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Imaginary Keyboards

Ethan Charles Isaac
Bard College

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Recommended Citation

Isaac, Ethan Charles, "Imaginary Keyboards" (2018). *Senior Projects Spring 2018*. 391.
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An Imperceptible Future

Originally, the intention was to create a programmatic album of some nature. At first I had come up with the concept of cataloging sounds and experiences from restaurants across the area, an idea which I may come back to at another time. But as it usually happens things do not go as planned. At the start of my senior year, I was enrolled in an electro-acoustic composition workshop run by my senior project advisor, Matt Sargent. In which I began exploring microtonal composition, something I had been building knowledge of as I spent my years here at Bard, though it wasn't apparent to me until in that moment that my senior project would be focused on such music. I remember in my freshman year being intrigued by Pianoteq (which I use extensively in my project), a piece of software brought into class for one day by my professor Kyle Gann, a serious composer of microtonal music. In the spring after that I had made microtonality the focus of my projects in Psychoacoustics. In my sophomore year I took Arithmetic of Listening, A class focused microtonal theory with Kyle, which in his words was "probably the only class being taught on this subject in undergrad". I spent hours listening to strange chords using the archaic microtonal music program, Scala. I enjoyed the class very much, but was unable to hand in the mid-term or final projects. I was struggling to keep up with the demands of college. Depression strikes when you DO expect it to and when it is least convenient. I had been harboring a disability my whole life, and was taught to act as if it was not a part of who I am. ADHD is a debilitating experience. One that I pretended wasn't there. In a lecture for a conference on ADHD Dr. Russell Barkley a clinical psychologist at the Medical University of South Carolina states what I have felt my whole life "ADHD is not an attention disorder, It's a blindness to the future… ADHD creates a nearsightedness to time so that the person with the disorder cannot organize to the delayed future, but only to the imminent future and so everything in life becomes a crisis" and it shows in my work. I was unable to complete

classes every year. I did not moderate until my spring semester of junior year. My depression developed in part because I had lost faith in myself, I was no longer able to throw together work in the hours before it was due like I could in high school. My medication for depression couldn't be combined with my ADHD medication and no amount of intelligence can solve a problem that needed 50 hours of work in 5. But I couldn't give up, I love music and no matter how much I felt like I didn't deserve to spend my time here studying it with others who had so much more control and expertise, I worked in spite of my disability. Relying on the gifts I do have. Like improvisation, the source of all my compositional output in my senior project and my propensity to technology, a tool I have always used to find shortcuts in my process. I am no longer on medication for depression and am taking Amphetamines for ADHD. The stimulant makes my body hurt, my heart rate high, and causes my bones ache. In my first semester of senior year I was able to create over a half an hour of new material using Pianoteq, other various electronic instruments, and effects. At the recommendation of my board I changed my spring goal from the creation of an album to a concert. I am becoming proficient in use of the Roli Seaboard, a cutting edge Midi controller. My understanding of notation has evolved through transcription of my improvised works. By collaborating with other musicians this year in Matt's electro-acoustic ensemble, I have learned so much. Two poets in my year are offering me the opportunity to write song cycles of their work. I couldn't have seen this coming, in more ways than one, but my future is something I am excited for. In the months after graduation I will go on a personal quest for some inner peace and control over my disorder that no one could find within the confines of a dorm room. I remember Kyle during my moderation board that it was unfeasible to write orchestral works based on improvisation but knew of an exception. I hope that in my imperceptible future I will be yet another exception and continue as the one that I already am.

Here is a short paragraph detailing the adult outcomes of being diagnosed with ADHD as a child. I was diagnosed as a toddler. I didn't receive pharmacological treatment until I pursued it myself at 15 after failing multiple high school classes. My parents did not think I would attend college.

Adult Outcomes

It has been estimated that anywhere from 15 to 50 percent of those with ADHD ultimately outgrow the disorder. However, these figures come from follow-up studies in which the current and more rigorous diagnostic criteria for the disorder were not used. When more appropriate and modern criteria are employed, probably only 20-35 percent of children with the disorder no longer have any symptoms resulting in impairment in their adult life. Over the course of their lives, a significant minority of those with ADHD experience a greater risk for developing oppositional and defiant behavior (50%+), conduct problems and antisocial difficulties (25-45%), learning disabilities (25-40%), low self-esteem, and depression (25%). Approximately 5-10 percent of those with ADHD may develop more serious mental disorders, such as manic-depression or bipolar disorder. Between 10 and 20 percent may develop antisocial personality disorder by adulthood, most of whom will also have problems with substance abuse. Overall, approximately 10-25 percent develop difficulties with over-use, dependence upon, or even abuse of legal (i.e., alcohol, tobacco) or illegal substances (i.e., marijuana, cocaine, illicit use of prescription drugs, etc.), with this risk being greatest among those who had conduct disorder or delinquency as adolescents. Despite these risks, note should certainly be taken that upwards of half or more of those having ADHD do not develop these associated difficulties or disorders. However, the majority of those with ADHD certainly experienced problems with school performance, with as many as 30-50 percent having been retained in their school grade at least once, and 25-36 percent never completing high school. As adults, those with ADHD are likely to be under-educated relative to their intellectual ability and family educational background. They are also likely to be experience difficulties with work adjustment, and may be under-employed in their occupations relative to their intelligence, and educational and family backgrounds. They tend to change their jobs more often than others do, sometimes out of boredom or because of interpersonal problems in the workplace. They also tend to have a greater turnover of friendships and dating relationships and seem more prone to marital discord and even divorce. Difficulties with speeding while driving are relatively commonplace, as are more traffic citations for this behavior, and, in some cases, more motor vehicle accidents than others are likely to experience in their driving careers. Thus, they are more likely to have had their driver's license suspended or revoked.

(source http://www.russellbarkley.org/factsheets/adhd-facts.pdf)

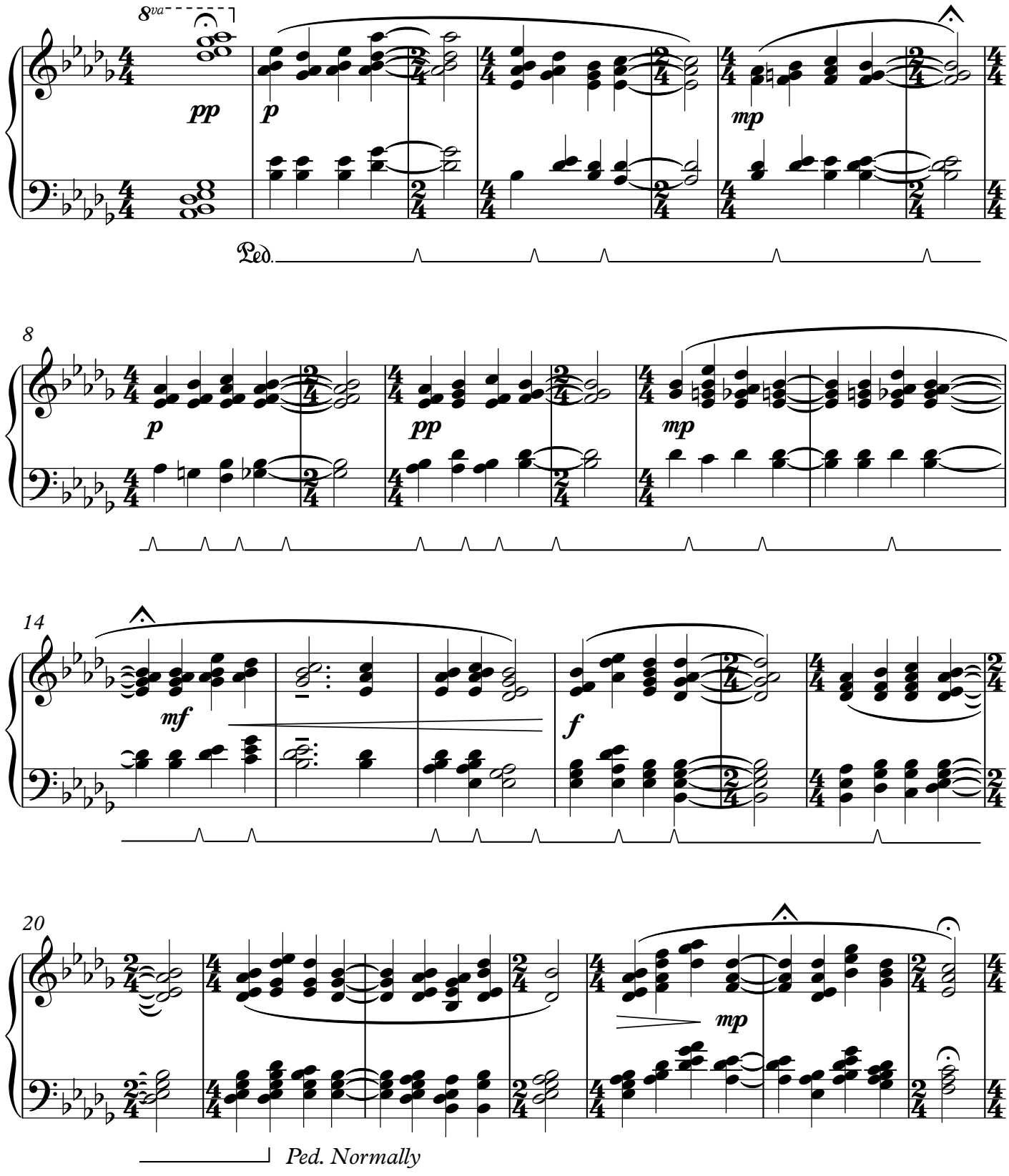
Procession

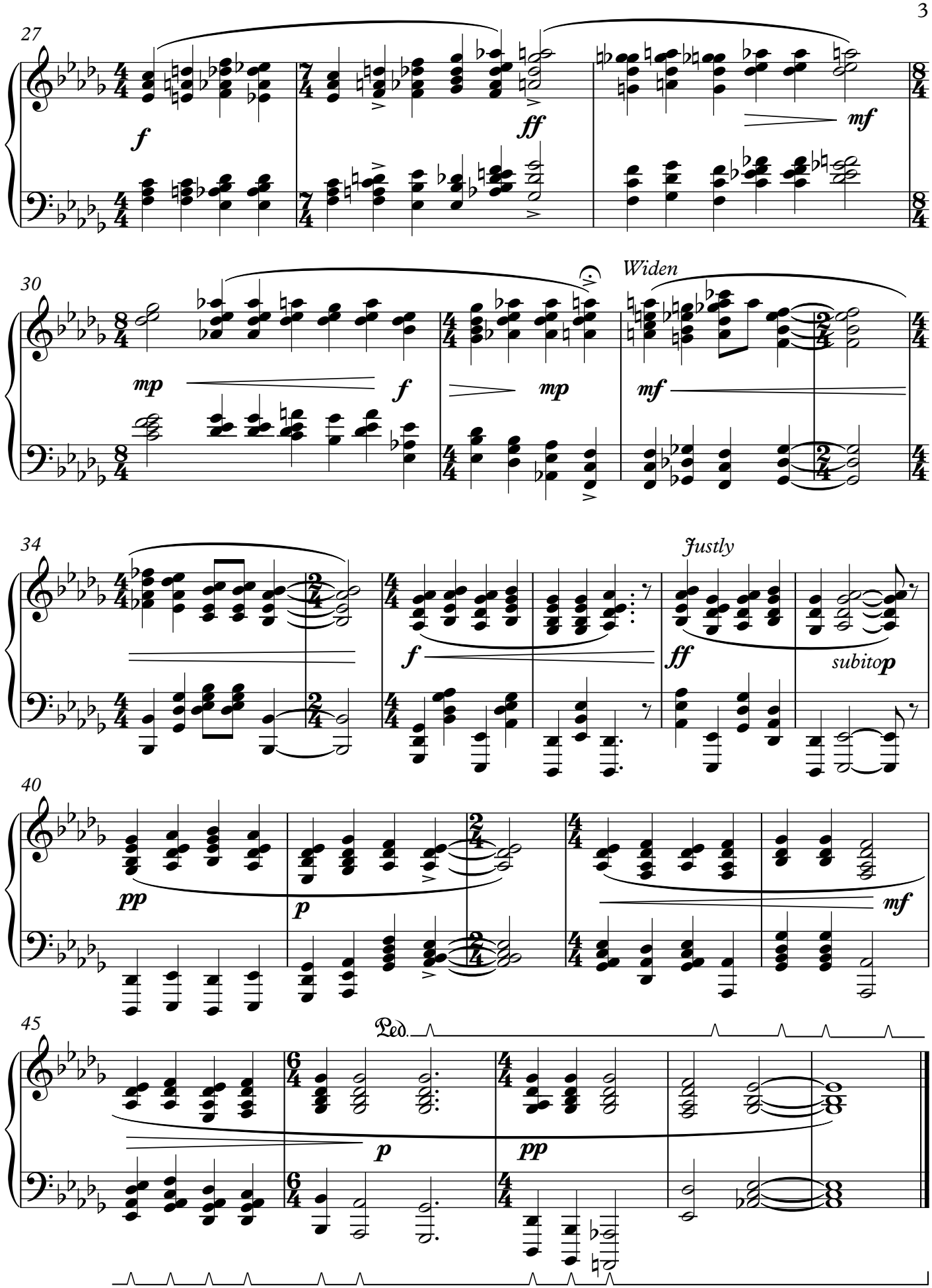
Ethan Isaac

For Pianoteq or tuned piano, tuned to just intonation on Gb3
A = 436
1/1- Gb
25/24-G
9/8- Ab
6/5- A
5/4- Bb
4/3- B
25/18- C
3/2- Db
8/5- D
5/3- Eb
9/5- E
15/8- F
2/1 - Gb

Procession

♩ = 50 **Considerately, Intensely, Quietly**




27
f
ff
mf
30
mp
f
mp
mf
Widen
34
f
ff
Justly
subito p
40
pp
p
mf
45
Ped.
p
pp

Pillars

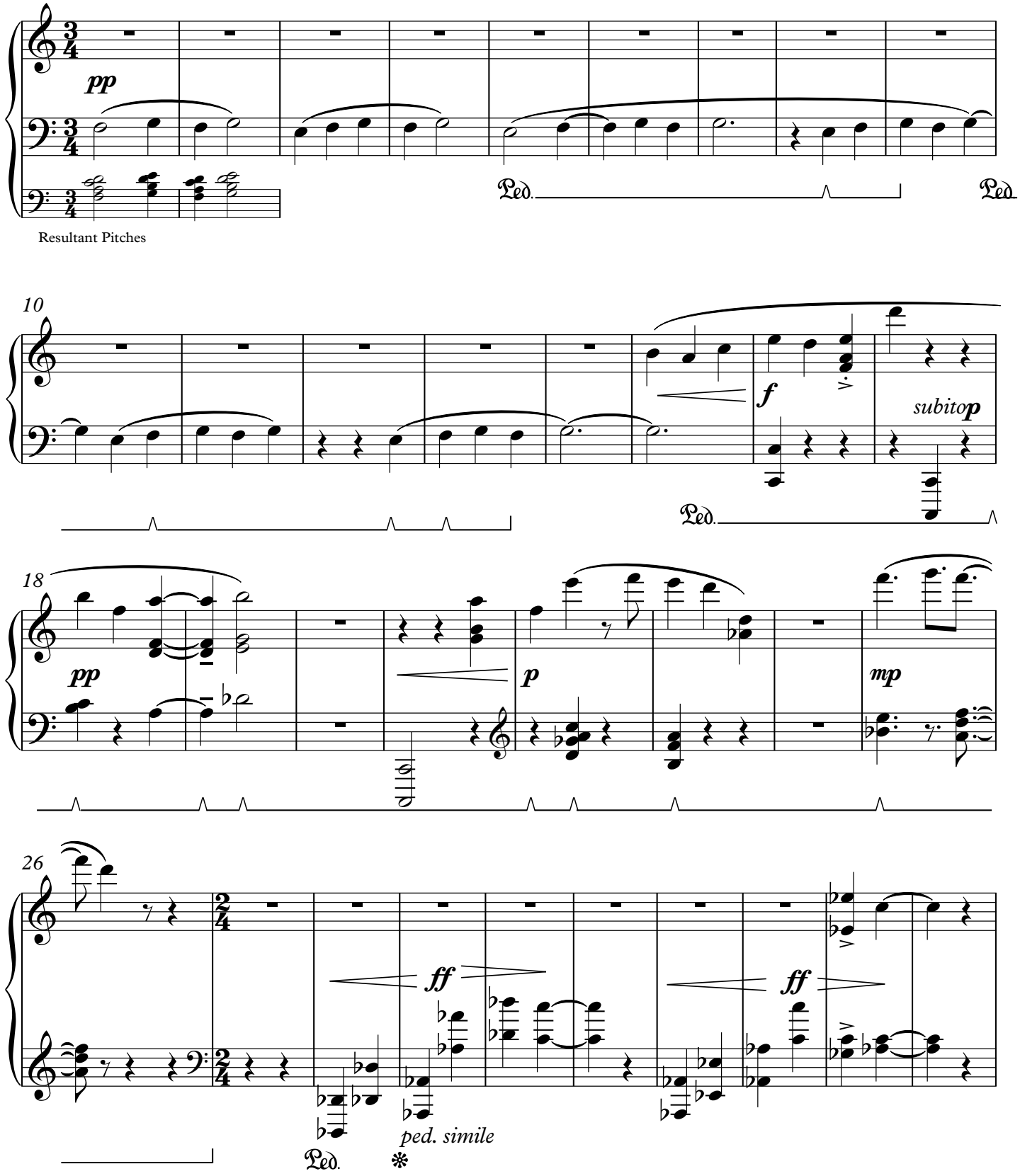
Ethan Isaac

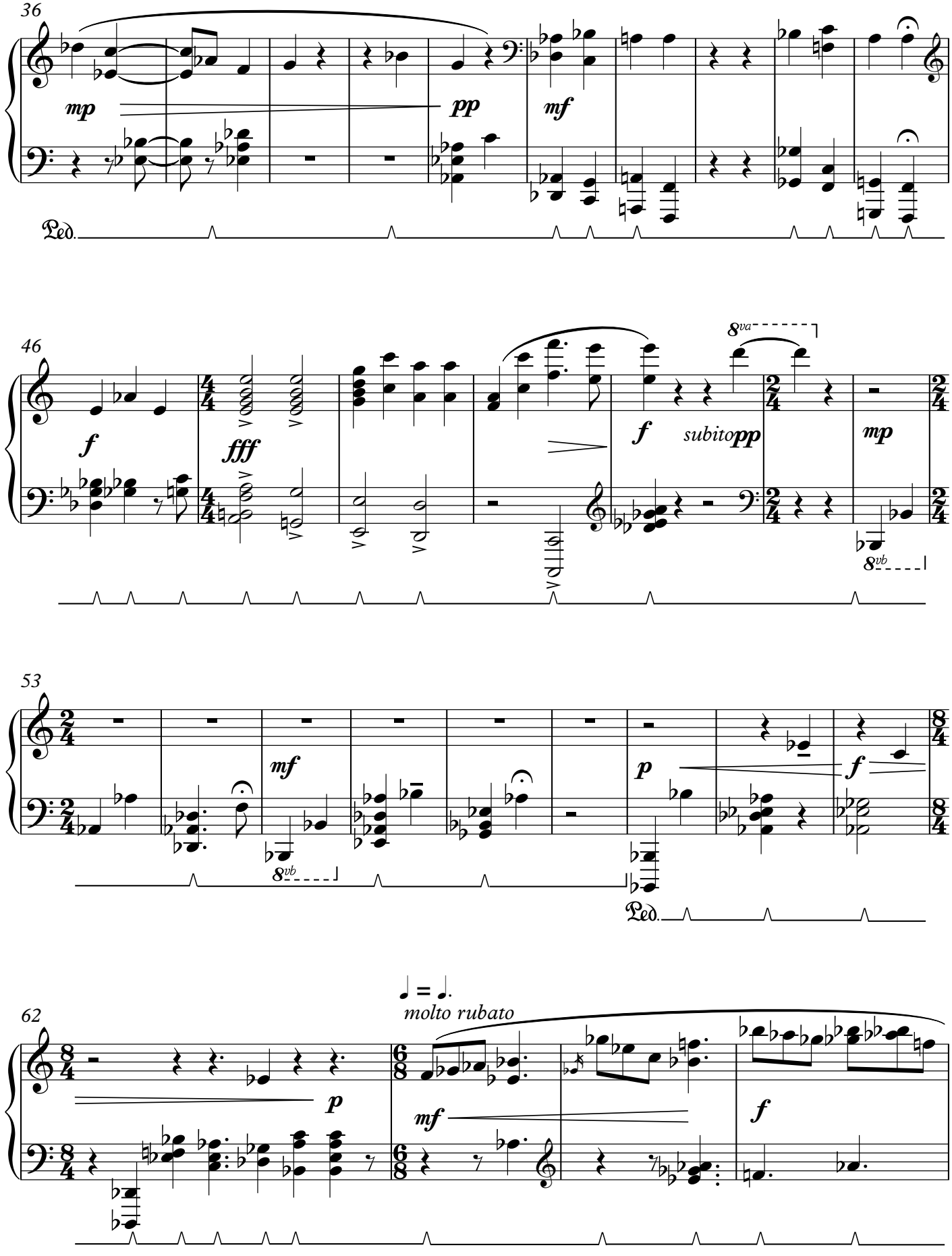
For Pianoteq, tuned to a harmonic scale on Db. Additionally some sort of plug in or patch must be used to add pitches listed below above those notated. Major 3rd , Perfect 5th , and Major 6th
1/1- Db
17/16-D
9/8- Eb
19/16- E
5/4- F
61/47- Gb
11/8- G
3/2- Ab
13/8- A
27/16- Bb
7/4- B
15/8- C
2/1 - Db

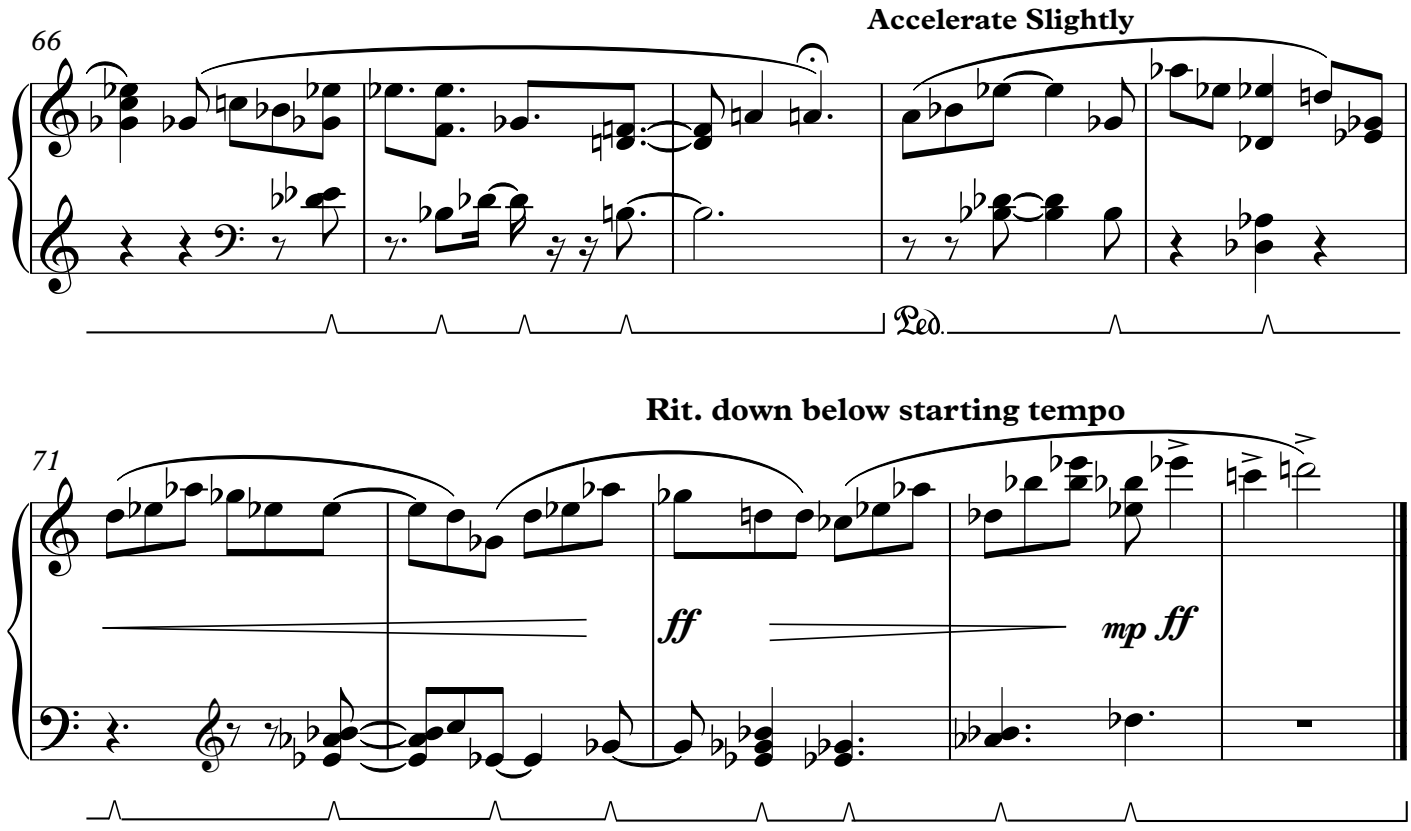
Pillars

Ethan Isaac

♩ = 73 **Abrupt, Mysterious, Awkward**

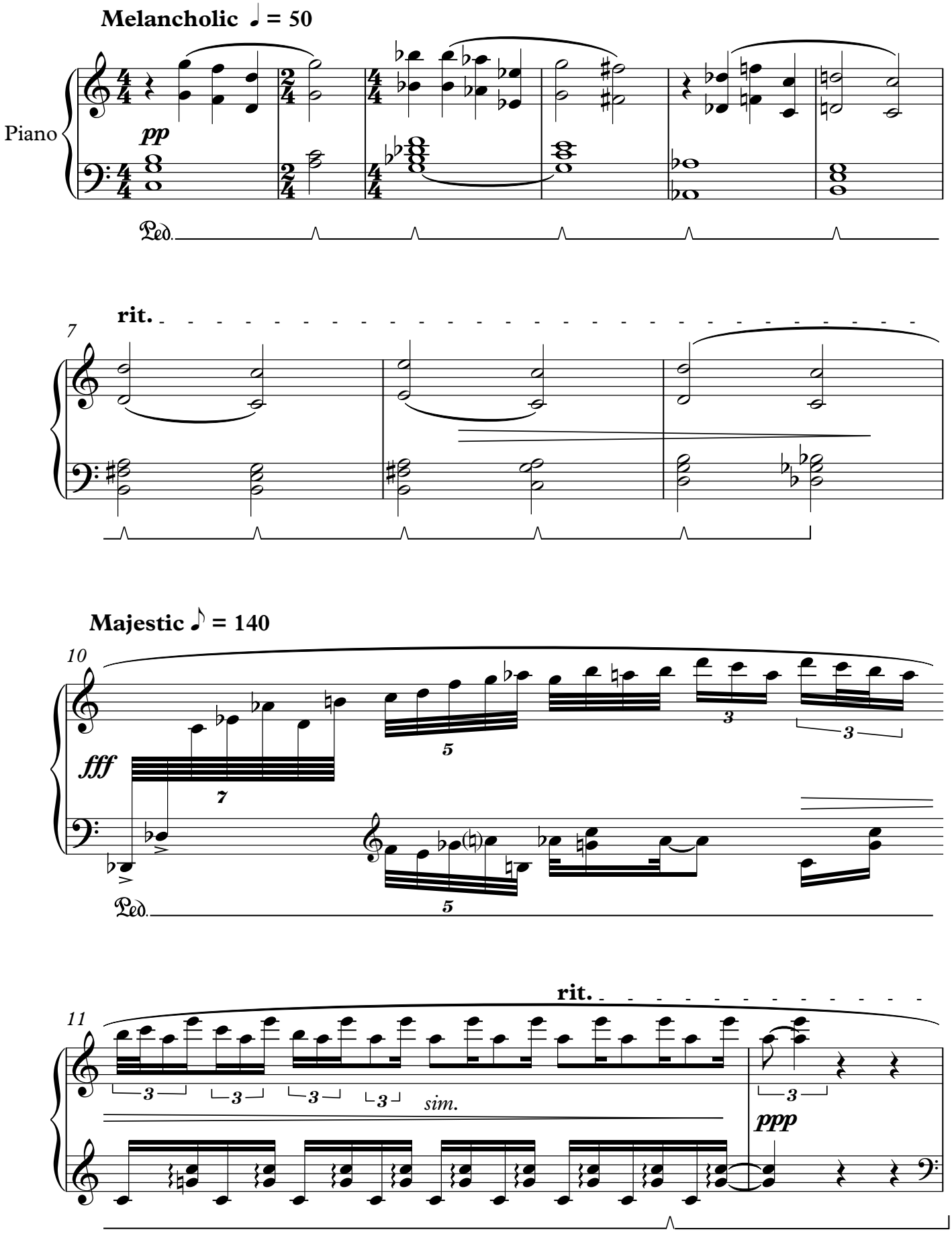



36
mp
pp
mf
Ped.
46
f
fff
f
subito pp
mp
8va
8vb
53
mf
p
f
8vb
Ped.
62
molto rubato
p
mf
f


66
Accelerate Slightly
Ped.
71
Rit. down below starting tempo
ff
mp ff

City of Gold

Ethan Isaac



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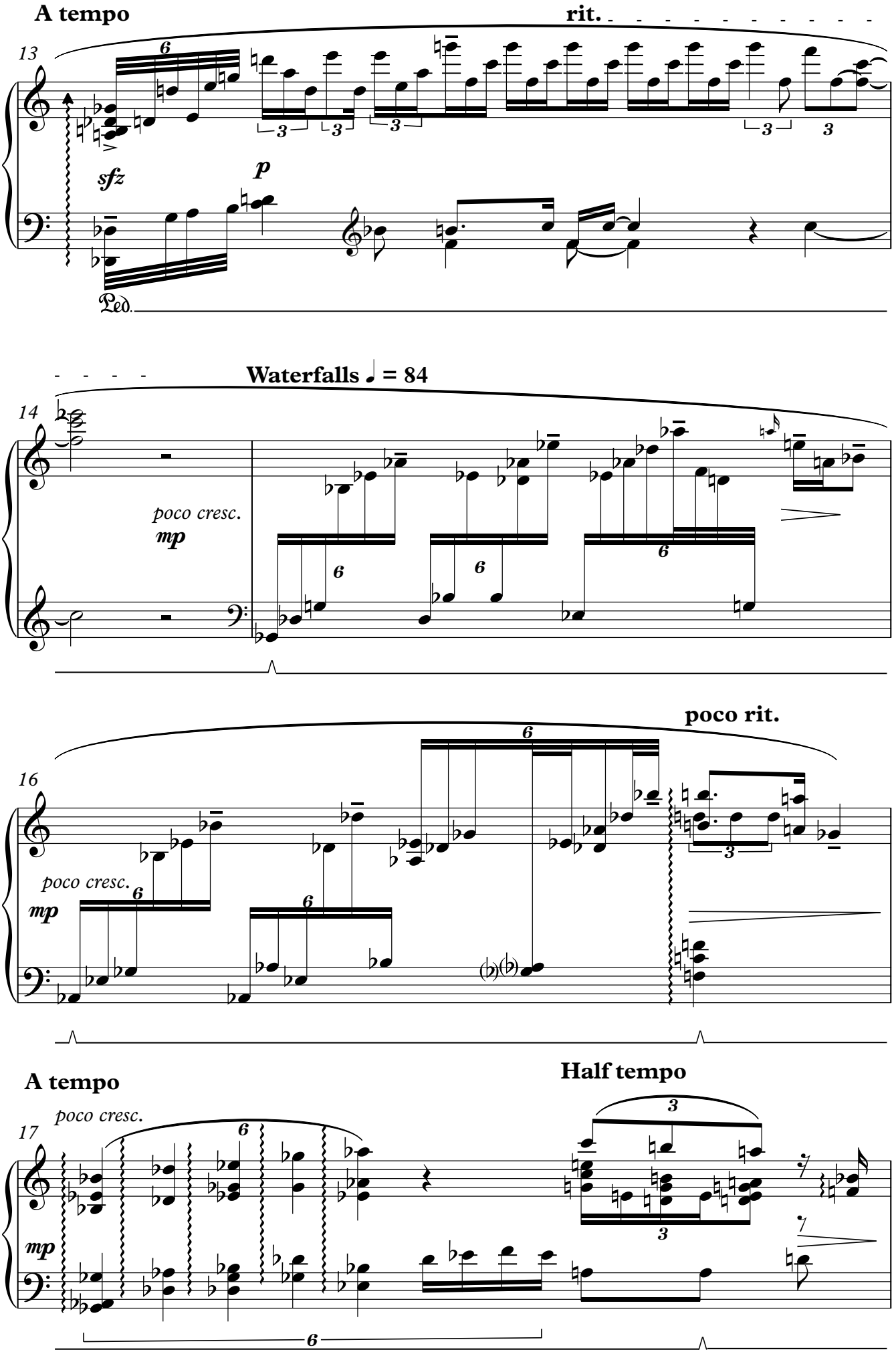
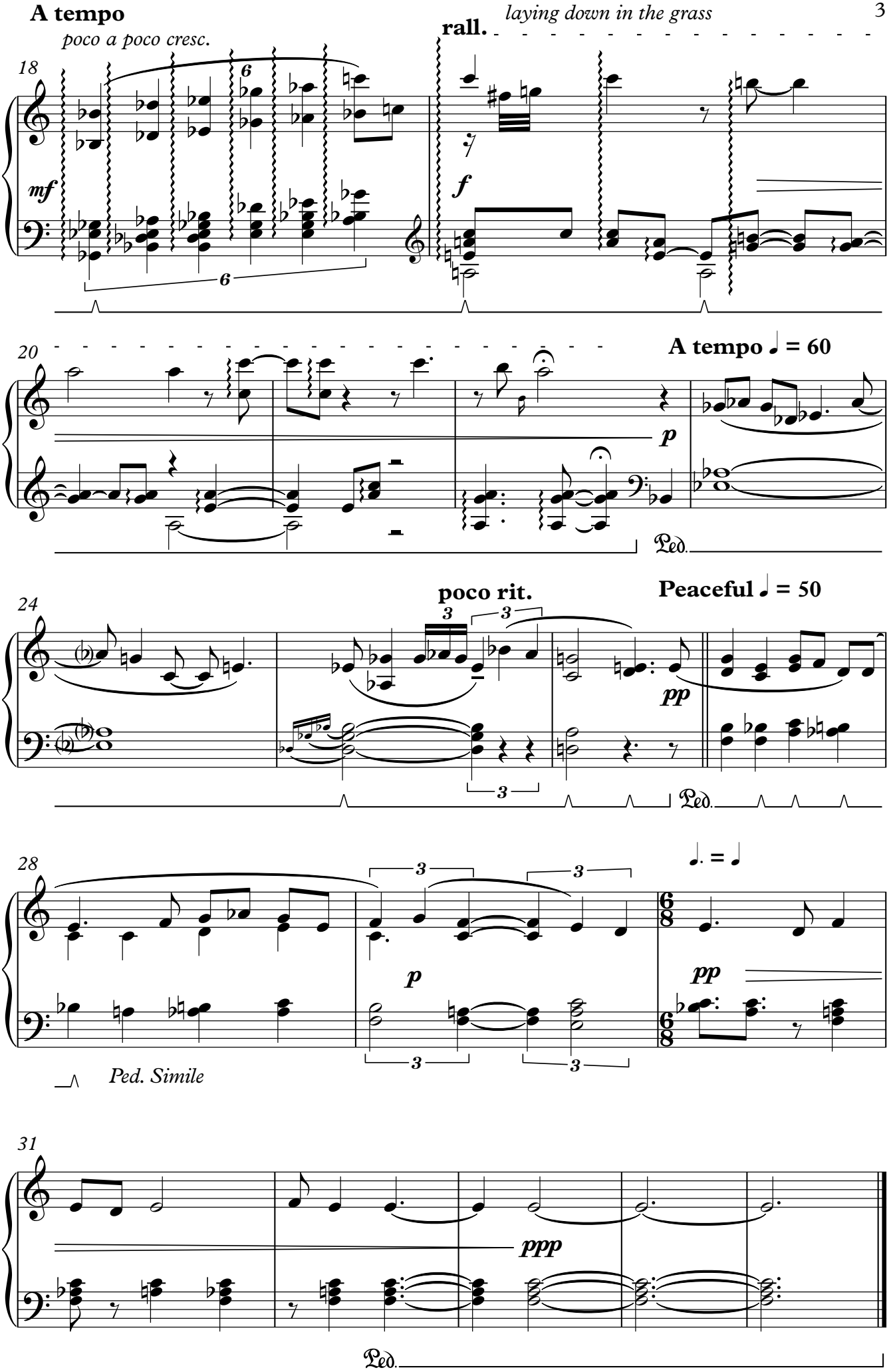
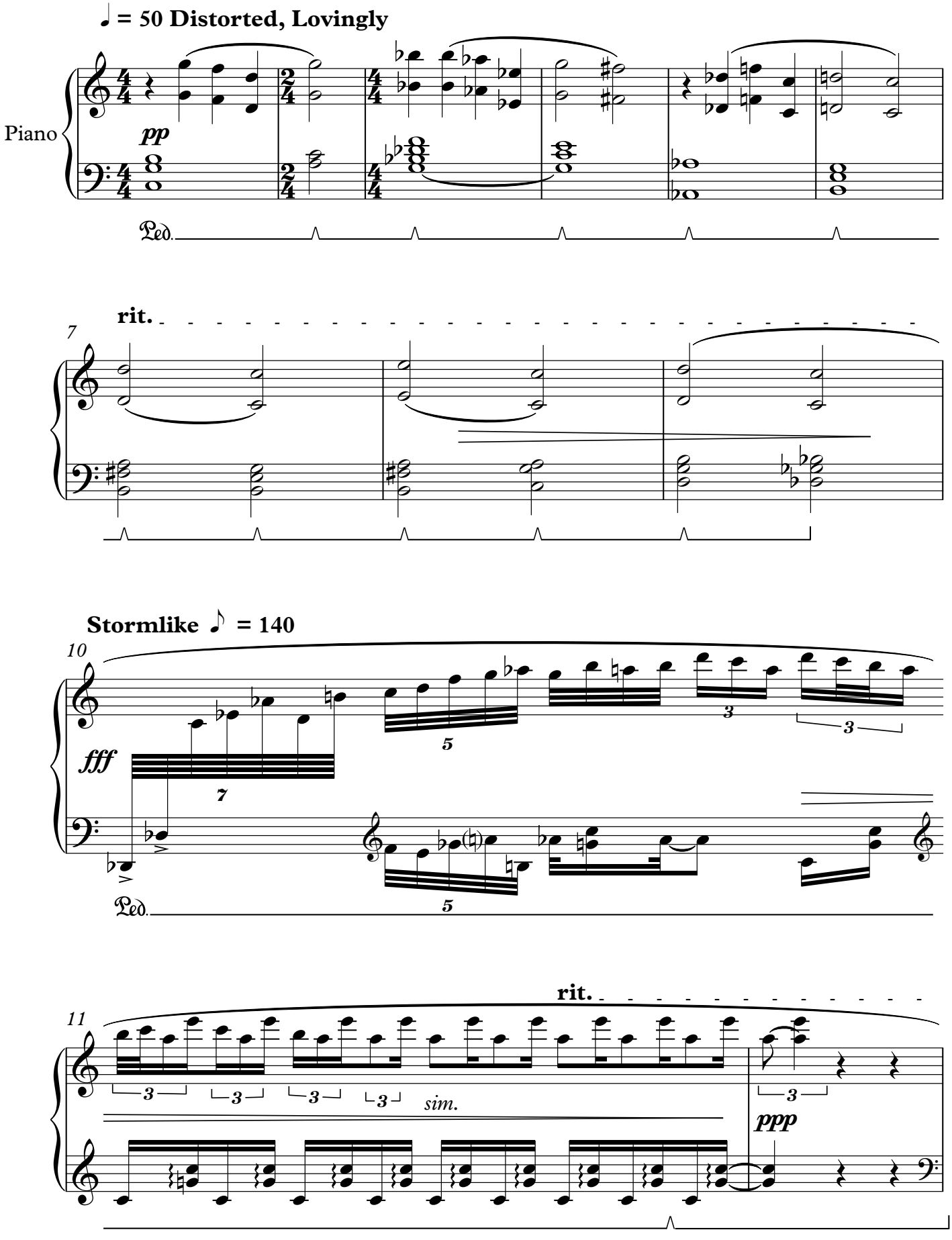

A tempo
rit.
13
sfz
p
Ped.
Waterfalls ♩ = 84
14
poco cresc.
mp
poco rit.
16
poco cresc.
mp
A tempo
Half tempo
17
poco cresc.
mp


A tempo
poco a poco cresc.
18
mf
6
6
rall.
f
20
A tempo ♩ = 60
p
Ped.
24
poco rit.
3
3
3
pp
Peaceful ♩ = 50
Ped.
28
3
3
p
3
3
♩. = ♩
6/8
pp
6/8
Ped. Simile
31
ppp
Ped.

City of Brass

Ethan Isaac



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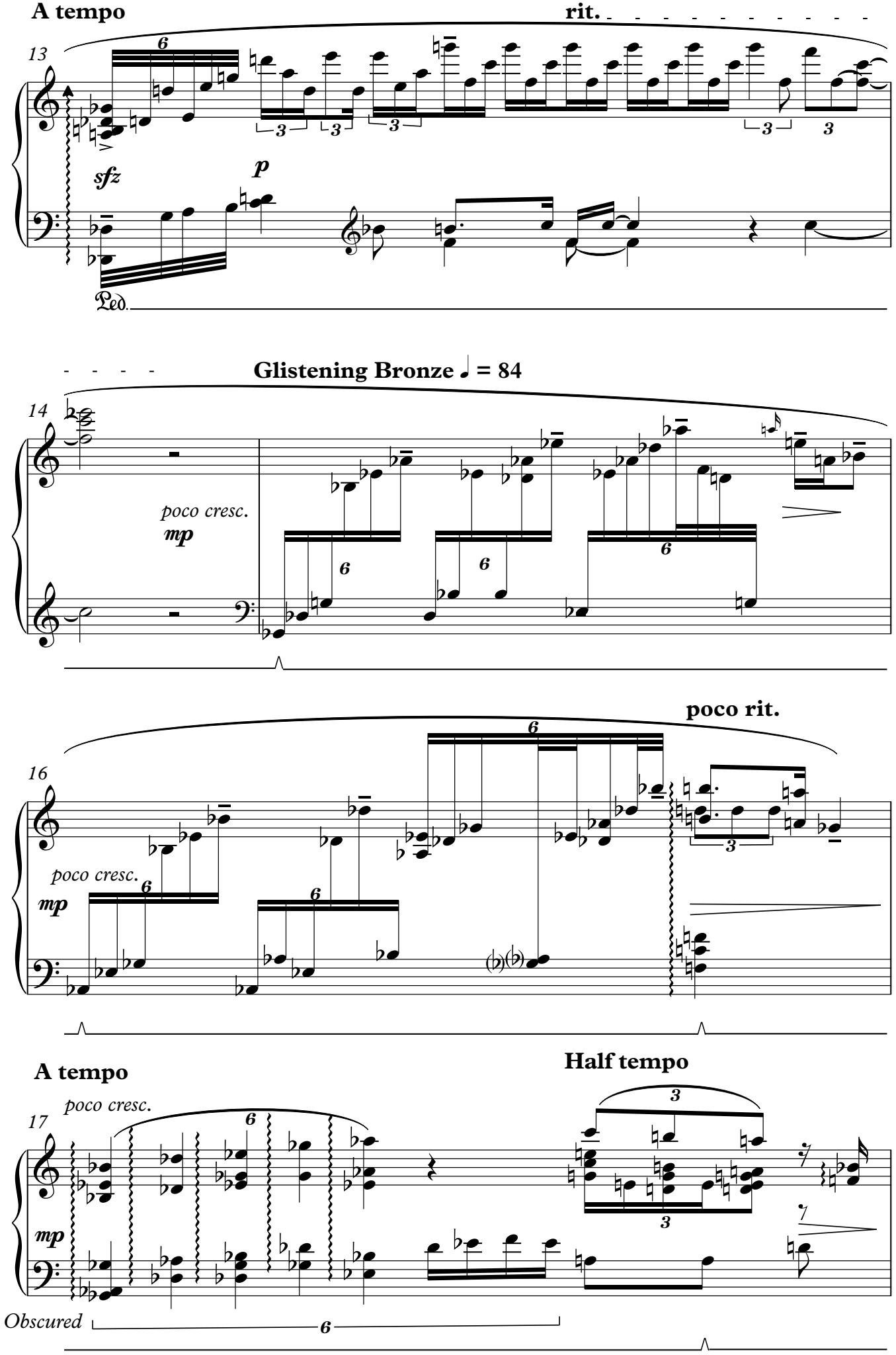
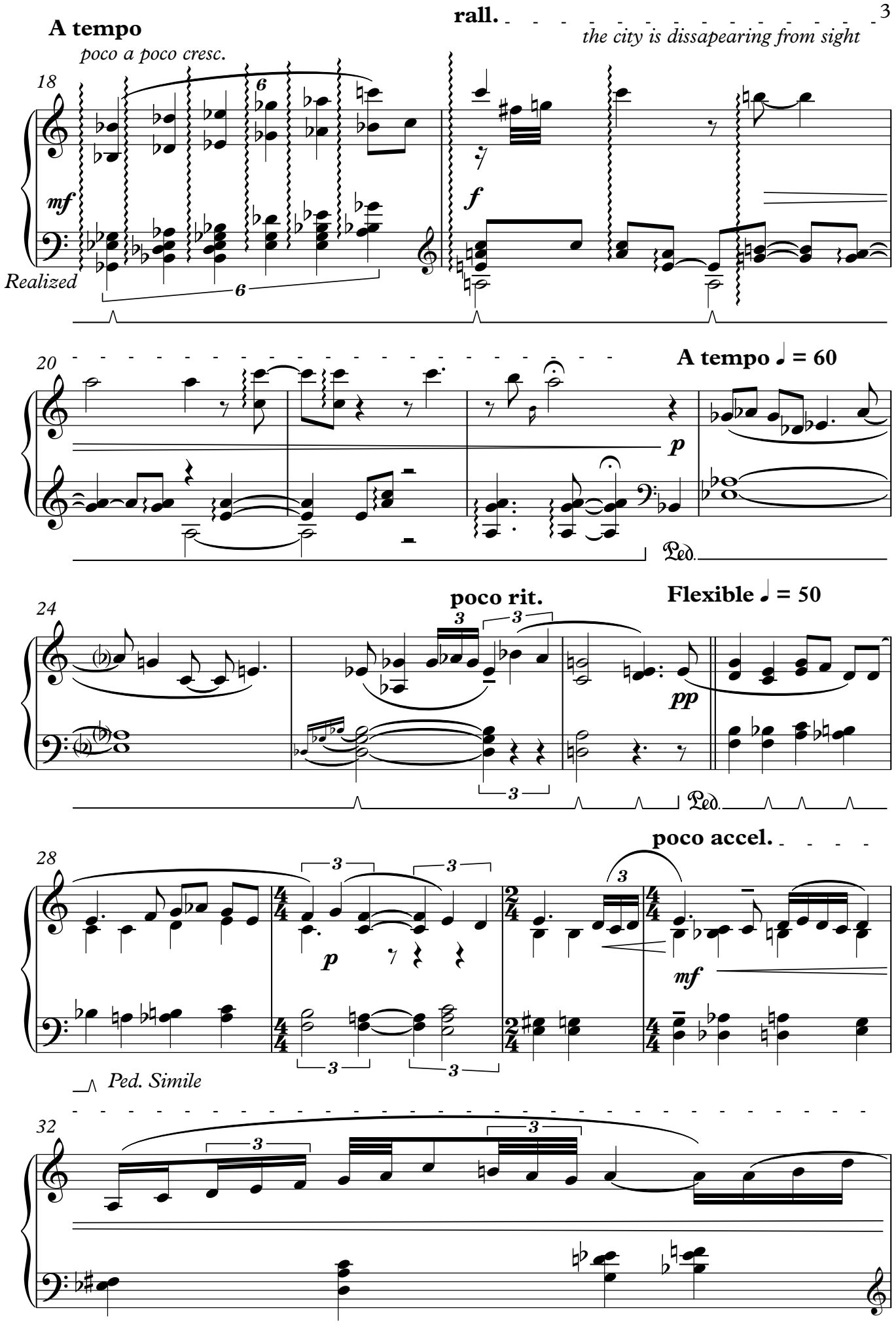
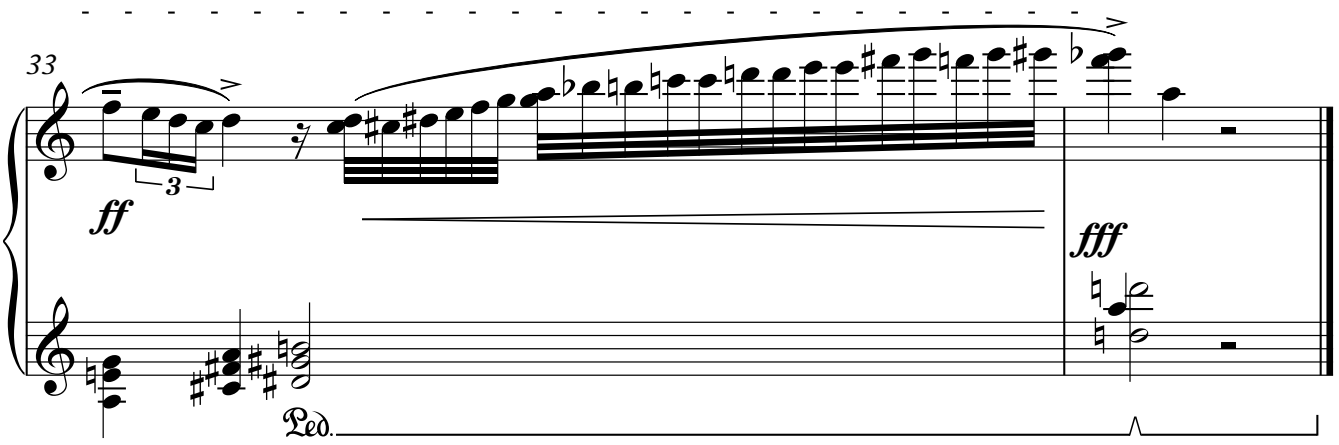

A tempo
rit.
13
sfz
p
Ped.
Glistening Bronze ♩ = 84
14
poco cresc.
mp
poco rit.
16
poco cresc.
mp
A tempo
Half tempo
17
poco cresc.
mp
Obscured


A tempo
poco a poco cresc.
rall.
the city is dissapearing from sight
18
mf
f
Realized
20
A tempo ♩ = 60
p
Ped.
24
poco rit.
Flexible ♩ = 50
pp
Ped.
28
poco accel.
p
mf
Ped. Simile
32


33
ff
3
fff
Ped.