# *Mapping Yorkshire*

*for two pianists*

*Nigel Morgan*

# *Mapping Yorkshire*

*for two pianists*

*Nigel Morgan*

**About the piece**

This composition is a by-product of a commission to write a work for two pianists from different positions in the musical spectrum; one, the jazz pianist Matthew Bourne, the other Philip Thomas who is aligned to contemporary experimental music. Both pianists own to what has become known as free improvisation - in some degree. A further requirement for this commission was that the 'scores' should be graphic, and take as their core images references to places in the landscape or cityscape within the county of Yorkshire.

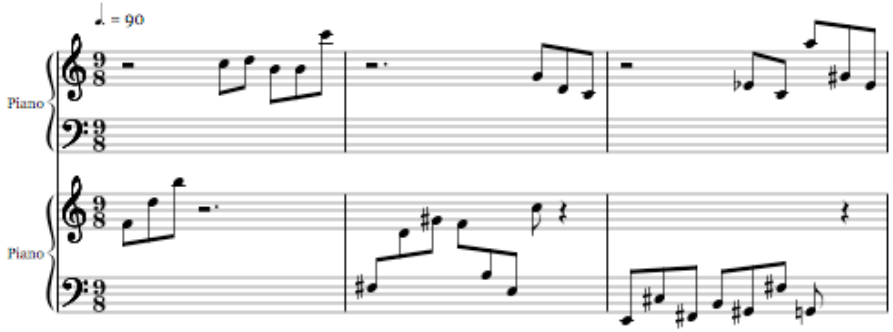
I made an early decision that whatever the graphic images and 'score' might be it would have to be 'mapped', either into physical gesture or into parametric musical elements – pitches, rhythms, dynamics, and articulation. I sought images that had within them letters, words, integers, and binary sequences respectively. I found in the famous Walk of Art at Yorkshire Sculpture Park a picture of people's names, on Ilkley Moor one of poet Simon Armitage's Stanza Stones poems, at the York Transport Museum a collection of railway engine numbers, and in the 11-storey front elevation of the Arena Hilton Hotel in Leeds a 6-bit binary sequence of windows.

These images are presented as the basis for four graphic scores with a minimum of graphic manipulation and a small insert of instructions for the two pianists to 'map' the images to musical parameters. To do this meant devising musical material which could be assimilated quickly and directly as the basis for some measure of improvisation, controlled randomness and open form.

The score provided here is an algorithmic realisation of the graphic score instructions to enable me to test possible outcomes in a fully notated score.

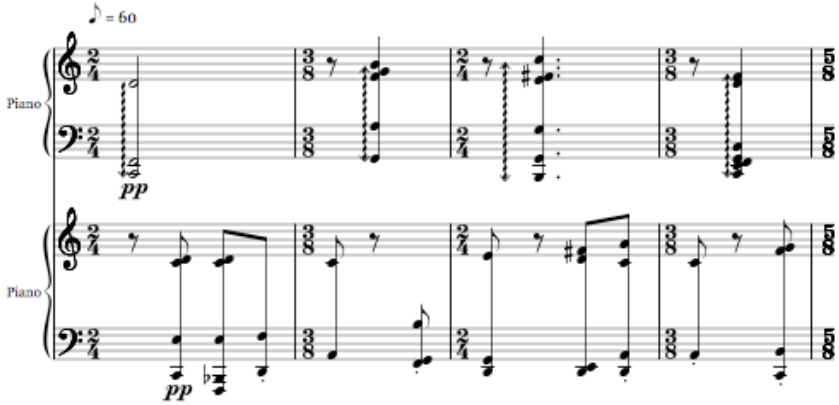
**Walk of Life** – maps a series of forenames and surnames between each pianist. A collection of names is taken from a single photo of the walk and each pianist is helped by a beat /space prompt to 'read' a potential mapping – to a chromatic scale. Then as the collection of names chosen has a finite total of nine so each letter is set into nine possible spaces. Thus, the name Molly Fox reads to pianist 1 (forenames) as: (= = = = c d b b c) and for pianist 2 (surnames) (f d b = = = = = =). The mapping here is already preordained: a b c = c c# d and so on. The octave positioning of the mapping has been removed for practical performance in the graphic score , but not in the fully notated version where second pianist is asked to 'map' at least an octave lower.

```
                    M  o l  l  y
Pianist 1 (=  =  =  = c5 d5 b4 b4 c6)
Pianist 2 (f4 d5 b5 = =  =  =  =  = )
           F  o  x
                                T  o  m
Pianist 1 (=   =  =   =  =  =  g4 d4 c4)
Pianist 2 (f#3 d4 g#4 f4 b3 e3 c5 =  = )
           G   o  u   r  l  e  y
```




In the notated version the algorithmic processing also rotates and transposes both piano parts. This is not a requirement in the graphic score version!

**Dew** - maps the text of one of the Stanza Stone poems by Simon Armitage. The poem is mapped into a tonality of c major but with occasional shifts up or down a fourth or a fifth.



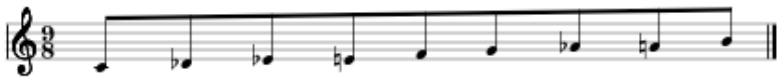

The tense stand off
of summer's end
the touchy fuse wire
of parched grass . . .

In the graphic score version the text is marked like this with the open parenthesis ( indicating a slow arppegiated chord and the [ open bracket showing a staccato. Piano 1 only plays arpeggiated chords. Piano 2 plays everything else but the arpeggiated chord, and so a two-part texture is created.

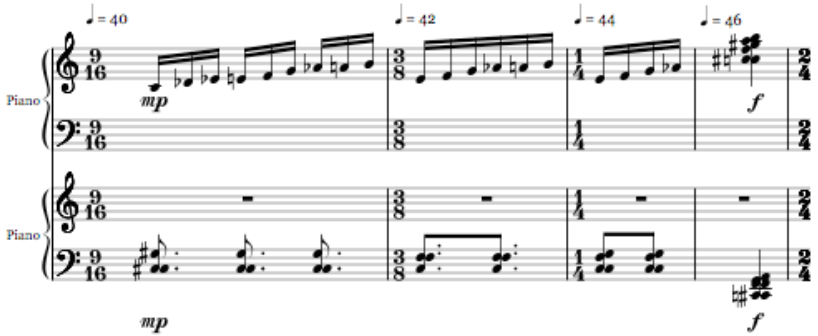
(The tense stand [off
of (summer's [end
the (touchy fuse [wire
of (parched [grass . . .

The tempo is a very slow eighth beat value and the pitches are chosen approxinmately by the performers, only making sure the number of notes in each chord equals the number of the letters in each word.

**Train Numbers** – maps collections of integers onto a nine-note scale, the famous scale created by Alexander Tcherepnin:



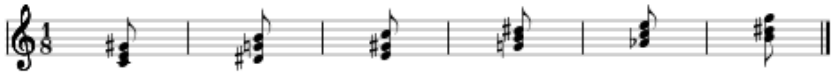
The reason for this is that the integers on the train plates are between zero and nine. So, for example, the integer five will generate five sequential pitches from this nine-note set and also create a rhythmic measure of 5/16. One piano continuously plays upward scale sequences, the other chords (taken from the scale tones) based on augmented divisions of that number. So in the integer five there might be chords played in the rhythm 3/16 followed by 2/16. The music gradually accelerates from quarter beat mm = 40 up to mm = 140. The integer zero creates a chord cluster (from the scale) and provides an occasional interruption to the otherwise continuous flow of the music.



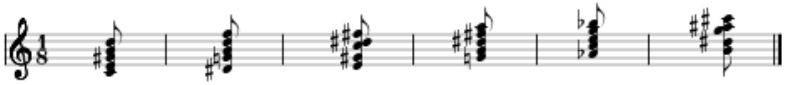

In the graphic score the integers are read (in any order) directly from the image of a collection of nine number plates. As each pianist chooses the current number that number denotes the starting pitch and the number of upward scale movements. The integer 5 will start at F and create a five note upward phrase. The chords work different referring to a division of the rhythm and a choice of between 2 and 5 note chords. Thus the integer 9 will allow three, three notes chords starting on C.

**Hilton Hotel** is influenced by a work called *Oculus* by Howard Skempton. This piece has been described by blogger Simon Cummings as a kind of 'tongue in cheek paradox' using only major and minor root-position chords. My take on this is to choose another scale, this time the six-note augmented scale.

So the chord sequences in Piano 1 will be:



And for Piano 2 the augmented chords are extended to include a major 7 and 9:



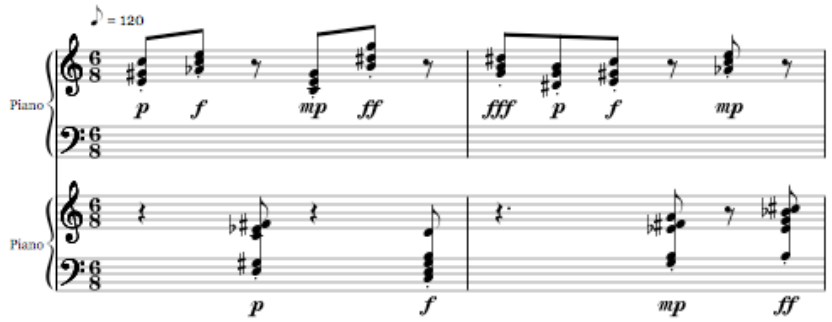
This musical material is played in a kind of hocketing rhythmic interplay taken from a 6-bit binary sequence and its inversion:

((1 1 0 1 1 0) (1 1 1 0 1 0)
(1 1 0 0 0 0) (1 1 0 0 0 1)
(1 1 0 1 0 0) (1 1 0 1 1 1)
(1 1 0 1 0 1) (1 1 1 0 0 0)
(1 1 0 0 1 0) (1 1 1 0 1 1)
(1 1 1 0 0 1)))

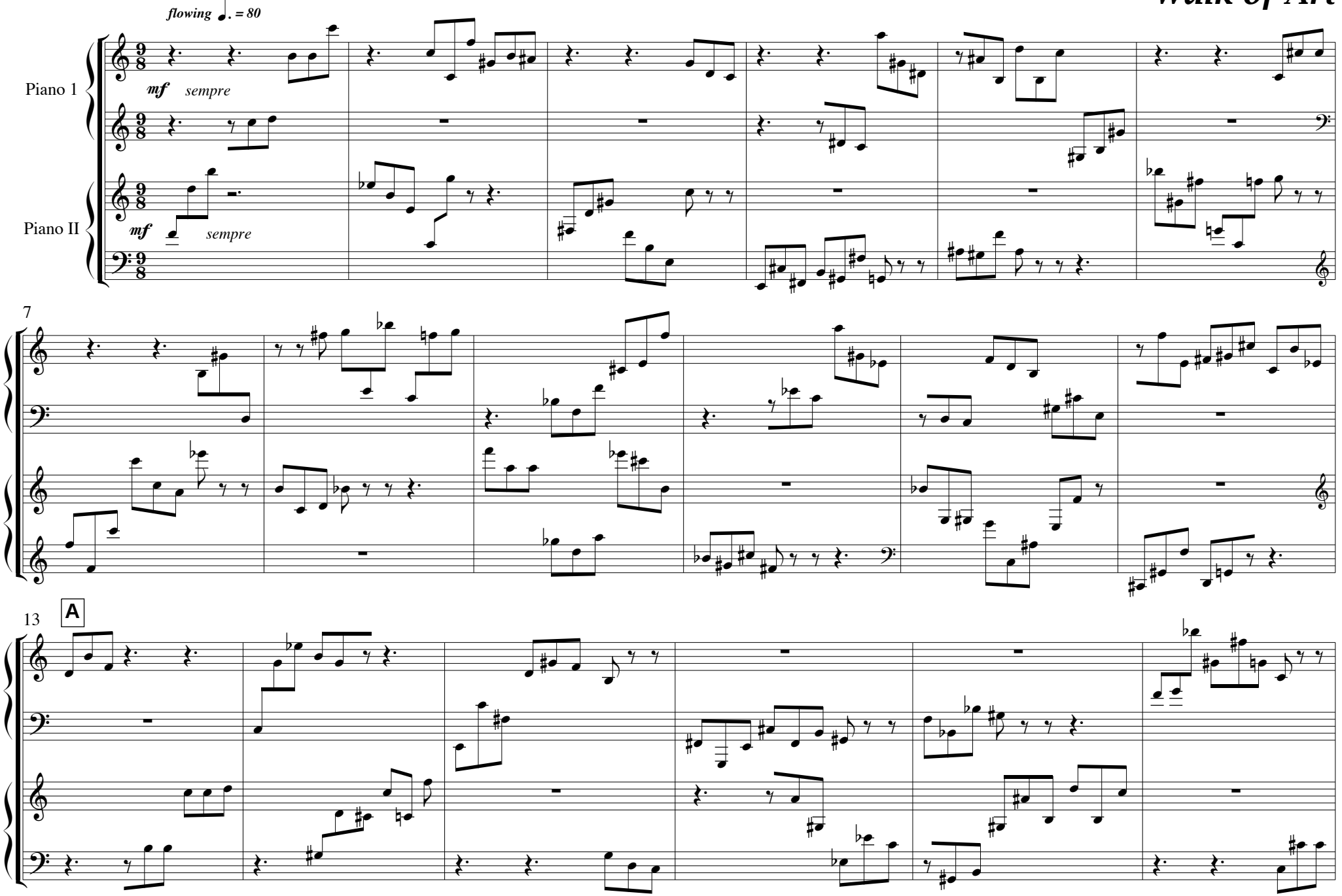
((0 0 1 0 0 1) (0 0 0 1 0 1)
(0 0 1 1 1 1) (0 0 1 1 1 0)
(0 0 1 0 1 1) (0 0 1 0 0 0)
(0 0 1 0 1 0) (0 0 0 1 1 1)
(0 0 1 1 0 1) (0 0 0 1 0 0)
(0 0 0 1 1 0))

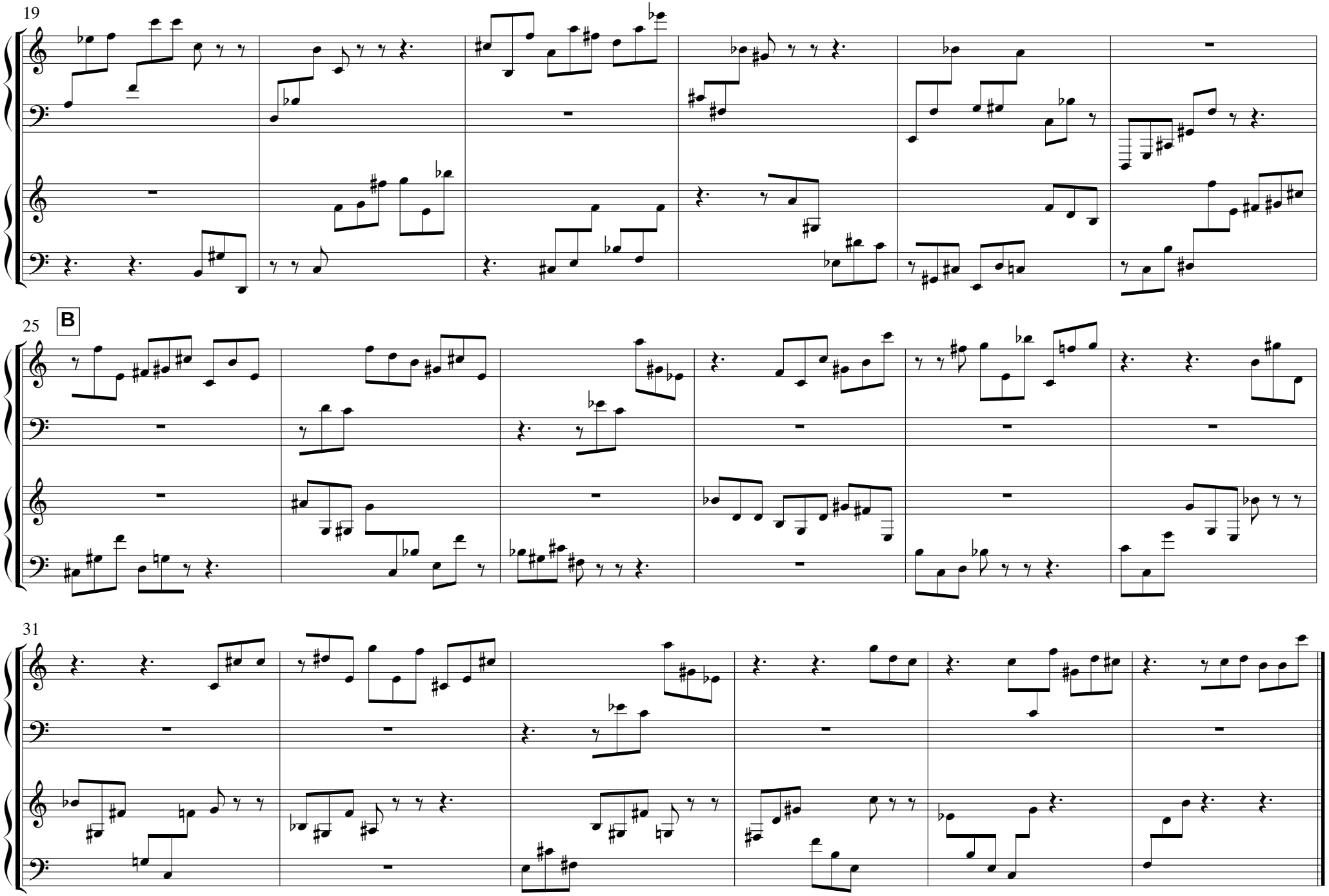
This sequence will be indicated visually using the window spaces in the eleven stories of the Hilton Hotel building. The augmented chords may be played as straight eighths in a 6/8 meter and the extended chords broken up and rhythmicised *ad lib* by the second piano. In the graphic score the order of the chords and their dynamics may be freely chosen, but the rhythm, the beat / space order is agreed between the players. In the notated

version chords and dynamics are chosen algorithmically with a random generator.

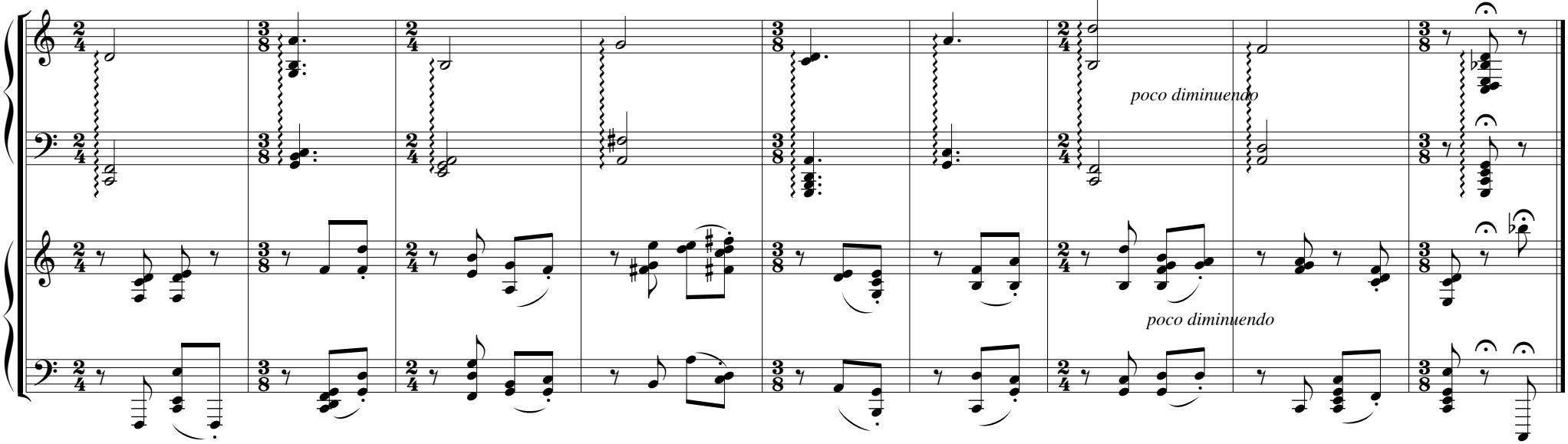


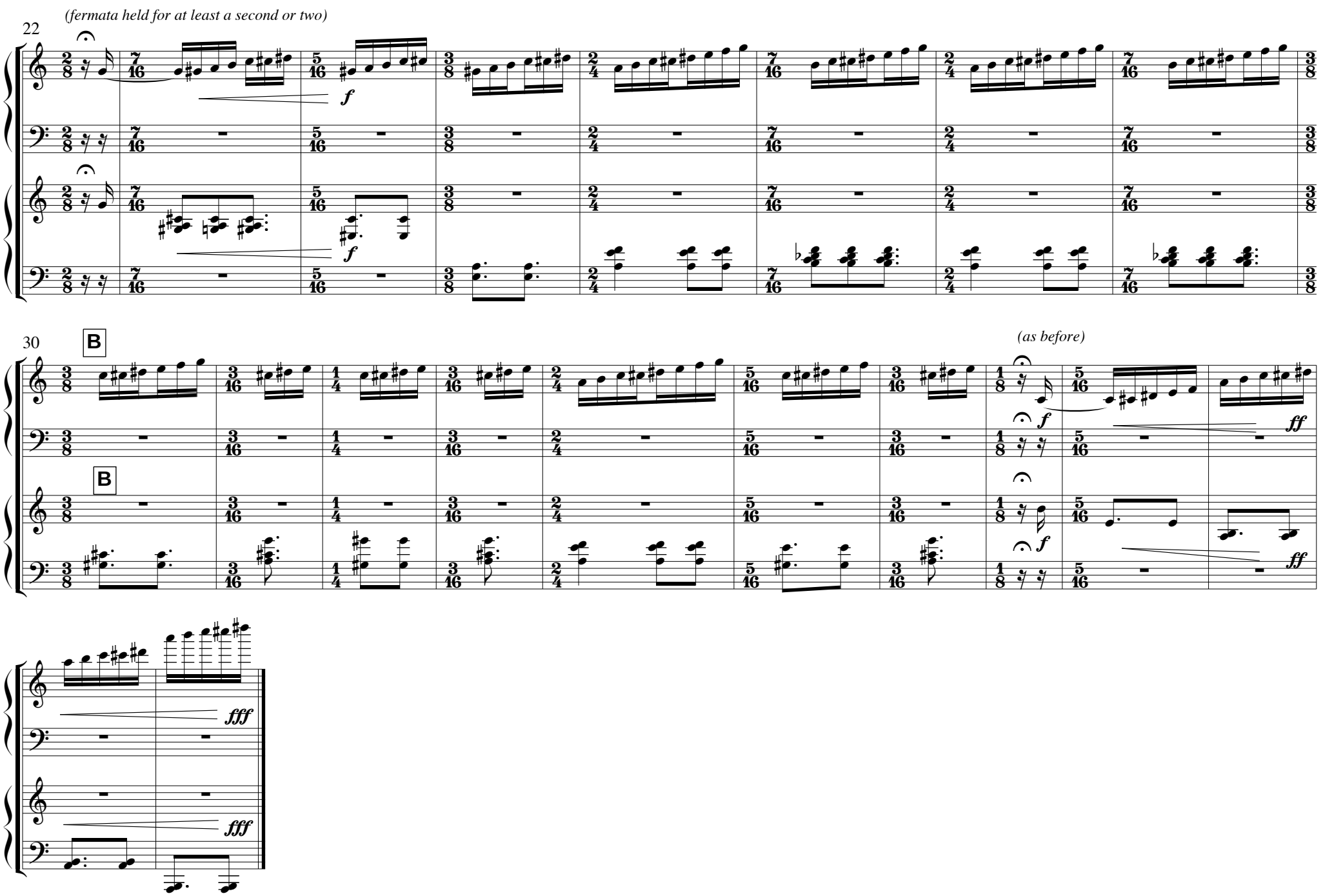
*This page intentionally left blank*.

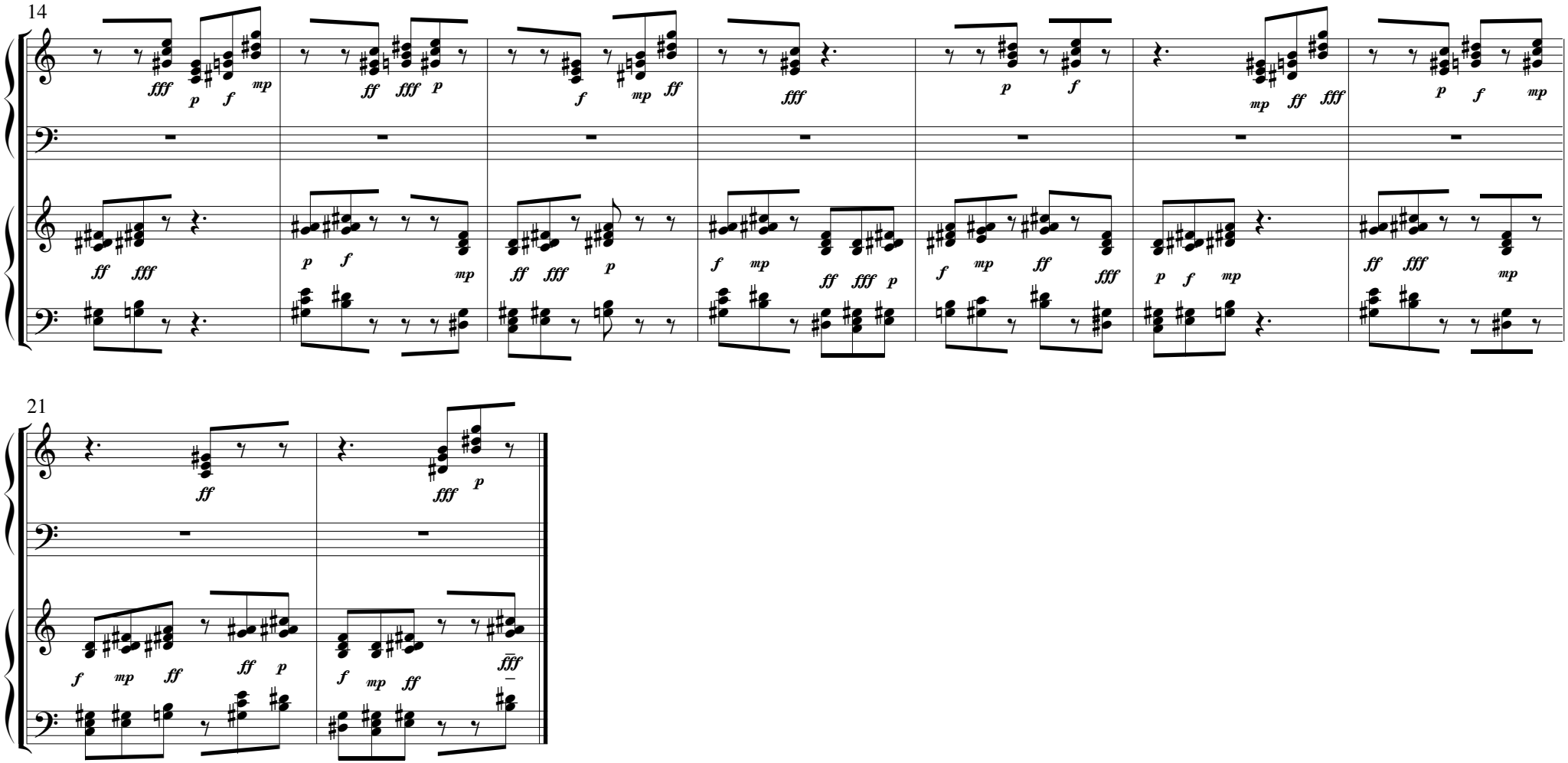

flowing ♩. = 80
Piano 1
mf sempre
Piano II
mf sempre
7
13
A


19
25
B
31

16




(fermata held for at least a second or two)
22
f
f
30
B
B
(as before)
f
f
ff
ff
fff
fff


14
21