Alexander Schubert

CODEC ERROR

2017

For 2 percussionists, double bass, choreography, light

Written for Samuel Favre, Victor Hanna, Nicolas Crosse [Ensemble Intercontemporain]

Commissioned by
SWR / Donaueschinger Musiktage
IRCAM
Musica Strasbourg

File version (explanations and setup):
September 6, 2017 9:50 PM
For version of score see first page of score/part.

Program Notes

This work is a composition including music, light and choreography. It examines the body of the performer and its representation in the digital age.

The use of strobe lights and highly synchronized light patterns visualizes the performer on stage in a video-clip-like way. This means that only short passages of movement are visible for the audience which results in an almost static and therefore mechanical appearance. This puppet-like display is the attempt to look at a human being on stage as if looking at a digital representation. The continuity and presence of the players is subject to alterations and error-like manipulations that we know from a crashed computer program - digital mistakes. While these faulty glitches are commonly experienced on a computer screen the attempt of this work is to bring this perception on stage to the actual persons and through that turn the musicians into their malfunctioning avatar in real life.

The theme of the composition picks up a trend of our times, in which body images, appearances become increasingly artificial and constructed. Everything is manipulated, virtual and edited all the time. And everything is clip-based, handed out in snippets, sections, cuts. We encounter an ambiguity here which opens fields of interesting aesthetics and media compositions on the one hand and a playground for depersonalized discontinuity, fake appearances and deception on the other. This work is not trying to make a statement in either direction but tries to put the finger in the wound and by bringing the topic on the stage, to the performer, to the actual person and through this making it perceivable and obvious. The body is subject to digital manipulation, the entity is infringed.

General Concept

Codec Error works with the bodies of the performers on stage. The integration of light is used to reflect the virtual and artificial body images of persons. As the piece progresses the lighting becomes increasingly stroboscopic and extreme - simulating a broken machine.

Notation

For each player the notation consists of 3 systems.
The upper system indicates chorography gestures to be performed without playing an instrument. These movements are purely theatrical. They are in almost every case connected to a sound in the electronics.
The middle system shows the notation for playing the instrument in a normal fashion. See special symbols and explanations for specific instruments below.
The lower system indicates the position of the player on stage.

Light

Around the stage 10 lights are positioned. See stage plan for details. As the lights sometimes shine directly in the face of the performer it can lead to disorientation.

Sync / Click / Sheet Music / Read Score

Careful: Pay Attention here!
The piece is realized with a click. The players need a wireless receiver. Lights and electronics are synced with this click.
The piece is mainly performed in the dark - which gives no possibility to read sheet music on note stands. This means that the majority of the piece needs to be played by heart.

There can be a few things to make this easier:

- The bass player can have an ipad with the score next to his double bass. Like that he can read the sheet music for the passages where he is not moving around. This would be relevant for the position in the back - but mainly for the one where he is playing in the middle - as this is the difficult passage.
- The percussionist can also have an ipad - but the problem is that they are moving around so this can only work partially - if at all. Alternatively placing something on the snare drum at the front could work - but due to the moving around it can not be a real option. Basically the fast musical sequences need to be played by heart.
- For the slower sections and the parts where the players move around on stage indication can be given over the click. Each player has an individual click - so indication what to do at what point can be given as a spoken cue over the headphones. This can work for every passage except the dense musical passage in the middle - which is too fast for this. So this one needs to be played by heart.

Gesture/Movement Legend

None of the gestures is supposed to create a sound (aside from the whip movements).
Start and finish each movement with an accent.
All executed movements in the piece should be machine-like. Consider yourself a robot, a puppet or similar. This counts 100% for the artificial movements. But also the regular playing should follow this idea as much as possible. It is also good to exaggerate the playing gestures.
The notation of the gestures is not very exact, so there's a bit of room for personal interpretation. That is anticipated, but the goal should be, that the movements are reproducible and don't change every time.

Each time one of these icons occurs it's supposed to be a different gesture. Not every time the same!

Slow movement in the air (continuous.) - Always with a robotic, mechanical style. Use mainly upper body, feet stay in position

Short, strong,accented movement, staccato

small, soft, but accented movement

Twitching, tremolo movement (fast, repetitive)

Freeze - do not move. Take an artificial pose.
If you played before this more or less means freezing where you are at that point.
If not, you can chose a pose, it should look like a taken pose, not just standing or similar, but not too theatrical too, like a strange frozen playing pose per haps.

Stop movement, with an accent.

Movement in the air without instrument (staccato)
The movement should follow the sort of machine-like style of the piece, but aside from that can be chosen freely, and can be different each time, they should also mimic the sound in some way, basically be in spired by the electronics at that part.

P
Playing gesture above the instrument.

Stand still without moving in a "normal" way, lights on

Picking up instruments always happens in the dark

Position Plan for Musicians

The lower system for each player indicates where the player is standing. The indication is always connected to a note with a given length. The duration of this note indicates over which duration the player goes to the new position. For example if the player is standing in the middle position and the next notation is a full note in 120bpm in a 4/4 bar with the indication to go to the center position, then the player should go from middle to center in 2 seconds. So the circle under the note indicates the finishing point of the movement.

The basic position names for all players are the same. At the back of the stage is the position “Back” followed in ascending order - getting close to the stage front: “Back-M”, “Middle”, “Center”, “Front”. If you step to the left at each position, then the position name is followed by an “L” and if you step to the right it is followed by a “R”. Left and right always refers to the view point of the audience.

Aside from the pure playing positions it can also be required to go to an instrument. That implies standing behind or next to the instrument (from the audience’s view). The instruments in the front row can be played from two positions.

The icon is followed by an arrow to visualize the duration. There are different ways of moving to a new position. The position is accompanied by an icon which indicates how to get there:
1) tip-toeing (in flashing light) [dashed line]
2) as fast as possible (completely in the dark) [solid line]
3) slow motion with light constantly on [dotted line]

Indications how to get to the next position:

Tip toe in flashing light, as little movement as possible, like a stop motion animation where the puppet

doesn't move.

Go to next position as fast as you can (so you are there for the next action - no need to be faster - movement in the dark)

very fast change - always in the dark

Go to next position in extreme slow motion, always with complete light on

This system also indicates turning (while standing in the same position).

↻ turn around self clock-wise

↺ turn around self counter-clock-wise

↑ turn so you are facing back of stage

↓ turn so you are facing audience

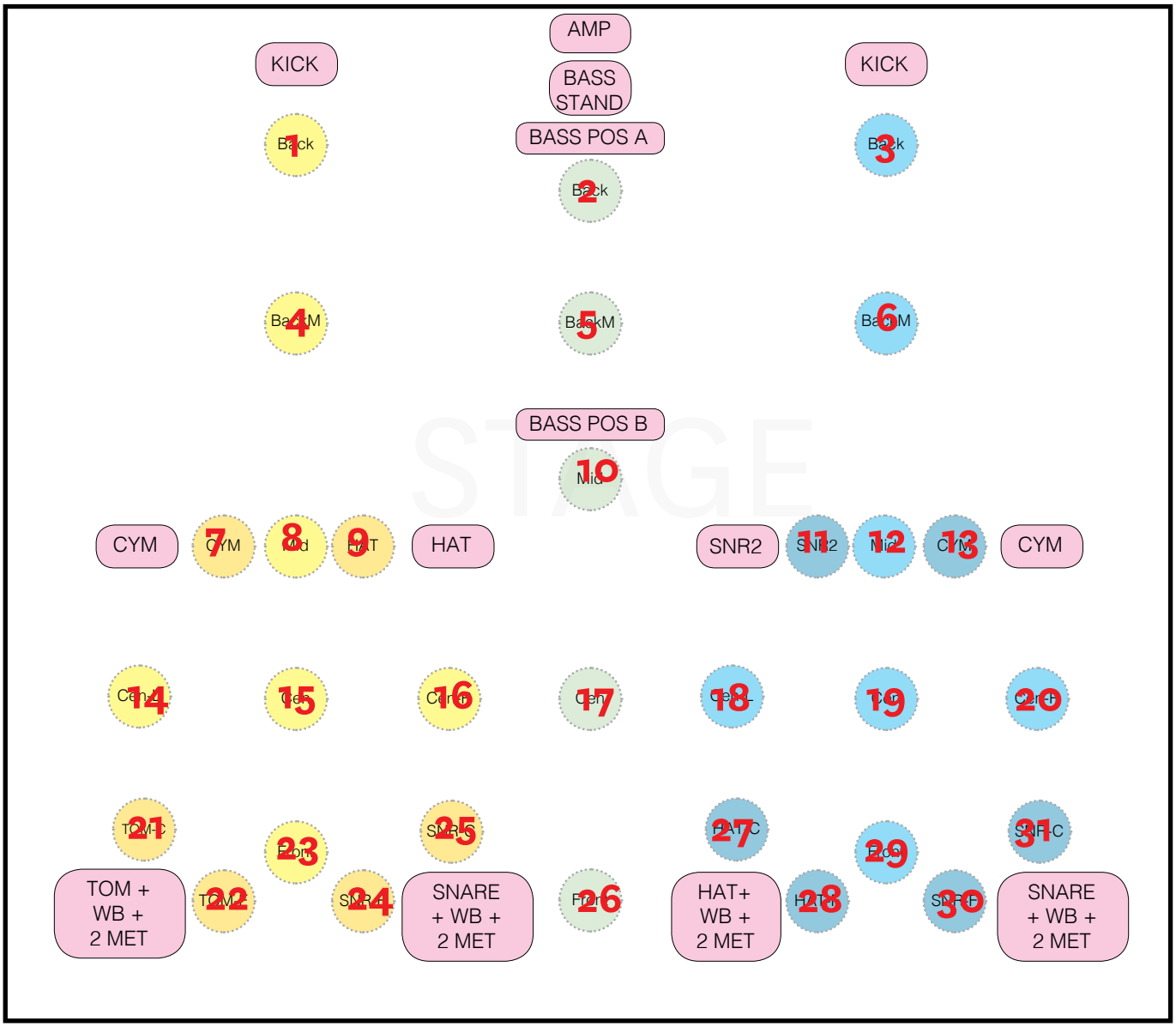
→ turn so you are facing right side of stage [cour]

← turn so you are facing left side of stage [jardin]

When turning to a new direction use the faster way unless stated differently (e.g. If you go from ↑ to → you would turn 90° Right and not 270° To the left - unless it is written in the score).

The double bass stands at the back of the stage in the center. For the middle section the player brings the bass to the “Middle” position. The percussion instruments (aside from the hand held ones) stay in position (see plan below).

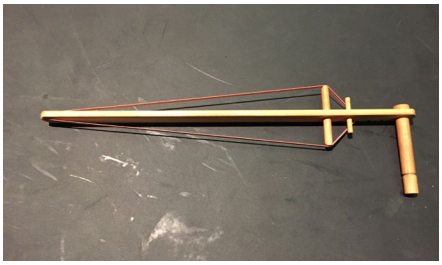
Stage Plan



Explanation

TOM	Stand Tom
WB	Woodblock
MET	Metal Object
HAT	Hi Hat
CYM	Crash Cymbal
KICK	Kick Drum (Drum Kit)

Yellow Circles: Positions for left percussionist.
Blue Circles: Positions for right percussionist.
Green Circles: Positions for bassist.



Rhombe

Rhombe

Bull Roarer

PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS:

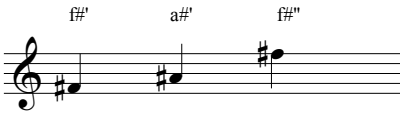
Instruments on stands:

- 3 snares
- 2 kick drums
- 2 hi hats
- 2 cymbals
- 4 wood blocks on mount [two on low mount (1m) and two on high mount (1,8m)]
- 1 stand tom
- 8 metal objects [small metal objects, with a loud sound, no long decay sound, mountable next to the percussion instrument, it should not require a big stand. When it is mounted next to a snare it should not Be much bigger and disturb the view. Each object should have the size of a wood block]

Hand-held instruments:

- a few shakers
- 3 roto cymbals
- 3 Rhombes (rotating instrument with rubber band (see image above) → Bring back up instrument in case there are complications (as experienced in the rehearsal, also back up rubber bands)
- 2 big bull roarers
- Metal sticks [like metal chop sticks or similar. Should produce a very dry, clean, metallic sound, no decay sound]
- Wood sticks [small pieces of wood to be held in hand and hit against each other]

- Plate bells of the following pitches:



Finger Cymbals

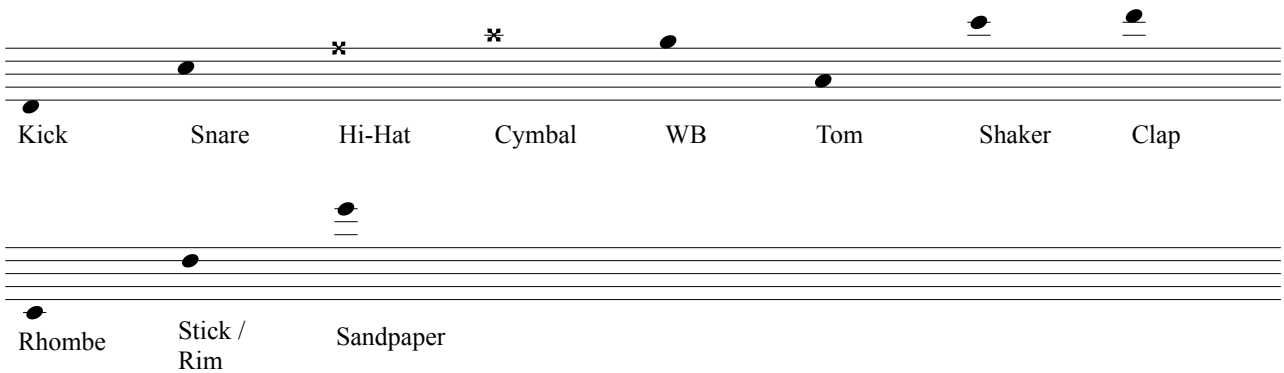
Not yet used but as backup:

- emergency blanket (tin foil)
- 2 ratchets
- 2 pairs of small hand cymbals
- 2 pairs of finger cymbals
- 2 wooden whips
- 4 claves
- Blocks of Styrofoam

PERCUSSION NOTATION:

The notation is explained in the legend below.
There are no precise indication for playing the instruments (like playing position on the drum head and so on): Chose different articulations (position where to hit, change in sound characteristic) for each new block of notes. In the middle part in different short sections of roughly 1-2 bars one sound is repeated over and over again. Pick a "style" for each of these blocks - but within the block stay as repetitive as possible.
In general: Play like a machine, like a (broken) sampler.

The right percussion player has two snare drums. The one in the middle of the stage is called "Snare2". Both are notated with the same pitch - the position indicates which one to play.



DOUBLE BASS NOTATION:

The notation is explained in the legend below.

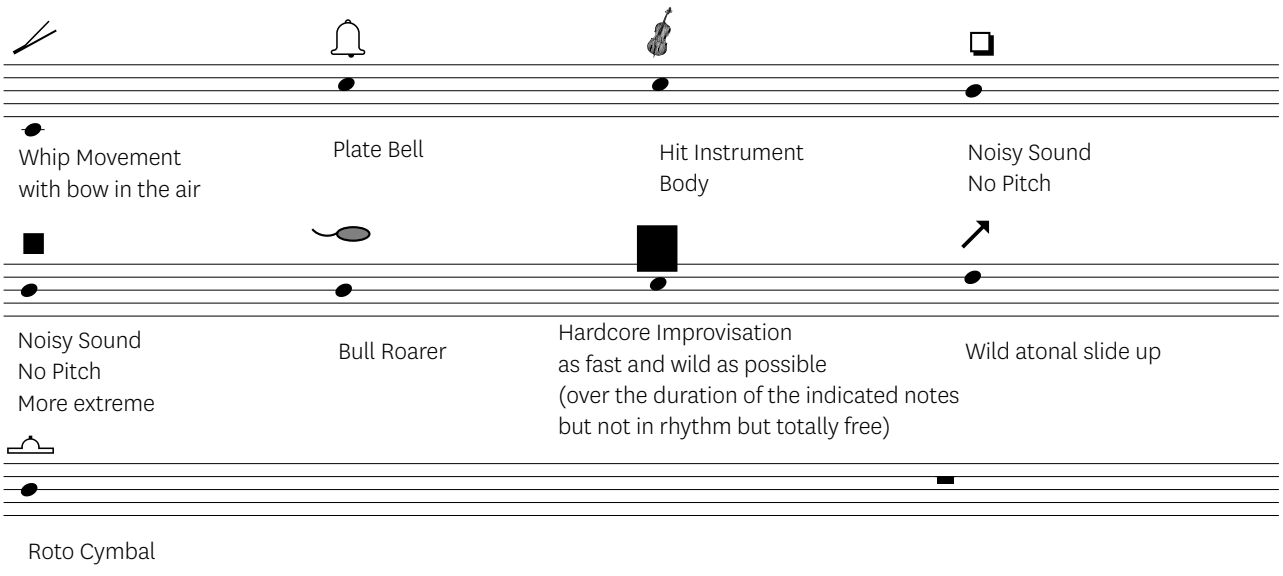
Almost all playing on the instrument is rather percussive and hence notated either as col legno battuto for the faster sequences and as bartok pizzicato for the slower passages. The playing technique can be changed if necessary for a given section if it's better playable. Also alterations of playing technique are welcome to changes the sound.
In the middle part in different short sections of roughly 1-2 bars one sound is repeated over and over again. Try to make each sound here as repetitive as possible. Between the blocks there can be changes in sound.

The idea is that the sounds are very percussive, direct, powerful and aggressive - and artificial - not sounding too much like a classical instrument.

The double bass is amplified with an amp and should have a general setting for a powerful, slightly distorted (but not too much) sound.

At a few points the bassist needs to play simple percussion instruments too - plate bell, bull roarer, roto cymbal.

In general: Play like a machine, like a (broken) sampler.



Materials

Along with the score the following materials are handed out:

- Demo MP3 of the piece
- Click Track MP3
- MP3 with click track on left channel and electronics on right channel
- Video showing the positions of the players on stage (red spots symbolize players, the thin line indicates orientation, when the circle turns white the player is playing an instrument, when it turns yellow he is performing a gesture)
- Video showing the positions of the players on stage and the lighting [not ready yet]

All materials can be downloaded here:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0Byx6gJQ75W4mZTNUaERYajI1TVU?usp=sharing

Stage Plan

See below

Tech Rider

See separate file

Microphones

The double bass uses a pick up and amp.
Percussion instruments are amplified.
Each player has a microphone on the arm for handheld instruments.
Two additional instruments (“Rhombes”) have a separate microphone.

Stage Setup

Reverb Settings

Perc-Left

58-73	50%	6s	Rhombe-Mic
77-79	0%→100%	8s	Shaker (Hand Mic)
152-172	100%	4s	Rhombe-Mic
172-190	100%→0%	4s	Rhombe-Mic
456-458	100%	40s	Bell (Hand Mic)
464-479	50%	40s	Rhombe-Mic
510-533	50%	16s	Rhombe-Mic

Perc-Right

58-73	50%	6s	Rhombe-Mic
77-79	0%→100%	8s	Shaker (Hand Mic)
152-172	100%	4s	Rhombe-Mic
172-190	100%→0%	4s	Rhombe-Mic
457-460	100%	40s	Bell (Hand Mic)
464-479	50%	40s	Rhombe-Mic
510-533	50%	16s	Rhombe-Mic

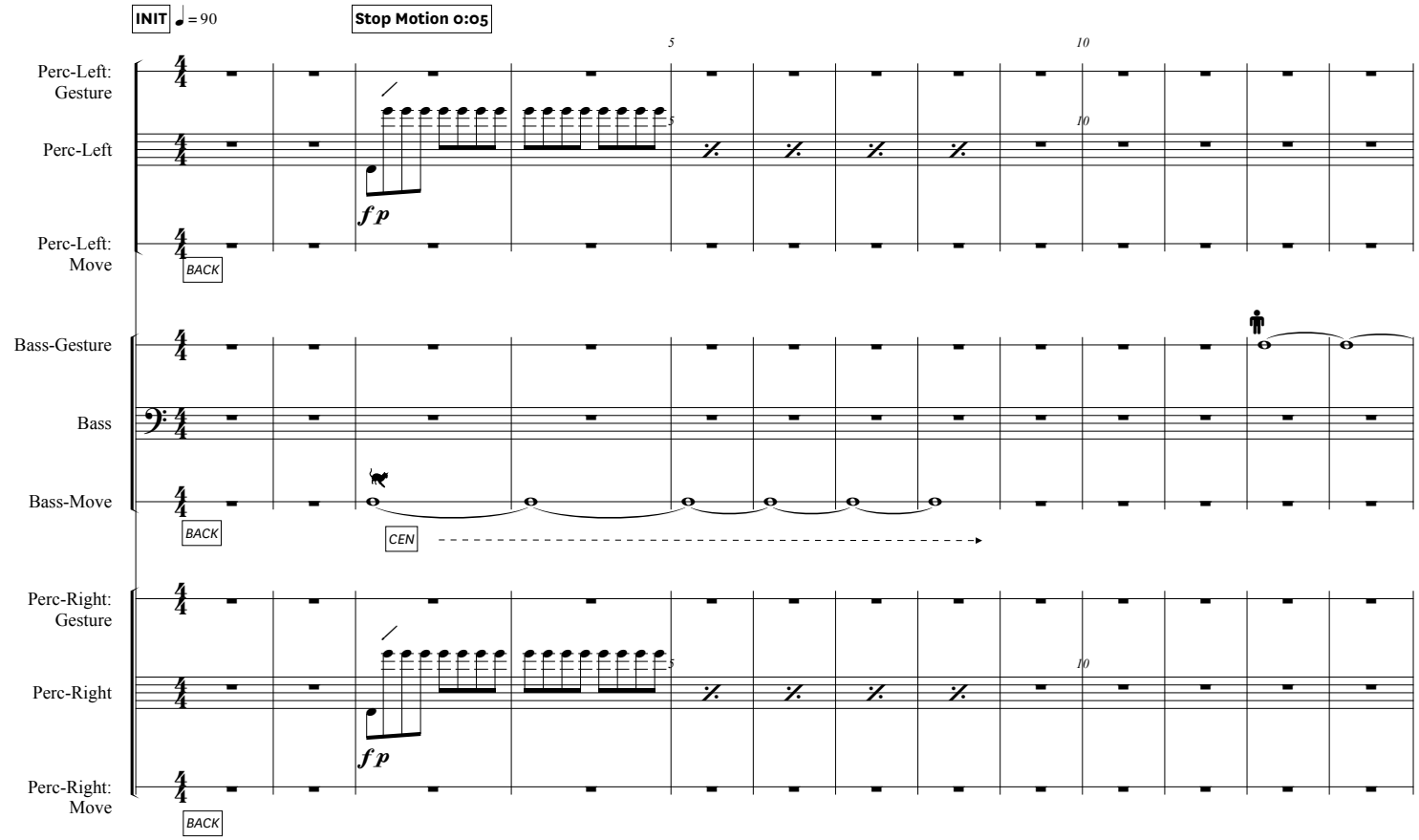
Bass

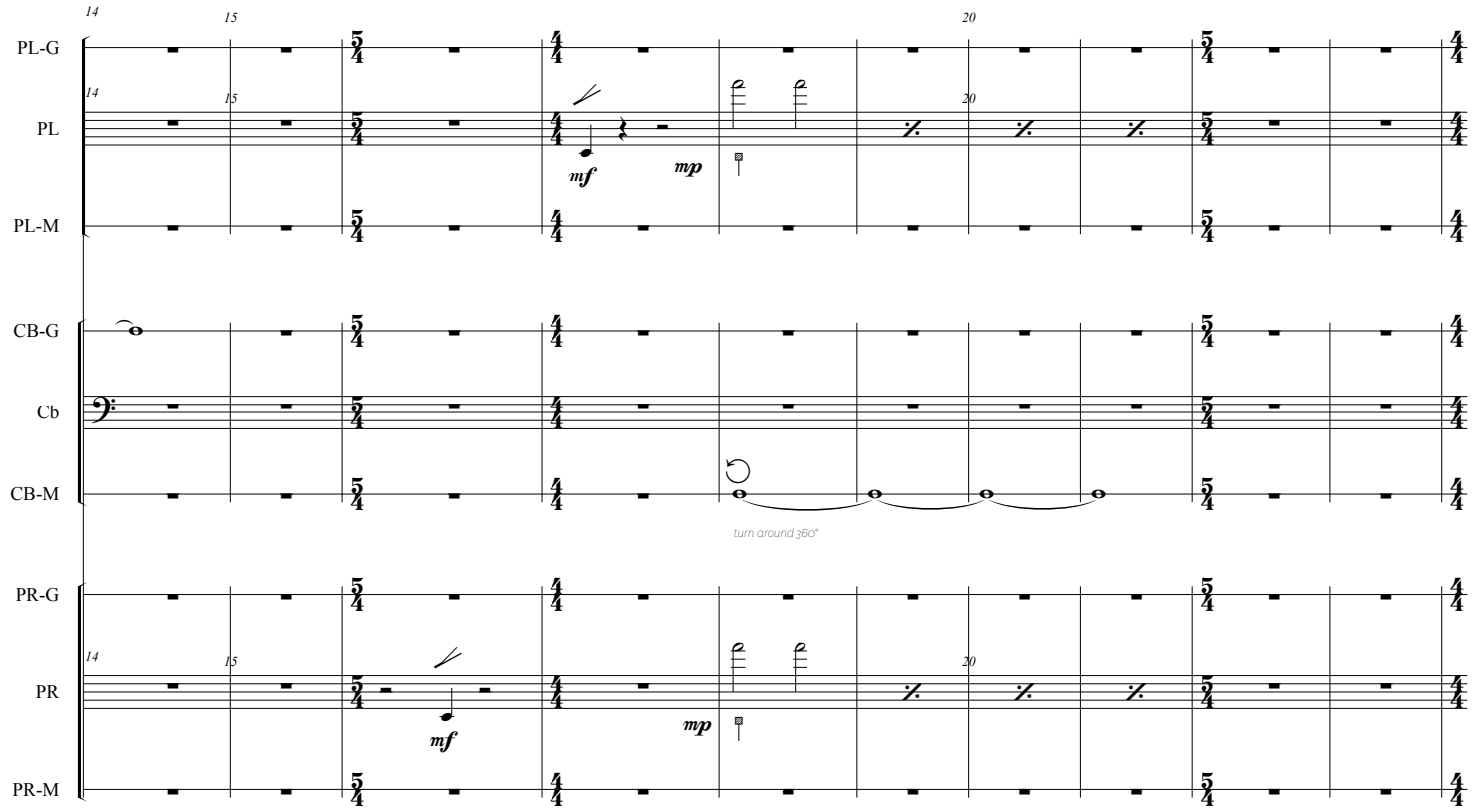
32-36	50%	8s	Bass
58-73	50%	6s	Whip (Hand-Mic)
79-83	100%	40s	Bell (Hand Mic)
88- 91	75%	8s	Bass
107-119	100%	8s	Bass
121-126	70%	8s	Bass
126-130	100%	8s	Bass
147	100%	8s	Bass
158-164	100%	6s	Bass
170-176	100%	6s	Bass
180-200	60%	4s	Bass
405	100%	8s	Finger Snip (Hand Mic)
417	100%	8s	Finger Snip (Hand Mic)
460-465	100%	40s	Bell (Hand Mic)
524-527	100%	40s	Bell (Hand Mic)
528-531	100%	40s	Bell (Hand Mic)

Score

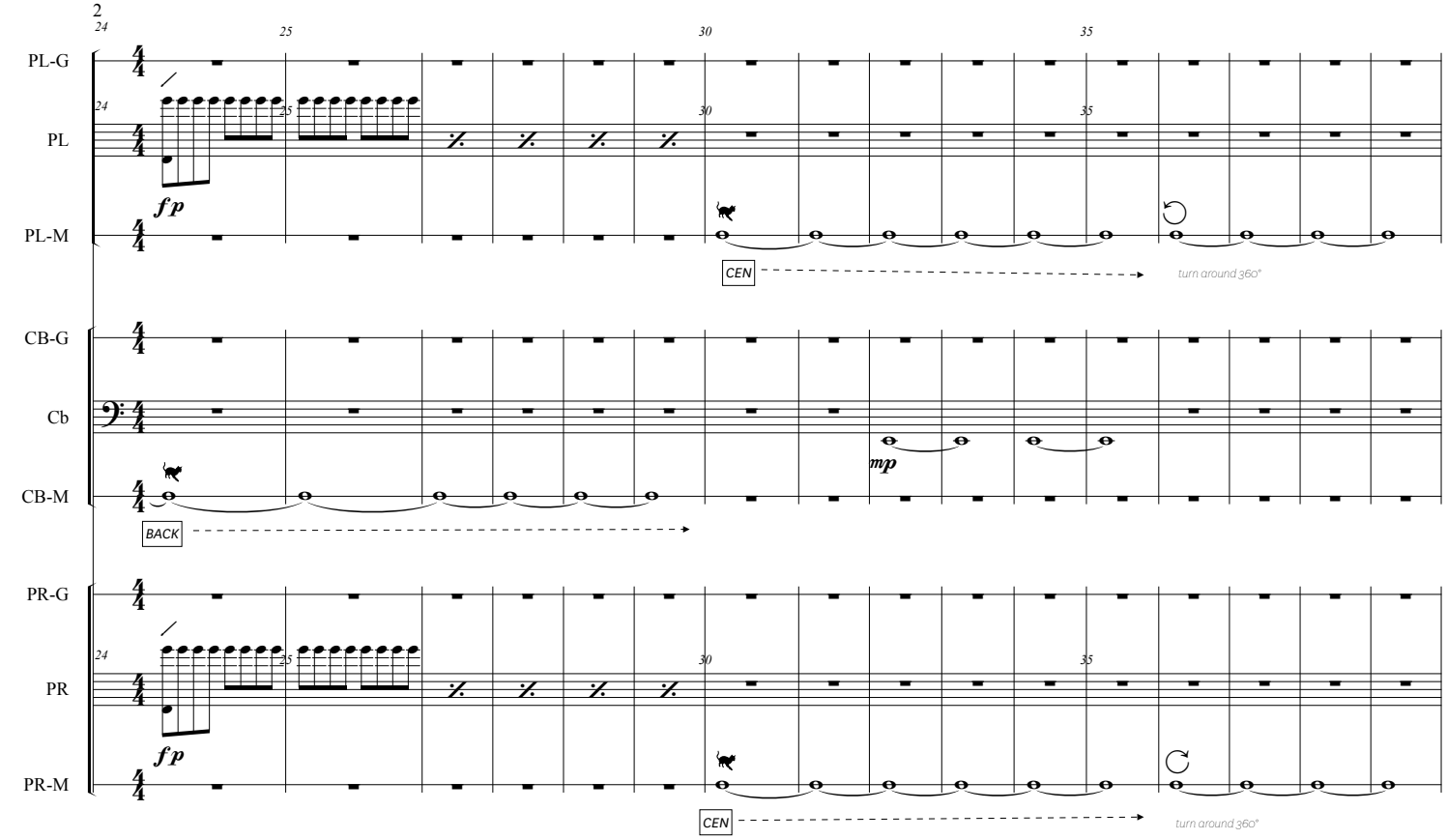
version:
29.09.17

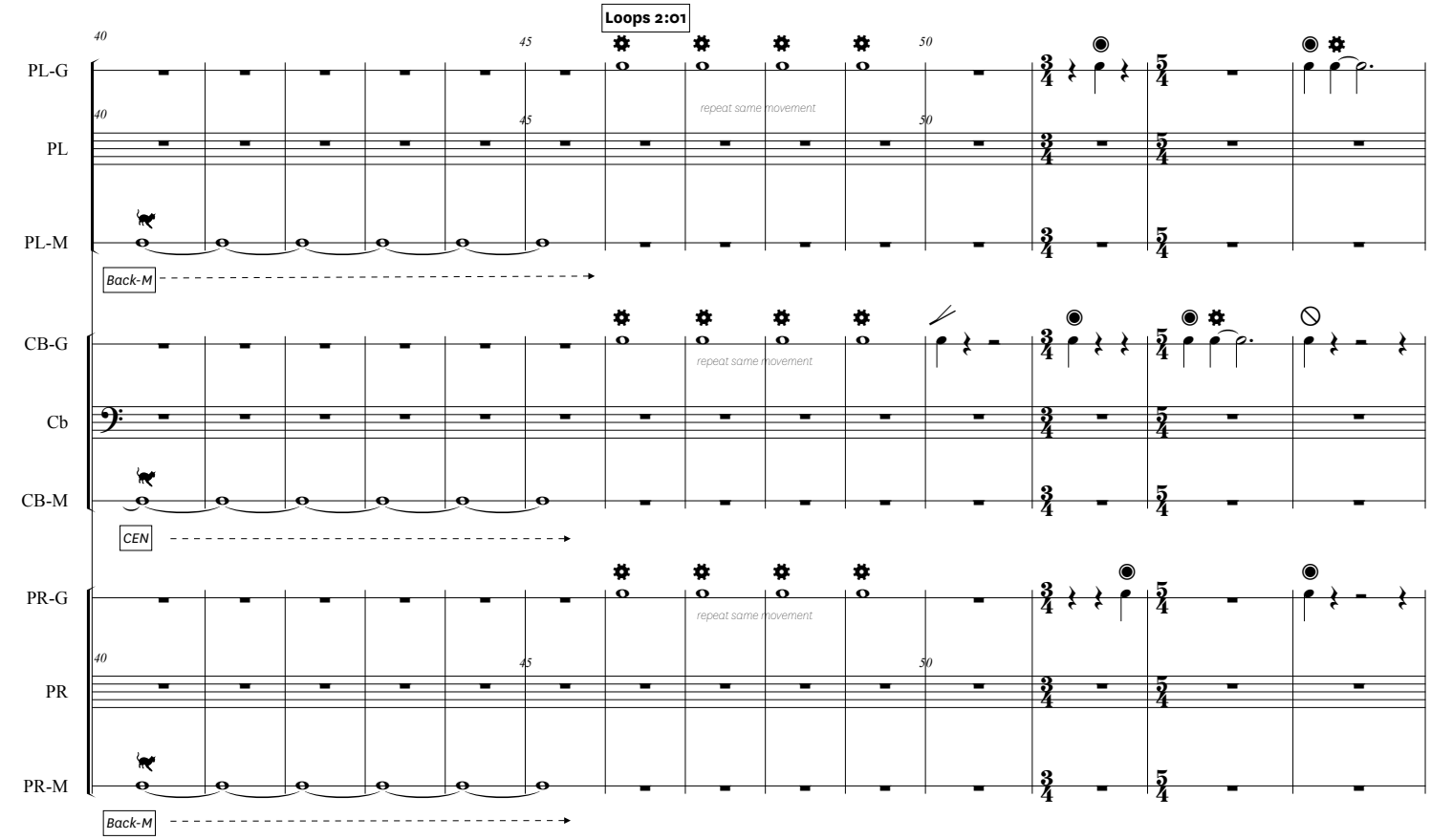
CODEC ERROR

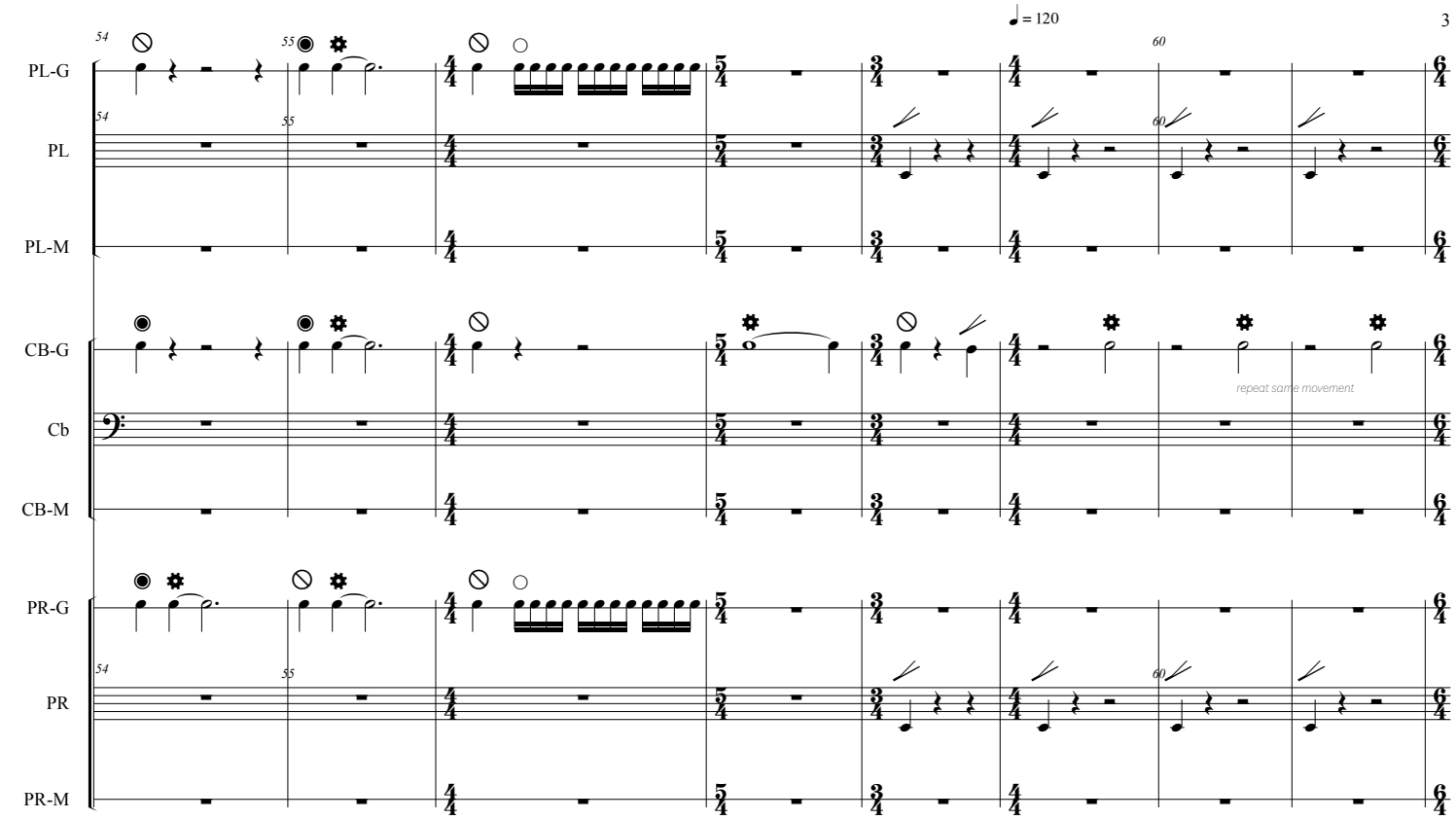


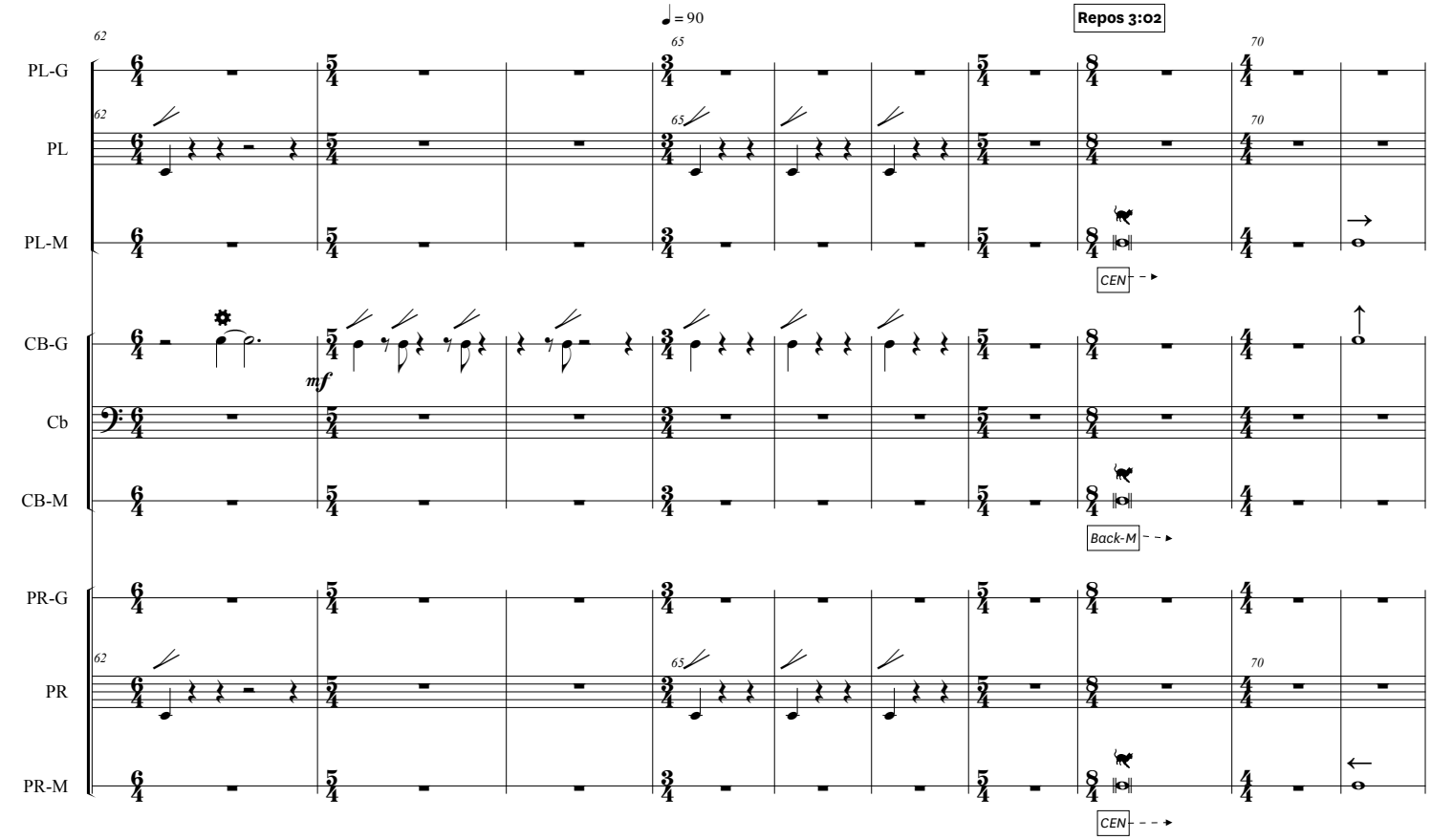


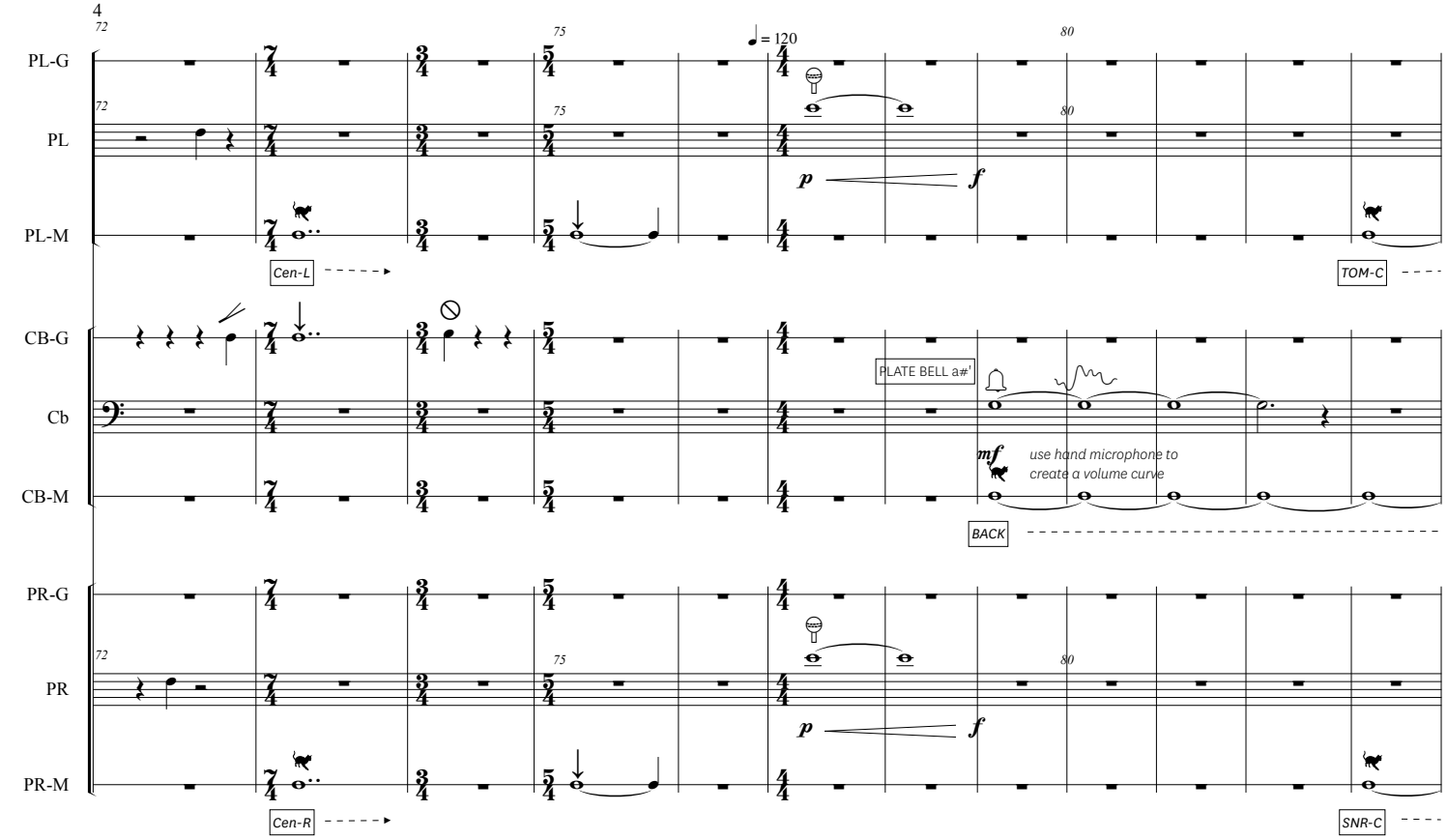
CODEC ERROR

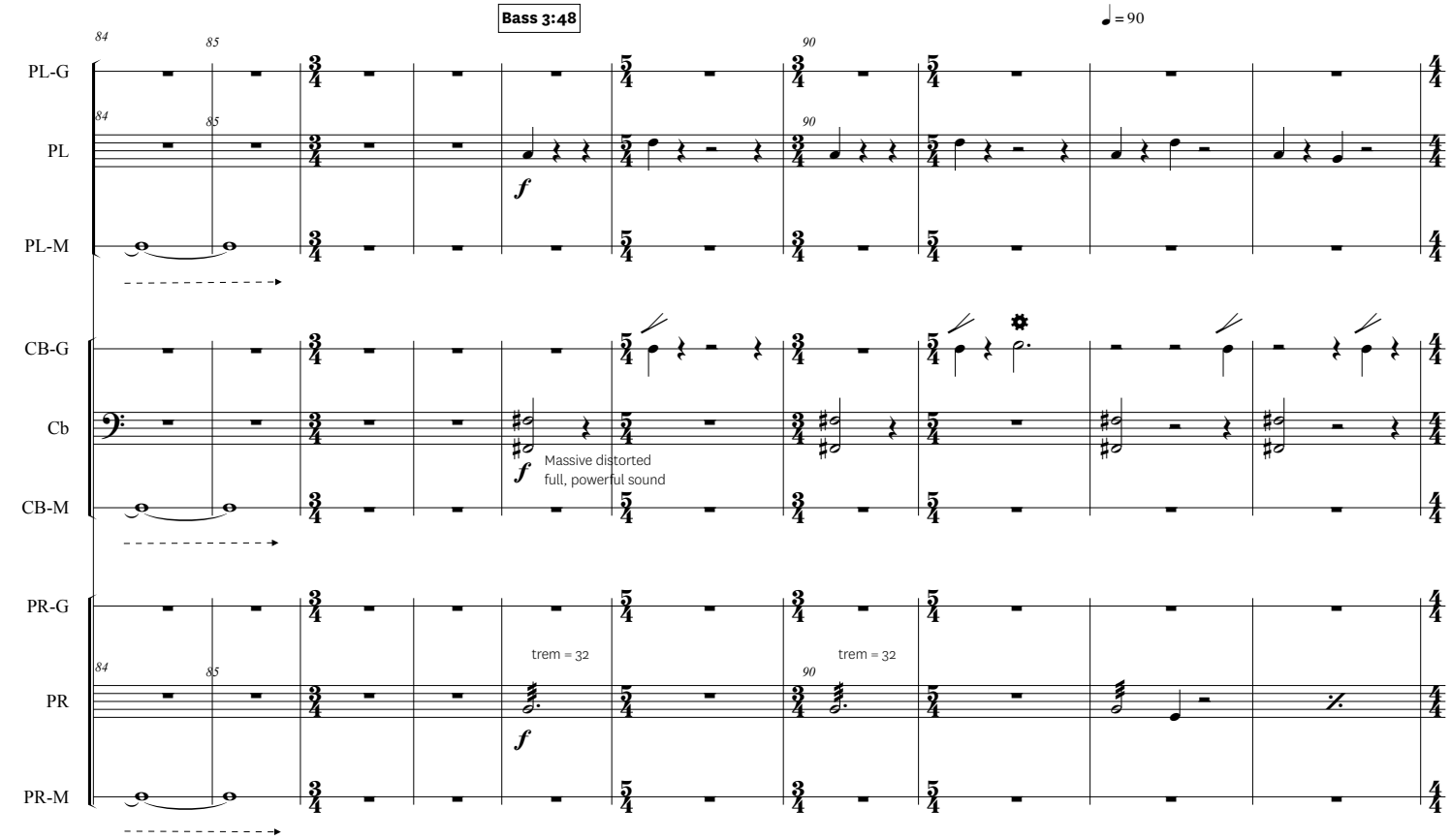

24
25
30
35
PL-G
PL
PL-M
fp
CEN
turn around 360°
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
mp
BACK
PR-G
PR
PR-M
fp
CEN
turn around 360°

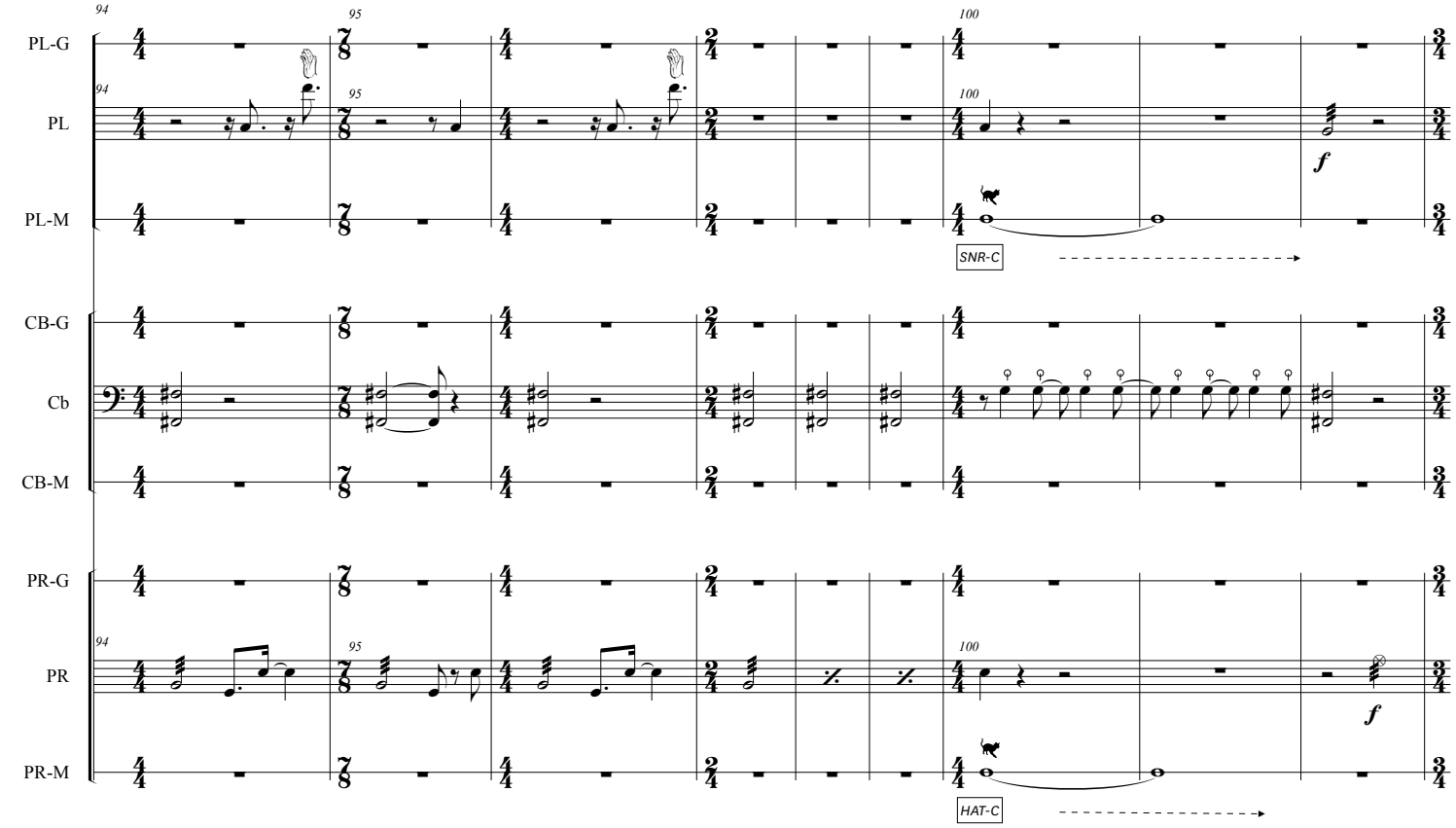

Loops 2:01
40
45
50
PL-G
PL
PL-M
repeat same movement
Back-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
repeat same movement
CEN
PR-G
PR
PR-M
repeat same movement
Back-M

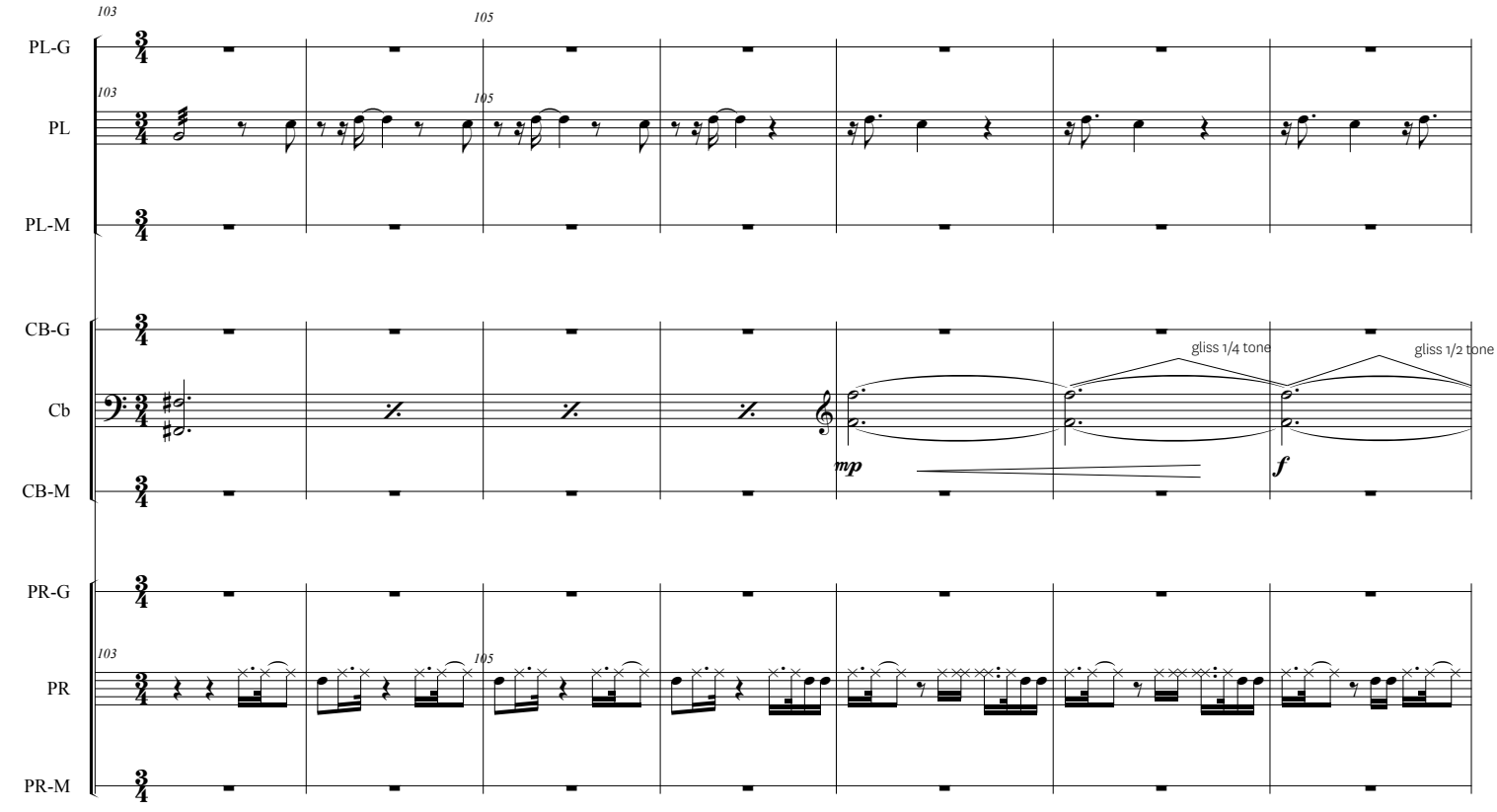

♩ = 120
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
repeat same movement

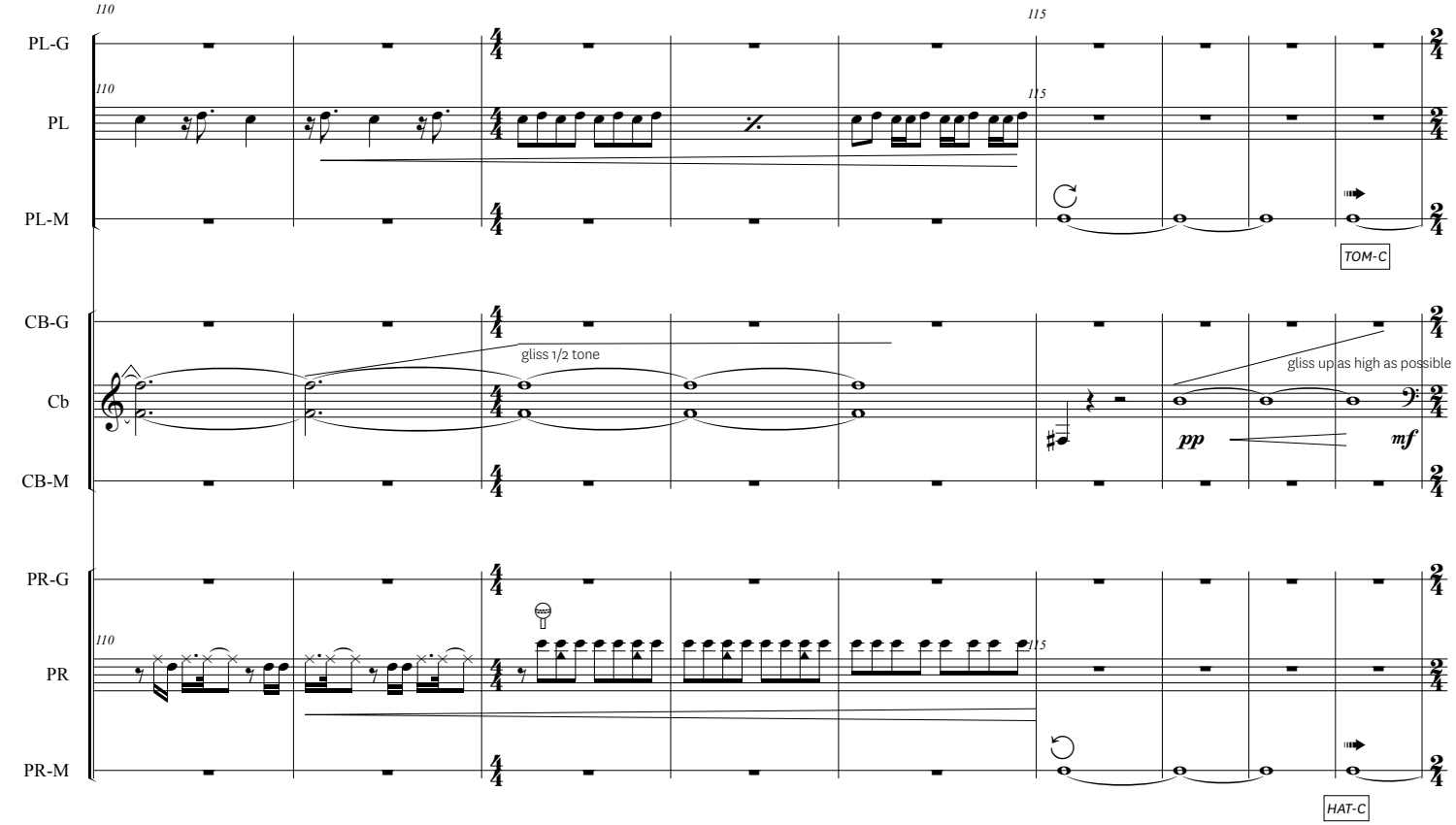

♩ = 90
Repos 3:02
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
mf
CEN
Back-M
CEN

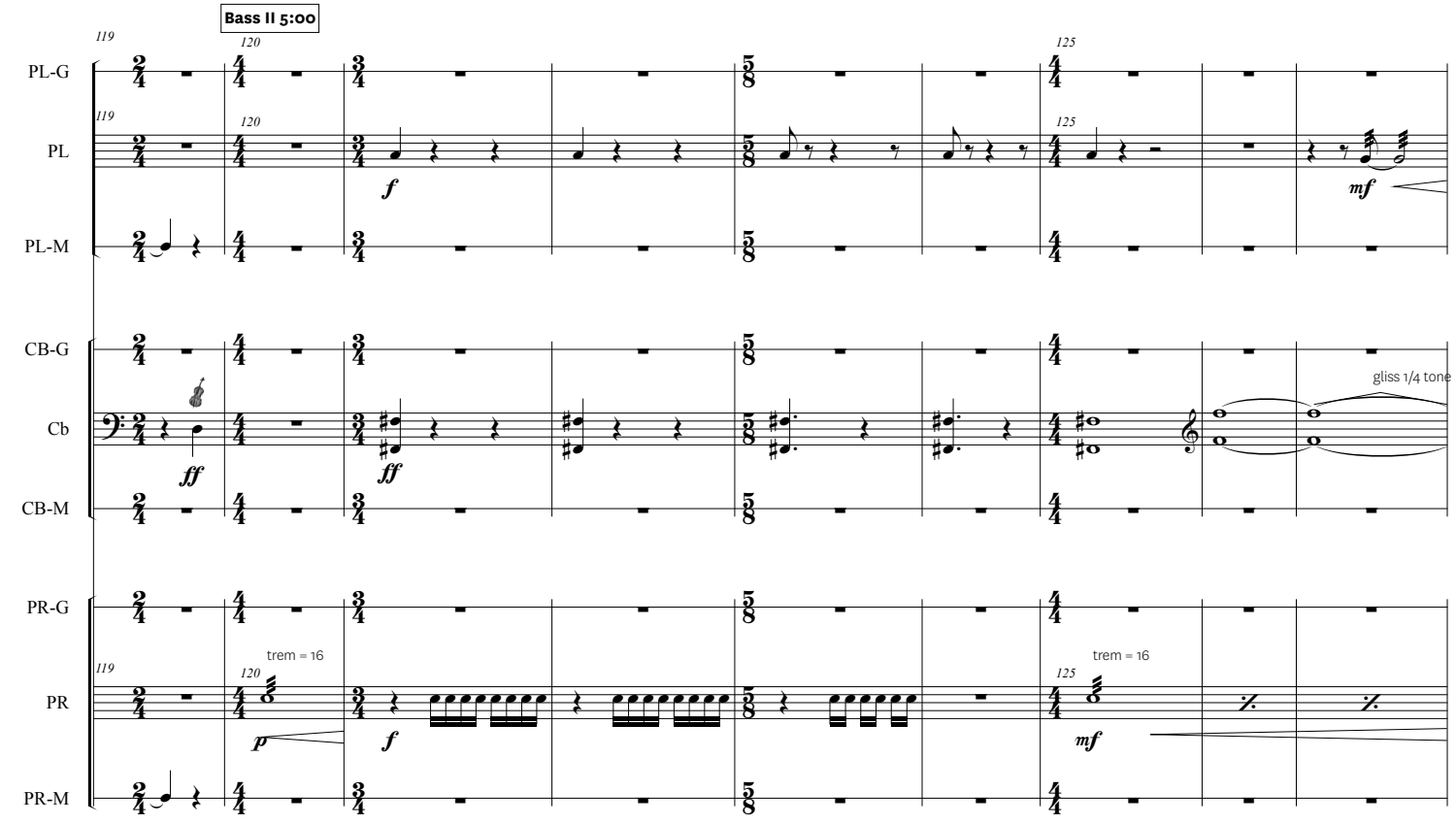

72
75
80
♩ = 120
PL-G
PL
PL-M
p
f
Cen-L
TOM-C
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PLATE BELL a#¹
mf
use hand microphone to
create a volume curve
BACK
PR-G
PR
PR-M
Cen-R
SNR-C

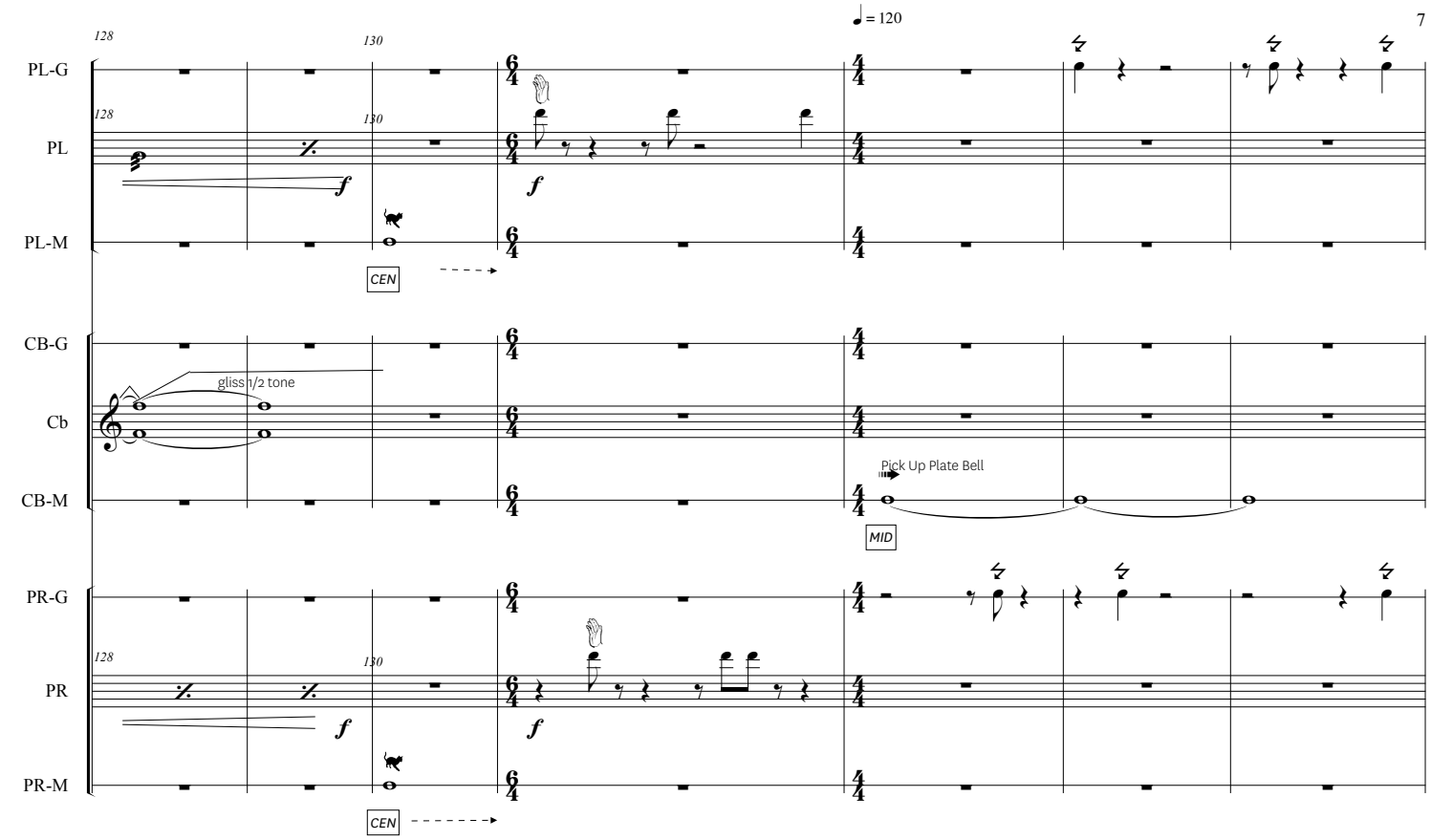

Bass 3:48
♩ = 90
84
85
90
PL-G
PL
PL-M
f
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
Massive distorted
full, powerful sound
PR-G
PR
PR-M
trem = 32
trem = 32

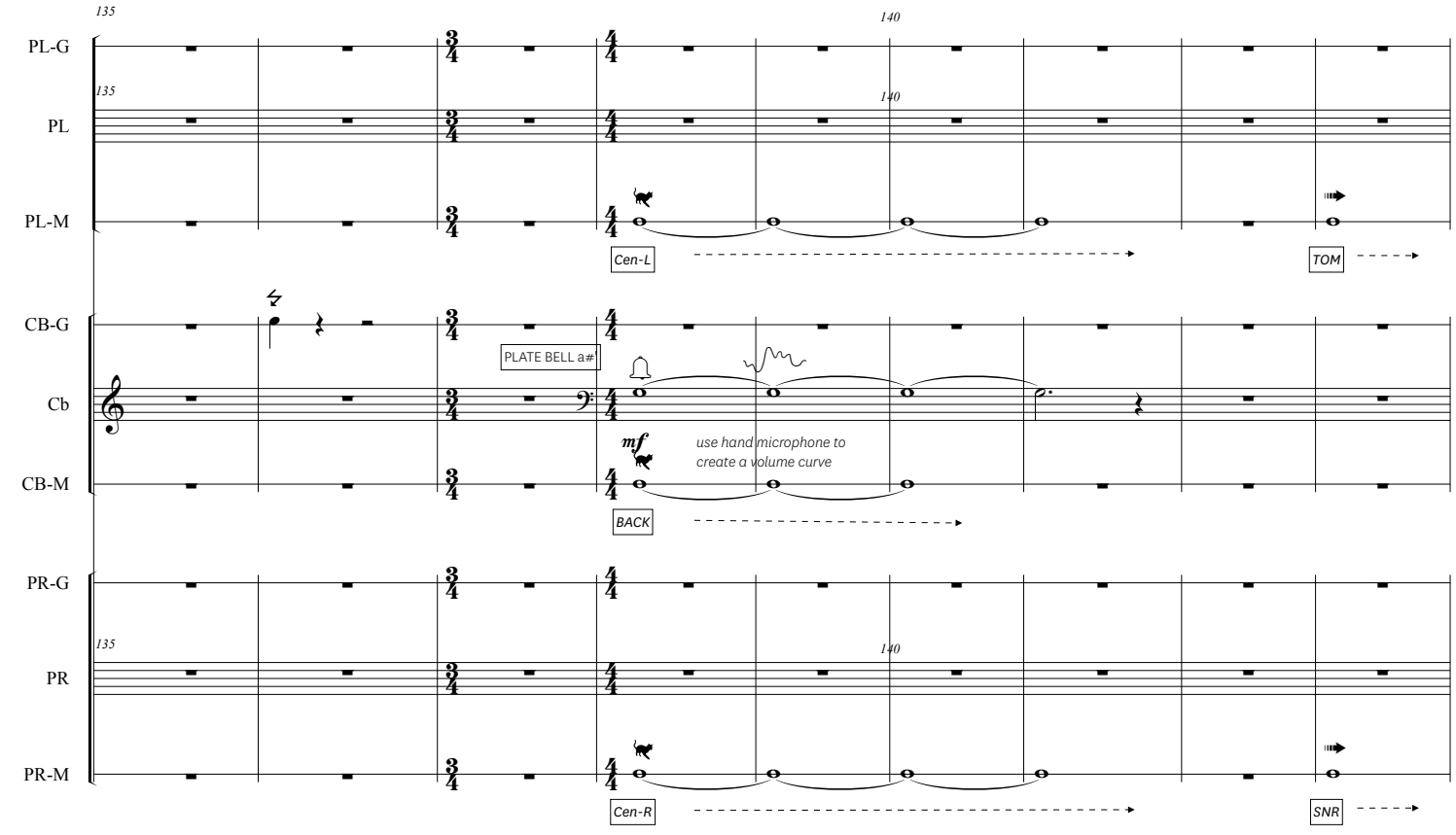

PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
94
95
100
SNR-C
HAT-C
f


PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
103
105
gliss 1/4 tone
gliss 1/2 tone
mp
f


110
115
PL-G
PL
PL-M
TOM-C
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
gliss 1/2 tone
gliss up as high as possible
pp
mf
PR-G
PR
PR-M
HAT-C


Bass II 5:00
119
120
125
PL-G
PL
PL-M
f
mf
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
ff
gliss 1/4 tone
PR-G
PR
PR-M
trem = 16
p
mf

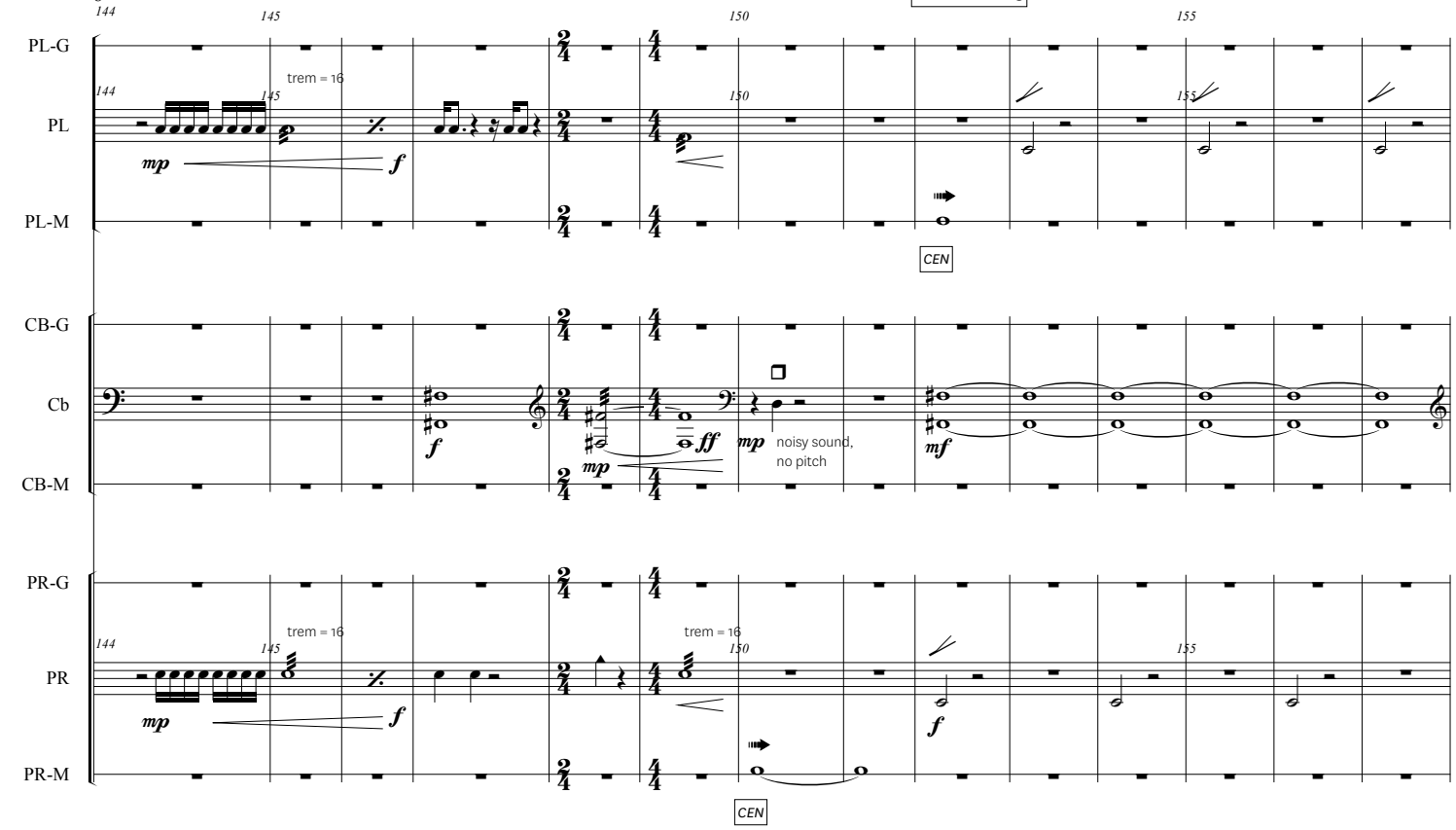

♩ = 120
128
130
PL-G
PL
PL-M
f
CEN
CB-G
gliss 1/2 tone
Cb
CB-M
Pick Up Plate Bell
MID
PR-G
PR
PR-M
CEN

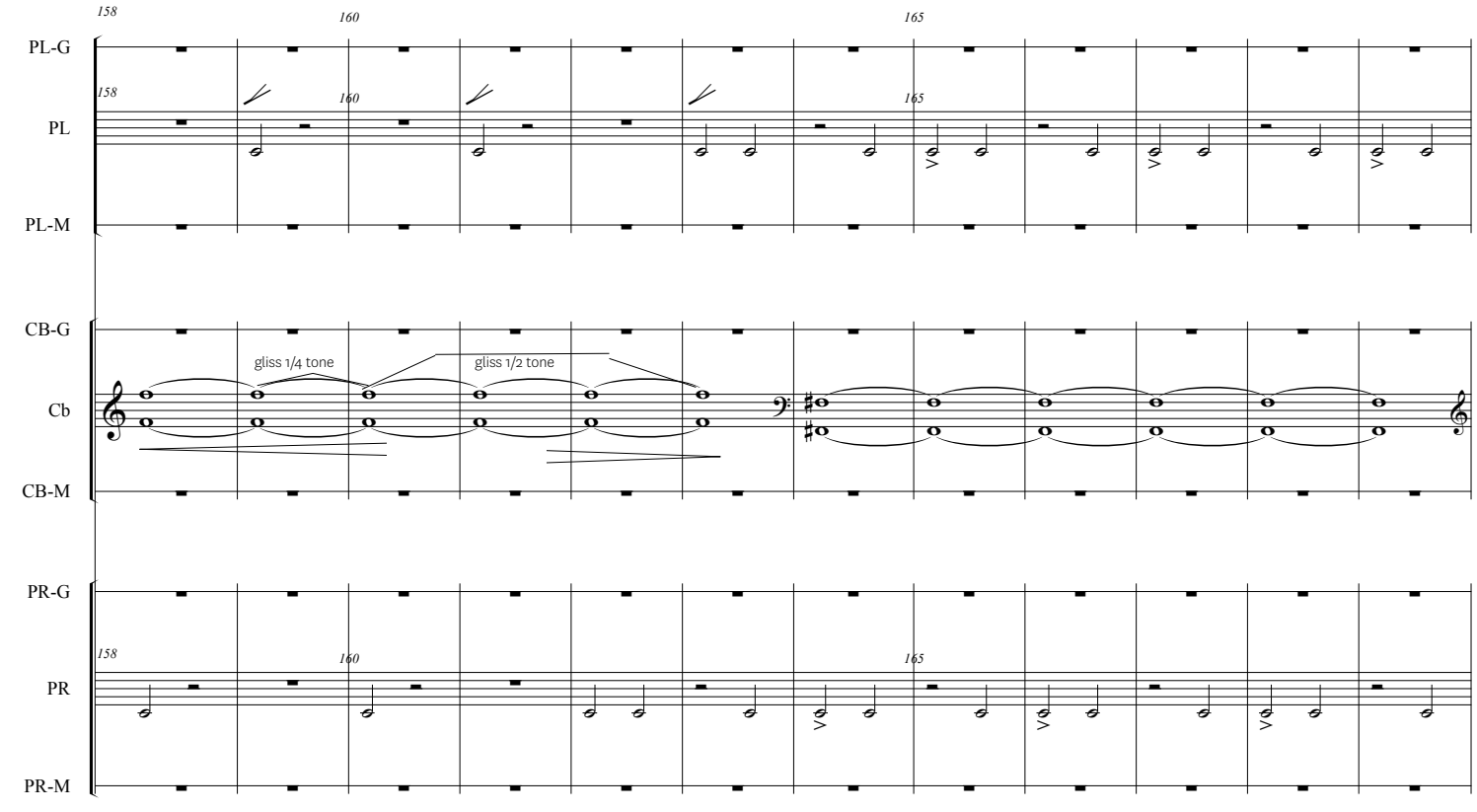

135
140
PL-G
PL
PL-M
Cen-L
TOM
CB-G
PLATE BELL a#
Cb
mf
use hand microphone to
create a volume curve
CB-M
BACK
PR-G
PR
PR-M
Cen-R
SNR

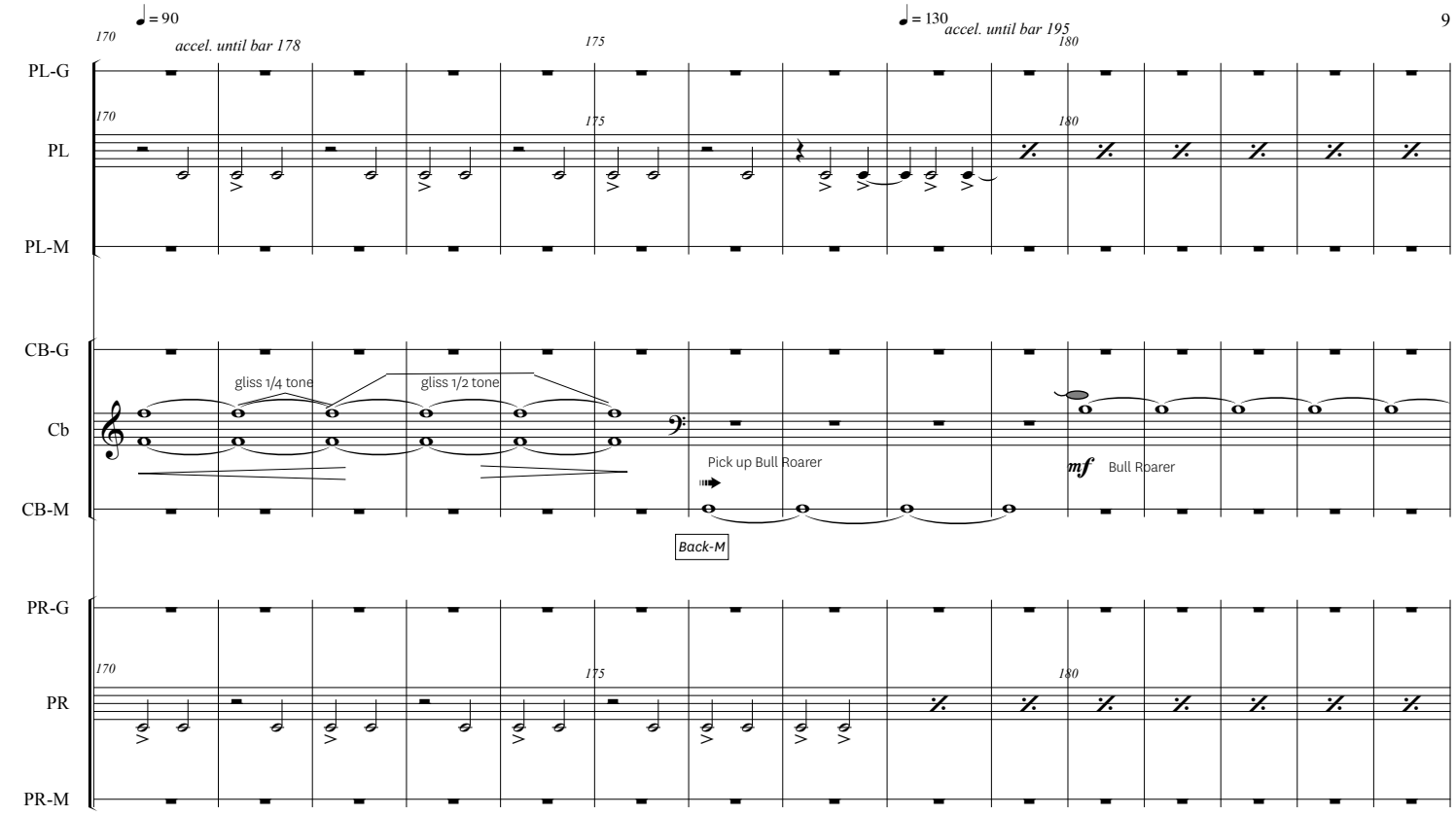
8

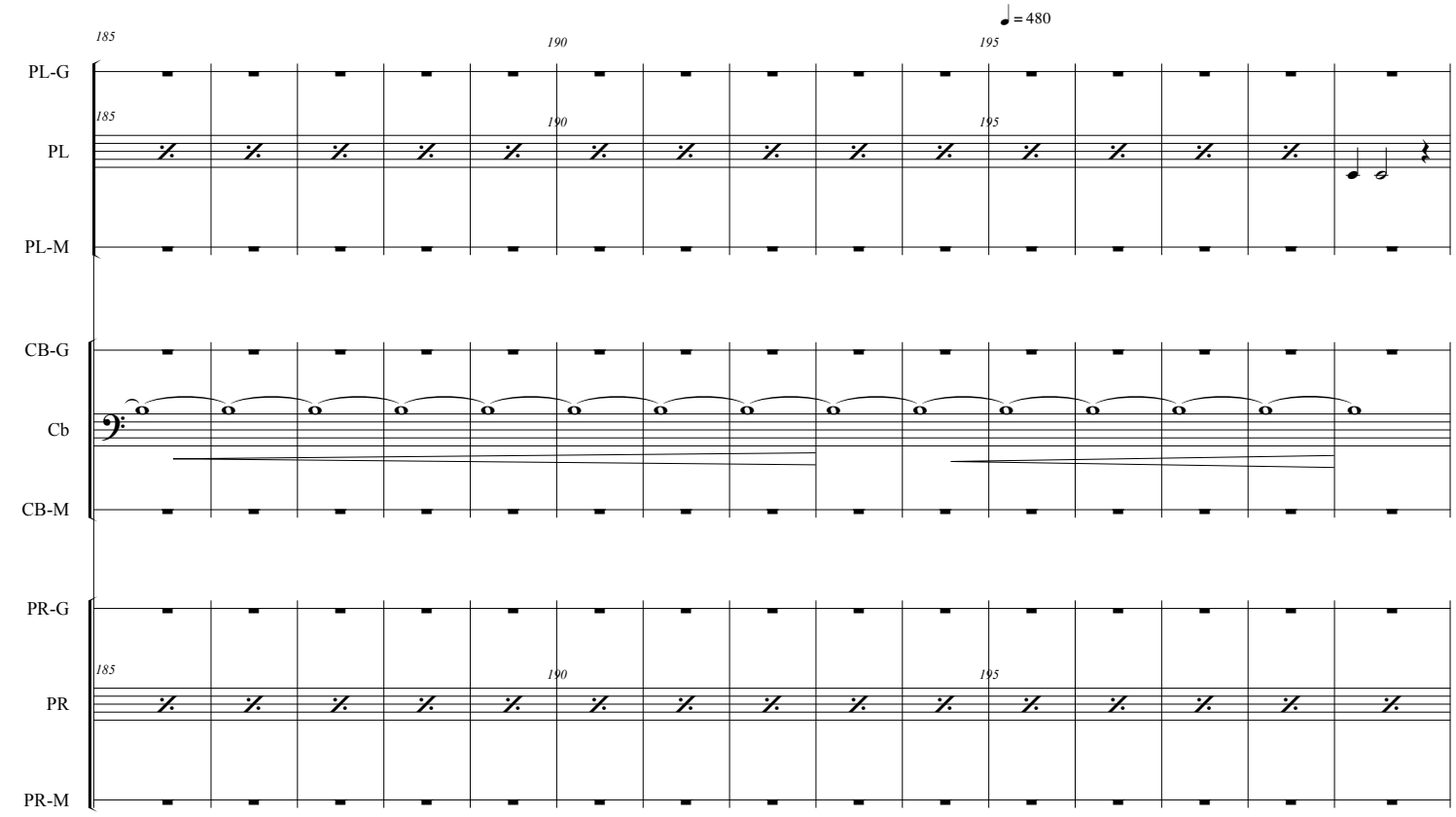
♩ = 90

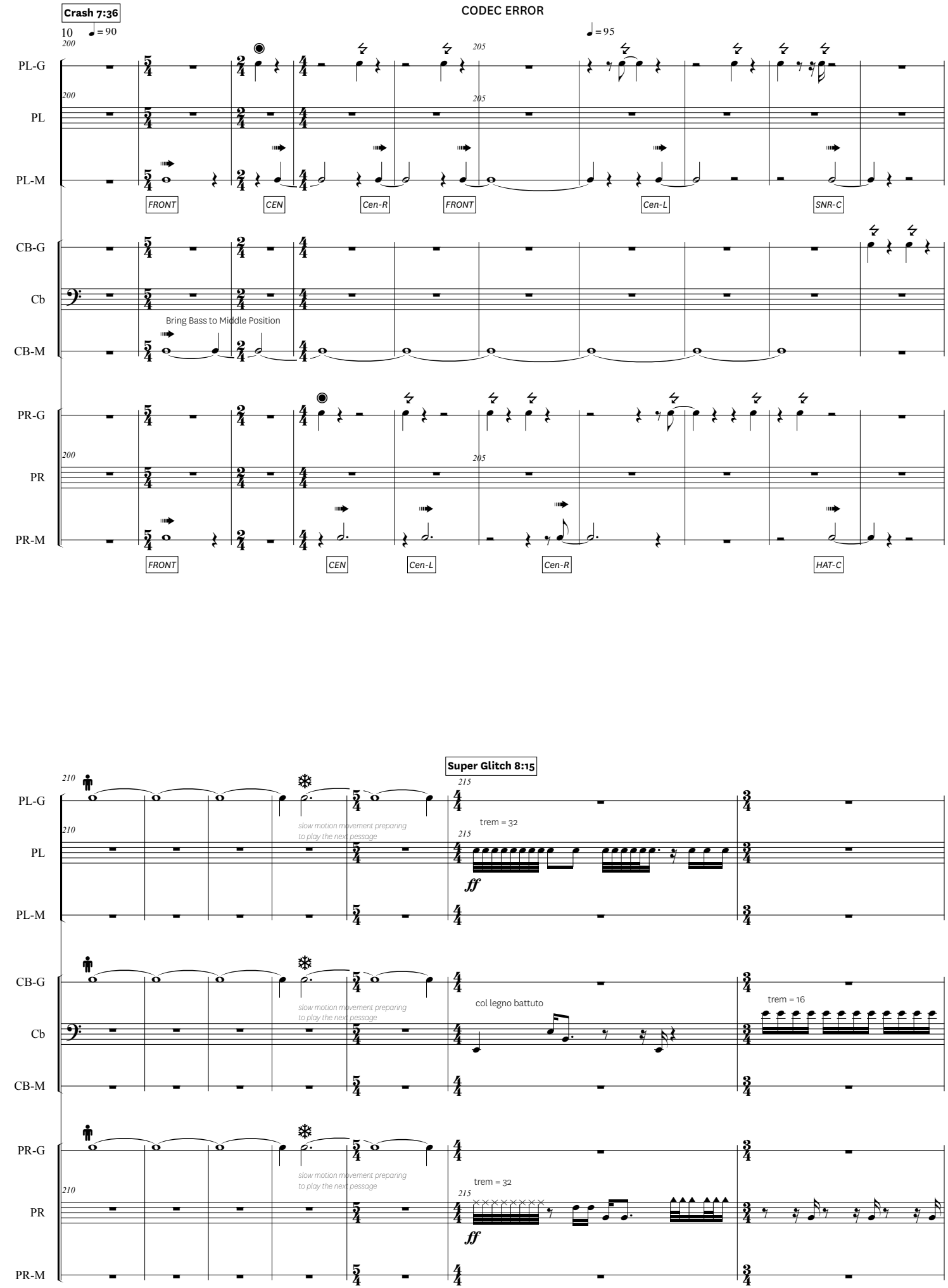
Interlude 6:13

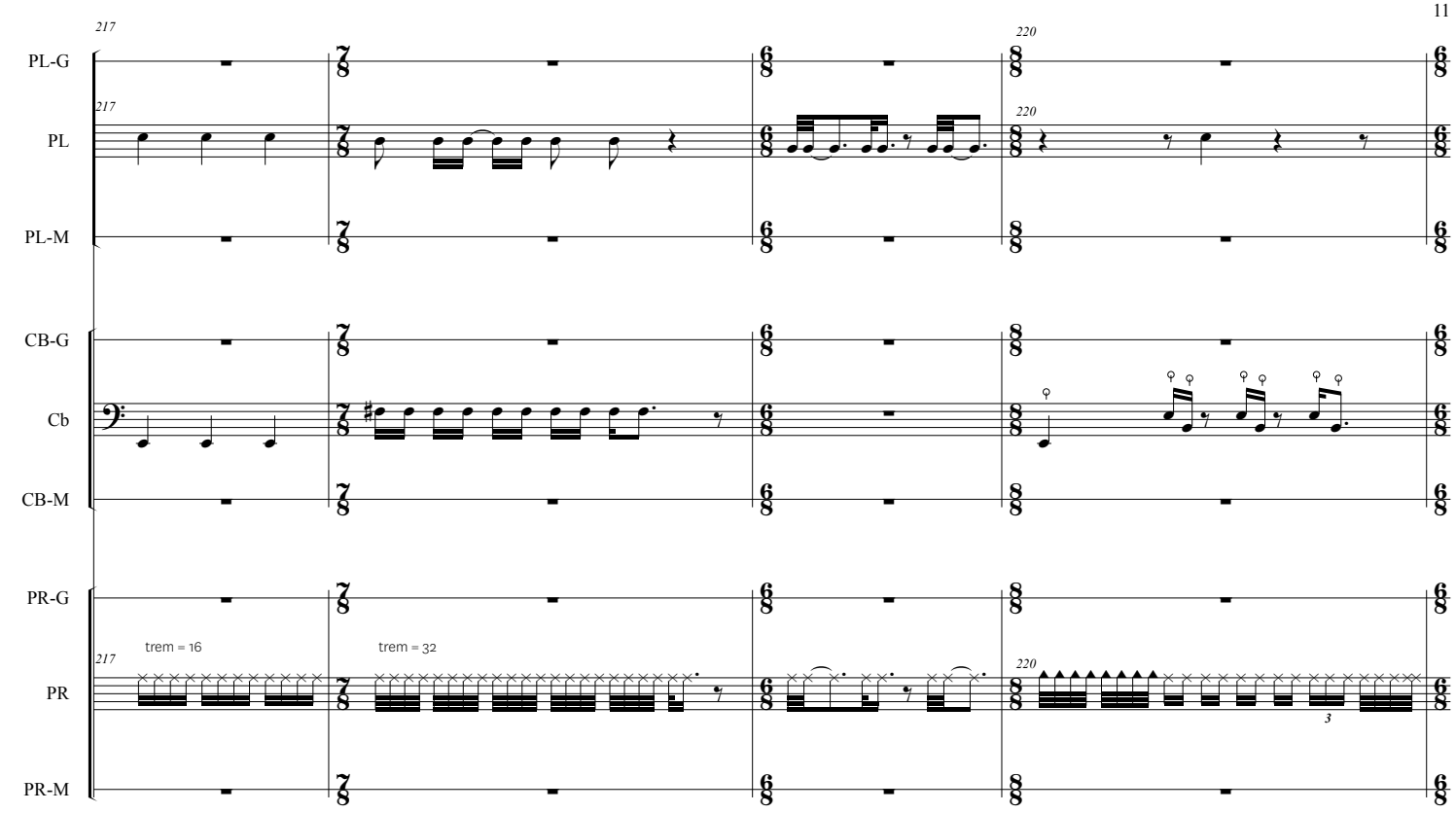


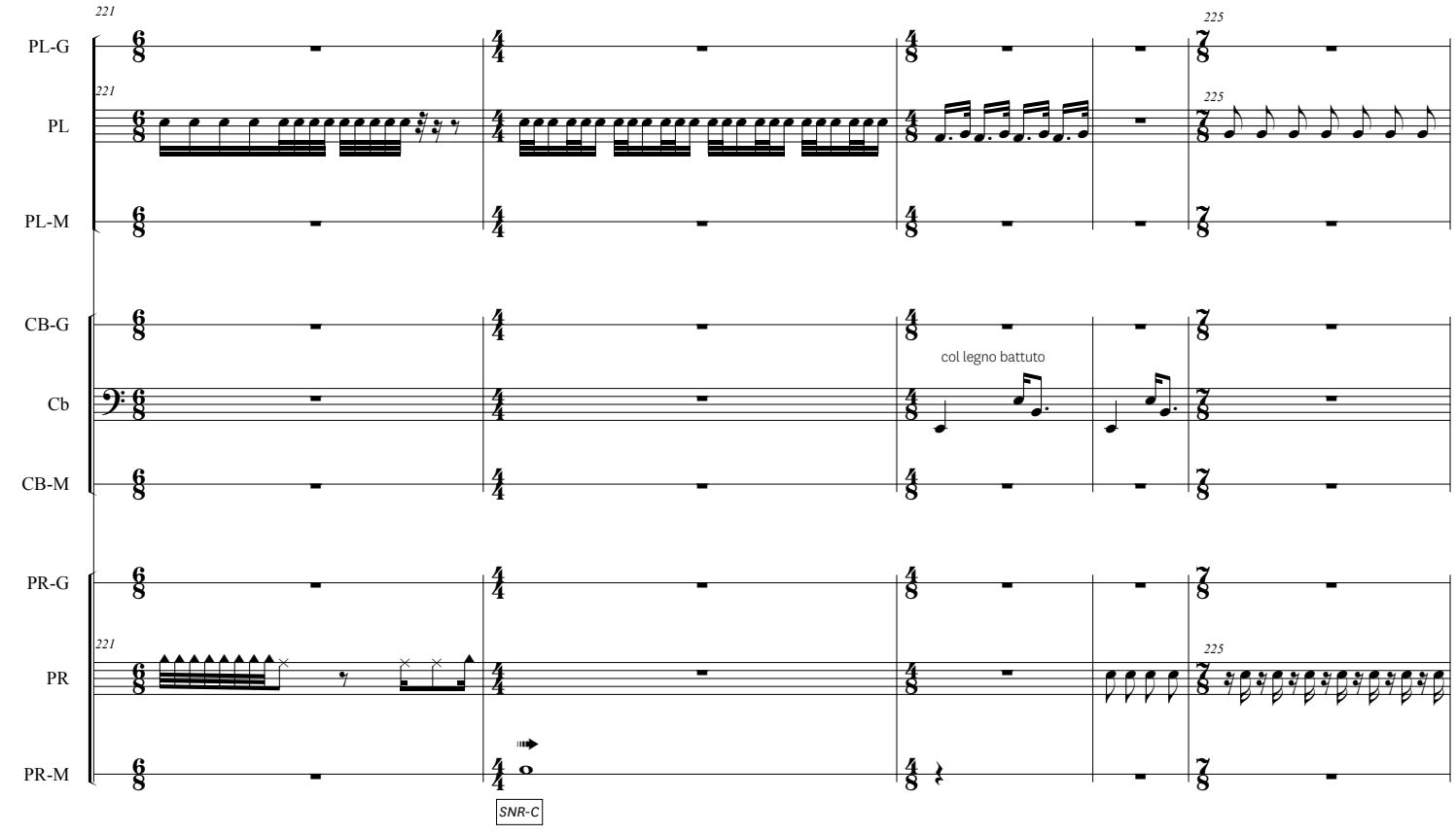


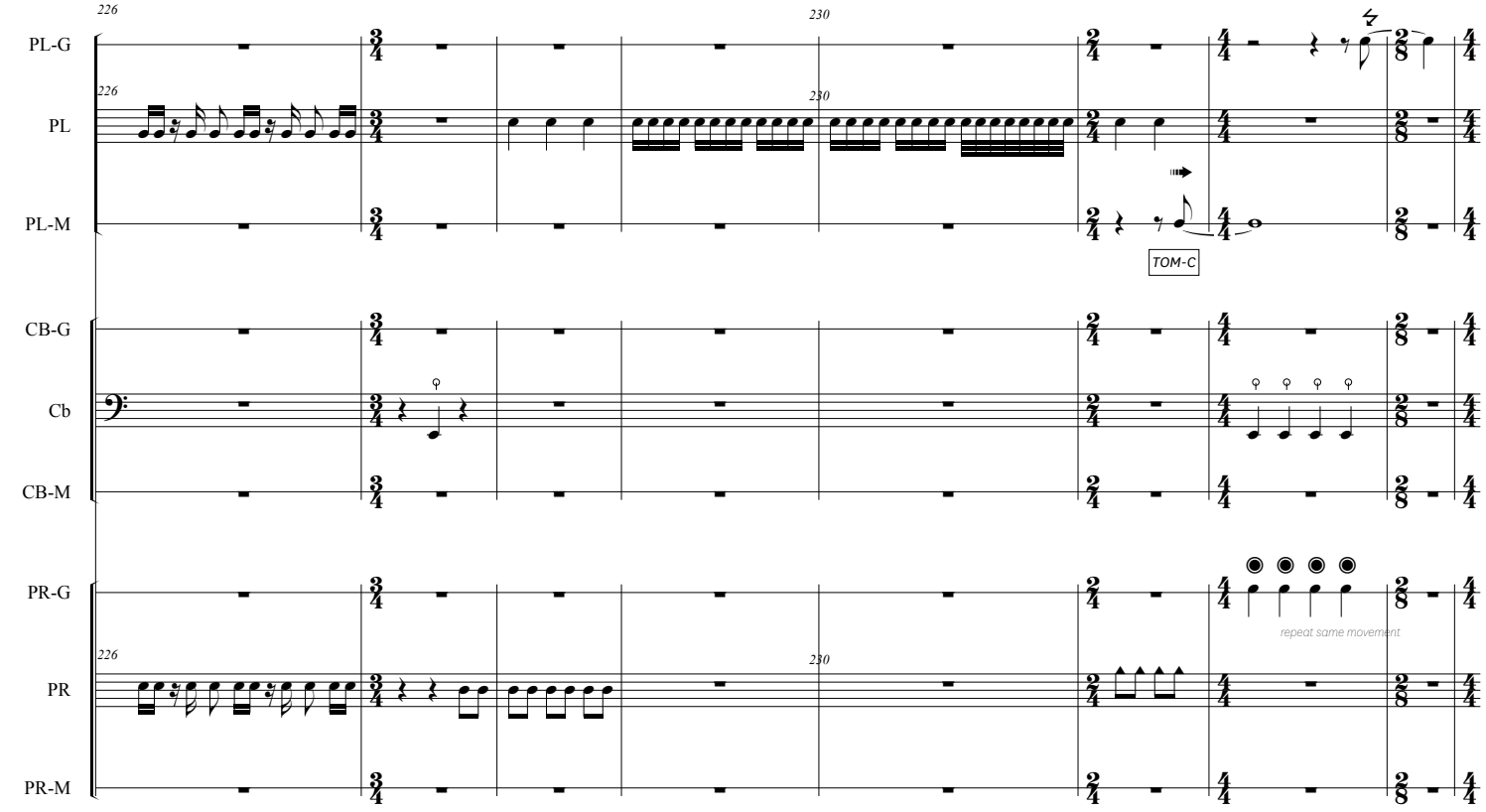

♩ = 90
accel. until bar 178
♩ = 130
accel. until bar 195
170
175
180
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
gliss 1/4 tone
gliss 1/2 tone
Pick up Bull Roarer
mf
Bull Roarer
Back-M

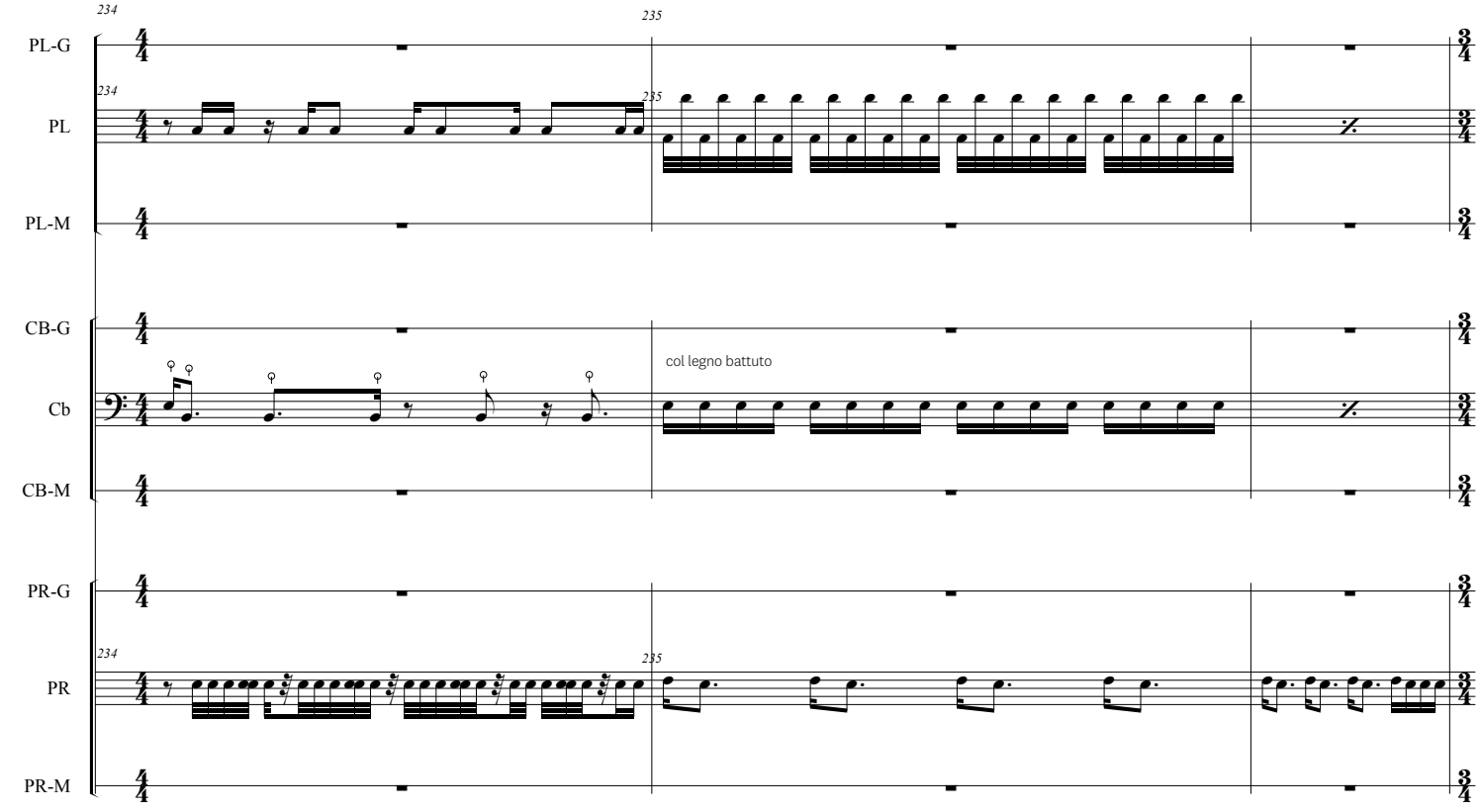

♩ = 480
185
190
195
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M

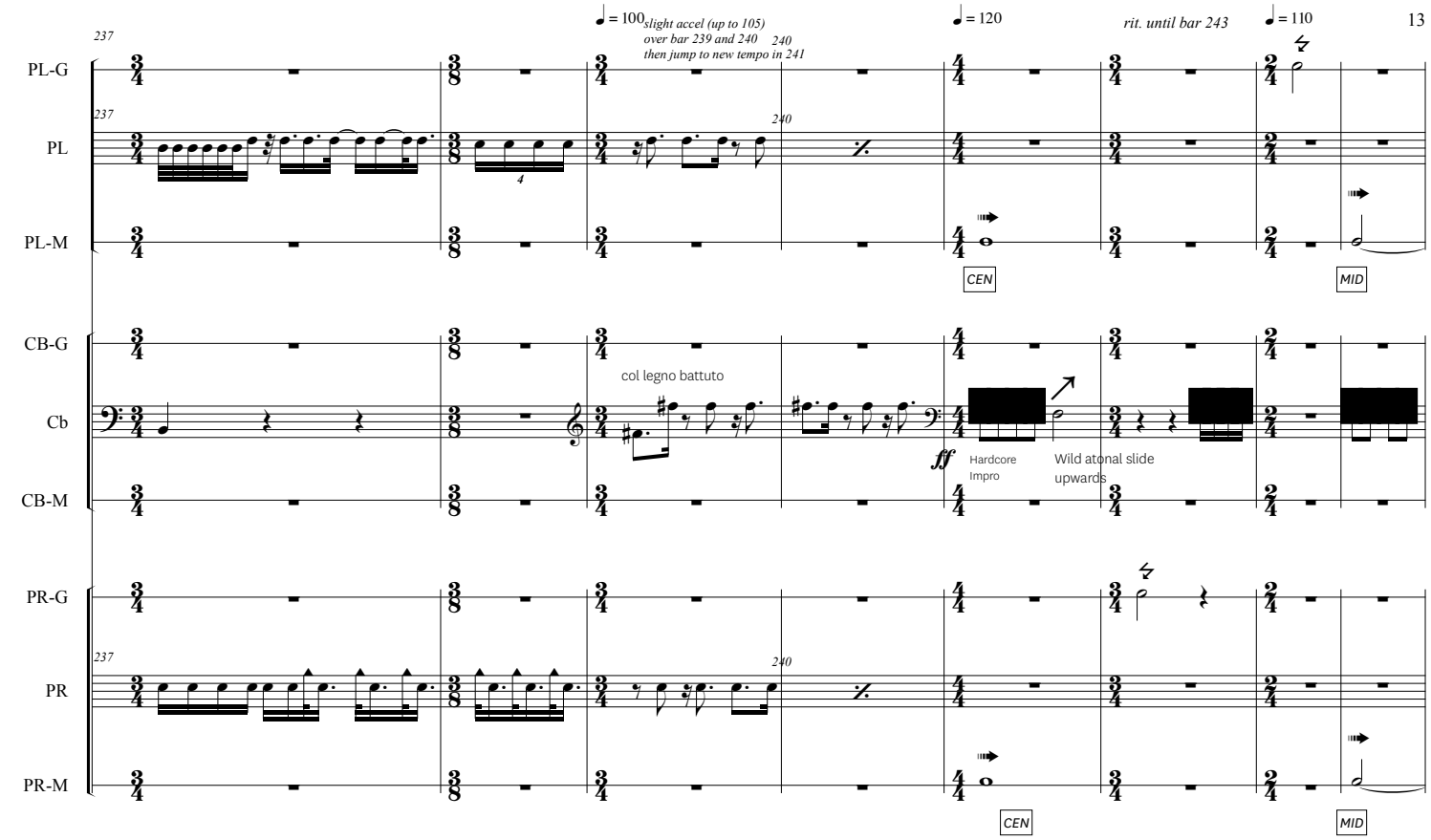

Crash 7:36
CODEC ERROR
10
♩ = 90
♩ = 95
200
205
PL-G
PL
PL-M
FRONT
CEN
Cen-R
FRONT
Cen-L
SNR-C
CB-G
Cb
Bring Bass to Middle Position
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
FRONT
CEN
Cen-L
Cen-R
HAT-C
Super Glitch 8:15
210
215
slow motion movement preparing to play the next passage
trem = 32
ff
col legno battuto
trem = 16

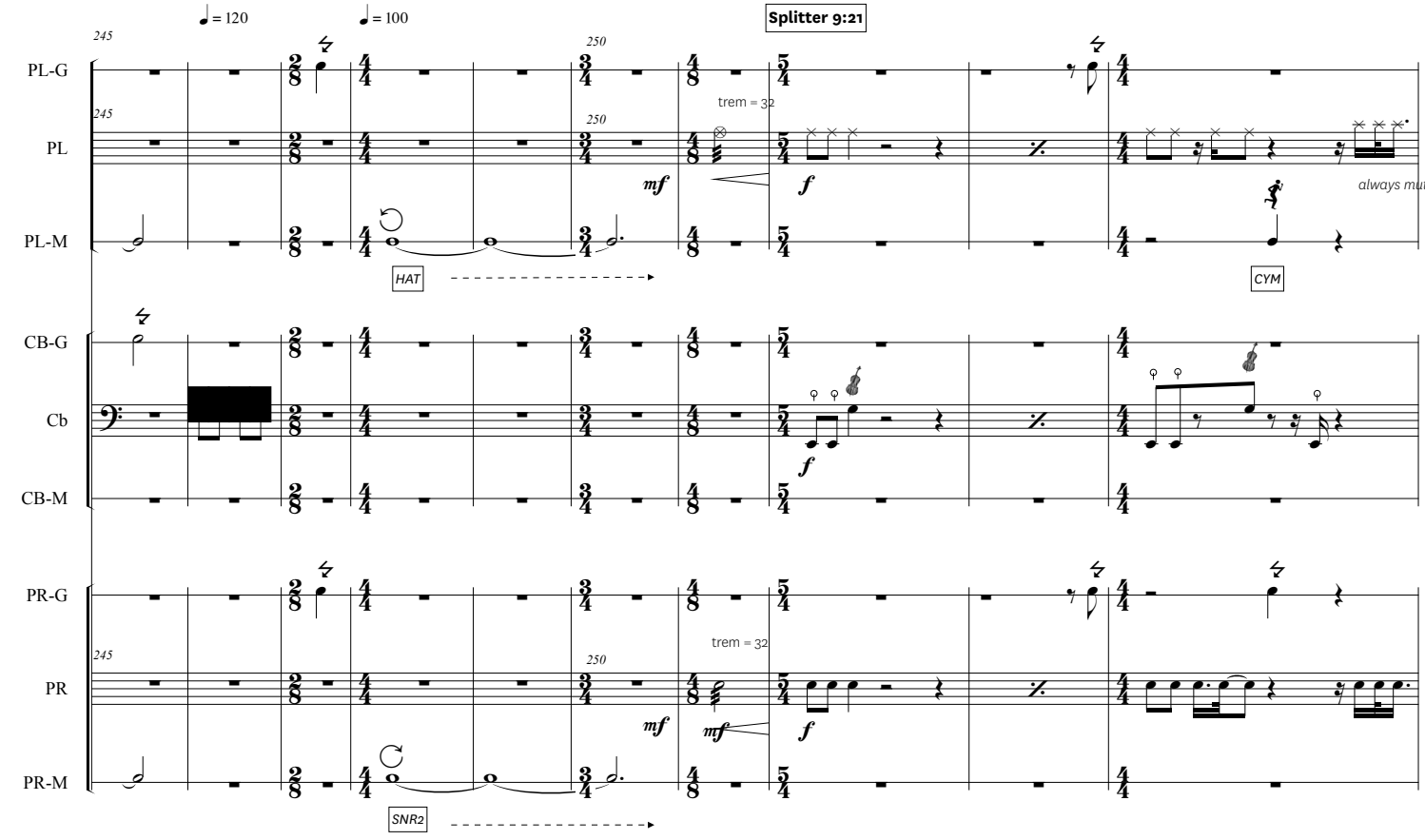

217
220
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
trem = 16
trem = 32
3

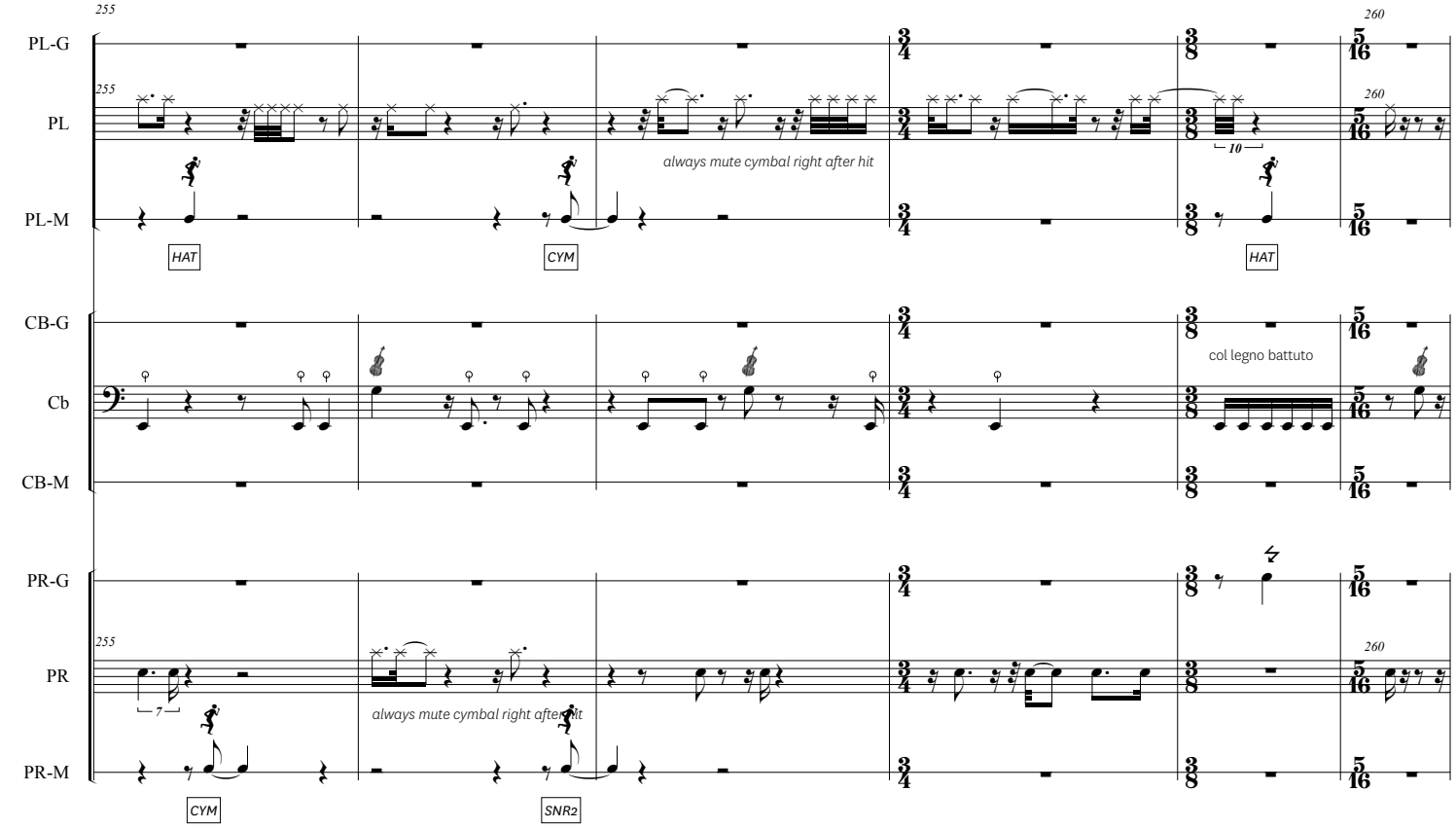

221
225
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
col legno battuto
SNR-C

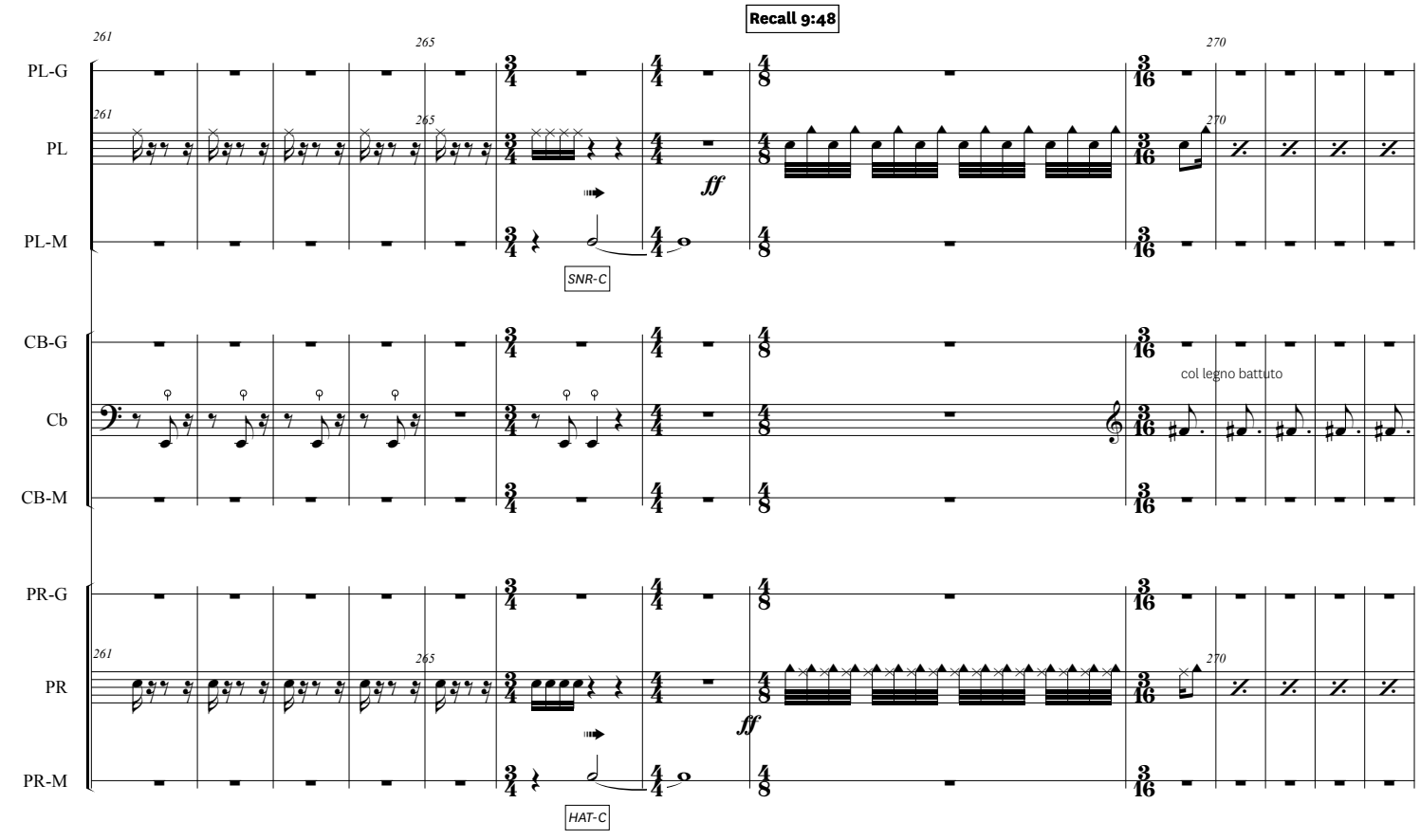

226
230
PL-G
PL
PL-M
TOM-C
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
repeat same movement
PR
PR-M

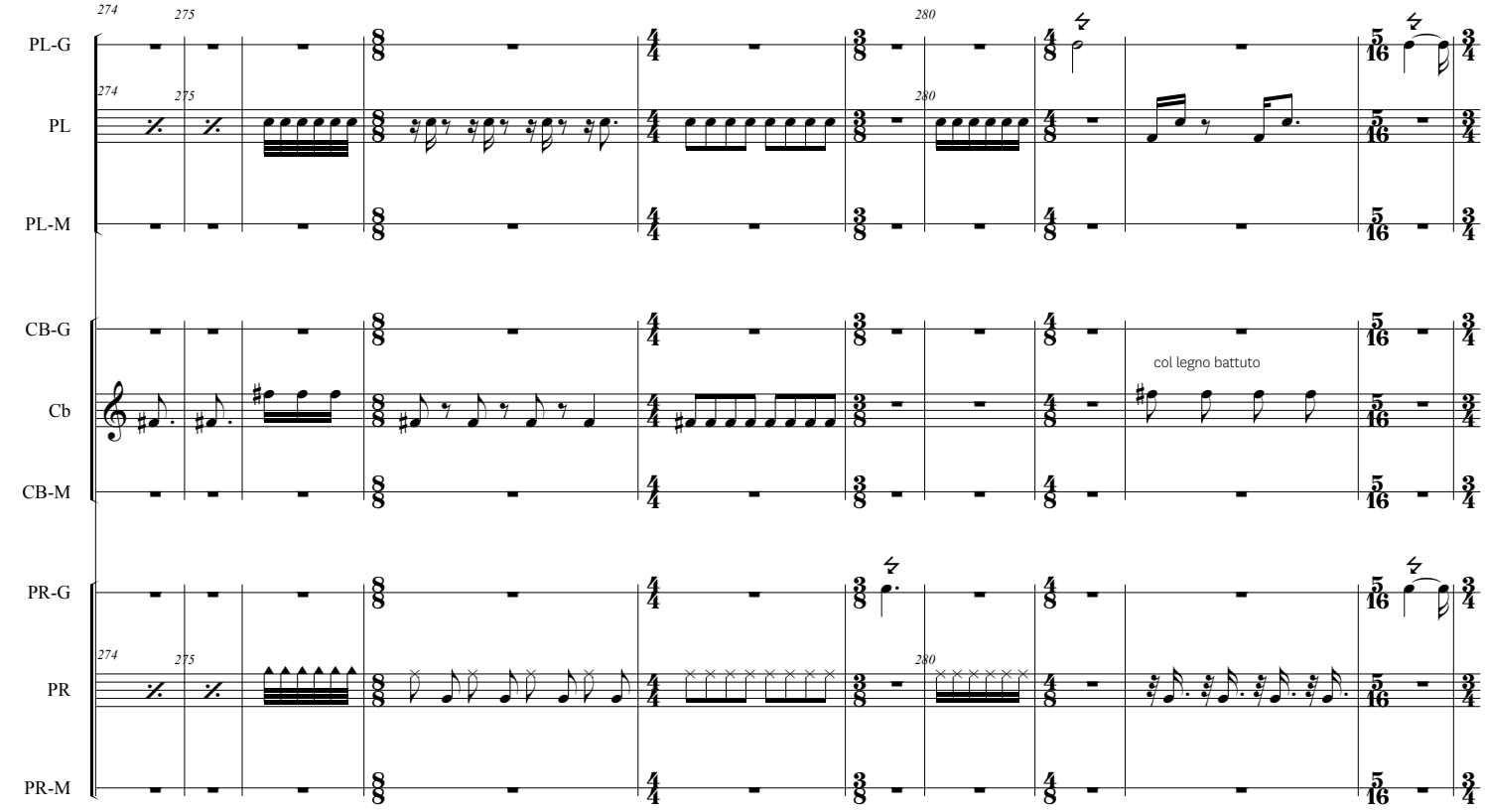

234
235
PL-G
PL
PL-M
col legno battuto
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M

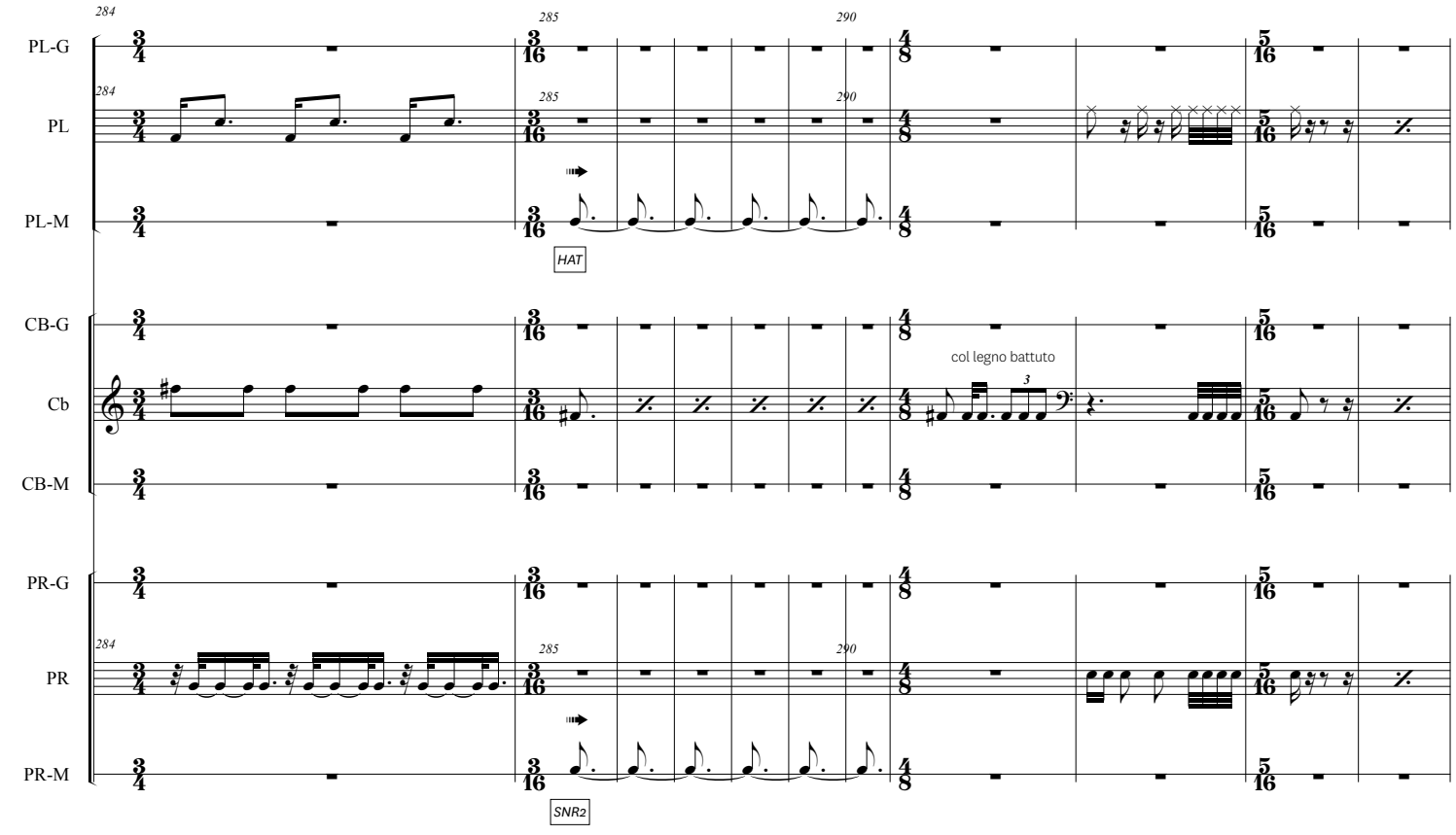

♩ = 100
slight accel (up to 105)
over bar 239 and 240
then jump to new tempo in 241
♩ = 120
rit. until bar 243
♩ = 110
237
240
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CEN
MID
col legno battuto
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
ff
Hardcore
Impro
Wild atonal slide
upwards
PR-G
PR
PR-M


♩ = 120
♩ = 100
Splitter 9:21
245
250
PL-G
PL
PL-M
trem = 32
mf
f
always mute cymbal righ
HAT
CYM
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
mf
SNR2

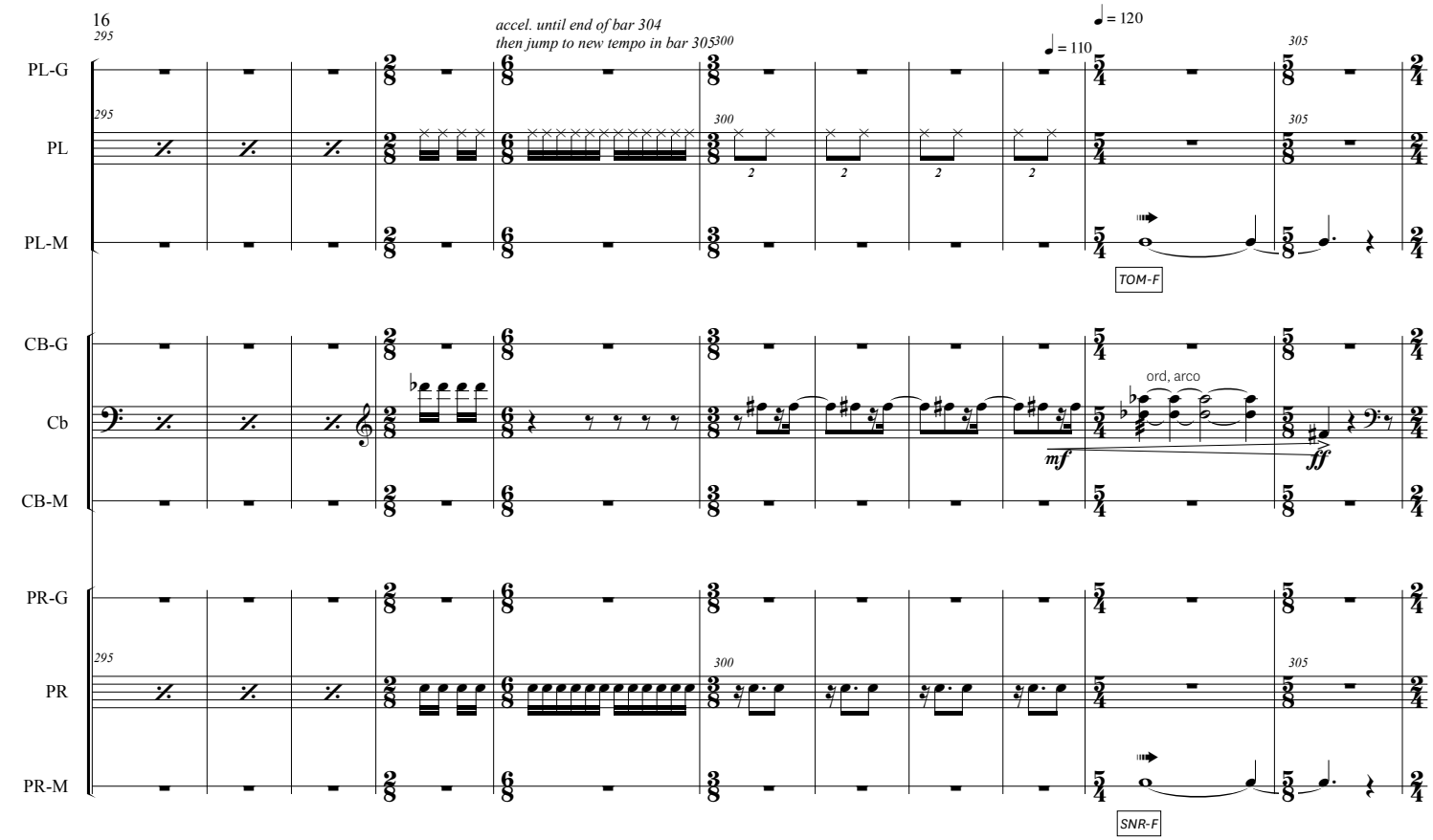

255
260
PL-G
PL
PL-M
always mute cymbal right after hit
HAT
CYM
HAT
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
col legno battuto
PR-G
PR
PR-M
always mute cymbal right after hit
CYM
SNR2

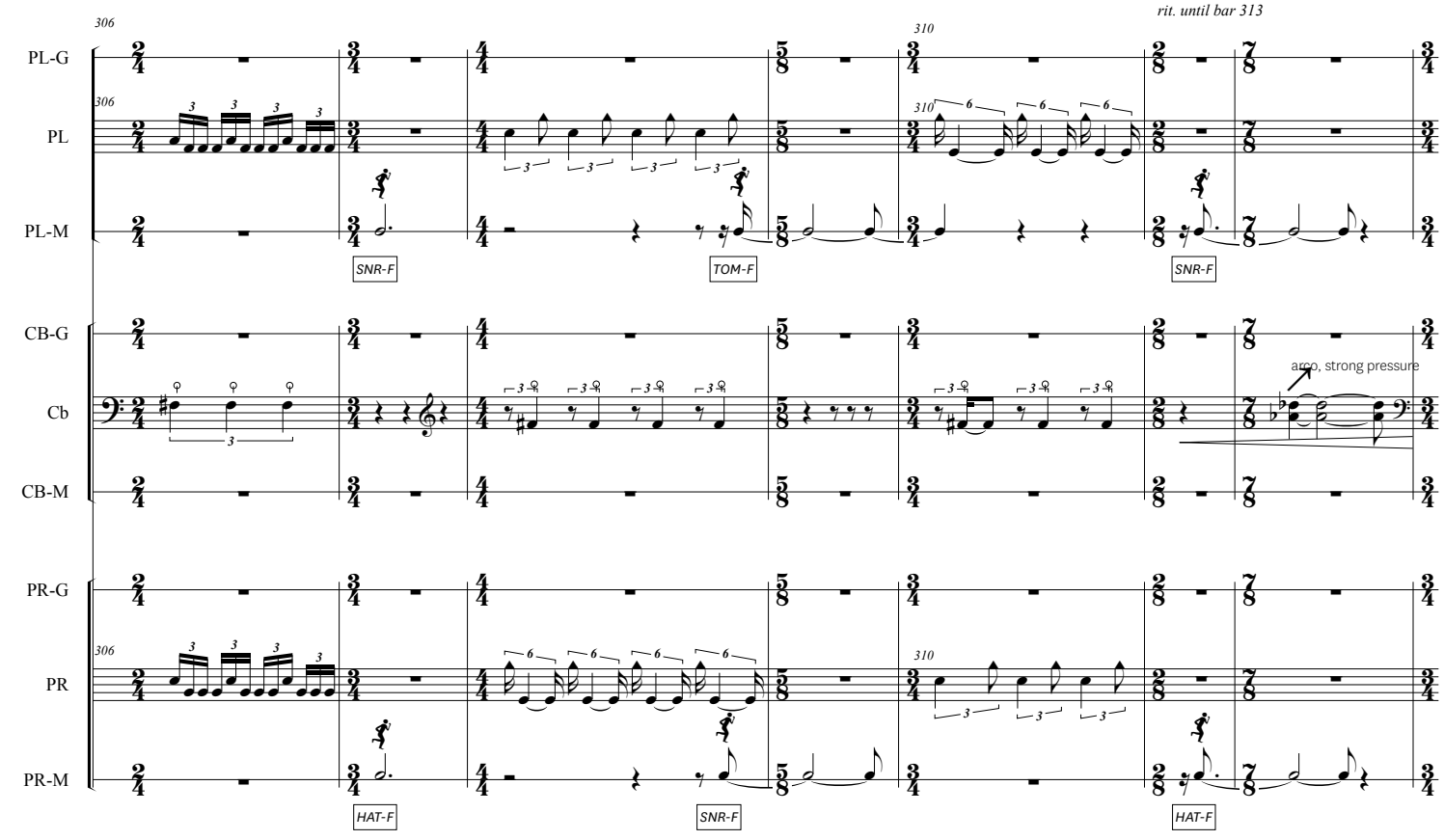

Recall 9:48
261
265
270
PL-G
PL
PL-M
ff
SNR-C
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
col legno battuto
PR-G
PR
PR-M
ff
HAT-C

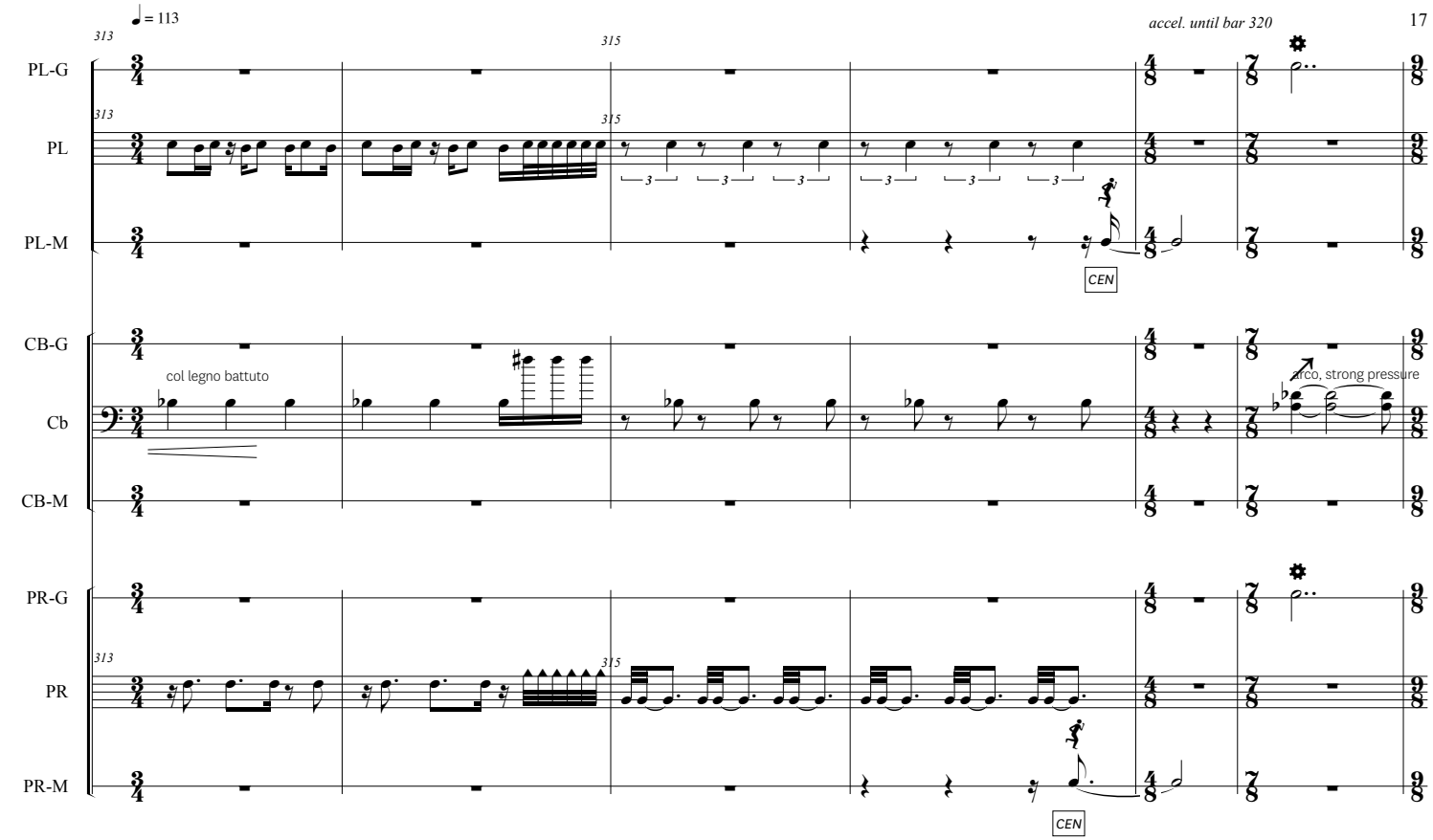

♩ = 133
♩ = 100
274
275
280
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
col legno battuto

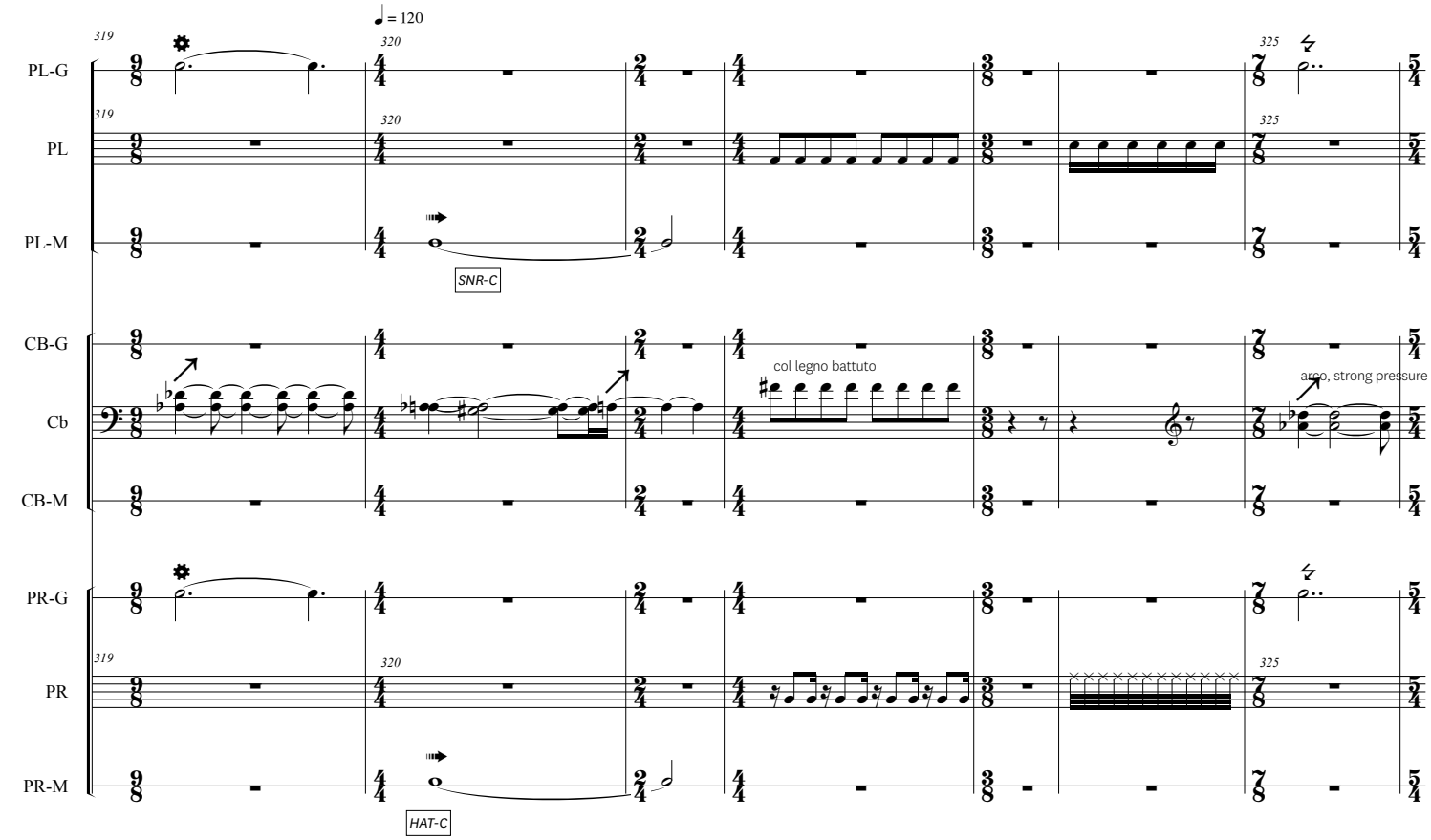

284
285
290
PL-G
PL
PL-M
HAT
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
col legno battuto
3
PR-G
PR
PR-M
SNR2

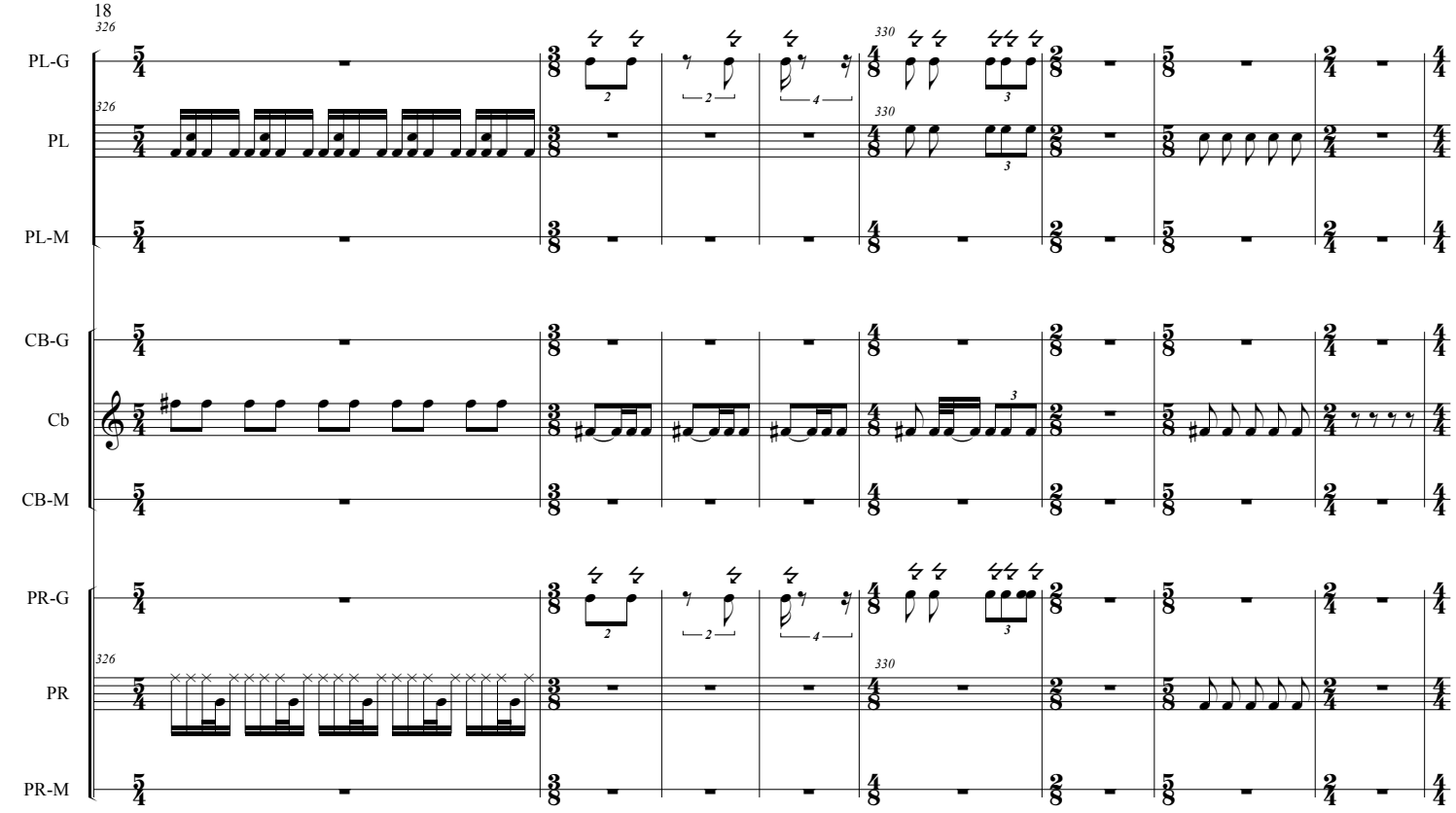
CODEC ERROR

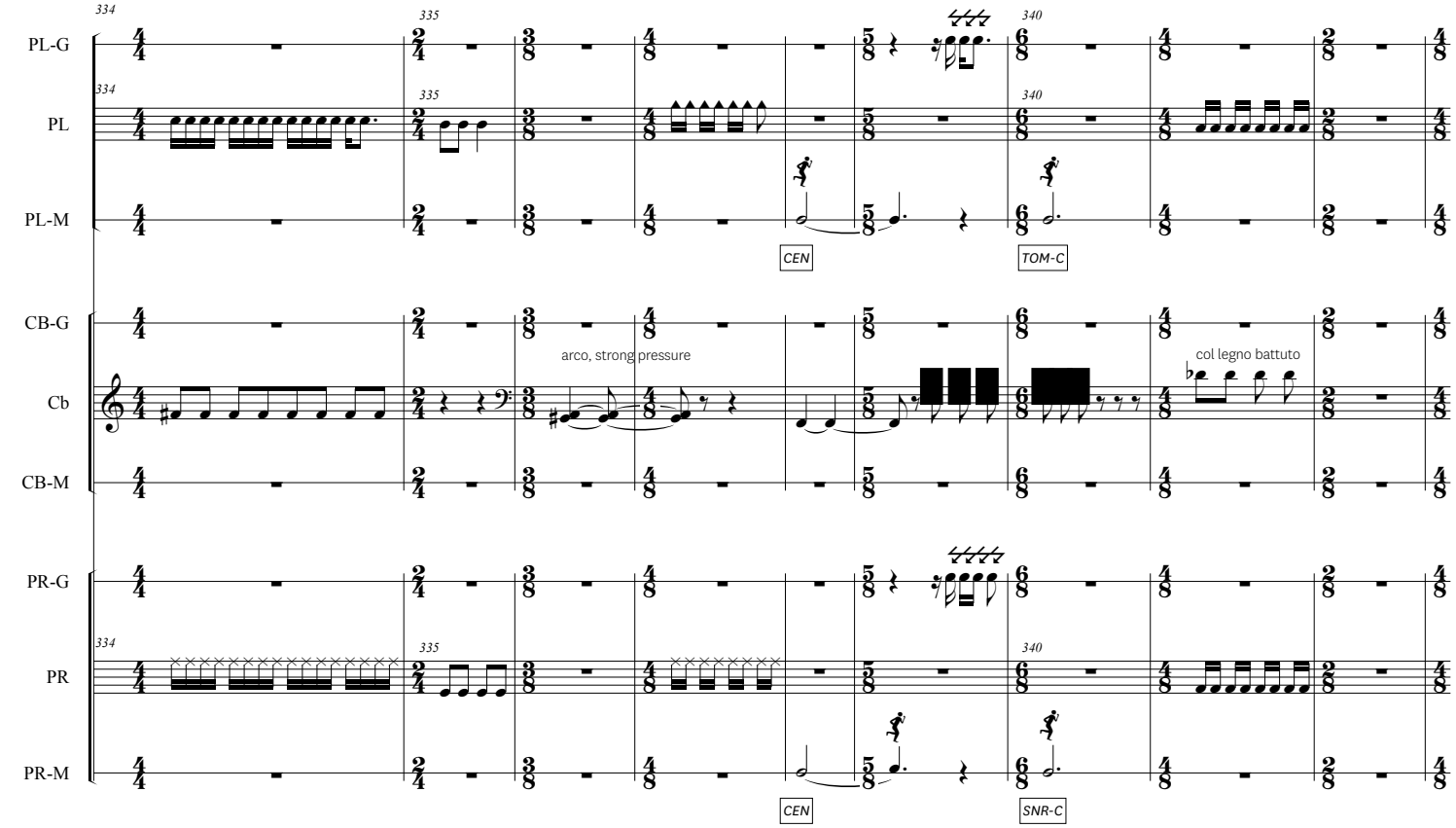

295
accel. until end of bar 304
then jump to new tempo in bar 305
300
♩ = 120
♩ = 110
305
PL-G
PL
PL-M
TOM-F
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
ord, arco
mf
ff
PR-G
PR
PR-M
SNR-F

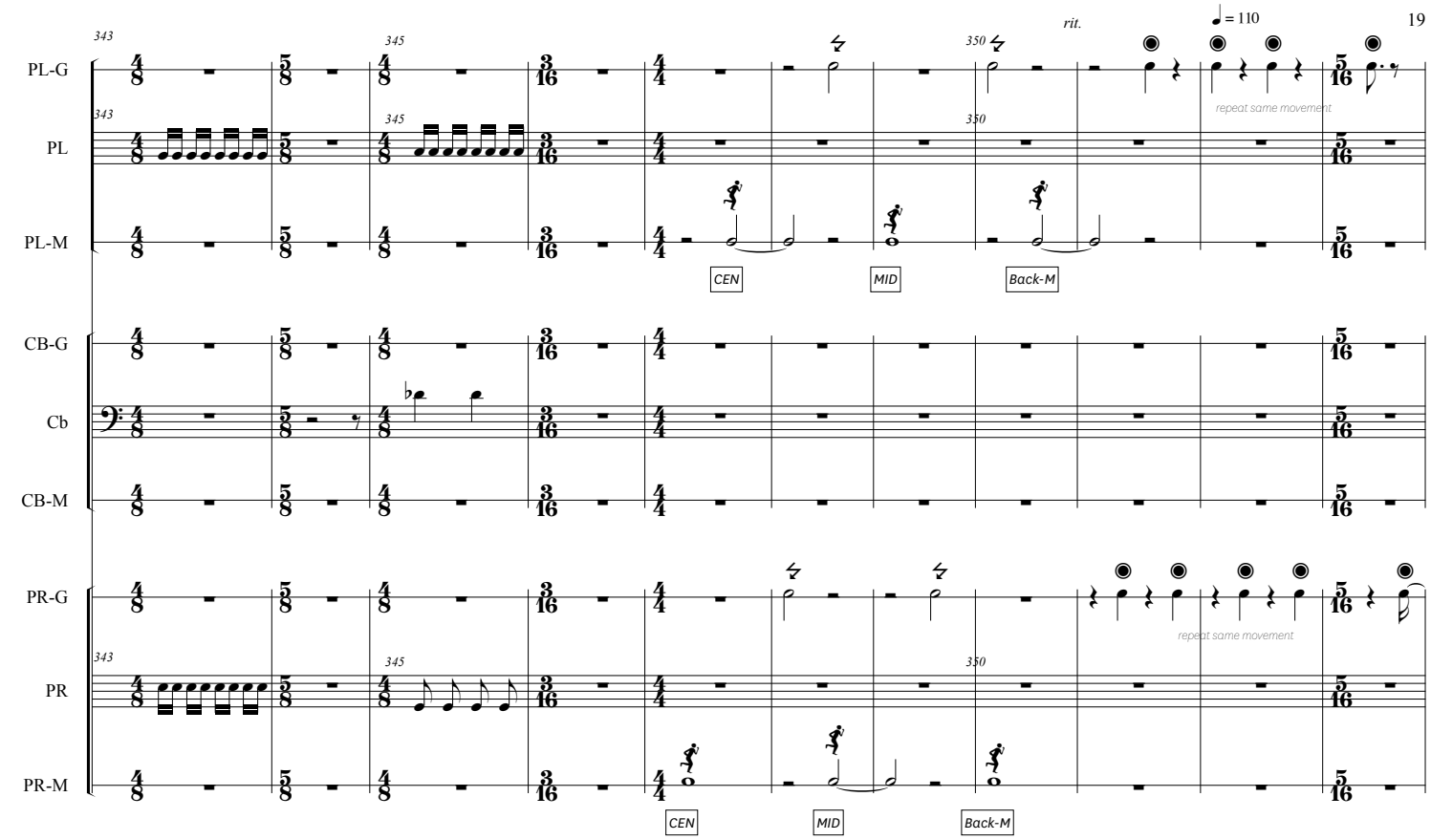

306
310
rit. until bar 313
PL-G
PL
PL-M
SNR-F
TOM-F
SNR-F
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
arco, strong pressure
PR-G
PR
PR-M
HAT-F
SNR-F
HAT-F

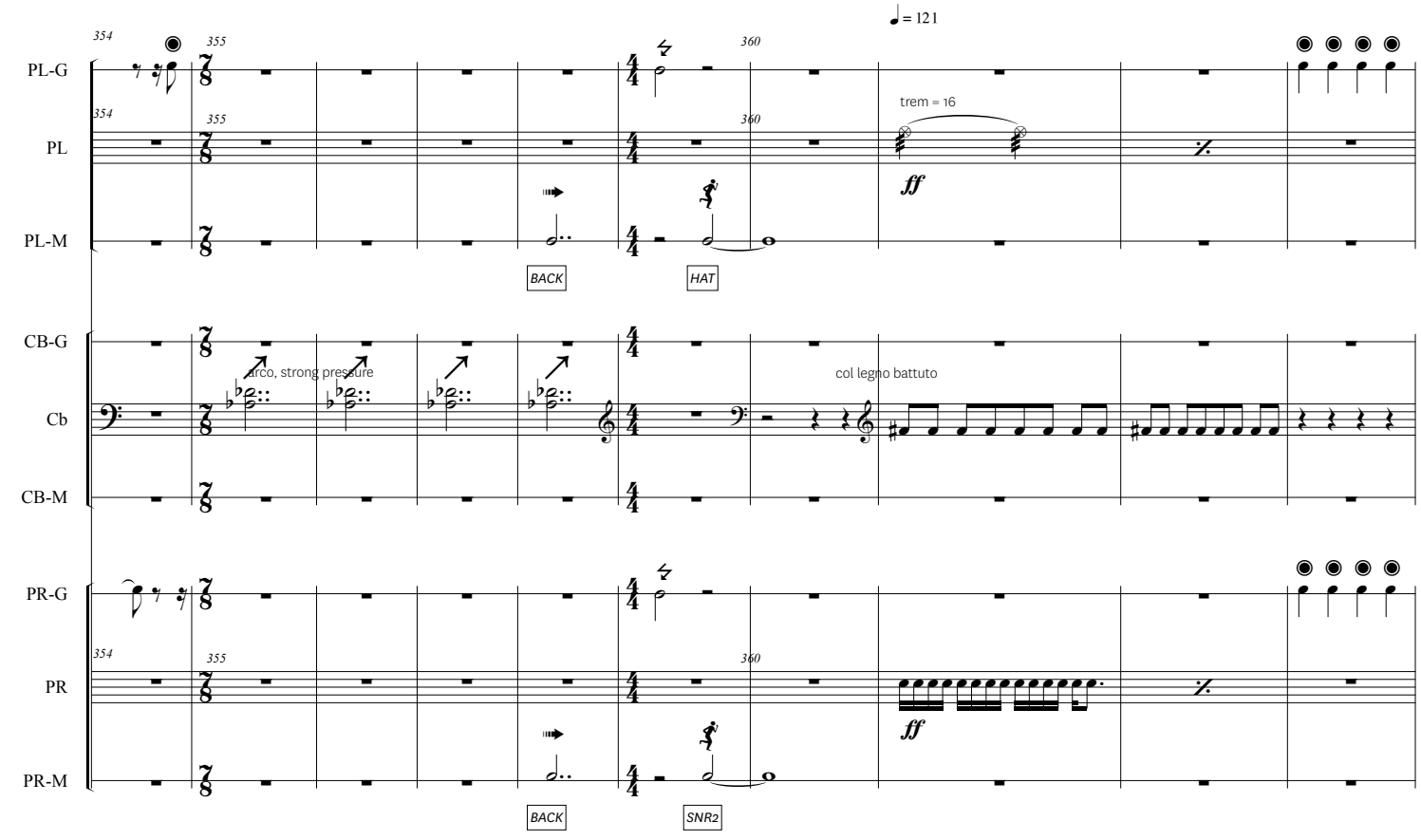

♩ = 113
accel. until bar 320
313
315
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
col legno battuto
arco, strong pressure
CEN
CEN

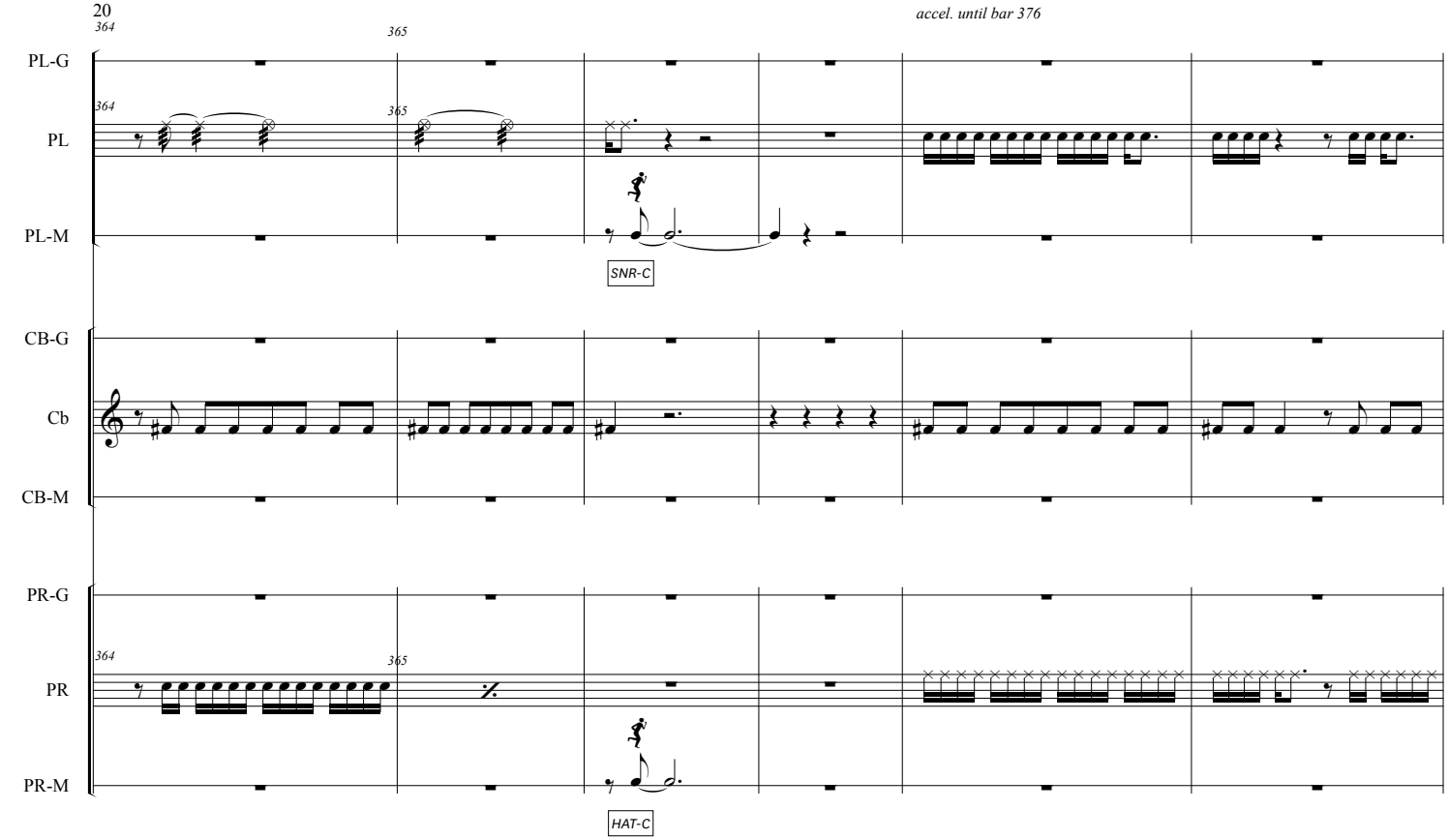

♩ = 120
319
320
325
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
SNR-C
col legno battuto
arco, strong pressure
HAT-C

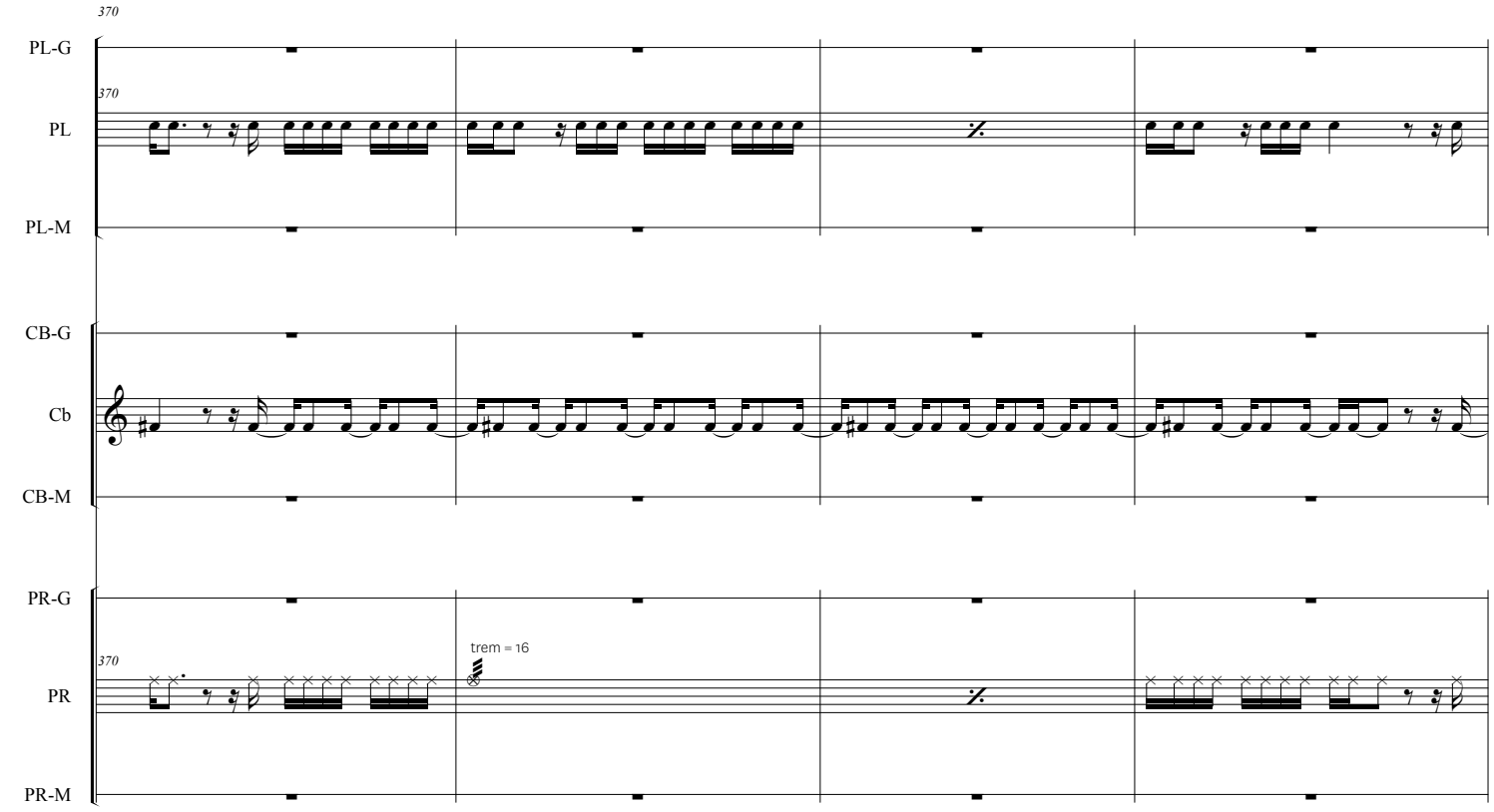

326
330
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M

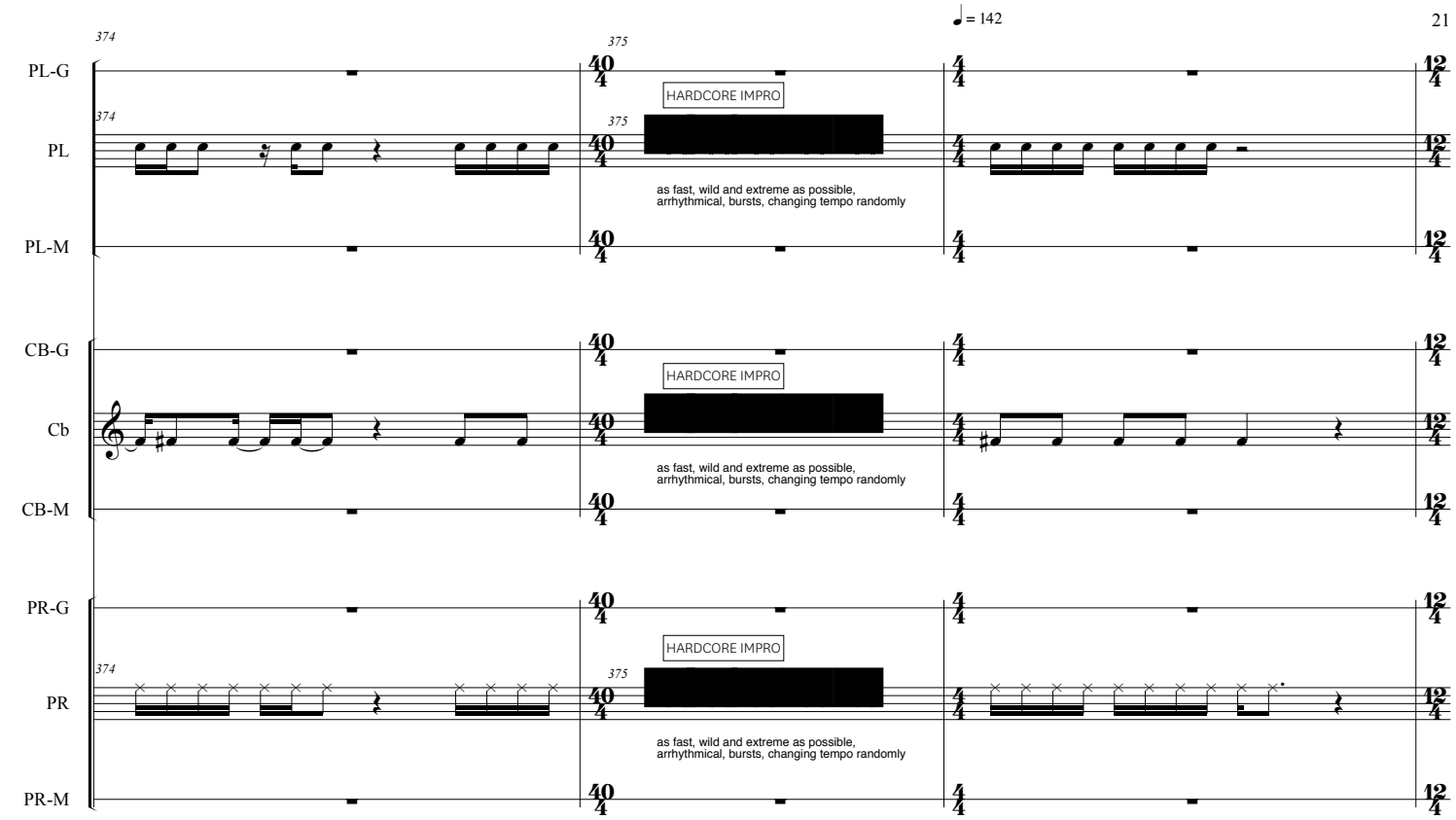

334
335
340
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CEN
TOM-C
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
arco, strong pressure
col legno battuto
PR-G
PR
PR-M
CEN
SNR-C

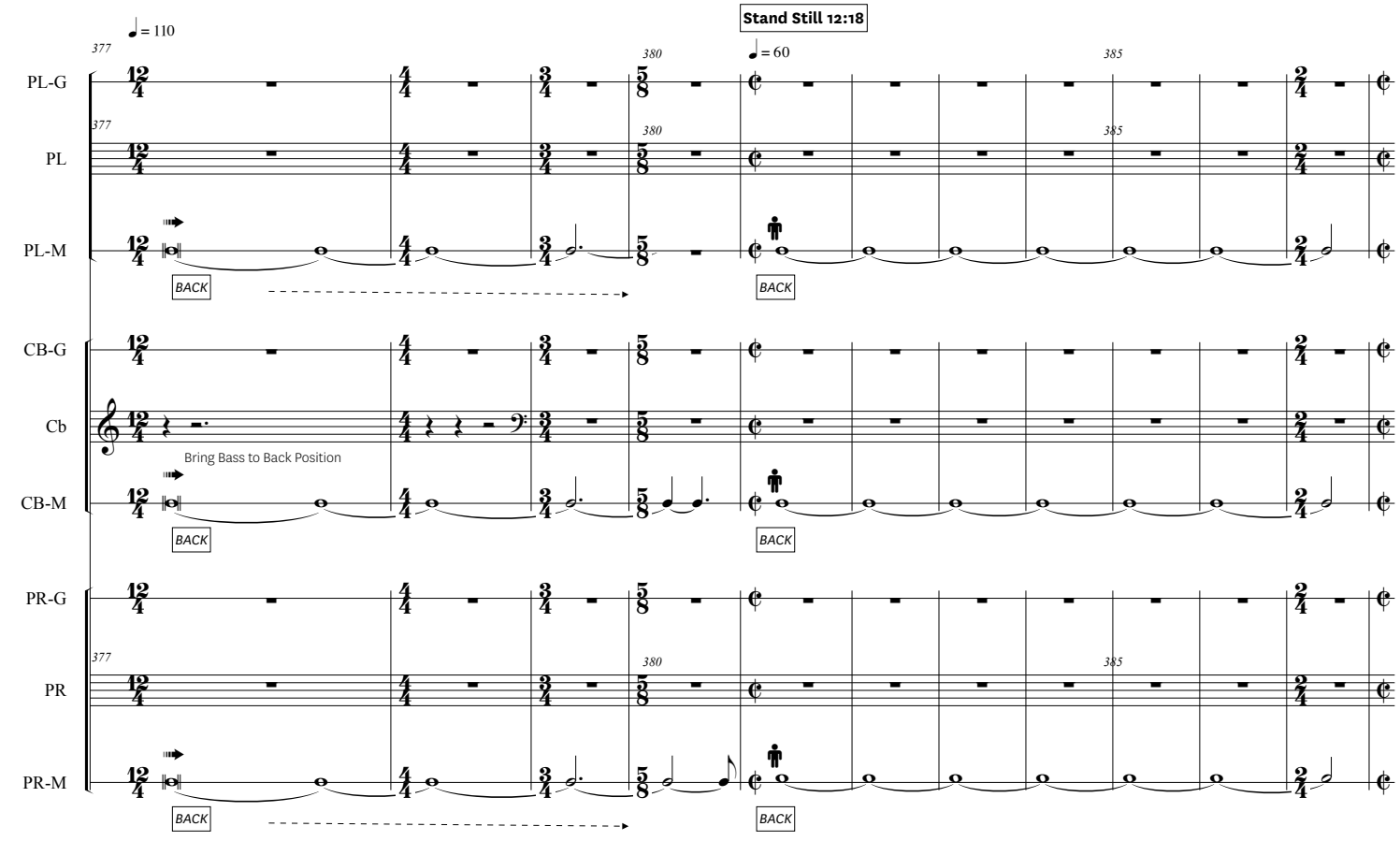

rit.
♩ = 110
343
345
350
PL-G
PL
PL-M
repeat same movement
CEN
MID
Back-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
repeat same movement
CEN
MID
Back-M


♩ = 121
354
355
360
PL-G
PL
PL-M
trem = 16
ff
BACK
HAT
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
arco, strong pressure
col legno battuto
PR-G
PR
PR-M
ff
BACK
SNR2

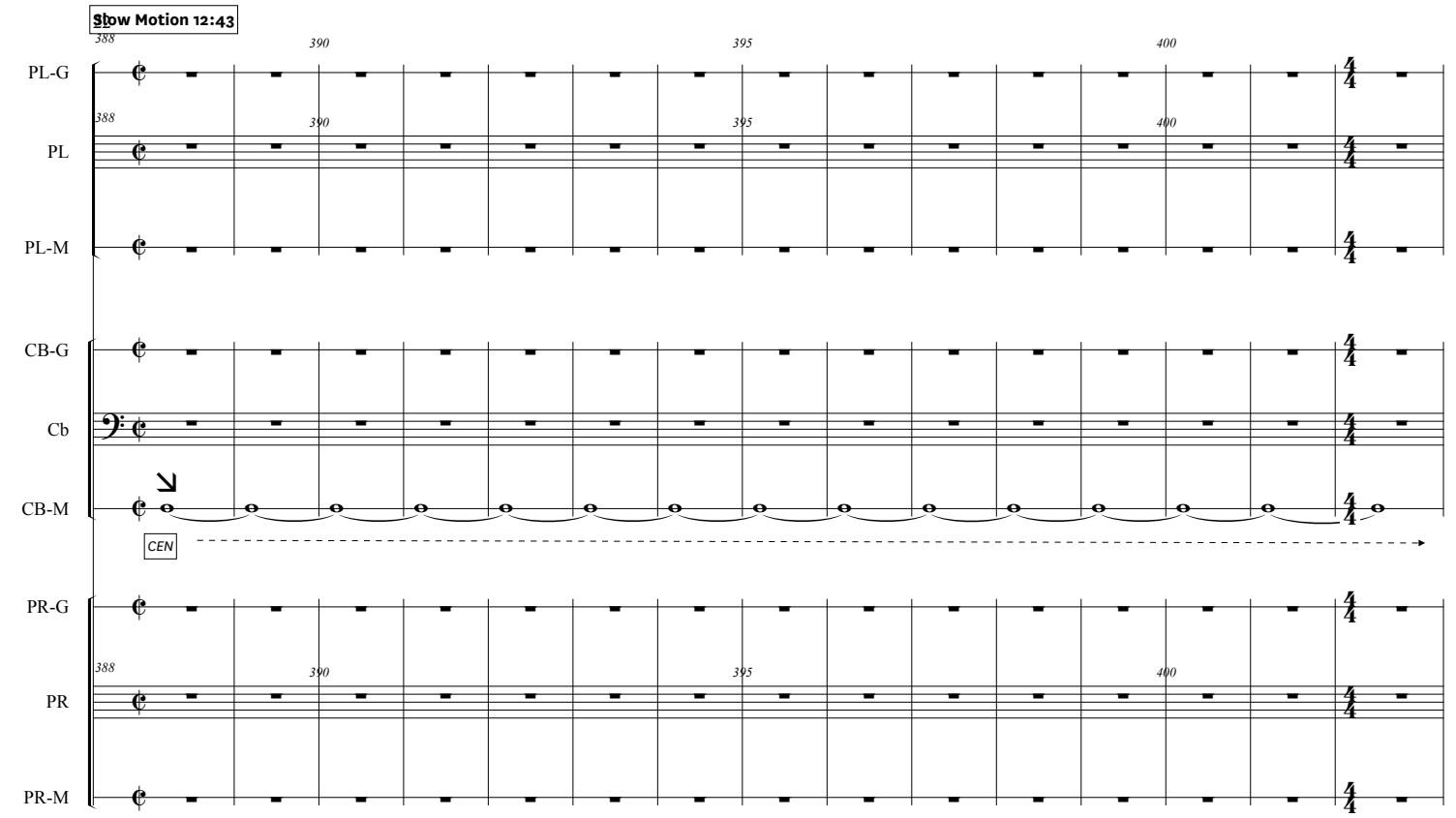

20
364
365
accel. until bar 376
PL-G
PL
PL-M
SNR-C
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
HAT-C

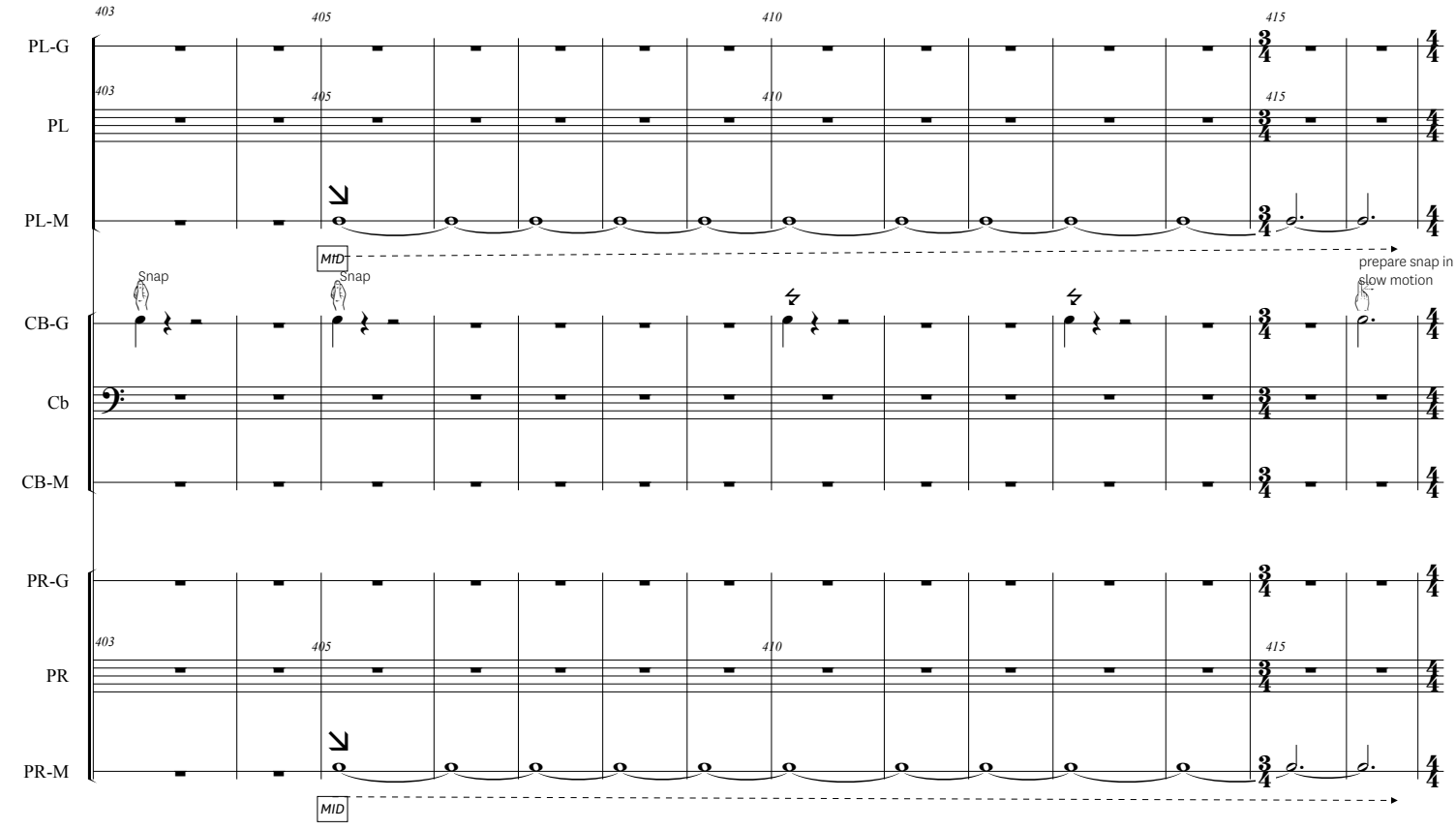

370
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
trem = 16
PR
PR-M

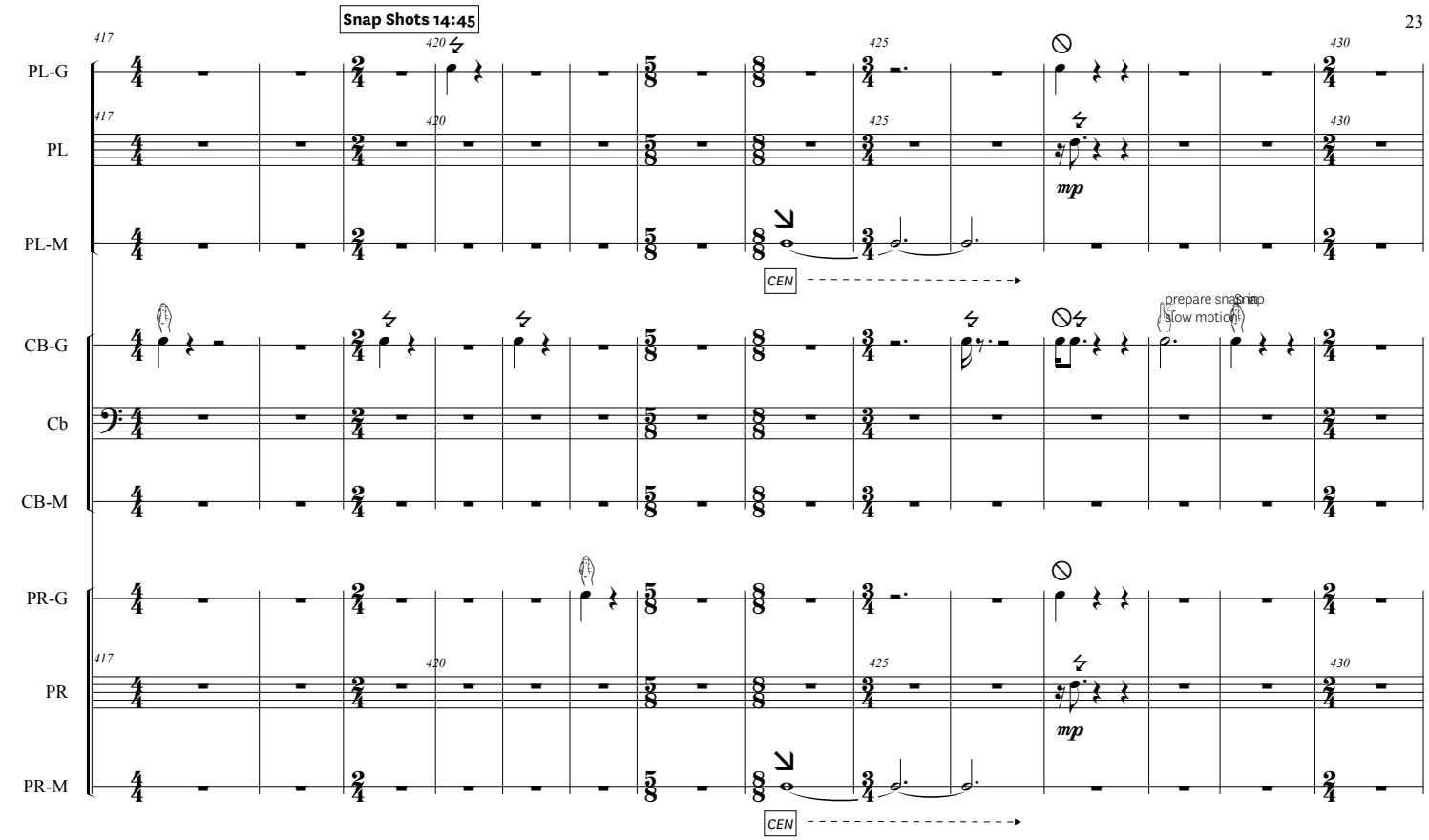

♩ = 142
374
375
PL-G
PL
PL-M
HARDCORE IMPRO
as fast, wild and extreme as possible,
arrhythmical, bursts, changing tempo randomly
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M

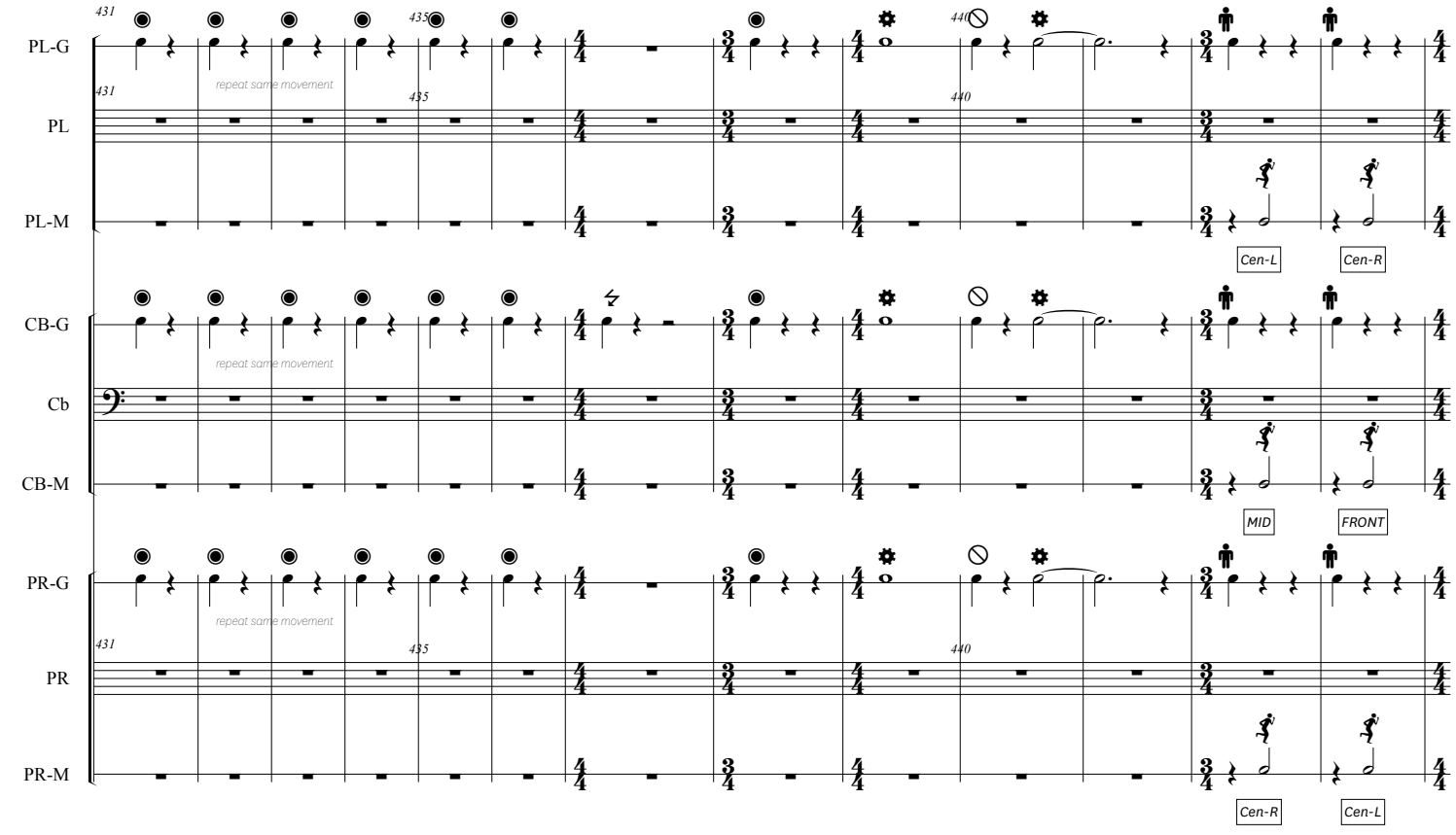

Stand Still 12:18
♩ = 110
♩ = 60
377
380
385
PL-G
PL
PL-M
BACK
CB-G
Cb
Bring Bass to Back Position
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M

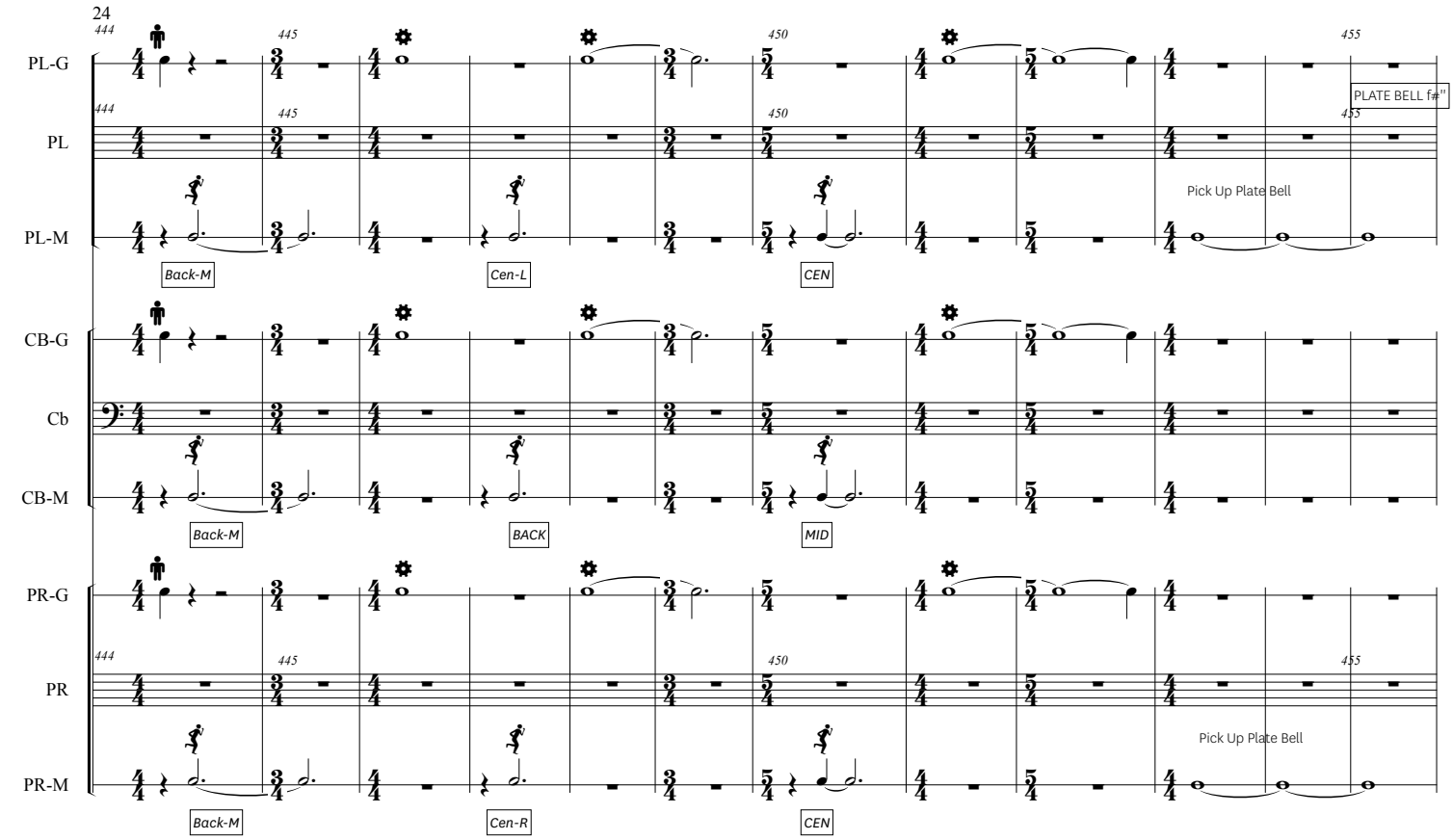
CODEC ERROR

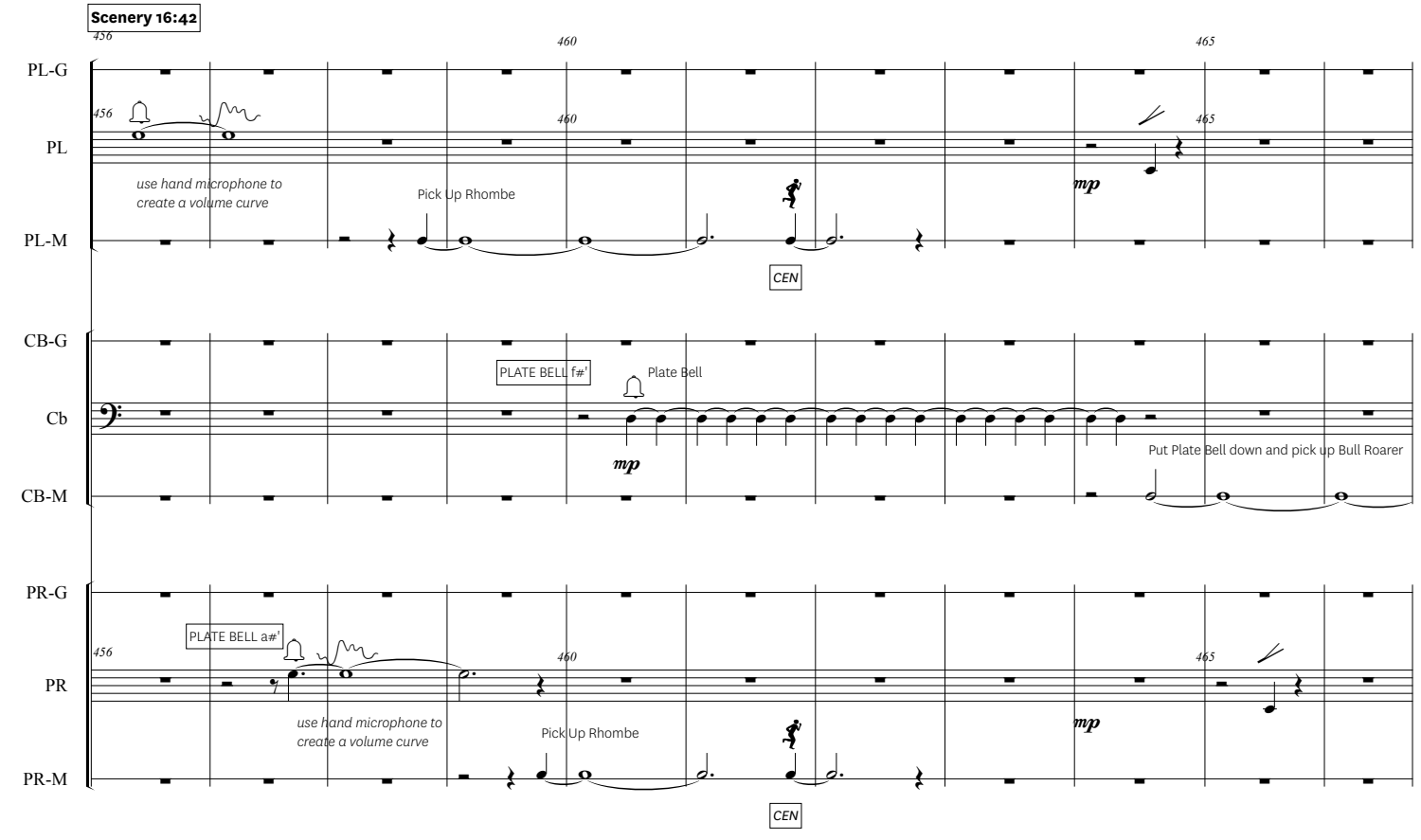

Slow Motion 12:43
388
390
395
400
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
CEN
PR-G
PR
PR-M

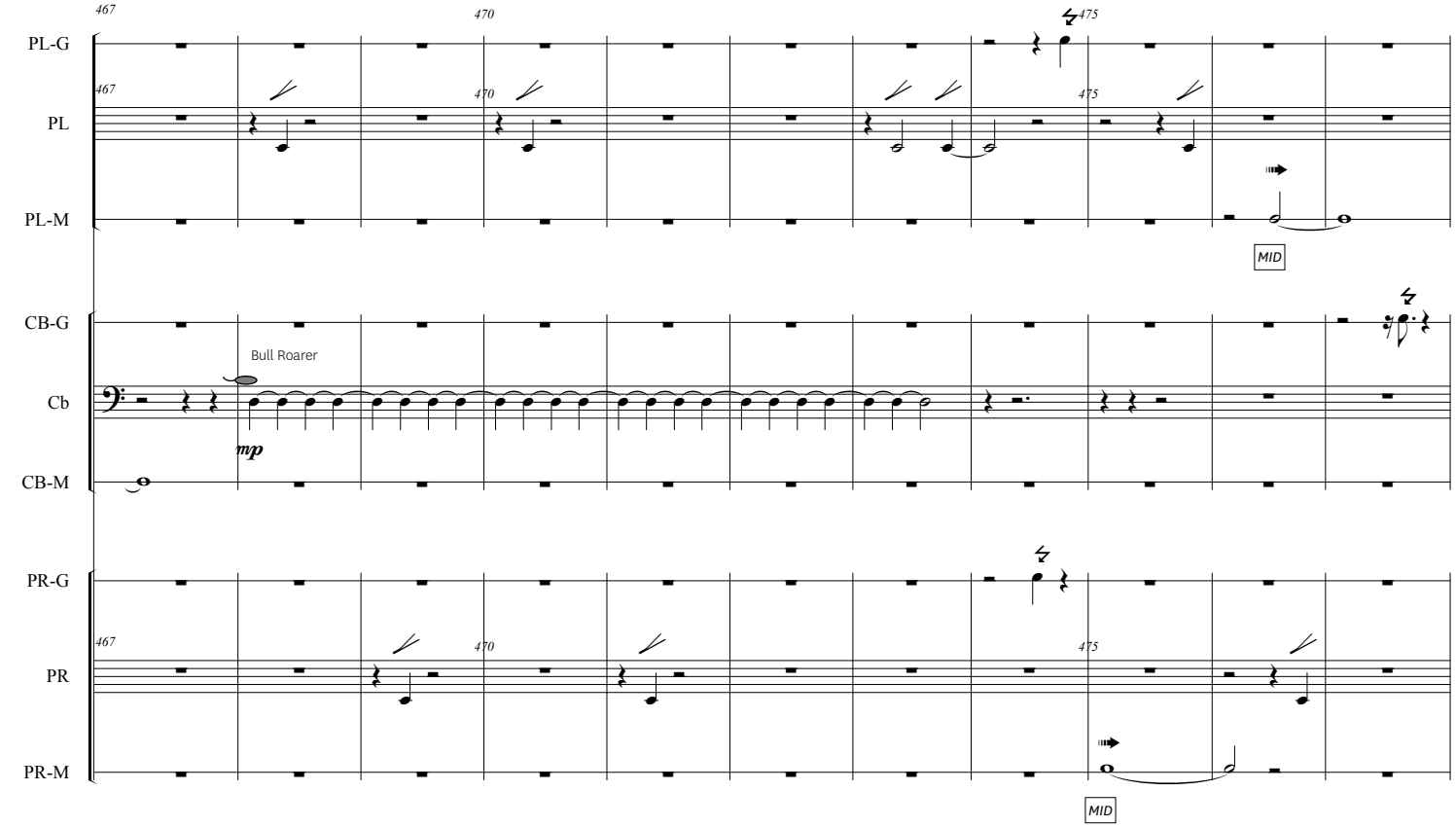

403
405
410
415
PL-G
PL
PL-M
MID
Snap
Snap
prepare snap in slow motion
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
MID

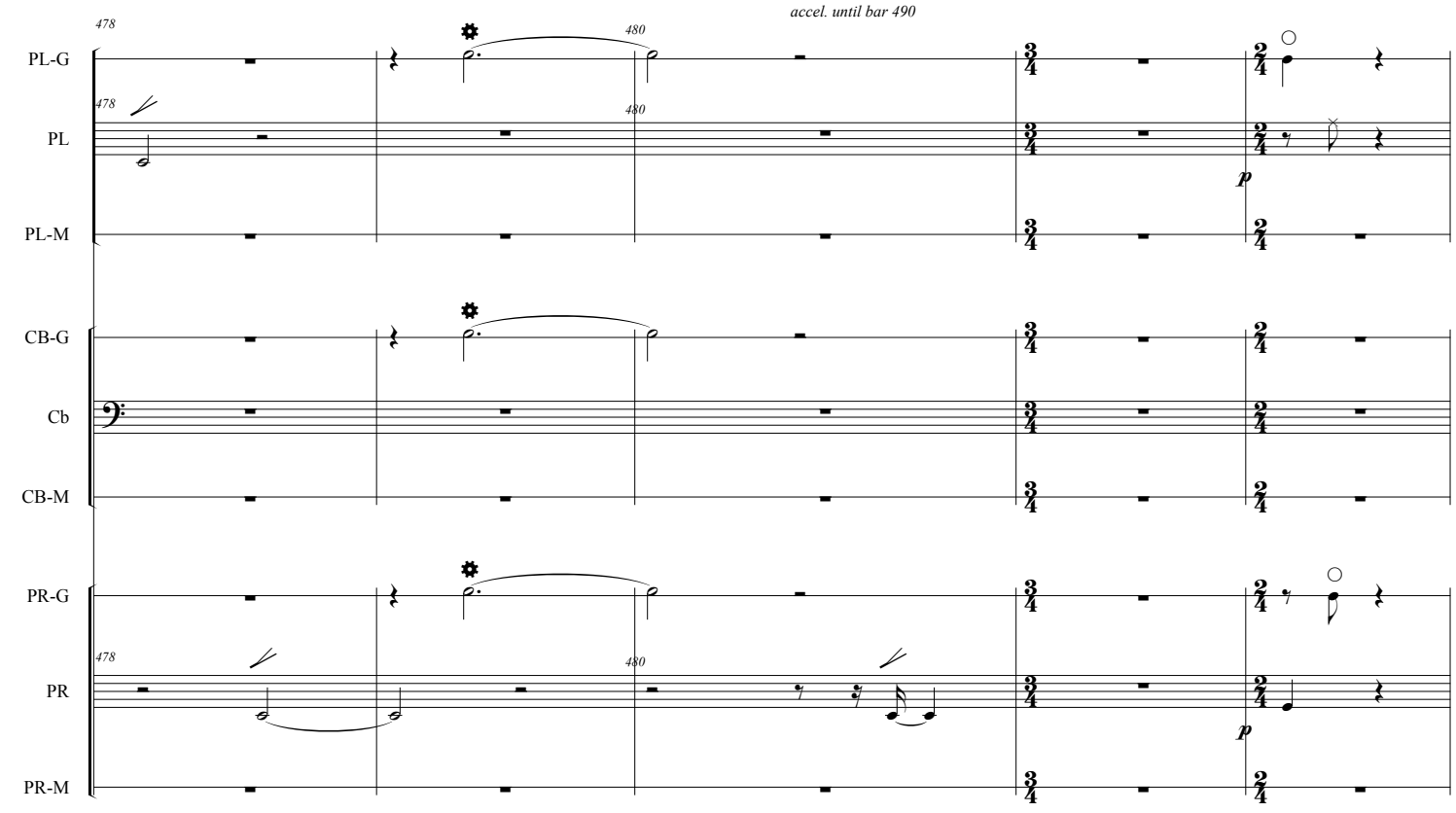

Snap Shots 14:45
417
420
425
430
PL-G
PL
PL-M
mp
CEN
prepare snap
slow motion
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
mp
CEN

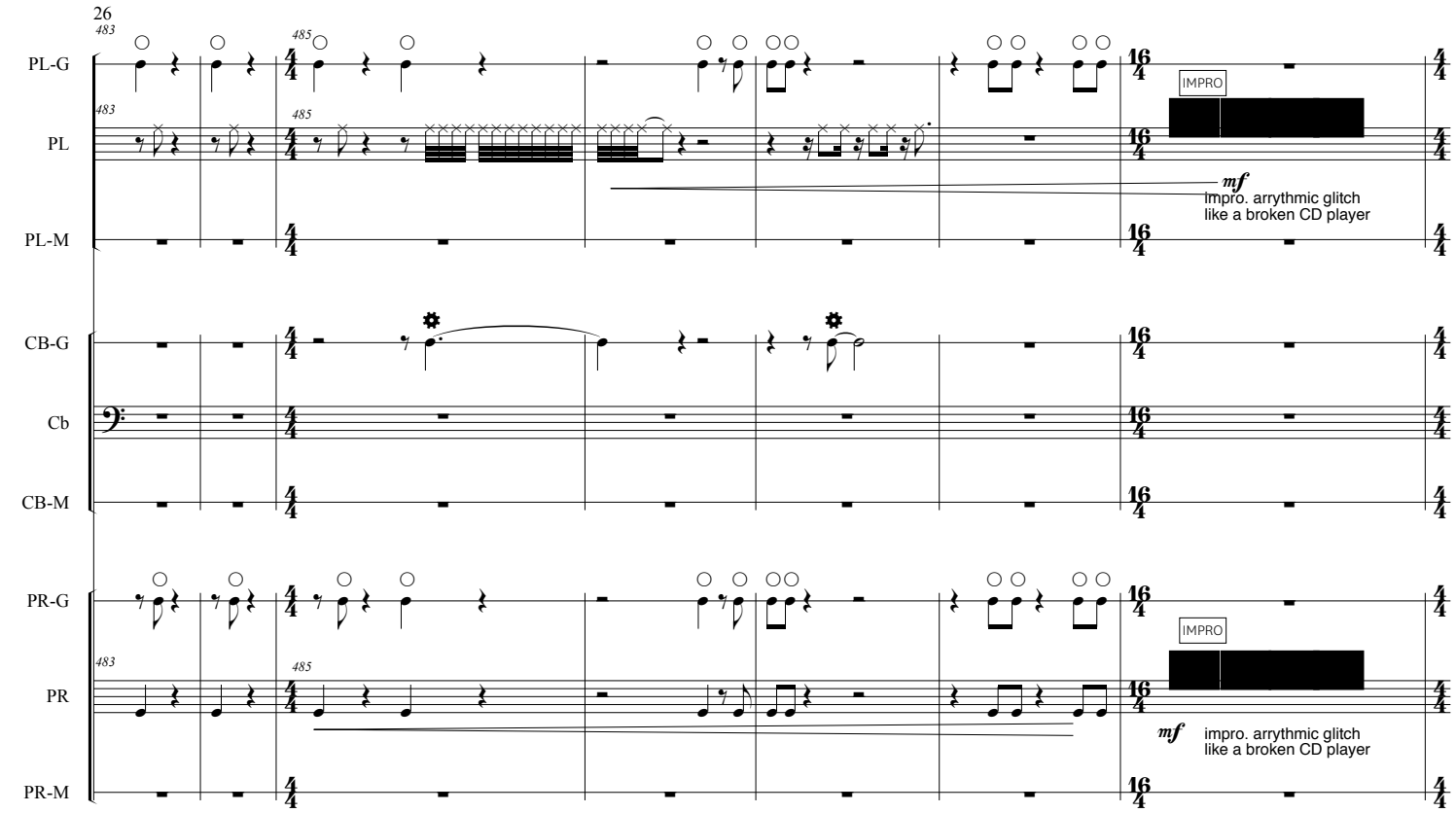

431
435
440
PL-G
PL
PL-M
repeat same movement
Cen-L
Cen-R
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
repeat same movement
MID
FRONT
PR-G
PR
PR-M
repeat same movement
Cen-R
Cen-L

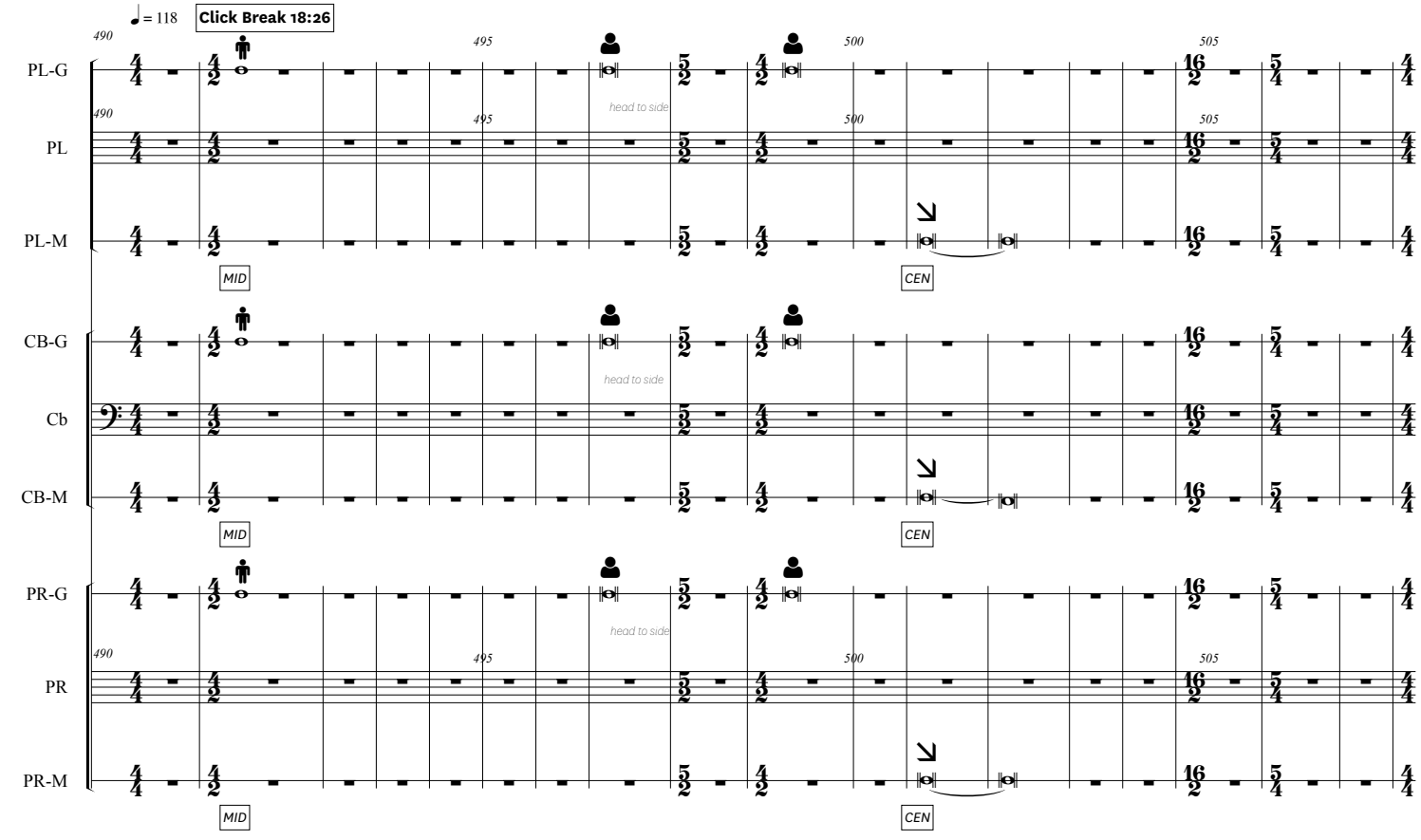

PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
444
445
450
455
PLATE BELL f#''
Pick Up Plate Bell
Back-M
Cen-L
CEN
BACK
MID
Cen-R

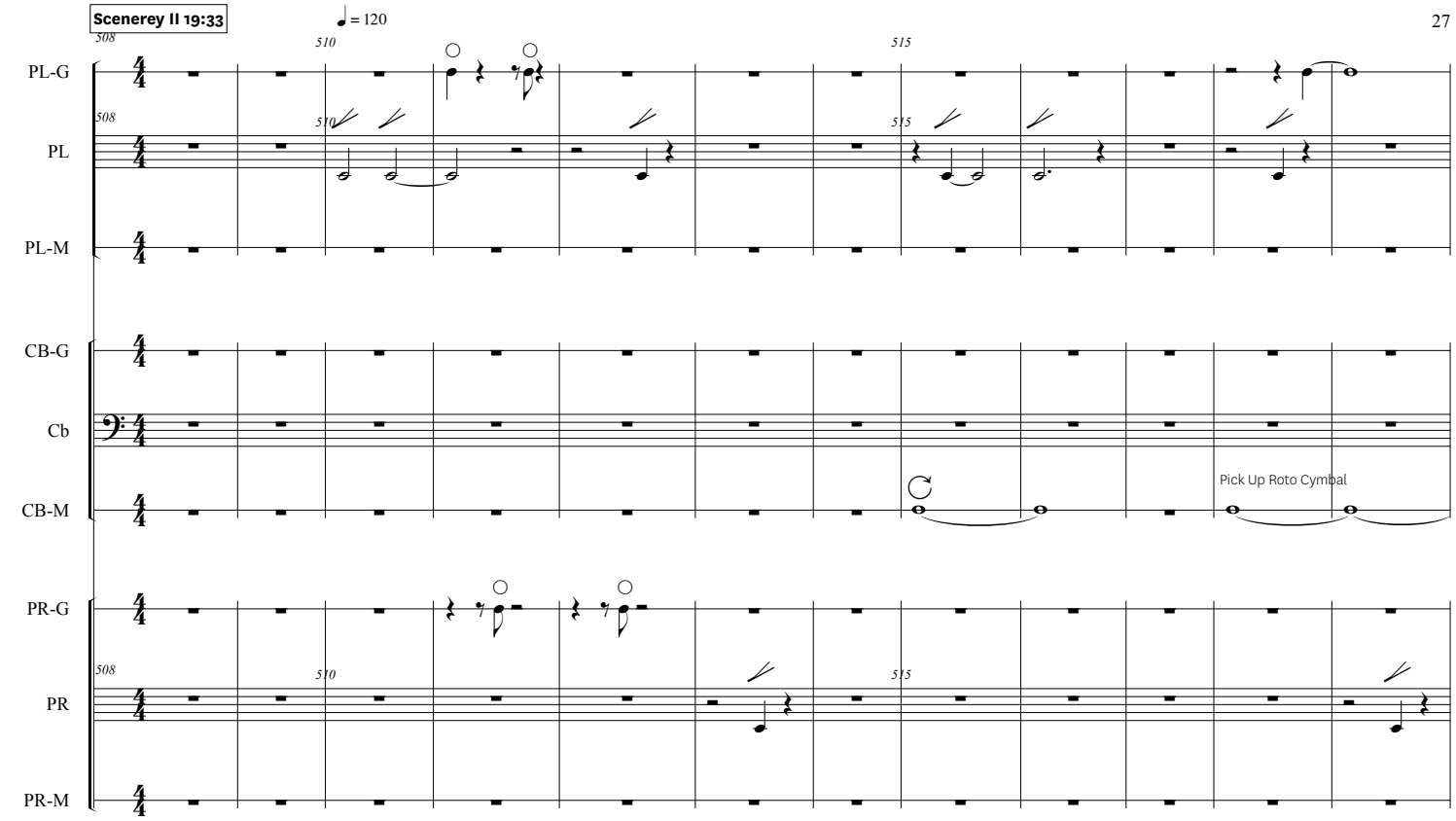

Scenery 16:42
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
456
460
465
use hand microphone to create a volume curve
Pick Up Rhombe
CEN
mp
PLATE BELL f#'
Plate Bell
Put Plate Bell down and pick up Bull Roarer
PLATE BELL a#'

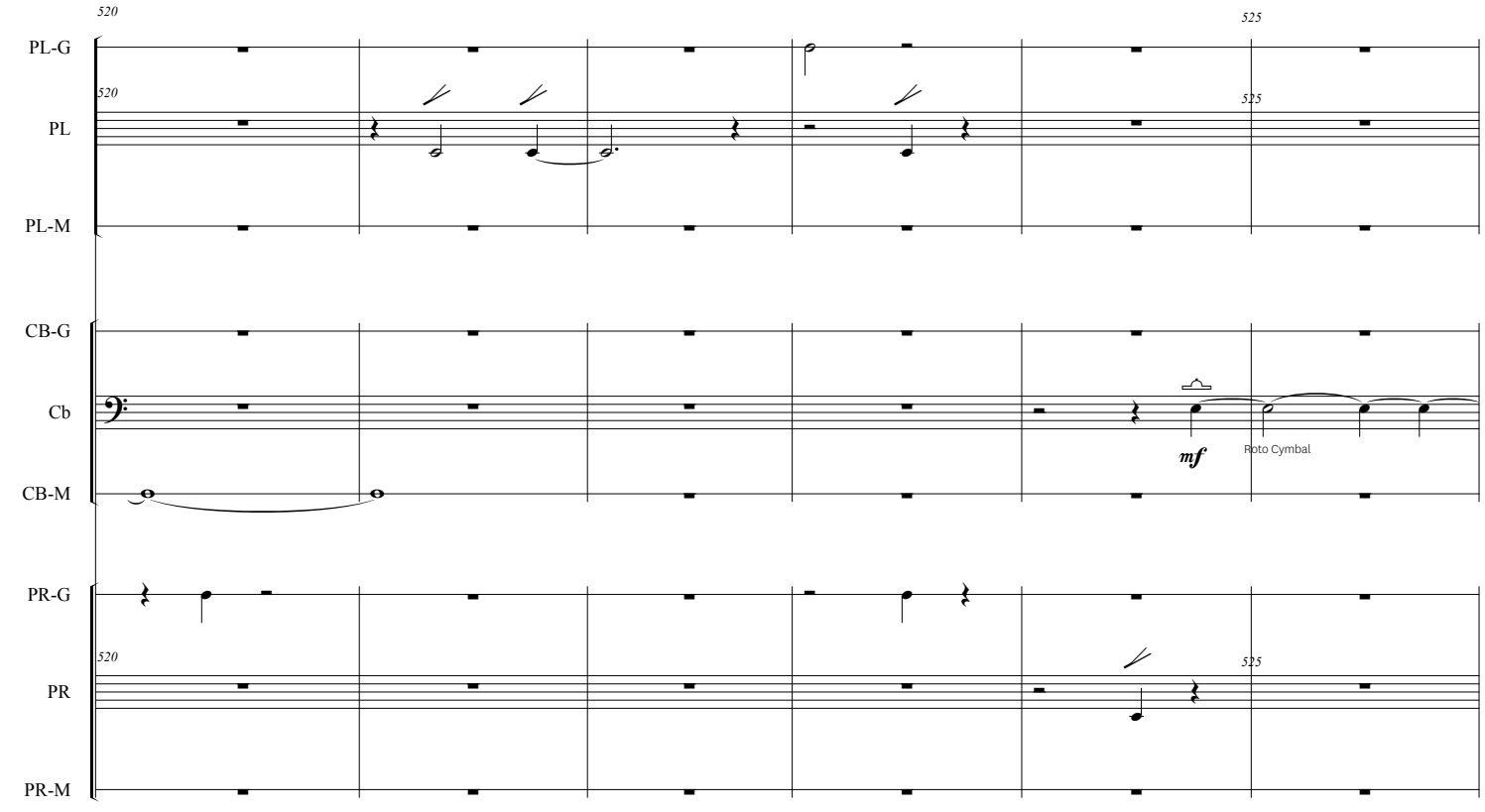

♩ = 90
467
470
475
PL-G
PL
PL-M
MID
CB-G
Bull Roarer
Cb
CB-M
mp
PR-G
PR
PR-M
MID

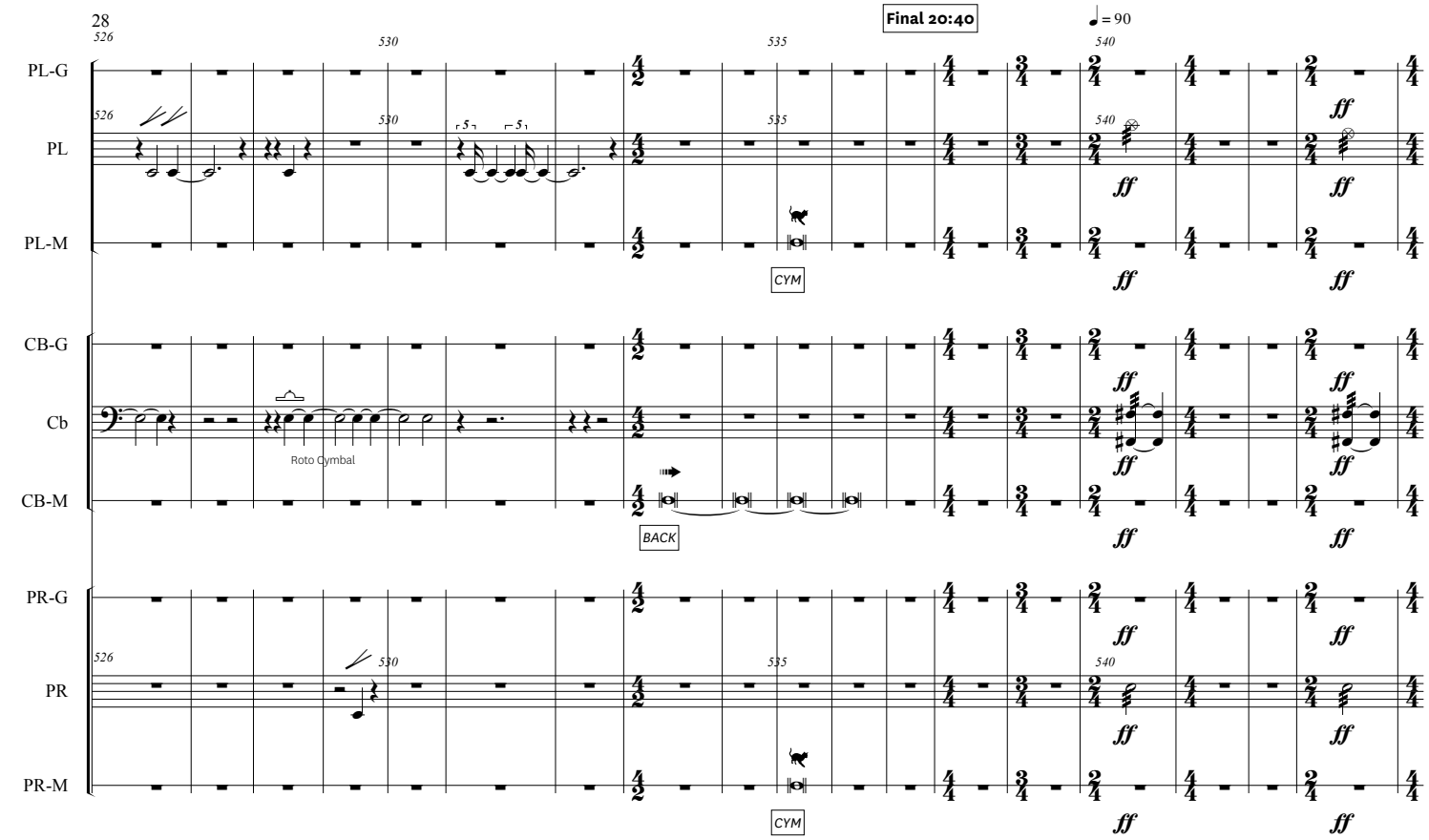

accel. until bar 490
478
480
PL-G
PL
PL-M
p
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
p

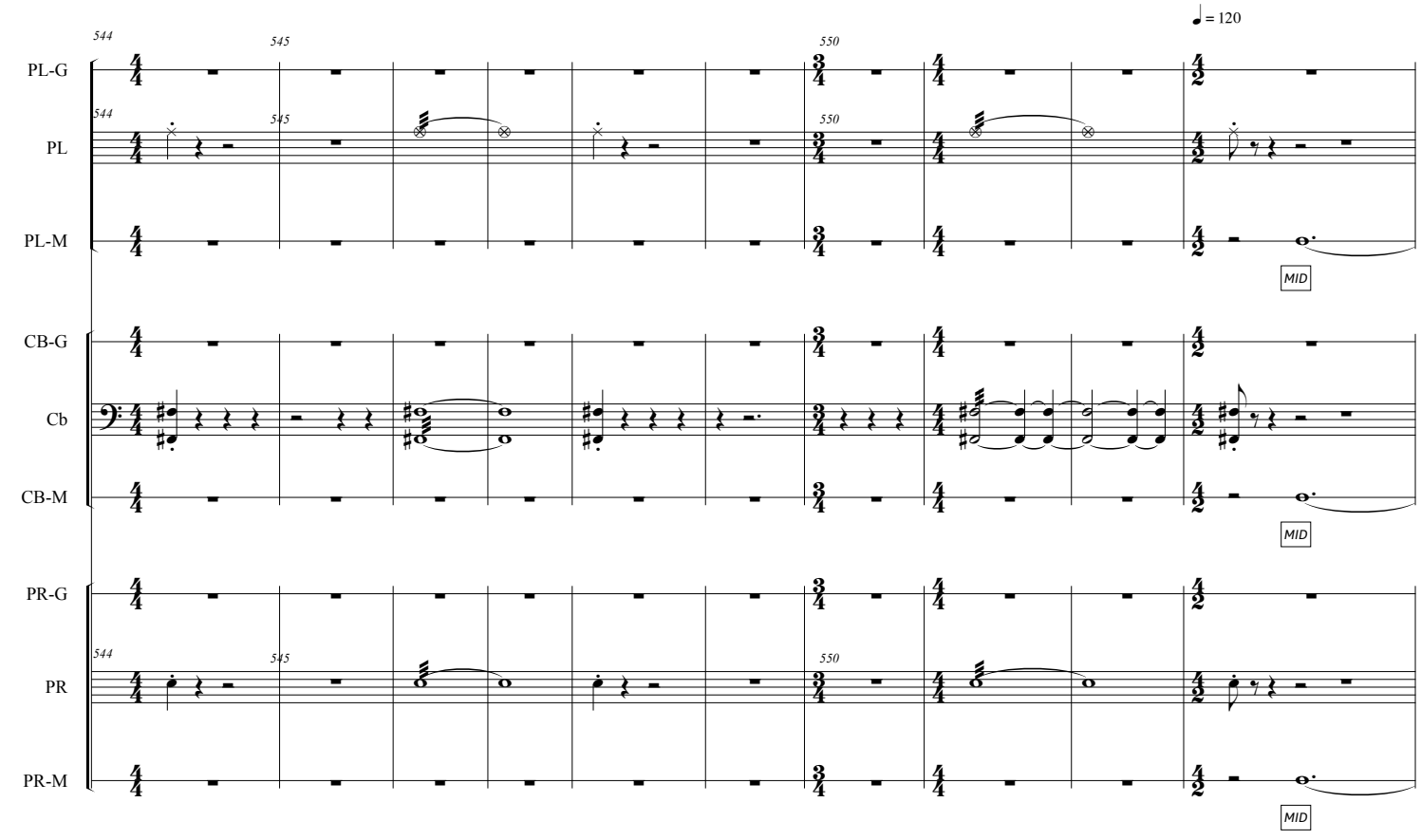

26
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
IMPRO
mf
impro. arrythmic glitch
like a broken CD player

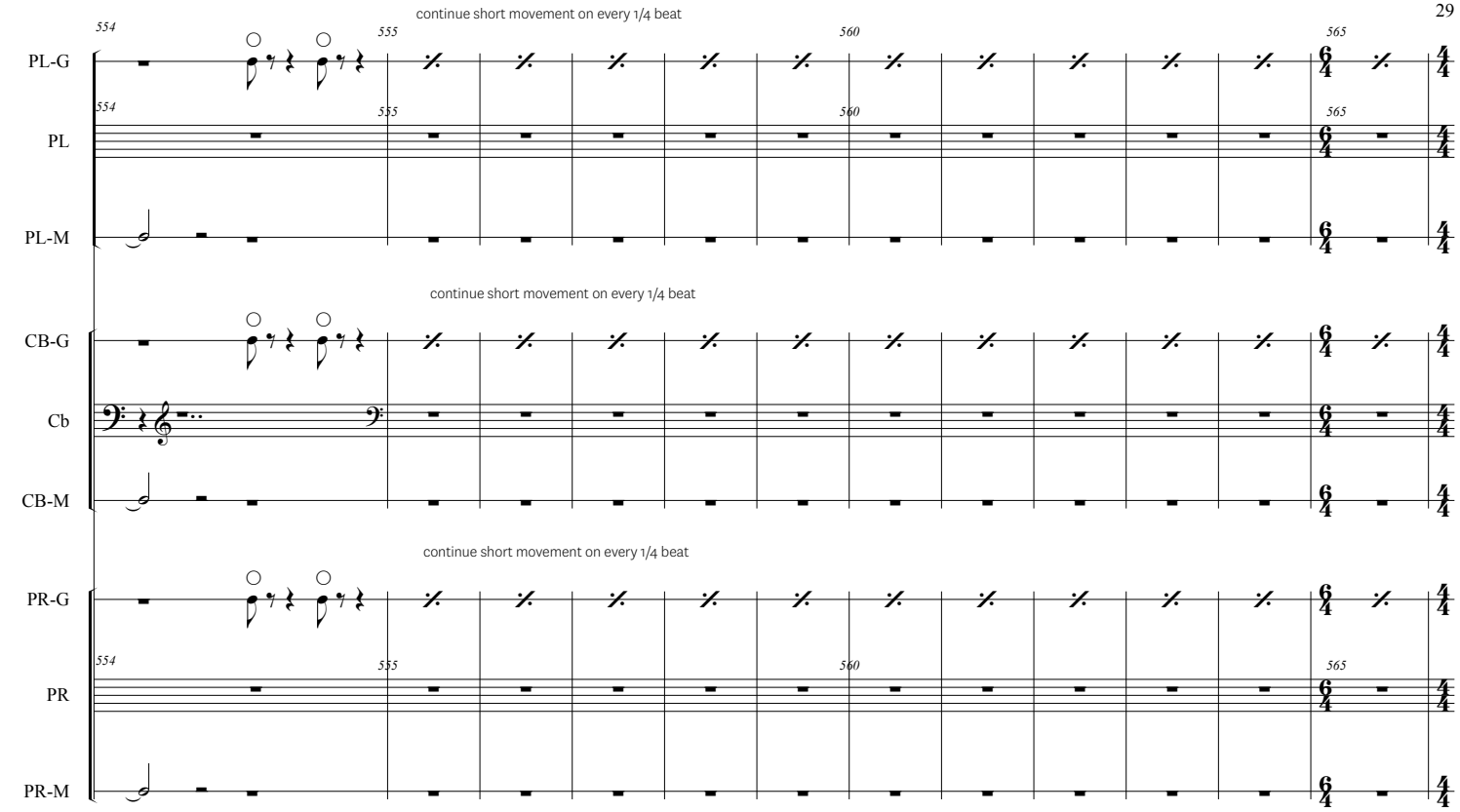

= 118
Click Break 18:26
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
head to side
MID
CEN

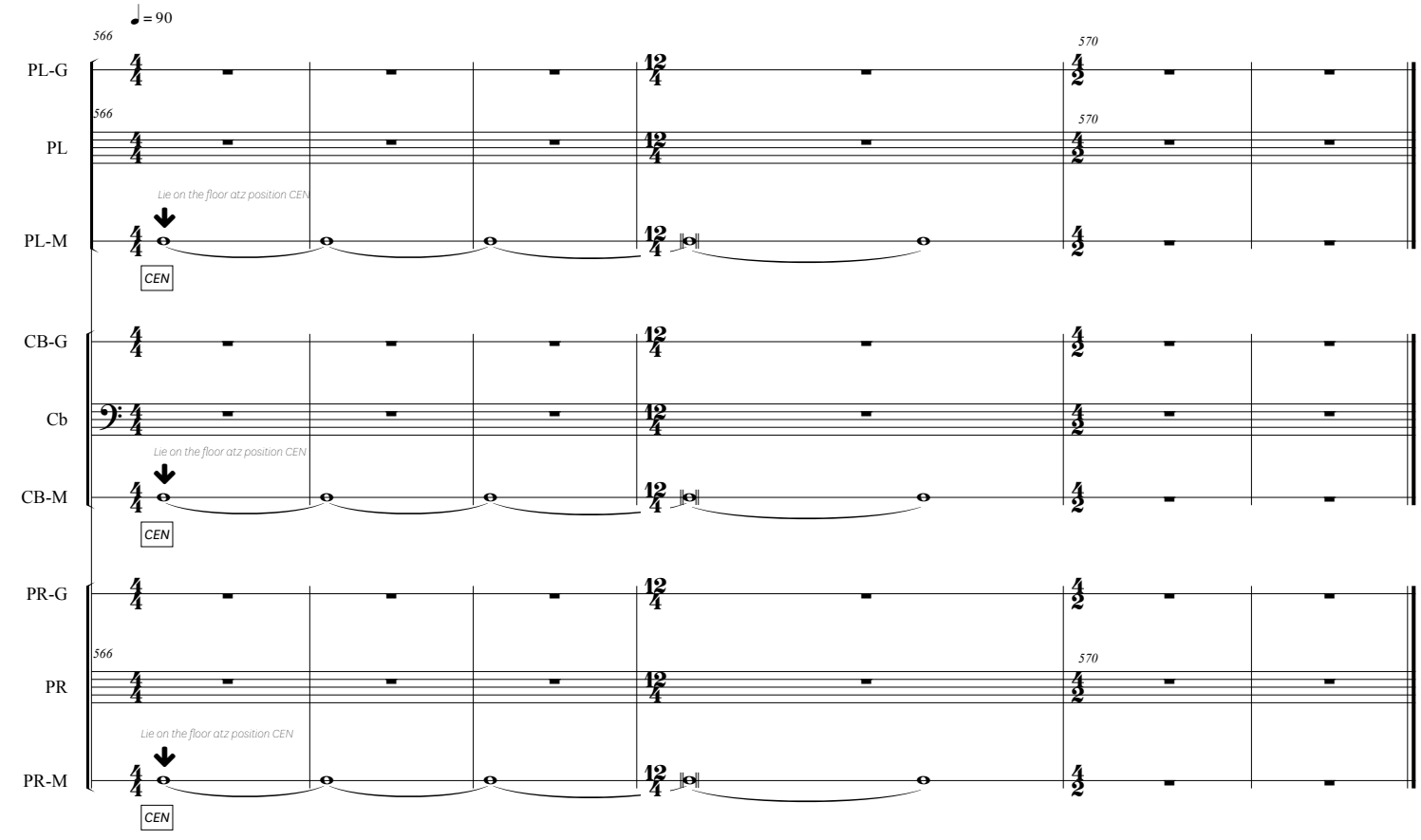

Scenerey II 19:33
♩ = 120
508
510
515
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
Pick Up Roto Cymbal
PR-G
PR
PR-M


520
525
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
mf
Roto Cymbal
PR-G
PR
PR-M


28
Final 20:40
♩ = 90
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
CYM
BACK
Roto Cymbal
ff


♩ = 120
PL-G
PL
PL-M
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
PR-G
PR
PR-M
MID


continue short movement on every 1/4 beat
554
555
560
565
PL-G
PL
PL-M
continue short movement on every 1/4 beat
CB-G
Cb
CB-M
continue short movement on every 1/4 beat
PR-G
PR
PR-M


♩ = 90
566
570
PL-G
PL
Lie on the floor atz position CEN
PL-M
CEN
CB-G
Cb
Lie on the floor atz position CEN
CB-M
CEN
PR-G
PR
Lie on the floor atz position CEN
PR-M
CEN