(d.)
voice
gliss ↓ d
(Sig/Hum as high as possible)
(50:50 Air : Noise)
60 gliss ↑
long pause
(voice glss)
bass drum
roll
w/ soft mallets
crotales

23

3:4 3:4 11:10 F 4:3

5:6

(into air)

Hum/sing as low as possible, disrupting tone.

Strum strings behind nut.

let ring

5:4 6:4

let ring Bend string behind nut.

n.h. tapping

vib

* Vol. swell

5:3

9:10

crotales

12:15

tr.

5:6

5:4 4:3

6:4

25

5:4

gliss.

4:5

(r.h. tapping)

11:10

3:4

Strings undampened, tap headstock.

sfzp

test tubes

5:6

scraping

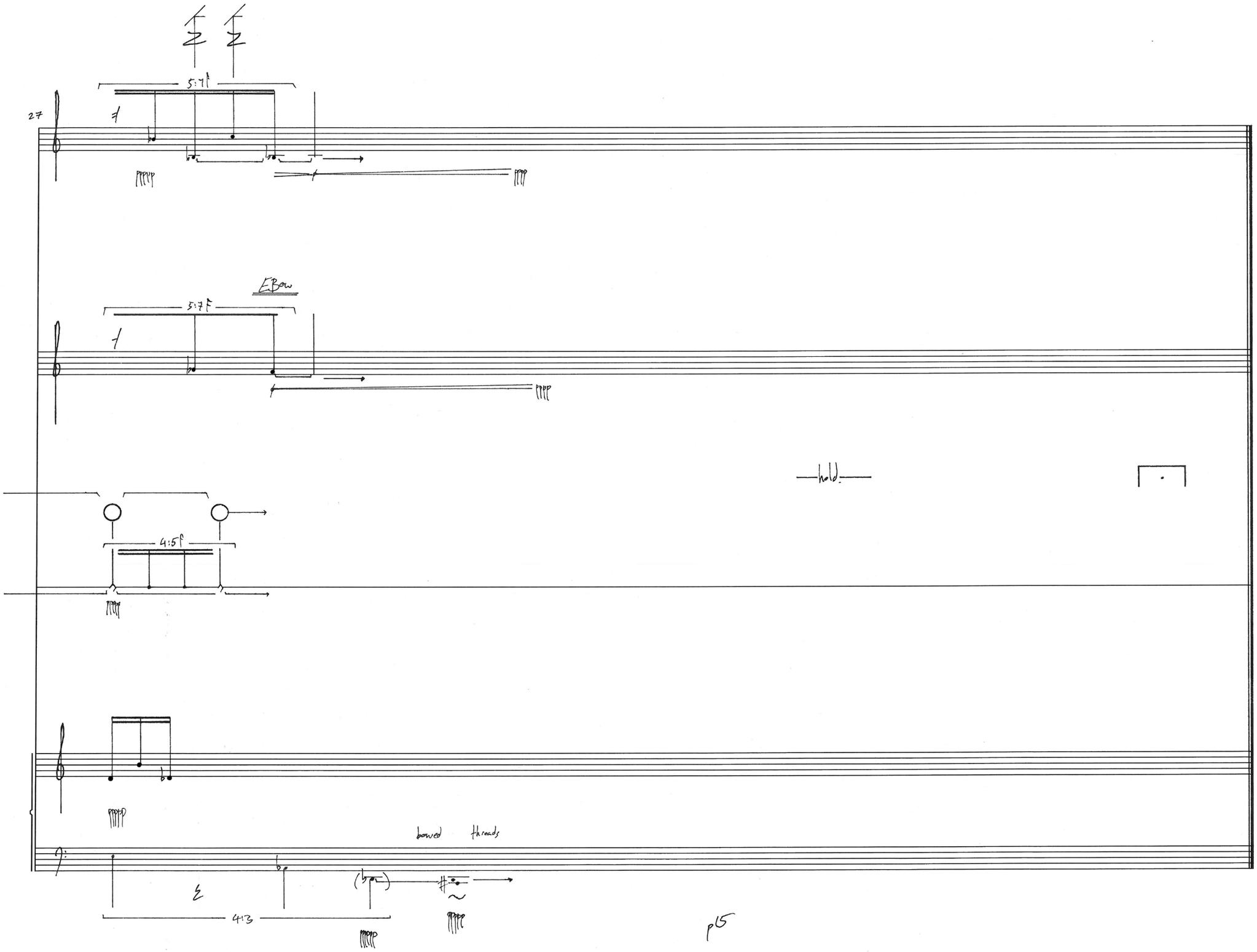
* scraping second tube on surface / table.

5:7

7:5

4:5

4:5



And Lo, for the Earth was empty of form, and void.

And Darkness was all over the Face of the Deep.

And we said:

'Look at that fucker Dance.'

Oliver Thurley
Leeds, September 2014