ritratto senza voce (Billie Holiday)

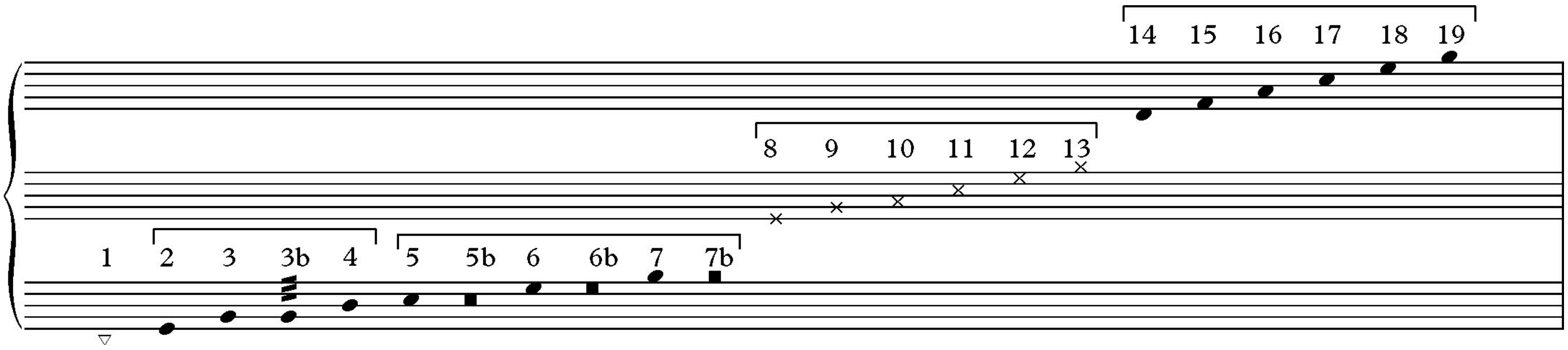
for percussion and video

Alberto Bernal

PERFORMANCES NOTES AND SET-UP

The material of the piece is taken from a video of Billie Holiday singing the piece “Strange fruit”, based in the same named poem by Abel Meeropol. It is a poem that protests agains the lynching of African Americans, and the song is often described as the first musical protest, in words and music, against racism.
The piece is a kind of mirroring of Billie Holiday and Strange fruit in form of a voiceless, muted portrait (ritratto senza voce) . It goes all the way through the video, frame by frame, substituting every text phoneme by a corresponding percussion sound.

The following distribution is proposed as a reference for the percussion set-up. Light changes can be made, but always taking into account, that the proposal underlies a phonetical nearness between percussion sound and text phoneme; this should be always preserved when doing changes to the proposed set-up.



- ***1*** No text phoneme at all. Pause ===> **whip**
  in order to make possible the speed and combination with other instruments, we propose to use two alternating whips, fixed in a stand or similar, so that only one and at a time is necessary to percute them. When tempo gets faster (around the middle of the piece) it will be necessary to change from hand percussion to sticks.
- ***2-4*** Nasal and lateral consonants ===> **skins (3 toms, 3 roto toms, 3 octabans...) + snare drum**
  - ***2*** m ===> **low drum (tom, roto tom, octaban, etc.)**
  - ***3*** n ===> **mid drum**
  - ***3b*** r ===> **snare drum with or without snares (always rolled)**
  - ***4*** l ===> **high drum**
- ***5-7*** plosive consonants ===> **woodblocks**
  - ***5*** b ===> **low woodblock, normal playing**
  - ***5b*** p ===> **low woodblock, edge (dryer, with less tone)**
  - ***6*** g as in *g*allant ===> **mid woodblock, normal playing**
  - ***6b*** k as in plu*ck* ===> **mid woodblock, edge**
  - ***7*** d and th as in “*th*e” ===> **high woodblock, normal playing**
  - ***7b*** t ===> **high woodblock, edge**
- ***8-13*** fricative consonants ===> **chinese cymbals**
  - ***8*** f ===> **low chinese cymbal**
  - ***9*** h ===> **high chinese cymbal**
  - ***10*** x as in Stran*g*e ===> **two chinese cymbals, mounted as hi-hat. foot stroke**
  - ***11*** z as in mou*th* ===> **two chinese cymbals, mounted as hi-hat. stick stroke, closed**
  - ***12*** s as in *S*outh ===> **two chinese cymbals, mounted as hi-hat. stick stroke on edge, open**
  - ***13*** ʃ as in bree*z*e ===> **two chinese cymbals, mounted as hi-hat. stick stroke on bell, open**
- ***14-19*** vowels ===> **opera gongs**
  - ***14*** u as in fr*ui*t ===> **low opera gong**
  - ***15*** o as in f*o*r ===> **mid-low opera gong**
  - ***16*** ʒ as in th*e* ===> **mid opera gong**
  - ***17*** a s in bl*a*ck ===> **mid-high opera gong**
  - ***18*** e as in b*ea*r ===> **high opera gong**
  - ***19*** i as in tr*ee* ===> **highest opera gong**

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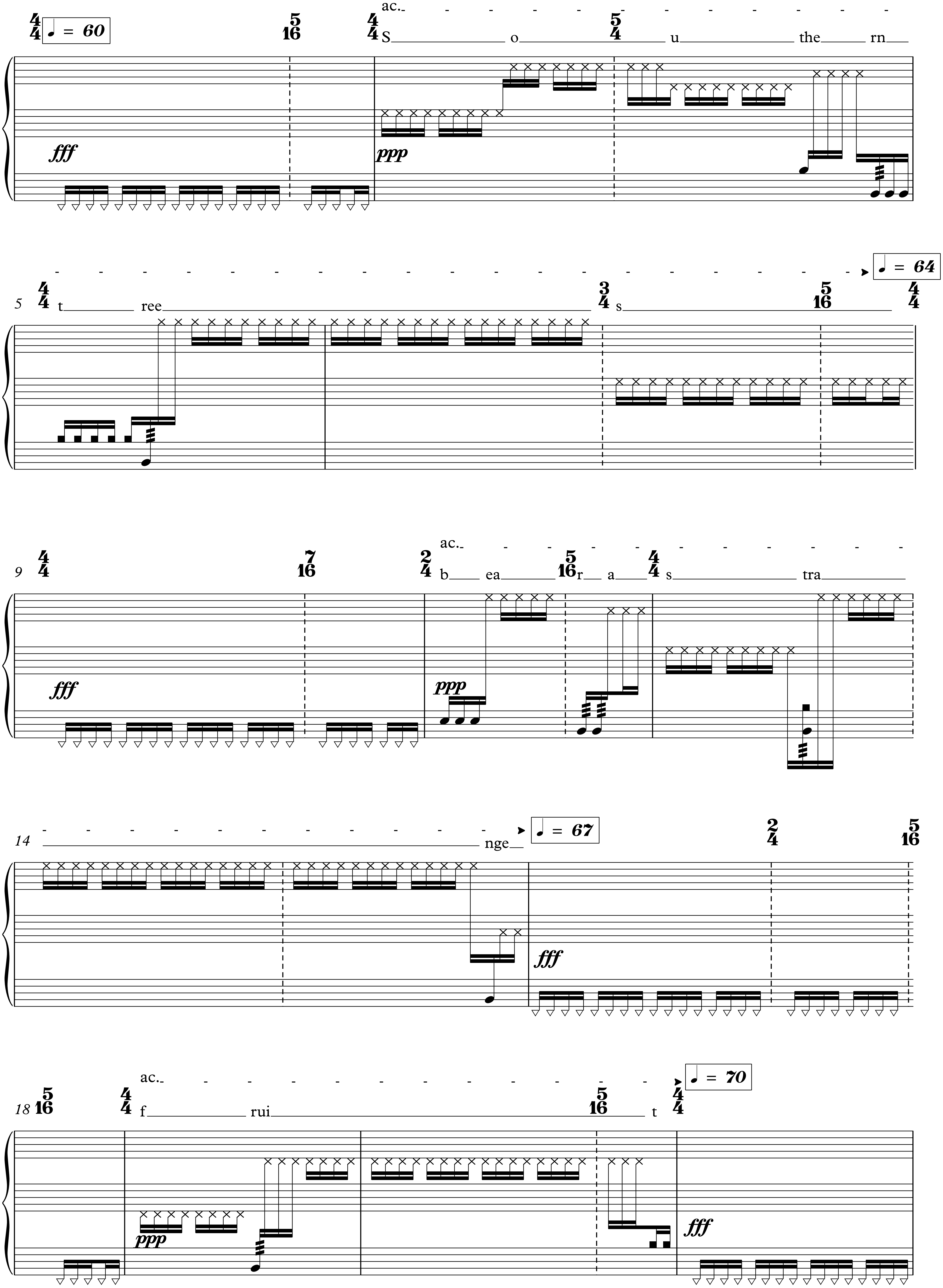
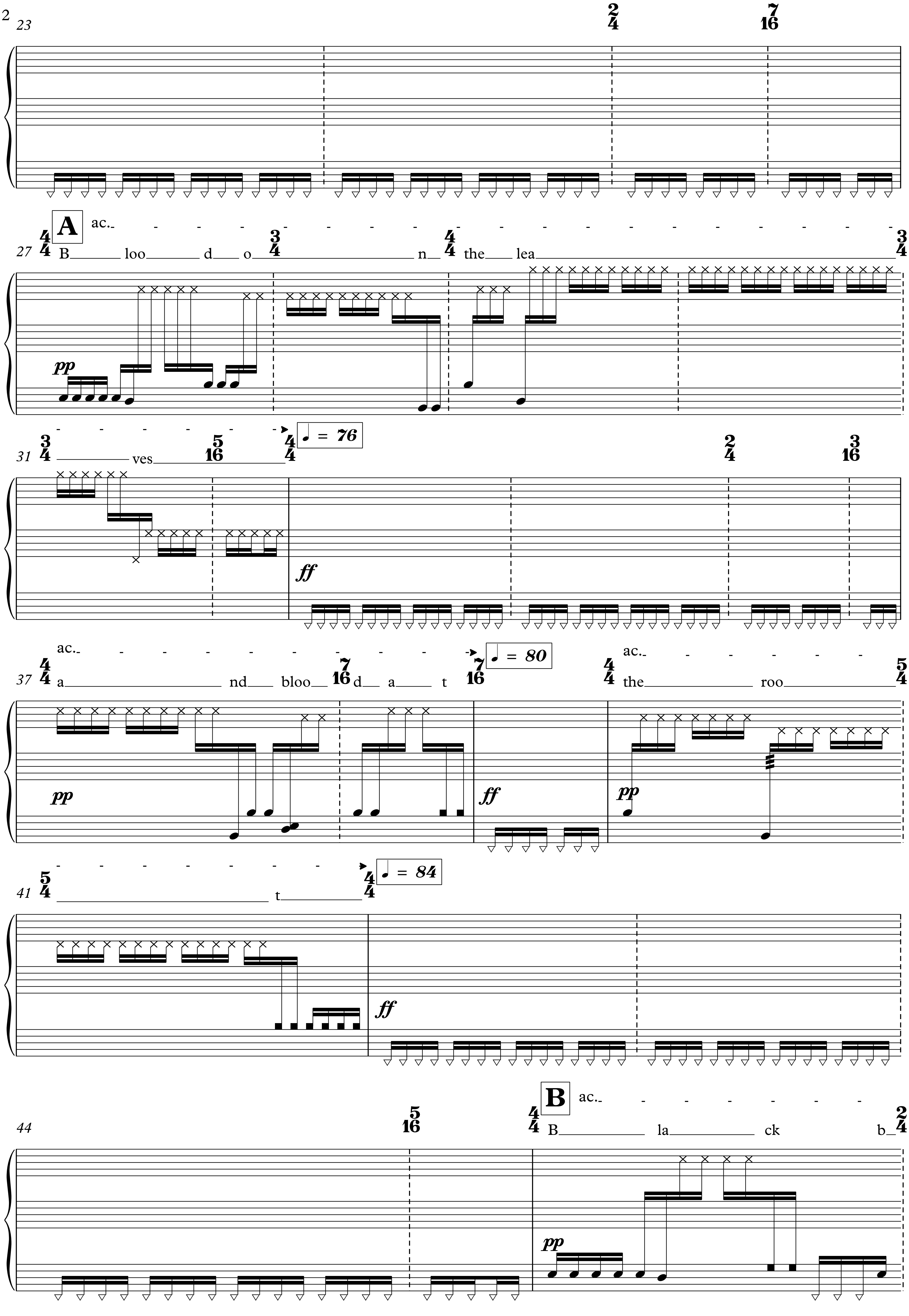


♩ = 60
fff
ac.
S o u the rn
ppp
5
t ree s
♩ = 64
9
fff
ac.
b ea r a s tra
ppp
14
nge
♩ = 67
fff
18
ac.
f rui t
ppp
♩ = 70
fff


23
2/4
7/16
A
ac.
27
4/4
B loo d o
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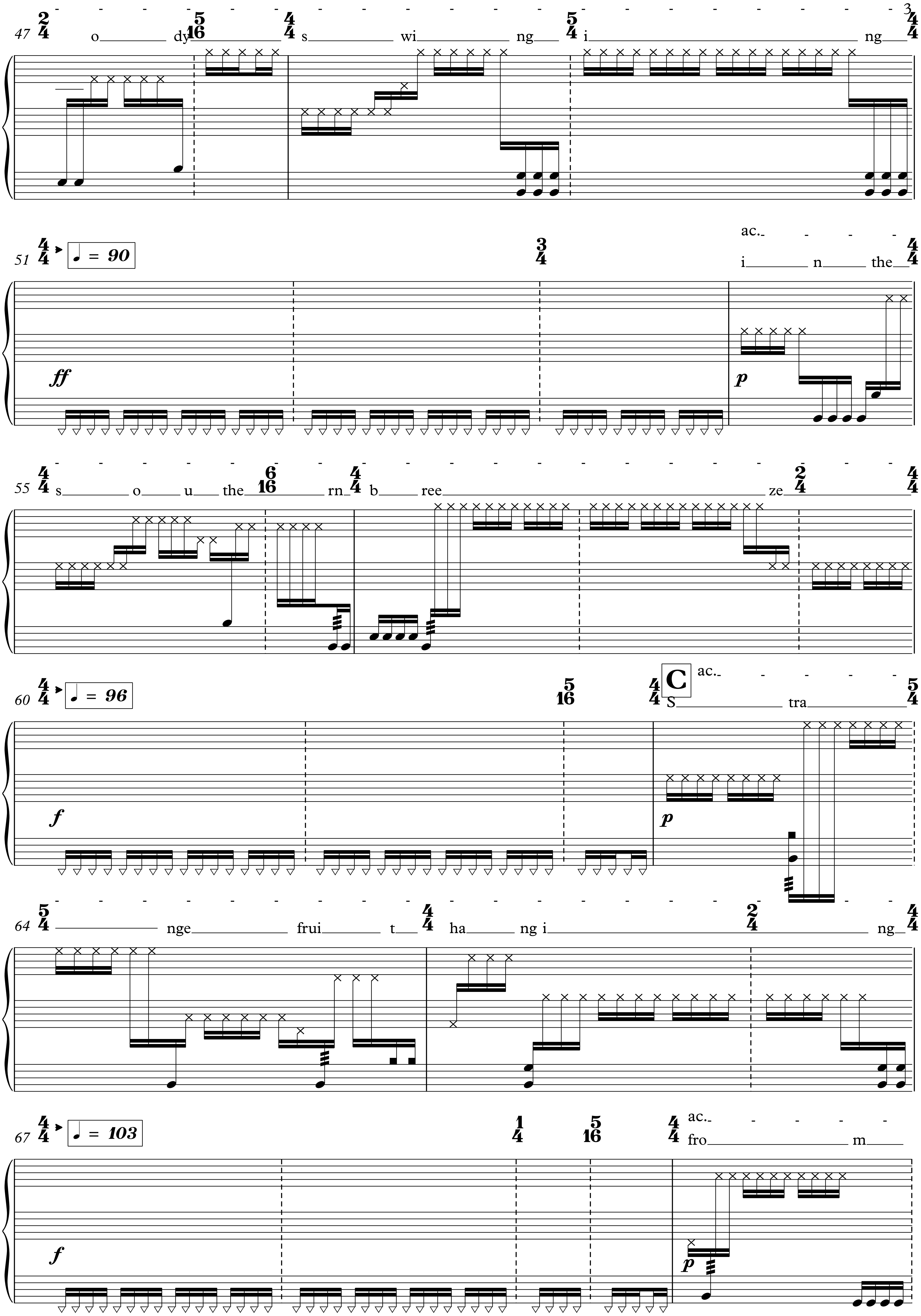
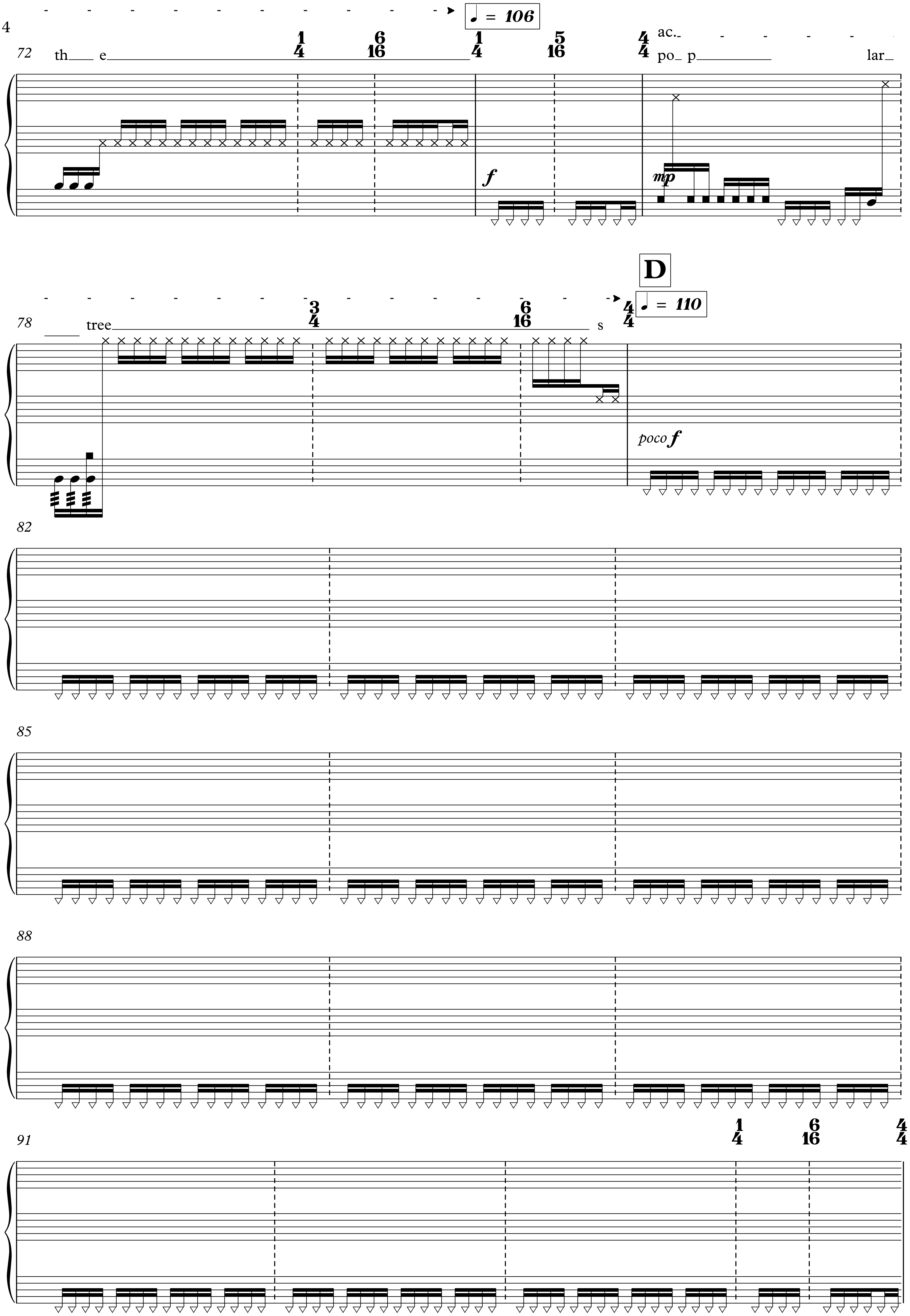
n
4/4
the lea
3/4
pp
31
ves
5/16
4/4
♩ = 76
ff
2/4
3/16
37
ac.
4/4
a nd bloo d a t
7/16
♩ = 80
pp
ff
ac.
the roo
5/4
pp
41
t
4/4
♩ = 84
ff
44
5/16
B
ac.
4/4
B la ck b
2/4
pp


47
o dy s wi ng i ng
51
♩ = 90
ff
ac.
i n the
p
55
s o u the rn b ree ze
60
♩ = 96
f
C
ac.
S tra
p
64
nge frui t ha ng i ng
67
♩ = 103
f
ac.
fro m
p


♩ = 106
72
th__ e
1/4
6/16
1/4
5/16
4/4
ac.
po_ p
lar_
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mp
D
♩ = 110
78
tree
3/4
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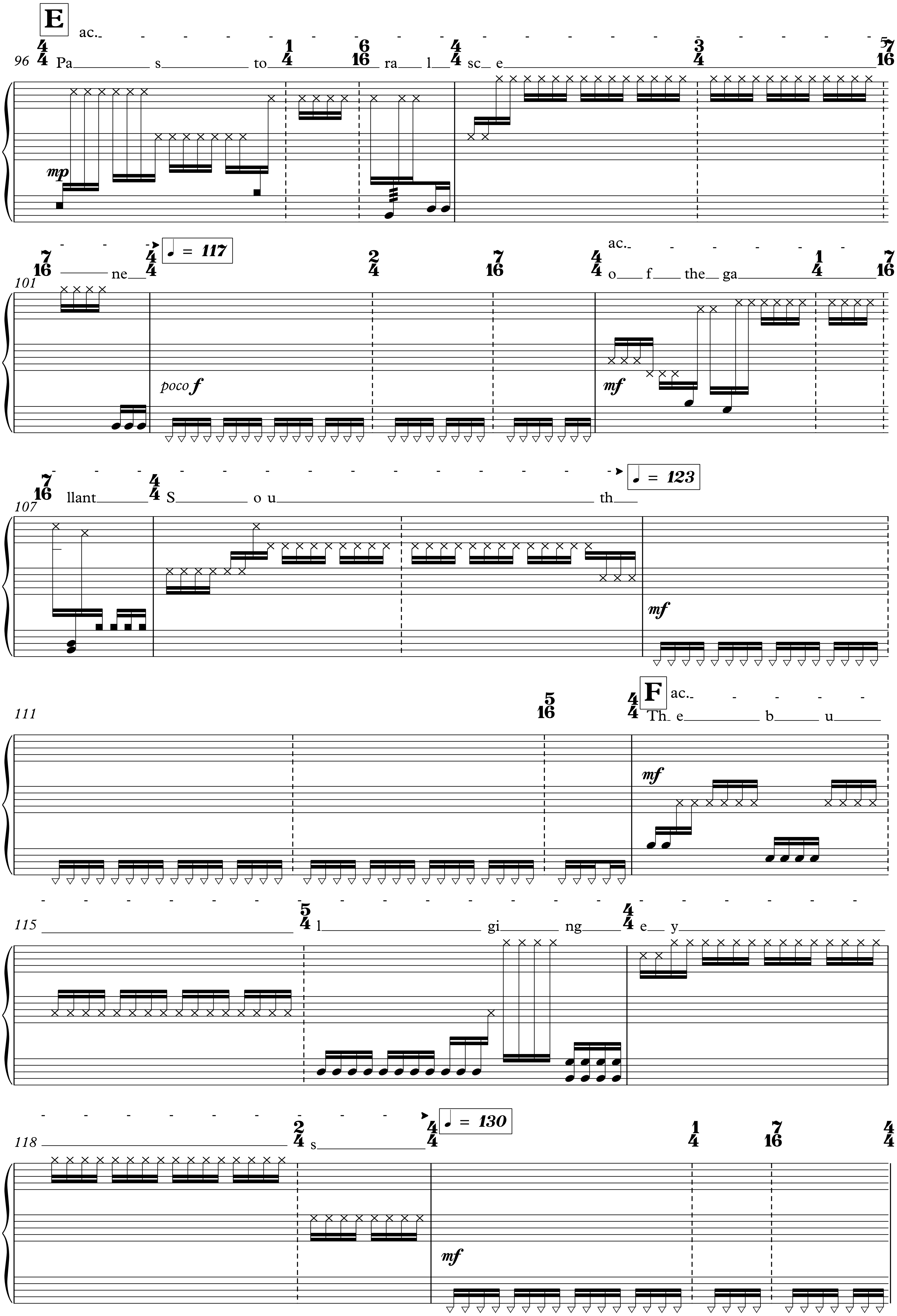
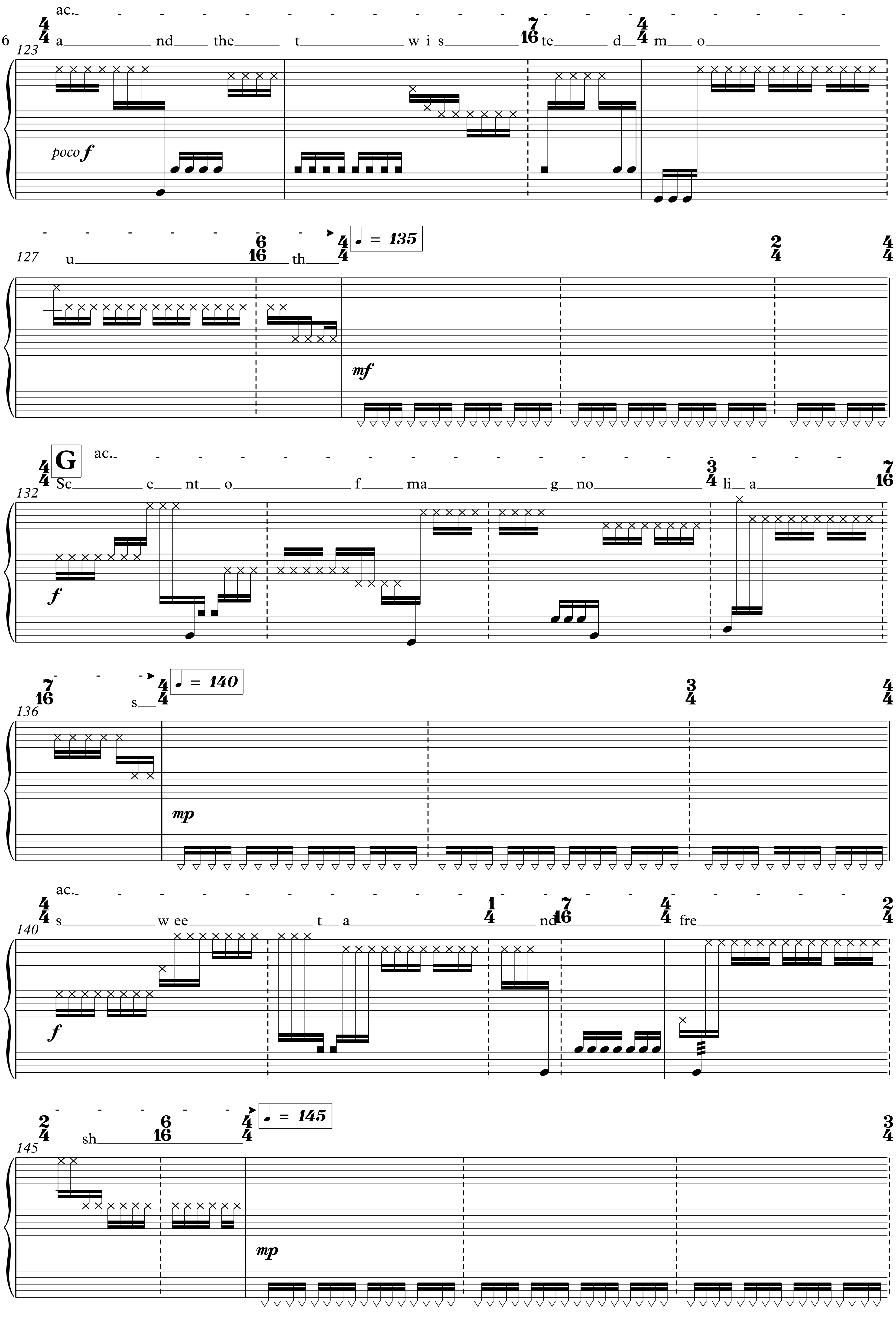
s
4/4
poco f
82
85
88
91
1/4
6/16
4/4


E
ac.
96
Pa s to ra l sc e
mp
101
ne
♩ = 117
poco f
ac.
o f the ga
mf
107
llant S o u th
♩ = 123
mf
111
F
ac.
Th e b u
mf
115
l gi ng e y
118
s
♩ = 130
mf


ac.
4/4
123
a nd the t w i s
7/16
te d
4/4
m o
poco f
127
u
6/16
th
4/4
♩ = 135
mf
2/4
4/4
G
ac.
132
Sc e nt o f ma g no
3/4
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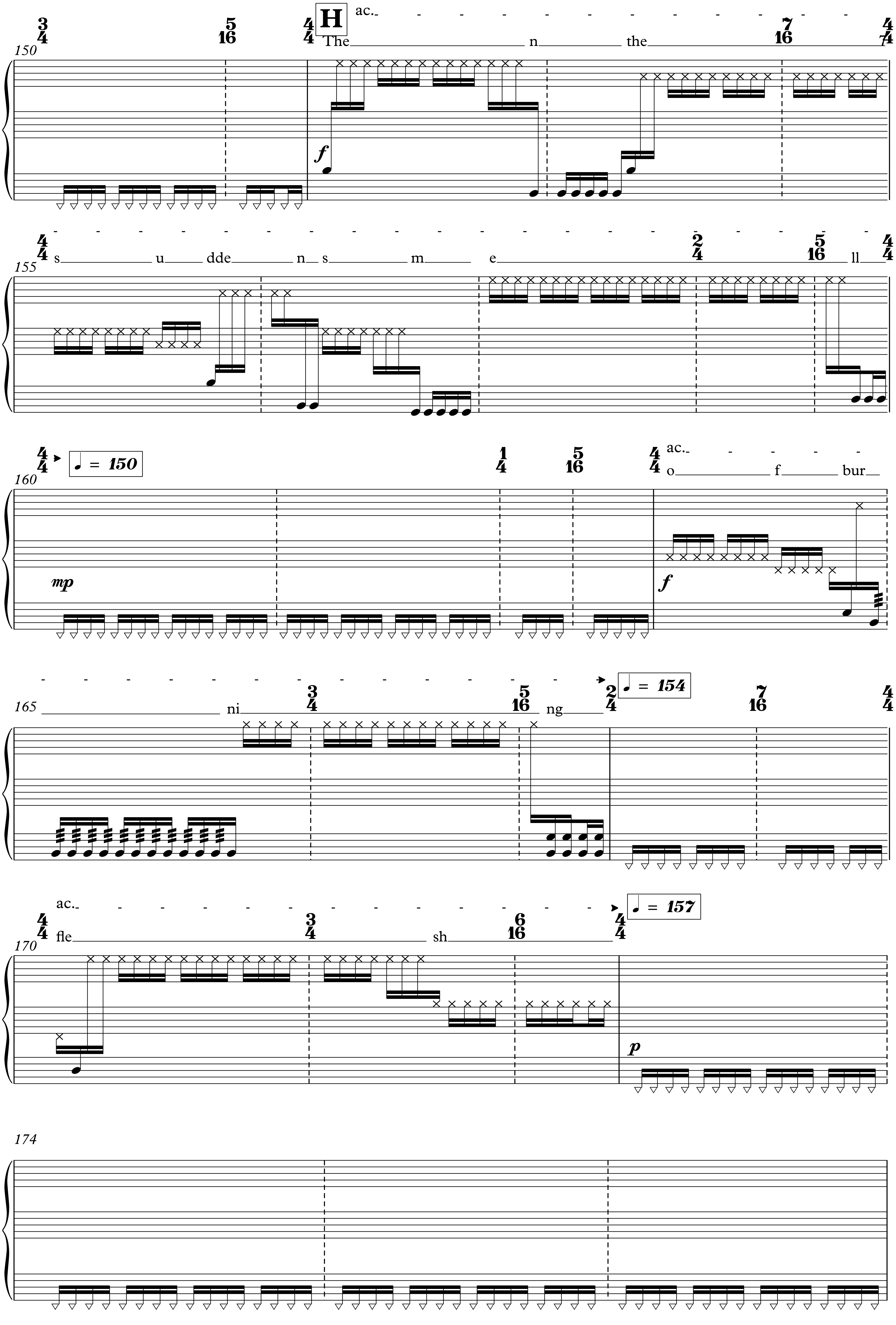
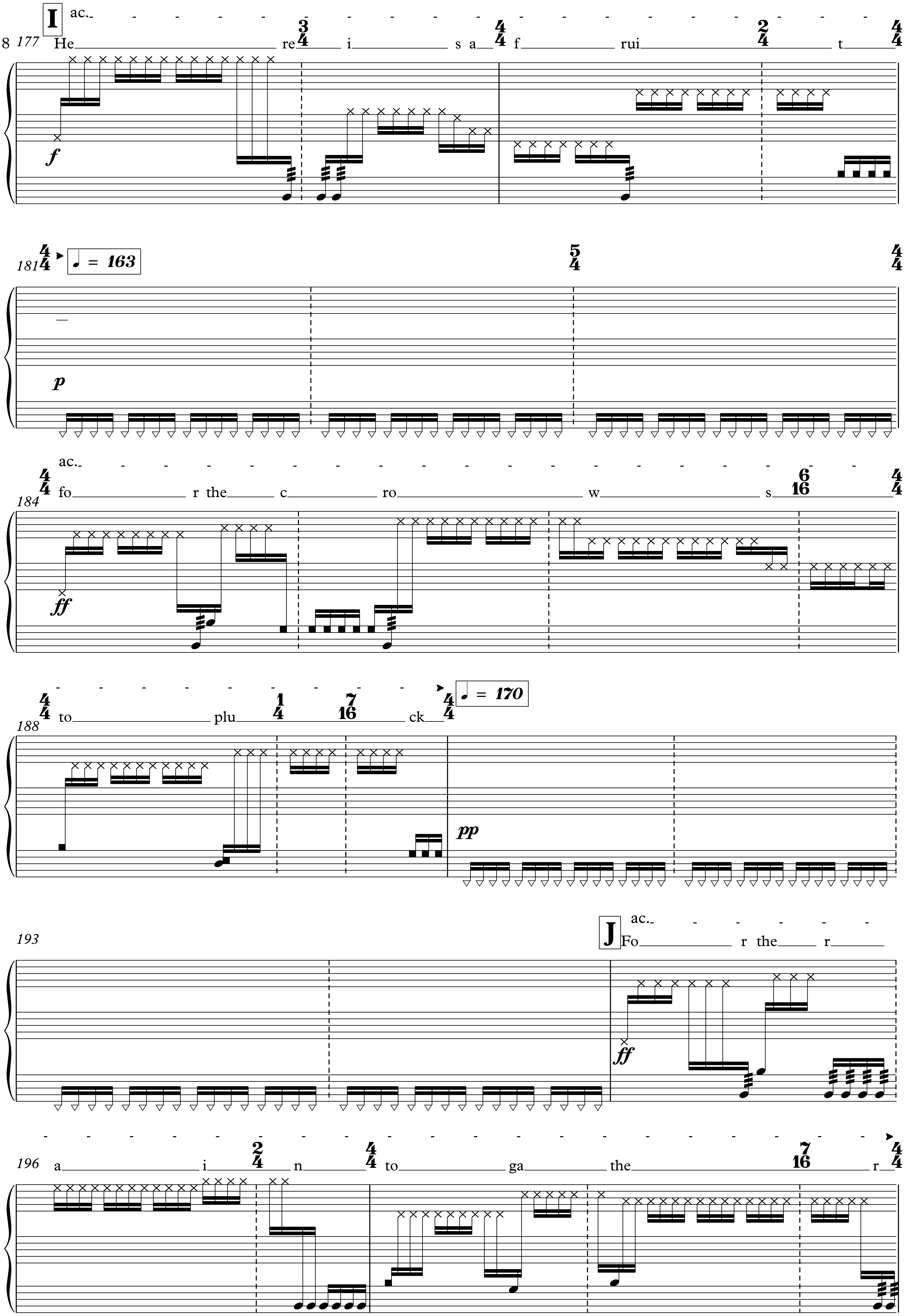
f
136
s
4/4
♩ = 140
mp
3/4
4/4
ac.
140
s w ee t a
1/4
nd
7/16
4/4
fre
2/4
f
145
sh
6/16
4/4
♩ = 145
mp
3/4


H
ac.
The n the
s u dde n s m e ll
♩ = 150
ac.
o f bur
ni ng
♩ = 154
ac.
fle sh
♩ = 157
150
155
160
165
170
174
f
mp
f
p


I
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177
He
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i
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t
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4/4
2/4
4/4
f
181
4/4
♩ = 163
5/4
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184
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188
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♩ = 170
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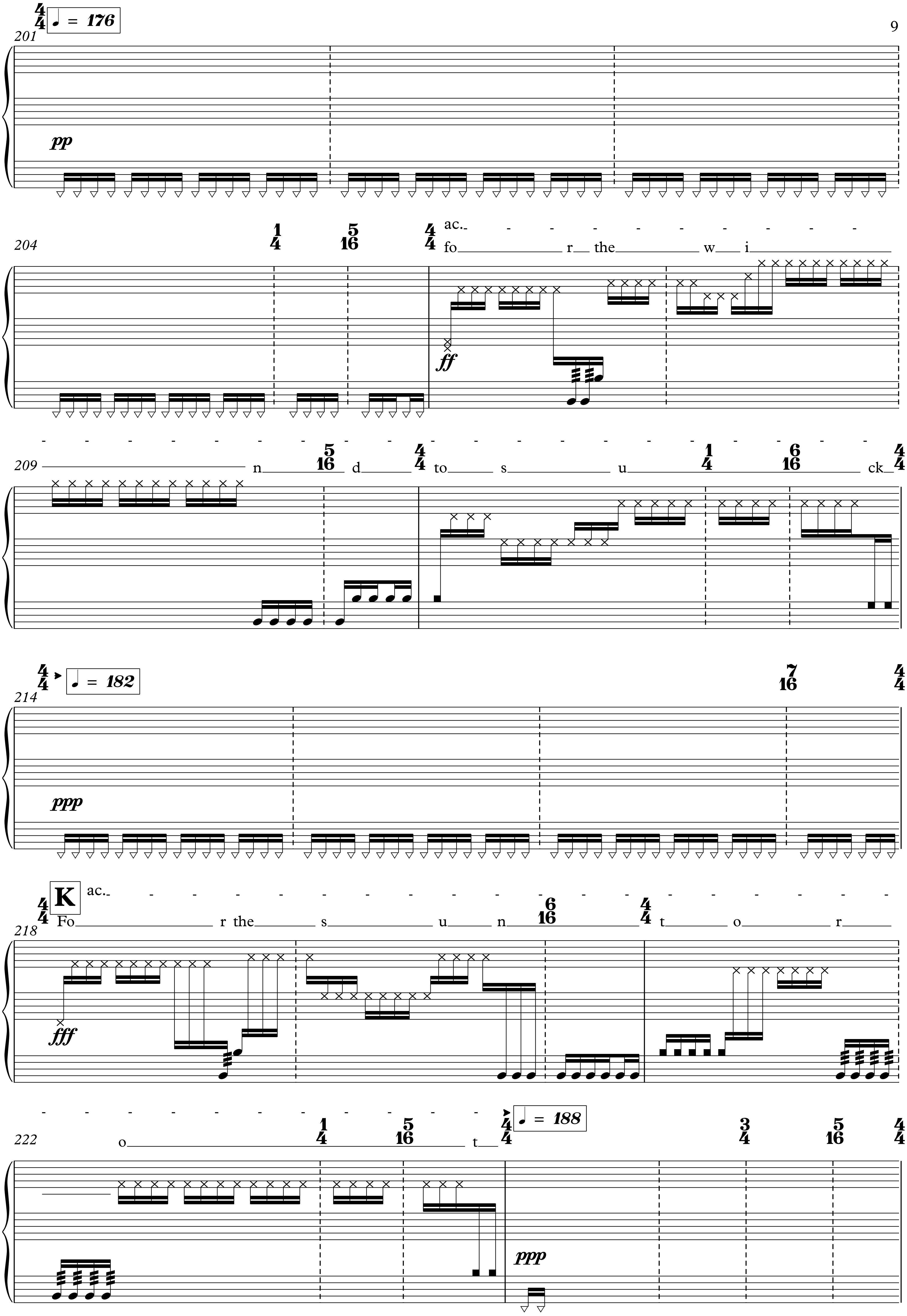
4/4
7/16
4/4


4/4
♩ = 176
201
pp
204
1/4
5/16
4/4
ac.
fo r the w i
ff
209
n
5/16
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to s u
1/4
6/16
ck
4/4
4/4
♩ = 182
214
ppp
7/16
4/4
K
4/4
ac.
Fo r the s u n
6/16
4/4
t o r
218
fff
222
o
1/4
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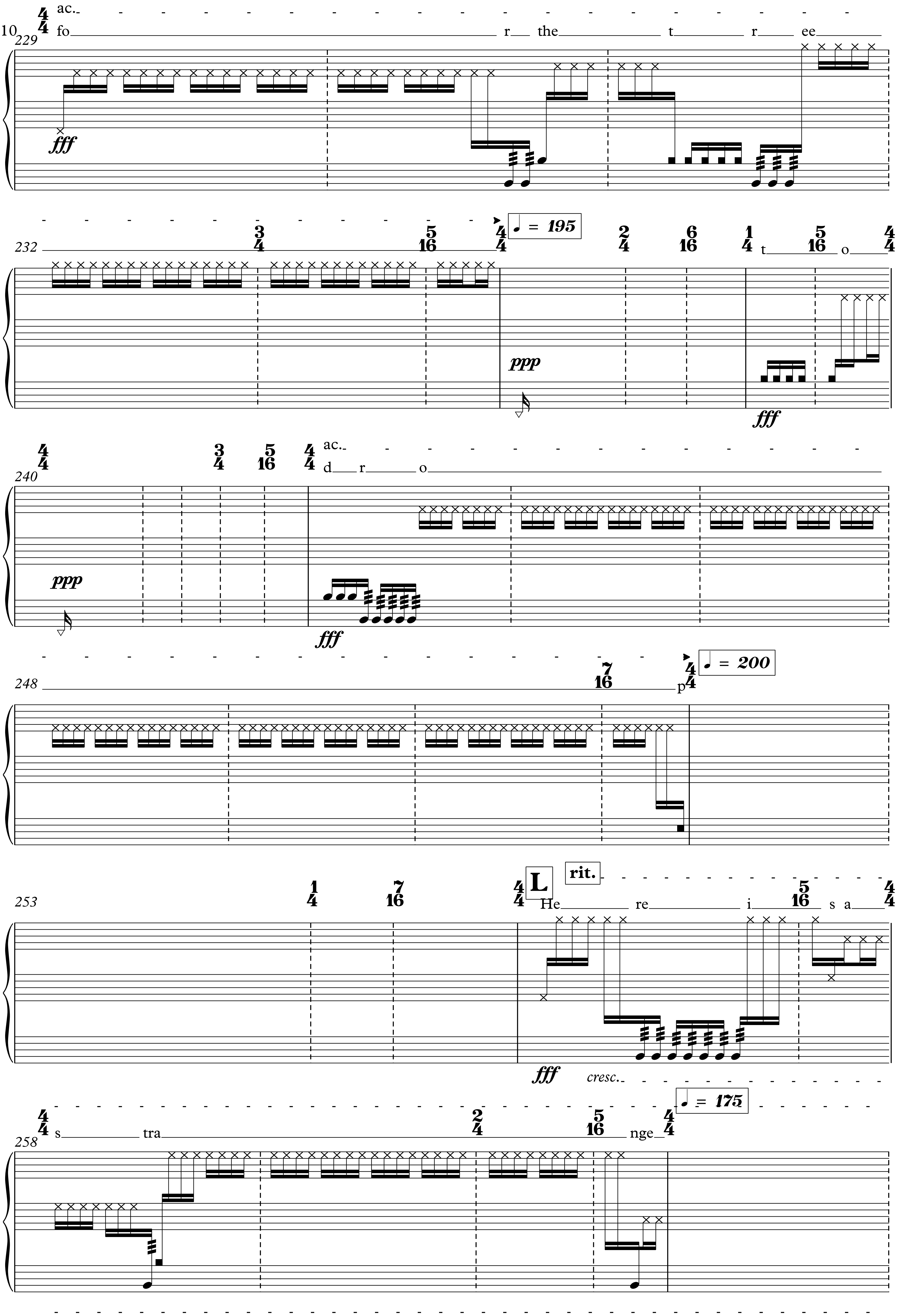
4/4
♩ = 188
ppp
3/4
5/16
4/4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fo r the t r ee
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195
t o
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fff
240
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248
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rit.
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fff
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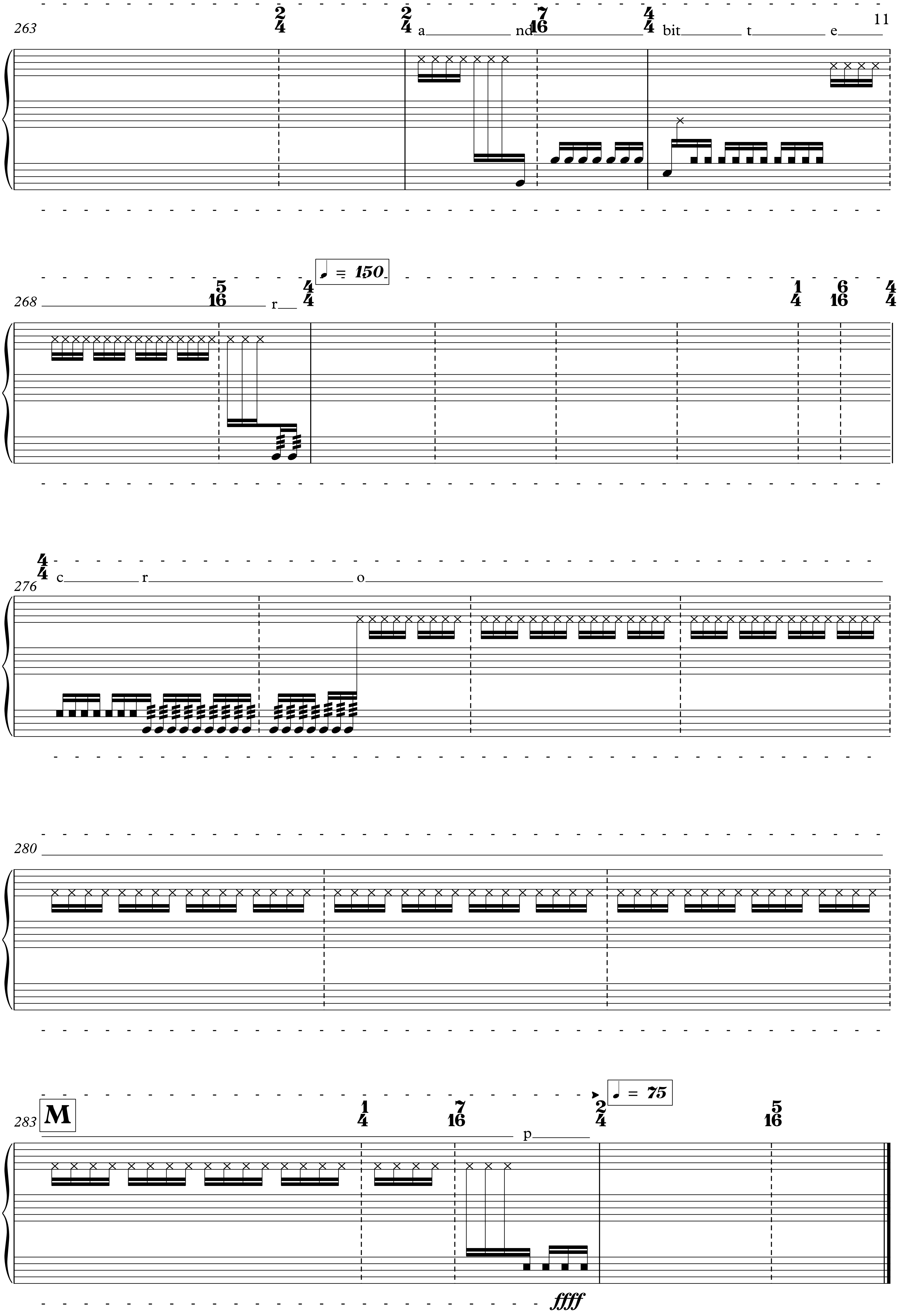
258
175
s tra nge


263
2/4
2/4
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7/16
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268
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♩ = 150
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6/16
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276
c
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280
M
283
1/4
7/16
p
2/4
♩ = 75
5/16
ffff