Pitiless as the Sun

JORDAN DYKSTRA (2023)

for four performers with fixed playback

20’20”

Basilita Bonita Publishing (BMI)

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

The Second Coming
By WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Composer's note:
Pitiless as the Sun recalls and abstracts my experience of seeing the total solar eclipse in August of 2017 in Monmouth, Oregon. I travelled across the country to view this profoundly wild gift from nature and based my composition on three particularly memorable aspects from that morning: the psychedelic crescent shadows, the temperature dropping, and the total eclipse itself.

Commissioned by Yarn/Wire for their 2023 *Currents Series*.
First performance: May 3, 2023 by Yarn/Wire at Roulette Intermedium in Brooklyn, NY.

Duration
20'20"

Instrumentation
Performer 1: Piano and Prepared Piano (custom VST)
Performer 2: Bowed Vibraphone (custom VST) and Gamelan 1
Performer 3: Noise 1, Cymbal, and Gamelan 2
Performer 4: Synthesizer, Frame Drum, and Noise 2
Playback: Sine tones (mono)

Further details about instrumentation
Custom VSTs: Both the Prepared Piano and Bowed Vibraphone VSTs will be available from the composer and played on a MIDI keyboard with sustain pedal via Kontakt or something similar.
Gamelan: These parts are only meant to *represent* the sound and tonality of a traditional Balinese gamelan. The 2-octave scale (from C1 to C3) should **not** be perfect equal temperament, only something reminiscent. The metallophones may be comprised from a variety of unique sources and are struck with hard wooden mallet.
Noise 1: Requires 1 plastic bag, a bowl with soft leaves, and 2 cricket instruments (made by Meinl Percussion). The plastic bag and bowl of soft leaves should be performed in an aperiodic manner (without any semblance of rhythm) and be perceived as a noise floor.
Noise 2: Requires 1 bird whistle, 1 plastic bag, and 1 piece of tin foil. The plastic bag and tin foil should also be performed in an aperiodic manner (without any semblance of rhythm) and be perceived as a noise floor.
Synthesizer: This part calls for a patch for glissing up and down one semitone and another patch for a microtonal drone. A suggestion for the glissing patch is "Interia" from the (free) *Twenty Five* sample library and the "Microtonal Mindcloud A1" from the *LCO Textures* library. If no sufficient patches can be acquired the composer can include these sounds in the playback.

PERFORMANCE NOTES
Form

Sync stop watches — 0:00 to 0:10
Intro — 0:10 to 1:10
I. Shadow Play — 1:10 to 5:10
II. Temp Drops — 5:10 to 10:12
III. Total Eclipse — 10:12 to 17:54
Outro — 17:54 to 20:20

Notes on Notation

Each bar is 2" in duration (quarter = 120bpm or 0.5")
Time is written in boxed text, i.e. 12:08
Courtesy cue markings from other instruments are written in brackets, i.e. [9:52 vibes+crickets]
Empty staves are hidden.

Electronic Playback

The sine tone playback is synced with the performer's stopwatches. It begins fading in at 13:42 with two closely tuned tones (one Hz apart) creating a rhythmic patter at 60bpm. The playback is quietly amplified, but heard clearly enough for the pianist to engage with it.

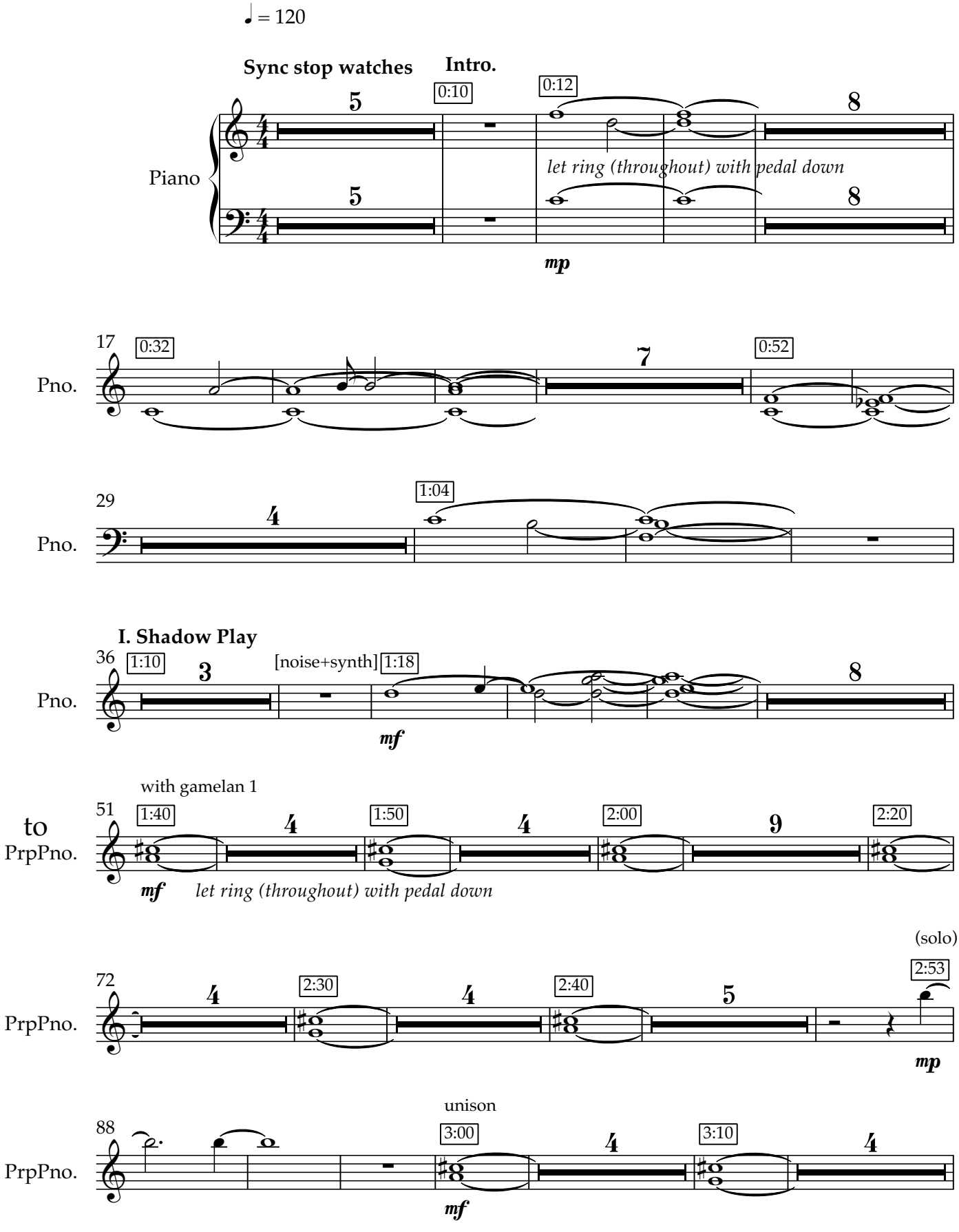
Brooklyn, NY
Spring 2023

Performer 1

Pitiless as the Sun

for Yarn/Wire

JORDAN DYKSTRA



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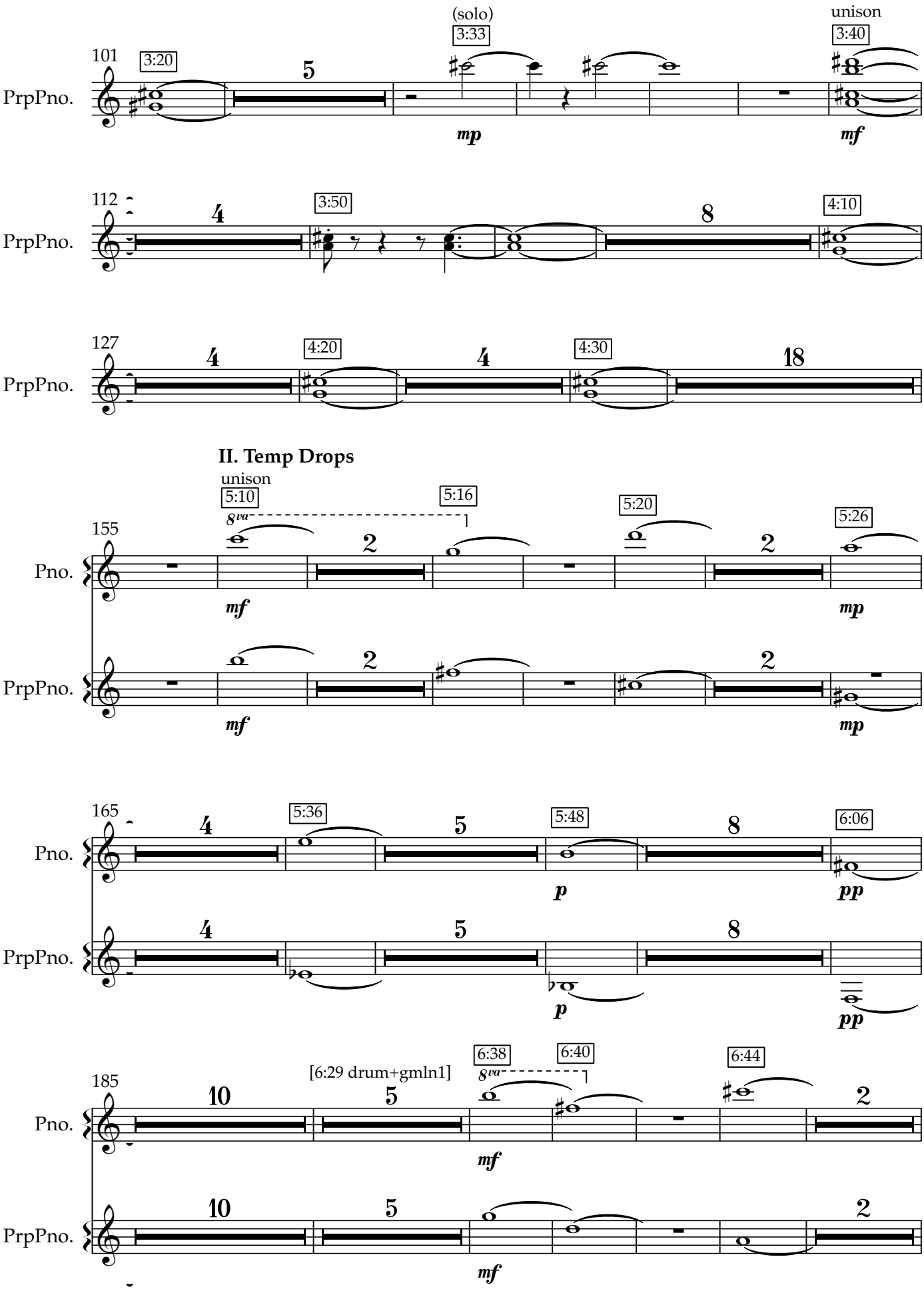
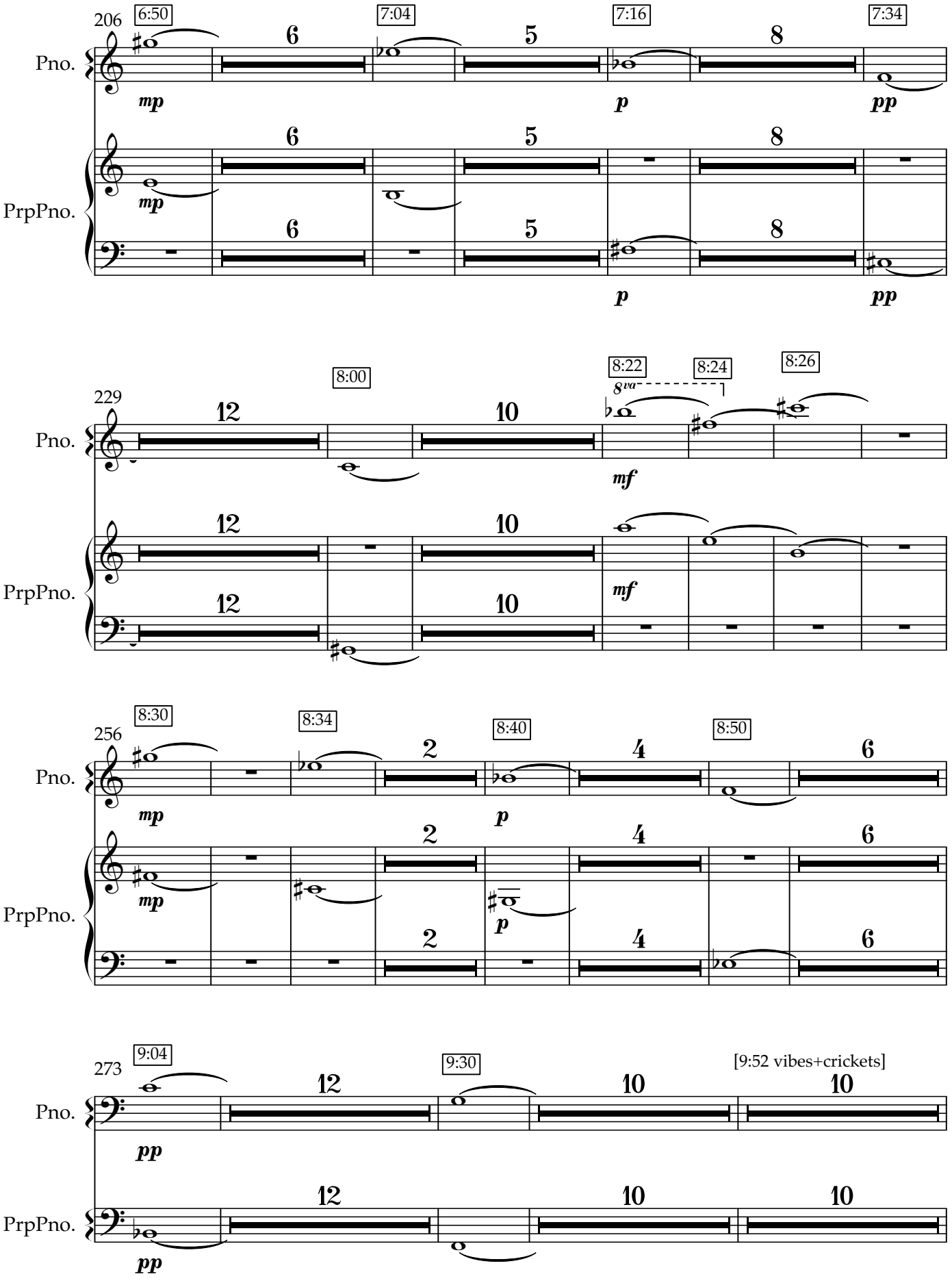
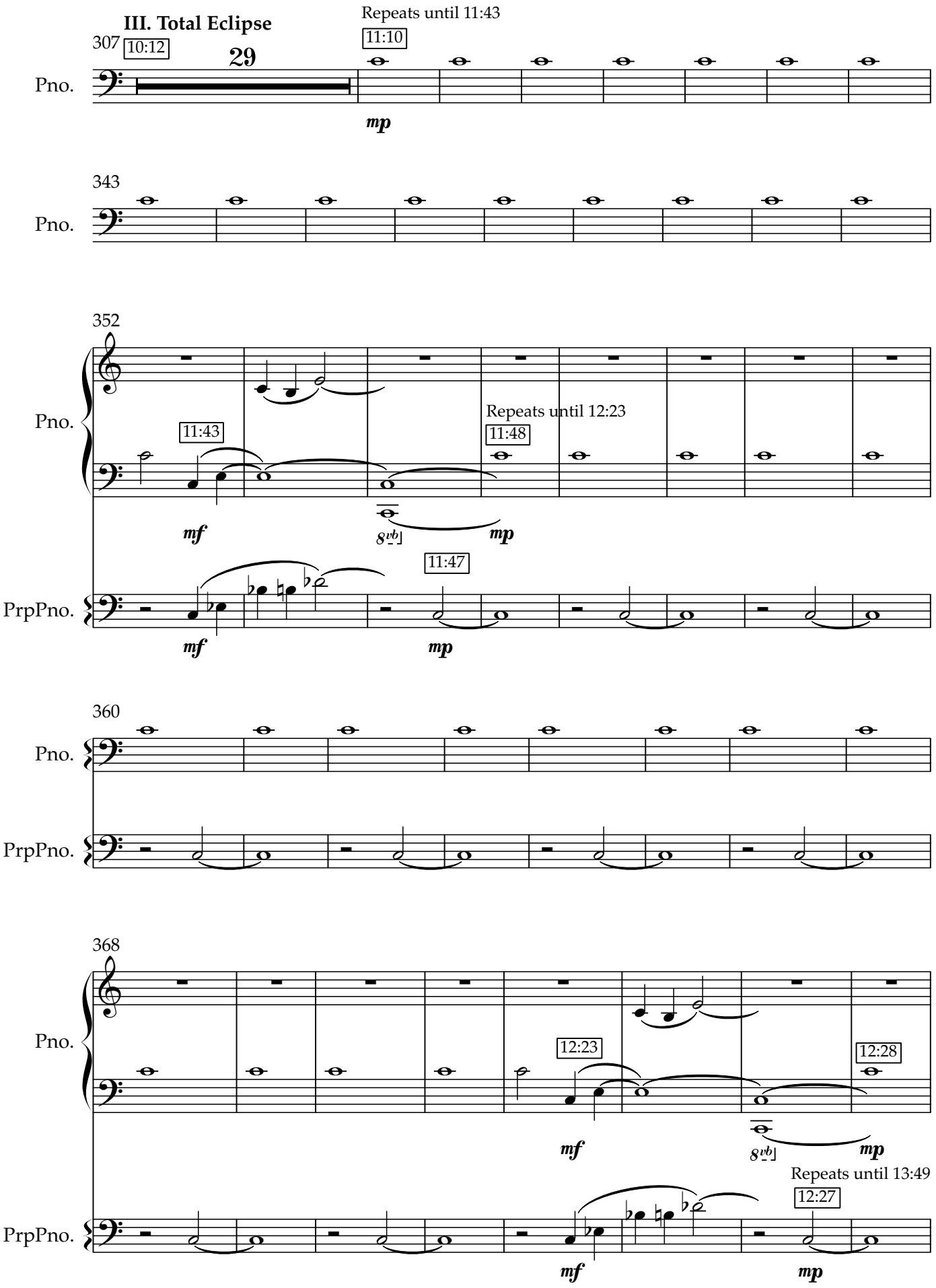
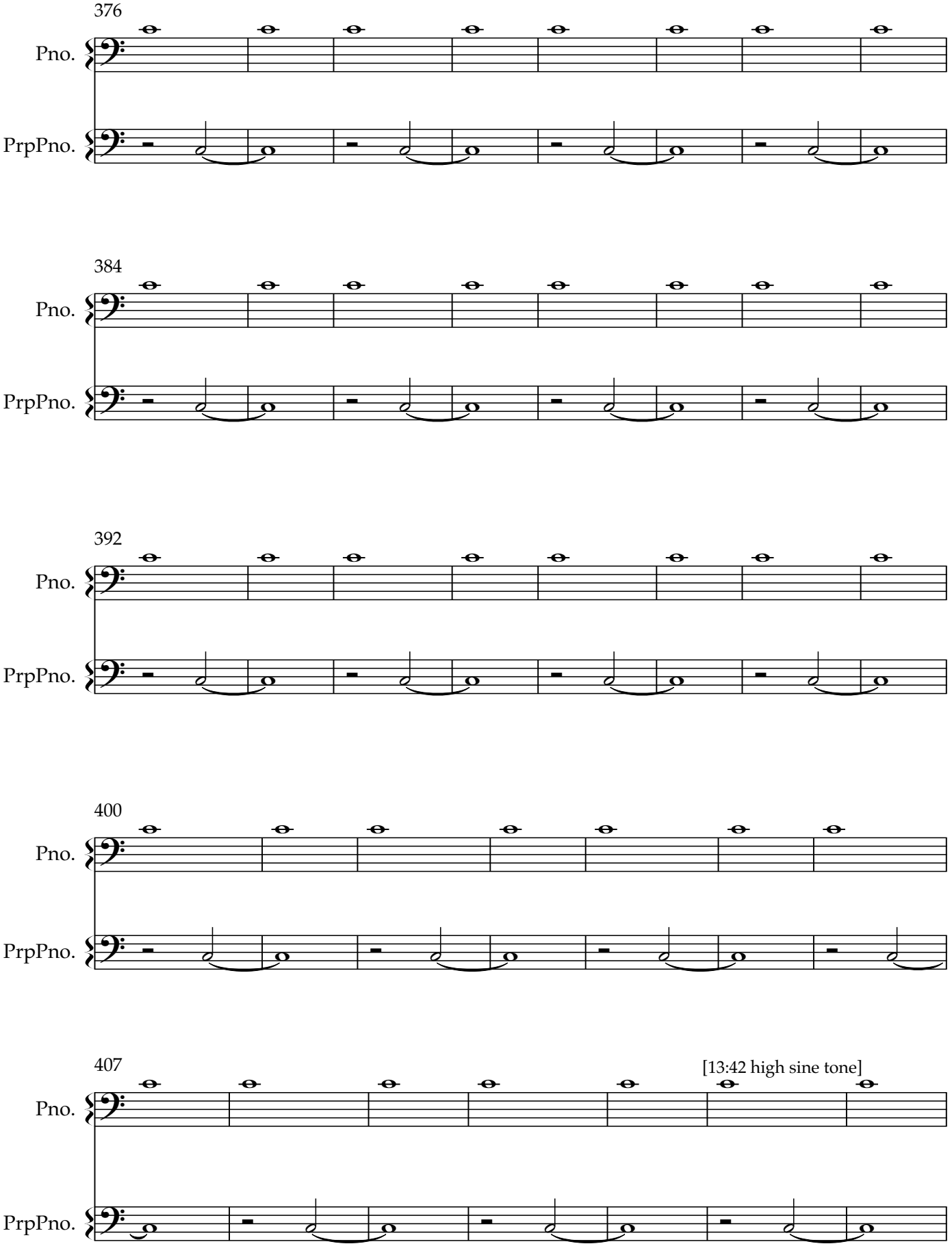
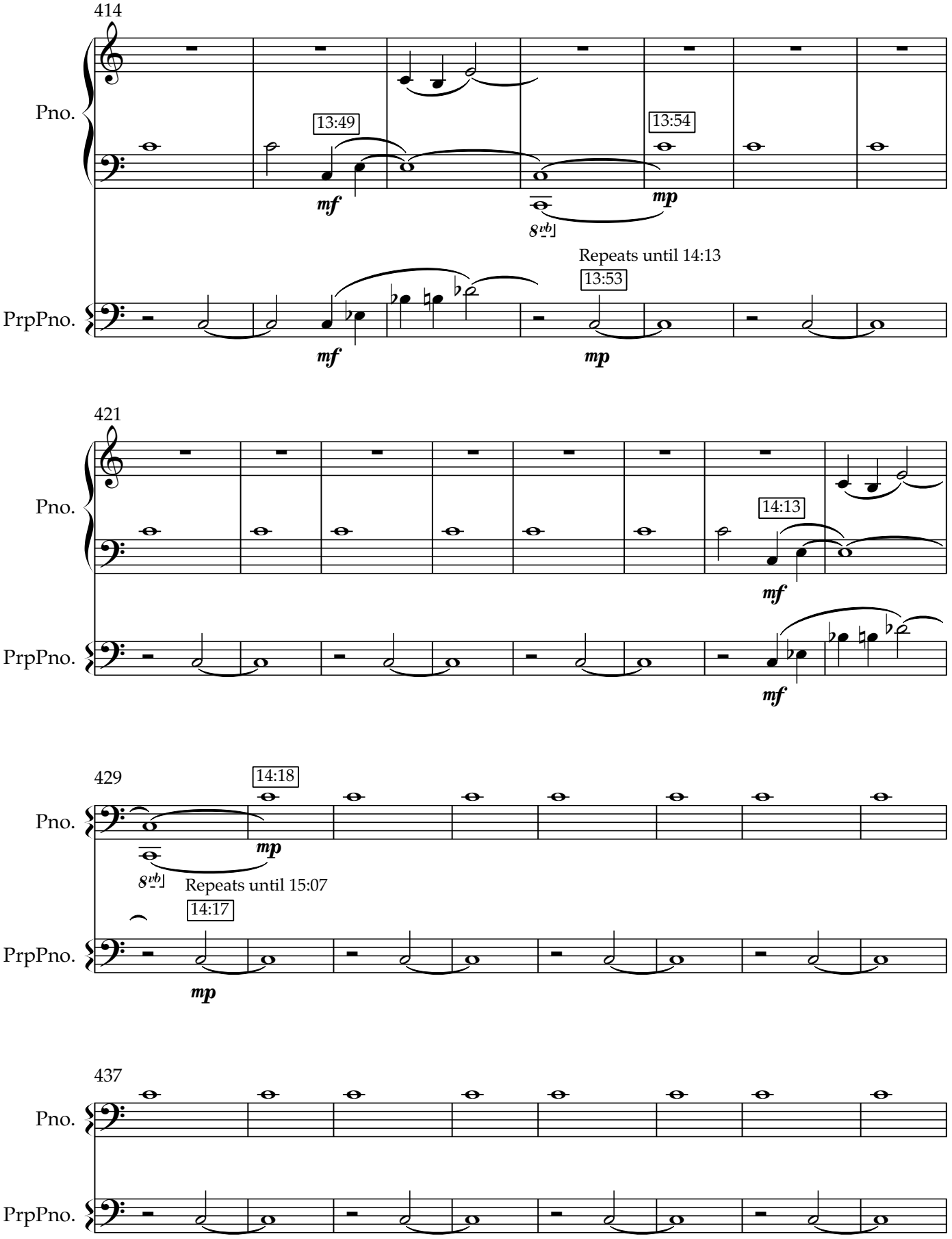
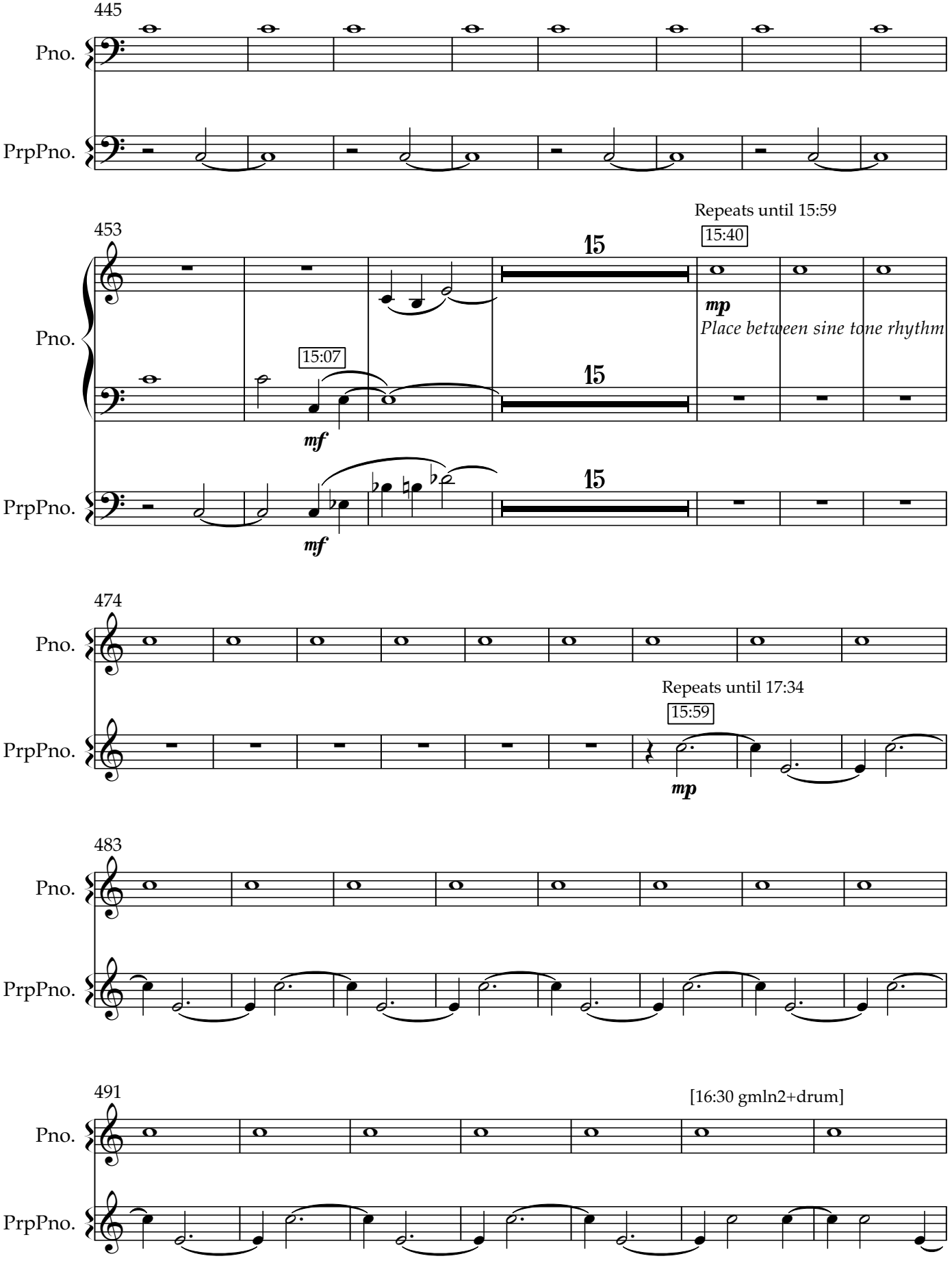

101
3:20
5
(solo)
3:33
unison
3:40
PrpPno.
mp
mf
112
4
3:50
8
4:10
PrpPno.
127
4
4:20
4
4:30
18
PrpPno.
II. Temp Drops
unison
5:10
8va
5:16
5:20
5:26
155
Pno.
PrpPno.
mf
mp
165
4
5:36
5
5:48
8
6:06
Pno.
PrpPno.
p
pp
185
10
[6:29 drum+gmln1]
5
6:38
8va
6:40
6:44
2
Pno.
PrpPno.
mf

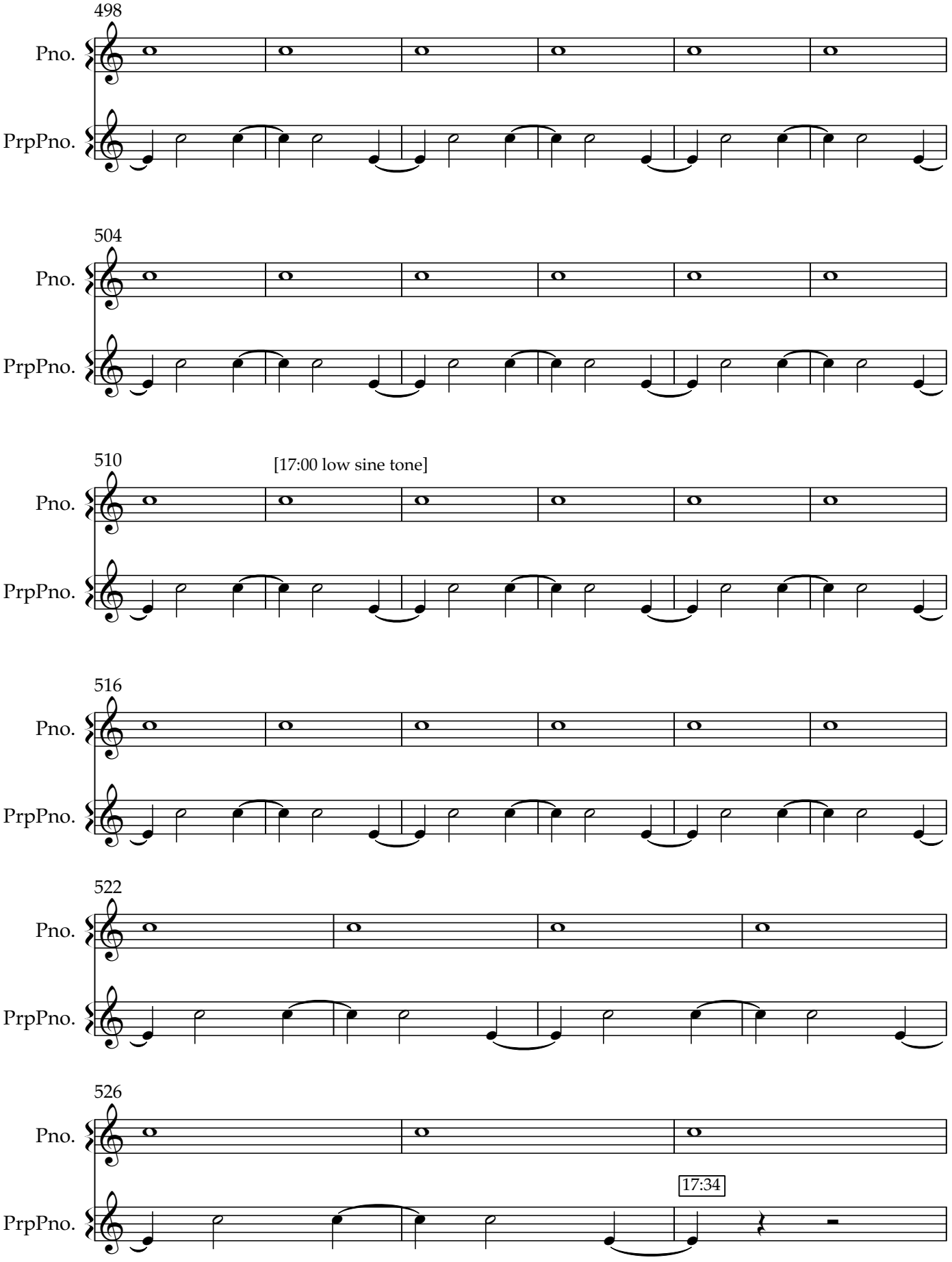

206
6:50
7:04
7:16
7:34
Pno.
PrpPno.
mp
p
pp
229
8:00
8:22
8:24
8:26
8va
mf
256
8:30
8:34
8:40
8:50
273
9:04
9:30
[9:52 vibes+crickets]

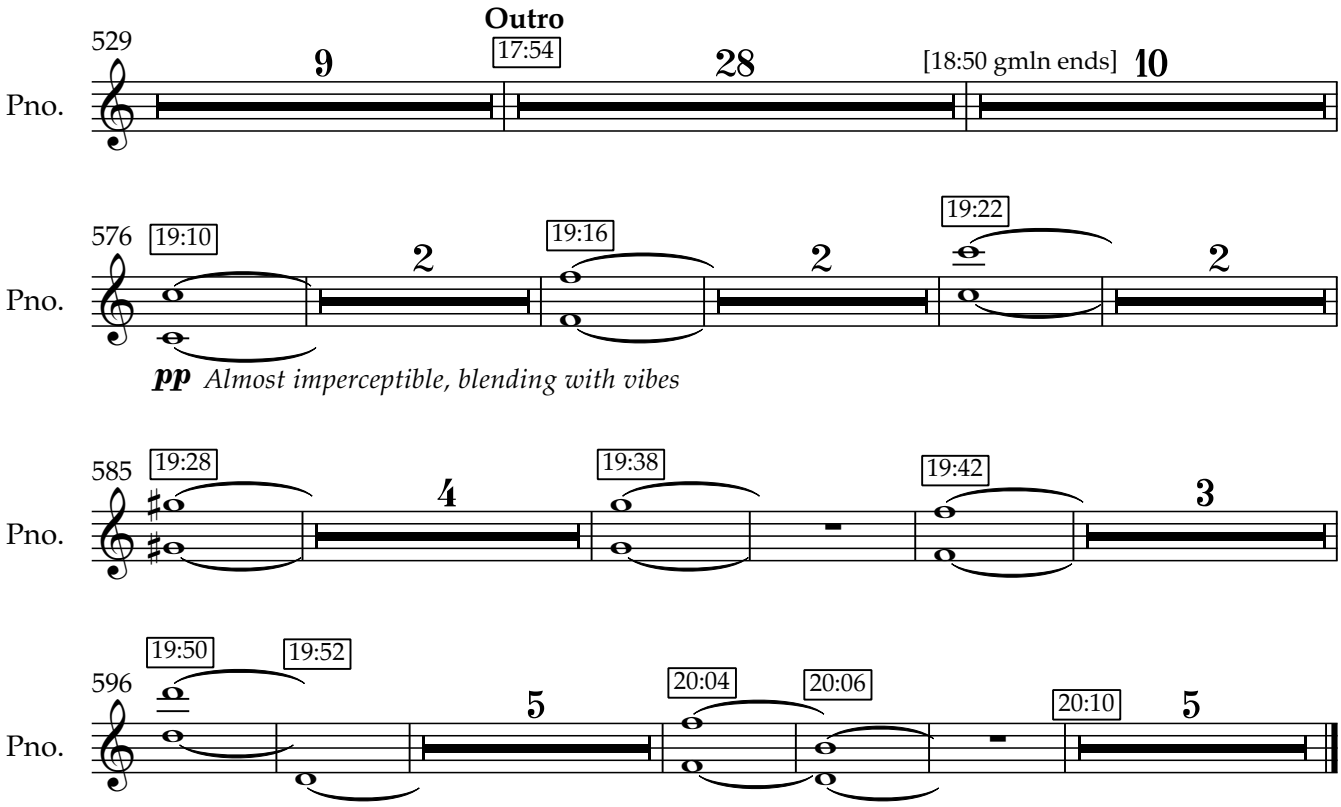

III. Total Eclipse
307
10:12
29
Repeats until 11:43
11:10
Pno.
mp
343
Pno.
352
Pno.
11:43
mf
8vb
Repeats until 12:23
11:48
mp
PrpPno.
11:47
mf
mp
360
Pno.
PrpPno.
368
Pno.
12:23
mf
8vb
12:28
mp
Repeats until 13:49
PrpPno.
12:27
mf
mp


376
Pno.
PrpPno.
384
Pno.
PrpPno.
392
Pno.
PrpPno.
400
Pno.
PrpPno.
407
[13:42 high sine tone]
Pno.
PrpPno.


414
Pno.
13:49
13:54
mf
mp
8vb
PrpPno.
Repeats until 14:13
13:53
mf
mp
421
Pno.
14:13
mf
PrpPno.
mf
429
Pno.
14:18
mp
8vb
Repeats until 15:07
14:17
PrpPno.
mp
437
Pno.
PrpPno.


445
Pno.
PrpPno.
453
Repeats until 15:59
15:40
15
mp
Place between sine tone rhythm
Pno.
15:07
15
mf
PrpPno.
15
mf
474
Pno.
Repeats until 17:34
15:59
PrpPno.
mp
483
Pno.
PrpPno.
491
[16:30 gmln2+drum]
Pno.
PrpPno.


498
Pno.
PrpPno.
504
Pno.
PrpPno.
510
[17:00 low sine tone]
Pno.
PrpPno.
516
Pno.
PrpPno.
522
Pno.
PrpPno.
526
Pno.
17:34
PrpPno.

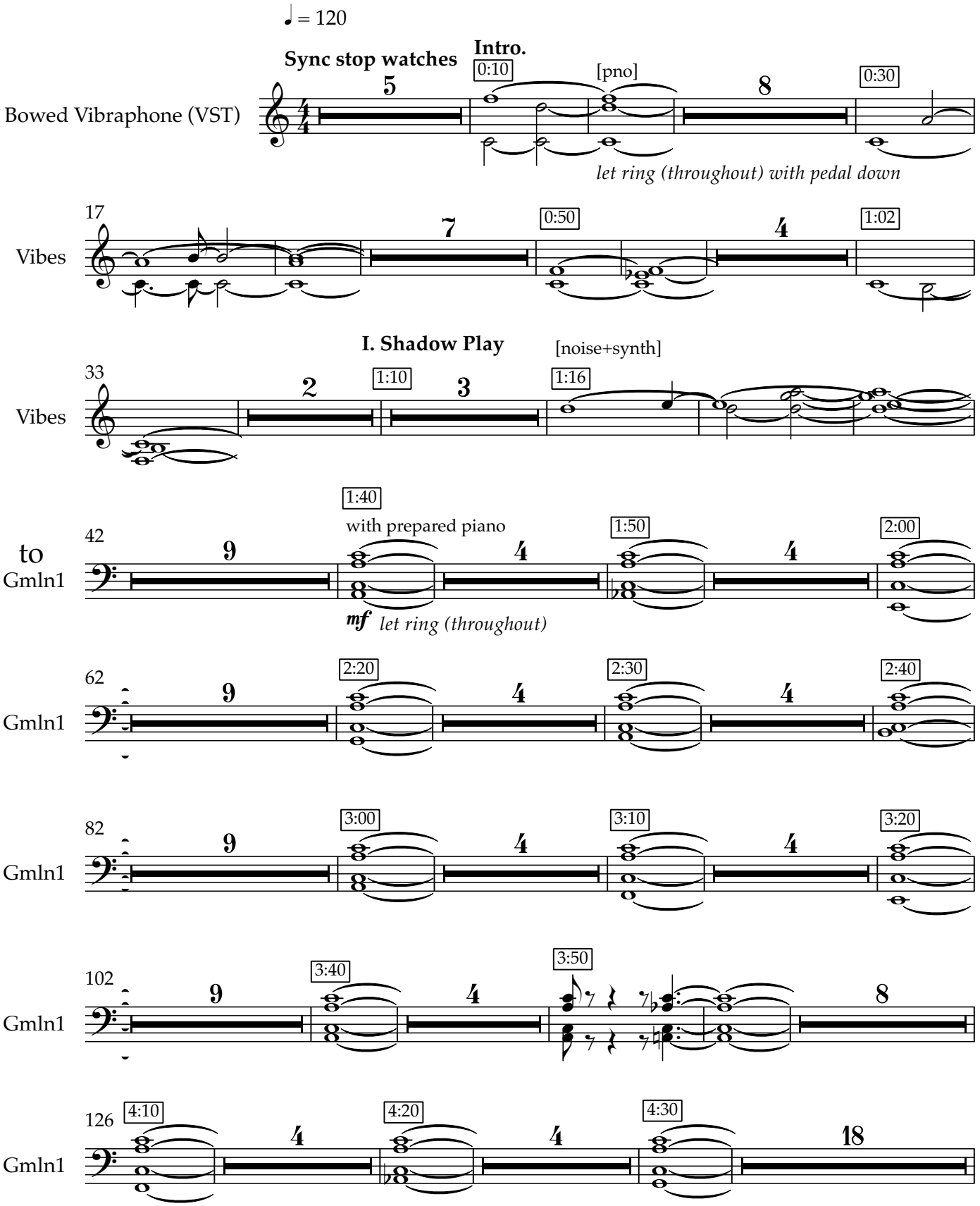

Outro
529
Pno.
9
17:54
28
[18:50 gmln ends]
10
576
19:10
19:16
19:22
2
2
2
pp
Almost imperceptible, blending with vibes
585
19:28
19:38
19:42
4
3
596
19:50
19:52
20:04
20:06
20:10
5
5

Performer 2

Pitiless as the Sun

for Yarn/Wire

JORDAN DYKSTRA



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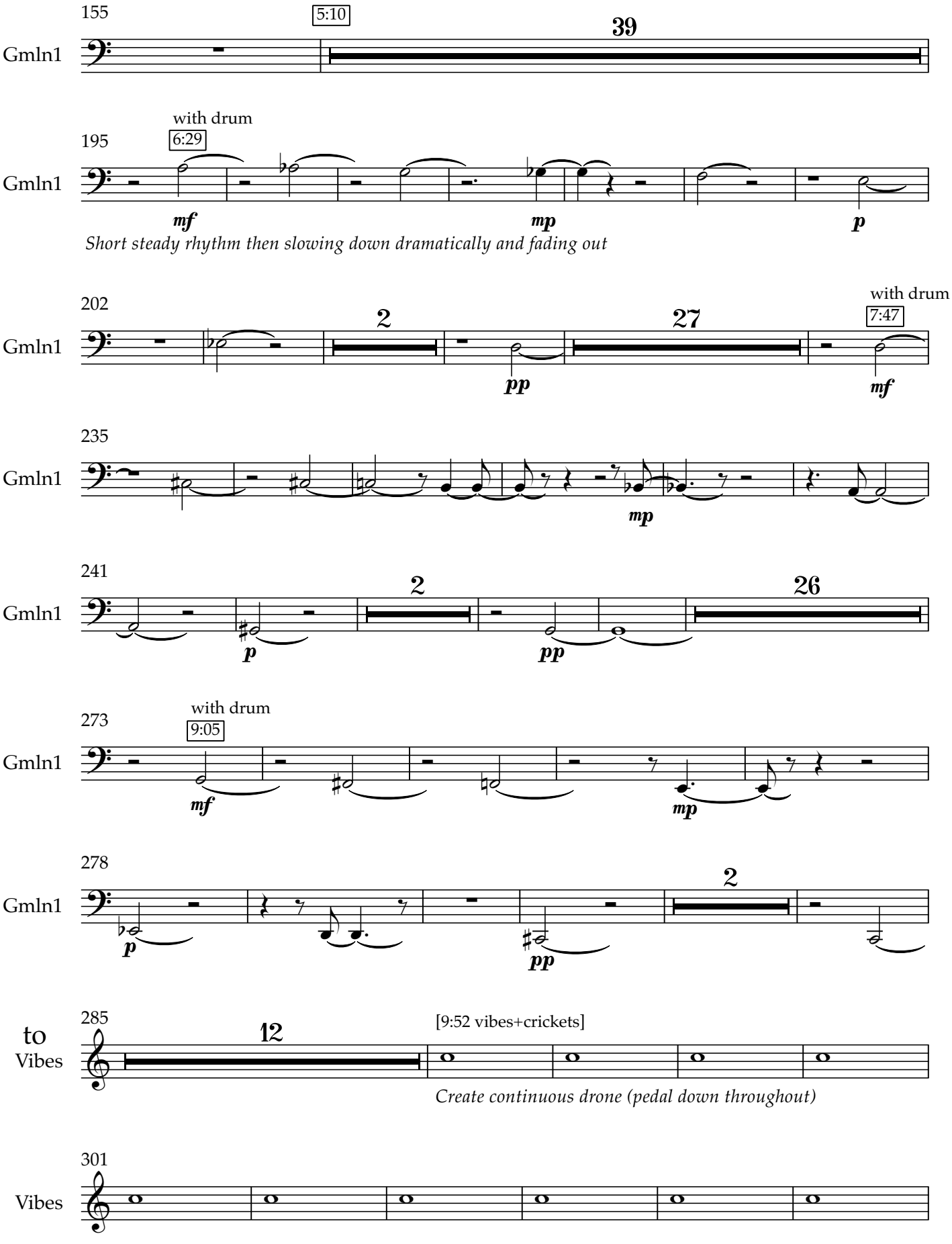
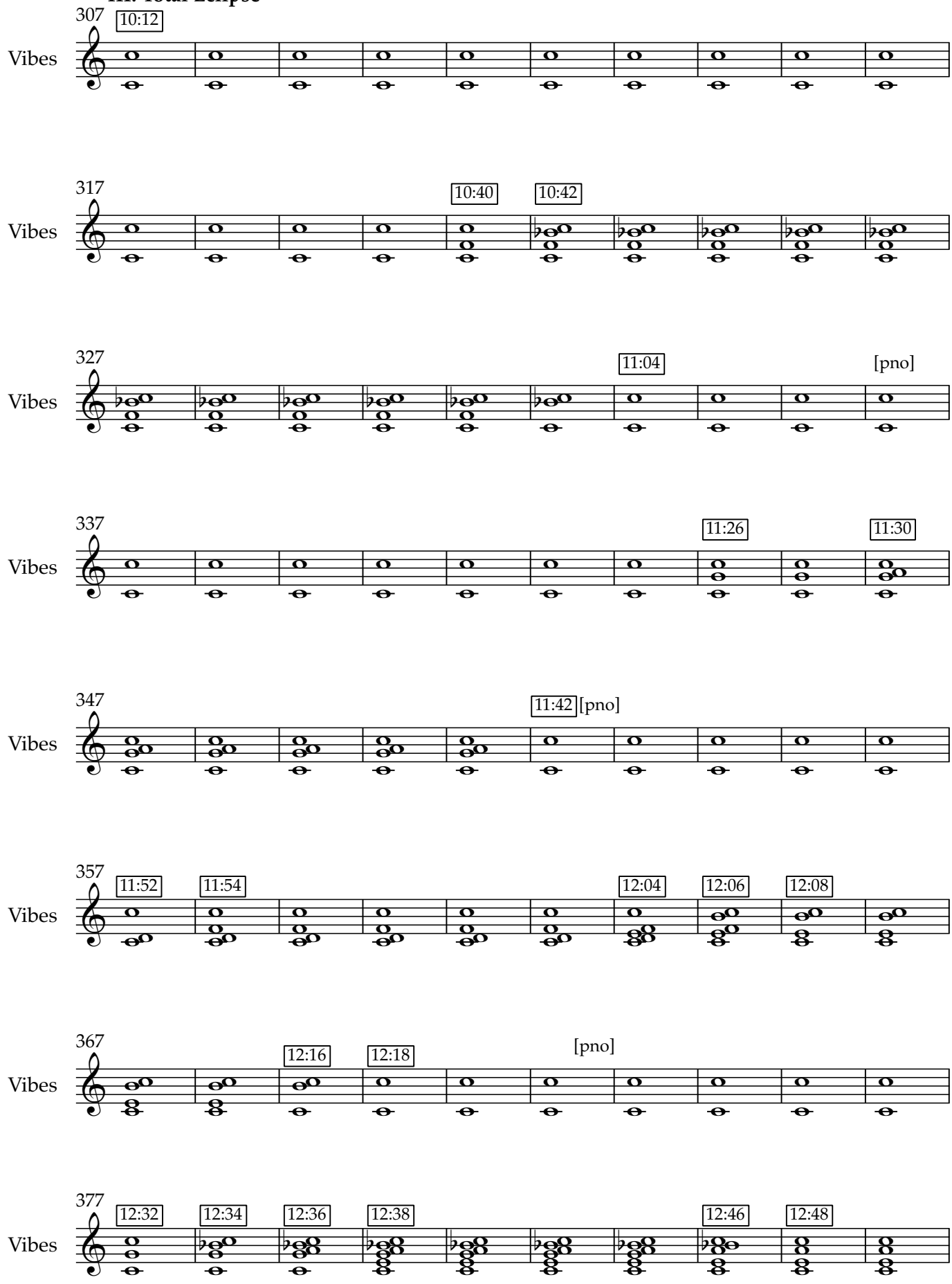
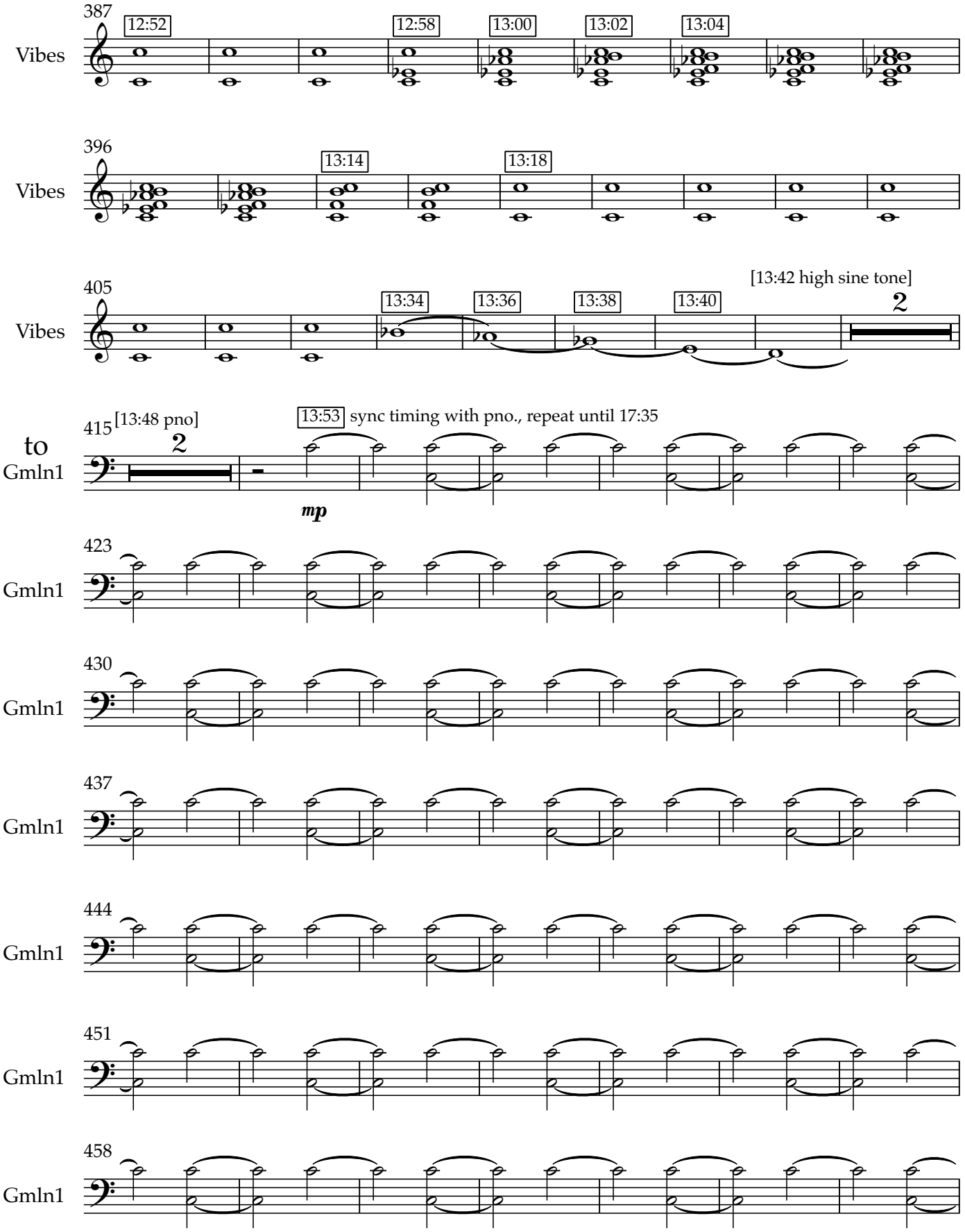
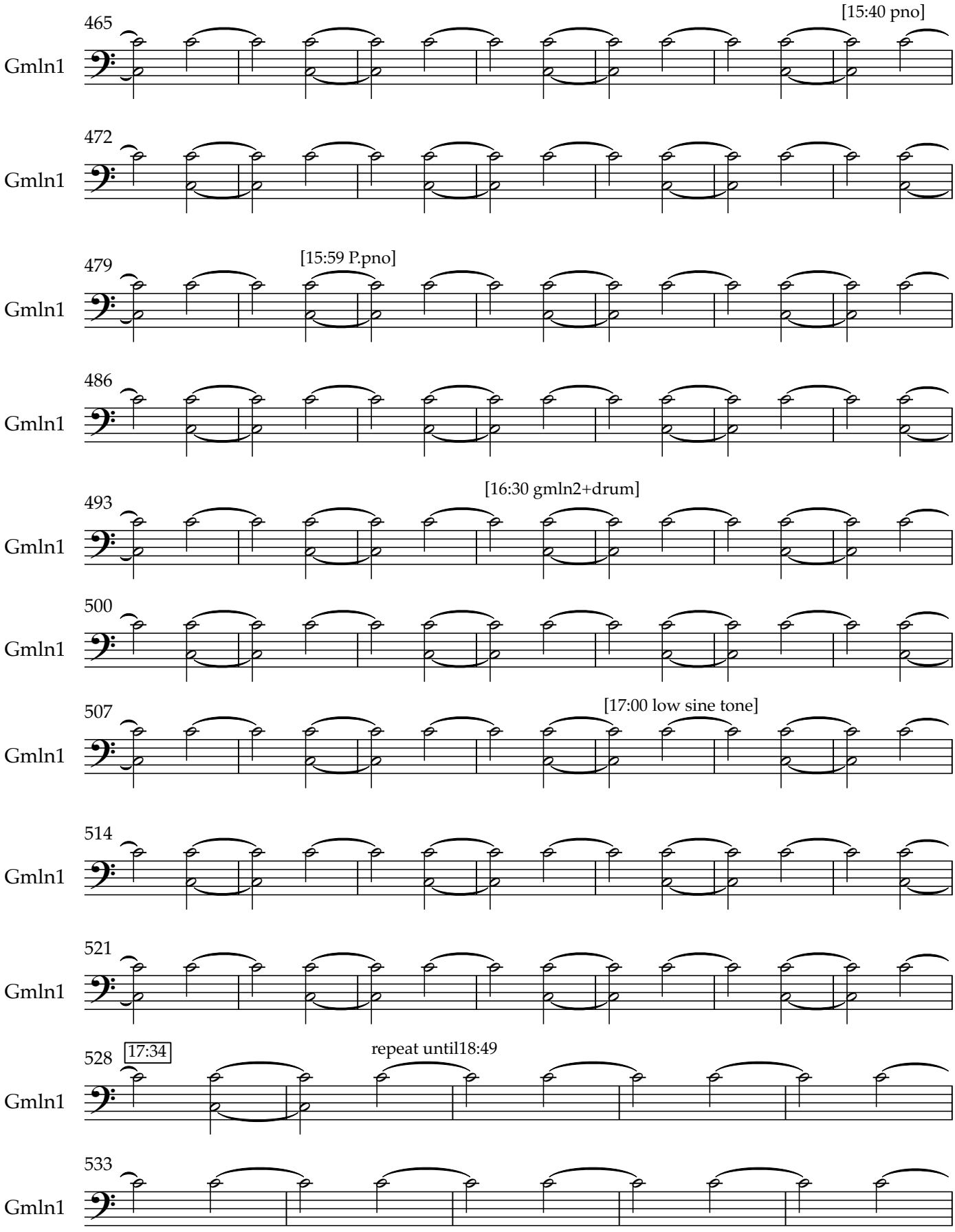
II. Temp Drops

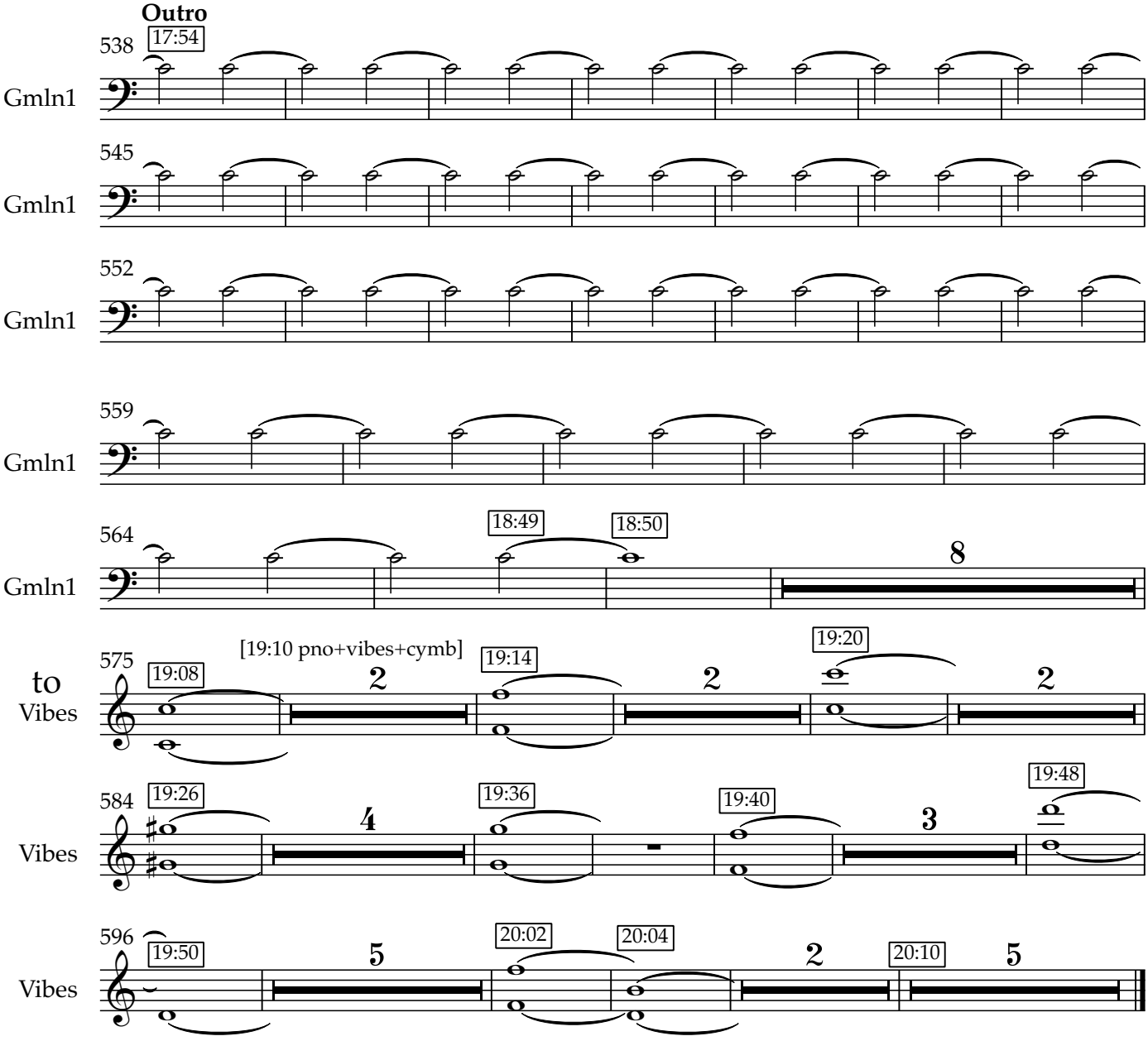


III. Total Eclipse




387
Vibes
12:52
12:58
13:00
13:02
13:04
396
Vibes
13:14
13:18
405
Vibes
13:34
13:36
13:38
13:40
[13:42 high sine tone]
2
415
[13:48 pno]
2
13:53 sync timing with pno., repeat until 17:35
to
Gmln1
mp
423
Gmln1
430
Gmln1
437
Gmln1
444
Gmln1
451
Gmln1
458
Gmln1


465
[15:40 pno]
Gmln1
472
Gmln1
479
[15:59 P.pno]
Gmln1
486
Gmln1
493
[16:30 gmln2+drum]
Gmln1
500
Gmln1
507
[17:00 low sine tone]
Gmln1
514
Gmln1
521
Gmln1
528
17:34
repeat until18:49
Gmln1
533
Gmln1

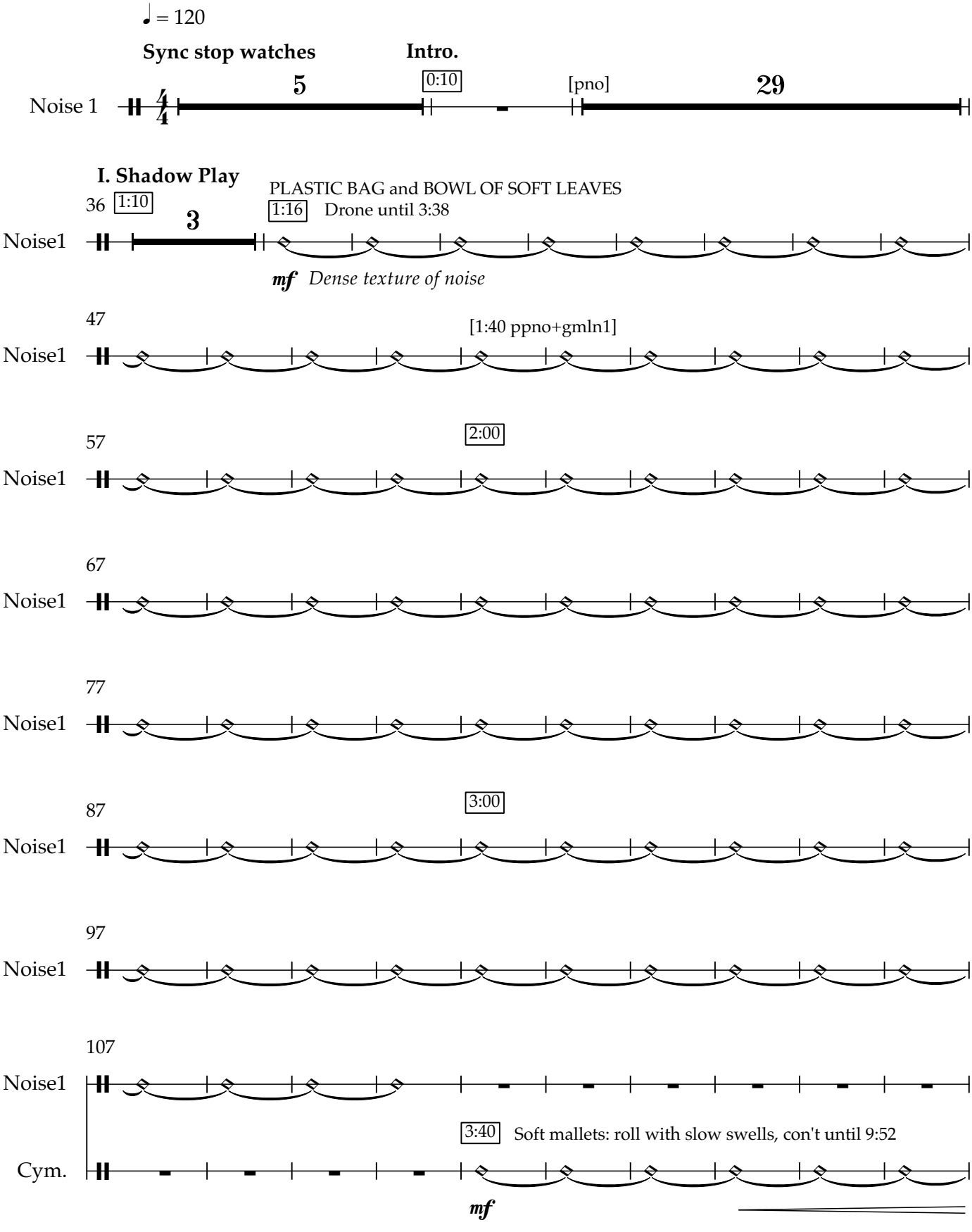

Outro
538
17:54
Gmln1
545
Gmln1
552
Gmln1
559
Gmln1
564
18:49
18:50
8
Gmln1
575
19:08
[19:10 pno+vibes+cymb]
19:14
19:20
to
Vibes
584
19:26
19:36
19:40
19:48
Vibes
596
19:50
20:02
20:04
20:10
Vibes

Performer 3

Pitiless as the Sun

for Yarn/Wire

JORDAN DYKSTRA



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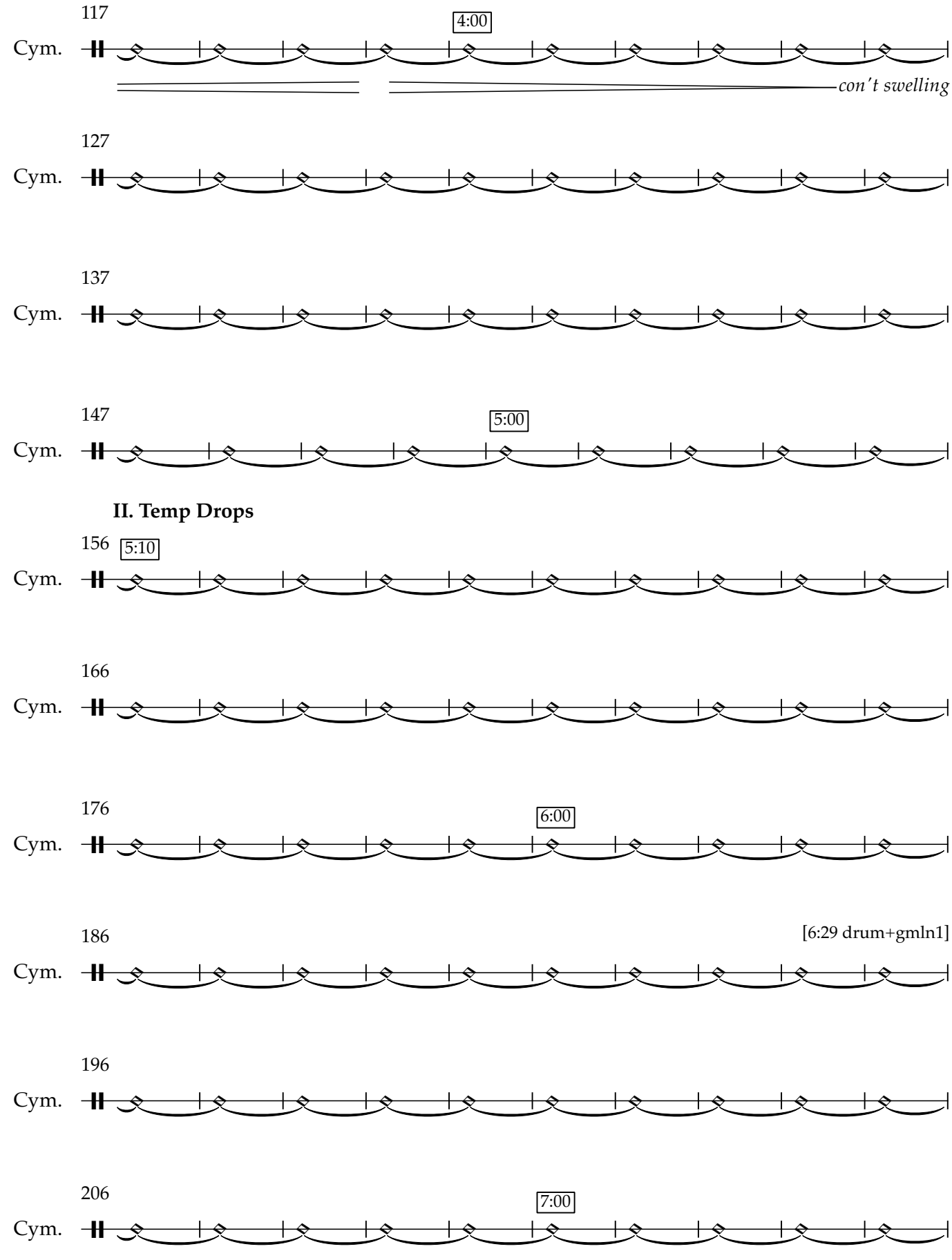
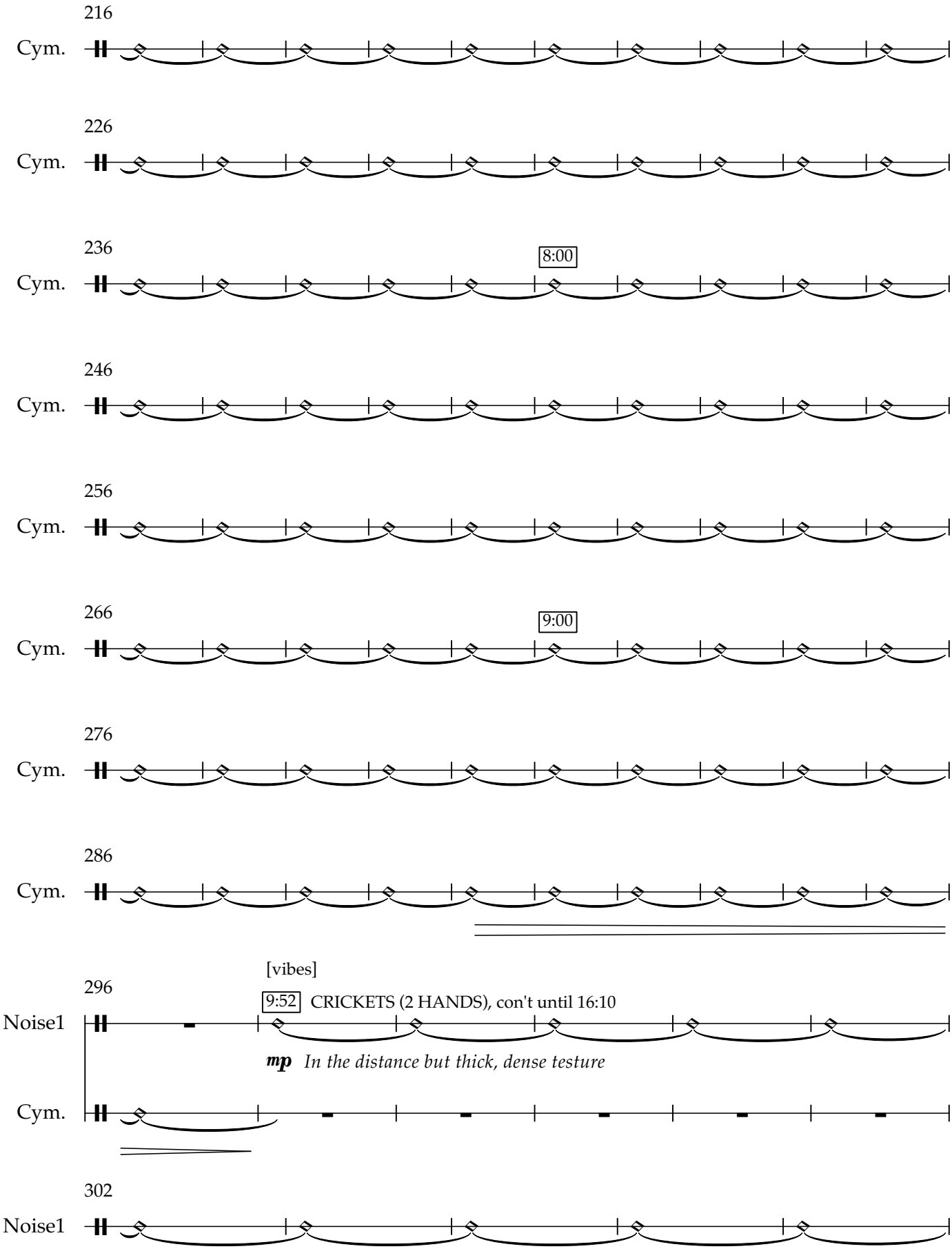
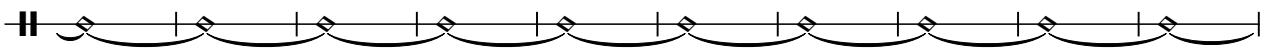

117
4:00
Cym.
con't swelling
127
Cym.
137
Cym.
147
5:00
Cym.
II. Temp Drops
156
5:10
Cym.
166
Cym.
176
6:00
Cym.
186
[6:29 drum+gmln1]
Cym.
196
Cym.
206
7:00
Cym.


216
Cym.
226
Cym.
236
8:00
Cym.
246
Cym.
256
Cym.
266
9:00
Cym.
276
Cym.
286
Cym.
[vibes]
296
9:52 CRICKETS (2 HANDS), con't until 16:10
Noise1
mp In the distance but thick, dense testure
Cym.
302
Noise1

III. Total Eclipse

307 10:12

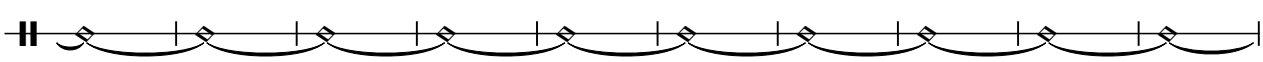
Noise1 

317

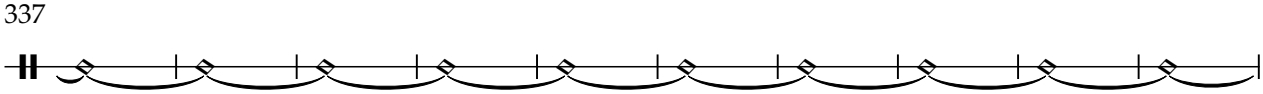
Noise1

11:00

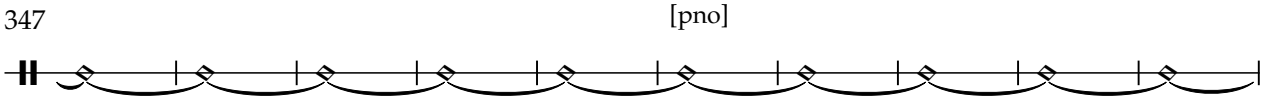
327 [pno]

Noise1 

337

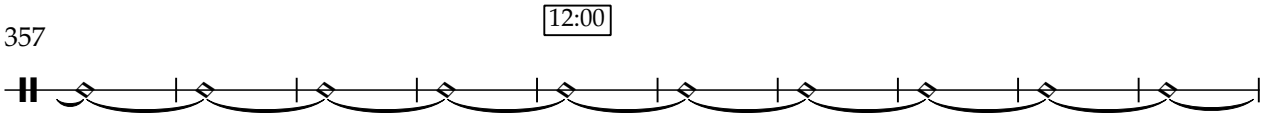
Noise1 

347 [pno]

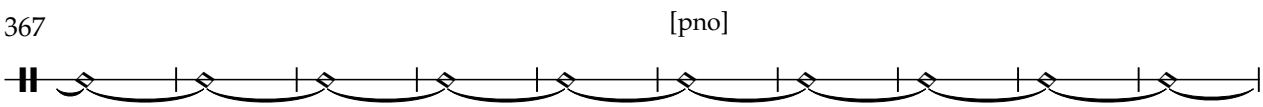
Noise1 

12:00

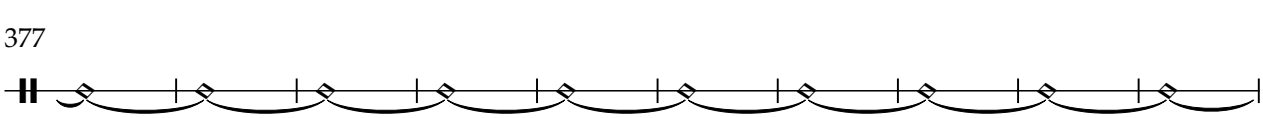
357

Noise1 

367 [pno]

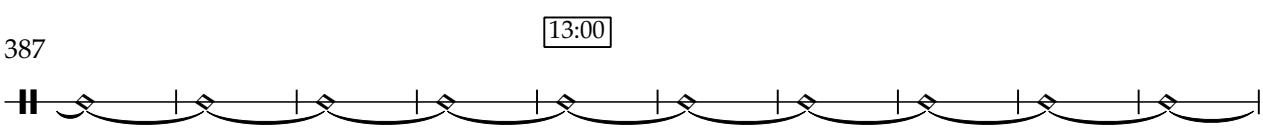
Noise1 

377

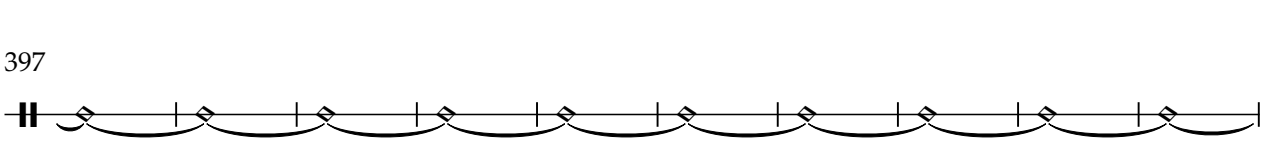
Noise1 

13:00

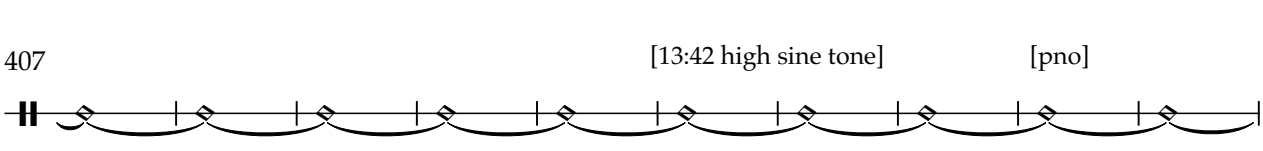
387

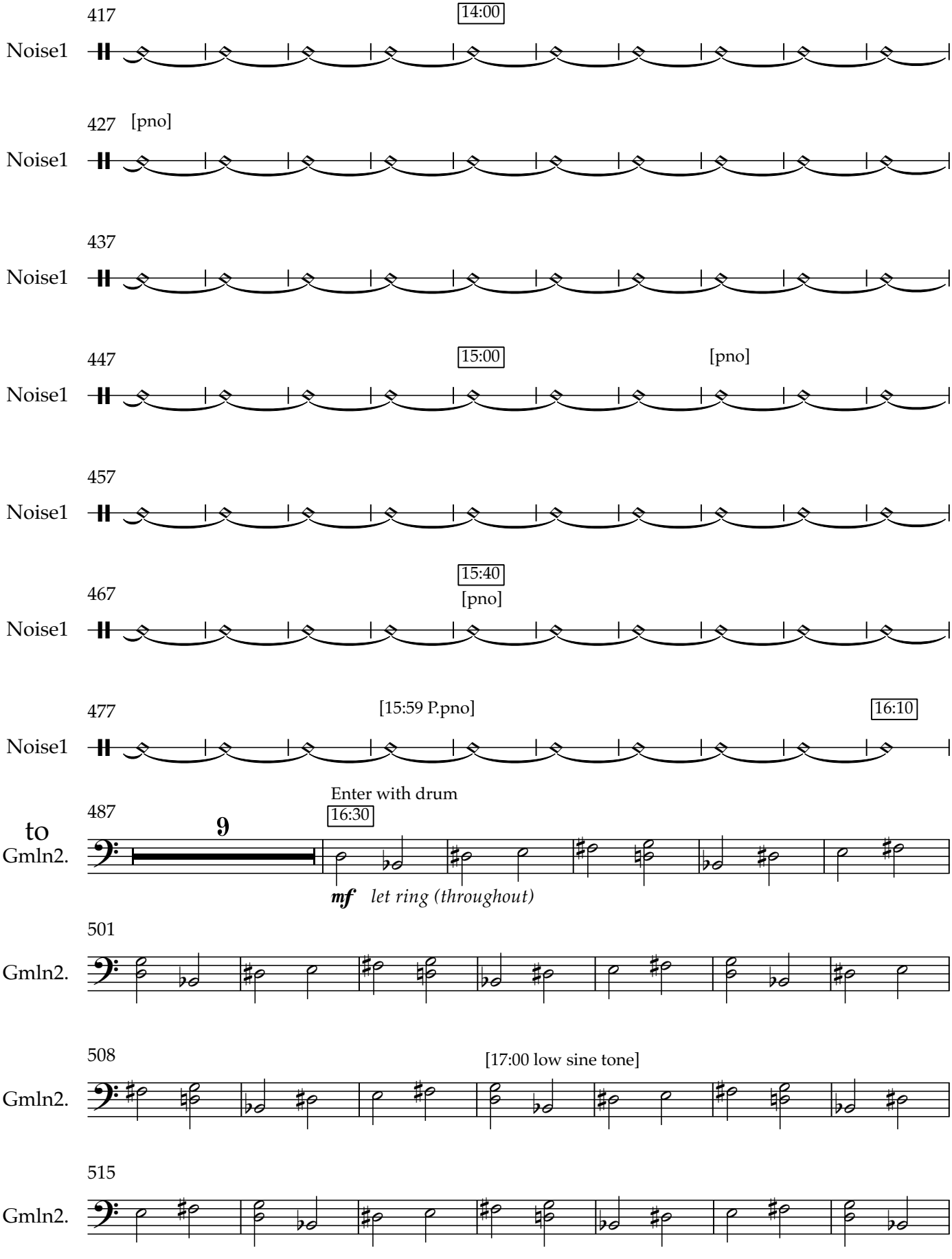
Noise1 

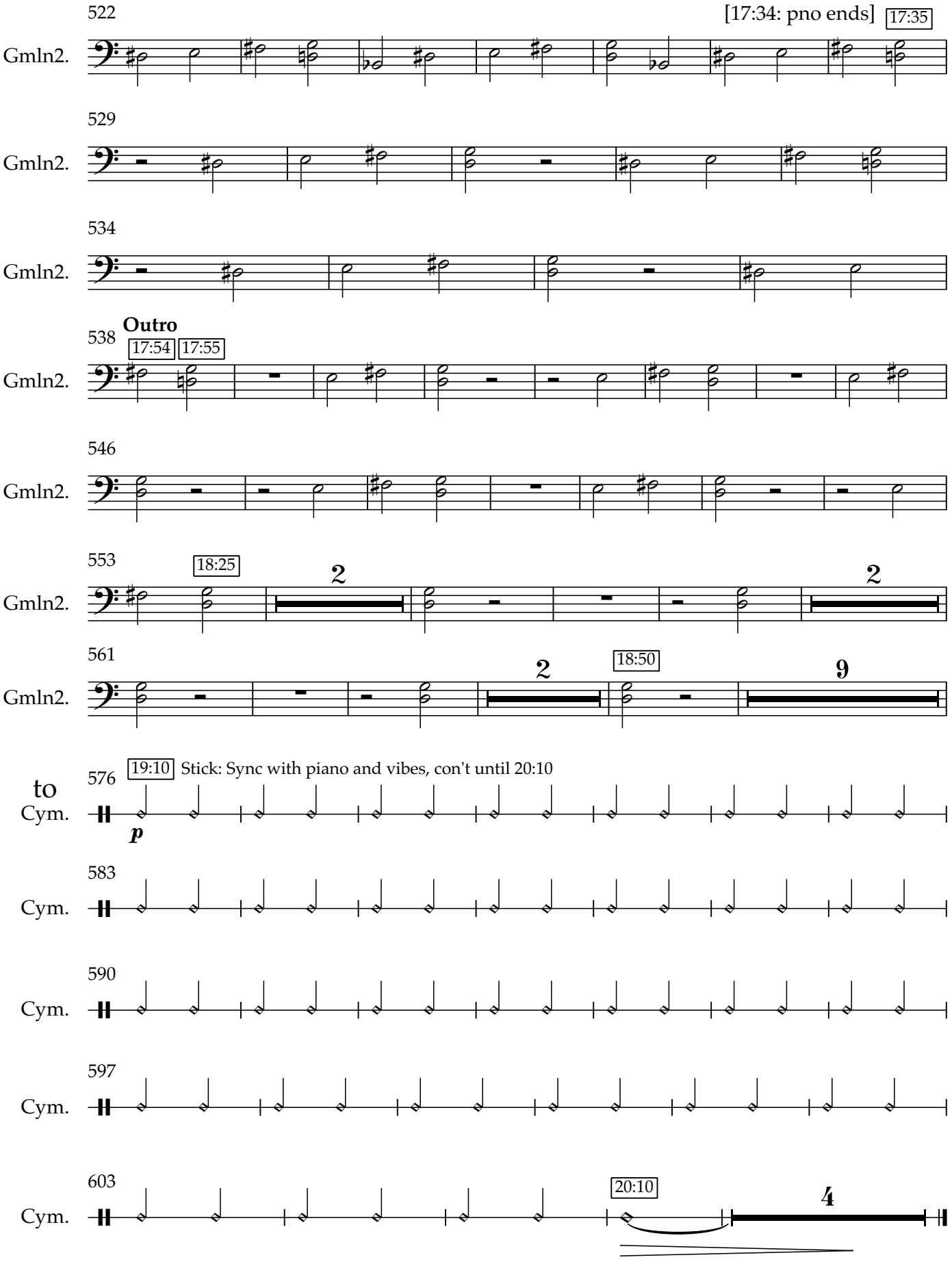
397

Noise1 

407 [13:42 high sine tone] [pno]

Noise1 


417
14:00
Noise1
427
[pno]
Noise1
437
Noise1
447
15:00
[pno]
Noise1
457
Noise1
467
15:40
[pno]
Noise1
477
[15:59 P.pno]
16:10
Noise1
Enter with drum
487
16:30
to
Gmln2.
9
mf
let ring (throughout)
501
Gmln2.
508
[17:00 low sine tone]
Gmln2.
515
Gmln2.


522
[17:34: pno ends]
17:35
Gmln2.
529
Gmln2.
534
Gmln2.
538
Outro
17:54
17:55
Gmln2.
546
Gmln2.
553
18:25
2
2
Gmln2.
561
2
18:50
9
Gmln2.
to
576
19:10
Stick: Sync with piano and vibes, con't until 20:10
Cym.
p
583
Cym.
590
Cym.
597
Cym.
603
20:10
4
Cym.

Performer 4

Pitiless as the Sun

for Yarn/Wire

JORDAN DYKSTRA

♩ = 120

Sync stop watches **Intro.**

Synthesizer

5 0:10 [pno] 29

I. Shadow Play

36 1:10 3 1:16 Consistantly glissing up 1 whole step and down 1 whole step from written pitch

Synth.

mp *mf*

A shadowy and almost imperceptibly moving dark texture

47 [1:40 ppno+gmln1]

Synth.

57 2:00

Synth.

67

Synth.

77

Synth.

87 3:00

Synth.

97

Synth.

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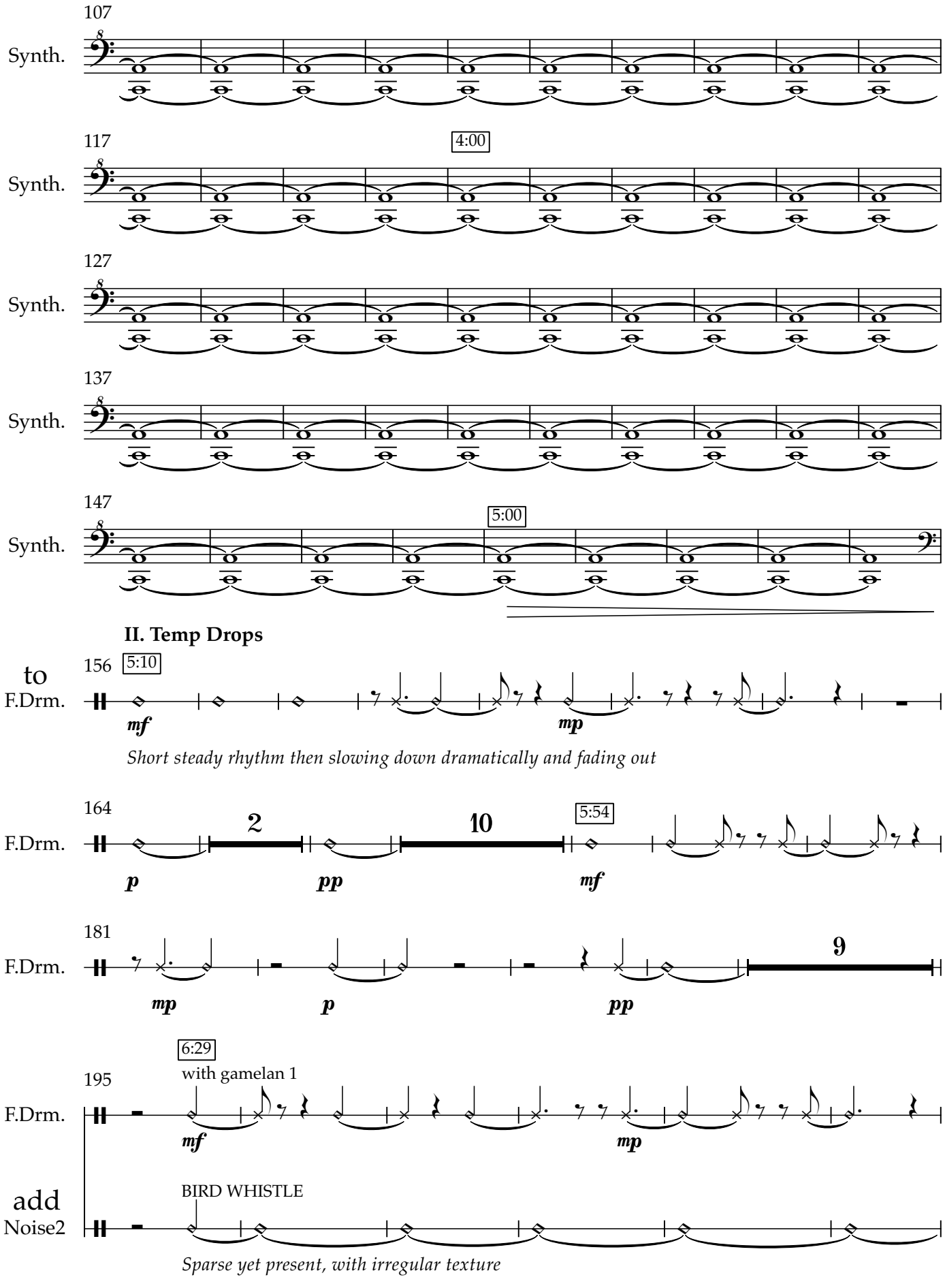
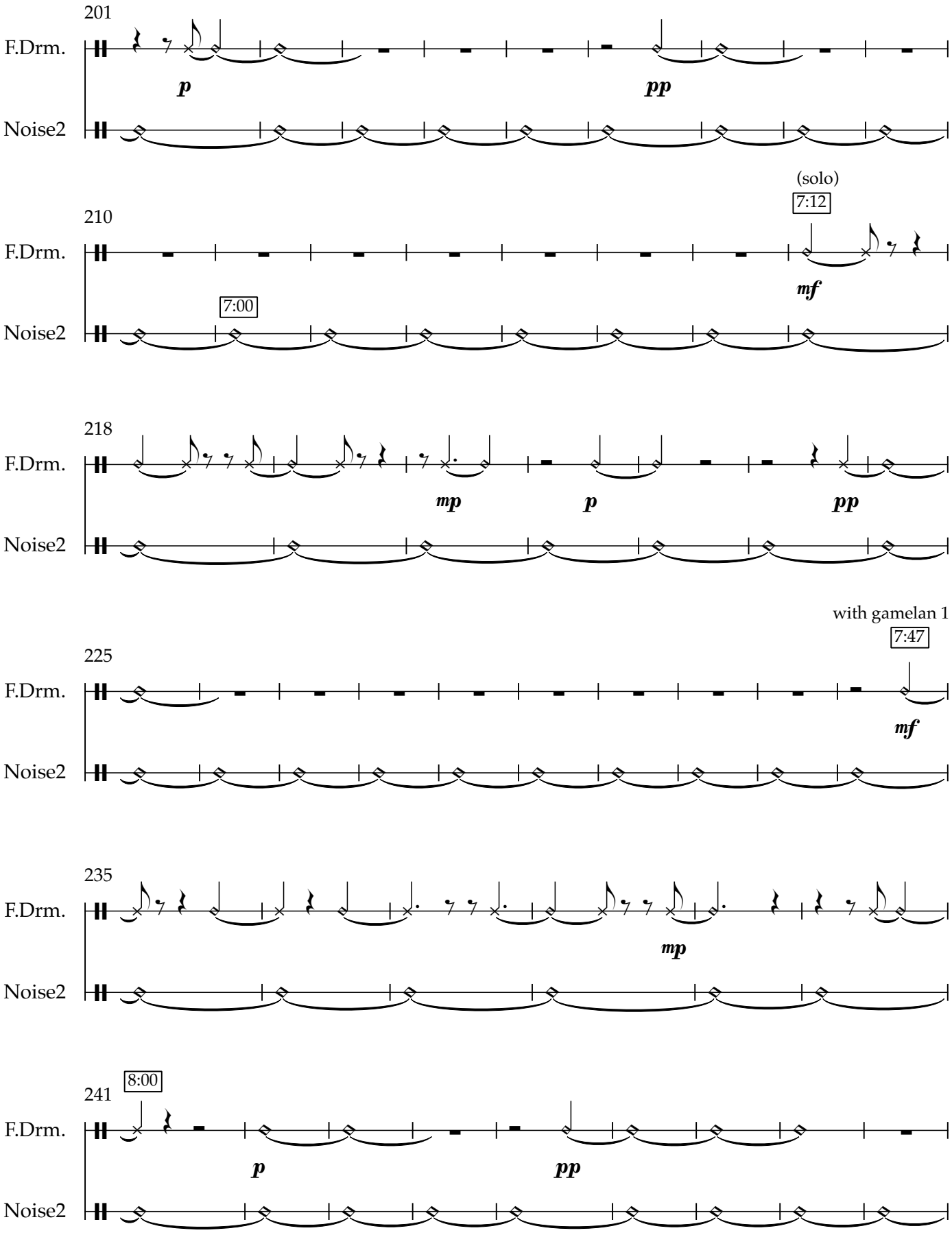
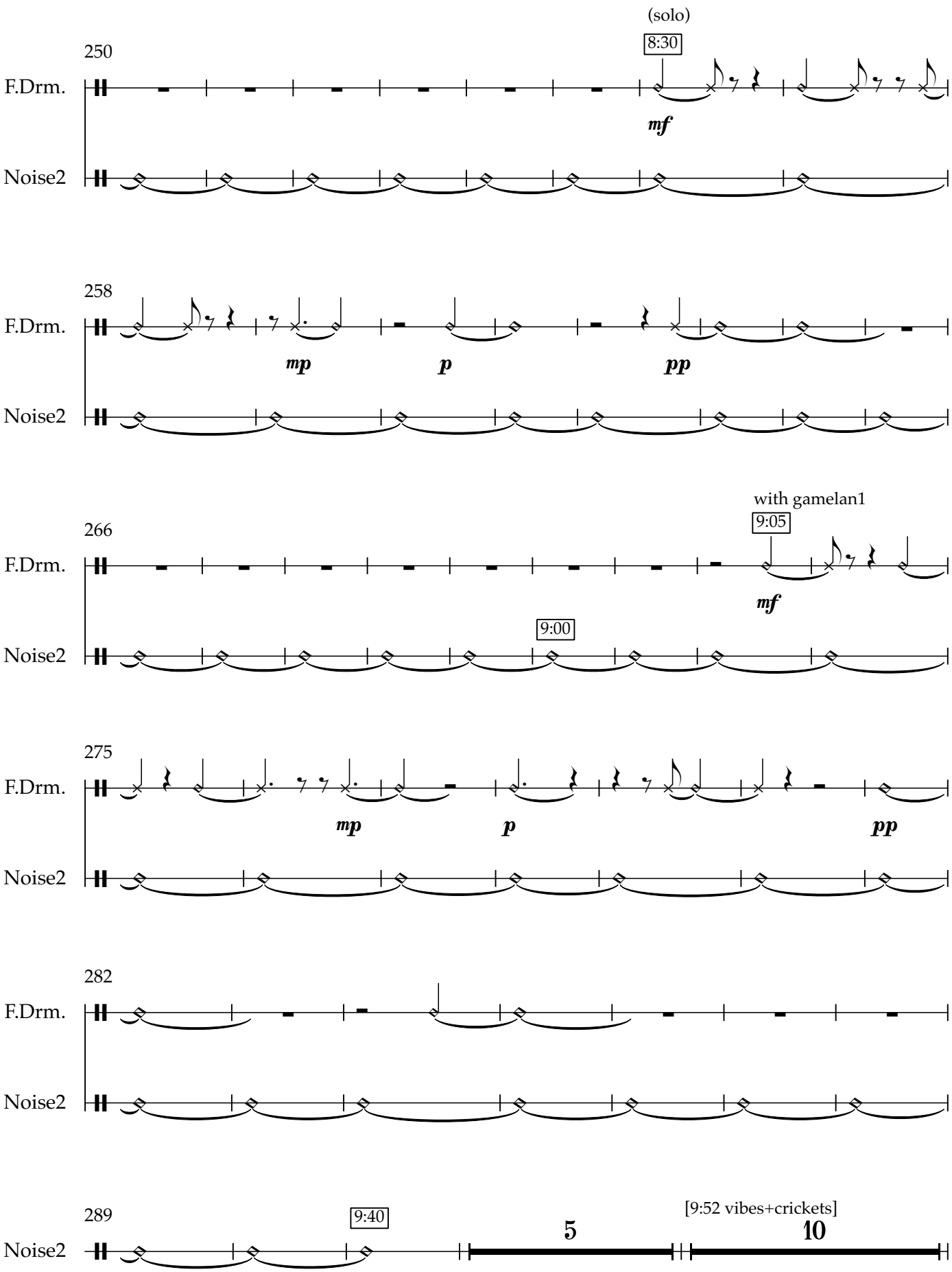
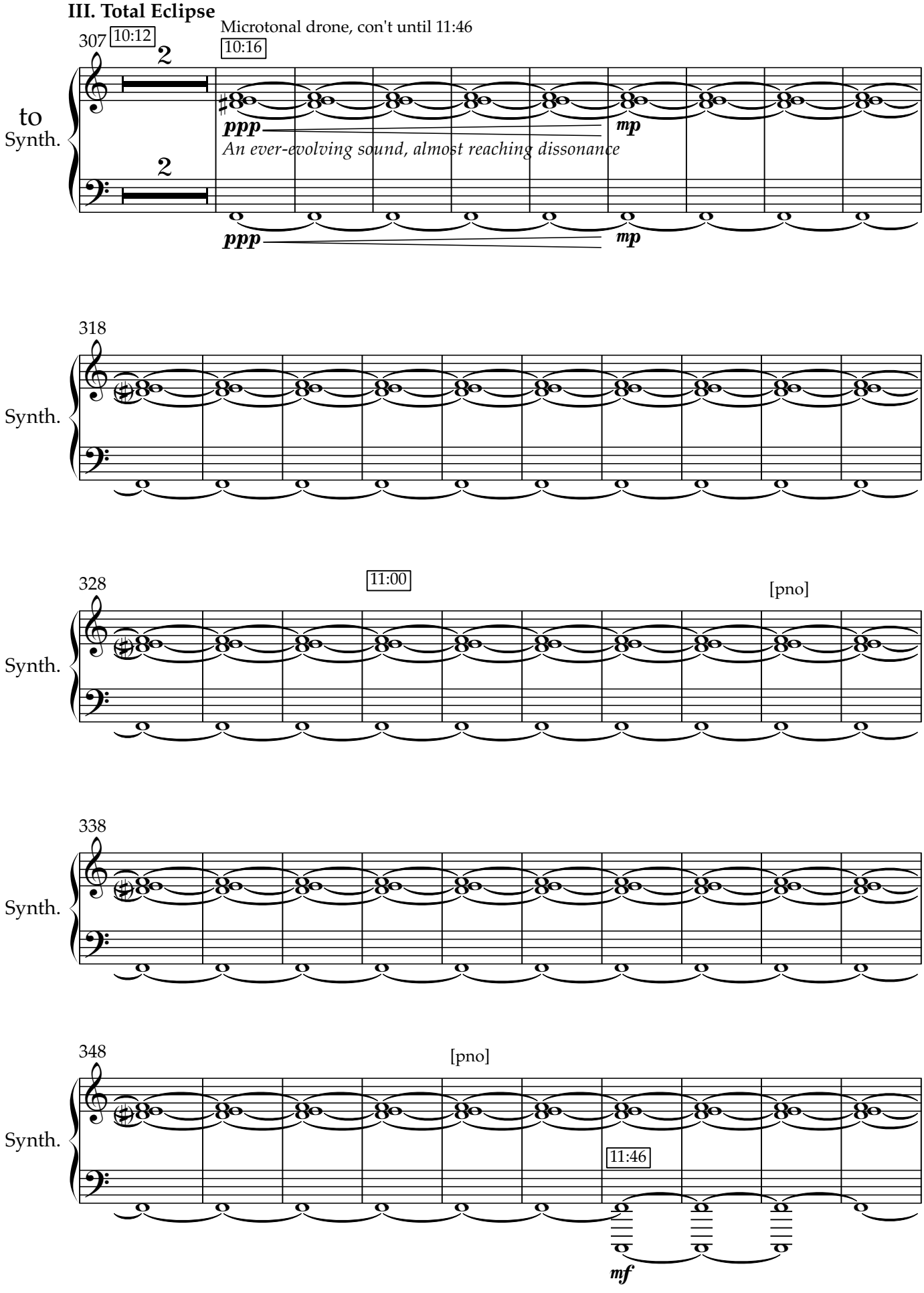
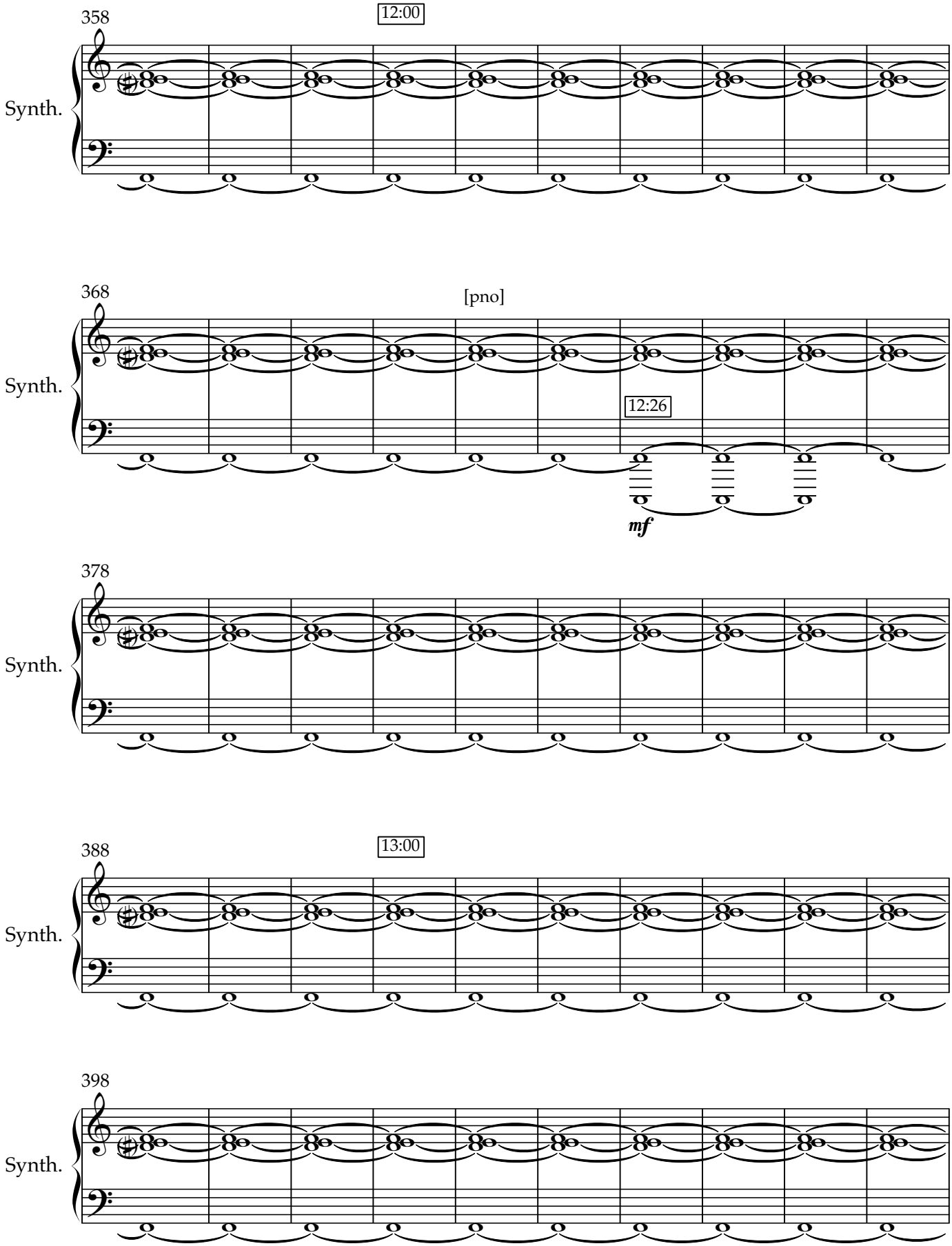
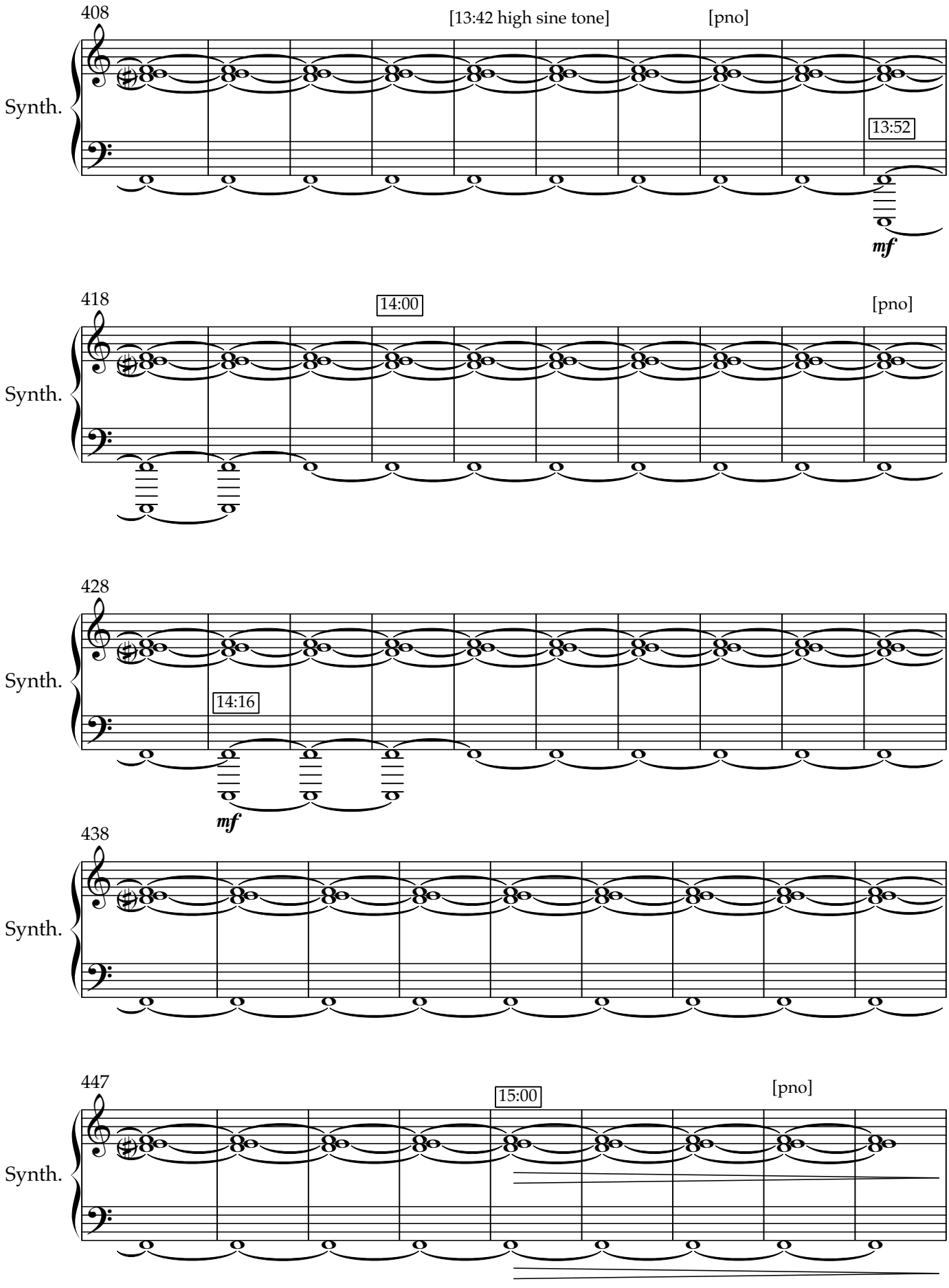

107
Synth.
117
4:00
Synth.
127
Synth.
137
Synth.
147
5:00
Synth.
II. Temp Drops
156
5:10
to
F.Drm.
mf
mp
Short steady rhythm then slowing down dramatically and fading out
164
2
10
5:54
F.Drm.
p
pp
mf
181
9
F.Drm.
mp
p
pp
6:29
with gamelan 1
195
F.Drm.
mf
mp
BIRD WHISTLE
add
Noise2
Sparse yet present, with irregular texture

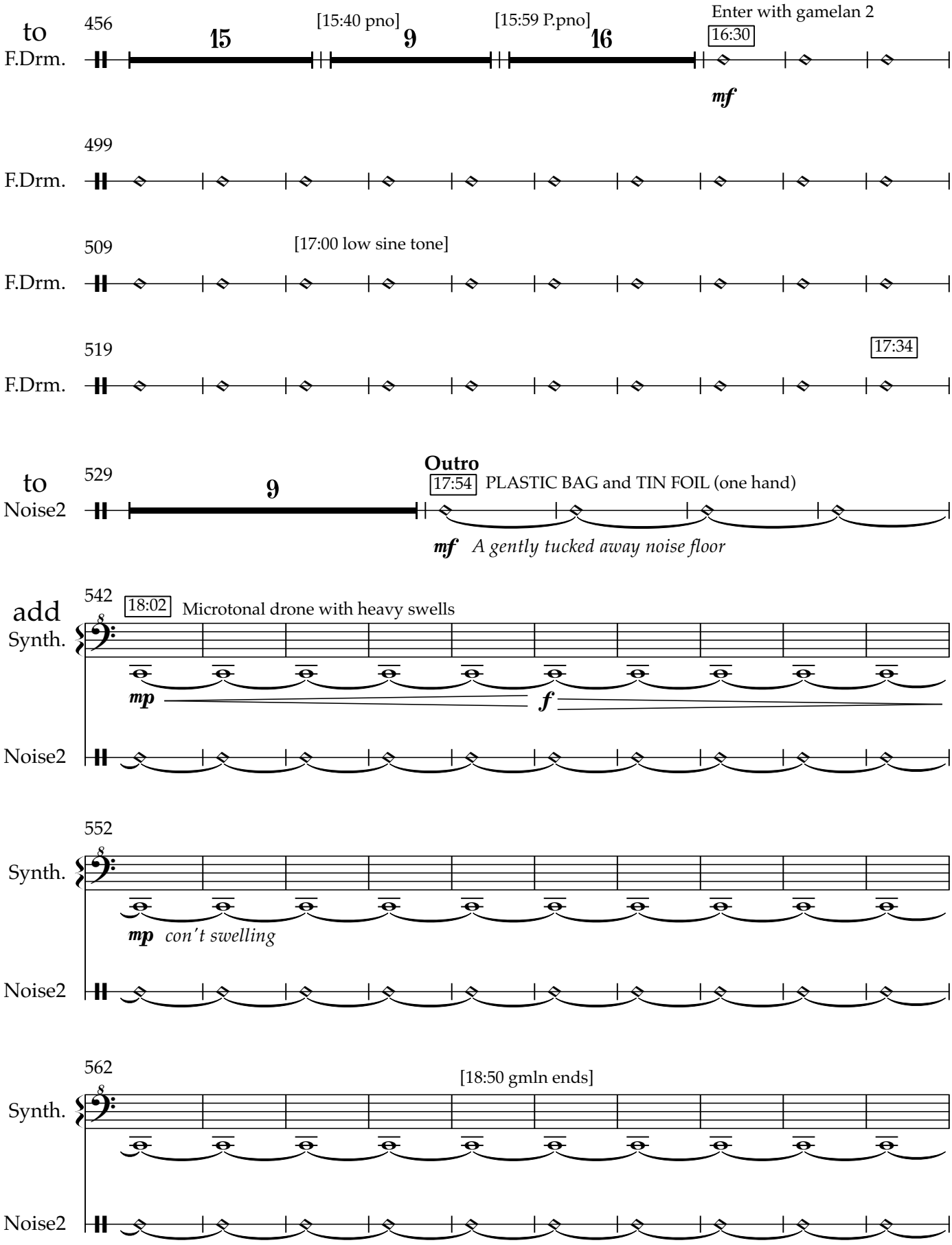

201
F.Drm.
Noise2
p
pp
(solo)
7:12
210
F.Drm.
Noise2
7:00
mf
218
F.Drm.
Noise2
mp
p
pp
with gamelan 1
7:47
225
F.Drm.
Noise2
mf
235
F.Drm.
Noise2
mp
8:00
241
F.Drm.
Noise2
p
pp

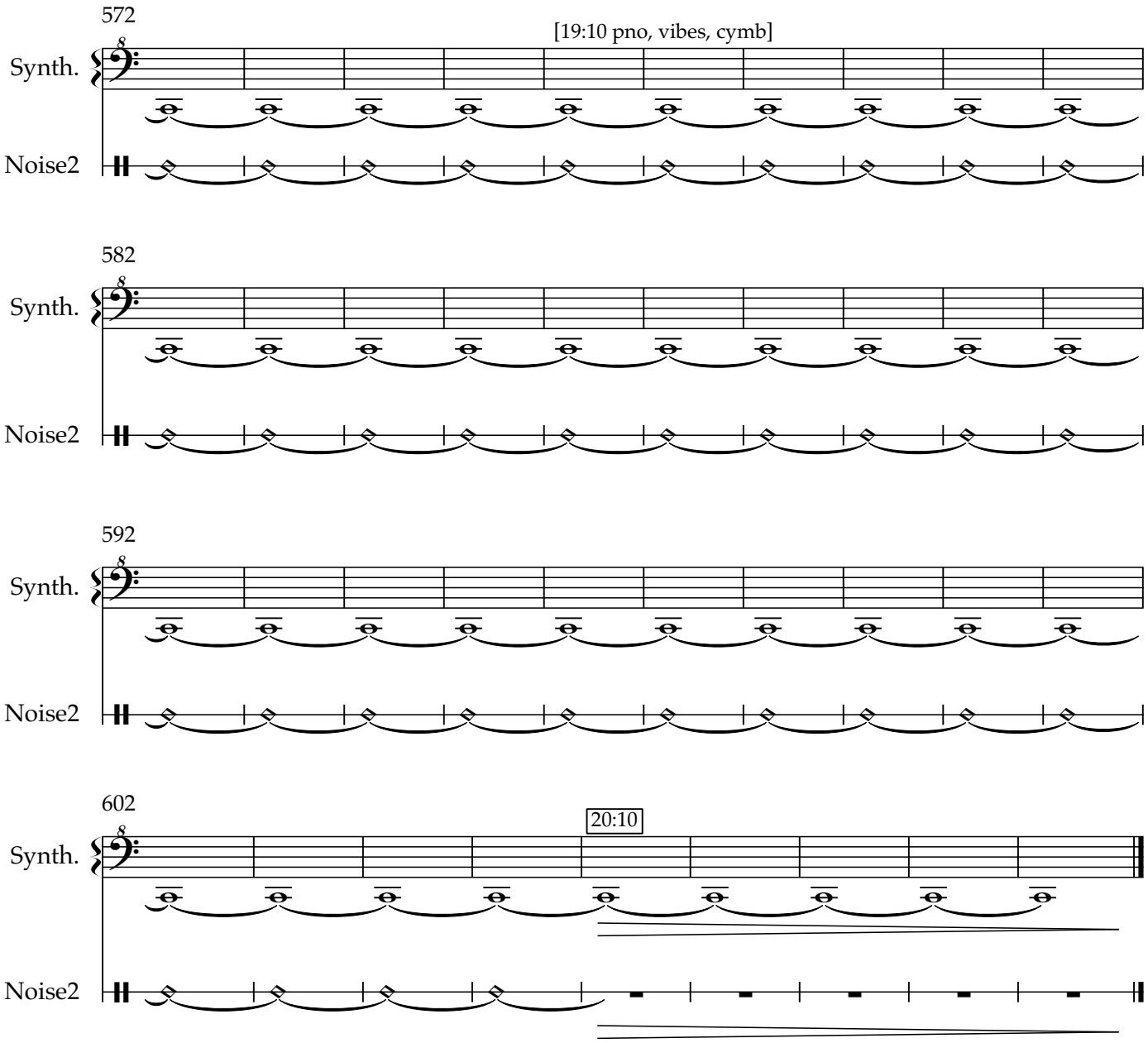

(solo)
8:30
250
F.Drm.
mf
Noise2
258
F.Drm.
mp
p
pp
Noise2
with gamelan1
9:05
266
F.Drm.
mf
9:00
Noise2
275
F.Drm.
mp
p
pp
Noise2
282
F.Drm.
Noise2
289
9:40
5
[9:52 vibes+crickets]
10
Noise2


III. Total Eclipse
Microtonal drone, con't until 11:46
307
10:12
10:16
to
Synth.
2
2
ppp
mp
An ever-evolving sound, almost reaching dissonance
ppp
mp
318
Synth.
328
11:00
[pno]
Synth.
338
Synth.
348
[pno]
Synth.
11:46
mf


358
12:00
Synth.
368
[pno]
Synth.
12:26
mf
378
Synth.
388
13:00
Synth.
398
Synth.


408
[13:42 high sine tone]
[pno]
Synth.
13:52
mf
418
14:00
[pno]
Synth.
428
Synth.
14:16
mf
438
Synth.
447
15:00
[pno]
Synth.


to
F.Drm.
456
15
[15:40 pno]
9
[15:59 P.pno]
16
Enter with gamelan 2
16:30
mf
499
F.Drm.
509
[17:00 low sine tone]
F.Drm.
519
17:34
F.Drm.
to
Noise2
529
9
Outro
17:54
PLASTIC BAG and TIN FOIL (one hand)
mf
A gently tucked away noise floor
add
Synth.
542
18:02
Microtonal drone with heavy swells
mp
f
Noise2
552
Synth.
mp
con't swelling
Noise2
562
[18:50 gmln ends]
Synth.
Noise2


572
[19:10 pno, vibes, cymb]
Synth.
Noise2
582
Synth.
Noise2
592
Synth.
Noise2
602
20:10
Synth.
Noise2