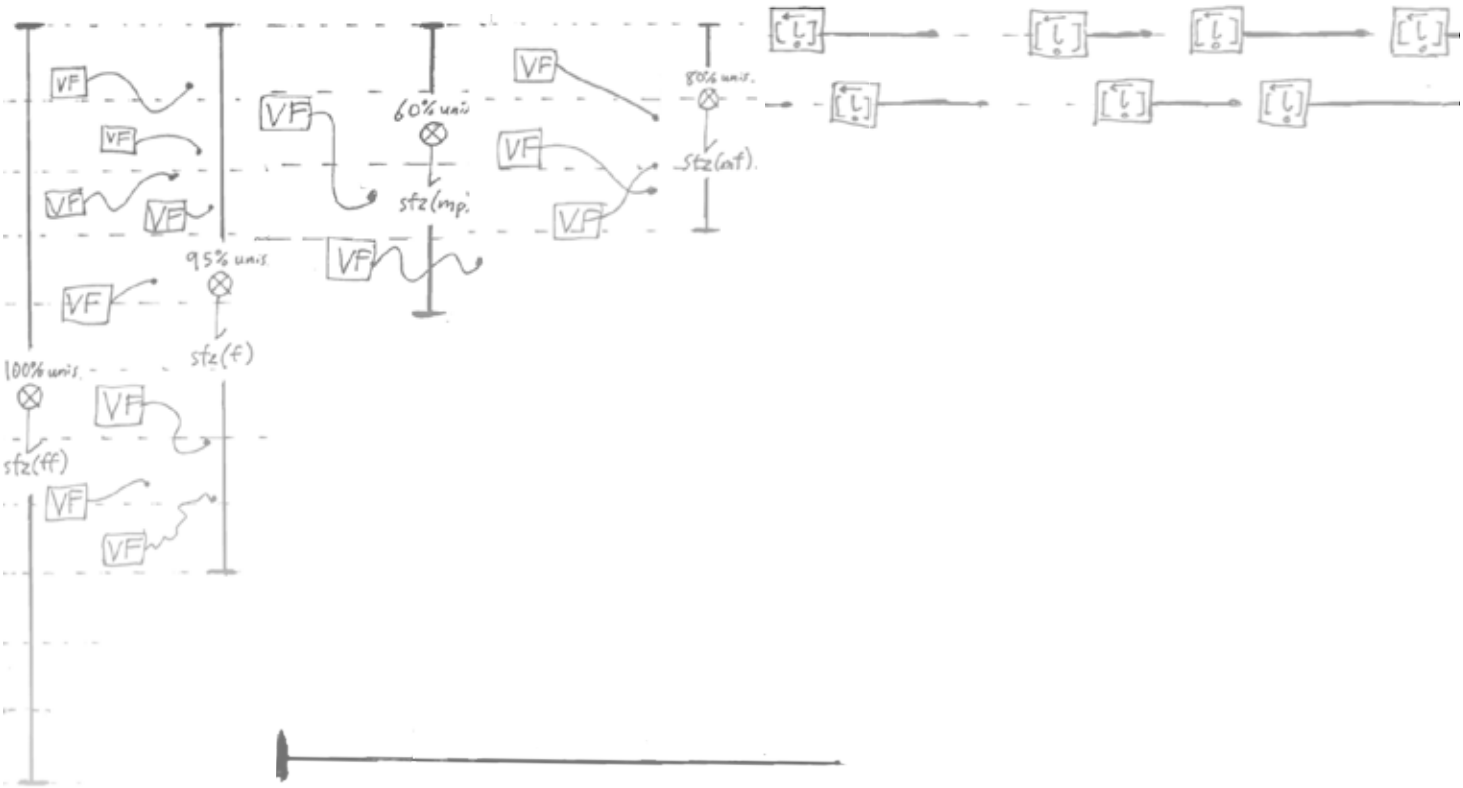


Formations

for piano and cued samples

by Marc Evans

Whiskers and Paws Publishing

The Main Idea(s)

The sounds of extended piano technique are some of my favorite sounds in the world, but they generally present two significant obstacles when composing for them: they are cumbersome to play, and some of the most delicate techniques are barely audible. Also, piano technicians tend not to be too hot on the idea.

This composition, therefore, makes use of a foot pedal to trigger a sequence of 27 short samples of extended piano techniques throughout the piece. The performer is free to create his or her own setup for doing this, or to use an application provided by the composer (requiring a MIDI foot pedal). At first, the sounds coming from the piano and from the speakers feel as though they come from two separate worlds, but over the course of the piece the sound worlds fuse into one.

As for the actual material of the piece, it was assembled with some thought to the "gamut" technique employed by Cage in his String Quartet from 1950. A number of short, self-contained musical gestures were collected, somewhat like shells on a beach, and then combined to make slightly longer gestures. These longer gestures were themselves combined, and through iteration this process creates a kind of form.

Some Notational Considerations

The score includes a staff representing the cued samples: boxed numbers indicate when the foot pedal is to be pressed to cue the respective sample, and the general shape and rhythm of the sample is represented. Dashed arrows are used to coordinate between the samples and the piano during more freely timed sections.

On the subject of timing: the score has three gradations of rhythmic organization: some sections of the score are in a free, quasi-proportional notation (e.g. the first system of page 3, or the end); other sections (e.g. "Fractured" on page 2) are metered. The majority of the piece, however, is somewhere in between, with standard rhythmic notation floating somewhat amorphously within "measures" of constantly varied length.

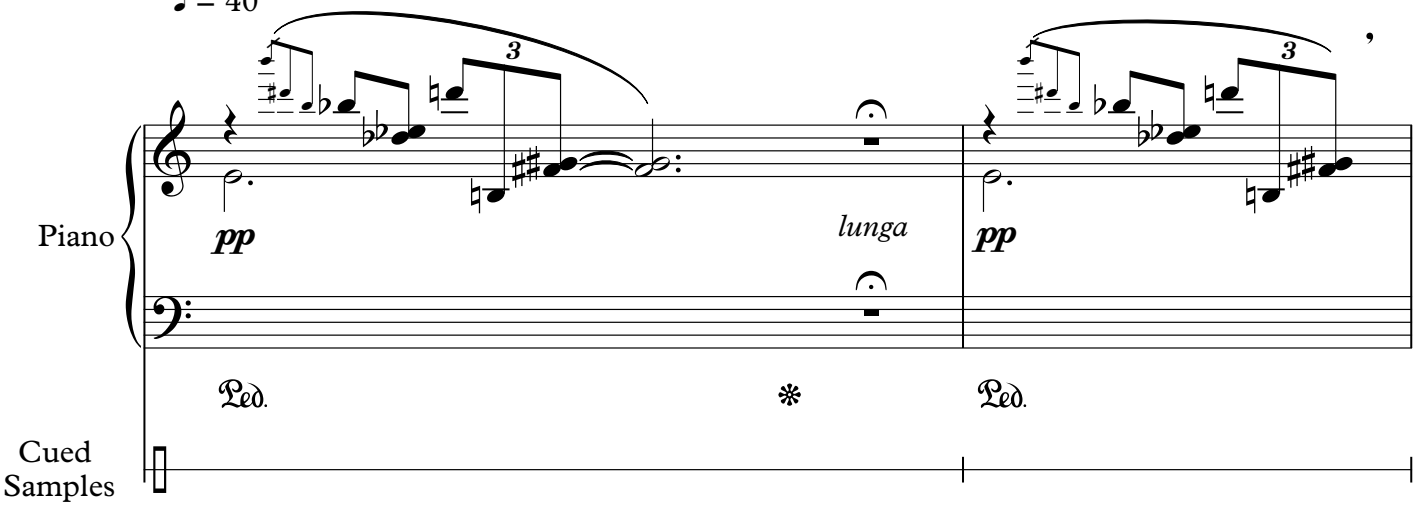
Formations

For Piano and Cued Samples

Marc Evans
Summer 2014

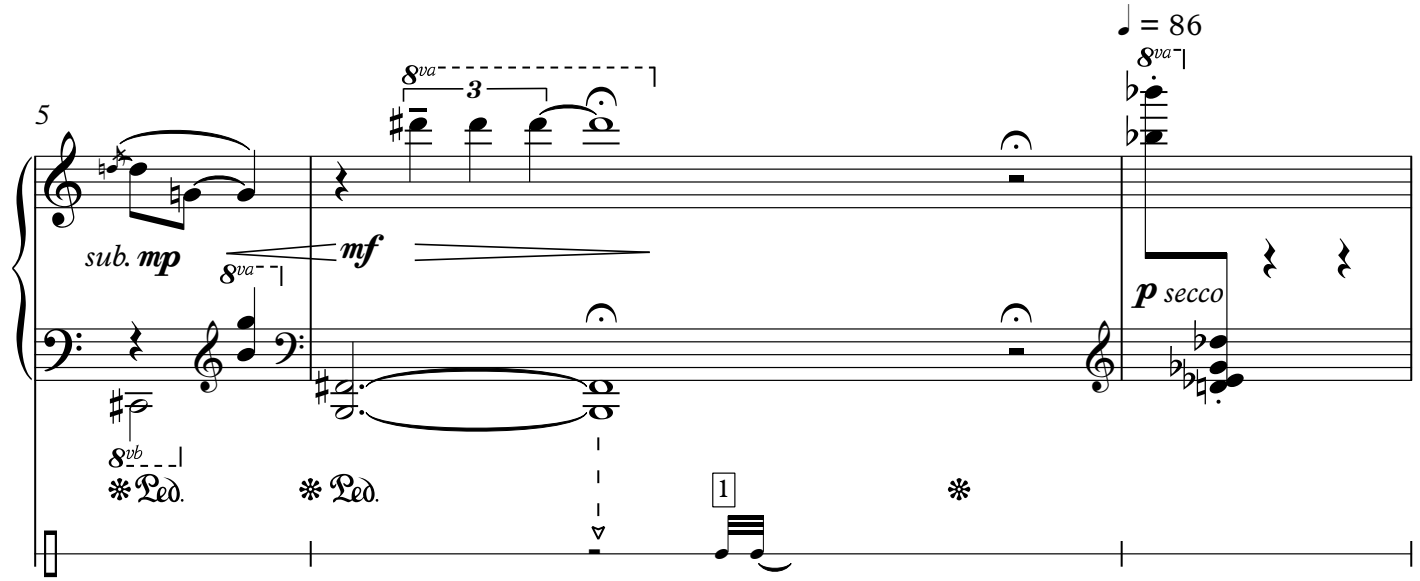
Crystalline

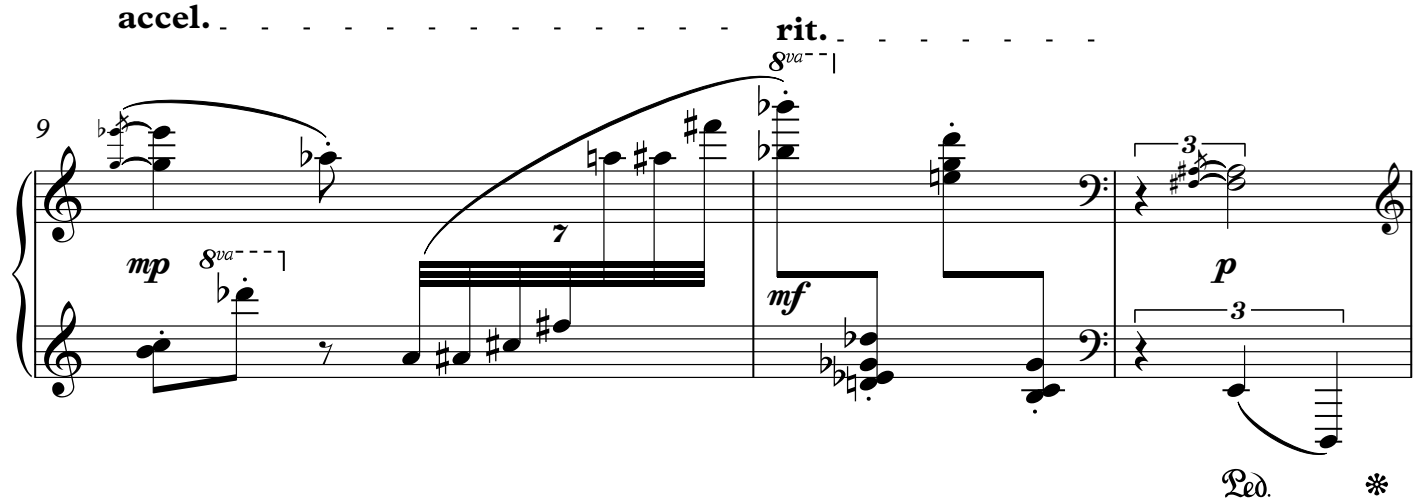
♩ = 40

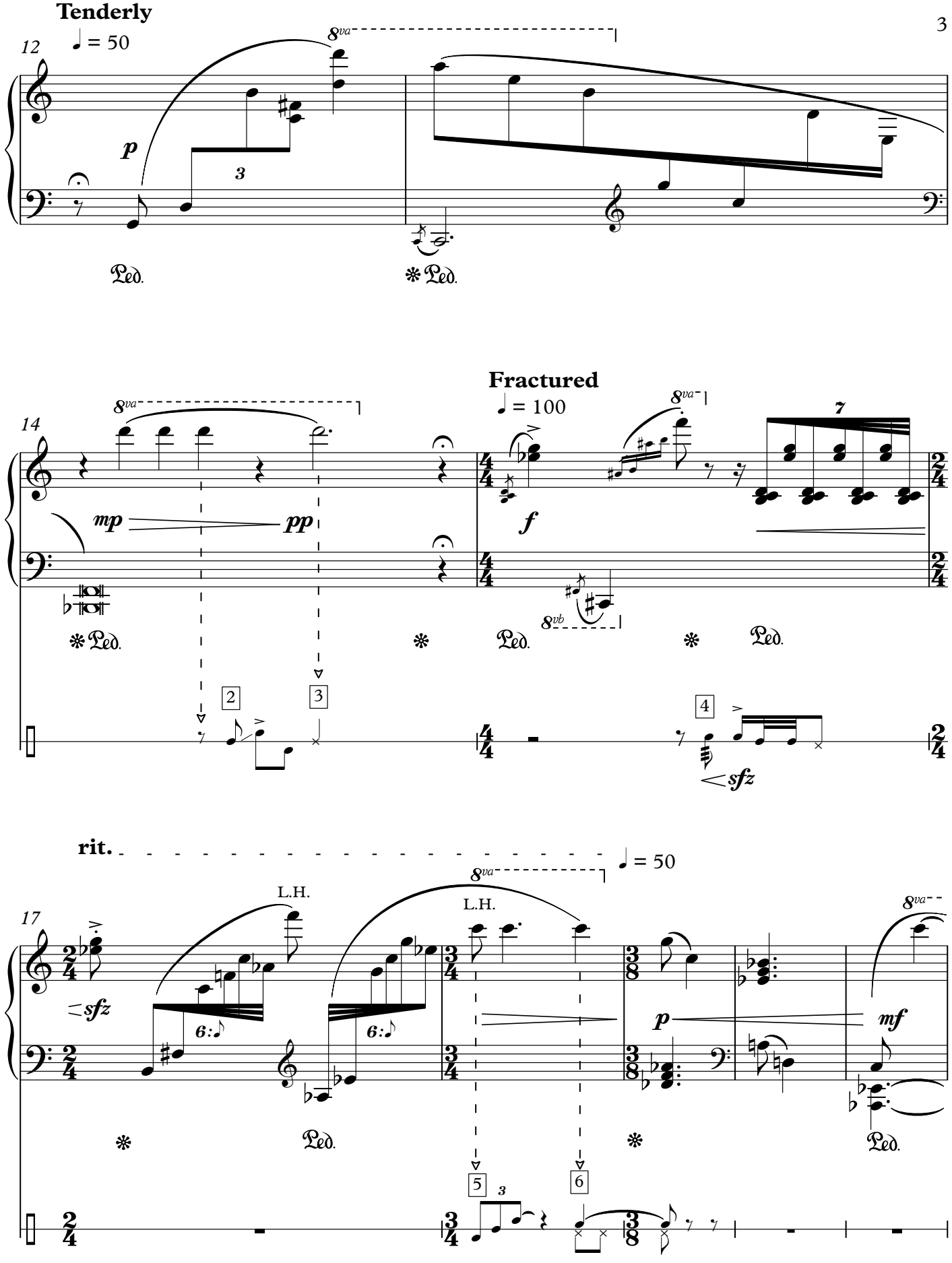


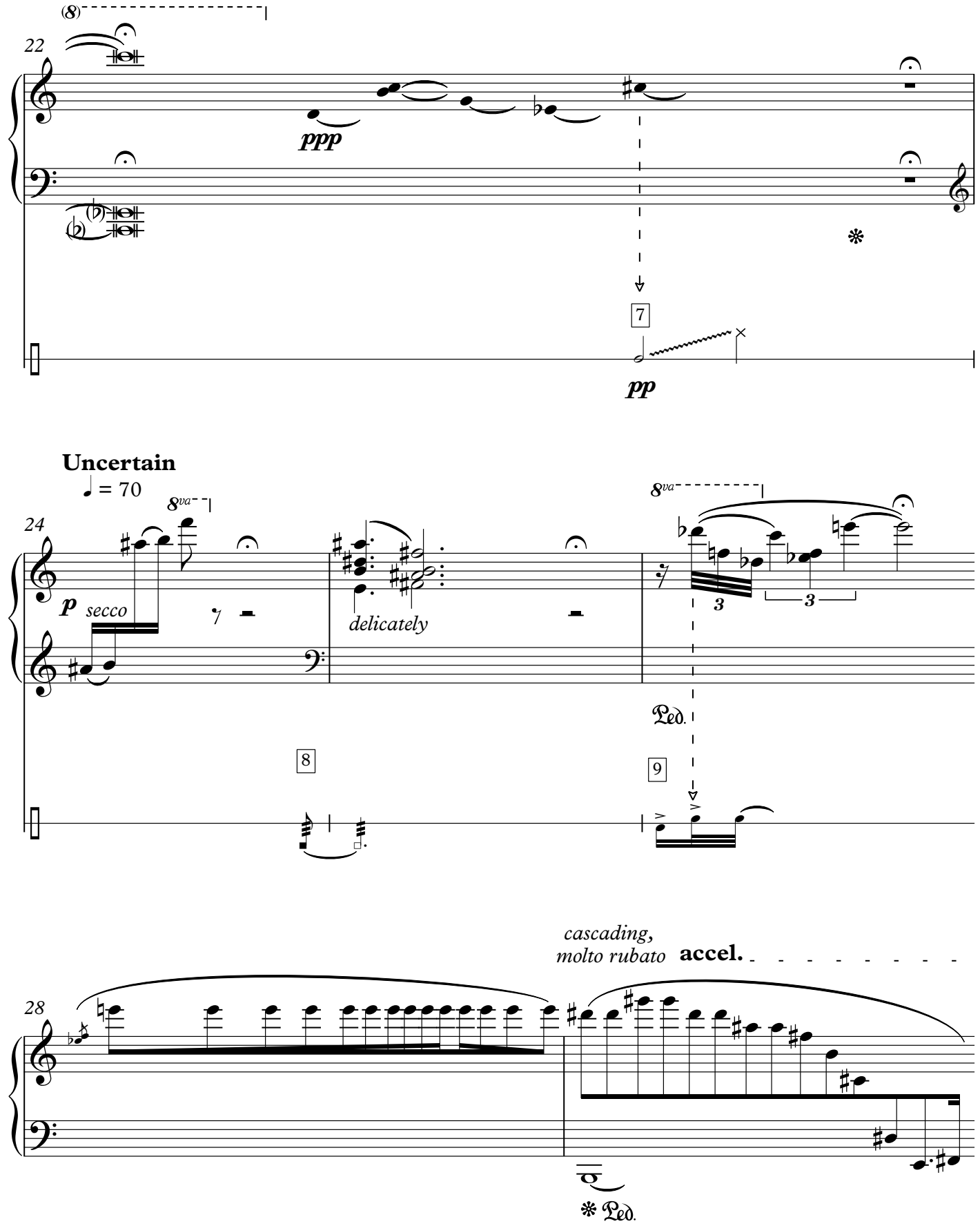
More Agitated

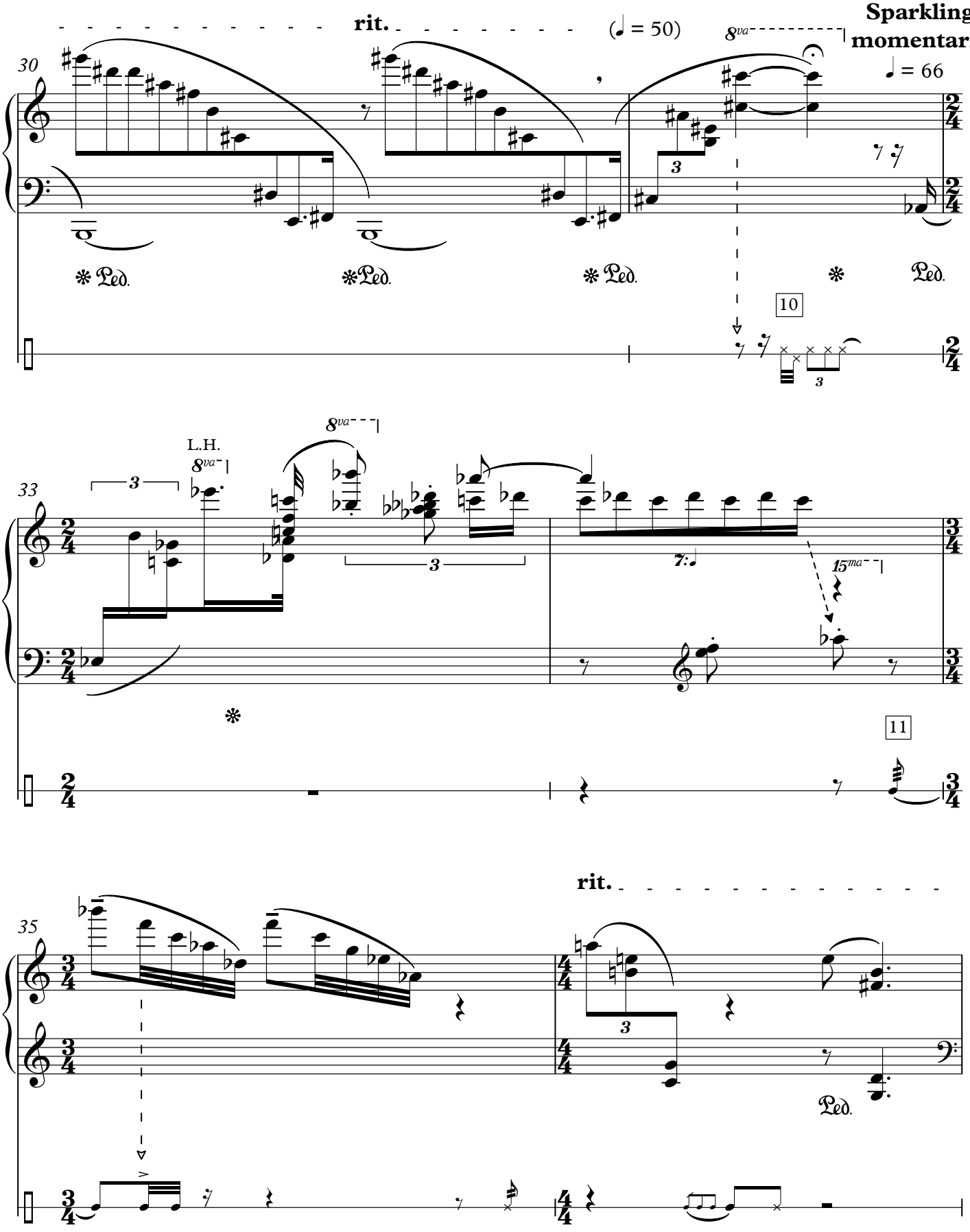
♩ = 86



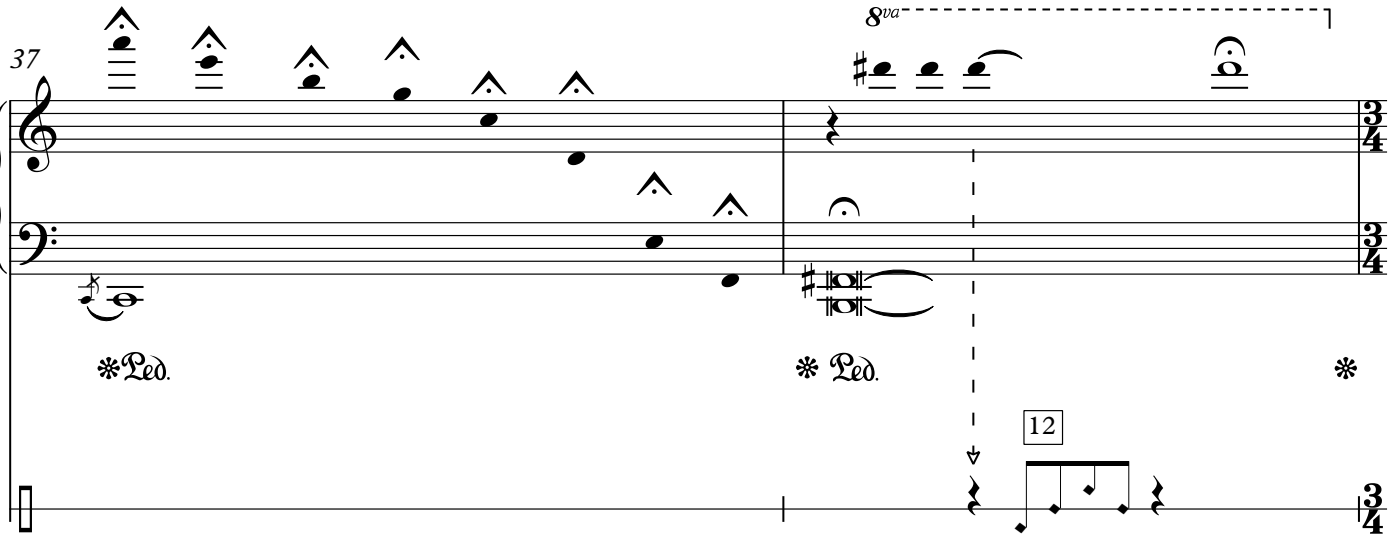



Tenderly
12
♩ = 50
8va
p
3
Ped.
Ped.
Fractured
14
♩ = 100
mp
pp
f
7
8vb
sfz
rit.
♩ = 50
17
L.H.
L.H.
sfz
6:♪
6:♪
p
mf
5
3
6

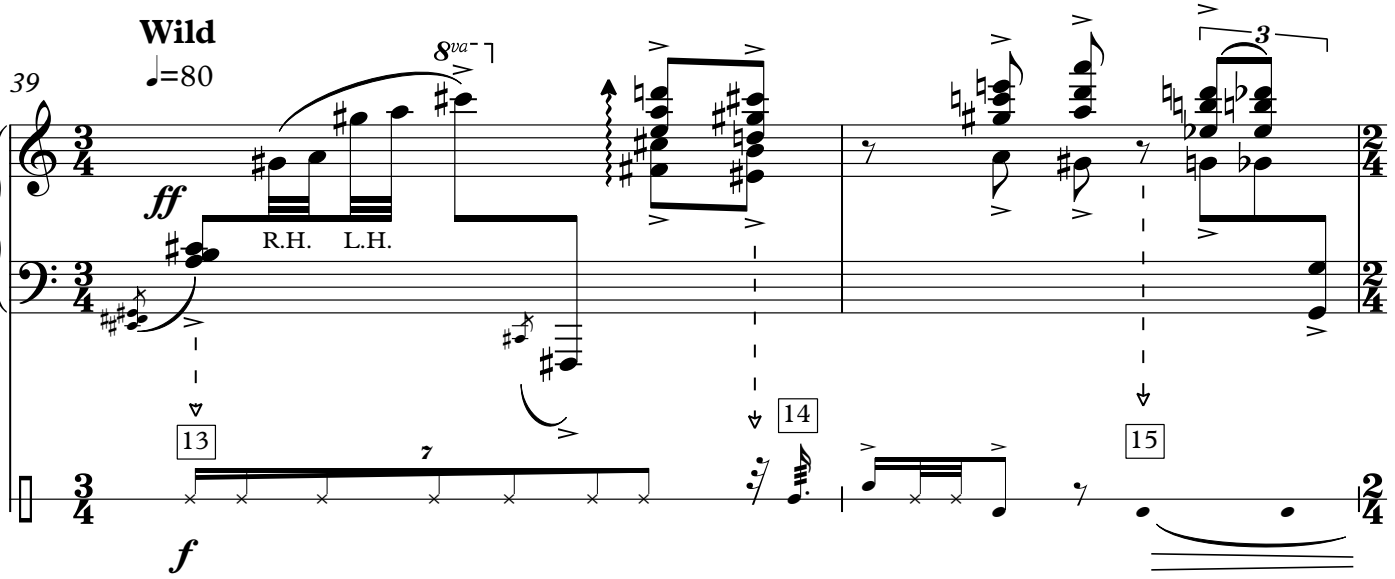

(8)
22
ppp
7
pp
Uncertain
♩ = 70
8va
24
p
secco
delicately
8va
3
3
Ped.
8
9
cascading,
molto rubato
accel.
28
Ped.

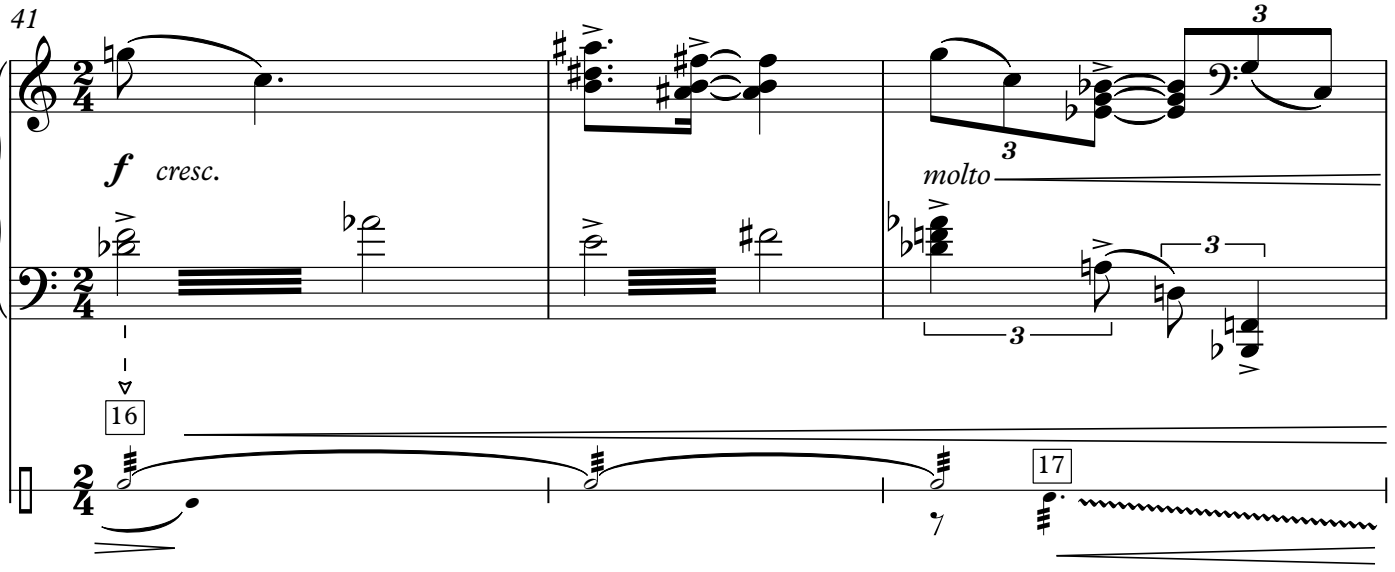

rit.
(♩ = 50)
8va
Sparkling, momentarily
♩ = 66
30
Ped.
10
L.H.
33
15ma
11
rit.
35
Ped.

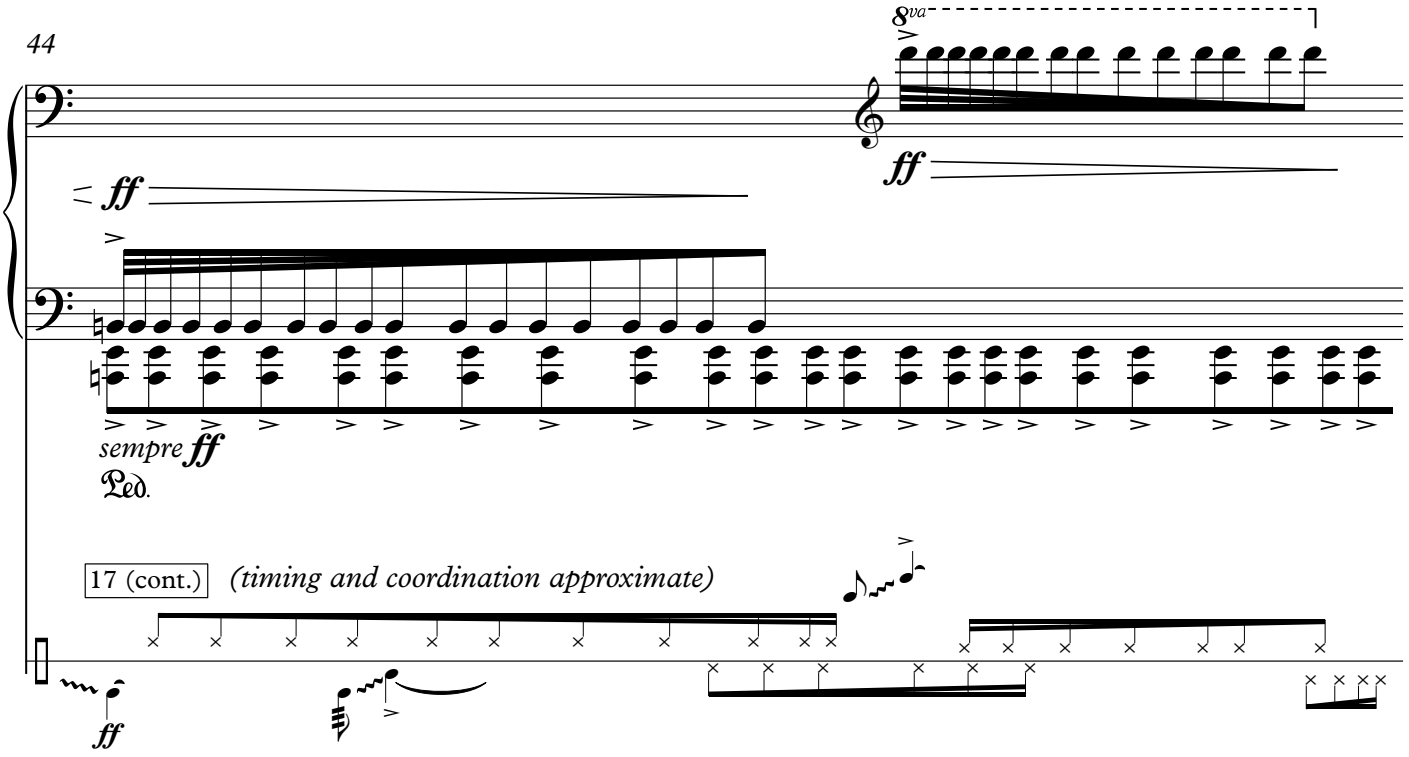
Suspended

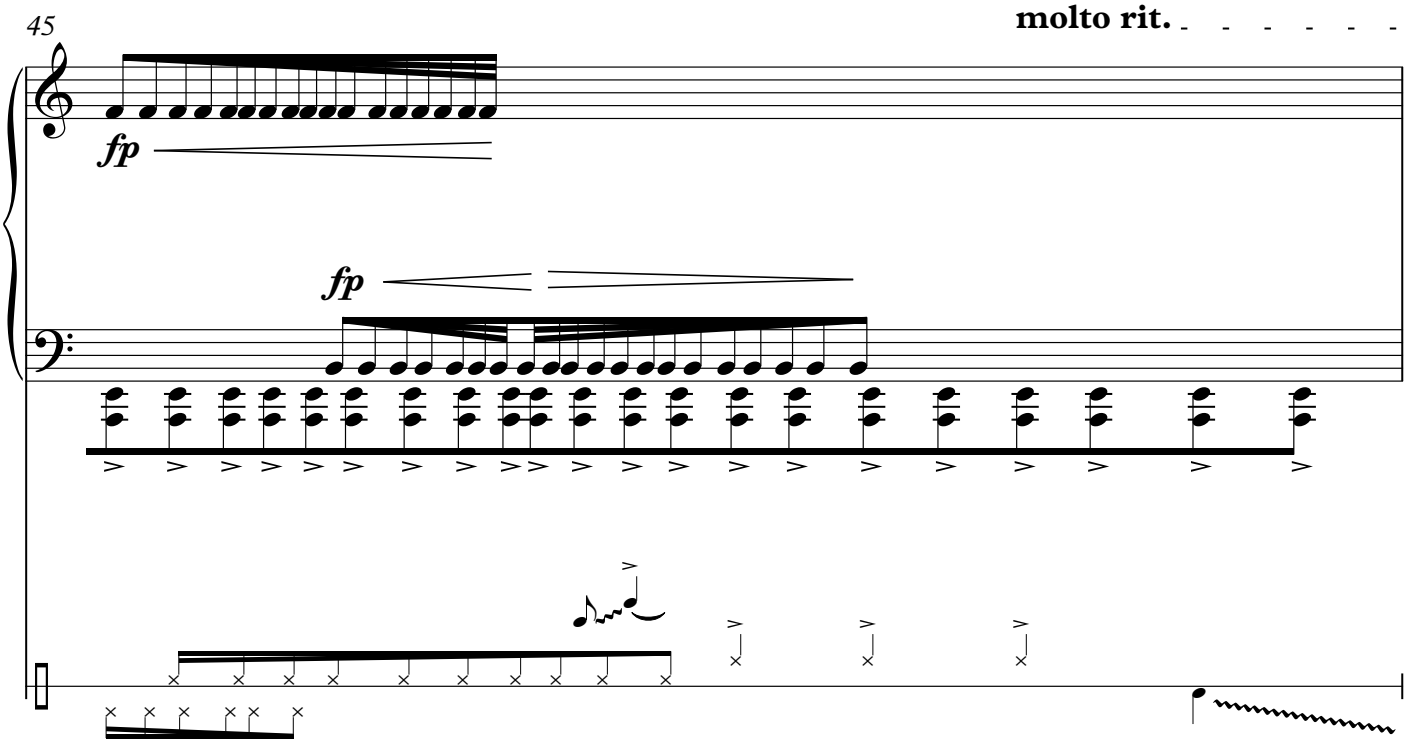


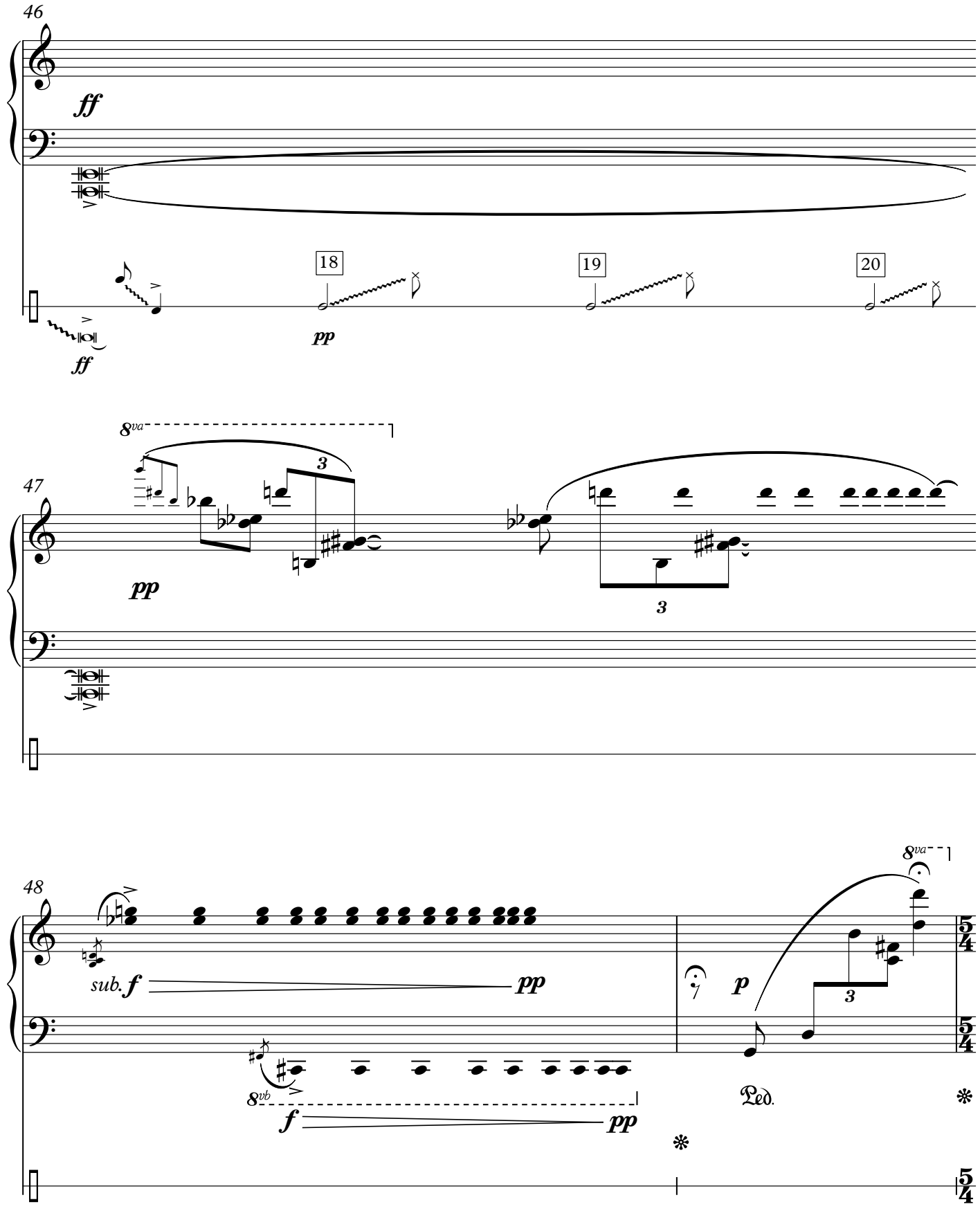
Wild

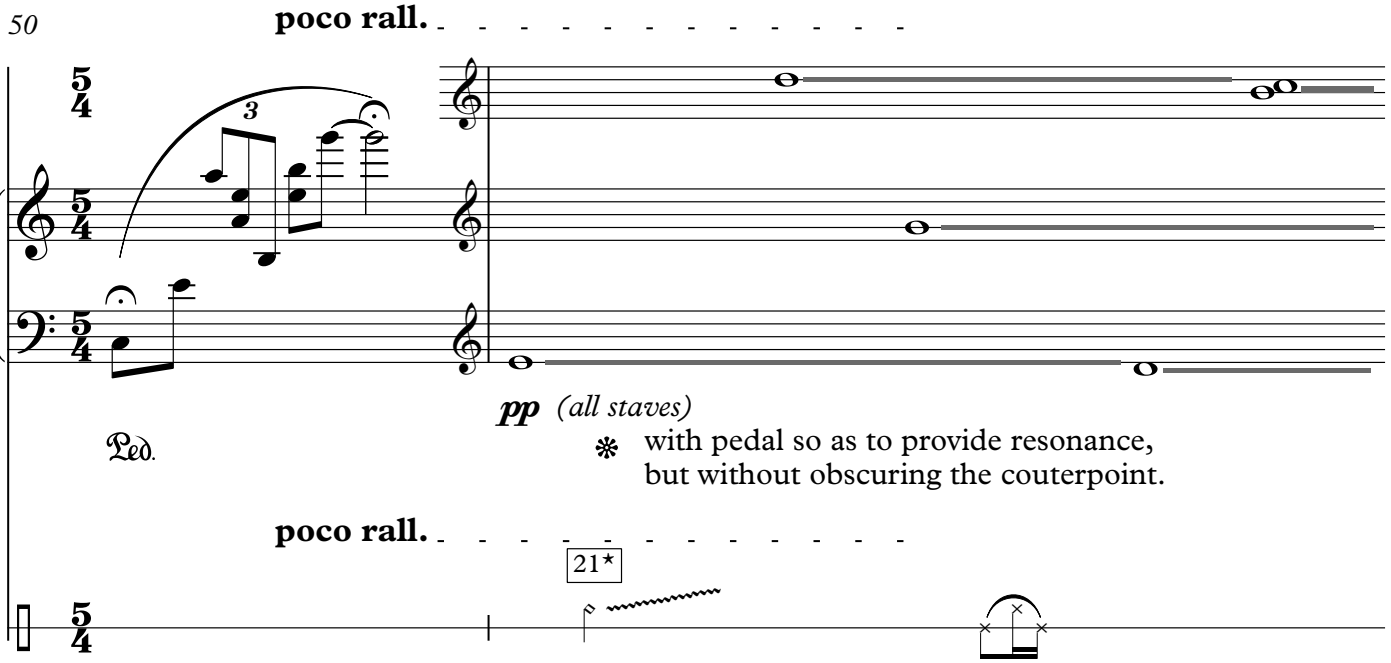


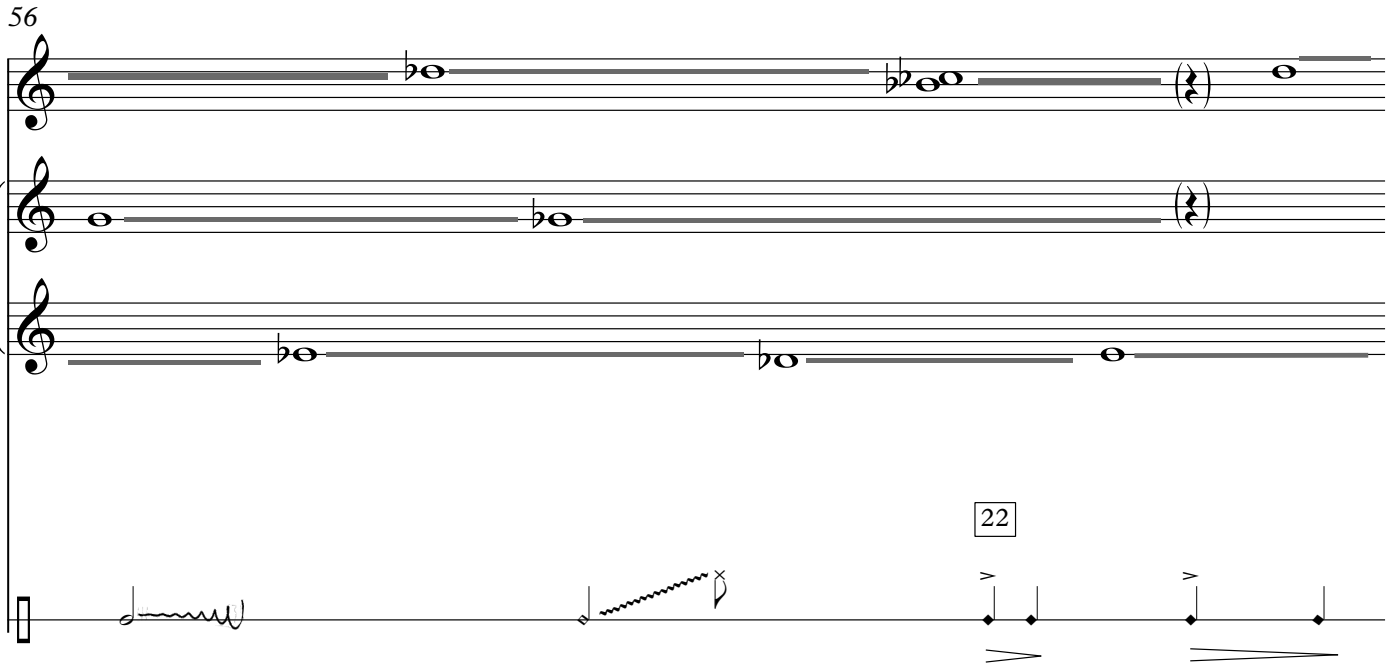



44
8va
ff
ff
sempre ff
Ped.
17 (cont.)
(timing and coordination approximate)
ff

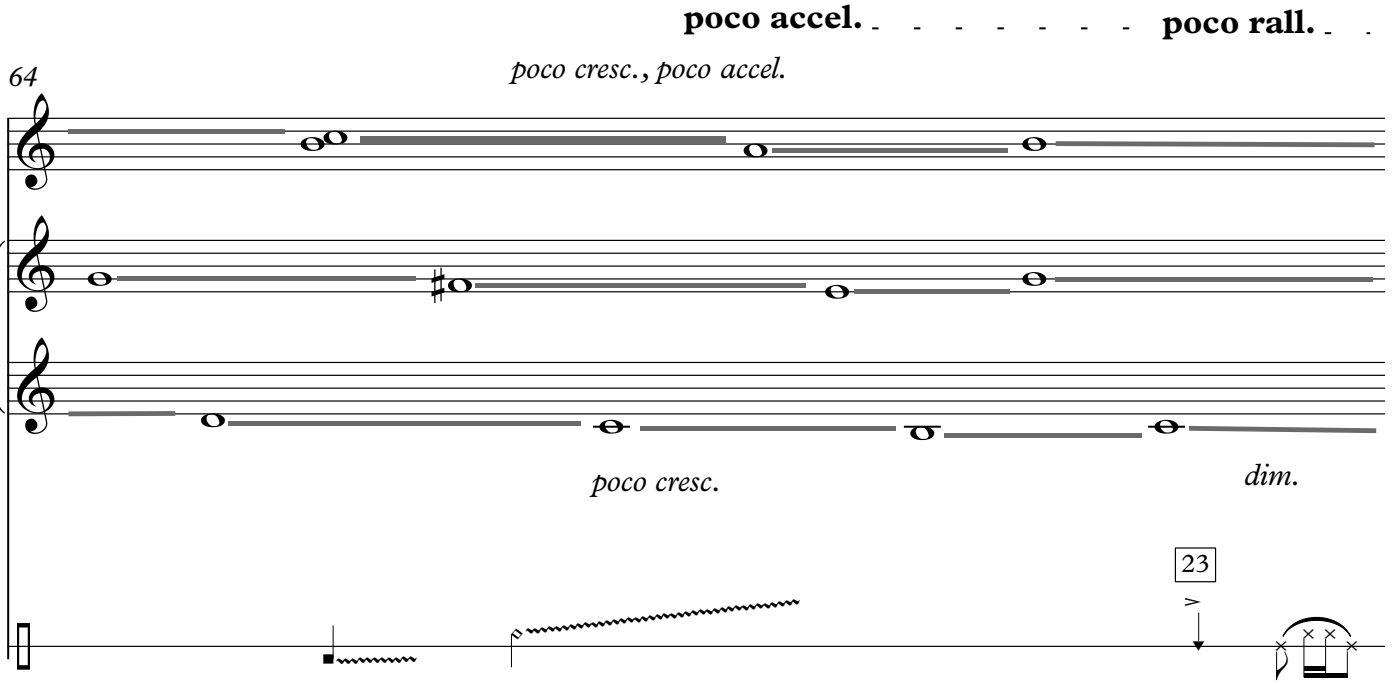

45
molto rit.
fp
fp

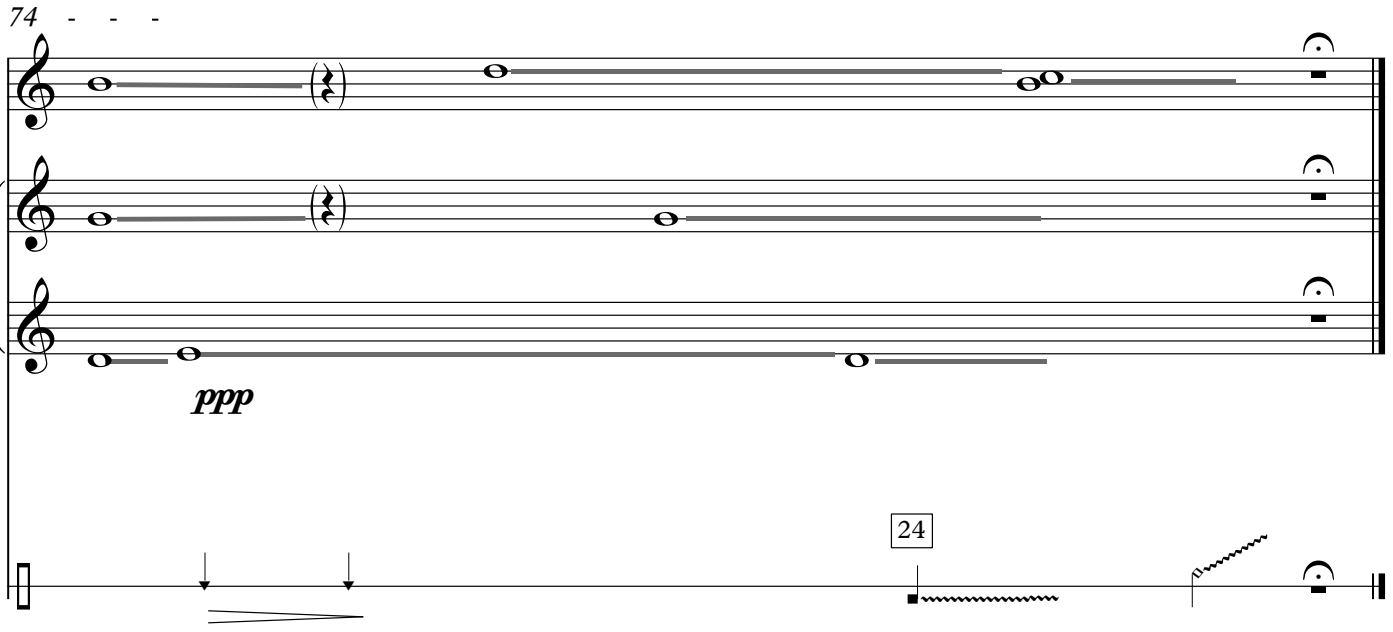

46
ff
18
19
20
pp
ff
47
8va
3
pp
3
48
sub. f
pp
8va
p
3
8vb
f
pp
Ped.
*
*
5/4
5/4
5/4





* The samples here are long, containing several gesures separated by rests. This makes coordination with the piano part more unpredictable, and intentionally so.


poco accel.
poco rall.
64
poco cresc., poco accel.
poco cresc.
dim.
23


74
ppp
24