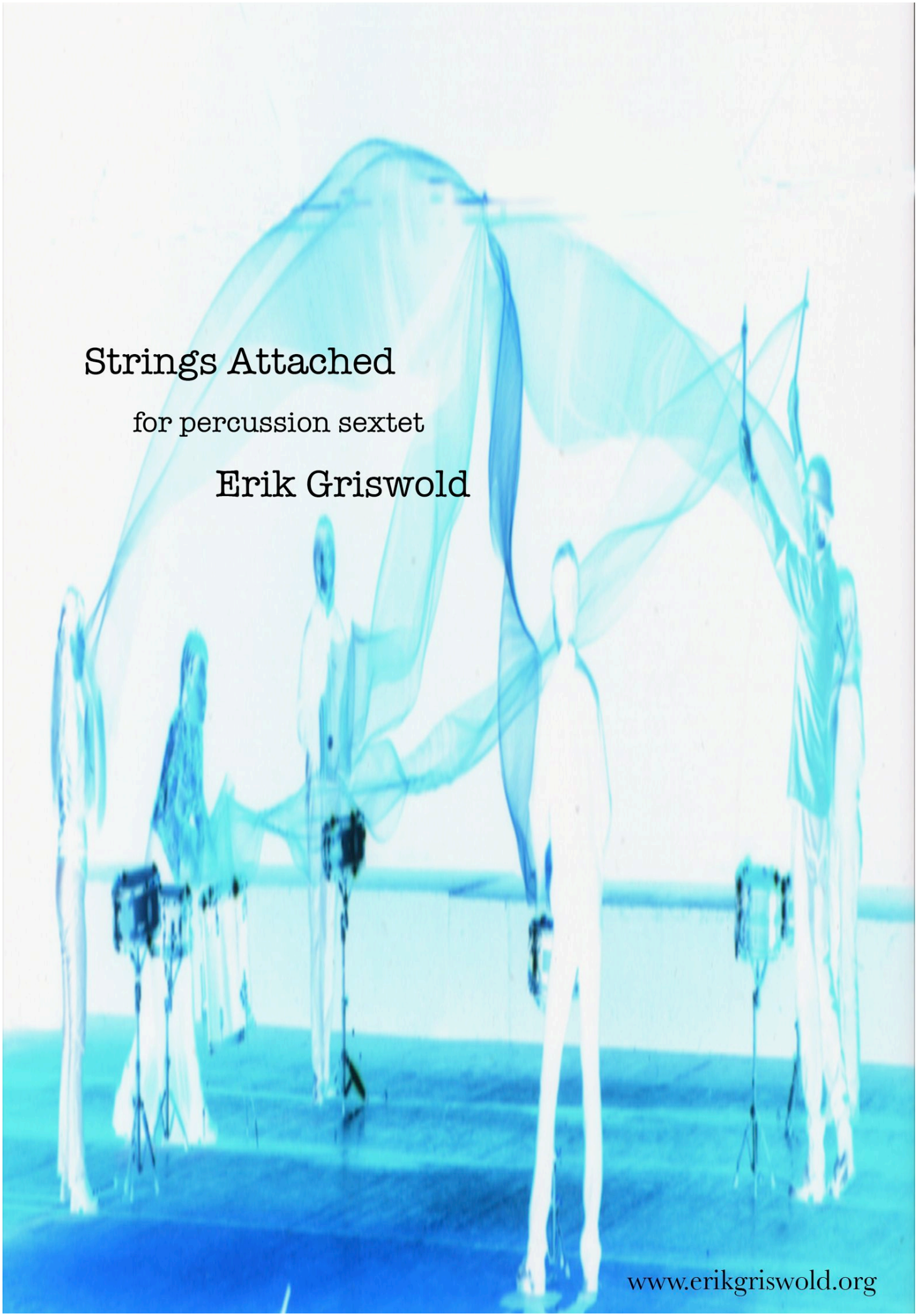
Strings Attached
for percussion sextet
Erik Griswold
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Strings Attached (1999)

for six percussionists

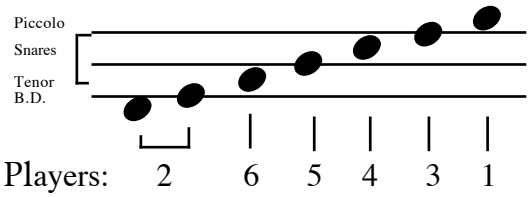
Erik Griswold

In *Strings Attached,* six percussionists perform with nylon ropes attaching their sticks to each others' (Players 1 & 2), or to a 3 m (10 ft) pole in the center of the stage (Players 3-6). Playing snare drums in a relatively conventional manner produces a variety of visual wave patterns both simple and chaotic. The visual aspect has been described as "kinetic sculpture" and compared to "cat's cradle" games. Although these notes will primarily address the visual component, it is my intention that the visual and sonic have equal importance.

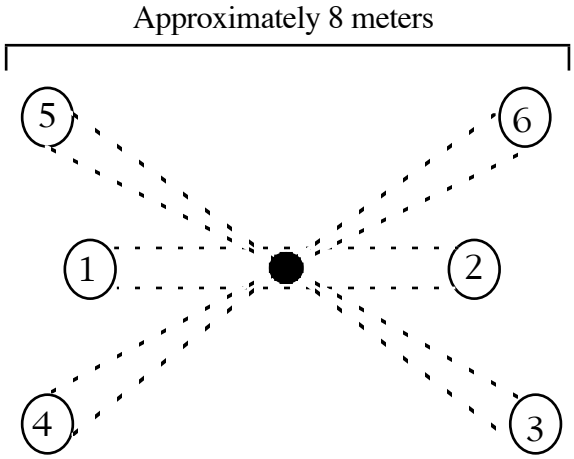
Instrumentation:

Player 1:	Piccolo Snare Drum
Player 2:	Tenor Drum & Bass Drum
Players 3-6:	Snare Drums

The drums should be tuned in this contour:



Staging (from above):



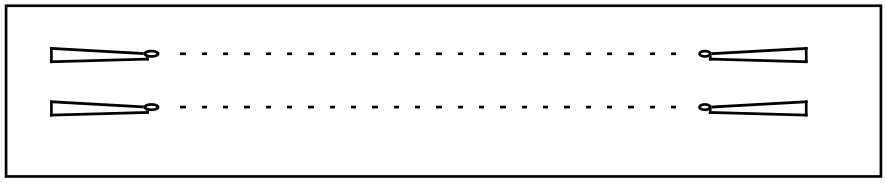
Lighting:
Good lighting is critical to a good performance of *Strings Attached*. The ropes should be lit with high intensity white light directly from above (simplest approach), or angled from the sides (more difficult). Above all there must be an absolutely black backdrop (whether a curtain or wall), and there must be extremely minimal or no ambient light.

Equipment:

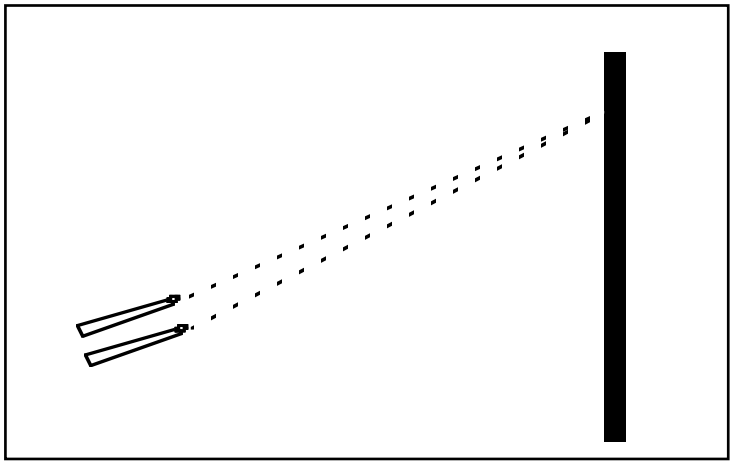
- Six pairs of snare drum sticks with 3 mm (1/8 inch) holes drilled at the nodes nearest to the tips.
- Approximately 52 m (160 ft) of nylon rope (6 mm [1/4 inch] diameter) divided as follows:
  2 x 6 m (20 ft), 4 x 10 m (30 ft).
- A 3-4 meter (10-12 foot) metal pole with a heavy base. We have used a standard "lighting tree."
- A hose clamp the same diameter as the metal pole, with four medium-sized springs threaded through it equidistantly.

Assembly:

- Thread the loose ends of the ropes through the drilled sticks and tie them securely.
- Fasten the hose clamp/spring assembly to the metal pole at a height of approximately 3 m (10 ft).
- Players 1 & 2 use the 6 m (20 ft) ropes tied one to another (left to right and right to left)



- Players 3-6 each use one of the 10 m (30 ft) ropes, looping the center of each rope around the base of a spring.



Special Performance Techniques:
The visual wave patterns are dependent on both the stick position and the height of stick preparations. All players should position themselves so that playing on the nearest edge of the drum(s) with high stick preparations results in maximum rope tension.

Tautness**:**
Except where indicated explicitly (as in section F), or by context (e.g. rim-shots in sections H - K) soft dynamics should be played on the far side of the drum, and loud dynamics should be played on the near side.

Stick Preparations:
Loud dynamics should be played, whenever possible, with exaggerated stick preparations.

"Choreography":
Players 1 & 2 are sometimes asked to use specific choreographies, alternately raising one or both sticks upright above the shoulder(s), and playing in a normal manner. This is notated as follows:

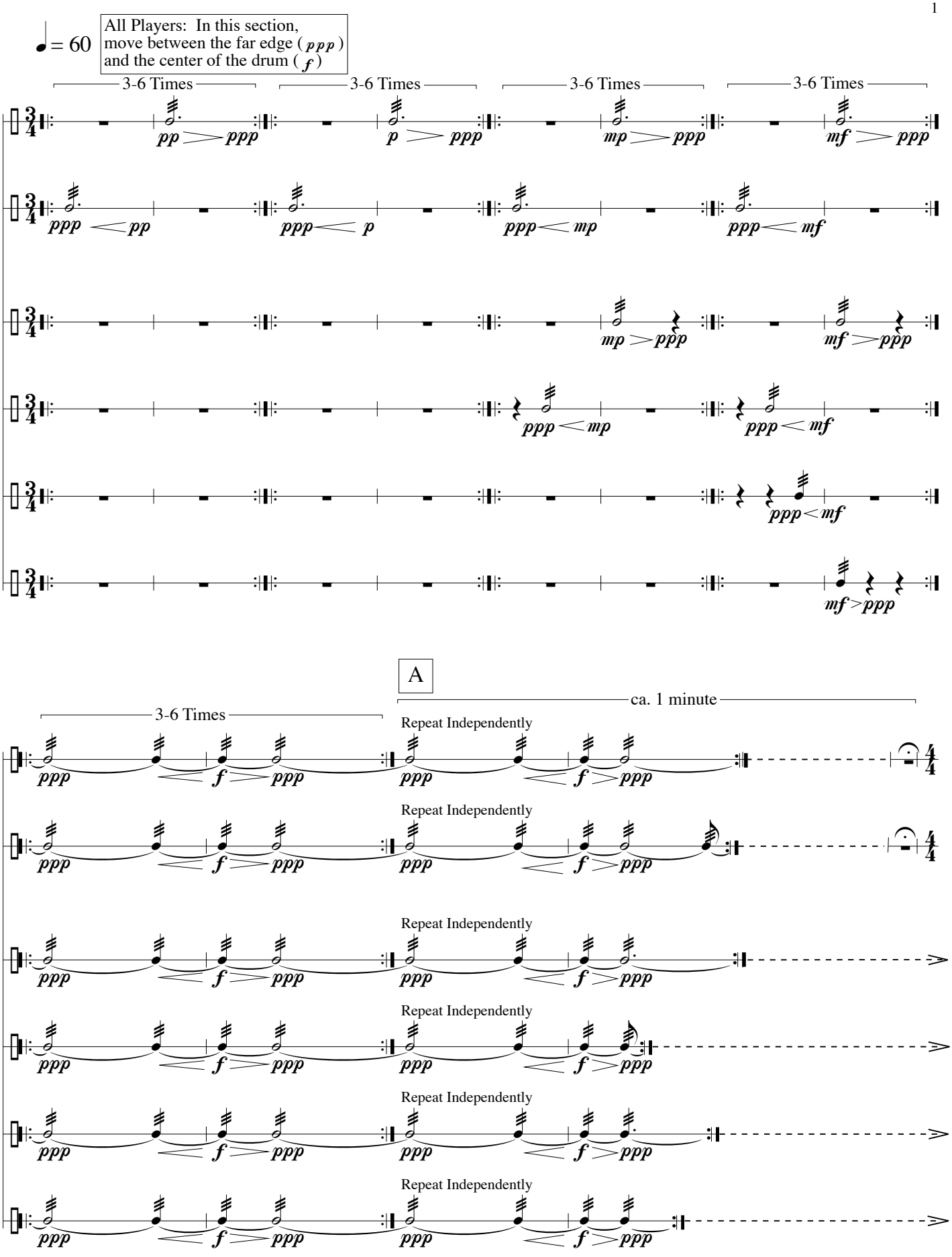
RH ↑
LH ↑ — With a swift motion, or "jerk", raise both sticks above your shoulders.

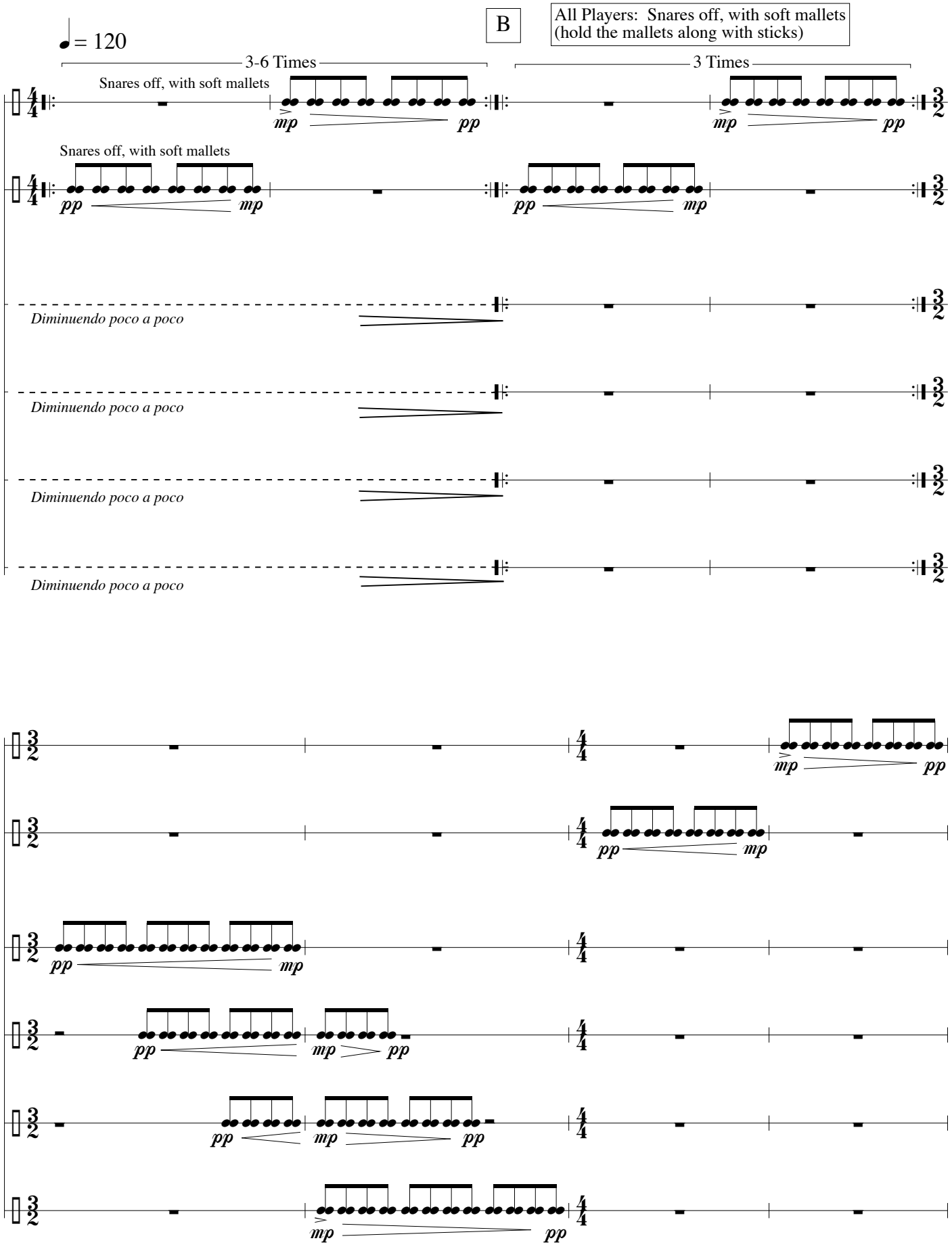
RH Play
LH ↑ — Hold the Left stick above your shoulder while playing normally with the right.

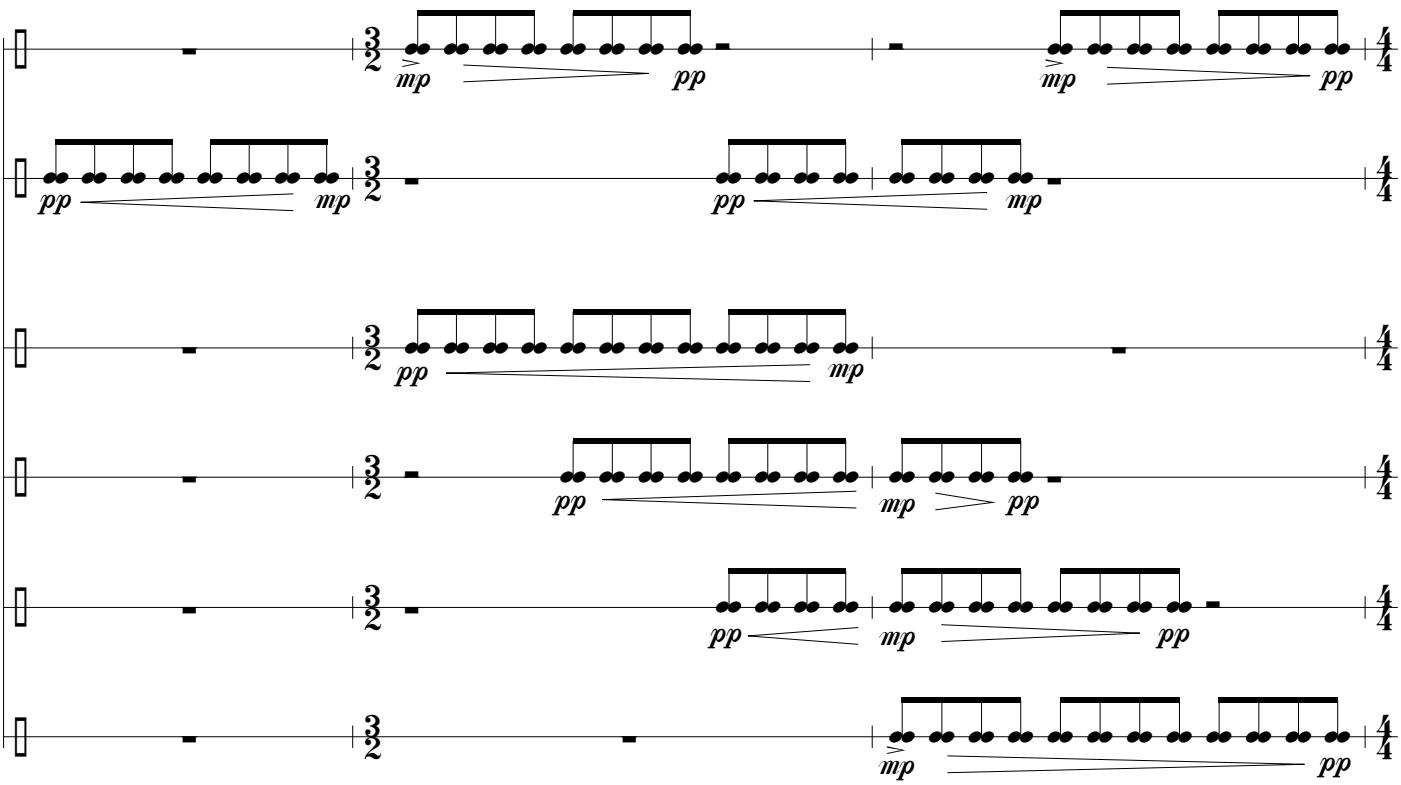
RH ↑
LH Play — Hold the Right stick above your shoulder while playing normally with the left.

Strings Attached is dedicated to the “red fish blue fish” ensemble of the University of Califonria, San Diego.

Thanks to Steven Schick, Terry Longshore, Ivan Manzanilla, Brett Reed, David Shively and Vanessa Tomlinson,


♩ = 60
All Players: In this section, move between the far edge (ppp) and the center of the drum (f)
3-6 Times
3-6 Times
3-6 Times
3-6 Times
pp > ppp
p > ppp
mp > ppp
mf > ppp
ppp < pp
ppp < p
ppp < mp
ppp < mf
mp > ppp
mf > ppp
ppp < mp
ppp < mf
ppp < mf
mf > ppp
A
3-6 Times
ca. 1 minute
Repeat Independently
Repeat Independently
Repeat Independently
Repeat Independently
Repeat Independently
Repeat Independently
ppp
f > ppp


B
All Players: Snares off, with soft mallets
(hold the mallets along with sticks)
♩ = 120
3-6 Times
3 Times
Snares off, with soft mallets
Snares off, with soft mallets
Diminuendo poco a poco
Diminuendo poco a poco
Diminuendo poco a poco
Diminuendo poco a poco


mp
pp
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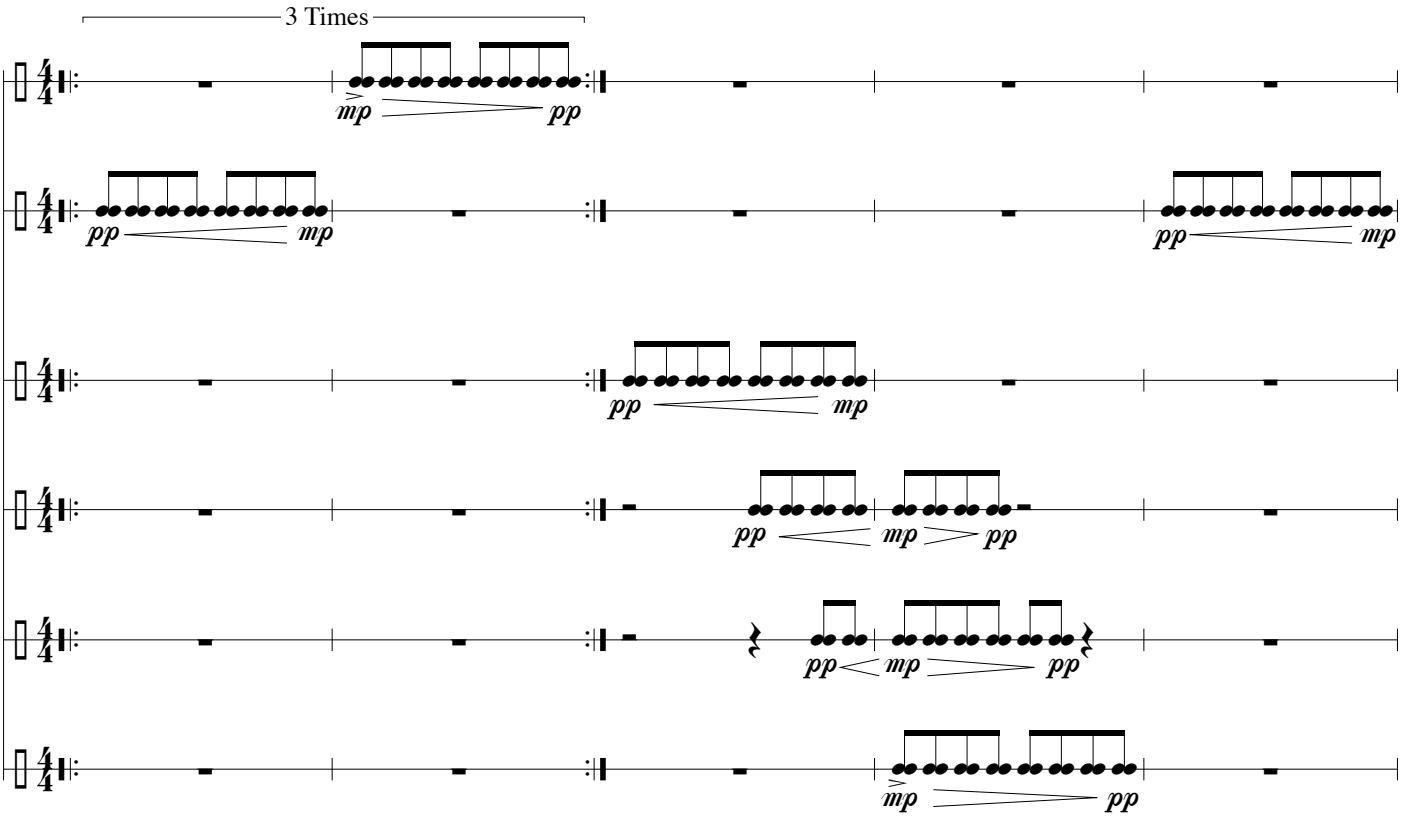
3 Times
mp
pp
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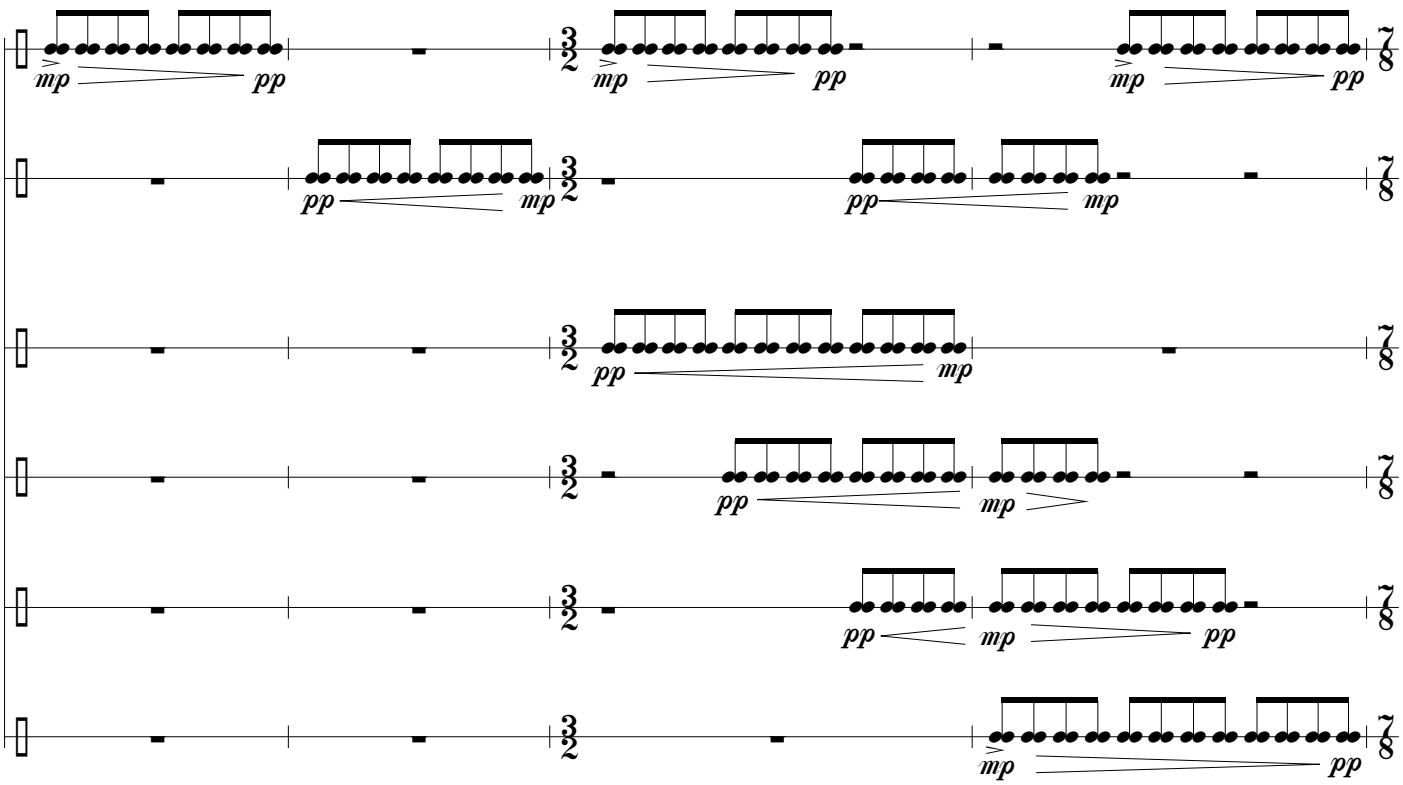
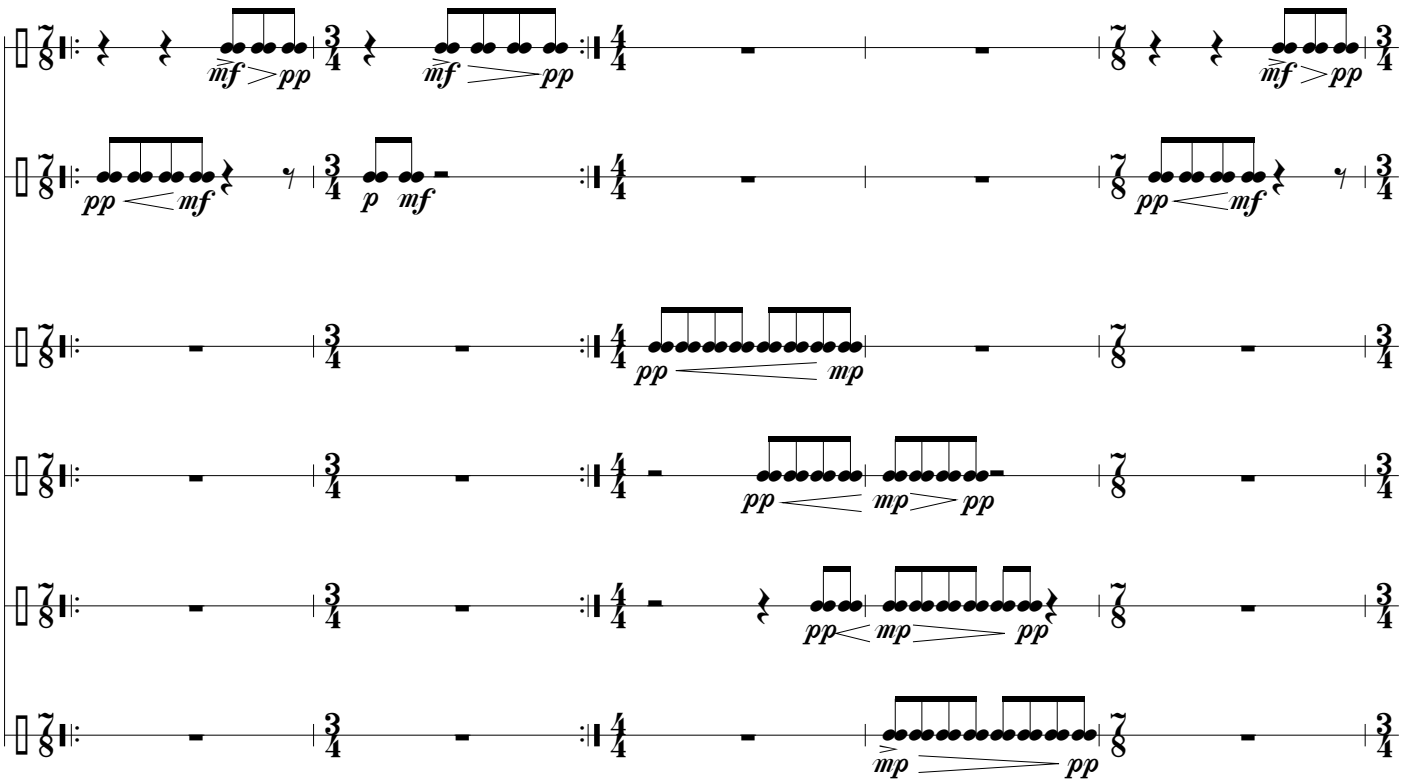
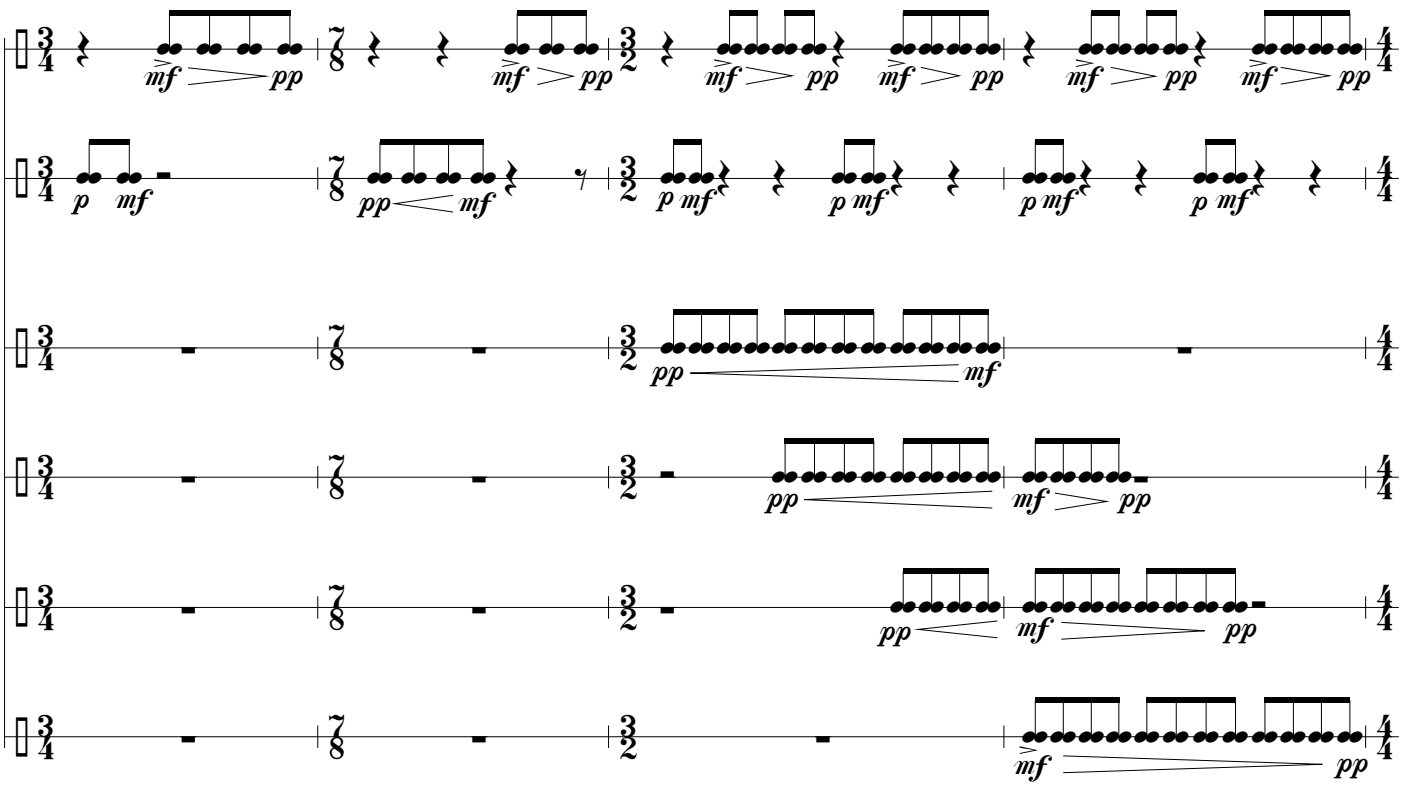
pp

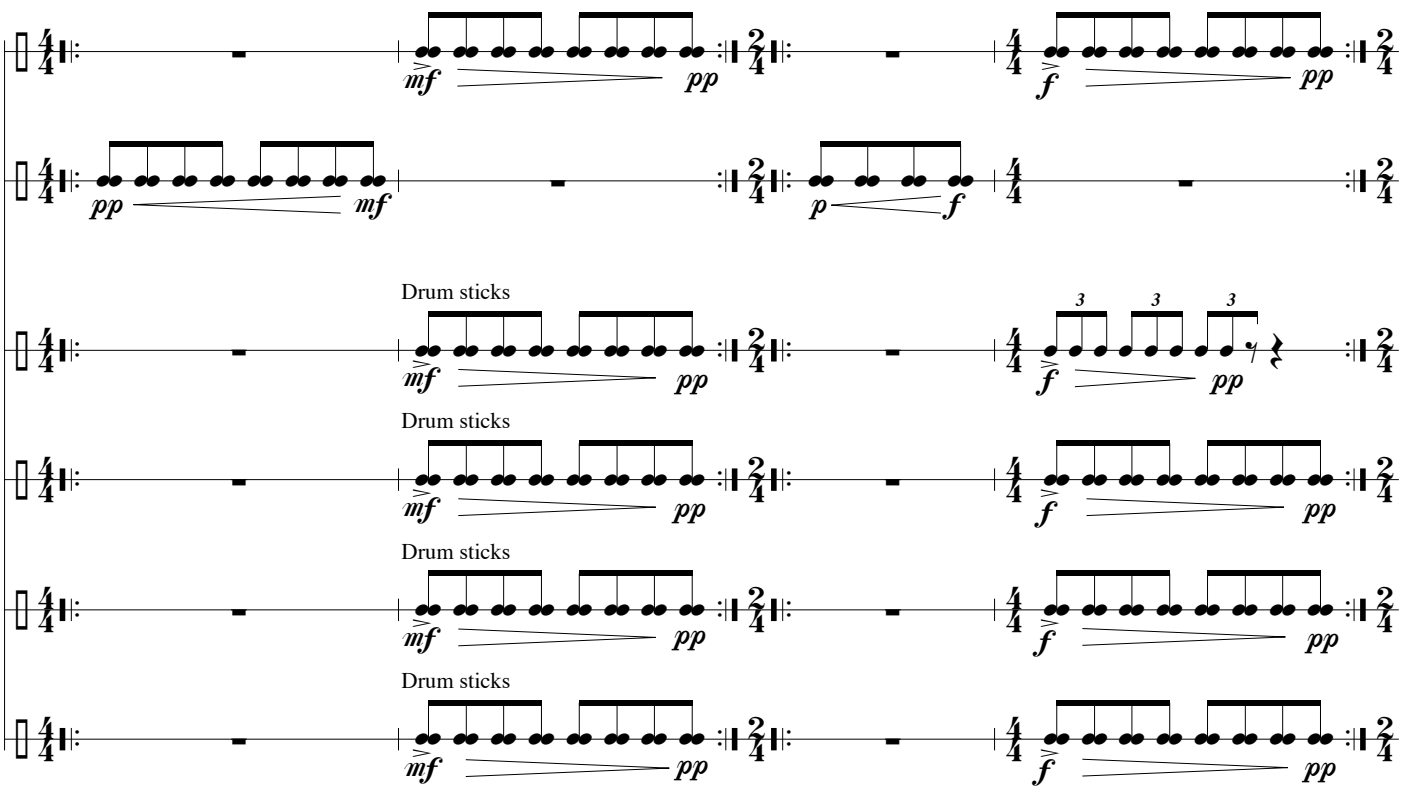


C

3 Times





D

3 Times