

Crisis music

for solo baritone saxophone

(bad jazz)

(glitch)

(crocodile tears)

(hum)

(a few soft, last lines)

J bunch (2012)

written for Phil Pierick

Program notes

Music that arose out of a crisis of conscience/confidence/concept. Short compositions (not etudes) that focus on one idea, one organizing principle, one image, etc. Also, music that does not attempt to take itself too seriously. Jokes. Questions. Terse statements. Sentences.

Regarding ordering:

The performer can choose how many of them to play and in which order. There is no grand design. However by way of suggestion, the player might chose to emphasize the differences by juxtaposition. It makes some sense to balance out the placement of *Bad jazz* and *A few soft, last lines* as they are closer in material/language to one another than to the other pieces.

Performance notes for *Bad jazz*

This piece is a joke. It initiates a series of pieces in which structural units (usually proportional) are articulated in 31's (my age as I write this). In fact, I was so flustered to begin that I did a very undergraduate-student-like thing: I used phone numbers and zip codes to derive rhythmic proportions. So I guess, if you can figure it out, give me a call – you're probably an interesting person. The title refers to the film noir cheesiness of the melody that unfolds throughout the movement.

This movement should be played in a relaxed manor. The 8ths can sound a little breathy but must be rhythmically precise. The vibrato over long melody lines should resemble that of Bari sax genius Gerry Mulligan. Whenever there is an accent, it should be quite exaggerated but jump immediately back to *p* afterwards.

Performance notes for *Glitch*

The player should perform the notated gestures as quickly as possible. This will be affected by how long it takes them to mentally process what they need to do. Variation is expected, not all “8th notes” are equal. A successful performance would sound kind of like a saxophone thrown in a blender on top speed.

Dotted slurs mark groups that can be treated as miniature phrases.

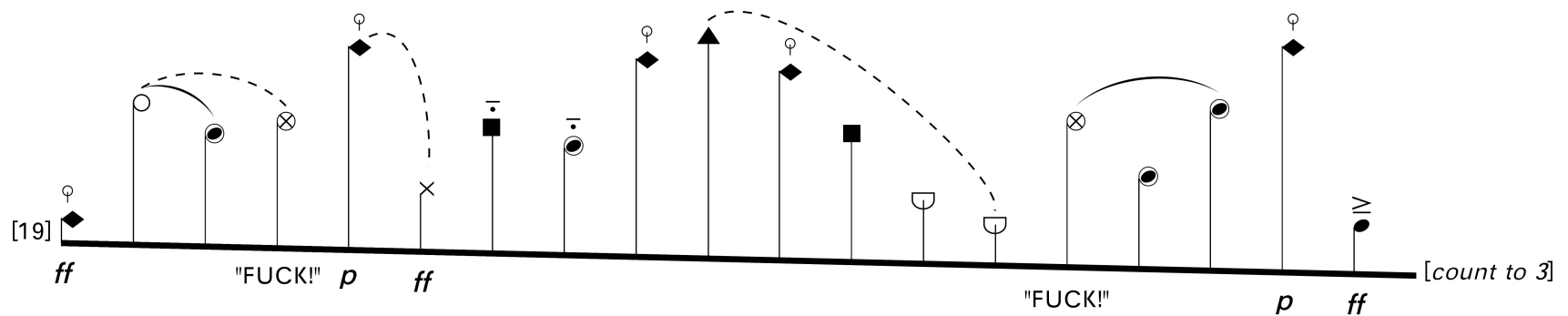
There are no staves, yet the vertical space of each line communicates relative pitch height (lower things “sound” lower, higher things, higher). The player shouldn’t get too wrapped up in trying to make sure the contour is exact over distances longer than the groups marked by dotted slurs.

I’m not interested in a fussy accuracy here. What I want is to release a certain kind of frenetic energy.

The shape of this piece is as follows:

- The first line consists in 31 sounds (all of them of 1 type – key clicks), the second line has 30 sounds (2 types), the 3rd line has 29 sounds (and 3 types), and so on.
- Each pair of lines is separated by a decreasing amount of silence between them (from 15 counts, down to 0). By the time you get to the group with 15 sounds, the intervening silences have disappeared. So that at the 4th line on page 3, it should sound like a hysterical fit of radically clashing noises.
- The first half begins somewhat quietly, and culminates around the 5th line of page 3.
- After that, the lines continue to get progressively smaller (and quieter, and less sonically heterogeneous) until they disappear at the very end. Where, in the first half there was decreasing amounts of silence, there are increasing amounts of a very high (ordinary, straight tone) pitch that gets progressively louder as the lines disappear around it

The player should feel free to vary the speed of their counting between lines, as long as it feels to the listener like the space between the lines is gradually being eliminated.



In this “phrase” there are 19 events (signified by the number 19 in the bracket at the front). The phrase should be performed as quickly as possible, leaving as little space between sounds as possible (taking into account that what you must do physically to get between sounds will slow some gestures down a bit). Don’t try to make every notes last the same amount of time. In this sense, rhythm is generated by the physical performative distances between sounds.

Solid slurs indicate a continuous sound. For example, from the 2nd into the 3rd sound, the un-pitched growl continues immediately into a medium-high pitched growl (sing-n-play).

Dashed slurs indicate groups or “sub-phrases.” Breaking the larger phrases down into small groups will help shape them and make it easier to read.

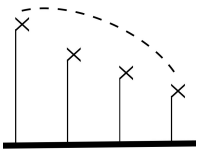
Notes with tenuto marks (-) over them can be held very slightly longer than those without them. Dotted tenuto indicates separation between evens (articulated space between them).

The slant of the beam merely indicates the general relative pitch direction of the entire line.

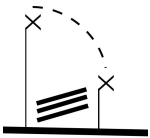
Individual noteheads (sound types)

— [count to 15]

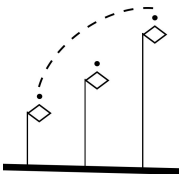
After each phrase, count to the number indicated. You can vary the speed at which you count, but the overall effect should be that the silence between phrases gradually evaporates.



Key clicks, usually in a descending direction. [*f*] dynamic indicates that the effort used to produce the dynamics is greater than the dynamic usually produced.



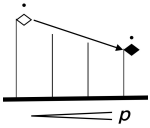
Key-click tremolo. Select keys that will make a loud enough sound.



Breath sounds – without absolute pitch. Choose a large enough difference in fingered pitch to get the relative pitch differences (probably you will need to divide the whole keyed range of the saxophone equally amongst the number of pitches requested). It may also be helpful to let some of the air escape outside of the reed. What is most important is that the relative pitch differences are audible.



Mezza voce. More airy, less focused pitch. Nearly always in a higher register, always at a quiet dynamic level.



Transition from breath sounds to mezza voce – in this case, the pitch is also descending.



Voce piena (“normal” tone).



Secco slap-tongue. Dry, mostly percussive, only relative pitch, not clear pitch is desired. Always occurs in a higher register. Always at a quiet dynamic level.



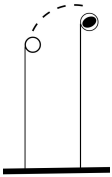
Mixed sound tremolo – rapidly alternate between the two sounds. It’s not necessary to do this precisely and cleanly. In addition, the ordinary note is fluttertongue.



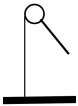
Full slap-tongue with clear pitch.



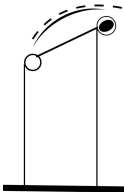
Teeth on reed. Should result in a very quiet, un-squeaky sound when at a soft dynamic level, but full and unstable squeak at louder dynamic levels. Attempt to get different sounds every time.



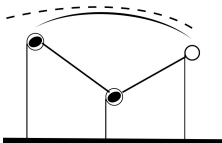
Growls. The first, only the voice into the saxophone, the second while playing a pitch on the saxophone. The growl should sound freely different each time, should always be visceral and wild. Feel free to change the pitch of your voice or use excessive vibrato to get the “right” sound.



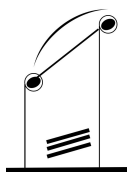
Glissando to indeterminate pitch level (in this case, while growling into the sax).



Growl-glissando into a sing-n-play note.



Pitch and growl glissando between notes. The third note is sung growl only.



Tremolo + growl-glissando. Tremolo between 2 notes, and simultaneously sing a gliss between two notes at the same time.



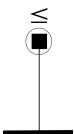
Shout obscenities into the saxophone. You can choose other obscenities, those notated are merely suggestions.



Cough into the instrument.



Honk. Take the entire reed into your mouth and roughly blow a sharp jet of air into the instrument. Should sound like a multiphonic.



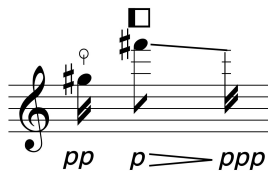
Sing-and-honk.

[1] *very high note*
ppp

At the end, the diminishing silence from the beginning is replaced by a very high pitch (on which you can get the full dynamic range) that gradually increases in length (from 1 count, all the way to 15) and loudness.

Performance notes for *Crocodile tears*

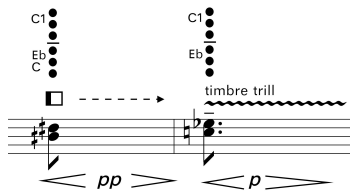
Firstly, I am not “making fun of” Salvatore Sciarrino’s music. I am poking fun at a composer who I obviously respect (see my dissertation). Secondly, this piece *is* a bit of a joke, though I would advise the performer to not try too hard to be funny. The beginning should sound beautiful, subtle, slow, and quiet. For me, the humor is the exaggerated transformation (disintegration) of the piece into weeping clichés familiar from centuries of Western art music (from Luca Marenzio to Sciarrino, and György Ligeti).



Downward “sigh” to an undetermined pitch (not more than a whole-step). It must sound like a “gesture” rather than 2 clear “itches.”



Gradual transition from *voce piena* to *mezza voce* (full tone to “breathy” tone).



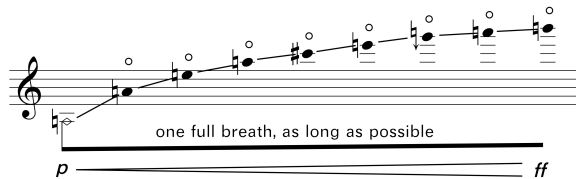
There are two multiphonics (fingerings here, and in the score). They are very close in sound so try as much as you can to bring out the difference. Also noted here, a timbre trill indicates a rapid alternation of 2 fingerings that don’t change the pitches of the multi’s significantly. The dashed arrow (as elsewhere in the set) indicates a continuation – in this case of the mezzo voce sound – until further notice.

Performance notes for *Hum*

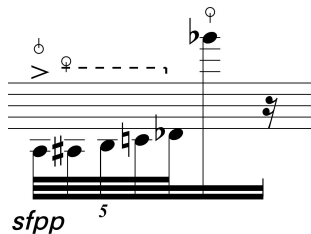
Hum is a short essay on slap-tongue sounds on the bari sax emphasizing the difference in the sound quality of slaps with respect to range on the instrument. It's also a bit of a character piece invoking the image of a hummingbird in flight. Think of it as an un-“fuzzy bird” sonata.

There should be a sense of dramatic pause separating the first and second pages. The 2nd and 3rd section of the piece should sound as if the figures are hovering in place. The rhythms of the first page are meant to inject a kind of crooked symmetry into the lines.

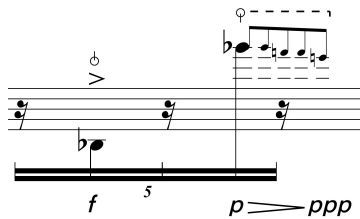
Care should be taken so that the chromatic lines – when slapped – should not sound like chromatic scales, but gradations of pitch amongst an array of “little woodblocks.”



Glissando through the partials of the lowest note (indicated with a diamond-shaped notehead). It should sound similar to a multiphonic. It is not necessary (or preferable) to make a clear articulation of each partial.

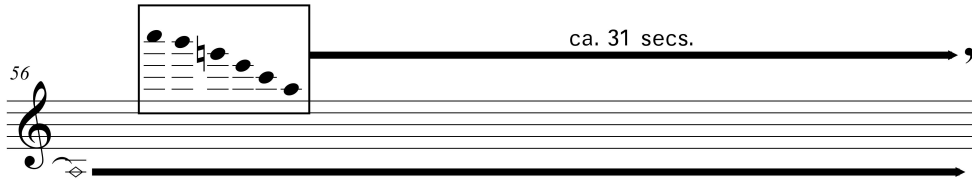


Low slaps (such as the first, here) naturally sound more pitched, high slaps sound more dry/percussive. The upside-down slap symbol indicates a more dry sound (taking less reed).



Suffix grace notes should be begun on the indicated beat, but should trail off as quickly as possible within the space over which they are articulated.

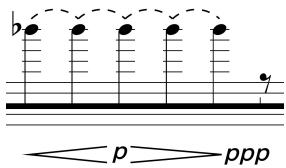
circular breathing, play harmonics in any order for indicated duration
irregular durations, mostly "stepwise" motion between them



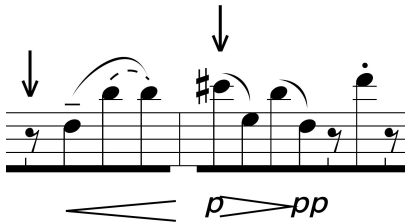
Indicates a harmonics "cloud" – the player should freely articulate upper partials of the indicated fundamental. In this case, I intend that each partial should be clear. This should not sound like a multiphonic (as does the harmonic sweep). There should be a fair amount of space between harmonics rhythmically (not very fast) and as indicated in the score, mostly stepwise motion between them, with some leaps occasional leaps. Do not simply arpeggiate up and down in order – it should sound a little more like "Brownian motion."

Performance notes for *A few soft, last lines*

Each line is articulated within a grid of 31 8th notes and conceived as a continuous line. The performer should not make the grid audible to the listeners in a rigid way. The sound should be very light – not venturing (if possible) into the raspier side of the sax timbre. No vibrato is required.



The dotted slurs indicate a slow timbre trill (alternation of color fingerings) in time.



The downward arrows indicate a feeling of “downbeat.” Put differently, the notes after the arrows should sound “off the beat.”

Please send questions to: debussydoesdallas@gmail.com

Wholly unprepared, we embark upon the second half of life...
We take the step into the afternoon of life; worse still we take this step
with the false assumption that our truths and ideas will serve as before.

But we cannot live the afternoon of life according to the
program of life's morning – for what was great in the morning will be
little at evening, and what in the morning was true will at evening have
become a lie.

– Carl Jung

crisis music

bad jazz

for phil pierick

j bunch

♩ = 88 relaxed, unserious

p

like a bad film noir melody, lots of vibrato, somewhat freely

A tempo

as before

fp

as before

fp

wailing

bell away from the audience

f *fp*

crisis music

2

A tempo, milling about

18

20

22

24

very gentle, trailing off

with easy grace

26

28

crisis music glitch

j bunch

As fast as possible

for phil pierick

[31] *f* [count to 15]

[30] [count to 14]

[29] *f p f pp f pp f p f f p f p* [count to 13]

[28] *f p f pp f p f pp f p f pp f p f pp f* [count to 12]

[27] *p f p f p f p f p f p f p* [count to 11]

[26] *p f p f p f p f p f p f mp f* [count to 10]

crisis music

2

[25] _____ [count to 9]

mp *pp* *mp* *f* *p* *mp* *pp* *f* *p* *f* *f* *p* *mp* *p* *pp*

[24] _____ [count to 8]

p *mf* *f* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *mp* *f* *mf*

[23] _____ [count to 7]

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

[22] _____ [count to 6]

f *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

[21] _____ [count to 5]

f "FUCK!" *p* *f* "SHIT!" "SHIT!" *p* *f*

[20] _____ [count to 4]

f "SHIT!" *p* *f* *p* *f*

[19] *ff* "FUCK!" *p* *ff* "FUCK!" *p* *ff* [count to 3]

crisis music

[18] *ff* *p* *ff* "SHIT! SHIT! SHIT!" [count to 2]

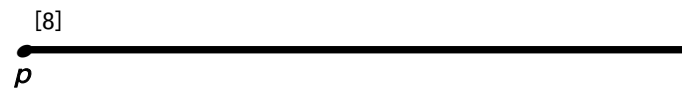
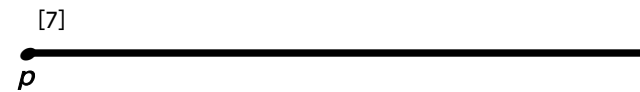
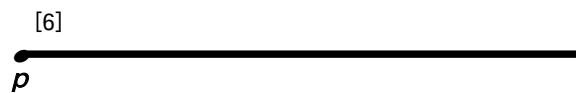
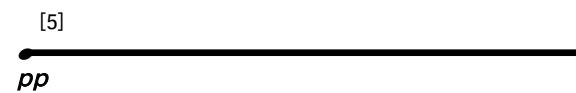
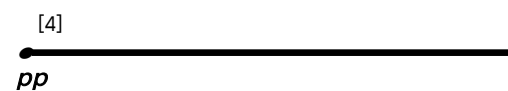
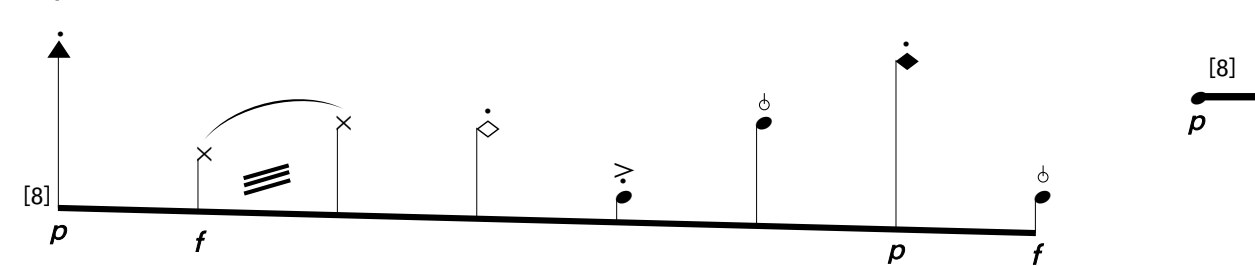
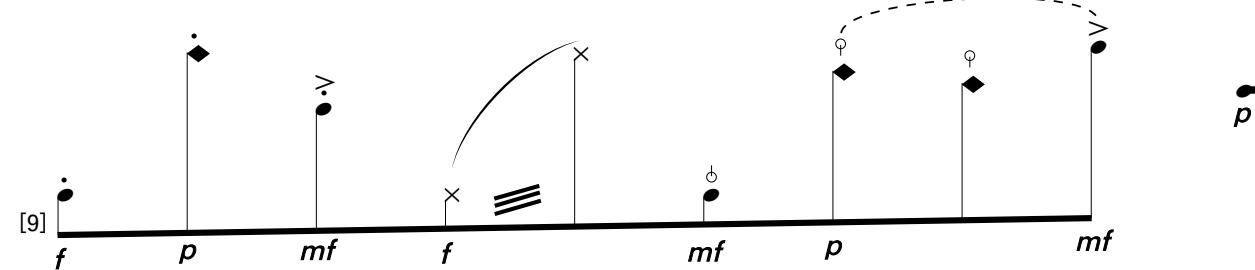
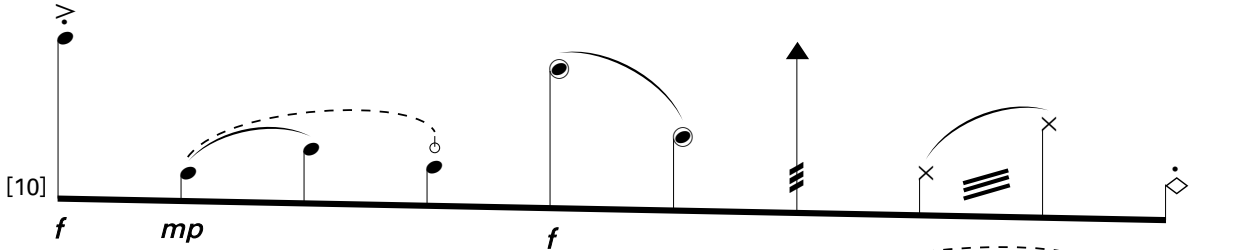
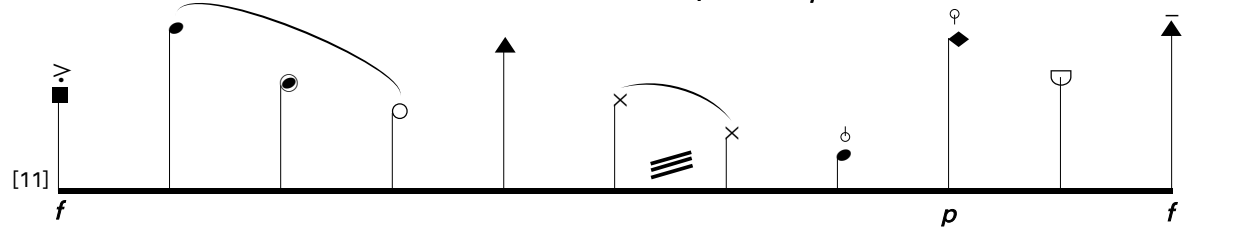
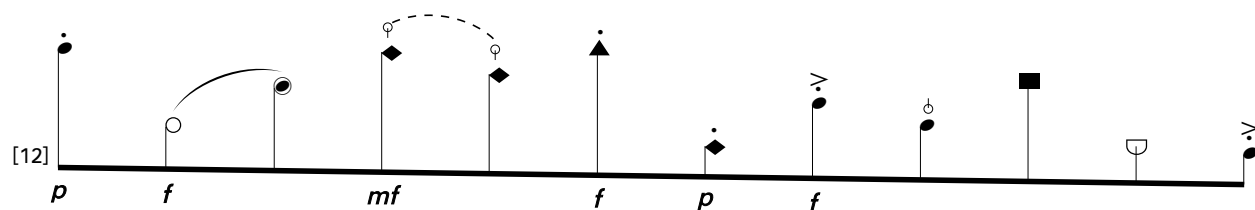
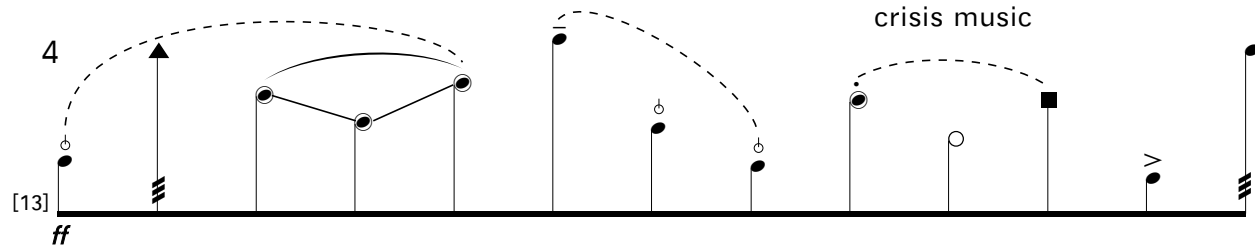
[17] *p* "FUCK!" *ff* *p* *mf* *ff* [count to 1]

[16] *p* *ff* "SHIT!" "FUCK!" [count to 0]

[15] *ff* *p* *ff* [1] very high note *ppp*

[14] *ff* *p* *ff* *fp* *ff* "FUCK!" [2] use same note every time *ppp*

crisis music



crisis music

[7] *non trem.*
f *mf* *p* *f*

[9] *mp*

[6] *mf* *f* *mf*

[10] *mp*

[5] *f* *mp* *f* *mp*

[11] *mf*

[4] *f* *p*

[12] *f*

[3] *f*


[13] *f*

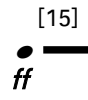
[2] *mf*

[14] *f*

crisis music

6

[1] 
p

[15] 
ff



crisis music: crocodile tears

j bunch

or, "don't cry for me sal sciarrino"

♩ = 84 small, frail

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It consists of six systems of music, each with dynamic markings and performance instructions. The first system (measures 1-8) features a sequence of chords and single notes with dynamics *pp*, *p*, *ppp*, and *sim.*. The second system (measures 9-14) includes a triplet of chords and a triplet of notes, with dynamics *pp*, *p*, *ppp*, and *pp*. The third system (measures 15-18) contains triplets of chords and notes, with dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *ppp*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The fourth system (measures 19-22) features a series of triplets of chords and notes, with dynamics *p*, *ppp*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The fifth system (measures 23-25) continues with triplets of chords and notes, with dynamics *ppp*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The sixth system (measures 26-30) includes triplets of chords and notes, with dynamics *p*, *mp*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *f*, and *mp*. The score includes various performance instructions such as *sim.*, *[a tempo] non rubato*, and *very slightly faster*. There are also square brackets indicating phrasing or articulation points. The tempo is marked as 84 small, frail, and later as 116-120 still small very slightly rubato.

line study

2

29 *f* *pp*

31 *fp* *fp* *fp* *sim.* *fp* *fp* *ff*

34 *ff*

37 *pp* *ppp* *ff* ♩ = 104-108

39 *p* *mf* *f* *pp* *legato*

41 *fp* *fp* *fp* *ff* *ppp* *mf*

crisis music: hum

j bunch

♩ = 104-108 with some flexibility

one full breath, as long as possible

p *ff* *sfpp* *pp* *f* *pp*

6 *pp* *f* *p* *ppp* *pp* *f* *p* *ppp* *pp* *p* *ppp*

13 *pp* *p* *ppp* *pp* *pp* *p* *ppp* *f* *pp*

18 *mf* *pp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *f* *ppp* *pp* *f* *pp*

22 *p* *ppp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *ppp*

26 *mp* *pp* *mp* *ppp* *p* *pp* *mf* *pp* *p* *ppp*

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a piece titled "crisis music: hum". It is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The tempo is indicated as 104-108 beats per minute with some flexibility. The score is divided into six systems, each containing a single line of music. The first system begins with a dynamic of *p* and includes a performance instruction: "one full breath, as long as possible" with a long horizontal line underneath. The dynamics throughout the piece are varied, including *ff*, *sfpp*, *pp*, *f*, *ppp*, *mf*, and *mp*. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several instances of triplets and quintuplets. The piece concludes with a final dynamic of *ppp*.

2 $\text{♩} = \sim 76$ more rhythmically consistent

line study

28 *f* pp *p* pp *sim.* *mf* pp *mp* pp *f* pp

33 *p* pp *sim.* *mf* pp *f* pp

37 *p* pp *sim.* *mp* p *f* pp *mf* pp *mp* pp

42 *p* pp *sim.* *ff* *mf* pp *f* p

46 *mf* pp *mf* pp *mf* pp *mp* pp *f*

50 *p* pp *sfpp* *mf* p pp *f* *mp* pp *f*

[tempo ad libitum]

54

~ 6 sec.

sfpp *ff* *p*

circular breathing, play harmonics in any order for indicated duration irregular durations, mostly "stepwise" motion between them

ca. 31 secs.

[a tempo]

57

f *pp* *p* *ppp*

crisis music: a few soft, last lines

j bunch

♪ = 176-192 tremendously gentle, simple, no vibrato

The musical score consists of six staves of music, each with dynamic markings and phrasing slurs. The dynamics range from *ppp* (pianississimo) to *p* (piano). The music is characterized by soft, simple lines with no vibrato. The first staff begins with a *pp* dynamic, followed by *p* and *pp*. The second staff starts with *pp* and *ppp*, then *pp* and *ppp*. The third staff features *p* and *ppp*. The fourth staff starts with *pp* and *p*, then *pp* and *pp*. The fifth staff begins with *pp* and *p*, then *pp* and *pp*. The sixth staff starts with *ppp* and *pp*, then *p* and *pp*. The music is marked with various slurs and accents, including a downward arrow in the sixth staff.

a few soft, last lines

2

The musical score consists of six staves, numbered 7 through 12. Each staff contains a sequence of notes with various dynamic markings and articulation symbols. The dynamics include *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *ppp* (pianississimo). Articulation includes slurs, accents, and downward-pointing arrows indicating breath marks or phrasing. The notes are primarily quarter and eighth notes, often grouped with slurs. The overall texture is light and delicate, consistent with the 'soft' instruction.

Staff 7: *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

Staff 8: *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

Staff 9: *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Staff 10: *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp*

Staff 11: *mp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p* *pp* *ppp* *p* *pp*

Staff 12: *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

a few soft, last lines

13

p *mp* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *ppp* *p* *pp*

14

pp *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

15

pp *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *ppp* *p* *p* *pp*

16

pp *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*