Robert Guthrie

Centric

for Double Bass

duration: ca.19 minutes

Programme Note

Centric is an exploration of colour and sound, inspired by and adopting techniques from improvised Contrabass music. This music, its aesthetics and techniques have greatly inspired the expressive and sonic world of the composition, which explores gestural sound objects as flashes and fragments with occasional drawn-out extended passages.

The style and structure of the piece aims to reflect, through the means of notation, something of the essence and energy of improvised music. It is not an attempt to imitate it, nor recreate it, as of course the writing down of the music removes the fundamental condition of this music, but it is concerned with the possible function of notation to explore and highlight some of these techniques.

This work explores a descriptive and physical notation, concerned with the performer's interaction with the instrument as a means to create sound, rather than signalling the exact sound to be created.

Performance instructions

As a guideline, every stave lasts 30 seconds unless otherwise indicated.
Within this guide timings are relative, not intended to be precisely to scale yet show the sense of movement and space. Individual gestures, sound objects and silence should be interpreted intuitively and dramatically by the performer.
Commas ' 𝄾 ' indicate a 'breath' or brief pause before moving on. These should be treated as indicators of a change of character/scene/atmosphere etc.
Fermatas indicate a longer pause, intended for dramatic effect.

Due to flexibilty in timing, bowing is not notated and may be used by the performer to enhance their realisation of the music.

The performer will also require a tuning fork, ideally one tuned to 440hz.

Notation

s.t. ..... sul tasto
s.p. ..... sul ponticello
m.s.p. / m.s.t. ..... molto...
N. ..... Normal (used with s.p. and s.t.)

batt. ..... battuto (hit/strike/ricochet with hair of bow)

c.l. ..... col legno
c.l. batt. ..... col legno battuto (×)
c.l. tratto ..... col legno tratto

ord. ..... ordinary (used with c.l.)

s.v. ..... sans vibrato
m.v. ..... molto vibrato
(if not specified assume usual level of vib.)

s.t. ⟶ s.p. ..... gradual change of timbre / technique

i, ii, iii, iv ..... string numbers

i ⟶ iv ..... gradual move from one string to another (crossing any inbetween)

IIII III II I ..... number of strings to play/use/activate (used above a note/gesture)

[ ] ..... repeat notated tone group in brackets as rapidly as possible

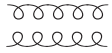
sustain to fade out

indicates bow/hand pressure increase towards noise (sometimes supported by 'b.p.')

..... repetition of the same pitch(es)

..... as quickly as possible

..... finger approximate pitches

 ..... move bow in circular motion

..... use palm of hand (as indicated, but usually to stop all four strings)

 ..... light / hard pressure (with above)

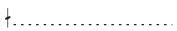
..... using the nut of the bow

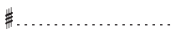
..... trill alternating between normal and light (harmonic) finger pressure

..... pull strings to bend pitch (beneath bridge)

..... tuning fork (440hz if possible)

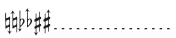
natural harmonic

 raised by ¼ tone

 raised by ¾ tone

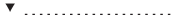
lowered by ¼ tone

lowered by ¾ tone

 microtonal adjustment (expressive rather than exact pitch)

adjust tuning fork by a ¼ tone (sharp/flat depending on direction of arrow)

 highest note possible

 lowest note possible

 trill action/effect

slow vibrato

quick vibrato

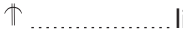
uneven vibrato

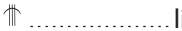
pitch bend

uneven glissando

glissando to undetermined pitch

play between the bridge and the tailpiece (one string)

 likewise (two strings)

 likewise (three strings)

likewise (arpeggiated across four strings)

to be played on the tailpiece (with heavy bow pressure to create rumble/drone sound

to be played on the side of the bridge (rectangular to right-hand edge)

 play on the bridge

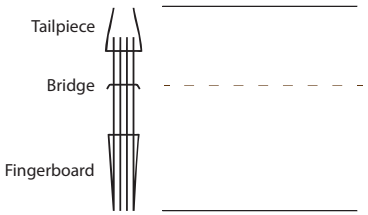
 play strings from behind (allows for bowing strings i, iv or both as indicated)

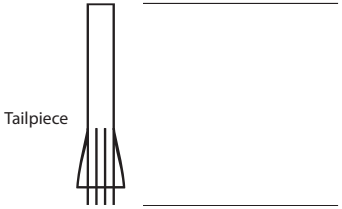
 indicates percussive technique (col legno battuto, on body of the instrument etc. as indicated)

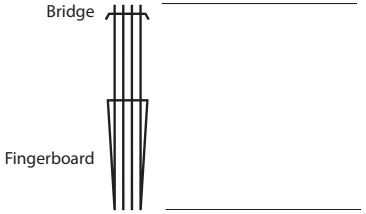
 left hand pizz.

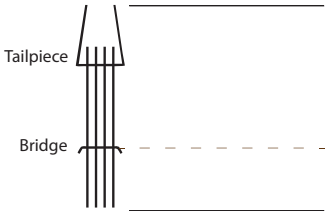
 bartok pizz. (snap against fingerboard)

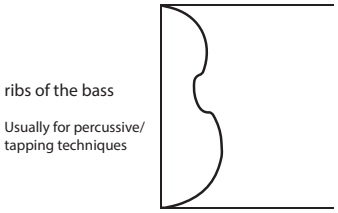
Clefs

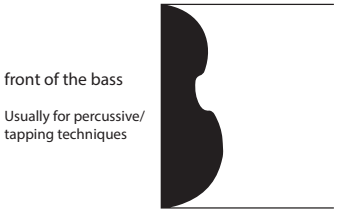












Notes on clefs:

- When there are two staves, the uppper stave indicates the action of the left hand, the lower of the right.

- Any instrument clef is oriented with the bottom of the body of the instrument corresponding to the upper edge of the stave, with the top of the instrument at the lower edge.

- Throughout, pitches are written assuming regular tuning, and should be fingered as such even when the strings are detuned with the pegs. This means that resulting pitches are not always aligned with what is notated.

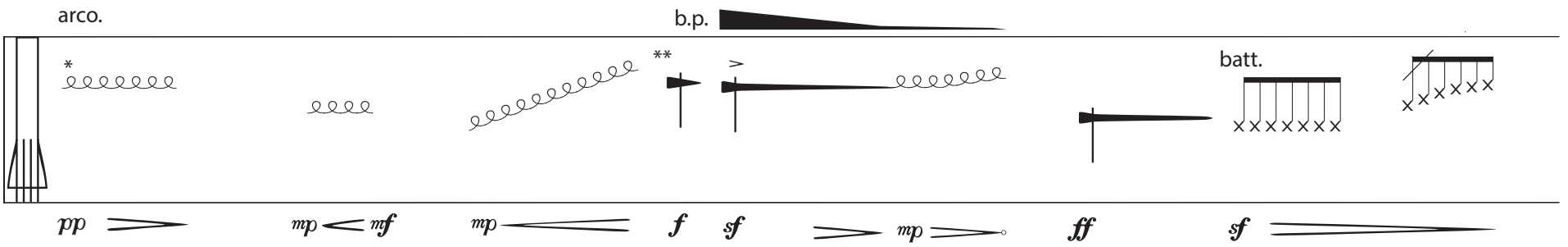
Centric

for solo Double Bass

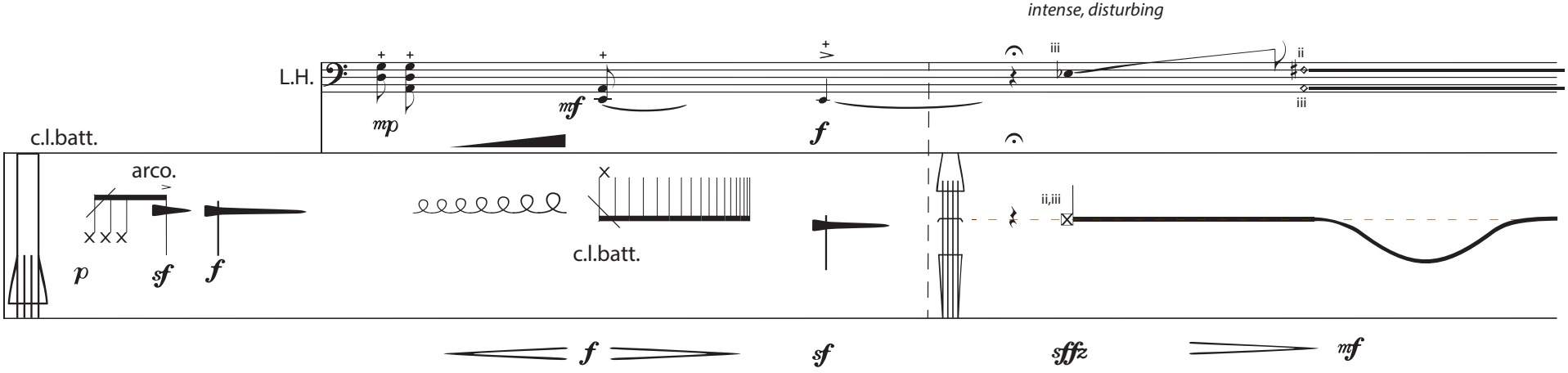
Robert Guthrie

30"

distant, atmospheric

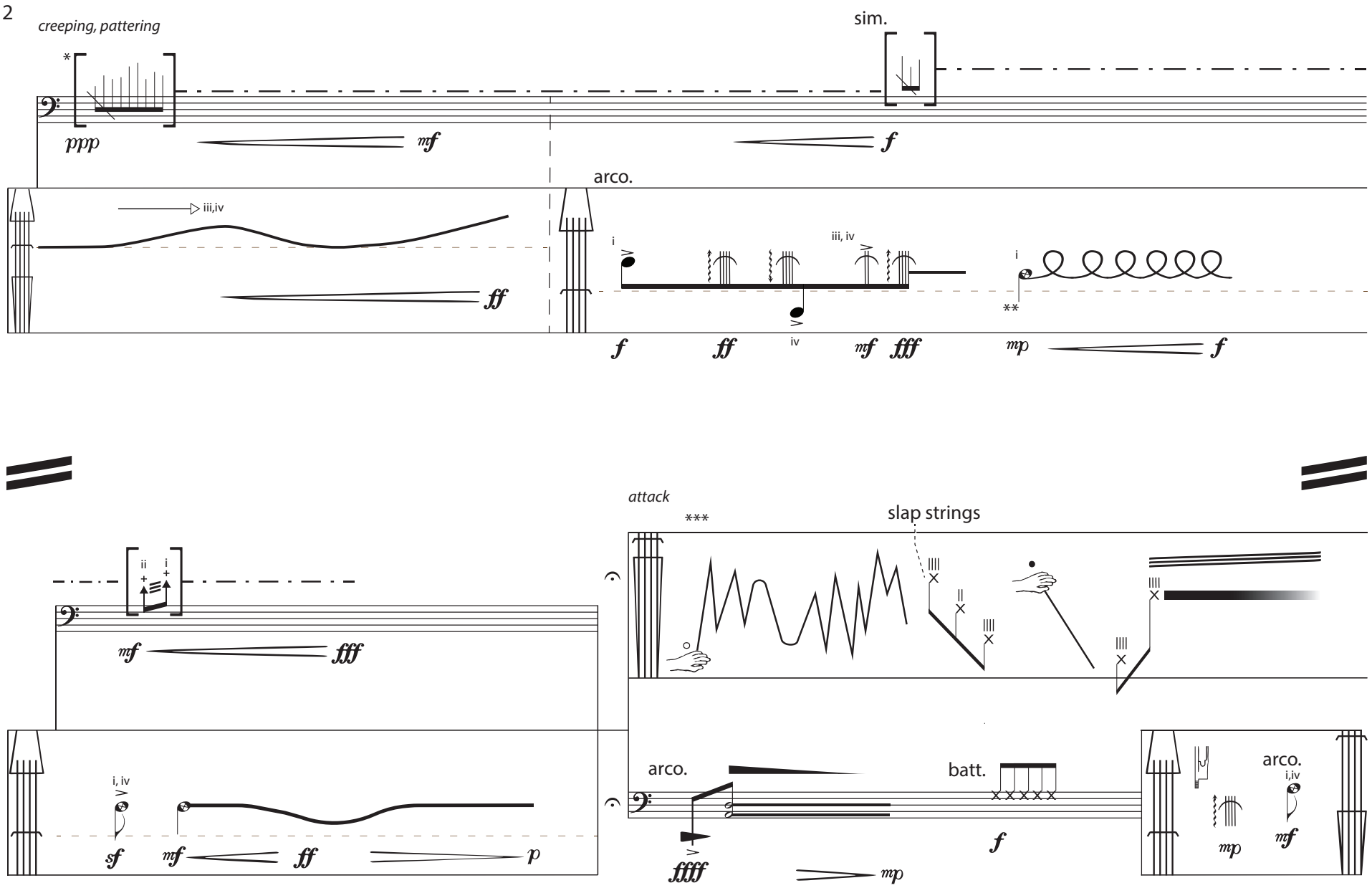


intense, disturbing



*bow tailpiece in circular motvion

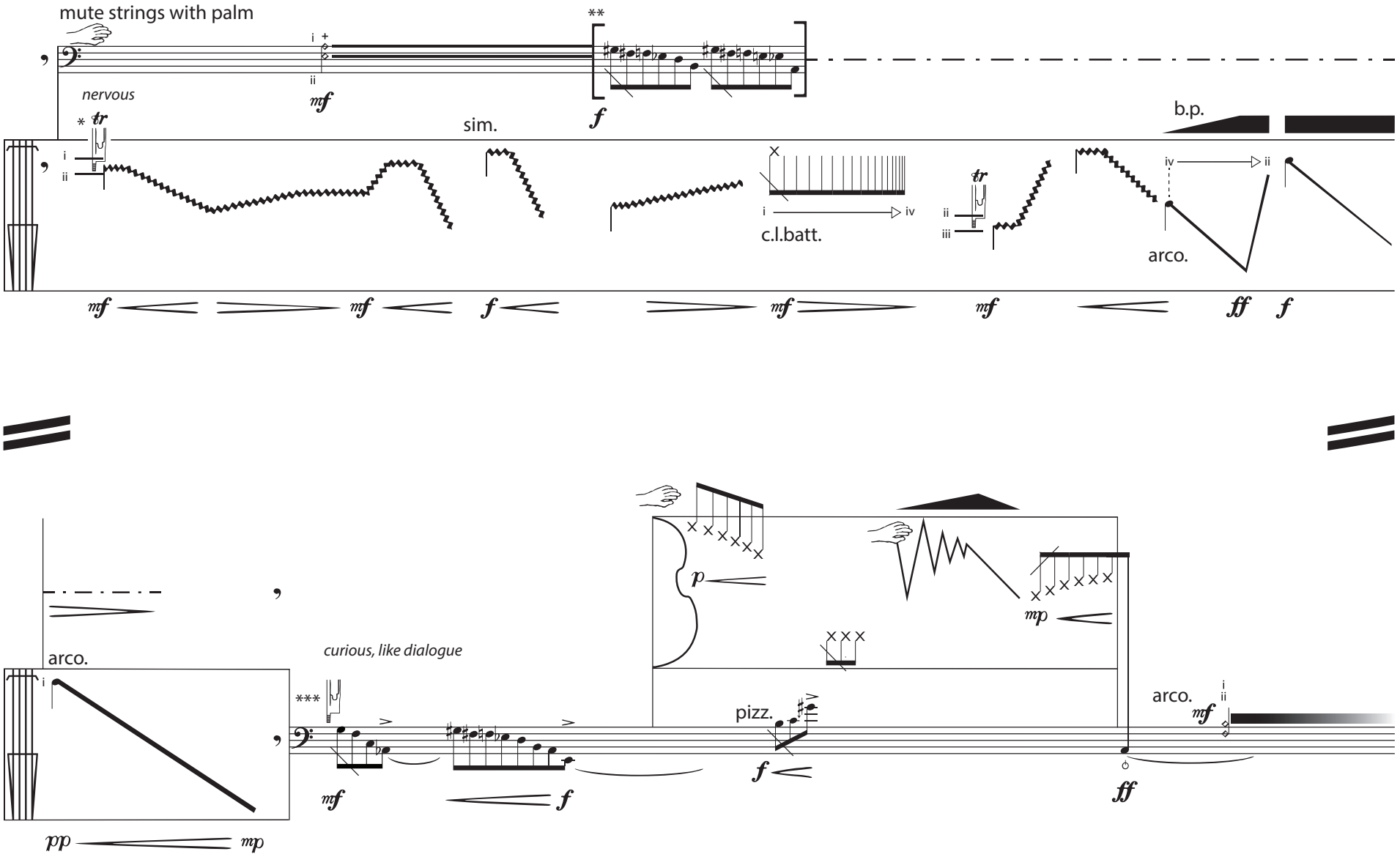
** using heavy bow pressure to create rumble/drone sound



*finger approximate pitches as rapidly as possible

** bow behind the strings beyond the bridge

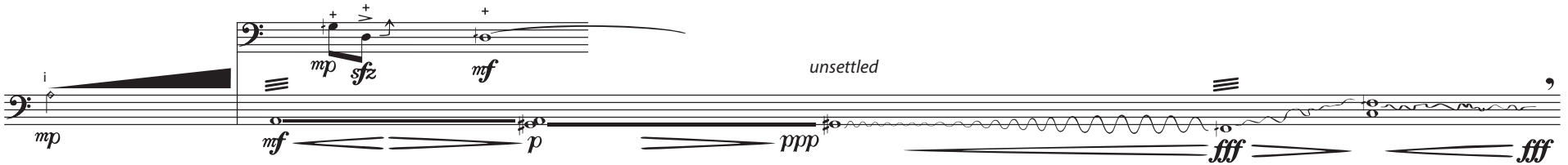
*** using light pressure (as for harmonics) rub palm of hand up and down the length of the fingerboard (all four strings)

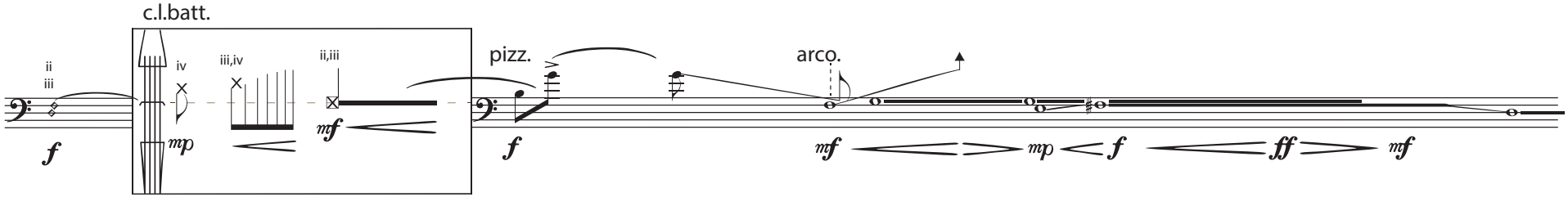


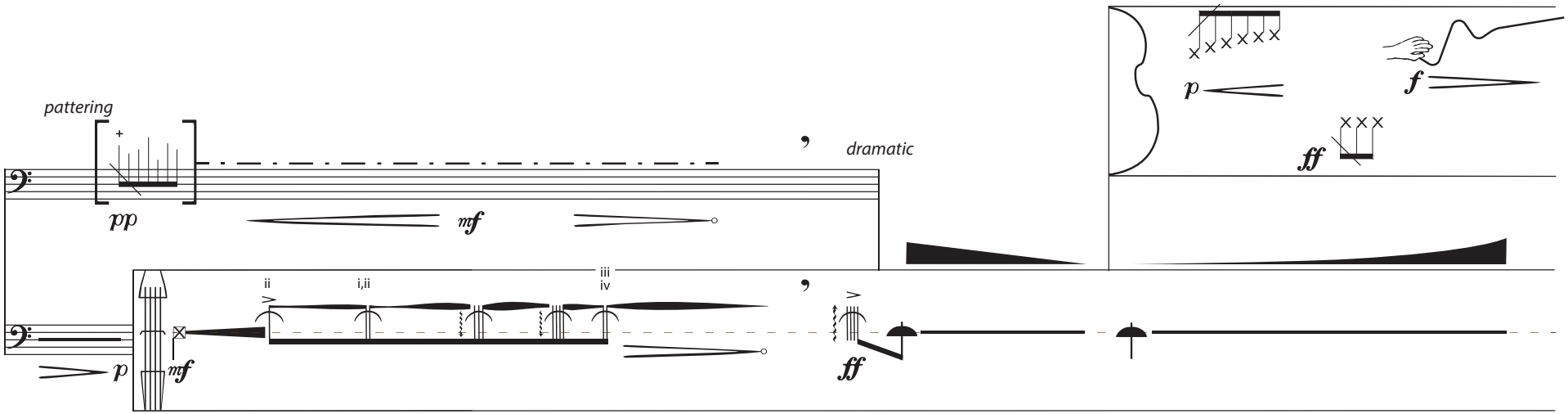
*rapid trill effect using nut of the bow between first and second string (following rough movement vertically between bridge and fingerboard)

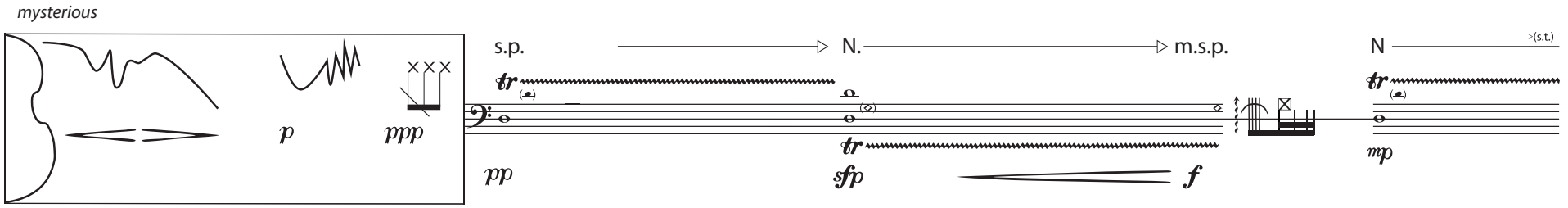
**finger these pitches as rapidly as possible

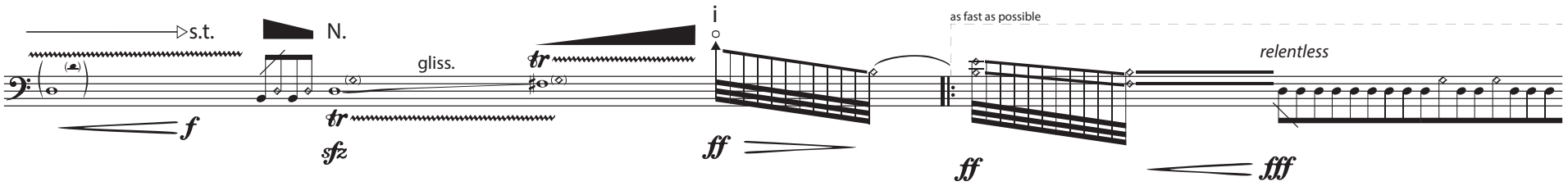
***pizz with the nut of the bow

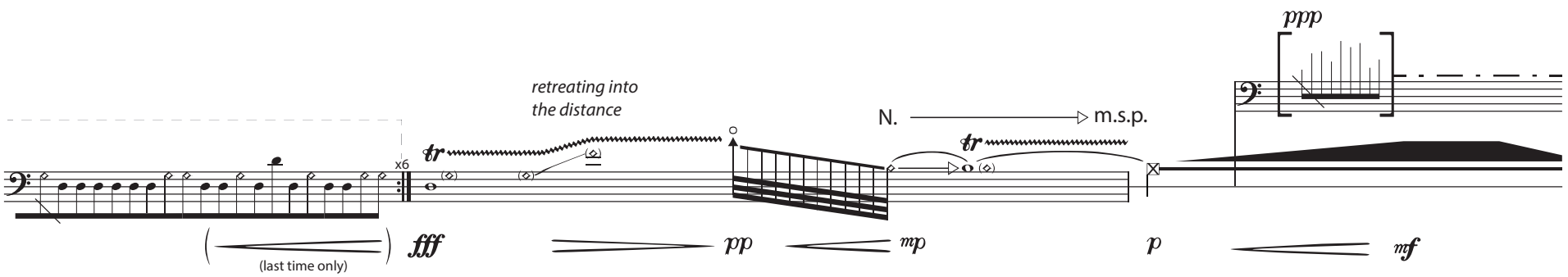

i
mp
mp
sfz
mf
unsettled
mf
p
ppp
fff
fff

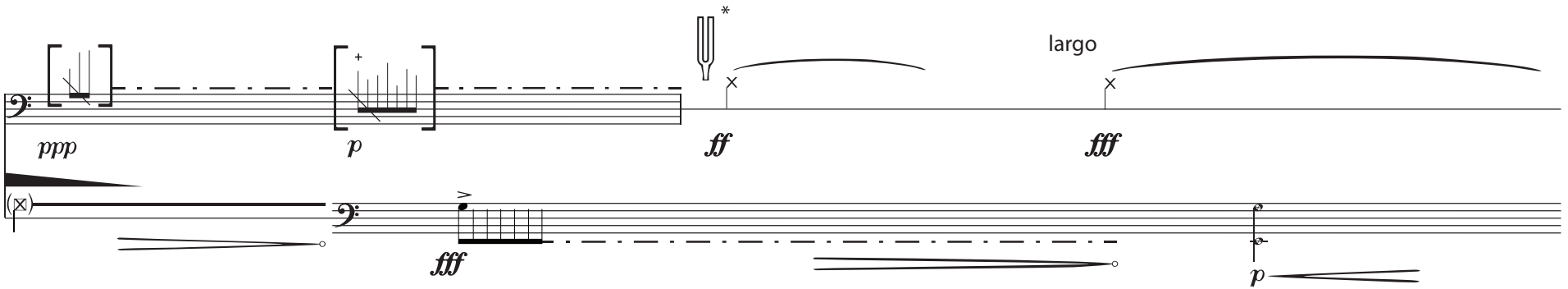

c.l.batt.
ii
iii
iv
iii,iv
ii,iii
f
mp
mf
pizz.
f
arco.
mf
mp
f
ff
mf

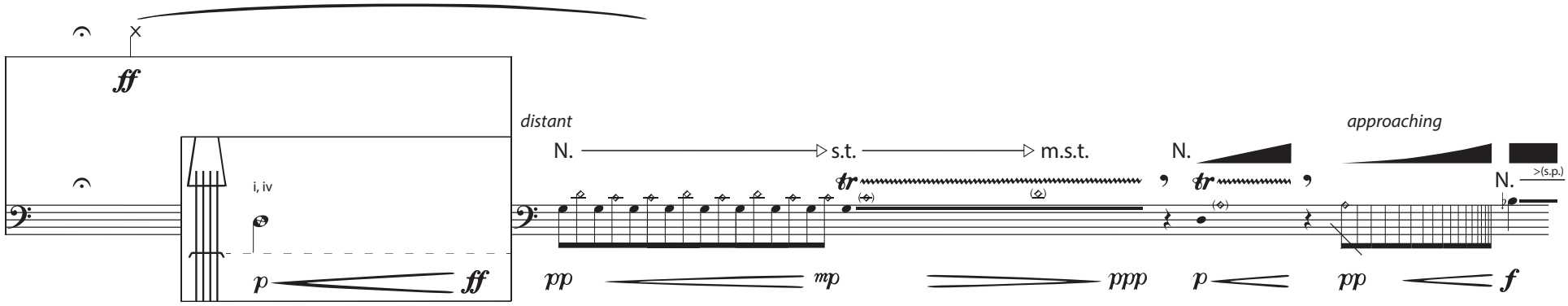

pattering
dramatic
pp
mf
p
mf
ii
i,ii
iii
iv
ff
p
f
ff


mysterious
p
ppp
s.p.
N.
m.s.p.
N
>(s.t.)
tr
tr
tr
pp
sfp
f
mp

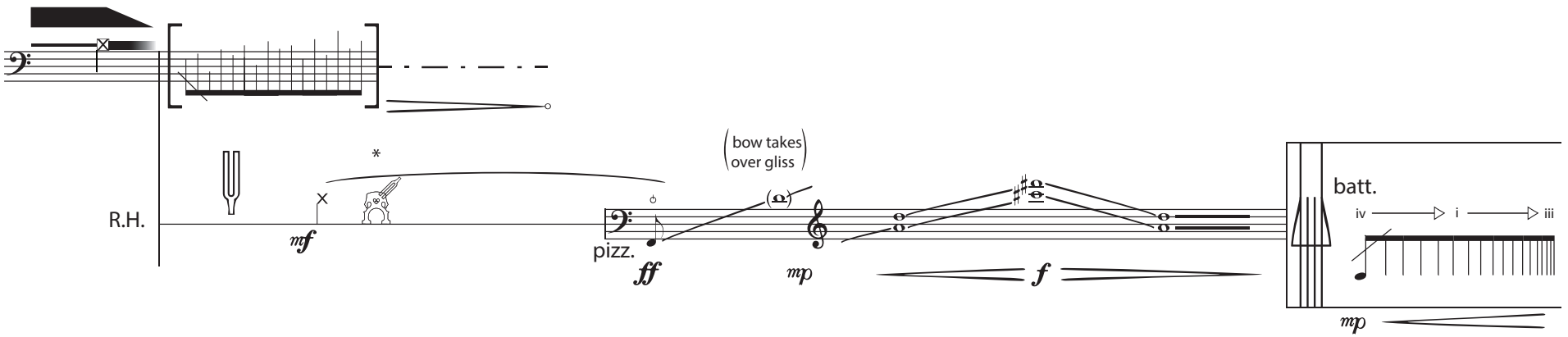

s.t.
N.
gliss.
i
as fast as possible
relentless
f
sfz
ff
ff
fff

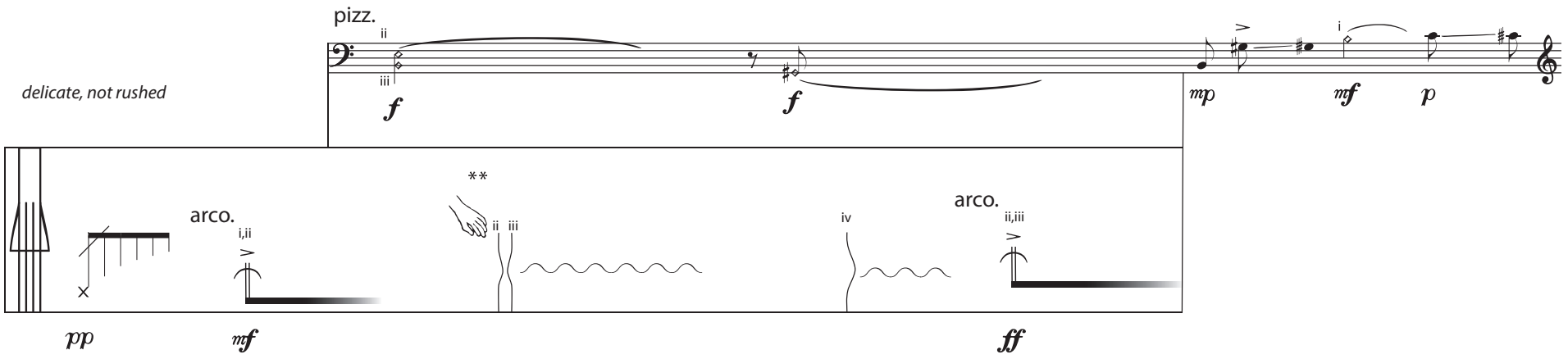

x6
retreating into
the distance
N.
m.s.p.
ppp
(last time only)
fff
pp
mp
p
mf





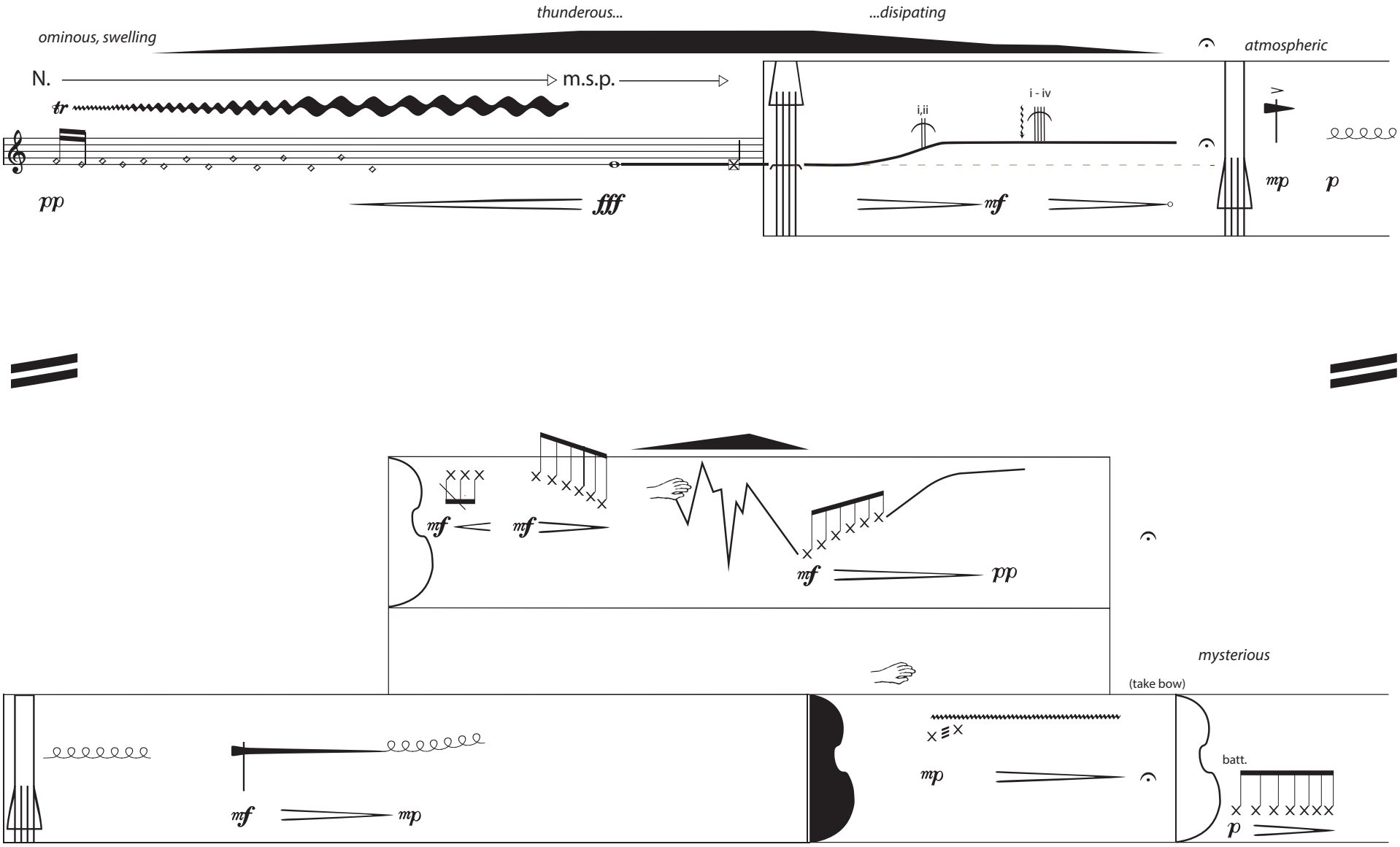
*hit tuning fork on something hard (chair/table etc) and let it resonate on body of instrument

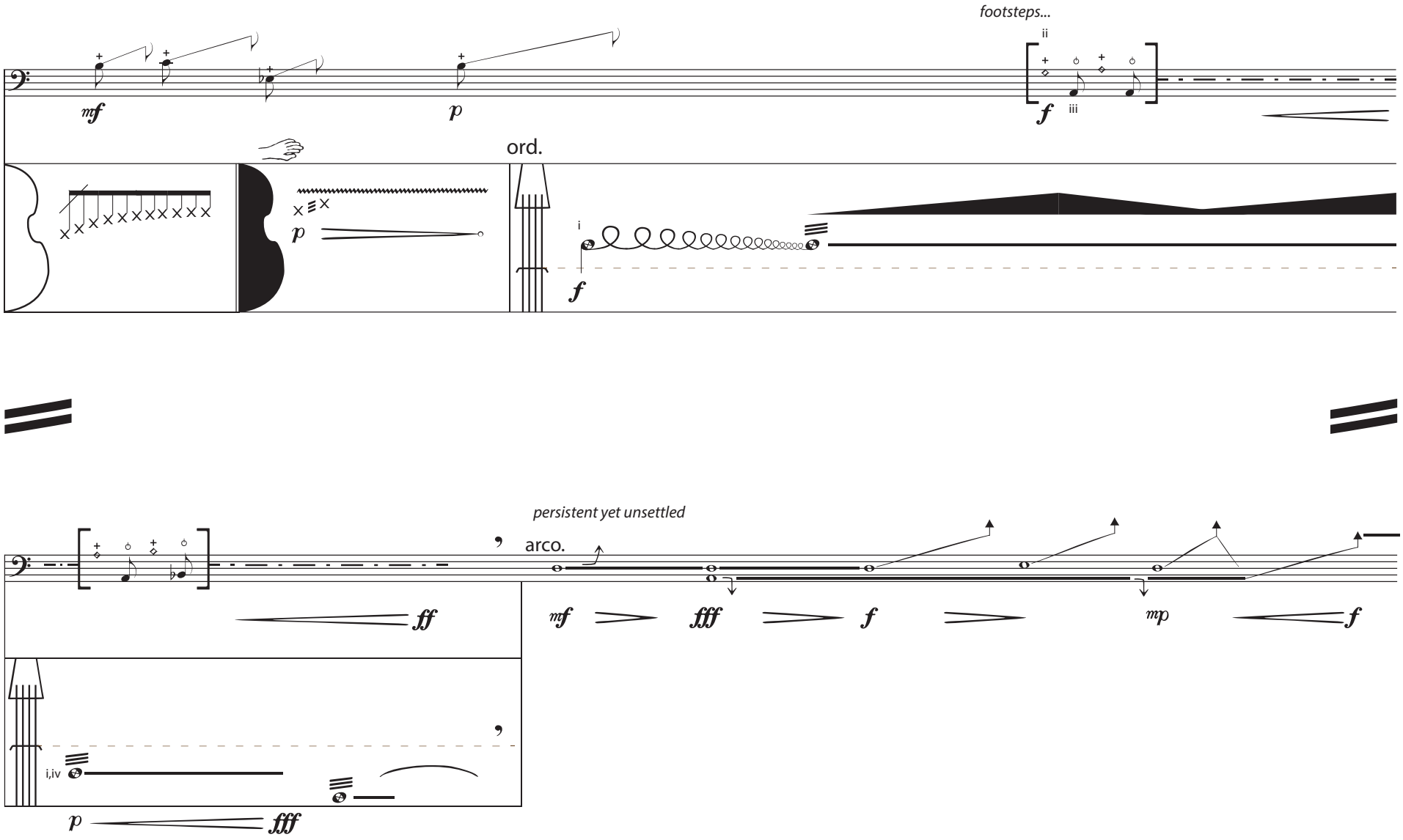


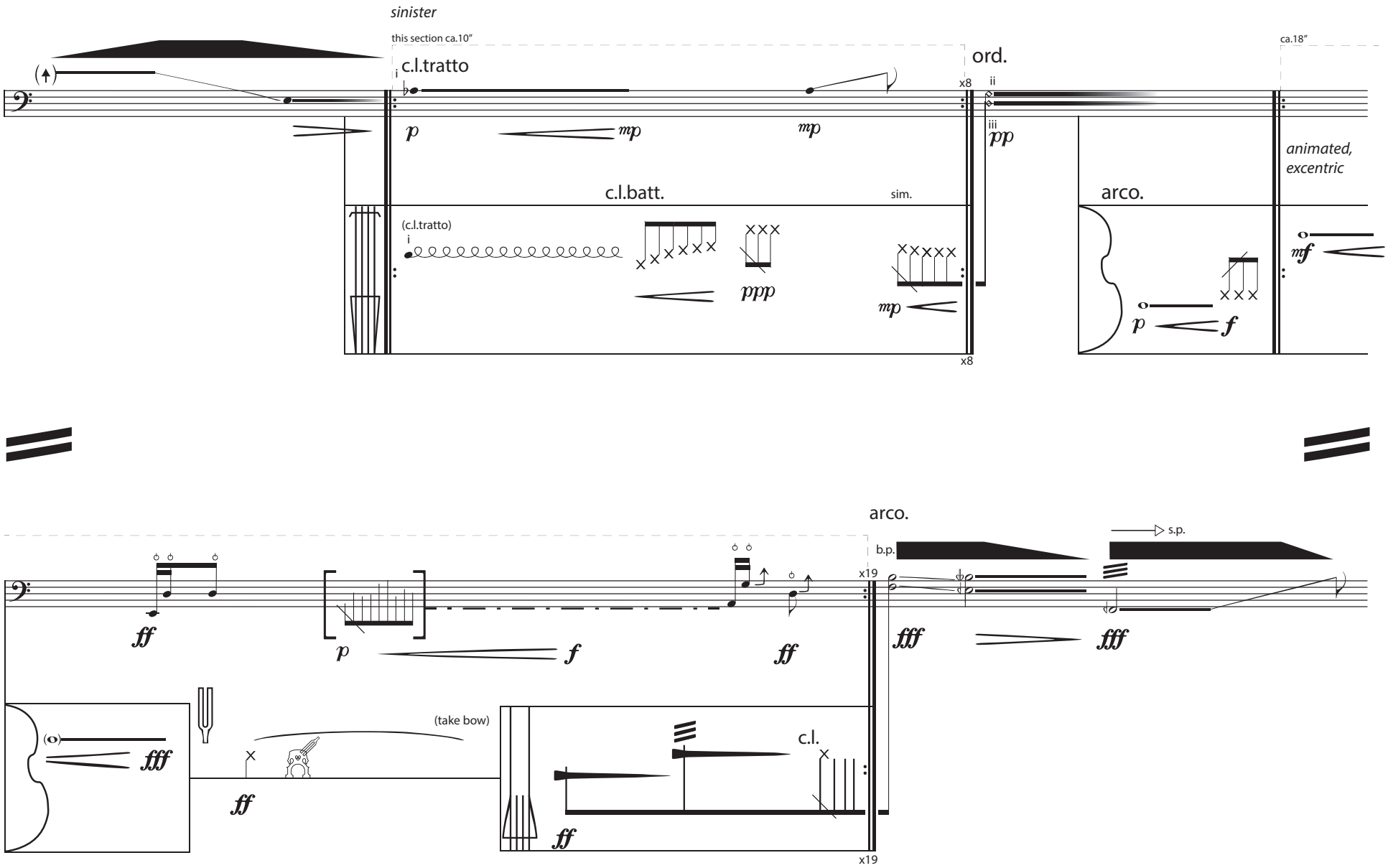


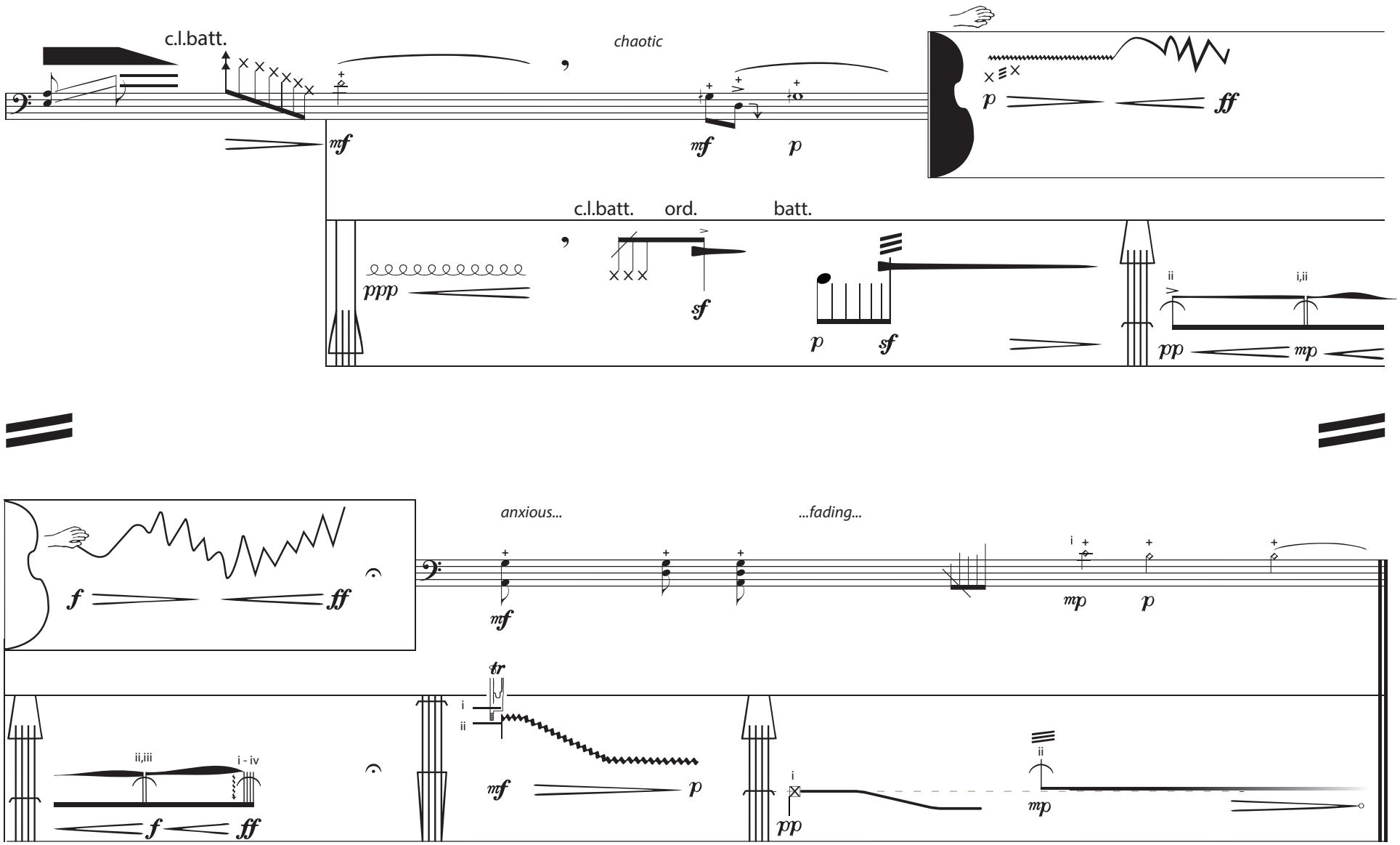
*hold tuning fork to the bridge while it resonates

**squeeze strings two and three together beneath the bridge while the harmonics sound to manipulate their pitch


ominous, swelling
thunderous...
...disipating
atmospheric
N.
m.s.p.
tr
pp
fff
i,ii
i - iv
mf
mp
p
mysterious
(take bow)
batt.


footsteps...
ii
iii
mf
p
f
ord.
i
arco.
persistent yet unsettled
ff
mf
fff
f
mp
i,iv


sinister
this section ca.10"
c.l.tratto
i
ord.
x8
ii
iii
p
mp
mp
pp
ca.18"
animated,
excentric
c.l.batt.
sim.
arco.
(c.l.tratto)
i
ppp
mp
p
f
mf
x8
arco.
b.p.
s.p.
x19
ff
p
f
ff
fff
fff
(take bow)
c.l.
fff
ff
ff
x19


c.l.batt.
chaotic
c.l.batt.
ord.
batt.
anxious...
...fading...
ii,iii
i - iv
i
ii