Nolan Krell
Why so bright? Why cast a shadow on anything?
for 2 percussionists and electronics
2016

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Why so bright? Why cast a shadow on anything?

performance note:

Why so bright? Why cast a shadow on anything? exists as a space within a space, continually contracting and expanding like a living fog.

What does it mean to connect?
How do physical geographies create linearities?
Where do boundaries collide to illuminate additional ones?
Why should an object move (beyond the self-justification of movement)?

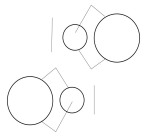
Performance directions:

General:

Each percussionist plays a snare drum. Both drums should be approximately the same size and tuning. Neither percussionist uses sticks; the piece is performed with the hand and fingers.

The electronic equipment required is two (or more) microphones, two (or more) speakers (stereo), and one mixer.

Staging: the two percussionists should be situated on the stage facing each other but with overlapping drums so that the acoustic material is perceived as a single unit. The electronics technician should be offstage, set up in the centre of the audience.



All performers should read from scores. Performers should use minimal visual cues (if any).

For smaller spaces or more intimate performances, it is possible to perform this piece without the electronic component.

Time:

Approx. Duration: 9'20"

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

Each page is accompanied by a precise length in seconds (however, this can be moderately flexible). This can be realized in a number of ways through rehearsal. One option would be to use stopwatches to guide the pacing of the sections. This will result in an interpretation that is potentially more rhythmically precise (it will be possible to divide the indicated pulsations into even lengths of time); however, this method could suffer with a loss of musicality. Another option would be to use a stopwatch in the learning process to understand the feel of the length of time and perform with this approximation in mind. This will involve listening and watching as well as an amount of guesswork and prediction which allows this interpretation to be based more on the space and time between each performer's actions. However, this method could have problems with unification and coordination. The final option would be to use a combination of both of these options which uses a stopwatch to anchor the piece at the beginnings of pages (other than this, most of the attention should be given to the subjective coordination between performers and not the stopwatch).

Dashed vertical lines indicate simultaneities.
Dashed horizontal lines indicate a sustained action. Dashed horizontal lines indicate a gradual change from one state to another.
There are larger beams which link pages together. These show larger formal sections and divisions.

Slurs are intentionally vague and suggest that the connected materials should be heard (or felt) as a cohesive unit somehow.

Grace notes are performed in a relaxed but quicker manner than the material surrounding them. They should be played 'before the beat'.

There are no dynamics indicated in the percussion parts. The amplitude of these parts hinge on the physical actions prescribed.
It is important for the performer to know that many of these actions are intended to be very subtle and, in many cases, almost inaudible.

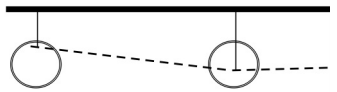
Percussion:

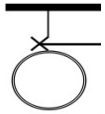
The percussion parts are divided into two hands and three staves. The staves should be read from top to bottom like this:

Right hand Position
Right hand Finger Pressure
Left hand Snare Mechanism

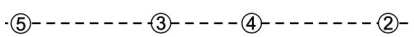
Top staff – Position of hand:

This staff indicates the y-axis position of the hand on the snare drum through graphic representations of the drum. The top of a circle indicates the top (furthest point from the performer) of the drum and the bottom of a circle indicates the bottom (closest point to the performer) of the drum. The centre indicates the centre of the drum. All other positions are between these extremes.





This (x notehead) indicates a position on the other side of the far rim. Moving to and from here should be quite aurally intrusive.



Between the top and middle staves, there are circled numbers. These numbers indicate the tension and finger density of the hand.

1 = fingers as close together as possible.
5 = fingers as far apart as possible.
All other numbers are between these extremes.

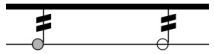
Middle staff – Finger Pressure

The five lines on this staff represent the five fingers. Top to bottom represents little finger to thumb. This staff illustrates the amount of pressure that each finger has on the drum head at any given time through different-coloured noteheads. The indicated pressure is sustained until that finger is asked to change pressure. All pressure changes are made *subito*. Noteheads in brackets are shown for cautionary reasons.

finger not touching

exagerated finger pressure.

Greyscale noteheads indicate variable pressure between these extremes.


Tremolo bars indicate a slight horizontal tremolo. The tremolo stops when a stem without tremolo bars appears.

Bottom staff – Snare Mechanism

snare on

snare off

Brackets indicate a position which has been sustained and only used for clarification.
When the snare is on, don't allow the mechanism to lock into place. Only move as much as necessary to make/remove snare contact.

Electronics:

The microphones amplify the acoustic material. The performer follows the percussionists' music and attempts to match their own line in time. The performer modifies the amplitude output with the indicated dynamics.

fff = only electronic sound is heard
mp = electronic and acoustic material are at equal level
o = no electronic sound
All others are between these extremes.

However, the performer must balance these dynamics with the ever-changing amplitude of the acoustic sounds.
Therefore, an unchanging dynamic in the score might have a flexible relationship with the acoustic material.

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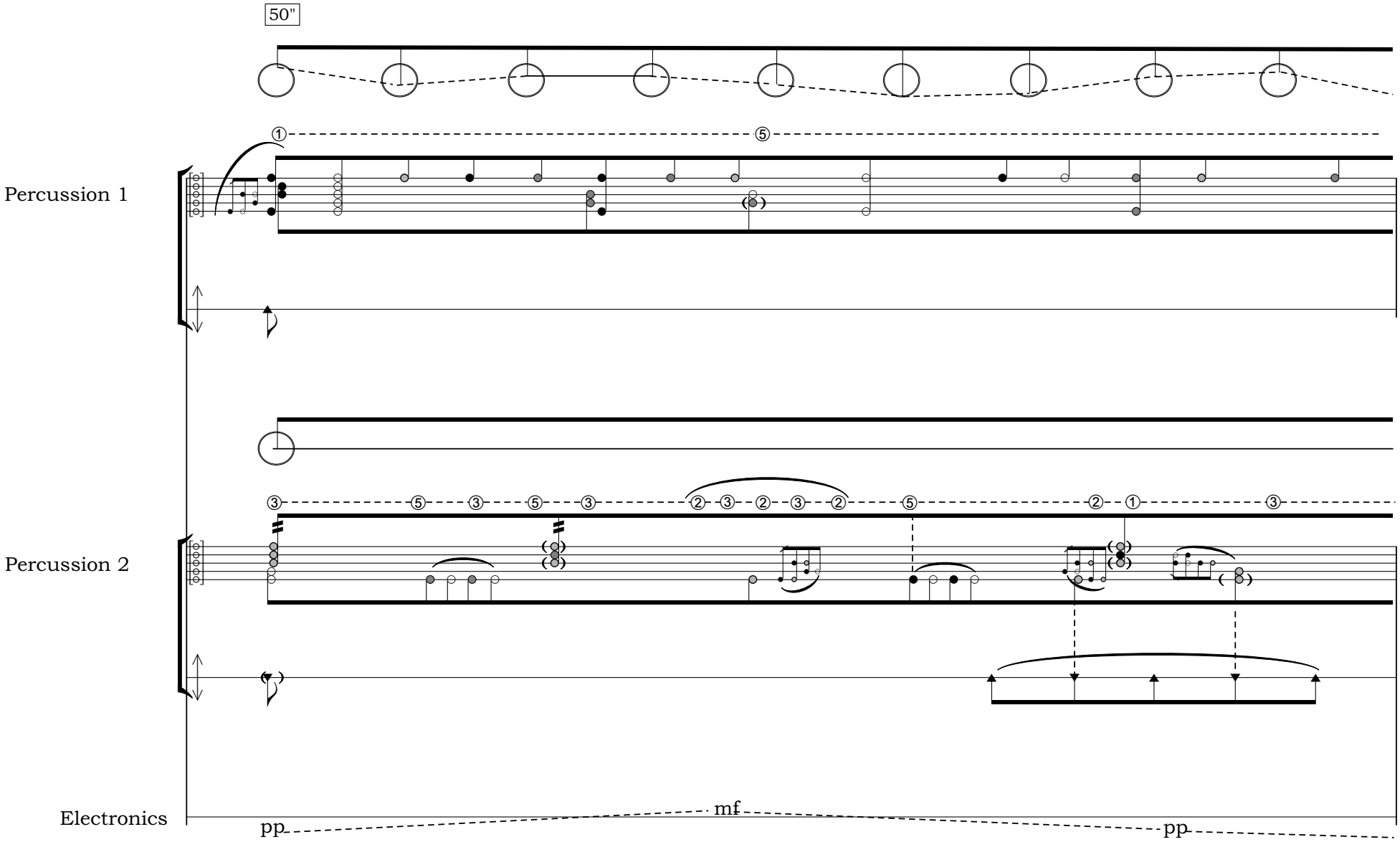
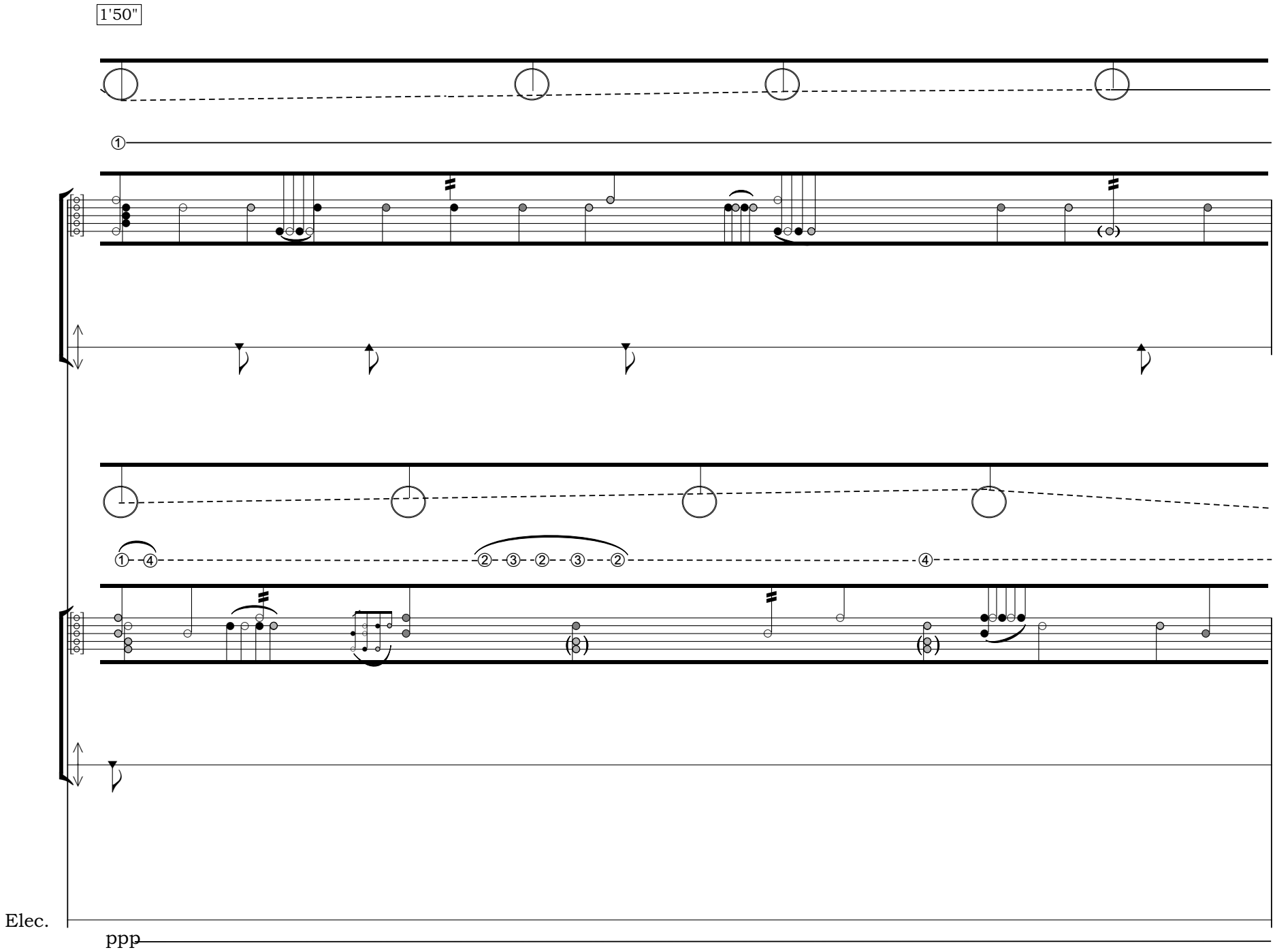
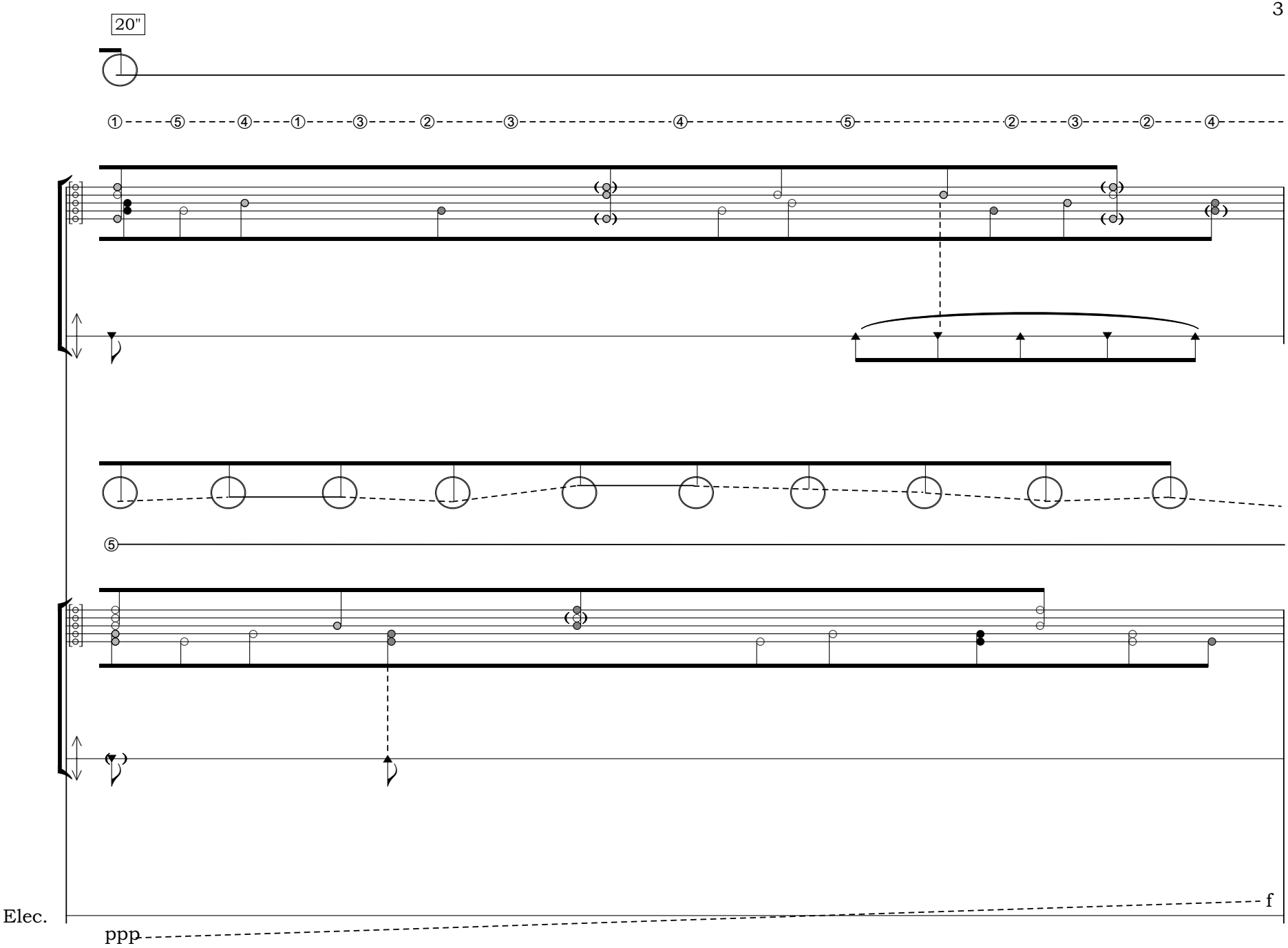
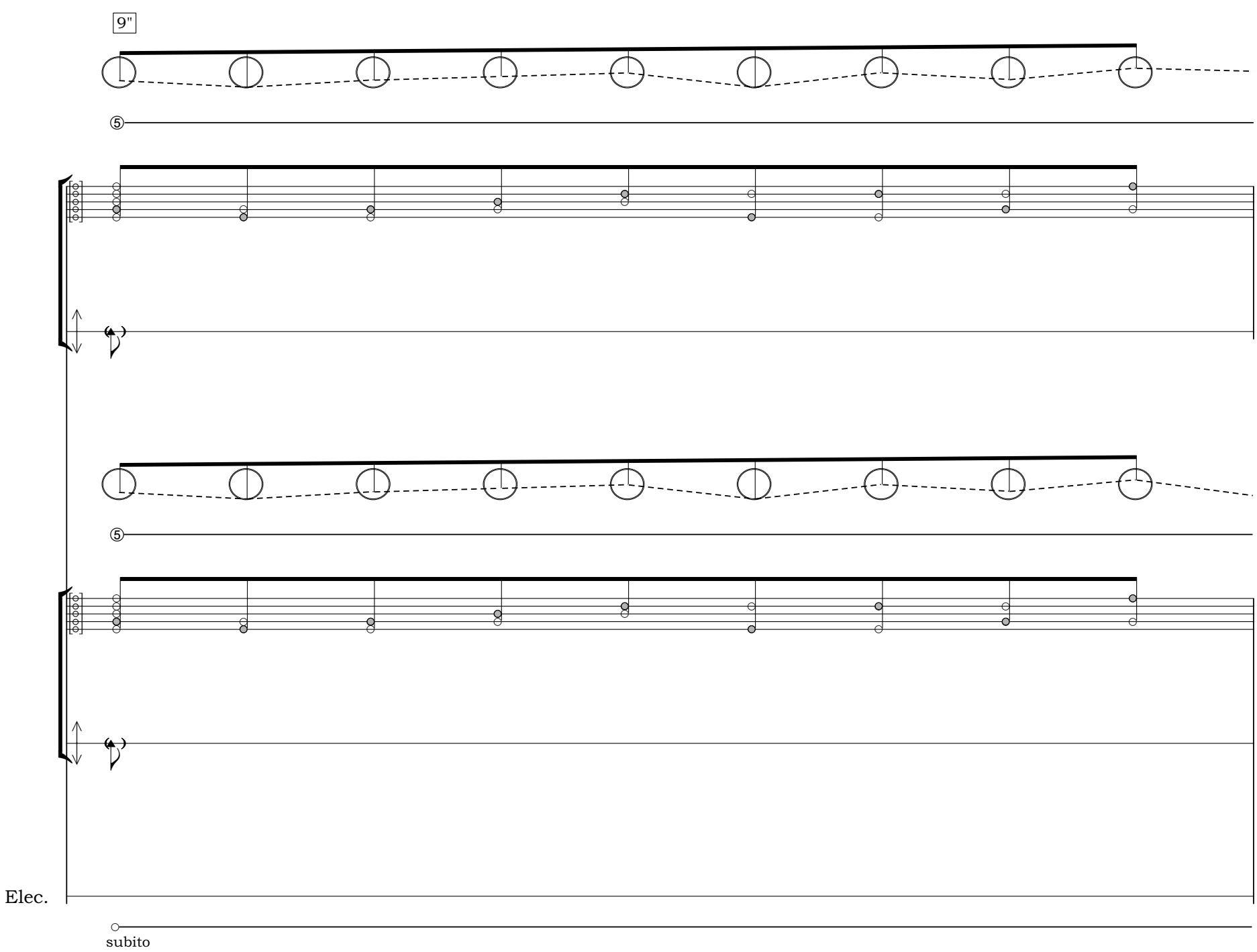
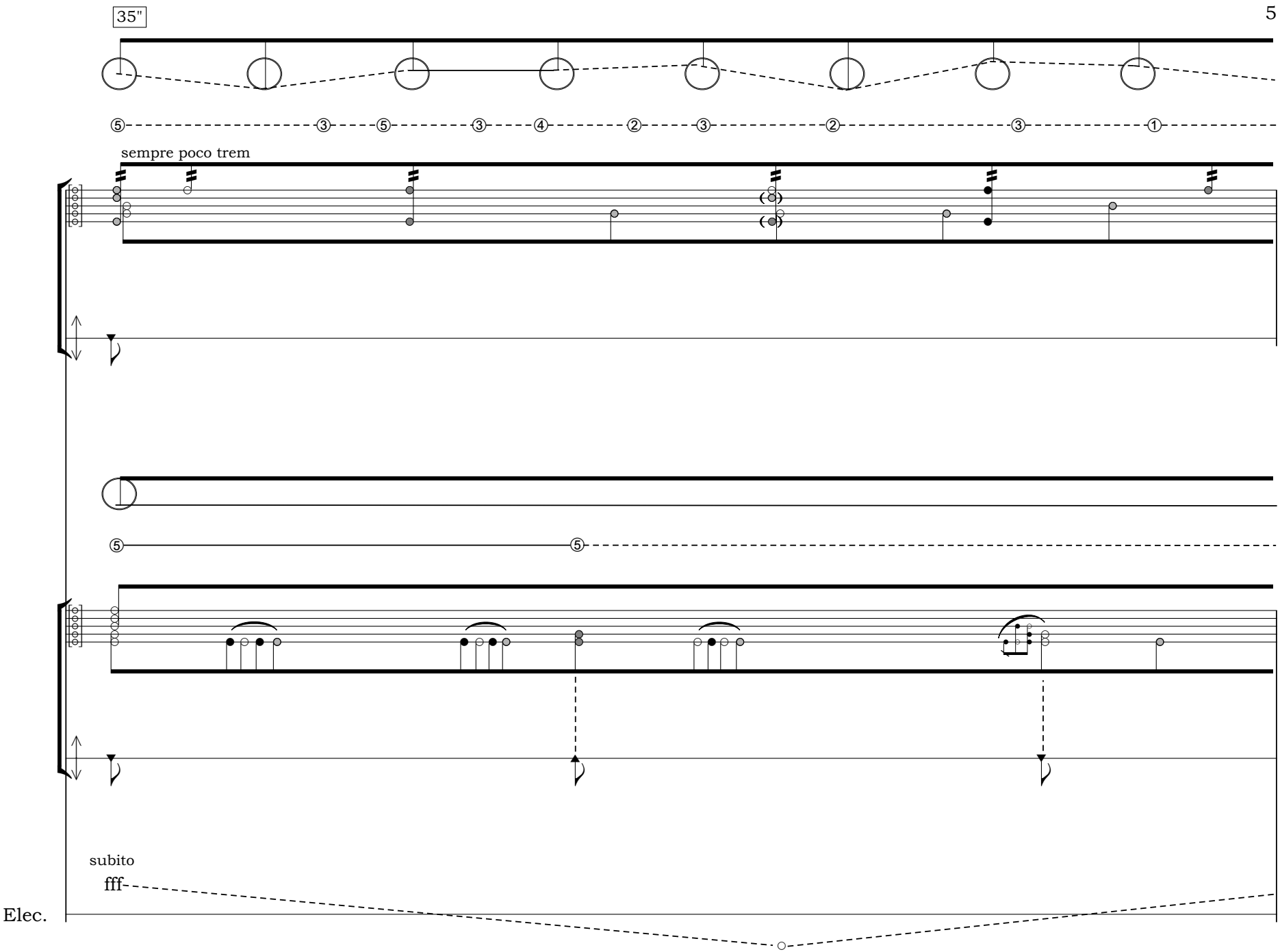
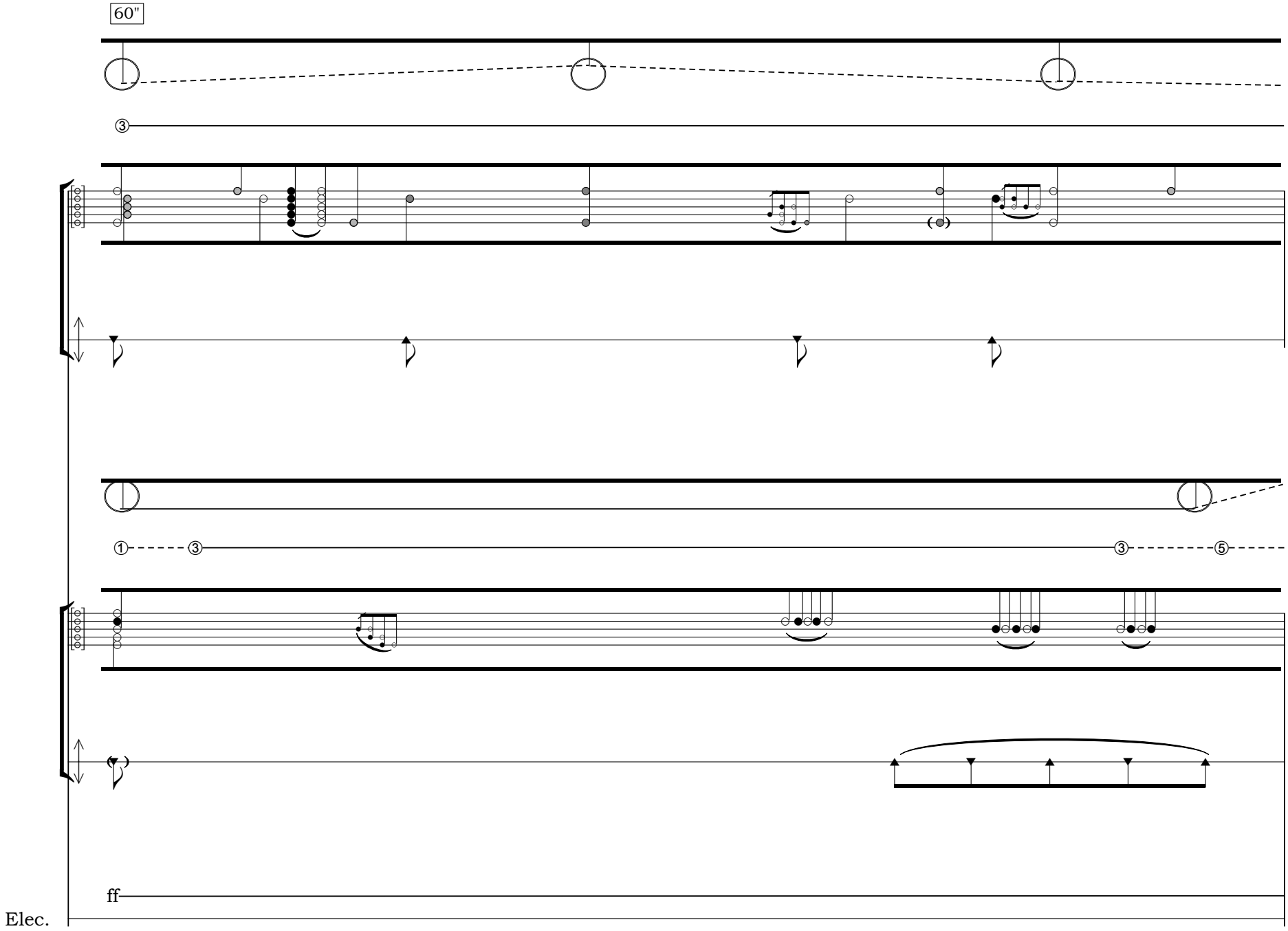


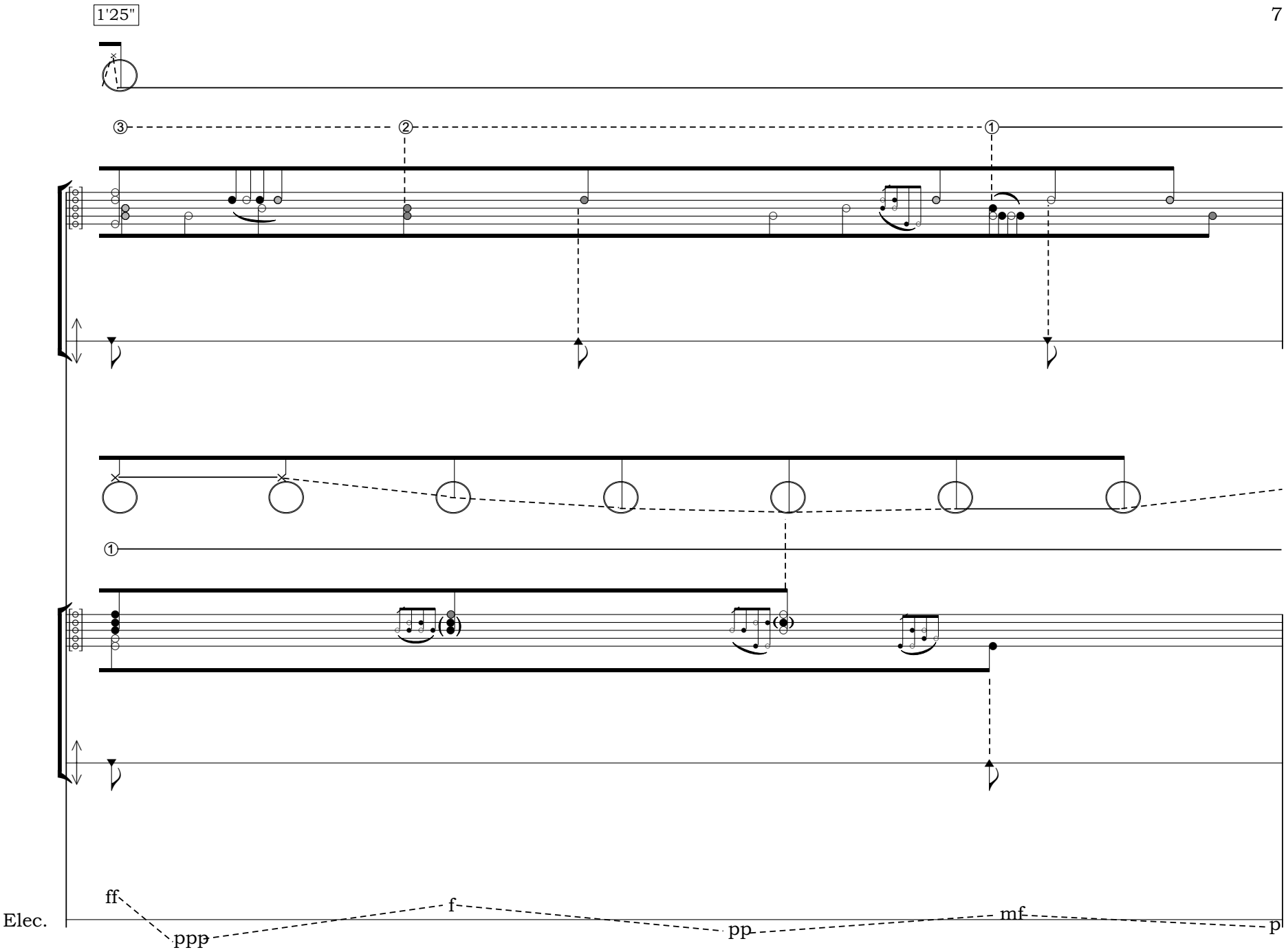

1'50"
Elec.
ppp

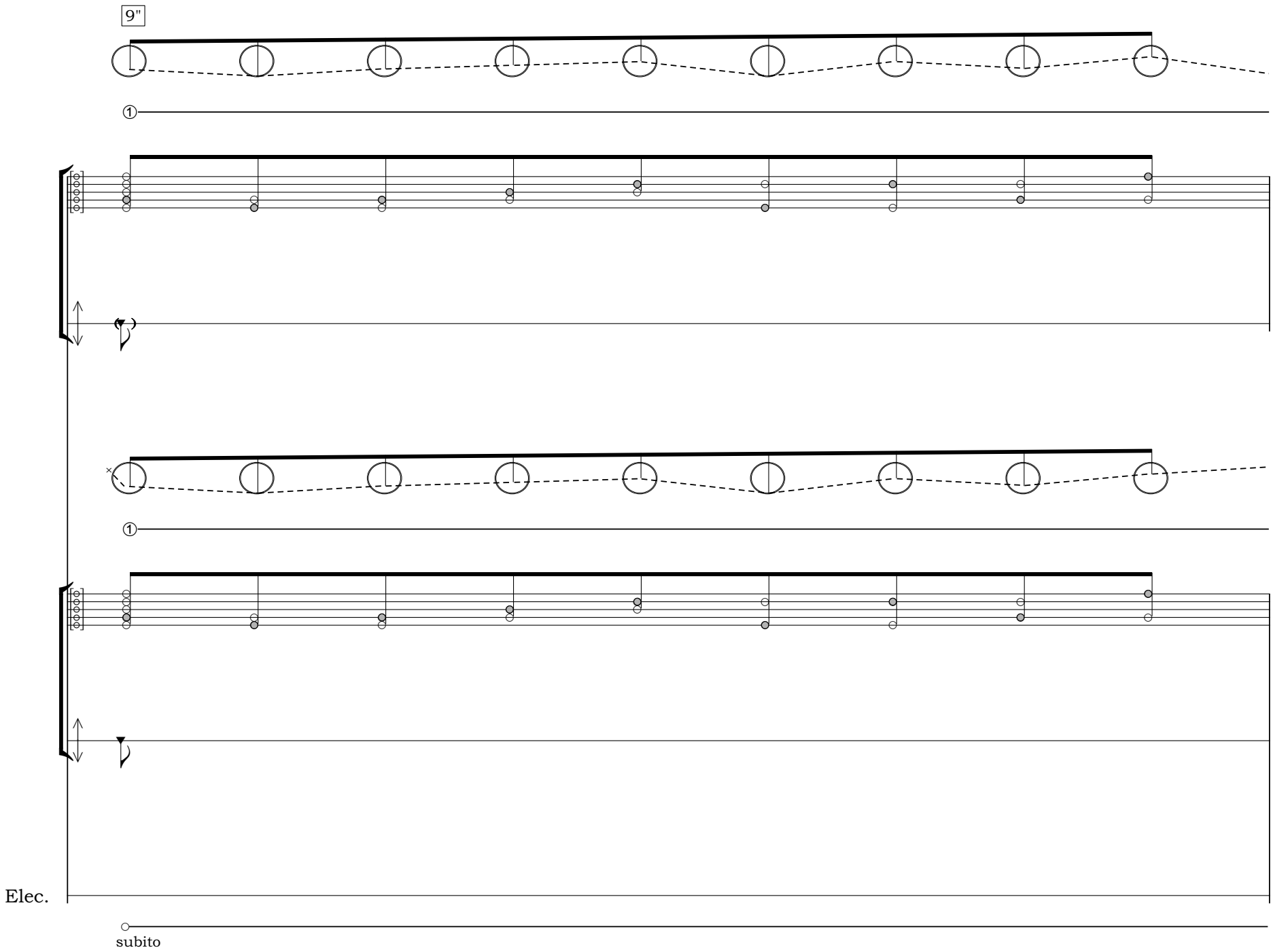

20"
① ⑤ ④ ① ③ ② ③ ④ ⑤ ② ③ ② ④
⑤
Elec.
ppp
f

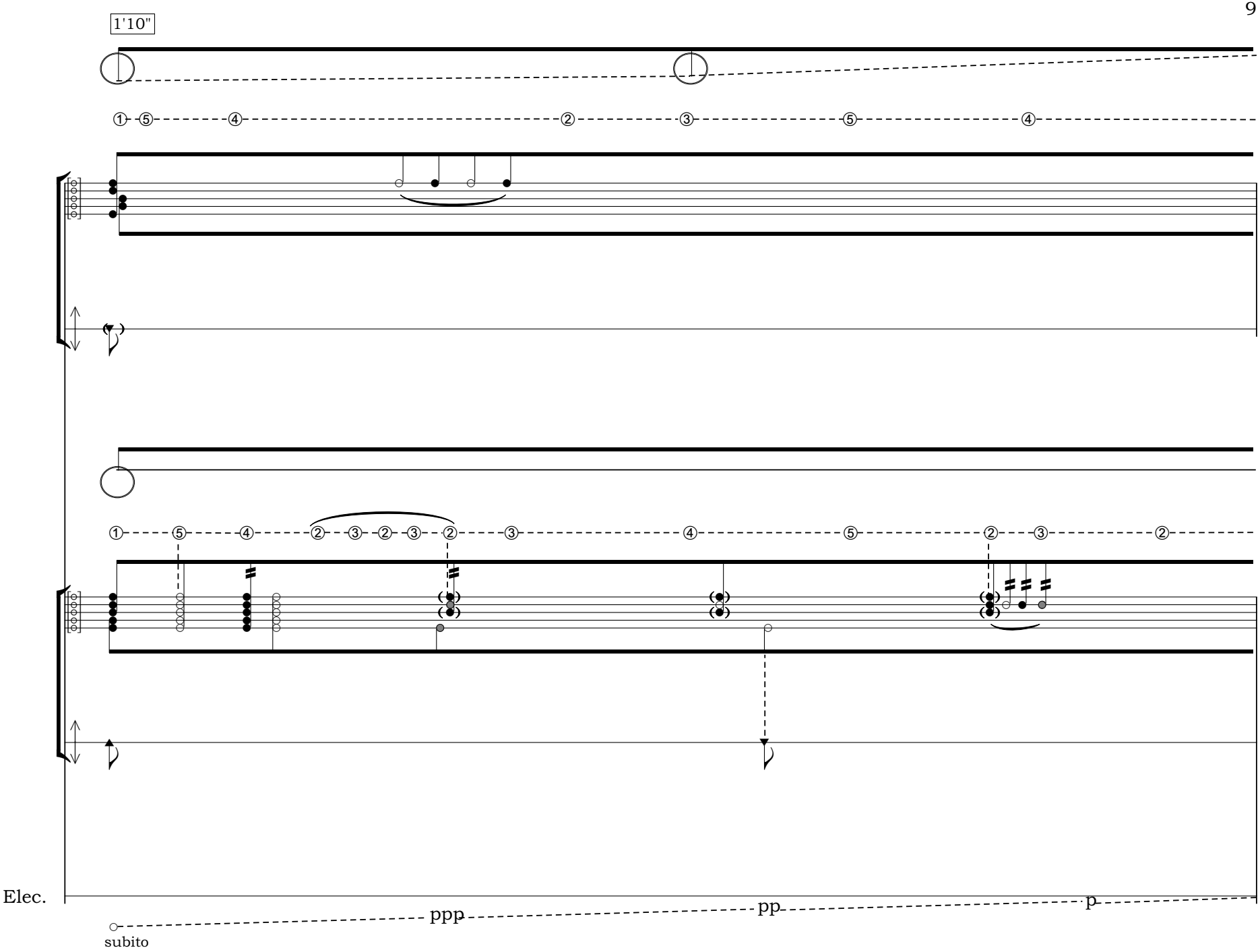

9"
Elec.
subito


35"
⑤ ③ ⑤ ③ ④ ② ③ ② ③ ①
sempre poco trem
⑤ ⑤
subito
fff-
Elec.

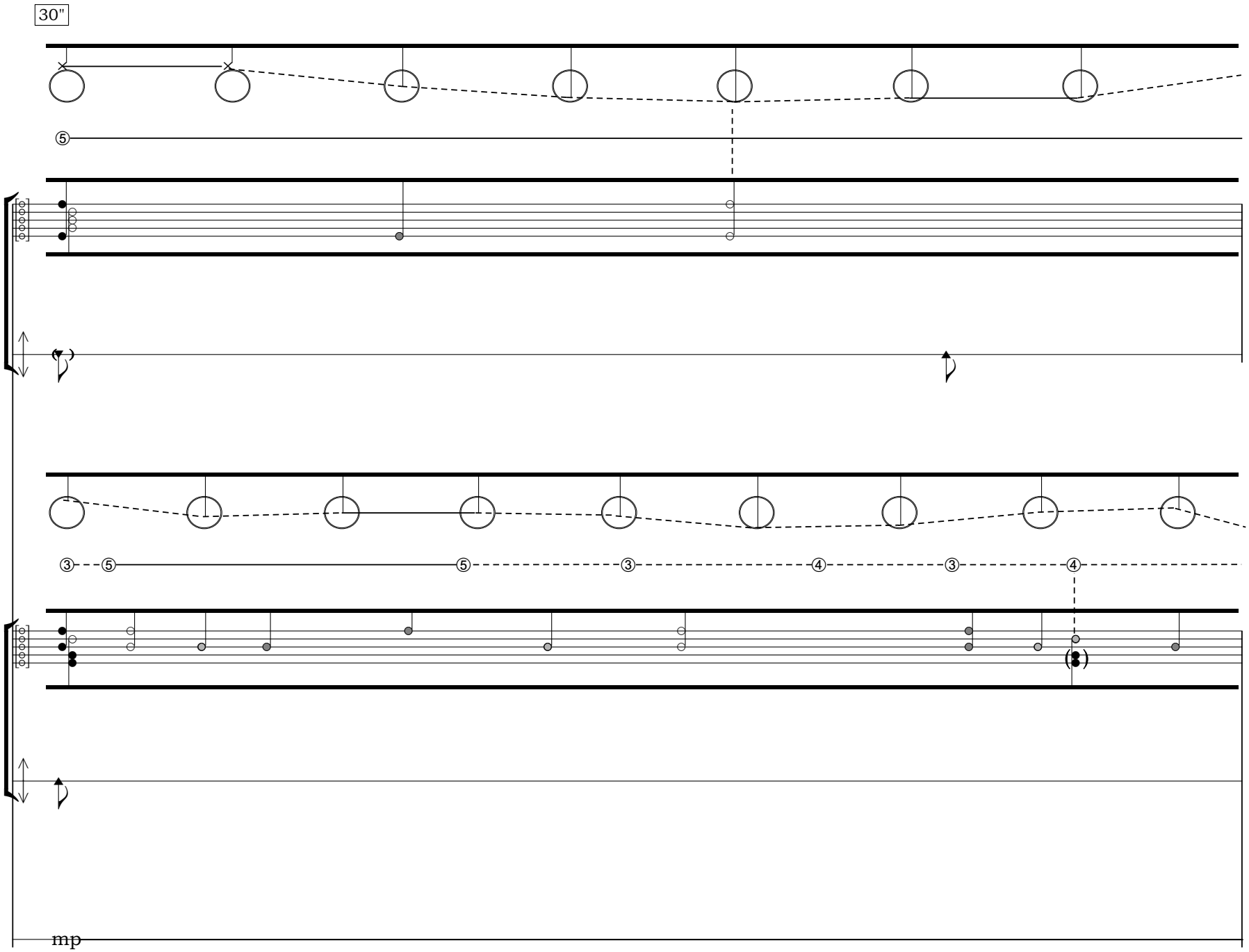

60"
③
①
③
③
⑤
ff
Elec.

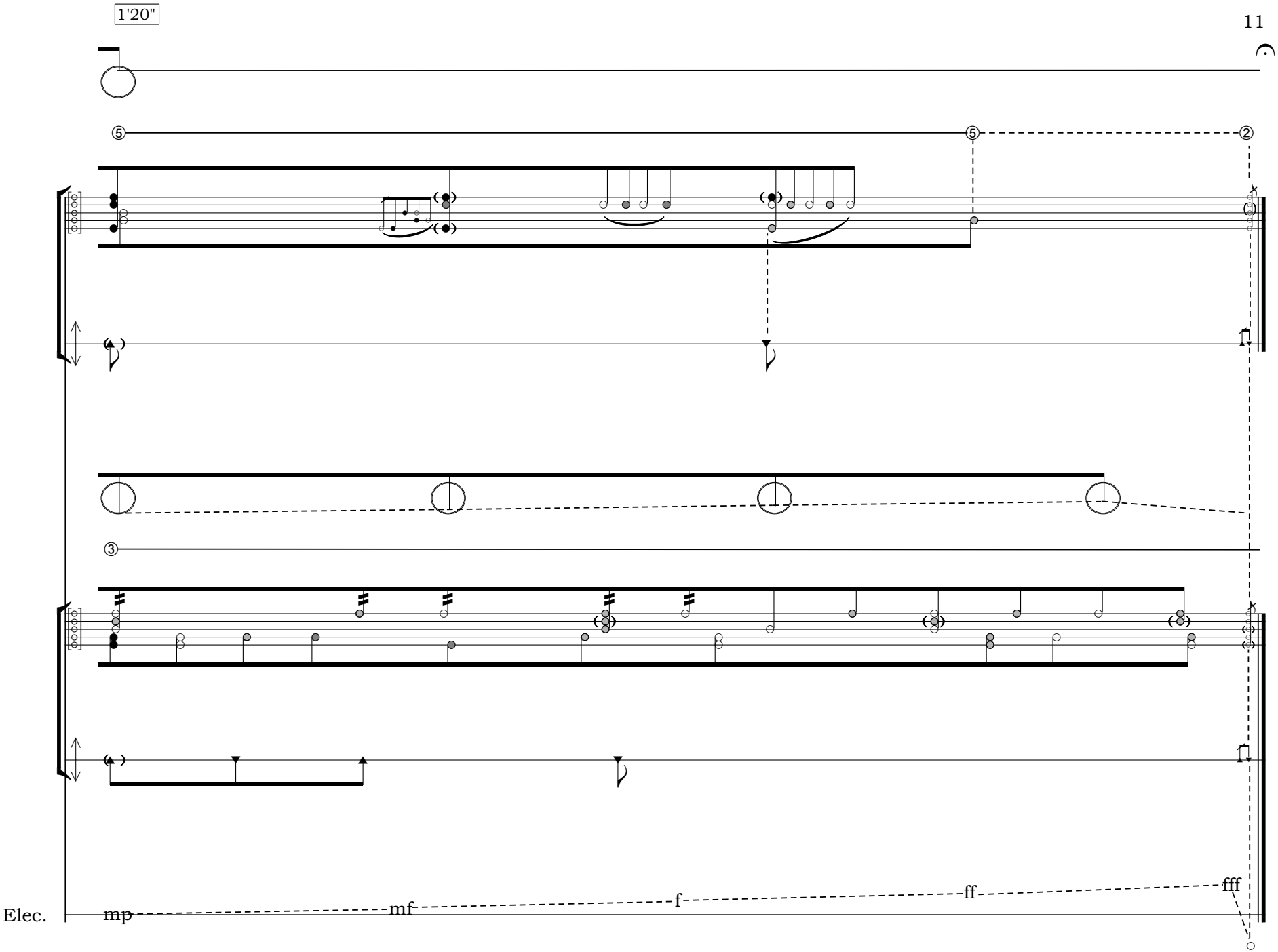

1'25"
③
②
①
①
Elec.
ff
ppp
f
pp
mf
p


9"
Elec.
subito


1'10"
Elec.
ppp
subito
pp
p

10




1'20"
⑤
⑤
②
③
Elec.
mp
mf
f
ff
fff