Sweeney Out West:

Four Vacation Mishaps for piano

by Kyle Gann

1987-89

Sweeney Out West: Vacation Mishaps for piano

1. Straddled in the Sun
2. Questionable Company (The Transformation Tango)
3. The Ocotillo's Message
4. Satori Canyon

Sweeney Out West: Vacation Mishaps for piano is a torso of a peculiar programmatic tone poem that occupied me in the late 1980s: a parodic set of pieces depicting the western sight-seeing USA vacation of an Everyman (Sweeney). Thirteen movements were planned and begun; no more than six were completed, and of those, only four seem worth keeping today. Two were performed in 1989. The various movements quoted each others' main motives in an orgy of narrative cross-reference. There was a seminal pitch set [0256] (C-D-F-Gb), and an 11-tone row. The first piece, with its desert surroundings, took its title from T.S. Eliot's Sweeney poems:

> The lengthened shadow of a man
> Is history, said Emerson,
> Who had not seen the silhouette
> Of Sweeney straddled in the sun.

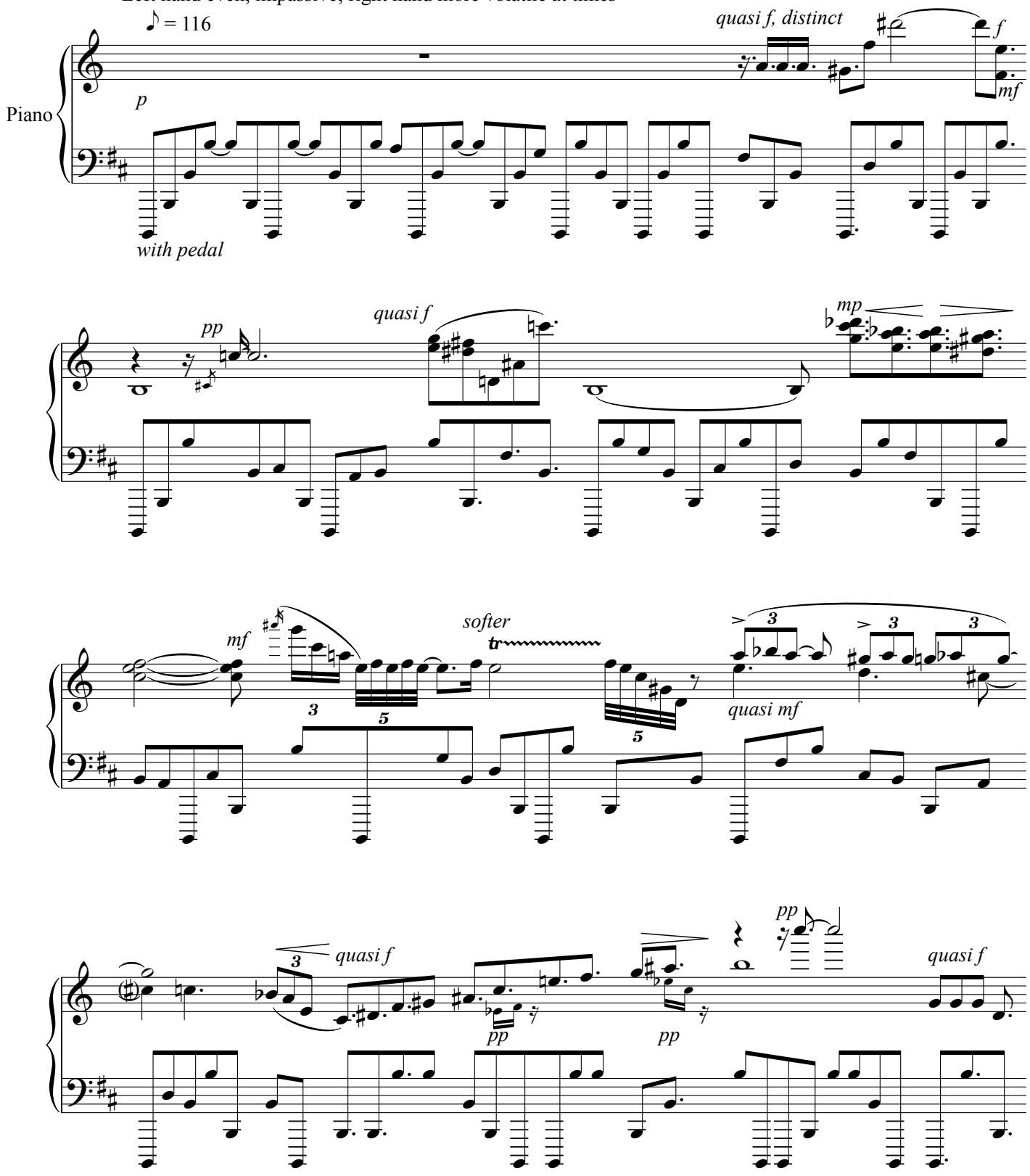
"The Ocotillo's Message" suggested zen mysticism; the tango "Questionable Company," a crisis brought on by public indiscretion; "Satori Canyon," enlightenment. There were others. My new and very public job at the *Village Voice* was an immense distraction. I was obsessively studying just intonation. The atonality-flirting pitch language didn't really suit me, the satirical agenda was odd, and the piece remains a detour and an outlier on the path from *Long Night* to *The Planets*. Still, "Straddled in the Sun," with its links to the Ives First Sonata, is the first instance of a texture-type that occurs in later works of mine (*Implausible Sketches*, for instance), and I retain some fondness for the other movements. Internally, it was evident my music was already headed in another direction. I couldn't possibly finish the piece now. Perhaps it is folly to make the surviving remnants public. Sweeney's advice would not have been reliable in the matter.

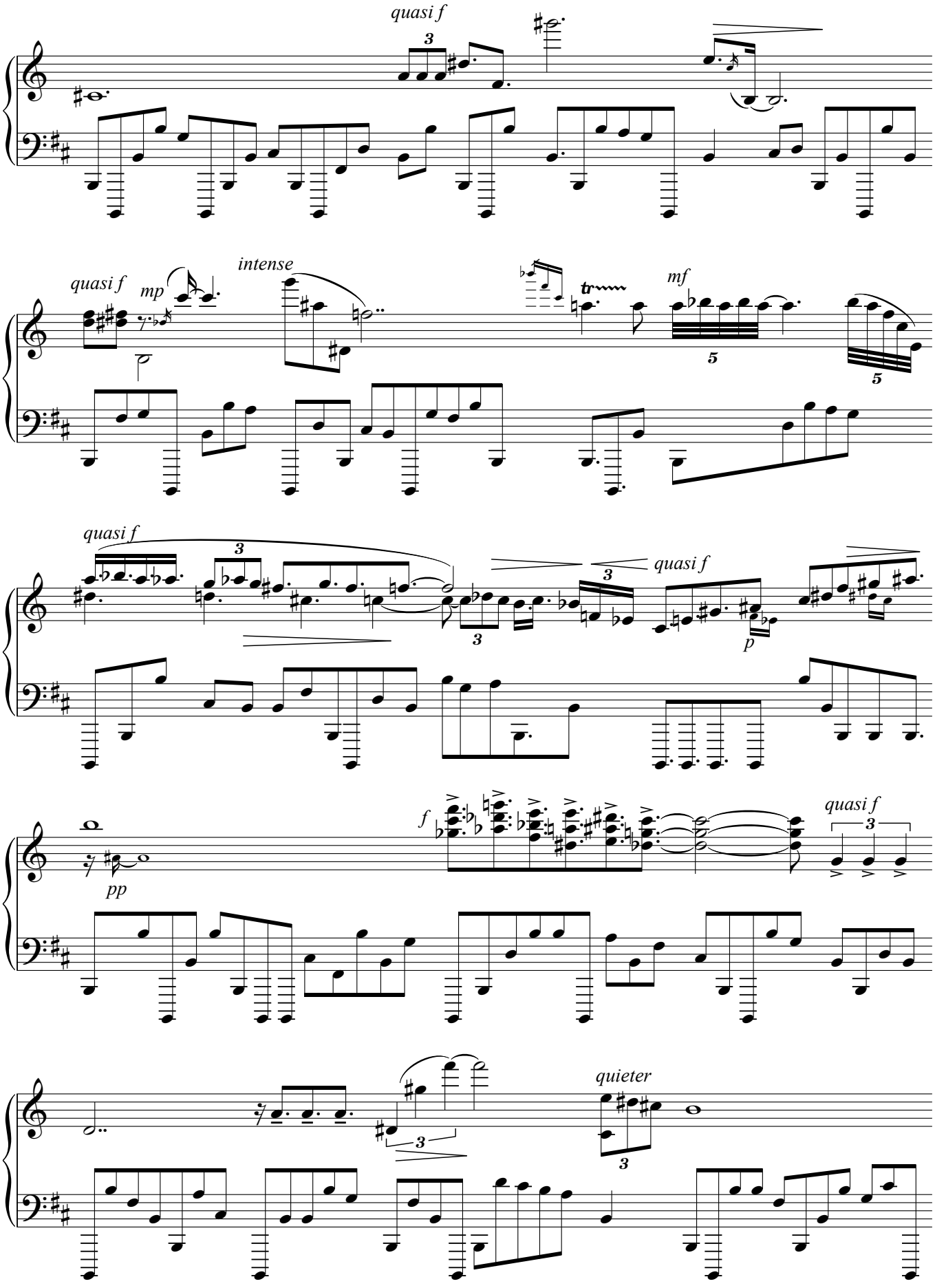
- Kyle Gann

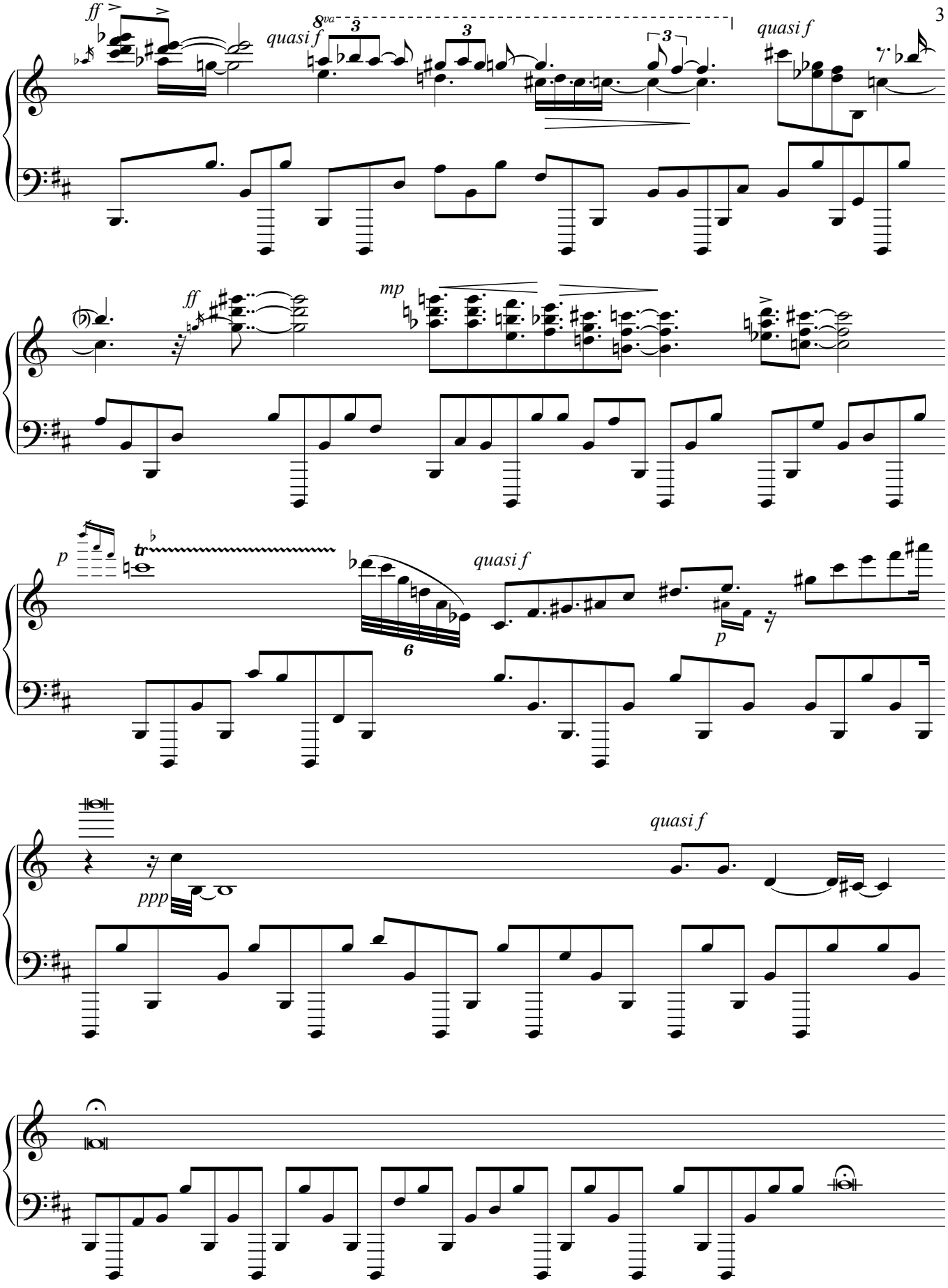
Straddled in the Sun

Kyle Gann
1987

Left hand even, impassive; right hand more volatile at times



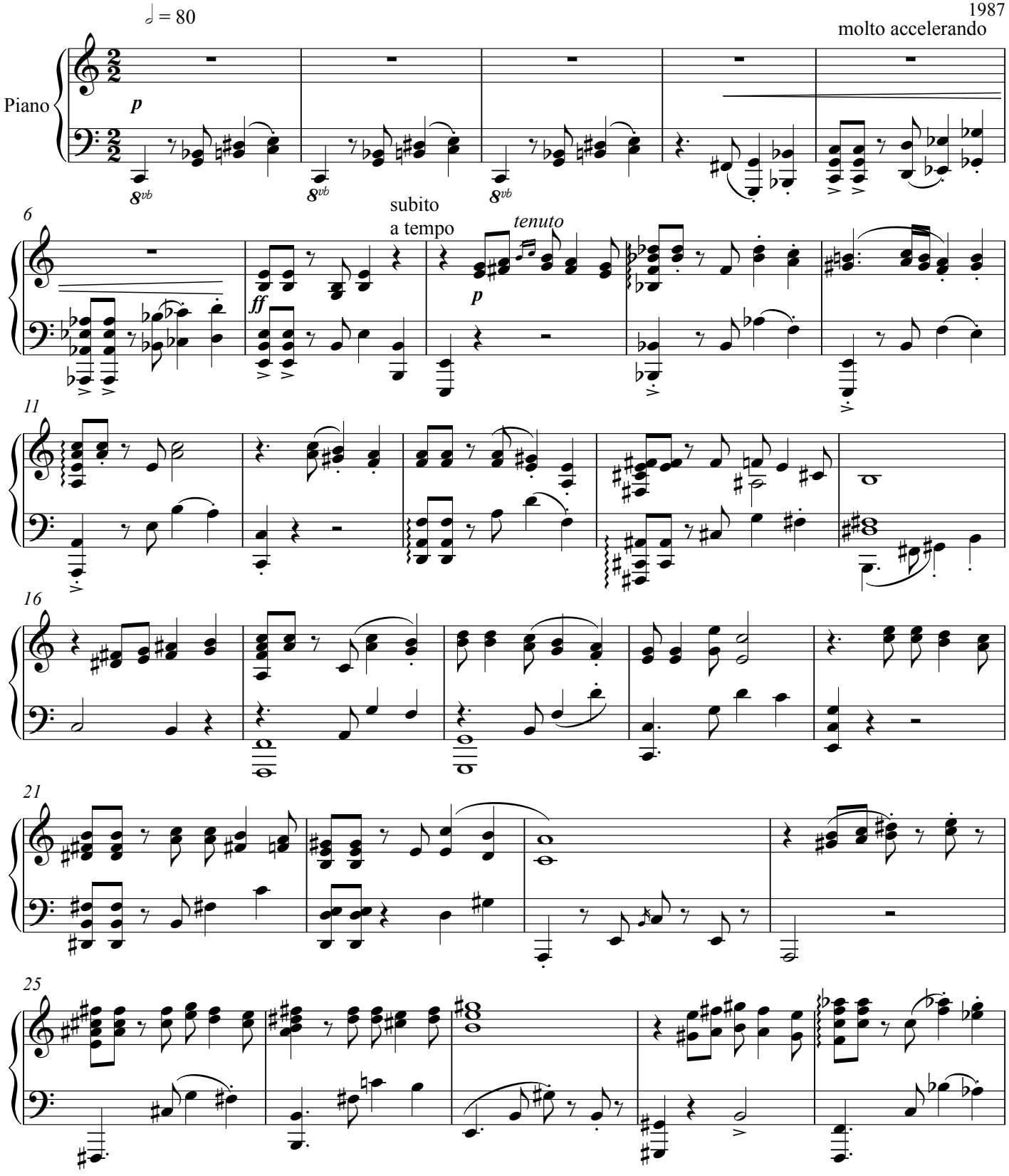

quasi f
intense
quasi f
mp
mf
quasi f
quasi f
p
f
pp
quasi f
quieter

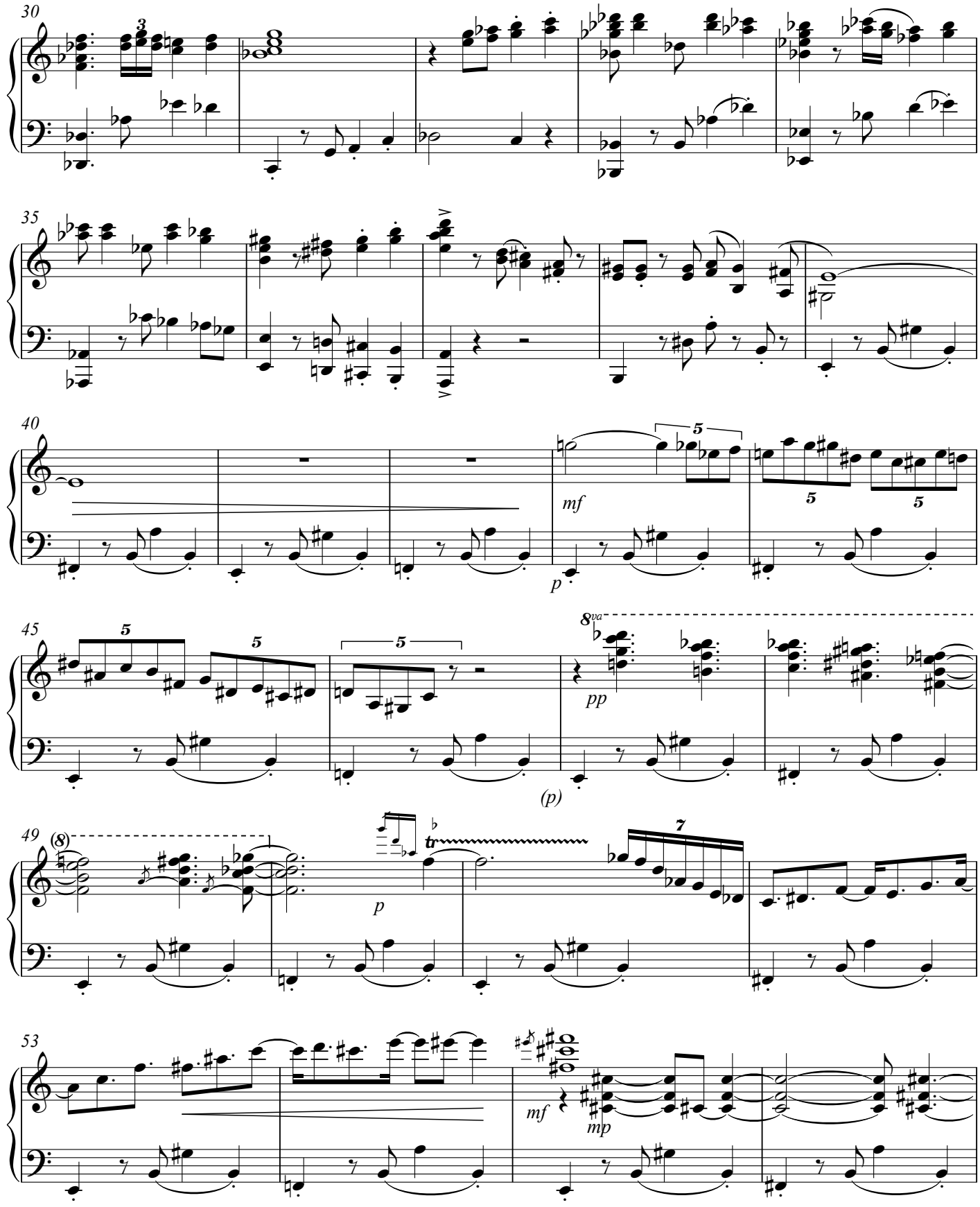

ff
quasi f
8va
quasi f
ff
mp
p
quasi f
p
quasi f
ppp

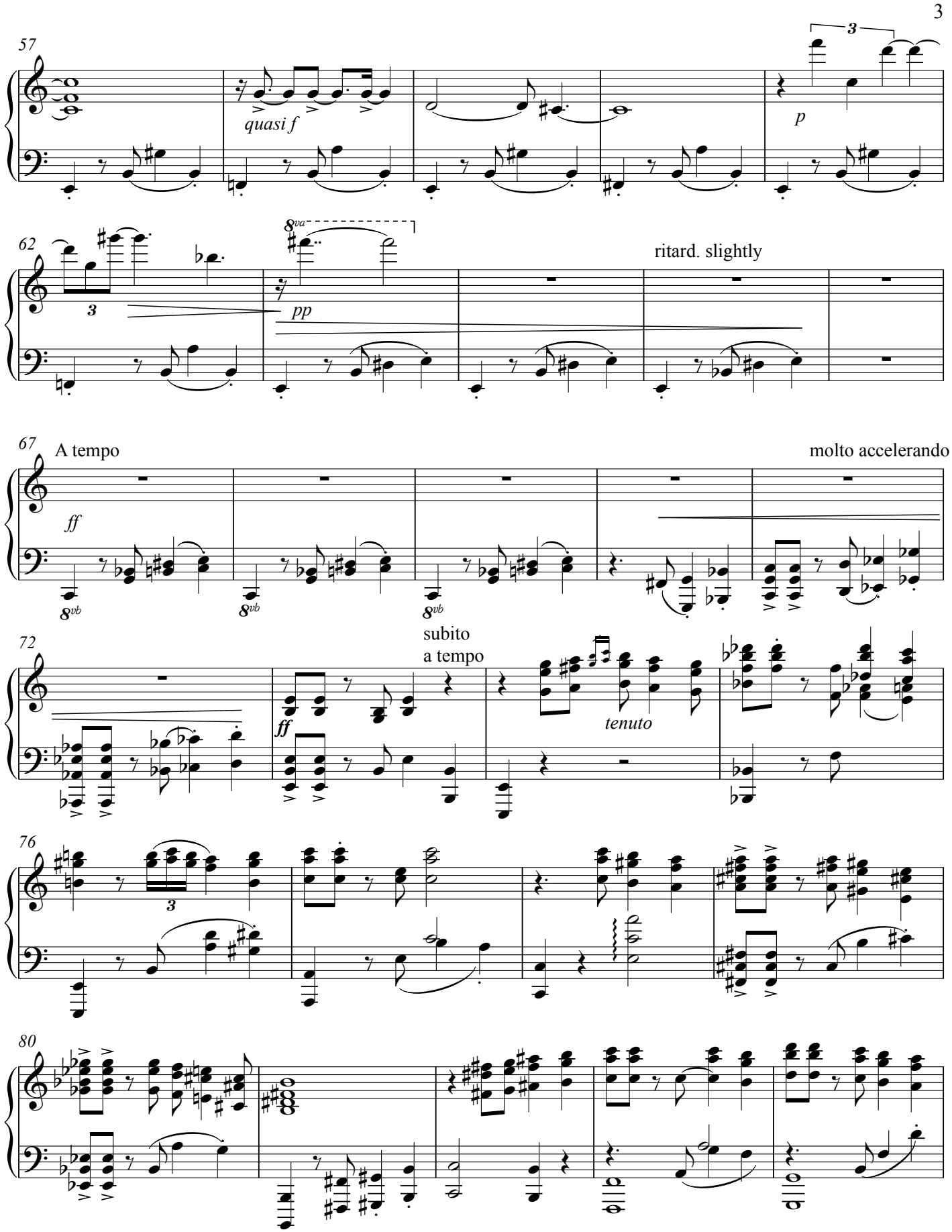
Questionable Company
(The Transformation Tango)

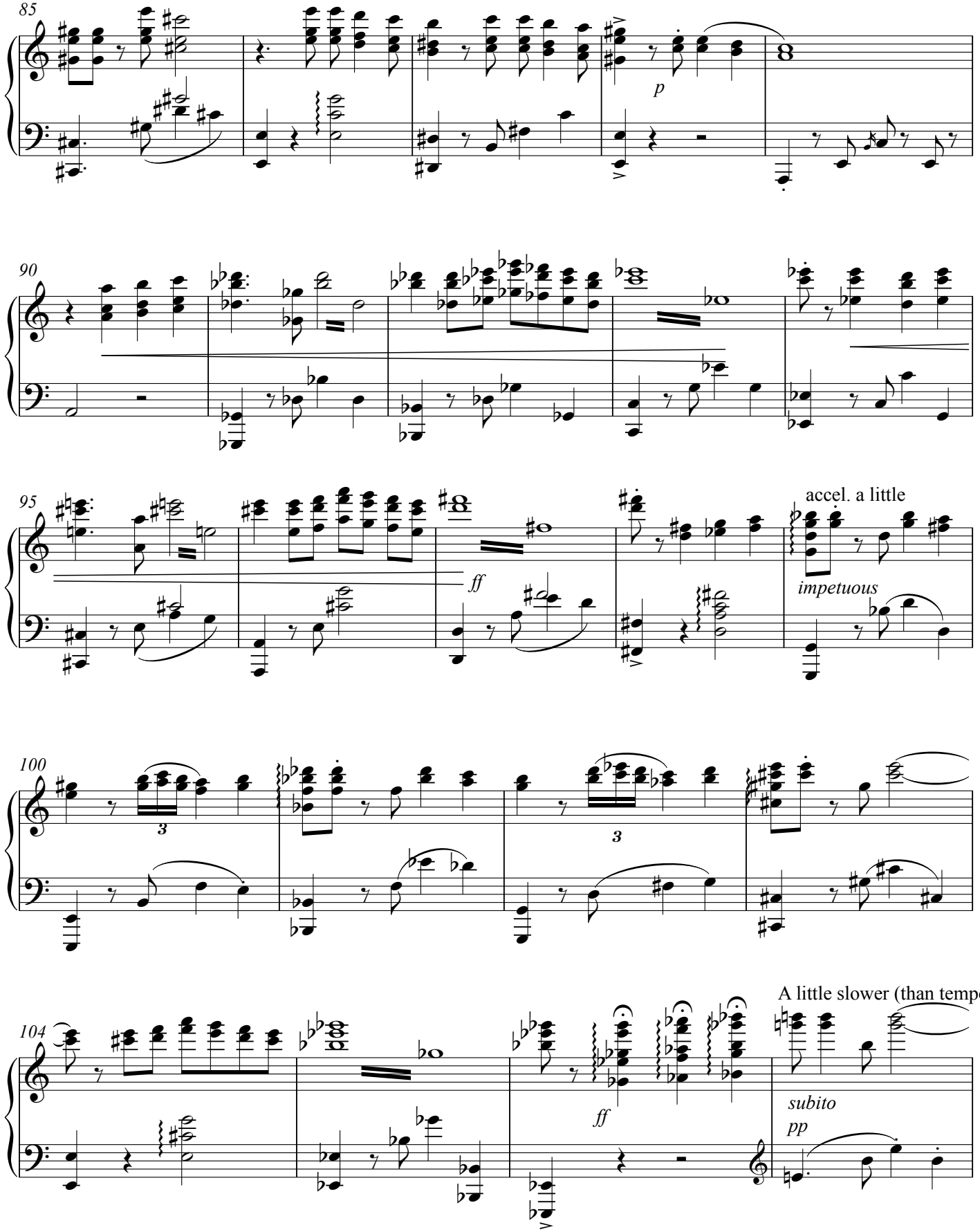
Kyle Gann
1987

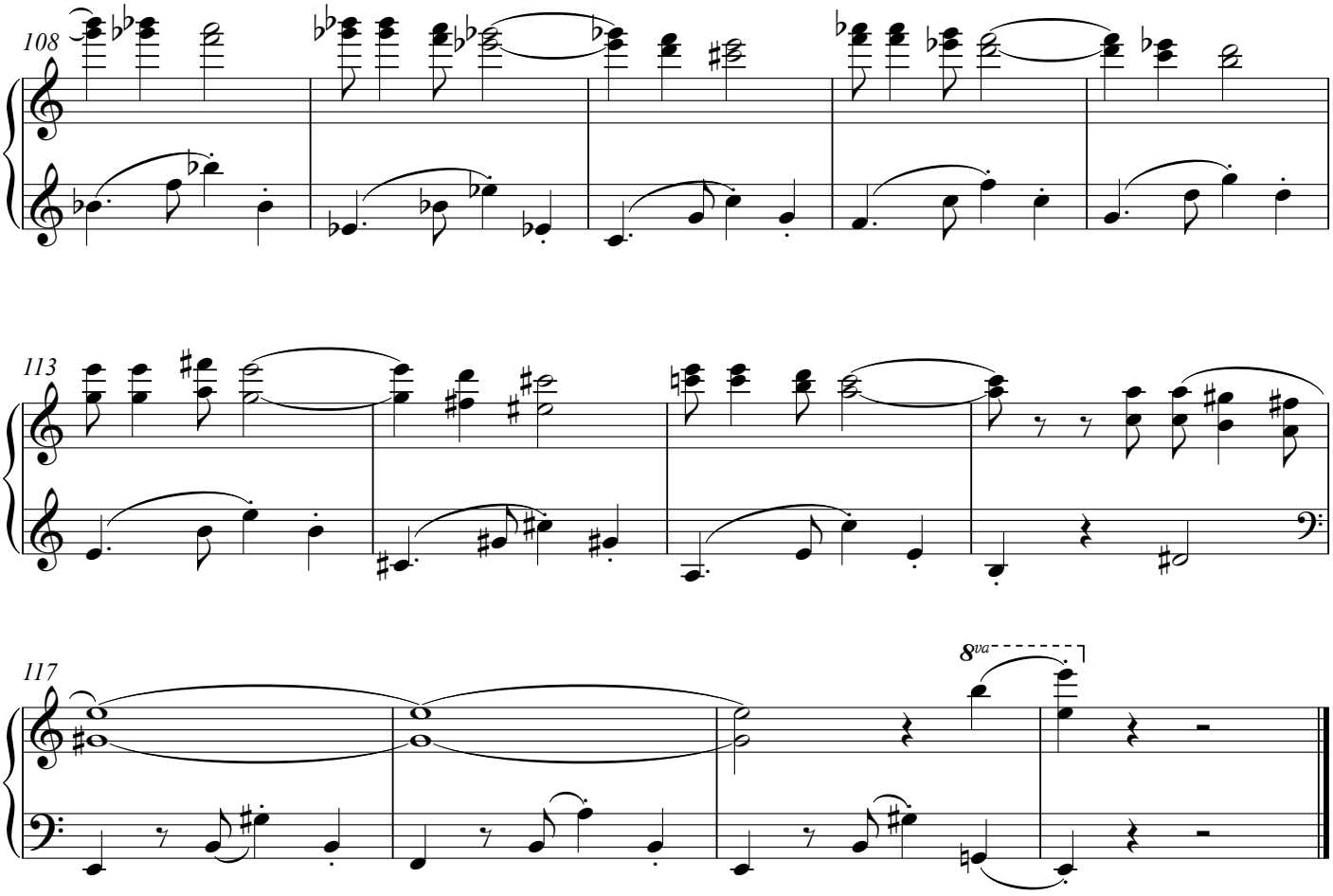
molto accelerando




30
35
40
mf
p
45
8va
pp
(p)
49
(8)
p
7
53
mf
mp

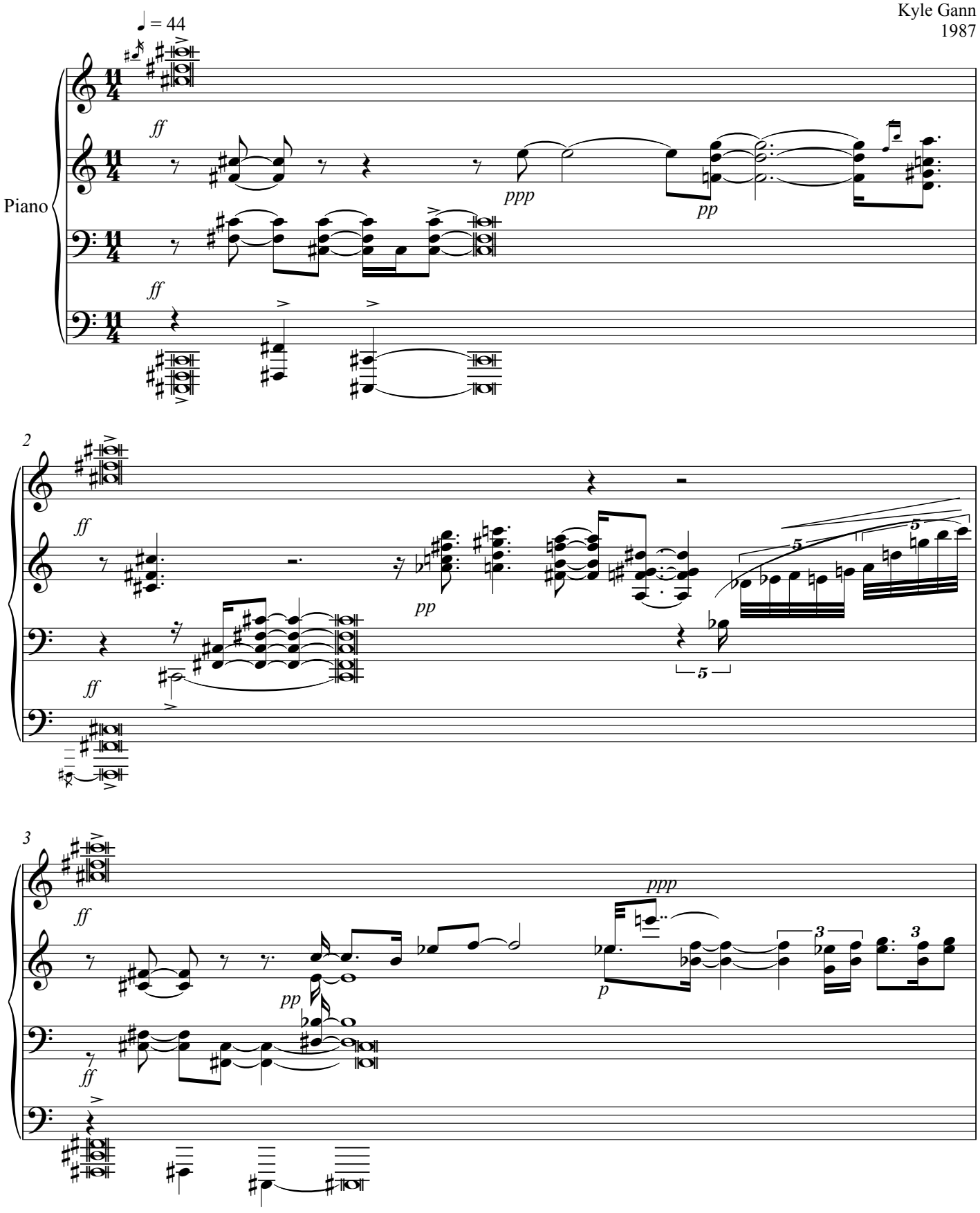

57
quasi f
p
62
8va
pp
ritard. slightly
67
A tempo
molto accelerando
ff
8vb
72
subito
a tempo
ff
tenuto
76
80

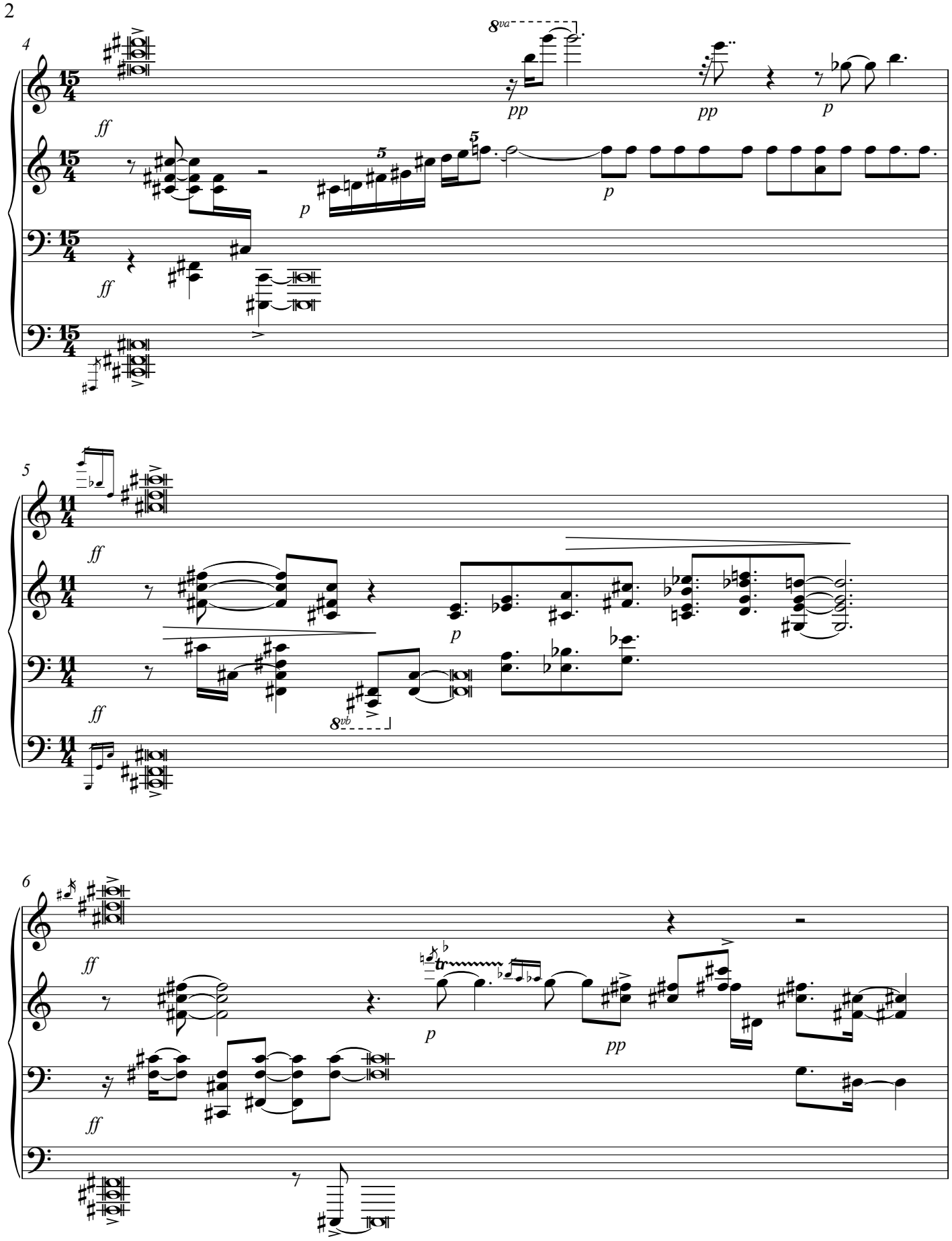

85
p
90
95
ff
accel. a little
impetuous
100
3
3
104
A little slower (than tempo I)
ff
subito
pp

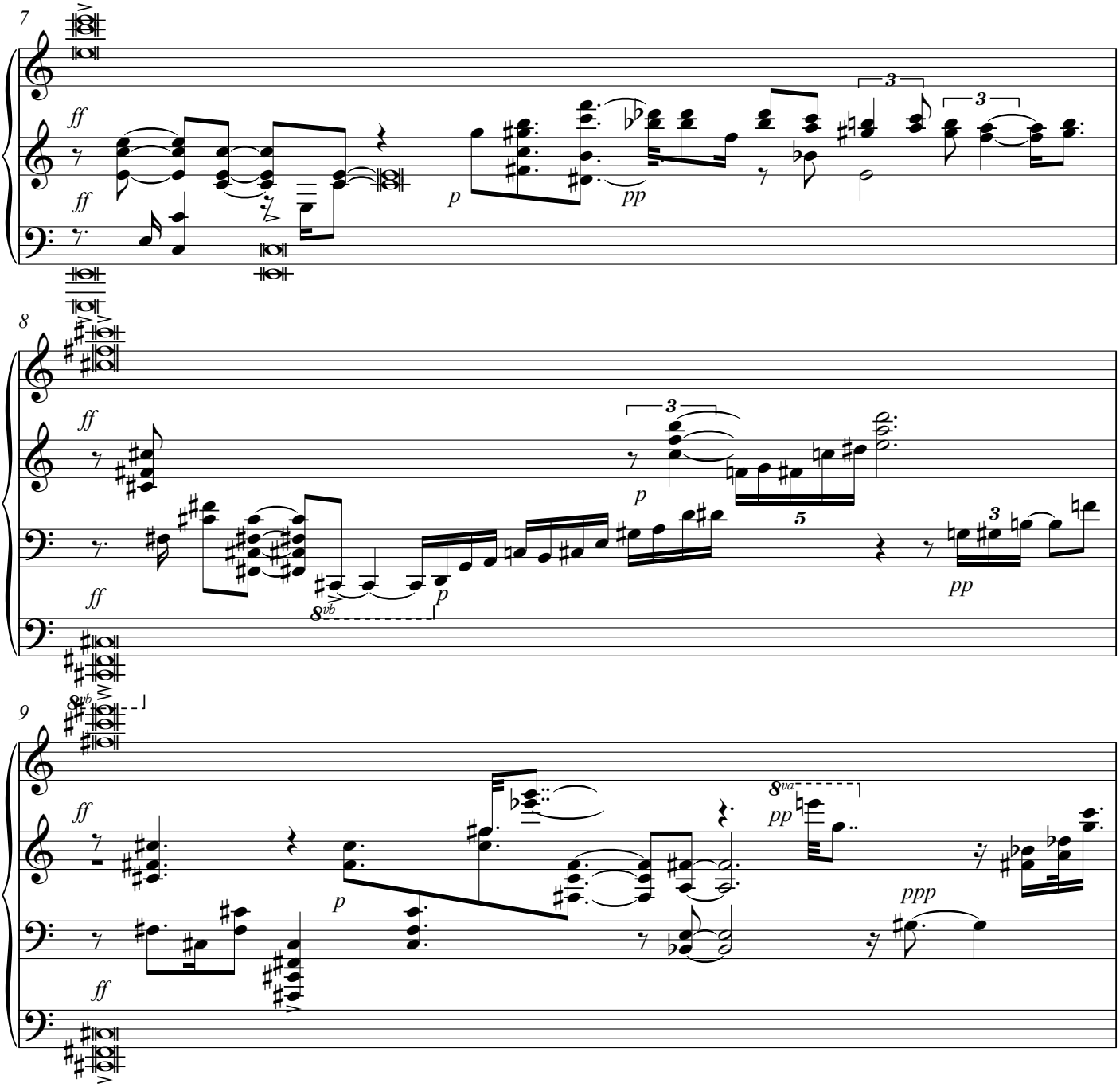

108
113
117
8va

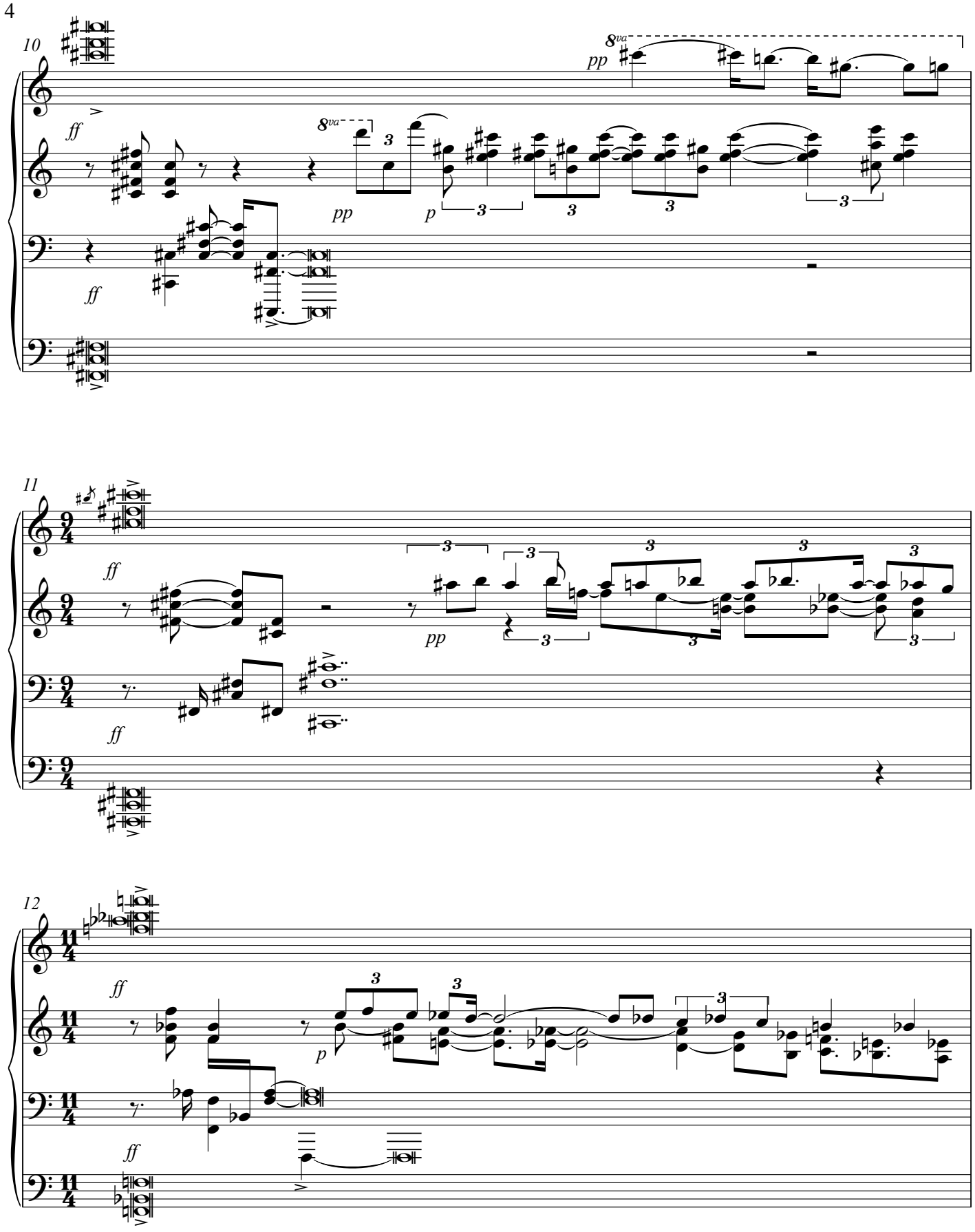
Satori Canyon

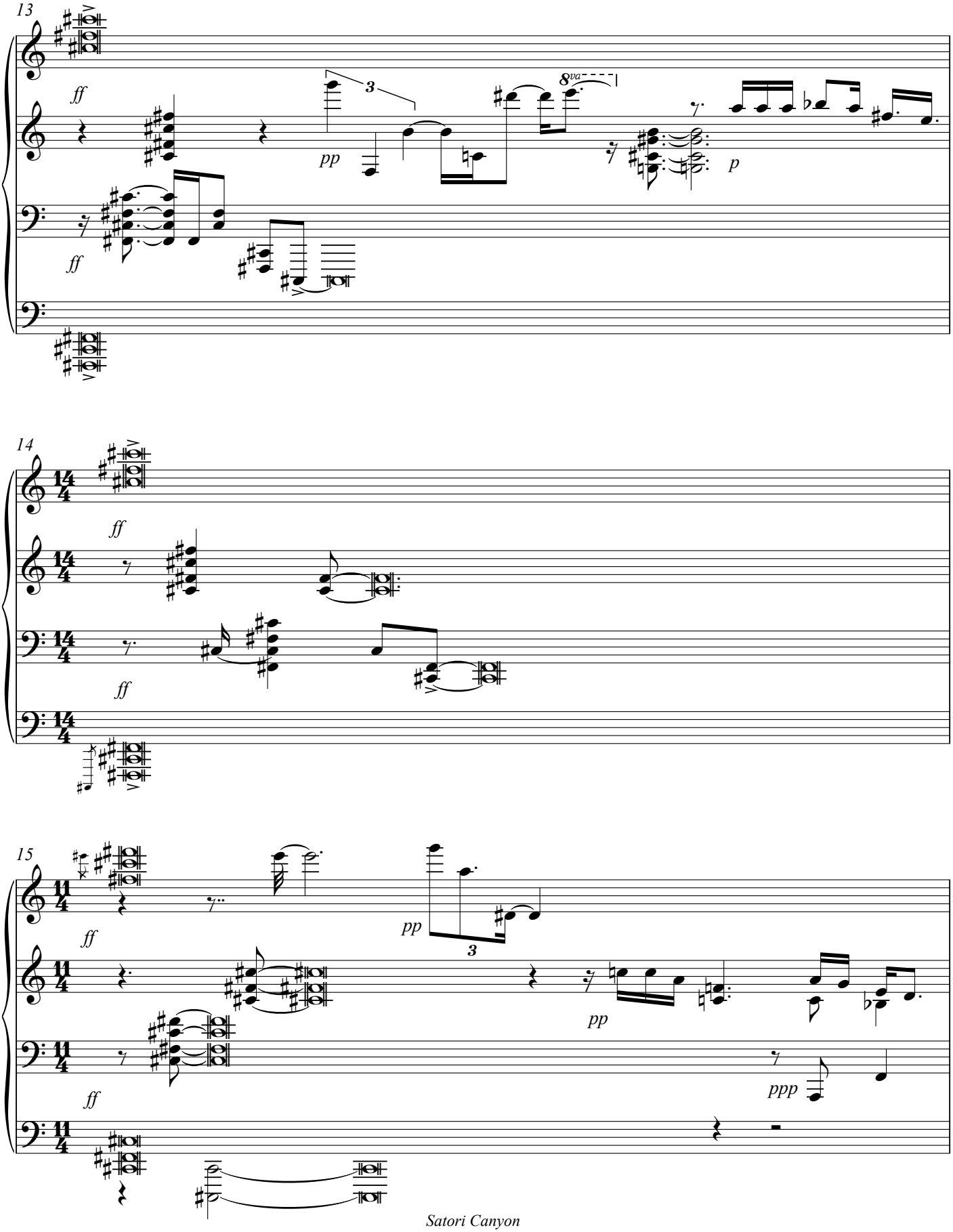
Kyle Gann
1987

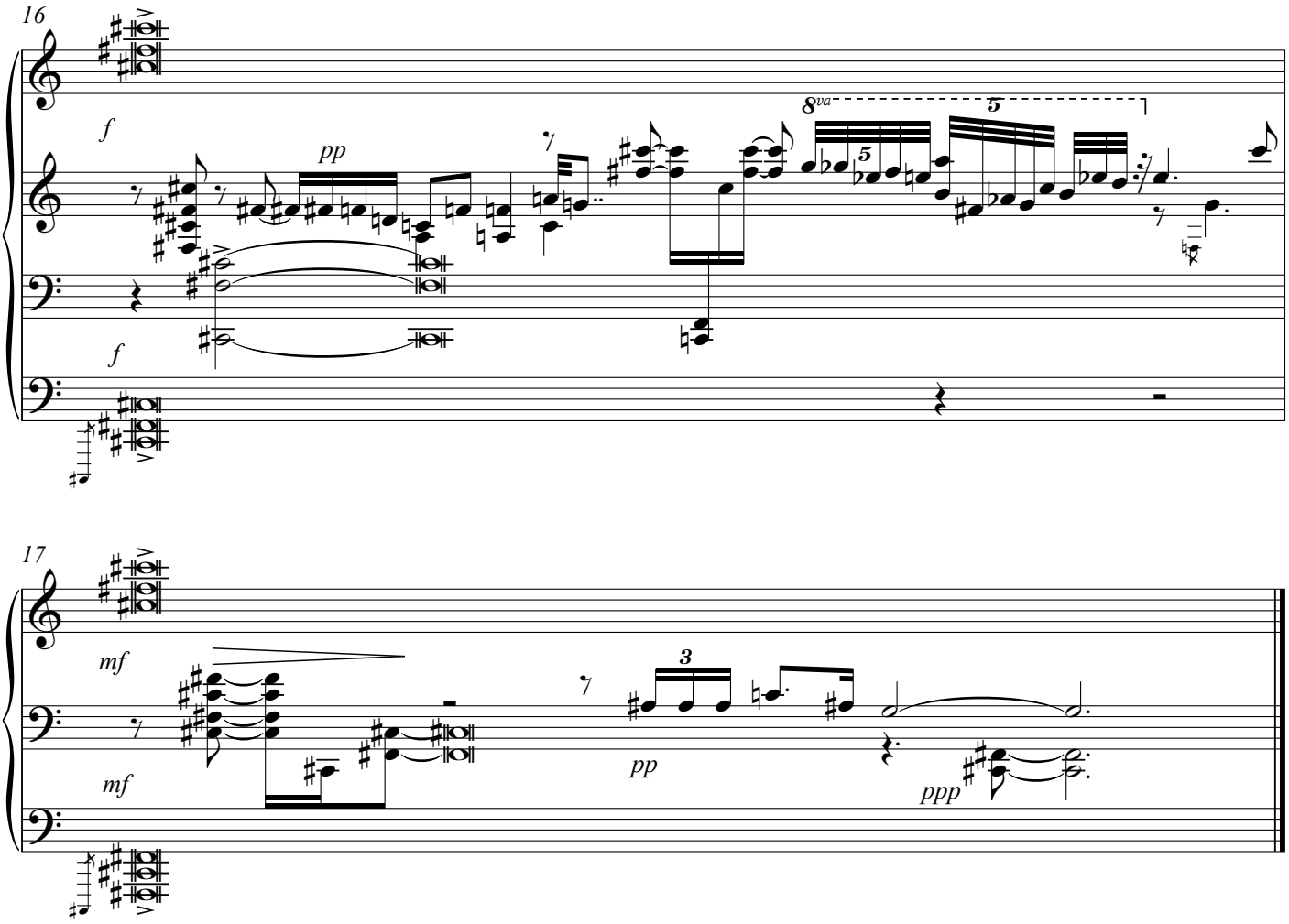



4
8va
ff
pp
pp
p
p
p
ff
5
ff
p
ff
8vb
6
ff
tr
p
pp
ff


7
ff
ff
p
pp
3
3
8
ff
ff
3
p
5
p
8vb
pp
3
9
8vb
ff
ff
p
8va
pp
ppp


10
ff
8va
pp
p
11
12


13
ff
pp
8va
p
ff
14
ff
ff
15
ff
pp
pp
ff
ppp


16
f
pp
8va
5
f
17
mf
3
pp
mf
ppp