Dominic Shodekeh Talifero

# Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice

*Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice was co-commissioned by the Caramoor Festival, Sō Percussion's New Work Development Program, Bard Conservatory Percussion, Baylor University Percussion, the University of Michigan Percussion, and Vanderbilt University Percussion.*

*It received its world premiere on December 11, 2021, at Carnegie Hall.*

Composer's Note:

***Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice***

*Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice* seeks to illuminate the different modalities of the vocal arts utilized by not only me, but vocalists the world over. Through three movements composed specifically for Sō Percussion, with each focused on the vocal modalities, or "vodalities" of Breath Art, Vocal Percussion & Beatboxing, Sō's challenge was to listen to, learn (& of course enjoy) each vocal movement, transcribe the pieces from a Hip Hop-based oral tradition construct to a system of western notation & finally through "technique transcription", figure out which physical, percussion-based instruments & which members of the ensemble using those tools would be best suited to play each element of the overall compositional structure.

In other words, welcome to the 21st century, where compositional paradigms & a synthesis of learning styles can take on a whole new reversal of impact, influence & imagination.

I. “The Universality of Breath Art” (Dedicated to Bobby McFerrin)
II. “The Genealogy of Vocal Percussion” (Dedicated to Ella Fitzgerald)
III: "The Mathematics of Beatboxing" (Dedicated to Doug E. Fresh: The Original Human Beatbox.)

— Dominic Shodekeh Talifero

Editor's Note:

Shodekeh Talifero's *Vodalities: Paradigms of Consciousness for the Human Voice* was composed orally and transmitted to Sō Percussion through recordings. He originally sent us the three movements as completed performances and also as individual stems for transcribing each part. We then translated his vocal percussion sounds into physical percussion. The skill, creativity, and range of colors in Shodekeh's practice is astonishing. The only way to fully grasp this is to hear him perform, which is why it is essential to listen to the accompanying mp3s before building your own interpretation of the piece.

The notated score included here serves as both an archival document of Shodekeh's creation, and also as a reference for each group's unique performance. It does not need to be followed note-by-note. In fact, it does not need to be followed at all! Each group is welcome to download the recordings and build their version from scratch. We adapted it as a quartet, but other combinations are possible.

The notation leaves out many detailed instructions that would be expected in percussion music. I write high and low sounds, and usually give "x" noteheads when a hi-hat or metal sound is indicated, and normal noteheads for drum sounds. The second movement in particular is notated for as many voices as I was hearing on the recording, but neither the exact patterns or voicings need to be followed strictly.

We usually perform the work as a kind of concerto with Shodekeh as the soloist. He improvises along with our performance, which hews very closely to the score printed here. The piece can also be performed alone.

A note on movement three: our arrangement with Shodekeh for live performance has departed from his original recording. I have chosen to include the arrangment rather than a strict transcription of the recording.

- Adam Sliwinski

# I: The Universality of Breath Art

Shodekeh Talifero
arr. Sō Percussion

♩ = 100

*Vary the color of this "hi-hat" line constantly, perhaps by slightly opening and closing the sound*

1

Drum Set

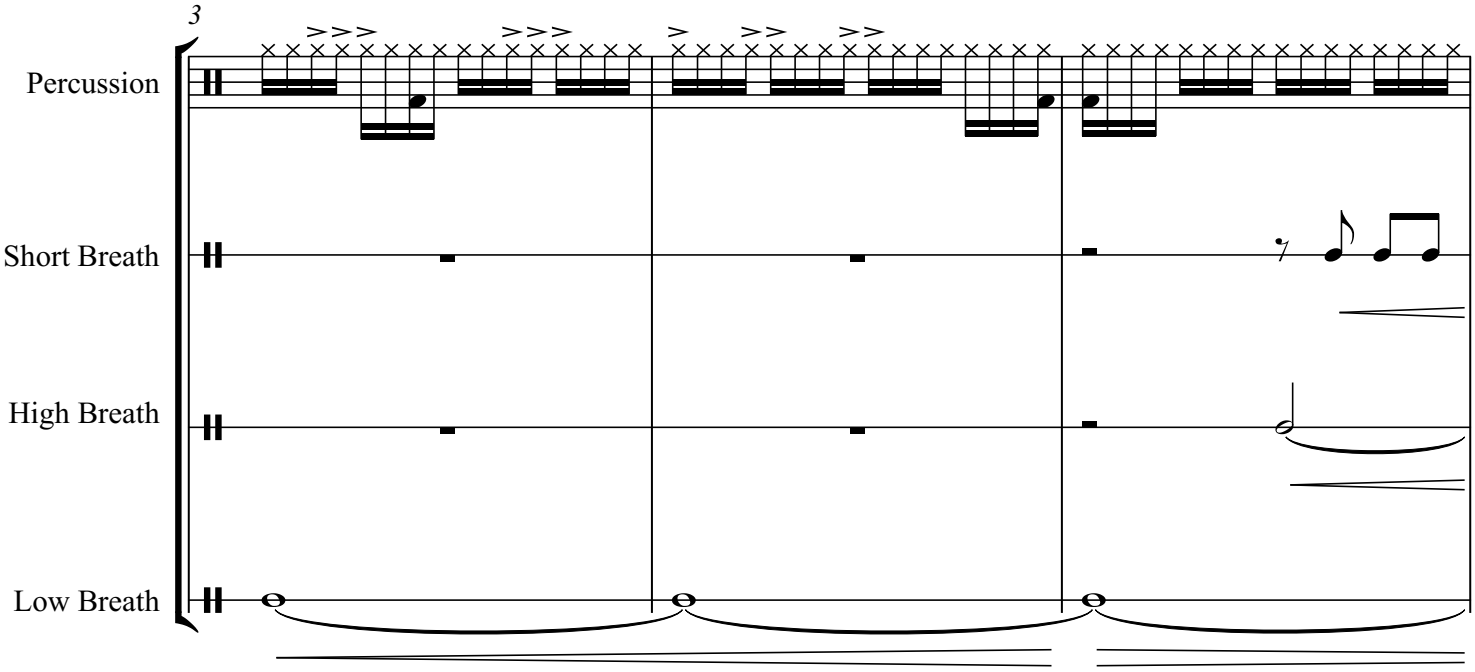
3

Percussion

Short Breath

High Breath

Low Breath



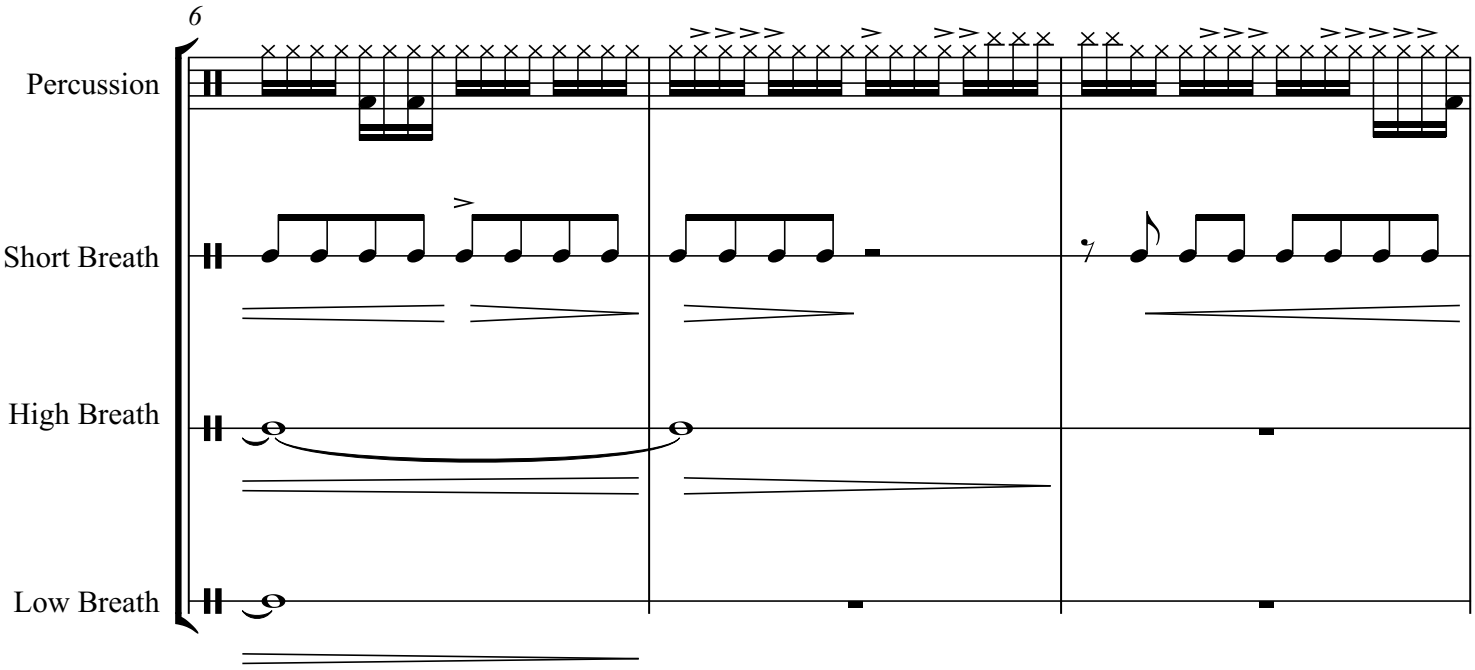
6

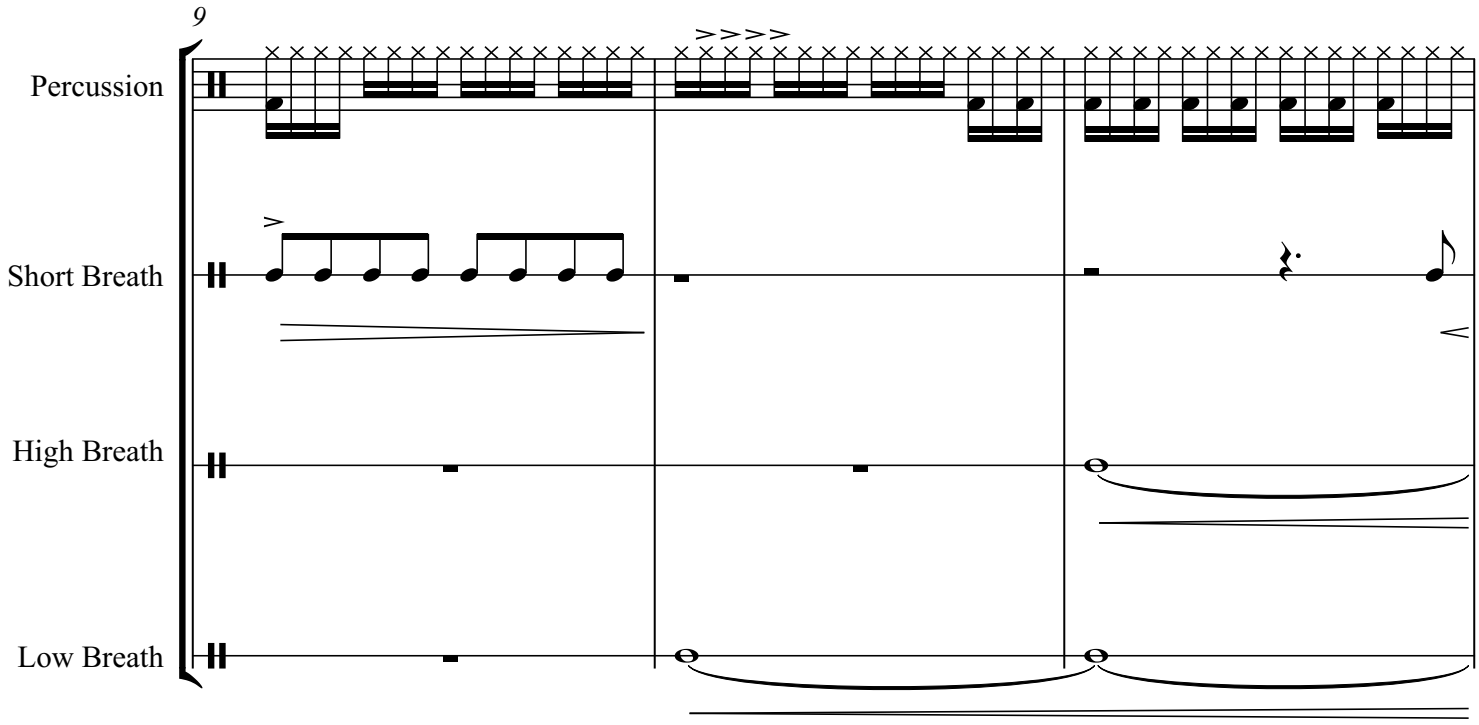
Percussion

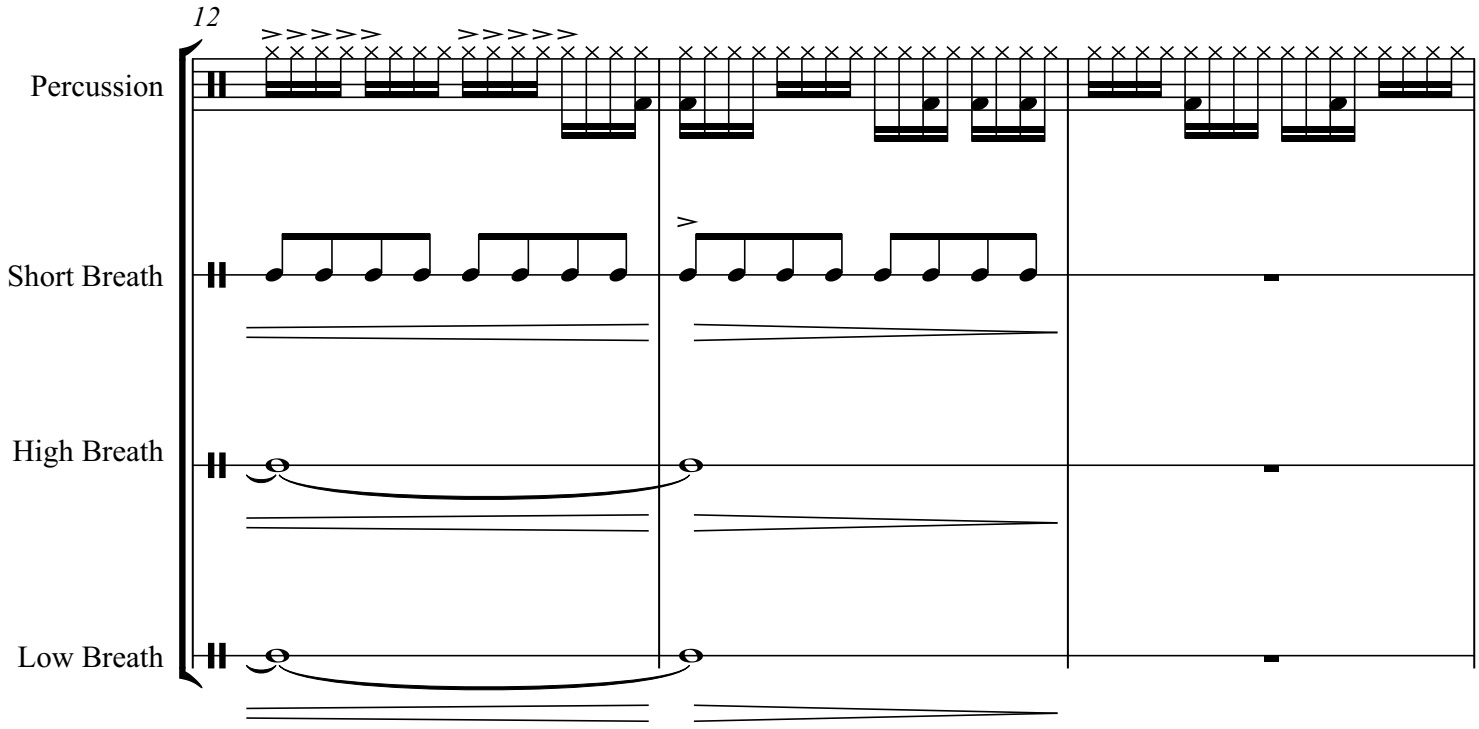
Short Breath

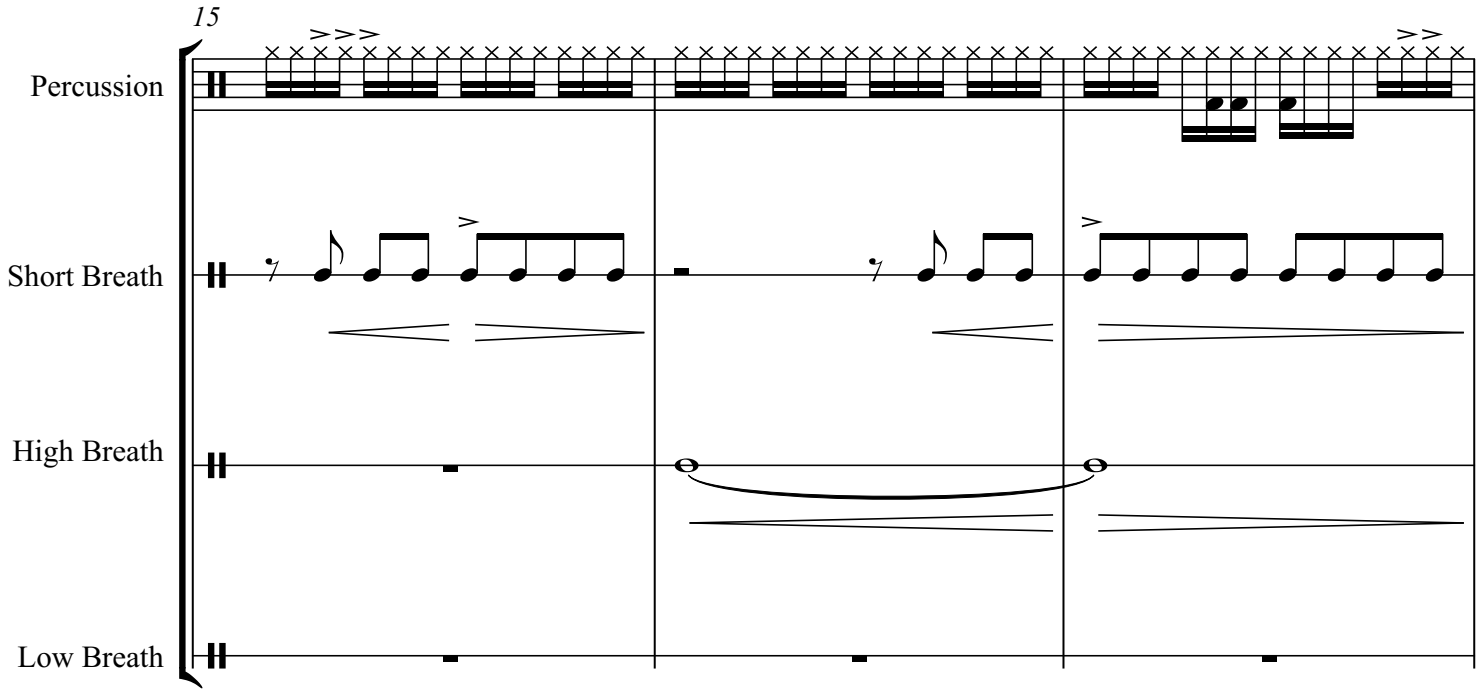
High Breath

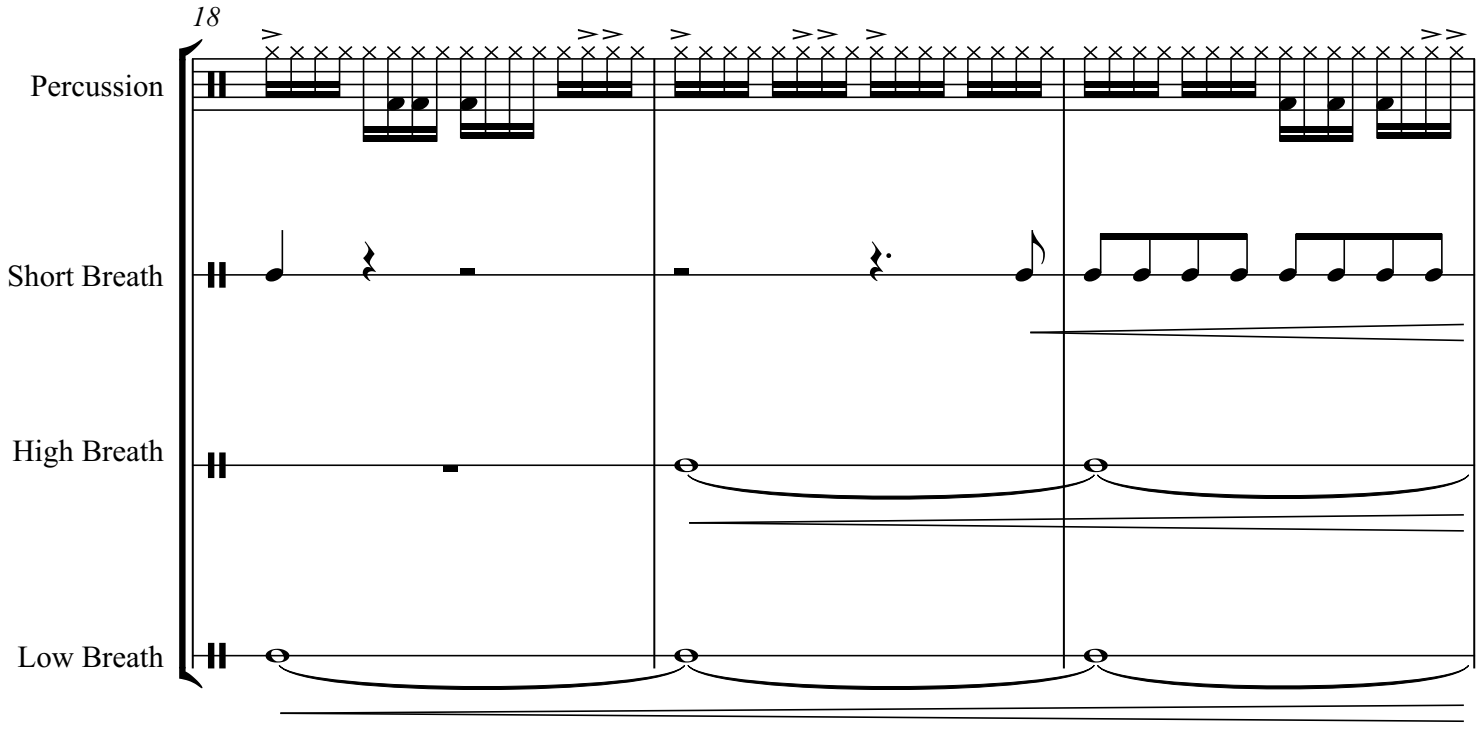
Low Breath

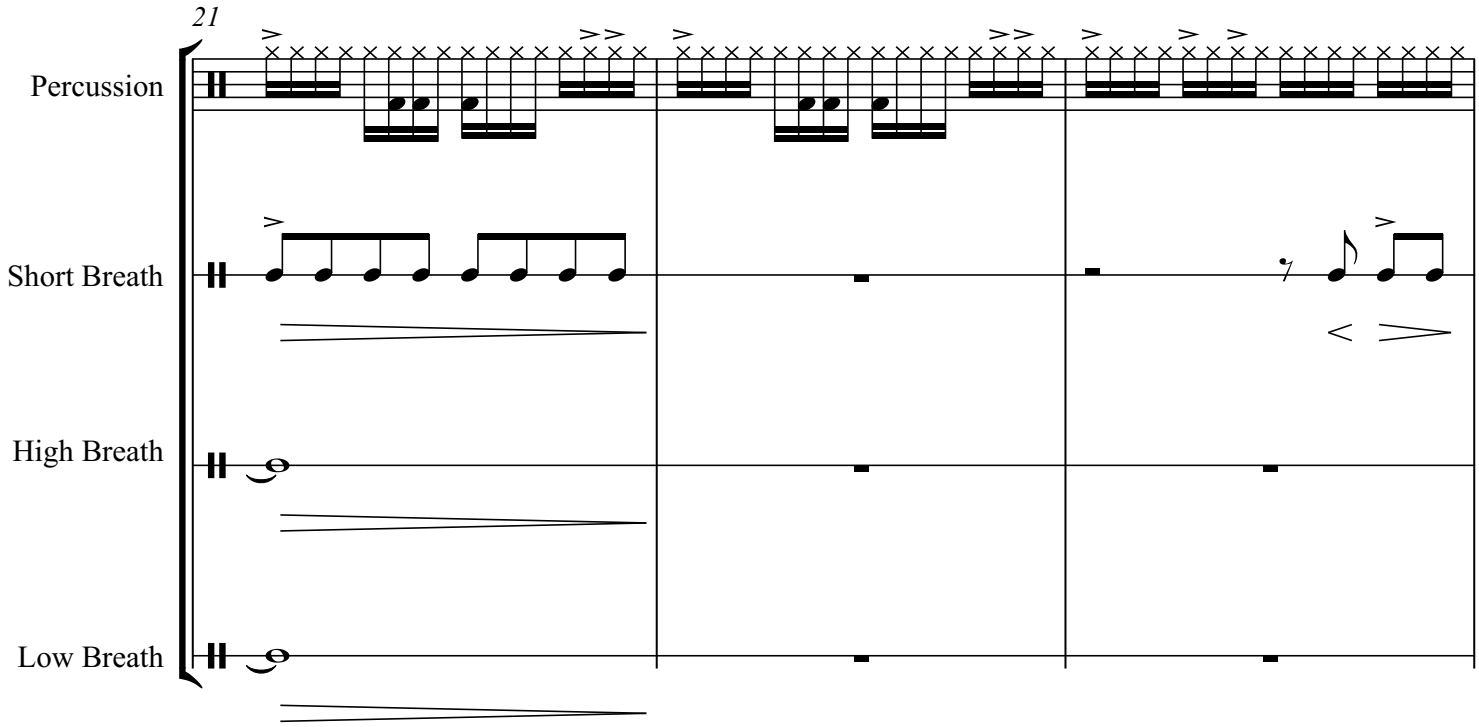


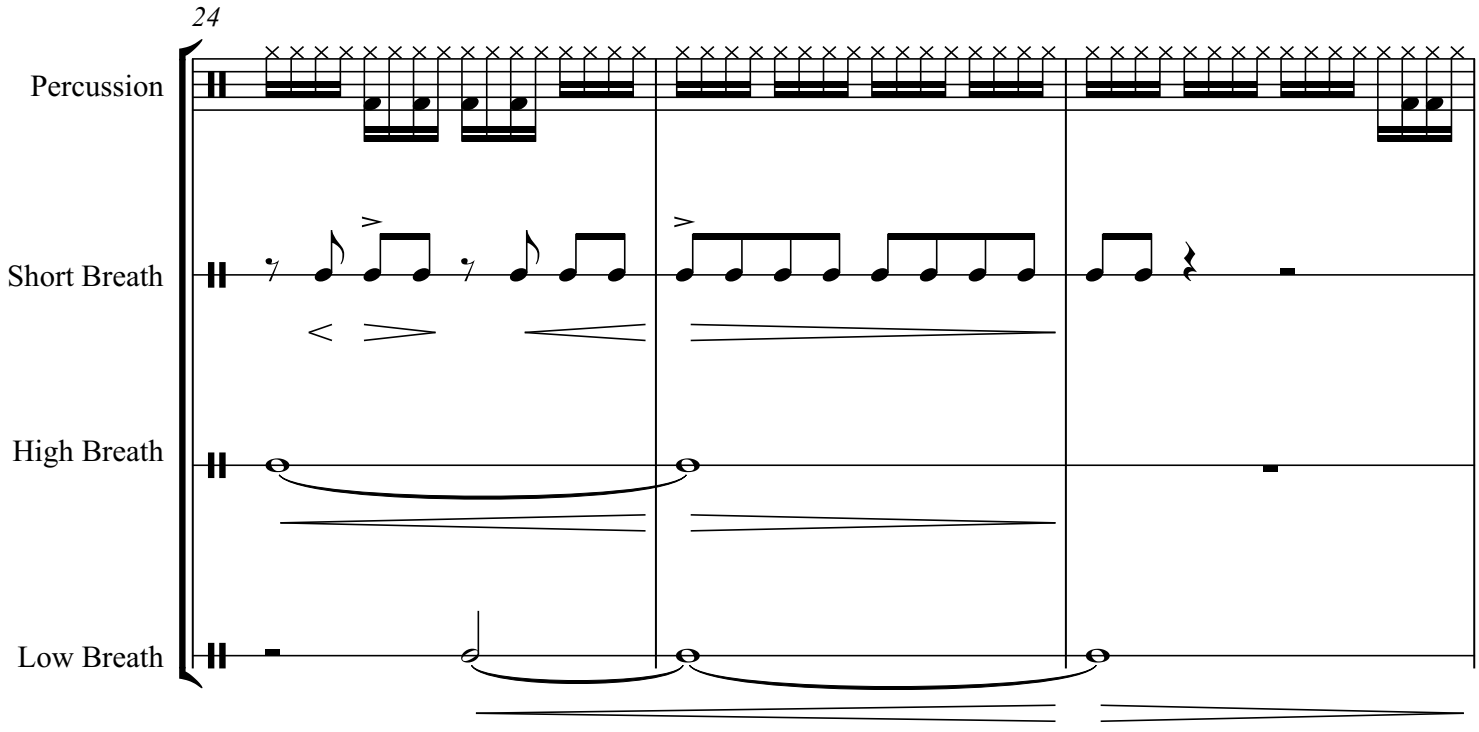

9
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath

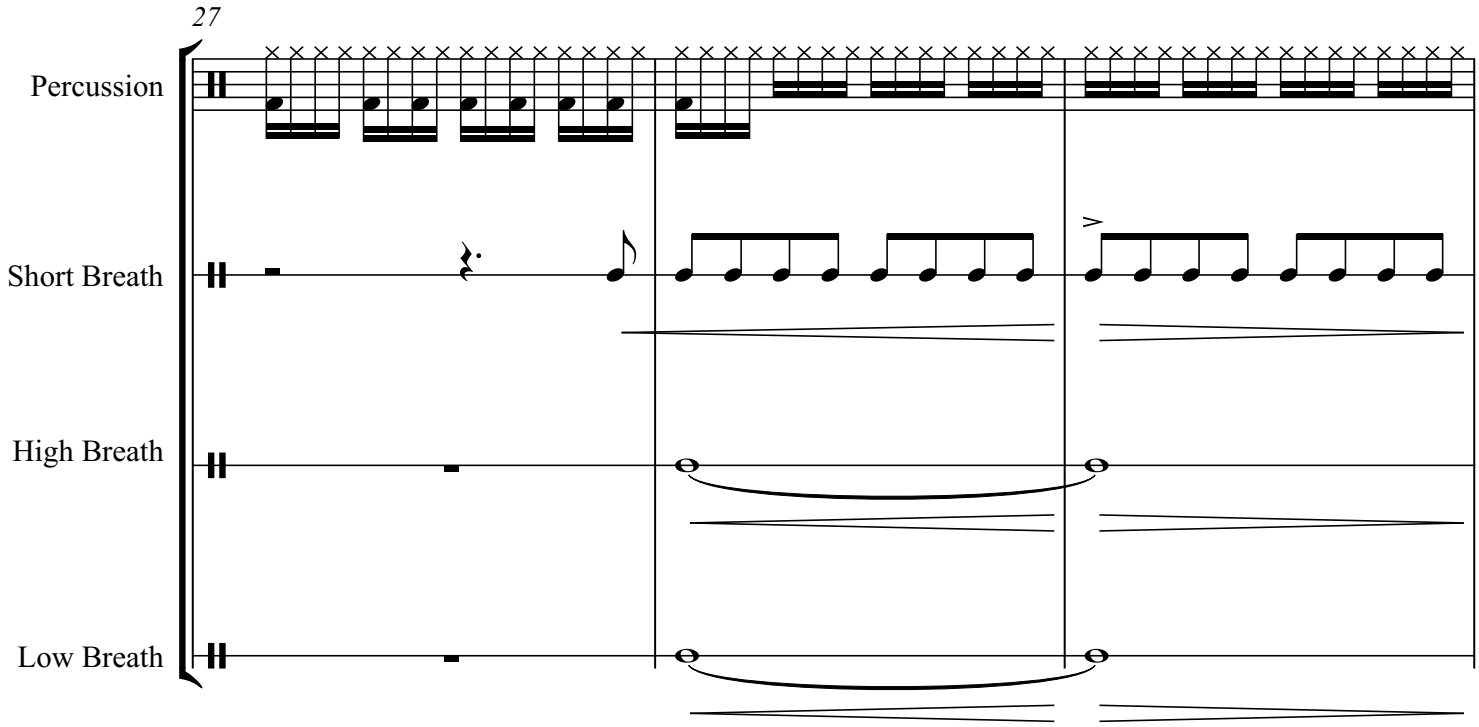

12
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath

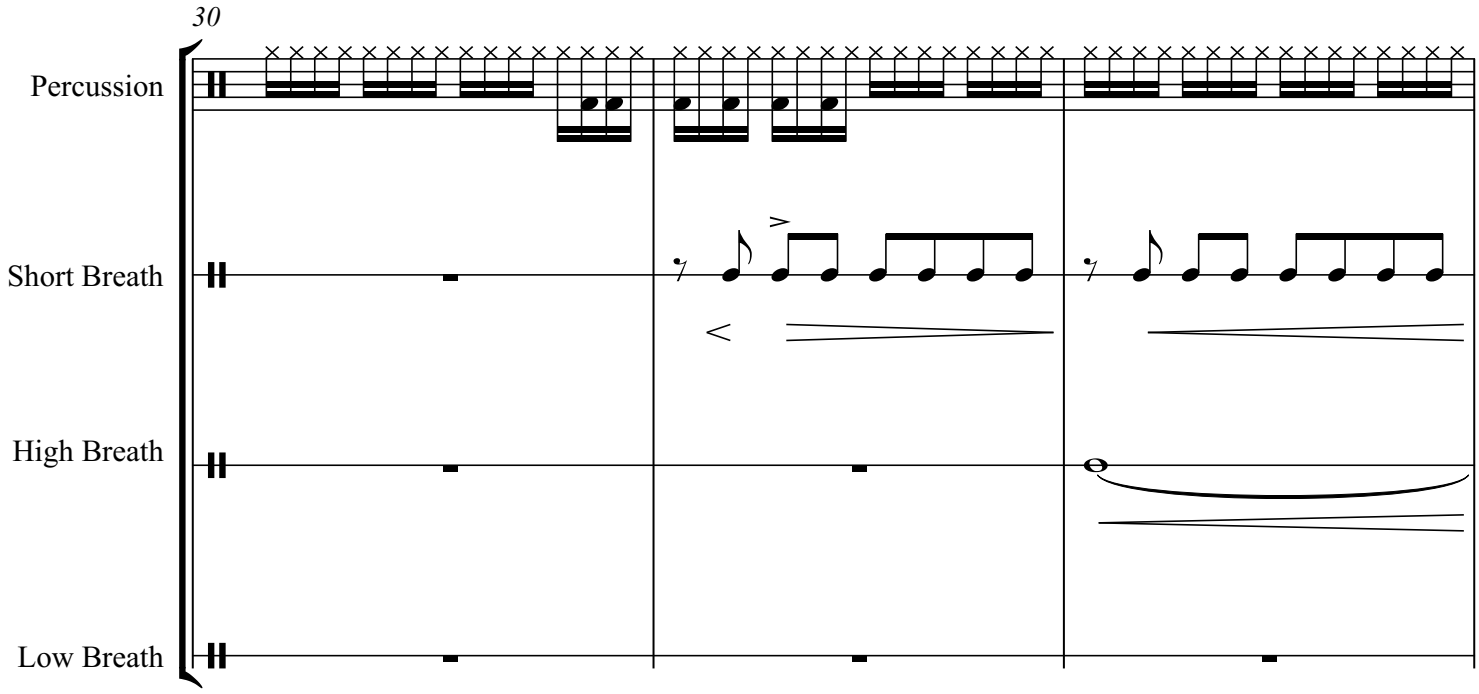

15
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath

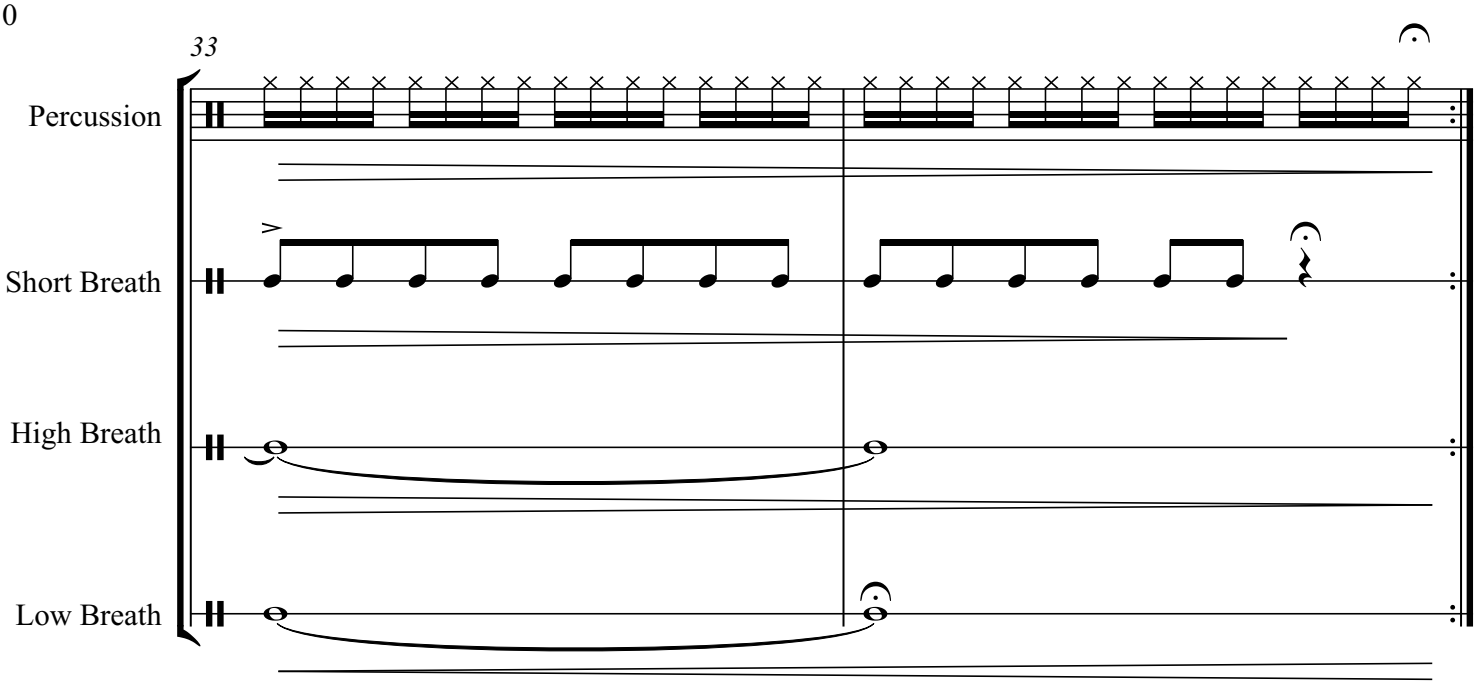

18
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath


21
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath

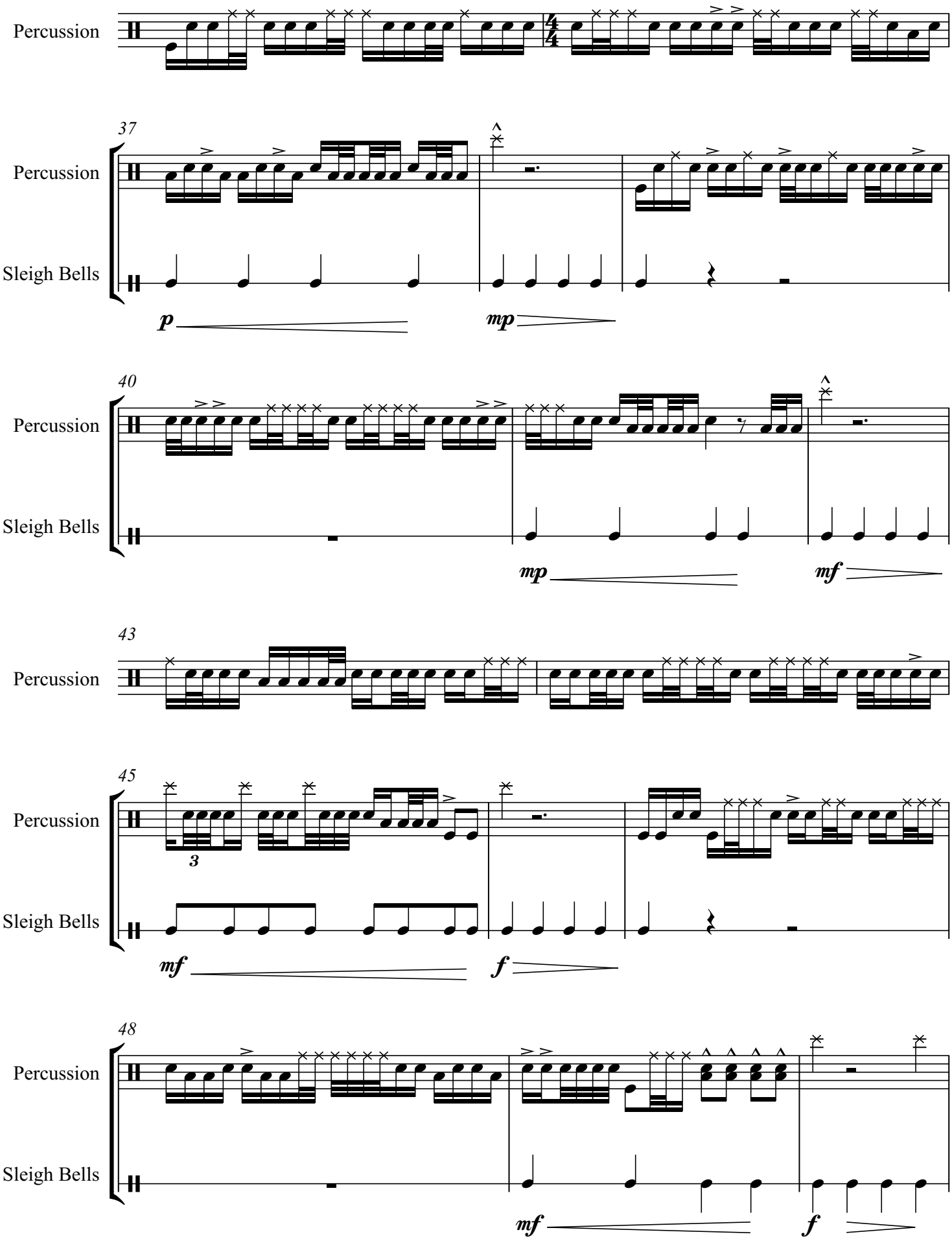

24
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath

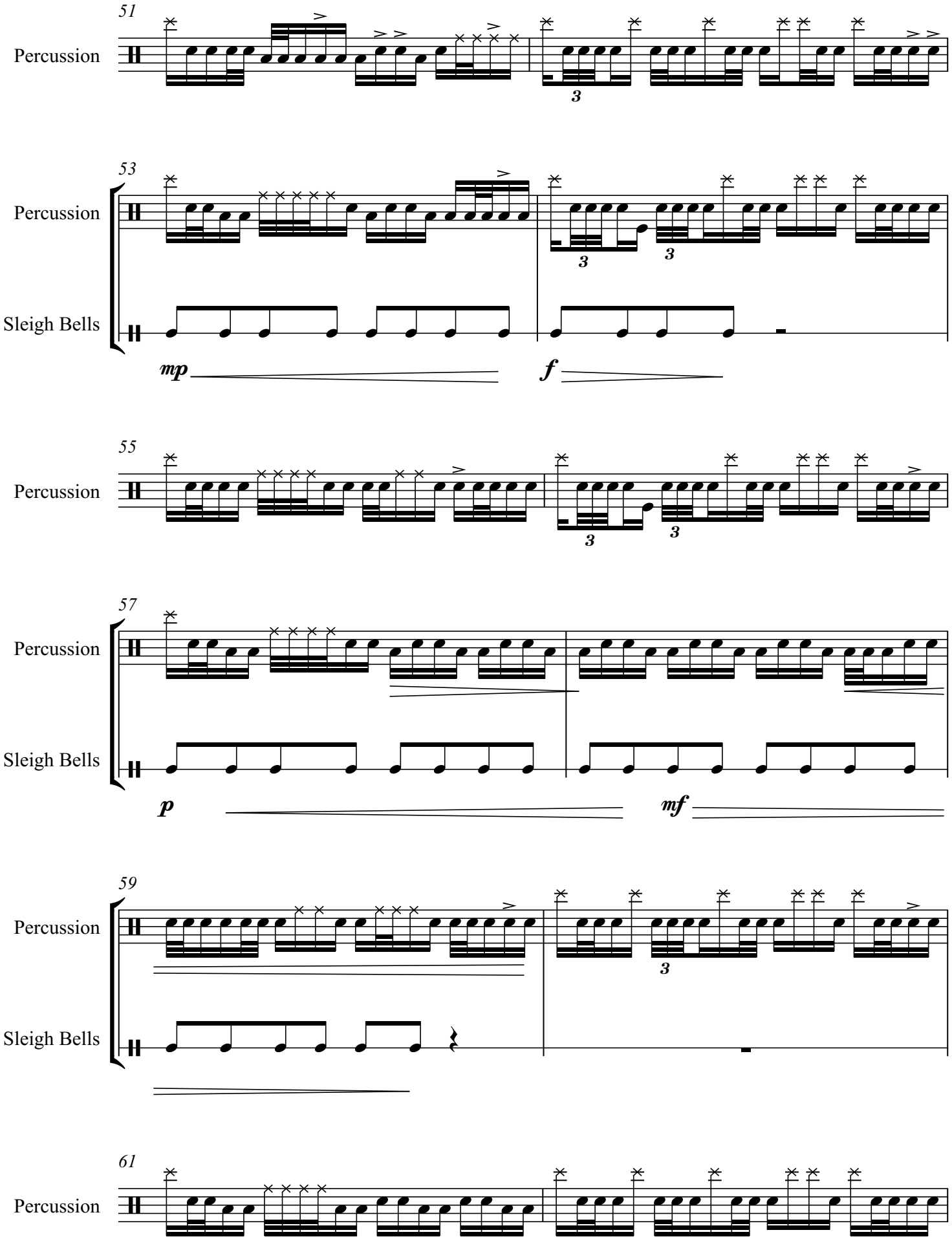

27
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath

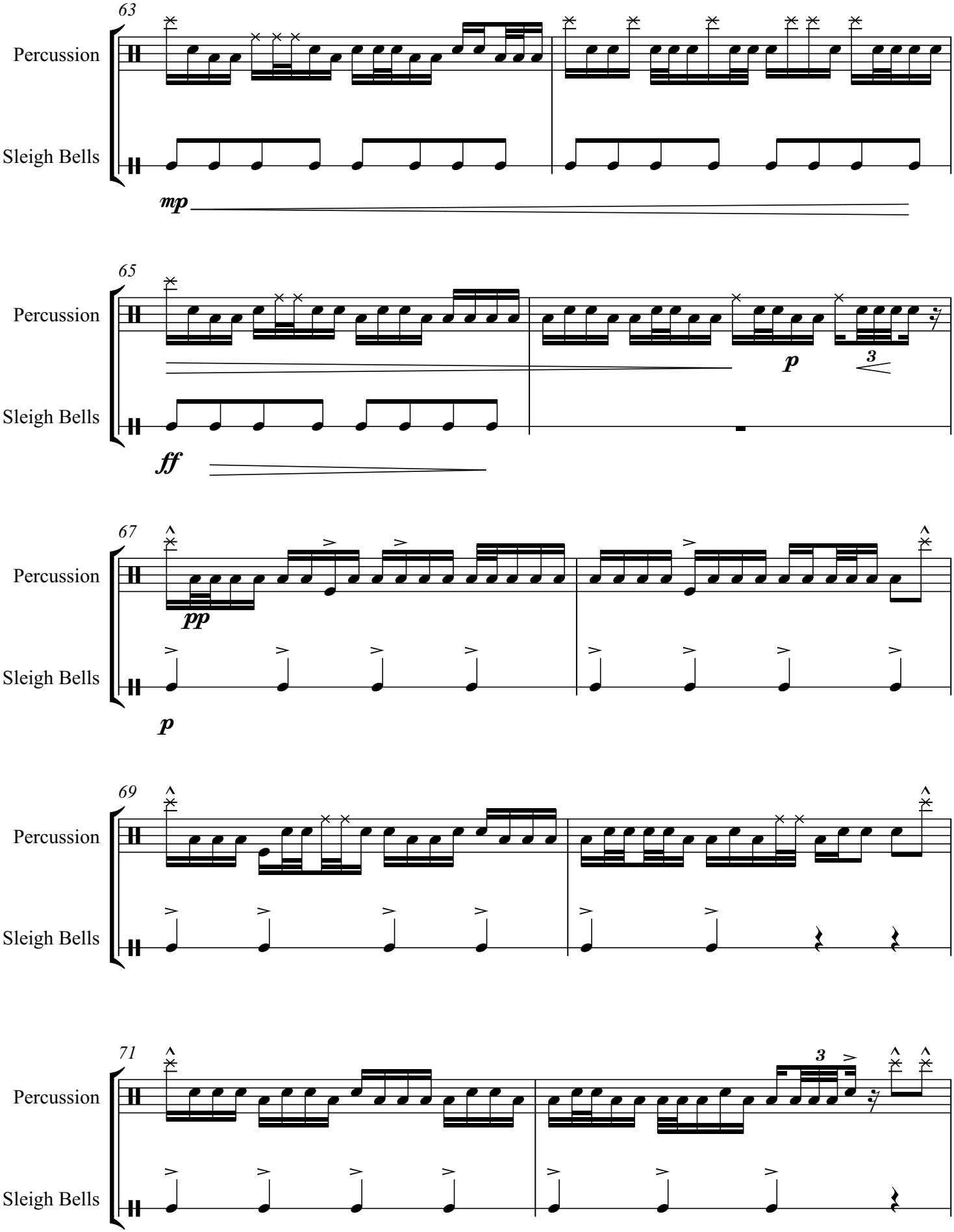

30
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath

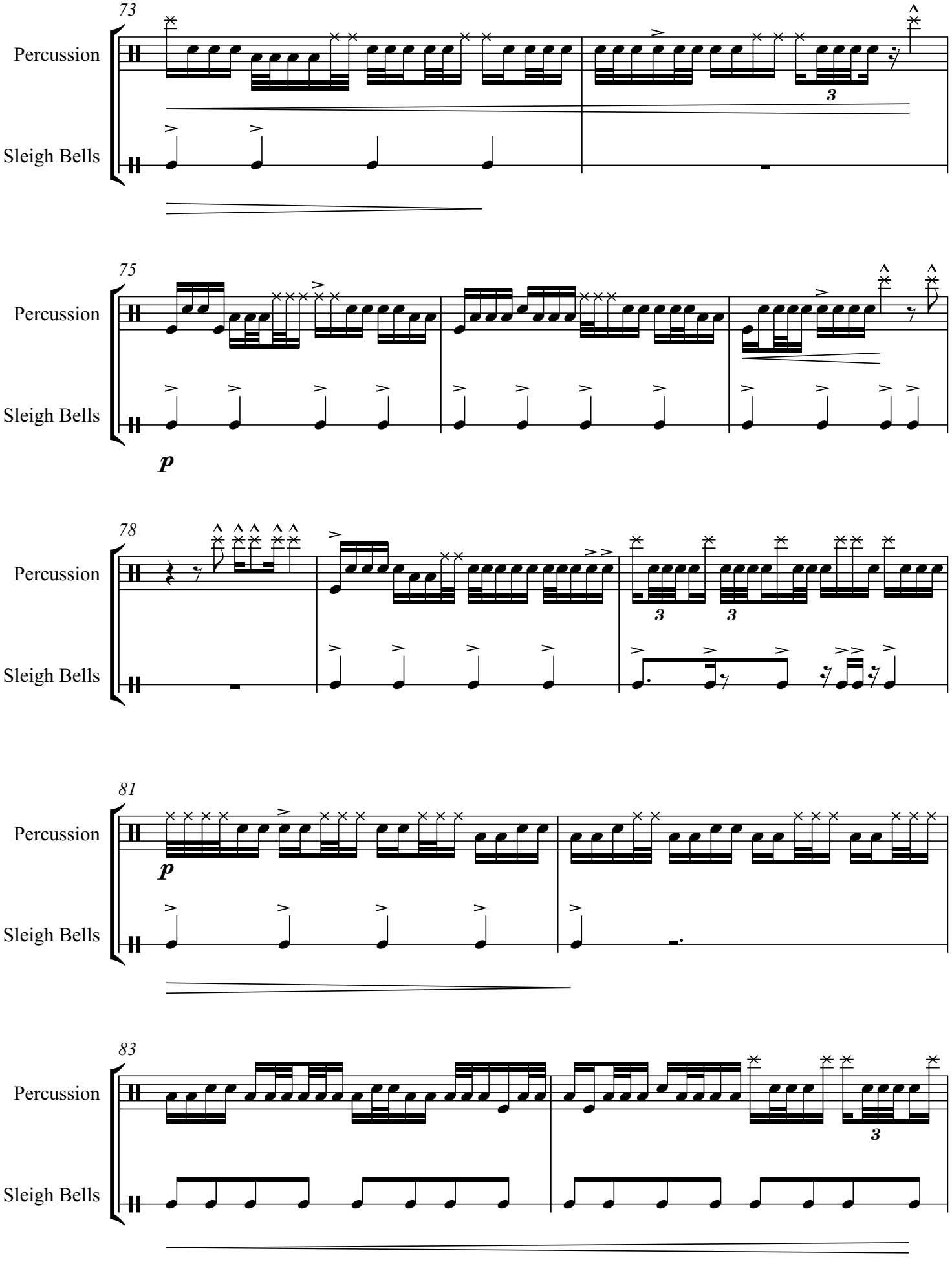

33
Percussion
Short Breath
High Breath
Low Breath

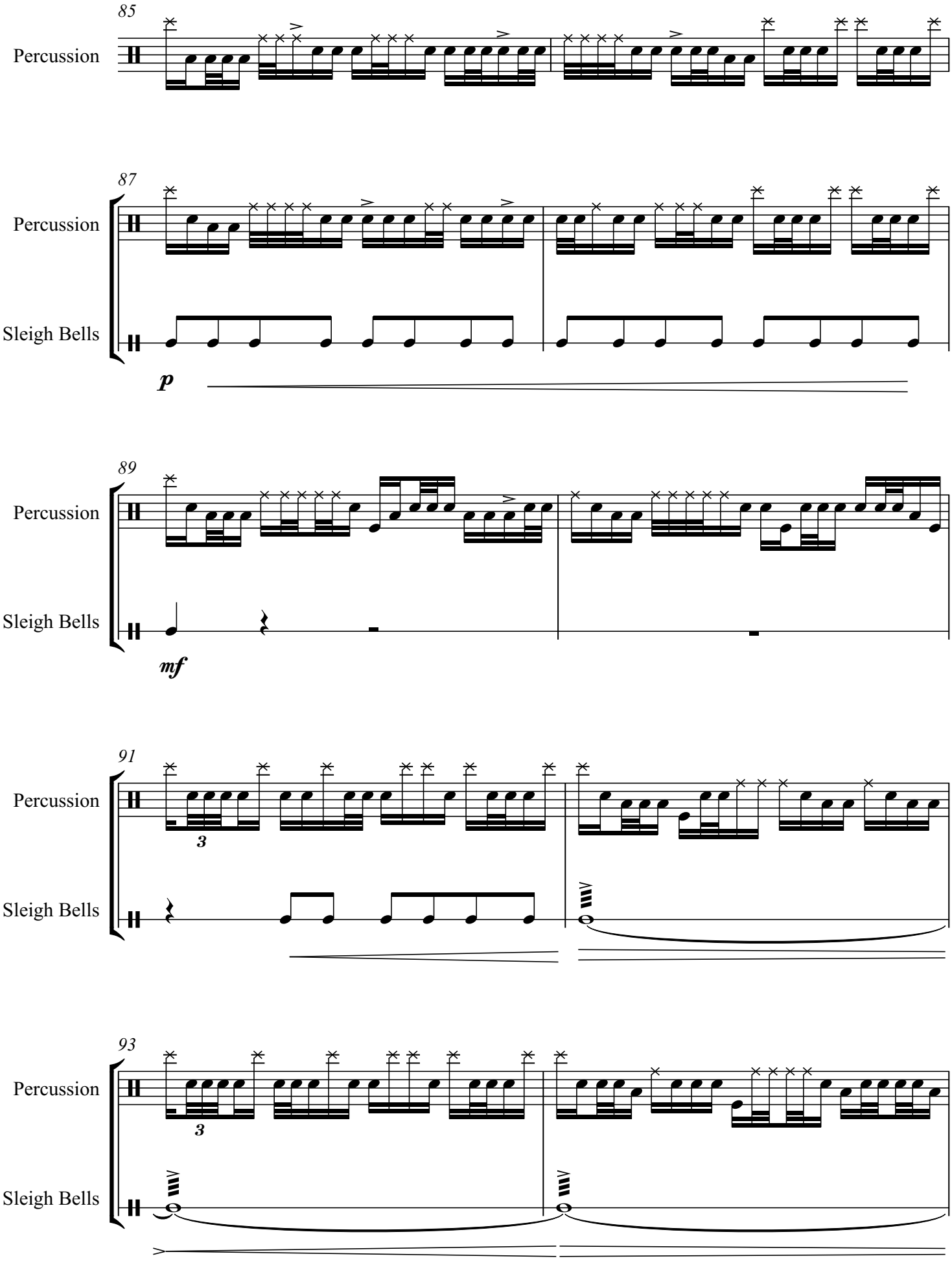
35 Find a tempo based on recording (Sō plays at about 90 BPM)

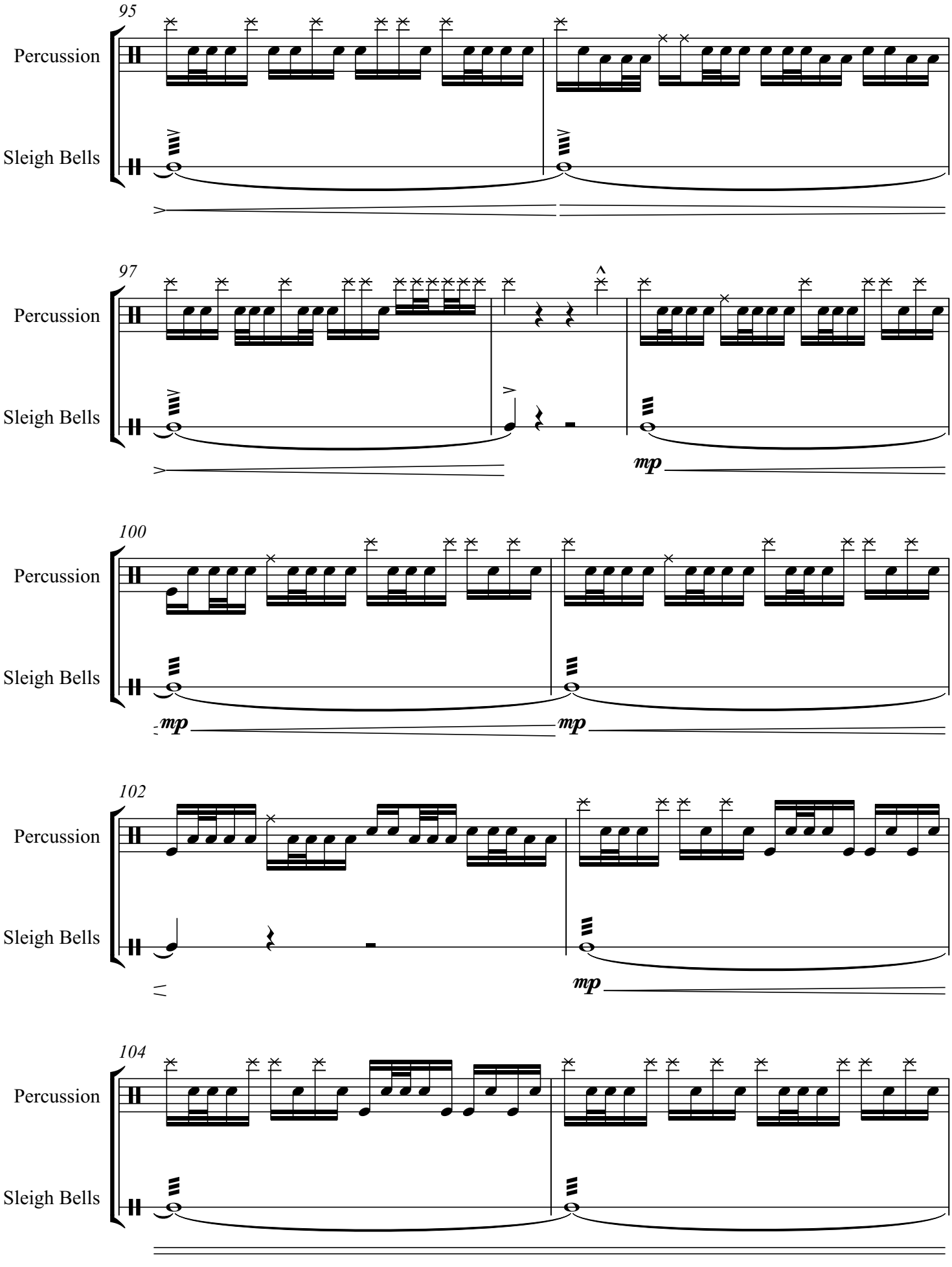


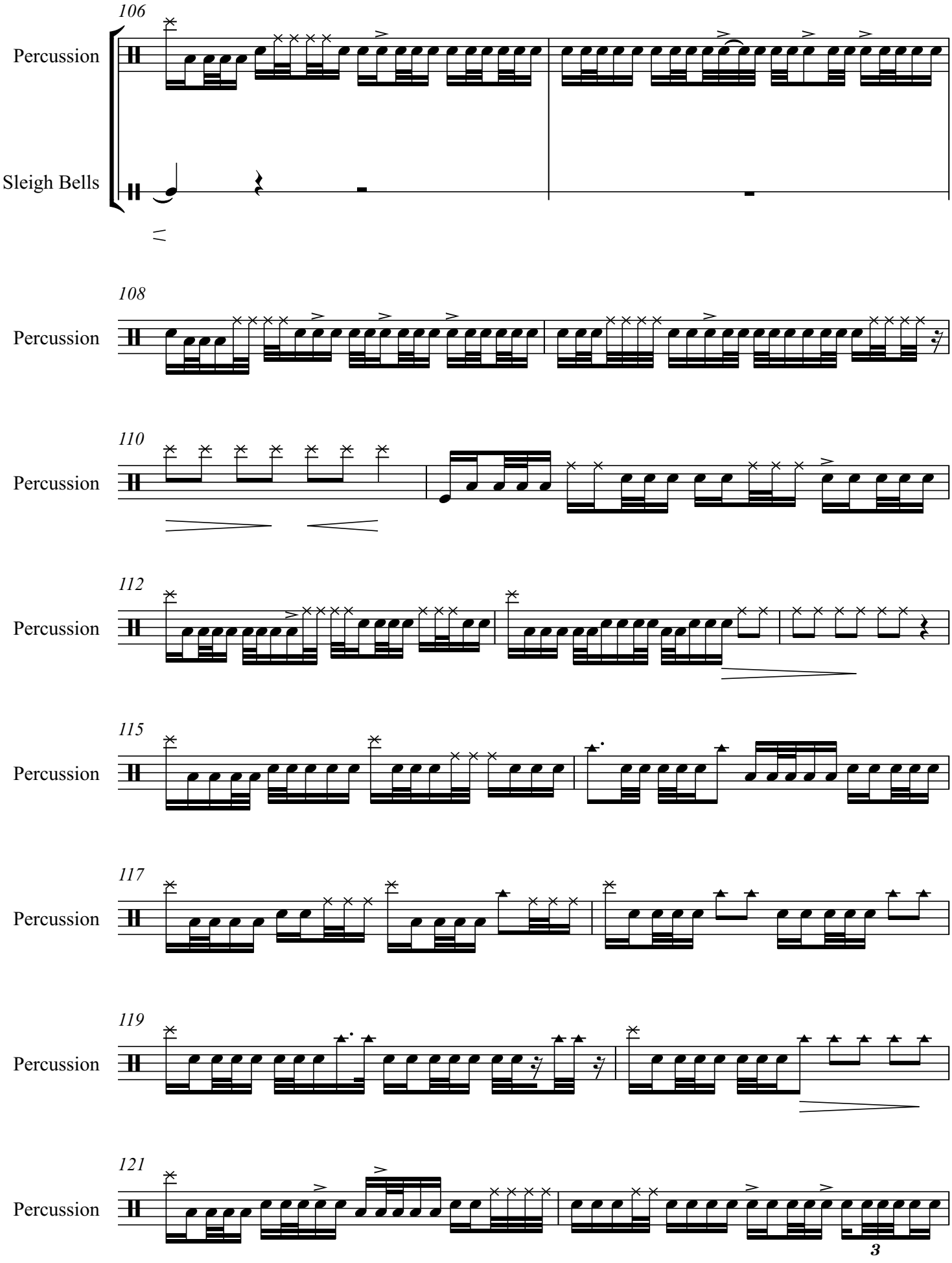

51
Percussion
3
53
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
3
3
mp
f
55
Percussion
3
3
57
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
p
mf
59
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
3
61
Percussion

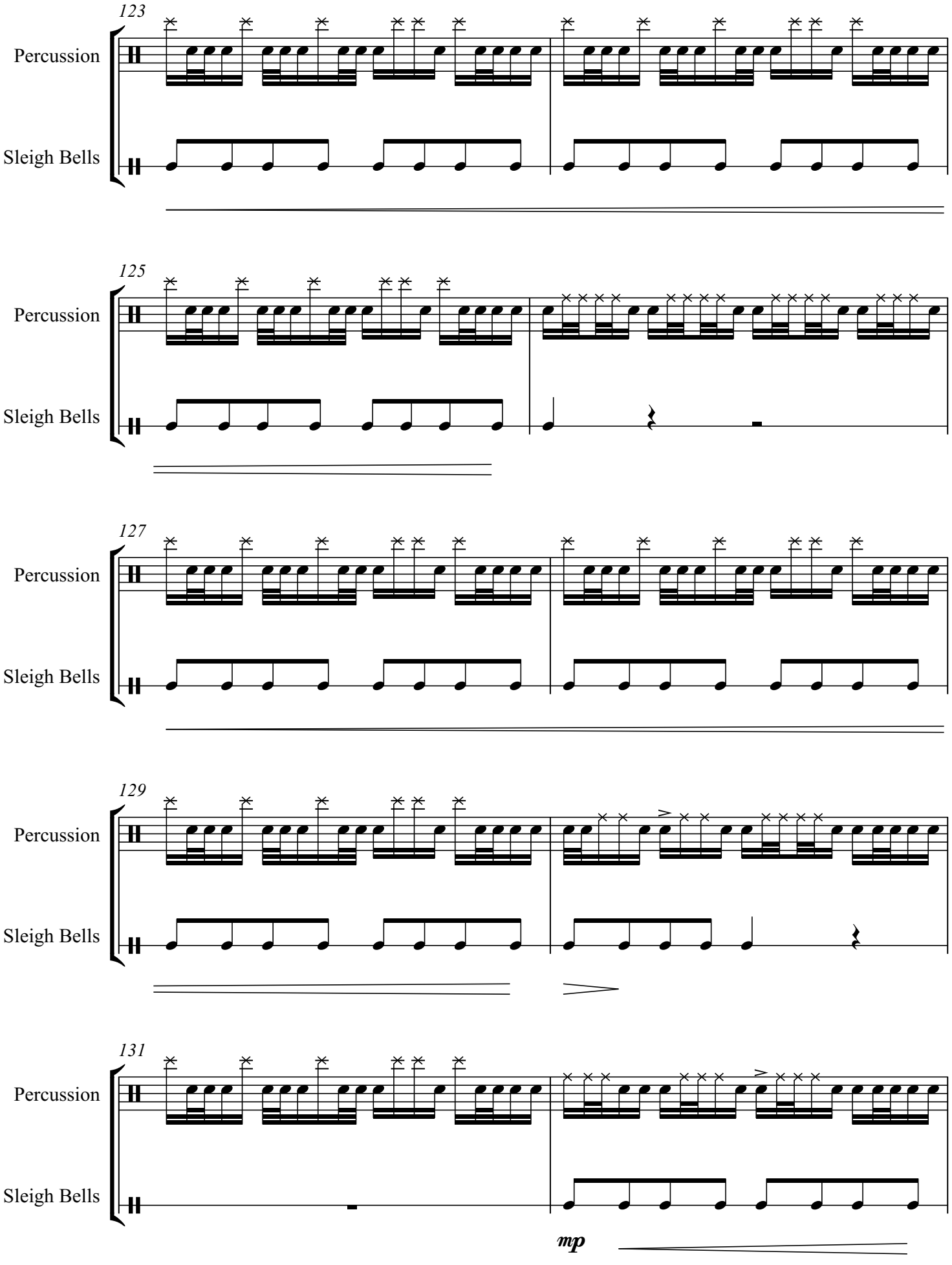

63
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
mp
65
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
ff
p
3
67
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
pp
p
69
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
71
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
3

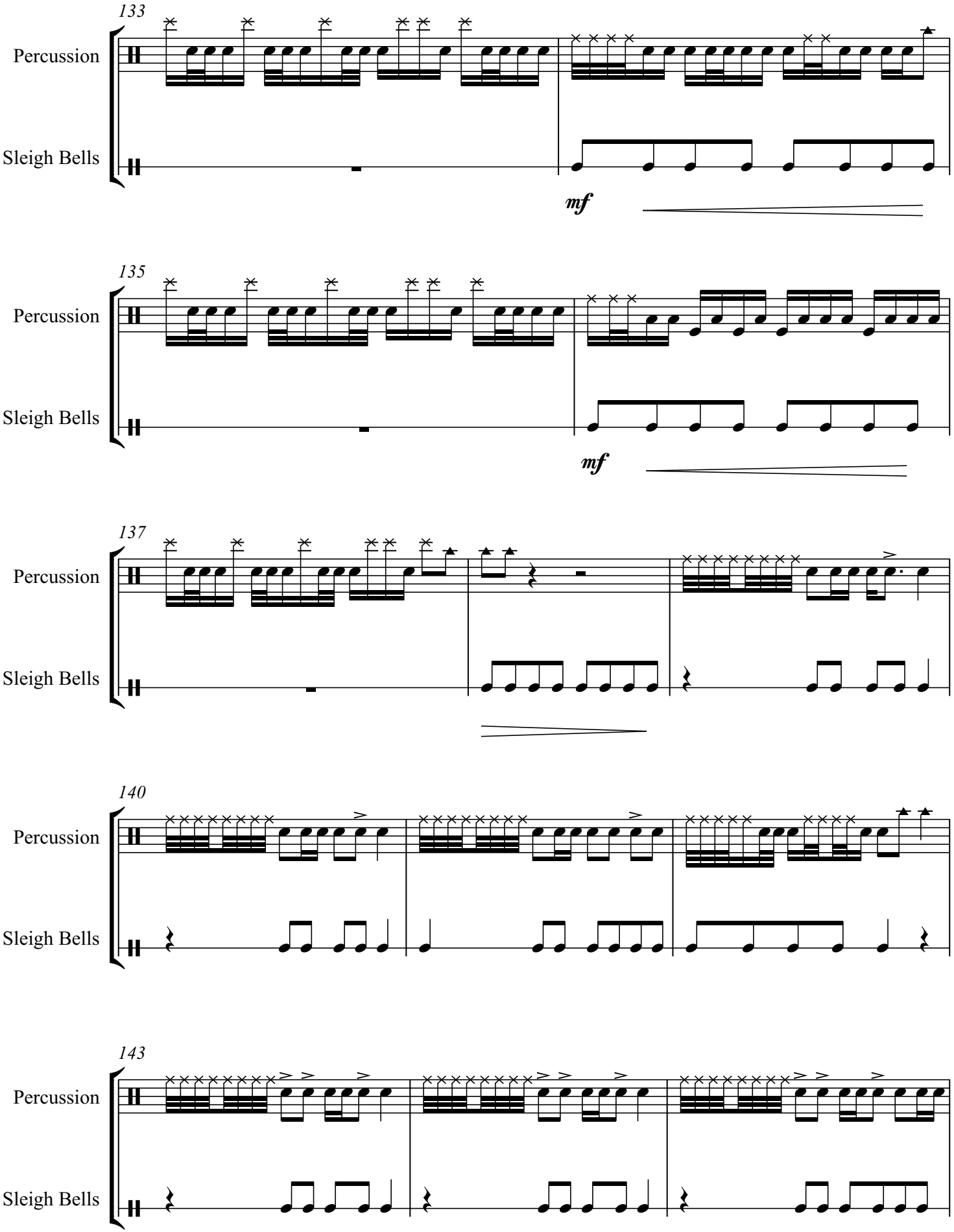

73
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
3
75
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
p
78
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
3
3
81
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
p
83
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
3

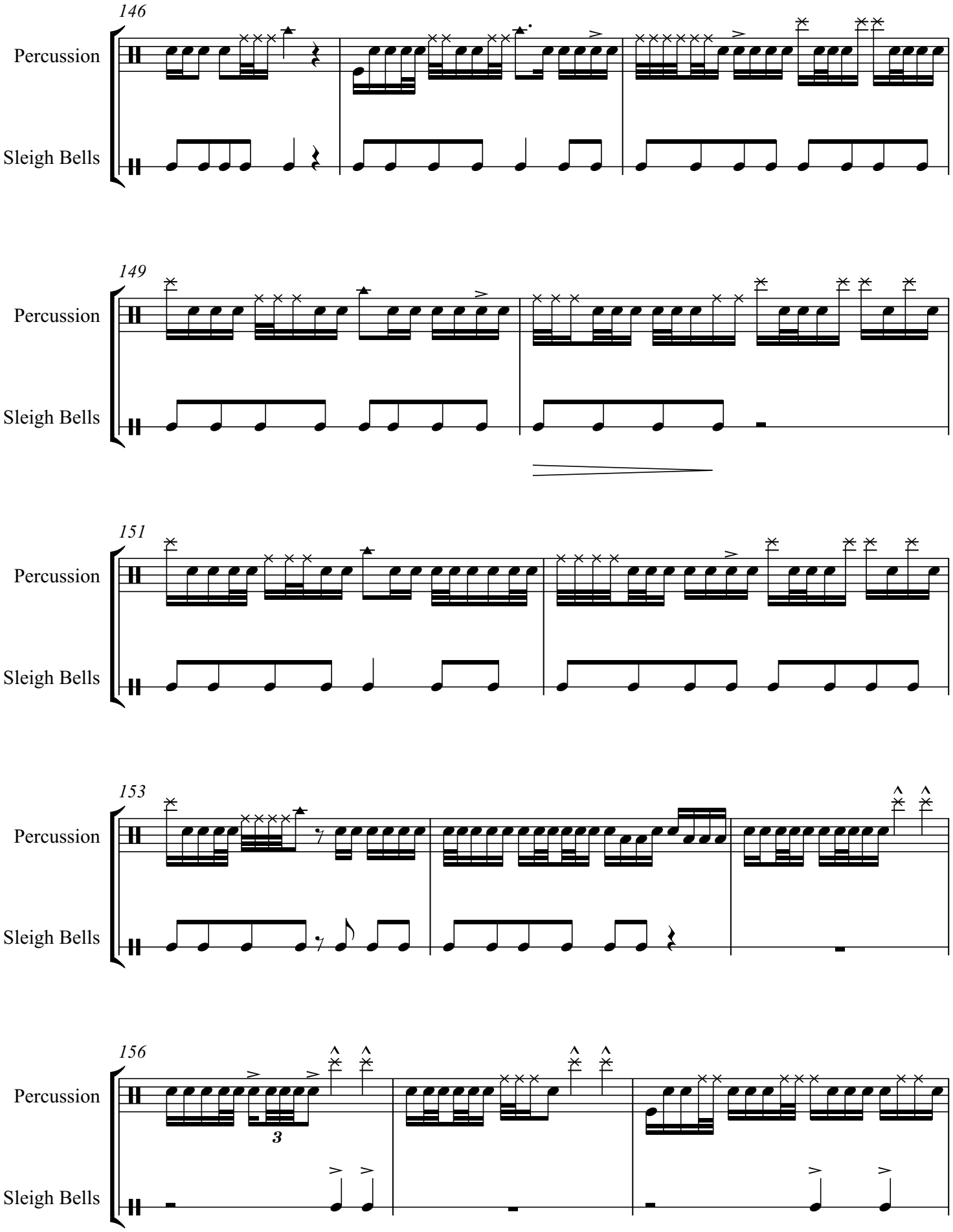

85
Percussion
87
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
p
89
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
mf
91
Percussion
3
Sleigh Bells
93
Percussion
3
Sleigh Bells

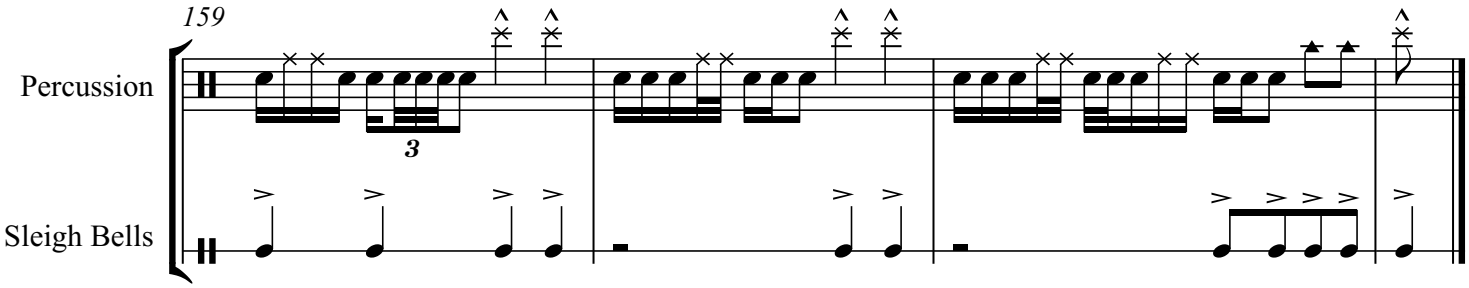

95
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
97
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
mp
100
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
mp
mp
102
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
mp
104
Percussion
Sleigh Bells


106
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
108
Percussion
110
Percussion
112
Percussion
115
Percussion
117
Percussion
119
Percussion
121
Percussion
3

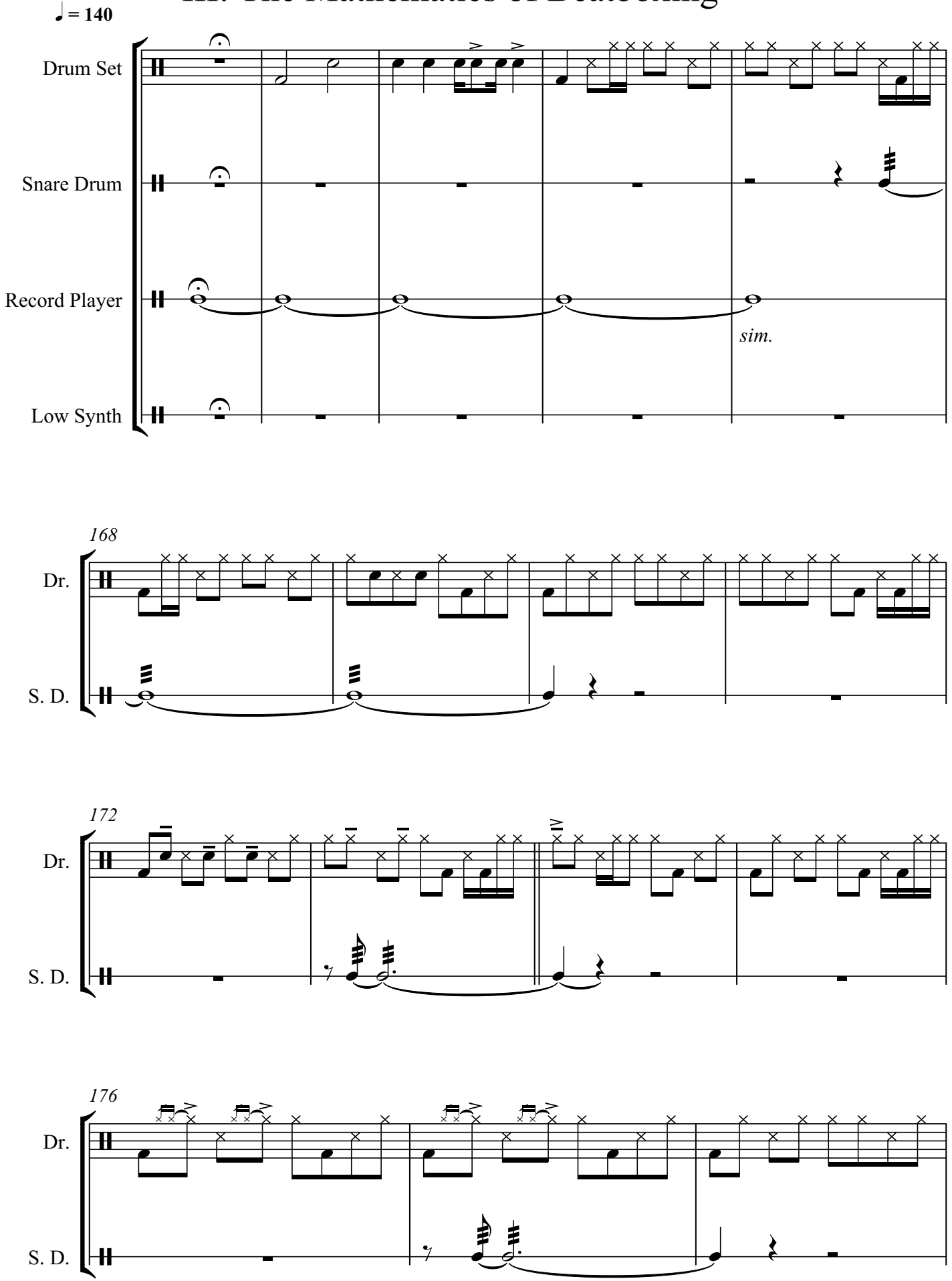

123
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
125
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
127
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
129
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
131
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
mp


133
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
mf
135
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
mf
137
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
140
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
143
Percussion
Sleigh Bells


146
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
149
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
151
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
153
Percussion
Sleigh Bells
156
Percussion
3
Sleigh Bells


159
Percussion
3
Sleigh Bells

# III: The Mathematics of Beatboxing



179

Dr.

S. D.

Low Synth

183

Dr.

S. D.

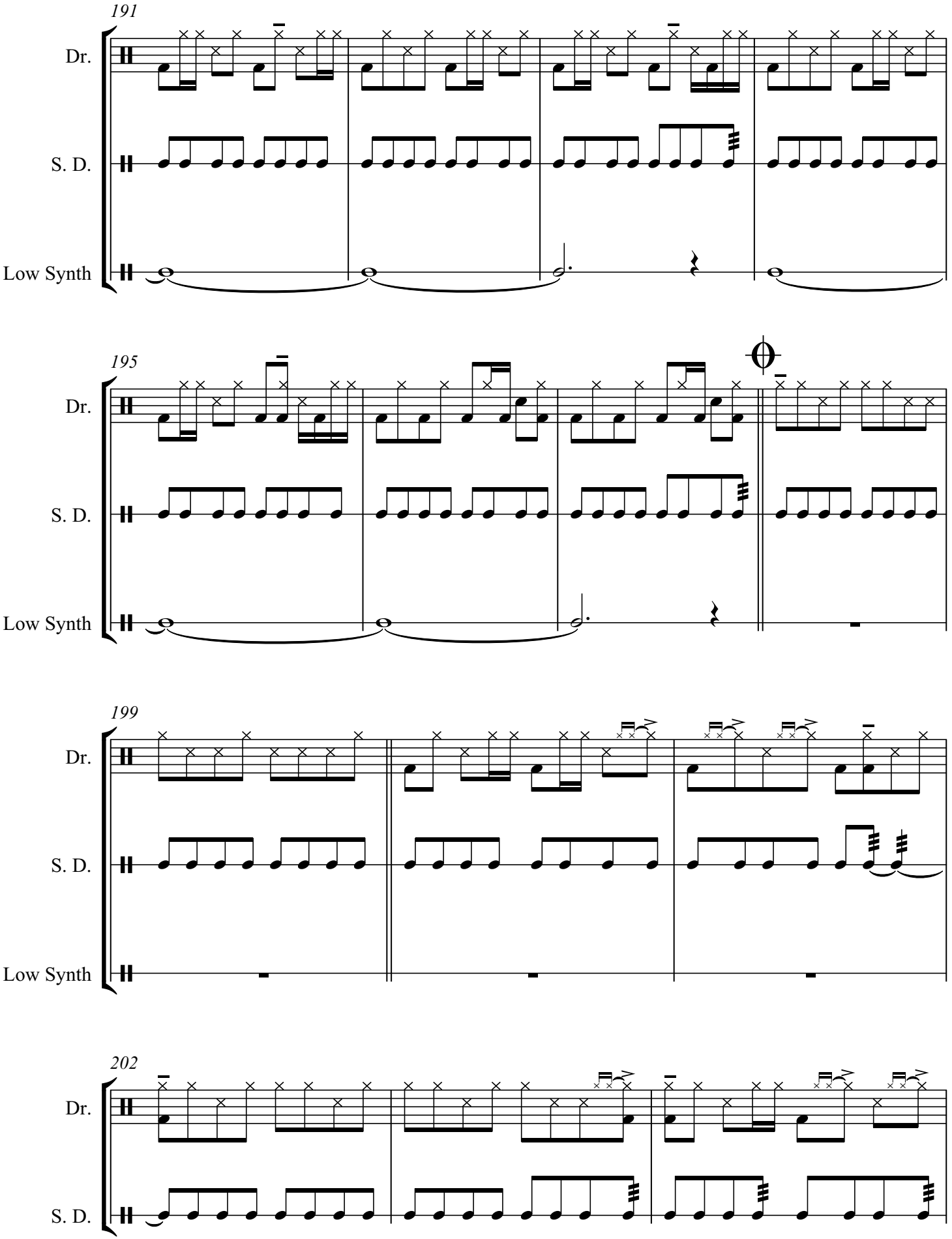
Low Synth

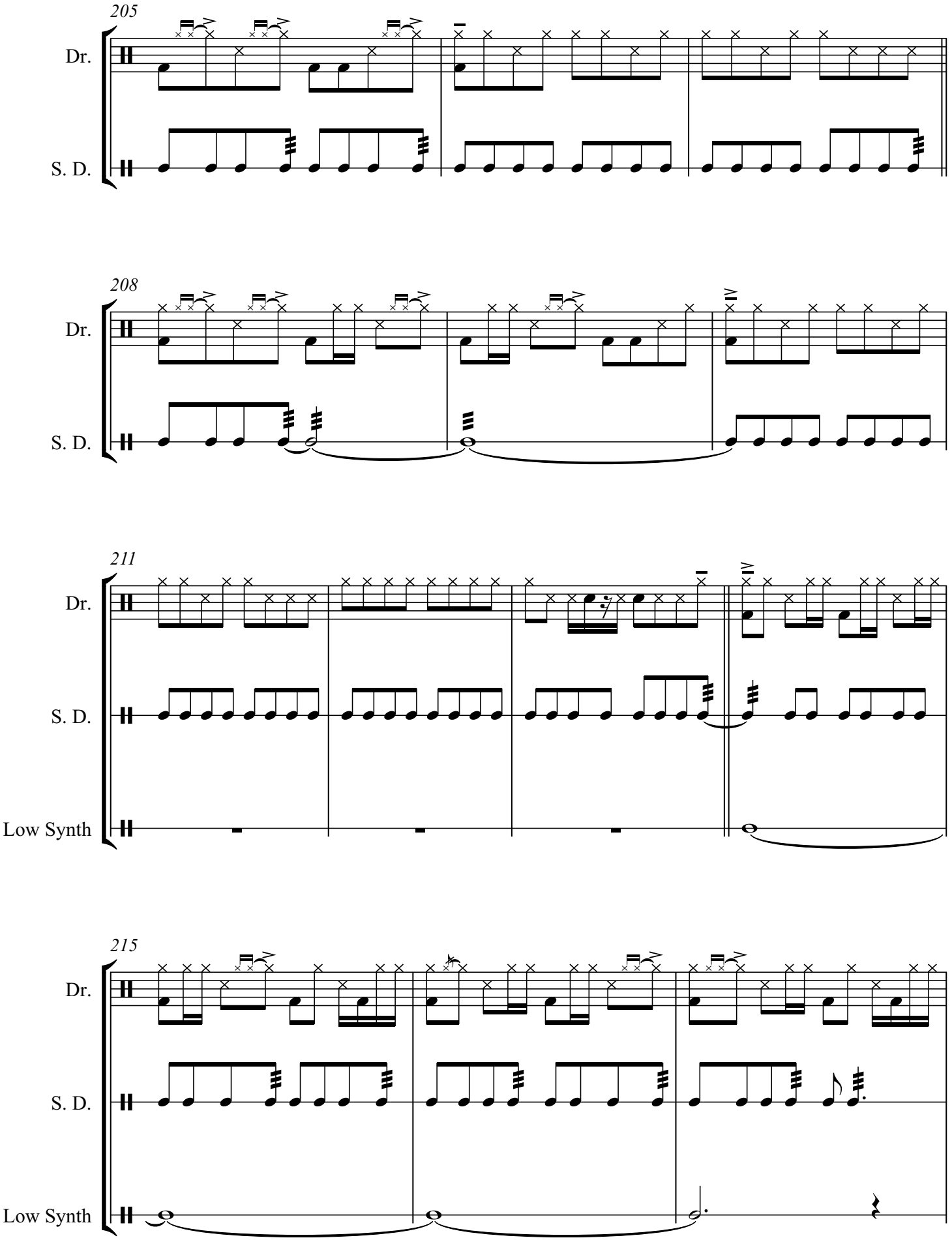
187

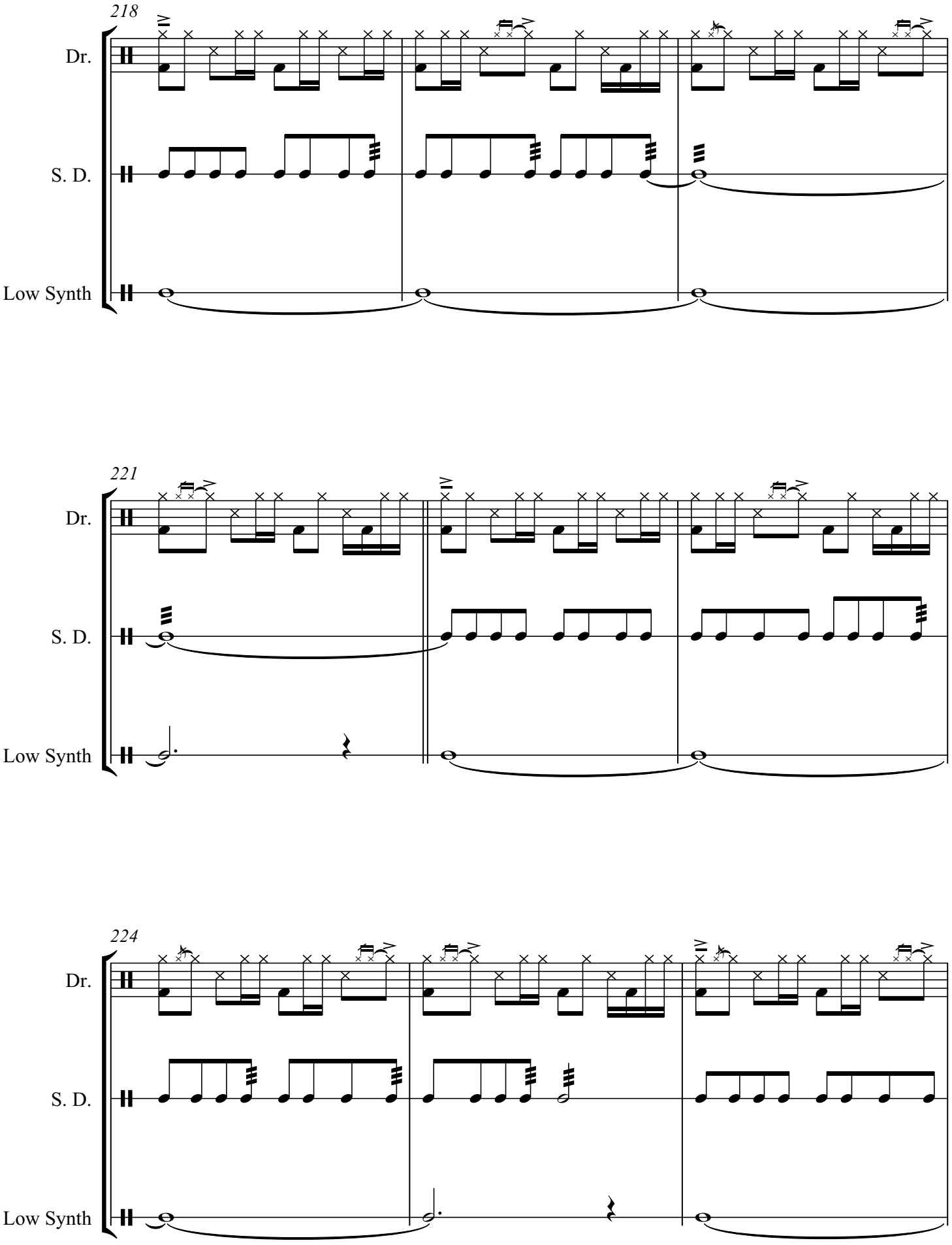
Dr.

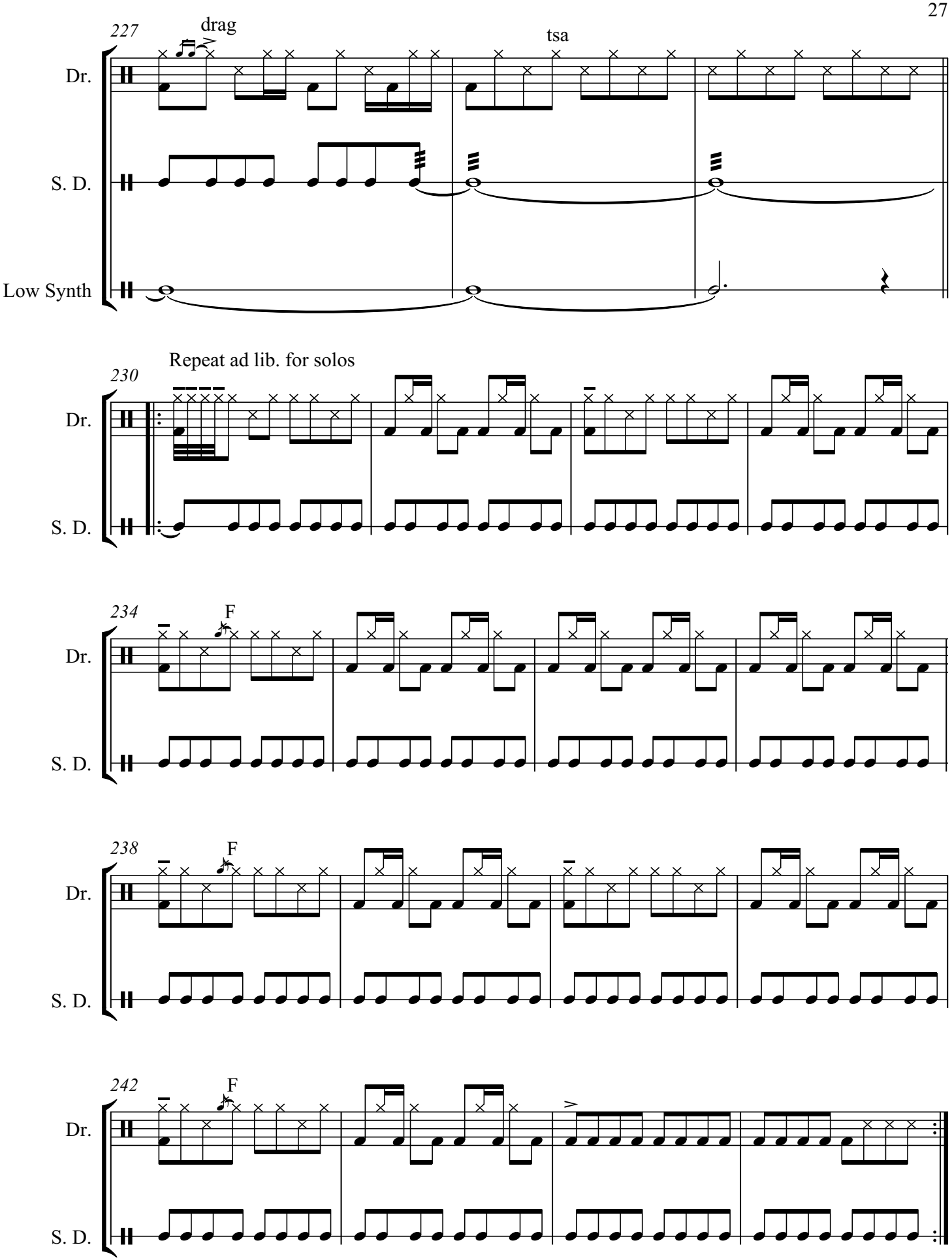
S. D.

Low Synth


191
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth
195
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth
199
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth
202
Dr.
S. D.


205
Dr.
S. D.
208
Dr.
S. D.
211
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth
215
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth


218
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth
221
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth
224
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth


227
drag
tsa
Dr.
S. D.
Low Synth
Repeat ad lib. for solos
230
Dr.
S. D.
234
F
Dr.
S. D.
238
F
Dr.
S. D.
242
F
Dr.
S. D.

More solos, only repeat once

246

Dr.

S. D.

250

Dr.

S. D.

254

Dr.

S. D.

258

Dr.

S. D.

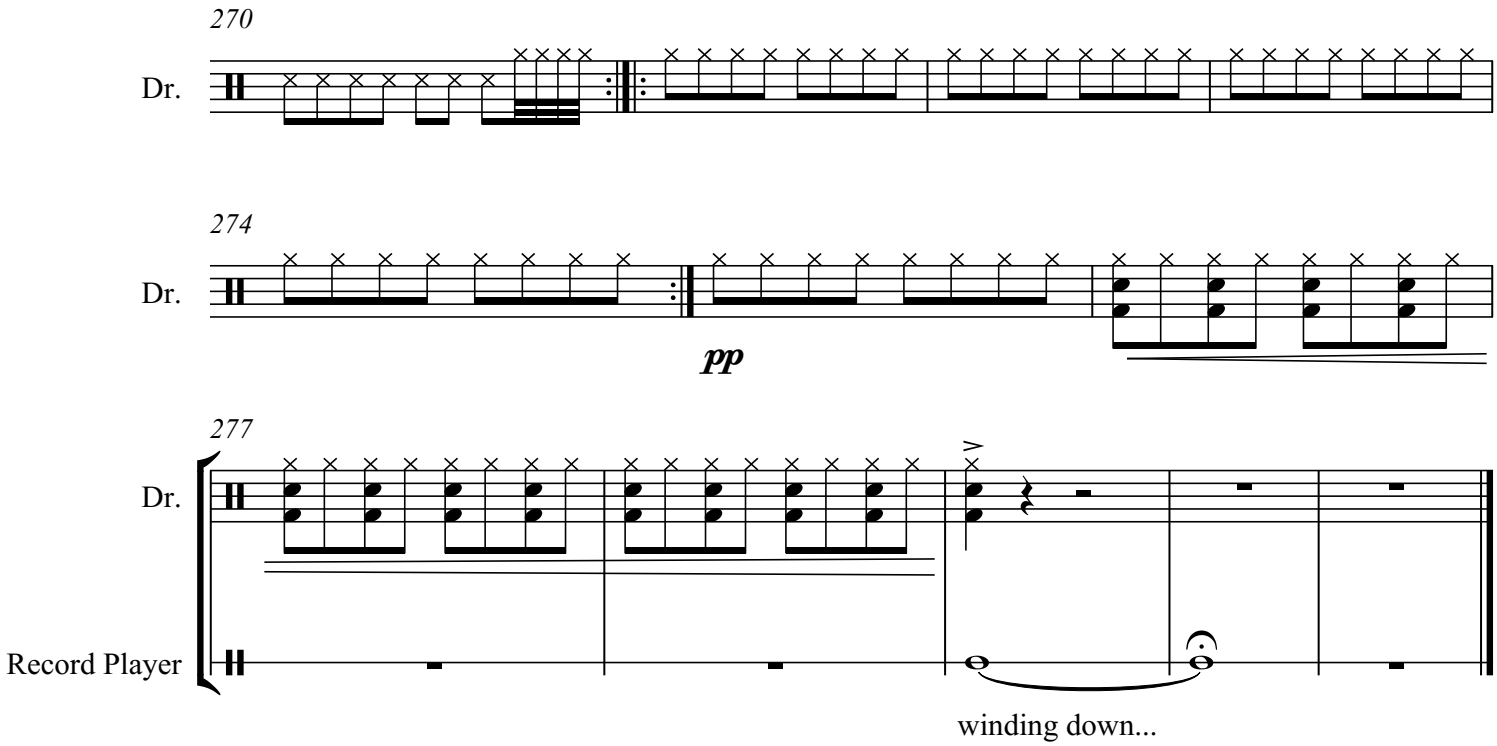
262 repeat ad lib. D.C. al coda

Dr.

*p*

266

Dr.




Starting at m. 271, ad lib. call and response between perfomers, and possibly with audience.

At m. 275, all performers descrescendo to almost nothing, then build back up to a climactic finish.

Piece ends with the record player alone.

## About Shodekeh Talifero

With 36 years of personal, professional, and community-based experience, Dominic "Shodekeh" Talifero continues to make musical strides as a groundbreaking and highly adept Beatboxer, Vocal Percussionist and Breath Artist who pushes the boundaries of the human voice within and outside the context of Hip Hop music and culture. As the first vocal percussionist to do so, he formally served as a dance technique musician and composer-in-residence for Towson University's Department of Dance for 12 years and is the founding director of Embody, A Festival Series of the Vocal Arts, which strives for artistic and cultural convergence through a variety of vocal art traditions from a multitude of worlds such as opera and Tuvan throat singing, to the many forms of vocal percussion, which has featured such vocal luminaries as Madison McFerrin, Alash Ensemble, Dan Deacon, Raul Midon, and Joyce J. Scott.

Beatboxing is a form of vocal percussion born within the world of Hip Hop, and easily exists as one the most highly advanced vocal art forms known within the diversity of the human voice. Imitating and often replacing a drum set, drum machine, or drum loop through a series of vocal effects or percussive sounds primarily produced by the larynx, nasal, oral and chest cavities, Beatboxing exemplifies the Hip Hop philosophy of creating meaningful artistic expressions with limited resources at its most extreme; it replaces the source of the timeless break beat with the human voice, becoming a ubiquitous and indigenous feature of the African American city experience and soundscape.

Shodekeh recently served as TU's very first Innovator-in-Residence from 2019 - 2022, a historic designation which was anchored by the College of Fine Arts & Communication, allowing him lecture, collaborate, experiment, compose, perform and conduct research within the departments of Music, Art + Design/Art History/Art Education, Dance, Communication Studies, Electronic Media + Film, Mass Communication, Theatre Arts, Arts Integration & Interdisciplinary Arts Infusion, as well as the Asian Arts & Culture Center of TU, the TU Community Art Center, TU Community Dance & the TU Center For The Arts MFA & Main Gallery.

In previous years Talifero served as music faculty of the American Dance Festival at Duke University and has served as the chosen musician for a variety of master class experiences led by such luminaries as Ailey II of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the Paul Taylor American Modern Dance Ensemble, and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. In his close relationship with the world of dance, he has acquired a wealth of experiences of applying his vocal and rhythmic skills in the movement context of ballet, capoeira, fire movement, belly dancing and a wide range of modern dance techniques created by such legends as Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham, and Lester Horton.

This deeply synthesized relationship with dance, which began in 2006 has also played a tremendous role in Shodekeh's sustained & pioneering development of 'Breath Art", which is essentially the deep practice and extensive research of isolated creative breathing techniques and methods maintained within the musical and kinesthetic modalities of universal human vocal expression. This deep artistic and philosophical practice and ongoing research of "Breath Art" are greatly exemplified in the recent commissions of original compositional work for the Covid-19 sculptures created by Rebecca Kamen for the 2021 exhibition "Reveal" at the American University Museum in Washington DC and his cymatic / sound art composition "Vymatics" for the 2022 world premiere event of "Voyages", a brand new immersive science communication series based at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, MD.

Over the years, Talifero has evolved and moved through the world as a musical ambassador from Beatboxing's Hip Hop roots to explore innovative and convergent cultural collaborations with a wide range of traditional and classical artists. He serves as the Beatboxer and vocal percussionist for the globally renown Alash Ensemble, one of the world's leading Tuvan Throat Singing ensembles from Southern Siberia, and features as a guest artist on their Smithsonian Folkways album release "Achai", as well as a co-curator and executive producer on the recently released album "Embodiments" with Bady Dorzhu Ondar of Alash, which is the first full album of Traditional Tuvan Throat Singing and Hip Hop fusion; has become a regular collaborator with the magnificent percussion and rhythm ensemble So Percussion based at Princeton University, with whom he composed for during Shodekeh's historic Carnegie Hall debut in 2021.

One of Shodekeh's most recent and by far bravest endeavor has been the recent establishment of his own collection and living archive with the Towson University Special Collections and University Archives in 2021, which is entitled "Ideations of Potential: Shodekeh's Innovation Lab of Embodied Scholarship & Hip Hop Imagination". This lifelong collaboration is the first Hip Hop-based archive created in the state of Maryland and the first Beatbox / Breath Art driven archive instituted in the world, with the expressed and dedicated mission of maximizing the collection as a platform for raising awareness on the epidemic of black youth suicide and ideation.