siúil go ciúin

an chéad blúire
(first fragment)

Piano

for Ben Smith

Eric Skytterholm Mac Aodhagáin

April 2021 | Tynemouth

around 6 minutes

Were other anapocryphal illustrious sons of the law
and children of a selected or rejected race mentioned?

Felix Bartholdy Mendelssohn (composer), Baruch Spinoza (philosopher),
Mendoza (pugilist), Ferdinand Lassalle (reformer, duellist).

What fragments of verse from the ancient Hebrew and ancient Irish languages
were cited with modulations of voice and translation of texts
by guest to host and by host to guest?

By Stephen: suil, suil, suil arun, suil go siocair agus suil go cuin
(walk, walk, walk your way, walk in safety, walk with care).

By Bloom: Kifeloch, harimon rakatejch m'baad l'zamatejch
(thy temple amid thy hair is as a slice of pomegranate).

James Joyce | Ulysses

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Piano Preparation

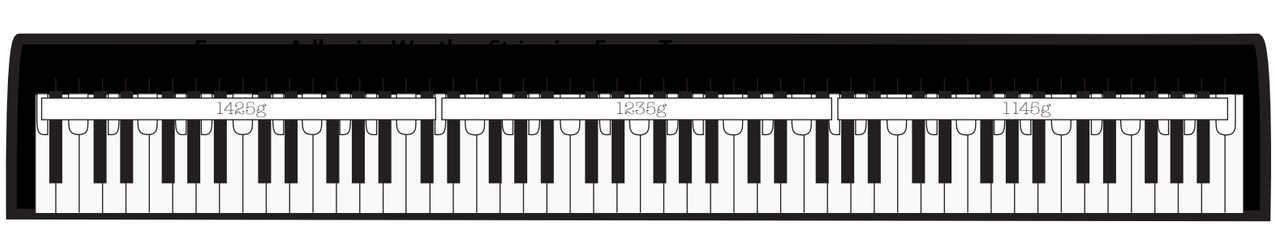
To perform this piece, the piano must be prepared in such a way that it each hammer rests in the **second position of the escapement mechanism** throughout. This can be achieved by any means; however, the suggested method is to use a combination of padded metal bars (dimensions outlined below), and soft rubber wedges.

Bars: The diagram below shows **three sets of bars**, one each for the low, middle, and high register of the instrument. I would strongly suggest using at least three sets to avoid bending, and becasue the weighting of the keys usually gets lighter towards the top of the instrument. The total weight of each set reflects this. Increasing the number of sets (say one set for each octave) also works well, but increases preparation time a little. The bars are used to prepare the **black keys**, and should be placed on top of each other.

It is important to note that the weighting of the keys varies from instrument to instrument. The **weights and dimensions** indicated here were tested on several Steinway D instruments, but different weights may be required on other pianos. Performers are therefore encouraged to carry **spare weights** (e.g. a quanitity of 120g bars) that can be used as well as, or in different combinations with, the sets outlined below:

3x [30mm x 6mm x 400mm] (570g)
2x [25mm x 6mm x 400mm] (475g)
4x [30mm x 3mm x 400mm] (285g)
6x [13mm x 3mm x 400mm] (120g) (spares)

The bars must be of **mild steel**. They can easily be cut to size and purchased at a reasonable cost from a steel supplier. However, these can often be roughly cut, so I suggest wrapping the narrow ends in single layers of **masking tape**, to cover any sharp edges. To avoid slippage and damage to the keys, **adhesive foam tape** should be attached to the bottom of the bars.



(30mm x 6mm x 400mm) x2 (25mm x 6mm x 400mm) x2 (30mm x 6mm x 400mm) x1
(30mm x 3mm x 400mm) x1 (30mm x 3mm x 400mm) x1 (30mm x 3mm x 400mm) x2

Many steel suppliers will be able to cut these to size. I have worked with August Knapman in the UK, who have a very straight forward ordering process and webiste.

Wedges: The **white keys** are prepared by placing soft rubber wedges between the frame and the end of the keys (**window wedges** are ideal but smaller tile wedges can also be used).
In order to prevent a clicking noise when the keys are released, and to increase the thickness of the wedge, adhesive **foam tape** should be attached to the bottom of each wedge.

For the original set of preparations, I used 20mm wide wedges for each set of two white keys, and sliced them in half lengthways for the single keys.
Star Pack, Onestopdiy, and ShieldUp soft rubber window wedges work very well, and can all easily be sliced in two.

Tape: I suggest using light-weight 12x3mm adhesive weatherstripping foam tape (Fowong brand tape rolls work well).

When familiar with the system, total **preparation time** can be reduced to **6-7 minutes** or therabotus. This should allow for the piano to be prepared swiftly before a concert, or during an interval. However, as the process entails adjusting 37 separate wedges, it may be wise to avoid programming the piece in the middle of a set, unless multiple instruments are available.

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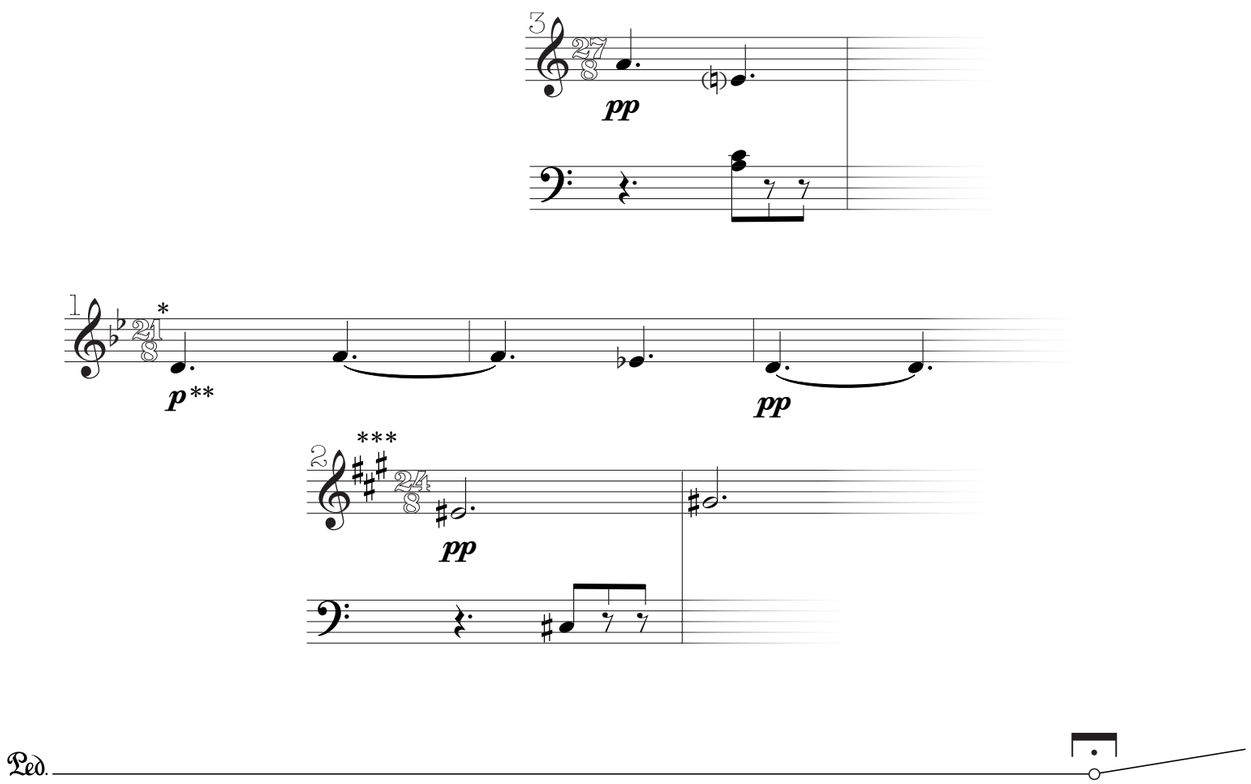
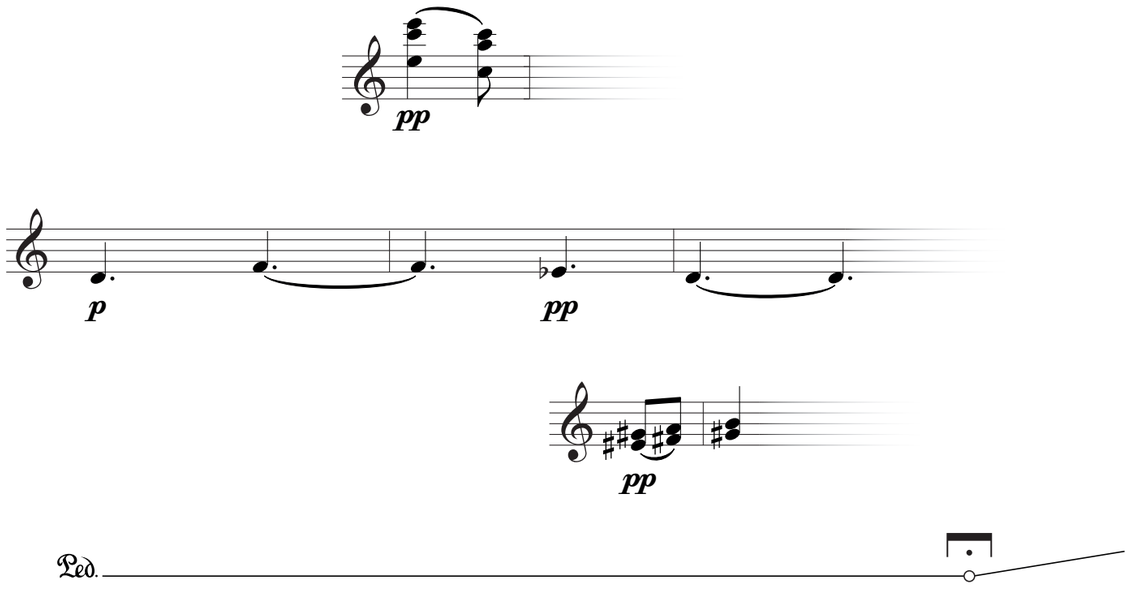


* Indication of relative tempi; the three parts (**1/2/3**) are in a 9/8/7 ratio. Aim to give each part its own line and melodic identity. Don't worry too much about minutae of precision. O

** All dynamics should be read as action dynamics. Due to the preparation of the instrument, the resulting sound will be much softer than indicated.

*** Key signiture for illustration only. Accidentals are notated throughout.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pp
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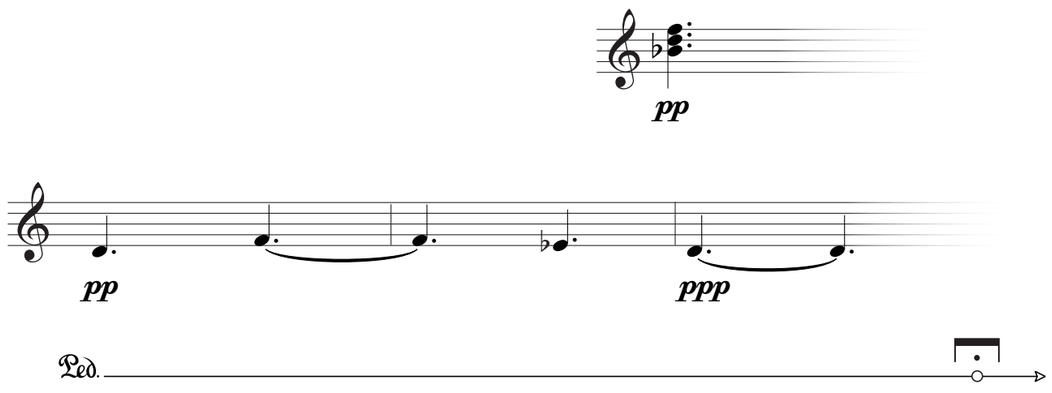
Ped.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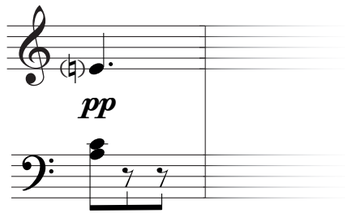
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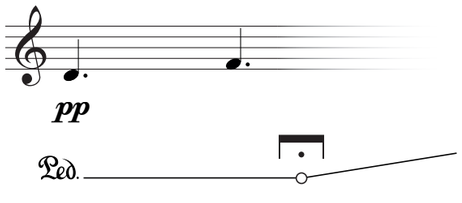
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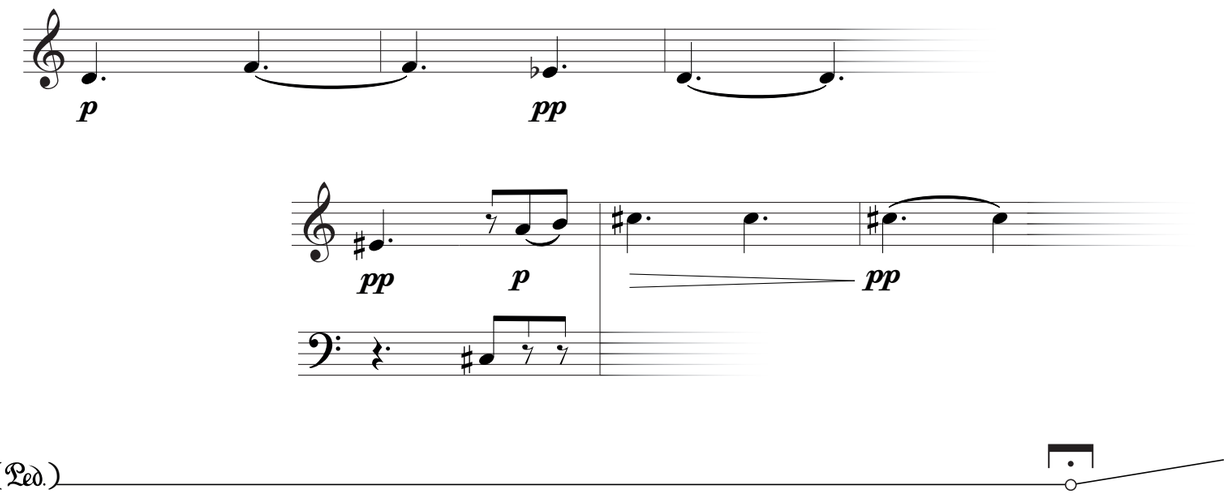
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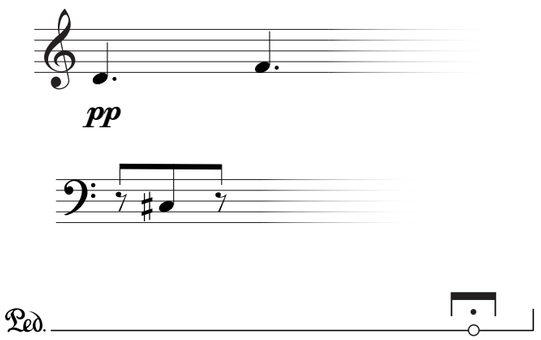
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Ped.

p pp

p pp

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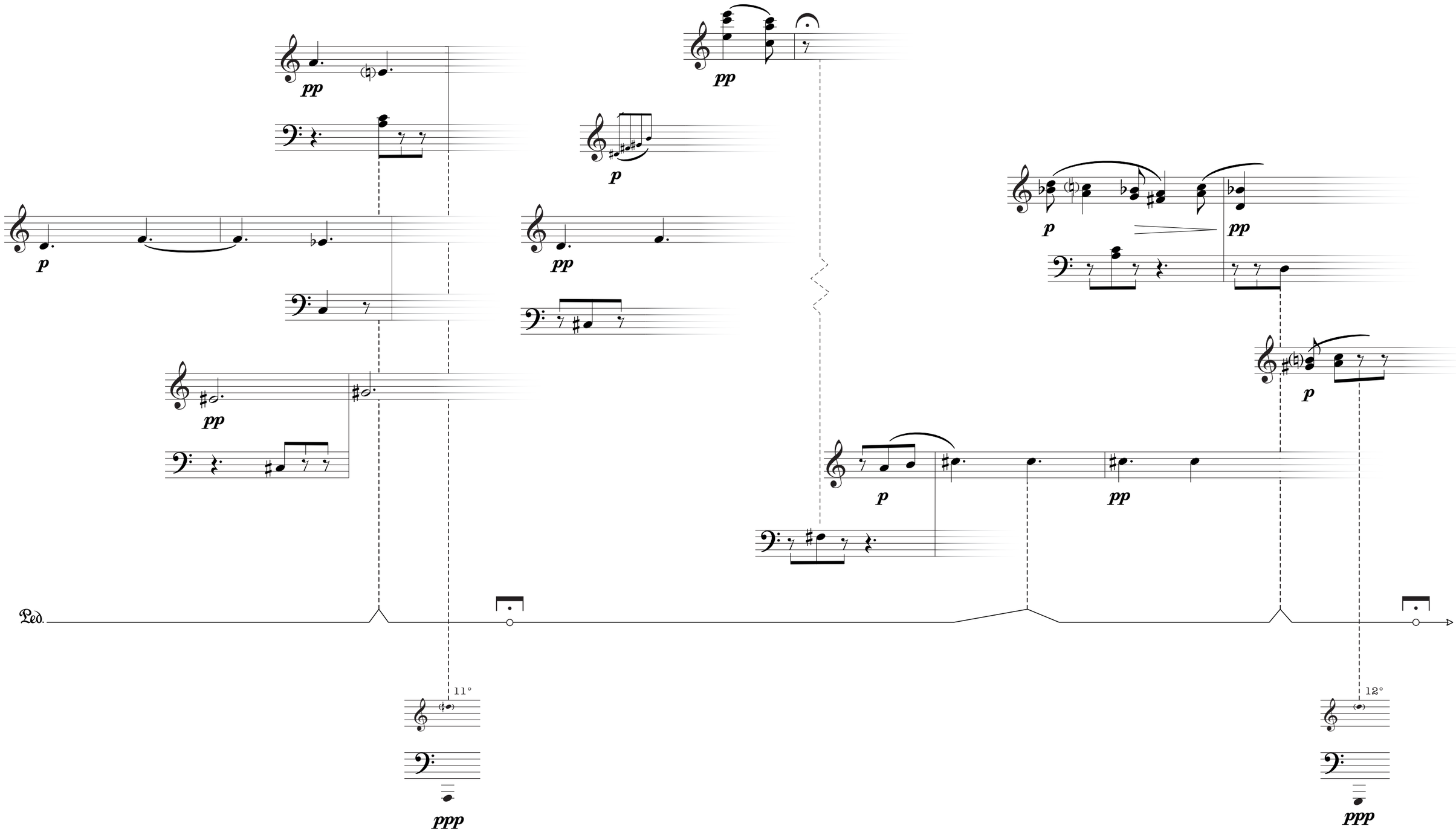
p pp p pp

p pp

* 12°

ppp

* All harmonics are notated below the pedal.
These should be played freely, in space time,
unless attached rhythmically to an upper layer.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p
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p
pp
Ped.
11°
ppp
12°
ppp

pp p pp

pp p pp

pp

p

pp

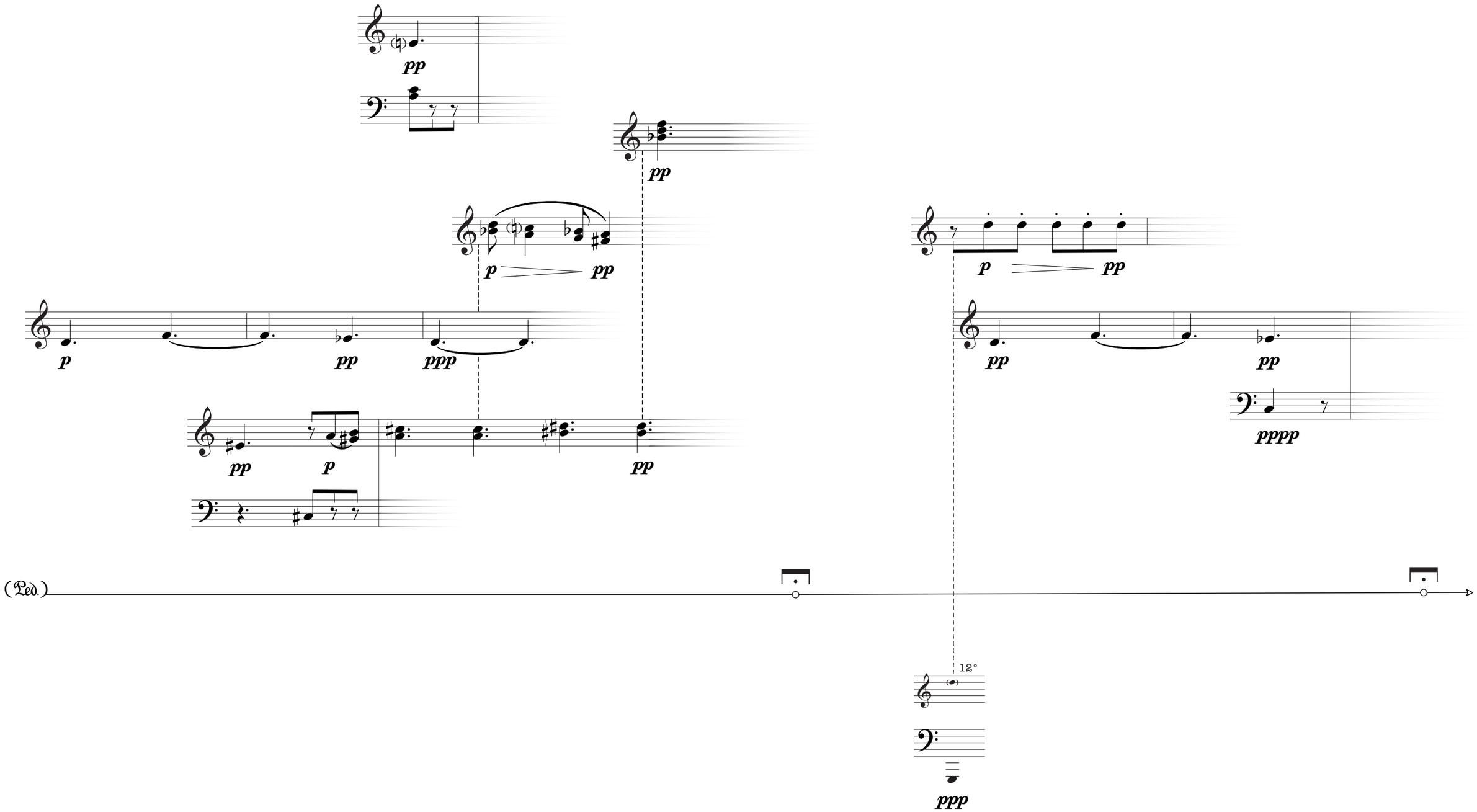
(Ped.)

14°

13°

14°

pp p pp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pppp
(Ped.)
12°
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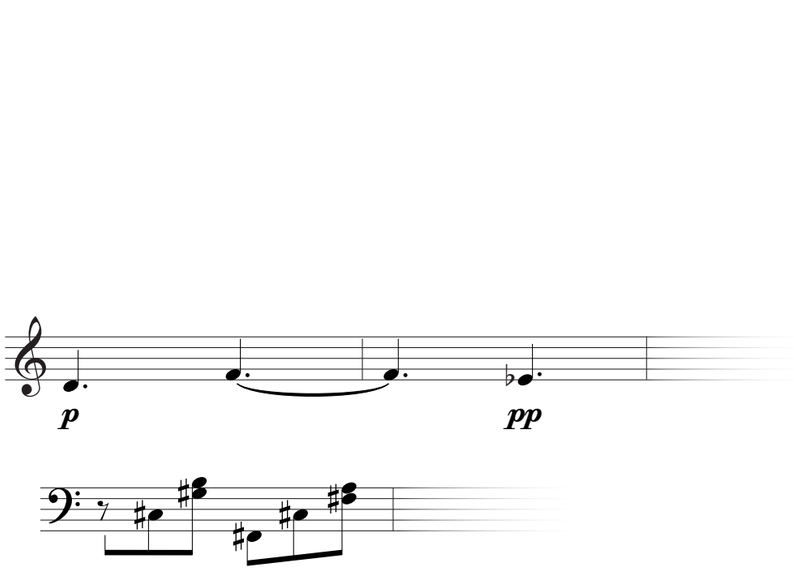
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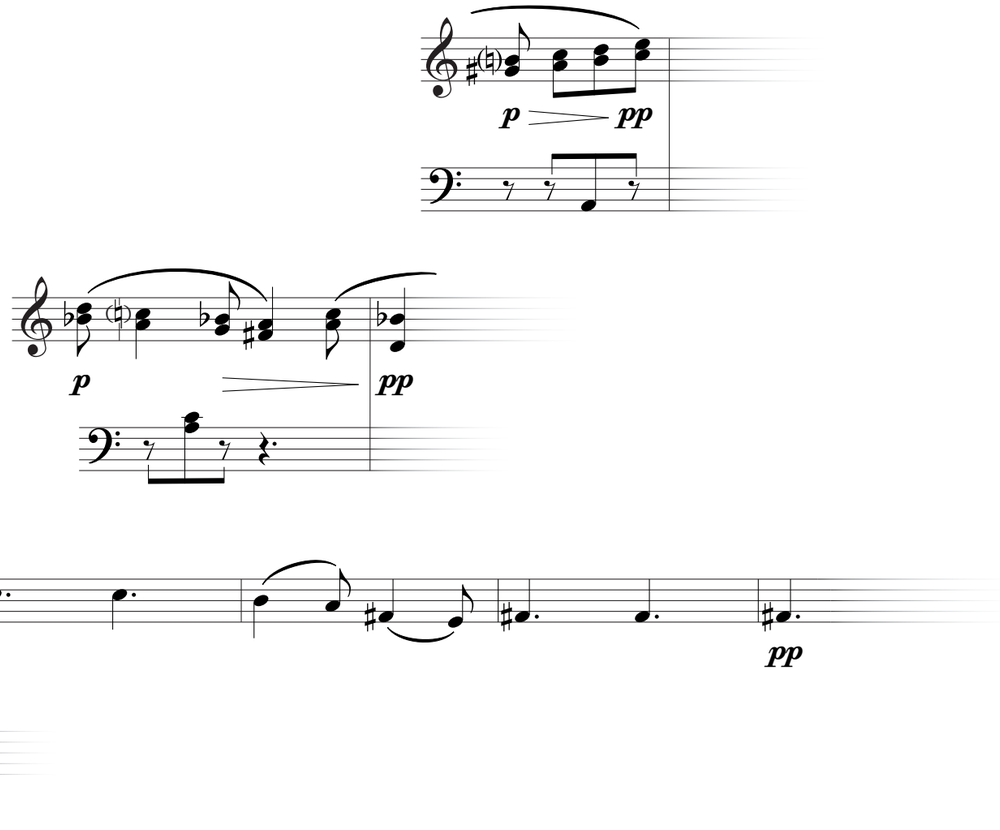
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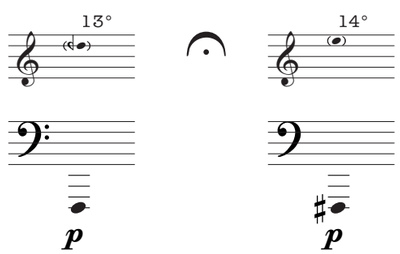
13°
14°
p
p

tr

pp

pp

p

pp

p

pp

pp

p

pp

pp

p

pp

pp

(Ped.)

(very long)

tr

p pp

pp

(Ped.)

SLUTT

12°

ppp

13°

ppp