Weegee Photos

Greg Sandow

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D*uration: c. 8 1/2 minutes*

World premiere: April 14, 2016
at the Mansion at Strathmore,
played by Jenny Lin

Dedicated to Jenny, with thanks
for her heroic performance
(and for many other things,
including her help with
revisions of this piece)

Who was Weegee?

Weegee (real name Arthur Fellig) was a freelance photographer who flourished in New York in the 1940s. He haunted police stations, reading alerts that came in about crimes and emergencies. Then he rushed to the scene of the murder or accident. Often he got there before the authorities did. He took photos, developed them in a darkroom he set up in his car, and sold them to the many newspapers published in New York back then. Especially, of course, to the tabloids.

His photos — dark, troubled, sometimes gleeful, always human — now are famous. They share a bold darkness with *film noir*. In this piece, I've created music for eight of them. The photos need no commentary, except maybe to say that the two love scenes, as I see them, show doomed love. And that the last photo, showing a huge joyous crowd at New York City's most famous beach, is of course staged, and wonderfully so.

How do you play the two crazy pieces, "Car Crash" and "Simply Add Boiling Water?"

These pieces — the second and seventh in this set — really look crazy. Crazy rhythms, crazy wildness, both hands all over the piano, all the time.

And yes, if you tried to render exactly what the notation says, the music would be unplayable.

But Jenny Lin played it! Here's the secret, at least as I understand it. Just smile when you look at all the zany tuplets, and treat what you see on the page as, in effect, graphic notation. Showing you more or less what happens when, but without any thoughts about exact rhythm.

Maybe first play at a leisurely tempo, stopping the flow when you need to, till you get the notes under your fingers. Then — and this is the key to making the music sound as I wanted it to — practice using computer renditions of the two pieces (which you'll find online) as click tracks. Keep "Car Crash" always loud and violent, and keep "Simply Add Boiling Water" soft, the music floating like the steam in the photo.

Here are the click tracks: "Car Crash," www.gregsandow.com/media/WeegeeCarCrash.mp3; "Simply Add Boiling Water," www.gregsandow.com/media/WeegeeBoiling.mp3. Here's a computer rendition of the entire score: www.gregsandow.com/media/WeegeeComputer.mp3.

And here's Jenny's performance: https://youtu.be/oXnkADl_h7g.

After the premiere…

…I revised both the music and the notation (with crucial help in the last piece from Jenny). Because all the pieces were harder to read (because of complex notation) and harder to play than they needed to be. The biggest revisions came in the wild boogie-woogie of "Crowd at Coney Island," the final piece, so Jenny's heroic performance won't fully correspond to what you see in the score.

These pieces may well still challenge you. But I think they'll reward you, too. In performance they're powerful.

I Gunman Killed By Off-Duty Cop at 344 Broome Street 1

II Car Crash 4

III Lovers at the Palace Theater 8

IV Heat Spell 9

V Alone in Their Dream 11

VI Accident on Grand Central Station Roof 15

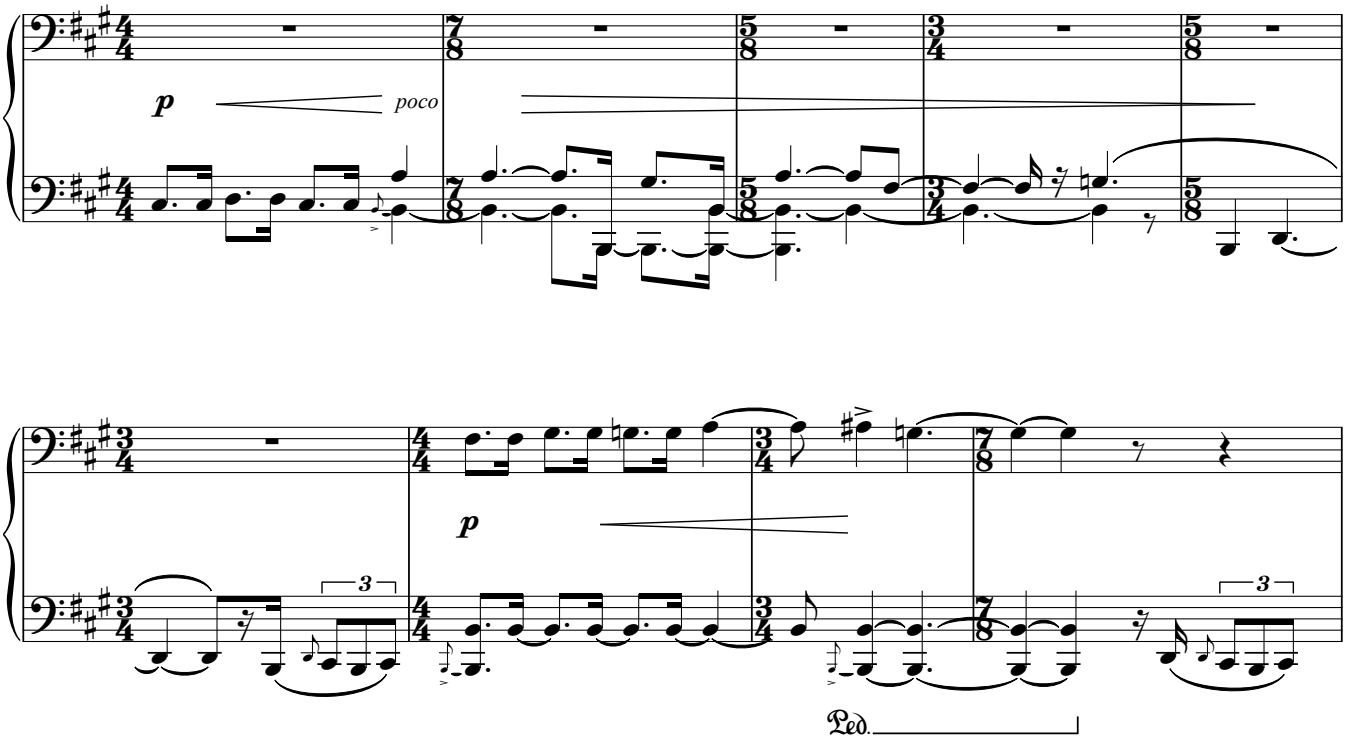
VII Simply Add Boiling Water 19

VIII Crowd at Coney Island 21

I Gunman Killed By Off-Duty Cop at 344 Broome Street

Slow, unsure boogie

♩ = 48



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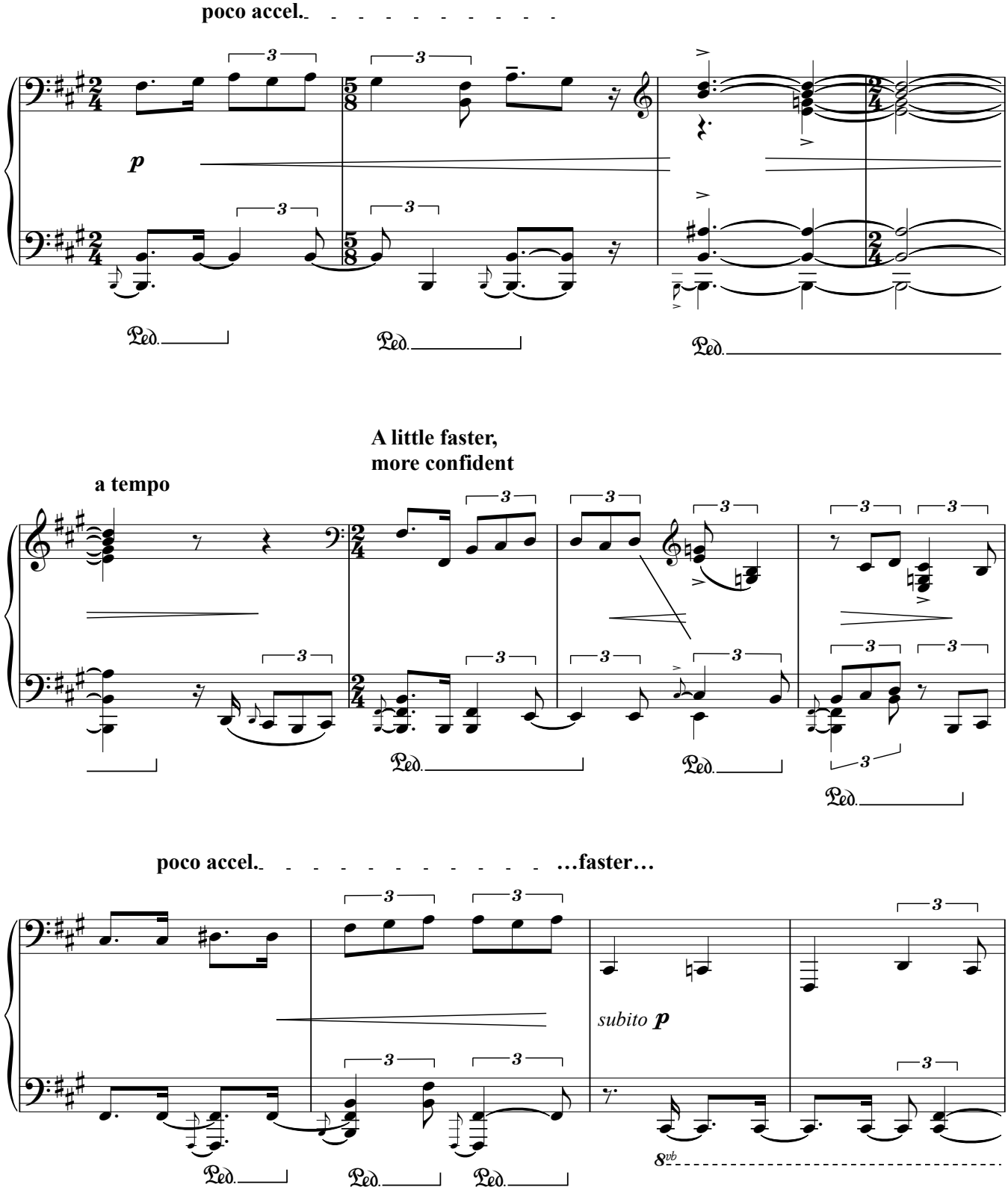
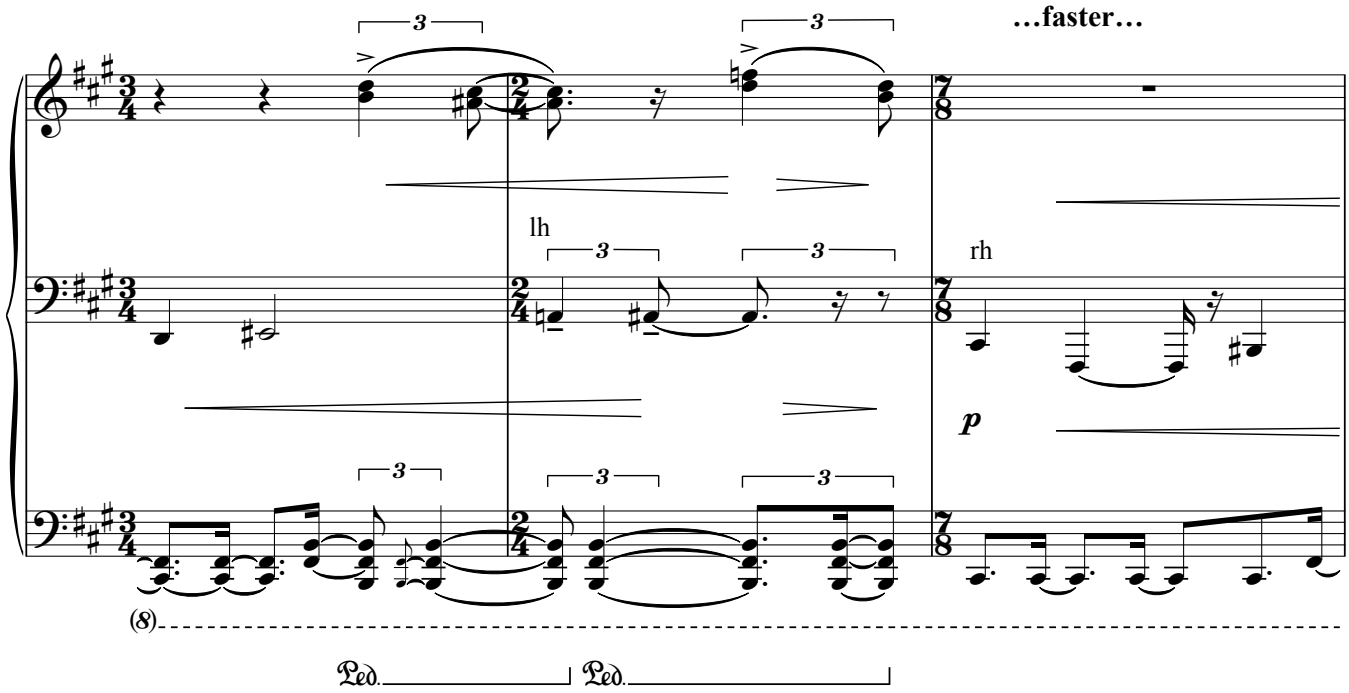
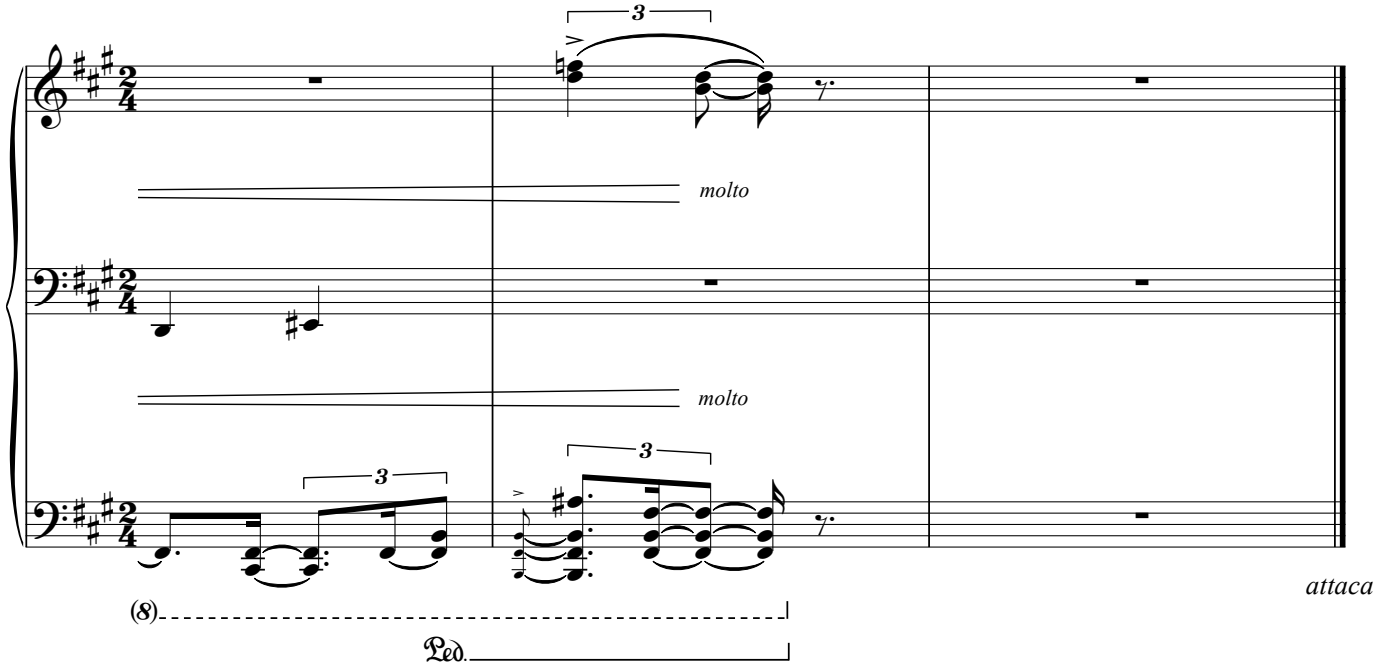

poco accel.
p
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
A little faster,
more confident
a tempo
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
poco accel.
…faster…
subito p
8vb
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


…faster…
lh
rh
p
(8)
Ped.
Ped.

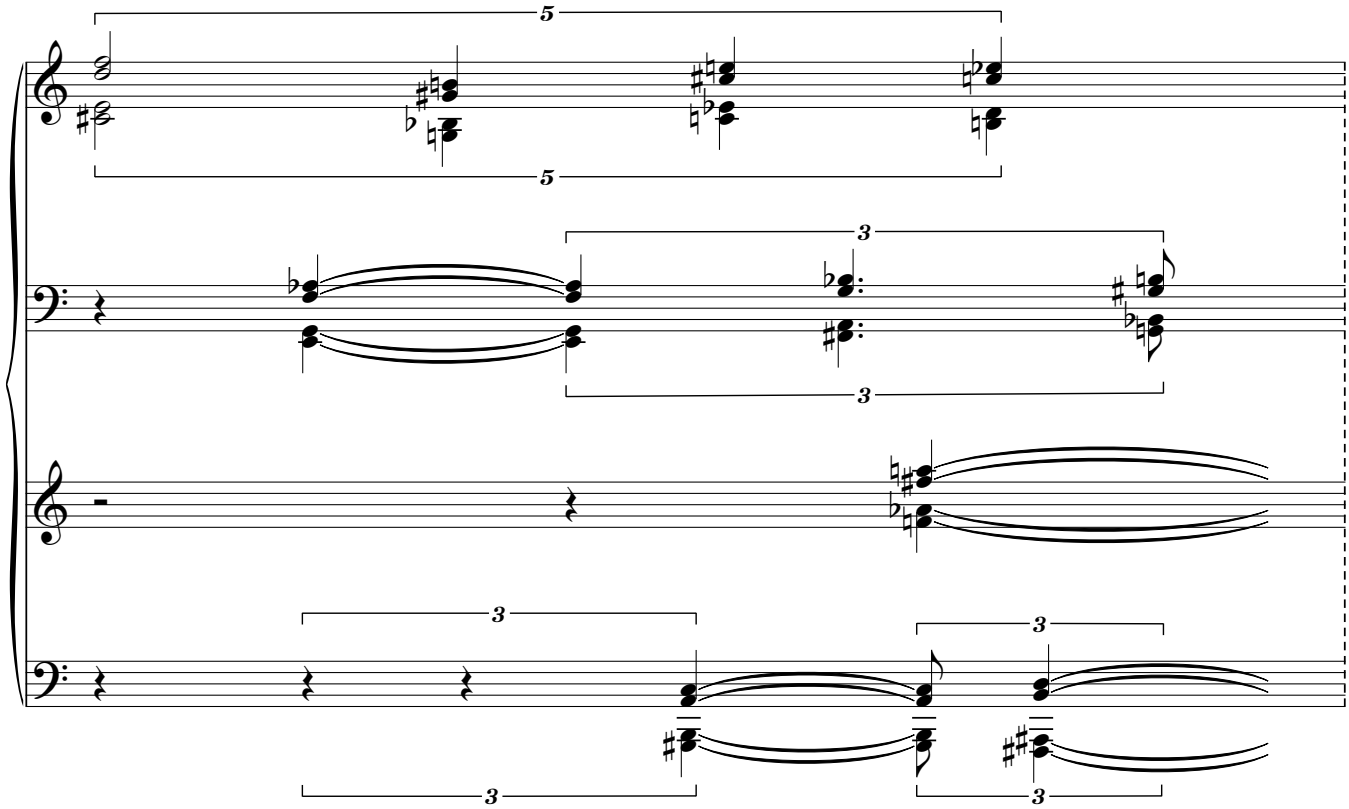

molto
molto
(8)
Ped.
attaca

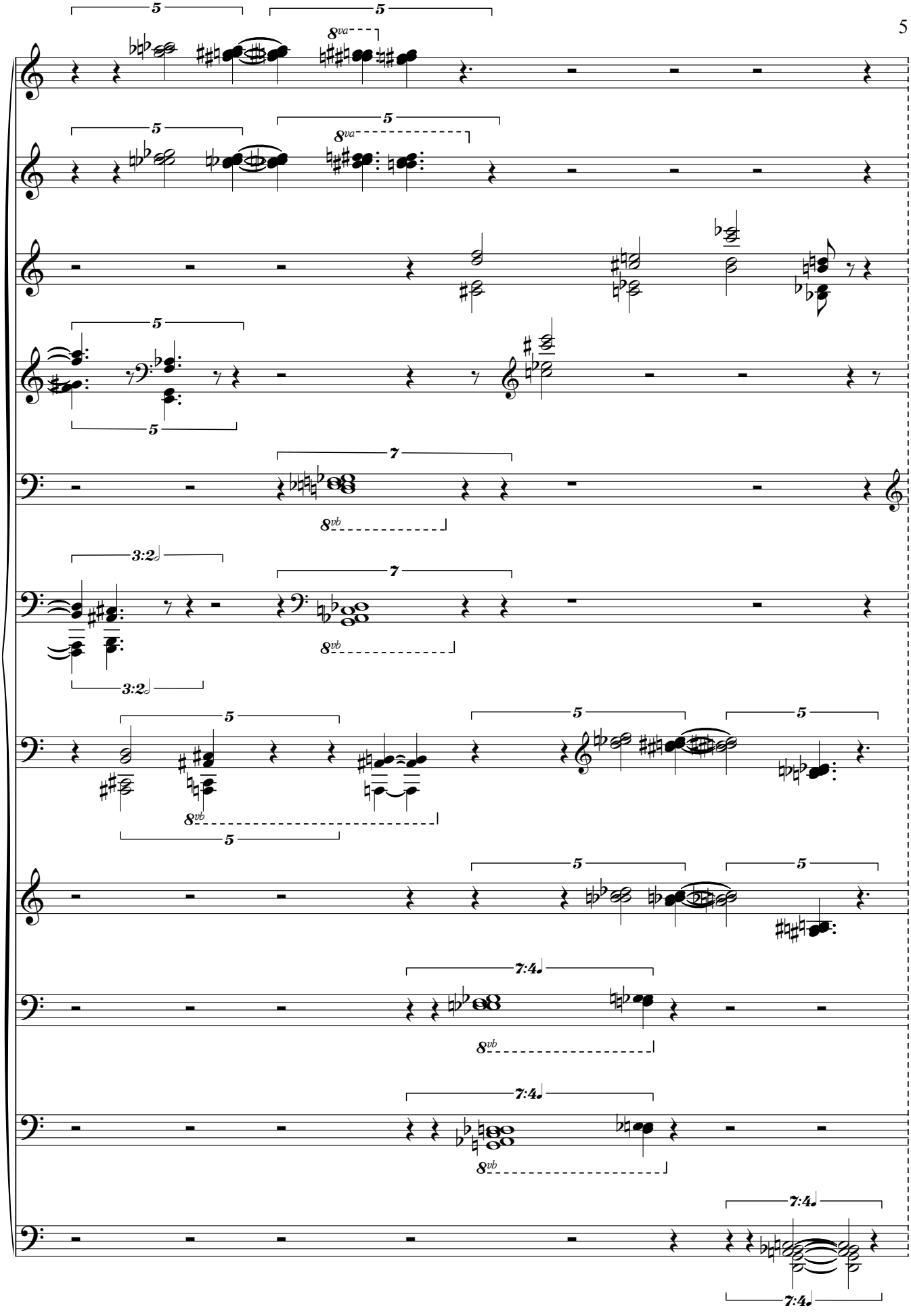
II Car Crash

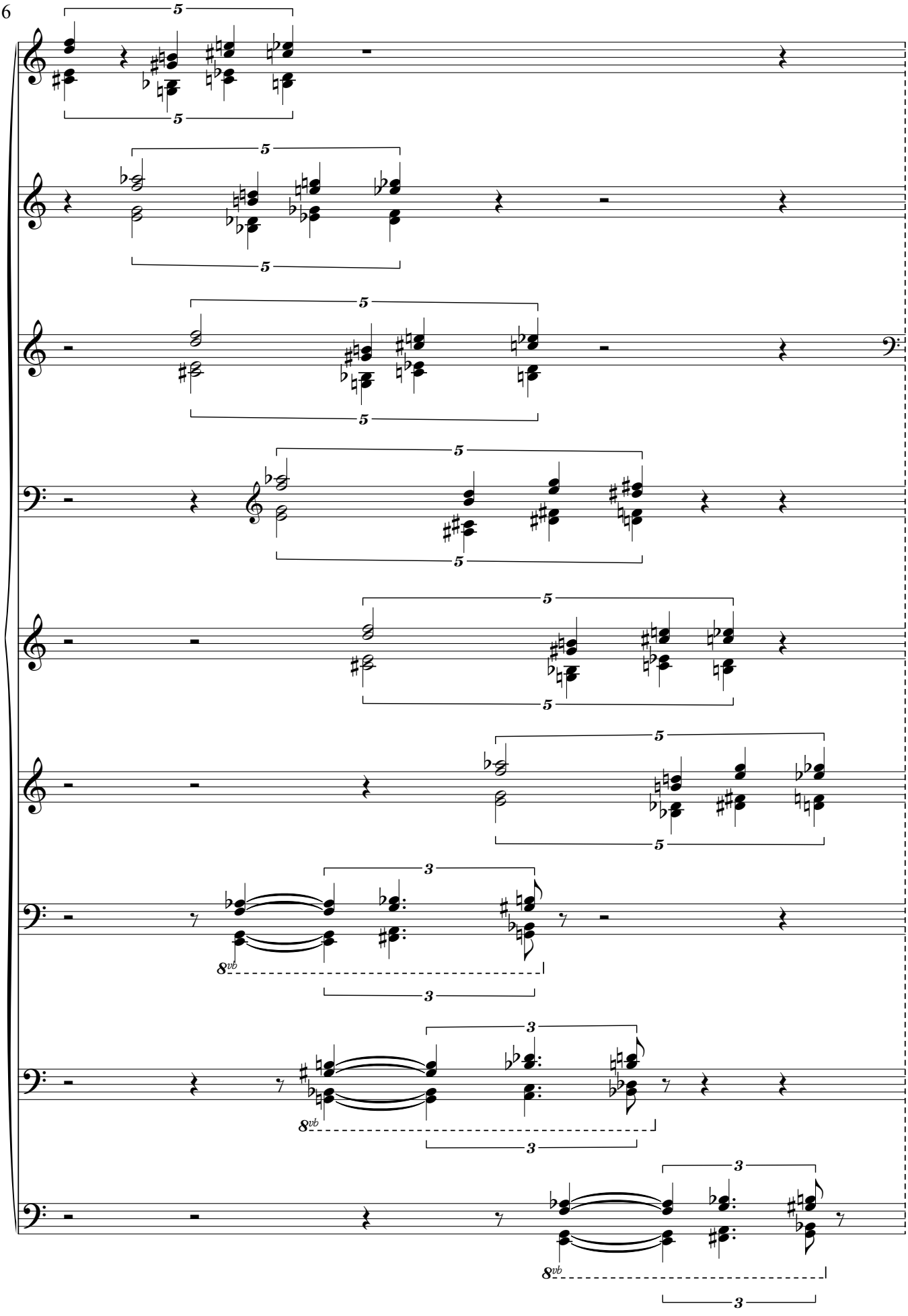
Treat this almost as graphic notation.
The notated rhythms are meant to
show that the chords shouldn't be
played with anything like a steady pulse.
See the introduction to the score for
more on how to play this.

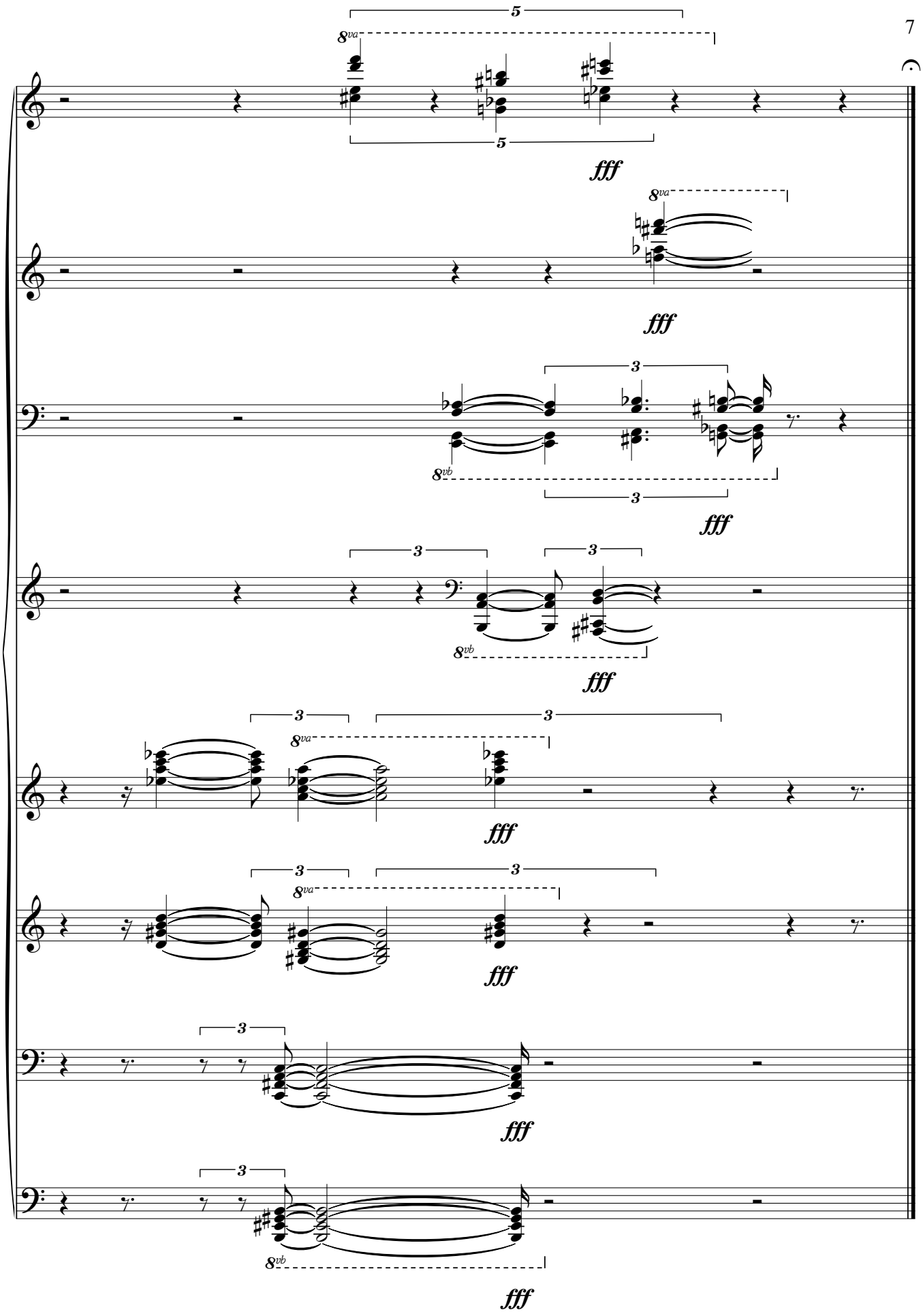
sempre ff

♩ = 100

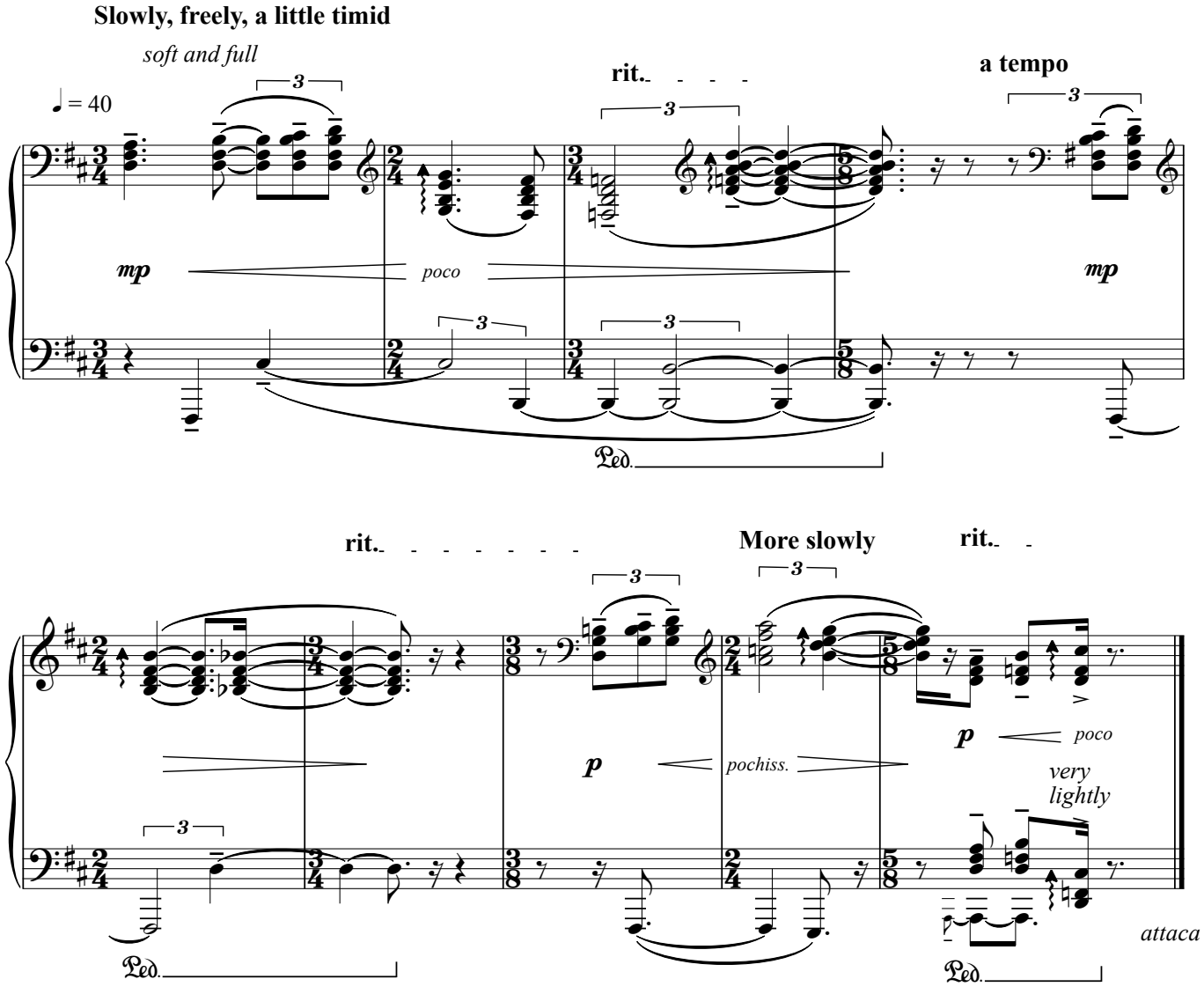



5
5
8va
5
5
8va
5
5
7
8vb
3:2
7
8vb
3:2
5
5
5
8vb
5
5
7:4
8vb
7:4
8vb
7:4
7:4


5
5
5
5
5
5
5
5
5
5
5
5
3
8vb
3
3
8vb
3
3
8vb
3


5
8va
5
fff
8va
fff
3
8vb
3
fff
3
3
8vb
fff
3
3
8va
fff
3
3
8va
fff
3
fff
3
8vb
fff

III Lovers at the Palace Theater



IV Heat Spell

Not too slowly, intense

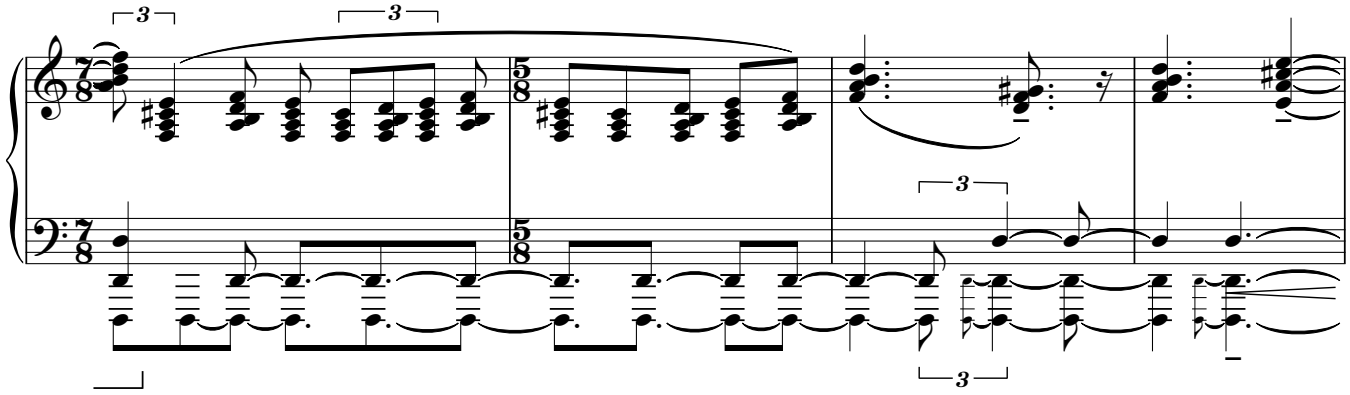
play all the tuplets in this piece freely

♩ = 38

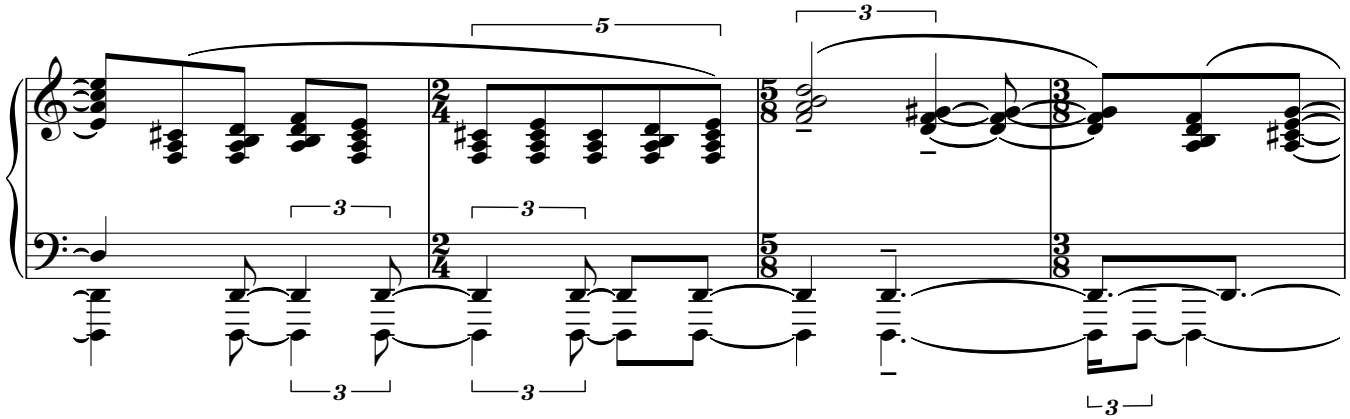
mp

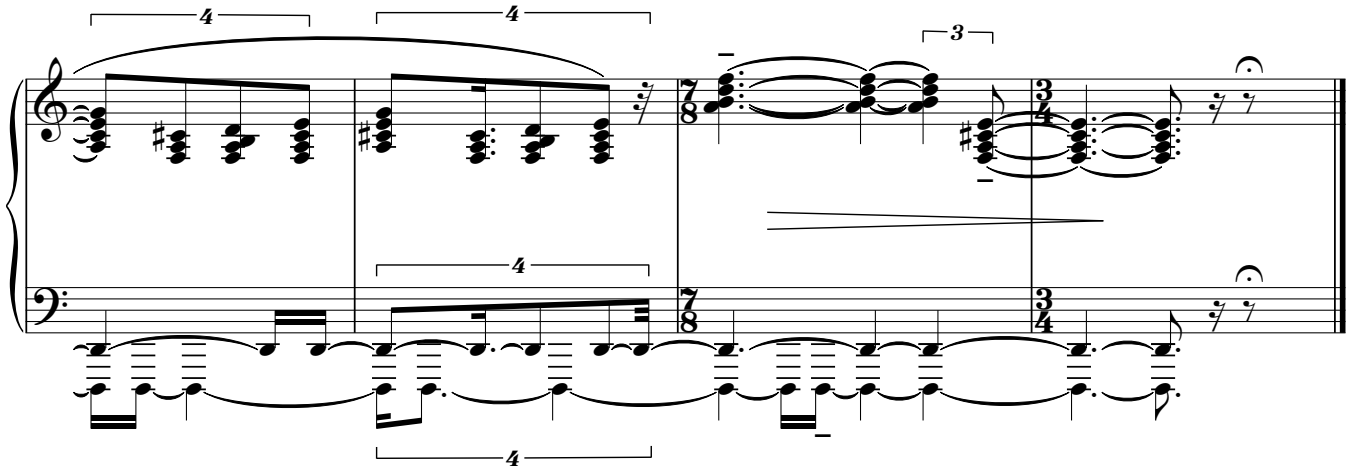
Ped.

Ped.



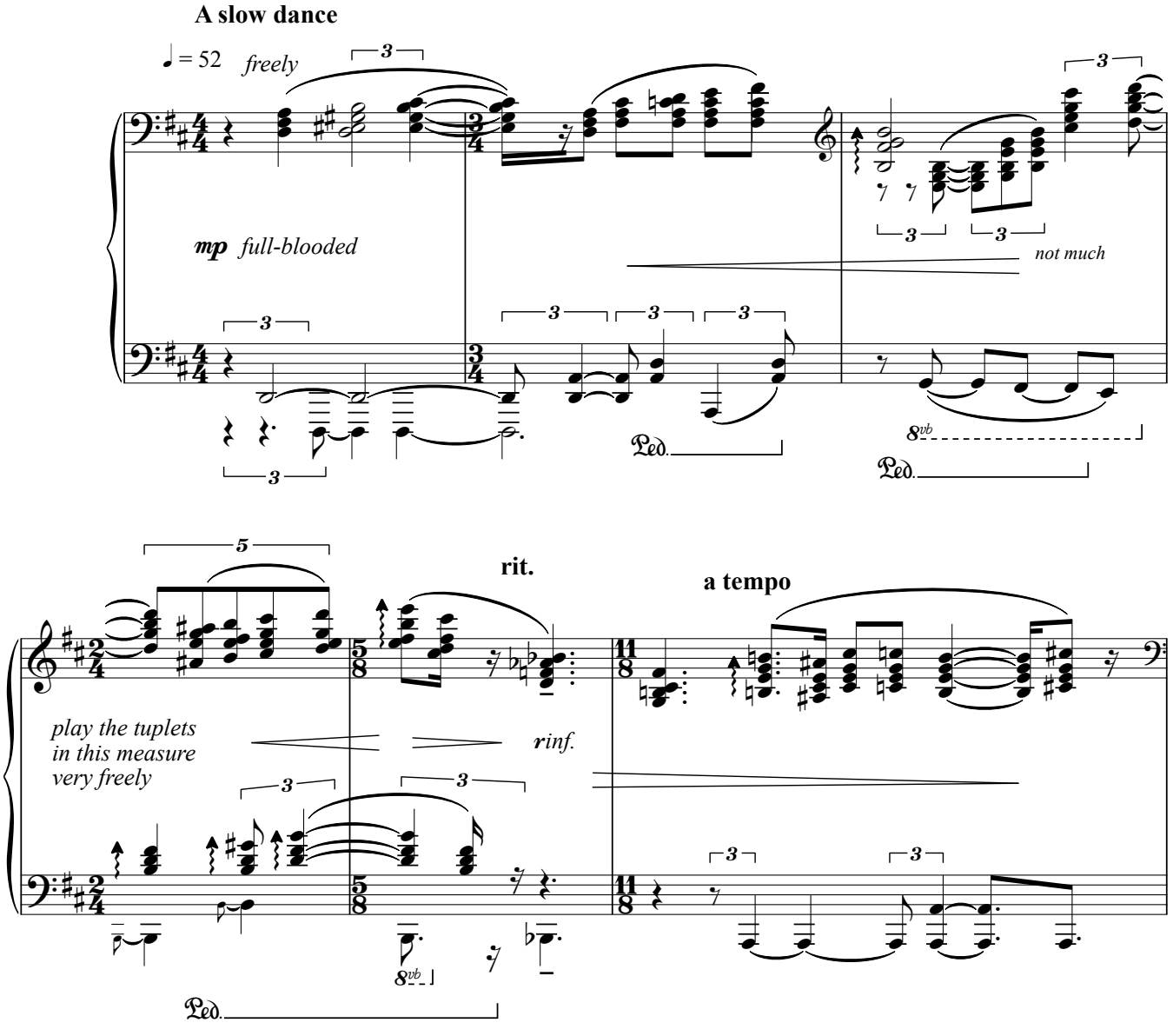
play the tuplets in this measure very freelly, as if they were graphic notation

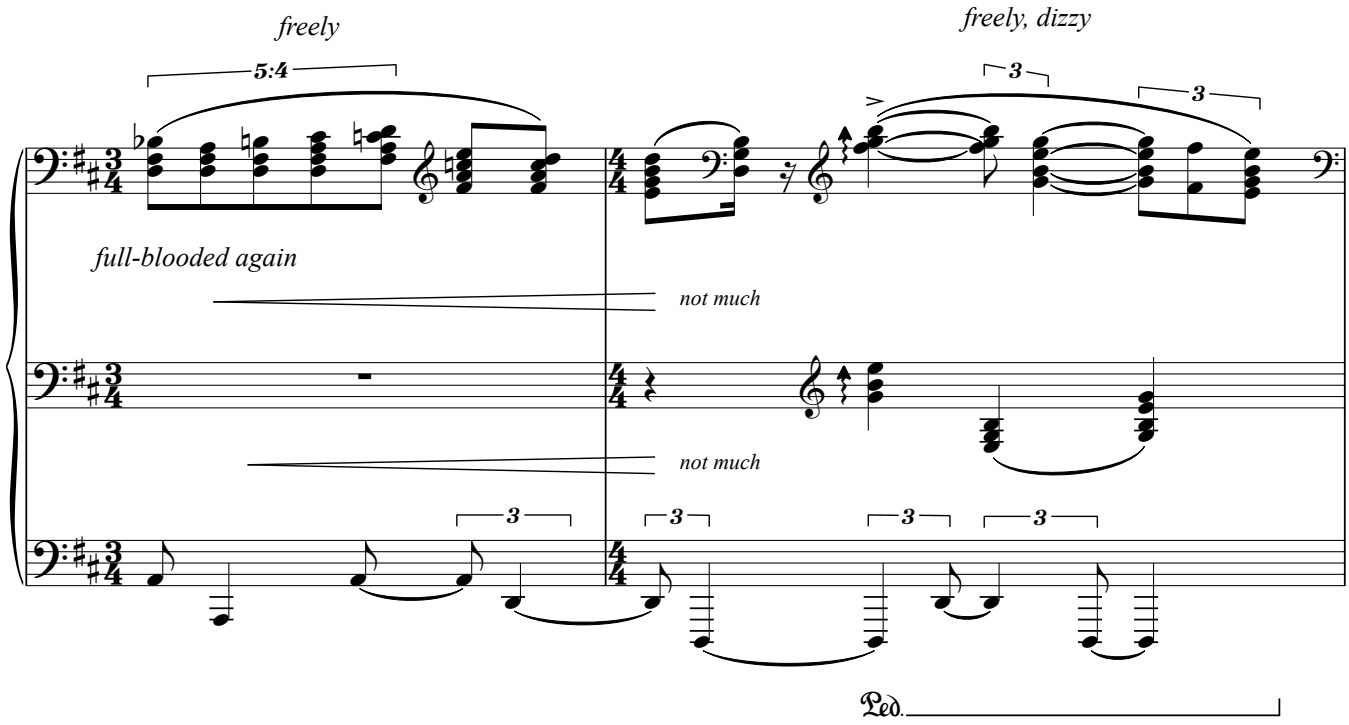


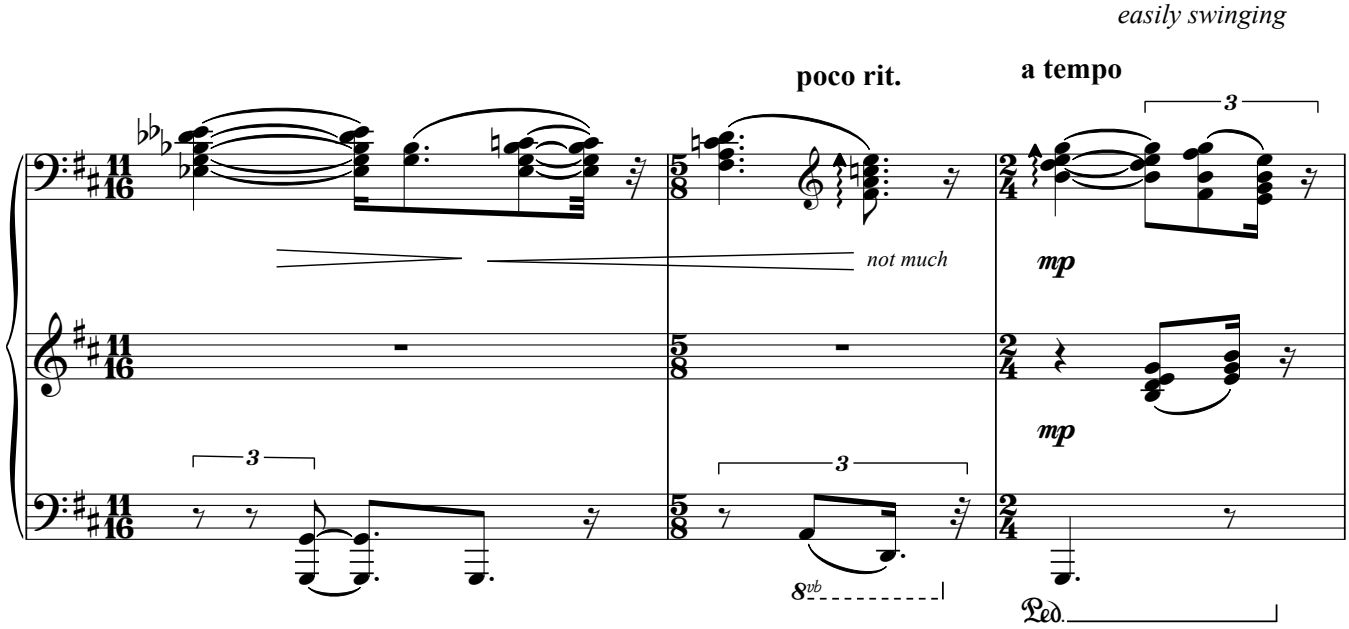


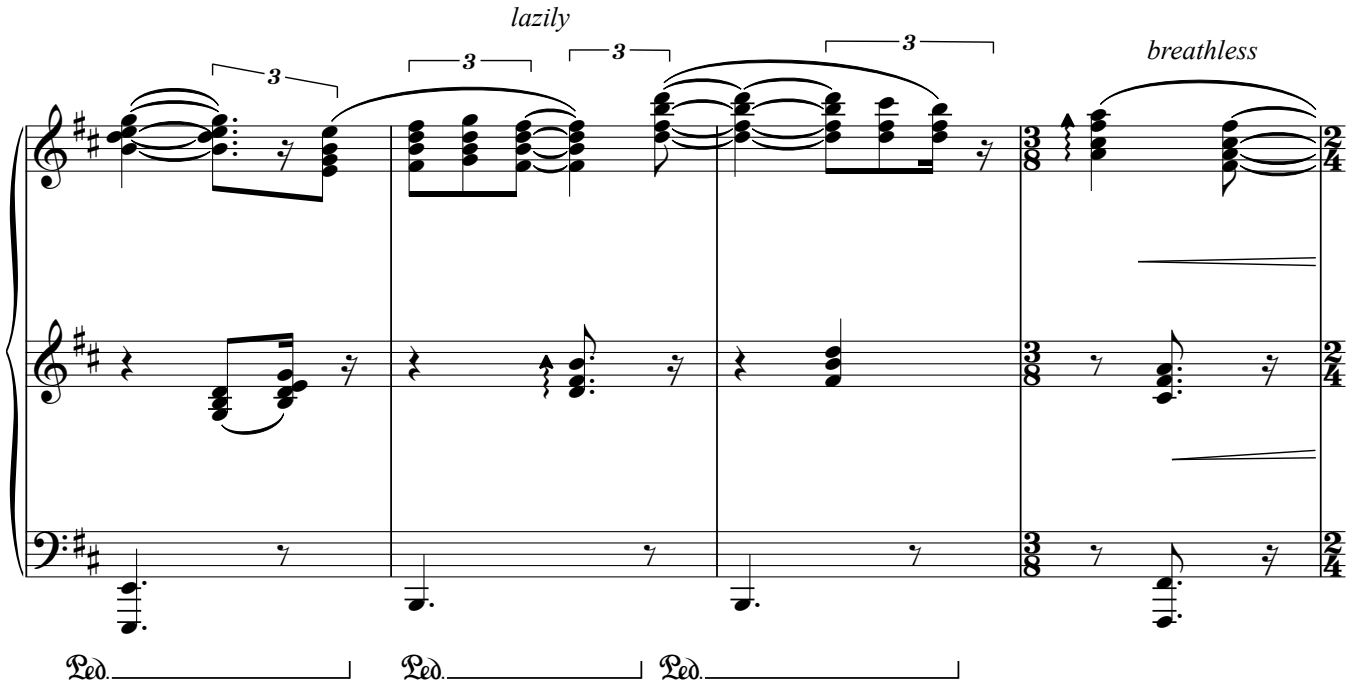
V Alone in Their Dream

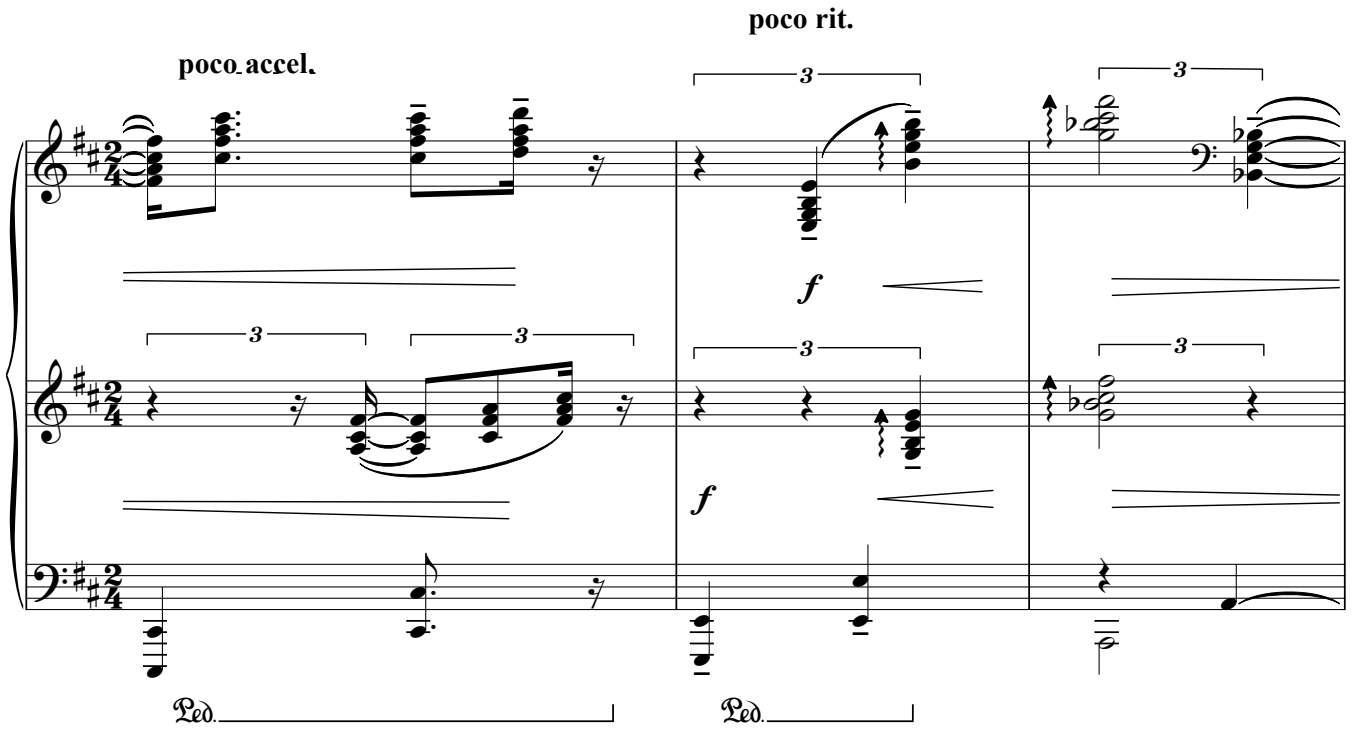
A slow dance

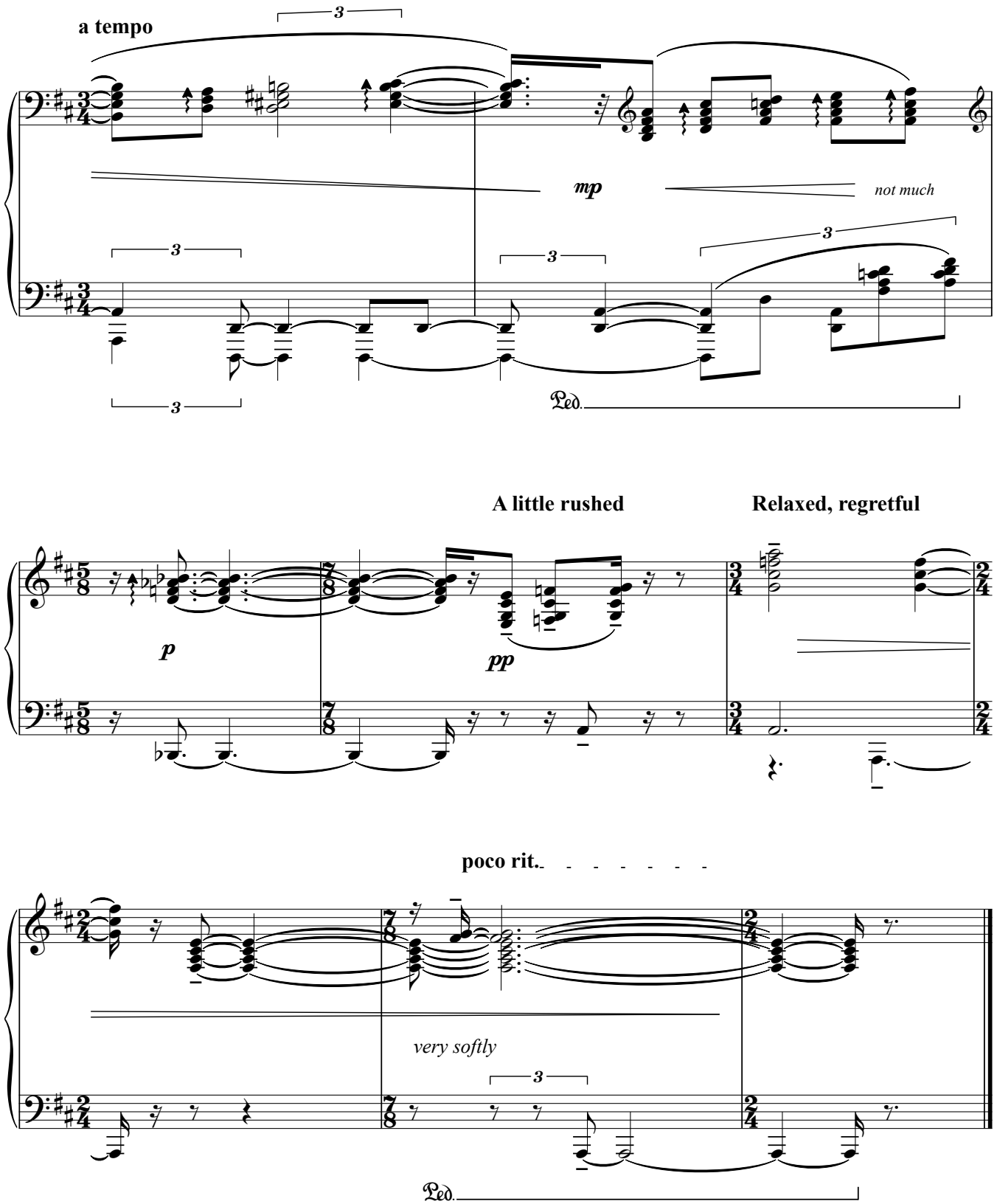


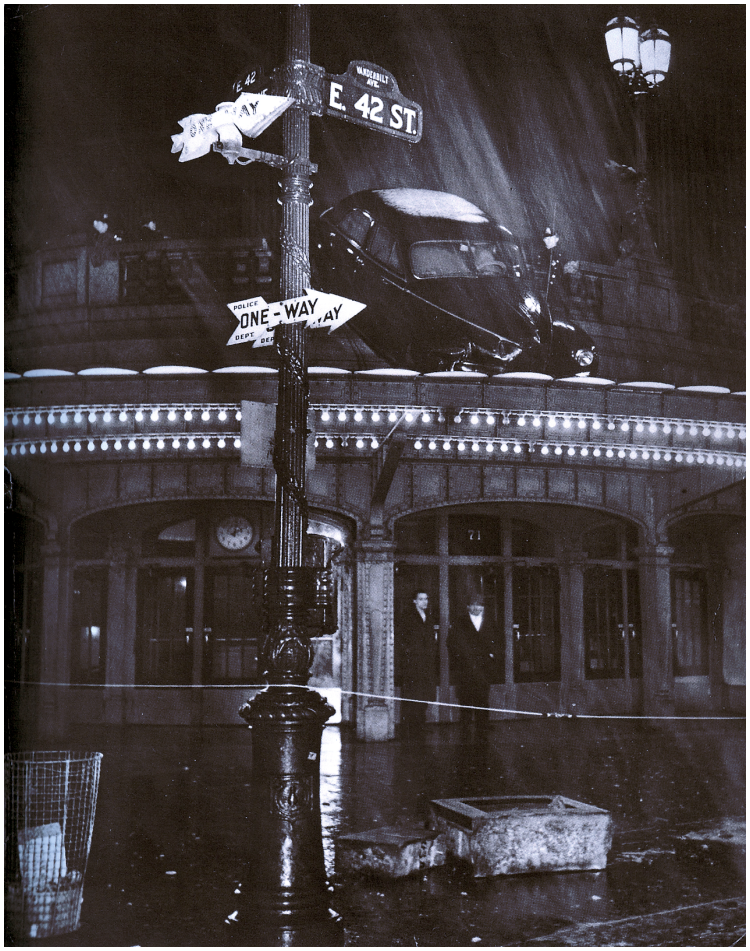

freely
freely, dizzy
5:4
3
3
full-blooded again
not much
not much
3
3
3
3
Ped.


easily swinging
poco rit.
a tempo
3
not much
mp
mp
3
3
8vb
Ped.

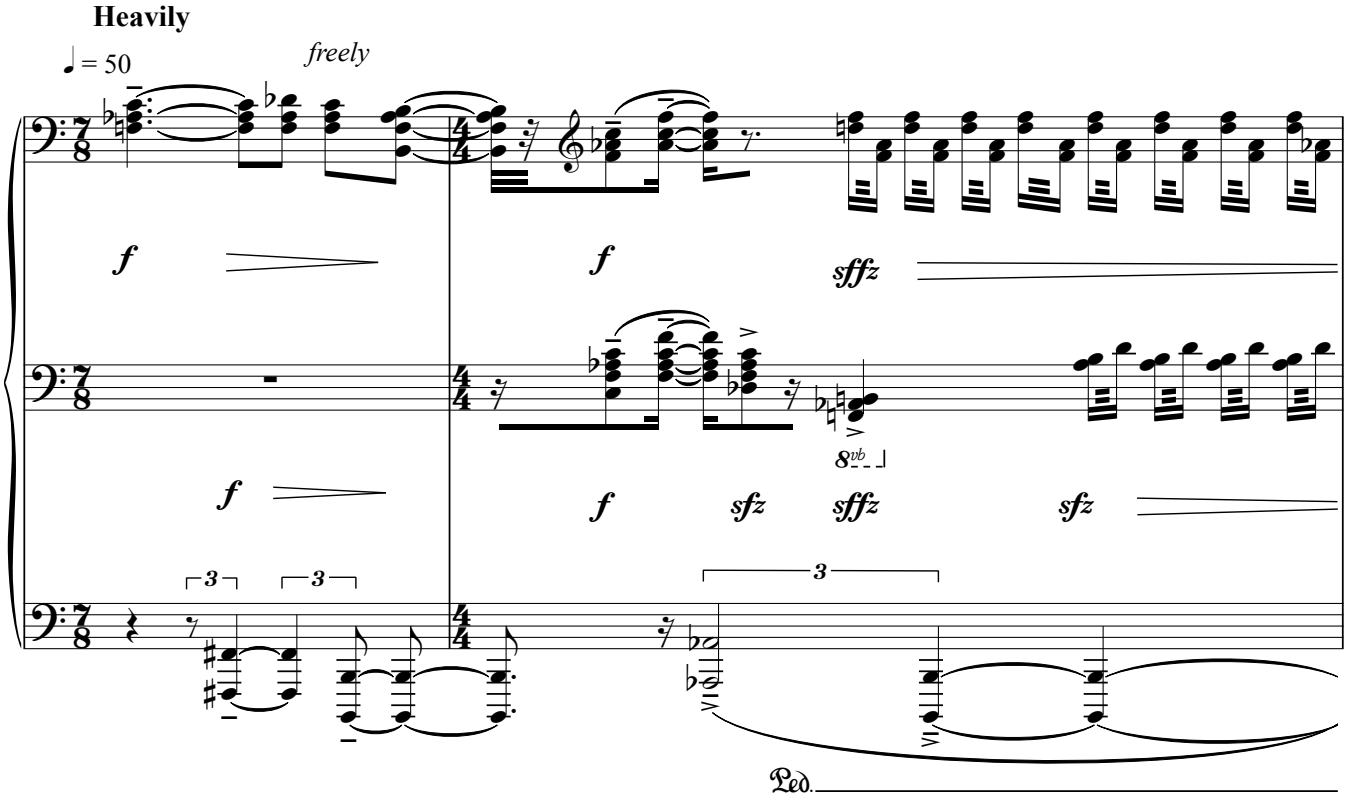

lazily
breathless
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

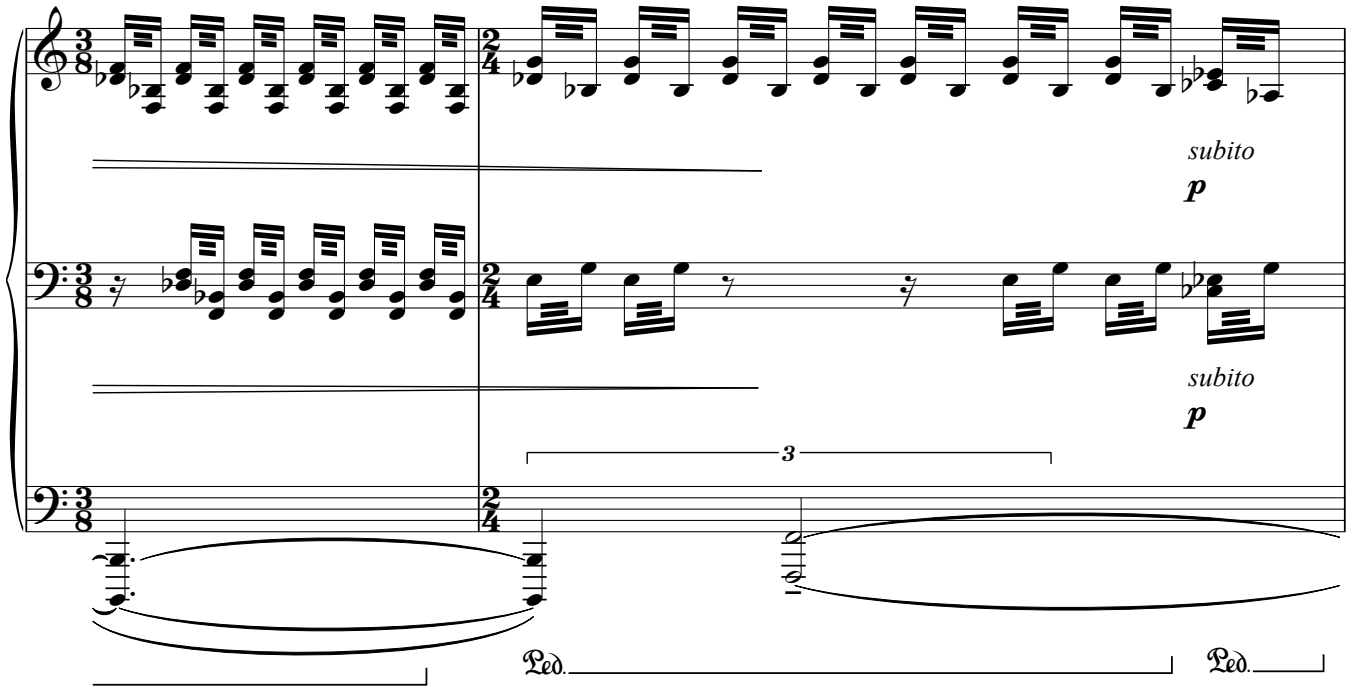

poco accel.
poco rit.
f
f
Ped.
Ped.

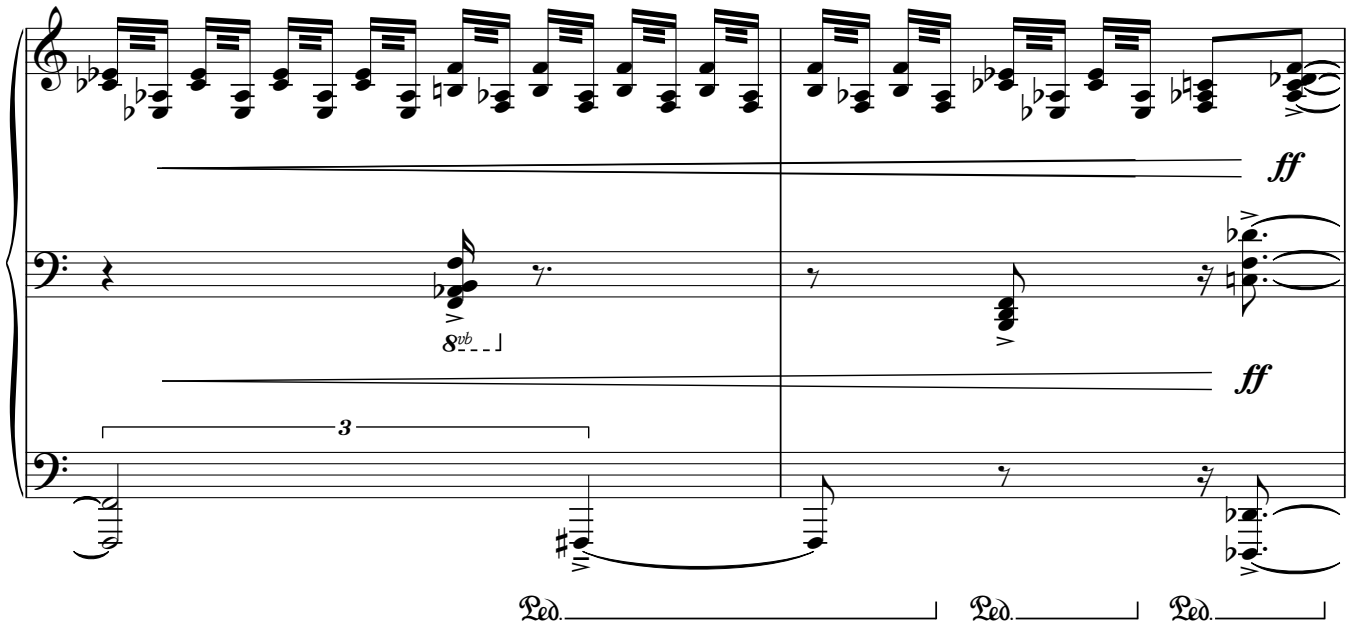

a tempo
mp
not much
Ped.
A little rushed
Relaxed, regretful
p
pp
poco rit.
very softly
Ped.

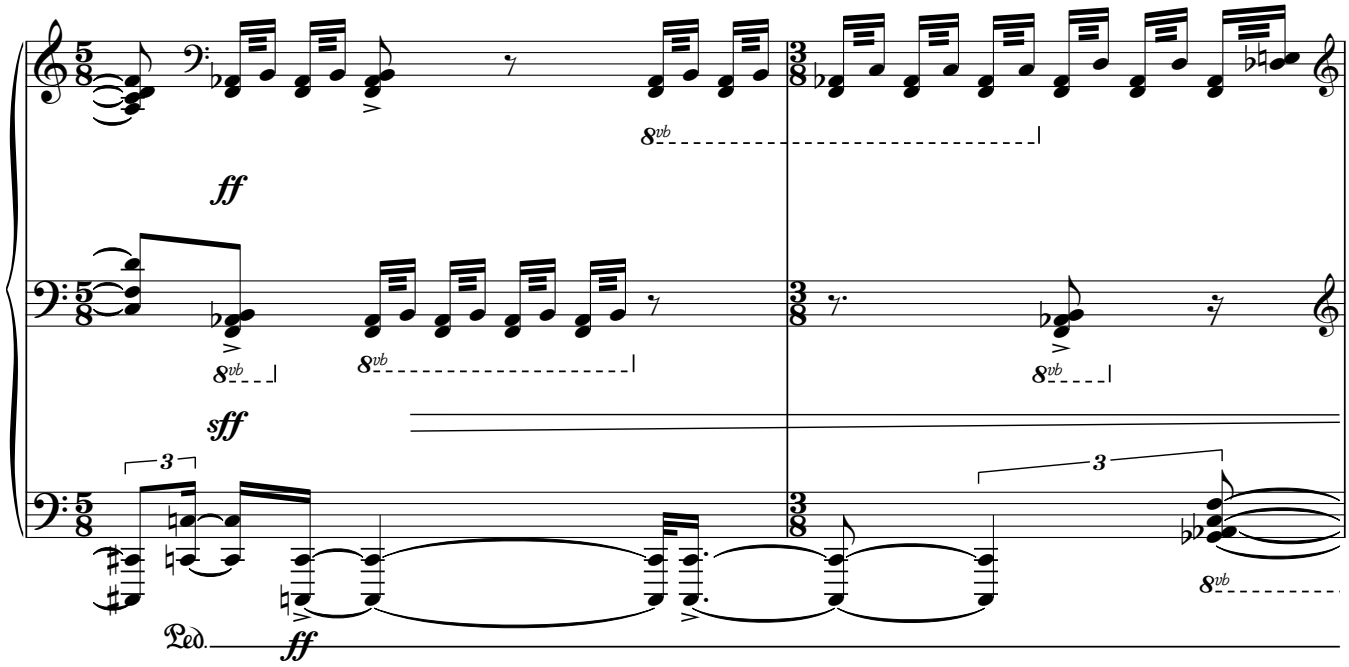


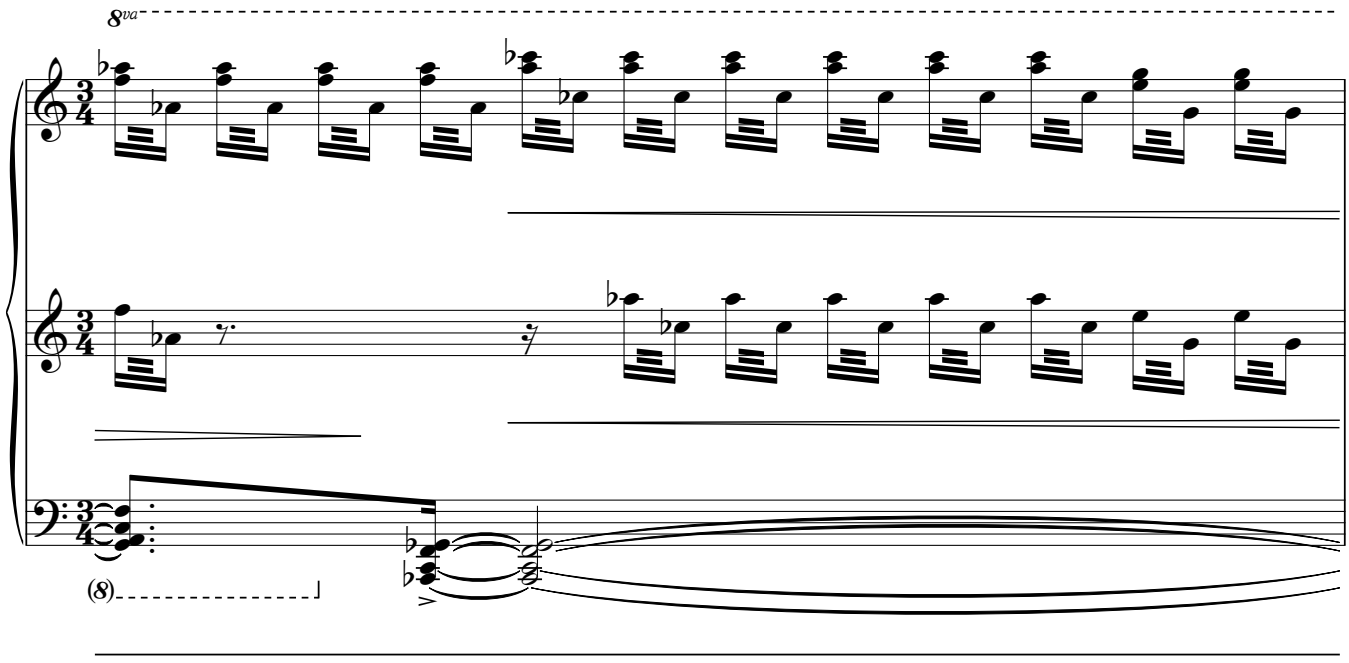
VI Accident on Grand Central Station Roof

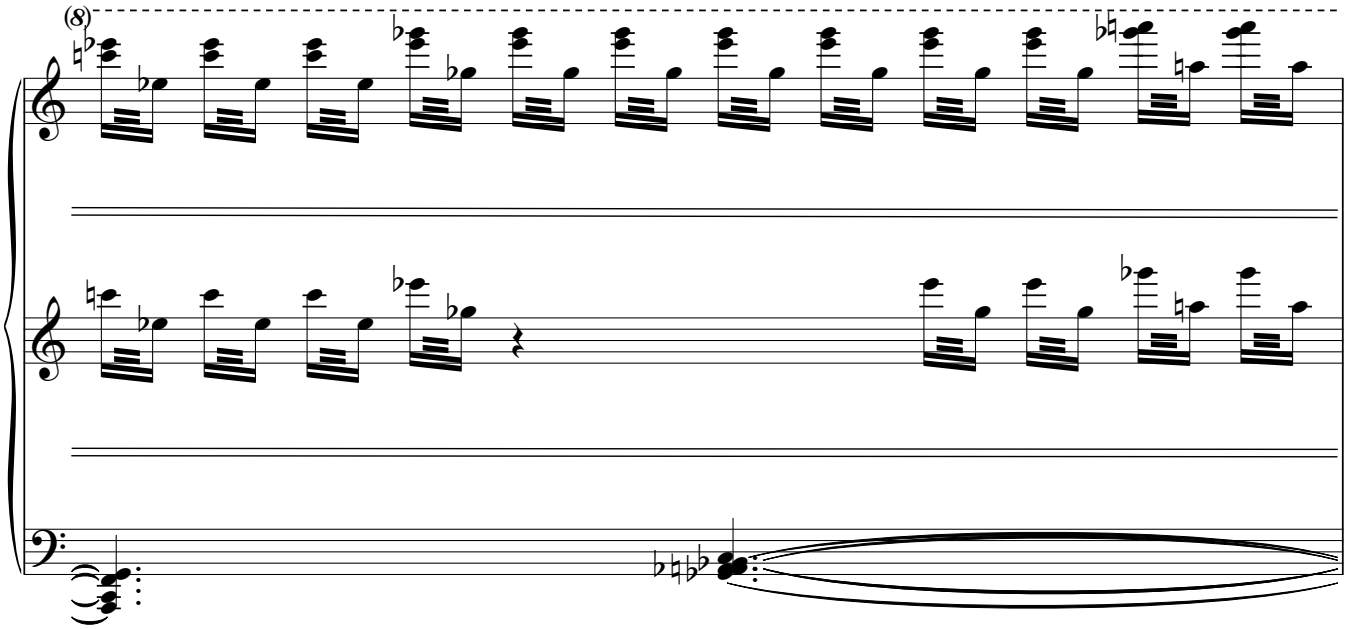


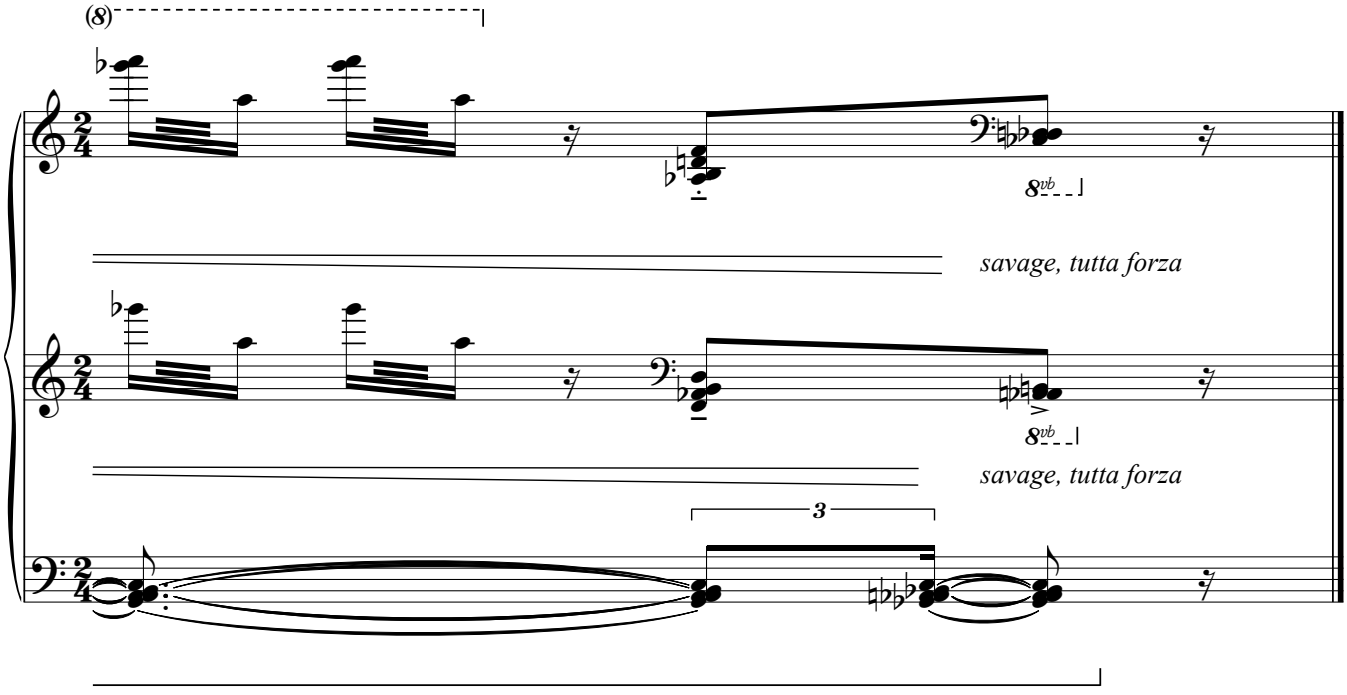

subito
p
subito
p
3
Ped.
Ped.


ff
8vb
ff
3
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


ff
8vb
sff
3
Ped.
ff


8va
(8)

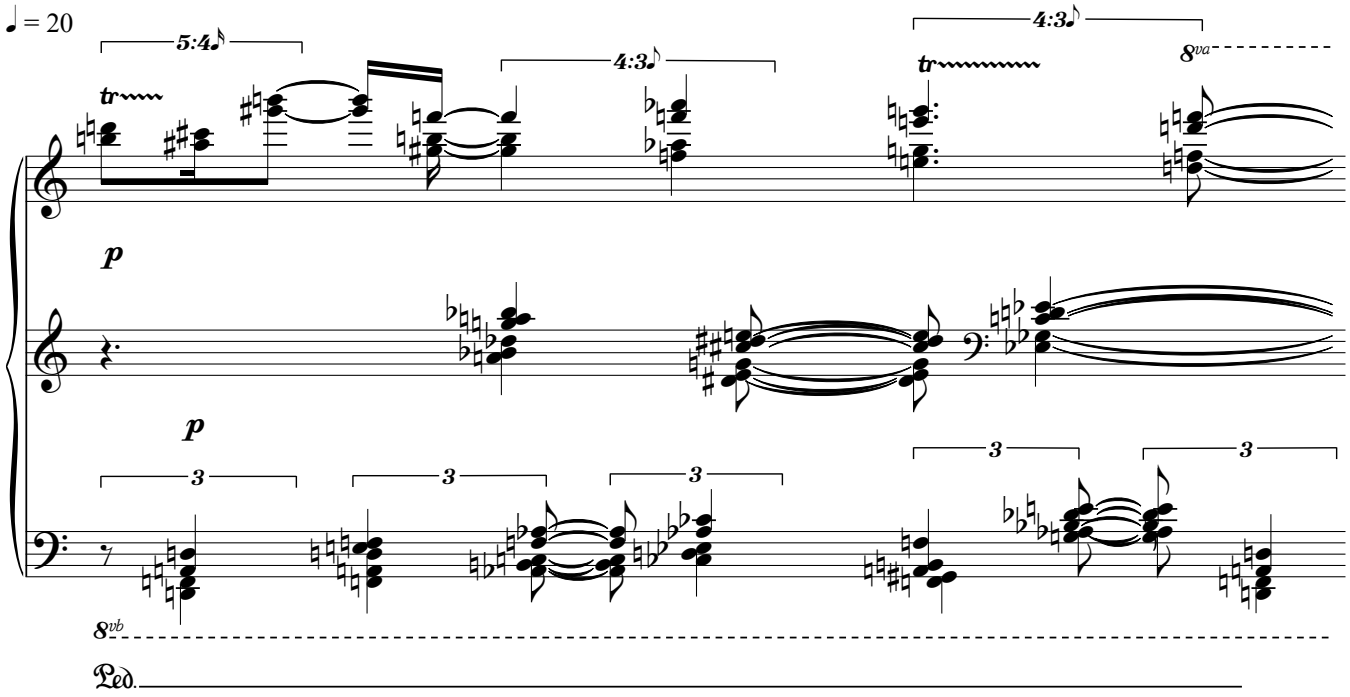

(8)

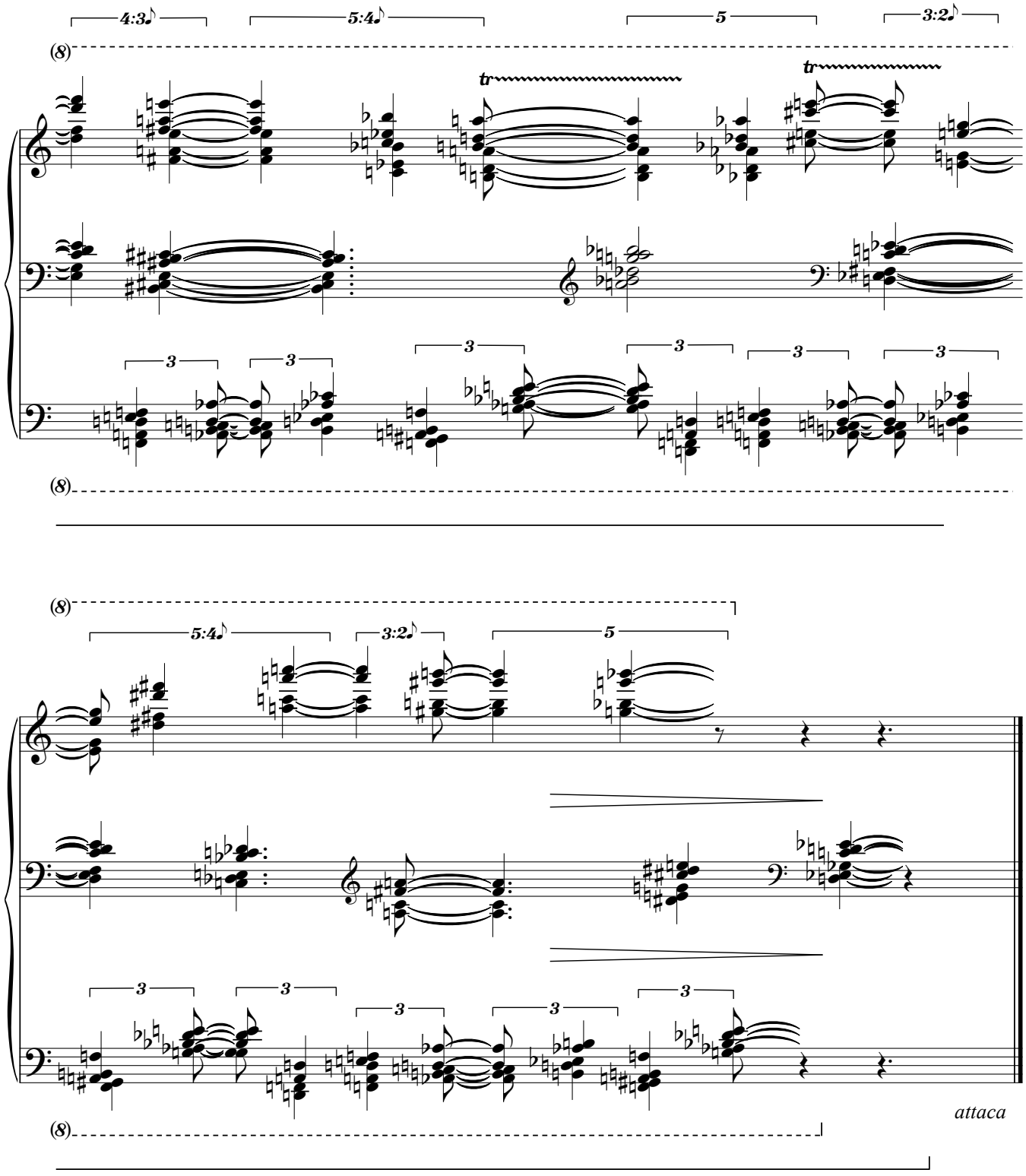

(8)
8vb
savage, tutta forza
8vb
savage, tutta forza
3

VII Simply Add Boiling Water

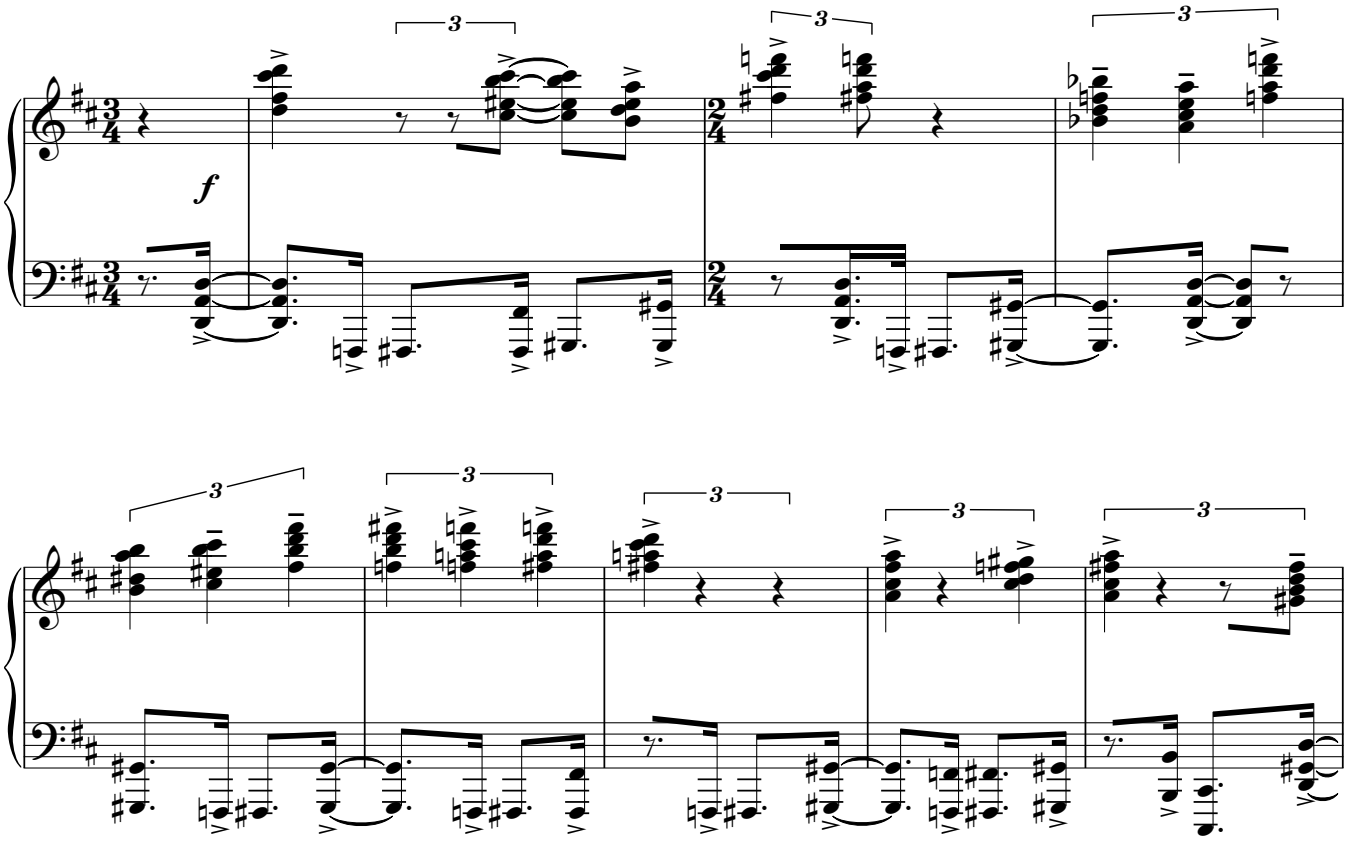
Treat this almost as graphic notation.
The notated rhythms are meant to
show that the chords shouldn't be
played with anything like a steady pulse.
See the introduction to the score for
more on how to play this.

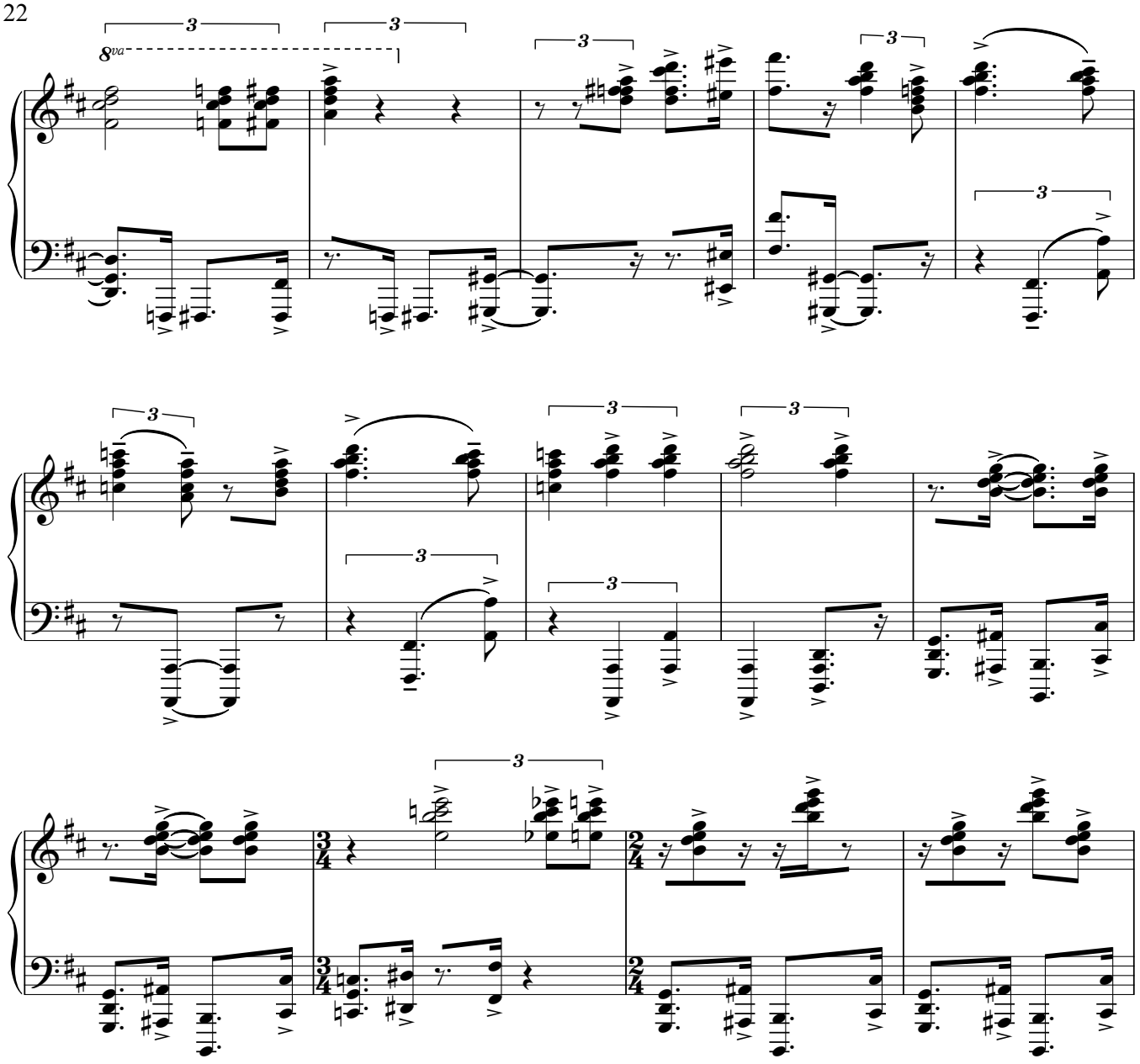
Slowly, freely, but with steady motion




4:3
5:4
5
3:2
(8)
tr
tr
3
3
3
3
3
3
(8)
(8)
5:4
3:2
5
3
3
3
3
3
attaca
(8)

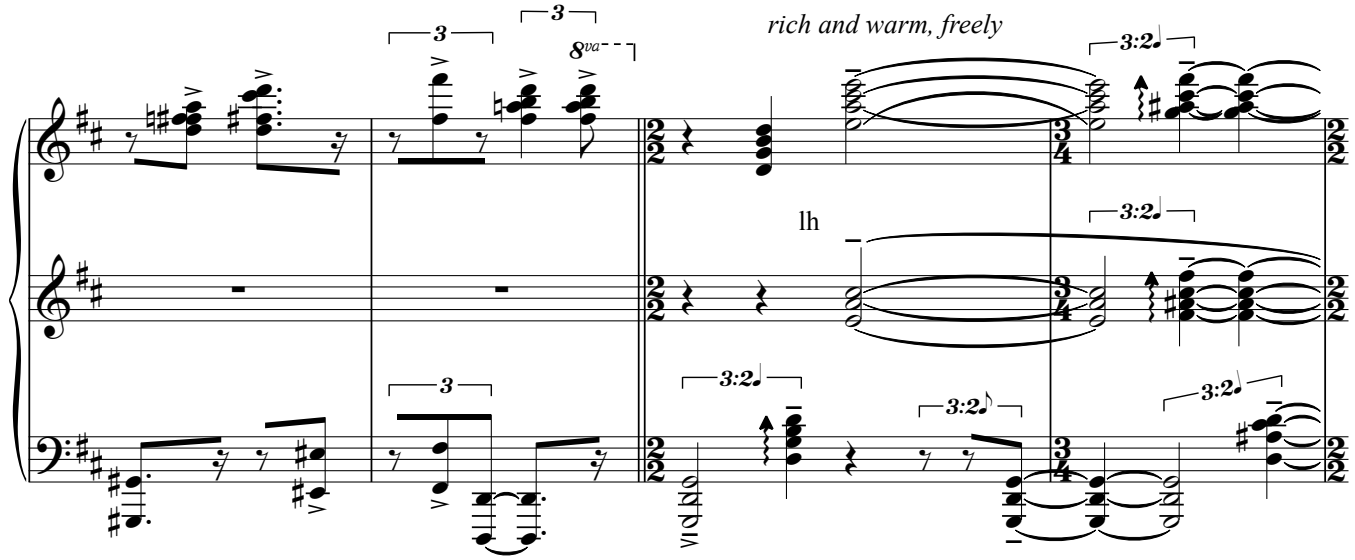
VIII Crowd at Coney Island





At the same tempo, but more relaxed

rich and warm, freely



more freely, hold the
tempo back a bit

8va

8va

Ped.

(8)

poco rit.

freely

rh

as before

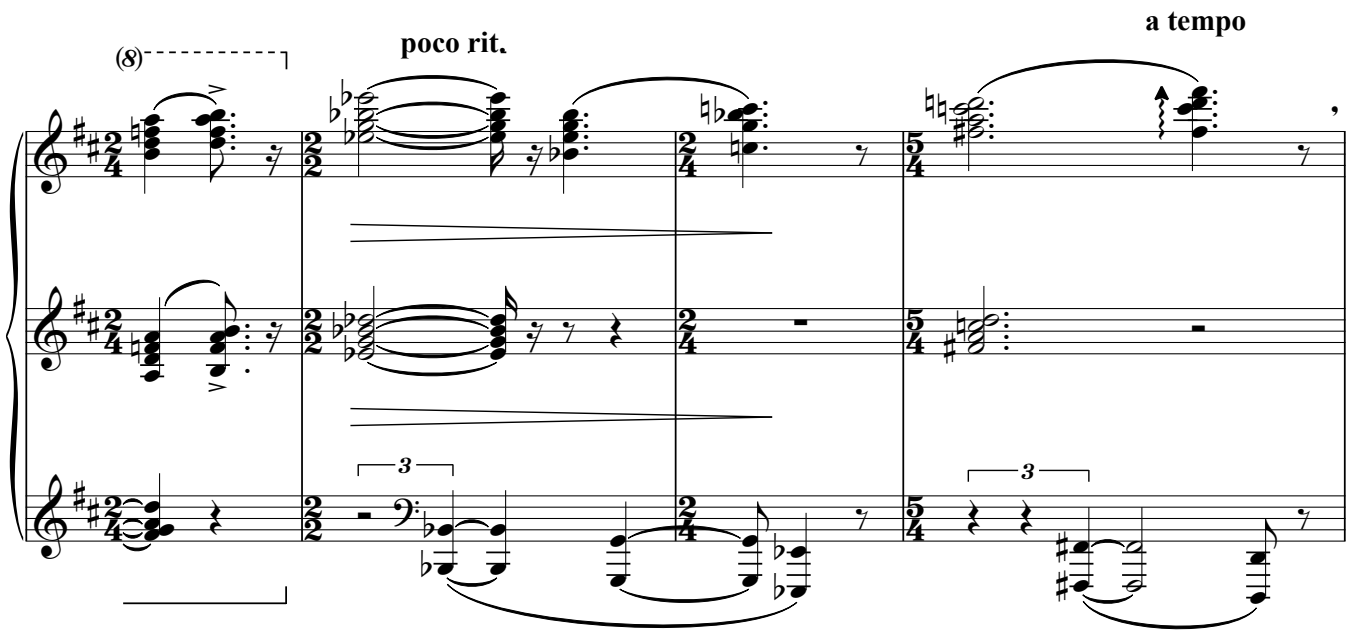
poco rit.

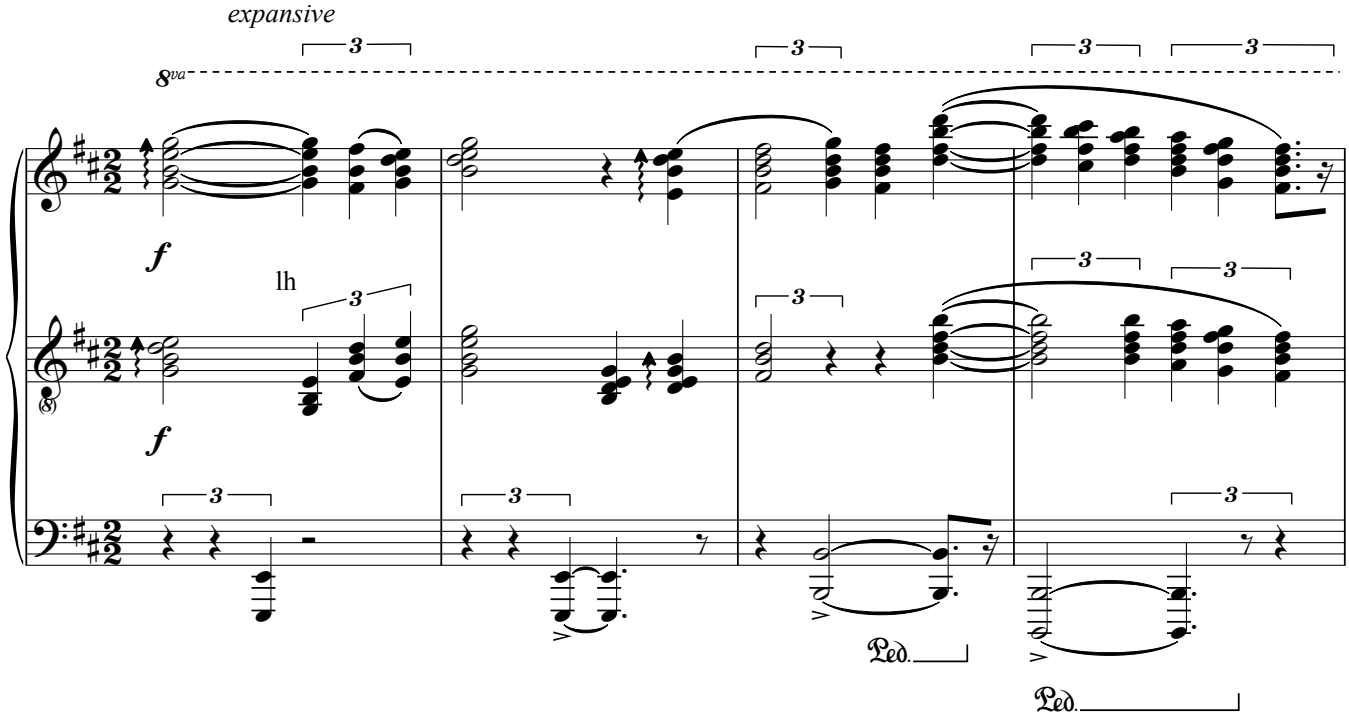
as before

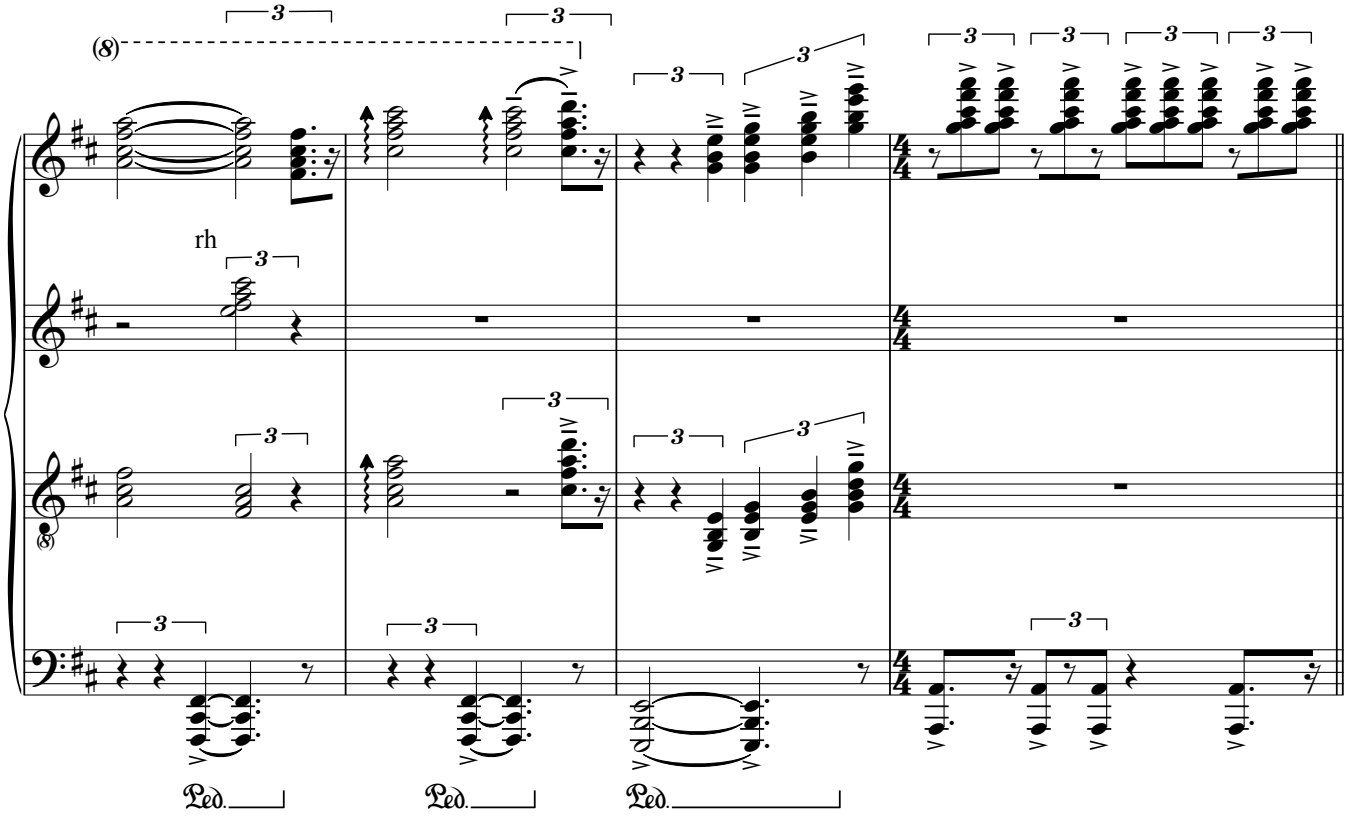
lh

8va

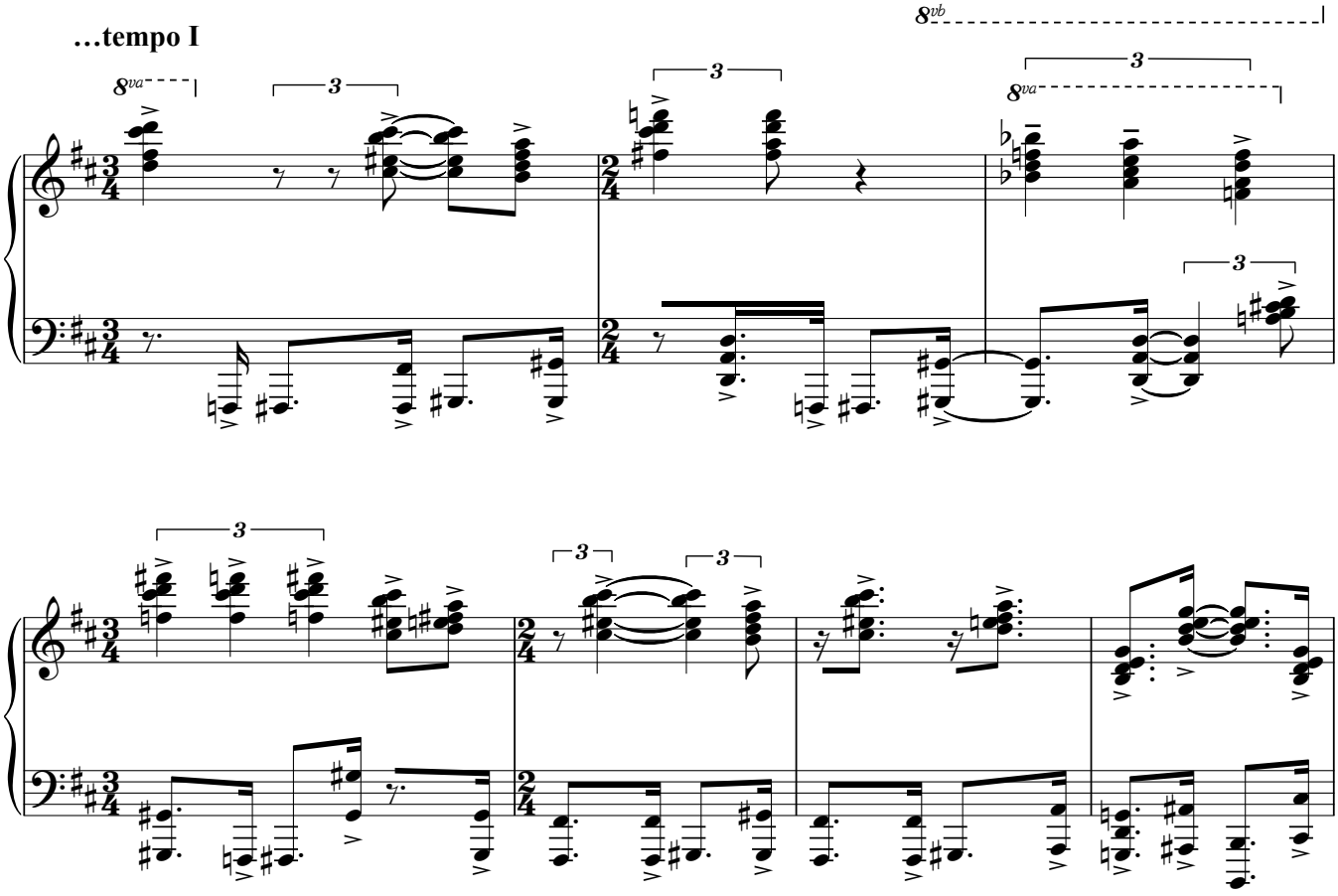
Ped.


poco rit.
a tempo

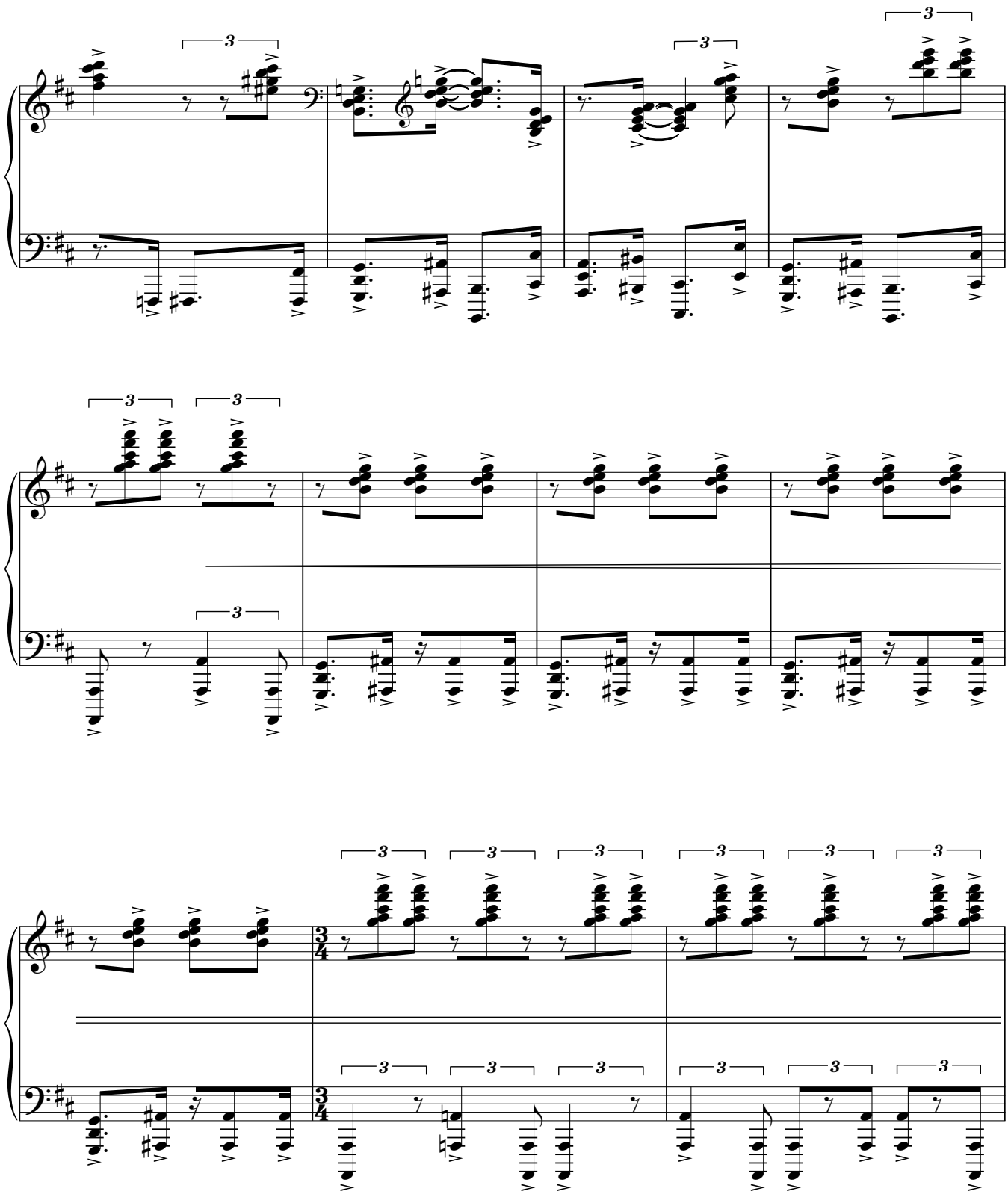

expansive
8va
f
lh
f
Ped.
Ped.

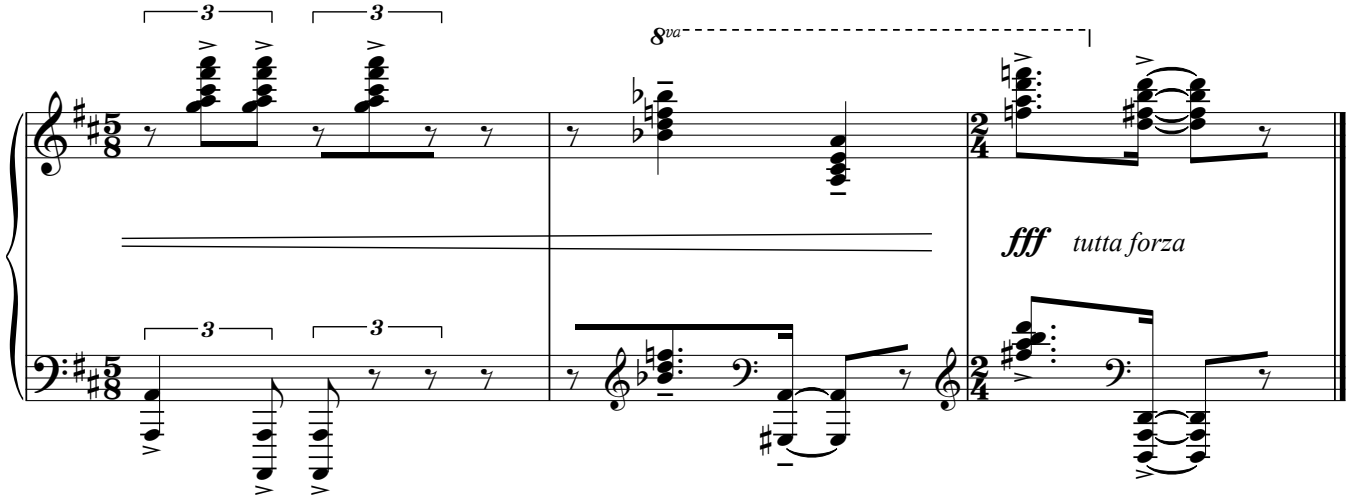


…tempo I



8va
3
3
3
3
3
3





10/21 everything
revised, not quite final