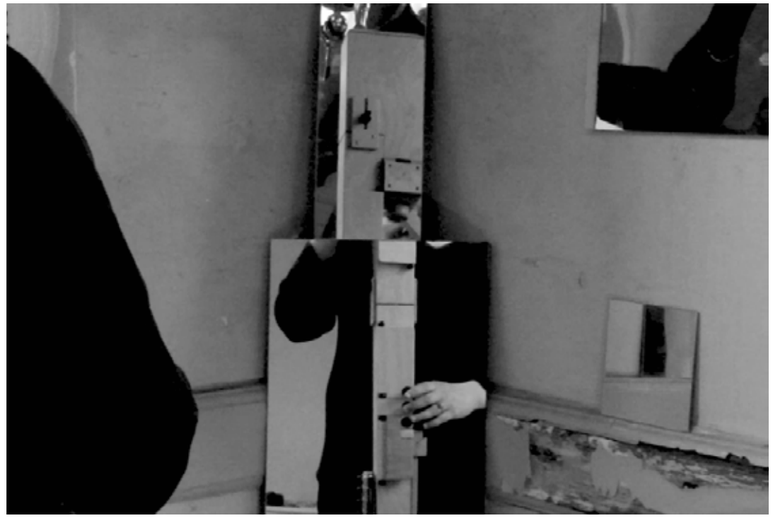
Dream Recorder:
Score instructions



Supported by

The idea for this piece came from an earlier project about 'dreaming in a time of a pandemic' drawing on recent research on how crises affect dreams and cognitive processes. See: https://danielportelli.com.au/dream-recorder/

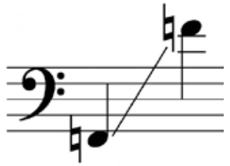
The piece was initially written for contrabass recorder to be performed in a lucid dream with a 15 second graphic notation that needs to be memorised. That notation was extended to 20 minutes for this waking life version of the piece. The performer is surround by mirrors of various shapes and styles as mirrors exhibit unstable and distorted characteristics in dreams due to their elusive and ephemeral nature. Forms reflected in mirrors are perpetually in flux, and reveal the inherent instability of perception. Can we consciously influence music we experience in a dream? Does the performer have any conscious or unconscious agency in forming their interpretation of the music? And how exactly does our brain 'listen' to it?

Images taken from rehearsals at Annandale Community Centre, Gadigal Country, Sydney.
Performer: Dr Alana Blackburn, 9 October 2024.

General instructions

- The graphic score consists of a series of dials that resemble clocks. Just like a clock they are numbered from 1 to 12, with 2 hands (big and small) that point towards numbers.
- The position of the big hand indicates how many sounds to make on the recorder. 12 = 12 sounds, 11 = 11 sounds, 10 = 10 sounds, 9 = 9 sounds, and so on. A single sound is whatever sound is made on the recorder that has a demarcation before and after it. The sounds can be different from each other, or the same. The spacing between each sound should be irregular wherever possible.
- The position of the little hand indicates the time in which to make the sounds. 12 = 12 seconds, 11 = 11 seconds, 10 = 10 seconds, 9 = 9 seconds, and so on. An example in the score is: 5, 2" – which means play 5 sounds in 2 seconds (in an irregular way, non-geometrically aligned, uneven, different with each iteration)
- The blue lines represent sounds that are breathier. The red lines have sharper attacks and are grittier.

Follow the dotted line. – – – – – – – – – – start where it says the word "Start" and play the nearest clock. Once you finish, follow the dotted line to the next clock and play that. Keep doing this, following the dotted line until it finishes, which is the end of that fragment.



This is the pitch range of the contrabass recorder in F2, which is the one used in the graphic score. But it can also be adapted for recorders of any octave.

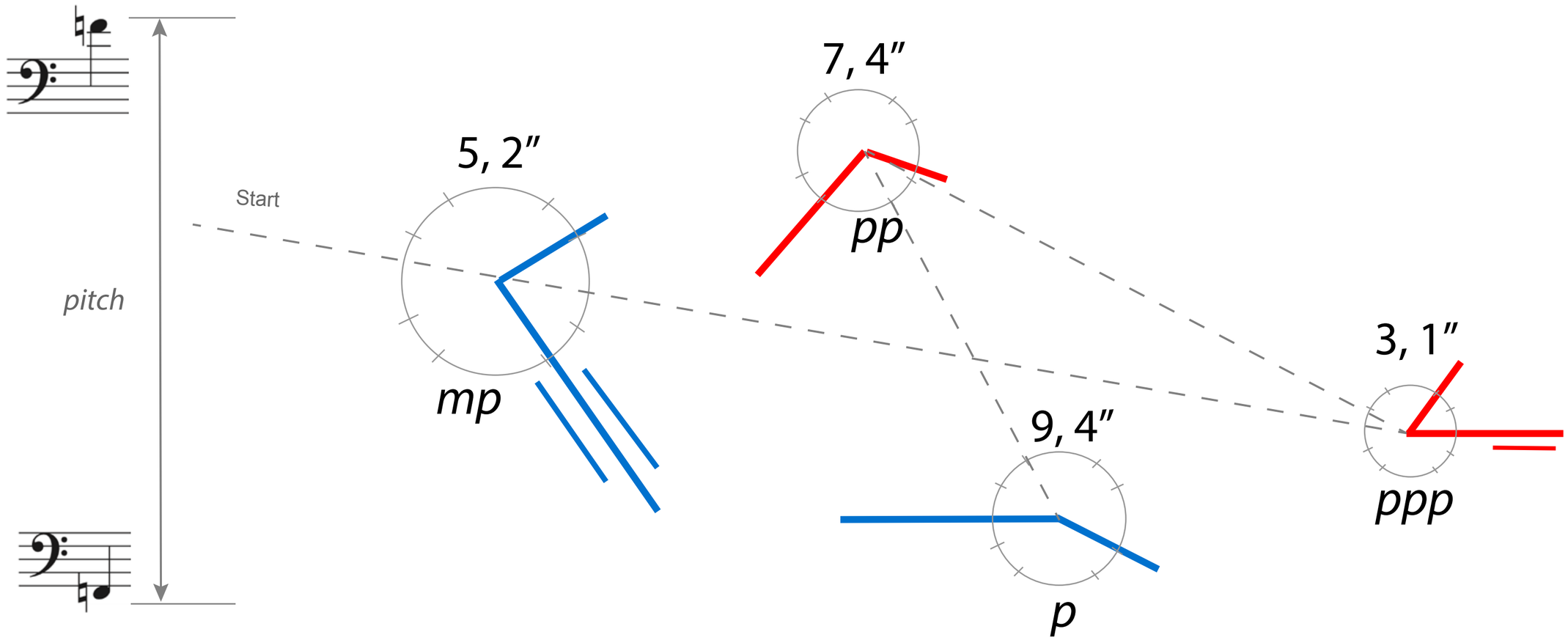
Pitch is indicated by how high or low the clocks are positioned in space. The higher the symbol, the higher the pitch. Pitch is imprecise, so explore pitch roughly in that area.

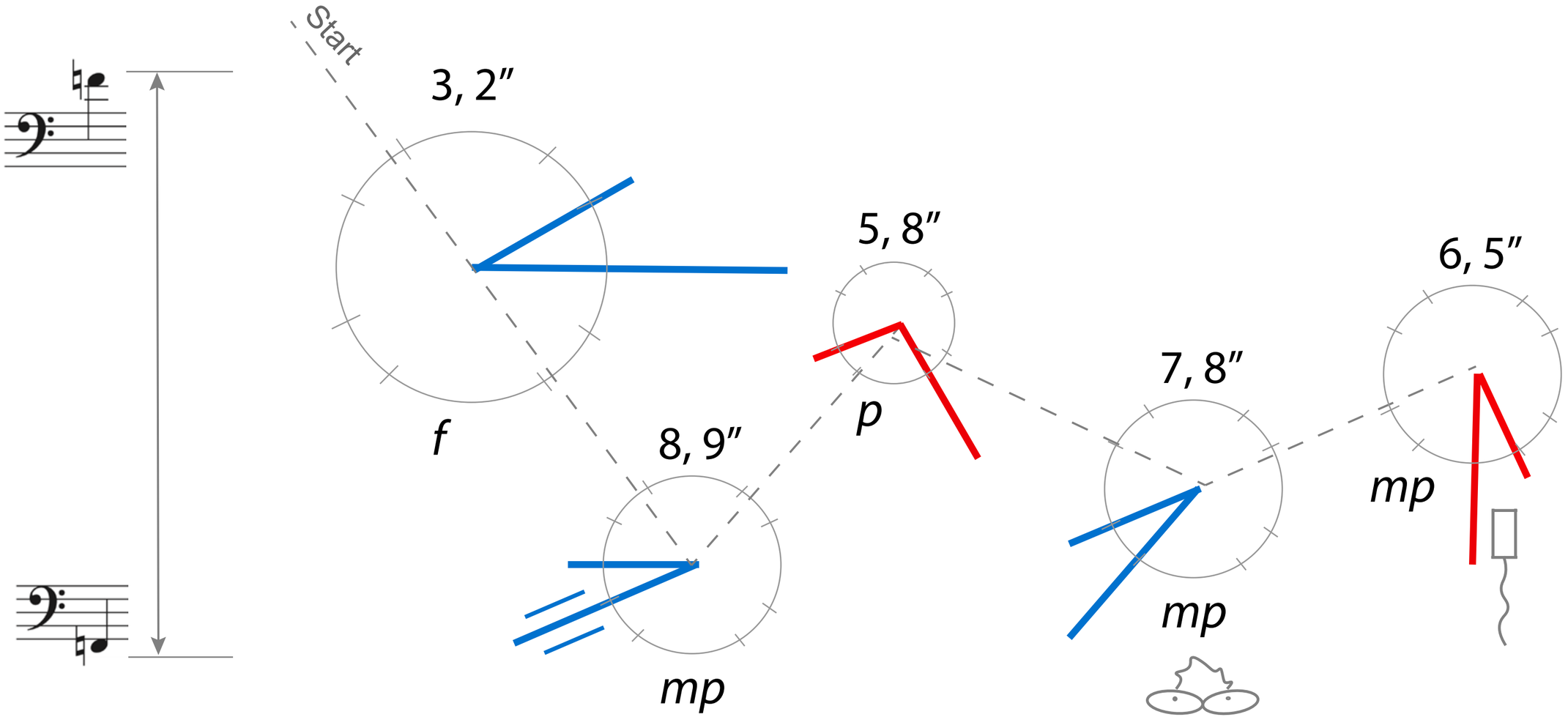
Dynamics

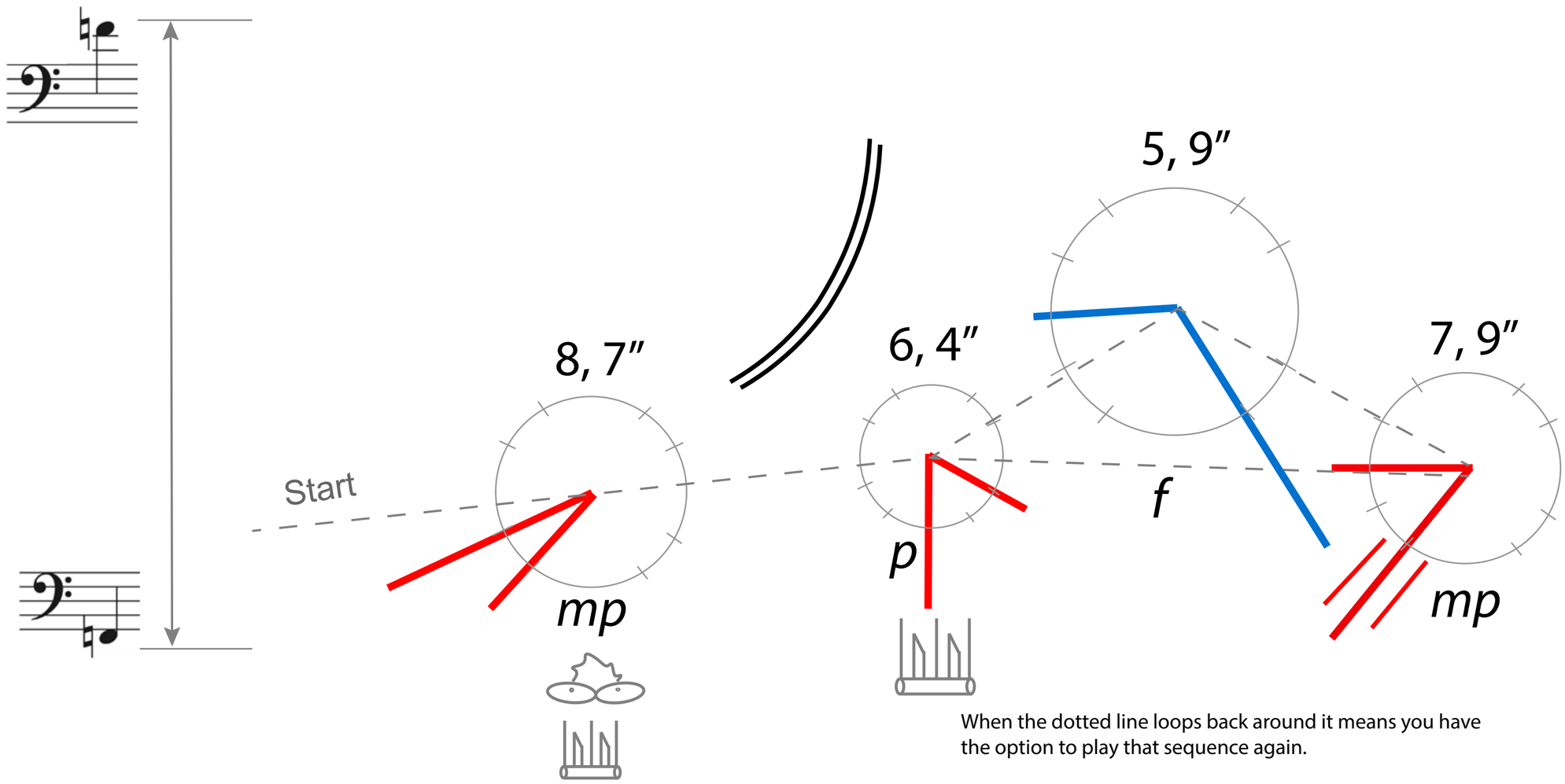
The size of the symbol indicates how loud to play it (a suggested dynamic has been written underneath). The player needs to estimate the pitch and the dynamics based on the relative size and position of the symbols.

Preparation

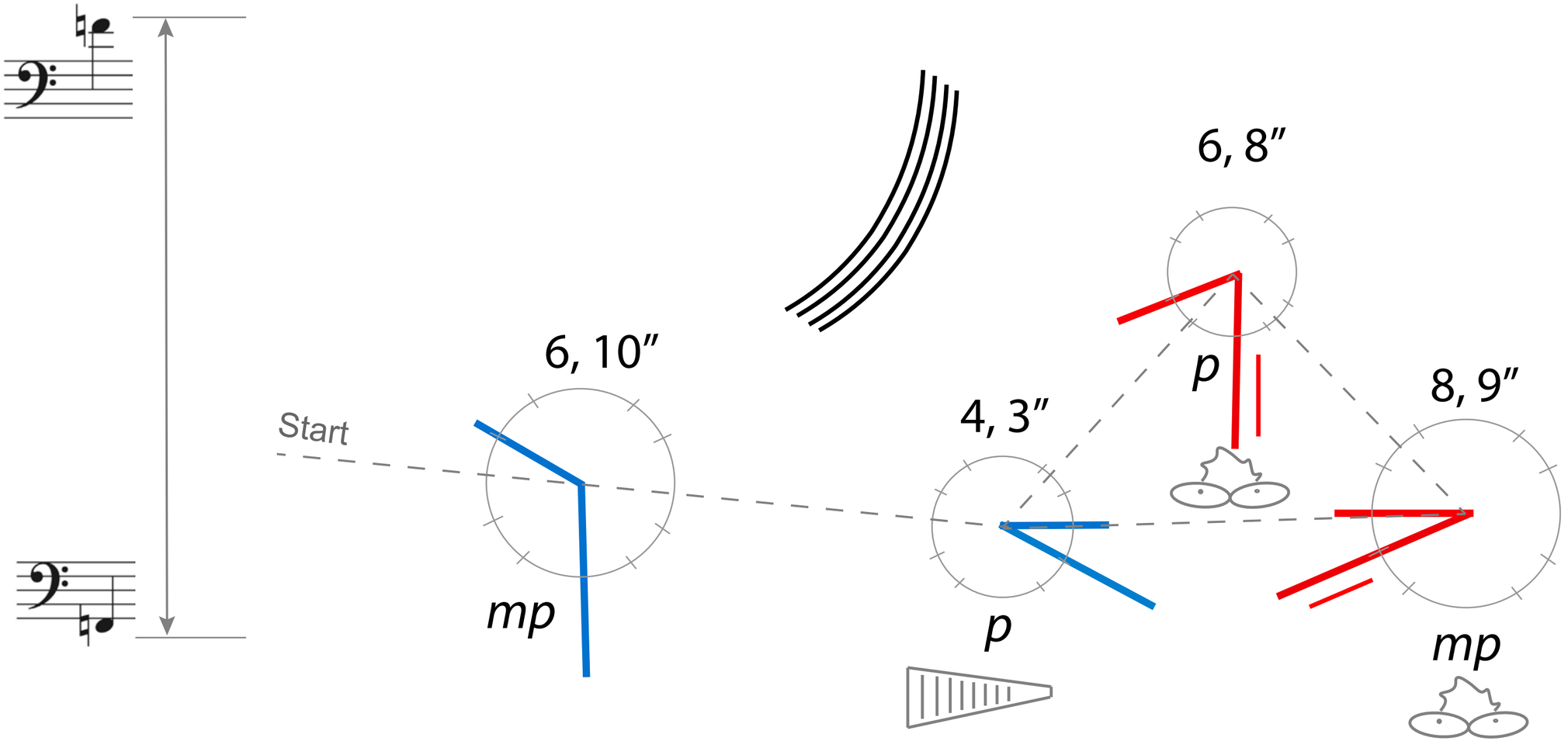
Folded up aluminum foil can be placed between the head joint and the middle joint to create a buzzing sound.

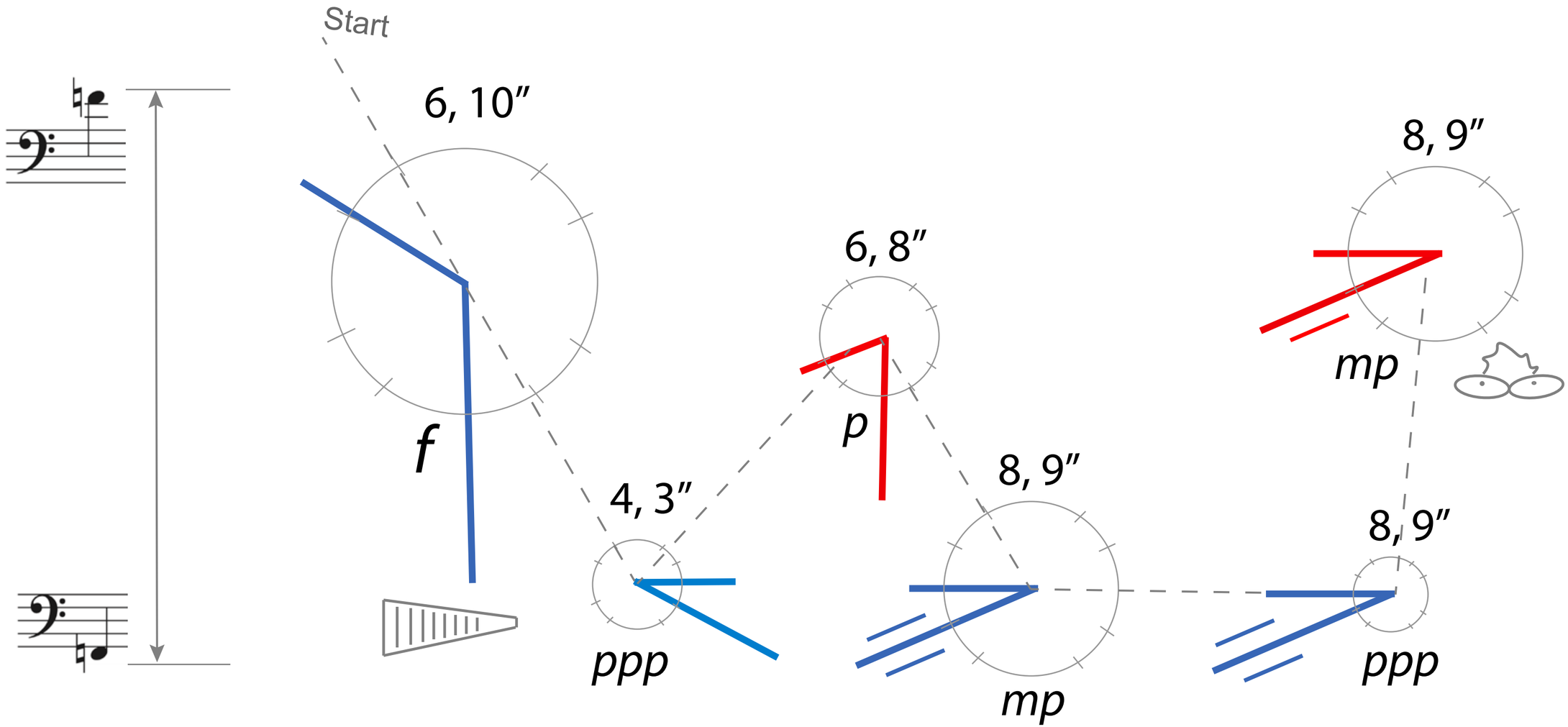

Start
pitch
5, 2″
mp
7, 4″
pp
9, 4″
p
3, 1″
ppp

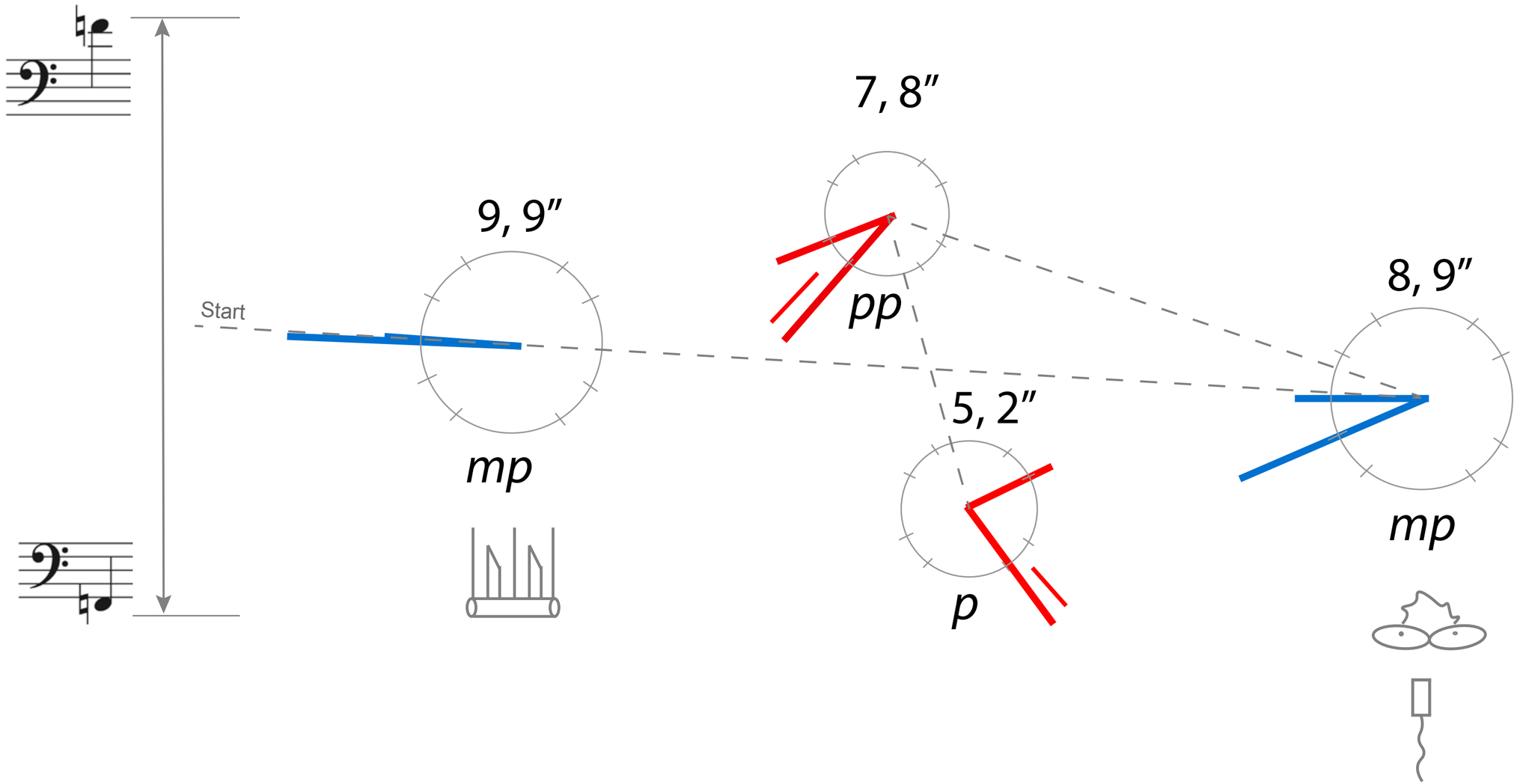

Start
3, 2″
f
8, 9″
mp
5, 8″
p
7, 8″
mp
6, 5″
mp

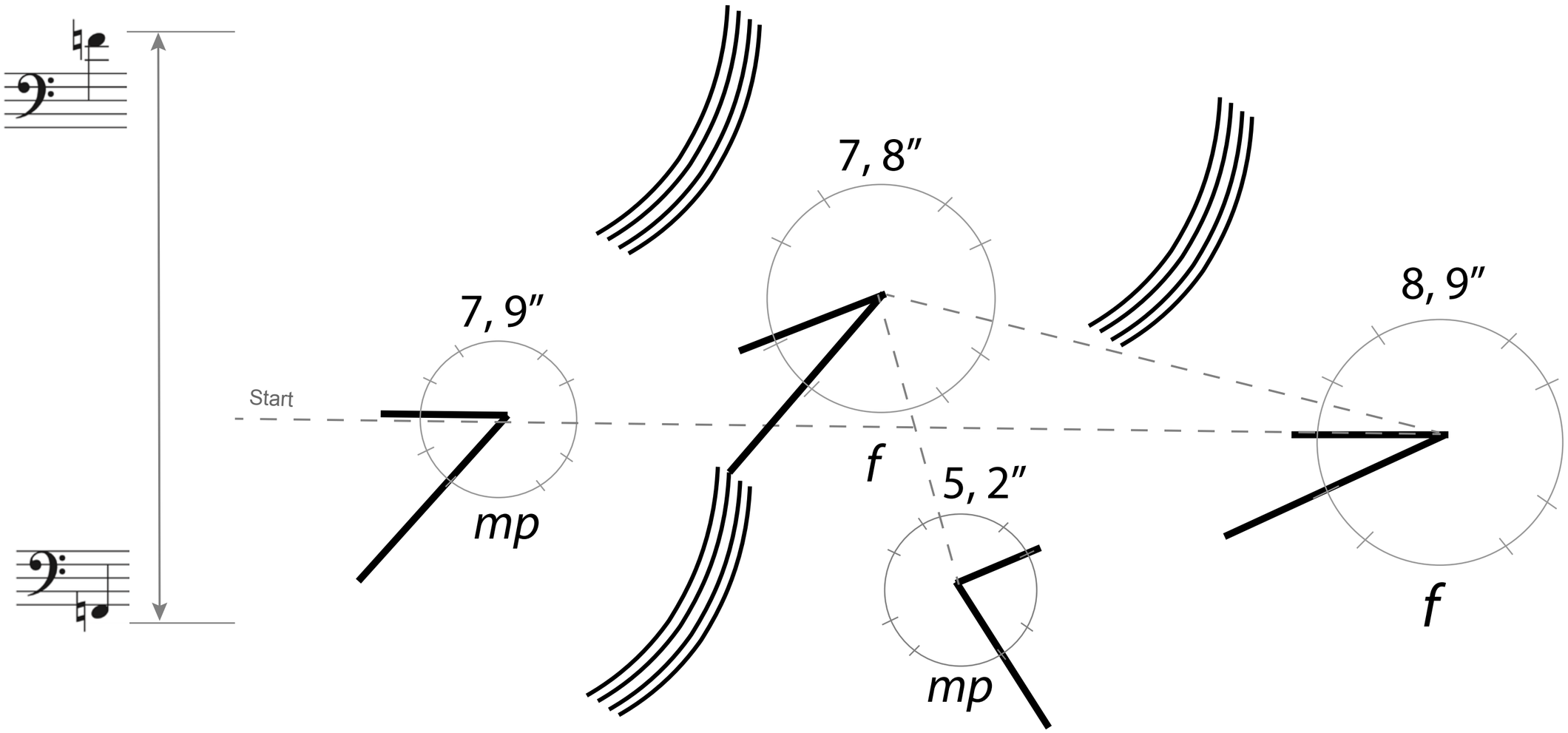


When the dotted line loops back around it means you have the option to play that sequence again.


Start
6, 10″
mp
4, 3″
p
6, 8″
p
8, 9″
mp

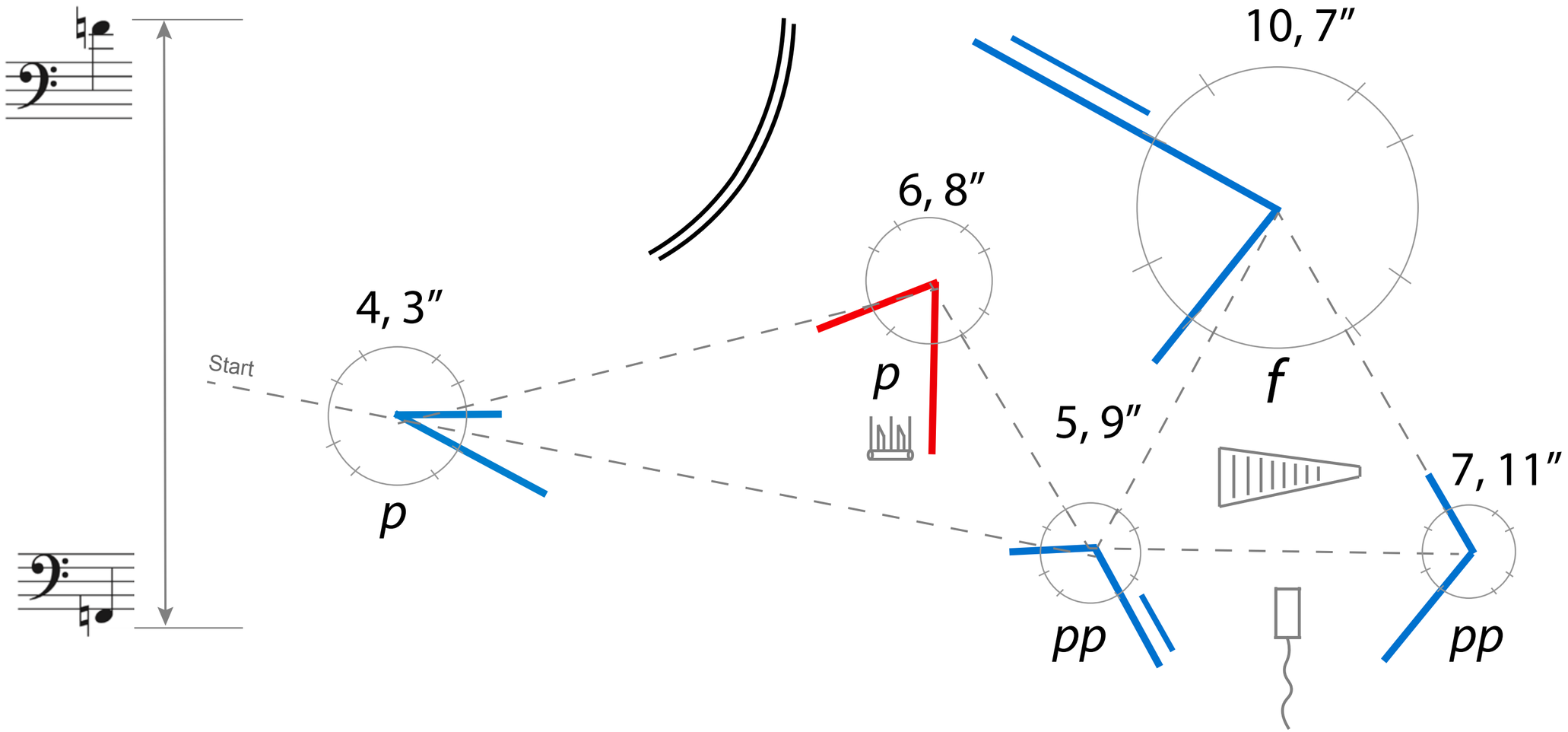

Start
6, 10″
f
4, 3″
ppp
6, 8″
p
8, 9″
mp
8, 9″
mp
8, 9″
ppp

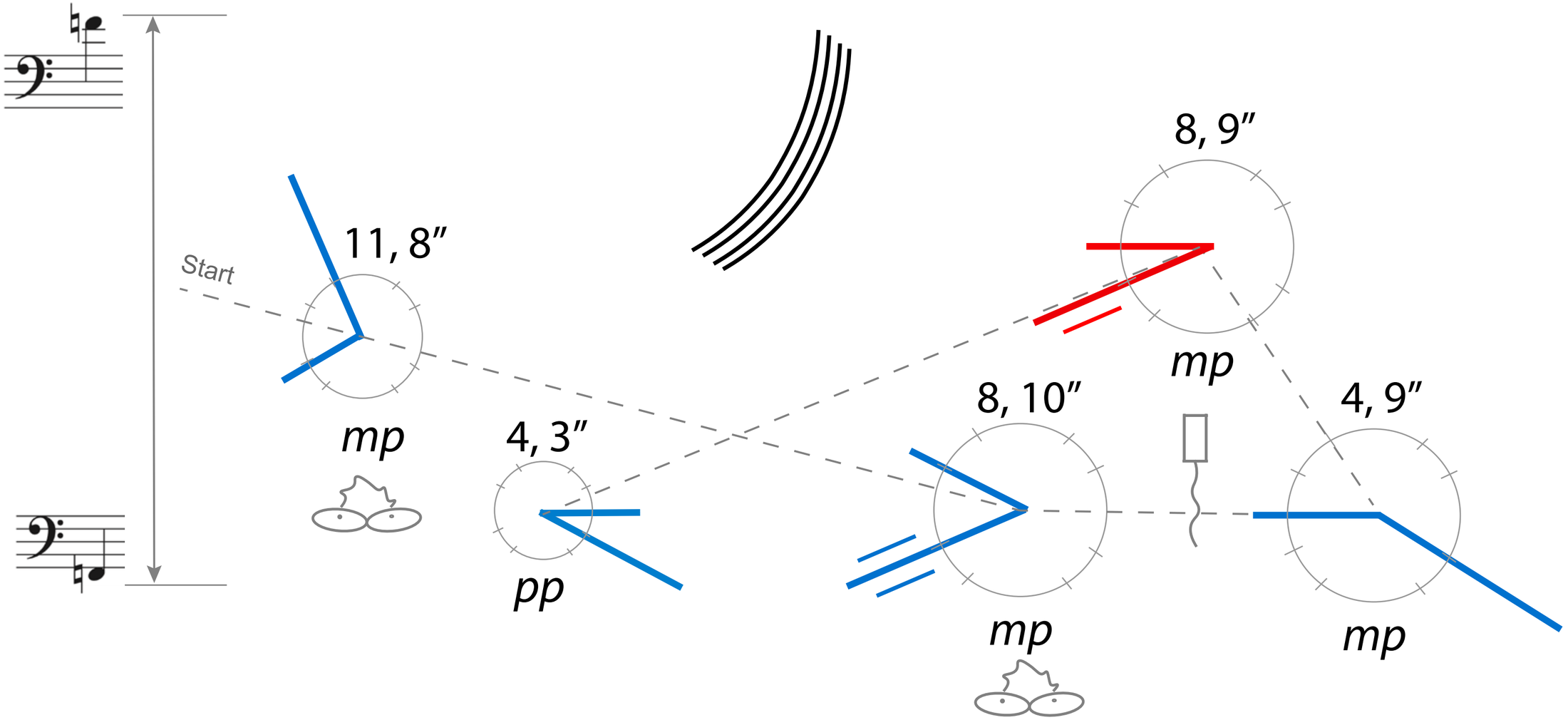

Start
9, 9″
mp
7, 8″
pp
5, 2″
p
8, 9″
mp

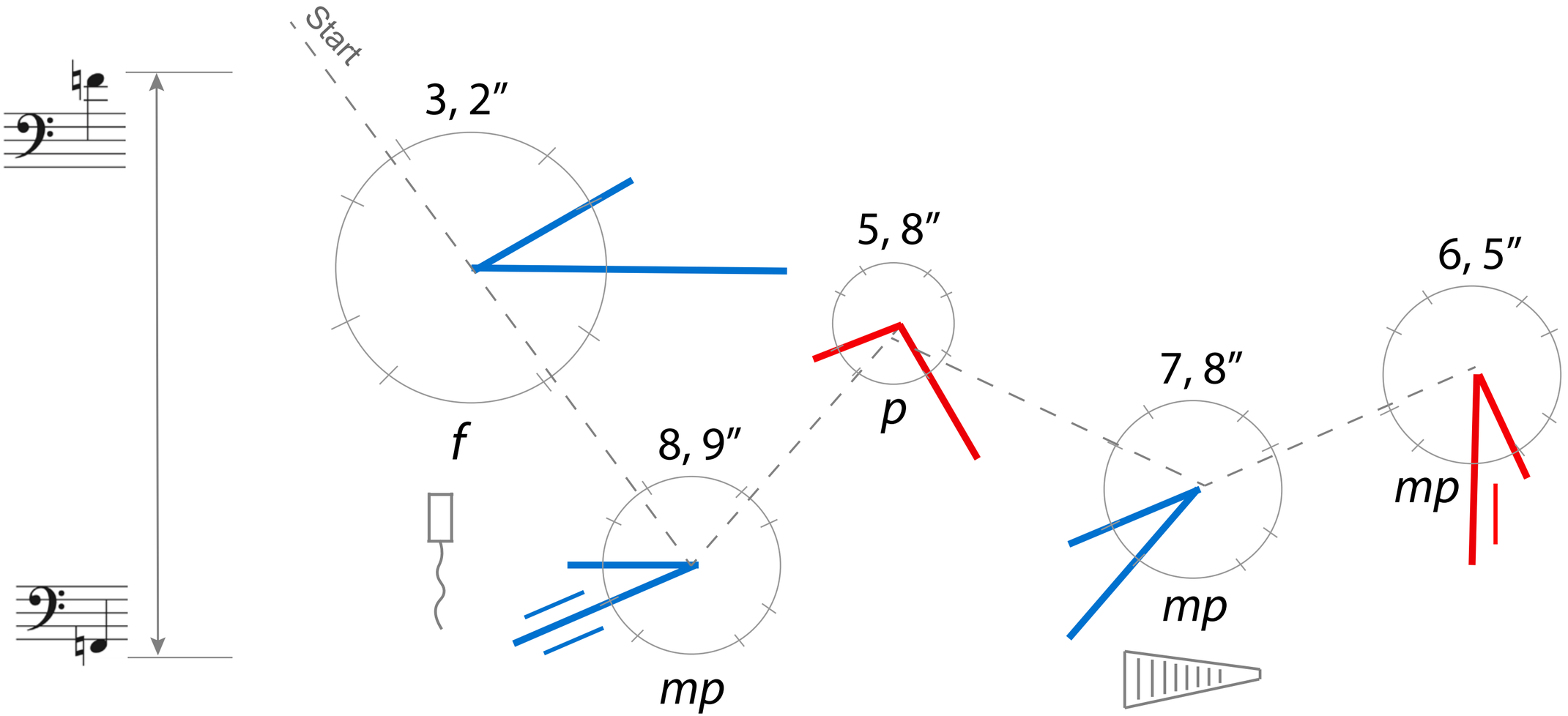


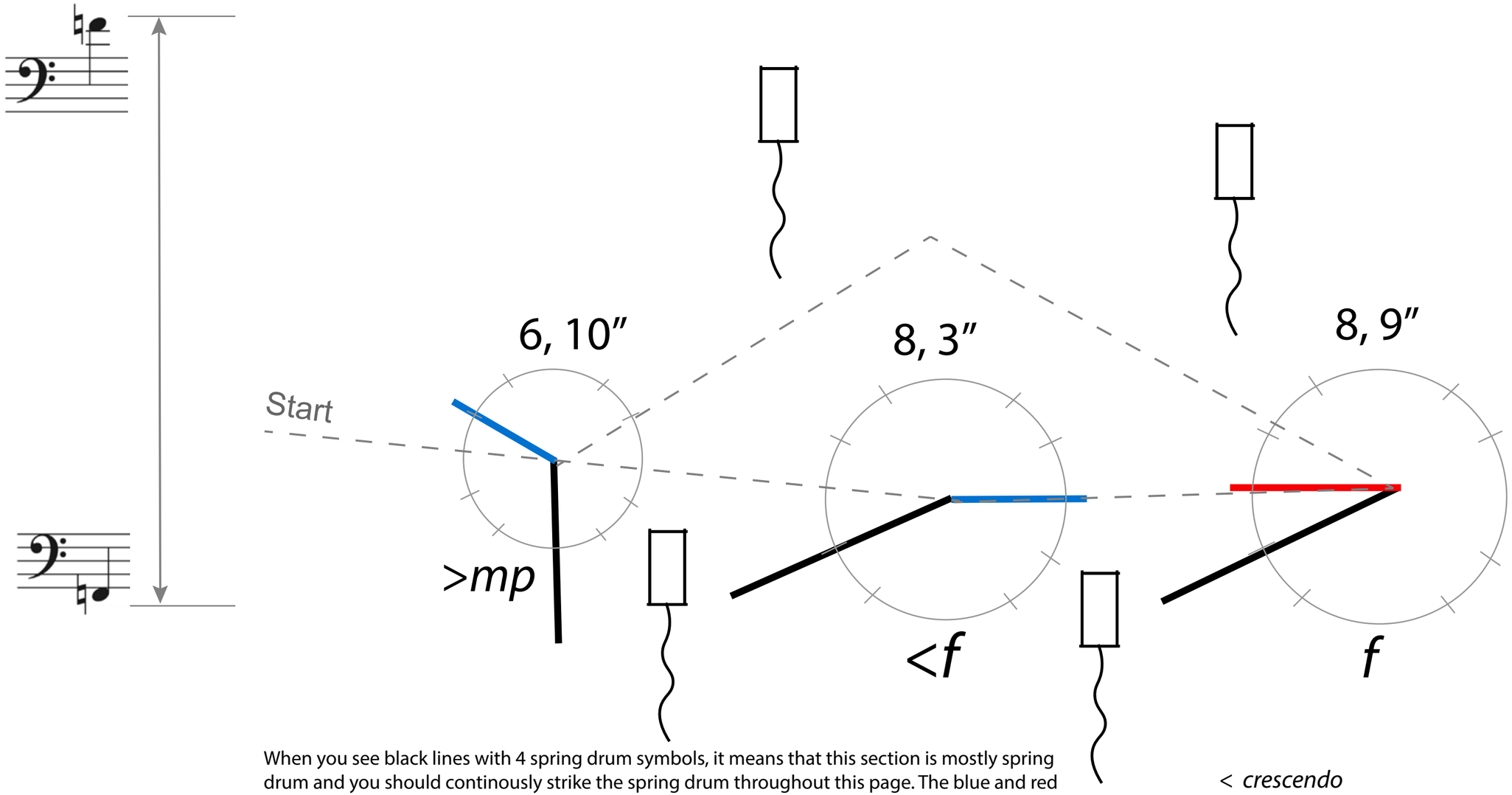
When you see black clocks with 4 curved lines (x3), it means that only electronics are to be used on this page.

Some pages are fixed and some can be freely rearranged. When you see a page number in the bottom right hand corner, it means that that page must be ordered with that page number (page 7). When there is no page number it means that the performer can freely choose the order of that page.


Start
4, 3″
p
6, 8″
p
10, 7″
f
5, 9″
pp
7, 11″
pp

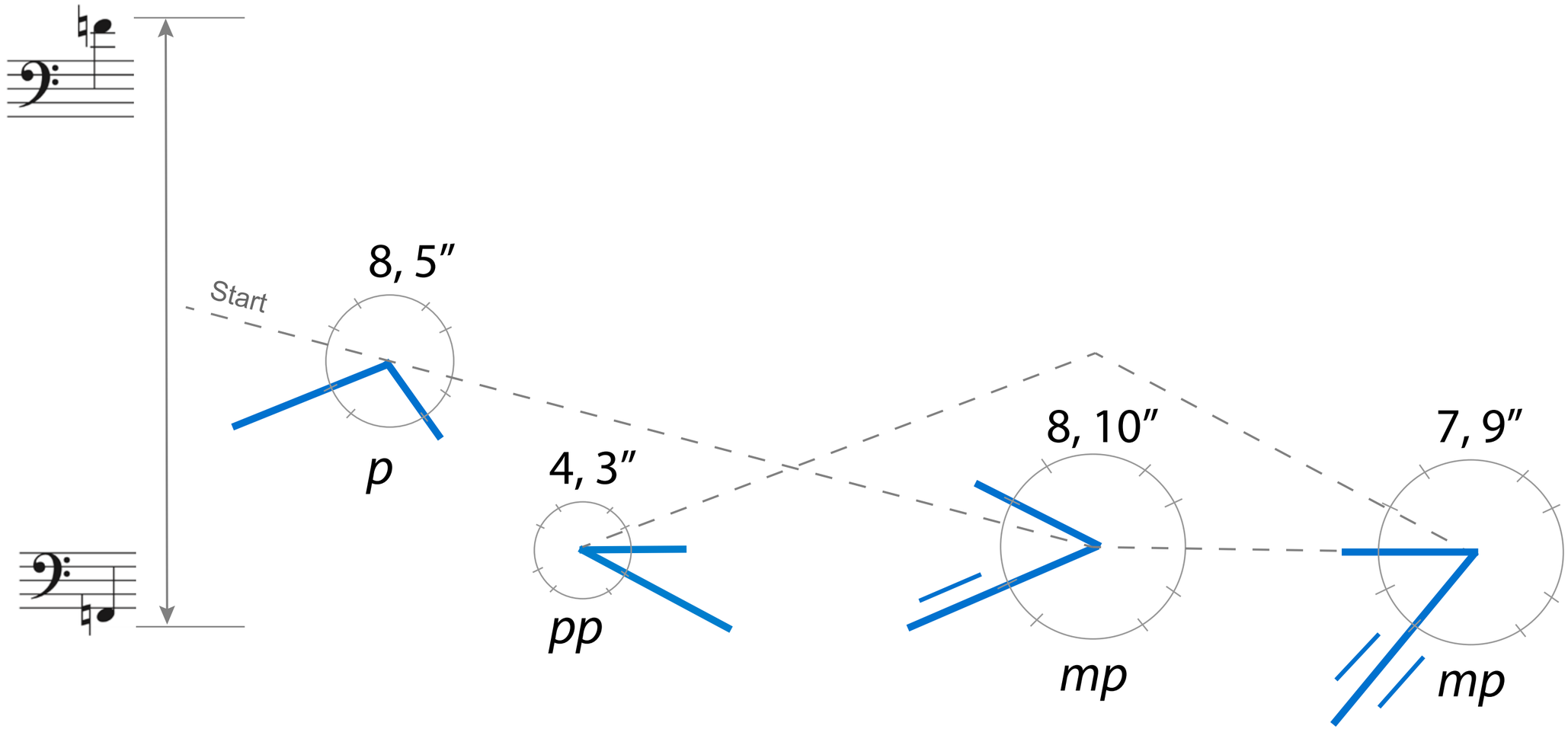

Start
11, 8″
mp
4, 3″
pp
8, 9″
mp
8, 10″
mp
4, 9″
mp

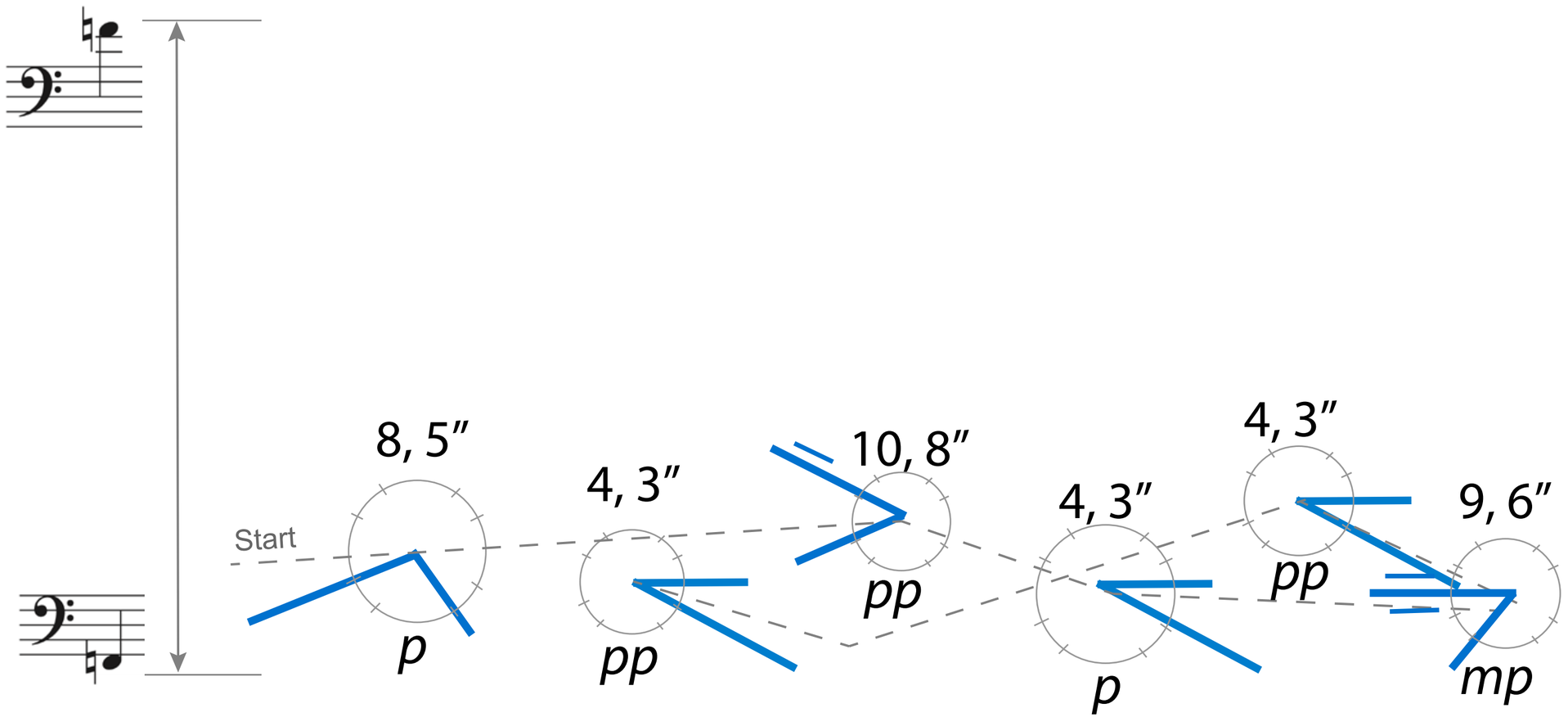

Start
3, 2″
f
8, 9″
mp
5, 8″
p
7, 8″
mp
6, 5″
mp

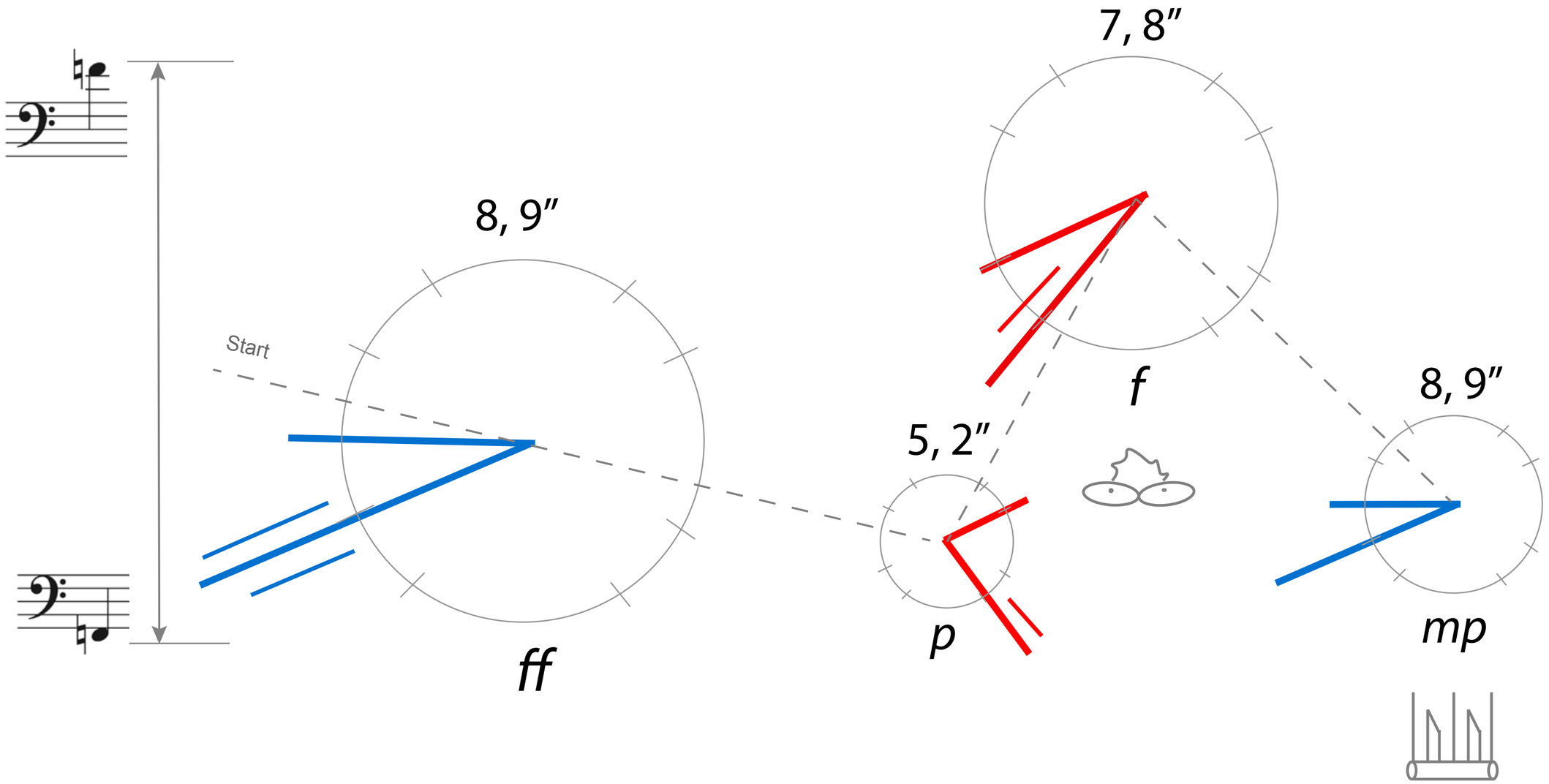


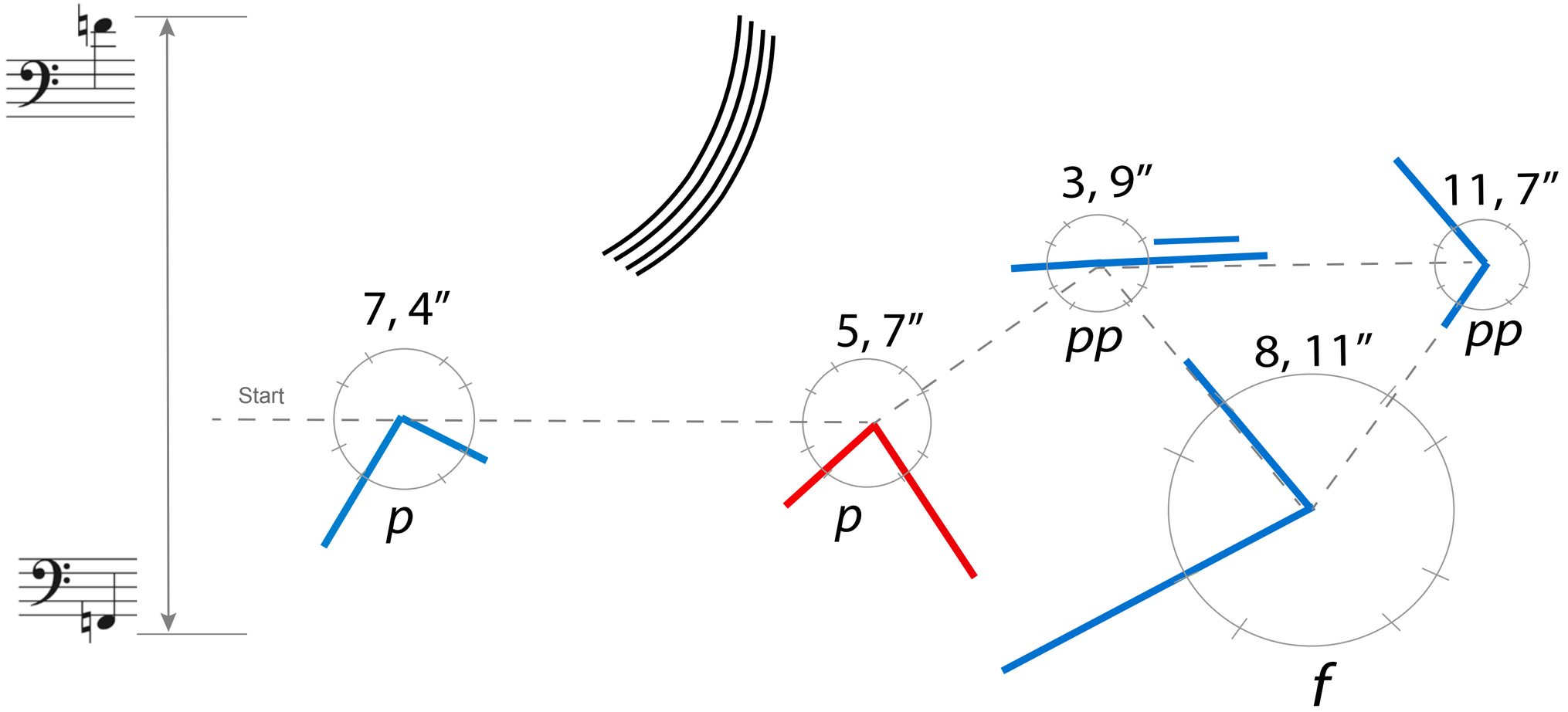
When you see black lines with 4 spring drum symbols, it means that this section is mostly spring drum and you should continously strike the spring drum throughout this page. The blue and red lines in the little hands means you can also play the contrabass recorder as well.

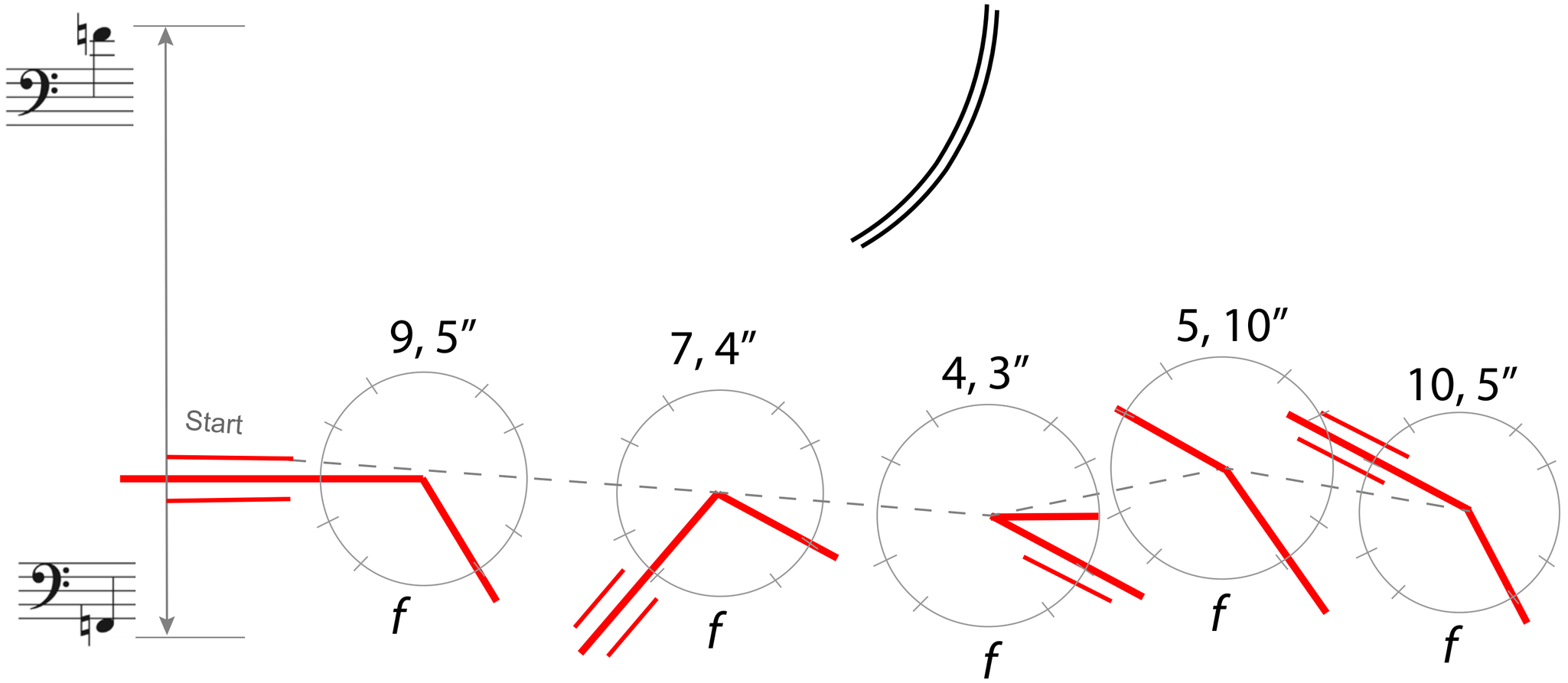
< *crescendo*
> *decrescendo*

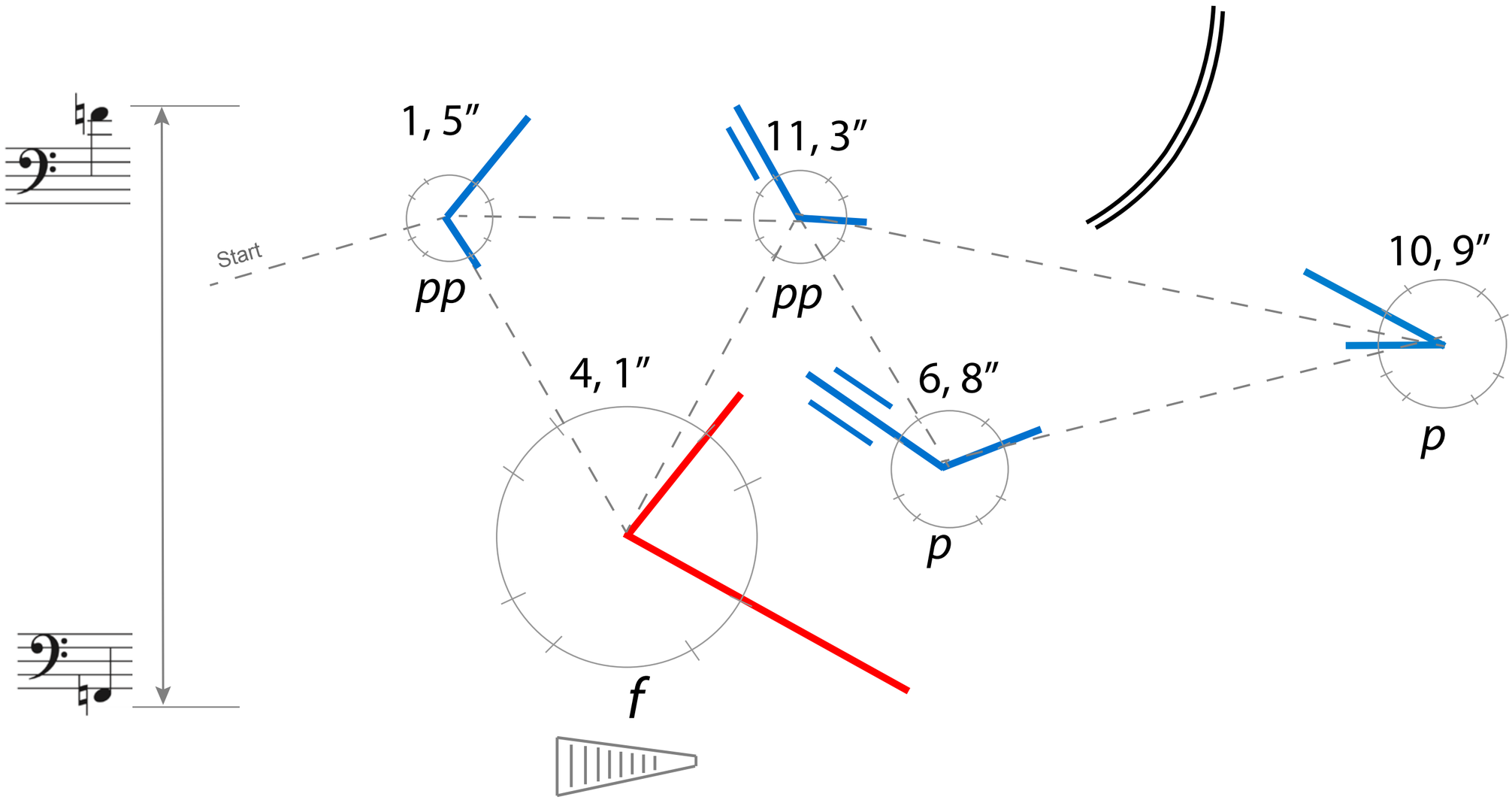

Start
8, 5″
p
4, 3″
pp
8, 10″
mp
7, 9″
mp

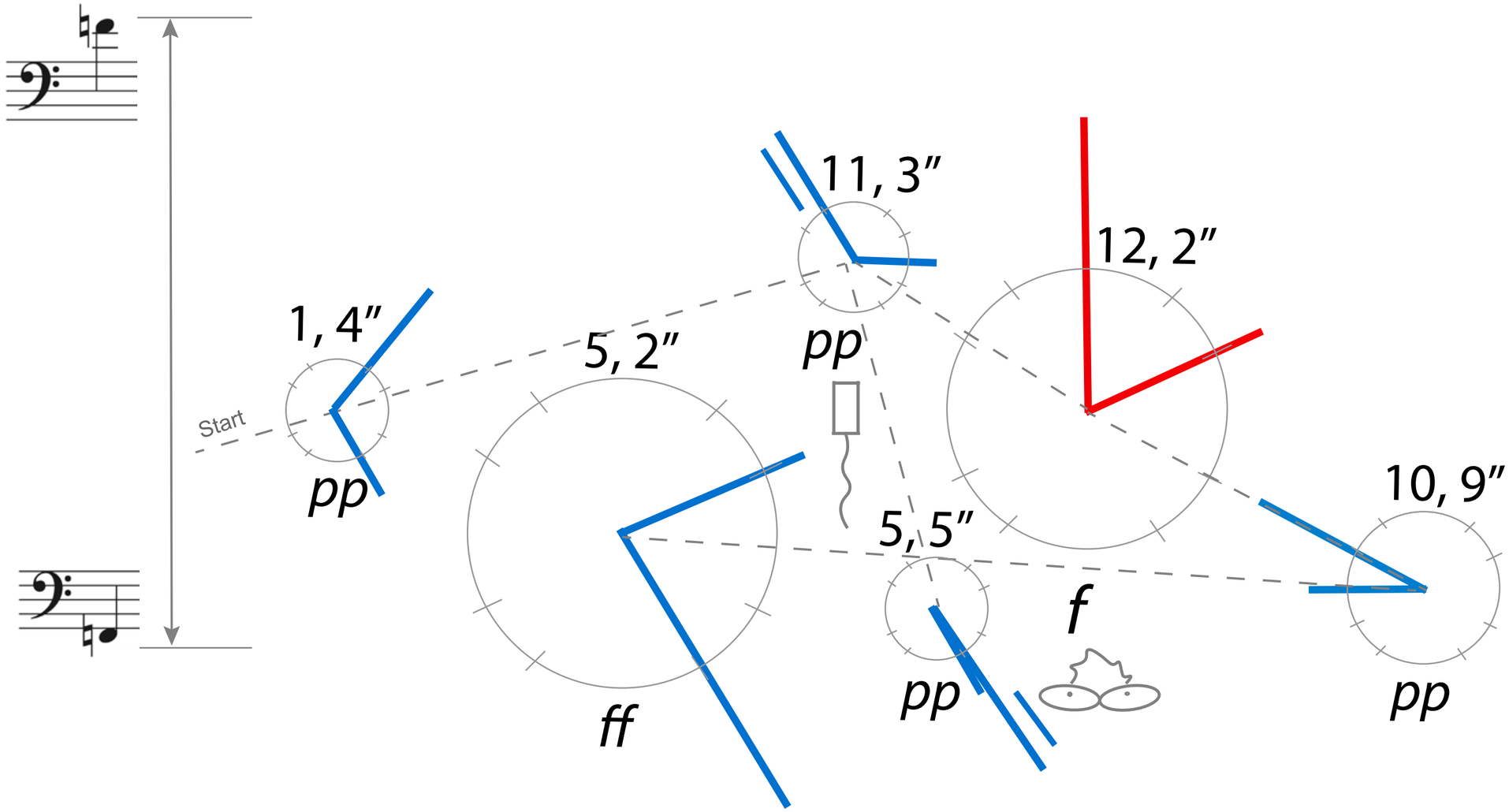

Start
8, 5″
p
4, 3″
pp
10, 8″
pp
4, 3″
p
4, 3″
pp
9, 6″
mp

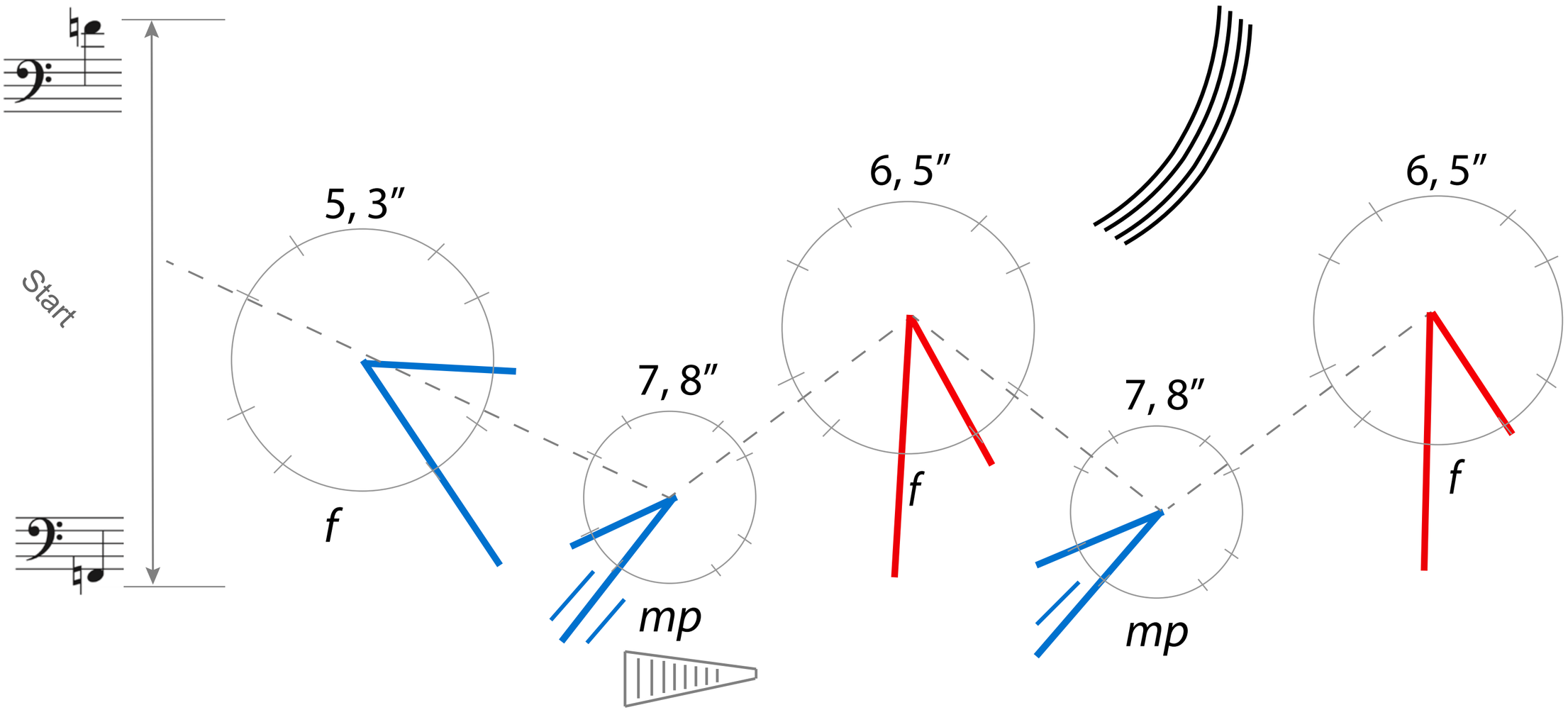

Start
8, 9″
ff
7, 8″
f
5, 2″
p
8, 9″
mp

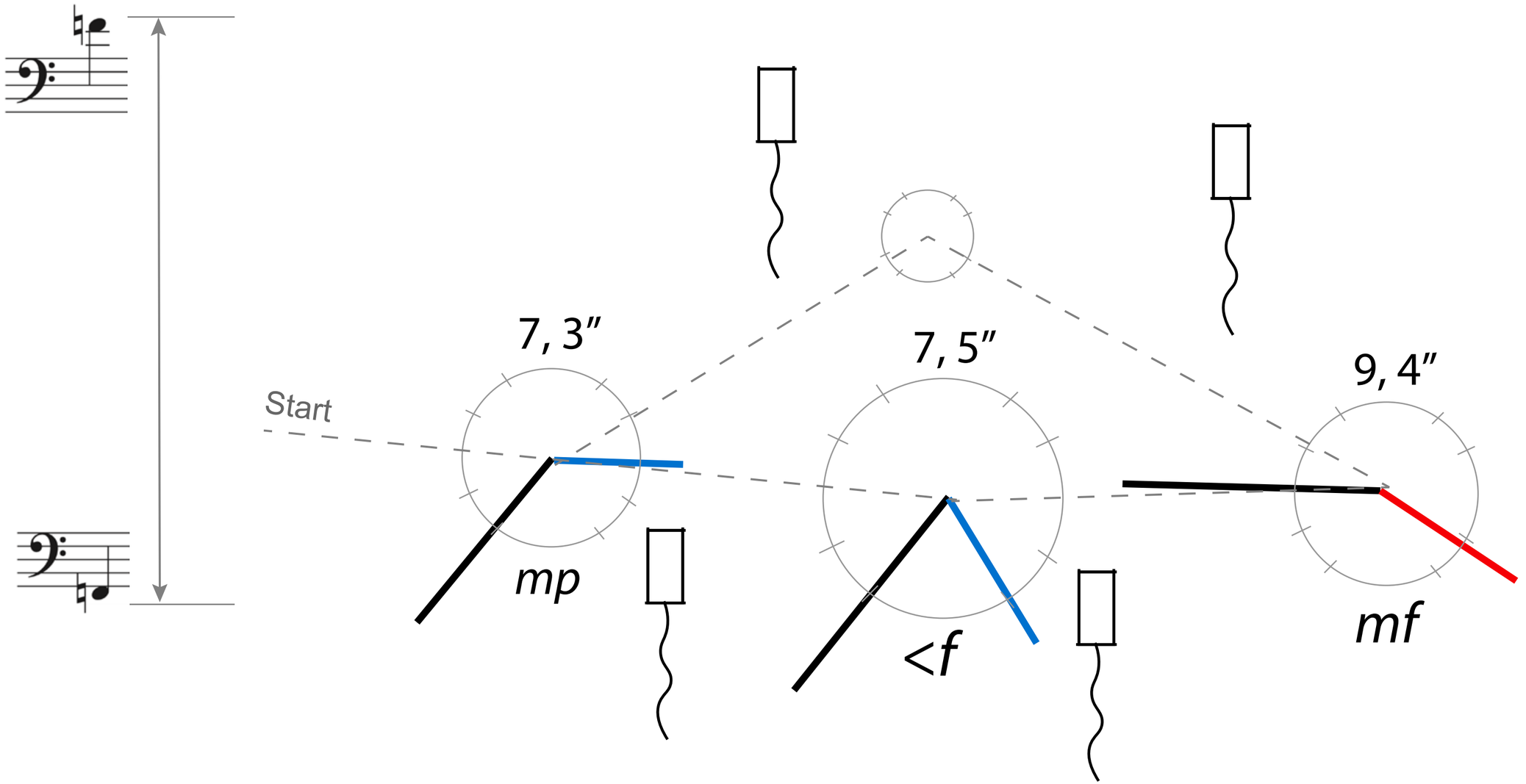

Start
7, 4″
p
5, 7″
p
3, 9″
pp
11, 7″
pp
8, 11″
f


Start
9, 5″
7, 4″
4, 3″
5, 10″
10, 5″
f
f
f
f
f

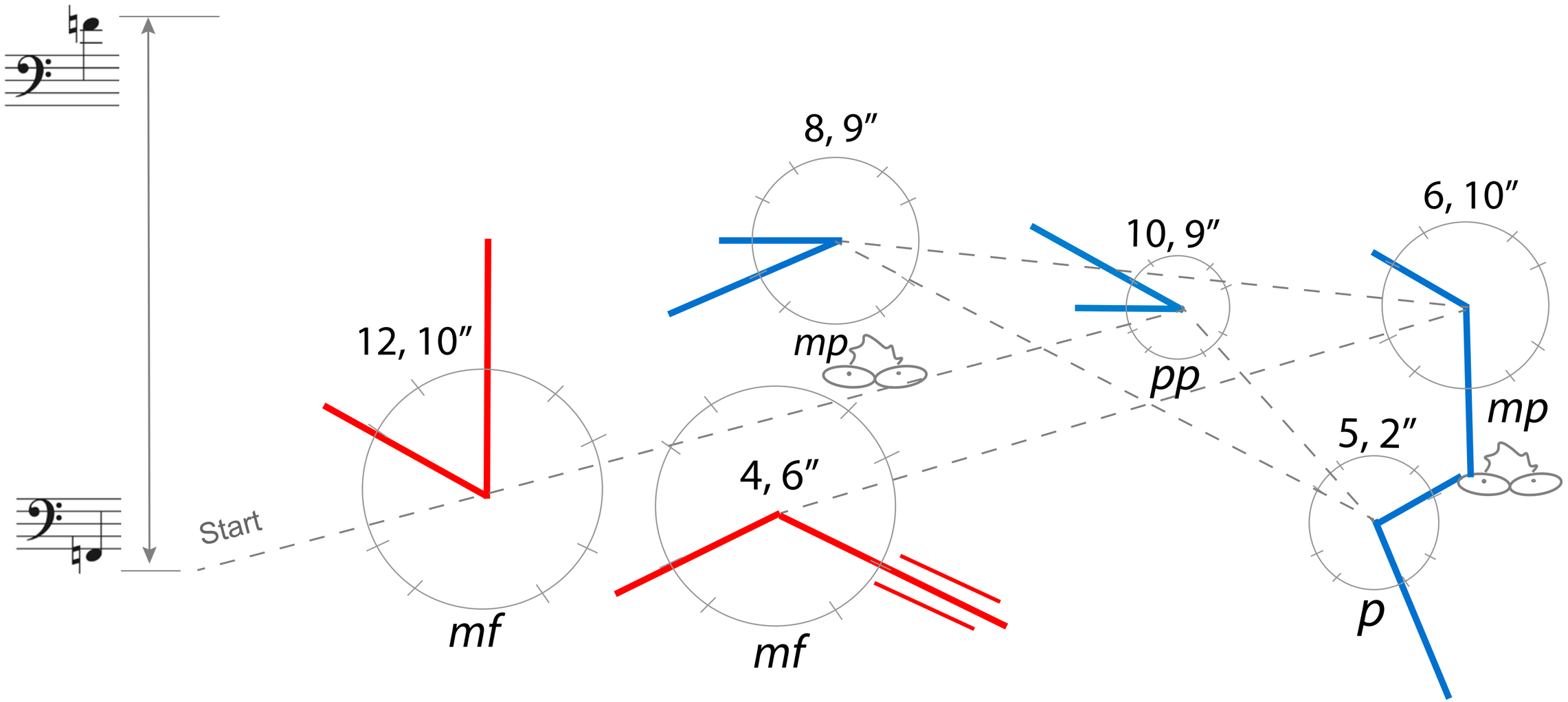

Start
1, 5″
pp
11, 3″
pp
4, 1″
f
6, 8″
p
10, 9″
p

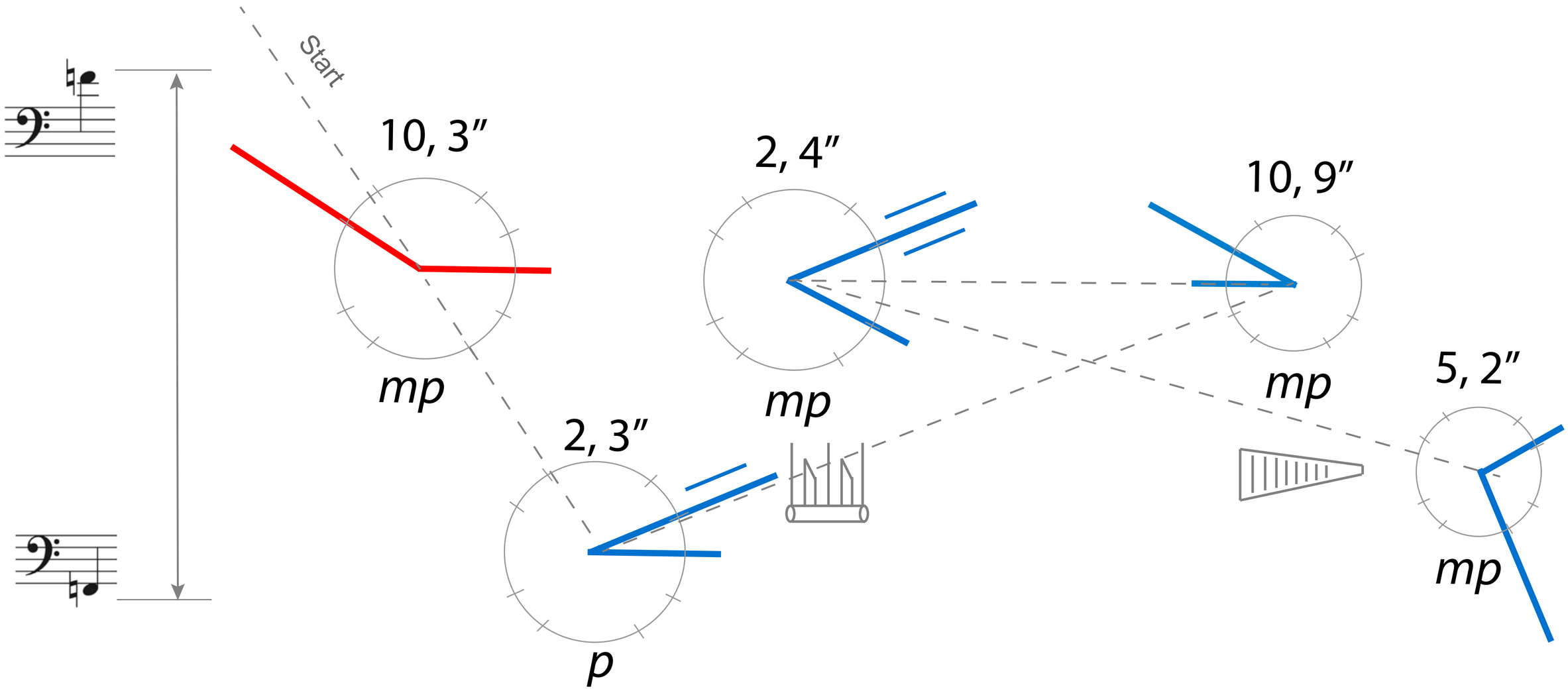

Start
1, 4″
pp
5, 2″
ff
11, 3″
pp
5, 5″
pp
12, 2″
f
10, 9″
pp

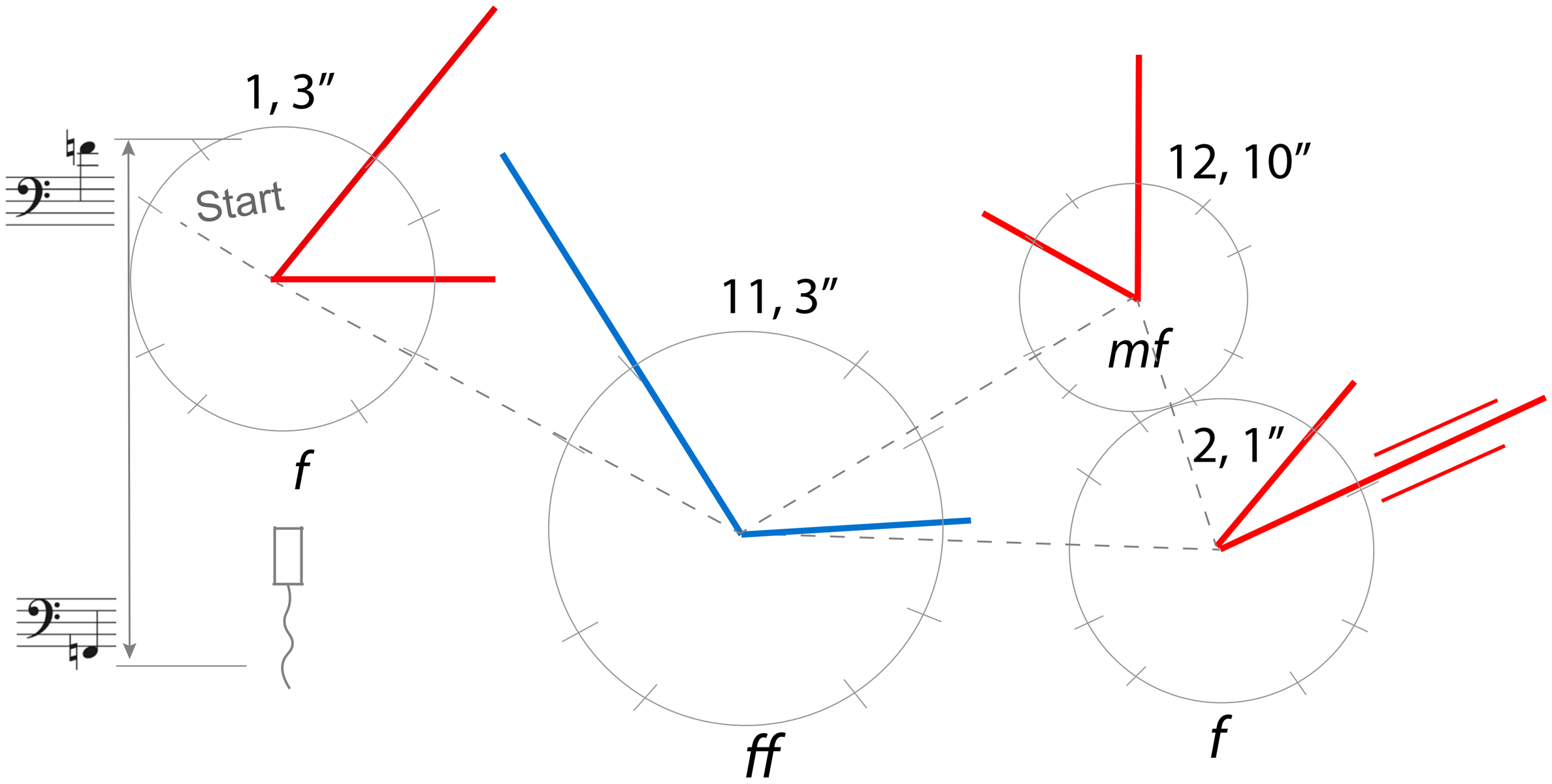

Start
5, 3″
f
7, 8″
mp
6, 5″
f
7, 8″
mp
6, 5″
f

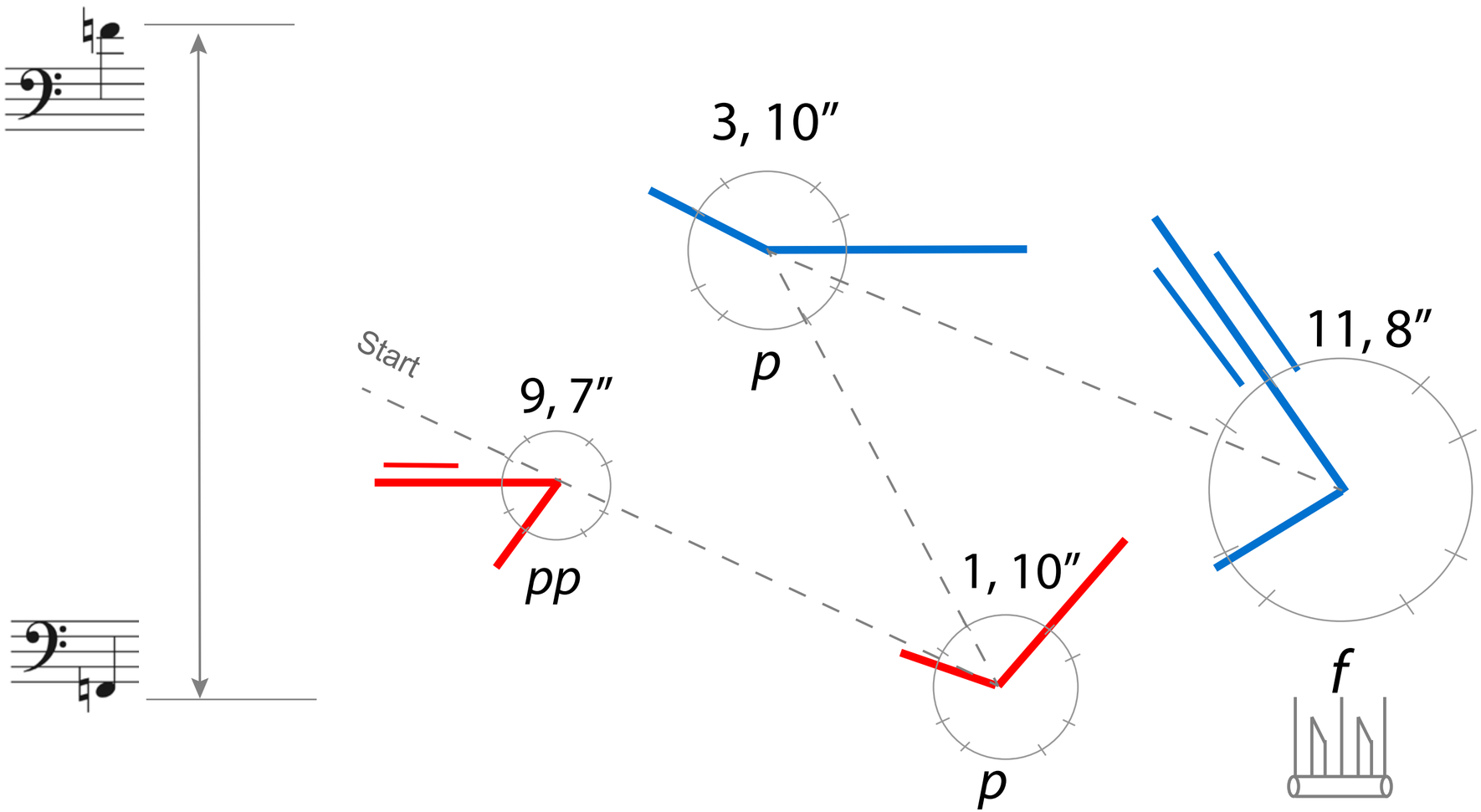


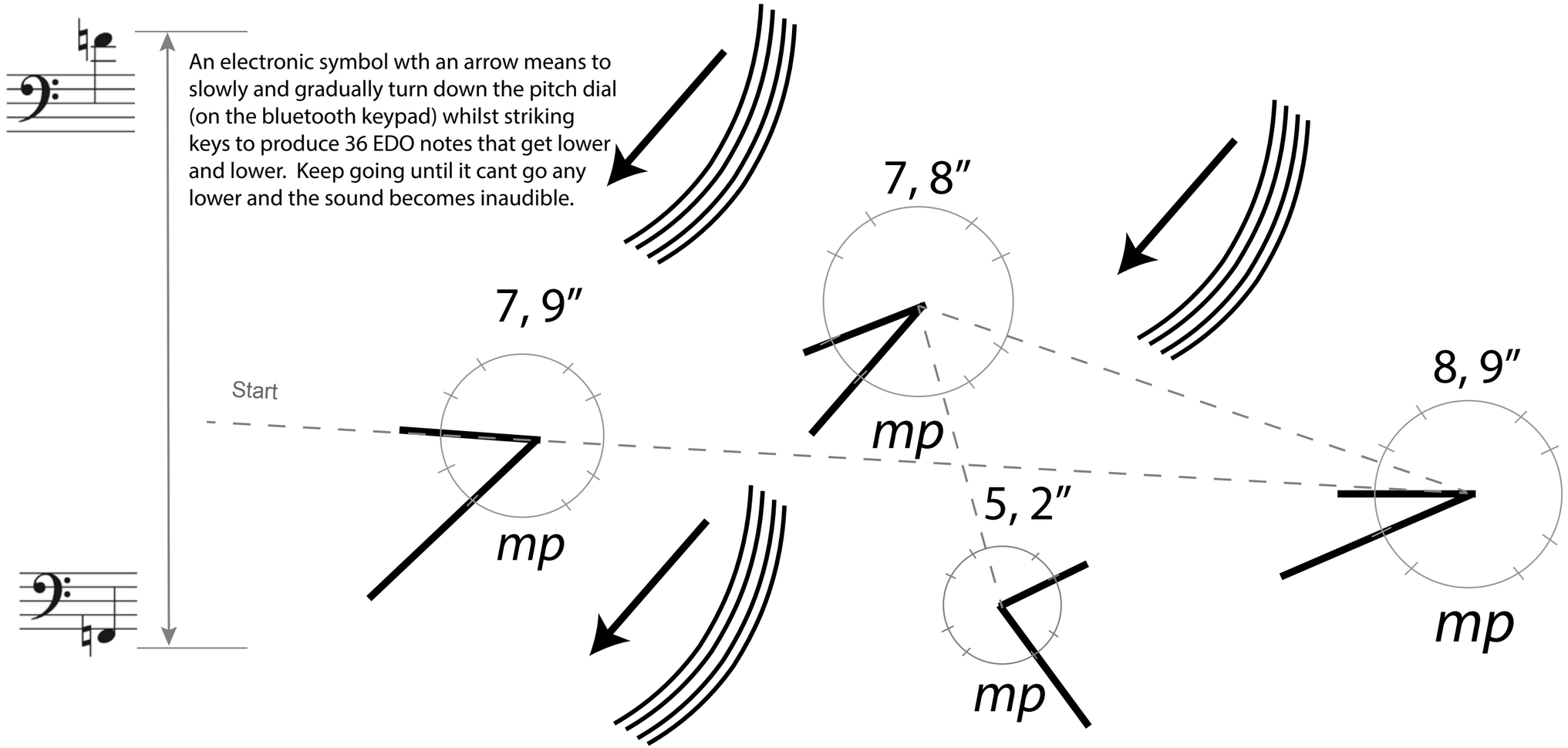
When you see black lines with 4 spring drum symbols, it means that this section is mostly spring drum and you should continously strike the spring drum throughout this page. The blue and red lines in the little hands means you can also play the contrabass recorder as well.

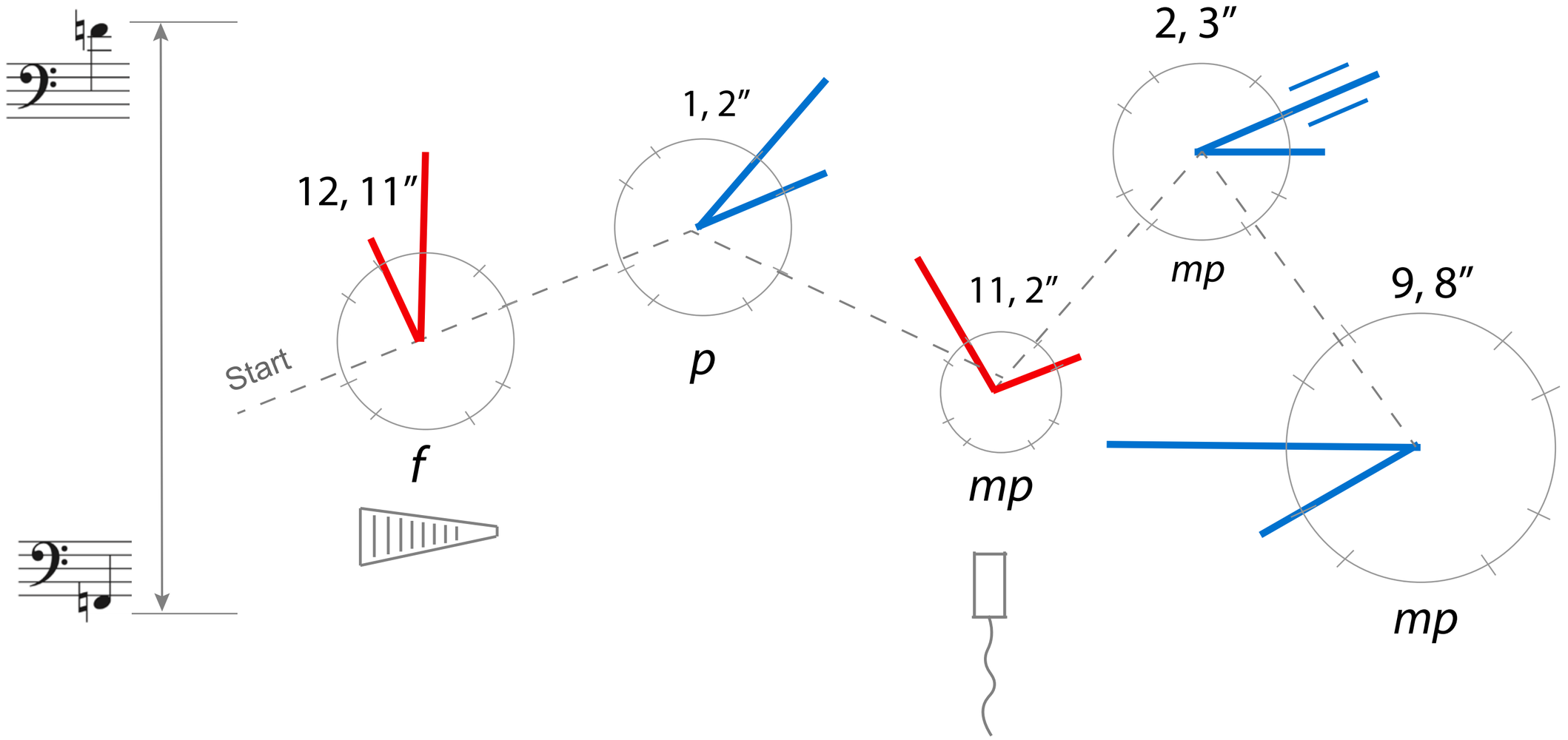

8, 9″
12, 10″
10, 9″
6, 10″
mp
pp
mp
5, 2″
4, 6″
Start
mf
mf
p

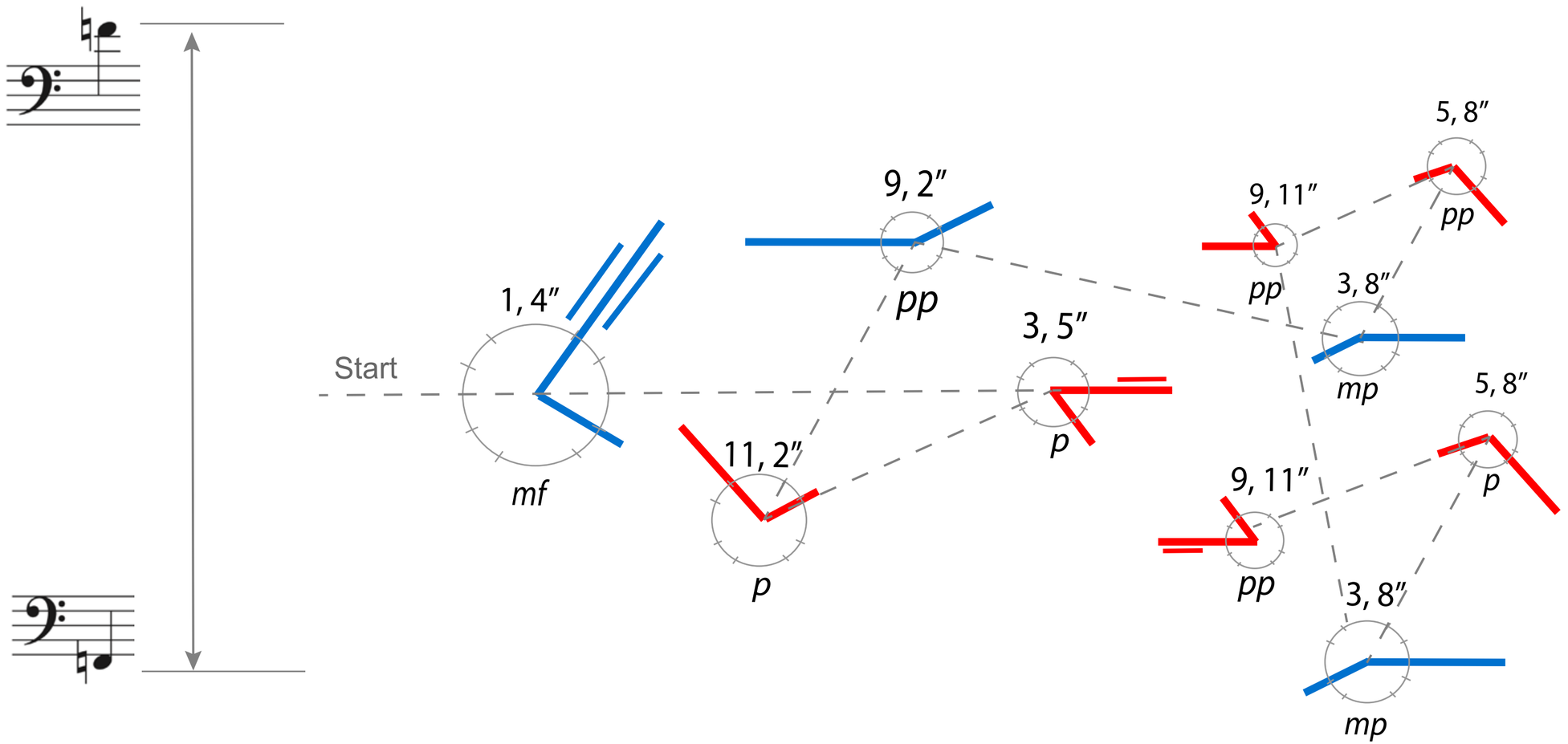

Start
10, 3″
mp
2, 4″
mp
10, 9″
mp
2, 3″
p
5, 2″
mp


1, 3″
Start
f
11, 3″
ff
12, 10″
mf
2, 1″
f


Start
9, 7″
pp
3, 10″
p
1, 10″
p
11, 8″
f


An electronic symbol wth an arrow means to slowly and gradually turn down the pitch dial (on the bluetooth keypad) whilst striking keys to produce 36 EDO notes that get lower and lower. Keep going until it cant go any lower and the sound becomes inaudible.
Start
7, 9″
mp
7, 8″
mp
5, 2″
mp
8, 9″
mp


12, 11″
Start
f
1, 2″
p
11, 2″
mp
2, 3″
mp
9, 8″
mp


Start
1, 4″
mf
9, 2″
pp
11, 2″
p
3, 5″
p
9, 11″
pp
5, 8″
pp
3, 8″
mp
5, 8″
p
9, 11″
pp
3, 8″
mp

Electronics

Ableton 12 Suite is the software that is used.
A programable mini keyboard is used (see right).
Karabiner Elements is the software used to customise the keys (Macbook 2019, Sonoma 14.5).
The keys and one of the dials are all changed to letters of the alphabet to work best with key binding in Ableton. One dial is set to the up and down arrows on the keyboard.

In Ableton, there are two tracks in total, and one ‘send’ is used.

Track one:
A breathing sound sample was taken from Pixabay.com. The file is called ghostbreath1-107236.mp3 but other breathing sounds could be used, such as recordings of the recorder players breath.

This mp3/wav is triggered as a clip in Ableton which is sent to a 'send', only, with reverb - 3.46 seconds decay, wet 50%, size 18.29,
and also a ‘grain delay’ (arrow keys control 'pitch') [click on it with the mouse to be able to control it with one of the bluetooth mini gaming keyboard dials].

Cut the sample up and give them all a fade in so the attack on all the samples is gradual.
Play the clips. Trigger the samples one after the other.

Track two:
The instrument plugin ‘Meld’ is on another track (A=Sub, B=Basic shapes), Attack 1.89ms, Release 7.27.

It has a 'pitch' MIDI effect with an interval of 1 semitone. As you move the dial up and down it changes the pitch on all of the notes on all the keys on the bluetooth mini keyboards. The dial on the second bluetooth mini keyboard controls this.

Each key is a note on the piano keyboard e.g: asdfghjkl - wei - but micro tunning is applied as 36-EDO (36 Equal Divisions of the Octave) - lowest note 42hz highest note 484.46hz. This track has reverb on it: 13.2 seconds decay, wet 100%, size 100.

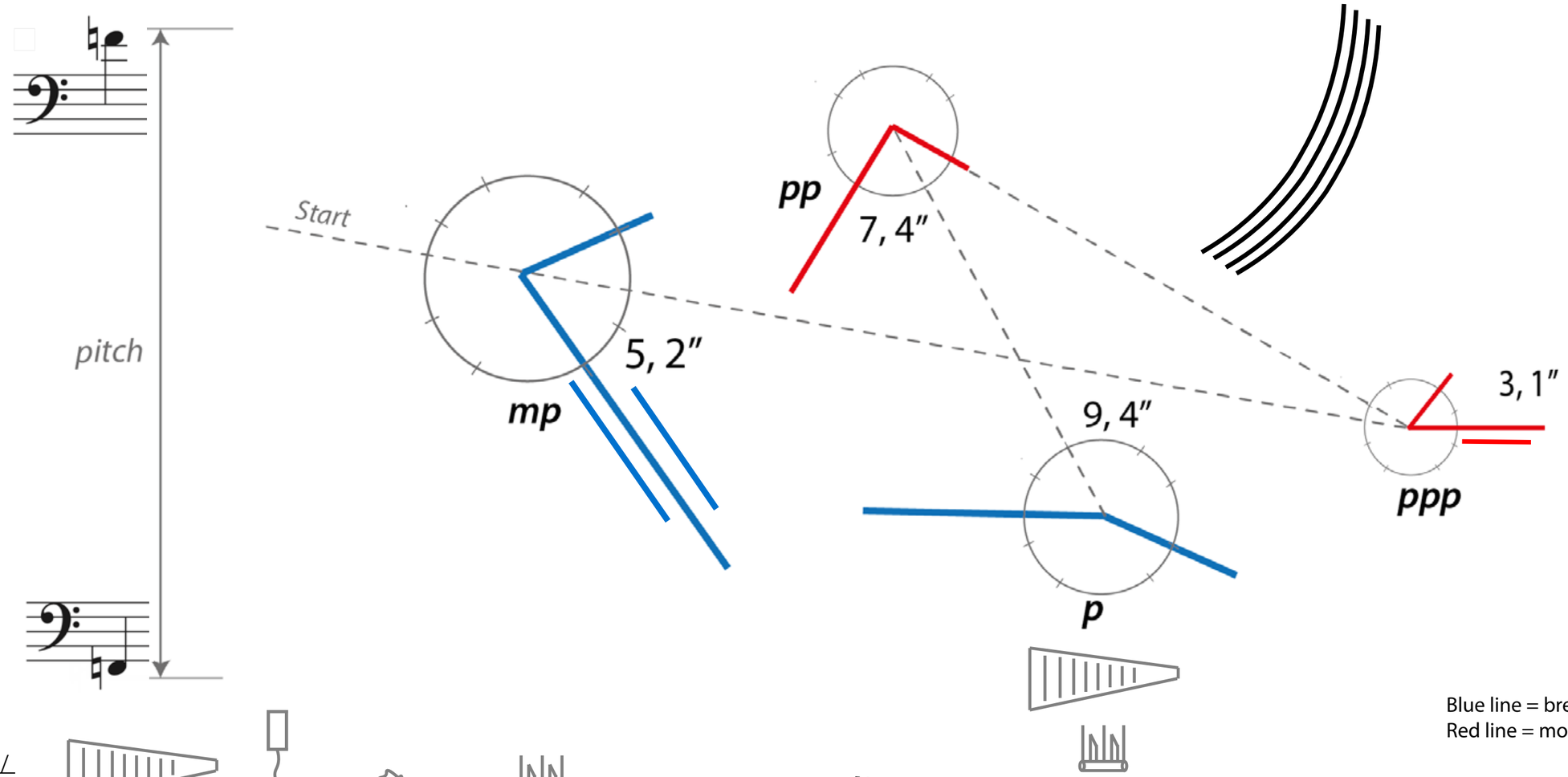
The electronics are controlled in real-time using:

A Bluetooth Mini Programable Macro, 4 Keys Mechanical Gaming Keyboard

x 2

Two of these keyboards are attached to the body of the recorder using blue tack and controlled wirelessly through Ableton. The dial is also a button so there are 4 buttons per keyboard. The dial button is another ‘note’ in the 36 EDO scale.

In order for the computer to register the two devices as separate devices one keyboard needs to be connected via USB-C.



Further symbols/ instructions

toy piano (insides)

spring drum
4" x 10"

finger cymbals

angklung (2 tones)
shake fast to create a continous sound

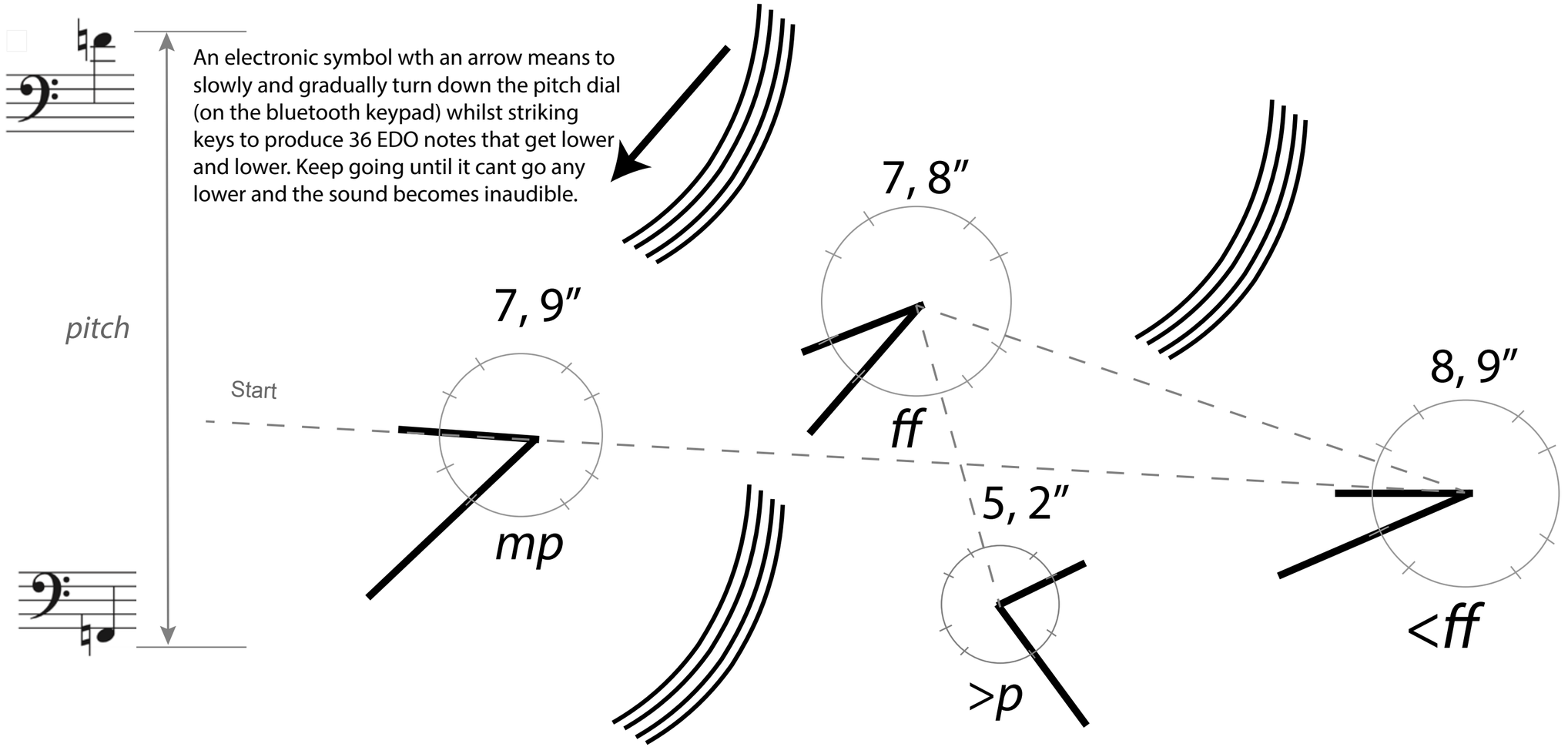
Blue line = breathy sound
Red line = more attack

Transitioning between clocks can be done instantly or in 1-4 seconds.

(these symbols are positioned underneath a clock to indicate they are to be played at that point)
Some toy piano gestures include:
downward glissando
short single strikes 1 high, 1 low
(a metal rode from a triangle is used)

These dark curved lines means that **electronics** are to be used at some point on the line in which it is positioned (a general instruction). 4 curved lines means roughly 6-7 electronic sounds on that page. 2 curved lines means roughly 2-3 electronics sounds. **Dynamics** are created using the density of sounds. As sounds layer on top of each other they get louder and create a distorted quality. So pressing the keys quickly will achieve this effect.

1 line means ordinary playing
2 lines mean voiced
3 lines means flutter and/or gutteral playing
Red and blue is the same



When you see black clocks with 4 curved lines (x3), it means that only electronics are to be used on this page.

< *crescendo*

> *decrescendo*

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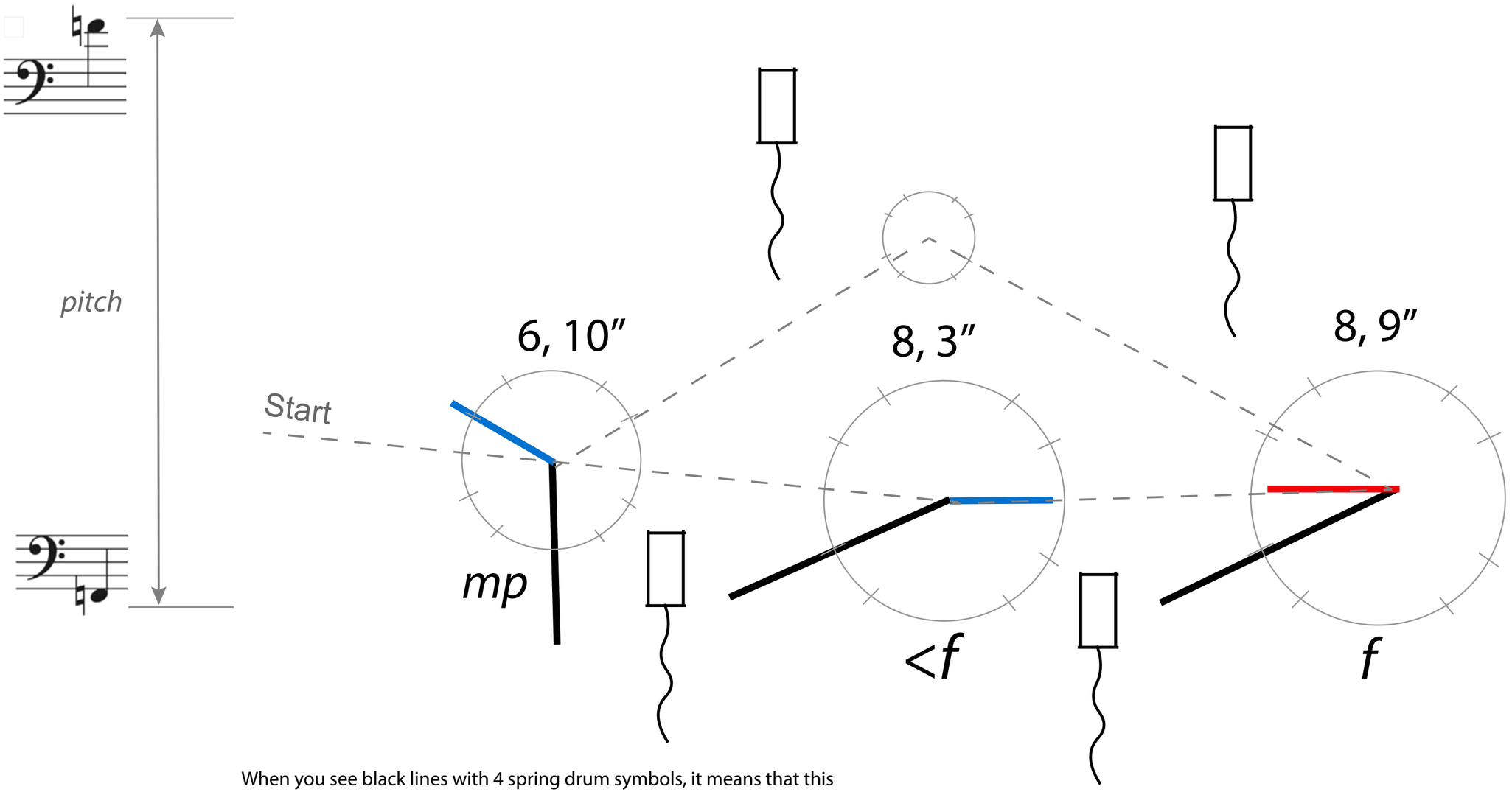
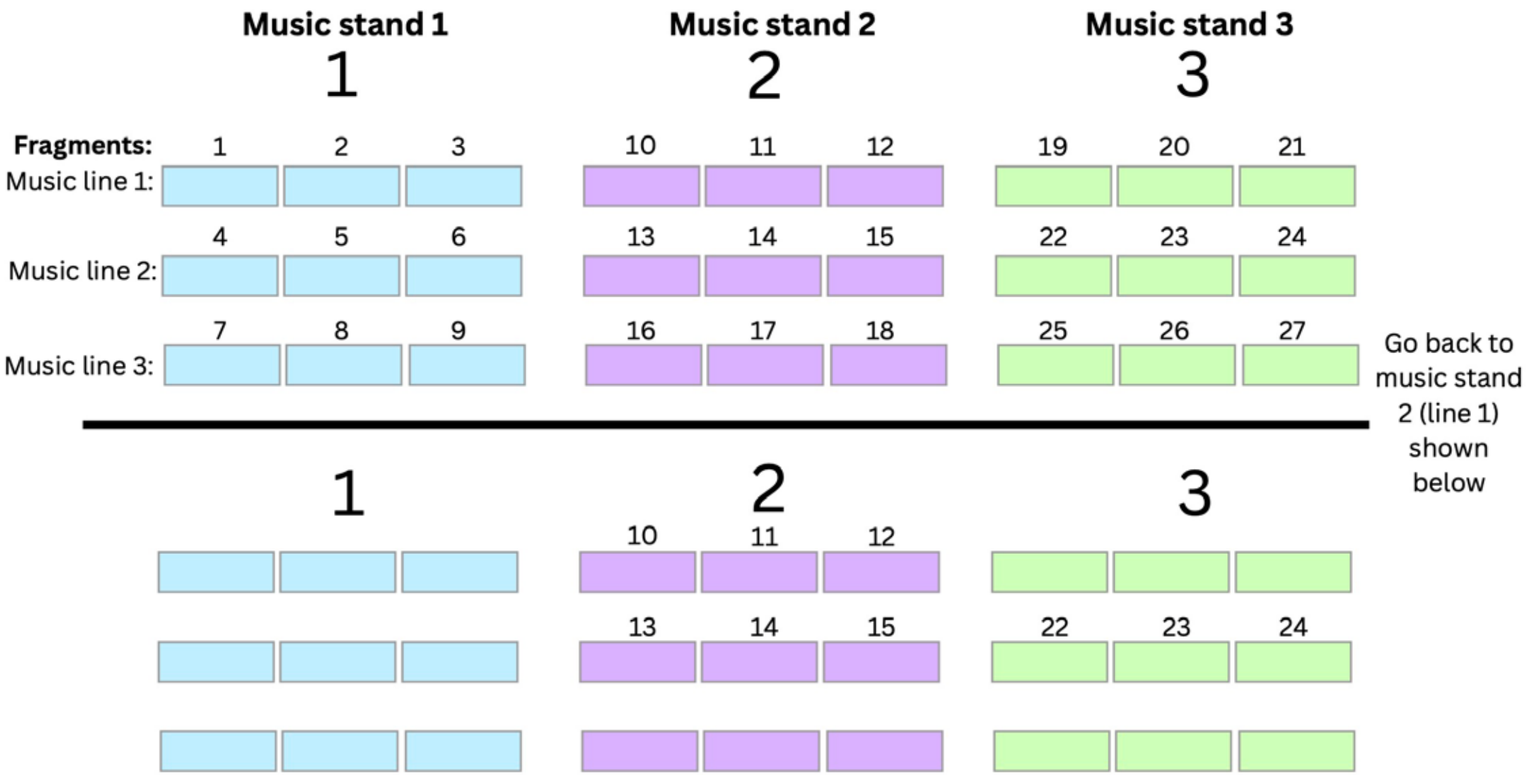


When you see black lines with 4 spring drum symbols, it means that this section is mostly spring drum and you should continously strike the spring drum throughout this page. The blue and red lines in the little hands means you can also play the contrabass recorder as well.

When the dotted line loops back around it means you have the option to play that sequence again.

Global structure

There are **3 music stands** with **9 fragments** on each. One fragment is one page (consisting of 4 to 7 clocks). Combine the fragments together into a compact cluster of 9 on each music stand.



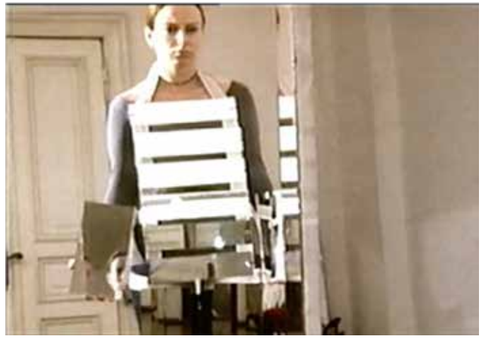
The whole sequence is 1 through to 27, then go back to 10 to 12 on stand 2 then 13 to 15 on stand 2 then 22 to 24 on stand 3. The performance should be roughly 20 minutes.



Theatrical

The recorder player is surrounded by mirrors of various forms. Different formations, perspectives and arrangments of mirrors are set up. Hand held mirrors and fixed mirrors reflect the recorder and the score at different angles. Mirrors can be spun to create a blurring effect. Videos of mirrors playback on screens or through projectors. Could be played back in slow motion as a camera effect. Broken small fragmented mirrors are scatterred on the ground and/or suspended. Camera operator moves around the mirror to pickup different angles of the room. A video of a mirror spinning is set up (using a projector) next to an actual mirror spinning in the space.




Artist: Rebecca Horn in a artwork called: 'Rooms meet in mirrors' (1974/75)