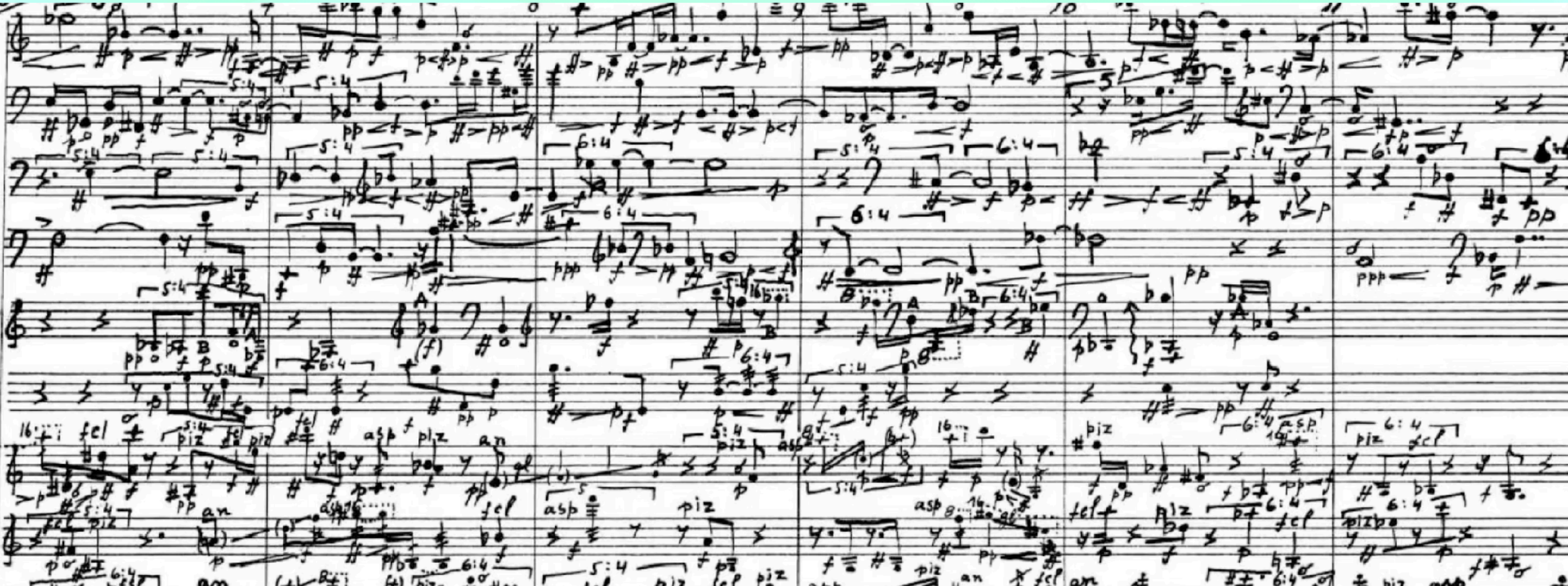
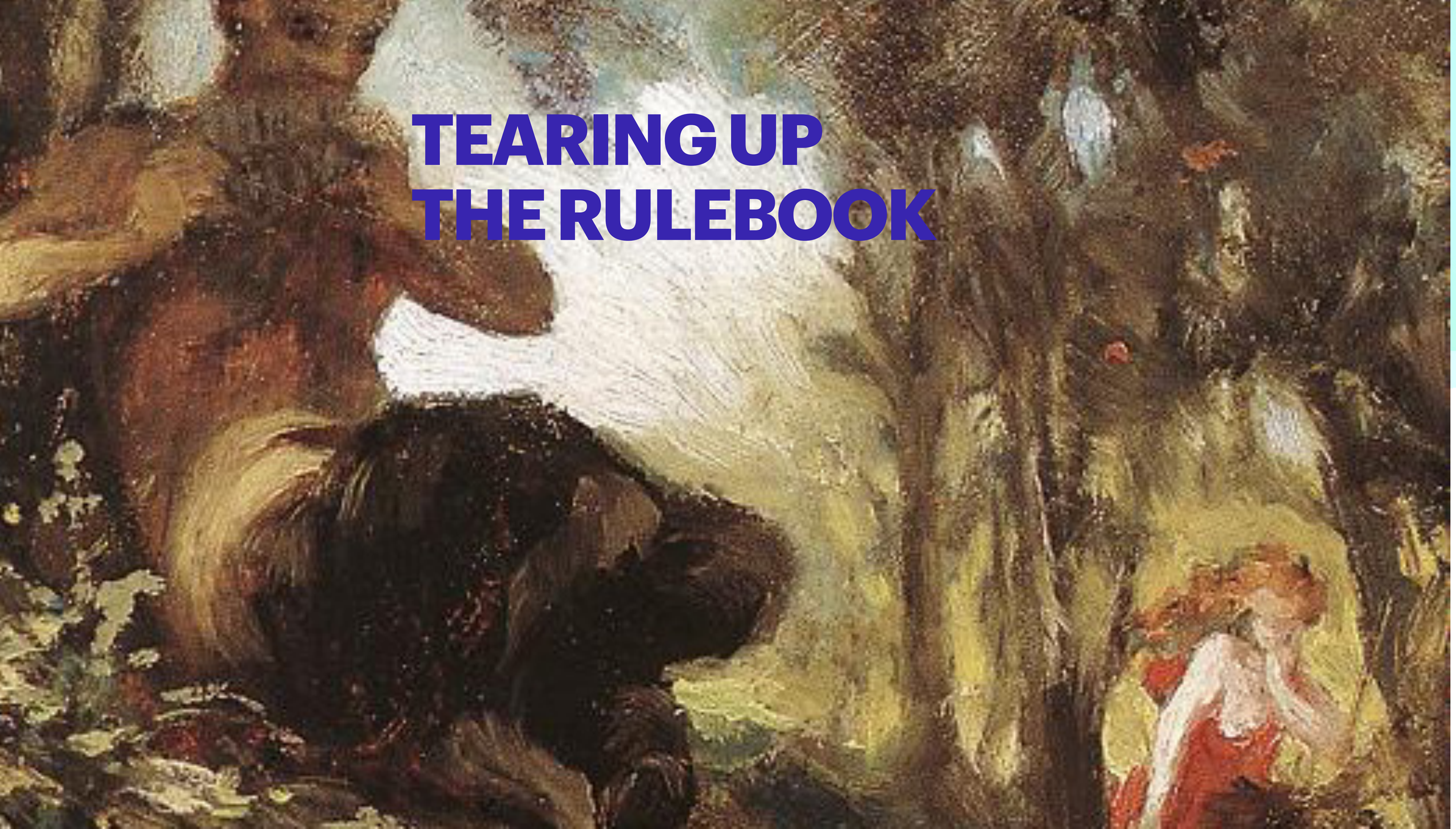
LIFE WITHOUT CHORDS?



WEAKENING OF HARMONIC FUNCTION

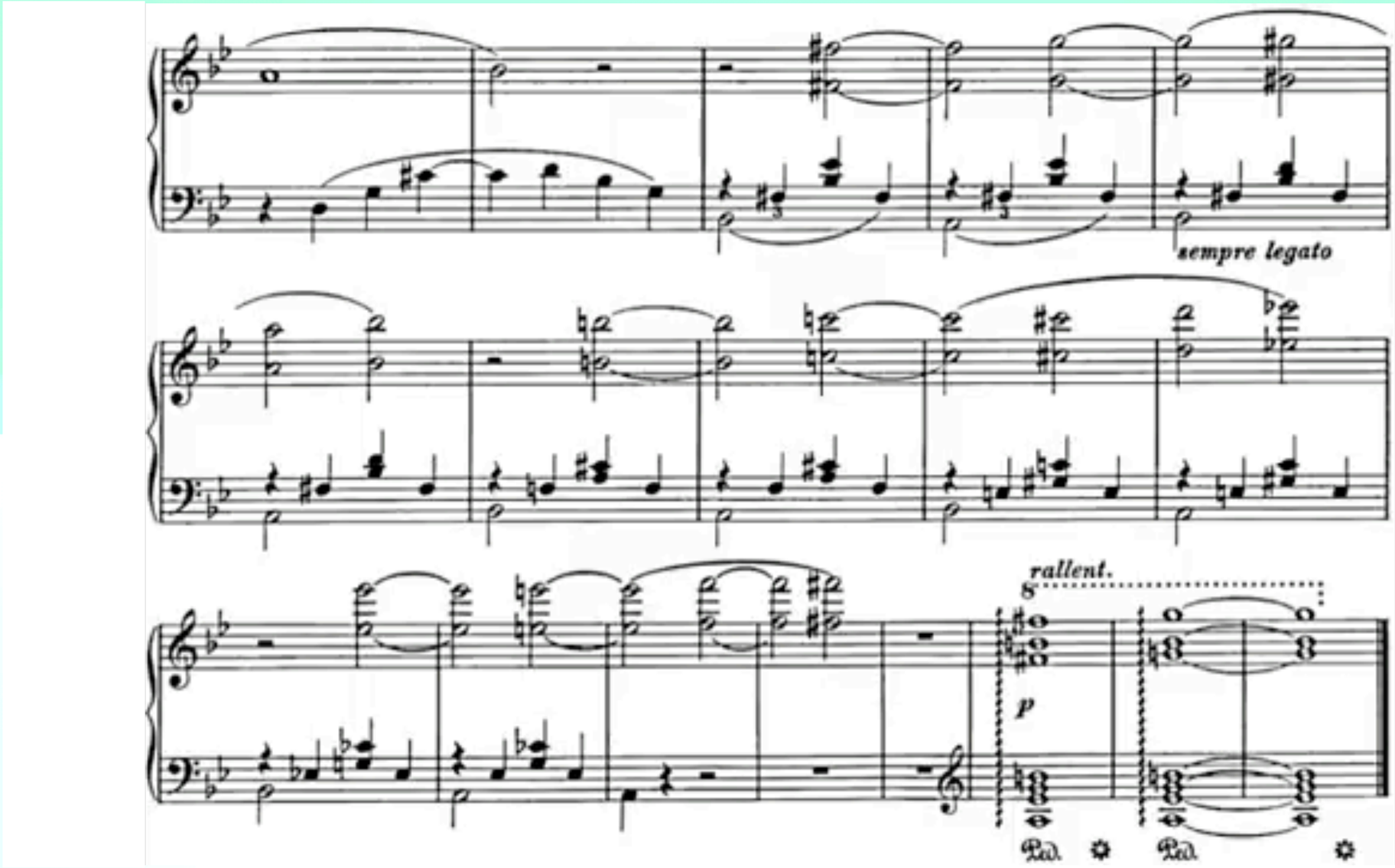
MORE LINEAR WRITING

ALTERNATIVE TUNING SYSTEMS



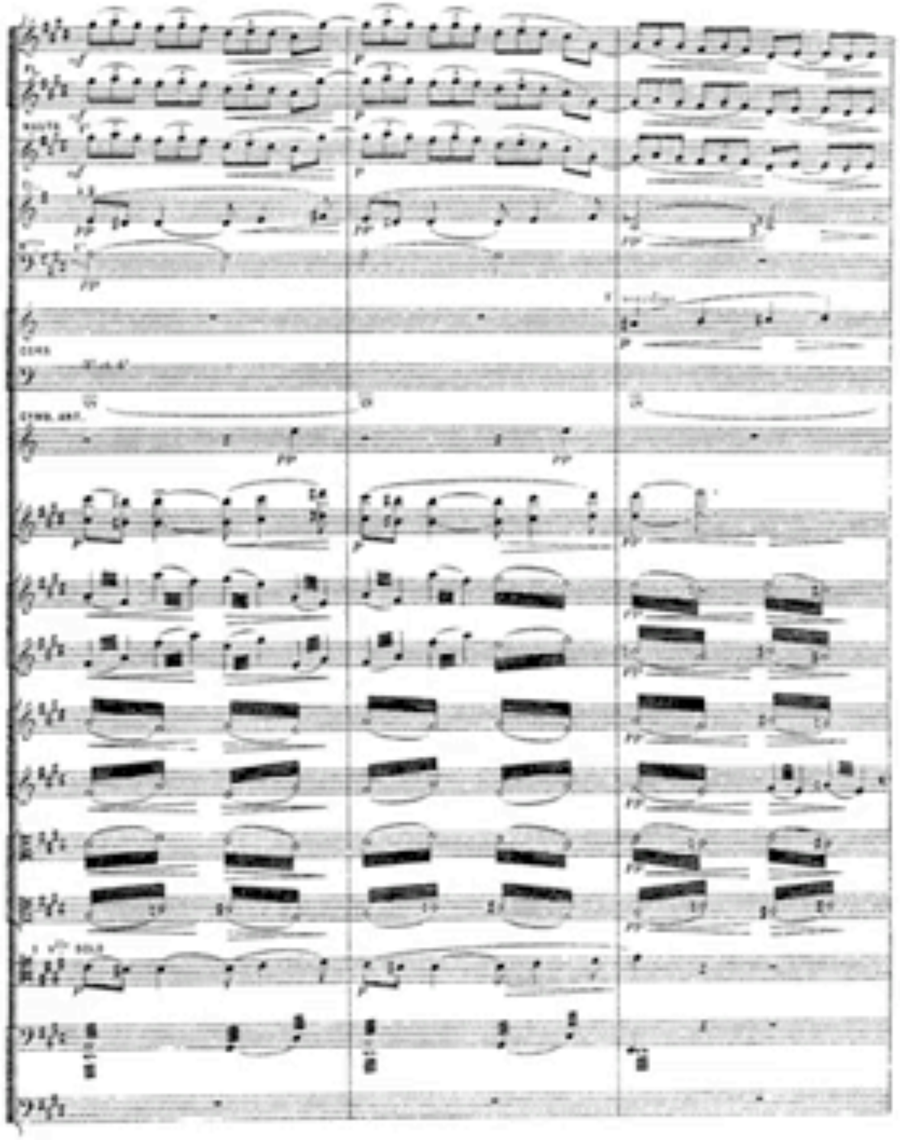
TEARING UP THE RULEBOOK

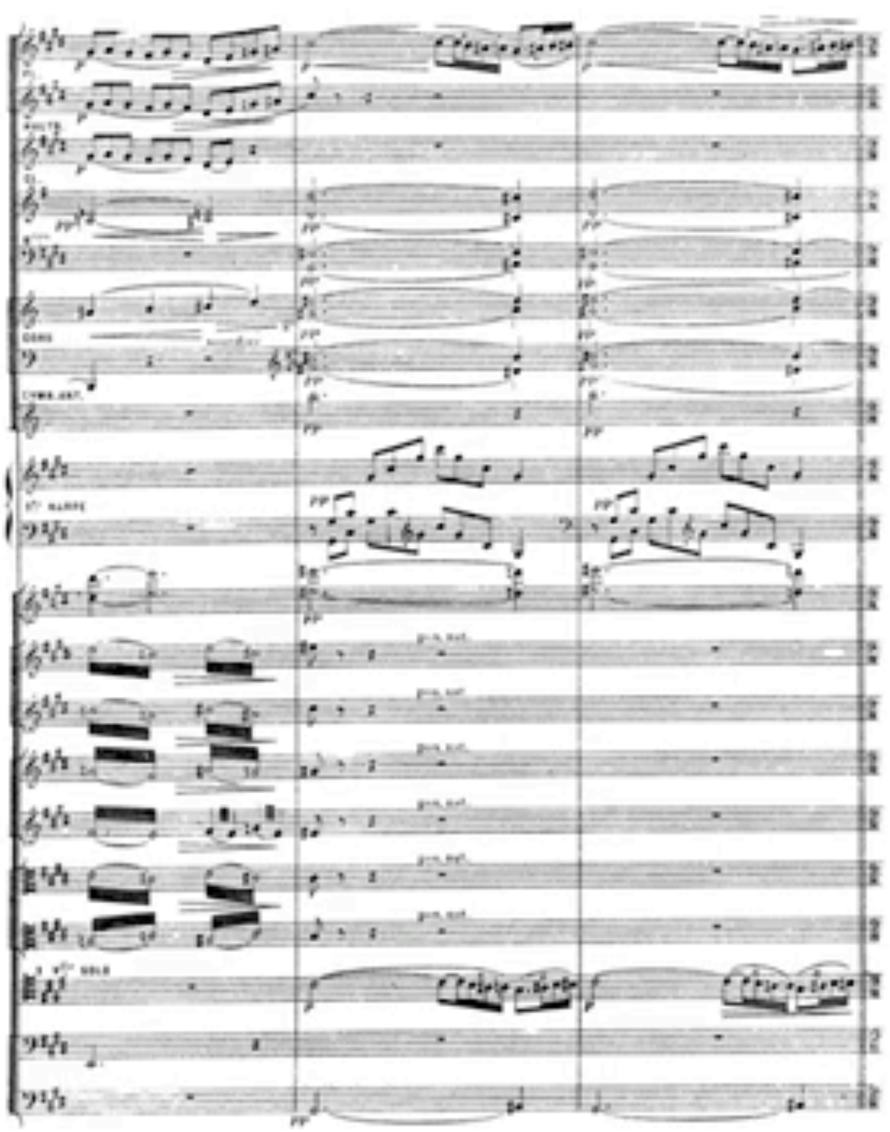
Franz Liszt Nuages gris (1881)



Mauricio Kagel Unguis incarnatus est (1972)

Claude Debussy　L’après-midi d’un faune (1894)





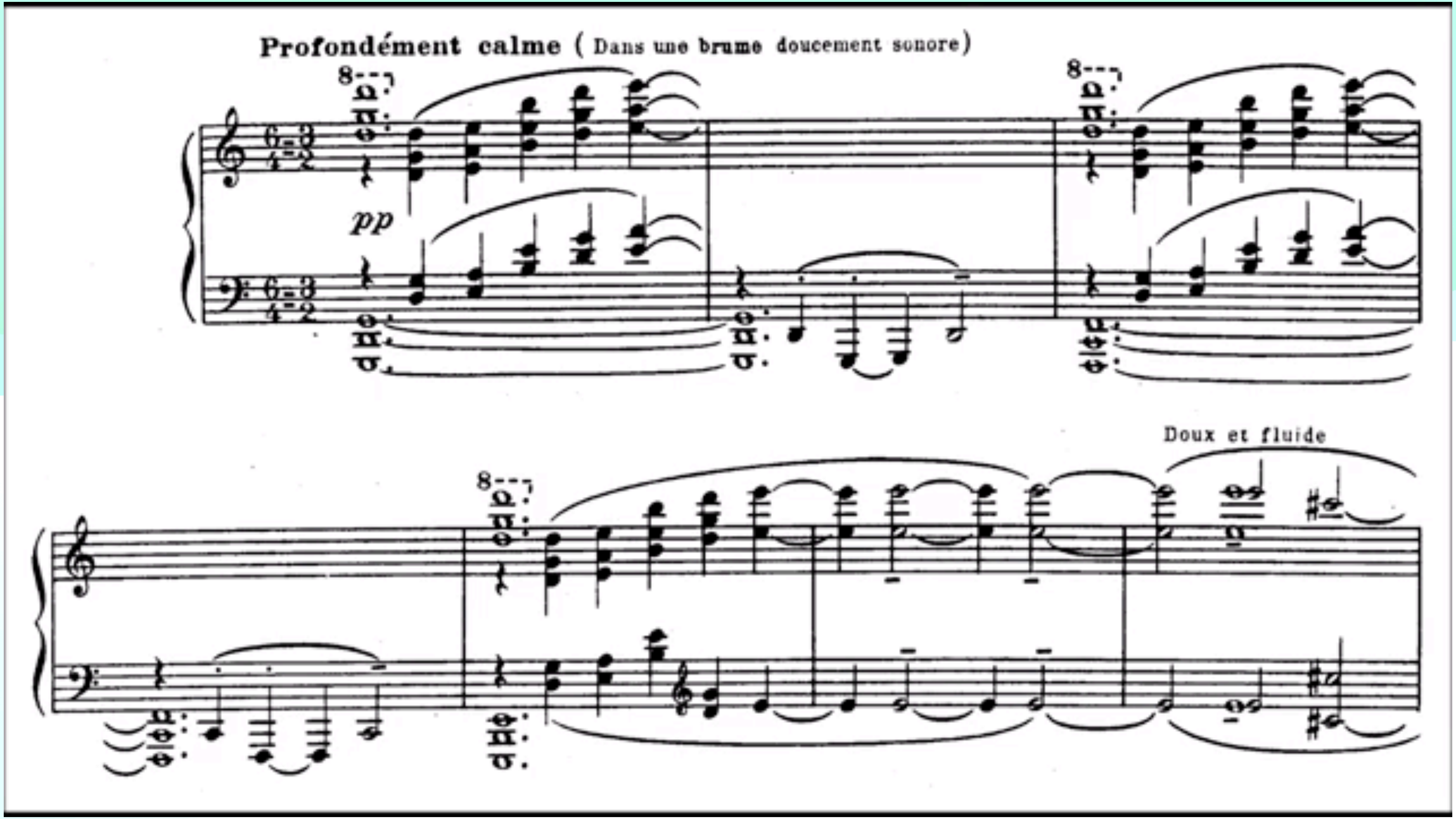
...tonic and dominant had become empty shadows of use only to stupid children...

The Prelude... shows a disdain for the so-called constructional knowhow that places a burden on our finer intellects... has no respect for tonality

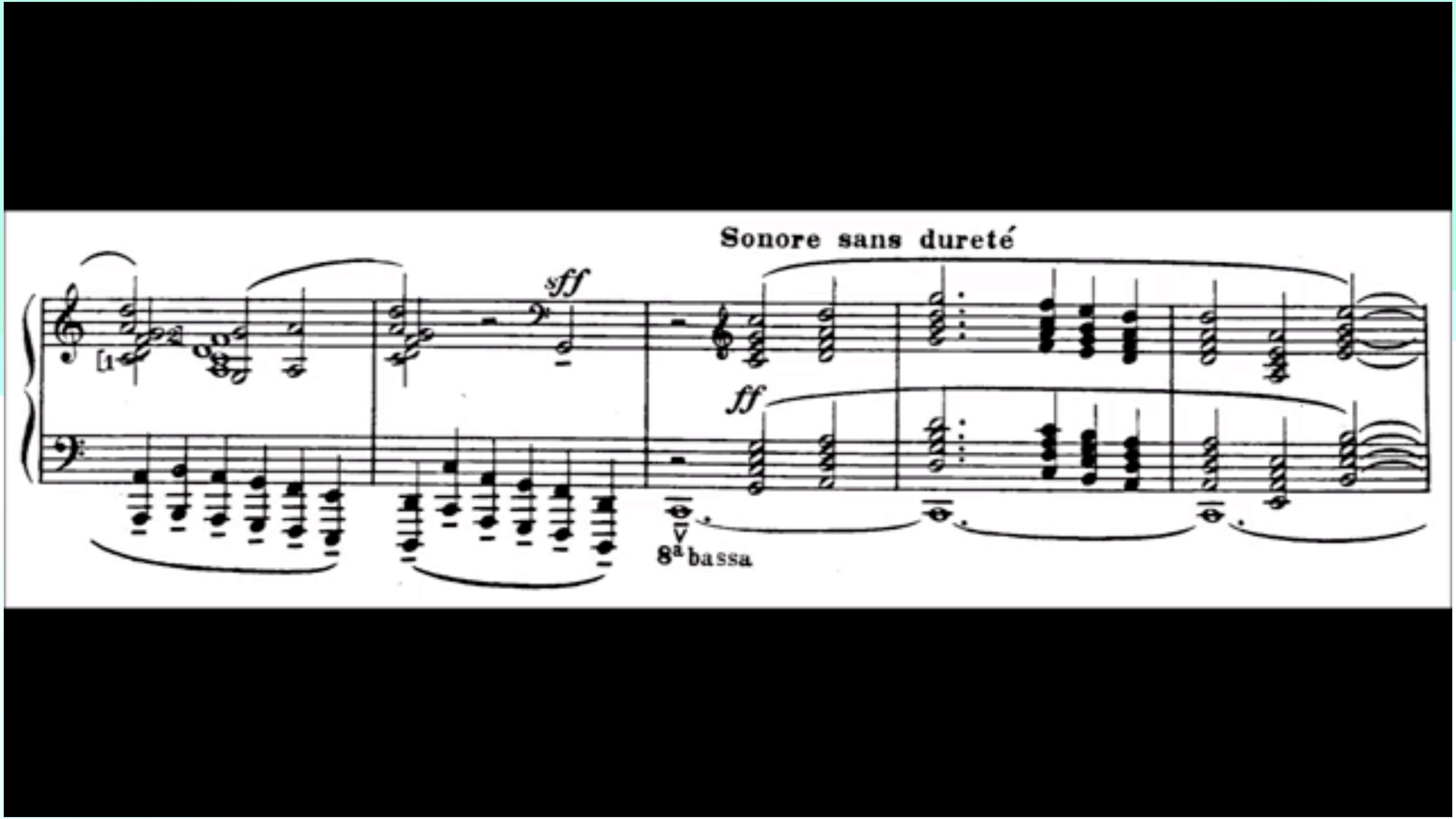
Nothing is more mysterious than a consonant chord! Despite all theories, both old and new, we are still not sure, first, why it is consonant, and second, why the other chords have to bear the stigma of being dissonant...

There is no theory. You have merely to listen. Pleasure is the law.

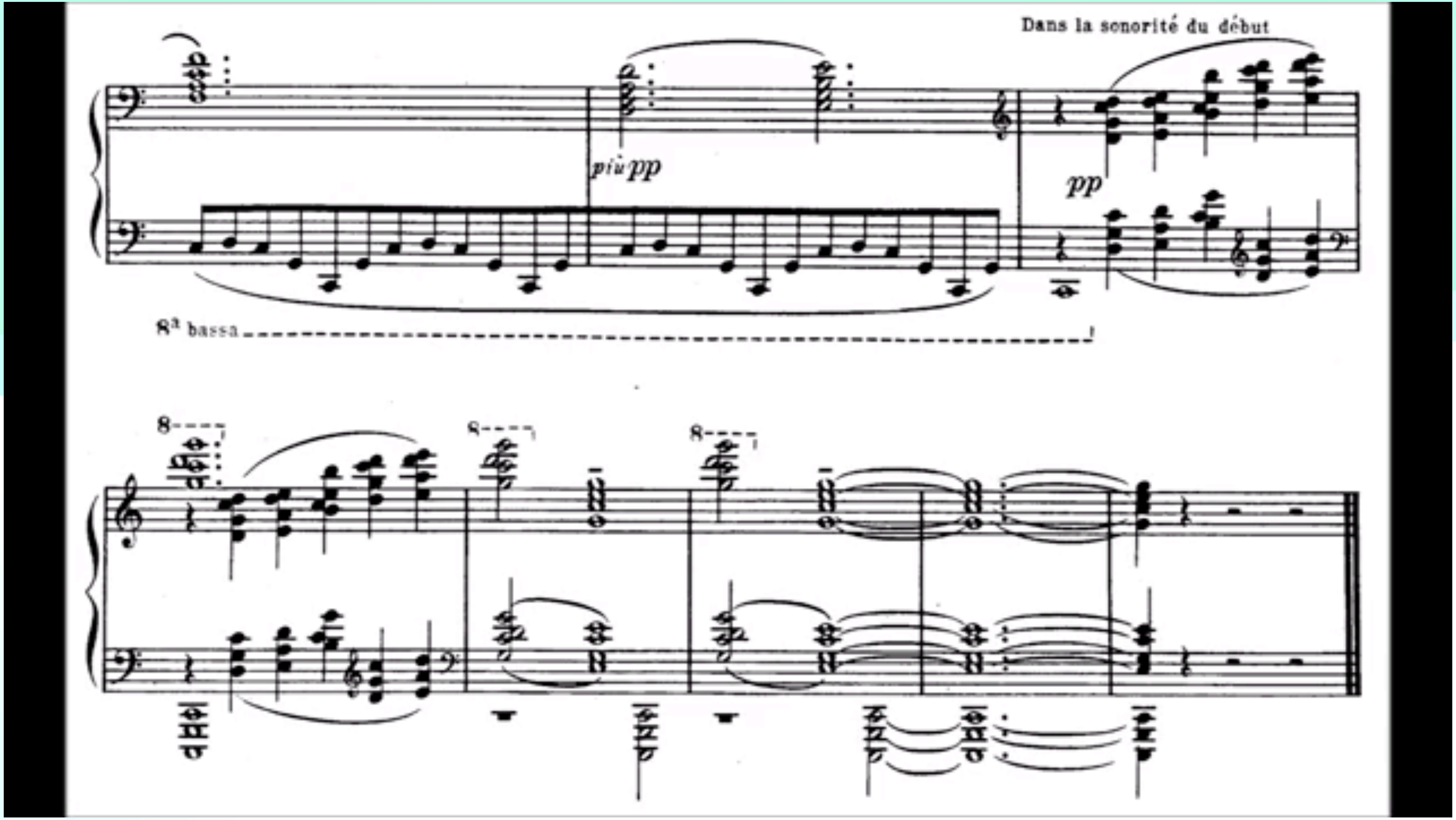
Claude Debussy (...La cathédrale engloutie) (1910)



Claude Debussy (...La cathédrale engloutie) (1910)

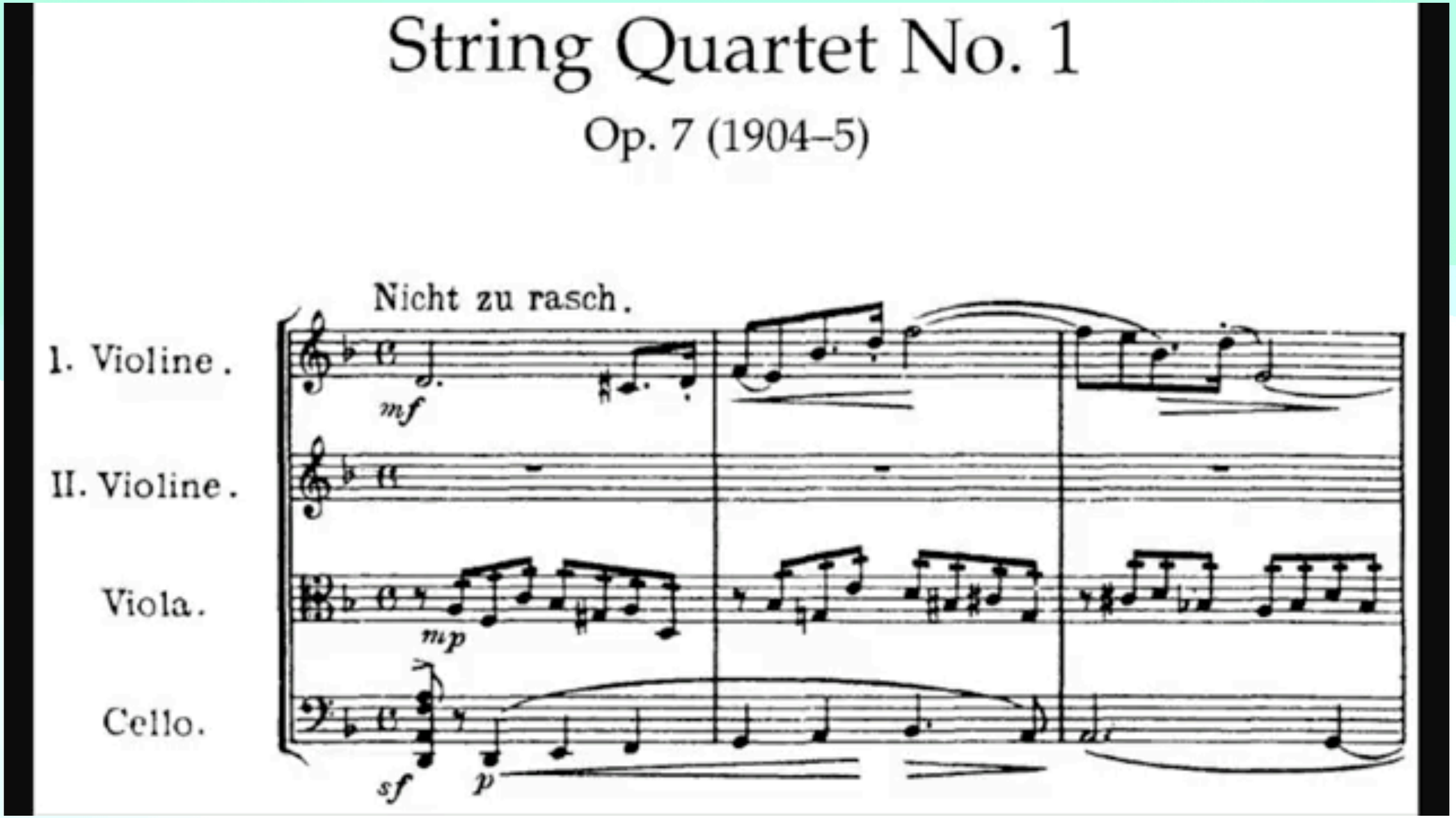


Claude Debussy (...La cathédrale engloutie) (1910)



TOO MUCH
TO TAKE

Arnold Schoenberg **Quartet No. 1 (1905)**



Mahler:

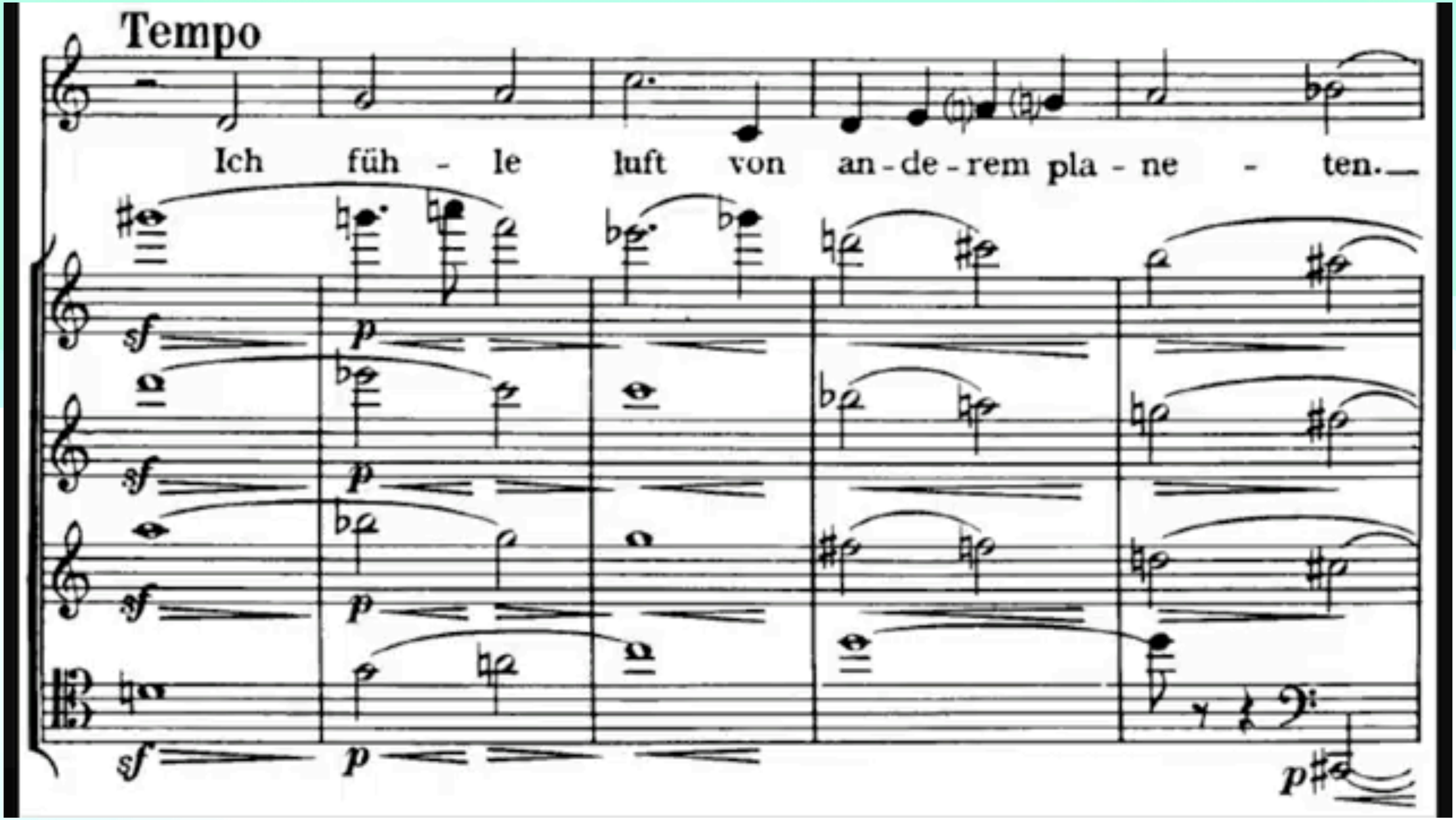
I have conducted Wagner's most difficult scores; I have written complex music myself, in scores of thirty staves and more; yet here is a score with no more than four staves, and I am unable to read them.

Schoenberg:

the most embarrassing circumstance was that the harmonies produced by those independently moving parts changed so fast and were so advanced that the ear could not follow their meaning

as in the earlier epochs, harmonies will be a product of the voice leading: justified solely by the melodic lines!

Arnold Schoenberg Quartet No. 2 (1908)



Stefan George, Rapture

I dissolve into notes, circling, weaving,

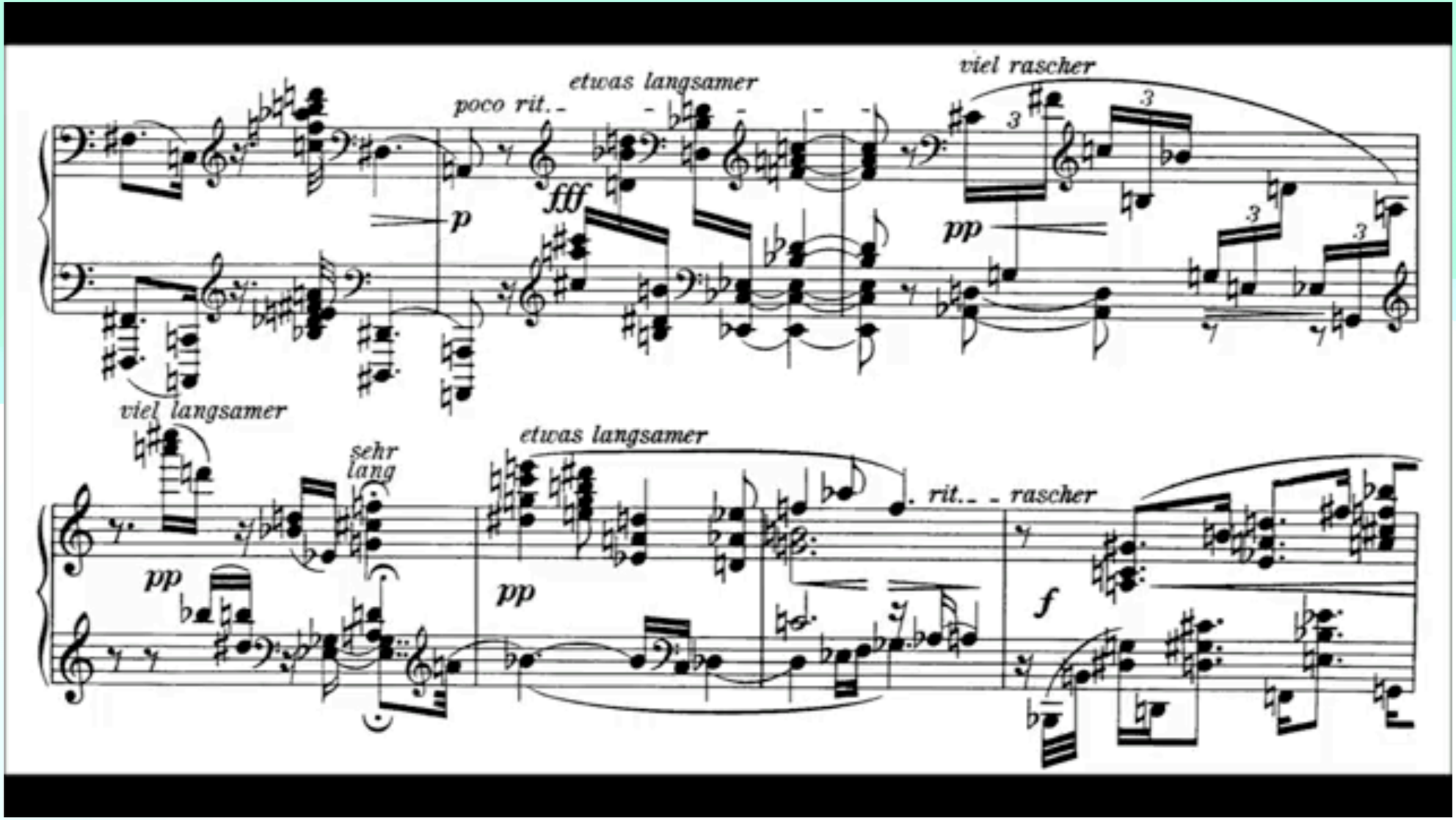
In groundless thanks and nameless praise,

Surrendering without a wish to the mighty breathing

Schoenberg:

The overwhelming multitude of dissonances could not be counterbalanced any more by occasional returns to such tonic triads as represent a key

Arnold Schoenberg No. 3 from Drei Klavierstücke (1909)



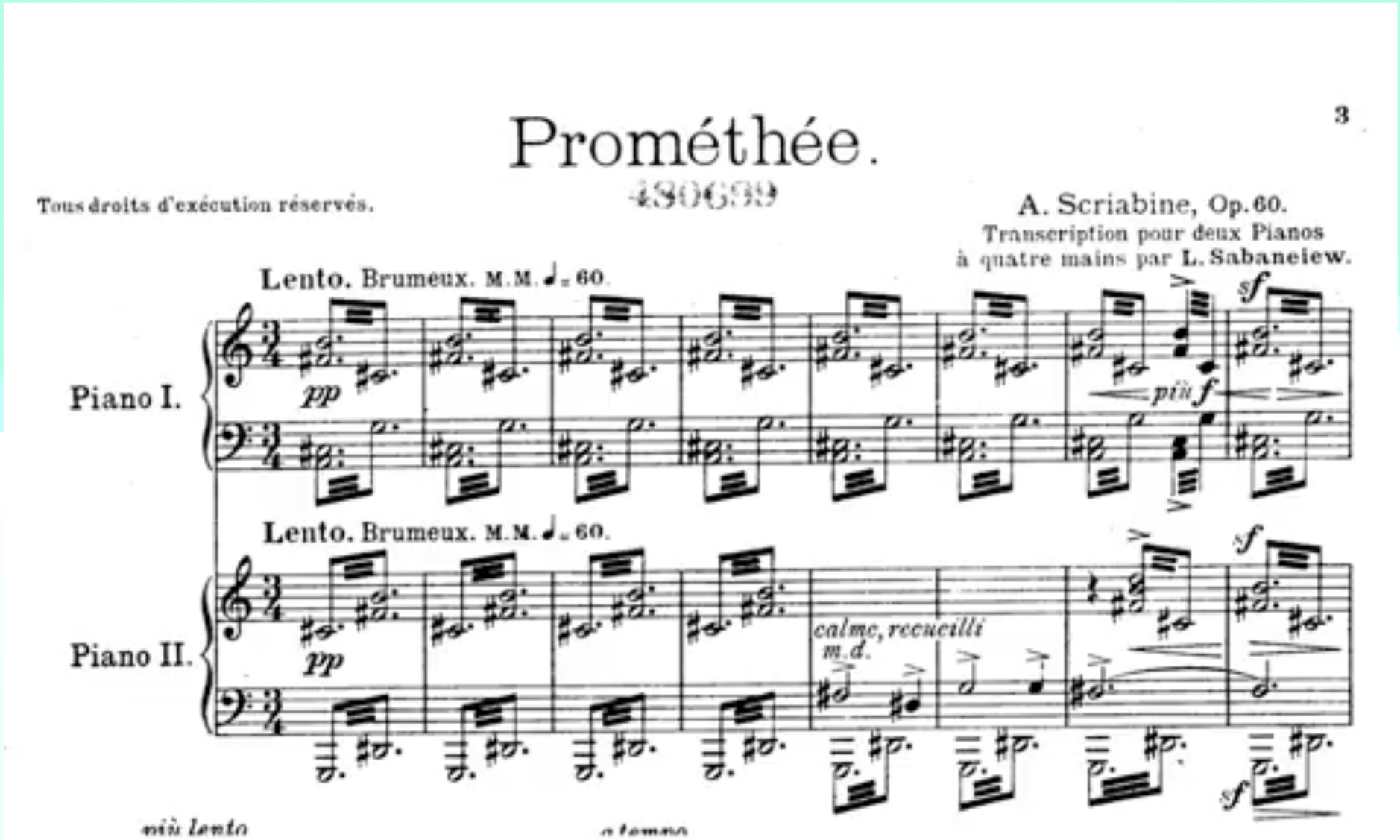
Vassilli Kandinsky Impression III (Concert)

Arthur Hahn:

The almost hair-raising cacophonies seemed rather too much even for those who had so far kept a straight face as they followed Schoenberg's Weltschmerz and its musical revelations. One can only shake one's head in astonishment at his effrontery in trying to pass off this kind of thing as music (in the sense that term has always been understood). These "sound effects" gave rise to accidental convergences of notes entirely at random. By mere chance, we might expect occasional combinations of notes that sound harmonious to our ears. Schoenberg however – and this is the only thread of consistency in his compositions – deliberately selects only sounds at the opposite end of the spectrum from whatever could sound "right" to our ears.

SUPERSIZE
THAT

Alexander Scriabin **Prometheus (1910)**



Prométhée.

3

Tous droits d'exécution réservés.

A. Scriabine, Op. 60.
Transcription pour deux Pianos
à quatre mains par L. Sabaneiew.

Lento. Brumeux. M.M. ♩ = 60.

Piano I.

pp

più f

sf

Lento. Brumeux. M.M. ♩ = 60.

Piano II.

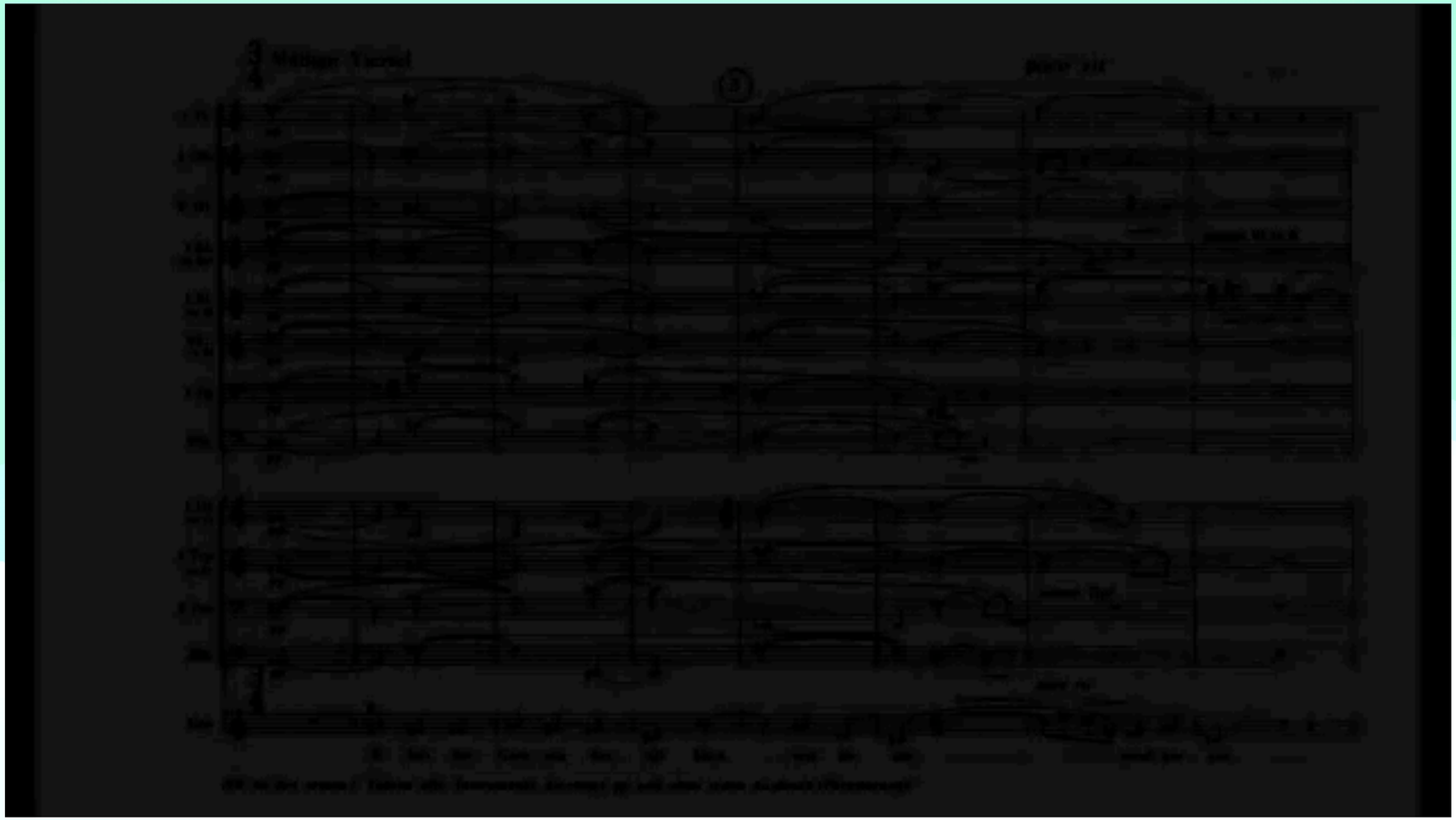
pp

calme, recueilli
m.d.

sf

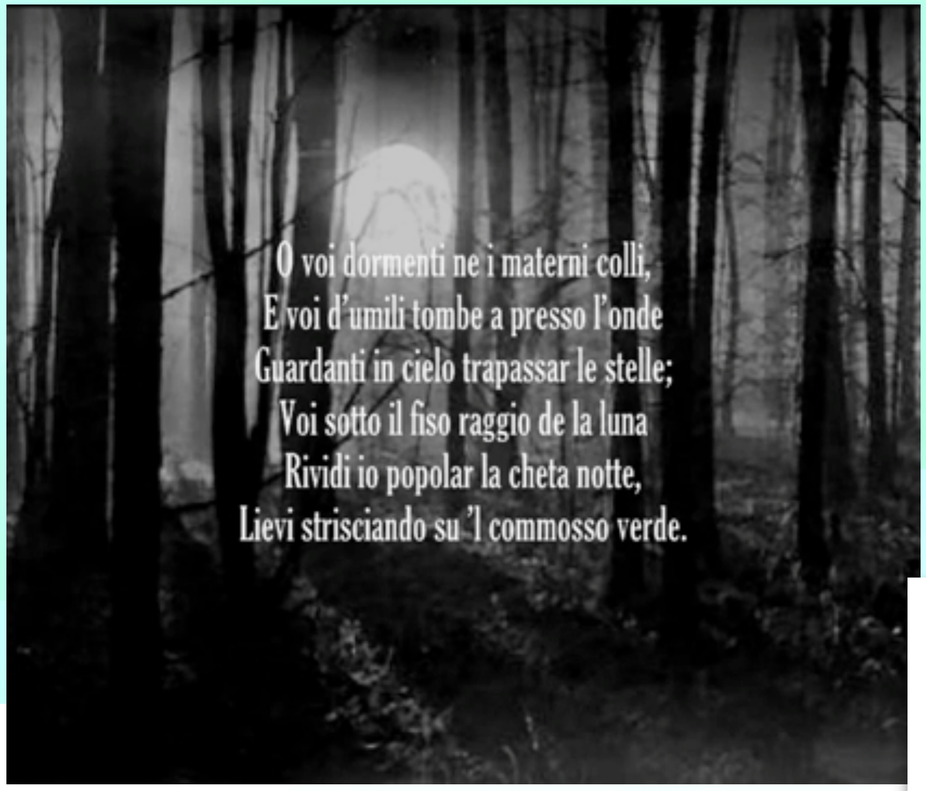
più lento

Alban Berg No. 3 from the Altenberg Lieder (1913)

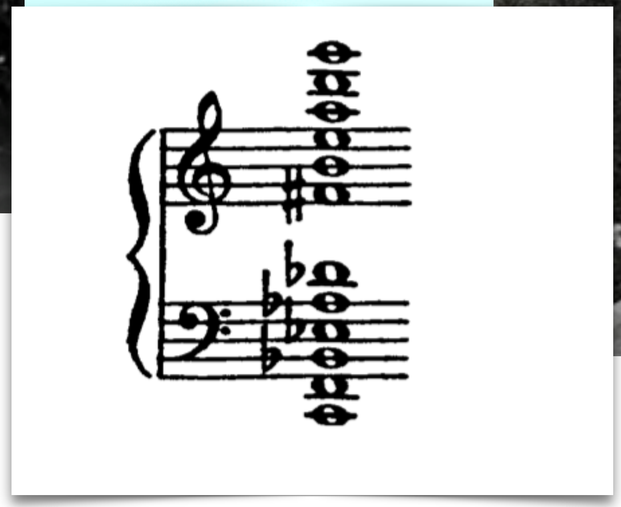


Beyond the borders of all we know, you ponder thoughtfully,

You’d never worry about hearth and home

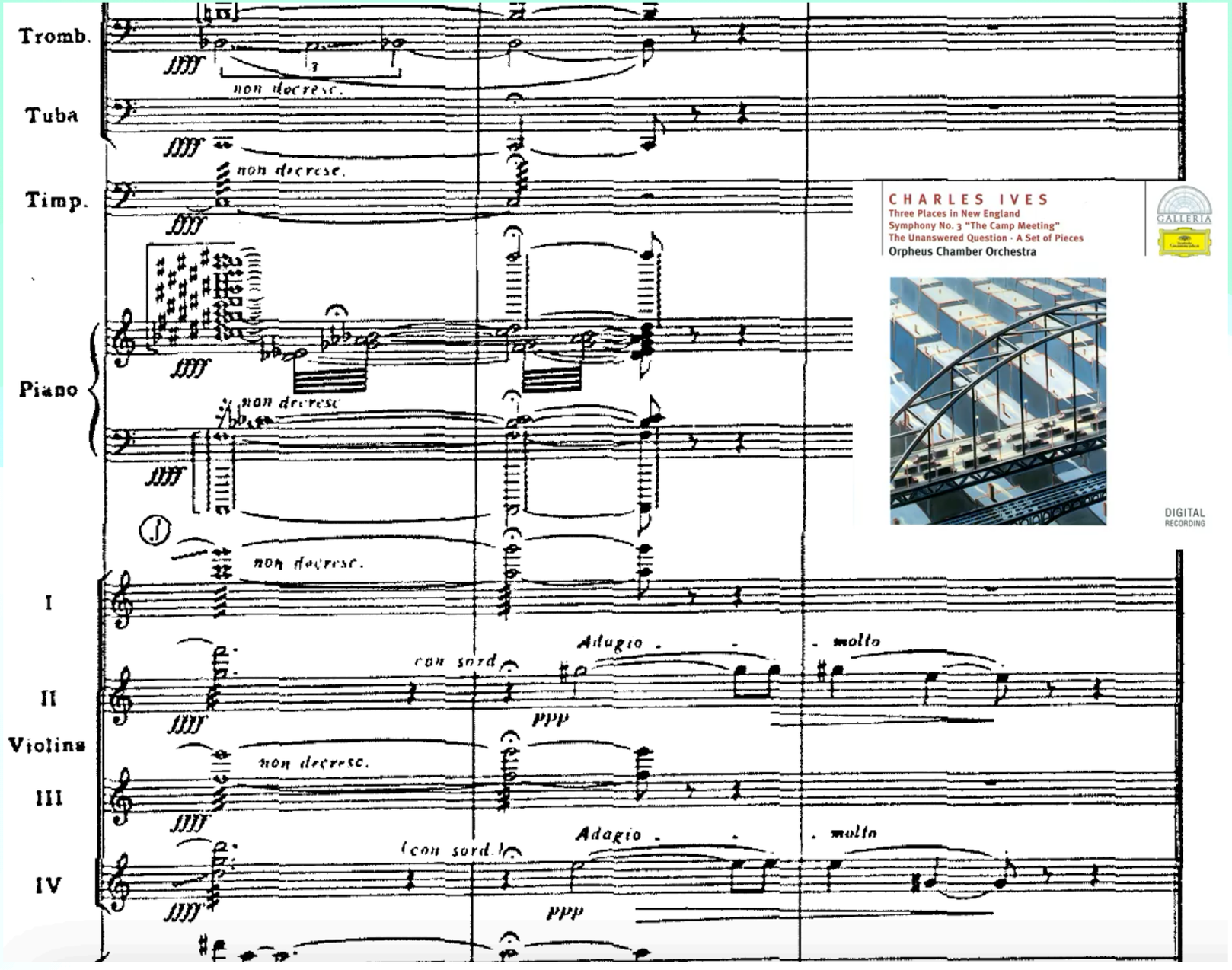


Alfredo Casella Notte di maggio (1913)



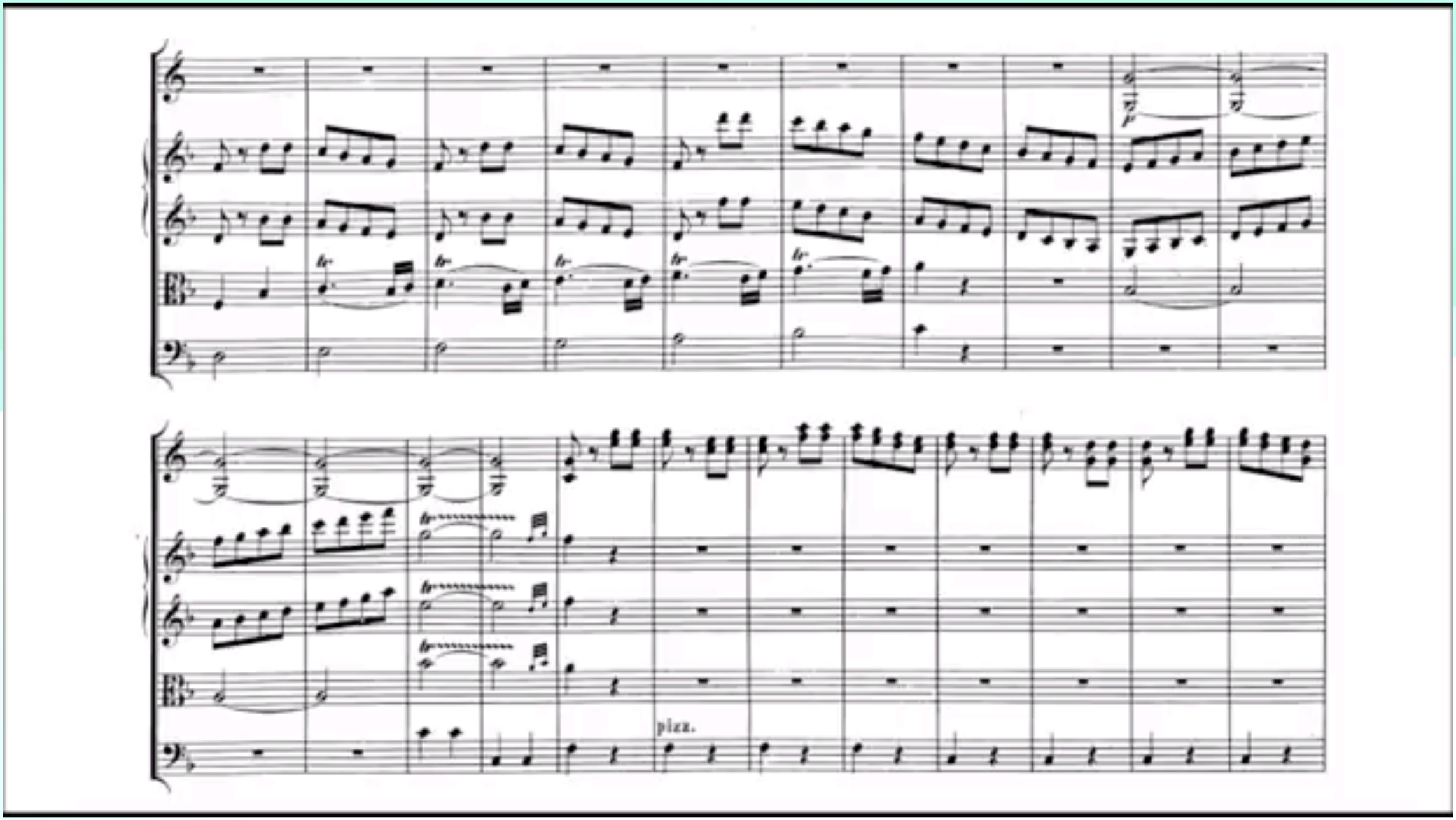
“The natural harmony of the atonal system”

Charles Ives The Housatonic at Stockbridge (1913?)

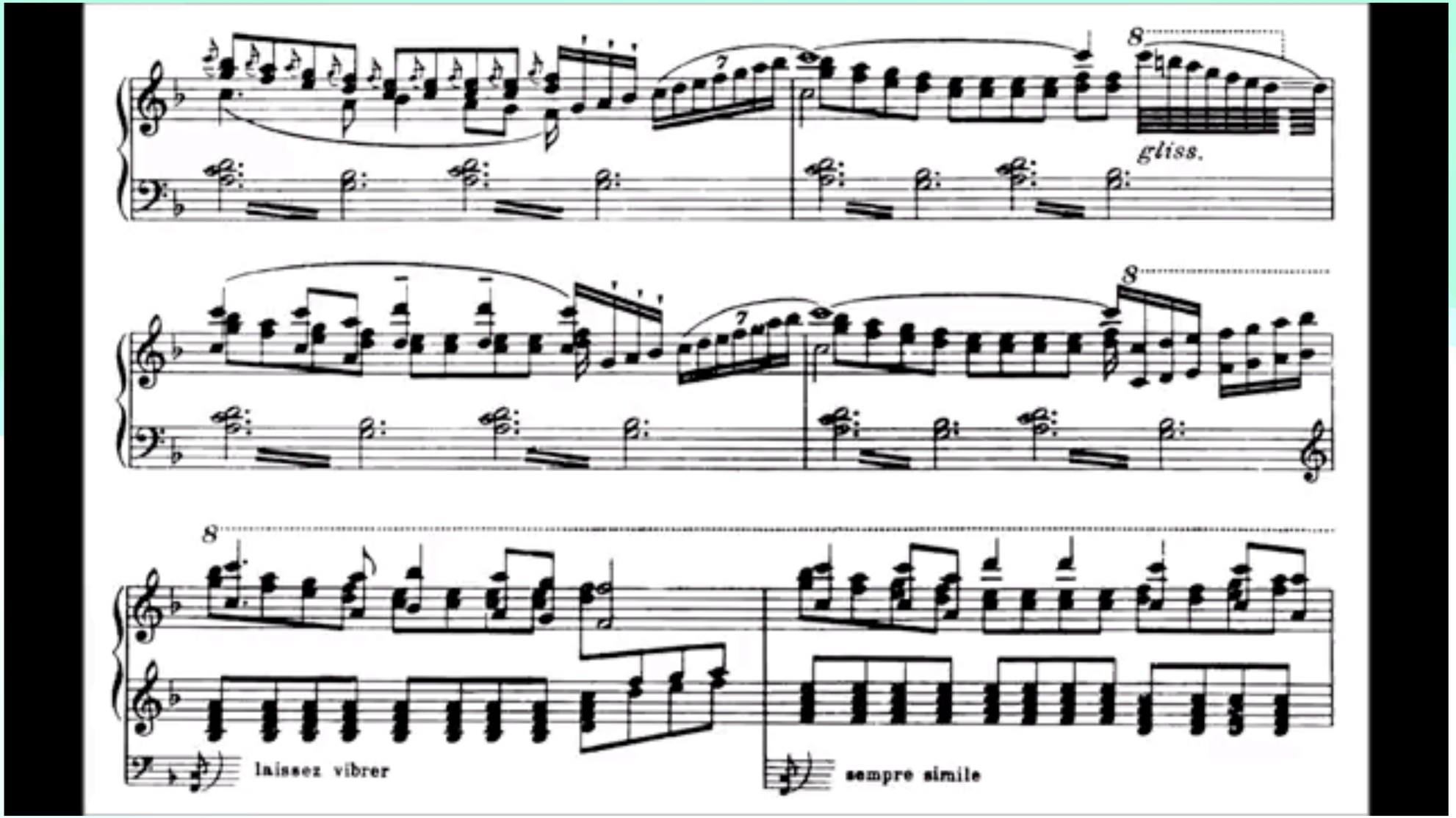


WRONG NOTES
WRONG CHORDS

Mozart Ein musikalischer Spaß



Igor Stravinsky Petrushka (1911/19)



Vyacheslav Karatygin:

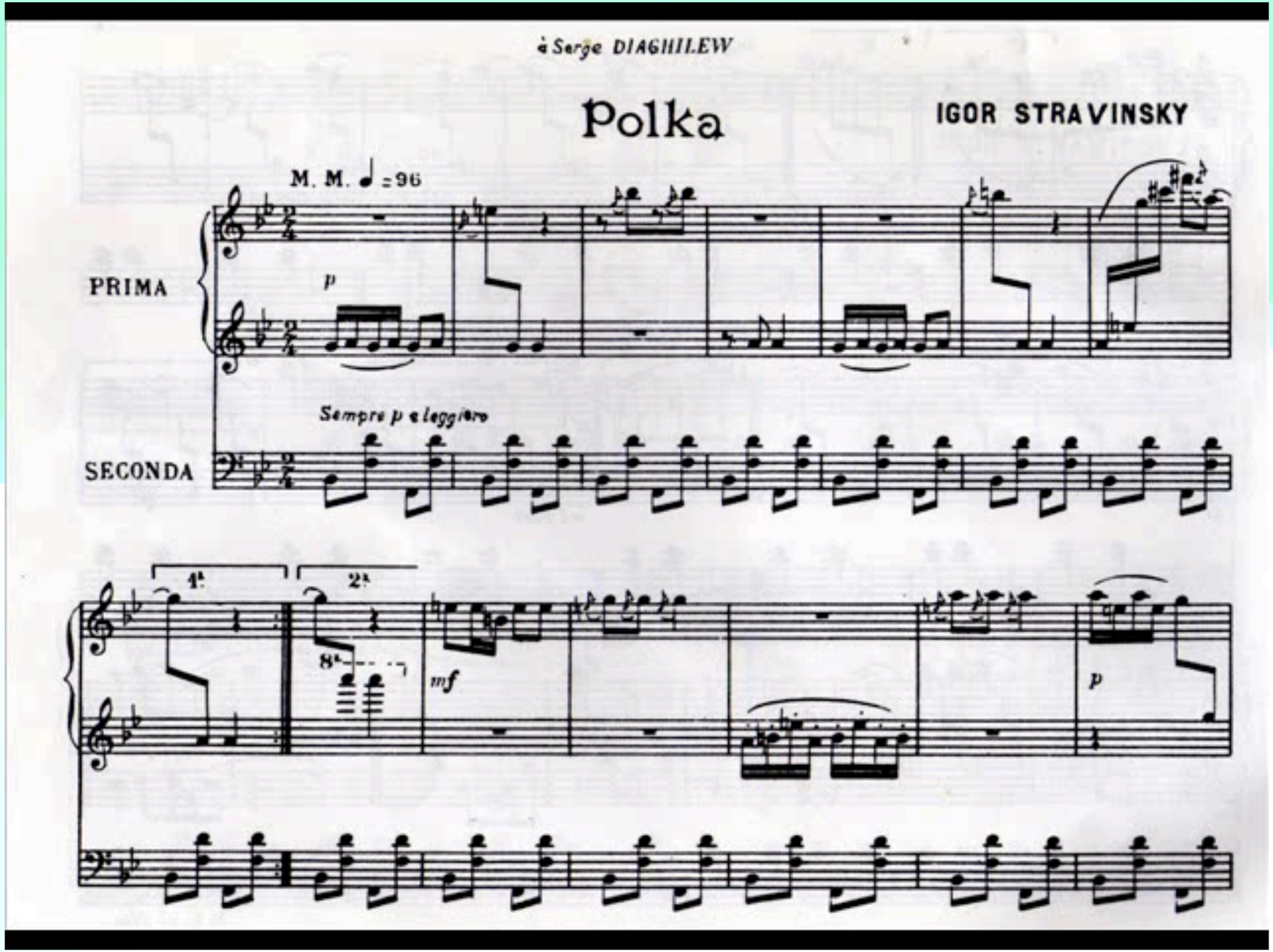
You have all seen futurist paintings... you have read futurist verses... And you have of course noticed that displacement is the characteristic feature of futurist art. Either the two eyes in a portrait have skittered to different corners of the painting, or else the letters in a word have been rearranged, mixed up...

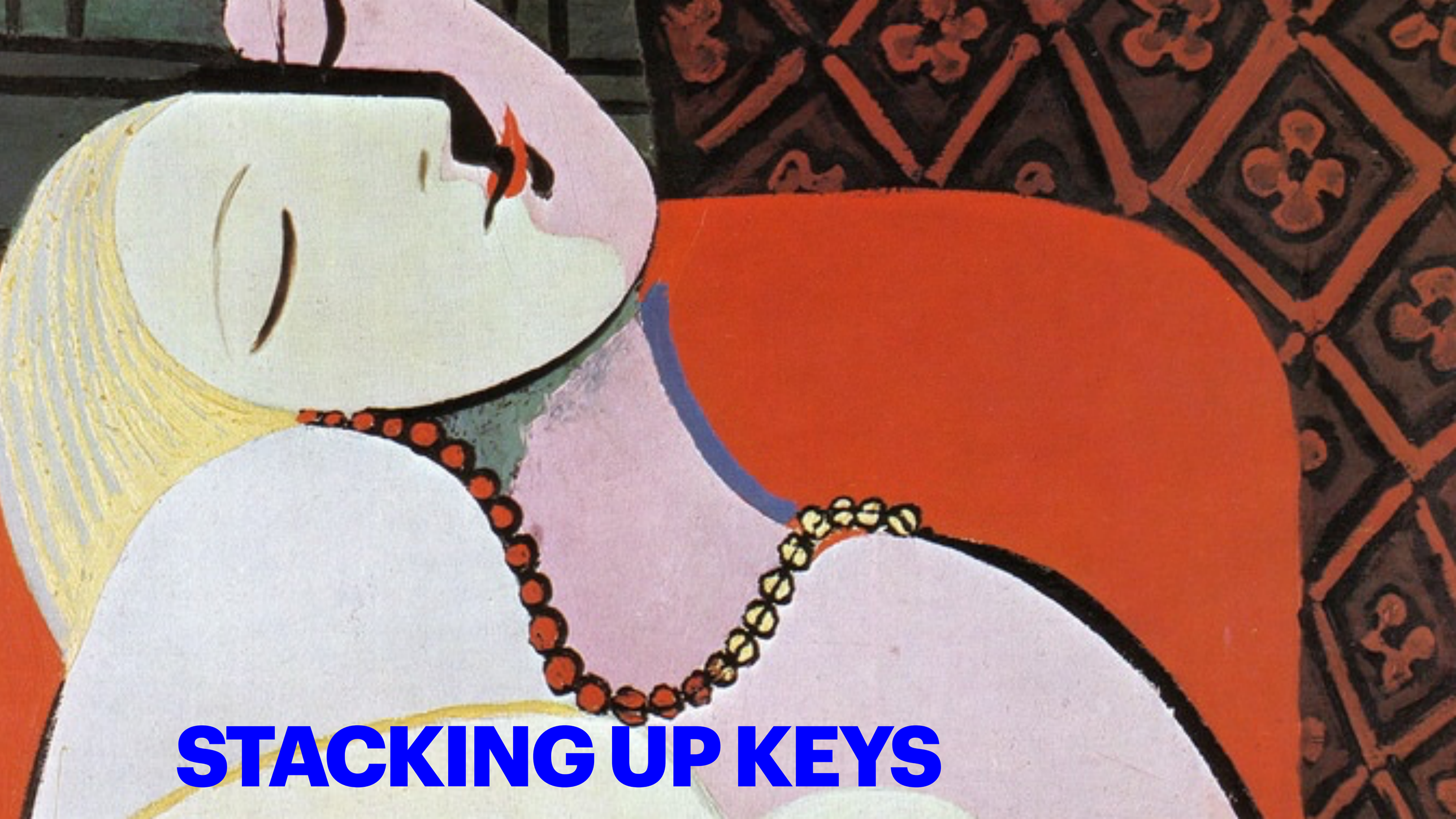
What Stravinsky is doing in the *Rite* is founded mainly on displacement. Tonalities are displaced...they ...have begun to pile up on top of one another.... and intervals are displaced. Octaves have suddenly slipped down into sevenths.... And rhythms are displaced. Everything has been shifted and shuffled...

Igor Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring (1913)

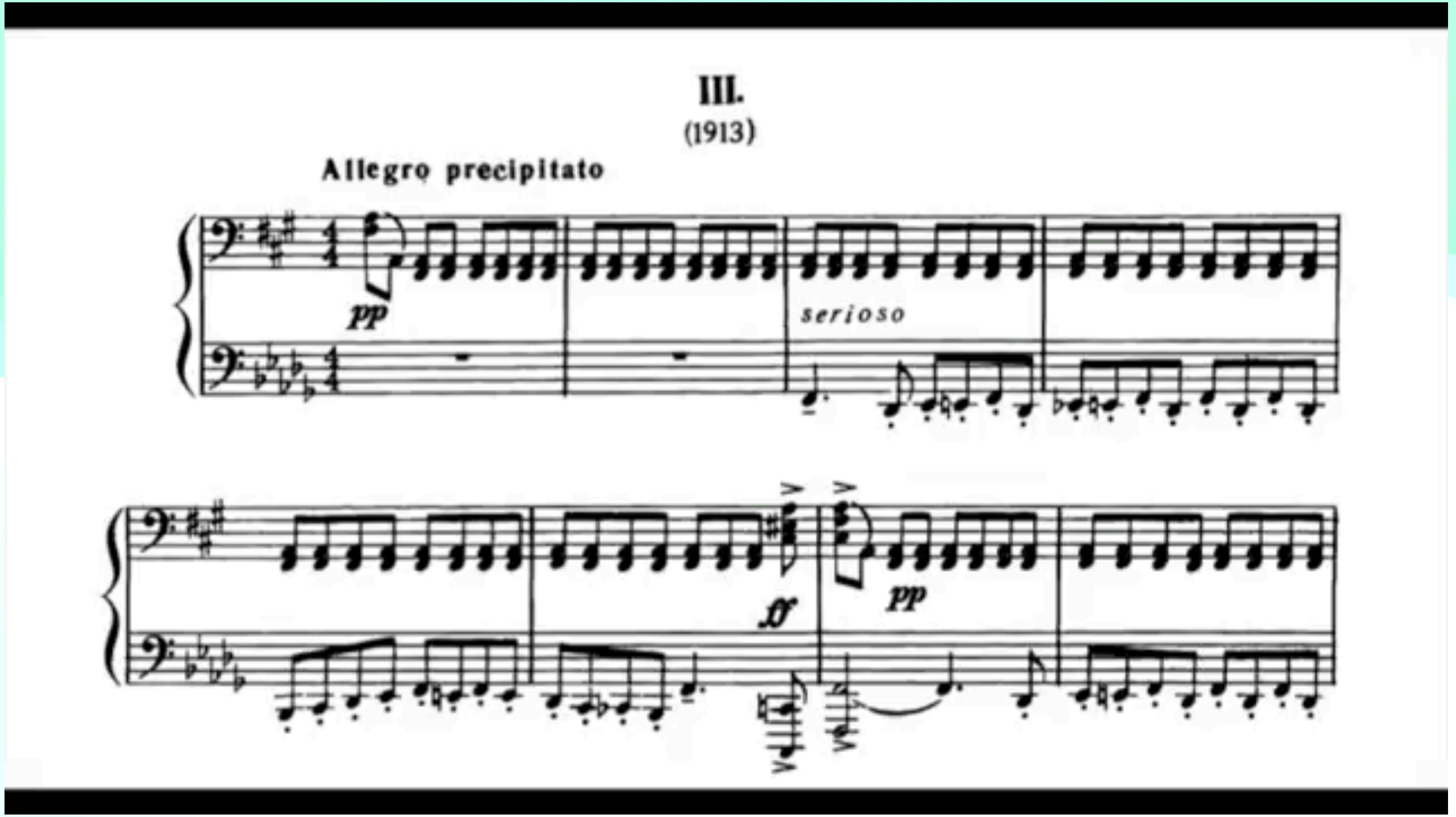
Igor Stravinsky Polka from Three Easy Pieces(1915)



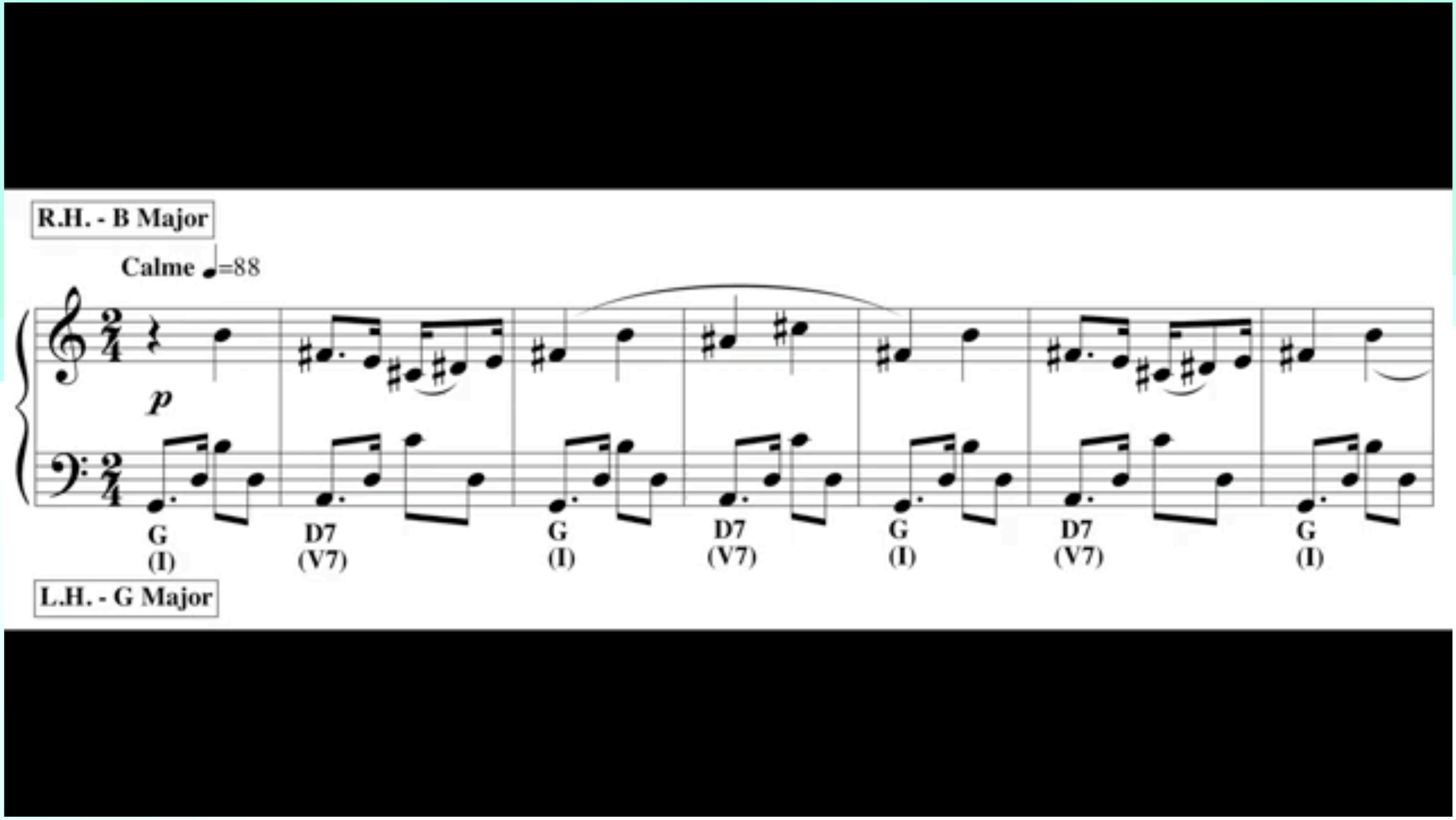


STACKING UP KEYS

Sergei Prokofiev Sarcasm Op. 17, No. 3 (1913)



Darius Milhaud Copacabana from Saudades de Brazil (1920)



This is music on two planes, but surely of the most facile, the most banal description. Just naughty; perverse.

This music, or anti-music, is, in spite of the incongruity of its parts, definitely harmonic.

Harry Farjeon, 1933

Darius Milhaud Chamber Symphony No. 3 (1921)

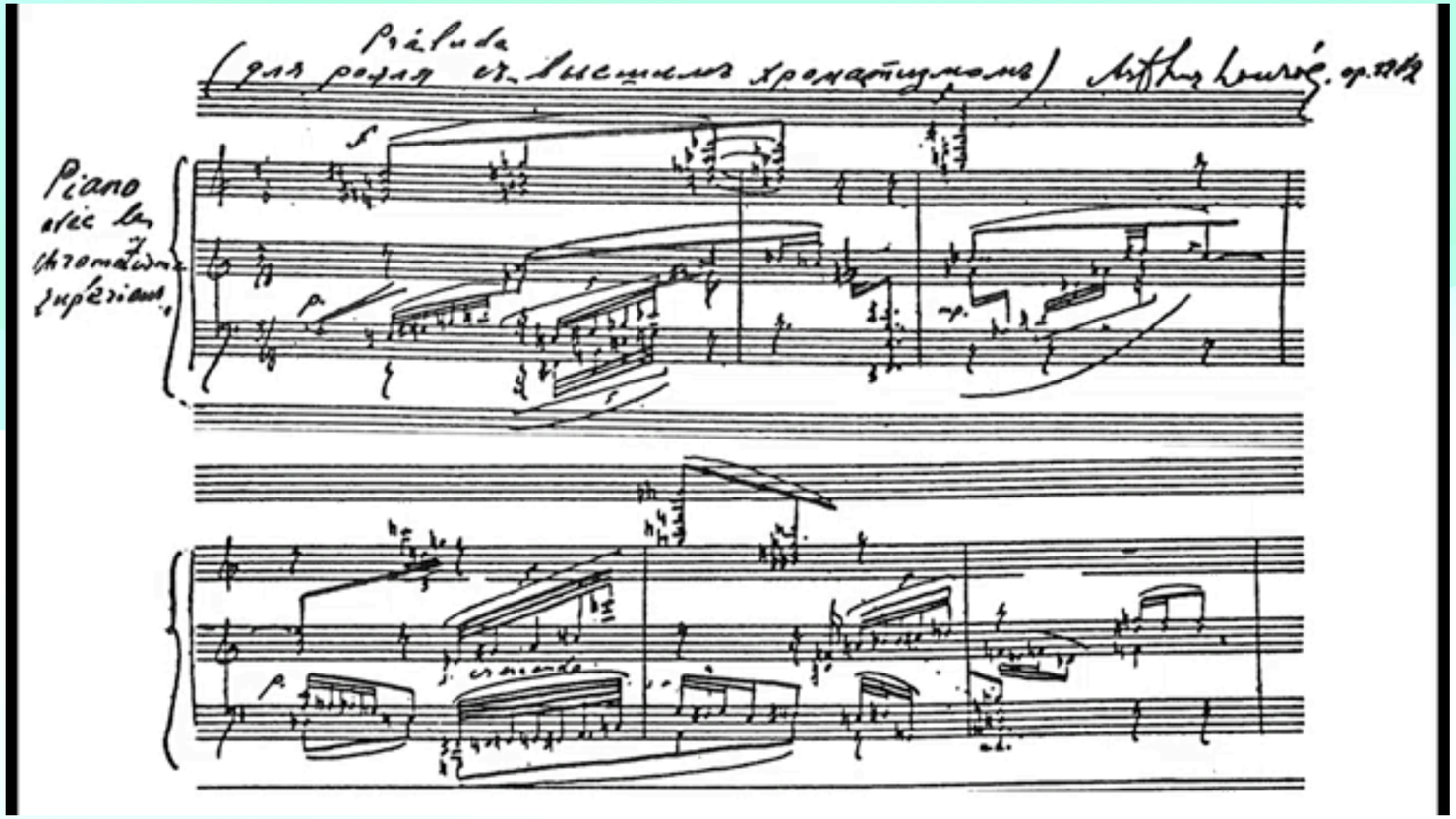
Flute
Clarinet in Bb
Bassoon
Violin
Viola
Cello

B♭ maj.
F maj.
E maj.
C maj.
B♭ maj.
D maj.

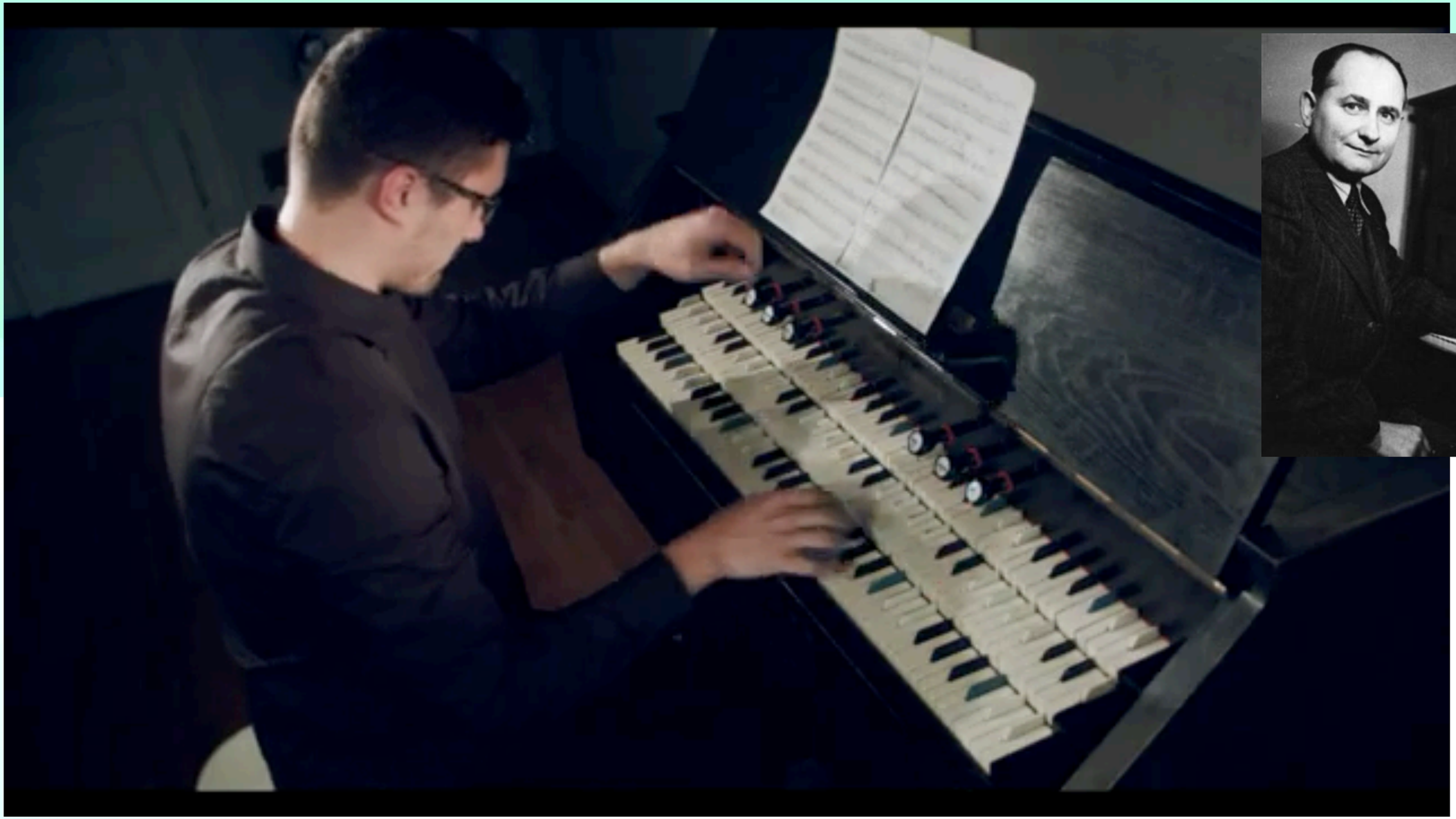
p *p* *mf* *mp* *mp* *mp*

BEYOND THE TWELVE NOTES

Arthur Lourié Prelude for quarter-tone piano (1912)



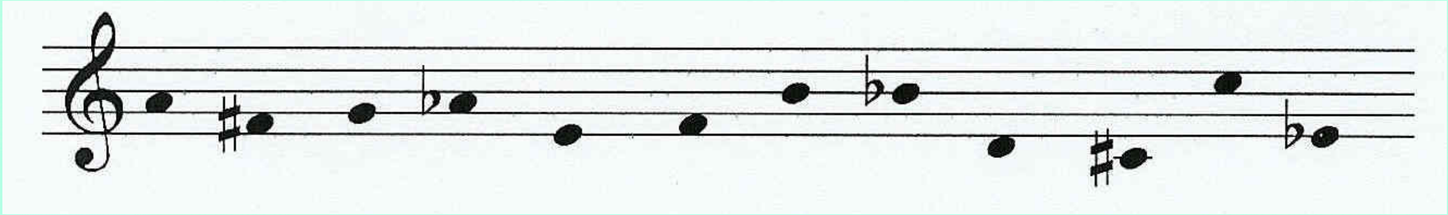
Alois Hába from Six Compositions for Sixth-Tone Harmonium (1928)



ENDING THE CHAOS

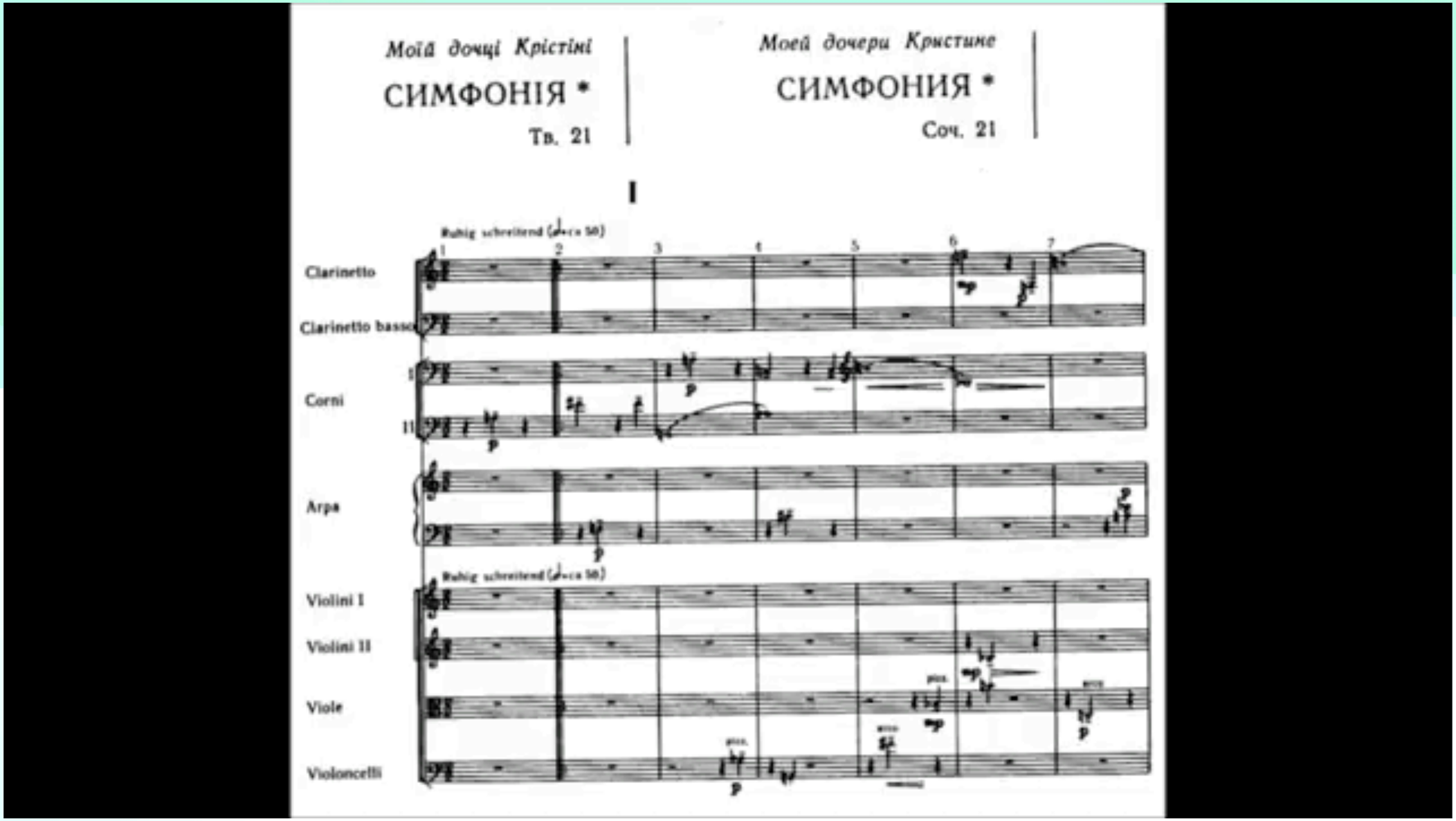
SATOR
AREPO
TENET
OPERA
ROTAS

Anton Webern Symphony, op. 21 (1928)

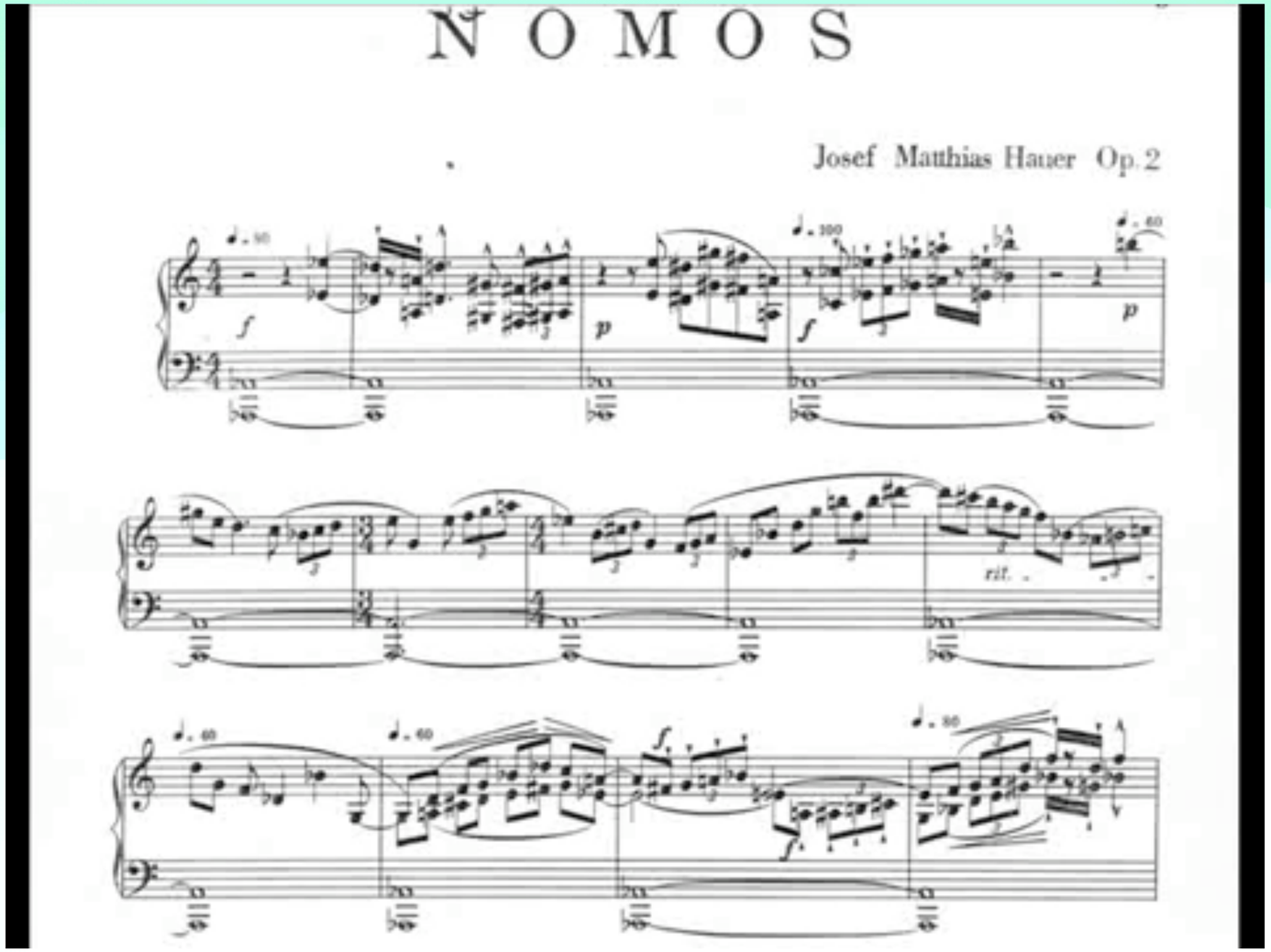


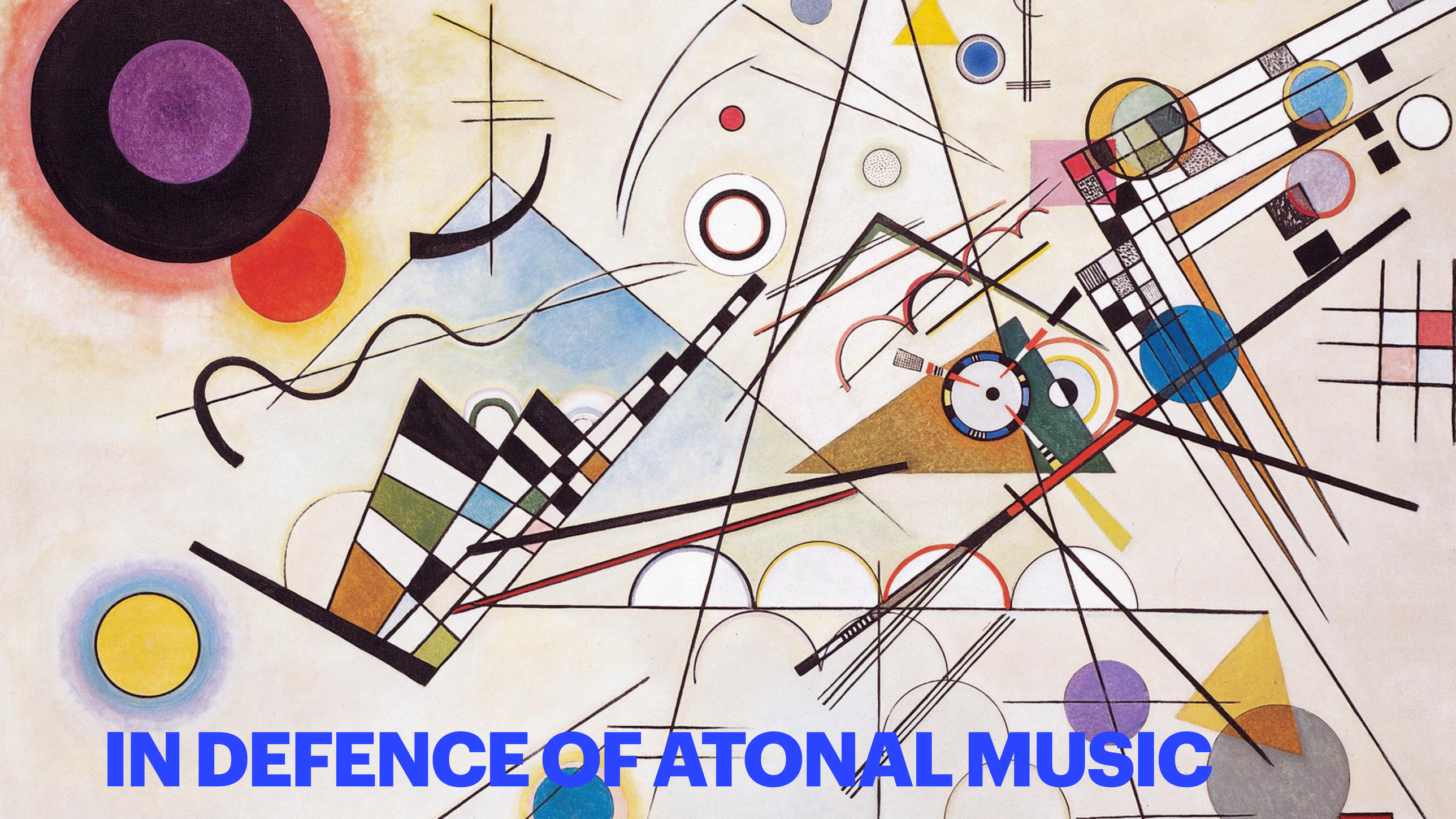
	I-0	I-9										
	↓	↓										
P-0→	A	F#	G	Ab	E	F	B	Bb	D	C#	C	Eb ← R-0
P-3→	C	A	Bb	B	G	Ab	D	C#	F	E	Eb	F# ← R-3
	B	Ab	A	Bb	F#	G	C#	C	E	Eb	D	F
	Bb	G	Ab	A	F	F#	C	B	Eb	D	C#	E
	D	B	C	C#	A	Bb	E	Eb	G	F#	F	Ab
	C#	Bb	B	C	Ab	A	Eb	D	F#	F	E	G
	G	E	F	F#	D	Eb	A	Ab	C	B	Bb	C#
	Ab	F	F#	G	Eb	E	Bb	A	C#	C	B	D
	E	C#	D	Eb	B	C	F#	F	A	Ab	G	Bb
	F	D	Eb	E	C	C#	G	F#	Bb	A	Ab	B
	F#	Eb	E	F	C#	D	Ab	G	B	Bb	A	C
	Eb	C	C#	D	Bb	B	F	E	Ab	G	F#	A
	↑											
	RI-0											
		↑										
		RI-9										

Anton Webern Symphony, op. 21 (1928)



Josef Hauer Nomos, op. 2 (1919)





IN DEFENCE OF ATONAL MUSIC

Alban Berg's interview in 1930:

The term "atonal music" has come to stand collectively for music of which it was assumed not only that it had no harmonic centre... but that it was also devoid of all other musical attributes such as melos, rhythm, form in part and whole, so that today the designation as good as signifies a music that is no music at all, and the term is used to imply the polar opposite of whatever was previously considered to be music".

Alban Berg’s interview in 1930:

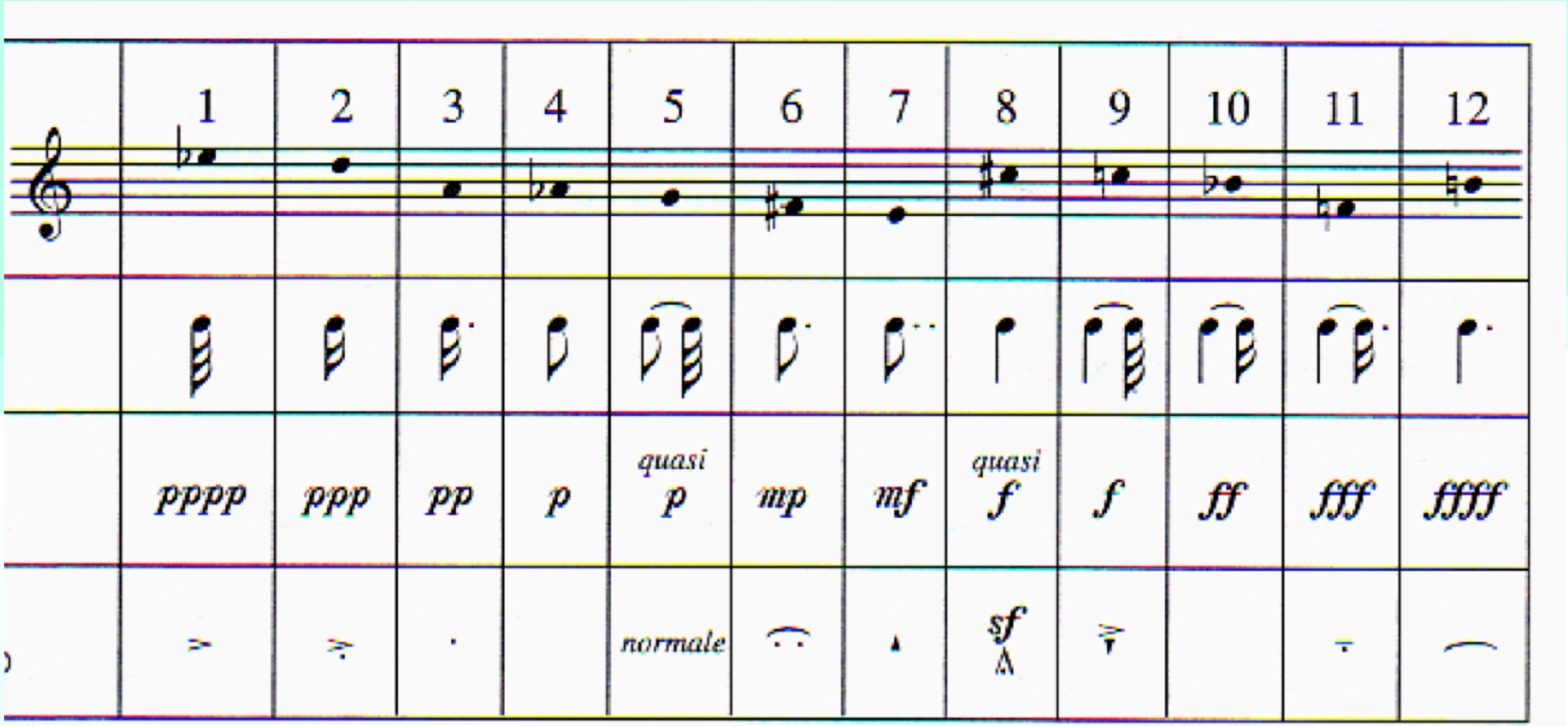
Melody is still fundamental

No periodicity but a freer rhythm like in prose

Freer rhythm that comes from a combination of individual lines

“every single bar has been subjected to the sharpest control of the outer and inner ear”

GIVING UP CONTROL


1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
pppp
ppp
pp
p
quasi
p
mp
mf
quasi
f
f
ff
fff
ffff
normale
sf

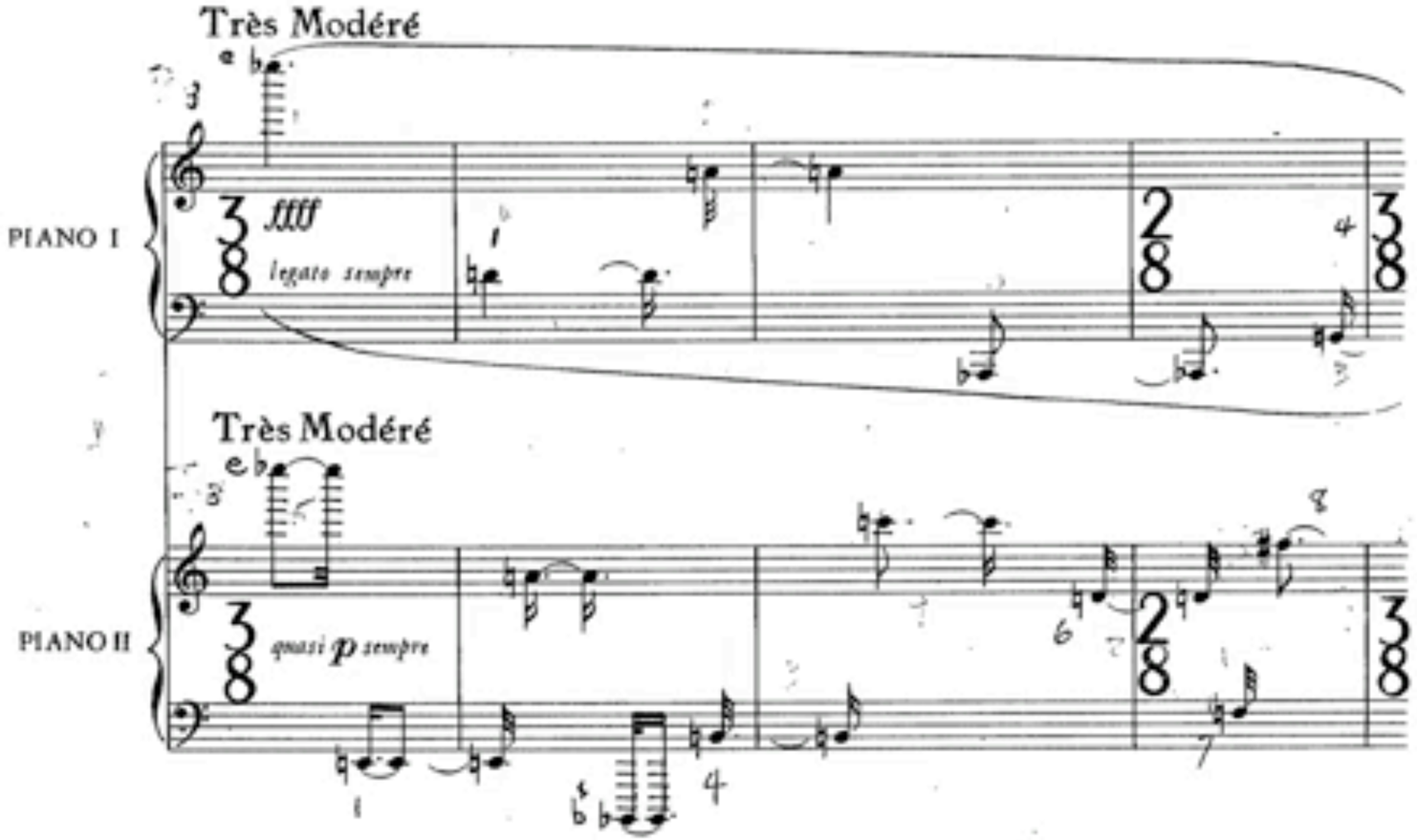
Pierre Boulez Structures I (1952)

Alle Rechte vorbehalten
Tous droits réservés

STRUCTURES

Pierre BOULEZ

I a

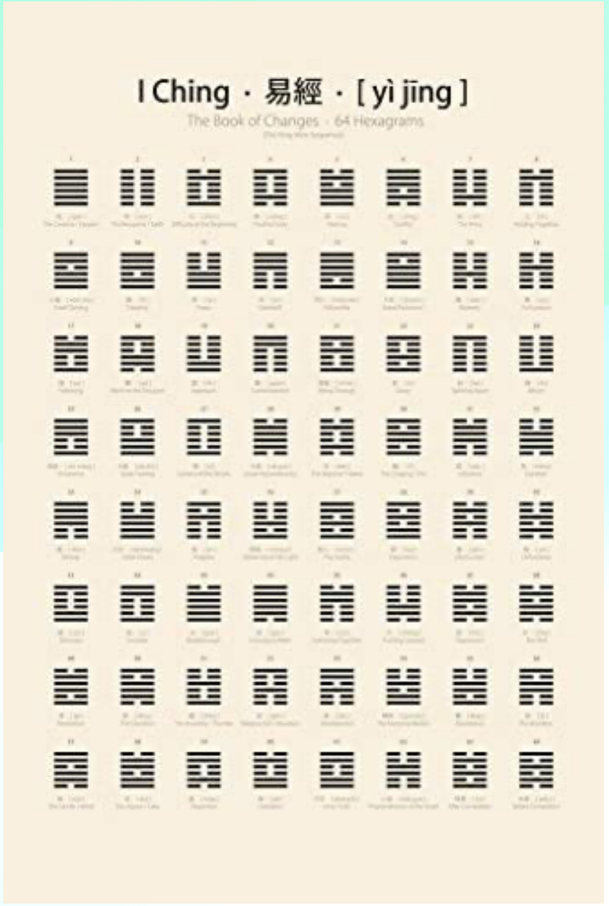


Cage:

By making moves on the [I Ching] charts, I freed myself from what I thought to be freedom, and which actually was only the accretion of habits and tastes.

Boulez:

I wanted to eradicate from my vocabulary absolutely every trace of the conventional, whether it concerned figures and phrases, or development and form...



'O' matrix

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2	8	4	5	6	11	1	9	12	3	7	10
3	4	1	2	8	9	10	5	6	7	12	11
4	5	2	8	9	12	3	6	11	1	10	7
5	6	8	9	12	10	4	11	7	2	3	1
6	11	9	12	10	3	5	7	1	8	4	2
7	1	10	3	4	5	11	2	8	12	6	9
8	9	5	6	11	7	2	12	10	4	1	3
9	12	6	11	7	1	8	10	3	5	2	4
10	3	7	1	2	8	12	4	5	11	9	6
11	7	12	10	3	4	6	1	2	9	5	8
12	10	11	7	1	2	9	3	4	6	8	5

ATONAL IN THE MAINSTREAM

Leonard Rosenman

The Cobweb (1955)

DUEL (1971)

Jimmy Giuffre

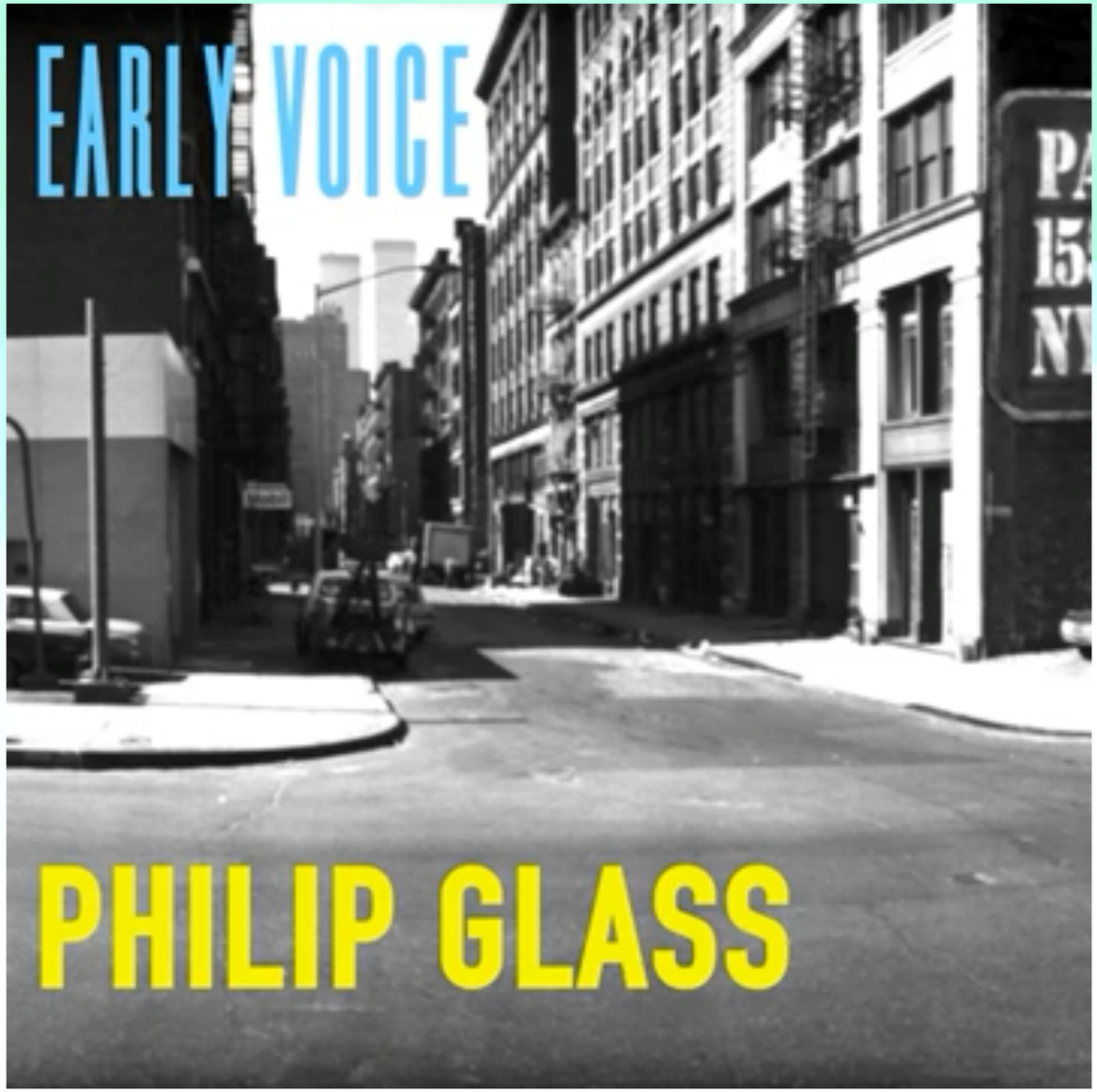
Fugue (1953)

ATLANTIC
SD 1364
FREE JAZZ
THE ORNETTE COLEMAN
DOUBLE QUARTET
STEREO
ONE
FREE JAZZ - PART 1
Ornette Coleman
(ST-A-61343 PR)

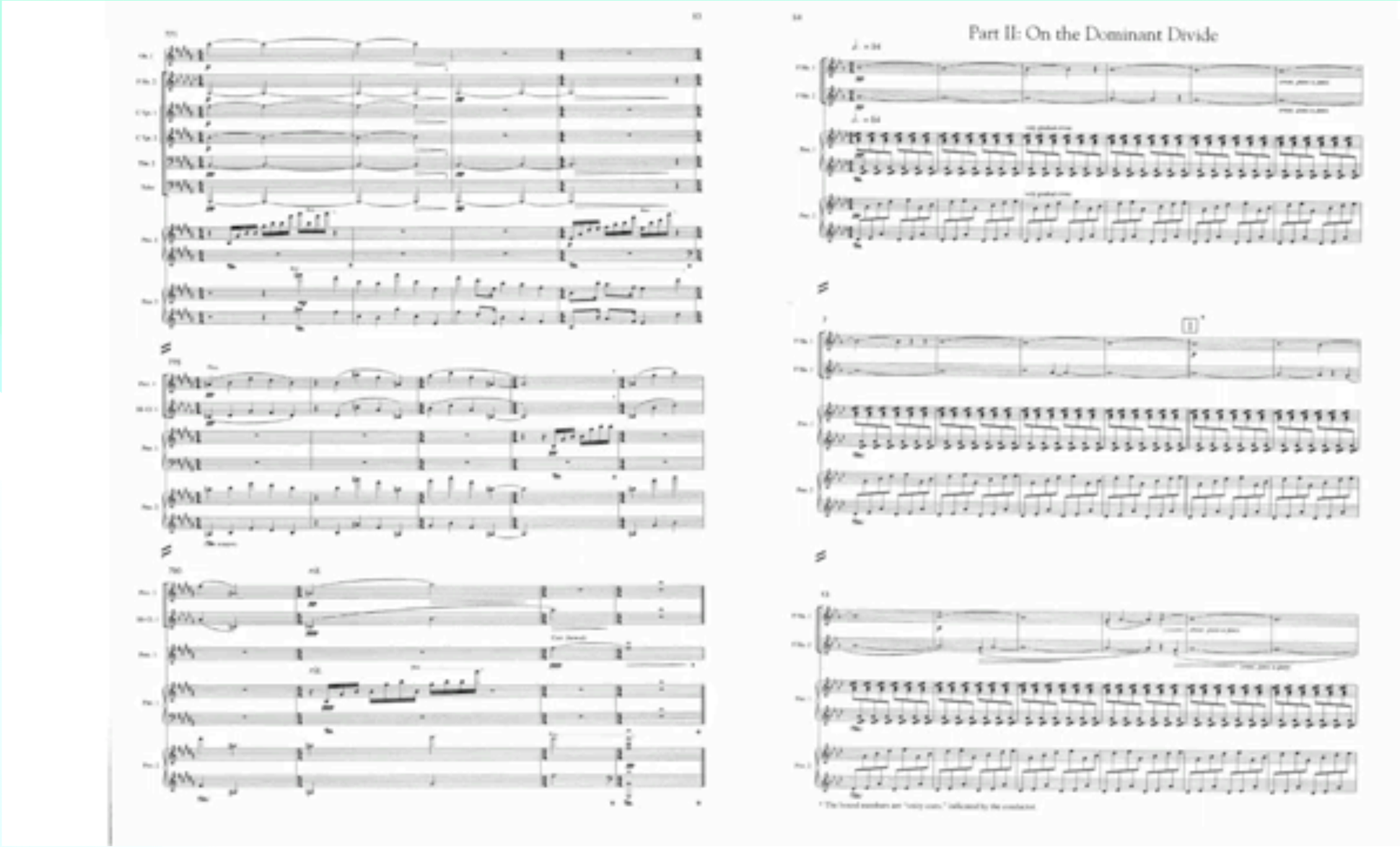
RETURN
OF THE CHORDS

Philip Glass

Another Look at Harmony (1975)



John Adams from Grand Pianola Music : On the Dominant Divide(1981)



Arvo Pärt

Credo (1968)

Arvo Pärt

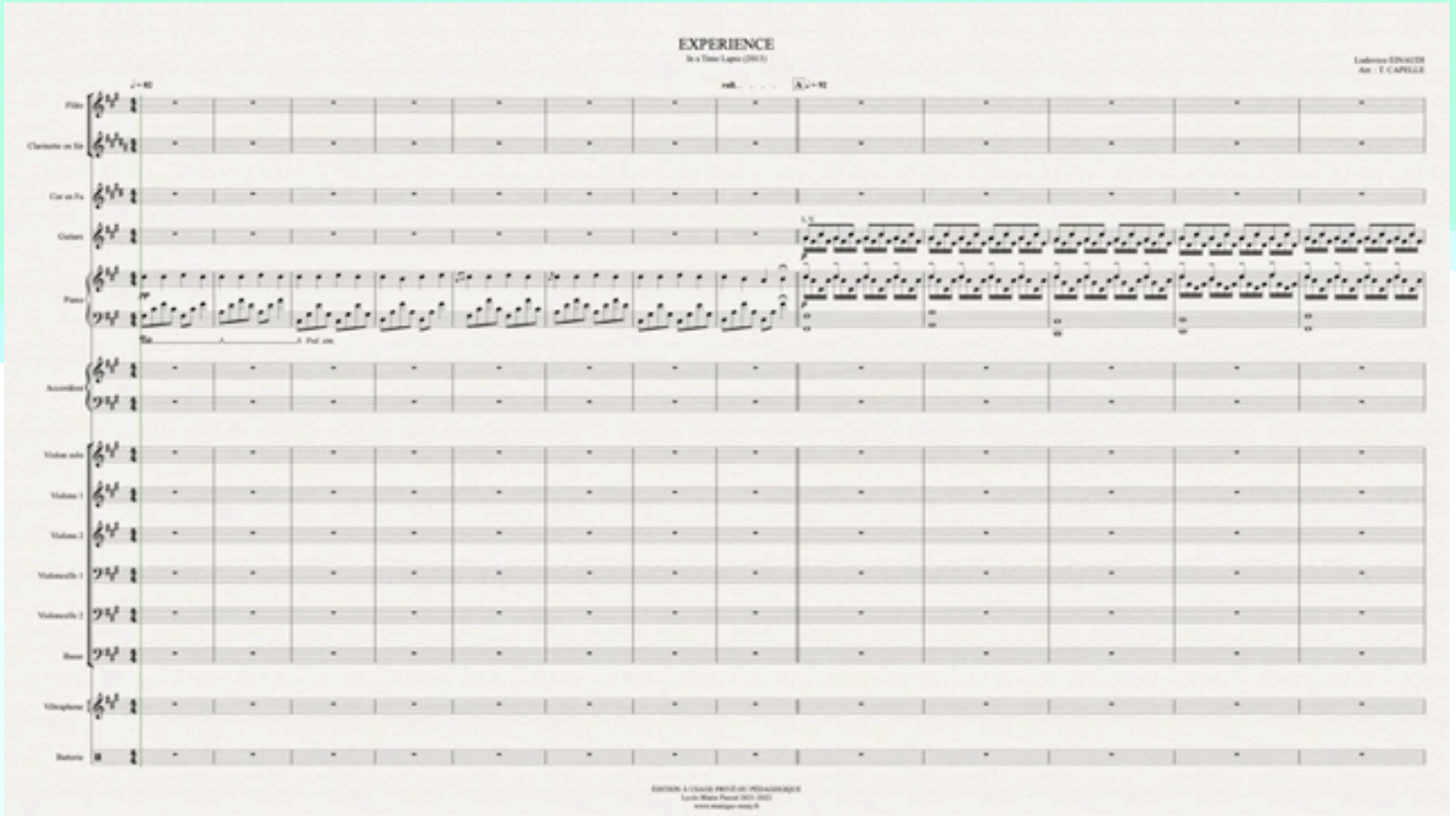
Credo (1968)

Berg in 1930:

I tell you, this whole hue and cry for tonality comes not so much from a yearning for a keynote relationship as from a yearning for familiar concords — let us say it frankly, for the common triads.

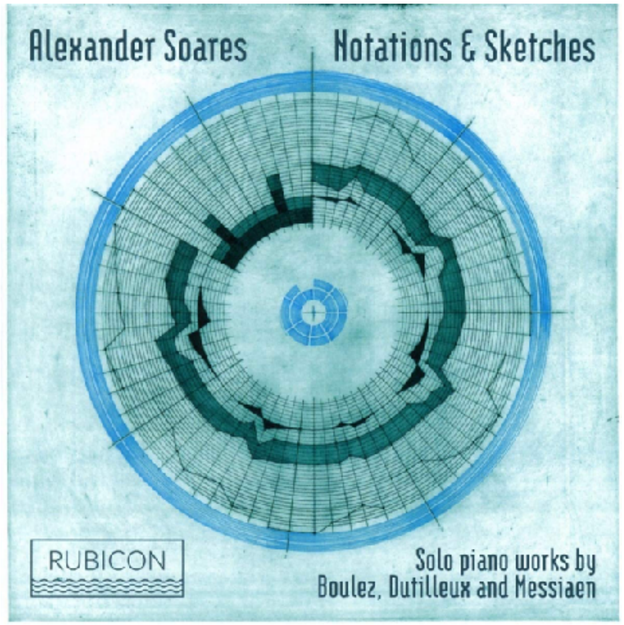
Ludovico Einaudi

Experience (2013)



ALEXANDER SOARES

MESSIAEN	Prélude (1964)
SCHOENBERG	from Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke Op. 19, Nos 2,4 and 6 (1911)
BOULEZ	Notations Nos 7,8 and 12 (1945)
ADAMS	China Gates (1977)



Ortega y Gasset (1925):

modern art is unpopular

removes narrative and emotion

emphasis on the aesthetic

the “how” rather than the “what”

Theodor Adorno (“Music, Language, and Composition”, 1956):

But with the proscription of everything that is even remotely similar to language, and thus of every musical sense, the absolutely objective product becomes truly senseless: objectively absolutely irrelevant. The dream of a wholly spiritualized music removed from the sullying influences of the animalistic nature of human beings arises from rough, prehuman material and deadly monotony.