BOOK OF BIRDS

A THESIS IN
Music Composition

Presented to the Faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

by
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BOOK OF BIRDS

Paul Stanton Berlinsky, Candidate for Master of Music Degree

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2021

ABSTRACT

Book of Birds is a composition for flute and electronics inspired by birds. Throughout human history, artists have developed stories and music about the natural world around them. In this piece, Book of Birds, I am adding to this vast repertoire of folk stories with some of my own design, focusing on select bird species. Every movement focuses on a bird who serves as a spiritual guide for the listener as each sonic narrative progresses.

The live flute performance serves as a connection between the real-world space that the listener is occupying, and the spirit world created by the electronics. The performer takes on many roles, sometimes as a combined instrument with the electronics and at other times performing independently from the electronics. Live processing of the flute performance allows for the line between real and electronic to break down even further, taking the listener deeper into the sonic universe of each tale.

The fixed media is where the bulk of the spiritual and story elements of the work manifest themselves. It is here that samples and synthesized sounds work together to create the world where these stories take place. I traverse many different modes of listening in the fixed media, including semiotic, reduced, causal, and semantic. In some

cases, they may happen at the same time, creating a counterpoint of meaning, sonic behavior, and music.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the Conservatory of Music and Dance have examined a thesis titled "Book of Birds" presented by Paul Stanton Berlinsky, candidate for the Master of Music degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Yotam Haber, D.M.A., Committee Chair
UMKC Conservatory

Chen Yi, D.M.A.
UMKC Conservatory

Paul Rudy, D.M.A.
UMKC Conservatory

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without so many important people in my life. I would like to thank my composition professors, Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Paul Rudy, and Yotam Haber, for their encouragement and for pushing me to be a better composer all throughout my time at UMKC.

I would like to thank my colleagues throughout the conservatory for their feedback, support, and hours they put in that helped create my time at UMKC a successful one. Whether for input on a new piece, help to find performers, or perform a work, I appreciate and am thankful for all their generous collaborations.

Next, I would like to thank my family for their support and love. I traveled across the country to learn about music, and they never wavered in their belief in me.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Jessica. Without her I quite possibly would not have even started studying music. She has always pushed me to do my best, it is because of her I am able to pursue being a composer.

Book of Birds

for flute and electronics

Paul Berlinsky

Instrumentation

Flute
Electronics

Movements

Hummingbird
Woodpecker
Seagull
Raven

Duration: approx. 26 minutes

Text

“The Pool” by Hilda Doolittle (1886-1961)

Are you alive?
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you - banded one?

This poem is in the public domain.

Program Notes

Book of Birds was initially inspired by the hummingbirds that would come drink from the sugar-water feeder that I put out during the spring. From there, I gathered field recordings of feeding and buzzing around. I began to compose with the sounds I captured. Each movement focuses on a different bird and the world they inhabit, both physically and mystically. The movements contain sound-stories based on short folklore tales that I wrote for each bird. The work harkens back to ancient days, before written word, when stories would be shared and passed aurally through generations, letting the mind create worlds with just sound alone.

Chapter 1: Hummingbird

The world is in a deep winter, the snow is still and makes the world quiet. The hummingbird finds its way to this place, and with it comes spring.

Chapter 2: Woodpecker

The lonely woodpecker searches for a tree to build a home, but it does not know how. It hears another woodpecker in the distance and begins to search for it. They are united and build a home together.

Chapter 3: Seagull

A solitary person stands on the seashore, not sure what to make of their life. The seagull carries them out to sea and asks them what and who they are. The person must answer to be set free. Text by Hilda Doolitle:

The Pool, by Hilda Doolitle

Are you alive?
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you - banded one?

Chapter 4: Raven

Someone has died, and their soul leaves their body. It is lost and does not know how to move on. A raven comes and guides the soul to new living vessels for it to be united with. The soul is guided to a whale and a cricket before finally it is united with a tree.

Performance Notes

Notation:

○ = air

◐ = half air, half pitch

● = pitch

→ = gradual transition to new technique

 = natural harmonic

 = key click

 = tongue pizz

 = flutter tongue

 = jet whistle

= tongue ram

 = start electronics

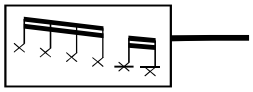
= initiate or end patch

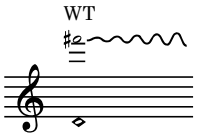
L.H. = left hand

R.H. = right hand

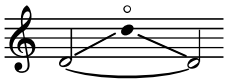
 = increase rhythmic density

 = decrease rhythmic density

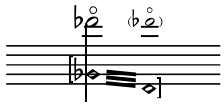
 = repeat and improvise gesture to the end of the line



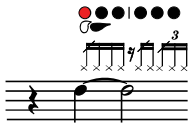
= whistle tone, bottom pitch is fundamental fingering, top pitch sounding pitch, line indicates rate of changing pitch



= change from fundamental to harmonic then back down to fundamental

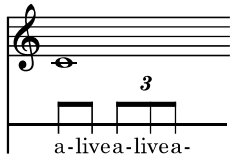


= timbral trill, between equal harmonics of different alternating fundamentals



= play pitch while performing rhythm with key clicks of suggested fingering

= play notated pitches with left hand fingering, and with right hand trill the D and D♯ keys.



= play given note and whisper rhythm and text of bottom staff

Notes on Interpretation:

1. Accidentals apply only to the note they precede. Even in the case of repeating notes, accidentals will be given.

2. Rests are given for silences generally less than eight beats. Longer silences will have blank space on the staff. The click track and graphic cues will assist in the timing of returning after long pauses.

3. The graphic notation for the electronics act as cues for the perfomer. Not all sounds could be notated and maintain a readable score. They are there in order provide a general understanding of what the sounds are doing with the performer.

4. All timing indications underneath rehearsal marks are in relation to when the electronics start, not the start of the movement. This is for practice assistance, but can also be useful in performance.

5. Let all live electronics decay natrually before stopping the effect.

Technical Requirements:

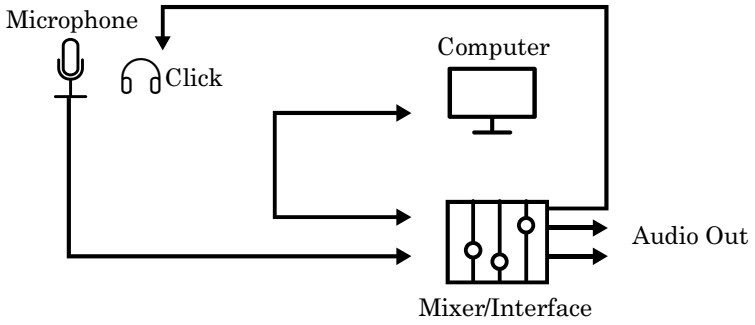
Hardware:

Microphone for amplification and optional live processing performance
Audio interface/Mixer and related cables
Computer
2.1 speaker setup
In-ear monitor for click track

Software:

A DAW to route audio channels to speakers and in-ear monitor

Hardware Setup Diagram:



Speaker Arrangement:

Have both speakers on stage on either side of the performer.

Electronics Performance:

It is recomended that someone perform the electronics by pushing play as indicated in the score. Each movement must be initiated as indicated in the score. This is also true if using live processing.

Click Track:

A click track is provided for each movement to assist the performer in order to align perfectly with the electronics. Each rehersal letter in the score indicates when the click will sound. There will be two preparatory beats given in tempo, then the letter will be spoken. It will sound as such: "1 - 2 - A".

Live processing:

Live processing is recommended, but optional for this work. Users can create their own patches or use plugins for the work based off the descriptions below. The score indicates when to turn the patches/plugins on and off.

See next page for patch parameters.

There are four patches required if using live processing for the piece:

1. Heavy Reverb:
   Large Hall
   30-70 ms predelay
   5-10 seconds decay

2. Medium Reverb:
   Small Hall
   14 ms predelay
   1-2.5 seconds decay

3. Delay 1
   Left 300-470 ms
   Right 700-850 ms
   Feedback 30%

4. Delay 2*
   Left 200-250 ms
   Right 60-90 ms
   Feedback 30%

*Delay 2 is only used in the second movement, Woodpecker.

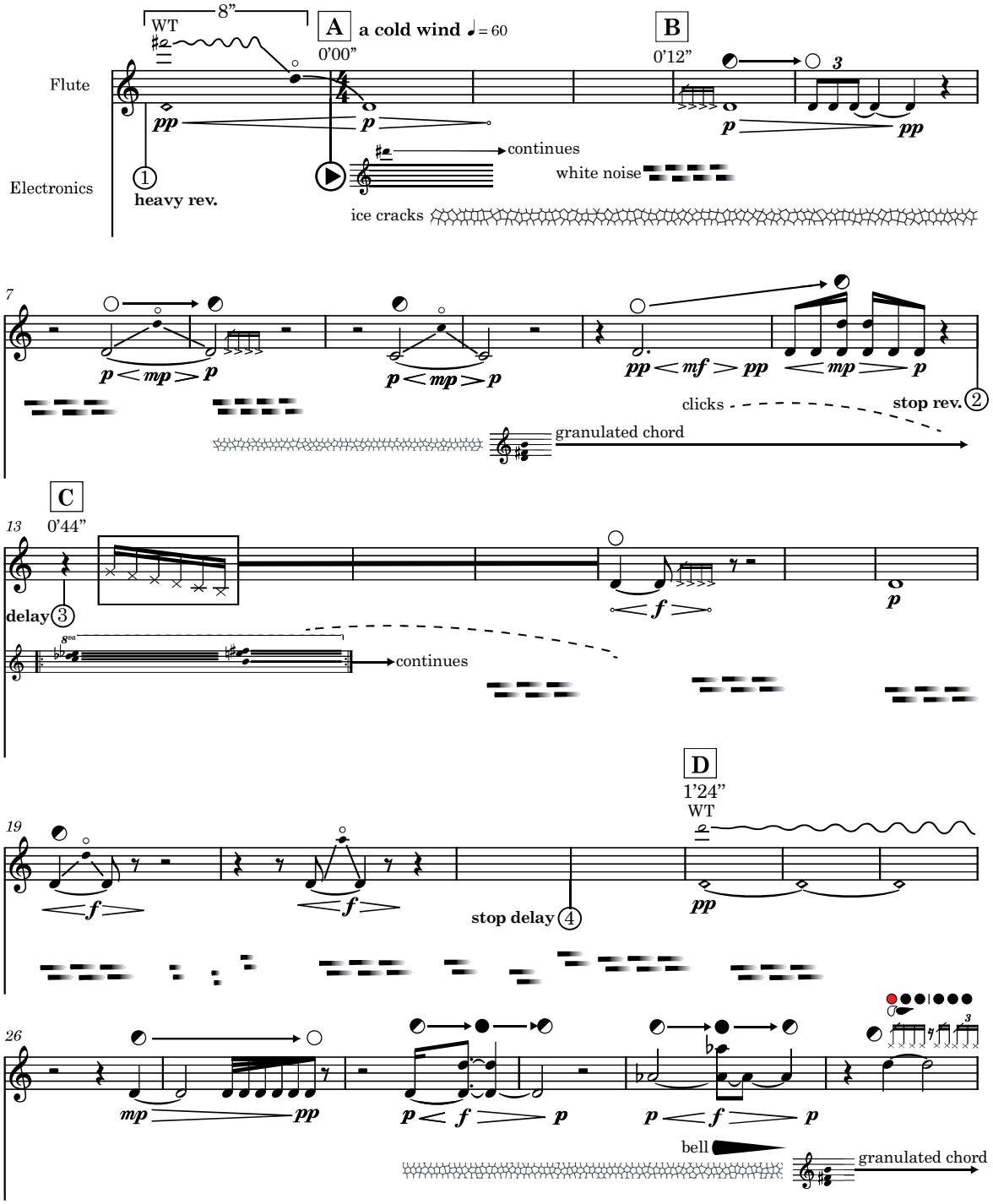
The performers should use discretion on what settings are best for the room the performance is taking place in, based on the ranges given. For example, in a small dry room, a longer decay time would be effective, whereas in a large wet hall, a shorter decay time would work better. The live processing should meld the flute with the fixed media. The computer performer should mix the amplification, live electronics and fixed media to create tasteful interactions between the flute and the fixed media.

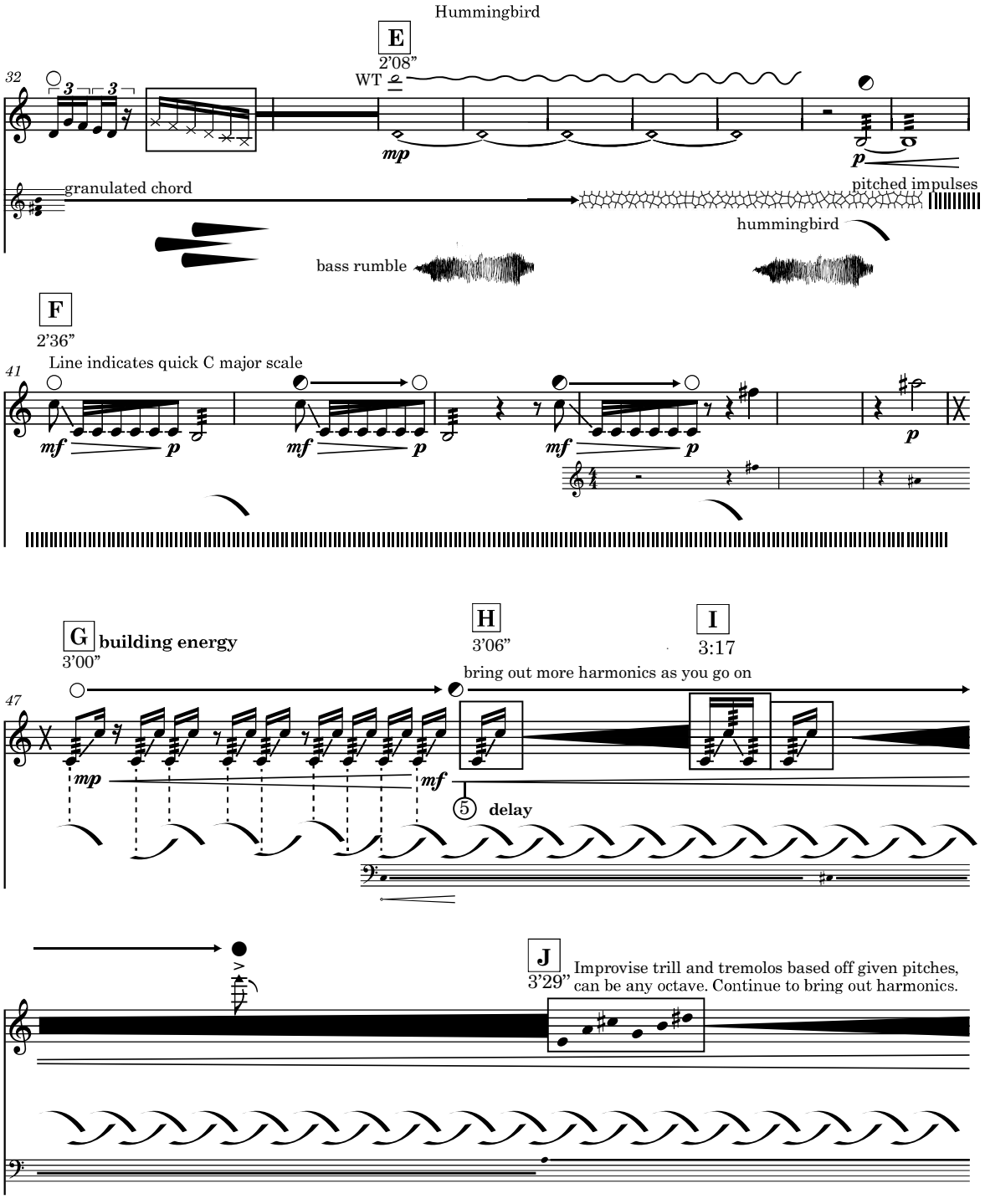
If performers do not wish to create their own patches, they can contact the composer to receive the patches he used while composing the work at paulber1358@gmail.com.

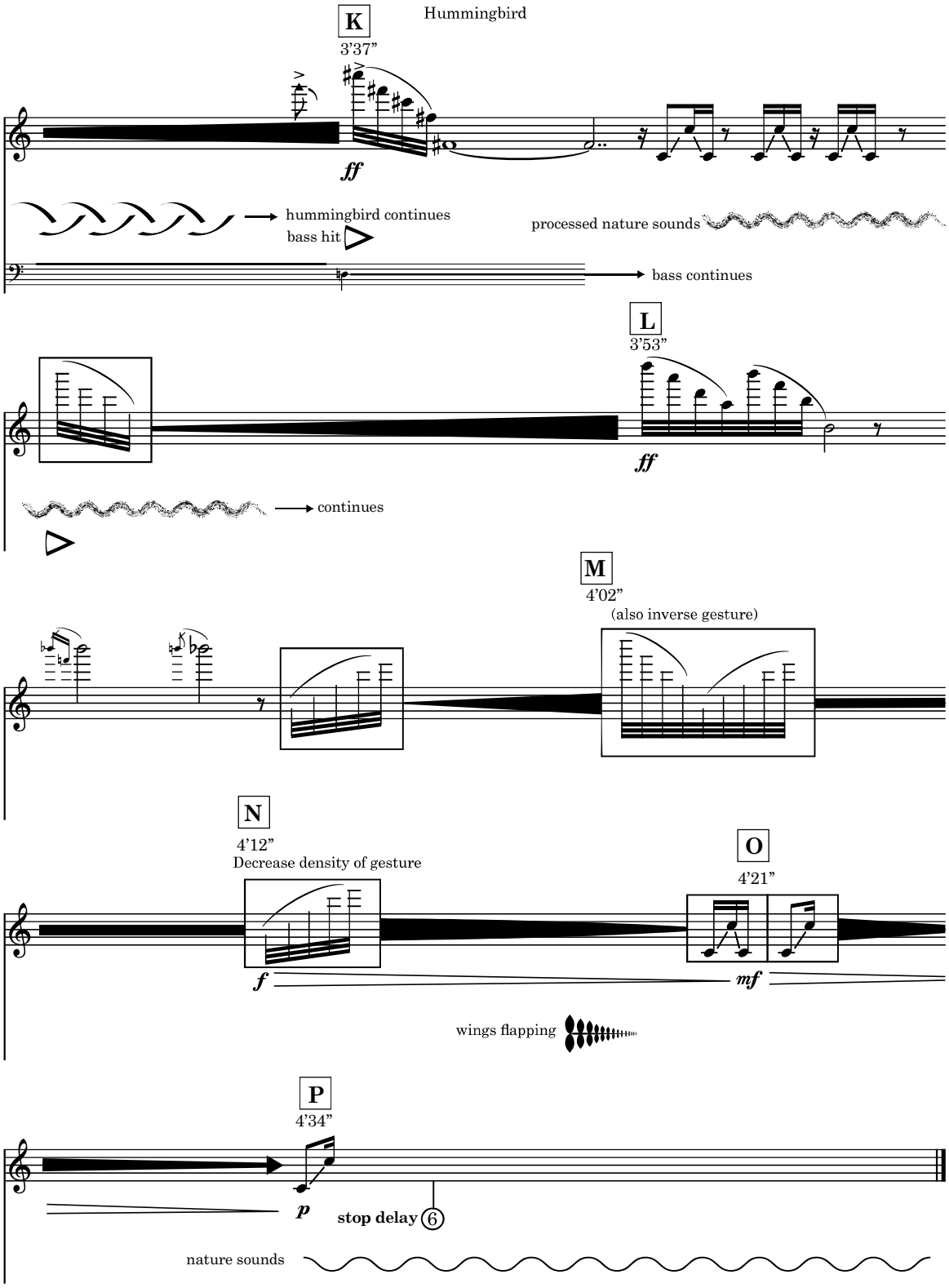
Book of Birds

1. Hummingbird

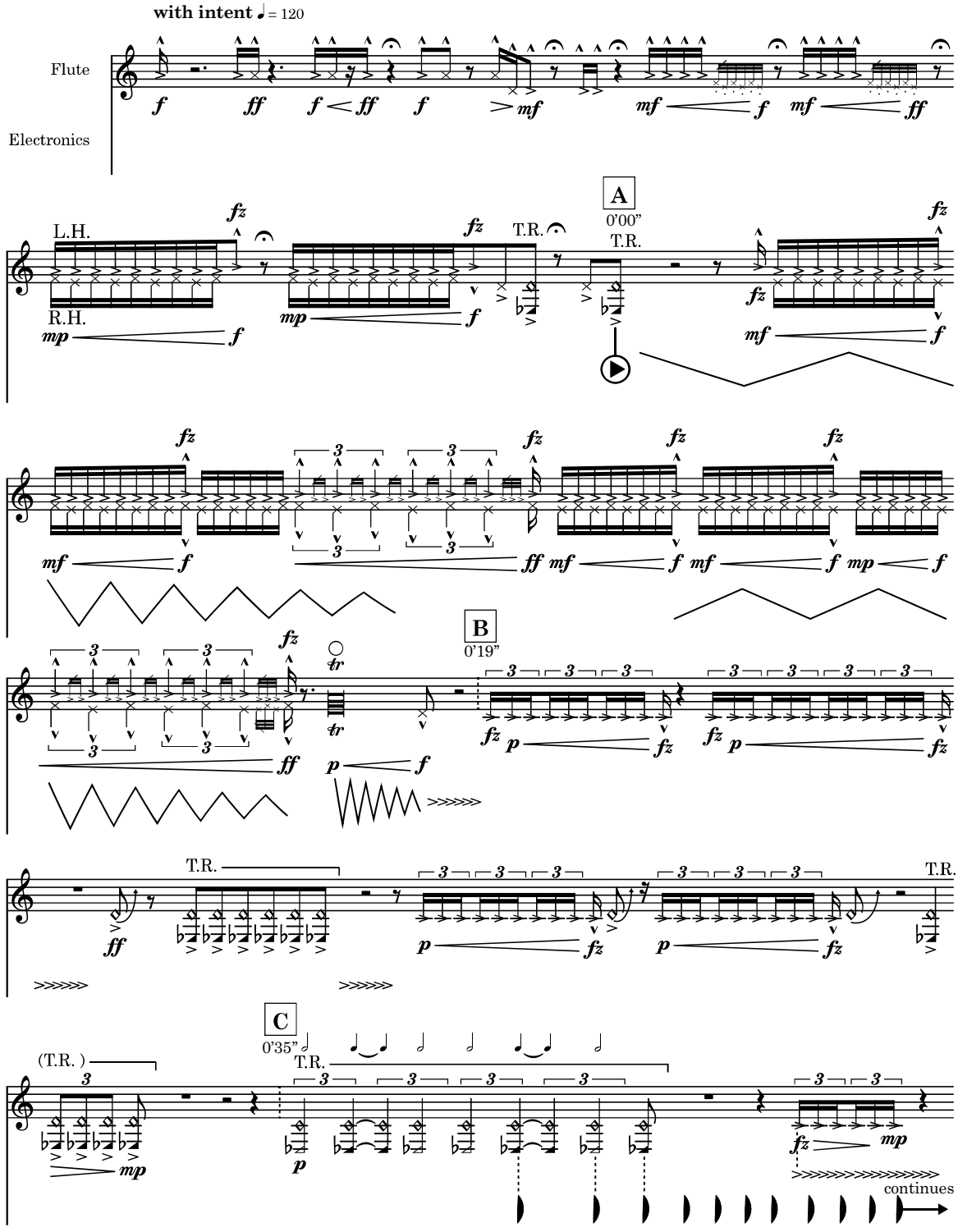
Paul Berlinsky

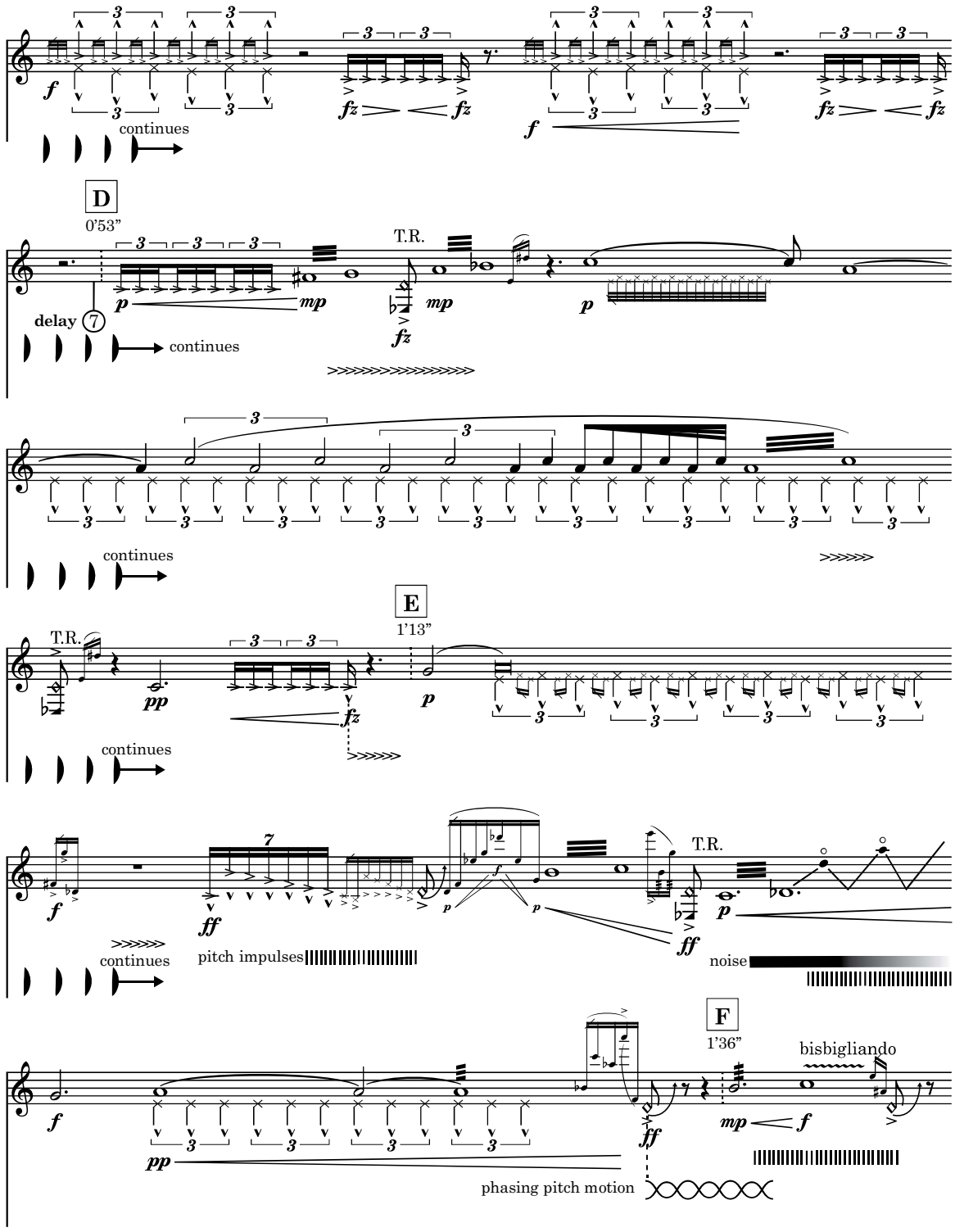


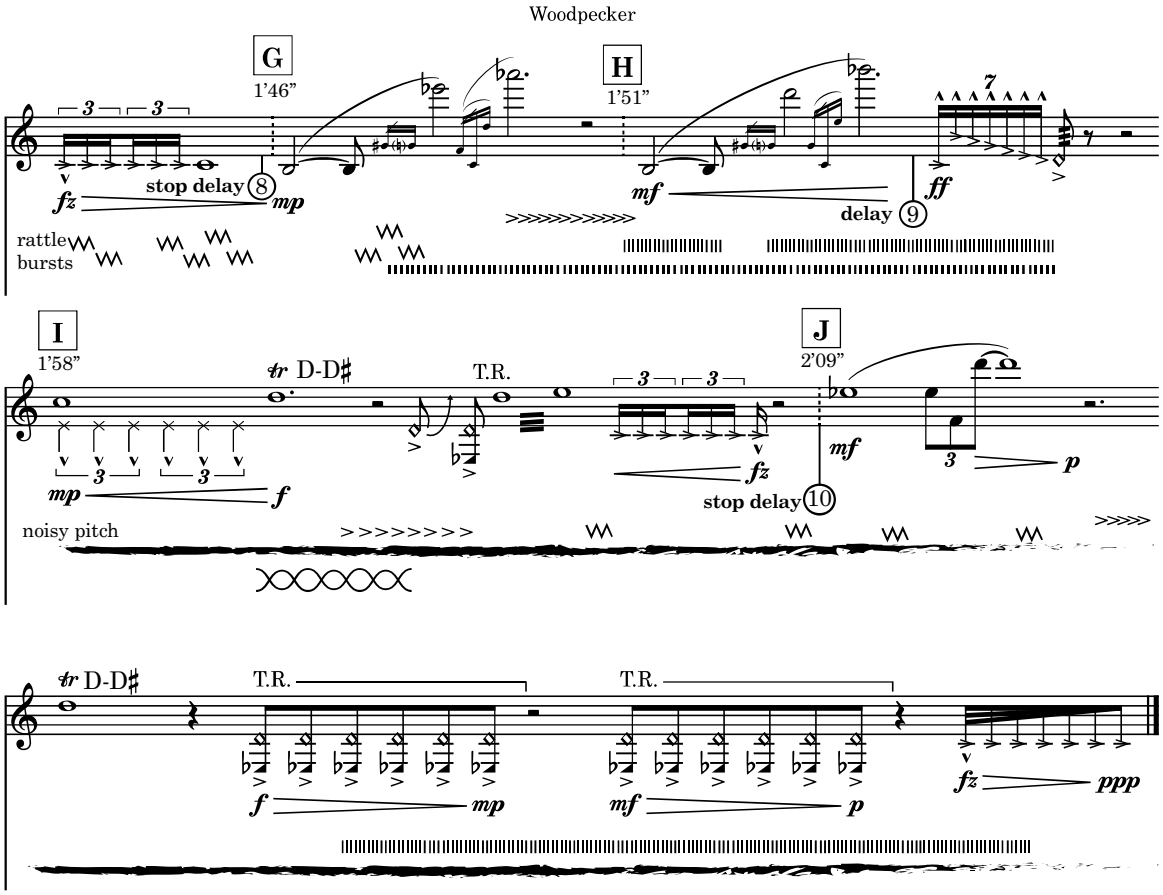

Hummingbird
E
2'08"
32
WT
mp
p
granulated chord
pitched impulses
hummingbird
bass rumble
F
2'36"
Line indicates quick C major scale
41
mf
p
G
building energy
3'00"
H
3'06"
I
3:17
bring out more harmonics as you go on
47
mp
mf
5
delay
J
3'29"
Improvise trill and tremolos based off given pitches,
can be any octave. Continue to bring out harmonics.


K
3'37"
Hummingbird
ff
hummingbird continues
bass hit
processed nature sounds
bass continues
L
3'53"
ff
continues
M
4'02"
(also inverse gesture)
N
4'12"
Decrease density of gesture
O
4'21"
f
mf
wings flapping
P
4'34"
p
stop delay 6
nature sounds

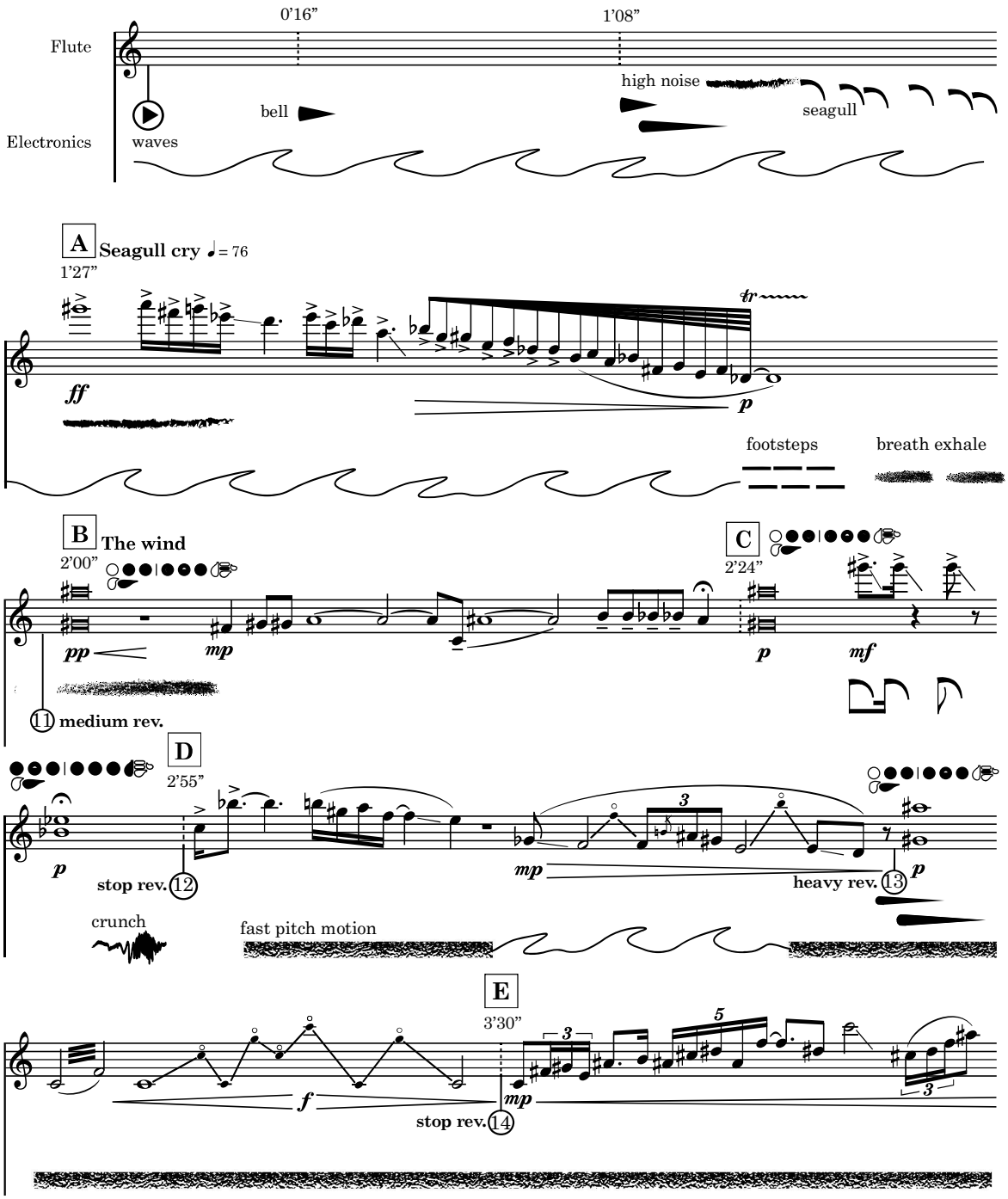
2. Woodpecker

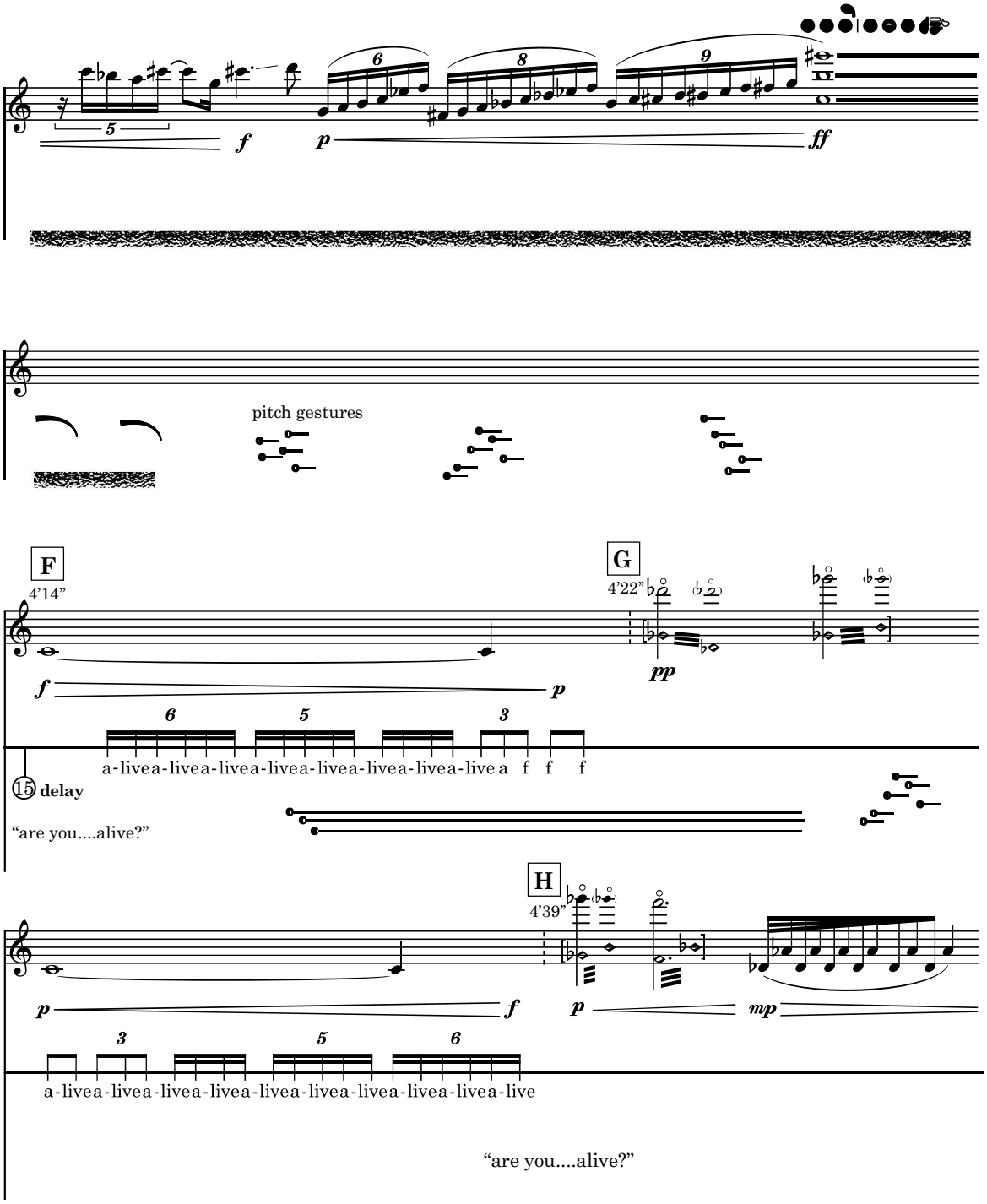


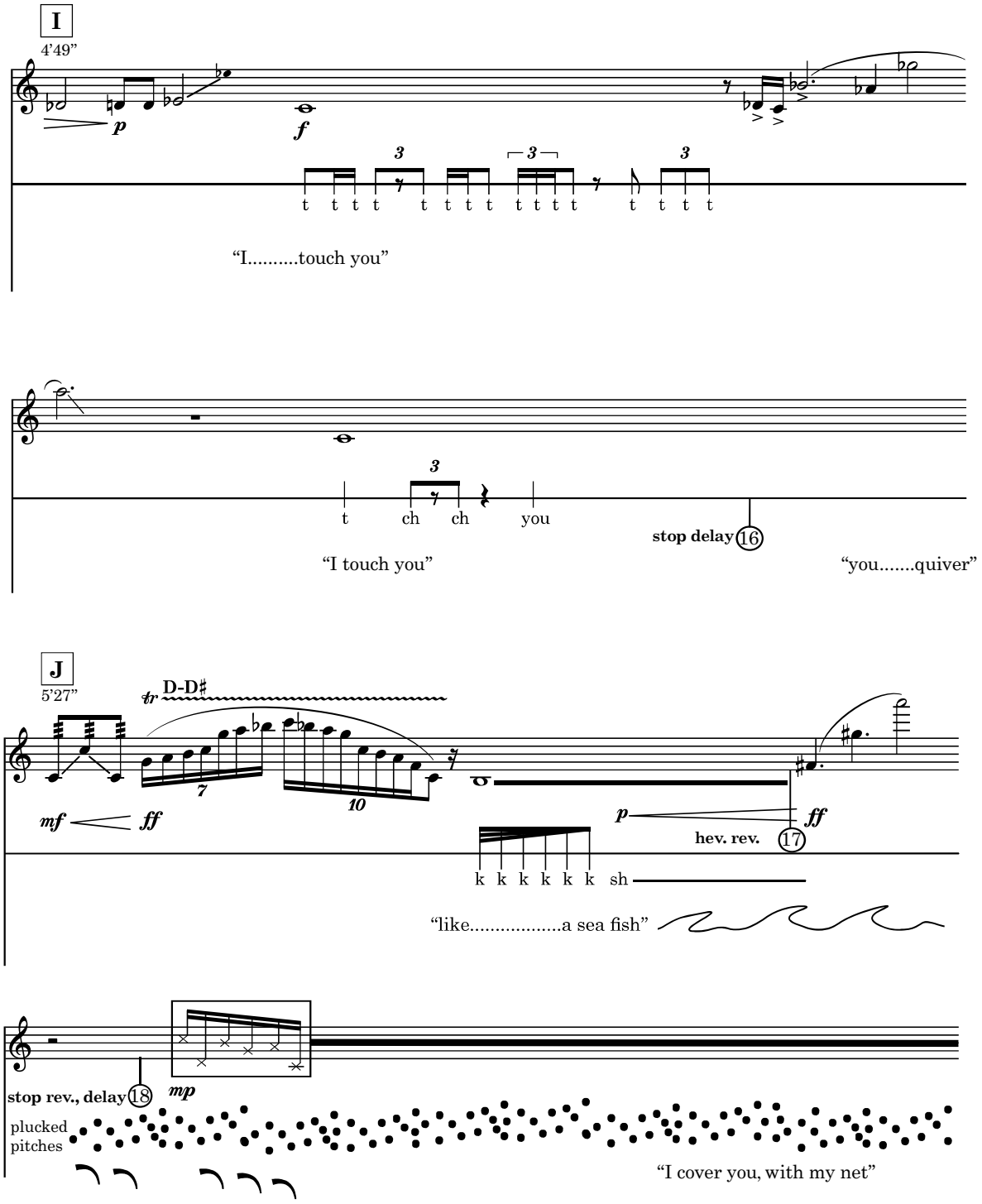

continues
D
0'53"
T.R.
delay 7
continues
continues
E
1'13"
T.R.
continues
T.R.
pitch impulses
noise
continues
F
1'36"
bisbigliando
phasing pitch motion

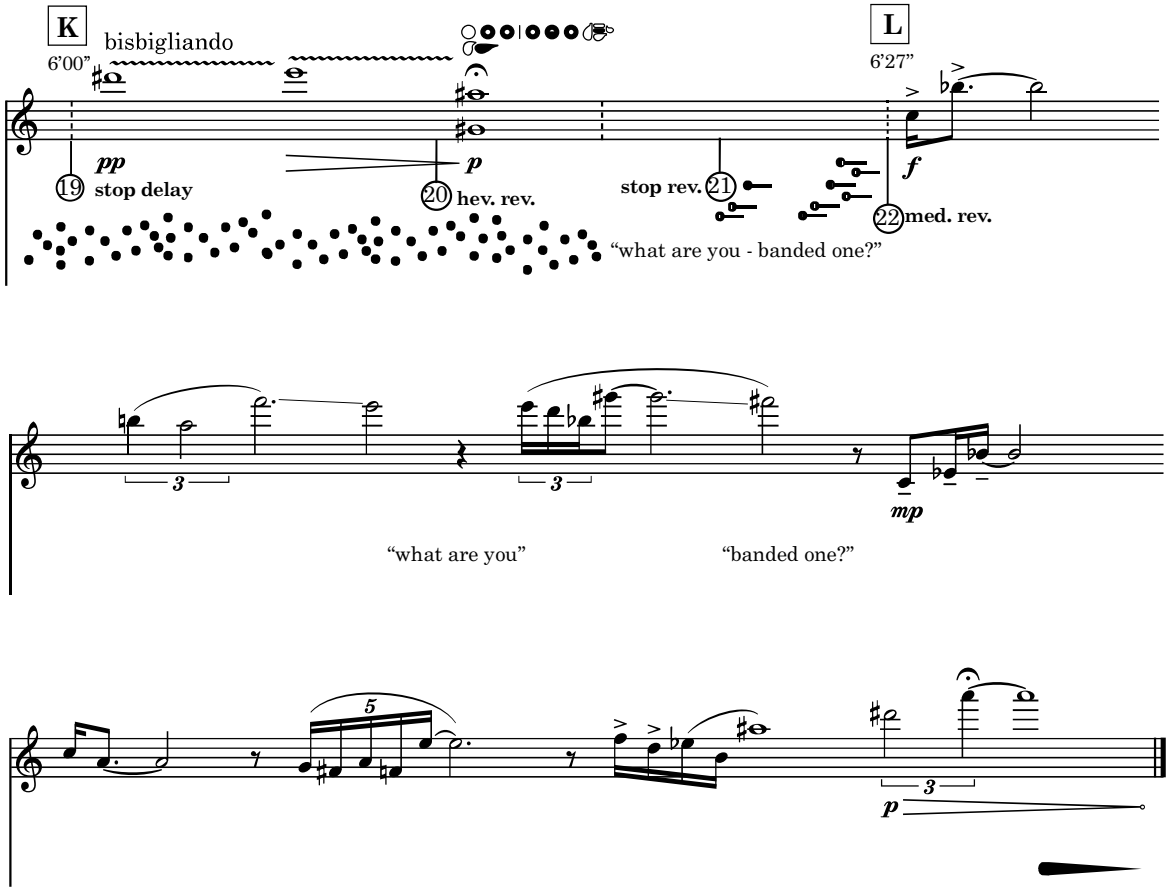

Woodpecker
G
1'46"
H
1'51"
stop delay 8
delay 9
rattle
bursts
I
1'58"
J
2'09"
tr D-D♯
T.R.
stop delay 10
noisy pitch
T.R.
T.R.

3. Seagull

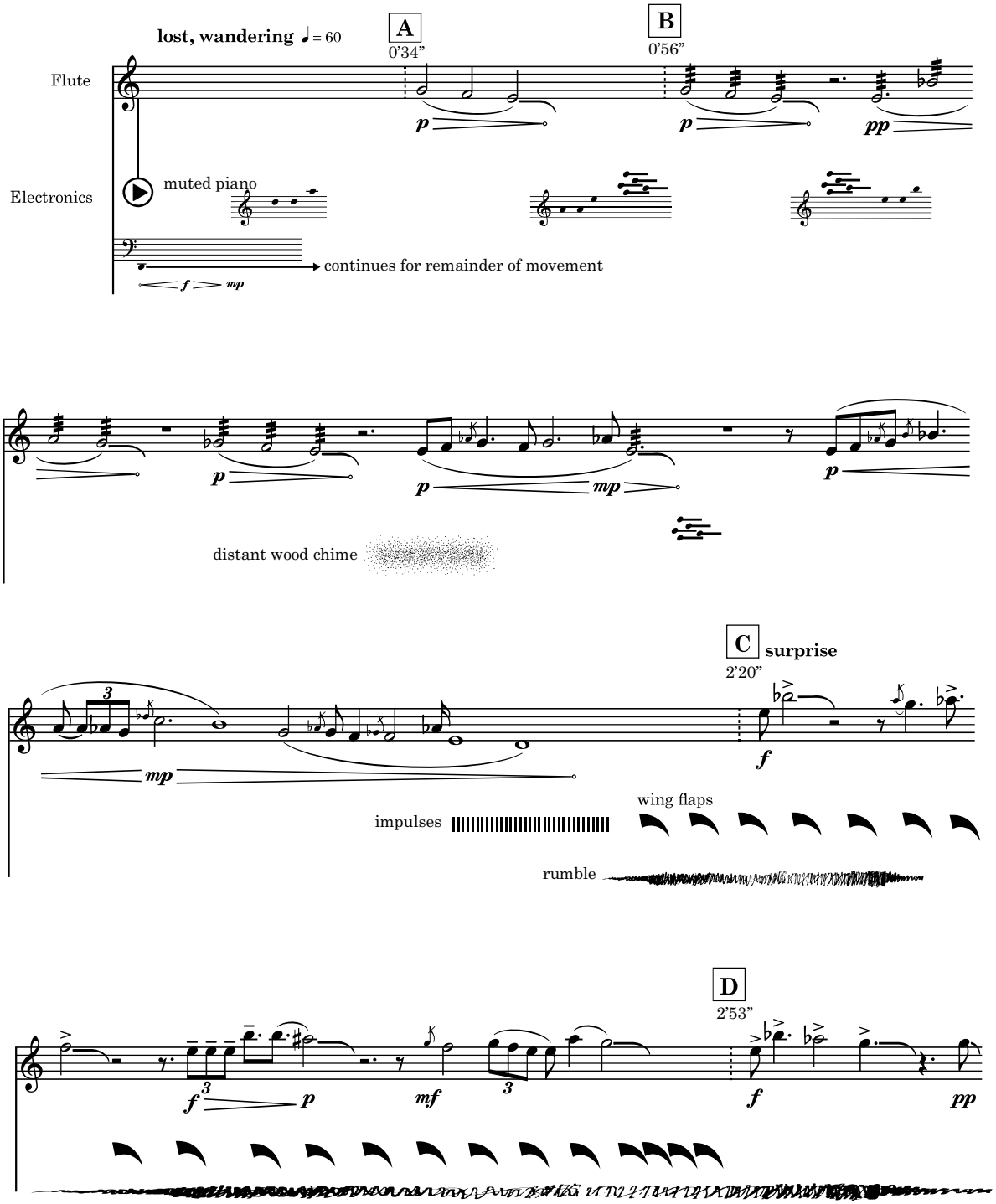

0'16"
1'08"
Flute
high noise
bell
seagull
Electronics
waves
A
Seagull cry ♩= 76
1'27"
ff
tr
p
footsteps
breath exhale
B
The wind
2'00"
pp
mp
C
2'24"
p
mf
11 medium rev.
D
2'55"
p
stop rev. 12
mp
heavy rev. 13
p
crunch
fast pitch motion
E
3'30"
f
mp
stop rev. 14

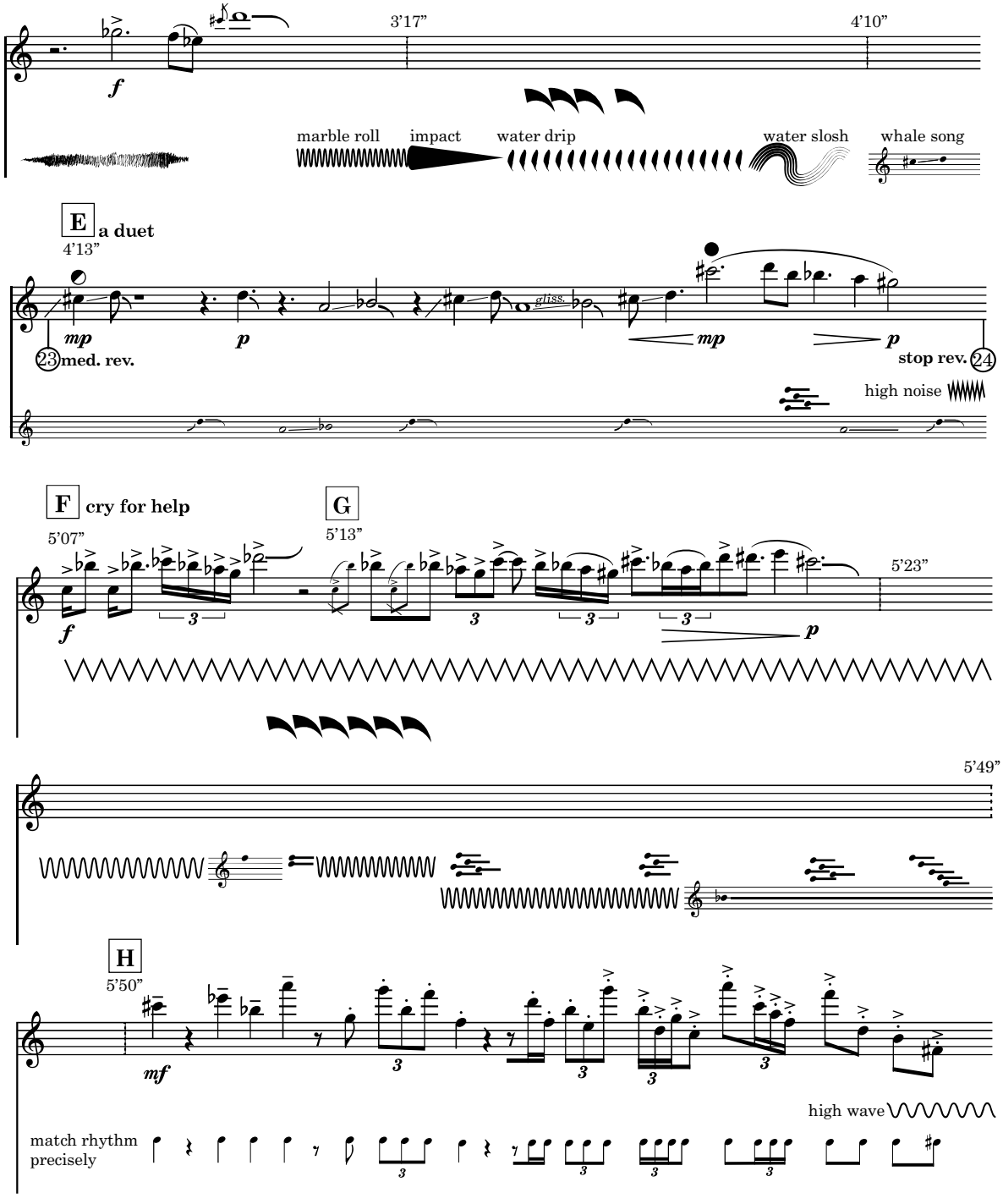

pitch gestures
F
4'14"
G
4'22"
H
4'39"
a-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-live a f f f
15 delay
"are you....alive?"
a-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-live
"are you....alive?"

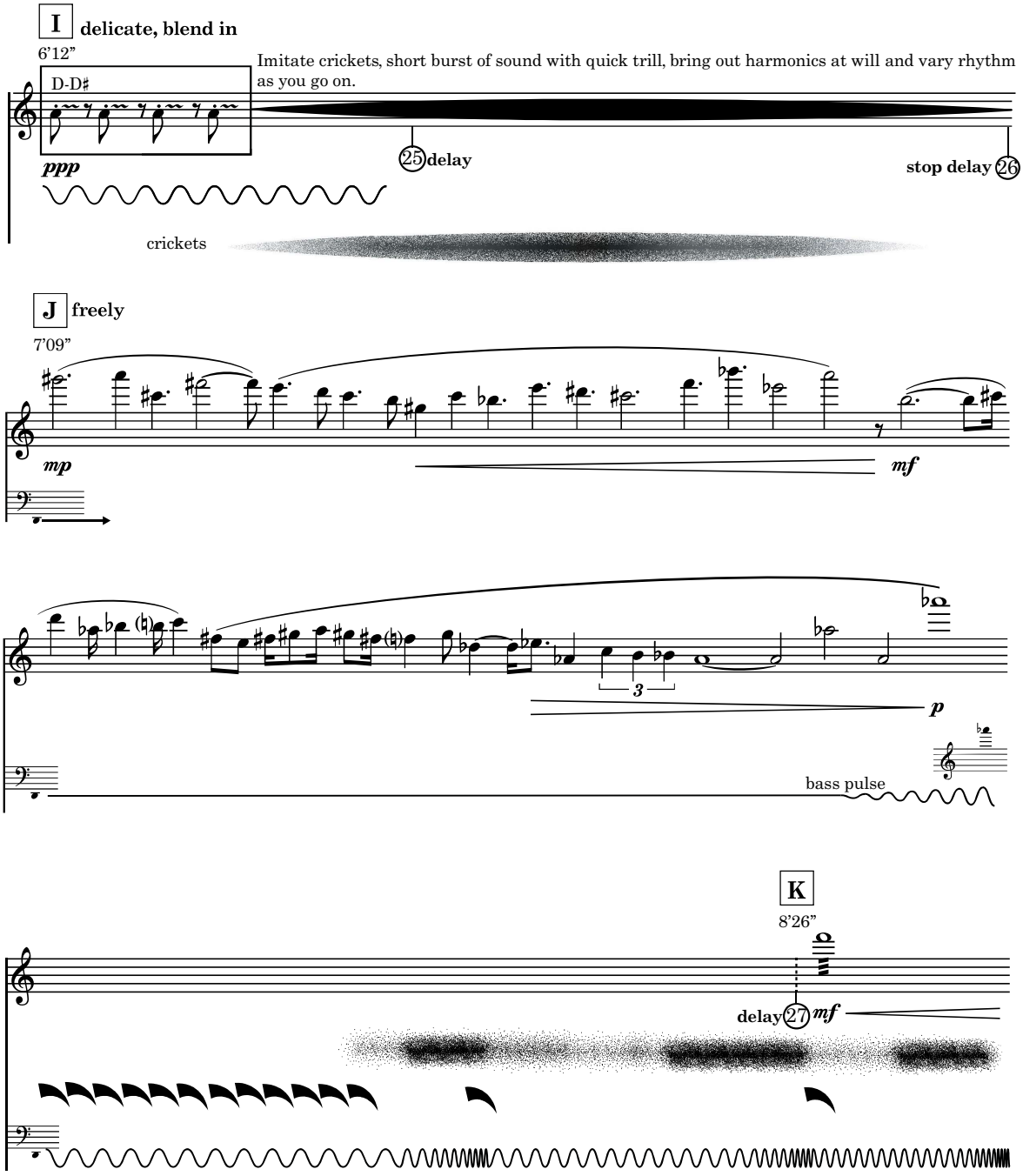

I
4'49"
p
f
3
t t t t t t t t t t t t t t t t
"I.....touch you"
3
t ch ch you
stop delay 16
"I touch you"
"you.....quiver"
J
5'27"
tr D-D♯
7
10
mf ff
p ff
hev. rev. 17
k k k k k k sh
"like.....a sea fish"
stop rev., delay 18
mp
plucked pitches
"I cover you, with my net"

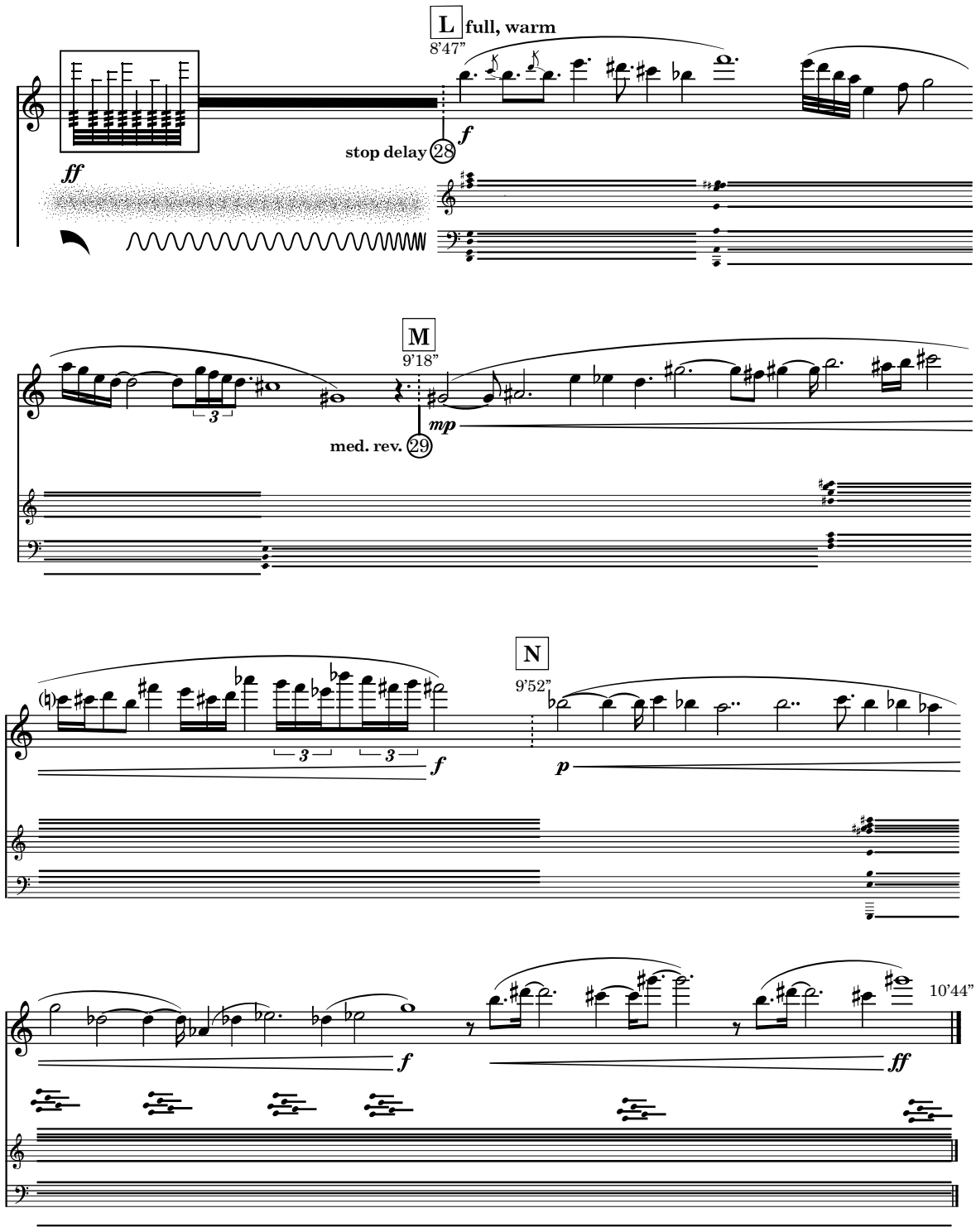

K
6'00"
bisbigliando
pp
19 stop delay
p
20 hev. rev.
stop rev. 21
L
6'27"
f
22 med. rev.
"what are you - banded one?"
3
3
mp
"what are you"
"banded one?"
5
3
p

4. Raven


lost, wandering ♩ = 60
A
0'34"
B
0'56"
Flute
Electronics
muted piano
continues for remainder of movement
distant wood chime
C
surprise
2'20"
wing flaps
impulses
rumble
D
2'53"


3'17"
4'10"
marble roll
impact
water drip
water slosh
whale song
E
a duet
4'13"
gliss.
23
med. rev.
stop rev.
24
high noise
F
cry for help
5'07"
G
5'13"
5'23"
5'49"
H
5'50"
high wave
match rhythm
precisely


I
delicate, blend in
6'12"
D-D♯
Imitate crickets, short burst of sound with quick trill, bring out harmonics at will and vary rhythm as you go on.
ppp
25 delay
stop delay 26
crickets
J
freely
7'09"
mp
mf
3
p
bass pulse
K
8'26"
delay 27
mf


L
full, warm
8'47"
stop delay 28
ff
f
M
9'18"
med. rev. 29
mp
N
9'52"
f
p
f
ff
10'44"

VITA

Paul Berlinsky (b. 1994) is a composer and sound artist whose music investigates the intangible space between tone and noise, metaphor and reality. His music explores collective memories and the stories they tell, often looking to the natural world and how we connect to it. He writes music for a vast range of performing forces, from acoustic to electronic, and solo to orchestral.

His music has been performed and recorded by musicians and ensembles around the country including Hub New Music, Transient Canvas, Plaza Winds, Florida Gulf Coast University Wind Orchestra, and flute soloist Gözde Çakır. Over the course of his career, Berlinsky has received honors and awards for his work, including a 2021 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award, with the panel recognizing him with the 2021 Leo Kaplan Award, first prize in the 2019 Arnold Salop Memorial Competition, and an appointment as the 2019 composer in residence with wind quintet Plaza Winds.

Berlinsky has recently finished his master's degree in music composition from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where he studied with Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Paul Rudy, and Yotam Haber. During his time at UMKC, he was also able to take lessons with composers Anthony R. Green, Amy Williams, Evan Chambers, and Ingrid Stölzel. He holds an undergraduate degree in music education from Florida Gulf Coast University, where he began to study composition with Jason Bahr and Shawn Allison.