a somnolence so dense it seemed to inhibit breathing

for metal whistles, fans, prepared guitar amplifier, and motorised environment

marcus jackson [2018]

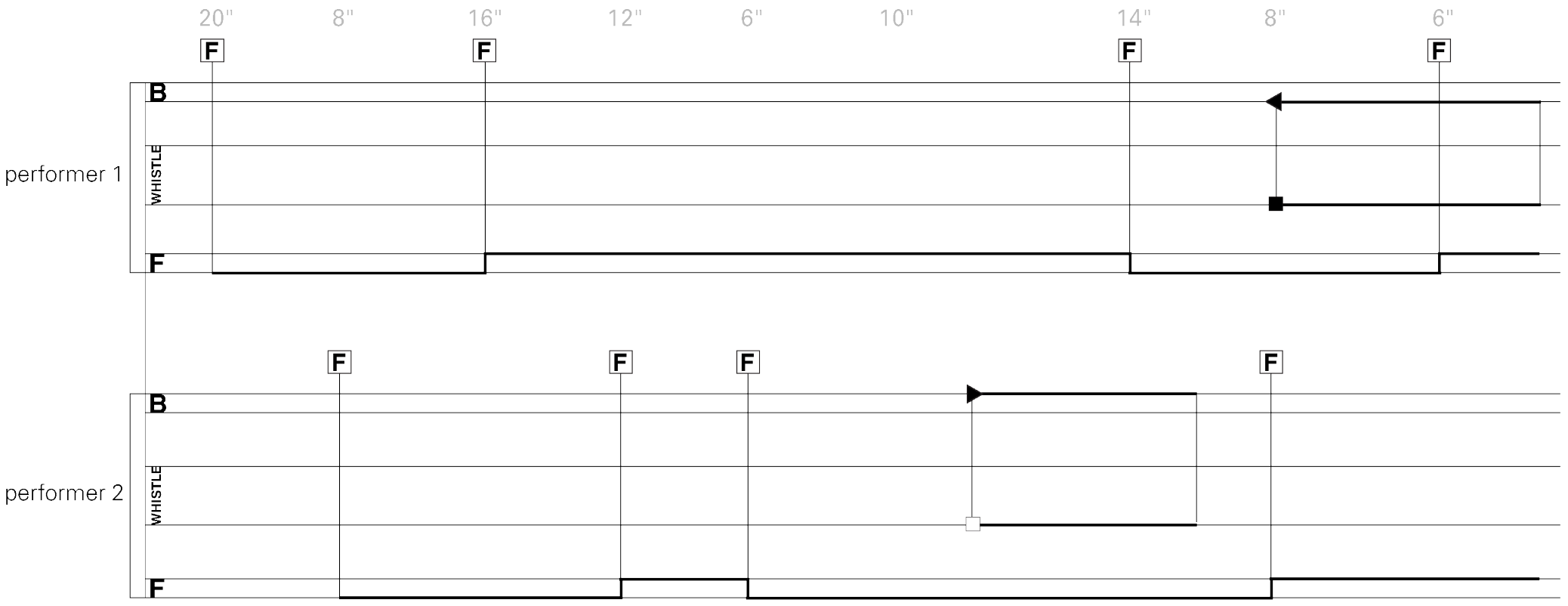
programme note

The title of the work comes from Joan Didion's *South and West: From a Notebook.*

> *"A somnolence so dense it seemed to inhibit breathing hung over Hattiesburg, Missippi, at two or three o'clock of that Sunday afternoon. There was no place to get lunch, no place to get gas. On the wide leafy streets the white houses were set back. Sometimes I would see a face at a window. I saw noone on the streets."*

The work is, throughout, restrained yet unyielding. Every push has an equal pull, and there should be a feeling throughout that the sound is on the cusp of dissipating—that it never quite actualised.

performance notes



The score is notated in time-space notation. The numbers up the top indicate the number ot seconds to be counted by the performers until the next number. Thus, in the first system, the first action occurs, followed by 20", until the second event (footswitch activations, in this case).

The performers will wear discrete earphones, which will deliver a click, to facilitate the performance. The first beat in each set is higher in pitch that the others.

The stave is such that the breathing and whistle manipulation are decoupled. The staff with the "B" clef indicates breathing. The top line indicates and outward breath, and the bottom line indicates an inward breath. The second staff is the whistle. The noteheads (described below) are positioned from high to low. The highest position indicates a maximum air breath pressure, the lowest indicating minimum air breath pressure. The lowest staff—"F"—is the footswitch, one of which is operated by each performer. These turn on and off the fans, and aid the score following in the electronics. The low line indicates the footswitch should be held down, the upper line indicates that it should not be engaged.

Fluttertongue into the whistle

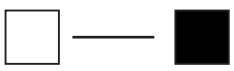
Multiphonic (outward breath, open fipple, low pressure). This is asking for a less pure tone of whistle, can be achieved by speeding up the air.

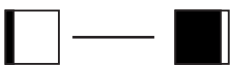
Indicates a change in the position of the footswitch

Indicates a rapid trill between fully open fipple and fully closed fipple

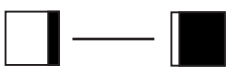
Notations

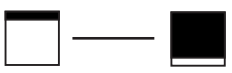
The square noteheads indicate various manipulations of the fipple with either one or fingers. The whistle should remain in the mouth throughout the piece. The bottom of the notehead is closest of the moth, the top is farthest away, as far as the fipple is concerned. Below, the extremes of the manipulations are shown, and there are gradations between these extremes.


open and closed

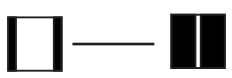

one finger on the left hand side of the fipple


one finger in the middle of the fipple


one finger on the right hand side of the fipple


one finger farthest away from the mouth, covering towards the mouth


one finger closest to the mouth, covering away from the mouth


one finger on each side of the fipple, covering inwards

The vertical dashed lines and thin lines are present to aid the performer in placing the notation accurately within the beat. Dashed lines are attached to the first beat in any time segment. Thin vertical lines show that two actions are paired, and should occur simultaneously.

The black thick lines indicate the amount of breath pressure that should be emplyed. The thick red lines indicate the amount of breath pressure to be emplyed, as well as indicating that the performer should try to transition smoothly between two fipple positions. Where there is no red line, changes in fipple positions should be immediate, and un-smoothed.

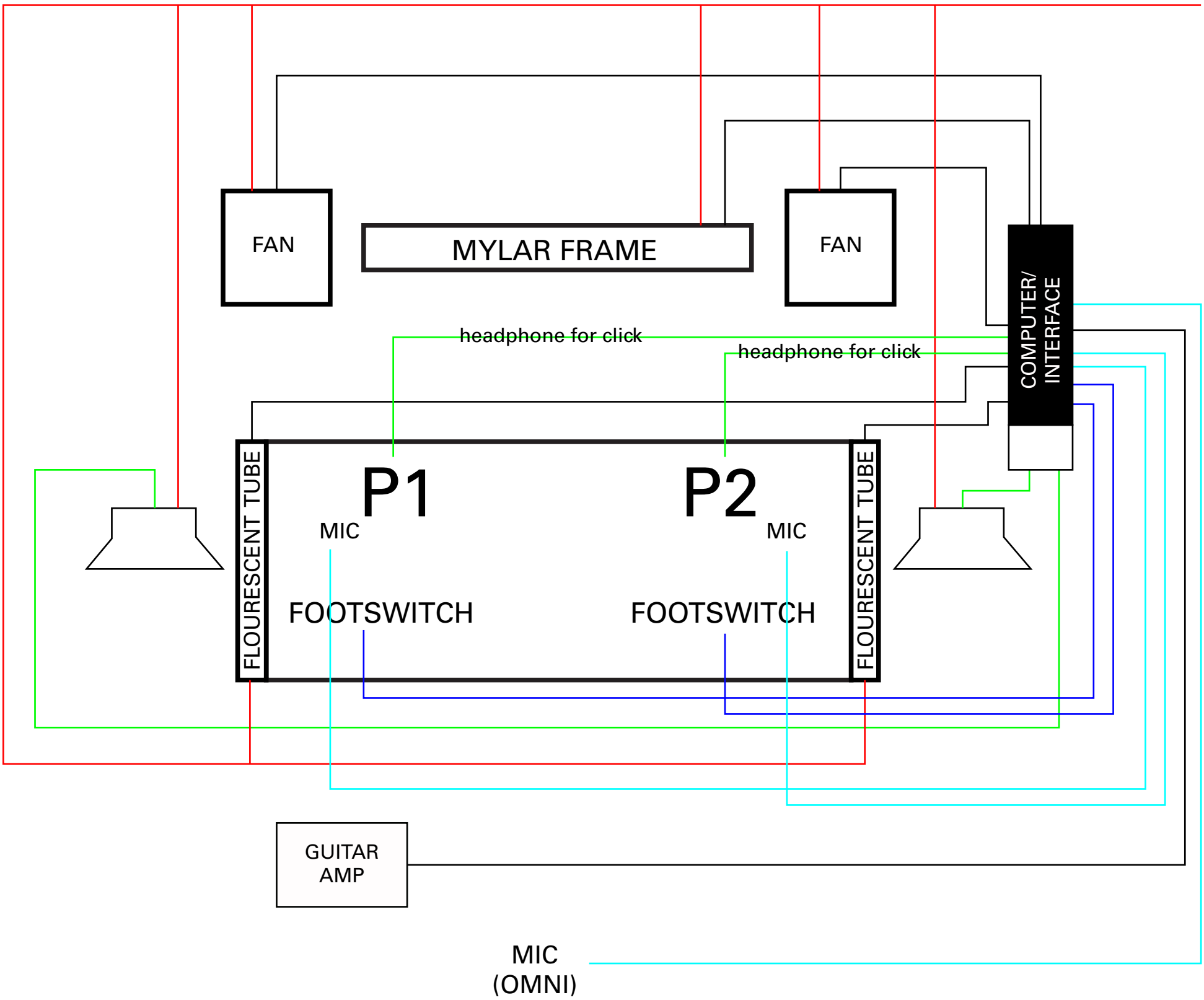
It is absolutely imperative that there are no full whistle sounds throughout the piece. The dynamic range should not exceed approximately mezzo-piano. Performers should attempt to be as visually and emotionally still as possible. This piece could be thought of as meditative, although calm does not accurately describe the feeling of the piece. Quietly anxious, perhaps.

Electronics

The electronics are all automated. The fans will turn on and off during the work. The prepared guitar will self-modulate, using servomotors on the knobs. The performers should be amplified subtly, and sent through speakers situated as close to them as possible. The motorised environment is customised for each performance, however, it comprises walls of mylar that are rustled by more servomotors. The house lights should be off, and there should be lighting near the performers, but this should be as minimal as possible.

A technical rider can be provided by the composer—please do not hesistate to contact him with any queries: **mrcsjksn@gmail.com**.

technical rider



AUDIENCE

RED is power.
BLACK is outward signal from the computer.
BLUE is signal input in the computer.
CYAN is audio input into the computer/interface.
GREEN is audio signal output from the computer/interface.

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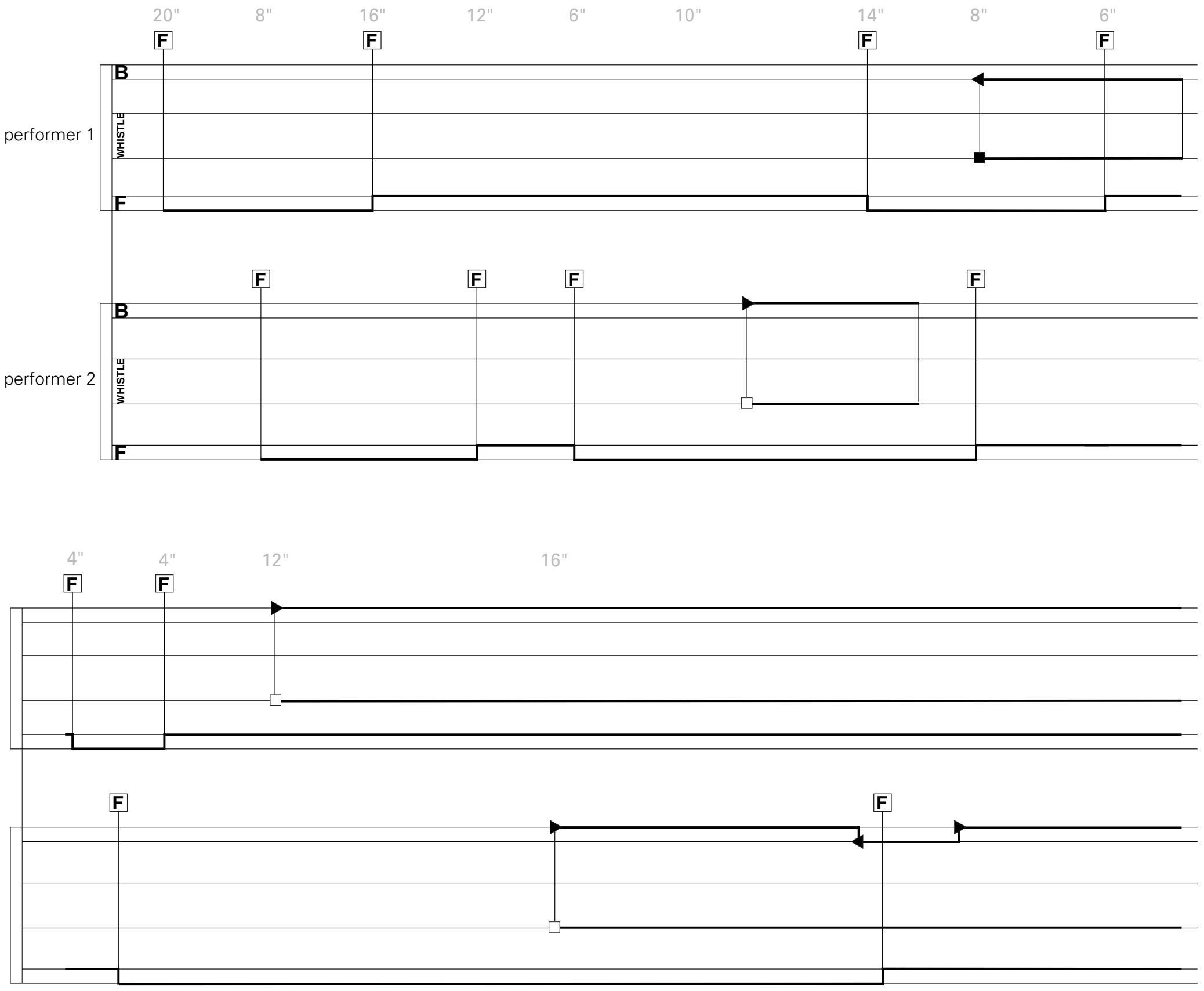
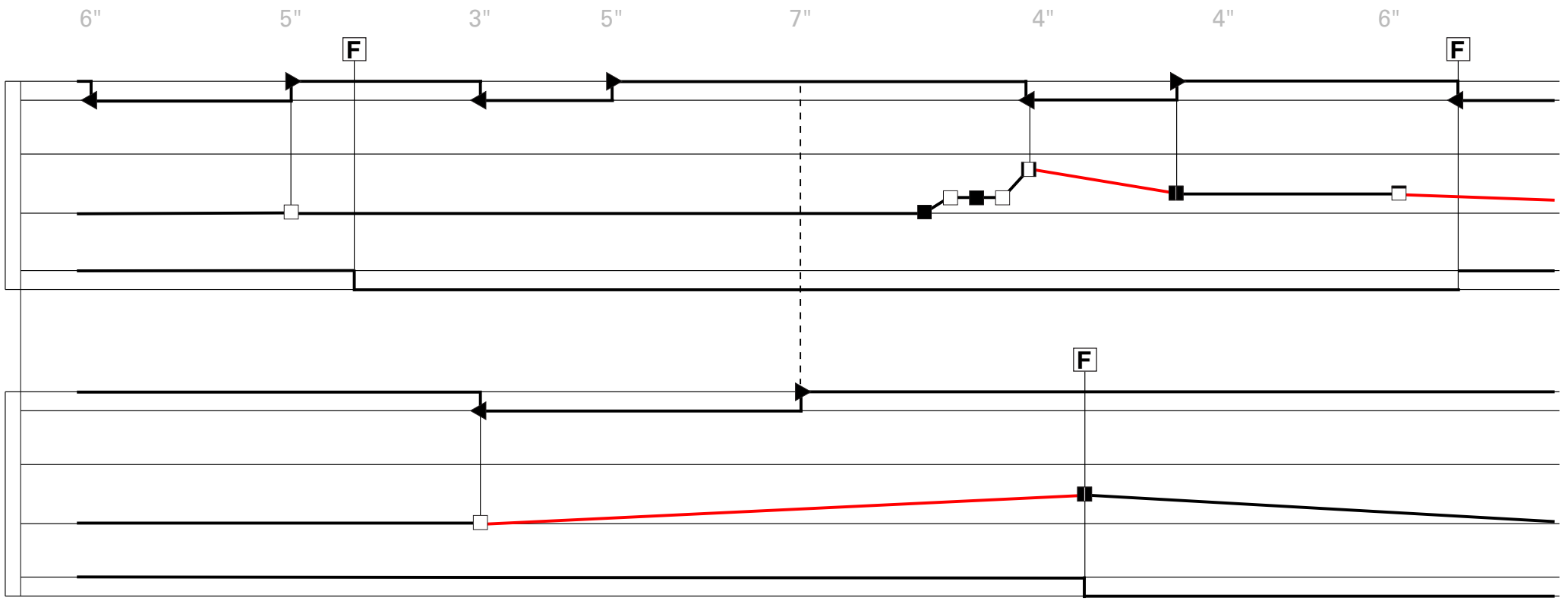
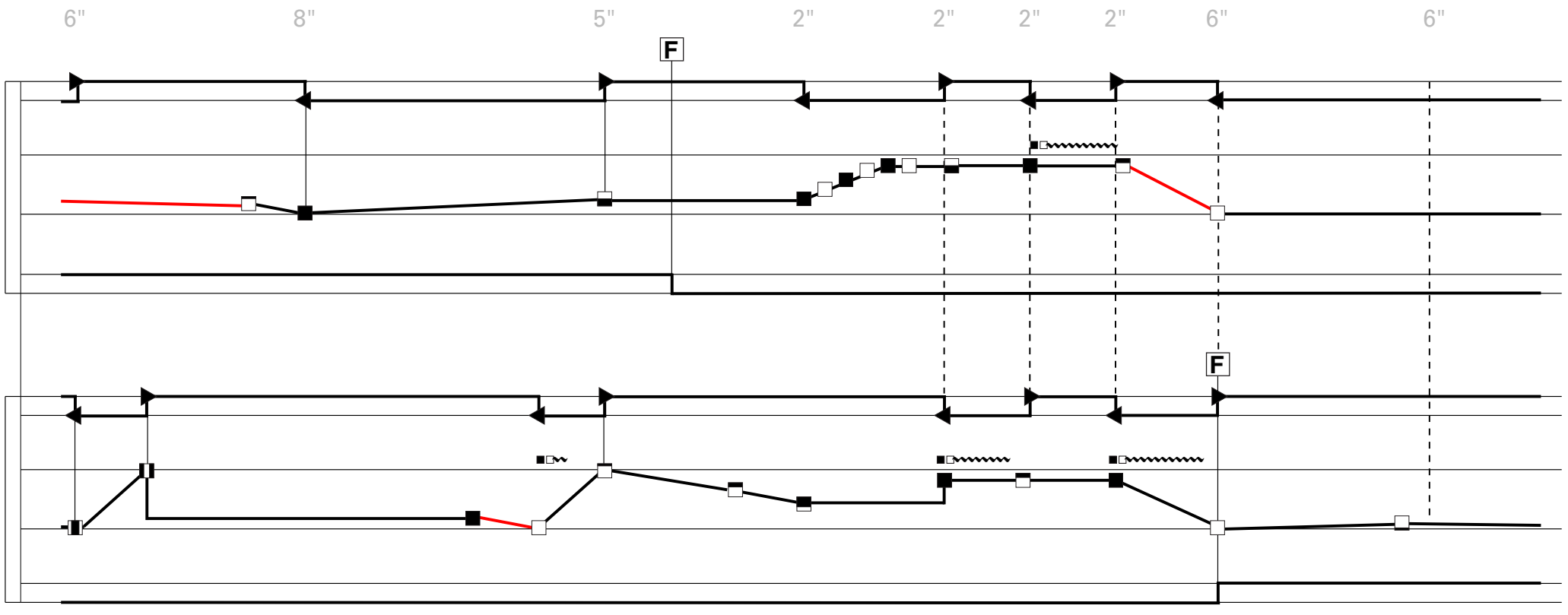
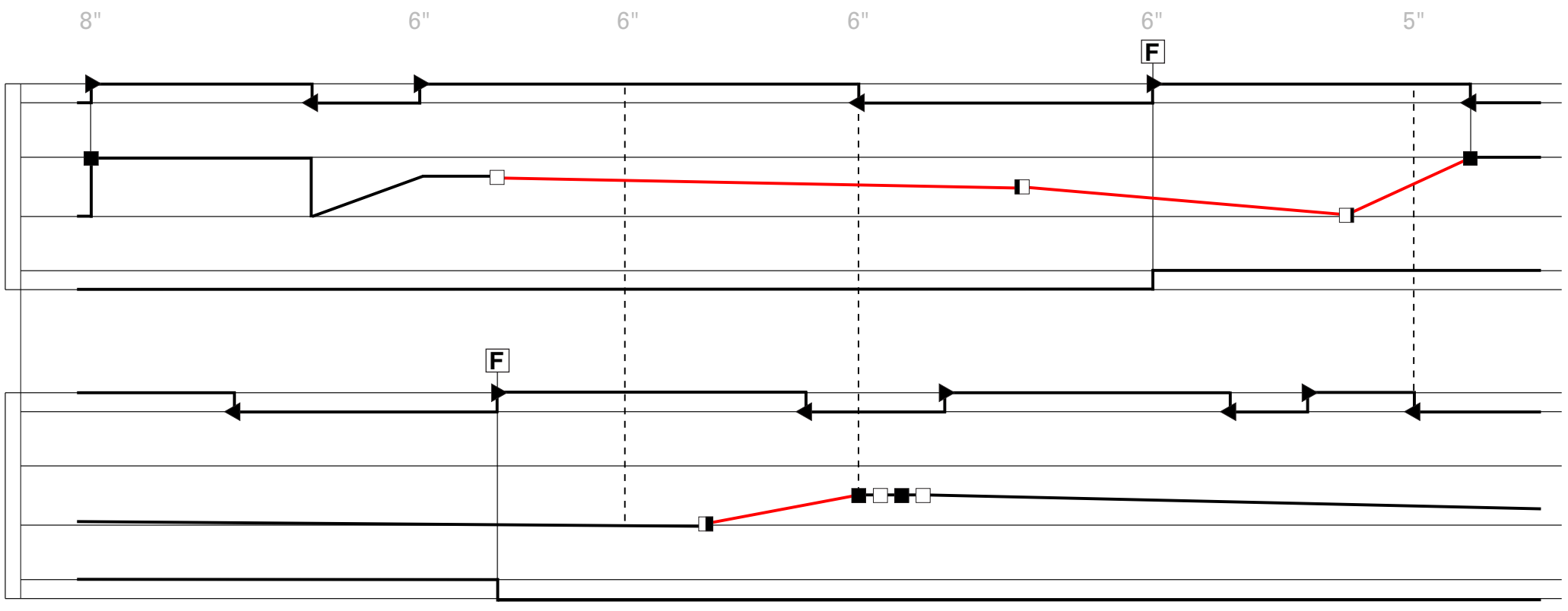
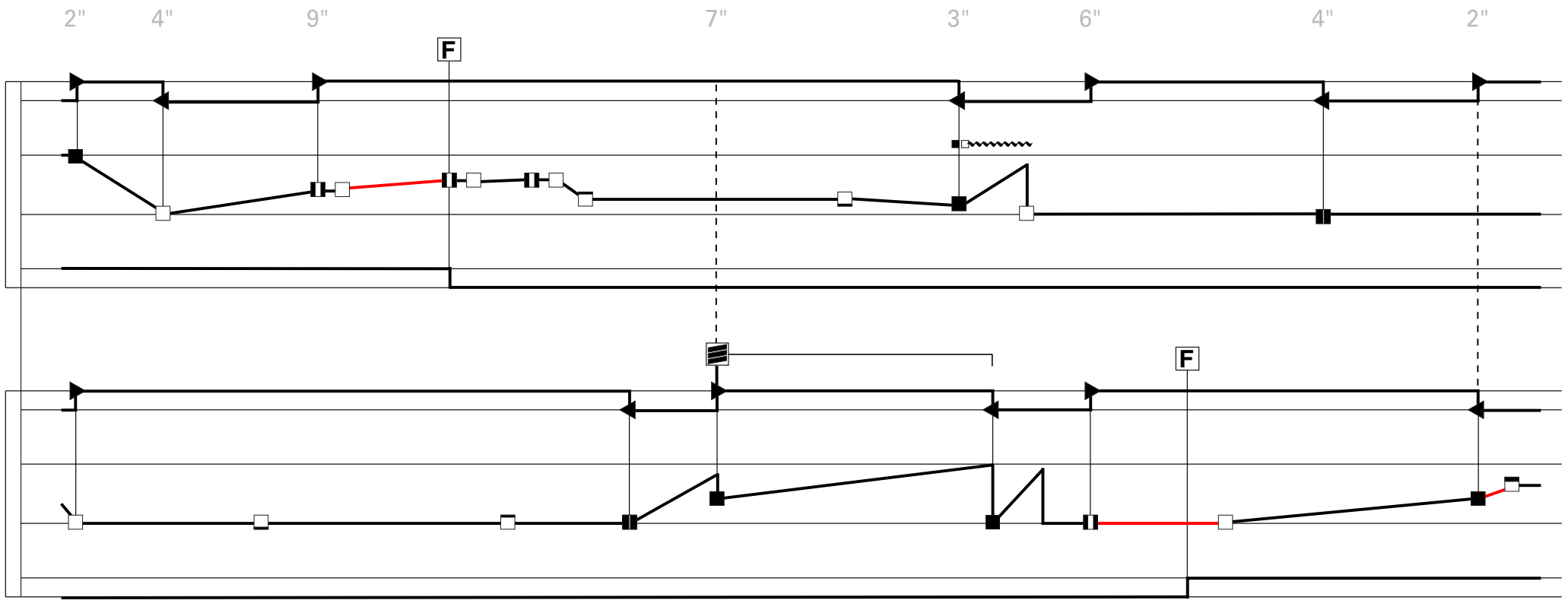


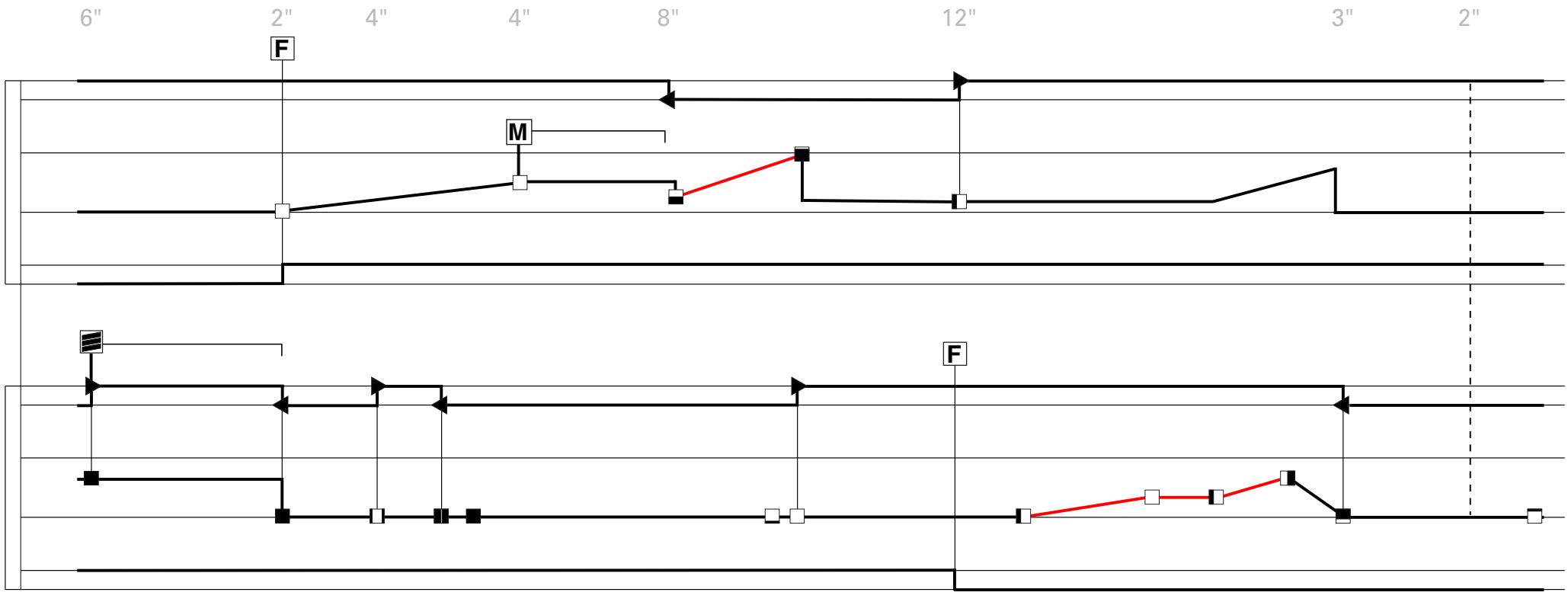


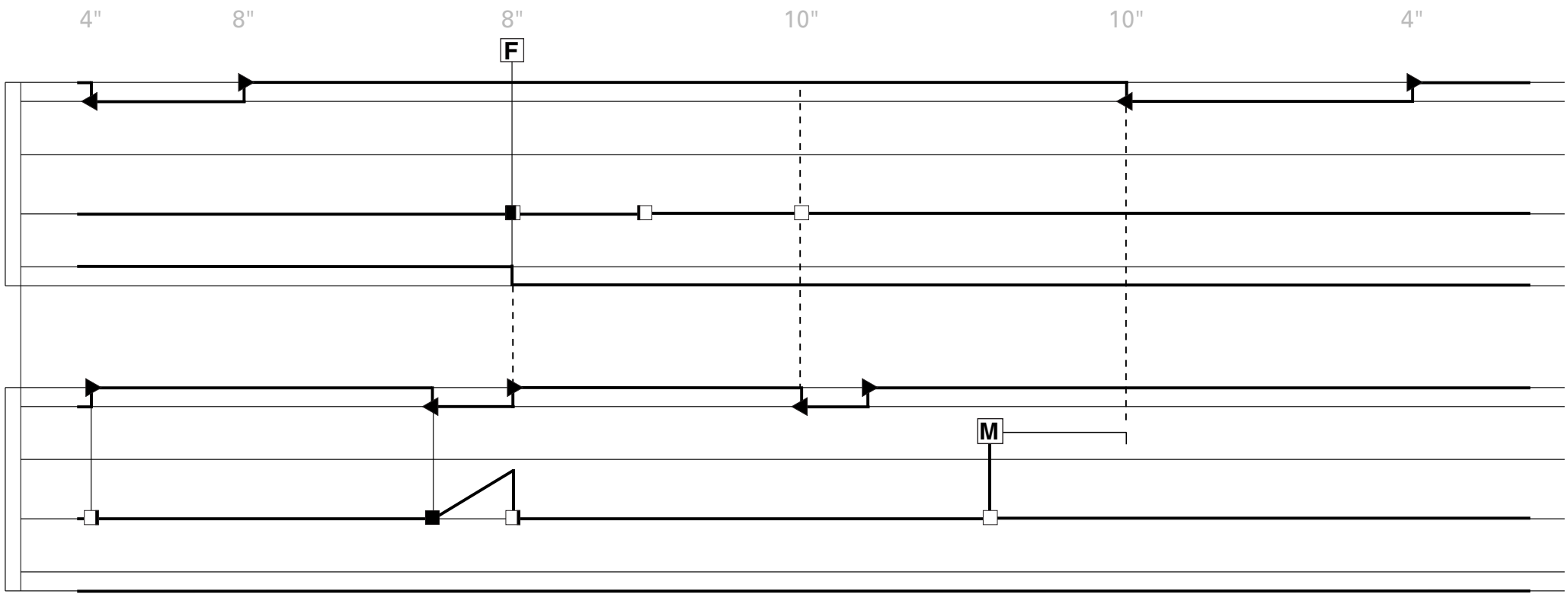
2

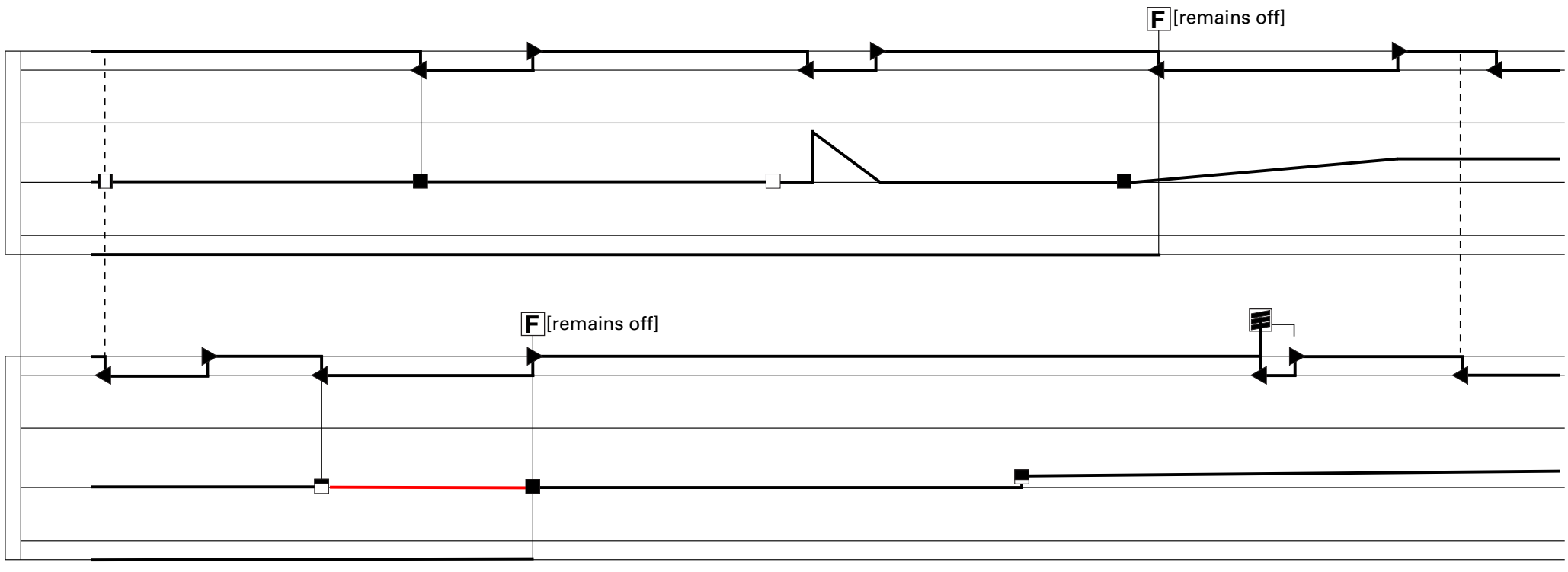







6"
2"
4"
4"
8"
12"
3"
2"
F
M
F


4"
8"
8"
10"
10"
4"
F
M


10"
2"
15"
12"
3"
F [remains off]
F [remains off]

4