Joseph Klein

Der Demutsahne

(The Humility-forebear)

character study after Elias Canetti

for solo guitar

(2008/13)

– for Matthew Elgart –

duration: c. 5'

edited by Joseph Mirandilla

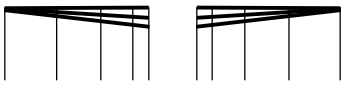
Performance Notes

senza misura

brief pause/break in sound

fermata continuum (short to long)

play as fast as possible


accelerando/ritardando

allow the sound to resonate (*laissez vibrer*)

+ left-hand pizzicato

⊕ hammer-on

5 6 string numbers

II VII fret numbers

arpeggiated chord (up/down)

[block chord

durational continuum within *senza misura* section: values arranged from shortest to longest (precise durations *ad libitum*).

• Accidentals apply only to the notes they immediately precede, with the exception of repeated pitches.

• With the exception of measure 16b, the de-tuning of the guitar strings should be achieved quickly and subtly so that the pitch change is not apparent until the following measure. In each case, the pitch alteration should be as close to 25 cents as possible in order to create the greatest discrepancy in tuning between the strings.

Program Note

Der Demutsahne (*The Humilty-forebear*) is the tenth in a series of short works for solo instrument based upon characters from *Der Ohrenzeuge: Fünfzig Charaktere* (*Earwitness: Fifty Characters*), written in 1974 by the Bulgarian-born British-Austrian novelist Elias Canetti (1905-1994). Canetti's distinctive studies incorporate poetic imagery, singular insights, and unabashed wordplay to create fifty ironic paradigms of human behavior. This collection of works, begun in 1997, was inspired by the vividly surreal depictions of Canetti's characters and includes works for contrabass, violin, bass flute, ocarina, contrabassoon, glass harmonica, trumpet, percussion, and bass saxophone, among others. In Canetti's depiction of this character, The Humility-forbear "twists from one submission to another... He knows that a person who is eager to die will practice submission early on, and the trick is to live in the teeth of this insight.... [He] practices bearing up under his hardship... [and] does it so well that he is sometimes pricked by malice; then he succeeds in intercepting a hardship before it properly arrives."

Der Demutsahne was composed in September of 2008 for guitarist Matthew Elgart, and first performed on 26 May 2012 at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music (Chengdu, China) by guitarist Joseph Mirandilla.

Der Demutsahne

(The Humility-forebear)

The humility-forebear nestles with destiny, the inevitable is his bliss. It is useless saying no to the inevitable, so he says yes before it even knocks. He walks about somewhat bent, thereby proclaiming his willingness to bear any yoke. But he strives not to look around too much, to keep from being noticed by yokes. For each yoke wants to be borne in its own way; if there are too many, they use their identity, and nothing is more dismal than routine.

The humility-forebear twists from one submission to another. He feels what good it does, he can rationalize it with deep-felt words. He is convinced that man exists for the inevitable: that is the very thing distinguishing him from animals. *They* do not know, they are always fleeing, as though they could escape their destiny. Eventually, they *are* eaten, and the poor things have no inkling that this is the way they have to be. Man, however, incessantly waits for his destiny and welcomes it.

"Do you want to live forever?" he says to his child after it has barely learned how to speak, and he prepares it at an early age for submission; let it become like him and not go through life blindly, let it increase the number of humility-forebears.

He knows that a person who is eager to die will practice submission early on, and the trick is to live in the teeth of this insight. This trick consists in doing absolutely nothing against what must be. "And how can one distinguish what must be from other things?" One is born with an instinct for that, he says, and a man's consists in never losing that instinct.

One is well-advised never to hear about struggles for freedom, rebellions, uprisings, or even mere protests. If one does hear about them, however, one should go all the way and also learn how useless they were. Either they fail or they do not fail. If they do not, then everything remains as before. A man who sees everything and takes it as it is and always was will maintain his dignity. The worst is good if only it comes as destiny, for it is the hardest.

The humility-forebear practices bearing up under his hardship. He does it so well that he is sometimes pricked by malice; then he succeeds in intercepting a hardship before it properly arrives. Thus one burden is supplanted by the other, he too has a sense of variety. Each new burden increases the sublimity of man.

The humility-forebear is bursting with experience. He scatters advice right and left. It is always the same.

— Elias Canetti, *Der Ohrenzeuge: Fünfzig Charaktere*
(translated by Joachim Neugroschel)

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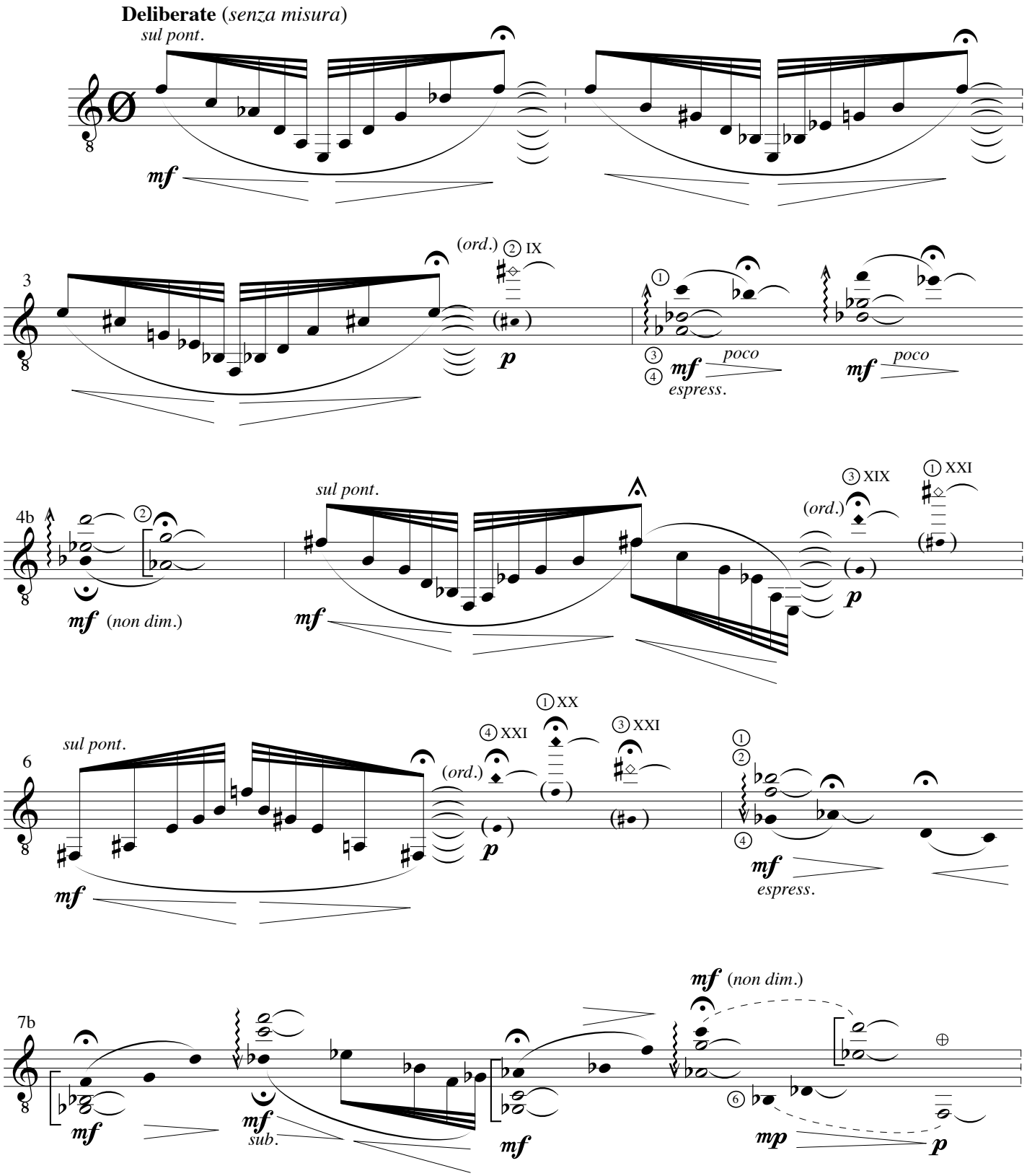

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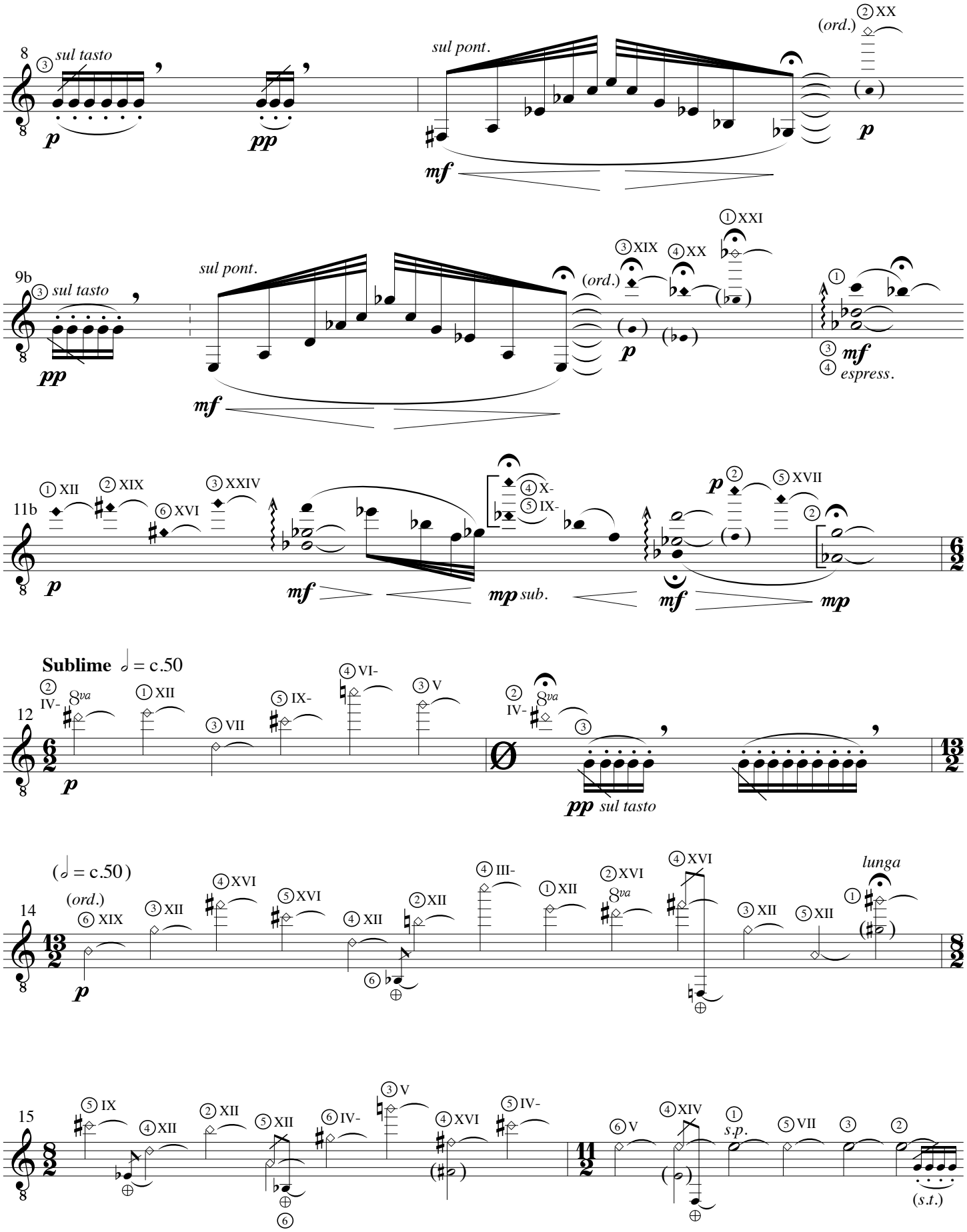
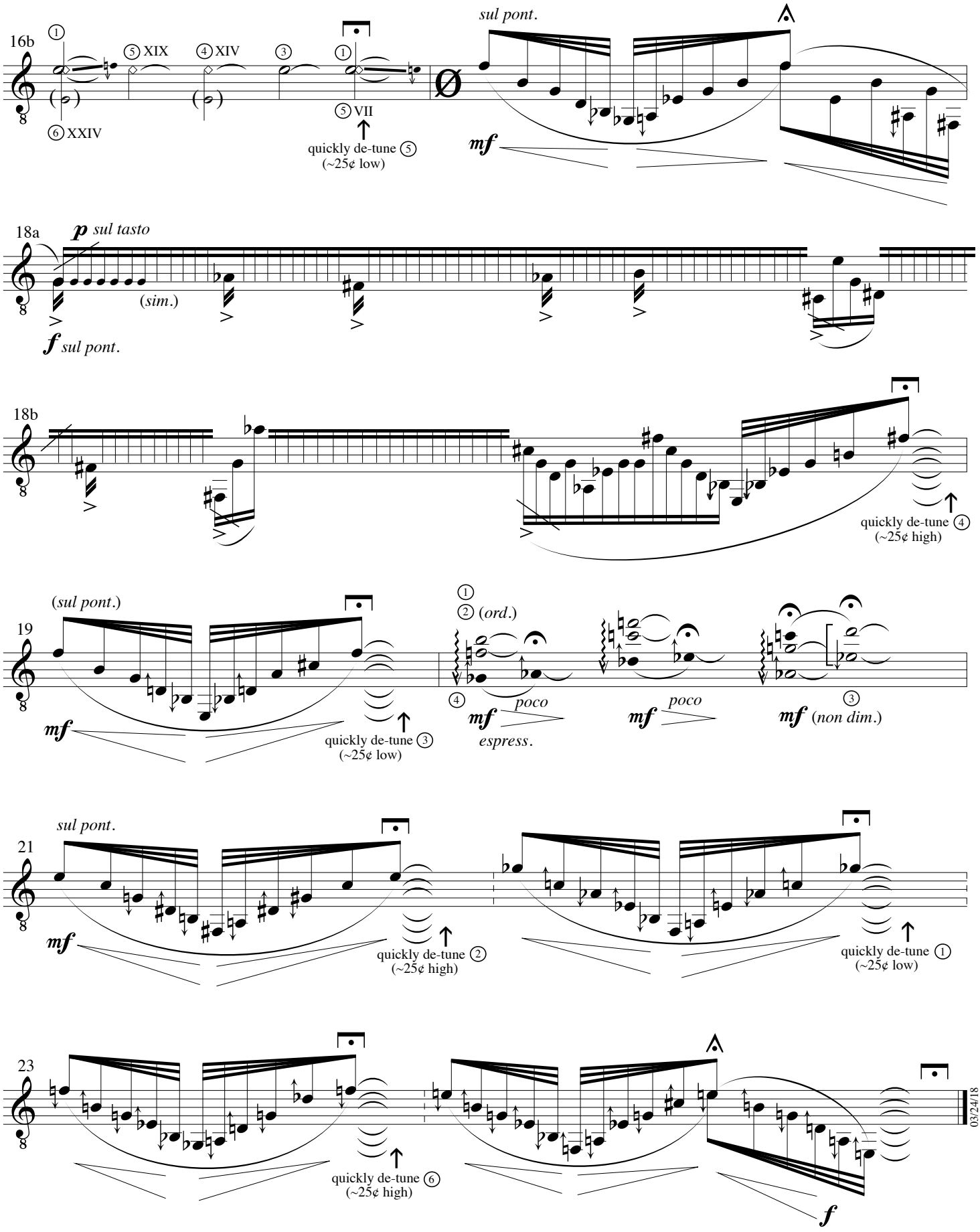

8
sul tasto
p
pp
sul pont.
mf
(ord.)
XX
p
9b
sul tasto
pp
sul pont.
mf
(ord.)
XIX
XX
XXI
p
mf
espress.
11b
XII
XIX
XVI
XXIV
p
mf
X-
IX-
mp sub.
mf
p
XVII
mp
Sublime ♩ = c.50
12
IV-
8va
XII
VII
IX-
VI-
V
IV-
8va
p
pp sul tasto
(♩ = c.50)
14
(ord.)
XIX
XII
XVI
XVI
XII
XII
III-
XII
XVI
8va
XVI
XII
XII
lunga
p
15
IX
XII
XII
XII
IV-
V
XVI
IV-
V
XIV
s.p.
VII
(s.t.)


16b
① ⑤ XIX ④ XIV ③ ①
⑥ XXIV
⑤ VII
quickly de-tune ⑤
(~25¢ low)
sul pont.
mf
18a
p sul tasto
(sim.)
f sul pont.
18b
quickly de-tune ④
(~25¢ high)
19
(sul pont.)
mf
quickly de-tune ③
(~25¢ low)
① ② (ord.)
④
mf poco
espress.
mf poco
③
mf (non dim.)
21
sul pont.
mf
quickly de-tune ②
(~25¢ high)
quickly de-tune ①
(~25¢ low)
23
quickly de-tune ⑥
(~25¢ high)
f
03/24/18