All The Wrong Notes

A solo piano piece for Leslie Cain (pictured)

Composed by

Nick Norton

(also pictured)

in Santa Barbara, California,

from January through April of 2013,

and lasting about four minutes.

About the piece

When I was an undergraduate I wrote a piano piece called *Densities*. It used all sorts of math to predict what sorts of mutations a cool little set of notes would go through. I spent months doing calculations, and then months copying down the notes that those calculations resulted in. It ended up sounding like a bunch of random, pointillist nonsense. My teacher at the time, Lei Liang, suggested that I improvise a bit over it, to highlight the more interesting parts. I did that. It made it more interesting, but not too much more interesting. I suppose I learned something about trusting your instincts from that.

Flash forward to 2012: I'd just started my PhD at UCSB and become close friends with Leslie Cain, also a new student, who was working on her masters in piano performance. She invited me to hang out in her practice room one afternoon, and I hadn't actually heard her play yet. She played a Debussy prelude (maybe number three or four?) and I was awed. I immediately knew that I wanted to work with her. She was interested in an idea I had for a series of fugues based on my favorite songs, and we agreed to collaborate.

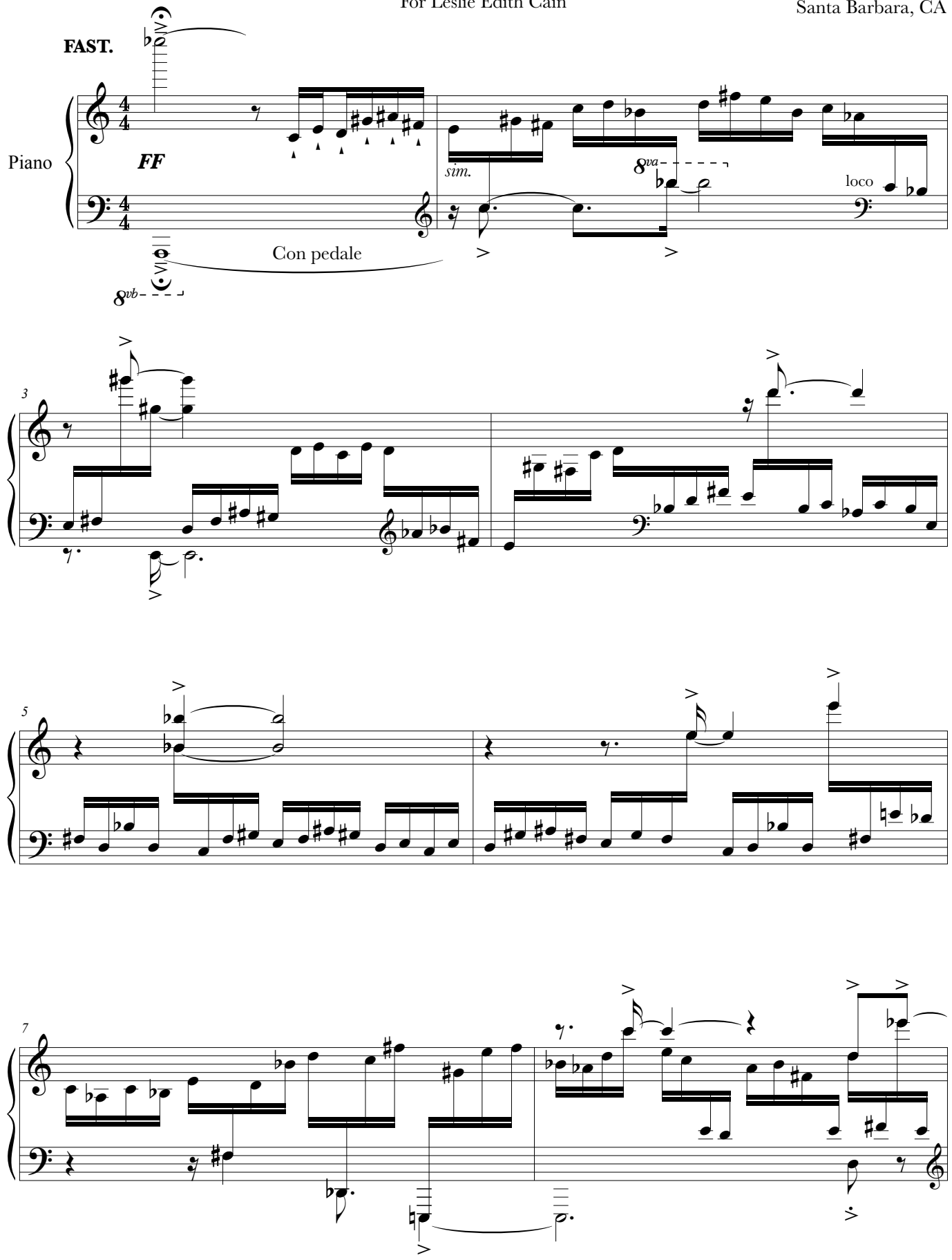
As such, I started working on a piano concerto (right? I don't know how I made that leap either), under the guidance of my teacher Joel Feigin. I had a fantastic opening, and ran into a brick wall when I began writing the solo part. I'd written a lot for piano, but nothing specifically intended to show off the abilities of the soloist. Joel suggested writing a short piece to get my head around virtuosity. I didn't have any material, and remembered that *Densities* had some pretty cool stuff in it that I had transformed into mush via all that math. I wanted to give those pitch series I'd originally written way back when a chance to rock as hard as they could, so used them as the starting point for *All The Wrong Notes*. After that, it was gut instinct, meetings with Joel and Leslie, and a bit of advice from a killer reading session with Jeremy Denk.

Leslie was planning to play it on her masters recital, but her teacher threw a couple things by Liszt at her at the last minute. As fate would have it, my friend Richard Valitutto premiered it the piece on May 3, 2014 at the Hear Now Festival in Los Angeles. I was ecstatic to work with him, and his input on fingerings, score layout, and pedaling were invaluable. I'm grateful that this piece gave me a chance to collaborate with so many mentors and friends.

All The Wrong Notes

For Leslie Edith Cain

Nick Norton
April 16, 2013
Santa Barbara, CA



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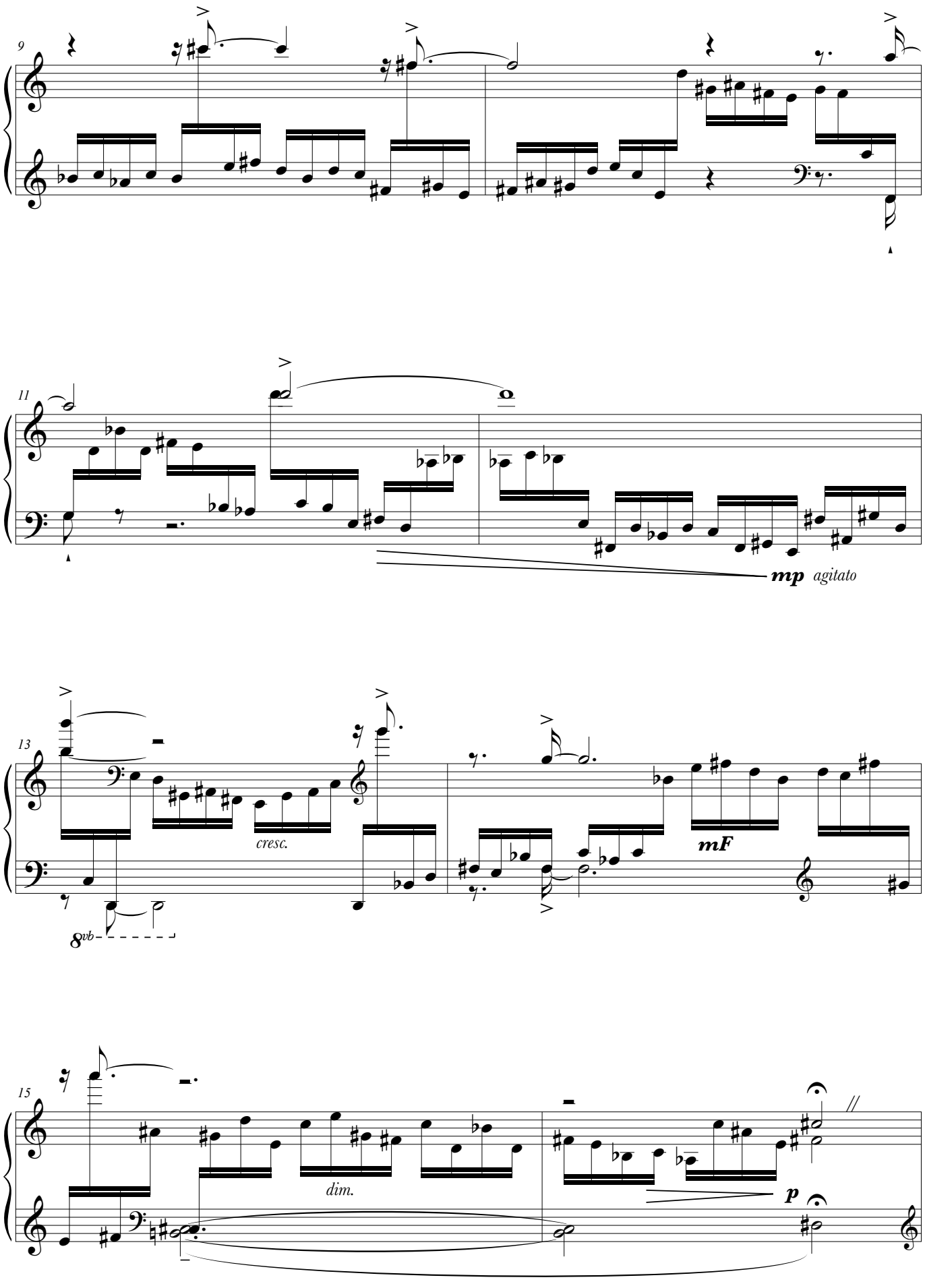
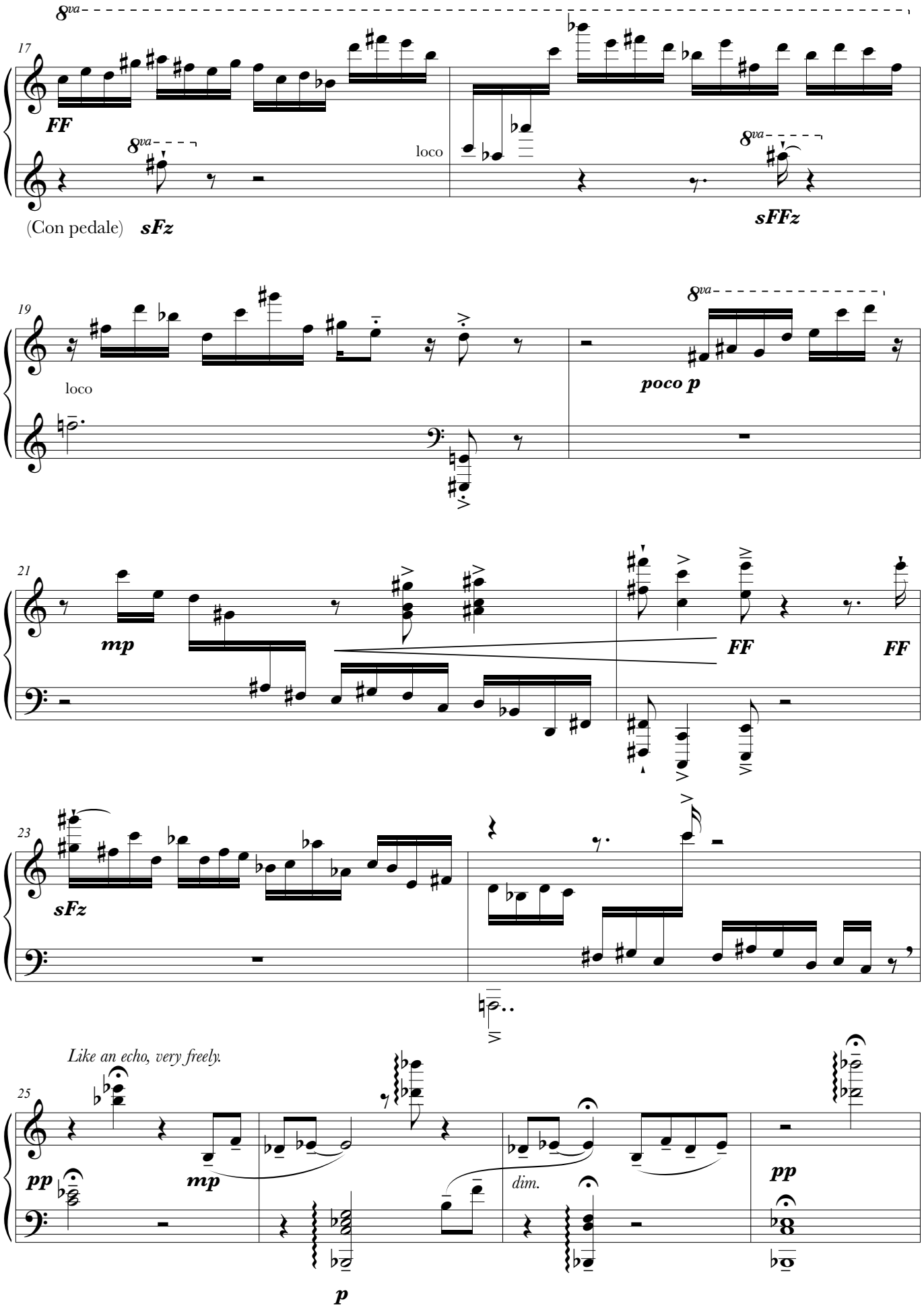
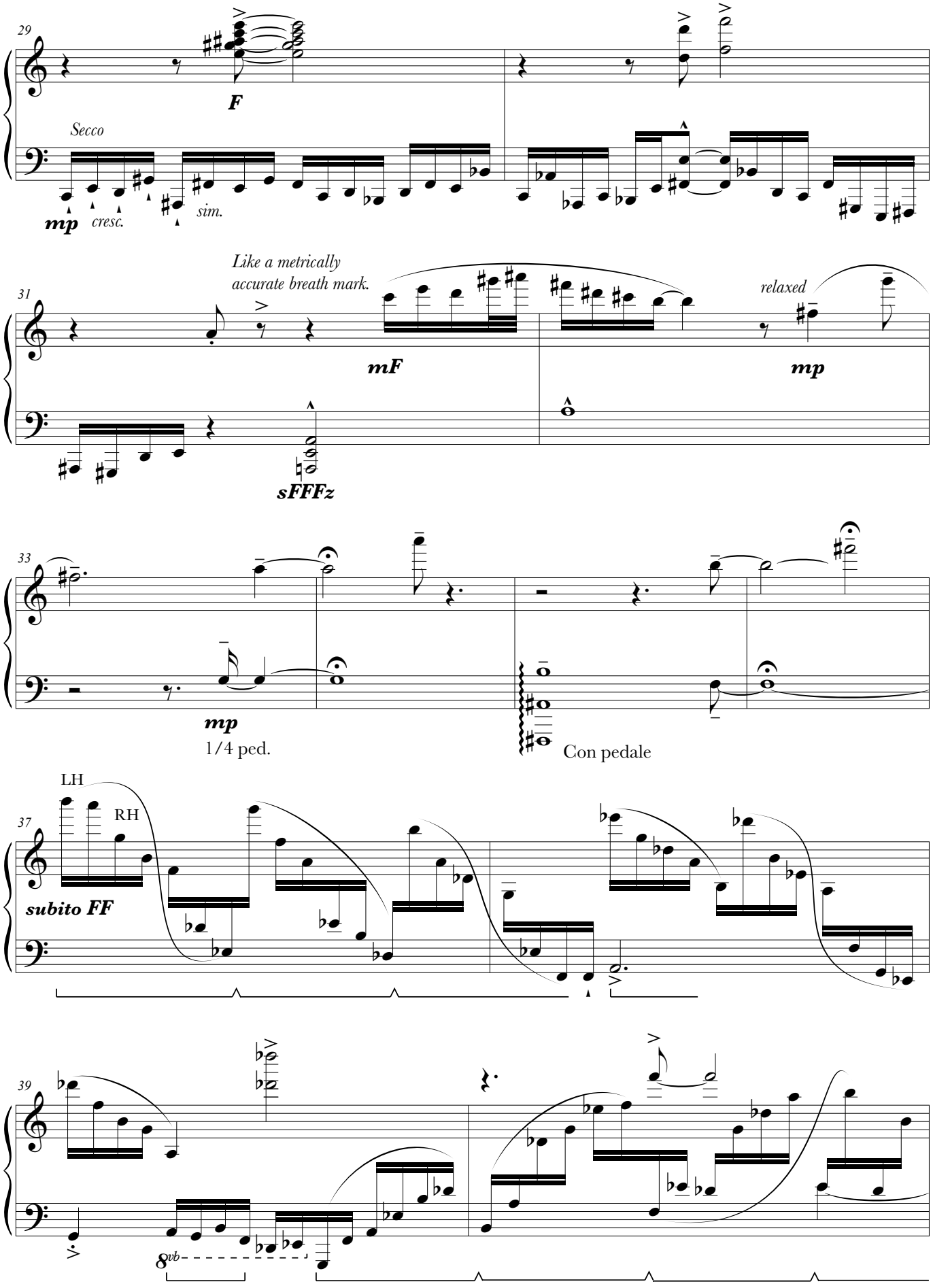
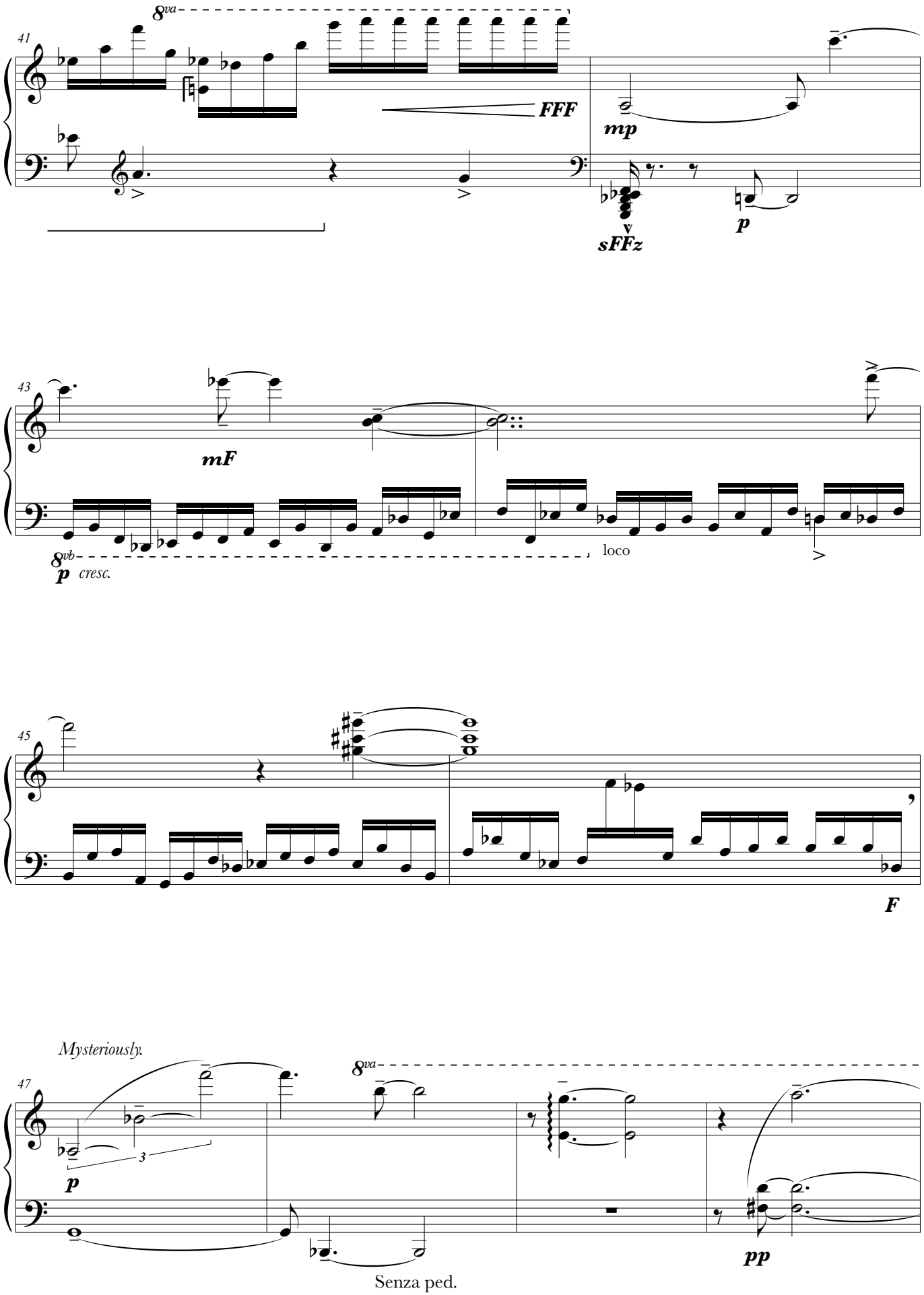
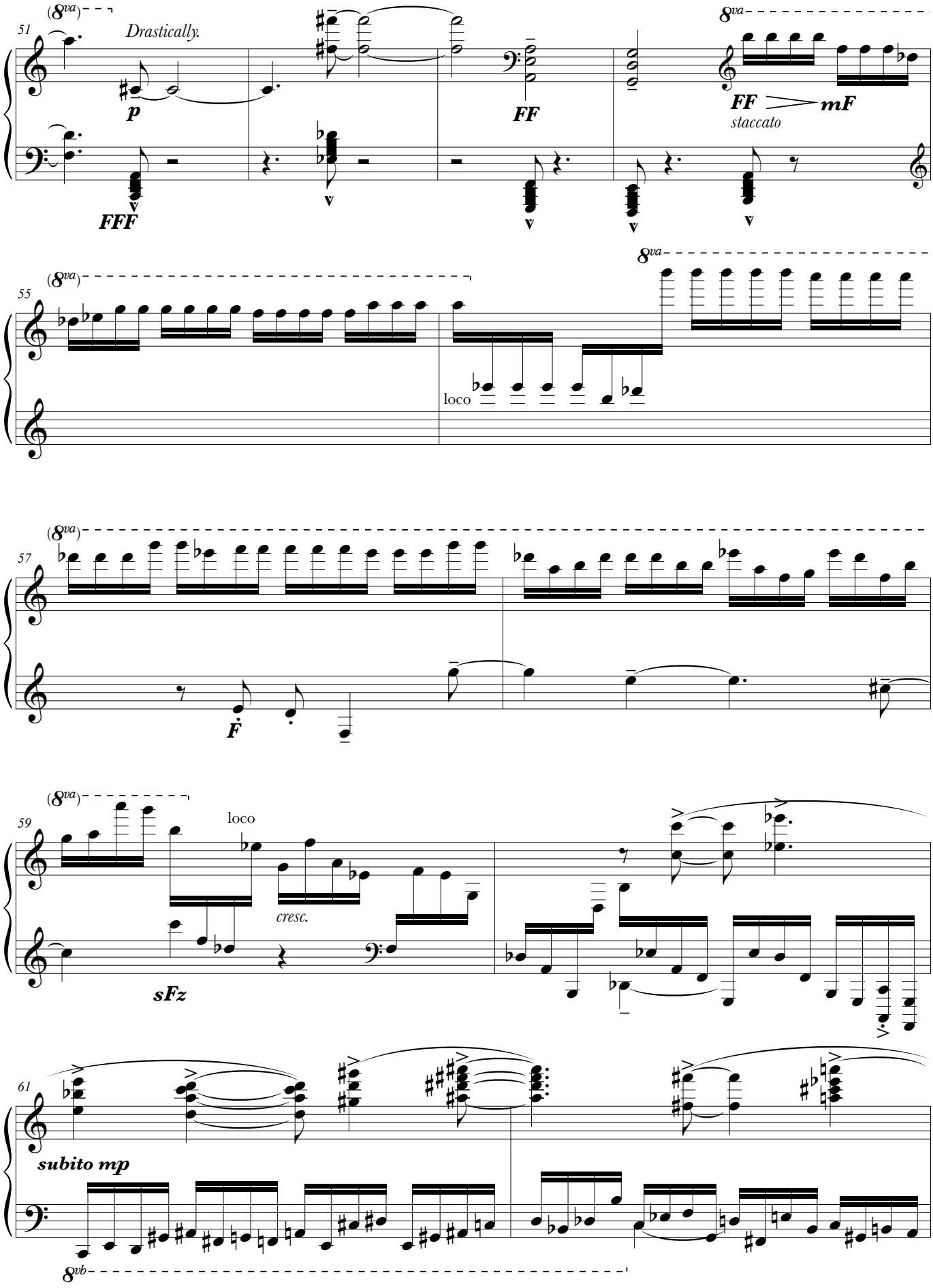
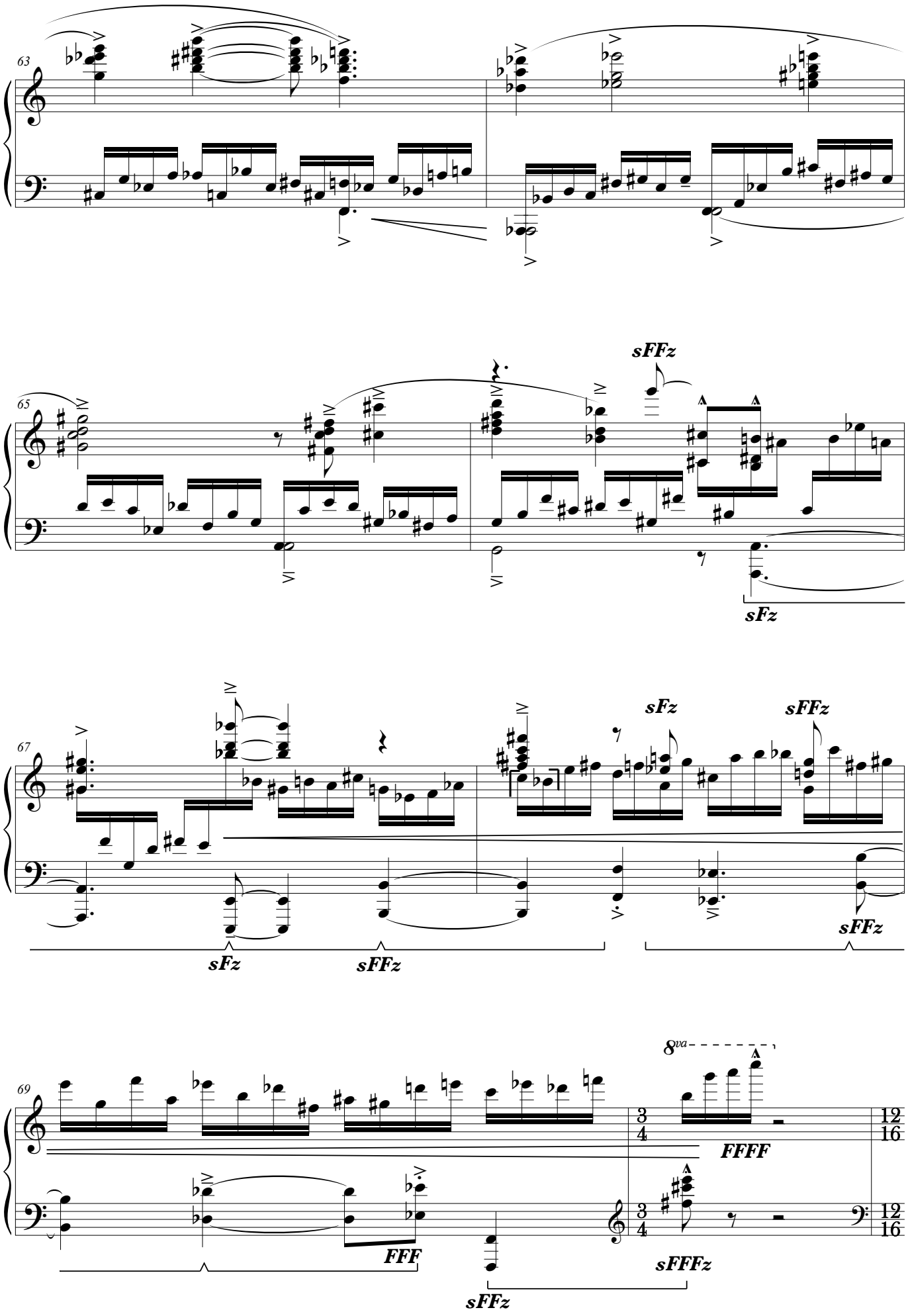

9
11
mp agitato
13
cresc.
mF
8vb
15
dim.
p

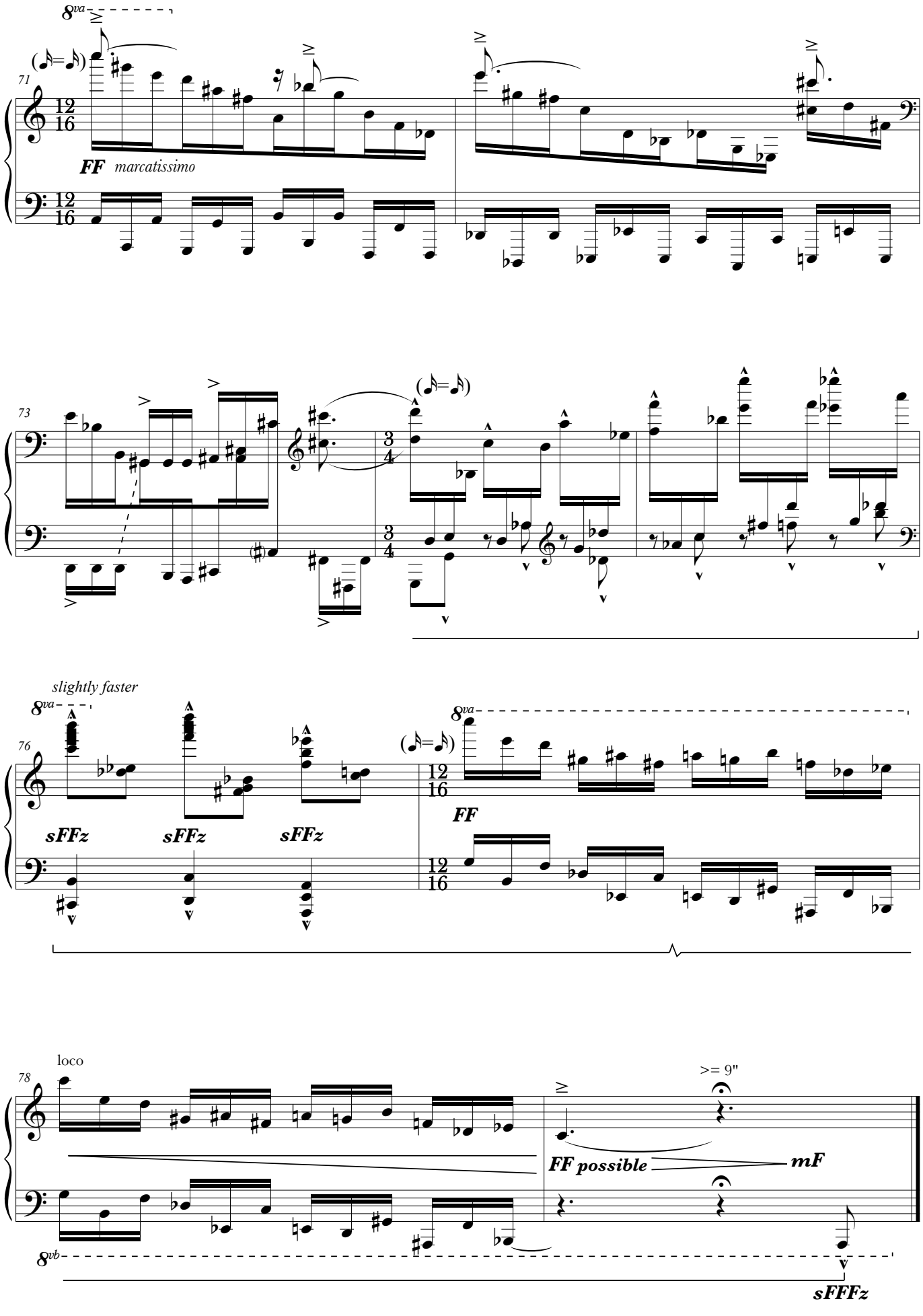

17
8va
FF
8va
loco
8va
sFFz
(Con pedale)
sFz
19
loco
8va
poco p
21
mp
FF
FF
23
sFz
Like an echo, very freely.
25
pp
mp
dim.
pp
p


29
F
Secco
mp
cresc.
sim.
31
Like a metrically
accurate breath mark.
mF
relaxed
mp
sFFFz
33
mp
1/4 ped.
Con pedale
37
LH
RH
subito FF
39
8vb


41
8va
FFF
mp
sFFz
p
43
mF
8vb
p cresc.
loco
45
F
Mysteriously.
47
8va
p
3
pp
Senza ped.


51
Drastically.
p
FFF
FF
FF
staccato
mF
55
loco
57
F
59
loco
cresc.
sFz
61
subito mp


63
65
sFFz
sFz
67
sFz
sFFz
sFz
sFFz
69
8va
FFFF
FFF
sFFz
sFFFz
3/4
12/16


8va
71
FF marcatissimo
73
slightly faster
76
sFFz
sFFz
sFFz
FF
loco
78
>= 9"
FF possible
mF
8vb
sFFFz