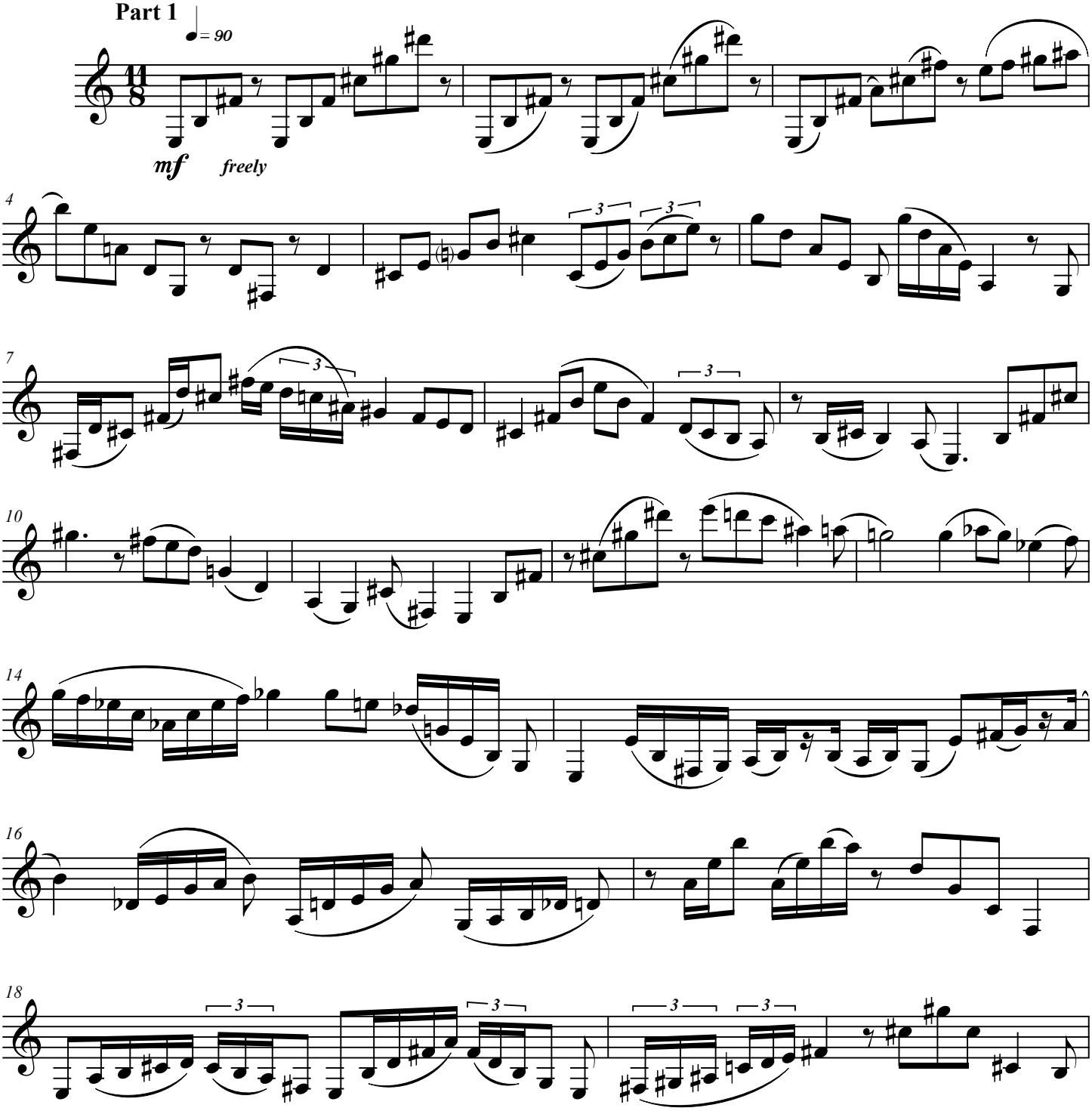
Untransposed

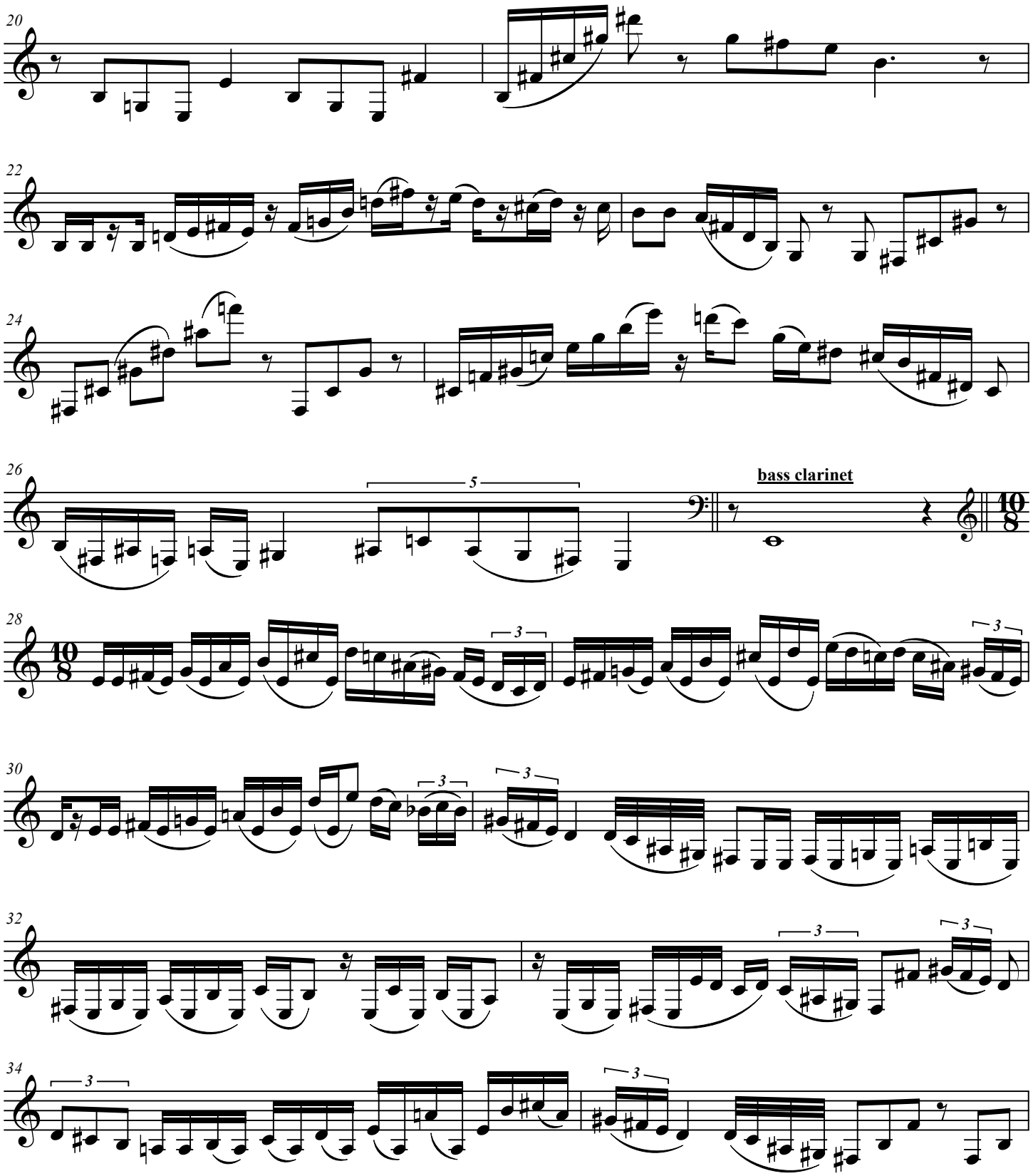
L'histoire du clarinette

for B♭ clarinet (et al.)

David Gunn

duration: 19 minutes




20
22
24
26
5
bass clarinet
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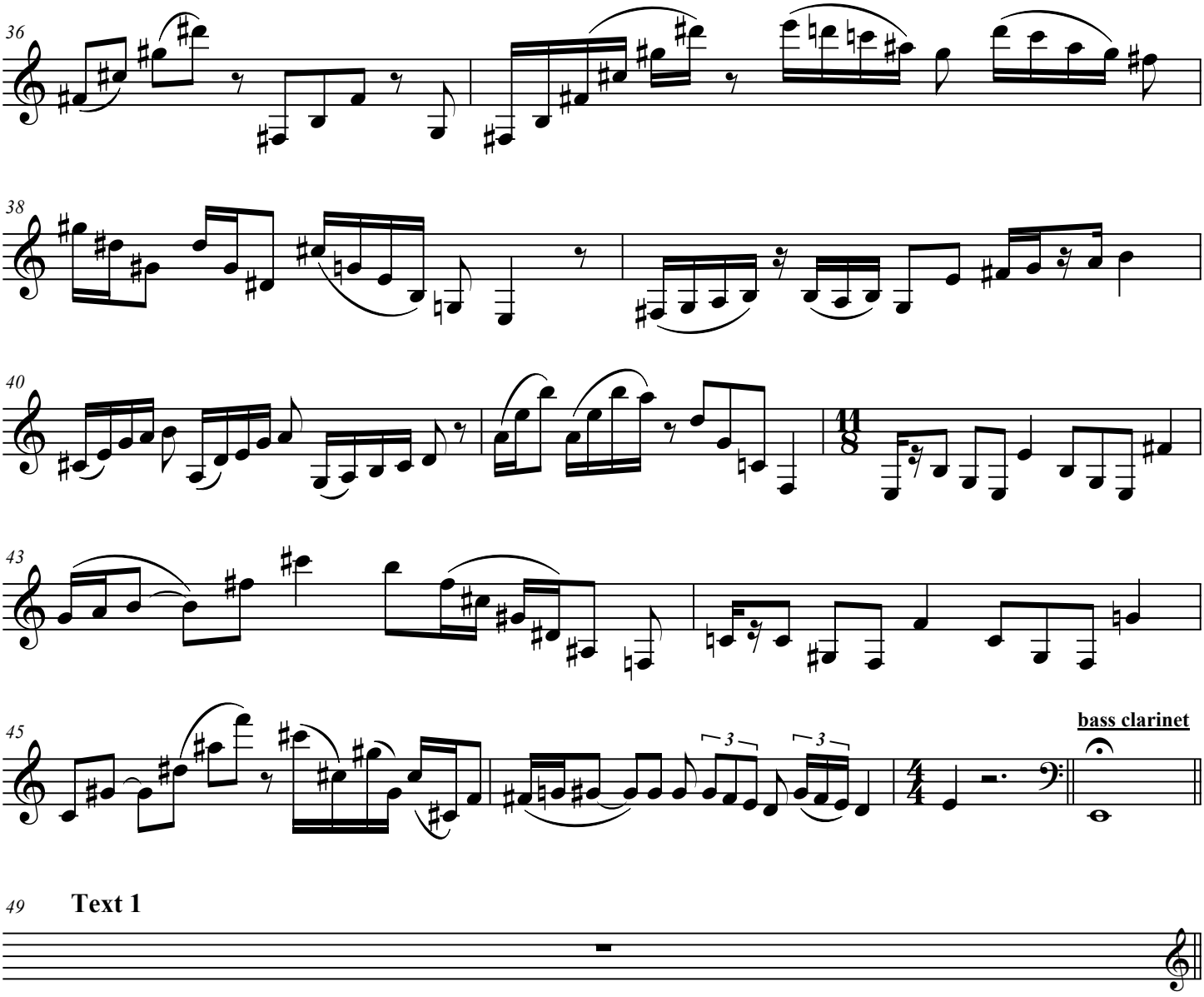

36
38
40
43
45
bass clarinet
3
3
49
Text 1

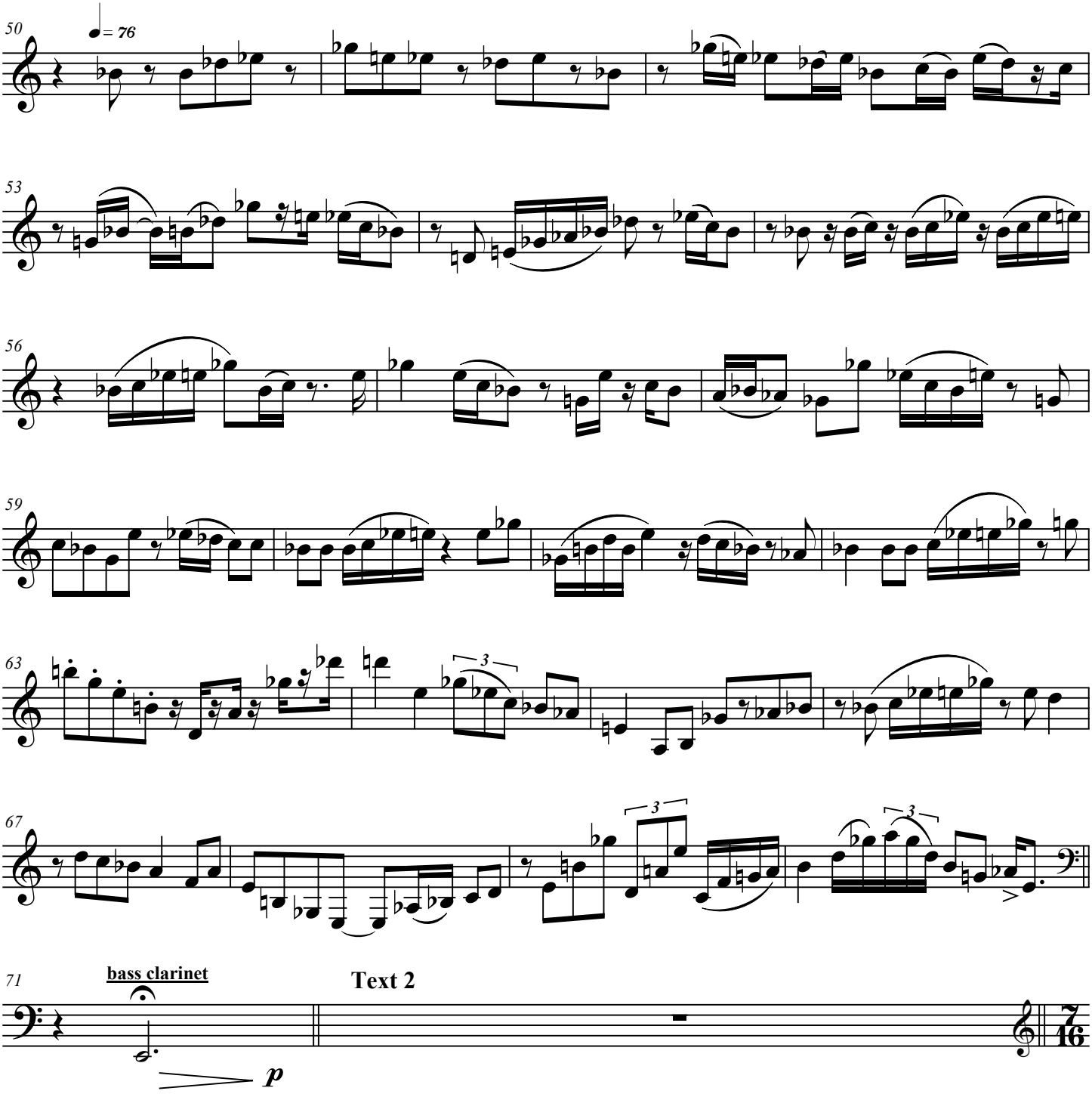
L'histoire du clarinette, part 1

This is the story of the clarinet (**01, clarinet**), a musical instrument born of the Stone Age (**02, Earth eras**), reared during the Me Decade, but not housebroken until 4 p.m. on a recent Saturday afternoon. It—that is, the clarinet, not the afternoon—consists of a cylindrical pipe (**03, pipe and wrenches**) made out of wood, metal, or, occasionally, liquid nitrogen, with a nose-shaped opening at one end and a hispid mouthpiece (**04, mouthpiece**) at the other end which conceals a small bellows. The clarinet's enclosed air column is activated by a single reed of bituminous coal (**05, hot water heater**). When fluid from the clarineticist's spittle gland comes into contact with the reed, the instrument somehow attains sentience, to the extent that it is often smarter than its player (**06, clarinet with diploma**).

Early clarinets were made of wicker (**07, wickernets**) and used in religious ceremonies to carry hold water (**08, priest and clarinet**). In fact, the word "wicker" is a derivation of "vicar," a parish woodwind priest. And a *sticky* wicker was a priest who (**09, censored**) … er, never mind. But its open-weave design, coupled with the instrument's numerous keyholes (**10, keyholes**) caused it to leak, and it eventually fell out of clergical favor.

At one time, clarinets were used by witches (**11, witch**), warlocks, and research scientists for alchemical purposes (**12, alchemy**). By squeaking through a mouthpiece fashioned from bat wings (**13, bat wings**), a skilled clarineticist could turn gold into water—and sometimes back again. But gastrointestinal ailments (**14, Humpty Dumpty**) often resulted from swallowing the reed and the occult practice eventually died out. For generations thereafter, the clarinet was stigmatized because ignorant people mistook it for a small, burrowing rodent (**15, rodent**) that destroyed croplands and silage (**16, not a rodent**). But after an article in a woodwind trade journal hypothesized that the clarinet didn't bear its young alive after all and therefore could not be a member of the vole family, the clarinet immediately enjoyed a period of popularity (**17, waving people**), which is only now beginning to wane.

Part 2

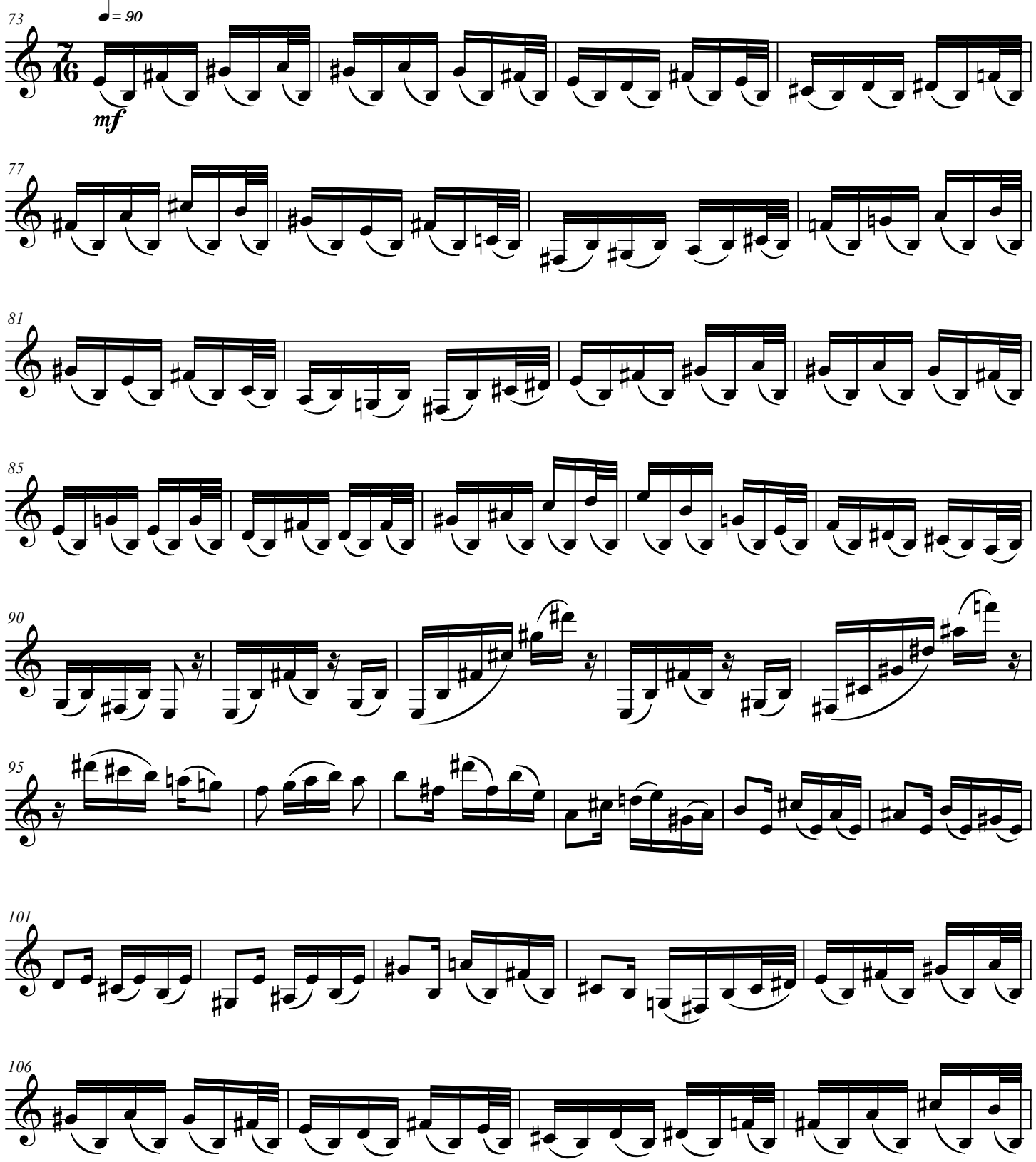


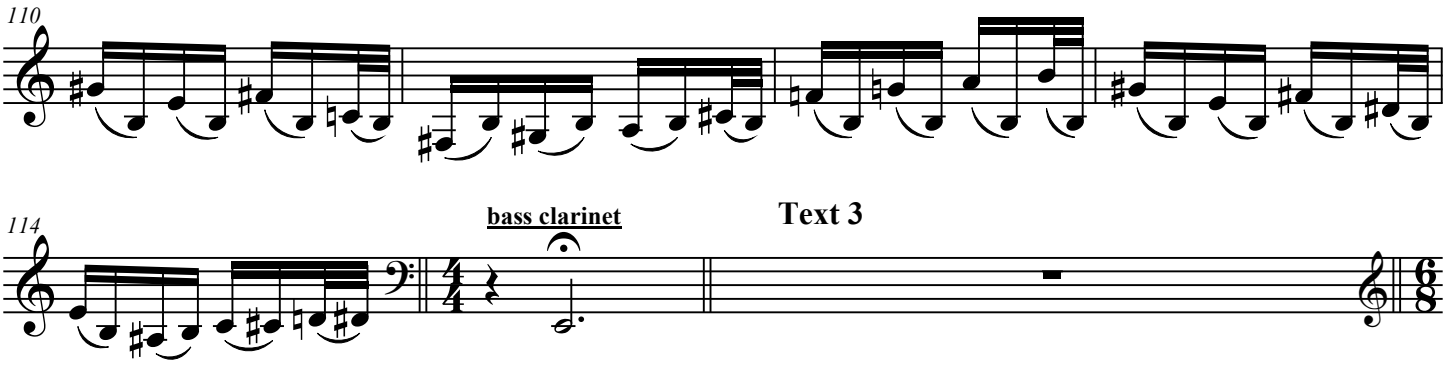
L’histoire du clarinette, part 2

In the third century, an Irish mensch named Patrick (**18, Patrick**) longed to play a clarinet in the local town band, but restrictive dental work condemned him to a life of poor tone quality. Still, his constant practicing helped to drive the snakes out of Ireland (**19, Patrick and snakes**), an achievement for which he was later be-sainted. The fact that thousands of irritated countrymen left *with* the snakes is rarely mentioned in polite company.

From Ireland, the clarinet followed the migratory path of Gypsy moths (**20, Ireland map**) to the nomadic camps of Romany, Bohemia, and Las Vegas, where its ability to effortlessly play seductive Latin melodies made it a three-to-one choice over symphonic orchestras in gypsy ballroom dance studios (**21, macarena**).

Part 3




110
114
bass clarinet
Text 3

L’histoire du clarinette, part 3

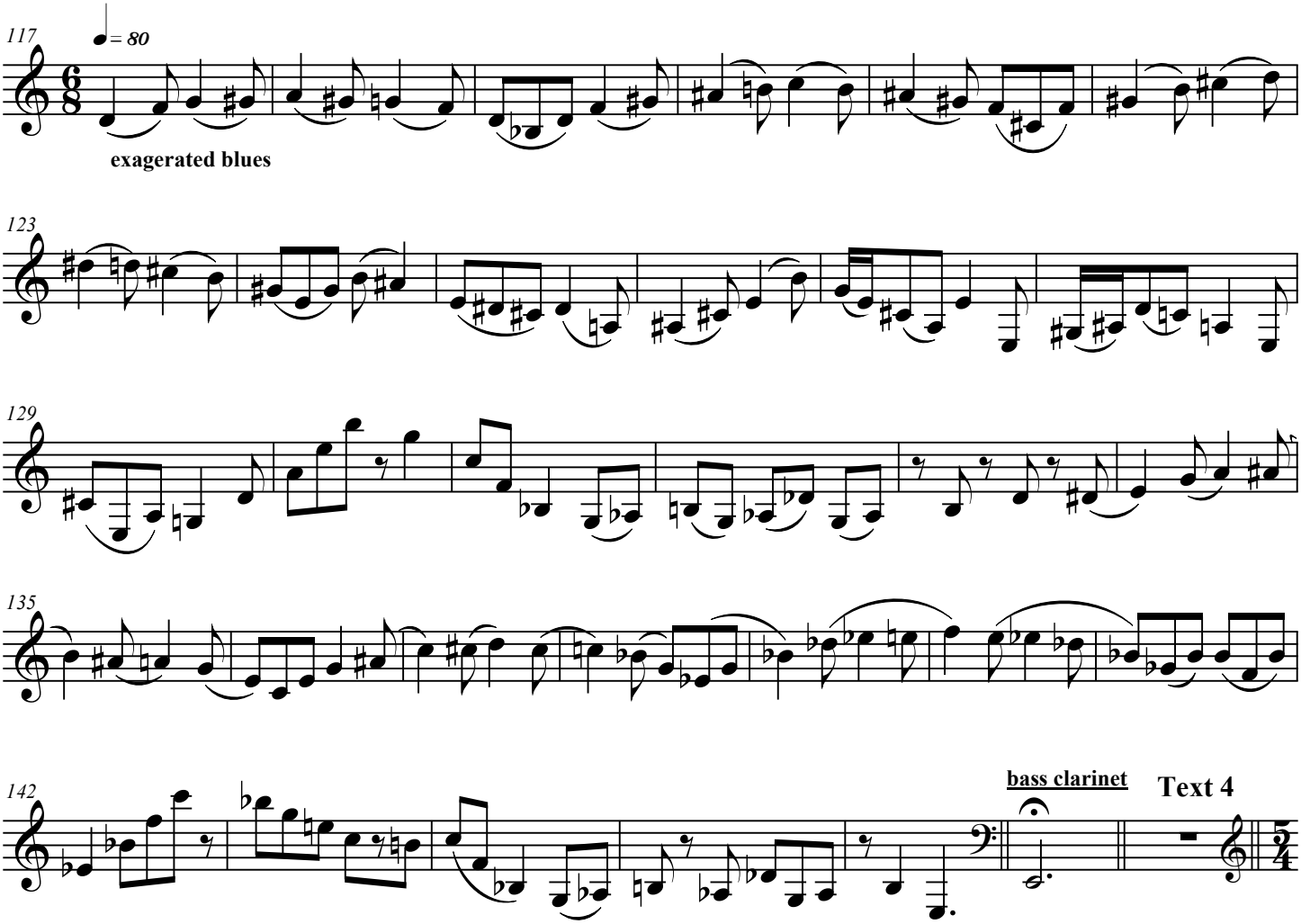
Just as a tree’s age can be determined by counting its rings, so can a clarinet’s age be ascertained by counting the number of keypads it has (**22, tree rings and clarinet keys**). For bass clarinets, use base-ten calculations. For basset horns (**23, basset hound**), count the ears. For contrabass clarinets—also called bassinets (**24, bassinets**)—apply the third pluperfect axiom of Chaos Theory and stand clear.

The clarinet makes a fine meal. Cooked properly (**25, grill**), the instrument’s eggs—or clarova—are considered a delicacy in certain Western cultures (**26, clarinet on plate**), and the glutinous fluids that accumulate on the inside of the neck make a mouthwatering marinade when cured.

Inverted, the clarinet becomes an elegant wine vessel (**27, two women**), plus its many keys allow the holder to precisely dial in the proper serving temperature (**28, gauge**) in Fahrenheit, Celsius, or Klingon.

An ignominious descendent of the early clarinet was the clarannoyance (**29, clarannoyance**), a disturbingly shrill instrument employed during the French Revolution to torment political prisoners. Mechanical improvements gradually transformed the clarannoyance into the somewhat less annoying guillotine (**30, guillotine**).

Part 4



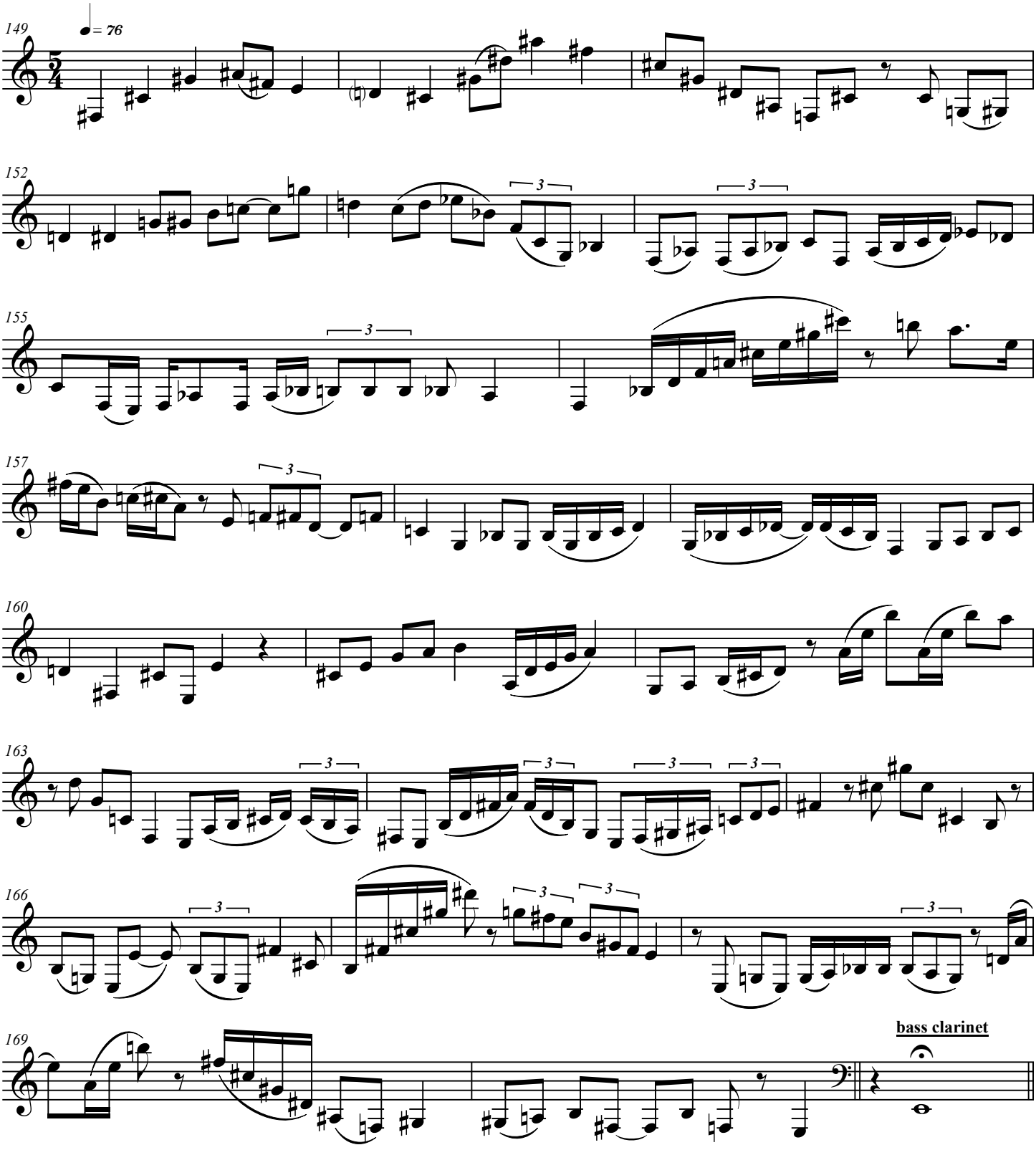
L’histoire du clarinette, part 4

Good posture is vitally important to achieving superior clarinetics. If one leans too far to the right, the instrument’s pitch can change dramatically and without warning. (**ad lib demonstration**) Equally crucial to instrumental proficiency is bladder control. Players must refrain from consuming large quantities of fluidic materials if an extended clarinary performance is anticipated soon thereafter.

Few duets exist for clarinet and saltine crackers because crumbs from the latter tend to collect along the edge of the reed of the former, befuddling the sound. (**ad lib demonstration: Open a box of crackers, eat one, then blow a sour note**.)

The clarinet was once a terrible weapon of war (**31, Alamo**). During the winter of 1836, General Santa Anna attacked the Alamo with five thousand men armed with clarinets and—the valor of David Bowie and Jiminy Crockett notwithstanding—roundly drubbed los Alamigos. Soon thereafter, the bayonet (**32, bayonet**) was forever removed from the bell and it became an instrument of peace (**33, Birth of Venus**).

Part 5



172 **Text 5**

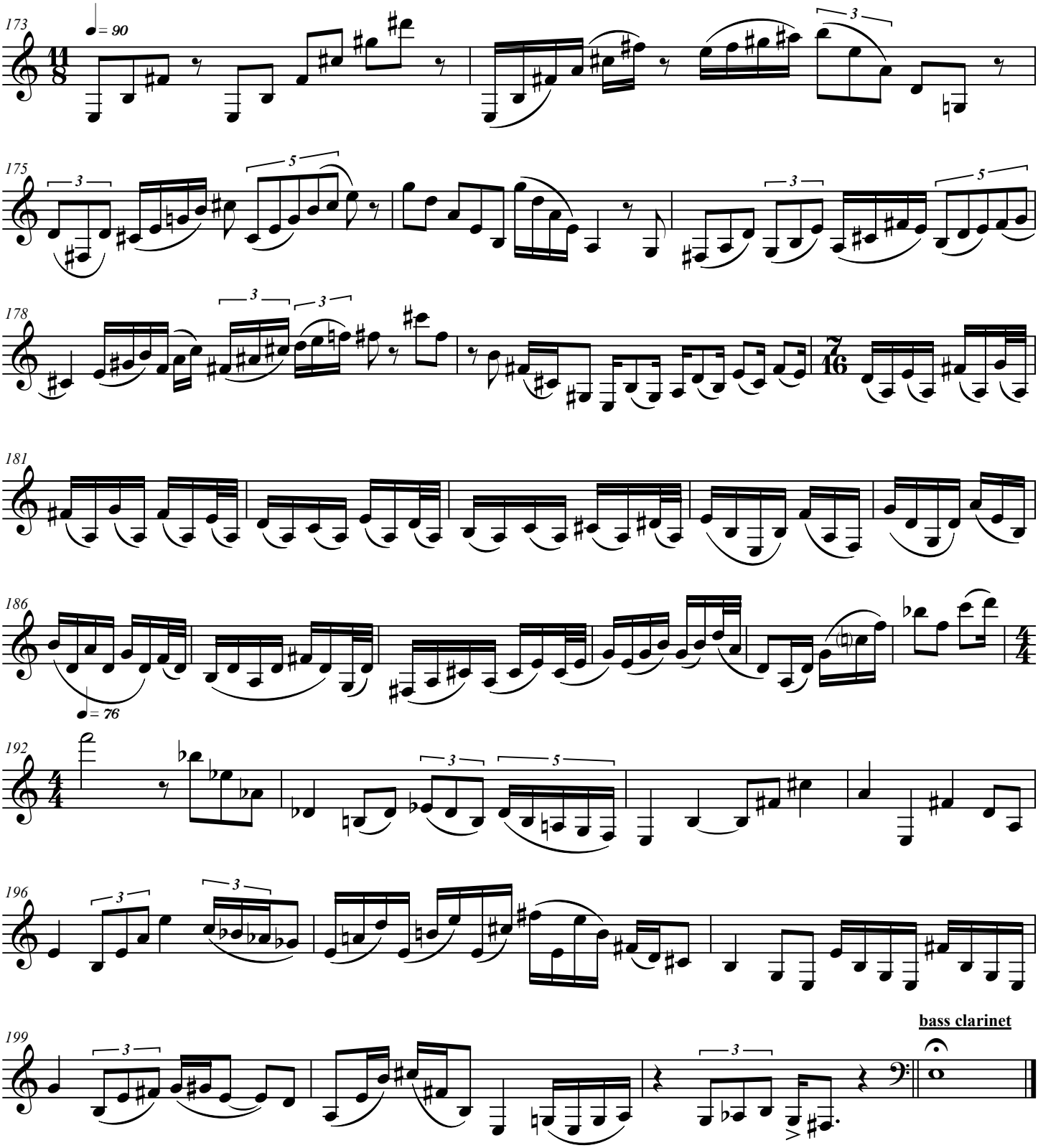
L'histoire du clarinette, part 5

Asked to describe the instrument that he helped to popularize, Benny Goodman once cryptically said of the clarinet "It is bigger than a breadbox (**34, mailbox**) but smaller than the bread inside." He never elaborated. The Science Department of Goodman University also proved that the clarinet is immune to the Doppler effect. Its frequency remains constant, no matter if it approaches or moves away from the listener. (**ad lib demonstration**)

Contrary to popular folklore, clarinets are *not* lighter than air. (**ad lib demonstration: Gently toss foam core clarinet**.) However, the molecules of clarinets are constantly in motion, and the instrument must always be either locked securely in its case or grasped firmly when played. Otherwise, it may escape into what musicologists term an Algonquin Hole (**35, Algonquin Hole**), doomed to drift in and out of tune and focus for eternity. (**blur image**)

To recap, the clarinet is the national instrument of Bali (**36, plow**), where it is used primarily as an agricultural tool to till croplands and disperse seed or fertilizer. Its resemblance to the haggisfish (**37, haggisfish**) has caused it to be overharvested in the North Sea, where it is officially listed as endangered. Upon first hearing the instrument's plaintive trill, Albert Einstein (**38, Einstein**) was moved to modify his "E equals M C cubed" theory to the more familiar "E equals M C squared." And the clarinet is one of only two musical instruments that sound better when played underwater (**39, scuba**). Due to logistical constraints, this fact will not be substantiated today.

Part 6



L’histoire du clarinette, part 6

The clarinet (**40, clarinet**): advanced, single-reed technology in a convenient, analog format!