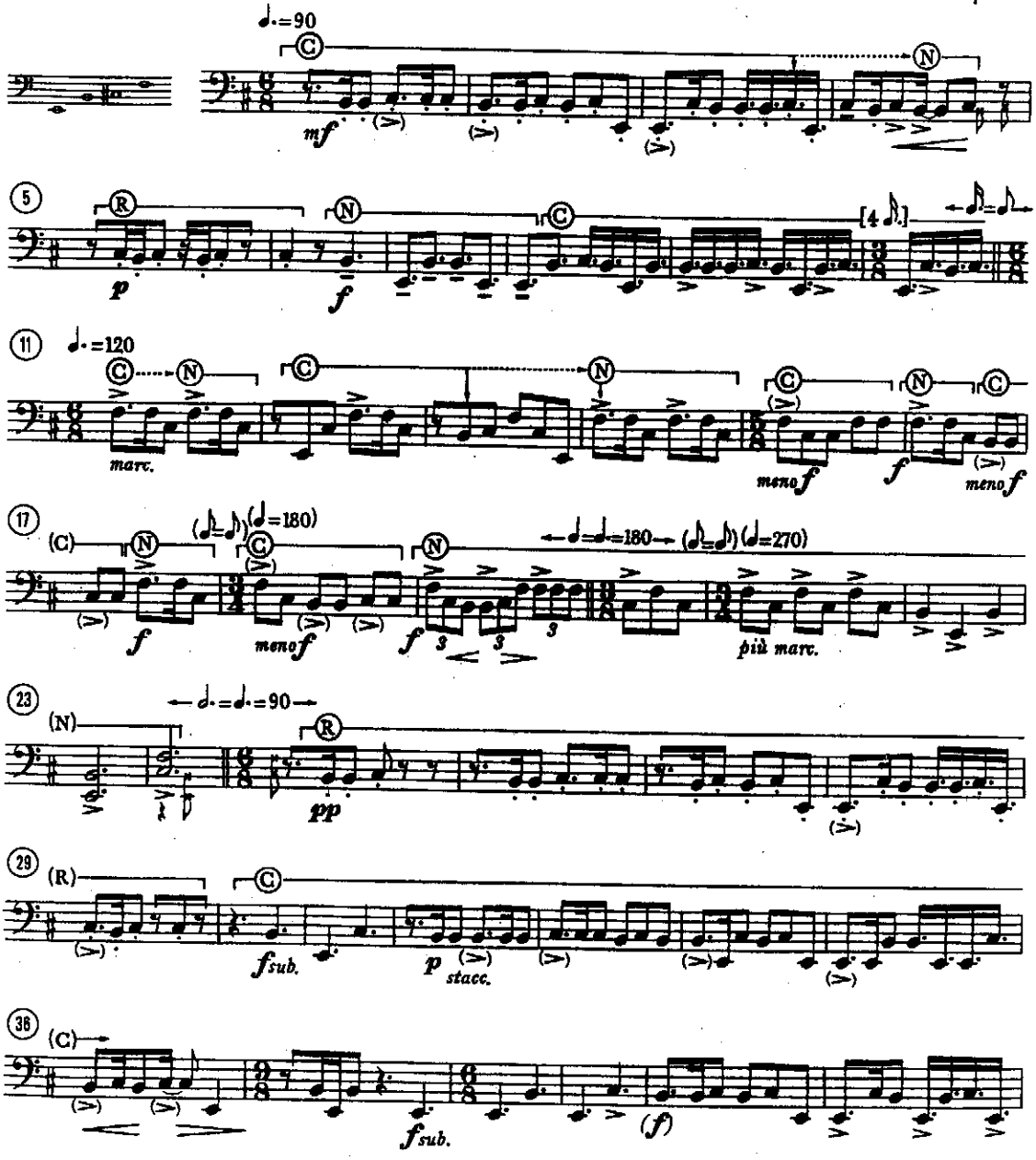
CANARIES

No. 7 from *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani (One Player)*
(1950–1966)

Elliott Carter (b. 1908)

This humorous virtuosic take-off on a seventeenth-century French dance is offered here as an analysis problem in rhythm. It abounds in proportional changes of tempo, a device sometimes called "metrical modulation." Merely figuring out the arithmetic is not enough. Non-timpanists should practice tapping out at least the first 25 bars on a table top.[26]

Canaries is also a study in what can be done with just four pitches. What is the form of the piece?[27]



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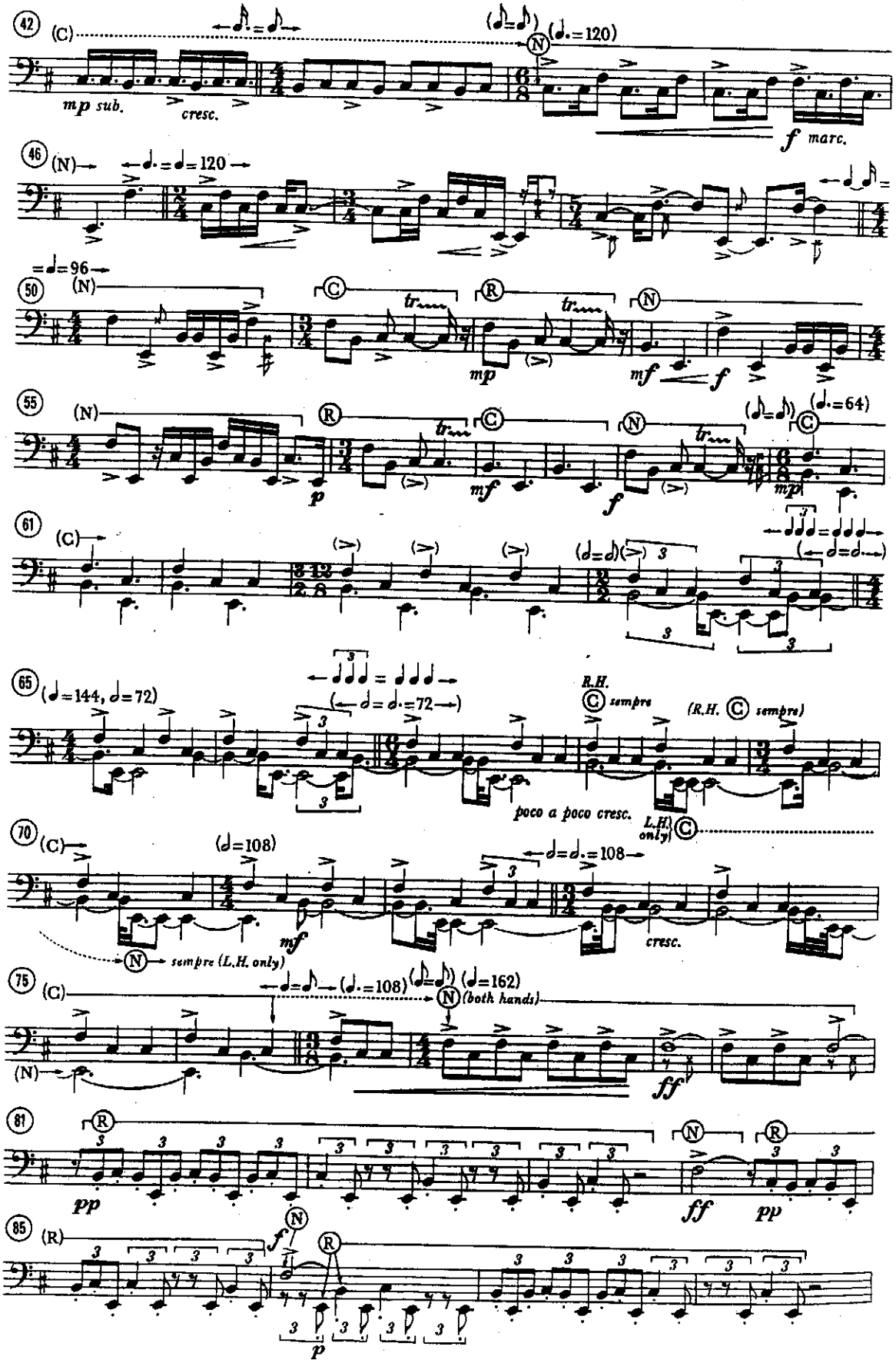
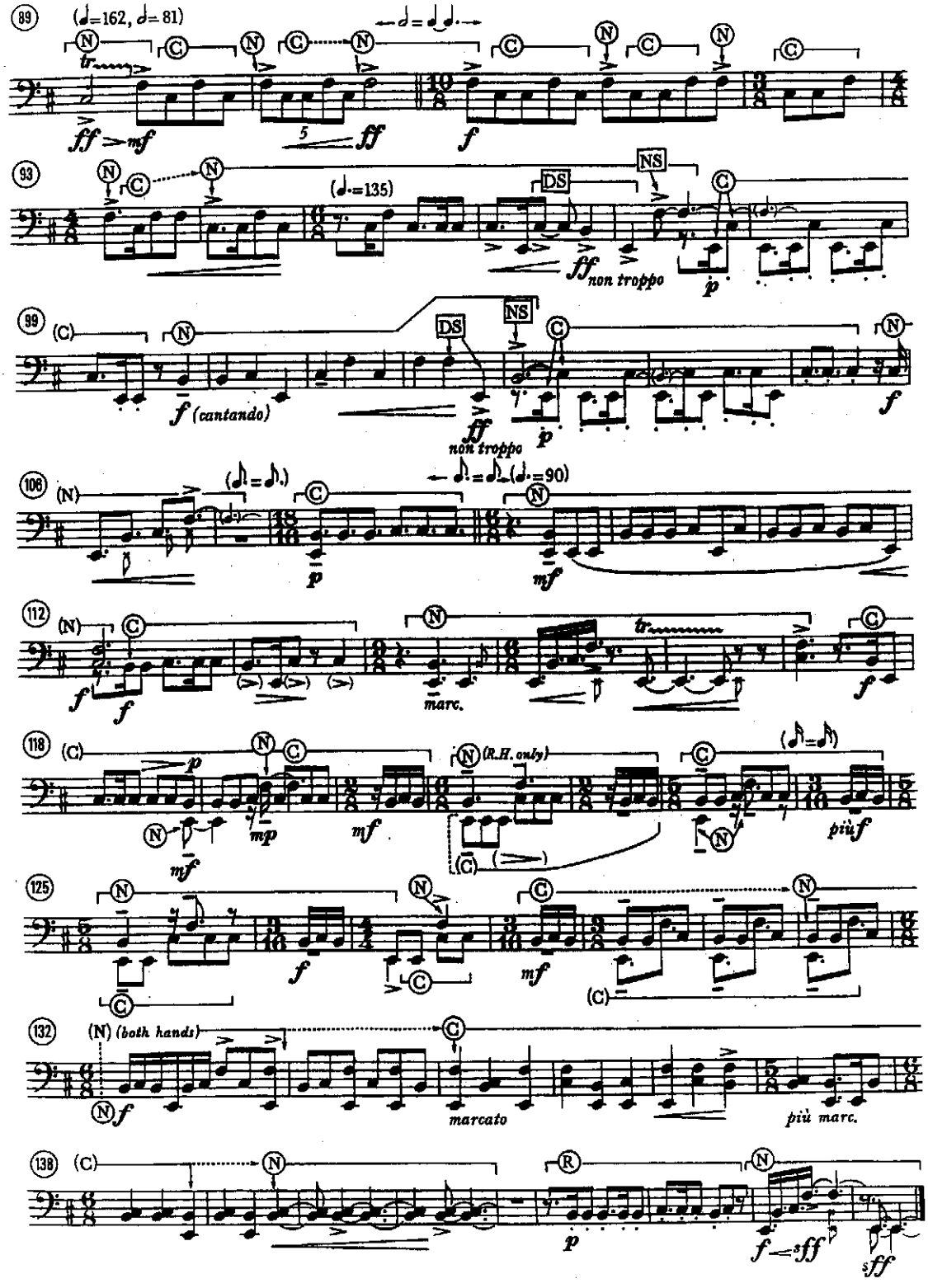
[26] Non-timpanists will have enough to do without considering the elaborate performance directions (C, N, R, DS, NS), which refer to ways of striking the drum to produce different timbres. An indispensable part of the composition, these directions are fully explained in the published set of eight pieces. Pitches notated as an x indicate hand damping.

[27] David Schiff discusses all eight pieces in his *The Music of Elliott Carter* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2nd ed., 1998, pp. 132–135).


42 (C)
mp sub.
cresc.
(N)
(♩.=120)
f marc.
46 (N)
=♩=96
50 (N)
C
R
N
mp
mf
f
55 (N)
p
mf
f
(♩.=64)
mp
61 (C)
65 (♩=144, ♪=72)
(←♪=♪.=72→)
R.H.
C sempre
(R.H. C sempre)
poco a poco cresc.
70 (C)
(♪=108)
mf
(←♪=♪.=108→)
cresc.
N sempre (L.H. only)
L.H. only
C
75 (C)
(♩.=108)
(♩=162)
N (both hands)
(N)
ff
81 R
pp
N
R
ff
pp
85 (R)
f
N
R
p


89
(♩=162, ♩= 81)
tr
ff > mf
5
ff
f
93
(♩.=135)
DS
NS
ff non troppo
p
99
(C)
f (cantando)
DS
NS
ff
non troppo
p
f
106
(♩.=♩.)
(♩.=90)
p
mf
112
(N)
f
f
marc.
tr
f
118
(C)
p
mp
mf
(R.H. only)
(♪=♪)
più f
mf
125
f
mf
(C)
132
(N) (both hands)
f
marcato
più marc.
138
(C)
p
f =ff
ff