rituali mundo venenatis

for prepared piano

Kevin H Gray

NOTES

IMPETUS

Rituali mundo venenatis (ritual for the poisoned world) was composed in February and March of 2011. Its composition was motivated by conditions and events which are probably obvious from the title. Environmental degradation (now so widespread as to be virtually systemic) is a bitter and inexcusable betrayal of the health and happiness of both current and future generations, as well as an ongoing and grossly cavalier endangerment to the continued viability of many (if not, eventually, most) non-human species, and is the impetus for this composition.

As long as society and its organs continue to indulge the destructive delusion that the functioning of an arbitrarily and artificially valued construct, namely, the global economy, is more important than the well-being and sustainability of the very planet on which we live, that long will society's better version of itself, and man's better rapport with his environment, both envisioned by so many, continue to be agonizingly just beyond reach.

PERFORMANCE

The pianist is urged to approach this score with an earnest and impassioned playing style, and though some utilization of *rubato* is hereby sanctioned, its use must not compromise the work's particular rhythmic integrity.

Although the injunction '*pedal sempre*' is found at the beginning of this score, the required observance does not preclude frequent partial releases of the pedal, when deemed appropriate, to prevent the intended sonic patina or glaze from becoming an unwanted smear. It probably goes without saying that the pedal need not be fully depressed at all times; many exquisite effects are to be found in partial pedal depressions. It is to be understood, however, that most measures containing only rests should also contain pedal. True silence should occur very seldom in this work. Likewise, there may be areas where the soft pedal is seen as expedient, but its use should be infrequent. Much of the success of any performance of this composition will depend on the pianist's thoughtful, deft, and artistic deployment of the pedal.

A few words about articulation are in order.

First, and most simply, accents should not be subtle, and must be easily perceived to stand out from their surroundings by even a casual listener.

Next, the unmitigated staccato dot is intended to represent the shortest possible duration, irrespective of all and sundry considerations which, in the minds of many pianists, often justify the lengthening of notes that bear a staccato dot. Within the locus of my composition, the use of staccato is usually meant to evoke an abruptness bordering on violence, (though accompanying accents are by no means thereby implied) regardless of the volume level. The fact of the present work's more or less constant use of pedal in no way softens my injunction to pianists to interpret the staccato dot stringently.

PREPARING THE PIANO

Preparing the piano for *rituali mundo venenatis* is a relatively simple task, since all notes to be used are to be prepared in the same fashion. Several other of my pieces employ this same preparation technique. Mute the strings by firmly depressing commercially available silicone putty earplugs (or similar) to each applicable string nut. The amount of putty required to achieve a uniform, muted tone over the specified area of the piano may vary with register, acoustics of the room, and type of piano. Please note that the goal of the preparations is uniformity of *tone*, rather than uniformity of size of the balls of putty. Some experimentation will be necessary. Prudence seems to dictate that neighboring notes at the periphery of the applicable range also be muted in the same manner, so that the effect of a possible wrong note in the heat of performance is not exacerbated by the sudden, unwelcome intrusion of a non-muted note. The resultant alteration of the responsiveness, tone quality, decay profile, and projection of the piano will be extreme, and the wise pianist will realize that practicing this piece on a piano that hasn't been prepared in the prescribed manner will be of limited efficacy.

It should be noted that, in the composer's opinion, this method of preparing the piano is completely harmless to the instrument, particularly if latex gloves are worn during the preparation. In the unlikely event that the silicone putty imparts a detectable residue, it may be safely cleaned with sterile cotton pads lightly dampened with denatured alcohol. Should a reader of these instructions nevertheless in any way damage a piano, please be advised that the composer assumes no responsibility.

Kevin H. Gray
April, 2011

rituali mundo venenatis

for Prepared Piano

Kevin H Gray

♩ = 68

sempre appassionato

ppp

molto rubato

Ped. *sempre*

... poco ... a ... poco ... meno ... rubato ...

pp

mp

poco rubato

f

mp

mf

mp

mf

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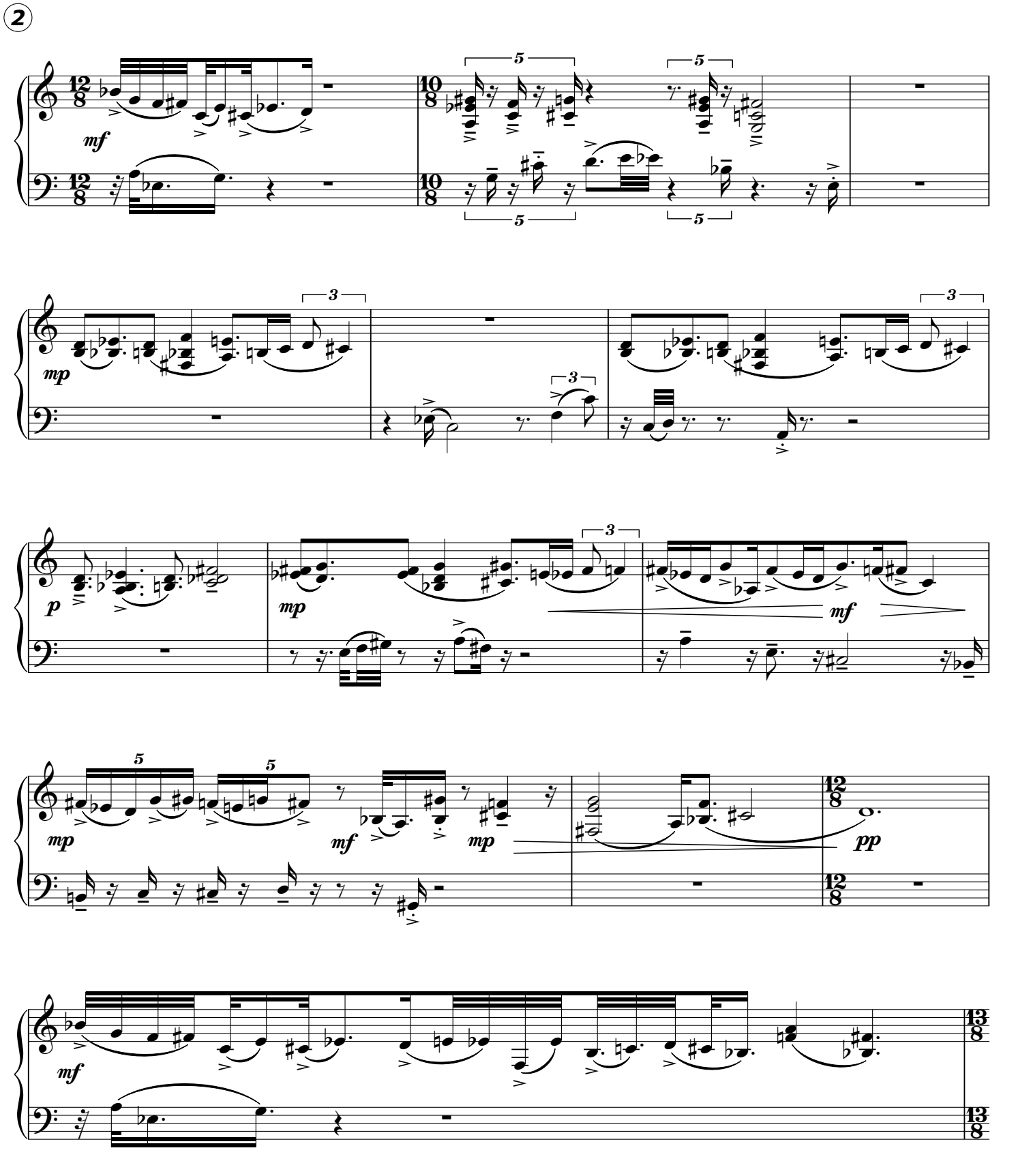
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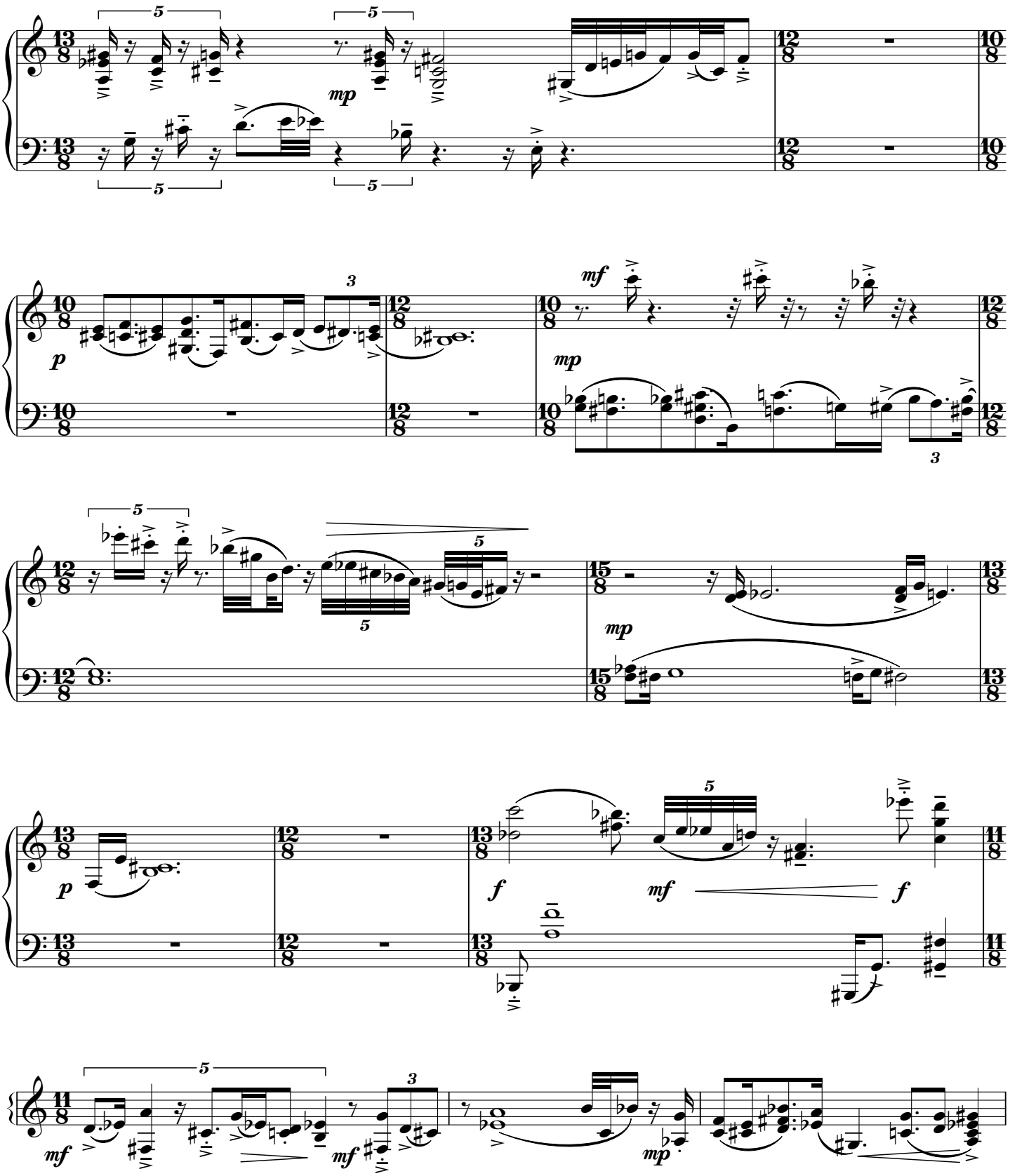
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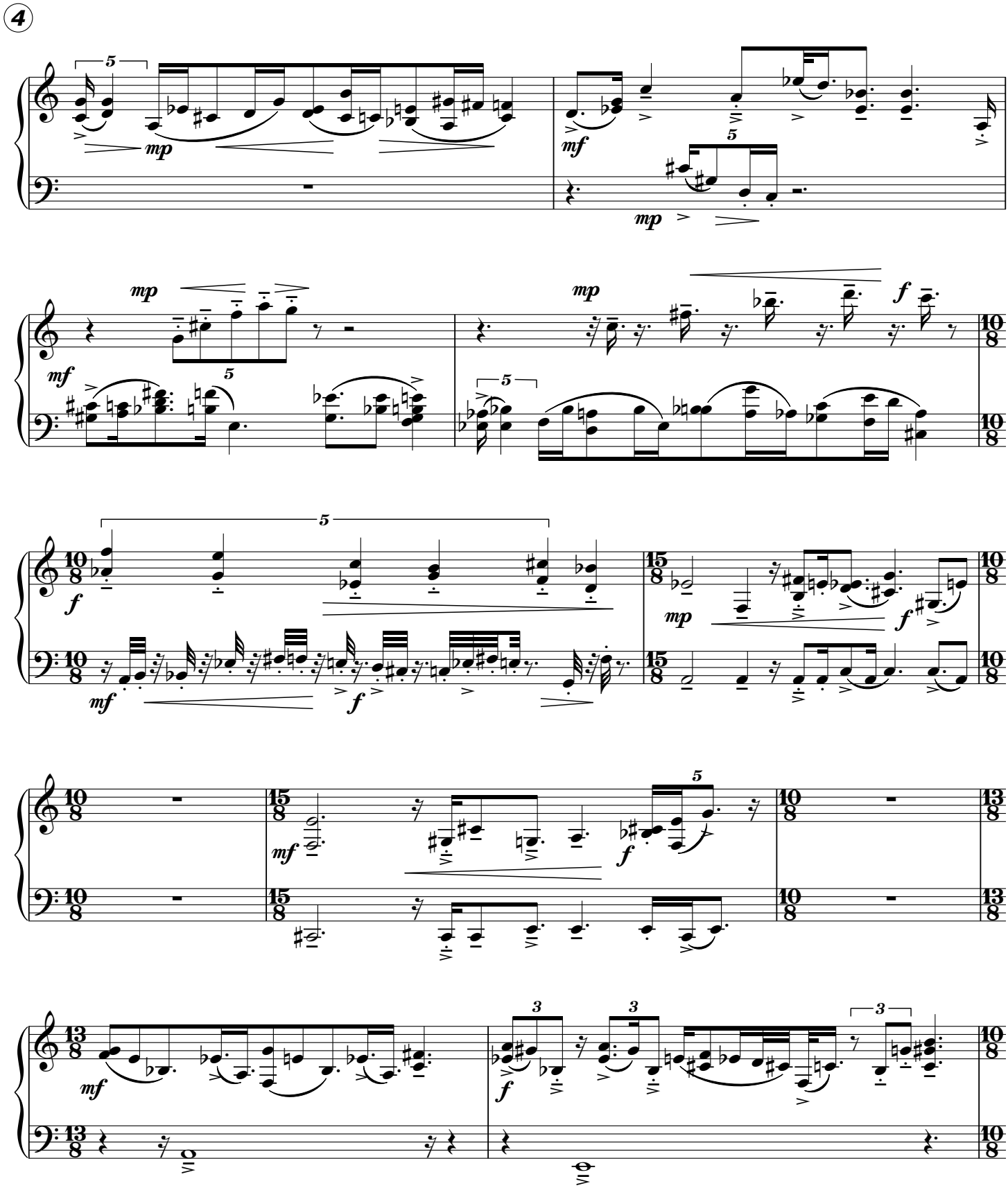
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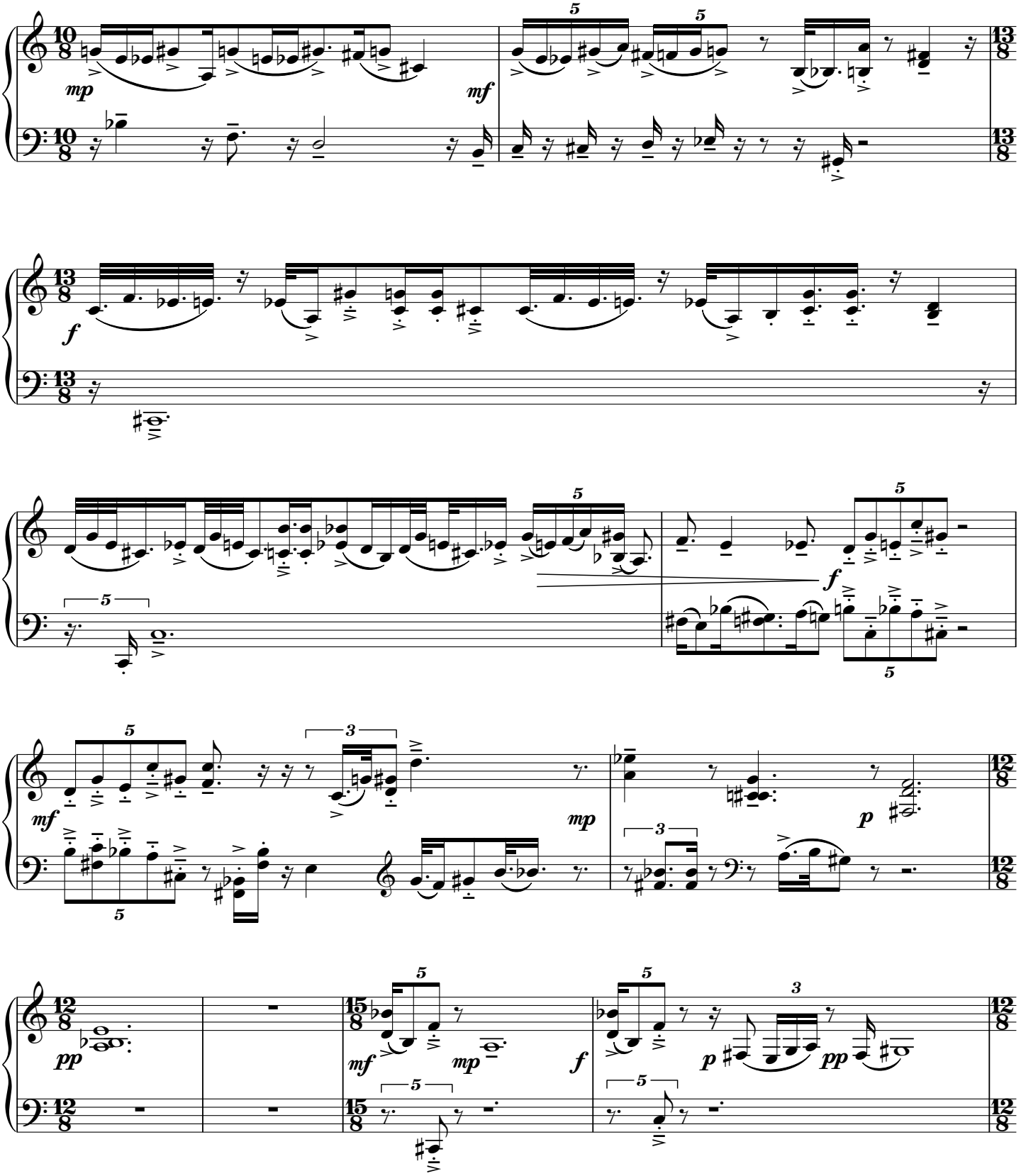
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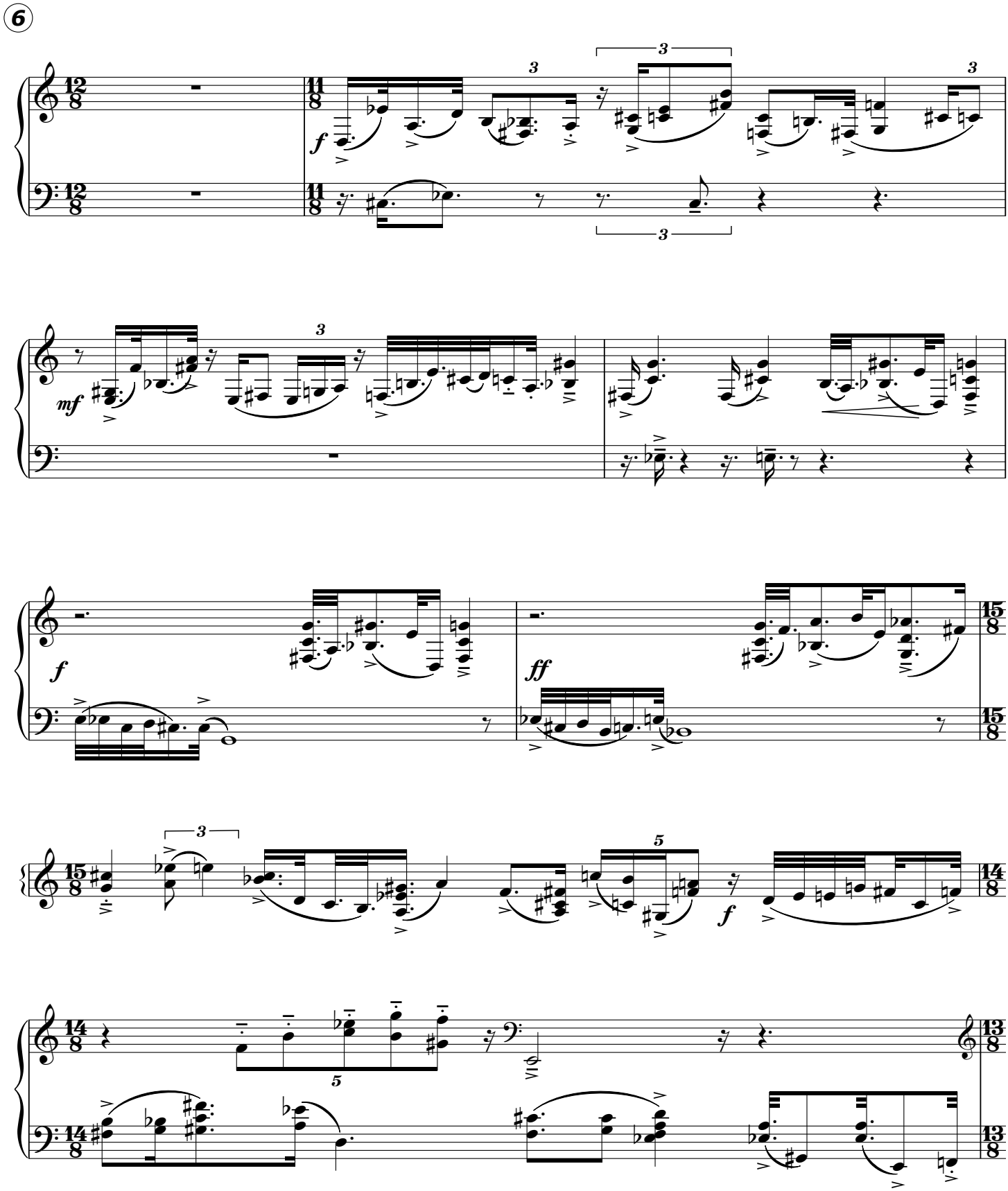
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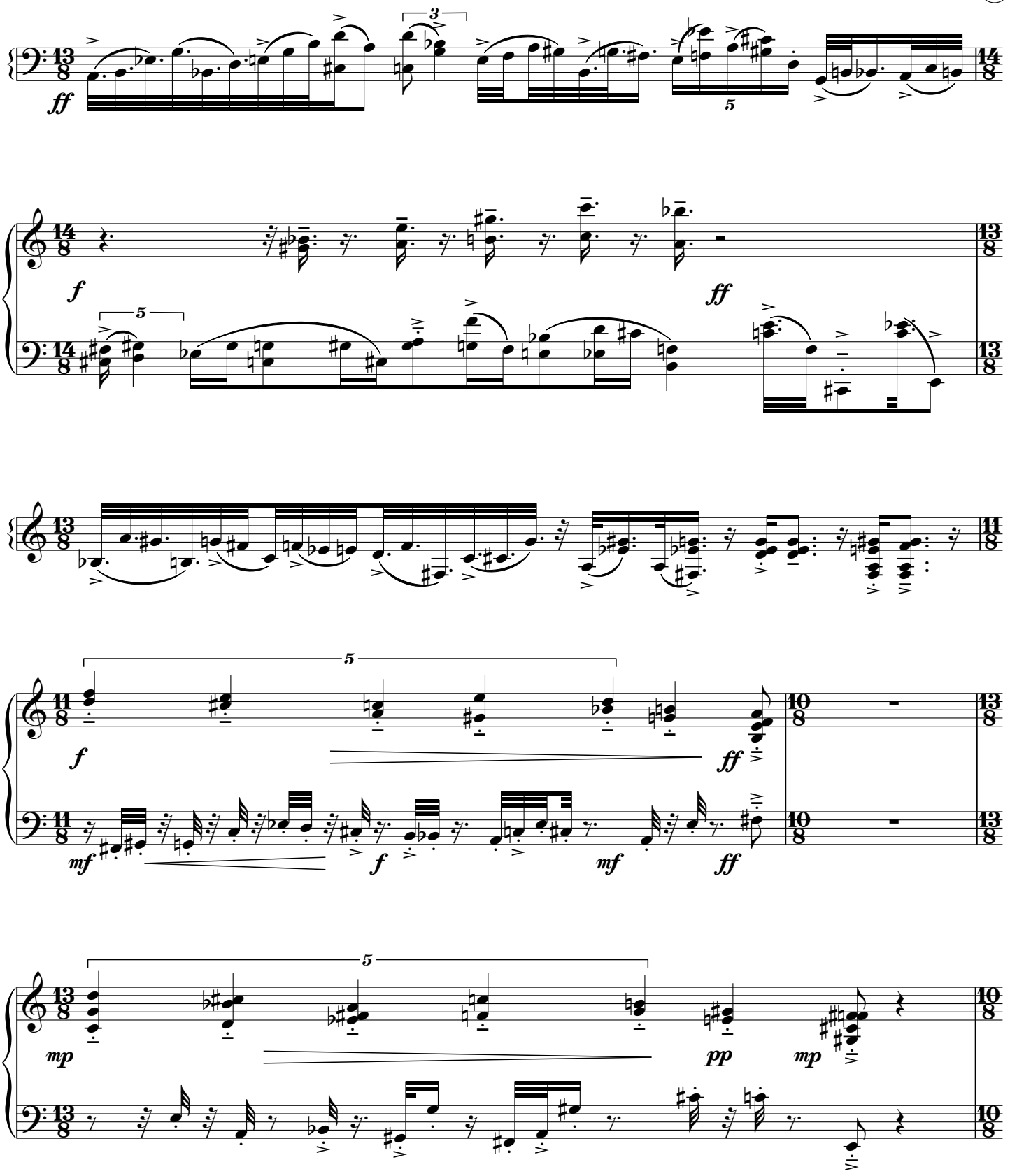
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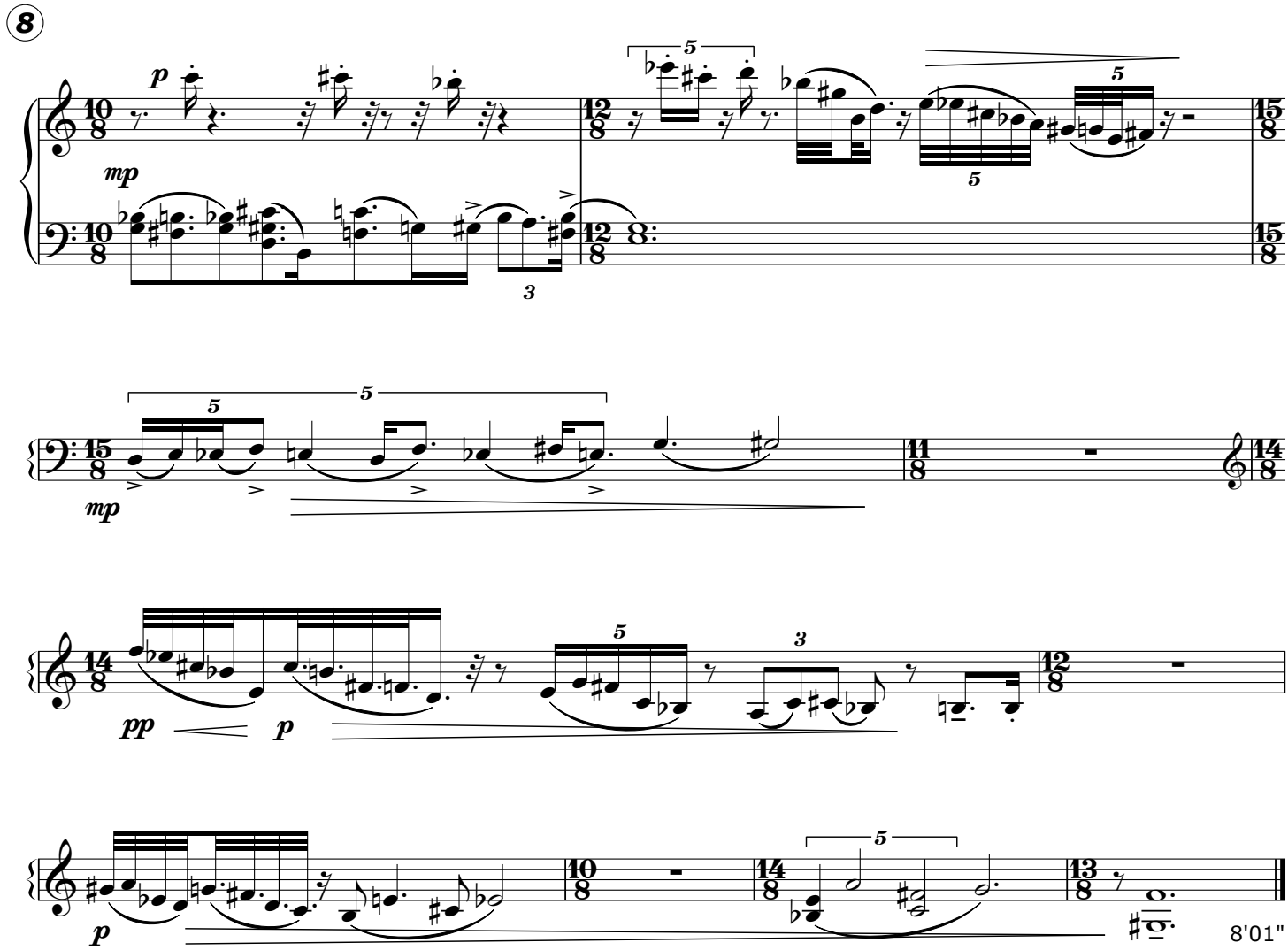
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