Leave To Live

for

solo soprano saxophone

and backing

John Gourlay

In the spring of 2019 the composer was taken ill with a subdural haematoma. Thanks to quick-witted and on-the-ball GP and to the nursing and surgical staff at the Department of Clinical Neurosciences at the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, the condition was dealt with successfully.

Lying in bed after the operation (a mini-craniotomy) the composer conceived this piece as a way of marking his deliverance and recovery from his first serious illness and as a way of expressing gratitude for the outcome. Consequently the piece is dedicated to the above medical staff and in general to NHS Scotland.

Although the piece is not a musical portrayal of events, there are references to the onset of the haematoma, the craniotomy and an MRI scan (in itself a very sonic experience). The solo saxophone part is sometimes written to be played 'in tempo', sometimes 'senza misura'. Some pssages are written in skeleton form and are intended to be elaborated by ornamentation and/or improvisation. The backing was devised using GarageBand software.

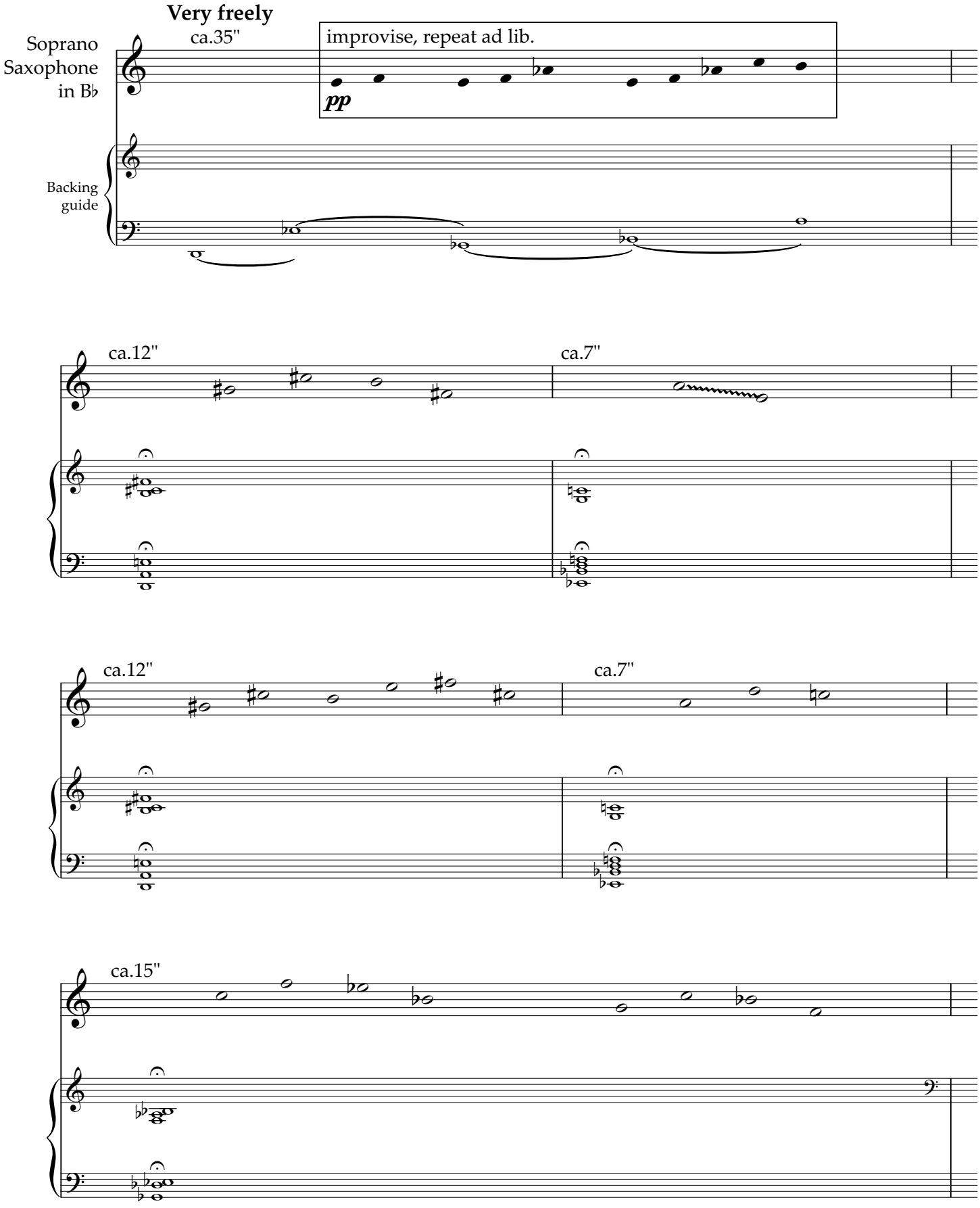
First performance - Fife Festival of Music on Thursday 6 February 2020 in the auditorium of the Adam Smith Theatre, Kirkcaldy, with the composer borrowing his daughter's soprano saxophone for the occasion.

Duration 10 minutes.

Leave To Live

"It's a grand thing to get leave to live." - Nan Shepherd

John Gourlay



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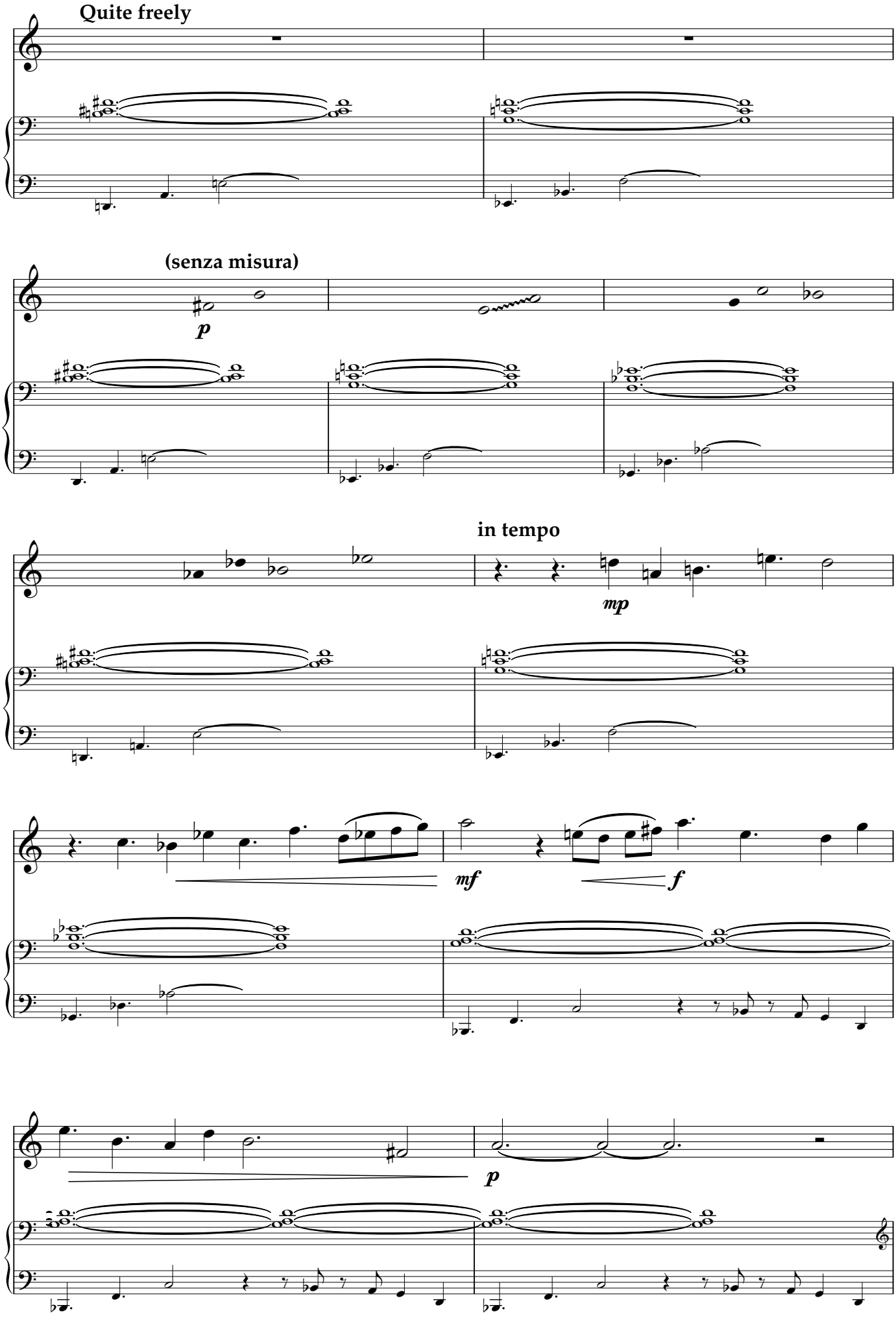
Quite freely
(senza misura)
p
in tempo
mp
mf
f
p