# Repetition Exercise: A Play in Three Lectures

## For Pianist, Performance Artist, and Orator

Emerson Floyd Voss
© 2024

**Instrumentation**:

grand piano, performance artist, orator

**Duration**:

35 – 40 minutes

**Practical Performance Overview:**

*Repetition Exercise* is a music-theatrical work. It is not opera. It is also not quite music theater in a typical contemporary music or New Music sense. There are narrative elements and actors, though these actors function as embodied ideas more than characters making choices that drive a more typical theatrical narrative. And *Repetition Exercise*'s narrative is less an unfolding of events and more an interplay of shifting perspectives on interrelated philosophical ideas and emotional responses to these ideas.

*Repetition Exercise* has many intermedia elements. In each of its 6 sections there is video projection. At most points during the video projections the pianist must play in time with the video. There is live painting. There is an orator who directly addresses the audience. There is interactive lighting. There is a nude performance artist having theater blood poured over them in a plastic-wrapped enclosure.

In addition to having an artistic director, it is suggested that a stage manager be present for setup and during the performance ensuring that wired connections, theatrical props, lighting, performers, and audience members (who should be very close to the action) remain safe and in their right place. There should also be a designated lighting assistant that turns on and off clamp lights between movements when necessary.

**Program Note/Text Within Pre-Concert Video (watch video here)**

How might interactions between text, speech, and music comprise social relations outside (Lecture I), between, (Lecture II), and within (Lecture III) ourselves? Or how might a work of art inflect the political (Lecture I), the emotional (Lecture II), and the self-referential (Lecture III)?

Lecture I: Form (Within the Real) - Furthermore (and in a Lacanian sense), how might a feeling of the Real* creep into everyday life within our increasingly opaque and complex neoliberal reality where democratically inaccessible dealings between government and corporate leaders worldwide encourage war, environmental degradation, and widespread acceleration of economic inequality? Is our time not incubating a return to a prenatal Form (or void) wherein language and art's ability to make a sense of reality becomes increasingly impotent?

Lecture II: Theory (Within the Symbolic) - And, how might the Symbolic (as the place of meaning which forms the interpersonal including text, speech, and the arts [of which music is a part]) relate to emotion (which can so easily be in tension with the logics

formed from our social symbols)? In other words, can a coherent Theory of meaning's relationship to emotion be formulated?

Lecture III: Praxis (Within the Imaginary) - And finally, how does an artist (as the paradigmatic meaning-maker) project consistently aligned desires of the self to the self? In other words, how does an artist access the Imaginary** to turn meaning (garnered from the Symbolic) into Praxis (i.e., meaningful experiments with lived experience [or artworks]) all while maintaining an awareness of the Real's underlying meaningless form/capital?

*from Wikipedia (https://web.archive.org/web/20230528112330/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Real) - "The real Real is the hard limit that functions as the horrifying Thing (the Alien, Medusa's head, maelstrom and so on) – a shattering force of negation. The symbolic Real refers to the anonymous symbols and codes (scientific formulae, digitalisation, empty signifiers…) that function in an indifferent manner as the abstract "texture" onto which, or out of which, reality is constituted…In the contemporary world, Žižek argues that it is *capital* itself that provides this essential backdrop to our reality and as such represents the symbolic Real of our age."

**from Purdue University's website (https://web.archive.org/web/20230927143804/https://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/psychoanalysis/definitions/imaginaryorder.html) - "Imaginary order. The fundamental narcissism by which the human subject creates fantasy images of both himself and his ideal object of desire, according to Lacan."

**Cast of Characters:**

The Artist: pianist (black attire)

The Other: performance artist (nude except for white ski mask)

The Playwright: orator (black T-shirt, black compression shorts, black socks, and black ski mask with no shoes)

The Teacher: arranged vocal snippets of Sanford Meisner

The Philosopher: arranged vocal snippets of Meisner's protégé Martin Barter

The Students: vocal sample of two acting students performing a repetition exercise

**Total Prop and Physical Tech Needs**:

1 Large 16:9 Projection Screen (9ft x 5ft preferably)

1 Video Projector

1 Laptop Computer

connected to a foot pedal for Max patch

with an audio interface for the speakers and subwoofer

with hdmi for video projector

placed near grand piano on side away from audience

2 Speakers and Subwoofer (with on and off pedal)

11 Clamp Lights

8 with daylight-, 1 with green-, 1 with red-, and 1 with blue-colored bulb(s)

7 Photography Tripod Light Stands

1 See-Through-Plastic-Wrapped Enclosure

large enough for 2 average height people to comfortably stand (4ftW x 4ftL x 7ftH suggested; metal frame of portable beach changing station suggested for frame)

sealed so that splashed liquid cannot leak out

fitted with opening for entry and exit

greenhouse plastic is suggested for its high transparency

4 Gallons of Theater Blood

3 in a 5-gallon bucket

other gallon in a tray in front of the performance artist

placed within enclosure

1 Photography Backdrop Stand (10ftW x 7ftH preferably)

placed in front of enclosure

lit with 2 daylight clamp lights attached to 1 tripod

Large Black Bedsheet or Tablecloth (90in x 150in preferably)

draped over backdrop stand to cover/hide enclosure from audience

1 Large Covered Easel

with large canvas completely covered in glued-on film-quality prop $100 bills

lit with 2 daylight clamp lights attached to 1 tripod

easel and canvas should be covered by a cloth at the start of the piece

Paint Brush, Black and Red Paint in Paint Tray

placed adjacent to large easel

1 Daylight Bulb Clamp Light That Lights Pianist and is Attached to 1 Tripod

Chair and Small Table

fitted with 6 variable voltage controllers connected to 6 clamp lights (3 daylight-, 1 green-, 1 red-, and 1 blue-colored bulb[s])

all colored clamp lights and 1 daylight clamp light thoughtfully placed surrounding and pointing towards chair with two tripods as well as the small table itself as possible points for clamp light attachment

2 daylight clamp lights for audience (1 on each side of audience; each with 1 tripod)

Very Large Thick Sheet of Plastic Laid on the Performance Space Floor

should generously cover entire area beneath and surrounding the easel and enclosure

should cover the floor making a path to the stage exit nearest the enclosure as well as stretch into the stage wing allowing the performance artist and orator to clean themselves with minimal mess

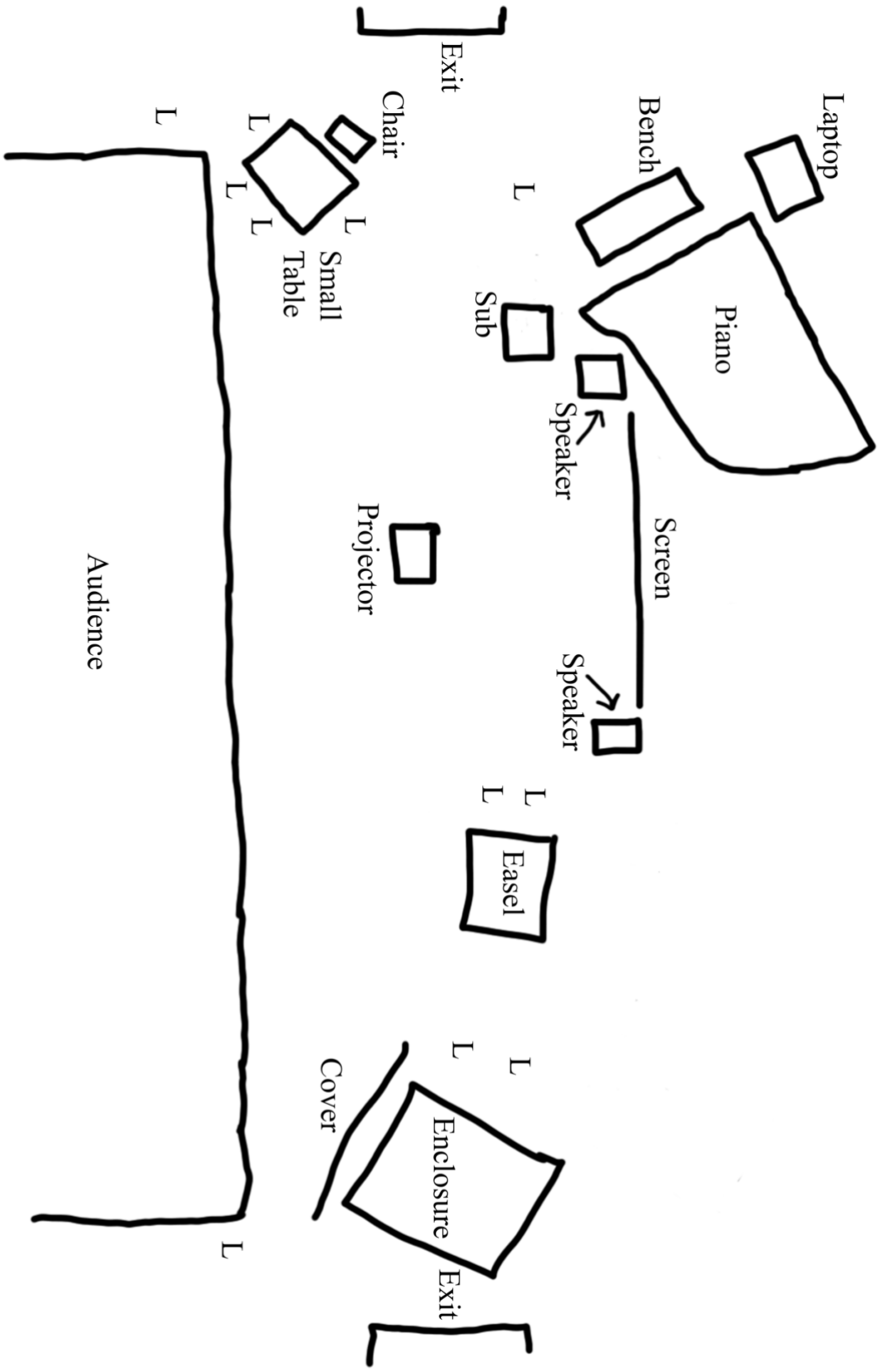
all necessary connection wires (HDMI, quarter inch, XLR, extension chords, etc.)

**Space Considerations**:

The piece should take place in a very large space that allows audience to sit very close to the action.

The space should have the ability to be very dark to show projections very clearly.

**Performance Setup Diagram ("L" means clamp light)**:



**Instructions for MaxMSP Patch Usage**:

For the patch, digital files (video and audio), and a video explaining how to use the patch contact the composer for a link to a google drive folder.

**Composer Contact**: emersonfvoss@gmail.com

**Performance Notes (which are not in the score):**

**General Notes**

Accidentals do not carry through the measure unless a note is immediately repeated.

Downward facing triangles indicate for the pianist to press a foot pedal that triggers a switch in a Max patch provided by the composer that plays an audio and video file.

Words above the staves in large regular typeface are placed where these words would occur within the triggered audio during the piece.

1. **Program Note/Pre-Concert Video (~5m 45s)**

   Video should be triggered by the pianist with foot pedal connected to the laptop running the Max patch.

   Performance artist should already be inside the enclosure nude except for a white ski mask.

   Stage should be completely dark except for video projection.

2. **Title Sequence (~1m 10s)**

   Pianist triggers patch and reads along with score.

   Stage should still be completely dark except for video projection.

3. **Lecture I: Form (Within the Real) (~2m 15s)**

   Lighting assistant should turn on enclosure lights and easel lights as well as make sure that that the subwoofer is switched on with pedal.

   Orator should be ready to enter stage right as soon as the title video is triggered and the pianist starts playing.

   The orator should go to the easel and take off its cloth covering.

Next the orator should begin painting the canvas (covered in $100 bills) with red and black paint.

The orator should paint in time with the music. Pianist and orator should practice this.

When the B-21 raider news report begins the orator should remove large black tablecloth from the photography backdrop stand revealing the enclosure and performance artist.

The orator should then go into the enclosure and slowly pour 3-gallons of theater blood onto the performance artist.

While this takes place the performance artist should splash the 1 gallon of theater blood in the tray in front of themself. The goal should be to cover all the inside of the enclosure's plastic with blood splatter.

After pouring all the blood, the orator should leave the enclosure and put the covering back onto the photography backdrop and exit stage left.

After the blood is poured the performance artist should lay still as if dead. The performance artist may then leave the enclosure discreetly during Lecture II.

At end of Lecture I, the lighting assistant should switch off the enclosure lights and easel lights.

4. **Lecture II: Theory (Within the Symbolic) (~18m 30s)**

   Stage should be completely dark except for video projection.

   At mm. 195 the lighting assistant should plug in the piano clamp light with it already switch on so that the pianist suddenly becomes lit.

   At mm. 277 the lighting assistant should unplug the piano clamp light.

5. **Lecture III: Praxis (Within the Imaginary) (~4m 50s)**

   To start, stage should be completely dark except for video projection.

6. **End Credits (~30s)**

   Stage should be completely dark except for video projection.

# Repetition Exercise: A Play in Three Lectures

## Program Notes/Pre-Concert Video

Emerson Voss (2024)

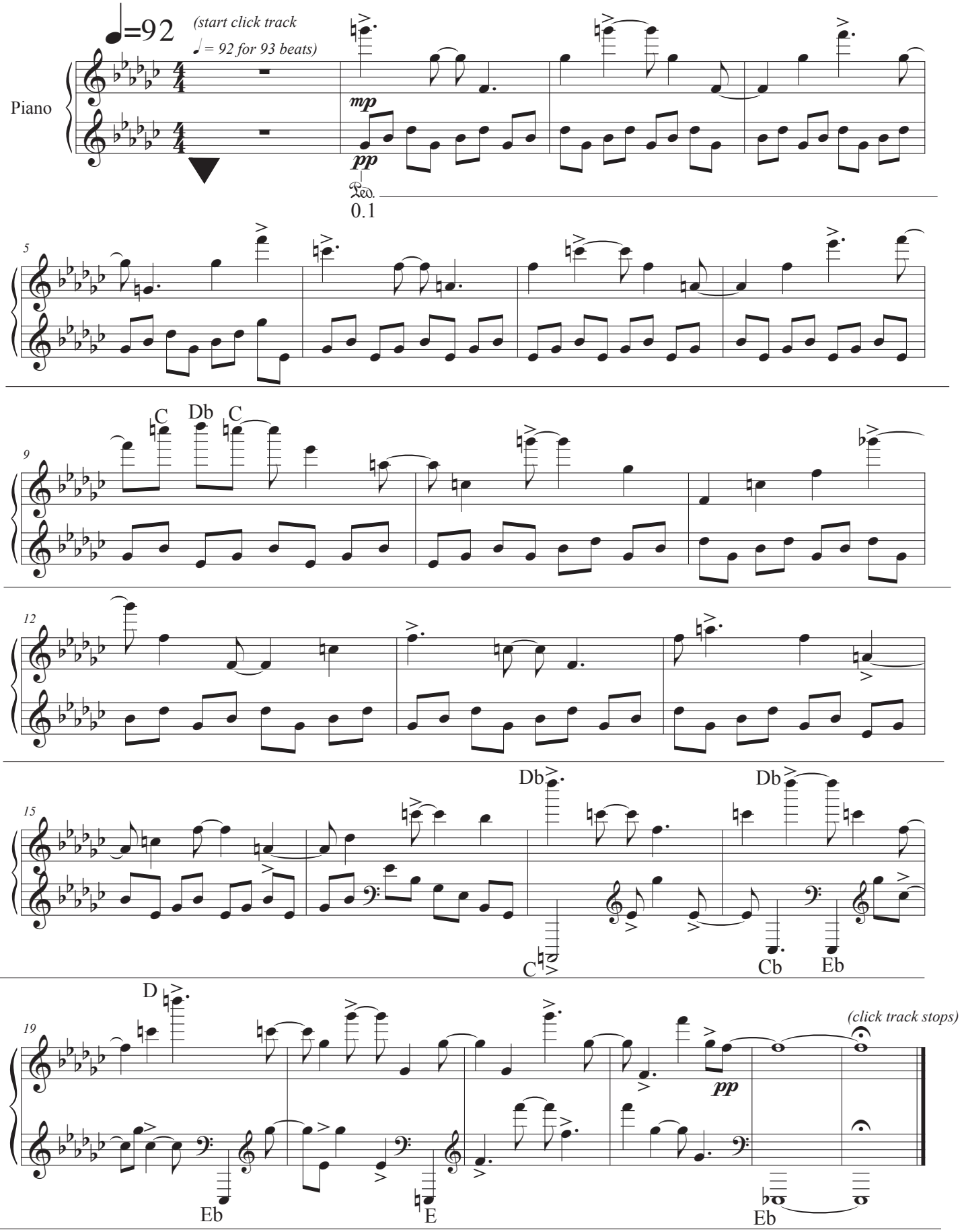
© 2024 Emeson Floyd Voss

# Repetition Exercise

## A Play in Three Lectures

## Title Sequence

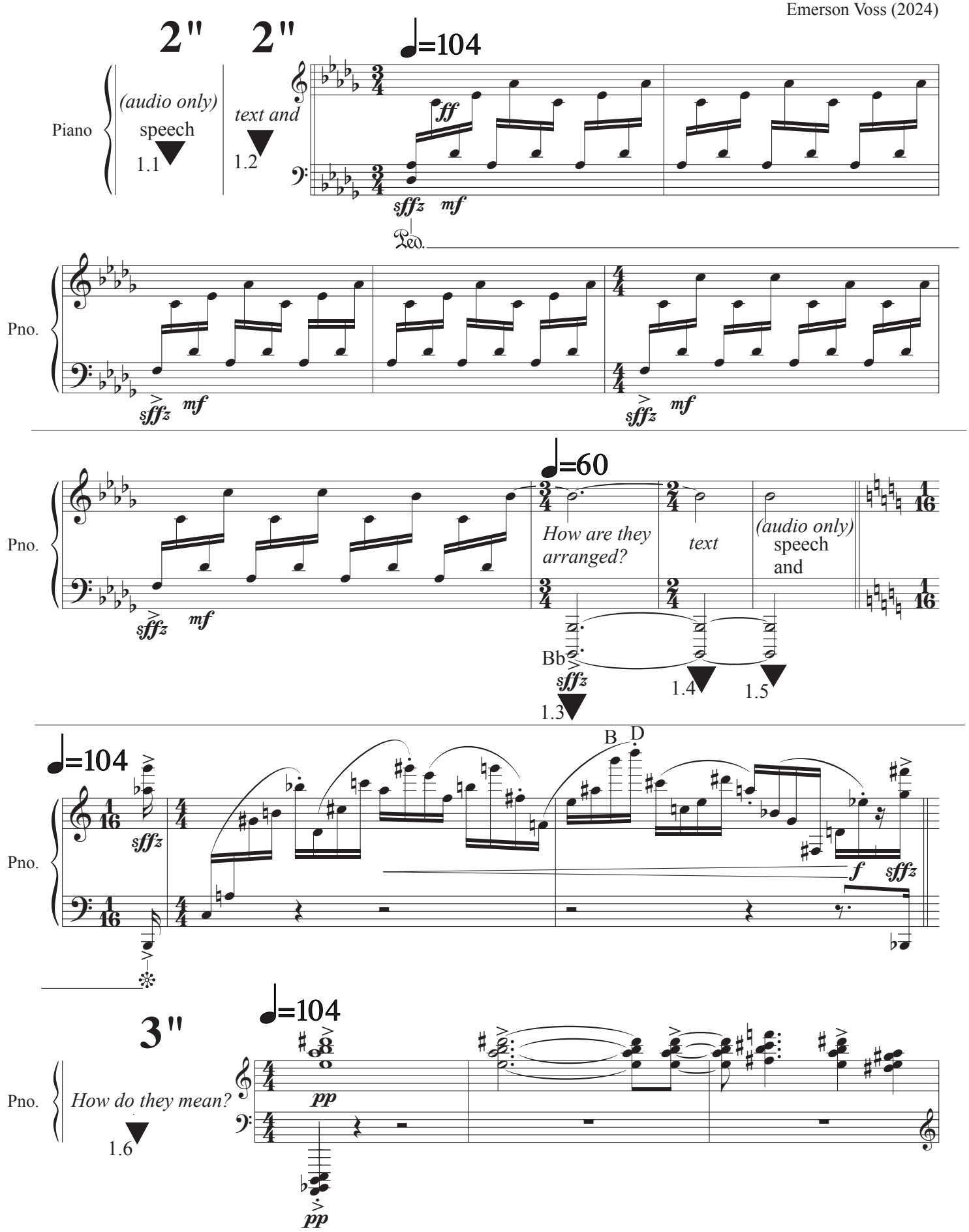
Emerson Voss (2023)

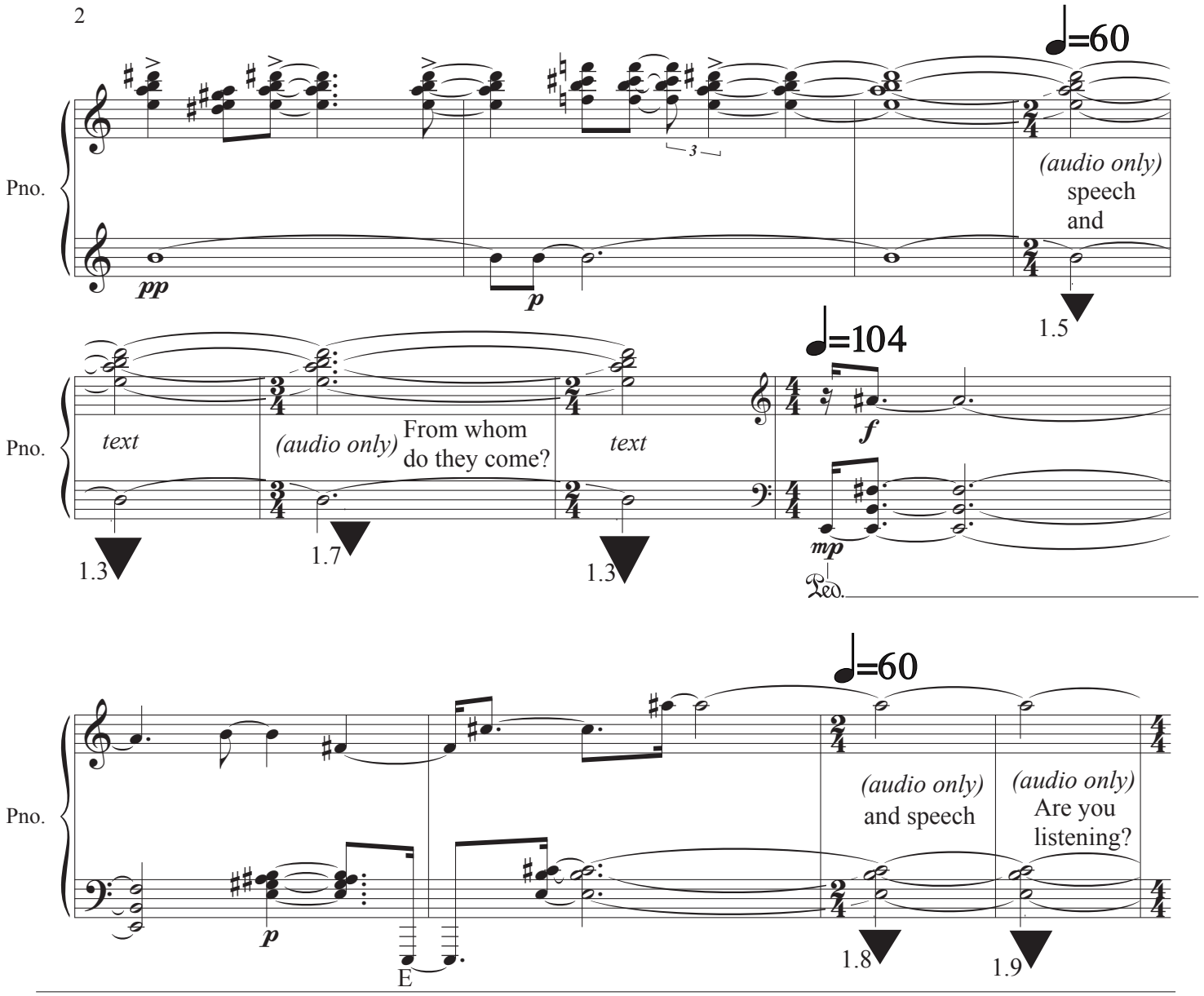


# Repetition Exercise

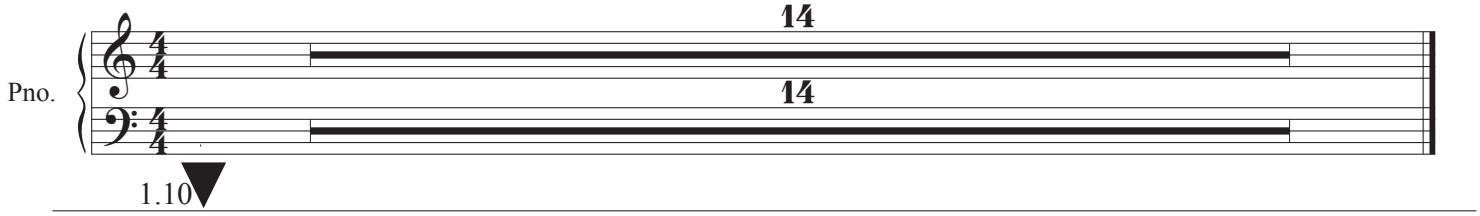
## Lecture I: Form

Emerson Voss (2024)






*(B-21 Raider News Report Excerpt)*



# Repetition Exercise

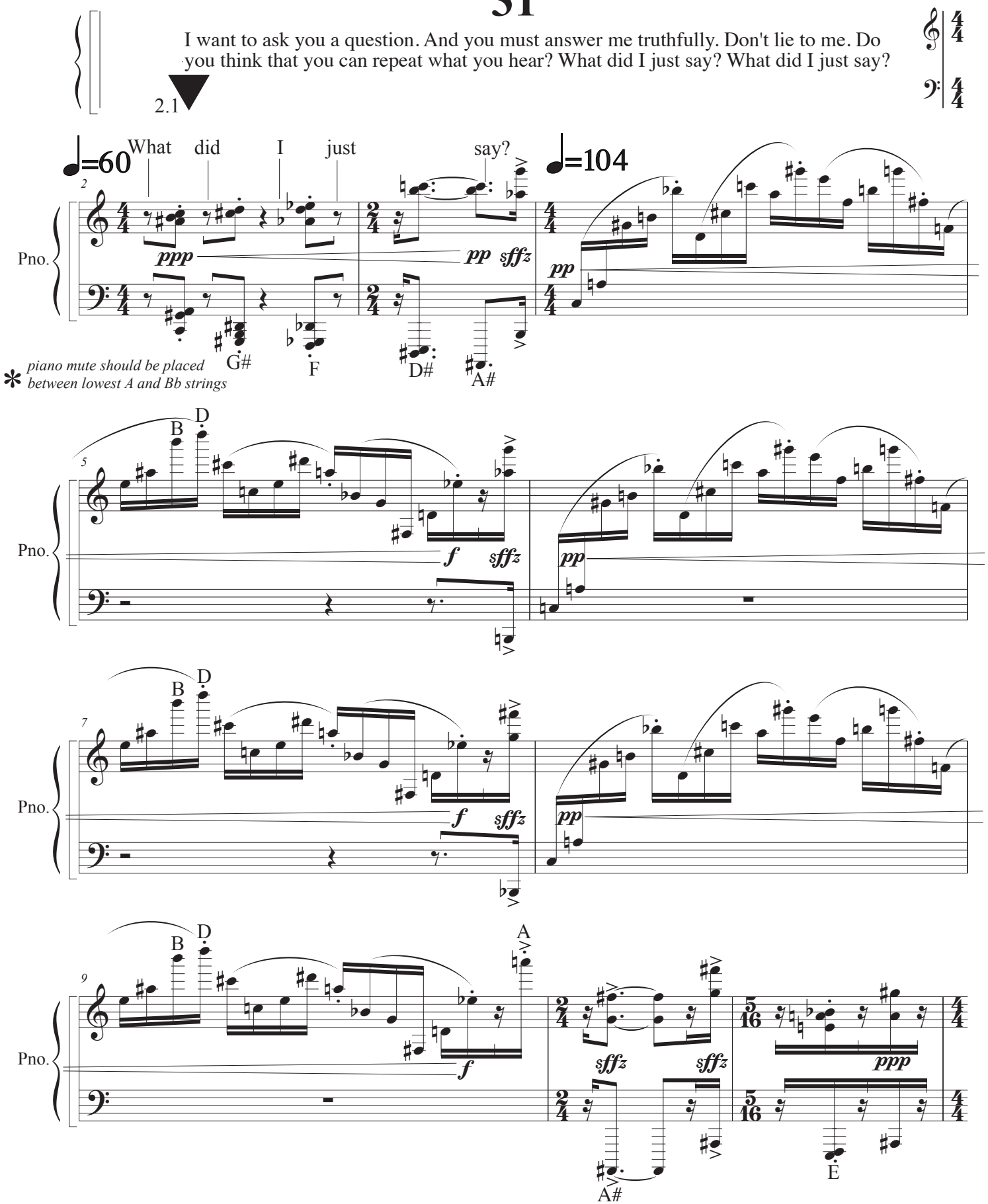
## Lecture II: Theory
## (within the Symbolic)

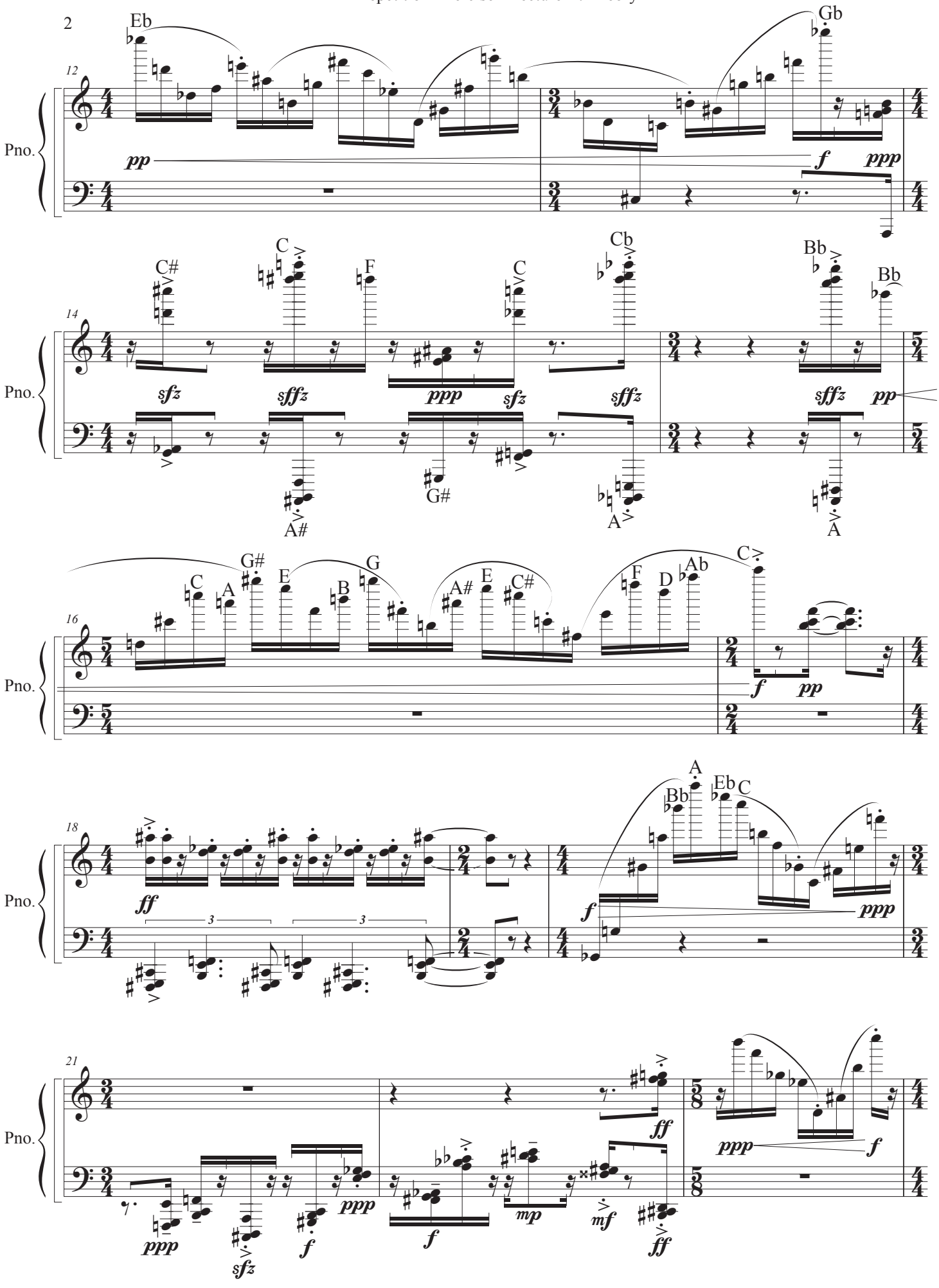
Emerson Voss (2023)

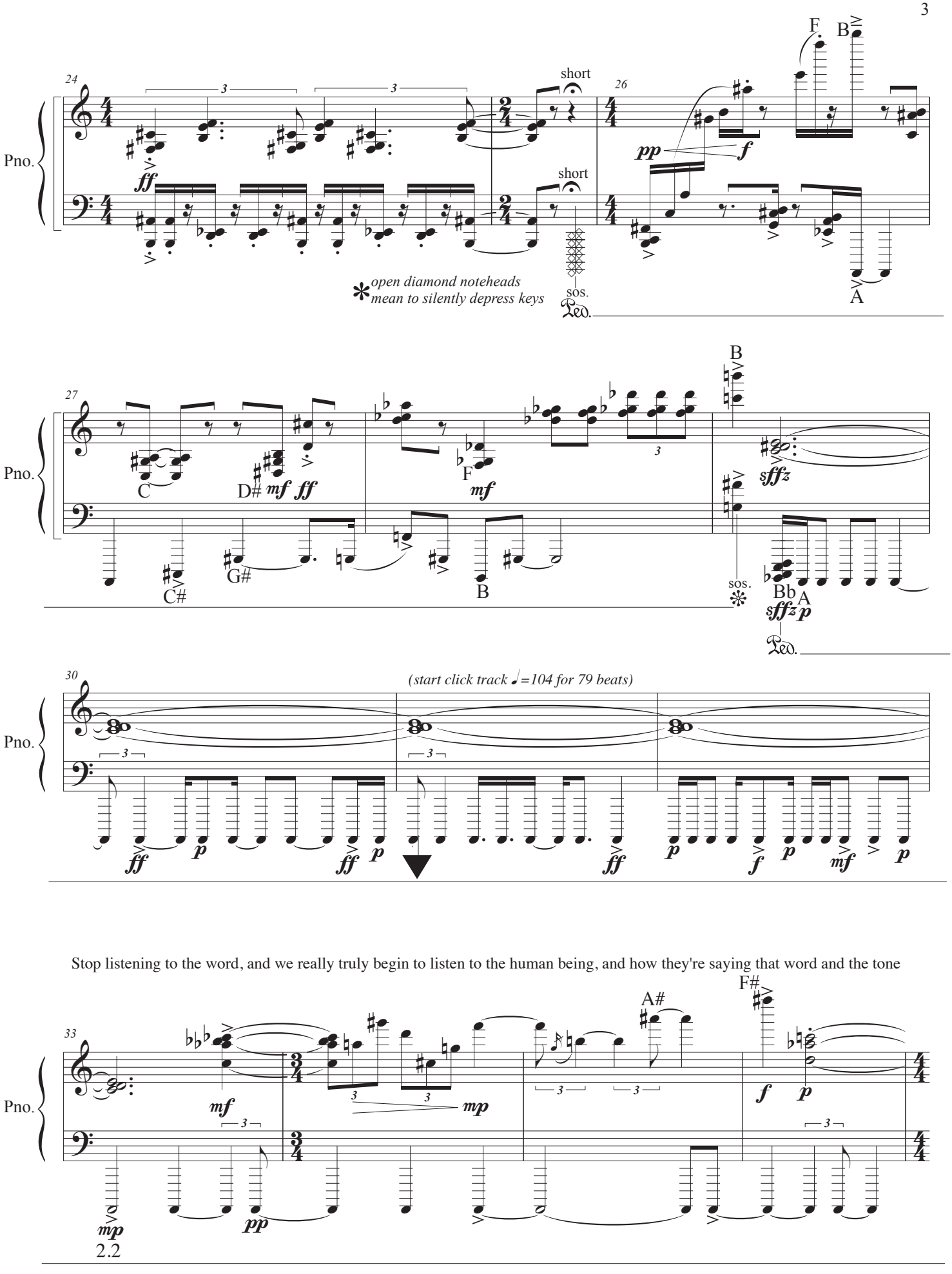
# 31"

I want to ask you a question. And you must answer me truthfully. Don't lie to me. Do you think that you can repeat what you hear? What did I just say? What did I just say?

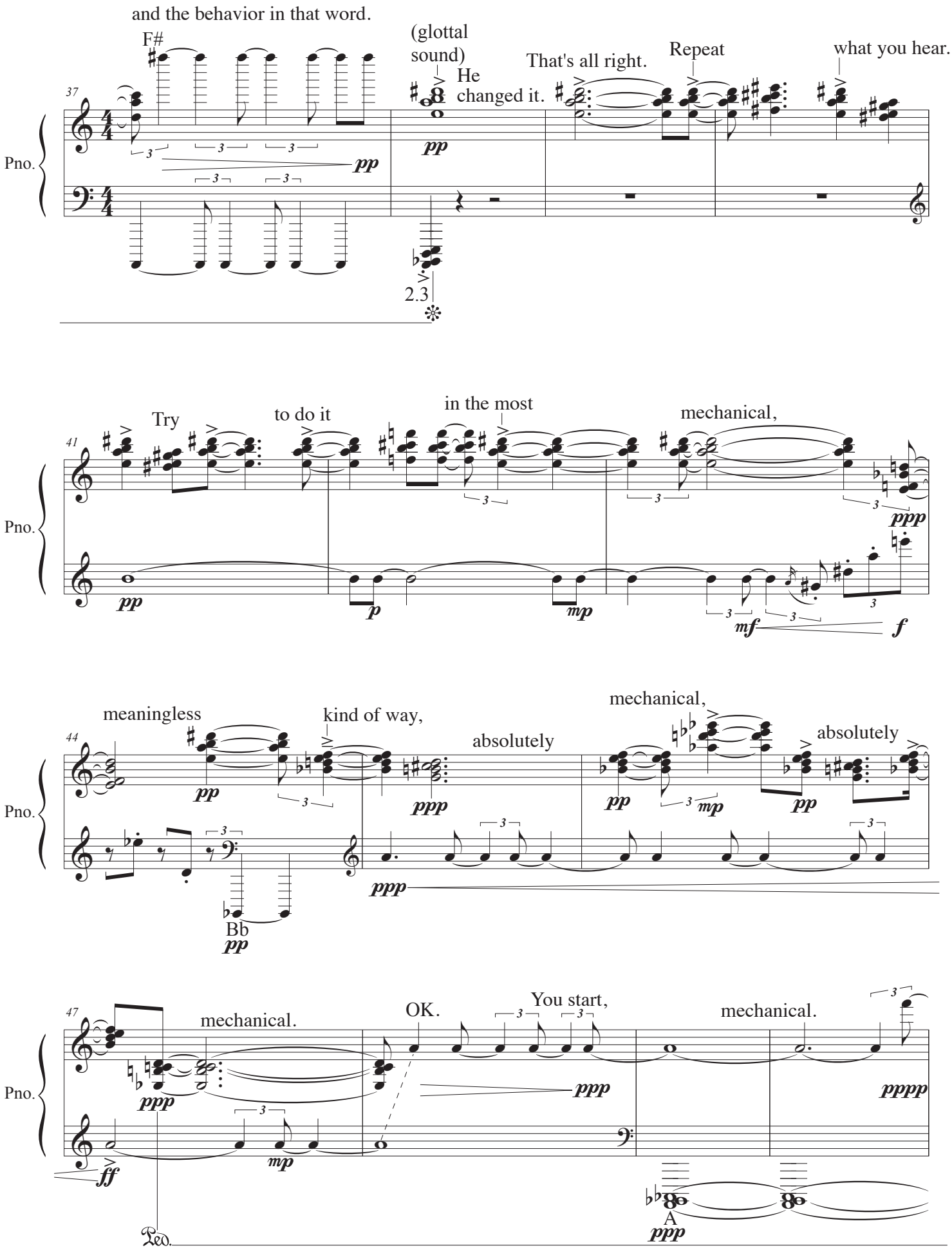
2.1

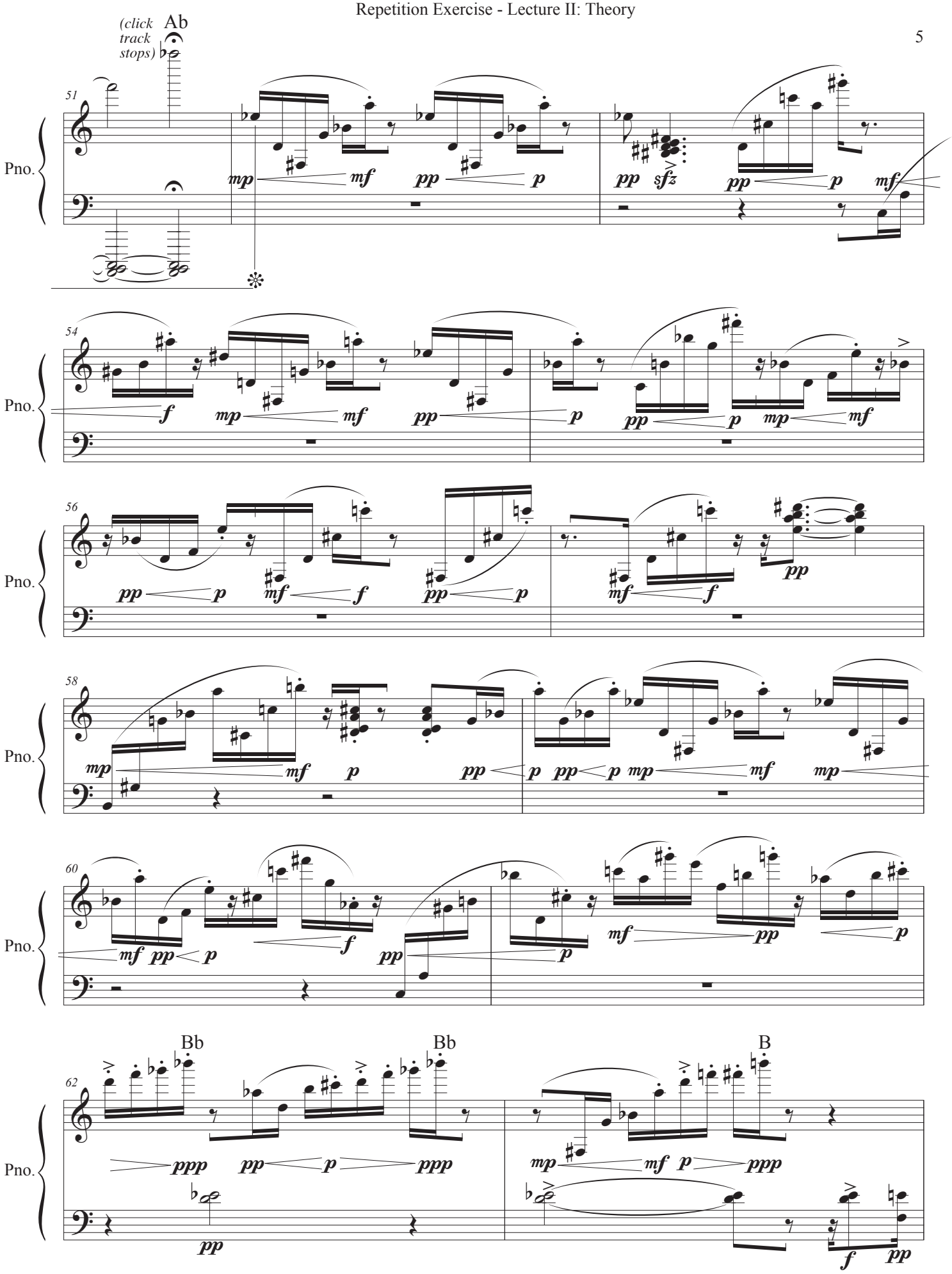


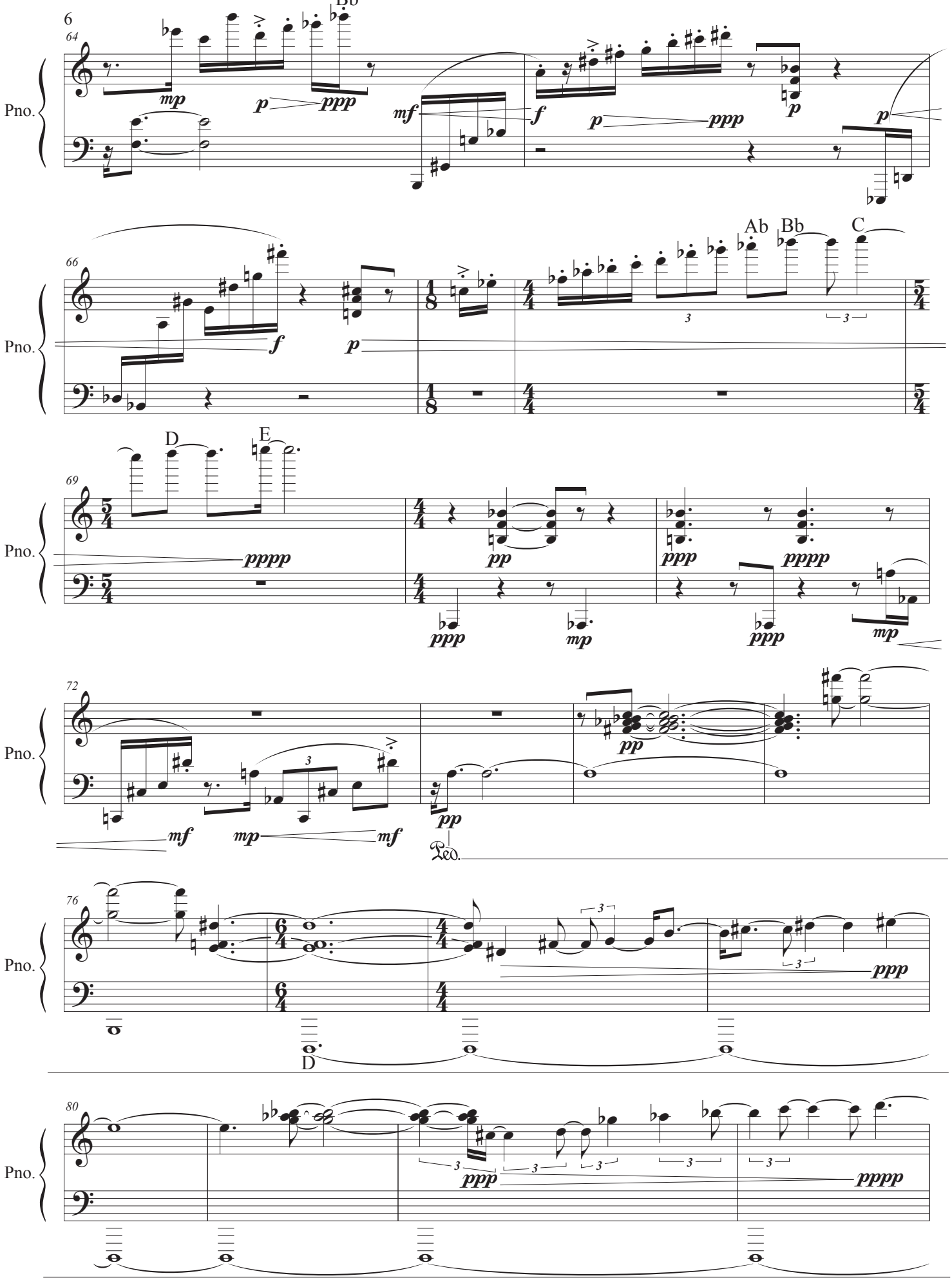

12
Pno.
Eb
Gb
pp
f
ppp
14
Pno.
C#
C
F
C
Cb
Bb
Bb
sfz
sffz
ppp
sfz
sffz
sffz
pp
A#
G#
A
A
16
Pno.
C
A
G#
E
B
G
A#
E
C#
F
D
Ab
C
f
pp
18
Pno.
ff
3
3
A
Bb
Eb
C
f
ppp
21
Pno.
ppp
sfz
f
ppp
f
mp
mf
ff
ff
ppp
f

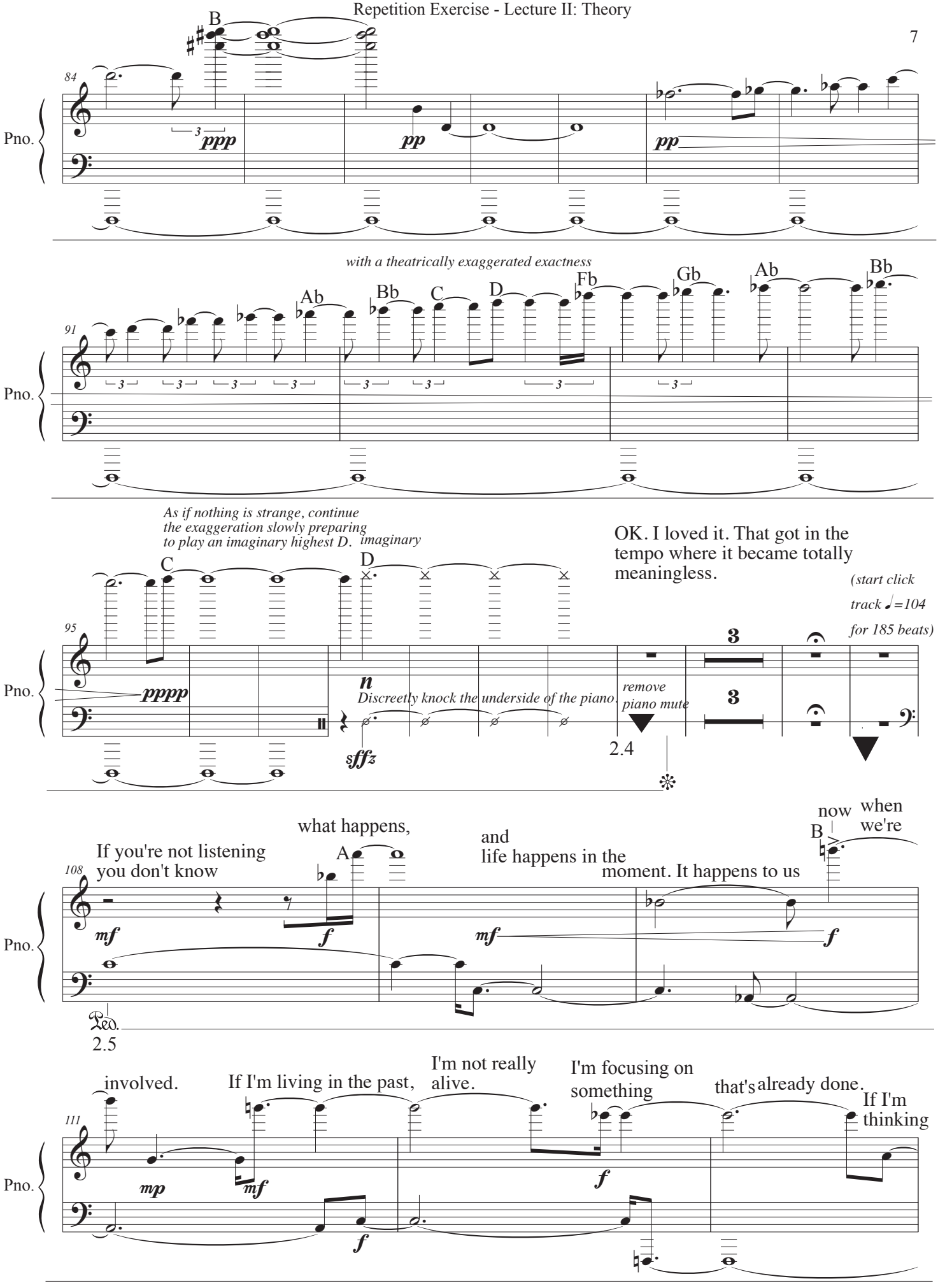


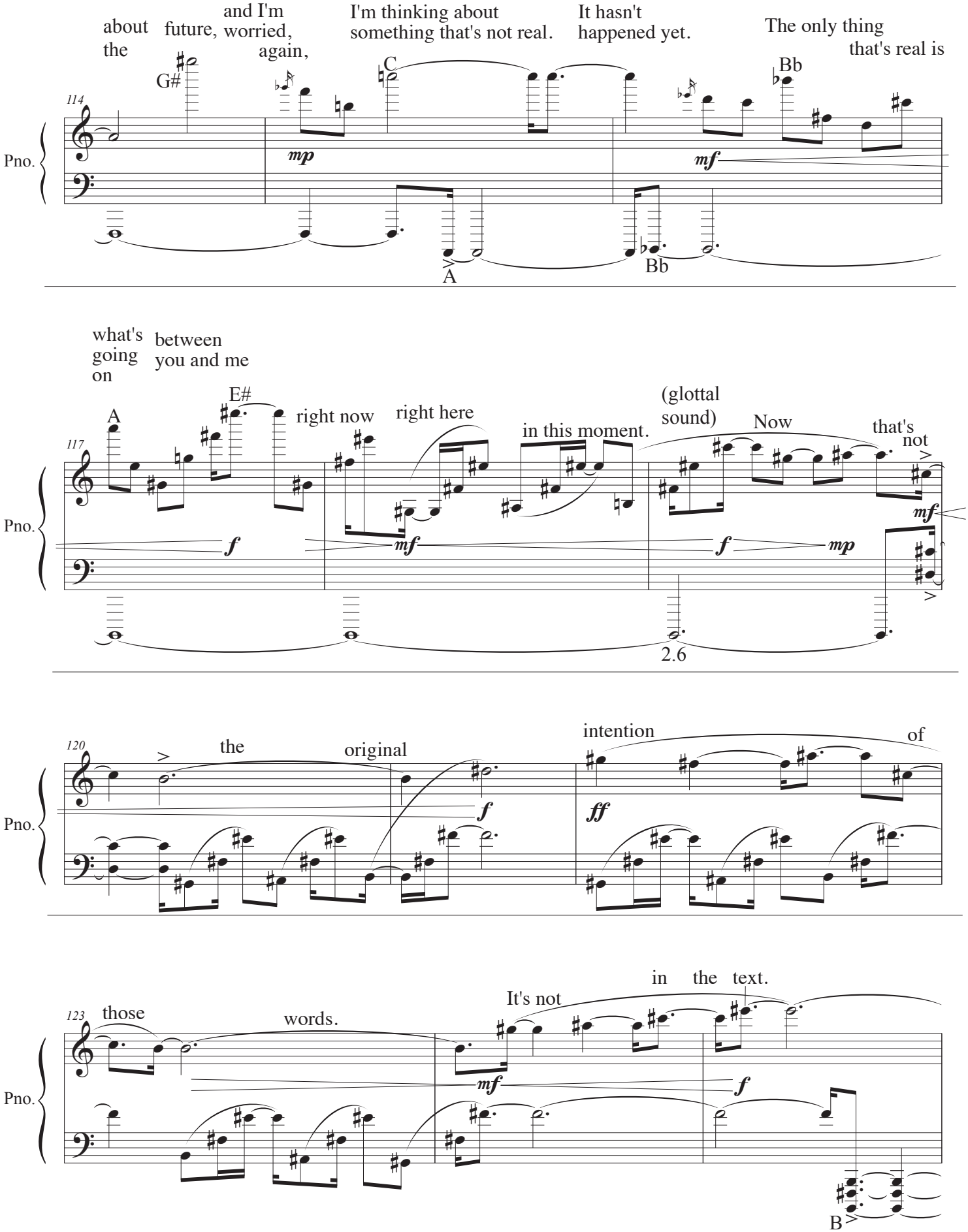

Stop listening to the word, and we really truly begin to listen to the human being, and how they're saying that word and the tone

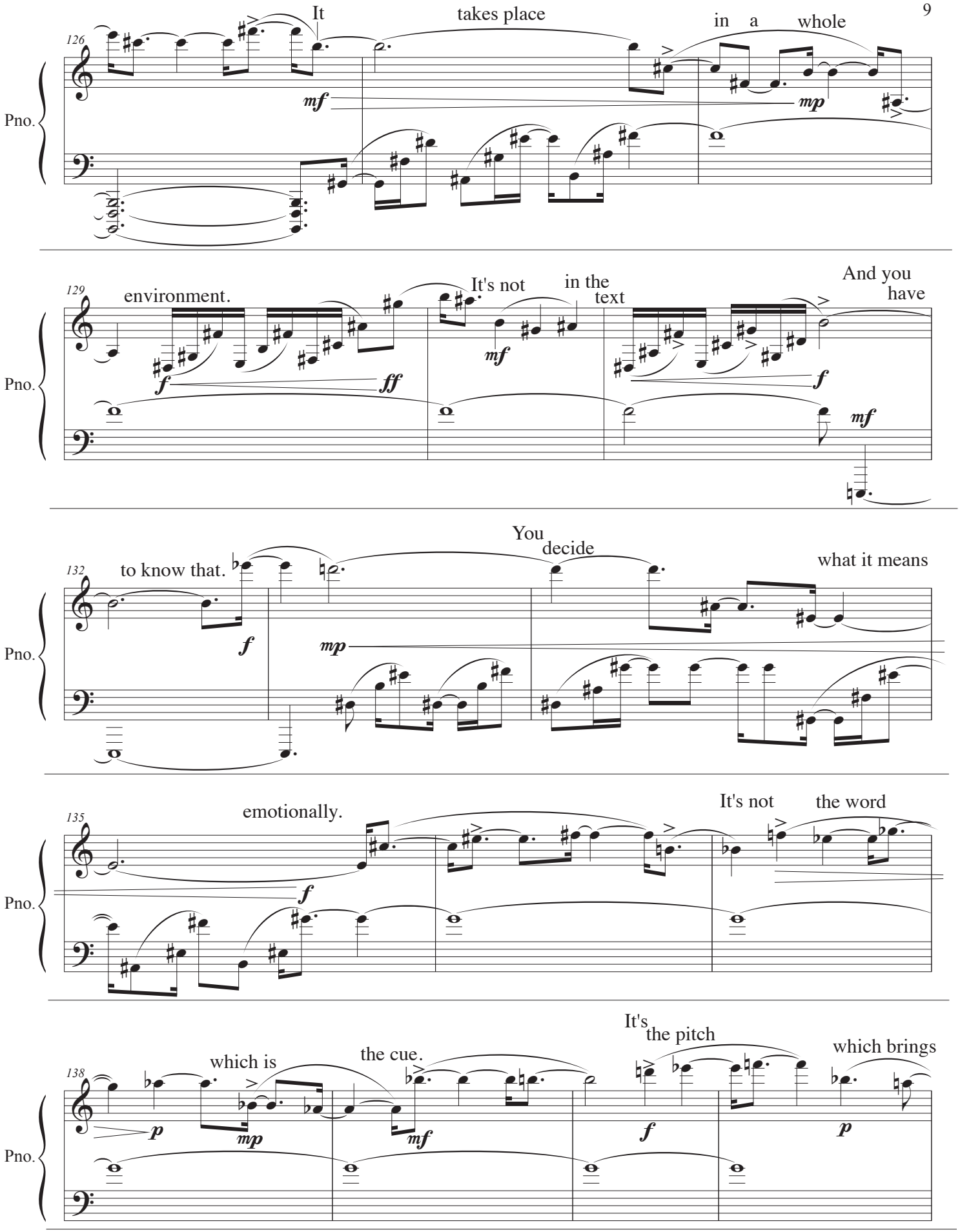

and the behavior in that word.
F#
(glottal sound)
He changed it.
That's all right.
Repeat
what you hear.
37
Pno.
pp
2.3
Try
to do it
in the most
mechanical,
41
Pno.
pp
p
mp
mf
f
ppp
meaningless
kind of way,
absolutely
mechanical,
absolutely
44
Pno.
pp
ppp
mp
Bb
pp
mechanical.
OK.
You start,
mechanical.
47
Pno.
ppp
mp
ff
pppp
A
ppp
Ped.

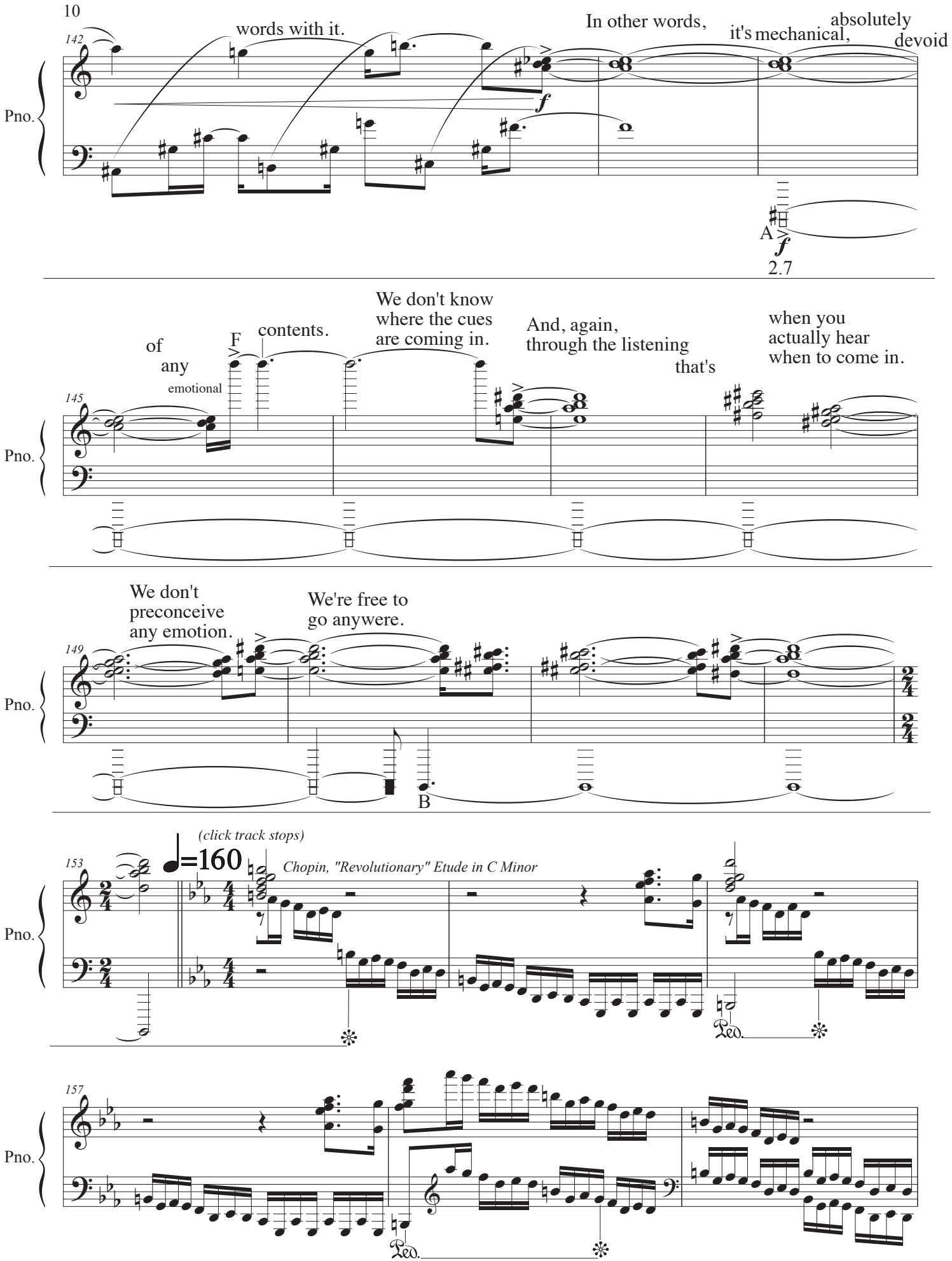

(click track stops)
Ab
51
Pno.
mp mf pp p
pp sfz pp p mf
54
Pno.
f mp mf pp p
pp p mp mf
56
Pno.
pp p mf f pp p
mf f pp
58
Pno.
mp mf p pp
p pp p mp mf mp
60
Pno.
mf pp p f
pp p
mf pp p
Bb
Bb
B
62
Pno.
ppp pp p ppp
pp
mp mf p ppp
f pp


6
64
Bb
Pno.
mp
p
ppp
mf
f
p
ppp
p
66
Ab
Bb
C
Pno.
f
p
3
3
69
D
E
Pno.
pppp
pp
ppp
pppp
ppp
mp
ppp
72
Pno.
mf
3
mp
mf
pp
pp
Ped.
76
Pno.
3
3
ppp
D
80
Pno.
3
3
3
3
3
ppp
pppp


B
84
Pno.
ppp
pp
pp
with a theatrically exaggerated exactness
91
Ab
Bb
C
D
Fb
Gb
Ab
Bb
As if nothing is strange, continue the exaggeration slowly preparing to play an imaginary highest D.
imaginary
C
D
95
pppp
n
Discreetly knock the underside of the piano.
sffz
remove piano mute
2.4
OK. I loved it. That got in the tempo where it became totally meaningless.
(start click track ♩=104 for 185 beats)
3
3
If you're not listening you don't know
what happens,
A
and life happens in the moment. It happens to us
now
when we're
B
108
mf
f
mf
f
Ped.
2.5
involved.
If I'm living in the past,
I'm not really alive.
I'm focusing on something
that's already done.
If I'm thinking
111
mp
mf
f
f


about the future, and I'm worried, again,
I'm thinking about something that's not real.
It hasn't happened yet.
The only thing that's real is
114
Pno.
G#
C
Bb
mp
mf
A
Bb
what's going on
between you and me
A
E#
right now
right here
in this moment.
(glottal sound)
Now
that's not
117
Pno.
f
mf
f
mp
mf
2.6
120
Pno.
the
original
intention
of
f
ff
123
Pno.
those
words.
It's not
in the text.
mf
f
B


126
It
takes place
in a whole
Pno.
mf
mp
129
environment.
It's not
in the
text
And you
have
Pno.
f
ff
mf
f
mf
132
to know that.
You
decide
what it means
Pno.
f
mp
135
emotionally.
It's not
the word
Pno.
f
138
which is
the cue.
It's
the pitch
which brings
Pno.
p
mp
mf
f
p


10
142
words with it.
In other words,
it's mechanical,
absolutely
devoid
Pno.
f
A
f
2.7
145
of
any
emotional
F
contents.
We don't know
where the cues
are coming in.
And, again,
through the listening
that's
when you
actually hear
when to come in.
Pno.
149
We don't
preconceive
any emotion.
We're free to
go anywere.
Pno.
B
(click track stops)
153
♩=160
Chopin, "Revolutionary" Etude in C Minor
Pno.
Ped.
157
Pno.
Ped.

*(start click track ♩=160 for 8 beats)*

*(click track changes to ♪ = 144 for 140 beats)*

♩. = 48

*Chopin, Nocturne in B Major, Op. 9 No. 3*

160

If I say, uh "I am a young pianist

Pno.

2.8

165

and tonight is my great opportunity," and I say,

Pno.

"What shall I play?"
"What would you have me play?"

169

Pno.

172

Pno.

175

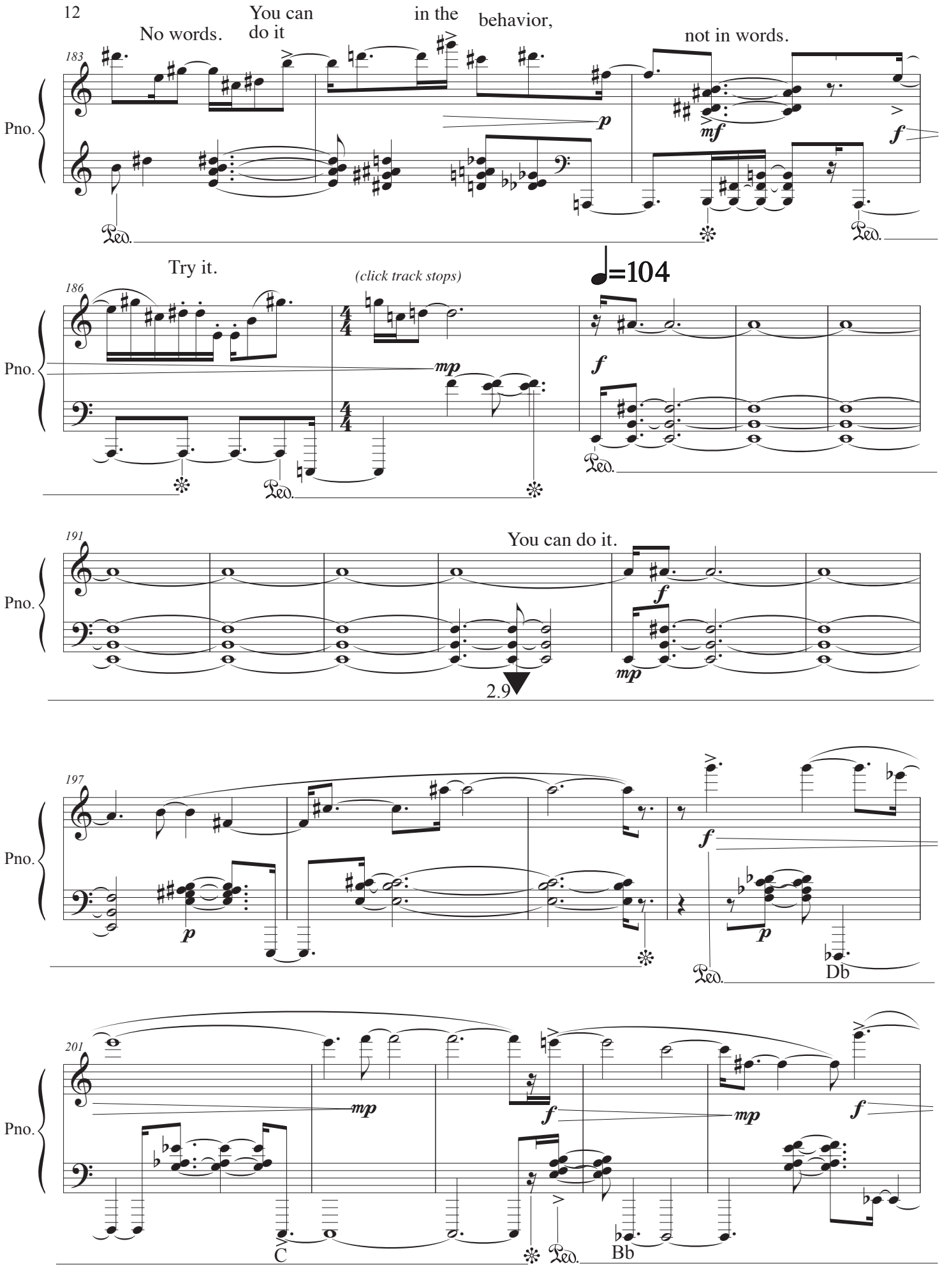
(laughing) yeah

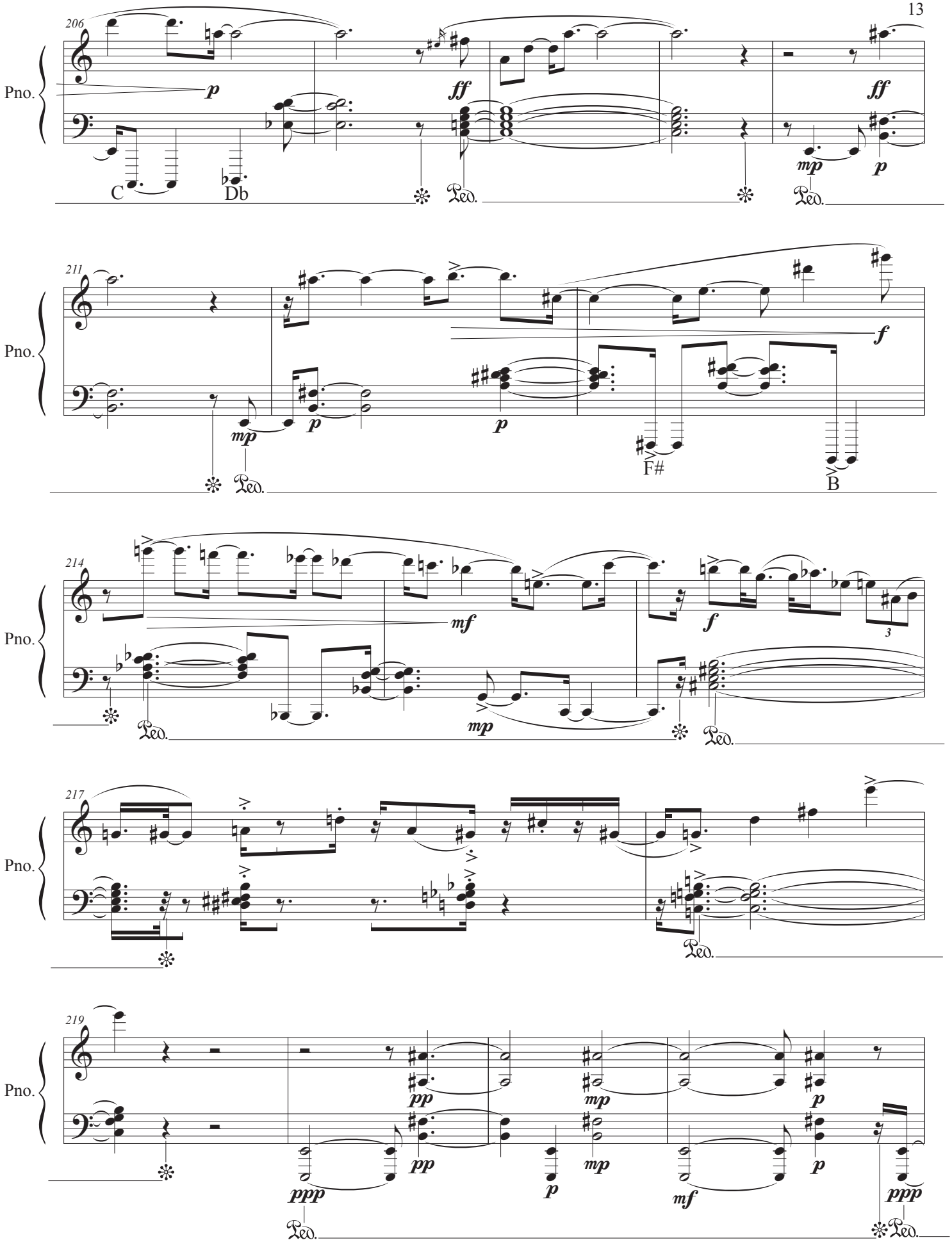
Pno.

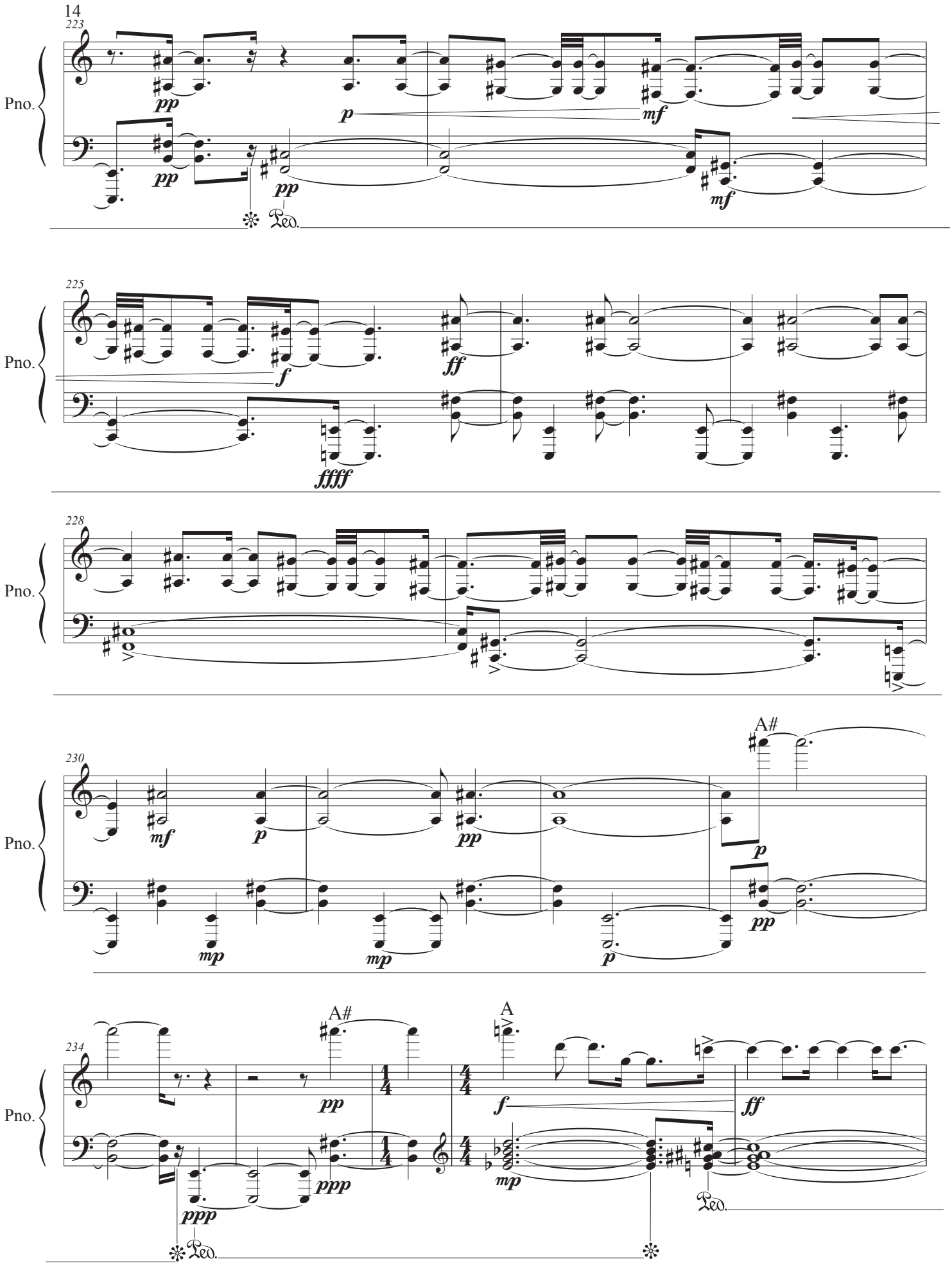
Let me see you express that without words. Repeat it.

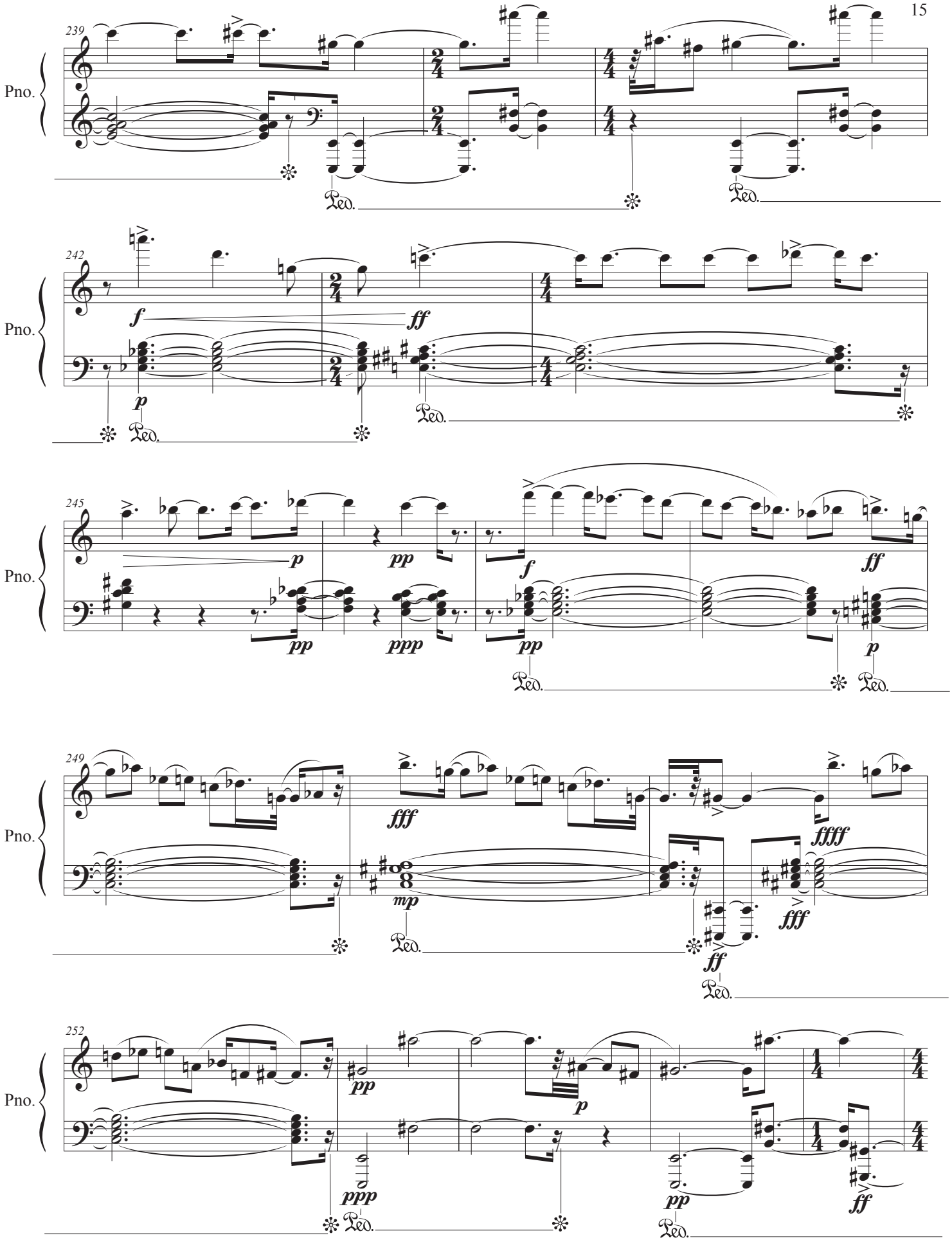
179

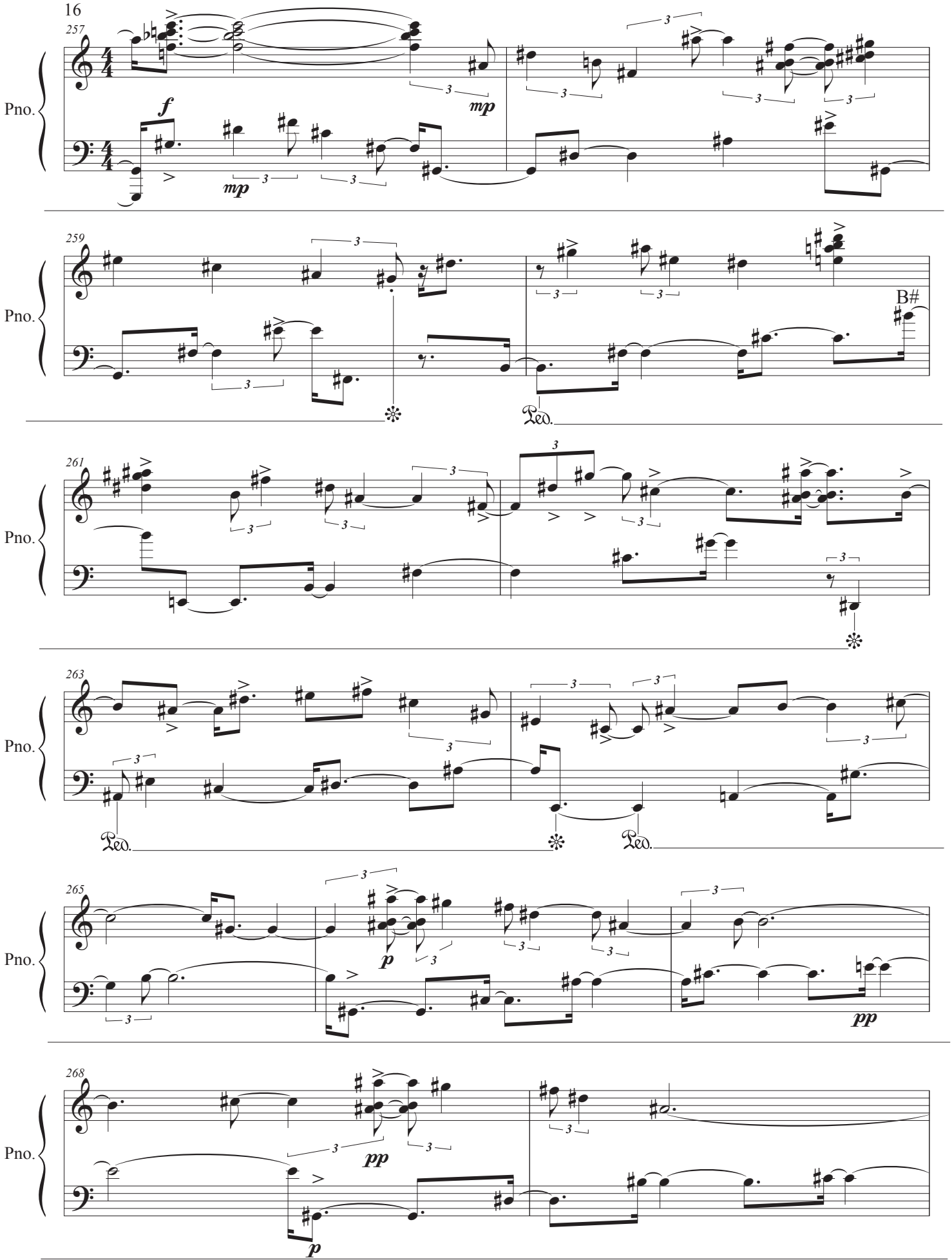
Pno.

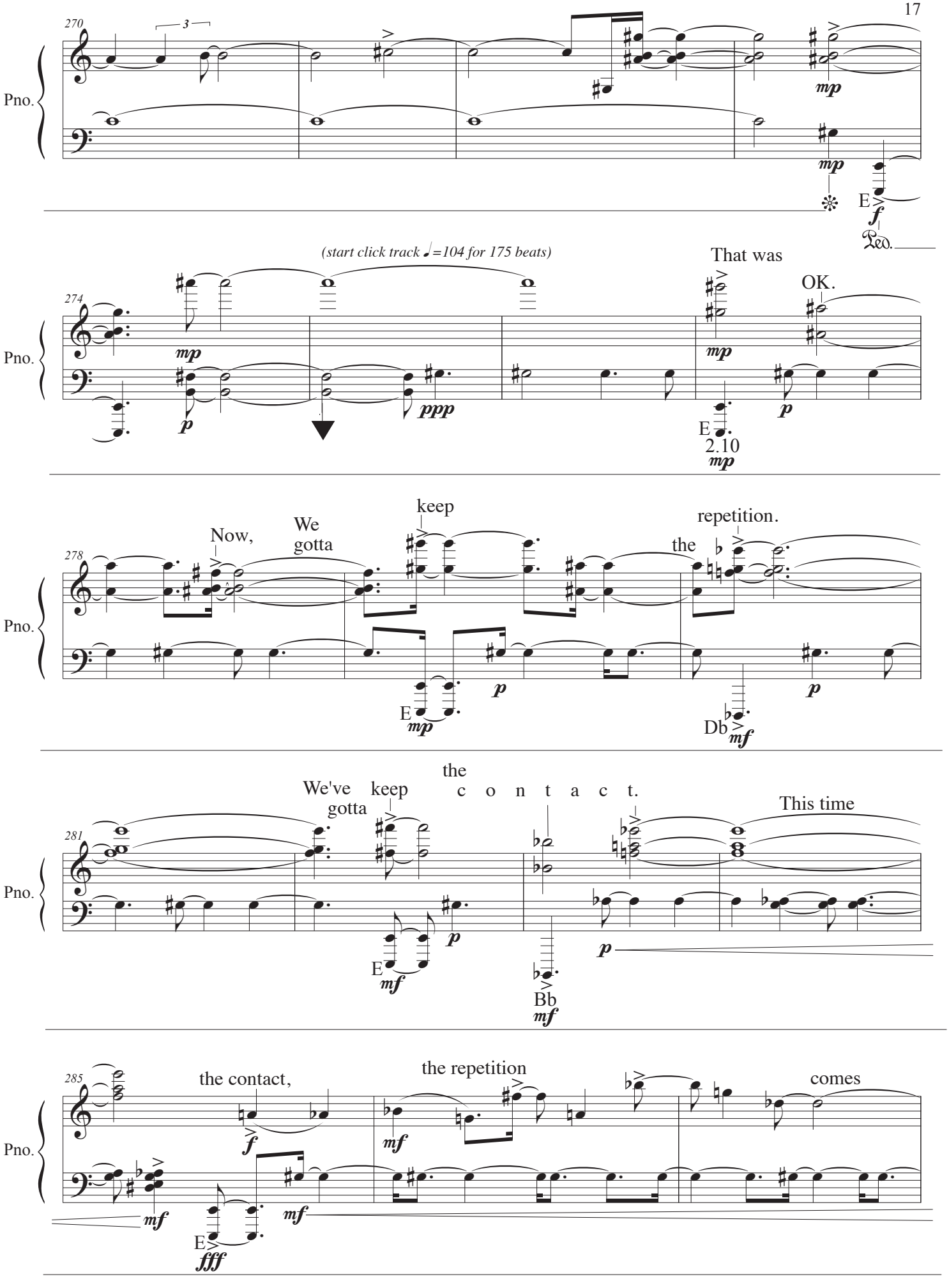

No words.
You can do it
in the behavior,
not in words.
183
Pno.
Try it.
(click track stops)
♩=104
186
Pno.
You can do it.
191
Pno.
2.9
197
Pno.
Db
201
Pno.
C
Bb

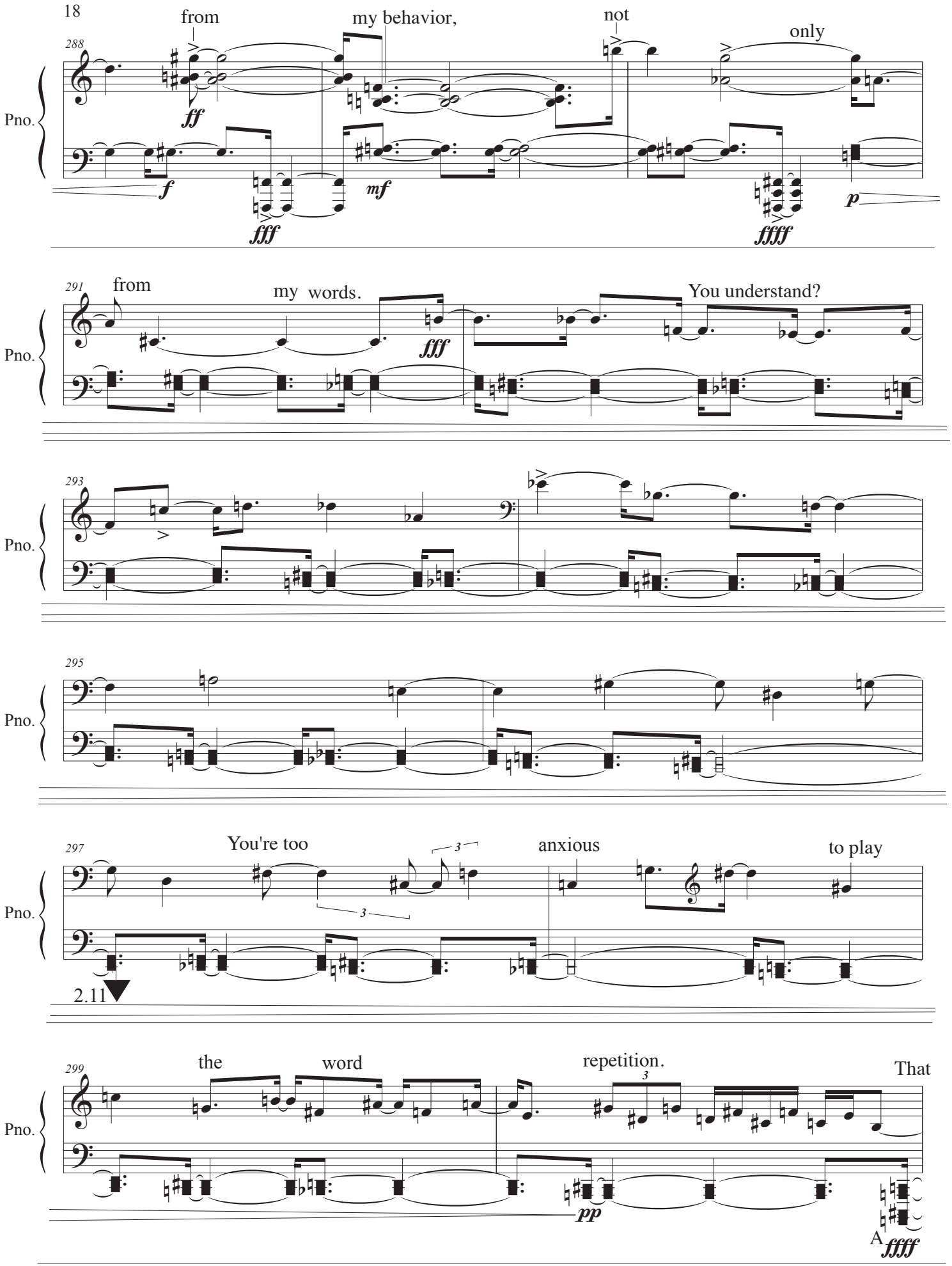

206
Pno.
p
ff
ff
mp
p
C
Db
Ped.
211
Pno.
mp
p
p
f
F#
B
214
Pno.
mf
mp
f
3
217
Pno.
219
Pno.
pp
pp
mp
mp
p
p
ppp
p
mf
ppp

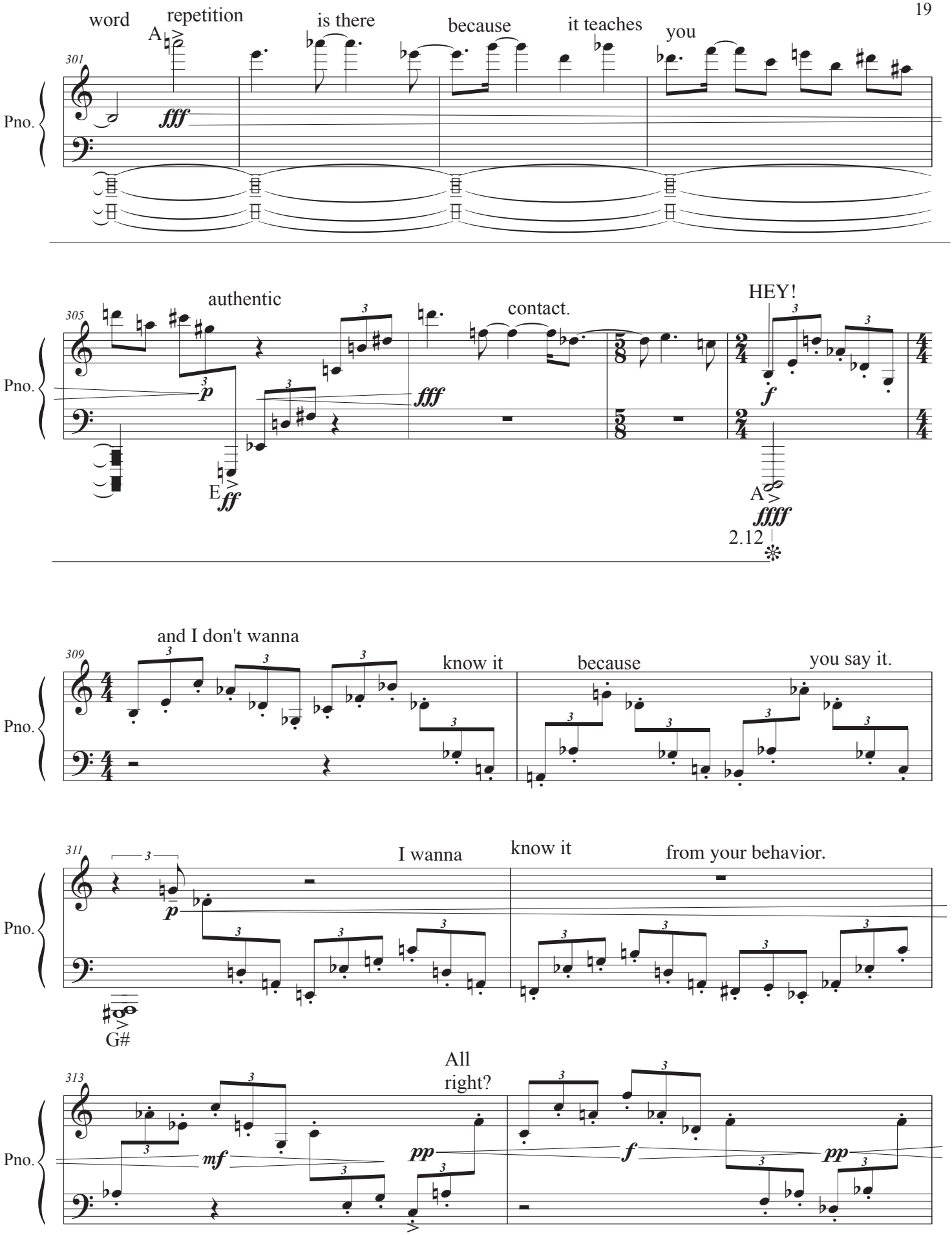

223
Pno.
pp
pp
p
pp
mf
mf
Ped.
225
Pno.
f
ff
ffff
228
Pno.
230
Pno.
mf
p
pp
p
mp
mp
p
A#
pp
234
Pno.
A#
pp
ppp
ppp
A
f
mp
ff
Ped.
Ped.

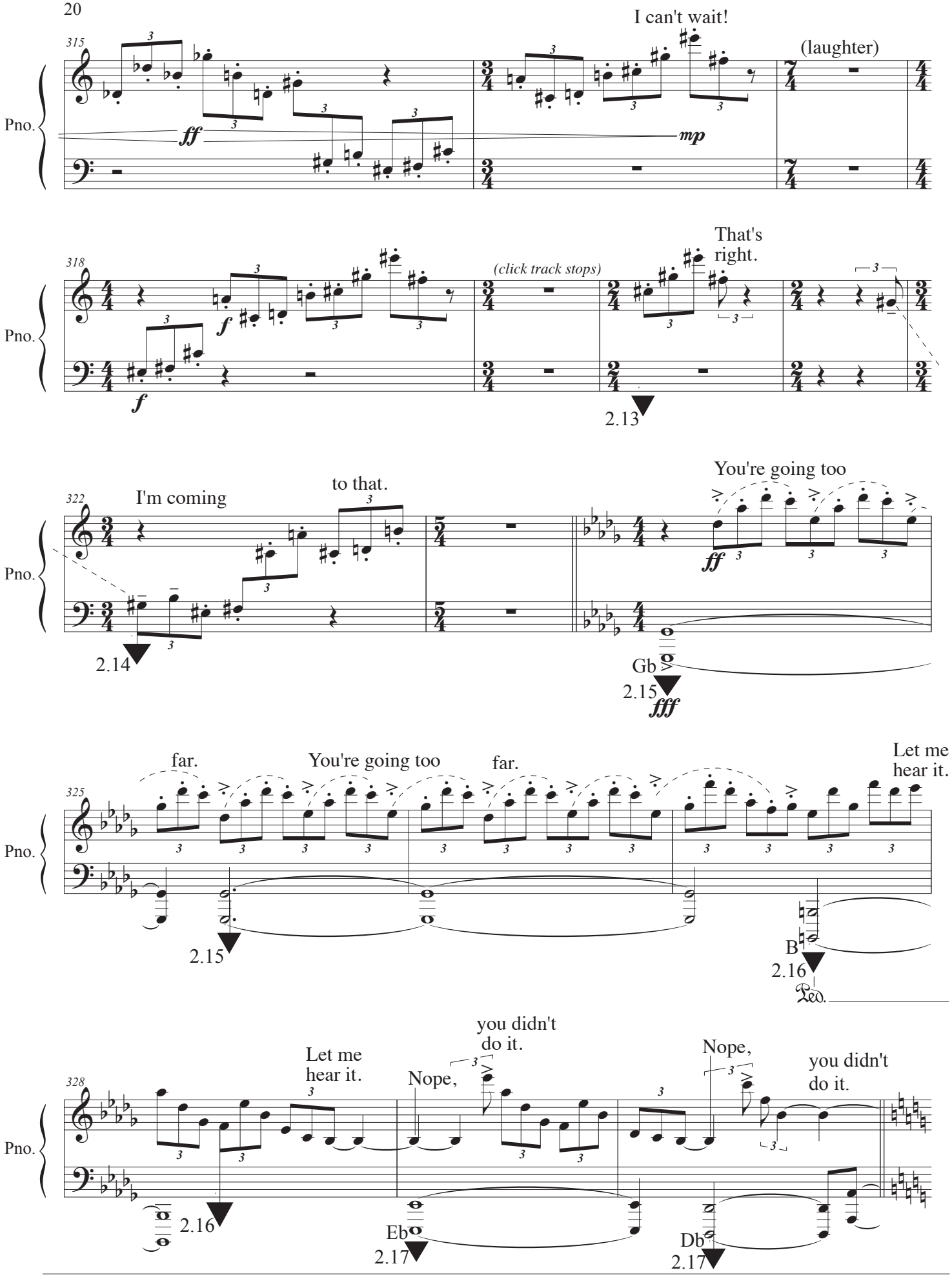

239
Pno.
242
Pno.
f
ff
p
245
Pno.
p
pp
ppp
f
ff
249
Pno.
fff
mp
ffff
252
Pno.
pp
ppp
p
ff

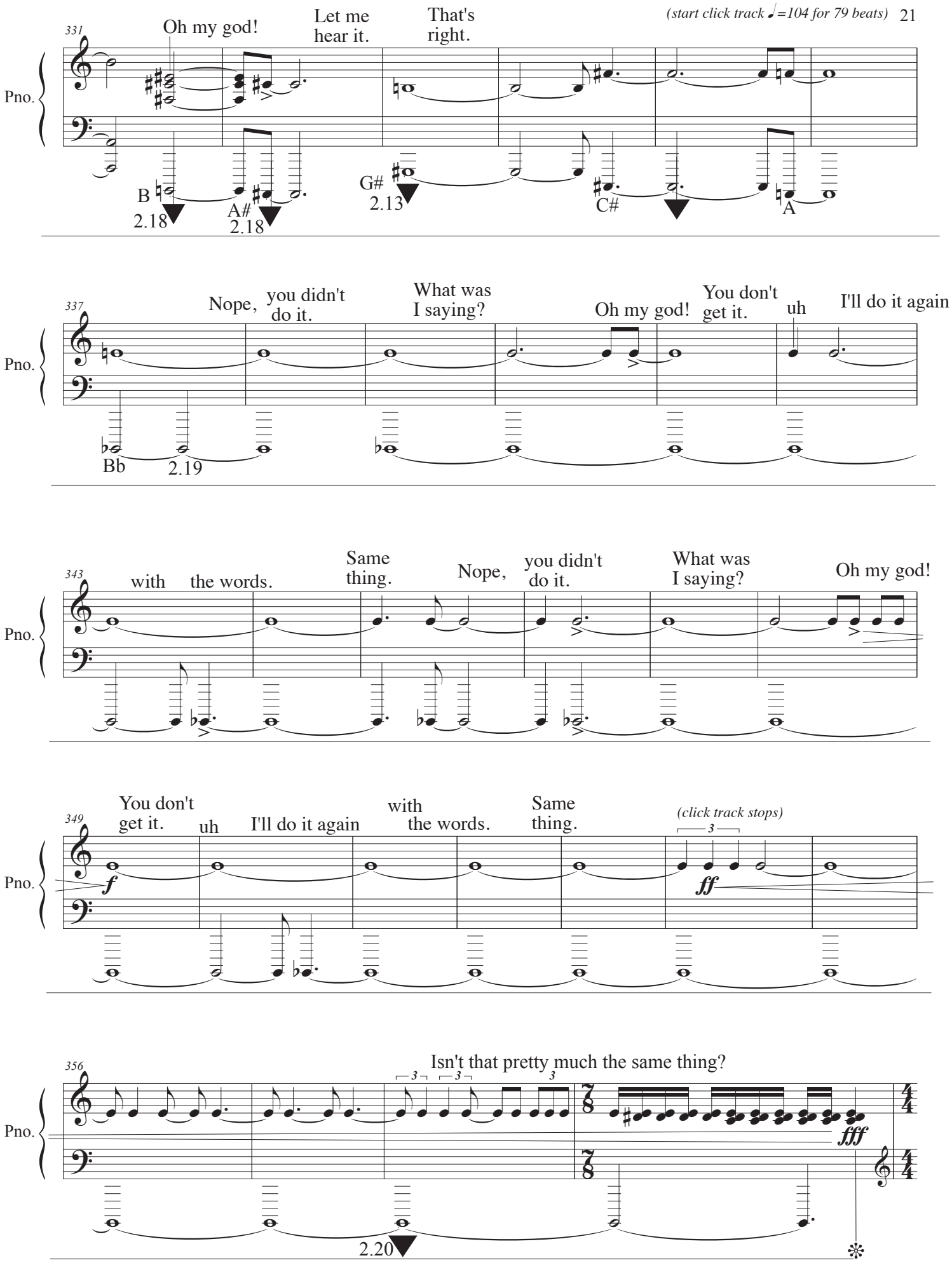

257
Pno.
f
mp
mp
259
Pno.
B#
Ped.
261
Pno.
263
Pno.
Ped.
Ped.
265
Pno.
p
pp
268
Pno.
pp
p

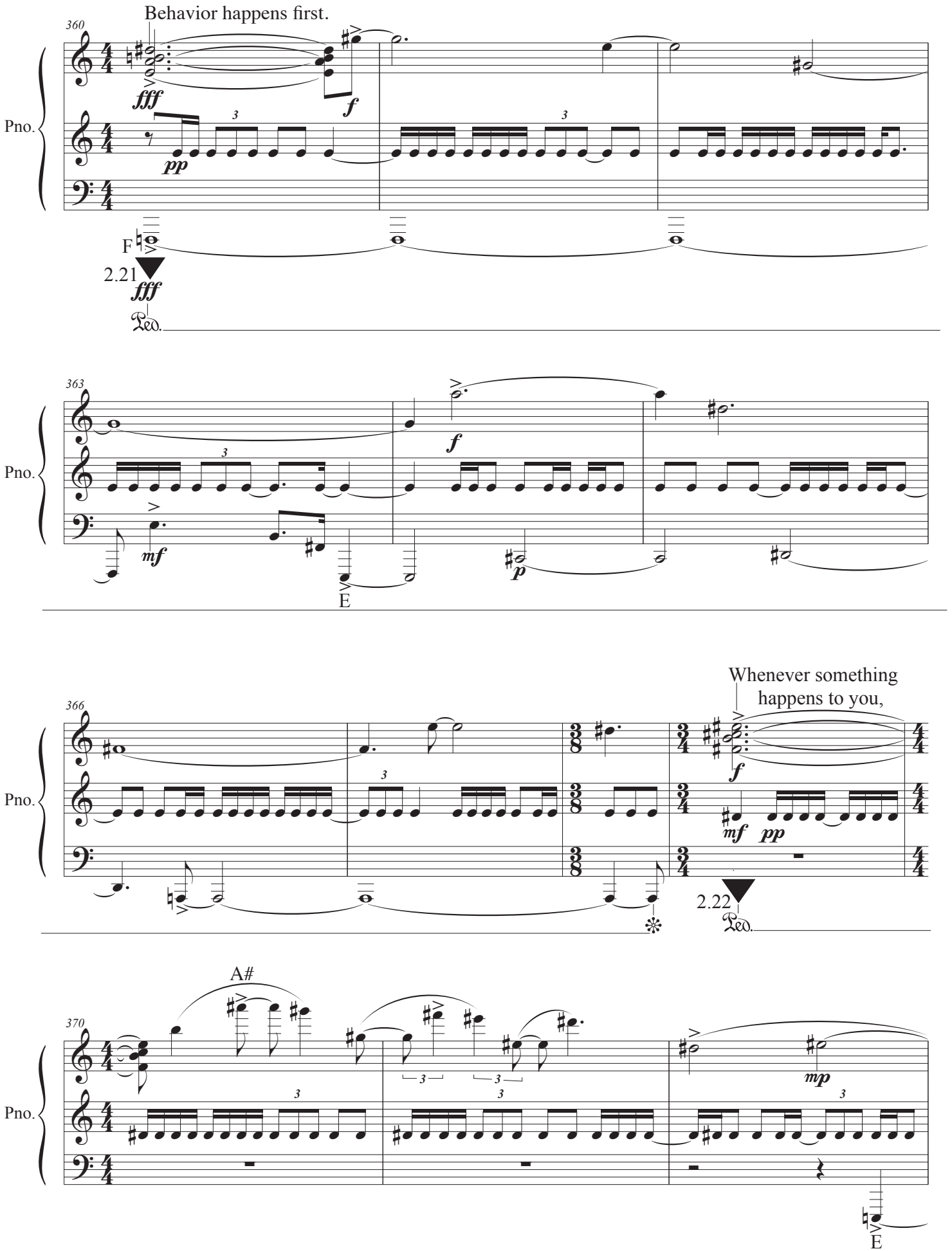

270
3
Pno.
mp
mp
E
f
Ped.
(start click track ♩=104 for 175 beats)
That was
OK.
274
Pno.
mp
p
ppp
mp
p
E
2.10
mp
keep
Now,
We
gotta
repetition.
the
278
Pno.
p
E
mp
p
Db
mf
the
We've keep
c o n t a c t.
This time
gotta
281
Pno.
p
E
mf
p
Bb
mf
p
the contact,
the repetition
comes
285
Pno.
f
mf
mf
mf
E
fff

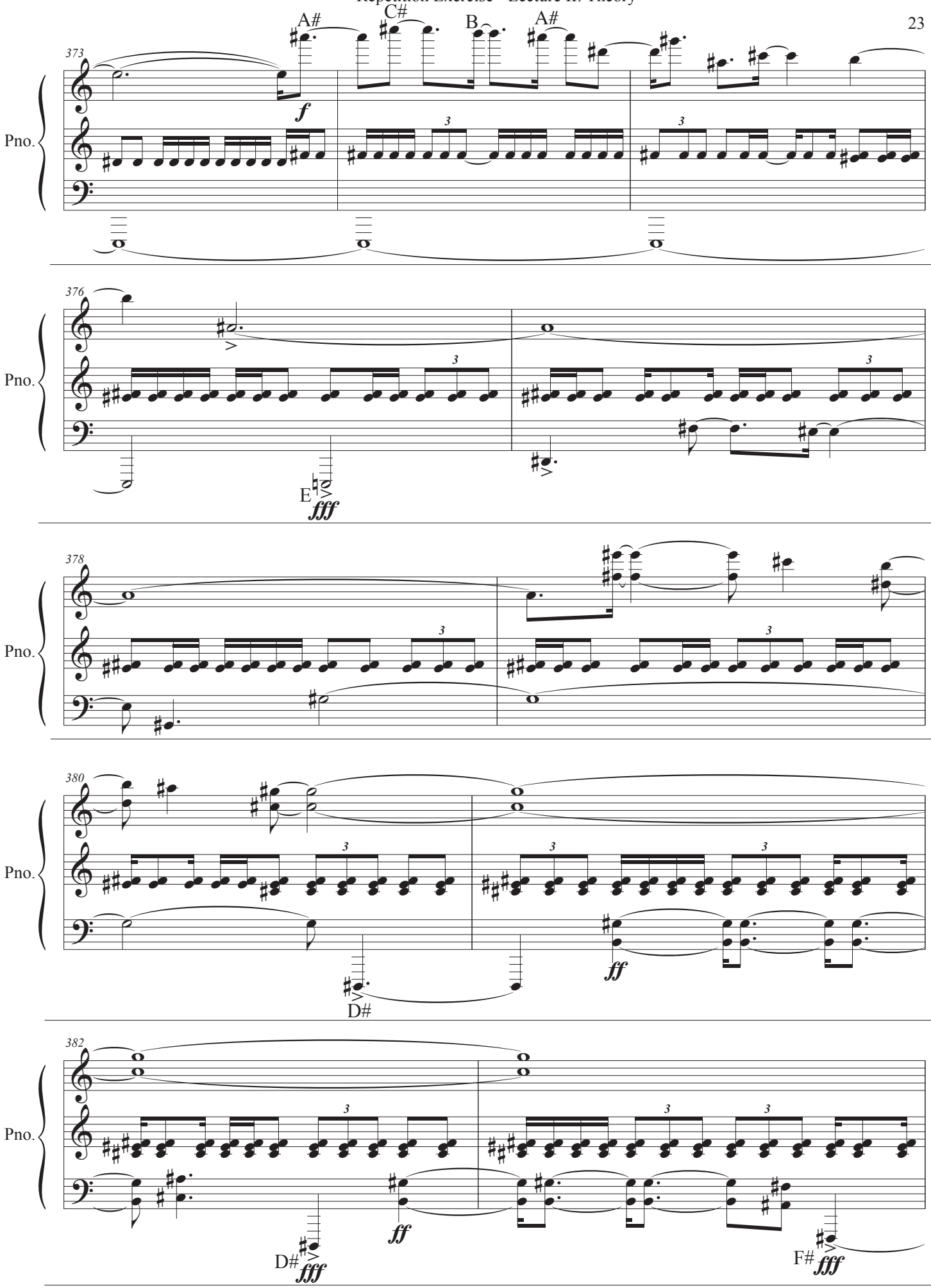

18
288
from
my behavior,
not
only
Pno.
ff
f
fff
mf
fffff
p
291
from
my words.
You understand?
Pno.
fff
293
Pno.
295
Pno.
297
You're too
anxious
to play
Pno.
3
3
2.11
299
the
word
repetition.
That
Pno.
pp
A
fffff

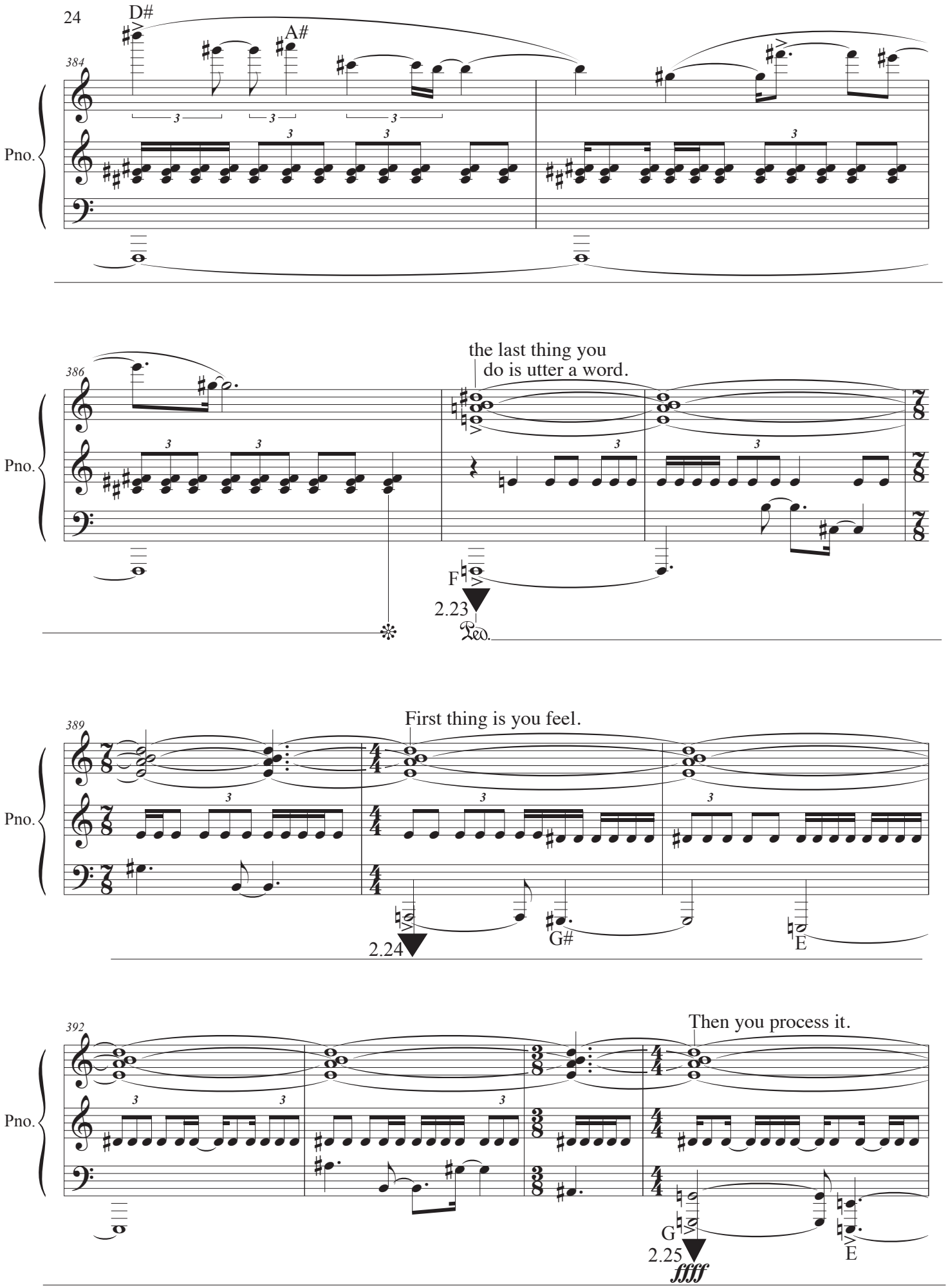

word
repetition
is there
because
it teaches
you
301
Pno.
fff
authentic
contact.
HEY!
305
Pno.
p
fff
f
E
ff
A
ffff
2.12
and I don't wanna
know it
because
you say it.
309
Pno.
I wanna
know it
from your behavior.
311
Pno.
p
G#
All
right?
313
Pno.
mf
pp
f
pp

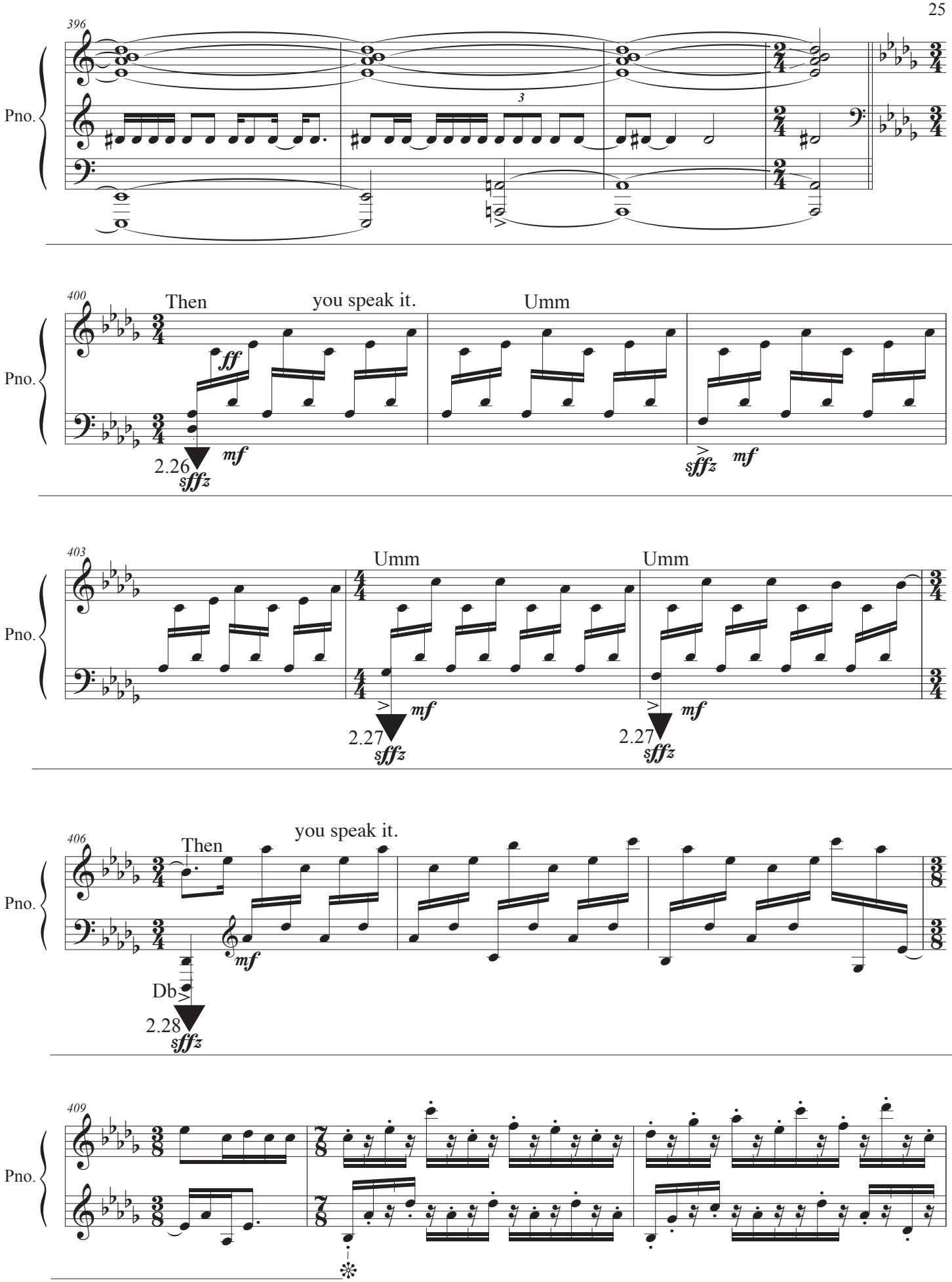

315
I can't wait!
(laughter)
Pno.
ff
mp
318
That's right.
(click track stops)
Pno.
f
2.13
322
I'm coming
to that.
You're going too
Pno.
ff
2.14
Gb
2.15
fff
325
far.
You're going too
far.
Let me hear it.
Pno.
2.15
B
2.16
Ped.
328
Let me hear it.
Nope,
you didn't do it.
Nope,
you didn't do it.
Pno.
2.16
Eb
2.17
Db
2.17

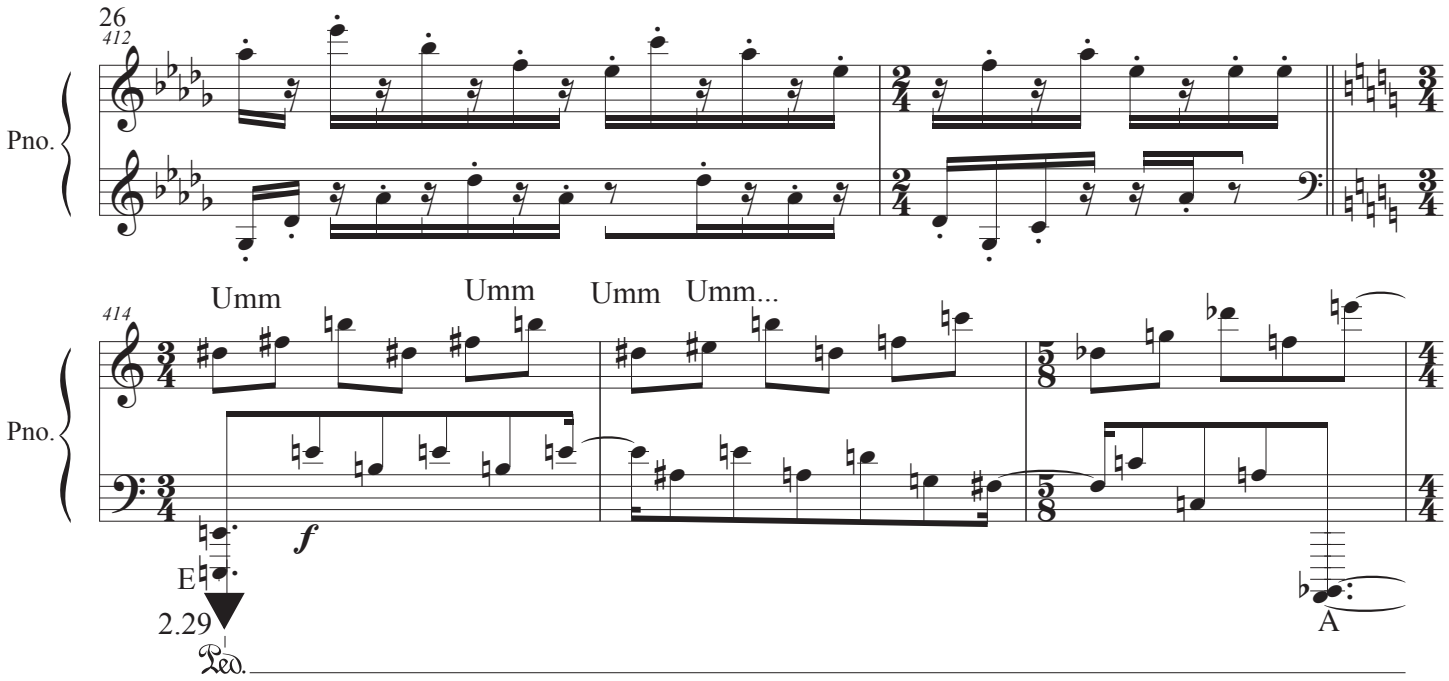

(start click track ♩=104 for 79 beats)
331
Oh my god!
Let me hear it.
That's right.
Pno.
B
2.18
A#
2.18
G#
2.13
C#
A
337
Nope, you didn't do it.
What was I saying?
Oh my god!
You don't get it.
uh
I'll do it again
Pno.
Bb
2.19
343
with the words.
Same thing.
Nope, you didn't do it.
What was I saying?
Oh my god!
Pno.
349
You don't get it.
uh
I'll do it again
with the words.
Same thing.
(click track stops)
3
f
ff
Pno.
356
Isn't that pretty much the same thing?
3
3
3
fff
Pno.
2.20


Behavior happens first.
360
Pno.
fff
f
pp
F
2.21
fff
Ped.
363
Pno.
f
mf
p
E
366
Pno.
Whenever something happens to you,
f
mf
pp
2.22
Ped.
370
A#
Pno.
mp
E

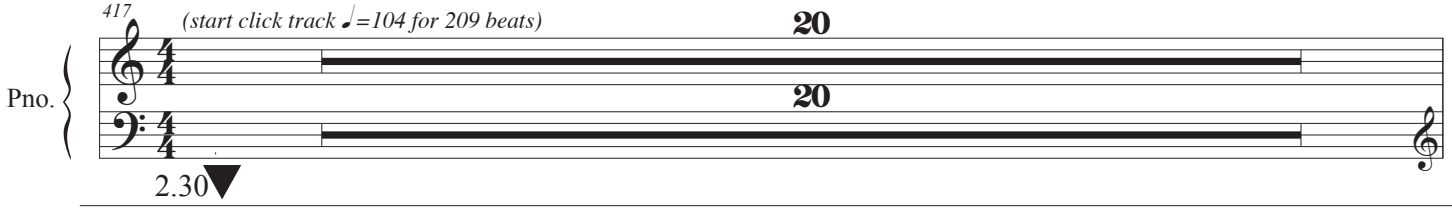

373
A#
C#
B
A#
f
Pno.
376
E
fff
Pno.
378
Pno.
380
D#
ff
Pno.
382
D#
fff
ff
F#
fff
Pno.

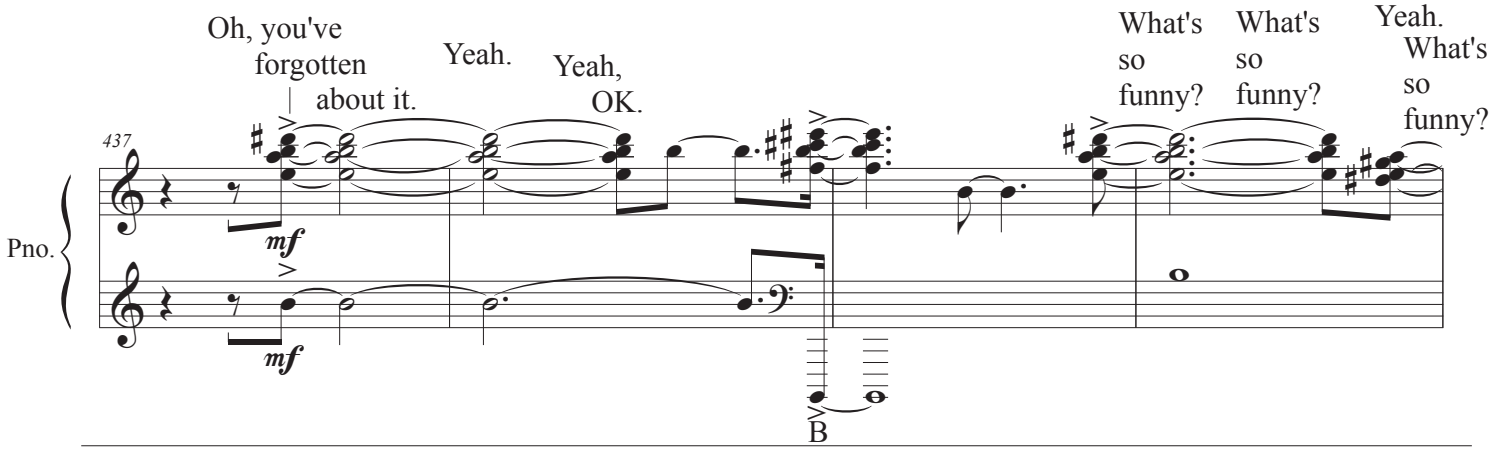

D#
A#
384
Pno.
386
the last thing you
do is utter a word.
F
2.23
Ped.
389
First thing is you feel.
G#
E
2.24
392
Then you process it.
G
E
2.25
ffff

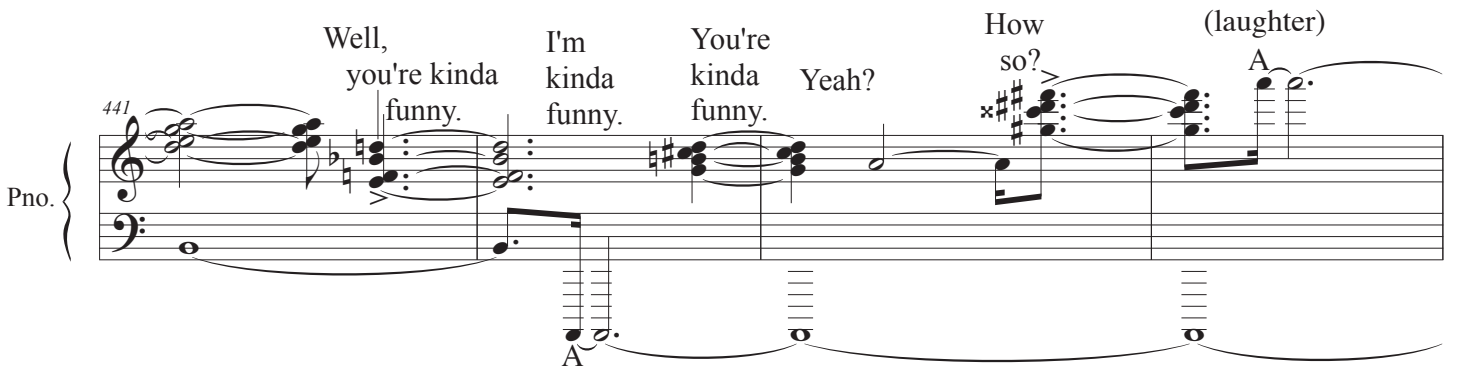

396
Pno.
3
400
Then
you speak it.
Umm
ff
mf
2.26
sffz
sffz
mf
403
Umm
Umm
mf
2.27
sffz
mf
2.27
sffz
406
Then
you speak it.
mf
Db
2.28
sffz
409

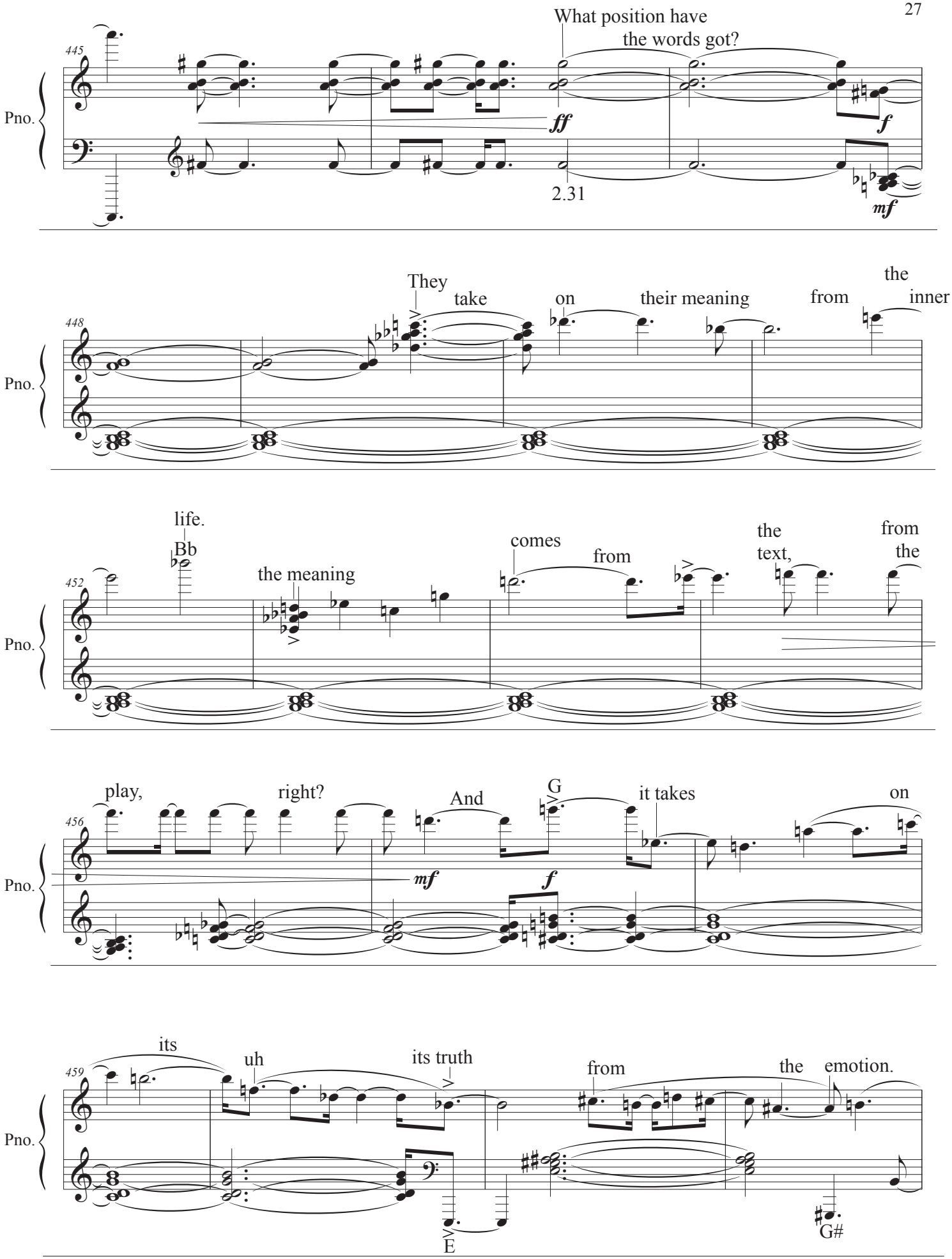


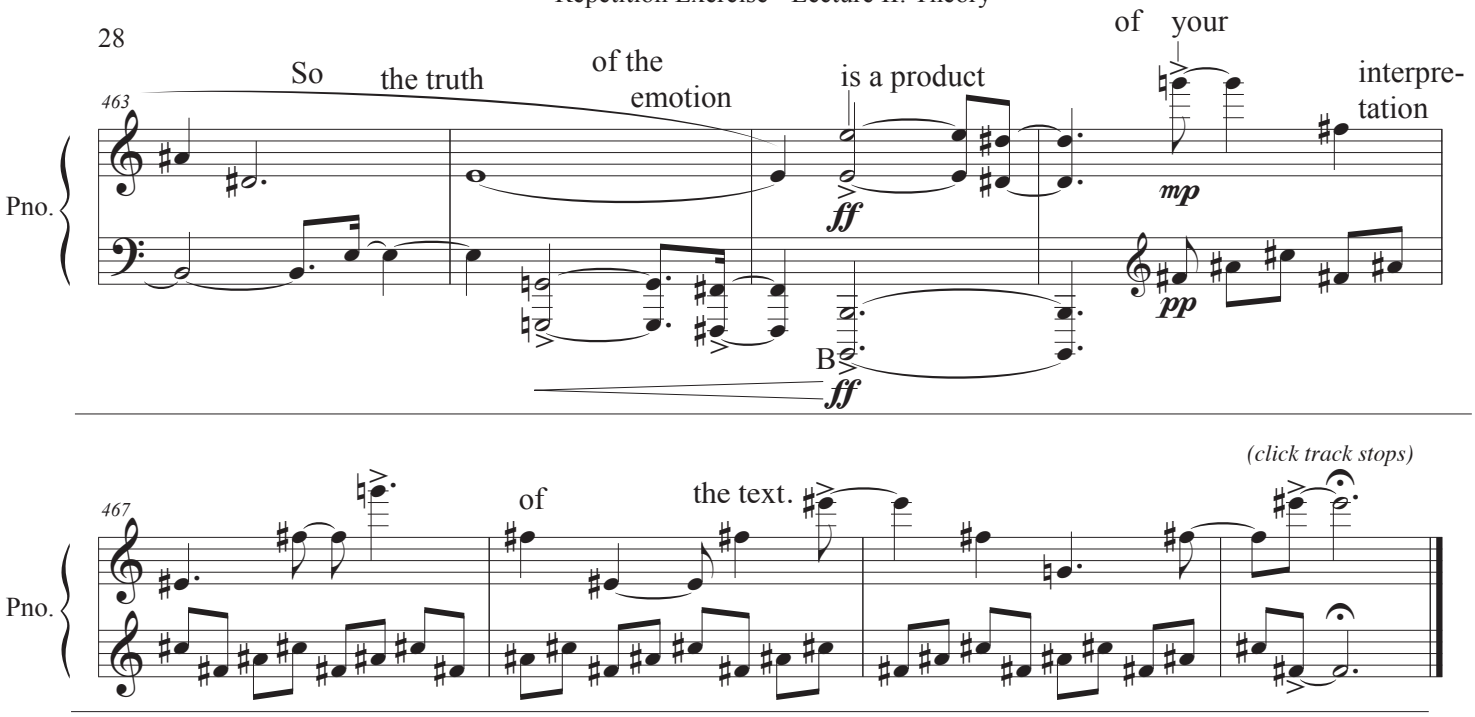

Your pants are wrinkled. My pants are wrinkled. Mhmm. Your pants are wrinkled. My pants are wrinkled. You don't care. No I don't care. You really don't care. No I really don't care. No you don't. No I don't. No you don't. No I don't. OK. You don't. OK. Well don't get testy. I'm not getting testy. You're not getting testy. No I'm not getting testy. You're getting irratated. Yeah. Well OK. I'm getting irritated. OK well. I'm glad you admitted it. Well I'm glad that you think so. You're getting sarcastic. No I'm not getting sarcastic. Oh you're not getting sarcastic. No I'm not getting sarcastic. OK you're not getting sarcastic. OK so forget about it. I've forgotten about it.




445
Pno.
What position have
the words got?
ff
f
2.31
mf
448
Pno.
They
take
on
their meaning
from
the
inner
452
Pno.
life.
Bb
the meaning
comes
from
the
text,
from
the
456
Pno.
play,
right?
And
G
it takes
on
mf
f
459
Pno.
its
uh
its truth
from
the
emotion.
E
G#


463
So
the truth
of the
emotion
is a product
of
your
interpre-
tation
Pno.
ff
mp
pp
B
ff
467
of
the text.
(click track stops)
Pno.

# Repetition Exercise
## Lecture III: Praxis
## (within the Imaginary)

Emerson Voss (2024)

Orator

Essentially, this piece is for those who tend to overthink and find themselves lonely as a result.

*2*

Ort. Sit at small table with voltage controlled lights wearing now wearing bloodied white ski mask that the performance artist was wearing.

Pno. Wait

3.1

*3*

Ort. Begin a lighting improvisation to video music and piano music. At some point take off white ski mask.

Pno. Began improvising during section where 2 layers of detuned pianos begin (at 1m 35s mark).

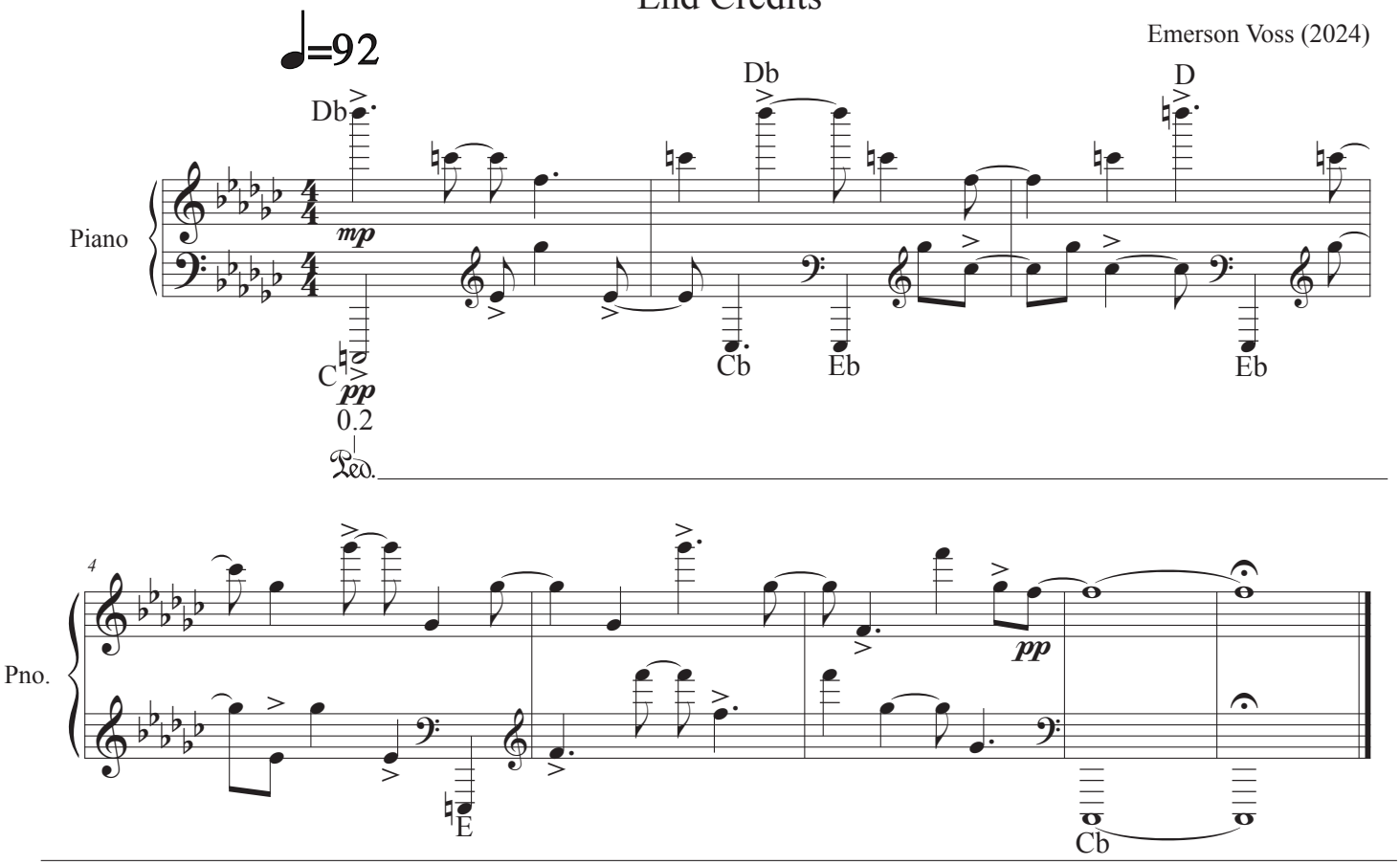
*4*

Ort. End improvisation with head face down on table and remain there until the end of the entire work. All voltage controlled lights should be off.

Pno. Once the video audio stops continue the improvisation to create a brief link to an attacca start of the end credits music.

*attacca*

# Repetition Exercise

## End Credits

Emerson Voss (2024)