UC Irvine
UC Irvine Previously Published Works

Title
Resonating Abstractions

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7pn8c747

Author
Dessen, Michael

Publication Date
2012

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Resonating Abstractions

Composed by Michael Dessen
© Cronopio Music 2012

Resonating Abstractions

Composed by Michael Dessen
© Cronopio Music 2012

Created for the Michael Dessen Trio:
Michael Dessen, trombone/computer
Christopher Tordini, bass
Dan Weiss, drums

Resonating Abstractions has been made possible with support from Chamber Music America's 2011 New Jazz Works: Commissioning and Ensemble Development Program, funded through the generosity of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Premieres:
11.26.12, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA
11.27.12, Shapeshifter Lab, Brooklyn, NY
11.28.12, Blue Whale, Los Angeles, CA
11.30.12, Space4Art, San Diego, CA
12.1.12, Winifred Smith Hall, Irvine, CA

Recording:
Released on CD by Clean Feed Records, 2014
CD title: *Resonating Abstractions*

About the score:
Please note that this score below is not intended as sheet music for other bands to perform. The electronics are not notated at all, and this is also highly improvisatory music in which a lot of the key information and materials are communicated orally in the rehearsal process. However, I have posted this score online in the spirit of sharing tools and methods with my musical community, and also in response to students who have asked me about how this music works.

About the music (CD liner notes):
Resonating Abstractions was created for this trio, and meant to be performed in a continuous set. We recorded it in that same spirit, shortly after a five-concert tour that gave us time to internalize all the music and explore different interpretations each night. With this band, my focus has always been on that kind of dynamic: we work on scored rhythmic and melodic materials that are sometimes very intricate, but in concert we approach them in a radically open way. The goal is to discover in each performance a deep sense of collectivity and flow, by maintaining a fluid relationship between structures that are precomposed in rich detail and structures that emerge through improvisatory dialogue. The chemistry we've developed over the years, along

with Dan and Chris' exceptional musicianship, make this possible, and I'm always grateful to them for bringing my music to life.

This composition is also inspired by the work of seven contemporary, abstract painters: Beatriz Milhazes, Allison Miller, Tomory Dodge, Jonathan Lasker, Mamie Holst, Julie Mehretu, and Odili Donald Odita. I didn't intend to depict or translate their paintings, but instead used their artworks as catalysts for exploring abstraction in diverse ways. Each track responds to a particular dimension of an artist's work; some tracks respond to formal features of a painting, but others might relate more to aspects of the artist's working process, or to ideas they have articulated. In today's visual art world, it is no longer meaningful to say simply that one works with abstraction, since that practice has accumulated so many histories and meanings. I have long been fascinated with abstraction, both in visual art and as a more general concept, so this music is another way for me to join that conversation.

Tracks 1, 4 and 7 are acoustic, and the other tracks involve the computer for live sampling/processing (tracks 2, 5 and 6) or algorithmic composition (track 3). Tracks 3 and 5 are solo features composed for Dan and Chris respectively. As I've written in previous liner notes, I use the computer in this trio to build upon what we do as acoustic performers, approaching it with that same creative tension between precomposition and improvisation. I also use technology to give the music a kind of dimensionality that a chordal instrument would traditionally provide, not by having the computer play chords, but by expanding the timbral and textural palette in a variety of other ways.

Thanks for listening.

Michael Dessen
www.mdessen.com

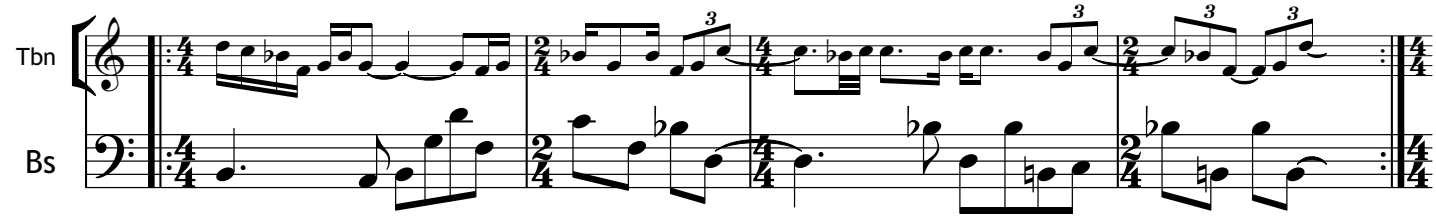
#1: grid after grid

for trombone, bass and drums

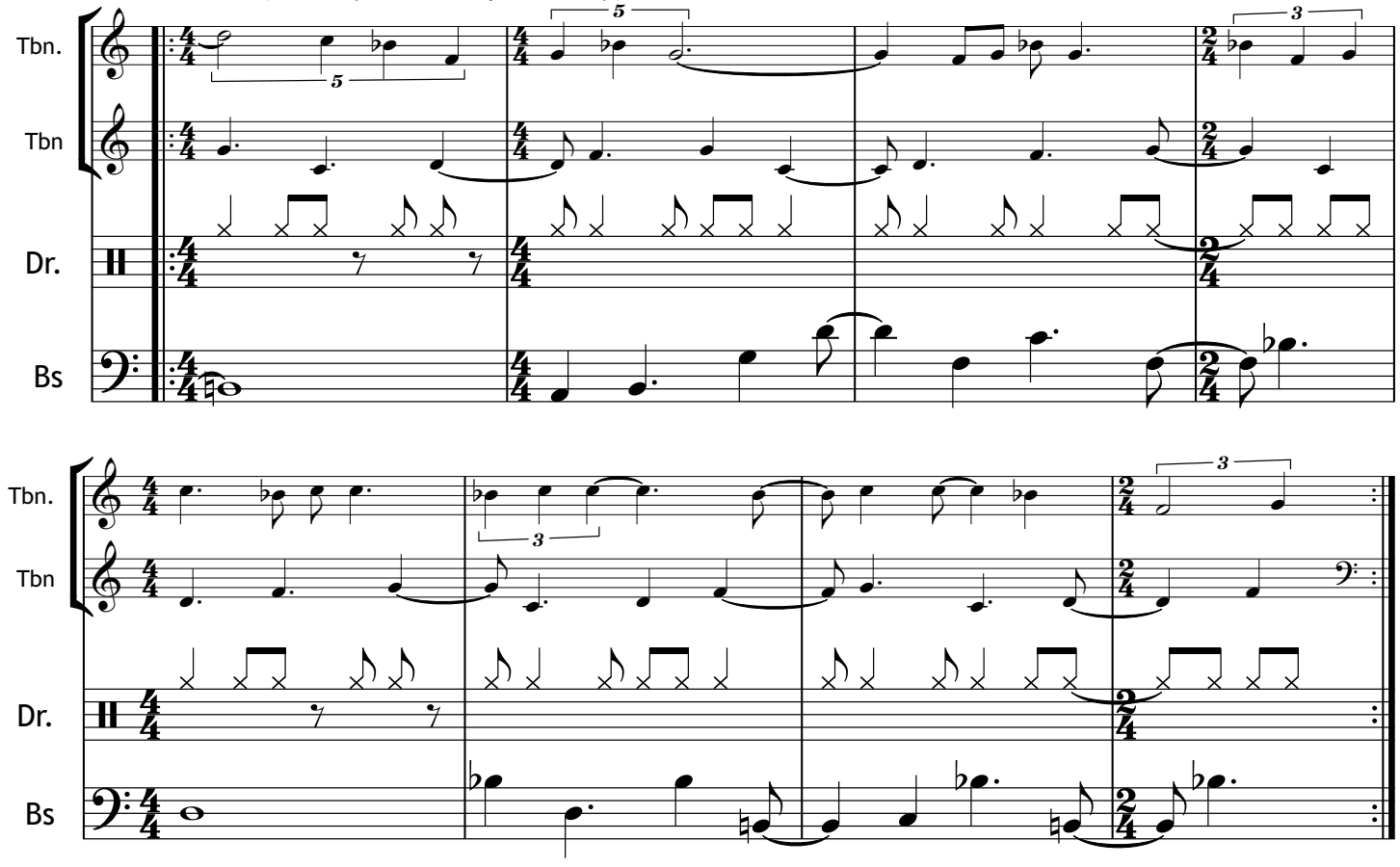
Michael Dessen

All sections OPEN
Slow build go D
Bass/tbn begin, then drums

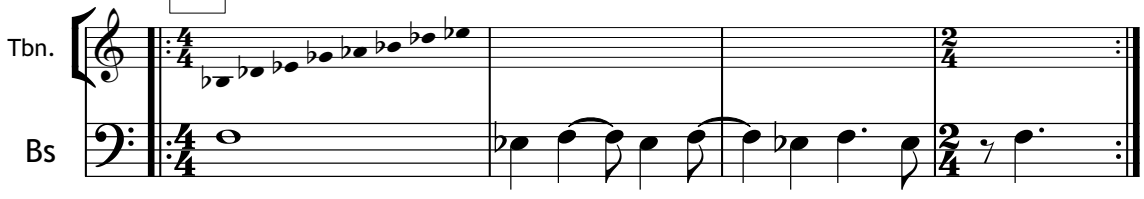
A1 Slow triplet feel



A2 ♩ = 172-188
(tbn very loose templates only)



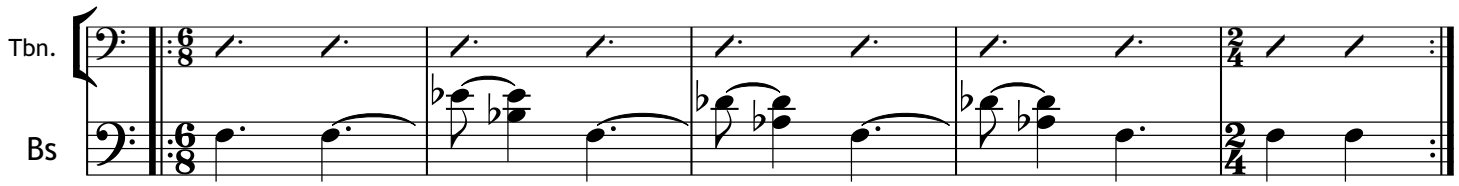
B Tbn pitches:



BACK TO A
or when ready
GO ON TO C

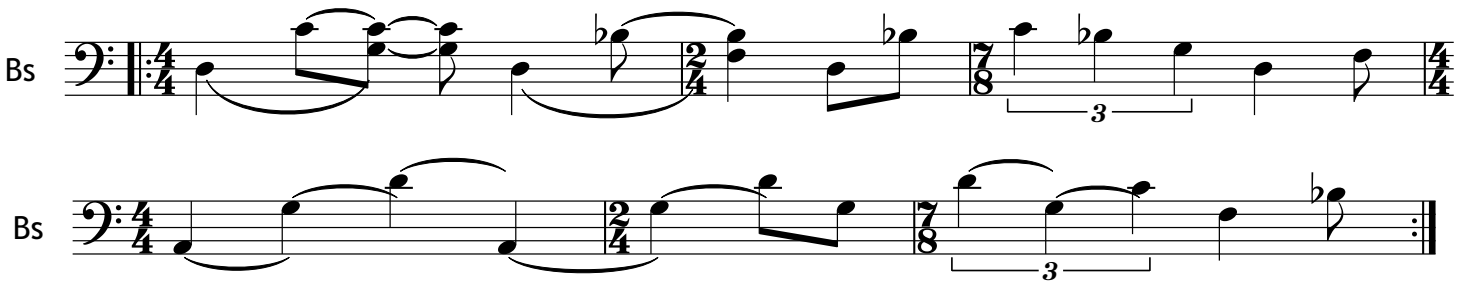
from *Resonating Abstractions* © 2012 Cronopio Music

C



D

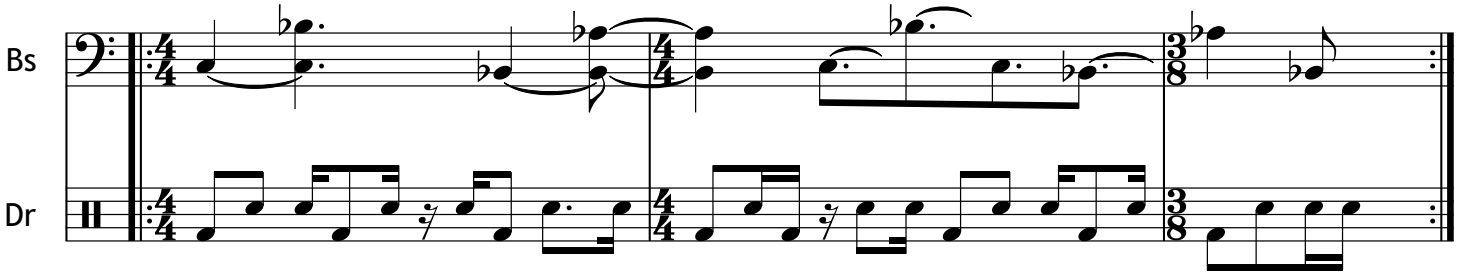
♩. = ♩ = 114-125



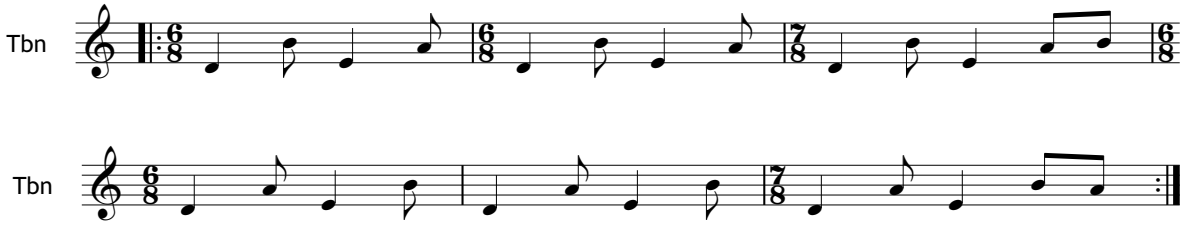
Tbn out
Bass solo, open

E

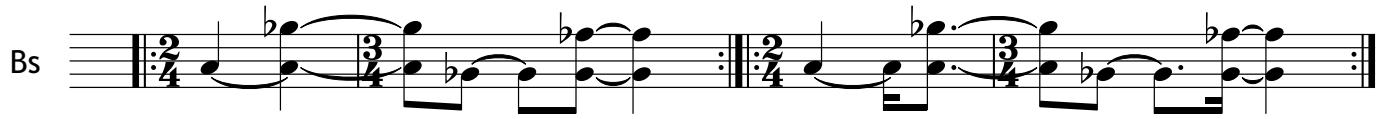
Drum solo



Tbn alt layer:



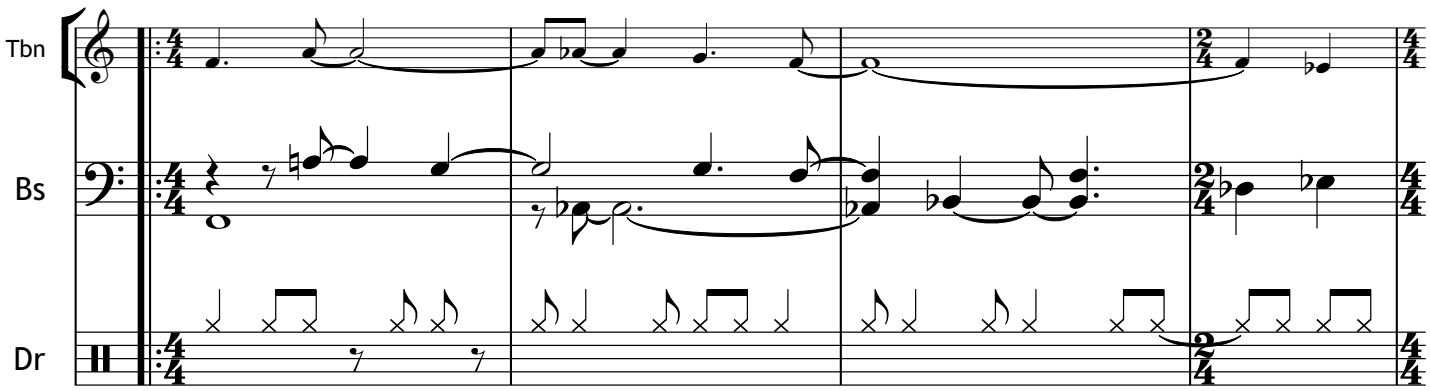
F Speeding up very slightly, to modulate:



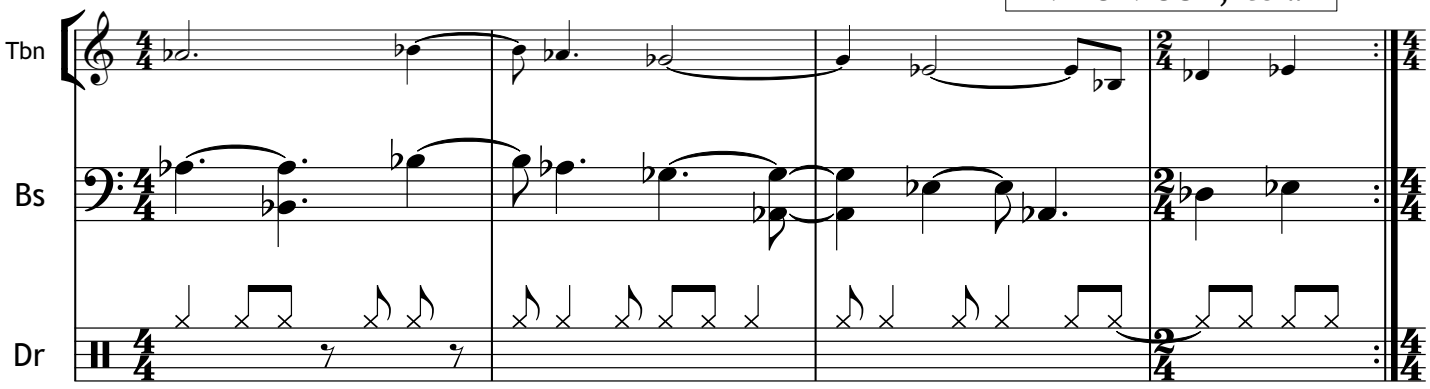
G

♩ + 𝅘𝅥𝅯 = ♩.

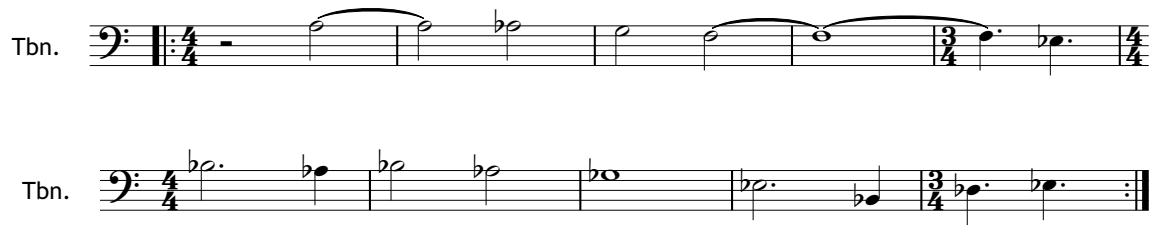
♩ = 162 Tbn end in slower time level feel



END ON CUE, to #2



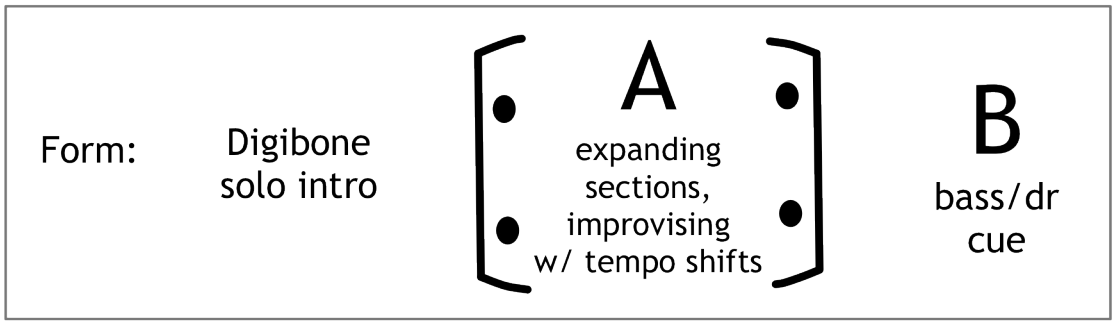
Tbn alt:



#2: organic and unnatural objects

for trombone/computer, bass and drums

Michael Dessen



A

Acoustic tbn w/ processing
Half valve/air tones

Continue, extend/expand pitches

Tbn

etc...

Bass/Drums: Loosely together on feel level, making tempo changes together

SLOW

pizz

Bass

Drums: Hi-lo (any sounds):

Dr

FAST

Bass

Dr

MEDIUM

Bass

Dr

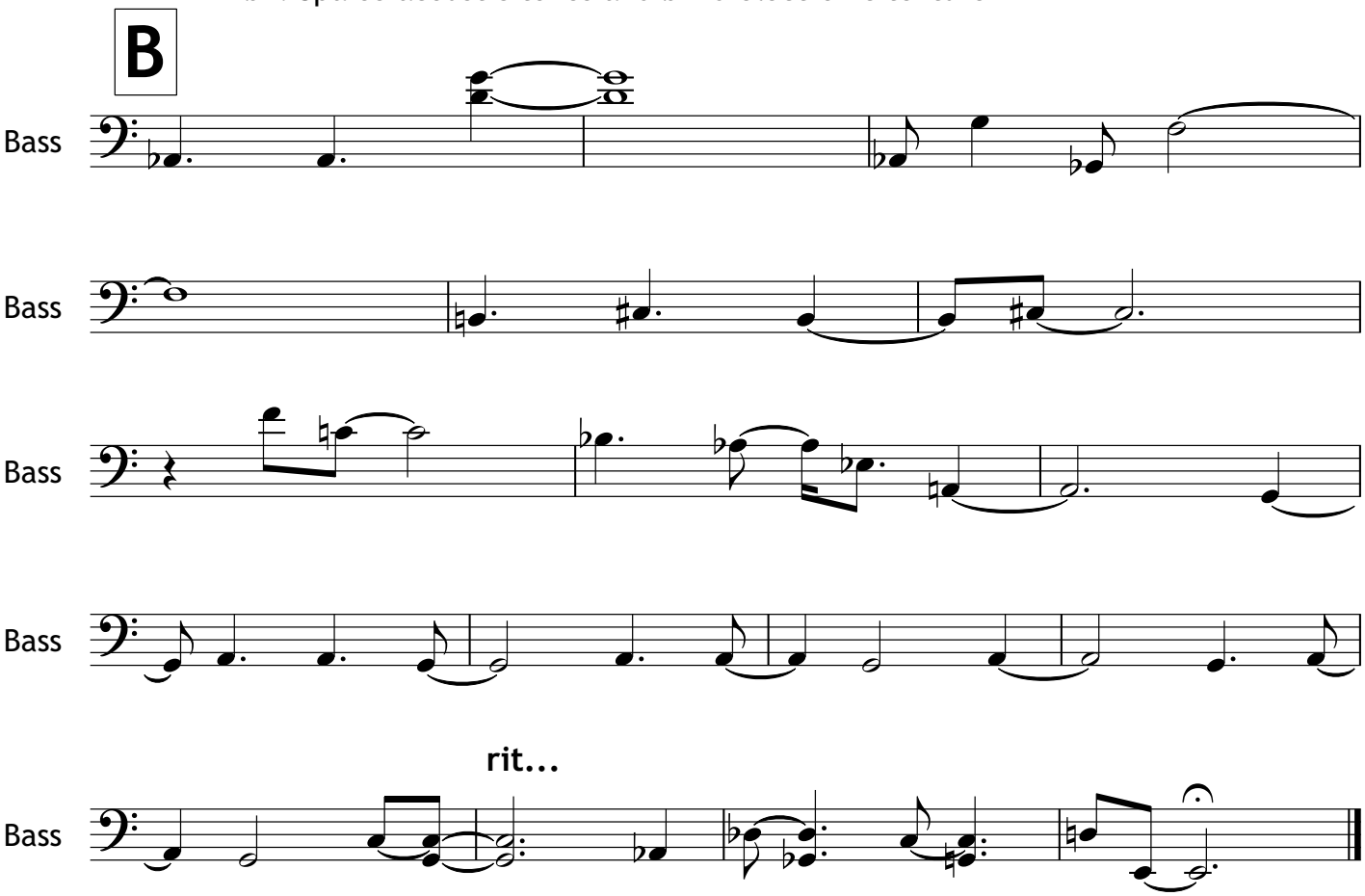
VERY SLOW

Bass

Dr

from *Resonating Abstractions* © 2012 Cronopio Music

Drums: Loose time feel and support bass line
Tbn: Sparse acoustic tones and bknd electronic texture



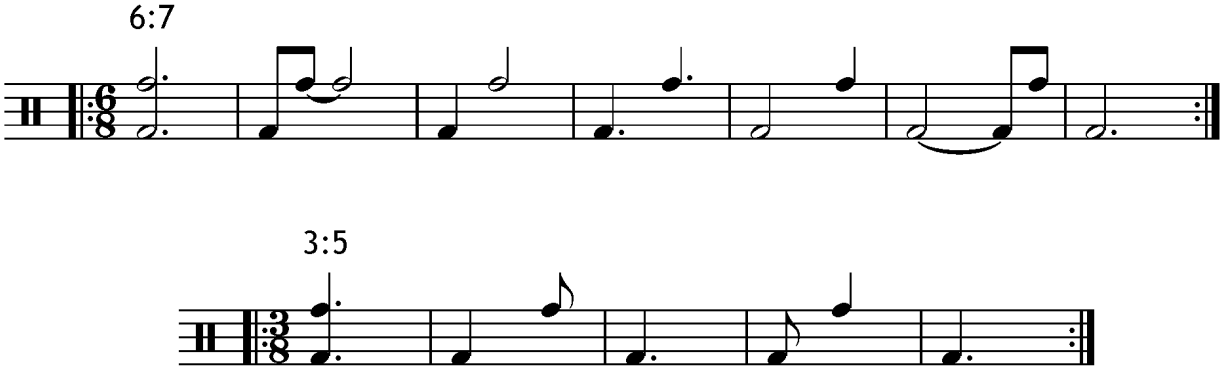
#3: ignite

Michael Dessen

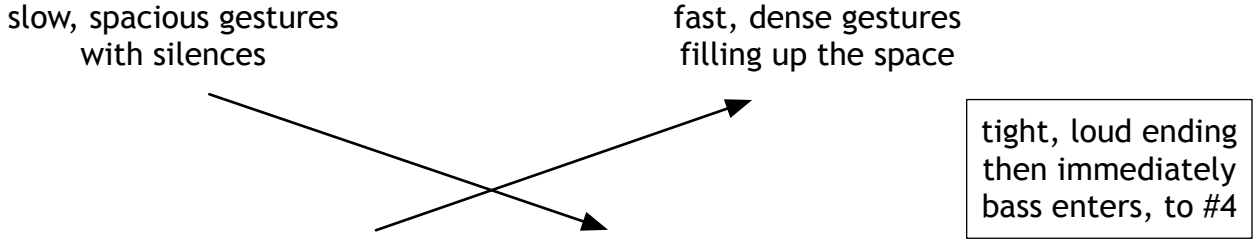
for drums and live electronics
for Dan Weiss

Drum part mostly improvised, using patterns below
Electronics are algorithmic 2-layer stream of sounds, with live processing

Rhythmic patterns to extend:



Form: Cross fade, with long build and conflict between 2 layers in middle section:



from *Resonating Abstractions* © 2012 Cronopio Music (ASCAP)

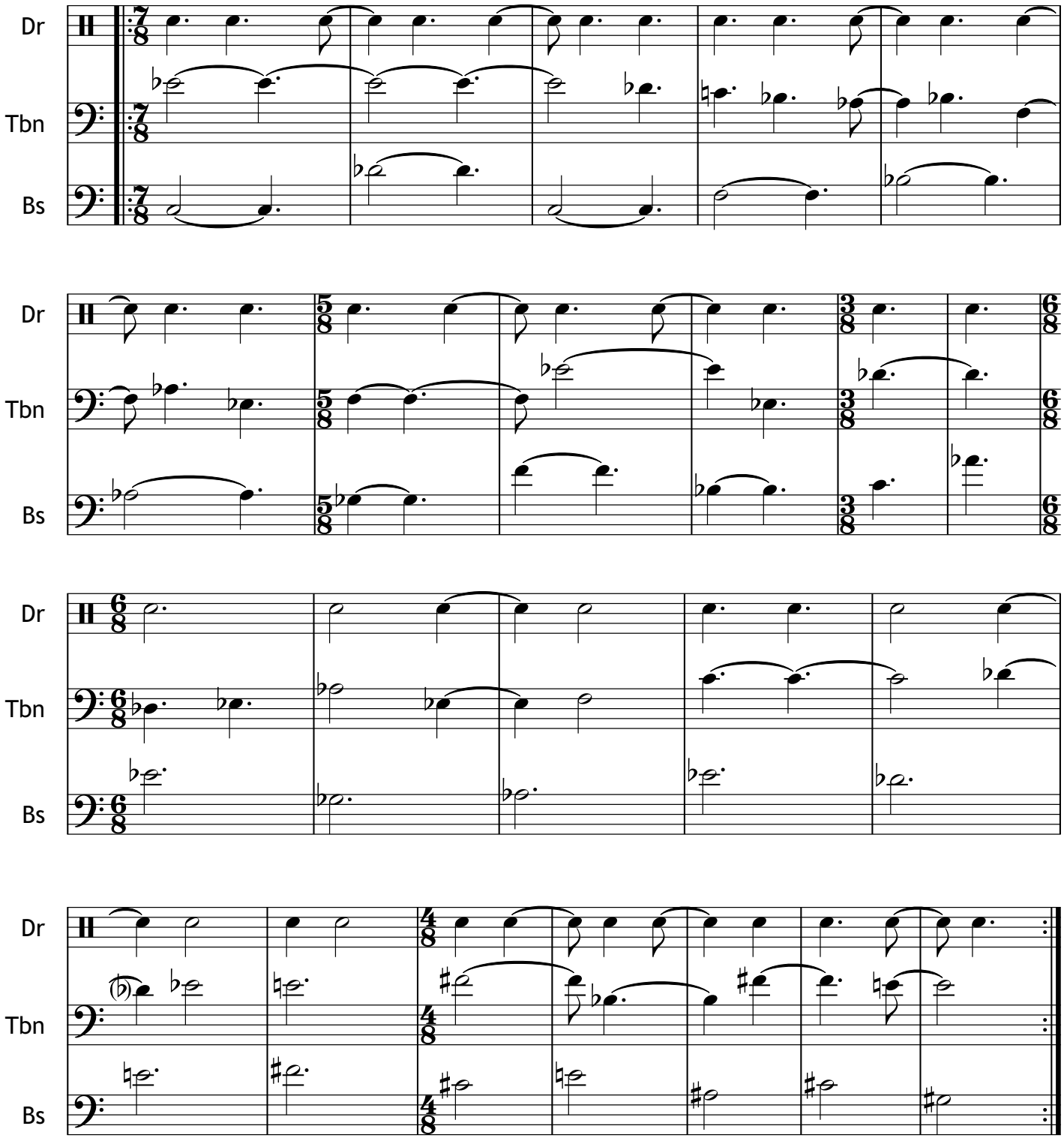
#4: the infinite and the invitation

for trombone, bass and drums

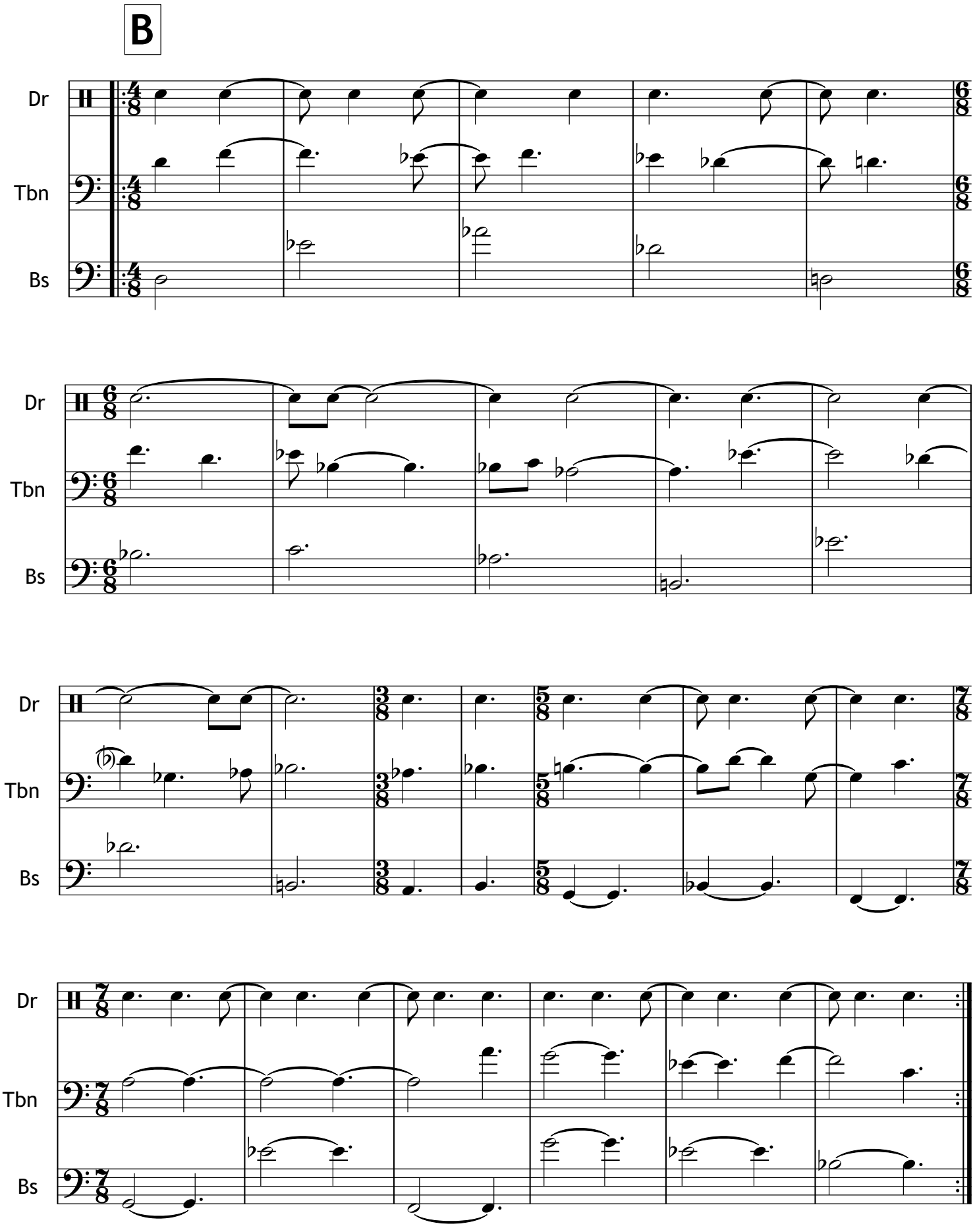
Michael Dessen

A A B B
Cycle form, improvise

A ♩ = 184



from *Resonating Abstractions* © 2012 Cronopio Music

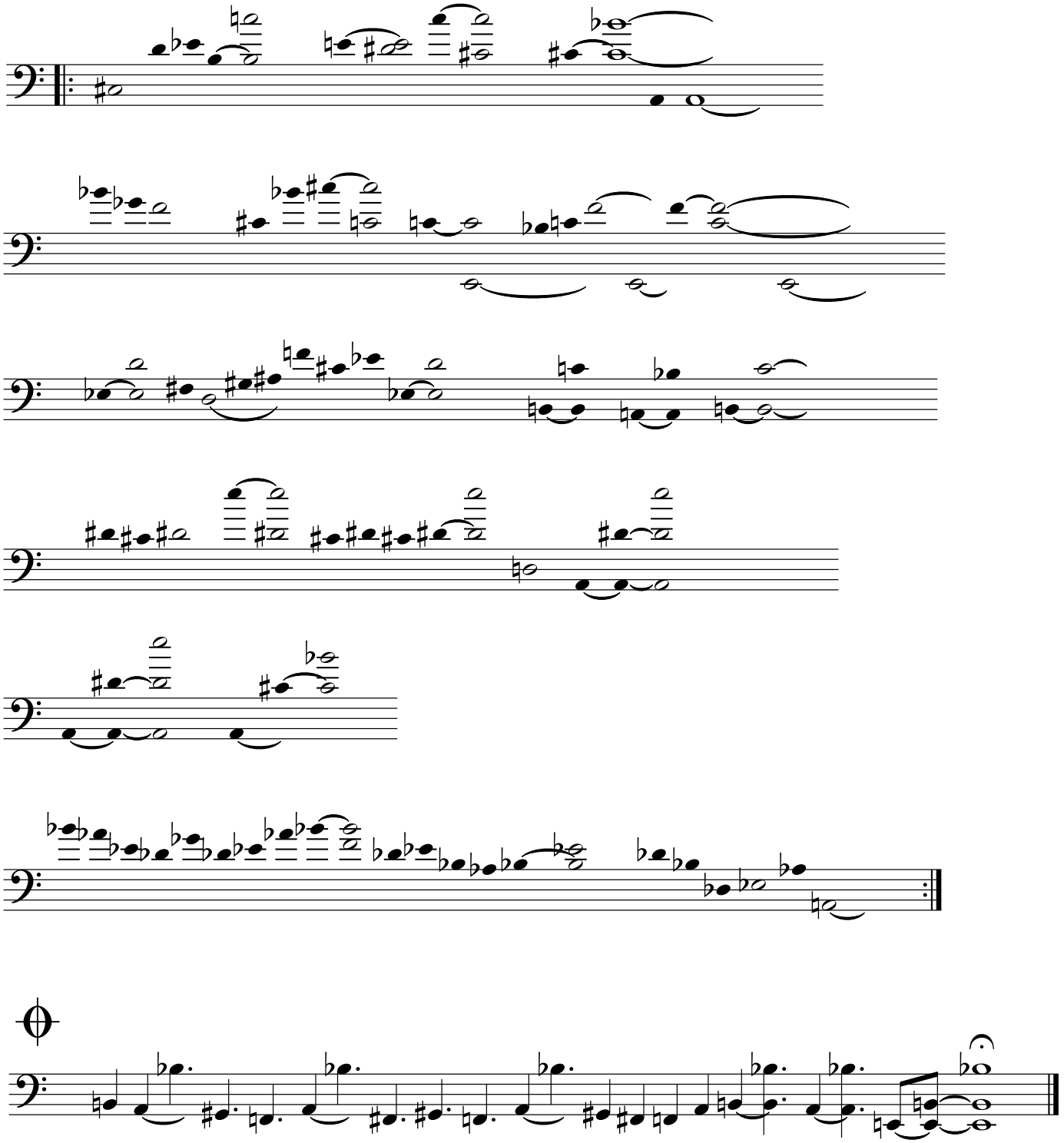

B
Dr
Tbn
Bs

#5: while in the subterrain

for bass and live electronics
for Chris Tordini

Michael Dessen

- Repeat optional. Dwell more on 2nd x.
- All accidentals are notated.
- Improvise with tones and explore harmonics freely. Pitches are notated in sounding octave.
- Live sampling/processing will be extremely minimal/subtle



from *Resonating Abstractions* © 2012 Cronopio Music

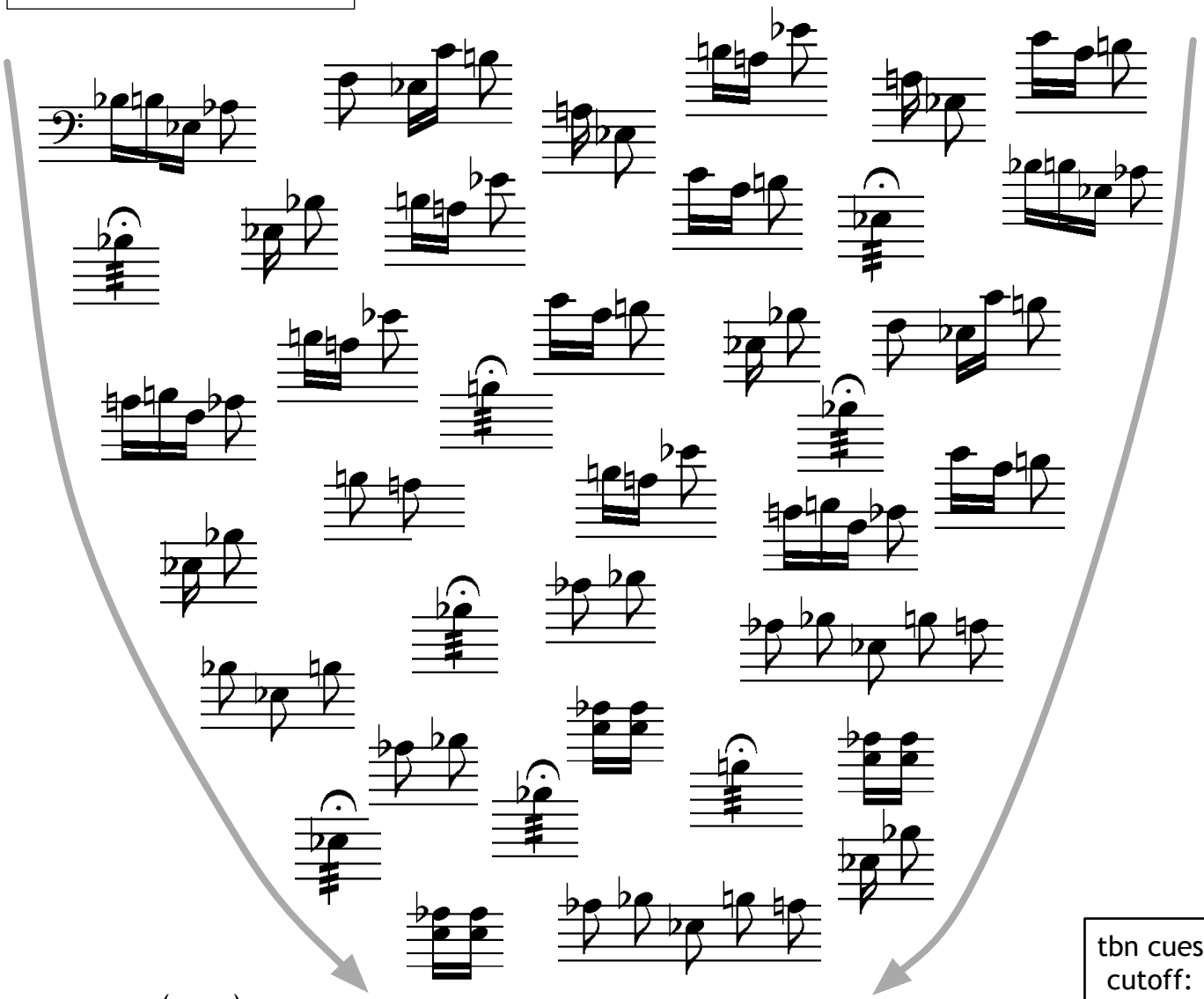
#6: where does time go

for trombone/computer, bass and drums

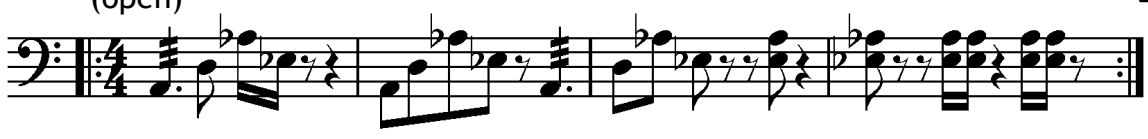
Michael Dessen

Tbn solo

arco bass w/drums:



(open)



tbn cues cutoff:

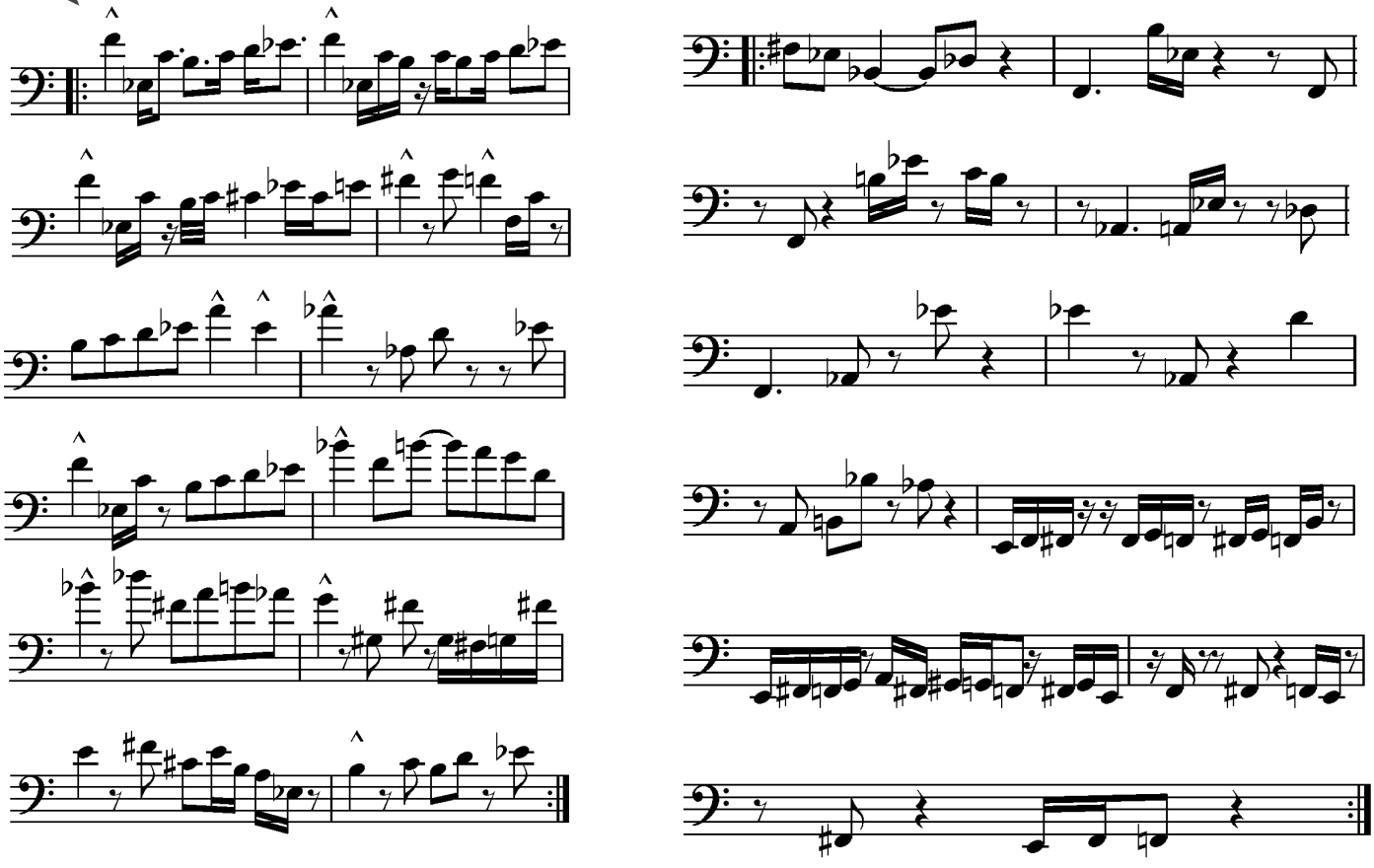
Drum solo (open)

+ tbn

Tbn/elect
pedal/gliss w/ flails

+ bass

Bass/Drums
loud, loose, heavy, open



WHEN TROMBONE STOPS

Bass solo

Drums bknd: sparse, gong-like
MD bknd: distant samples

Bass (alone) transitions to #7

#7: to make real

for trombone, bass and drums

Michael Dessen

♩ = 104

loose time feel at first

OPEN

Bs

A

Bs

Bs

1.

Bs

2.

Bs

3x then to B

Bs

1x - Bass/Dr
2x - + Tbn

B

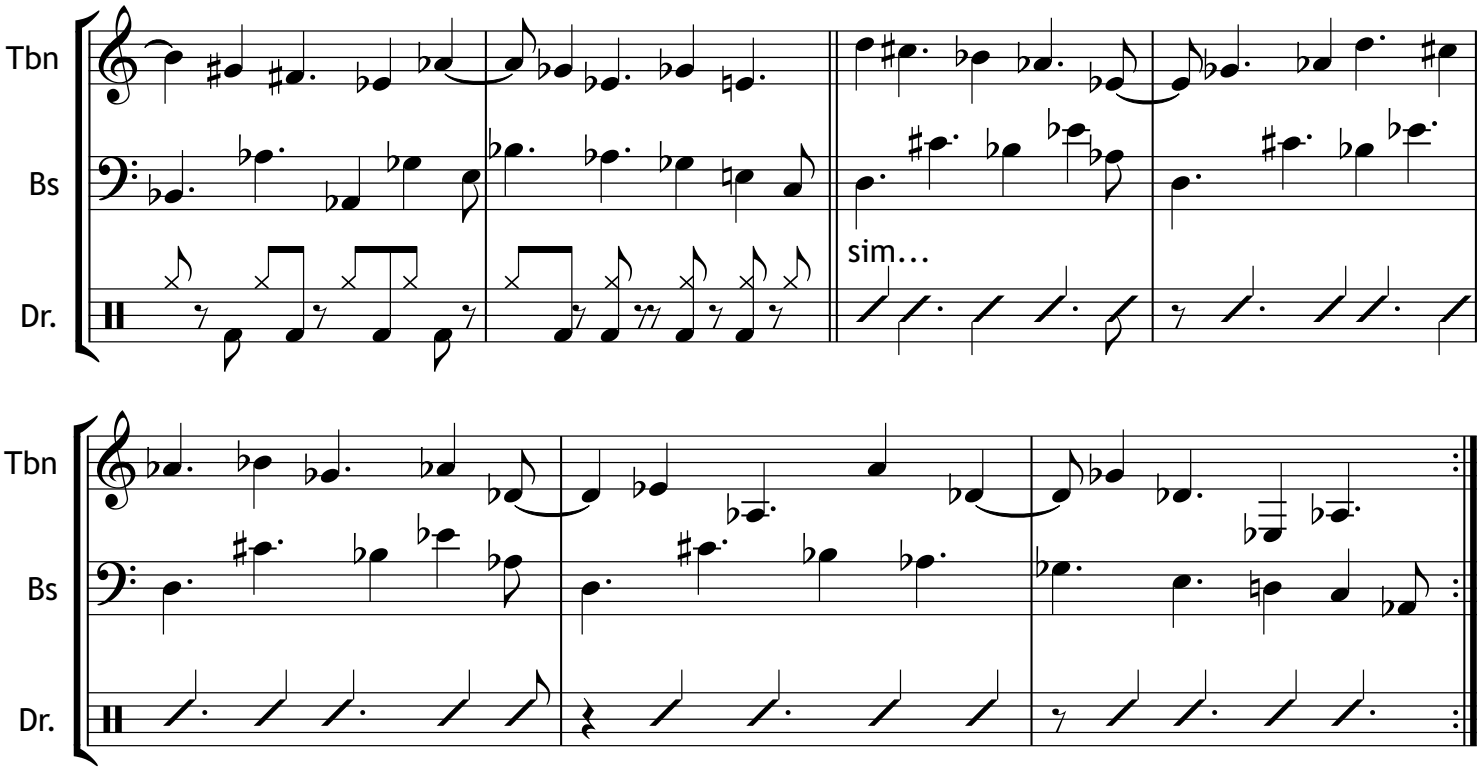
OPEN ♪. = ♩. = 138

Tbn

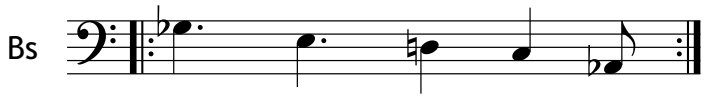
Bs

Drums: 5:11

Dr.



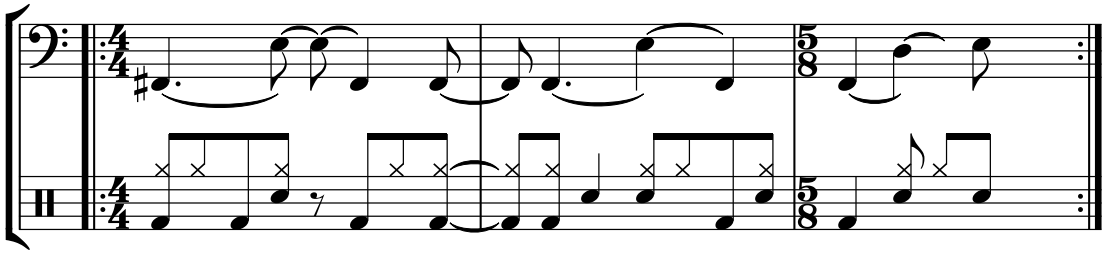
Open, use to modulate



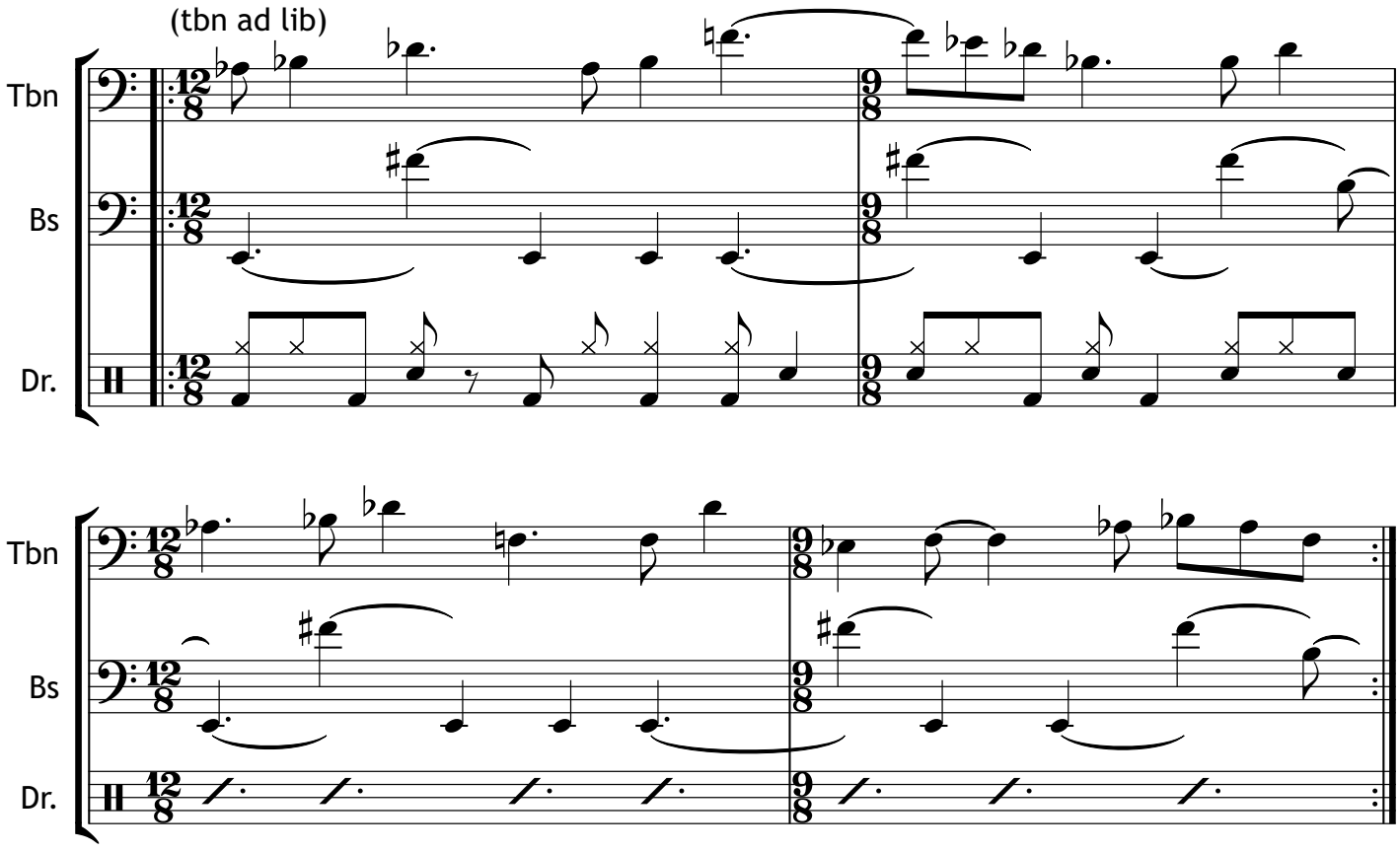
C

1.

OPEN ♩. = ♩ = 138



Trio improvise
then back to B

2. **OPEN / END**

(tbn ad lib)