# BOREALIS MUSIC

Eleanor Hovda

For the Sylmar Chamber Ensemble
Commissioned by the MCF/CCP Program
funded by the Jerome Foundation

# BOREALIS MUSIC

for flute, oboe, bassoon, piano

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## PERFORMANCE NOTES

BOREALIS MUSIC suggests energy which moves but doesn't go anywhere. The Aurora Borealis is seen as curtains or ribbons of active energy, but not a travelling form. There is also the perception of the Aurora being a series of superimposed "after-images" - the idea that what is seen is the resultant of a field of reflected/refracted electrical impulses.

The energy fields are achieved by introspective probings of the "sound around the sound" of strings and winds. Sonic ribbons emerge, and lengths of time taken to excavate and articulate resonance fields.

An important aspect of performance, is to be able to work with very soft dynamic levels with intense concentration and energy. A theatrical metaphor is the Noh drama of Japan, where the slow unfolding of infinitesimally distilled material serves to heighten and sustain focus and attention.

## TIMING

This piece moves in "breath" or "process" time - the "time it takes to do something". Any pulsed/repetitive sections should be performed in a fleet, non-dogged manner once the tempo is established; avoid rigid execution at all times.

## ENERGY COUNTERPOINTS

Instruments in the ensemble perform similar pitches with very different types of energy inherent in the nature of each instrument. Players may establish "push/pull" or balancing-act relationships with each other during performance.

Both WINDS and PIANO are asked to use techniques which will result in the possibility of sounds considered "extraneous" or "wrong" by classical standards of technique. These sounds include "air" sounds, "escape tones" which may occur while changing fingerings, and upper partials which result from slow bowing/blowing. These sounds are important to give multidimensional/spacial form to the soundings, and plenty of time should be allowed for them to become established into the texture of the piece.

## FLUTE

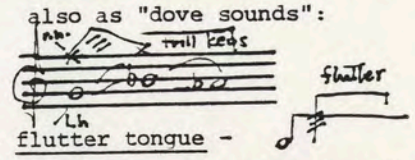
It is important to use inhale as well as exhale "melodically", as motion forms, to establish flow. Let both inhale and exhale modes be audible.

ⓐ ⓐ ⓔ ⓞ ⓤ (vowels) used melodically to color air
sh, H, T (consonants) sounds and shape attacks and decays

## FLUTE

"subtone"/"covered tone" - used in soft modo ordinario (mo) seq

also as "dove sounds":




soft, muffled playing with trill keys coloring and "hollowing" basic tone. Trill keys using variable speeds.

flutter tongue -

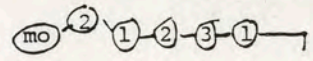
(m.o.) - modo ordinario; ordinary mode of tone production

(1) - traverse air sound (½ air, ½ pitch); relaxed embouchure

(2) - covered air sound; mouth covers embouchure hole, exhale

(3) - same as (2), except inhaled.

NOTE: (2) & (3) are interchangeable and should be used as needed (exhale or inhale). They are made audible in a phrase by the use of vowels and consonants.




indicates unbroken, flowing transition from one manner of playing to another.

## OBOE & BASSOON

Always maintain as soft, sheet sound as possible. The intensity of the softness of reed instruments is important in the piece.

Alternate fingerings - ⓧ ⓨ ⓩ used to indicate different fingerings to be used to make a "timbral melody". Please select three different fingerings for the written pitch which differ in color (and microtonally, in pitch, probably). Assign each fingering a letter ⓧ ⓨ or ⓩ and use these fingerings when performing the piece. This process allows each player to design an alternate fingering set which works for that player.

Trill keys are used to "hollow out" tones. Use at gentle, variable speeds to give contour to tones played softly.

ALWAYS take time to fully exhale and rest when needed.

## BOWED PIANO

Use 5 or 6 violin bowhairs knotted together at each end and threaded under the designated piano strings. Anchor each end of each bow on the bars when not in use. Masking tape works well for this purpose. Resin each bow before use.

"Bow" very slowly and gently; strings "speak" most clearly when bowed gently and relaxedly.

A variation to violin bowhairs, is to use lengths of nylon fishline, lightly sanded to give traction, and resined well.

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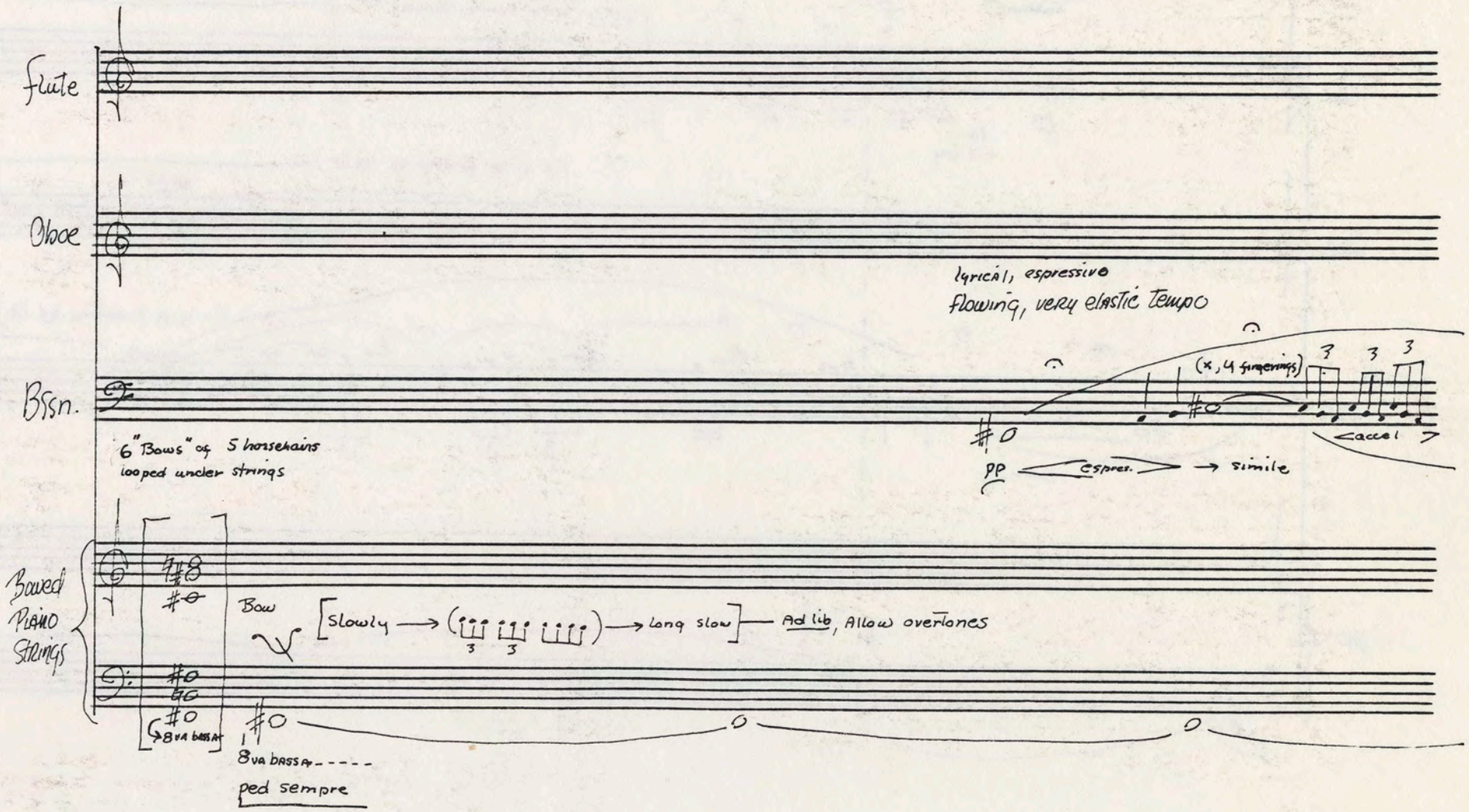




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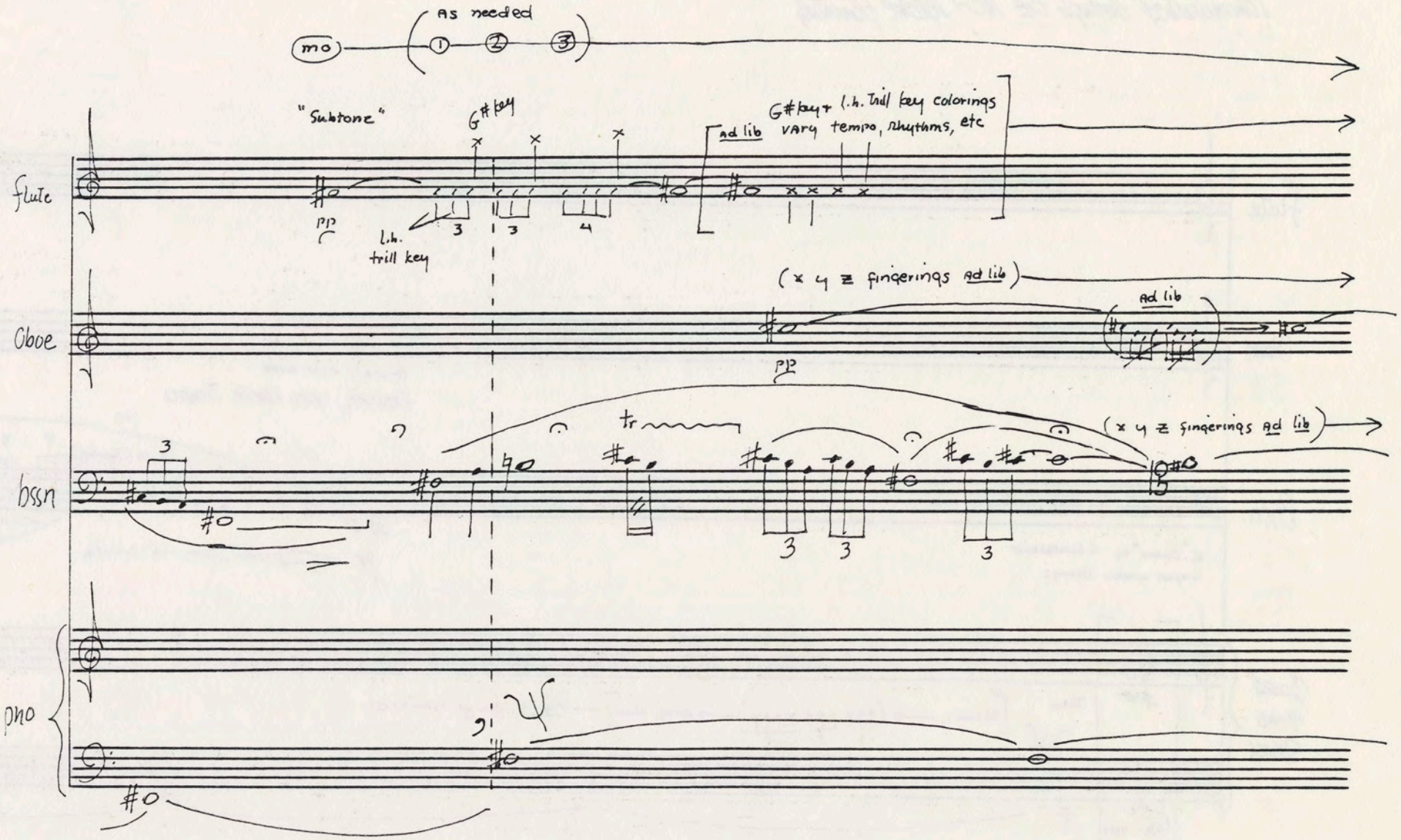
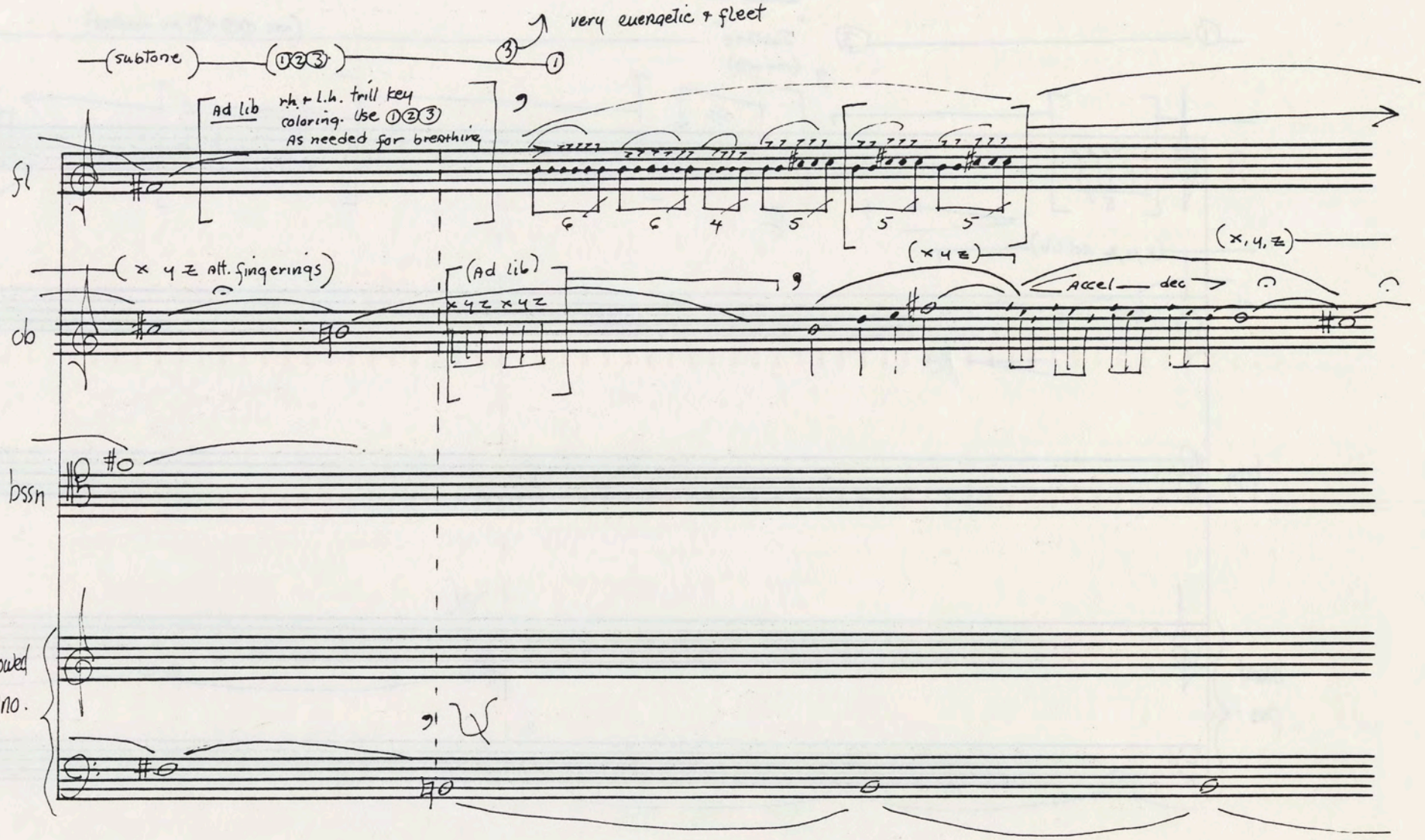
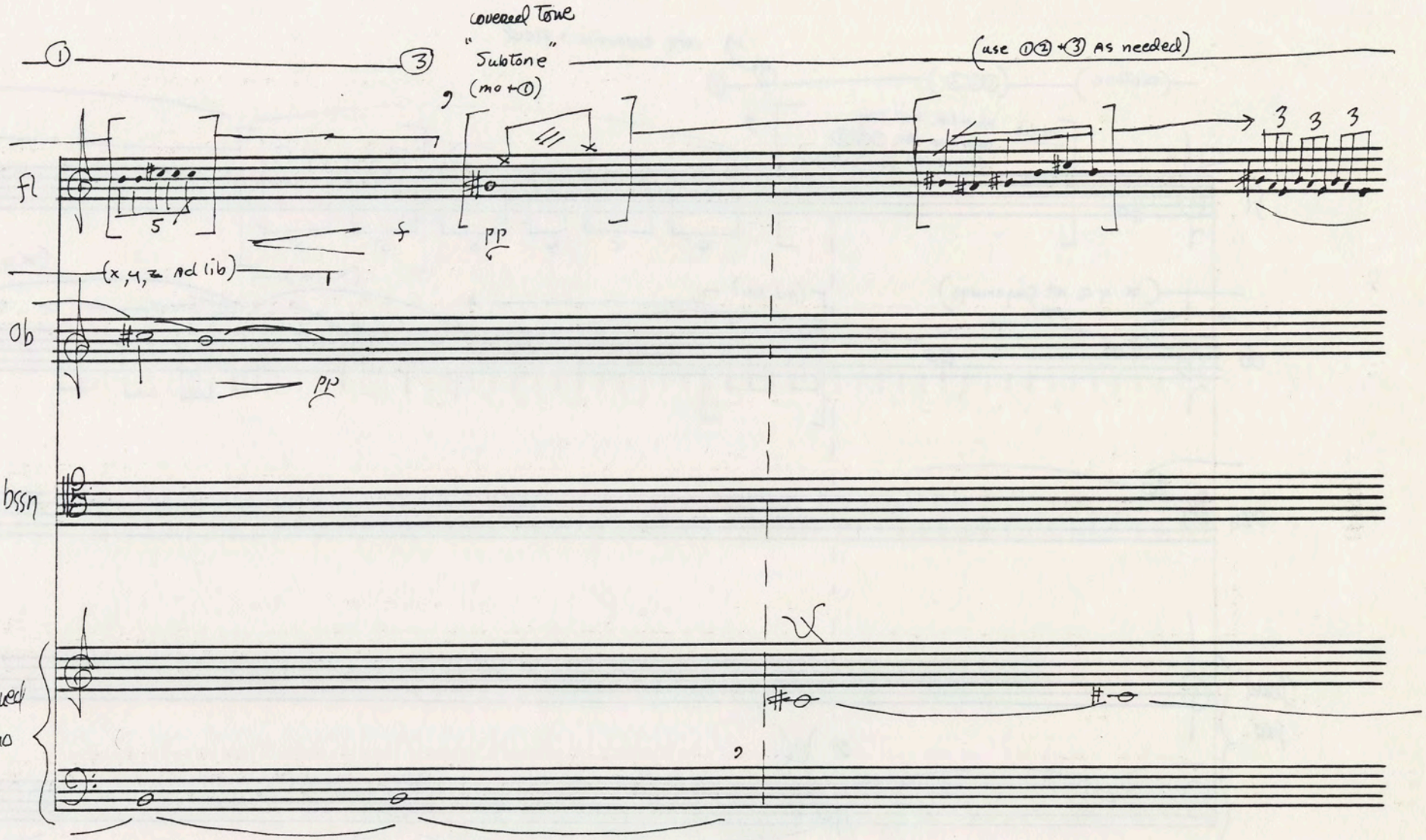


mo
As needed
1
2
3
"Subtone"
G# key
ad lib
G# key + l.h. trill key colorings
vary tempo, rhythms, etc
flute
pp
l.h.
trill key
3
3
4
(x y z fingerings ad lib)
Oboe
ad lib
pp
tr
(x y z fingerings ad lib)
bssn
3
3
3
3
pno


very energetic + fleet
(subtone)
(1 2 3)
3
1
Ad lib
rh + l.h. trill key coloring. Use 1 2 3 As needed for breathing
fl
(x y z alt. fingerings)
(Ad lib)
x y z x y z
(x y z)
Accel — dec
(x, y, z)
ob
bssn
Bowed pno.


covered Tone
"Subtone"
(mo+①)
(use ①②+③ as needed)
fl
(x,4,z ad lib)
ob
bssn
bowed
pno

(subtone) 1 2 3 1 ("whistle tone" harmonics at 8va + 5th)

fl

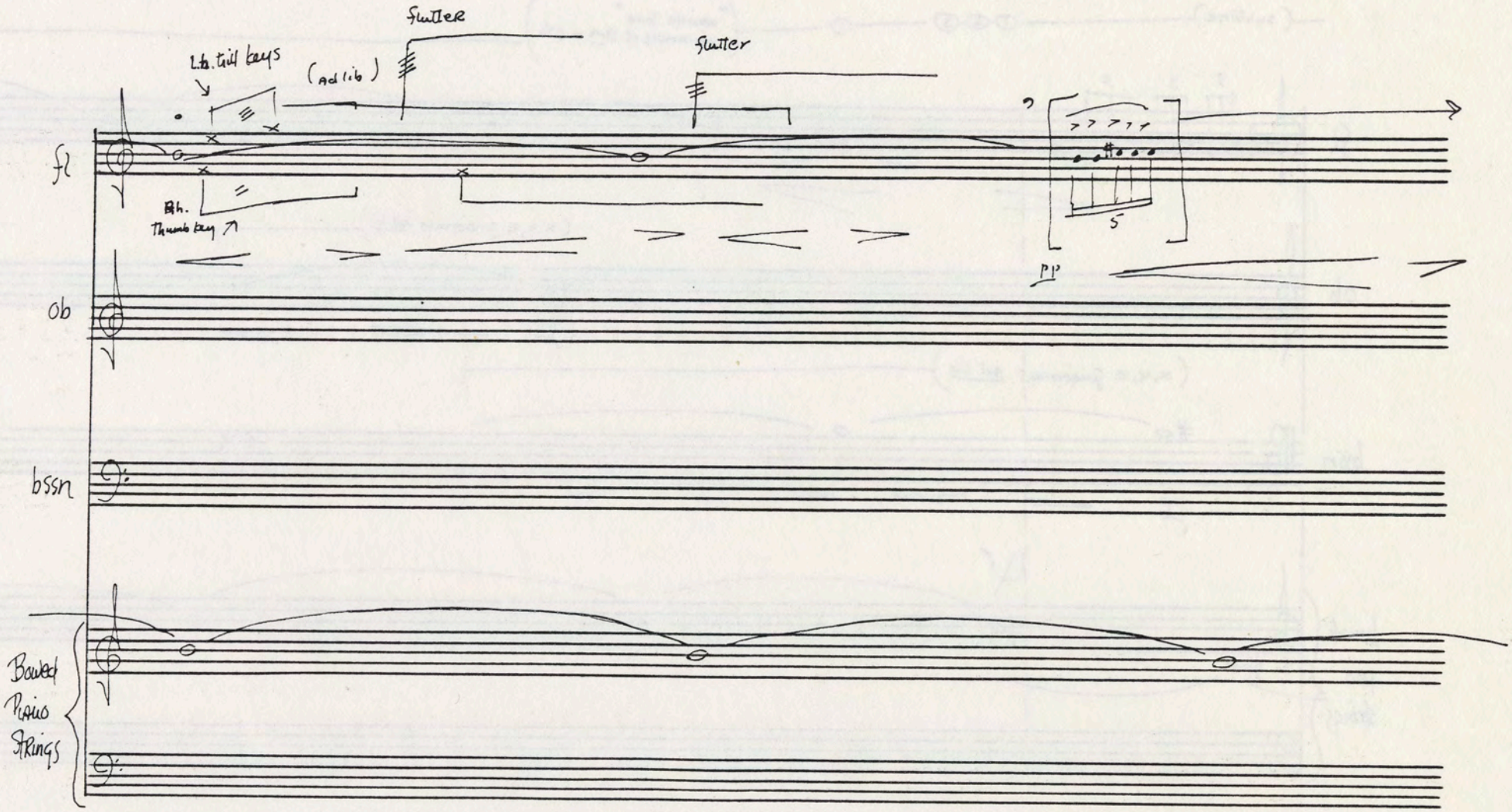
ob

(x, y, z fingerings Ad lib)

bssn

(x, y, z fingerings Ad lib)

boweed pno strings


flutter
flutter
L.h. trill keys
(Ad lib)
fl
Rh.
Thumb key
ob
bssn
Bowed
Piano
Strings

fl

mf

ob

pp

bssn

Bowed Pno Strings

"Subtone"
covered Tone
mo

(use ① ② + ③ when needed for breathing)

③ mo
"Subtone"

(Ad lib)

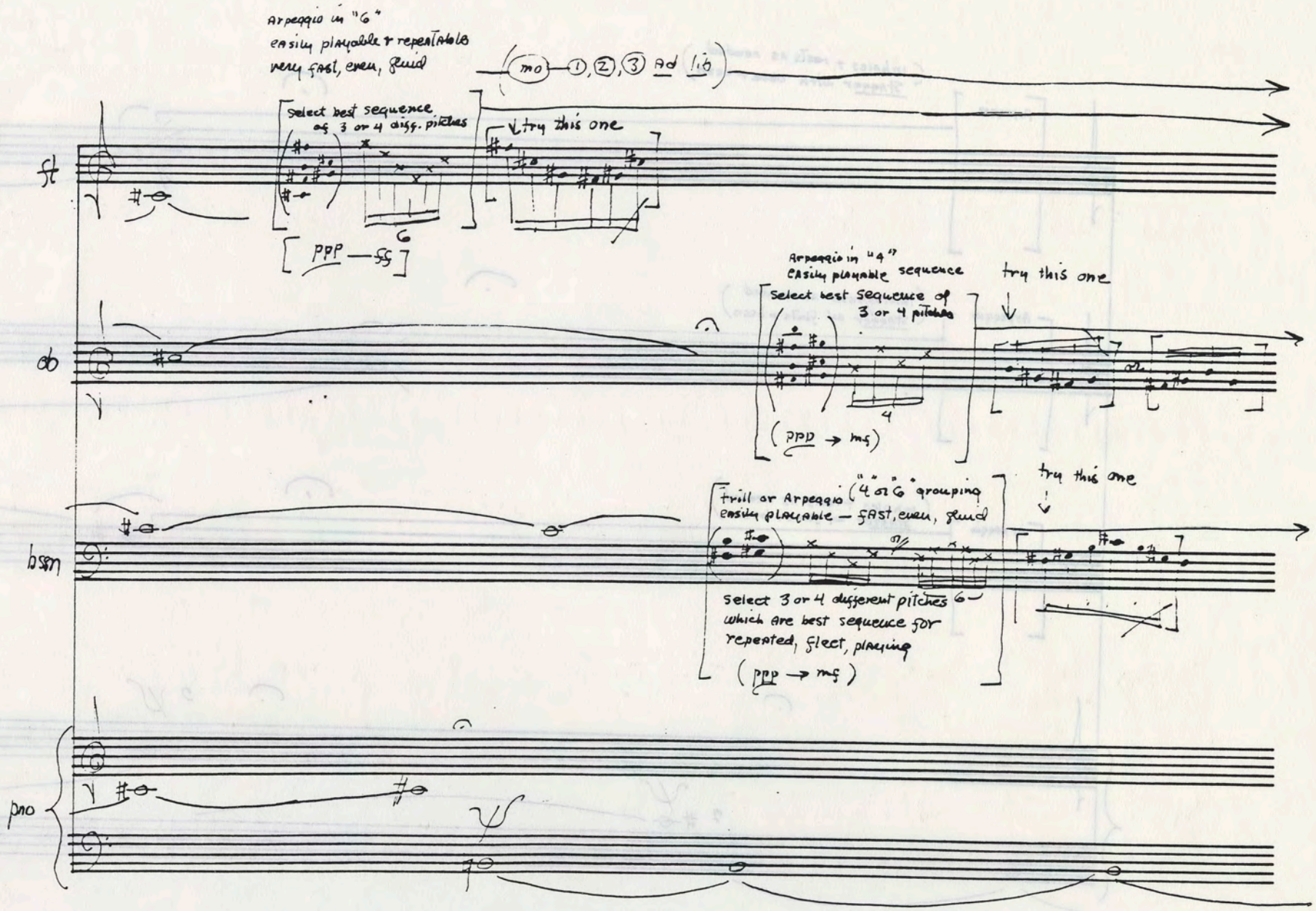
flutter flutter flutter

gliss gliss gliss gliss

p

pp

trill Ad lib


Arpeggio in "6"
easily playable & repeatable
very fast, even, fluid
(mo — 1, 2, 3 ad lib)
Select best sequence of 3 or 4 diff. pitches
try this one
ft
6
[ppp — ff]
Arpeggio in "4"
easily playable sequence
Select best sequence of 3 or 4 pitches
try this one
ob
4
(ppp → mf)
trill or Arpeggio ("4" or "6" grouping
easily playable — fast, even, fluid
try this one
bsn
Select 3 or 4 different pitches
which are best sequence for
repeated, fleet, playing
(ppp → mf)
pno

(inhales + rests as needed
Stagger with oboe + bssn)

Arpeggio

Arpeggio

(inhales/rests as needed
stagger w/ flute + bssn)

(inhales + rests as needed
Stagger w/ flute + bssn)

Arpeggio