megrims

for oboe, bass clarinet, viola, cello, and piano

Christopher Fisher-Lochhead

megrims [2013] for oboe, bass clarinet, viola, cello, and piano
dedicated to Ensemble Recherche

The English word “megrim” shares an etymon with the word “migraine”. Like its more common cousin, “megrim” can mean a strong headache, but it can also be used to mean “low spirits or depression” and “a whim or fancy”. Each of these “overwrought” miniatures attempts to explore the nexus of these semantic traces.

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megrims was premiered by Ensemble Recherche (Jaime Gonzalez, oboe; Shizuyo Oka, bass clarinet; Barbara Maurer, viola; Åsa Åkerberg, cello, Jean-Pierre Collet, piano) at Northwestern University’s Lutkin Hall on November 7th, 2013 as part of its residency at Northwestern’s Institute for Contemporary Music.

A full recording of the premiere is available to stream at http://www.cflmusic.com/works/megrims/

Notation

In megrims 2 and 4, rhythm is indicated on a supplementary rhythmic staff above or below the main instrumental staff. Stems and noteheads are only used to indicate rhythmic events. That is, they do not indicate sustain or smoothly changing musical objects, which are indicated instead by horizontal or sloped solid lines. In megrims 1, 3, and 5, the rhythm is free and should be dictated by the soloist (bass clarinet in 1 and 5, piano in 3).

Noteheads

● solid noteheads indicate fully voiced (pitched) sounds. These correspond to normal instrumental techniques.

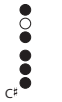
○ hollow noteheads indicate unvoiced (pitchless) sounds. Employ whatever technique is necessary to achieve the desired effect.

◇ diamond noteheads indicate harmonics. For the strings, the notehead indicates fingering, for the winds, overblowing.

Woodwinds

fluttertongue

slap tongue/tongue pizzicato



fingering

bisbigliando/timbral trill

V with voice

□ air sound (no discernible pitch)

/ k[ə] / where there is a vocal staff, phonemes are indicated with IPA symbols.

overblown spectral glissando on the indicated fundamental.

In megrims 1 and 5, the bass clarinet part is written on two staves. The bottom staff indicates a fingered trill while the top staff indicates an overblown harmonic. Fluctuations in the speed of the trill are indicated with feathered beams.

Strings

tablature "clef": there are always two positions indicated on this clef. That on top indicates the action of the right hand (contact point) while that on bottom indicates the action of the left hand. When the bow is used, pressure is indicated by the thickness of the line. Strings are indicated above the staff.

damp the strings with the left hand so that no discernible pitch results.

unmeasured tremolo

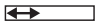
msp *molto sul pont*

pluck the string with the force of a snap (Bartok) pizzicato, even if no audible snap results

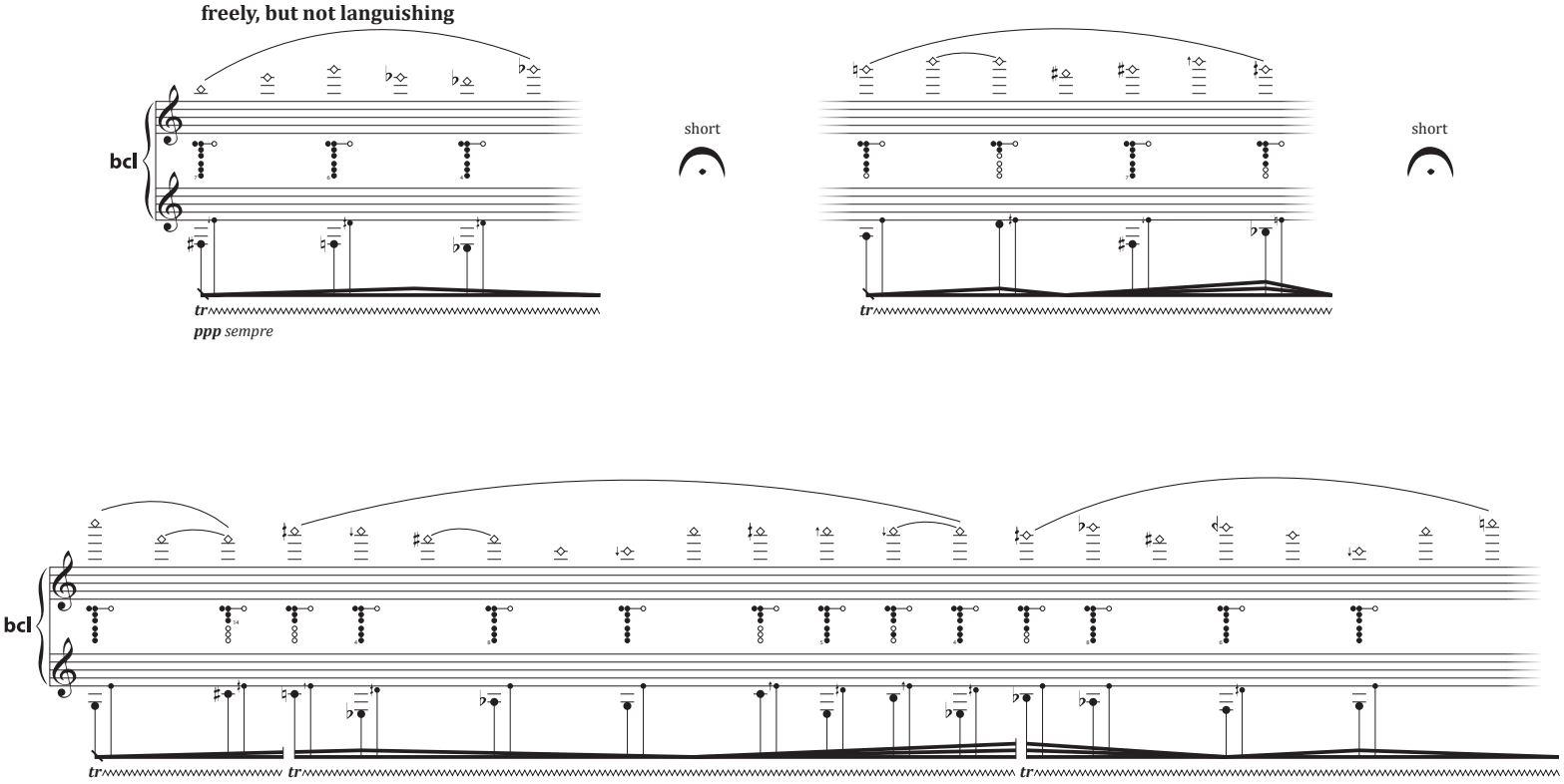
rapid "brushing tremolo between *sul pont* and *sul tasto*.

sp *sul pont*

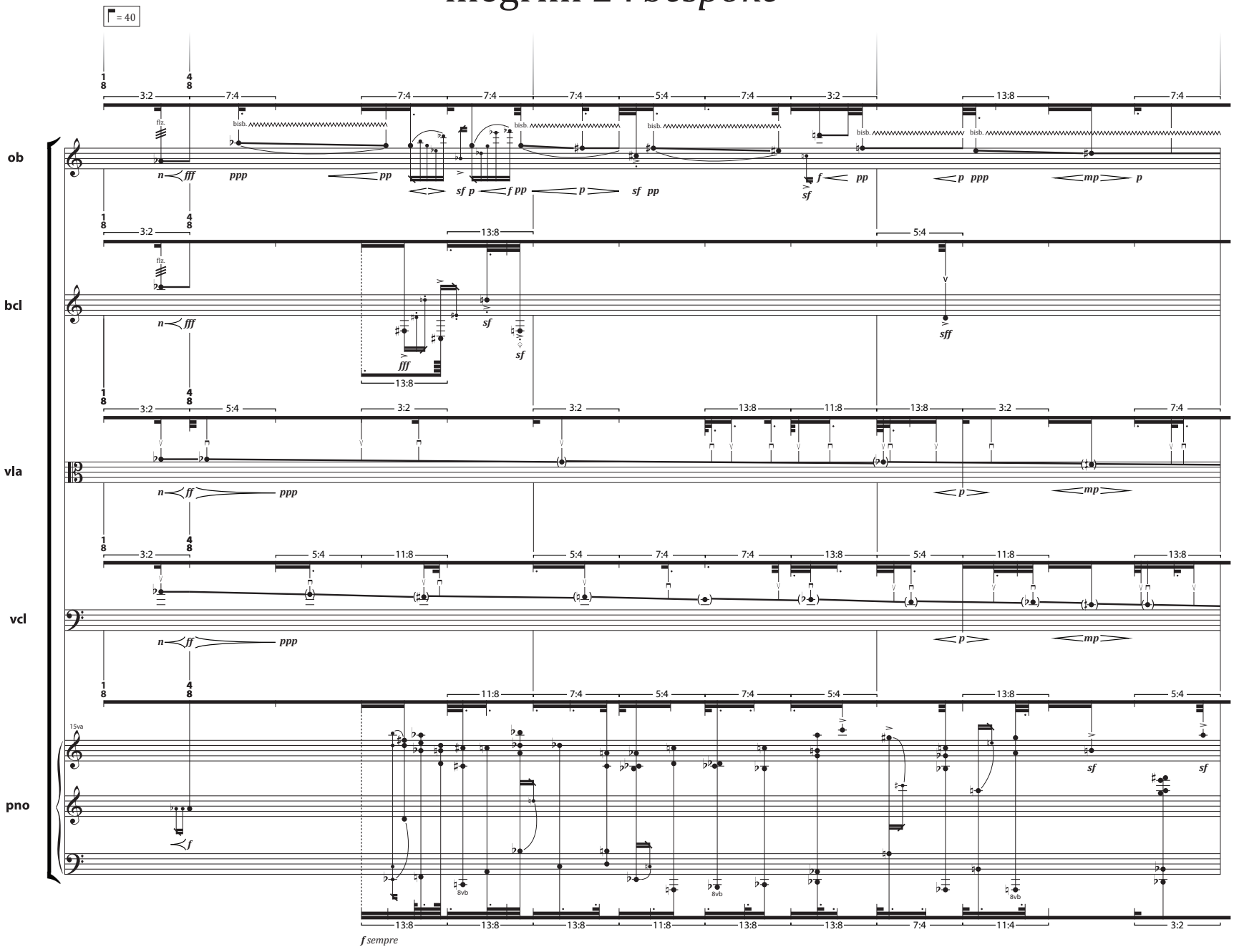
roll in the indicated direction

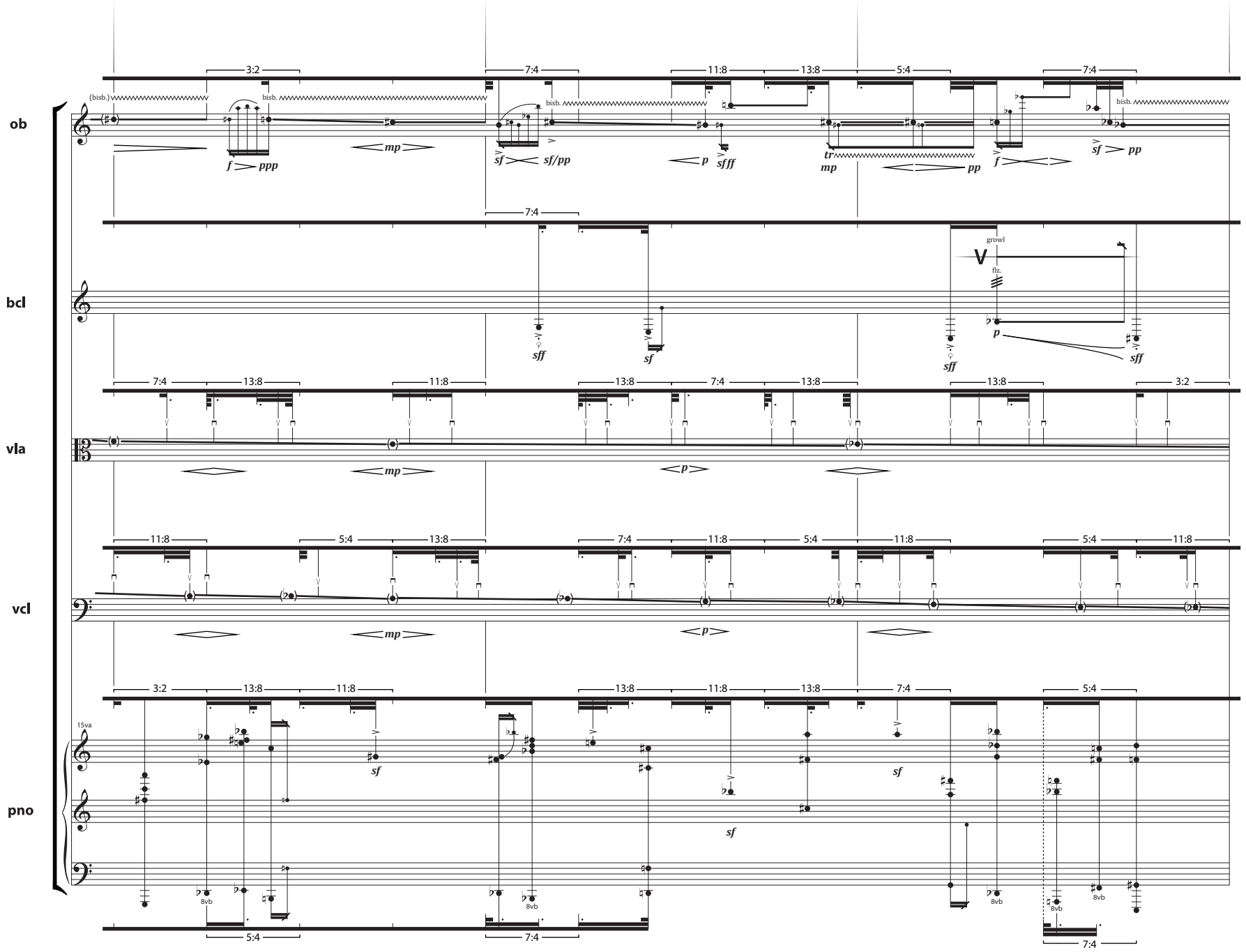

draw the bow "vertically" along the fingerboard as indicated.

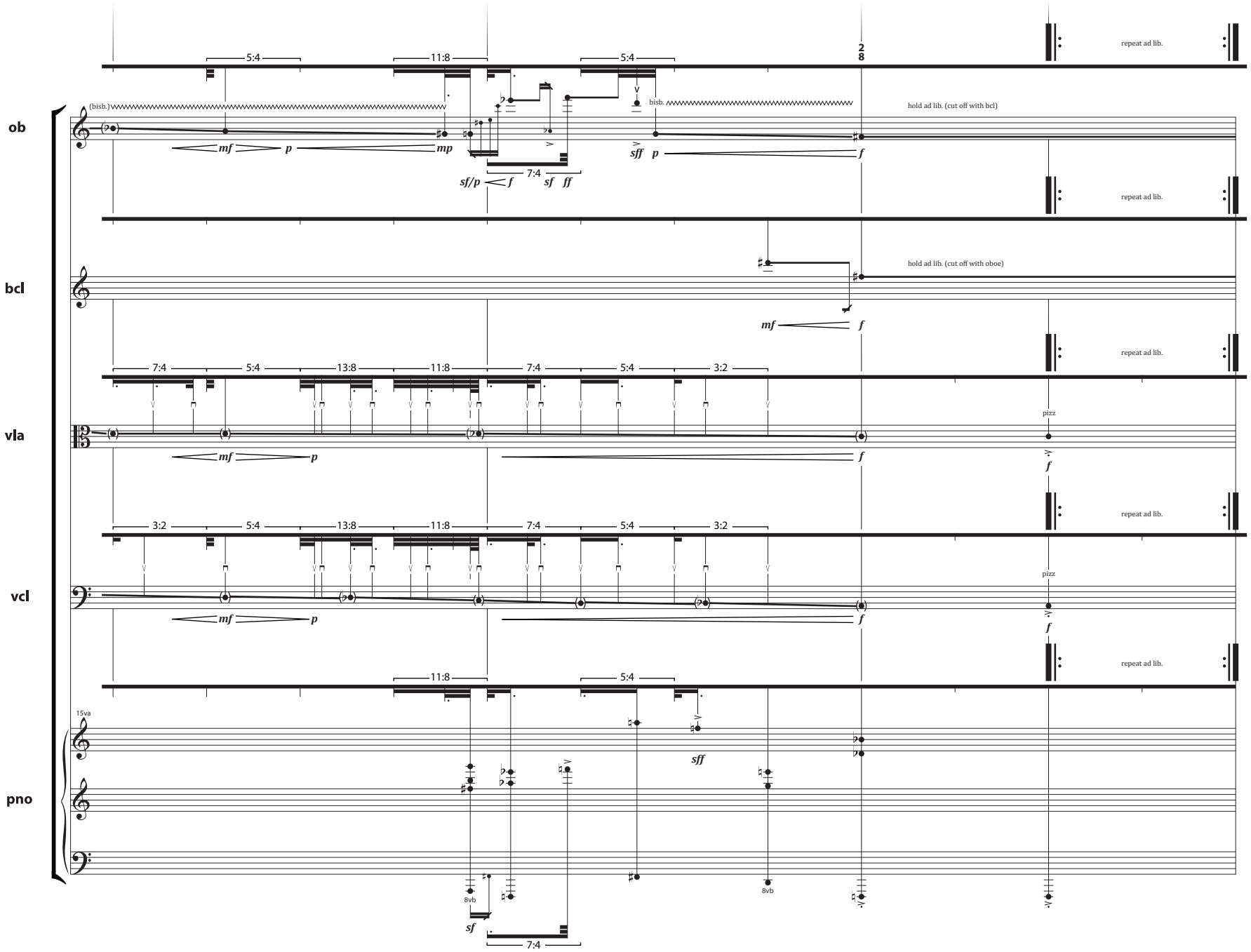
megrim 1 : *ghost in the machine*



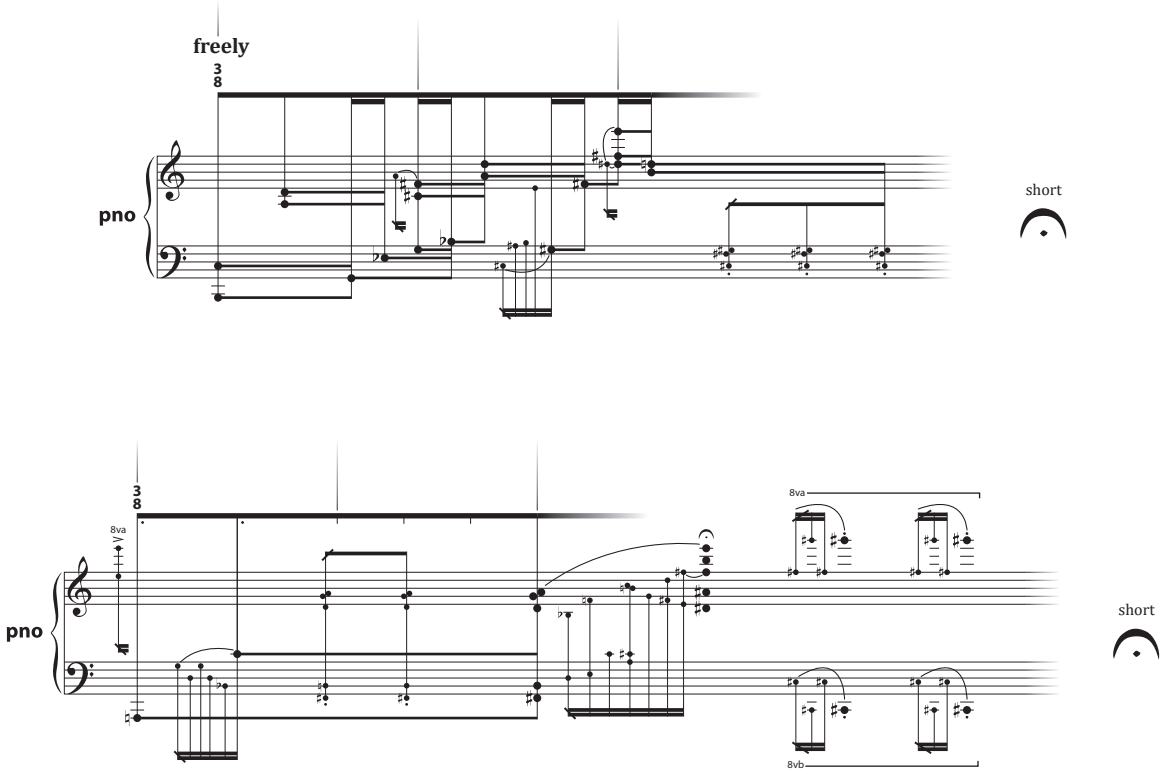
megrim 2 : *bespoke*



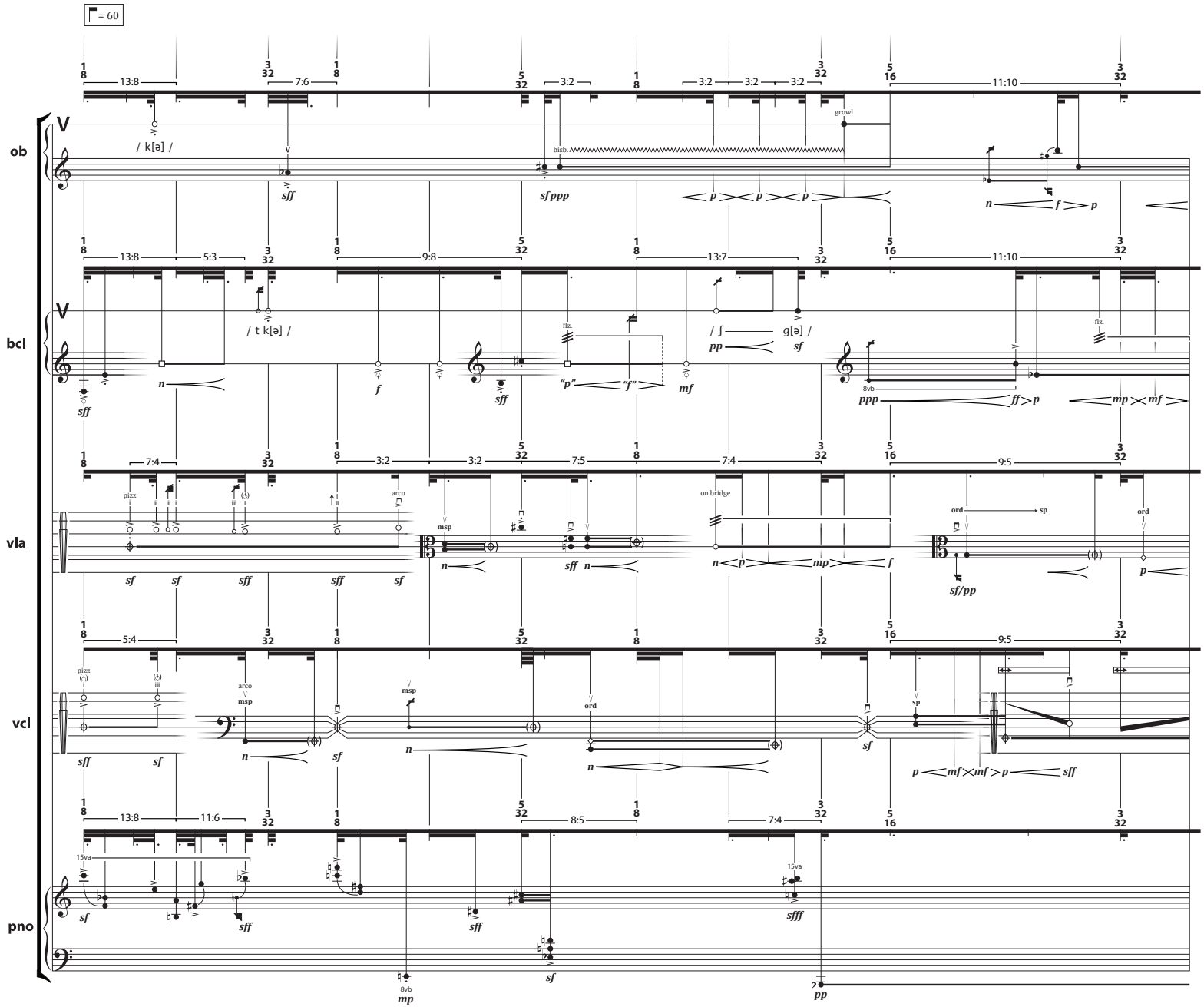

ob
bcl
vla
vcl
pno
(bisb.)
bisb.
growl
flz.
15va
8vb

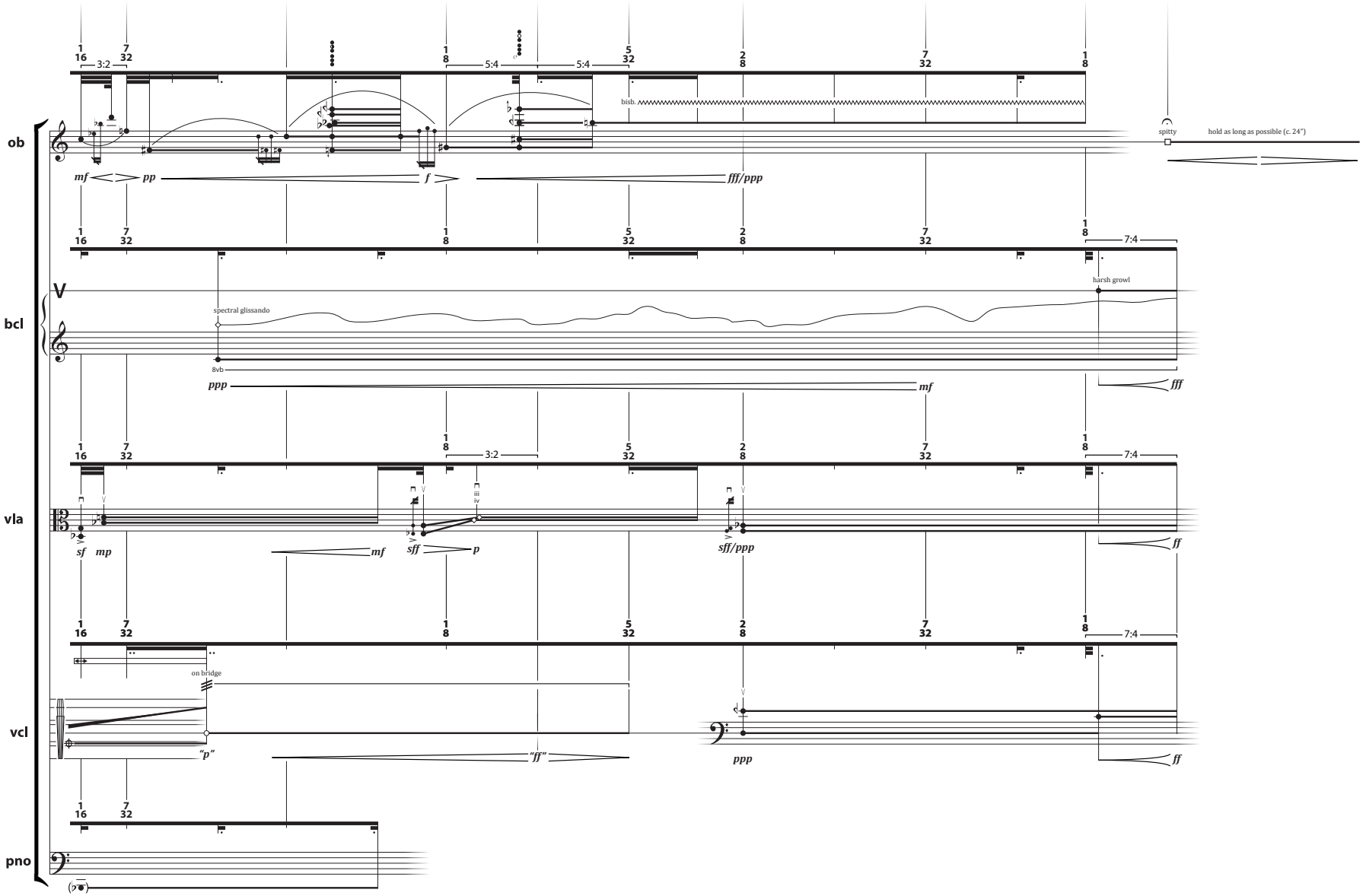

ob
bcl
vla
vcl
pno
(bisb.)
bisb.
hold ad lib. (cut off with bcl)
hold ad lib. (cut off with oboe)
repeat ad lib.
pizz
15va
8vb
5:4
11:8
7:4
13:8
3:2
2
8
mf
mp
p
f
sf/p
sf
ff
sff
sf

megrim 3 : *éminence grise*

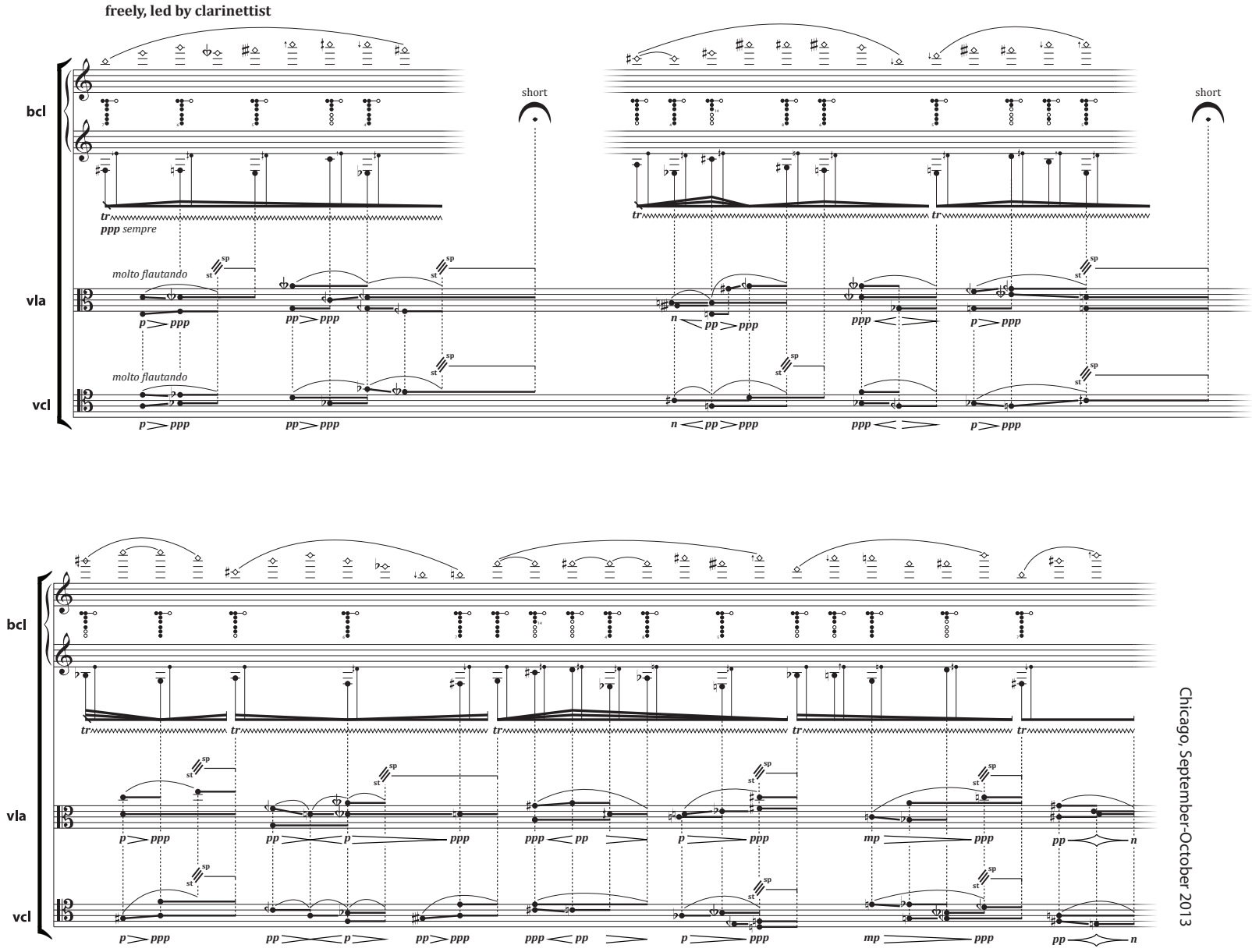


megrim 4 : *transit*




ob
bcl
vla
vcl
pno
3:2
5:4
5:4
bisb.
spitty
hold as long as possible (c. 24")
mf
pp
f
fff/ppp
7:4
harsh growl
spectral glissando
8vb
ppp
mf
fff
3:2
7:4
sf
mp
mf
sff
p
sff/ppp
ff
7:4
on bridge
"p"
"ff"
ppp
ff

megrim 5 : *ghost in the machine*



Chicago, September-October 2013