‘...flickering instantiation...’

for harpsichord

Chris Dench

‘...flickering instantiation...’

(2024)

for harpsichord

for Luca Quintavalle

...a glimpse of a world suffused with magic, of which our own day-to-day experience seems to be a flickering instantiation...

from a *Daily Telegraph* review, by Sam Leith, of Alan Garner’s ***Treacle Walker***
5 November 2021

Duration: ~10’

Program note

Having just finished Alan Garner's unique and extraordinary novel *Treacle Walker*, I was putting off shelving the book and opened the very front pages to the review quotes that publishers seem to feel obliged to include as preface. All were, of course, laudatory in the usual bland, congratulatory way of reviewers …except one. The quote from the *Daily Telegraph*'s Sam Leith ran "it's a glimpse of a world suffused with magic, of which our own day-to-day experience seems to be a flickering instantiation". I was stunned by the insightful exactitude of this remark, and determined that I would write a piece titled after the two final words. One instrument seemed preeminently suitable to such a work: the harpsichord, whose whole soundworld could be said to be *flickeringly instantiatory*.

Nonetheless, I could not ignore that the review was posted in that organ of the right-wing, the *Daily Telegraph*, effectively subverting the probity of the observation. So this piece bears a Schrödinger's title, one that is simultaneously *subtle*, and *suspect*, and I have attempted to convey that ambiguous character by framing the words with quote-marks. In fact, that subtle/suspect *sens tremblant* is itself a 'flickering instantiation', so the title exemplifies itself.

Like the title the music is possessed of a certain irony, being a work of unflinching modernism for an instrument with archaic roots; were it being written in Frescobaldi's day I might have entitled it *Toccata N-esima*. The dedication to Luca Quintavalle seemed eminently appropriate.

Performance notes

- This work would be better on a two-manual instrument. The range used is from GG to d'''.
- Accidentals only apply to the notes they immediately precede.
- The metronomic tempi need not be slavishly observed. Players should adopt appropriate tempi rather than exact ones. Discreet rubato is encouraged.
- There are four dynamics used, each of which should, if possible, have its own registration:

  p*—*mp*—*f*—*ff

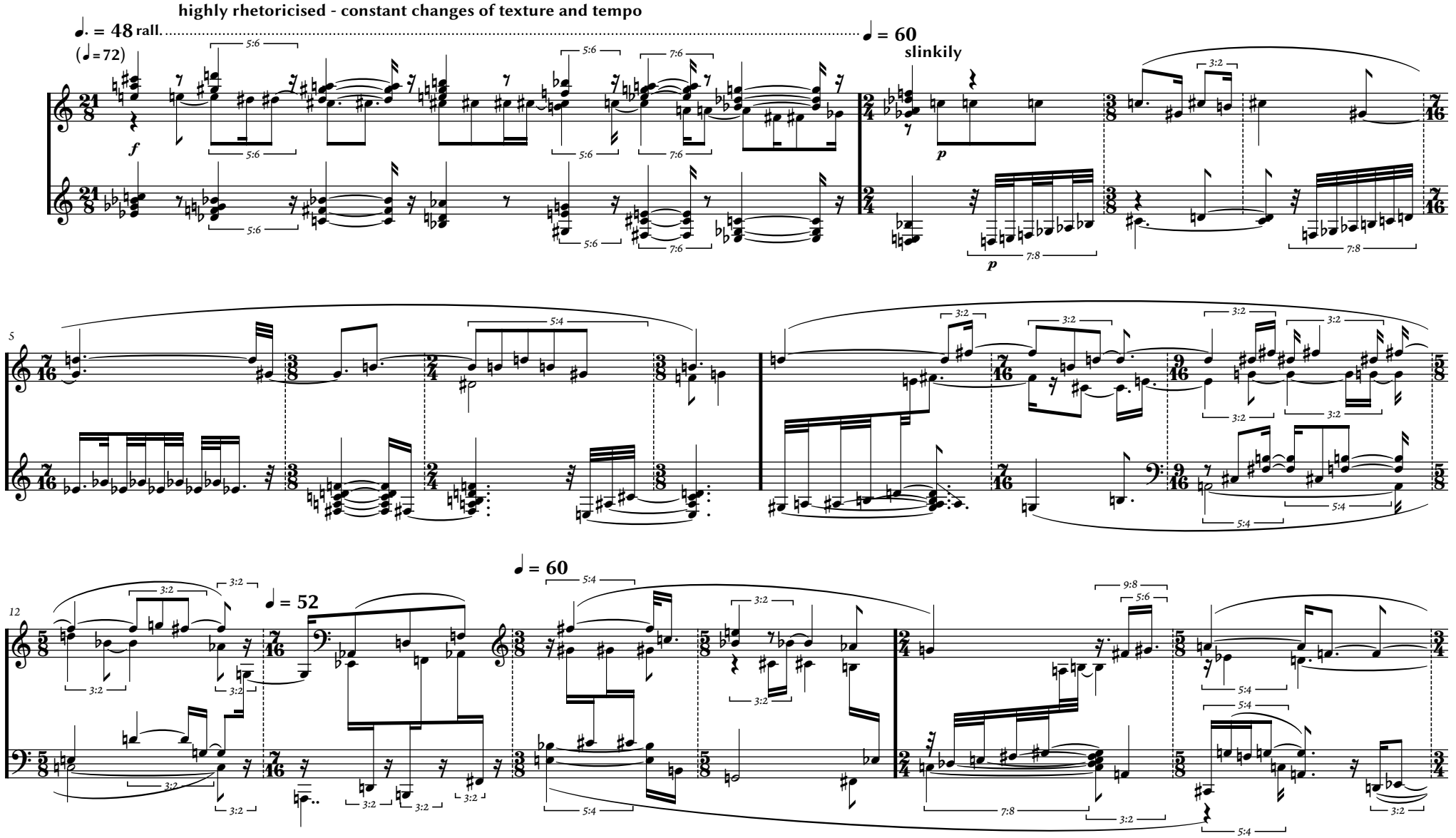
  It may not be possible to effect all the registration changes that the dynamics suggest; the player should use their discretion. Generally, the ***p*** and ***mp*** markings should be regarded as *quieter*, and the ***f*** and ***ff*** as *louder*.
- In this score the emphasis mark **–** indicates detached playing; the *marcato* symbol **>** suggests a slighter sharper attack, if possible.
- There are two degrees of pause:

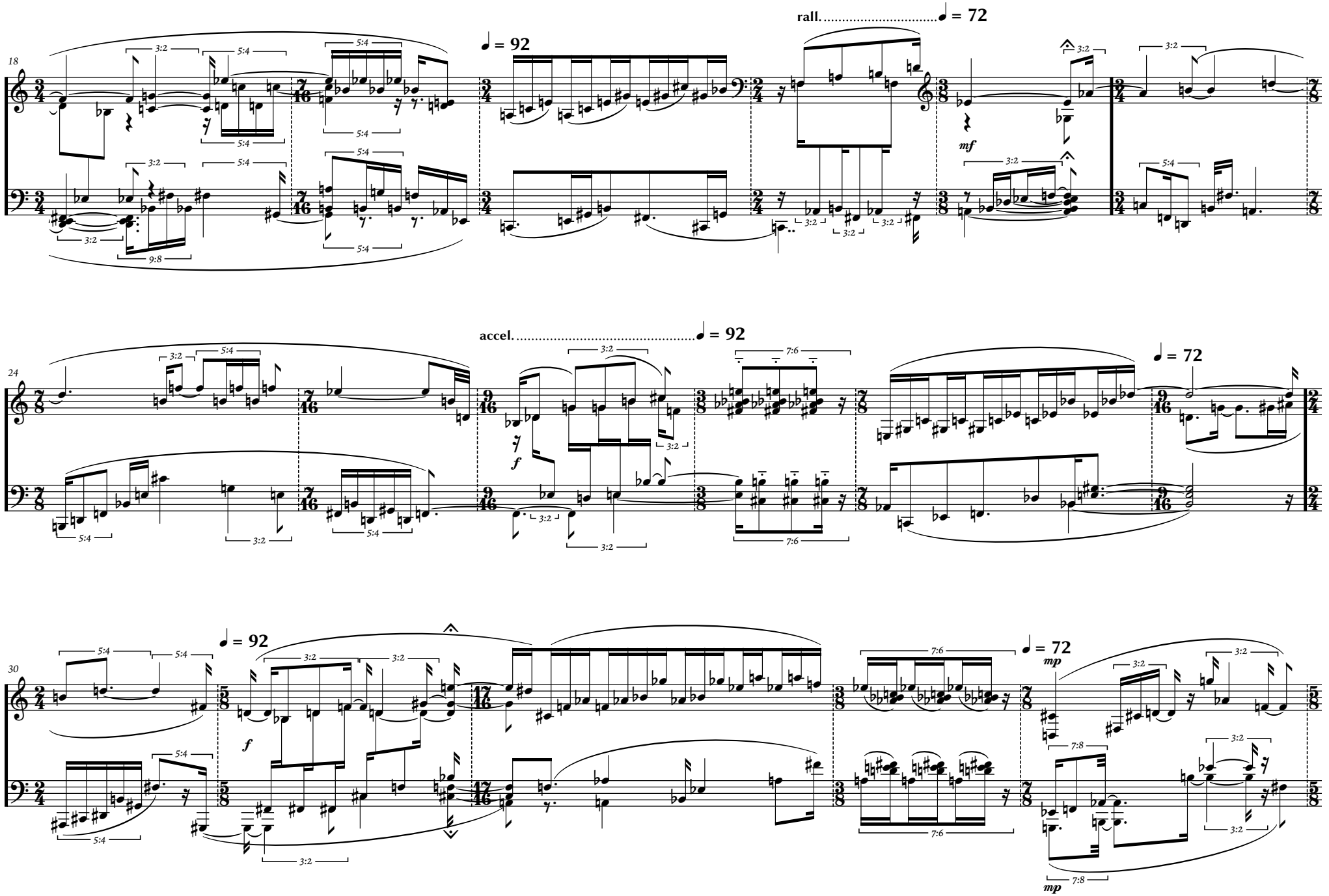
  indicating a very brief elongation of the note beneath—momentum should not be lost

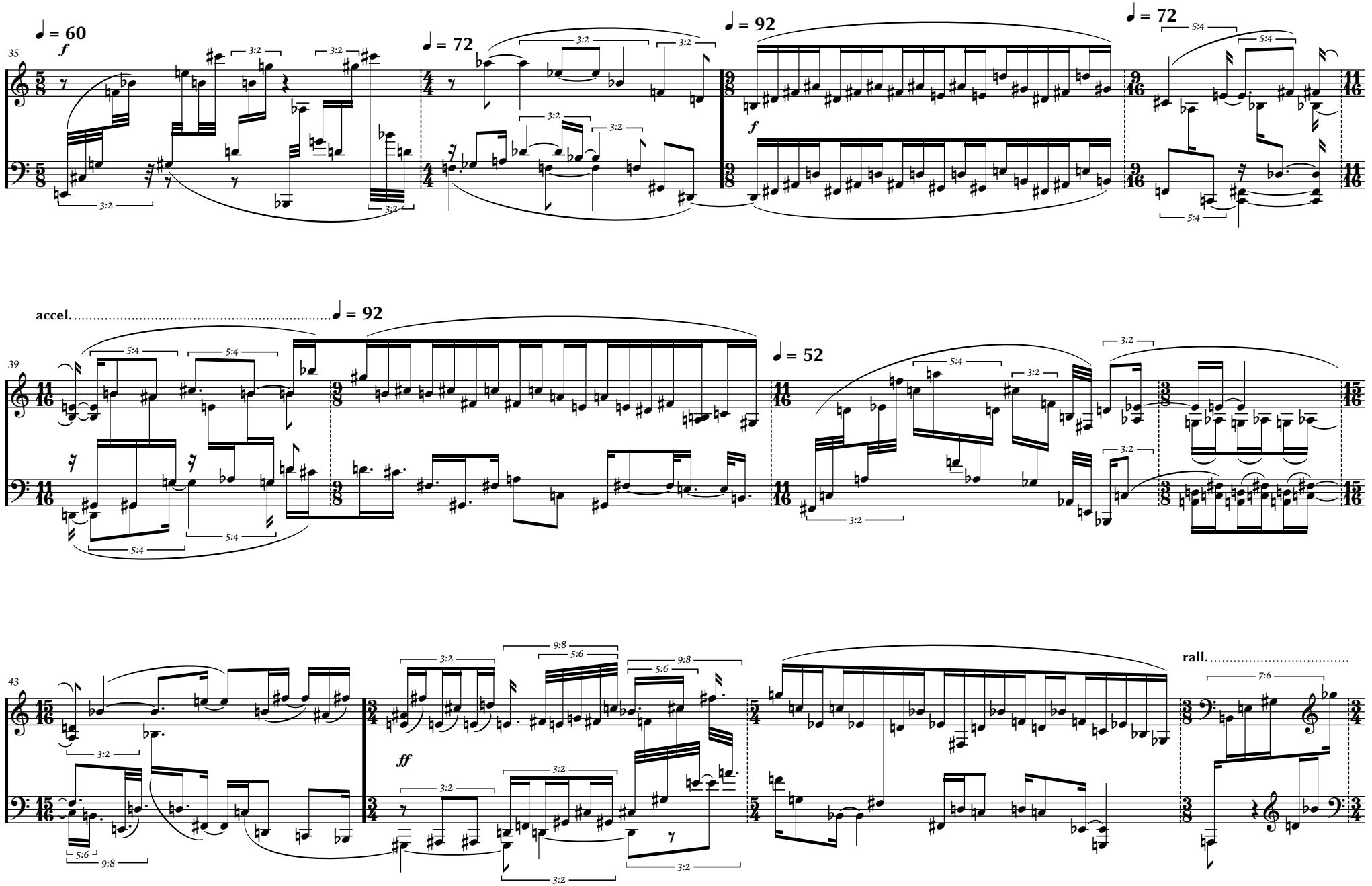
  meaning a longer pause

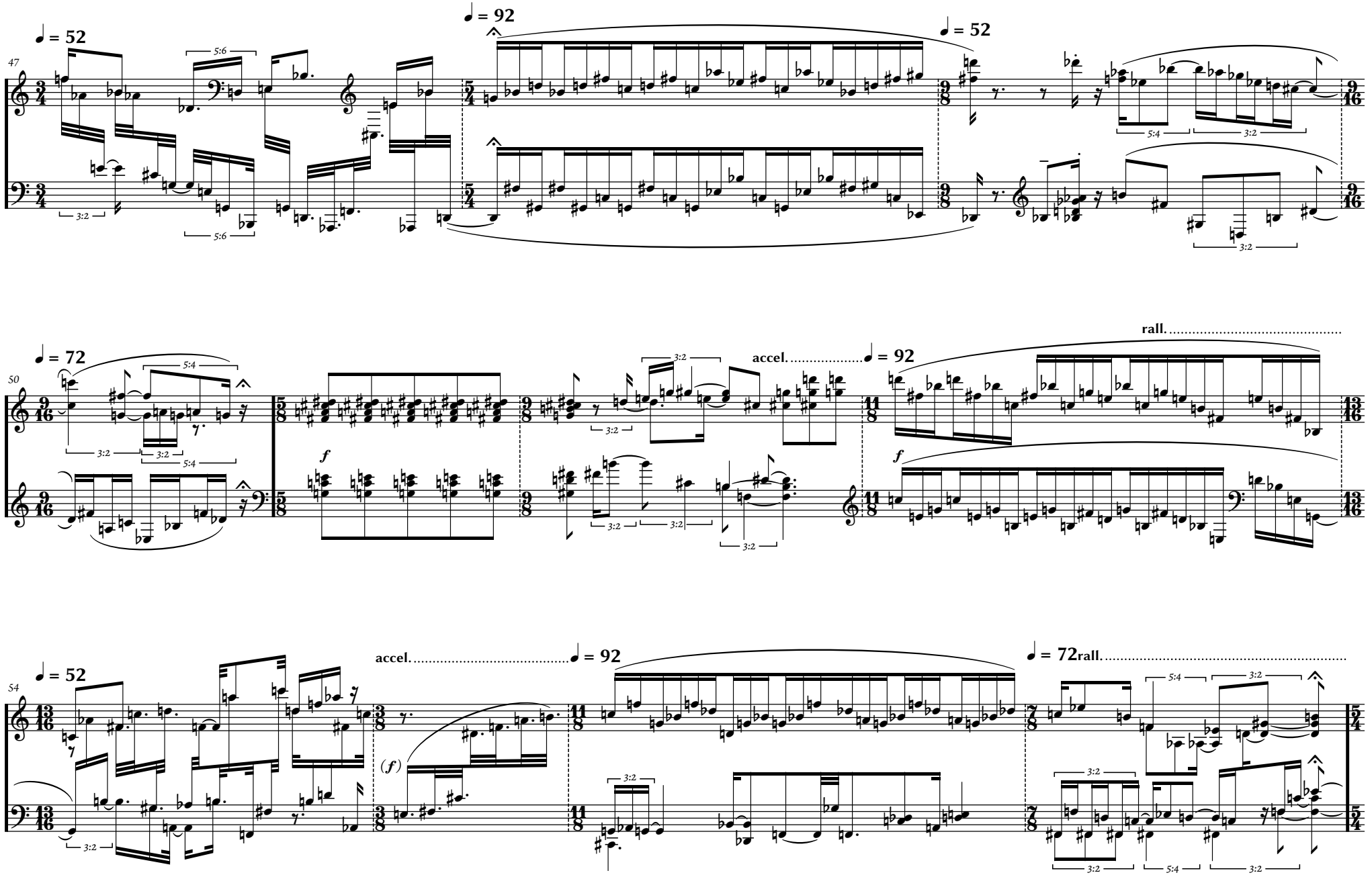
‘…flickering instantiation…’

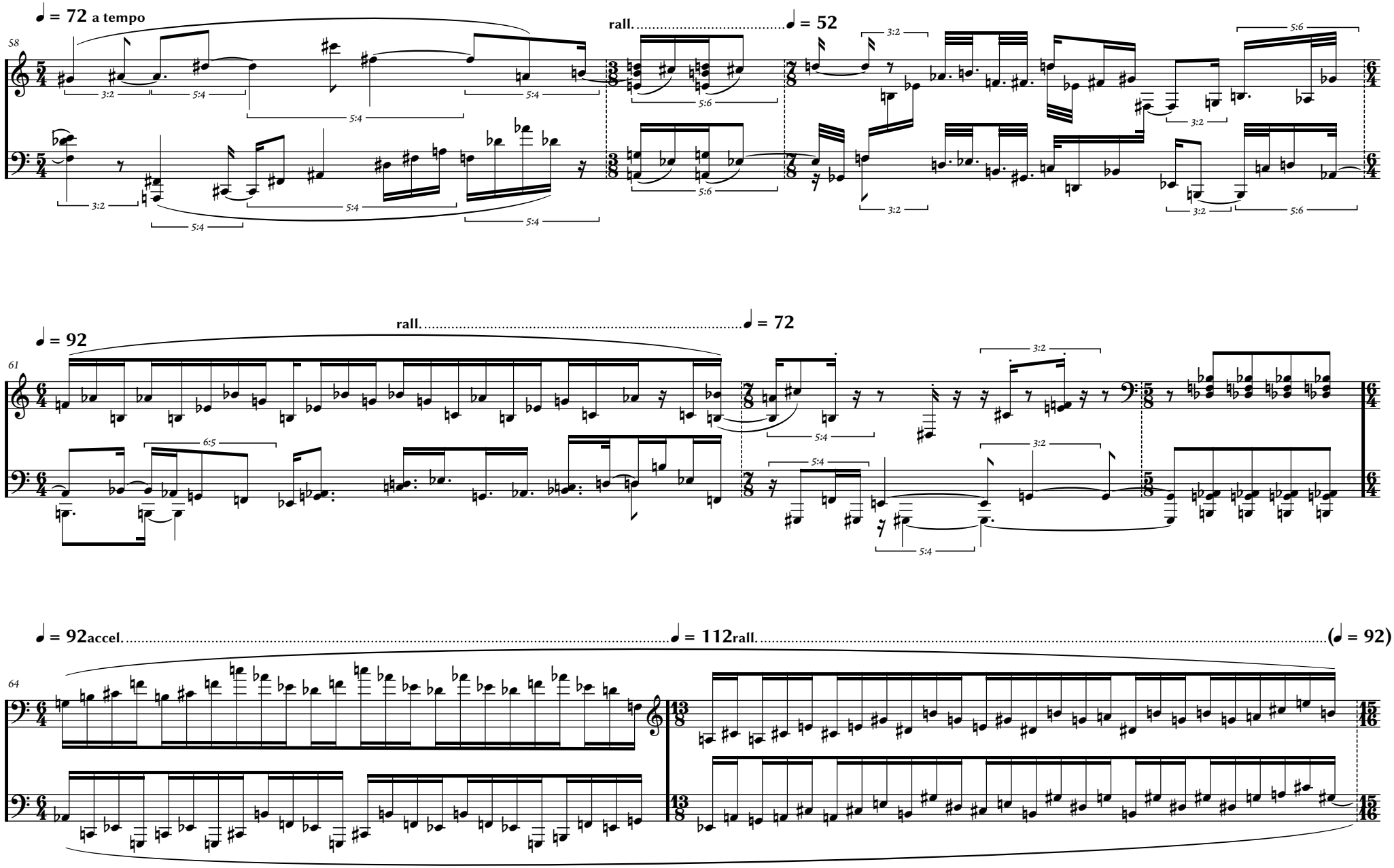
Chris Dench (2024)

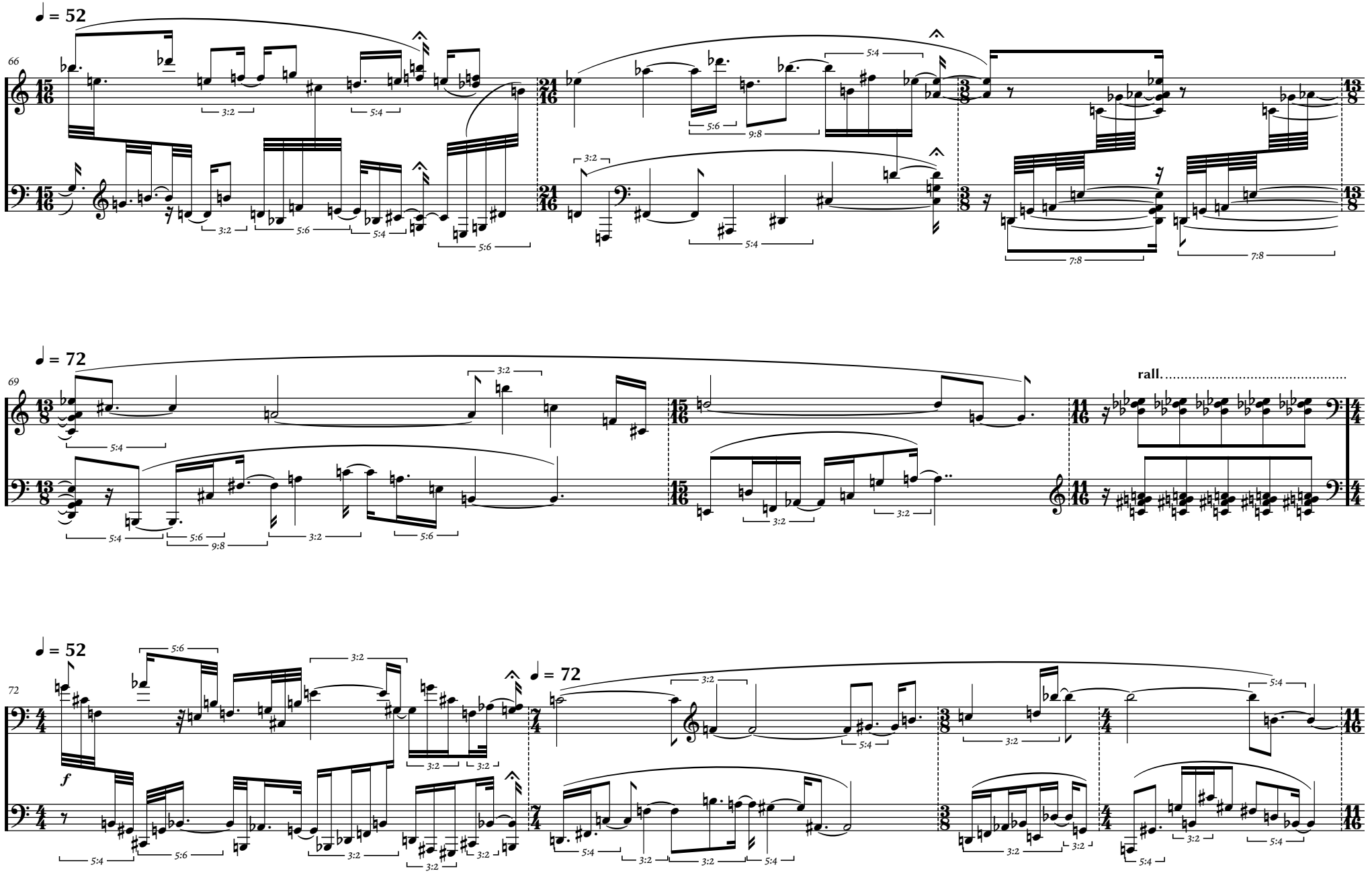



18
rall. ♩ = 72
♩ = 92
mf
24
accel. ♩ = 92
♩ = 72
f
30
♩ = 92
f
♩ = 72
mp
mp


35
♩ = 60
f
3:2
♩ = 72
3:2
♩ = 92
f
♩ = 72
5:4
accel.
♩ = 92
39
5:4
♩ = 52
3:2
43
5:6
9:8
ff
rall.
7:6


47
♩ = 52
♩ = 92
♩ = 52
50
♩ = 72
accel.
♩ = 92
rall.
54
♩ = 52
accel.
♩ = 92
♩ = 72
rall.


♩ = 72 a tempo
58
rall.
♩ = 52
♩ = 92
61
rall.
♩ = 72
♩ = 92 accel.
64
♩ = 112 rall.
(♩ = 92)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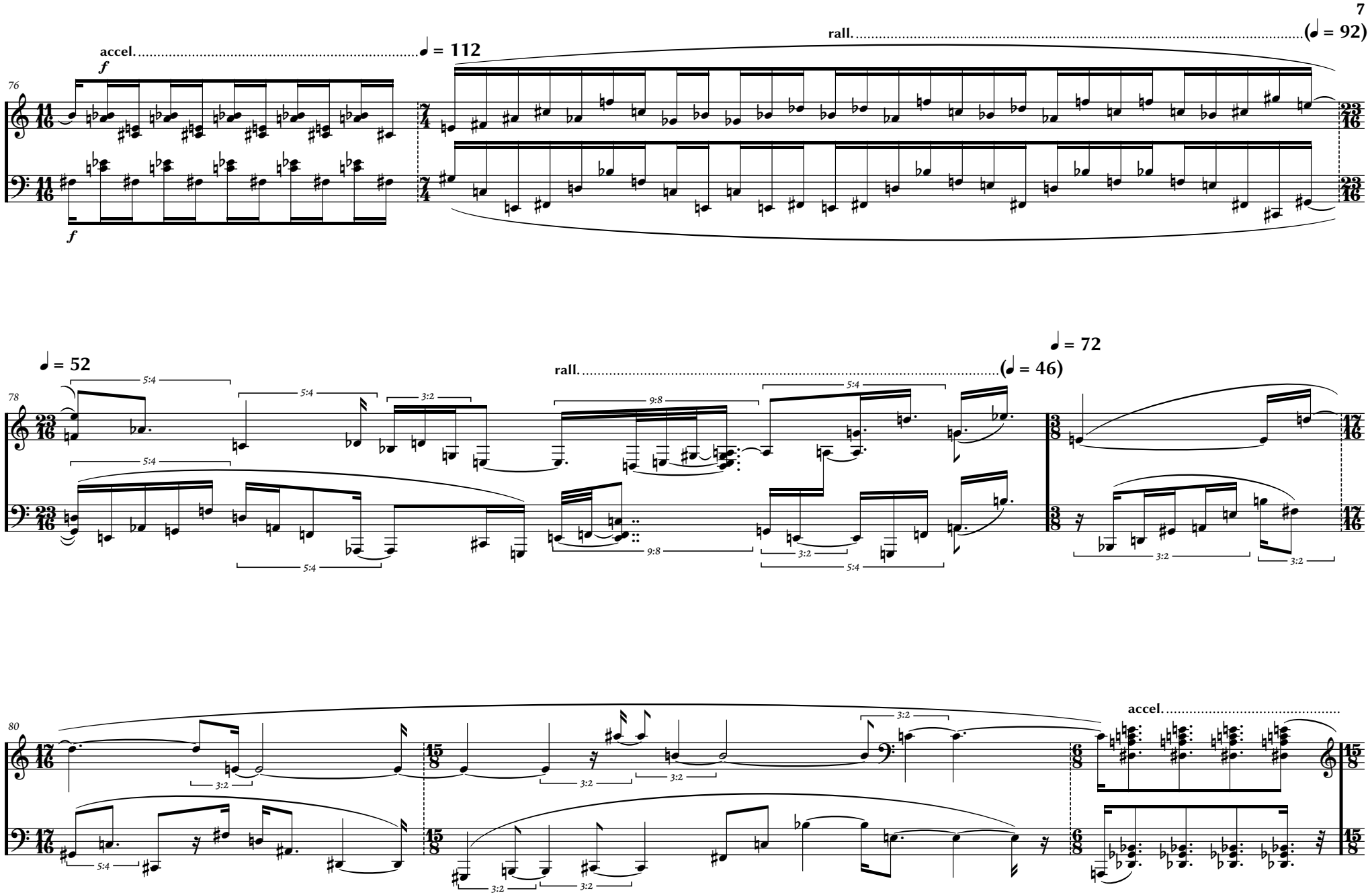
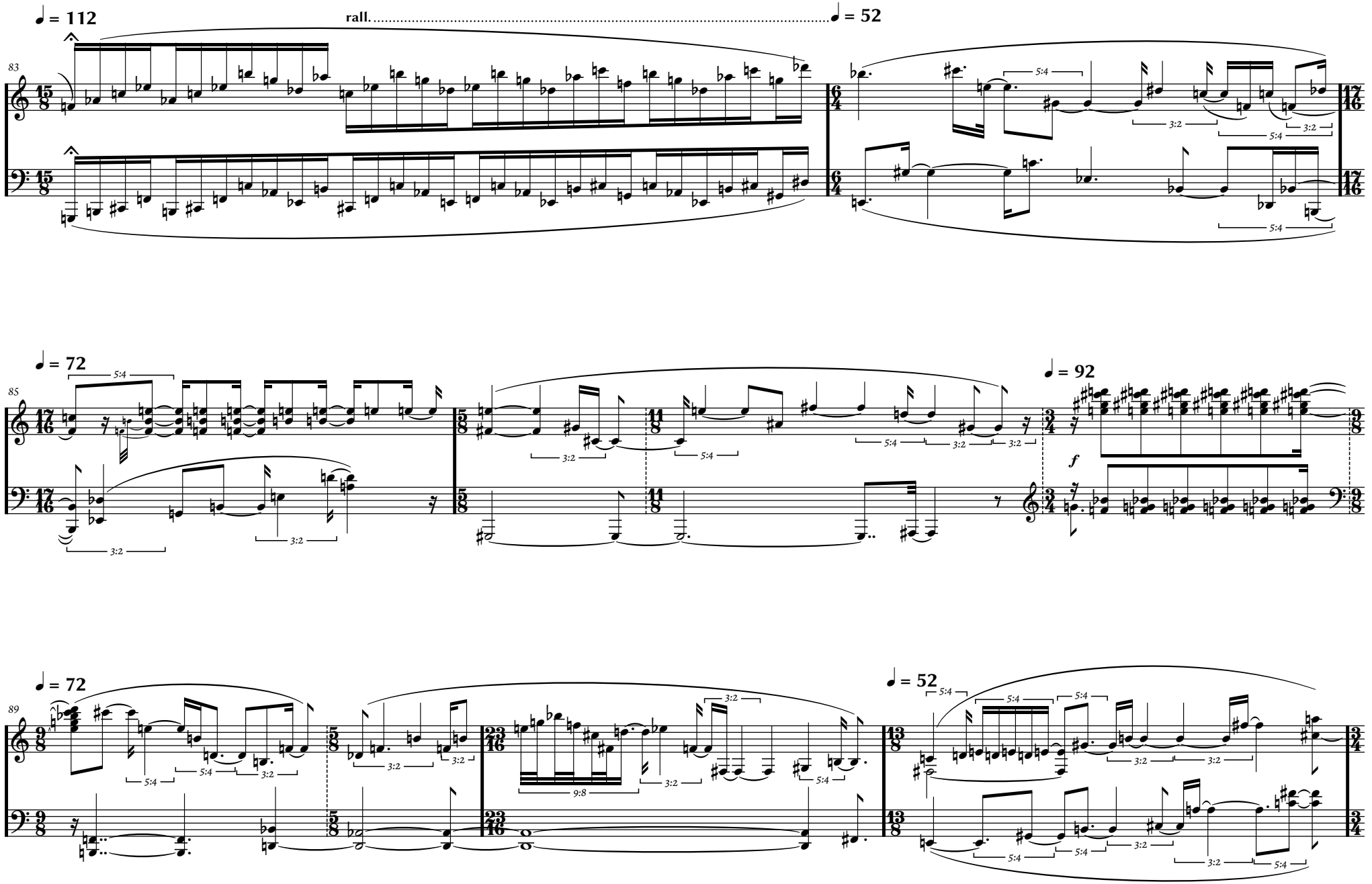
66
♩ = 72
69
rall.
♩ = 52
72
f
♩ = 72


accel.
♩ = 112
rall.
(♩ = 92)
76
f
f
♩ = 52
rall.
(♩ = 46)
♩ = 72
78
5:4
3:2
9:8
80
accel.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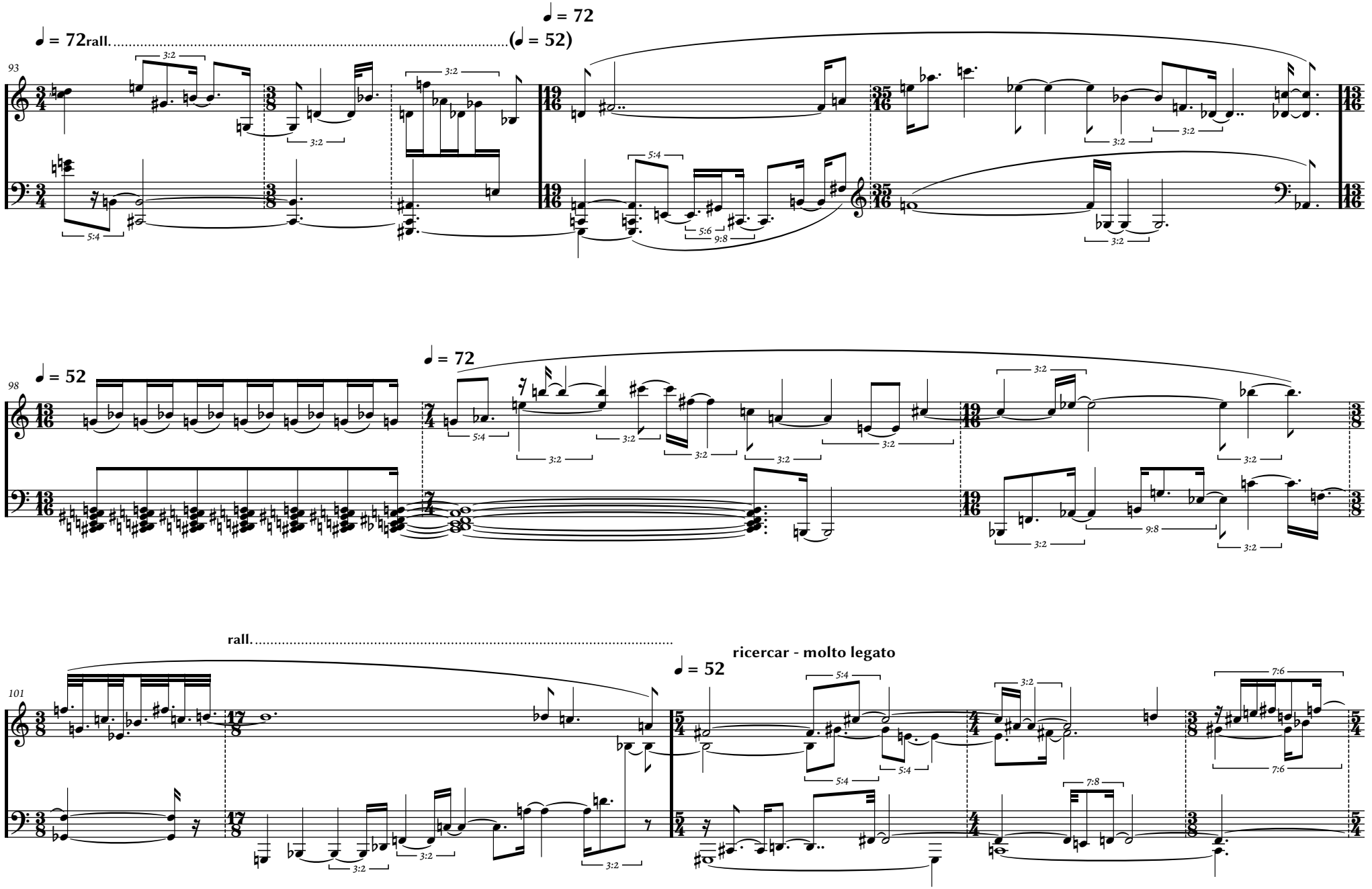
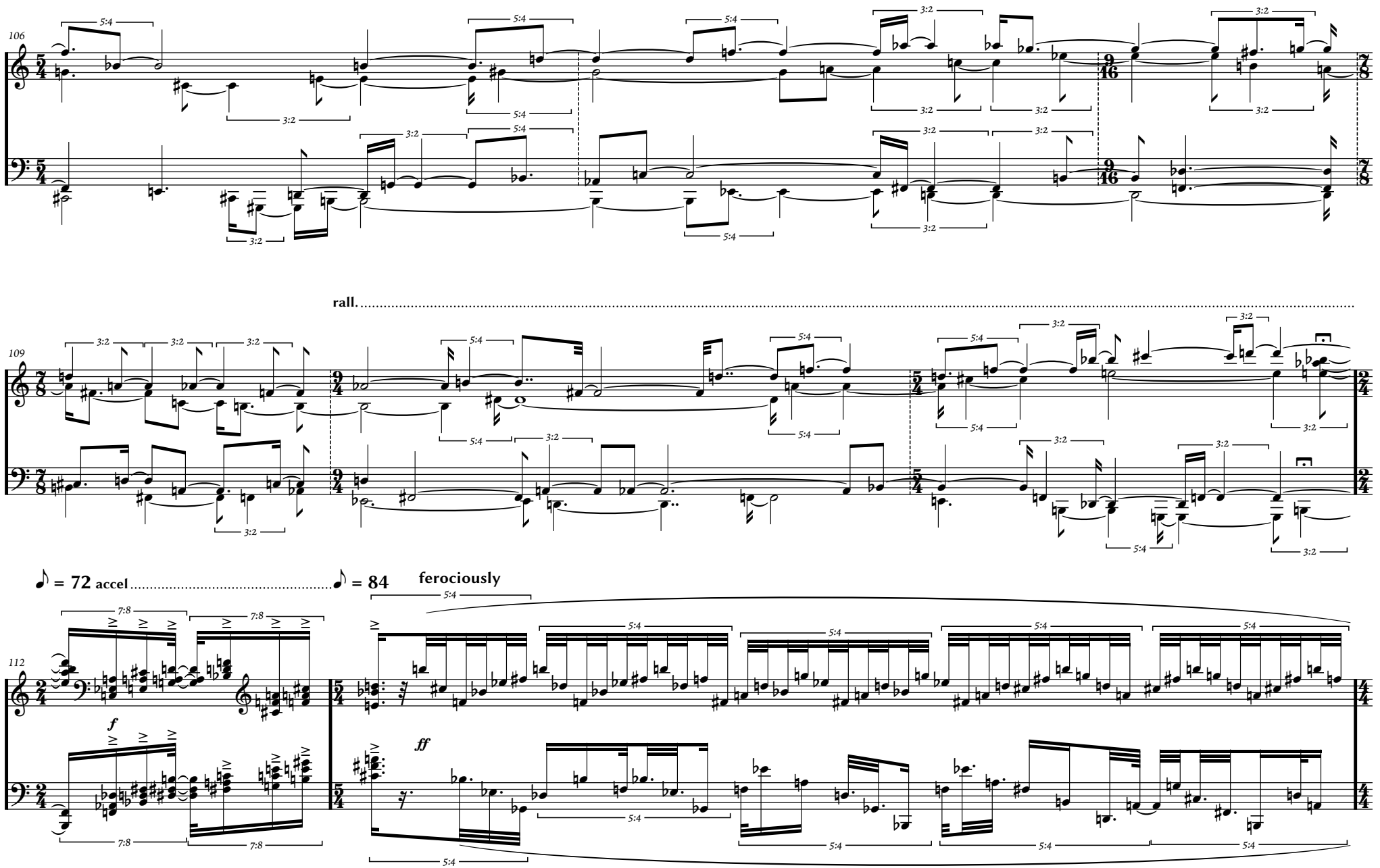
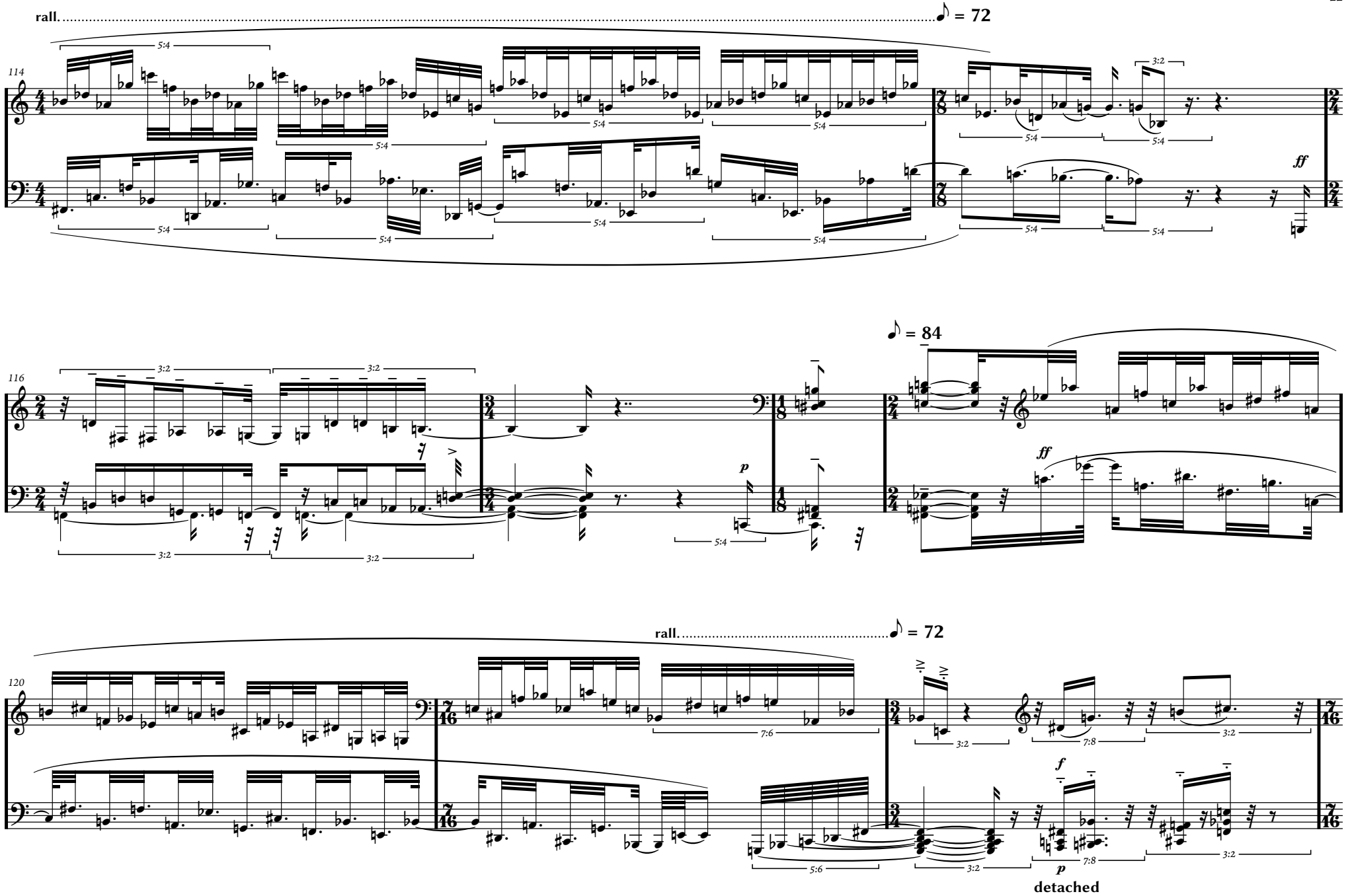
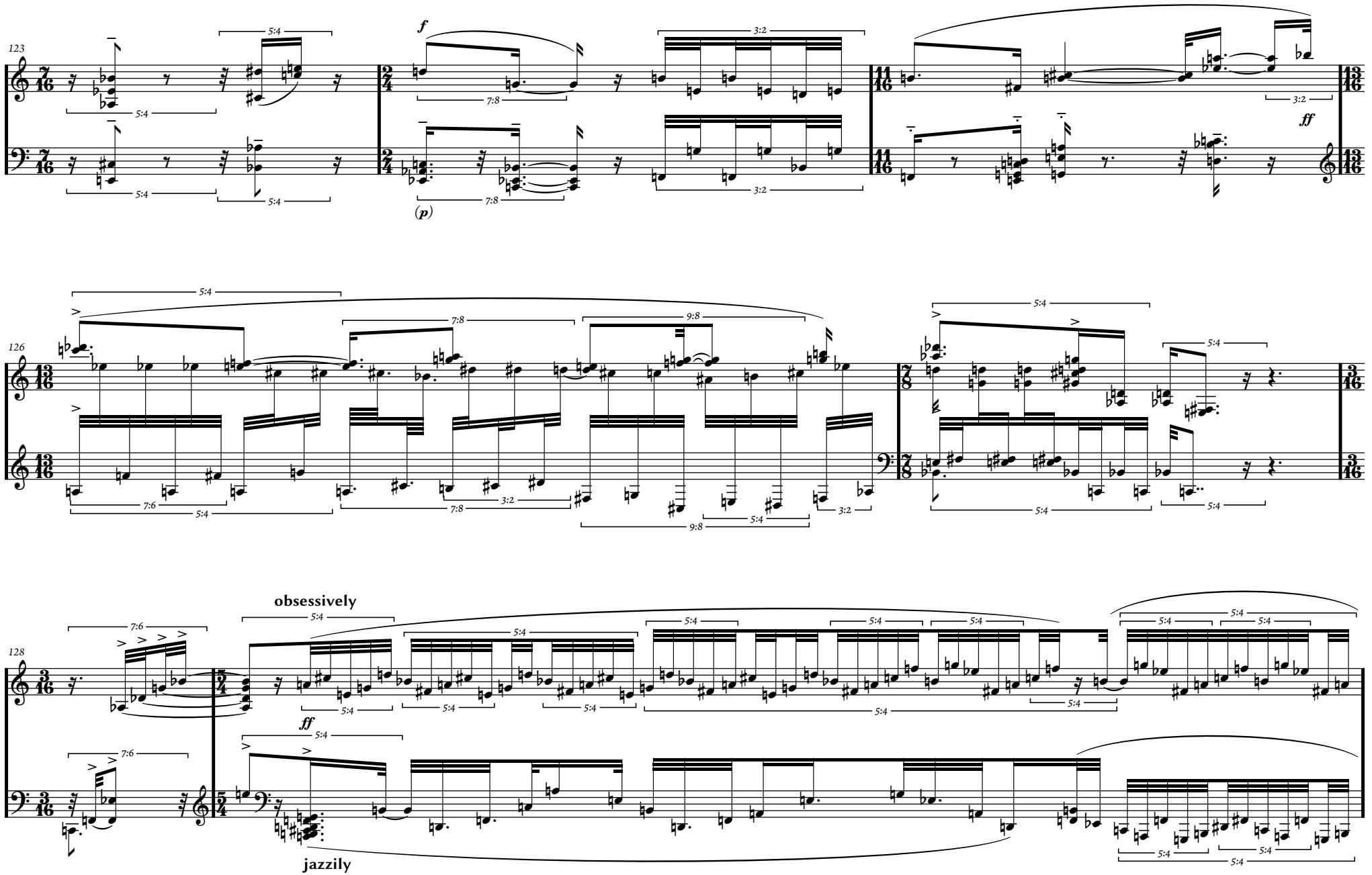
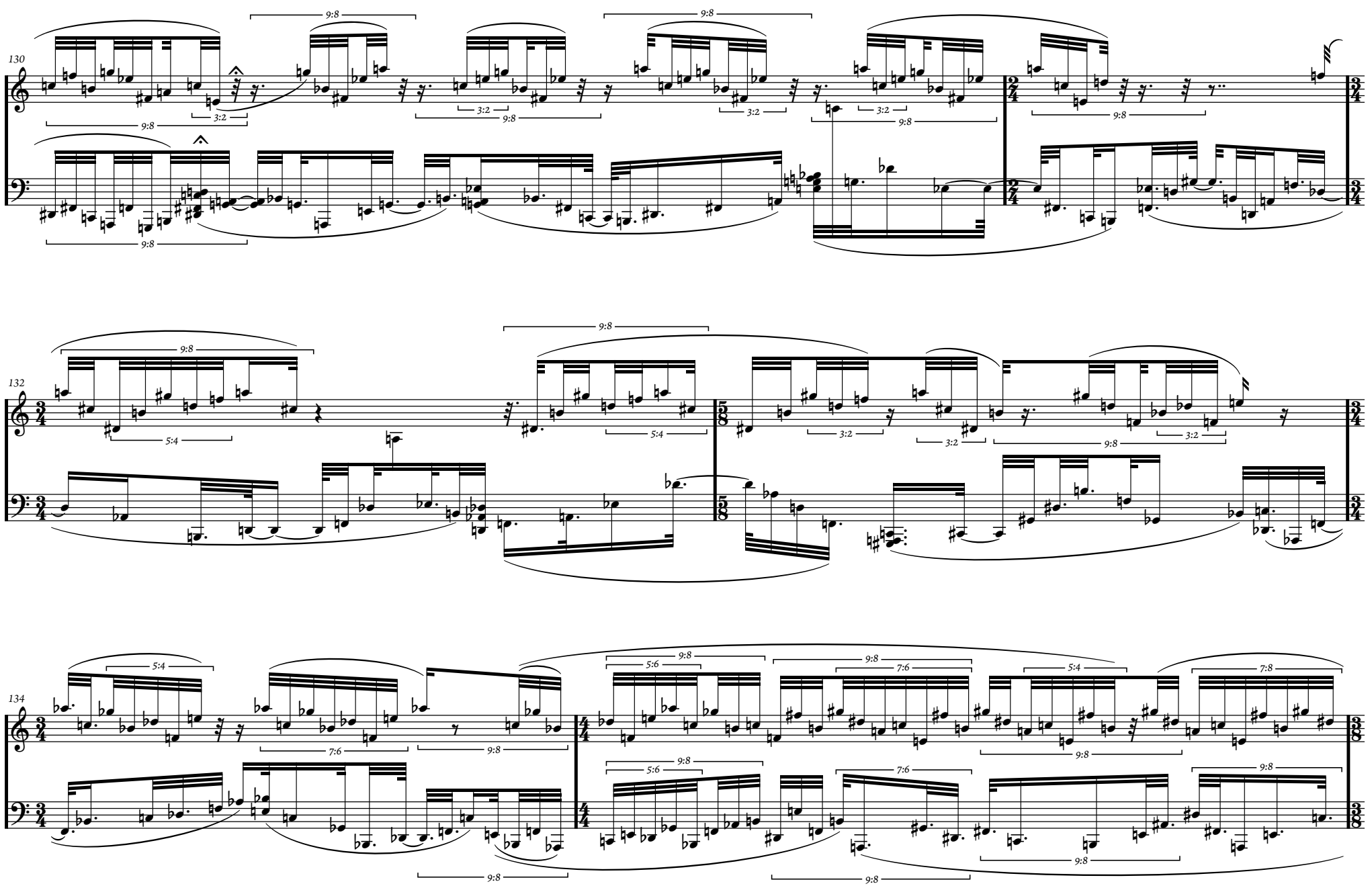
rall.
♩ = 52
83
♩ = 72
85
♩ = 92
f
♩ = 72
89
♩ = 52


♩ = 72
♩ = 72rall.
(♩ = 52)
93
♩ = 72
♩ = 52
98
rall.
ricercar - molto legato
101
♩ = 52


106
109
rall.
112
♪ = 72 accel
♪ = 84
ferociously
f
ff


rall.
♪ = 72
114
5:4
3:2
ff
116
3:2
p
♪ = 84
ff
120
rall.
♪ = 72
7:6
5:6
7:8
f
p
detached


123
f
(p)
ff
126
ff
obsessively
jazzily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132
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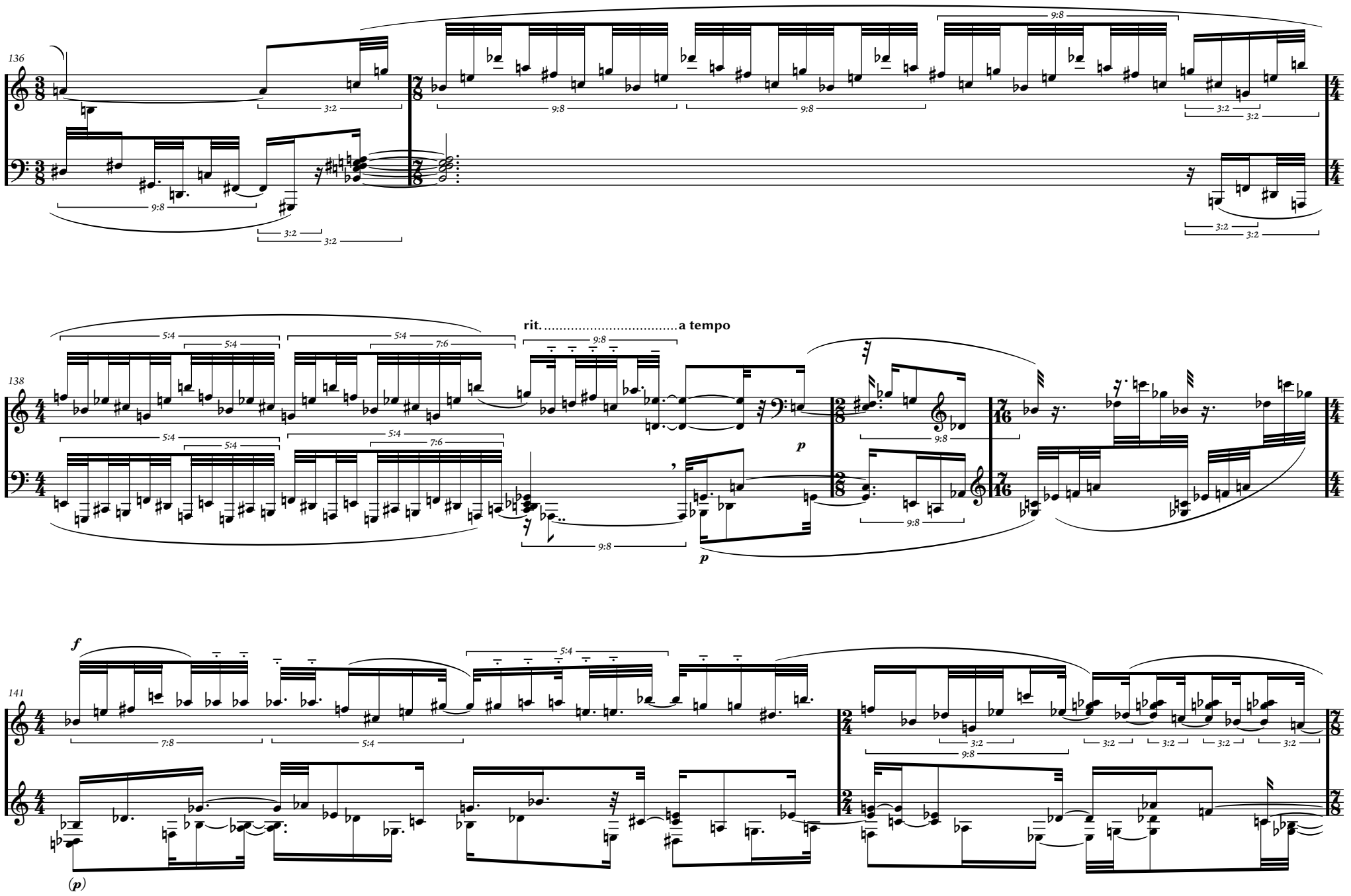
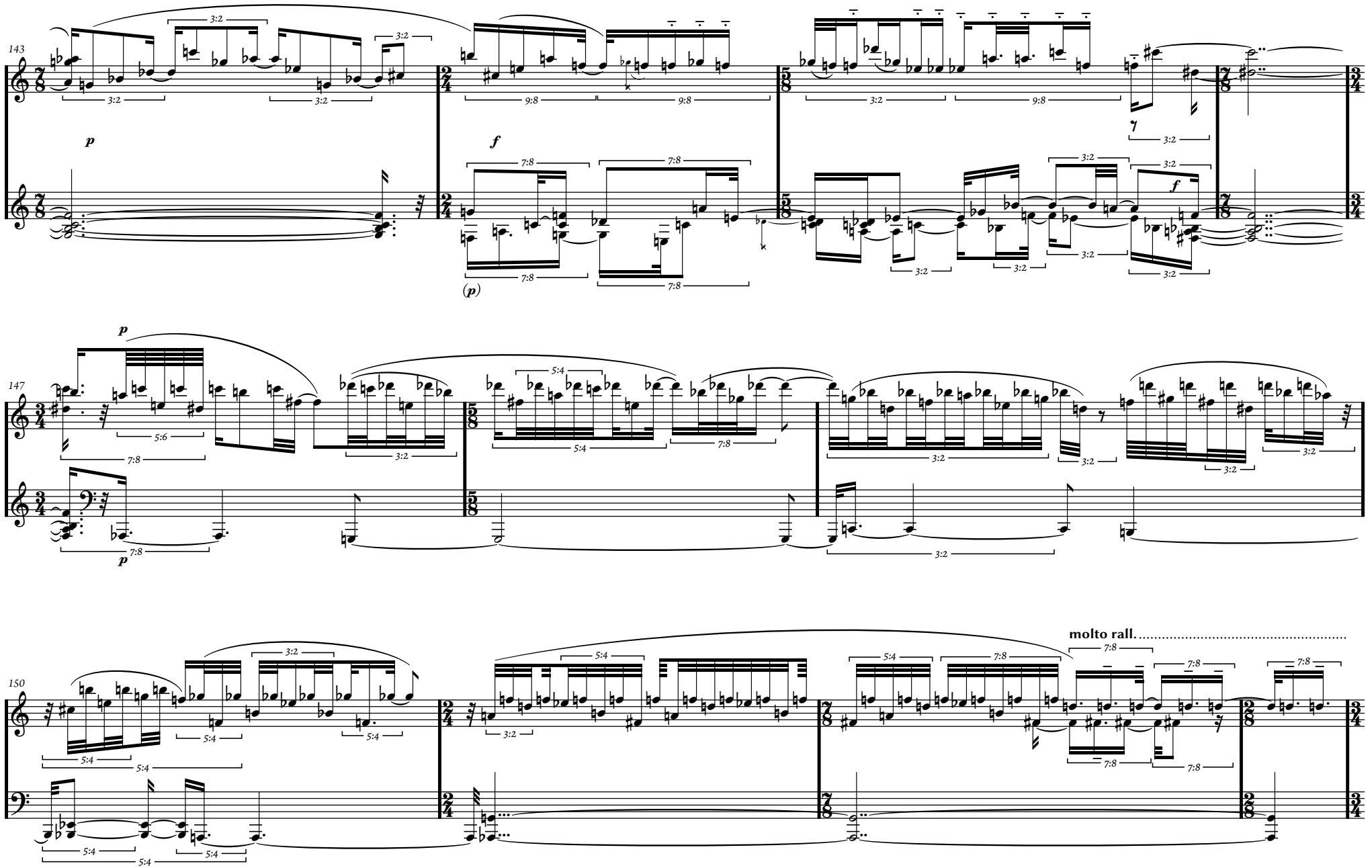
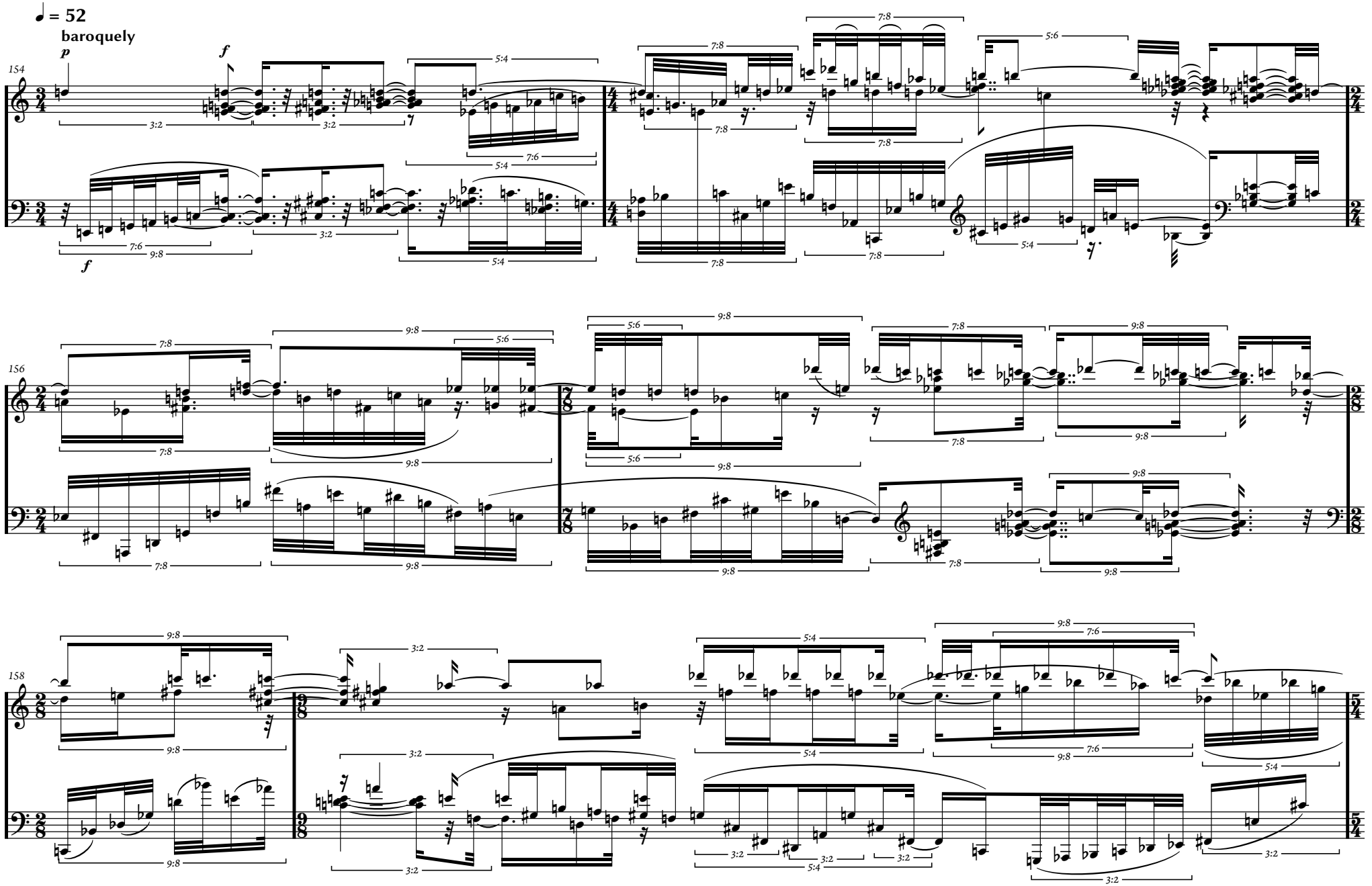
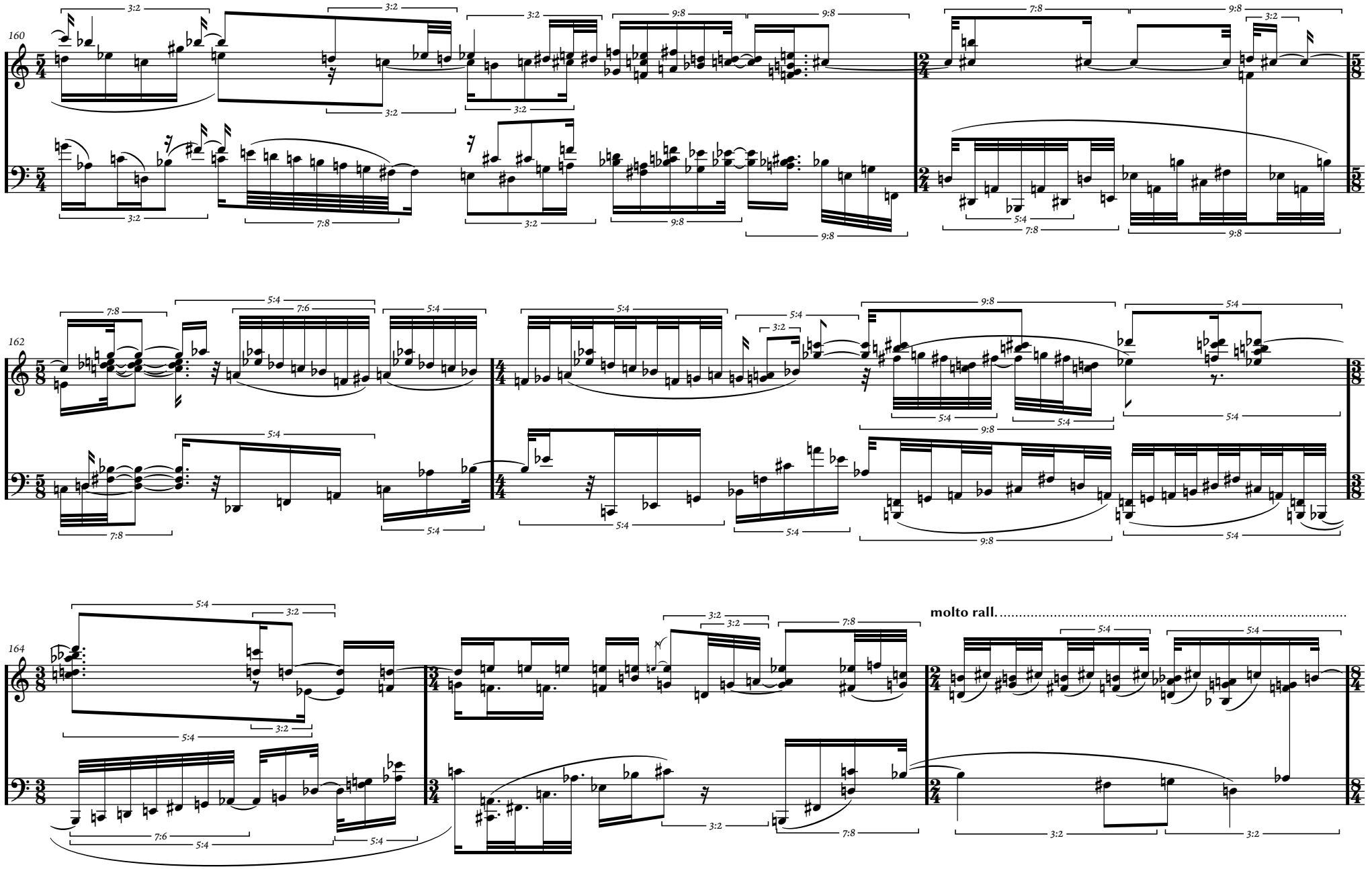

136
138
141
rit.....a tempo
p
f
(p)


143
147
150
molto rall.


♩ = 52
baroquely
p
f
154
156
158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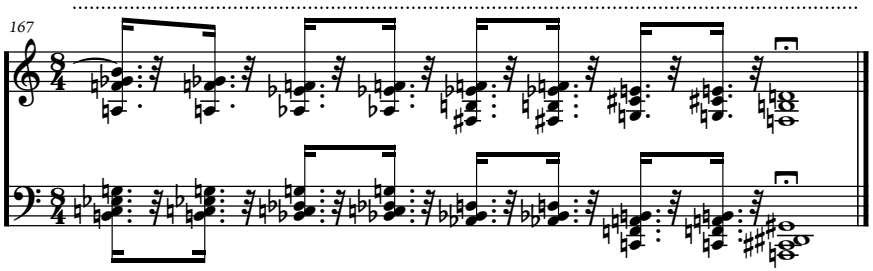
162
164
molto rall.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