Invisible Cities:
ERSILIA

for
Chamber Orchestra

Composed by
JOSIAH WOLF OBERHOLTZER

2015

PREFACE

1

In Ersilia, to establish the relationships that sustain the city's life, the inhabitants stretch strings from the corners of the houses, white or black or gray or black-and-white according to whether they mark a relationship of blood, of trade, authority, agency. When the strings become so numerous that you can no longer pass among them, the inhabitants leave: the houses are dismantled; only the strings and their supports remain.

From a mountainside, camping with their household goods, Ersilia's refugees look at the labyrinth of taut strings and poles that rise in the plain. That is the city of Ersilia still, and they are nothing.

They rebuild Ersilia elsewhere. They weave a similar pattern of strings which they would like to be more complex and at the same time more regular than the other. Then they abandon it and take themselves and their houses still farther away.

Thus, when traveling in the territory of Ersilia, you come upon the ruins of abandoned cities, without the walls which do not last, without the bones of the dead which the wind rolls away: spiderwebs of intricate relationships seeking a form.

- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

2

"Are we still in the South Reach?"

"Reach? No. The islands –" The chief moved his slender black hand in an arc, no more than a quarter of the compass, north to east. "The islands are there," he said. "All the islands." Then showing all the evening sea before them, from north through west to south, he said, "The sea."

"What land are you from, lord?"

"No land. We are the Children of the Open Sea."

Arren looked at his keen face. He looked about him at the great raft with its temple and its tall idols, each carved from a single tree, great god-figures mixed of dolphin, fish, man, and seabird; at the people busy at their work, weaving, carving, fishing, cooking on raised platforms, tending babies; at the other rafts, seventy at least, scattered out over the water in a great circle perhaps a mile across. It was a town: smoke rising in thin wisps from distant houses, the voices of children high on the wind. It was a town, and under its floors was the abyss.

- Ursula LeGuin, *The Farthest Shore*

3 Instrumentation

- Flute
- Bass clarinet
- Oboe
- Baritone saxophone
- Acoustic guitar
- Piano
- Percussion
    - bamboo wind chimes
    - four toms
    - five wood blocks
    - snare drum
    - marimba
    - crotales, two octaves
    - tam-tam
    - bass drum
- Violin
- Viola
- Cello
- Contrabass

4 Performance notes

Six players – flute, bass clarinet, oboe, violin, viola and cello – receive a shaker – caxixi, maraca or similar. Four players – guitar, piano, percussion and contrabass – receive a chromatic pitch pipe – a circular harmonic-like instrument generally used for tuning vocal groups.

The shakers should be placed on or suspended from their respective performer's music stands, or wherever convenient.

The pitch-pipes should be played by inhaling or exhaling – as indicated – through fully half of the circumference of the instrument, creating a rich cluster.

For all winds, a +-symbol indicates slap tonguing.

For guitar, the coda symbol indicates a percussive damping of the strings.

Piano plays with pedal to their discretion throughout the first four sections of the piece. The sound should be generally dry, although some pedal should be used when appropriate for phrasing and blending, especially on tremolo passages. The sustain pedal should remain fully depressed for the entirety of section D. Inside-piano glissandi are notated proportional to the lower interior portion of the instrument – from the lowest string up to the first cross-bar – and should be played with the fingertip.

Percussion should use hard sticks on toms, woodblocks, snares and crotales, and softer mallets on marimba, bass drum and tam-tam (when ergonomic to do so).

All mordents and trills are a major 2nd, unless otherwise specified. All tremolos are unmeasured and should evoke a cloud-like texture.

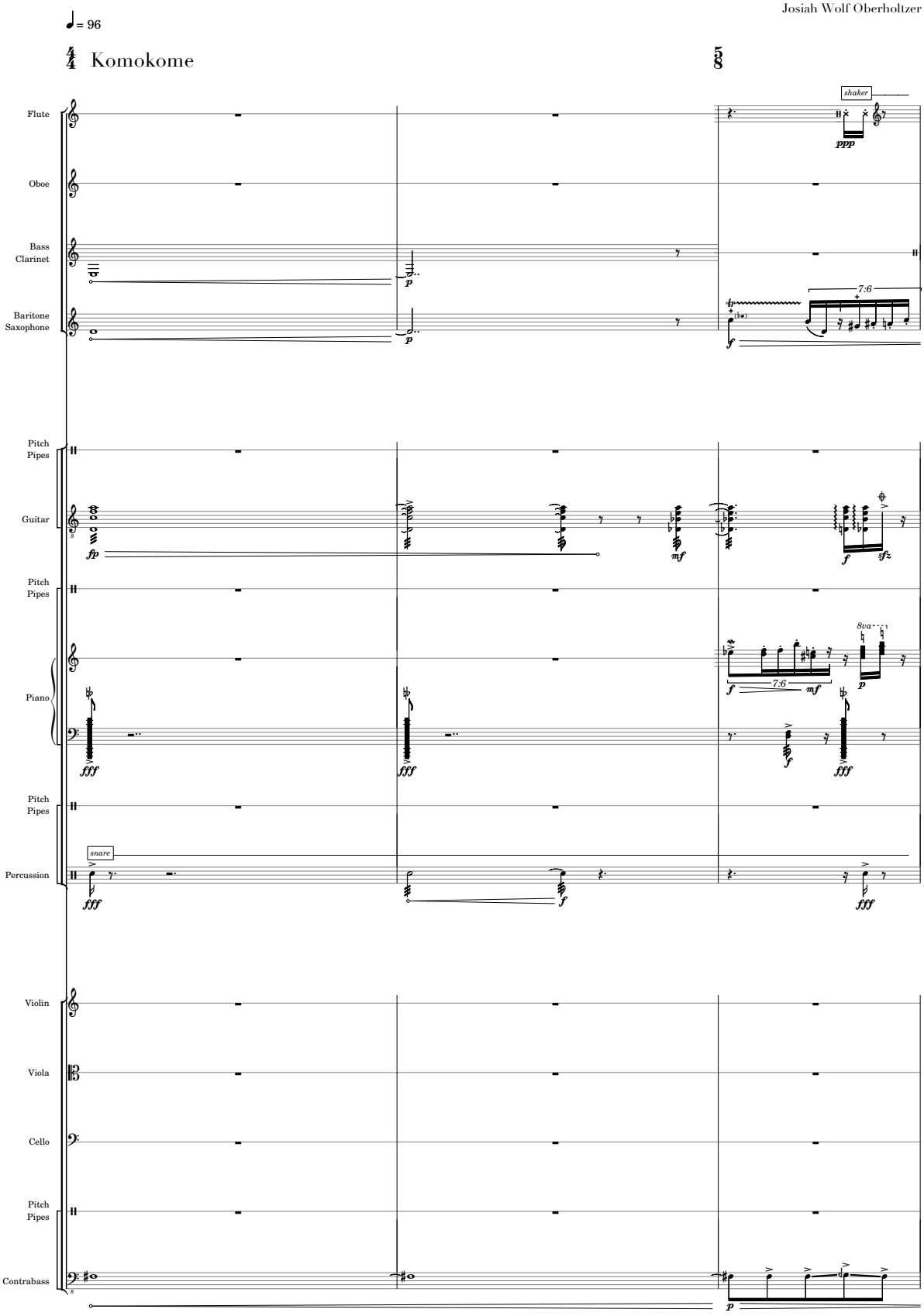
Invisible Cities (iii):

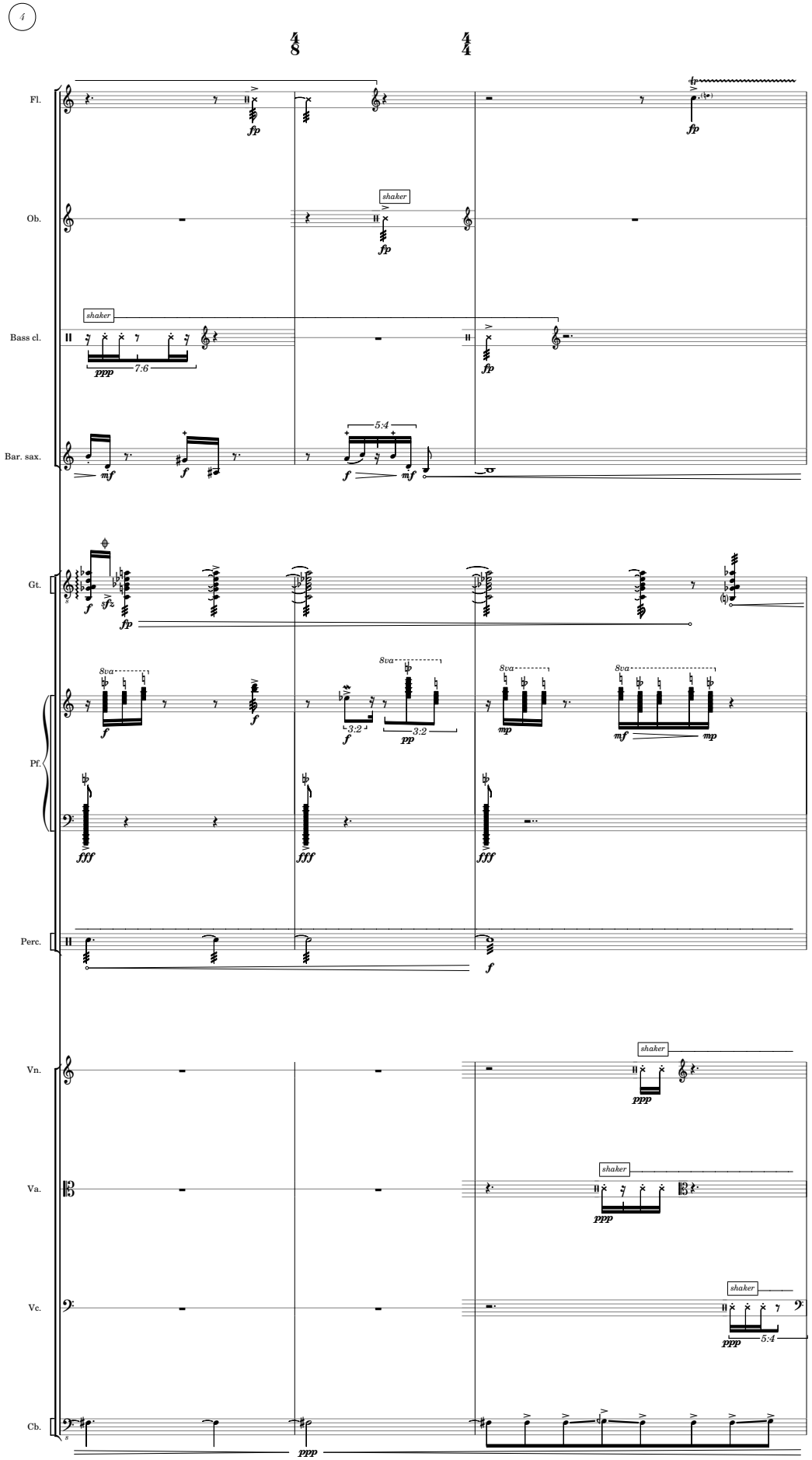
ERSILIA

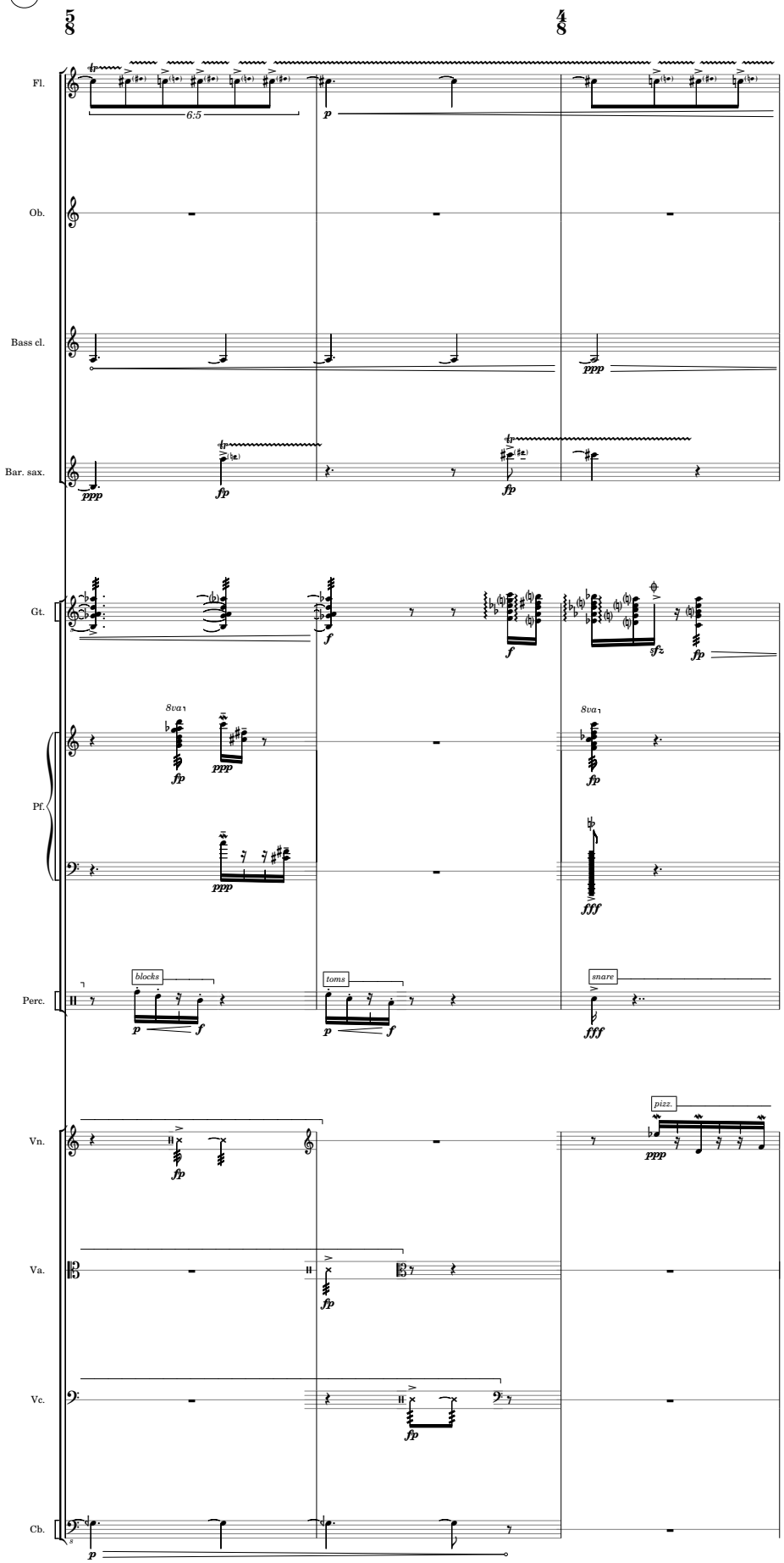
(a botanical survey of the uninhabited northeastern isles)

for Ensemble Dal Niente

Josiah Wolf Oberholtzer (1984)




Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
shaker
8va
7:6
5:4
3:2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4/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
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Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
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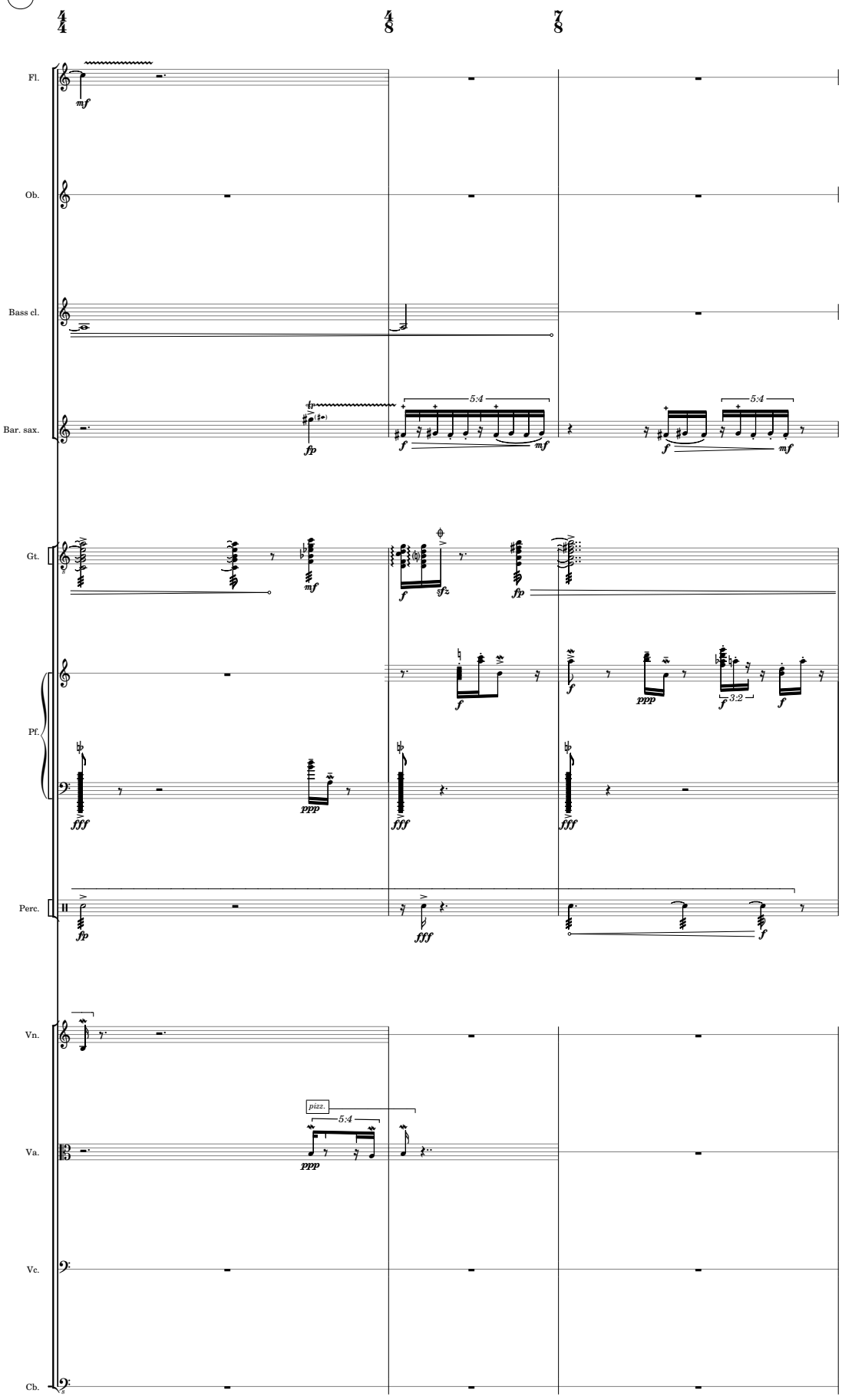
Vc.
Cb.
6:5
8va
blocks
toms
snare
pizz.


4/4
4/8
7/8
Fl.
mf
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
fp
5:4
f
mf
Gt.
sfz
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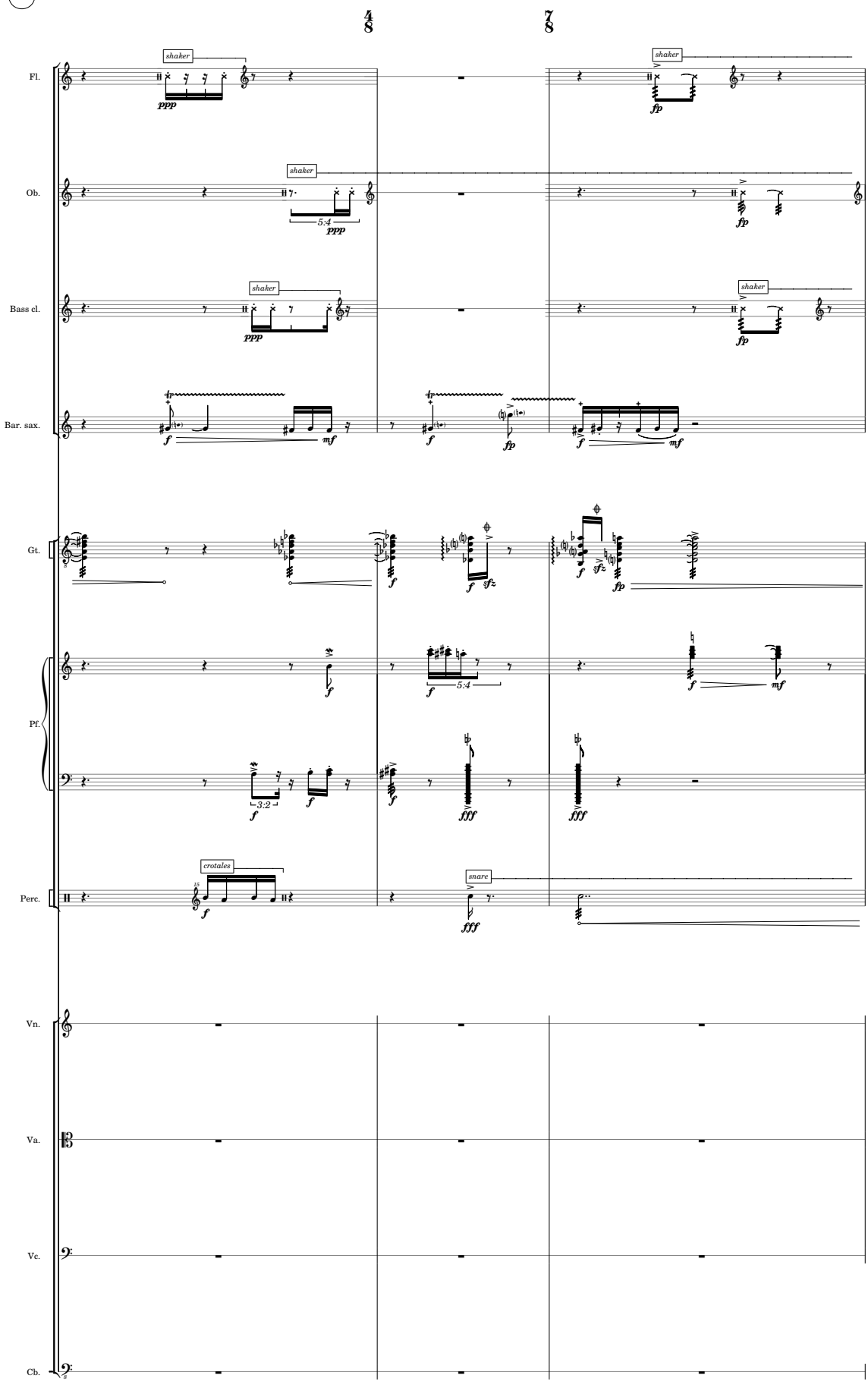
3:2
Perc.
Vn.
pizz.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.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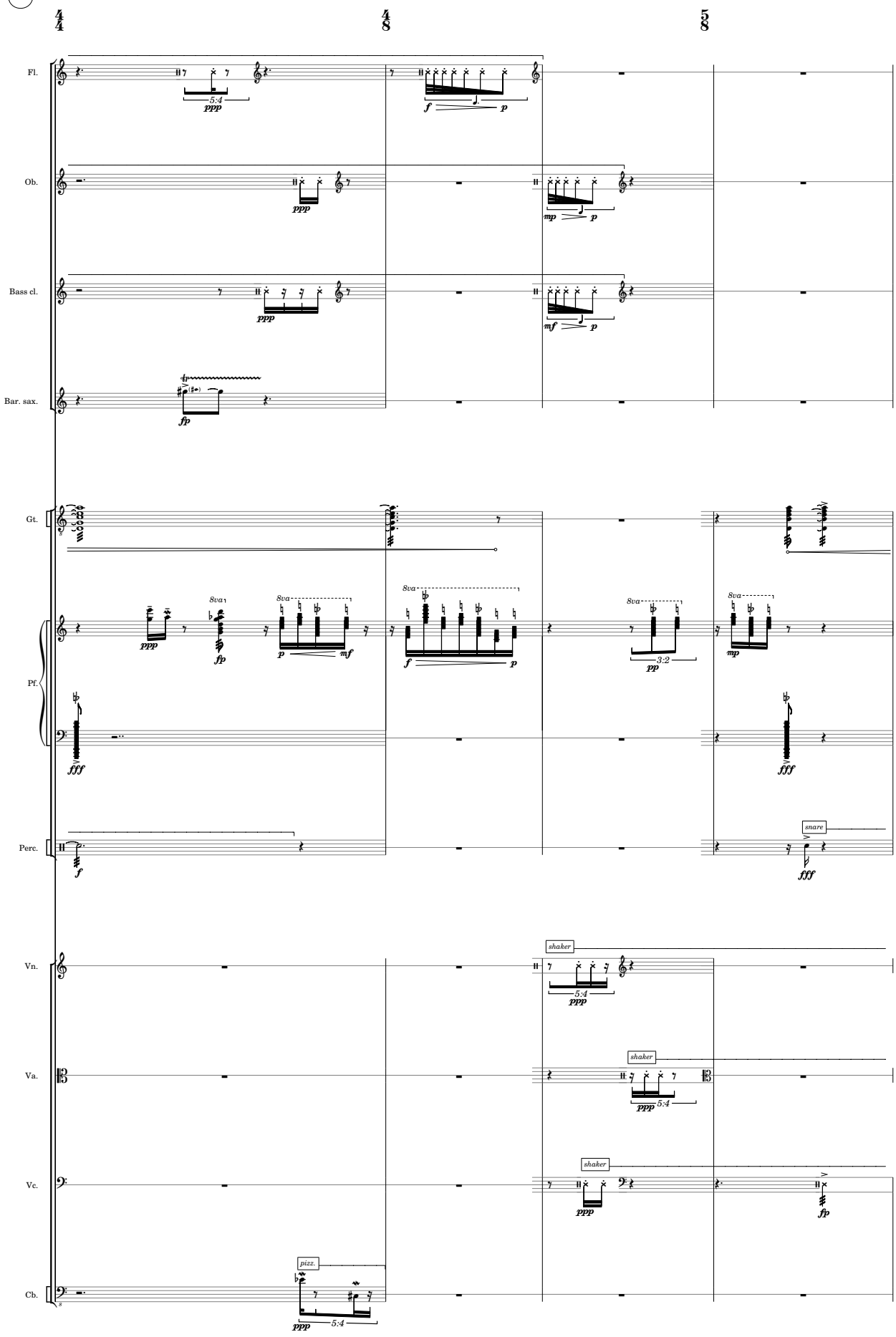
7/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
shaker
crotales
snare
ppp
fp
f
mf
fff
5:4
3:2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4/8
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Fl.
Ob.
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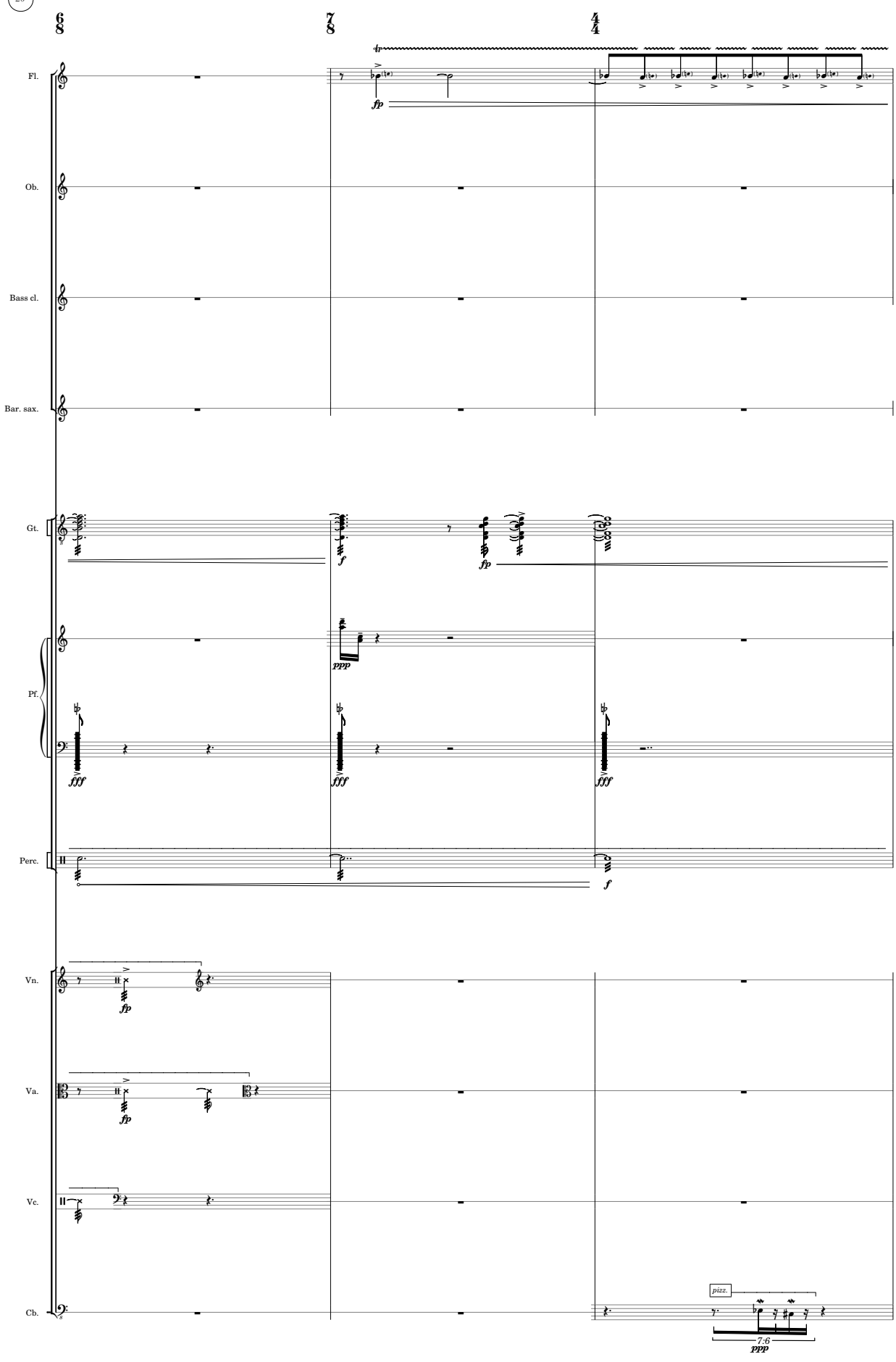
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
5:4
ppp
f
p
mp
mf
fp
8va
3:2
pp
fff
snare
shaker
pizz.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7/8
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Fl.
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Ob.
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Bar. sax.
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f
fp
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Perc.
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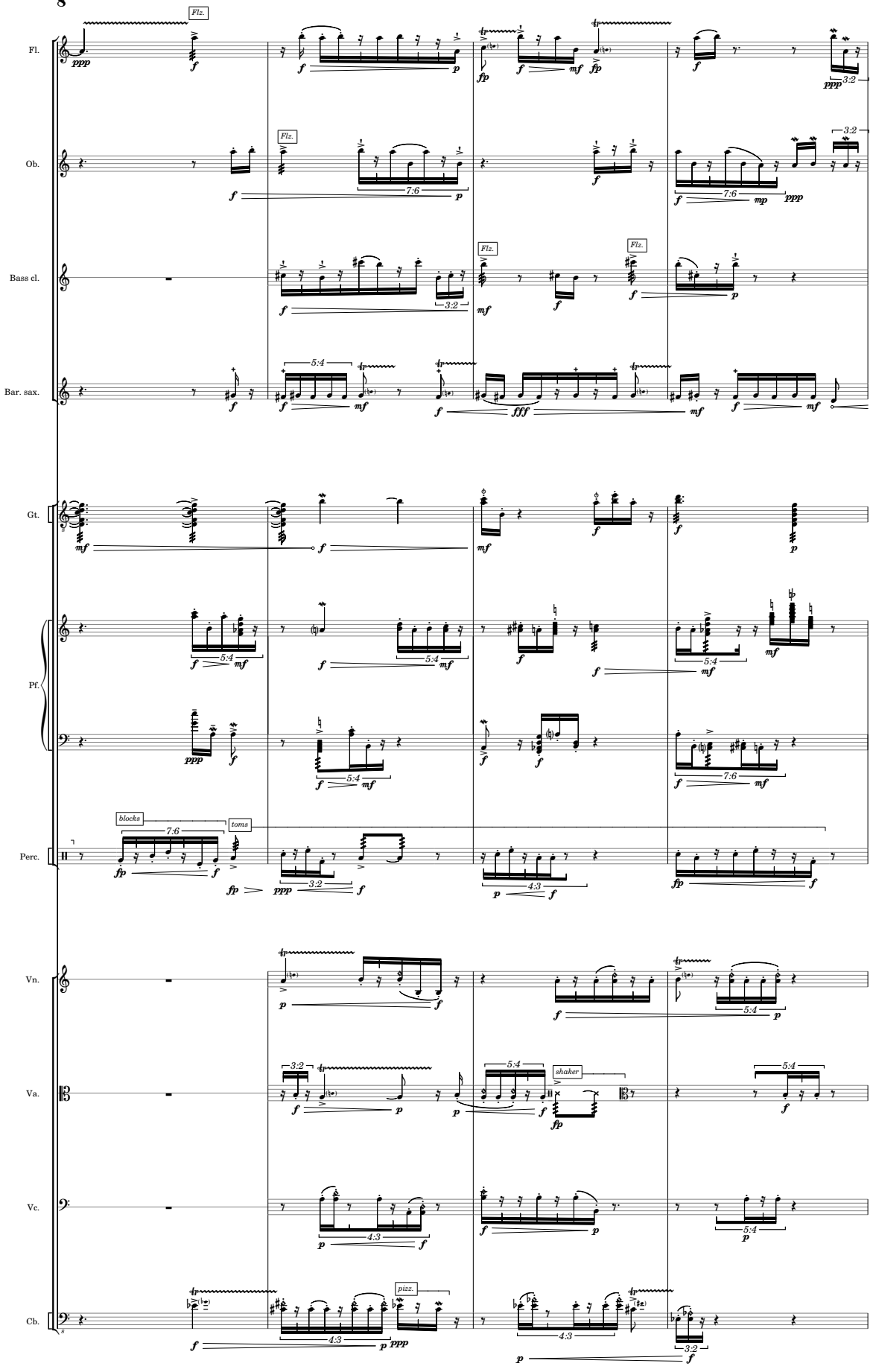
Va.
fp
Vc.
Cb.
pizz.
7:6
ppp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Ob.
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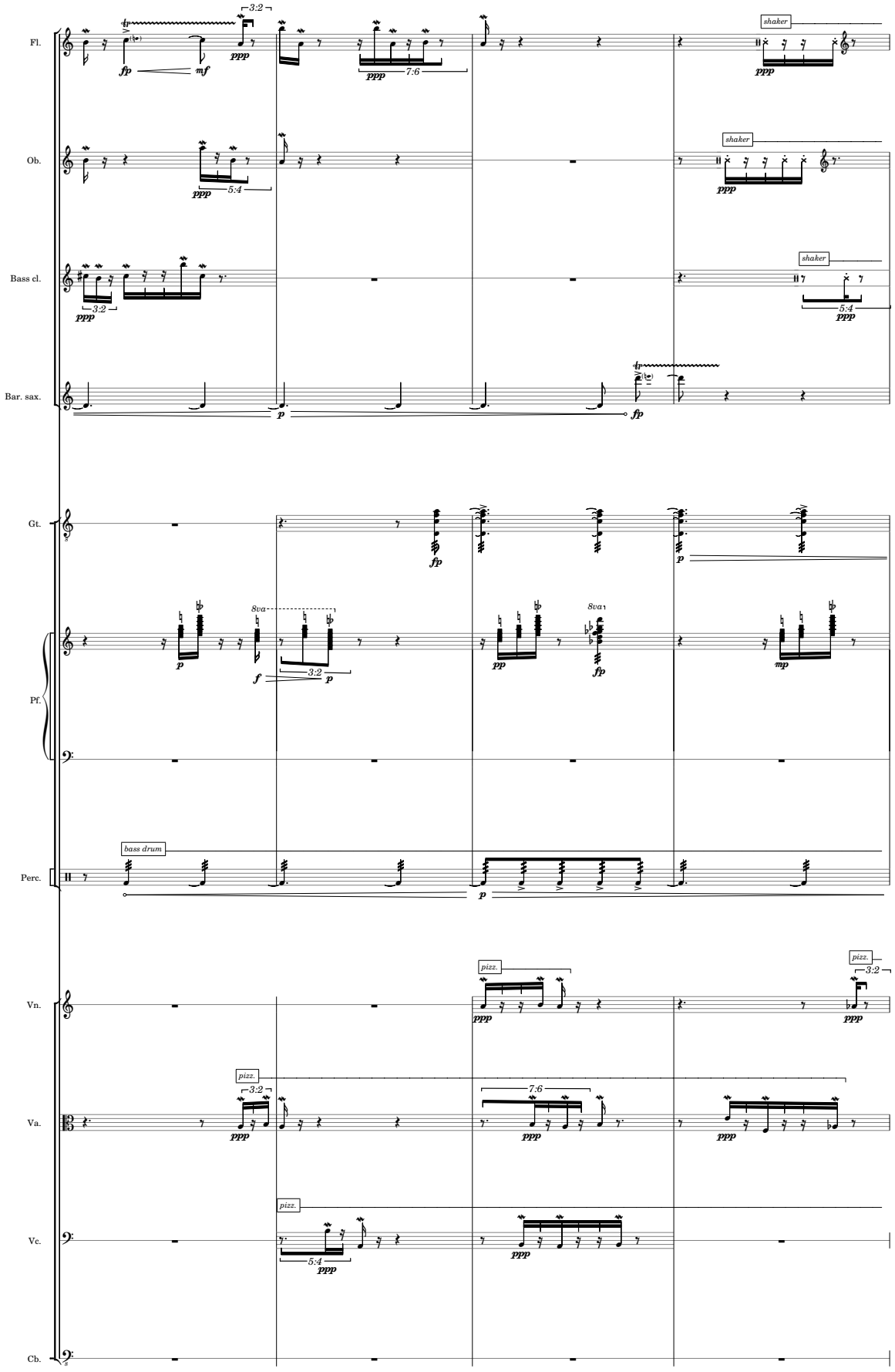
Vc.
Cb.
Flz.
blocks
toms
shaker
pizz.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Ob.
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Gt.
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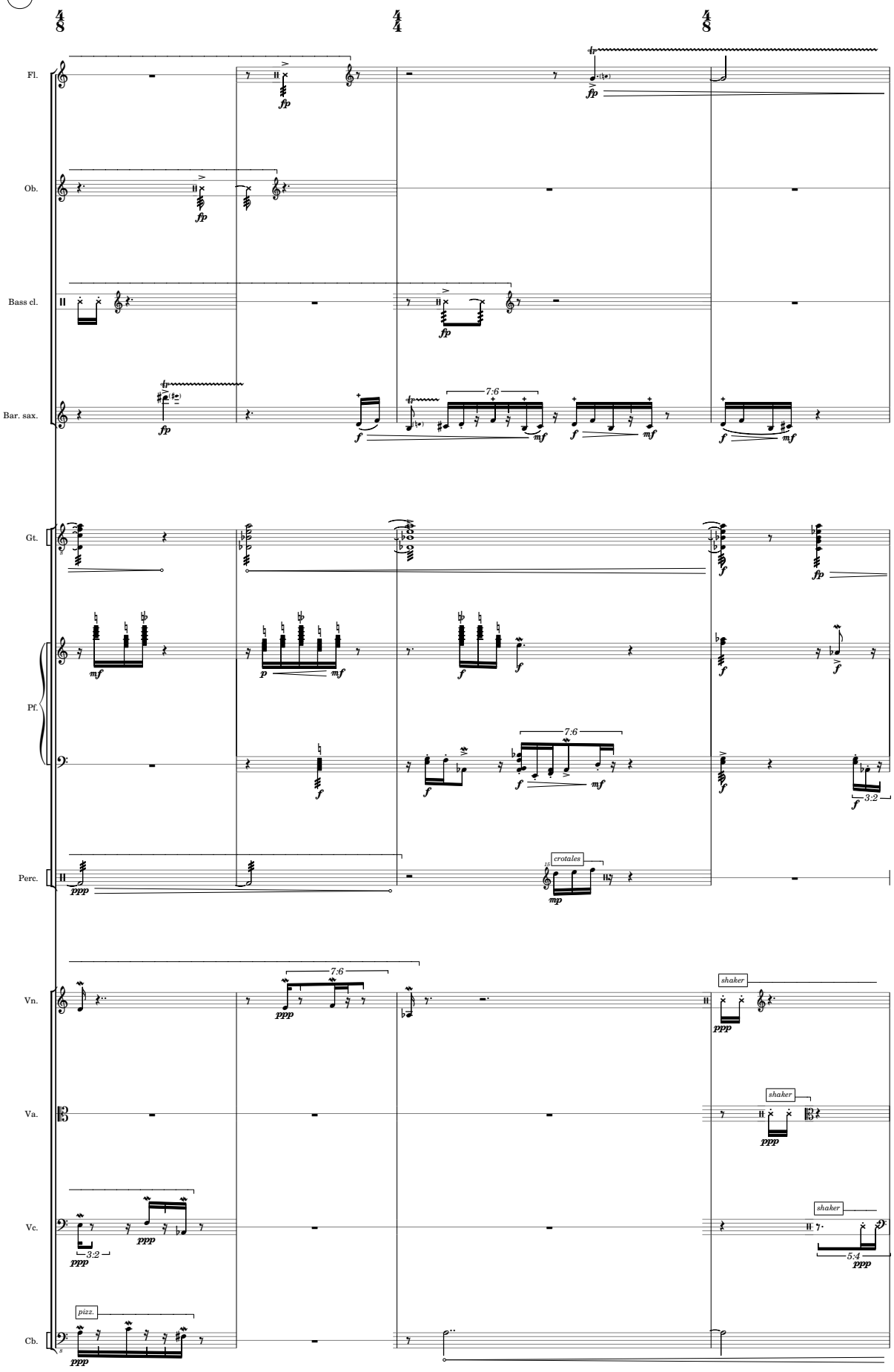
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
shaker
bass drum
pizz.
3:2
5:4
7:6
8va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Ob.
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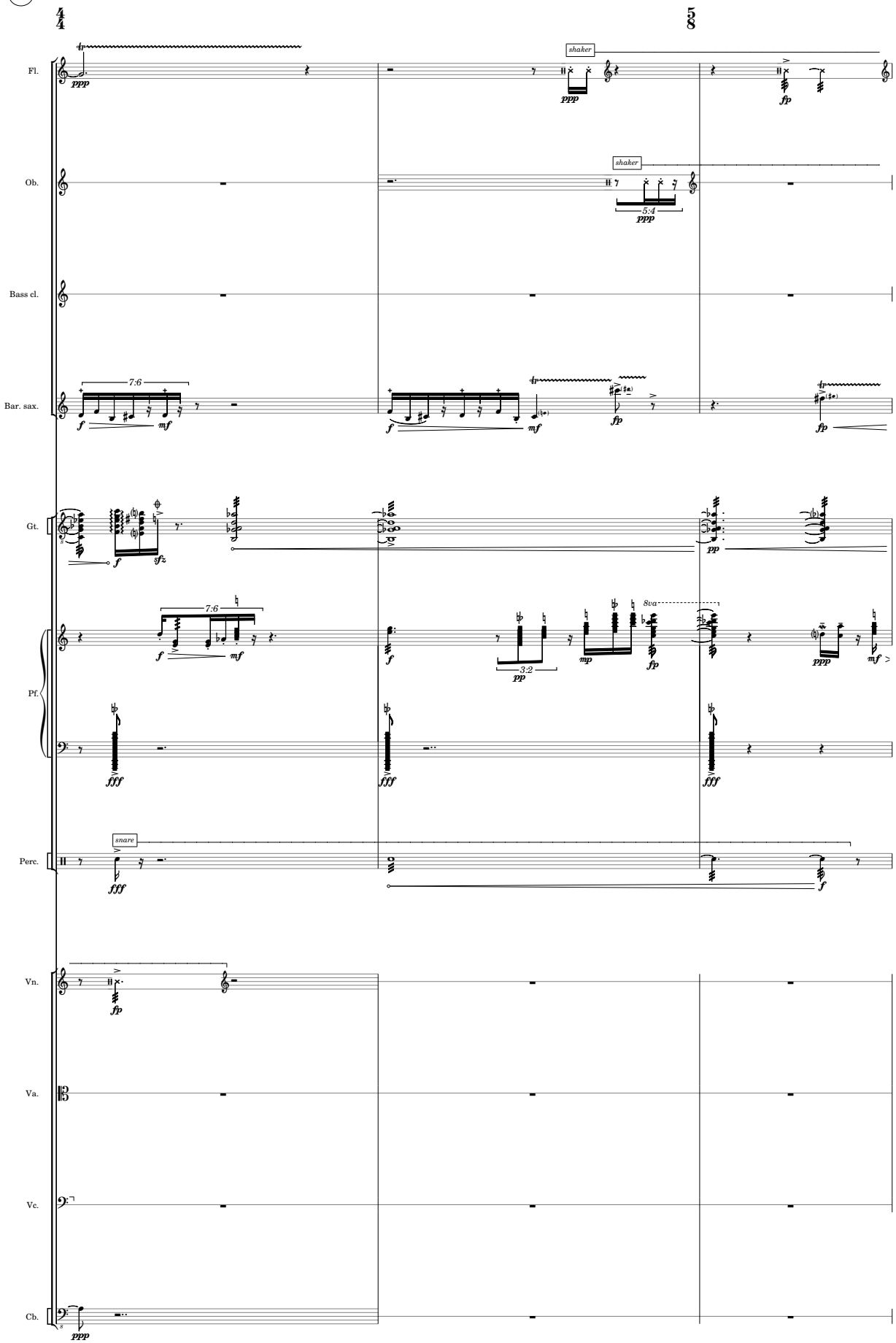
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
crotales
shaker
shaker
shaker
pizz.
7:6
7:6
7:6
3:2
3:2
5:4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Pf.
Perc.
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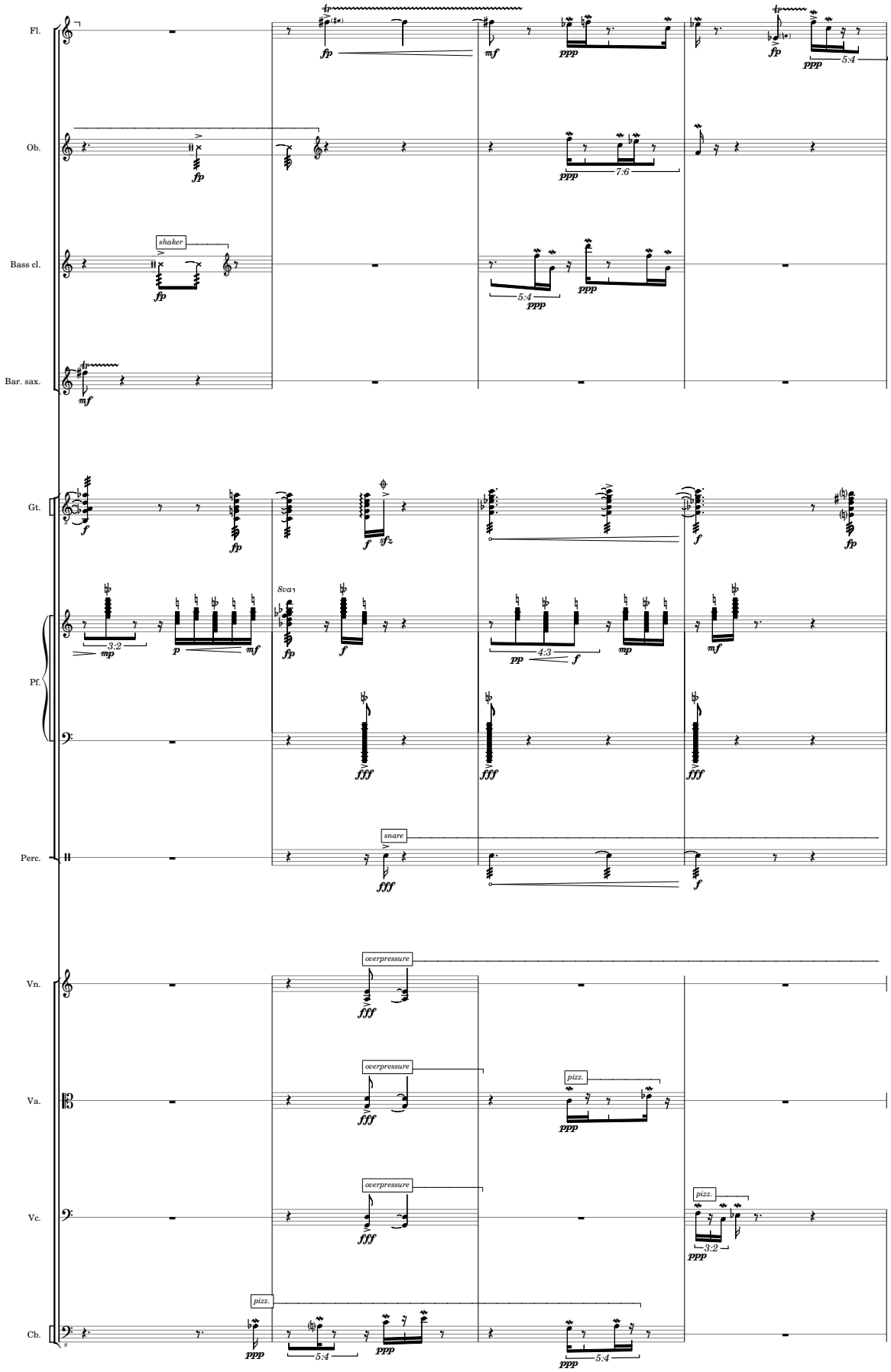
shaker
shaker
snare
7:6
7:6
5:4
3:2
8va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Pf.
Perc.
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Vc.
Cb.
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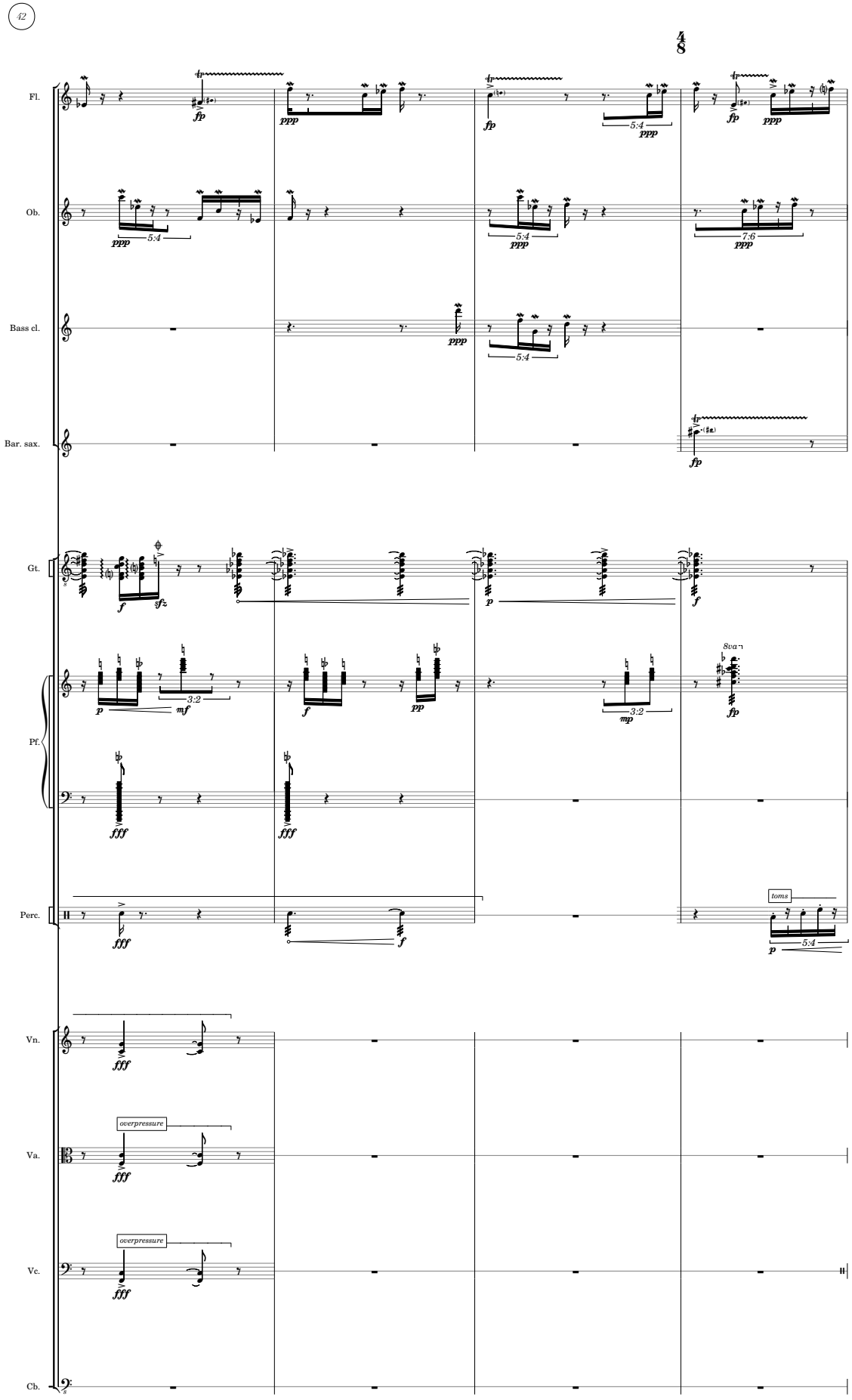
snare
overpressure
pizz.
8va
3:2
5:4
7:6
4:3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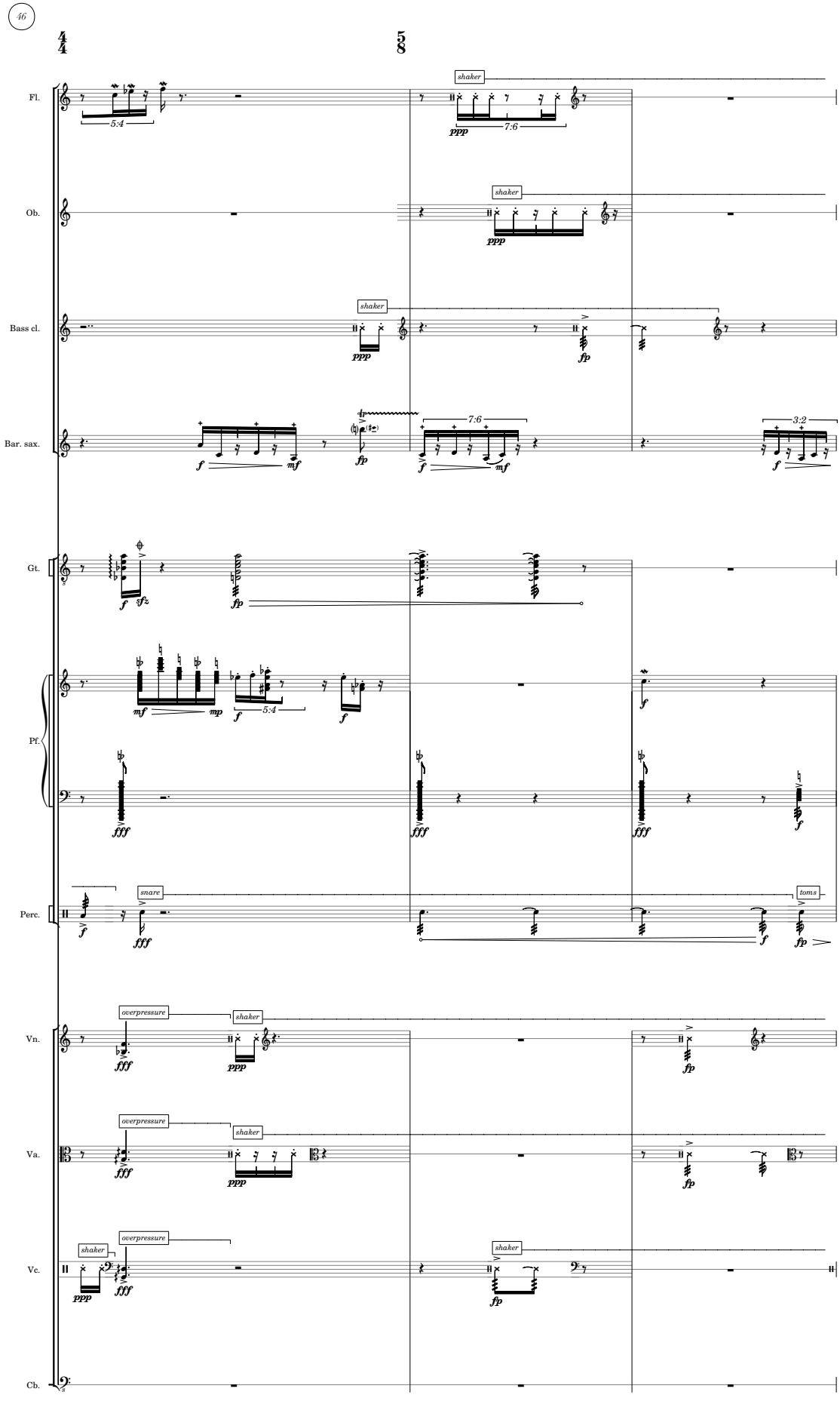
Vc.
Cb.
overpressure
overpressure
toms
8va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Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
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shaker
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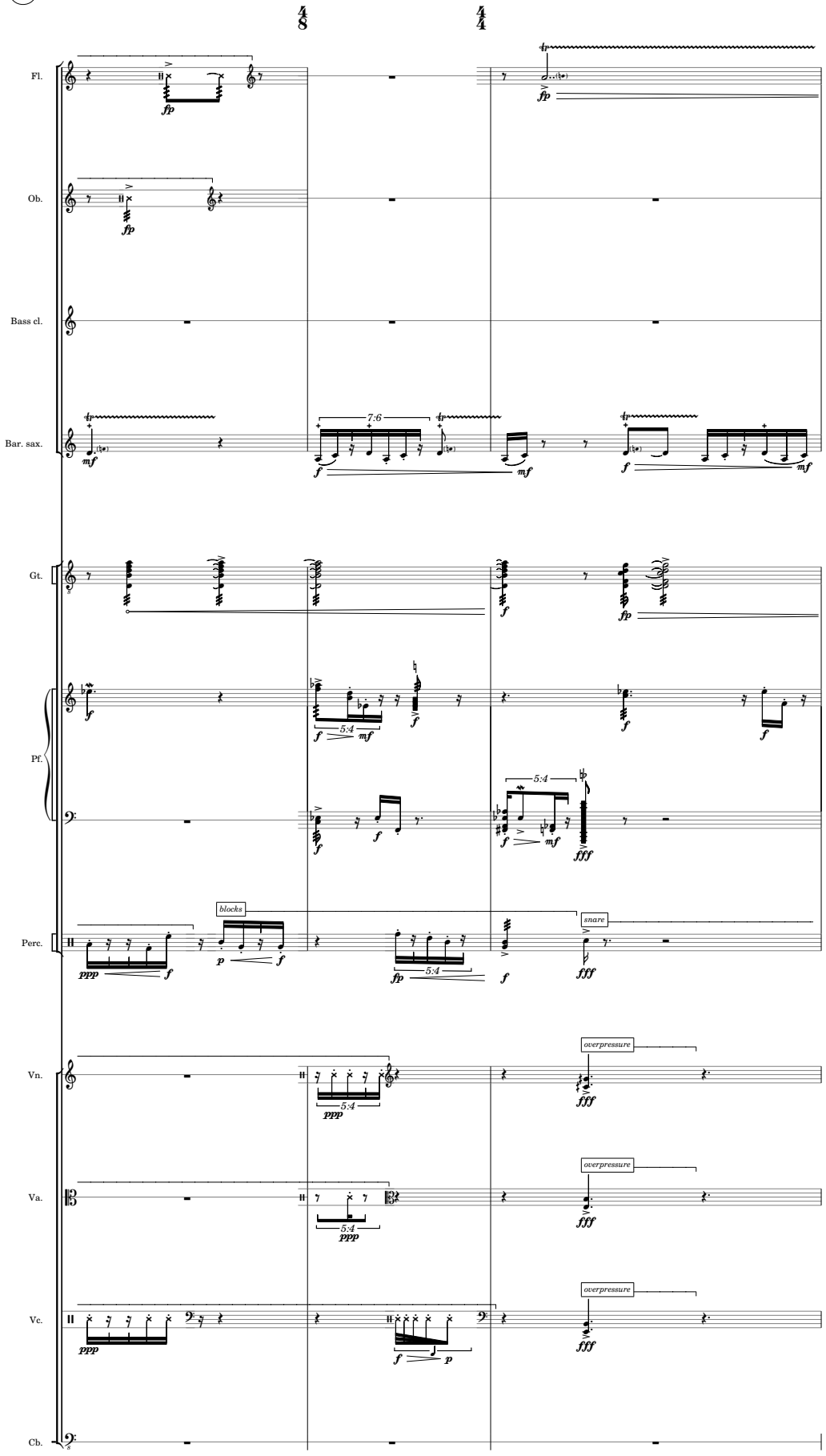
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Ob.
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Gt.
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Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
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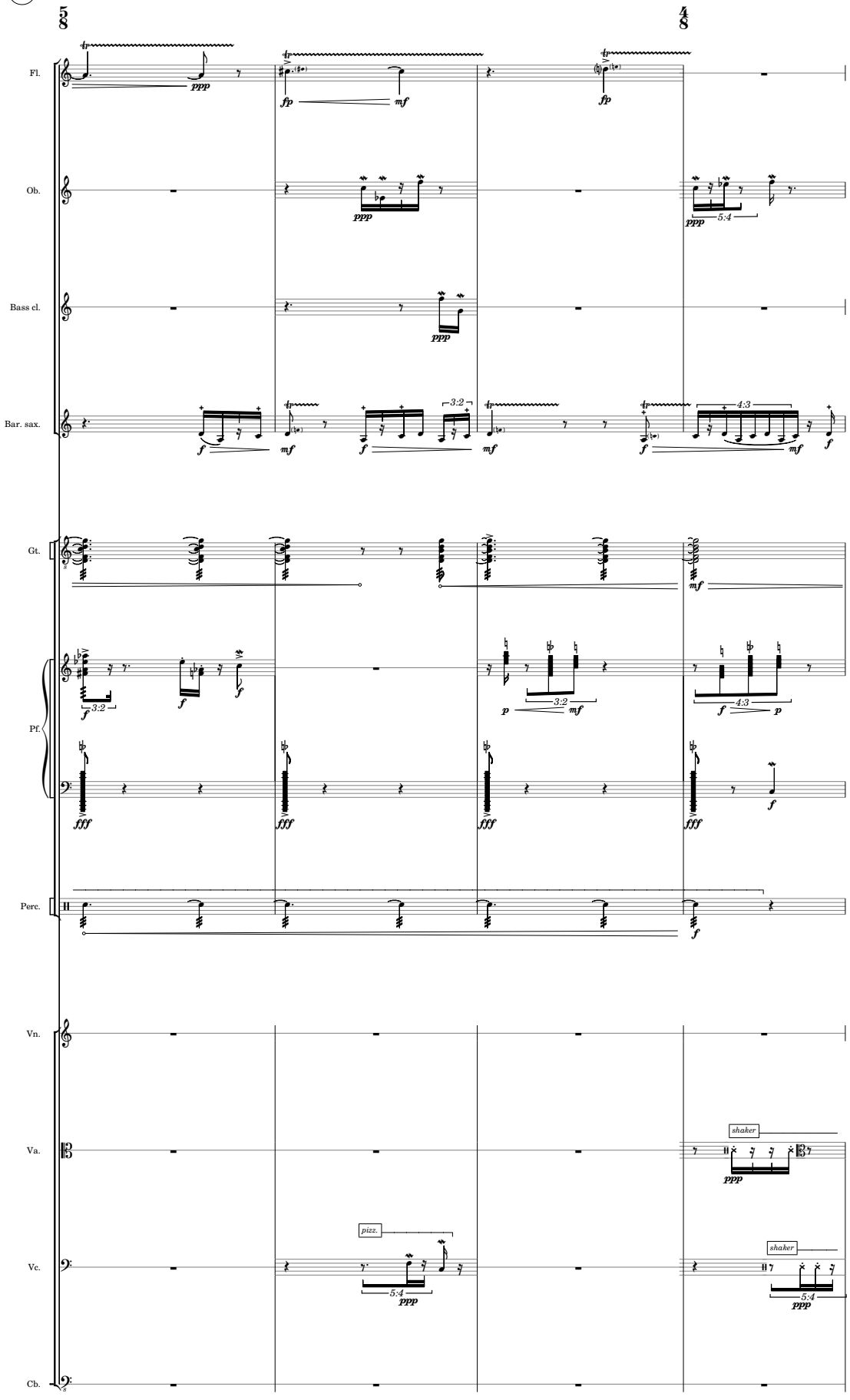
blocks
snare
overpressure
overpressure
overpressure
7:6
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4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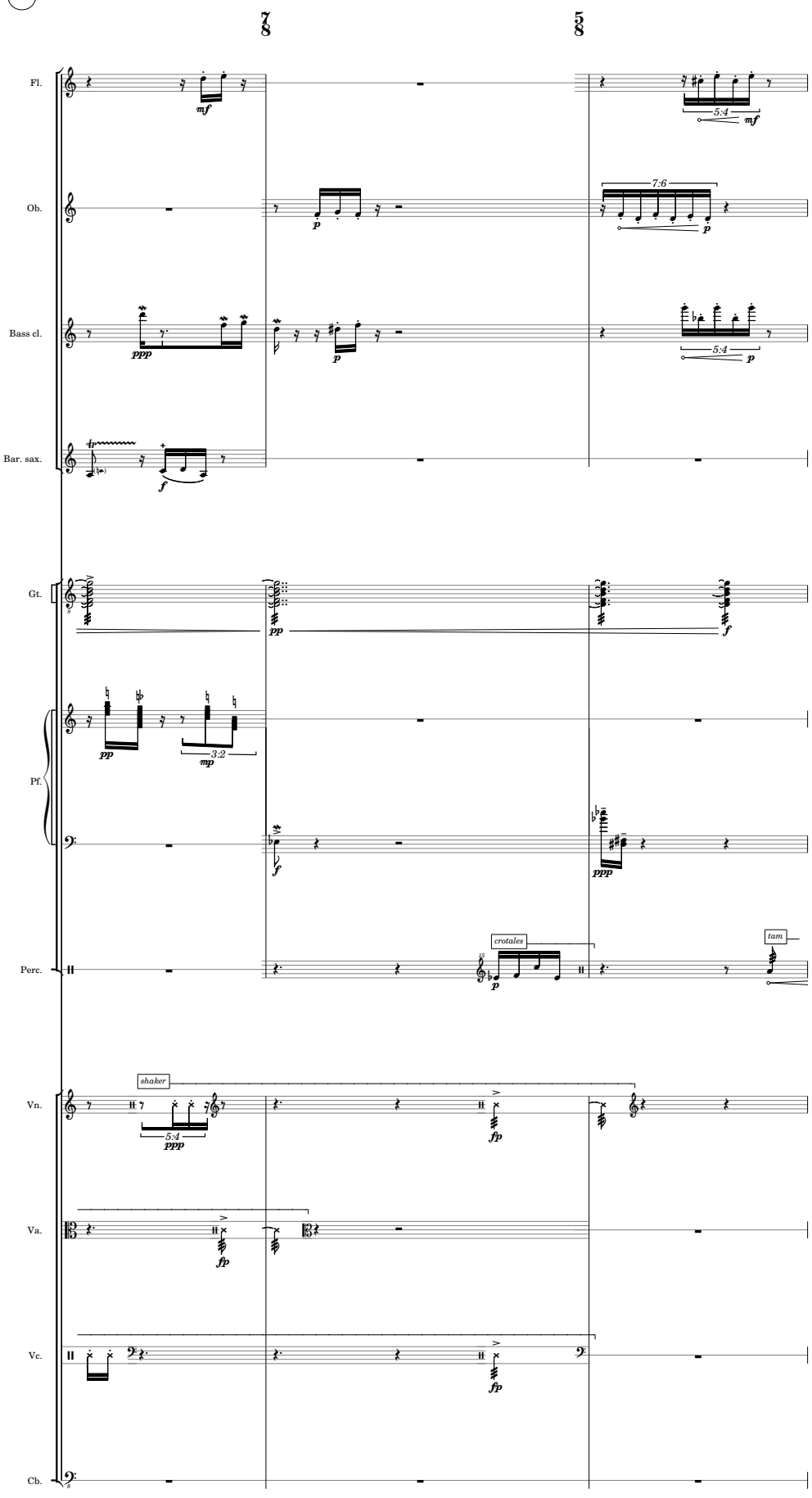
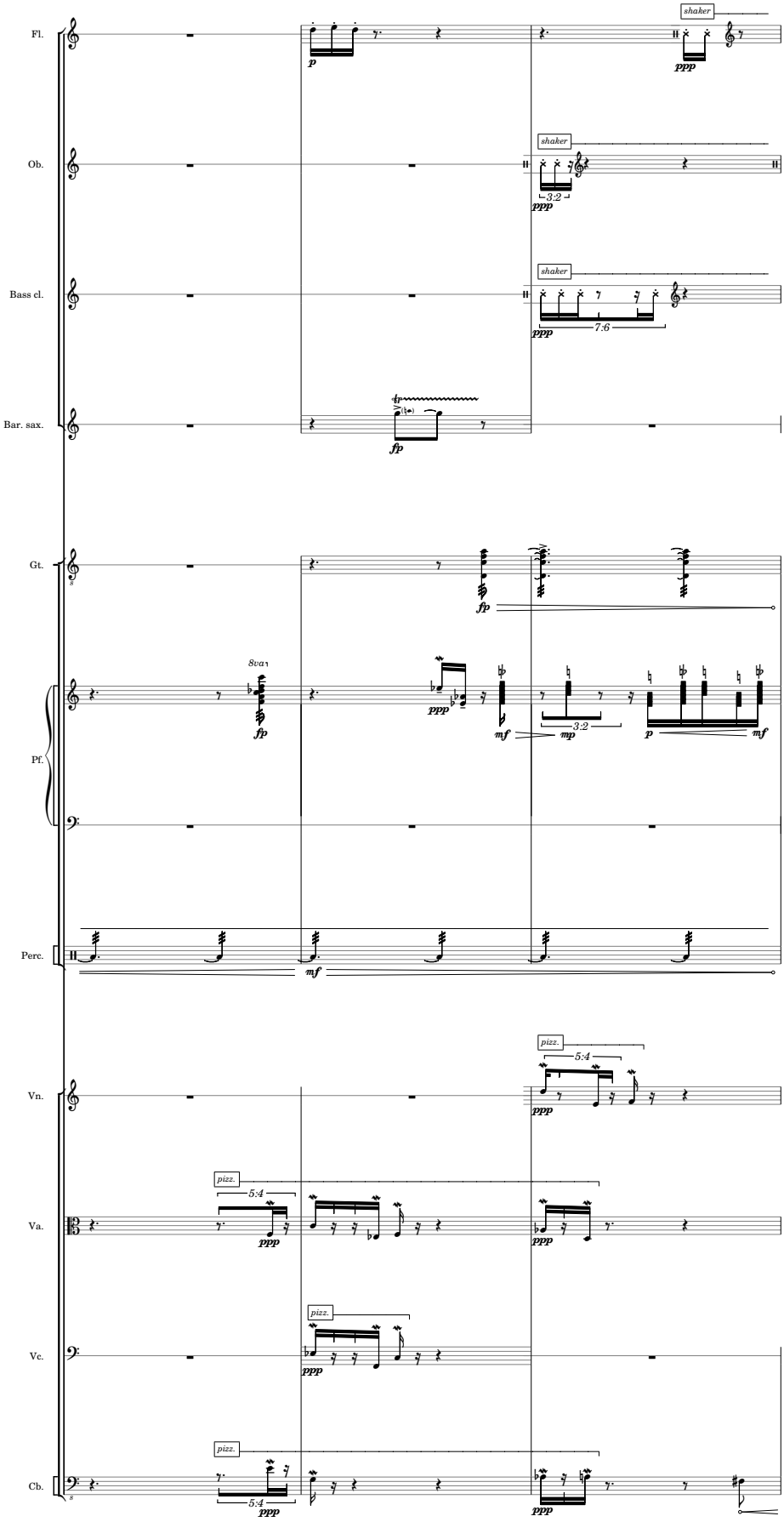
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
ppp
fp
mf
f
3:2
4:3
5:4
fff
p
shaker
pizz.


7/8
5/8
Fl.
mf
5:4
mf
Ob.
7:6
p
p
Bass cl.
ppp
p
5:4
p
Bar. sax.
f
Gt.
pp
f
Pf.
pp
3:2
mp
f
ppp
Perc.
crotales
p
tam
Vn.
shaker
5:4
ppp
fp
Va.
fp
Vc.
fp
Cb.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p
ppp
Ob.
shaker
3:2
ppp
Bass cl.
shaker
7:6
ppp
Bar. sax.
fp
Gt.
fp
Pf.
8va
ffp
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3:2
mp
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Perc.
mf
Vn.
pizz.
5:4
ppp
Va.
pizz.
5:4
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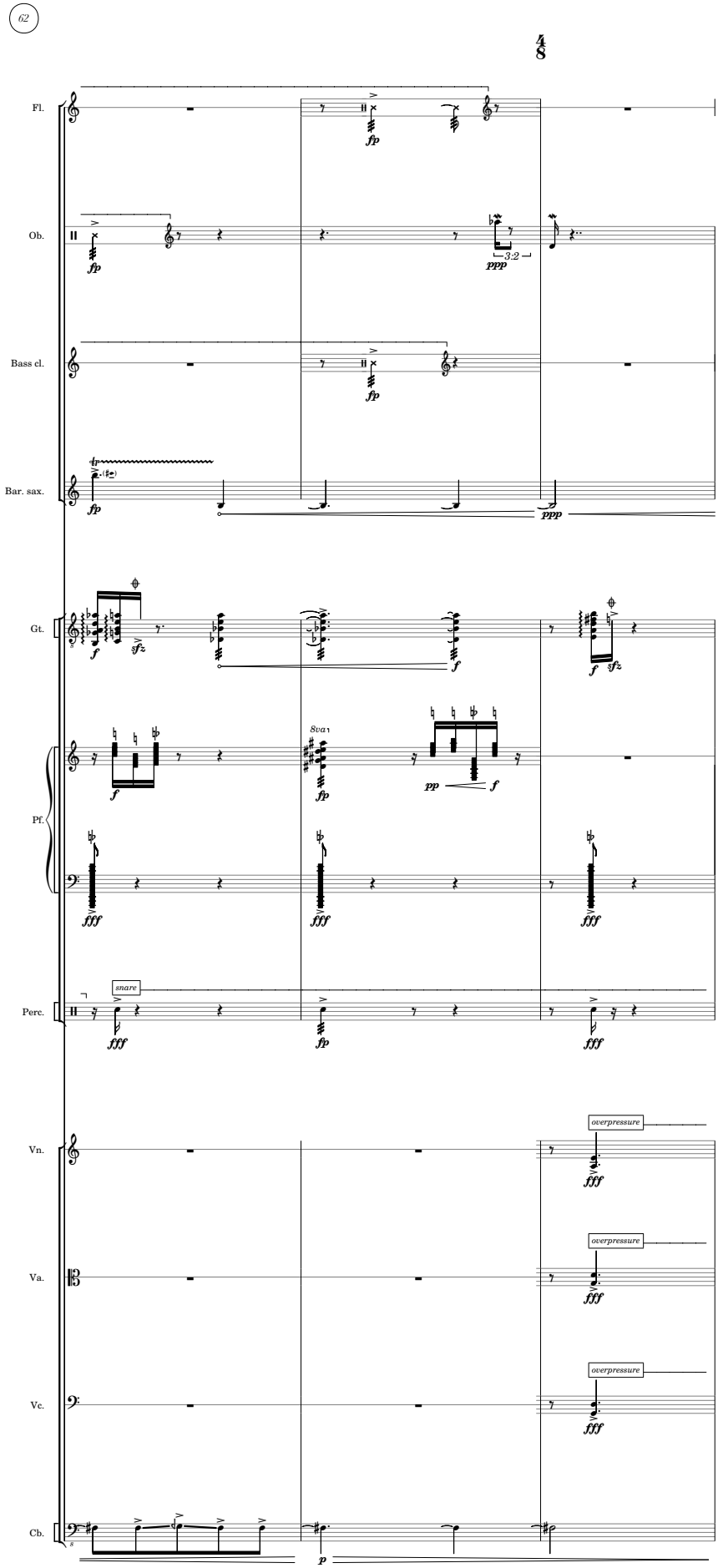
Vc.
pizz.
ppp
Cb.
pizz.
5:4
ppp
ppp


Fl.
Ob.
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Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
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Va.
Vc.
Cb.
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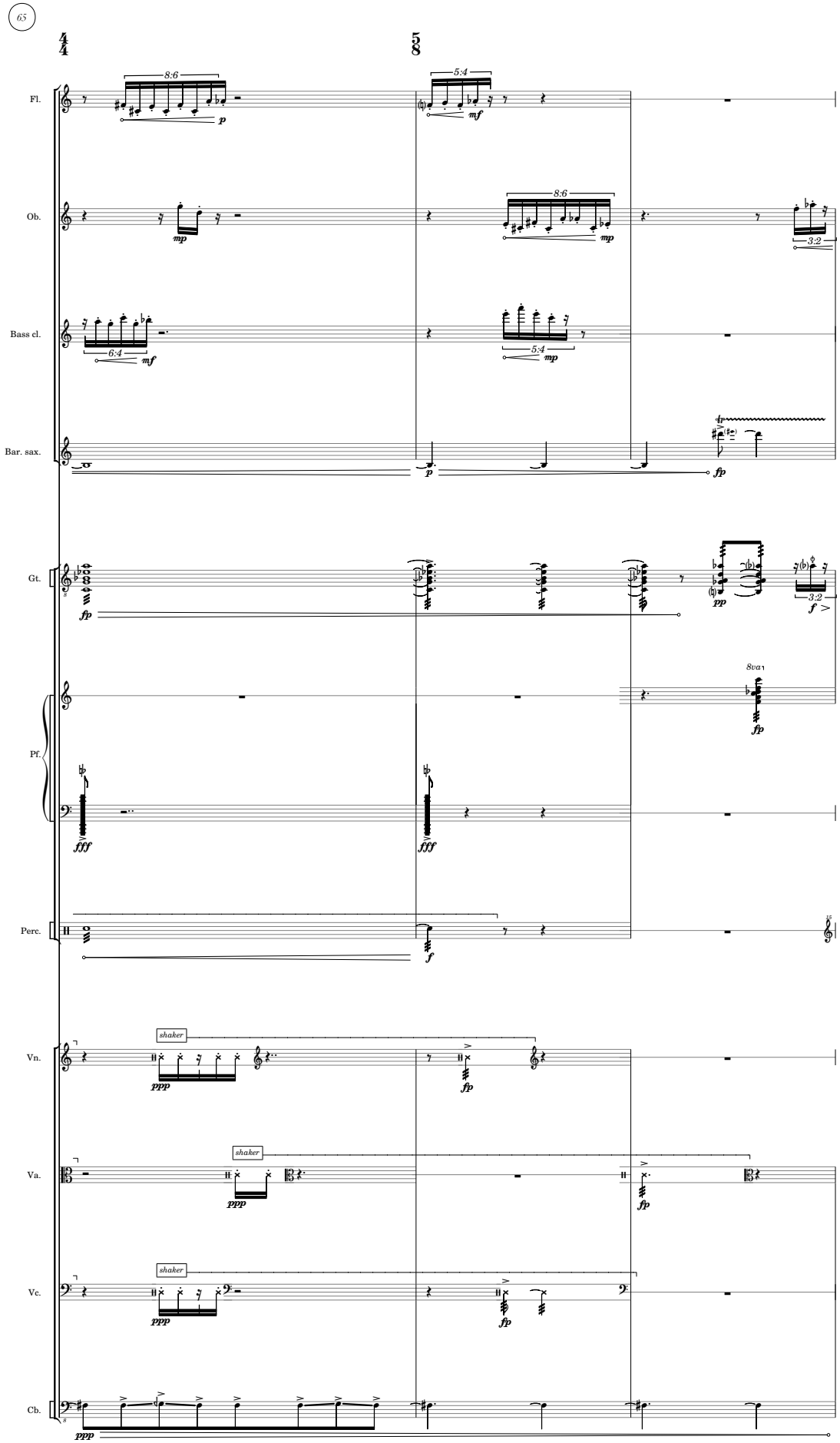
overpressure
overpressure
overpressure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Perc.
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Va.
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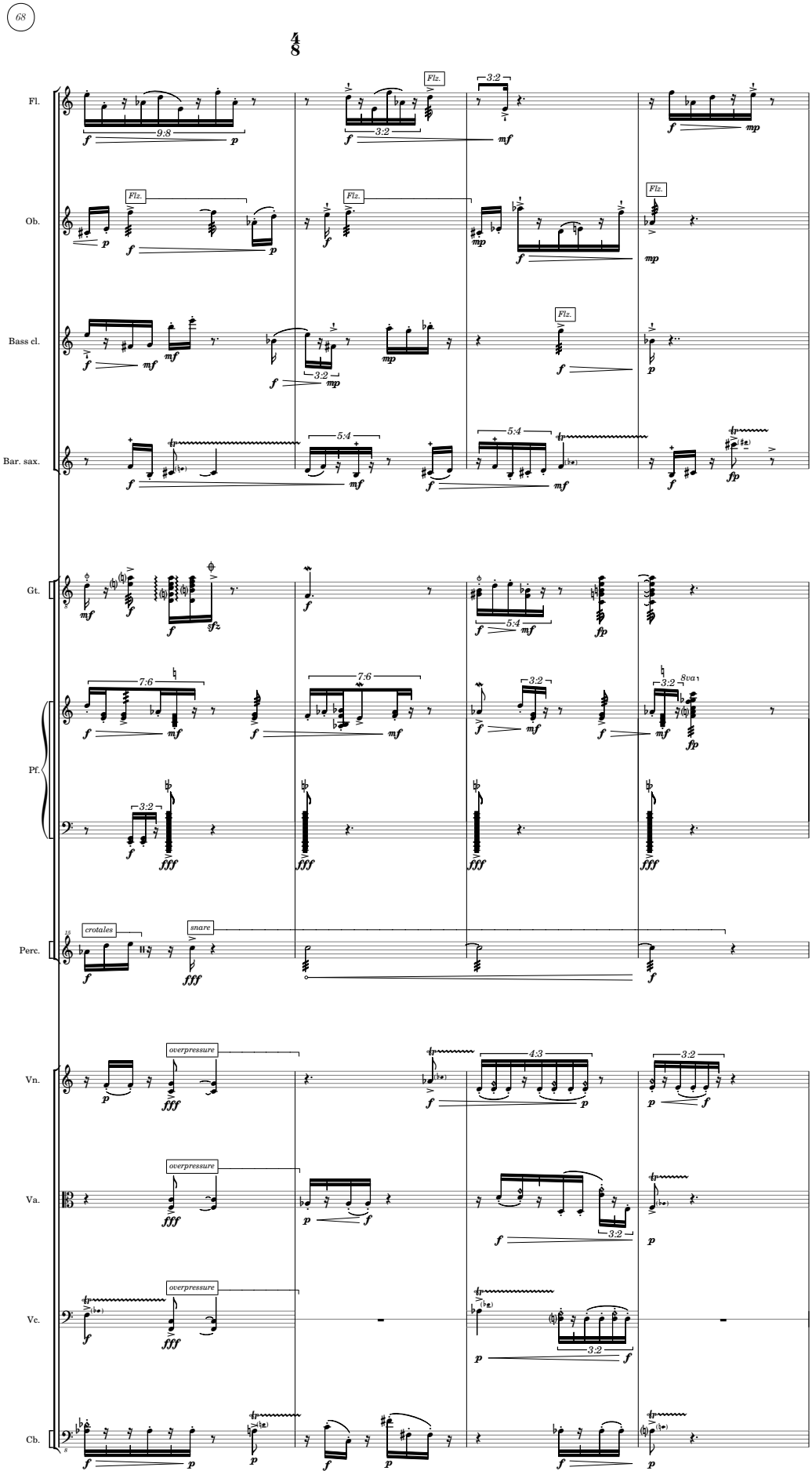
Cb.
shaker
8va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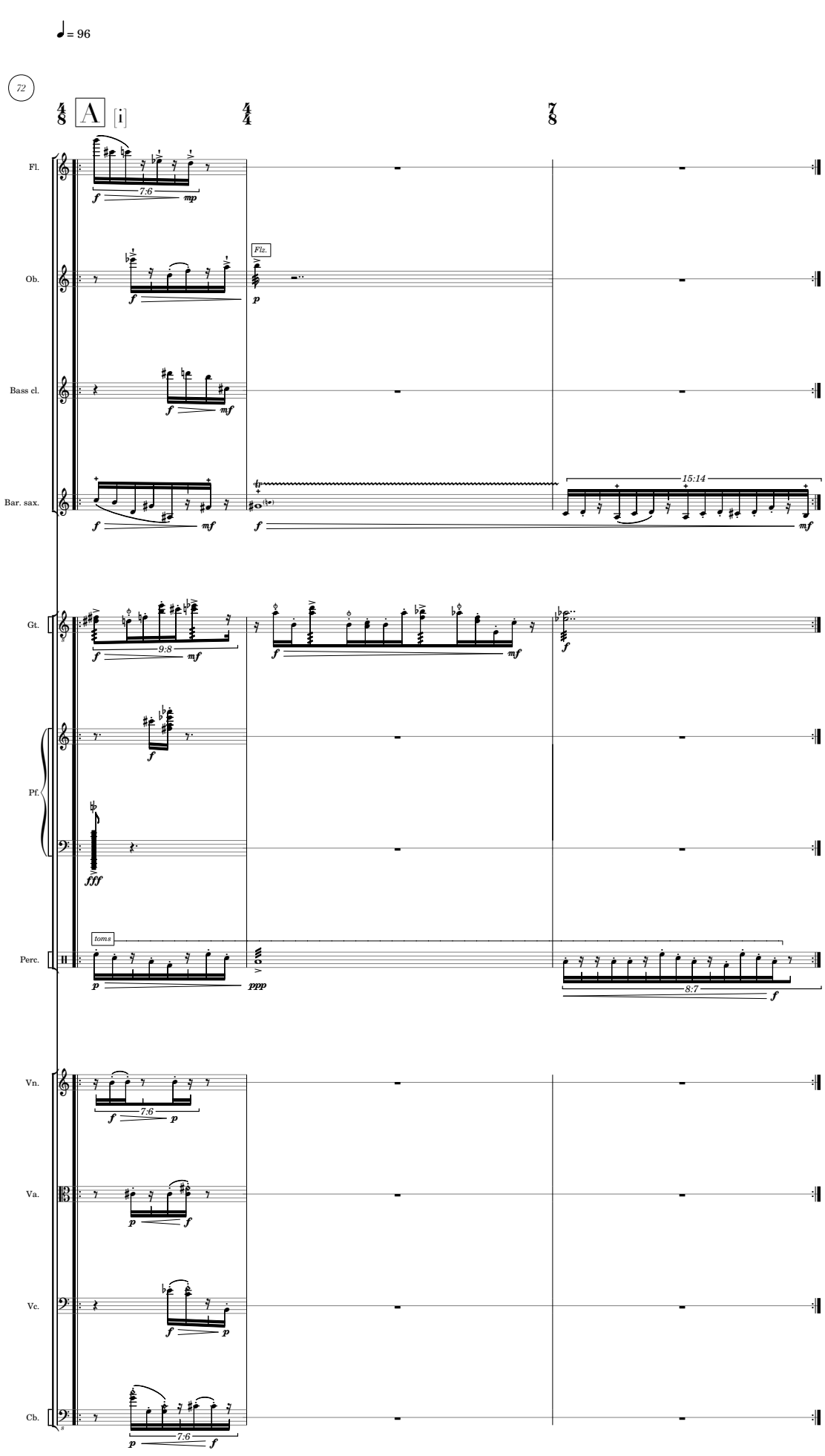
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
Flz.
crotales
snare
overpressure
8va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A
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Fl.
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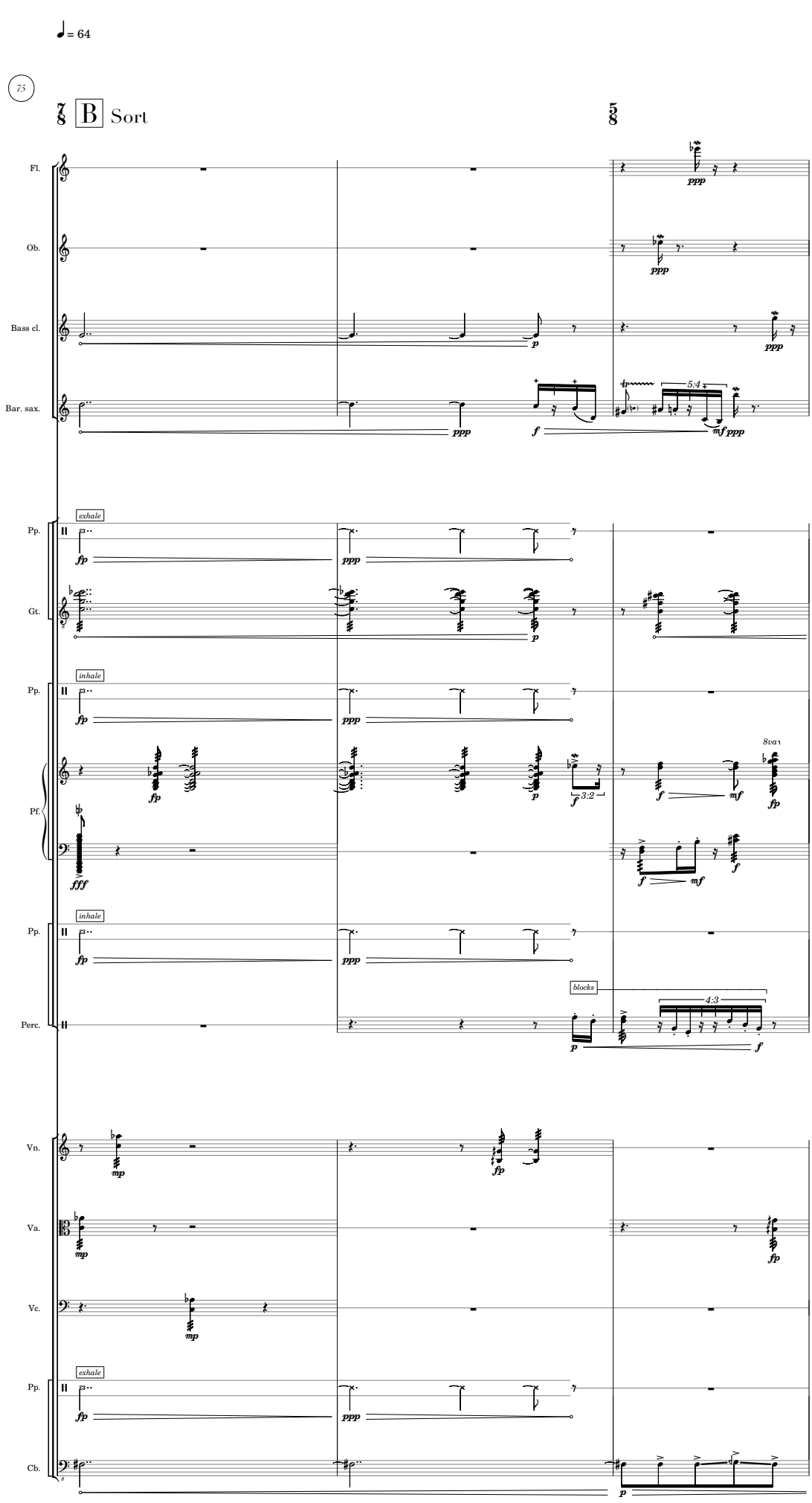
Cb.
Flz.
toms
7:6
9:8
15:14
8:7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Pp.
exhale
Gt.
Pp.
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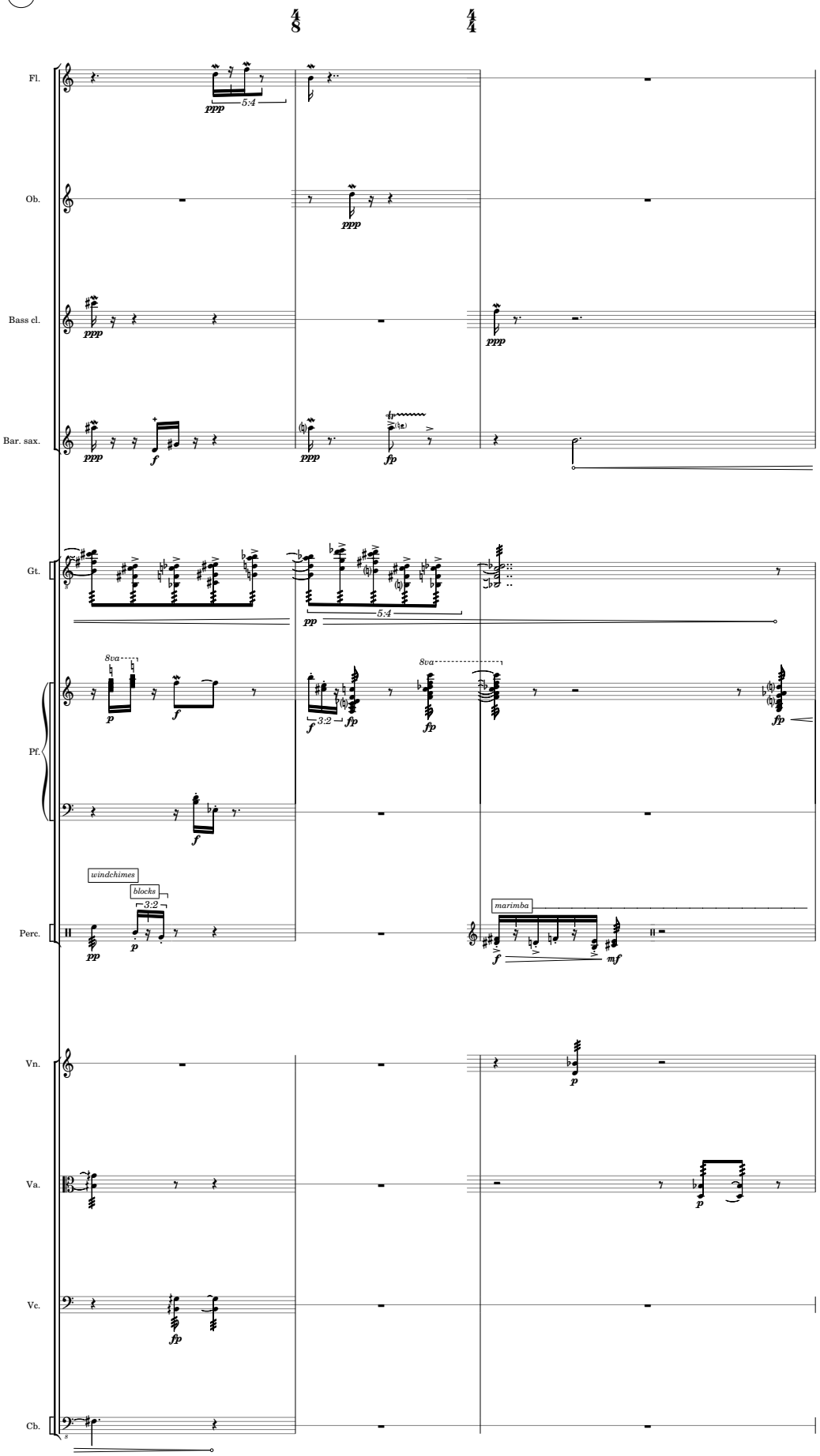
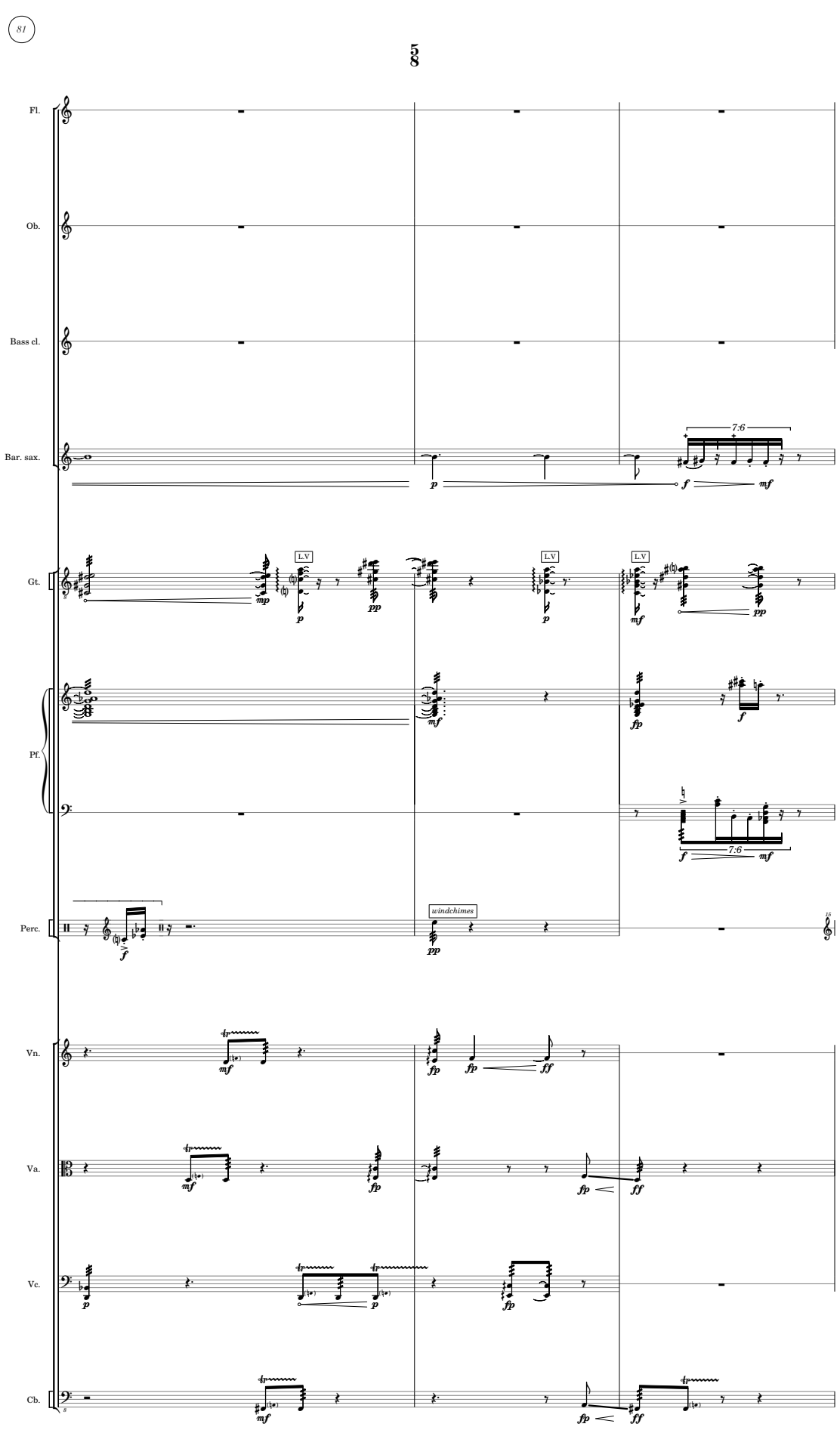
Pp.
inhale
Perc.
blocks
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
exhale
Cb.


Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
windchimes
blocks
marimba
8va


5/8
Fl.
Ob.
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7:6
Gt.
L.V
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windchimes
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Vc.
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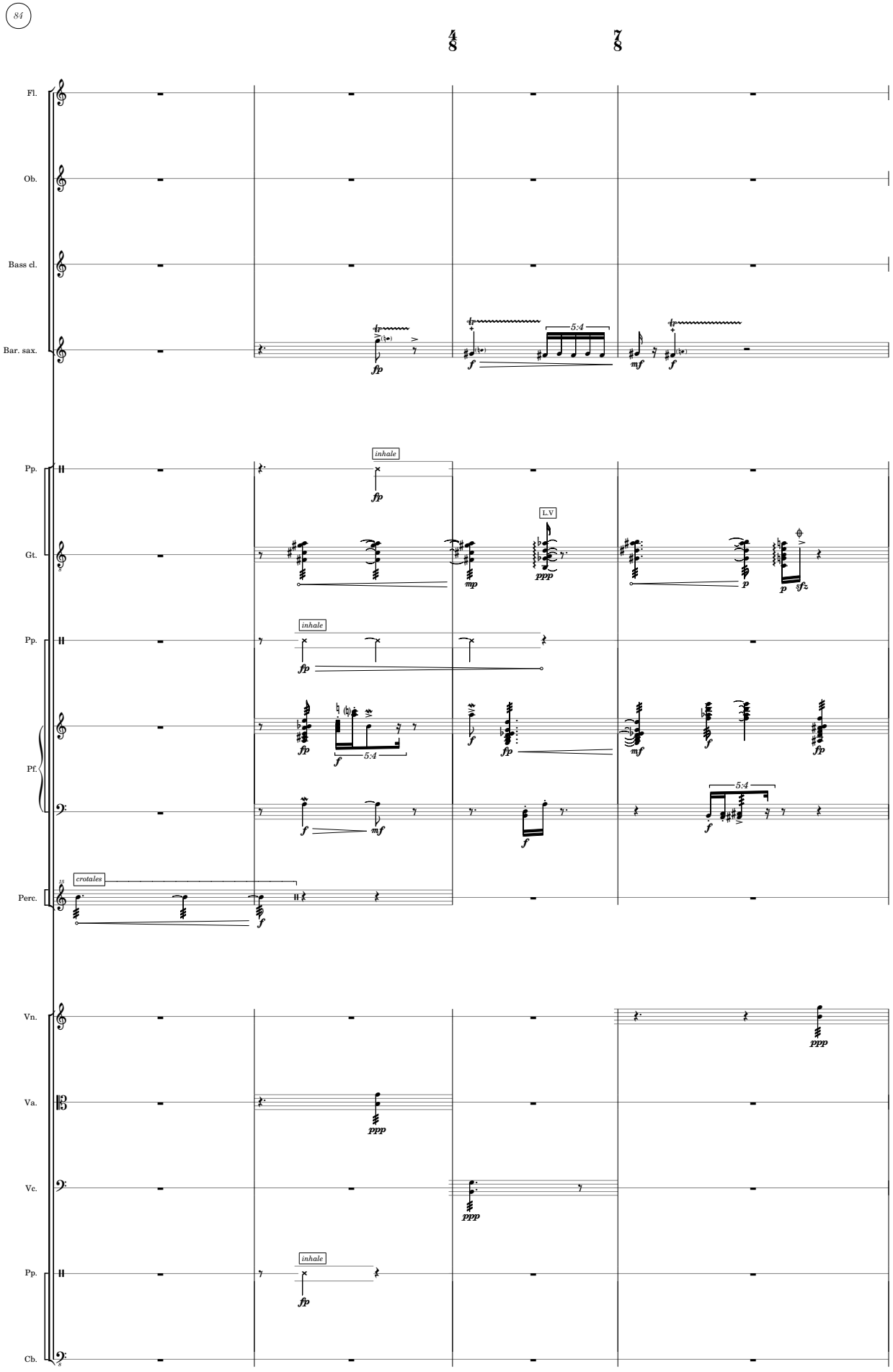
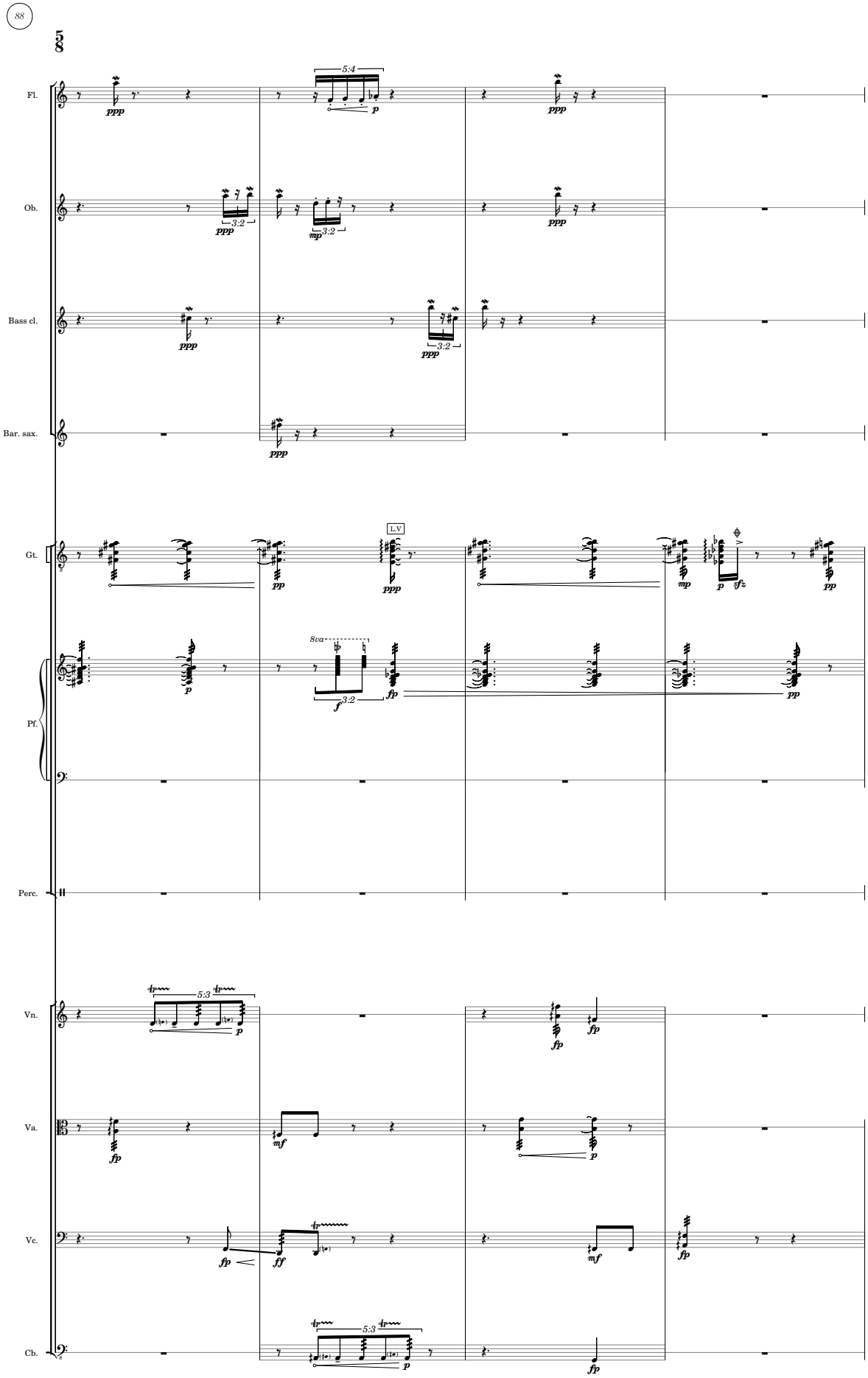

4/8
7/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
inhale
L.V
crotales
5:4
fp
f
mf
mp
ppp
p
sfz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Fl.
Ob.
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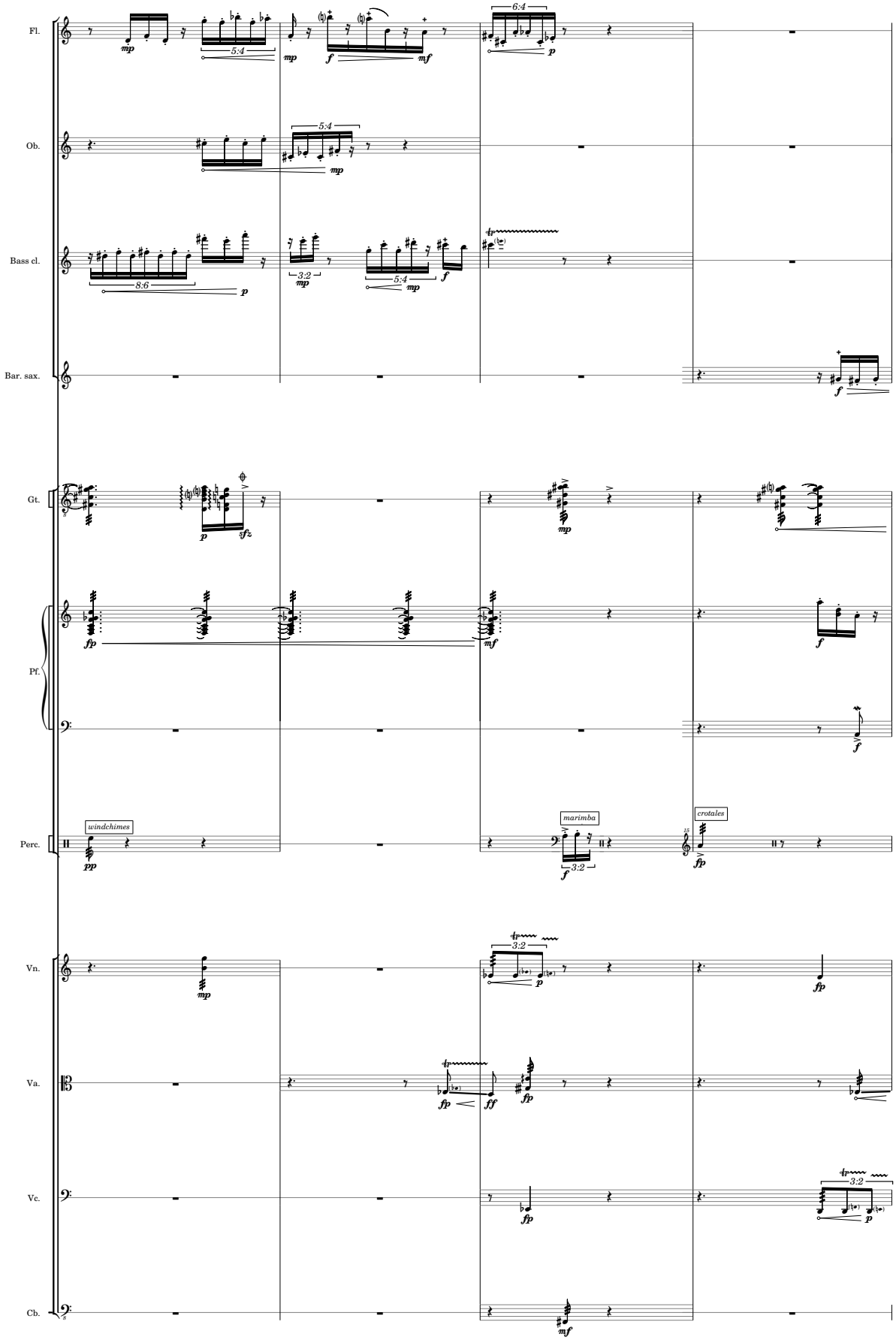
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
LV
8va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Ob.
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Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
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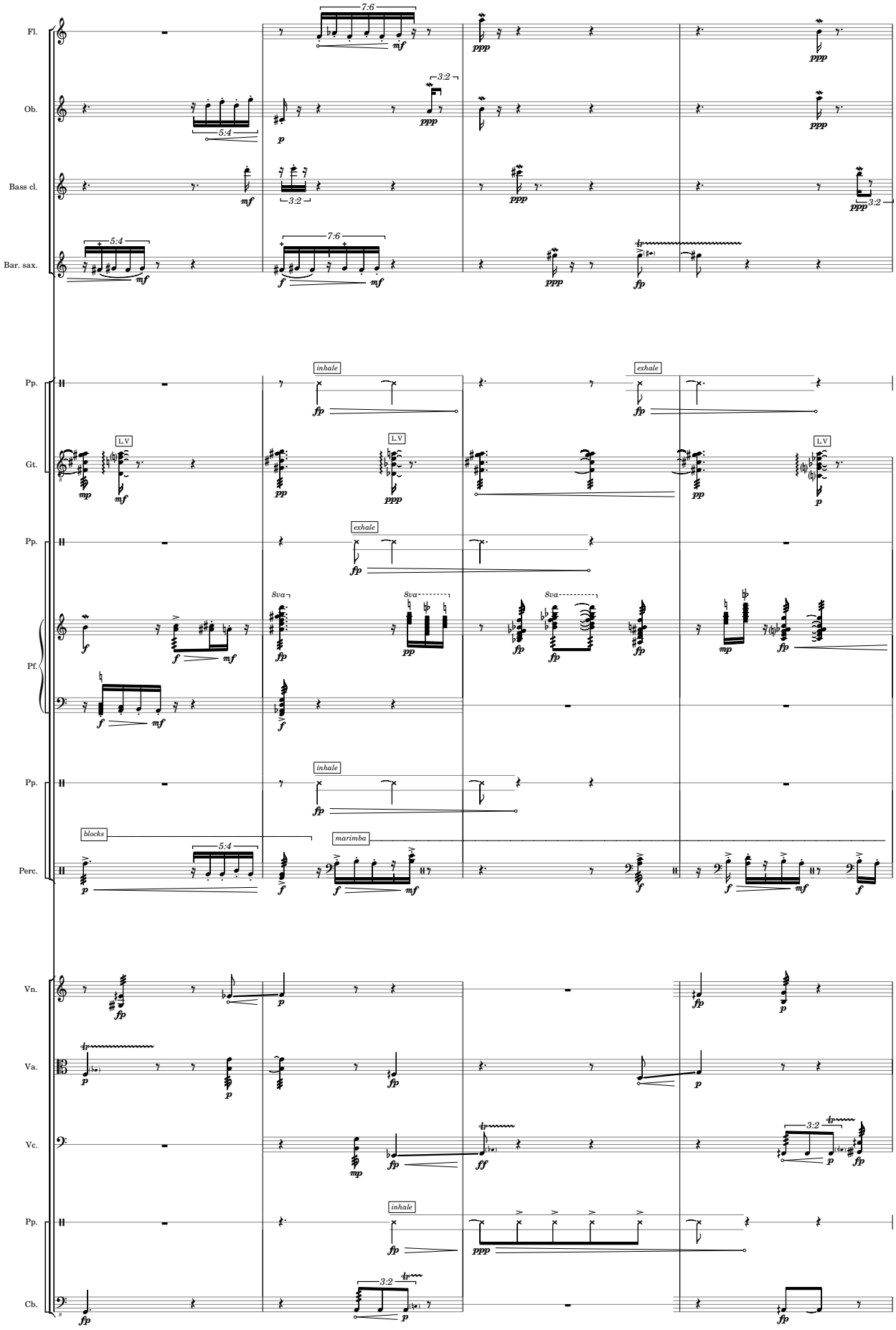
Cb.
windchimes
marimba
crotales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Ob.
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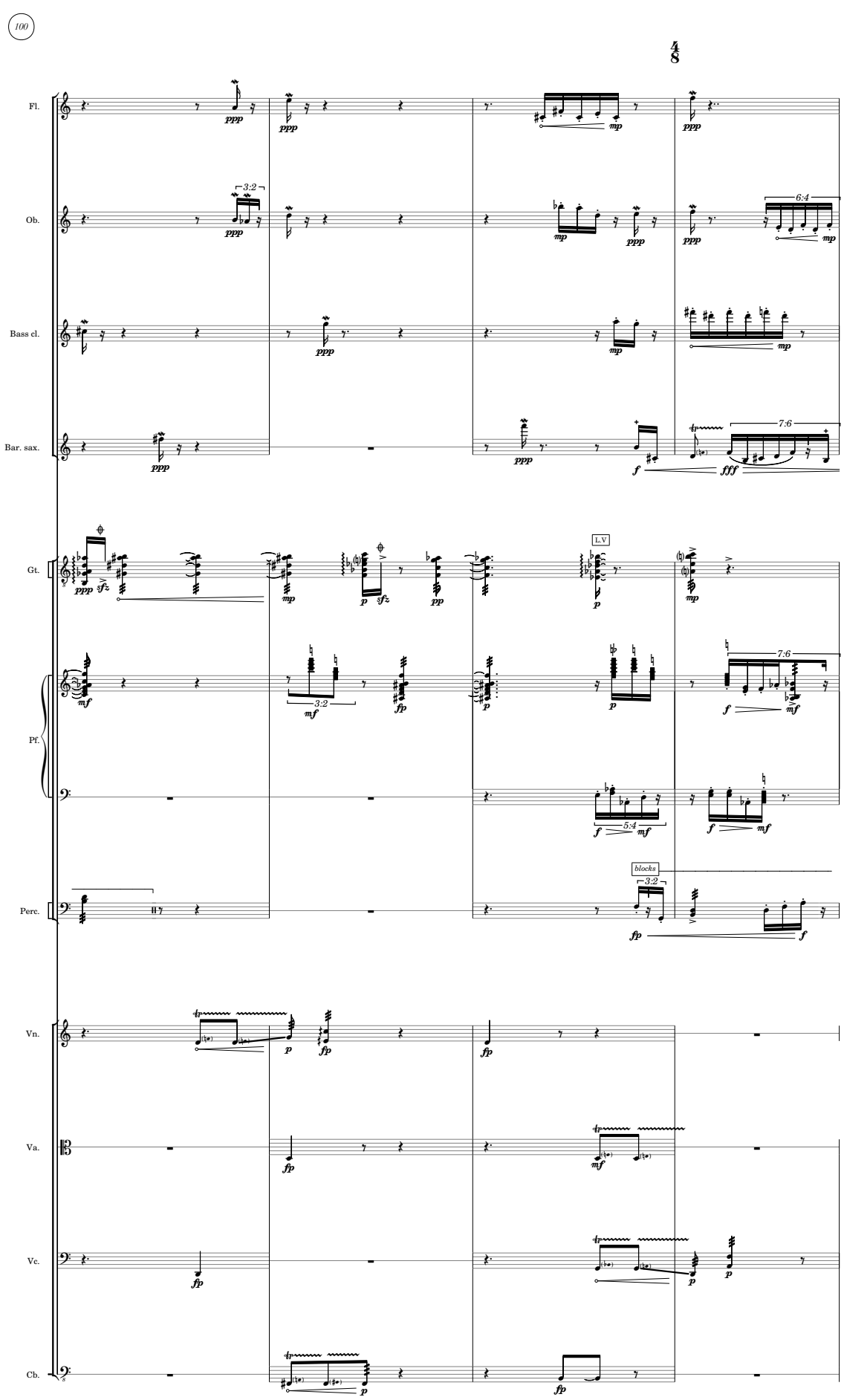
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
inhale
exhale
L.V
8va
blocks
marimba
7:6
5:4
3:2


Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
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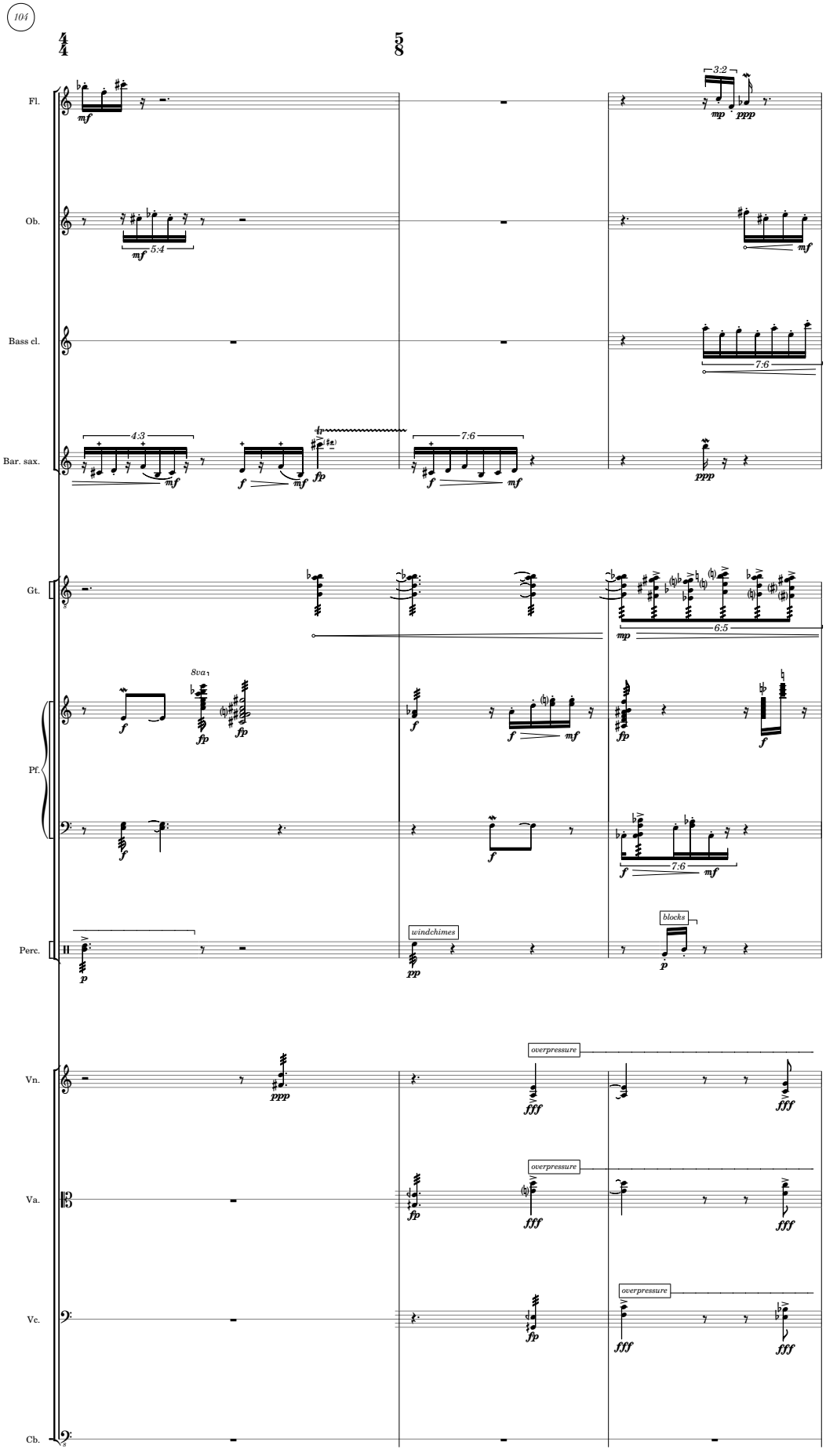
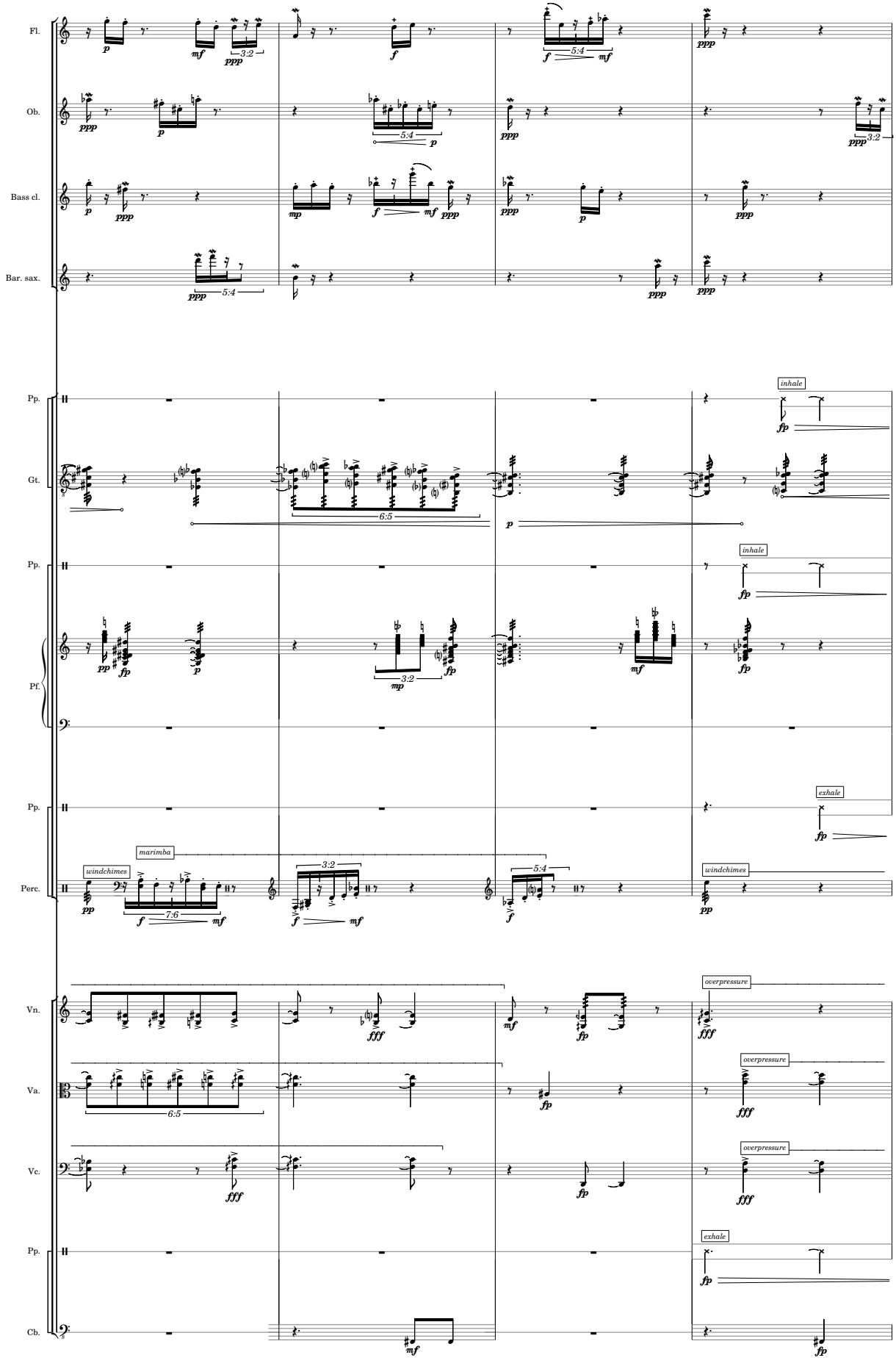
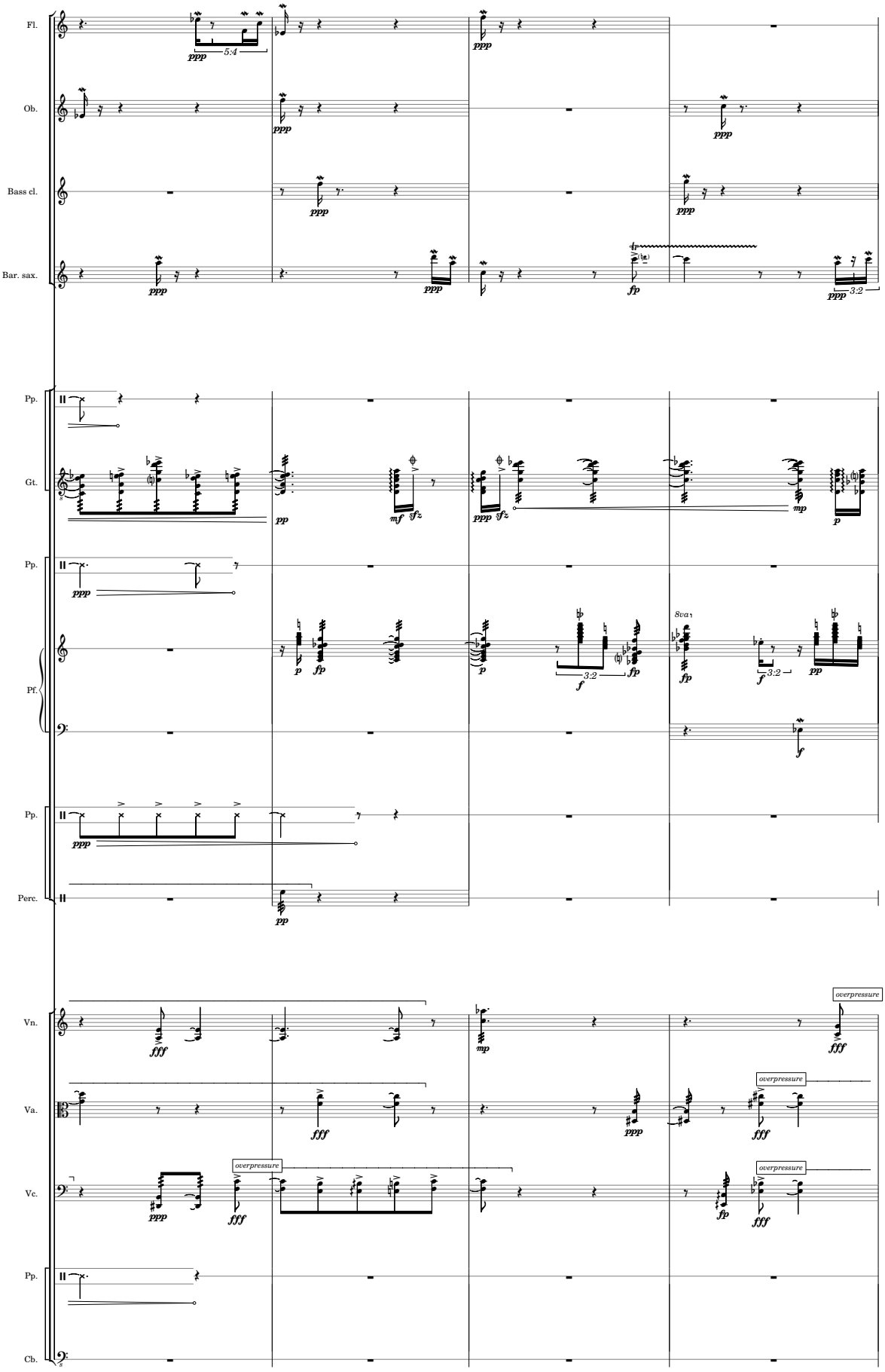
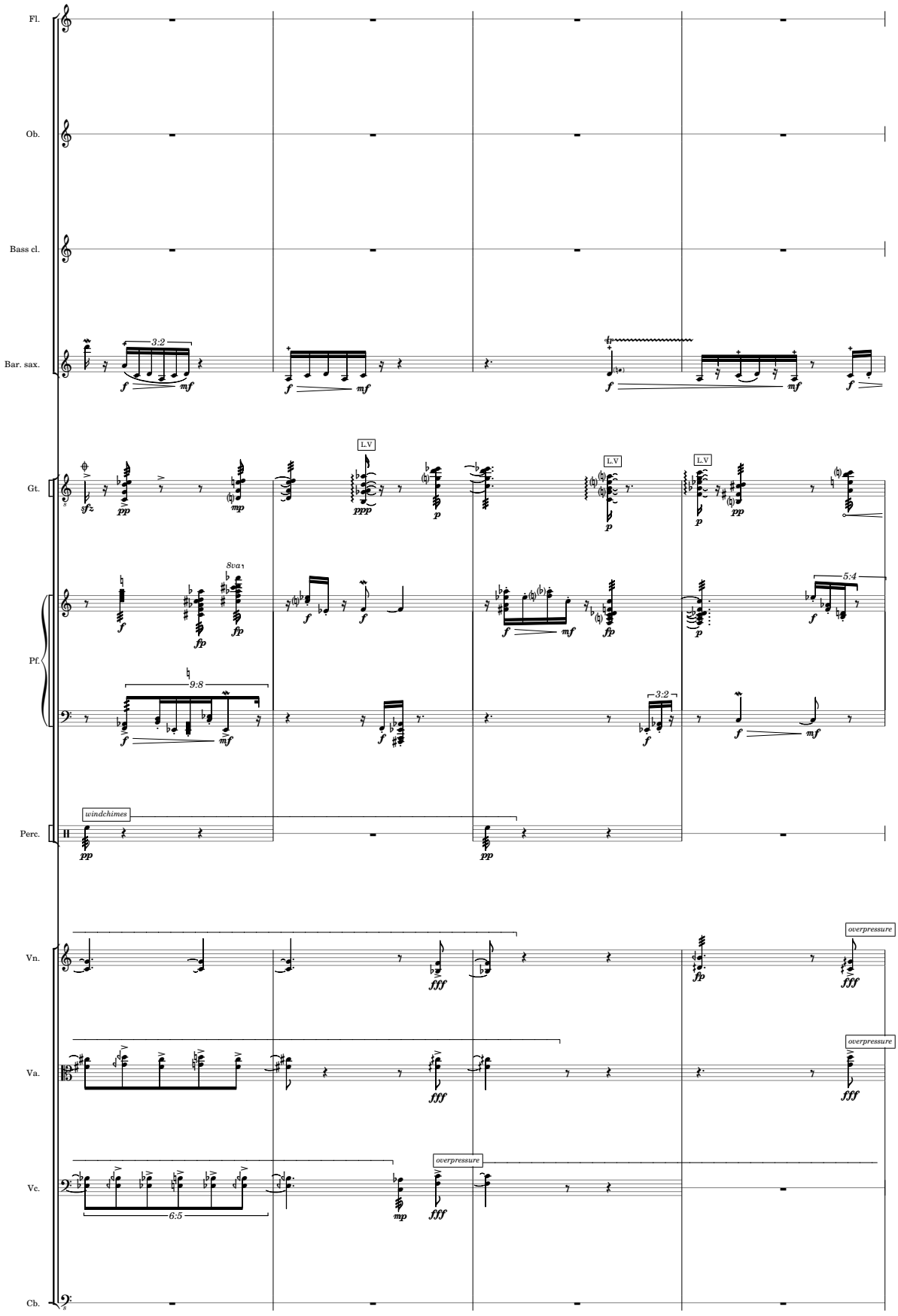
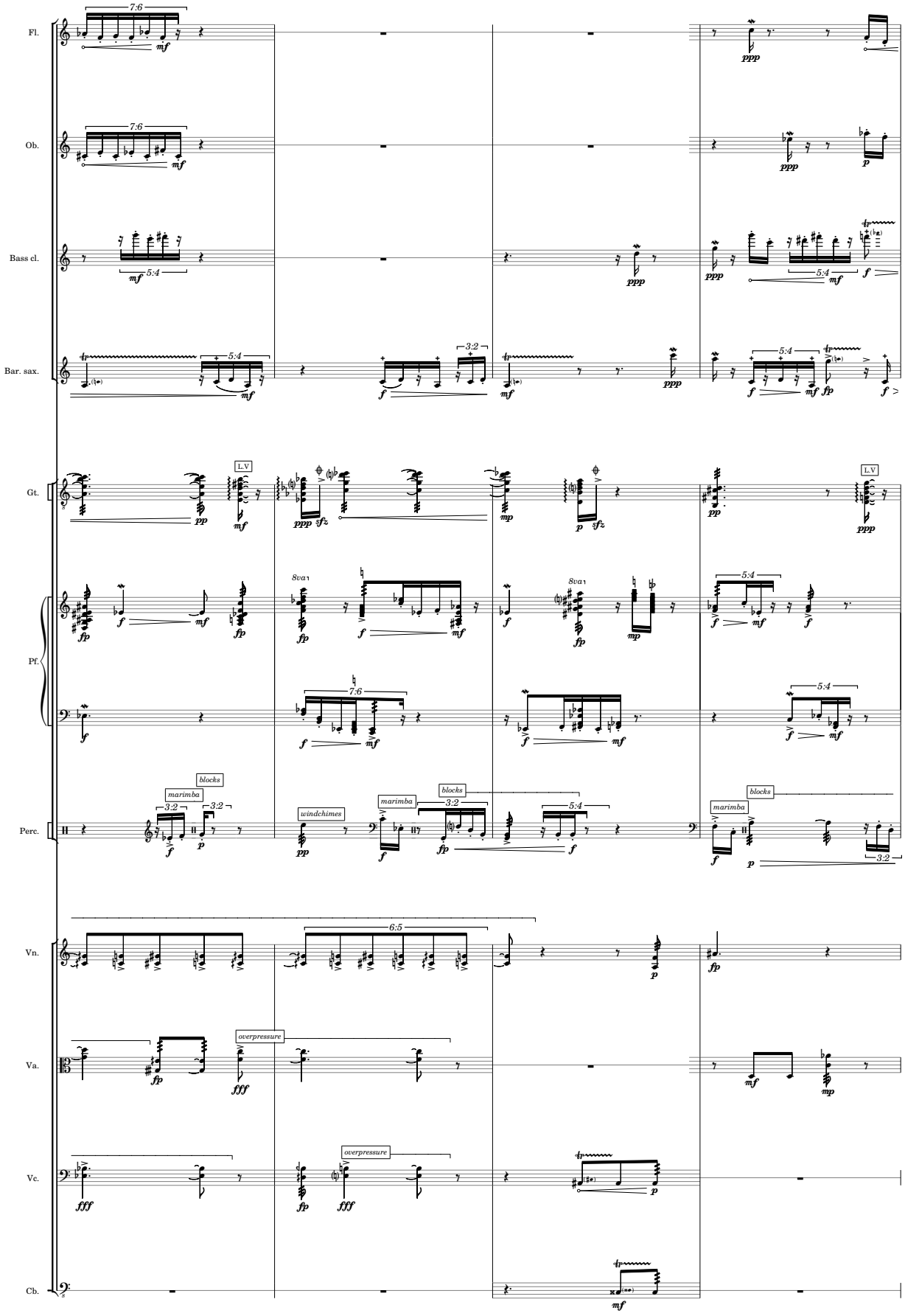
Cb.
L.V
blocks

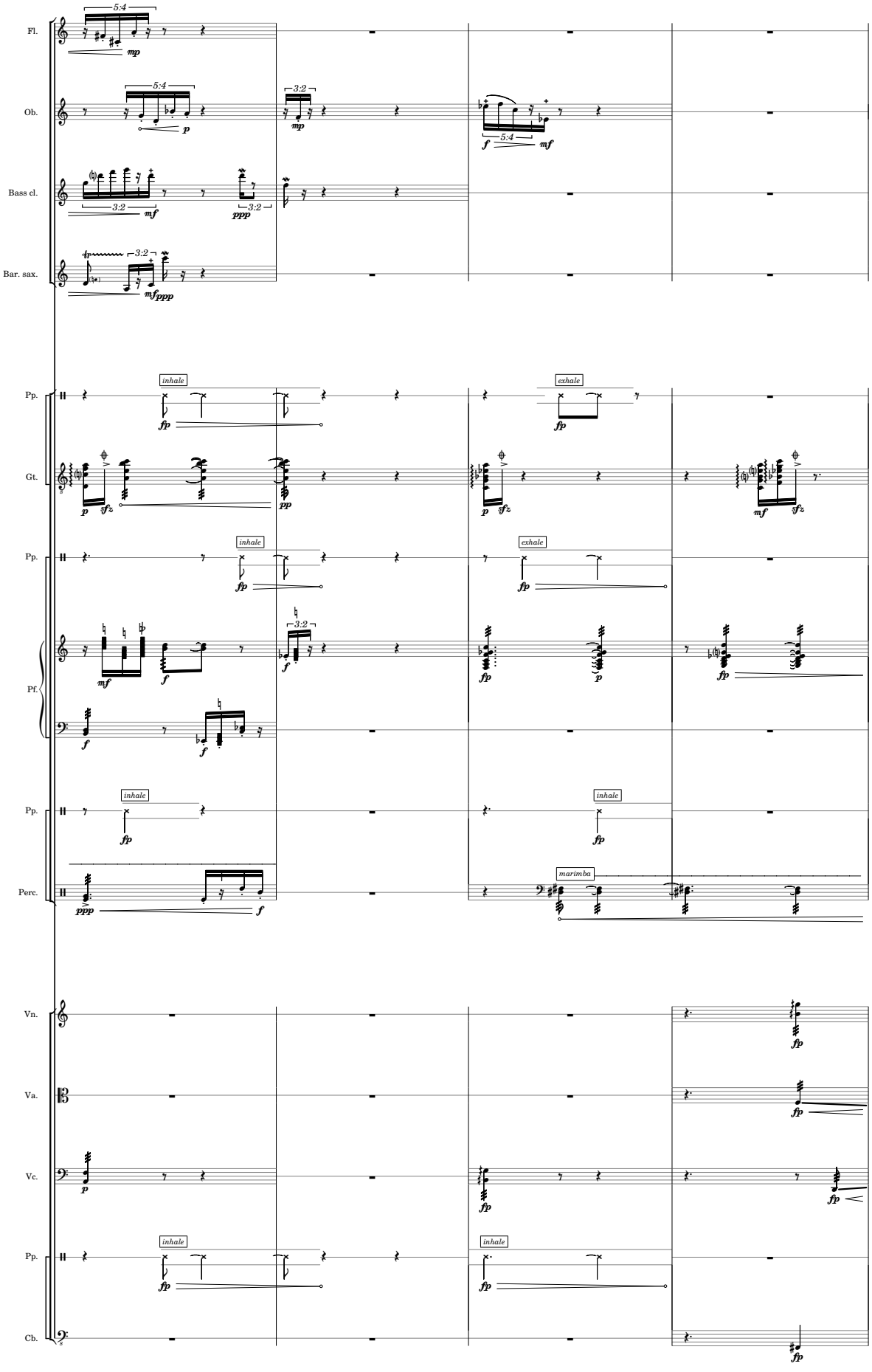

4/4
5/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
3:2
5:4
4:3
7:6
6:5
8va
windchimes
blocks
overpressure

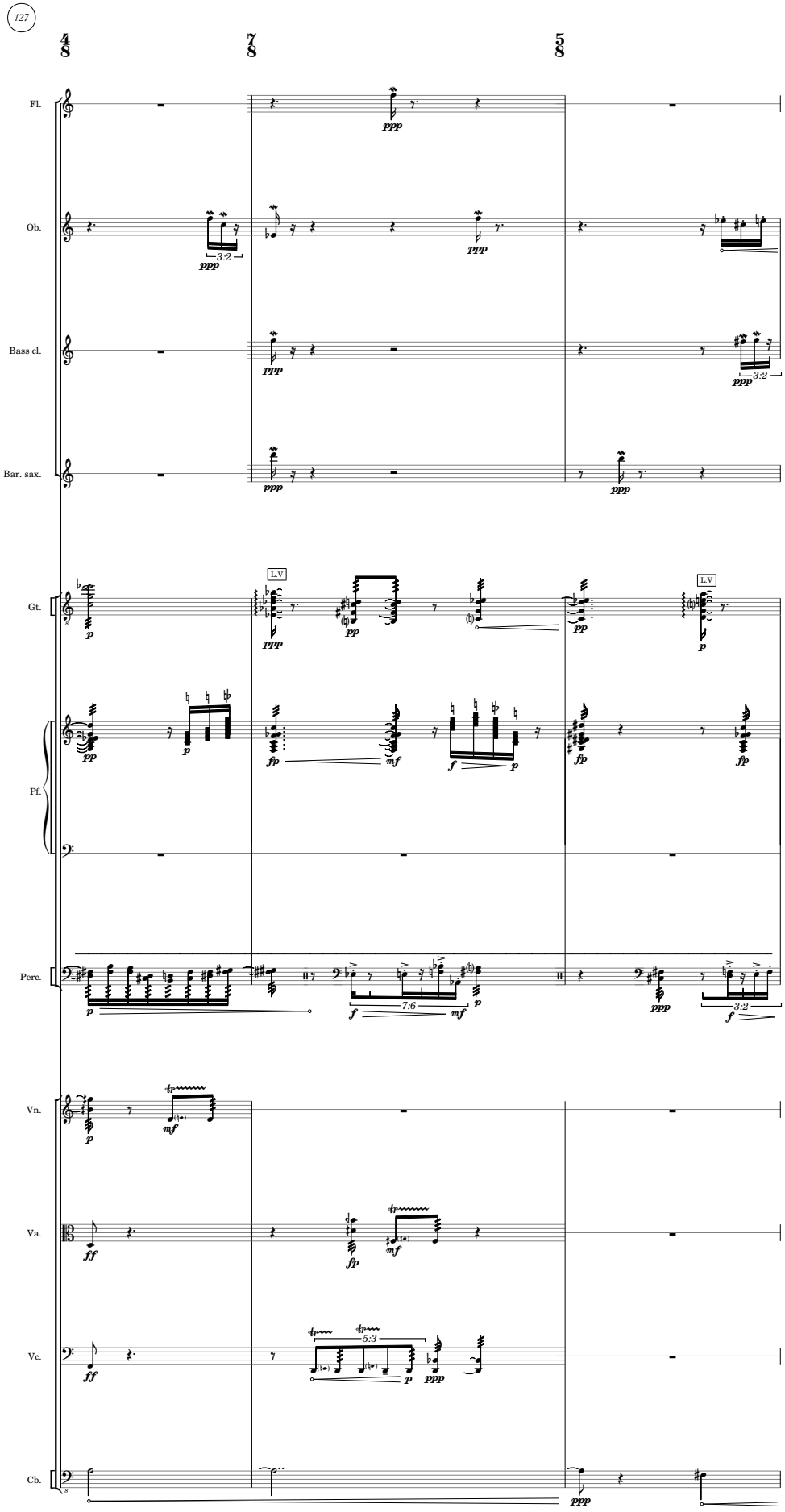

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
inhale
exhale
marimba
windchimes
overpressure

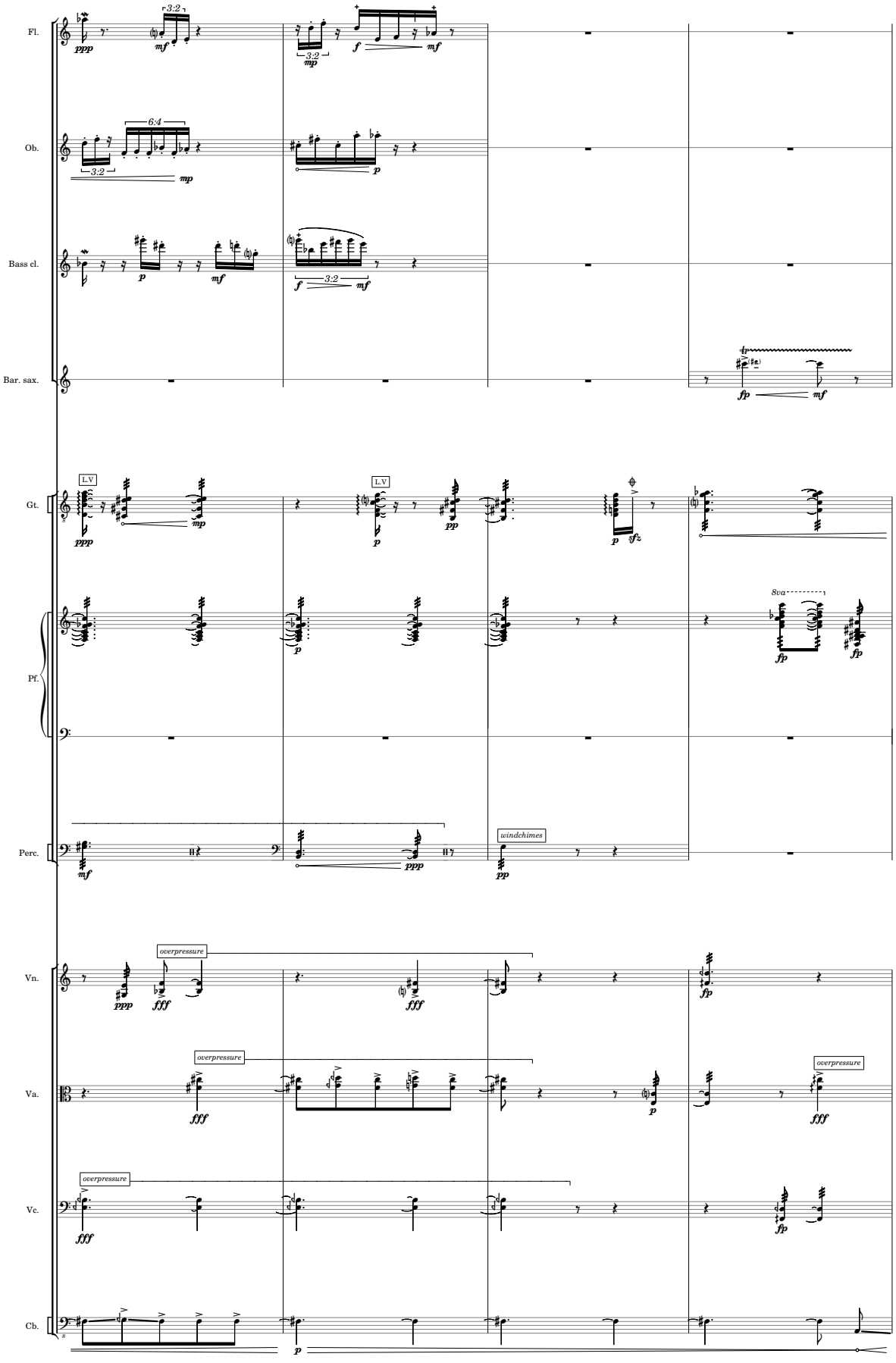

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
overpressure
8va

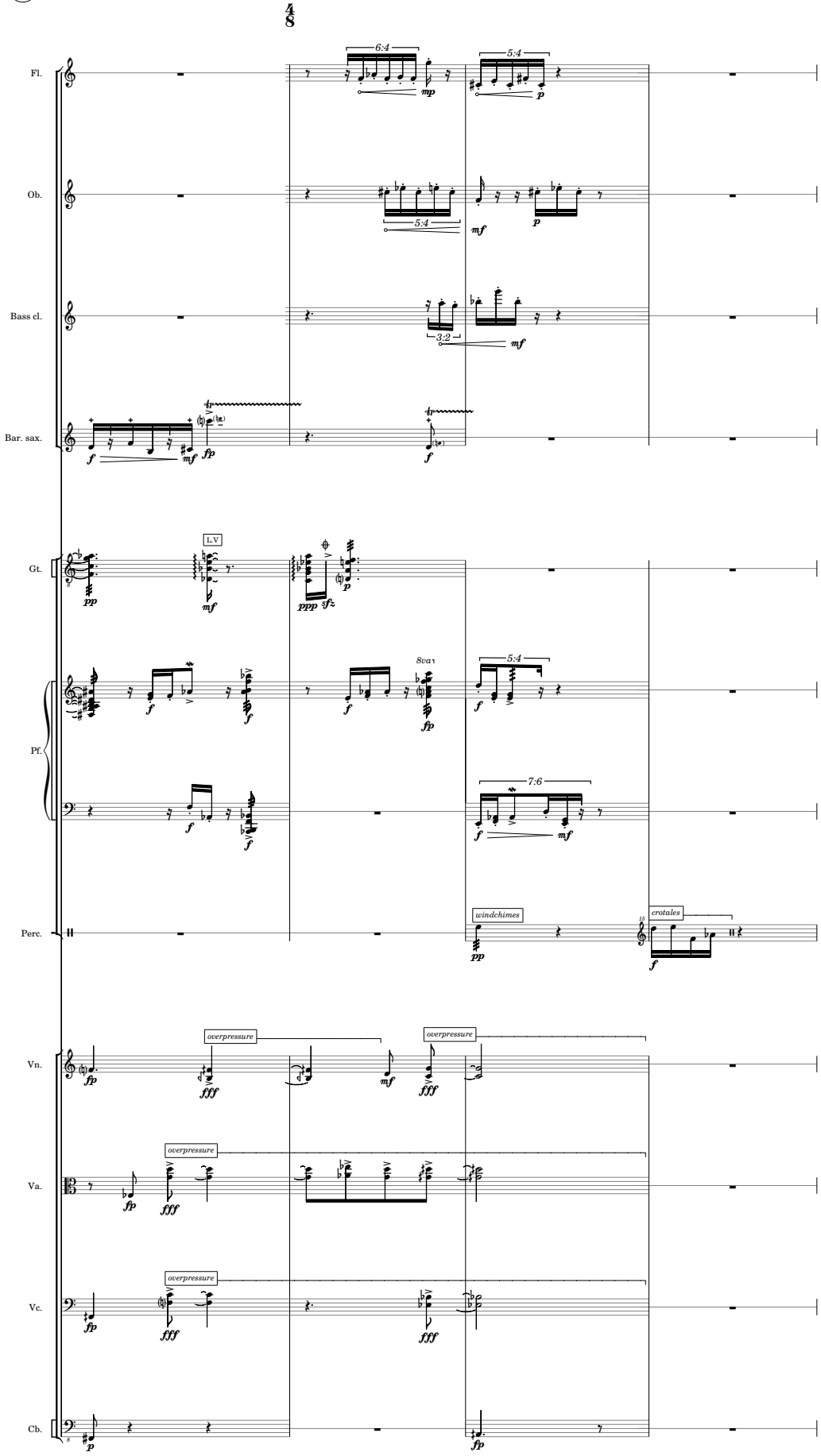

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
3:2
L.V
8va
5:4
9:8
windchimes
overpressure
6:5


Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
L.V
8va
marimba
blocks
windchimes
overpressure


Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
inhale
exhale
marimba


4/8
7/8
5/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
L.V
3:2
7:6
5:3

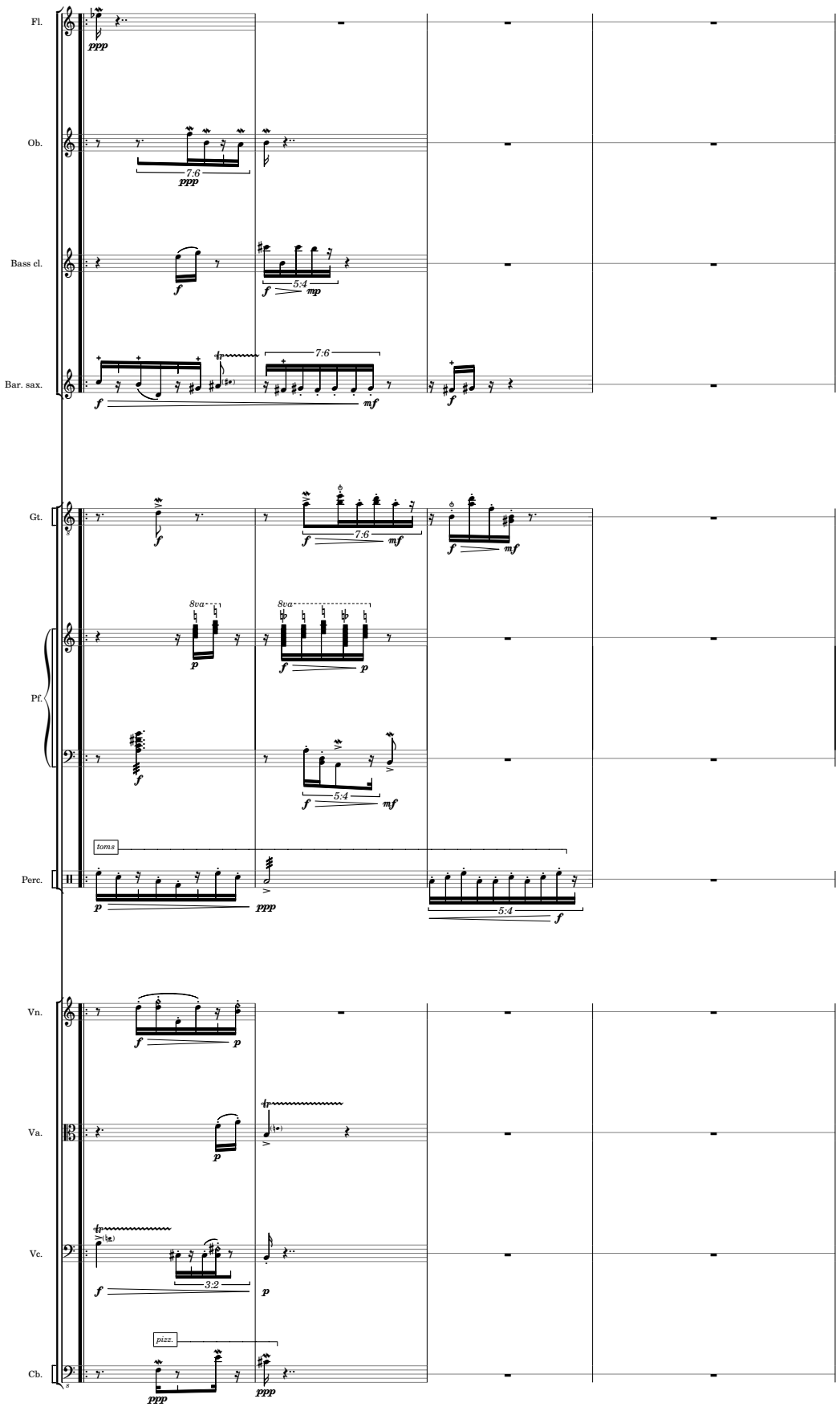

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
LV
windchimes
overpressure
8va

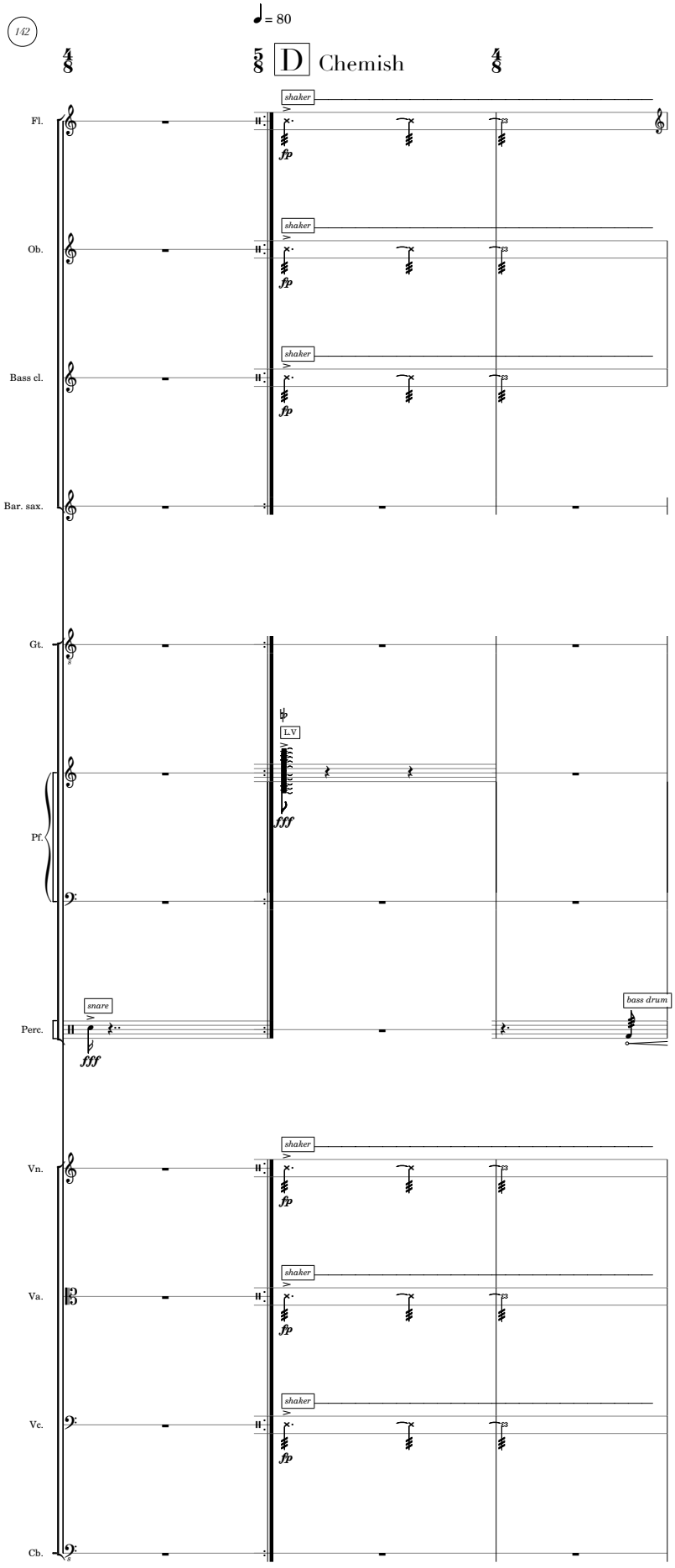

4/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
6:4
5:4
3:2
LV
8va
7:6
windchimes
crotales
overpressure

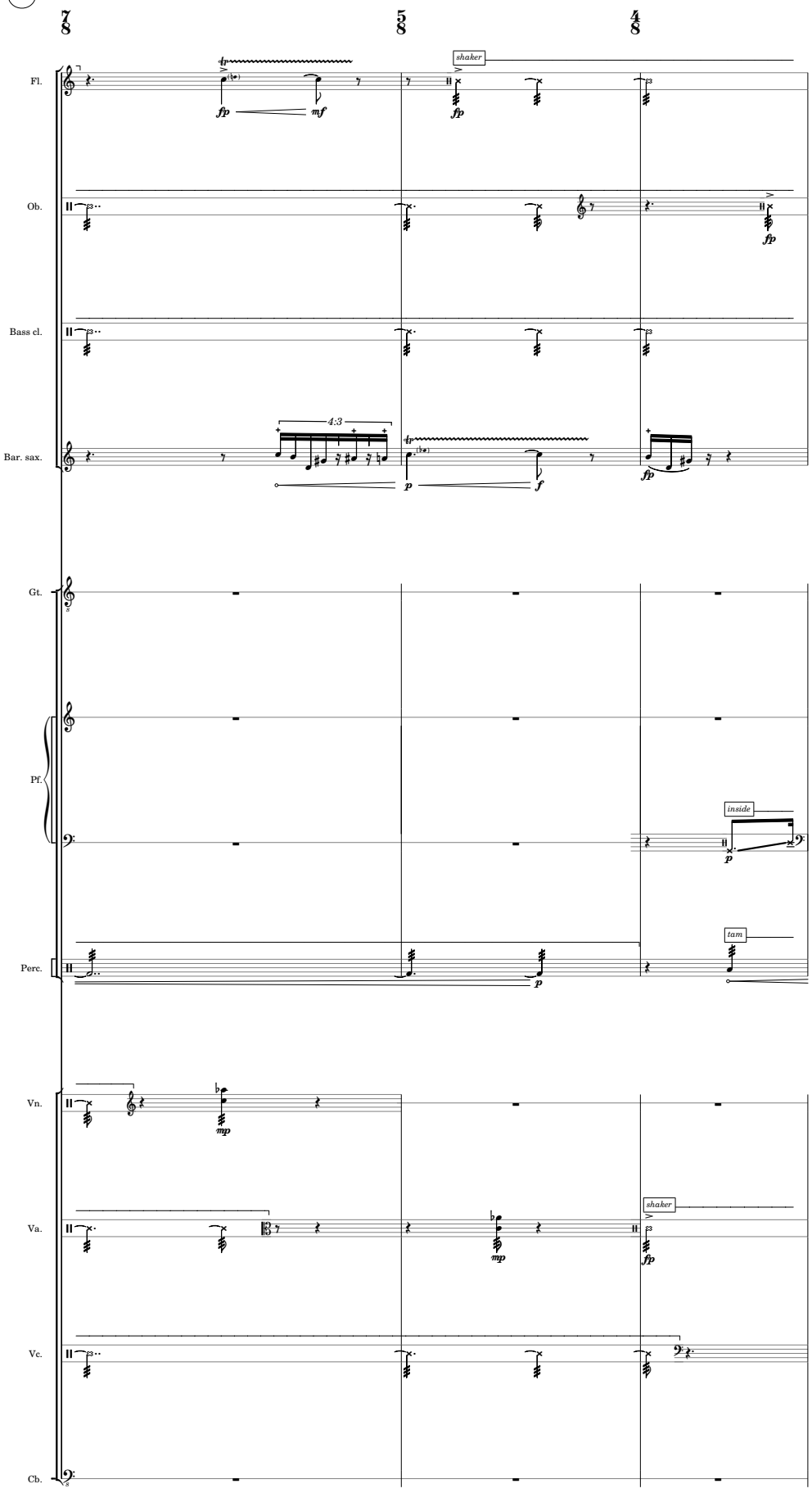
♩= 64

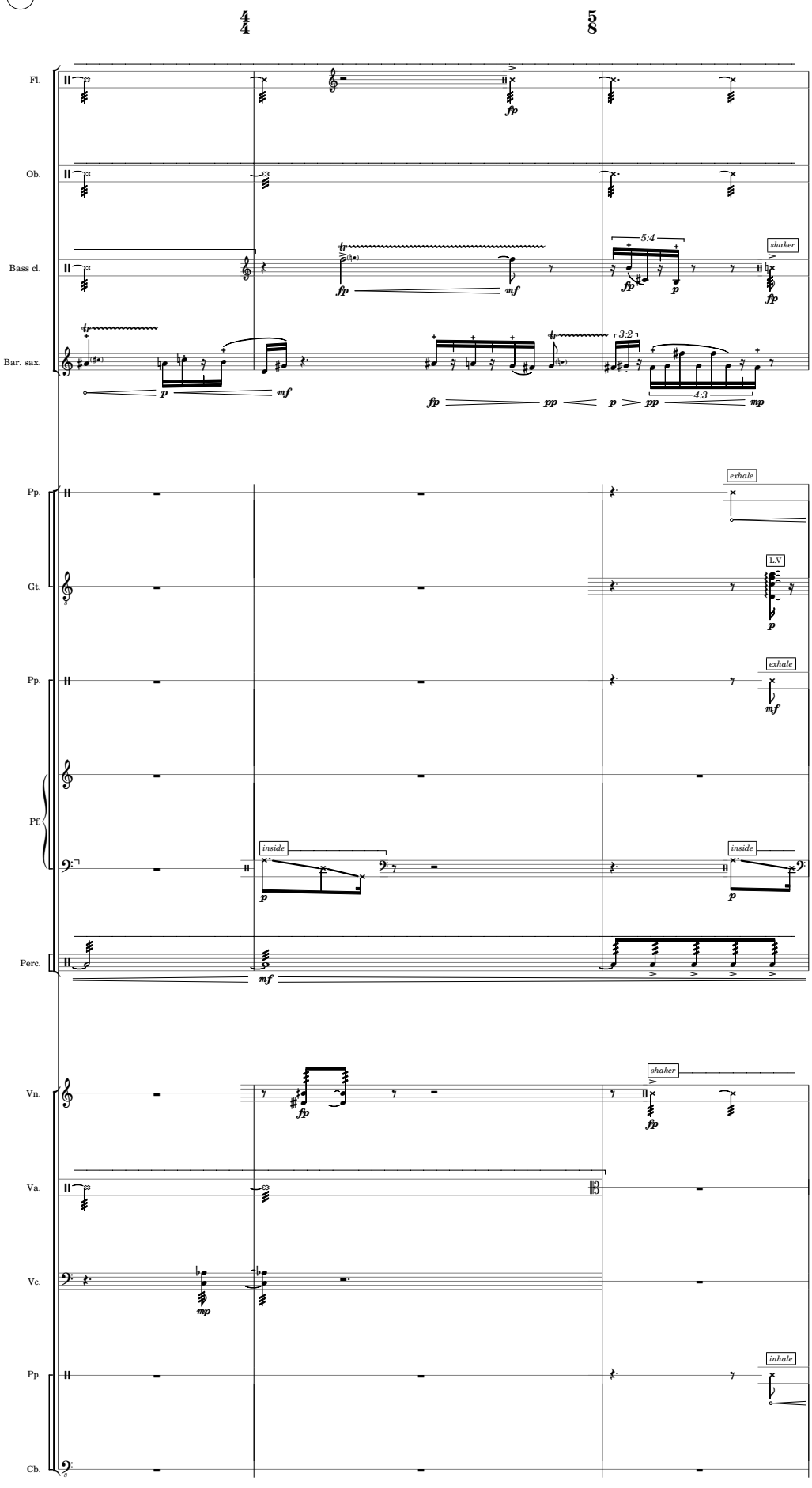
138

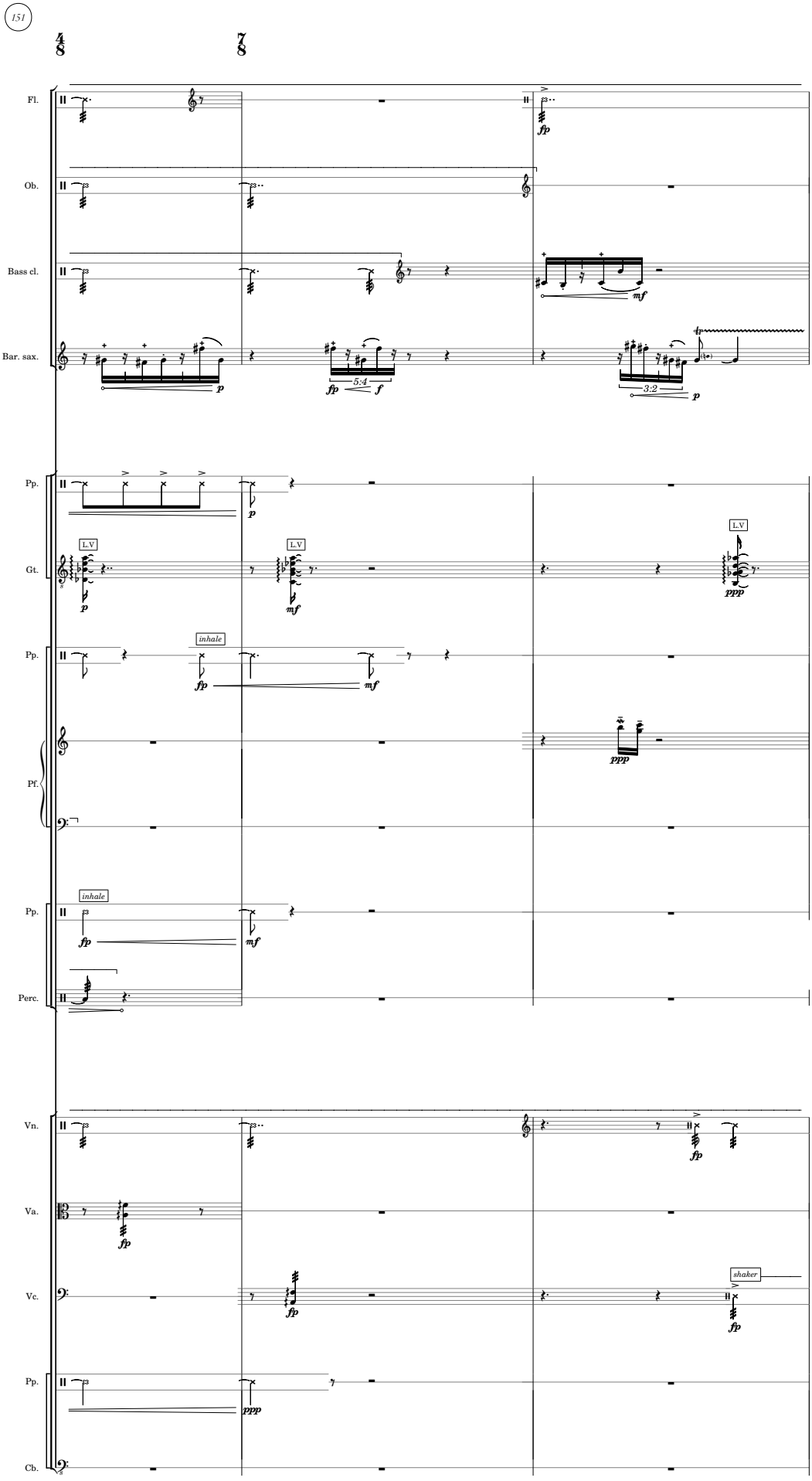
4/8 C [ii] 6/8

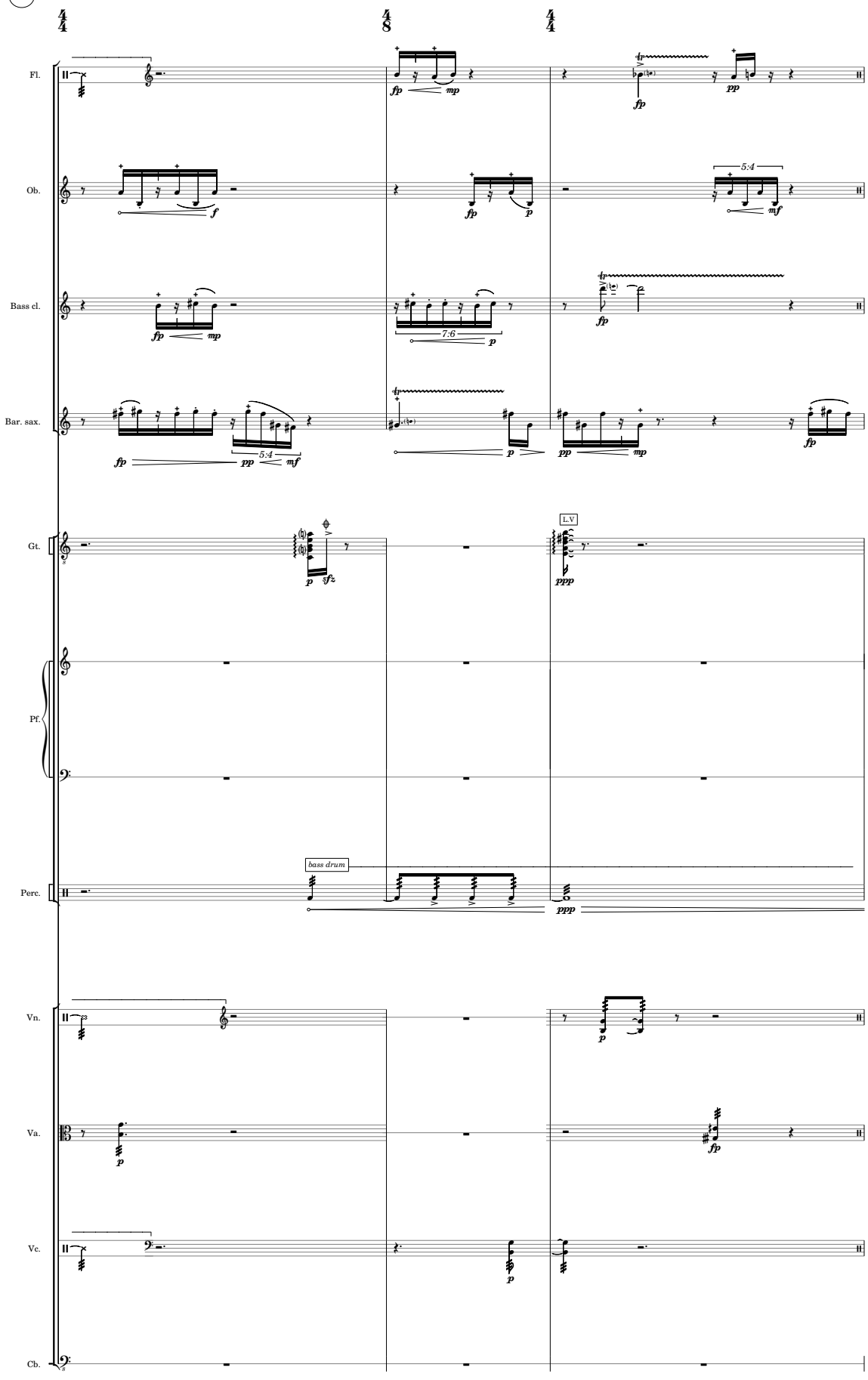


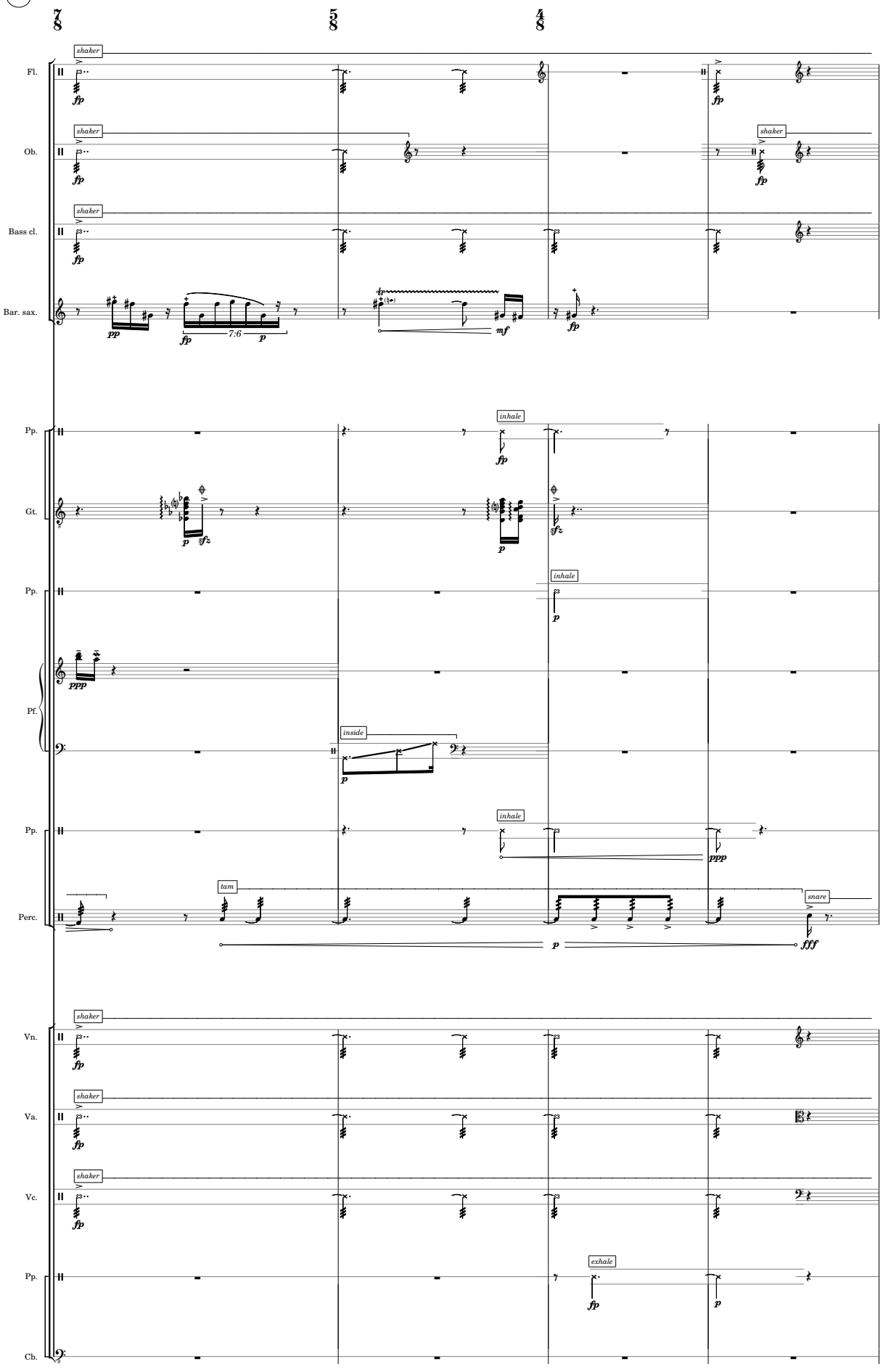

142
♩ = 80
4/8
5/8
D
Chemish
4/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
shaker
fp
LV
fff
snare
bass drum

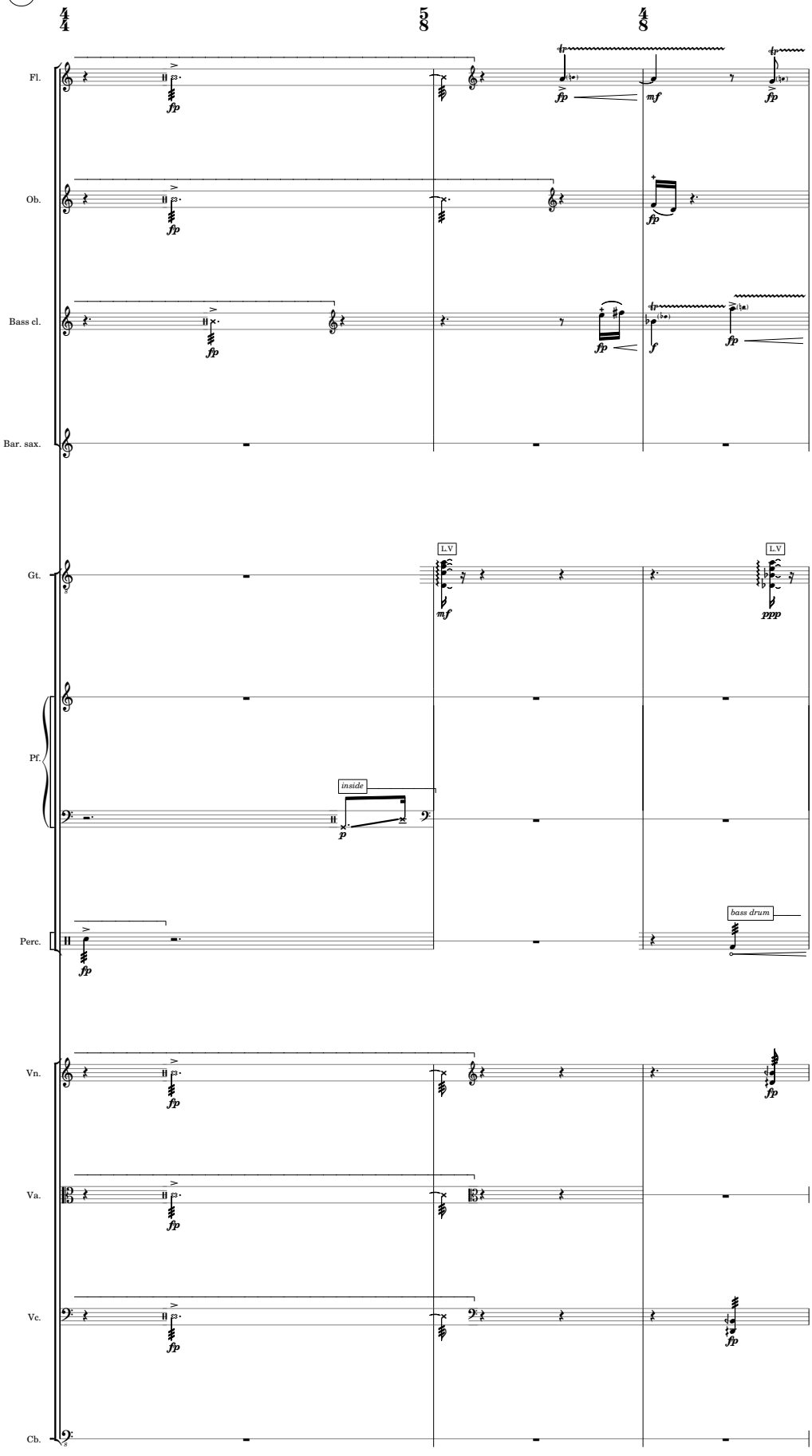

7/8
5/8
4/8
Fl.
shaker
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
4:3
Gt.
Pf.
inside
Perc.
tam
Vn.
Va.
shaker
Vc.
Cb.

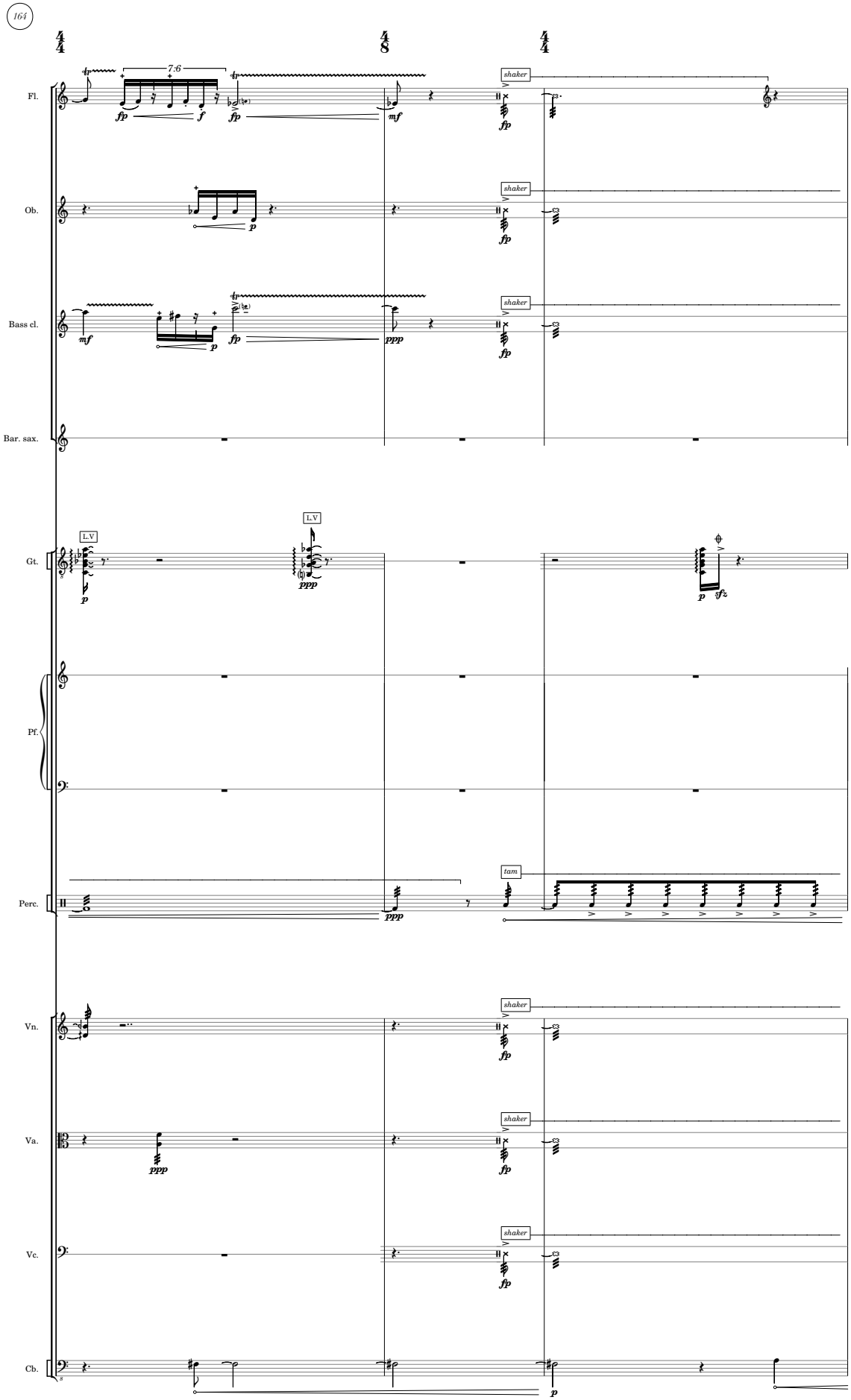

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
shaker
5:4
3:2
4:3
exhale
L.V
inside
inhale

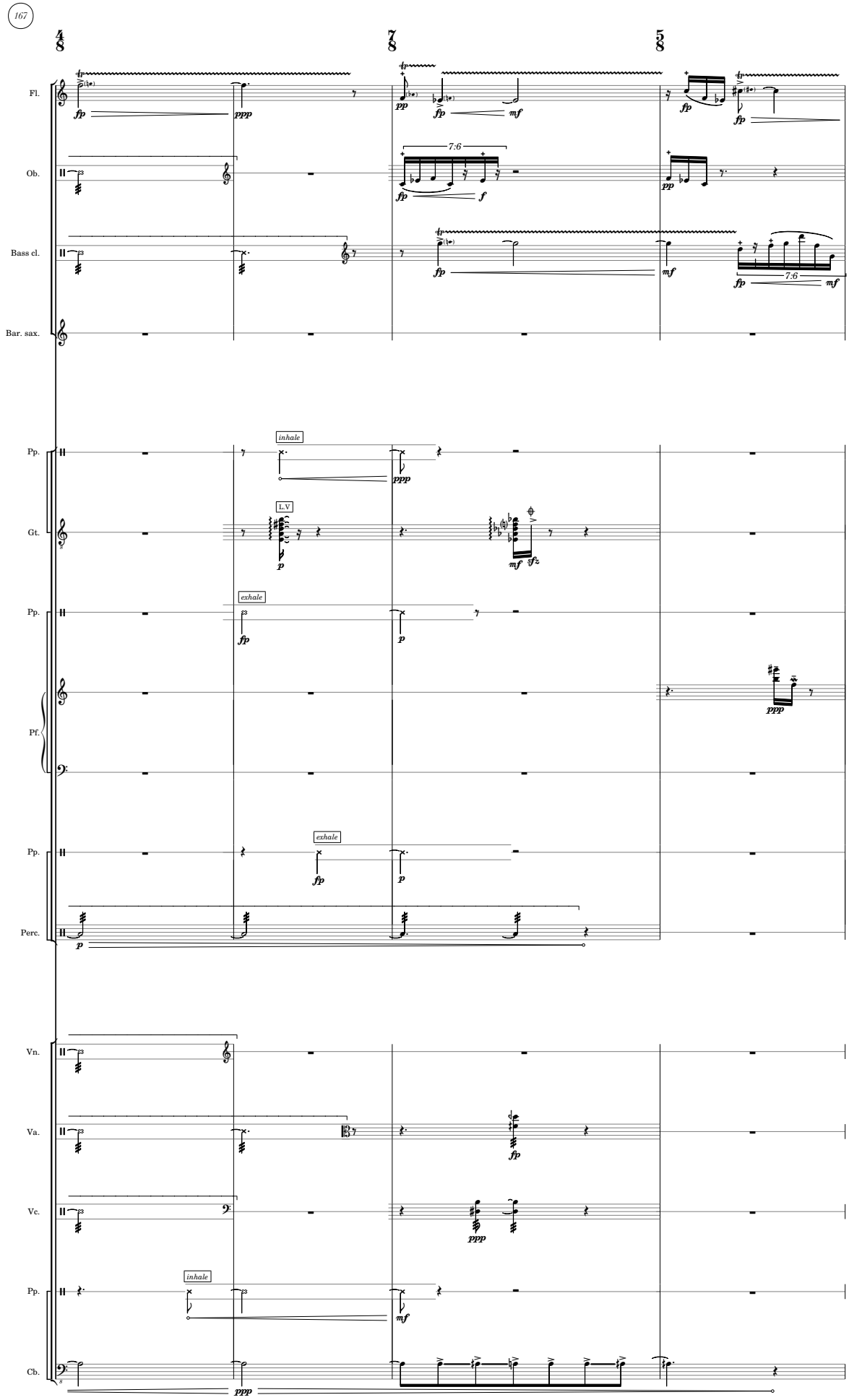

4/8
7/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
L.V
inhale
shaker
5:4
3:2
fp
mf
f
p
ppp

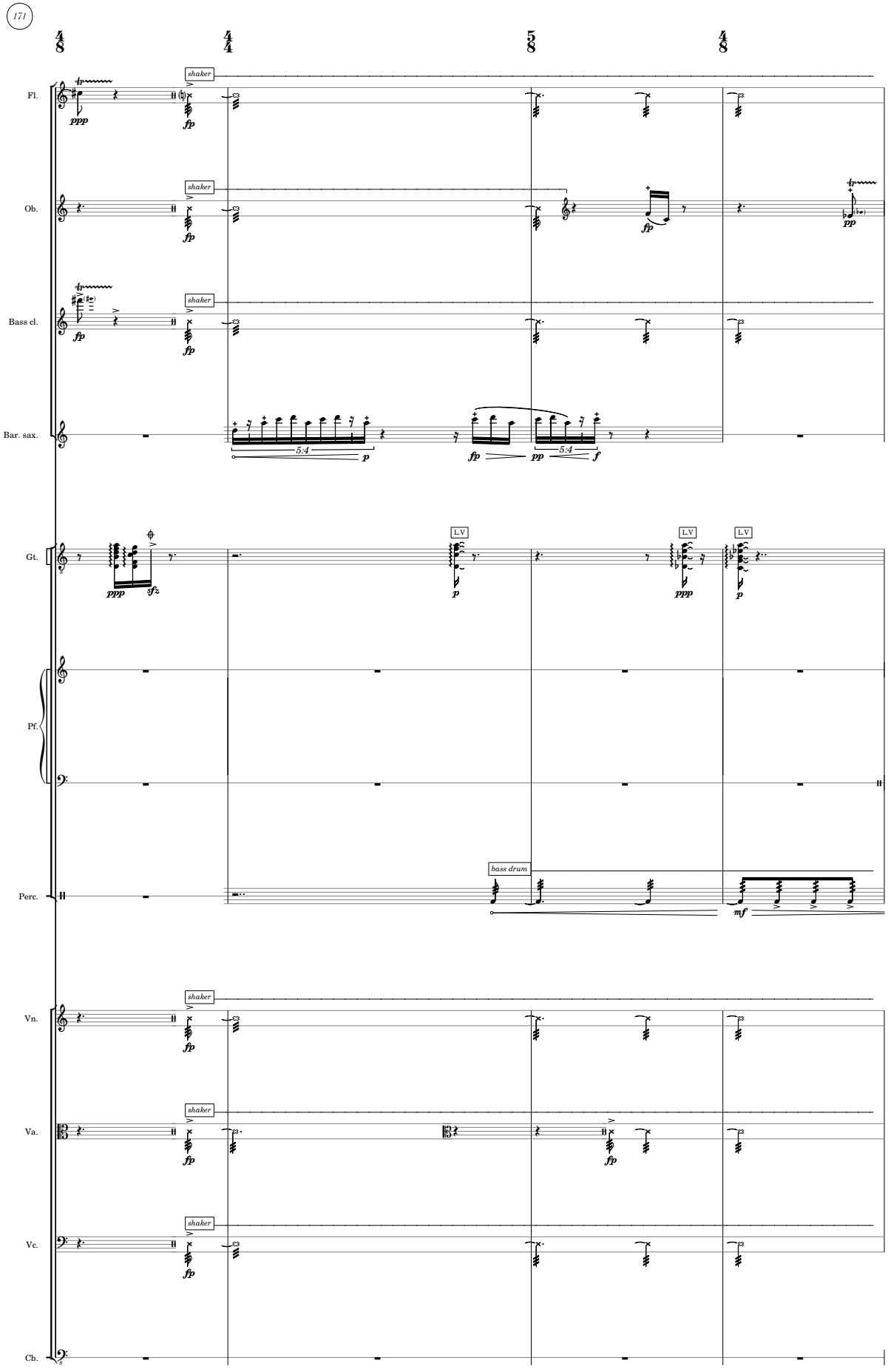

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
bass drum
LV
5:4
7:6

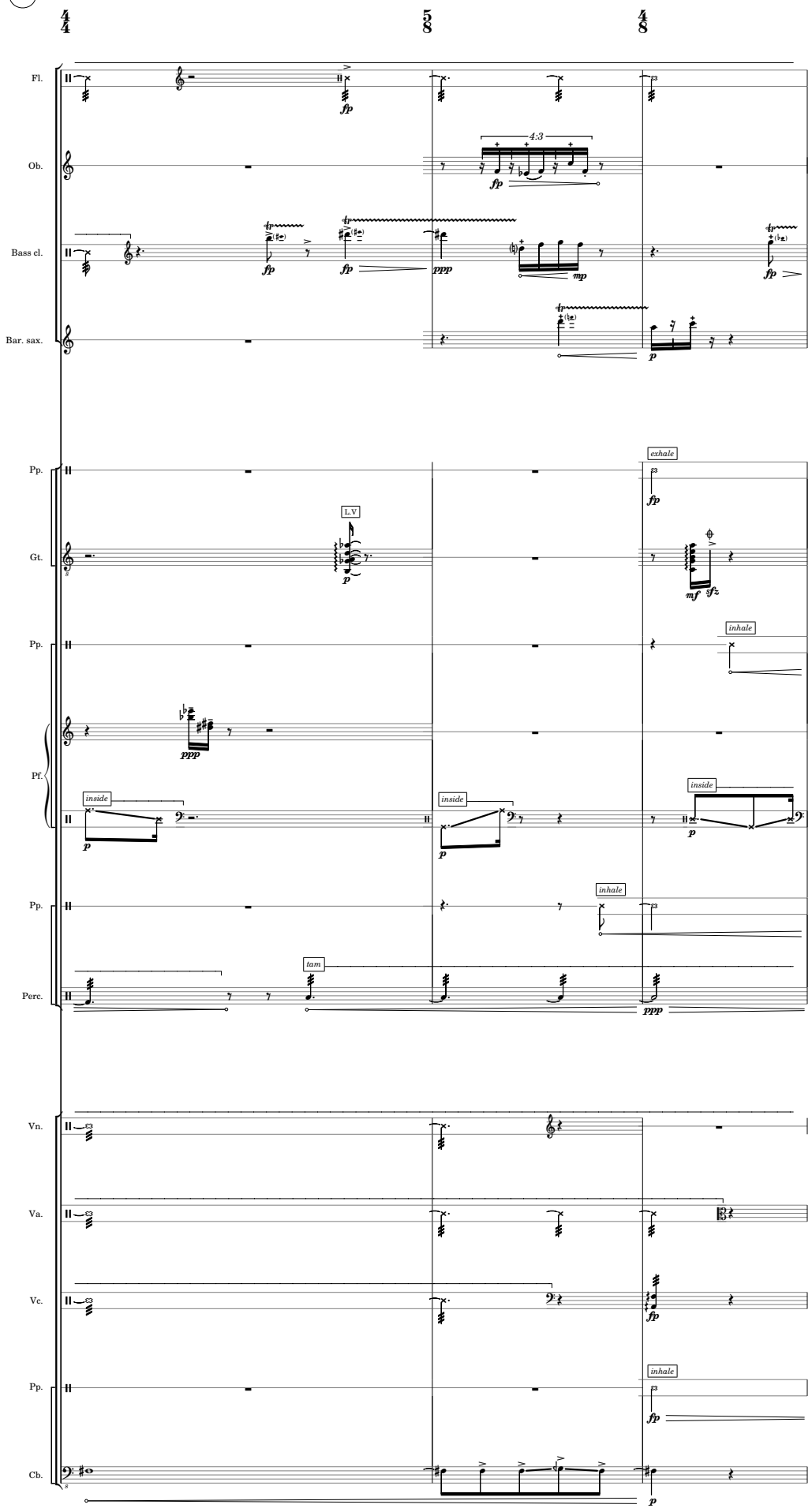

7/8
5/8
4/8
shaker
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
fp
pp
7:6
p
mf
Pp.
Gt.
inhale
sfz
Pf.
ppp
inside
Perc.
tam
snare
fff
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
exhale
Cb.

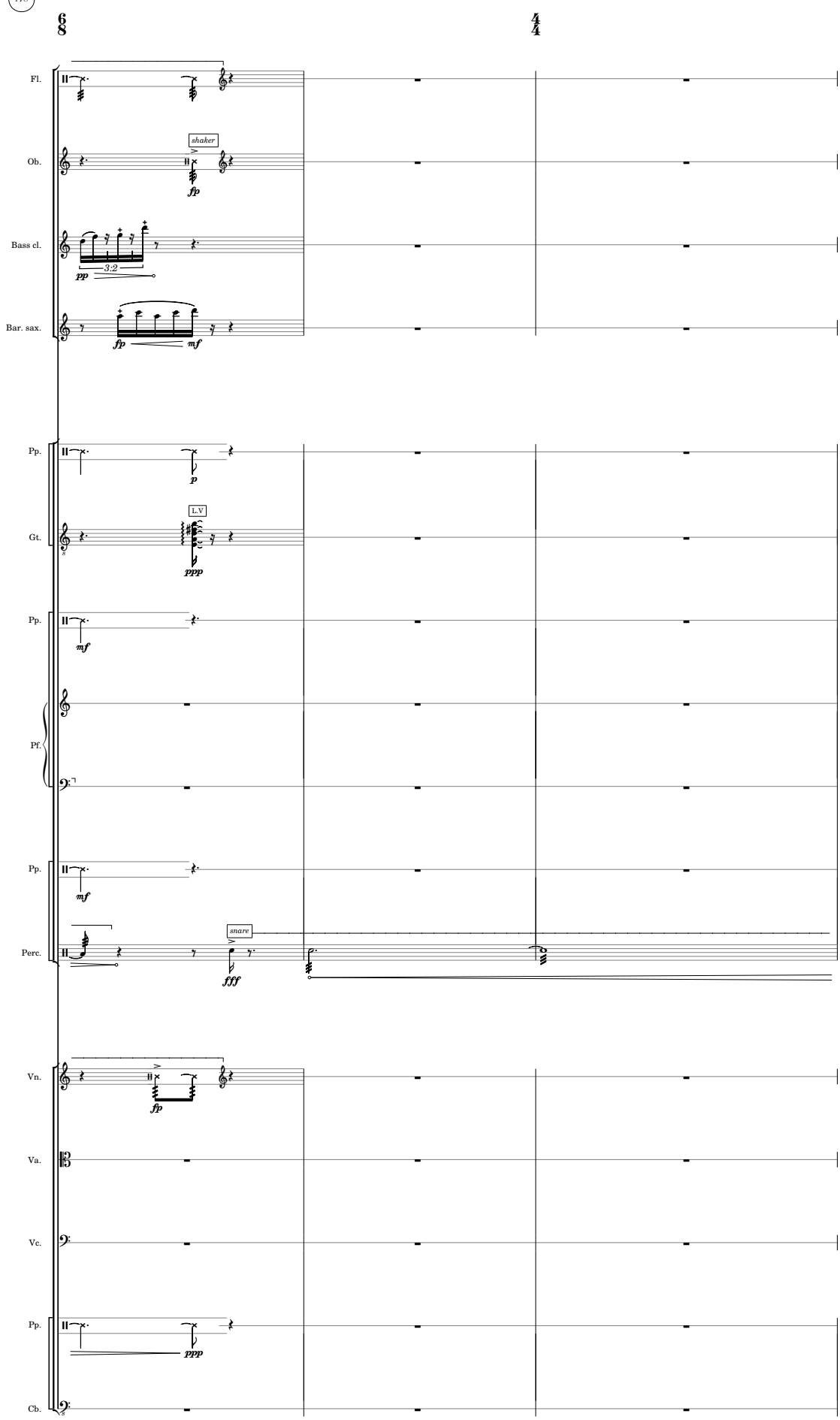

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
LV
LV
Pf.
inside
Perc.
bass drum
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

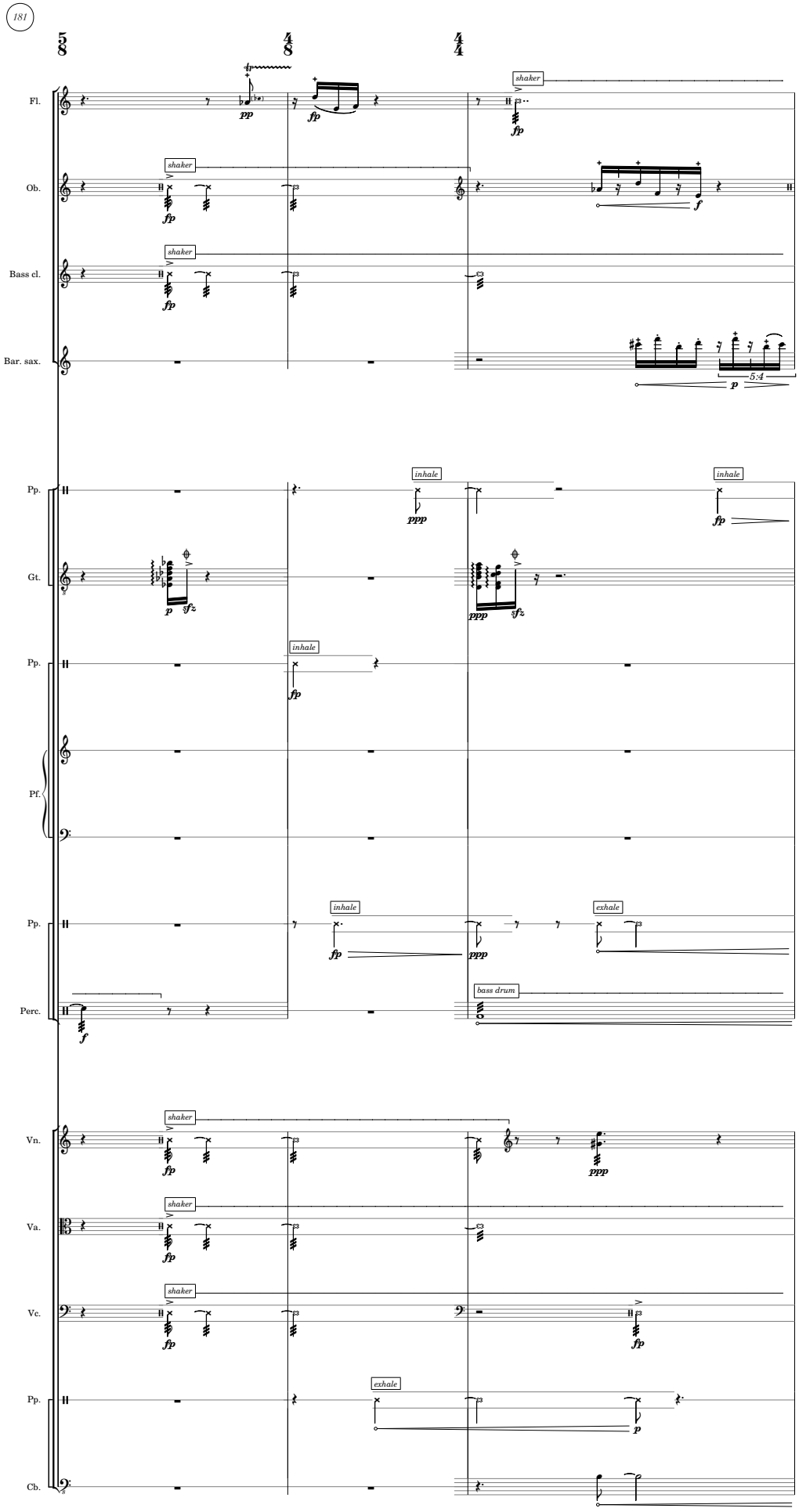

Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
shaker
tam
LV
7:6

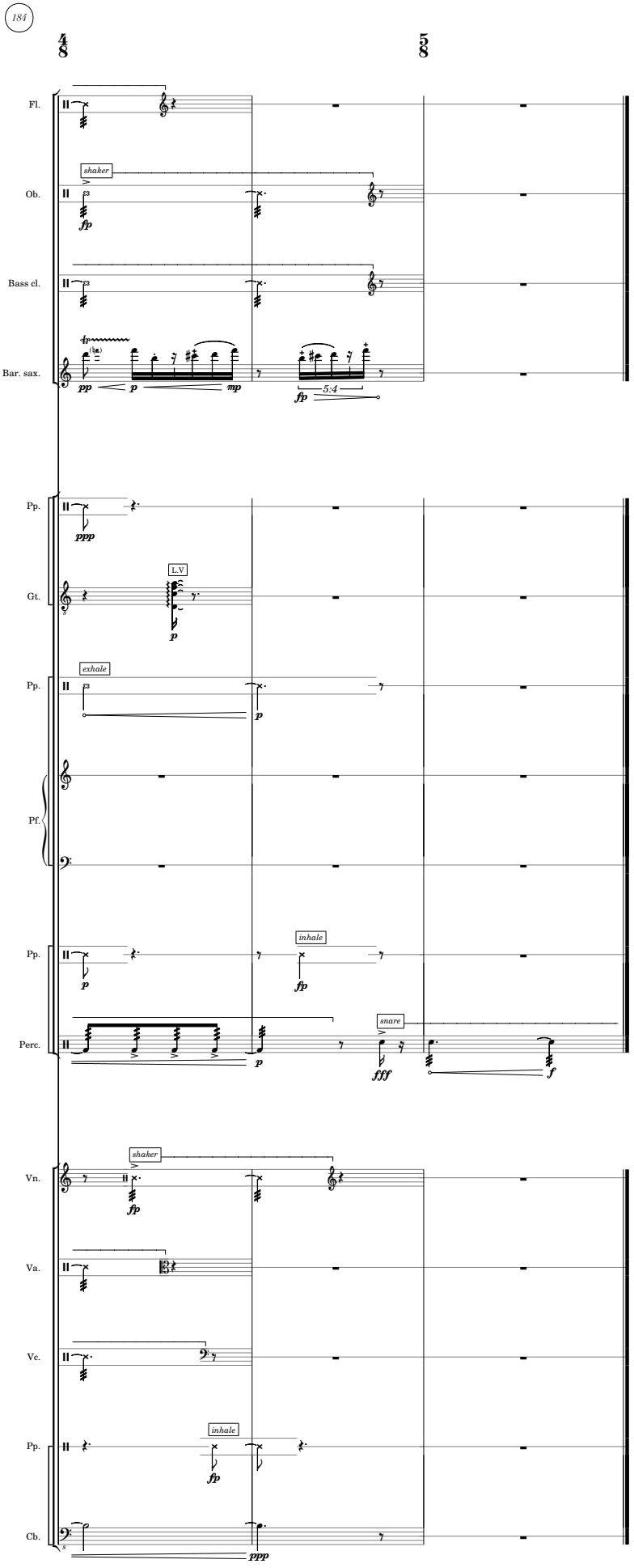

4/8
7/8
5/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pp.
Pf.
Pp.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
Cb.
inhale
L.V
exhale
exhale
inhale
7:6
7:6


4/8
4/4
5/8
4/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
shaker
LV
bass drum
5:4


4/4
5/8
4/8
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
4:3
L.V
exhale
inhale
inside
tam


6/8
4/4
Fl.
Ob.
shaker
fp
Bass cl.
3:2
pp
Bar. sax.
fp
mf
Pp.
p
Gt.
L.V
ppp
Pp.
mf
Pf.
Pp.
mf
Perc.
snare
fff
Vn.
fp
Va.
Vc.
Pp.
ppp
Cb.


5/8
4/8
4/4
Fl.
Ob.
Bass cl.
Bar. sax.
Pp.
Gt.
Pf.
Perc.
Vn.
Va.
Vc.
Cb.
shaker
inhale
exhale
bass drum
5:4



Portland, OR
January 2015 - April 2015

2014-05-15

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