Midnight Toccatas

organ solo

Aaron Travers

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This composition is the winner of the 2021 Composition Competition sponsored by the Ruth and Clarence Mader Memorial Scholarship Fund, celebrating its 50th Anniversary.

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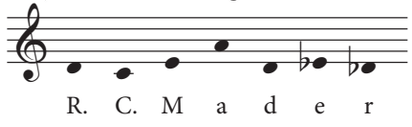
Registrations are provided in the score and pertain to a three-manual organ, though a two-manual organ may work as well. The registrations are only suggestions, and the organist is encouraged to find other possibilities that suit the quality of the music.

Program Note

Midnight Toccatas is based on the names of Ruth and Clarence Mader, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Mader Fund. The motto used in the piece is this:



Rather than using the motto in a thematic way (although the sequence of pitches does appear toward the very end of the piece in the pedals), I decided to use it to develop a range of motives, chords and arabesque-like passages that operate throughout the piece. One way I did this was to develop rotational arrays, so that all of the pitches used were dervied serially from the motto. In this way, the motto is integrated into the fabric of the piece on every conceivable level.

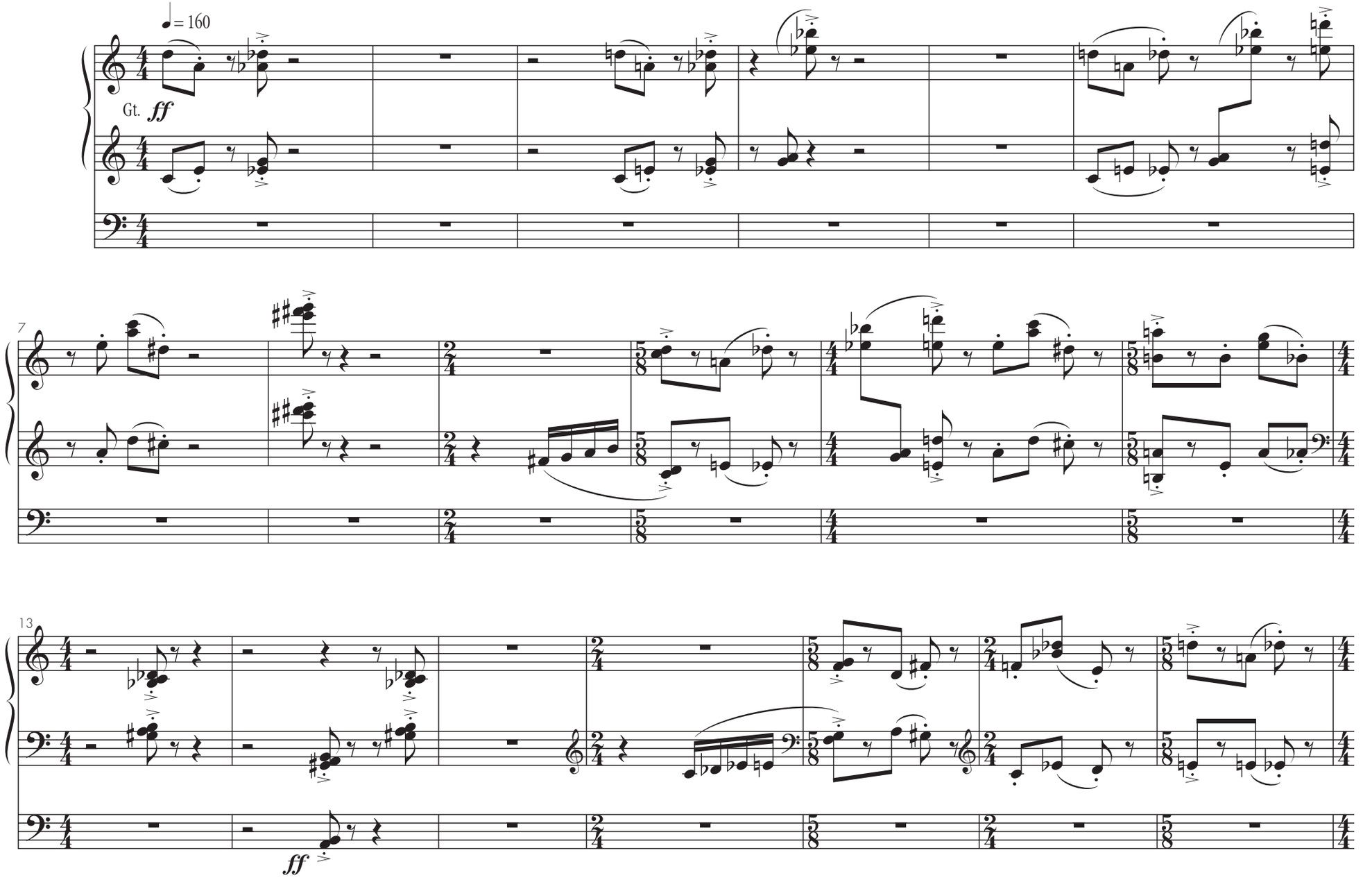
The piece is arranged as a series of short toccatas, all held together by the consistency of the materials. Sometimes they are connected by running passages; at other times they stop abruptly and begin a contrasting section. Throughout it all, material recurs in ever-changing but still recognizeable ways. The piece is split into three larger sections (fast-slow-fast), though each section contains several toccatas. The fast parts are breakneck, jittery, fragmented even, using the the full register of the instrument. The middle slow section is almost meditative, with long, highly ornamented, melismatic strands of melody in the right hand over slower moving voices.

Concerning the title: When I attended Oberlin in the mid-1990s, it was a regular tradition among the organ students to hold a monthly ad hoc recital at midnight on a Friday. These recitals were called the "Friday Night Organ Pump," and it is a tradition that continues even today. At the time, I flirted with writing a toccata for one of these concerts, though I knew so little about the organ at the time that I didn't feel confident enough to write anything worthwhile. With *Midnight Toccatas*, I was finally able to manifest that idea into a challenging but, I hope, fun work for solo organ.

Midnight Toccatas

Aaron Travers

Gt.: 8' 4' 2' Pr., Reeds, Mixt.
Ped.: 16' 8' Pr., Reeds, Mixt.



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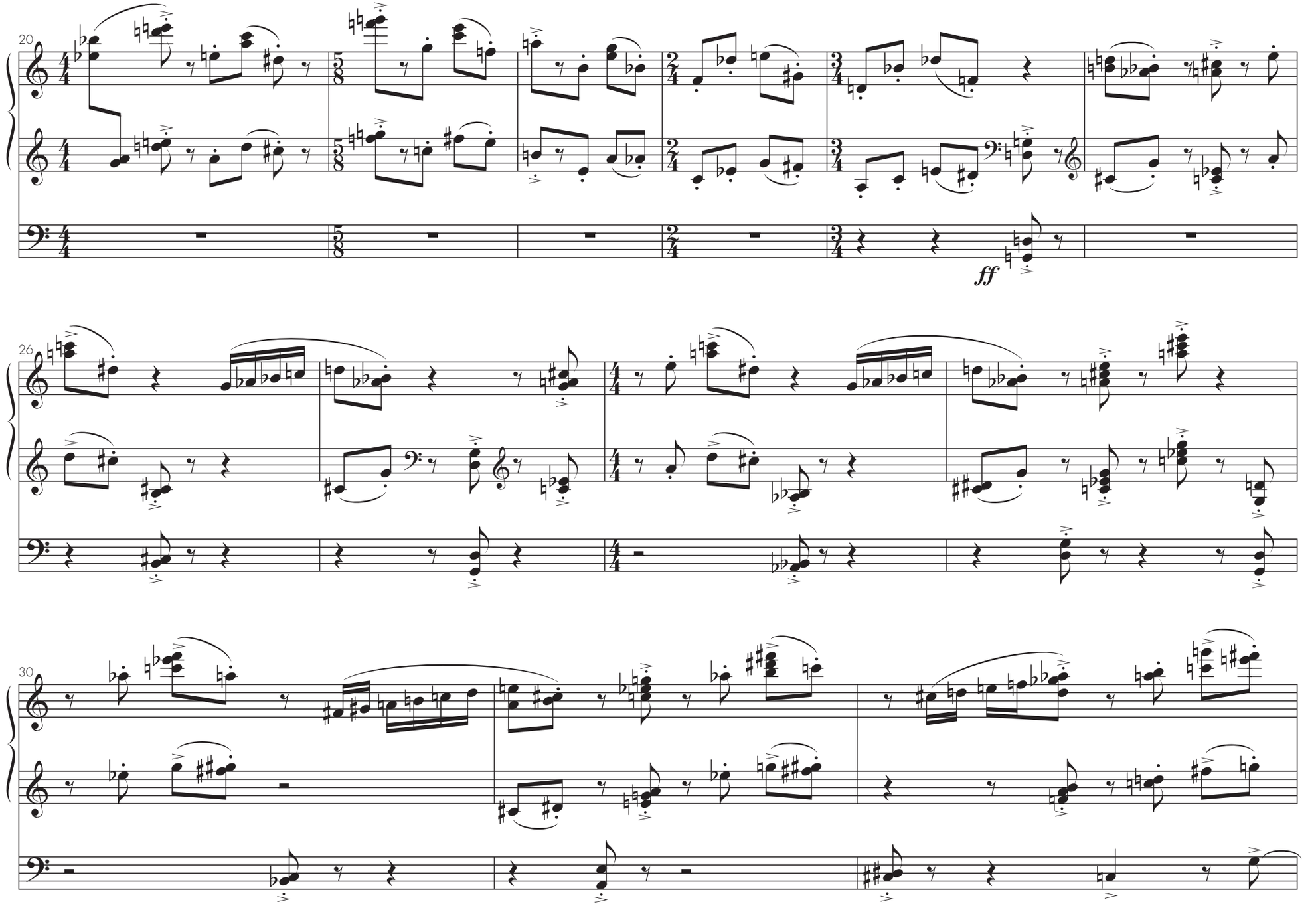
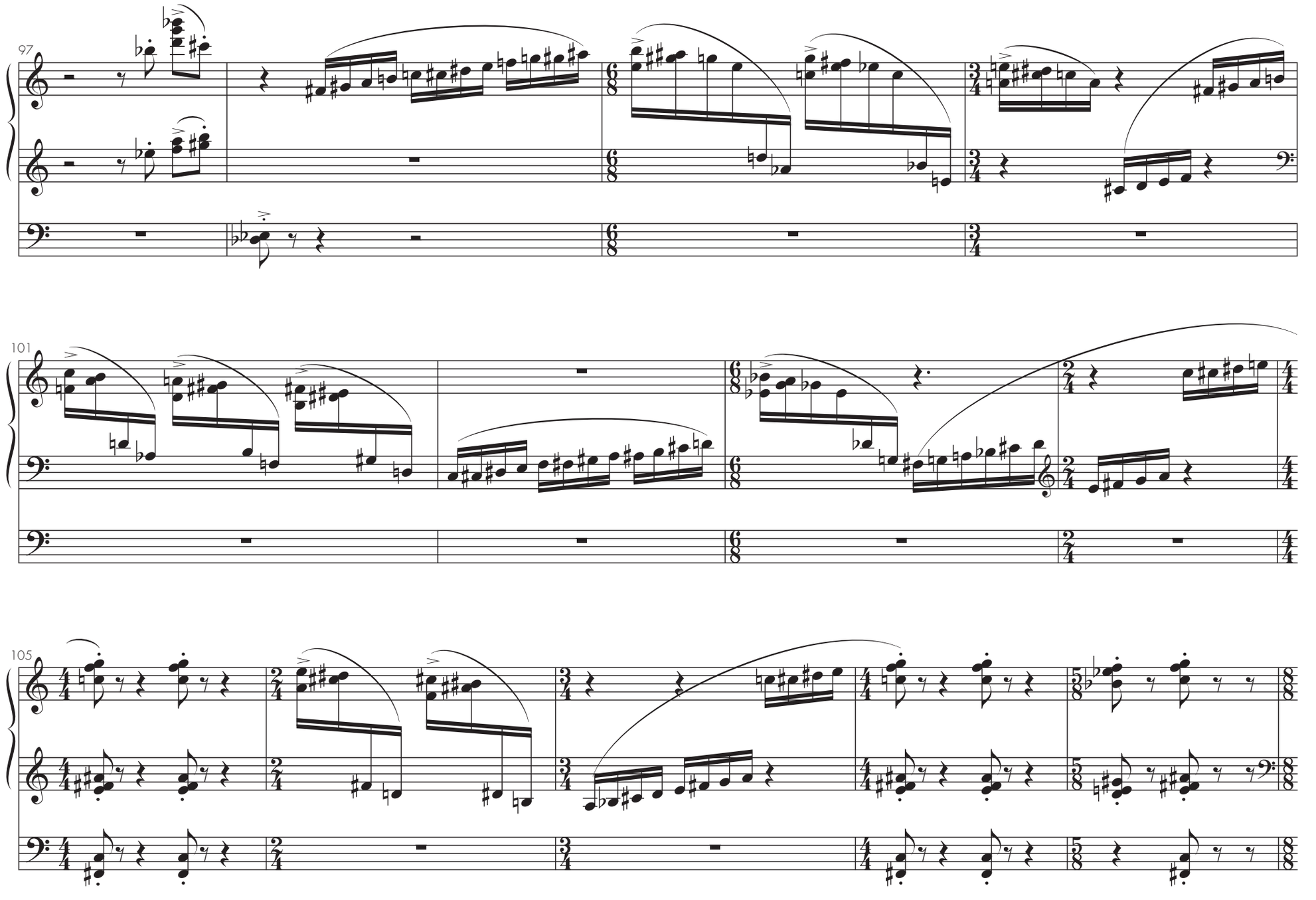
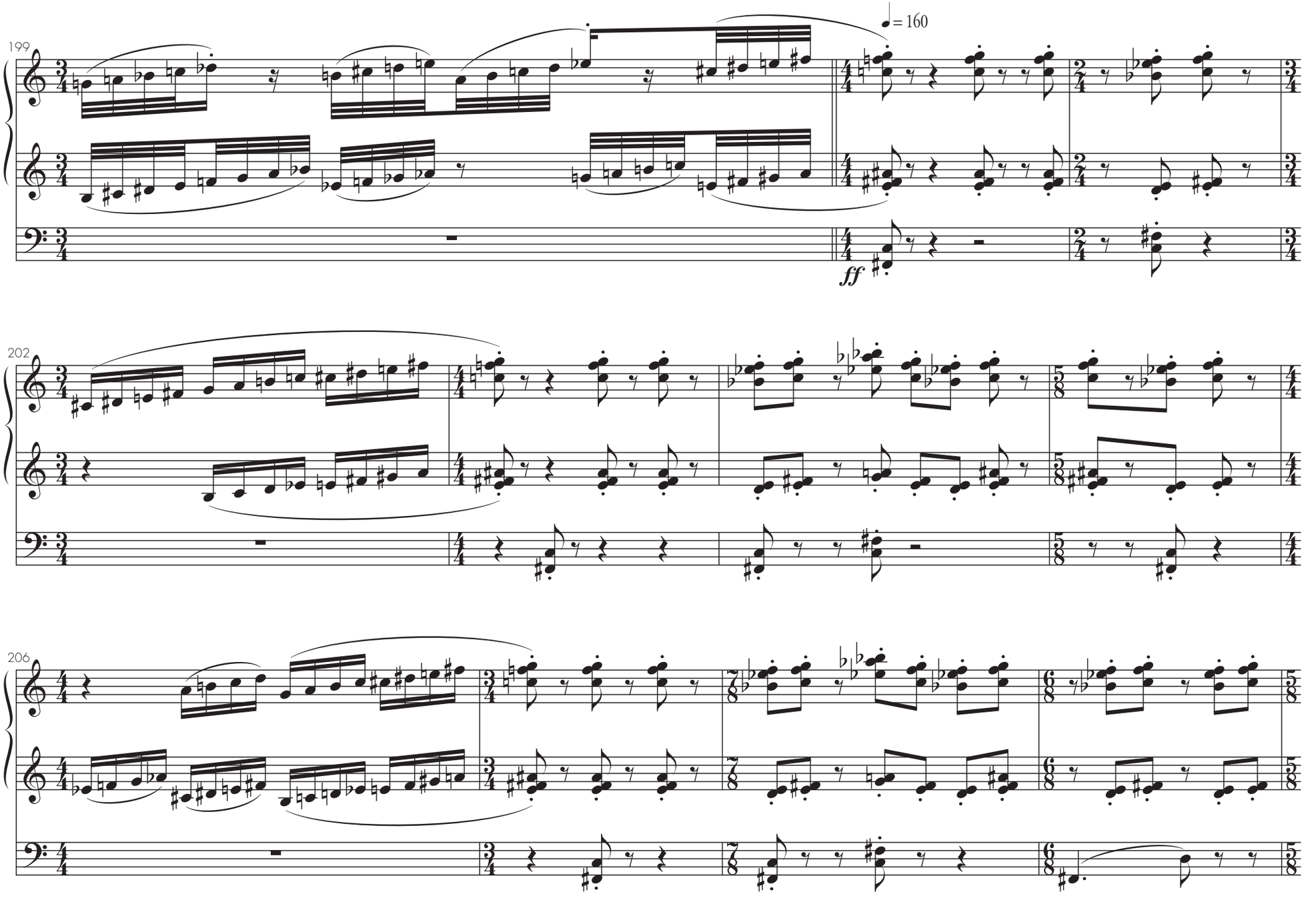
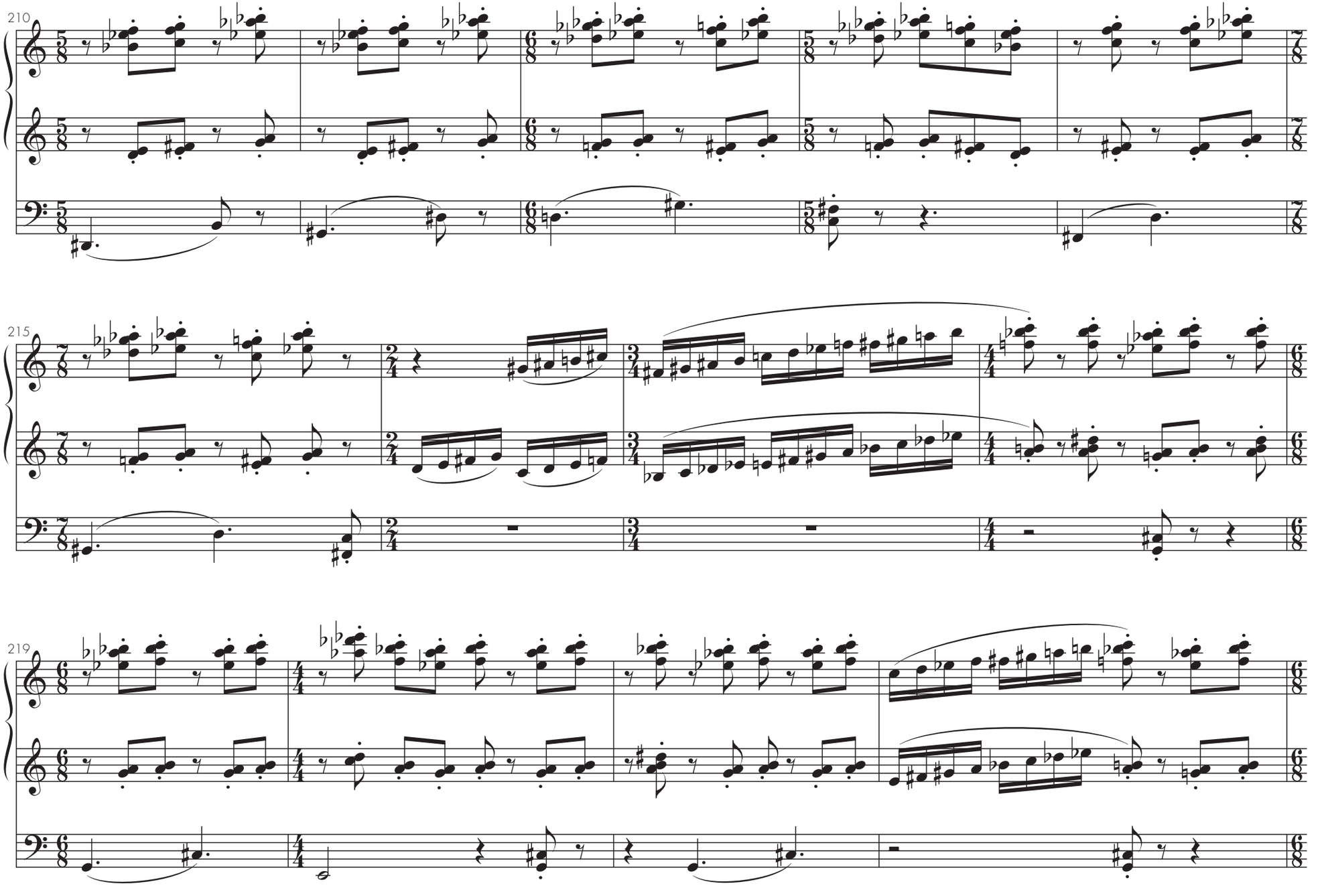
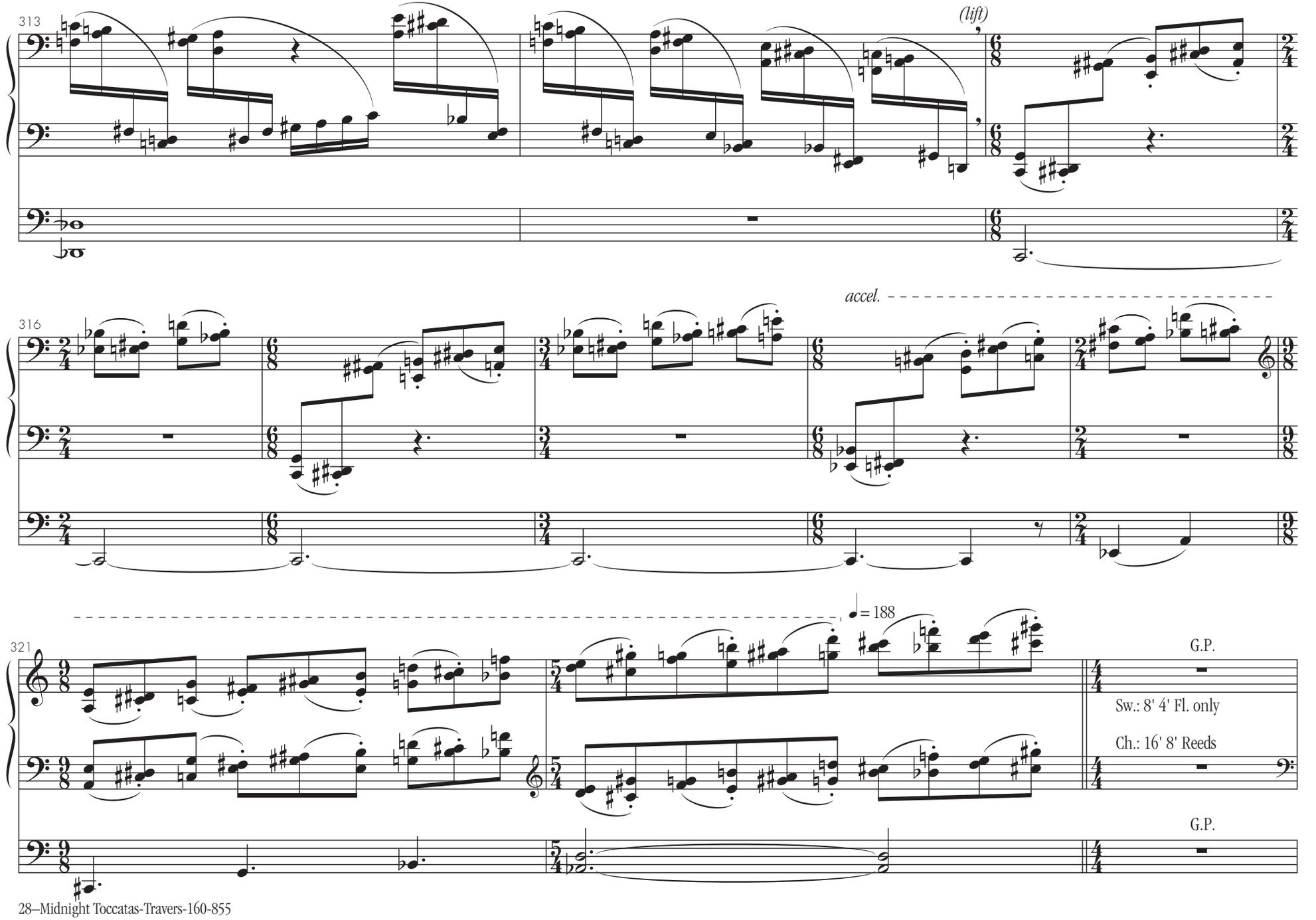
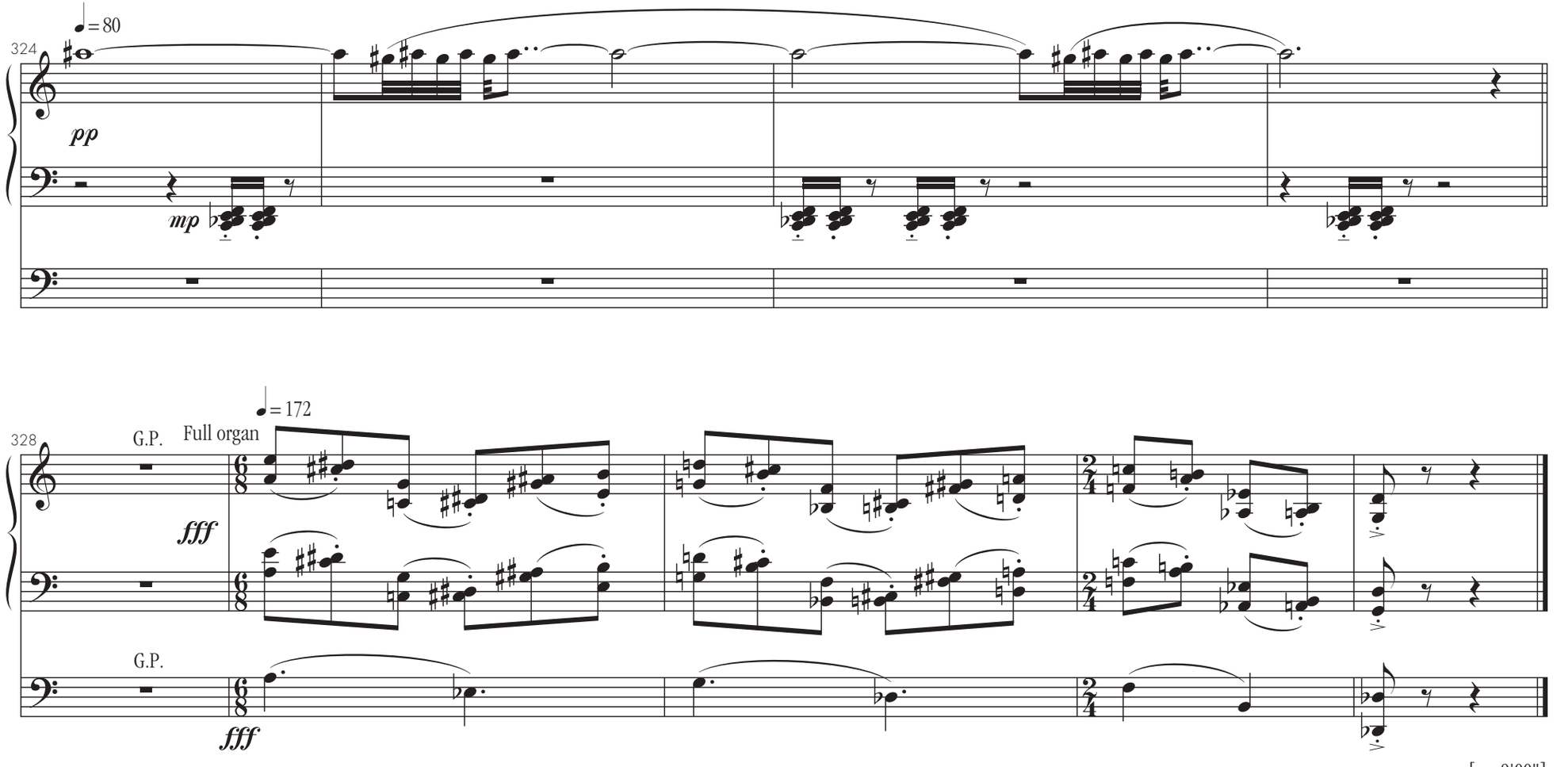

20
ff
26
30


97
101
105


199
♩ = 160
ff
202
206


210
215
219


313
(lift)
316
accel.
321
♩= 188
G.P.
Sw.: 8' 4' Fl. only
Ch.: 16' 8' Reeds
G.P.



[ca. 9'00"]

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