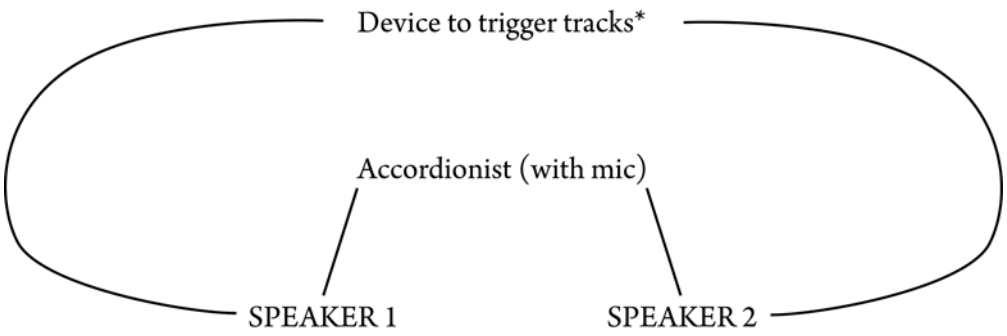
Matthew Shlomowitz
Freedom for Notes and Men

For speaking accordionist (with recorded tracks)
Completed: 2018
Duration: 22 minutes
Written for Ghenadie Rotari

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Stage setup



** Whilst an off-stage sound engineer could control the recorded tracks, I imagine the performer controlling them on stage with a device such as a sampler keyboard, computer or mobile device.*

Required equipment

- Stereo PA
- 1 vocal microphone
- Device to trigger two recorded tracks.

Routing

- Microphone to speakers 1 and 2
- Device to speakers 1 and 2

Recorded tracks

(1) 16 beat looping Hip Hop drumbeat (5'00")
(2) Hip Hop backing track (2'45")

Spoken text

The boxed text is spoken in performance. To foster direct communication with the audience, memorise this text as much as possible and ideally the music too. In the first part of the work, the text is spoken whilst playing accordion. There are passages in the later stages of the work where the text is spoken alone, without an accordion part. In these places, you might put the accordion to the side to address the audience more directly.

I imagine the text being performed:

- In a register that is formal but friendly.
- With a 'natural' demeanour: you perform as yourself (perform your 'self'), rather than acting a character.
- With the text delivered in a matter of fact kind of way where the meaning is presented without inflection (e.g. without inflection that suggests sarcasm).

I am open to other interpretations. GO FOR IT, if you want to perform the work in a different way. E.g. in an imagined character and/or setting. It could be great.

The accordion registers provided are just basic suggestions. You are free to select registers according to your taste and feeling in relation to your instrument and the hall.

Score

Freedom for Notes and Men

Matthew Shlomowitz

♩ = 60

This music is tonal music in the key of C major.

Accordion

LH

p

9

This is the C major chord.
It transmits a feeling of stability.

The other chords are unstable and defined by their relationship to the central C major chord. A number of metaphors have tried to capture this relationship. C major is home and the other chords are the journey. C major is the accomplishment of sexual desire. The C major chord is the Queen of chess pieces, or it may be the King. Or perhaps C major is the sun and the other chords are the orbiting planets.

(text continues)

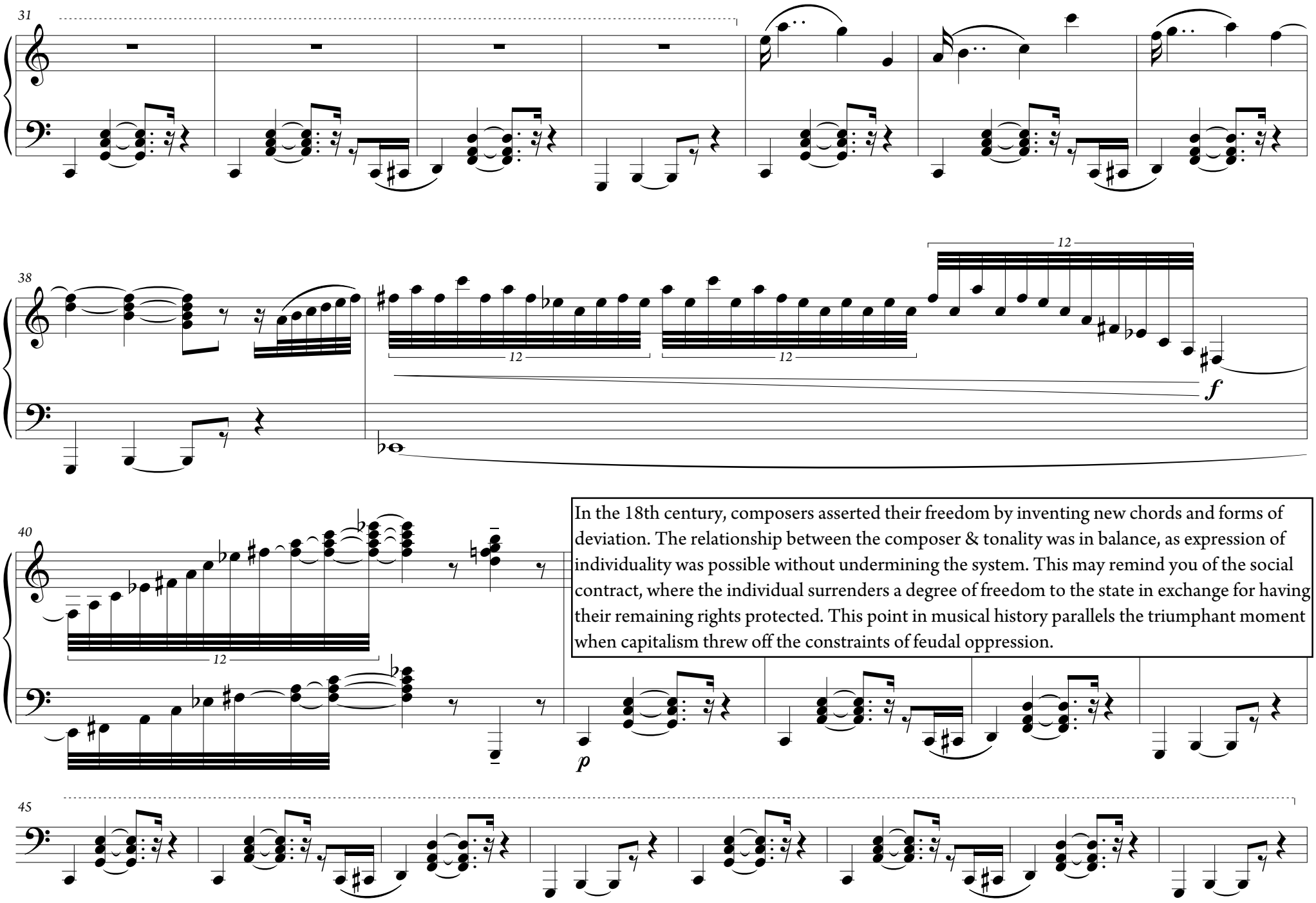
17

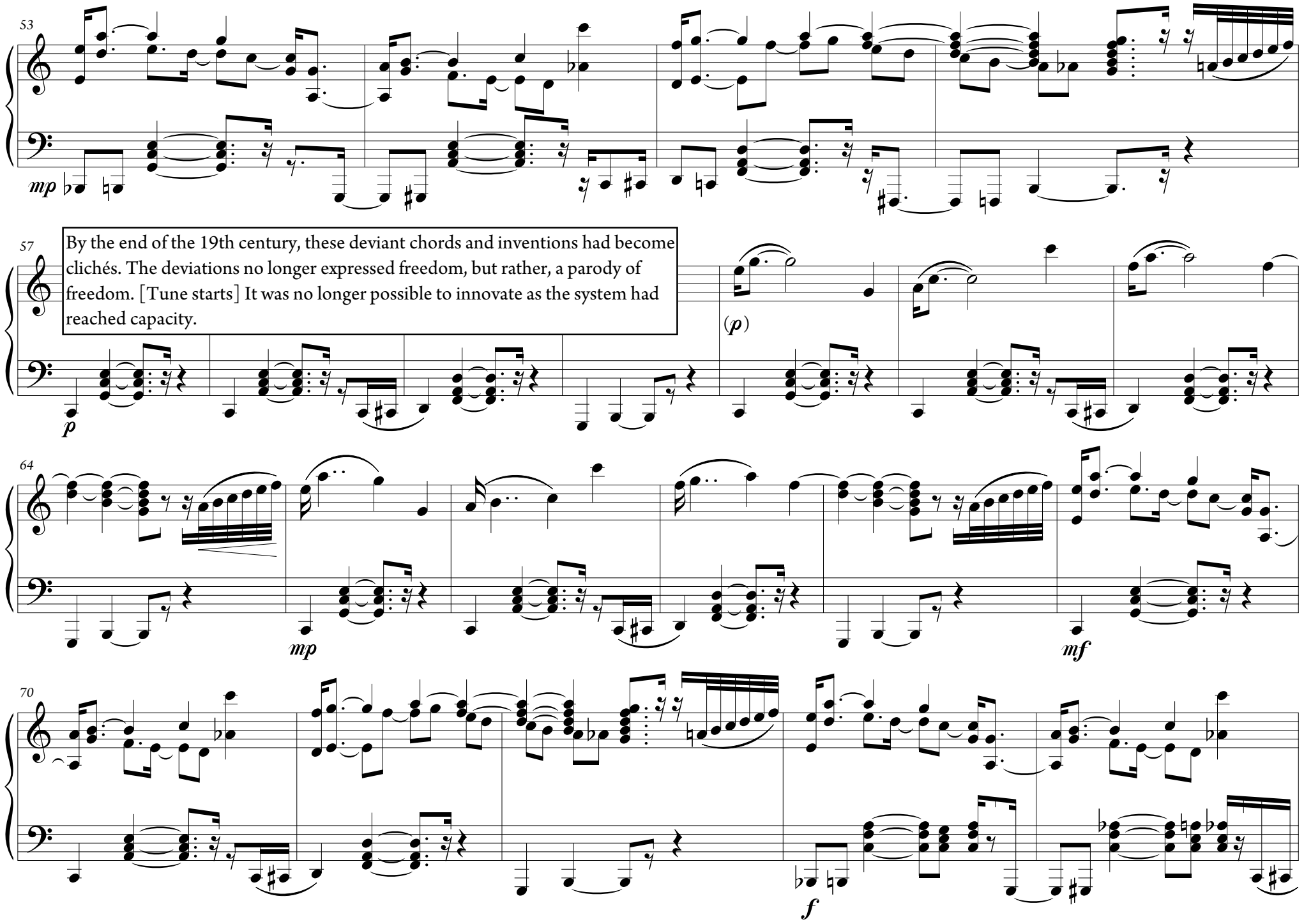
8'

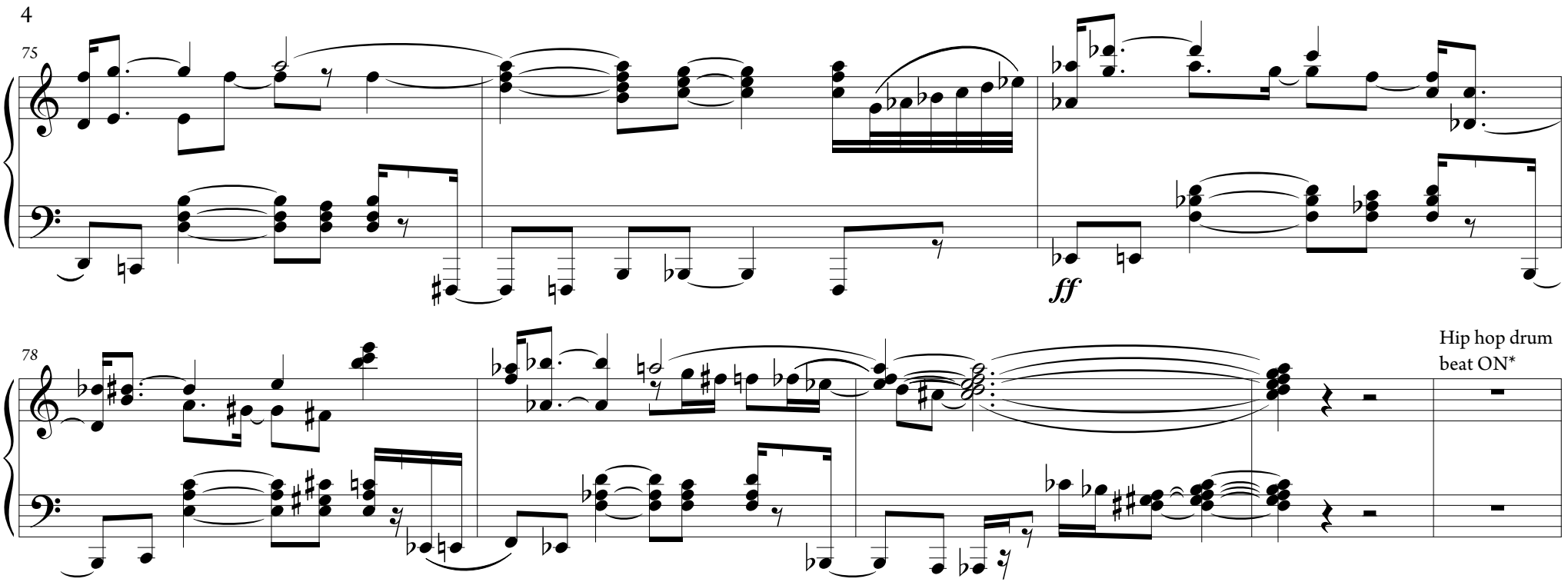
23

(*p*)

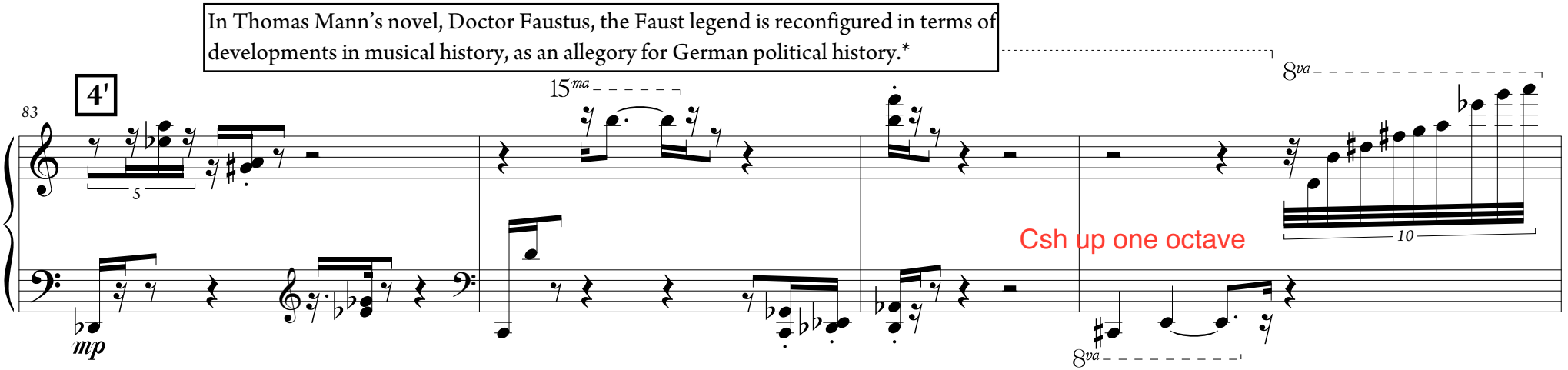
The hierarchical nature of tonal music also mirrors the feudal system. Just as feudalism is based on the relative ranks of people, the tonal system is based on the relative importance of notes. And just as feudalism limits the freedom of men, tonality limits the freedom of notes. Tonality also limits the freedom of the composer, who is bound to oblige the system.


31
38
12
12
12
f
40
12
In the 18th century, composers asserted their freedom by inventing new chords and forms of deviation. The relationship between the composer & tonality was in balance, as expression of individuality was possible without undermining the system. This may remind you of the social contract, where the individual surrenders a degree of freedom to the state in exchange for having their remaining rights protected. This point in musical history parallels the triumphant moment when capitalism threw off the constraints of feudal oppression.
p
45


53
mp
57
By the end of the 19th century, these deviant chords and inventions had become clichés. The deviations no longer expressed freedom, but rather, a parody of freedom. [Tune starts] It was no longer possible to innovate as the system had reached capacity.
p
(p)
64
mp
mf
70
f

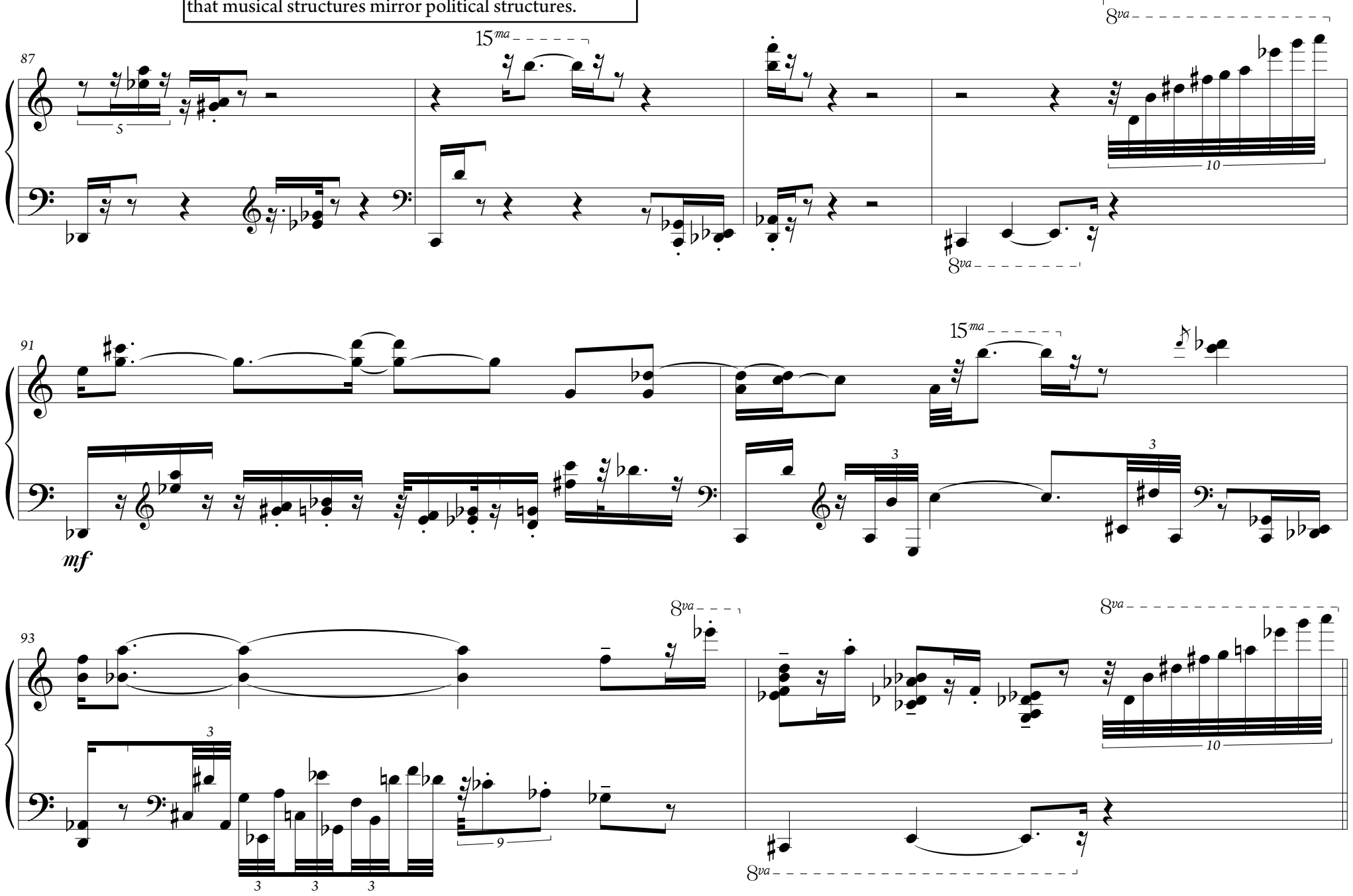


** The looping drum pattern is 4 bars long in 4/4 time. The beat has a continuous flow until just before the third beat of the final bar, where it briefly stops before a fill during the final beat of that bar (which leads into the start of the loop). NOTE: the first bar heard on the recorded track is the final bar of the loop - the accordion enters one bar after the recorded track commences to coincide with the start of the loop. The looping drum pattern is turned OFF by the performer (or sound engineer), as marked later on the score.*

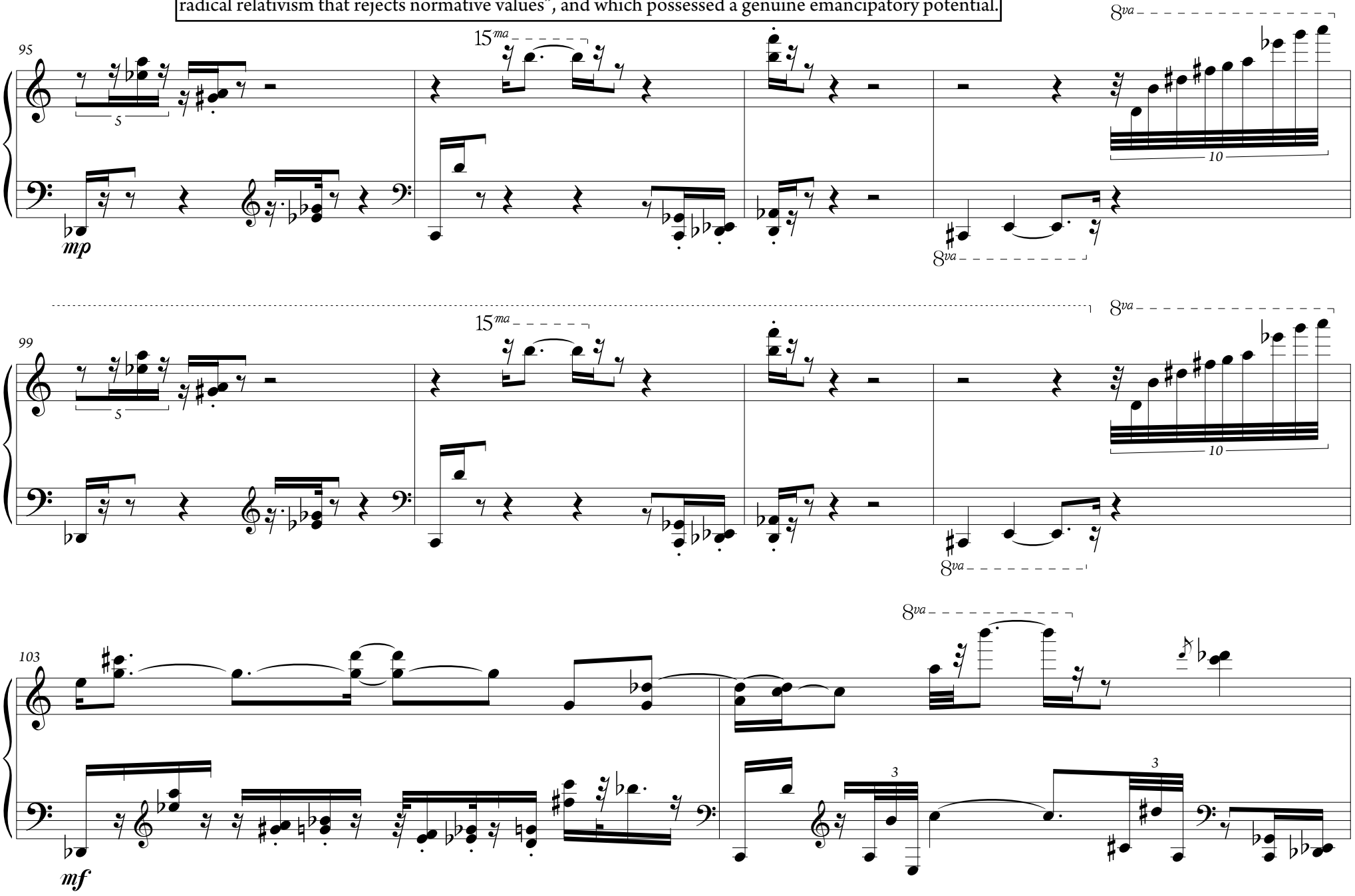


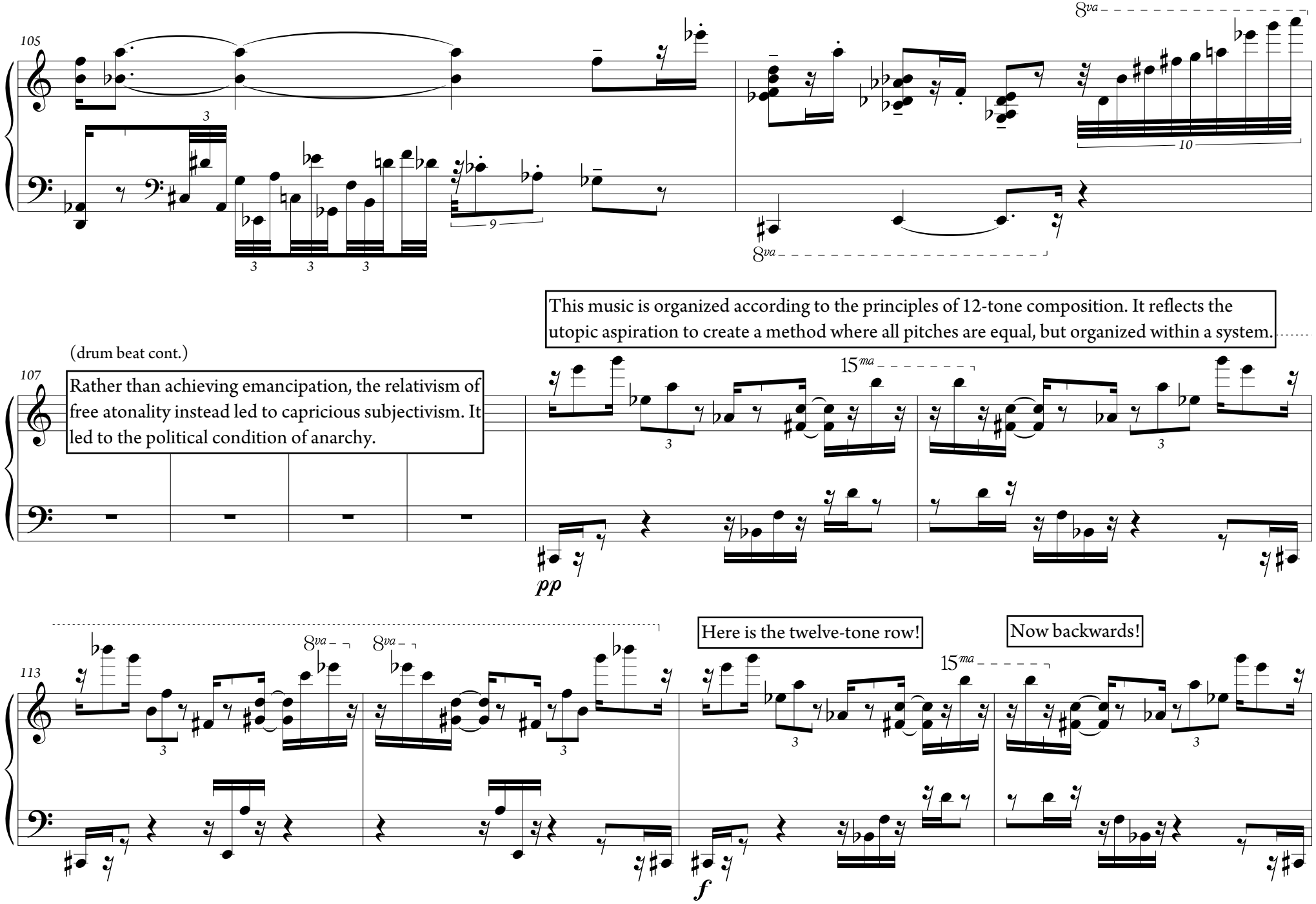
** The character of the spoken text can become more energetic, animated and/or assertive to fit with the drumbeat.*

The novel offers a compelling account of the proposition that musical structures mirror political structures.



This music has no central note, no hierarchy, no rules, no system. The notes are free. The composer is free. This is Free Atonality, a phase in musical development marked by a "Nietzschean affirmation of radical relativism that rejects normative values", and which possessed a genuine emancipatory potential.

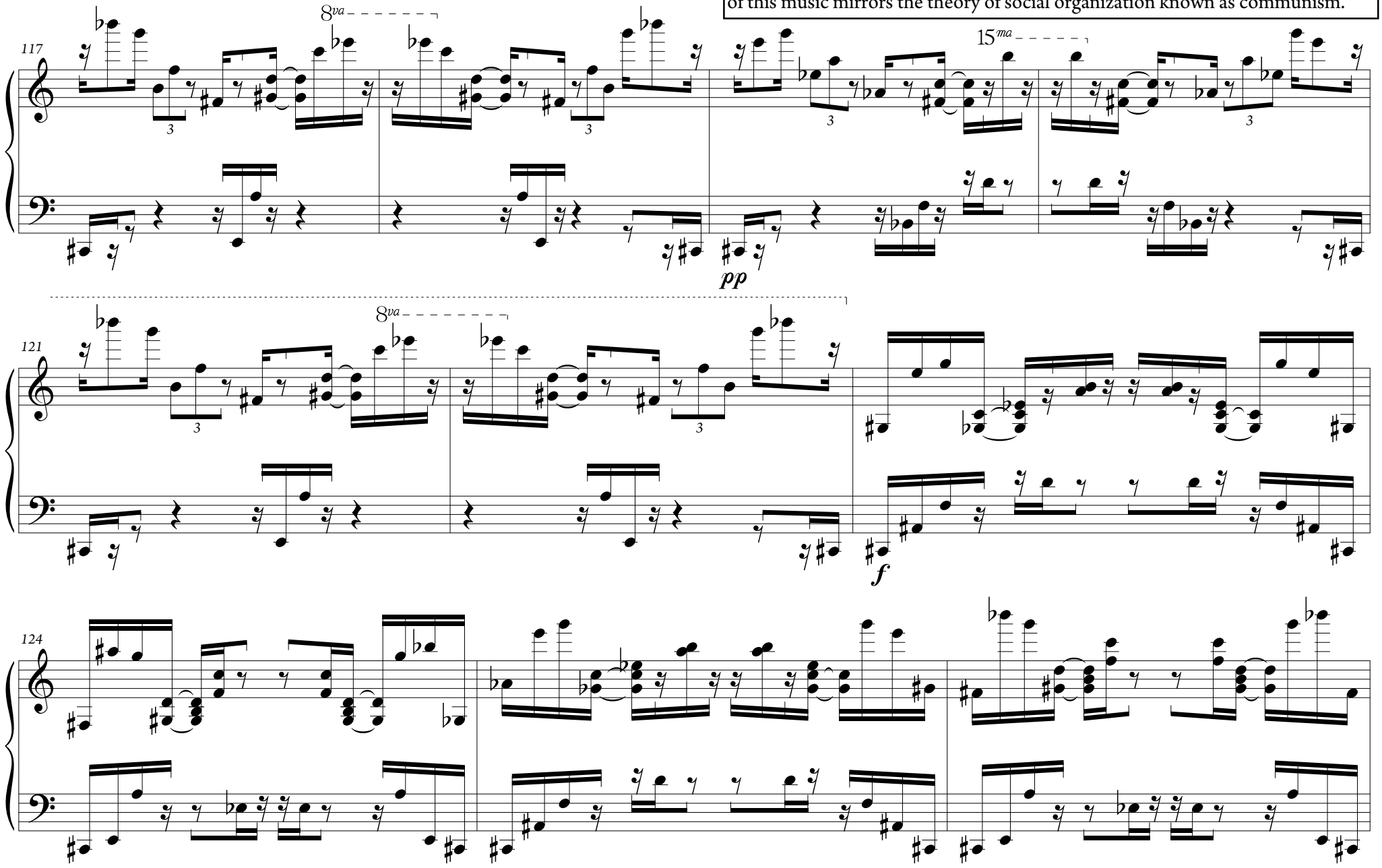



105
8va
10
8va
This music is organized according to the principles of 12-tone composition. It reflects the utopic aspiration to create a method where all pitches are equal, but organized within a system.
(drum beat cont.)
107
Rather than achieving emancipation, the relativism of free atonality instead led to capricious subjectivism. It led to the political condition of anarchy.
15ma
pp
113
8va
8va
Here is the twelve-tone row!
15ma
Now backwards!
f

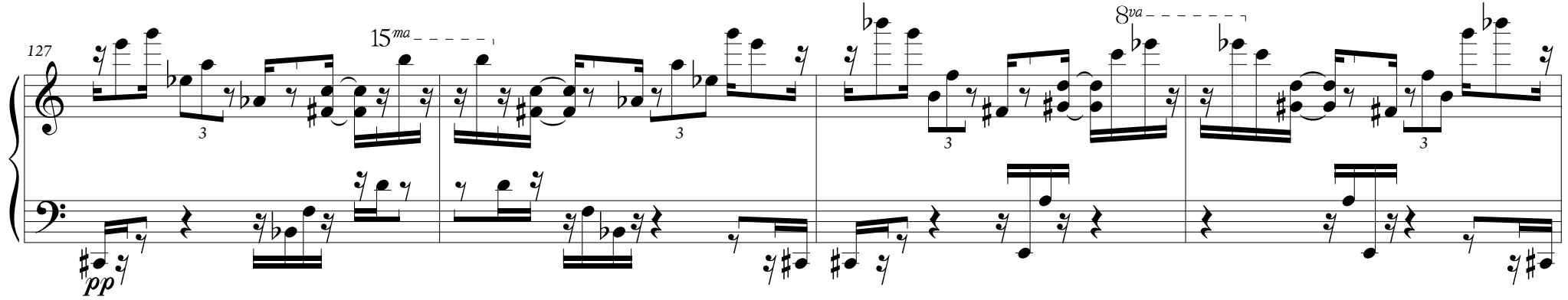
Here it is inverted!

Backwards and inverted!

You may not be able to hear the difference between free atonality and the 12-tone method, but that doesn't matter. What matters, is that the deep structure of this music mirrors the theory of social organization known as communism.



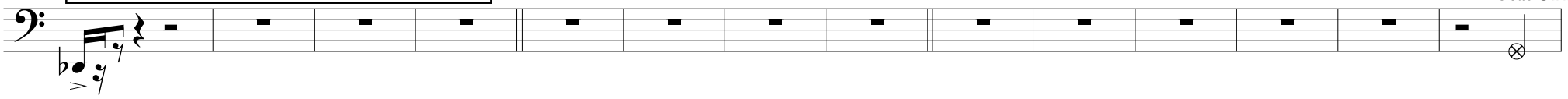
The notes in this music are equal and do not subordinate other notes. However, as the role of each note is defined by their place in the system, there is no scope for non-conformity.

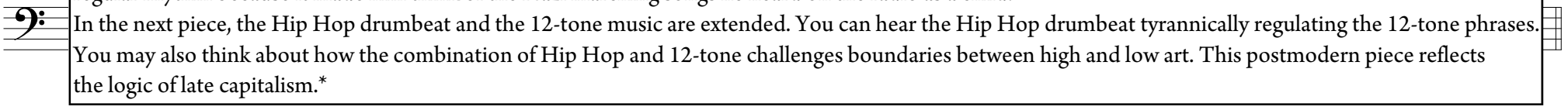


(drum beat cont.)

The notes are not free. Rather than mirroring communism, 12-tone mirrors totalitarianism.

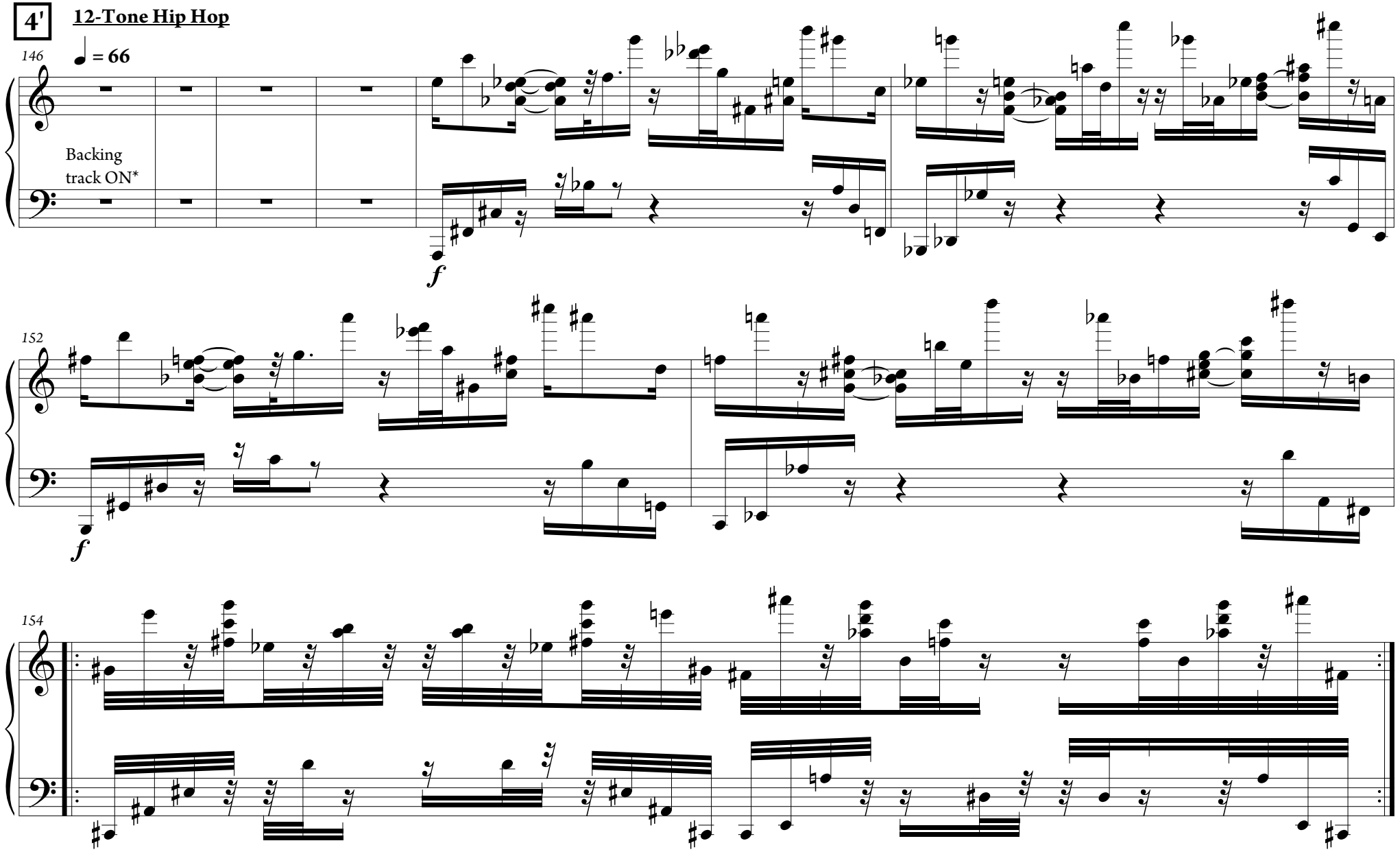
Lightly nodding to drum beat, perhaps starting with nods on beats 1 & 3 before moving on to nodding on all beats.



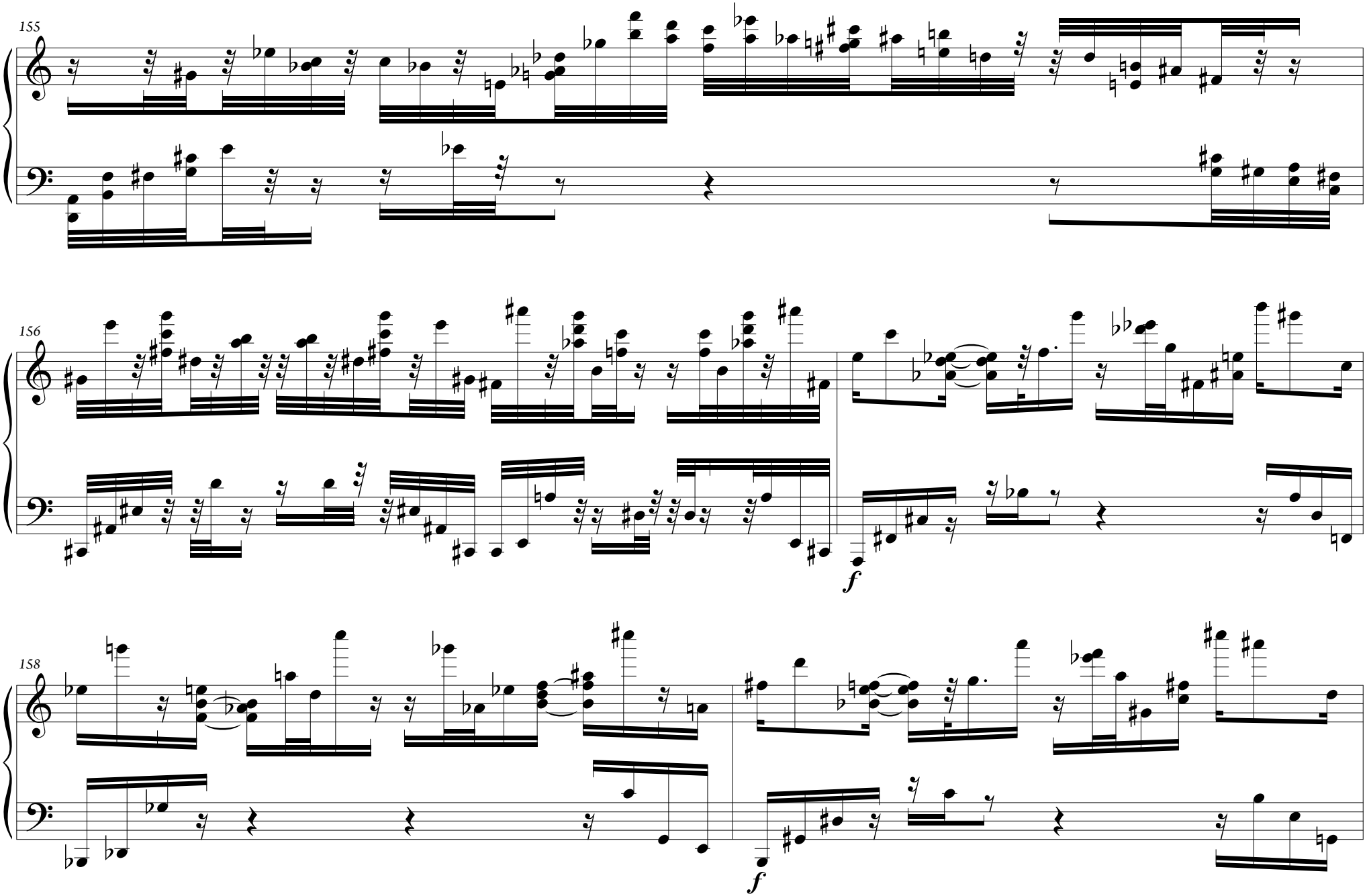


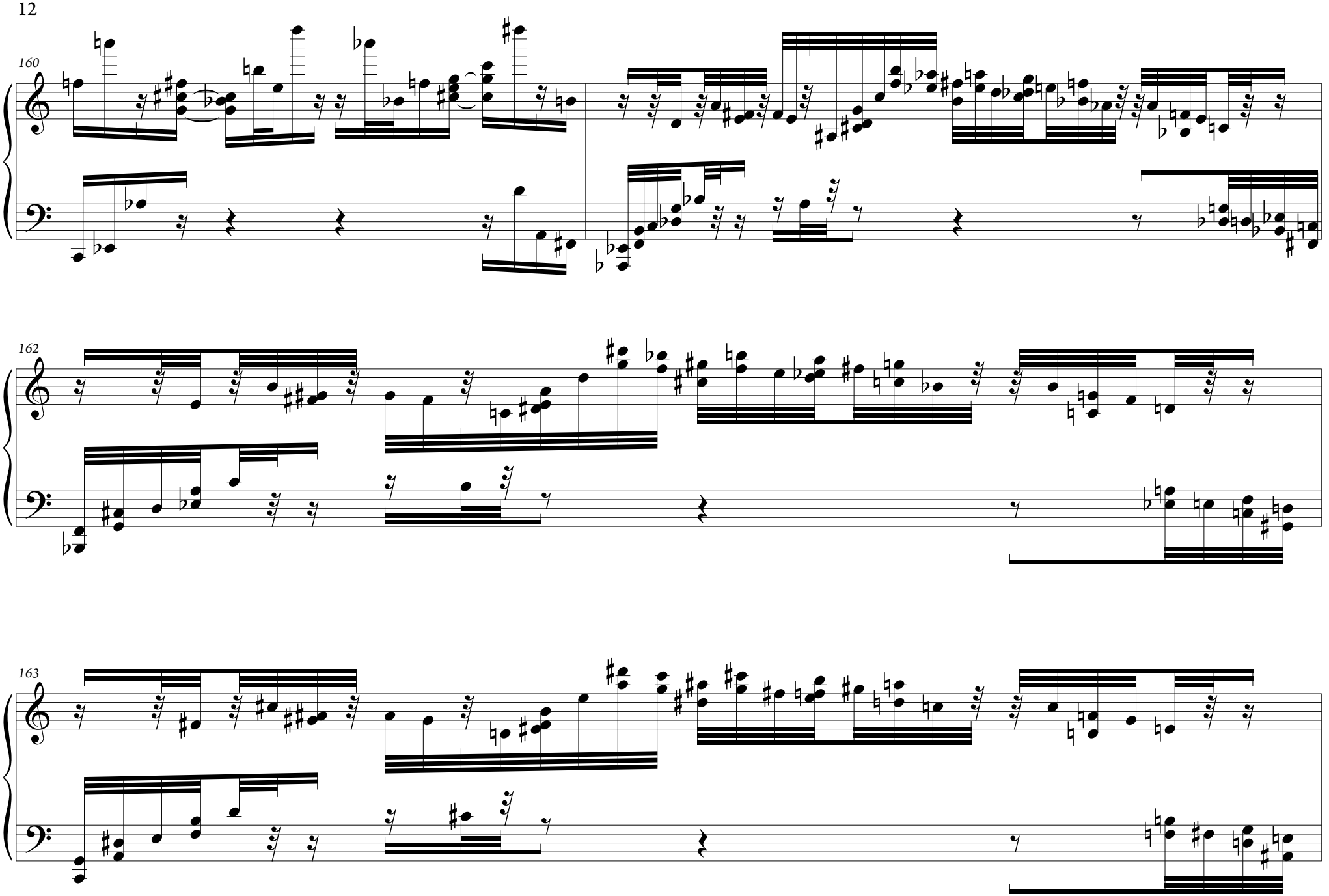
Drum beats are also totalitarian. That Hip Hop drum pattern was tyrannically regulating the music. The composer Karlheinz Stockhausen said he avoided regular rhythm because it made him think of the Nazi marching songs he heard on the radio as a child.
In the next piece, the Hip Hop drumbeat and the 12-tone music are extended. You can hear the Hip Hop drumbeat tyrannically regulating the 12-tone phrases. You may also think about how the combination of Hip Hop and 12-tone challenges boundaries between high and low art. This postmodern piece reflects the logic of late capitalism.*

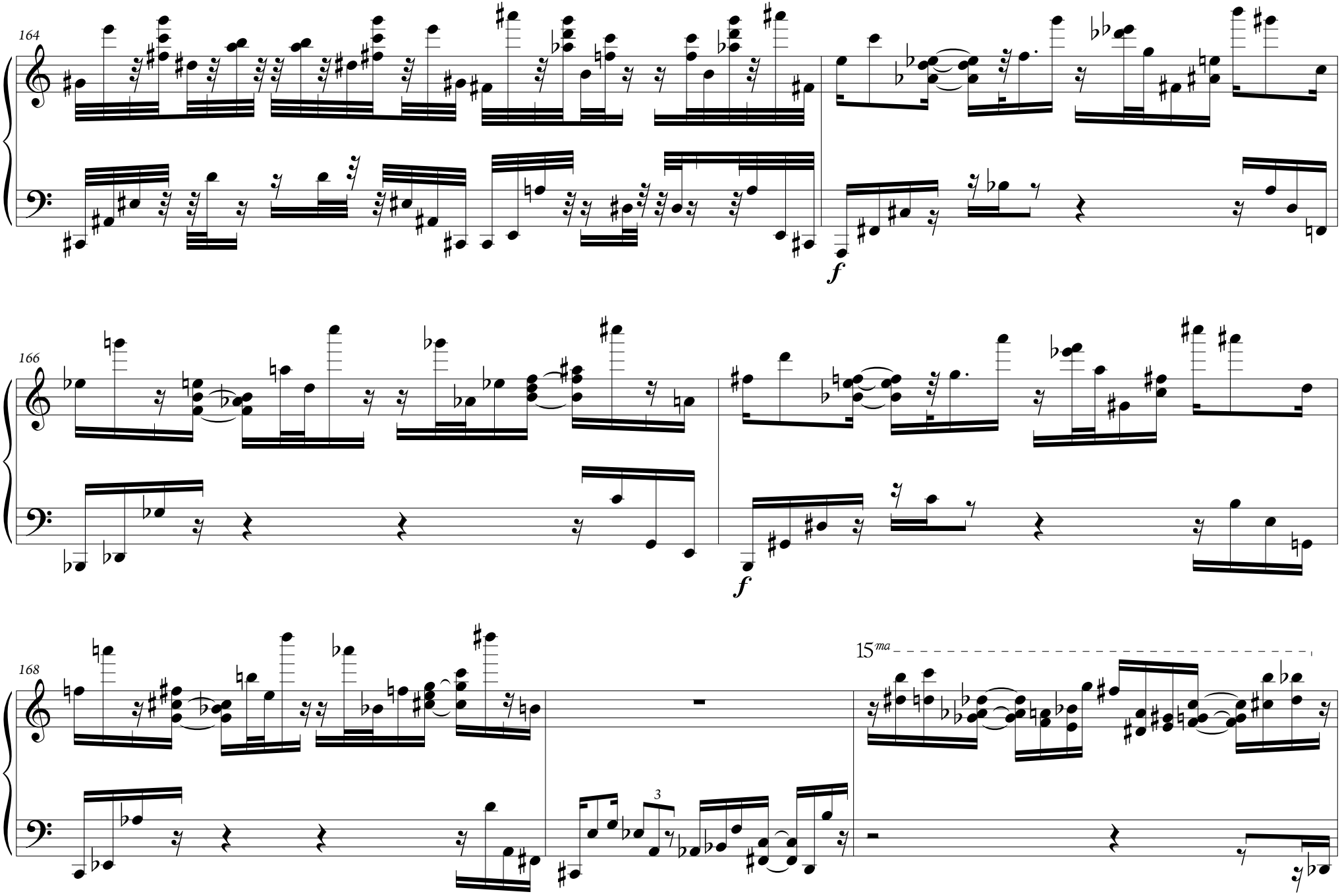
** With the line, "Drum beats are also totalitarianism" you can signal to the device or speakers to make it clear you are here referring to the drumbeat that just stopped.*

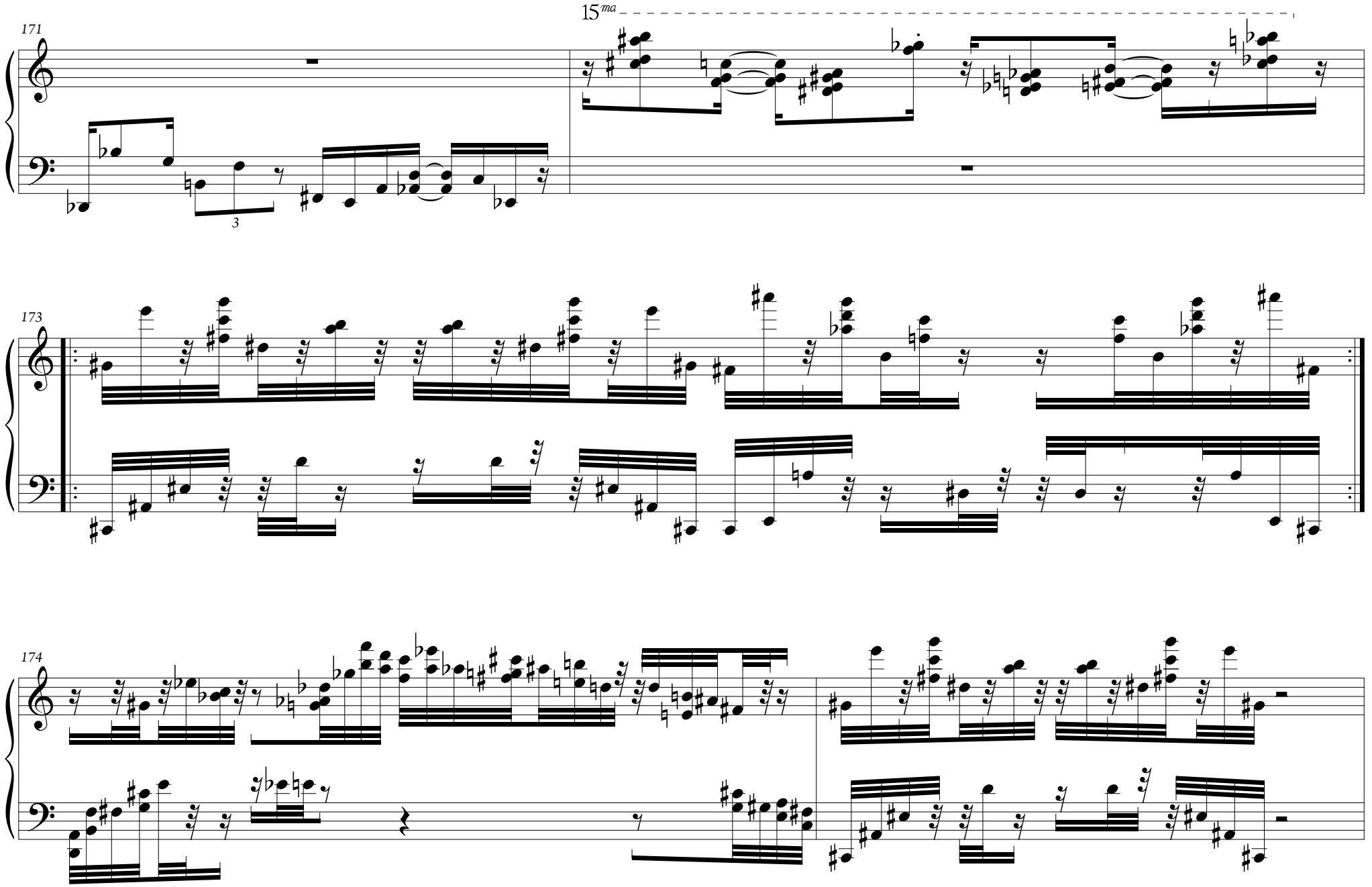


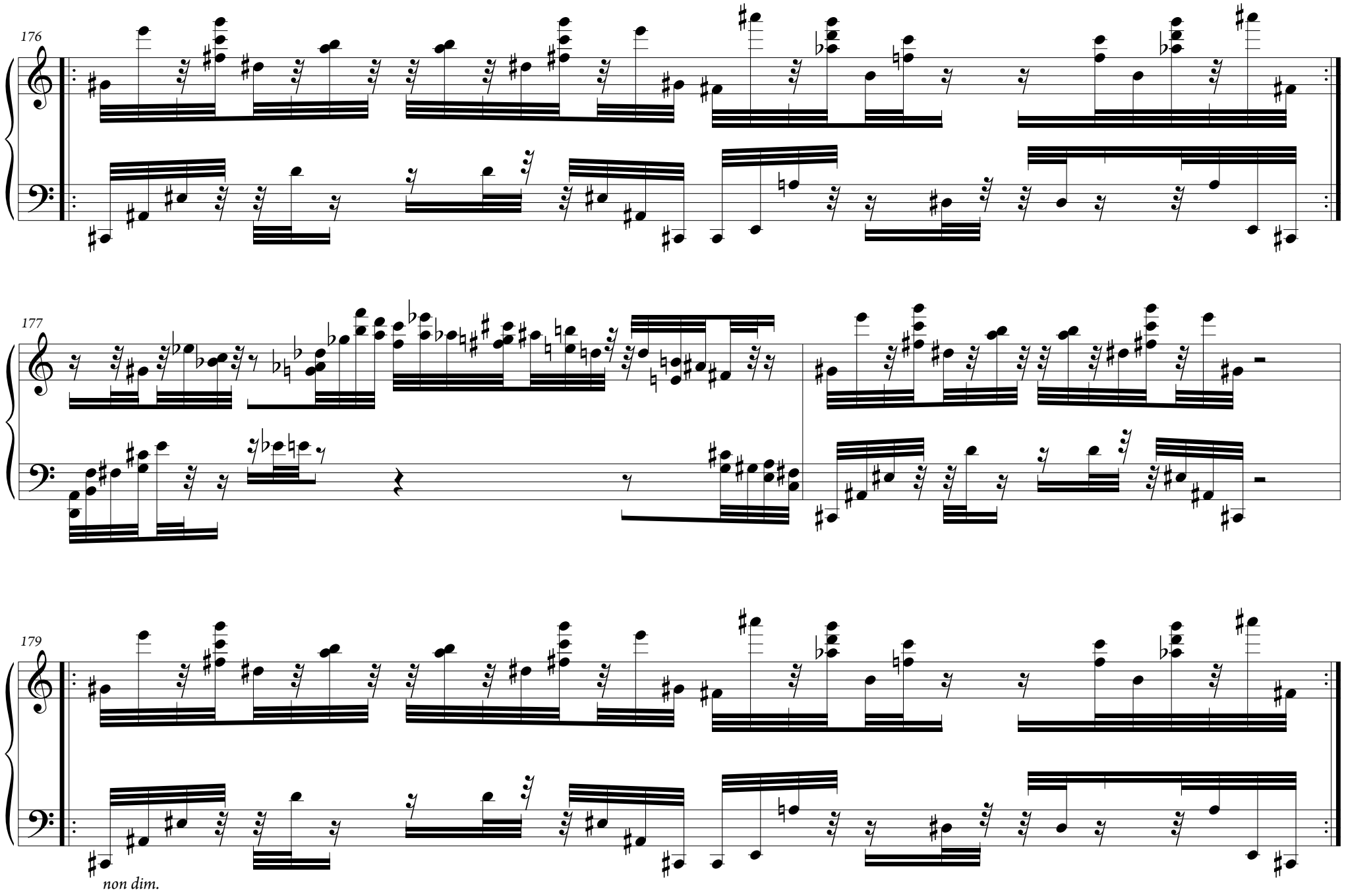
** Play along with recorded track (note: the accordion part is doubled on the track with an electronic synth sound). The recorded track should be loud, balanced so that the live accordion is always clearly heard, but with the accordion fusing as much as possible with the recorded sound. The tempo of the track is 66 BPM until the final two bars, when it gradually slows to 20 BPM – try to match the ritardando. This recorded track does not need to be triggered OFF (the track has an ending).*

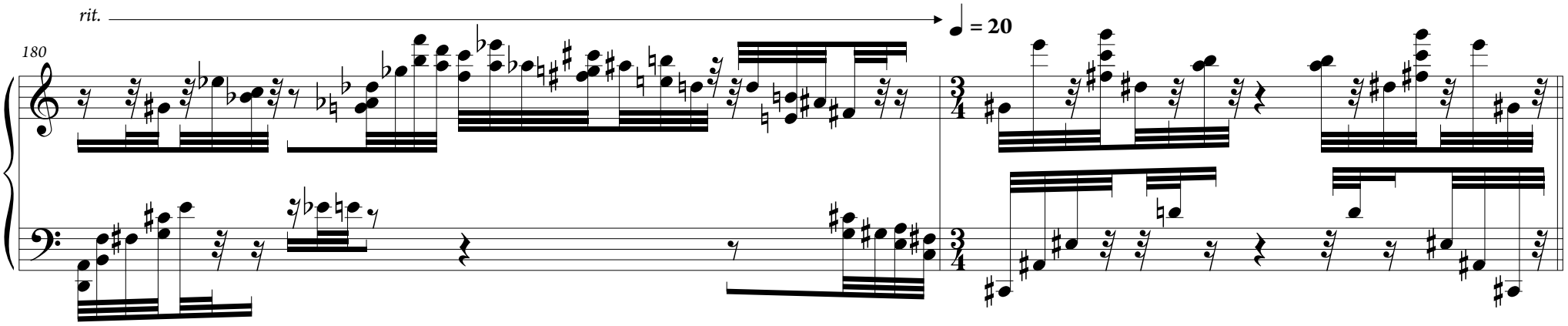

155
156
f
158
f


160
162
163


164
f
166
f
168
3
15ma


171
15ma
3
173
174


176
177
179
non dim.



182

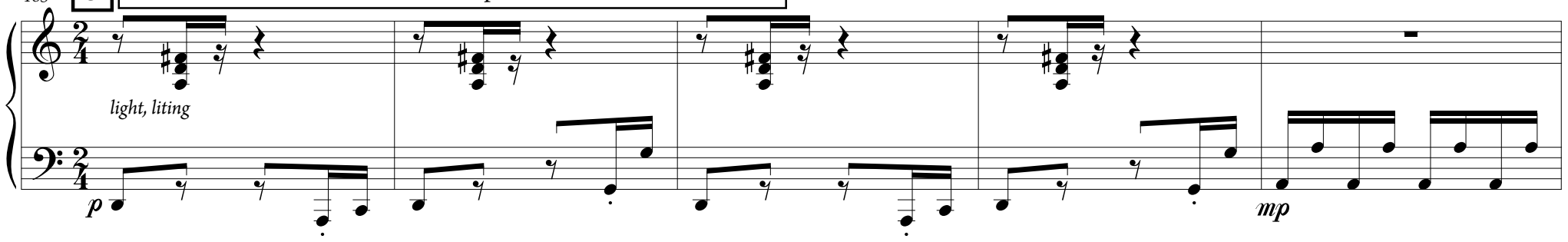
We've looked at a number of approaches to musical composition and suggested that each parallels a moment in political history. But, is that accurate? Do musical compositions really reflect political structures? Let's now hear some critical perspectives.

Critical Perspectives

♩ = 76

183

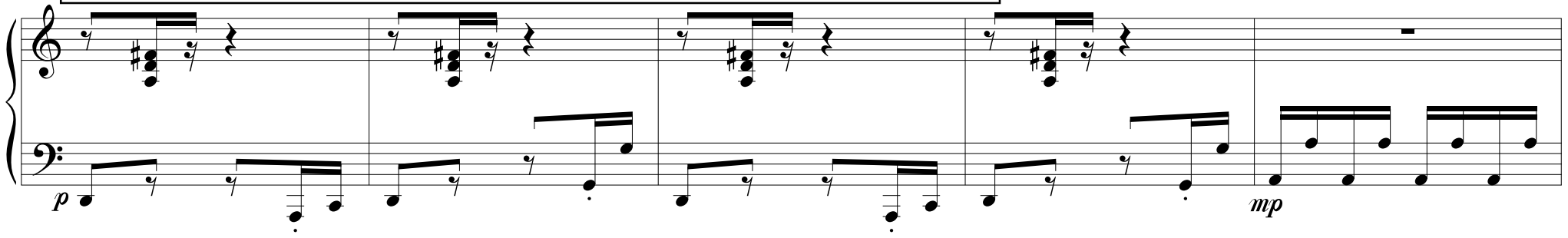
8' The idea that musical structures mirror political structures is ridiculous.*



*The character of the spoken text here can be playful, even a little cheeky.

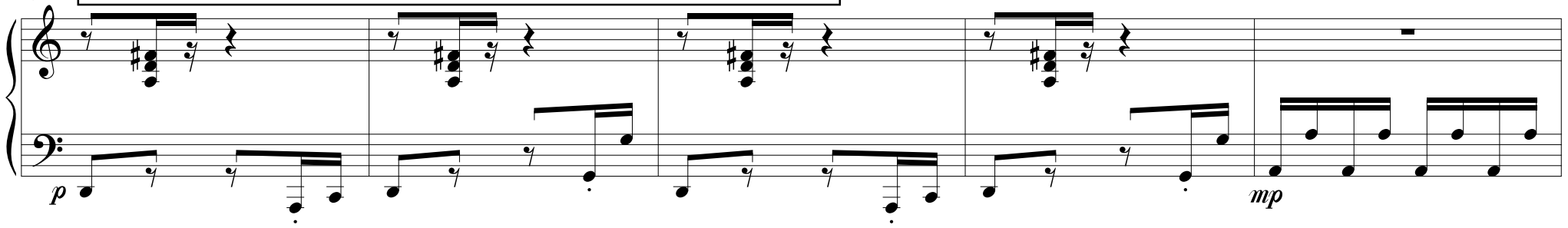
188

This thesis is based on a mode of interpretation that is solely focused on unmasking hidden ideologies.

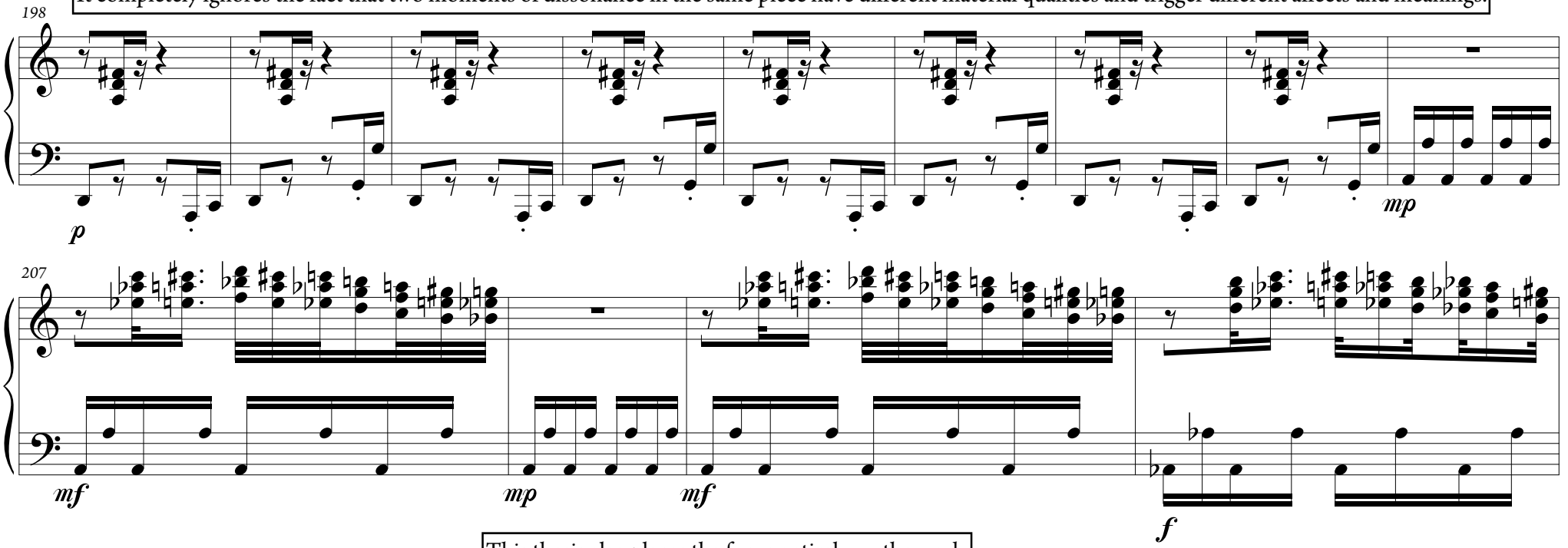


193

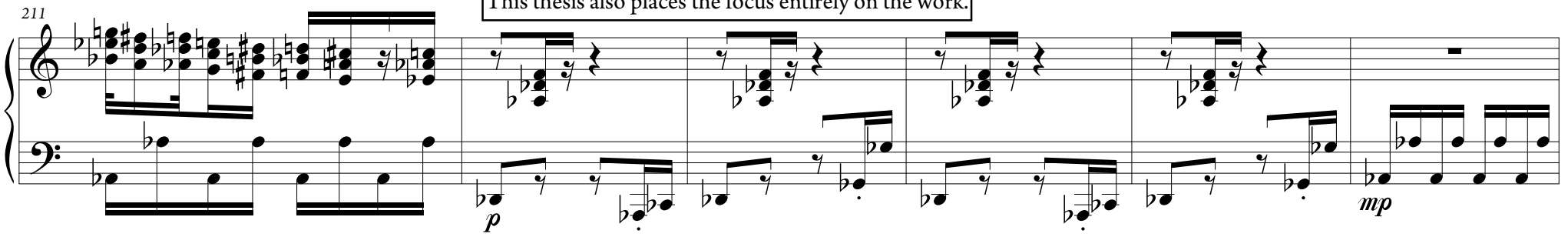
Pah! It supposes that real meaning is repressed and located deep below the surface.



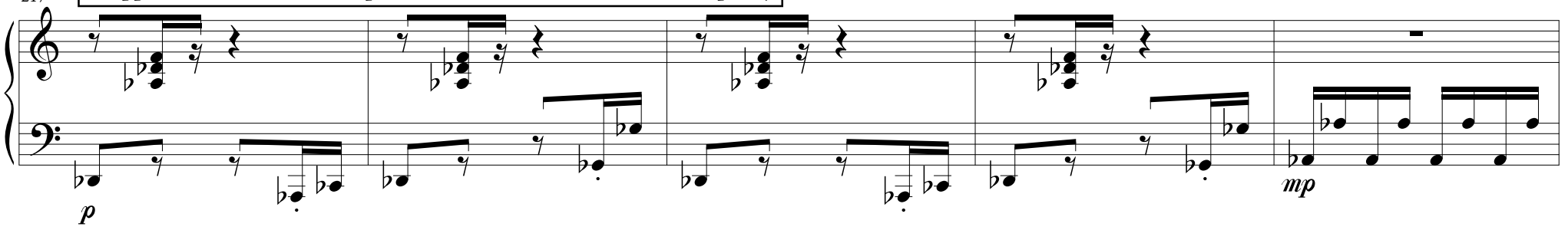
It completely ignores the fact that two moments of dissonance in the same piece have different material qualities and trigger different affects and meanings.

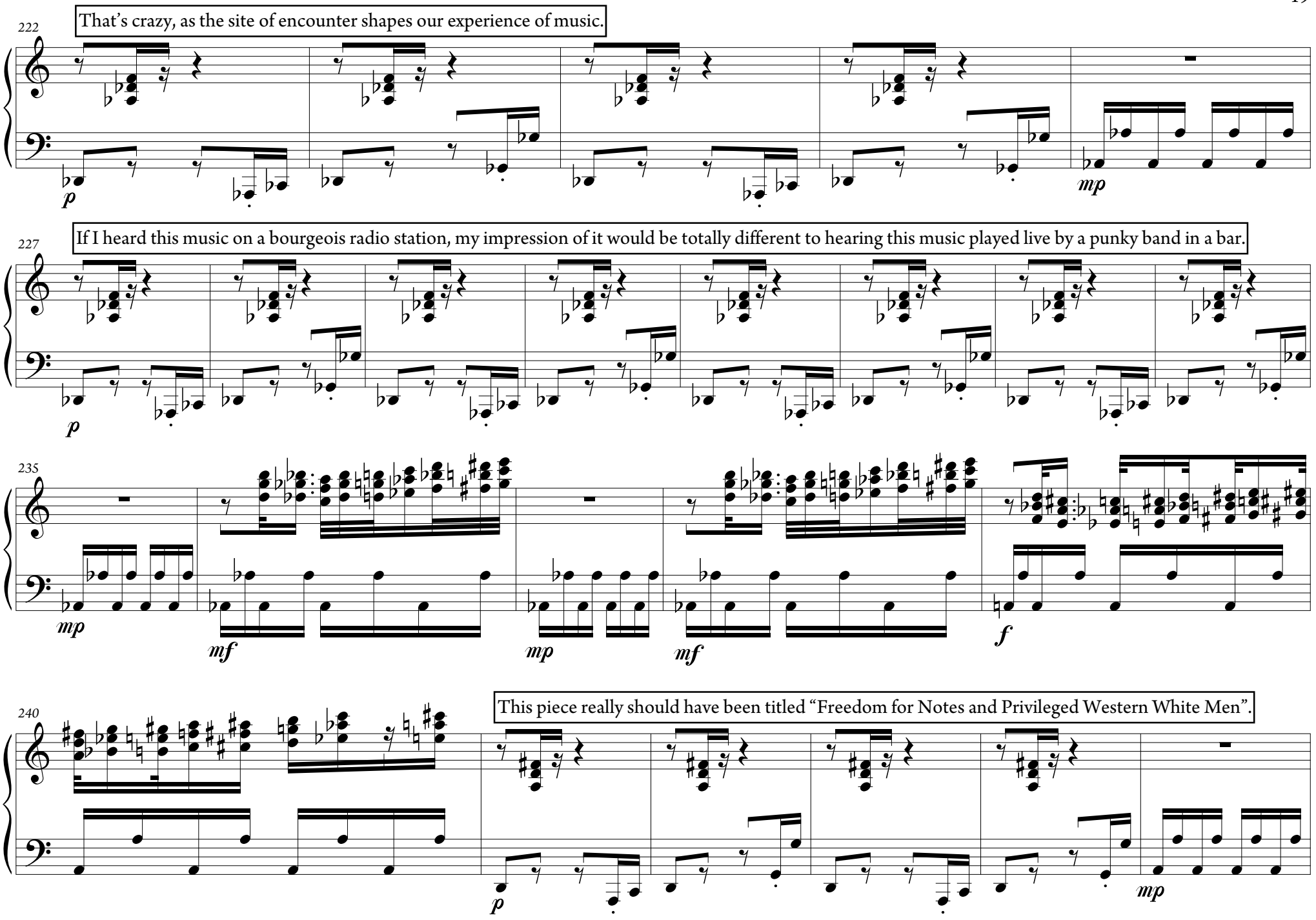


This thesis also places the focus entirely on the work.



It supposes that musical works possess an absolute and transcendent quality.




That's crazy, as the site of encounter shapes our experience of music.
222
p
mp
If I heard this music on a bourgeois radio station, my impression of it would be totally different to hearing this music played live by a punky band in a bar.
227
p
235
mp
mf
mp
mf
f
This piece really should have been titled "Freedom for Notes and Privileged Western White Men".
240
p
mp

246

The pursuit of liberty is a grand narrative that features an all white male cast.

The white man's journey has been fallaciously universalised as collective experience.

p *mp* *p* *mp*

256

The idea that musical structures mirror political structures totally fails to take into account how our gender, race and class shape the way we experience music.

p *p* *mp*

265

8va

mf *mf* *f*

269

(8va)

273

Many of you will simply dismiss this thesis as pretentious, academic Many of you will simply dismiss this thesis as silly, pretentious, academic and over reaching. Yet, is it really so far-fetched to imagine that a religious society would produce music that emphasises the system reflecting the beauty of God's creation, rather than individuality? That a society organised around the cyclical patterns of agriculture will make music with a cyclical concept of time. Or, that an industrial society would produce music that is goal directed. We will now return to the melody from the start of this piece.

274 ♩ = 60

RH

p

278

Let's take a moment to imagine how this melody would have been affected by other historical events. Close your eyes, and try to imagine how the Protestant Reformation might have transformed this melody.*

18"

** Address the audience directly and intimately.*

280

Now try and imagine how this melody would have sounded in the Soviet Union during the period of Socialist Realism.

18"

282

Let's now try and imagine how this melody would have sounded after Issac Newton formulated the laws of motion and universal gravitation.

15"

284 ♩ = 72

How would this melody have sounded after...

World War I*

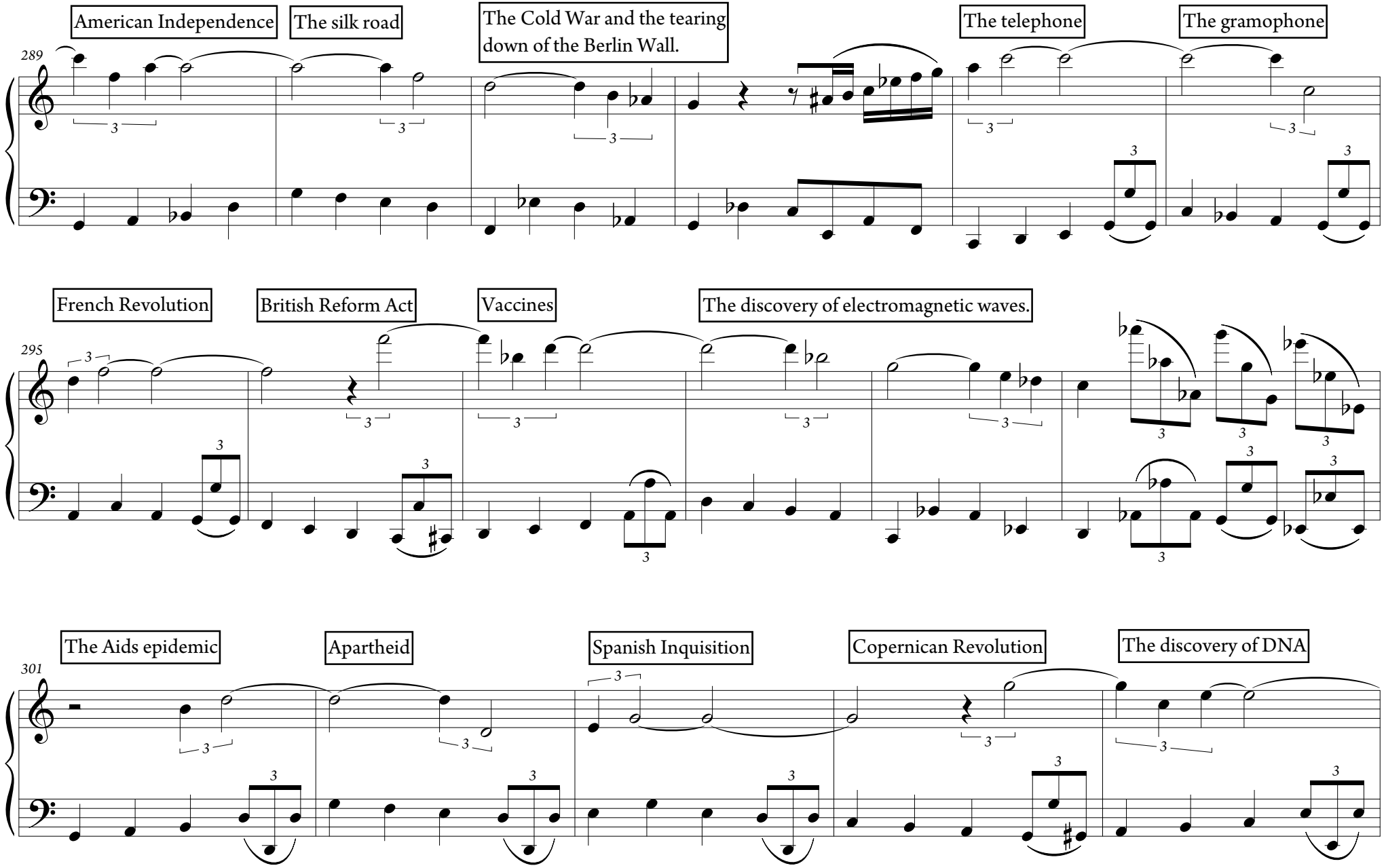
The atomic bomb

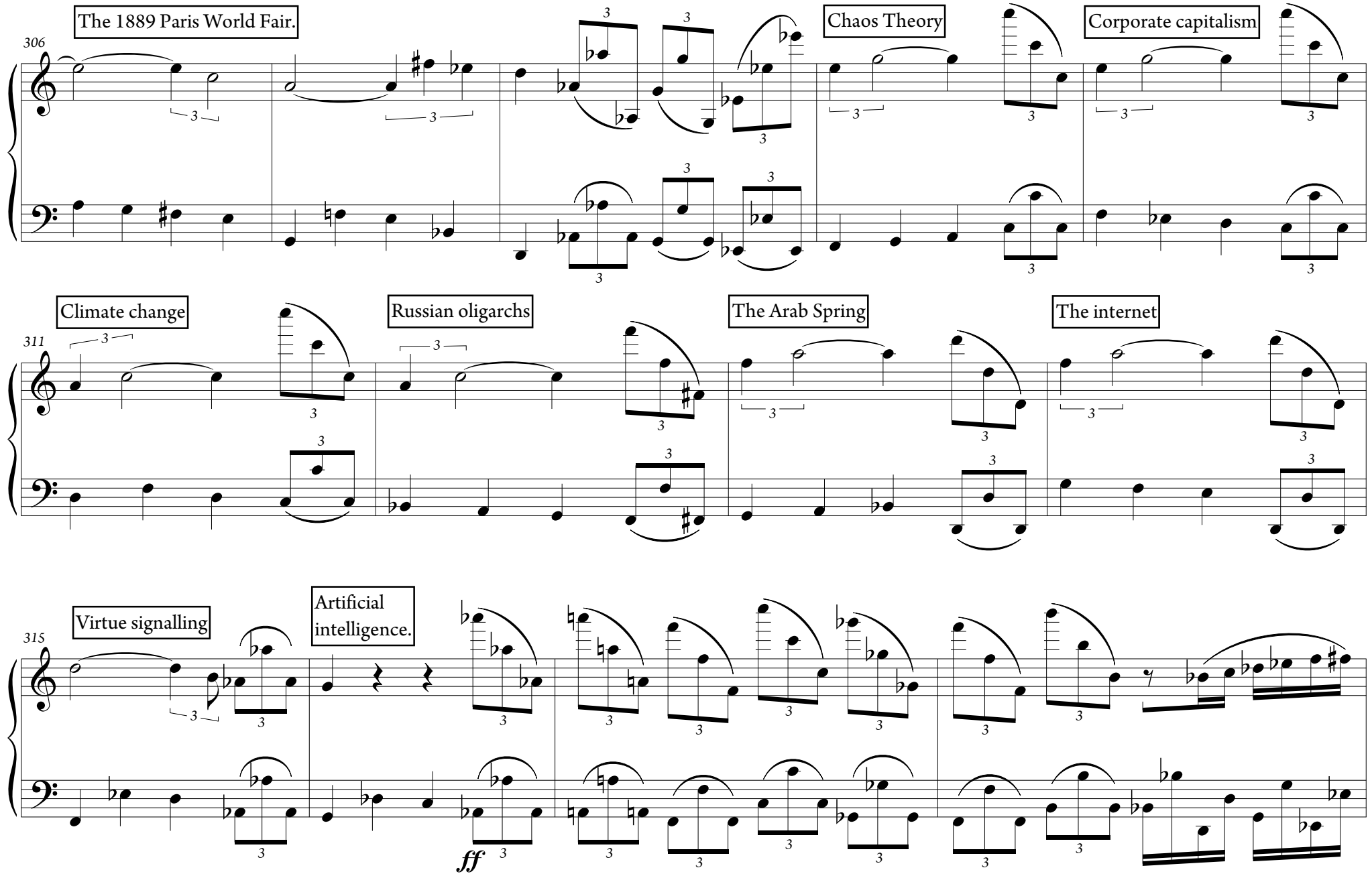
Suffragette Movement

The Me Too movement

mf

** The character of the spoken text here animated, perhaps Beat Poet style.*


American Independence
The silk road
The Cold War and the tearing down of the Berlin Wall.
The telephone
The gramophone
289
French Revolution
British Reform Act
Vaccines
The discovery of electromagnetic waves.
295
The Aids epidemic
Apartheid
Spanish Inquisition
Copernican Revolution
The discovery of DNA
301


The 1889 Paris World Fair.
306
Chaos Theory
Corporate capitalism
Climate change
311
Russian oligarchs
The Arab Spring
The internet
Virtue signalling
315
Artificial intelligence.
ff

♩ = 36 (subito)
Expansive, sonorous

319

f

323

That music was polytonal. That's when two keys are presented at the same time. The melody was in C major, whilst the accompaniment was in A-flat major. As the music continues in this final part of the piece, you can contemplate what form of social organisation this musical system suggests.

molto rit.

LH

p

A tempo (♩ = 36)

325

(*p*)

f