PIERCE GRADONE

AUTOMATON

for bass clarinet

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

JAMESCREST MUSIC

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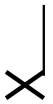
PERFORMANCE NOTES

half-breath

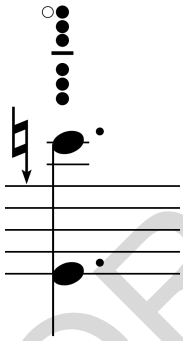


key click

flutter tongue

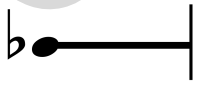
unit of time in seconds

multiphonic index number from Sparnaay's
The Bass Clarinet Book: A Personal History



fingering

multiphonic showing highest and lowest pitches



unmeasured sustained pitch

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PROGRAM NOTES

In *Bach and the Meaning of Counterpoint*, David Yearsley recounts the incredible tale of Pierre Demoulin's automata. The three automatons - a flutist, a drummer and a duck(!) - were unveiled to astonished Frankfurters in 1746, who were fascinated - and in some cases, deeply troubled - by their realism and functionality (the duck's most acclaimed feature was its apparent digestive system). The flutist, however, captured the imaginations of the German intelligentsia - especially the great flute virtuoso Joachim Quantz - with its astonishing technical ability. Yearsley, quoting Quantz, writes:

> "With skill a musical machine could be constructed that would play certain pieces with a quickness and exactitude so remarkable that no human being could equal it….but it would never move you."

Quantz's musical prophecy was fulfilled just over two centuries later with the development of computer music in the 1940s and 1950s. With the possibility of a perfect, impossibly accurate realization of a given work, performers were now cast as an imperfect shadow of now quite visible Platonic form of technical virtuosity. In this new reality, musicians bore a new burden - they were now subject to the autocratic rule of technical perfection, machine-like accuracy.

Automaton is a dramatization of this burden - a kind of passion play for the contemporary musician in which heartless, unrelenting machines roar, then slowly crumble as a distinctly human voice emerges from the ruins. The opening measures of the work are a theatre of impossibility: is the clarinetist breathing? can any other sound be heard above the loud mechanical percussion of the bass clarinet's large and cumbersome keys? And in the end: is that the sound of a human voice, or just a convincing reproduction?

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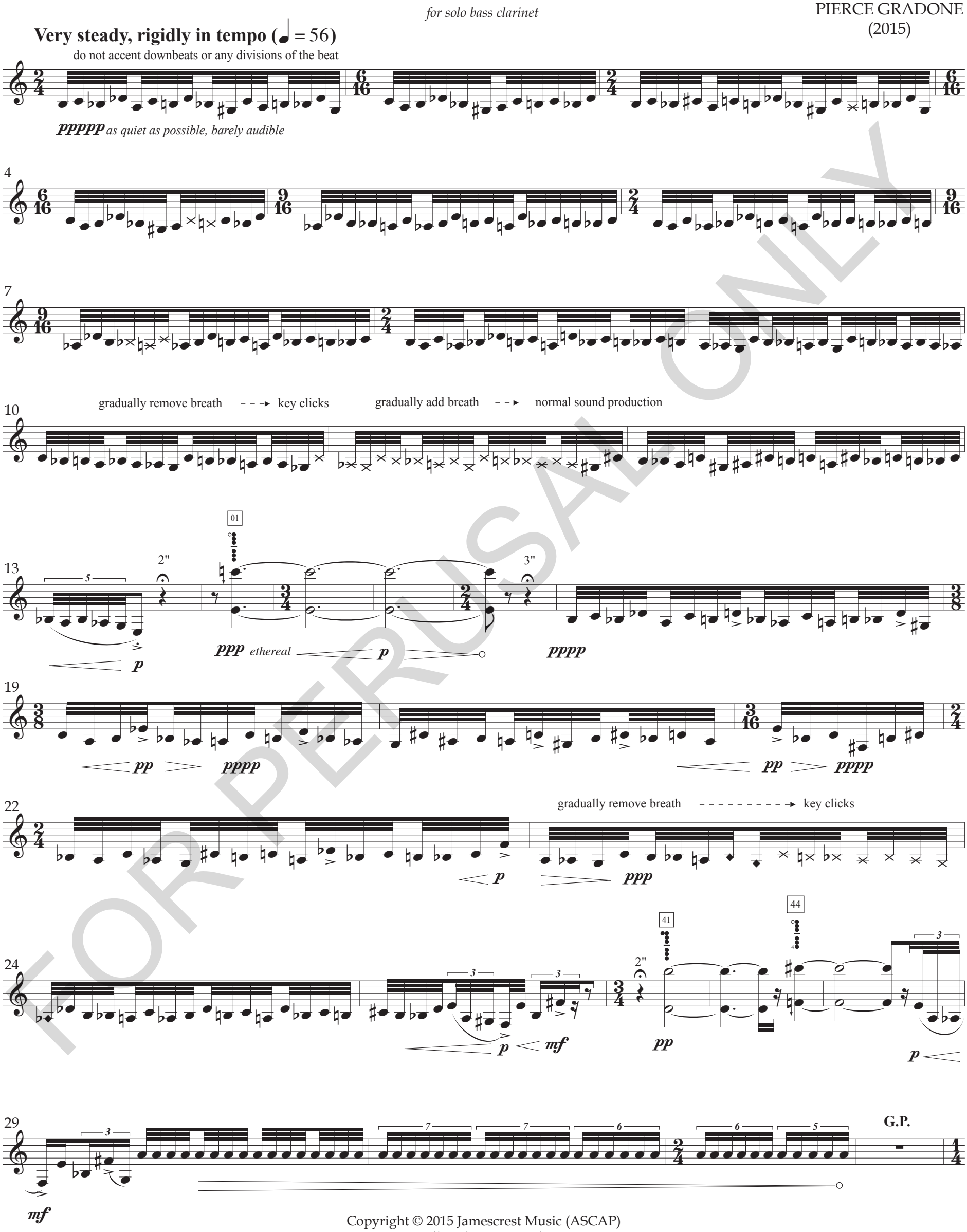
for Katie Schoepflin

AUTOMATON

for solo bass clarinet

PIERCE GRADONE
(2015)



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67

sfz ppp sfz ppp sfz ppp

69

sfz ppp sfz ppp sfz ppp 7 f 32 25 pp f pp 7

73

mf pp mf

75

ppp f 5 06 11 p mf

78

mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp f

81

f pp f pp f pp f pp f pp f pp f

83

mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp mp ppp

85

f f pp f pp f pp f pp f pp f pp f p

88

6 mf mp p 3 pp

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47

48

Faster (♩ = 64)

90

3

pp *mf* *f* *pp* *f* *p*

93

95

98

use three different fingerings, alternate fingerings should waver in pitch

101

1 2 3

p *f* *p*

gradually remove breath

continue alternating fingerings with key clicks

104

1 2 3

f *p*

inhale through instrument

108

p *mp* *p*

110

5

mp *p* *mf* *p* *sfz* *p*

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112

ad lib fingerings

ad lib fingerings

ad lib fingerings

114

articulate each note
continue alternating fingerings

117

use three different fingerings, alternate
fingerings should waver in pitch

articulate each note
continue alternating fingerings

120

flz.

flz.

123

flz.

flz.

flz.

flz.

127

G.P.

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131

p with growing urgency

mf *p*

mf

p

134

mf

p *f*

p *mf* *p* *f*

p *f*

137

p *f*

p *f*

f

mp *f*

141

sfz pp

f

sfz

144

sfz *sfz* *sfz*

146

6

150

3

40

Rubato (♩ = 60)

mf *p*

156

65 40 65 48 40 65 48

p solemn, like a sacred chorale

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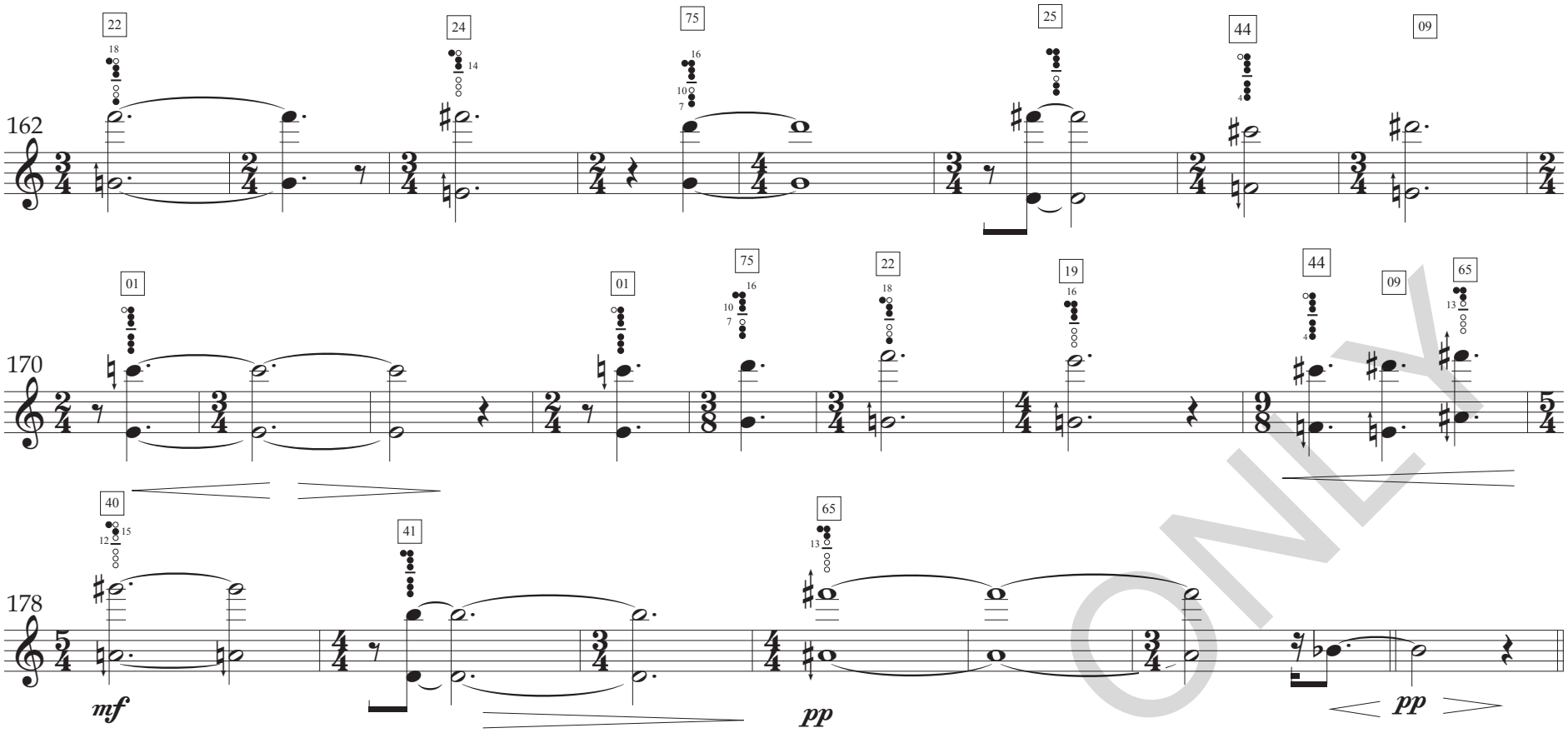
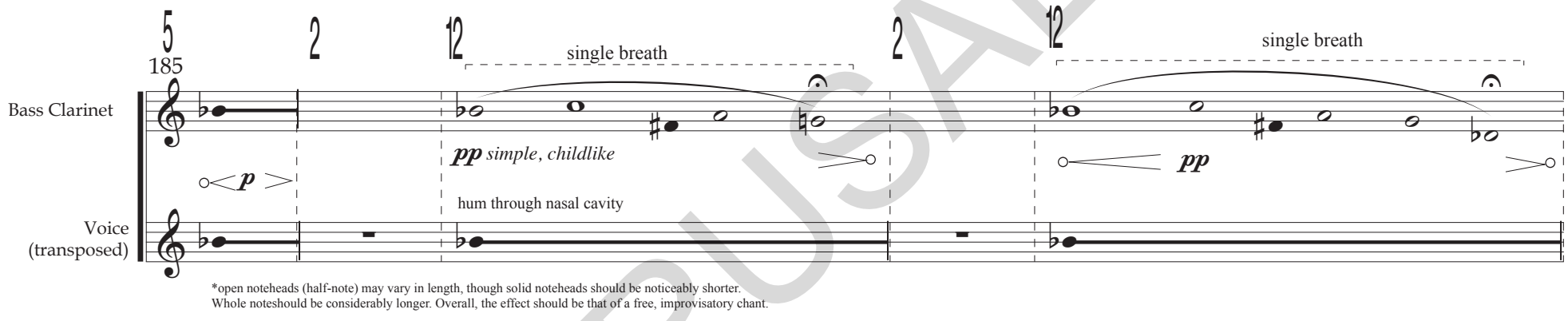
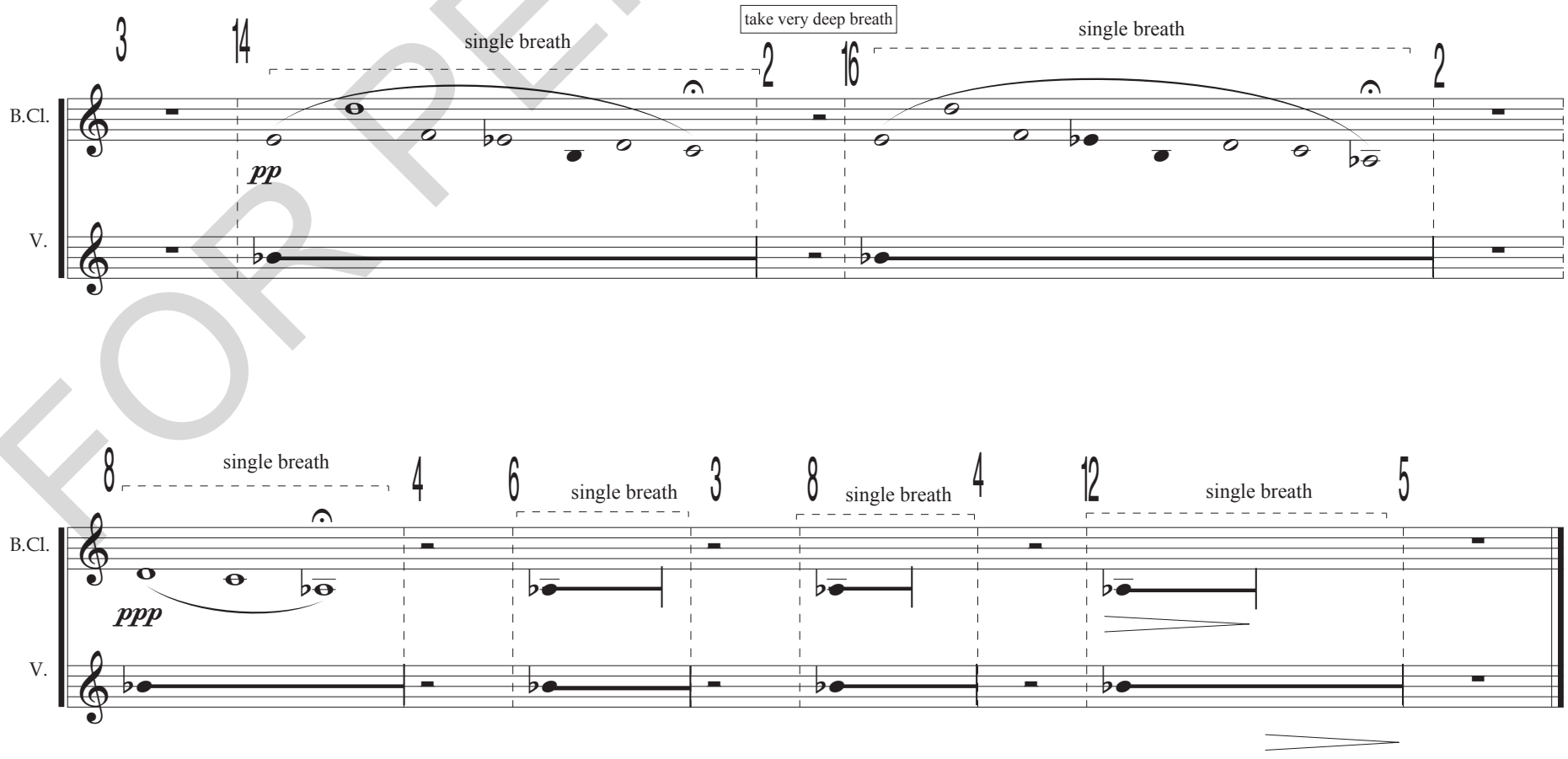


Extremely free, senza tempo

numerals in this section refer to the length of the bar in seconds



*open noteheads (half-note) may vary in length, though solid noteheads should be noticeably shorter.
Whole noteshould be considerably longer. Overall, the effect should be that of a free, improvisatory chant.



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