Letters and Texts—Munich premiere

Sunbin Kim's composition deals with communication, distancing and alienation. It is loosely programmatic and drawn from two times and places (West Germany in late 1977, the United States in mid-2020). In this time, communication has become ever more distant, both physically and mentally. This is especially true for the younger generation, who are dependent on precarious temporary work and deprived of time and money to form social bonds. Human beings are social creatures, and even in an atomised existence, they need social bonds just as they need food and water. A starving person will even eat rotten food to survive. So, many young working people seek second- or third-hand sources of sociality, using readily available virtual media – but none of these can truly fulfill our need. Social cognition is blunted as communication becomes pushed off to more far-off media.

To represent this growing alienation between people, Kim's piece explores three „levels" of communication as translated to music: real performance (live musicians), semblance of a performance (recordings, of both composed and quoted music), and artificial imitation of music without performance (VST / MIDI sequencing). Reality is stifled and artificiality dominates. The theatrics of the piece depicts the desire, and indeed need, to perform after all, so the real music – the real message again and again creeps to the surface, but struggles to break out under the second- and third-hand layers. It will be performed by Katharina Heißenhuber (vocals) and Oliver Klenk (clarinet).

9 Songs, Reiko Füting und Michael Grossmann, Munich premiere

9 Lieder, Bruchstücke aus *Stabat Mater*, der Vorgängerkomposition, aufgeführt in München, Dresden und Leipzig, 2018 gehen kompositorisch unmittelbar auf den Text.

Einfache Liedstrukturen entwickeln ein unmittelbares Kunst– und Theaterlied. Sopran: Katharina Heißenhuber, Klarinette: Oliver Klenk, Klavier: Reiko Füting

Letters to a screen

for a vocalist, a clarinettist,
and an electronic track

Sunbin Kim
(2020)

Program notes

Sunbin Kim's composition deals with communication, distancing and alienation. It is loosely programmatic and drawn from two times and places (West Germany in late 1977, the United States in mid-2020), but does not contain a plot or setting in the traditional way. Although it is inspired by political themes, composing this is in no way a form of activism.

In this time, communication has become ever more distant, both physically and mentally. This is especially true for the younger generation, who are dependent on precarious temporary work and deprived of time and money to form social bonds.

Human beings are social creatures, and even in an atomised existence, they need social bonds just as they need food and water. A starving person will even eat rotten food to survive. So, many young working people seek second- or third-hand sources of sociality, using readily available virtual media – but none of these can truly fulfill our need. Social cognition is blunted as communication becomes pushed off to more far-off media.

To represent this growing alienation between people, Kim's piece explores three "levels of communication as translated to music: real performance (live musicians), semblance of a performance (recordings, of both composed and quoted music), and artificial imitation of music without performance (VST / MIDI sequencing). Likewise, there are three levels of musical content, each one more "alienated" in tone and personal involvement than the last. To the second layer belong direct quotations and passages written in other composers' styles. The last level consists of music generated almost entirely by neural network. The first few bars of Strauss' *Metamorphosen* serve as a seed for the algorithm in various style presets. This layer requires the least creative work, and my only input is to arrange the results into something plausible-sounding.

For much of the piece, reality is stifled and artificiality dominates. The audience feels a weird dissonance of hearing the song of a vocalist, but the actual vocalist is not singing, but just seems to be *sitting there* scrolling on a phone. The theatrics of the piece depicts the desire, and indeed *need,* to perform after all—they are onstage and the show must go on! So the real music—the real message—again and again creeps toward the surface, but struggles to break out under the second- and third-hand layers.

Instrumentation

Voice (soprano/mezzo)

Clarinet in B♭

Electronic track (see Stage set-up)

Scordatura: The **Clarinet** is tuned down approximately 30 cents from concert pitch. An electronic tuner or an app can be used to calibrate the pitch.

Special notation

 Quarter-tone sharp.

 Quarter-tone flat.

Three quarter-tones sharp.

Three quarter-tones flat.

Vocals: *Sprechstimme* (for syllables)
indefinite pitch (for singly articulated consonants)

In tape track transcription: For non-tempered passages: The above microtonal accidentals are used, plus up ↑ and down ↓ arrows attached to the accidentals to indicate finer tuning distinctions (approx. 1/12 tone). For example:

 Slightly sharper than normal.

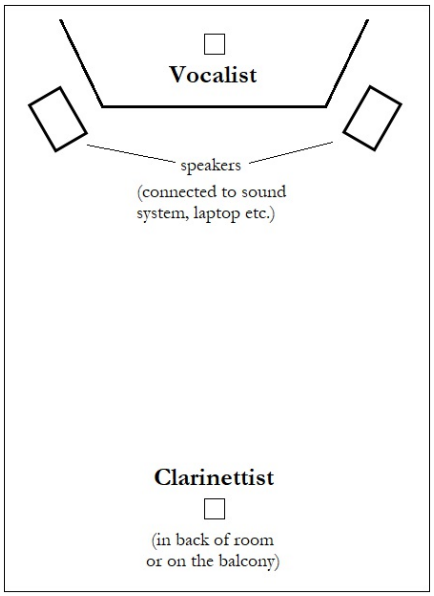
Approximately a sixth tone flatter.

Somewhat less than three-quarter tones sharp.

Accidentals are also attached to clefs to transpose them by a microtone. This is used for 12-EDO (equal temperament) samples that are transposed by a non-tempered interval. The "sixth tone flat" sign shown above is also used for the tuned-down clarinet's clef.

19-tone temperament samples are notated with traditional accidentals, but with different values: because of the greater number of tones, sharps and flats are no longer enharmonic. 19-EDO is indicated by writing "19-EDO" on top of a clef. For finer microtonal "transpositions", up ↑ and down ↓ arrows are simply attached to the clef.

Stage plan and performance set-up



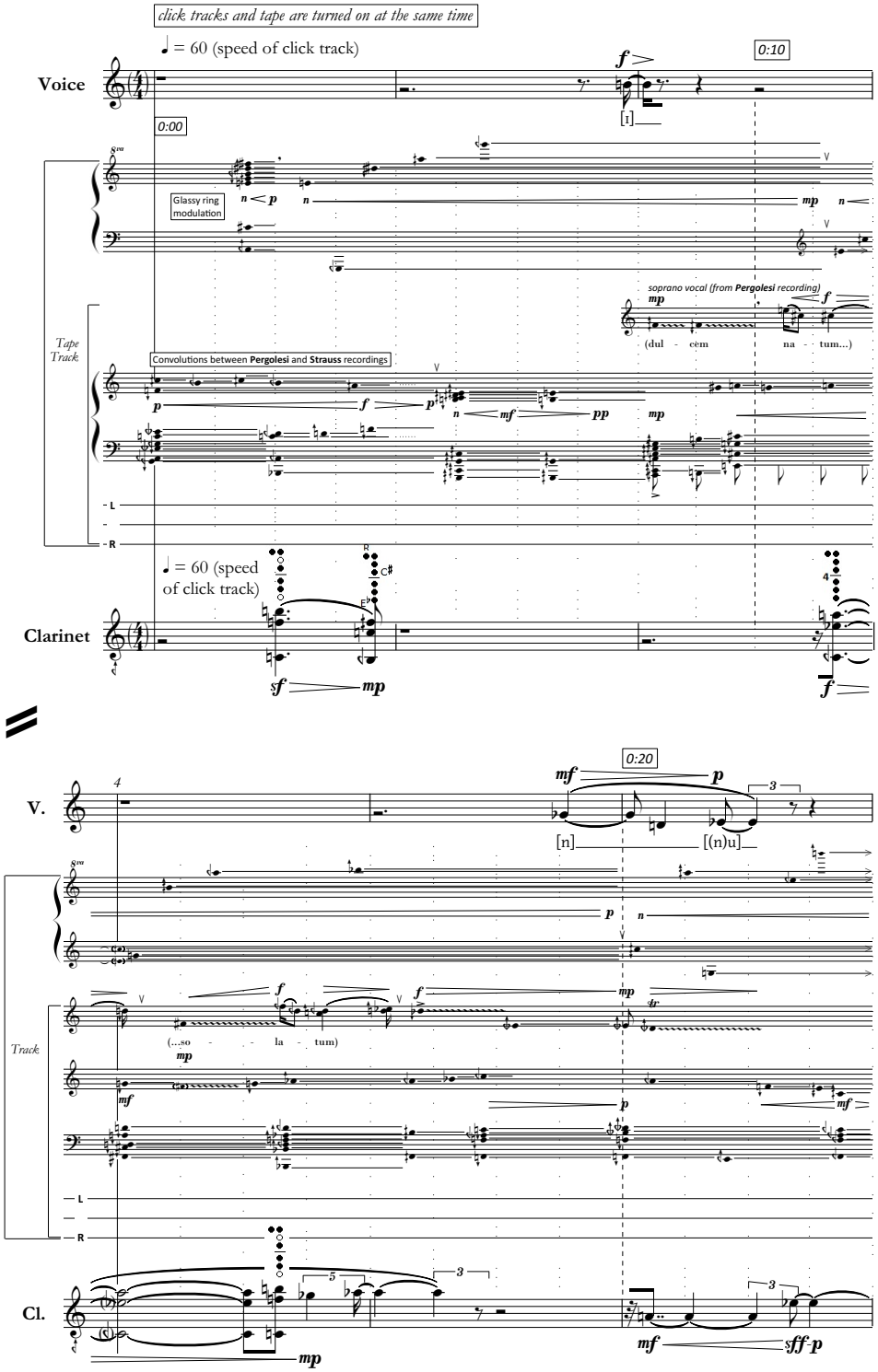
The **electronic track** is a continuous fixed media tape track. It needs two speakers in stereophonic set-up, and a sound-system capable of playing FLAC (or mp3, but the lossless format is preferred).

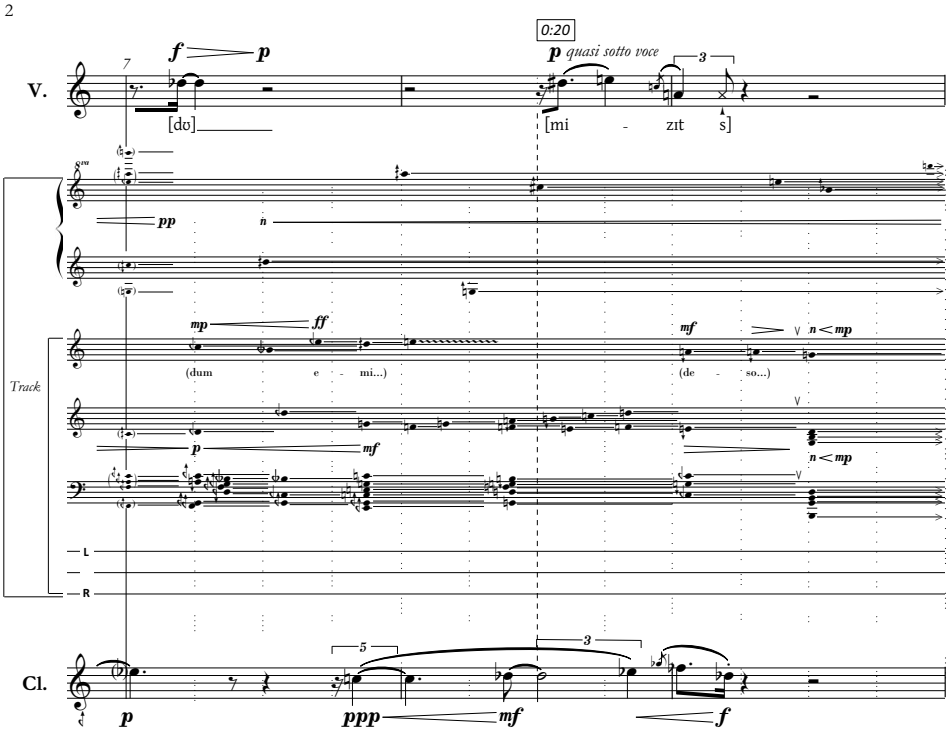
The two performers require **a click track** and **headphones** for each. The click track is set at ♩ = 60 and 4/4 meter, and lasts for four minutes from the beginning.

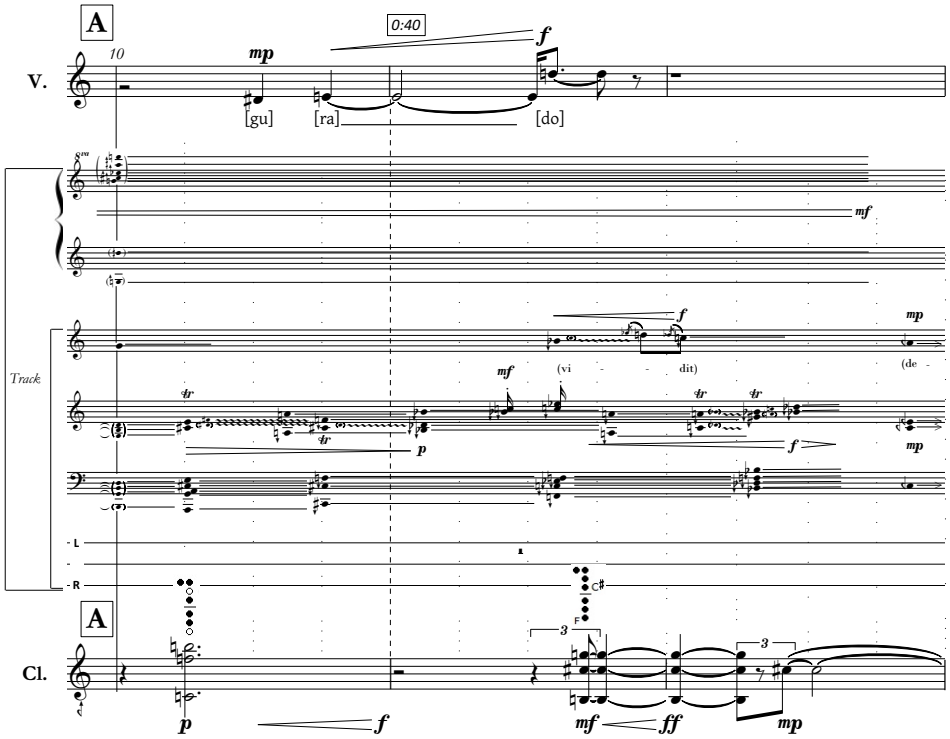
Letters to a screen

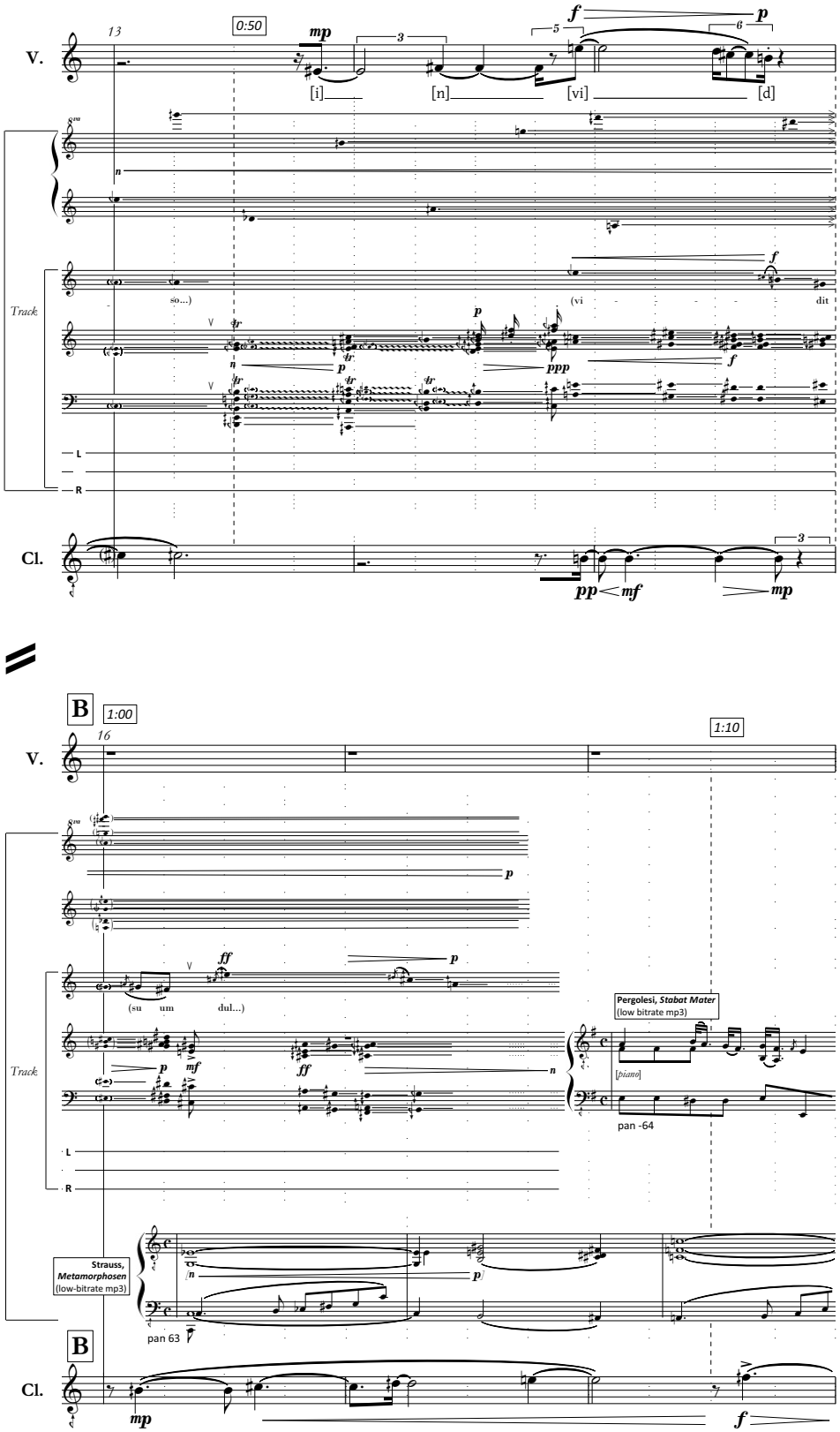
for a vocalist, a clarinettist, and an electronic track
(2020)

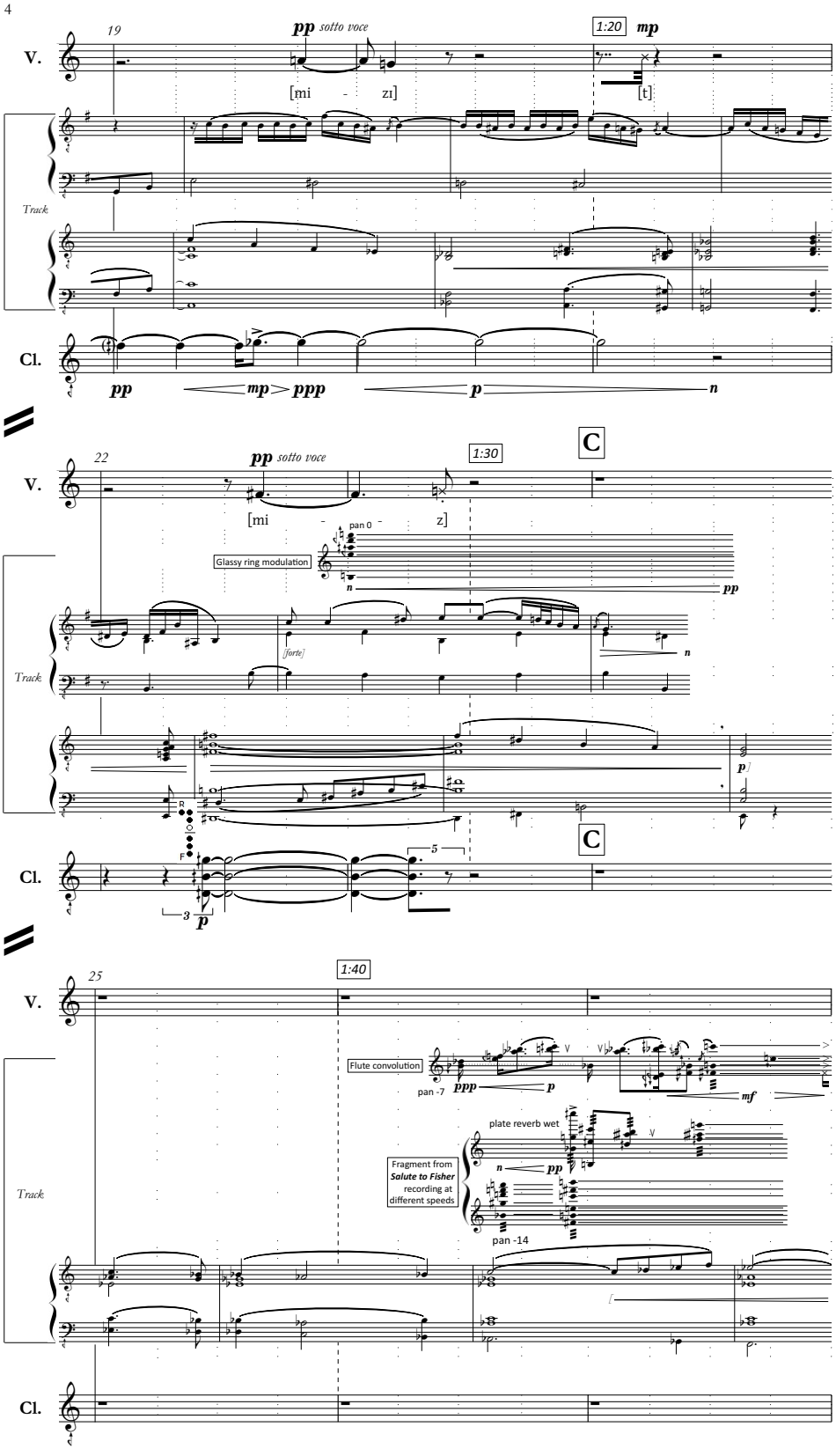
Sunbin Kim

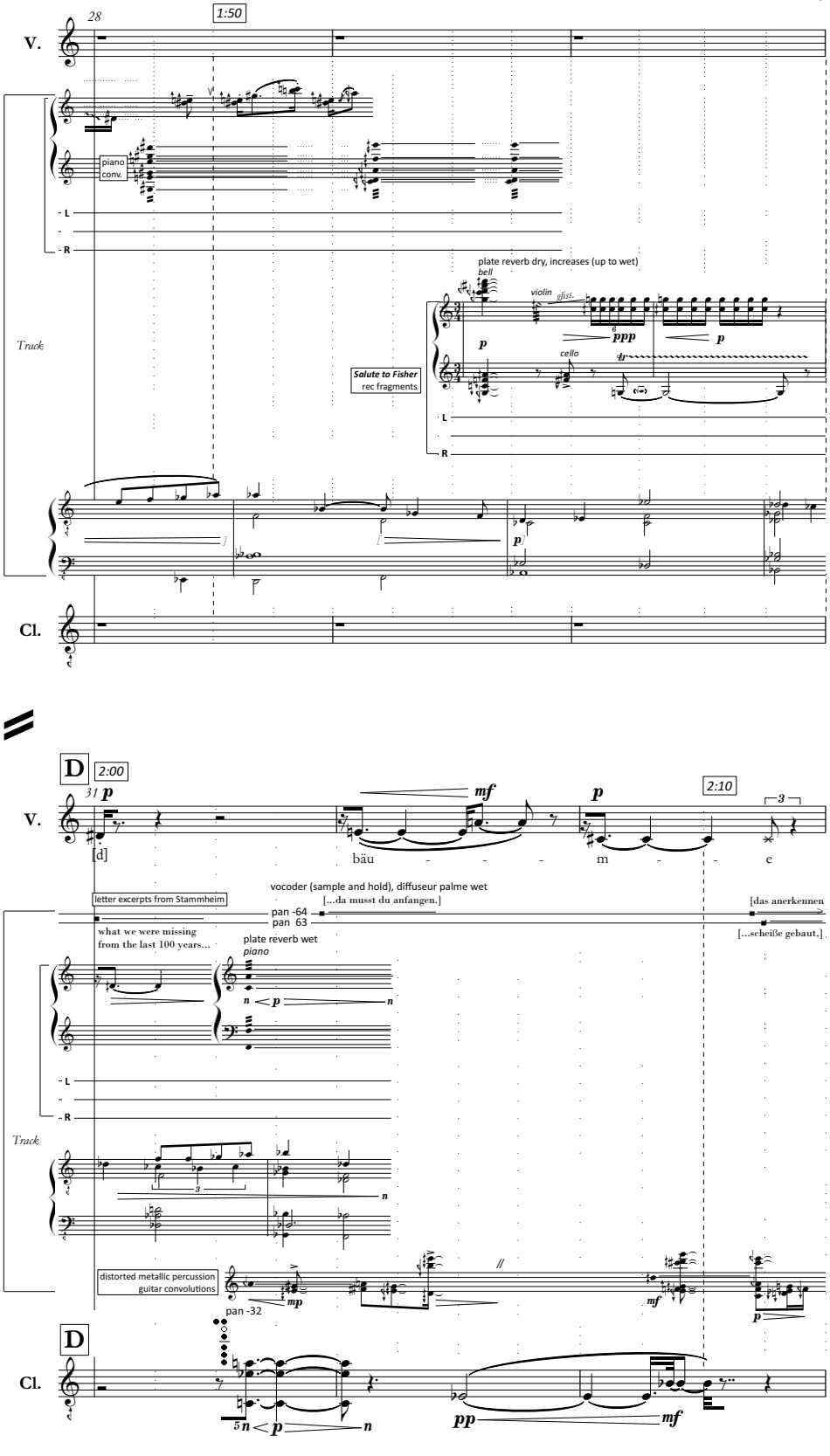


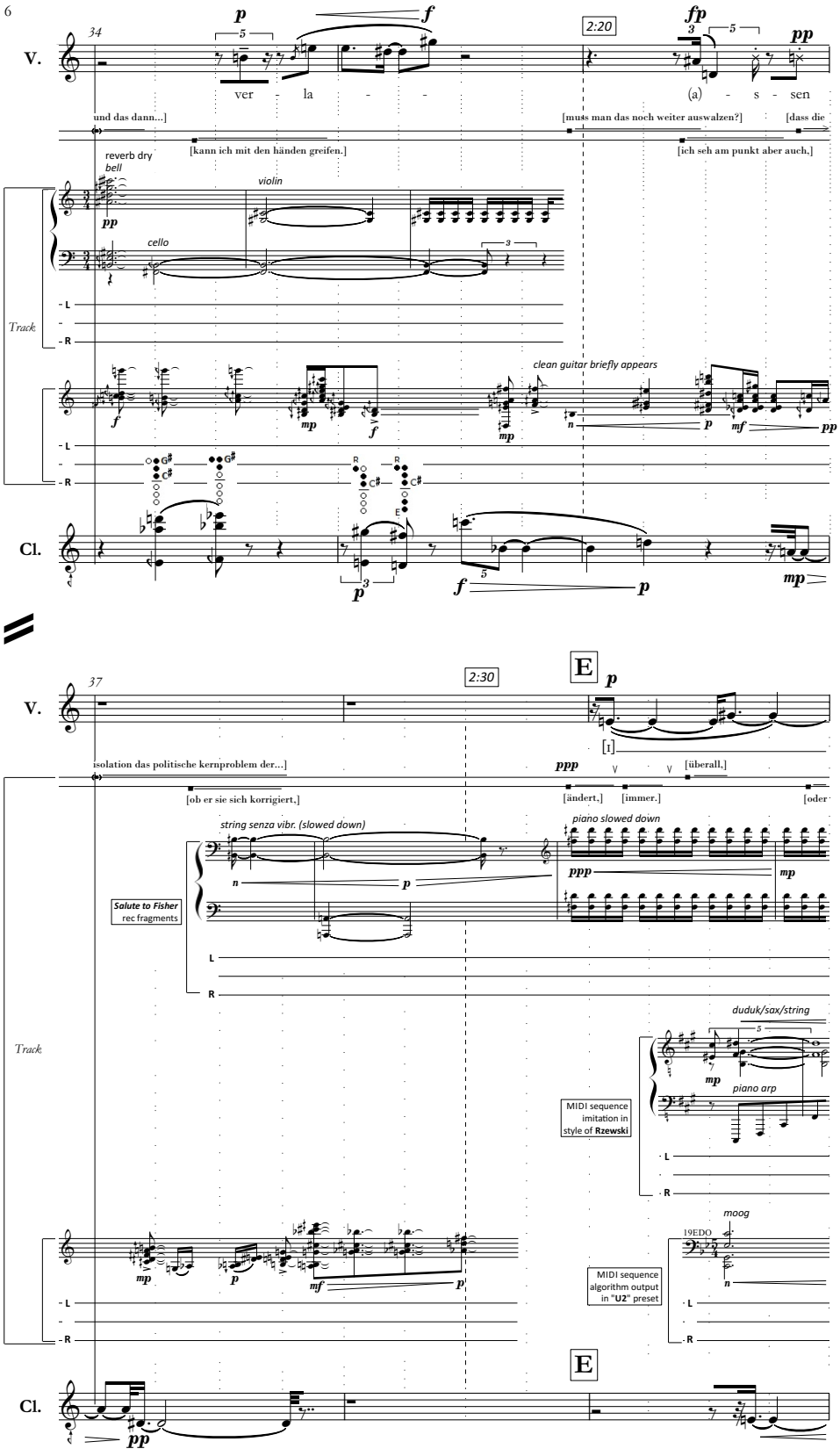

0:20
V.
Cl.
Track
quasi sotto voce
[dʊ]
[mi - zɪt s]
(dum e - mi...)
(de - so...)
L
R

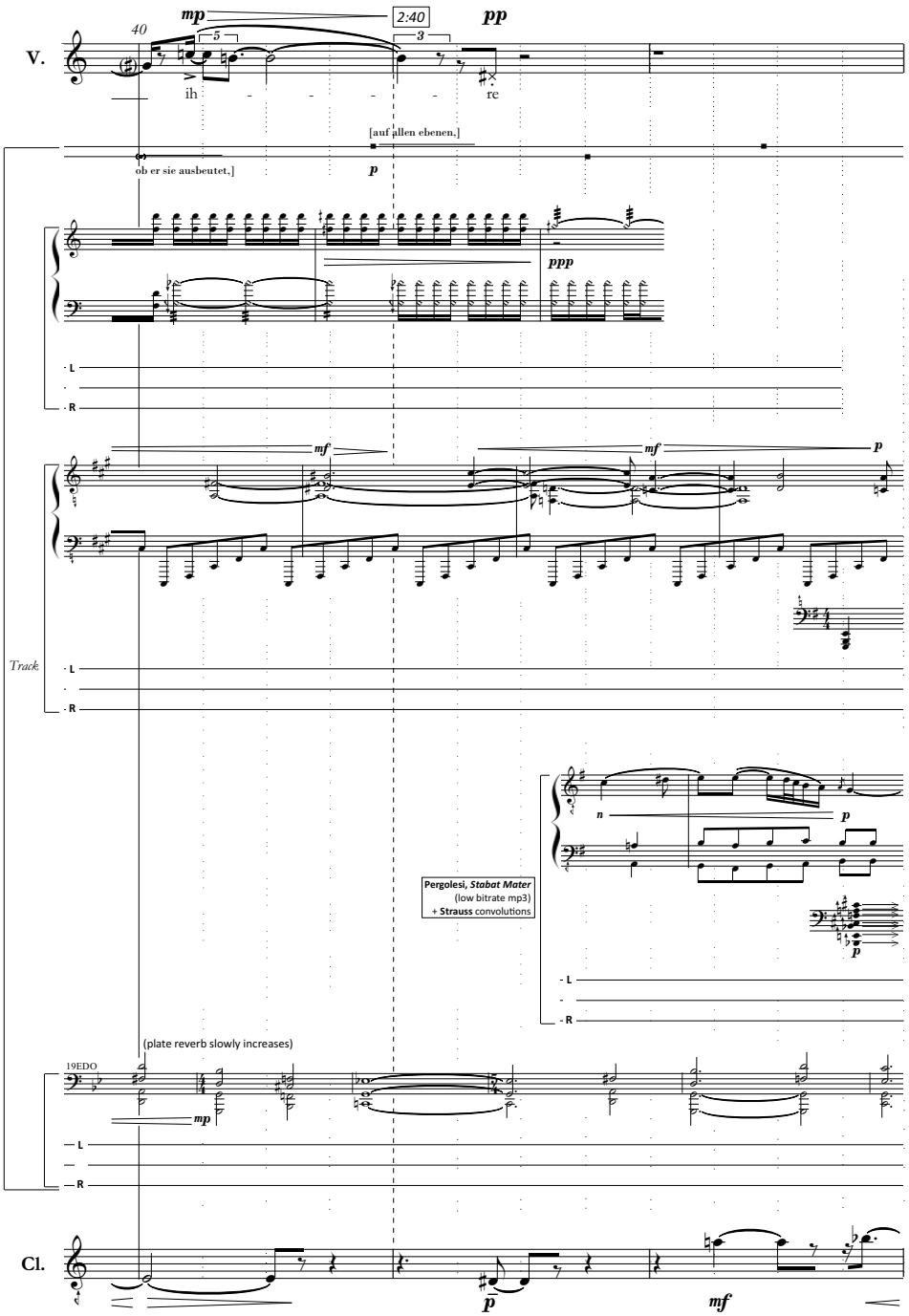

A
0:40
V.
Cl.
Track
[gu]
[ra]
[do]
(vi - dit)
(de -
L
R

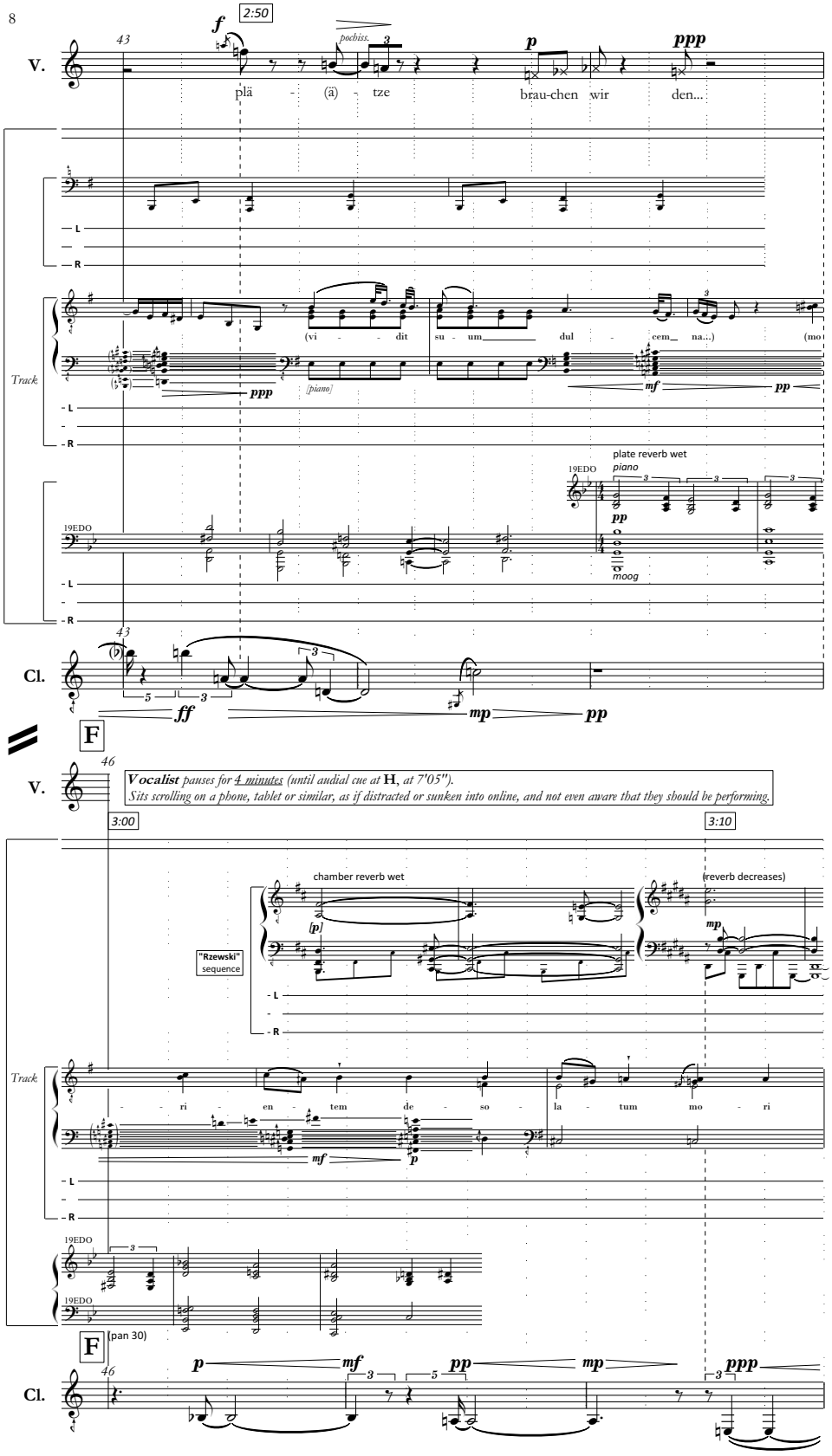

V.
0:50
[i]
[n]
[vi]
[d]
Track
so...)
(vi
dit
L
R
Cl.
B
1:00
1:10
(su um dul...)
Pergolesi, Stabat Mater
(low bitrate mp3)
[piano]
pan -64
Strauss,
Metamorphosen
(low-bitrate mp3)
pan 63

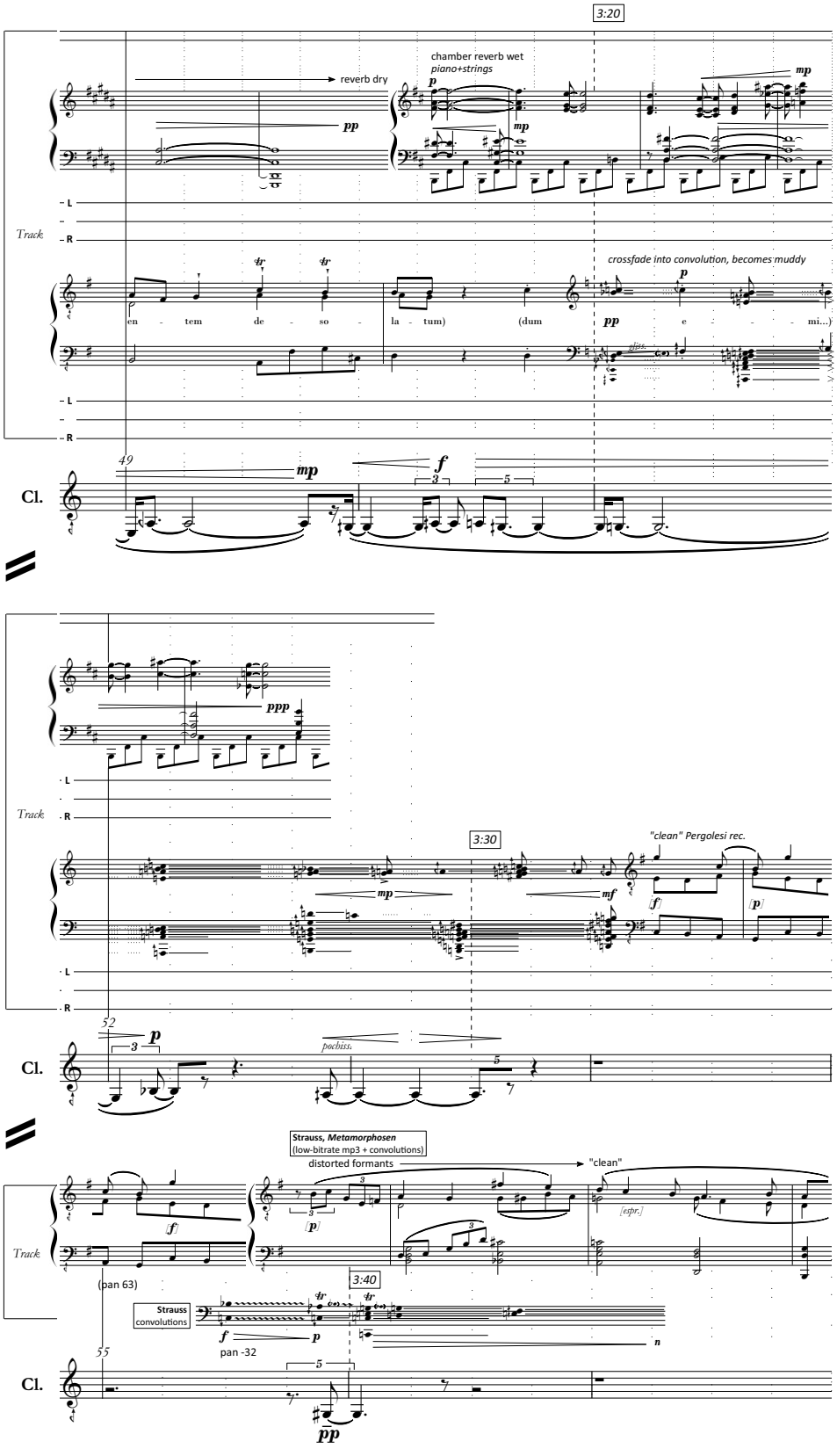

19
pp sotto voce
1:20
mp
V.
[mi - zɪ]
[t]
Track
Cl.
pp
mp > ppp
p
n
22
pp sotto voce
1:30
C
[mi - z]
pan 0
Glassy ring modulation
pp
[forte]
n
Track
p
C
Cl.
5
3
p
25
1:40
V.
Flute convolution
pan -7
ppp
p
mf
plate reverb wet
Fragment from Salute to Fisher recording at different speeds
n
pp
pan -14
Track
Cl.

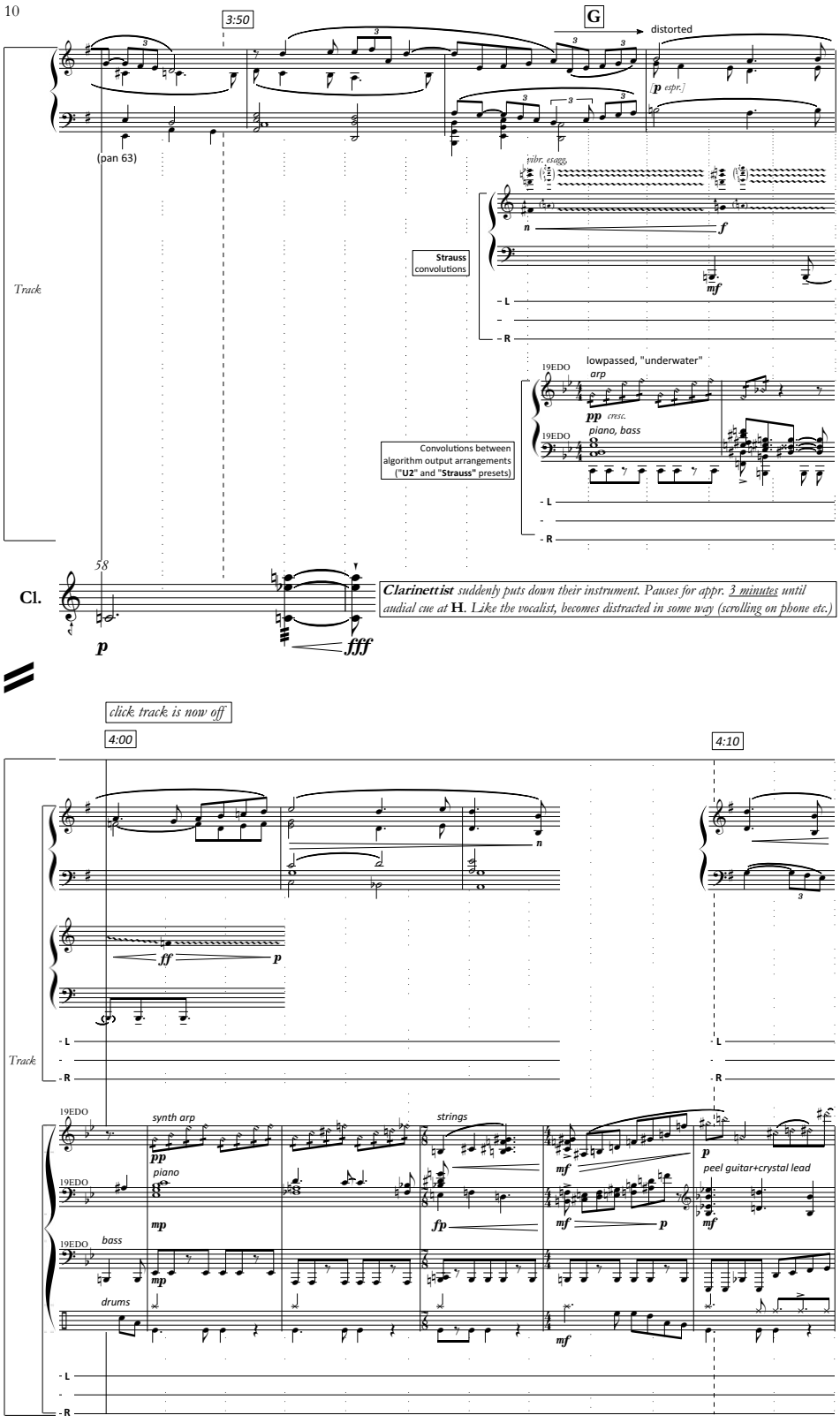

28
1:50
V.
piano conv.
L
R
Track
plate reverb dry, increases (up to wet)
bell
violin
gliss.
ppp
p
cello
Salute to Fisher
rec fragments
Cl.
D
2:00
31
p
mf
2:10
3
[d]
bäu - - - m - - e
letter excerpts from Stammheim
what we were missing
from the last 100 years...
vocoder (sample and hold), diffuseur palme wet
[...da musst du anfangen.]
pan -64
pan 63
[das anerkennen
[...scheiße gebaut.]
plate reverb wet
piano
distorted metallic percussion
guitar convolutions
pan -32
mp
pp

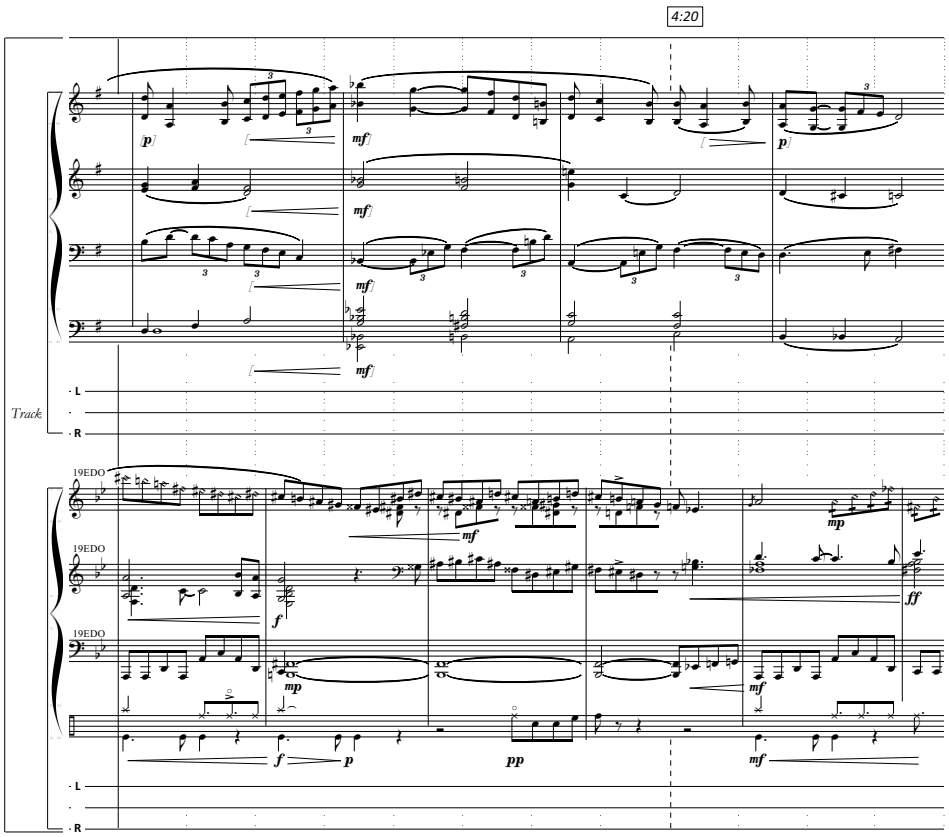

34
V.
p
f
2:20
fp
pp
ver - la - - (a) - s - sen
[und das dann...]
[kann ich mit den händen greifen.]
[muss man das noch weiter auswalzen?]
[dass die
[ich seh am punkt aber auch,]
reverb dry
bell
violin
cello
pp
Track
L
R
clean guitar briefly appears
mp
mf
Cl.
37
2:30
E
[isolation das politische kernproblem der...]
[ob er sie sich korrigiert,]
[ändert,]
[immer.]
[überall,]
[oder
ppp
string senza vibr. (slowed down)
piano slowed down
Salute to Fisher
rec fragments
duduk/sax/string
piano arp
MIDI sequence
imitation in
style of Rzewski
moog
19EDO
MIDI sequence
algorithm output
in "U2" preset

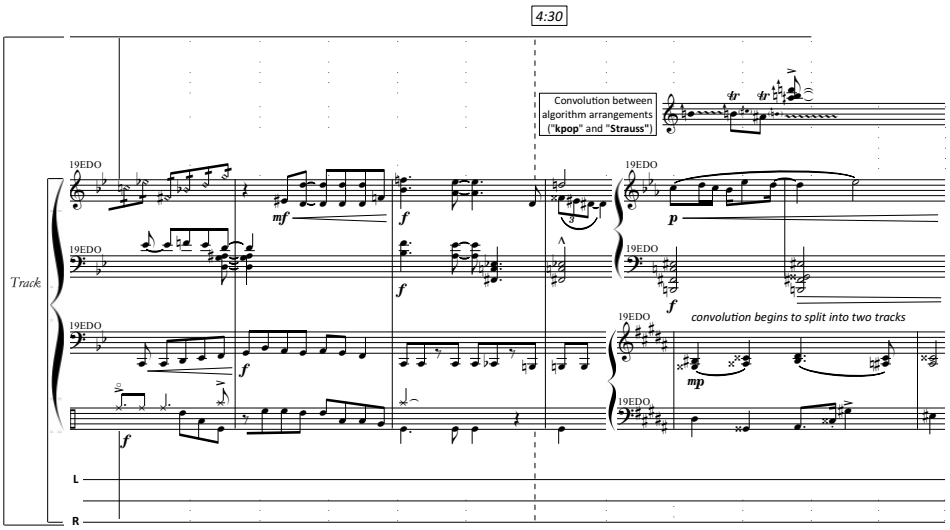

V.
40
mp
5
2:40
3
pp
ih - - - - - re
[auf allen ebenen,]
ob er sie ausbeutet,]
p
ppp
L
R
mf
mf
p
Track
L
R
n
p
Pergolesi, Stabat Mater
(low bitrate mp3)
+ Strauss convolutions
p
L
R
(plate reverb slowly increases)
19EDO
mp
L
R
Cl.
p
mf

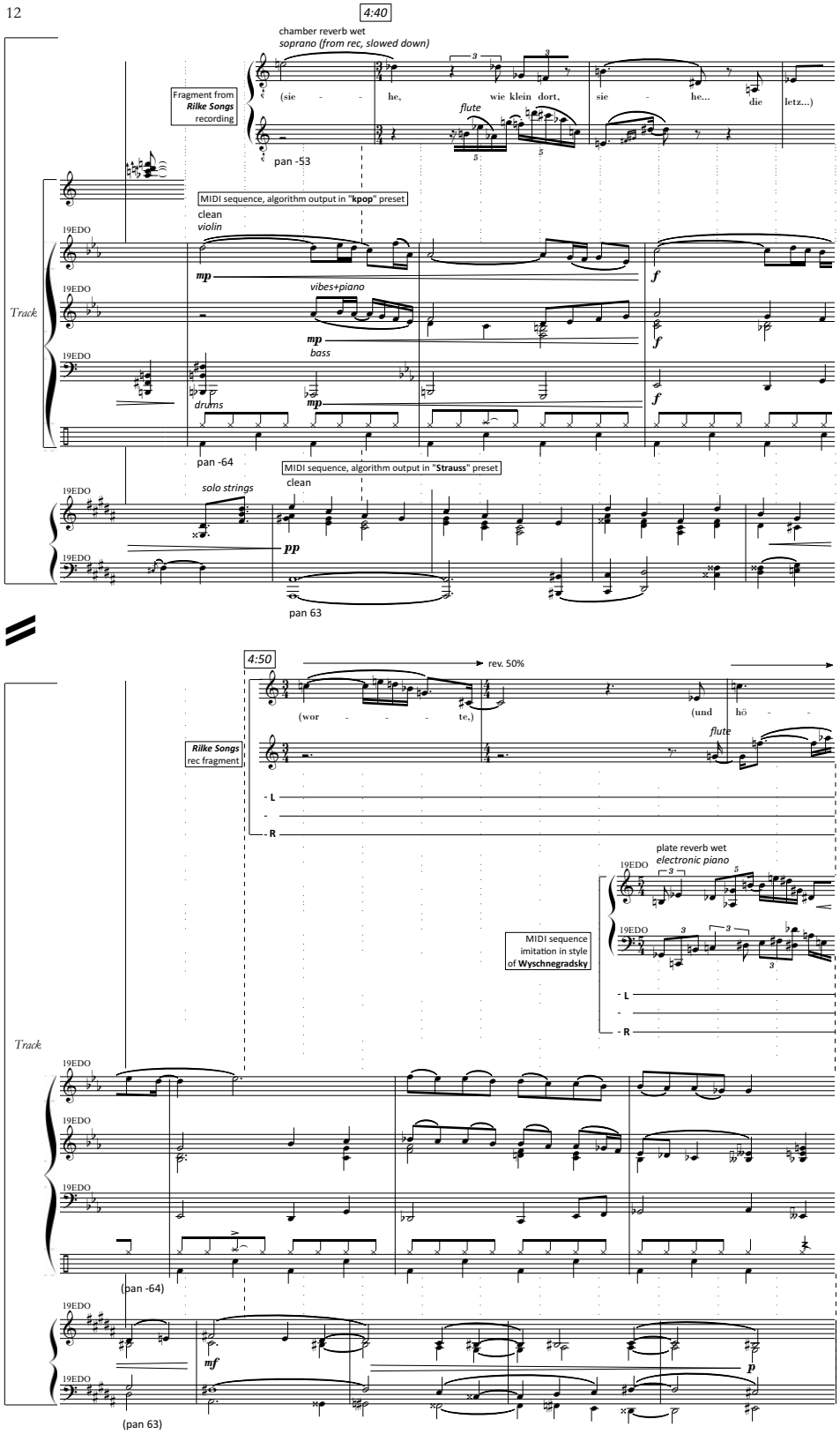

2:50
V.
plä - (ä) - tze
brau-chen wir den...
pochiss.
Track
(vi - - dit su - um dul - cem na...) (mo
[piano]
plate reverb wet
piano
19EDO
moog
Cl.
F
Vocalist pauses for 4 minutes (until audial cue at H, at 7'05").
Sits scrolling on a phone, tablet or similar, as if distracted or sunken into online, and not even aware that they should be performing.
3:00
3:10
chamber reverb wet
(reverb decreases)
"Rzewski" sequence
- ri - en - tem de - so - la - tum mo - ri
(pan 30)

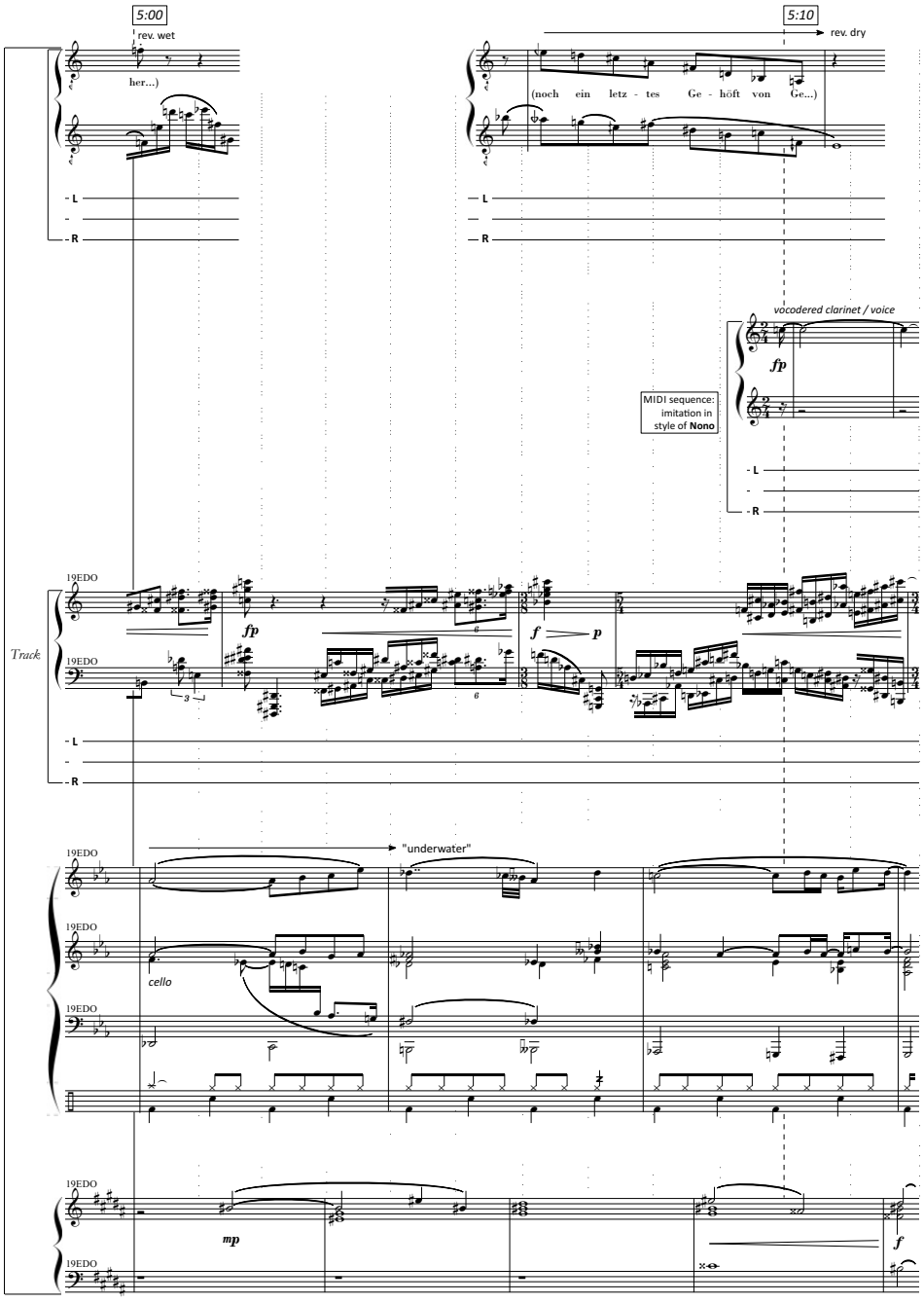

3:20
chamber reverb wet
piano+strings
reverb dry
Track
crossfade into convolution, becomes muddy
en - tem de - so - la - tum) (dum e - - - mi...)
49
Cl.
3:30
"clean" Pergolesi rec.
52
pochiss.
Strauss, Metamorphosen
(low-bitrate mp3 + convolutions)
distorted formants
"clean"
(pan 63)
3:40
Strauss
convolutions
pan -32
55

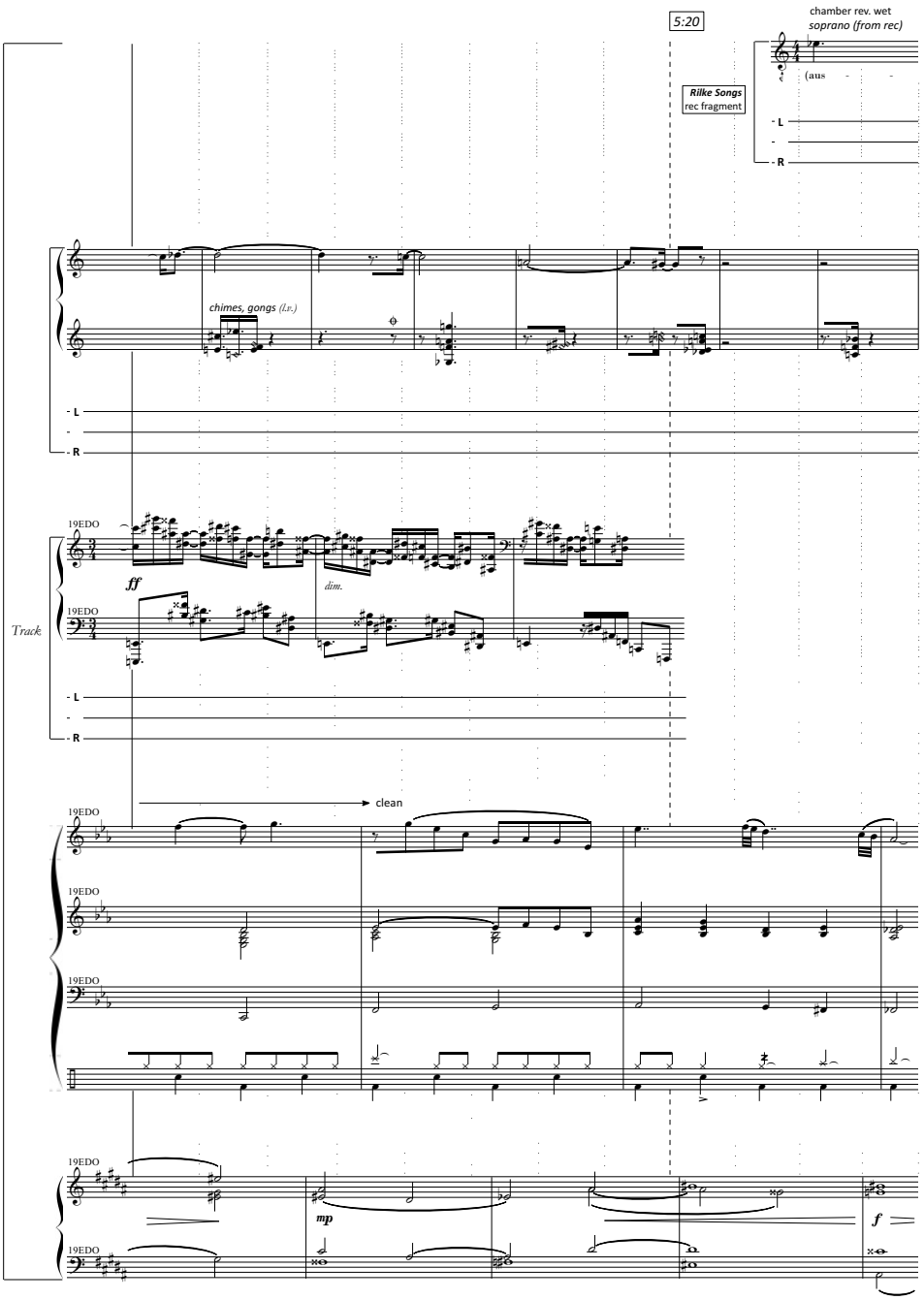

3:50
G
distorted
p espr.
(pan 63)
vibr. esagg.
Strauss convolutions
Track
19EDO
lowpassed, "underwater"
arp
pp cresc.
piano, bass
Convolutions between algorithm output arrangements ("U2" and "Strauss" presets)
58
Cl.
Clarinettist suddenly puts down their instrument. Pauses for appr. 3 minutes until audial cue at H. Like the vocalist, becomes distracted in some way (scrolling on phone etc.)
click track is now off
4:00
4:10
synth arp
strings
piano
bass
drums
peel guitar+crystal lead

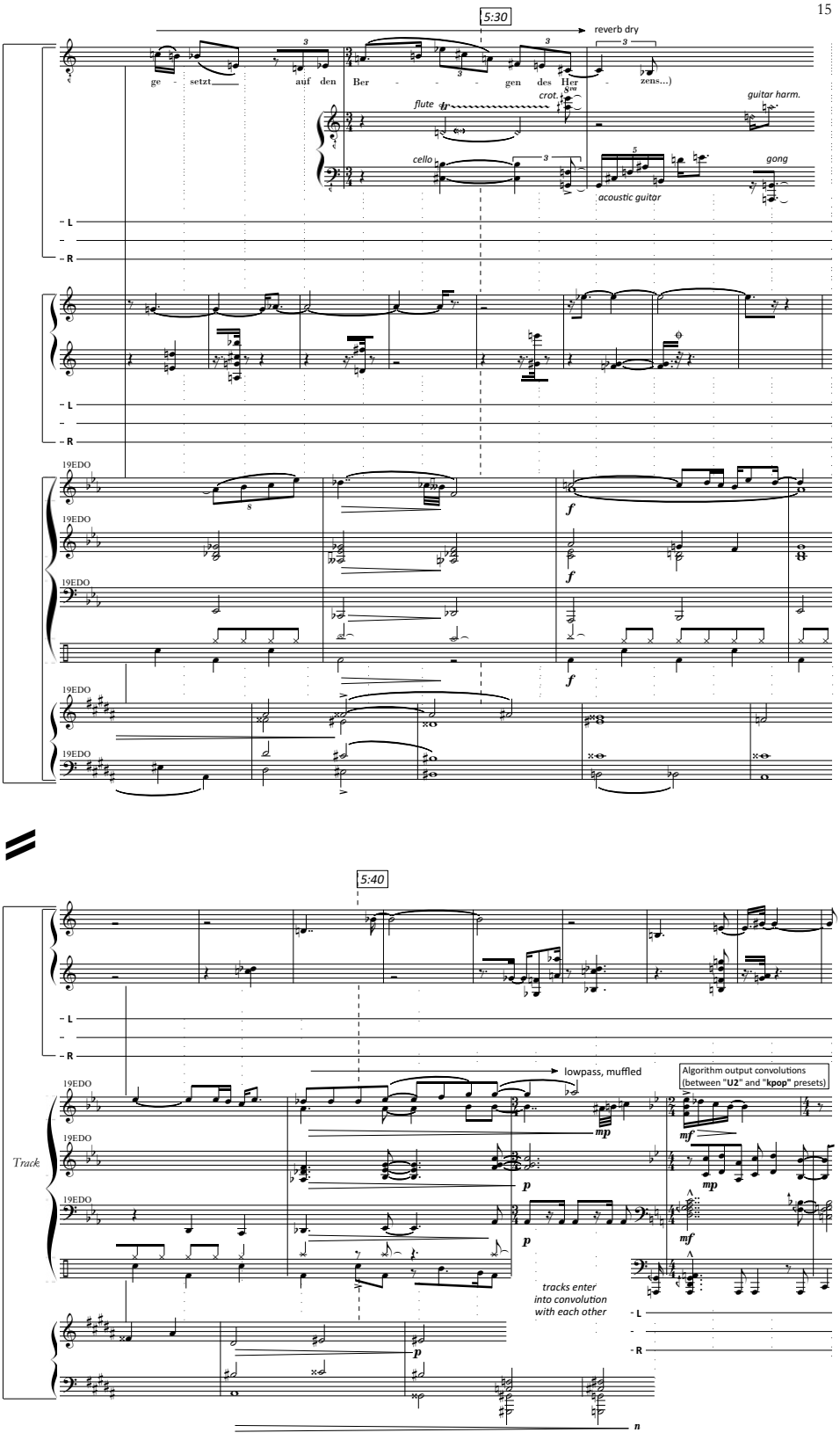

4:20
Track
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
L
R
L
R

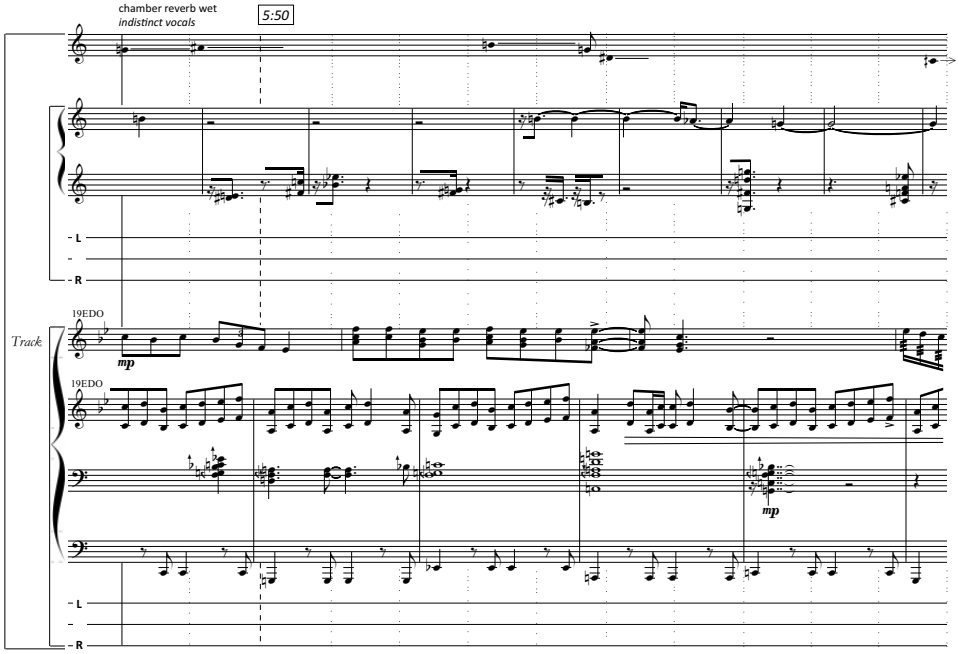

4:30
Convolution between algorithm arrangements ("kpop" and "Strauss")
Track
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
convolution begins to split into two tracks
L
R

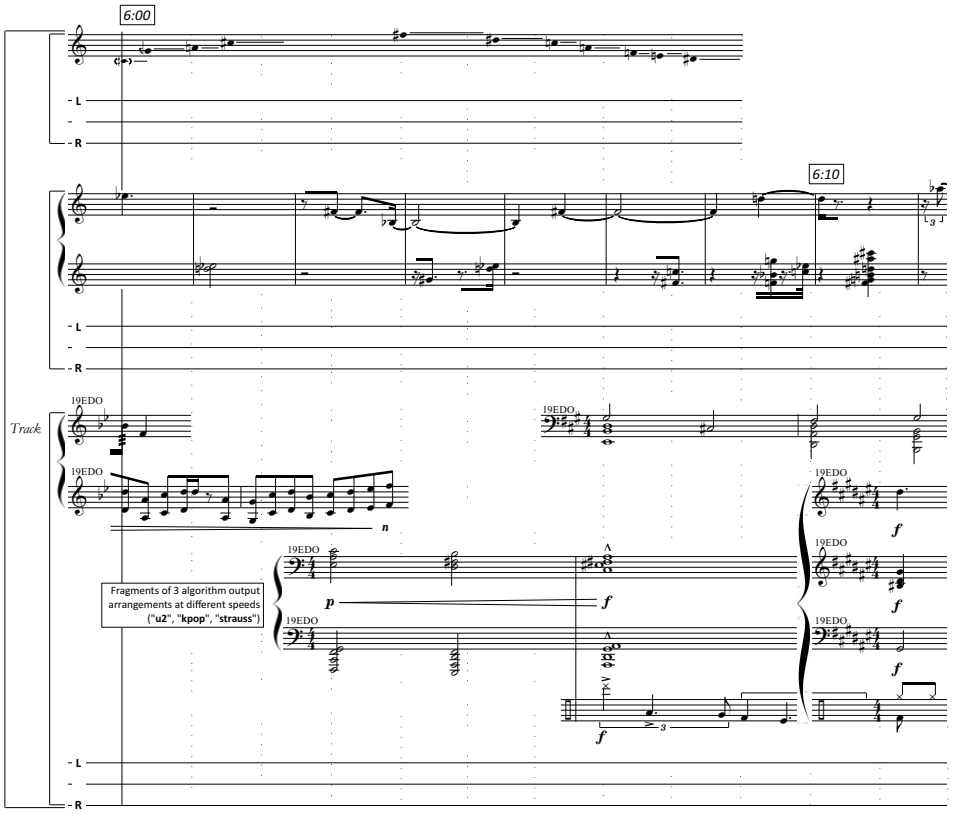

4:40
chamber reverb wet
soprano (from rec, slowed down)
(sie - - he, wie klein dort, sie - he... die letz...)
Fragment from Rilke Songs recording
flute
pan -53
MIDI sequence, algorithm output in "kpop" preset
clean
violin
vibes+piano
bass
drums
Track
19EDO
mp
f
pan -64
MIDI sequence, algorithm output in "Strauss" preset
clean
solo strings
pp
pan 63
4:50
rev. 50%
(wor - - - te,) (und hö -
flute
Rilke Songs rec fragment
- L
-
- R
plate reverb wet
electronic piano
MIDI sequence imitation in style of Wyschnegradsky
(pan -64)
mf
p
(pan 63)

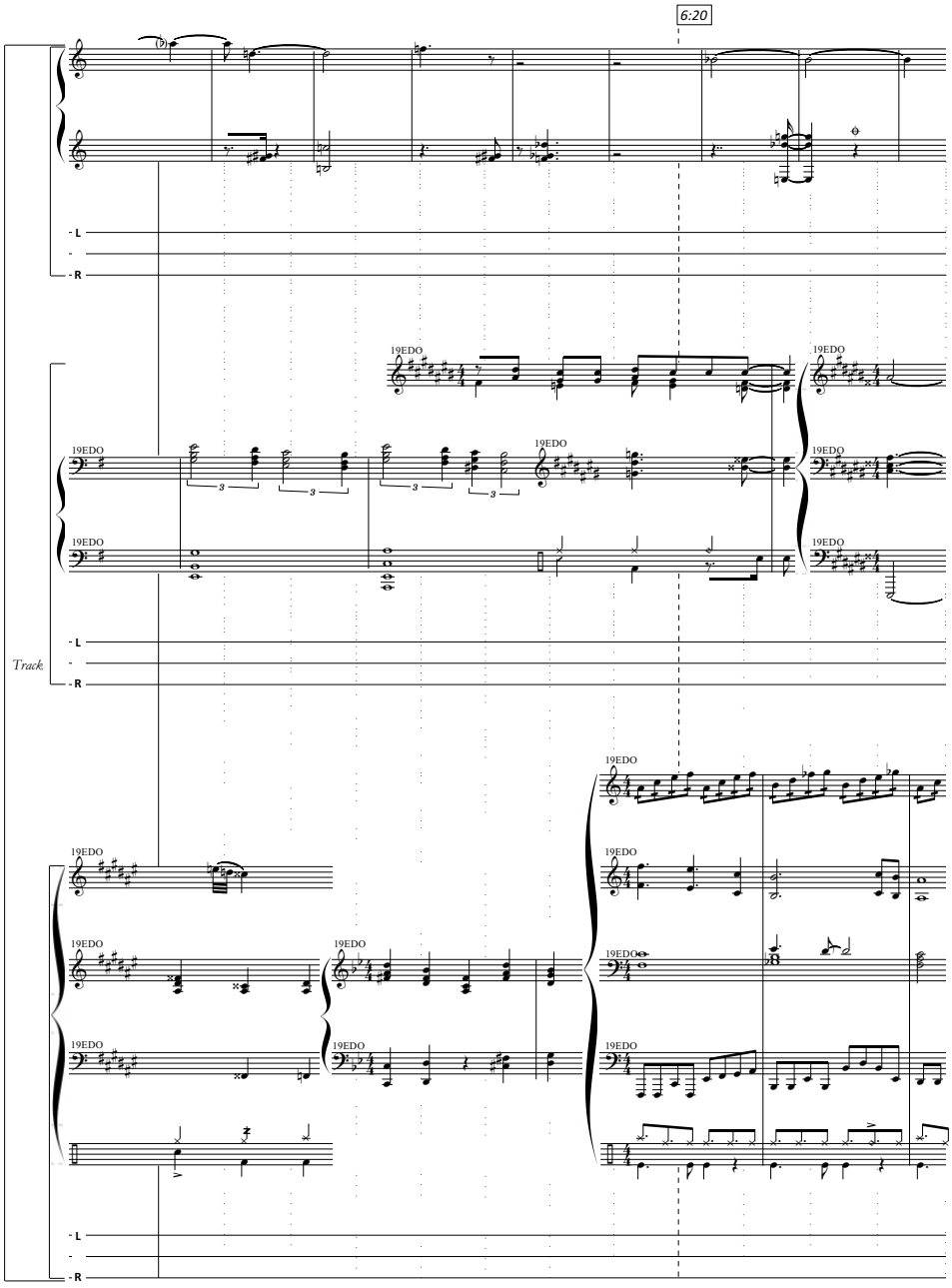

5:00
rev. wet
her...)
5:10
rev. dry
(noch ein letz - tes Ge - höft von Ge...)
L
R
vocodered clarinet / voice
fp
MIDI sequence: imitation in style of Nono
19EDO
Track
fp
f
p
"underwater"
cello
mp
f

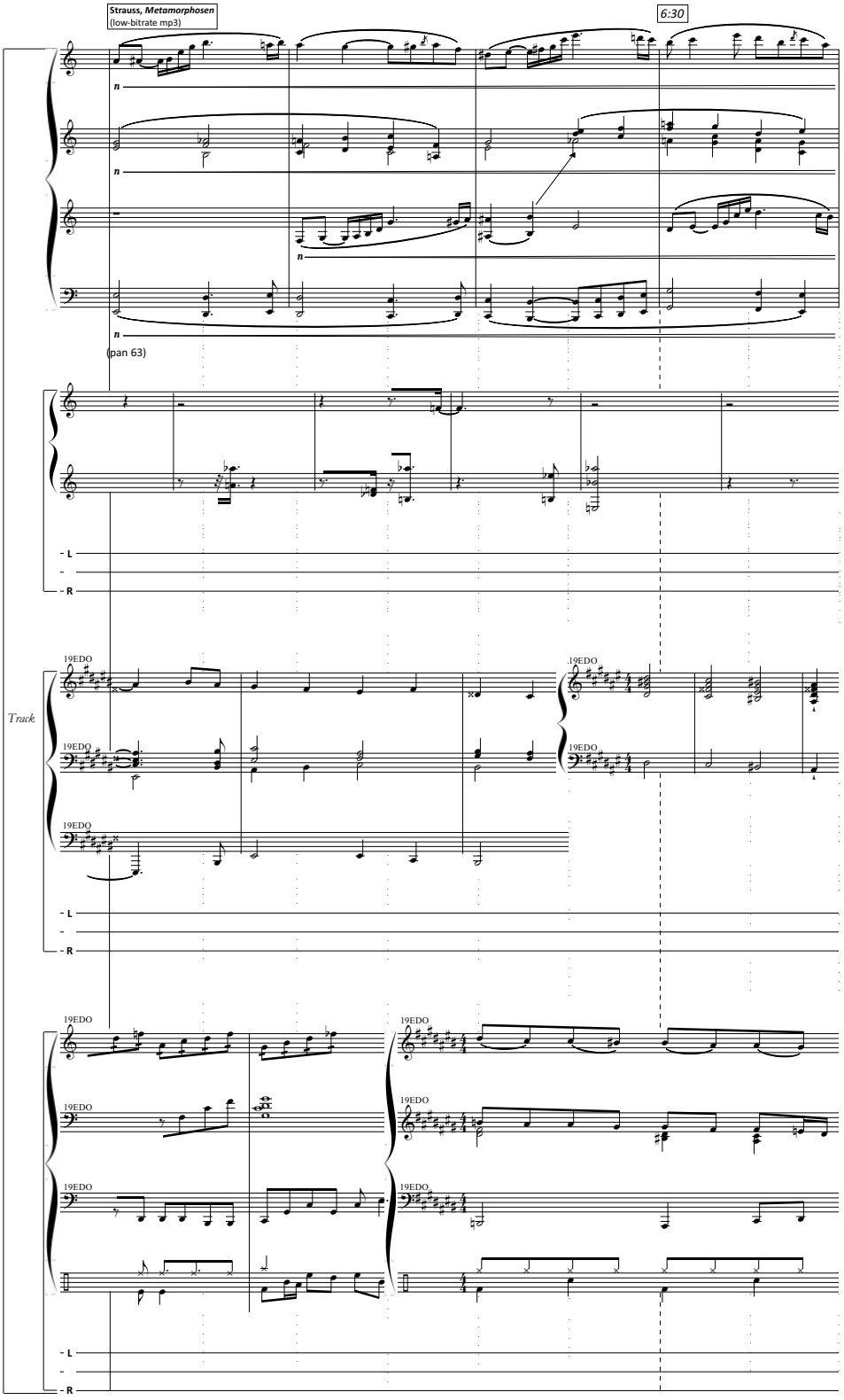

5:20
chamber rev. wet
soprano (from rec)
(aus
Rilke Songs
rec fragment
L
R
chimes, gongs (l.v.)
19EDO
ff
dim.
Track
clean
mp
f

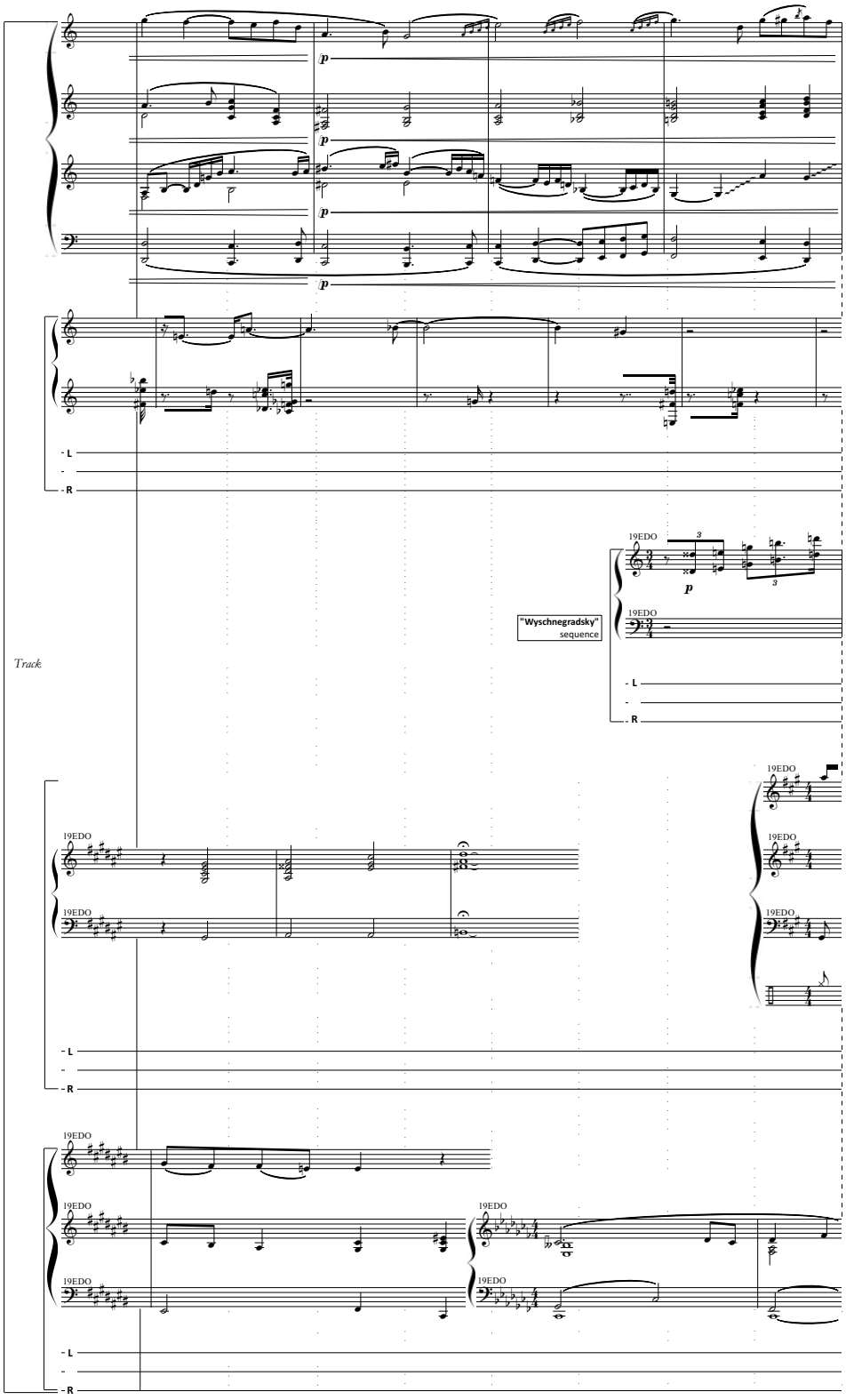

5:30
reverb dry
ge - setzt auf den Ber - - - gen des Her - zens...)
flute
crot.
guitar harm.
cello
acoustic guitar
gong
L
R
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
5:40
lowpass, muffled
Algorithm output convolutions
(between "U2" and "kpop" presets)
Track
tracks enter
into convolution
with each other

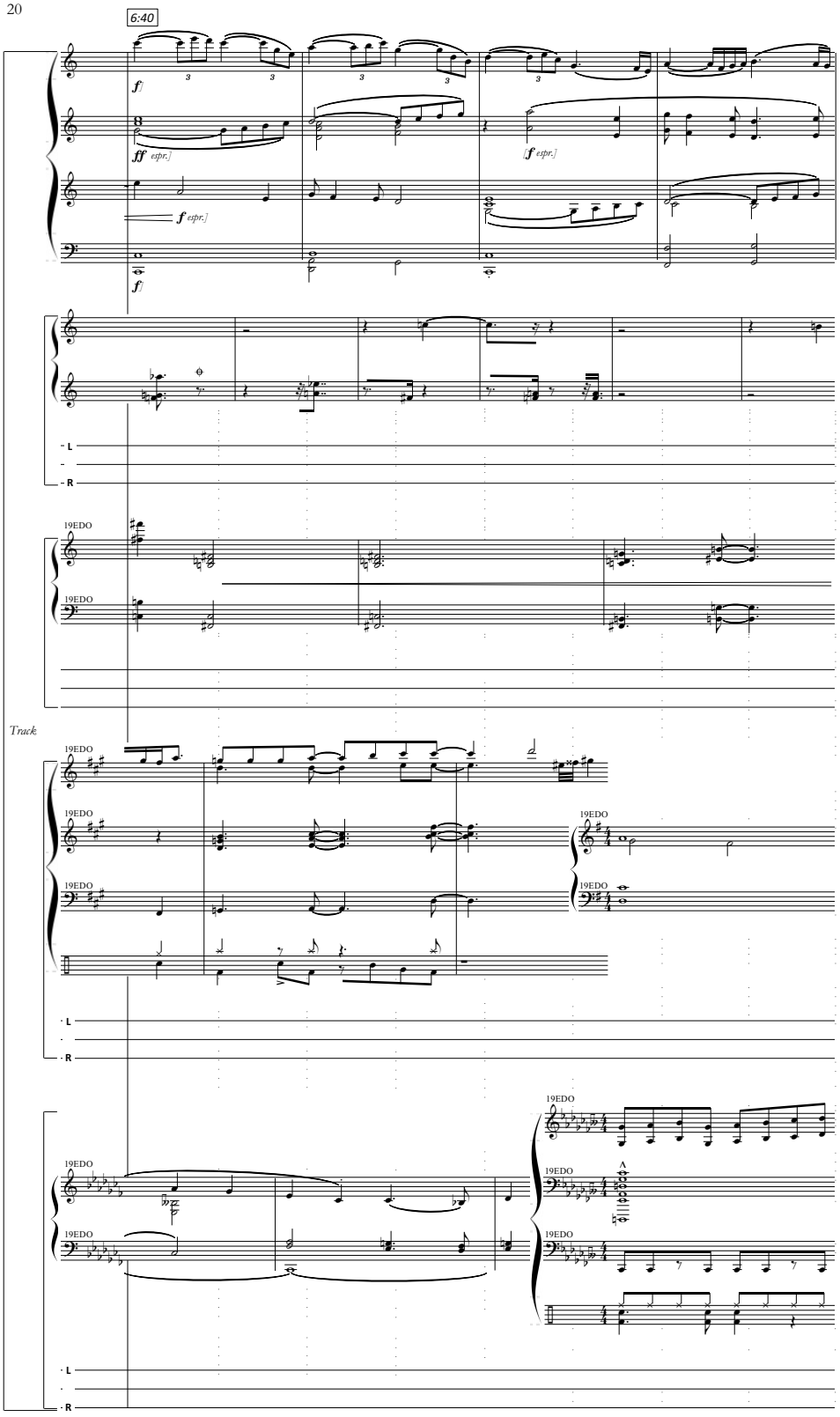

chamber reverb wet
indistinct vocals
5:50
L
R
Track
19EDO
mp
19EDO
mp
L
R

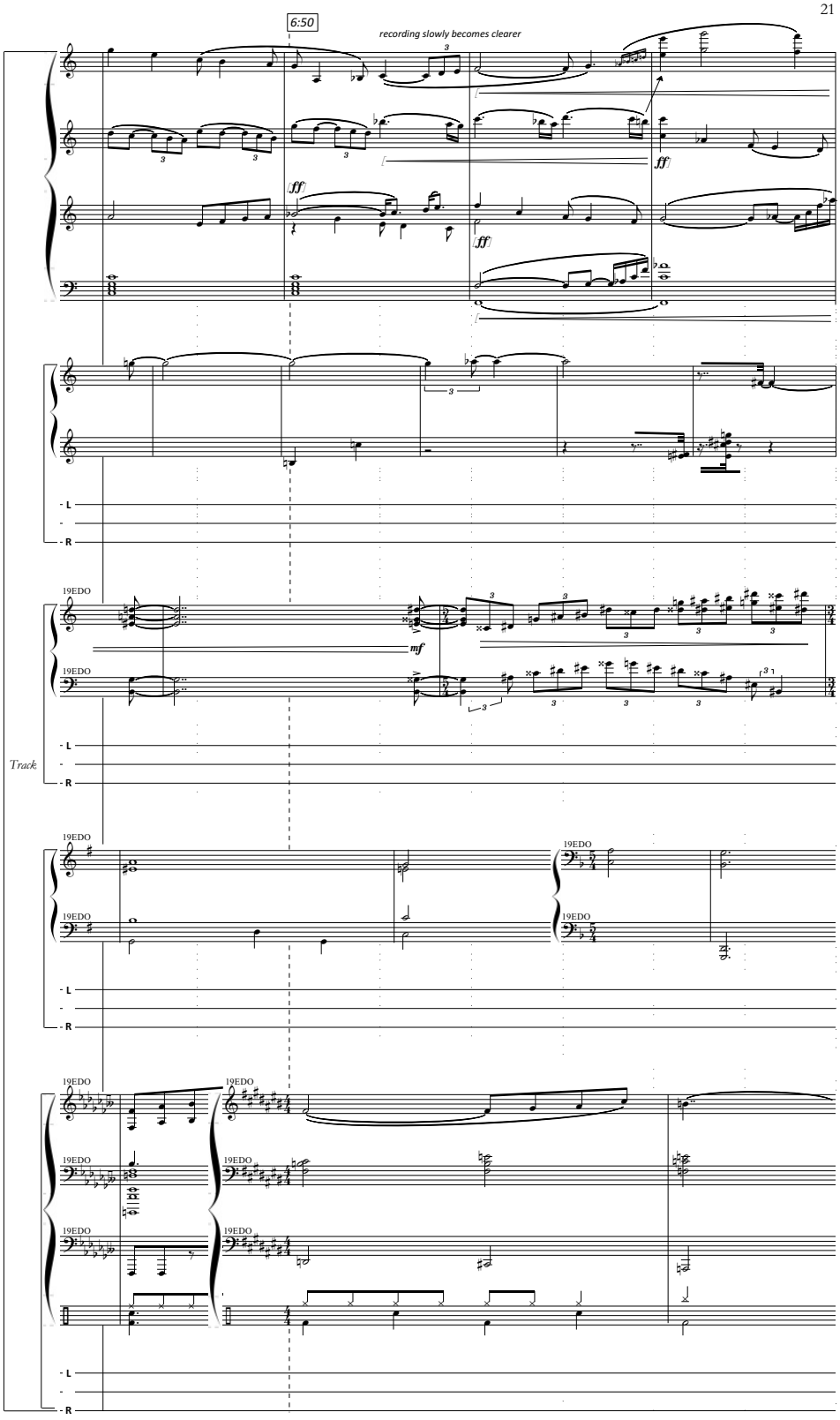

6:00
L
R
6:10
L
R
Track
19EDO
19EDO
n
19EDO
19EDO
p
f
19EDO
19EDO
f
f
f
f
Fragments of 3 algorithm output arrangements at different speeds ("u2", "kpop", "strauss")
L
R

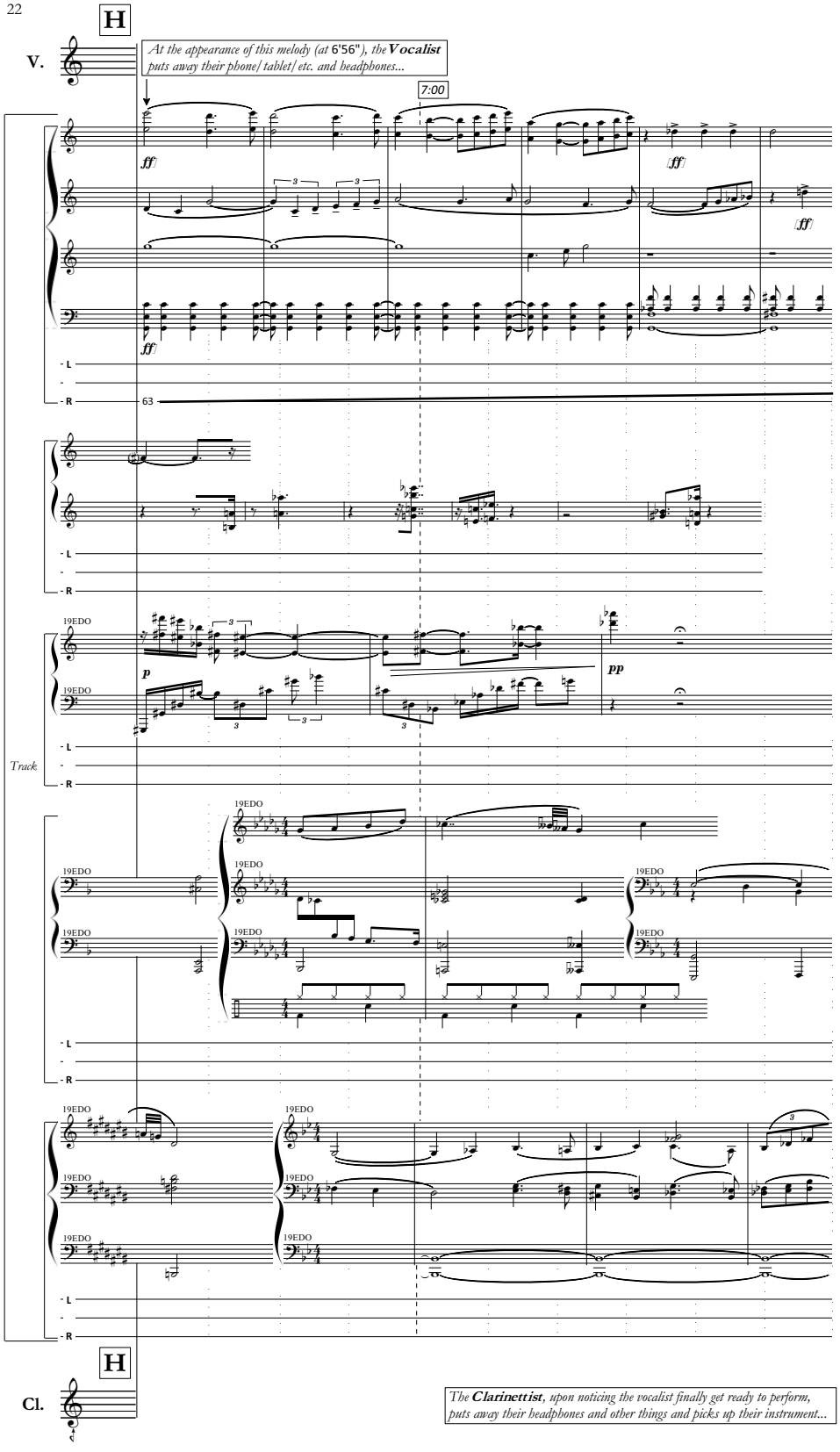

6:20
19EDO
L
R
Track

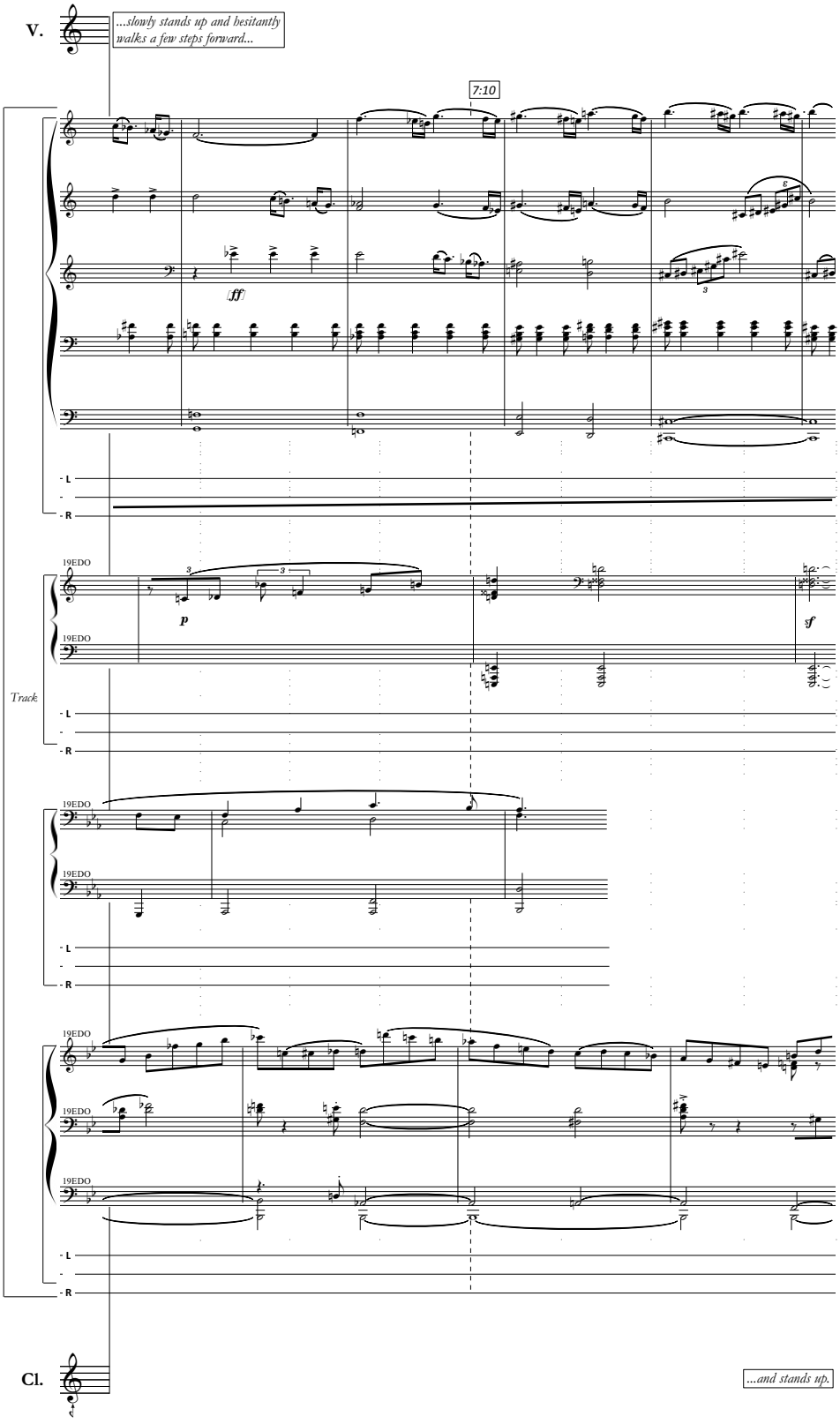

Strauss, *Metamorphosen*
(low-bitrate mp3)
6:30
(pan 63)
Track
19EDO
L
R

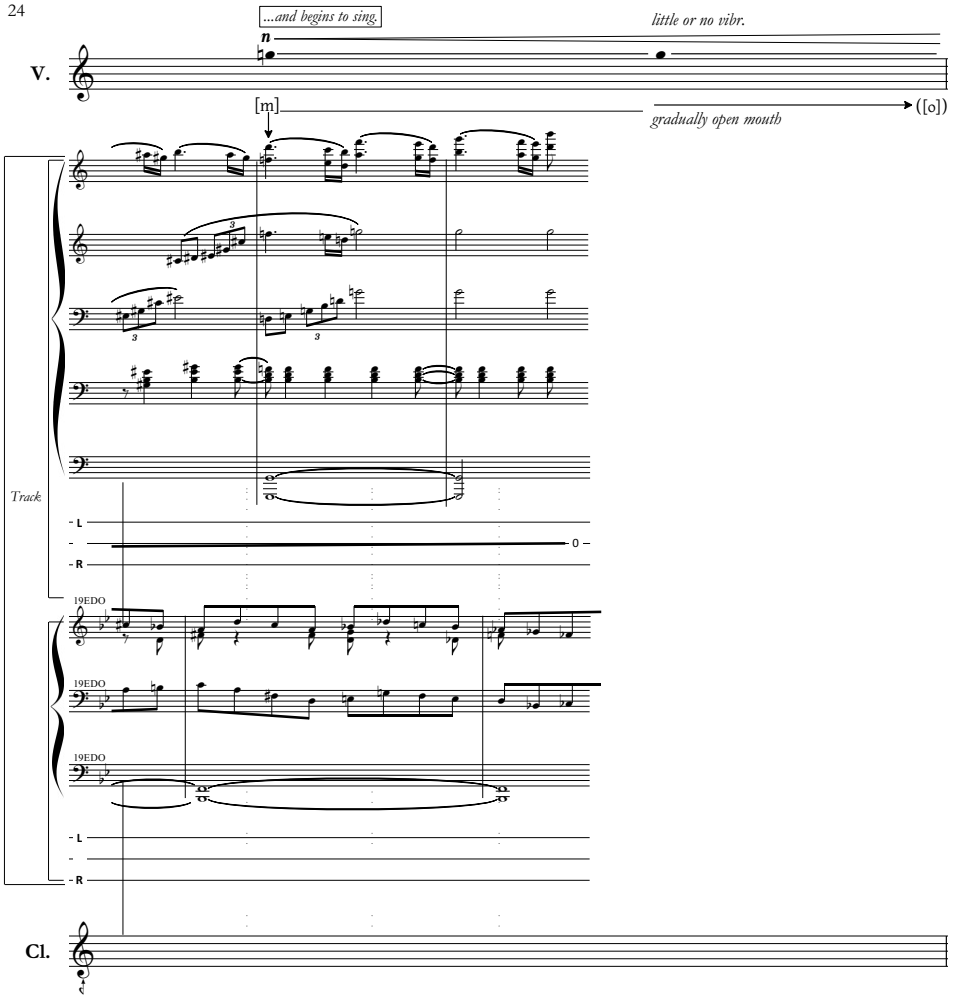

p
p
p
p
L
R
19EDO
3
p
19EDO
"Wyschnegradsky"
sequence
L
R
Track
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
L
R
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
19EDO
L
R


6:40
f
ff espr.
f espr.
[f espr.]
f
L
R
19EDO
Track


6:50
recording slowly becomes clearer
ff
mf
19EDO
L
R
Track

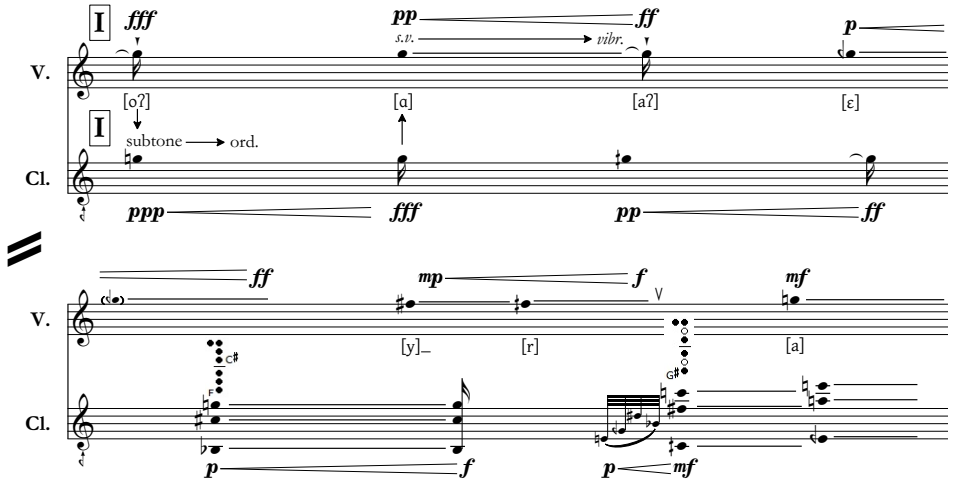

H
V.
At the appearance of this melody (at 6'56"), the Vocalist puts away their phone/tablet/etc. and headphones...
7:00
ff
63
19EDO
p
pp
Track
H
Cl.
The Clarinettist, upon noticing the vocalist finally get ready to perform, puts away their headphones and other things and picks up their instrument...


V.
...slowly stands up and hesitantly walks a few steps forward...
7:10
ff
19EDO
p
sf
Track
L
R
Cl.
...and stands up.

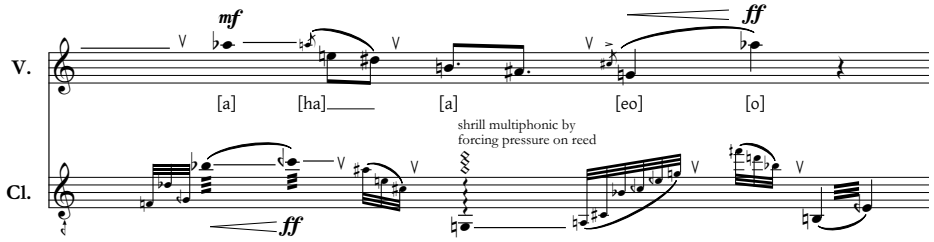


Call-and-response passage. *At the beginning,* ***Vocalist*** *and* ***clarinettist*** *both listen and give cues to each other to time each entrance. The clarinet's first entrances begin as soon as the other performer finishes their note. After this, each entrance begins to overlap more and more with the other performer's note, and the parts become more independent. Lengths of the passages are variable, but each one is a little shorter than the last.*

Duration of this whole passage (from the clarinettist's first entrance until the reintroduction of the tape) is a little more than 30 seconds. It may go on for a few seconds after the tape sound starts.

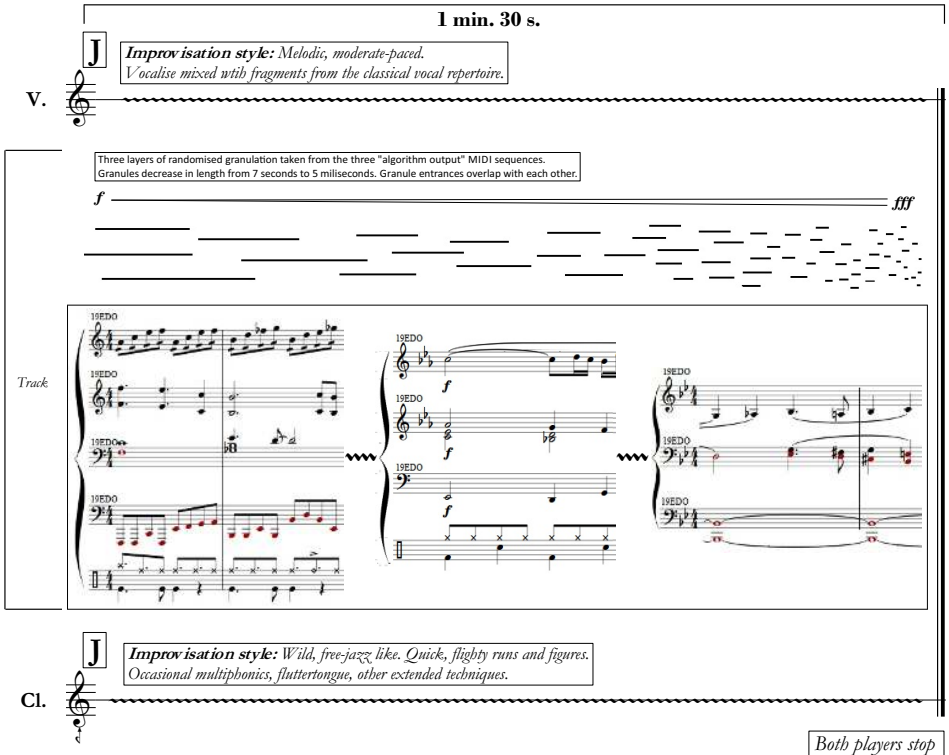


At this point, the two performers begin to lose their coordination with each other and perform independently, although the total duration of this measure is roughly the same. If needed, this section may be repeated to fill the time until the tape comes in.



Electronic track is reintroduced. ***Vocalist*** *and* ***Clarinettist*** *begin* free improvisation passage.
All parts are independent of each other and the tape.

1 min. 30 s.



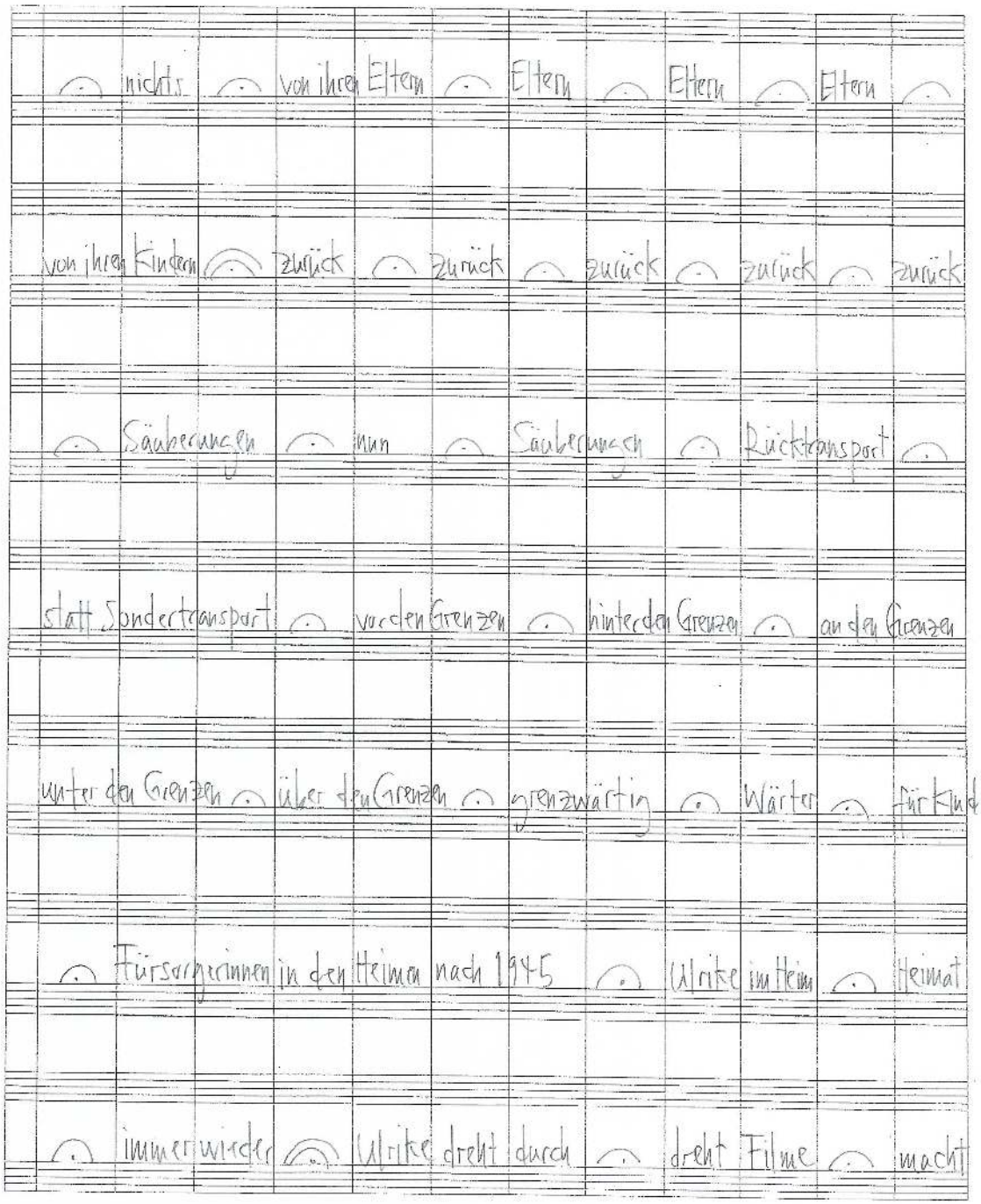
Both players stop suddenly at the same time as the electronic track!

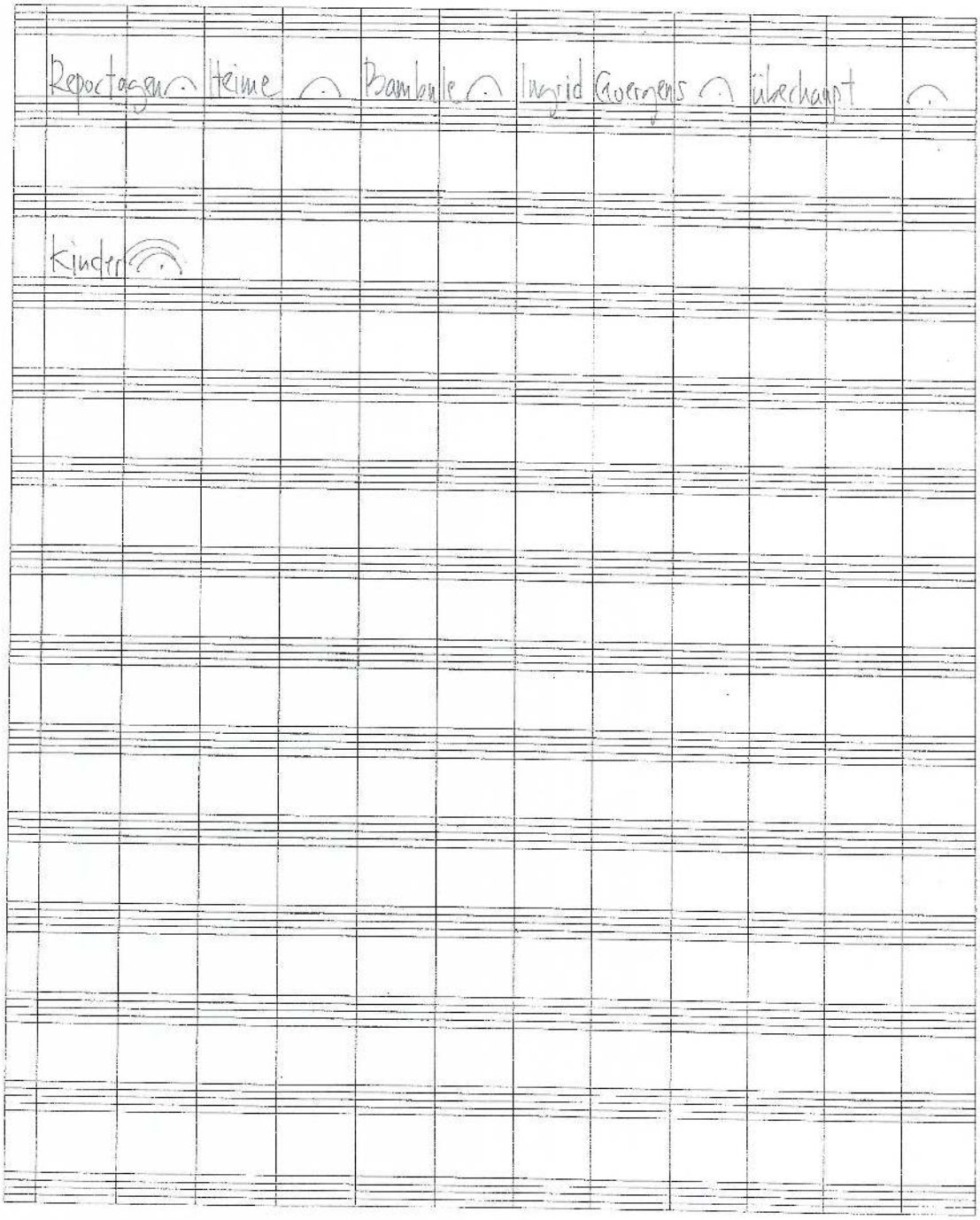
North Bergen,
October 2020.

Zwischenspiel: Text

"ausdruckslos", langsam

Käfighaltung	bitter	schwarz	und tragisch	Krankenschwestern				
Pflegerinnen	spritzen	Versuchskaninchen	tot					
Erste Tote	durch	Gas	Pflegerinnen	nicht	vor			
Gericht	Pflegerinnen	Ärzte	Heimleiter	in Fürsorge				
heimen	1933 bis 1945	Behörde TY	weil	nicht				
volksdeutsch	nicht	volks	E	U	schutz			
suchend	frierend	Kinder	getrennt	von Eltern	wissen			


nichts
von ihren Eltern
Eltern
Eltern
Eltern
Eltern
von ihren Kindern
zurück
zurück
zurück
zurück
zurück
Säuberungen
nun
Säuberungen
Rücktransport
statt Sondertransport
vor den Grenzen
hinter den Grenzen
an den Grenzen
unter den Grenzen
über den Grenzen
grenzwärtig
Wärter
für Kinder
Fürsorgerinnen
in den Heimen
nach 1945
Ulrike
im Heim
Heimat
immer wieder
Ulrike
dreht durch
dreht Filme
macht

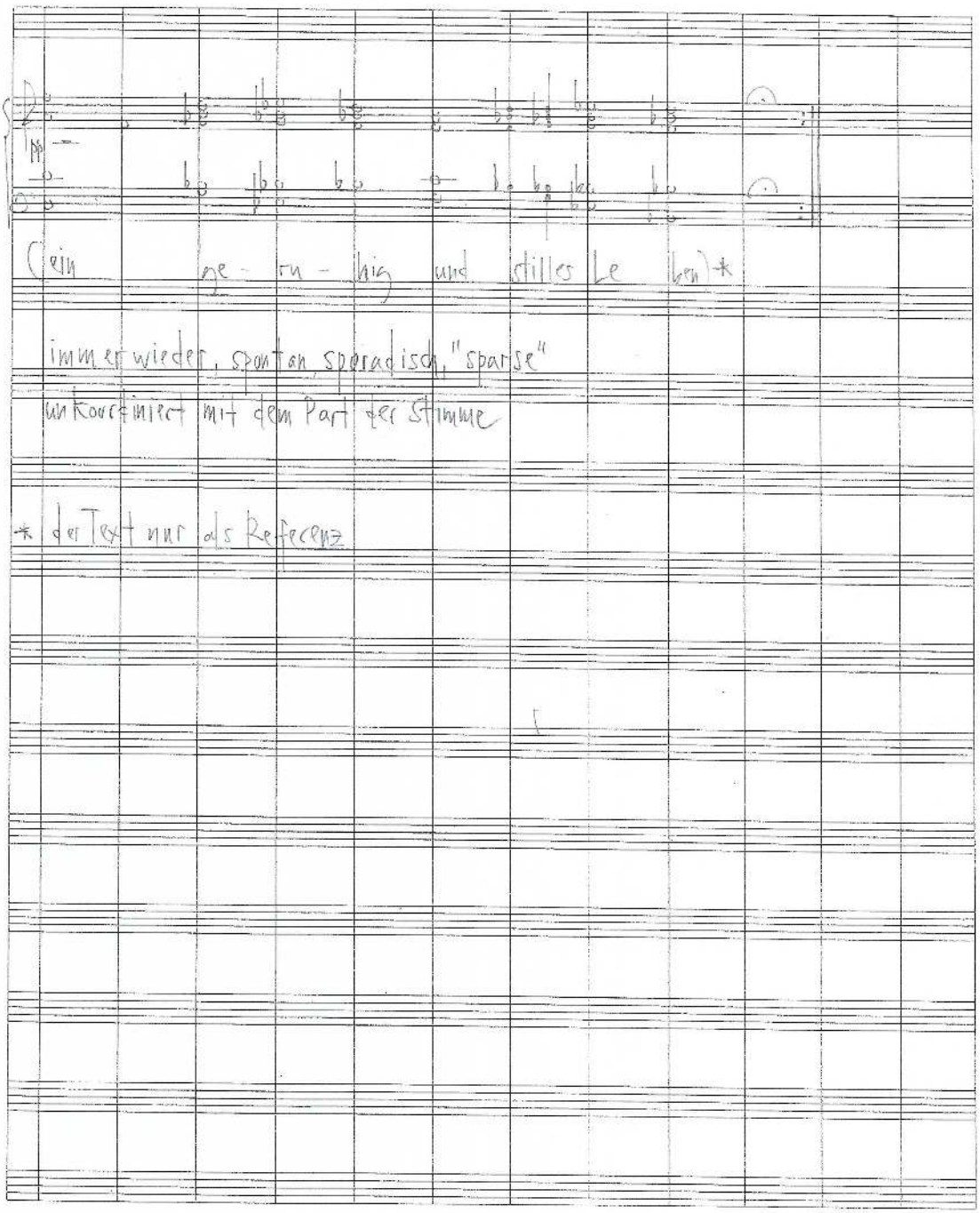


Reportagen Heime Bambule Ingrid Goergens überhaupt

Kinder

Zwischenspiel : Musik

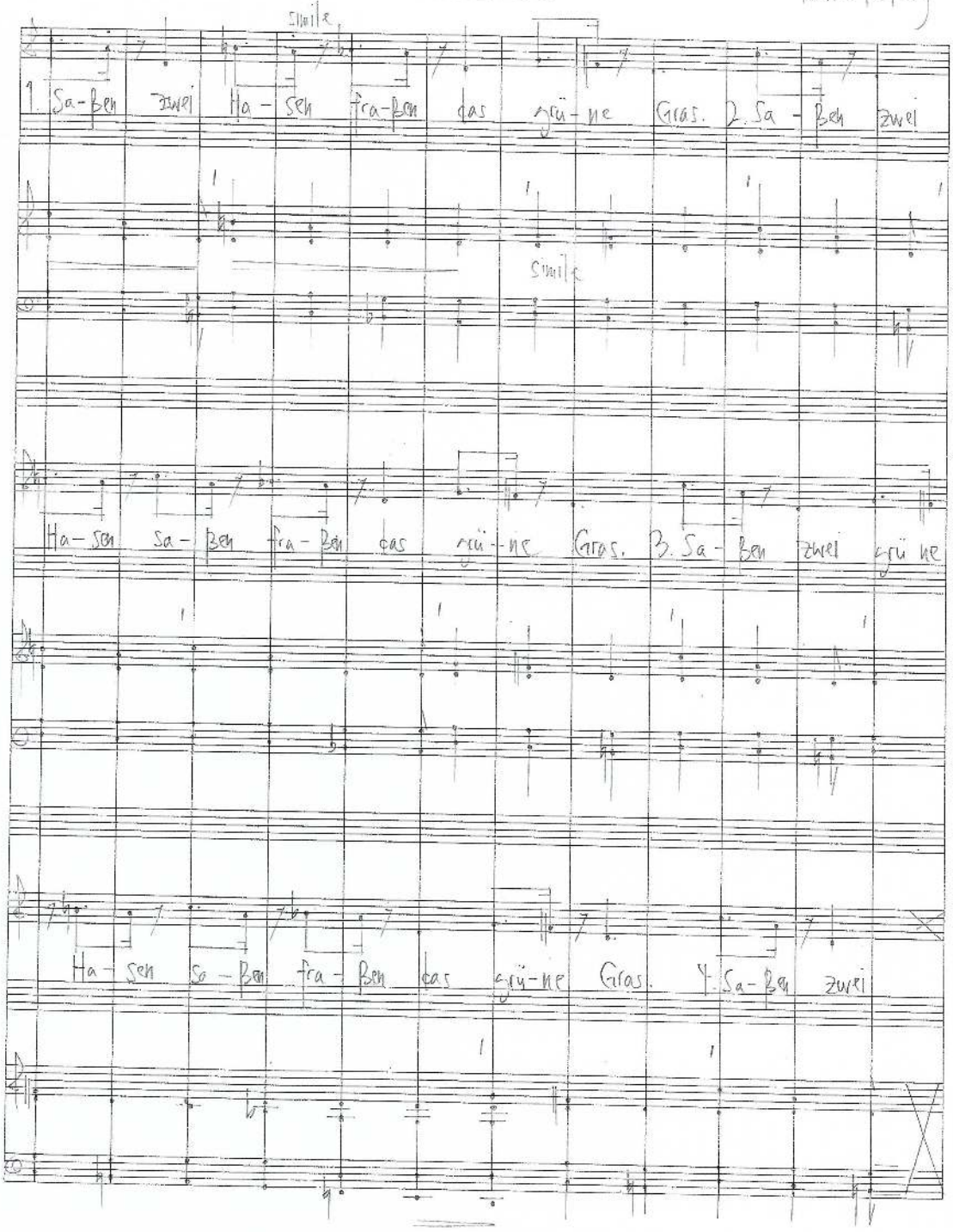
♩ = 72

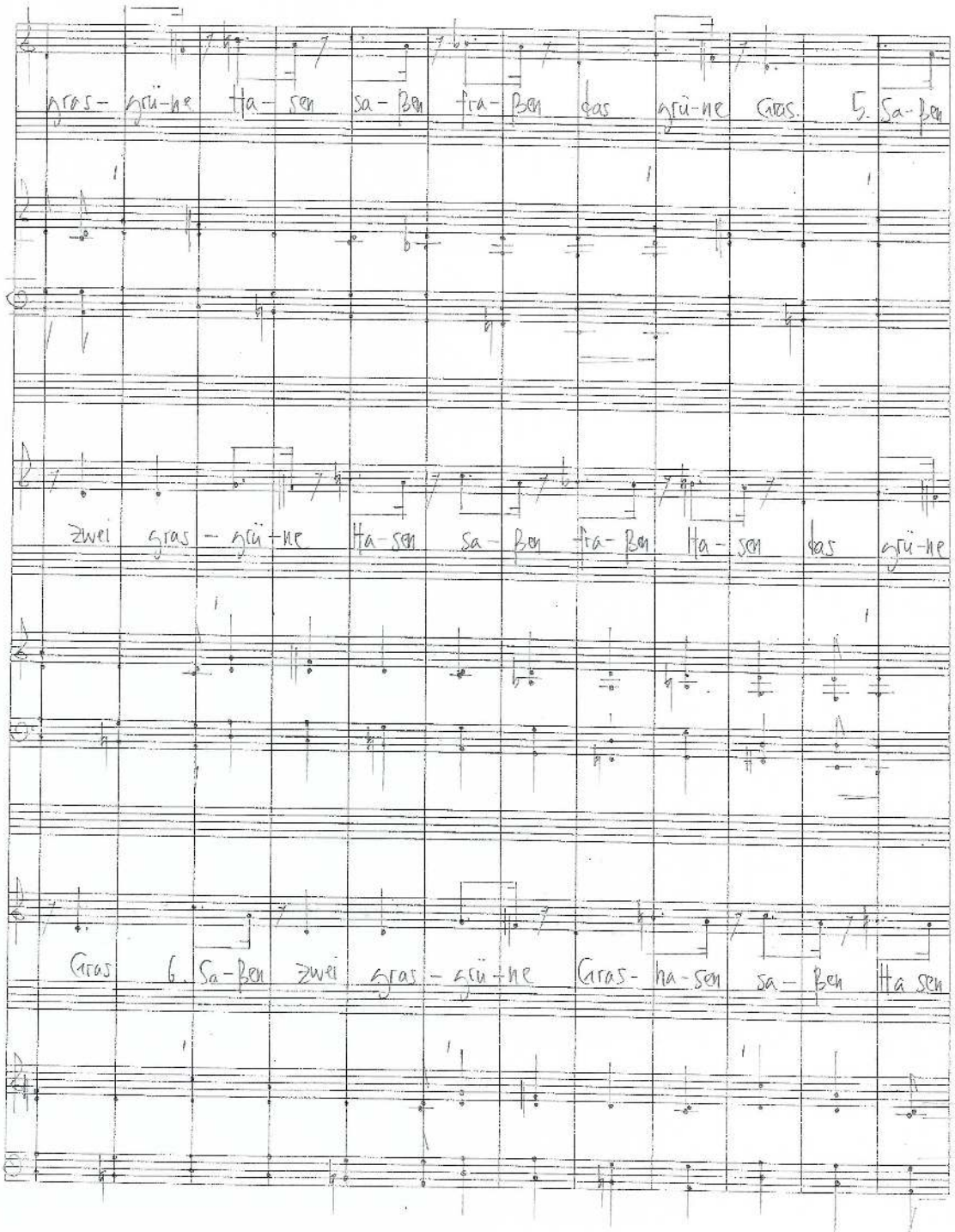


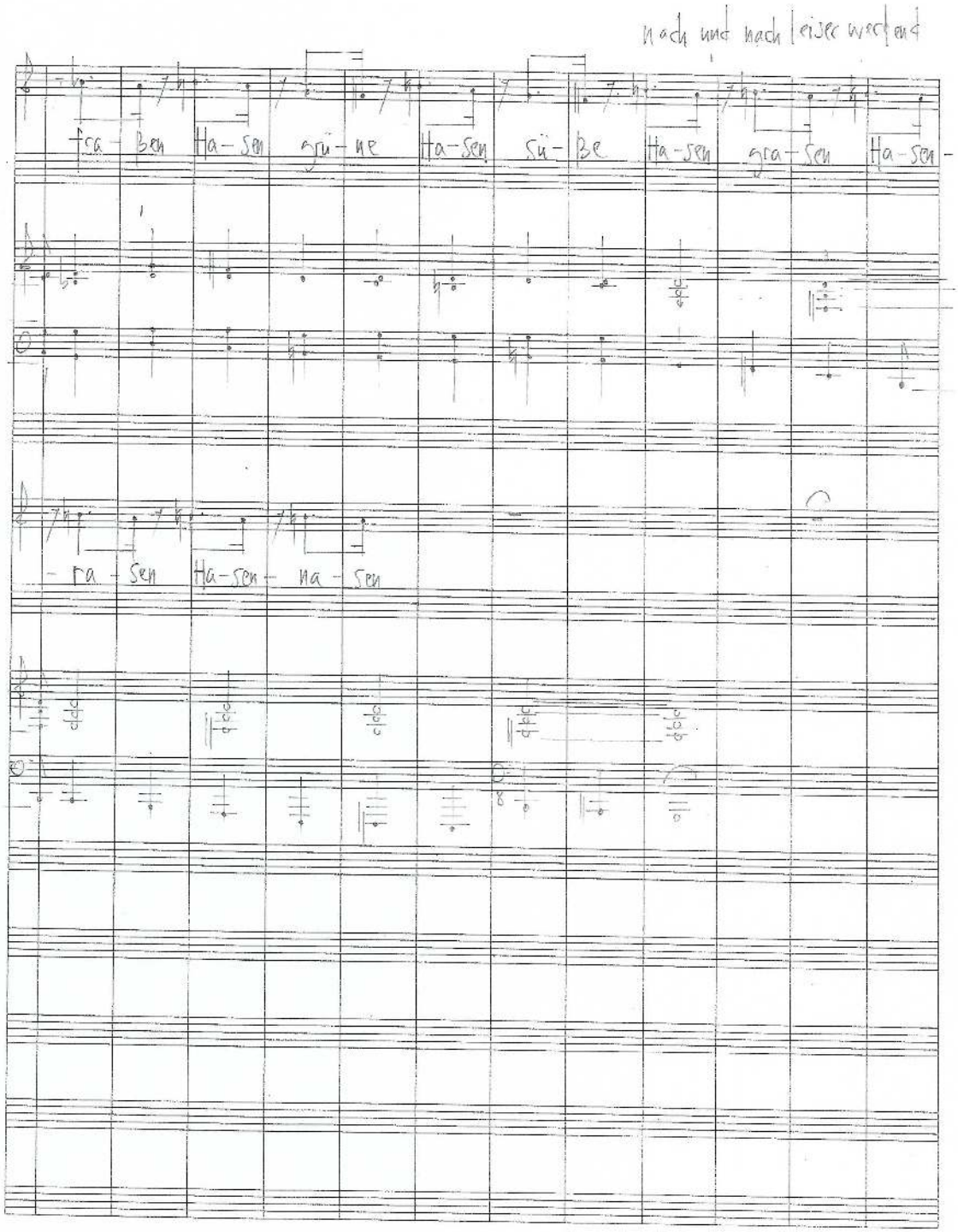
♩ = 86

Zwei Hasen

Reiko Füting



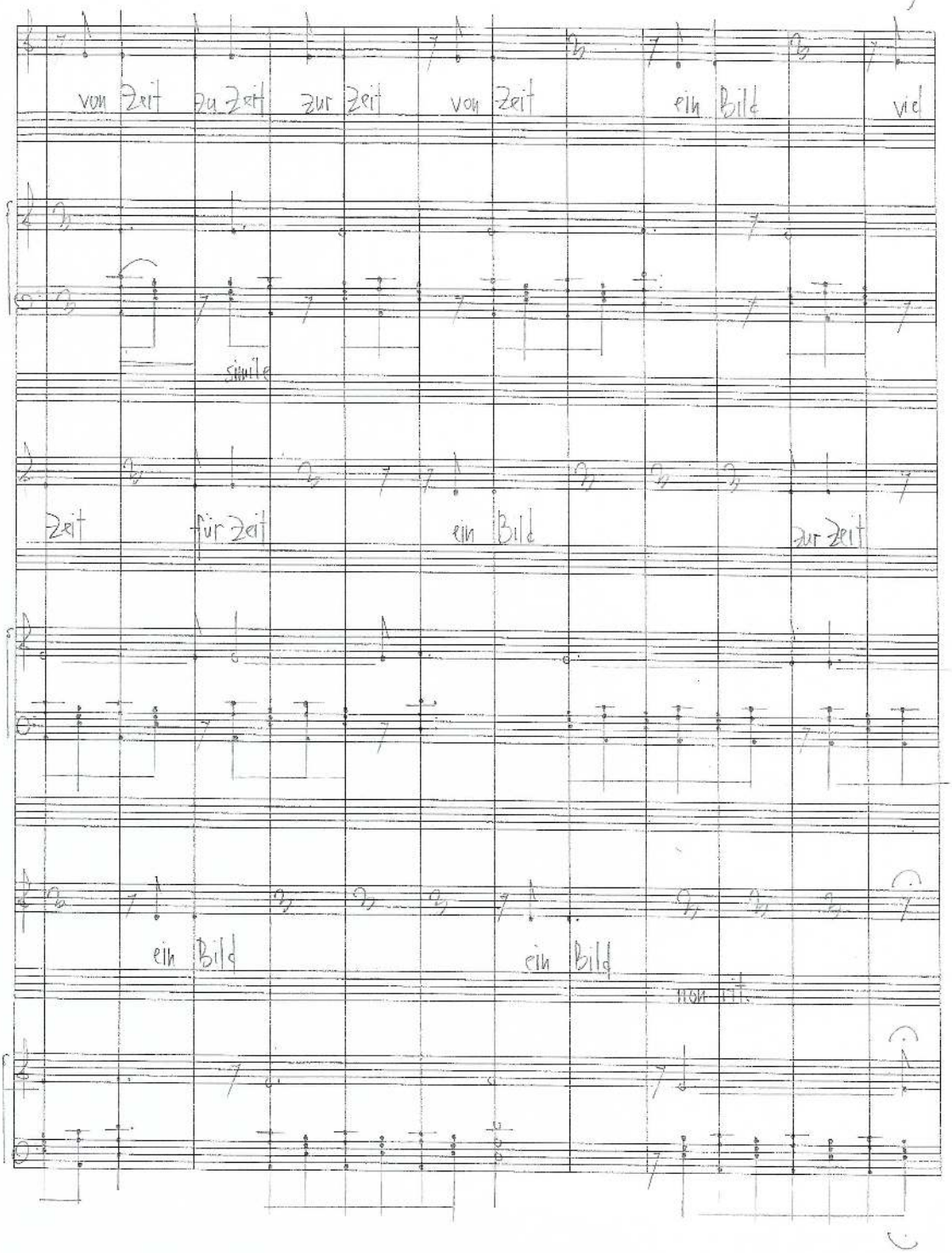

gras- grü-ne ha- sen sa- ben fra- ben das grü-ne Gras. 5. Sa-ben
zwei gras- grü-ne ha- sen sa- ben fra- ben ha- sen das grü-ne
Gras 6. Sa-ben zwei gras- grü-ne Gras- ha-sen sa- ben Ha sen

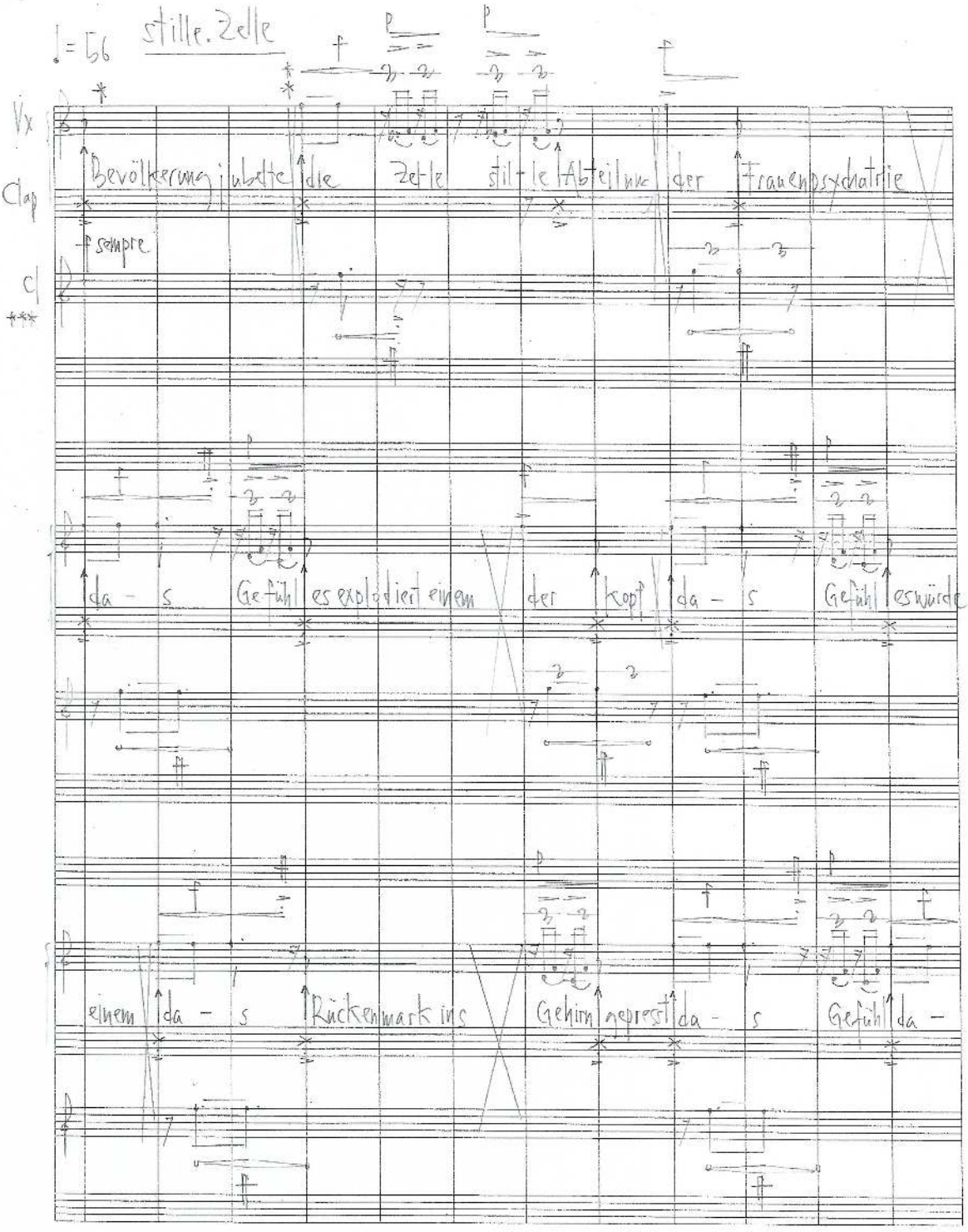

nach und nach leiser werdend
Ta - ben Ha - sen grü - ne Ha - sen Sü - Be Ha - sen gra - sen Ha - sen -
- ra - sen Ha - sen - na - sen

♩=72

Zeit.Bild

Reiko Füting

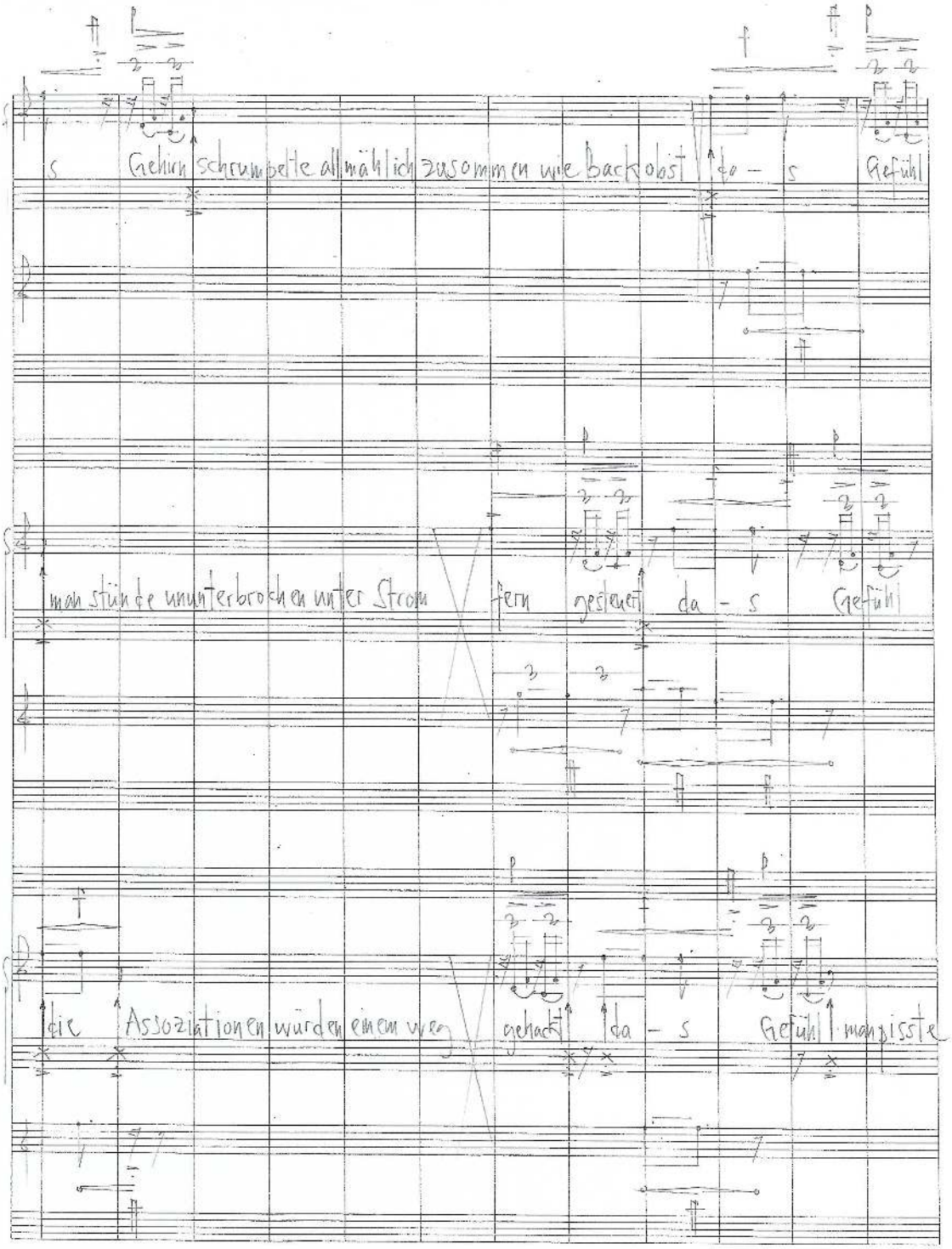


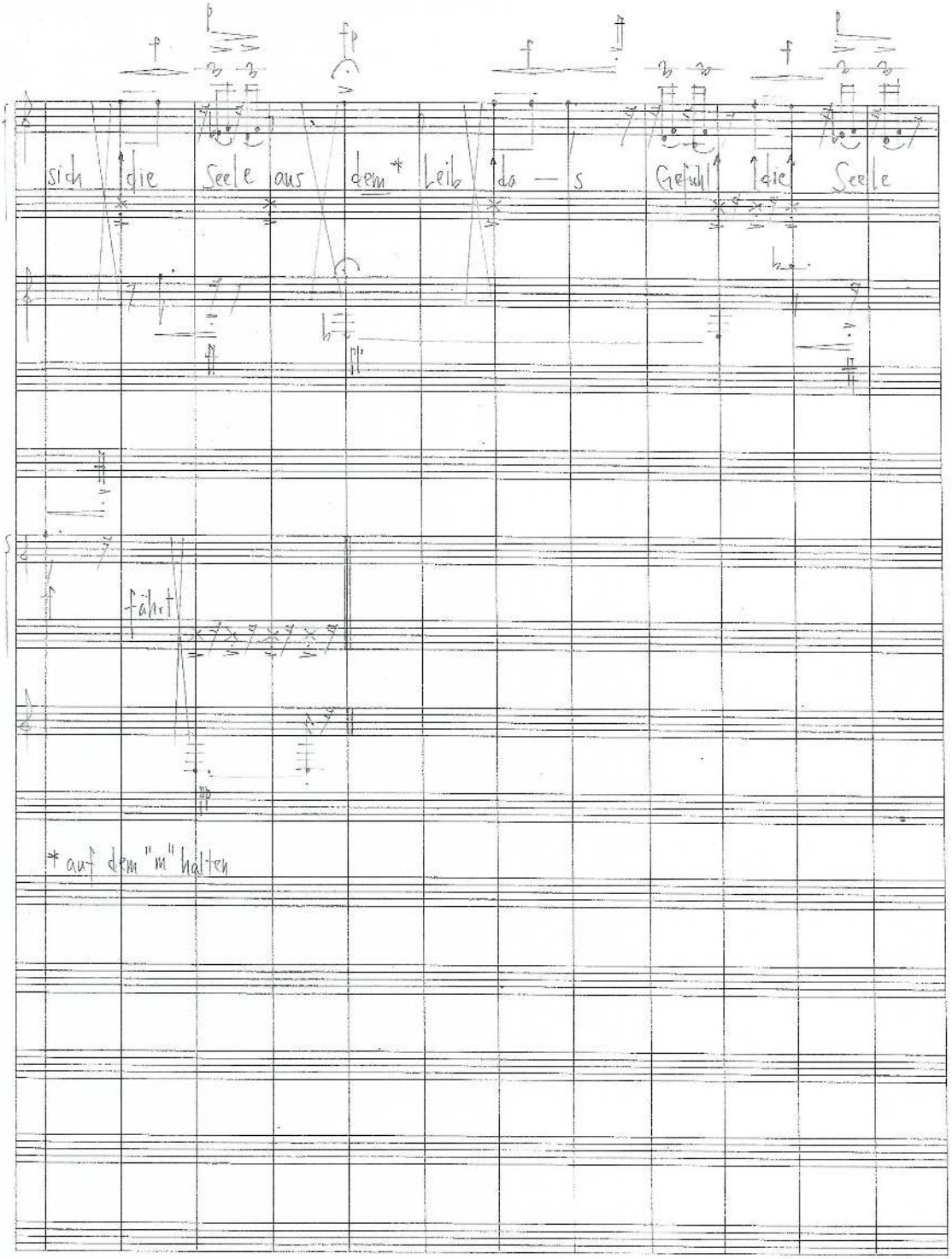


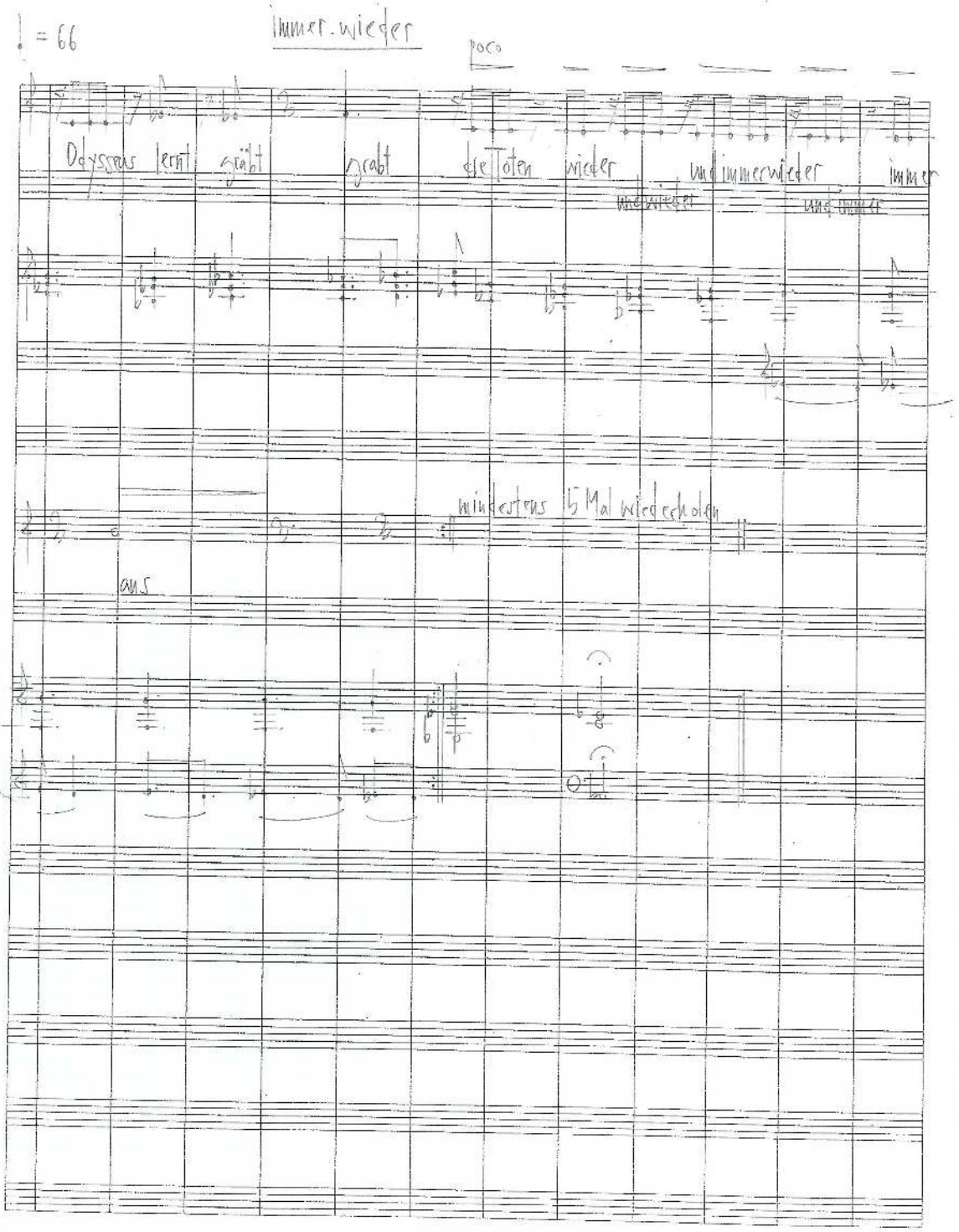
* Den Text sehr schnell, aber dennoch verständlich sprechen, im mp/mf Bereich, gleich nach dem klatschen

** Das Singen gleich nach dem Sprechen, das Klatschen mit dem Singen

*** in C notiert

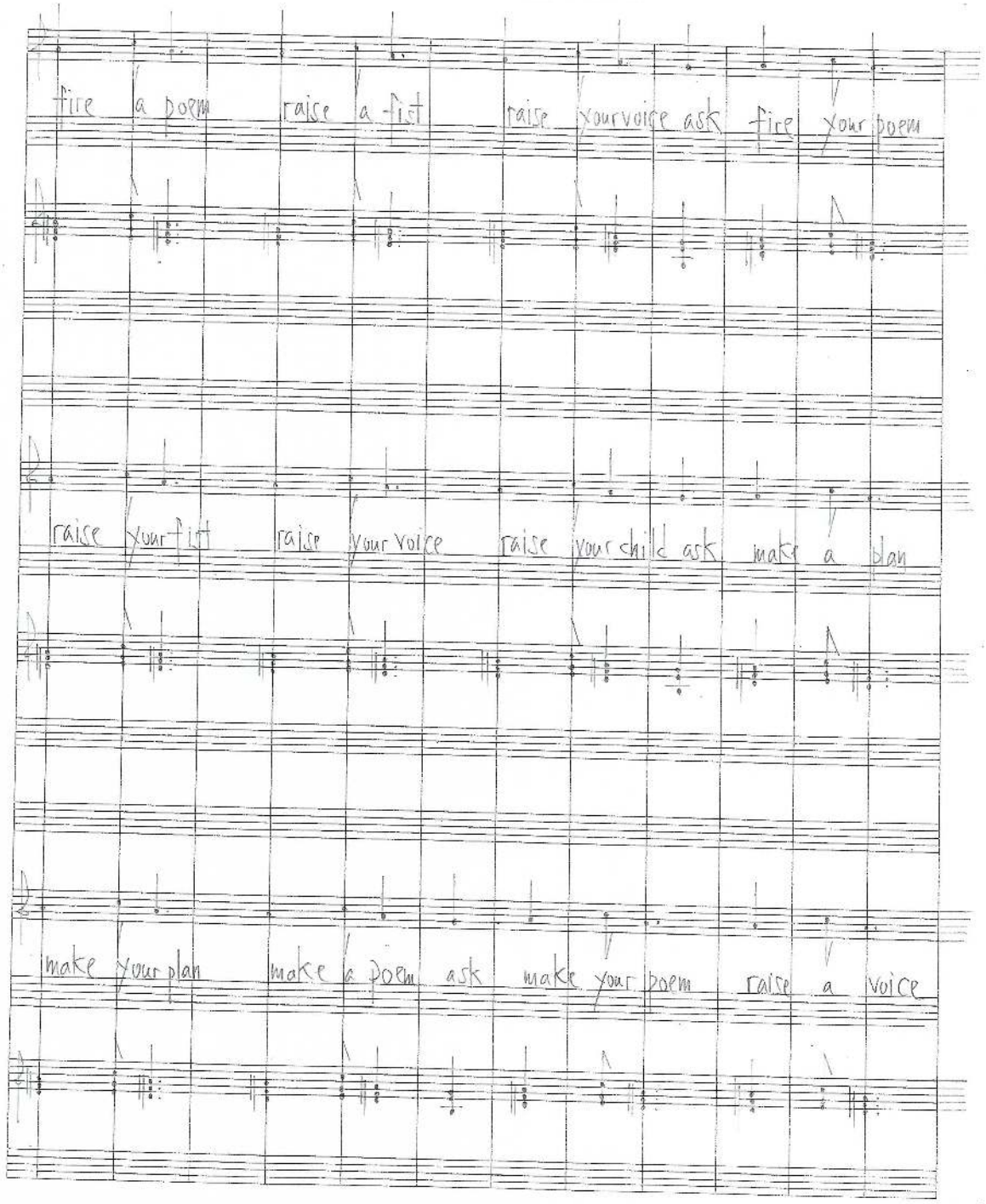

s Gehirn schrumpelte allmählich zusammen wie backobst da - s Gefühl
man stünde ununterbrochen unter Strom fern gesteuert da - s Gefühl
die Assoziationen würden einem weg gehackt da - s Gefühl mangisste

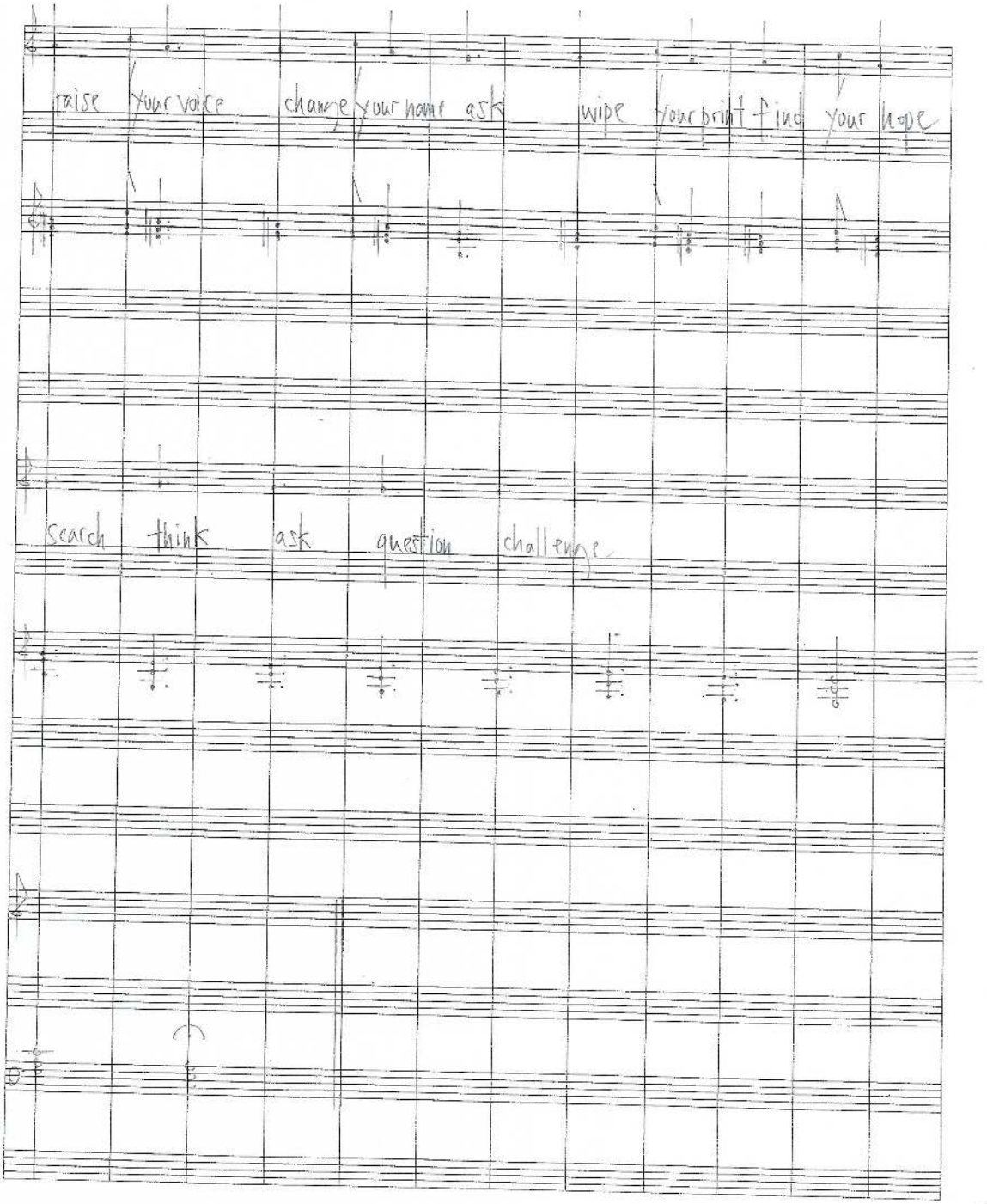

sich die Seele aus dem* Leib das Gefühl die Seele
fährt
* auf dem "m" halten


♩ = 66
immer.wieder
poco
Odysseus lernt
gräbt
die Toten wieder
und immerwieder
immer
mindestens 5 Mal wiederholen
aus

♩= 160

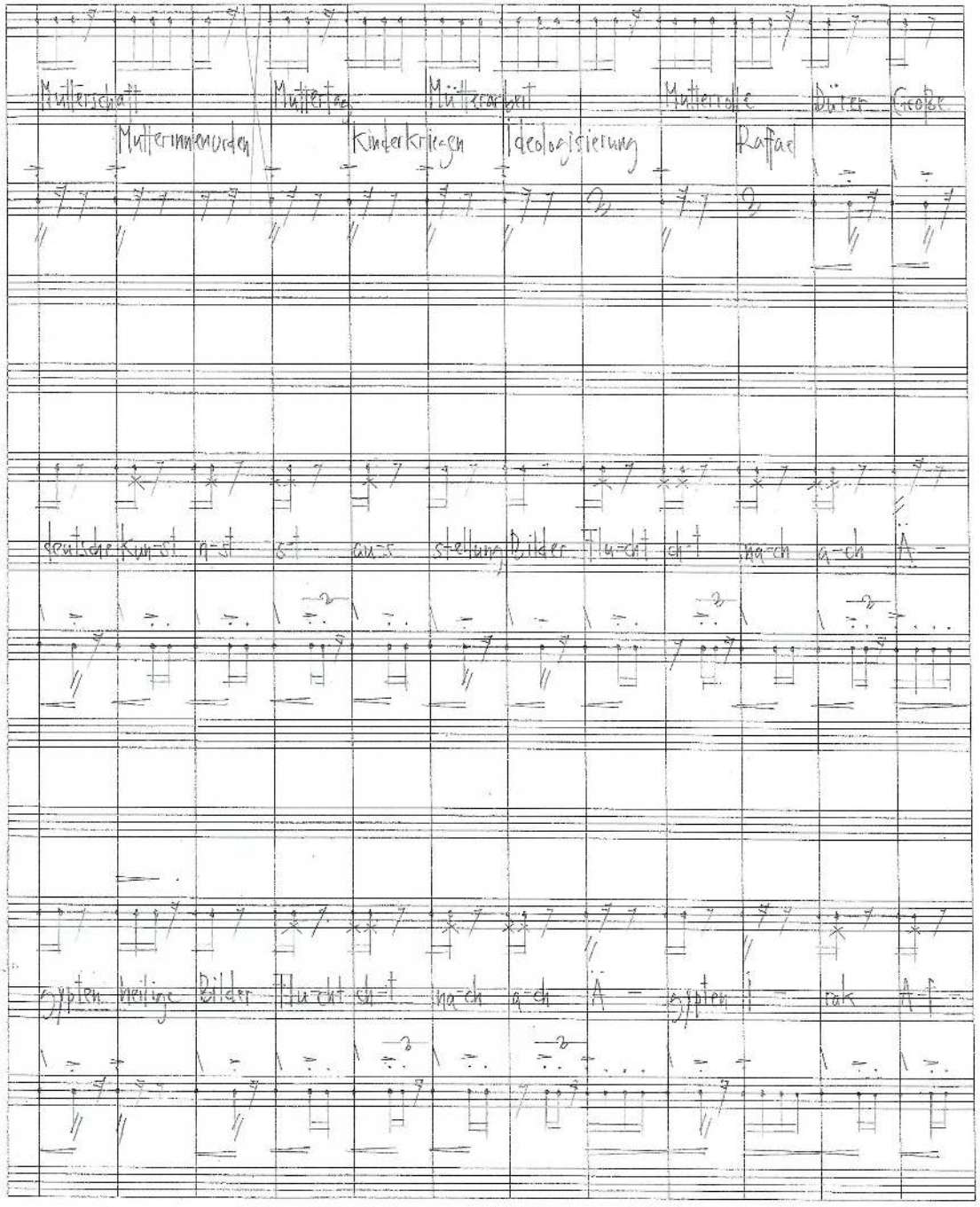
for Comrades who ask




raise your voice change your name ask wipe your print find your hope
search think ask question challenge

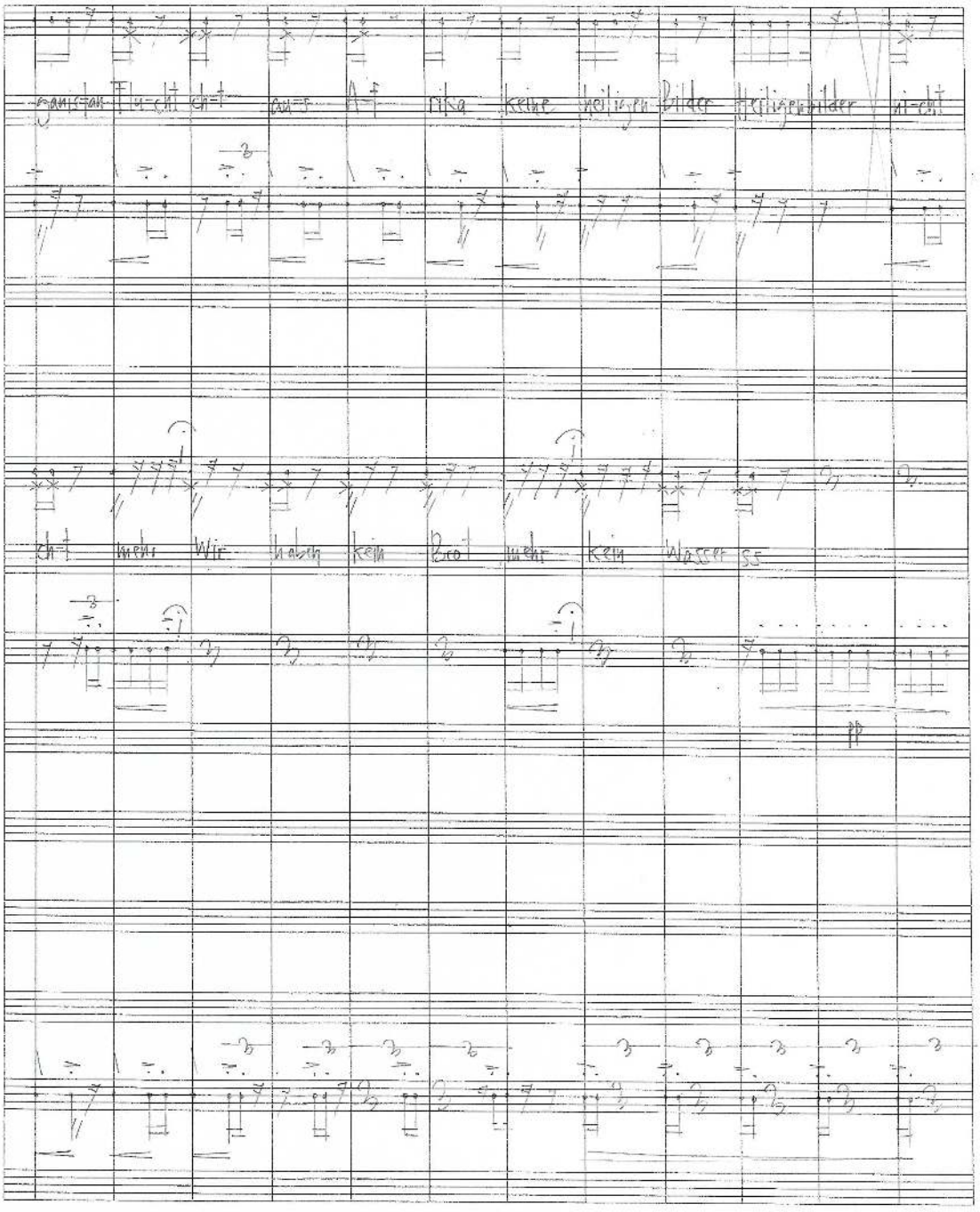
Flucht.nach.aus

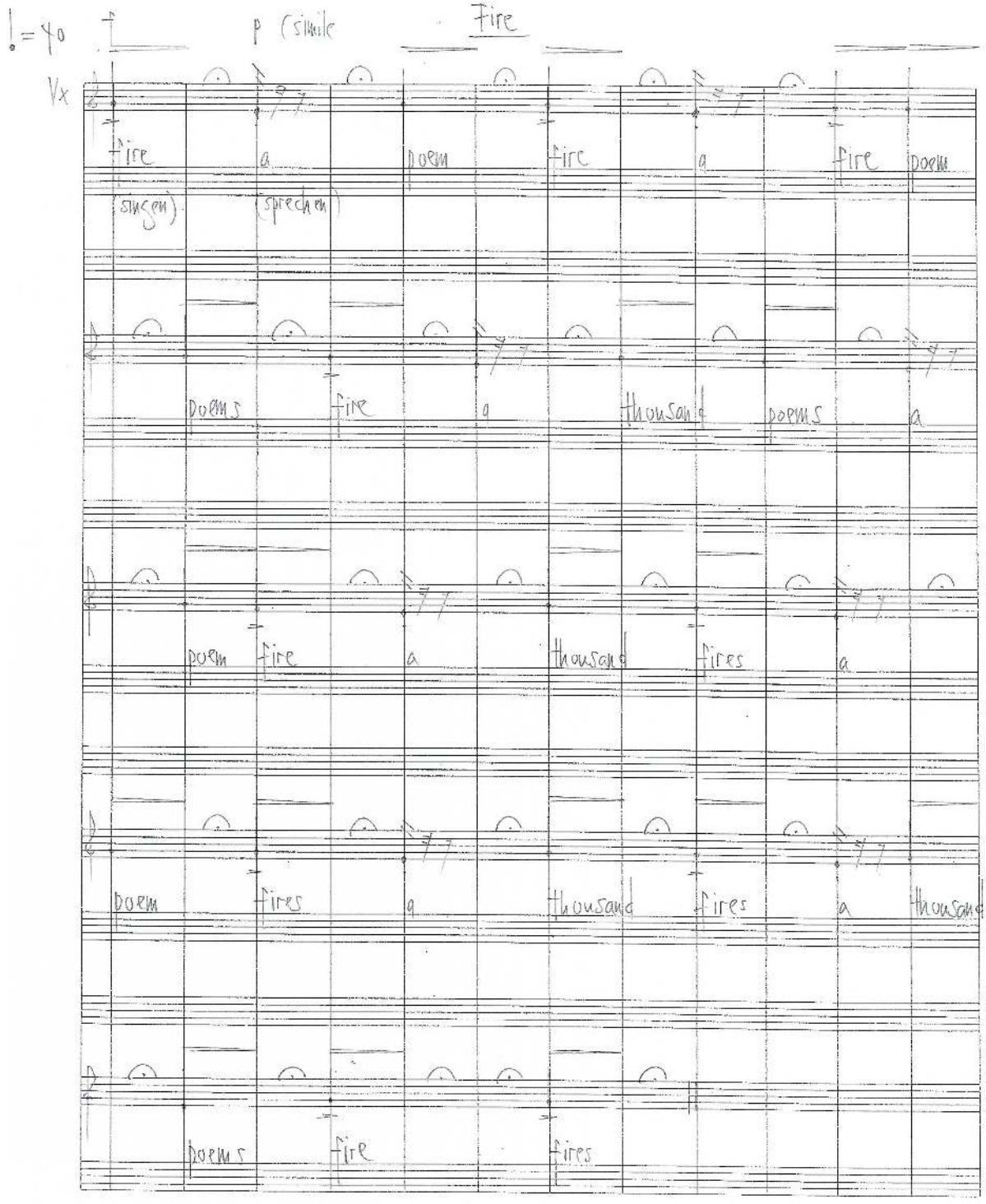
poco



Vx ↑ stimmhaft (sprechen)

x stimmlos (flüstern)


ganistan Flu-cht ch-t an-s A-f rika keine heiligen Bilder Heiligenbilder ni-cht
ch-t mehr Wir haben kein Brot mehr kein Wasser ss
pp



! = 40
p (simile
Fire
Vx
fire
a
poem
fire
a
fire
poem
(singen)
(sprechen)
poems
fire
a
thousand
poems
a
poem
fire
a
thousand
fires
a
poem
fires
a
thousand
fires
a
thousand
poems
fire
fires