Western Michigan University
ScholarWorks at WMU

Masters Theses | Graduate College

4-2024

All Is Flux for Solo Vibraphone and Fixed Media

Ethan Stearley
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the Composition Commons

Recommended Citation

Stearley, Ethan, "All Is Flux for Solo Vibraphone and Fixed Media" (2024). *Masters Theses*. 5415.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/5415

This Masters Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

ALL IS FLUX FOR SOLO VIBRAPHONE AND FIXED MEDIA

Ethan Stearley, M.M.

Western Michigan University

"All is Flux" is a composition for solo amplified vibraphone and fixed media. The title is derived from a quote by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus- "All is flux, nothing remains still." While a traditional score will be provided to the performer for the purposes of preparation and analysis, a video score that is synchronized to the fixed media audio elements will be used in the final performance. This moving score should be visible only to the performer, not the audience. The composition serves as a practical demonstration of experimentation on structure in tandem with elements drawn from narrative theory. Additionally, this piece explores scale and its effect on the perception of musical changes and textures as both moving events or immersive environments.

The structure of the composition draws influence from the Joseph Campbell's idea of the narrative mono-myth, the "Hero's Journey." Each movement of the composition serves as a musical representation of the three acts described in the Hero's Journey. The first movement is meant to explore the idea of the "familiar environment" and the unwilling hero. In contrast, the second movement acts as the representation the hero's growth while exploring the unfamiliar environment. Finally, the third and final movement is to juxtapose the changed hero with the unchanged, familiar environment and the discomfort of this modified relationship.

ALL IS FLUX FOR SOLO VIBRAPHONE AND FIXED MEDIA

by

Ethan Stearley

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Music
School of Music
Western Michigan University
April 2024

Thesis Committee:

Lisa Coons, Ph.D., Chair
Christopher Biggs, D.M.A.
Carter Rice, D.A.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Lisa Coons, Dr. Christopher Biggs, and Dr. Carter Rice, for reviewing my work and serving as such wonderful mentors for me. I would particularly like to thank Dr. Coons for her constant reminders to take care of myself- well-balanced art comes from the well-balanced artist. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Christina Fava for work as the Graduate Coordinator and her unending kindness. Their compassion and guidance is paramount to the creation of the work contained in this thesis.

Next, I would like to thank Dr. Terry Dean, Dr. Jimmy Finnie, Julie Edwards, and Rusty Bottomley for their continued support and encouragement, and for always guiding me. I owe so much of my musical curiosity and growth to them.

Additionally, I would like to thank Curt Koehler, Tim Keller, Aaron Wells, Trevor Hanson, and Matt Phegley for so often and effortlessly blurring the lines between friend, mentor, and collaborator and for always encouraging me to take chances.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, sister, and grandparents for their unending love and support. I can never thank you enough for pushing me and believing in me. None of this would be possible without them.

Ethan Stearley

SET-UP AND PERFORMANCE NOTES

"All is Flux" is written for a 3.5 octave vibraphone that is to be amplified via a dynamic microphone (such as a Shure SM57) positioned under the resonators. The sound of the vibraphone, as well as the fixed media, should be channeled through a setup including, at minimum, a stereo set speakers and a subwoofer. Ideally, the piece is to be performed with the vibraphone's motor set to a medium-slow speed (if the instrument's motor supports variable speed,) although this is not entirely necessary.

During the performance, a provided video score is to be read from a screen visible only to the performer. The fixed media audio, synchronized to the video playback of the score, is to be channeled from the playback device to the stereo setup.

It is suggested that the piece be performed using two pairs of medium-hard cord mallets and two bass bows, although experimentation with implements is encouraged. Pedal markings are notated in the score, but the performer should also have a degree of freedom in pedaling decisions. With the few specifically notated exceptions, each pitch should be allowed to ring for its full duration and care should be taken with both harmonic and gestural changes to ensure that the pedaling clarifies the intent of the phrase, rather than obscuring it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ……..…… ii

SET-UP AND PERFORMANCE NOTES ……..…….. iii

CHAPTER

1. MOVEMENT I. DEPARTURE ……..…….……..… 2

2. MOVEMENT II. INITIATION ……..…. 6

3. MOVEMENT III. RETURN ……..…..……. 15

© 2024 Ethan Stearley

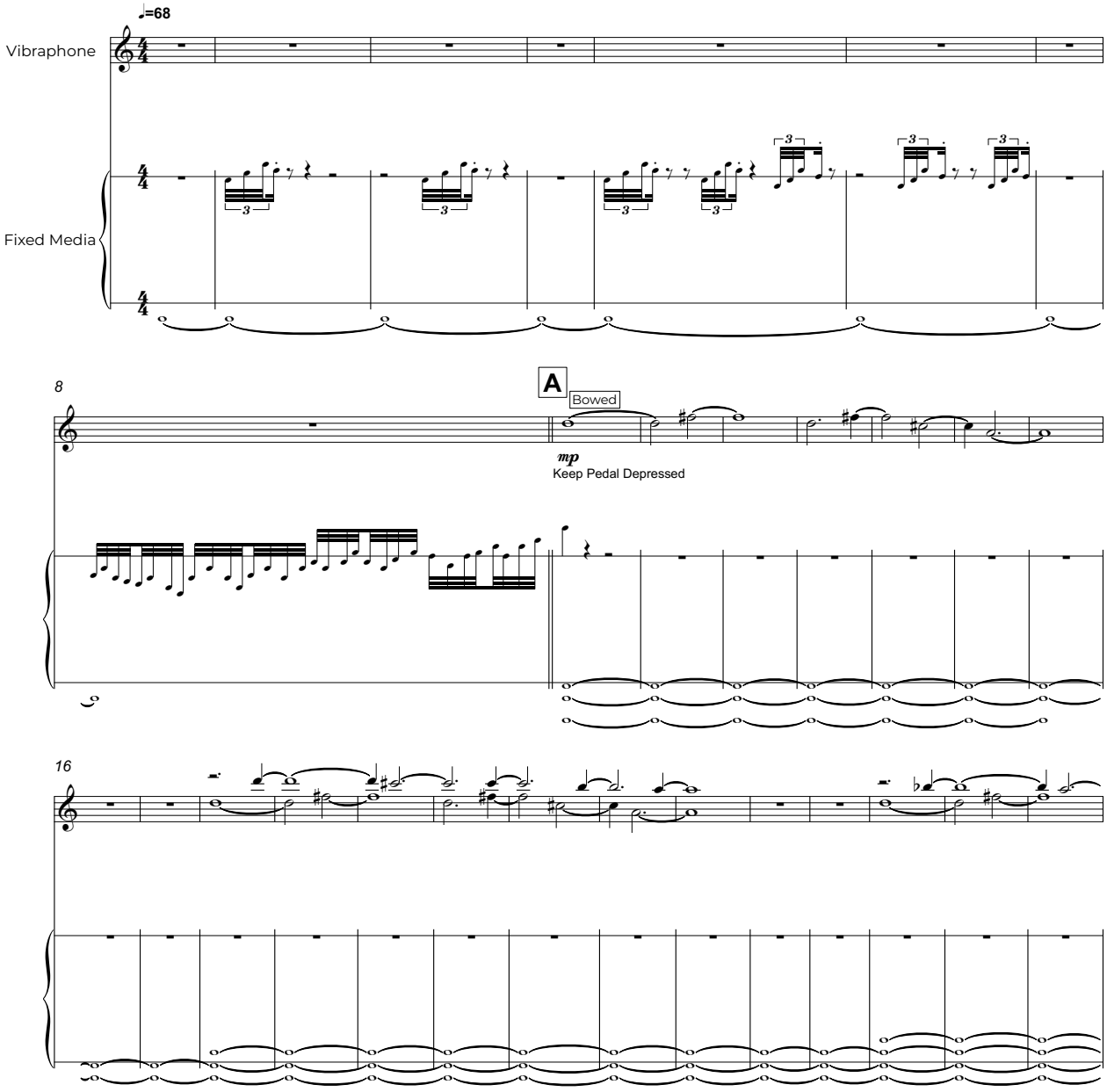
Ethan Stearley

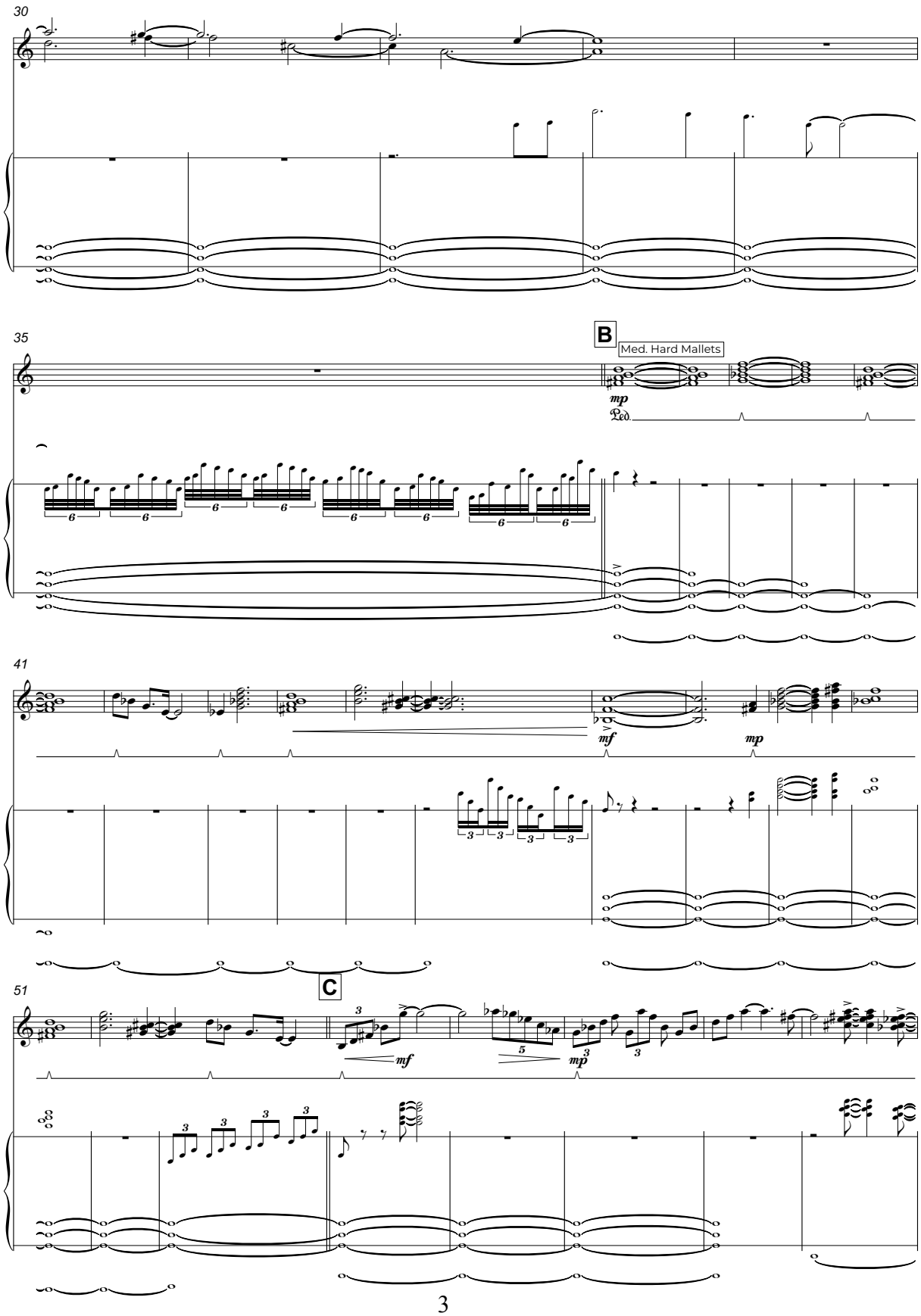
All is Flux

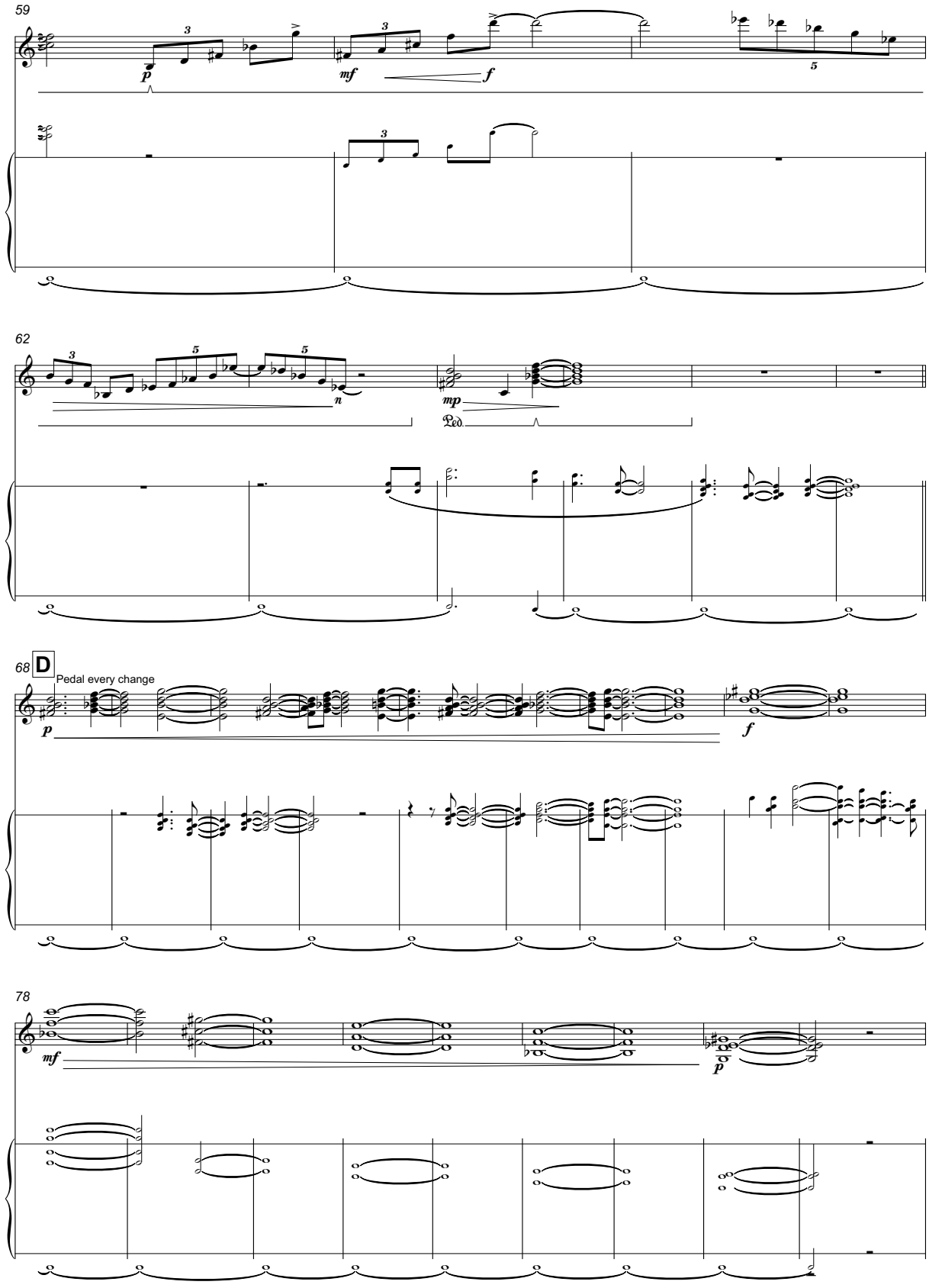
All is Flux

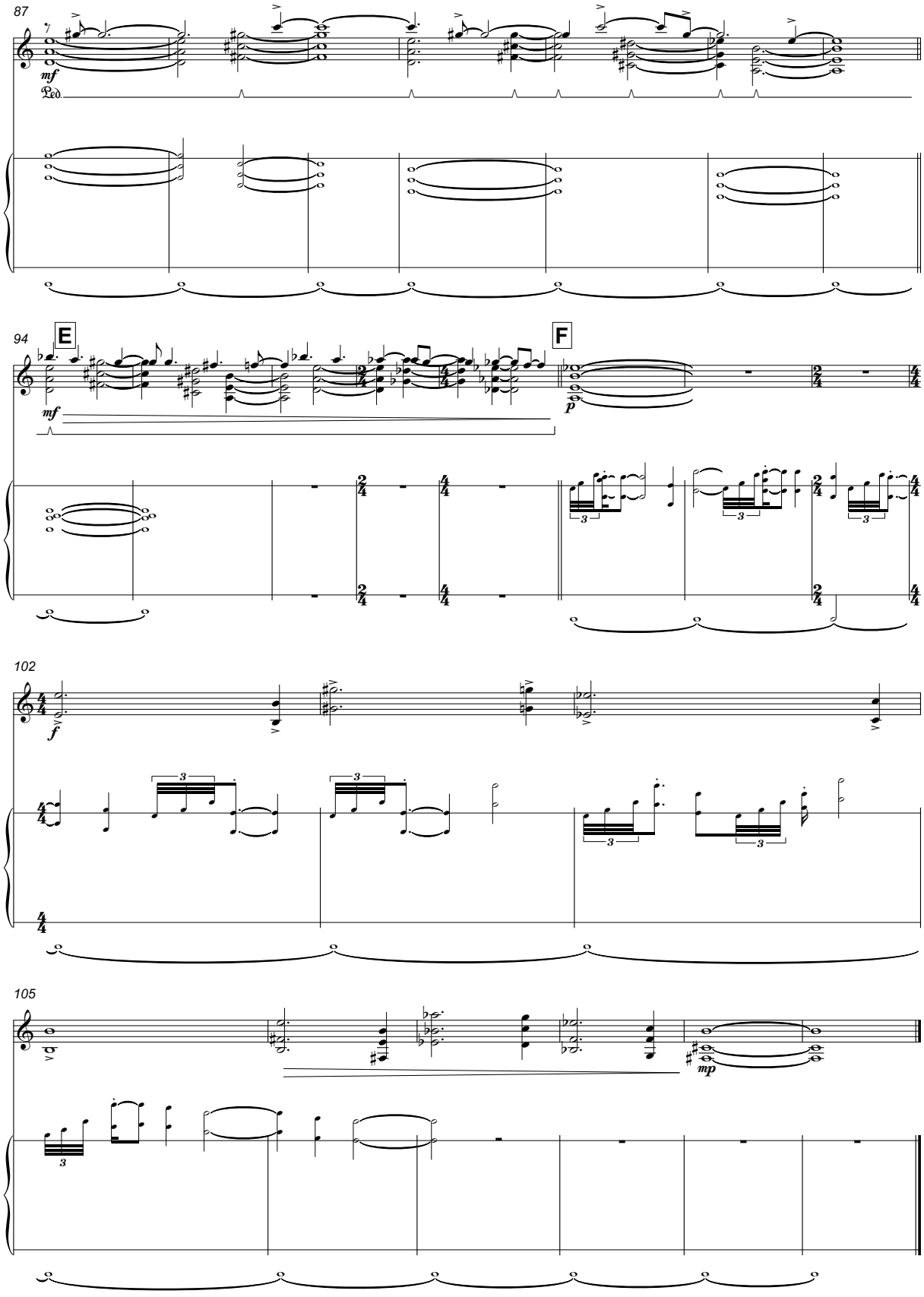
I. Departure

Ethan Stearley



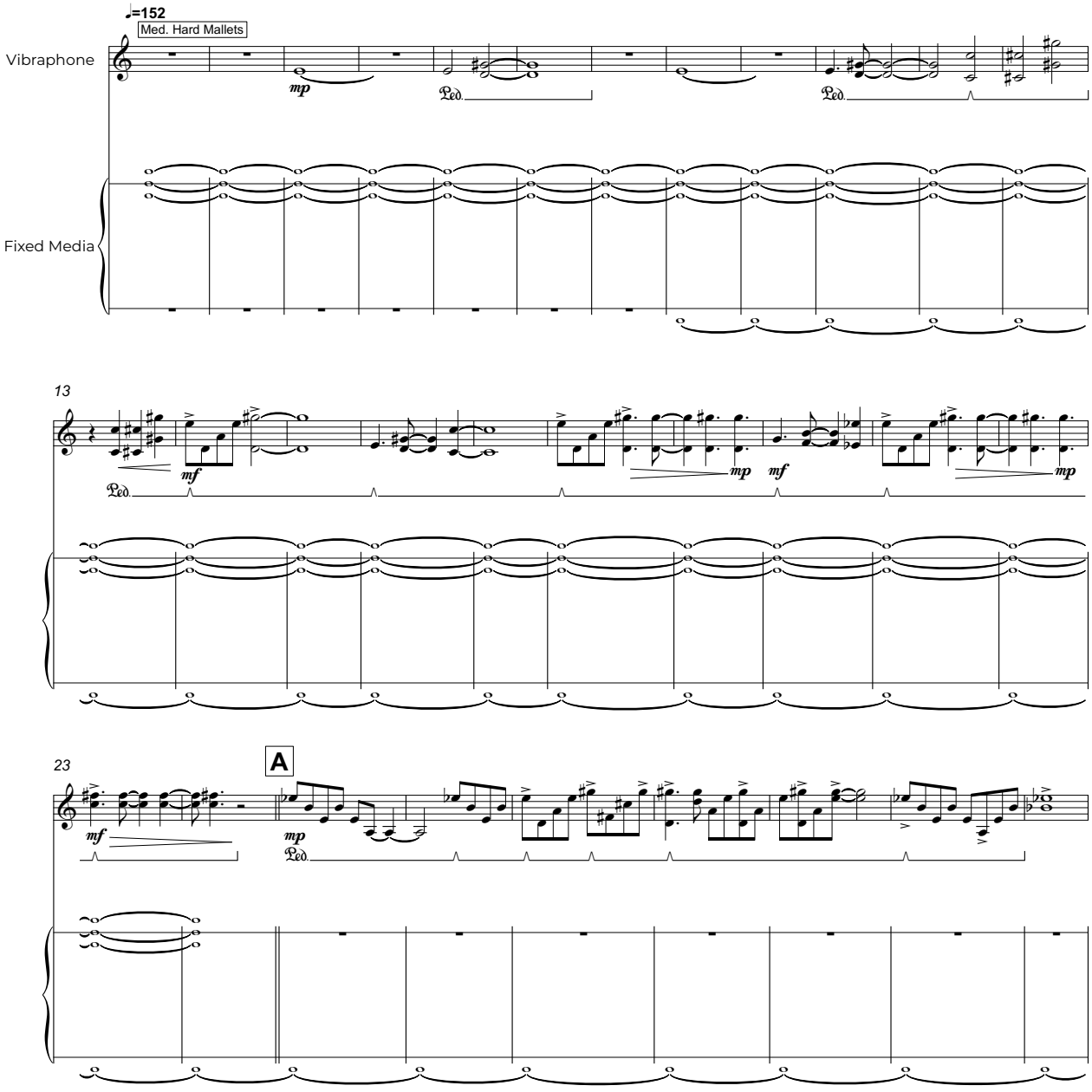

30
35
B
Med. Hard Mallets
mp
Ped.
41
mf
mp
51
C
mf
mp

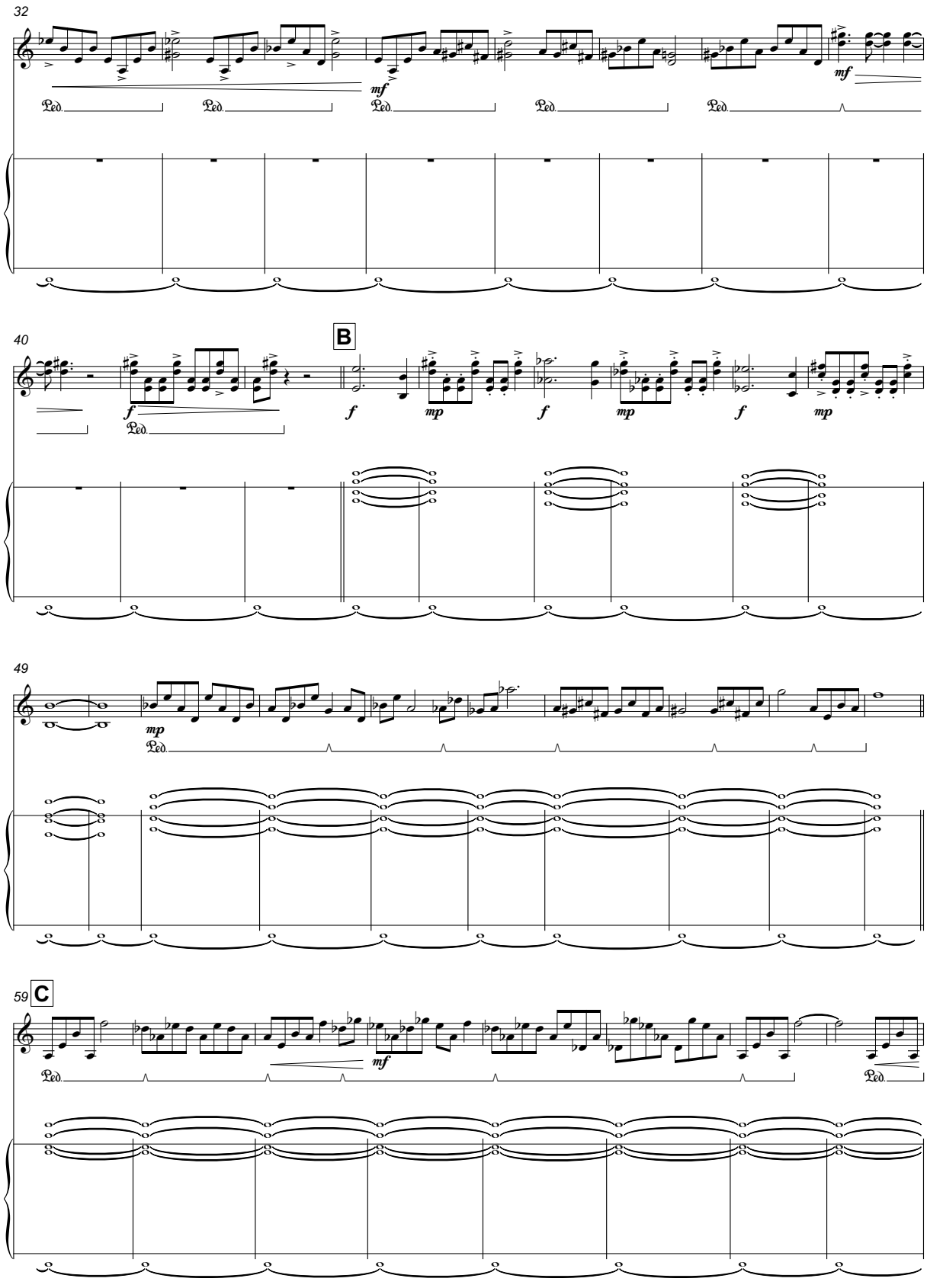

59
62
68
D
Pedal every change
78

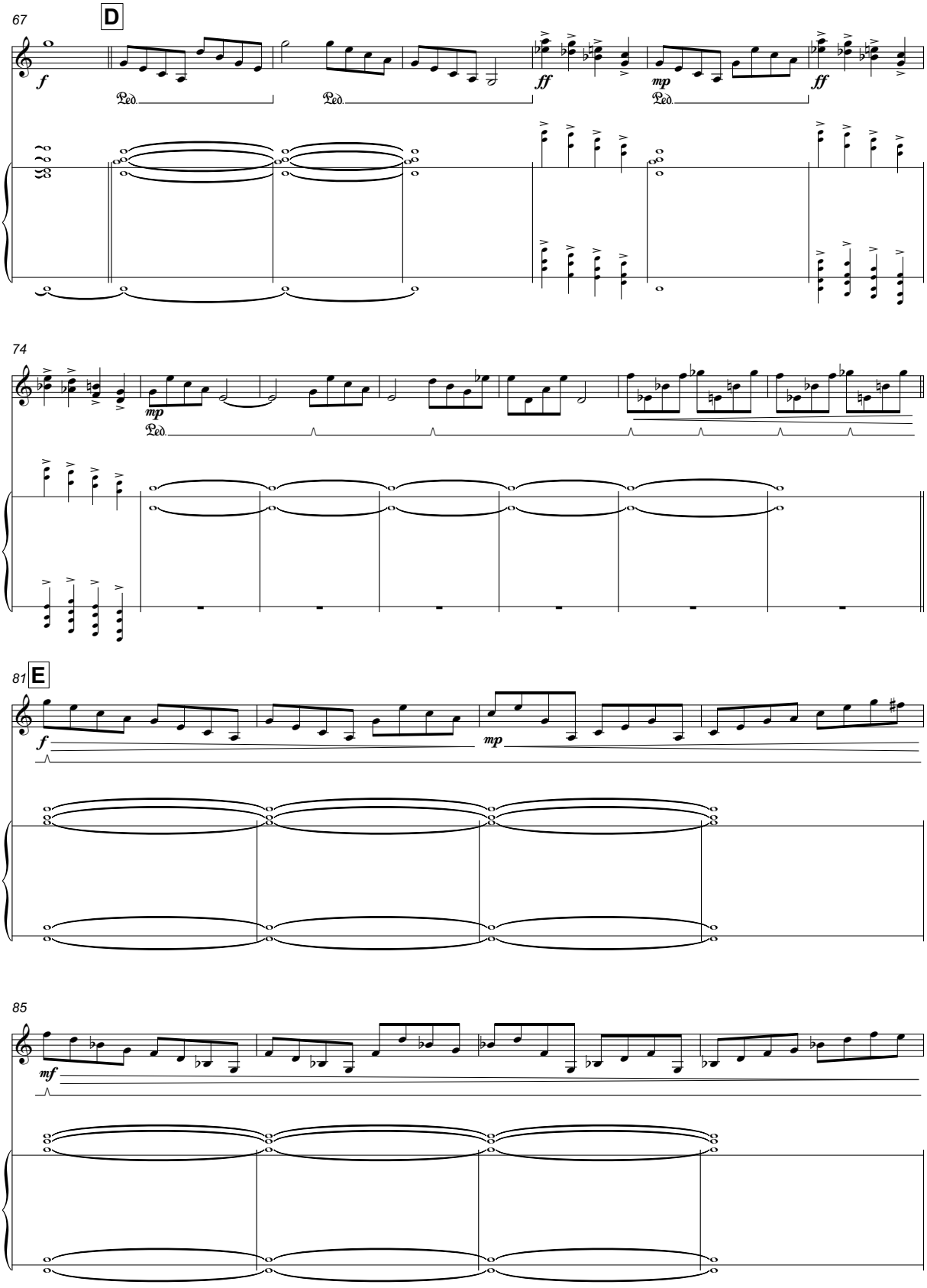

87
mf
Ped.
94
E
mf
F
p
102
f
105
mp

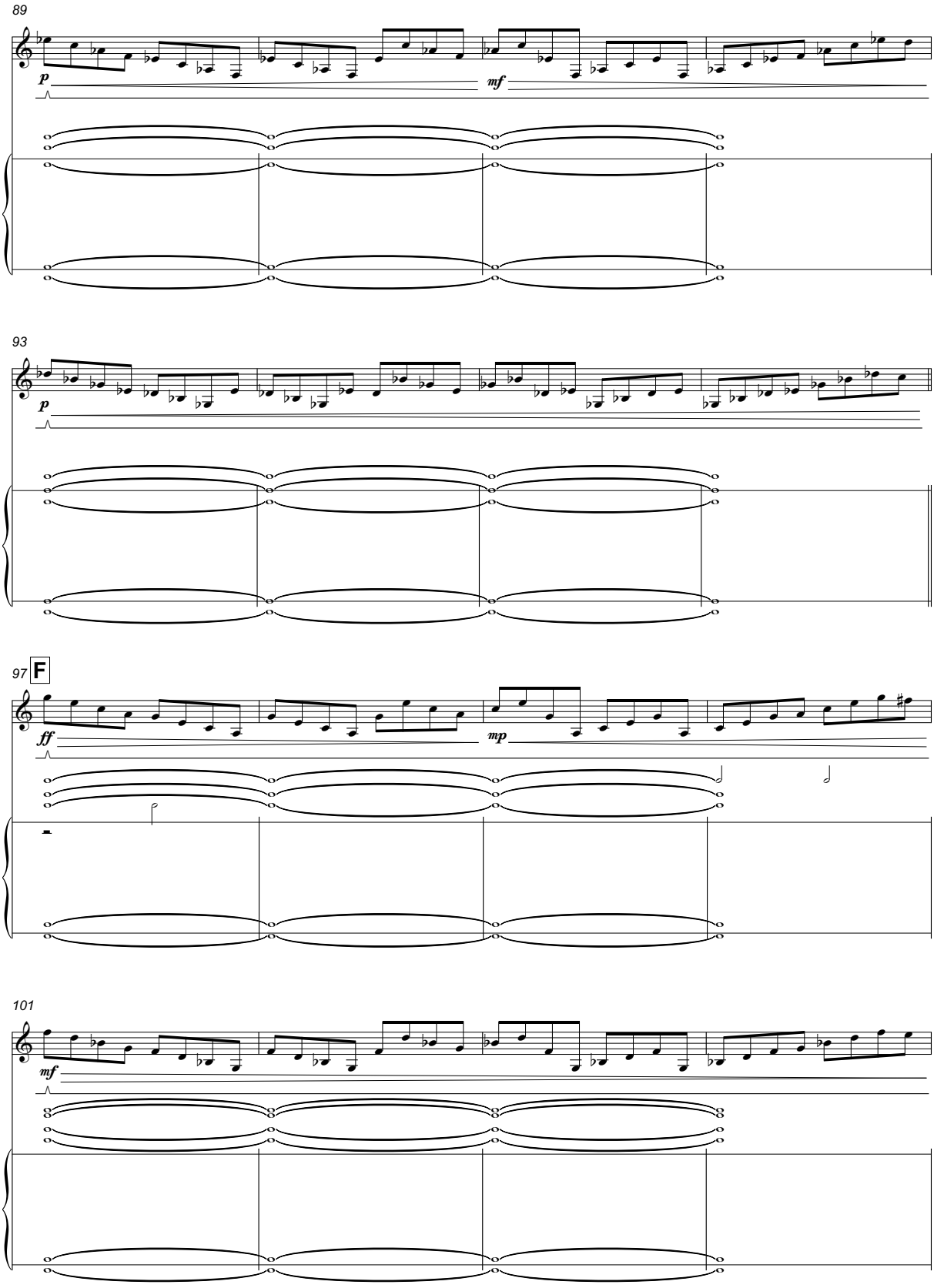
All is Flux

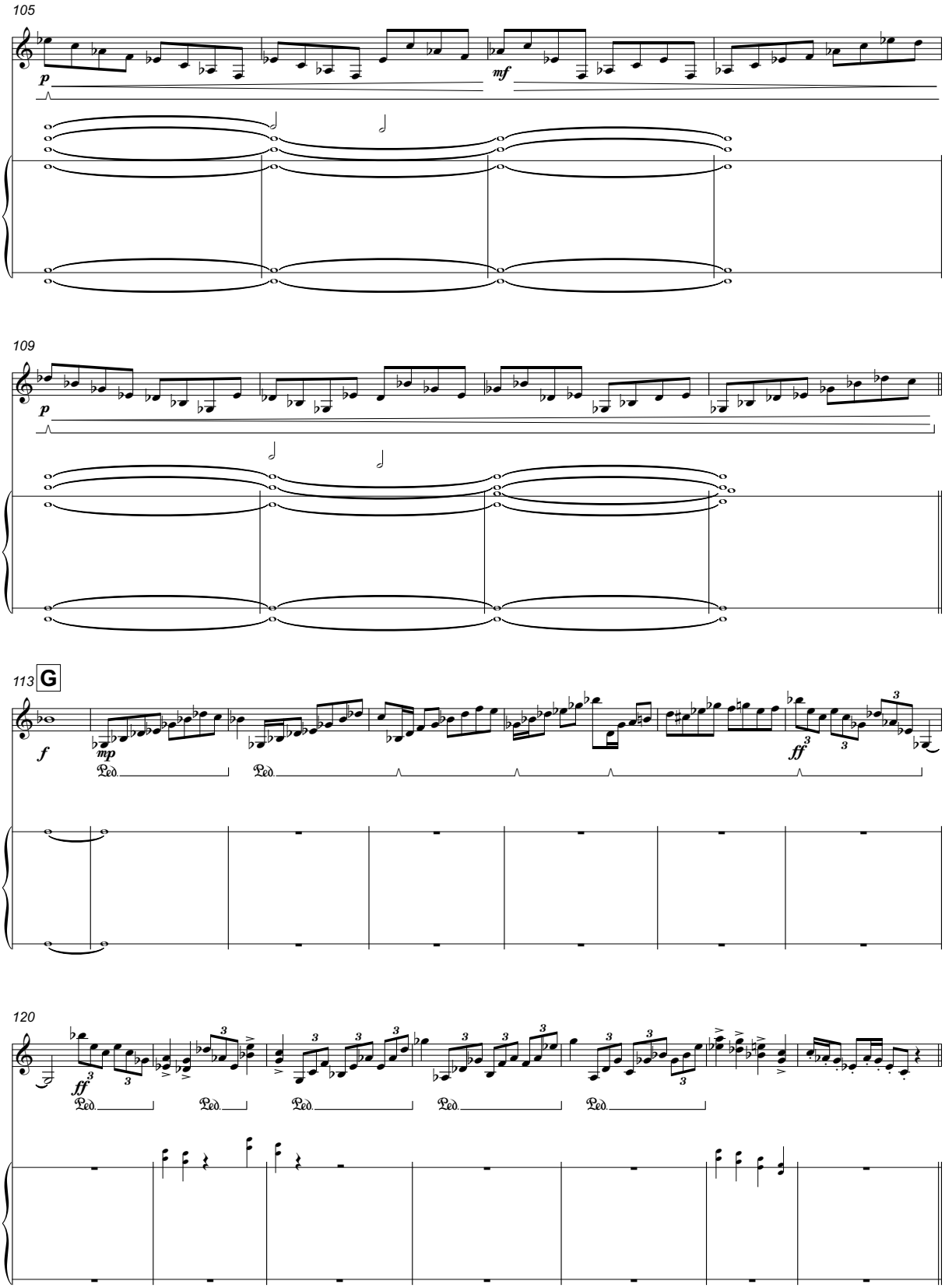
II. Initiation

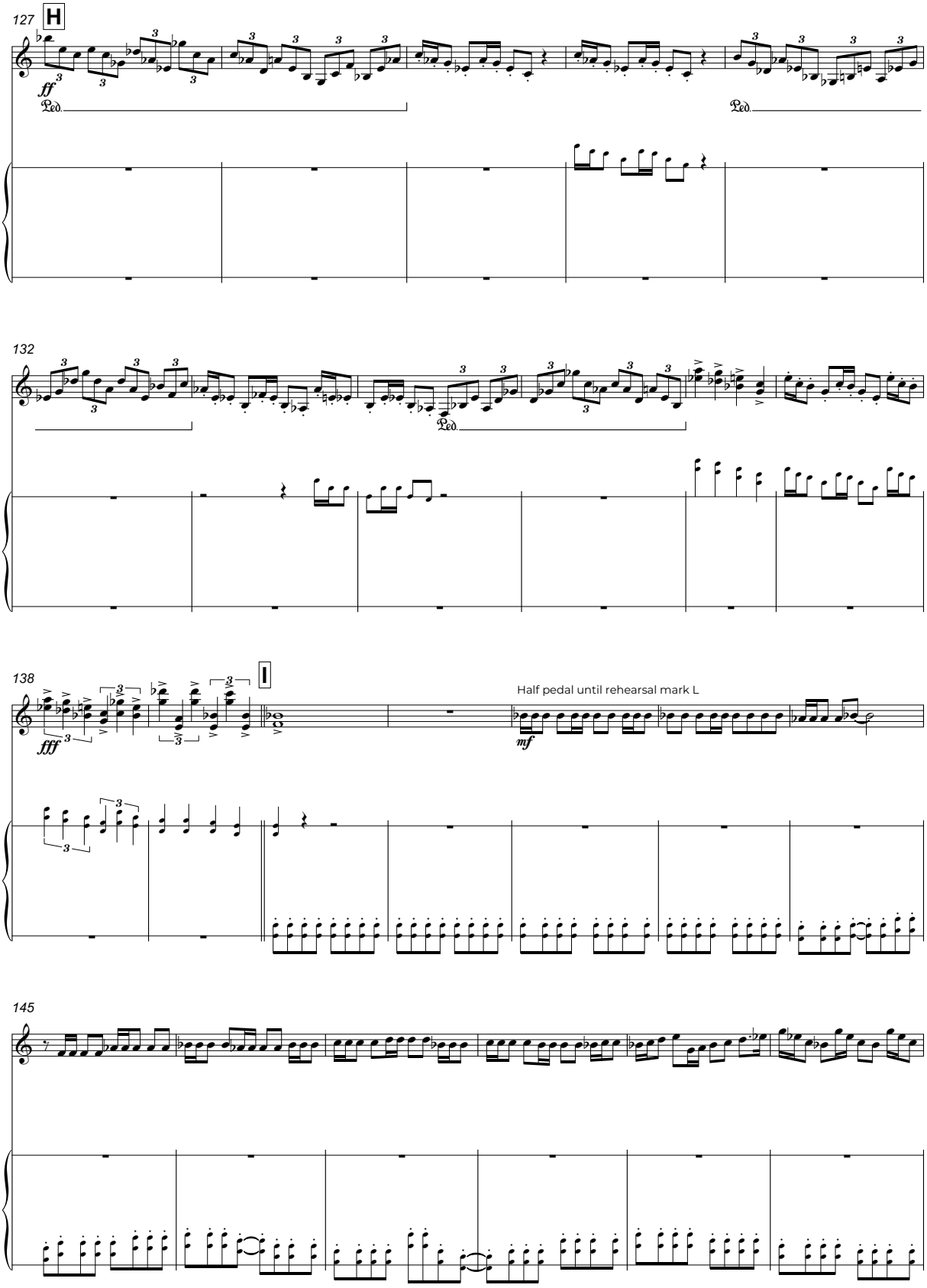


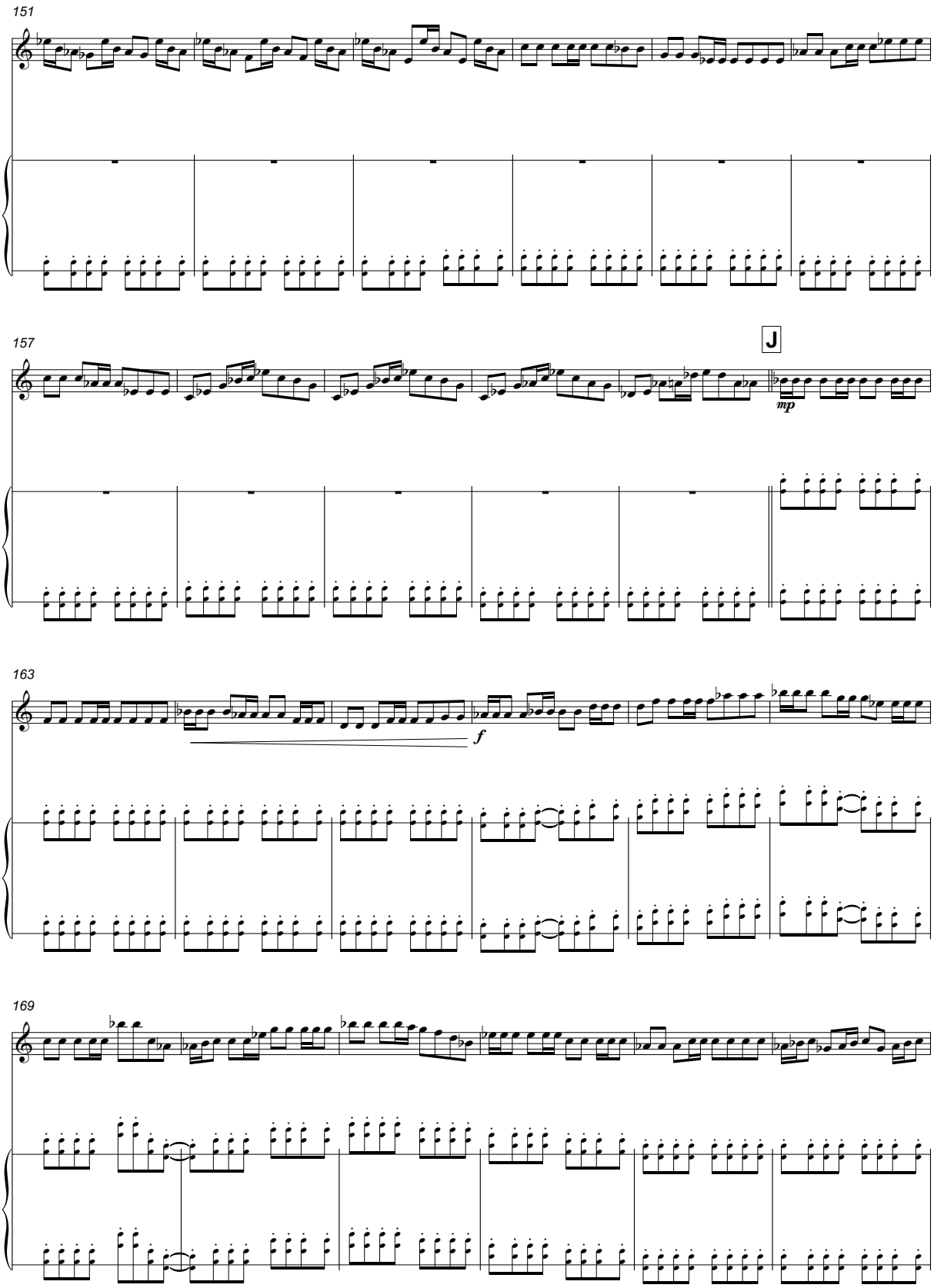

32
mf
Ped.
40
B
f
mp
49
59
C

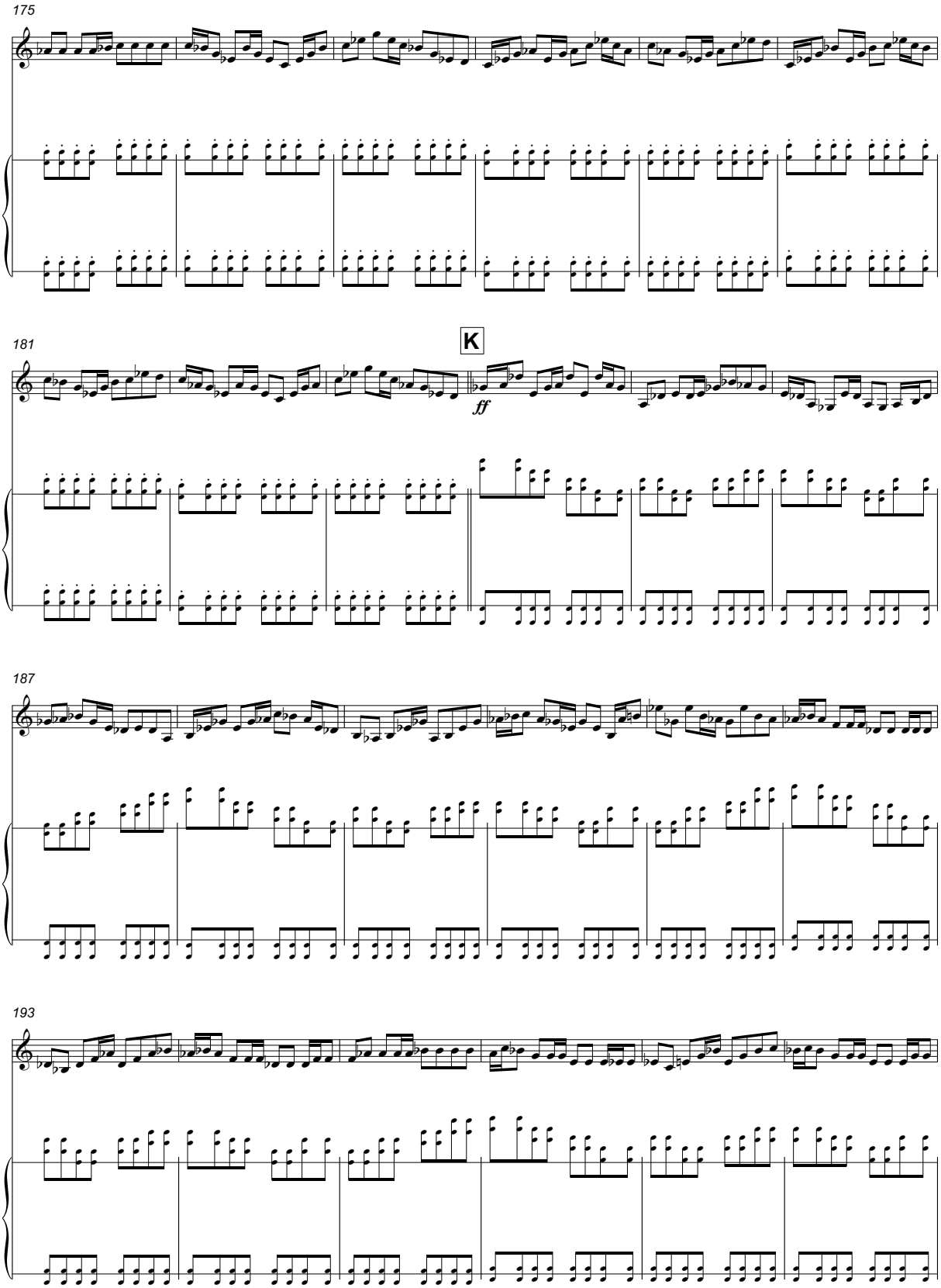

67
D
f
Ped.
Ped.
ff
mp
Ped.
ff
74
mp
Ped.
81
E
f
mp
85
mf

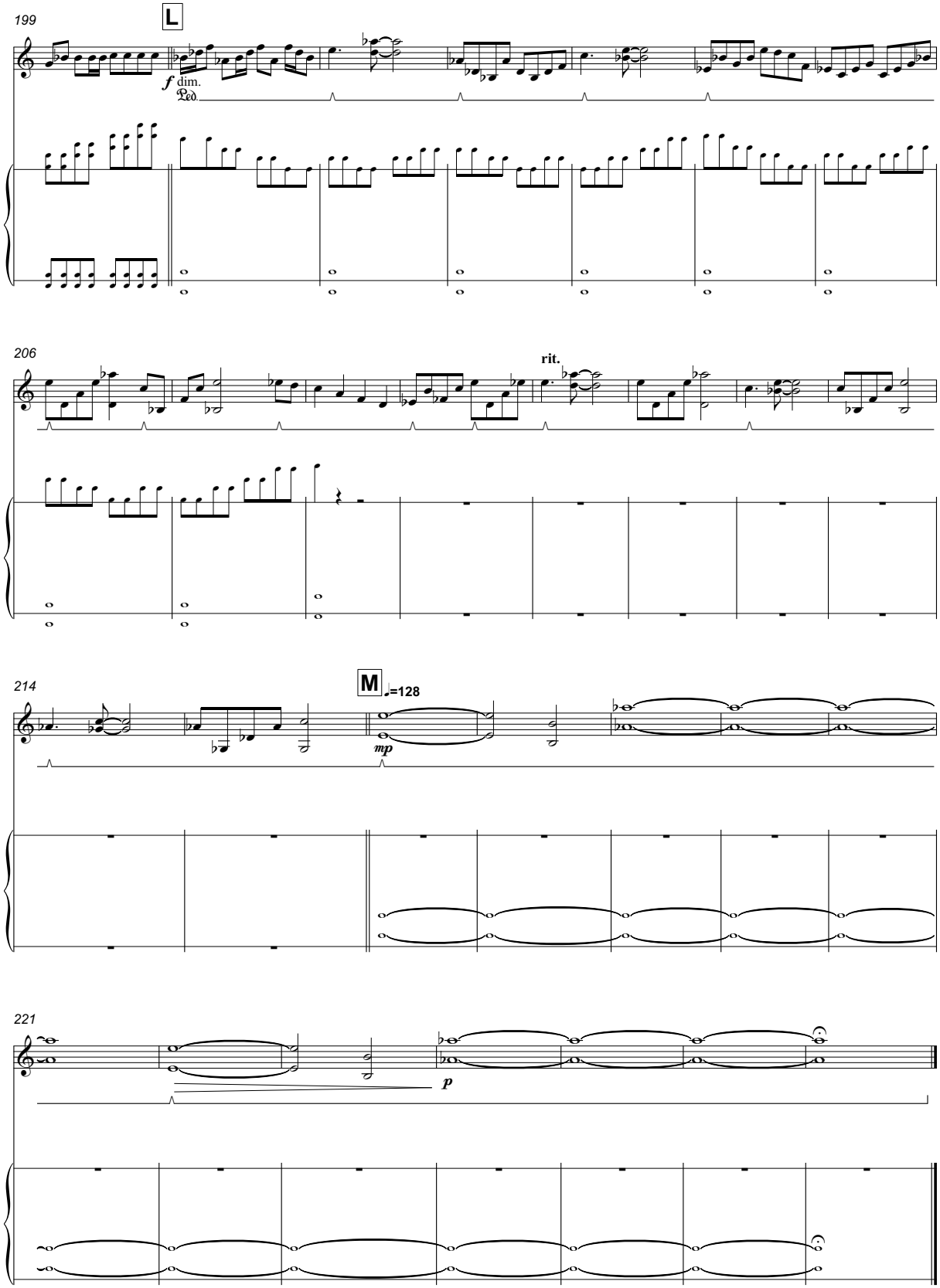

89
p
mf
93
p
97
F
ff
mp
101
mf


105
p
mf
109
p
113
G
f
mp
Ped.
Ped.
ff
120
ff
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


127
H
ff
Ped.
Ped.
132
Ped.
138
I
fff
Half pedal until rehearsal mark L
mf
145


151
157
J
mp
163
f
169

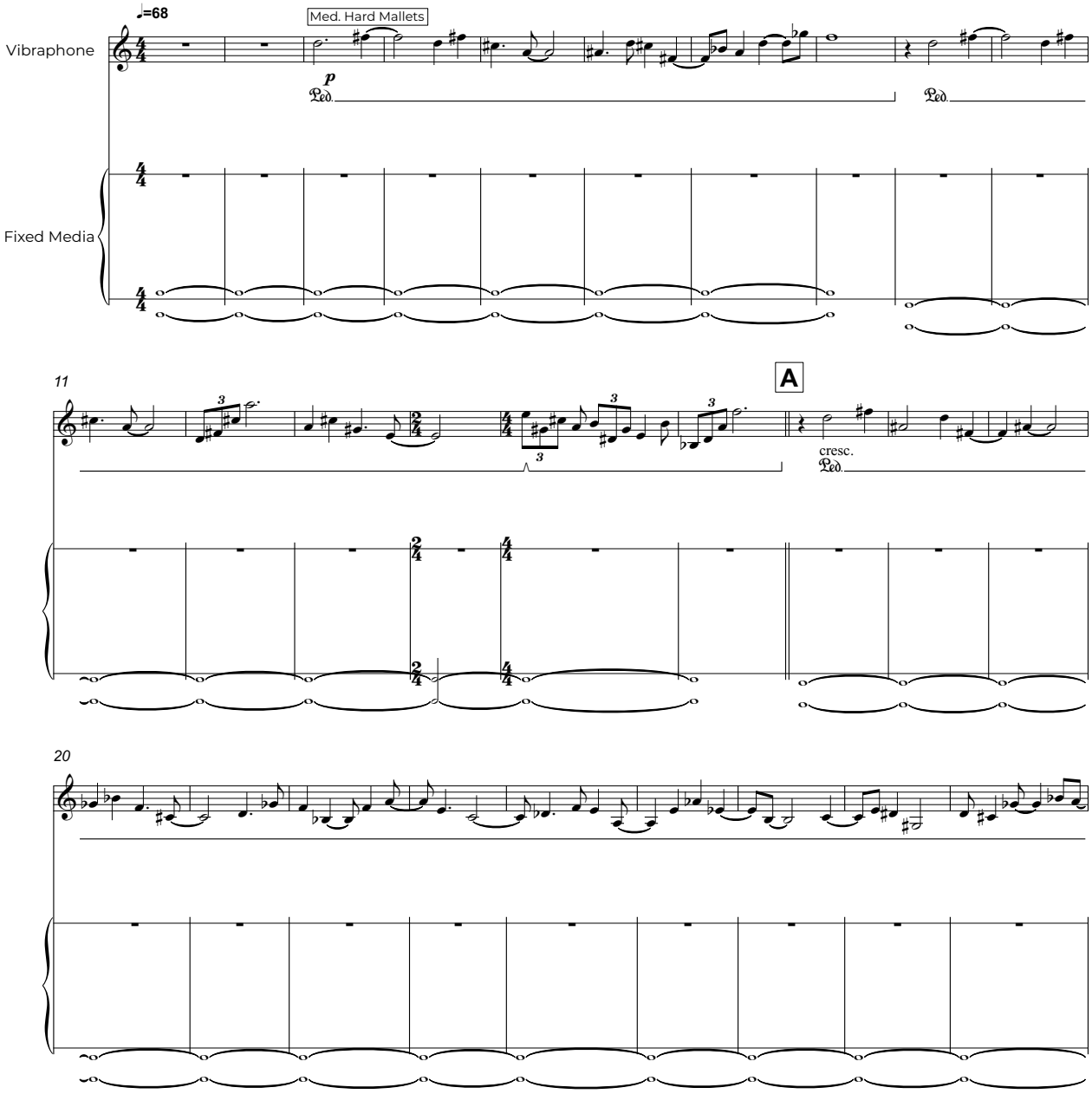

175
181
K
ff
187
193

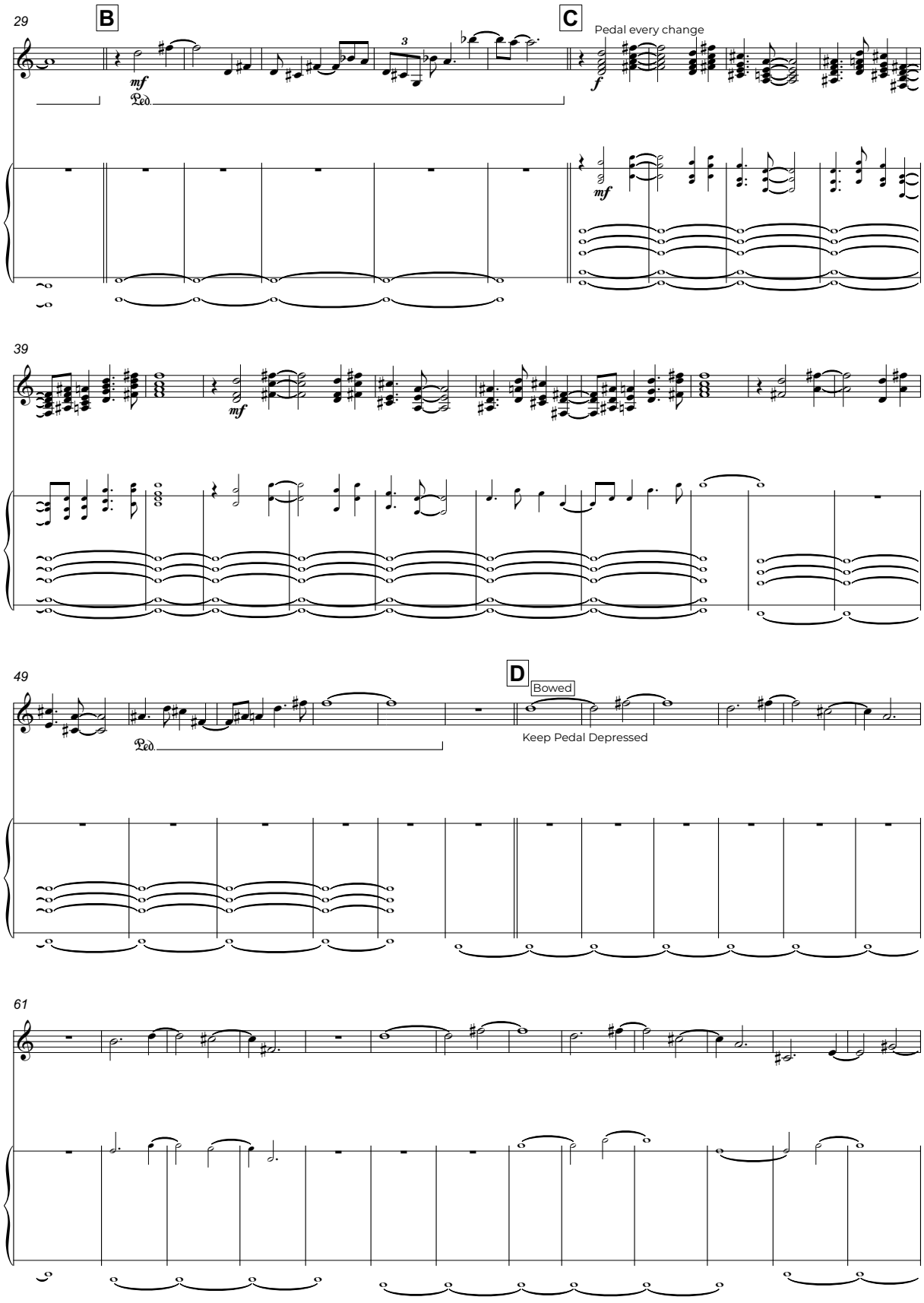

199
L
f dim.
Ped.
206
rit.
214
M
♩=128
mp
221
p

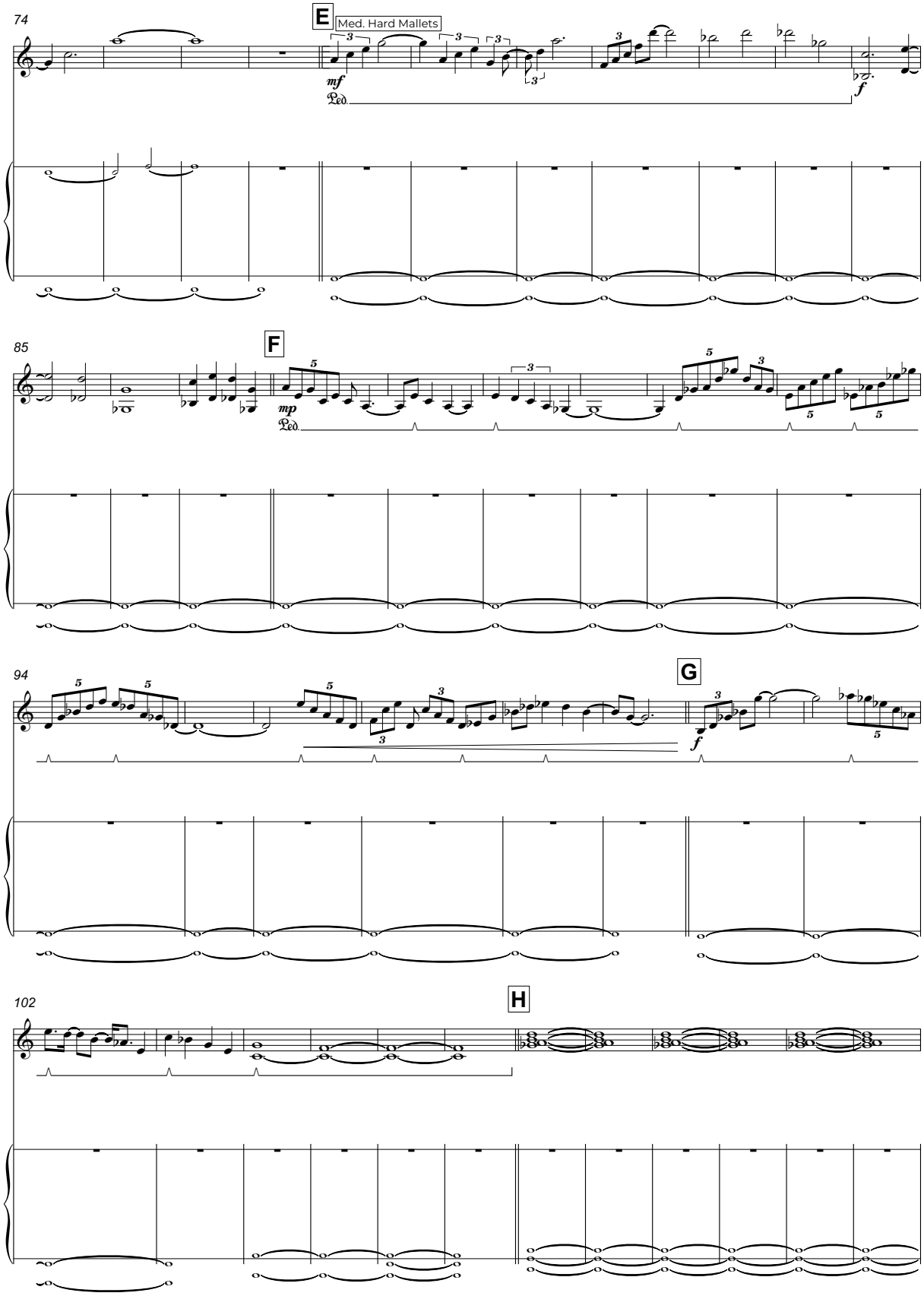
All is Flux

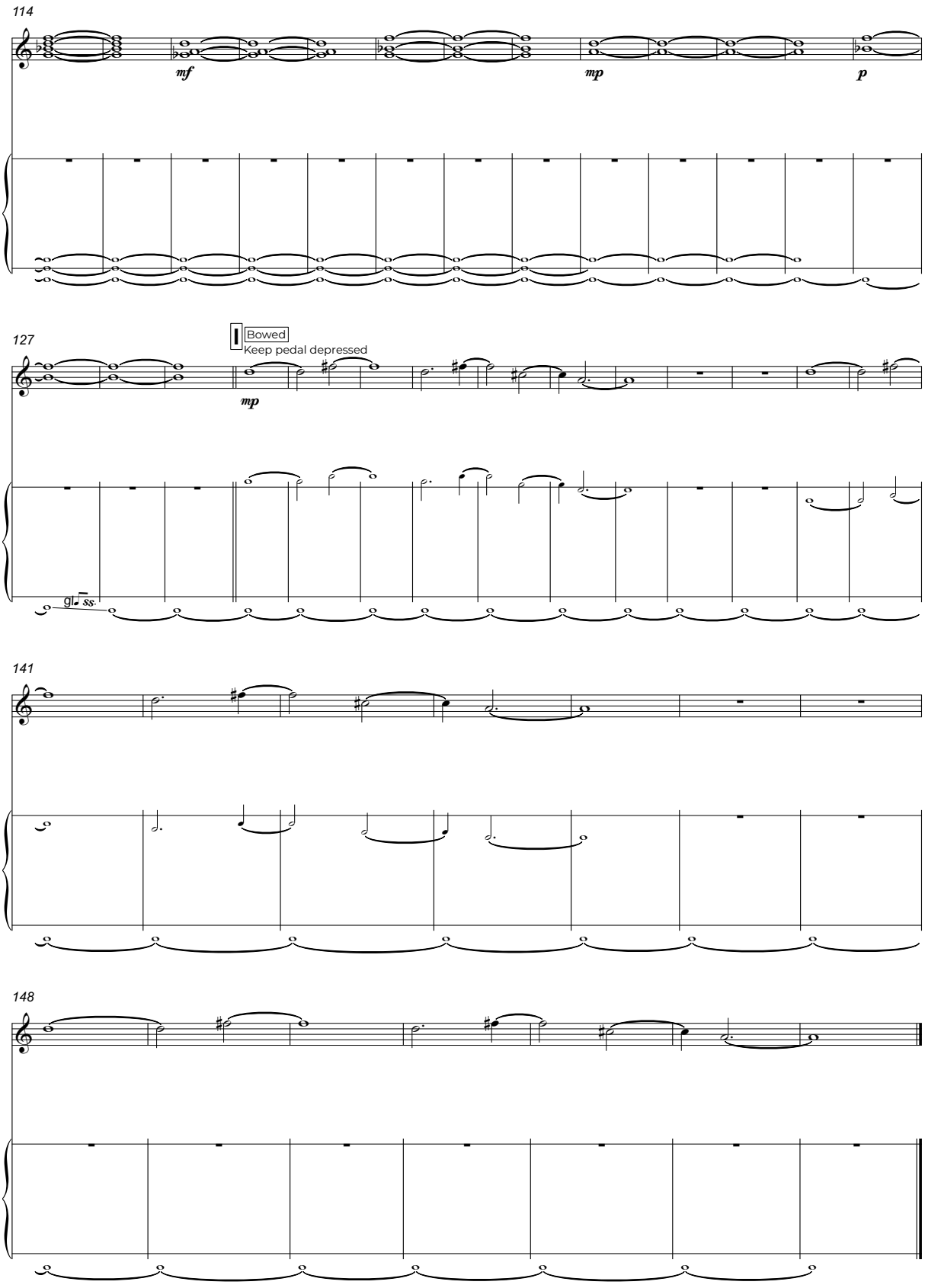
III. Return

Ethan Stearley




29
B
C
Pedal every change
mf
Ped.
f
mf
39
mf
49
D
Bowed
Ped.
Keep Pedal Depressed
61


74
E
Med. Hard Mallets
mf
Ped.
f
85
F
mp
Ped.
94
G
f
102
H


114
mf
mp
p
127
Bowed
Keep pedal depressed
mp
gl. ss.
141
148