379
N81d
No. 1281

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

BY SHOSTAKOVICH, orchestra 1

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

Karl Frederick Miller, B.M., M.M.

Denton, Texas

May, 1978

Miller, Karl Frederick, Original Composition: Variations on a Theme by Shostakovich. Doctor of Musical Arts (Music Composition), May, 1978, discussion and analysis, score, 48 pp.

The discussion and analysis describes the content of this work and the variation techniques employed.

The Variations on a Theme by Shostakovich is scored for an orchestra of 3 flutes, 3 oboes, 2 bassoons, contra-bassoon, 4 horns, 3 C trumpets, 3 trombones, harp, harpsichord, piano, percussion and strings. The entire work is approximately 17 minutes in duration.

The subject for the Variations comes from the Fifteenth Symphony of Shostakovich, last movement. There are many allusions to the writing of Shostakovich in terms of gesture, orchestration, and harmonic structure.

Conceived in a straight-forward, accessible style, the Variations are intended to be something of an orchestral requiem.

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VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY SHOSTAKOVICH 1

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ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The impetus for composing the Variations on a Theme by Shostakovich can be traced to two events: first, the death of Shostakovich on the ninth of August 1976, and second, the performance of his Fifth Symphony on the same day by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mstislav Rostropovich, cellist, conductor and friend of Shostakovich. The loss felt by Rostropovich was conveyed in a most moving performance. This second event is reflected by the use of the solo violoncello in the Variations.

Structure

Structure in the Variations is not easily defined. It is in several distinct sections, none of which can be described as a single, complete variation. The sections are arranged according to mood and character as opposed to strictly thematic considerations. A diagramatic representation of the overall shape of the composition is as follows. (Figure 1)

m.26	59	119	191	255	267	
I Theme	II Lyrical	III Scherzo I	IV Lyrical	V Scherzo II	VI Cadence	VII Coda Lyrical
slow	slow	fast	slow	fast	slow	slow

Fig. 1-Overall shape

If sections I & II and VI & VII are paired because of a similarity of tempo a regular alternation of slow - fast tempos is evident suggesting a rondo form.

This allusion to rondo is not restricted solely to tempo. The theme is most clearly presented in the first and last sections. Furthermore Scherzo I and II utilize essentially the same permutations of the material. This would further suggest arch form as well.

Melodic Structure, Harmonic Structure

The theme of the Variations is taken from the Fifteenth Symphony by Shostakovich, final movement, measures 14 to 35. It is first heard in the solo strings at the beginning of the Variations measures 3 to 24. The progression presented in the remaining strings, beginning in measure 2, has appeared frequently in many of my own works. (Figure 2)

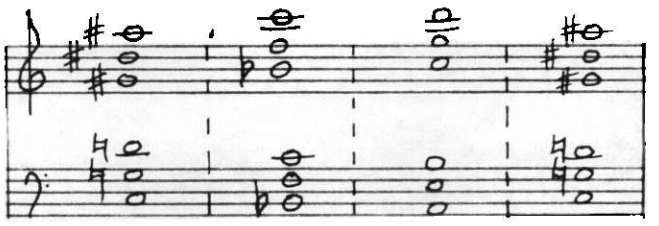

Fig. 2-My own progression

The Shostakovich theme and my own progression constitute a dichotomy of ideas which permeates the Variations.

The Shostakovich theme per se is not always the observable subject for variation. A tone row is derived from the theme. This derivation can be seen in figure 3, the Shostakovich theme above, the resultant row below.

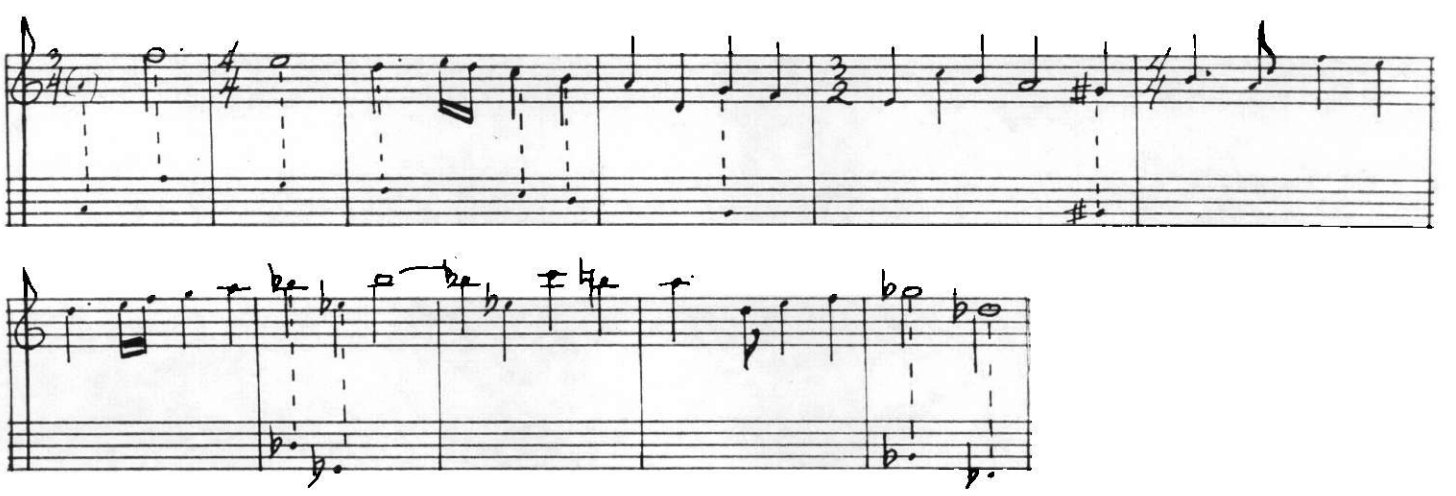

Fig. 3-Row derivation

The second section of the Variations is an accompanied solo for violoncello. The violoncello solo beginning at measure 29 articulates the row in a rather rhapsodic manner. Accompaniment is provided by the strings playing the opening progression. (Figure 2)

Scherzo I, beginning in measure 59, presents permutations of the principal material of the composition, the Shostakovich theme, the derived row and my own progression. The row is presented in measures 63 to 66.

The row with these particular rhythmic values (Figure 4) will be significant in the following section, section IV. The theme may be

Fig. 4-Row

heard in its entirety in the woodwinds beginning in measure 67. My own chord progression may be found in the woodwinds and strings in measures 82 to 89, in the brass measures 89 to 99 and lastly in the harp, harpsichord and piano in measures 115 to 118. A second permutation of the theme may be heard in the lower strings, woodwinds and brasses in fifths from measures 103 to 118. The section ends at measure 119 with the final chord of the Shostakovich Symphony, A-E.

A violoncello solo based on the Shostakovich theme provides a bridge, measures 123 to 127, to section IV. The first and principal permutation in this section is based upon the opening of the second section. (Figure 4) This form of the row is heard in triple augmentation with superimposed fifths in the soprano voices in retrograde and in the bass voices in the original direction. At measure 144 the bass voices are heard in retrograde while the soprano voices may be heard in the original direction. The Shostakovich theme is presented in its entirety in retrograde by the harp and vibraphone in measures 145 to 166. My own progression is not heard until measure 176. Its abrupt appearances in the brass foreshadow the following section, Scherzo II, section V.

Section V begins in measure 191 with a figure in the percussion similar to the opening of Scherzo I. The most significant permutation of the Shostakovich theme may be found in canon between the trumpets and trombones in measures 245 to 256. The row derived from the theme may be heard in measures 207 to 218 in the upper strings and woodwinds. A permutation of my own chord progression may be found in measures 232 to 240 in the brass, harpsichord, piano and harp. This permutation quotes some of the modifications of my chord progression as heard in Scherzo I, measures 115 to 118.

The cadential material begins in measure 255. Three distinct ideas provide the basis for the remainder of the composition. The first is my own progression, the second, the opening notes of the Shostakovich theme and lastly the concluding chord of the Shostakovich Symphony, A-E.

Orchestration

The orchestration of this work is quite thin. There are few tutti passages, most notable exception being the cadential section. Most instruments are used in their lower registers. If lines are doubled they will usually occur in the bass instruments. Starkness in the soprano is achieved through the use of open spacings. These characteristics, a resonant bass and the stark soprano, convey the general notion of a lament. Clarinets have been omitted because of the darkness of the chalumeau register.

The structure of the Variations is straightforward, the mood repressed. In a romantic sense the Variations might be considered an orchestral requiem.

Variations on a theme by Shostakovich

Karl F. Miller

Adagio — Allegretto ♩= 100

Flutes 1 2 3
Oboes 1 3
Bassoons 1 2
Contrabassoon
Horns in F* 1 2 3 4
Trumpets in C 1 2 3
Trombones 1 2 3
Harp
Harpsichord
Piano
Percussion: Suspended Cymbal, antique cymbals, bongos, snare drum, military drum, claves, vibraphone, celeste, bass drum
Suspended Cymbal — wire brushes — pp
Timpani
Violin solo — Adagio — mp — Allegretto ♩= 100
Violin I — consord. divisi — ppp
Violin II — consord. divisi — ppp
Viola — consord. divisi — ppp
'Cello — consord. divisi — ppp
Bass — con sord. — ppp

1 2 3 4 5 6

* Written in C

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6♩ 4♩ (10)

Vln solo
Vln I
Vln solo — senza sord — pizz
Vln II
Vla. solo — senza sord — pizz
altri
Vc. solo — senza sord — pizz
altri
Db solo — senza sord — pizz
altri

7 8 9 10

(15)

solo
Vln I
solo — arco
Vln II
solo — arco
altri
solo — arco — pizz
altri
solo — arco — pizz
altri

11 12 13 14 15

20

pizz

pizz

16 17 18 19 20

non rit.

25

Horn

1.

P

PP

PP

P

PP

P

arco

P poco espr.

PP

arco

P poco espr.

21 22 23 24 25

Hp
Hpsd
Pf
Vc solo
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc solo
altri
Db
molto espress.
poco
a
poco

Vc solo

Antique Cym.

Sus Cym

Vc solo

Hp

Hpsd

Pf

Sus Cym

molto rit.

morendo

accel.
hard mallets
Allegro molto
as quickly as possible
Bongos
SD
MD
no snares
(60)
(65)
(70)
mf
f
ff
secco
Pf
Vln I
Vln II
Vla
Vc
Db
pizz
Fl
Ob 1
2
Bsn
a2
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70

mf

mf

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

arco

arco

mp

mp

71

72

73

74

75

mp cresc. poco a poco

mp cresc. poco a poco

Pf

mf

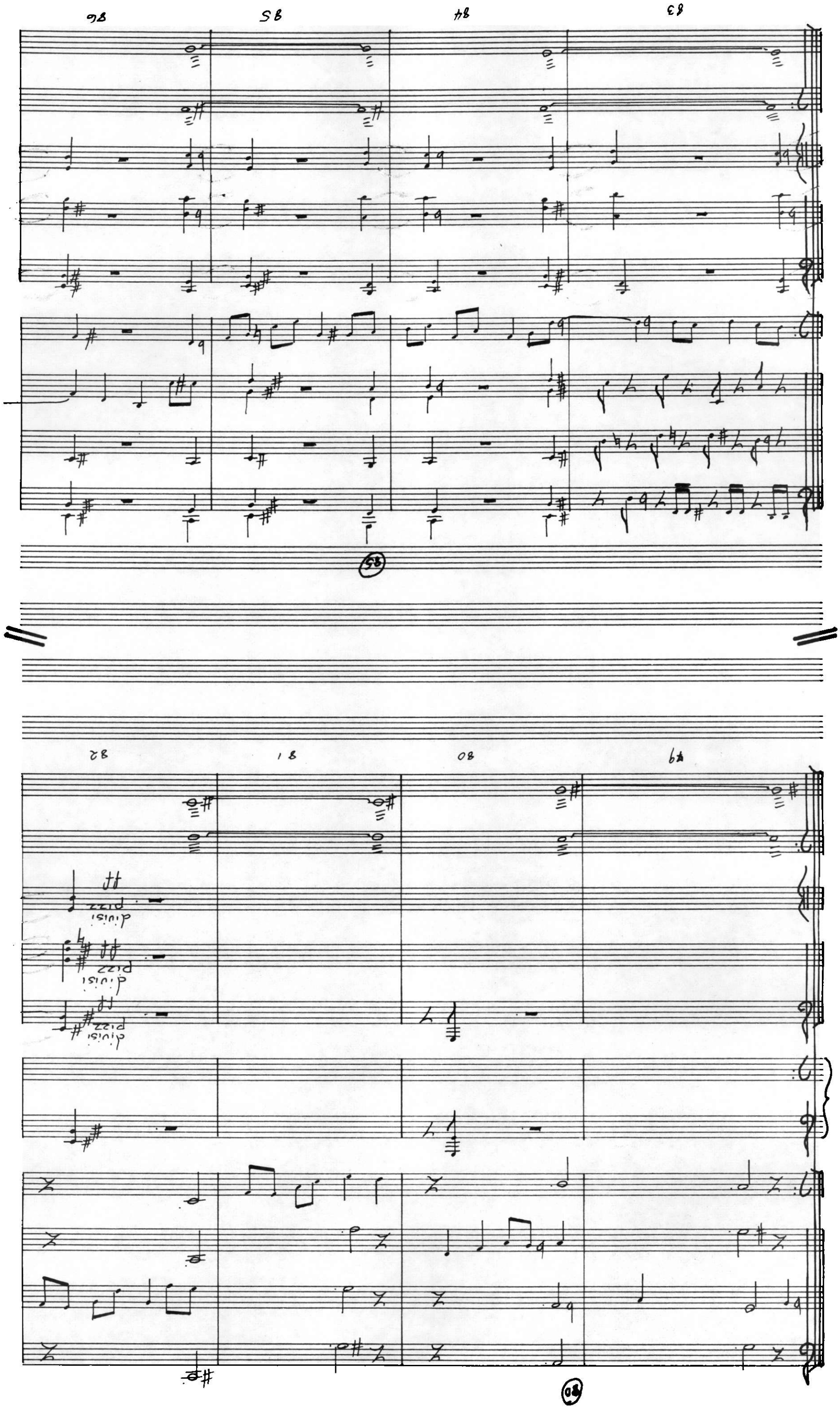
pizz

75

76

77

78


78
79
80
81
82
85
88
div.si
pizz
pp

Fl. 1 2 3
Ob. 1 2
3
B
Cb
Hrn
Tru
Tro
SD
Sus Cym

90

cresc. ff
3 ff
sffz
secco ff
rim
choke
pp cresc.
arco

87 88 89 90

ff

ff

1
243

91 92 93 94

95

fff

fff

fff

95 96 97 98

100

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

Bongos
SD
MD
no snares

fff

3

3

5

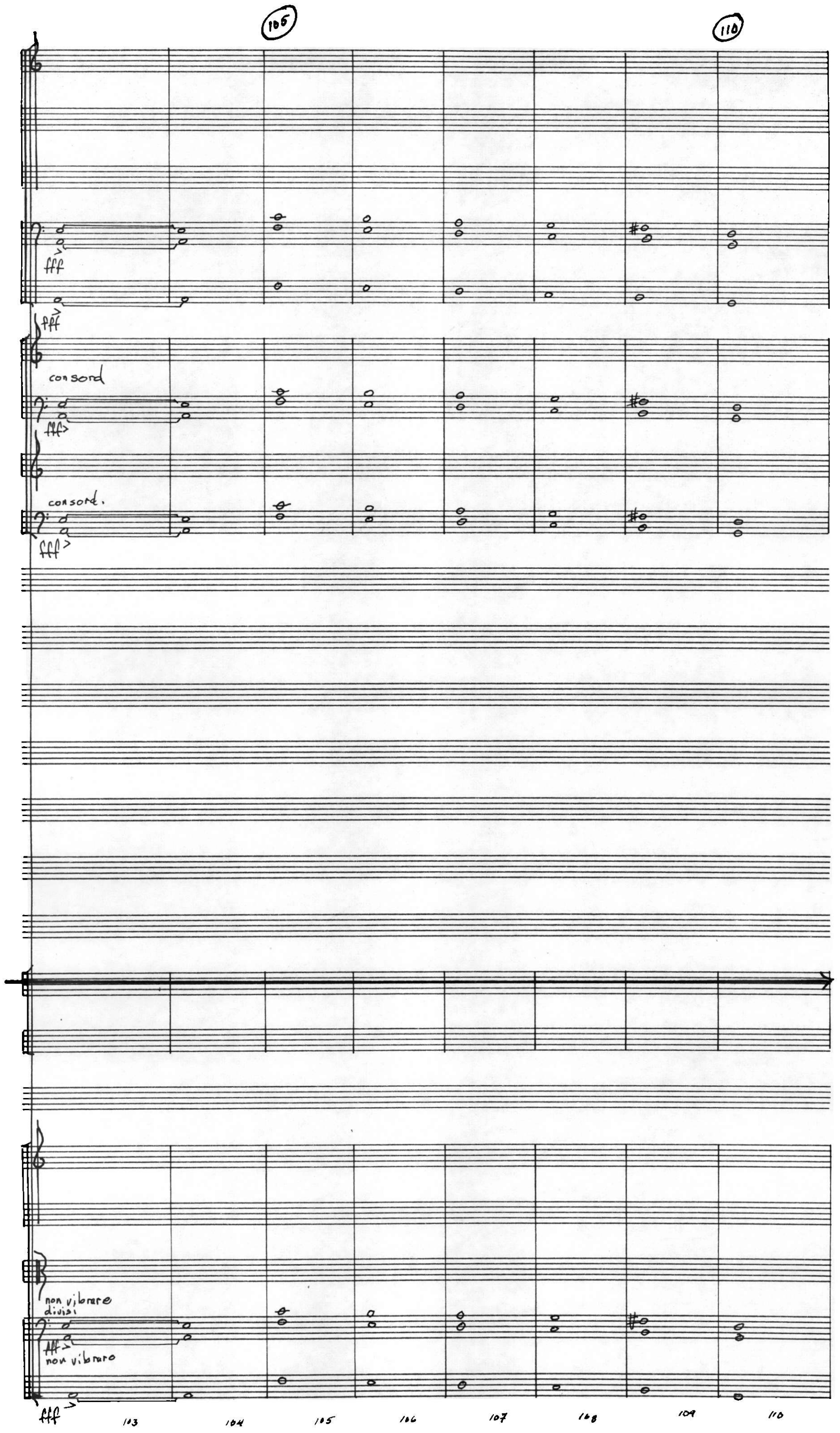
as quickly as possible

99

100

101

102


105
110
fff
fff
con sord
fff>
con sord.
fff>
non vibrare
divisi
fff>
non vibrare
fff
103
104
105
106
107
108
109
110

Hp

Hpsd

Pf

non arp.

fff

fff

fff

111

112

113

114

Fl M2 115

Ob

ppp non cresc.

ppp non cresc.

fff

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

2+3

fff

fff

cresc.

ff

freebowing

ppp non cresc.

freebowing

non cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

115 116 117 118

Sub. Lento ♩=40

120

125

sus. cym.

wire brush tr.

pp

antique cym

mf

Celeste

mf

Sub. Lento ♩=40

solo 1.

mp

119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126

130

Fl

Ob

PPP

PPP

Trom

con sord

PPP

VlnI

freebowing

VlnII

freebowing

Vla.

Vc solo

divisi freebowing

altri

PPP

Db

divisi freebowing

PPP

127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134

135

140

135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142

145

Fl 1 2 3

Ob 1 2 3

Bsn.

Cb

Horns

Trum

Trom

Harp

f

Hspd.

secco

mp

Pf.

secco

mp

8va

Vib.

motor off hard mallets

mp

VlnI

VlnII

Vla

Vc

Db

143 144 145 146

160

3

3

3

147 148 149 150

151 152 153 154

155

8va

155 156 157 158

160

Ped.

divisi

159 160 161 162

(165)
Rit.

atempo

(170)

decres

PPP

Vib

Antique Cymbal

mf

divisi

p <>

divisi

p <>

unis.

p <>

divisi

unis.

p <>

163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170

fff

fff

Claves

fff

Xylo

fff

SD.

no snares

MD

fff

fff

mf

mf

pp sempre

f

f

f

divisi

mf

171

172

173

174

175

pp

pp

ff

5

5

175 176 177 178

180

PPP

5

5

179 180 181 182

185

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

soft mallets

ppp

10/8

193

184

185

186

Rit. Molto

190

1.

ppp

Pf

mf

Xylo

GC

pppp

3 e do

pp

5

p

ppp

ppp

ppp

187 188 189 190

Subito Vivace

hard mallets

Bongos H M L
SD MD
Snares

p cresc.

ff

tutti

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc.

Db

ff

191 192 193 194

195

195 196 197 198

200

Fl.

Ob.

B.

Cb.

mp

mp

6

ff

mf

mf

199 200 201 202

205

a2

f

a2

f

203 204 205 206

210

Fl

Ob

Bsn

Cb

Horns

Trum

Trom

Harp

CDEF#G#A♭B♭

f

gliss.

SD

w. snares

mf

tr.

rim

VlnI

VlnII

Vla

Vc

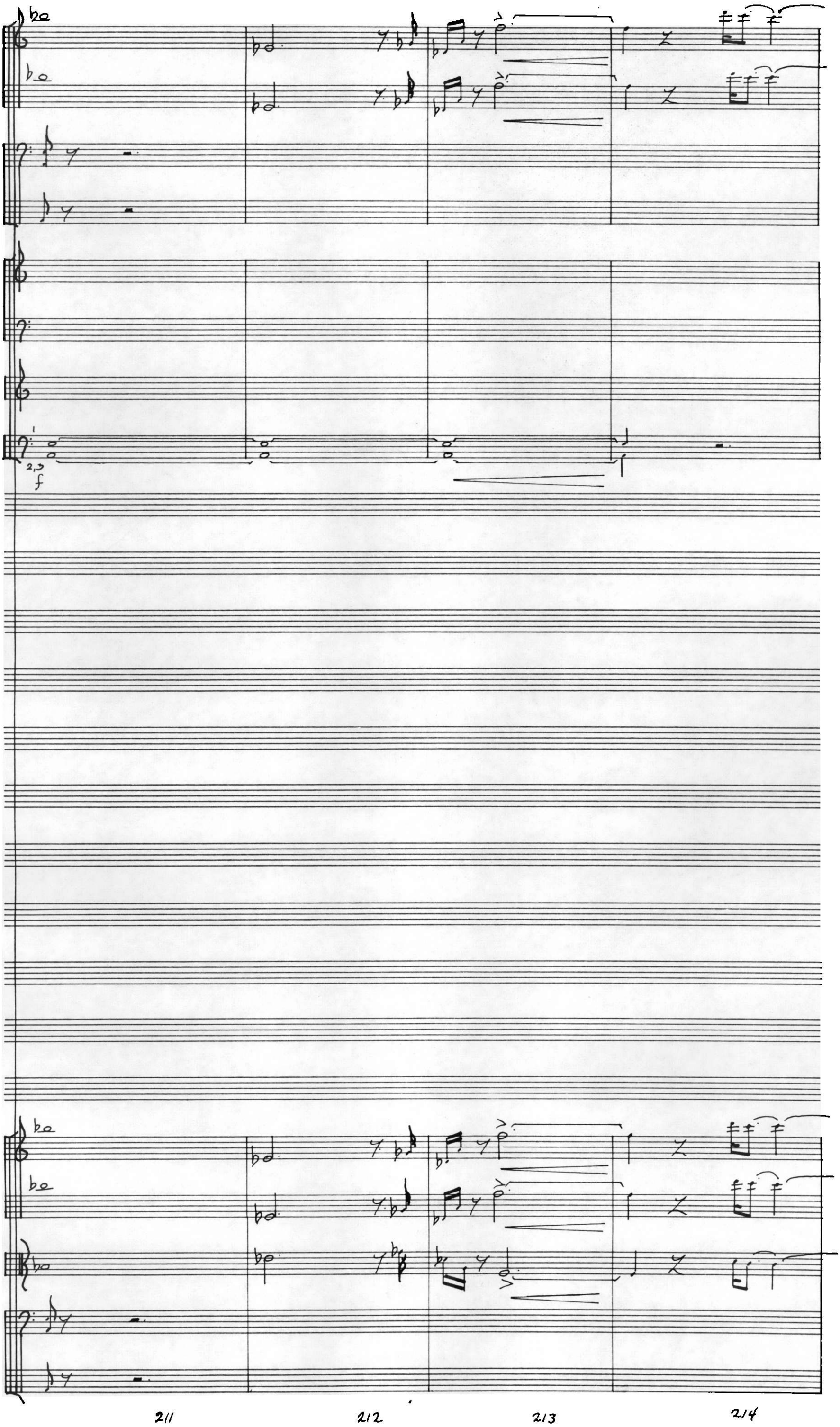
Db

207

208

209

210



211 212 213 214

215

215 216 217 218

220

f

f

no snares hard mallets

SD

hard mallets

no snares

MD

ff

ff

219 220 221 222

225

ff

ff

Violently!

hard hammers

fff

ppp fff ppp

pizz

div.

ff

223 224 225 226

230

adlib these pitches

ppp

arco
uns.

p

arco
uns.

p

arco
uns.

p

227 228 229 230

ff

ff

ff

ff

23

Hp

CDEF#G#A♭B♭ gliss.

f

non arp.

ff

Hpsd

ff

Pf

ff

SD
w. snares

tr.

p

fff

rimshot

fff

231

232

233

234

235

235 236 237 238

240

ffp ff

ffp ff

ffp ff

ffp ff

Xylo

Claves

mf

mf f

f

f

239 240 241 242

245

1.

f

2

f

Pf.

ff

mf

arco divisi

mf

arco

mf

243 244 245 246

flutter

a.l

mf

250

ff

a l

mf

2
mf

3

non arp.

ff

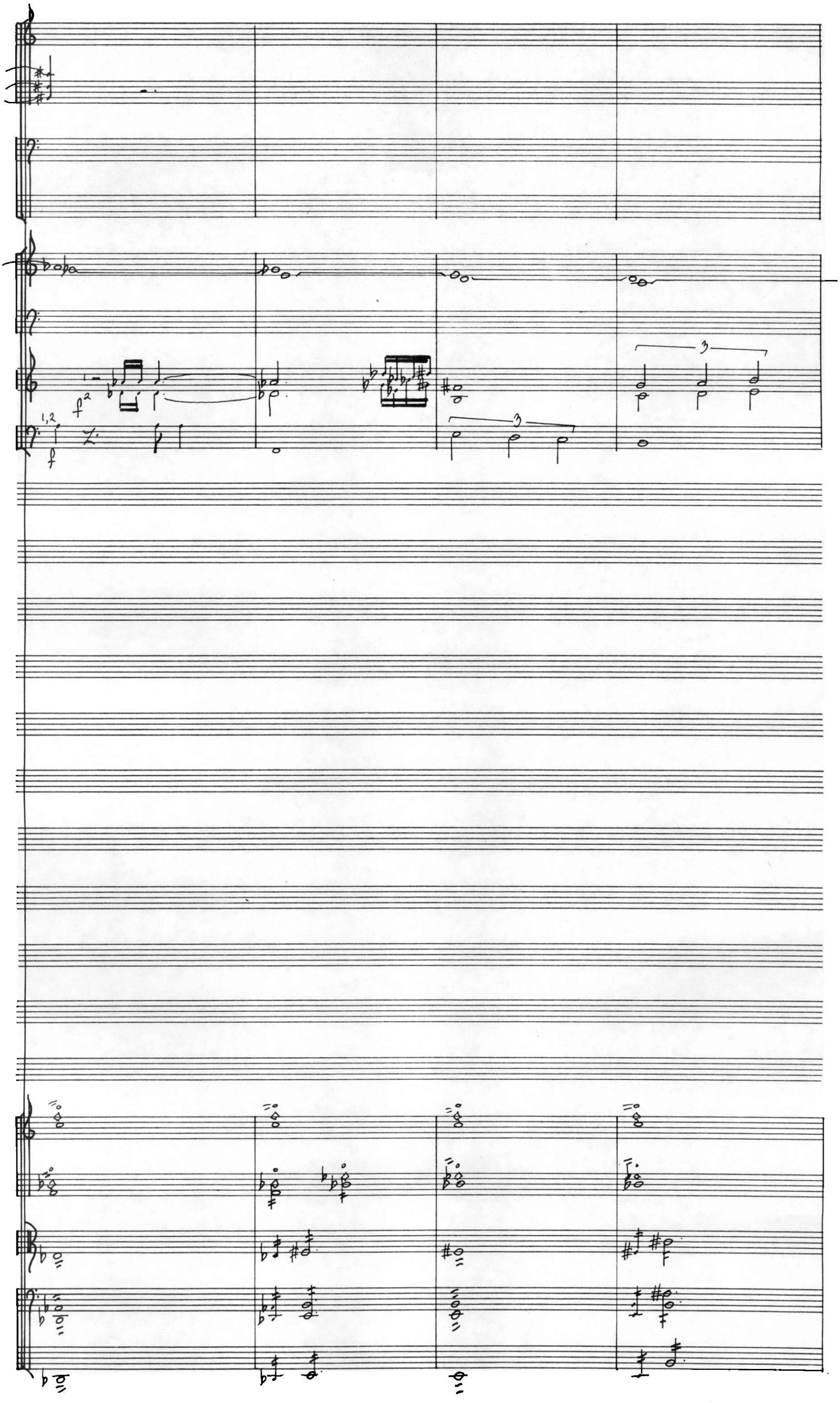
ff

ff

gliss.

gliss.

247 248 249 250


f²
1,2
f
3
3
251
252
253
254

255

Allargando

p cresc.

p cresc.

ff

ff

ff

ff

Allargando

Hp

gliss.

f

Pf

use forearms

ff

5

8va

GC.

p cresc.

Timp.

p cresc.

fff

fff

5

f

f

5

255 256 257 258

Largo

260

mp

mp

ff

cresc.

ff

cresc.

ff

cresc.

ff

cresc.

tr

tr

tr

ff

ff

cresc.

gliss.

ff

8va

simile

8va

8va

Largo

sf

simile

mf

mf

mf

ff

simile

ff

simile

259

260

261

262

265

mp

mp

8va

GC

ff

263 264 265 266

270

pp

pp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

Hp

Ant
Cym

mf

divisi

pp

divisi

pp

pp

divisi

pp

267 268 269 270

Fl

Ob

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc solo

mf

Vc

Db

271 272 273 274

275

rit

Lento

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc solo

Vc

Db

275 276 277 278

(280)

Sus Cym

wire brushes

tr

P PP

pp

pp

pp

mf

pp

279 PP 280 281 282

(285)

Hp

mf

tr

ppp

f

ppp

283 284 285 286

30 July 1977