

LIKE STARING AT A WORD...

FOR SOPRANO AND TAPE

Text by
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Music by
Stephen F. Lilly

Like staring at a word...

It starts simply. Maybe saying the wrong things at the wrong times, or the right things at the wrong times, or some logical derivation or semantic inversion thereof.

Realization:

I am perpetually wearing the wrong pants.
The wrong suspenders grace my shoulders, which I was once convinced could be neither right nor wrong, but only fluctuate within the context of spaces between wrists and collarbones, bootlaces and kneecaps, fumbled intimacy and clumsy accusation.

When a soiled hand of dubious identity fishes through my pocket I can never seem to reclaim the pen I need to jot down the telephone number of a girl I took to an aquarium full of strange and wonderful fish three years ago.

Instead, my errant fingers provoke a strange and sweet-smelling fistful of foreign currency, a wristwatch I'm certain I've never seen before, a streetmap for another town written in the wrong dialect or worse in the wrong century with a blue ink stolen from creatures of a sea having never caressed my shores.

The wrong tongue meanders doppelganger over teeth far too white to have remembered the wet hollow snick of my zippo; the momentary dry flash of a nervous longing.
This is always the way.

Gaze too long at one's own mirrored face and it pangeates, becomes the scribbled characters of an ancient and forgotten language.

Like staring at a word until it quietly dismantles itself, I have realized that somewhere, fields are full of the wrong lovers, carving the wrong initials into the wrong trees with pretty pocketknives appearing universally in the wrong palms.

Meanwhile and far away, a sudden meeting is taking place.

The wiry Egyptian looking for his pocketwatch finds himself in pure amazement unfolding a scarred photograph; and staring in quiet disbelief at her beautiful and unfamiliar face.

Like staring at a word...

Performance Notes

Tape

The tape part is represented on the score by graph: amplitude on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal axis (graphs courtesy of *Sonic Foundry Sound Forge 6.0*).

The larger the displacement from the central line, the louder the corresponding sound is.

All of the graphs use the same scale for amplitude except for the following: 450-480 seconds, 630-660 seconds, 780-810 seconds, 810-840 seconds, and 840-870 seconds.

The sounds represented on these graphs are very soft, so the displacement has been enlarged for clarity.

Not all of the sounds on the tape are represented on the graphs.

Soft sounds are often excluded to maintain the consistency of scale; this is especially true of the first 120 seconds.

Cues have been added to the graphs.

Whole words are represented without parentheses.

Phonemes and syllables from words are represented one of two ways:

Unheard portions of the word are placed in parentheses.

Letters entirely in parentheses are vocal sounds as defined by the International Phonetic Alphabet (the *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* was used for reference).

Cues in italics are descriptions.

Time/Rhythm

Each system is thirty seconds long.

On the meter at the top of each system, the longer lines represent seconds, which are sequentially numbered, and the shorter lines each represent half a second.

All sounds on the staves are placed relative to tape sounds on the graph.

The performance of all sounds on the staves may vary by as much as half a second.

Duration is indicated by word extensions, dashed lines, or arrows.

Sounds without these indications should be performed at a normal rate of speech without elongation or clipping.

If a sound has a staccato dot, it should be performed as short as possible.

When a quick break between sounds is desired, a comma has been placed above the staff.

Like staring at a word...

Staff and Symbols

The soprano part is divided amongst two staves: one for speaking and one for singing.

The 'Speak' staff is a single line with noteheads placed below, on, or above the line.

Very generally, placement indicates inflection (low, medium, and high respectively).

All noteheads represent voiced sounds whereas an 'x' indicates an unvoiced sound.

If an unvoiced sound is simply the elongation of a phoneme from a spoken word, it is joined to the spoken word via tie.

Whole words are represented without parentheses with syllables separated by dashed lines.

Phonemes from words are represented with letters from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) placed entirely in parentheses.

Arrows indicate that the performer should slowly transform the sound as indicated.

From 40 seconds to 75 seconds, two levels of text setting are given.

The bottom level indicates a core sound, represented by the appropriate IPA symbol.

The top level indicates alterations to the core sound.

IPA symbols in parentheses indicate the shape of the mouth while articulating the core sound.

Brackets are used for the following effect:

Place one's hands flat.

The fingers of the right hand should be placed underneath the fingers of the left hand
so that the palms of both hands are still visible and both thumbs are facing the same direction.

Then, one should make a cylinder by placing the bottom of the palms together.

The thumb of the left hand should create a 'C' with the fingers of the left hand,
while the thumb of the right hand should be flush with the fingers of the right hand.

An 'o' indicates that the performer should speak through the cylinder

A '+' indicates that the performer should close the cylinder by "cupping" the hands.

When a dashed vertical line connects two different sounds there is to be no break between them.

Glissandi are indicated by straight and curved lines on the five-line 'Sing' staff.

The performance of each glissando should reflect the shape.

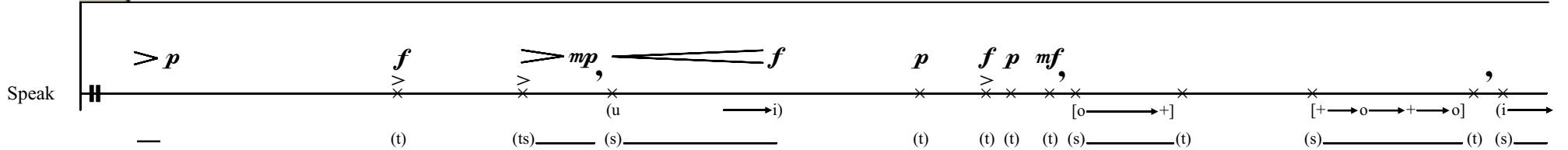
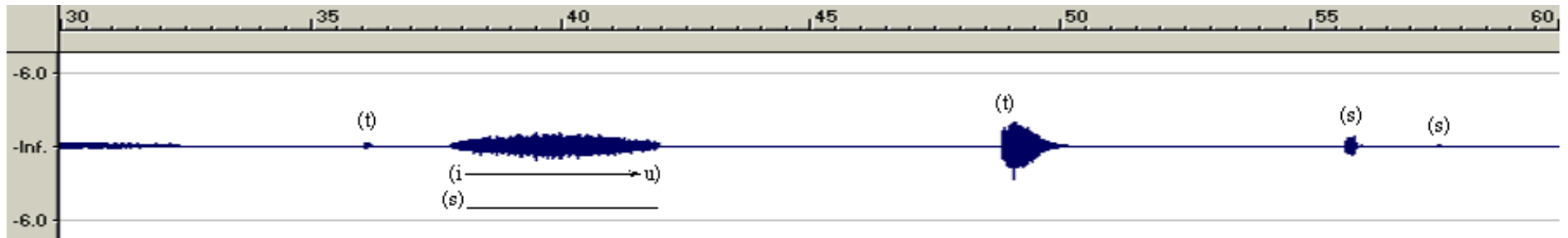
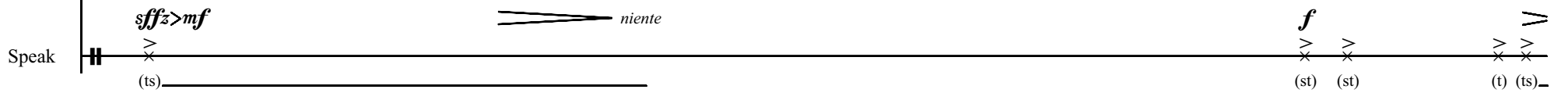
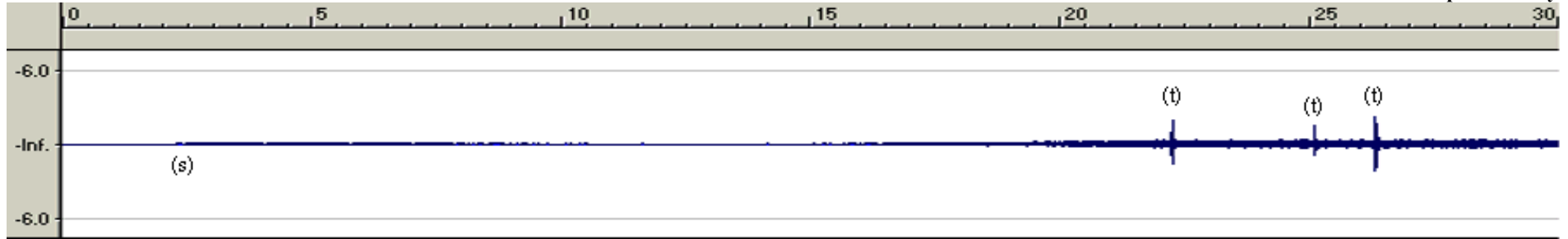
When the glissando is not bounded by a notehead, pitch is approximate.

If one of the boundaries is a downward arrow, the glissando is either to or from one's lowest possible pitch.

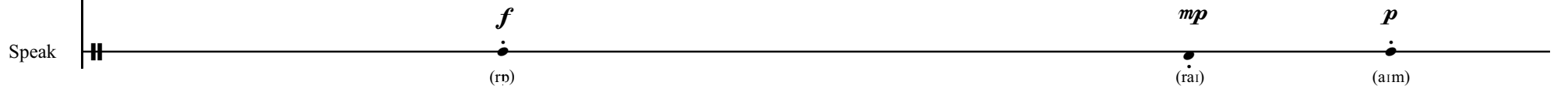
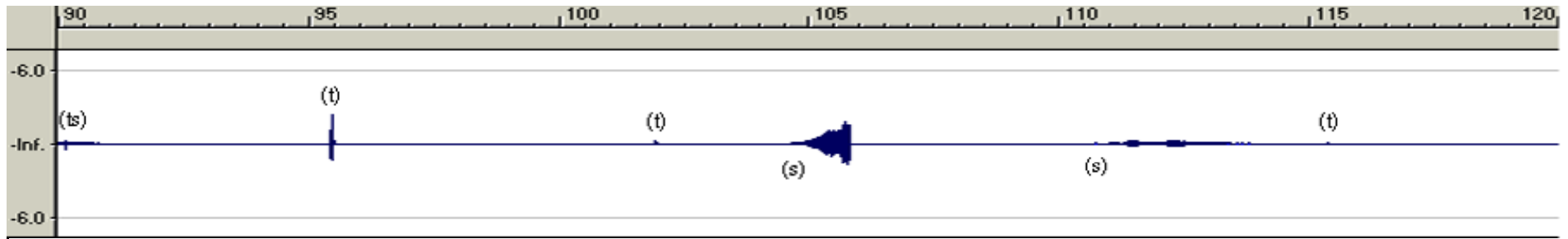
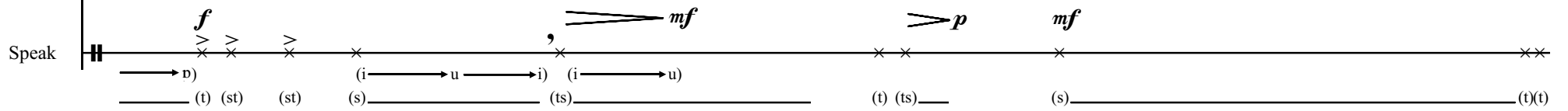
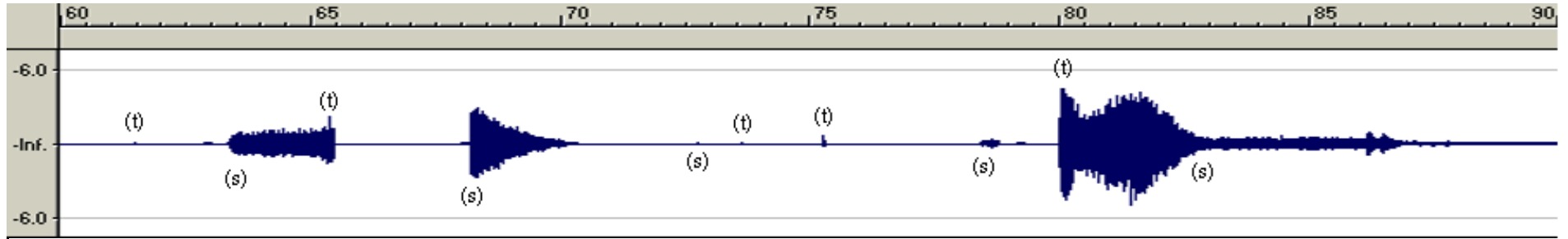
Like staring at a word...

Ivan R. Molton

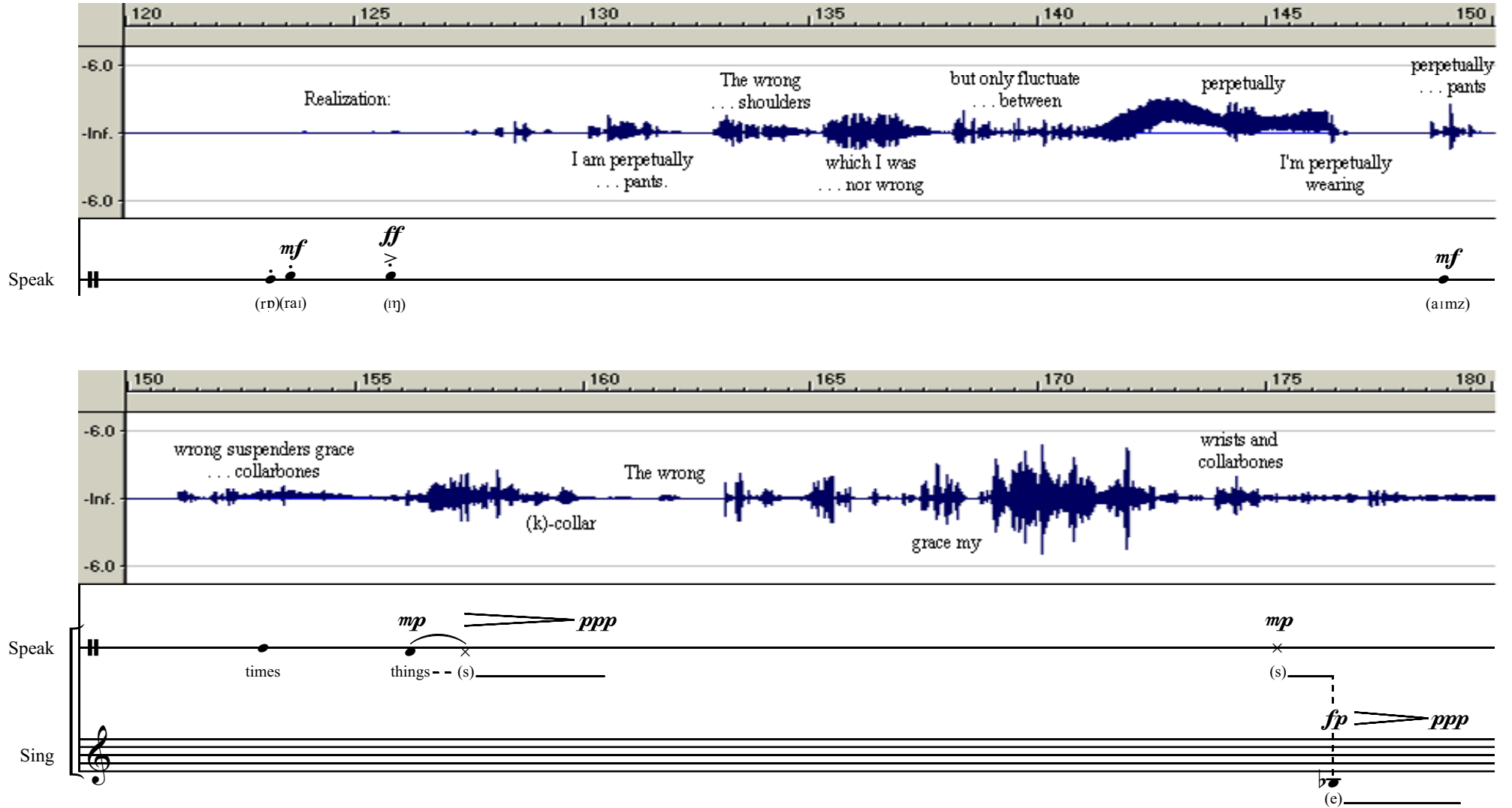
Stephen F. Lilly



Like staring at a word...



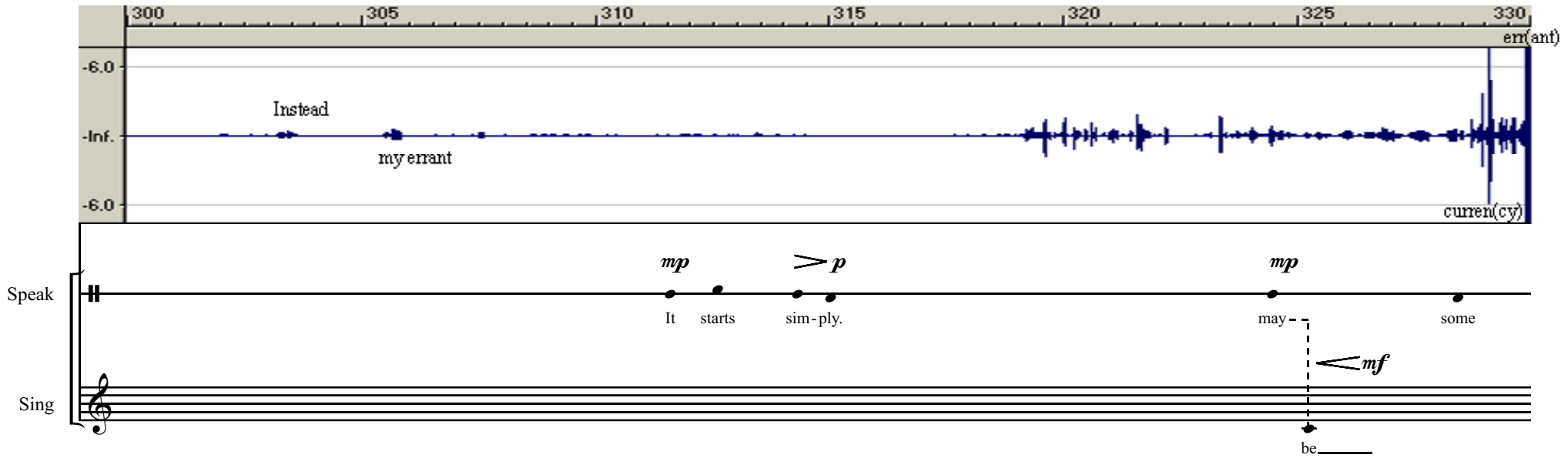
Like staring at a word...



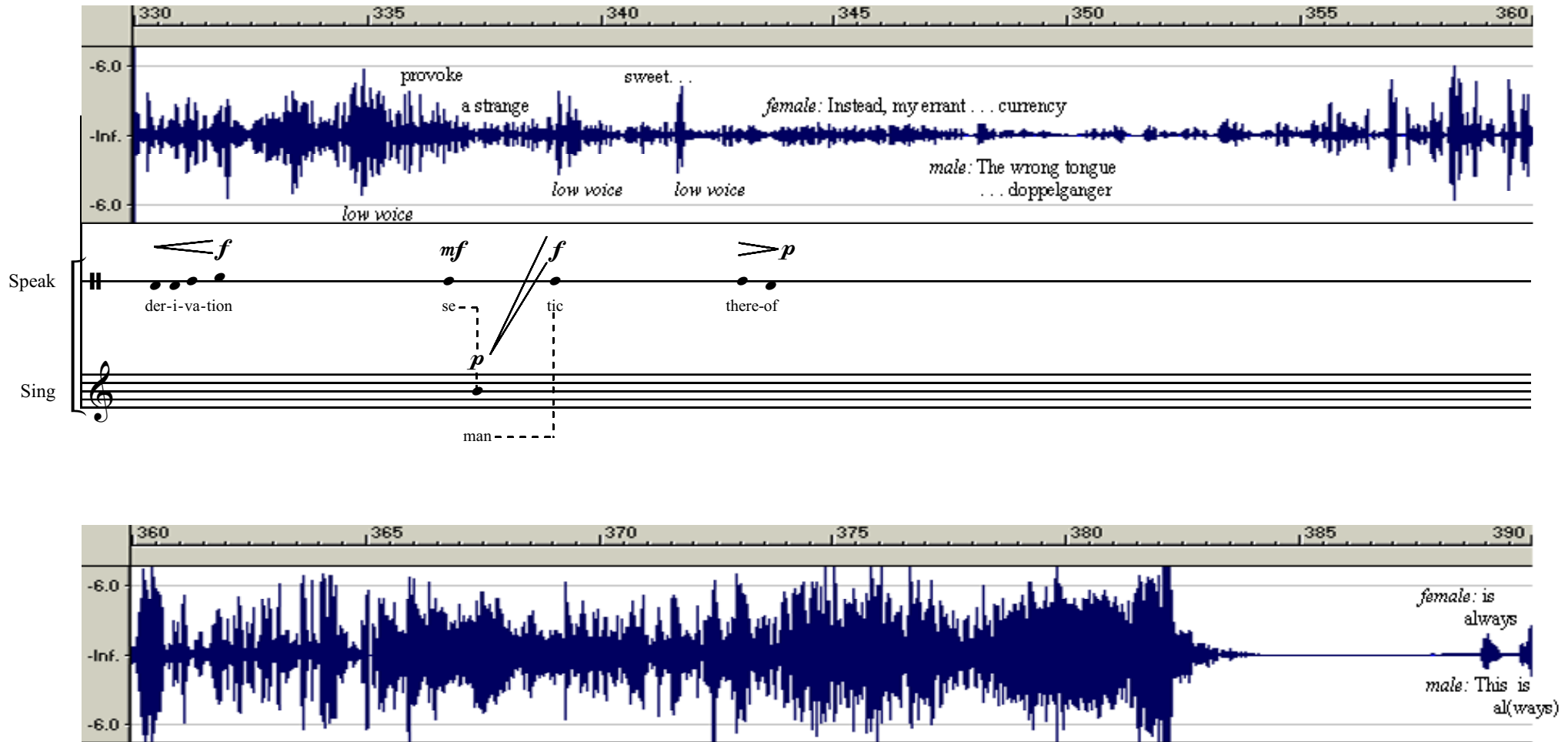
Like staring at a word...

180 seconds (3 minutes) - 300 seconds (5 minutes)

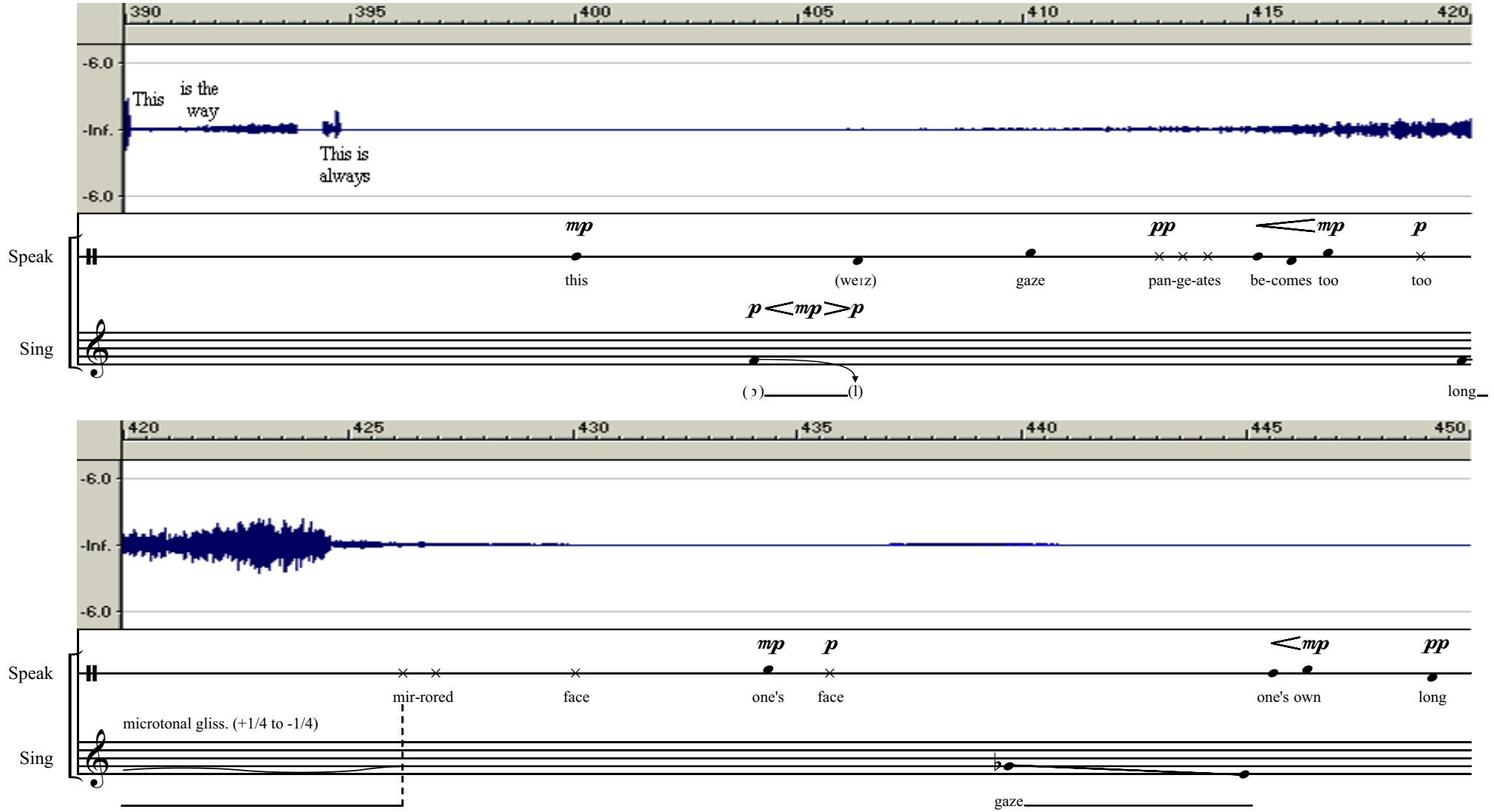
Soprano Tacet



Like staring at a word...



Like staring at a word...



Like staring at a word...

450 455 460 465 470 475 480

-18.1
-Inf.
-18.1

Speak
Sing

be - come (s) scrib-bled gaze it at be pan ge - ates for - got - ten mir - rored

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

480 485 490 495 500 505 510

-6.0
-Inf.
-6.0

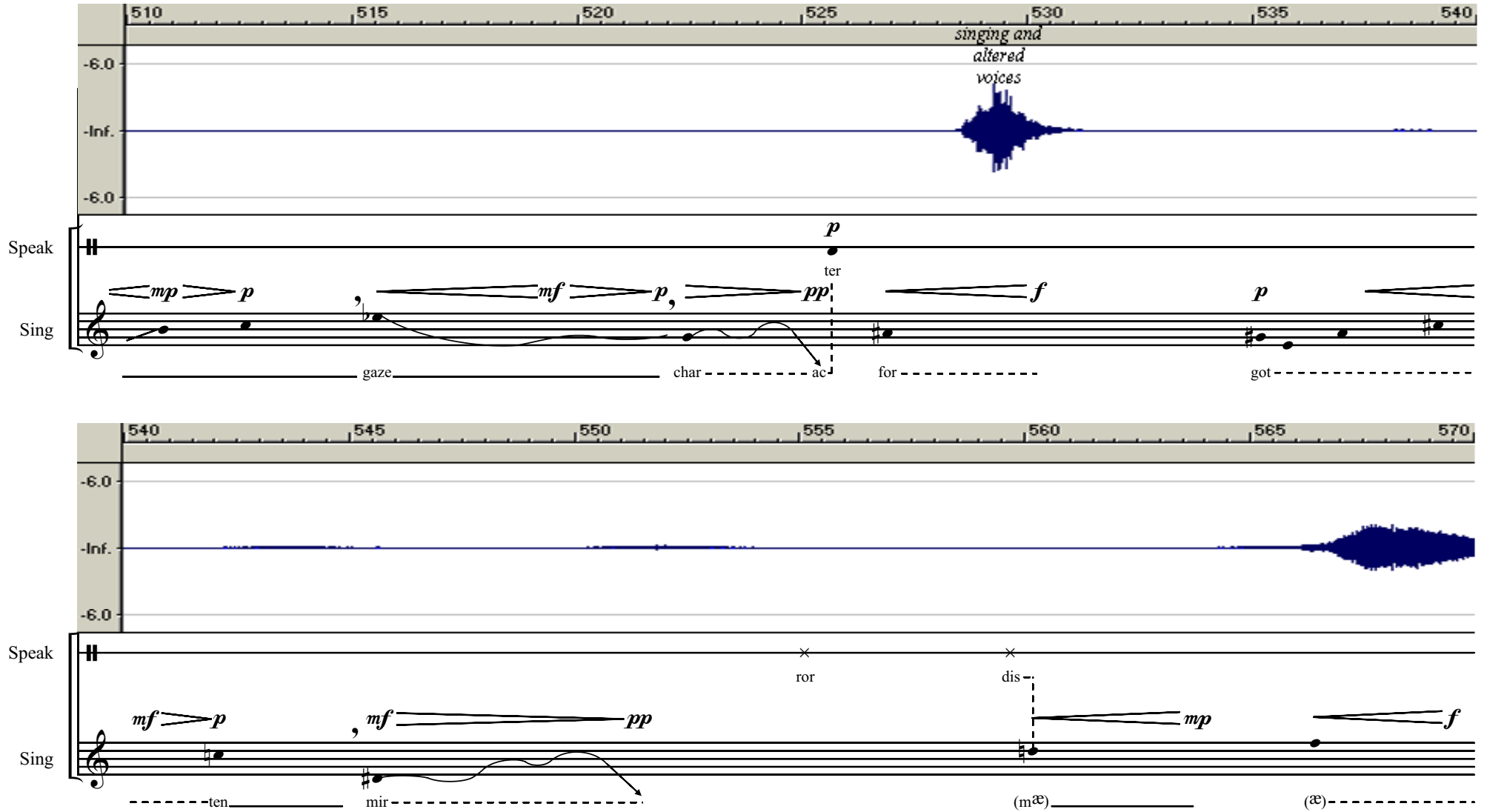
altered voices singing and altered voices singing and altered voices

Speak
Sing

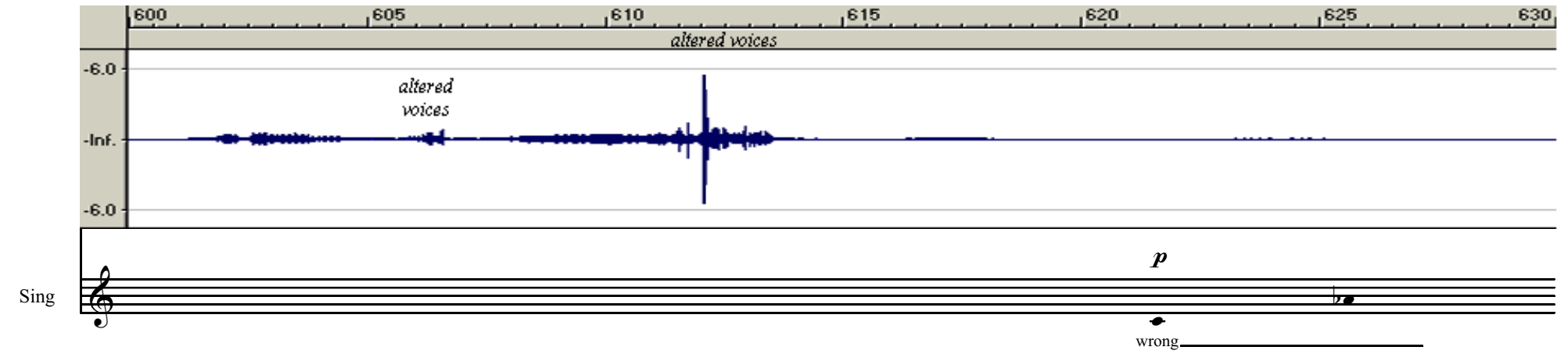
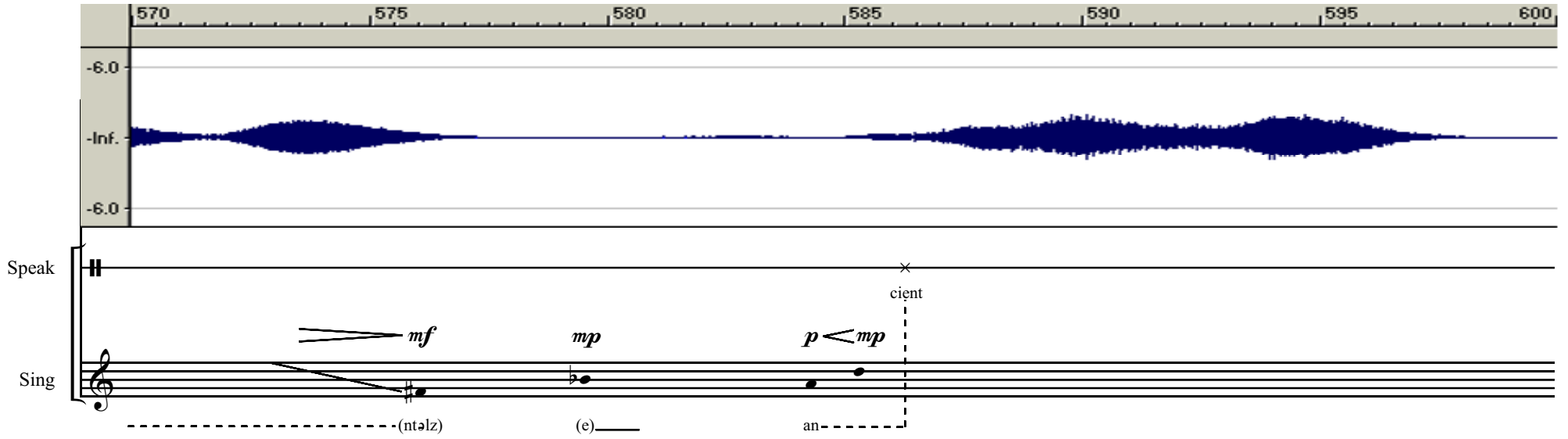
be - - - - comes it at the and too own and be

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

Like staring at a word...



Like staring at a word...



Like staring at a word...

The image displays a musical score and spectrogram for the phrase "Like staring at a word...". The score is divided into two systems, each with a spectrogram above and a musical staff below. The first system covers measures 630 to 660, and the second system covers measures 660 to 690. The spectrograms show amplitude levels, with the first system ranging from -18.1 to -Inf and the second from -6.0 to -Inf. The musical staff includes dynamic markings (*mf*, *p*, *mf*^(t), *p*, *f*, *pp*) and lyrics: "dis-- --man-- --", "like", and "stare". The second system includes lyrics: "trees", "palms", "lov-ers", and "(da)", with dynamic markings *f*, *p*, *f*, and *mp*. The spectrogram in the second system is labeled "low altered voices".

630 635 640 645 650 655 660

-18.1
-Inf.
-18.1

Speak

Sing

mf *p* *mf*^(t) *p* *f* *pp*

dis-- --man-- -- like stare

660 665 670 675 680 685 690

-6.0
-Inf.
-6.0

low altered voices

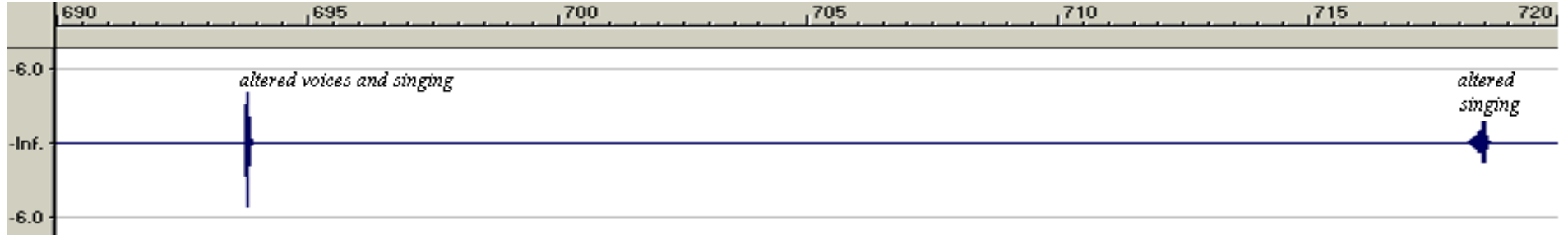
Speak

Sing

trees palms lov-ers (wɜ) (da)

f *p* *f* *mp*

Like staring at a word...



Sing

mp

have _____

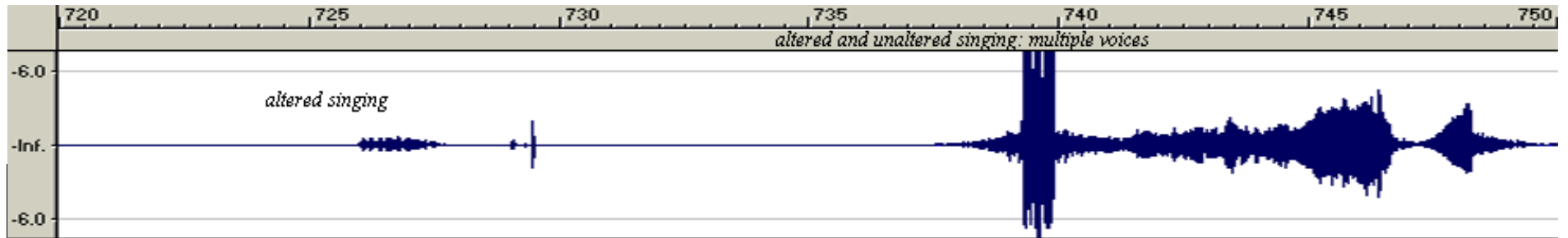
non vib. *f* vib. norm. *mp*

qui-----et

mf *p*

microtonal gliss. (+1/4 to -1/4)

ly_____ (rd)



Sing

mp *p*

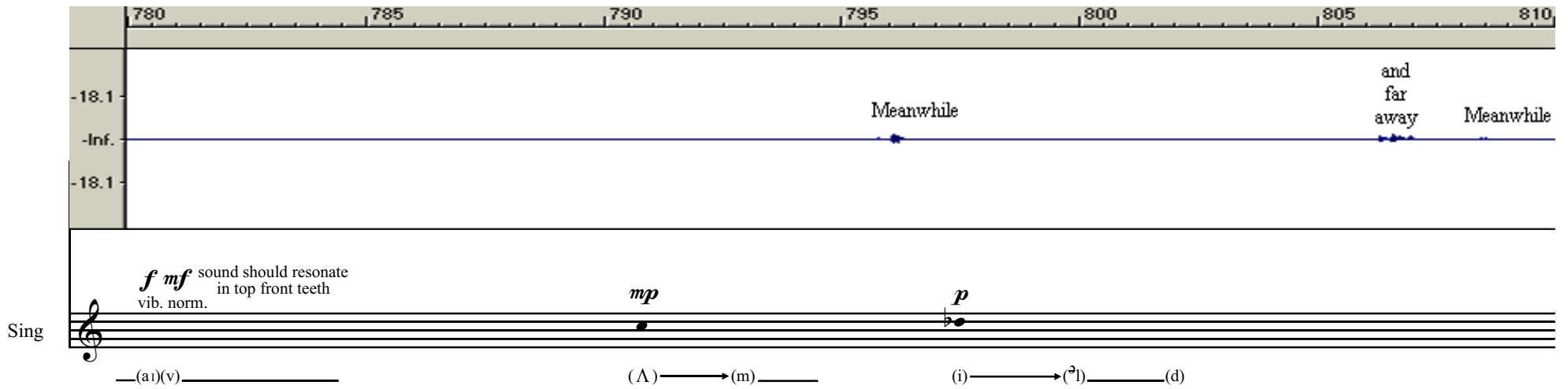
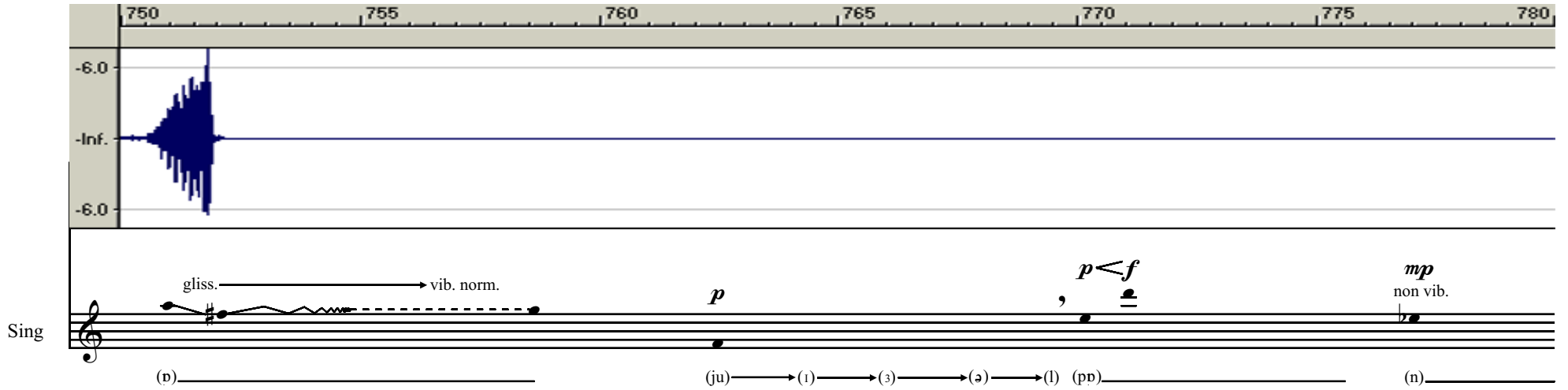
(r) → (i) → (ə) → (l)-(aiz)

mf < f

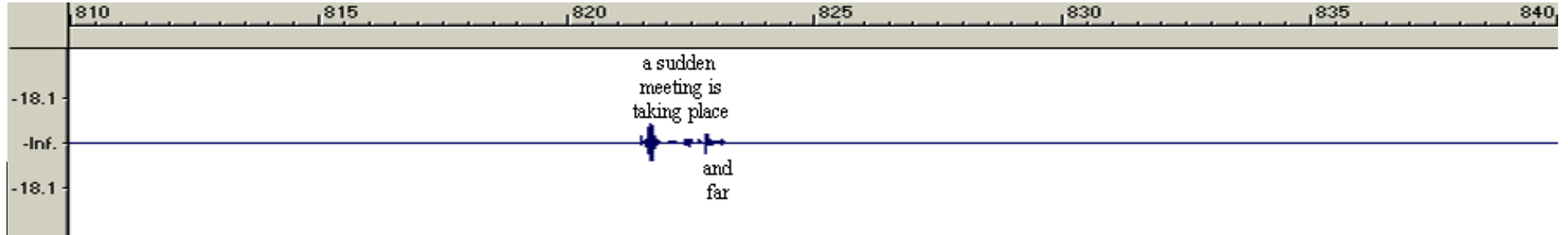
(rd) _____

(rd) _____

Like staring at a word...



Like staring at a word...

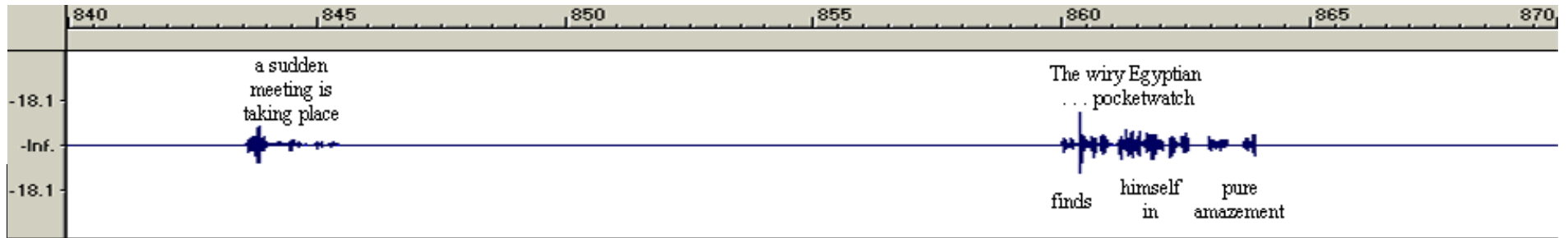


Sing

mf *mp* *f* *p*

(v) (v) (i) (i) → (²r) (v)

non vib.



Sing

p *niente*

(i) (v)

soprano tacet al fine