

Gravitation

I: Independence

II: Attraction

III: Gravitation

for an ensemble of 5 to 8 performers

Duration: 9 min. 10 sec.

(ca. 10' including time between movements)

Nolan Stolz

Completed Spring 2004

Revised Fall 2007

Revised Summer 2020 for COVID-19 provisions

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Performance Notes

The ensemble should consist of 5 to 8 performers*. In Group A, there shall be three or four players. The music written in green is the optional fourth part. The number of players in Group B should match the number in Group A, with exception of the use of piano, in which each hand would count as a separate part.

For Part 1, Independence, Group B shall be in the very center of the stage**, ~~sharing one music stand~~ with safe social distancing. Group A should be in the corners of the stage, farthest away from each other and from Group B. The music stand shall remain, and the musician will move to the next position for part 2. A stage layout is illustrated on the following page; the audience can be on any side.

For Part 2, Attraction, Group A's position will be exactly half way between Group B and the previous position. The opening phrases are marked "metal/wood," meaning to play the instruments percussively with metal striking wood, or vice-versa. For example, a string instrument could play col legno. A piano could play the strings with a wood stick, or play the wood of the instrument with a metal object. A brass instrument would be struck by wood. In the event that it is not possible to do so, strike the metal music stand with a wooden stick. For "metal/metal," a string instrument could play the strings with a metal object. A brass instrument would be struck by a metal object, preferably inside the bell. For loud volumes and for instruments not containing metal, strike a metal music stand with a metal object. The final section is marked "wood/wood," so a string instrument would either play the body of the instrument with the wood of the bow, col legno, or for louder volumes, knock on the body. A brass player will have to use a percussion instrument, or the floor of the hall with a wooden stick. In the presence of a synthesizer, it is perfectly fine to use different patches to mimic these sounds.

Part 3, Gravitation, should be read off Group B's music stand. All players should ~~uncomfortably crowd around the one stand~~ should now be on stage, but with safe social distancing. This movement is written for a combination of Groups A and B, and therefore are no longer divided. Note that the music is not color-coded, so the players should intuitively and musically divide into sections when required.

For the first two movements, the music is notated in two "staves" one for each group. There are two "systems" per page. The third movement the ensemble is not divided, and there are three "systems" per page.

The rehearsal numbers at the top of each system are a guide; they start over every five and at the beginning of each movement. A conductor can be used to help direct the gestures and to cue the rehearsal numbers by showing the number of fingers corresponding to the arrival of each one.

* A "performer" could be a musician, dancer, poet, etc. Groups A and B should be of two types of instruments. The premiere consisted of flute, bassoon and trumpet in Group A and accordion, contrabass and percussion (drum set and washboard played with spoons) in Group B. This particular performance had orchestral instruments "attracted" to a zydeco band (the instruments were listed as squeezebox, doghouse, traps and washboard in the program). Another performance included band instruments (saxophones, trumpet and trombone) "attracted" to electronic ensemble (two synthesizers, electric guitar and electrified voice).

** The "stage" could be a performance space of any type or size. It could be a traditional stage, as in the first several performances of the piece. It could also use the entire space of the concert hall. The musicians could also be miles apart, as long as in Part 2 they are exactly half way from the previous position and Part 3 is performed together.

→ or performing live online
or overdubbed (in which case, it could be the same player on multiple parts)

NOTE: for practice and rehearsal purposes, there are audio-only cue tracks, conducting videos with the aural cues, and conducting videos without aural cues. For live performances, the conducting video without sound maybe be used if a conductor is not available or if logistically impossible (e.g., online performances)

Notation Guide

For parts 1 and 2, the vertical axis represents pitch, and the horizontal axis represents the time in which the events occur. There are recommended time markers at the bottom of each line. The thickness of the line defines the dynamic, the thicker the line, the louder it should be played. The color of the line determines which player will play it. If the line is black, this means all players are included.



These randomly scattered dots are small, so they would be played both short and soft. Because of the different vertical heights, the range and pitch is also completely random. The density of the dots determines how often the instruments should play, creating a dense or light texture.



The downward curving line gets thicker, so the note is not only bent lower, but also gets louder.



The image on the left has ascending dots that are connected by a skinny line. This would be played legato, with five accented pitches. The image on the right represents a series of eight descending pitches, separated.



The image to the left represents six instruments at different pitch levels, half of which bend down, and the other bend up to the middle range of their instrument. During the bend, the volume increases. The pitch is held, and then everyone together bends to a lower pitch that is suddenly louder.

Examples:



The thickness at the start of the line represents an attack. The pitch is held shortly, and then it is bent down to a lower pitch which is also held. Notice another pitch bend downwards at the tail end of the line.



This represents all four instruments, all in the same type of register (low, mid, or high for their instrument), gradually getting louder and all with an abrupt cutoff.



The line on the left is skinny, therefore it would be long and soft. The line on the right is the same length, but is much thicker. This would be played long and loud.



The top note starts loud, drops quiet, and gets louder. It sustains the volume as the pitch is bent lower, and then gets softer. The other note also starts loud, but drops to a medium volume throughout. Notice the first two dots are smaller than the last two. The latter would be slightly louder and longer.

Group A, orange, part 1

Group A, green, part 1

Group A, orange, part 2

Group A, green, part 2

Group B, parts 1 and 2
All, part 3

Group A, red, part 2

Group A, blue, part 2

Group A, red, part 1

Group A, blue, part 1

stage layout

Since the vertical axis Part 2 represents dynamics, not pitch, here is a brief explanation of these graphs:



The first several notes are loud, but they gradually get softer. Notice the increase in distance between the dots, signifying that the time between occurrences increases. The effect is that of slowing down.



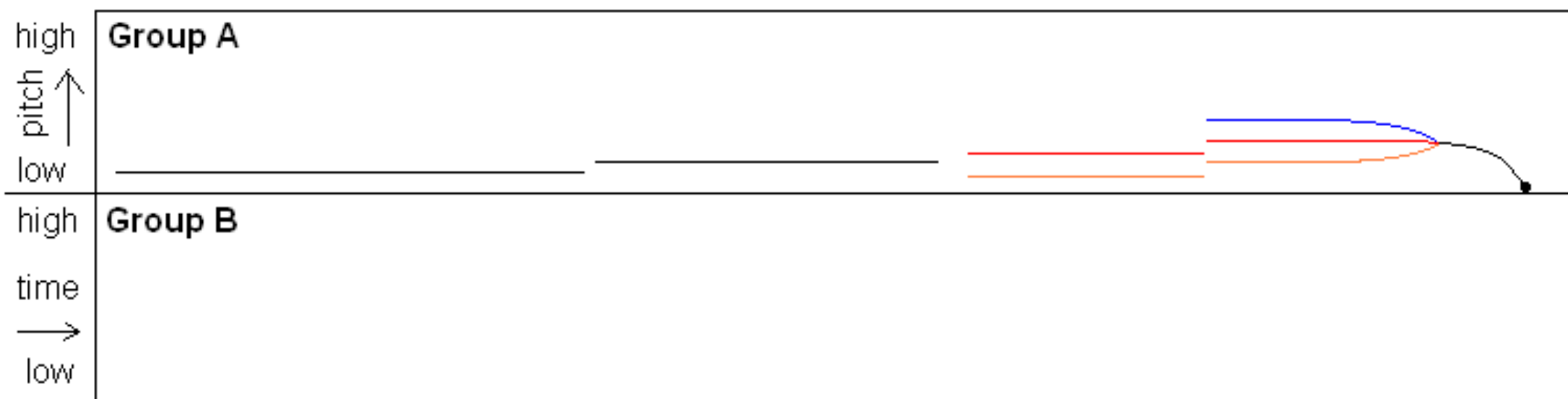
The player in Group A plays five loud notes. Then, the players of Group B play several random notes in a relatively soft dynamic. Because of the vertical distance, the dynamics should vary slightly. Another player from Group A responds with 5 more loud notes. Notice the 4th note is closer to the 5th than the third.



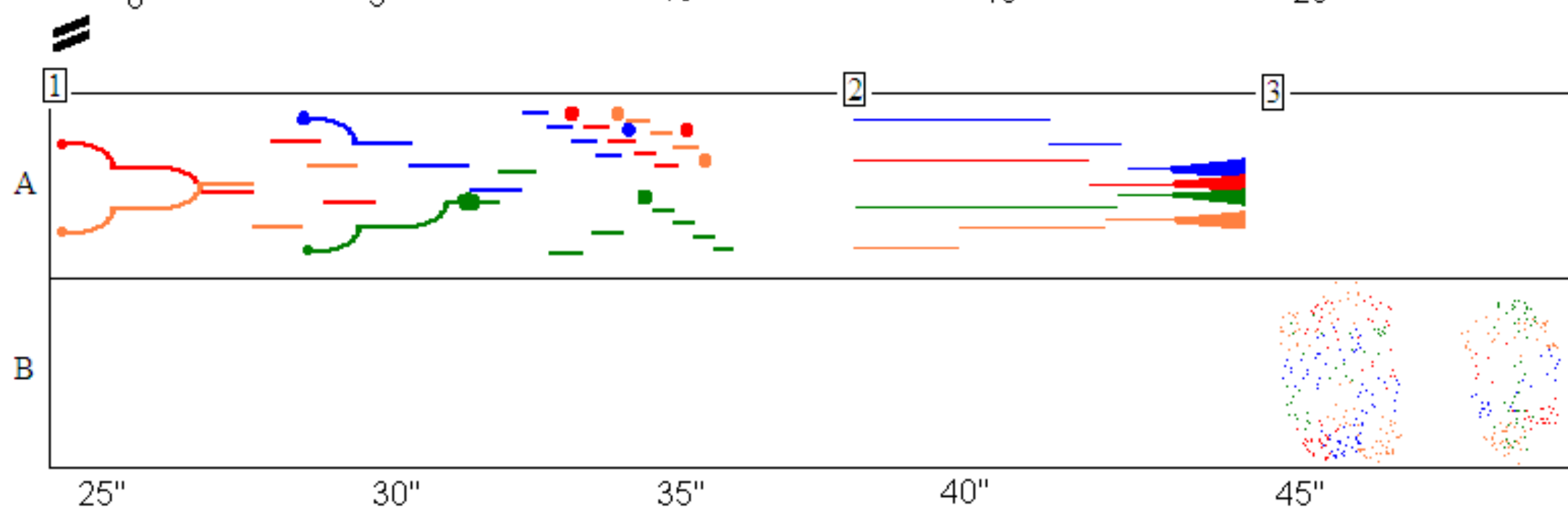
Gravitation

I. Independence

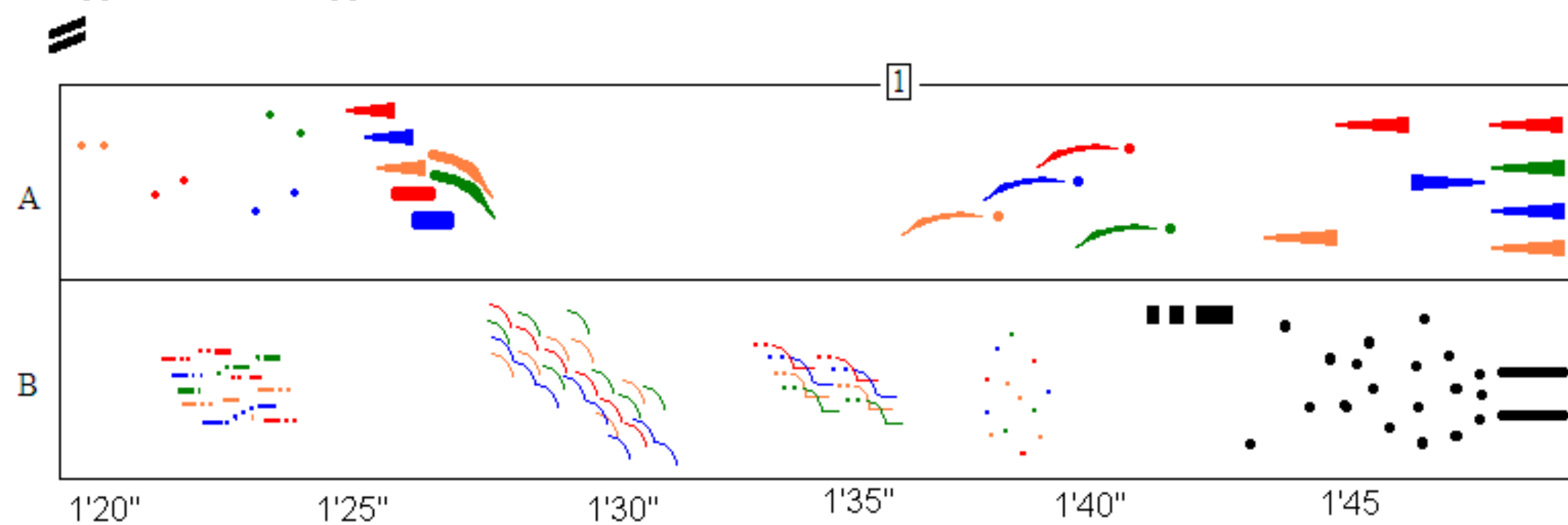
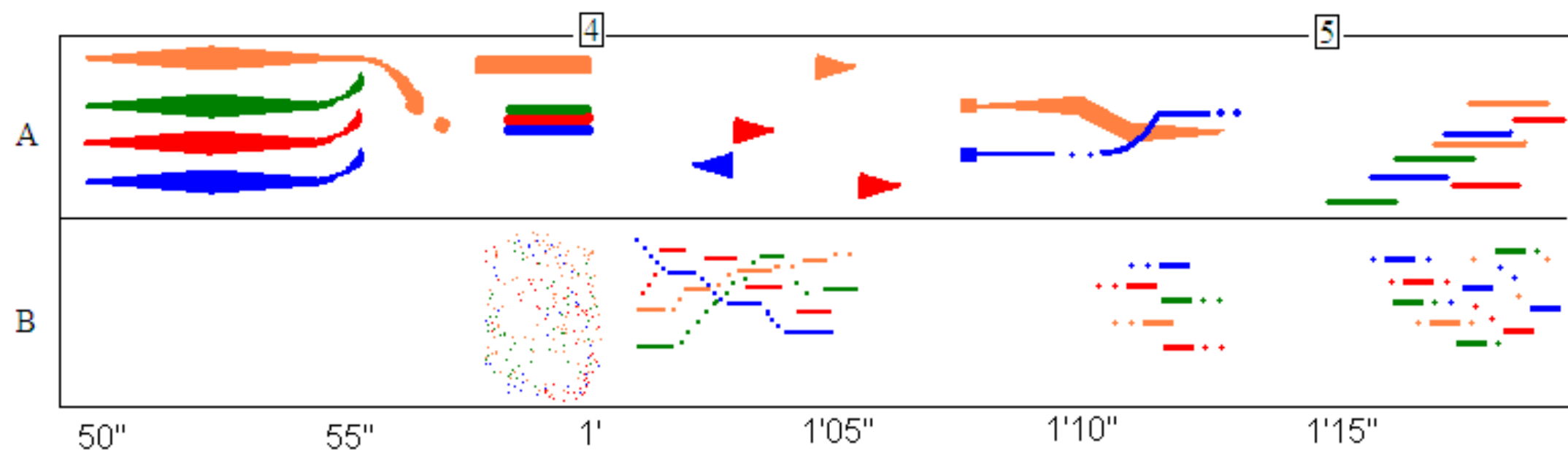
Nolan Stolz

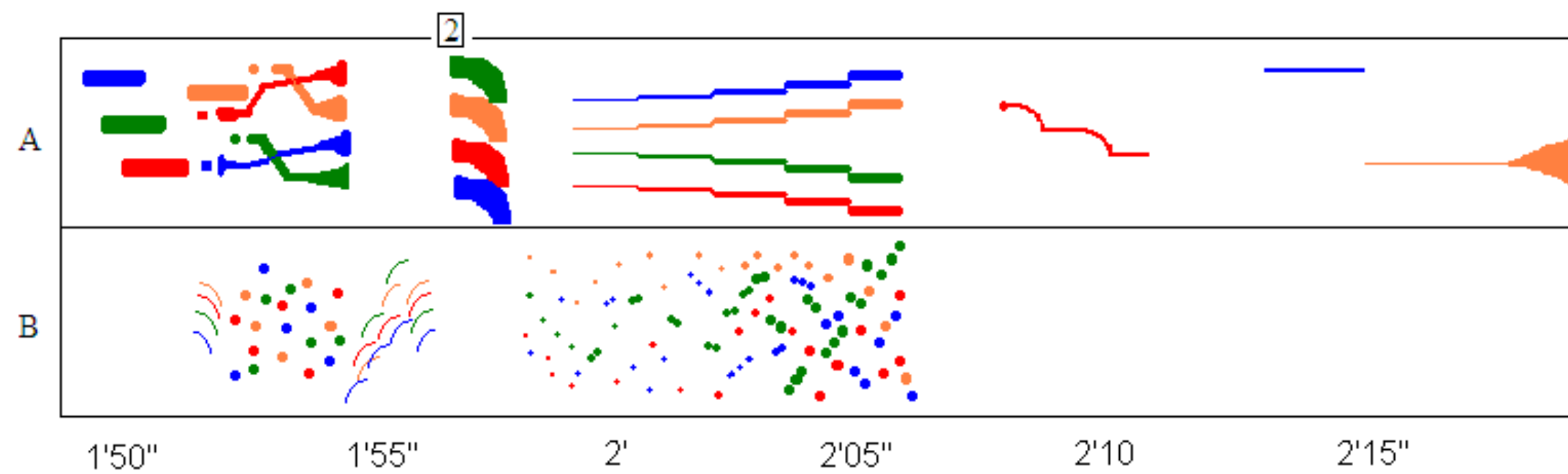


0" 5" 10" 15" 20"

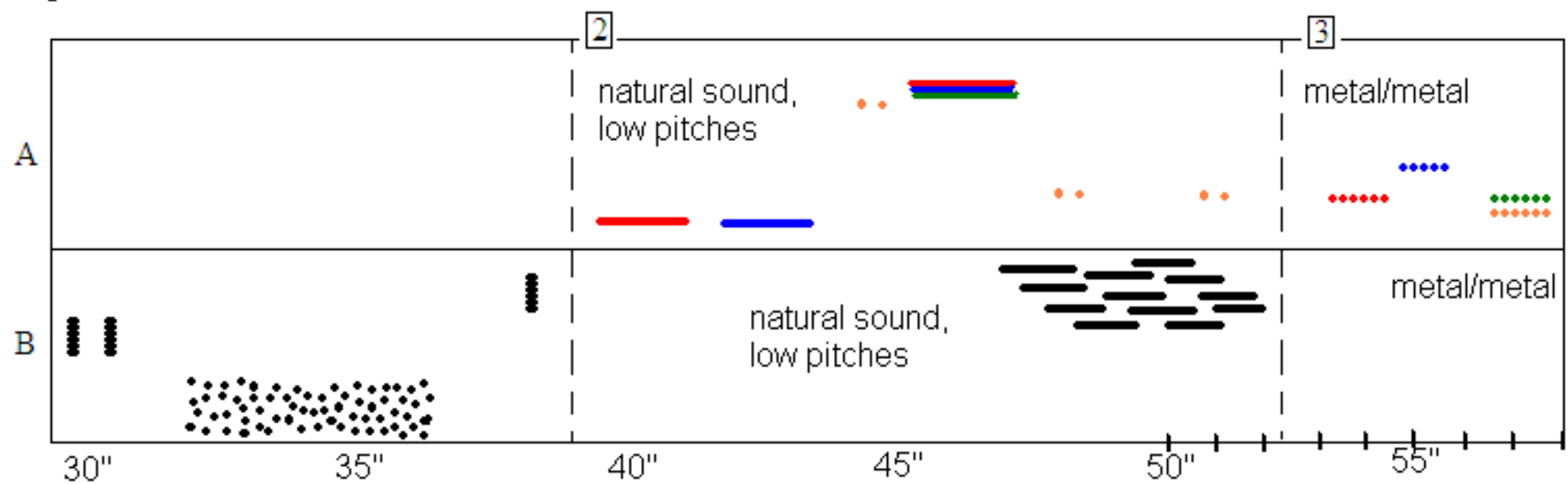
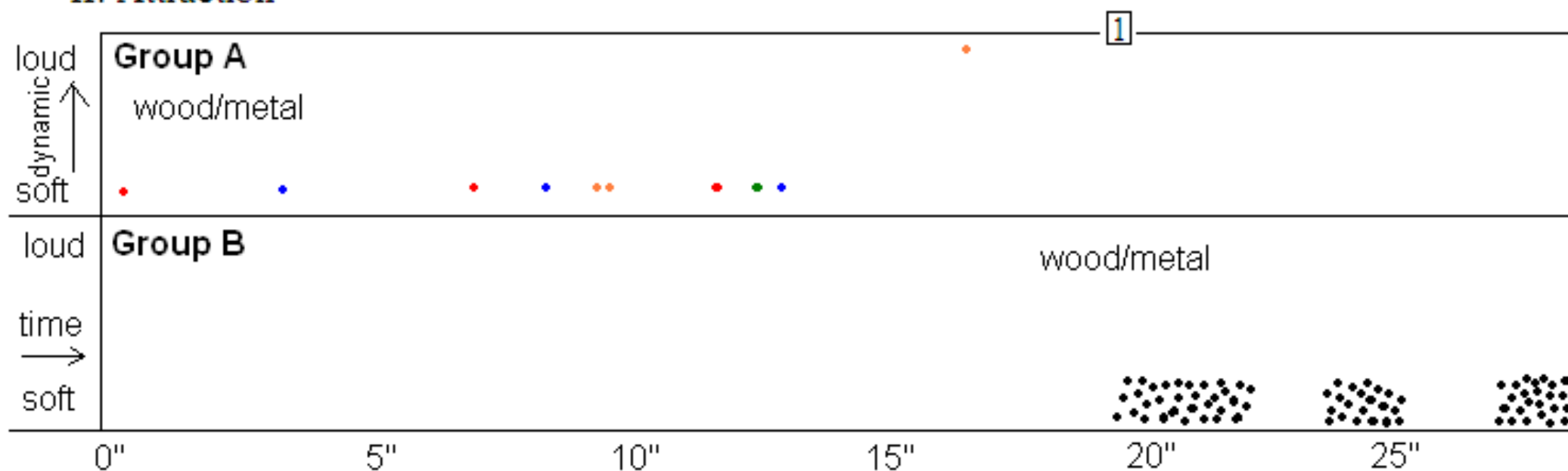


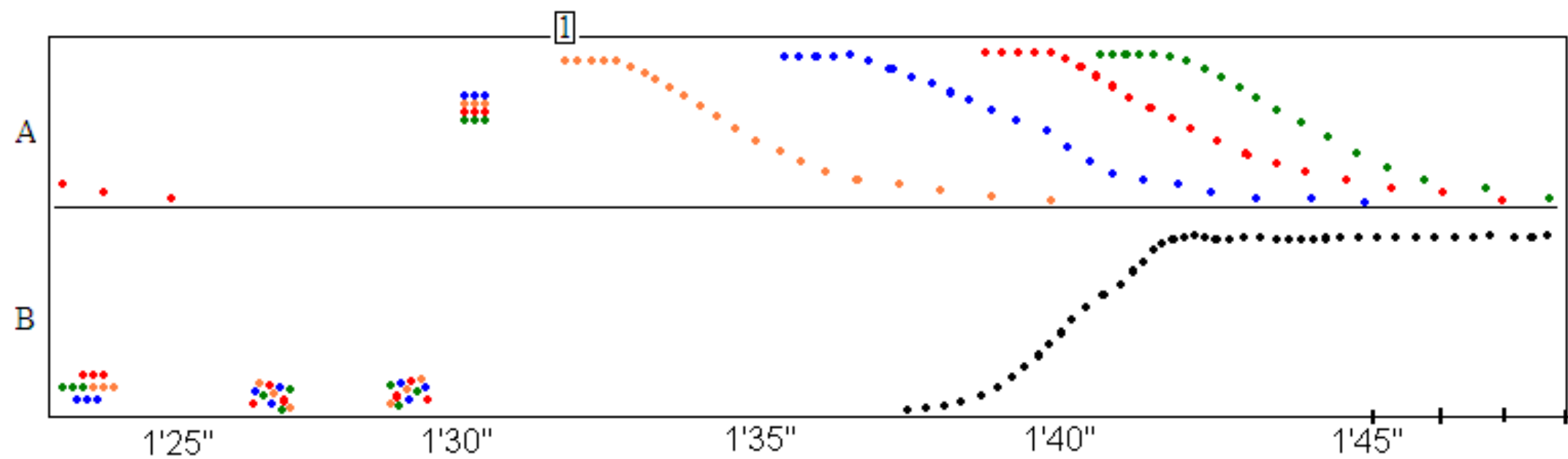
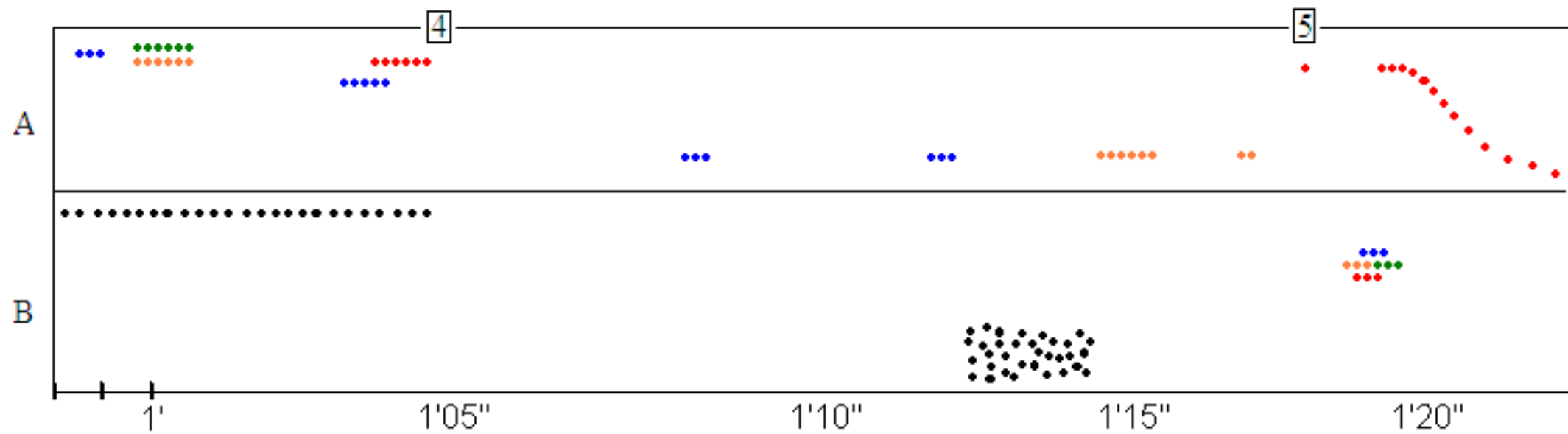
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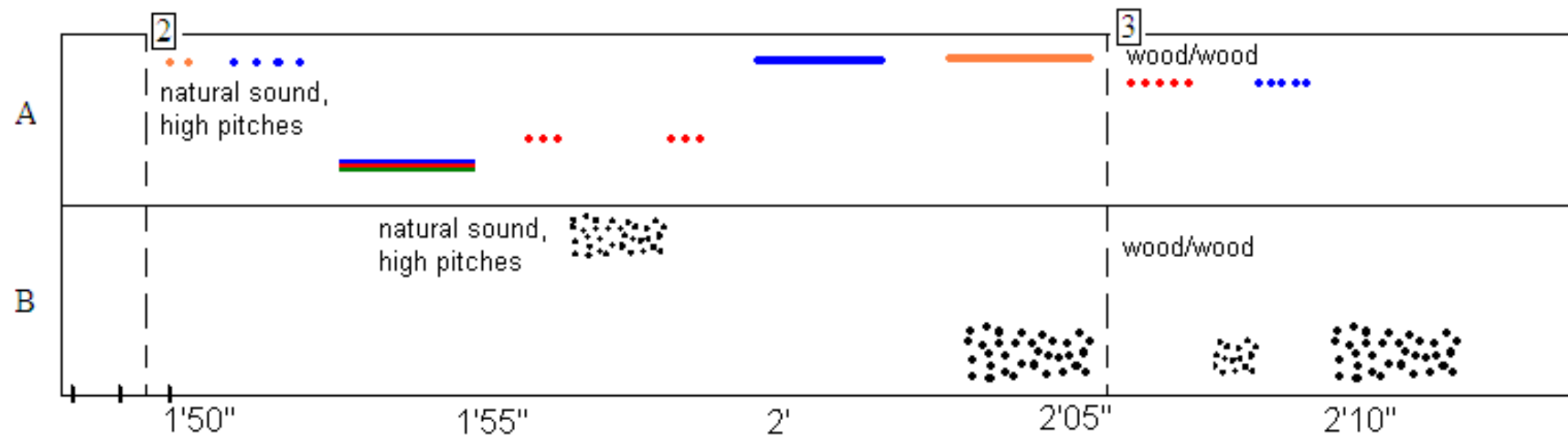


II. Attraction

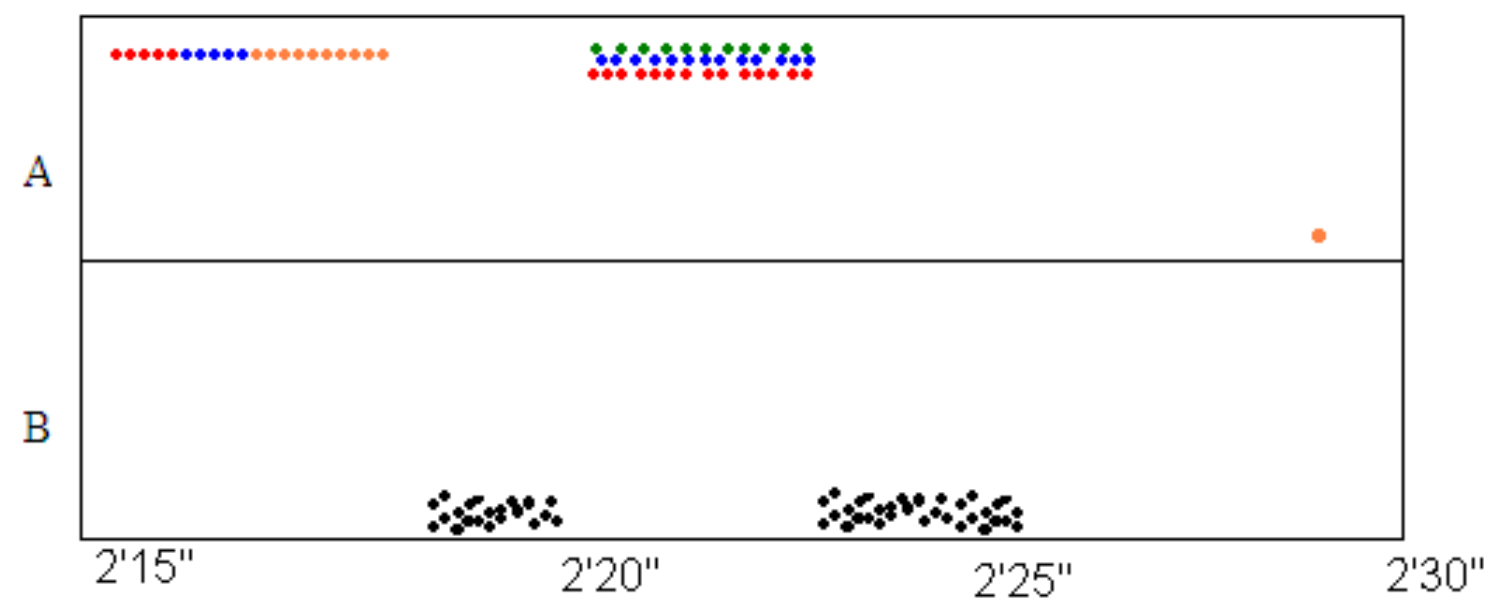




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III. Gravitation

