Steven Snowden

Speed Studies

Saxophone Quartet

Commissioned by
The Bel Cuore Quartet

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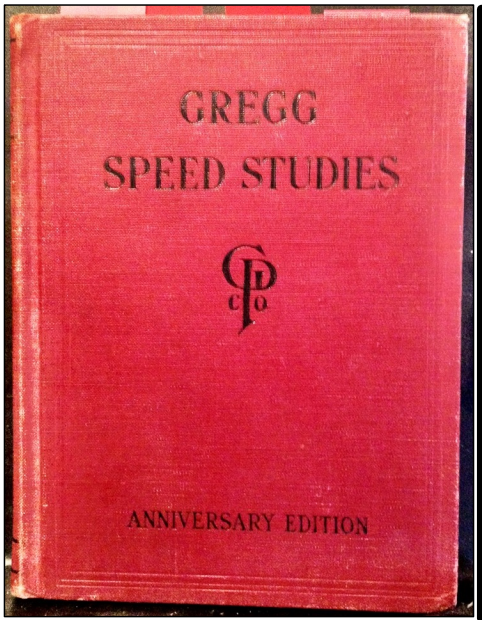
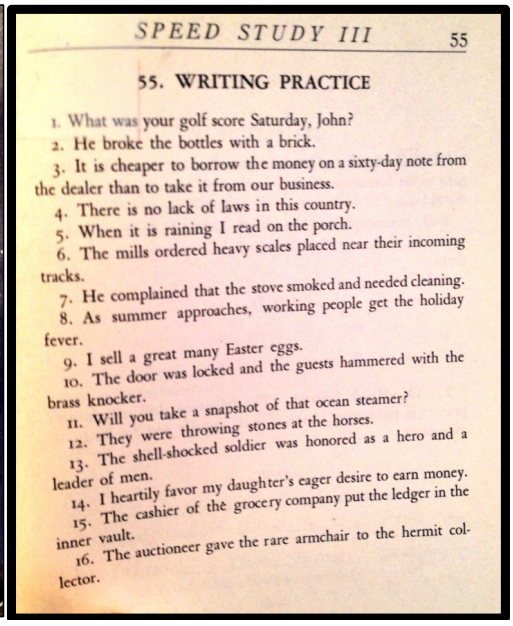
Program Notes:

Years ago, I was at a summer garage sale and came across a dusty old book titled *Gregg Speed Studies*. Published in 1917, this hardback was a complete guide to increasing speed and accuracy in the craft of shorthand. Initially, I was intrigued by the way in which this book shed light on a bygone era before the prevalent use of typewriters. However, as I flipped through the tattered pages, I noticed that the majority of it was comprised of writing and comprehension exercises designed to rigorously focus upon particularly difficult combinations of words. However, rather than simply asking the student to practice by only writing those particular words, the author chose to place these drills within the context of complete sentences.

The result was line after line of sentences that seem to have been randomly plucked from a library of imaginary novels. While many of these sentences were quite mundane, several of them jumped out to me as highly provocative and even quite sinister. Three of these phrases were particularly compelling to me not only because of their individual suggestiveness, but also because they seemed to form a loose narrative when grouped together. Though somewhat abstracted, I took inspiration from that resulting narrative for this piece, while basing much of my melodic and gestural material upon the contours of the shorthand itself.

She sang a song of a cruel and jealous lover.
The clock chimed the hour of midnight and there was a profound quiet about the grounds.
He wiped the knife twice on a pile of rags.

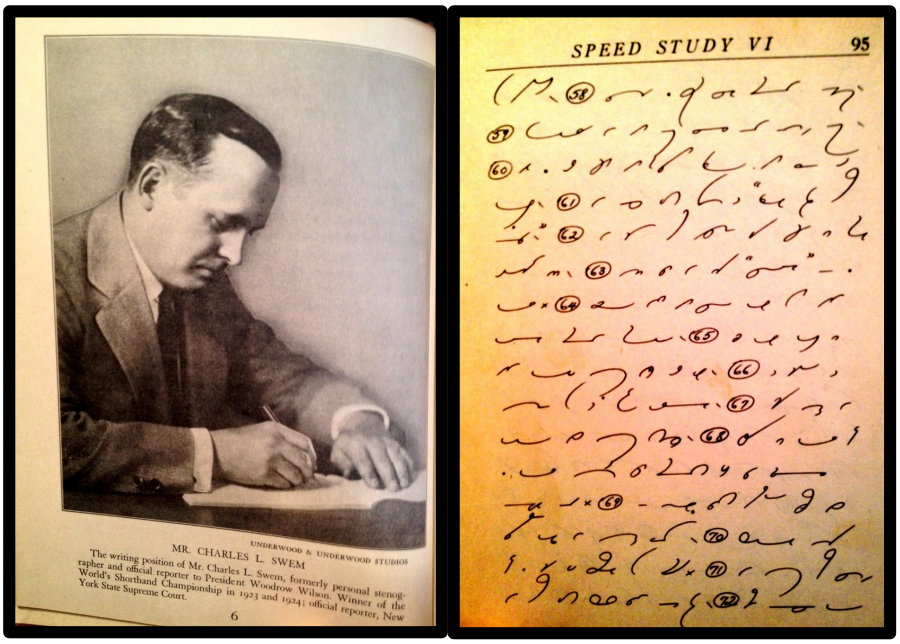




SPEED STUDY III 55

55. WRITING PRACTICE

1. What was your golf score Saturday, John?
2. He broke the bottles with a brick.
3. It is cheaper to borrow the money on a sixty-day note from the dealer than to take it from our business.
4. There is no lack of laws in this country.
5. When it is raining I read on the porch.
6. The mills ordered heavy scales placed near their incoming tracks.
7. He complained that the stove smoked and needed cleaning.
8. As summer approaches, working people get the holiday fever.
9. I sell a great many Easter eggs.
10. The door was locked and the guests hammered with the brass knocker.
11. Will you take a snapshot of that ocean steamer?
12. They were throwing stones at the horses.
13. The shell-shocked soldier was honored as a hero and a leader of men.
14. I heartily favor my daughter's eager desire to earn money.
15. The cashier of the grocery company put the ledger in the inner vault.
16. The auctioneer gave the rare armchair to the hermit collector.



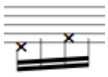
Performance notes:

Harmonic gliss:

This effect (used only in the bari sax) consists of changing the shape of the oral cavity to emphasize varying harmonics above the fundamental. The resulting sound should closely akin to a scream that is barely under control.

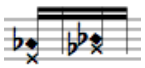
Key pops:

Two types of key pops are indicated in the score.

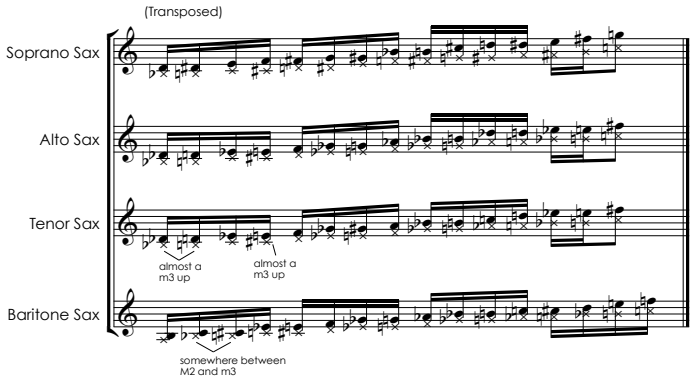


This notation indicates that the player should play the key pops with his or her mouth on the mouthpiece so that the fingered note is the same as the sounding note.

This notation indicates that the player should execute the key pops without his or her mouth on the mouthpiece. The top diamond-shaped note indicates the desired pitch, while the bottom X notehead indicated what must be fingered in order to produce this desired pitch. Below, is a chart I made according to information from the Bel Cuore Quartet. This chart may not apply to all makes and models of saxophone.



fingered vs. sounding key pops
for saxes with mouthpiece uncovered



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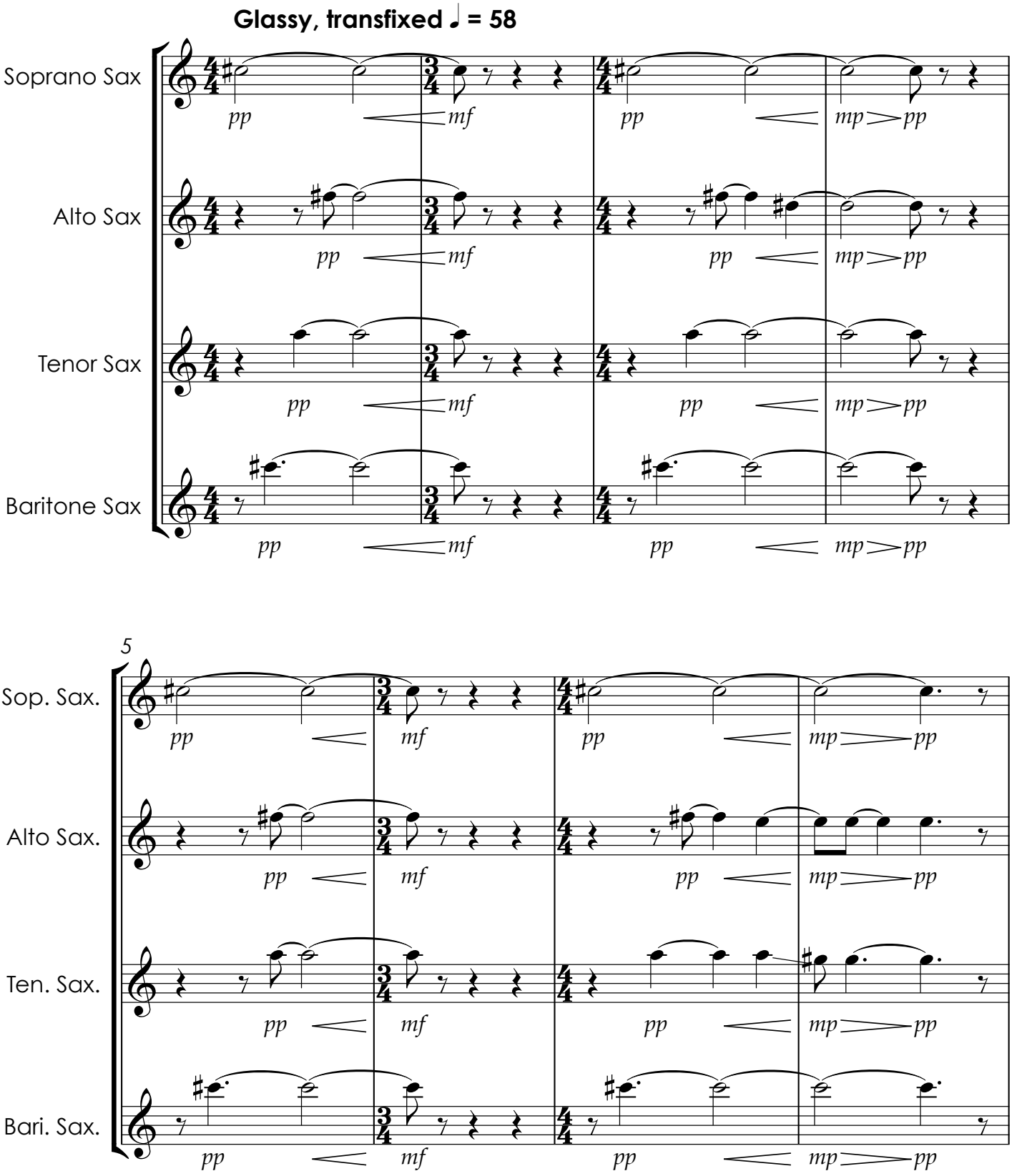
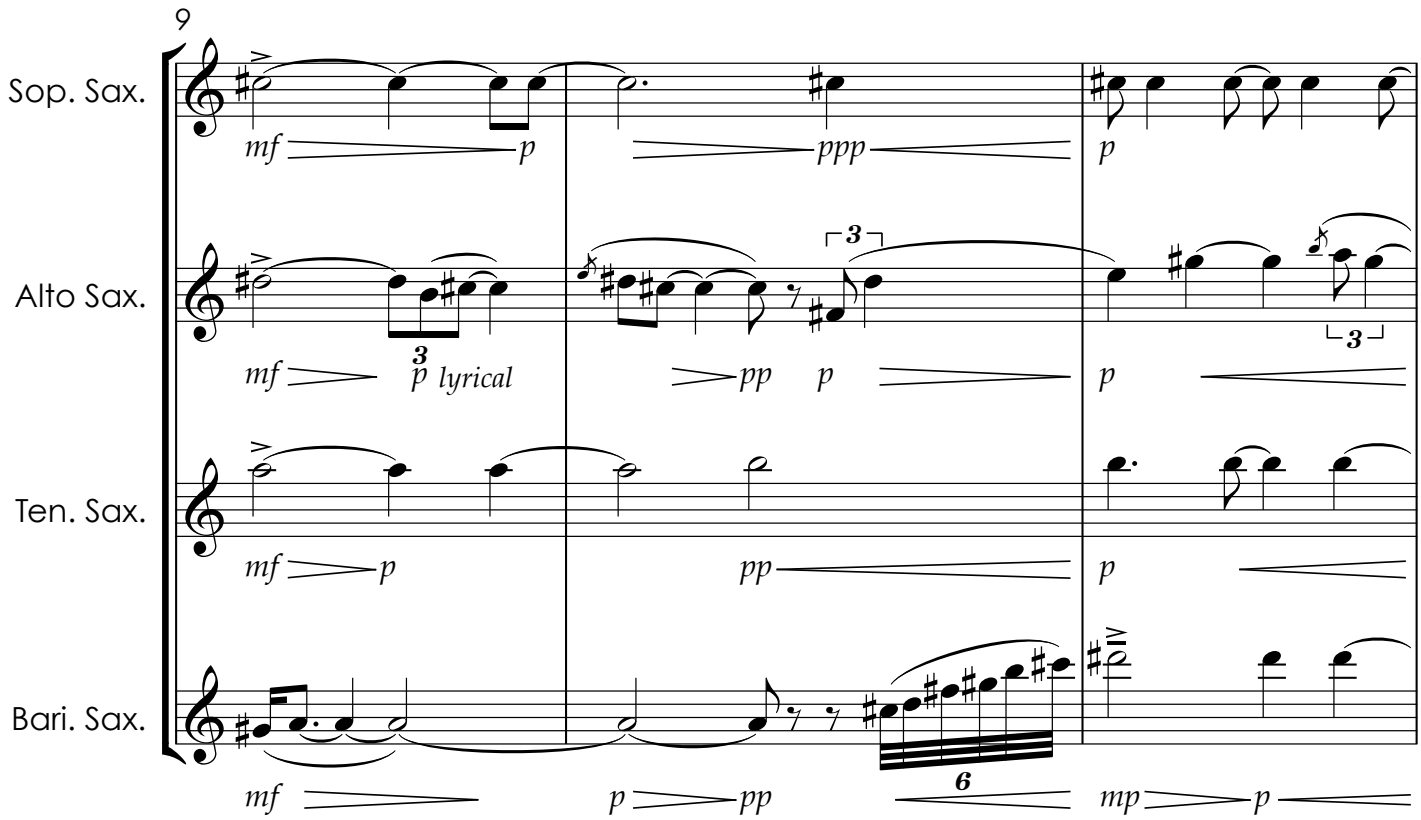
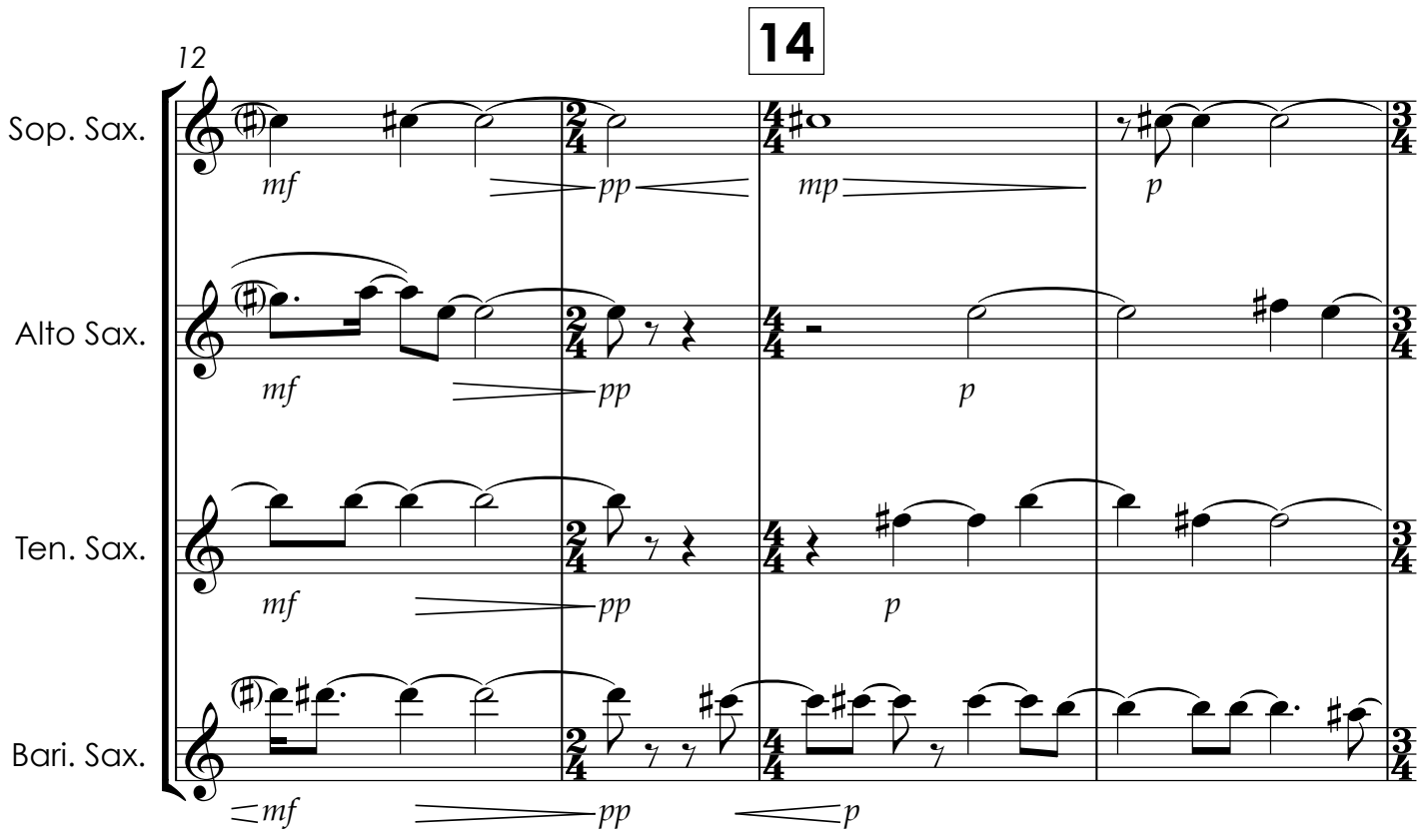
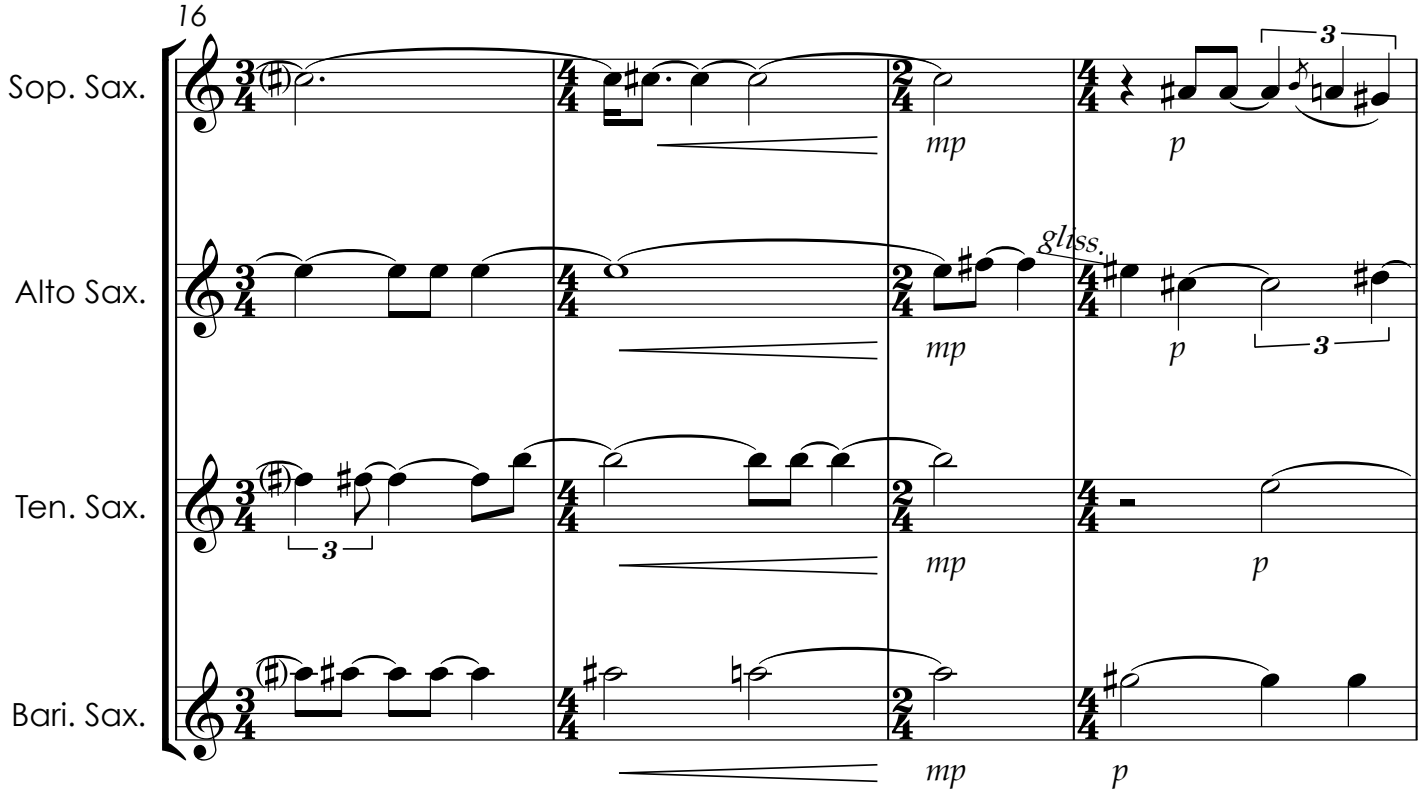
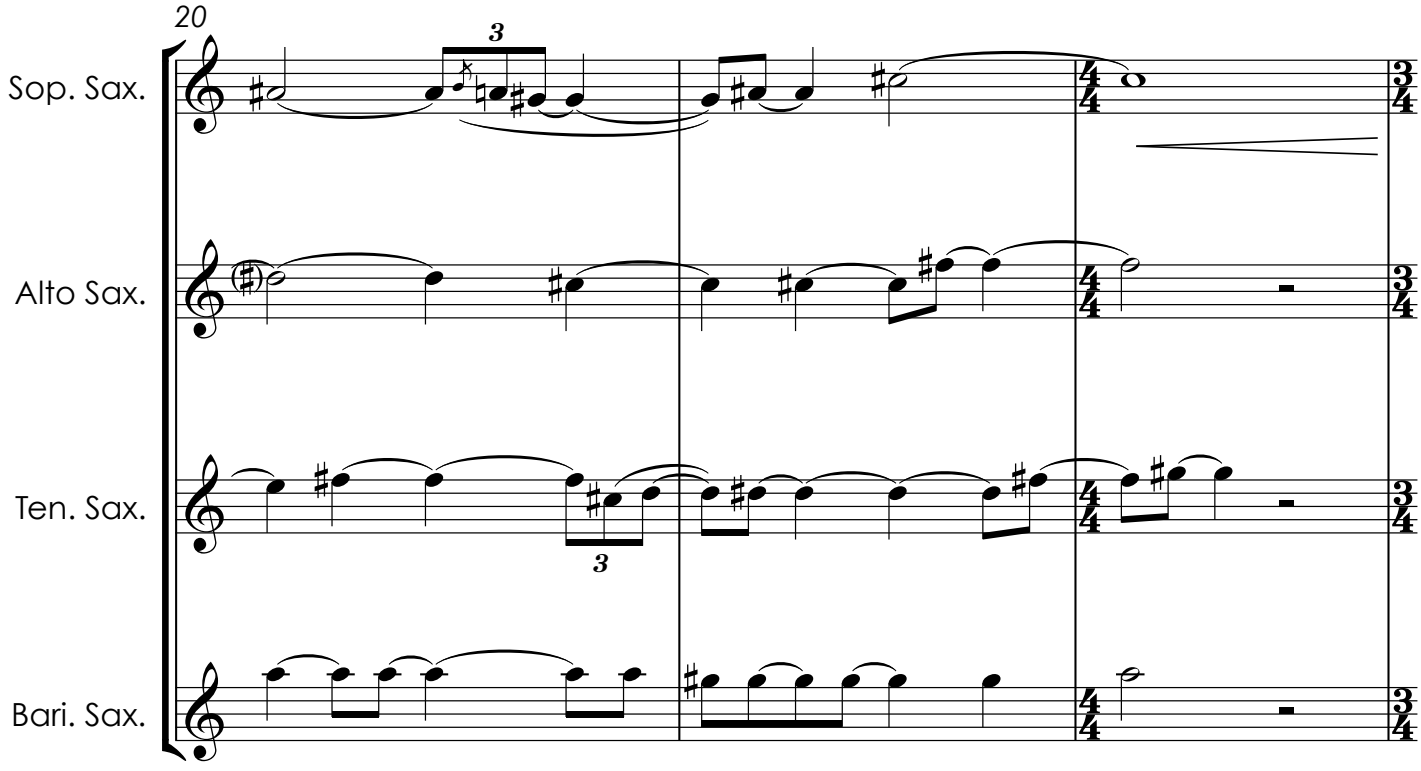
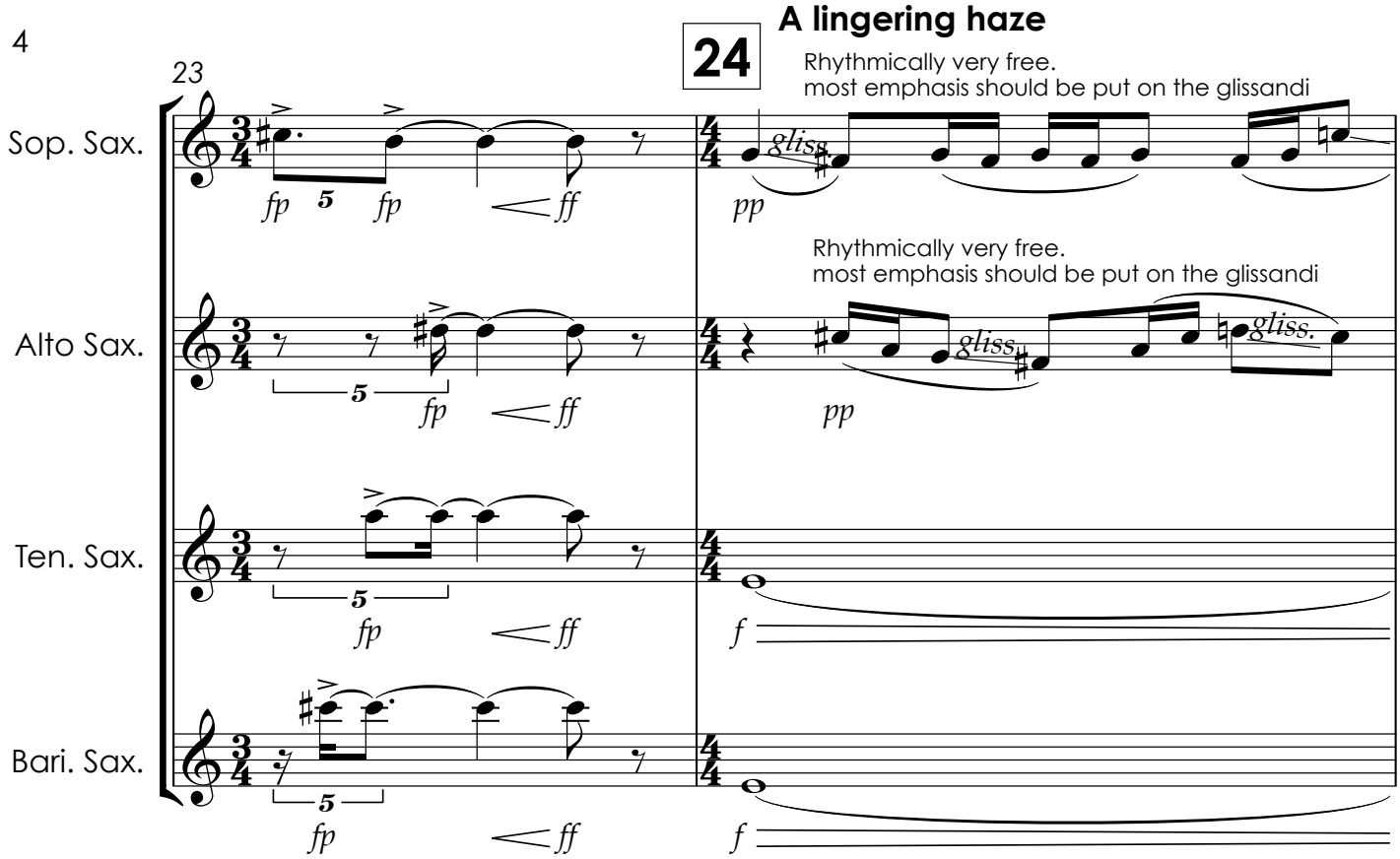


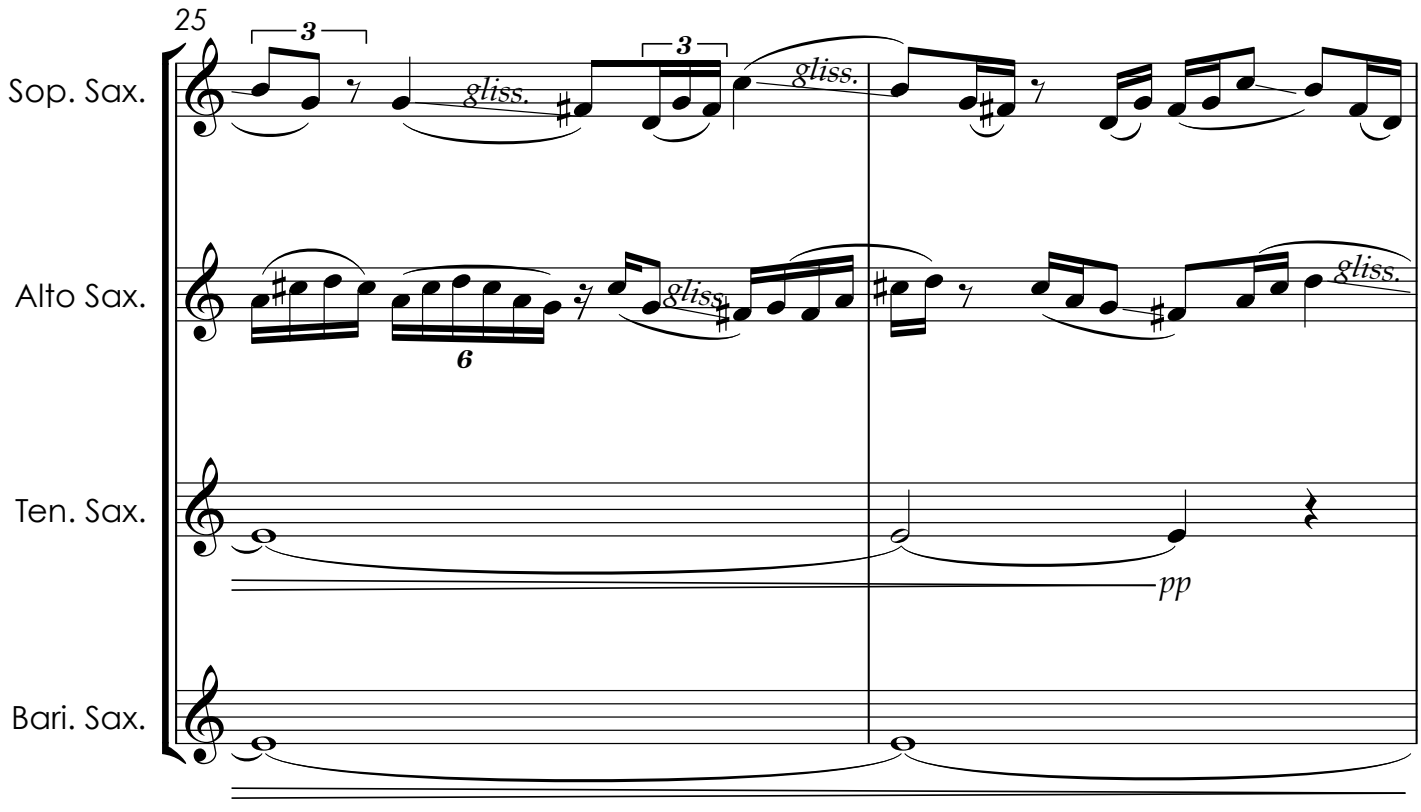

9
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
p
ppp
p lyrical
pp
mp

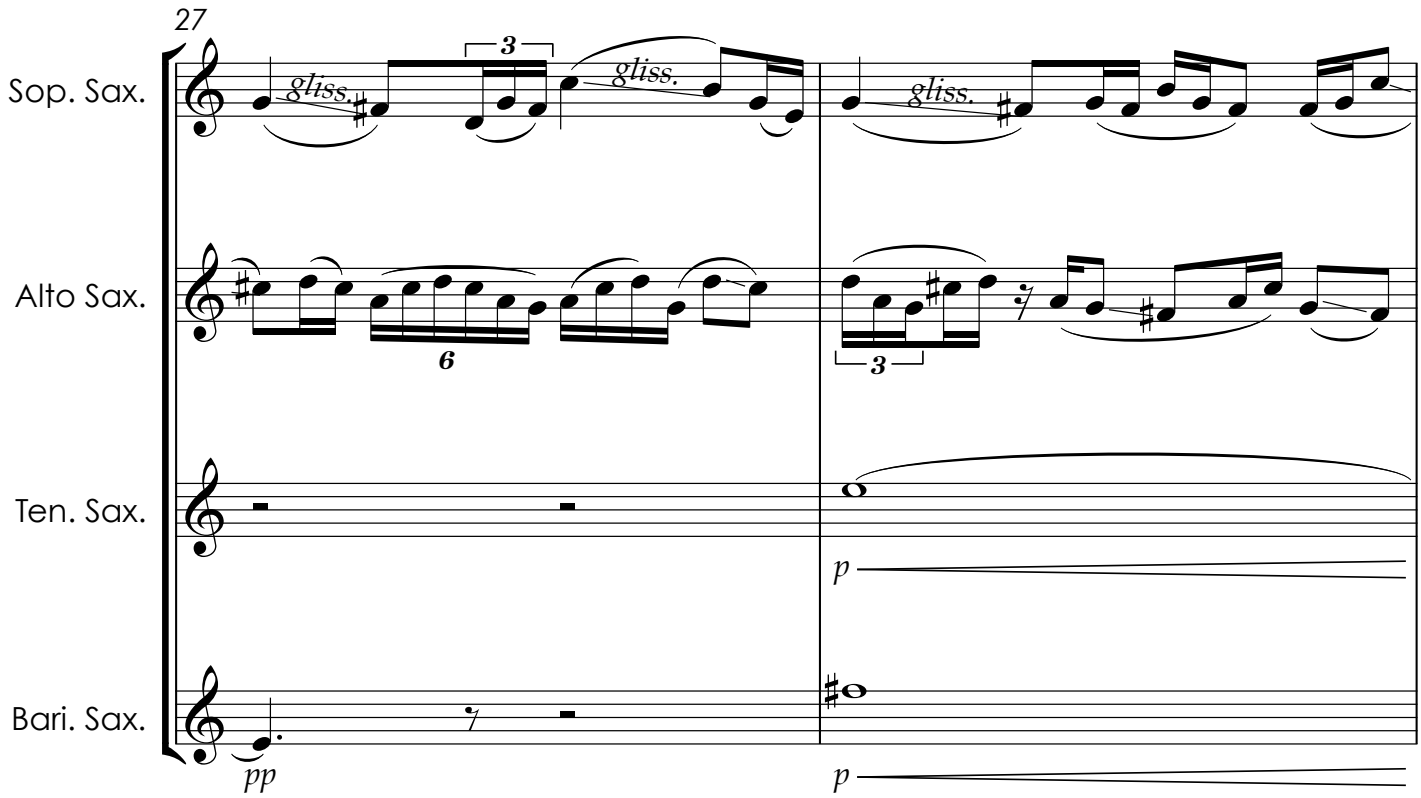

14
12
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
pp
mp
p

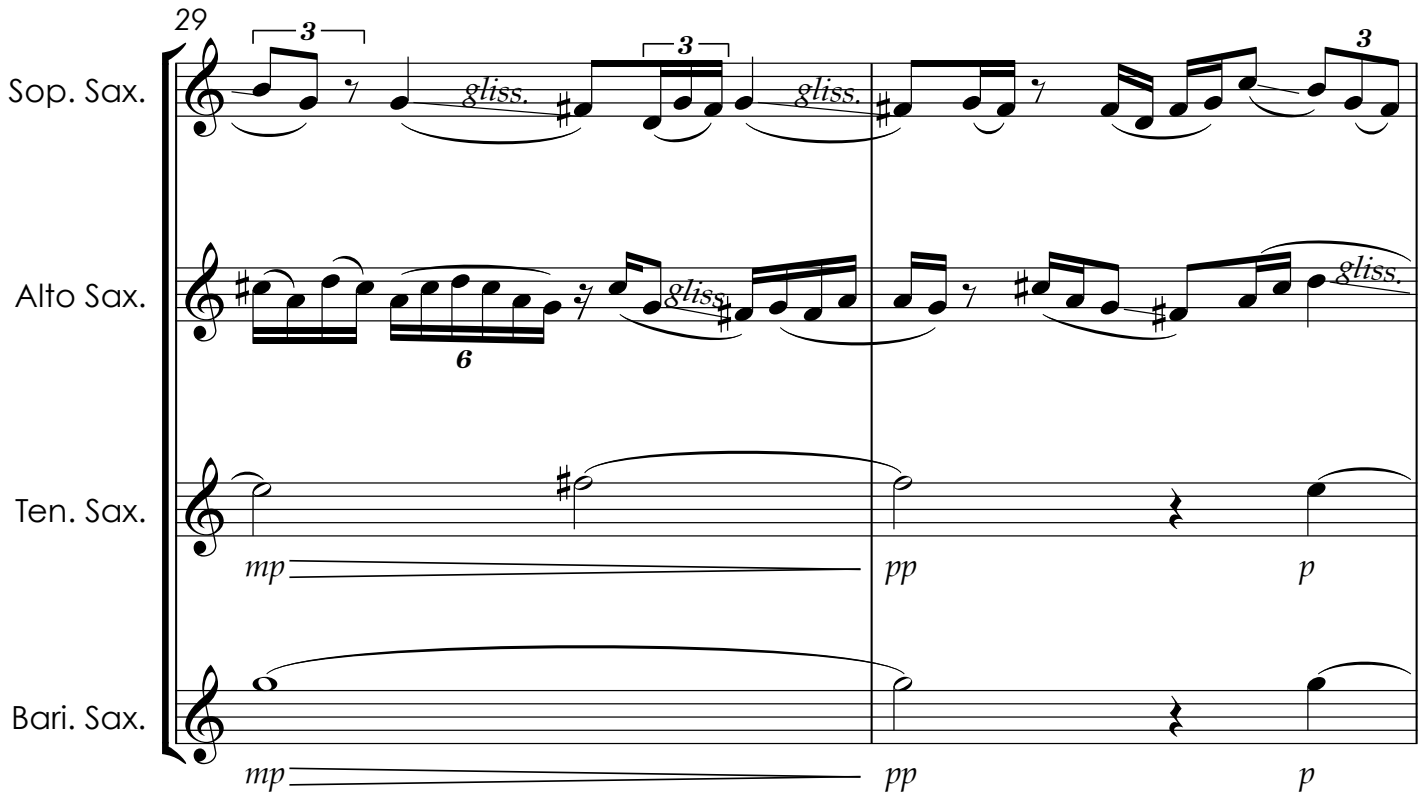

16
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mp
p
gliss.
3

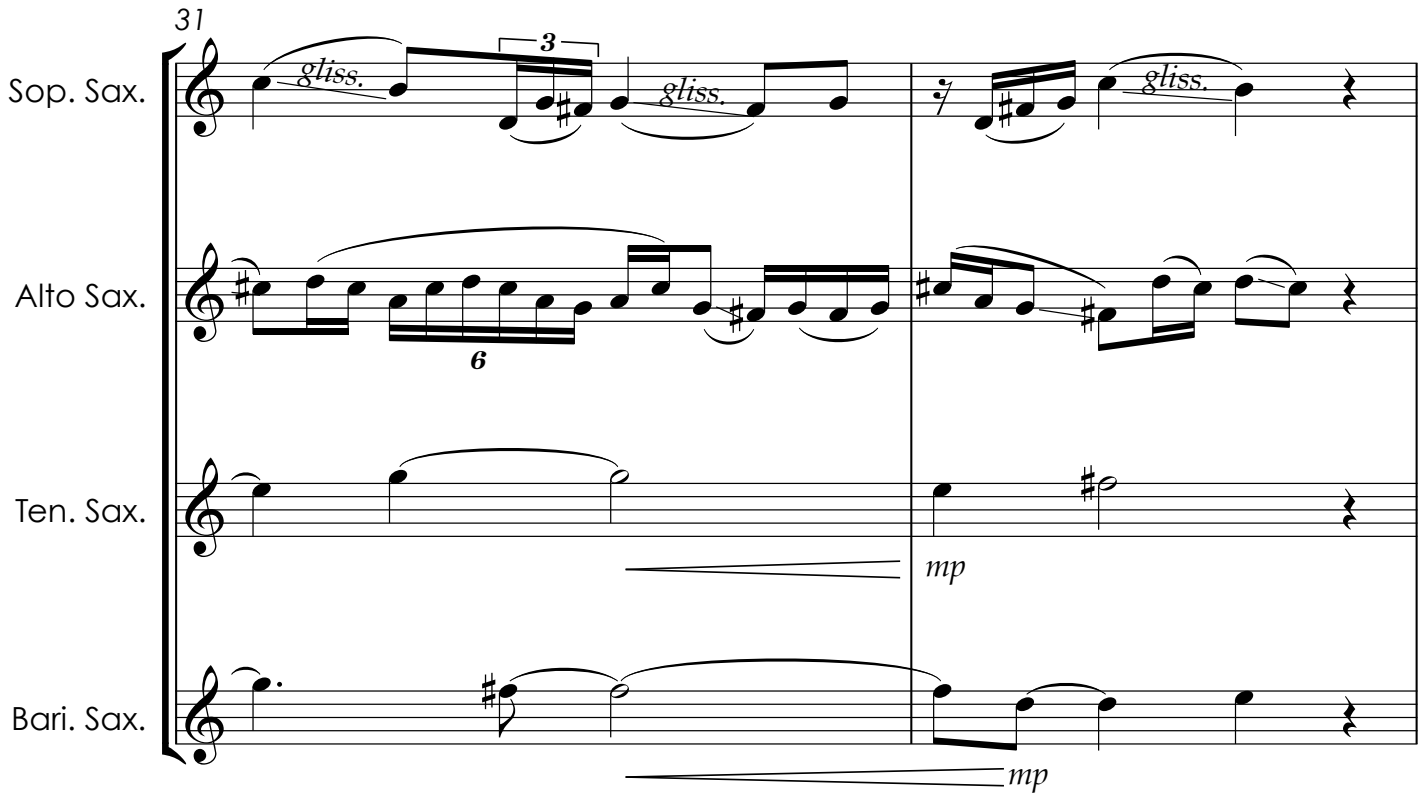

20
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
3

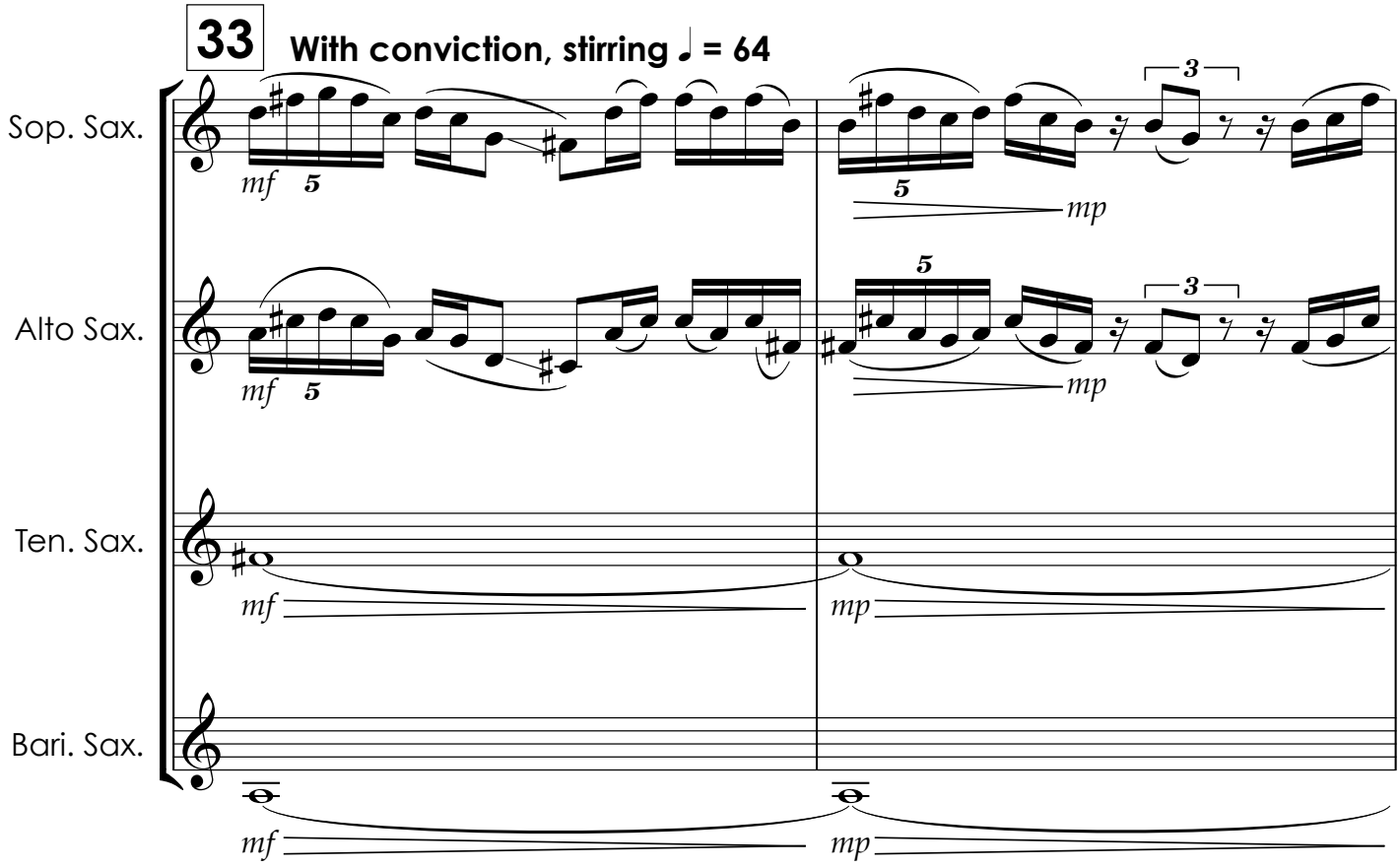

A lingering haze
24
23
Rhythmically very free.
most emphasis should be put on the glissandi
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
fp
ff
pp
f
gliss.

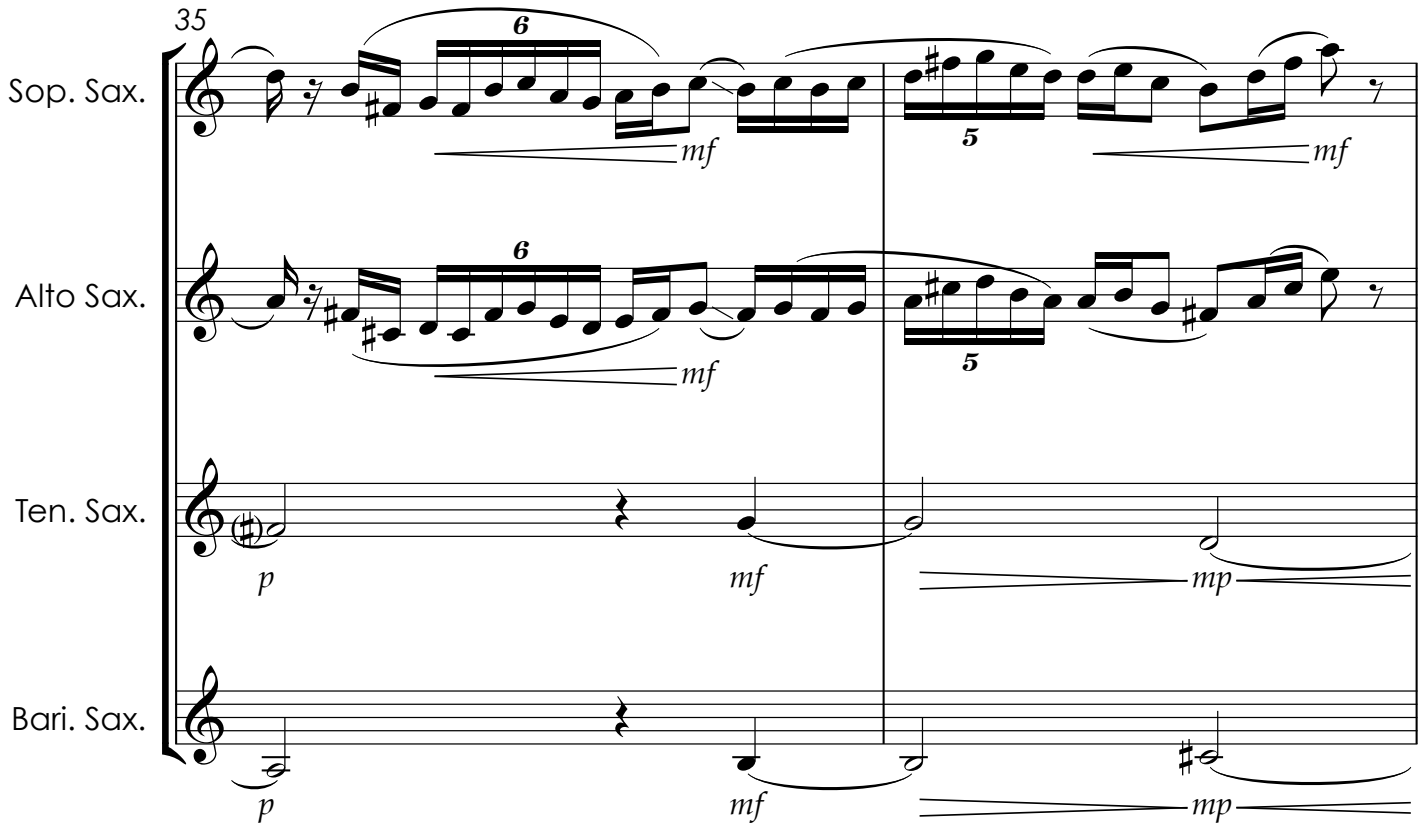

25
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
gliss.
pp

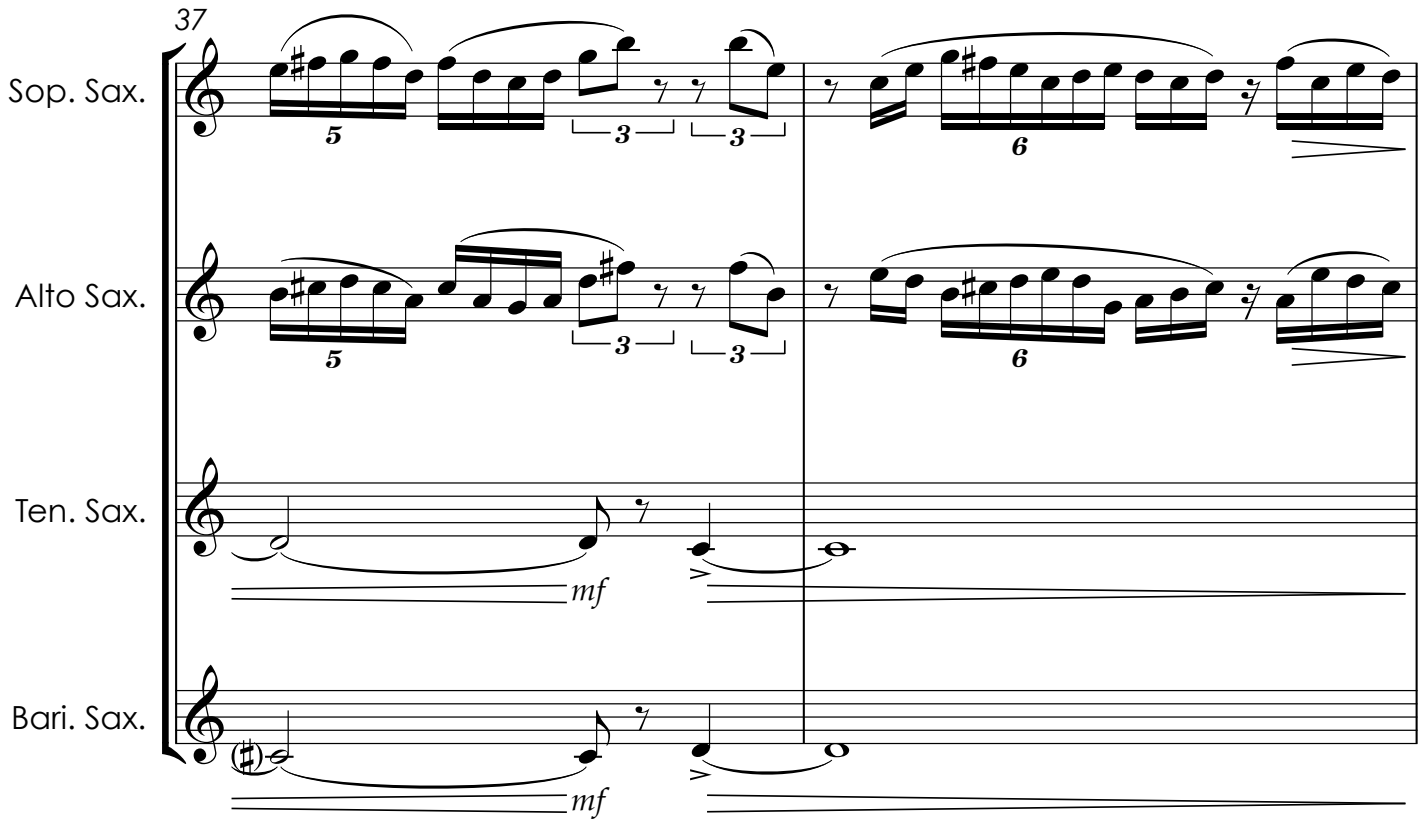

27
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
3
6
3
pp
p
p

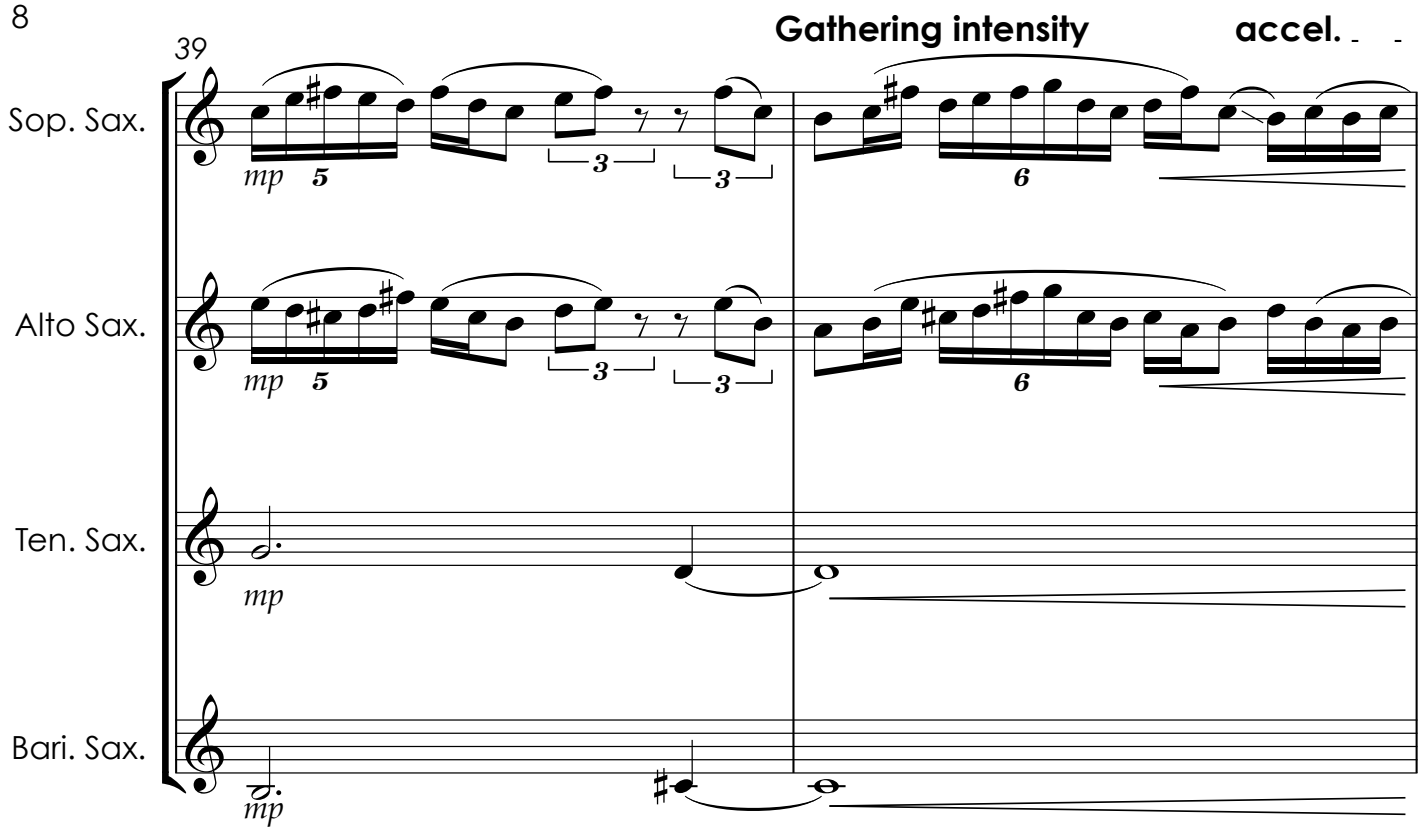

29
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
3
3
3
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
6
mp
pp
p
mp
pp
p

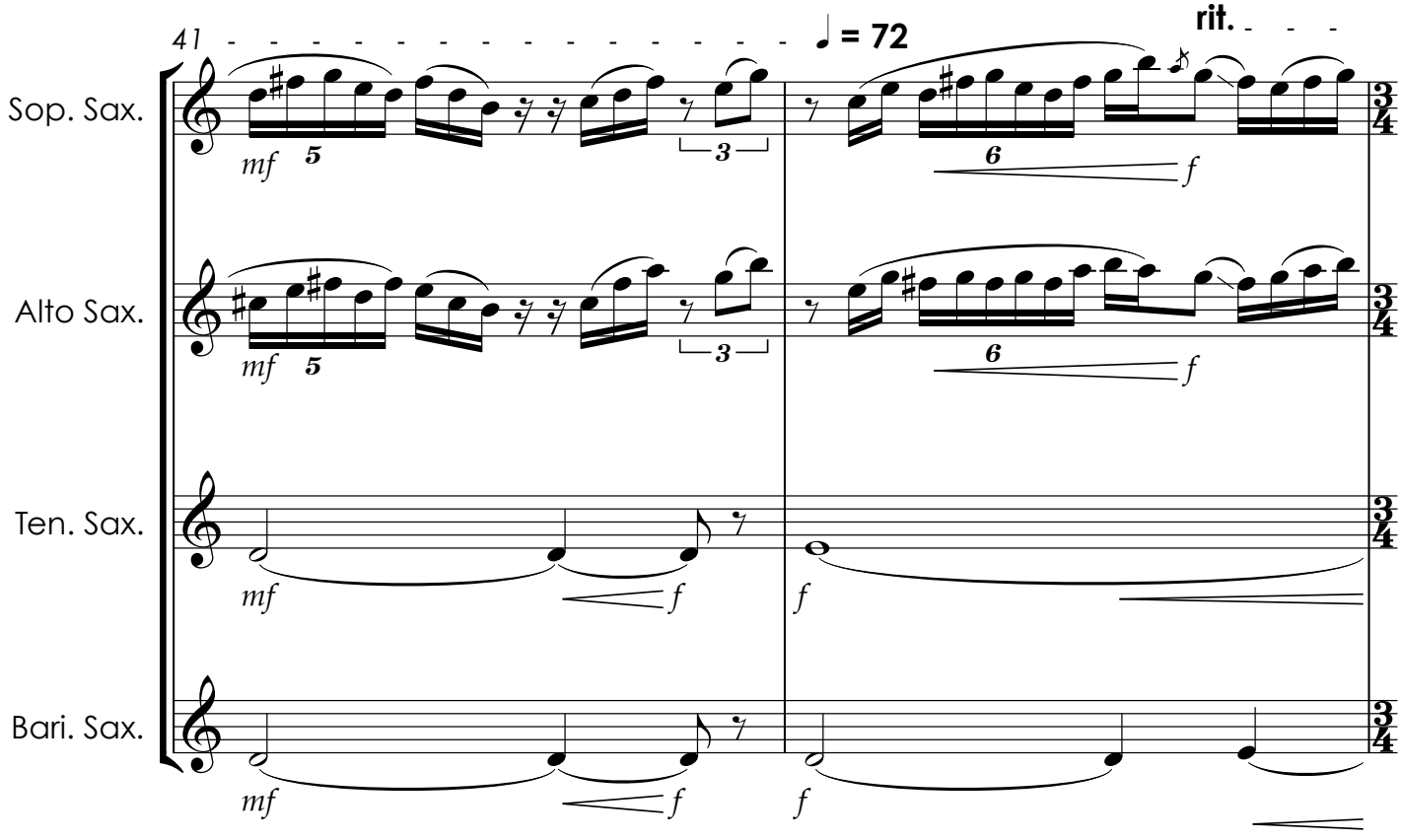

31
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
3
6
mp
mp

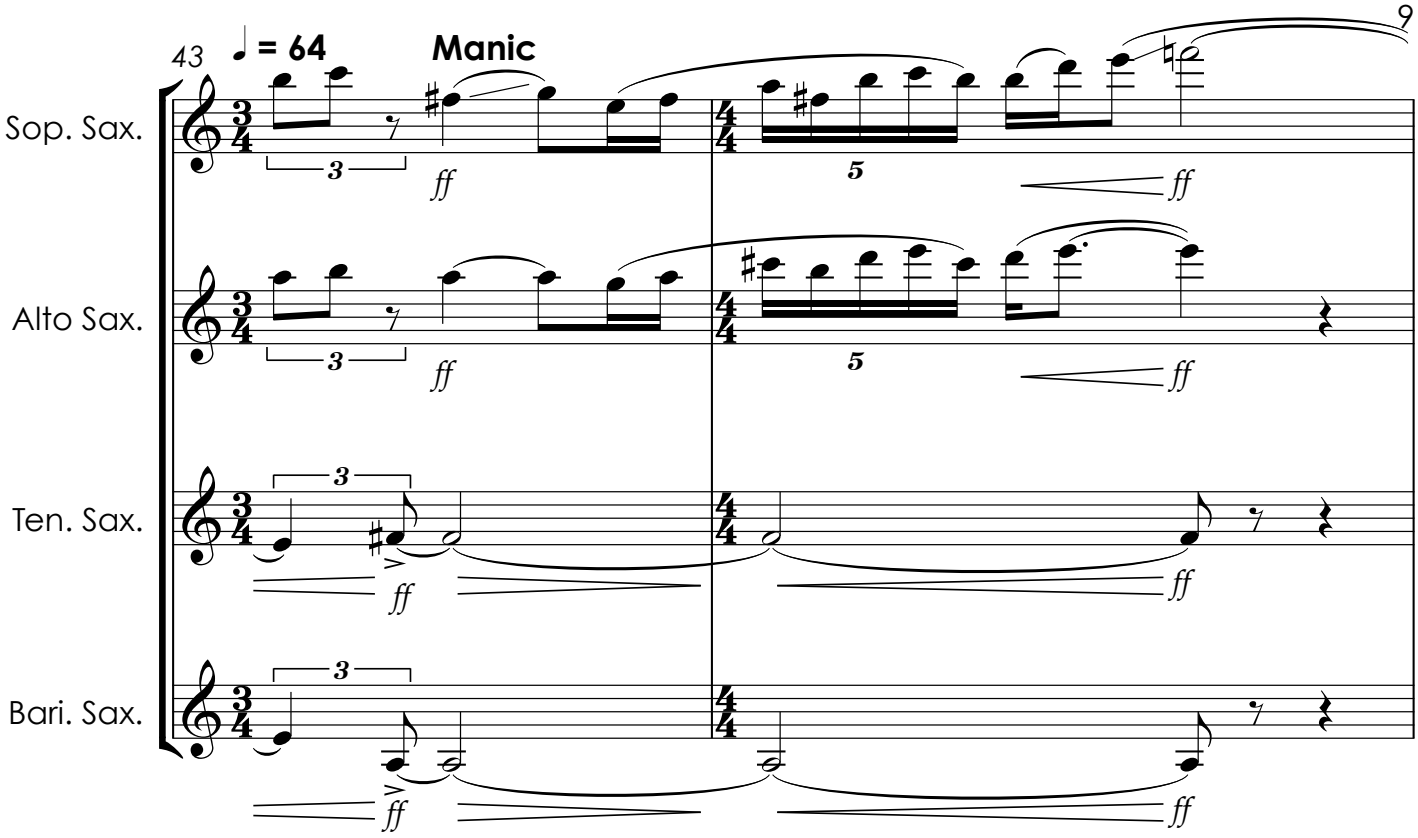

33
With conviction, stirring ♩ = 64
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
5
5
mp
3
5
mf
5
5
mp
3
mf
mp
mf
mp


35
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
p
mp


37
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf


39
Gathering intensity
accel.
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mp
5
3
6


41
♩ = 72
rit.
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
f
5
3
6
3/4


43
♩ = 64
Manic
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ff

45 **Brash, Tolling** ♩ = 102

Sop. Sax.

Alto Sax.

Ten. Sax.

Bari. Sax.

51

ff

57 **Frenetic**

Sop. Sax.

Alto Sax.

Ten. Sax.

Bari. Sax.

Harmonic gliss.

p *f* *ppp* *mp*

60

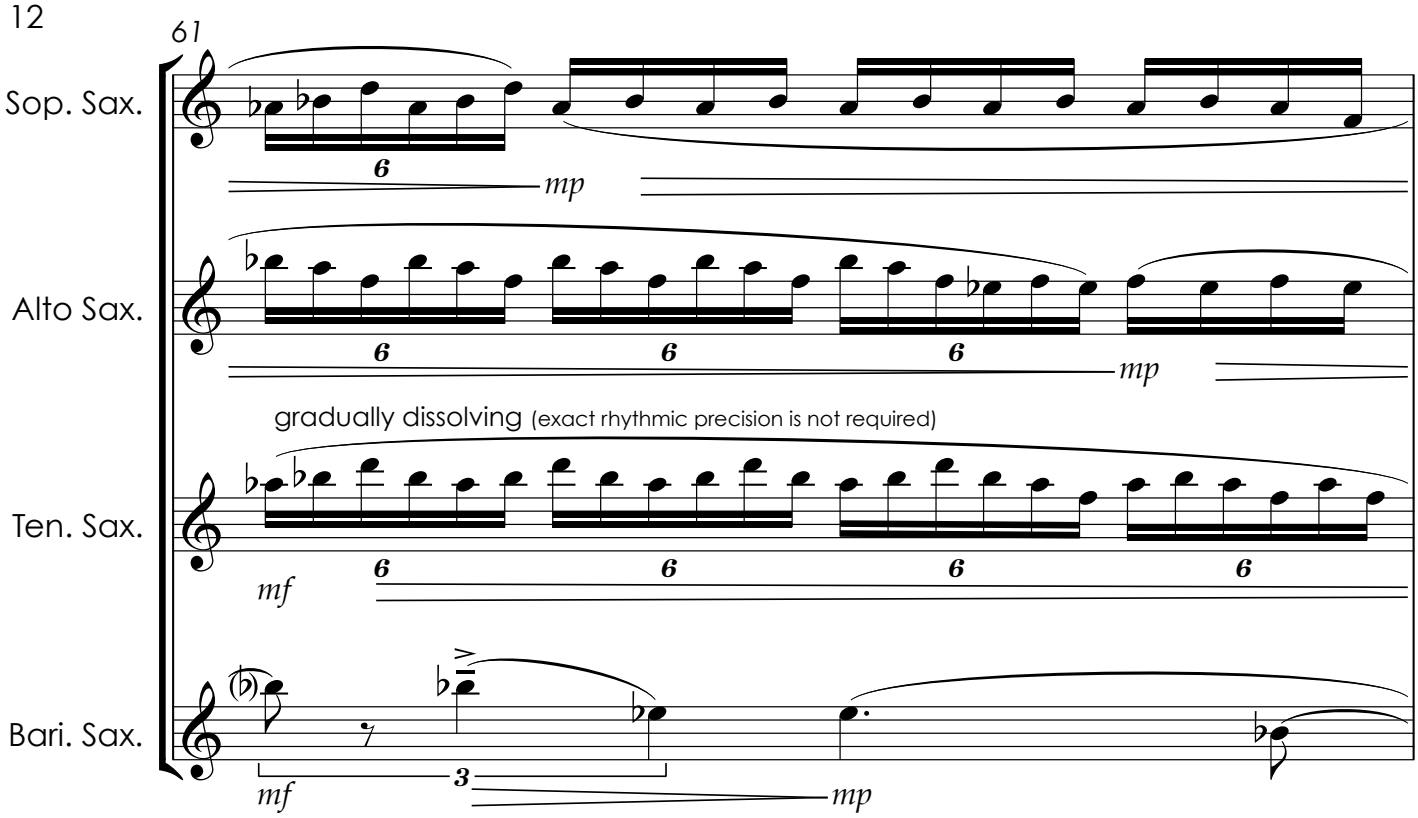
gradually dissolving (exact rhythmic precision is not required)

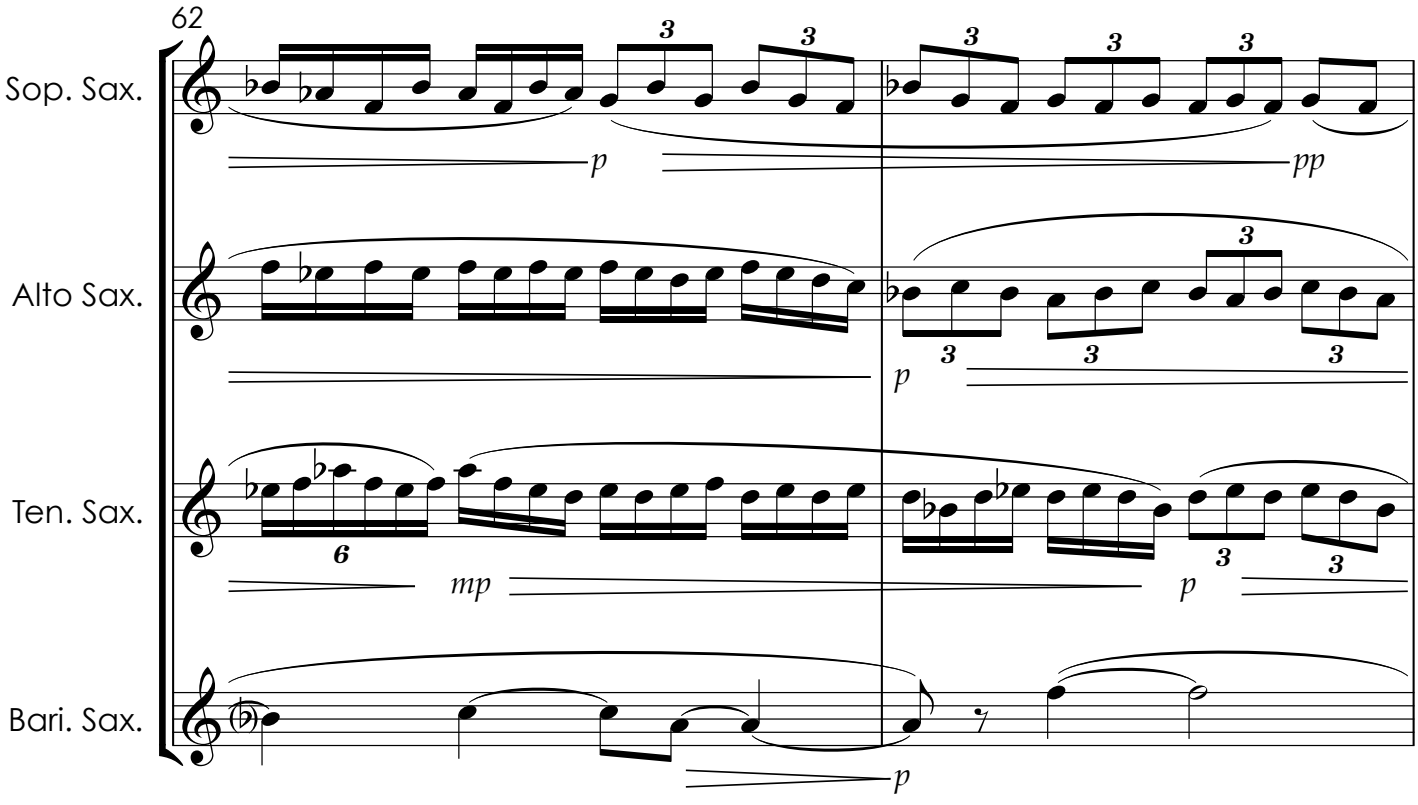
mf

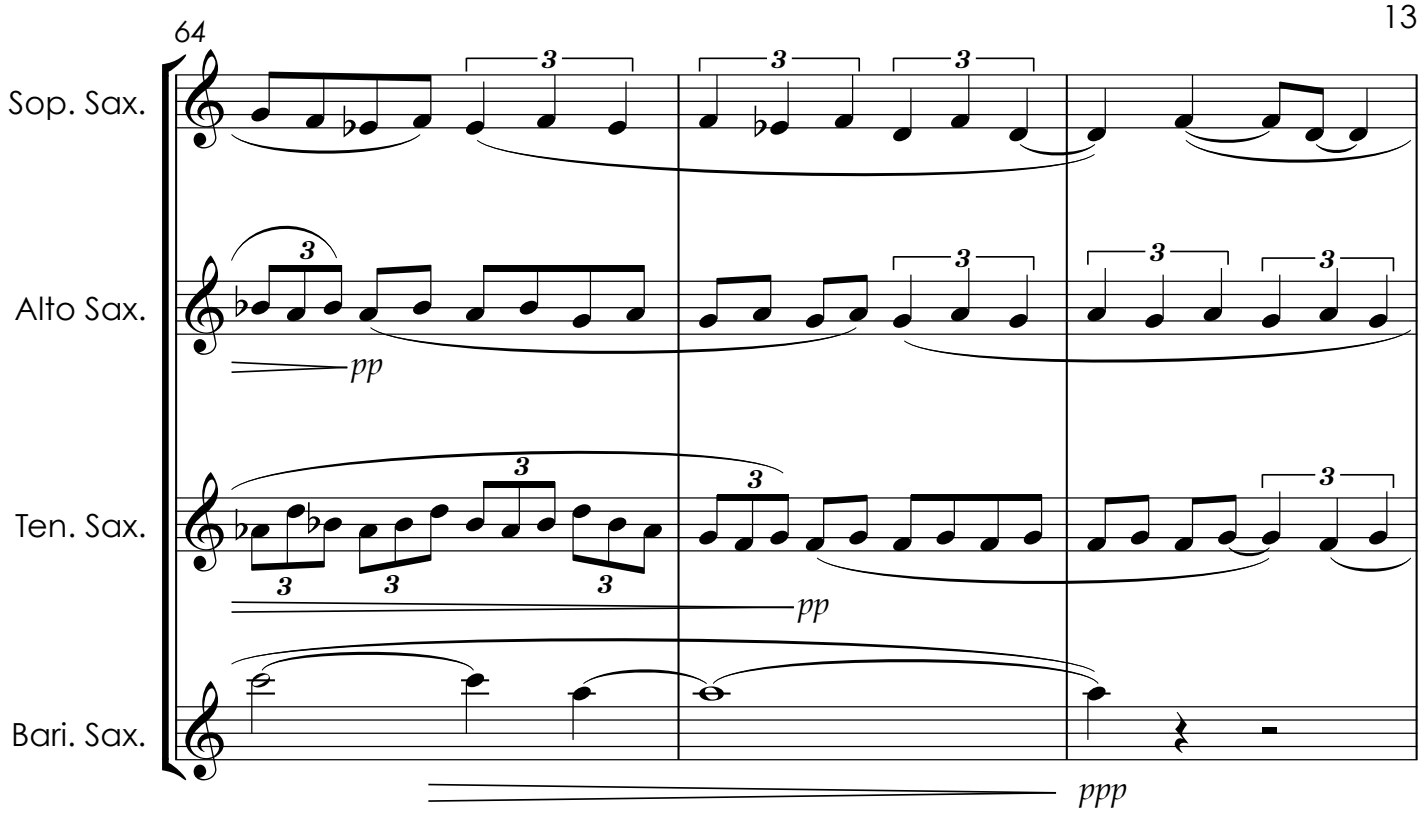
gradually dissolving
(exact rhythmic precision is not required)

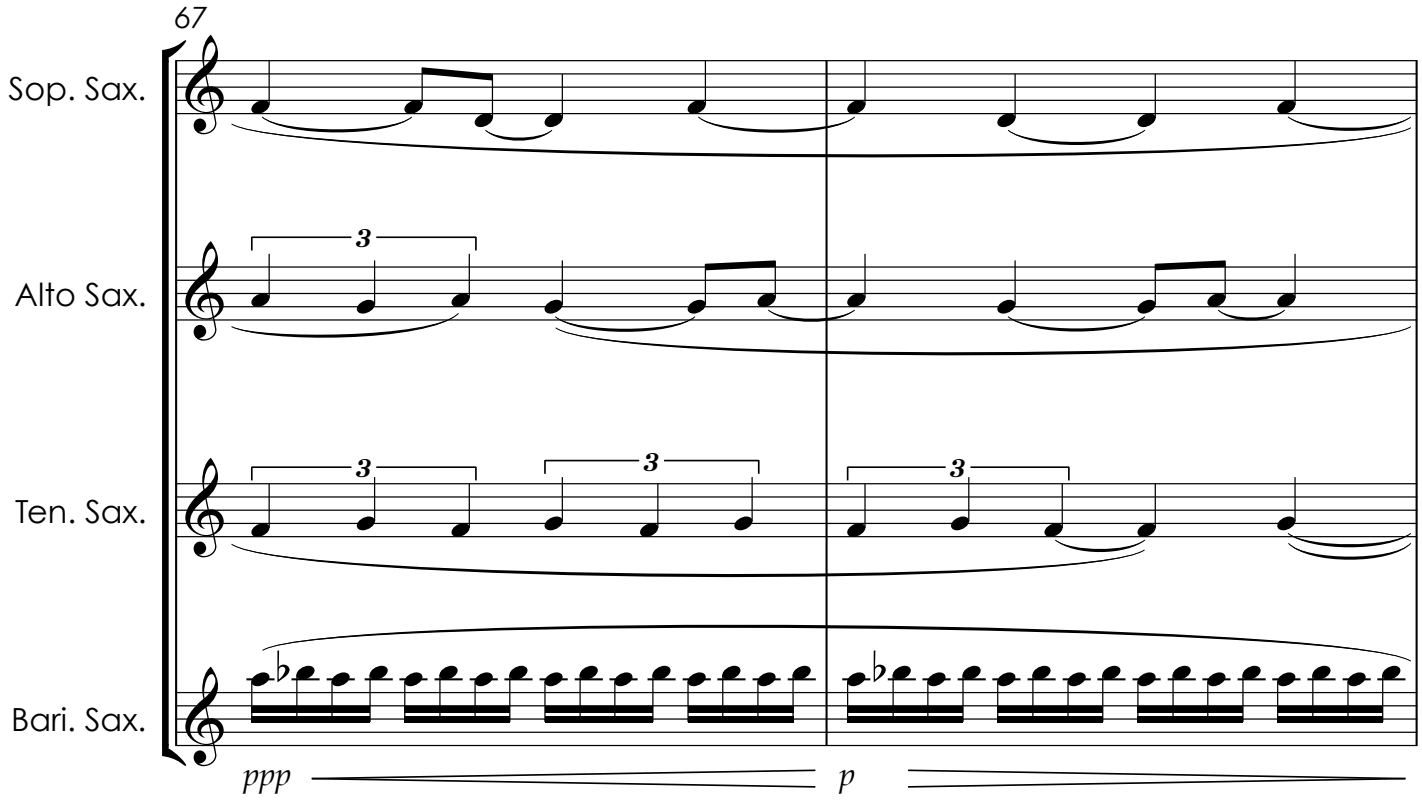
mf

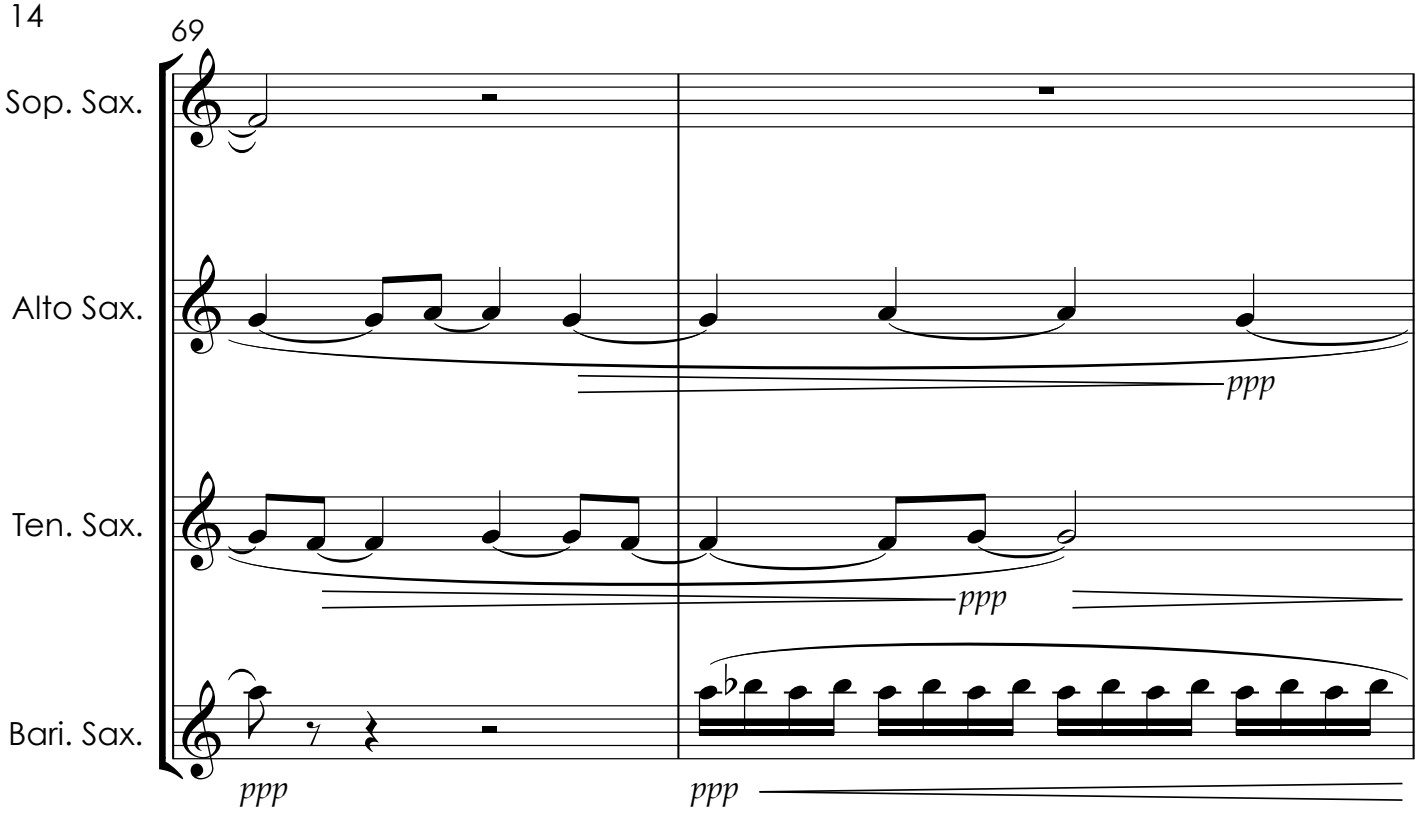
f

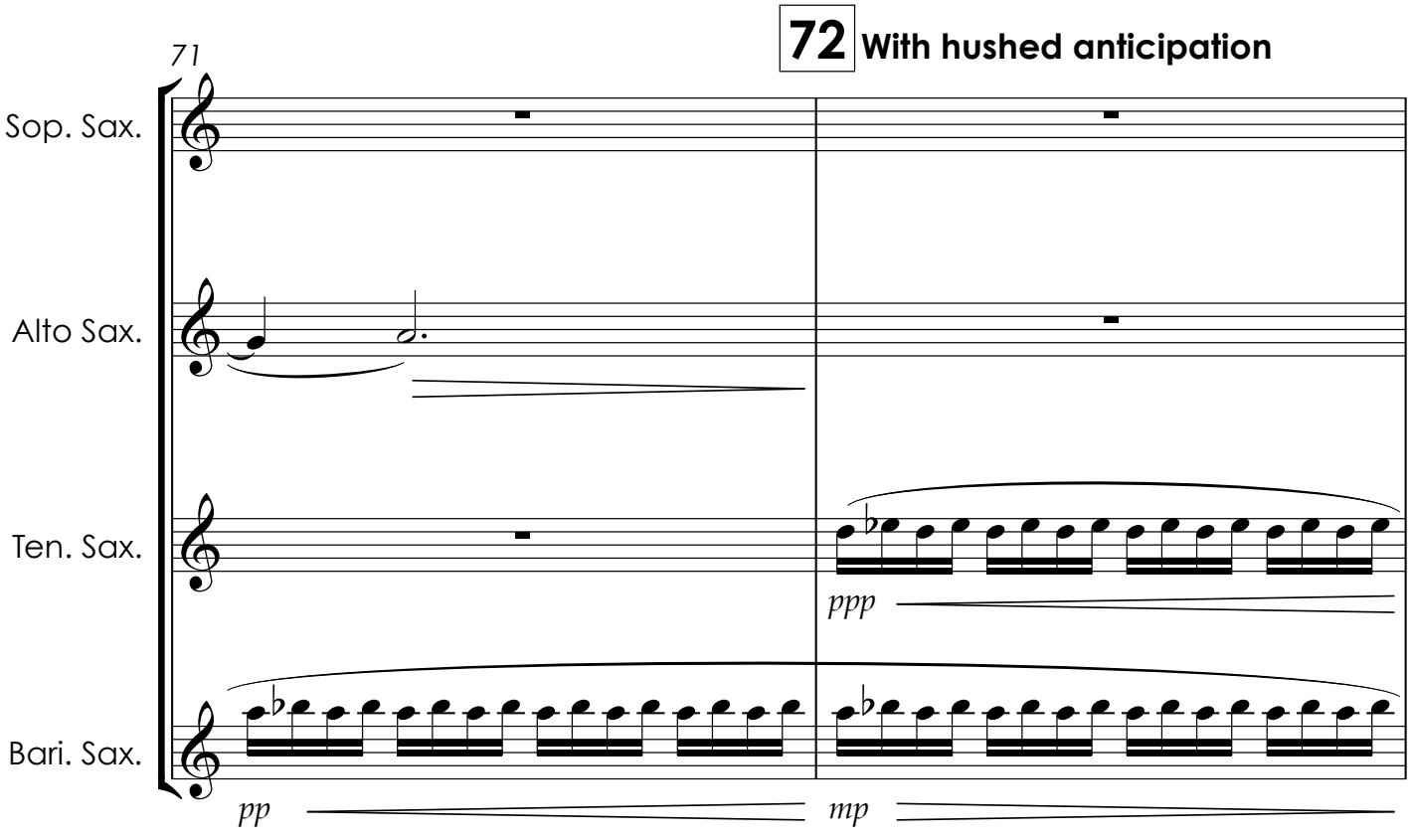

61
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
gradually dissolving (exact rhythmic precision is not required)
mf
mp
mf
mp

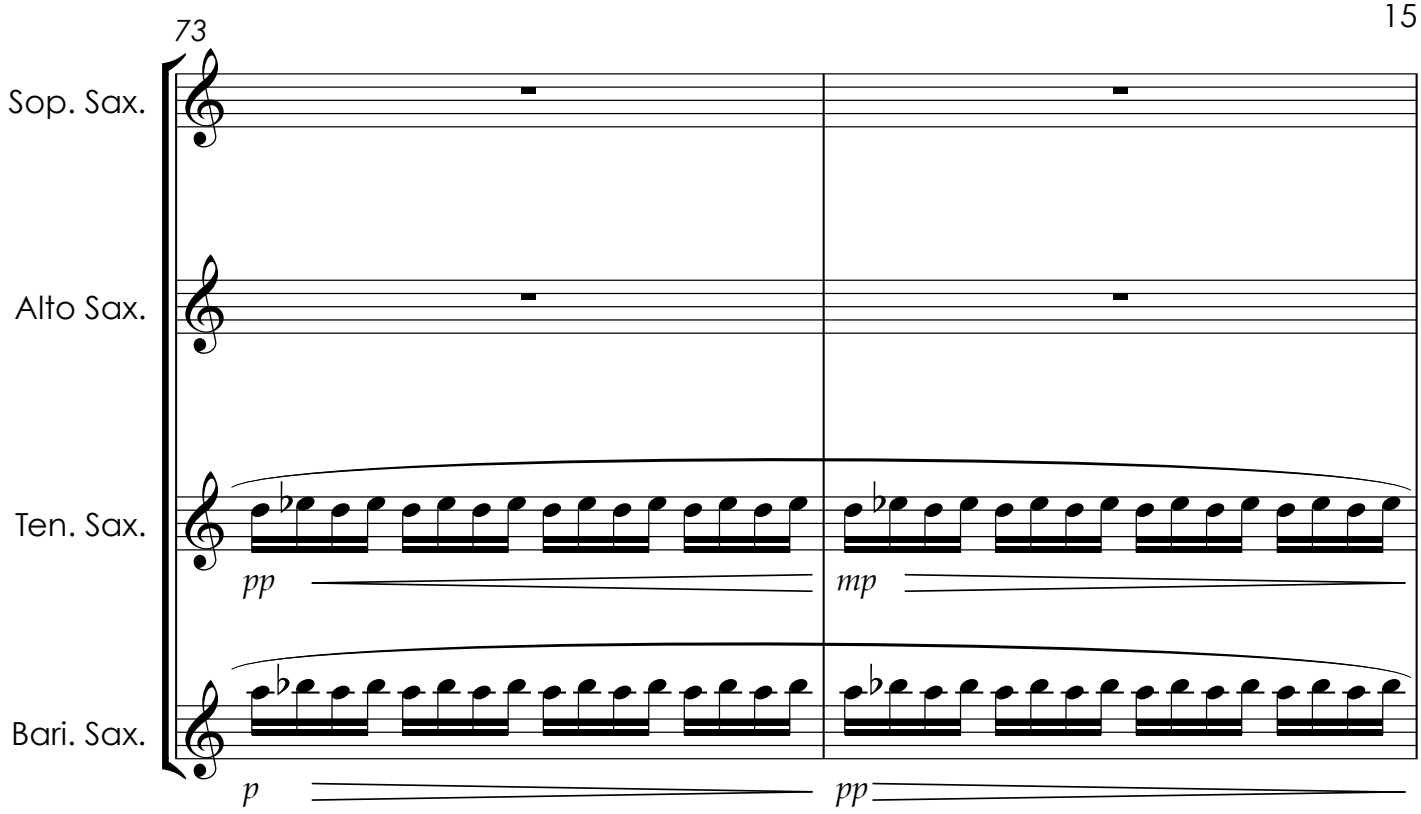

62
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
p
pp
p
mp
p
p

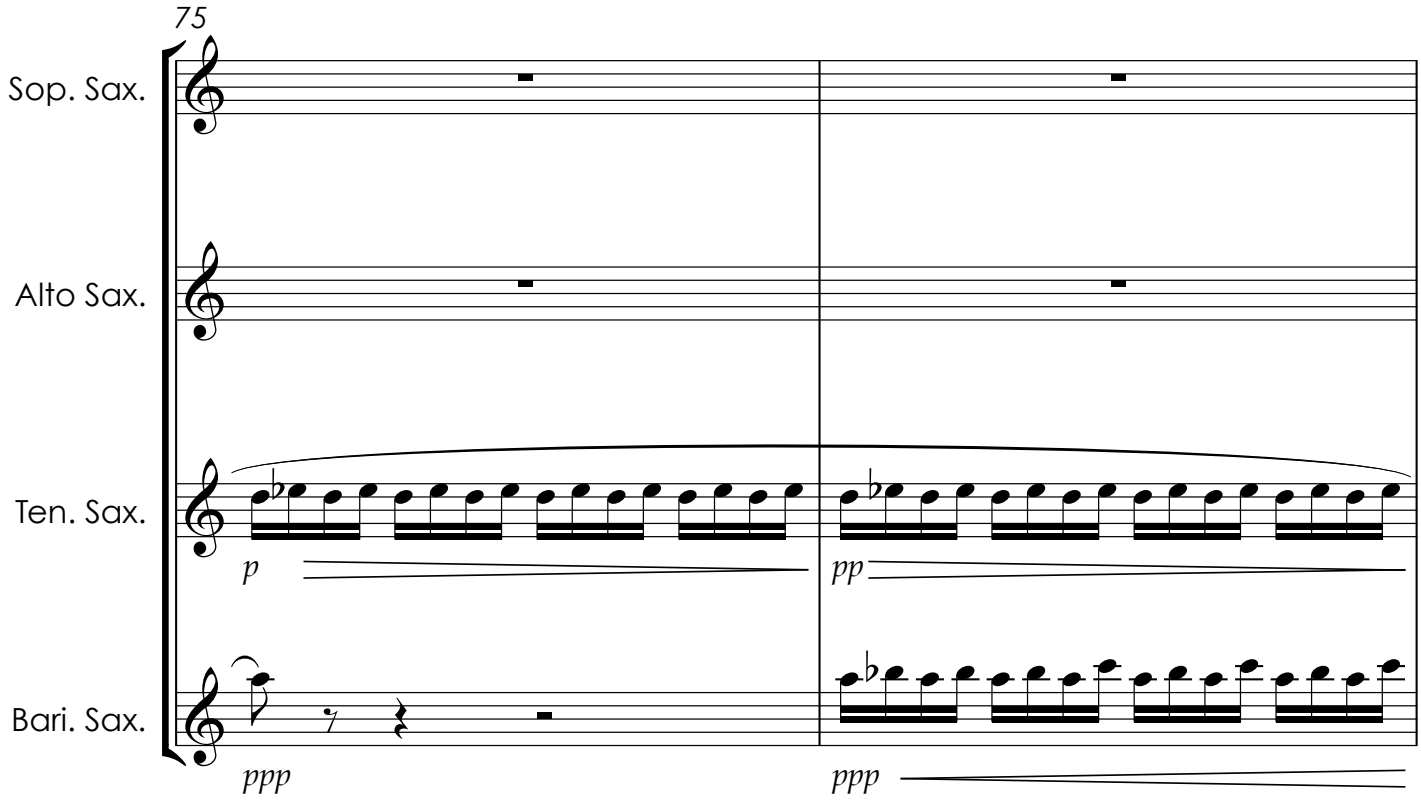

64
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
pp
pp
ppp

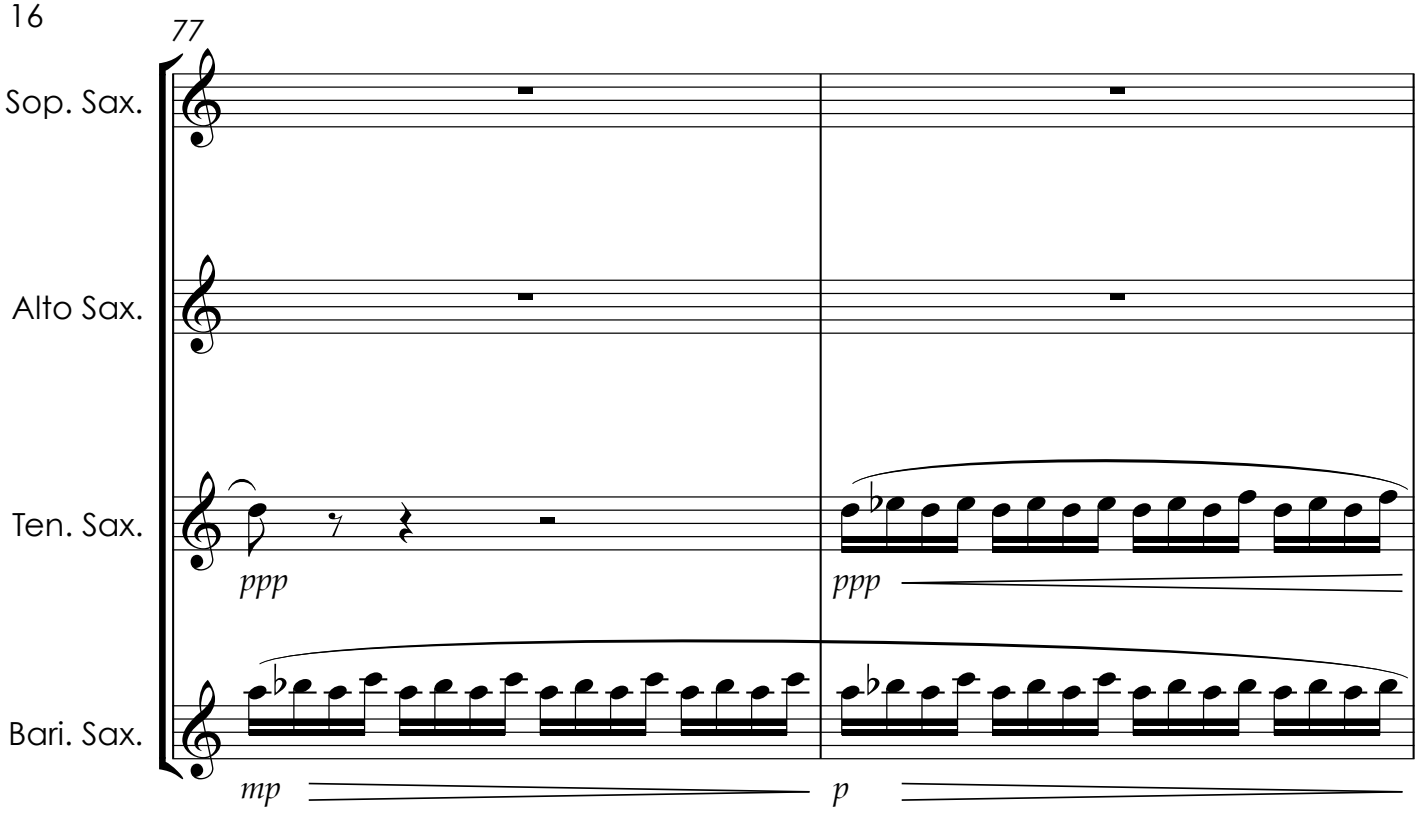

67
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ppp
p

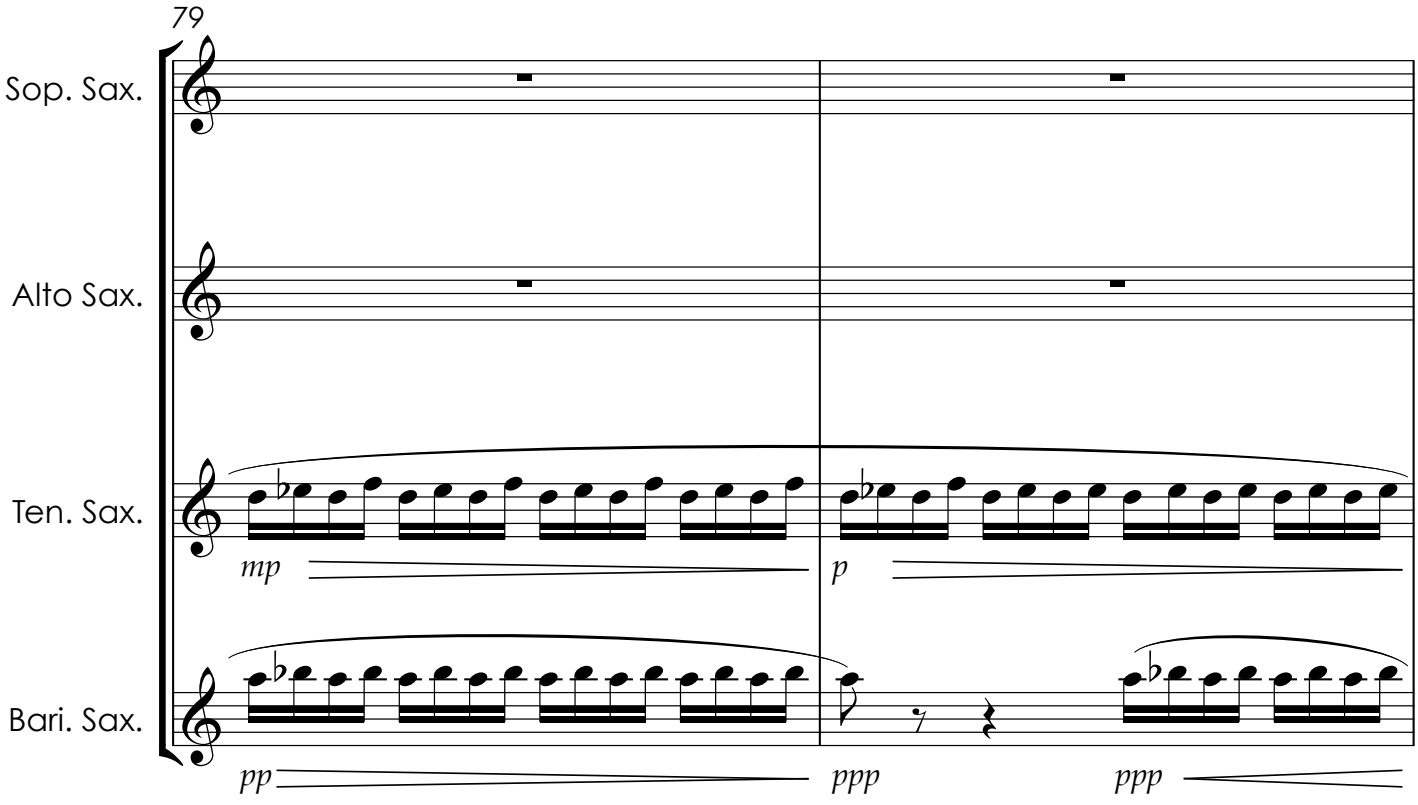

69
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp

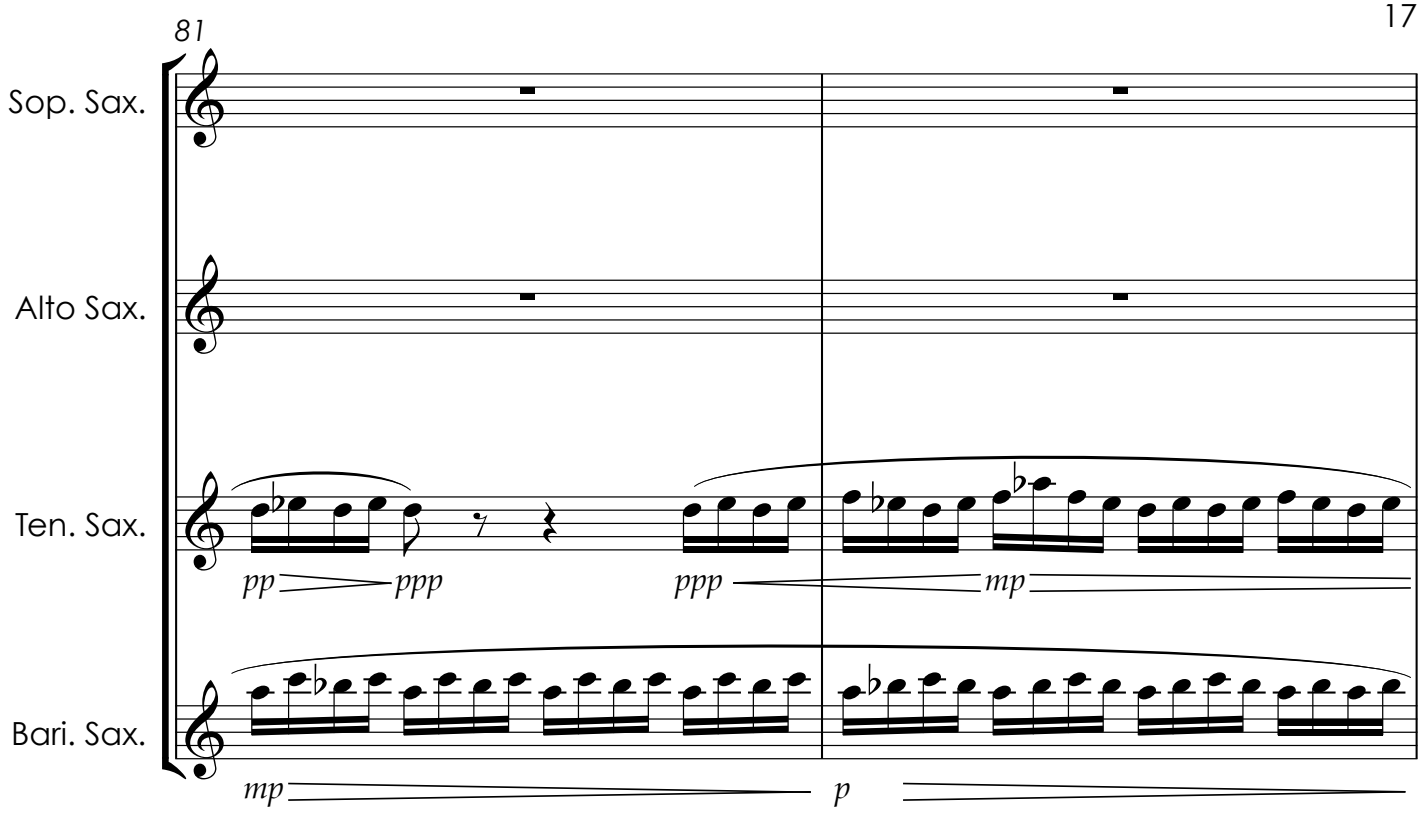

71
72 With hushed anticipation
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ppp
pp
mp

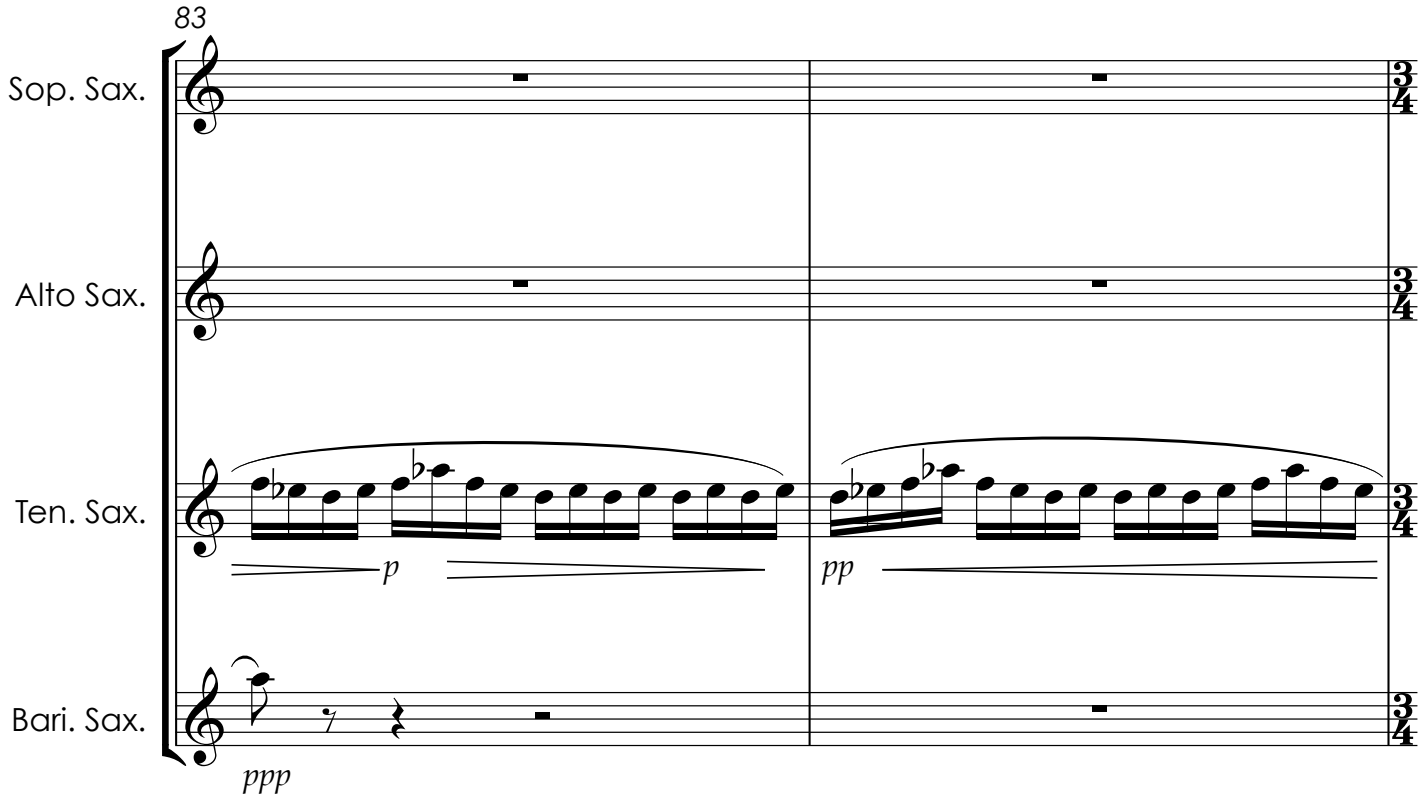

73
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
pp
mp
p
pp

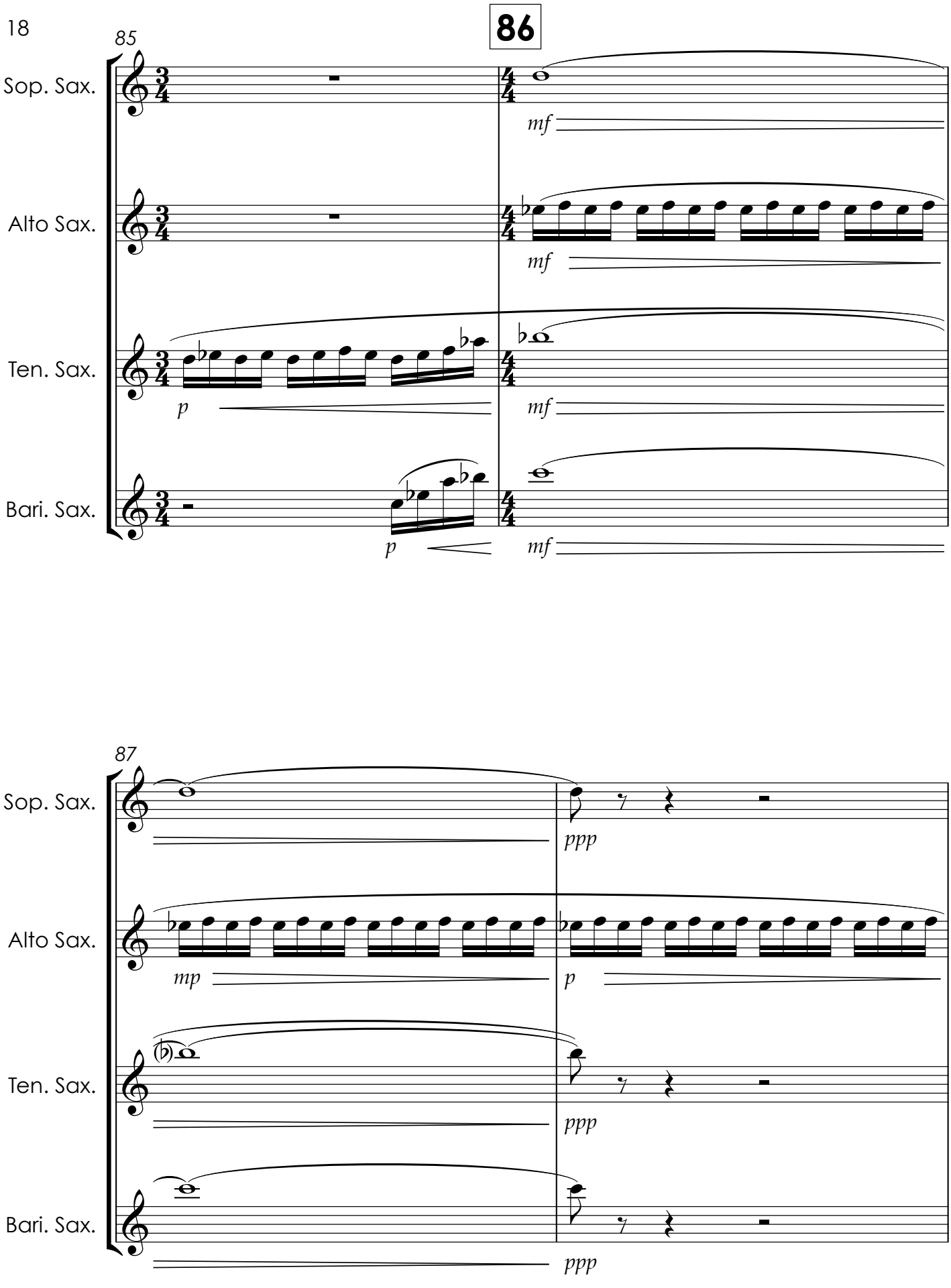

75
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
p
pp
ppp
ppp

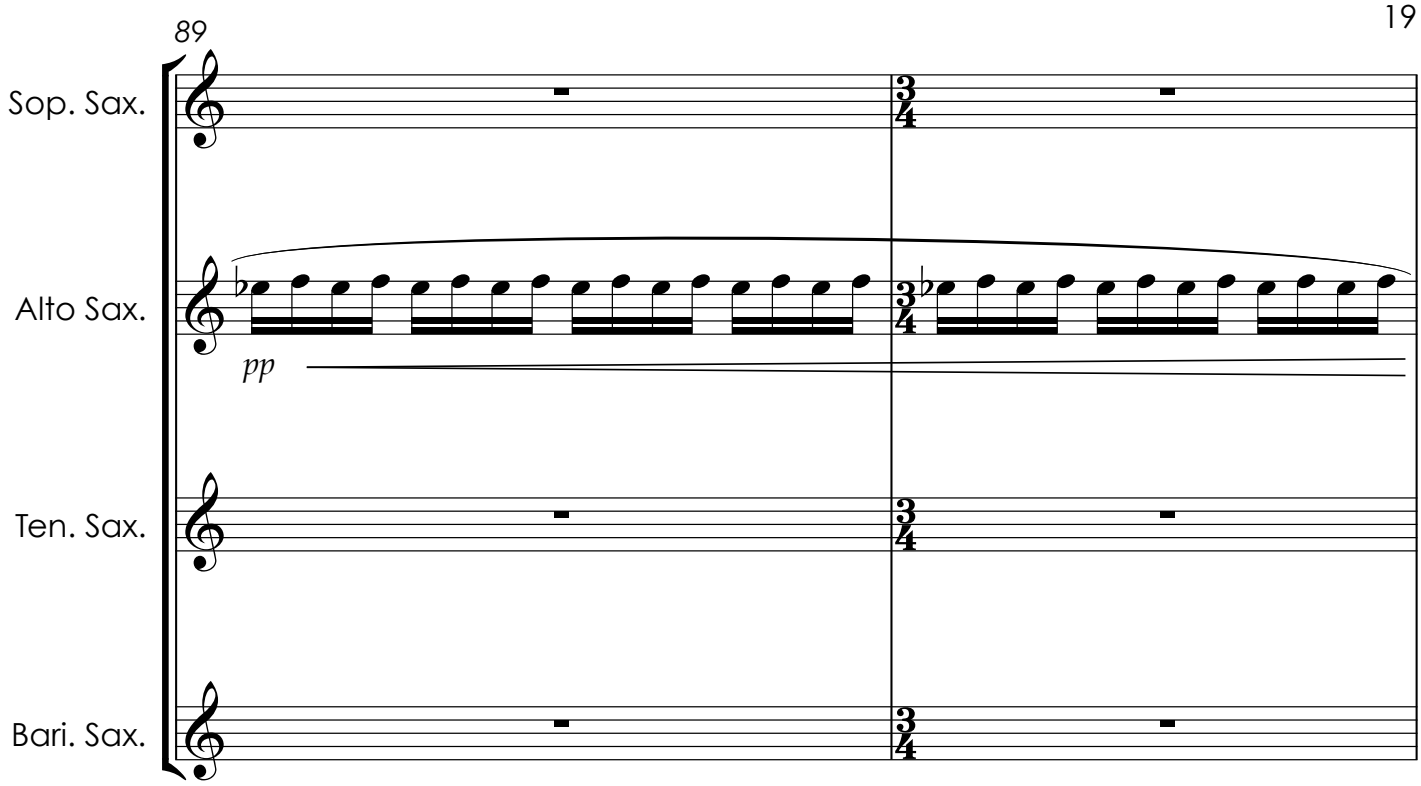

77
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ppp
ppp
mp
p

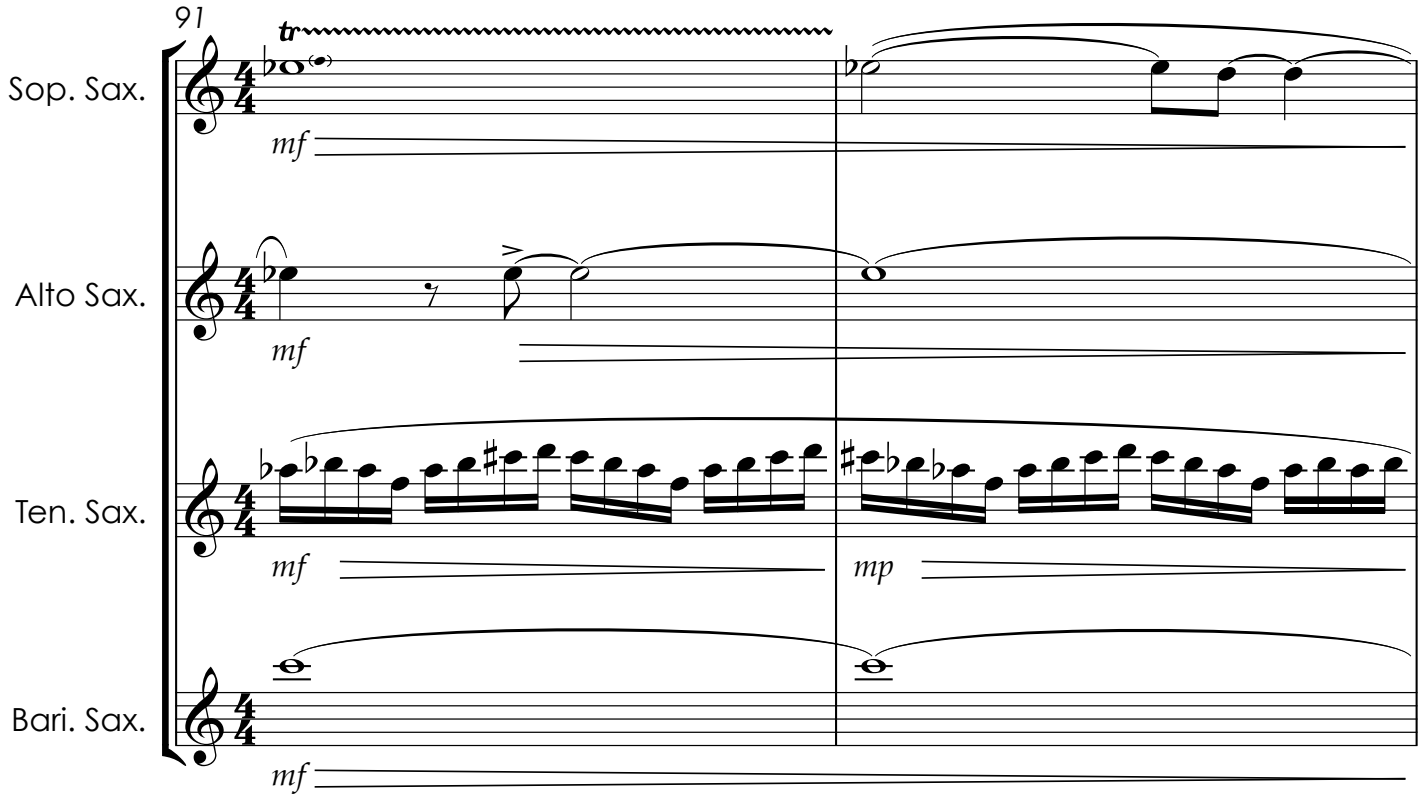

79
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mp
p
pp
ppp
ppp

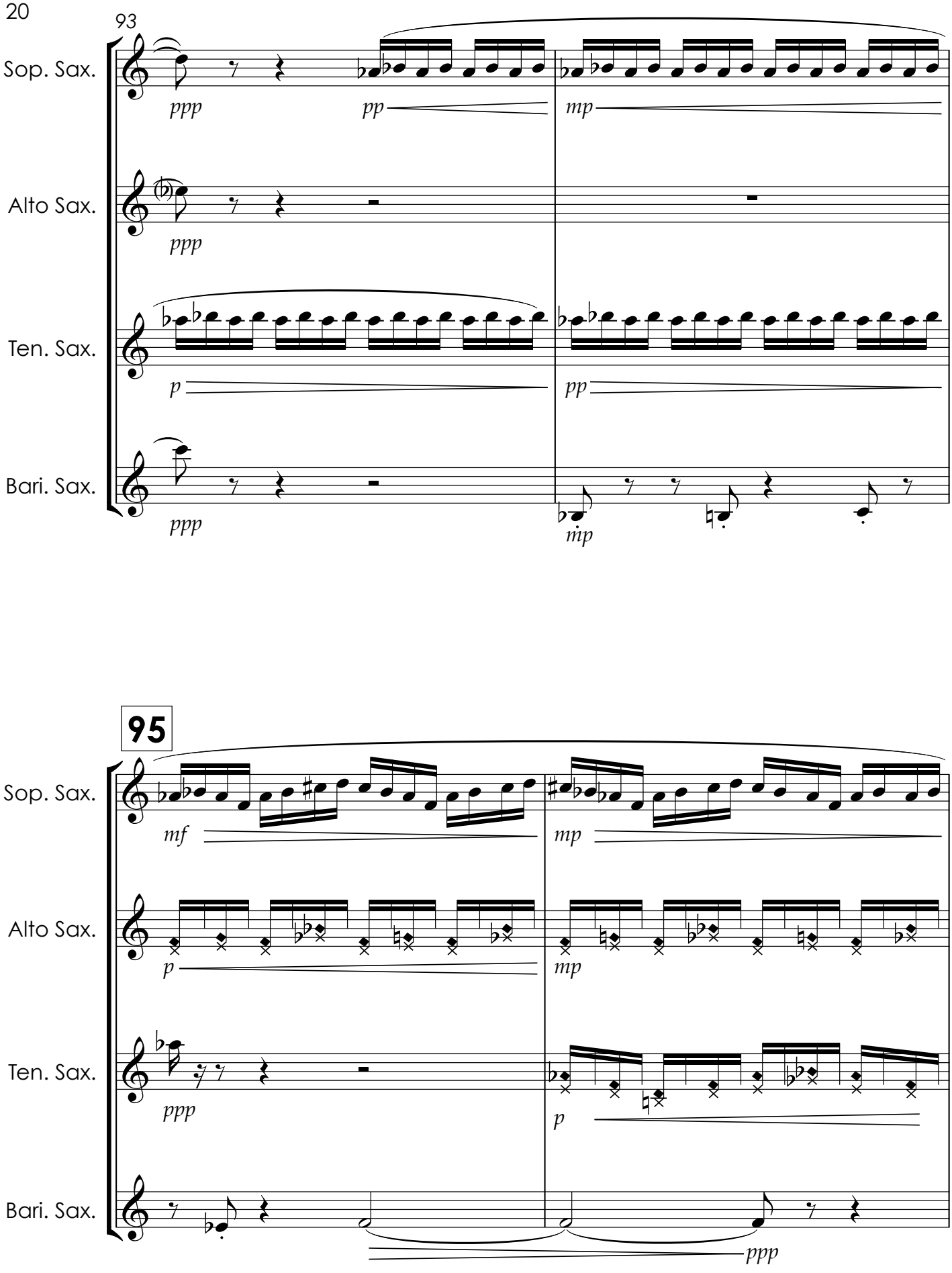

81
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
pp
ppp
ppp
mp
mp
p

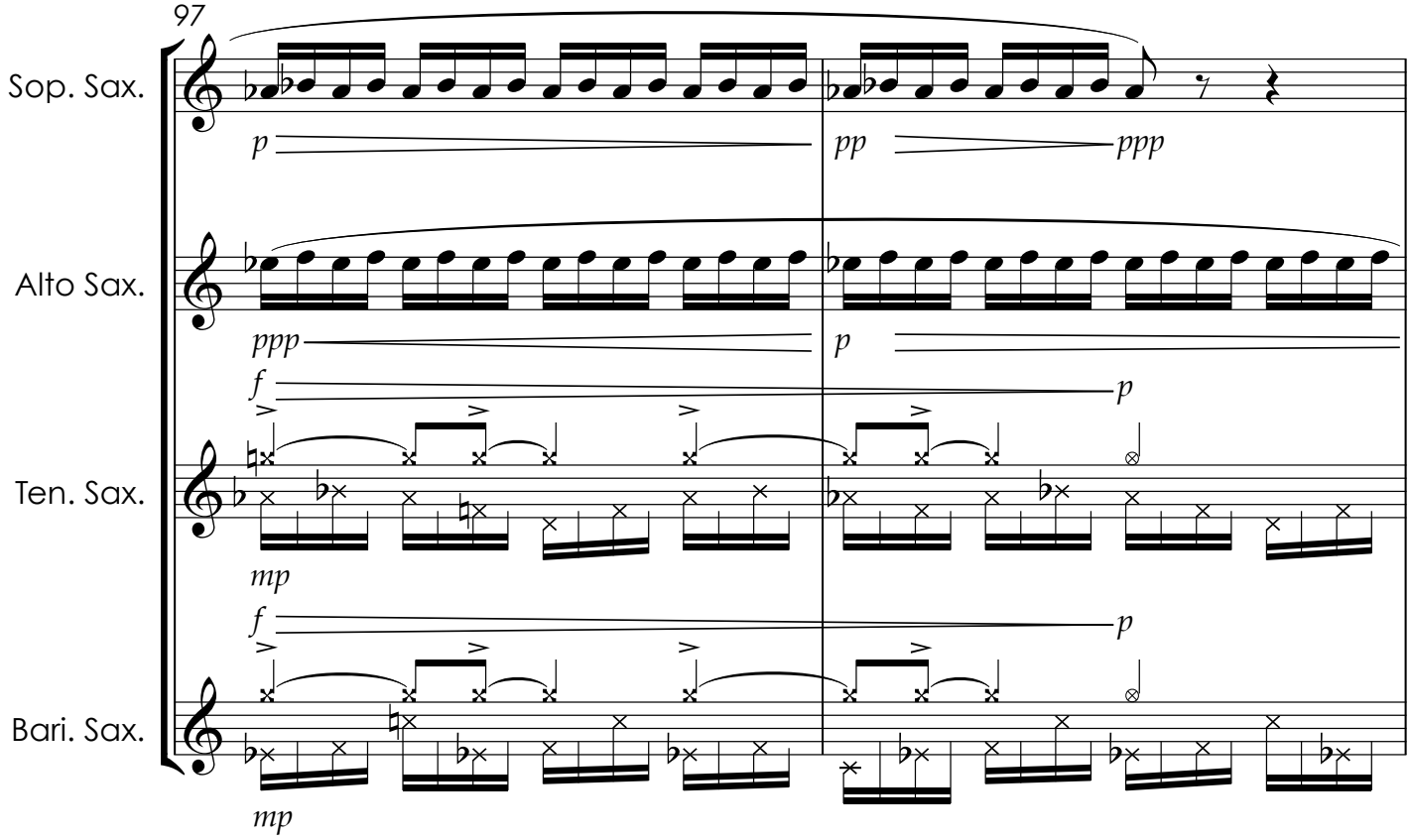

83
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
p
pp
ppp

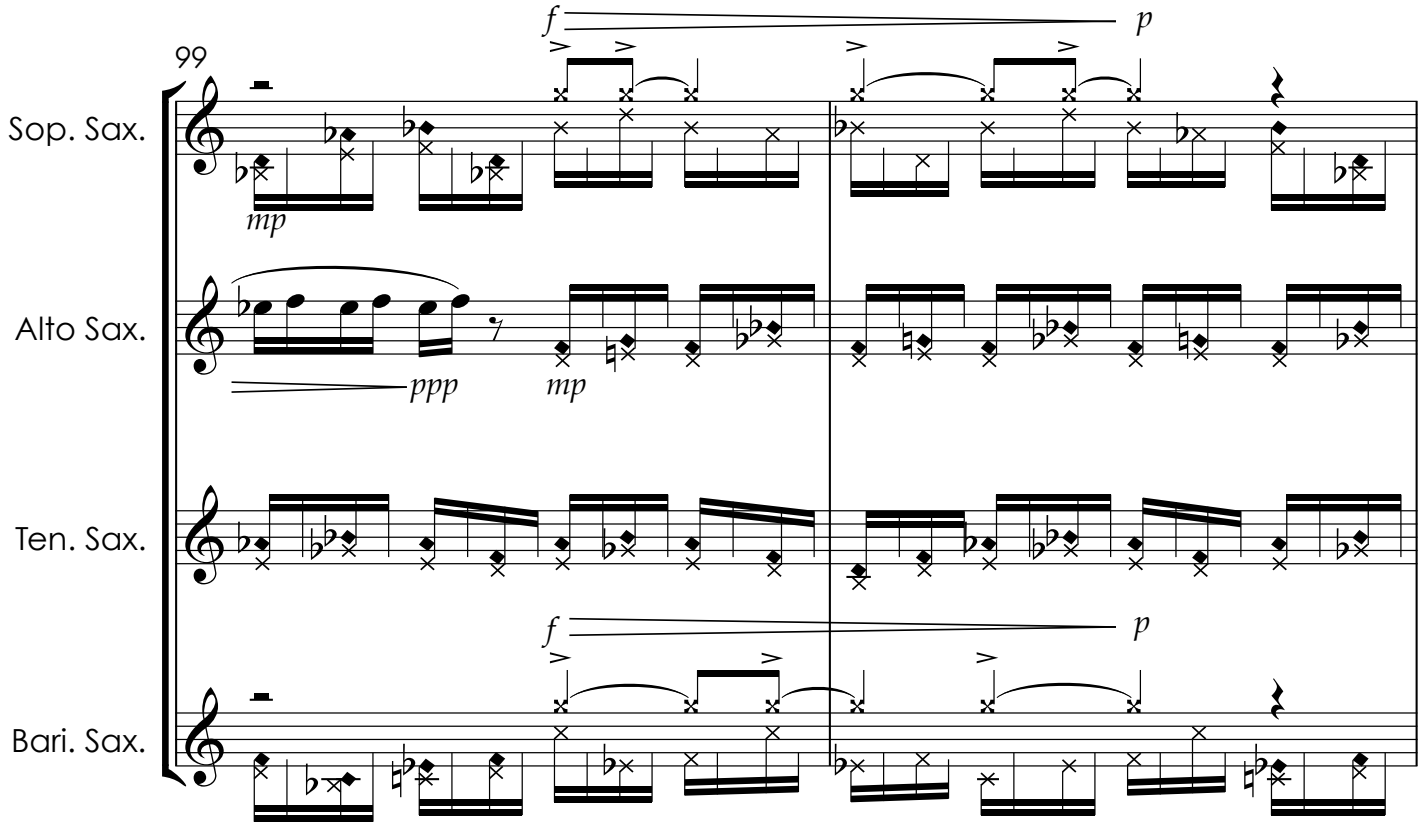

85
86
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
p
87
mp
ppp

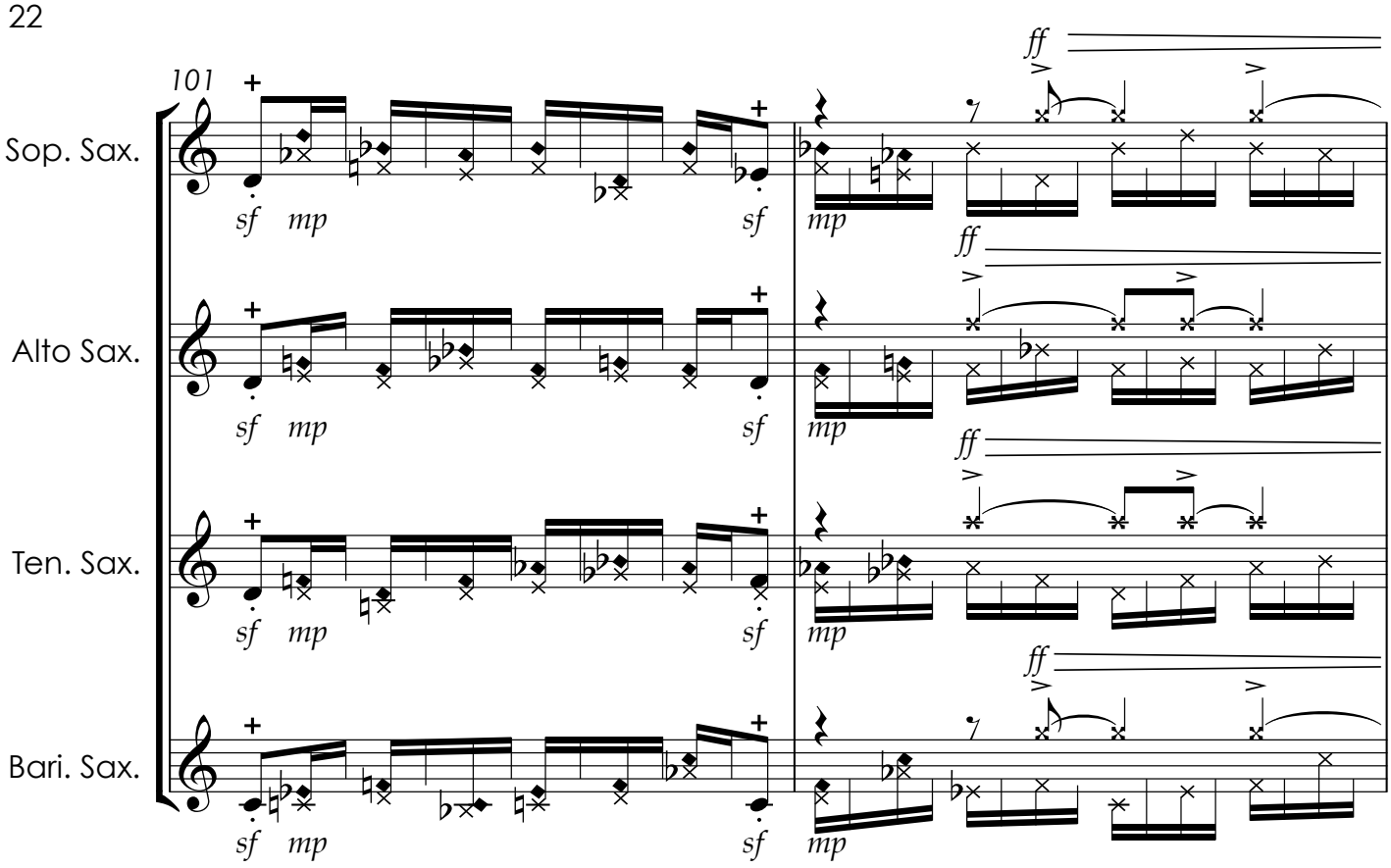

89
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
pp
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.

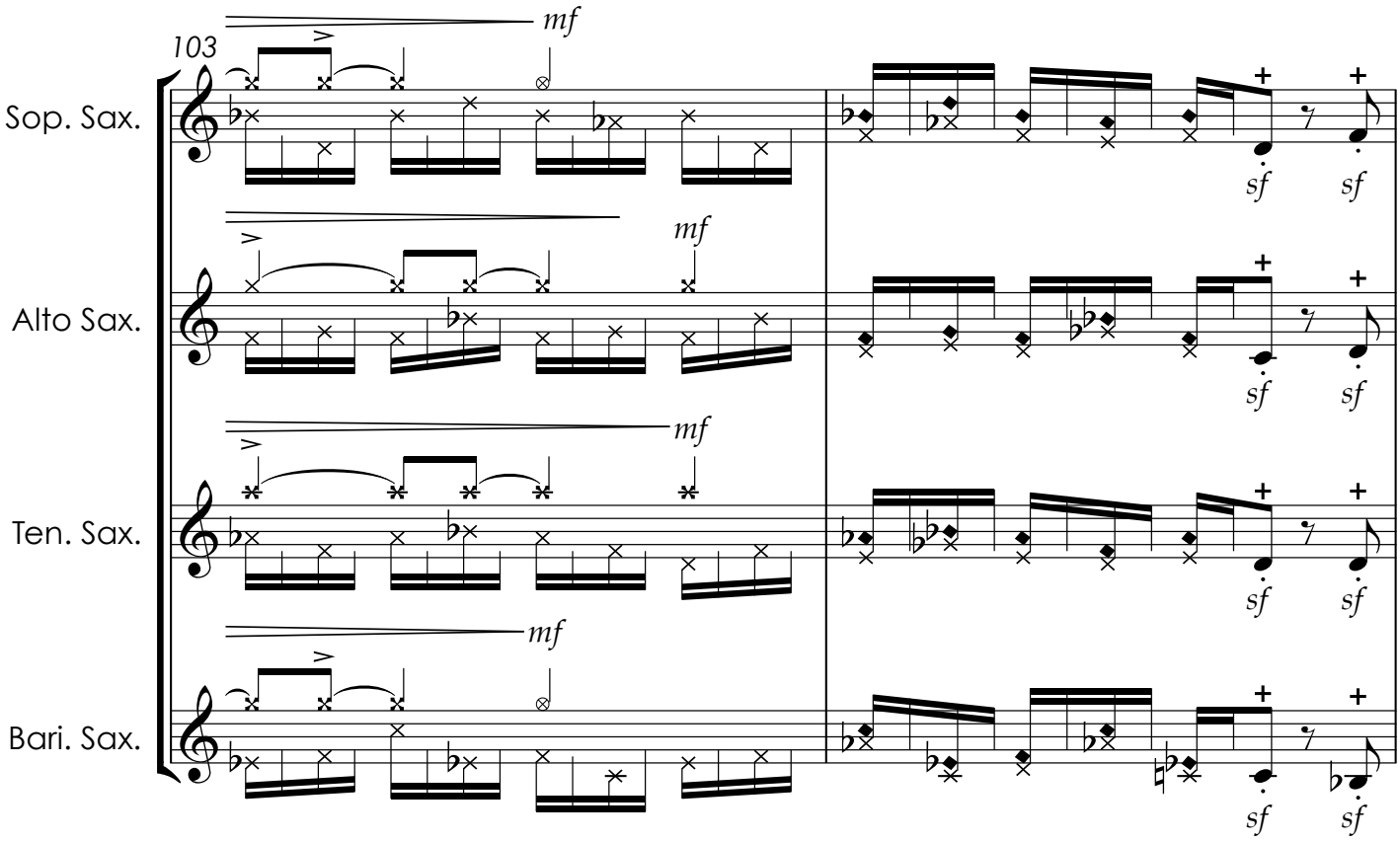

91
tr
Sop. Sax.
mf
Alto Sax.
mf
Ten. Sax.
mf
mp
Bari. Sax.
mf

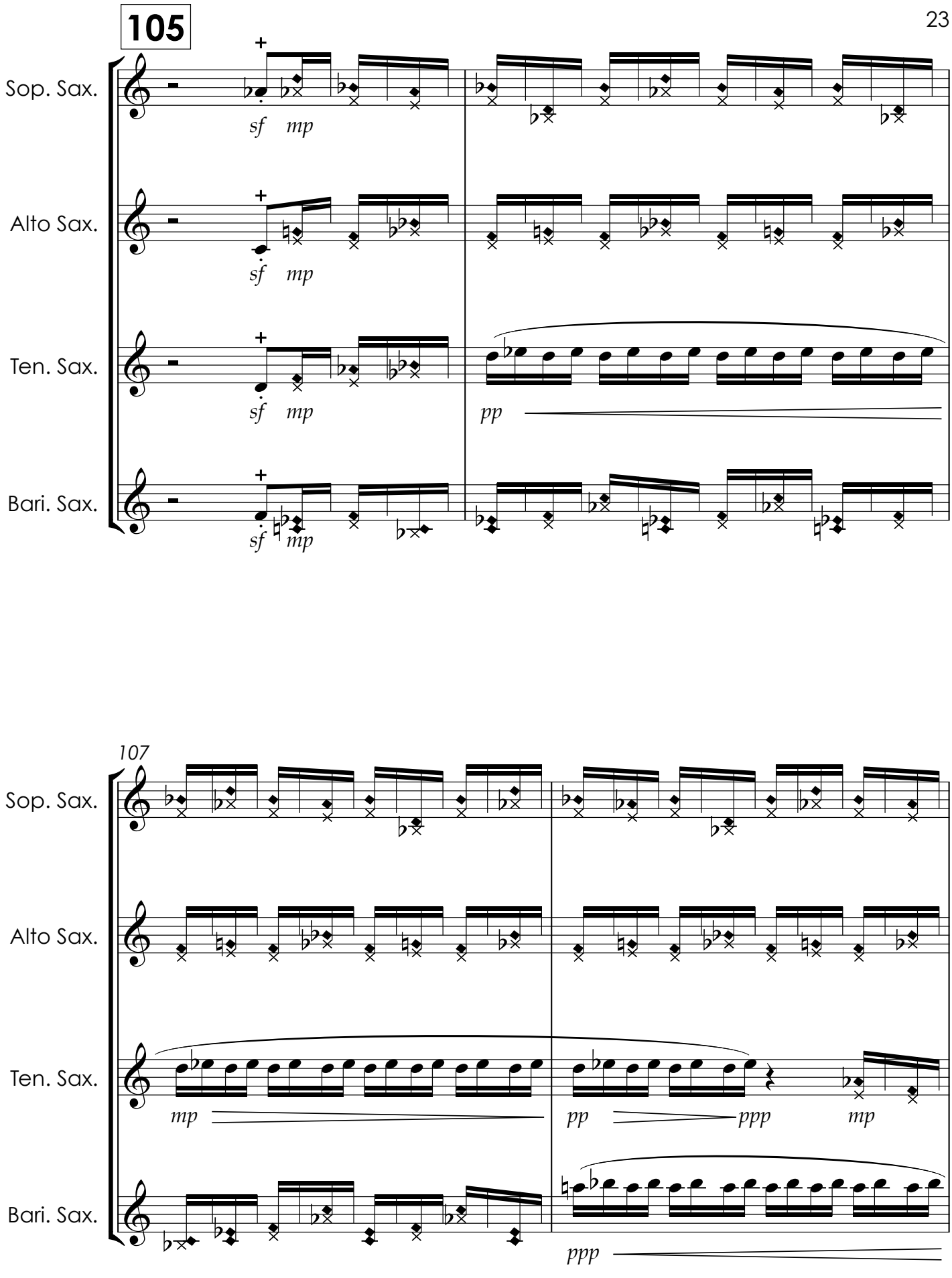

93
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ppp
pp
mp
ppp
p
pp
ppp
mp
95
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
mp
p
mp
ppp
p
ppp

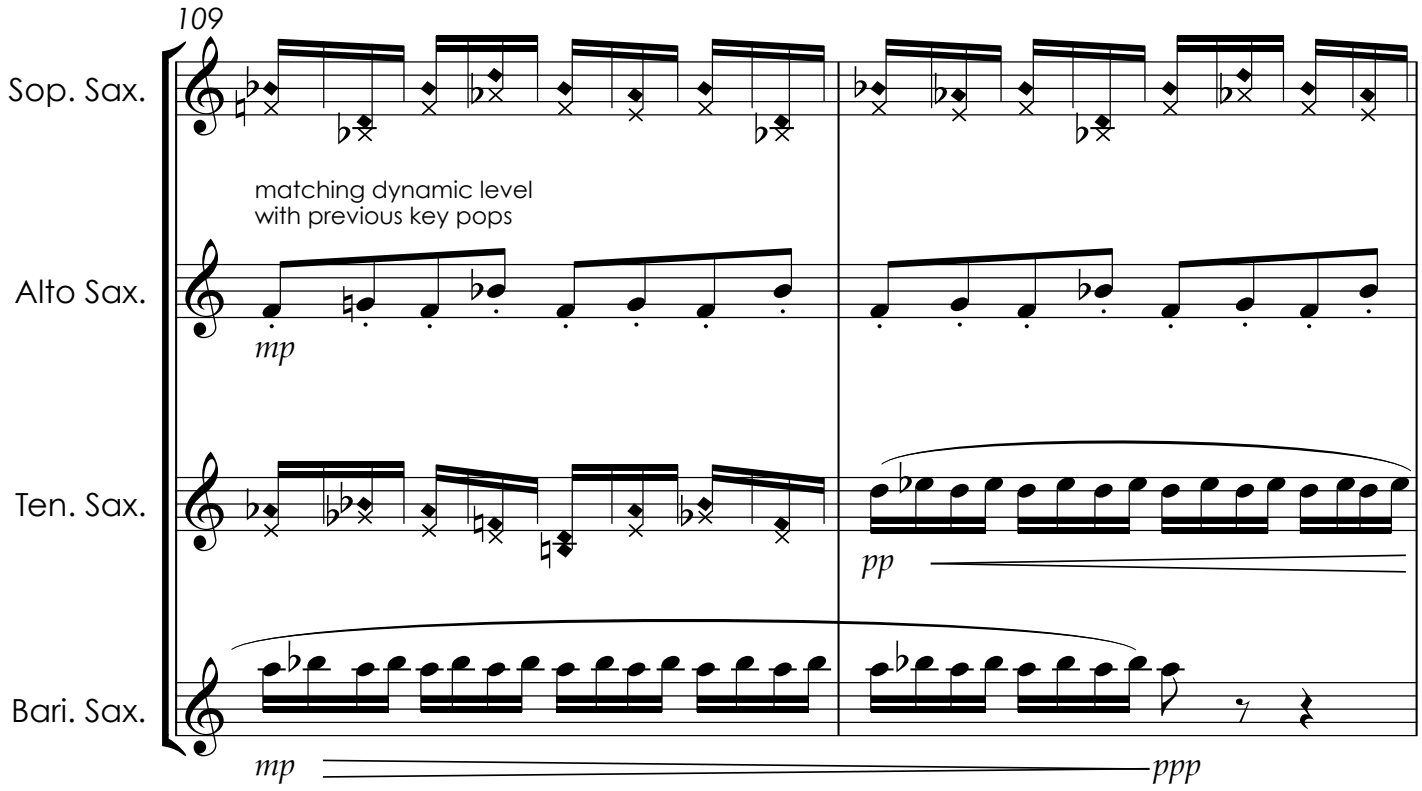

97
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
p
pp
ppp
ppp
p
f
p
mp
f
p
mp

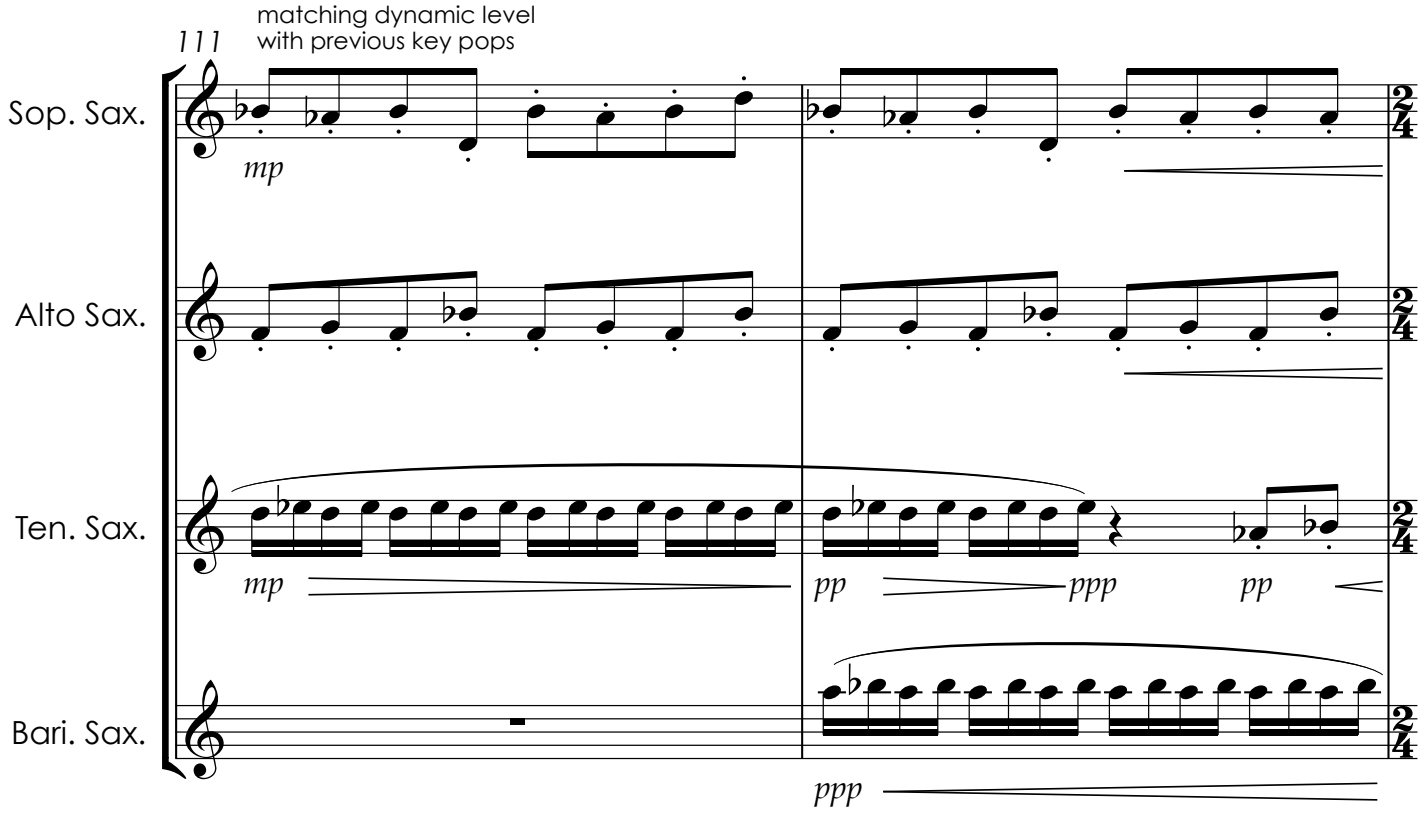

99
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
f
p
mp
ppp
mp
f
p

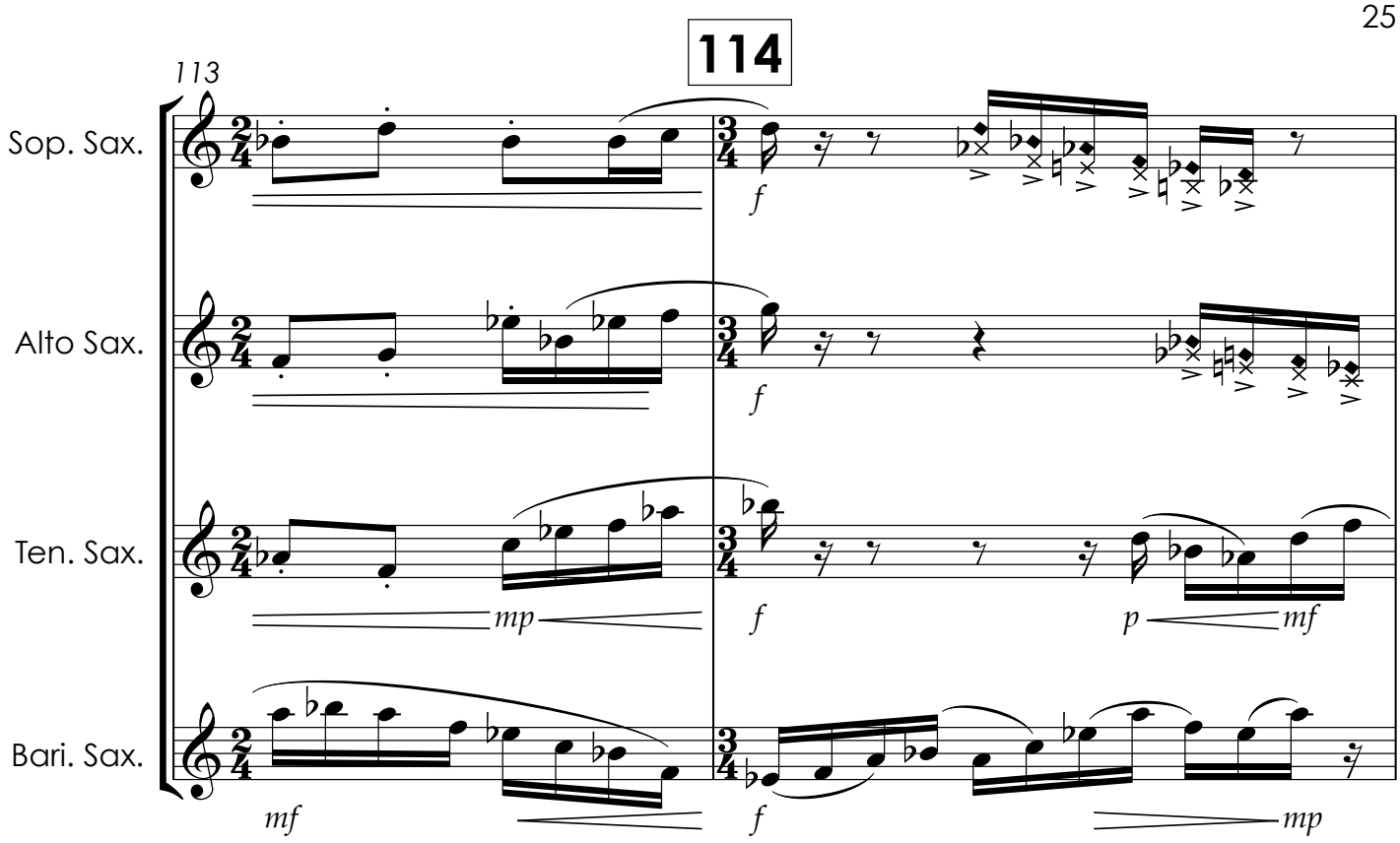

101
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
sf mp
sf
mp
ff

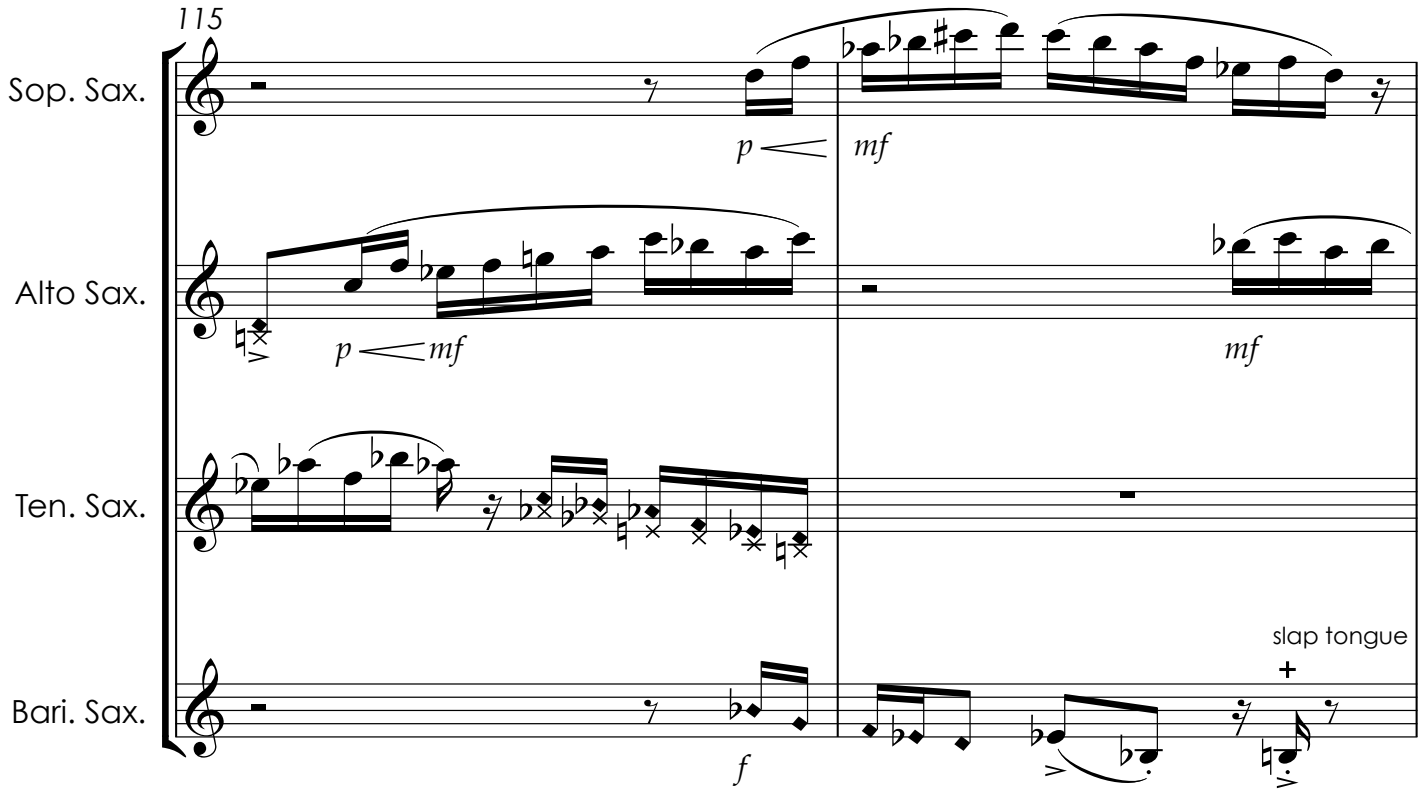

103
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
sf

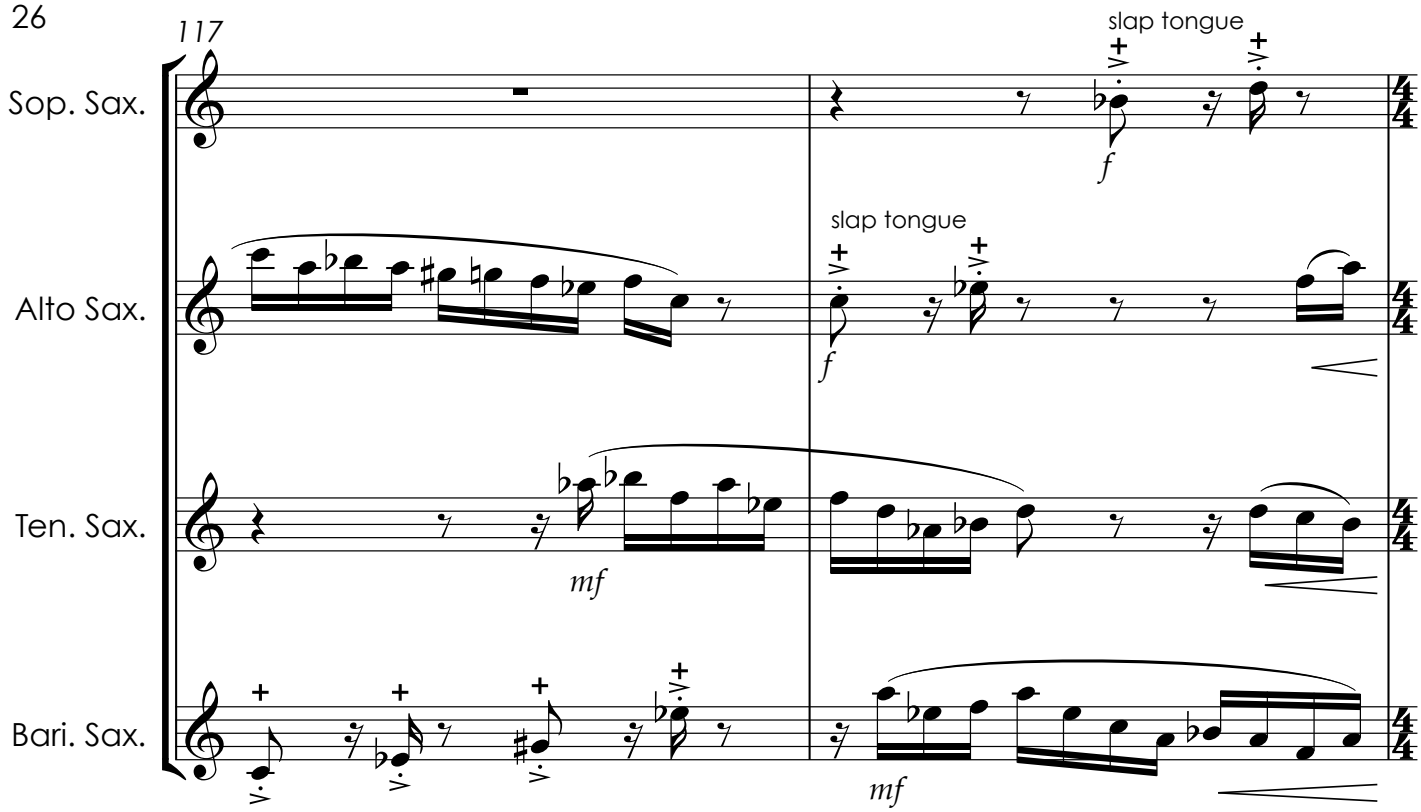

105
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
sf mp
sf mp
sf mp
sf mp
pp
107
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mp
pp
ppp
mp
ppp

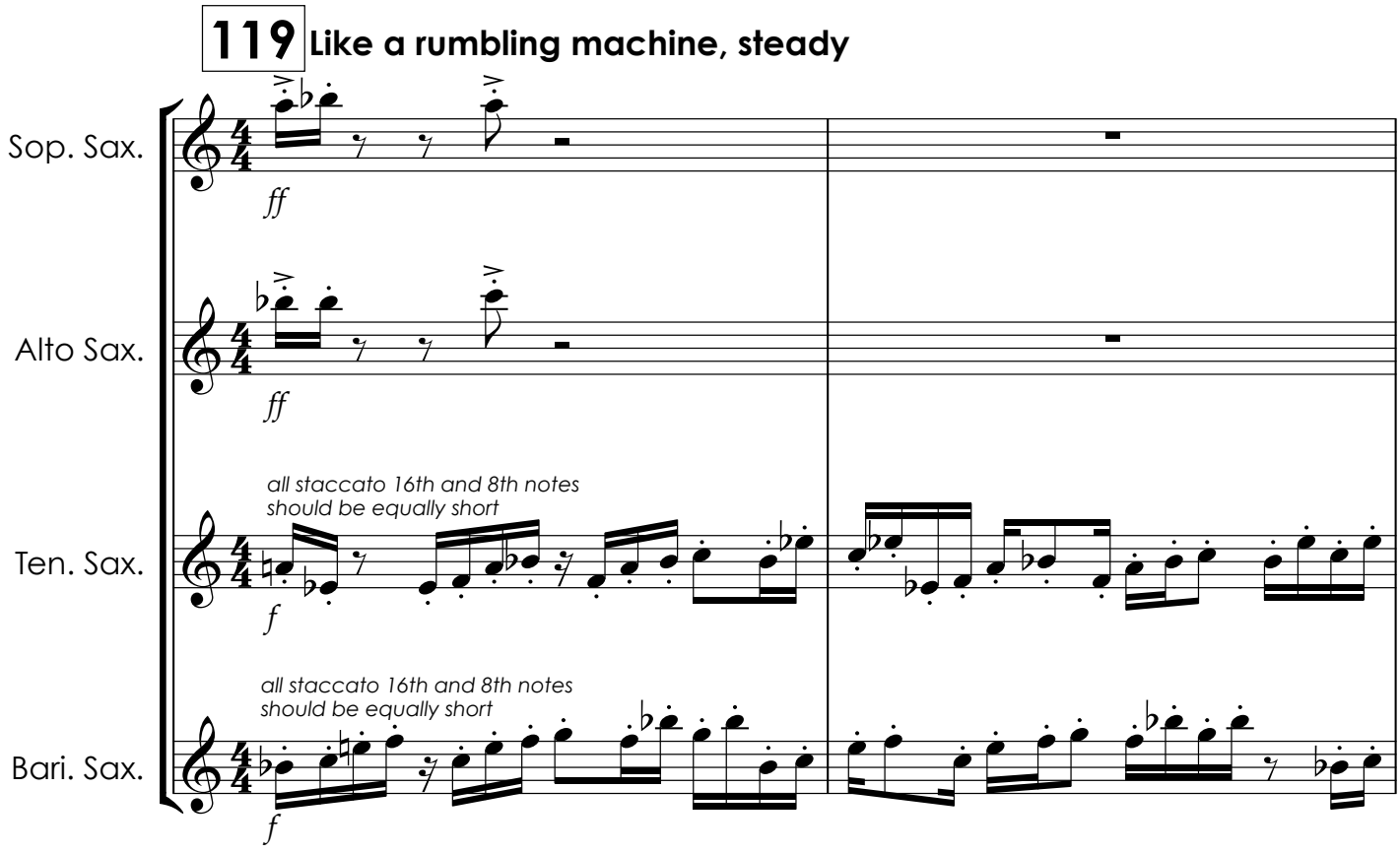

109
Sop. Sax.
matching dynamic level
with previous key pops
Alto Sax.
mp
Ten. Sax.
pp
Bari. Sax.
mp
ppp

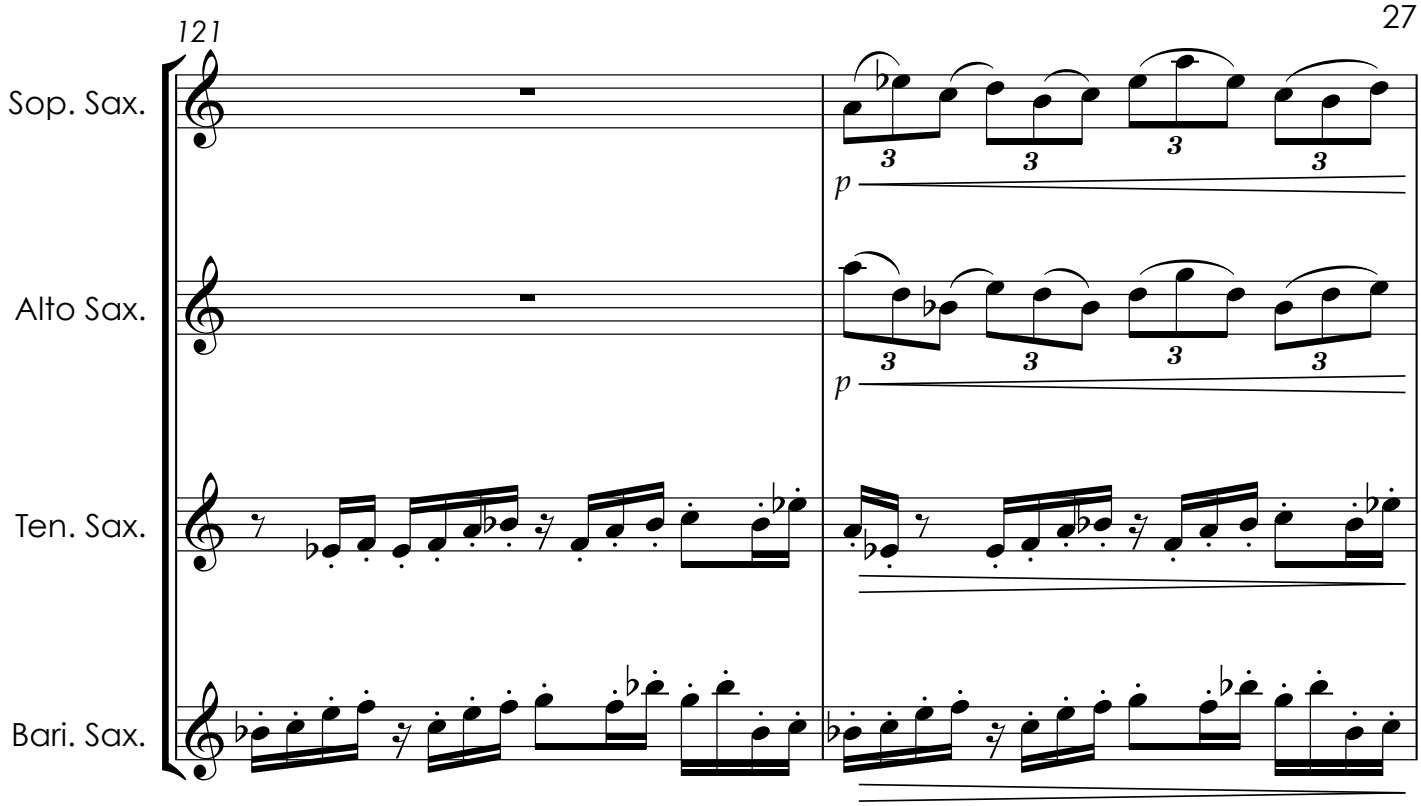

111
matching dynamic level
with previous key pops
Sop. Sax.
mp
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
mp
pp
ppp
pp
Bari. Sax.
ppp

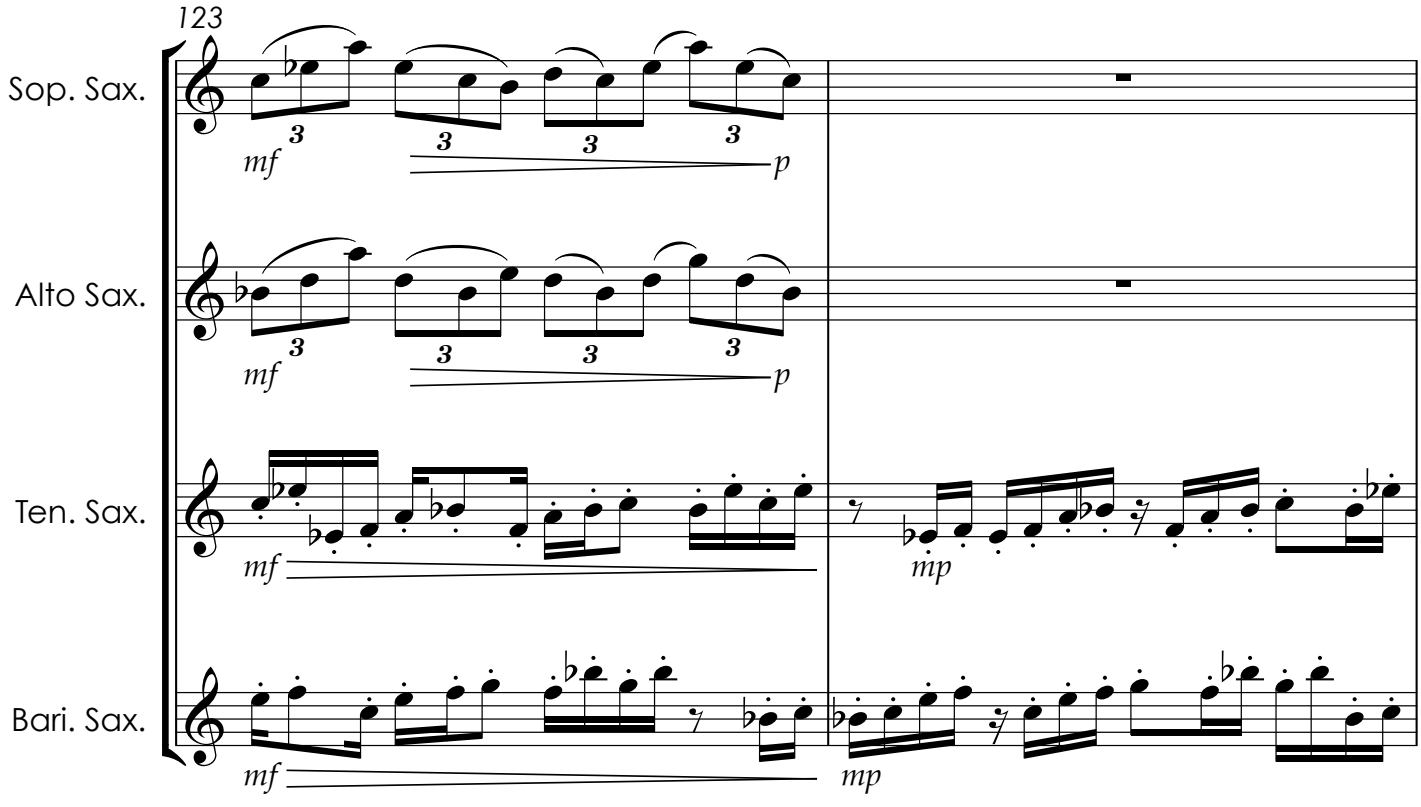

114
113
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
f
mp
p

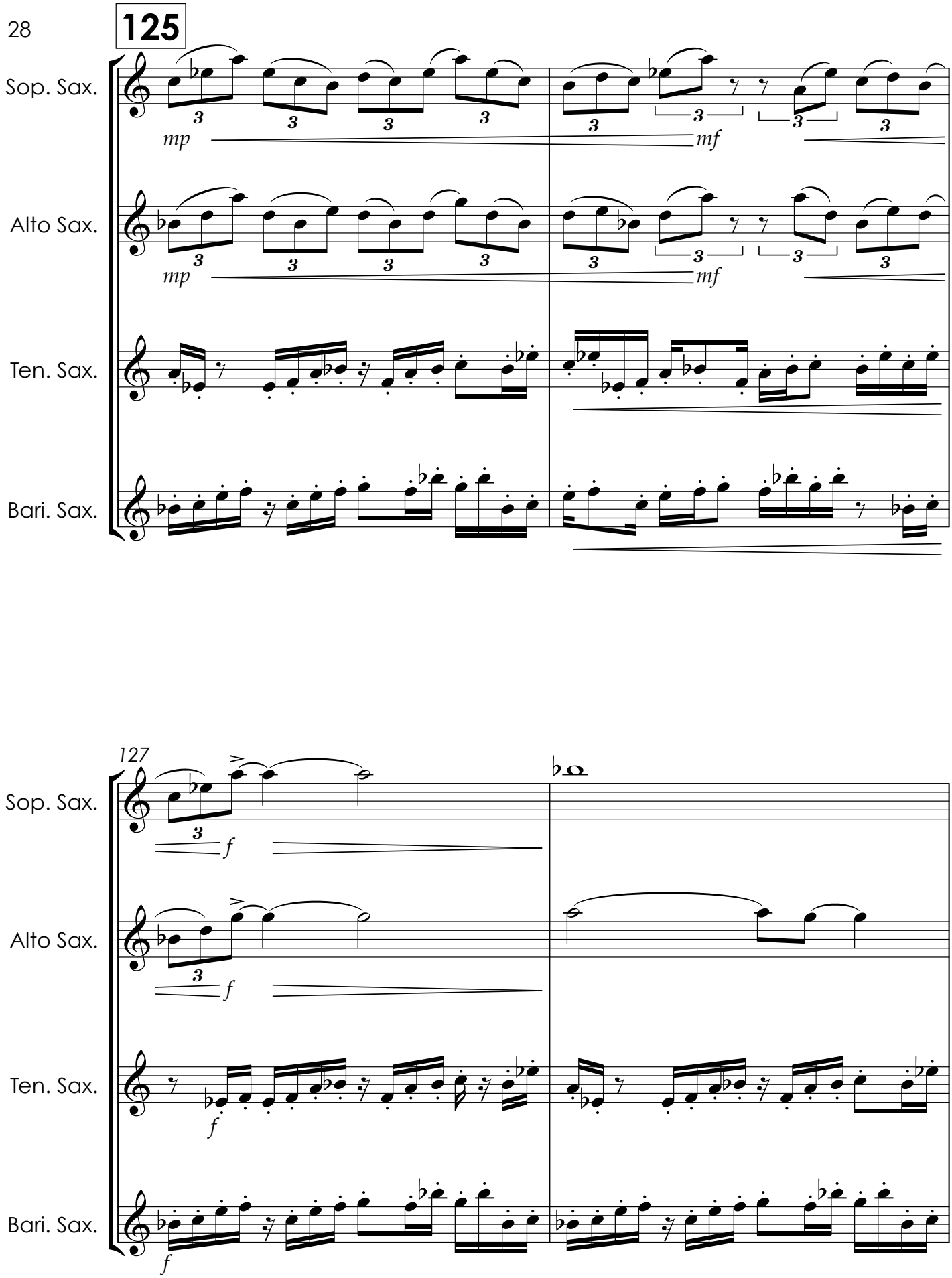

115
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
p
mf
slap tongue

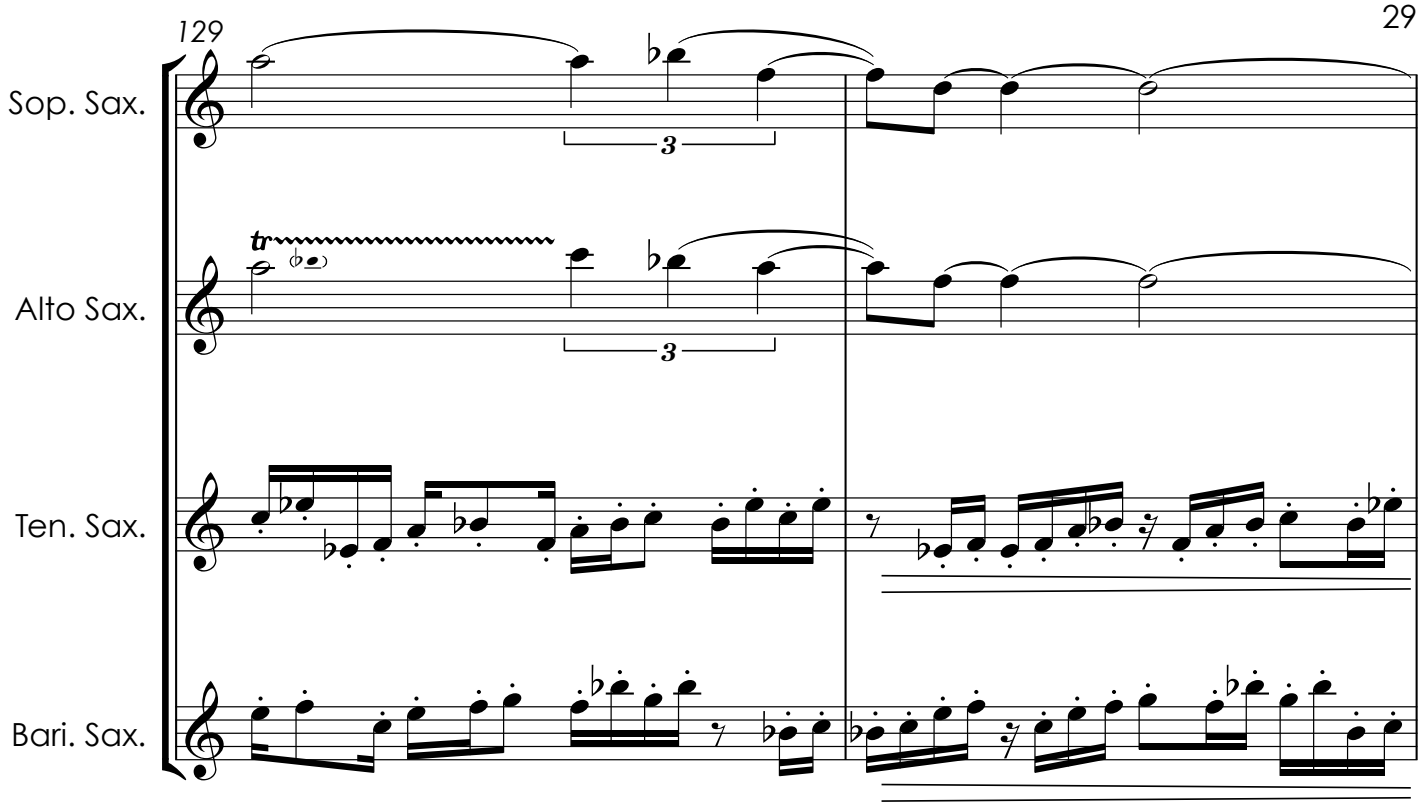

117
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
slap tongue
slap tongue
f
f
mf
mf

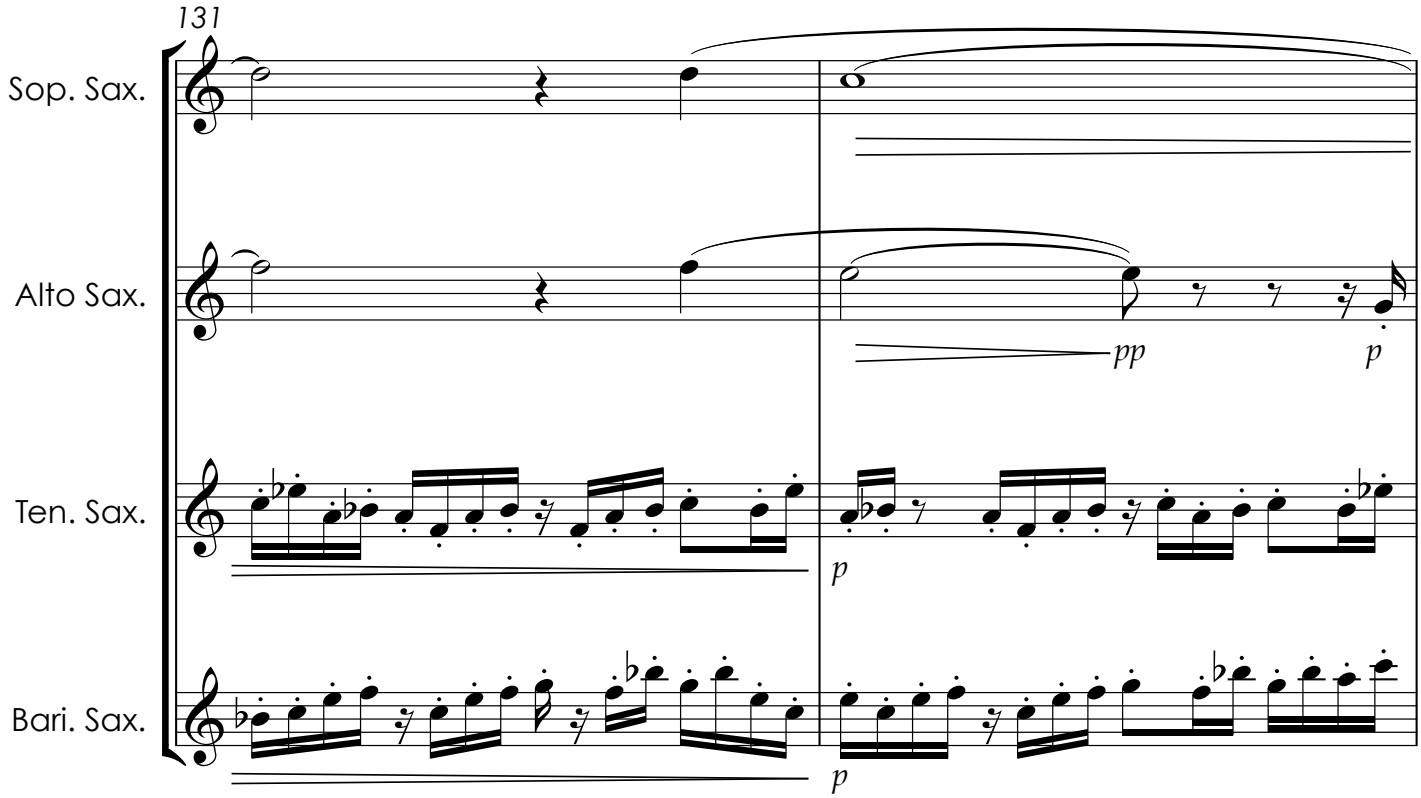

119 Like a rumbling machine, steady
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ff
ff
all staccato 16th and 8th notes should be equally short
all staccato 16th and 8th notes should be equally short
f
f

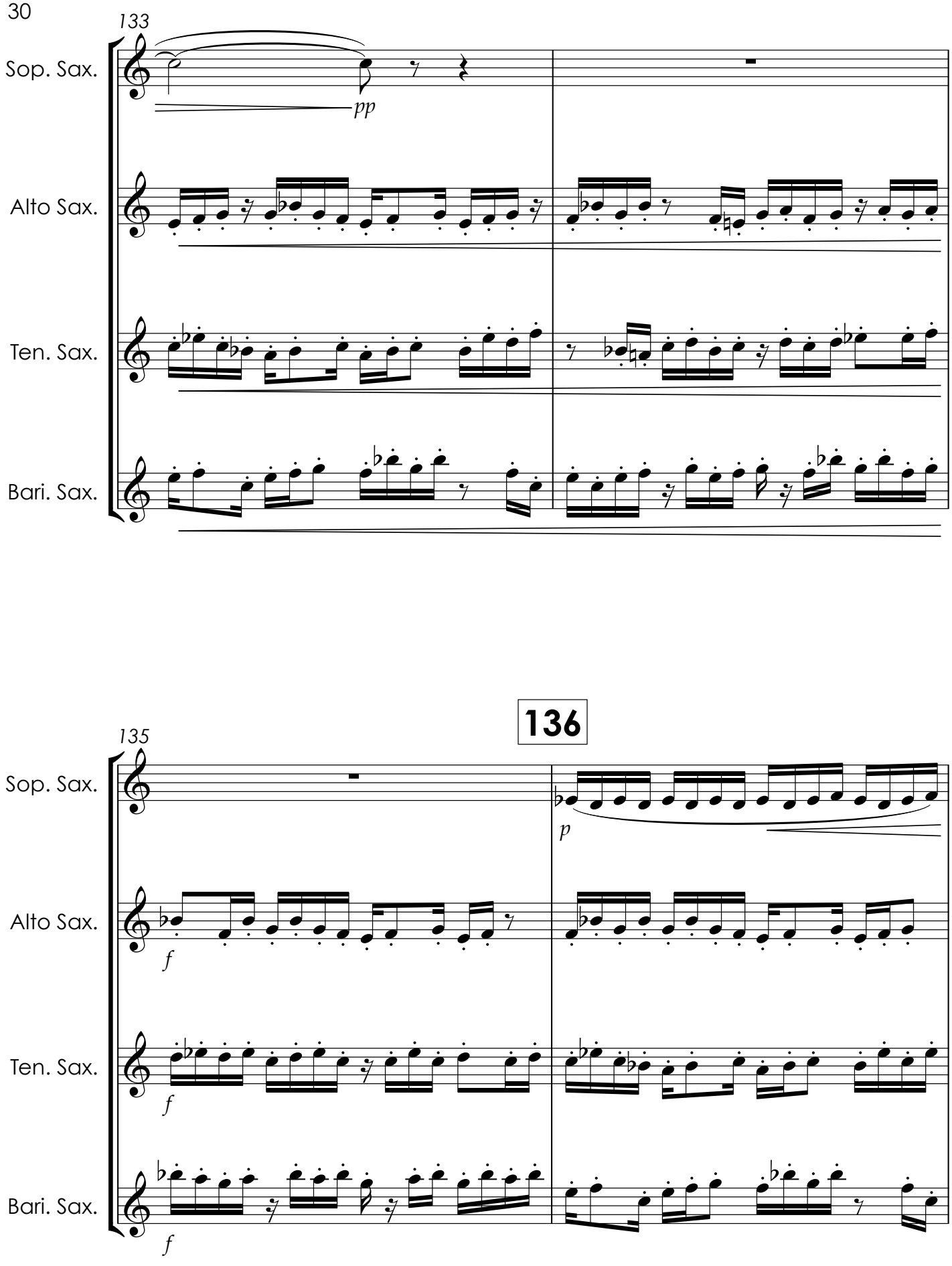

121
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
p
p

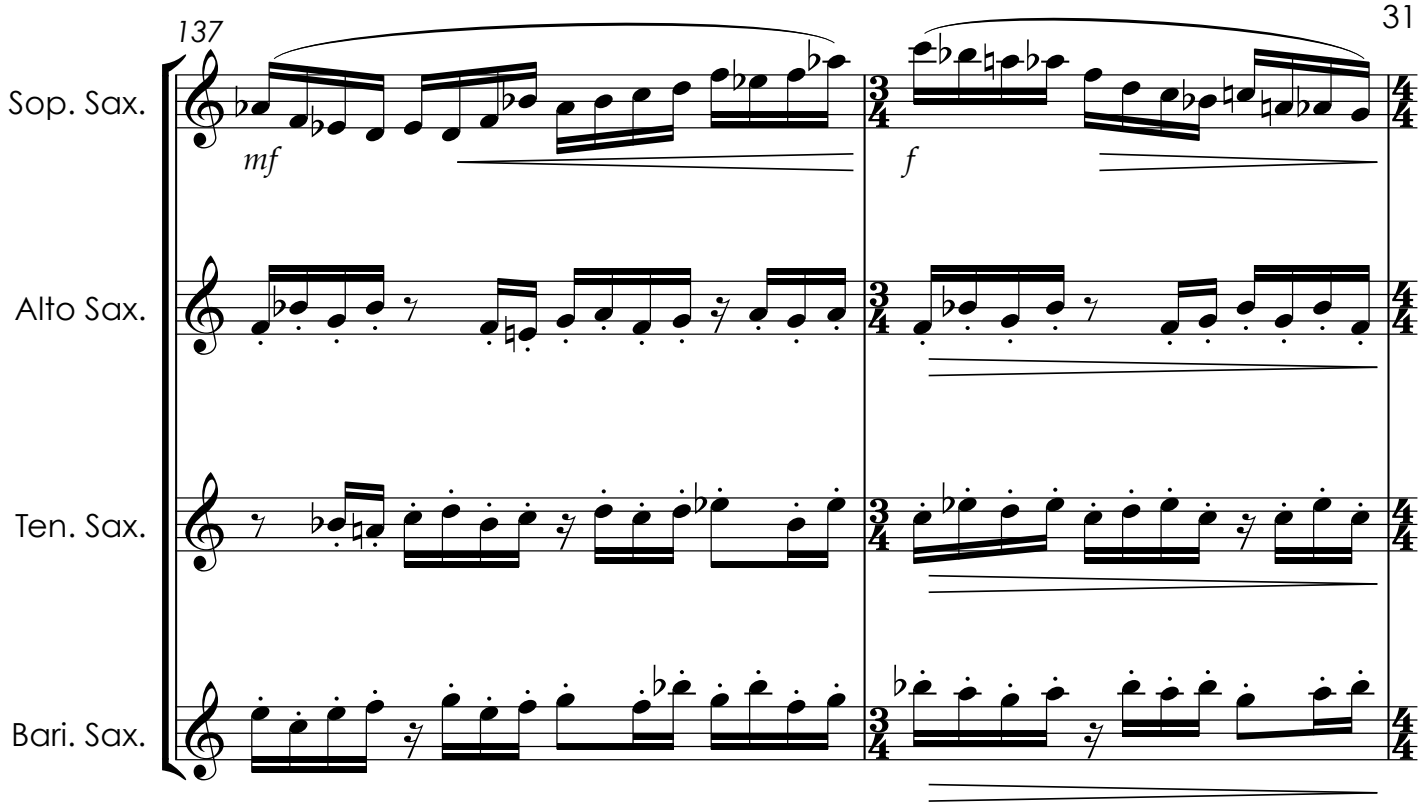

123
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
p
mf
p
mf
mp
mf
mp

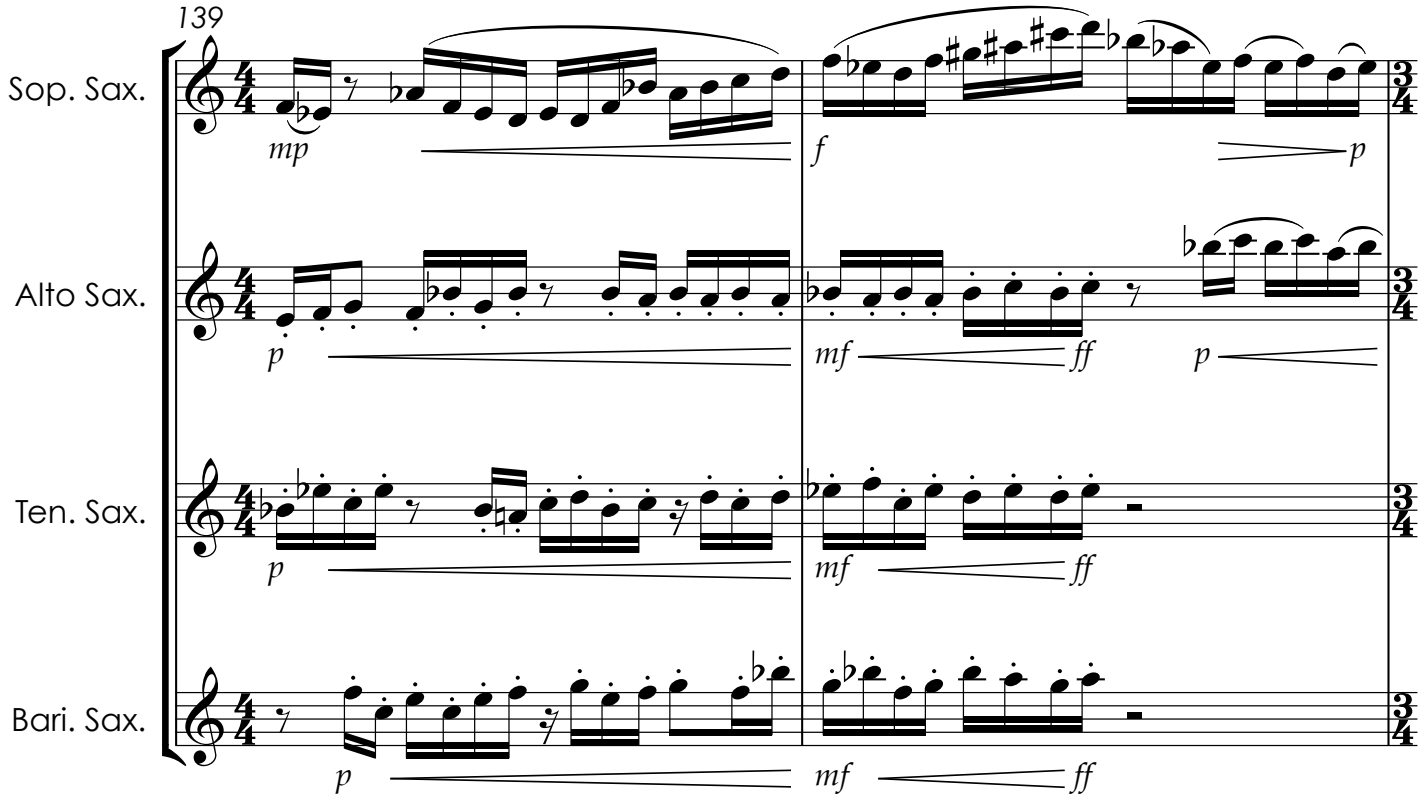

125
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mp
mf
127
f

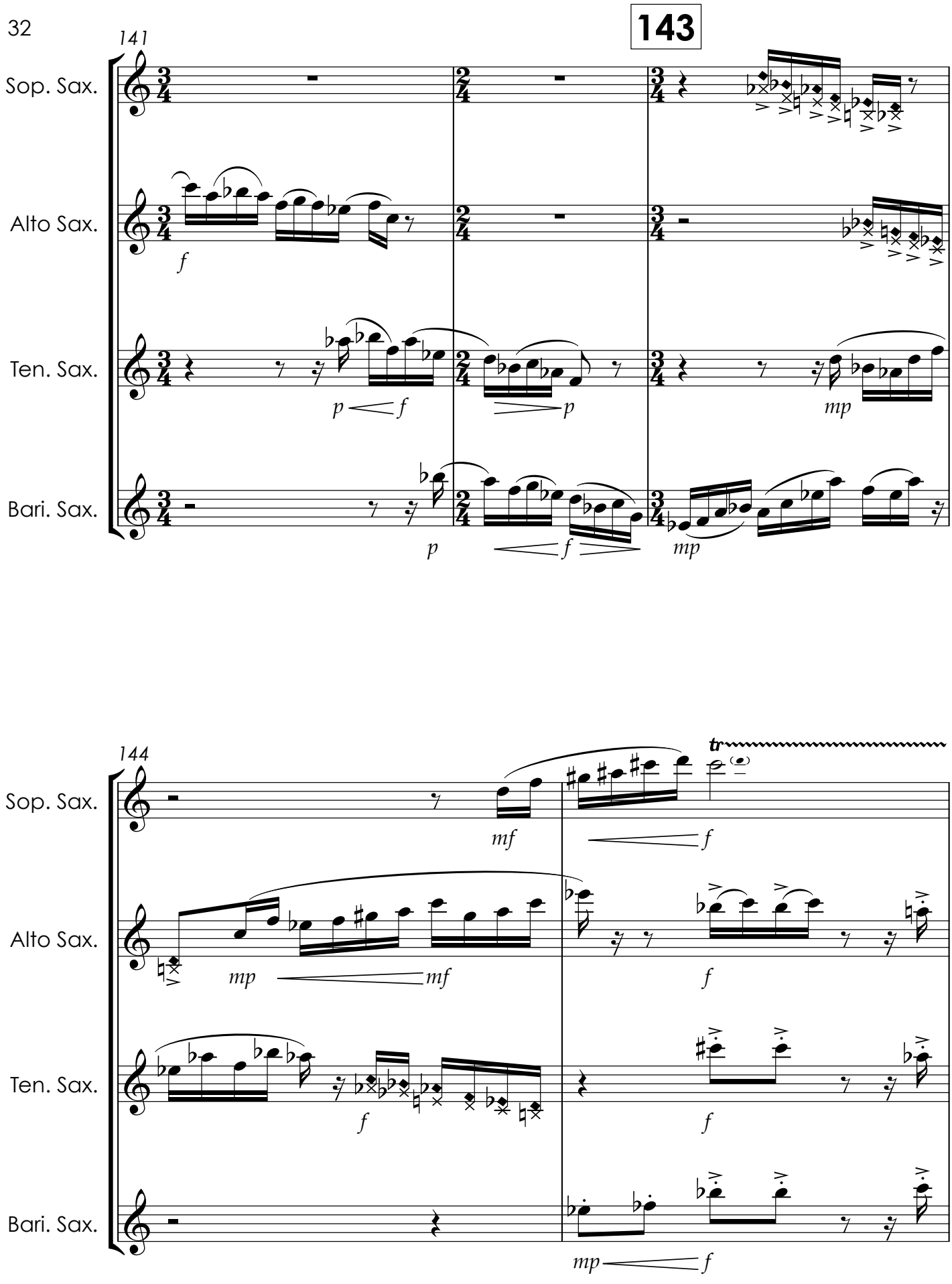

129
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
tr
3
3

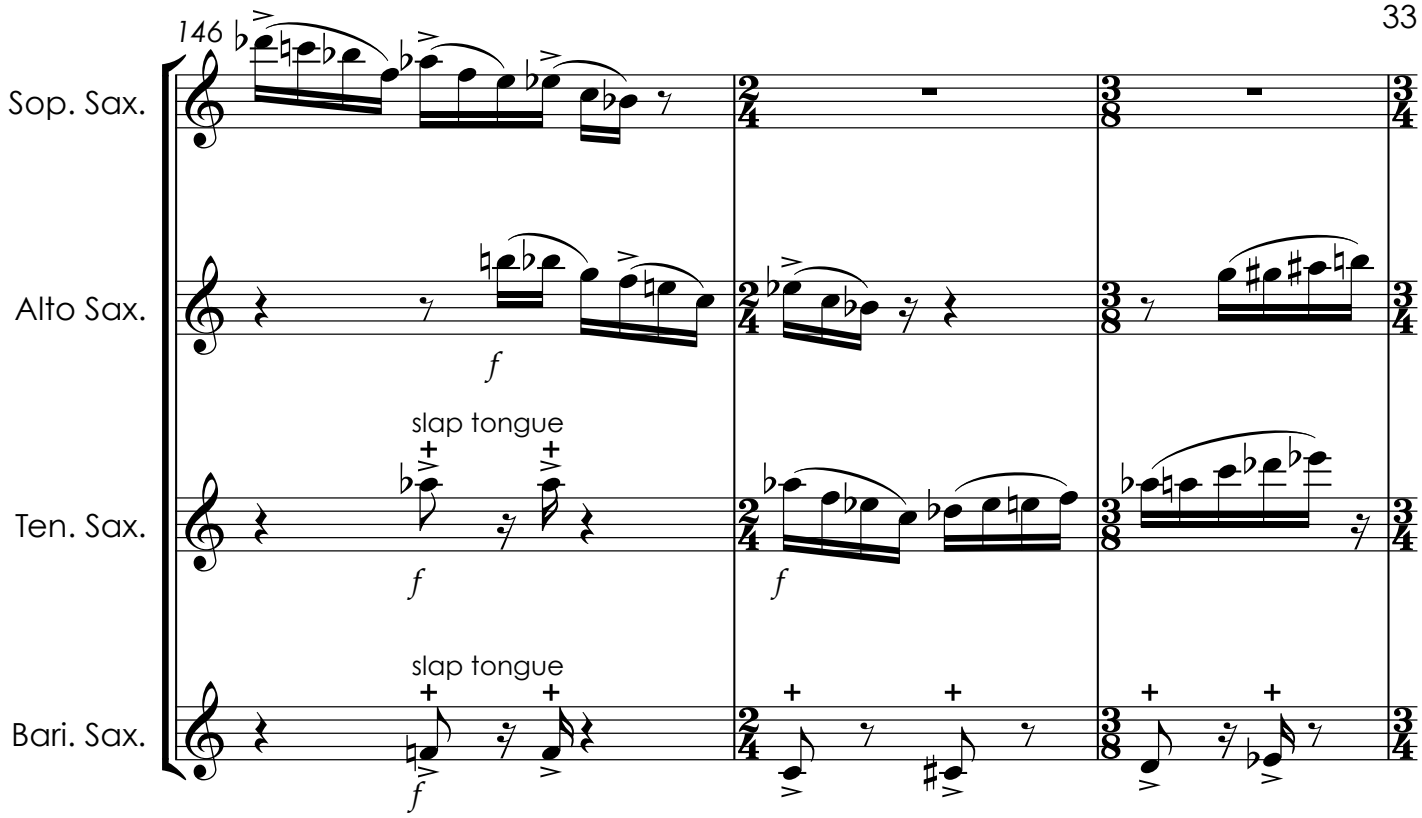

131
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
pp
p
p
p

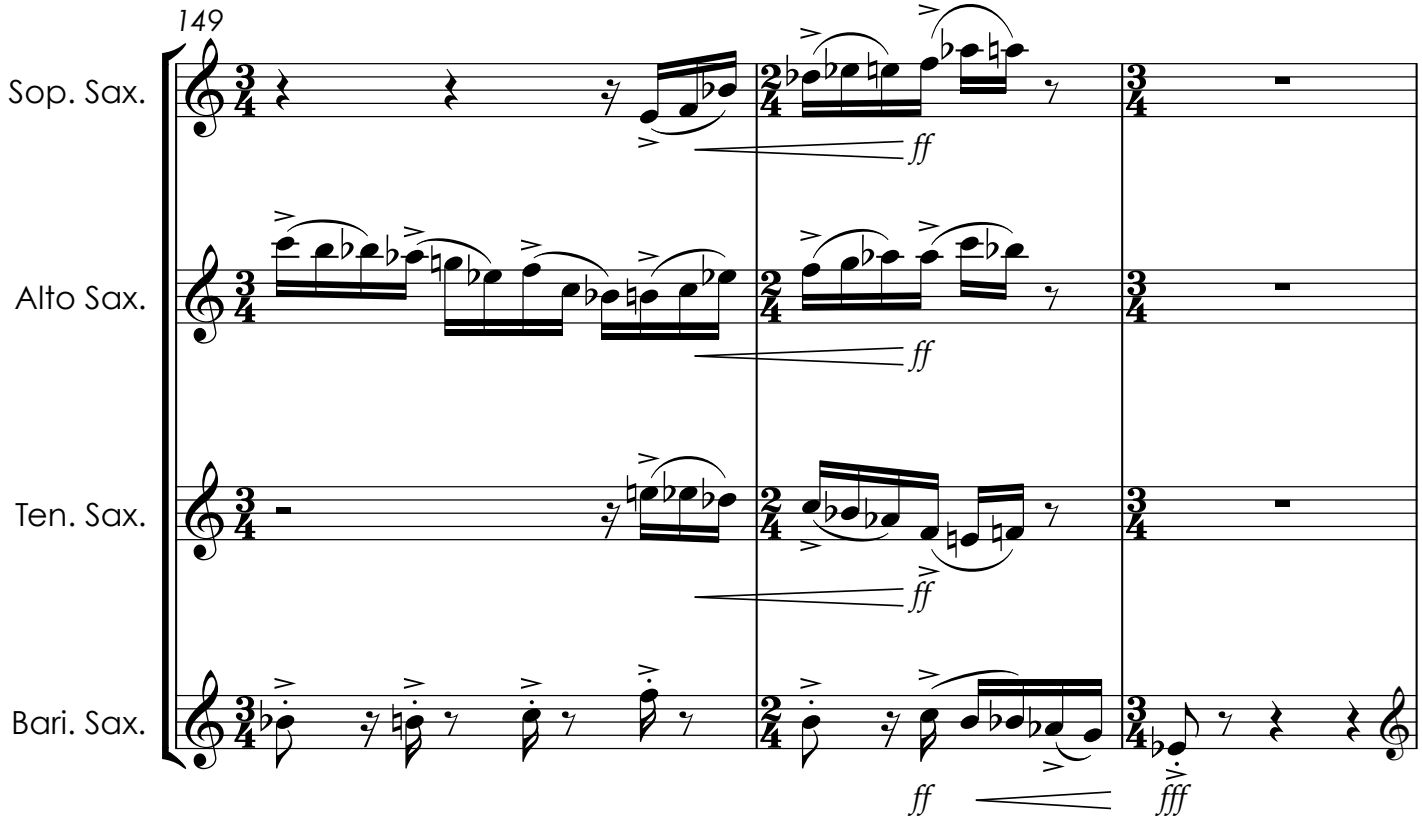

133
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
pp
136
135
p
f


137
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
f

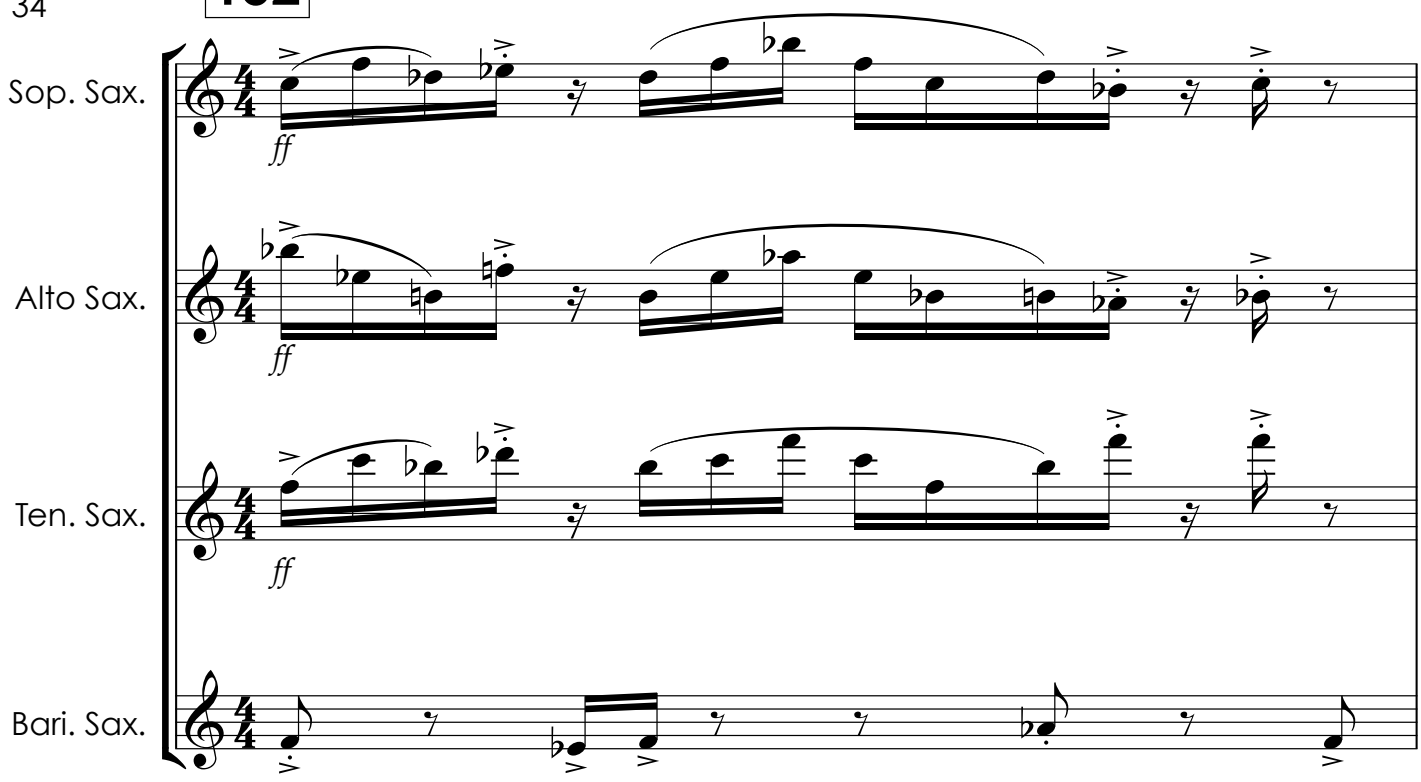

139
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mp
f
p
mf
ff

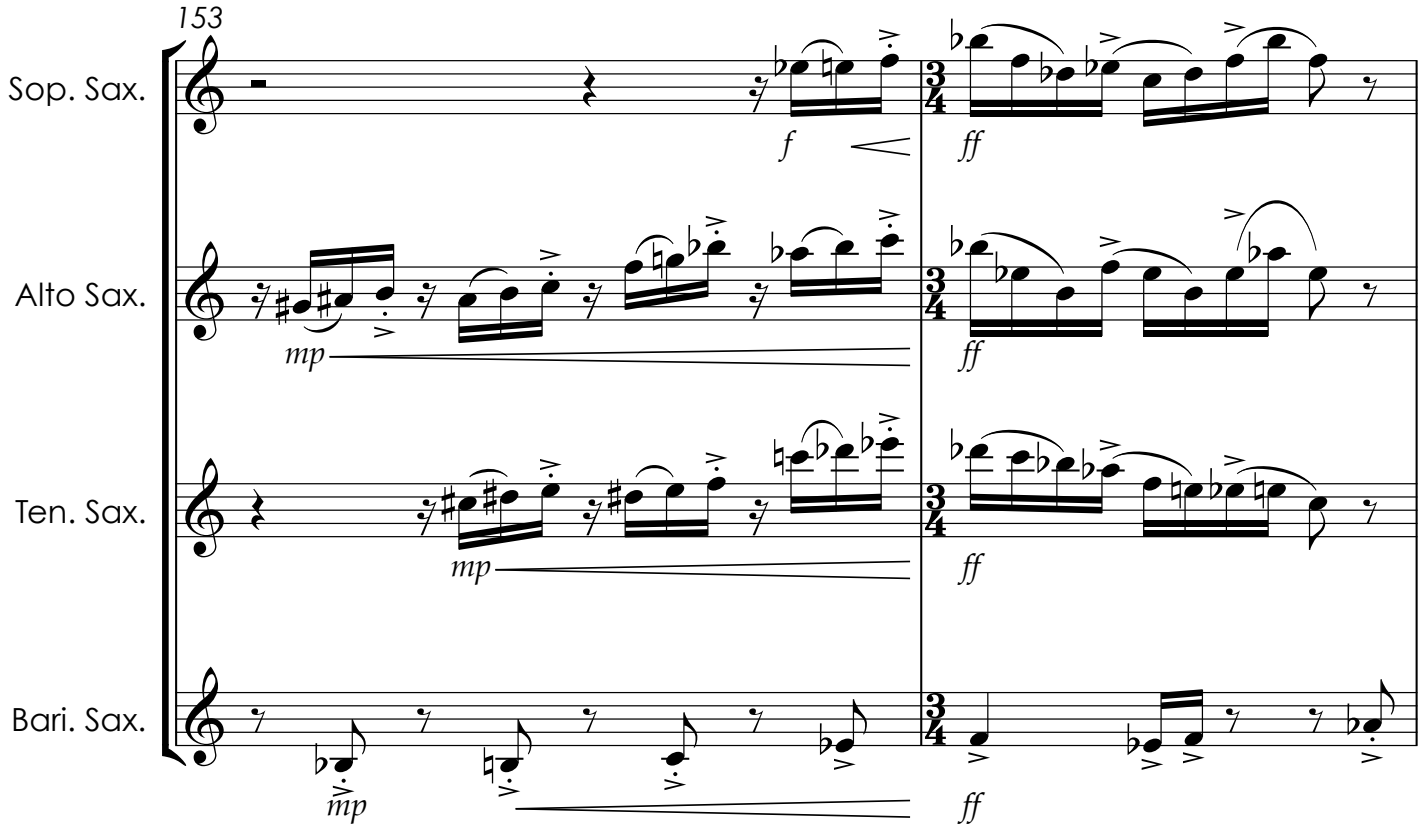

141
143
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
f
p
f
p
mp
p
f
mp
144
tr
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
f
mp
mf
f
f
f
mp
f

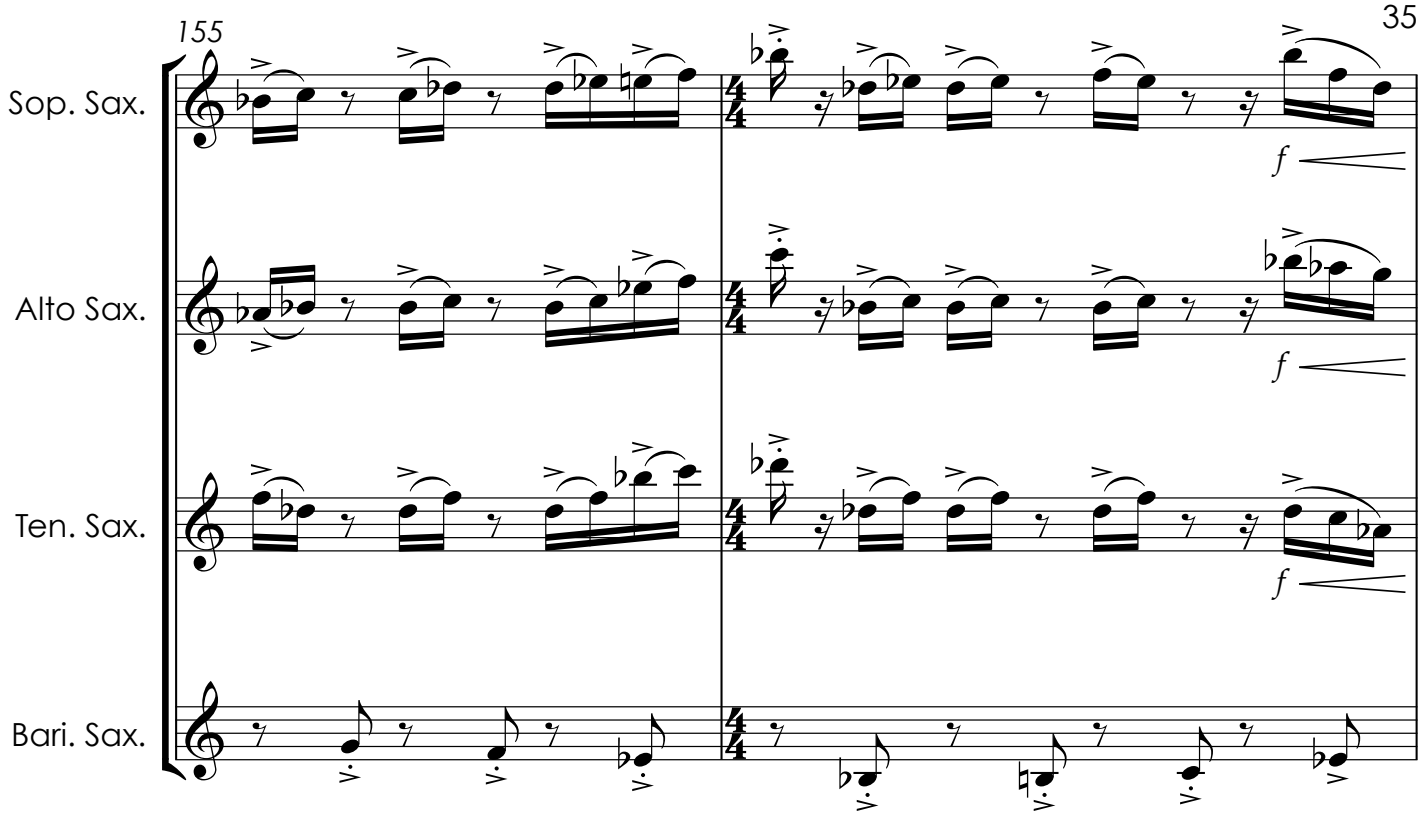

146
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
slap tongue
slap tongue
f

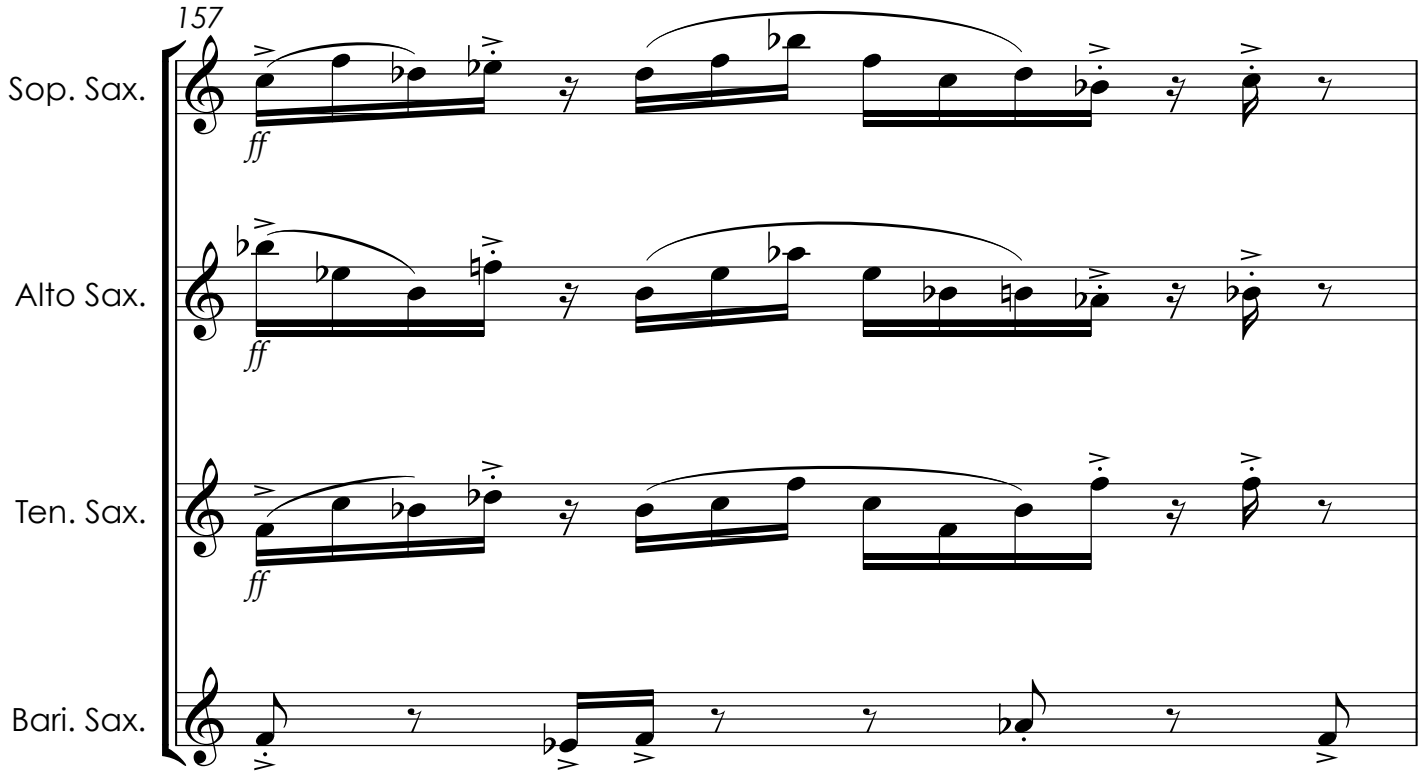

149
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ff
ff
ff
ff
fff

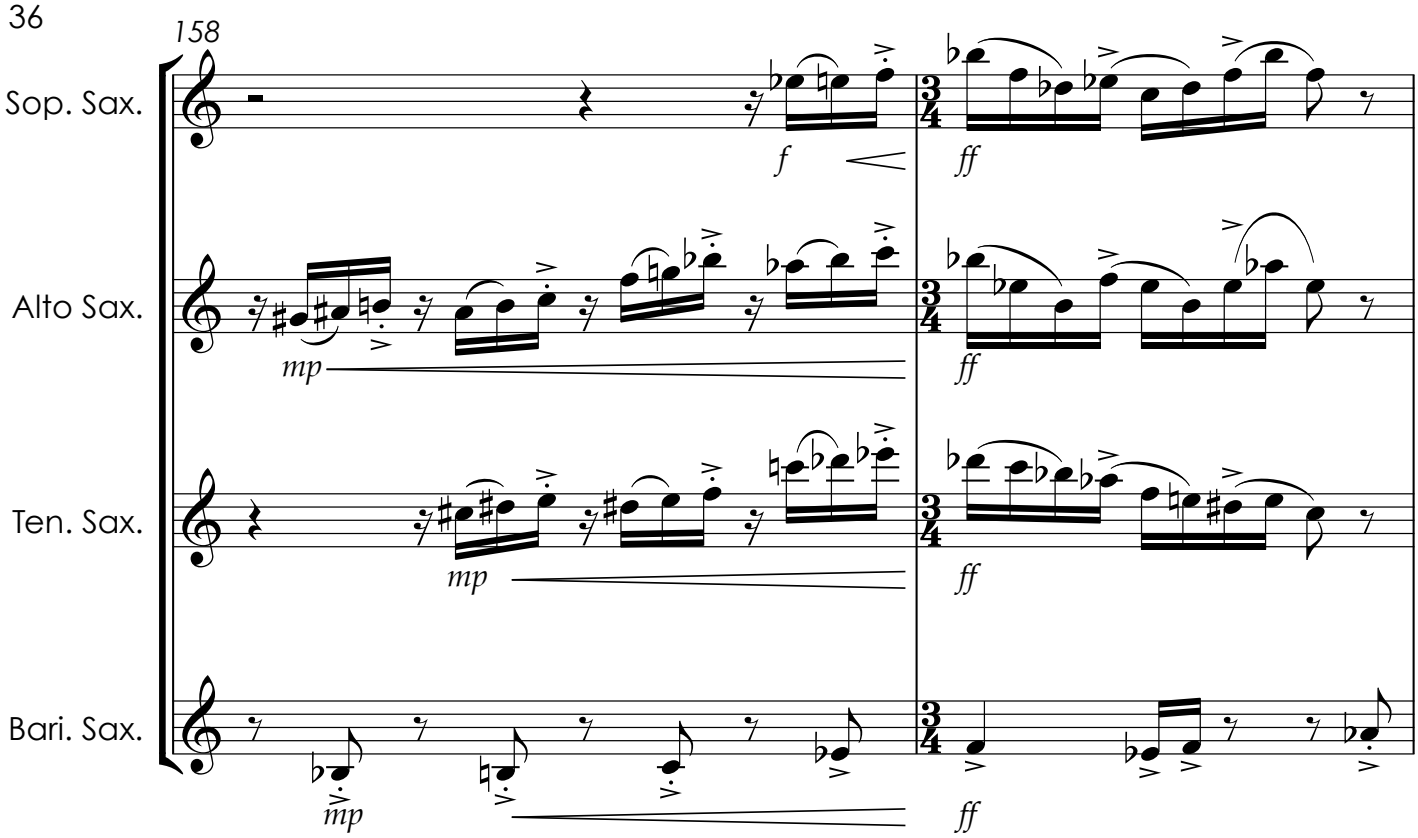
152 **Can't resist the funk**

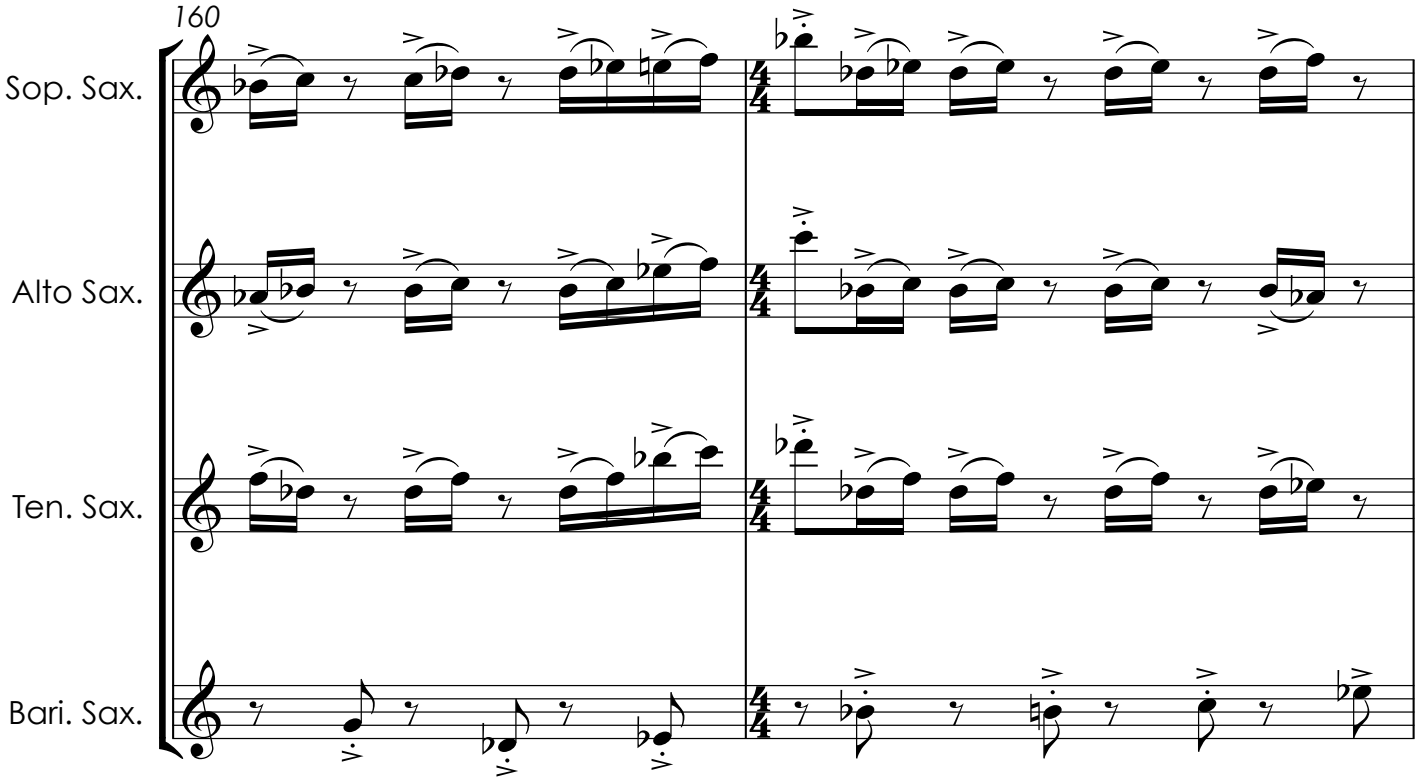


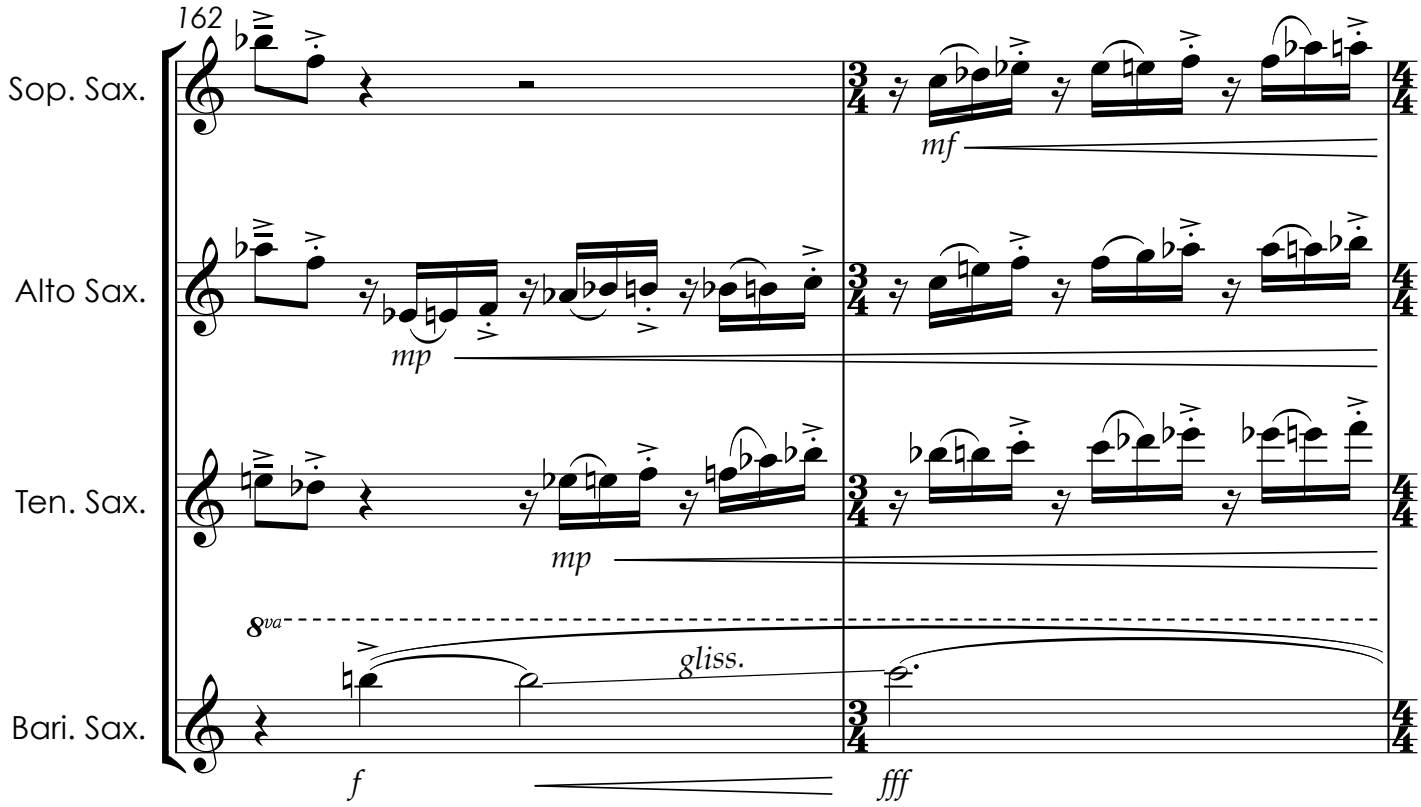


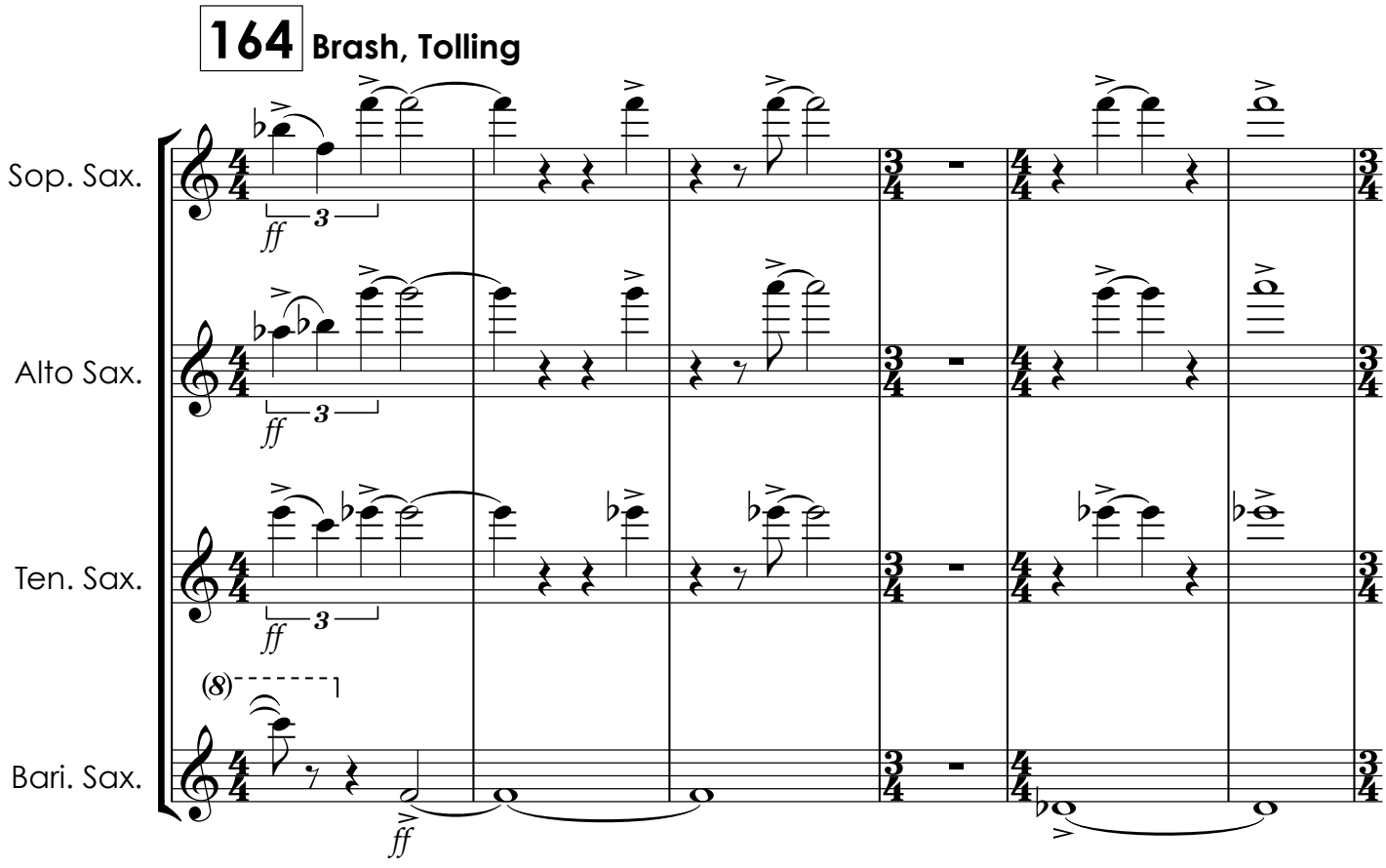

155
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
f
f
f

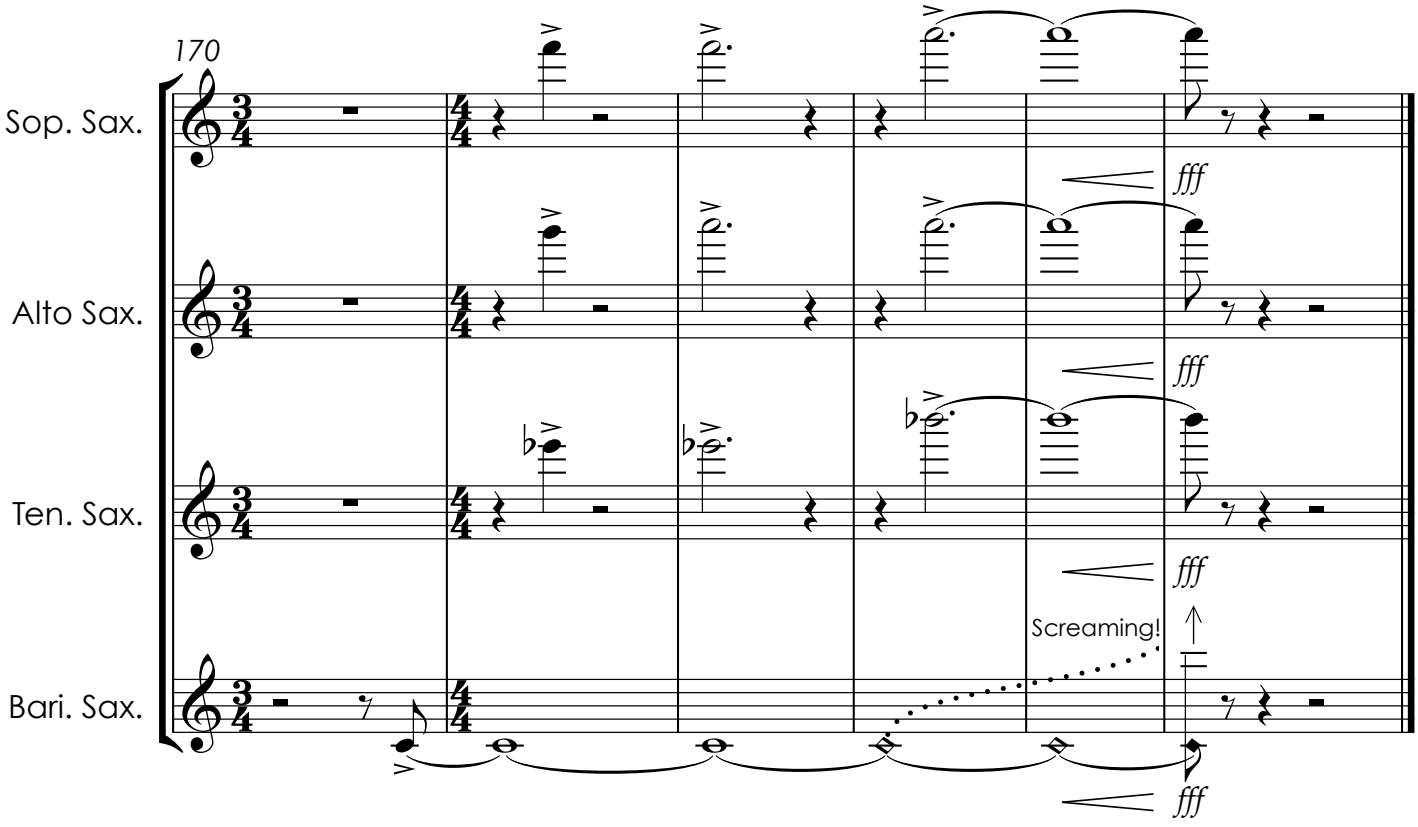

157
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ff
ff
ff


158
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
f
ff
mp
ff
mp
ff
mp
ff


160
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.


162
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
mf
mp
mp
8va
gliss.
f
fff


164 Brash, Tolling
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
ff
3
ff
3
ff
3
(8)
1
ff


170
Sop. Sax.
Alto Sax.
Ten. Sax.
Bari. Sax.
fff
fff
fff
Screaming!
fff