rise To burn

for piano solo

BRIAN CIACH

2021

rise To burn

(Fifth Sonata)

for piano solo

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PERFORMANCE NOTES

- Approximately 13-15 minutes in duration (depending on rubato and tempi)
- This piece may be repeated da capo.
- “Ametric rubato”, basically an extreme rubato, is a type of playing where the music lacks a consistent pulse; the rhythmic values are time-warped at the performer’s discretion. Perhaps similar to *Sprechstimme*, where pitches are approximated, this technique approximates a given rhythm. Feel free to stretch time, to listen just a bit longer to your playing, or push ahead.
- Pedal indications are given and specific.
- Fermatas used:

short normal long

PROGRAM NOTES

Rise to Burn (Fifth Piano Sonata) was commissioned by Charles Abramovic—pianist, composer, and Chair of the Piano Department at Temple University's Boyer College of Music. For six years, I studied piano with Dr. Abramovic with a special emphasis on new music performance (I won a Graduate Assistantship as a Contemporary Music Performance Specialist, premiering works of student composers). In Rise to Burn, Charlie requested only "on the keys" piano music—no extended techniques, like string plucking, stopped string slides, and other similar effects, which I enjoy writing. Instead of exploring these unique timbres, I strived to compose a compelling work in the realm of good, old-fashioned pitch and rhythm.

This piece is inspired by our ongoing post-Pandemic return to society and is a loose depiction of the life cycle of a Phoenix, the mythological bird that represents resurrection and rebirth. According to folklore, the Phoenix has a wonderfully melodious voice, which becomes mournful with approaching death. Other creatures are then so overcome by its beauty and sadness that they fall dead. Every thousand years or so, the Phoenix burns itself up in death and is reborn out of its own ashes. The "rise" in my title is a call to rise to the occasion, to rise up; "burn" is a call to accomplish, to be fueled, inspired, and/or to consume.

Overall, the piece moves from slow to fast. It begins with a mournful "Phoenix Song" and a slow, "Primordial Ash", which is depicted through extremely slow and deep chords. It is here that the main whole-step motive (slow triplets: E-D-E-D-E) is introduced. Movement then begins to take shape in "The Rise"; dense chords ascend to a climax. Out of these disjunct and dissonant rising clusters, a faster lyrical section emerges in "Soaring". "The Burn" features rapid 32nd notes and a simple melody in E Mixolydian. It is this fast music which overtakes the music's trajectory, eventually leading to a blistering finale.

The work is through-composed and has no real connection to Sonata-Allegro Form. If it is in any true form, it would be Variation Form—there is a constant sense of development pervading the work. In fact, my only reference to Sonata Form is that the work is one stormy, 15-minute development section. The element that ties it all together is the main whole-step motive mentioned above, which is developed throughout the piece. The Phoenix narrative provides cohesion, as well. The piece may be repeated, like the first movement of a sonata, reflecting the continuous life cycle of a Phoenix.

In terms of pitch, for much of the work, I relied on an online random twelve-tone pitch generator for the chord progressions throughout. I explored vertical stackings of random twelve-tone rows, chose only the chords which spoke to me (ignoring the rest), and

arranged them into chord progressions. Thus, the “Phoenix Chords” were born. The rest of the pitch content was either improvised at the piano or worked out motivically.

In terms of rhythm, I generally aim for phrase irregularity, metric disillusionment, and a balance of predictability/unpredictability, which makes the meter “wrong in the right way” (as one student so aptly described it). All the metric shifts (4/4 to 5/4, to 7/16, 3/8, 2 and-a-half 4, 4/4 + 1/16 and back), irrational time signatures (5/6, 4/20, etc.), polyrhythms, and poly-tempos, aim to present the musical material in novel ways that capture and hold the listener’s attention.

Finally, the music features cryptograms on the name Abramovic. Throughout the piece, motives of ABC [ABramoviC], CBCA, BC, etc., riddle the score. I’ve always enjoyed uncovering musical ciphers, like the BACH motive spelled out in Bach’s Art of Fugue (and in my Fourth Sonata), Schumann’s SCHA reference to himself in Carnaval, the DSCH motive in Dmitri Shostkovich’s 8th String Quartet, and countless others. But the true enigma for me in this work is that my apparently explicit reference to ABramoviC was completely subconscious and only discovered after completing the final double barline.

for Charles Abramovic

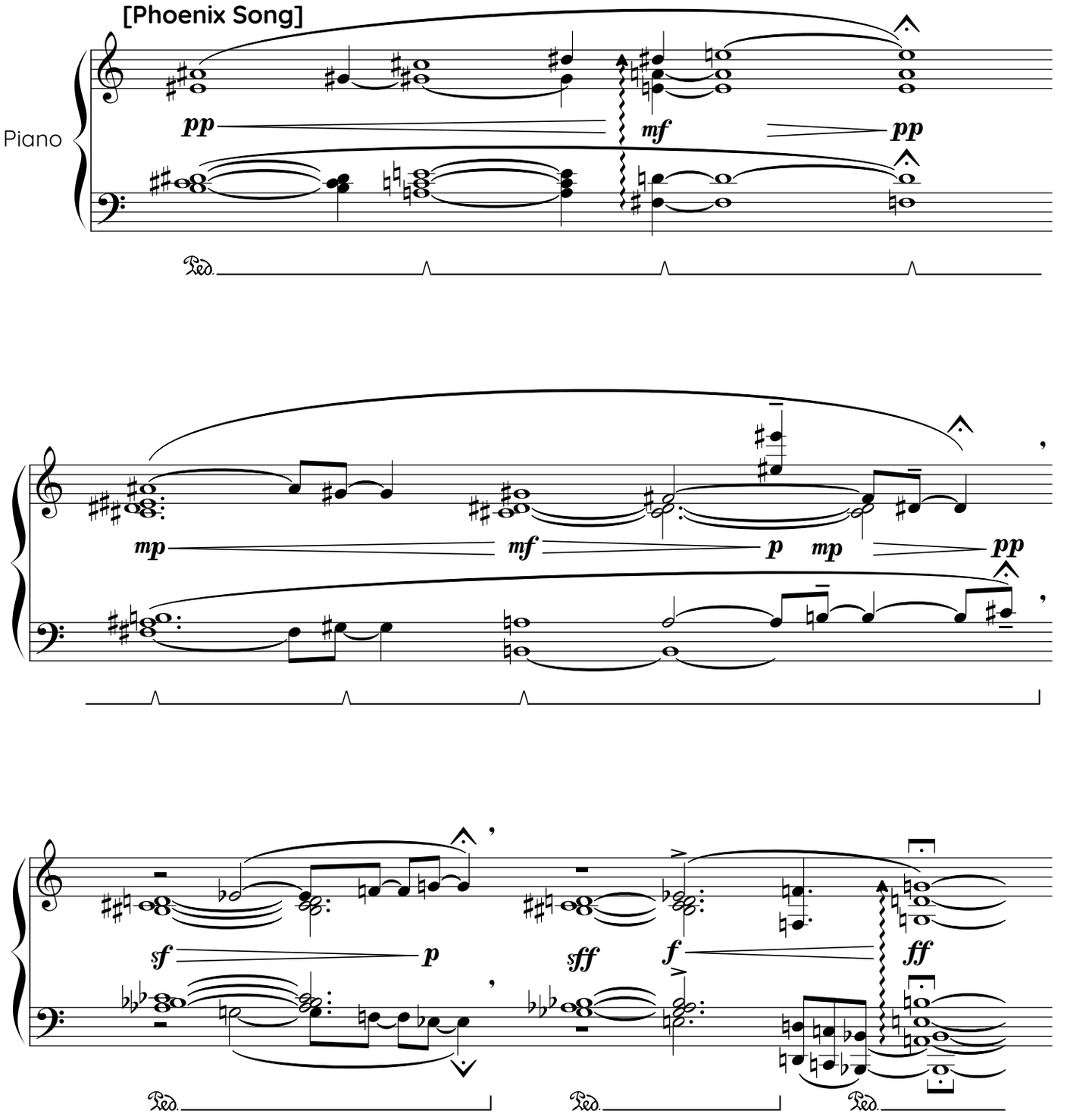
rise To burn

(Fifth Sonata)

"In order to rise from its own ashes, a Phoenix first must burn."
--Olivia E. Butler

BRIAN CIACH

Ametric rubato*--timeless, lyrical, free, mournful
[Phoenix Song]



*see performance notes

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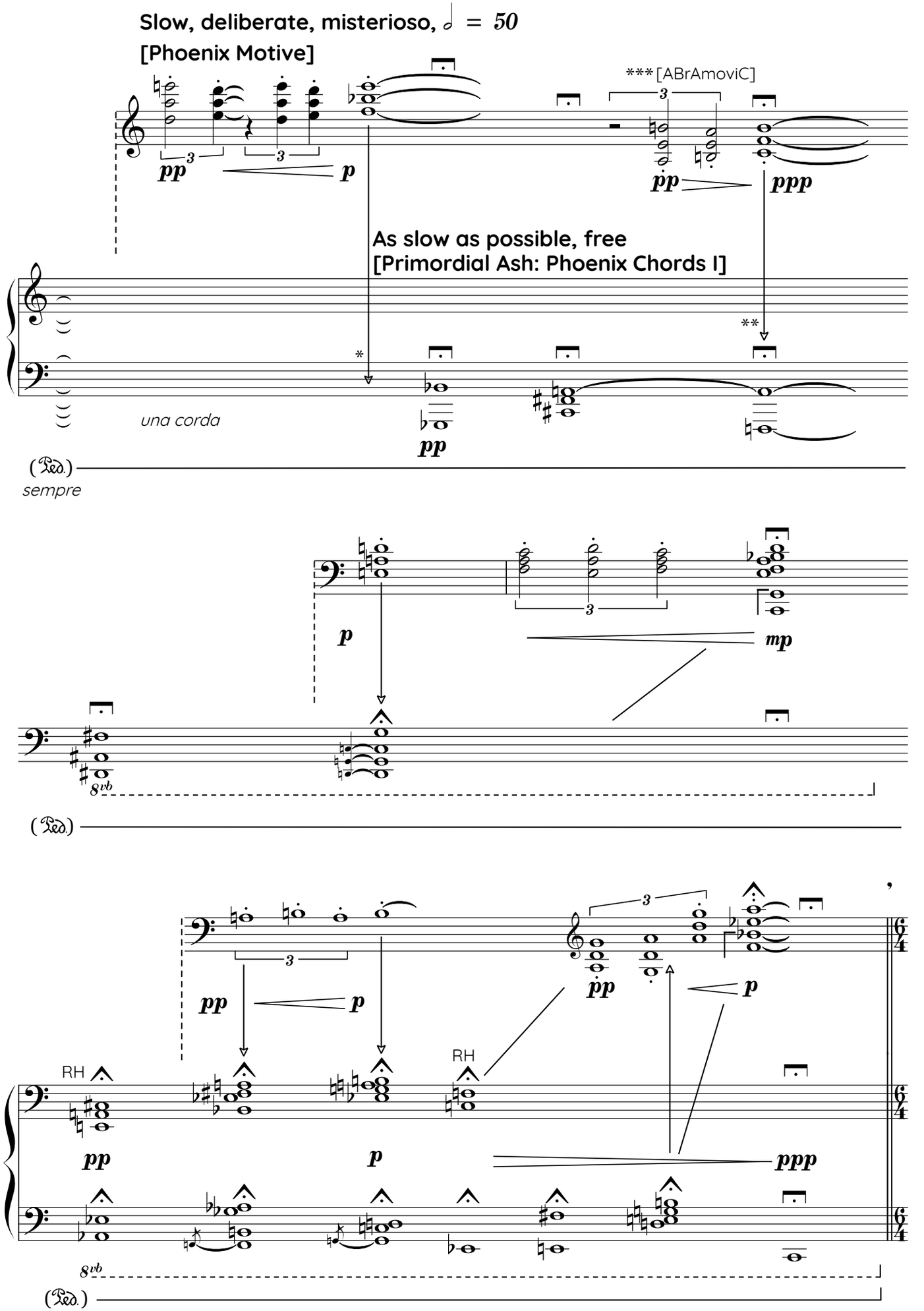
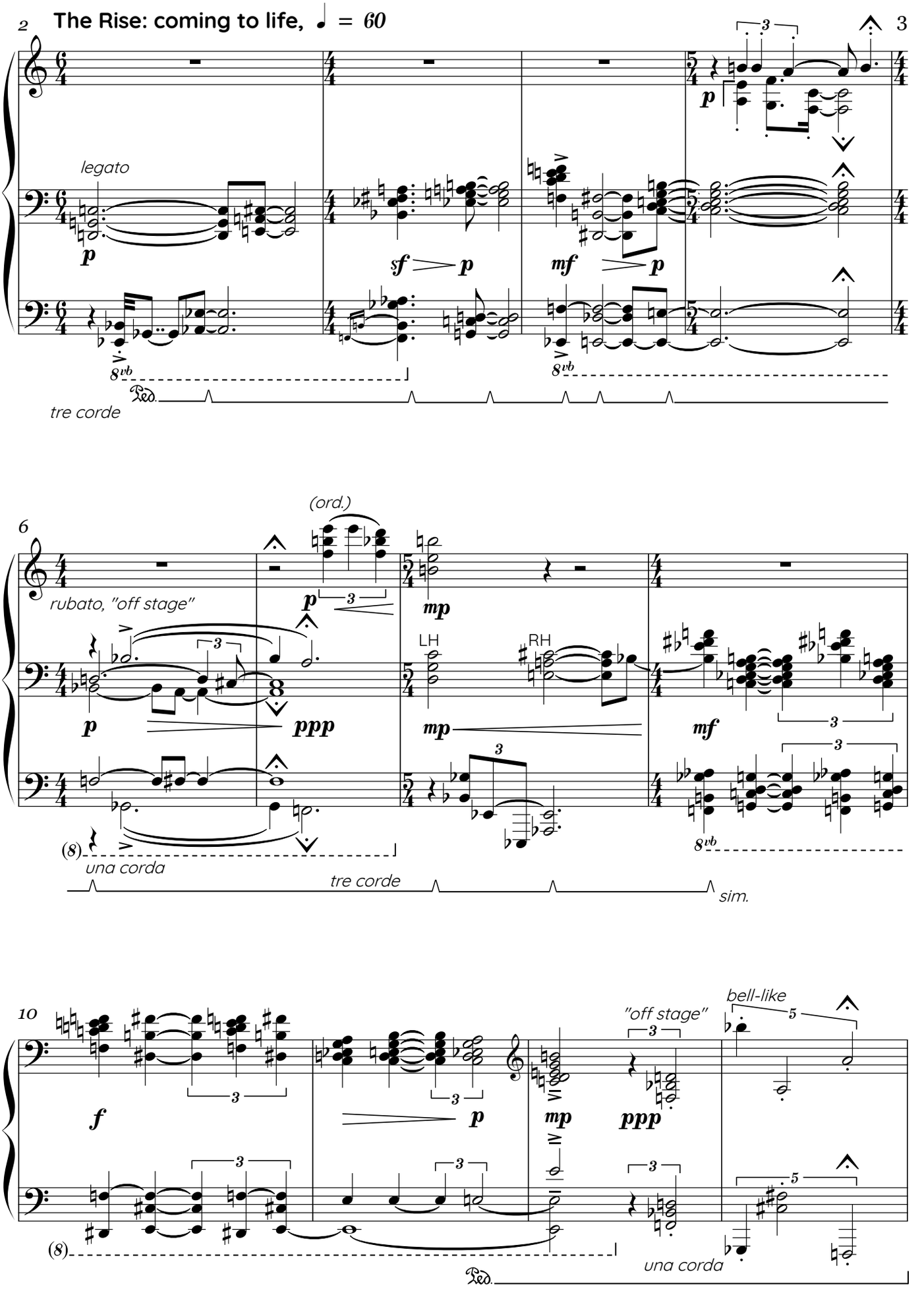
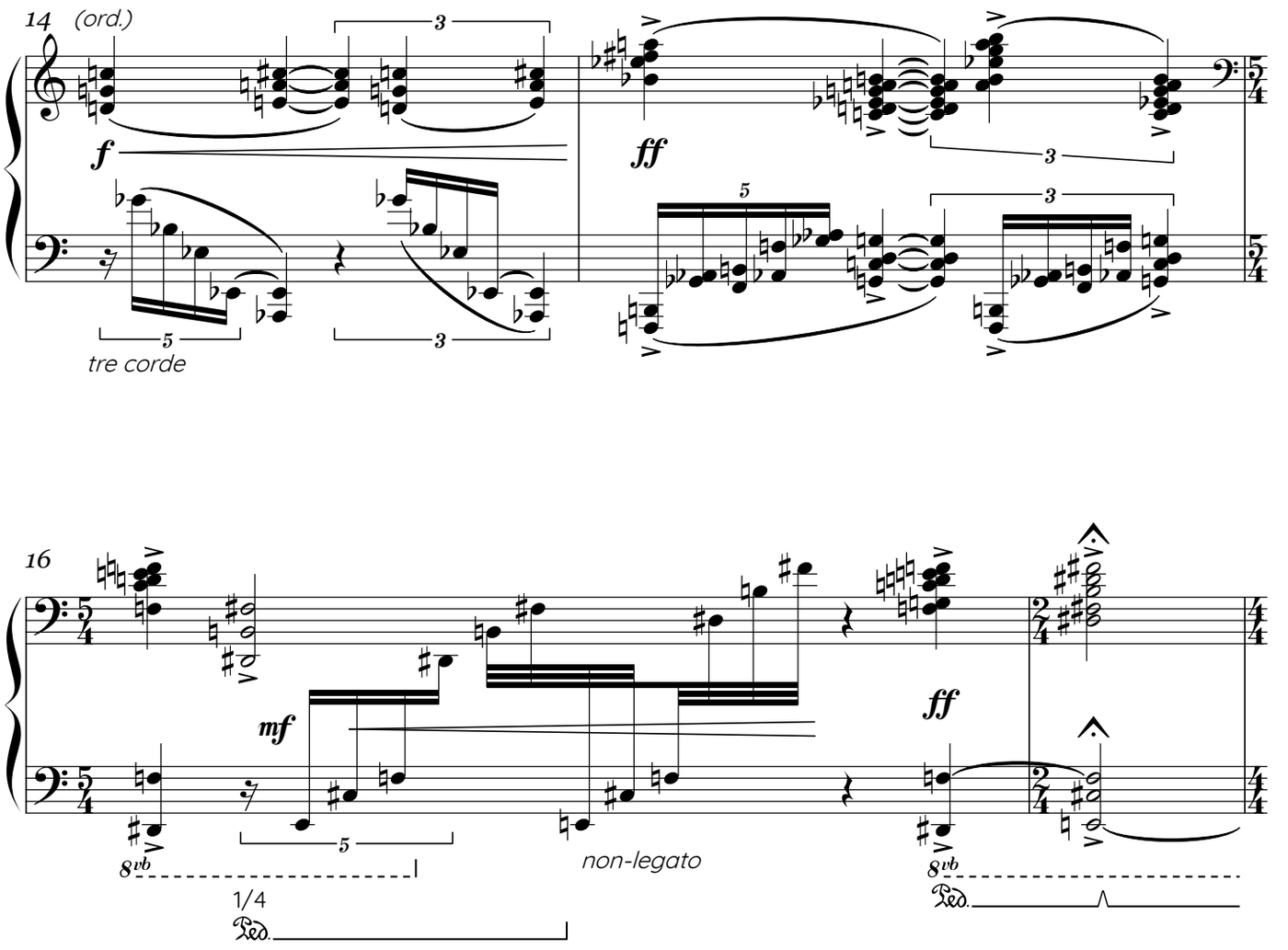
https://sigh-ackmusic.org



*LH two or three beats after the RH here--these arrows are placed intentionally. **RH with LH. ***all pitch collections of ABC or any variation of these, e.g., AB, BA, CBCA, etc., are cryptograms on the name of the dedicatee, Abramovic.


2
The Rise: coming to life, ♩ = 60
3
legato
p
sf
p
mf
p
8vb
Ped.
tre corde
6
(ord.)
rubato, "off stage"
p
3
mp
LH
RH
p
ppp
mp
mf
3
(8)
una corda
tre corde
sim.
8vb
10
bell-like
"off stage"
f
3
p
mp
ppp
5
(8)
una corda
Ped.


14
(ord.)
f
ff
tre corde
16
mf
ff
8vb
non-legato
1/4
Ped.

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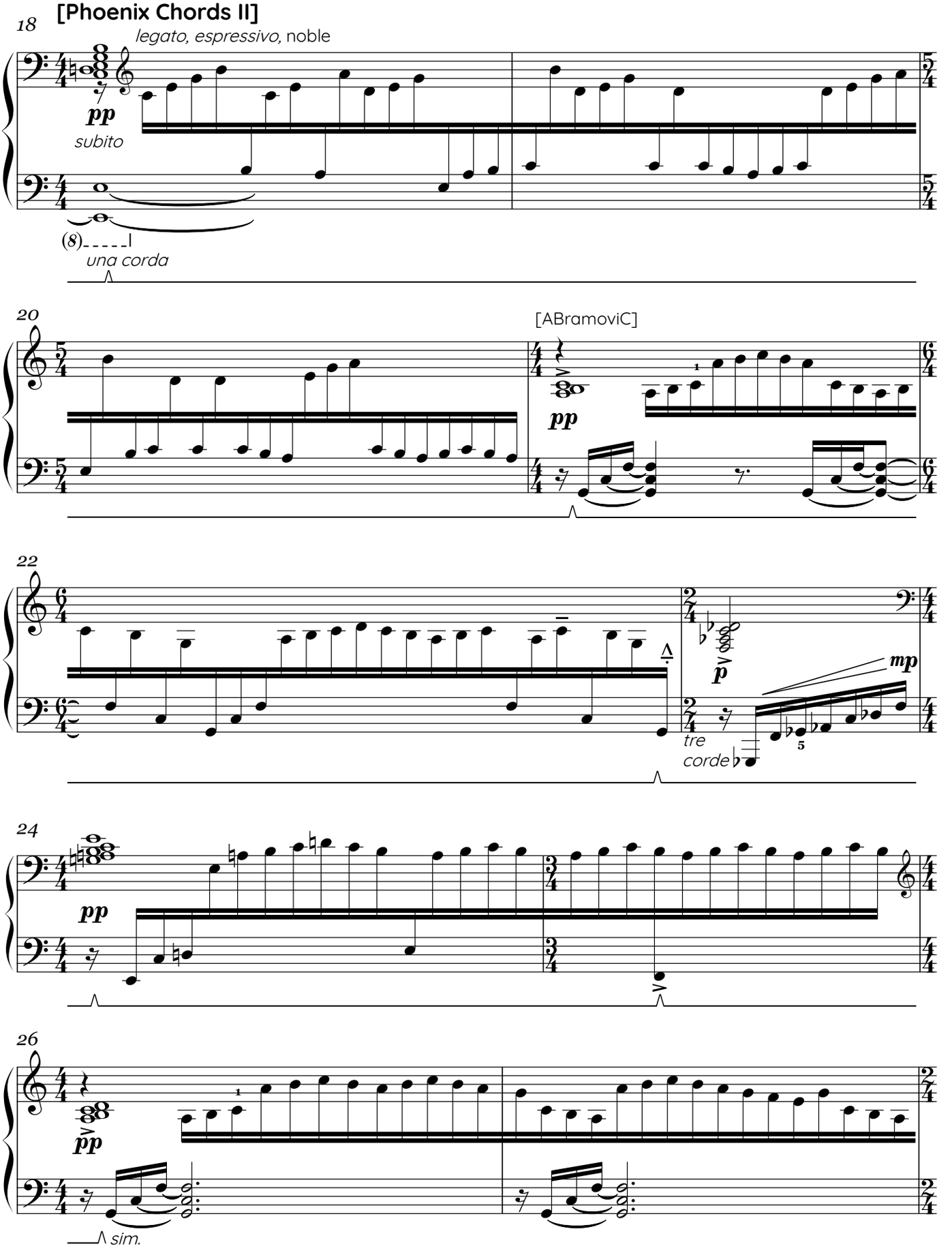
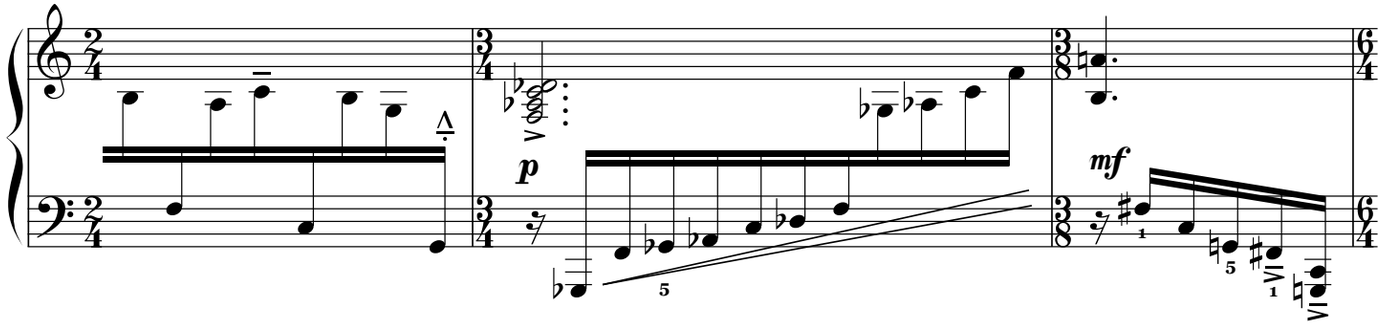
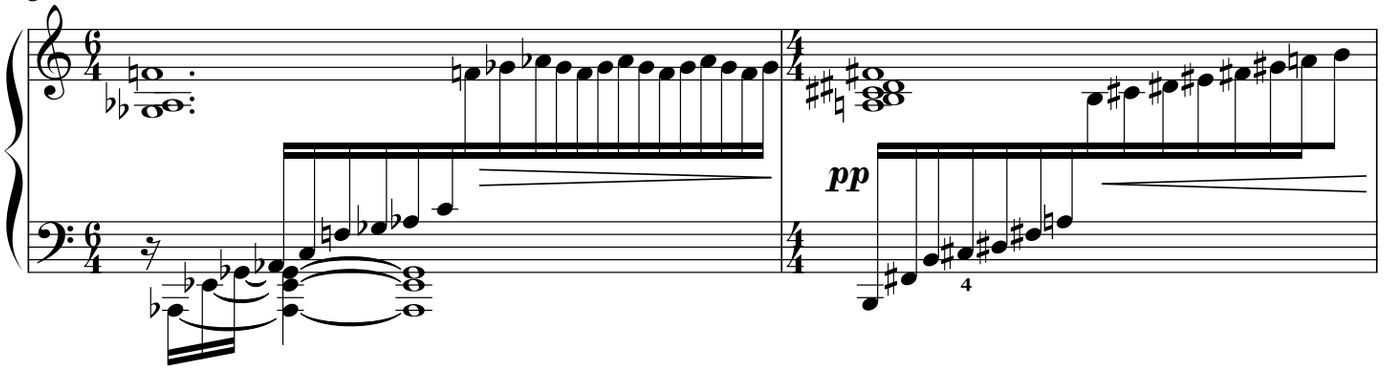
Soaring (same tempo)
[Phoenix Chords II]



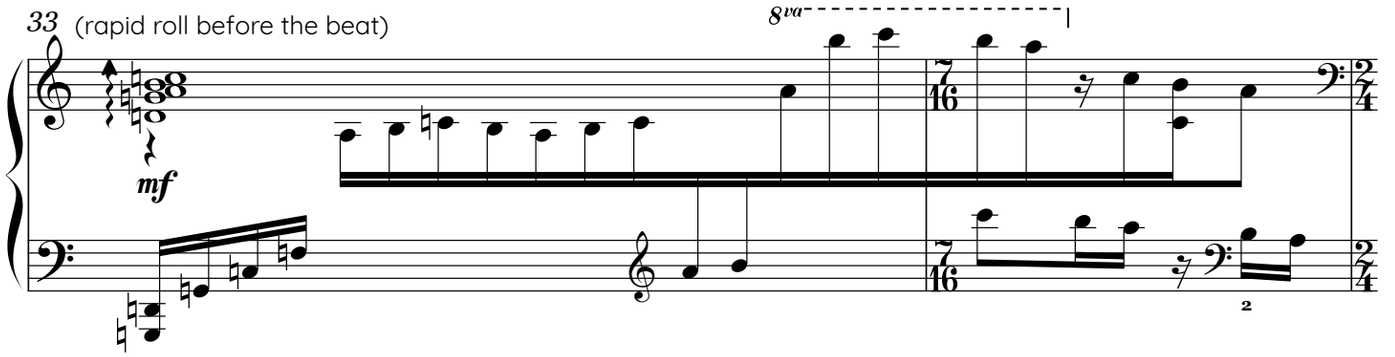
28



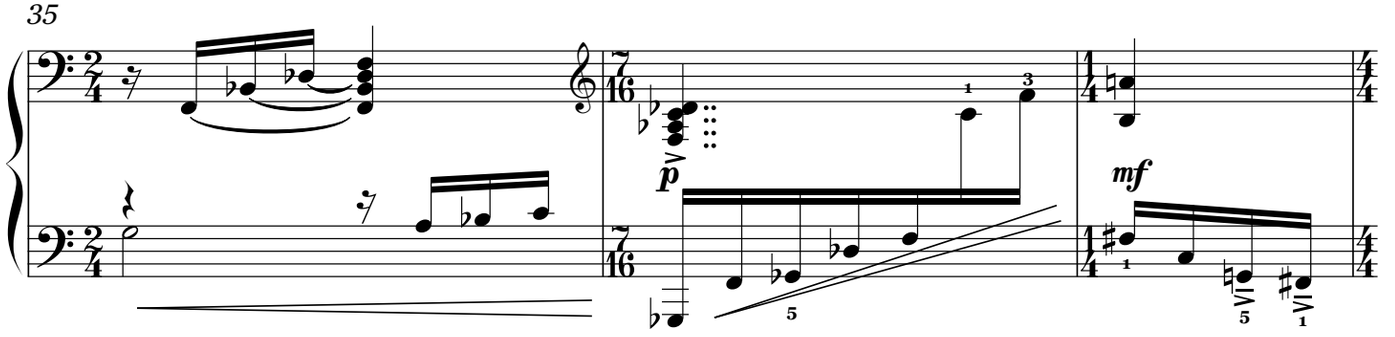
31



33 (rapid roll before the beat)



35



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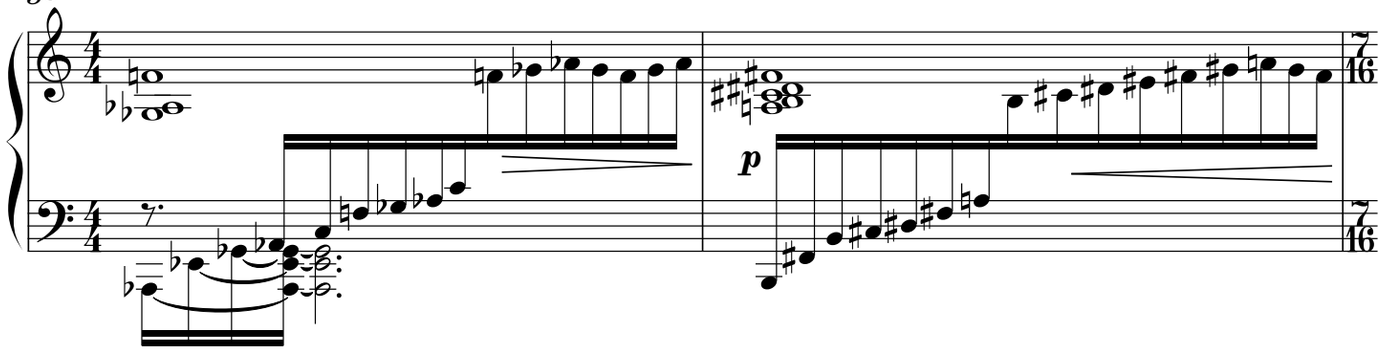
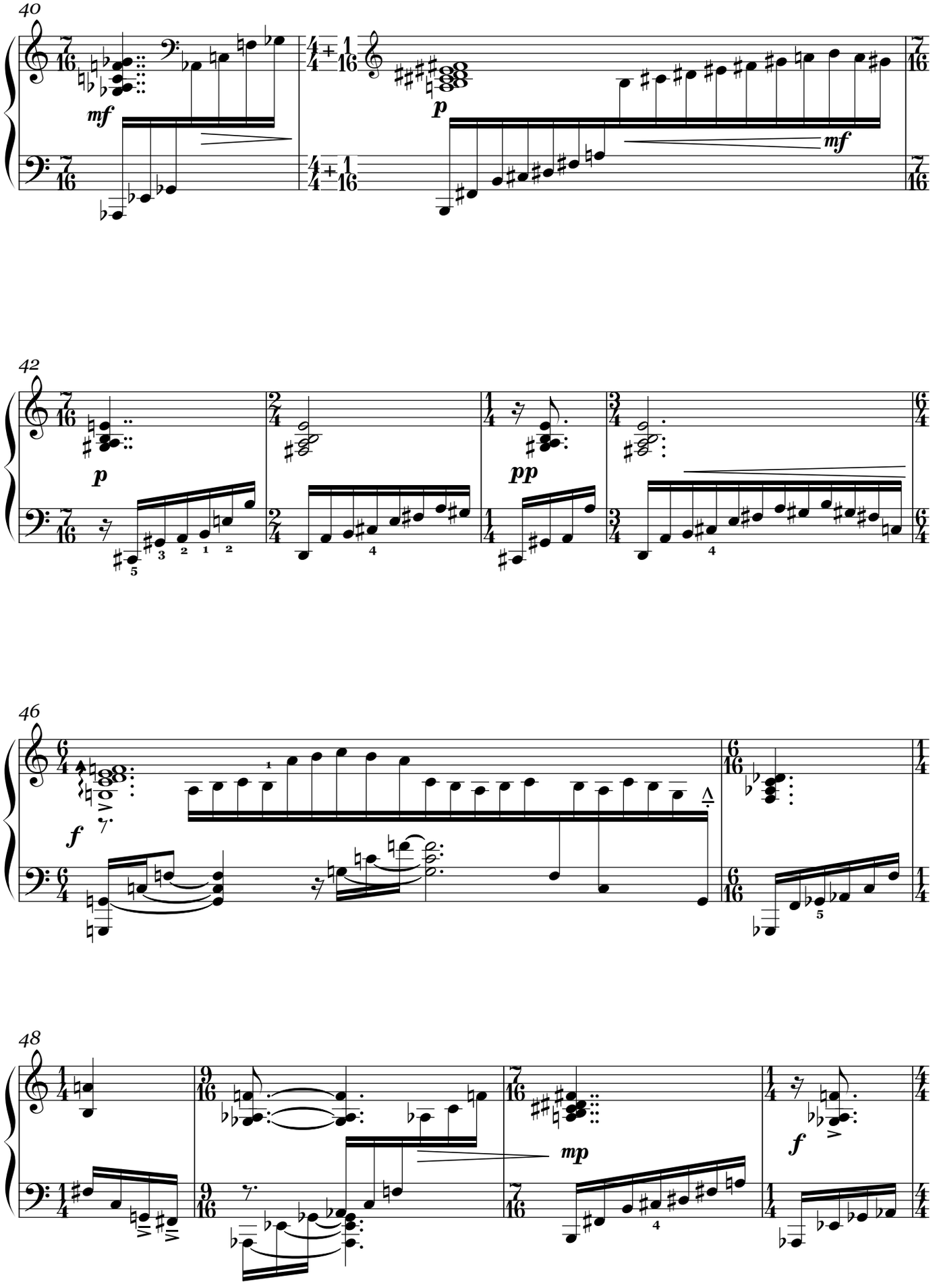
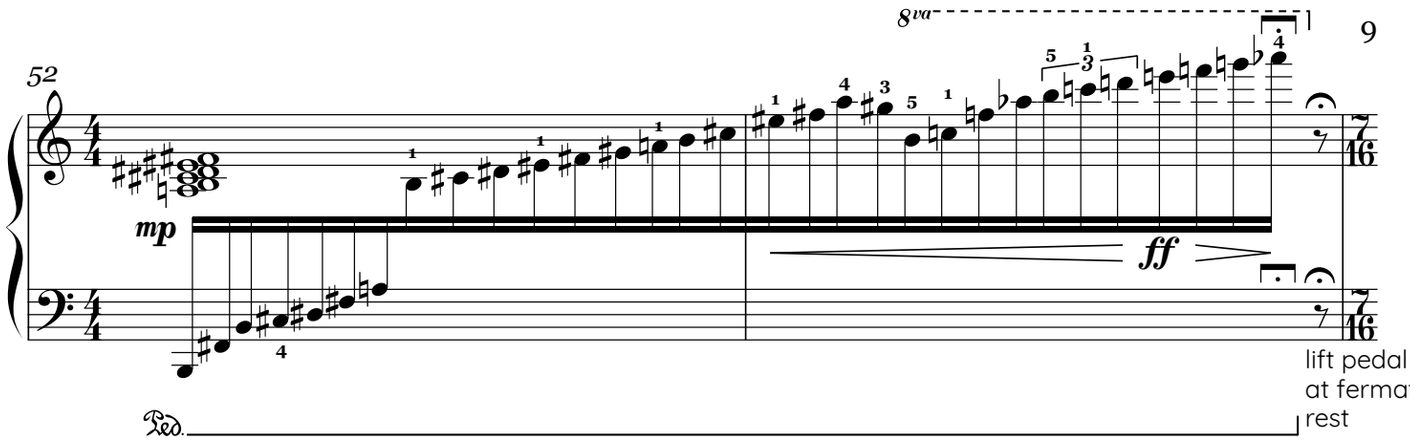
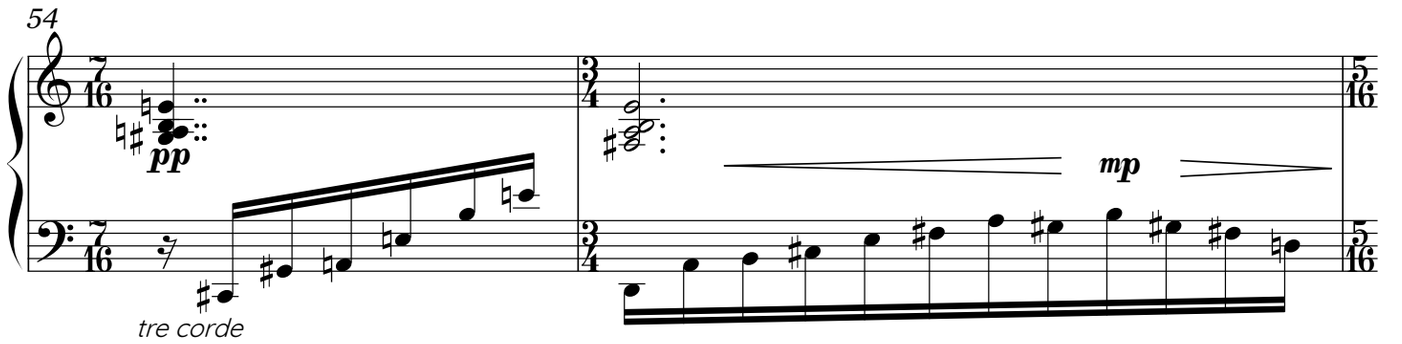
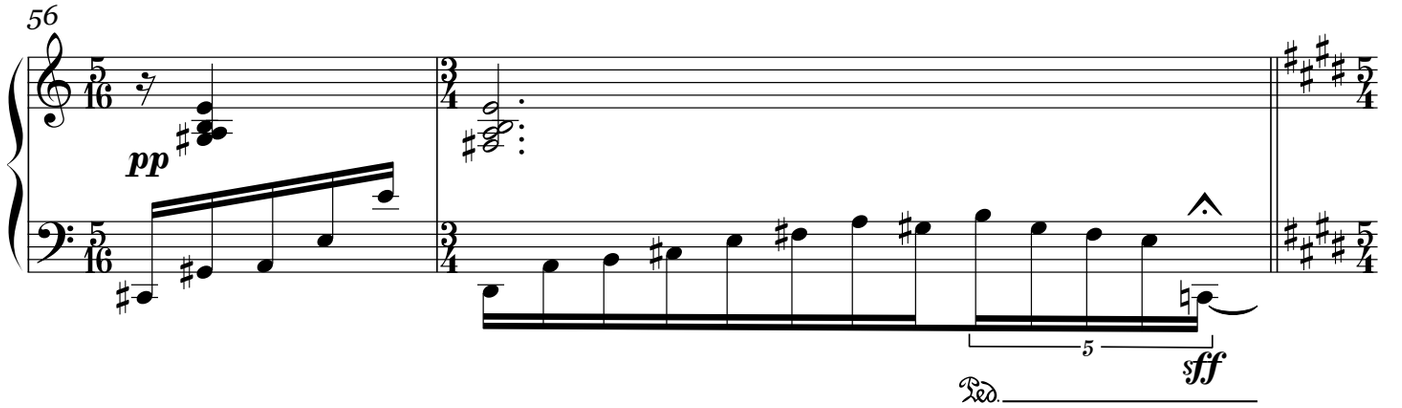
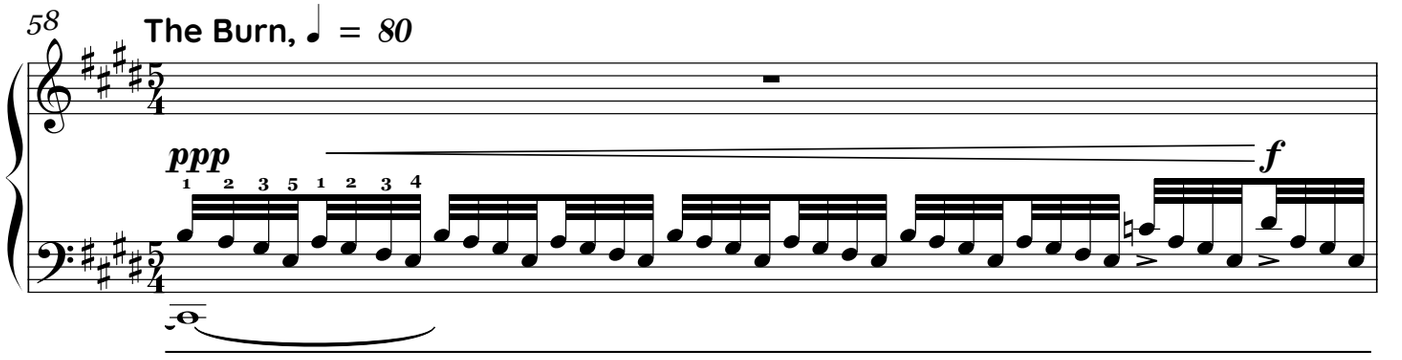


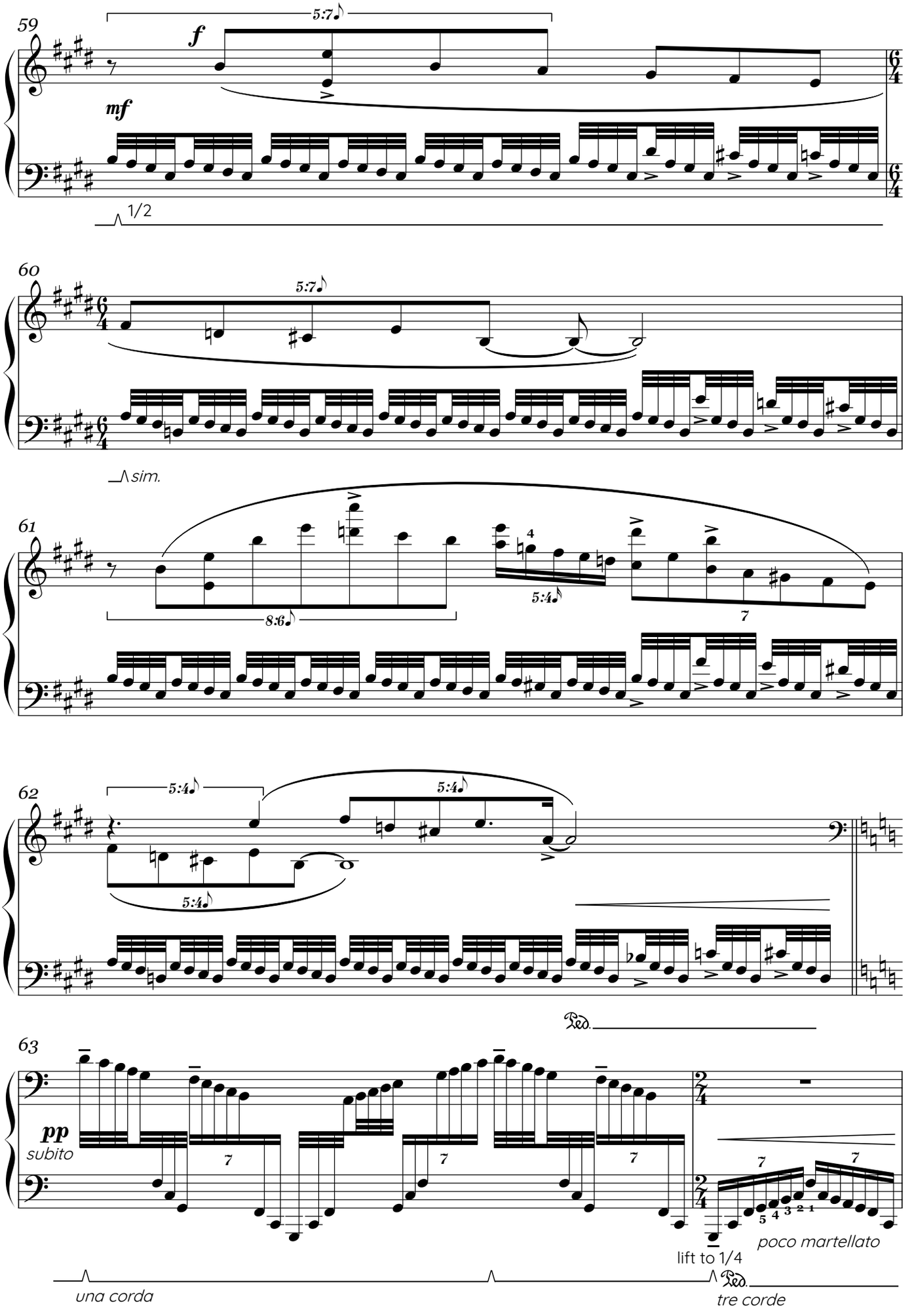

40
mf
p
mf
42
p
pp
46
f
48
mp
f


52
8va
mp
ff
Ped.
lift pedal
at fermata
rest


54
pp
mp
tre corde


56
pp
sff
Ped.


58
The Burn, ♩ = 80
ppp
f


59
5:7
f
mf
1/2
60
5:7
sim.
61
8:6
5:4
7
62
5:4
5:4
5:4
Ped.
63
pp
subito
7
7
7
7
7
poco martellato
lift to 1/4
una corda
Ped.
tre corde

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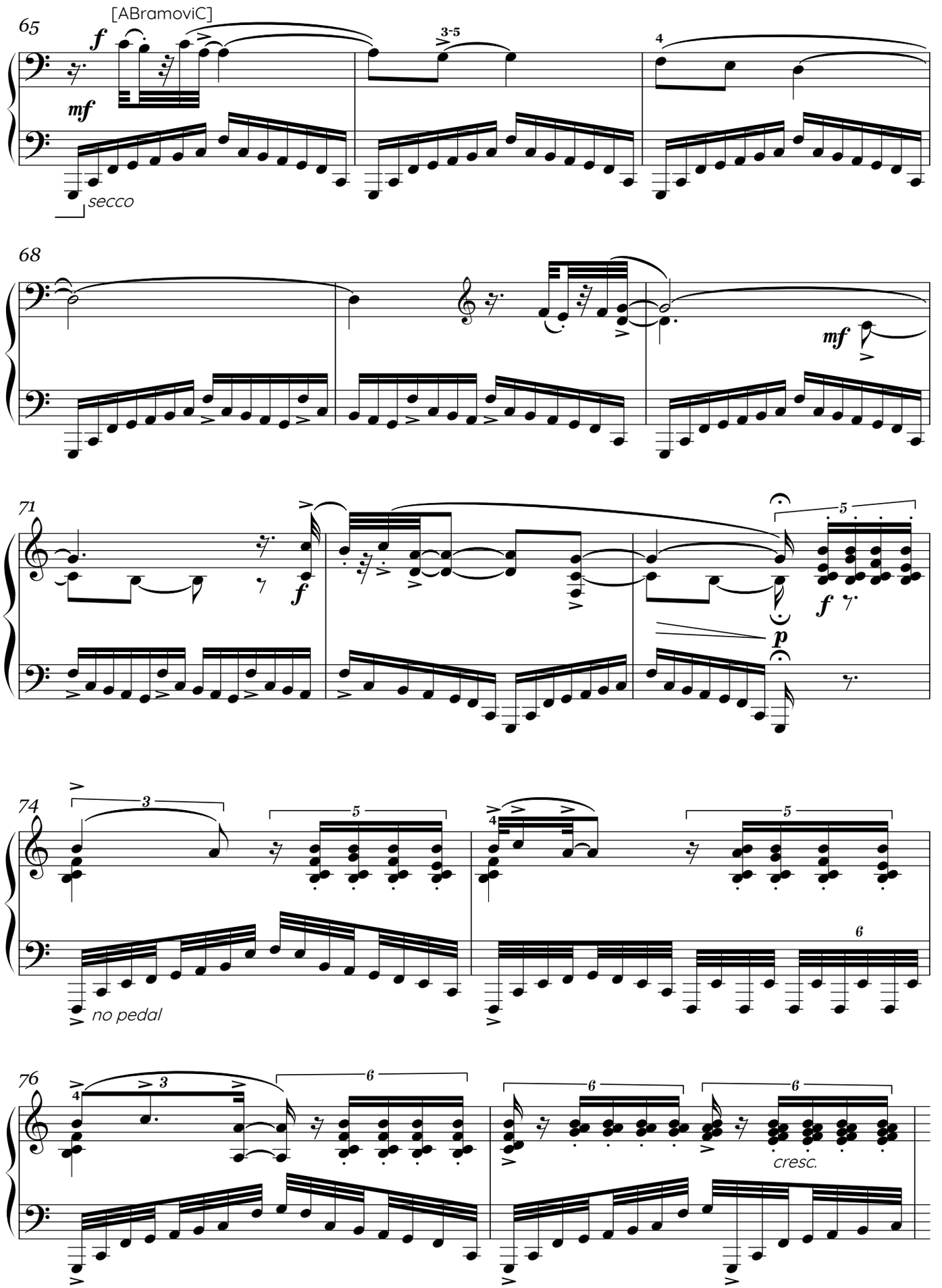
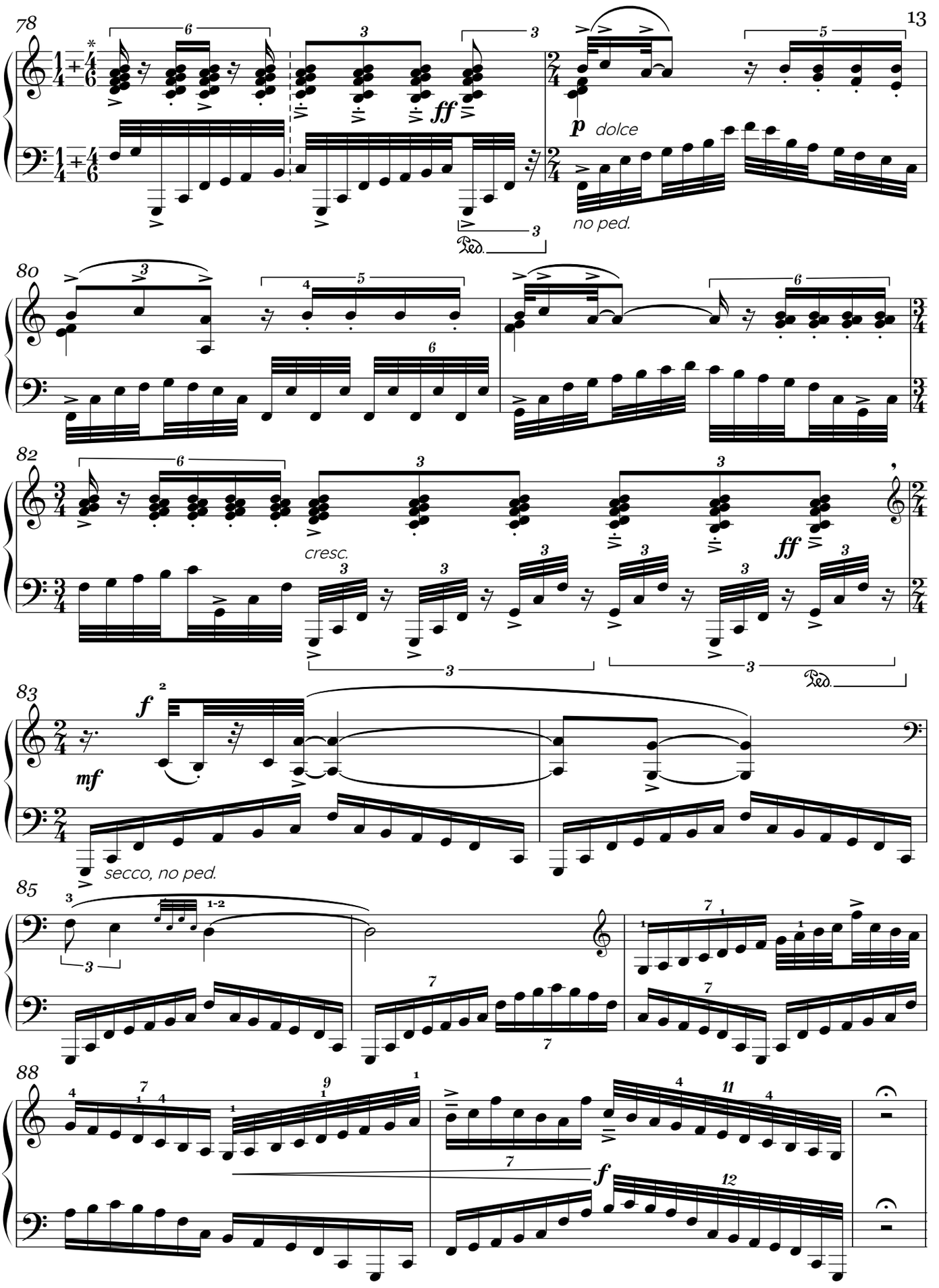
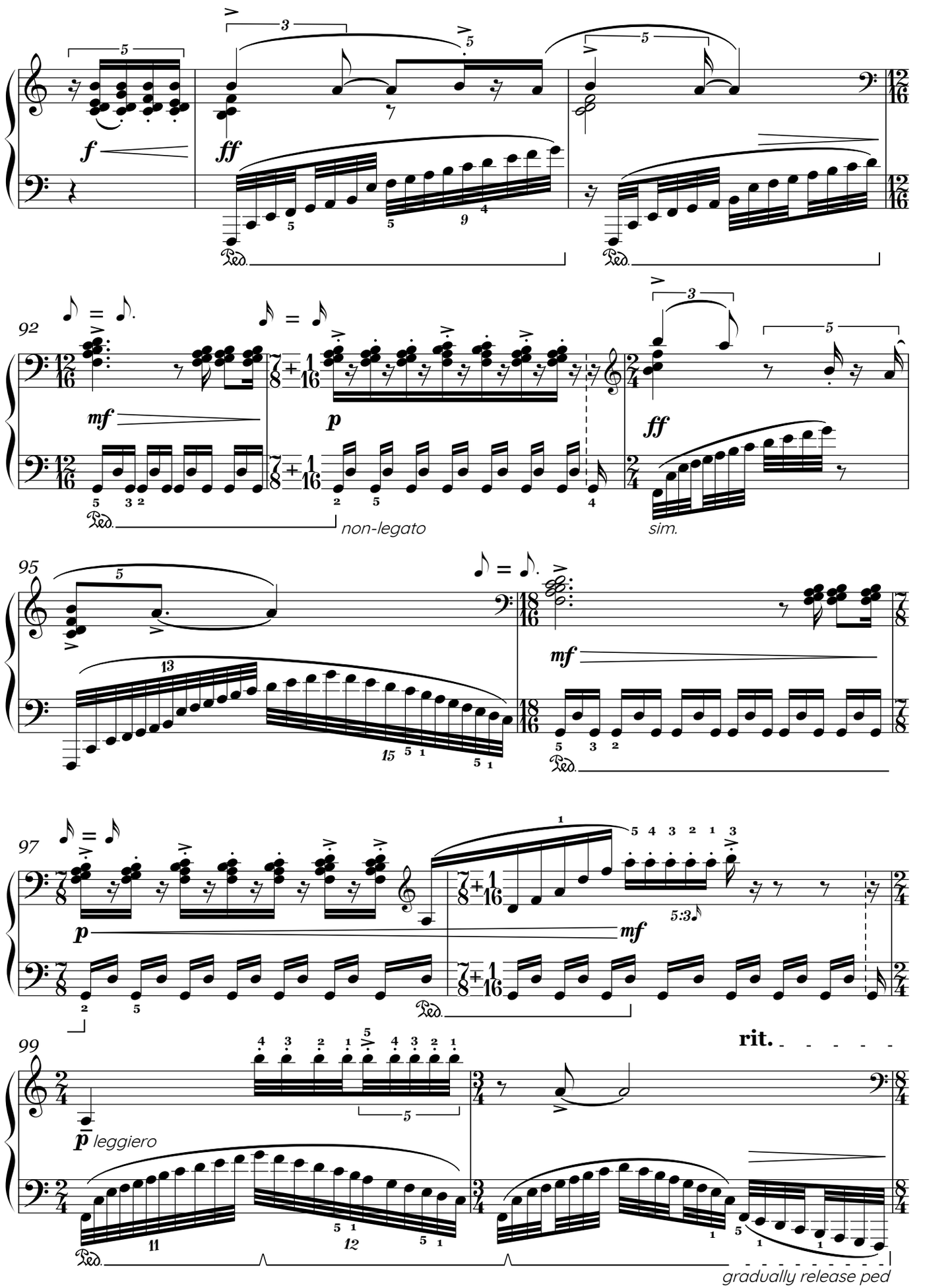
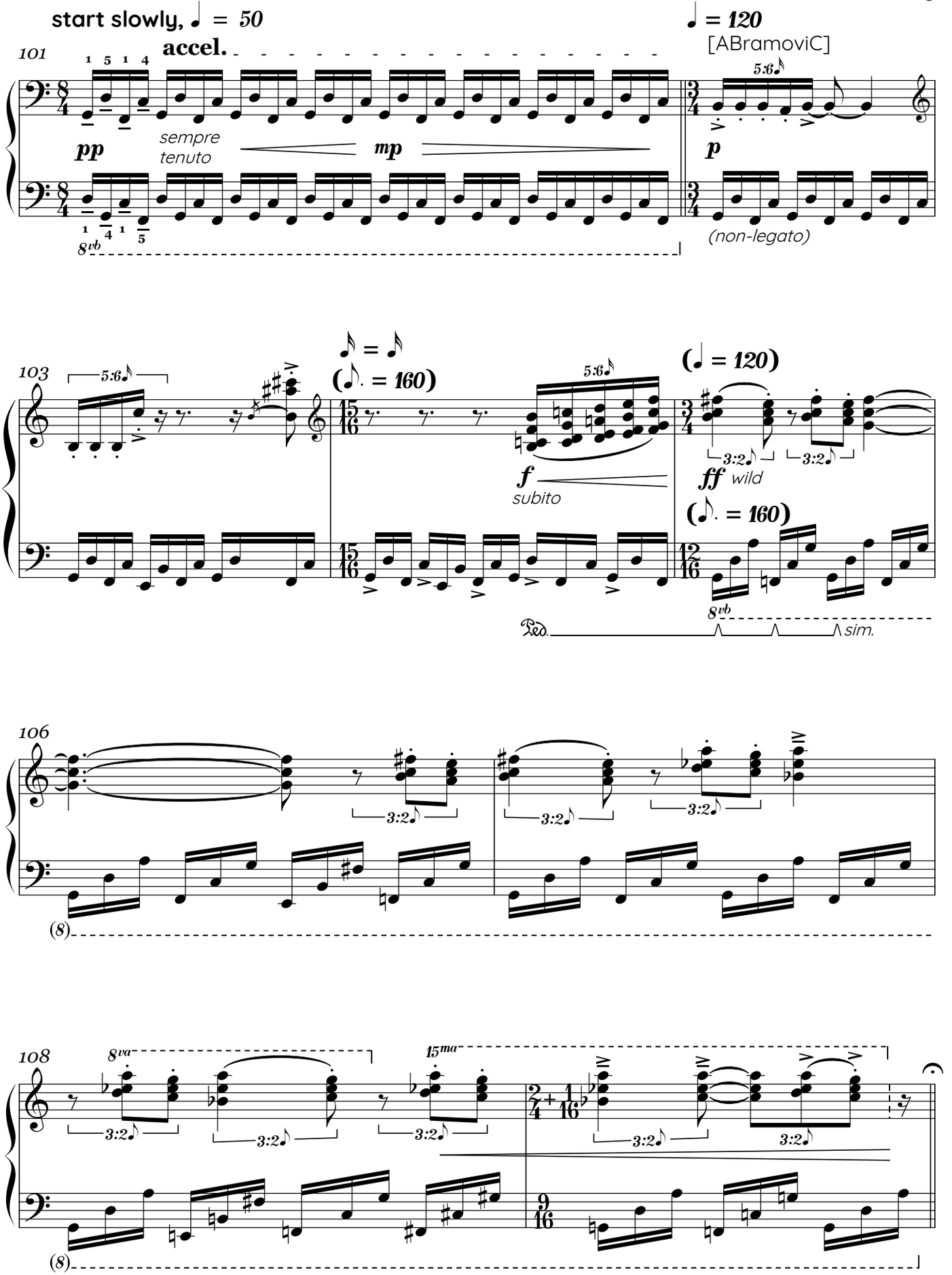
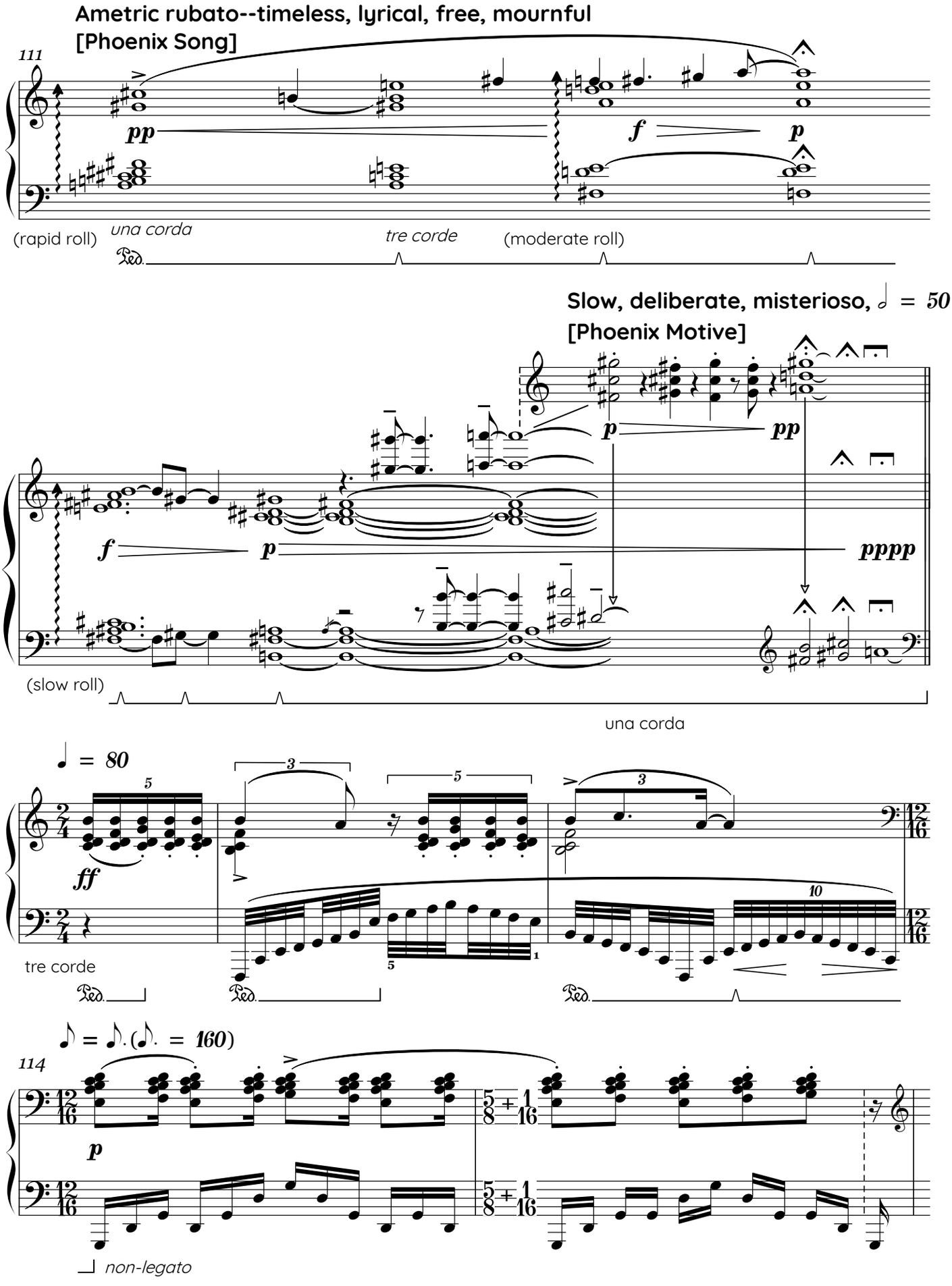

[ABramoviC]
65
f
mf
secco
3-5
4
68
mf
71
f
p
5
74
3
5
4
no pedal
6
76
4
3
6
cresc.

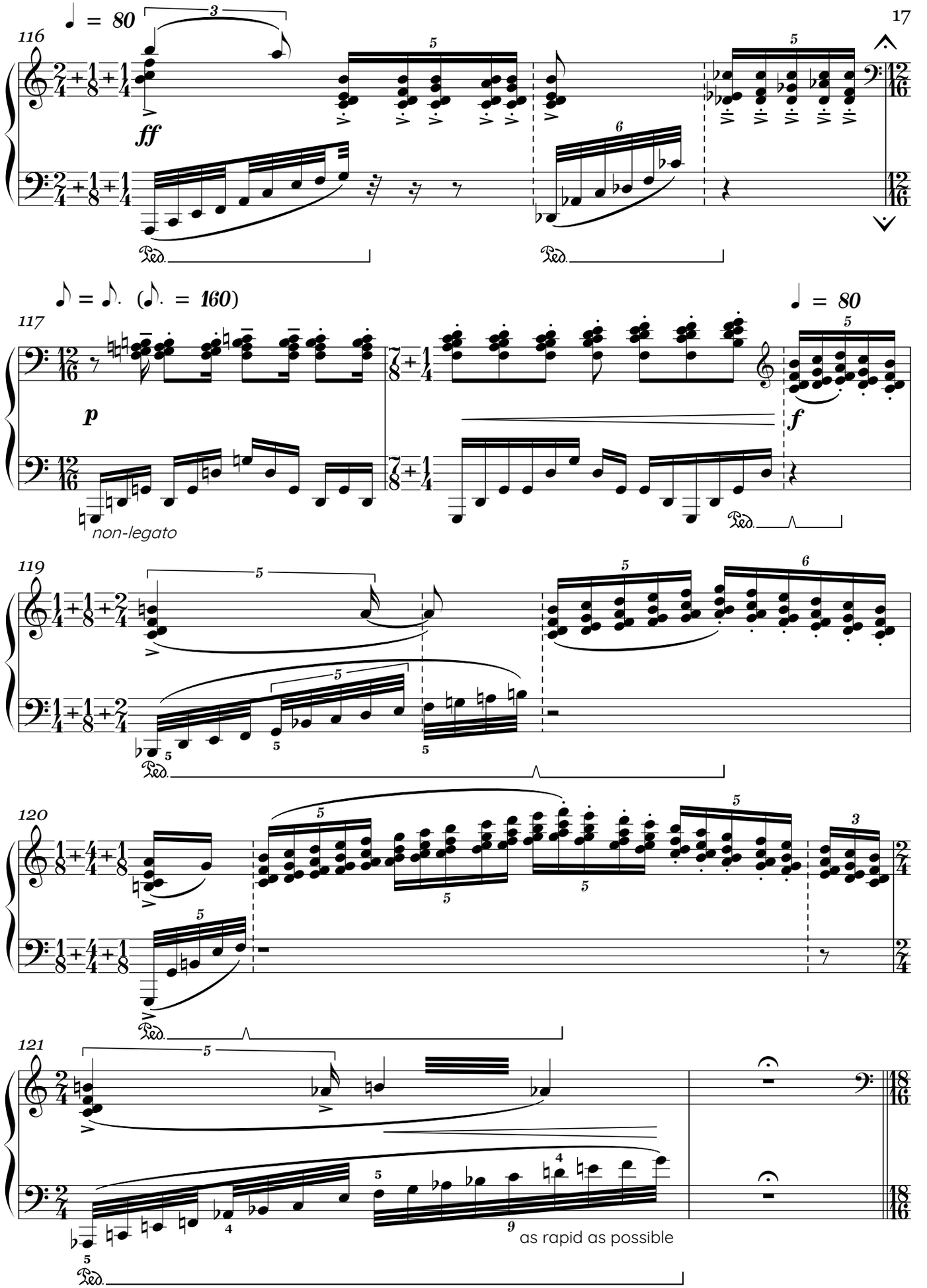


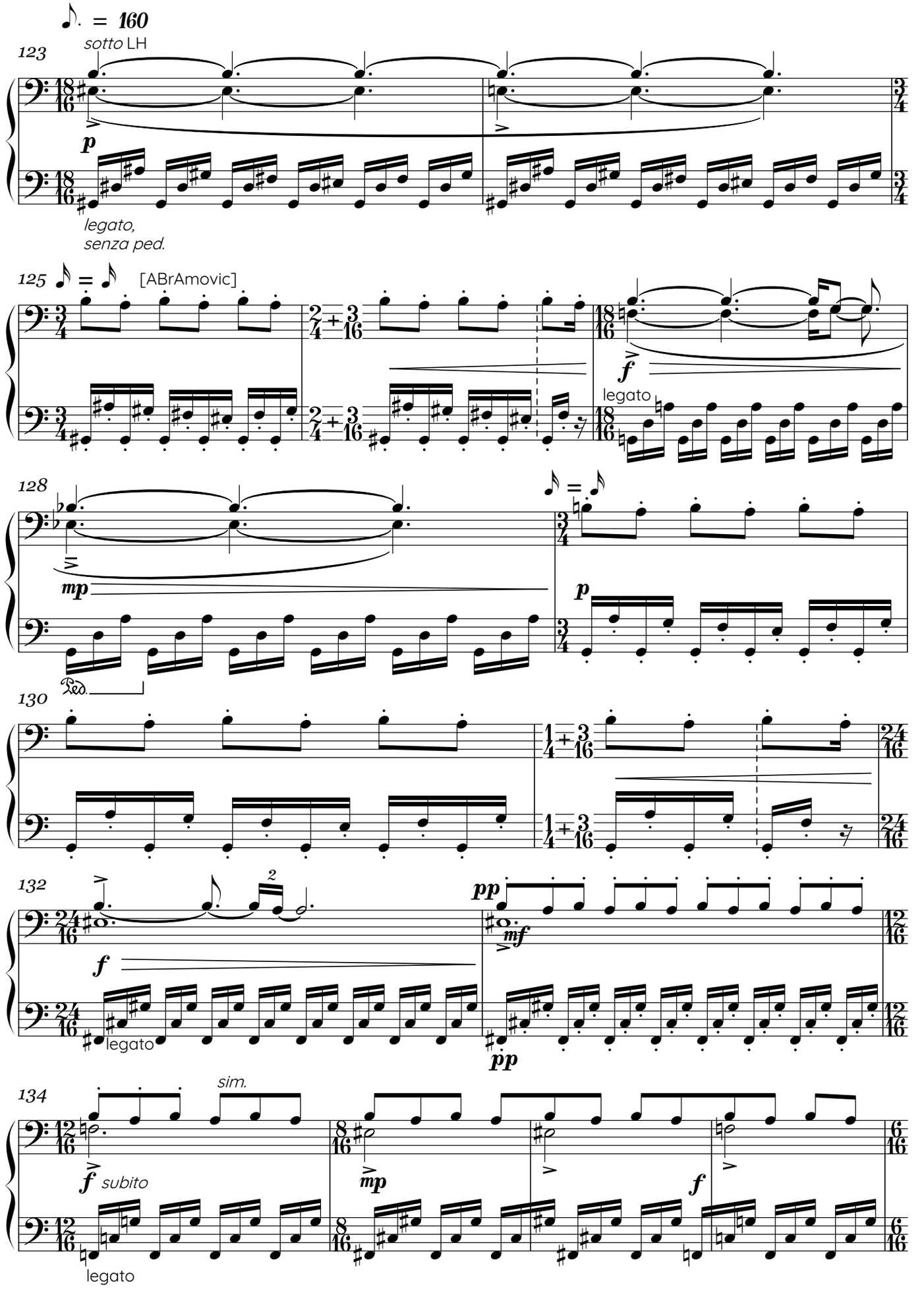
*four sixths of the prevailing $\frac{2}{4}$ meter; four triplet 8th notes; whereas six 8th triplets would complete one measure, play four out of the possible six.

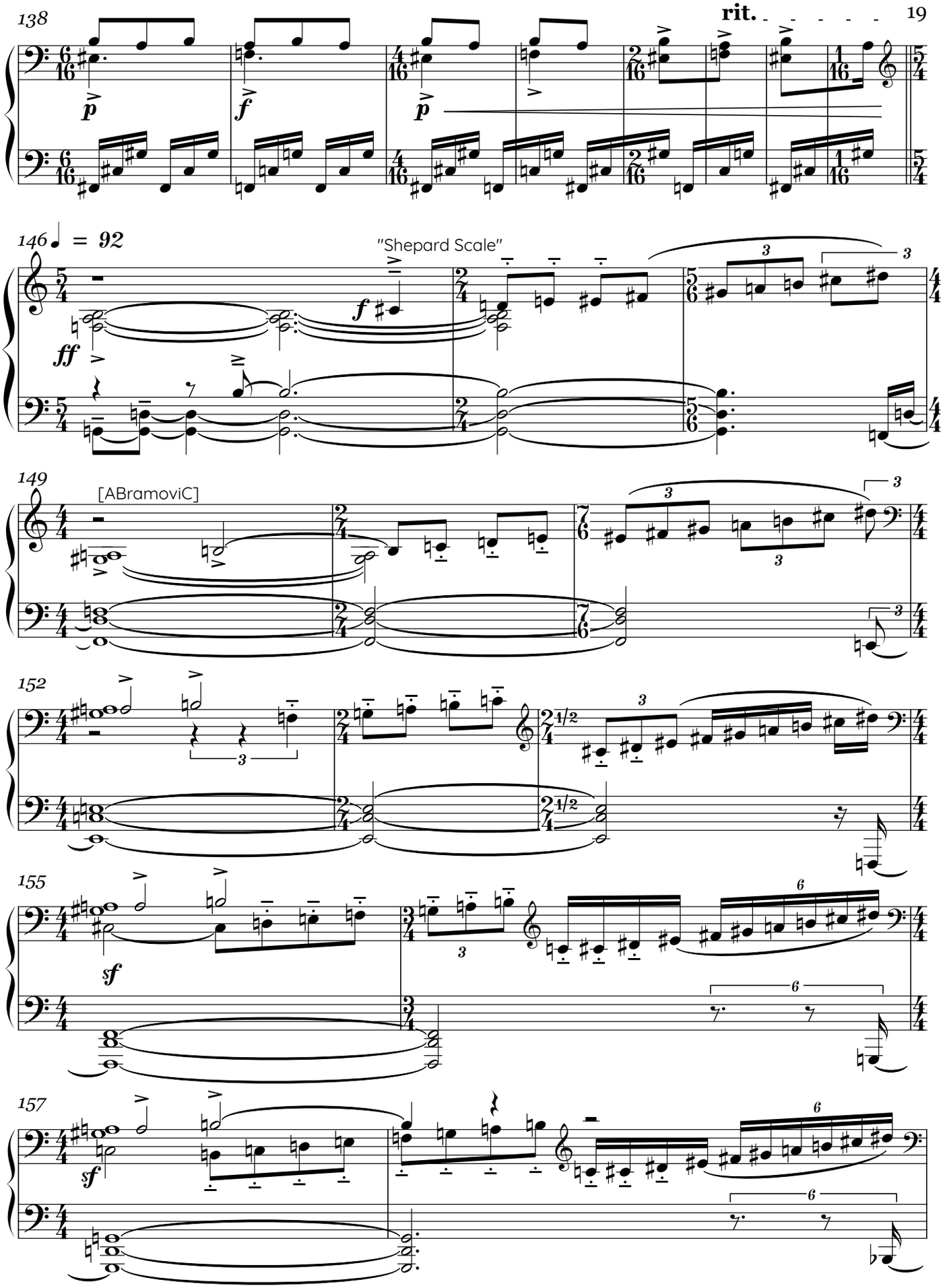

f
ff
92
mf
p
ff
non-legato
sim.
95
mf
97
p
mf
5:3
99
rit.
p leggiero
gradually release ped

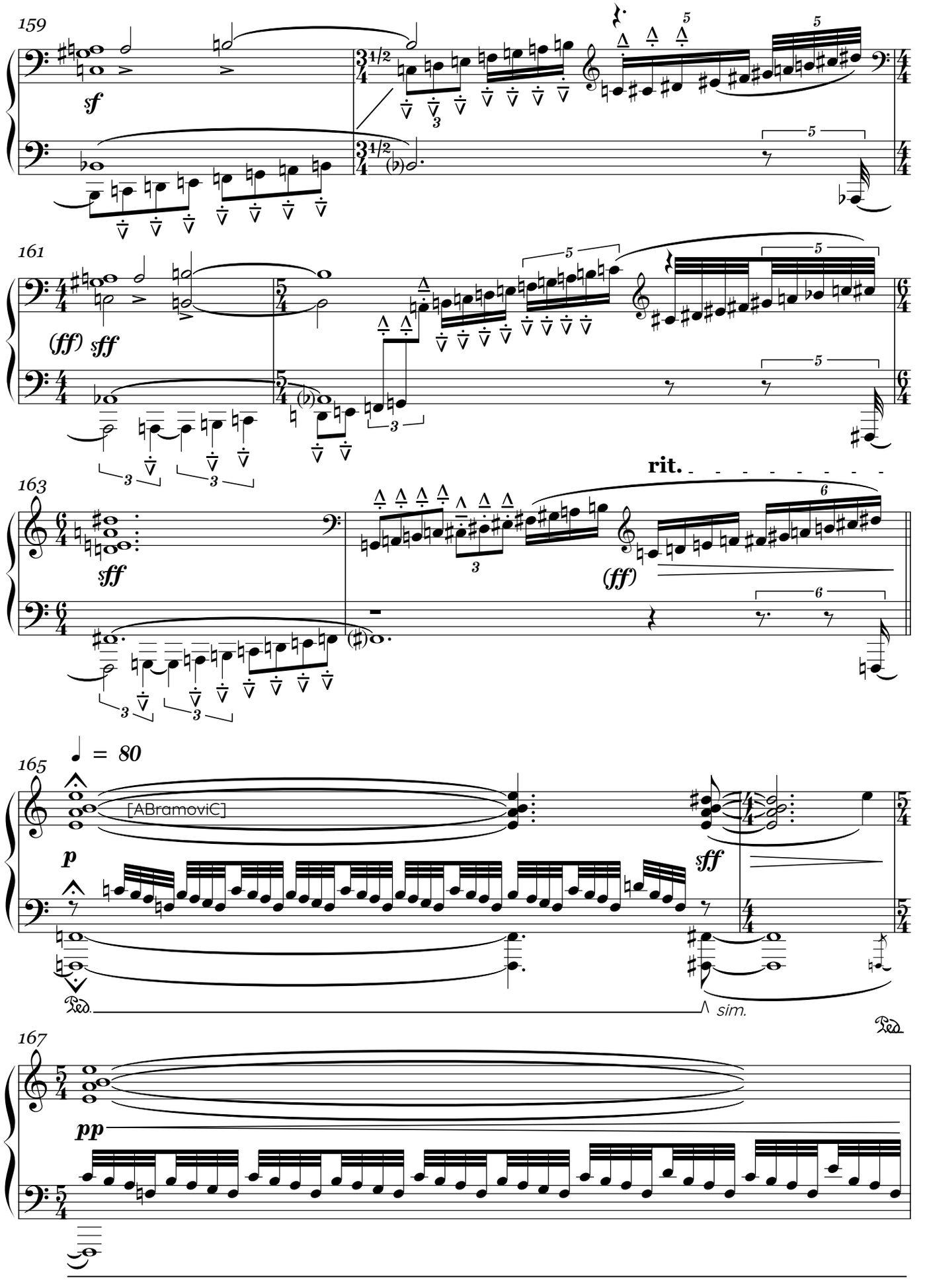

start slowly, ♩ = 50
accel.
♩ = 120
[ABramoviC]
101
pp
sempre tenuto
mp
p
(non-legato)
8vb
103
5:6
(♪. = 160)
(♩ = 120)
f
subito
ff wild
Ped.
sim.
106
3:2
(8)
108
8va
15ma
2+1/16
9/16


Ametric rubato--timeless, lyrical, free, mournful
[Phoenix Song]
111
pp
f
p
(rapid roll)
una corda
tre corde
(moderate roll)
Slow, deliberate, misterioso, 𝅗𝅥 = 50
[Phoenix Motive]
p
pp
f
p
pppp
(slow roll)
una corda
♩ = 80
ff
tre corde
𝅘𝅥𝅮 = 𝅘𝅥𝅮.(𝅘𝅥𝅮. = 160)
114
p
non-legato

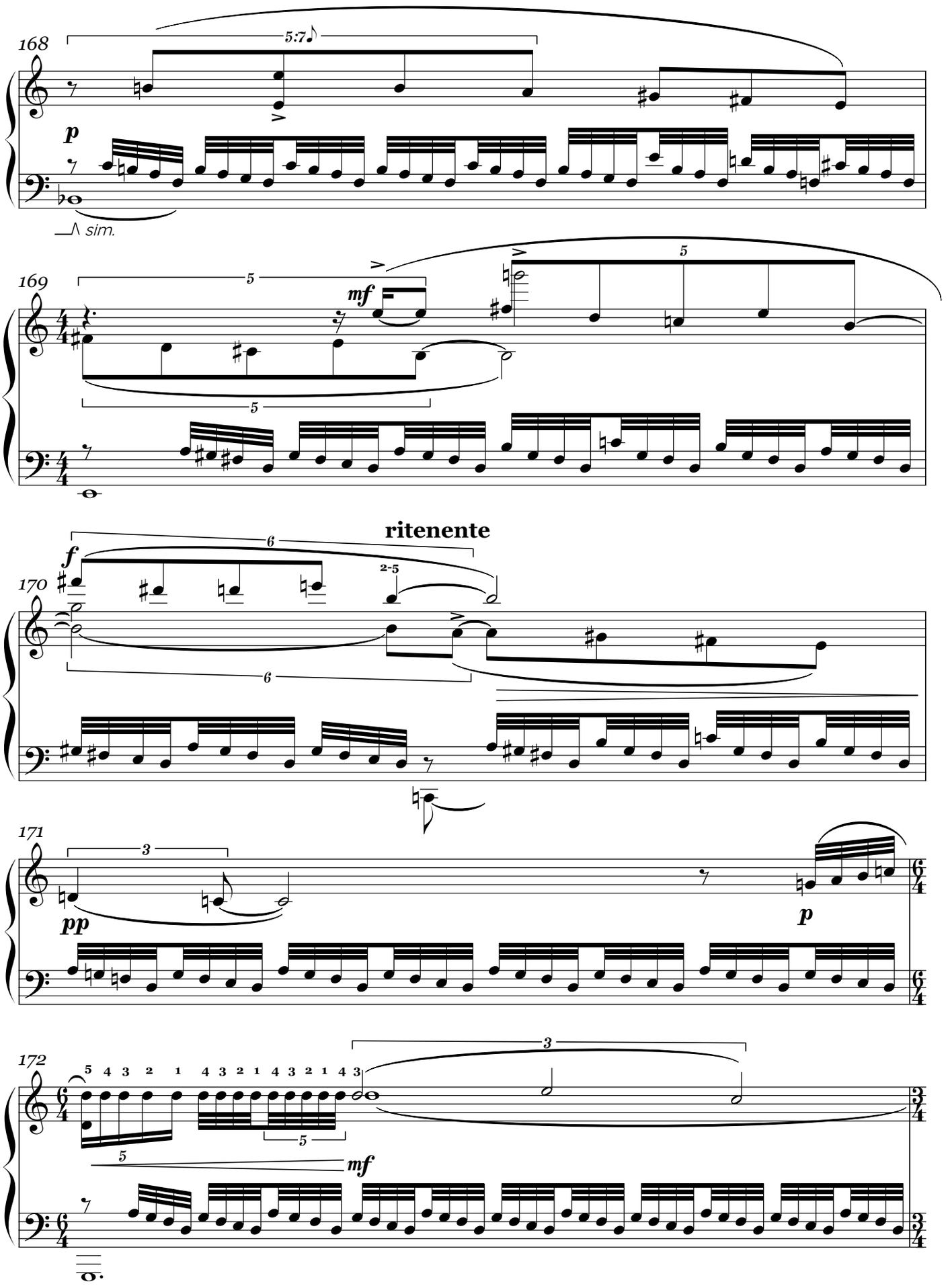

116
♩ = 80
ff
Ped.
117
♪ = ♪. (♪. = 160)
p
non-legato
♩ = 80
f
Ped.
119
Ped.
120
Ped.
121
as rapid as possible
Ped.

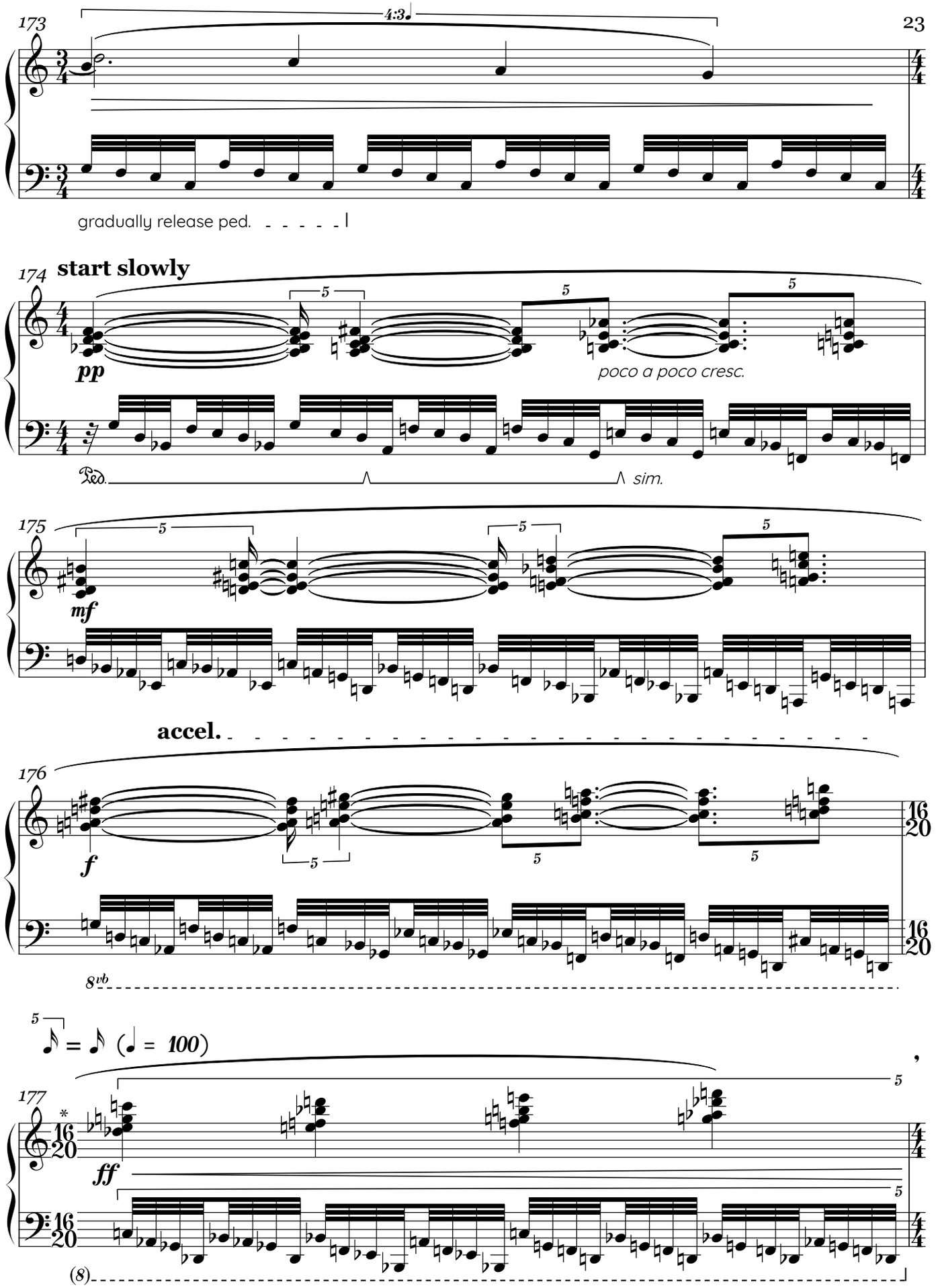

♪. = 160
123
sotto LH
p
legato,
senza ped.
125
♪ = ♪
[ABrAmovic]
f
legato
128
mp
p
Ped.
130
132
f
legato
pp
mf
pp
134
sim.
f
subito
mp
f
legato


138
rit.
146 ♩ = 92
"Shepard Scale"
149
[ABramoviC]
152
155
157

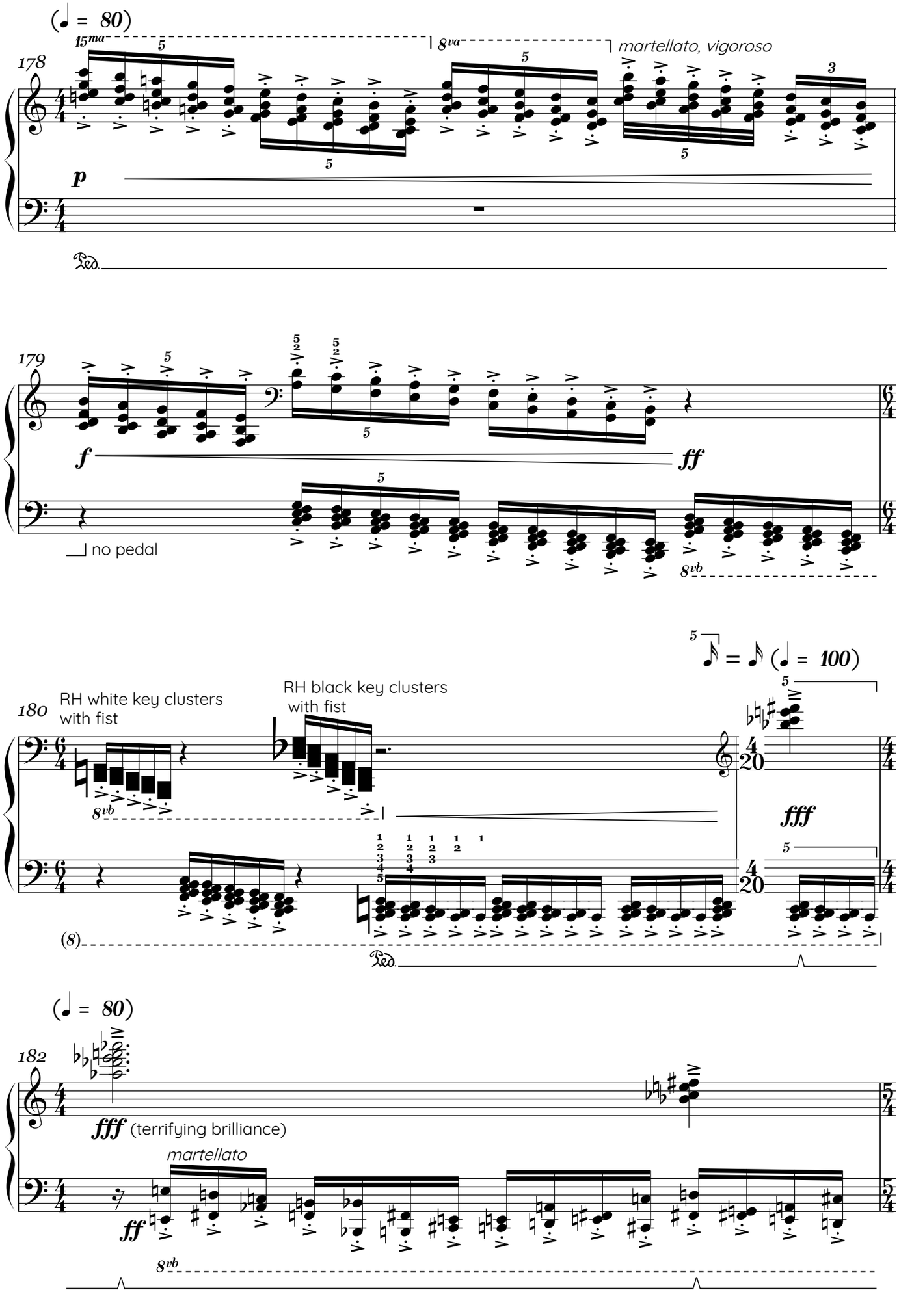

159
sf
3/2
3/4
5
161
(ff)
sff
4/4
5/4
6/4
163
sff
rit.
(ff)
6
165
♩ = 80
[ABramoviC]
p
sff
Ped.
sim.
Ped
167
pp

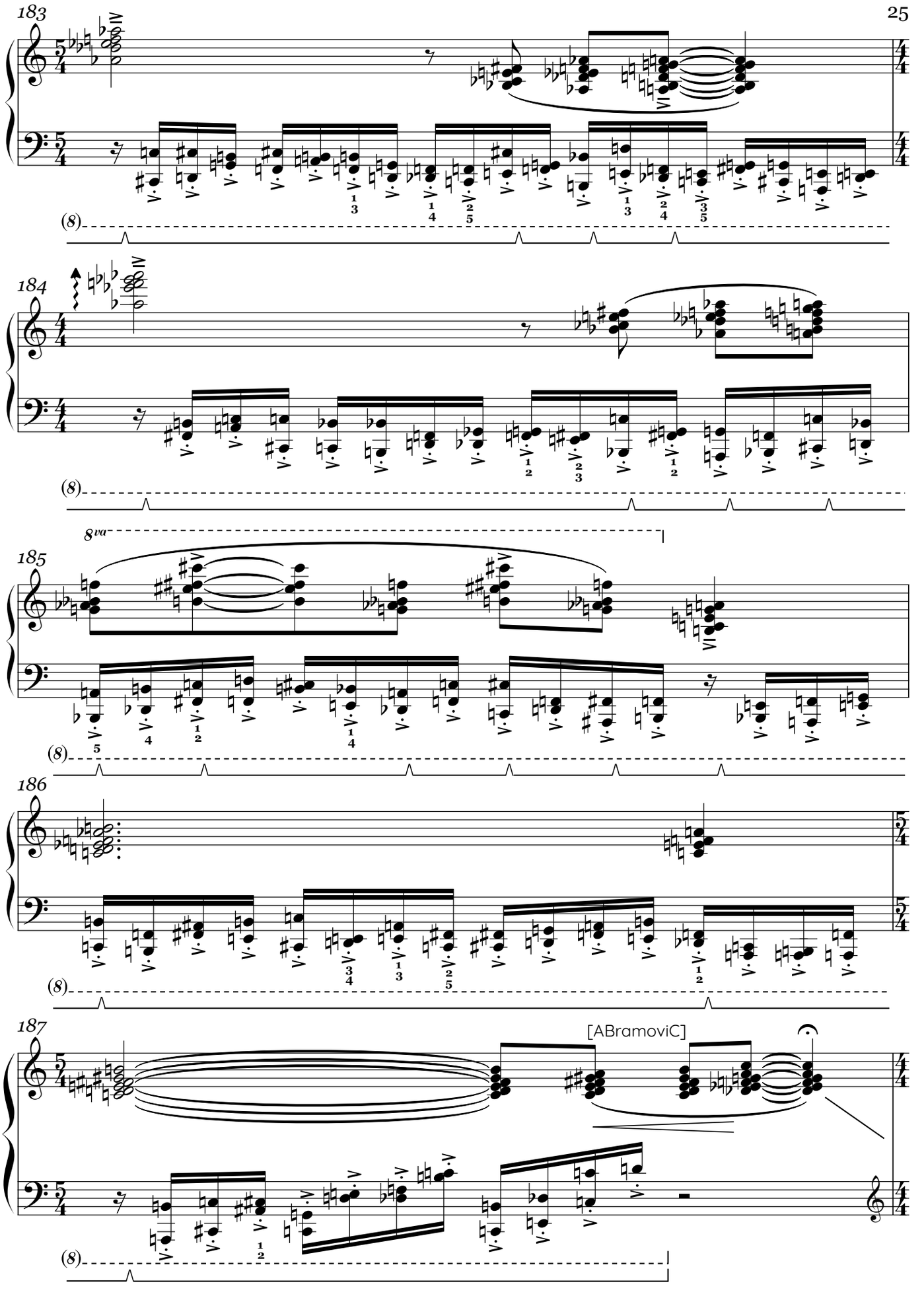
(Page intentionally left blank.)

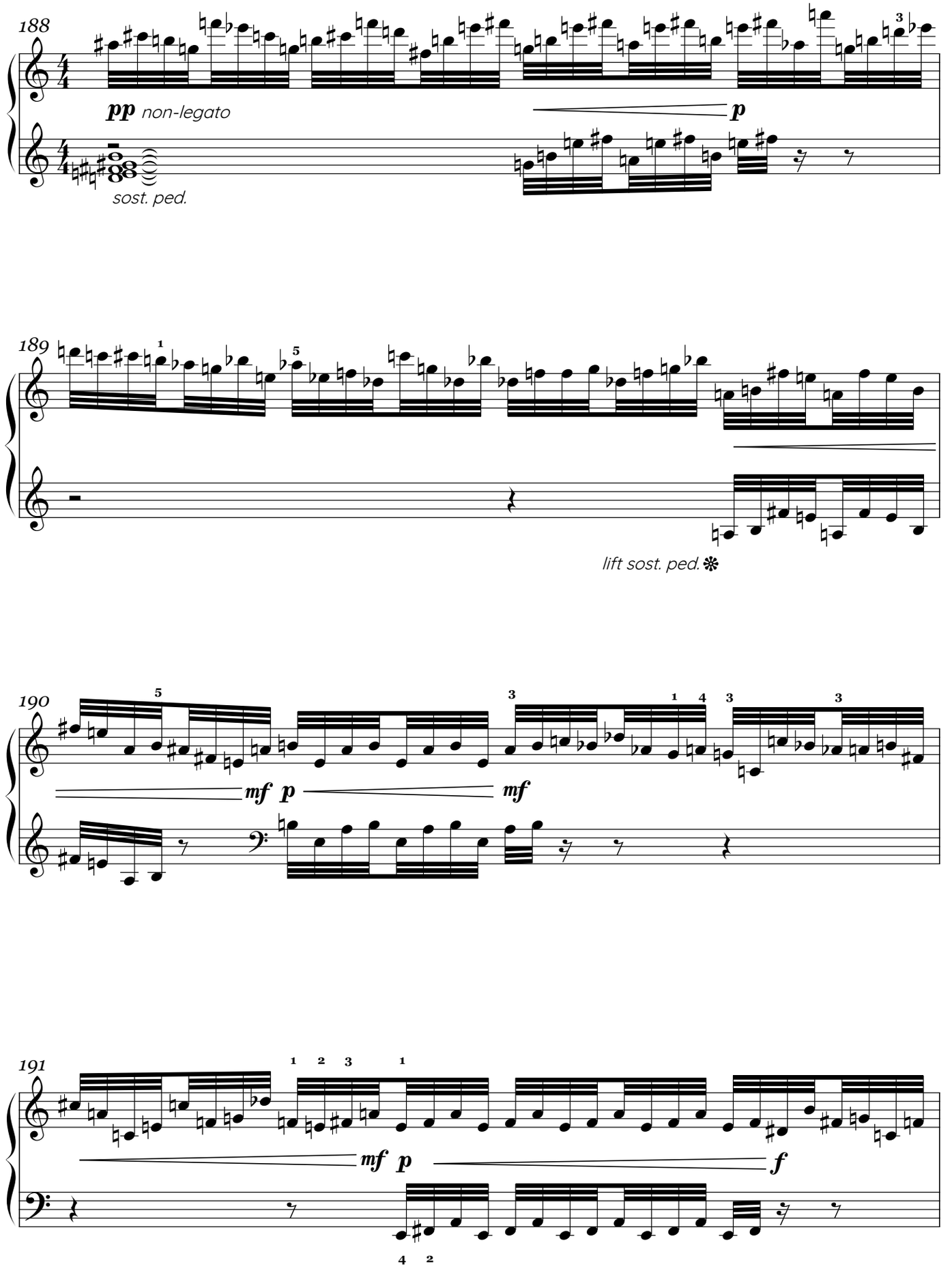

168
5:7
p
sim.
169
5
mf
5
5
170
ritenente
f
6
2-5
6
171
3
pp
p
172
5 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3
3
5
5
mf

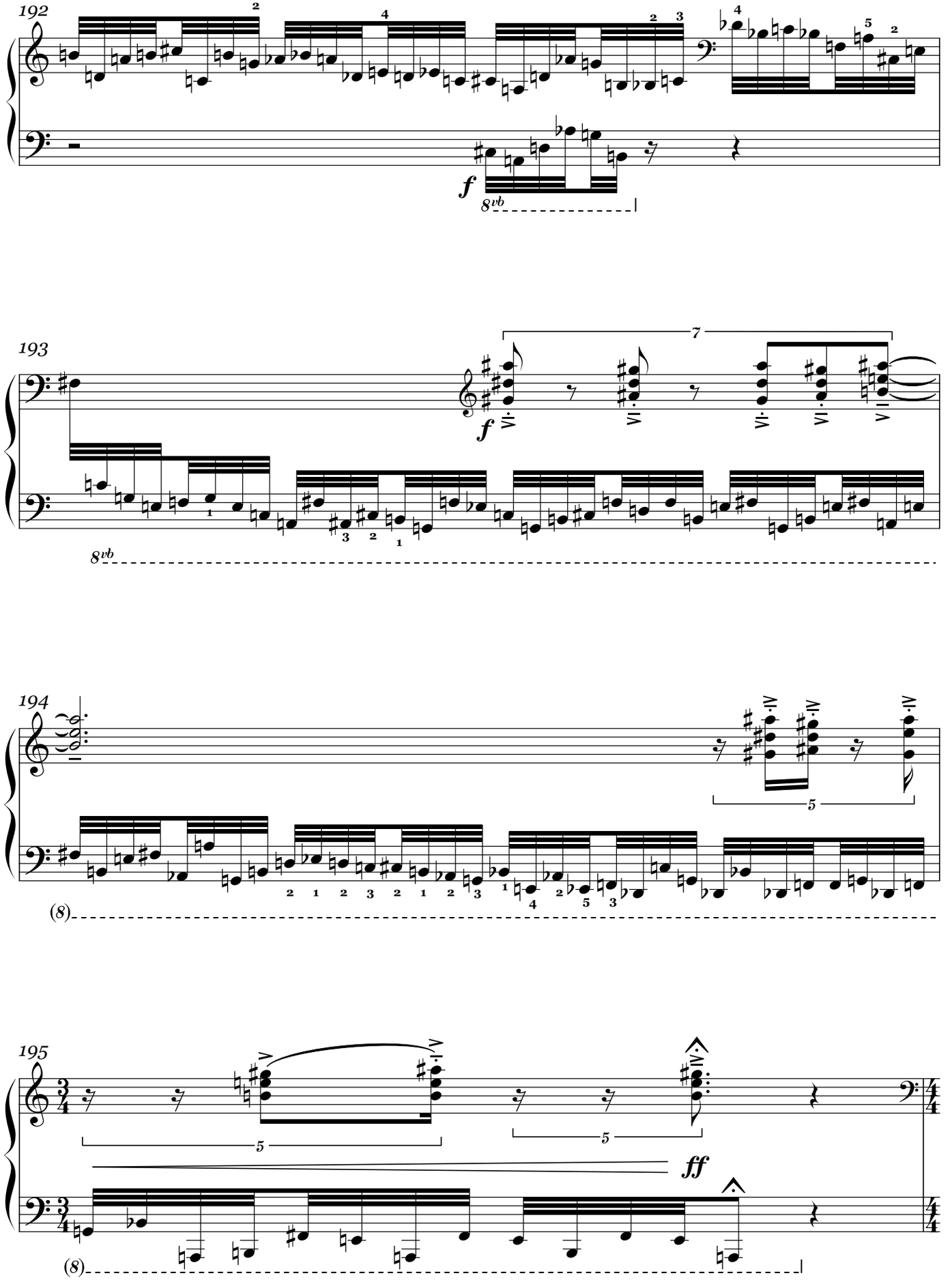


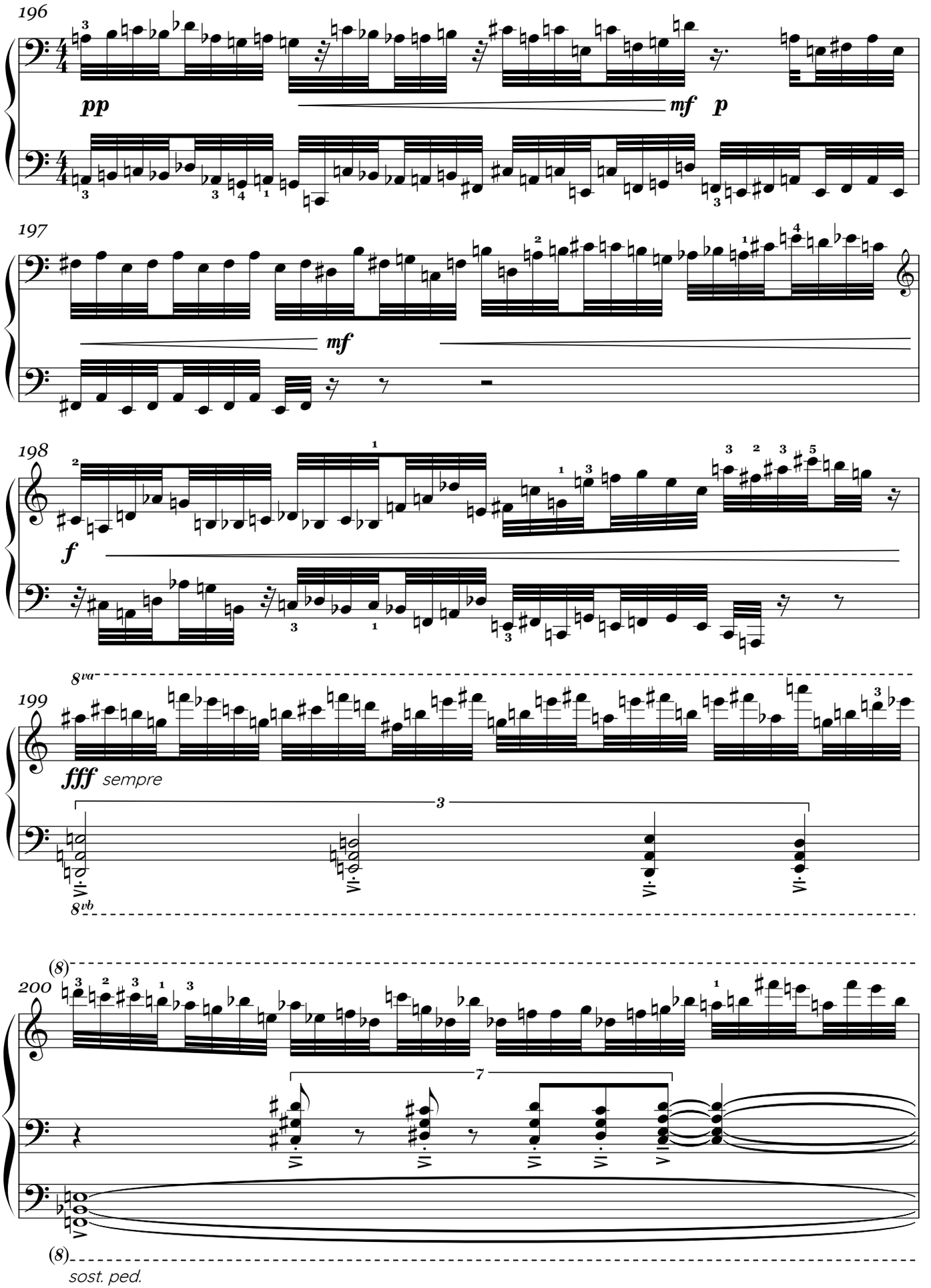
*four quintuplet quarter notes in the prevailing $\frac{4}{4}$ meter; where there are five quintuplet quarters in the time of four in $\frac{4}{4}$, play only four out of the possible five. Quintuplet 16ths each constitute a 20th of the measure in $\frac{4}{4}$ (there are a total of twenty 16ths in the bar). Thus, four quintuplet quarters would complete "sixteen twentieths".

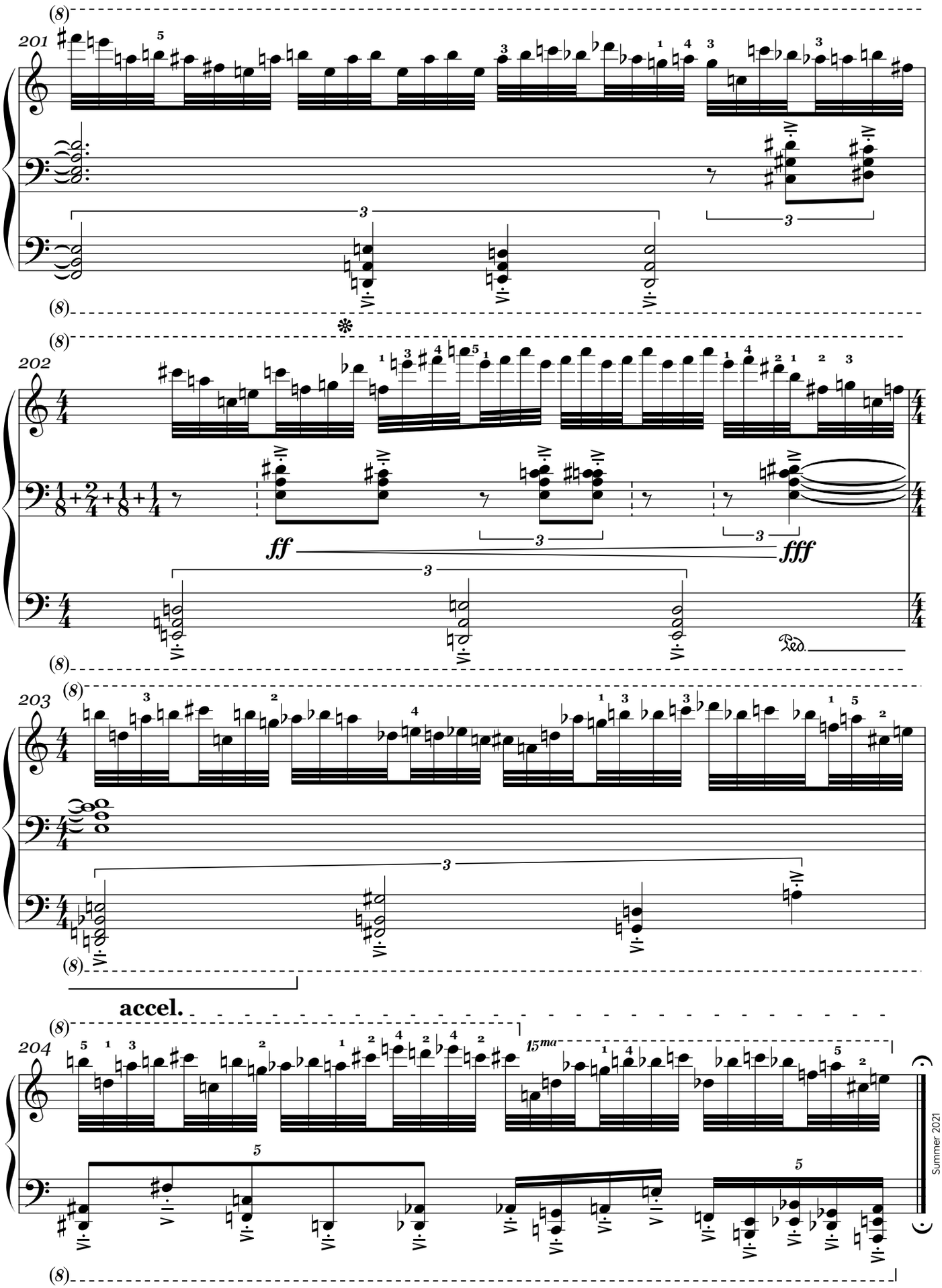

(♩ = 80)
178
15ma
8va
martellato, vigoroso
p
Ped.
179
f
ff
no pedal
8vb
5 = ♪ (♩ = 100)
180
RH white key clusters
with fist
RH black key clusters
with fist
8vb
fff
(8)
Ped.
(♩ = 80)
182
fff (terrifying brilliance)
martellato
ff
8vb


183
184
185
186
187
8va
[ABramoviC]


188
pp non-legato
sost. ped.
p
189
lift sost. ped.
190
mf p
mf
191
mf p
f


192
193
194
195
f
ff
8vb
(8)
7
5


196
pp
mf
p
197
mf
198
f
8va
199
fff sempre
3
8vb
(8)
200
7
(8)
sost. ped.


201
202
203
204
ff
fff
Ped.
accel.
15ma
Summer 2021
East Palo Alto, California