Geometries

for soloist or N performers on any instruments

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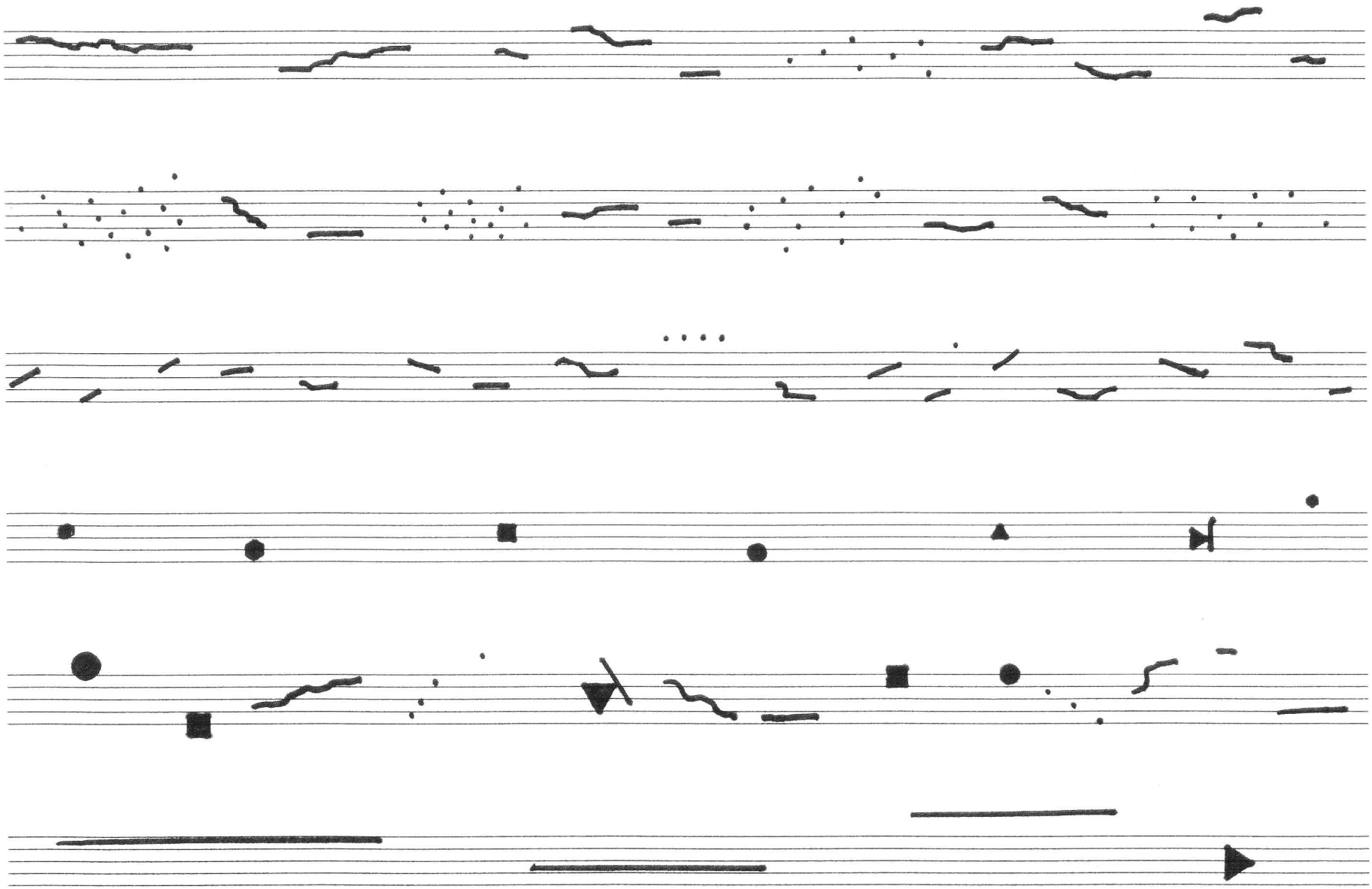
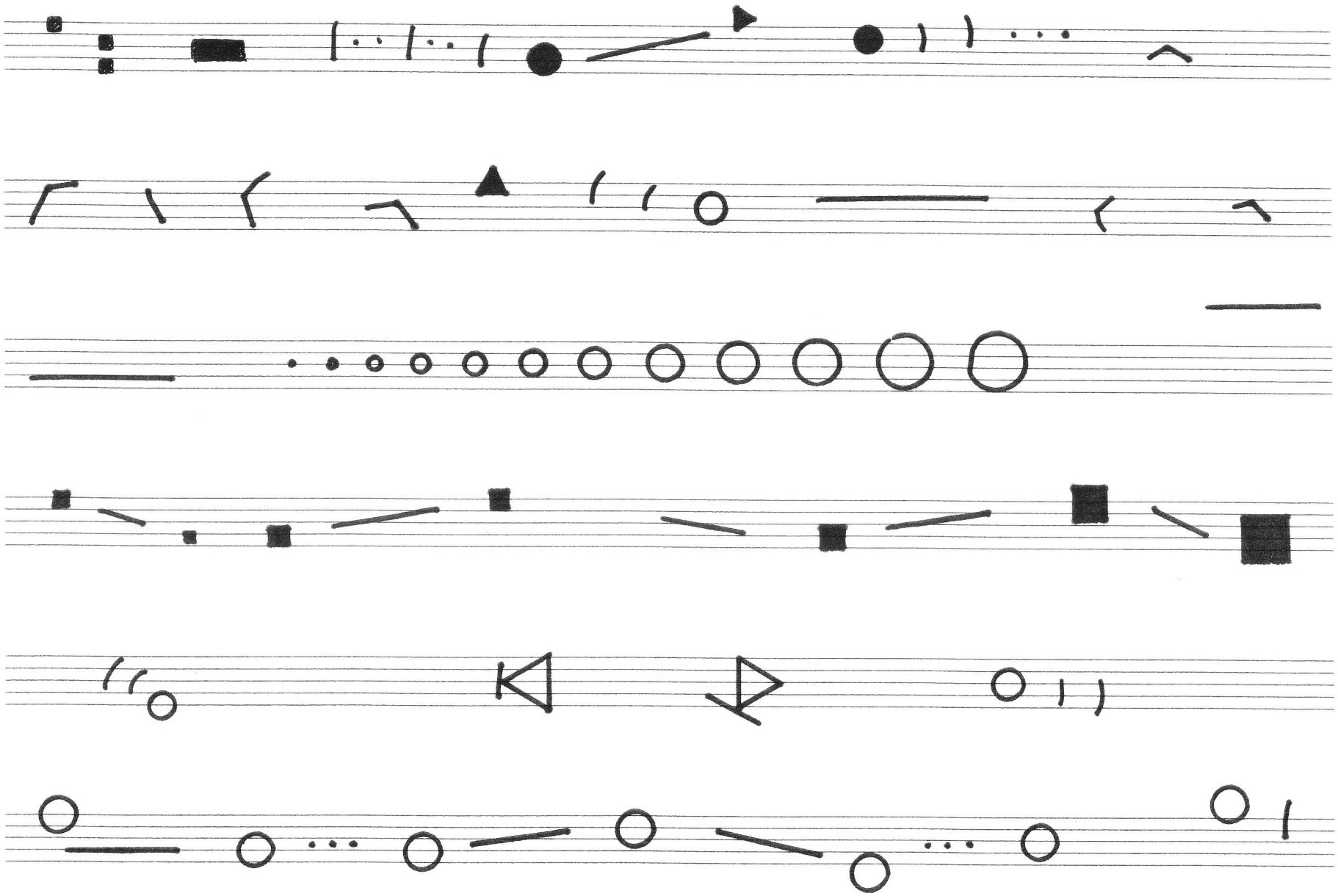
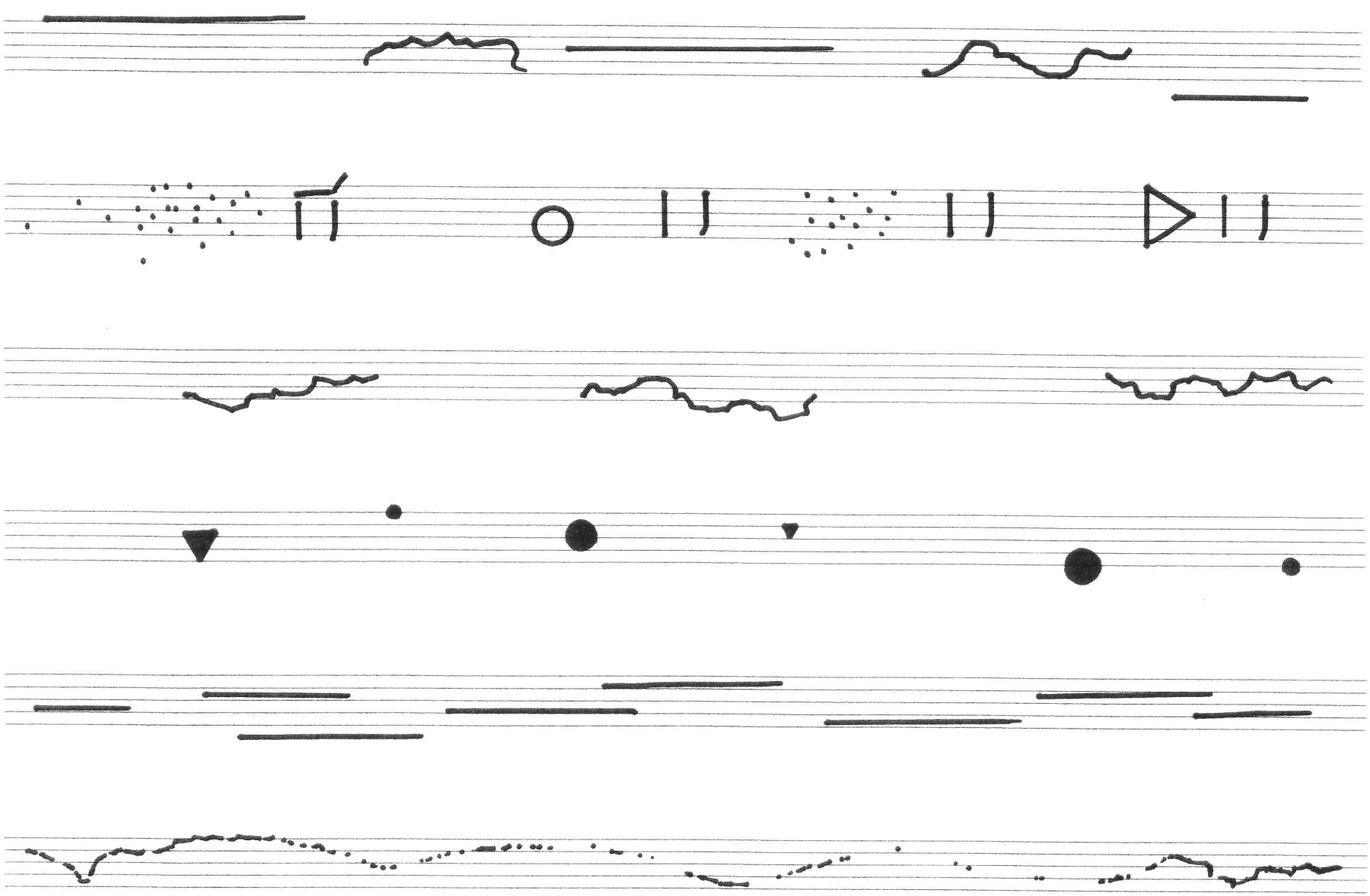
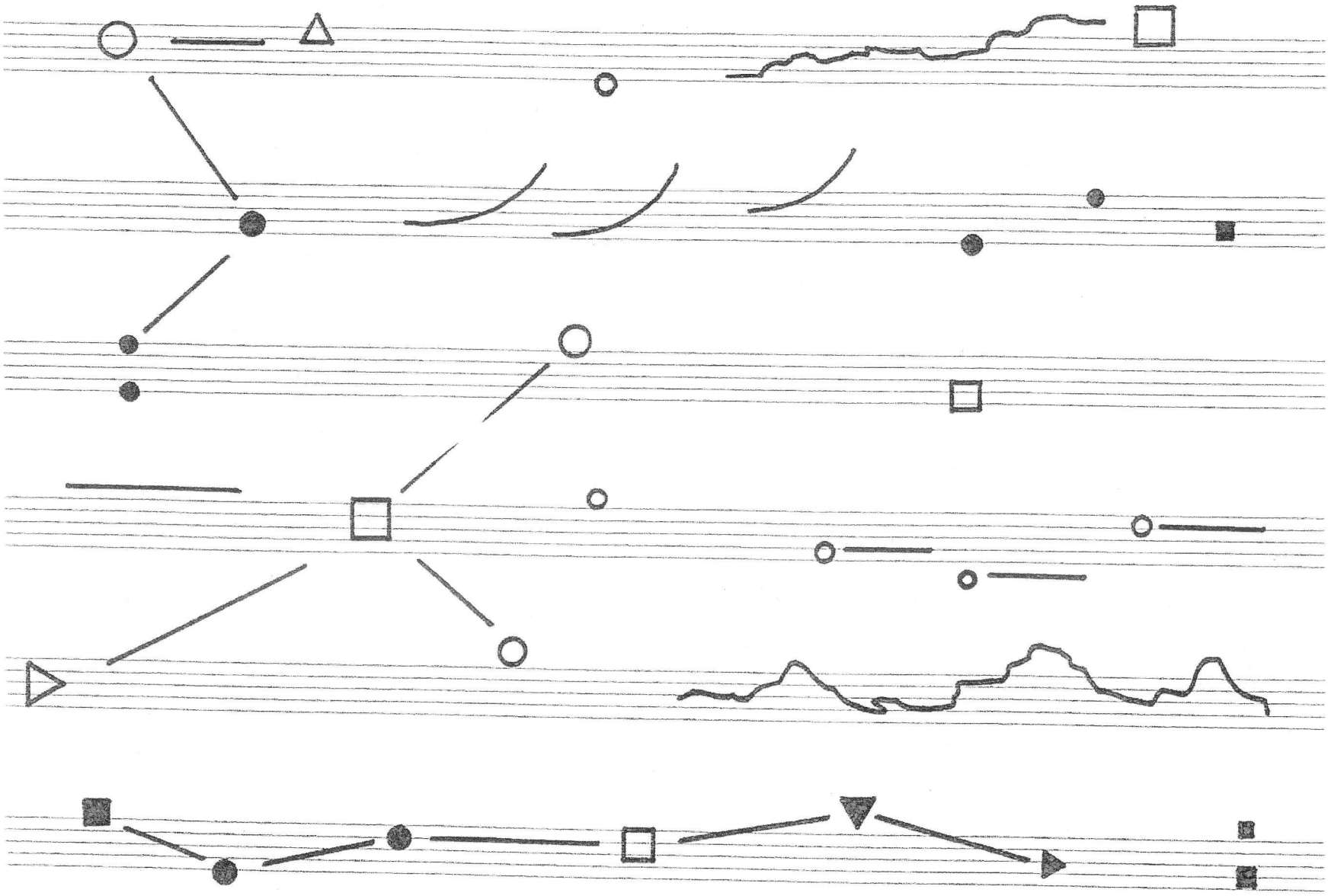
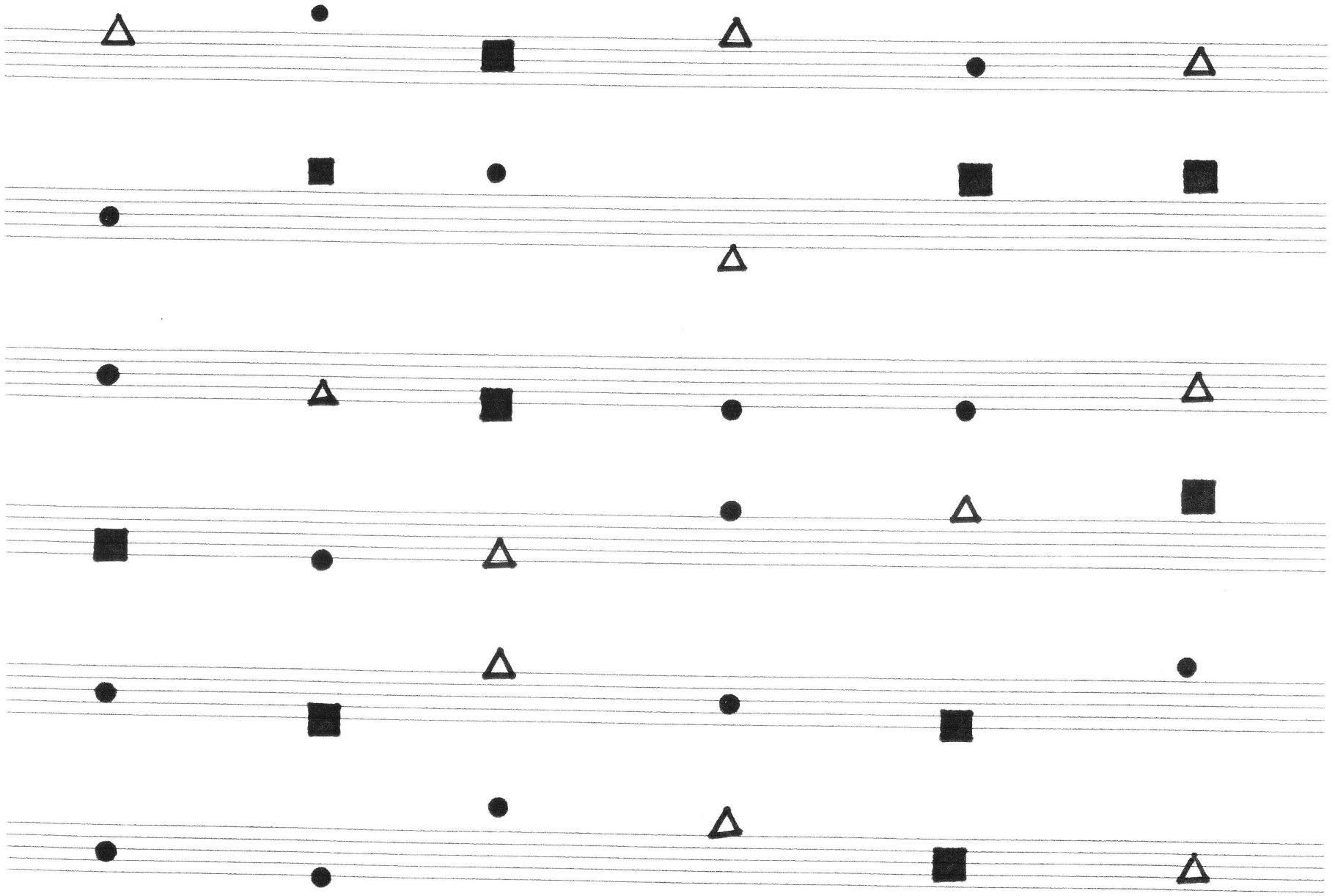
Geometries is a graphic score consisting of five pages of geometric shapes and lines superimposed on musical staves. The score may be realized by a soloist on any instrument or by an ensemble of any number of performers on any instruments.

The geometric shapes represented on the score—rectangles, triangles, circles and squares—are variables the specific values of which are to be chosen by the performer. Once a performer makes a choice of association between a given type of shape and a musical value, he or she is encouraged to interpret all occurrences of that shape in a way consistent with that initial choice. The staves are simply graphic elements and need not be read as musical staves; as with standard musical notation, the marks on the staves should be read from left to right, and the staves from top to bottom. Performers are strongly encouraged to hold a discernible pause when moving from one stave to the next.

Some examples of possible interpretations: A square may be read as a four-tone or four-sound grouping (e.g., a sequence of four notes, a cluster of four notes, a quartal chord); a triangle as a three-tone or three-tone sound grouping. Alternately, different shapes may be taken as indicating different durations for single tones or sounds: a square can be read as the longest duration, a triangle as a medium duration, a circle as a short duration. A filled-in shape may be interpreted as a sound of higher density relative to an unfilled-in shape. Performers may interpret the shapes' relative positions on the staves as indicating relative pitch, i.e., a shape higher on the stave indicates a higher pitch than a shape lower on the stave. Lines connecting shapes may be read as indicating a phrase to be made from the connected shapes; irregularly shaped lines may be read as indicating the outline of a phrase; straight lines may be read as indicating a glissando or a range of discrete pitches whose exact number is up to the performer to choose. Shapes unconnected by lines may be read as discrete events separated by discernible pauses.

The interpretive possibilities given above are simply suggestions; the intent is for the marks to inspire the performer to create his or her own set of reasonably consistent associations between marks and sound.

For a solo performance:
The number of pages to be played and the order in which they are to be played are to be chosen by the performer; each page may be played for as long as the performer is inspired to do so. The duration of the performance is to be set by the performer, who can choose an overall duration within which to play as many of the selected pages as he or she can fit into the preset time limit, or can choose to play each selected page for a set time. The performer may treat each page as a movement with a significant silence placed between each movement, or may move directly from page to page.

For an ensemble performance:
The number of pages to be played is to be determined before the performance, with each performer having the same number of pages as every other performer. Once the pages have been selected the sequence in which they should be played may be determined collectively by the ensemble beforehand or may be left up to the individual performer. The duration of each page should be agreed upon beforehand, and a conductor used to indicate when to move from page to page. A performer who has played through his or her entire page before that page's time is up should maintain a silence until the next page is signaled by the conductor. A performer who hasn't gotten through the entire page before the page's time is up should simply move onto the next page when signaled by the conductor. The performance is over when the last page's time is up.