Full Score

referendum

by Sheena Phillips

an open score piece inspired by the UK referendum on Brexit in June 2016

for four instrumental parts (High, High, Medium, Low) and percussion
(two players)

composed for the CoMA summer school, 2016

duration c. 6:00

licensed exclusively to CoMA

all rights reserved

© copyright Sheena Phillips 2016

www.sheenaphillips.com sheenaphillips@gmail.com

referendum

An open score composition for 4 instrumental lines (High, High, Medium, Low) and percussion.

The piece is an attempt to portray the British referendum on membership of the European Union in June, 2016. In the opening sections, the High 1 and Medium parts represent the "remain" camp. Their theme is derived from the notes that "EUROPE" spells out if you imagine extending the alphabet along the white notes of a piano beyond the first A through G. Another motif based around E and C (for European Community) also plays a part. The High 2 and Low parts represent the "leave" camp – punchier and bolder from the outset, and growing more so with time. Their main theme is derived partly from a conjunction of car horn notes that I happened to hear one morning, and the GDBB motif comes from the notes that "UKIP" (UK Independence Party, one of the louder voices in favour of "leave") spells out on the imaginary alphabet piano described above.

Perhaps what remains with me most strongly about the whole event was the emotional aftershock of the Brexit vote – a sense of teetering at the edge of some yawing void, and/or of being catapulted into unknown and uncharted territory – and a sense also of grief at the sudden departure from the world as we thought we knew it. Yes, I voted "remain" – and this piece is written from that perspective – but I hope some of the drama feels true to onlookers from both sides of the divide.

Sheena Phillips
July, 2016

Suggested instrumentation

High 1: upper strings, flutes, woodwinds
High 2: trumpets, woodwinds
Medium: violas, horns
Low: low strings, low brass, bassoons

Percussion: the piece calls for three main timbres, of which only two play at any one time.
- Timbre 1 - any kind of drums
- Timbre 2 – castanets / claves / wood
- Timbre 3 – tambourine / suspended cymbal / metal

In addition, at bars 97 and 106 it would be ideal if a sports referee's whistle could be blown. Otherwise, a gong or bell – or a blast from high woodwinds – can be substituted.

Body percussion is another option (thigh slaps for Timbre 1 / finger clicks for Timbre 2, strongly whispered 'cha cha cha' for Timbre 3, whistles for whistles).

Notation

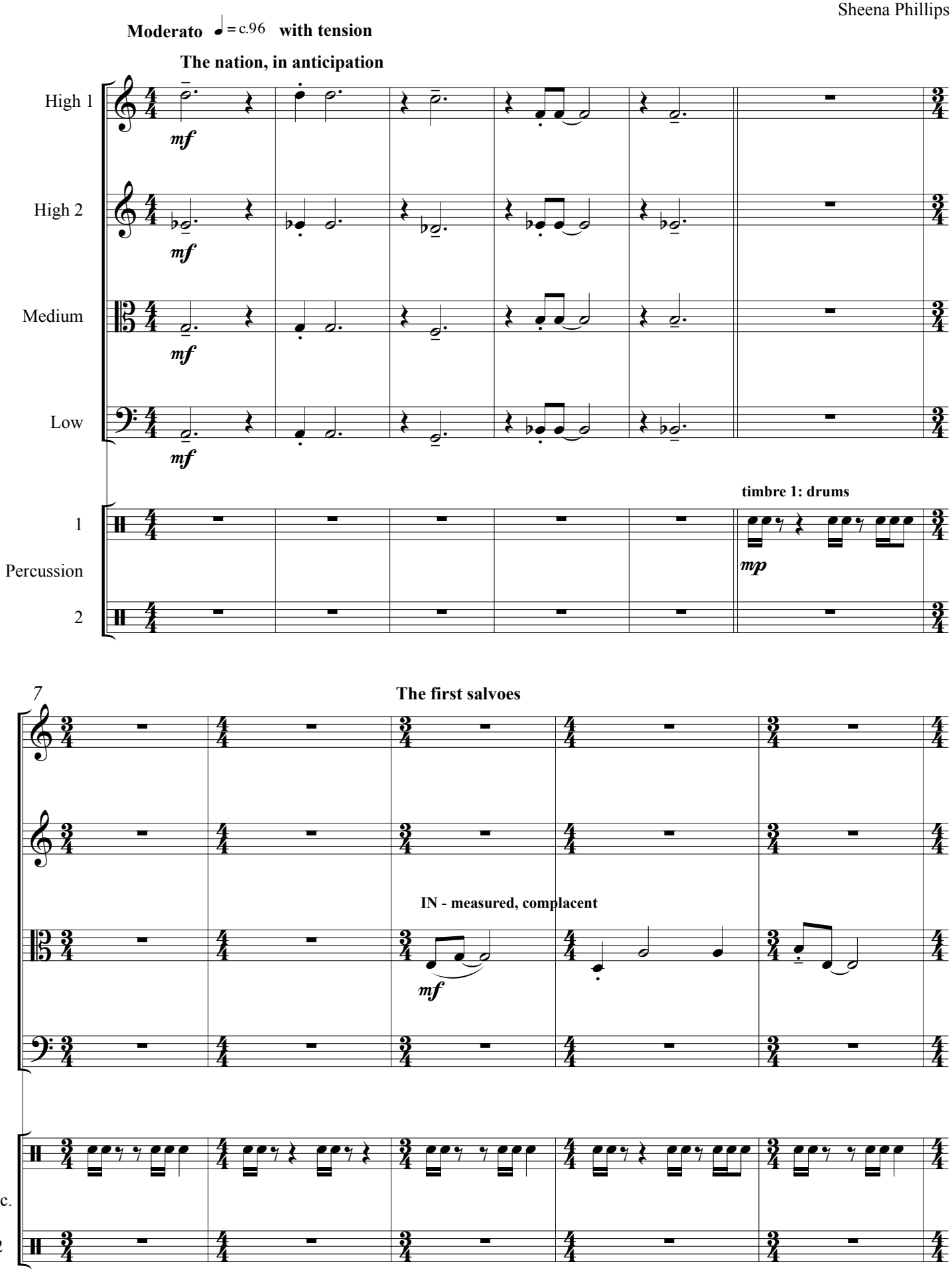
Box and line notation: repeat the material in the box for the duration of the extension line.

Rest in brackets – a rest of indeterminate length.

Independence – players on the same part play in their own time.

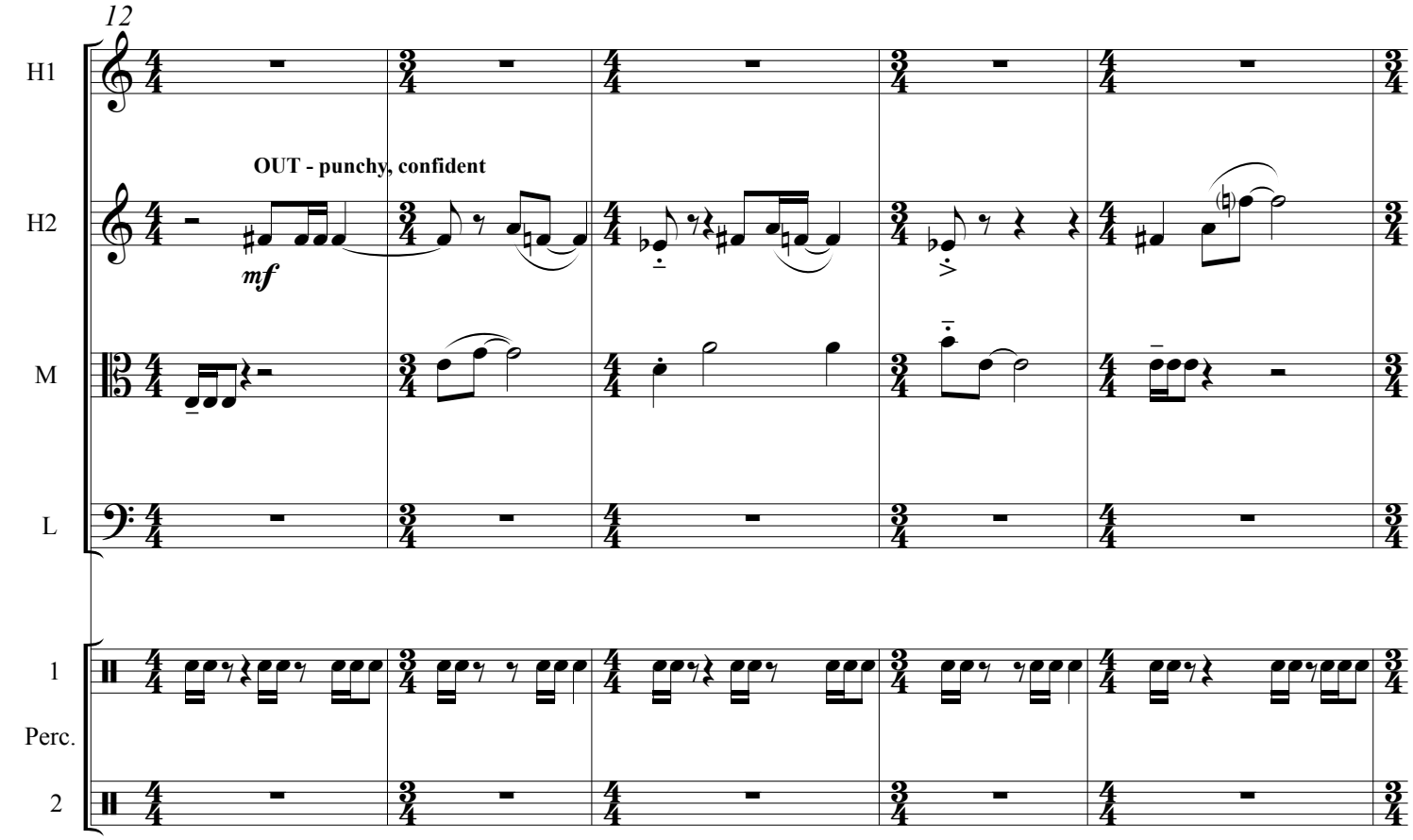
referendum

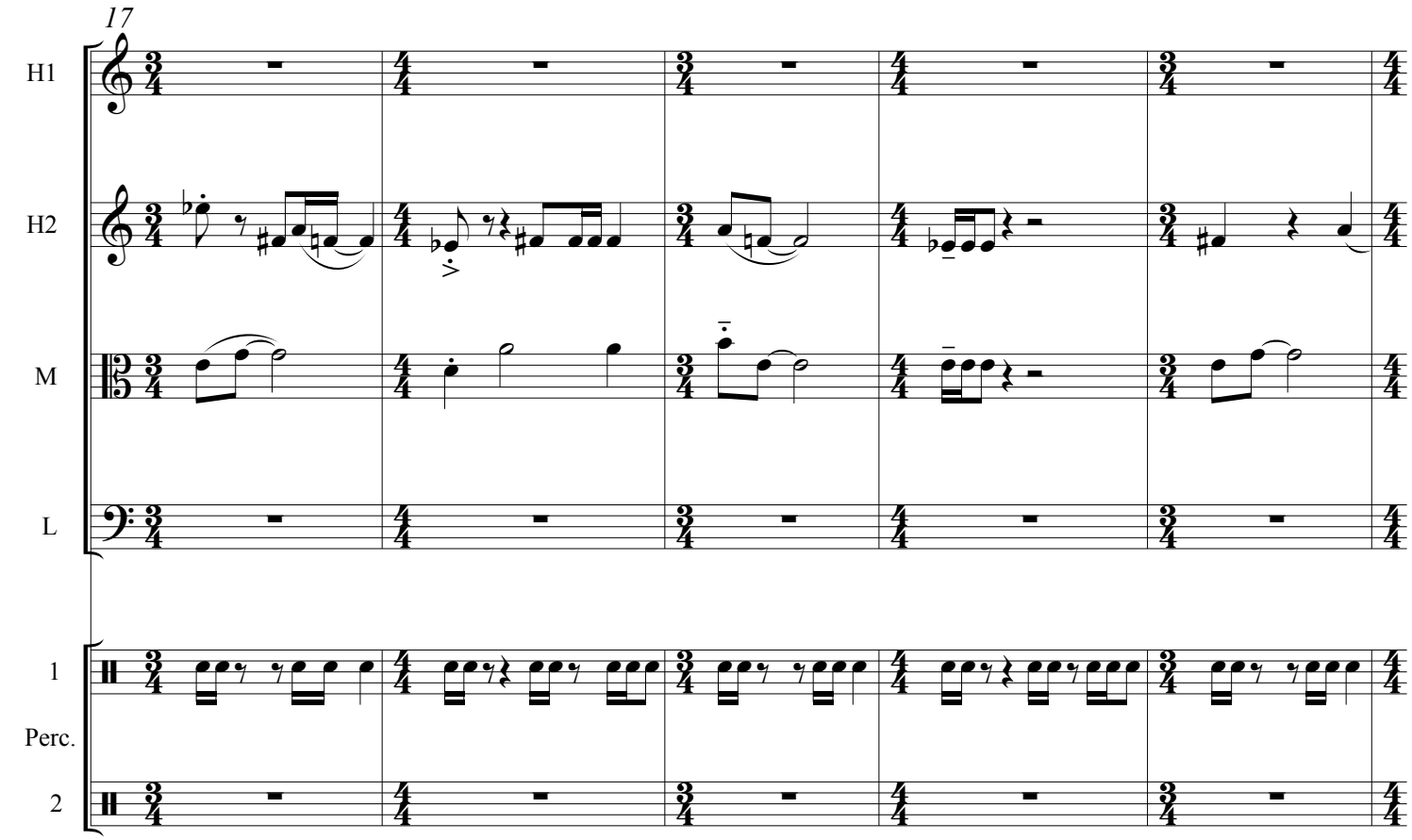
Sheena Phillips

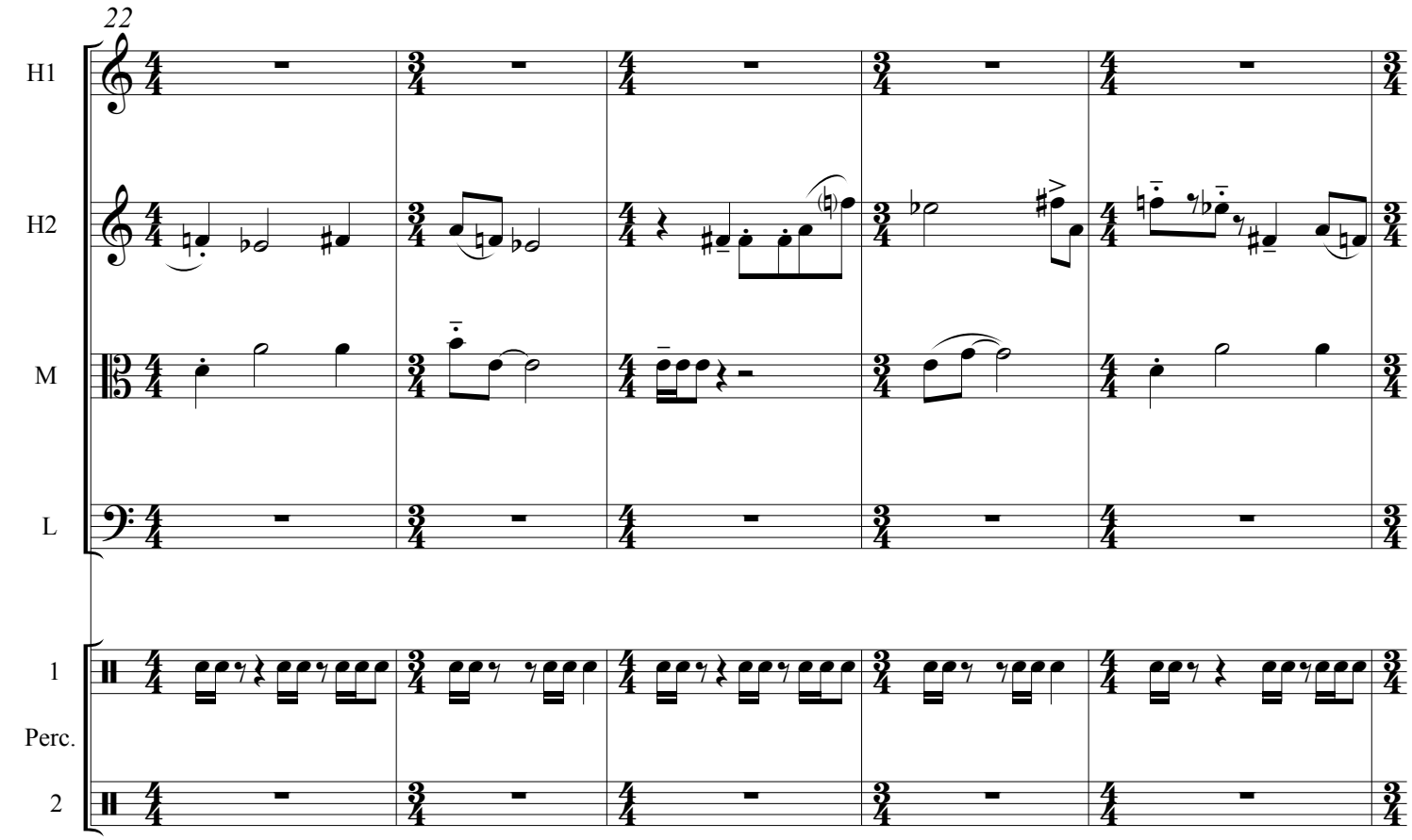


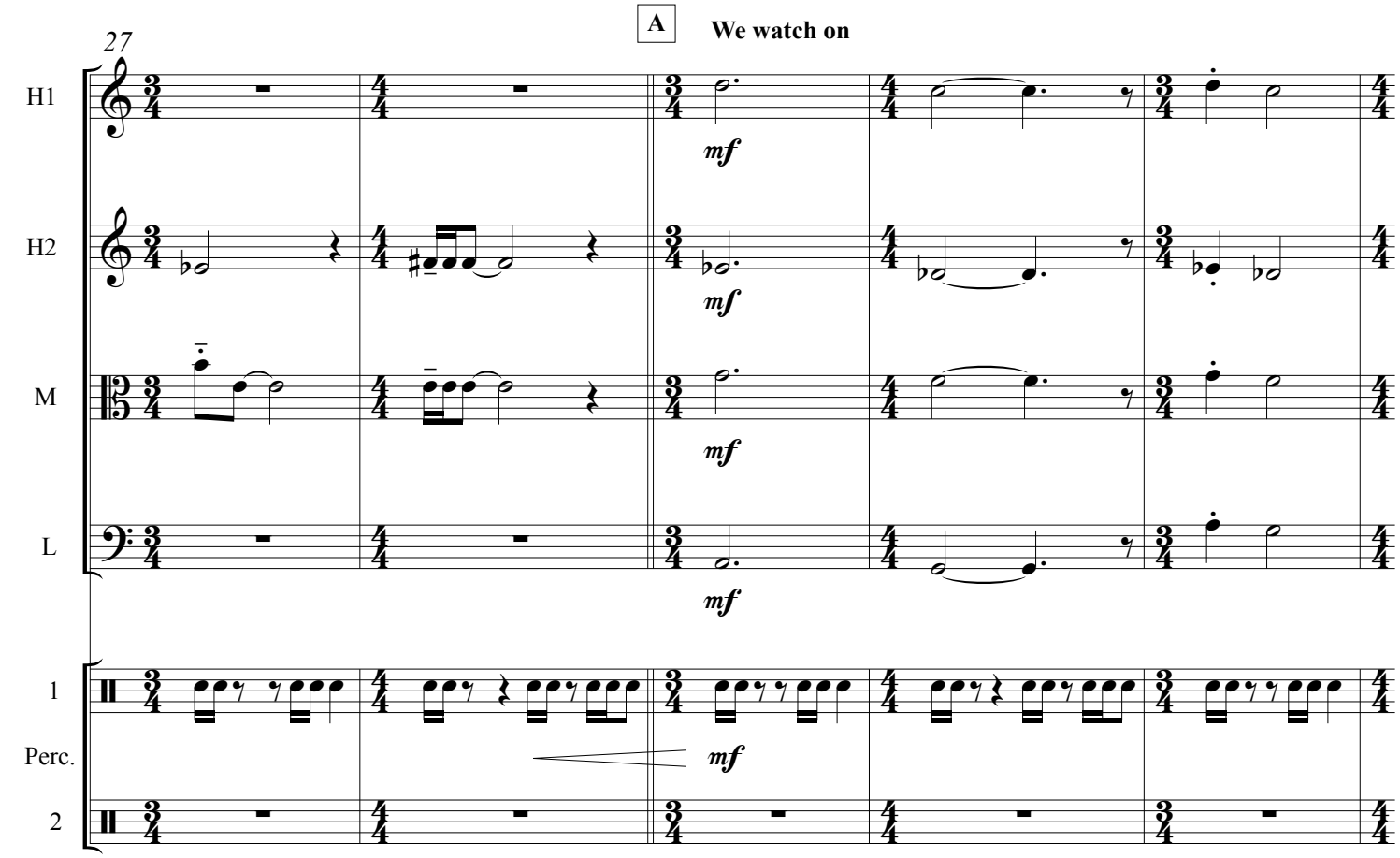
© copyright Sheena Phillips 2016

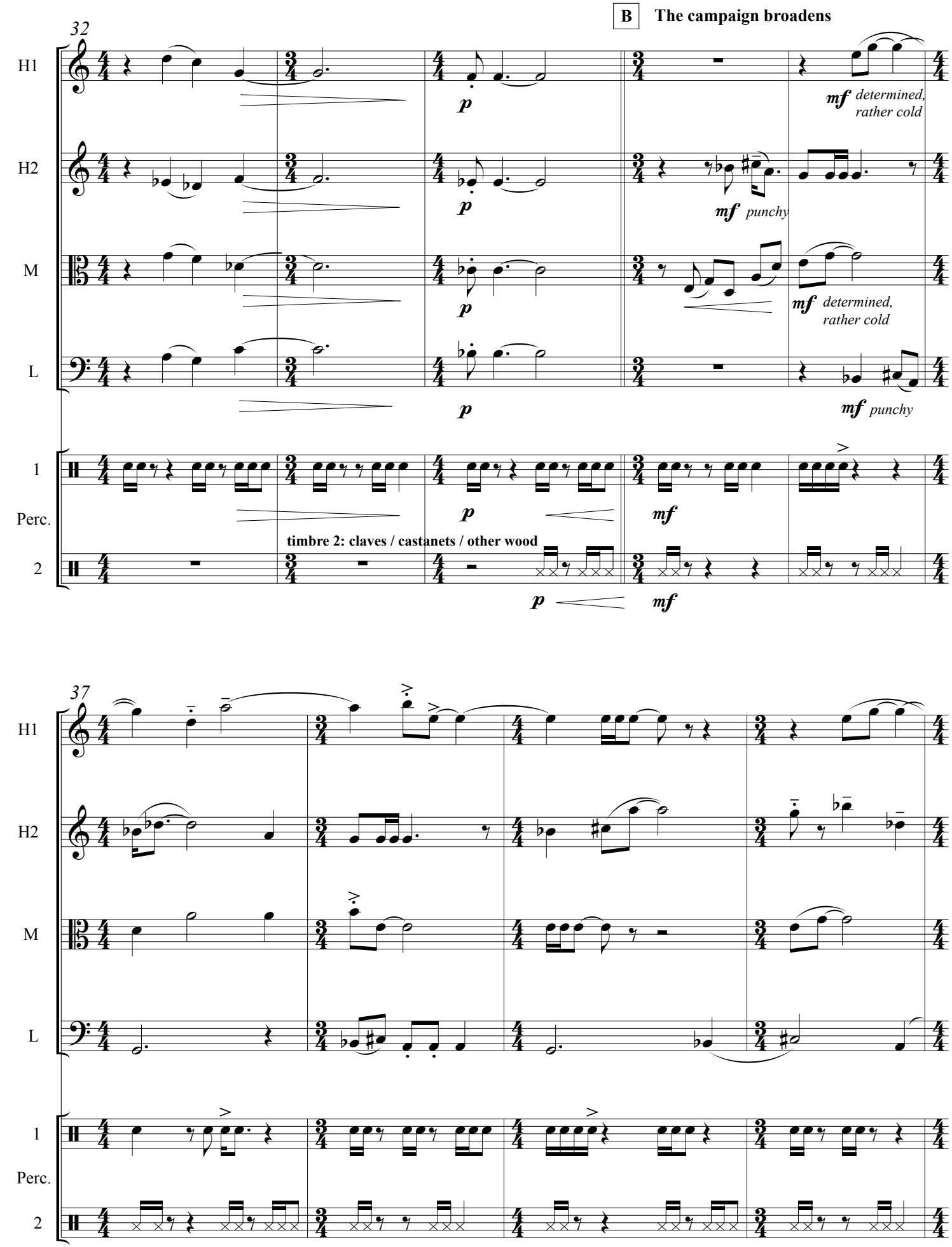
licensed exclusively to CoMA

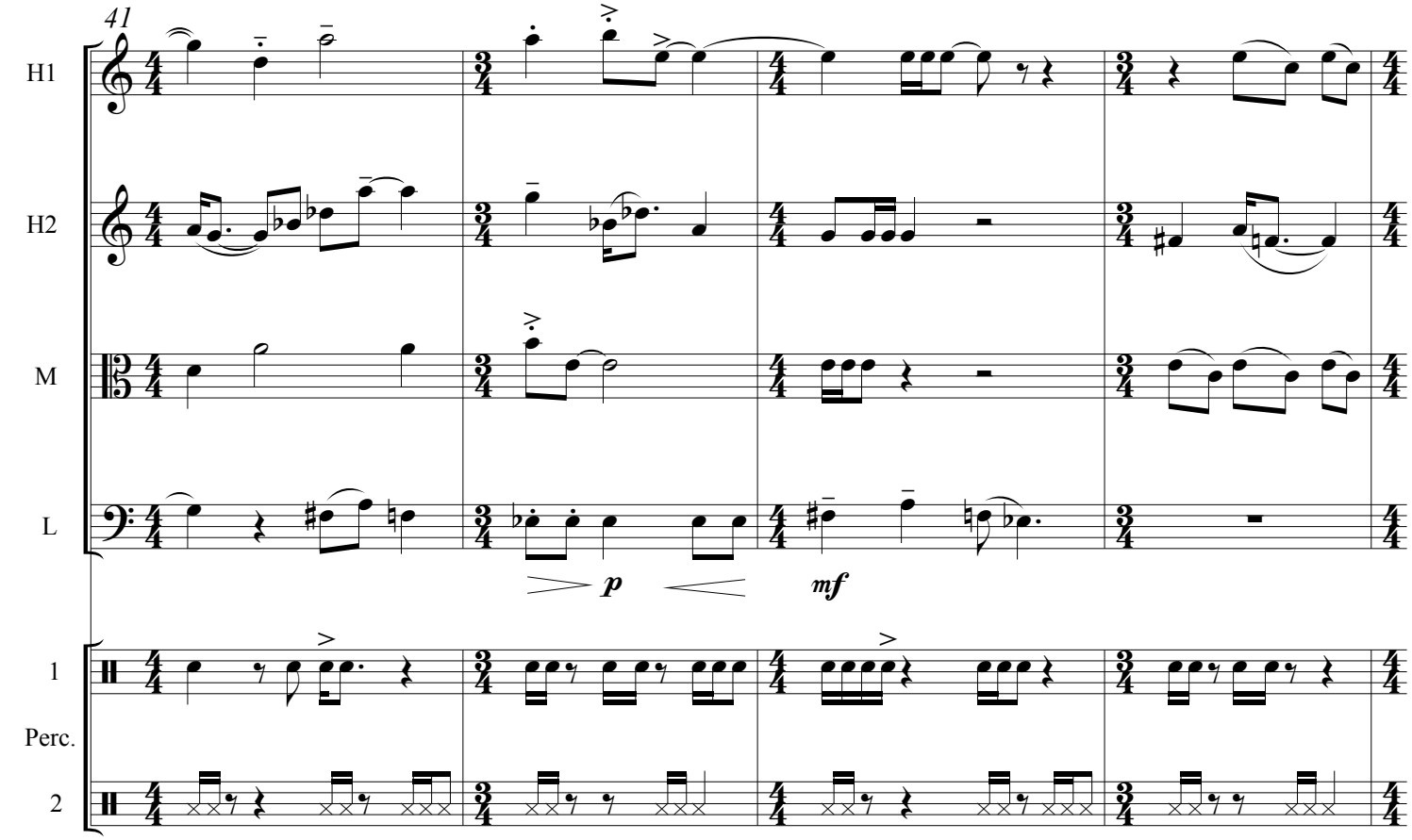

12
H1
H2
OUT - punchy, confident
mf
M
L
1
Perc.
2

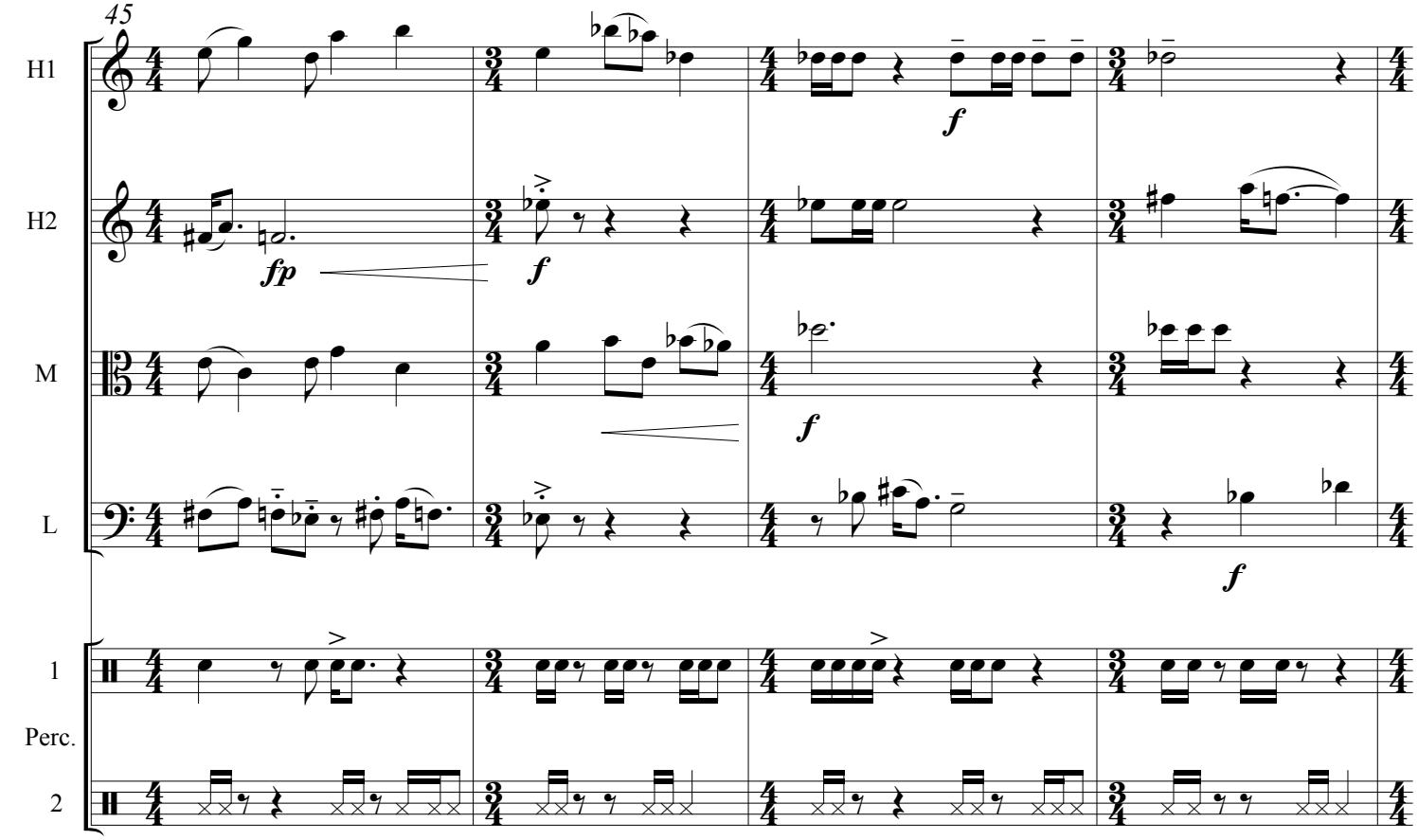

17
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2


22
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2


A
We watch on
27
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
mf


B
The campaign broadens
32
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
p
mf determined, rather cold
mf punchy
timbre 2: claves / castanets / other wood
37


41
H1
H2
M
L
p
mf
1
Perc.
2


45
H1
H2
M
L
fp
f
f
f
f
1
Perc.
2

C

The first signs of uncertainty

49

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

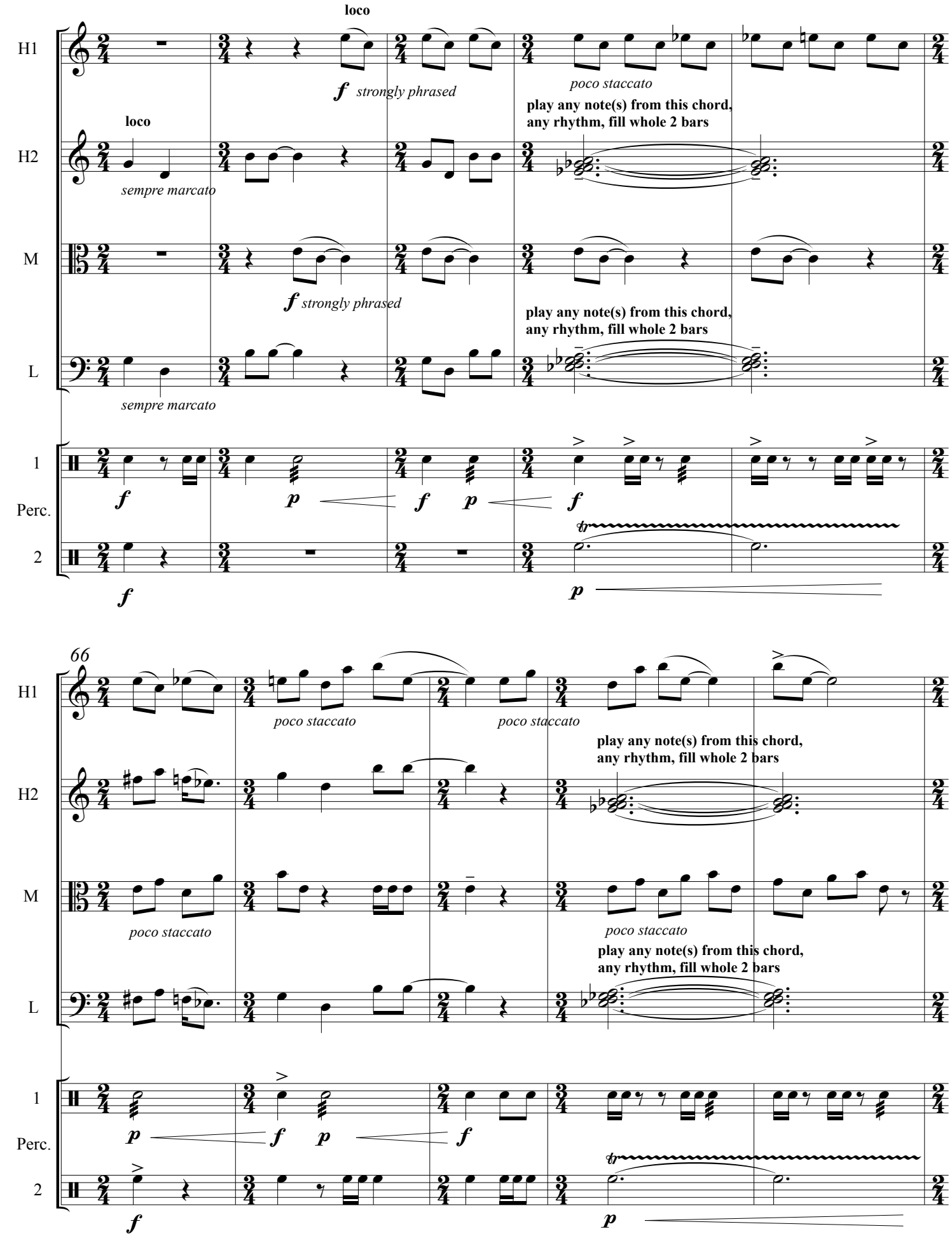
54

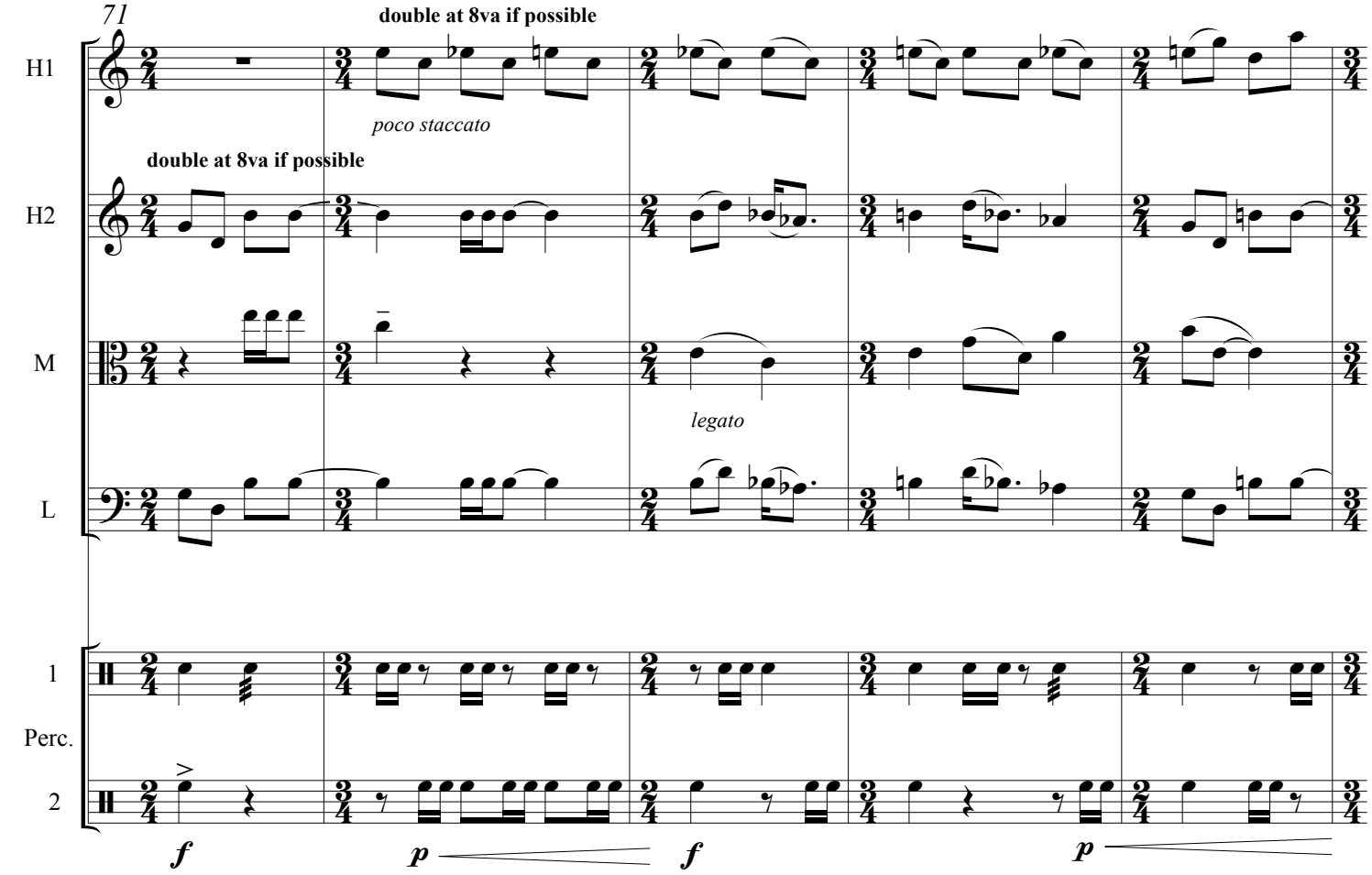
double at 8va if possible

double at 8va if possible

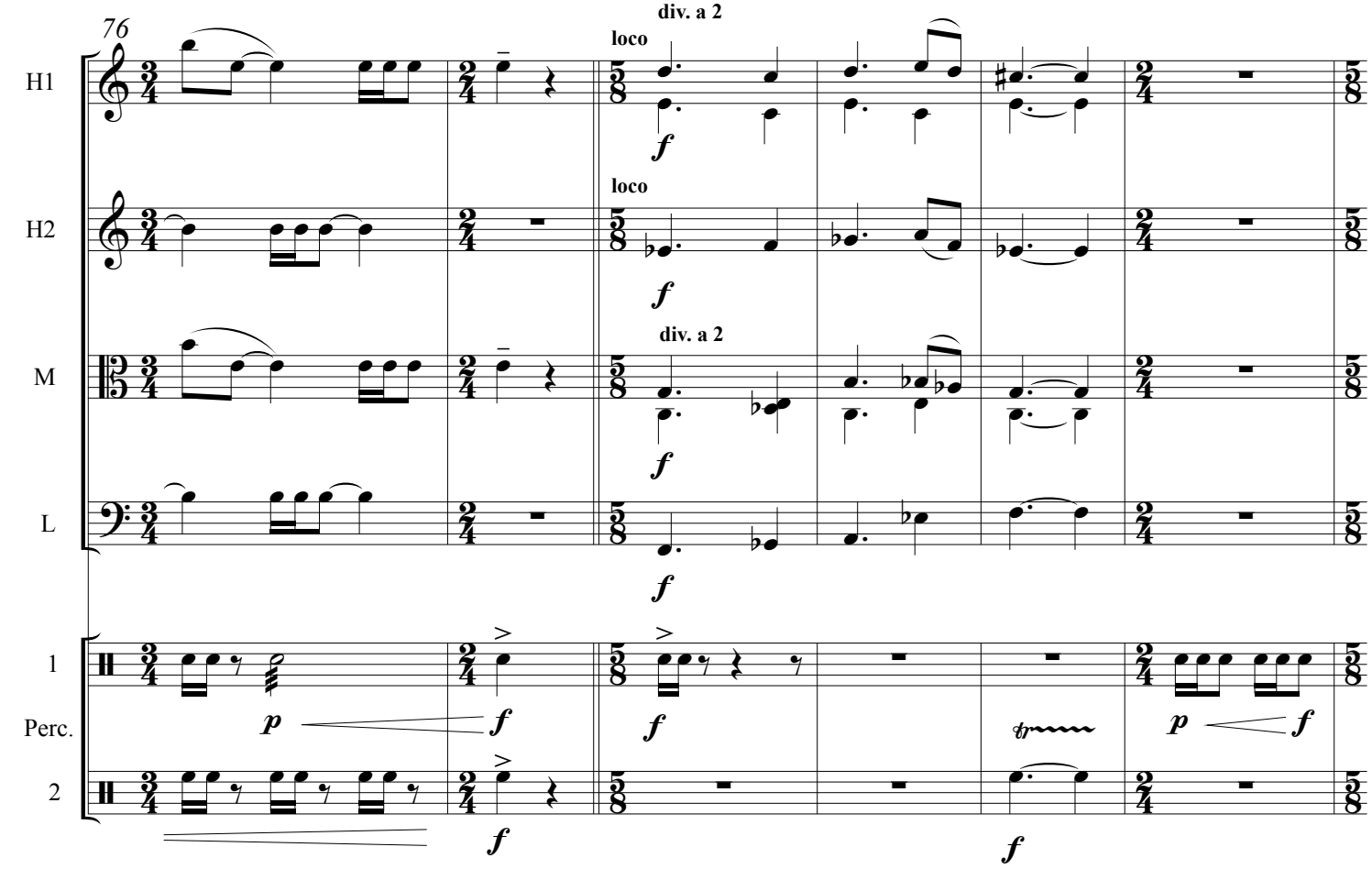
timbre 3 : tambourine / suspended cymbal / metal

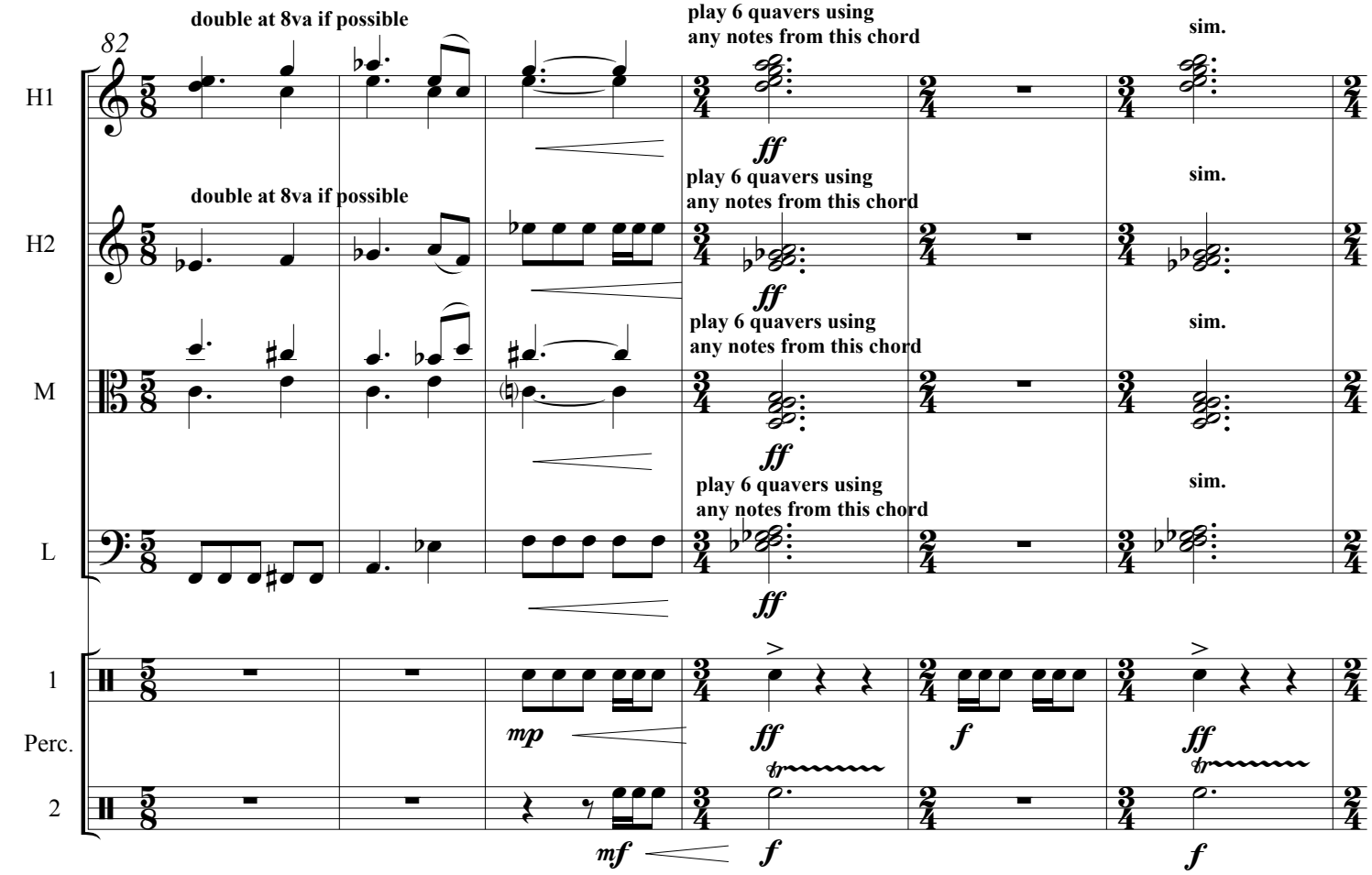
D **intensifying**





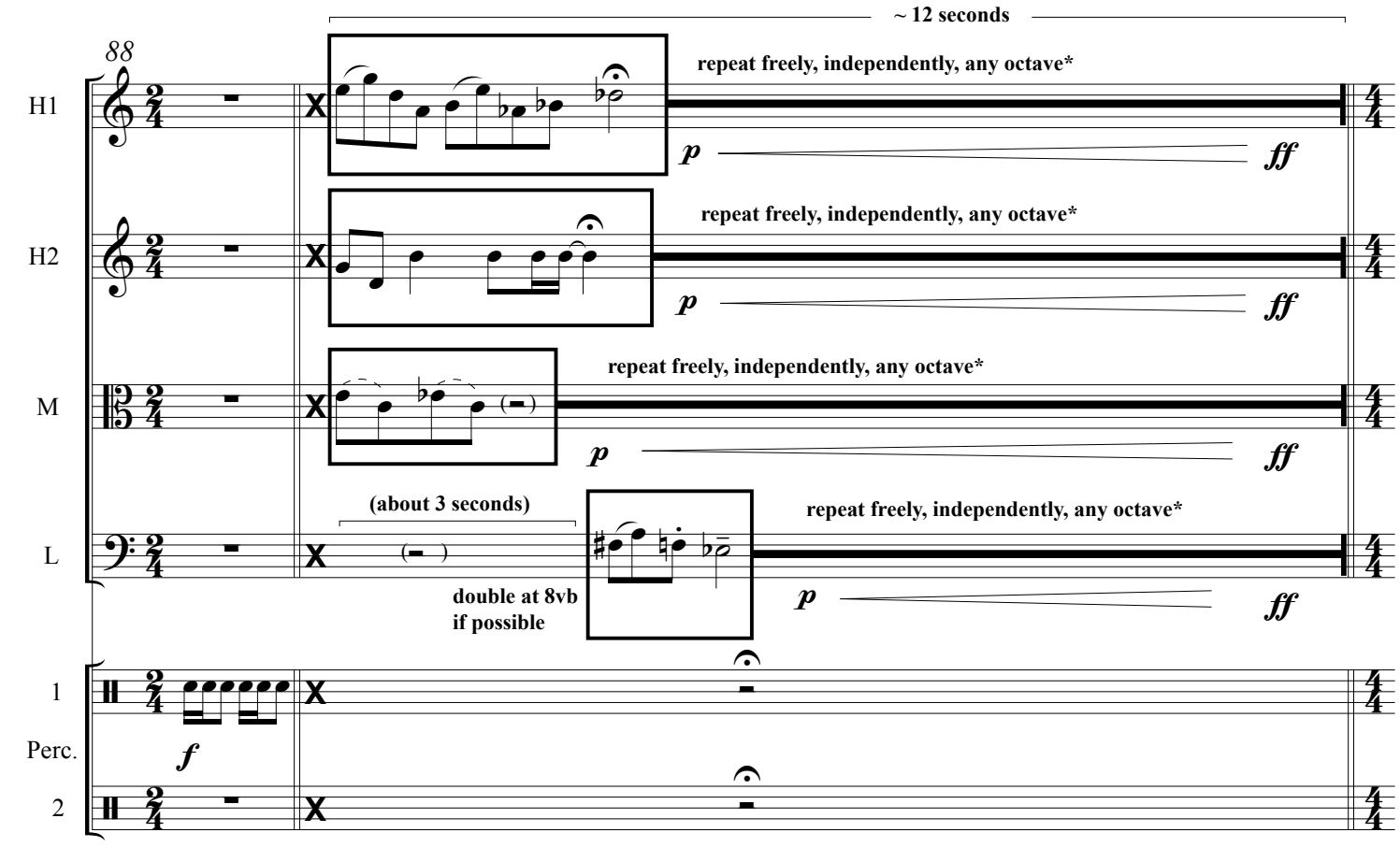
E **lurching, dirty**

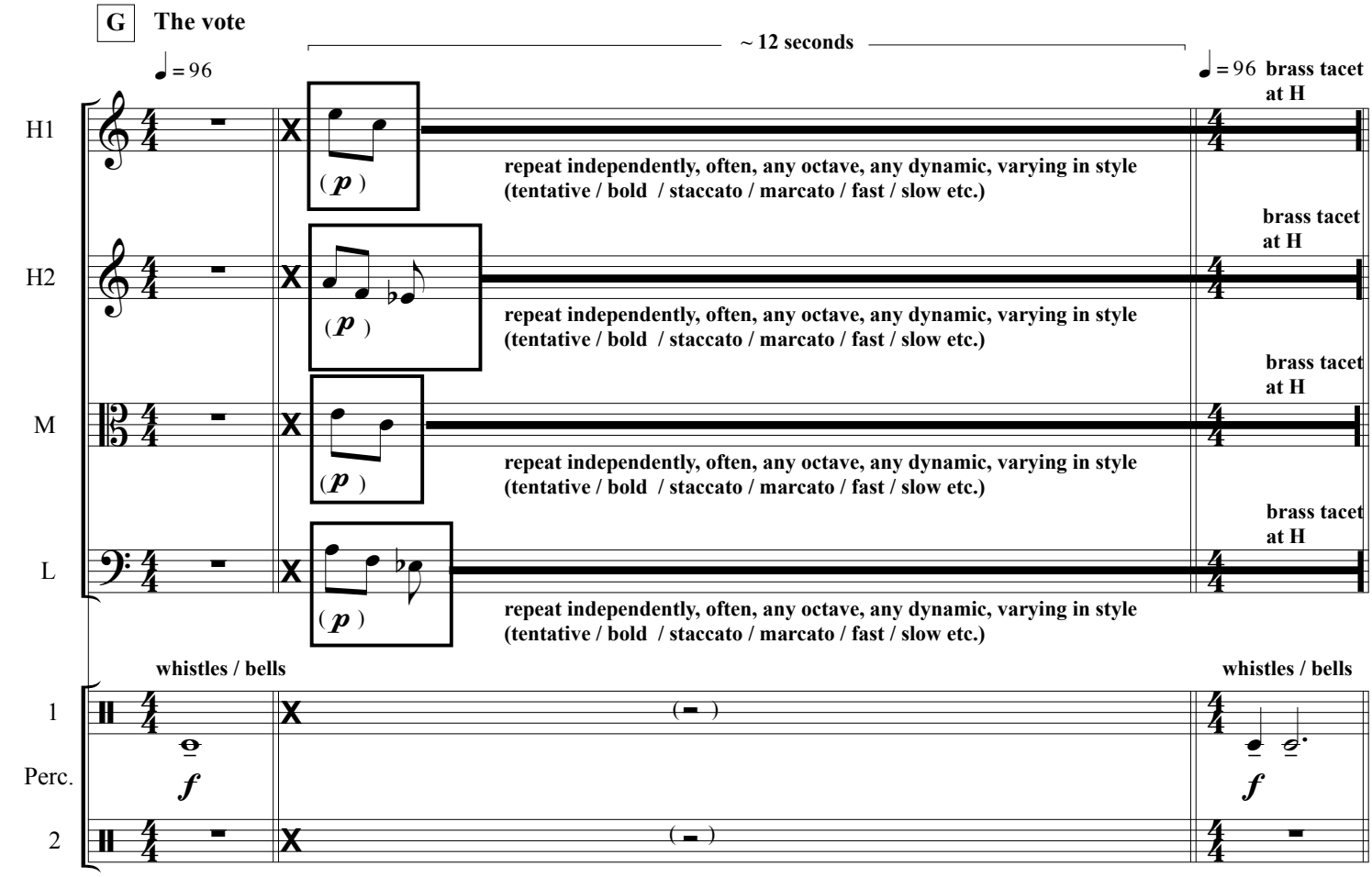


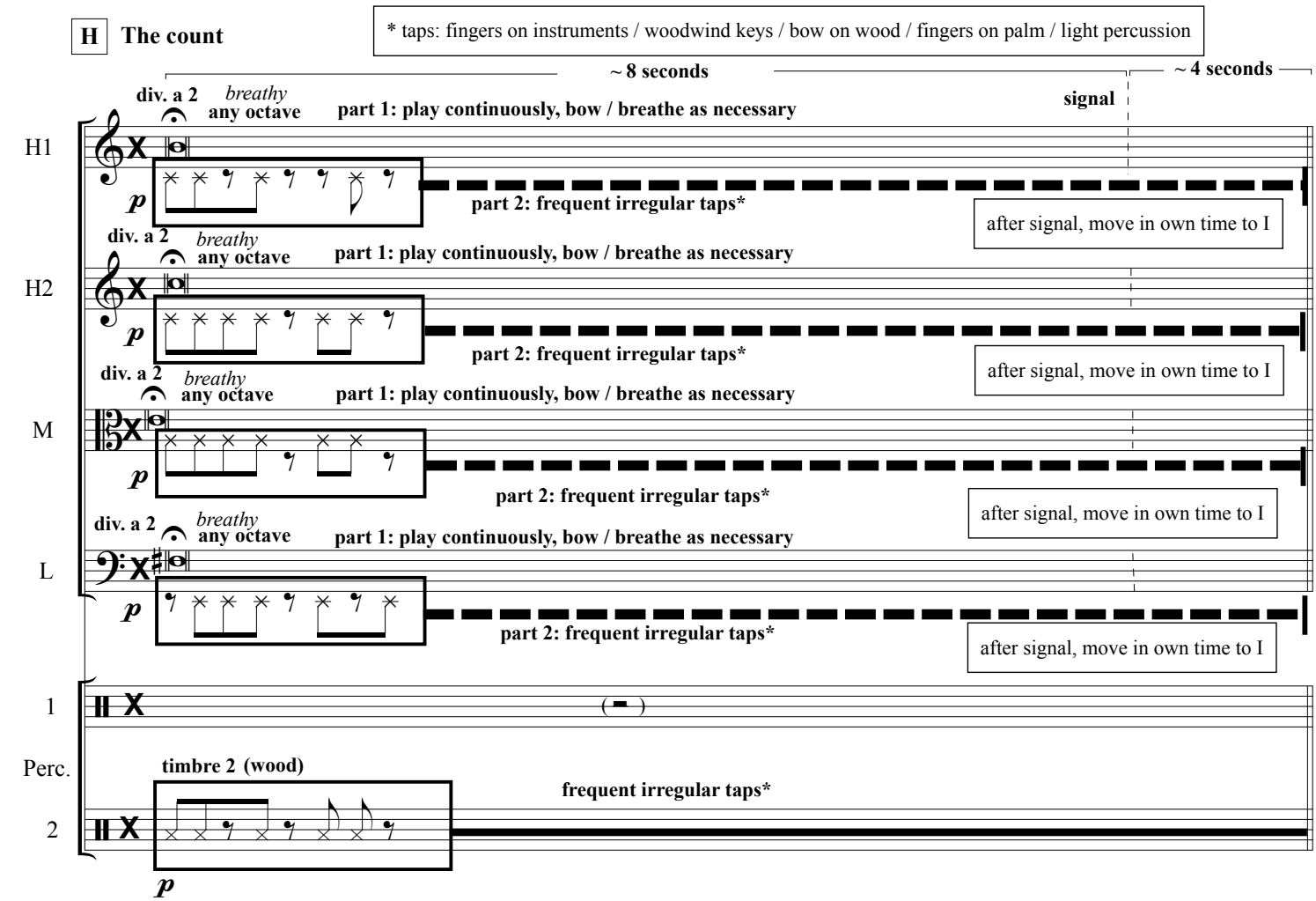


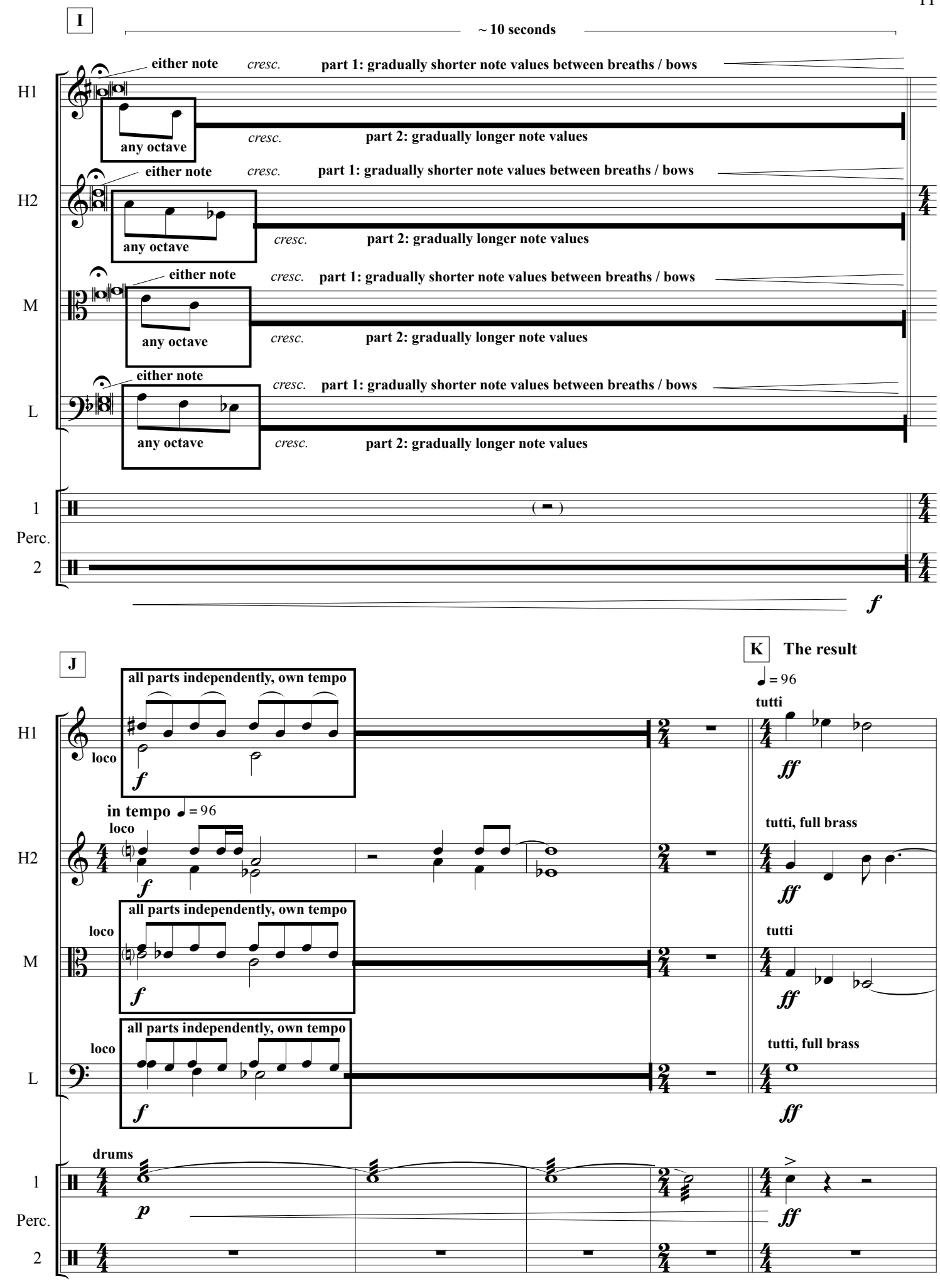
F **A cacophany of voices and arguments**

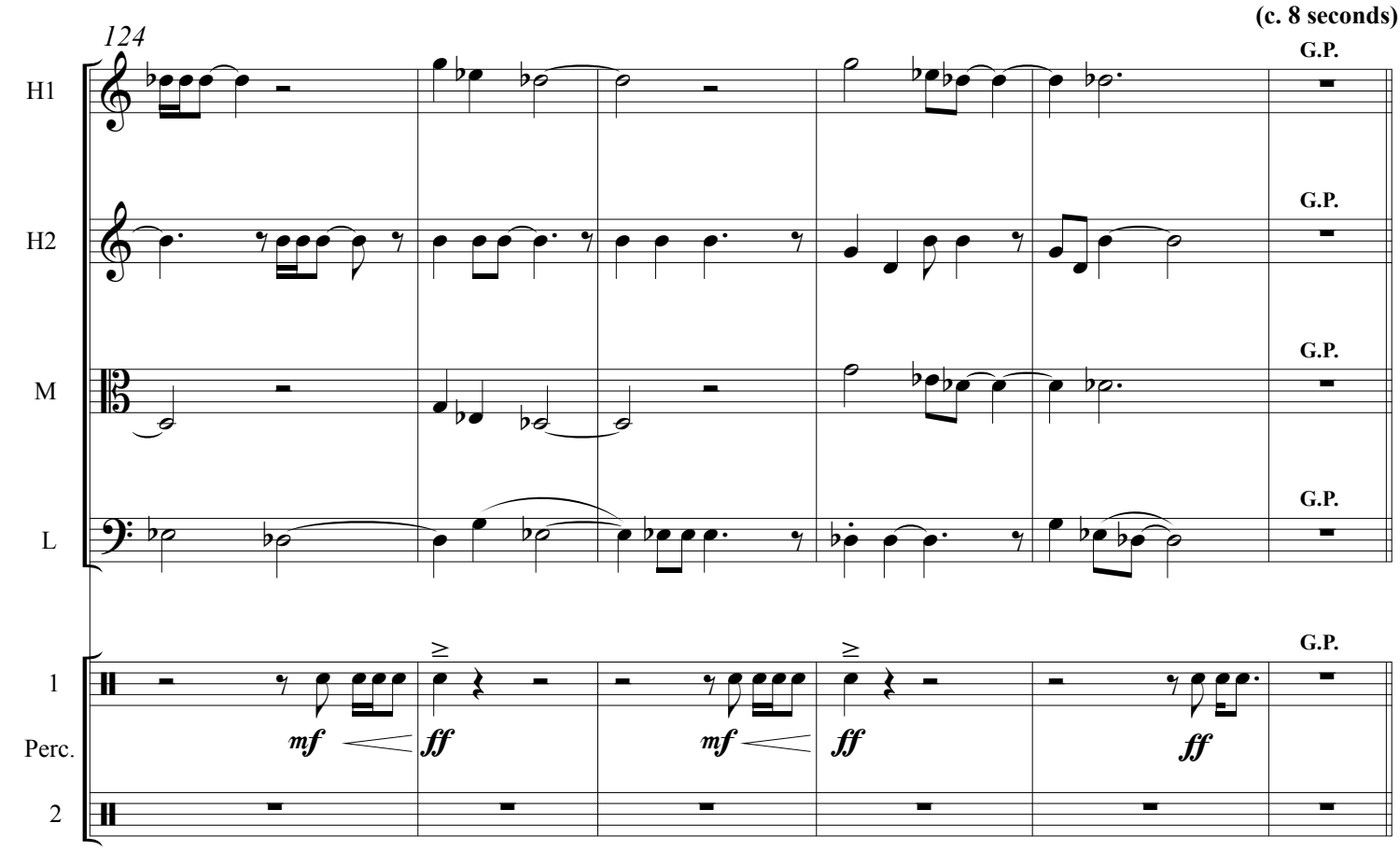
* wait between repetitions, especially if there are many players, so as not to overcrowd the sound

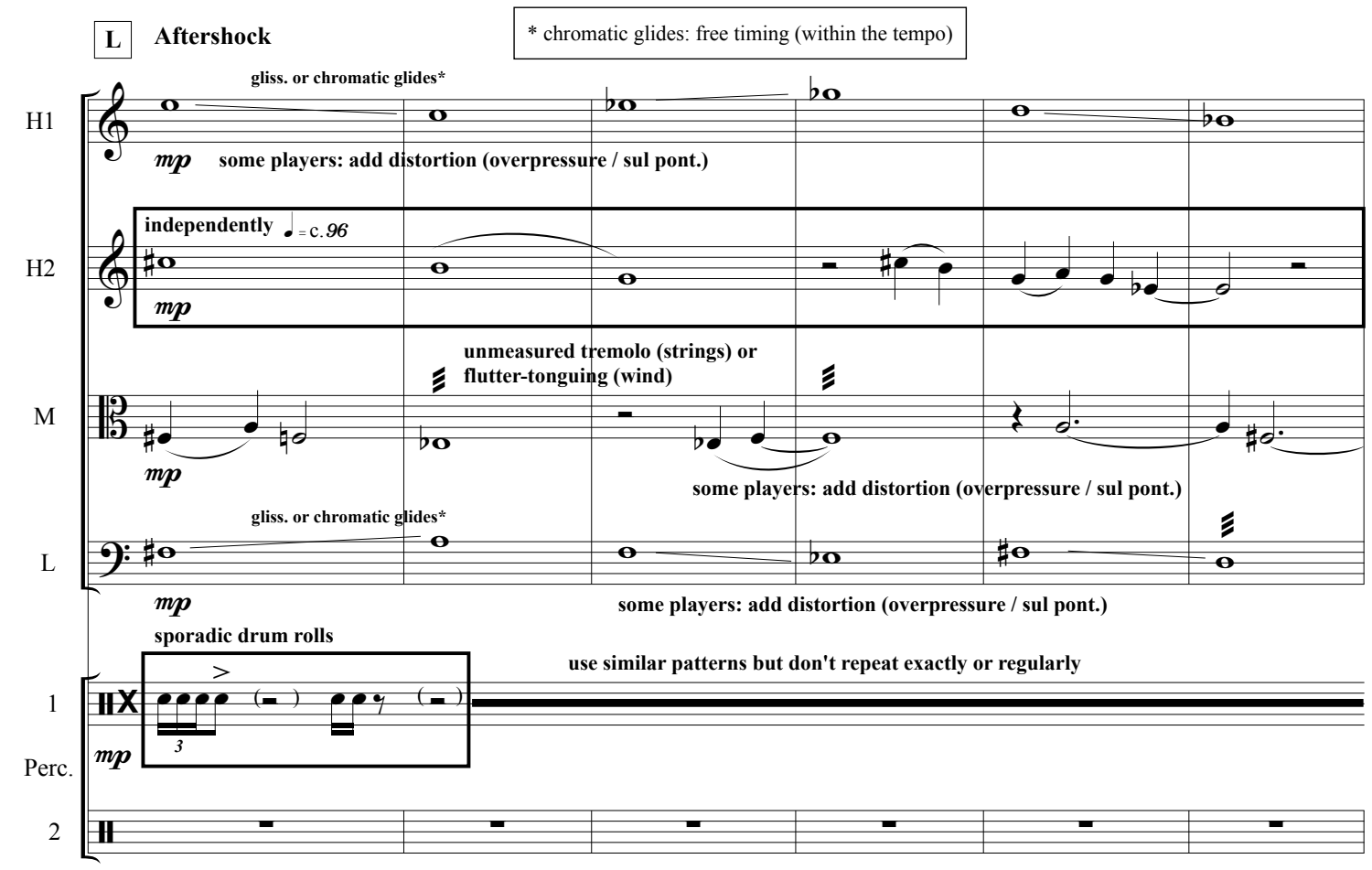


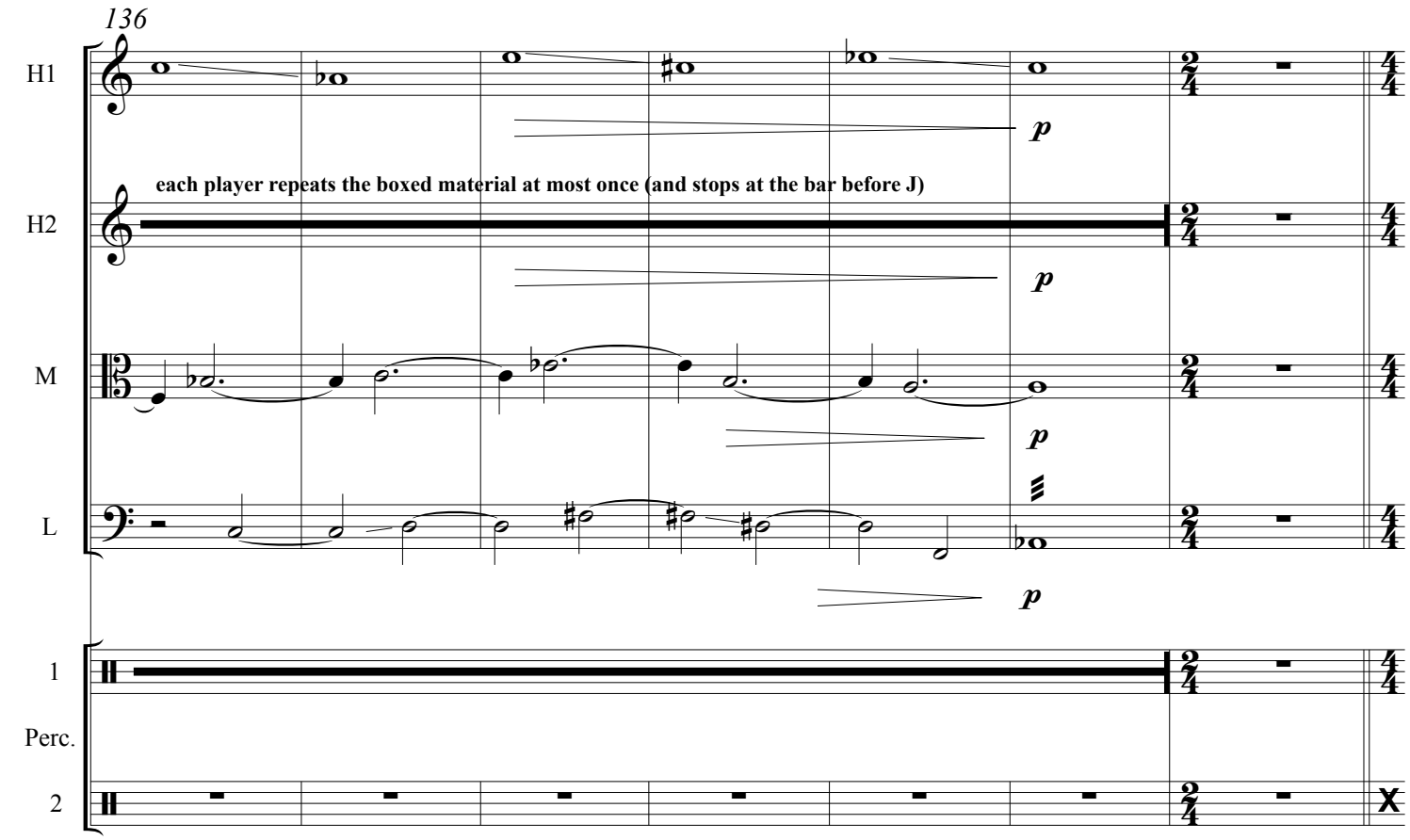

G
The vote
~ 12 seconds
♩ = 96
♩ = 96 brass tacet at H
H1
H2
M
L
repeat independently, often, any octave, any dynamic, varying in style (tentative / bold / staccato / marcato / fast / slow etc.)
brass tacet at H
whistles / bells
1
Perc.
2

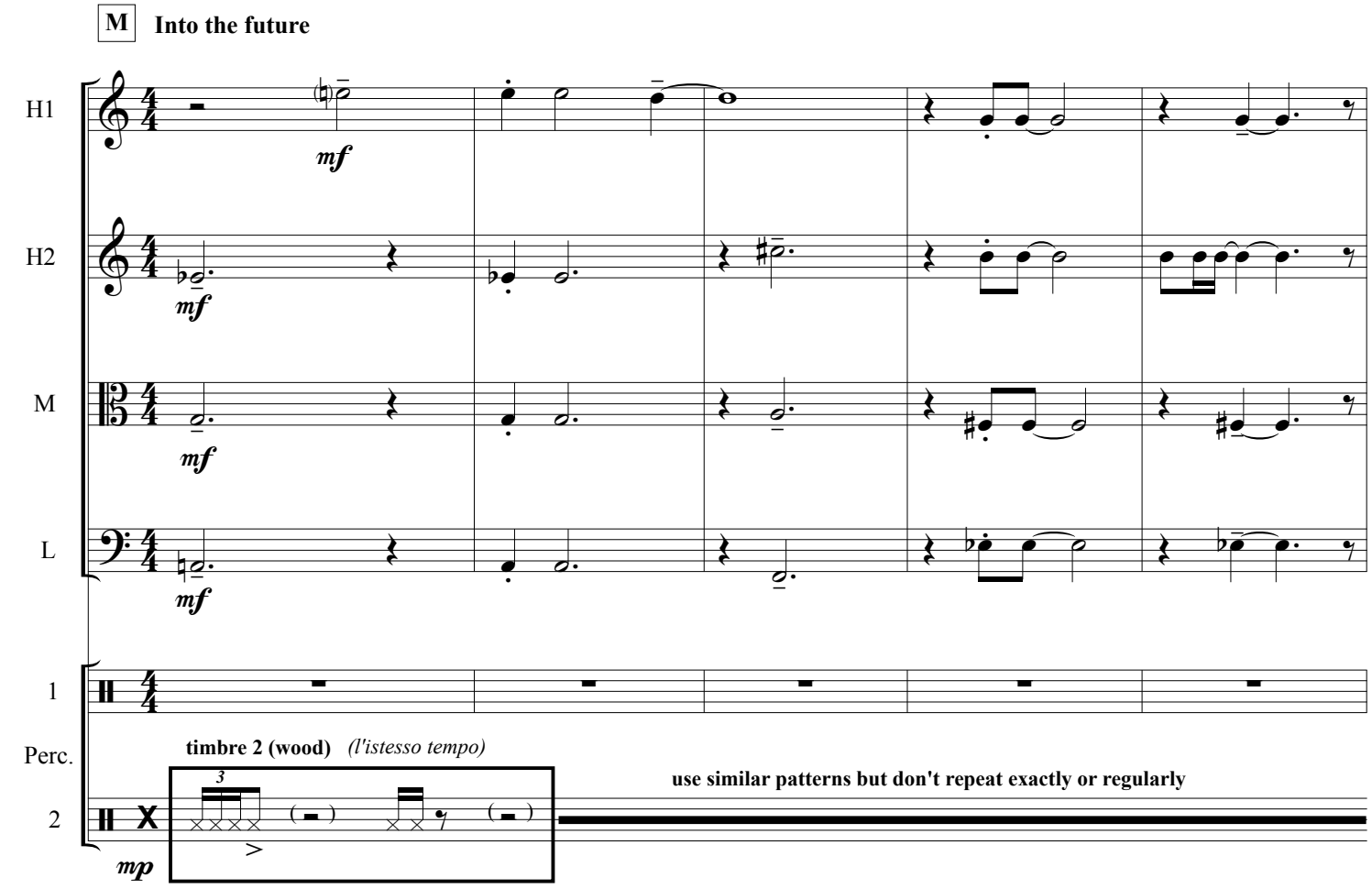

H
The count
* taps: fingers on instruments / woodwind keys / bow on wood / fingers on palm / light percussion
~ 8 seconds
~ 4 seconds
div. a 2
breathy
any octave
part 1: play continuously, bow / breathe as necessary
part 2: frequent irregular taps*
signal
after signal, move in own time to I
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
timbre 2 (wood)
frequent irregular taps*

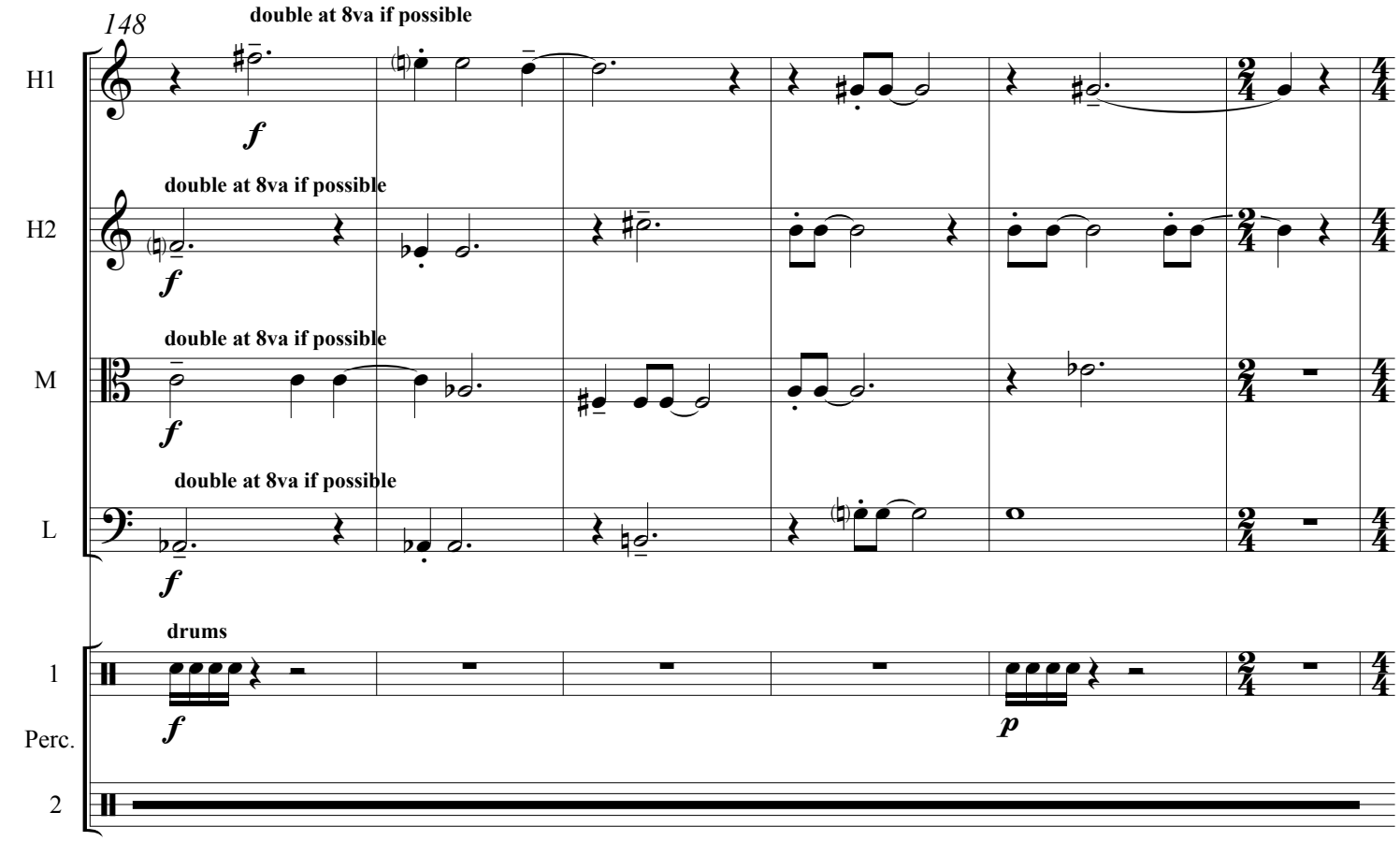

I
~ 10 seconds
either note
cresc.
part 1: gradually shorter note values between breaths / bows
any octave
part 2: gradually longer note values
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
f
J
K
The result
all parts independently, own tempo
loco
in tempo ♩= 96
♩= 96
tutti
tutti, full brass
drums
p
ff

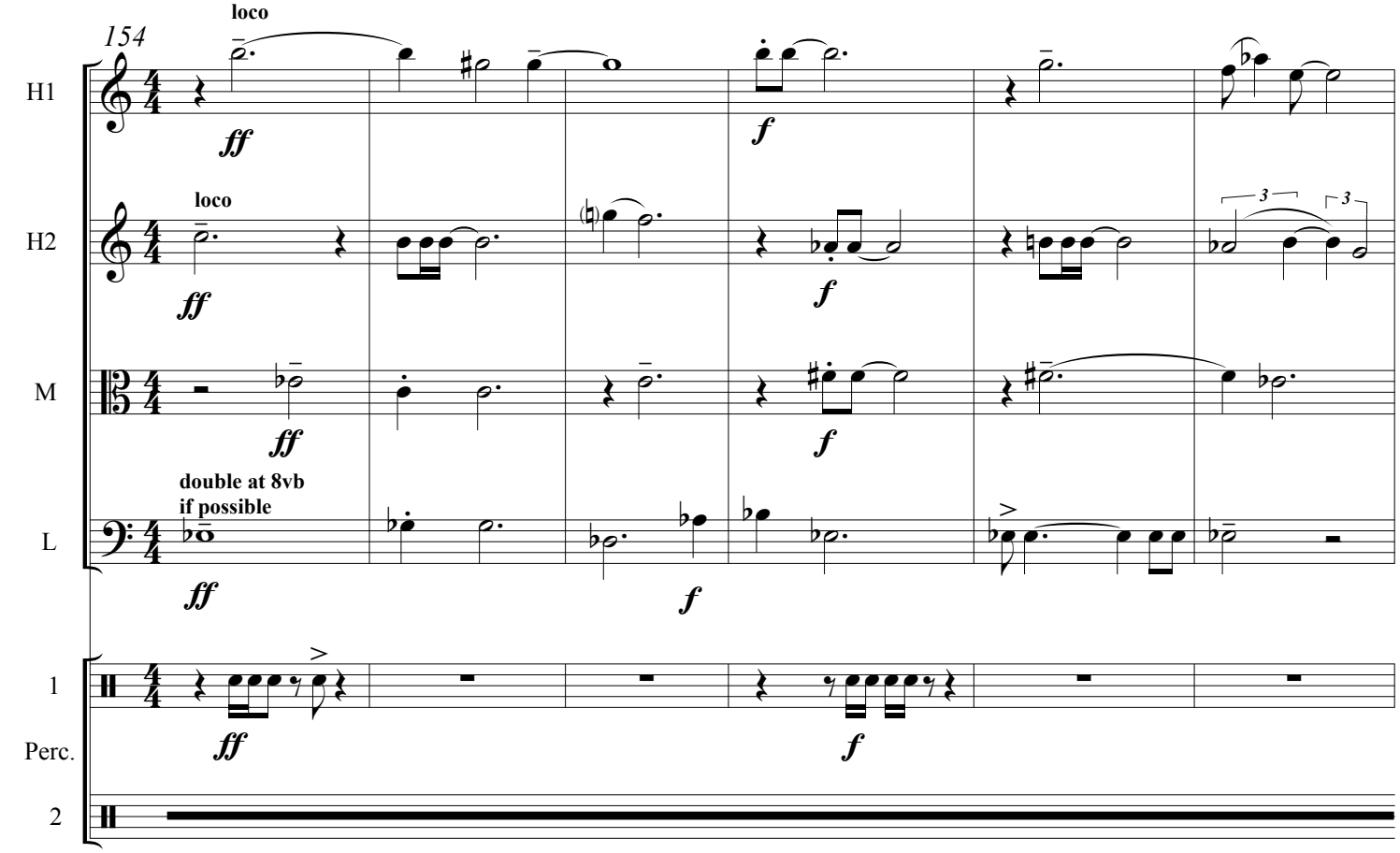

(c. 8 seconds)
124
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
G.P.
mf
ff

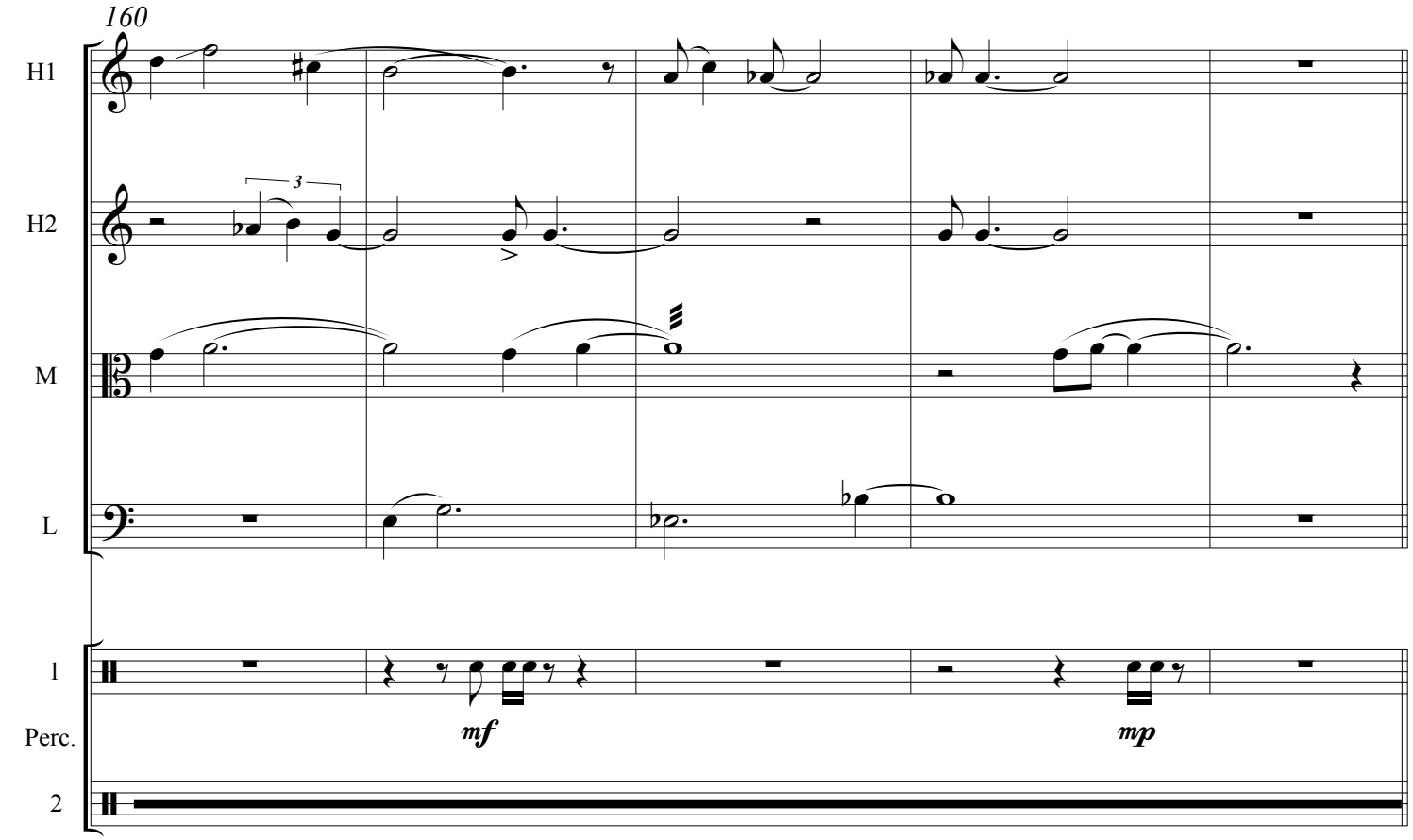

L
Aftershock
* chromatic glides: free timing (within the tempo)
gliss. or chromatic glides*
mp
some players: add distortion (overpressure / sul pont.)
independently
= c. 96
unmeasured tremolo (strings) or
flutter-tonguing (wind)
sporadic drum rolls
use similar patterns but don't repeat exactly or regularly
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2

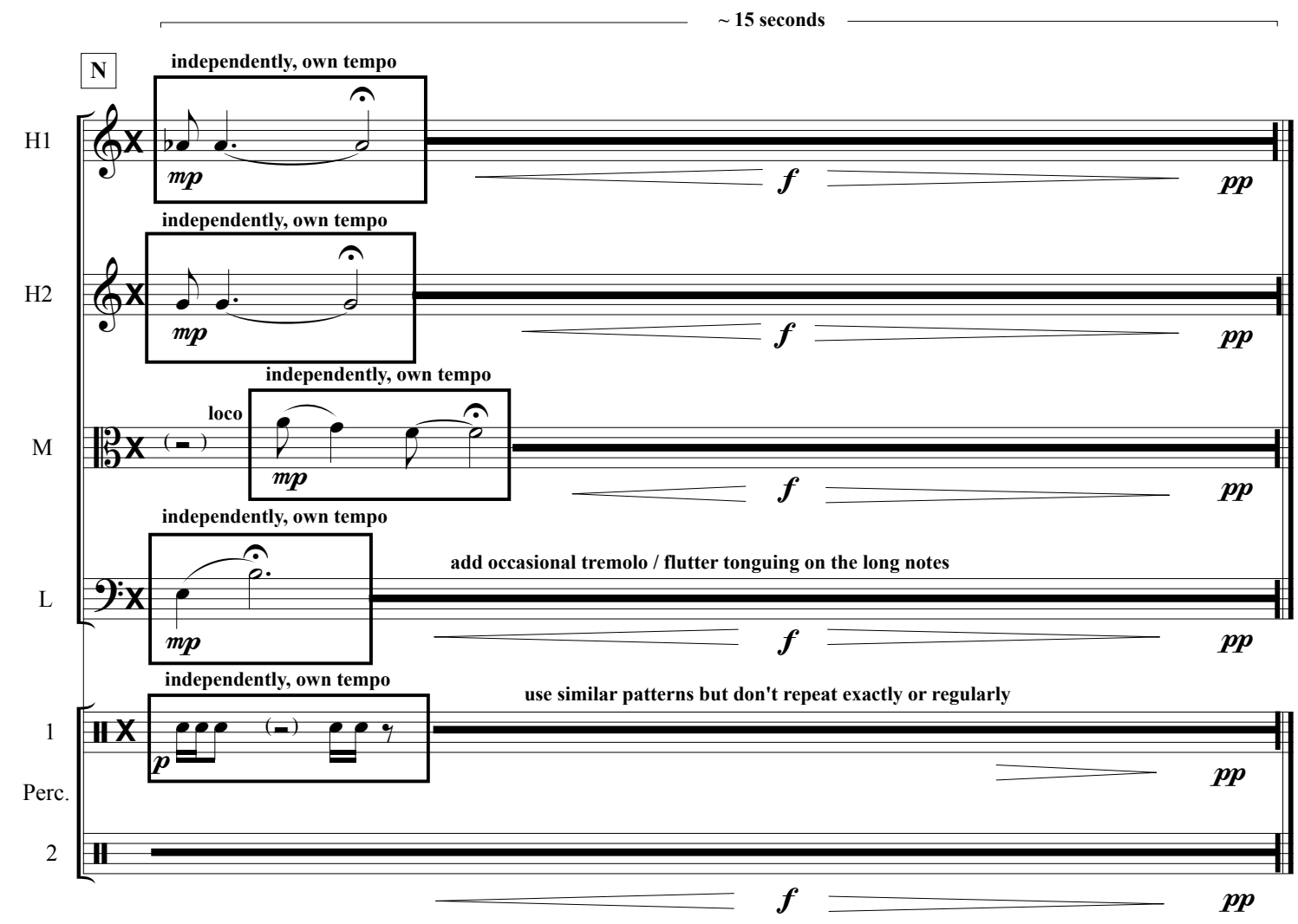

136
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
each player repeats the boxed material at most once (and stops at the bar before J)
p
p
p
p


M
Into the future
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
mf
mf
mf
mf
timbre 2 (wood)
(l'istesso tempo)
3
use similar patterns but don't repeat exactly or regularly
mp


148
double at 8va if possible
H1
f
double at 8va if possible
H2
f
double at 8va if possible
M
f
double at 8va if possible
L
f
drums
1
f
p
Perc.
2


154
loco
H1
ff
f
loco
H2
ff
f
3
3
M
ff
f
double at 8vb
if possible
L
ff
f
1
ff
f
Perc.
2


160
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
3
mf
mp


~ 15 seconds
N
independently, own tempo
mp
f
pp
H1
H2
M
L
1
Perc.
2
loco
add occasional tremolo / flutter tonguing on the long notes
use similar patterns but don't repeat exactly or regularly
p