Joseph Klein

Die Geruchschmale

(The Narrow-smeller)

character study after Elias Canetti

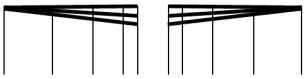
for solo harpsichord

(2022)

- for Elliot Figg -

duration: c. 6'30''

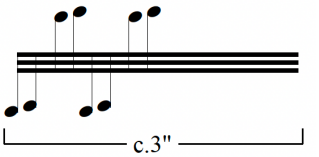
Performance Notes



accelerando/ritardando (number of beams indicates relative speed)

durational continuum in *senza misura* sections: arranged from shortest to longest (precise durations *ad libitum*).

distinct pause/break in sound, arranged from shortest to longest



continue pattern for the extent of the beams or wavy line (duration may or may not be specified)

senza misura

small noteheads indicate sustained pitches from previous passage

sustain indefinitely, until otherwise indicated or next hand position shift

release previously-depressed key(s)

The work is composed for a double-manual harpsichord, with the top manual tuned in A and the lower manual tuned in E♭, as indicated in the tuning diagram below. In the score, pitches played on the top manual are notated with red noteheads; those on the bottom manual are notated with black noteheads.

Pitch	Top Manual (A)	Bottom Manual (E♭)
B	466.9 Hz	463.3 Hz
B♭	442.7 Hz	435.8 Hz
A	415 Hz	406.7 Hz
A♭	389.1 Hz	387.3 Hz
G	373.5 Hz	363.1 Hz
F♯	345.8 Hz	348.6 Hz

Pitch	Top Manual (A)	Bottom Manual (E♭)
F	332 Hz	326.8 Hz
E	311.3 Hz	309 Hz
E♭	290.5 Hz	290.5 Hz
D	276.7 Hz	272.3 Hz
C♯	259.4 Hz	261.5 Hz
C	249 Hz	242.1 Hz

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

It is important to adhere to the timings indicated in each *senza misura* section to achieve the proper pacing of the music: the Cautious, Hesitant section is 12–17 seconds per system; the Aloof section is 12 to 15 seconds per system; the Anxious sections are approximately 15 seconds per system; and the Elusive section is approximately 12 seconds per system.

All arpeggiated chords are ascending unless otherwise indicated by a downward arrow. Chords not marked with an arpeggiation sign are always to be played as block chords.

As a general rule, arpeggiated figures are sustained whenever possible (typically indicated with open ties, though occasionally left to the discretion of the performer).

Broken ties are used to indicate continuity between microtonally related pitches; while the tied pitches are to be rearticulated (these are not ties in the traditional sense), the connection between pitches should be smooth.

Program Note

Die Geruchschmale (*The Narrow-smeller*) is the twentieth 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, alto saxophone, trumpet, percussion, bass saxophone, guitar, piccolo, organ, basset horn, and violoncello, among others. In Canetti's depiction of this character, the narrow-smeller "shrinks away from smells and avoids them. [She] is regarded as noble because she avoids any touch. She fears vehement sentences that might pierce through, she addresses people softly.... Unfortunately, she is attractive and gets pursued with roses, she can save herself from them only with quick faints.... while she dreams about distilled water, her admirers put their foul-reeking heads together and try to figure out to which flower scents they could convert her."

Der Gertuchschmale is conceived as a deconstructed chaconne, whose subject is based on a fragment from Maurice Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (1911). The work incorporates a 23-tone microtonal scale, which is the result of tuning each manual to a different key in just intonation.

Die Geruchschmale was completed in August 2022 and composed for harpsichordist Elliot Figg.

Die Geruchschmale

(The Narrow-smeller)

The narrow-smeller shrinks away from smells and avoids them. She opens doors cautiously, hesitating before she crosses a threshold. Half-averted, she stands there a while, to smell with one nostril and spare the other. She sticks one finger into the unknown space and brings it to her nose. Then, with that finger, she holds one nostril shut and sniffs with the other. If she does not lose consciousness immediately, she waits a bit. Then she puts one leg sideways across the threshold, but leaves the other foot outside. It would not take much more for her to dare it, but she hits upon a final test in time. She gets up on her tiptoes and sniffs again. If the smell does not change now, she fears no surprises and risks the other leg as well. She is standing inside. The door, through which she could save herself, remains wide open.

The narrow-smeller seems isolated wherever she may be, she has a layer of caution about her; other people watch out for their clothes when they sit down, but she watches out for her isolation layer. She fears vehement sentences that might pierce through, she addresses people softly and awaits answers just as softly. She does not come halfway to anyone; in the aloofness in which she remains, she follows the movements of other people. It is as though, separated from them, she is constantly dancing with them. The distance remains the same, she knows how to ward off any approach and certainly any touch.

So long as it is winter, the narrow-smeller feels best out of doors. She worries about the spring. The blossoms and fragrances will begin and she will suffer unbearable torments. She prudently avoids certain bushes, she goes her own, intricate ways. When she sees an insensitive person sticking his nose in lilacs far away, she becomes ill. Unfortunately, she is attractive and gets pursued with roses, she can save herself from them only with quick faints. People find this exaggerated, and while she dreams about distilled water, her admirers put their foul-reeking heads together and try to figure out to which flower scents they could convert her.

The narrow-smeller is regarded as noble because she avoids any touch. She is at her wits' end with marriage proposals. She has already threatened to hang herself. But she will not do it, she cannot bear the thought of having to smell the savior who cuts her down.

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

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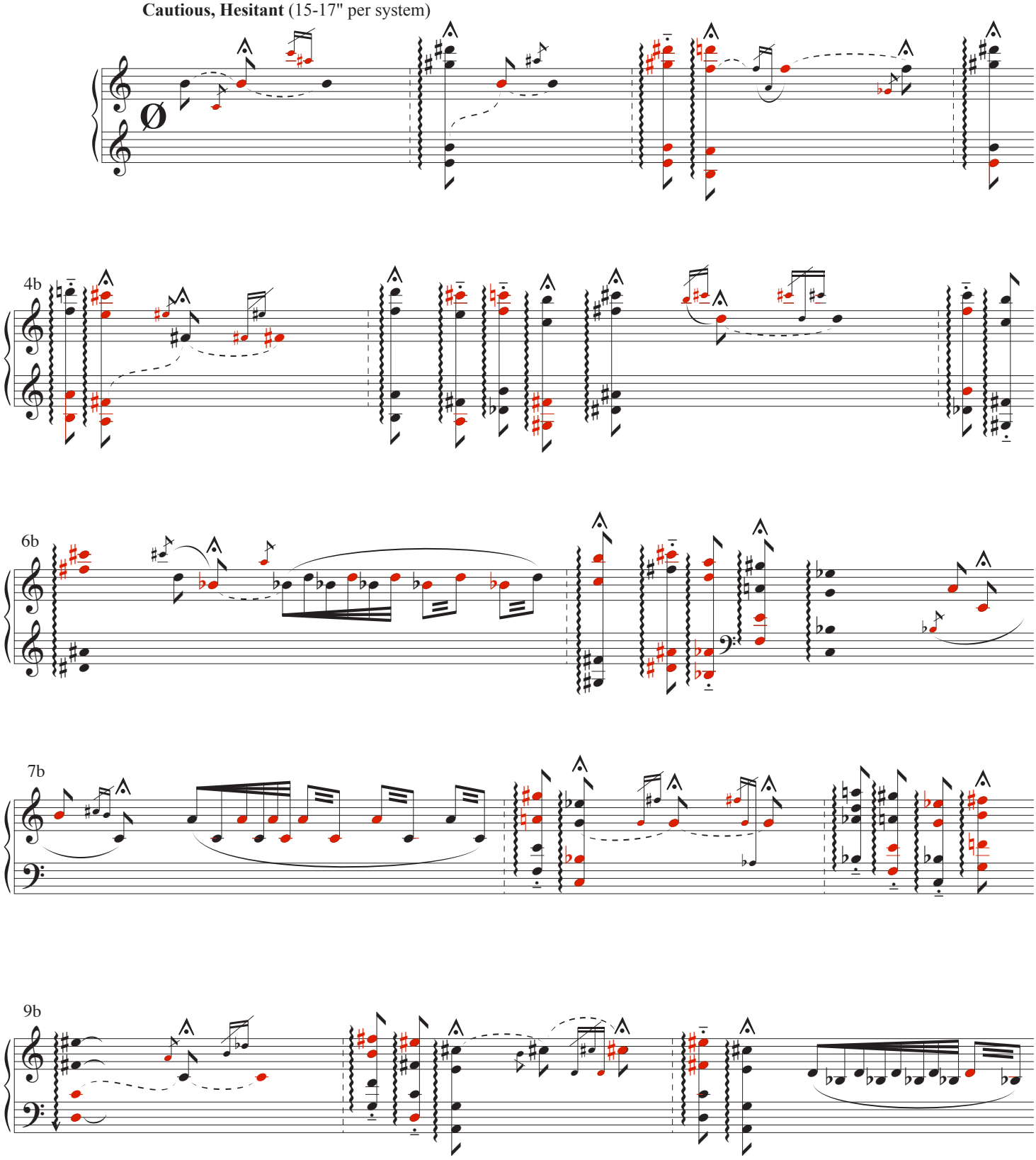
Cautious, Hesitant (15-17" per system)



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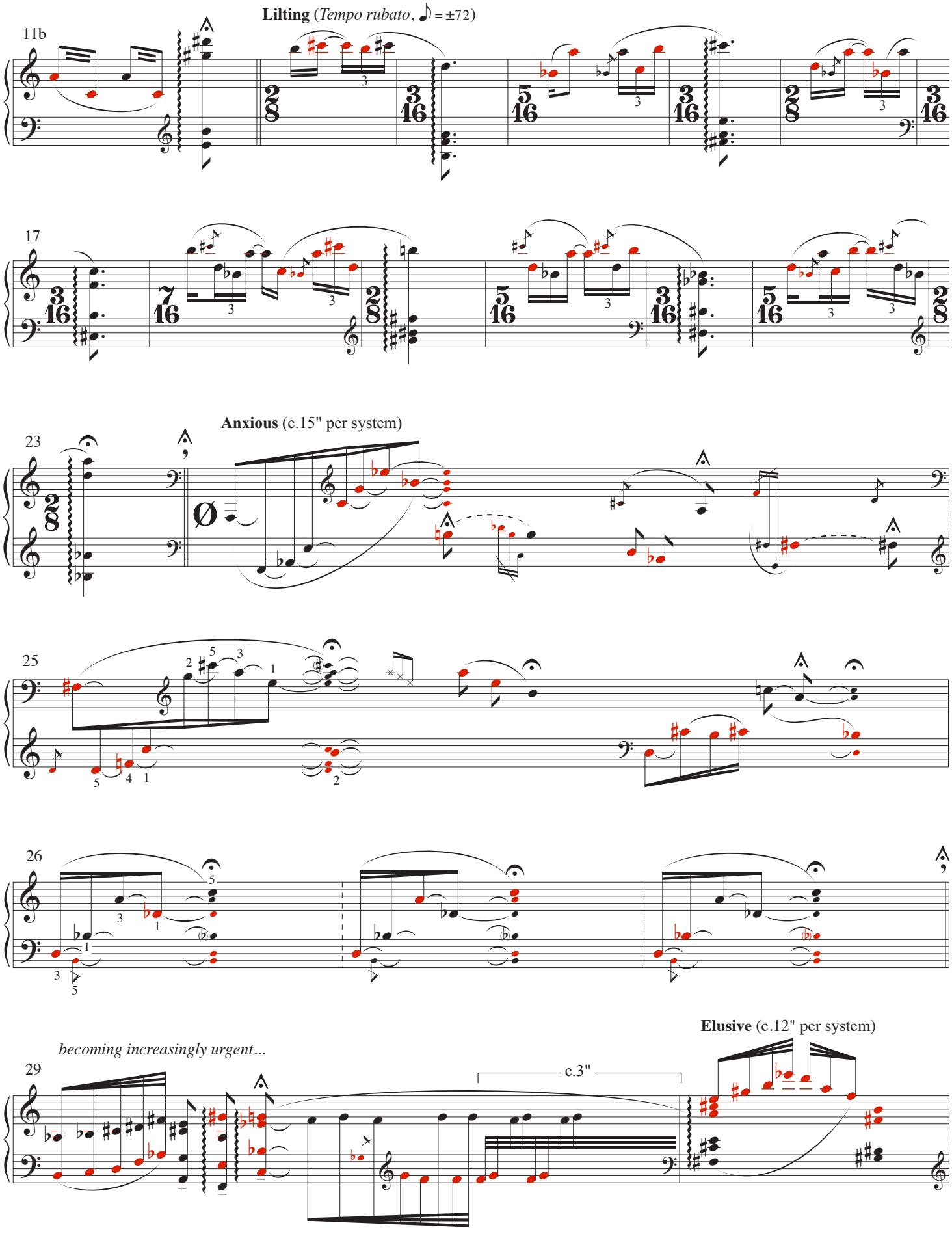
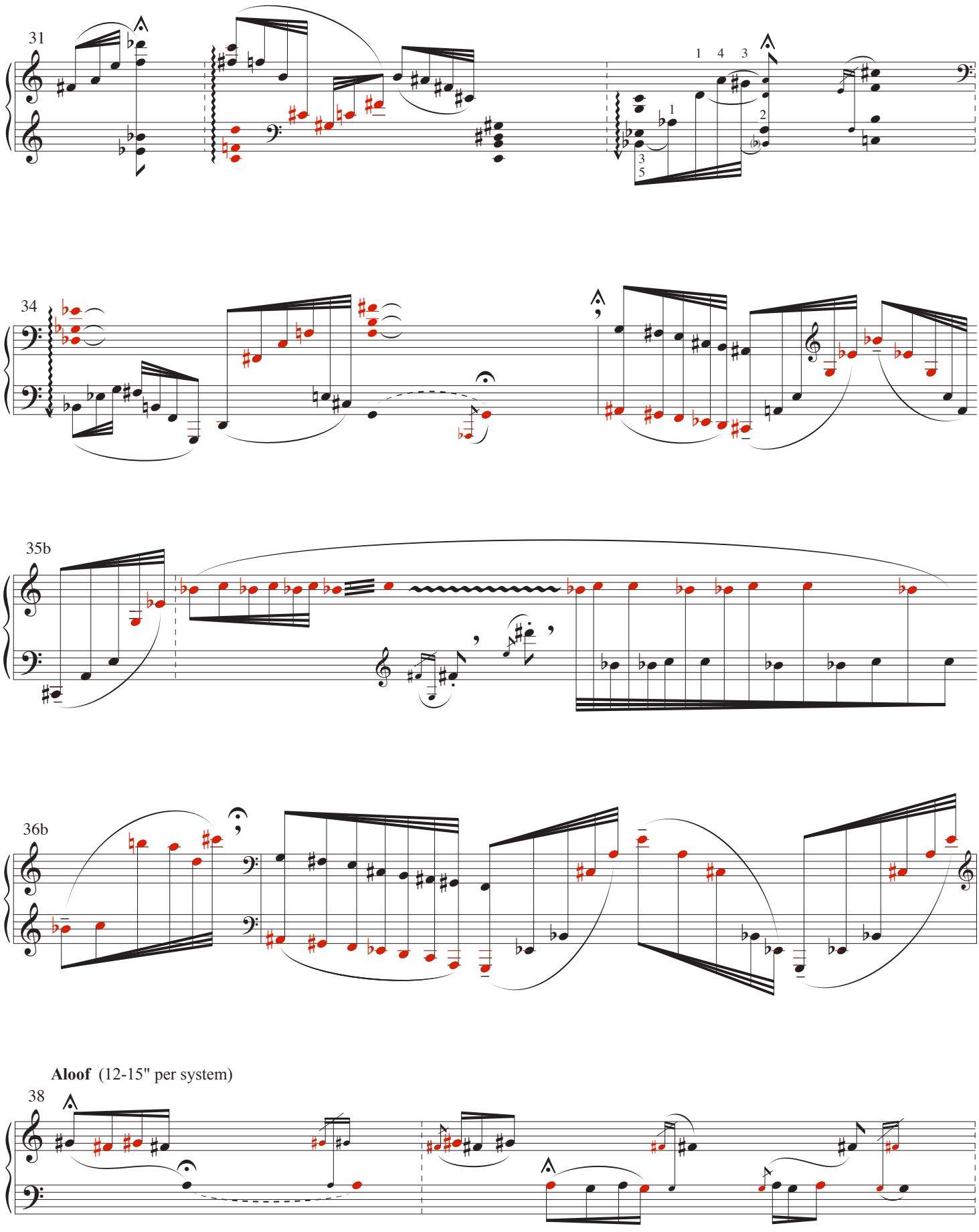
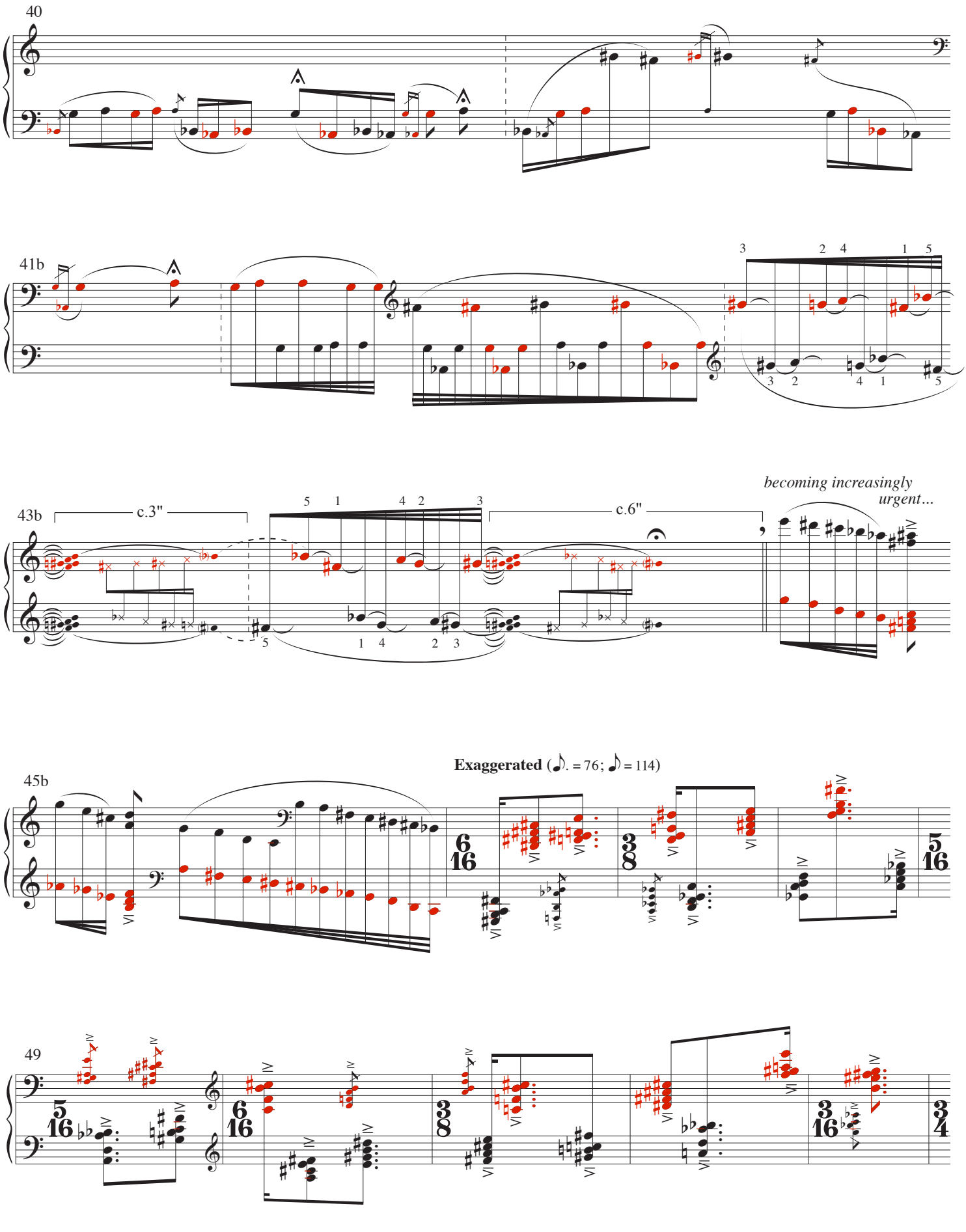
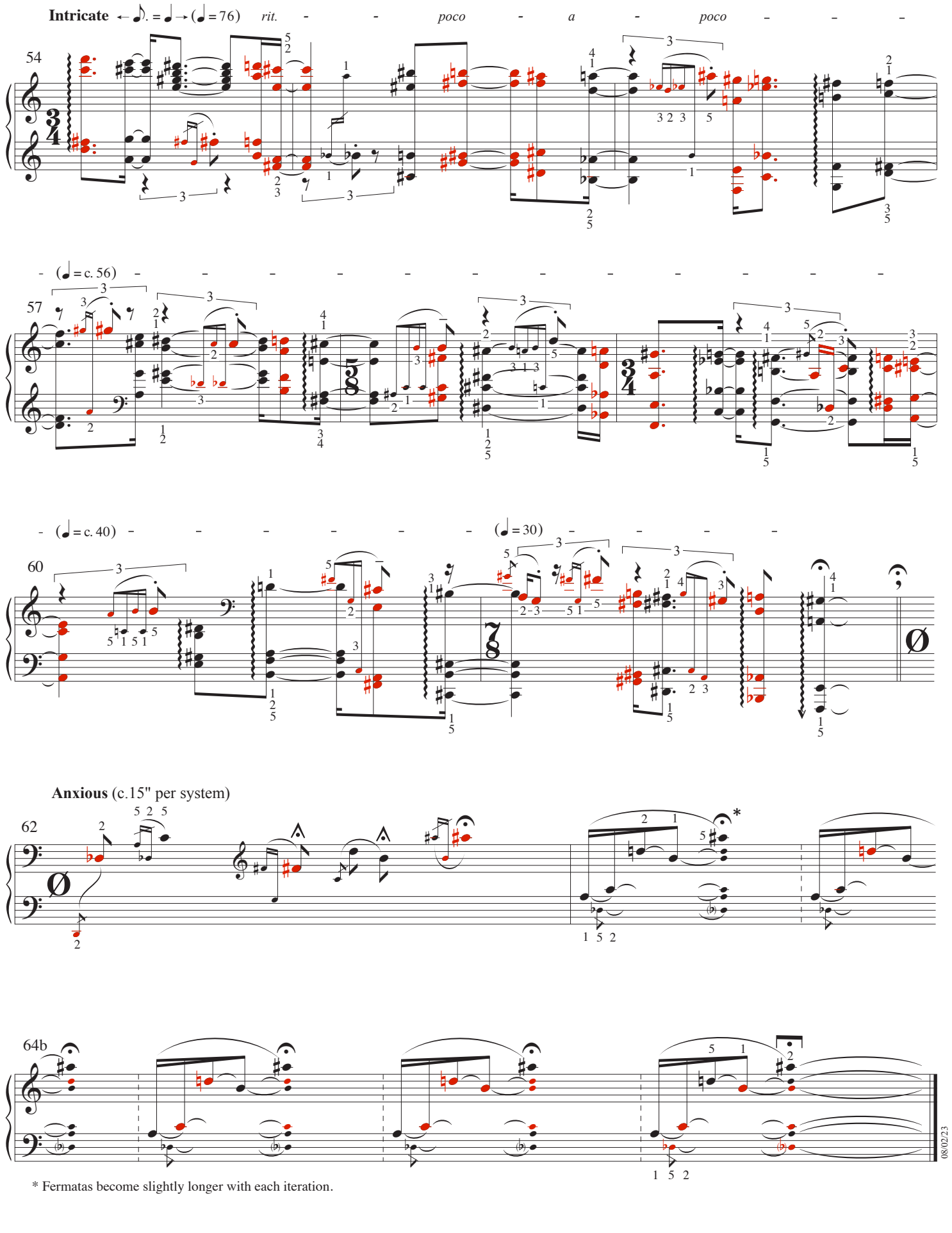

Lilting (Tempo rubato, ♪ = ±72)
11b
17
Anxious (c.15" per system)
23
25
26
Elusive (c.12" per system)
becoming increasingly urgent...
29
c.3"


31
1 4 3
34
35b
36b
Aloof (12-15" per system)
38


40
41b
43b
c.3"
c.6"
becoming increasingly urgent...
45b
Exaggerated (♪. = 76; ♪ = 114)
49



* Fermatas become slightly longer with each iteration.