Nursery Tunes for
Weird Children

for three retuned pianos

by Kyle Gann
2012/15

Nursery Tunes for Weird Children (2012/15)

1. Down to the End of the Town
2. Up the Hill and Up Again
3. Tiger, Tiger, Turning Right
4. The Cracked Bells at St. Swithun's
5. Jack Ate a Blackbird

Nursery Tunes for Weird Children is a group of simple tuning studies I wrote on the scale I was thinking about using for a much larger work, which eventually became *Hyperchromatica* (2015-17). The tuning employs 33 harmonics of Eb. It comprises eight harmonics series', each up to the 15th harmonic, based respectively on the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 11th, 13th, and 15th harmonics. The notation given here is the just-intonation pitch notation of my teacher Ben Johnston. Those who need a guide to translating the notation will find one here:

https://www.kylegann.com/BJNotation.html

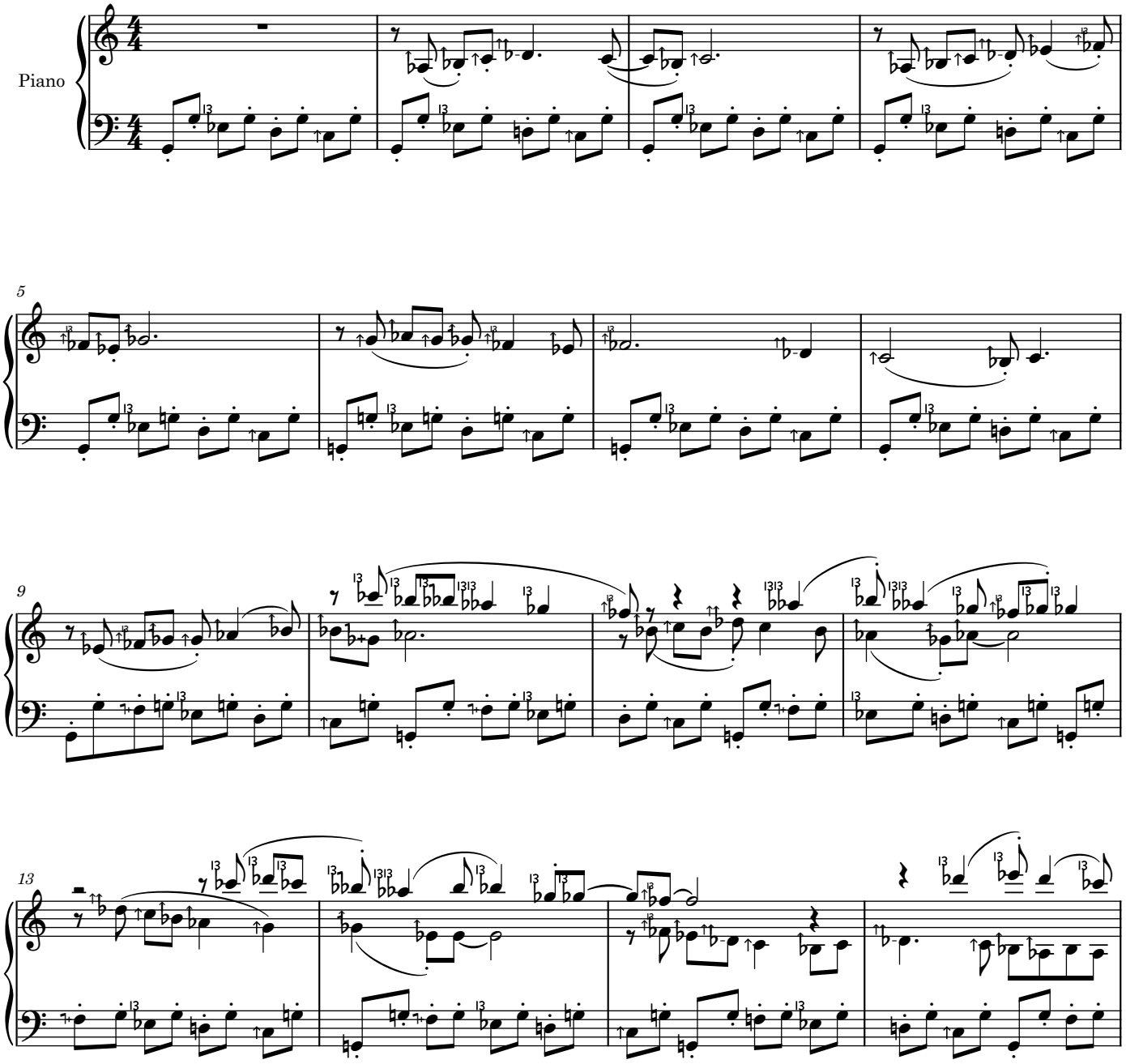
"Down to the End of the Town" takes its title from one of the favorite A.A. Milne poems of my childhood. It is a polytonal study in which melodies on the 11^{th} and 13^{th} harmonics cavort over an ostinato on the 5^{th} harmonic; the techniques here ended up in *Hyperchromatica*'s *Reverse Gravity*. "Up the Hill and Up Again" is a voice-leading exercise among hyperchromatically related chords – "tonality flux" was Harry Partch's term for it. These kinds of chord links ended up in many movements of *Hyperchromatica*, notably *The Rings of Saturn*. "Tiger, Tiger, Turning Right" has its harmonies determined by a hyperchromatic line in mid-register, a device later used in *Dark Forces Signify*. "The Cracked Bells of St. Swithun's" uses upper harmonics (chords with ratios like 7:9:11 and 8:10:13) to achieve bell-like sonorities; having explored them here, I later used them in *Liquid Mechanisms*. And "Jack Ate a Blackbird" is a neoclassic romp among almost-normal harmonies that are actually distantly related, with voice-leading like those later used in *Pavane for a Dead Planet*.

- Kyle Gann

Duration: 10 minutes

Down to the End of the Town

Kyle Gann
2015



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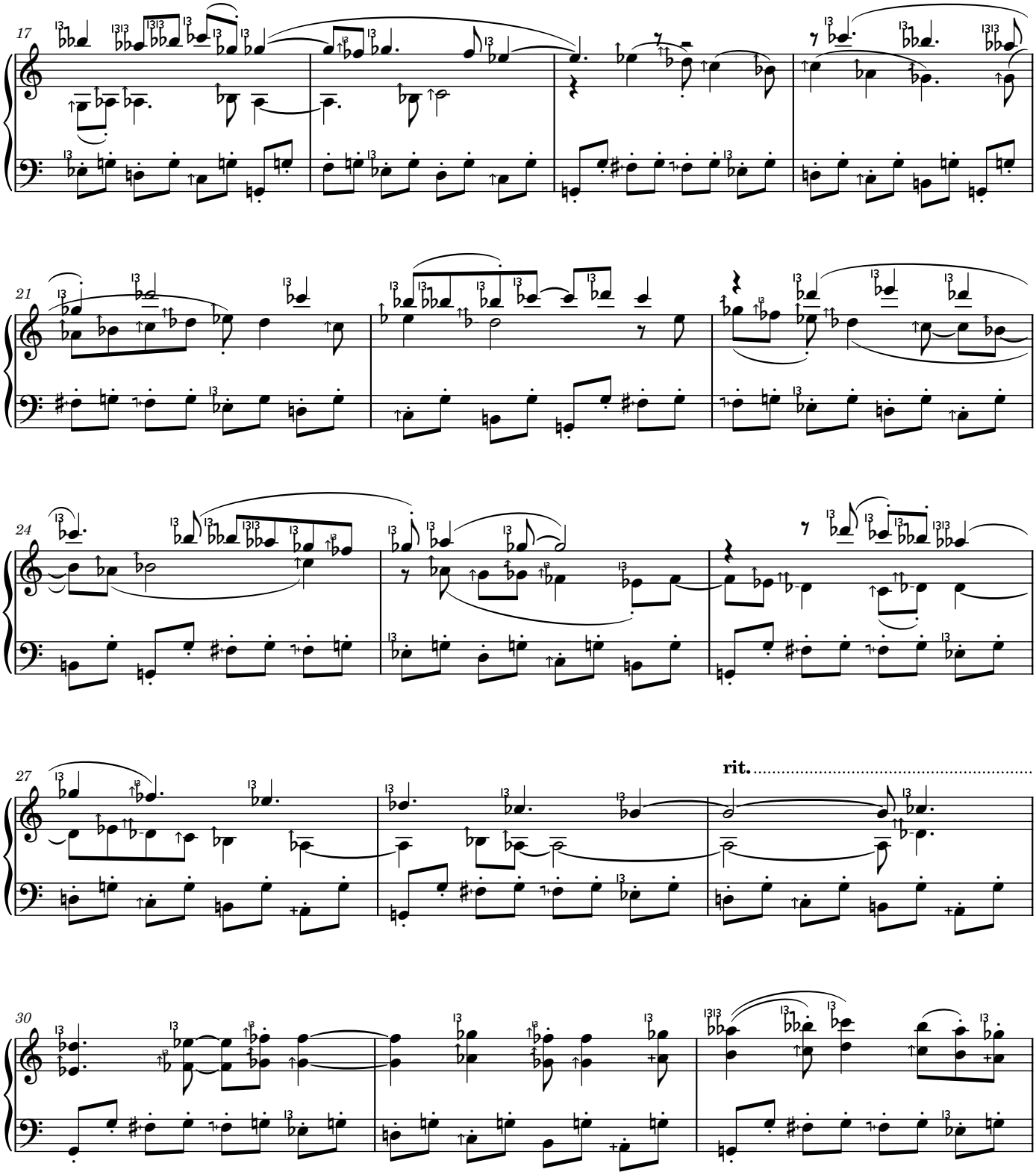
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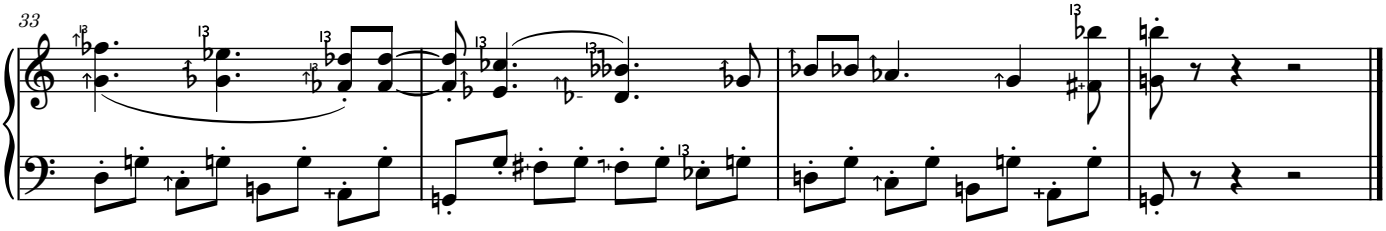
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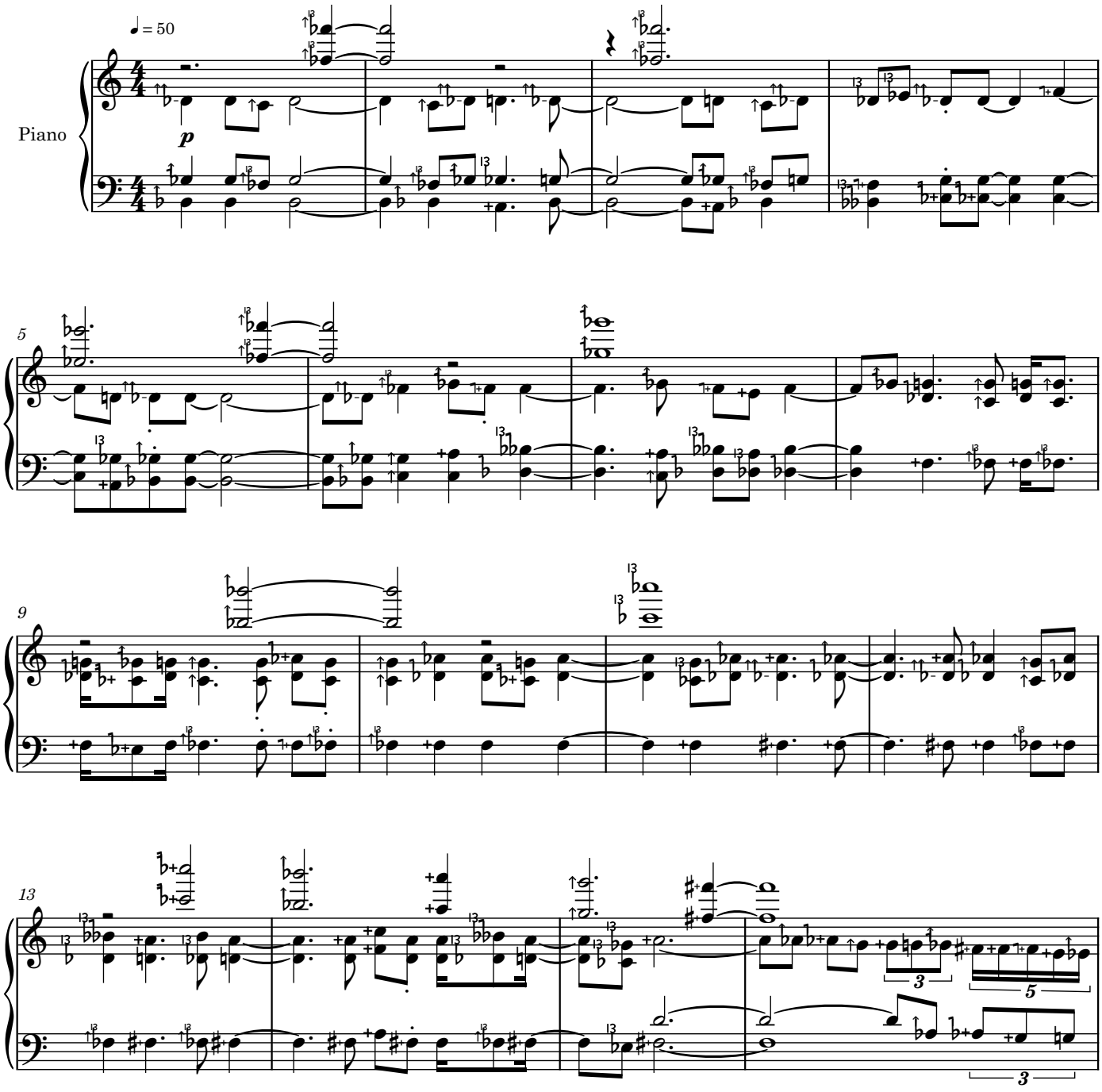
Up the Hill and Up Again

Kyle Gann
2015



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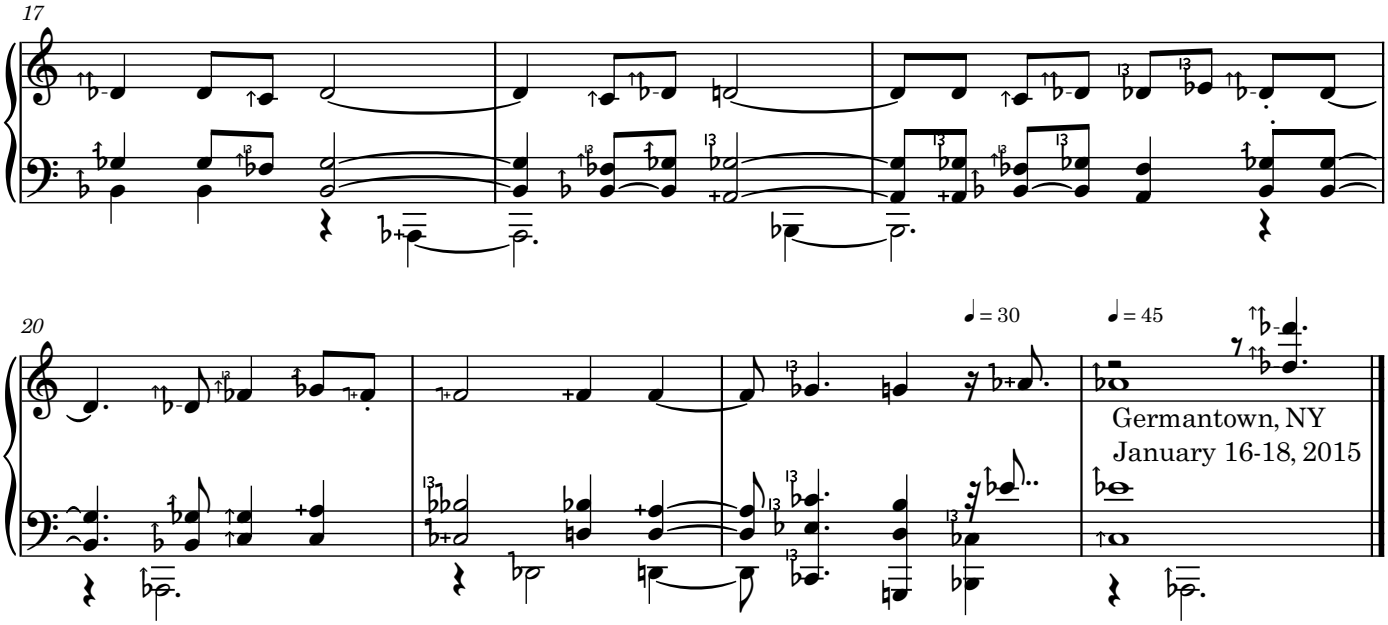
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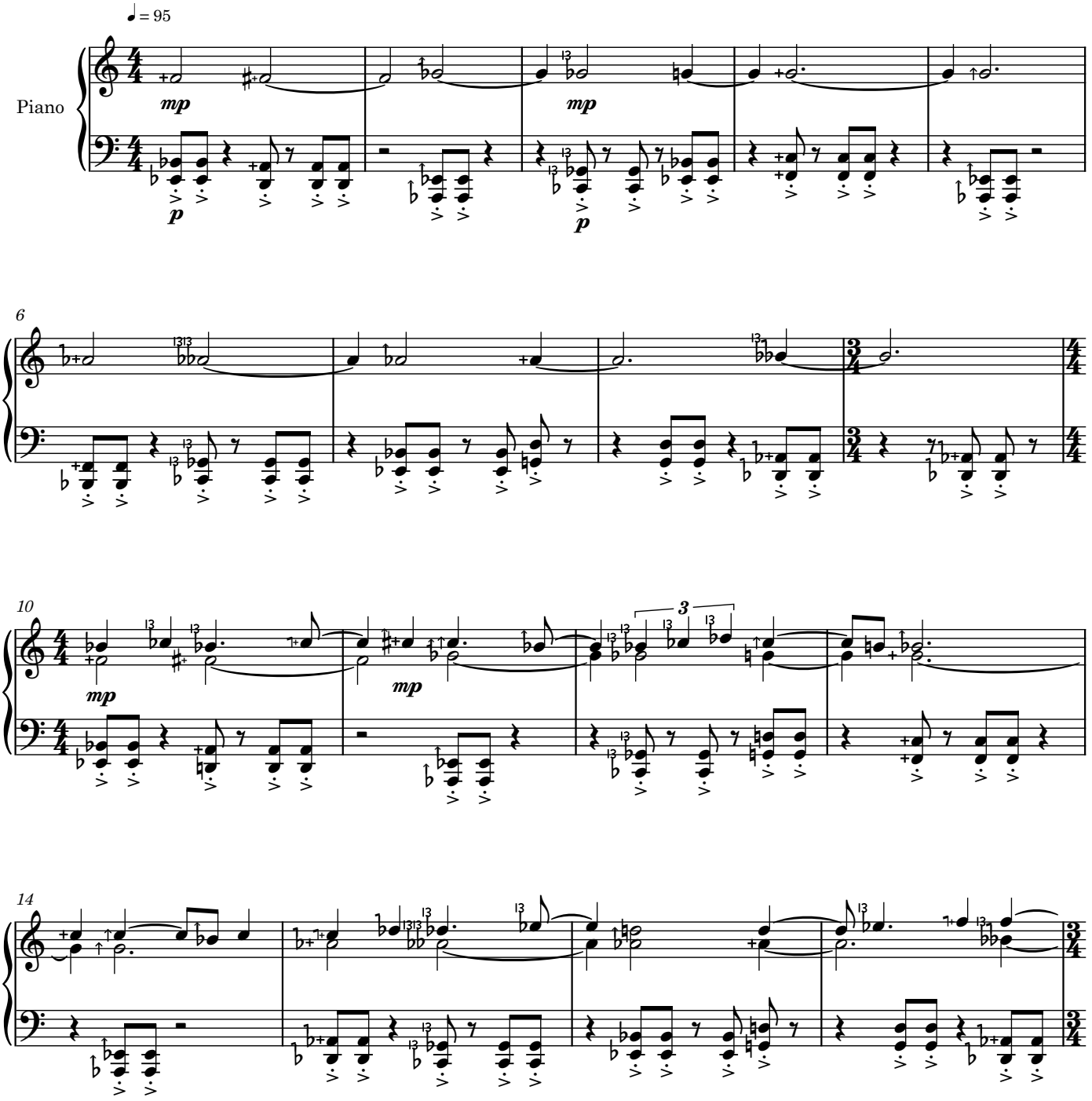
♩ = 30
♩ = 45
Germantown, NY
January 16-18, 2015

Tiger, Tiger, Turning Right

Kyle Gann
2015



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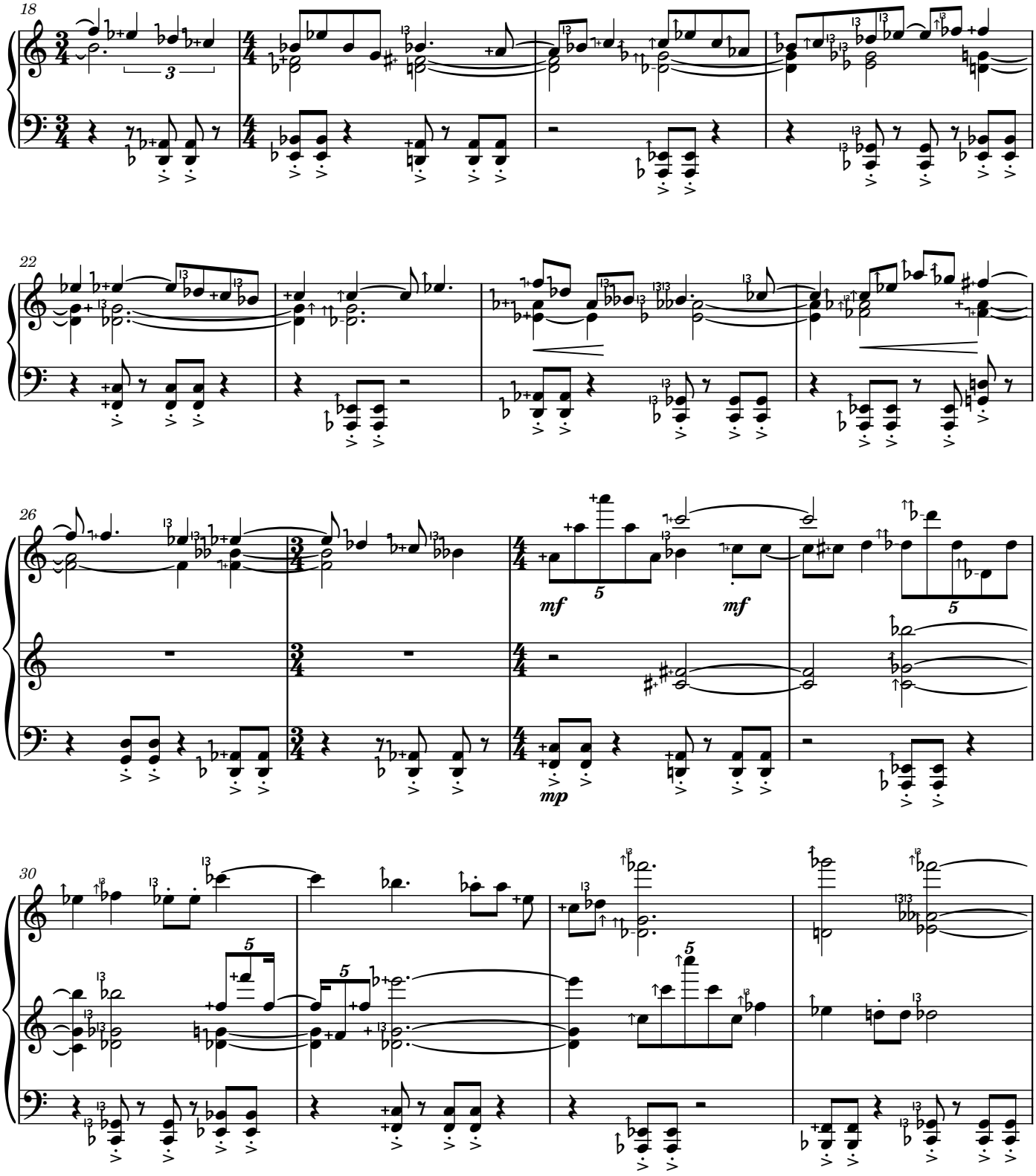
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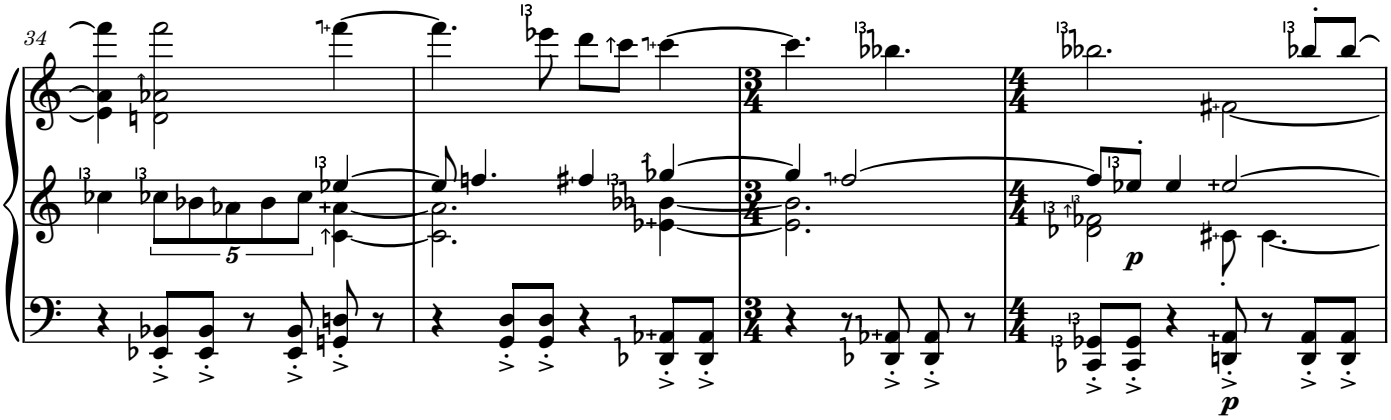
mf
mp
30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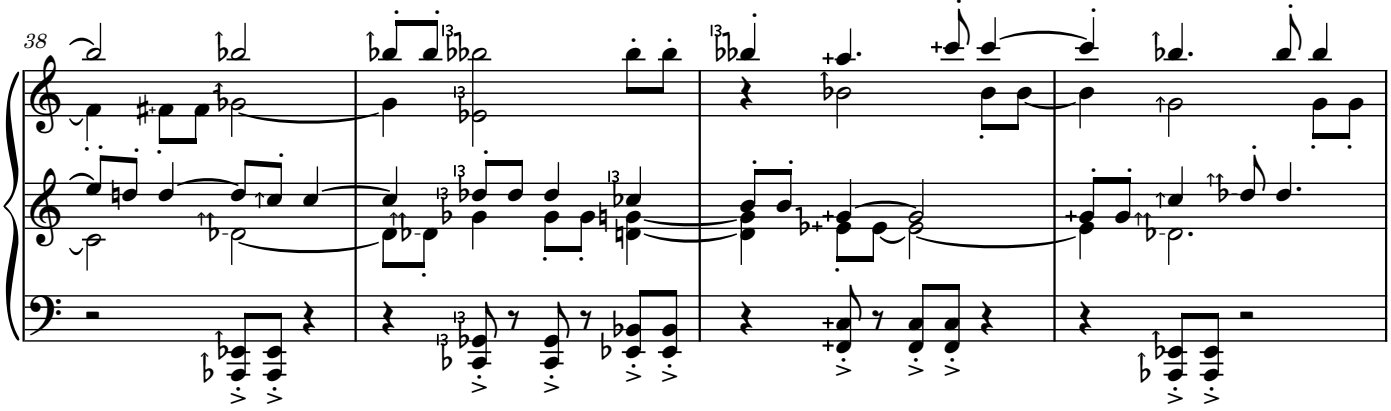
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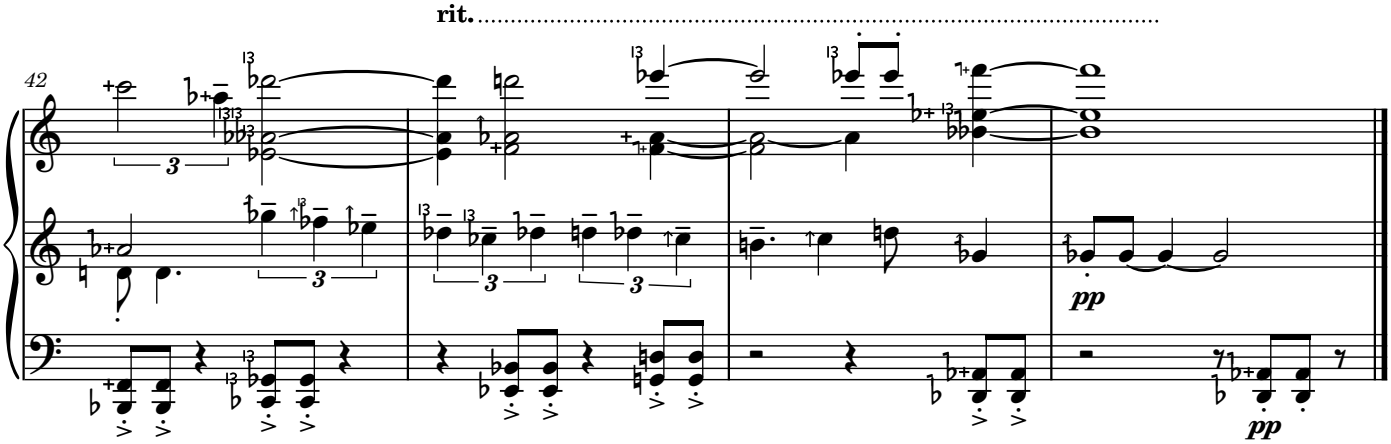
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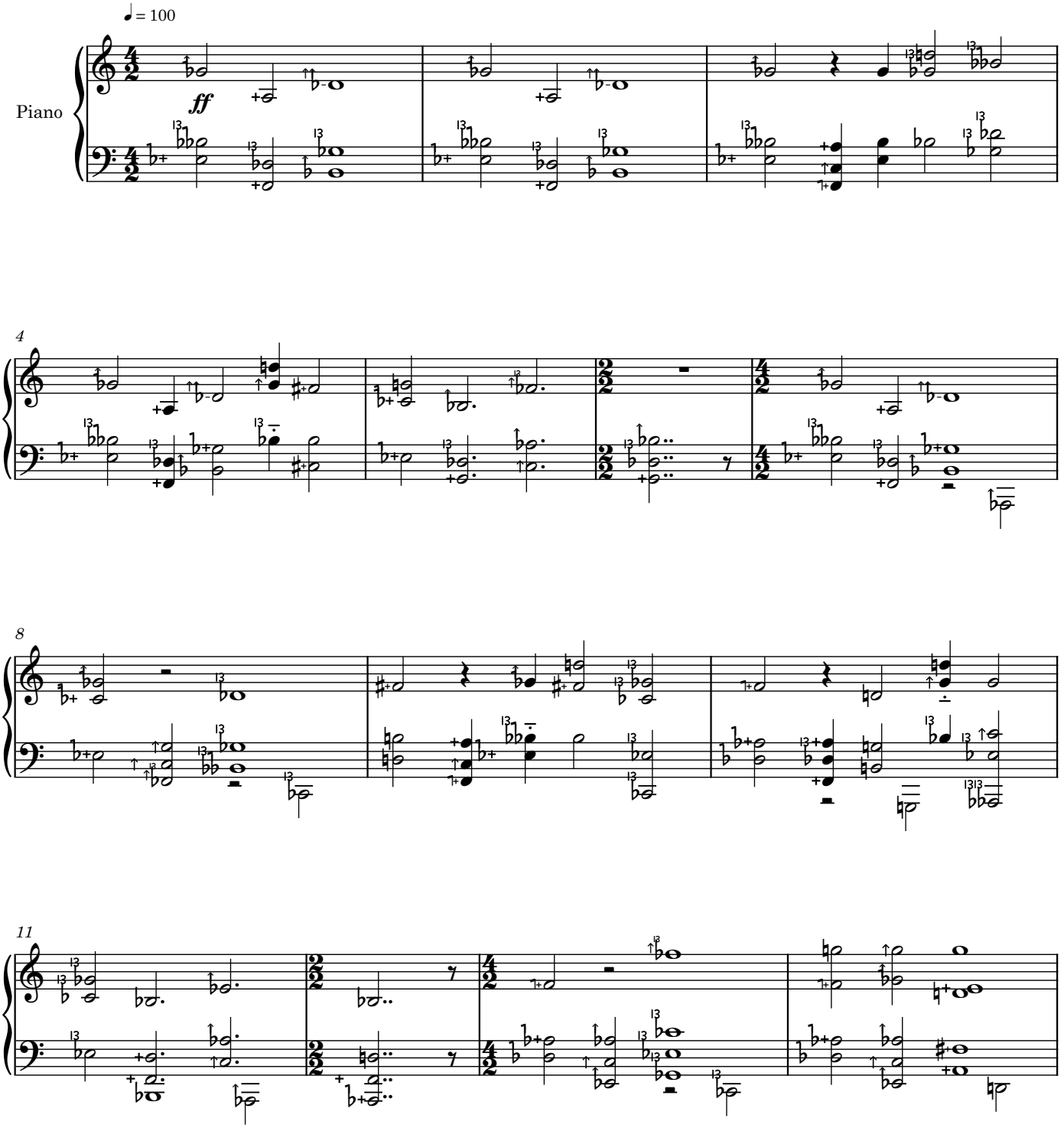
The Cracked Bells of St. Swithun's

Kyle Gann
2015



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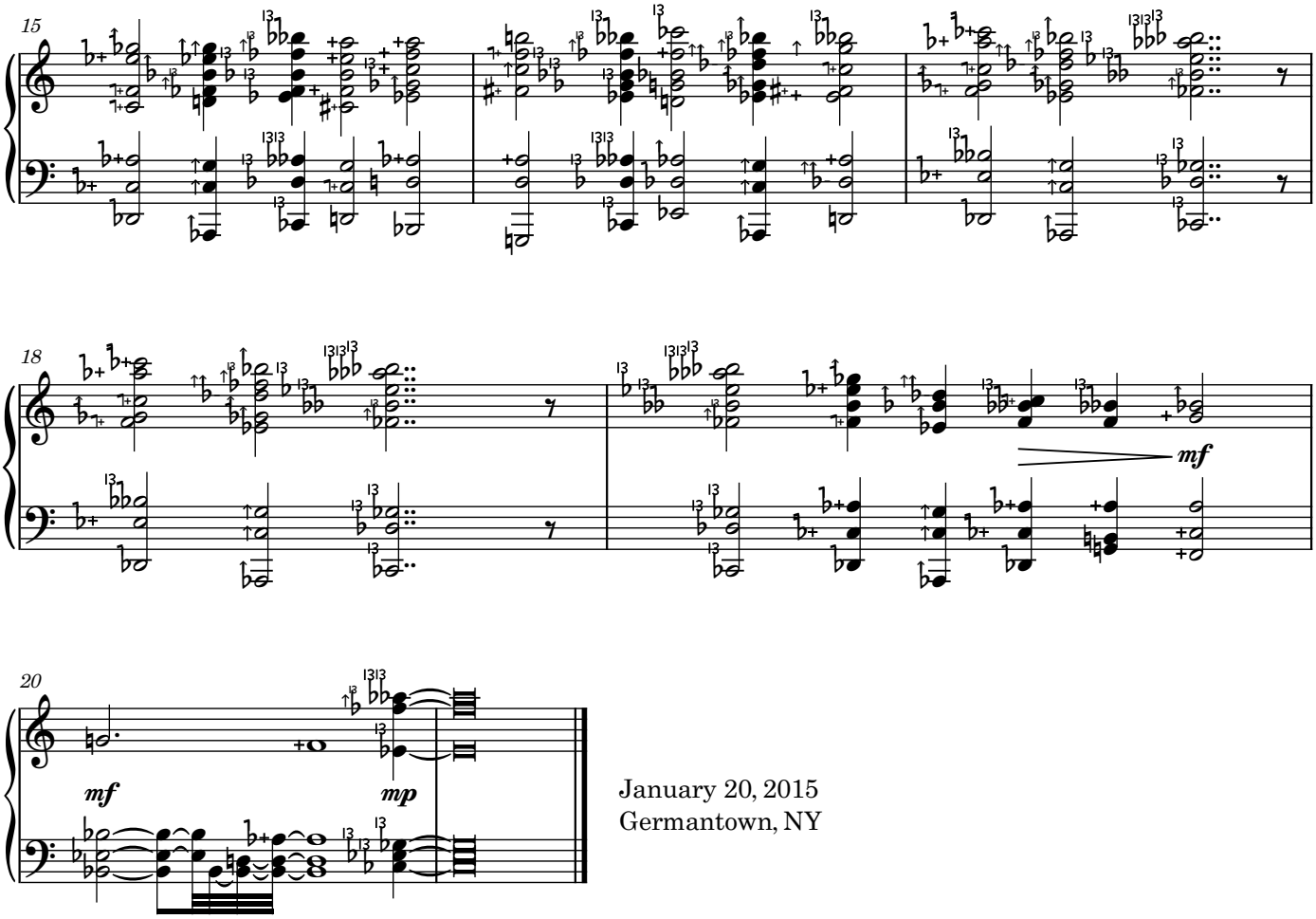
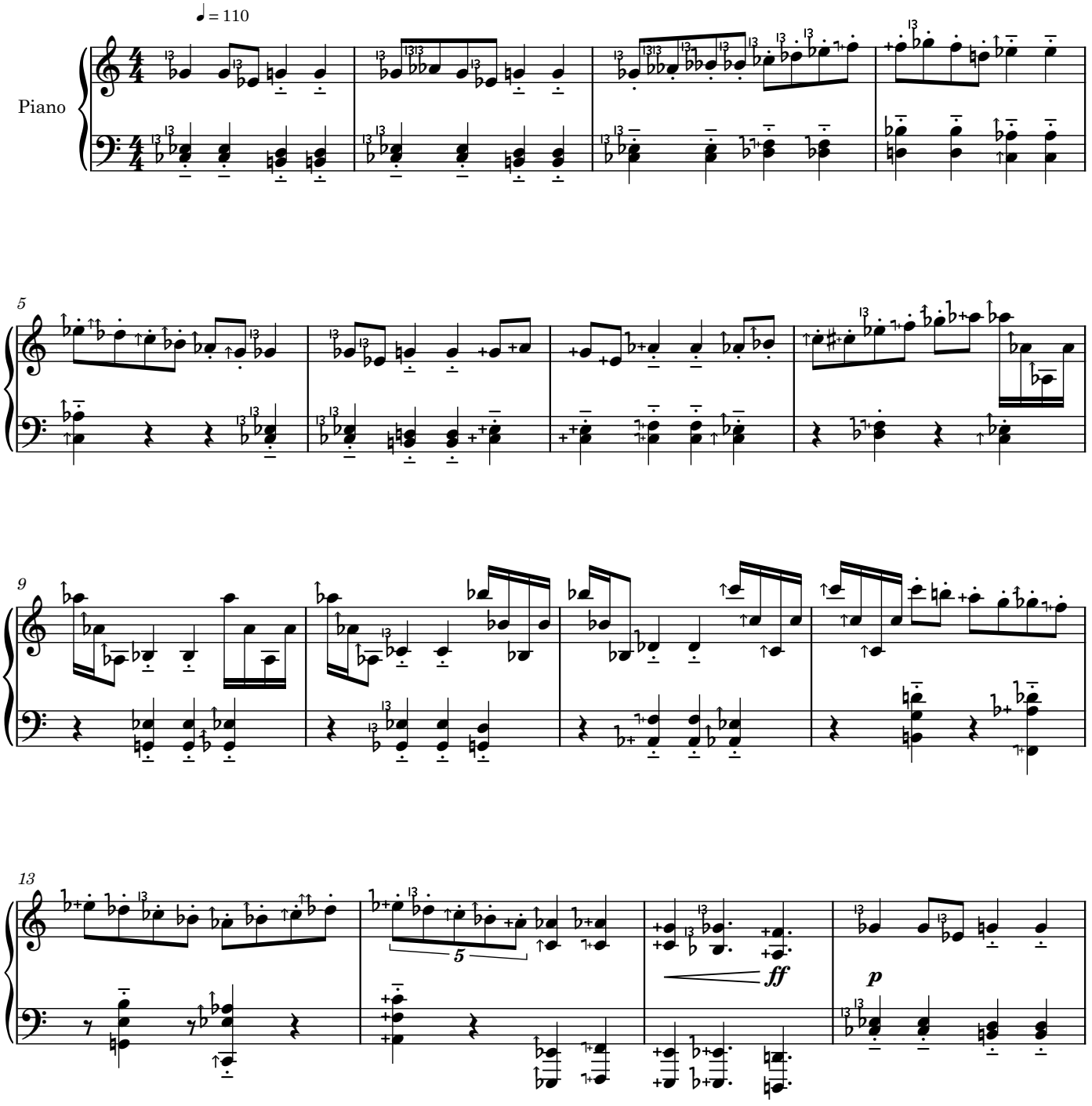


January 20, 2015
Germantown, NY

Jack Ate a Blackbird

Kyle Gann
2015



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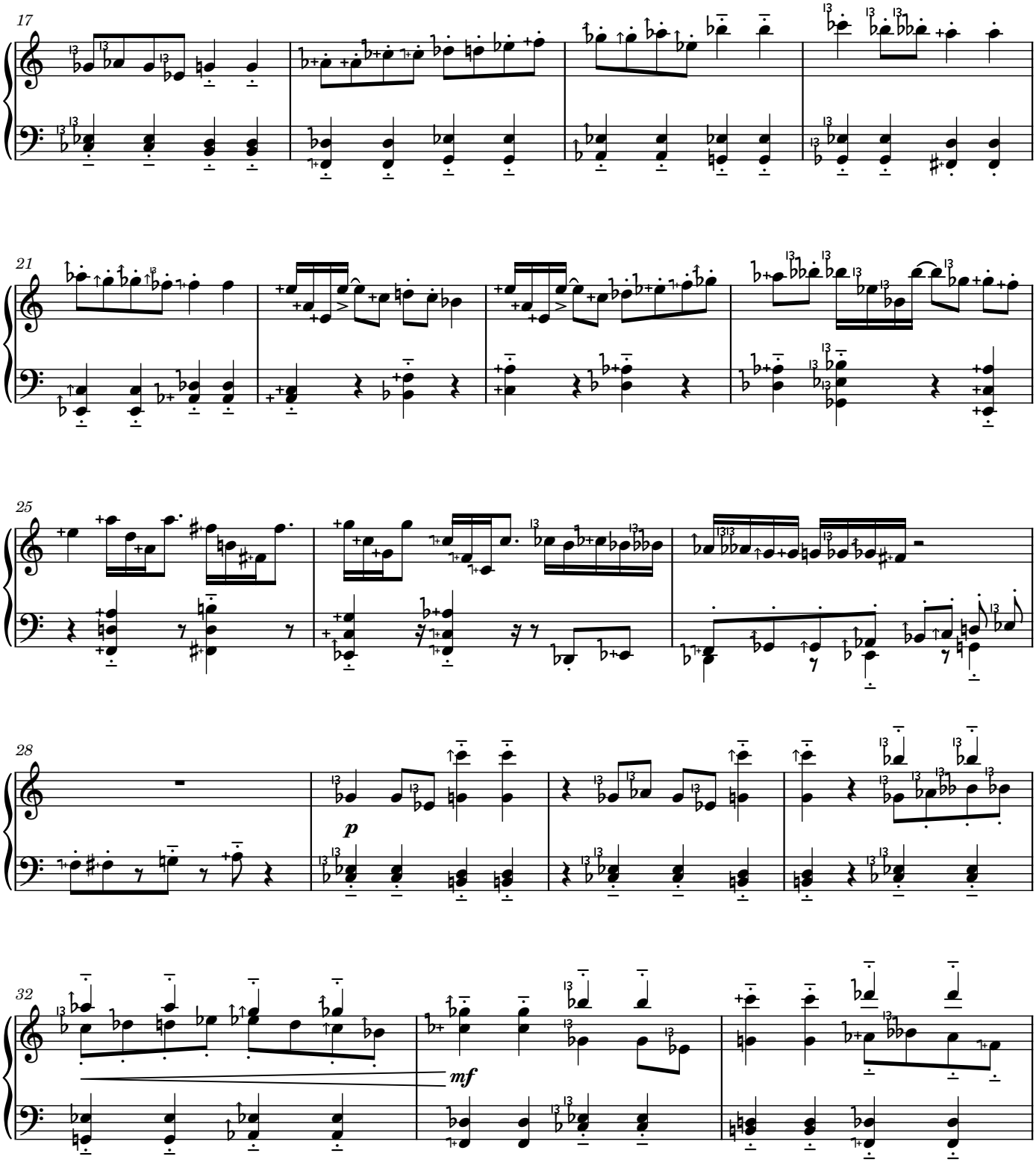
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p
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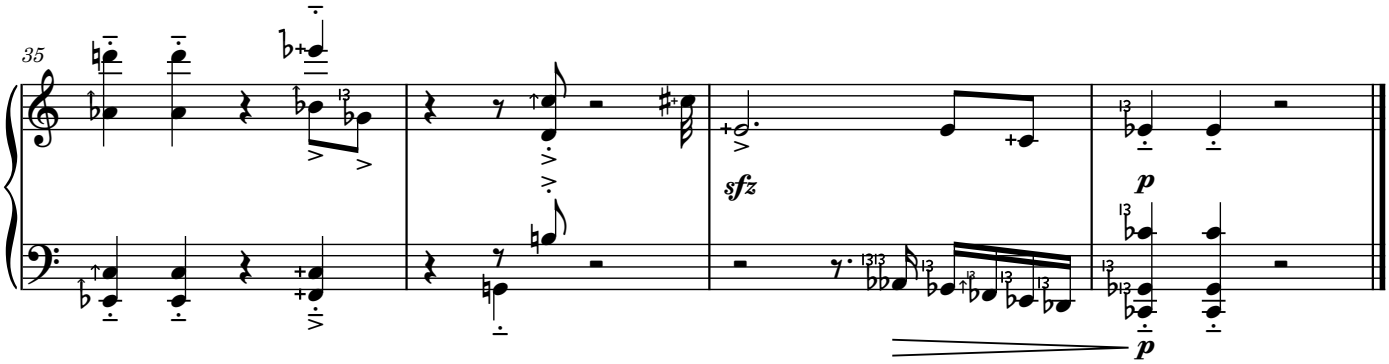
mf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