Joseph Klein

# Chain of Circumstances

(2020)

for solo piano or piano four hands,
with optional dancer and/or interactive computer music

To Richard Shuster and Jordan Fuchs
Supported by a grant from Texas Woman's University

duration: variable (c.7-15')

## Symbols

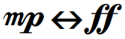
accelerando/ritardando

durational continuum in senza misura sections (shortest to longest)

fermata continuum (shortest to longest)

senza misura

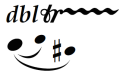
metered notation: beat units are fixed, measure units fluctuate



play within the dynamic range indicated

fluctuate around given dynamic

let the sound ring



double trill: rapidly alternate between the three pitches indicated

sweeping glissando (with hand)

tremolando (freely)

mute string with finger near pin block

scrape wrapped strings with fingernail

pluck string with fingernail

## Performance Notes

*Chain of Circumstances* is a modular work consisting of a series of distinctive, contrasting, and relatively static "states," which comprise the raw materials to be arranged and integrated at the discretion of the performer(s):

- The performer(s) should consider all manner of ways that the various modules may relate to one another when organizing the work.
- Modules may return any number of times during a given realization.
- A given module may interrupt any other module—or may itself be interrupted, fragmented, and reorganized.
- Gestures or fragments from any of the individual modules may be interpolated into a contrasting module at any time, in order to "perforate" the prevailing texture.
- Various modules may be combined to form larger units, which themselves may be considered discrete episodes or movements within the overall realization of the work.
- The only fixed element in the piece is Module 1/8, which is to serve as a prologue and epilogue to the piece. Other than this one formal consideration, there is no particular order that the interior modules must occur.
- The overall duration of the work is dependent on how frequently modules recur, as well as the degree to which the performer(s) dwell upon any given state; however, the duration is also dependent upon whether the work is performed with one or two pianists, with the optional solo dancer and/or interactive computer music, as these factors may influence the manner and degree to which the various states are explored.

The arrangement of these raw materials may either be determined ahead of time by the performer(s), or spontaneously determined during performance. When working with a dancer, a pre-determined arrangement of materials (with fairly consistent timings) may be desired—unless the choreography itself is of an improvisational nature, in which case a more spontaneous realization may be preferred.

## Program Note

*Chain of Circumstances*, for solo pianist or piano four hands (with optional solo dancer and/or interactive computer music), is one of a series of open-form compositions that have occupied my creative interest in recent years. As with the other related works, *Chain of Circumstances* explores aspects of recombinance, modularity, and non-linear musical structures. In this instance, the work is conceived as a series of disparate, distinctive, and relatively static musical states that provides an ever-changing sonic canvas, which the pianist(s) may alter at will. In performances that include solo dancer and/or electronics, the result is a kind of dynamic and unpredictable "feedback loop" between the various elements.

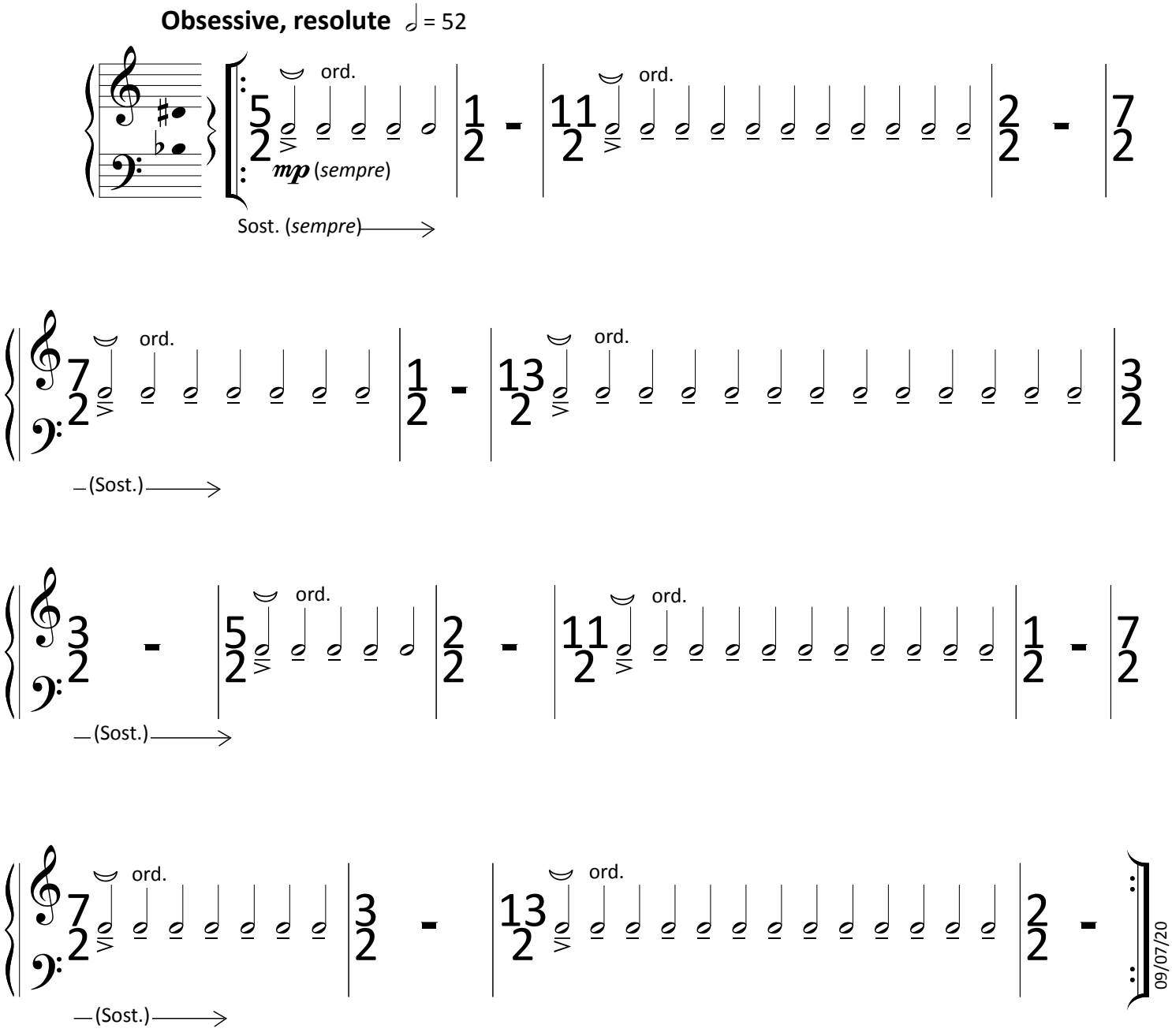
*Chain of Circumstances* was supported by a grant from Texas Woman's University and composed in February-March 2020 for pianist Richard Shuster and dancer/choreographer Jordan Fuchs.

# Chain of Circumstances

Module 1/9

(Prologue/Epilogue)

Joseph Klein
2020




- This module must always begin and end the work.
- The performer may start playing at any measure; however, the duration of the first and final iterations must be no longer than one complete cycle.
- The performer may return to this module (sparingly) at any time during the performance; however, iterations other than the first or last must be no longer than four measures in duration (including rests).
- The performer may choose either of the pitches indicated, but may not change pitches within a given iteration. If proceeding directly to or from Module 2: choose B♭ to elide with section A; choose D♯ to elide with section B.

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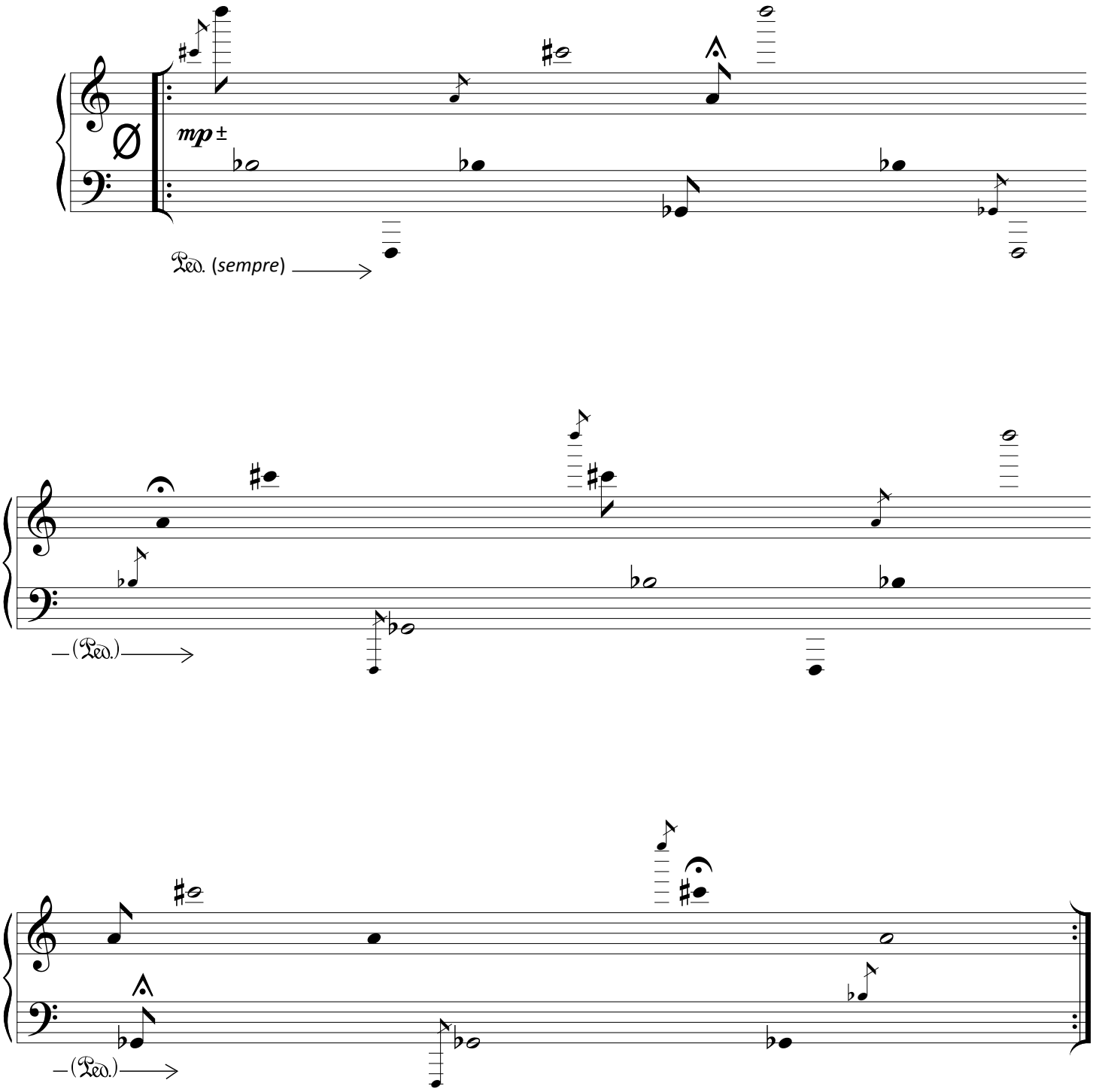
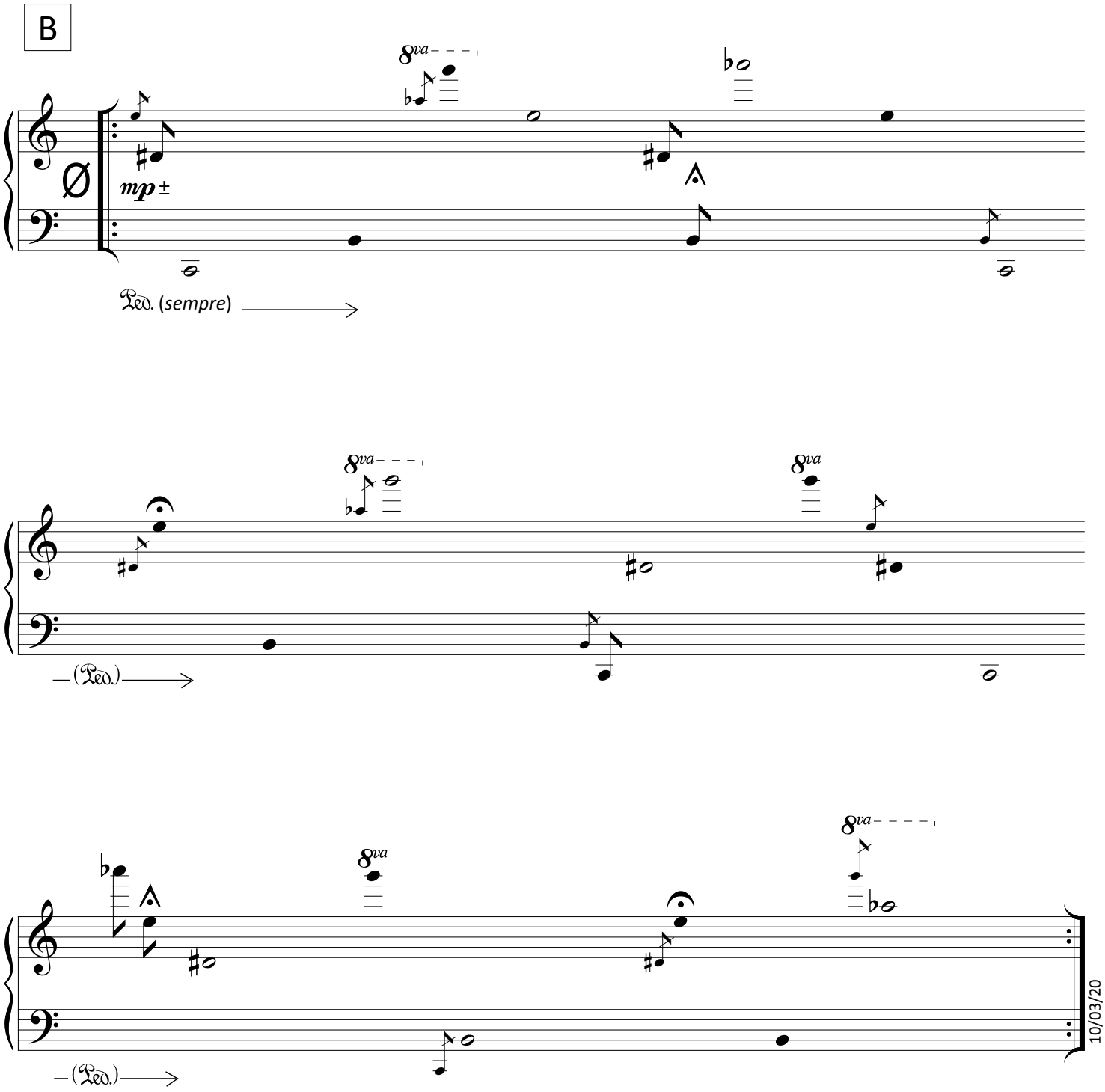
# Chain of Circumstances

Module 2

A **Suspended, languid** (12-15" per system)

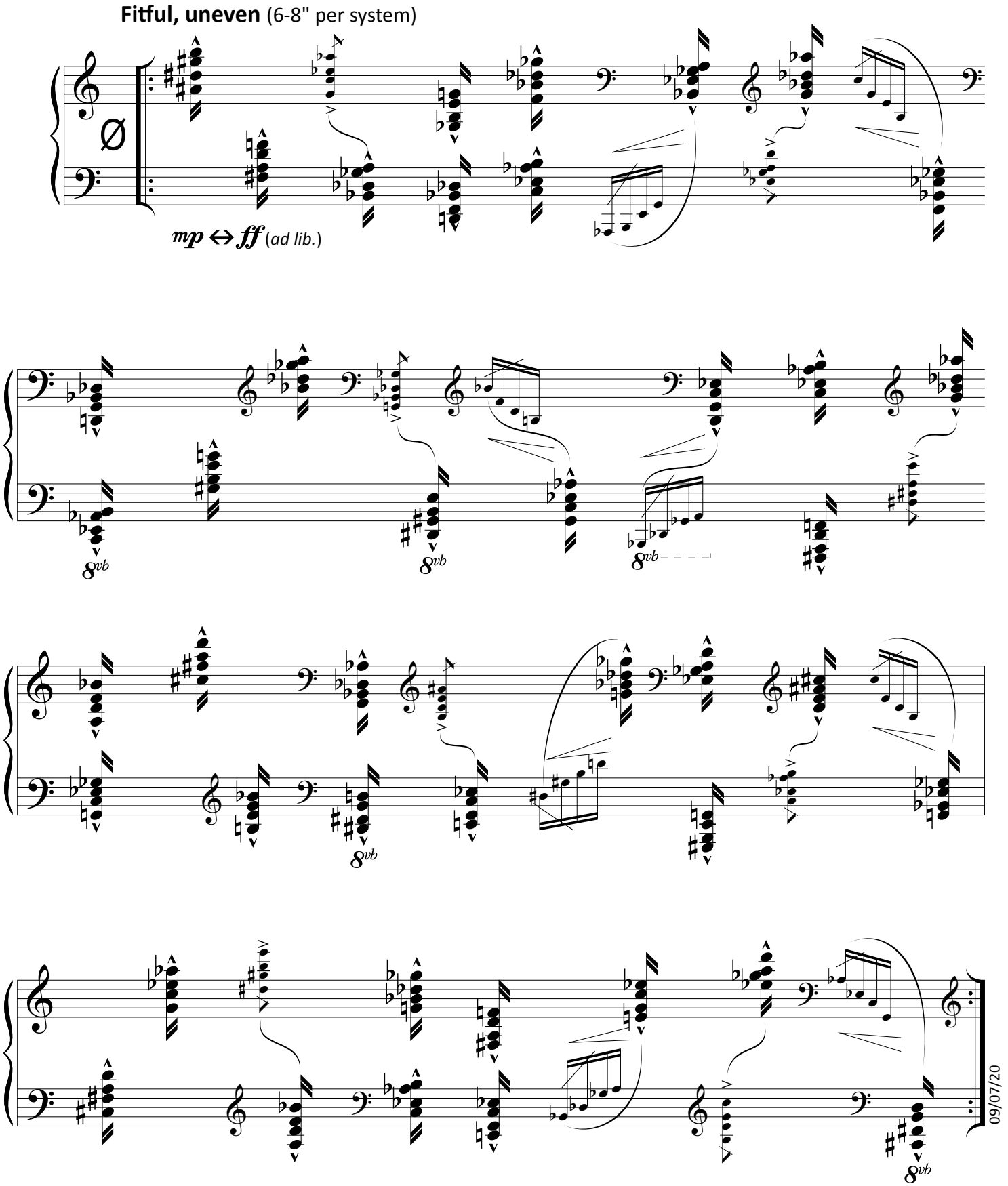




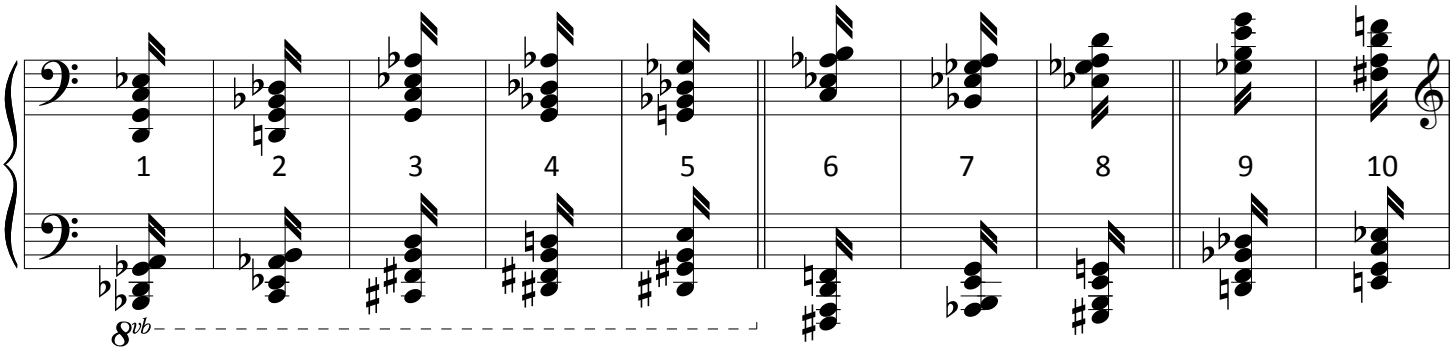

- The performer may begin at any point in this module, and should play no more than three complete cycles in a given iteration.
- While the dynamic level is primarily *mezzo-piano* throughout, the performer should feel free to occasionally accentuate random notes (*ad libitum*), which should punctuate the otherwise placid state of the prevailing texture.
- The performer may choose to play either section A or section B, and may not change sections within a given iteration.
- The overall effect of this module should be like that of wind chimes gently sounding in the breeze.

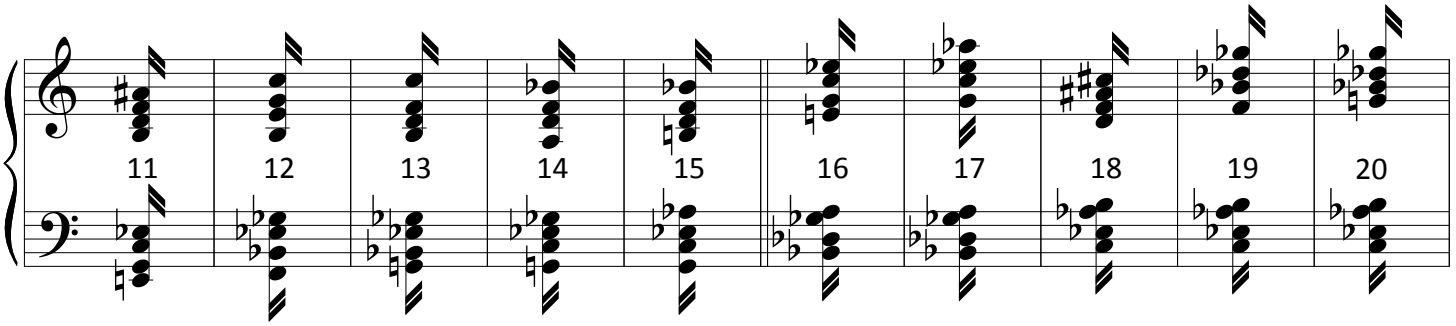
# Chain of Circumstances

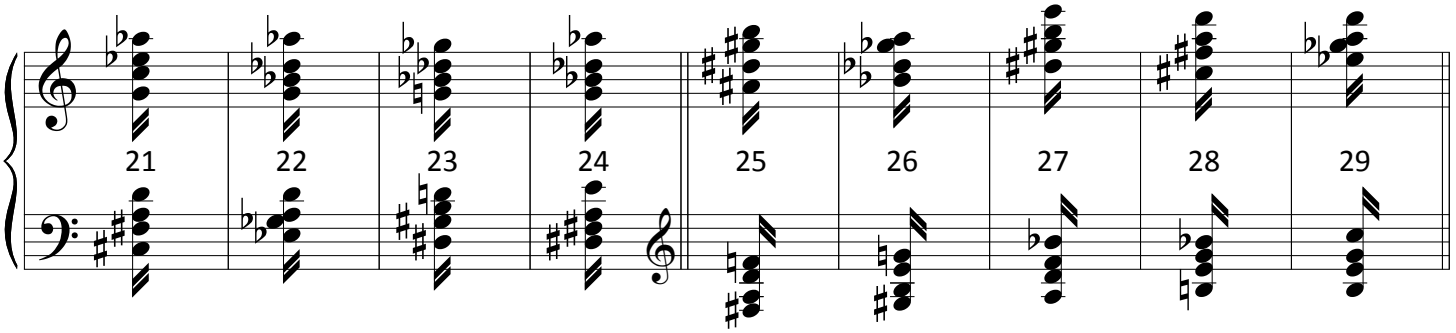
Module 3

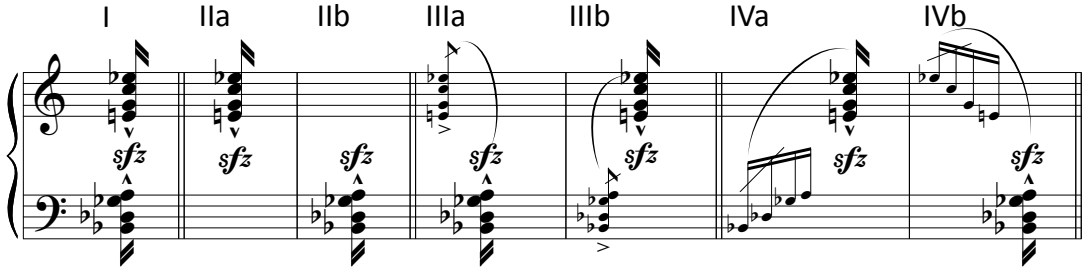


- The performer may begin at any point in this module, and should play no more than one complete cycle in a given iteration before proceeding to the next module.
- Fragments of this module may be interjected at any time during the performance, typically acting as a disruptive element.
- In addition to playing this module as notated on the previous page, the performer may freely play these chord complexes (indicated below from lowest to highest) in any order, applying any of the gestures at the bottom of this page to any of the chords. In such cases, the character of the resulting music should always be similar to that on the previous page.



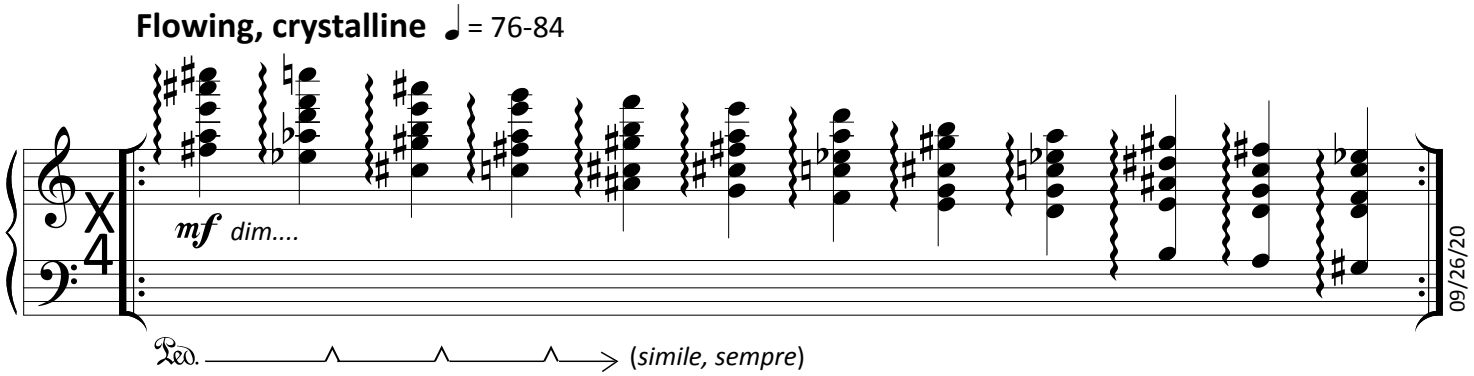



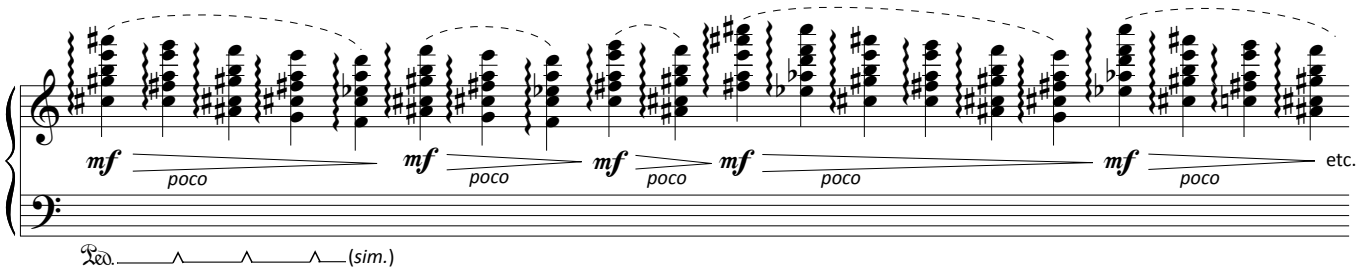



# Chain of Circumstances

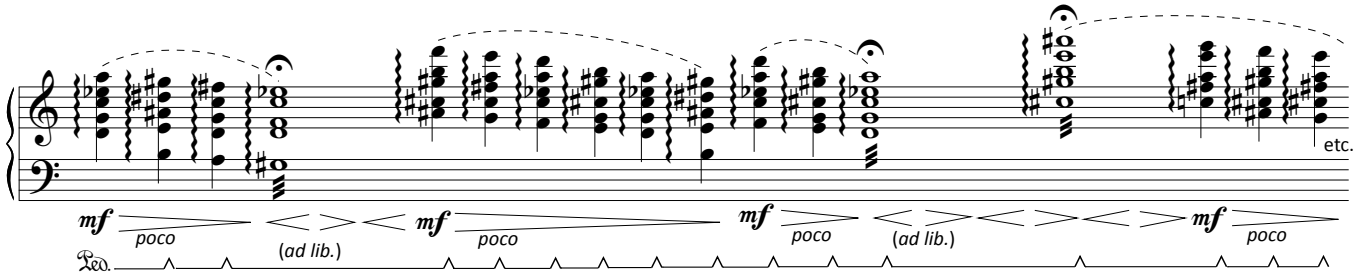
Module 4




- The performer may begin playing at any point in the descending chord sequence.
- The sequence may be repeated at the performer's discretion.
- The performer may restart the descending sequence at any point, with three conditions: (a) at least two sequential chords must be played before restarting; (b) the performer must go back at least two chords whenever restarting the sequence; and (c) each new sequence must begin *mezzo-forte* and *poco diminuendo* throughout. For example:



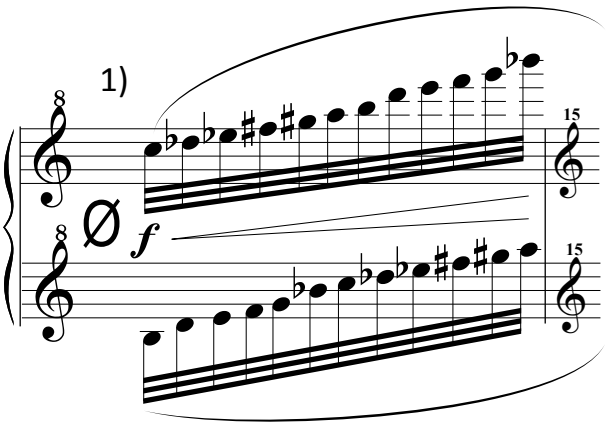

- This section may be initiated or terminated by "freezing" any of the given chords within the sequence through a sustained tremolando; this should be performed with the pedal depressed throughout. For example:



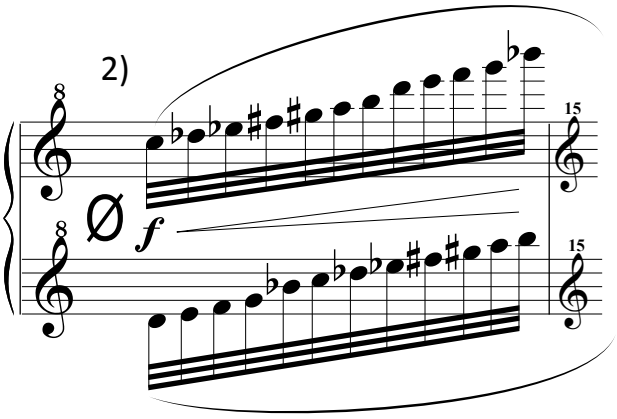
# Chain of Circumstances

Module 5

1)

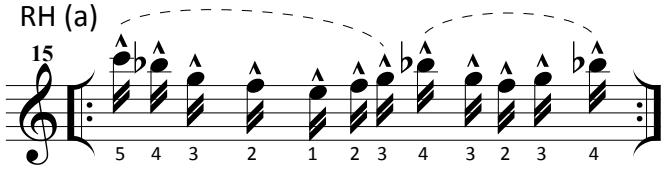


2)

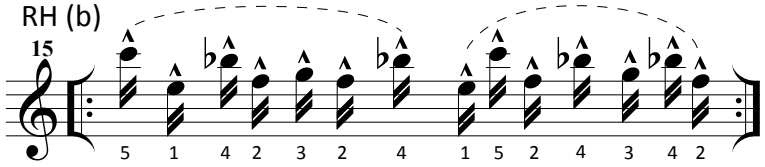


**Brittle, nervous**

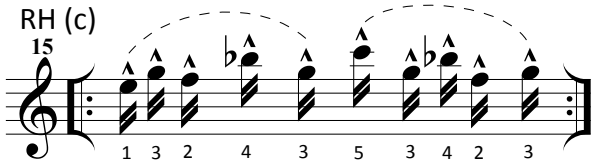
RH (a)



RH (b)



RH (c)

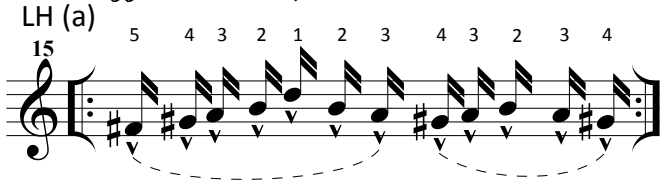


***ff*** *e secco, sempre*

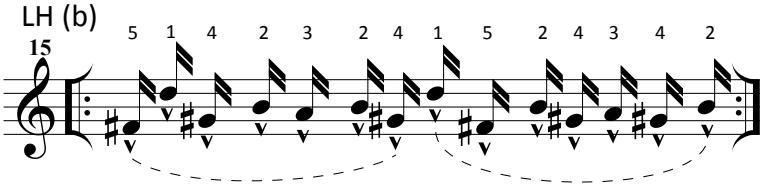
- Either of the two-handed runs at the left may be played to initiate this module (optional).
- Each pattern may be repeated *ad libitum*; player may move from one pattern to another at any point.
- Player may begin on the first note of any broken-slurred grouping.
- Any of the right-hand patterns (above) may be combined with any of the left-hand patterns (below), *ad libitum*.
- Each hand moves independently, with erratic and uneven rhythm throughout. Performer should avoid any sense of alignment between the two hands.
- The overall duration of any iteration of this module should be no less than 10 and no more than 30 seconds.
- The composite effect should be that of heavy rain hitting a tin roof.

***ff*** *e secco, sempre*

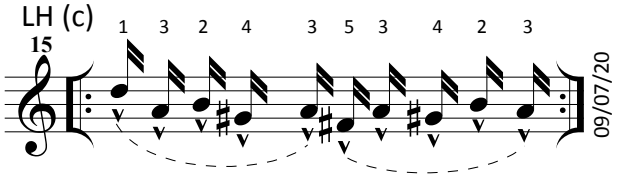
LH (a)



LH (b)



LH (c)

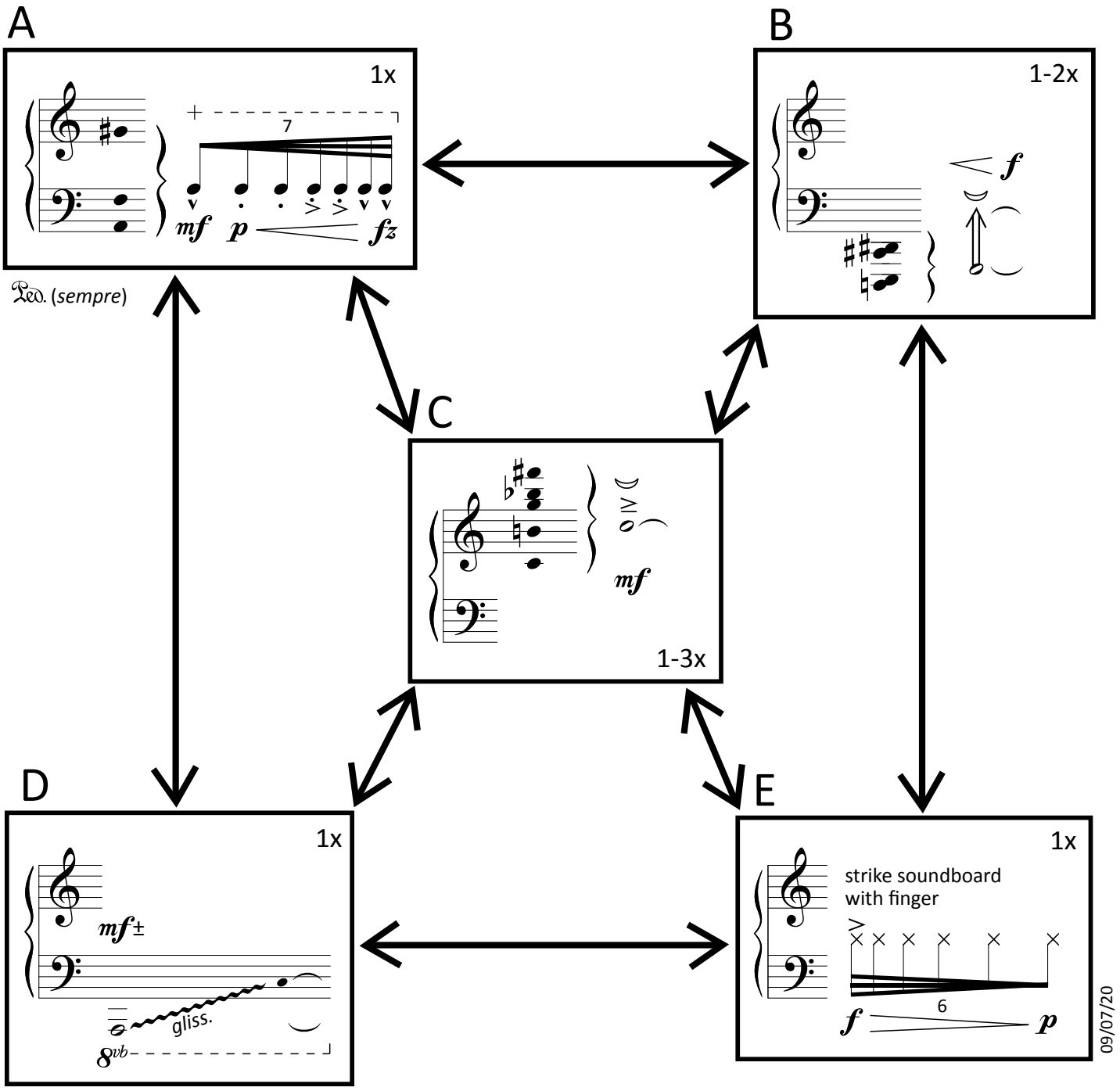


09/07/20

# Chain of Circumstances

Module 6

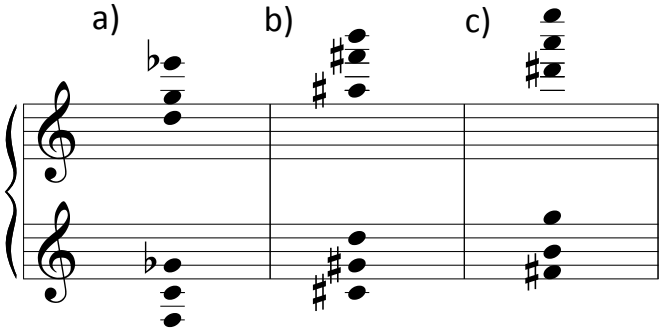
(Event-complex)

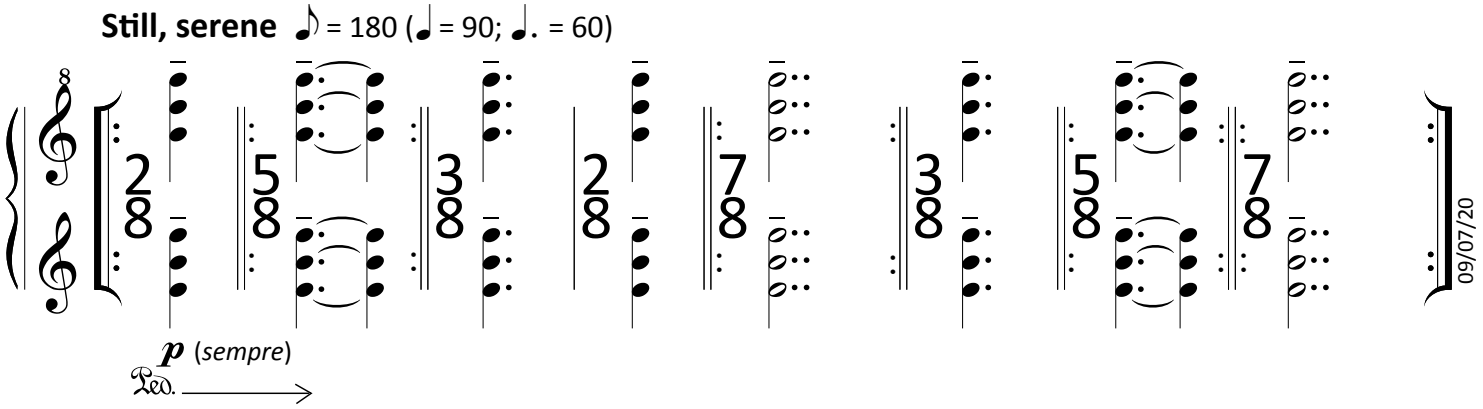



- Performer may begin at any place in the score and proceed according to the arrowed lines.
- In contrast to the other modules, all events within this module require play inside the piano
- The events in boxes A, B, and C may be played on any of the pitches indicated in the grand staff; it is recommended that the hammers be marked with color-coded stickers in order to aid the performer.
- The events in boxes B and C may be reiterated before proceeding to the next gesture. The number of successive iterations of any given event is indicated in the boxes (1x, 1-2x, 1-3x).
- Any of these events may be freely interpolated into one or more of the other modules at any time during the performance.
- In a given iteration of this module, none of the events may be played more than three times before proceeding to another module.
- The pedal is to be depressed throughout this entire module.

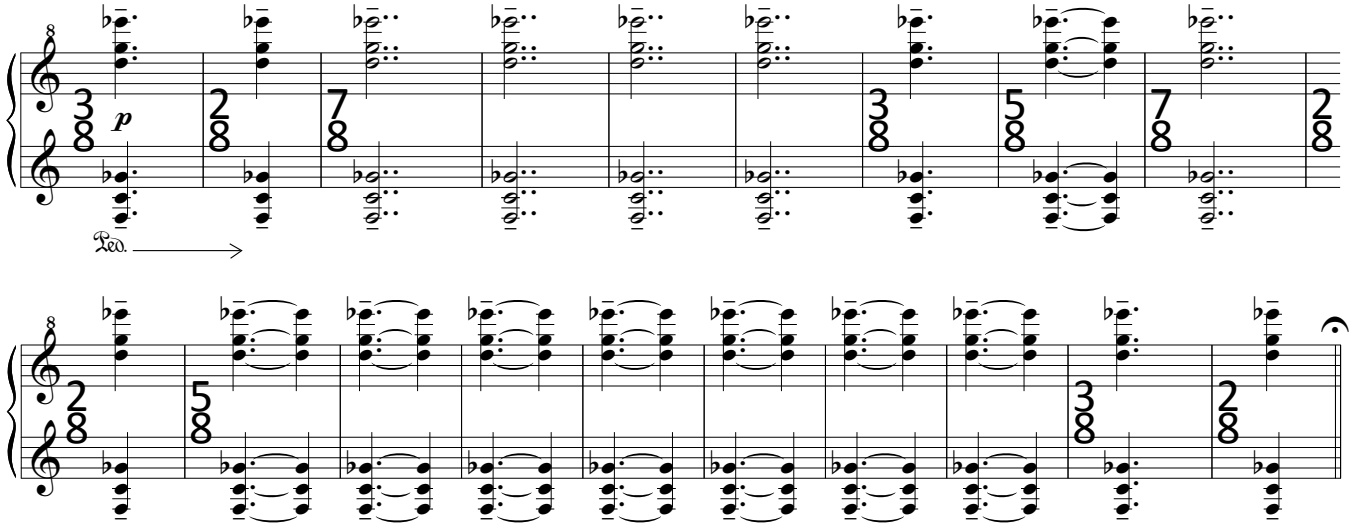
# Chain of Circumstances

Module 7




- The performer may select any of the three chords indicated at the top of the page, but may not change chords within a given iteration of this module.
- The performer may begin playing at any measure; however, a given iteration may include no fewer than three measures and no more than eleven measures (not including repeated measures; see below).
- Any of the 5/8 or 7/8 measures may be (optionally) repeated three to seven times before proceeding, as if stuck in a loop; this may occur no more than twice within any given iteration of this module. Such repeats may not occur in successive measures; i.e., there must be at least one measure separating repeated measures. For example:

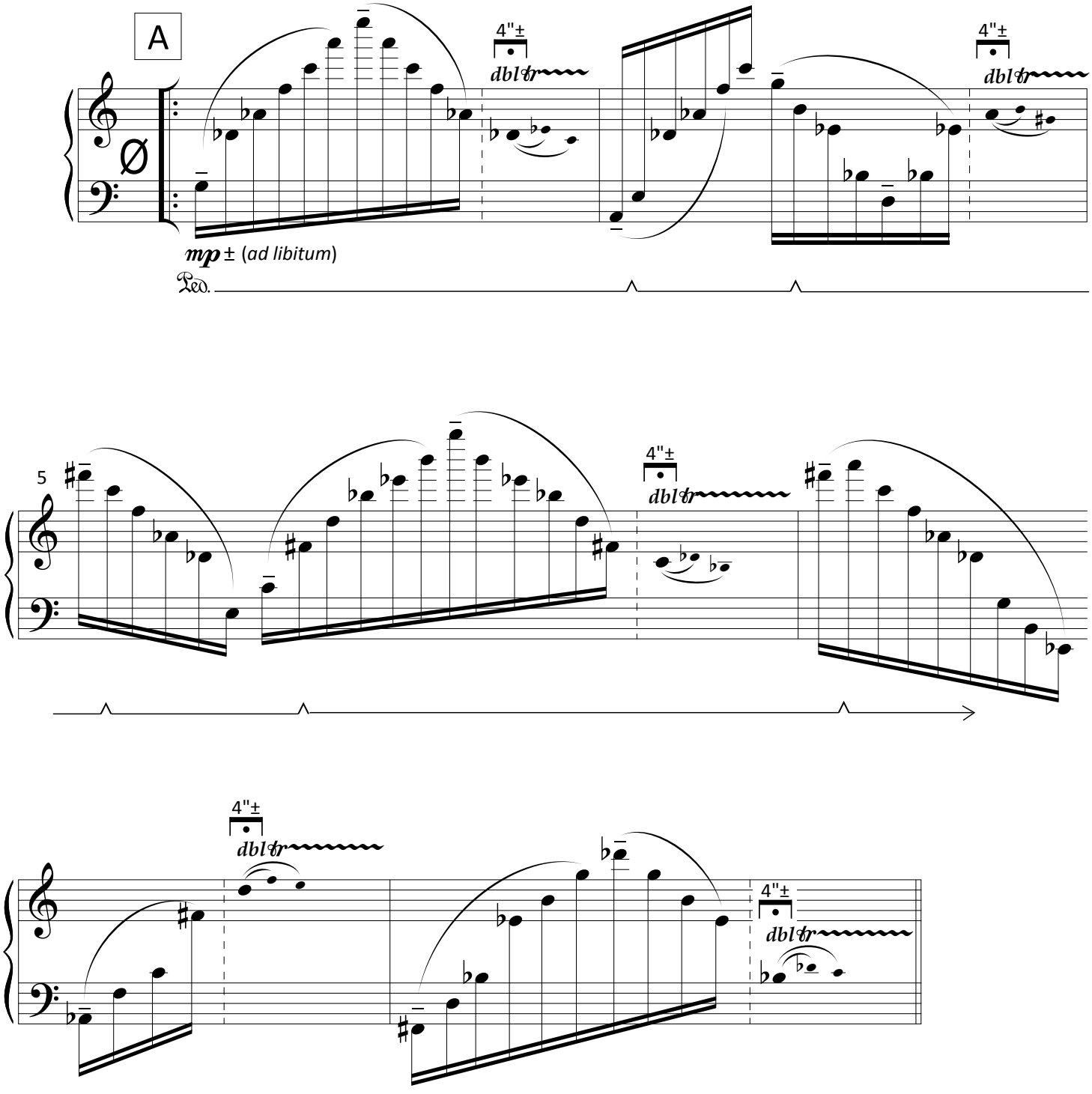


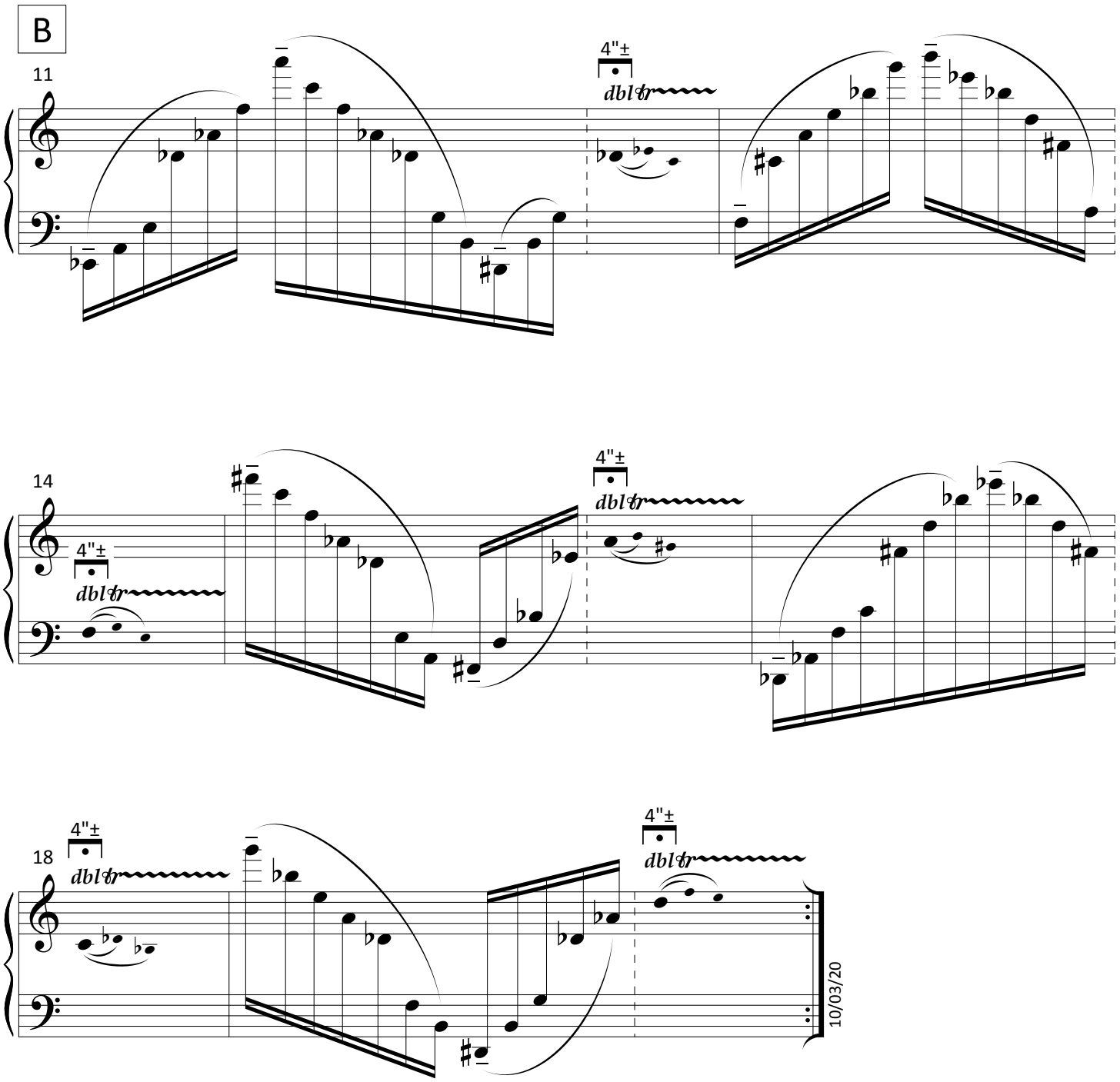

- The overall effect of this module should be that of church bells chiming in the distance.

# Chain of Circumstances

Module 8

**Florid, shimmering** (*molto rubato*)






- The performer may start at the beginning of either section A or section B, returning to the top once reaching the end.
- A given iteration of this module may be no less than one complete section and no more than three: e.g., A, B, AB, BA, ABA, BAB.
- Tempo and dynamics should be constantly fluctuating throughout, *ad libitum*;
- The duration of the double-trills should average around 4 seconds, but should fluctuate *ad libitum* between 3 and 6 seconds. The effect should be an unpredictable suspension of the arpeggiated figures, and must always avoid falling into a regular pattern.
- Fragments of this module may be interjected at any time within another episode; in such instances, no more than three (consecutive) measures may be used.