Nolan Krell
never broken a bone trying to hold on to something so hard
for saxophone quartet
2017

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For Quasar Quatuor de Saxophones

Performance notes

Programme note:

Never broken a bone trying to hold on to something so hard exists in the small spaces of the instrument and attempts to construct a vocabulary with limited resources. Breath, focus, and relationships between performers and their instrument are placed into frame.

Directions

General:

All performers should read from scores and arrange the pages so that as few page turns as possible are executed. Performers should use minimal visual cues.

The vertical alignments between parts show the attempted relationships that the players are to construct and the audible realization should sound different and imprecise.

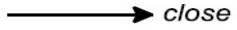
The primary material in this piece is breath. The actions directed in the score are meant to influence the timbre, speed, and shape of the sounds. Towards the end of the piece, the directions converge on the physical characteristics required to produce a standard pitch or sound. While a pitched sound is not intended, if there is no way to avoid one due to the indicated physical parameters, it is acceptable to produce one if only for this reason.

Because the piece is so dependent on breath length and direction, in order to avoid hyperventilation, the performers may take an 'emergency breath' between larger structural breaths. However, these should be made as discretely as possible.

There are no dynamic indications in the score. All sounds should be intended to be as quiet as possible while still fulfilling the prescribed actions. The amplitudes of these parts hinge on the actions indicated. Most of the actions in the score are either on the edge of audibility, very quiet, silent, or create the opportunity for sound to be created.

The saxophones in this piece are 'prepared' in a way. The ligature is removed and not used. The performer holds the reed in place with the thumb of their right hand (right hand keys are never depressed in this piece). Various indications will instruct the performer to 'rotate' the reed between a diagonal position and a standard vertical position (see below).

Horizontal arrows indicate a smooth transition between two states (usually immediately adjacent). When the arrow graphically begins, the transition begins.



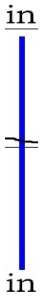
The piece may be amplified if in a large performance space.

Duration: approx. 4'45" – 6'15"

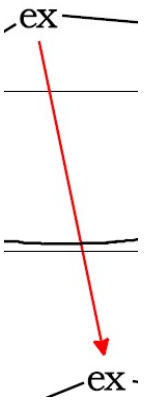
Notation

Cues:

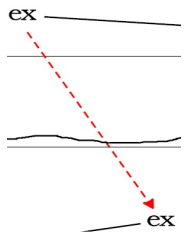
Vertical blue lines indicate simultaneities. These should be coordinated between the involved players.



Solid diagonal red arrows indicate cues. The arrow points away from the cuing part (this player should quasi disregard the cue) and towards the cued part (this player should be prepared to listen for the indicated sound or, more likely, watch for the indicated action). The cued part should act about 1 to 1.5 seconds after observing the cue.



Dashed diagonal red arrows indicate 'softer' cues. The same rules apply but the cued part should act about 2 to 4 seconds after observing the cue.



The beginnings of pages should be organized so that all parts act at the same time (an imaginary vertical blue line).

The piece does not need to be printed with colour but it might make it easier to read. Should the performers chose to read the score in black and white, the blue lines are thicker than all lines and the cues are the only diagonal arrows in the score.

Pace/Rhythm:

Breath is indicated on top of the staff and controls the time and pace of the piece.

'in' indicates and inhaled breath
'ex' indicates and exhaled breath

Lines extending from 'in' and 'ex' show the pace of breath. If the line is shorter, the breath should take a shorter amount of time and be slightly louder (and vice versa).

The longest 'in'/'ex' in the piece (alto page 1 and tenor page 3 respectively) should be thought of as "as long as possible" and everything else is relative to those breaths. Therefore, the player with the smallest lung capacity determines the pace of the piece.

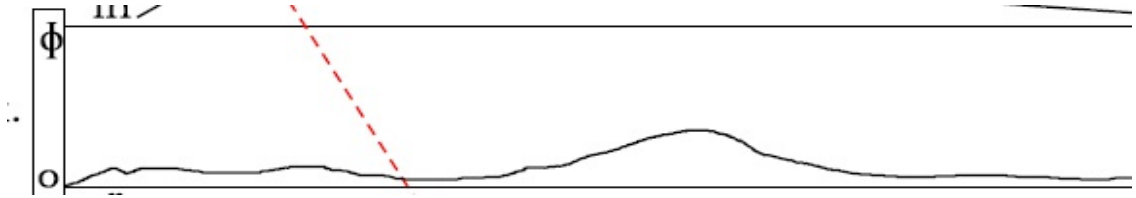
Fingering:

Only the left hand depresses keys in this piece.

On top of the breath indications there are fingering charts for the left hand. Changes should be made as subtly and quickly as possible.

Embouchure/Mouth Tension:

The primary area of the notation indicates the mouth tension with a free-looking line.

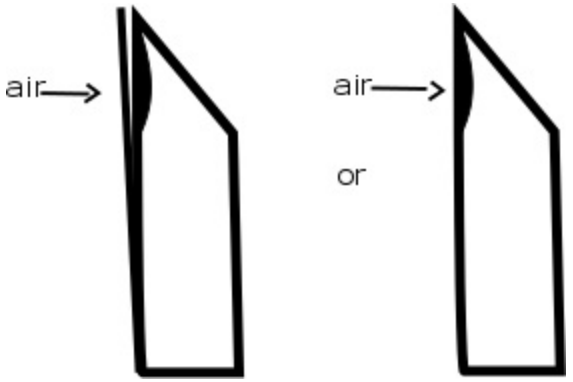


The graph's extremes are 'o' and '□'. 'o' indicates a loose "ooo" sound with enough focus to direct air towards the instrument.
'□' indicates a very tight air sound produced with very tight lips that release only a small stream of intense air. Anything between these extremes indicates some degree of blend between these two sounds (ie, the amount of tension in the lips).

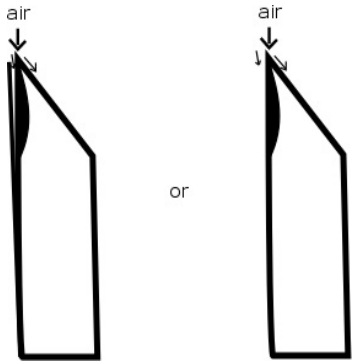
Distance Between Lips and Mouthpiece:

The text in italics beneath the mouth tension areas on the score indicate the relationship between the mouthpiece and lips.

Off = Direct air towards the window of the mouthpiece from about 5cm away. The instrument should be positioned so that the mouthpiece is at an almost vertical angle. If the reed is positioned in a standard, vertical way, the air should make contact with the heart/vamp of the reed.



Close = Direct air towards the tip of the mouthpiece from about 1-2cm away. Some air should deflect off the top of the mouthpiece and some should enter the window. If the reed is positioned in a standard way, a slight whistling will occur due to air traveling between the reed and mouthpiece.



Tip = Blow air through the instrument with the lips around the tip of the mouthpiece.

On = Ordinary position on the mouthpiece.

Reed Rotation:

This is indicated graphically beneath the mouthpiece/lip distance.

= Hold the reed diagonally

= Hold the reed vertically in the standard position.

Page X:

There is a page that exists outside of the normal, 6-page structure of the piece labeled “X”. This additional page is written in standard notation and should be executed in a more or less ‘standard’ way. This page can be played once (and only once) between any two pages or at the start of the piece. The ensemble should determine its position prior to performance.

The first measure should be used (if necessary) to move to an “on” mouthpiece position and rotate the reed to a standard, vertical position. The reed should be held stable enough in the right hand so that pitch can be produced stably.

The last measure should be used to move to the positions notated at the start of the upcoming page.

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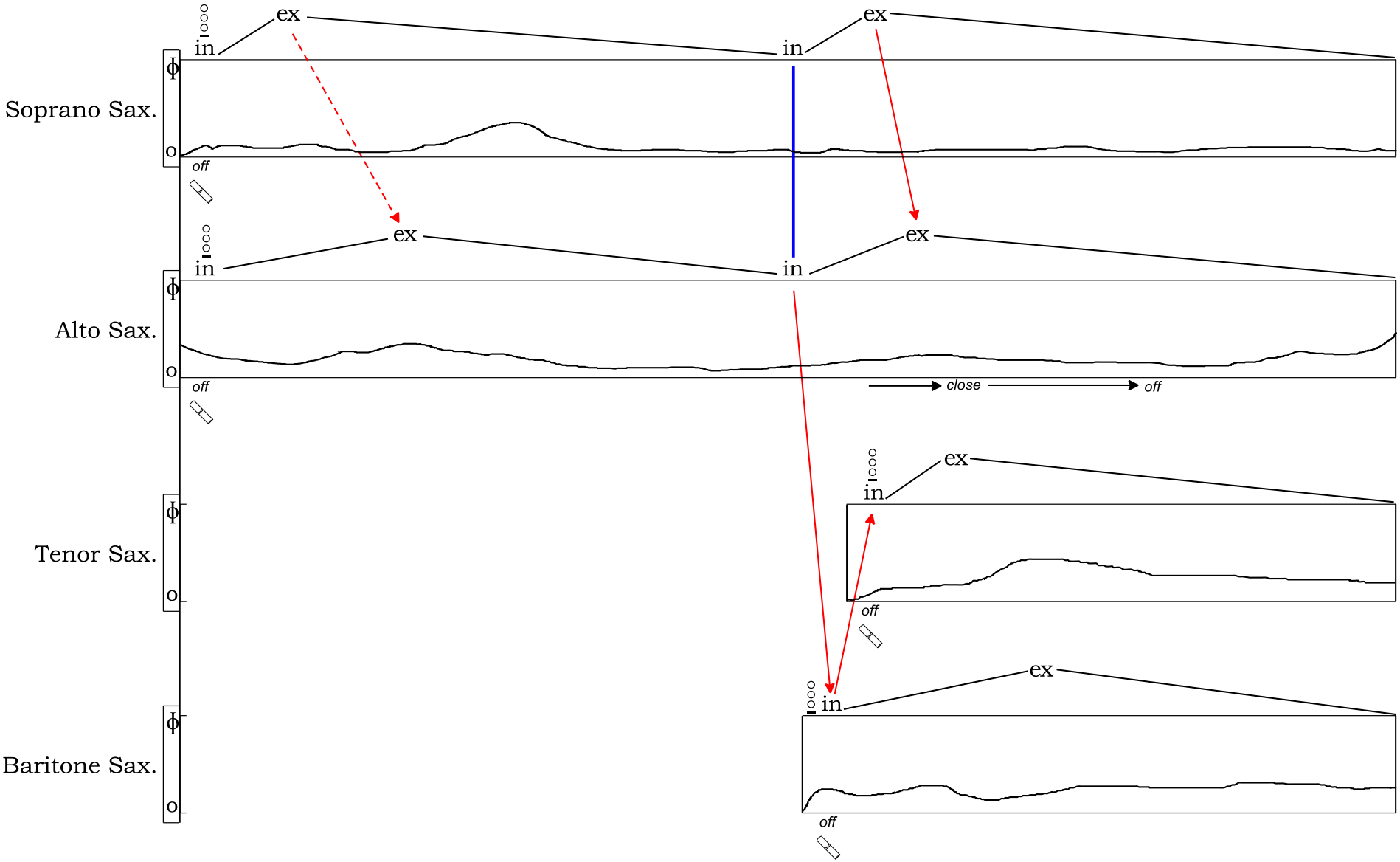
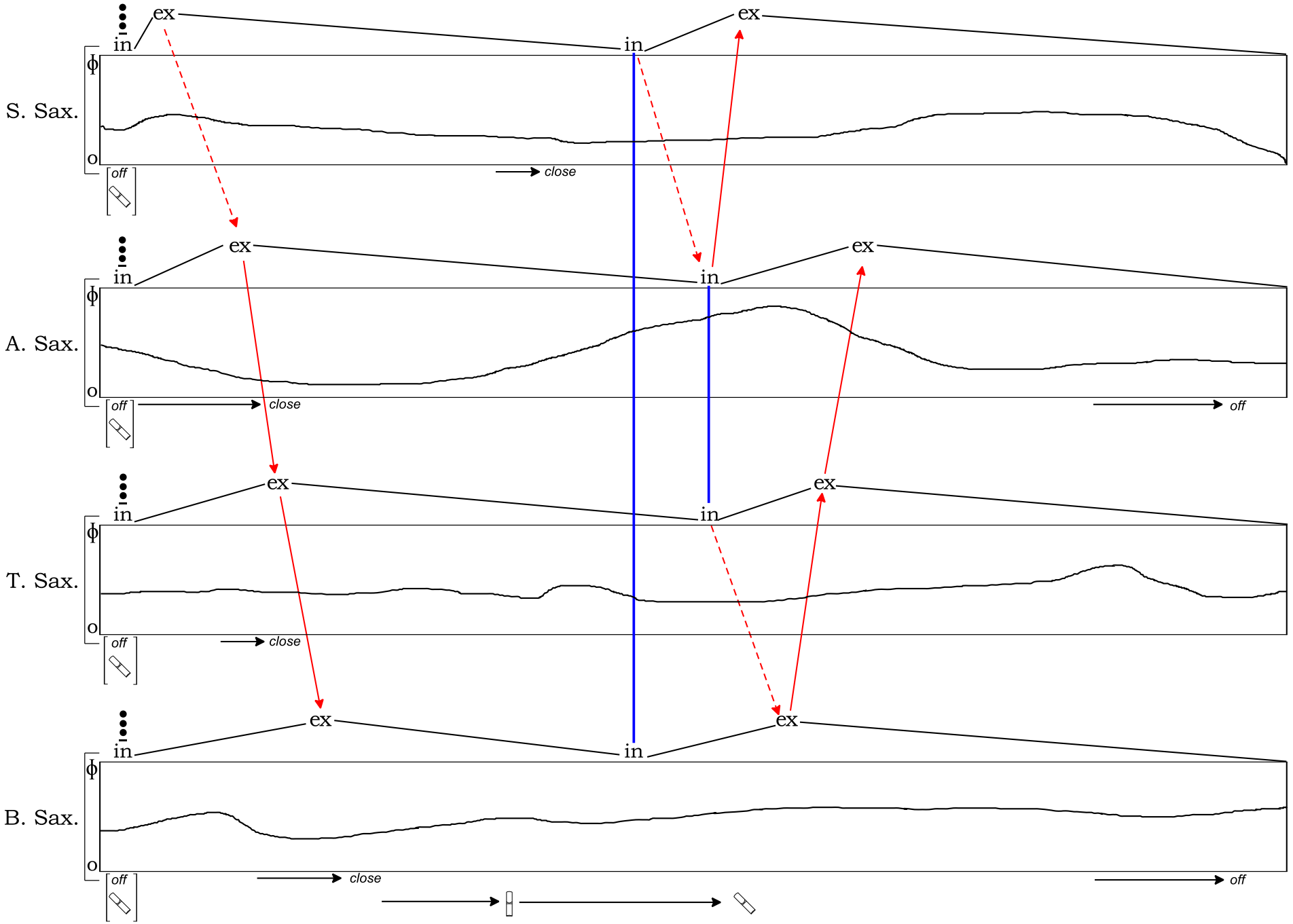
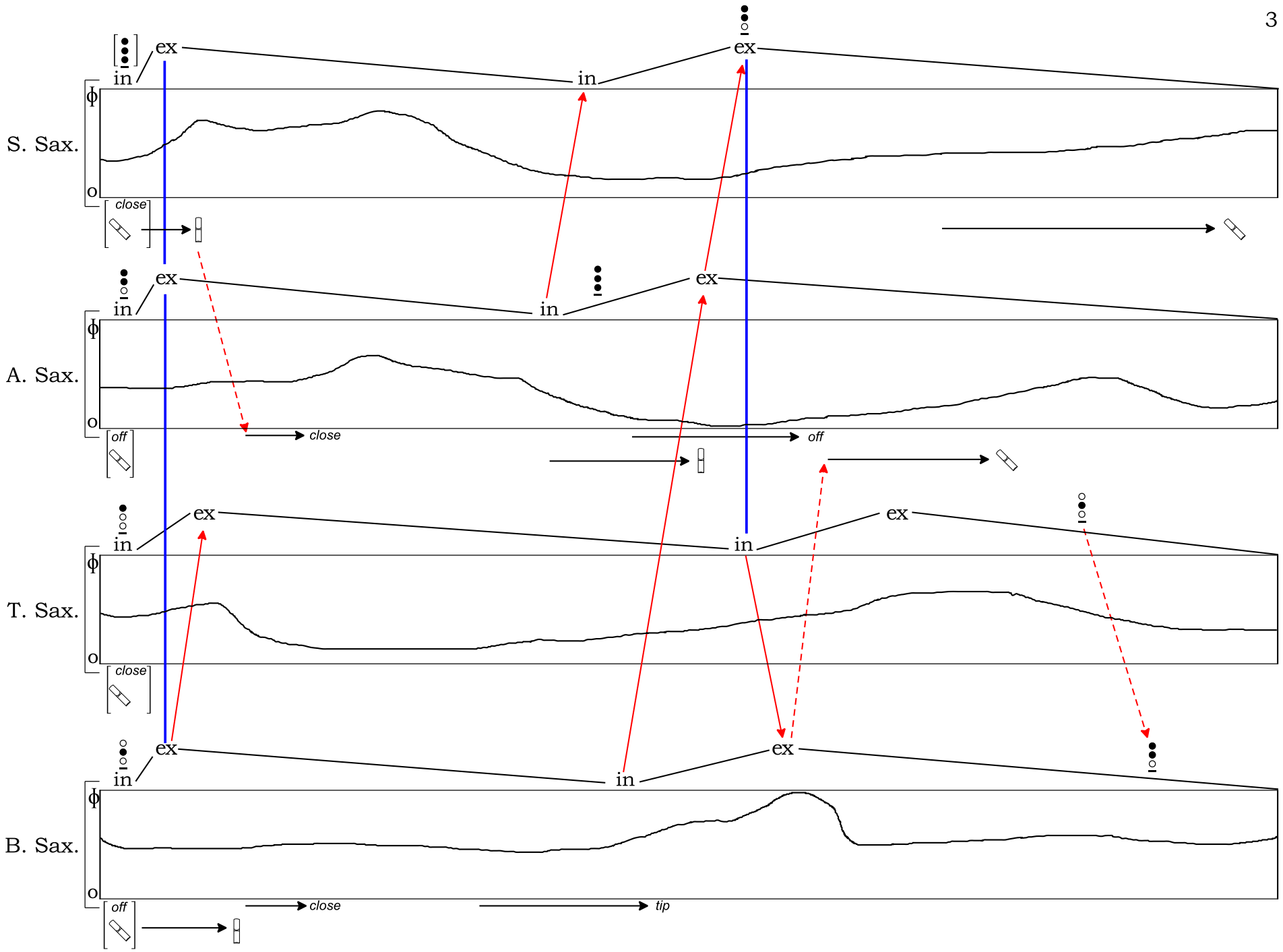
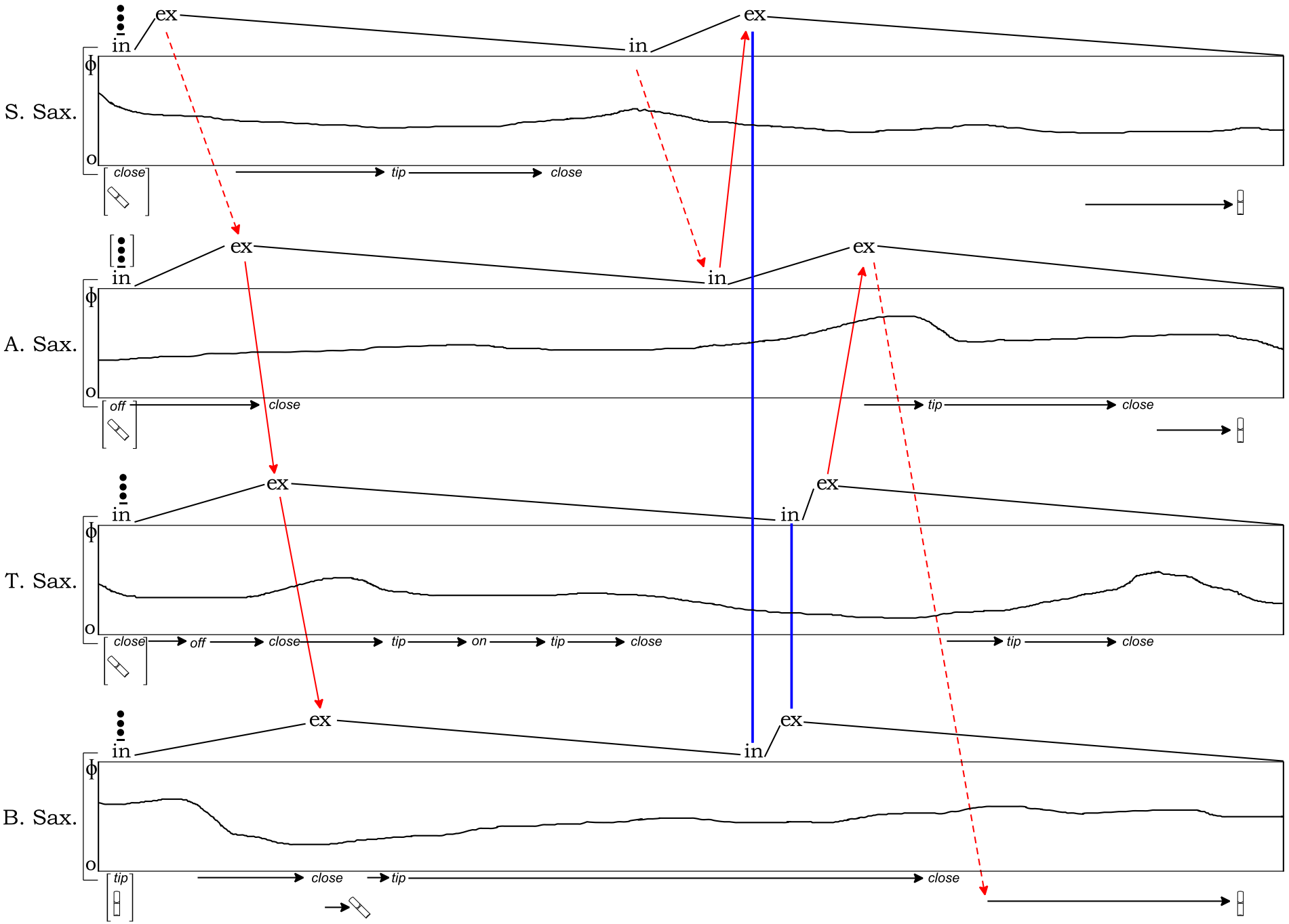
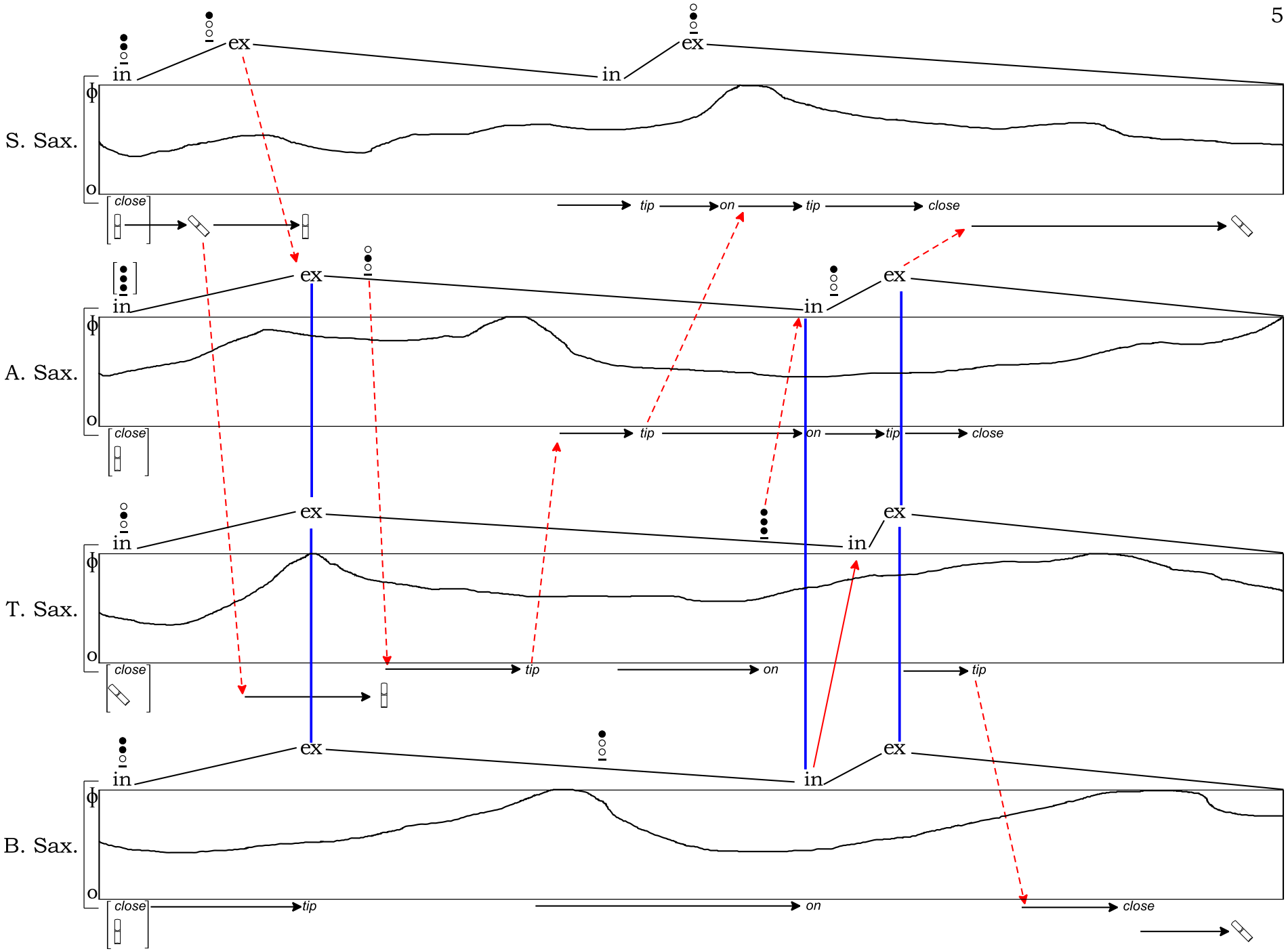


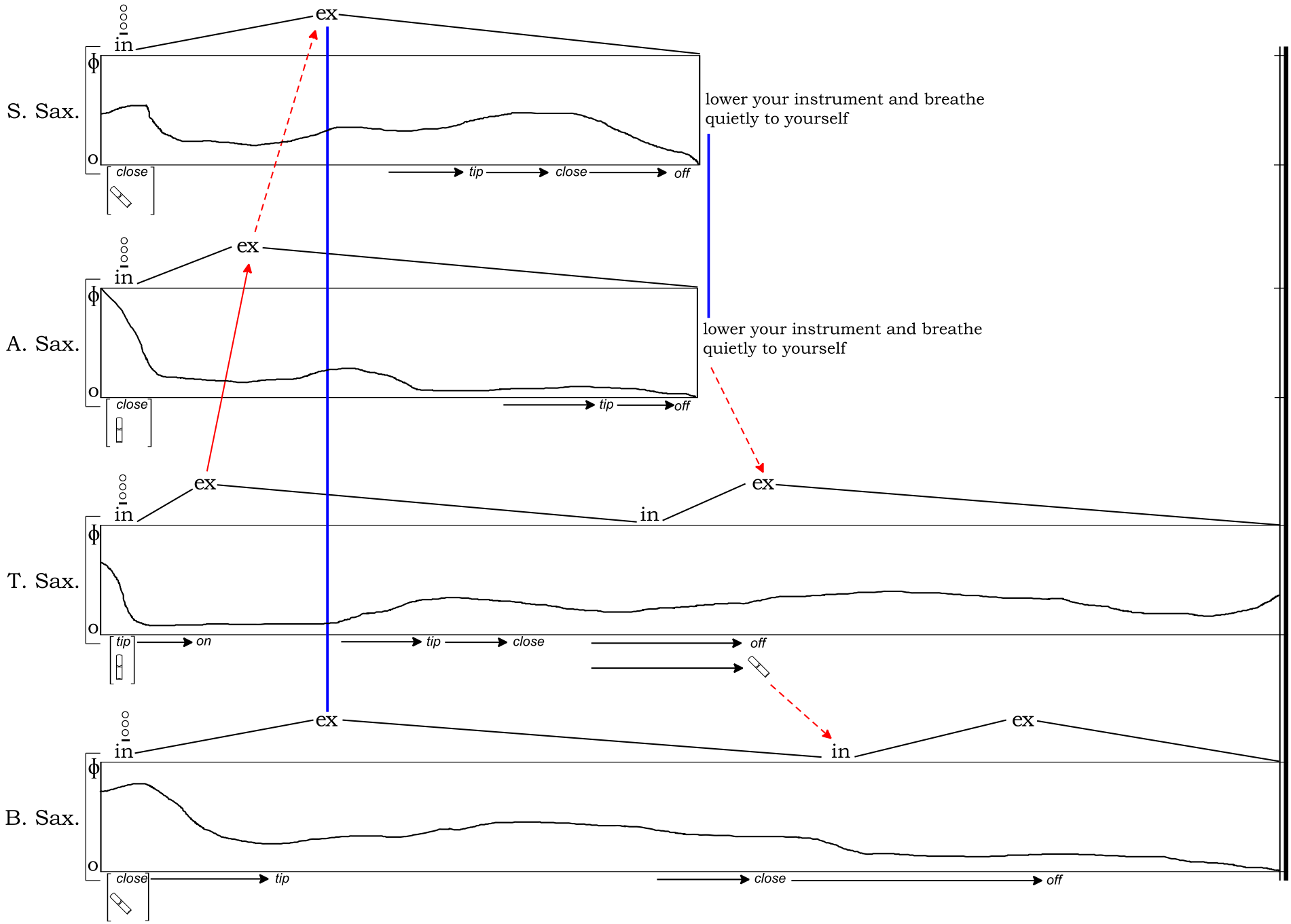
2

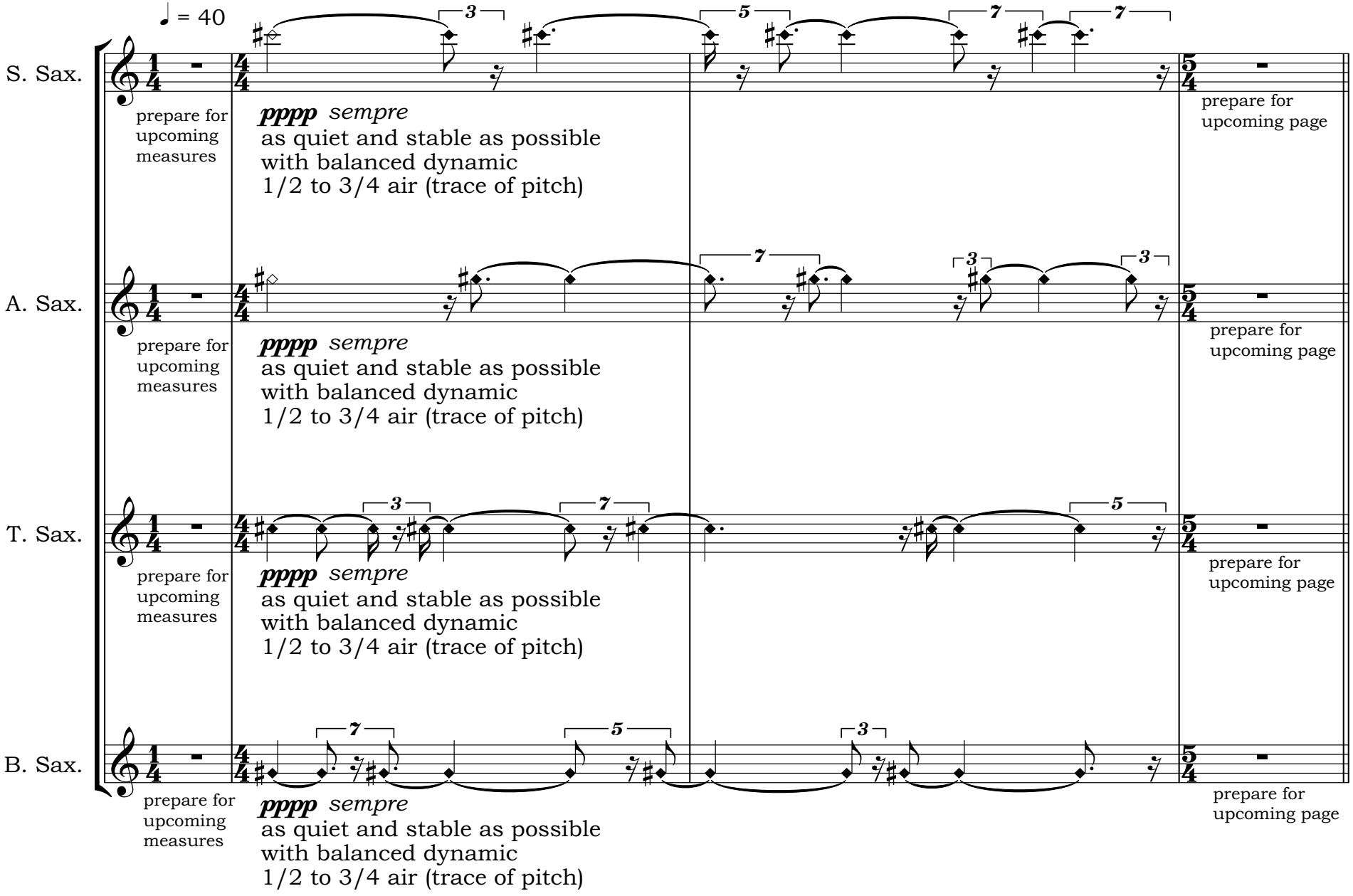



S. Sax.
A. Sax.
T. Sax.
B. Sax.
ex
in
close
off
tip


S. Sax.
A. Sax.
T. Sax.
B. Sax.
ex
in
close
tip
off
on


S. Sax.
A. Sax.
T. Sax.
B. Sax.
in
ex
close
tip
on
tip
close


S. Sax.
A. Sax.
T. Sax.
B. Sax.
in
ex
close
tip
on
off
lower your instrument and breathe quietly to yourself
lower your instrument and breathe quietly to yourself


♩ = 40
S. Sax.
A. Sax.
T. Sax.
B. Sax.
prepare for upcoming measures
pppp sempre
as quiet and stable as possible
with balanced dynamic
1/2 to 3/4 air (trace of pitch)
prepare for upcoming page