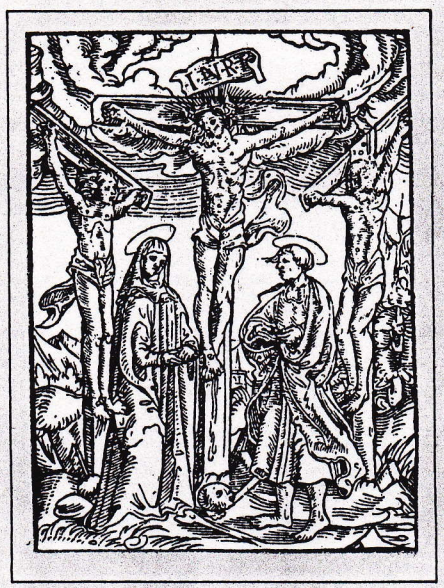
6

Religious Songs

for Soprano and Piano

Words by

Elizabeth Jennings



Music by

Melvin C Bird

August – October 1995.

6 Religious Songs.

1) Introduction

(2) 1 Friday.

2 Christ on the Cross.

3 Dust.

4 Clarify.

5 The Resurrection.

6 The Lord's Prayer.

Friday

We nailed the hands long ago,
Wove the thorns, took up the scourge and shouted
For excitement's sake, we stood at the dusty edge
Of the pebbled path and watched the extreme of pain.

But one or two prayed, one or two
Were silent, shocked, stood back
And remembered remnants of words, a new vision.
The cross is up with its crying victim, the clouds
Cover the sun, we learn a new way to lose
What we did not know we had
Until this bleak and sacrificial day,
Until we turned from our bad
Past and knelt and cried out our dismay,
The dice still clicking, the voices dying away.

2

Christ on the Cross

Forgive them, Father, forgive them Father who
Is in my heart. How frightened she who stands,
My mother with my friend. The soldiers too,
Help me forgive them who have nailed my hands.
It seems so long ago

I talked in Temples. O the streams where John,
Another, poured the fountain on my head.
Father, I tell my mother that a son,
My friend, shall care for her when I am dead.
I am so dizzy on

This wood. The waters flow but now from me.
I have been chosen. Father, I am you
Who breathed, then sapped the great man-offered tree.
Spirit within me, there are risings too.
Father, forgive now, me.

3

Dust

We are made of dust, we are
Flying on every wind,
Blown to the back of the earth,
Stormed at, broken, defiled.
We are people of dust
But dust with a living mind.

Dust with a spirit, grace
Goes to the end of the earth,
Follows the dark act, the thought
Lying, wounding, distraught,
We are dust from our birth
But in that dust is wrought

A place for visions, a hope
That reaches beyond the stars,
Conjures and pauses the seas,
Dust discovers our own
Proud, torn destinies.
Yes, we are dust to the bone.

4

Clarify

Clarify me, please,
God of the galaxies,
Make me a meteor,
Or else a metaphor

So lively that it grows
Beyond its likeness and
Stands on its own, a land
That nobody can lose.

God, give me liberty
But not so much that I
See you on Calvary,
Nailed to the wood by me.

5

The Resurrection

I was the one who waited in the garden
Doubting the morning and the early light.
I watched the mist lift off its own soft burden,
Permitting not believing my own sight.

If there were sudden noises I dismissed
Them as a trick of sound, a sleight of hand.
Not by a natural joy could I be blessed
Or trust a thing I could not understand.

Maybe I was a shadow thrown by some
Who, weeping, came to lift away the stone,
Or was I but the path on which the sun,
Too heavy for itself, was loosed and thrown?

I heard the voices and the recognition
And love like kisses heard behind the walls.
Were they my tears which fell, a real contrition?
Or simply April with its waterfalls?

It was by negatives I learnt my place.
The garden went on growing and I sensed
A sudden breeze that blew across my face.
Despair returned but now it danced, it danced.

6

The Lord's Prayer

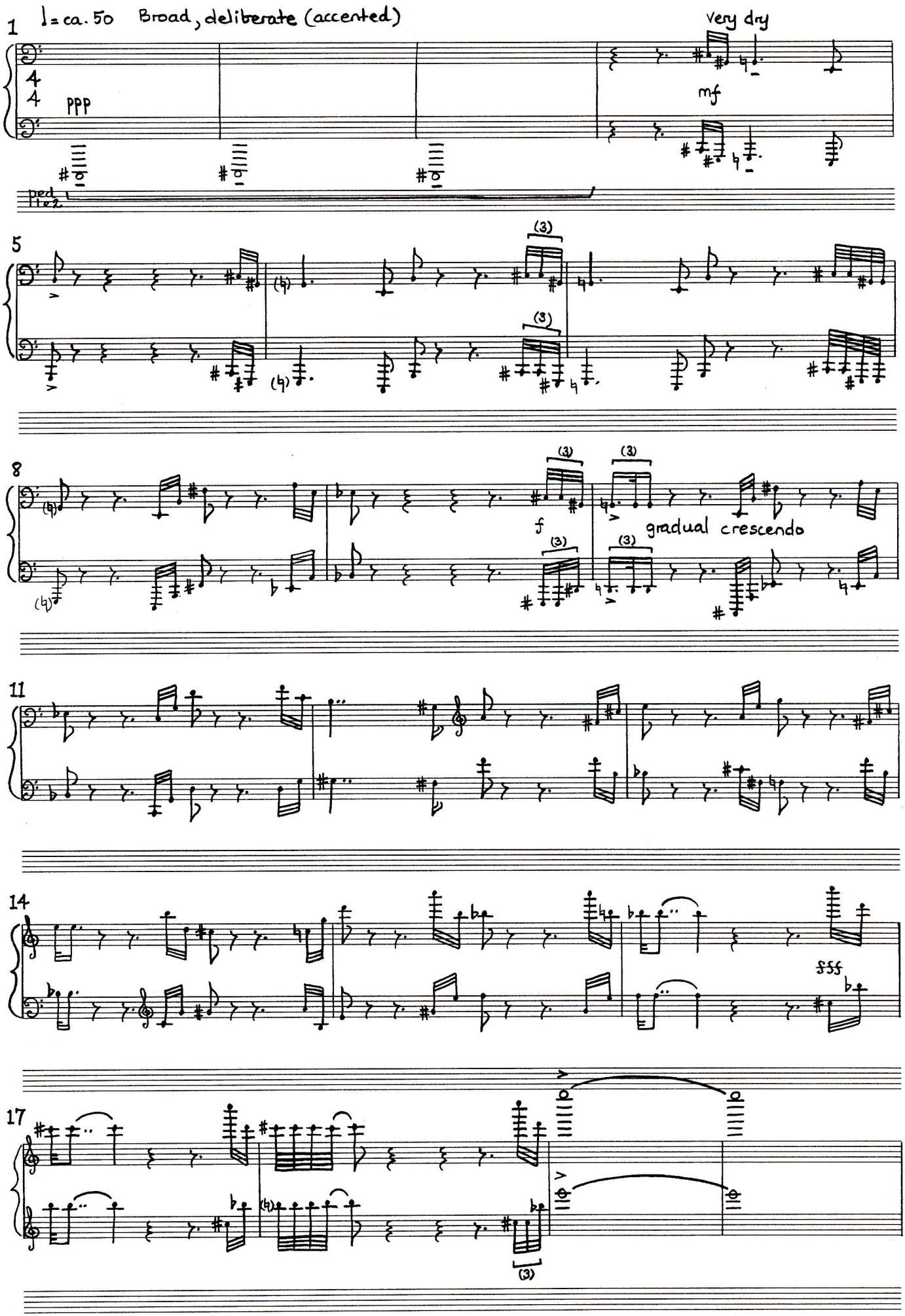
"Give us this day." Give us this day and night.
Give us the bread, the sky. Give us the power
To bend and not be broken by your light.

And let us soothe and sway like the new flower
Which closes, opens to the night, the day,
Which stretches up and rides upon a power

More than its own, whose freedom is the play
Of light, for whom the earth and air are bread.
Give us the shorter night, the longer day.

In thirty years so many words were spread,
And miracles. An undefeated death
Has passed as Easter passed, but those words said

Finger our doubt and run along our breath.



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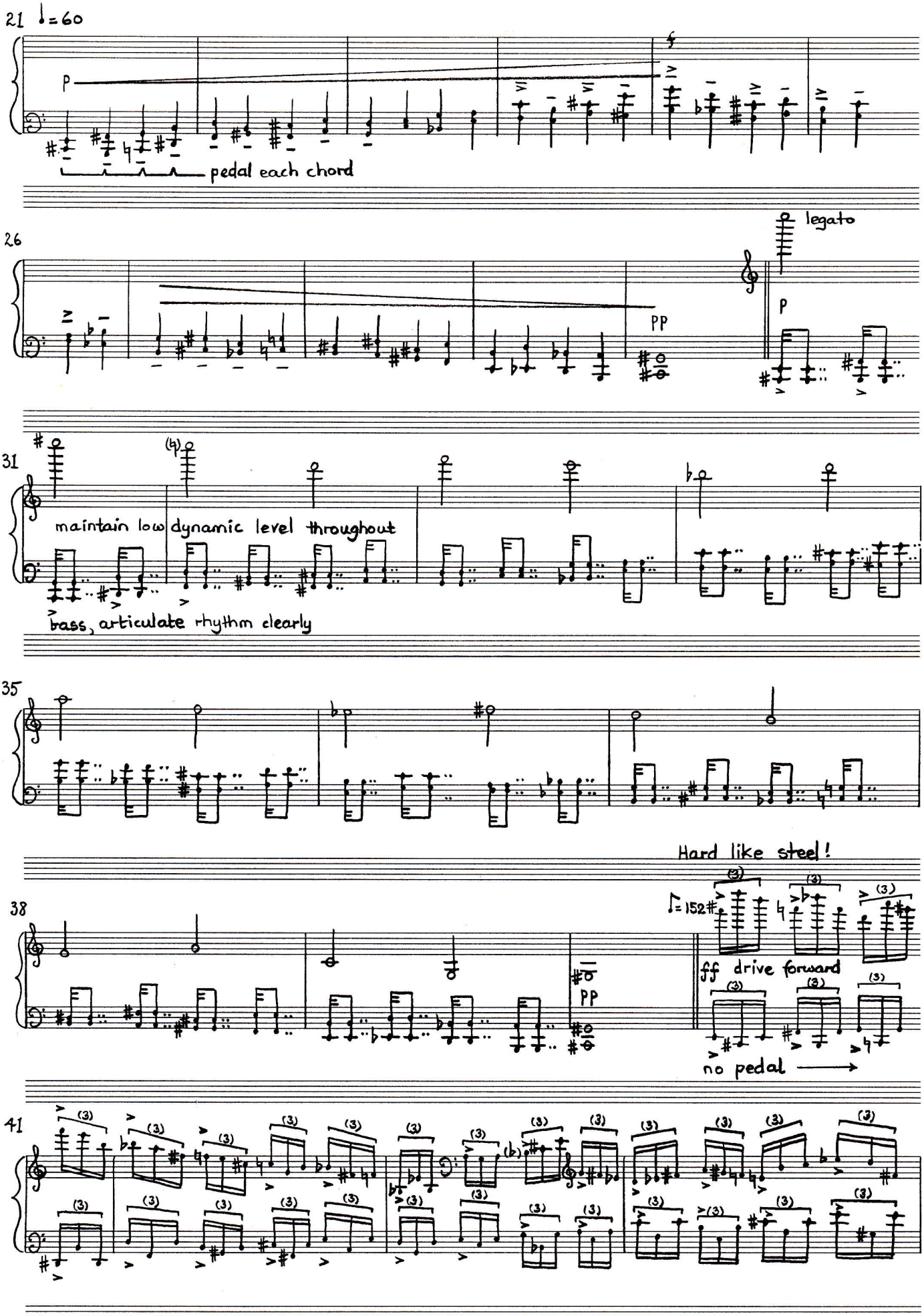
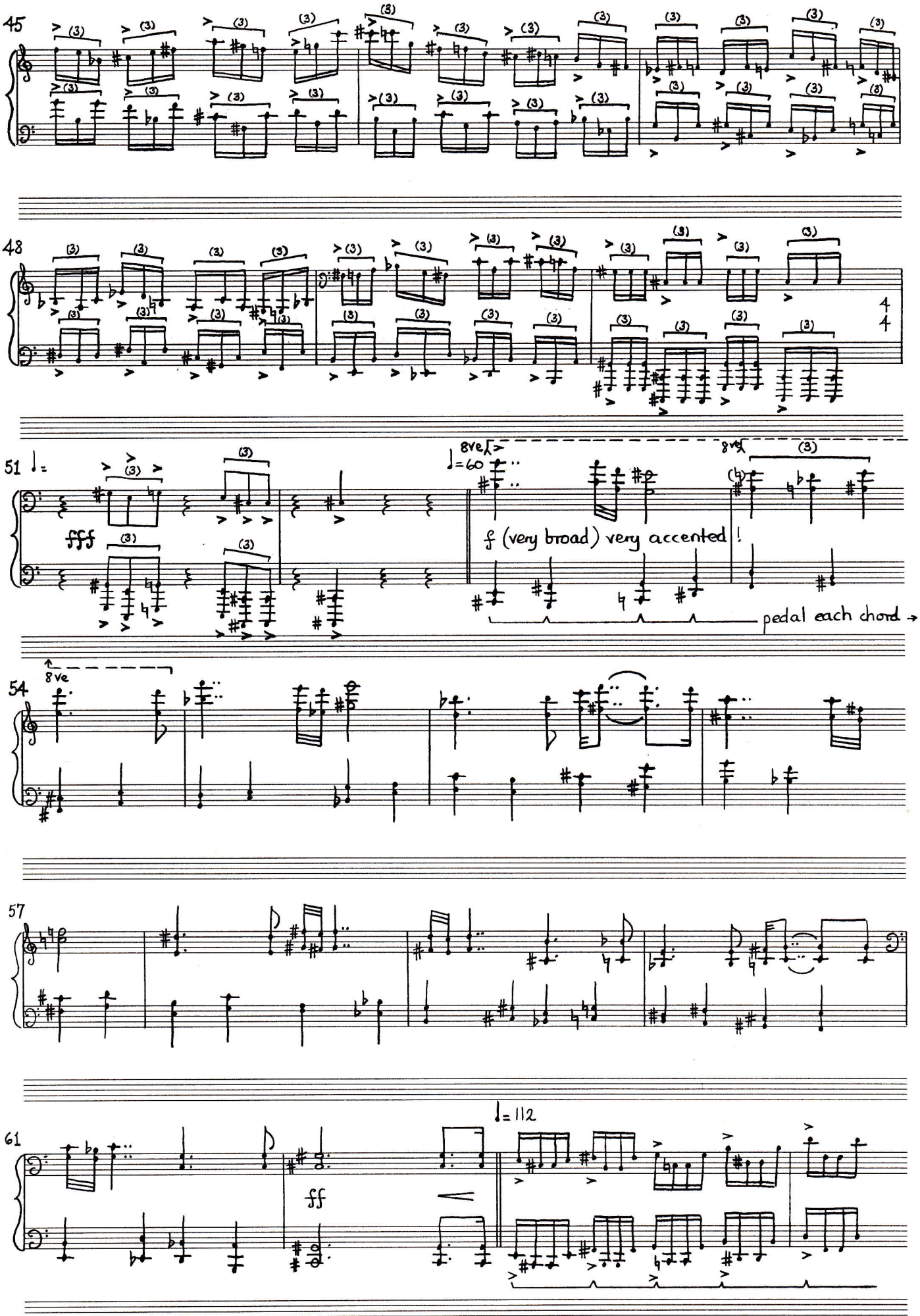
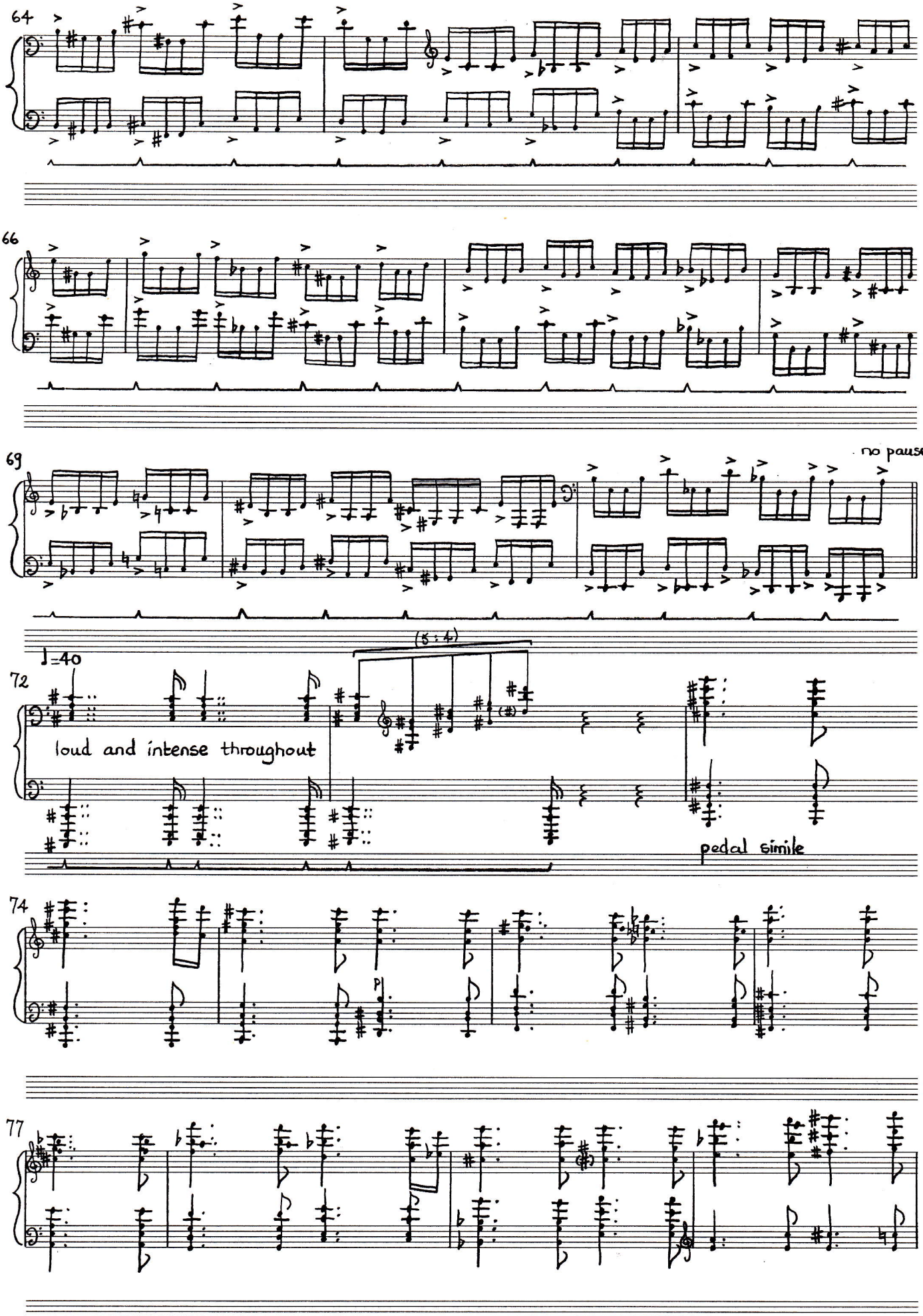
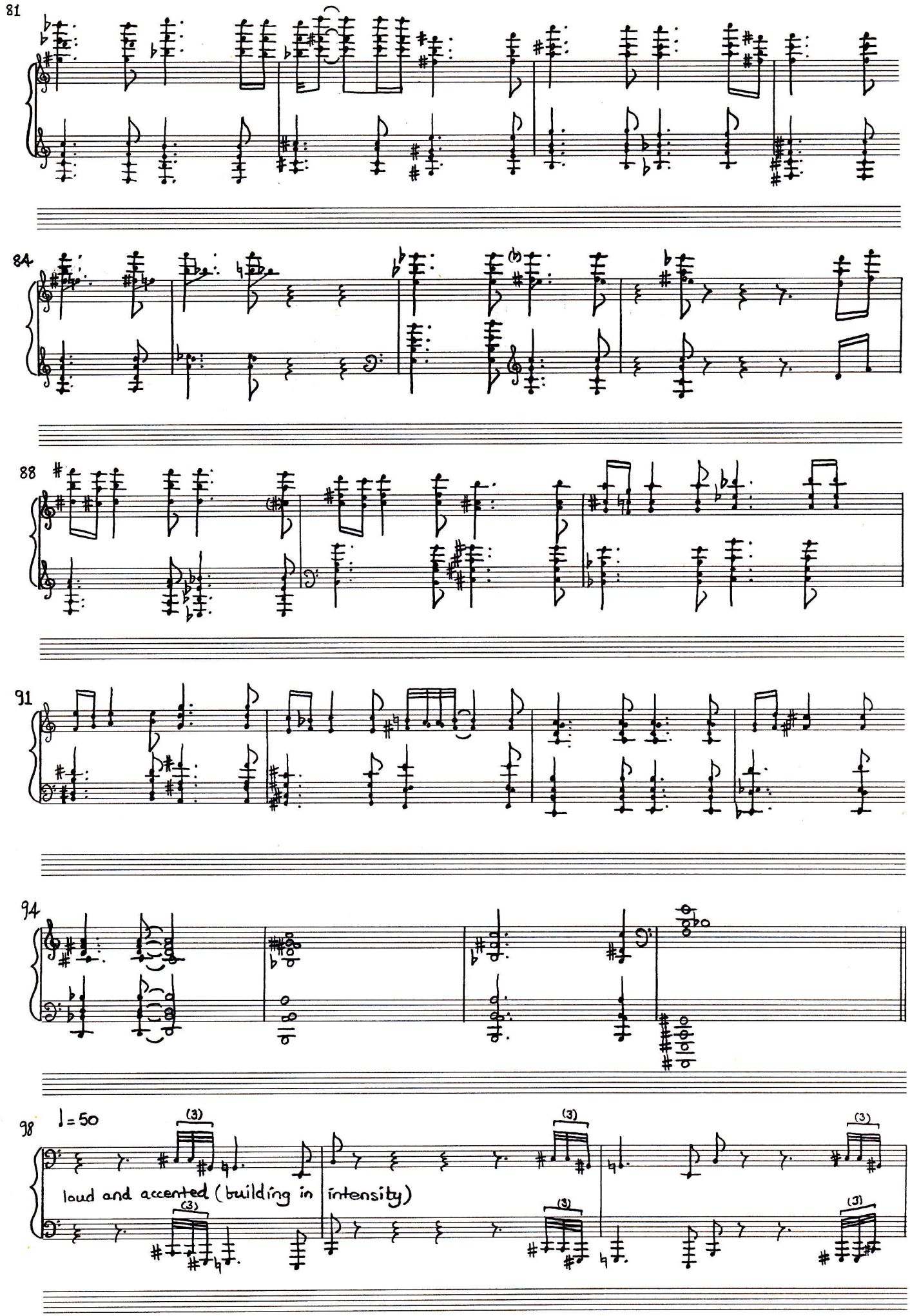
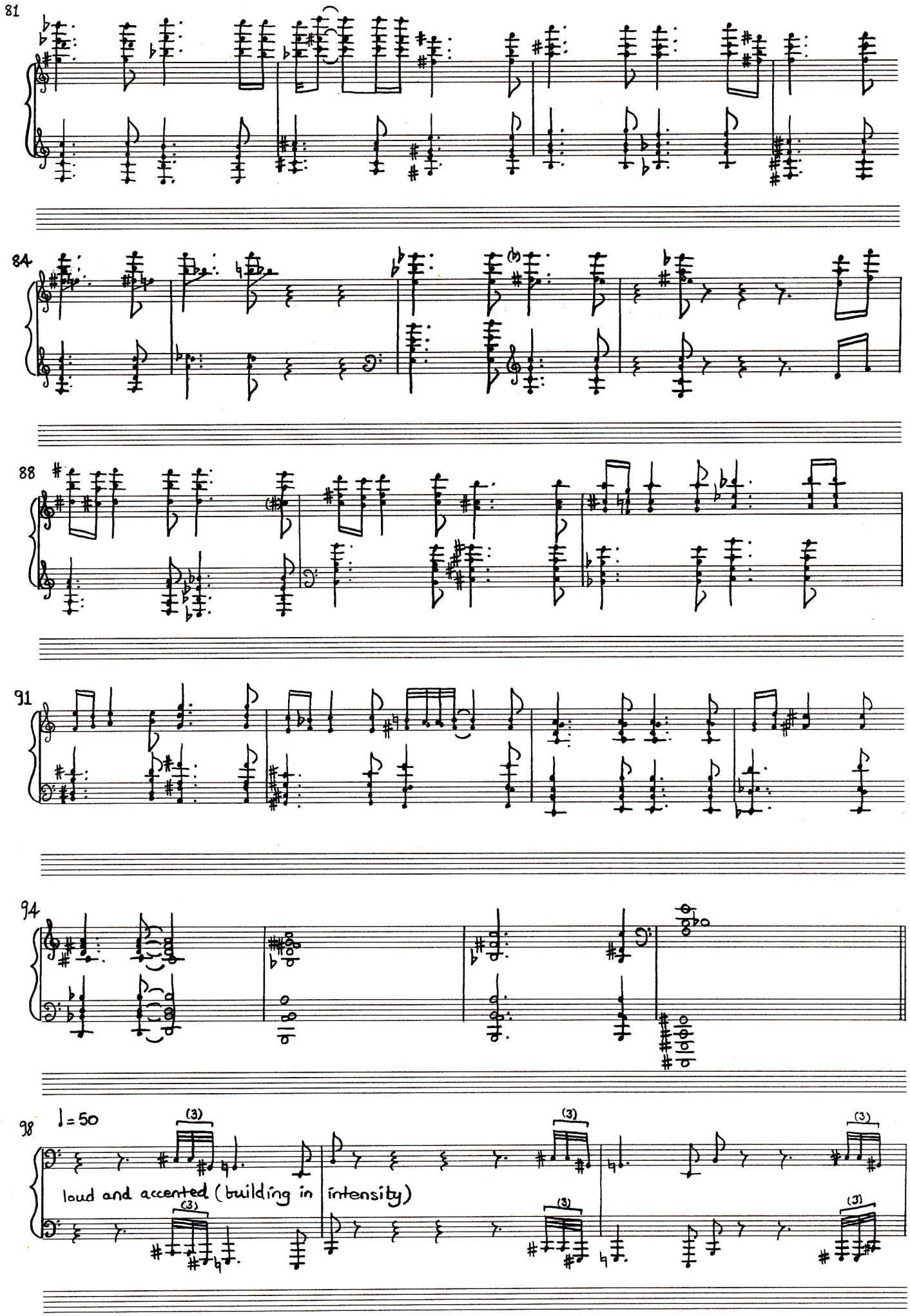
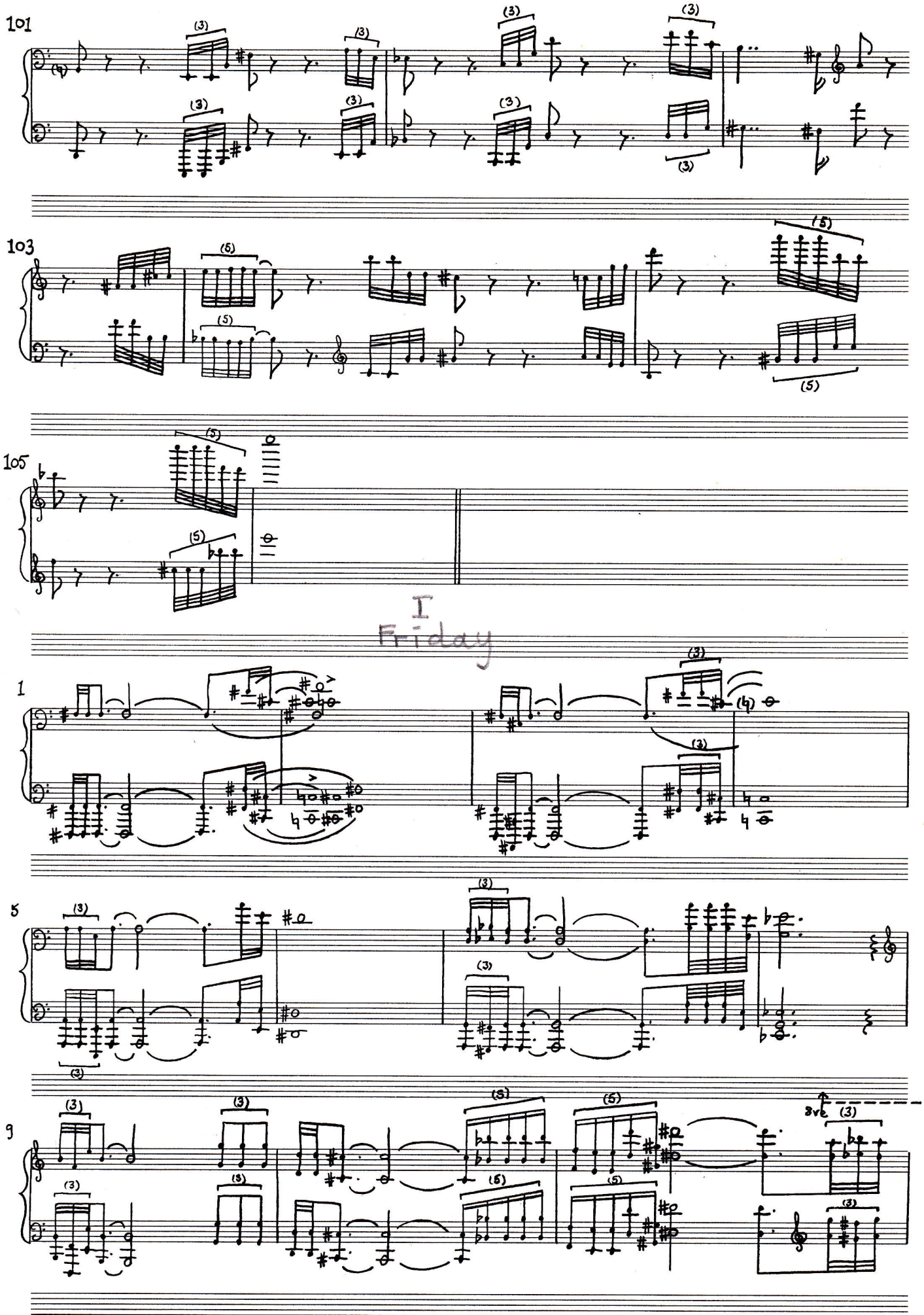

21 ♩=60
p
pedal each chord
26
legato
PP
p
31
maintain low dynamic level throughout
bass, articulate rhythm clearly
35
Hard like steel!
38
♩=152
ff drive forward
PP
no pedal
41


45
48
51
fff
8ve
♩=60
f (very broad) very accented!
pedal each chord
54
8ve
57
61
♩=112
ff


64
66
69
no pause!
72
♩=40
(5:4)
loud and intense throughout
pedal simile
74
77


81
84
88
91
94
98
♩= 50
(3)
loud and accented (building in intensity)


81
84
88
91
94
98
♩= 50
(3)
loud and accented (building in intensity)



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