Paul Clift

Action Painting

for solo piano

duration ca. 7 minutes

2006

Programme note:

Anyone who has improvised at the piano might agree that the experience is in many ways similar to that of a painter approaching a blank canvas. Nowhere is this concept so pertinent as in the work of the abstract expressionists; applying paint in broad, flowing movements or abrupt flicking, the gradual accumulation of layers to create rich and complex textures, and the occasional emergence of realist forms which have floated up from the artist's unconscious… the relationship between the keys of a piano and an improvising musician shares many of these qualities: where realism can surface spontaneously in visual arts, fragments of recognisable quasi-melodies or harmonic progressions might appear in improvising at the piano.

The composition of this work was an attempt to simulate such an improvisation; although the piece far from improvisatory, it was nonetheless marked by a preoccupation with the parallels between spontaneous application of paint to a canvas and pianistic gesture.

London, October 2006

Performance Notes & Special Notation:

- In order to achieve a greater degree of precision with the sustain pedal a dedicated stave is occasionally used; the rhythms indicated therein should be respected with the same degree of precision as notated pitches; beyond this the notation for pedalling is consistent with traditional notation;

- Every effort should be made to respect the precise pitches indicated in the *glissandi*; although this material is gestural, the start/end pitches are of harmonic relevance;

	'muted', *i.e.* silently depress the note half-way down before the sounding pitch (until the resistance of the mechanism is felt), then abruptly press it the remaining distance; the maximum 'sounding' dynamic for this effect should be *piano*;
	'muted', *i.e.* touch the string near the tuning pegs in order to mute the string, then play the note normally on the keyboard; this should be done in such a way that the pitch is still audible (and not a harmonic) but of a very short duration, similar to a violin *pizzicato*;
	touch the string lightly near the dampers and then playing normally on the keyboard, produce a *random* harmonic;

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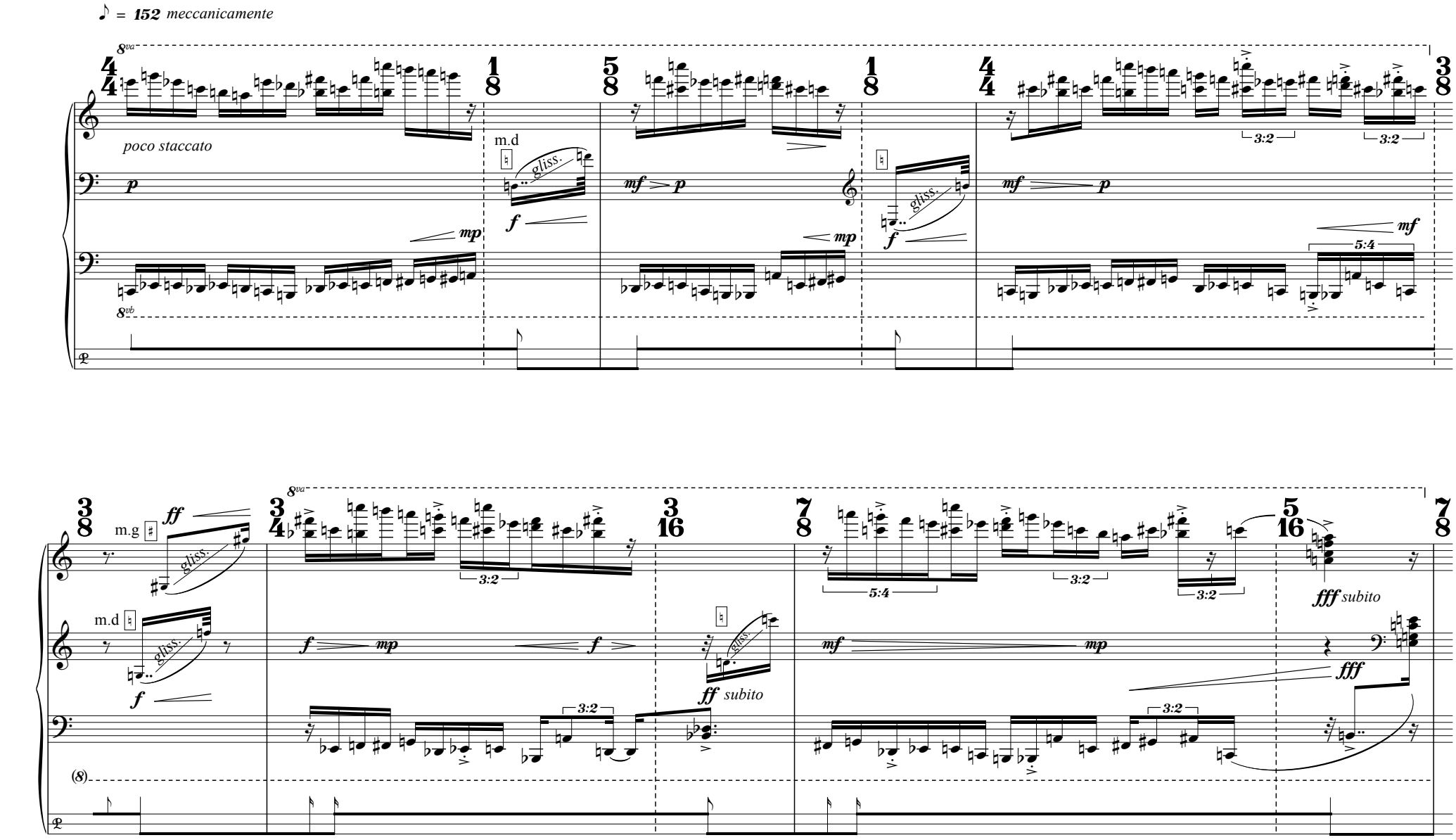
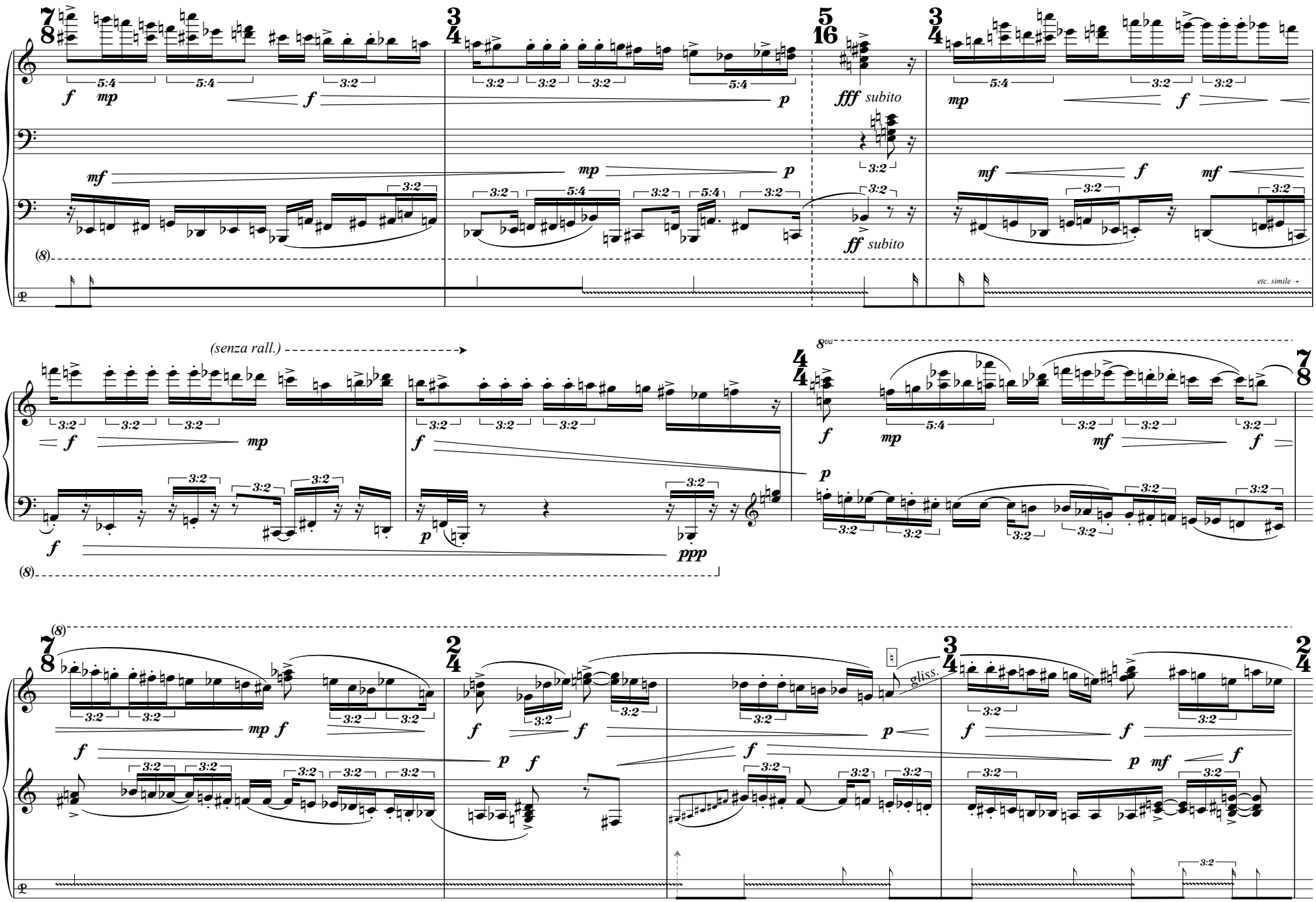
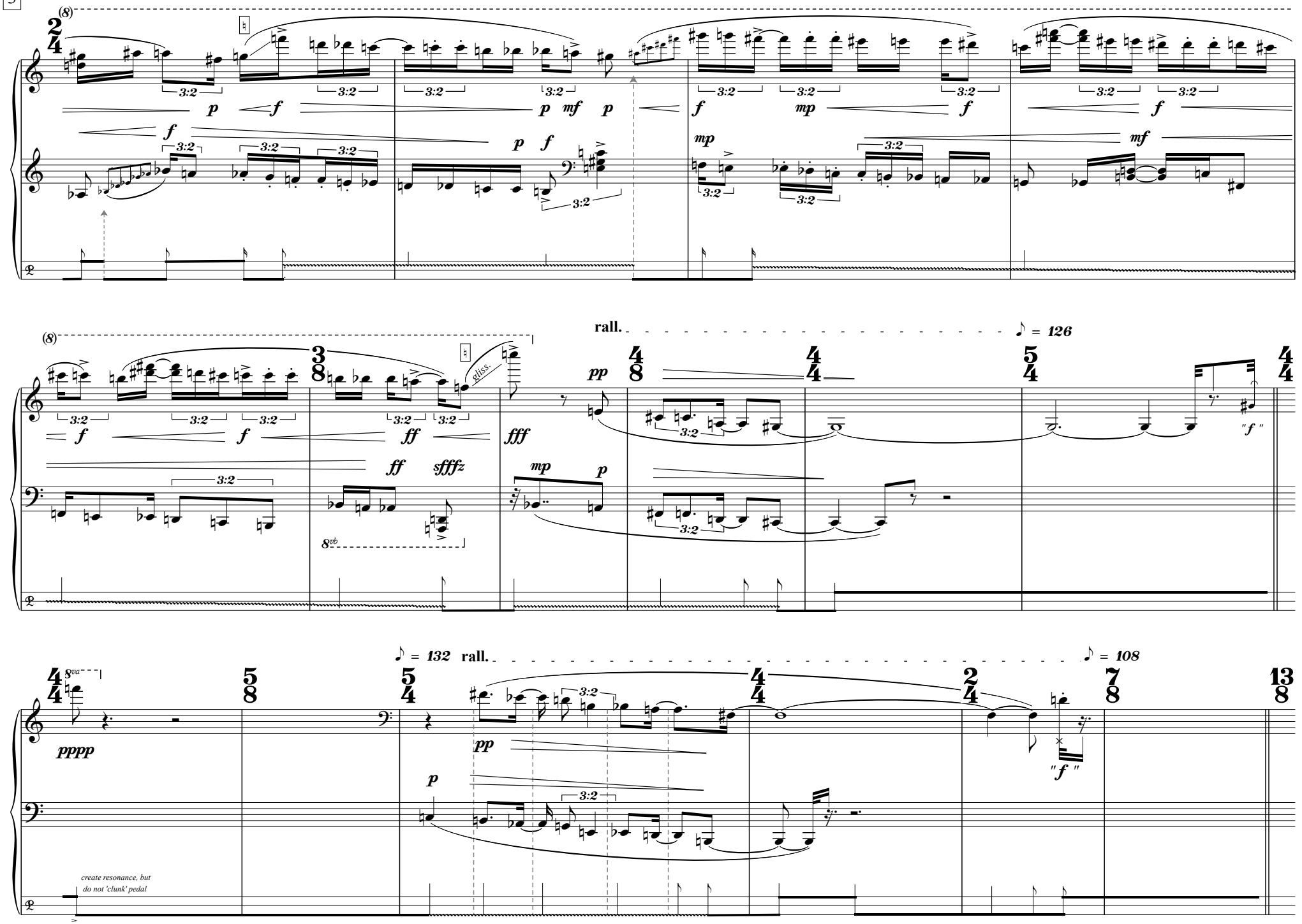
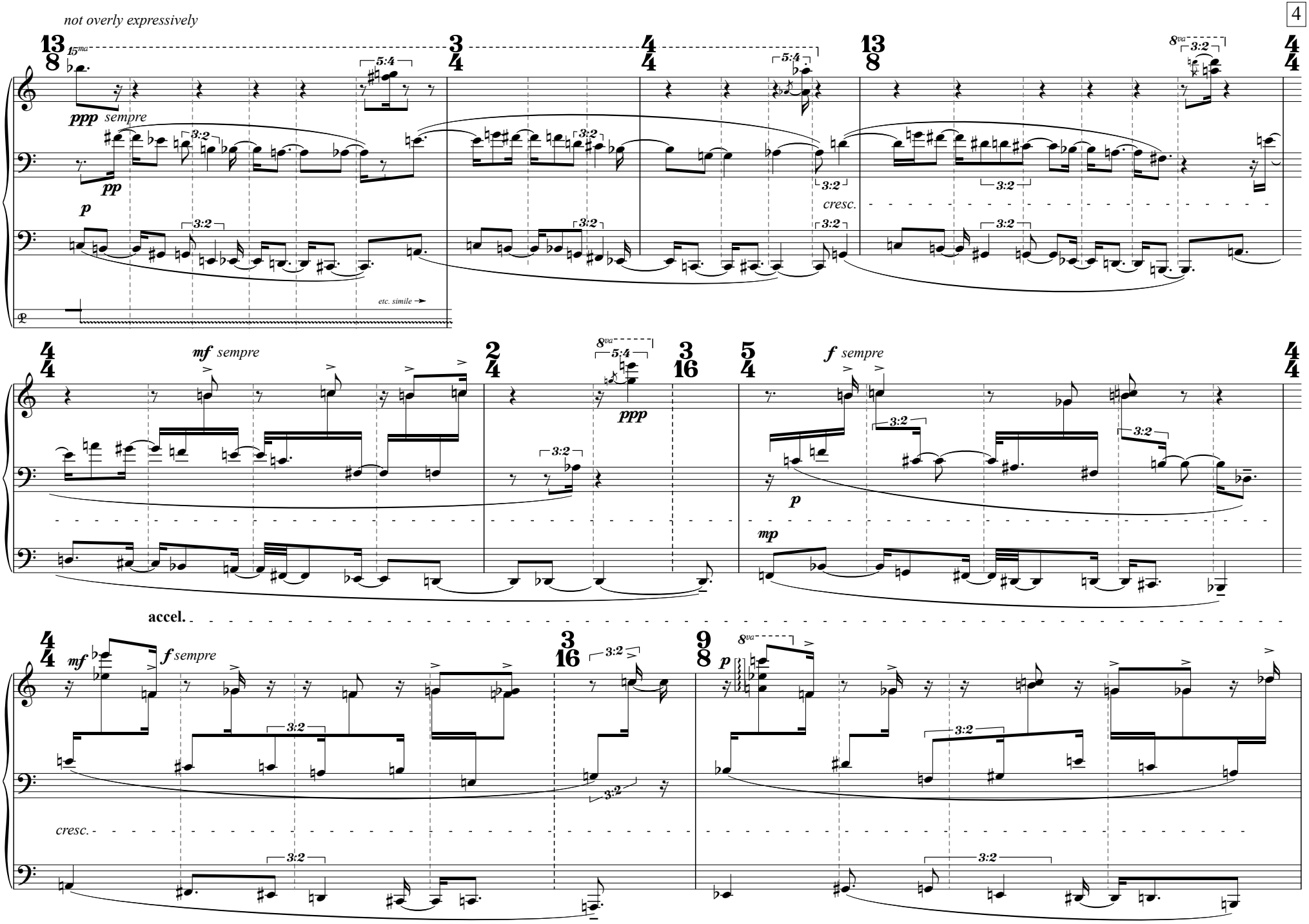
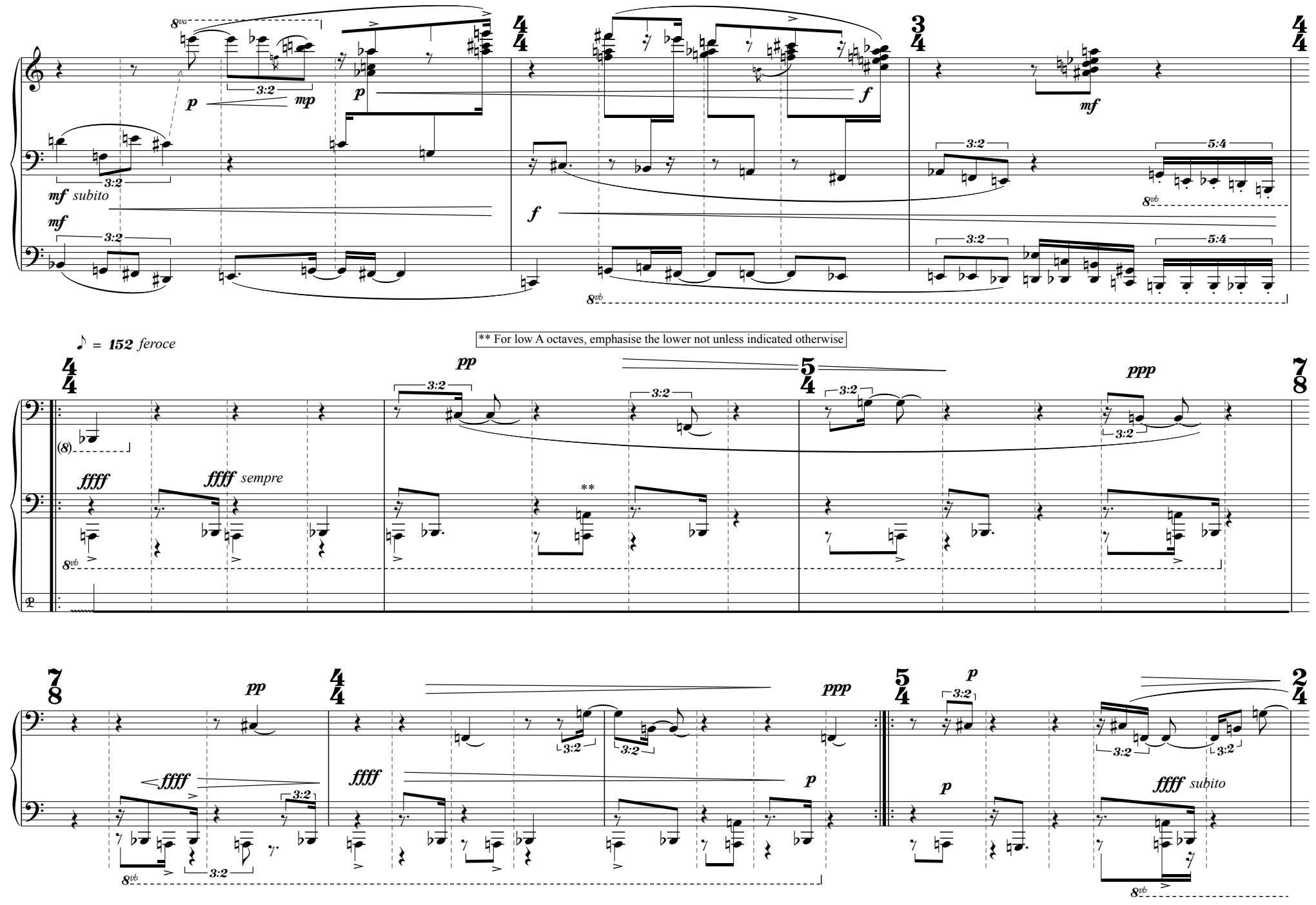
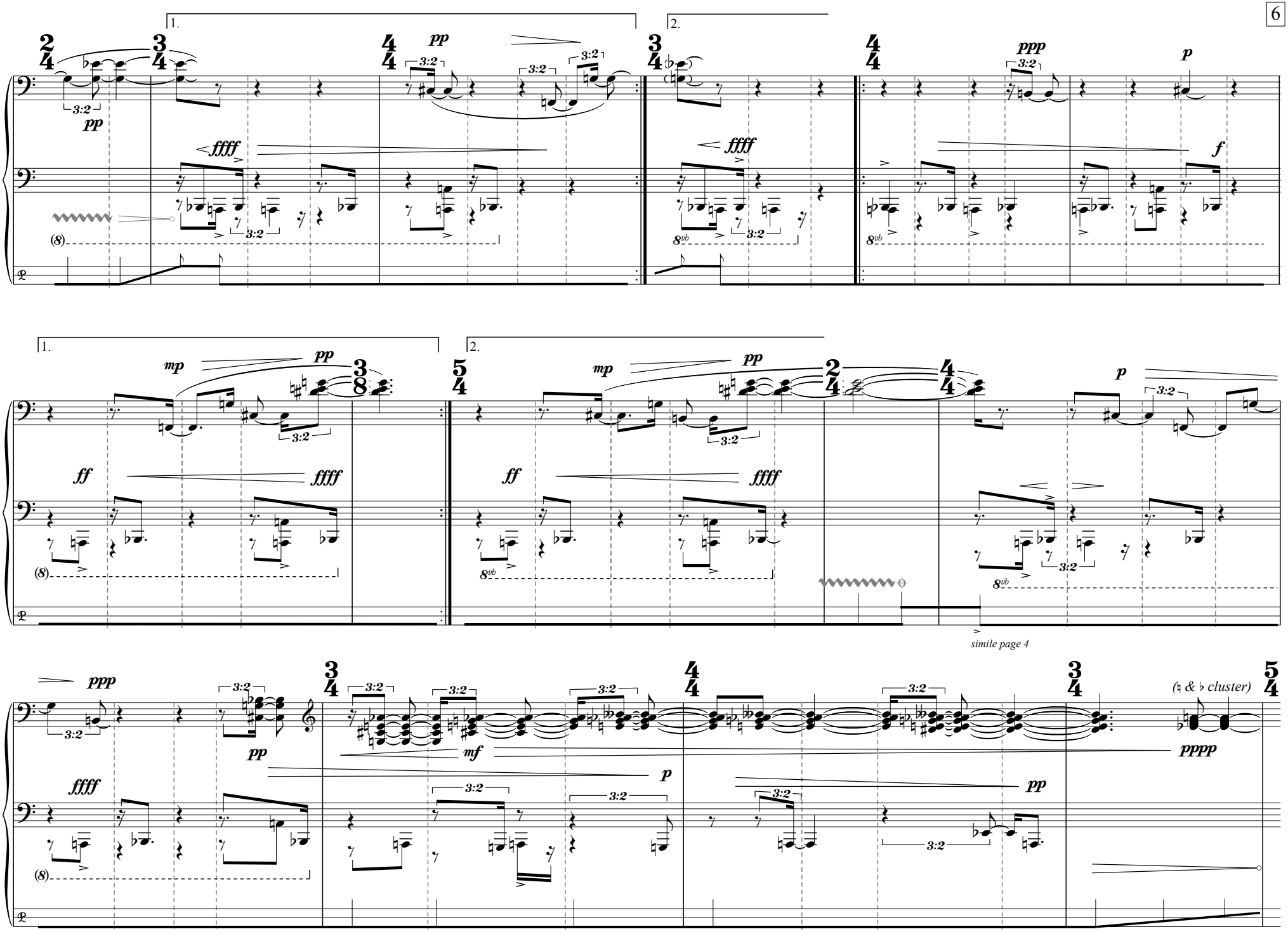


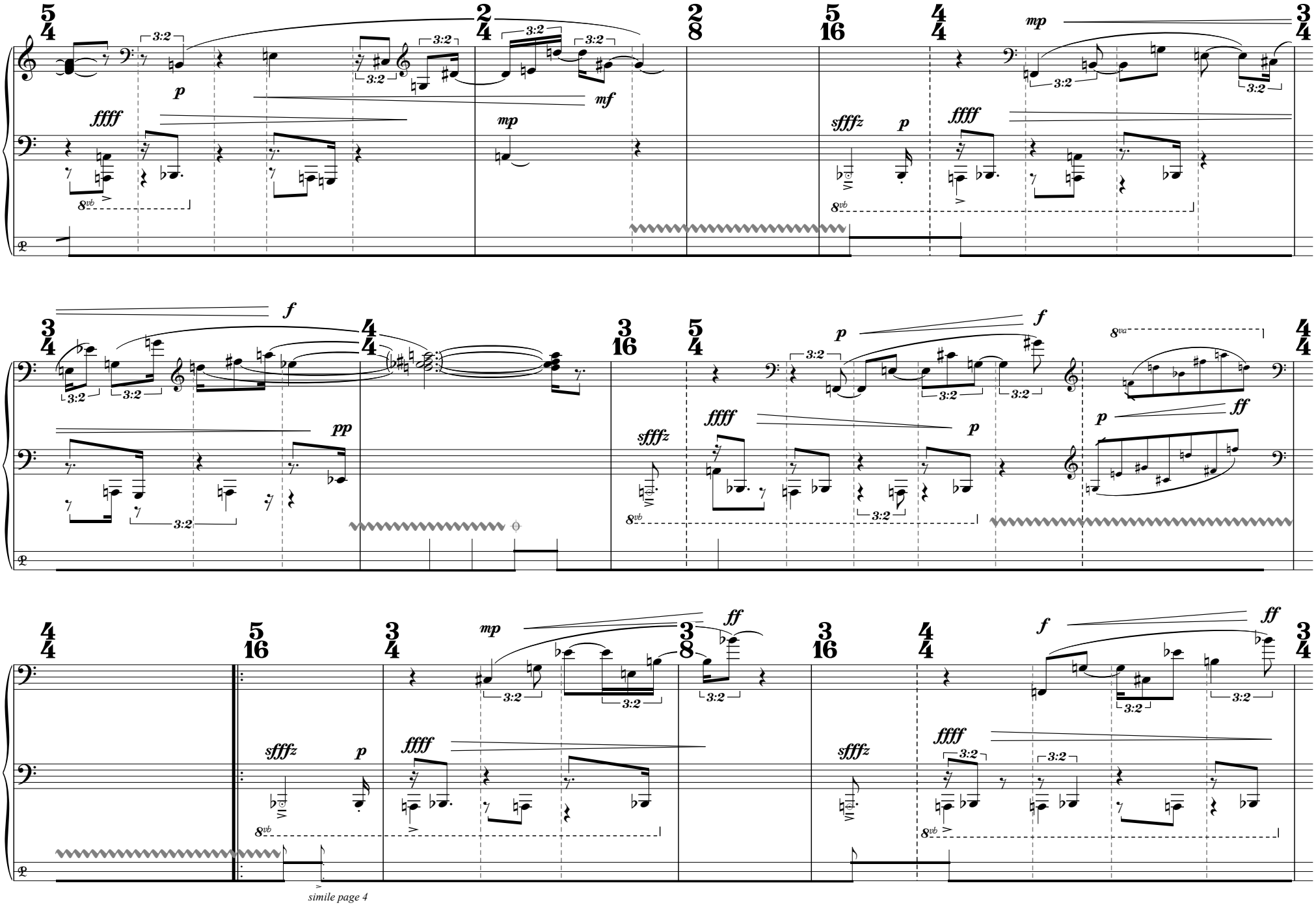

7/8
3/4
5/16
3/4
fff subito
ff subito
mp
mf
f
p
(8)
etc. simile →
(senza rall.)
8va
4/4
7/8
ppp
(8)
7/8
2/4
3/4
2/4
gliss.
3:2
5:4

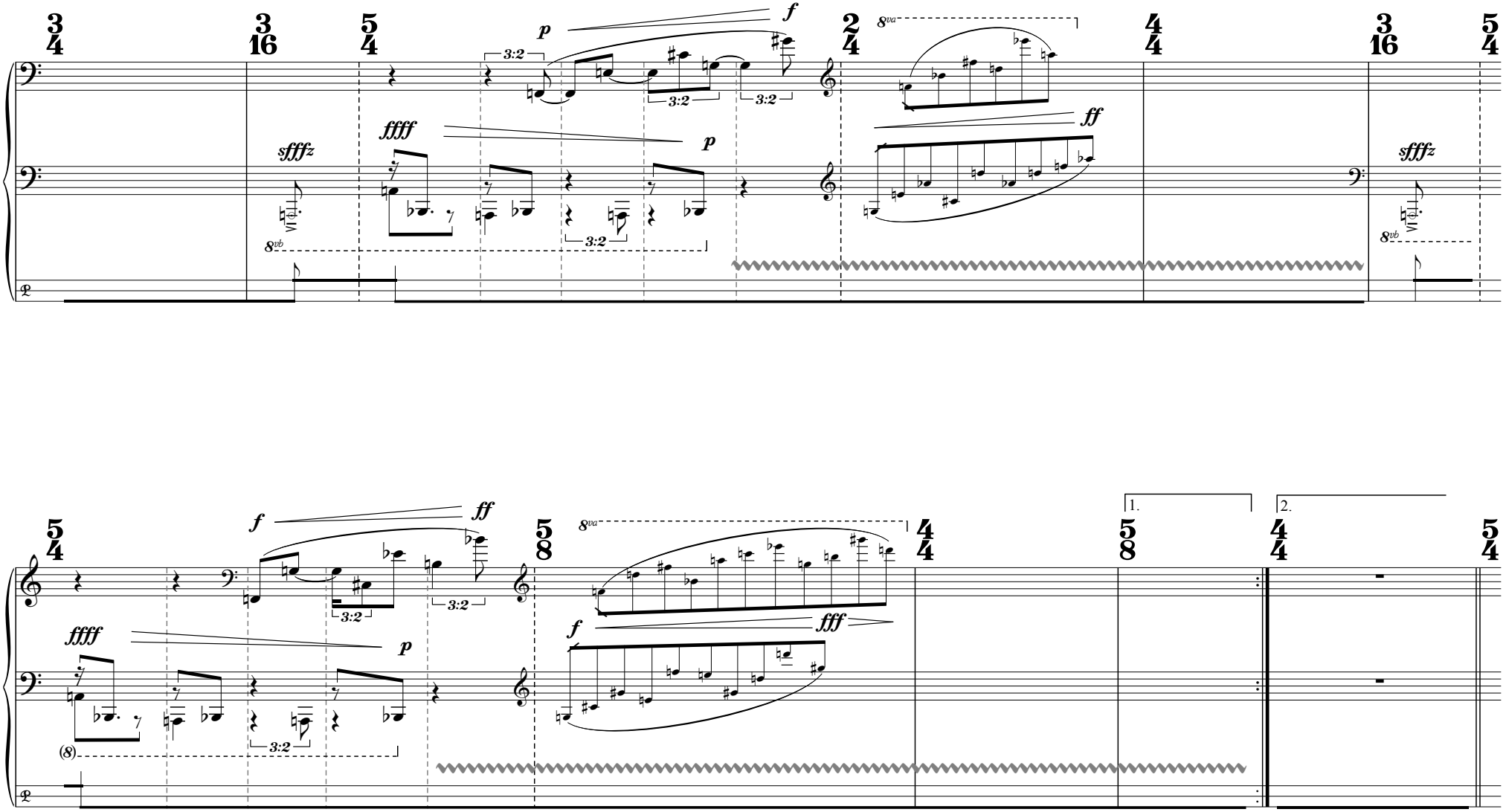

rall.
♪ = 126
gliss.
8vb
♪ = 132
rall.
♪ = 108
8va
create resonance, but
do not 'clunk' pedal


not overly expressively
15ma
ppp sempre
pp
p
3:2
5:4
cresc.
etc. simile
8va
mf sempre
ppp
mp
f sempre
accel.

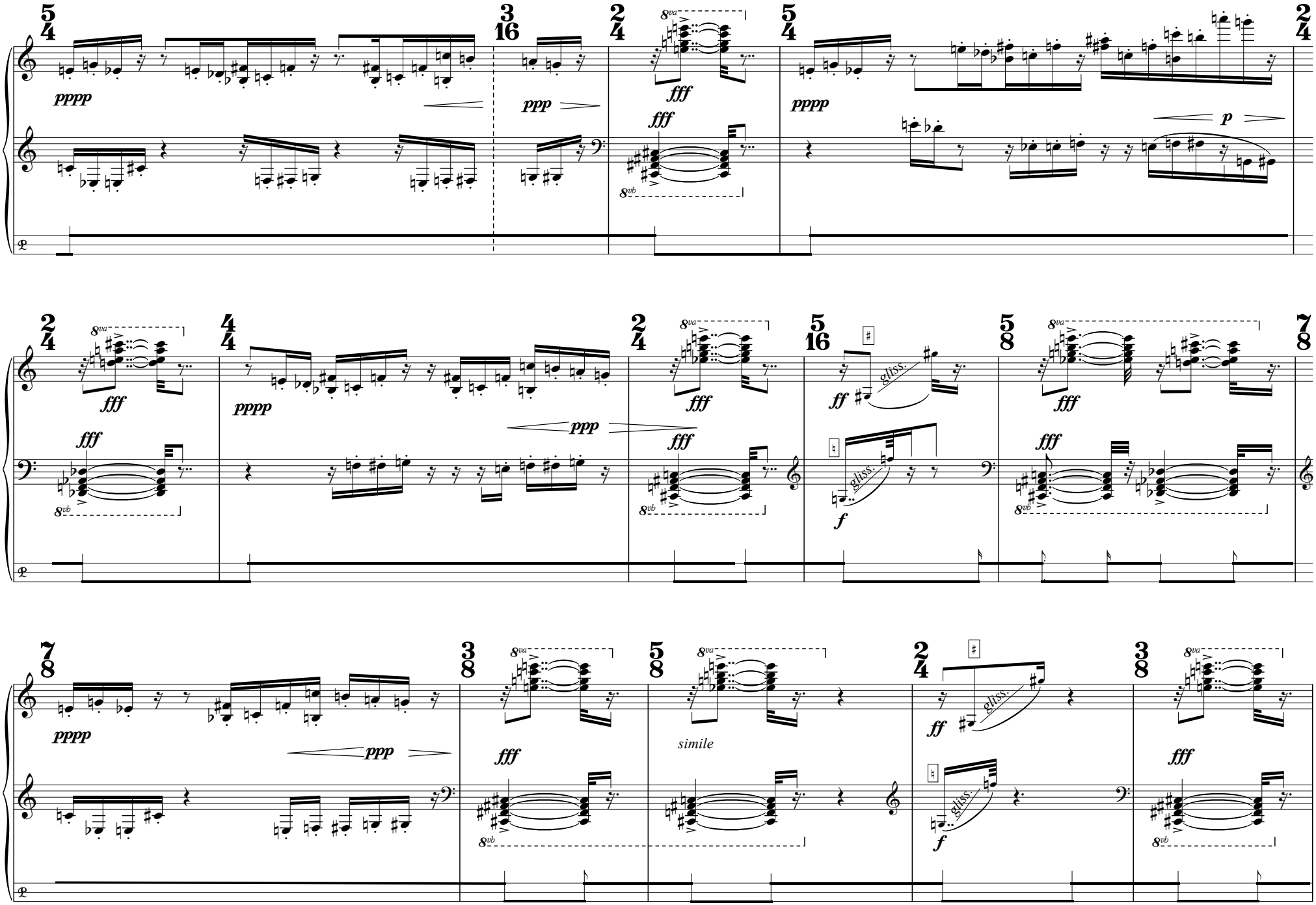

8va
p
3:2
mp
p
f
mf
3:2
5:4
8vb
mf subito
mf
3:2
f
3:2
5:4
8vb
♪ = 152 feroce
** For low A octaves, emphasise the lower not unless indicated otherwise
pp
3:2
3:2
3:2
ppp
3:2
(8)
ffff
ffff sempre
**
8vb
pp
ppp
p
3:2
3:2
3:2
3:2
ffff
ffff
p
p
ffff subito
3:2
3:2
8vb
8vb

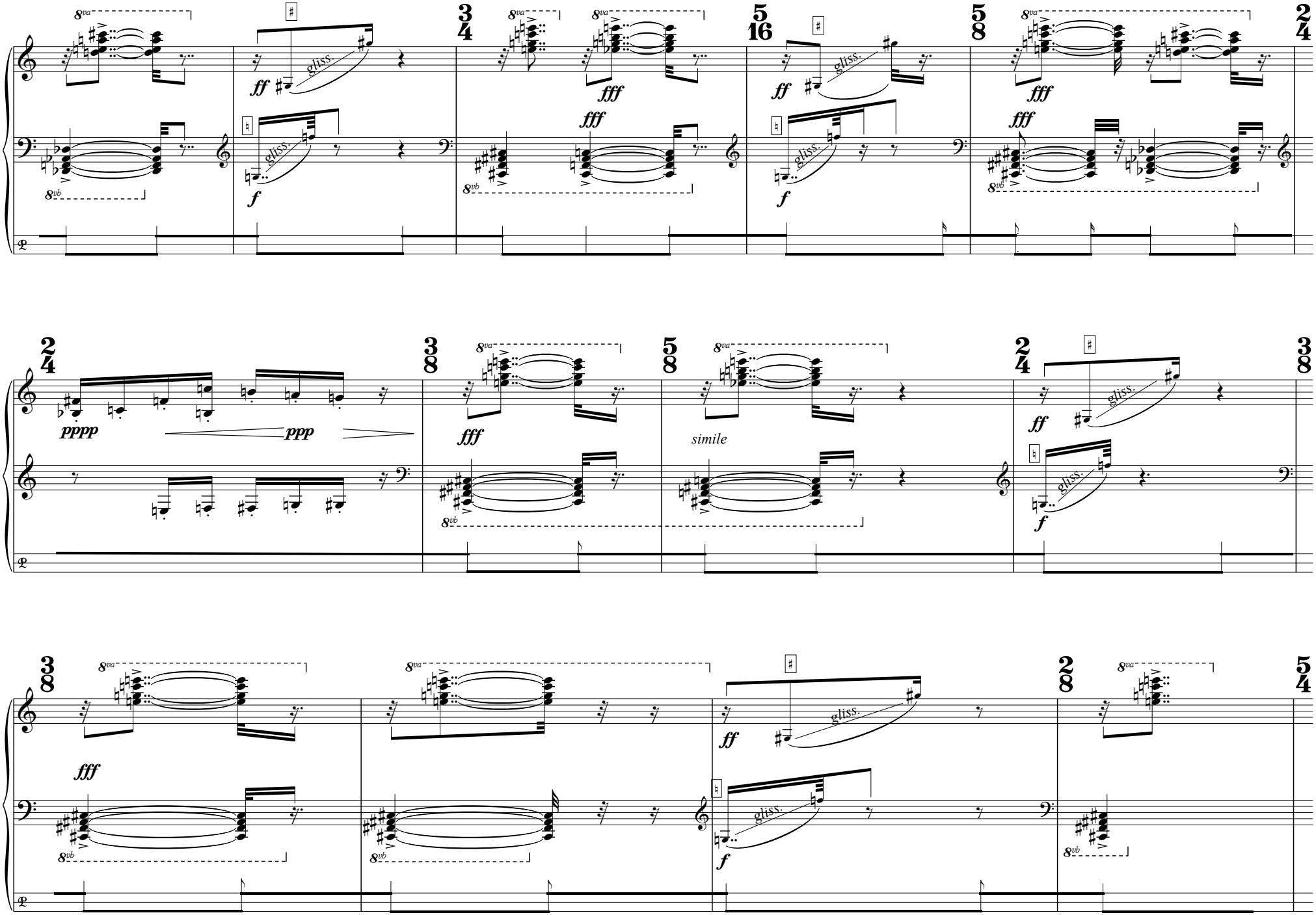

1.
2.
pp
ffff
ppp
p
f
3:2
8vb
1.
2.
mp
pp
ff
ffff
p
simile page 4
ppp
mf
pppp
(♮ & ♭ cluster)

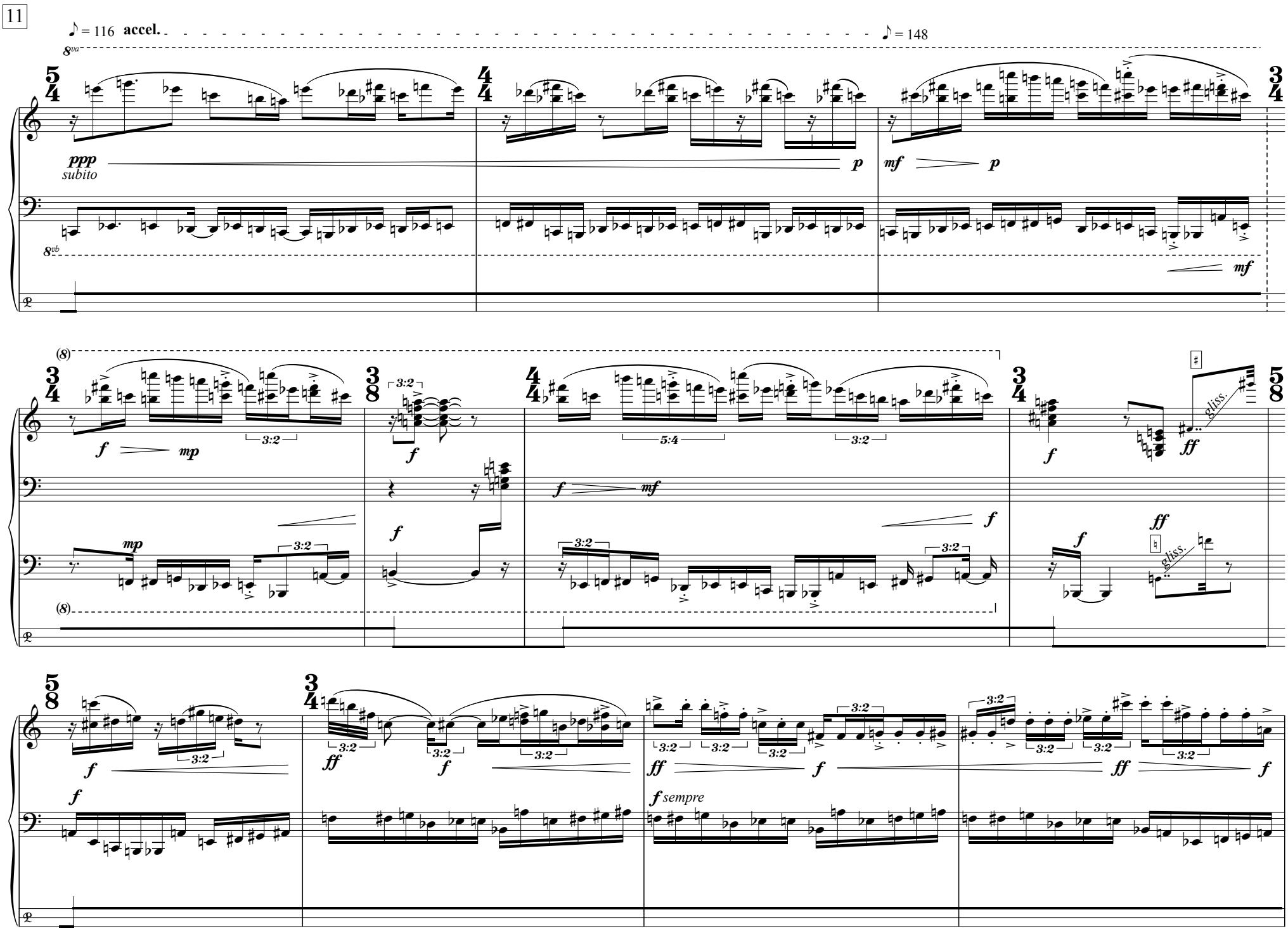

simile page 4

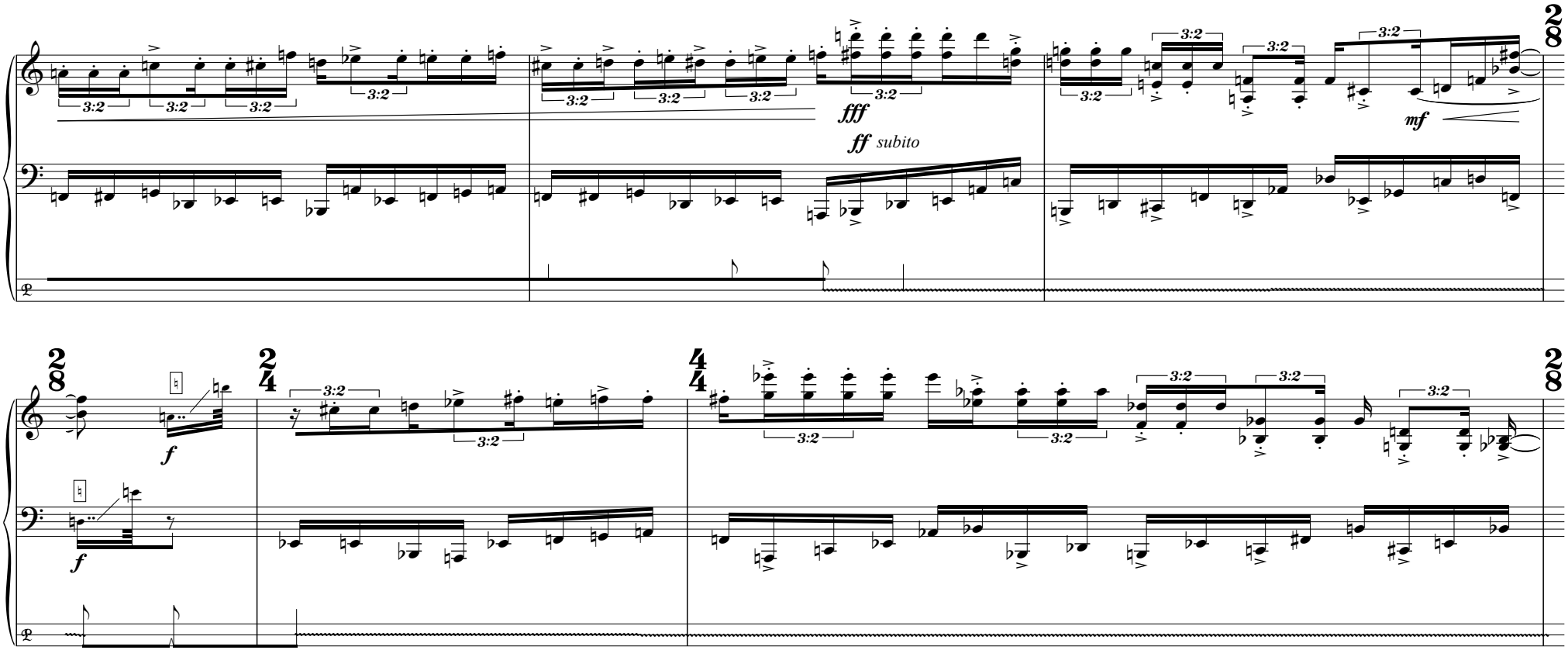

3/4
3/16
5/4
p
f
3:2
2/4
8va
4/4
3/16
5/4
sfffz
ffff
p
ff
8vb
5/4
f
ff
5/8
8va
4/4
5/8
1.
2.
4/4
5/4
ffff
p
f
fff
(8)

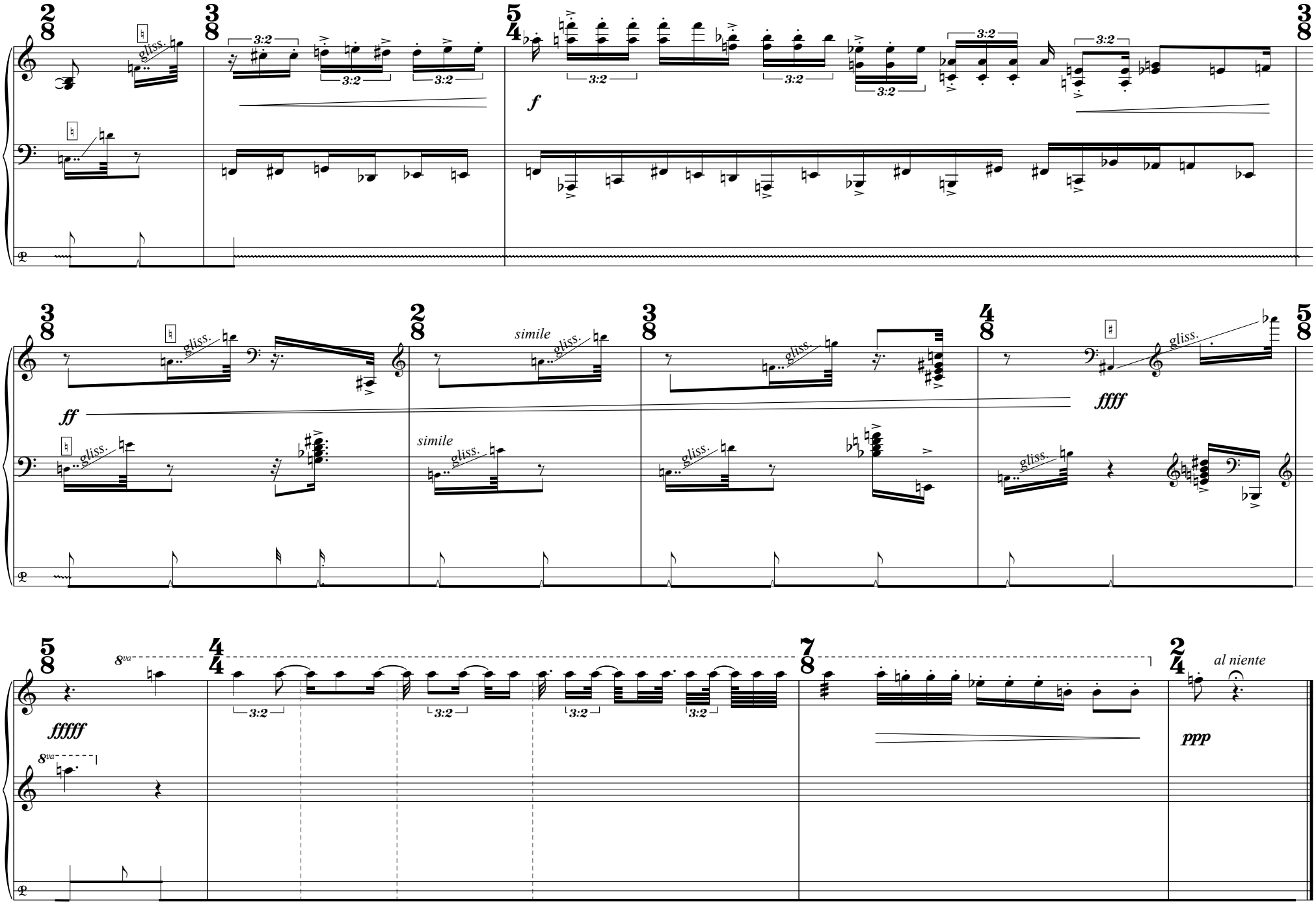
♪ = 152


5/4
3/16
2/4
5/4
2/4
pppp
ppp
fff
pppp
p
2/4
4/4
2/4
5/16
5/8
7/8
fff
pppp
ppp
fff
ff
fff
gliss.
f
7/8
3/8
5/8
2/4
3/8
pppp
ppp
fff
simile
ff
fff
gliss.
f
8va
8vb


8va
8vb
ff
fff
f
pppp
ppp
gliss.
simile


♪ = 116 accel.
♪ = 148
8va
8vb
ppp
subito
p
mf
p
mf
(8)
f
mp
3:2
f
f
mf
5:4
3:2
f
ff
gliss.
f
ff
gliss.
f
f
ff
f
f sempre
ff
f
ff
f


3:2
fff
ff subito
mf
f
f


gliss.
3:2
f
simile
ff
ffff
8va
fffff
al niente
ppp