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Oberfläche

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Author
Krieger, Ulrich

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Oberfläche
(Open Ocean, Marine Desert)

for
piano and percussion
(duo version)

(2013/14)

Ulrich Krieger

Oberfläche

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The surface of the open ocean, and its pelagic layers below, is a marine desert - no way to orientate and easy to get lost. Only sparse fish life exists in this featureless, endless open water expanse. Most fish live close to the beach or the ground where plant life can be found. Out here only plankton eaters and predators feed, both regularly traveling great distances across the featureless blue for food.
On the surface there is a blazing sun, water's glittering reflections, and the unknown of what lies below the blue shimmering, endless sheet of water. The only animals living on the surface of the ocean are a few scattered populations of sea birds.
Somehow the open ocean's surface is neither really above nor below, it is the in-between... Always the same, never the same…

Unplayable passages in Oberfläche are moments in the system leading to system disturbances, localized failures and breakdowns.
The system deconstructs itself. This is not the fault of the performer, but he has to cope with it.
The performer has the responsibility to find playable solutions for unplayable passages, changing the written material as freely as needed by displacing it in time –before or after where it is written. How far the performer tries to keep up with the perfect system and where he diverts from it and how, is his decision.

The perfect, abstract, impossible system becomes a less perfect, but practical, playable structure.
This allows/gives room for chaotic symetry breaking resulting in new variations/mutations,
which in their organic form, multitude and detail could not have been conceived and written down.

Duration: around 12' minutes

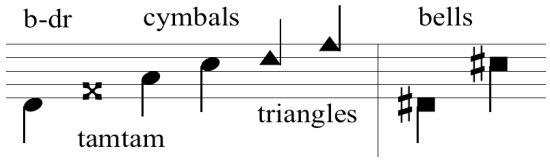
Ulrich Krieger (2013/14)

Solo version (2013) -piano **with** percussion- for Danny Holt - thanks for his insistence and patience
Duo version (2014) -piano **and** percussion-

Instruments
Oberfäche (2013/14) is for piano and percussion (two performer).
Amplification can be used to bring out, support, and blend the harmonics of the piano resonance with the shimmering, ringing sounds of the percussion.

Piano
Sustain pedal is always depressed (open) throughout the piece and should be fixed. Everything always rings.
Una corda pedal is used at the discretion of the performer.

Percussion



Let everything always ring.

Bass/kick drum is played with a foot pedal.
The sound should be dark and a bit boom-y - eventually loosen skin, don't mute.

Tamtam and cymbals
are played with soft mallets (or hand, knuckles or fist)
for a dark and long sustaining sound. Larger cymbals are to be preferred.

Triangles, bells, glockenspiel
(and tamtam in a fast move along the side of the instrument)
are played with light, hard beaters, best metal (or hard plastic or soft wood).

Bells should sound either as written or one octave higher.
Glockenspiel sounds two octaves higher than written.

Vibraphone
Sustain pedal is always depressed (open) throughout the piece and should be fixed. Everything always rings.
There are three different motor speeds notated.

Performance techniques

The performers has several ways of influencing the final outcome of the piece:

general

1. If a passage gets too difficult or unplayable, because it is too dense
rhythmically/metrically displace material to come before or after where it is notated, a free quasi-arpeggio.
The speed of the quasi-arpeggio can vary and could take up to two beats. The internal speed of the arpeggio can vary.

The performer has to find ways to make these unplayable passages work,
but the atmosphere of the piece should never be hectic, forced or 'spastic'.

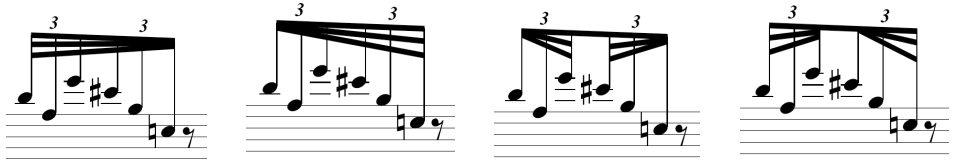
2. dynamic pp – mf
The performer should freely use the whole range of pp to mf dynamics and colors.

3. tempo ♩= 42 – 56 (quasi sempre rubato)

Floating time. The performer should freely use the whole range of tempi, but never change abruptly.
Individual figures can be played faster or slower than others at times.
Both player can have slightly different times. Players can disagree on where exactly a downbeat falls.

specific

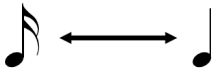
4. piano 32nd note passages
The pianist should play these figures always with some internal accelerando-ritardando and always differently, e.g.:



5. piano arpeggios
The pianist should play these arpeggios always differently, within given range, from fast, hushed arpeggios to 16th notes and triplets, e.g.:

6. glockenspiel glissandi
The percussionist should play these glissandi always differently and freely in
a) actually pitch range (from – to),
b) glissando speed and
c) glissando length ranging from one 16th to one ¼ note in glissando duration

gliss notation



gliss duration

piano and percussion
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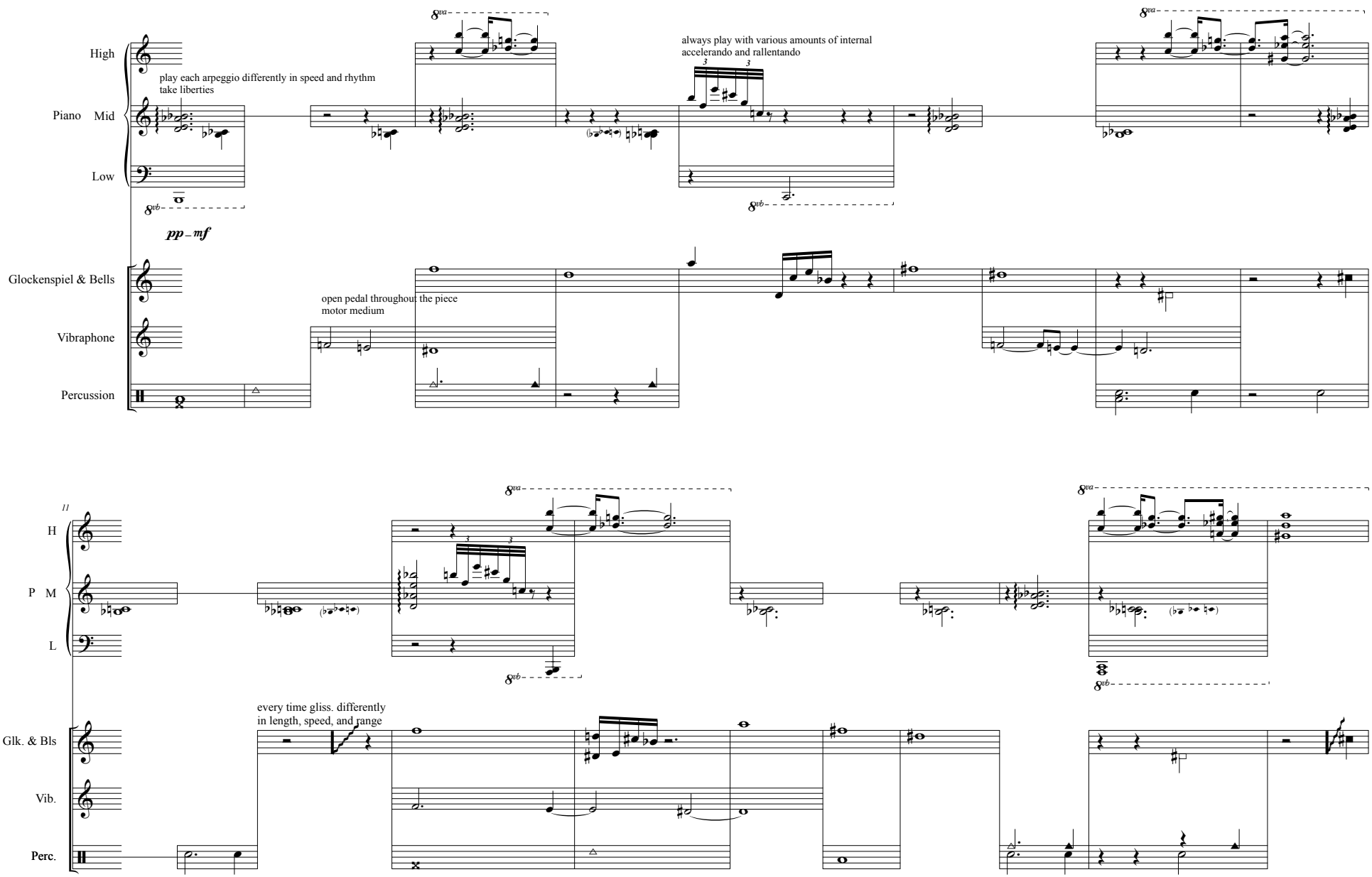

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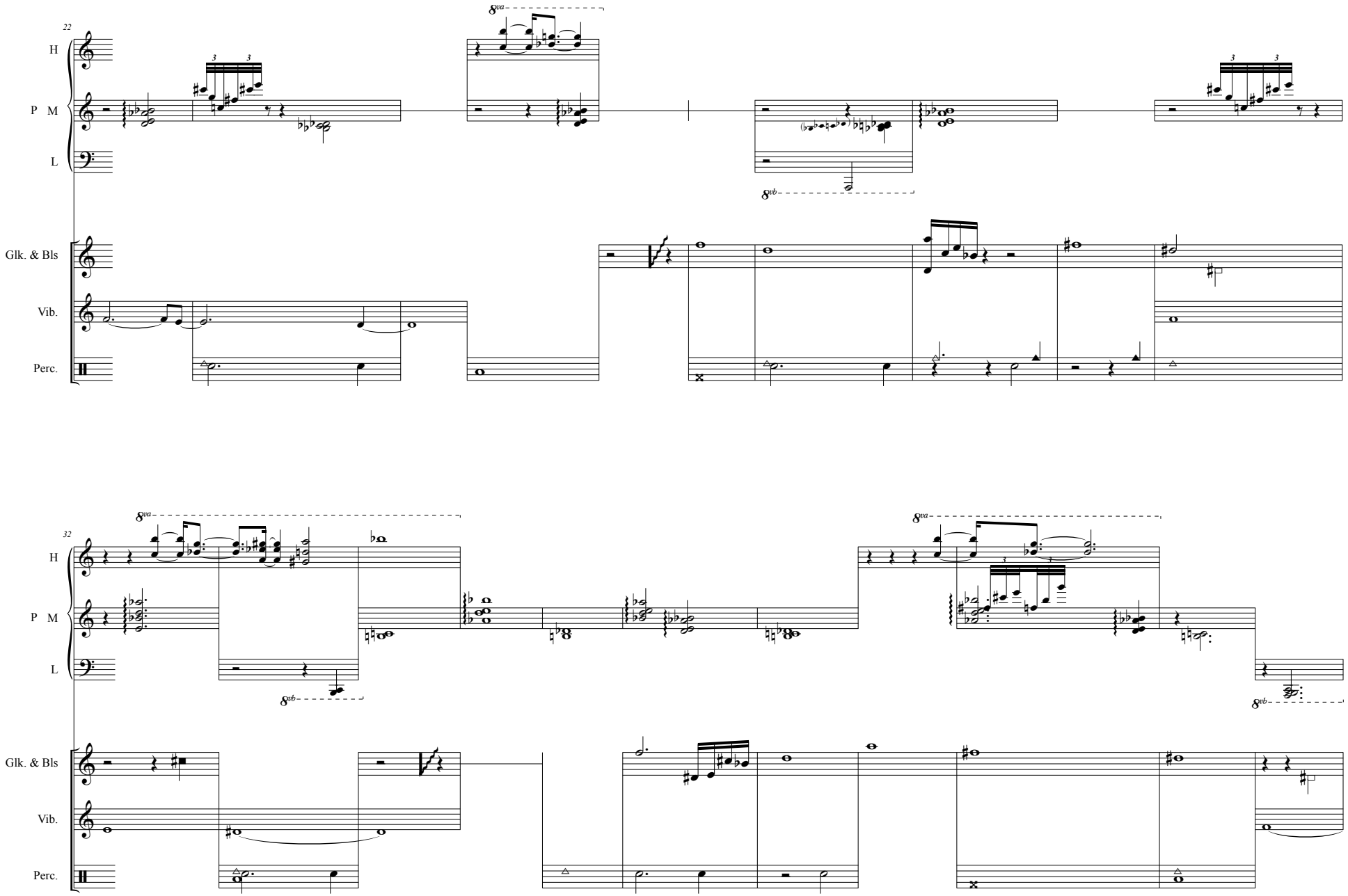
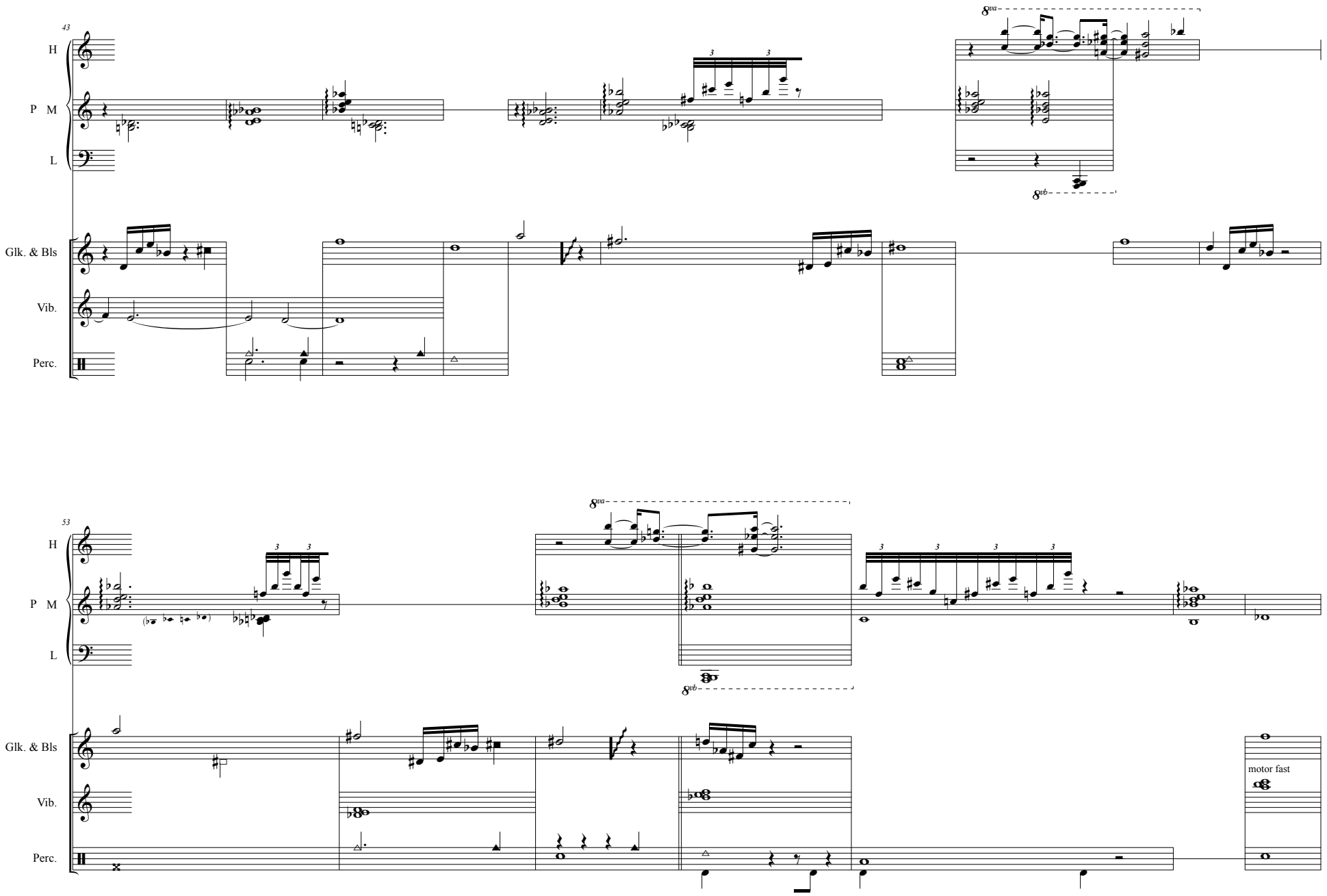
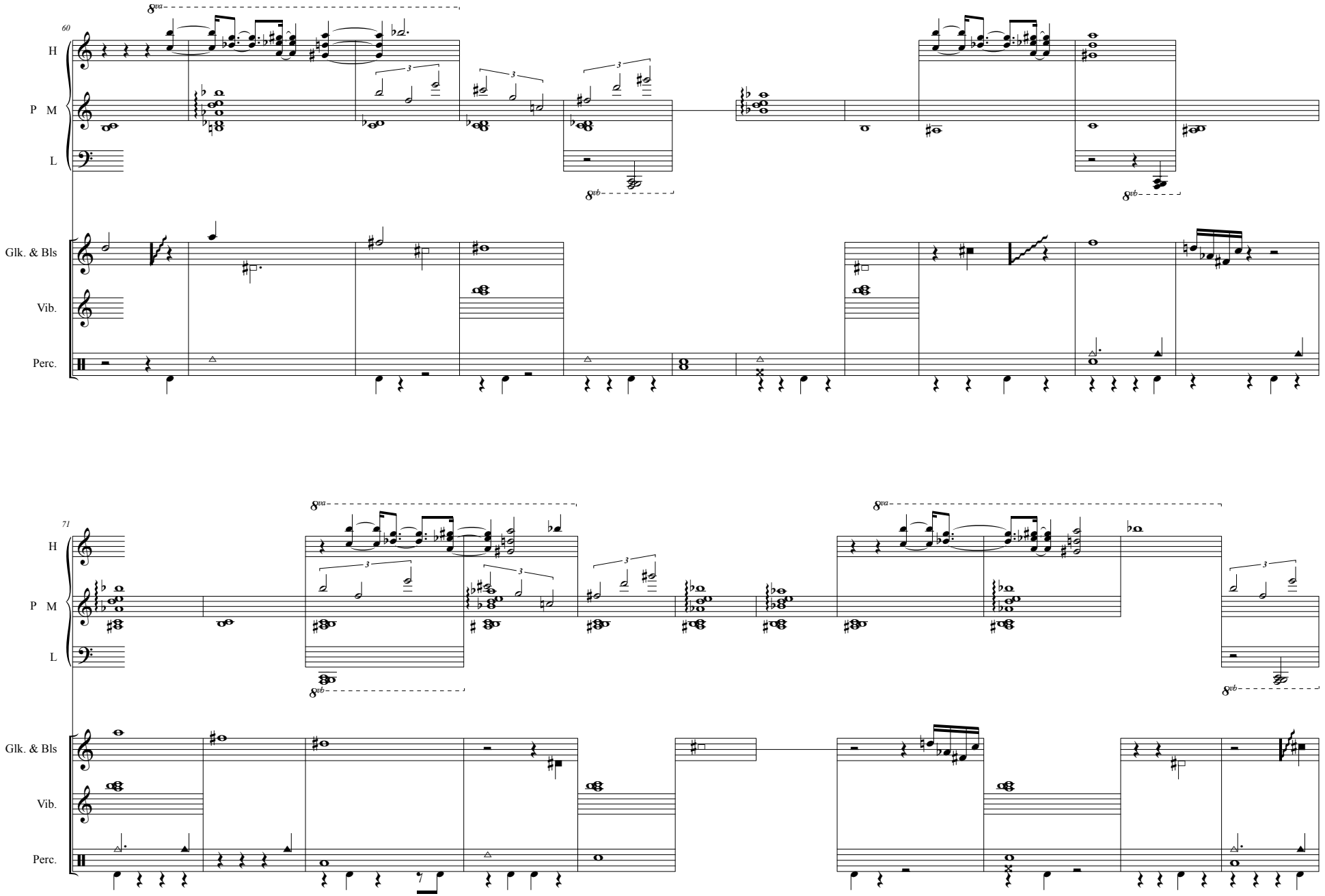
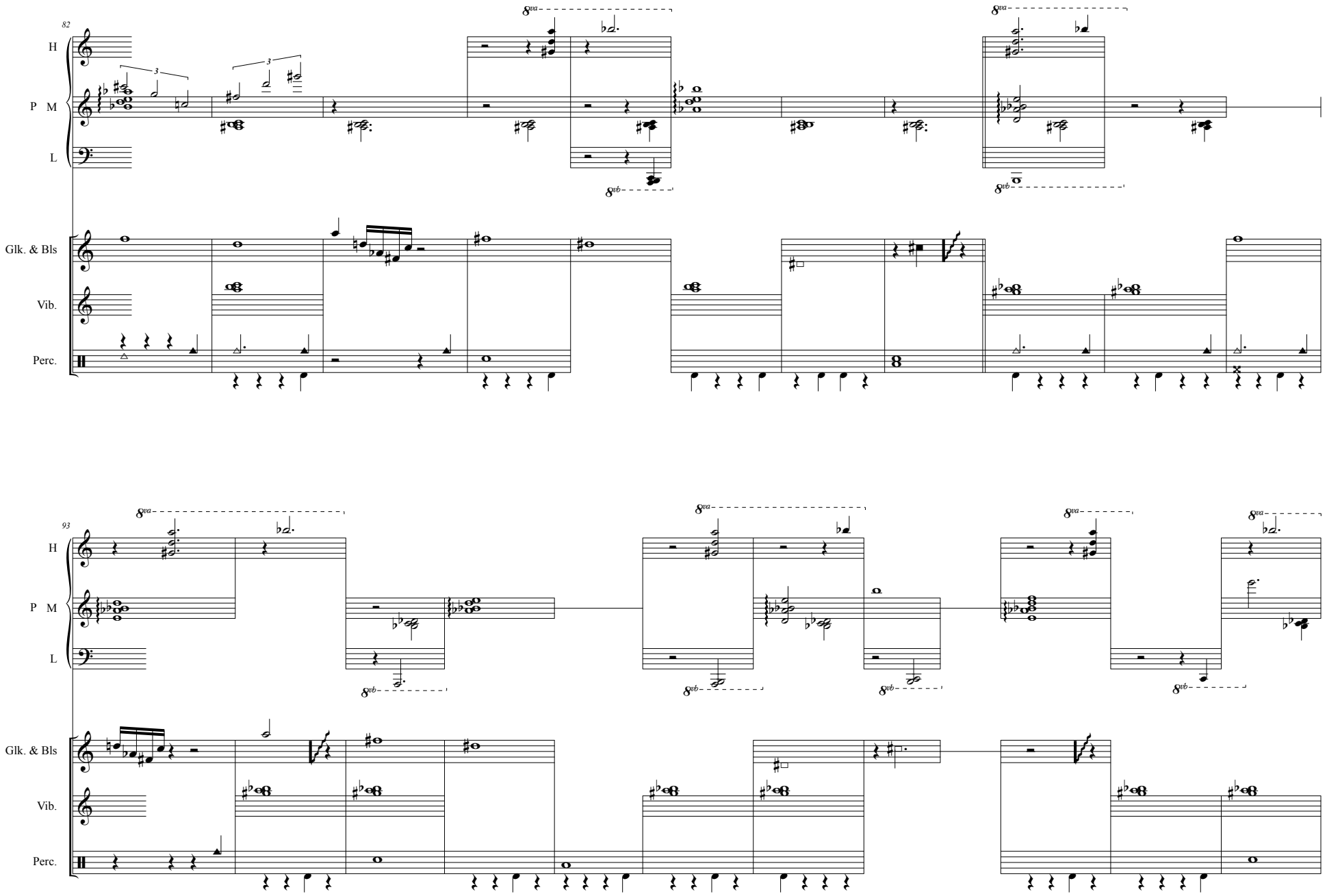
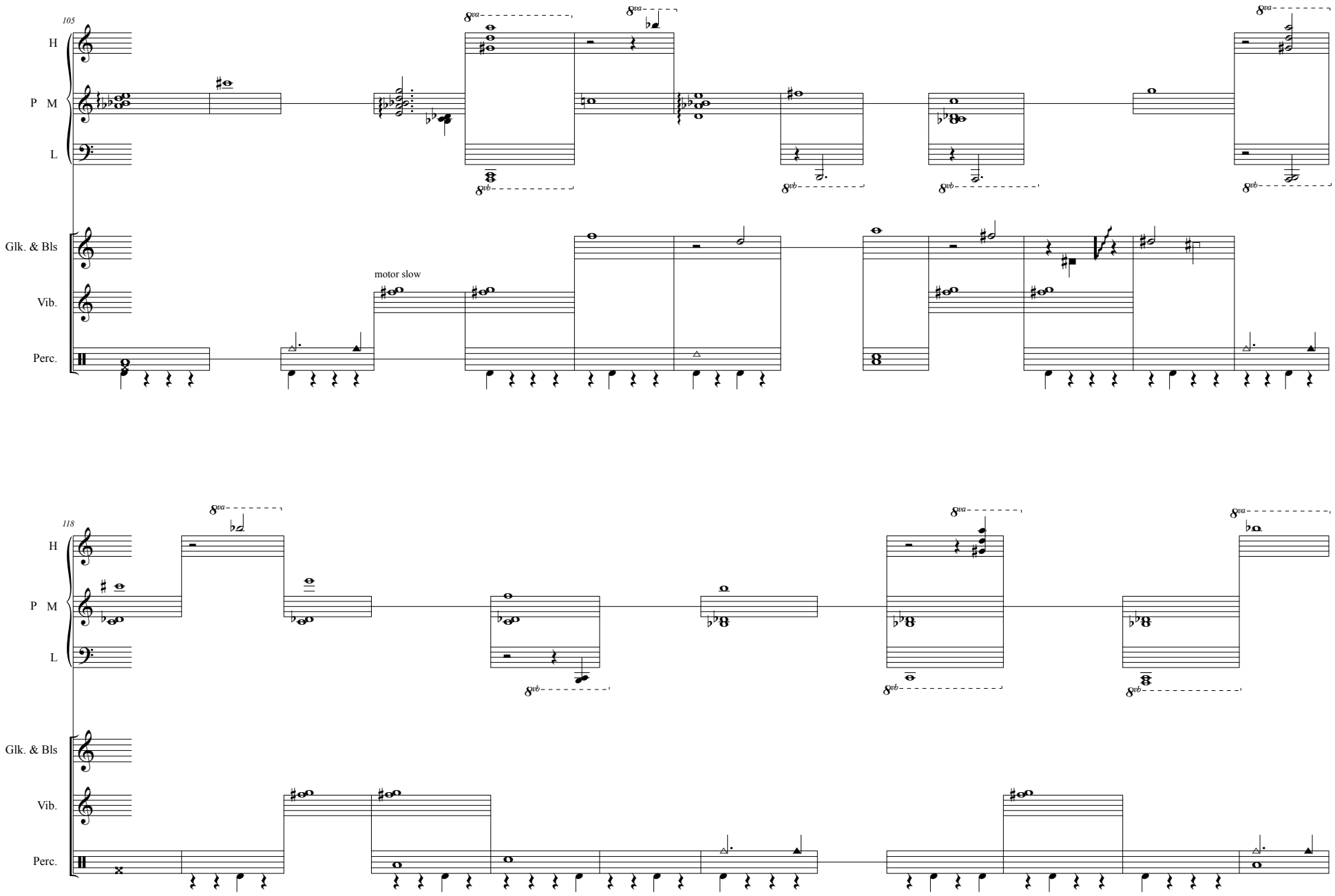
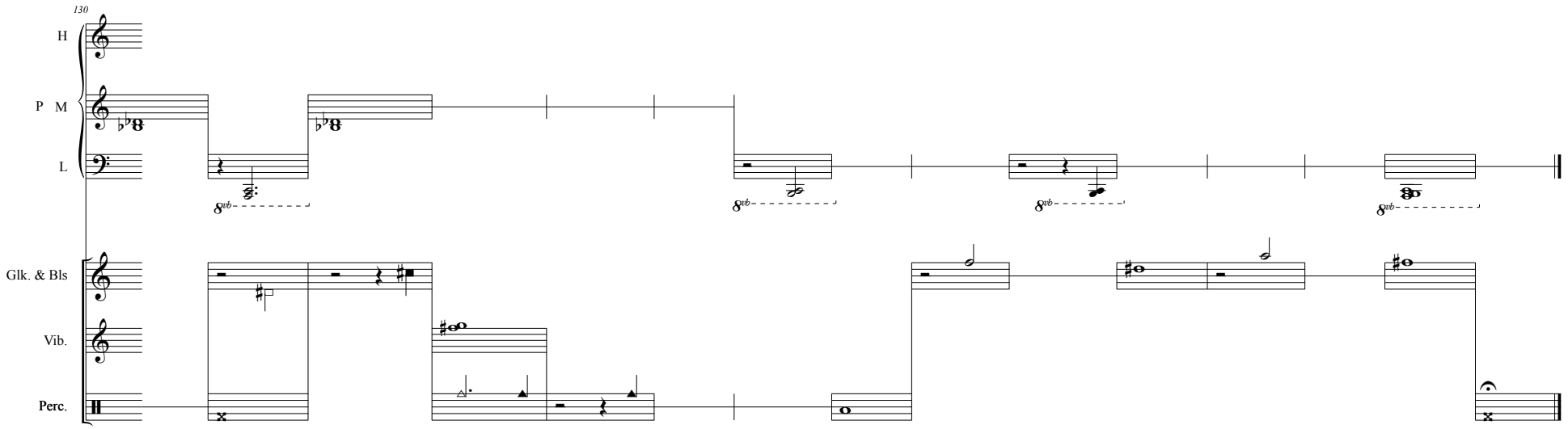

22
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.
32
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.


43
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.
8va
8vb
53
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.
8va
8vb
motor fast


60
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.
71
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.


82
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.
93
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.


105
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.
motor slow
118
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.


130
H
P M
L
Glk. & Bls
Vib.
Perc.