Pande Shahov

Napev

for cor anglais and vibraphone

2008

Composer's notes:

Napev was written for the composition workshop with the duo *New Noise* at Royal Holloway. I chose the option to composer for cor anglais instead of oboe. This was mainly because I wanted to compose a piece with an improvisatory (jazzy) type of melody, more typical of a tenor saxophone. The cor has some of that quality.

In Macedonian, the word *napev* is used to describe a way of singing (for example, typical of a geographic region).

Notating folk songs is a relatively recent activity in Macedonia and most of the songs have survived for centuries just by being handed down orally from one generation to another. This is why sometimes there many versions, even with different lyrics, which belong to the same 'group' of songs. I liked the title because my aim was not to transcribe or arrange a song but to create a musical atmosphere of the melody by keeping short fragments and its intonation. I chose the folk song *Me izlagaye, ludo si ide (They lied to me that my sweetheart is coming back)* from the collection Macedonian Immigrant Folk Songs, edited by Lazo Karovski (Institute for Folklore, 1979). The lyrics describe the pain felt by a woman, waiting for her her beloved to come back from working abroad. The folk song gives a surprisingly honest and thought-provoking account of the impact of economic migration on the everyday life of an ordinary person.

The song is in a Dorian mode with sharpened fourth (sometimes called the Gypsy scale). I adapted the melody in order to emphasise the ascending and descending direction, whilst diminishing the impact of the Gypsy mode in order to create a more unified harmonic environment.

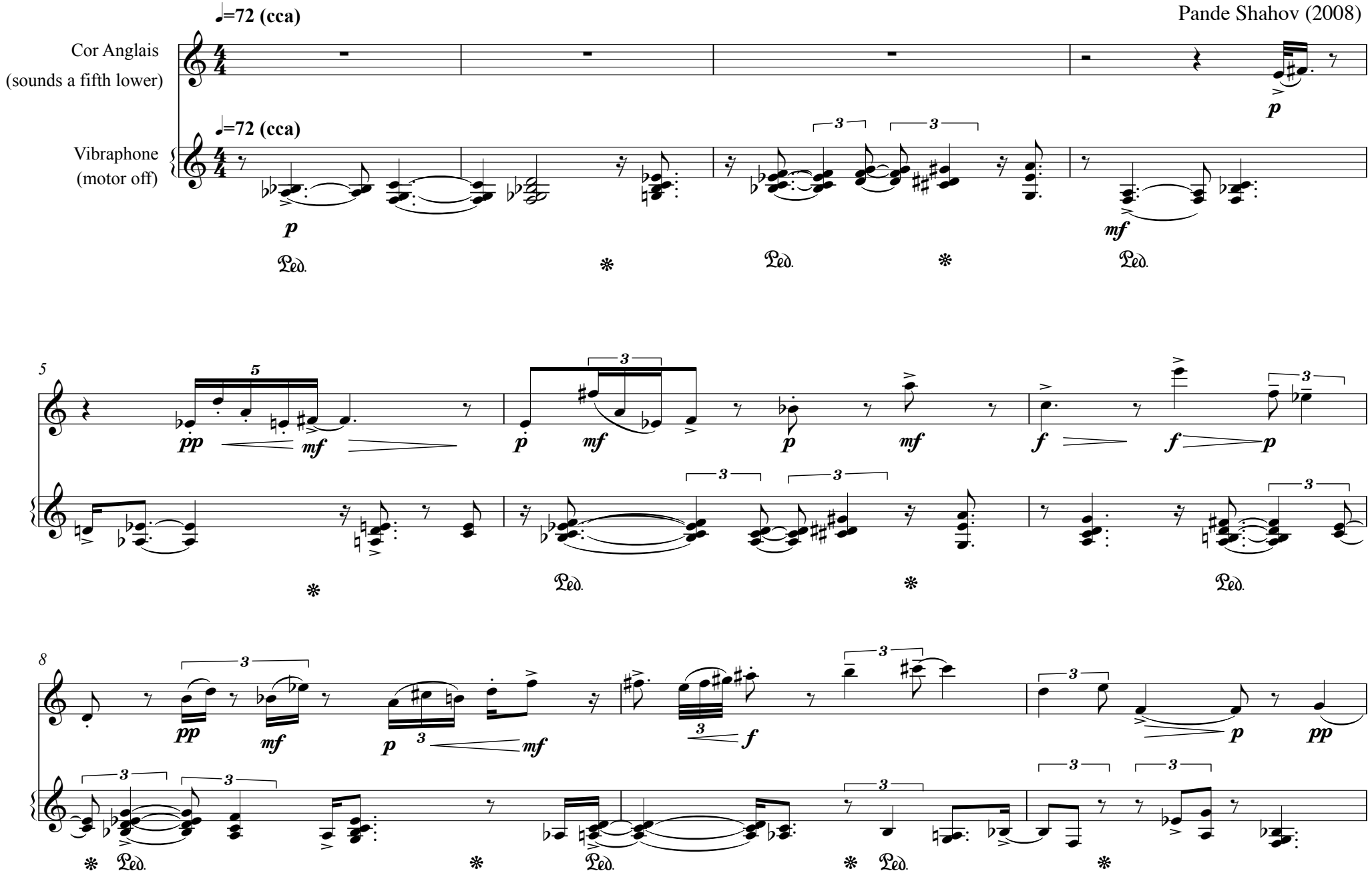
The vibraphone part creates ambience for the expressive, warm timbre of the cor anglais. The cor melody is fragmented and has declamatory elements. It is really a monologue, a confession or a story-telling part, accompanied by the atmospheric sounds of the vibraphone. The rhythmic and intervallic characteristics of the vibraphone are not predetermined. I tried to create a part by playing on the piano, singing and humming. I sought a slow but elaborate melody, halfway between Baroque ornamental melodic line of slow harpsichord pieces and the saxophone or flute improvisations in jazz.

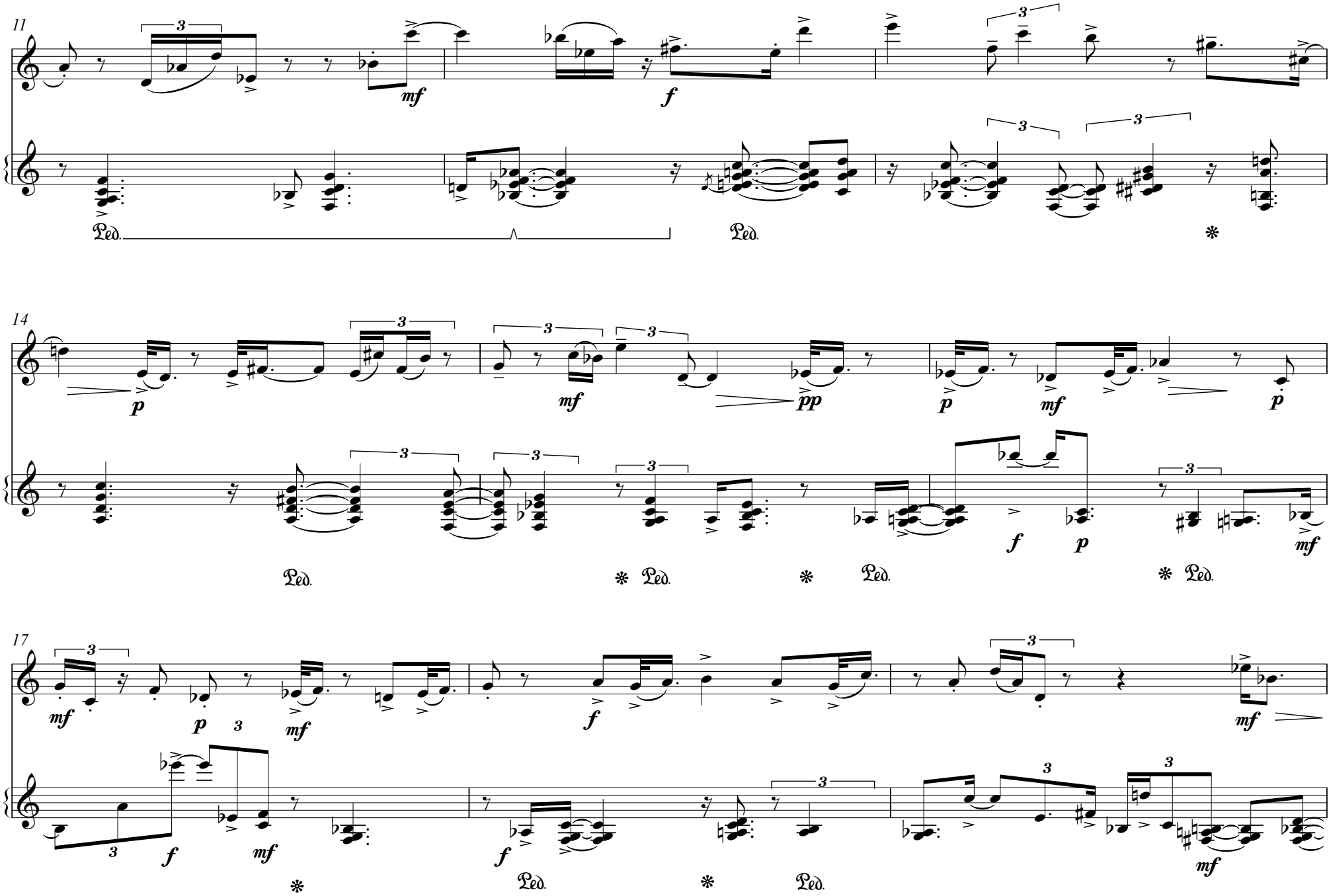
During the composition of *Napev* I often thought about variation as a compositional tool. What constitutes variation? Do we need to have heard the theme and have remembered it, in order to have basis for comparison when variations are played? In my transcription of *Me izlagaye, ludo si ide*, I used the space before, in between and after each of the harmonised melodic notes to add notes to the vibraphone part, only loosely relating to the overall motivic and harmonic content. Therefore, the theme and the variation is delivered at the same time, in a heterophonic fashion.

The cor part should be played with a sense of freedom; it should lead the pace in a *rubato* manner. The quick passages should not be rushed and should be well pronounced.

Napev

Pande Shahov (2008)

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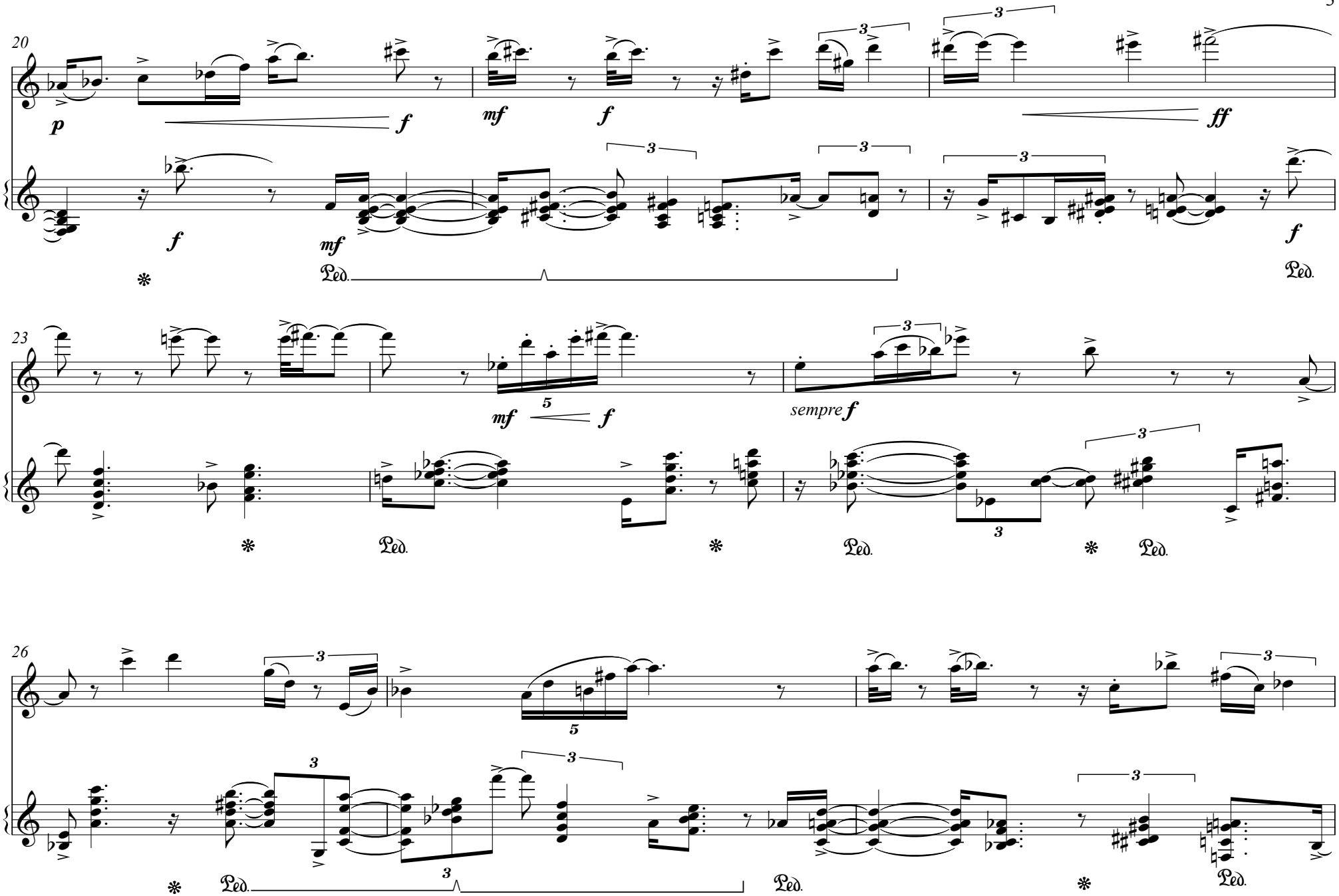
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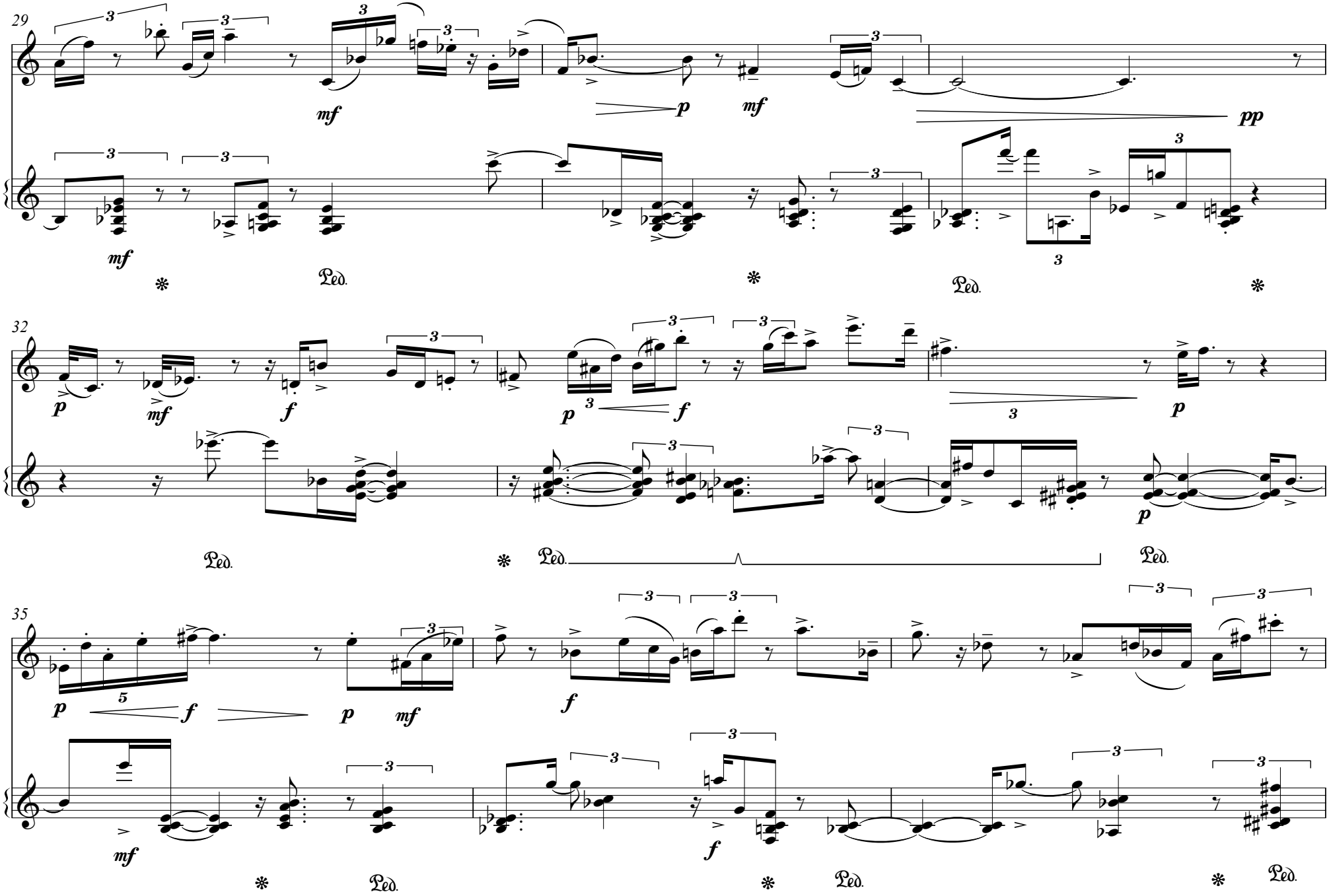
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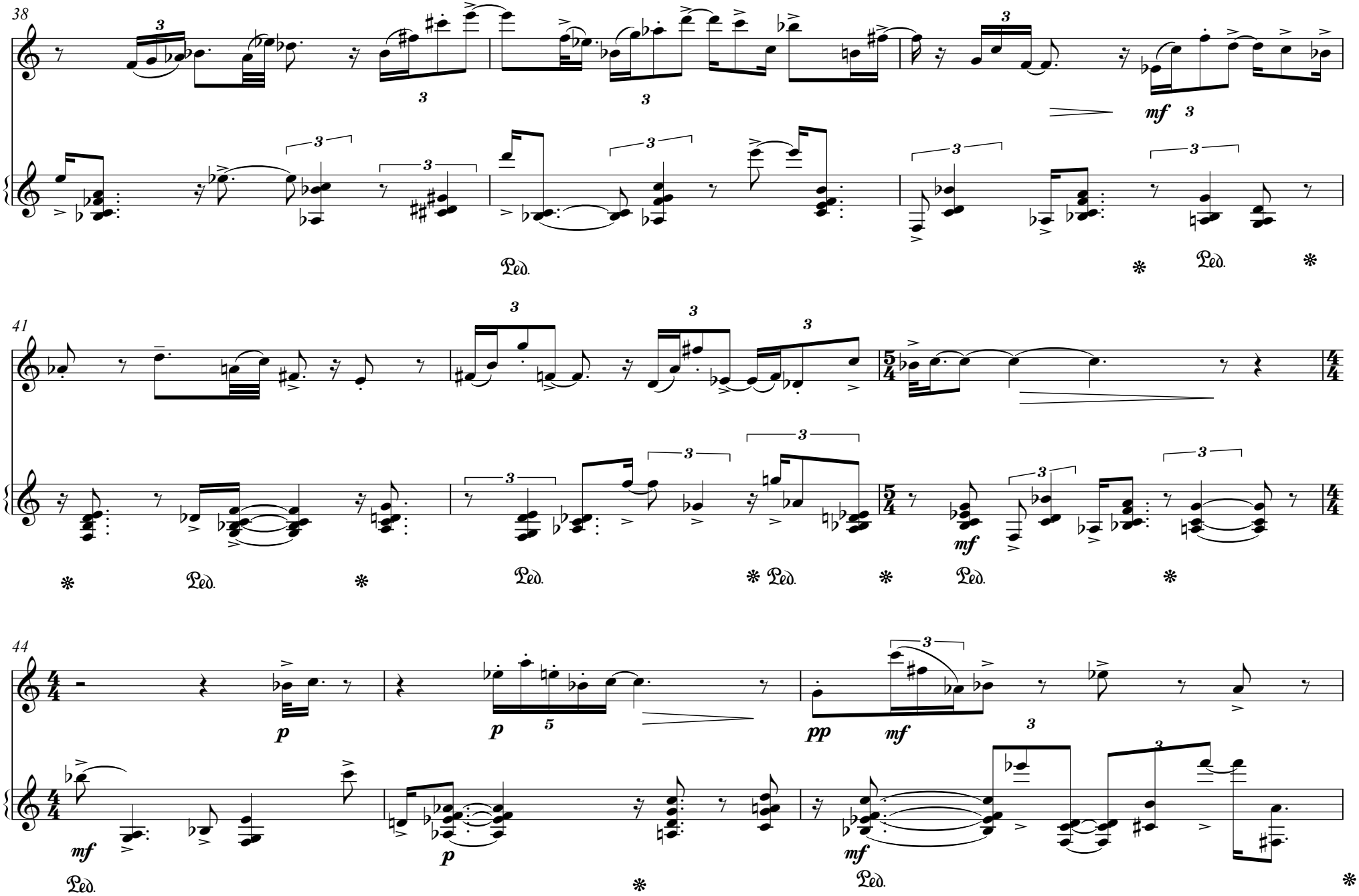
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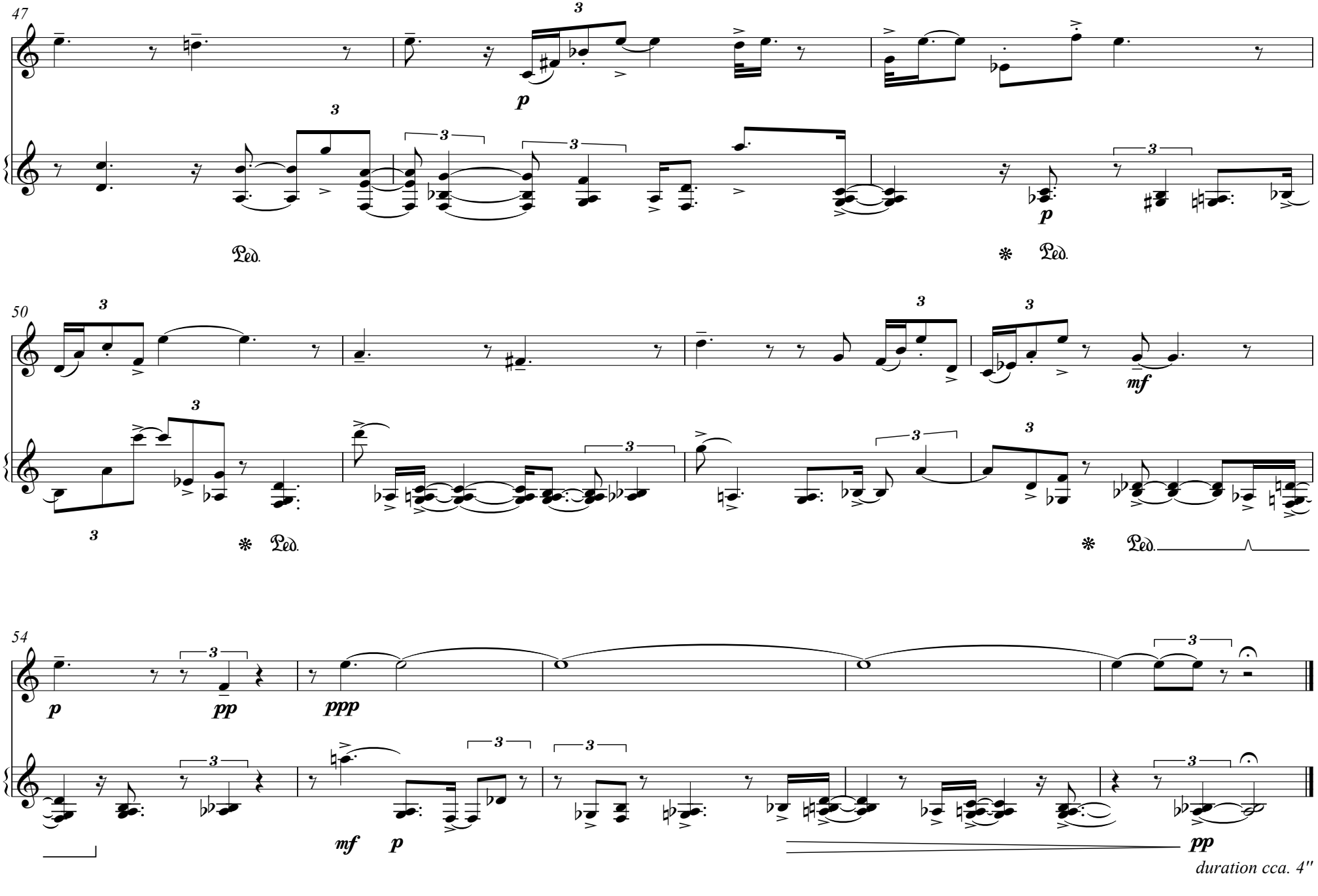
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