Improvisation Game

#1 Pulse and Sustain

Joseph Michaels

For: at least 4 instruments
Duration: free

Part A

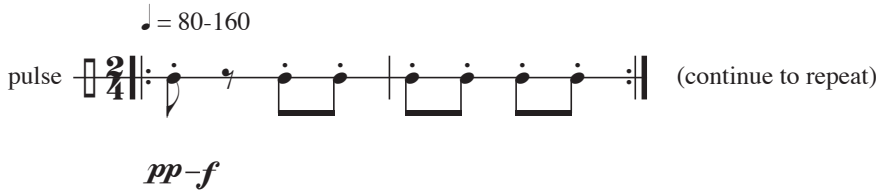
1) A predesignated leader begins by starting the pulse in part A on any pitch, at a tempo between 80-160 BPM, and repeating the phrase many times.
2) The others may then join in anytime on the pulse, playing any pitch but at the same tempo, or they may play the sustain part. Vary the dynamics of the pulse between ***pp*** and ***f***. Sustain = improvise a sequence of 1-4 long, sustained pitches. Suddenly and/or gradually fluctuate the dynamics anywhere between ***n*** and ***f***.
3) The pitches in the pulse should be mostly repeated. Change to a new note every 5 to 20 seconds. The change may occur on any note of the pulse.
4) The tempo of the pulse should occasionally vary. Any member may begin the change by gradually slowing or accelerating. When this is heard, everyone should gradually adjust until a consensus is reached on a new tempo. Once this new tempo has been established, it should remain for at least 20" before changing again.
5) Switch ad lib. between the pulse and sustain. Pause between the switch.
6) In the event that all are playing the sustain, anyone may begin the pulse again at any tempo between 80-160 BPM. Or, all may continue to play the sustain.

Part B

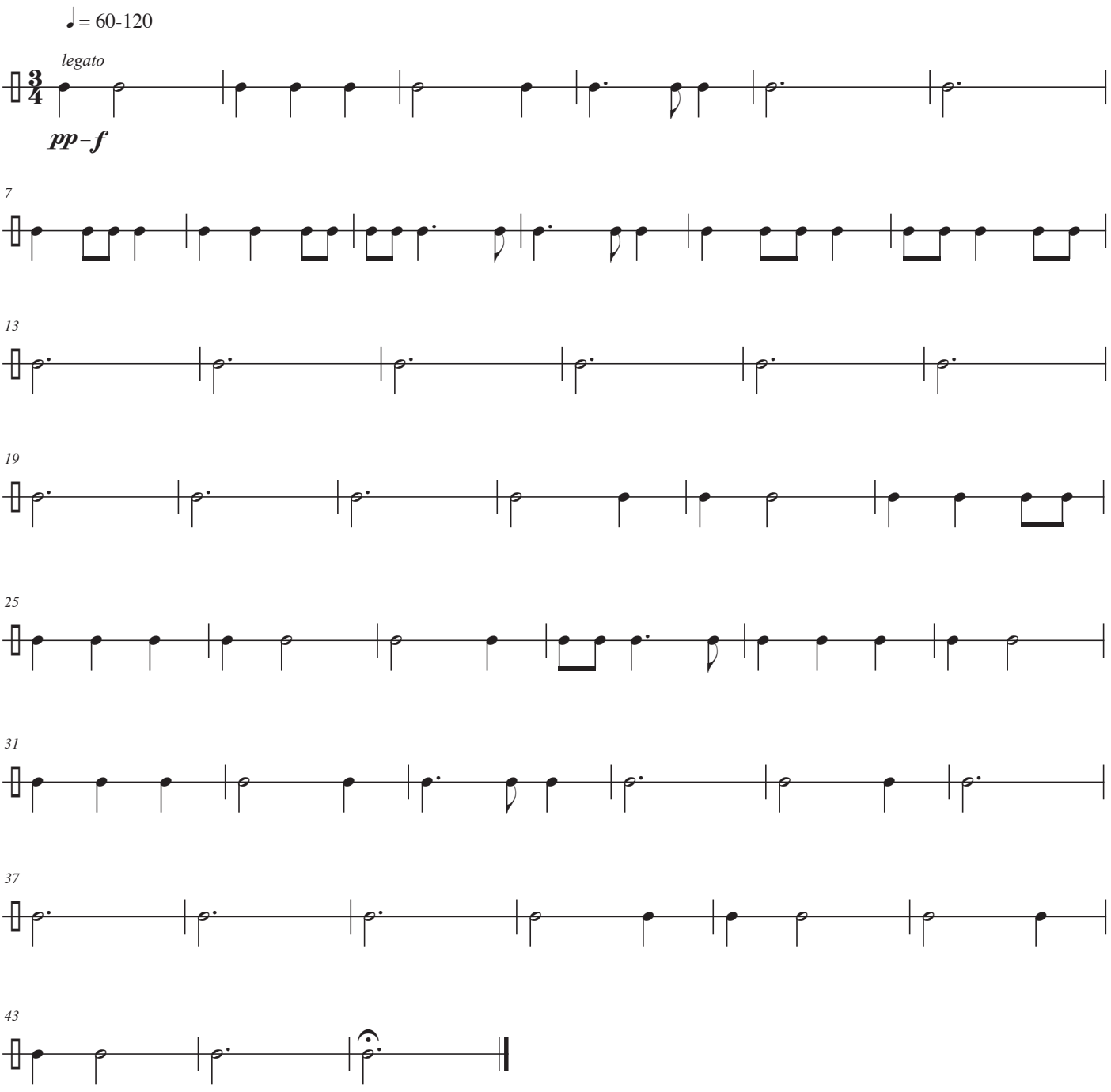
1) When the leader is ready, he or she should cue and move onto part B on any note. The leader chooses any tempo between 60-120 BPM. After this, the tempo must remain constant until the end.
2) The rest join in with the leader on part B at any time up to measure 10 on any note, but playing at the same tempo.
3) Vary dynamics between ***pp*** and ***f***.
4) Mostly repeat the notes, but occasionally change to a new one.
5) Take infrequent or frequent breaks. Join back in where the others currently are playing.

Improvisation Game
#1 Pulse and Sustain

A



B



Improvisation Game

Joseph Michaels

#2 Unfinished Score/Sketch A

For: at least 4 instruments
Duration: free

1) The first four instruments play together from the score. If there are more instruments, they improvise freely.
2) The movement may begin and/or end with instruments I-IV or instruments V-etc. (if applicable). In other words, all instruments may improvise before or after the written music, although it is not necessary.
3) Instruments I-IV:

a) All times in the score, i.e. 30"-1', are approximate and may be reduced or stretched even further.

b) Any instruments play I – IV and do not have to follow the order of an orchestral score (for example, a violin plays I whereas a flute is on II).

c) I-III are played by instruments with a higher range. IV must be played by a bass instrument.

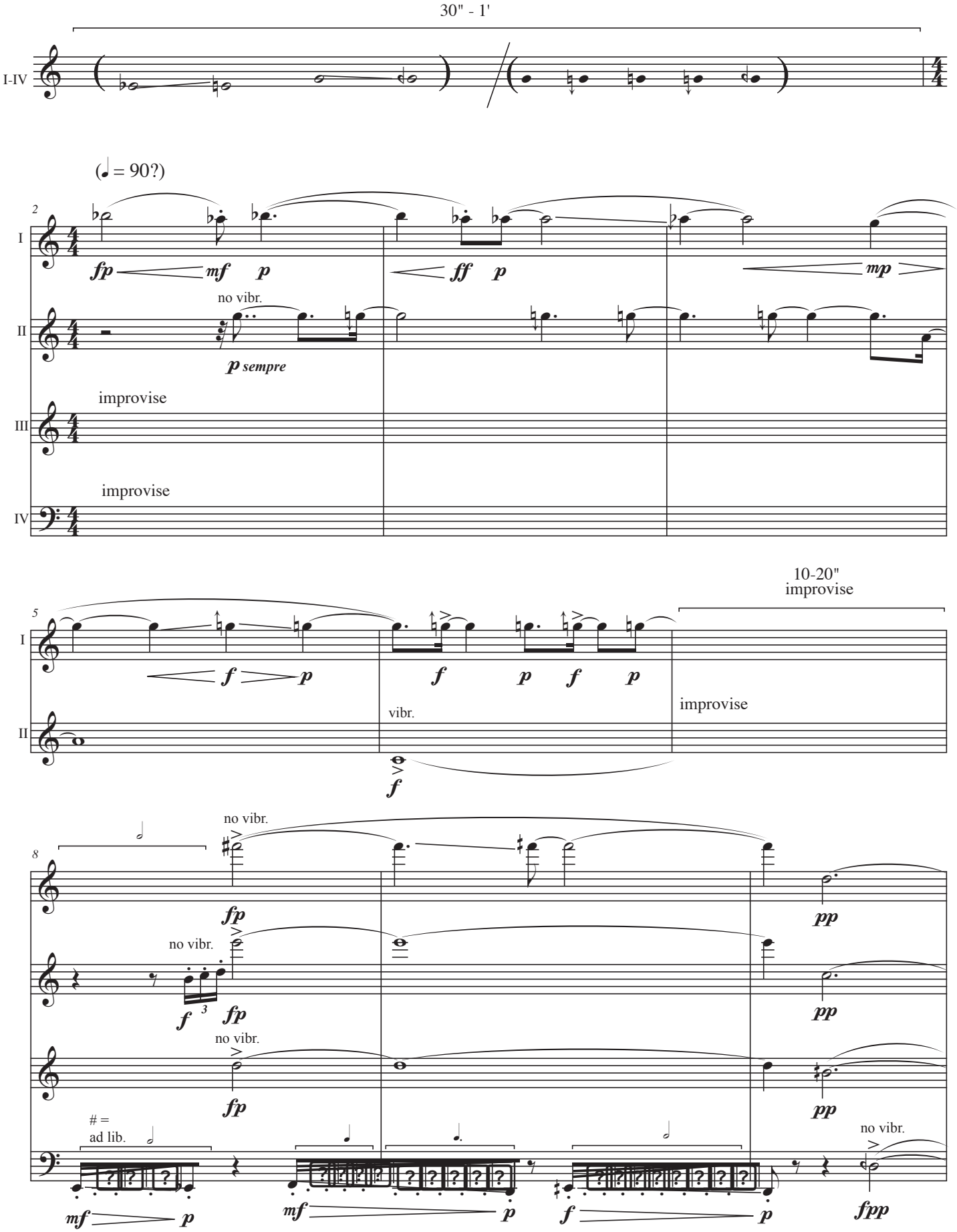
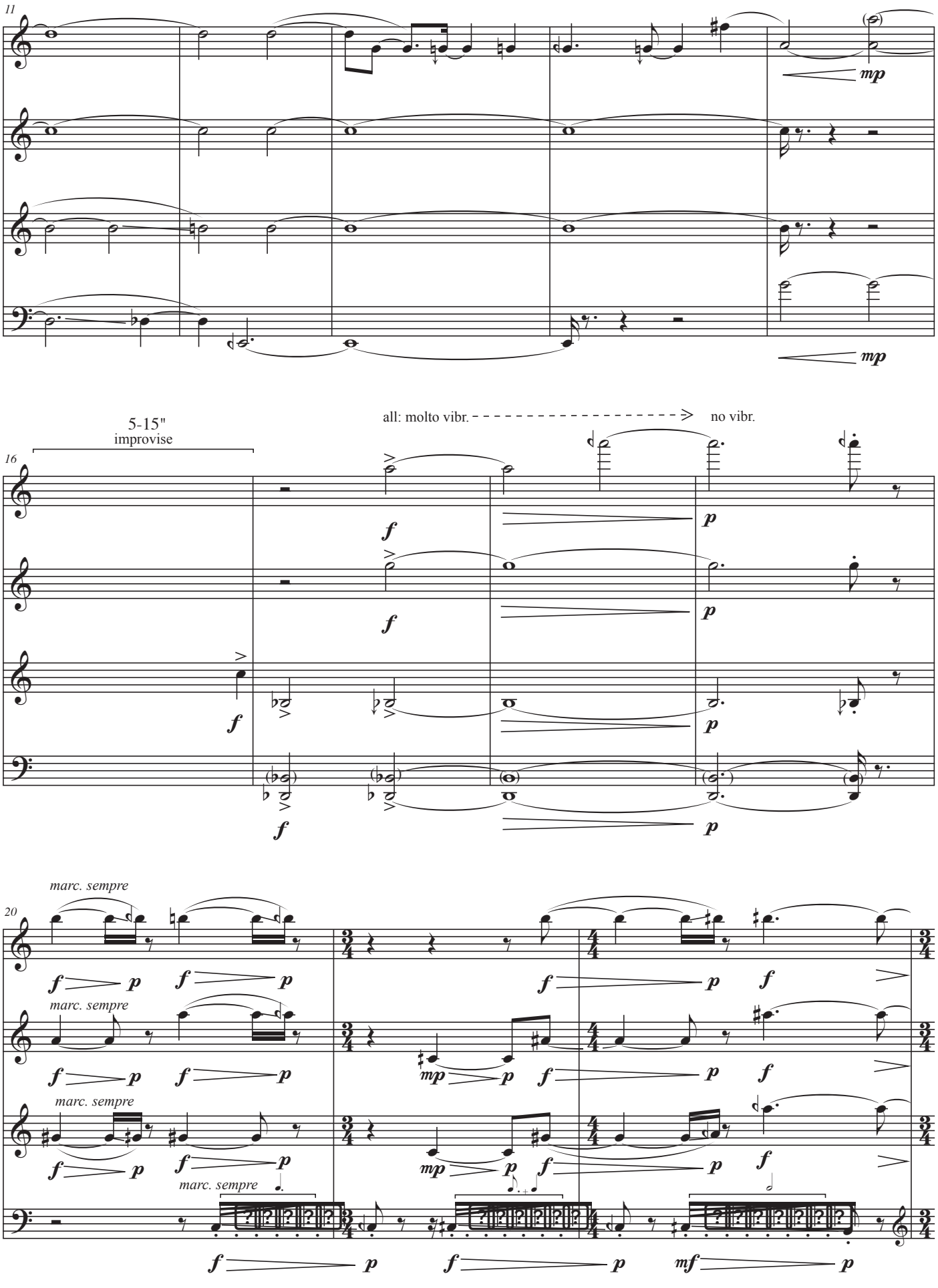
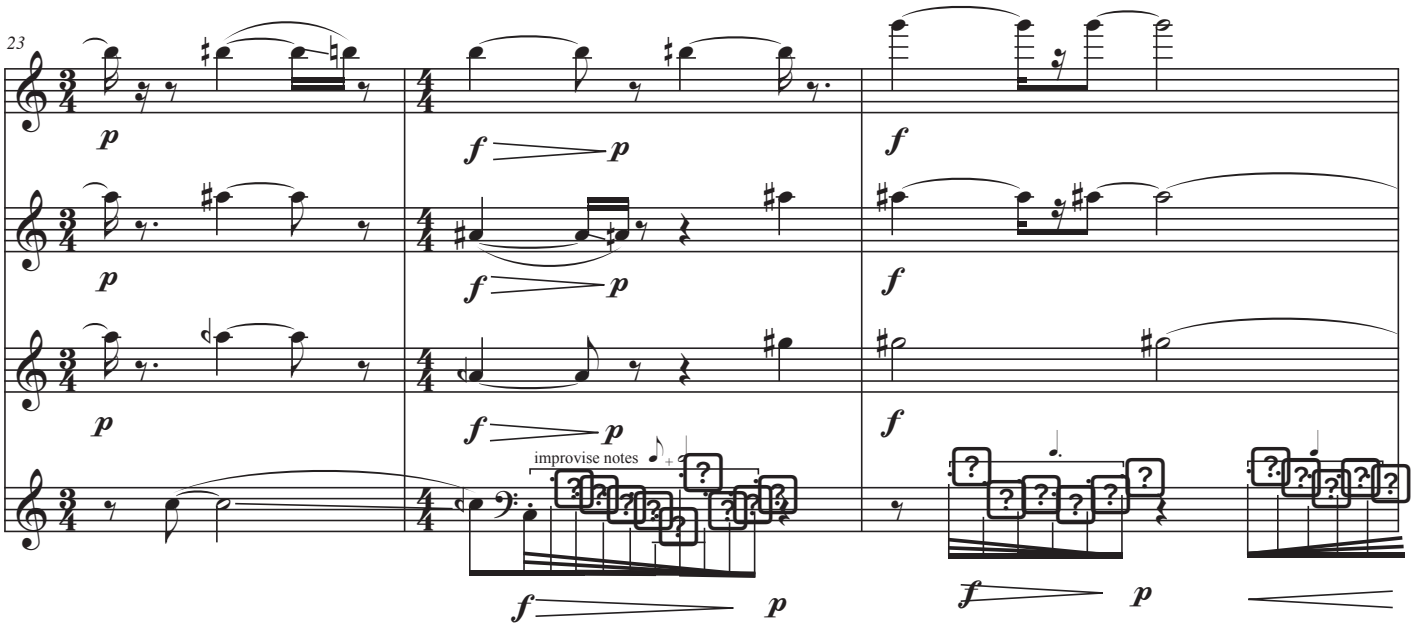
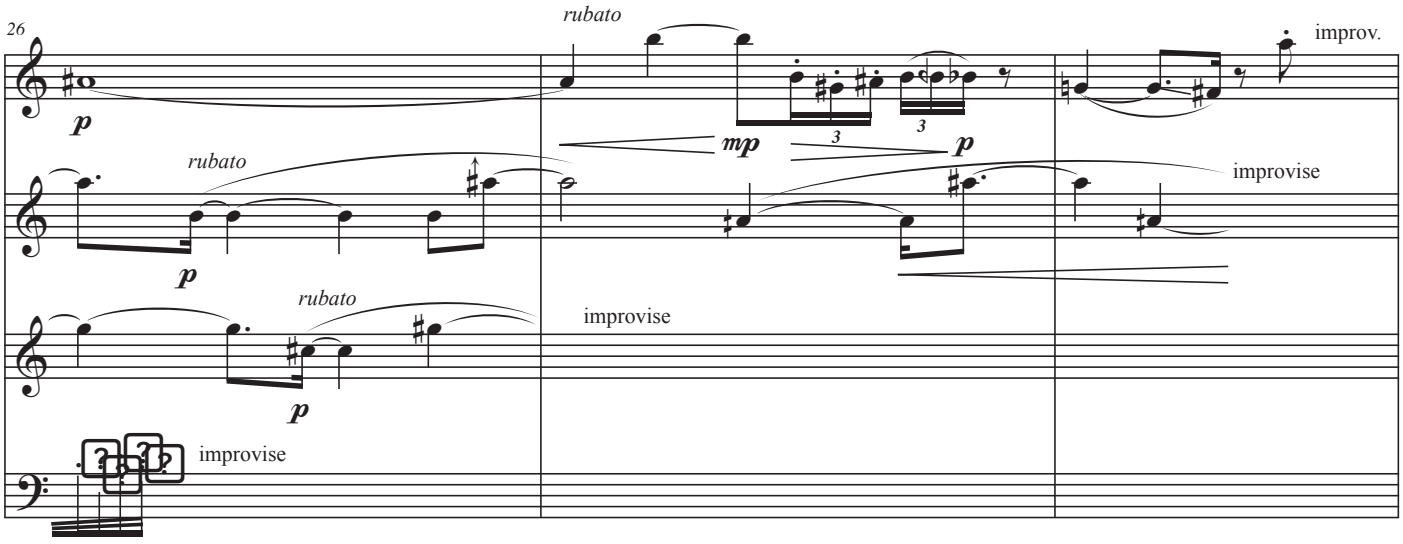
d) Noteheads surrounded by parentheses are optional. Note collections surrounded by parentheses should be improvised in any range and highlighted.

e) Standard microtonal notation for ¼-tones (half-#, backwards flat, etc.). Accidentals with an arrow attached mean to raise or lower by any interval less than a ¼-tone.

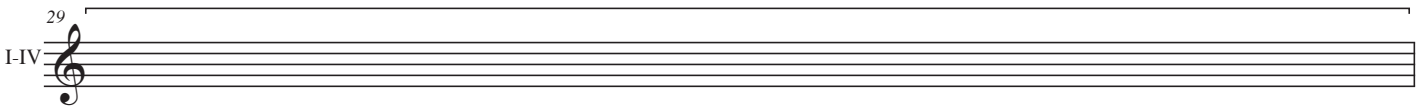
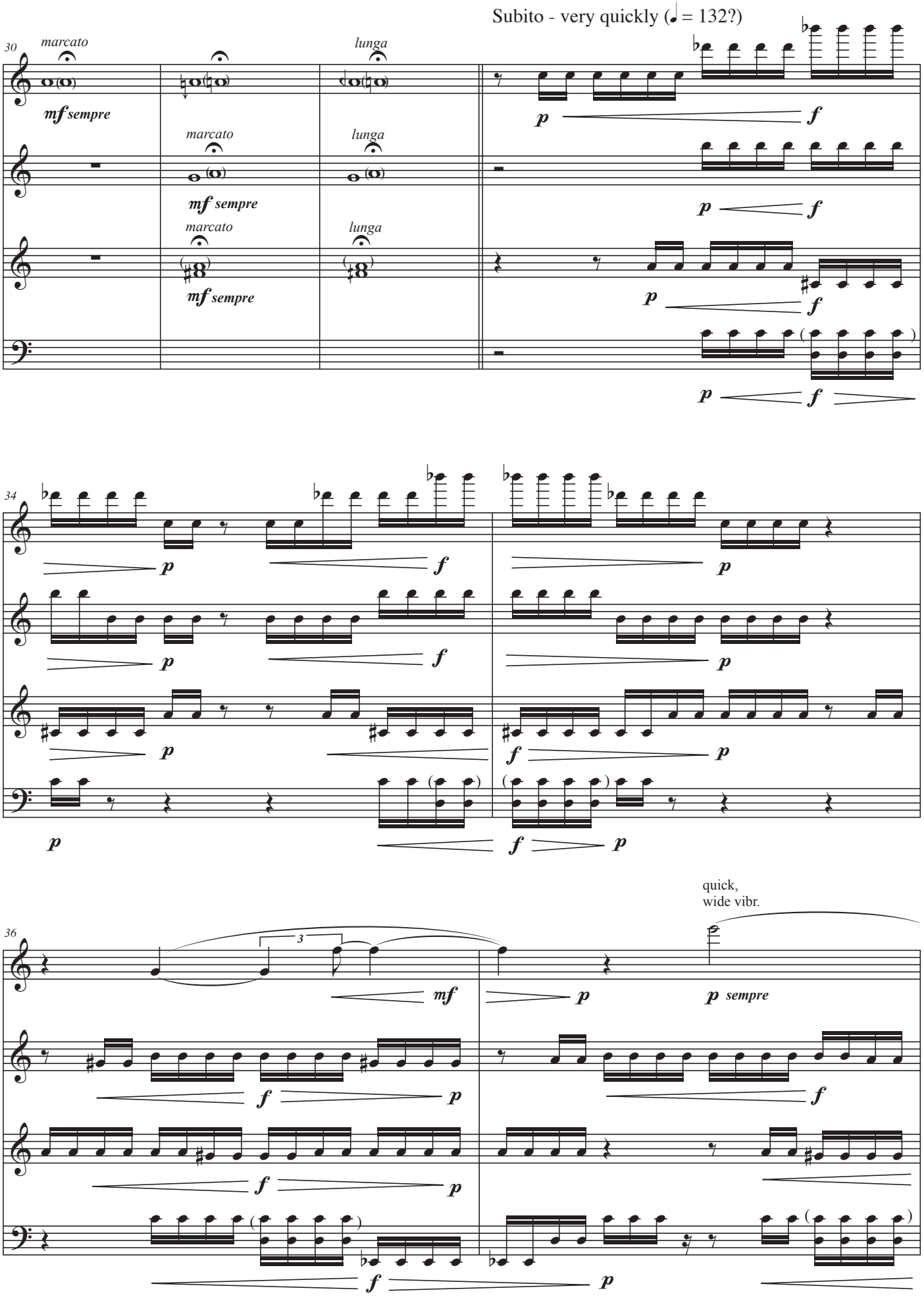
f) Glissandi markings appear as lines without the indication *gliss.*

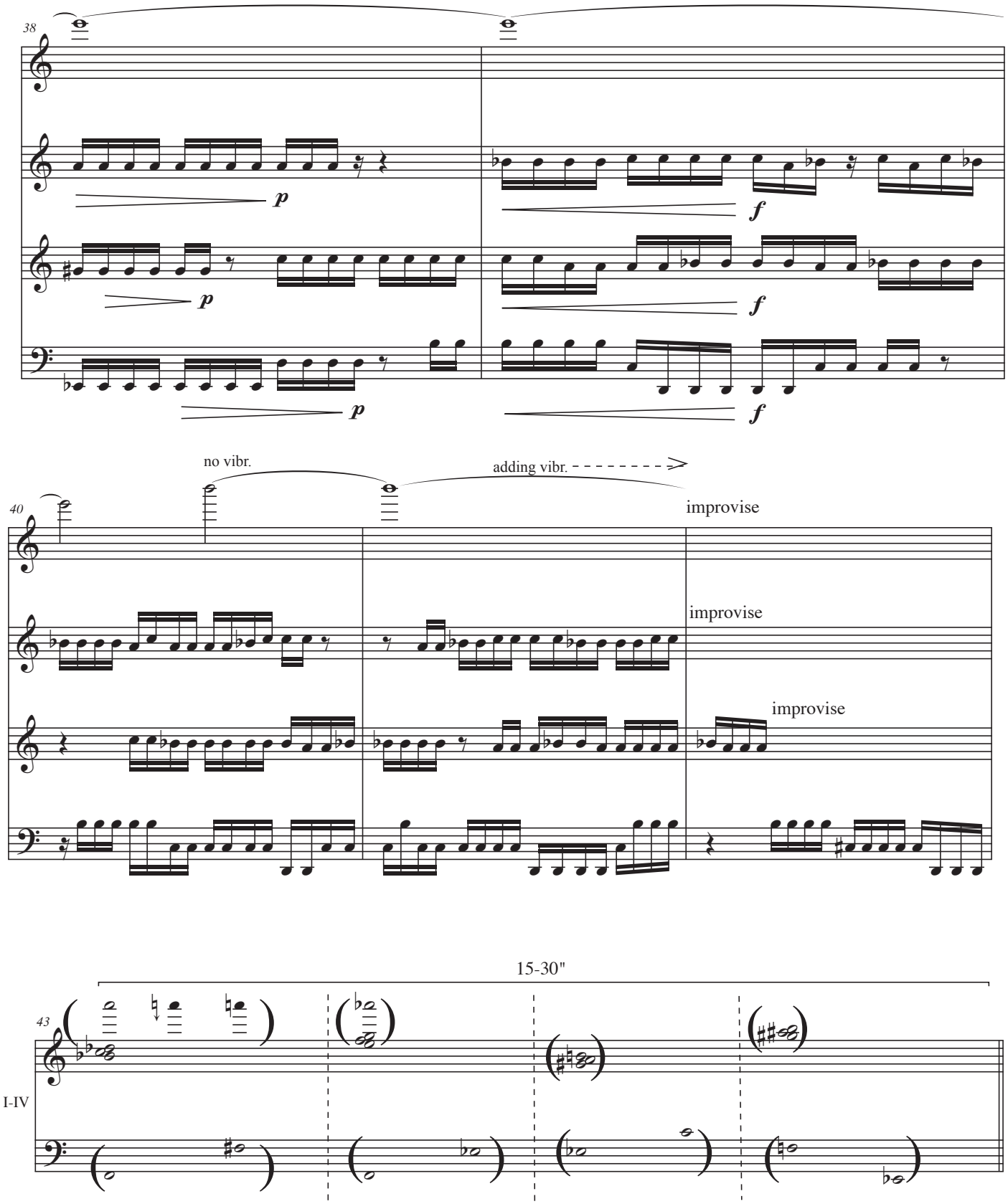
g) Improvise the dynamics and articulation unless otherwise notated.

Score in C

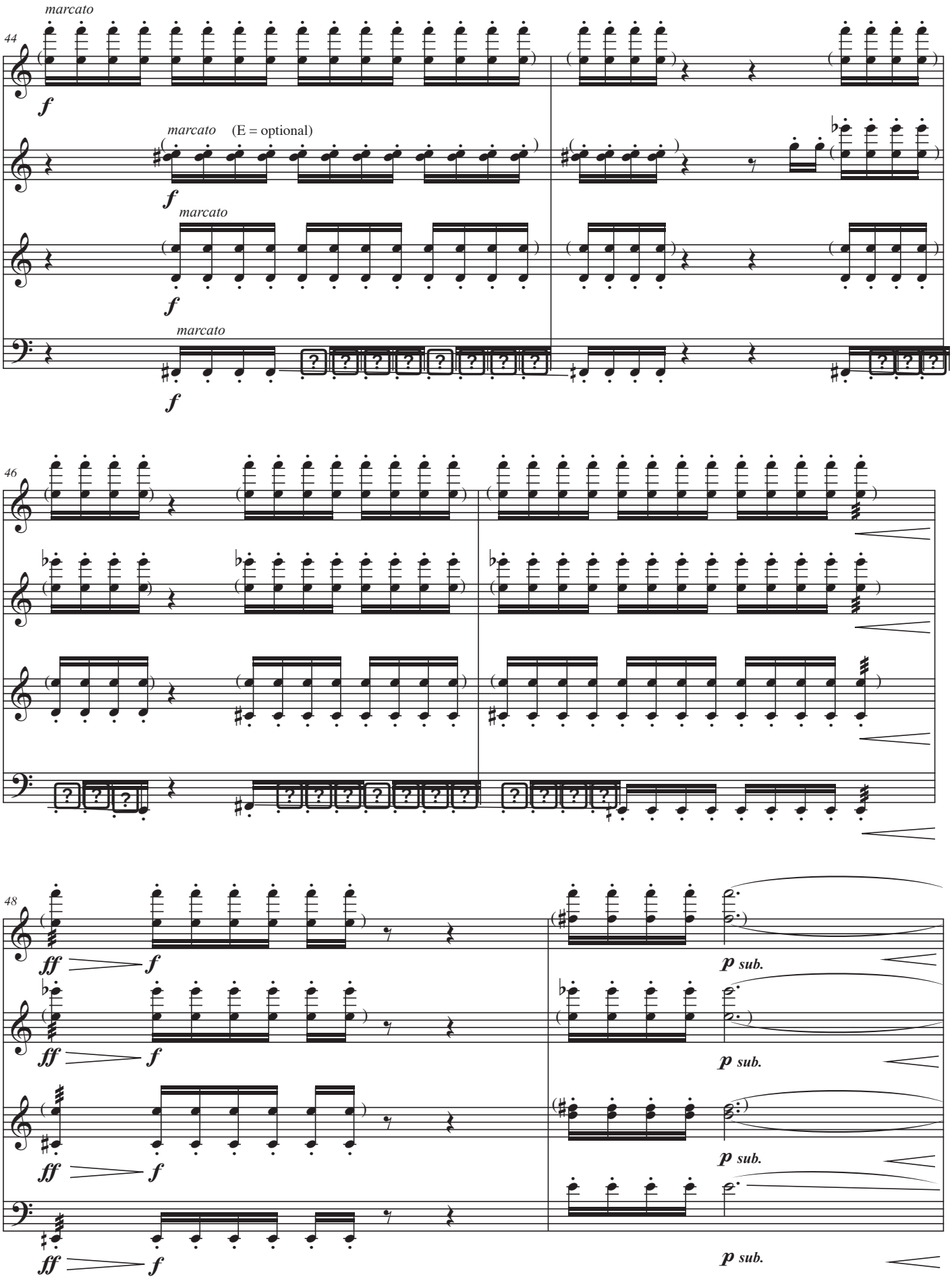
Improvisation Game
#2 Unfinished Score/Sketch A

11
mp
mp
5-15"
improvise
all: molto vibr.
no vibr.
16
f
p
marc. sempre
20
mf



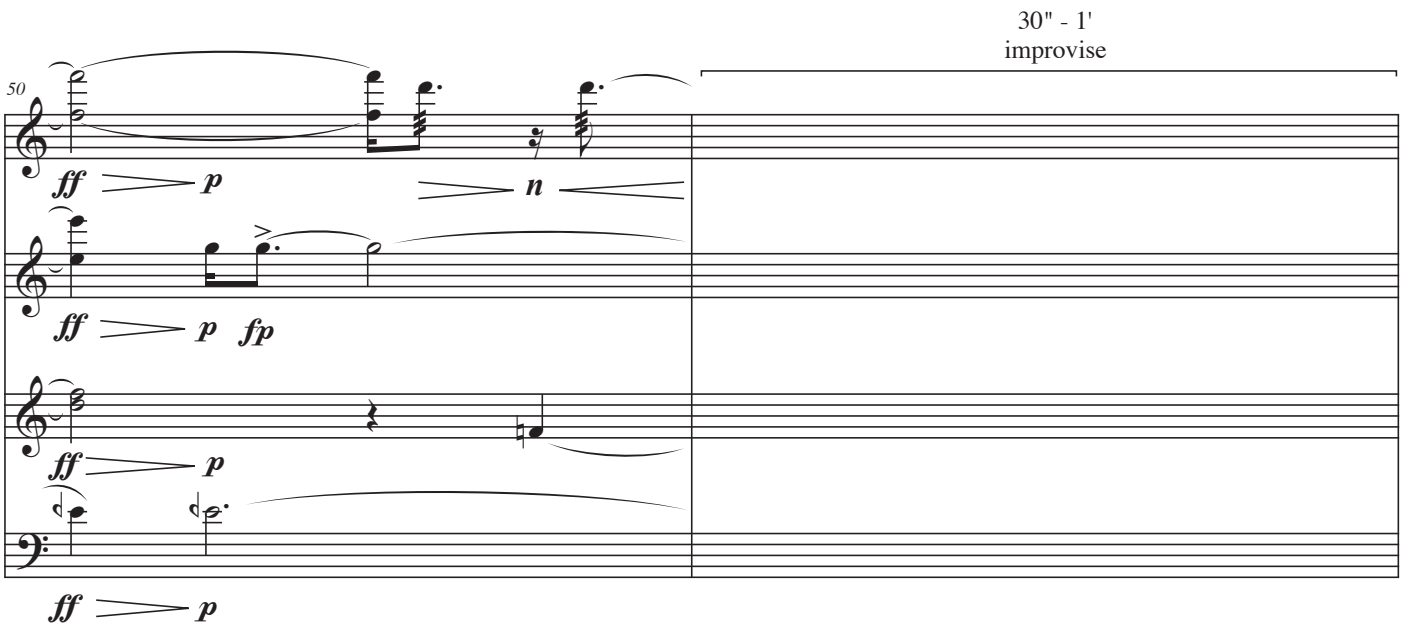
30" - 1'
improvise

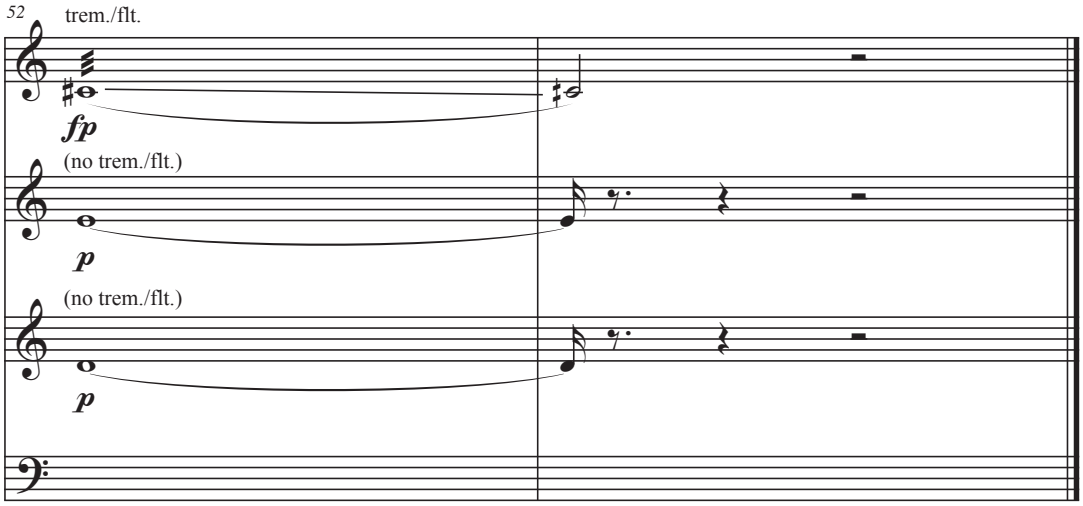


Subito - very quickly (♩ = 132?)
30
marcato
lunga
mf sempre
marcato
lunga
mf sempre
marcato
lunga
mf sempre
p
f
34
quick,
wide vibr.
36
3
mf
p sempre

38
p
p
p
f
f
f
no vibr.
adding vibr.
40
improvise
improvise
improvise
15-30"
43
I-IV

Slower, but with energy and some flow (♩= 80?)




30" - 1'
improvise
50
ff
p
n
ff
p
fp
ff
p
ff
p


52
trem./flt.
fp
(no trem./flt.)
p
(no trem./flt.)
p

Improvisation Game

#3 Unfinished Score/Sketch B

Joseph Michaels

For: at least 3 instruments
Duration: free

1) The first three instruments play together from the score. If there are more instruments, they improvise freely.
2) The movement may begin and/or end with instruments I-III or instruments IV- etc. (if applicable). In other words, all instruments may improvise before or after the written music, although it is not necessary.
3) Instruments I-III:

a) All times in the score, i.e. 30", are approximate and may be reduced or stretched even further.

b) Any instruments play I – III and do not have to follow the order of an orchestral score (for example, a violin plays I whereas a flute is on II).

c) I and II are played by instruments with a higher range. III must be played by a bass instrument.

d) Noteheads surrounded by parentheses are optional. Note collections surrounded by parentheses should be improvised in any range and highlighted.

e) Standard microtonal notation for ¼-tones (half-#, backwards flat, etc.). Accidentals with an arrow attached mean to raise or lower by any interval less than a ¼-tone.

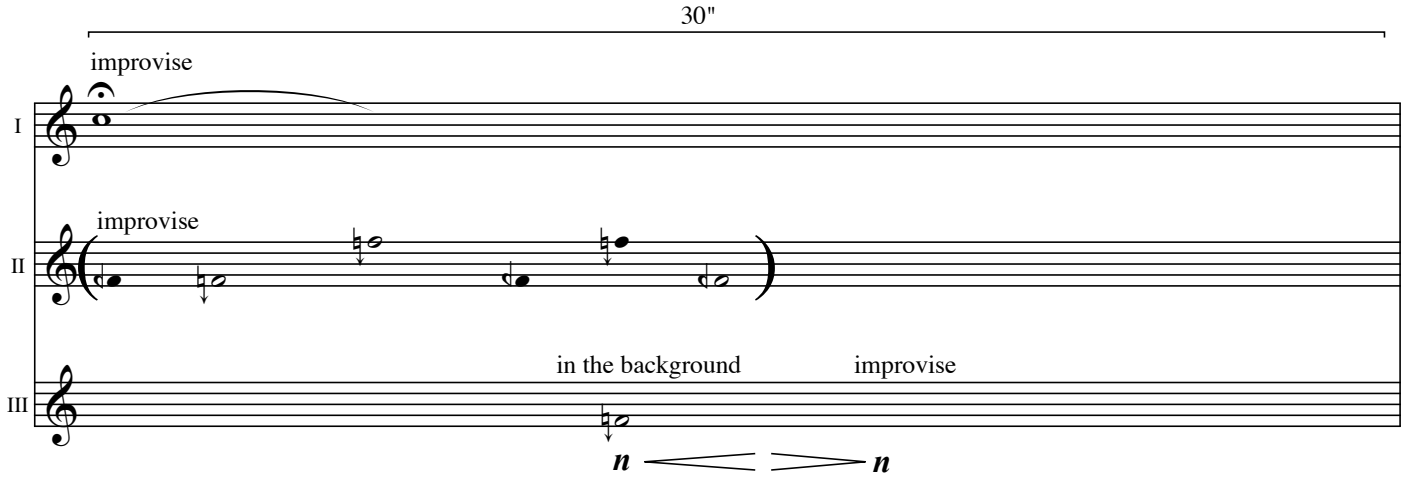
f) Glissandi markings appear as lines without the indication *gliss.*

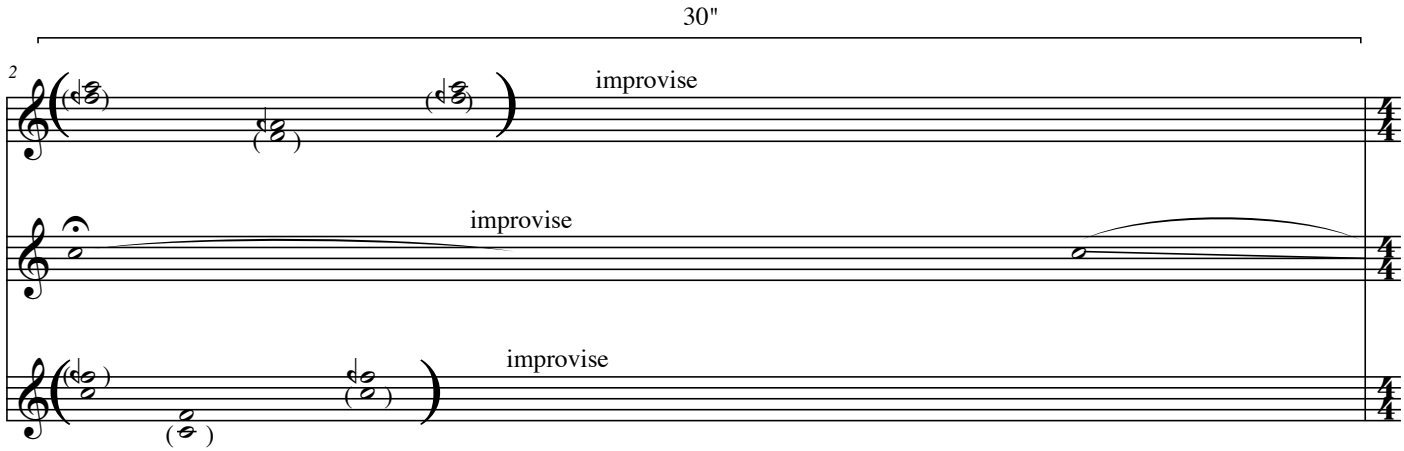
g) Improvise the dynamics and articulation unless otherwise notated.

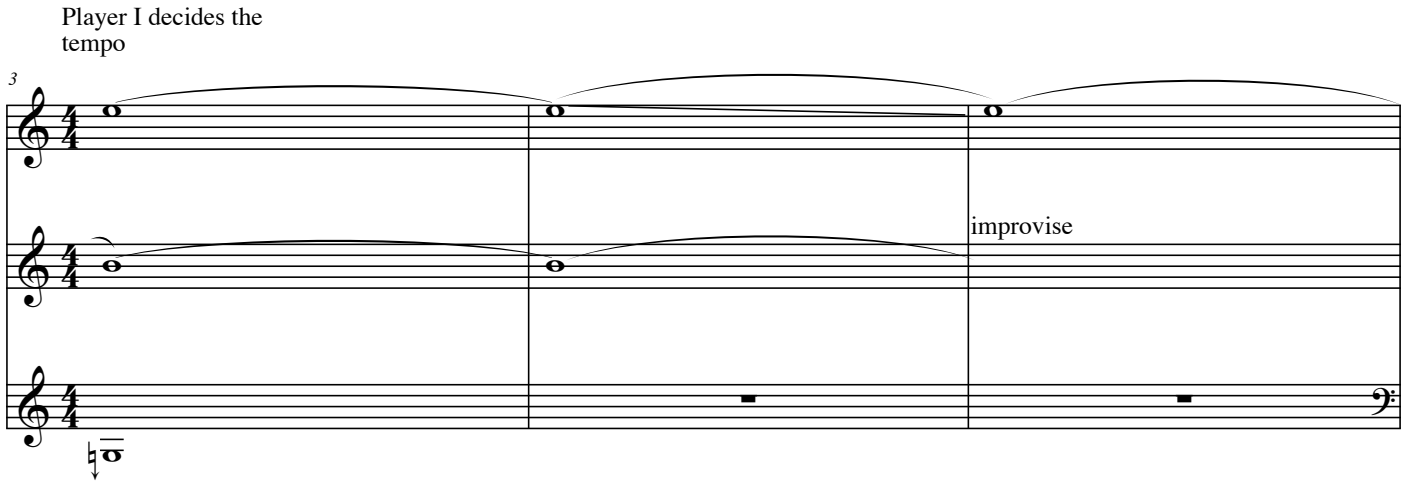
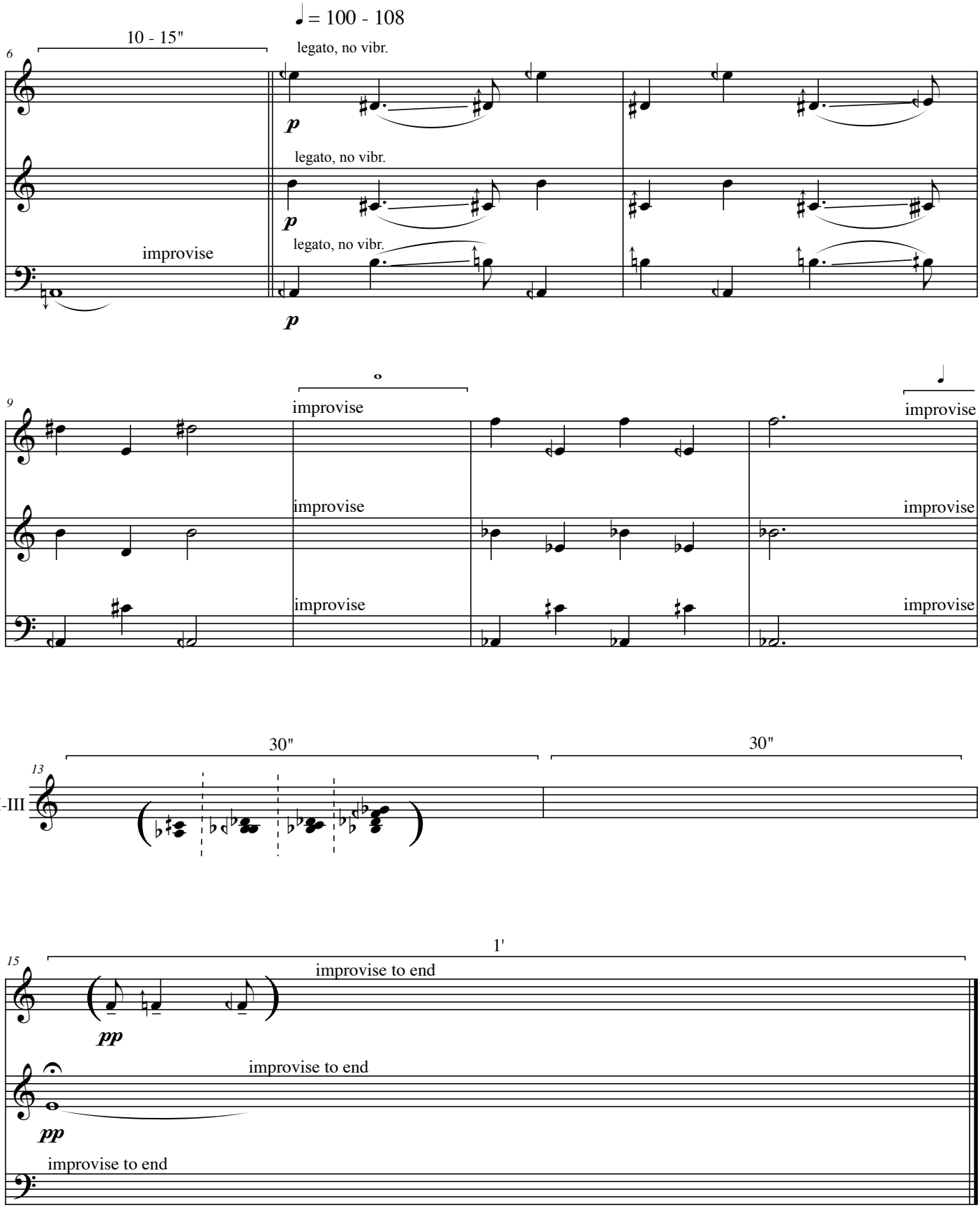
Score in C

Improvisation Game
#3 Unfinished Score/Sketch B

Joseph Michaels







♩ = 100 - 108
10 - 15"
6
legato, no vibr.
p
legato, no vibr.
p
improvise
legato, no vibr.
p
9
improvise
improvise
improvise
improvise
improvise
improvise
30"
30"
13
I-III
1'
15
improvise to end
pp
improvise to end
pp
improvise to end

Improvisation Game

#4 Drone, Continuous Rhythm, Continuous Line

Joseph Michaels, 2009/15

For: at least 4 instruments
Duration: free

1) Anyone begins the piece and improvises on one of the three types of musical ideas that are described below.
2) Improvise on all three types at least once. Switch often or infrequently between the three.
3) Dynamics, articulation, pitch, etc. are free unless otherwise specified.

The three types:

Drone – Very long, sustained pitches. The volume must remain constant from the beginning to the end of the pitch. In low-middle range of the instrument. No tremolo or fluttertongue so that the pitch is always very stable. Double-stops, multiphonics, and smaller chords with 3-4 pitches are possible, but not obligatory. Once a pitch or pitches (in the case of double-stops, multiphonics, or small chords) are chosen, they remain mostly the same each time you play the drone and only seldom change.

Continuous Rhythm – Improvise a slow-fast, asymmetrical yet mostly continuous rhythm using only percussive sounds.

Continuous Line – Improvise a floating, mostly slow and mostly continuous melodic line.

Improvisation Game

#5 Three Characters

For: any number of instruments
Duration: each movement = 30" – 2'.

1) Musically interpret the three characters that are listed below.
2) Pause in between each character type.
3) In the third movement, "Exaggerated", repeat material that you improvised in the first two movements as exactly as possible but in an exaggerated manner. Play this along with newly improvised material.
4) Occasionally contrast these character types with different material.

I Dark, somber
II Quiet, but tense
III Exaggerated

Improvisation Games

No. 6

Leader: inform the audience at the beginning that they can turn their cell phones back on or their vibrate off. Wait for a minute before beginning.

Musicians: call someone in the audience. Look at out them while you are doing this. Improvise a conversation. You can talk to them about the view from the stage, or ask them how they are doing, or anything you want. You can talk for as long as you want, or everyone can also decide beforehand if you want to set a time limit.

If you do not have a cell phone, you can ask your neighbor to have him/her put their conversation on speakerphone so that you can join in.

Before the concert, you should not tell anyone in the audience that you are going to call them so that they will be surprised.

When the talking has come to an end and it's over, the leader should ask everyone to turn their cell phones back off.

No. 7

Begin exactly together (through a sign from the leader), very quietly humming a note of your choice. Don't worry if your note doesn't match what the people around you are humming. Hold it steady for at least one minute, taking breaths when necessary and quietly re-entering on the same pitch.
Do not coordinate the harmony beforehand. Each time you perform this movement, you should hum a different note.

After a while, the leader should give a cue. This means that everyone should slowly slide from their pitch to the pitch that their neighbor is humming. Eventually, everyone should find the same pitch. After you reach a unison, sustain it for a while.

After a while, the leader should give the next cue. This means that everyone slowly hums the unison pitch louder and louder, taking breaths when necessary. When it has gone on long enough, the conductor will give a cue.

At this point, one by one you should begin to play your instrument. Play a very quiet, sustained pitch of your choice. Strings may play a double-stop. If your instrument doesn't sustain, play a tremolo or arpeggio on a chord of your choice. Like with the humming, do not coordinate this beforehand, and play different pitches each time you perform this movement. Winds take breaths when necessary.

Hold the sustained pitches for a while. The conductor will then give a cue to stop, which is the end.

November 5, 2015
Stuttgart

No. 8

Red light, green light.

Play any slow melody, already existing or improvised. Try to play something different than what anyone else is playing. The leader controls the dynamics through predetermined gestures. He or she can vary the dynamics as desired.

At any given time, the leader gives a signal. This means that everyone should freeze on a note and sustain it. The leader can vary the dynamics for the sustained pitches as well. Then the leader gives another cue, which means to continue with the melody you were playing. Repeat the stopping/starting several times.

After a while, the leader gives a special cue. This means that everyone should now play any fast melody, already existing or improvised. As before, the leader controls the dynamics.

At any given time, the leader gives a signal to stop. At this point, everyone should be silent. Then the leader gives another cue, which means to continue playing. Repeat the stopping/starting several times. The leader decides when to end the movement.

November 6, 2015
Stuttgart