Creativity, Improvisation, and Pedagogy for the Chinese Yangqin

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MUSIC
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

May 2021

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Abstract

Improvisation is commonly employed in the approach to teaching creative and imaginative music in music education systems across many cultures. However, improvisation as a creative teaching strategy is not yet applied in music programs in Chinese universities, conservatories, and schools. The aim of my research project is to formulate and develop pedagogical materials and exercises which can be used to develop contemporary music improvisation programs in Chinese education.

My study will focus on a practical/experimental approach to teaching, with the aim of discovering a viable pedagogy for transmitting the values and spirit of free improvisation. This research draws on my own experience studying improvisation at York University as well as conducting research on other North American and European institutions. It is organised on the basis of the following: 1) different models of teaching improvisation; 2) importance of improvisation in music; 3) musicianship exercises; 4) music creation; 5) improvisation strategies. I will also discern the roots of the yangqin and regional yangqin music improvisation techniques to establish an innovative approach to creating music and to compare with Western music improvisation techniques.

Acknowledgements

This paper would not have been possible without the support from my supervisor, co-supervisors, mentors, family, and friends. I would like to give special thanks to my supervisor, Professor Michael Coghlan, for his time and careful attention to detail. I thank him for his untiring support and guidance throughout my music study and journey at York University. My completion of this dissertation could not have been accomplished without his support. I must also thank Professor Randolph Peters, my committee member, who always gave me valuable suggestions on music creation and guided me towards higher achievement in my composition.

I would like to give a special thanks to Professor Casey Sokol, my committee member, with whom I have been studying improvisation for many years, for showing me in his unique way what it means to be a dedicated, creative, open-minded person. He leads me to play music from deep in my heart with deep listening. His pedagogical approach to improvisation has influenced my views on music creation and education and led me to develop this research project. I also thank all the professors who have worked with me over the last two years and have given me of their time, energy, and expertise, for which I am richer, especially Dr. Rob Bowman and Dr. Dorothy de Val.

To my family, thank you for encouraging me in all of my pursuits and inspiring me to follow my dreams. I am especially grateful to my parents for their emotional and financial support. I have always known that you believe in me and want the best for me. I would like to say thanks to you for teaching me that my job in life is to learn, to be happy, to be kind, to be creative, and to know and understand others and myself.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

The disappearance of improvisation in the Chinese music academy motivates me to discover a contemporary Chinese music improvisation pedagogy with innovative approaches and materials for both performance and academic consumption. Two millennia ago in ancient China, music was created spontaneously, and this tradition of on-the-spot improvisation can be defined as composition during performance. Chinese musicians had great freedom to play, create, and discover music and techniques during performance because there were few established norms, or any established or "standard" repertoire, to perform or to serve as models.

The field of music education and performance in the West has seen the integration of the teaching of improvisation, including in universities and conservatories, in community settings, and in private studios (Monk 2013, 1). In all these contexts, three ways of teaching improvisation are commonly used: 1) the idiomatic approach, which teaches improvisation in a specific style; 2) the free improvisation approach, which encourages exploration of the individual voice and improvisation as self-expression; and 3) the music education approach, which provides materials for the discovery of possible realizations (Monk 2013, 1). Taking these three models into consideration, with this project I sought to discover contemporary Chinese music pedagogical strategies and exercises for improvisation that focus on the music education and free improvisation approaches that could be incorporated in my own pedagogy.

The idiomatic approach involves teaching improvisation "through the vocabulary, conventions, and traditions of a specific style" (Monk 2013, 1). The approach is commonly applied in jazz music education. The jazz player learns to improvise by using scales and chord progressions according to certain styles, transcribing solos, and mimicking renowned improvisers (Mazzola 2011, 170). As it is rooted in a “thinking” perspective on improvising, this approach rarely cultivates in the learner a creative perspective or helps stimulate potential creativity (Monk 2013, 1). In my attempt at developing a new contemporary Chinese improvisation pedagogical strategy, a teaching approach based on stylistic assumptions has not been retained in this research.

In addition to the idiomatic model, the free improvisation model has been commonly used in teaching improvisation. This method of improvisation provides the students with an entrance into music exploration, experimentation, and discovery (Monk 2013, 2). From there, improvisers discover new styles and constructions of music, explore new possibilities, and experiment with sounds in the moment (Monk 2013, 2). To this end, free improvisation may contain “sound effects, textural passages, intentionally ‘ugly’ or annoying moments, and chaotic sonorities” (Monk 2013, 2). Bailey (1992, 84) points out that this improvisational approach is commonly applied by classically trained players who are tired of the constraints of classical performance. This method would help one to explore possibilities with one’s instrument and express one’s individual voice to create music and unique new sounds.

The third model is commonly used in music education setting, such as in elementary and secondary schools. Through this model, musicianship training and the learning of basic music theory and certain compositional techniques are required in the process of learning to make music in the moment. Through this approach to improvisation, one could develop musicianship and creativity by discovering possibilities of music creation based on a given rhythmic pattern; one could improvise by applying certain compositional ideas and techniques. This approach to music creation provides learners with certain ideas in regards to how to improvise but requires of them a certain level musicianship and compositional skills.

The three pedagogical models explained above each has their own teaching and learning purposes. These well-developed models are effective in achieving one's purposes in improvisation and can lead to successful improvisation. My research addresses the lack of attention to creativity in Chinese music education and uses the second and third model to discover contemporary pedagogical strategies for improvisation in Chinese music creation.

1.1 Motivation

Many university educators in a formal academic environment grapple with how to teach a creative process such as music improvisation. A year ago, I shared a recording of one of my improvisations with a few Chinese friends who had a similar professional music background in China as me. I did not tell them the music was improvised before they listened to it because I wanted to see how they would respond to improvised music. Most of them assumed it was a composition and said it was beautiful. They asked who composed the piece, and I said, "It is an improvised piece that I played with friends on the spot without any previous discussion or preparation." They said, "What? That is impossible! How do you improvise? If I ask you to teach improvisation on Chinese musical instruments, what will you teach?"

My motivation for this research originates in my own ten years of experience in studying Chinese music performance on the yangqin in China. I realized that Chinese music education mainly focuses on playing techniques and on mimicking instructors' musical expression and interpretations. A lack of attention to creativity in Chinese music education may be one of the greatest obstacles to the development of a modern Chinese music education because "creativity is becoming increasingly important due to increasing global competitiveness" (Sawyer 2005, 265). Sawyer (2005) argues that young people's education in schools needs to help them to be innovators. And this, I argue, would assist the revival of improvisational practice, that is, of a long-lost tradition of innovation.

To seek a way forward, after completing my bachelor's degree in Chinese music performance in China I entered the master's program in music at York University, in Toronto, Canada. This is where I started my new journey in music and of improvisation. I enrolled in the class Contemporary Musicianship and Improvisation, taught by Prof. Casey Sokol, designed to help students find their own potential creativity. The first time I participated in the class was very frustrating because even though I am an experienced performer I had no notion of how to improvise and create music in the moment, so I played a yangqin piece I already knew from memory.

From there, I learnt how to improvise under a combination of the free improvisation and music education models. This allowed me to be liberated from the constraints of both traditional and contemporary Chinese music to create my own music and express my own individual voice. Realizing that modern Chinese music education does not address the disappearance of the possibility of individual creativity, I picked up on improvisation as an innovative approach to music creation that can help unlock potential human creativity and express one's individual voice. The exploration of contemporary pedagogical strategies for improvisation in Chinese music could be beneficial to Chinese students in helping them develop their individual creativity.

Over the past few years at the university, I have studied rhythmic patterns, music vocabulary, variations, permutation, articulations, the cycle of fifths, ostinato, improvisation for silent movies, painting, dance and collaborative improvisation, among other topics. Although I did not focus on harmony because my instrument is limited in terms of its harmonic potential, I improvise with musicians from various cultures to make different kinds of music. If the guitarist plays a harmonic progression, I sometimes improvise a melody over it by analyzing and deeply listening to their playing. Through my experience in learning and practicing improvisation, I observed that improvisation is an indispensable skill that connects and develops one's creativity and spontaneous musicianship. This conclusion led me to explore contemporary pedagogical strategies for improvisation aimed at a wider range of musicians.

In ancient Chinese music creation, two thousand years ago, improvisation was not a foreign concept. As previously stated, this tradition of on-the-spot improvisation can be seen as composition during performance (An, 2016). Chinese musicians, in the absence of established repertoire, created music with a great sense of freedom (An, 2016). However, with the establishment of modern Chinese music education in the early twentieth century, improvisation in the Chinese music academy disappeared under the influence of the German, Japanese, and Soviet Union's music education systems. The exclusion of improvisation from the modern Chinese music education system thus also serves to motivate me to discover a contemporary Chinese music improvisation pedagogy with innovative approaches and materials for both performance and academic consumption. In this research, I seek to share my experience in learning improvisation in the West and how I practice and realize improvisation exercises using the yangqin.

1.2 Relevance to the Field

The reason I want to expand the applicability of the models I mentioned above is because of the potential it offers to a wider range of musicians who might be willing to create music through improvisation. I imagine Chinese musicians could benefit from improvisation. The question of how to teach improvisation to a wide range of musicians is raised (Monk 2013, 6). These models can be beneficial to musicians to find an effective learning and teaching approach to improvisation for each individual, thus expanding their ways of creating music in the moment.

1.3 The Problem

This research project attempts to address the neglect of creative training in modern Chinese music education, and it does so through an exploration of contemporary music improvisation strategies using the yangqin. Many academic trained-musicians such as Chinese music masters, educators, and performers view improvisation as playing music that has meaningless, and spontaneous music-making has not yet been introduced or accepted in Chinese music academies. Most of the students follow the "standard" mode of music expression as required by the instructors in order to pass the admission requirements and the exams which students take during their studies after being admitted.

It is a significant drawback of Chinese music education that it does not incorporate individual expression or individual creativity. To help Chinese music education moving forward, I suggest that improvisation course should be involved in academic and conservatory music schools because improvisation is a way of discovering one's individual creative voice in music and of realizing the self while generating new music. It is also a standard skill for some performers such as jazz and to some extent popular music performers in North America. Similar to composition, improvisation is another version of creative process. Nettl (2005) pointed out that improvisation and composition are quite often considered as completely separate processes, but in actuality, they are two version—even opposite aspects—of the same creative process.

By sharing both my personal experience and my observations of improvisational instruction in the West, I will explore contemporary music improvisation with reference to the two above-mentioned models (free improvisation and music education). I will show how the use of certain improvisation exercises can be used to assist in the development of one's potential creativity and as a means to discover one's individual voice in spontaneous music making. From a pedagogical perspective, I aim to discover pedagogical strategies designed to stimulate student engagement in improvisation and, from this, to accumulate ideas for students in improvisation and them accumulate ideas for creating music in the moment of performance.

1.4 Research Focus

To overcome the limitations of modern Chinese music education in terms of improvisation, the main purpose of this research project is to explore pedagogical strategies for contemporary music improvisation through the instrumental medium of the yangqin. A variety of associated areas are also explored, including the instrumental roots of the yangqin, a comparison of Eastern and Western approaches to improvisation, the history and influence of the Silk Road on the yangqin's physical form and on yangqin music, creativity in Chinese traditional and folk music, and a brief history of Chinese music education. To achieve a comprehensive account of the educational, musical, and innovative breakthrough of the yangqin, several approaches will be used throughout the dissertation. This study will be divided into four major areas:

1) An Exploration of the influence of the Silk Road on the development of music for the yangqin as well as the evolution of the physical structure of the instrument.
2) The history and roots of Chinese music improvisation.
3) A general overview of Chinese and Western music improvisation

techniques/methods/traditions/forms/conventions.

4) The formulation of a novel improvisation pedagogy which incorporates innovative technical approaches and relevant practical exercises, as well as suggestions for the application of these materials and exercises in the creation of original music.

1.5 Research Questions

Through observation and analysis of contemporary improvisation practices, I seek to find causes and possible remedies to address the weakness of Chinese music education. The study will build on the research and writing of Zhou, An, Nunn, Monk, Berkowitz and Nettl. The following questions will be considered:

1) Foundations

   What is the foundation of Chinese music improvisation? Do yangqin artists sometimes improvise freely, with no prior material as a reference? What source materials do they use and how do traditional yangqin artists improvise based on a given material? By what means are various local cultures embodied in Chinese regional music when they improvise?

2) Cultural comparison

   What are the most common approaches and methods used by Western performers in their improvisational practice? How might they be compared to Chinese improvisational practices, particularly those which incorporate the qualities, attitudes and materials of Chinese regional music?

3) Transmission and the continuity of tradition

Why is it important to create new and original music for the yangqin performers in China today? How does improvisation help create original yangqin music and enrich the yangqin repertoires? Is improvisation considered an important ability for performers in China today?

4) The responsibility of higher education in China

   Has improvisation disappeared entirely from academic teaching or are there some vestiges of creative music making that could be revived and expanded into a practical education? Would university and conservatory curricula be more comprehensive, and would it carry greater cultural value, with the inclusion of courses in contemporary music improvisation practice and pedagogy? Why is improvisation an important skill for modern Chinese performers and composers? How can we determine the most viable methods for teaching music creativity in universities and conservatories?

1.6 Literature Review

Mark (2018), offers a history of the Silk Road and traces its routes. He shows how the traditional Silk Road was associated with an international exchange network connecting the East and Southeast Asia to Southern Europe. Foltz (1999) points out that the Silk Road trade in pre-modern times offered interaction, exchange, and religious contact between different cultures. Zhou (2010), provides good information regarding the origin of the yangqin and how it spread into China. Paul M. Gifford, in *The Hammered Dulcimer: A History* (2001), also gives a detailed account of yangqin history and design and provides a useful history of hammered dulcimers around the world. Furthermore, Gillian (2020), examines the origins of the world's dulcimers and provides information regarding the roots of the yangqin.

Stock (1997) offers a detailed discussion and analysis of Abing's six "pieces," especially focusing on traditional work that heavily relied on improvisation and creative reworking of musical materials. Elaborating on Stock's Analysis of Abing's compositions, I analyze improvisation techniques used by Abing and later "re-creations" of his music according to more conservatory pedagogies in contemporary China. Nettl (2005), gives a detailed account of the varied ways in which different cultures of the world perceive musical creativity. The article provides a valuable understanding of Western and non-Western musical creativity and a diversity of creative processes in music composition. Moreover, Nettl (2017) takes a comparative approach to the nature of improvisation as a concept and process. Taking Nettl's idea as a starting point, I will draw a comparison between Chinese and Western conceptions of music improvisation and discuss various ways in which Chinese and non-Chinese music creation are manifested.

Mills (2010) offers a good literature review regarding the history of Western music improvisation. Taking Mills's study as a point of departure, I will provide a brief overview of the history of some areas of music improvisation and explore similarities and differences between Chinese and Western music improvisation histories. An (2016) provides a brief history of traditional Chinese music improvisation and a discussion of how it has been affected by cultural transformation. An examines the concept of traditional Chinese music improvisation in detail, dividing it into three categories. An's study feeds into my endeavor to define Chinese music improvisation and to compare it with Western music improvisation. Huang He, in "Chinese Yangqin Music Creation" (2016), gives in-depth information detailed information regarding the origins of traditional Chinese music, including Chinese folk, opera, and local *qǔyì* (storytelling) music, provides examples of the originality of regional yangqin music.

Tang (1998) discusses in detail the various techniques used in traditional music improvisation in the province of Guangdong, including for the yangqin. Pan (1986) also provides information on regional yangqin music improvisation techniques. Lawrence (1983) points out that certain improvisation practices are found in traditional Chinese silk and bamboo music (*sizhu* music). Hughes (2004) shares Steven Jones's experiences in teaching Chinese silk-and-bamboo music at SOAS. This study conceptualizes and exemplifies the typical improvisation techniques used in regional Chinese music (see Chapter Three).

Lee and Shen (1999) provide a historical study of the renovation of the yangqin in terms of its construction, playing techniques, and repertoire following the establishment of People's Republic of China. Xiang (1981), also focuses on the historical development of Chinese musical repertoires from traditional to contemporary. Heydarian and Reiss (2005) explain and analyse the santur, including its design, physical structure, and size, as well as its role in Persian music. They discuss the origin of the santur and its later migration to India, China, Thailand, Greece, Germany, and provide a diagram of the instrument and its tuning keys and sticks (*mezrab*). Gui (2003) gives details regarding the performance, structure, and symbols for yangqin notation, including good diagrams of the instrument and its models.

Debra Hedden (2017) uncovers a successful pedagogical approach applied by a professor in Lithuania for teaching undergraduate music education majors how to improvise. She articulates her philosophy of teaching and learning improvisation, including a practical introduction to strategies for learning. Nelson's dissertation, "The Classroom and Individual Teaching Methods of Bill Douglas" (2020) discusses one teacher's teaching philosophy favoring a creative pedagogical approach to improvisation. Wang (2011) also provides an experience of studying improvisation in a conservatory. Inspired by Nelson and Wang's study, I divide the pedagogical approach to improvisation into five categories: creating music with freedom, disciplined approach, creative training, setting for improvisation, and class expectation.

Caplin, Douglas, Berkowitz, Augustyn, Mazzola, Park, Thalmann offer certain ideas on the importance of musicianship training and exercise. Caplin (2002), discusses rhythm as a basic element in music creation and offers a history of various rhythmic concepts. Bill Douglas's *Vocal Rhythm Etudes* (1997) and Garland (1997) offer rhythmic exercises and musical materials as practice frameworks. These rhythmic patterns provided me with fantastic pedagogical resources for discovering creative possibilities on the yangqin. Moreover, Azzara (2006), explores improvisation as a way of developing one's musicianship and takes a practical approach to improvisation.

Berkowitz (2010) offers pedagogical strategies for improvisation focusing on transposition, variation, recombination, and the use of specific models. The author explores how each pedagogical methodology can be used for making spontaneous music in the moment. Pressing (1998) points out that Professional improvisers have discovered an effective way of organizing all their musical experience, so that they are able to create, maintain, and enrich their own knowledge-base. Pressing suggests that it is crucial to accumulate knowledge and materials as a reference for one to use in making spontaneous music. Eckert Stefan's PhD dissertation "*Ars Combinatoria*, Dialogue Structure, and Musical Practice in Joseph Riepel's *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst*" discussed how Joseph Riepel, a music theorist, encouraged his students to render variations and rearrangements of given materials in as many ways as possible through the use of permutation and combination.

Augustyn (2014) offers examples in the application of musical variation by various notable composers from different eras and points out that musical variation appears in many cultural traditions. They suggest that variation is a crucial strategy for improvisation and composition in many cultures—a principle with which I agree and upon which I will elaborate in the appropriate section of the dissertation. Kandinsky (1979) points out that colors and lines can provide certain ideas for musical improvisation. One can improvise based on sense of color to create music with various expressions. Chappell (2020) and Podlucki (2015) provide specific ideas and strategies of creating music for a silent movie, particularly ways of improvising for this purpose. Goldstein (1988) provides a good example of an exploration of free improvisation. These all provide interesting ideas in terms of discovering one's individual voice and expressive style through images, stories, and the sounds of the nature.

Mazzola, Park, and Thalmann (2011) point out that the coherence connecting small and large musical structures is crucial. Large and small musical forms are applied by many improvisers and composers in expressing their music. This is applicable to my idea that knowing larger forms can provide a framework for improvisers to reorganize their small ideas and placing them within a large form when making music in the moment.

1.7 Methodology

I intend to conduct this research partly with the help of my literature review but more so relying on my personal experiences learning improvisation, music creation, and performance. Using an auto-ethnographic approach I will draw on my own experiences studying the yangqin in China and studying improvisation in Canada to discover and produce a contemporary music improvisation pedagogy with direct application to the yangqin. My observation and participation in the Contemporary Musicianship and Improvisation course at York University will be the main reference of formulating a contemporary Chinese music improvisation pedagogy. As an international yangqin performer, composer, and improviser, I improvise with diverse musicians and play diverse music. Therefore, I will draw on my extensive experience studying music overseas by sharing my experiences discovering and experimenting diverse and original yangqin music through improvisation.

1.8 Dissertation Structure

Chapter One, the Introduction, presents a brief overview on the rationale behind the dissertation, what motivated it, and its purpose and includes a literature review. Chapter Two uncovers the influence of the Silk Road and the Peoples Republic of China on the development of the yangqin. Chapter Three explores improvisation techniques used in traditional yangqin music[1]. It proposes that improvisation in this music helps enrich and provide material for the ongoing renewal of traditional music and changes the role of the yangqin from being an accompaniment instrument to a solo instrument. Chapter Four focuses on the limitations of the Chinese music teaching in modern Chinese society in reference to my own experiences of studying music in China.

In Chapter Five I look at lessons from Europe and North America in terms of developing a pedagogical approach to teaching improvisation, studying the approaches used by three professors from universities in different countries in successfully teaching improvisation for undergraduate and graduate students majoring in music. Chapter Six examines contemporary Chinese music improvisation and musicianship pedagogy through the use of the yangqin. In

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[1] Traditional yangqin music refers to repertoires composed for traditional models of the yangqin, such as the two-bridges model, before 1966, which marked the start of the 10-year Cultural Revolution of China (Huang 2016, 7).

Chapter Seven, I propose pedagogical strategies for teaching improvisation suitable for Chinese contemporary music creation. The chapter also functions as a summary and conclusion to the dissertation, also providing suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SILK ROAD AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YANGQIN

The hammered dulcimer, which originated in Persia, is being used in many cultures including in the Middle East, southeastern Europe, South Asia, and East Asia. In this chapter, I give a brief overview of the significance of the Silk Road and the transmission of the hammered dulcimer to China through this route. I also touch upon the modification and transformation of the yangqin through the influence of political factors. I point out that the Chinese New Silk Road policy that encourages cross-cultural exchange and collaboration with developing countries helps enrich and diversify yangqin music and encourage yangqin masters to discover new ways of fusing yangqin music with other styles.

2.0 What is the Yangqin?

According to Paul Gifford (2001), there are different types of hammered dulcimers around the world, including the *dulcimer* (British Isles and United States), *santur* (Middle East), *hackbrett* (German-speaking peoples), *cimbalom* (Central and Eastern Europe), *salterio* (Mexico), *psaltérion* (France), *tympanon* (France), and *yángqín* (Asia). In China, the term for "dulcimer" is *yángqín*[2] (Gifford 2001, 195). Similar to the European and American hammered dulcimers, the yangqin has a butterfly shape (Gifford 2001, 195). In the past, the instrument had other names reflecting its shape and construction materials: *húdiéqín* (butterfly qín)*, shàn-miàn*

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[2] This term, in the pinyin system of transliteration, has been used in the People's Republic of China since 1959.

qín (fan-shaped qín), *tóng-sī qín* (brass-stringed qín), and *tóng qín* (copper-stringed qín) (Gifford 2001, 195).

The yangqin is trapezoidal in shape and made of hardwood with a large and flat soundboard and horizontal strings attached to hitch pins and wrest-pins (left and right side of the white pines) (see Figure 2). On top of the sound box are two rows of bridges (traditional yangqin) or four bridges (modern yangqin) on which the stings press (see Figure 4). The traditional yangqin has seven or eight chessman-type (movable bridges) while the modern yangqin has 10 or 13 bridges. To produce the sound, the strings are struck with bamboo sticks.

2.1 The Relationship Between the Ancient Silk Road and the Yangqin

The term "Silk Road" was coined by German geographer and traveler Ferdinand von Richthofen, who referred to the Asian trade routes as "Seidenstrasse," German for "Silk Road" (Mark 1, 2018). The Silk Road was an ancient network of trade routes begun in China during the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE). Trade routes from Central Asia were expanded between 130 BCE and 1453 CE, with the missions and explorations of the Chinese imperial envoy Zhang Qian, who undertook the journey in 138 BC, beginning with several military conquests (Boulnois 66, 2012). These routes established economic, cultural, political, and religious connections between the East and the West (Gan, Brill, and Shouyun 2009, 41). Initially these were the land routes that fostered international connections between East Asia and Southeast Asia and South Asia, Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, and Southern Europe (Mark 2018). This connection with Eurasia played a significant role in the development of civilizations in terms of their economic, cultural, and political relations.

The Silk Road was not a unique path, but actually consisted of several routes. The northern route started from Chang'an (now Xi'an), an ancient capital city of China, going northwest through the Chinese province of Gansu from Shanxi province and splitting into three further routes. The southern route was mainly a single route from China through the Karakoram mountains (now the Karakoram Highway); the southwestern route went across the Ganges Delta; and the maritime Silk Road replaced land trade after "the Ottoman Empire boycotted trade with the west and closed the routes," thereby connecting China to Southeast Asia, the Indonesian archipelago, the Indian subcontinent, the Arabian peninsula, Egypt, and finally Europe (Mark 2018).

With the trade in products facilitated through the Silk Road, many local arts were transmitted, particularly through Central Asia, where cultures had been intermixed. A mixture of artistic influences with Greek and Indian elements can be found in later Buddhist art in China and throughout countries on the Silk Road (Foltz 1999, 45). The exchange of culture, art, religion, technology, language, goods, and other elements of the societies along the network, played a major role in the development of the modern world.

Nonetheless, the origins of hammered dulcimers are diverse and elusive. Dulcimers are divided into two types according to shapes, playing methods, and diverse origins: 1) the fretted dulcimer, known as the Appalachian or Mountain dulcimer, similar to an elongated violin, with three to five strings which can be plucked or bowed, and 2) the hammered dulcimer, generally trapezoidal in shape, with a range of up to three octaves with sets of multiple strings and played by striking the strings with two beaters known as hammers (Holmes 2020, 1).

Holmes (2020) explains that both dulcimers were developed to play folk music and appeared in many locations in Europe and the Middle East. The origin of the hammered dulcimer is the santur, an instrument used to play classical Persian music (Holmes 2020). The appearance and presence of the santur in China and Spain had been a result of the silk trades that crisscrossed the Middle East during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Holmes 2020). In China, it came to be known as the *yángqín*, etymologically derived from *yáng* 洋, "foreign" or "Western", and *qín* or *ch'in* 琴, deriving its name from "an ancient board-shaped instrument whose seven strings are plucked" (Zhang 2018, 4).

The yangqin arrived through the Silk Road but was not immediately popularized in China. According to Zhou Qing Bao (2010, 50), the first recorded mention of the santur in Ancient China dates to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in *History of the Yuan Dynasty*. The document states that Guo Kan, who followed the Mongol conqueror, Hulagu Khan, to the west in 1257 obtained the santur (Zhou 2010, 50). Although the instrument was known in China in the 13th century, it did not spread there at the time (Zhou 2010, 50).

In addition to the Silk Road, the development of transportation along a maritime Silk Road also contributed to the transmission of the hammered dulcimer to China in the Ming Dynasty, which then spread into mainland China. By the end of 16th century, the center of international trade and cultural exchange was moved to the southeast coastal area of China so that European marine navigation reached China via both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans (Zhou 2010, 51). In that period, a large number of foreigners visited China, including missionaries, merchants, and sailors, who brought the hammered dulcimer to China via the maritime Silk Road.

According to Ben Wu (2002), the yangqin was introduced into Guangdong through the southeast coastal area by the end of the Ming Dynasty (1638–1644). First popularized in the southeast coastal area, the influence of the yangqin spread from Guangdong, Guangxi, and

Yunnan provinces, to the interior of China and elsewhere in Asia, such as Korea, Xinjiang, Mongolia, Tibet, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Japan (Gifford 2001).

2.2 The Political Influence on the Development of the Yangqin in China

The traditional yangqin was mentioned in Chinese literature in the 18th to early 20th centuries and it was mostly used as an important instrument in local Cantonese and Chaozhou ensembles (Thrasher 2001). It was also adopted into Sichuan music for accompanying narrative singing as well as in northern vocal genres such as *errentai.* It was also incorporated into the *sizhu* ensemble in the Jiangnan region in the 20th century. When the concept of *guóyuè* (national music) was introduced and promoted around 1949, the traditional yangqin was enlarged in size, extended into a wider range, and increased in volume (Thrasher 2001).

Compared with the Persian santur, the traditional yangqin is smaller. According to Gifford (2001), the traditional yangqin is about 71 to 78 cm wide at the end of the board, 46 cm wide at the board top, and 4 cm in height. In contrast the Persian santur consists of a trapeziform case made of walnut wood approximately 90 cm wide at the broad end, 35 cm wide at the narrow end, and 6 cm deep and is played by using two light hammers held with three fingers of each hand to strike the strings (see Figure 1) (During, Hassan, and Dick 2001). The two sides of the instrument form an angle of about 45 degrees at the wider end.

In addition to the size difference between the two instruments, the design and materials of the mallets are also different. Santur sticks have a special design at the bottom and are shorter than yangqin sticks (see Figures 1-b & 3); they are made of wood; unlike yangqin sticks, which are bamboo.

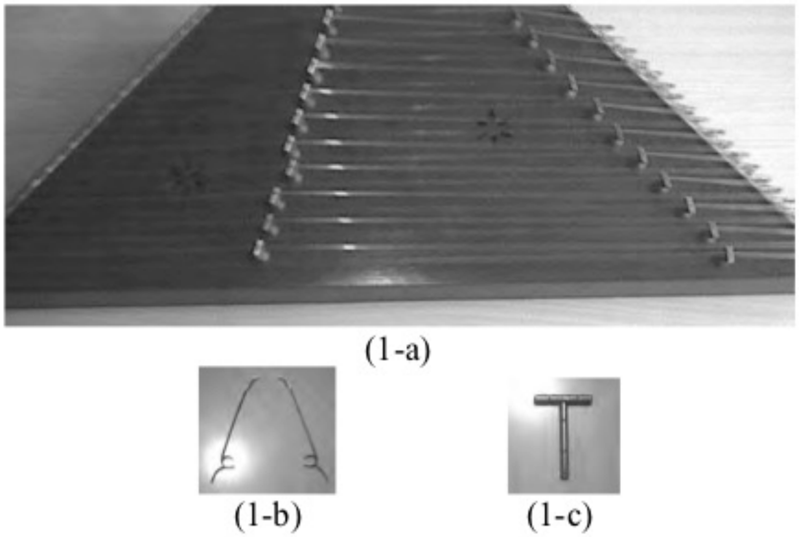
(1-a)
(1-b)
(1-c)

Figure 1. 2) Santur; b) Sticks; c) Tunung Key (Heydarian & Reiss 2005, 525)

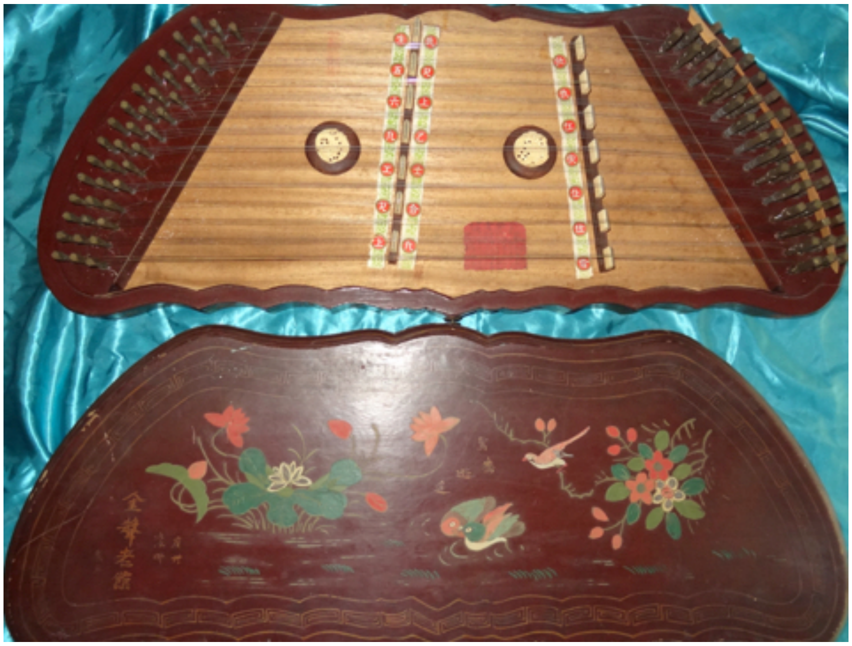

Figure 2. View from above of a traditional yangqin, made by Guangzhou Haopan Jinshen Laoguan during the Ming Dynasty period (Shao 2012).

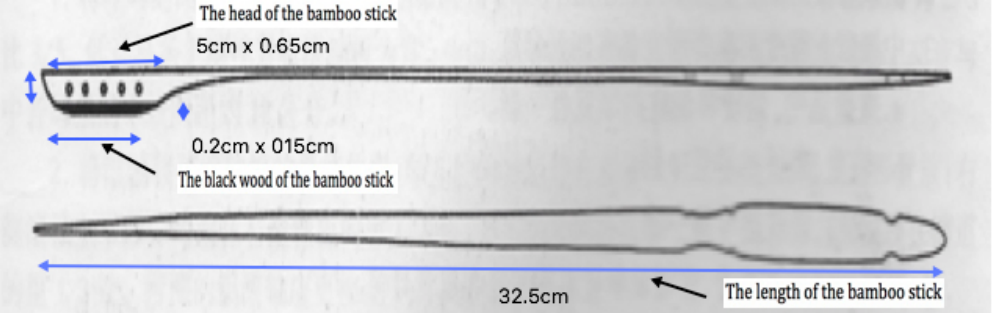
The head of the bamboo stick
5cm x 0.65cm
0.2cm x 015cm
The black wood of the bamboo stick
32.5cm
The length of the bamboo stick

Figure 3. A standard bamboo stick (from Gui 2003, 9)

Furthermore, the structural details of the santur are different from the traditional yangqin. The strings of the santur are fixed to hitch-pins along the left-hand side and wound around metal wrest-pins on the right by means of which they are tuned with a tuning key, and each quadruple set of strings rests on a movable peg made of hardwood (see Figures 1-a and 2) (During, Hassan, and Dick 2001). The bridges are almost parallel with the sides of the case, and the low-register strings on the right-hand side cross the high-register strings on the left and can be played on either side of the bridges (During, Hassan, and Dick, 2001). For the yangqin, the hitch-pins are located at the surface of the left-hand side and wrest-pins on the right, and the tuning pegs are changed to bridges that are unmovable.

In addition to the modification of the size, materials, and structure of the yangqin from the santur, the traditional yangqin reduced the range of the instrument to adapt it for local music. The santur can play 27 different pitches with 18 groups of strings and nine (or sometimes 11) quadruple strings on either side (Heydarian & Reiss 2005, 525). Its range is from E3 to F6 (C4=middle C) with the lowest sounding on the right and the highest sounding on the left (During, Hassan, and Dick 2001). The instrument has three note-groups, including the Yellow Notes, showing the first octave and located on the right side of the instrument; the white notes, showing the second octave and located the right side of the left-hand bridge; and the behind-the-bridge white notes that are the extension of the second octave notes and are located on the left side of the left-hand strings (see Figure 4) (During, Hassan, and Dick 2001).

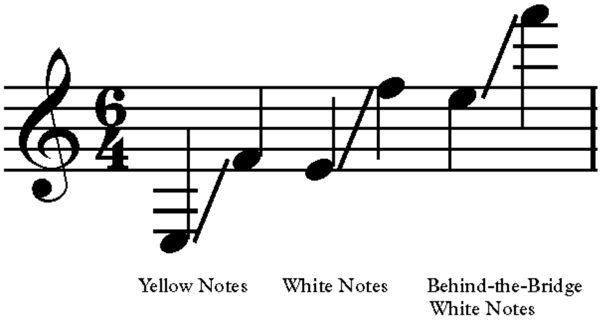
Yellow Notes
White Notes
Behind-the-Bridge White Notes

Figure 4. The note regions of the traditional santur

Similar to the Persian santur, the right-hand strings of the yangqin can only be played on the left side of the bridge while the left-hand strings can be played on either side of the bridge. However, the yangqin, having modified its range, can play 16 notes in Chinese tonality with 14 groups of strings and seven quadruple strings on both sides (see Figure 5). According to Lee & Shen (1999), the traditional yangqin has two octaves, from G3 to C6 (C4=middle C), and seven courses on each bridge. The interval between the two sides of the left bridges is a fifth, and those on neighboring bridges are mostly major seconds with a few minor seconds (see Figure 5).

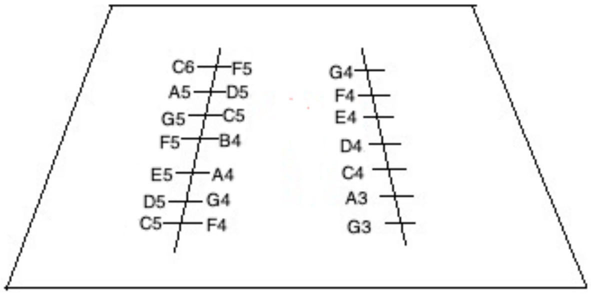
C6
F5
A5
D5
G5
C5
F5
B4
E5
A4
D5
G4
C5
F4
G4
F4
E4
D4
C4
A3
G3

Figure 5. The notes of the traditional yangqin

Local culture is highlighted with both the santur and the traditional yangqin in their own ways. For instance, the back of the traditional yangqin is engraved with images of birds and local flowers to illustrate Chinese culture; an example is pictured in Figure 2. The yangqin also uses local bamboo sticks topped with rubber (Xiang 1981). Such innovations incorporated a great variety of local natural and synthetic materials (Zhang 2018, 15). Over time, the sticks were made from different materials as musicians needed greater elasticity for speed of execution, more dynamic subtlety, and tone-color. The changing materials of the sticks made the sticks more elastic (Zhang 2018, 15).

The traditional yangqin continued to change with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, which encouraged development of the teaching of the yangqin and promoted academic research and composition for national instruments, all of which resulted in modifications that brought about the modern yangqin after 1949 (Zhang 2018, 10). The traditional yangqin had "a narrow range, small sound volume, and was difficult to tune and modulate," which constrains the music that can be played on it (Zhang 2018, 10). This prompted yangqin masters, composers, and players to extend the instrument's range and create new designs for the yangqin in order to be able to play more styles of music and produce greater volume (Zhang 2018, 10).

In addition to the new government policies encouraging national Chinese music creation, Western music and instruments also inspired yangqin specialists to redesign the instrument's traditional two bridges. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), many musicians had great opportunities to visit other countries to perform and share music with other cultures (Zhang 2018, 10). Through these activities yangqin specialists were able to broaden their horizons and modify the traditional yangqin.

After 1949, several new models for the yangqin were gradually created, including the *lū-lū*, three-bridge, 401, 501, whole-tone, 81, 402, 502, and 601 models[3] (Zhang 2018). These innovations extended the range of the yangqin from three octaves to four and added the ability to play chromatic scales. With these new innovations, unlike the traditional two-bridge yangqin, the modern yangqin could accommodate music in different keys without the need to retune specific strings according to the specific key. Today, one of the most commonly used models of yangqin is the 402 (Zhang 2018).

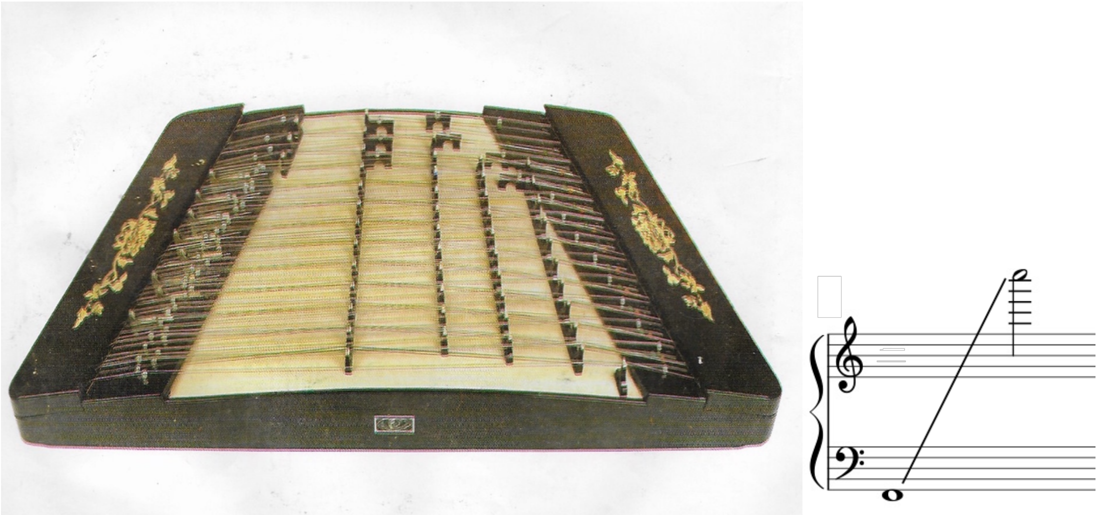

Figure 6. Top view of the 402 yangqin (Gui 2003, 2)

Compared with the traditional yangqin, the modern yangqin was expanded in size to extend its range to F2 to C7 (C4=middle C). The 402 yangqin is 64.5 cm in upper length, 102.5 cm in lower length, 45.8 cm in width, and 9.5 cm in height, larger than the traditional yangqin (Zhang 2018, 12). Also, the decorations on the modern yangqin representing Chinese cultural elements are placed on the left and right sides of the instrument instead of its back, a change from the traditional yangqin (see Figures 2 & 6).

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[3] For a description of these models see Zhang (2018) “Perspectives of the Study of the Yangqin,” M.A. Major Research Paper, York University.

In addition to the expansion of its range and size, several additional elements were introduced to help simplify the tuning of the yangqin. An example of an element of the modern yangqin that the traditional yangqin does not contain is the roller plank (Zhang 2018, 14). The function of the roller plank is for the tuning grooves and rollers to support and stabilize the strings (Zhang 2018, 14). “The tuning grooves make it fast and convenient to move the rollers so that the player is able to tune the yangqin quickly” (Zhang 2018, 14) (see Figure 7).

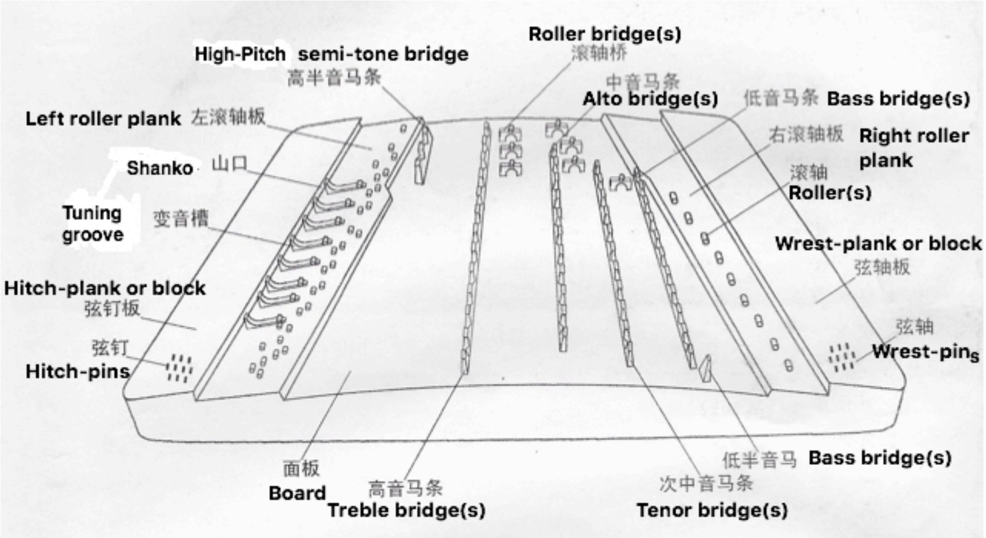
Roller bridge(s)
滚轴桥
High-Pitch semi-tone bridge
高半音马条
中音马条
Alto bridge(s)
低音马条 Bass bridge(s)
Left roller plank 左滚轴板
右滚轴板
Right roller plank
Shanko 山口
滚轴
Roller(s)
Tuning groove
变音槽
Wrest-plank or block
弦轴板
Hitch-plank or block
弦钉板
弦轴
弦钉
Hitch-pins
Wrest-pins
低半音马 Bass bridge(s)
面板
Board
高音马条
Treble bridge(s)
次中音马条
Tenor bridge(s)

Figure 7. Diagram of the 402 yangqin (Gui 2003, 1)

The modern yangqin could also produce greater tonal quality and volume than the traditional yangqin (Zhang 2018, 14). One of the most significant factors in improving the quality of tone and volume of the sound is the modification of the strings (Zhang 2018, 14). According to Xiang (1981), the traditional yangqin uses copper strings; the modern yangqin modified these to steel wire strings and nylon strings. The other important factor is that the modern yangqin added modifiers, including an enlarged resonator, roller boards, and *shanko* to help improve the volume of the tone and stabilize the tuning (see Figure 7) (Li 2001, 60).

In addition to the modification of the construction, design, physical ornamentation, and materials of the traditional yangqin, modern yangqin masters created new symbols representing specific playing techniques and adapted new notation systems for modern yangqin performance. Traditionally yangqin players learned through oral transmission. With the introduction of notation systems, *gōngchē* notation[4] was mainly adopted, a system using 10 Chinese characters to indicate pitches. In 1920, 10 symbols for notation of yangqin playing techniques were created by Qiu Hechou,[5] classified into four categories: 1) *shùndǎ,* 2) *màndǎ,* 3) *mìdǎ,* and 4) *qídǎ* (Kuang 2003, 32). These traditional symbols and techniques are shown in Figure 8.E=MC

Name of the Technique	**Symbol**	**Description**
Shunda (1)	、	*Shun* means sequence; *da* means strike. The duration of the symbol presents a sixteenth note; the note is played with the left hand.
Shunda (2)	ı|	The left hand plays the note, the right hand plays an octave below, and the duration of each note is an eighth note.
Shunda (3)	…	The left hand plays the note written, the right hand plays its low octave, and the left hand plays it again. The duration of each note is a sixteenth note.

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[4] For the *gongche* notation system, see "Vocal and instrumental gongche notations" in Oxford Music Online (Thrasher et al., 2021).

[5] Qiu Hechou 丘鹤俦 was born in Taishan, Guangdong province (1982-1942). He started learning traditional Guangdong folk music and ancient music at nine years old in the "eight-tone" music class in Taizhou before immigrating to Hong Kong in 1900.

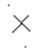
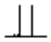
Shunda (4)		The left hand plays the note; the right hand plays its low octave and repeats the same thing one more time. The duration of each note is a sixteenth note.
Manda (1)		*Man* means slow. The left hand plays the note, and the duration of each note is an eighth note.
Manda (2)		The left hand plays the note, the right hand plays its low octave, and the duration of each note is an eighth note.
Manda (3)		The left hand plays the note, the right hand plays its low octave, and left hand plays the note again. The duration of each note is an eighth note.
Manda (4)		The left hand plays the note; the right hand plays its low octave and repeats it one more time. The total duration of each note is an eighth-note.
Mida or tremolo		*Mi* means density. By alternating between the left and right hand, the musician should play as fast and as evenly as possible. This symbol is still used in modern yangqin music.
Qida	又	*Qi* means together. For this technique, the hands play together, the left hand playing the original note and the right hand playing an octave below. This symbol is still used in modern yangqin music.

Figure 8. Traditional technical symbols for gongche notation for the yangqin (Zhang 2020, 15)

According to Gui Xili (2003), 44 symbols were developed for notation of modern yangqin techniques, and yangqin masters standardized these symbols for academic study of the yangqin. The symbols are shown in Figure 9; explanations for the technical terms and techniques are provided in Appendix A.

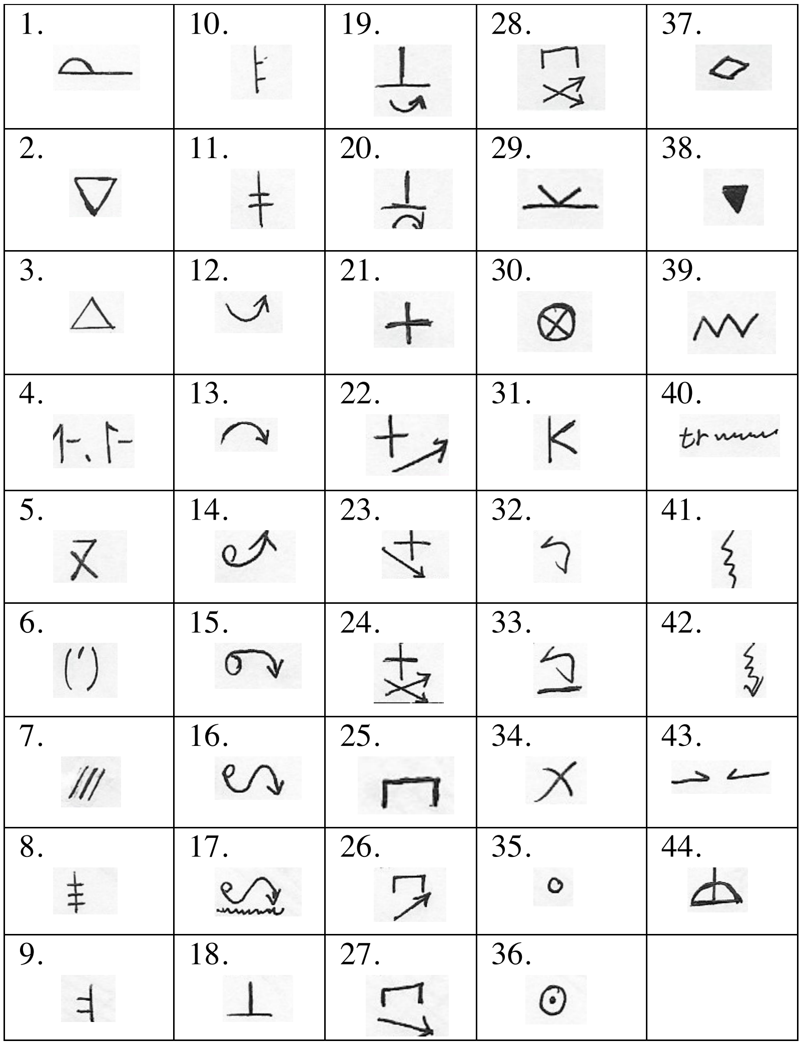

1.
10.
19.
28.
37.
2.
11.
20.
29.
38.
3.
12.
21.
30.
39.
4.
13.
22.
31.
40.
tr
5.
14.
23.
32.
41.
6.
15.
24.
33.
42.
7.
16.
25.
34.
43.
8.
17.
26.
35.
44.
9.
18.
27.
36.

Figure 9. Notation symbols for yangqin playing techniques (Zhang 2018, 32)

In addition to the development of these notation symbols to represent modern yangqin playing techniques, China's new government (circa 1949) encouraged the replacement of gongche notation with a numerical notation system and staff (see Figure 11). According to Zang (1996), the last book with traditional Chinese notation was published in 1947, after which it was gradually replaced by *jiǎnpǔ* or numerical notation. After 1949, the new China was established, and the jianpu notation system was promoted for use at an academic level for Chinese music

(Kuang 2003, 39). This notation system has since become one of the most useful and easiest-to-read notation systems in the documentation of modern repertoires (Kuang 2003, 39).

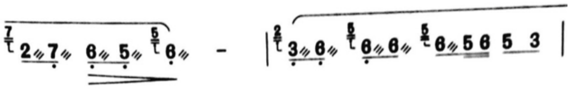
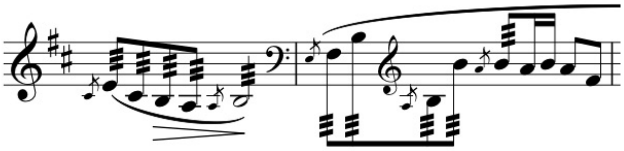
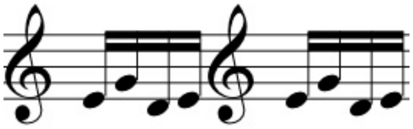
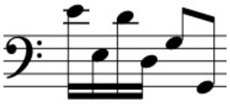
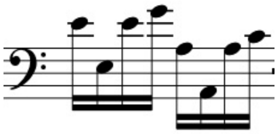
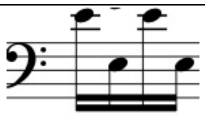
Jianpu notation	1=D 4/4 
Staff	

Figure 10. A translation of a jianpu notation into staff notation for a modern yangqin piece, *Capriccio of Manchu Village* (Zhang 2020, 15)

Compared with numerical notation, the traditional gongche notation for yangqin is more complex to be documented and read; an example is shown in Figure 11.

、 、 、 、 *Shunda* (1): 工六尺工	刂 刂 ⫫ *Shunda* (1): 工 尺 合
	
… 、… 、 *Shunda* (3): 工 六士 上	× *Shunda* (4): 工
	

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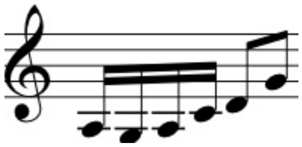	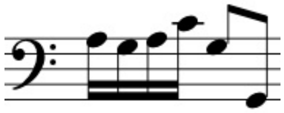
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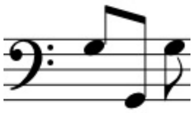
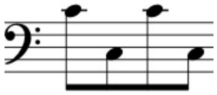
	

Figure 11. A comparison of traditional yangqin notation with staff notation for some yangqin playing techniques (Zhang 2020, 15)

As can be seen in Figure 11, gongche notation, written in Chinese characters, indicates pitches, and the symbols indicate durations and playing techniques. This notation system can accommodate some elements of improvisation but limits the diversity and possibilities of modern yangqin music to what can be represented in a limited number of characters and symbols. The new notation systems that are commonly used in modern Chinese music contribute to the enrichment of yangqin music because they are able to represent styles and techniques used in diverse music genres.

2.3 The Influence of the Contemporary Silk Road on Yangqin Music

The idea of the New Silk Road or Silk Road Economic Belt was announced by Chinese president Xi Jinping on September 7, 2013 (Litvinov 2016, 179). The New Silk Road not only represents the creation of a transport network and the power of economic trade but also tourism promotion and strengthening cultural exchanges between China with other regions, including Central and South Asia and Europe (Litvinov 2016, 179). It is one of the most important projects of One Belt One Road vision for strategic construction in China.

Stimulated by government policy, an increasing number of Chinese music compositions, including orchestral, ensemble, solo, and duo music, have been created referencing cultural elements along the Silk Road over the past few years. For example, the first Chinese national instrumental music drama, *Xuanzang's Journey to The West*, was composed by Jiang Ying and her group (Guo 2017). This magnificent work depicts a famous legendary story, that of Xúanzàng, who facilitated cultural exchange between China and the West, traveling on the Silk Road seeking to find Buddhist scriptures. It features culturally diverse musical styles, including Han, Uygur, Kazakh, Tajik, and Indian styles, in order to show ethnic music along the Silk Road (Zhou Qing Bao 2010, 58).

In addition to political imperatives driving an increasing number of Chinese compositions evoking the Silk Road in general, the music is enriched through yangqin musicians sharing and collaborating with musicians from other cultures. In consequence of the fact that this ancient Persian instrument received such abundant modifications, as it experienced the rich mingling of diverse cultures along the old Silk Road, the yangqin continues to provide opportunities for Chinese musical elements to spread in collaboration with other cultures (Zhou Qing Bao 2010 58). For instance, yangqin master Li Lingling, who is highly interested in collaborative work, played with the Xinjiang yangqin musicians and published, "Diemeng Feizhu Xinjiang Style Yangqin Ensemble and Duet Repertoires"—a book of 48 pieces for yangqin solo and duet in the Xinjiang musical style (Hu 2019).The other prominent example is yangqin master Liu Yuening's efforts at collaborative work with Iranian santur musicians and who led the Ninth Iran-China Friendship Association's annual meeting in 2018 (Wei 2018).

I would expect that new ways of collaborating with musicians from other cultures would be developed, such as through improvisation, which is an important element in many Middle Eastern and South Asian musics such as Iran and India. For example, "North Indian musicians create music in the moment of performance, that is, during the concert itself" (Zhang 2020, 2). To prepare for such a demanding task, a North Indian sitarist practices improvisation-based exercises for hours every day in order to inculcate and memorize a large vocabulary of roles and models from which they can draw (Nettl 2005, 27).

For future collaborations with musicians from other cultures, new and diverse modes of collaborative work need to be created. To facilitate collaboration with musicians from other cultures along the Silk Road, the development of contemporary improvisation techniques among yangqin players would be helpful for creating new music that is born out of fusion. My experience living and studying in North America underlined for me the importance of improvisation in music creation. To gain a broader context for the study of Chinese contemporary music improvisation, I audited the Contemporary Musicianship and Improvisation course at York University, taught by Prof. Casey Sokol (see Chapters Four, Five, and Six).

During my studies in contemporary improvisation, I collaborated with many musicians whose way of creating music challenged and expanded my own. I tried to encounter and collaborate with improvisers and composers from many different cultural backgrounds to make music in the moment. Below, I share one personal story.

> I was talking with my friend in the studio, and his friend came in, took out his guitar, and began playing Spanish flamenco. I could not focus on our conversation and was struck by this entirely new music, which had never appeared in Chinese music. I felt compelled to walk to my yangqin and play with him. The music and rhythm were really attractive to me. A week later, I could not forget how we made music on that day, so I asked him to improvise with me for my recital in the York University Tribute Communities Recital Hall. We created a piece, *Sin Límites* or No Boundaries, that was improvised on the yangqin, guitar, and cajón. (Zhang 2018, 45)

More broadly, certain remarkable improvisers have had a significant impact on the practice of improvisation, some of whom are mentioned by Nunn:

> Emerging from the jazz world with an extraordinarily experimental, even intellectual, approach, Braxton has created a musical syntax for improvisation employing graphic “systems maps,” for want of a better word. Braxton’s music is now widely known, and his reputation as a premiere improviser is well established. John Zorn is another improviser who has garnered widespread recognition. His “improvisation games” involving cue cards, hand signals and multiple isolated/non-interactive styles have been very effective in pieces such as “Cobra.” Davey Williams and LaDonna Smith are exquisite veteran free improvisers based in Birmingham, Alabama, who have done much to galvanize the improvisation community through their annual publication, *The Improvisor*. (Nunn 1998, 19)

I developed a new way of thinking about music creation and performance in Chinese music both through my personal experience and from other experienced improvisers. “Improvisation is a powerful way of discovering one’s individual voice in the music and of discovering and making new music spontaneously” (Zhang 2020, 15). It is also a spontaneous emotional and intellectual expression of an individual’s life and requires the total participation of one’s musicianship, instrumental technique, memory, listening skills, and imagination.

As stated earlier, the yangqin was based on the santur, an instrument originally transmitted from the Persia through the Silk Road and modified in response to political factors after the 1949 establishment of the People’s Republic of China. The modern yangqin reflects modifications made to extend its range and size, improve timbral quality, increase its volume, and adapt local materials for the mallets. In addition to the transmission of this dulcimer into China and its subsequent modification into the yangqin, music for the yangqin has been greatly enriched and has spurred governmental imperatives to promote a New Silk Road. There is every expectation that this will encourage new cross-cultural collaborations, from which new forms of fusion music will assuredly emerge.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPROVISATION ON THE REGIONAL YANGQIN MUSIC

Improvisation, "the creation of a musical work, or the final form of a musical work, as it is being performed," may reflect the performer's immediate composition on the spot, the recreation of an existing musical framework, or anything in between (Nettl 2001, 1). The concept of improvisation has been examined by various Western music scholars, and case studies on improvisation began appearing in ethnomusicology journals in the middle of the twentieth century, focusing on three genres: jazz, Indian art music, and Iranian music (Nettl 2001, 1). Through an comparative analysis of music from the West with yangqin folk music, I will propose that a renewal of the traditional yangqin music facilitated by improvisation has functioned not only to augment the existing repertoire, but it has also begun to transform the role of the yangqin from an accompaniment instrument to that of a solo instrument.

3.0 Concept of Chinese Music Improvisation

"In virtually all musical cultures there is music that is improvised. Societies differ, however, in several ways: the degree to which improvisation is distinguished from pre-composition; the nature and extent of the musical material which improvisers use as a point of departure or inspiration; the kinds and amounts of preparation required of improvisers, either in their musical training or in relation to individual performances; the relationship of written to oral transmission; and the relative social and musical value assigned to improvisations, compositions, and the musicians who practise them" (Nettl 2001, 1). The ability to improvise is one of the most significant musical abilities in many of the world's musical cultures, especially for those regions such as the Middle East and North India where a performance mainly relies on improvisation

(Nettl 2001, 1). For instance, North Indian musicians create music in the moment of performance during a concert itself; Iranian musicians maintain a balance between memorized material and improvisation.

Similar to Middle Eastern and North Indian music, a few thousand years ago in China, music performance and composition were more closely allied; all music creation relied to some extent on improvisation (An 2016, 13). One salient example is traditional yangqin music, originally created through improvisation as accompaniment for folk music, opera, and local qǔyì performance (Huang 2016, 7). This type of material-based improvisation in Chinese music, which arose after notation systems were invented, is referred to as "incomplete improvisation" (An 2016, 3). This is the re-creation or realization of a composition with the addition of ornamentation, rhythmic and tonal modulation, rubato, pitch substitution, changes in tempo, repetition, variation, and dynamics (An 2016, 3). This is similar to protocols in Baroque music, early classical music, and jazz. Musicians who play Baroque music or jazz are "given a structure which they can interpret and enrich by means of their own knowledge and training and their own sense of musical taste" (Zhang 2020, 8). This approach is still currently used by Chinese folk artists and is an indispensable skill for most folk yangqin artists today.

In addition to incomplete improvisation, the other type of ancient Chinese music creation was "complete improvisation," which can be defined as composition during performance, where music was created entirely on the spot, in the moment (An 2016, 13). This type of Chinese music improvisation is similar to Western "free improvisation" whereby the music is composed and created completely spontaneously in real time. Before notation systems were invented in China, ancient Chinese musicians had great freedom to create and discover music during performance (An 2016, 13). I am speculating that what we refer to as ancient Chinese composition was, in essence, real-time improvisation, the skills for which were transmitted generationally through oral tradition before music began to be notated.

Complete improvisation was the main means of music creation two millennia ago in ancient China, and it inevitably highlighted the off-the-cuff spontaneous decisions that were the result of the prevailing mood of the performers and the specific atmosphere in which the artists were playing (An 2016, 13). "Similar to Western free improvisation, this type of improvisation focused on the performer's individual perceptions, needs, and moods before and during the performance, which suggests that ancient Chinese musicians advocated artistic authenticity and freedom" (Zhang 2020, 4).

This type of spontaneous music making was present not only in ancient Chinese music but also in that of other cultures, such as Western classical and contemporary music, music of Native Americans, and countless others. Historian Ernst Ferand (1961, 5) suggests that spontaneous music making in Western music is "as old as music itself". In other cultures, such that of as the Pima Indians of the southwestern United States, there was a belief that "songs existed in the supernatural world but had to be unraveled by humans in order to be realized" (Nettl 2017, 5). Like Native American music, notation does not exist for their songs since they arise from the unanticipated moment of inspiration (Nettle 2017, 5).

3.1 A Background of the Origin of Yangqin Music Creation

After the dulcimer was introduced into China, it was gradually integrated into local folk music, opera music, and local *qǔyì* (Chinese folk arts) performance forms. The yangqin was initially an accompaniment instrument for different Chinese regional folk musics, including in Guangdong, Chaozhou, Jiangnan *sizhu*, Sichuan, Shandong, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang's 12-

muqam music, Tibetan string dance, and many others (Huang 2016, 7). In combination with the development and performance of Chinese musical instruments, the yangqin began to appear in the form of individual performance and gradually developed as a solo instrument (Xiang 1981).

Since traditional solo yangqin music was derived from Chinese regional music, including from Sichuan, Guangdong, Jiangnan, the northeast and Xinjiang's twelve muqams/maqam, the yangqin repertoire was quite limited before the 20th century. According to Huang (2016), the earlier role of the yangqin was as an accompaniment instrument for ballads, local operas, and *qínshū* (storytelling with musical instrumental accompaniment through improvisation). Early yangqin compositions were mainly based on regional folk music by performers whose role was to provide accompaniment for regional music. These earliest works for yangqin have their origins in the 1950s.

After the mid-20th century, yangqin repertoire and education began to be developed under the impetus of the new government. New yangqin repertoire was composed and arranged that conformed to the modern music education and social system (Zhang 2018, 20). These new Chinese music compositions were inspired by Western musicians such as Alexander Tcherepnin, who encouraged Chinese musicians to use local traditional scales and tuning systems, such as are used in Chinese folk music, as a compositional resource to develop a new music based on Western compositional techniques and structures (Stock 1997, 144).

In addition, the teaching of the yangqin changed from its original status to take its place in the field of professional music education in response to the new government's focus on developing the study of music in an academic way by establishing conservatories (Stock 1997). With the new Chinese leaders introducing their ideas regarding cultural and political development to mainland China by 1950, professional training on yangqin was established in the

Chinese educational system, including in nine Chinese music conservatories, approximately 50 schools of arts, and schools of Chinese music education and Chinese music performance (Li 2001). The professional music education system in Chinese music conservatories was modeled on the educational system of the Soviet Union; as a result, "complete and incomplete" improvisation gradually disappeared from the academic Chinese music discipline, with the younger generations of professional and amateur Chinese musicians mostly playing memorized music notated by yangqin masters or experienced composers.

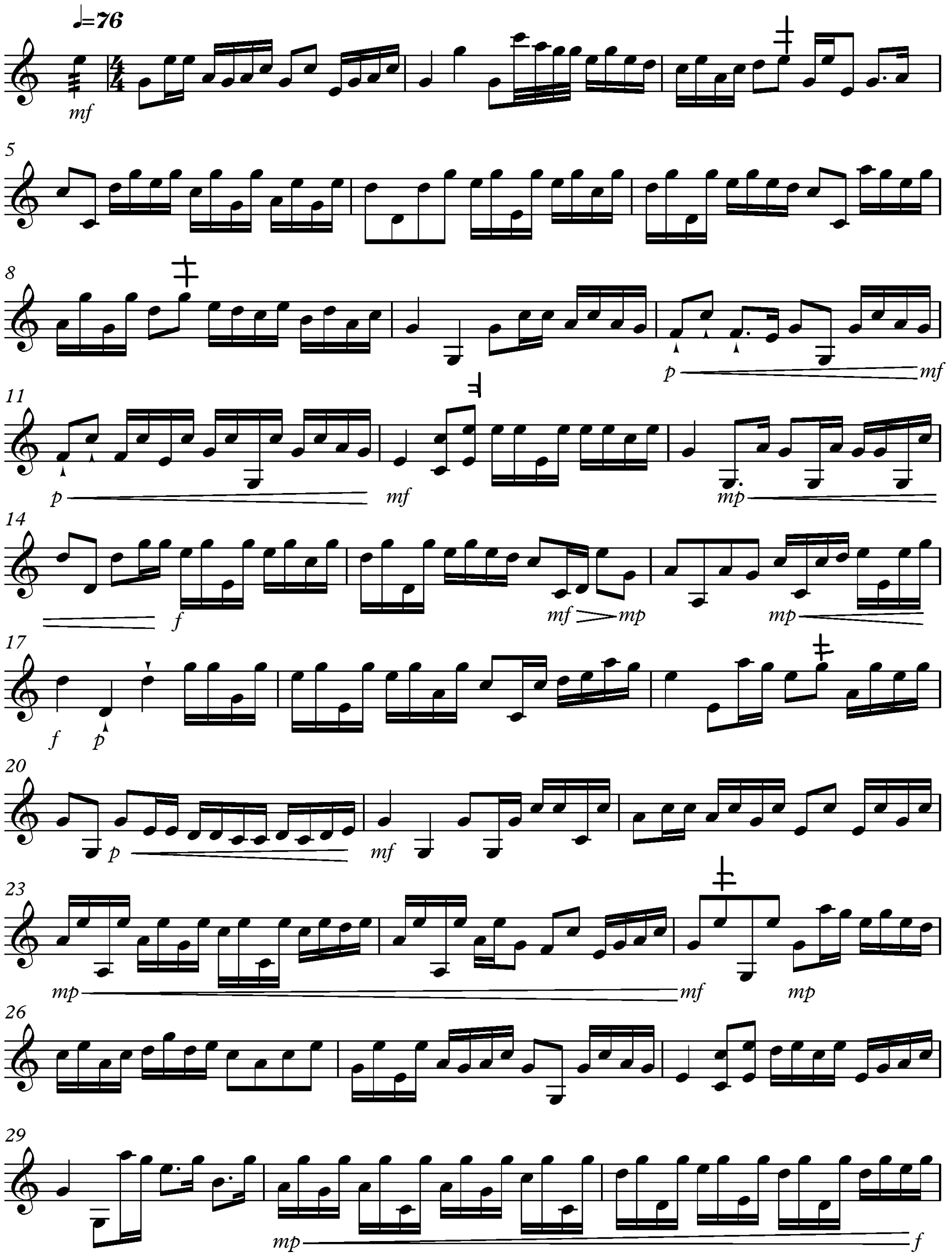
3.2 Improvisation Techniques in Regional Yangqin Music and Western Music

The yangqin was first introduced into China during the Ming Dynasty through the coastal areas into Guangdong, first appearing in the performance of Cantonese music and then spreading to the whole country from Guangdong (Huang 2016, 7). This Cantonese yangqin music had a large repertoire in comparison with other regional yangqin musics and enjoyed great popularity among Cantonese speakers in Guangdong province, Guangxi, Hong Kong, and Macao (Lee & Shen 1999, 136). Many Cantonese people enjoyed playing and listening to Cantonese music, which is associated with the popularity of Cantonese yangqin (Lee & Shen 1999). The Cantonese yangqin repertoire consisted mostly of arrangements of music from Cantonese opera, in which Chinese musical instruments such as the yangqin played, and continues to play, a significant role as improvised accompaniment.

The yangqin is one of the most ubiquitous instruments in regional music accompaniment and, similar to Guangdong yangqin music, the repertoire for many other solo yangqin genres was recreated or improvised based on regional music and operas, such as Jiangnan *sizhu* (silk-and-bamboo music), Sichuan music, and Shandong music (Xiang 1981). According to Wu (2002), Chinese instruments were adapted to play both solo and ensemble music, including silk-and-bamboo music, Guangdong music, and Sichuan music, and yangqin played an increasingly important role in Chinese music. Most yangqin repertoires moved from improvisation for local opera or accompaniment to various solo and ensemble pieces. Much of the repertoire performed on the instruments today comes from local operas from the end of Qing Dynasty (about 1770) (Wu 2002).

Material-based improvisation is important among folk yangqin performers and contributes to the sound of local operas. According to Tang (1998), different Guangdong musicians improvise on the same piece of music differently; even the same person playing the same piece produces a different result each time. Various yangqin masters have built on given material through improvisation by adding special yangqin techniques and employing diverse strategies to express various parts of the music. A large number of excellent Chinese folk music pieces was spread through "incomplete improvisation" or re-creation by skillful folk musicians in performance (Tang 1998, 141).

Transcriptions of typical Cantonese music, sourced from recordings of improvisations by previous generations of yangqin masters, have been arranged for solo yangqin. Such pieces, including "Dao Chuilian," "Thunderstorm in the Dry Season," and "Chain of Rings," represent the earliest solo yangqin pieces that adopt the unique playing techniques of the Guangdong yangqin (Tang 1998, 141). One of the most famous Guangdong pieces, "Dao Chuilian," was originally from "Monk Thought of Wife," the second movement of *Buddha's Three Treasures*, composed in 1870 by an unknown composer; later it was revised by master yangqin performer Yan Lao-lie, who recorded local folk artists improvising and reinterpreted the material using unique yangqin playing techniques (Tang 1998, 141). The musical score for “Dao Chuilian” is shown in Figure 12.


♩=76
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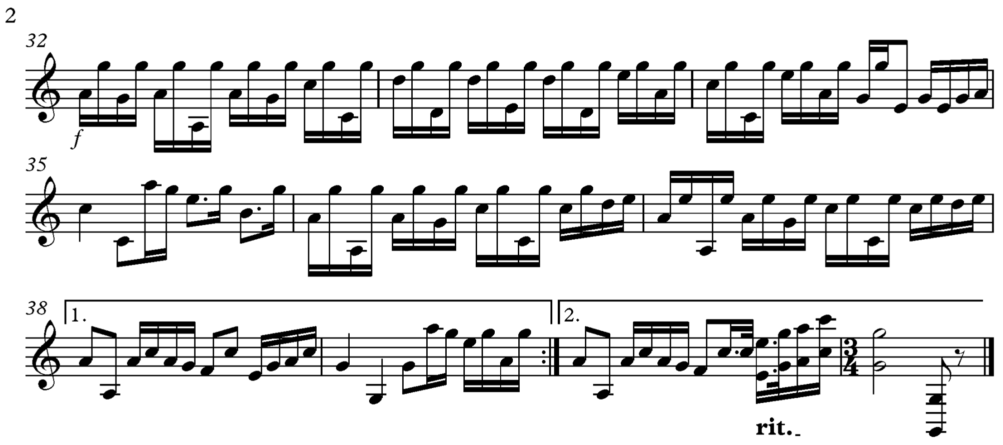


Figure 12. “Dao Chuilian”, for solo yangqin(Zhang 2018, 38)

In this piece, particular special yangqin techniques are applied, including *tánlún, chènyīn* (rapidly alternating octaves), and *shǒubìyīn* or *dùnyīn* (one hand strikes the stings and the other mutes them) (Xiang 1981, 27).

The symbol appearing in measures 3, 7, 11, 12, 18, 21, 24, 27, 28, and 34 indicates *tánlún*, a playing technique particular to the yangqin. “To create *tánlún*, the left thumb presses the bamboo stick while the middle and fourth finger hold the bottom part of the stick to make the top part of the stick vibrate naturally. The strings are then touched, the stick vibrations producing many notes in a single strike” (Zhang 2018, 31). *Chènyīn* is mostly used in the piece to accompany the melody (see measure 29, 30, 31, 32). In addition to *tánlún* and *chènyīn*, the symbol for *shǒubìyīn or dùnyīn* appears in measures 9 and 10.

In addition to applying the unique yangqin techniques to given musical material, adding ornamentation is an essential improvisation technique in folk opera and regional music such as silk-and-bamboo music. Witzleben (1983, 34) writes, “Most sizhu musicians stress the importance of improvisation (at the relatively ‘micro’ level of ornamentation and embellishment). A player should not stick to a fixed version of a piece but should vary it subtly with each rendition, eventually developing a unique style of playing”—an approach he calls “semi-improvisatory” (Witzleben 1983, 29).

The key concept for Chinese artists in improvising on set material is reading or memorizing a “bone melody and adding flowers”. Hughes (2004) noted that Steve Jones, who teaches Chinese silk-and-bamboo music at SOAS (The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) tells his students “from the start that a major goal during their first year is to reach the point where they can think of (or read the notation for) only a skeletal ‘bone melody’ (*gǔgànyīn*) while actually playing a more complex style based on ‘adding flowers’ (*jiāhuā*).” *Jiāhuā* 加花 is a technique commonly used in Chinese music improvisation (Tang 1998, 141). *Jiā* in Chinese means to add; *huā* means flower; therefore, *jiāhuā* means adding ornamentation.

Adding ornamentation in Chinese music (semi-improvisation) can be done with a level of sensitivity and integration that serves to enhance the original music, to achieve better musical expression through dynamics, and to reach a higher level of playing technique. Tang divided this improvisation technique into three categories: 1) calling the head (*jiàotóu* 叫头), meaning to improvise on the offbeat before the first starting main note on the downbeat; 2) expansion by means of diminution (one value becomes 4 smaller values or 4 notes become 8 notes); and 3) *chènyīn*, playing original notes and their lower or higher octave (Tang 1998, 141).

In Chinese folk music and opera, calling the head is a commonly used improvisation strategy. It is done just before the melody comes in, usually starting on the offbeat and the duration not exceeding one beat. In this beat, one, two, or more notes are played, and these notes are often improvised in close relation to the main melody that immediately follows (see Figure 13).

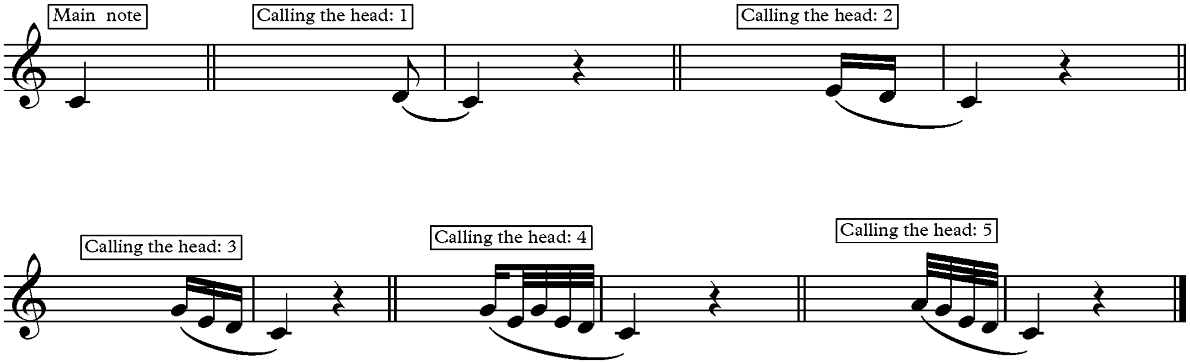


Figure 13. Calling the head before starting the melody

Five possible ways of calling the head are shown in Figure 13. Measure 1 shows the main note, in this case middle C; measures 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 provide five examples of the many possible ways to call the head, that is, of possible ornamentations leading to the middle C.

Adding ornamentation at the very beginning of the piece can naturally be done as a means of individual expression. The famous Guangdong music that reworked the music of yangqin masters has greatly promoted the development of Cantonese yangqin music. Tang (1998) pointed out that some Cantonese yangqin pieces have been recast through the addition of ornamentations that provide new content to the original music, such as “Dao Chunxue” and “Thunderstorm in the Dry Season.” “Thunderstorm in the Dry Season” originated from “Sao Jingtang,” the first movement of *Buddha’s Three Treasures*, when it was revised by master yangqin performer Yan Lao-lie for yangqin solo by adopting ornamentation techniques such as calling the head and expansion. A score that compares the original music to the revised version for yangqin solo is shown in Figure 14.

In measures 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 12 ornamentations were added in the revised version to reconceptualize the material and provide new artistic expression. According to Tang (1998), many musical languages or unique techniques on Chinese musical instruments were created based on diverse local dialects, customs, common practice, and on players' individual expressions and musical sense in order to embellish and rework the given material and embody colors of local culture through musical language. In the process of transformation from the original music, these new pieces offered great enhancements in terms of techniques, rhythms, dynamics, and musical expression and they formed the famous solo yangqin repertoire.

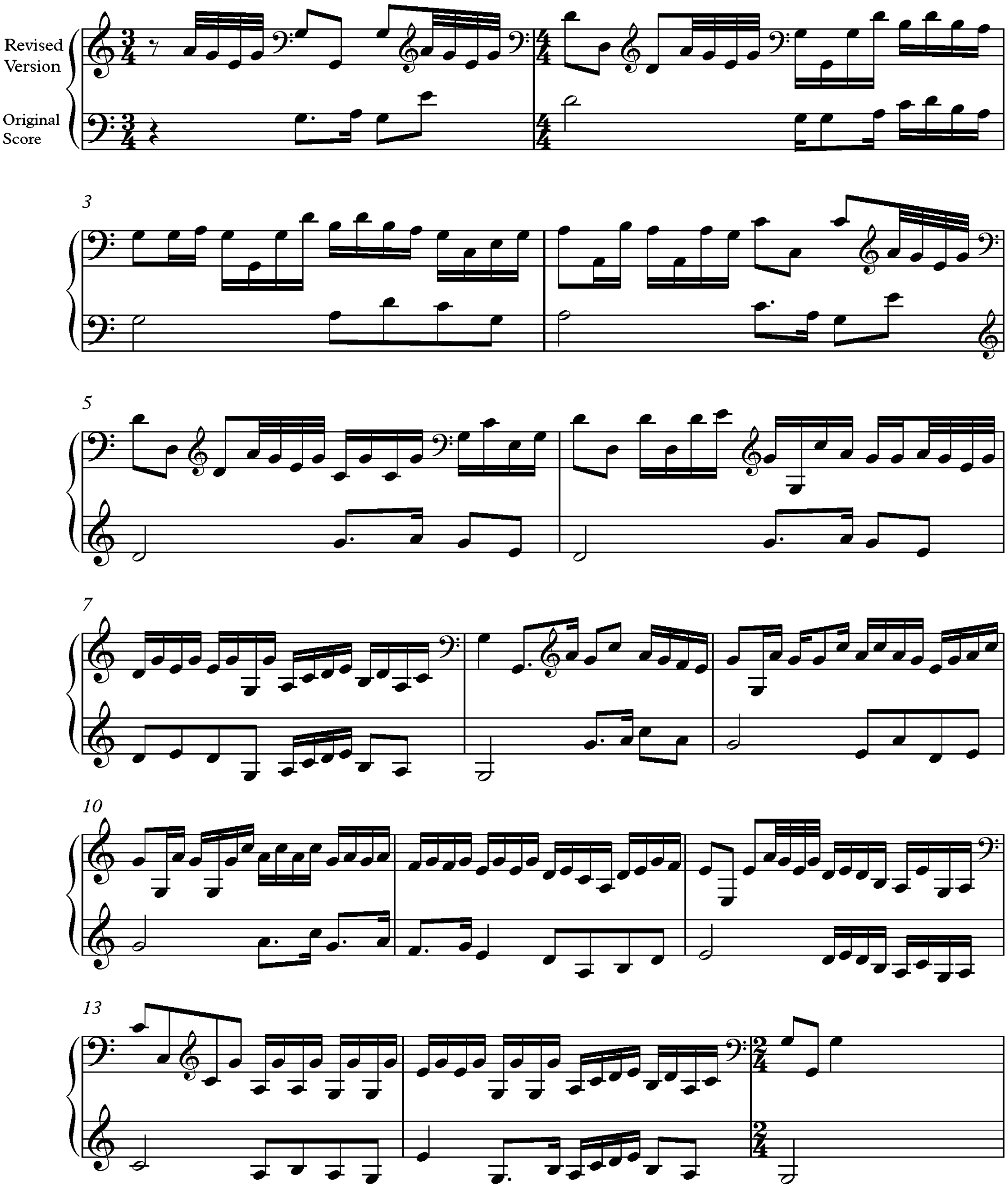

Revised Version
Original Score
3
5
7
10
13

Figure 14. “Thunderstorm in the Dry Season” for yangqin solo compared “Sao Jingtang,” the original piece on which it was based

In addition to the ways of calling the head, another indispensable improvisation strategy that is commonly used in regional yangqin improvisation is expansion. This improvisation technique can be divided into three types: 1) expansion of the first half beat, 2) expansion of the second half beat, and 3) expansion of the whole beat (Tang 1998, 141) (Figure 15).

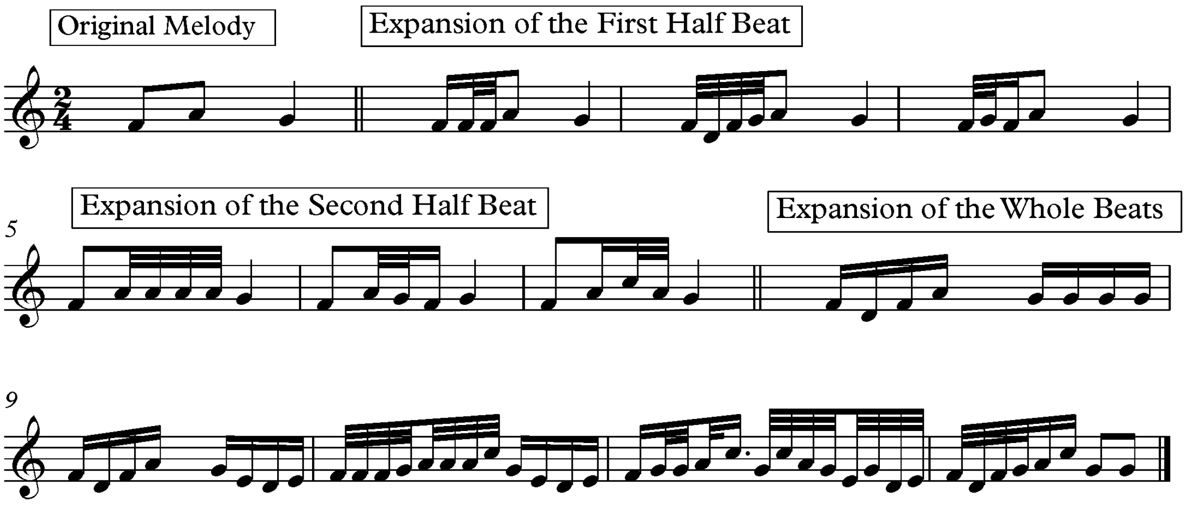

Original Melody
Expansion of the First Half Beat
5
Expansion of the Second Half Beat
Expansion of the Whole Beats
9

Figure 15. An Example of Three Types of Expansion

In the Figure 15, it can be seen that the expansion technique allows for many variations. Tang (1998, 141) also advises that the notes used in the expansion must be closely related to the original notes, and the pitches should not be improvised too far apart. It is also preferable for the final note of the expansion to not be far away from the opening note of the next beat (Tang 1998, 141).

This improvisation manner is used not only in Cantonese folk music improvisation but also in folk music improvisation in other regions, such as Sichuan opera (Figure 16) and silk-and-bamboo music (Figure 17). For instance, diminution is commonly used in Sichuan yangqin music improvisation. In Sichuan, in southwestern China near the upper Yangzi River, the yangqin was mainly played in the capital city, Chengdu, accompanying local ballad singing which attracted large audiences through its rich sonority (Lee & Shen 1999). Sichuan yangqin performers mainly played for wealthy people and special occasions such as holidays, marriages, and funerals before the 1911 Revolution, which signaled the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of modernization (Lee & Shen 1999). After the 1911 Revolution, Sichuan yangqin performers played in public teahouses for the entertainment of the wealthy. Li Liangshen, Li Decai, and Yi Dequan were renowned for their skill both in vocal opera and on the yangqin (Lee & Shen 1999). The form and tunes of present-day yangqin-accompanied ballad singing through improvisation have not changed a lot since 1880 (Lee & Shen 1999).

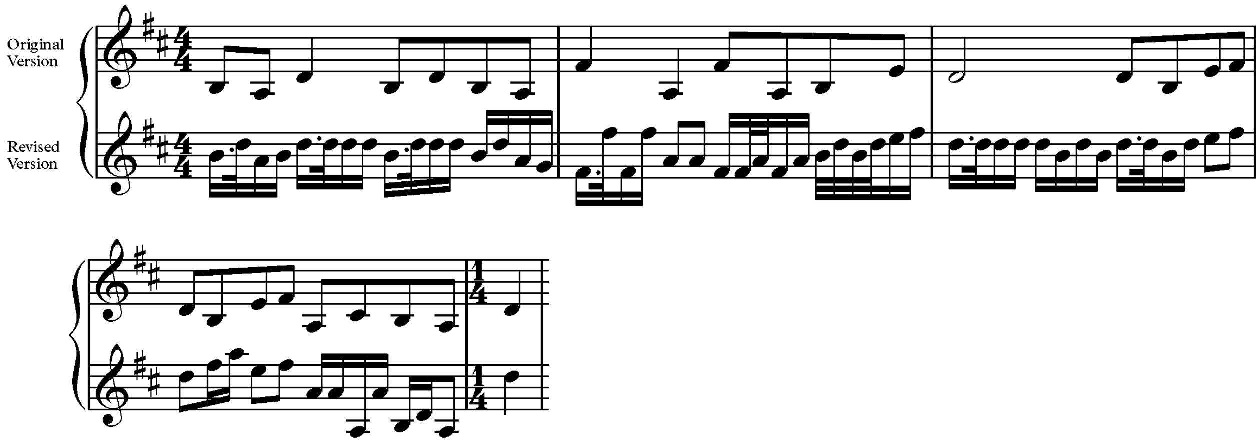


Figure 16. An example of original Sichuan opera and a revised version for yangqin solo, "Nan Jing-gong"

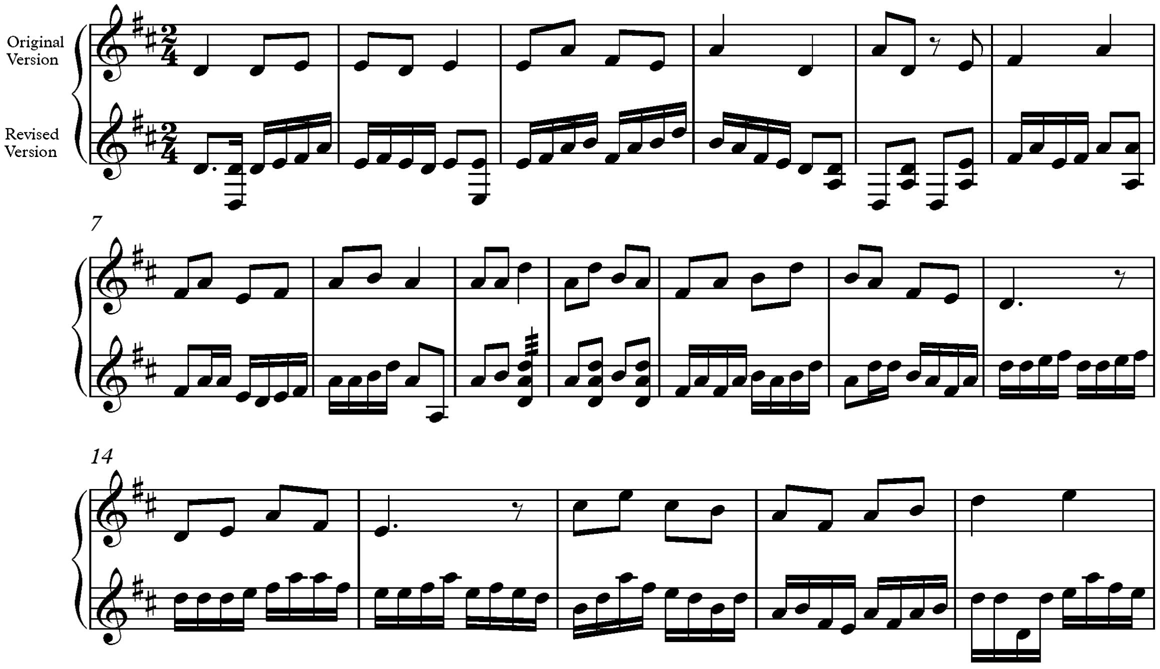


Figure 17. An example of original silk-and-bamboo music and an improvised version for yangqin solo, “Sanliu”

According to Lee and Shen (1999), works in the Sichuan yangqin repertoire were improvisations on melodies used in ballads or regional operas. Sichuan yangqin repertoire is based on regional operas with the influence of the other regional music improvisation techniques such as expansion. Many pieces in the solo yangqin repertoire are still played today and continue to be representative of Sichuan yangqin music, such as “General’s Order,” “Nan Jing-gong,” and “Nao Tai.”

Several types of ornamentations as I discussed above are similar to the diminutions used in Western music improvisation in the 16th century, “when florid passages were added to a single line of a composed work while it was being performed” (Wegman 2001, 16). These ornaments were called diminutions as they reduced the duration of the notes in a piece, transforming them into shorter notes, a practice that was referred to as the "breaking" of a melodic line (Wegman 2001, 16). An example of this type of ornamentation is shown in Figure 18.

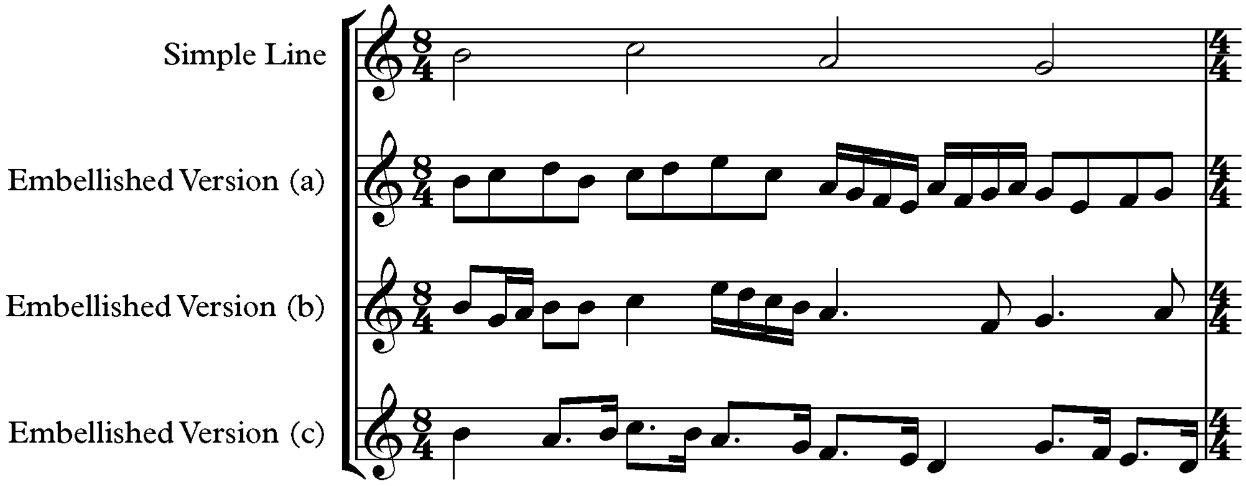


Figure 18. An example of diminution in Western music improvisation

The simplest way was to ornament given notes by beginning and ending on the pitch of the note and then moving to the next note immediately, as shown in Figure 18, embellished version (a). Wegman (2001, 16) noted that this way of adding ornamentation was deemed as the safest since it contained "the original contrapuntal movement of the work". The second way was to start on the given note but ending on the neighbour tone of the next note by conjunct motion. The third manner was given more freedom whereby some ornamentations might not touch on the original note.

In addition to this type of ornamentation, the other essential improvisation technique in yangqin music is *chènyīn*, where a certain note could be played in homophony in a lower octave (Figure 19).

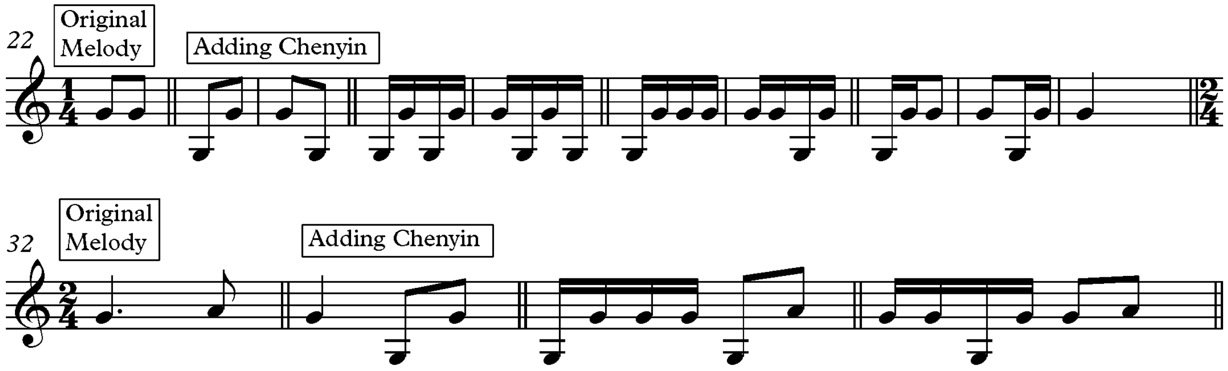

22
Original Melody
Adding Chenyin
32
Original Melody
Adding Chenyin

Figure 19. An example of adding *chènyīn* to the original melody

In Chinese folk music, opera music accompaniment, or ensemble improvisation, when two or more unisons occur in one beat or the duration of the main note is more than a half beat, *chènyīn* can be added. The added note might fall on the downbeat or the offbeat. *Chènyīn* can also function as a means of filling in short rests when the folk yangqin players play as part of an ensemble. An example is shown in Figure 20.

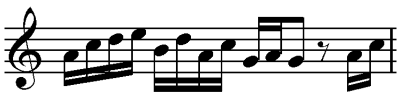
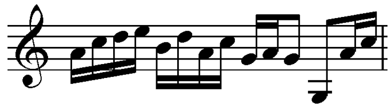
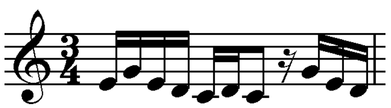
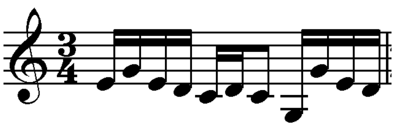
Original Music	Adding *Chènyīn* Over a Short Rest
	
	

Figure 20. An example of filling in a short rest by adding *chènyīn*

Expect filling in short rests by adding *chènyīn*, a melody could be improvised to fill in over a longer break while playing in an ensemble or solo (Figure 21).

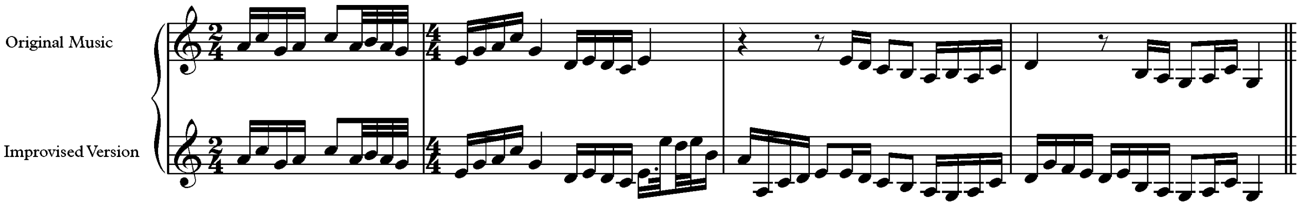

Original Music
Improvised Version

Figure 21. An example of filling in a long rest by adding a melody

According to Tang, this type improvisation is commonly used in yangqin music, especially for playing the yangqin in a Chinese folk ensemble. The purpose of filling in a rest by adding a melody is to make a connection between phrases and enhance the original melody (Tang 1998, 147).

In addition to adding ornamentation, yangqin-specific techniques such as tremolo and *tánlún* (mentioned above) are commonly used among folk yangqin players. There are two types of yangqin tremolo: the indefinite and the definite. The indefinite tremolo is a high-level yangqin technique requiring the musician to play as fast and as evenly as possible alternating between the left and right hand. In the definite tremolo eight notes are played in one beat, each note being a thirty-second note (Figure 22).

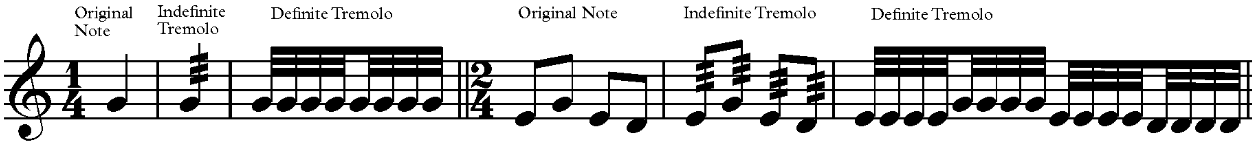
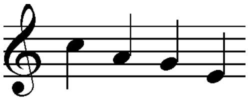
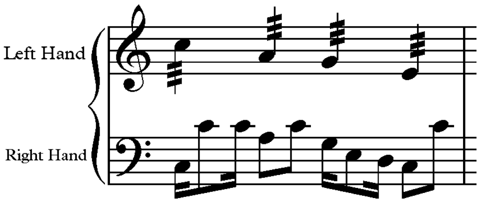

Original Note
Indefinite Tremolo
Definite Tremolo
Original Note
Indefinite Tremolo
Definite Tremolo

Figure 22. Examples of indefinite and definite tremolos

Single-hand tremolo is also commonly used among folk yangqin artists to embellish the music (Figure 23).

Original Melody	Improvisation by Applying Single-Hand Tremolo
	

23. An example of single-hand tremolo and accompaniment

The single-hand tremolo mostly involves the left hand playing the tremolo while the right hand plays an accompaniment or a melody. As can be seen in the Figure 23, the original single-line melody seems simpler than the improvised version in polyphony. To emphasize and enhance the melody this improvisation technique can be applied.

As I mentioned above, certain unique yangqin techniques, such as *tánlún*, are commonly used by folk yangqin artist. As shown in Figure 24, *tánlún* is mostly added on the last note on the offbeat. For example, if there are two eighth notes in one beat *tánlún* would be added on the second of them. These different types of unique yangqin technique are added in order to enrich the sound and dynamics of original music by emphasizing the melody.

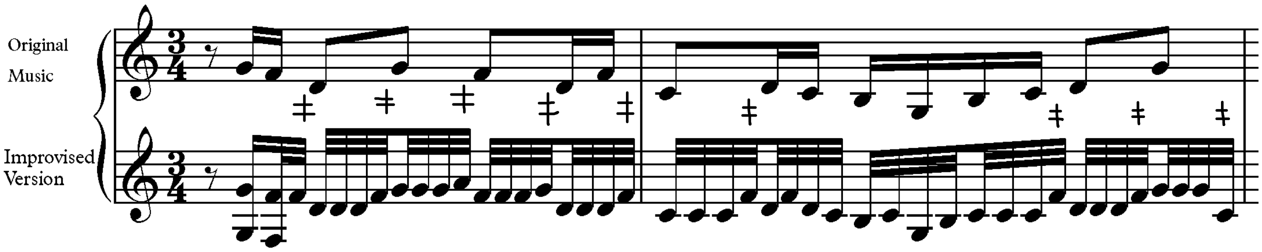


Figure 24. An example of adding tánlún to the melody

Such unique techniques in yangqin playing also developed in other regions, such as Liaoning (Northest China). A famous local folk artist, Zhao Dianxue, converted the ancient piece "Su Wu Shepherding" to a yangqin solo piece in the 1920s by creating new yangqin techniques learned from *zhēng* techniques, including *húatán* or glides, the use of harmonics, and *róuxuán* (pressing down the bottom of the string on the yangqin to make an interval of second), for producing diverse sounds (Lee & Shen 1999, 146). An example excerpted from "Su Wu Shepherding" is shown in Figure 25.

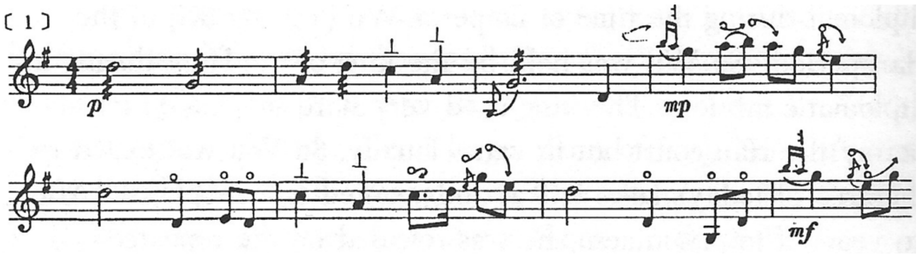
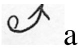
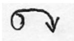


Figure 25. An excerpt of "Su Wu Shepherding" showing yangqin-specific embellishments (Lee & Shen 1999, 152)

Figure 25 includes symbols referring to such techniques. For instance, the symbol for *róuxuán*, ⊥, appears in measures 2 and 6. *Róuxuán* involves "creating vibrato by using the middle and fourth fingers of the left or right hand to rub the strings after the other hand has struck the other side of the strings," mimicking the sound of zither (Zhang 2018, 35). The symbols for up and down *shàng huámě* or glides,  and *xià huámě* , are appear in measures 4, 6, and 8. For the explanation of the symbols see Appendix A.

In addition to the use of ornamentation and unique yangqin techniques, similar to Western music improvisation in the Baroque period, variation upon repetition is indispensable for Chinese instrumental folk music players. This manner of improvisation can be found in

Chinese folk music in many regions, including Guangdong and *jiangnan sizhu* (silk-and-bamboo music). Lee and Shen (1999) note that there are many famous pieces of silk-and-bamboo music from the early 20th century, including "Lao Sanliu," "Song of Joy," "Yunqing," "Slow Sanliu," "Slow Liuban," and "Sihe Ruyi," and that its light, beautiful, melodious sound became ubiquitous in the cities. One of the yangqin virtuosos of silk-and-bamboo music, Ren Huichu, recorded "Sanliu" and "Hua Liu" for the first solo yangqin album in the late 1920s in Shanghai (Xiang 1981, 27). One of the most popular silk-and-bamboo pieces, "Sanliu." is shown in Figure 26. This piece not only features diminution but also uses variation upon repetition (Figures 26 & 27).

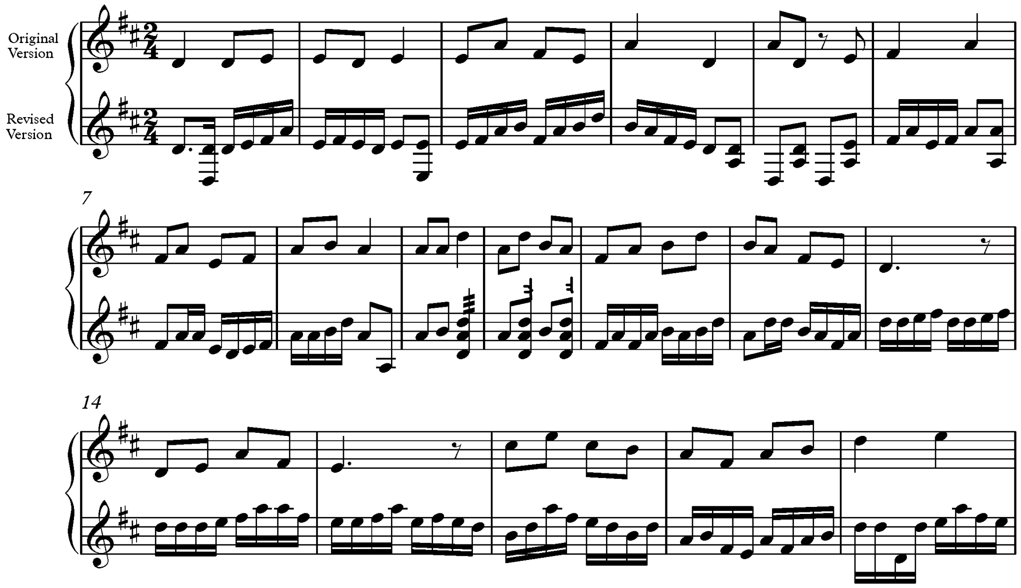


Figure 26. A comparison of an extract of the original "Sanliu" and a revised version for yangqin solo and the first variation

The top line of the score shows the original "Sanliu" while the second line shows a revised or improvised version for yangqin solo. The revised version used specific Chinese folk music improvisation techniques, such as expansion and diminution, applying unique yangqin techniques (in measures 9 and 10) (see Figure 26). In addition to using diminution for the first variation, the third variation features the unique yangqin techniques *fǎnzhú tánlún* (measures 3 to 5) and *fǎnzhú* (measures 6 to 13) (see Figure 27). *Fǎn* in the Chinese pinyin system means the back side.

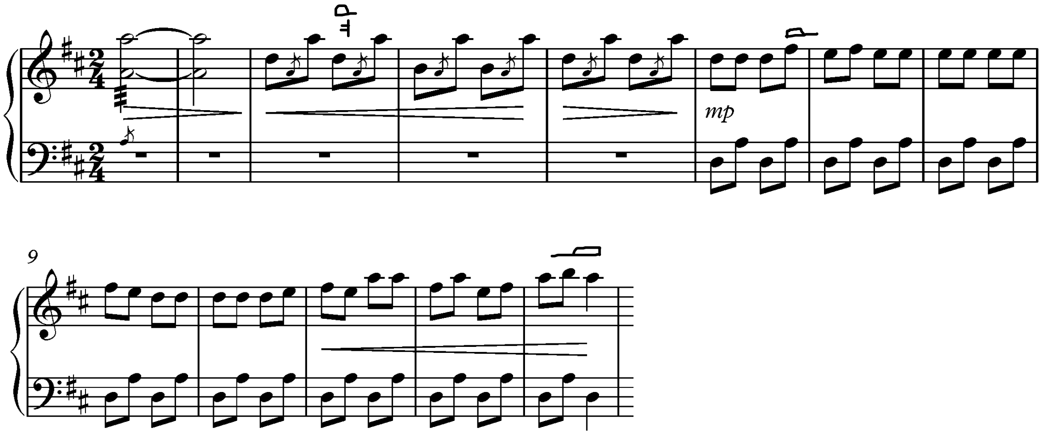
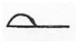


Figure 27. The third variation of "Sanliu"

The symbol  which appears in measures 3 and 6 indicates the start of *fǎnzhú*; the symbol in measure 13 indicates where it ends. To execute *fǎnzhú*, the yangqin is played using the back side of the bamboo stick to produce a bright, sharp tone that imitates the sound of the pipa. In addition to this specialized yangqin technique, the third variation of "Sanliu" has the left hand playing the melody and the right hand plays the accompaniment. These improvisation techniques expand the content of the original music in the new revised version for yangqin solo.

Variation upon repetition is also a typical improvisational gesture in Guangdong. Material-based improvisation in regional Chinese music styles is normally repeated three times or more, with each repetition revealing variations in dynamics, rhythm, and tempo (Huang 2013, 149). One of the most popular pieces in the traditional Guangdong repertoire is "Dance of the

Golden Snake," where the whole piece is repeated three times (Zhang 2020, 9). Figure 28 shows the melody of the first five measures of the piece with its rhythmic variations.

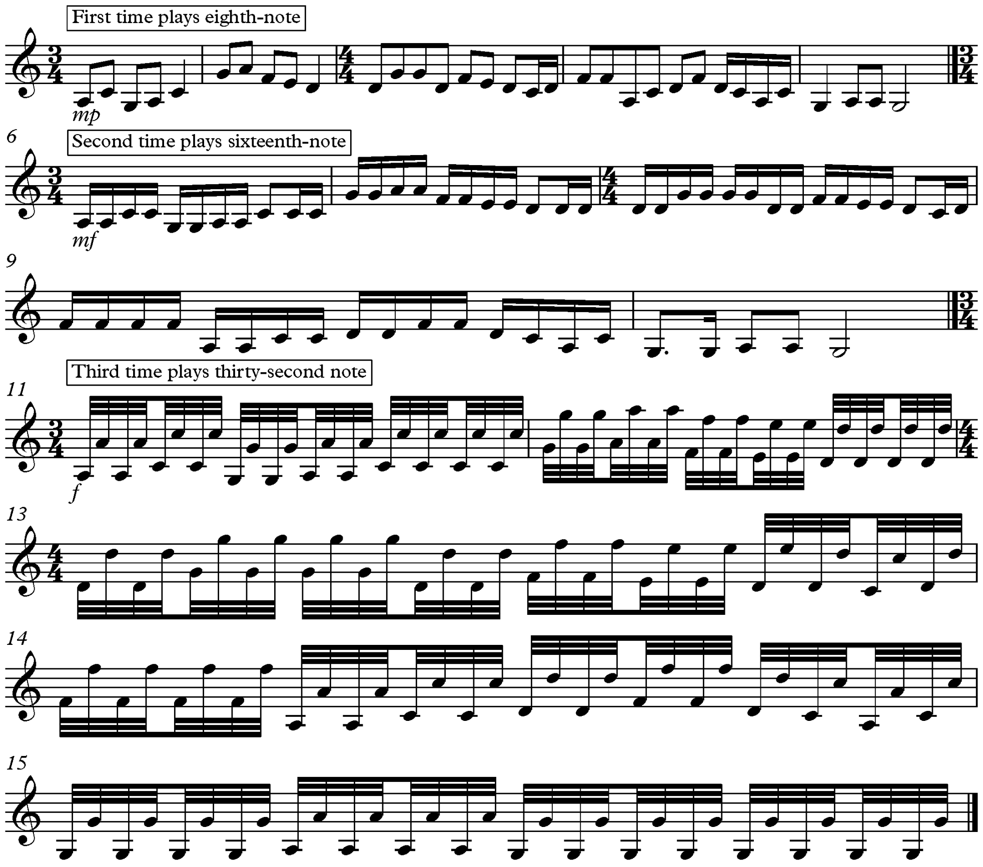

First time plays eighth-note
mp
6
Second time plays sixteenth-note
mf
9
Third time plays thirty-second note
11
f
13
14
15

Figure 28. Rhythmic variation in "Dance of the Golden Snake" (Zhang 2020, 9)

The first five measures of the score use eighth-note values to present the melody. The repetition of the melody shows a change in the 'inner' tempo by the use of diminished values: eighth notes become sixteenth notes. In the final, most lively repetition, values are once again diminished, and the melody is presented in *chènyīn*. In performance, dynamics would be natuarally varied throughout, bringing out the different moods of the music and of the performer.

Most improvisation methods used in Chinese folk music, such as ornamentation and variation upon repetition, are also used in Western classical music. For example, melisma and coloratura in early Christian music were both “considered appropriate for the expression of religious ecstasy in all its spontaneous glory” (Mills 2010, 12). Later, in the Renaissance era and late Barouque improvisation continued to remain a crucial element of performance, in the form of ornamentation, variation, and repetition (Mills 2010, 12).

> In the late Barouque is achieved a far-reaching synthesis of the horizontal principle of melodic ornamentation with the vertical one of polyphony and chordal playing and with motoric elements not technically highly developed, a synthesis in which free and strict improvisation at the organ, as it was practised by many generations of organists, acquires special importance. In this field, as in that of the art of vocal and instrumental ornamentation, there is reached with Johann Sebastian Bach not only an undreamed of peak but also a kind of conclusion. (Ferand 1961, 14)

C.P.E. Bach wrote in the foreword to his piece *Sechs Sonaten Fur Clavier mit veranderten Reprisen* (translated in 1961 by Ferand in *Die Improvisation in Beispielen*, 1956):

> Variation upon repetion is indispensable today. It is expected of every performer. The public demands that practically every idea be repeatedly altered, sometimes without investigating whether the structure of the piece or the skill of the performer permits such alteration. It is this embellishing alone, especially if it is coupled with a long and sometimes bizarrely ornamented cadenza, that often squeezes the bravos out of most listeners. How lamentably are these two adornments of performance misused. One no longer has the patience to play the written notes the first time; the too long absence of bravos is unbearable. Often these untimely variations, contrary to the setting, contrary to the *Affect*, and contrary to the relationship between the ideas, are a disagreeable matter for many composers. Granted, however, that a performer has all the qualities necessary to vary a piece in the proper way; is he always ready to do so? Are not new difficulties raised thereby in unfamiliar pieces? However, aside from these difficulties and from misuse, good variations always retain their value… In writing these sonatas I have had in mind mainly beginners and such amateurs as …no longer have enough time and patience to practise especially assiduously. I have wanted to give them… the satisfaction of being heard playing variations without having either to invent them themselves or to have others write them down and then themselves learn them by heart with much effort. I am happy to be the first, so far as I know, to work in this manner for the use and the pleasure of his patrons and friends. (Bach 1961 quoted in Collins 2001, 77)

Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Sonata Op. 109* contains melodic, rhythmical, contrapuntal, and permutational variation (Mazzola, Park, & Thalmann 2011, 306).

Similar to Western music, material-based improvisation is a predominant method of reworking music among Chinese regional artists. Some Chinese folk artists still improvise on given materials by adopting various techniques, such as ornamentation, repetition, variation, and special playing techniques. Free tempo is also a very typical tool for interpretation and expression in Chinese regional music, which was influenced by Chinese local operas. When folk musicians improvise to accompany operas, they follow the tempo and pulse of the singers, whose singing and dancing include frequent use of free tempo (Huang 2013, 150). "In this way, rubato becomes one of the most significant devices for musical expression among Chinese musicians" (Zhang 2020, 11).

In conclusion, early yangqin music was learnt through oral tradition and material-based improvisation, so it was mainly completed by performers in performance. Today's yangqin repertoire is mostly based on re-creations or revisions of Chinese folk music from different regions. In improvising for local operas, the yangqin masters adopted certain improvisational gestures, including *jiāhuā* or ornamentation, variation, and repetition. These techniques help enrich and expand the original music and moves the yangqin from being an accompaniment instrument to a solo instrument.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LIMITATION OF CHINESE MUSIC EDUCATION SYSTEM IN MODERN CHINESE SOCIETY

In this chapter, I briefly introduce the history of Chinese music education and share my ten years of experience through the modern conservatory studies of the yangqin in China. By sharing my personal experience, I will explain professional music training in Chinese music and propose that professional trained Chinese music students are lack of creativity. To discover a method of developing one's creativity, I briefly introduce the history of Chinese and Western music improvisation and share my experience in studying overseas and discovering a creative way of making Chinese music. In addition, I will propose that improvisation is a way of discovering and developing the nature of human potential creativity.

4.0 History of Chinese Music Education

As previously stated, traditional Chinese music learning was through oral tradition. Zhang (2018, 21) point out that "the oral tradition for the yangqin is the same as that of a great many Chinese instruments, such as the *zheng*, a plucked wooden zither from the period of the Han dynasty." Chinese music was "traditionally taught by oral transmission in terms of its composition, techniques, performance, and practice" before the establishment of modern Chinese conservatory education system (Zhang 2018, 21). The traditional pedagogy for Chinese music performance was that the students imitated the instructors and learned the playing techniques and music from the instructors to learn an individual musical style and distinctive interpretations of pieces (Xie 2000, 72). Therefore, traditional Chinese instrument music education was based on innovative approach instead of academic resource, scientific approaches, or professional training.

The associated process of modernization, Westernization, and professionalization run parallel with development of the contemporary Chinese music education from the end of 19th century. In 1892, Kang Youwei submitted a proposal to the Qing court titled, *Please Open the School* (Zhu & Su 2018, 106). In the proposal, Kang suggested that one of the most crucial things is to open more schools and to develop a new education system learning from as far as Germany in the West and as close as Japan to the East (Zhu & Su 2018, 106). In addition, he suggested that the establishment of a music course to teach "school songs"—a new idea that arose in Chinese music education at that time (Zhu & Su 2018, 106). The initial school song course used a large number of Western tunes, adding lyrics to the folk melodies, and the course taught Western music theory so that, through learning songs, students could simultaneously be inculcated with ideological values of patriotism (Zhu & Su 2018, 106).

The first normal school[6] to establish music courses in the Qing dynasty was the *Constitution of Women's Normal Schools* (Zhu & Su 2018, 106).

> The Constitution provide a clear understanding and arrangement for the education purpose and teaching period of normal music education, and laid a preliminary foundation for the construction and development of modern normal music education system in China (Wu, 1999). From December, 1912 to February, 1913, the Ministry of Education of the Provisional Government of the Republic of China successively promulgated Regulations of Normal Schools, Regulations of Normal Universities, and Curriculum Standards for Normal Universities in which music class was stipulated as a compulsory course in ordinary normal universities".

Therefore, the highest level of music schools for training of music teachers and professional performers emerged in the early 20th century.

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[6] The Chinese term normal school or normal university is 师范大学 or *shīfàn dàxué*. It refers to teacher-training colleges where help train students to be teachers for primary, secondary and tertiary schools.

In addition to the implementation of modern Chinese music education, other historical moments, such as the May Fourth Movement, stimulated the development of the modern Chinese music education system. In Beijing, on May 4th, 1919, around 50,000 students from Peking University took to the streets to show their strong opposition to imperialism and feudalism (Chow 1960). The May Fourth Movement was a nationalist mass movement, a cultural revolution, and a social movement (Chow 1960). Many scholars deemed it one of the most crucial events and transformations in Chinese history (Wang 2014).

During the May Fourth era, from 1915 to 1925, people who were liberal-minded, Western-oriented students participated in the New Culture Movement, searching for new ideas from overseas and expressing suspicions regarding the pertinence and validity of the Confucian tradition (Wang 2014). Confucianism features the concept of *Tiān Rén Hé Yī* which means harmony between Heaven and the People and is a highly desirable achievement in Chinese philosophy (Law & Ho 2011, 371). This is one of the most significant reasons that traditional Chinese music mainly adopts pentatonic scales that offer the harmonious interplay of those sounds.

Furthermore, one of the principal interpreters of Confucianism, Mencius (372-289) suggests that music embodies the "highly valued harmony between cultural and education" (Law & Ho 2011, 371). In traditional or old Chinese society, music was not used for entertainment as much as for the educational purpose of promoting social harmony (Ho 2003). Music belonged to one of the four most important and fundamental social functions such as morals, law and politics, and social harmony (Ho 2003). Traditional Chinese music education could help "the government to achieve social harmony at a time when Imperial China was torn apart by internal dissent during the era of the Warring States (481-256BC)" (Ho 2003, 289). The reason that Confucius gave educational priority to music is because music, including folk songs, ceremonial songs, and love songs, improve human behaviour and formed the basis of self-control (Ho 2003, 289).

However, Confucianism was blamed for backwardness of China and, during the May Fourth Moment era, some Chinese radicals promoted a new Chinese culture and reformation of China without Confucianism (Law & Ho 2011, 372). Mao Zedong (1893-1976) and his followers criticized Confucianism as a "old-fashioned, feudal, and part of the bourgeois hierarchical thinking of the past; and during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) Mao launched a campaign to discredit Confucius in an effort to scrap the ancient sage's remaining influence" (Law & Ho 2011, 371). The new idea at that time was to balance "the interest of individuals and that of society (Law & Ho 2011, 372). Among the goals of the May Fourth Movement was to modernize all aspects of China, including its music, by incorporating Western thought and music education systems (Leung, Shiobara & Yan 2013).

To develop a modern Chinese music education system in the early 1920s, a small number of Chinese schools and universities had started to incorporate music courses in the curriculum. The earliest and most representative higher music education institute for professional musicians' training was the Peking University Conservatory of Music founded in October 1922. After that, the National Music College and a few Western-operated institutions of Chinese music education were established in Shanghai from November 1927 onward (Stock 1997). The National Music College was the predecessor of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, which adopted the German conservatory system. It was established by educationist Yuanpei Cai and Doctor Youmei Xiao, who gained learning experience in Japan and Germany (Zhu & Su 2018).

In addition to the National Music College, the Music Department of Beijing Women's Normal University as well as the Peking University Conservatory of Music were established by

Doctor Youmei Xiao, who adopted the Japanese conservatory educational system (Zhu & Su 2018). The *Regulation of Higher Normal* Universities was announced by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China from the end of 1912 to the beginning of 1913, at which time the higher-level education for professional musicians was officially established (Zhu & Su 2018). With the establishment of professional Chinese music schools, universities, and conservatories, Chinese music performance courses such as the erhu (two-stringed spike fiddle) and pipa (Chinese lute) were introduced in a few schools by a few erhu players such as Liu Tianhua and Zhou Shaomei (Stock 1997).

Although Chinese music performance courses were introduced in the schools, it was not widely accepted by the students because the Chinese musical instruments were played for entertainment purposes. Some Chinese academics and students questioned the teaching of Chinese musical instruments in modern educational institutions (Zhang 2018). Stock (1997) pointed out that classes in Chinese musical instruments in the universities did not find wide acceptance at first. They viewed the erhu as an instrument played by girls smoking in entertainment venues, an instrument which was considered by the ancients as "licentious in sound and injurious to virtue" (Stock 1997, 143).

To resolve this issue, some new and contemporary Chinese music compositions began to appear, in order to make a distinction between these and the older traditional music that had been played in the tea houses for entertaining purpose. Many Chinese music masters such as Liu Tianhua understood the issue at hand. He composed and arranged a new music repertoire for the erhu and pipa that would fit into the modern educational and social system (Stock 1997). These new Chinese music compositions were inspired by Western musicians such as Alexander Tcherepnin, who encouraged Chinese musicians to use local traditional music melody, such as

Chinese folk music, as a compositional resource to develop a new music based on Western compositional techniques (Stock 1997, 144). To make national Chinese music (*guóyuè*) consisting of arrangements of traditional pieces, modern Chinese music integrated Chinese music tunes into Western compositional structures and techniques (Zhang 2018).

Chinese music education was modeled on the methods of Eastern and Western music education, adapting their approaches to the new Chinese music conservatories, universities, and schools. However, unlike the erhu and pipa training in the professional music schools established in the early twentieth century, some other Chinese music instrumental performances such as the yangqin were introduced to conservatories in the mid-twentieth century. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the new Chinese leaders were introducing their ideas regarding cultural and political development to mainland China (Stock 1997). The new government stimulated the development of academic music studies by establishing related music subjects in new conservatories (Stock 1997).

To learn from the West, the new Chinese government provided certain opportunities for professional musicians to have exchange lessons and performances overseas. Stock (1997) points out that the new government established links with other countries so that Chinese music students, virtuosos, and foreign teachers could have opportunities to exchange lessons and performances. With the intention of increasing the overall public awareness of music, the new government encouraged school-educated, professional musicians and music teachers to spread the new music education system (Zhang 2018). To educate people from the working classes, musicians, performers, and students from the conservatories visited rural areas and factories to help people learn music as part of their daily practice (Stock 1997, 148).

With the establishment of music education in the public schools and universities in 1952, thirty-one universities were founded with their own faculties of music (Zhu & Su 2018). At the same time, professional training in Chinese music performance was established in the Chinese music educational system, including nine Chinese music conservatories, approximately fifty schools of arts, schools of Chinese music education, and Chinese music performance (Li 2001). During this period, the Chinese music education system incorporated music theory learnt from the Soviet Union (Zhu & Su 2018). Due to the development of new Chinese music education system, the status of Chinese music education had been changed from non-professional to professional training. For almost all the commonly used musical instruments, education in Chinese music performance began to take its place in the field of professional music education in the conservatories (Li 2001).

With the flourishing development of China, an increasing number of universities with students majoring in music has been gradually appearing in Chinese modern society from the late 20th century to the early 21th century. There were more than 100 universities accepting "music majors" by 1988 (Zhu & Su 2018). As for now, there are 11 conservatories of music, 2 art colleges, 143 normal universities, and more than 700 universities (Zhu & Su 2018). During the development of these education institutions, upper-level Chinese music education adopted three models: conservatories (traditional professional music education), normal music education (music education for teaching), and university music departments (music education in comprehensive universities) (Zhu & Su 2018).

These conservatories integrated Chinese music performance, education, and research into new graduate curricula. To train professional musicians from a very young age, some of universities and conservatories established professional music education programs extending from primary school to junior high school, high school, and finally university (Li 2001). I was trained in one of the university's music faculties in Beijing that included programs for children in all four of those levels. I will share my experience in studying Chinese music performance (yangqin) in the following section.

4.1 Personal Experience of Ten Years' Conservatory Training in China

In China, most children start learning instrumental performance (including Chinese and Western musical instruments) from a very young age (Zhu & Su 2018). Their performance skills would develop into a professional level after a few years training; then, they would join in the annual exams for further study in conservatories to attain a professional musician training (Zhu & Su 2018). To meet the admission requirements, students need to have high-level professional skills as a foundation and a good sense of music expression and an ability to identify rudimentary musical values (Zhu & Su 2018).

To meet the admission requirements, the students need a referral to the professors or instructors who teach at the conservatory or universities. The students would be given some lessons to help them meet the admission requirements so that they could pass the audition and the exams of solfeggio, listening, and music theory that are provided by the conservatory. After they pass the exams, they would join the Chinese National College Entrance Examination including Chinese, Math, English, Politics, History, and Geography. After the students pass all the exams, they would be accepted by the conservatory, which depends on how many students the admissions office gives to each major in each year. It was an intense training, in term of playing techniques and musicianship, before the students are admitted into the schools, but it depends on a lot of self-discipline.

In reviewing my ten years' experience studying Chinese music performance in a Chinese university music department, I realize that, in general, Chinese music education in performance is greatly lacking in intellectuality, creativity, and practical application. My personal story is shared below:

> In 1994, at the age of four, I started to learn the instrument with a virtuoso teacher from the local community orchestra. I had private one-hour lessons once a week and received feedback from the teacher. As a beginner and amateur musician, I started learning to read *jianpu* notation (numbers), how to hold the bamboo sticks, and playing yangqin repertoire from level one (the lowest level) to level ten (the highest). With daily two-hour practice over six years, my hand shape, skills, and techniques were developed for the capability of performing. When I was ten years old, I passed the conservatory exams for level ten in yangqin playing for amateur players. After that, my local teacher referred me to a famous professional yangqin master, professor, and educator, Gui Xili, to study yangqin in Beijing. He suggested that I continue to develop my musical talent on the yangqin by enrolling in the conservatory. I passed the auditions and exams (yangqin performance, basic music theory, solfeggio and ear training) provided by the university, and I left home to study Chinese music performance at the school of arts in Beijing with professor Gui Xili at the age of ten[7]. During my studies with professor Gui and instructor Xue at the conservatory, I lived at the school, along with about 150 other students between 10 and 18 years old, and I studied a range of Chinese and Western musical instruments. There are usually around 50 yangqin students joining in the exam and between three and five yangqin students were accepted by the conservatory each year. To finish the conservatory training, we were expected to stay and live there for a minimum of ten years. Training at the conservatory involved intense study to build strong instrumental skills and learn common musical interpretation from the instructors. At the beginning of my study, Gui assigned me practice in tremolo, scales, and broken chords early every morning from 6:00 am to 7:00 am, and then practice in each section of the repertoire at least eight hours per day to focus on skills, dynamics, rhythm, timbre, body gesture, and memorizing the pieces. This helped me develop strong lifelong habits in practicing and performing, especially since conservatory studies require a lot of self-discipline, with no one ever forcing or even supervising students to do these tasks (Zhang 2018, 25).

My typical day of studying in the conservatory since I was ten is shown in the table chart below:

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[7] I come from Daqing, a small city in north-western China. Because it is about 1,200 kilometers from Beijing, I was, for the most part, able to return to my hometown to visit my family only during summer and winter breaks.

Time/ Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00am – 7:00am	Fundamentals	Fundamentals	Fundamentals	Fundamentals	Fundamentals	Fundamentals	Fundamentals
7:30am–12:30pm	Math class Chinese class English class	Yangqin class Solfeggio and ear training class	Geography, history, political studies classes	Music Theory Solfeggio and ear training Music analysis class	Music appreciation Music history Harmonic analysis	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice
1:00pm–3:00pm	Piano class Solfeggio and ear training exercise	Piano practice Solfeggio and ear training practice exercise	Piano practice Solfeggio and ear training exercise	Piano practice Solfeggio and ear training exercise	Piano practice Solfeggio and ear training exercise	Piano practice Solfeggio and ear training exercise	Piano practice Solfeggio and ear training exercise
3:00pm–6:00pm	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice
6:30pm–10:00pm	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice	Orchestra classes	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice	Yangqin practice

Figure 29. My personal schedule of studying in the Chinese University music department

Perspectives on the Study of the Yangqin: Zhang (2018, 25)

Apart from learning the yangqin, students are also required to study the piano, music theory, solfeggio and ear training, Chinese and Western music history, music analysis, and harmony to build up strong musical ability (Gui 1996). In addition to these compulsory courses, one could enroll some other courses for personal interests such as composition, electric music composition, literature, etc.

In addition to sharing my experience in studying Chinese music performance in Central University of Nationalities in Beijing, I provide an example of taking a subject of music in South China Agriculture University:

> Taking the subject of music in South China Agriculture University as an example, the courses required to complete a four-year undergraduate education are:
> - *Basic Principles of Marxism,*
> - *An Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought and An Introduction to Socialist Theory with Chinese Characteristics,*
> - *Ideological and Moral Cultivation,*
> - *Basics of Law,*
> - *International Situations and Policy Education,*
> - *English, etc.*

> The professional basic courses and professional required courses include:
> *Introduction to Art,*
> *Music Theory,*
> *Solfeggio and Ear Training,*
> *History of Western Music,*
> *Music History of China,*
> *An Introduction to Chinese Folk Music, and*
> *Aural Analysis of Melodic Style,*
> *Repertoire studies (for piano, voice, chorus, conducting, etc*.)
> .
> Professional elective courses are different in different universities, and can include:
> *Piano Improvisation,*
> *Piano Accompaniment,*
> *Opera Appreciation,*
> *Choreography,*
> *Mandarin pronunciation,* etc.
>
> Extracurricular expensive courses include:
> *Art Practice,*
> *Concerts,*
> *Social Practice and Engineering Skills Training,*
> *Practical Training,*
> *Management Science,*
> *Agricultural Training, Sports, and Innovative Business Practices* ((Zhu & Su 2018, 112).

Similar to module systems in Western universities' music faculty, the Chinese universities' music course is a four-year sequence requiring a minimum grade of 60% for all 120 course credits. The curriculum can be divided into four categories: 1) compulsory courses (Chinese Language and Literature, English, and Political courses), 2) professional musician training course (Music Basic Theory, Solfeggio and Ear Training, Introduction to Art courses, History of Western Music, Music of China, Music and Harmony Analysis of Western Music, 3) Performance course (skills courses such as piano, vocal, and performance course), and 4) optional courses (Zhu & Su 2018).

Based on my ten years study in the university, I realized the teaching models of Chinese music performance are lacking in the development of personal creativity. For example, learning Chinese music performance, the instructors mainly focus on playing techniques and training music elites instead of individual creativity and encouraging one's individual expression on music. Even though the professors have some requirements on music expressions, most of them would mark down the articulations and dynamics for the students to follow their interpretation of music. Most of the professors do not allow the students to give their own interpretations on music because they give a standard to the students to mimic in terms of emotion, body movement, musical styles, and dynamics; therefore, most of their students would play the music similar to each other.

By following the instructions of the professors, students could work on sensitivity, boldness and nuance in musical expressions after they obtain a professional level of techniques. However, based on my experience, most of the professors mainly focus on skills and techniques of the students. Although this intensive Chinese music training helps build up artistic stamina, impeccable technical mastery, and consistent playing through a highly demanding practice regime, it is lacking in individual creativity and imagination.

In comparison with traditional folk artists, it seems to me that the professional performers had less freedom to create music and less practical meaning in music practice. For instance, according to Stock (1997), the erhu master, Abing (born in 1893) learned music from Hua Qingping who encouraged Abing to play tunes and the local instruments that he liked. As he loved performing at different events, he joined the Chuigu ensemble that contained many professional trained performers. However, because they considered improvisational playing as nonsensical, Abing was not allowed to improvise. Abing enjoyed creating music in the moment and, as a consequence, they excluded Abing from the ensemble because the ensemble thought that his playing contravened the group's customs (Stock 1997, 36). Therefore, he decided to make his musical career as a simple wandering street musician and one of his improvised pieces, *Reflections of the Moon on Erquan,* became a very famous erhu piece in China (Stock, 1997).

These thoughts about Abing and professional training were very much on my mind during my ten years of study, however, "the early twenty-first century, Chinese society, quality of life, and music evolved to a new stage. The establishment of the new China was a milestone for the development of contemporary Chinese music and education" (Zhang 2018, 26). As already stated, the difference between old Chinese music education and modern training in Chinese music is that modern Chinese music education focuses on technical and musicianship improvements and stability in skills and that traditional Chinese music education contains more freedom for students to play music in a creative way. For instance, the music that Abing played was mostly based on improvisation (Stock 1997). This is contrary to the academic study of the instruments in the modern conservatories since the criteria for playing modern Chinese music are accurate playing of the score, musical expression through dynamics, and articulations as required by the instrumental masters.

In addition to music performance, the musicianship training class focused most on passing the exams. In the solfeggio lesson, the instructor gave a one-page score for students to sing at sight. In the class, we usually learn certain skills to pass the exams. For example, we first determine the function of the chord. Then by listening to the root of the chord, we can use our knowledge of music theory to infer the character of the harmony. Passing such exams is required of both current students and those applying to the conservatories. These musicianship lessons lack practical meaning for performers.

The musicianship class is more like doing a series of sample tests, because the training consistent primarily of practicing exercises that would be tested in the exam. As is said in the west, the teachers simply taught to the exam. For example, there are seven sections, including listening to pitches, intervals, chords, open chording, rhythmic patterns, melodies, in the ear training exam. The instructor would play section by section, and the students are required to write them down, and they would give some suggestions on the listening strategies for the exams. Thus, my experience in musicianship training in China demonstrated to me that Chinese music education focus more on strategies of passing exams. This lack of creativity training for the students is one of the biggest challenges that Chinese music education is facing today.

4.2 A Brief History of Chinese and Western Music Improvisation

From the writings of An, we understand that "a few thousand years ago in China, music performance and composition were hardly separable activities; all music creation relied on improvisation. For many generations, ancient music was developed and transmitted through oral tradition. As a result, making spontaneous music—in the moment—was the original way of creating music in ancient China" (Zhang 2020, 1). With the invention of notation systems and the influence of Western and modern education systems, the original way of creating music has been gradually replaced by the material-based music played by Chinese performers.

Similar to the Western art music, there were a plenty of traditions of music improvisation in Western music before the twentieth century. Outstanding classical composers including Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Liszt were accomplished improvisers. Their improvisation was particularly featured in ornamentations, preludes, cadenzas, and organ playing (Stewart 2016). However, with the exception of church organ music, improvisation traditions in Western art music had diminished due in part to the widespread availability of printed sheet music (Stewart 2016). By the nineteenth century, sheet music effectively transforms music into a commodity that gives composers a wider marker, copyright protection, and mass-production, all of which allowed for a greater monetary return (Stewart 2016).

By looking at the process of music and culture, we can observe that, by the early twentieth century, improvisation began to re-enter Western art music. Improvisation came to be "identified increasingly with African American expressive culture, further reinforcing the divide between improvisation and composition, as well as their perceived class and race affiliations" (Stewart 2016, 40). In support of this revival of improvisatory practice, it also began to re-enter Western musical discourse in various university music departments and music education institutions by the middle of 20th century (Stewart 2016).

There are various reasons that contributed to this re-emergence, including the incorporation of new sounds among composers involved in experimental and indeterminate composition and the un-notated music such as may be associated with recording technology (Stewart 2016). In addition, it might have result in recording technology. Stewart (2016, 40) points out that the invention of sound recording technologies that allowed improvisers to record, evaluate, circulate, and sell is associated with the re-emergence of music improvisation. In addition, the improvisatory approaches to music creation has been applied by many contemporary composers and creative performers, including Giacinto Scelsi, Lukas Foss, Derek Baily, George Lewis, Anthony Braxton, William Parker, John Zorn, etc.

Moreover, academic interest in improvisation has increased gradually. In Western academic discipline, a few scholars are interested in the subject of improvisation, notably Bruno Nettl and Stephen Blum who demonstrated their interest by publishing important essays in the 1980s (Stewart 2016). The first academic improvisation conference titled "Improvisation Across Borders the Symposium on Improvisation" was held at the University of California San Diego in the late 1990s (Stewart 2016). Improvisation has been considering as one of the standard skills by professional music educators starting from 2000 (Nettl 2001, 7). Today, improvisation courses are offered in many music academies in both Europe (such as Germany) and North America, including the U.S. and Canada (Wang 2011).

However, compared with the international music education, the level and pedagogical approach for music education in China are still relatively backward (Wang 2011). Although an increasing number of Chinese conservatories and universities established international exchange courses and master classes with certain Western universities, courses in improvisation pedagogy are still not yet developed, either in Chinese conservatories or universities (Wang 2011). There are a few early child education institutions using the concept of improvisation, such as the Orff teaching method intended to develop children's creativity; however, the teaching and learning of improvisation in China is still at the beginning stage of imitating the West (Wang 2011).

In addition to early childhood education institutions, the interest and awareness of improvisation among contemporary music colleges are on the rise. With the establishment of pop, jazz and other majors in a few contemporary music colleges in China, some students now have acquired an interest in improvisation (Wang 2011). They discover new music and make spontaneous music in the real-time public performances (Wang 2011). The appreciation of free improvisation is slowly emerging (Wang 2011). In addition to avant-garde jazz, many performers of experimental jazz and modern music emerged in China, but these subjects have not yet appeared in the curricula of professional music schools such as conservatories and universities (Wang 2011).

4.3 The Importance of Improvisation in Music Creation

It might be a tough but meaningful mission to receive public recognition and support of improvisation from professional performers. China has a long history with a rich culture comprising 56 ethnic groups, each with their unique musical traditions and artistic and cultural influences. In the process of creating music through improvisation, there might emerge various new music styles and genres. These rich sounds and playing concepts also provide composers with new imagined spaces to create new and original music that are the most important attributes of a musician's musical talent. Making spontaneous music in the moment is a way of creating original music and it could constitute a new model for creative work in the field of Chinese music education and performance.

Having had the privilege of living and studying music in North America, I am moved to take advantage of the opportunity to investigate pedagogical strategies for the teaching of contemporary Chinese music improvisation (see Chapter 5 & 6) with the hope that it can develop and enrich Chinese music education. To make original music in a creative way, I have been working on discovering contemporary improvisation using the yangqin through participation in York University's course in Contemporary Musicianship and Improvisation. I also collaborated with many musicians with training in different cultural backgrounds, to make spontaneous hybrid musics that challenged and expanded my own.

Based on my studies in the West, I realized that improvisation is a powerful way of discovering one's individual voice and potential creativity in music and of discovering and making new music spontaneously (Zhang 2020, 15). According to Blum (2009, 239), improvisation is defined as "composition during performance" or "composition in real time." By making fusion music with various musicians, I found that improvisation gave me a new way of thinking about creativity in Chinese music education and performance. It was a direct experience of the "spontaneous processes of creating music in real time as a direct response to the influence of content itself as perceived" (Nunn 1998, 20).

For the purpose of engaging new and original music through a creative activity, "I recorded an album in 2017, *Path to the Contemporary*, tracing yangqin music from the Tang Dynasty (traditional Chinese music) up to contemporary compositions. These included several free ("complete") improvisations (*Habitats*, *For Us*, *Song For Casey*, *The Future*, and *Asian Story*—a theme-based improvisation (Zhang 2018, 46). "The initial rationale for doing the project was to draw a comparison between traditional and modern yangqin works and to discover varied styles of new music through free improvisation" (Zhang 2020, 13).

To make spontaneous music, I invited a few of my friends to play and improvise together. In order to filter out any extraneous sounds, we played in two separate rooms using headphone to listen to each other without discussing any plans ahead, so "the music was created spontaneously, based solely on personal impulse and our interactive sensitivities" (Zhang 2020, 14). To discover new music through individual interpretation, special yangqin techniques and variations were adopted to create unique sounds that could best express my sensations, emotions, perceptions and my imagination at the moment.

In addition to creating music without any prior agreements, I also articulated some ideas to facilitate further experimentation. To this end, I invited the collaboration of Kenny Kwan, a piano improviser, and David Benitez, a percussion improviser. Before we improvised together, I firstly experimented with some ideas myself; then, I discussed these ideas with them prior to playing. After we improvised, we listened back to our playing and exchanged feedback. We realized we made a number of spontaneous decisions and creations at the moment.

Improvisation ideas: 1) create a piece at the moment by using exclusively the four pitches G, B, D, F, 2) create a melody based on the chord progression of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Preludium I* (WTC Book I), 3) improvise based on a Persian scale (C, Db, E, F, Gb, Ab, B,) with a loosely defined structure: introduction, adagio, allegro, cadenza, ending, 4) create a melody based on a descending ostinato bass line (A, Ab, G, Gb, F, D, and E), 5) improvise based on a pentatonic scale, 6) improvise by using Peter Garland's Guiro/Clapping music, 7) improvise based on a traditional Japanese mode D, E, F, A, B flat, and 8) improvise based on tremolos. The rationale for doing the project was to create music with diverse ideas and discover creative possibilities by making realization of some music materials.

Improvisation is a significant way of developing an individual voice and creativity, and it should be an indispensable partner in music creation. According to Nunn (1998, 12), some 20th century music has incorporated indeterminacy and "chance music" as an integral aspect of the improvisation. Nunn 1998 (12) pointed out some composers, such as Stockhausen, Berio, Cage, Earl Brown, etc., have used some approaches of improvisation and indeterminacy in their compositions; Lucas Foss was active in developing new music through improvisation with his Improvisational Chamber Ensemble in Los Angeles in the later 1950s (Nunn1998, 12).

In addition, to be inspired by one of my improvisation pieces "that came out of an individual emotion of sadness and fear deep in the heart," I composed certain yangqin pieces that used a melody which originally arose in an improvisation (Zhang 2018, 52). Improvisation can incorporate diverse methods of creating music that are influenced by an individual's perceptions and experiences (Blum 2009, 241). To make yangqin music in a creative way, I am not only doing a recording project, but I also composed specific improvisatory pieces intended for yangqin ensembles incorporating yangqin solo with percussion and string quartet, including *Love in Asia*, *Building the Walls*, *Rolling*, and others (see Appendix A). I made a composition based on previous recordings because I was attracted by the melody that arose spontaneously in an improvisation.

It seems to me that improvisation embodies greater essential meaning than written scores because there is no gap, no disjuncture, between conception and execution. The spontaneous outpouring of music is the final product—the composition. It focuses the experience more on listening and expressive creativity (Zhang 2018, 46). An inevitable component of improvisation is indeterminacy that is creating music and making music decisions in the moment. It not only helps enrich original repertoires, but also a practical method to discover human potential in creation and to develop an authentic sense of individuality in music.

Based on my experience in improvisation, training and performance in freely improvised music fully cultivates and highlights performers' potential capability for music creation. While improvising, listening to pitch, timbre, harmonic progression and phrase are all necessary. “When different styles and forms of music meet, the performers can look with their ears and mind, taking into account how their perceptions have been shaped over time—from the process of preconception, practice, language, communication and presentation” (Zhang 2020, 14). Improvisation is not easy task for performers because the total participation of one’s musicianship, instrumental technique, memory, listening skills, and imagination are required (Zhang 2020, 14). It is an opportunity to make spontaneous music from the integration of one emotional and intellectual expression of an individual’s life.

4.4 Conclusion

Improvisation is an approach to music creation that is common to jazz, experimental music, the music of India, and within many traditions. It is also a common subject of study in Western music education. It is “the creation of music in the course of performance” (Nettle 2005, 36). To assist the development of Chinese music education, Chinese music educators should seriously consider the development of their abilities in music creation through improvisation and be able to create music spontaneously based not only on previously composed thematic material, but even simply on the basis of personal impulse and interactive sensitives. To help Chinese music education moving forward, certain pedagogical strategies of contemporary Chinese music improvisation should be created and developed.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPROVISATION LESSONS IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA: A PEDAGOGICAL MODEL FOR TEACHING IMPROVISATION

The purpose of this chapter is to seek for the teaching approach that is commonly used in the Western universities and conservatories for teaching improvisation. How do professors in the West teach improvisation and help develop learners' sense of creativity, originality, spontaneity in one two-semester course. In this chapter, I will focus on the pedagogical approach by which professors motivate and provide a sequence of instruction and learning activities for students in their improvisation lessons. By way of sharing my experience in studying improvisation in Sokol's class at York University and other learners' experiences in studying improvisation in classes in Europe and North America, I would divide approaches to teaching into five themes: 1) creating music from a sense of inner freedom, 2) disciplined approach, 3) creative training, 4) setting for improvisation, and 5) class expectation.

5.0 Improvisation Teaching Approach in the Western Classrooms

An increasing number of research-based articles focusing on improvisation have recently appeared in publications, especially in the music education literature (Hedden 2017). Improvisation is significant since it is a fusion of three main musical activities of composition, performance, and listening/analysis happening simultaneously (Covington 1997, 49). Due to the lack of teaching experience in improvisation, many music conservatories, faculties, and departments do not offer improvisation course or lessons, with the typical exception of jazz studies (Hedden 2017). Thus, the lack of education for most musicians and professors in "integrating concerted improvisation training" has perpetuated for a long time (Hedden 2017, 290).

By participating in Contemporary Musicianship and Improvisation lessons at York University, I realized that improvisation skills are essential to improve one's performance technique, musicianship, and musical creativity. Especially as a Chinese musician, I believe improvisation is an essential skill for performers. However, the question is how do musicians train and how do they learn to teach improvisation? There are certain treatises which offer particular methodologies for instruction. For instance, the Gamso teaching approach[8] emphasizes attention to listening, an approach which integrates jazz methods into classical practice and into woodwind methods for collegiate students (Hedden 2017, 290). Covington (1997, 49) pointed out that "one area in which improvisation could be incorporated into music curriculum and which would reach all music majors was aural training. Improvisation in aural pedagogy should not be just a discretionary choice but an essential component."

5.1 Teaching Philosophies of Improvisation

I participated in Sokol's Contemporary Improvisation and Musicianship course for two semesters. Sokol, a professor at York University, Canada, is an excellent improviser who is active as a workshop leader for music teachers, dancers, actors and musicians. Through my observation and participation in his class, I realized that his effective pedagogical approach is closely linked to practice; his teaching philosophy is focused on creativity through deep familiarity with improvisational materials and composition strategies, deeply listening to music, and learning to act freely by involving music expression from your heart. His improvisation classes are offered twice a week and each lesson is three hours. The first half of his class is often given to the introduction of certain improvisation-related musicianship training exercises; the second half of his lesson is the time to improvise from solos and duets to ensembles.

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[8] For an explanation of the Gamso teaching approach, see "An aural learning project: Assimilating jazz education methods for traditional applied pedagogy" in *Music Educators Journal* (Gamso, 2011).

Similar to Sokol's teaching approach, Sapmannshaus, who teaches improvisation in Munich Conservatory of Music, introduces certain exercises for musicianship training and free improvisation as a way to express one's individual voice and emotions. Wang Lei (2011), who participated in Sapmannshaus's improvisation class at Munich Conservatory of Music, points out certain exercises that were demonstrated in the class, including musicianship training, collaborative improvisation, improvisation based on a theme, and free improvisation.

By contrast with the teaching approaches of Sokol and Sapmannshaus, Douglas's approach to teaching improvisation not only focuses on musicianship training, intrinsic motivations (prepared ideas and materials), spirit, deep listening, but he introduces it all through a Buddhist "practice of presence." Nelson (2020, 4) points out that "Douglas's teaching philosophy is primarily based on his deep love of music and his love of sharing music with people." The purpose of his pedagogy is inspiration of love and disciplined methodology to practicing music that will come from one's accumulation of music materials. He also brings Buddhist practice into his pedagogy which places great importance on "the value and joy of nowness, not only in music but also in life" (Nelson 2020, 4).

In Douglas's memoir, he describes his practice as a Buddhist and how it influences his music and teaching (Nelson 2020, 4). By inspiration from his first Buddhist teacher, Sangharakshita, he learned meditation practice: a basic technique to concentrate on the incoming and outgoing breath so that one could train their consciousness to be aware of the present moment. He practiced mediation for ten or more hours a day in Buddhist retreats in the summers. Douglas describes his experience in meditation:

> Meditation is training the mind to be present—watching thoughts and feelings arise and cease, noticing habitual patterns, allowing space in the mind where one can be less caught up by thoughts and emotions, where one can see them as passing clouds in the sky of mind. This lessens our tendency to react impulsively and habitually to stimuli, and it brings peace of mind and a deep sense of well-being (Douglas, 2019, 26).

By the inspiration of Tibetan Buddhist scholar Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation in Los Angeles in 1972, Douglas took his Bodhisattva vow that enlightens one to become a sentient being and help develop one's best potential abilities. This, for him, was the beginning of walking the Mahayana path in Buddhism (Nelson 2020).

In addition, Douglas sought to integrate Buddhist practice to music practice. He states in his memoir:

> The foundation of Buddhist practice is the development of awareness of the present moment—awareness of one's sense perceptions, one's thoughts and feelings, one's body, and other people. Doing so can result in a mind that is clear and calm, and it can increase appreciation of the world and compassion for others. Music practice doesn't go as far, but it is also concerned with developing precise awareness of the present moment (Douglas, 2019, 21).

Douglas realizes that it is crucial to experience the nowness for both Buddhism and music; thus, he emphasizes "synchronizing body and mind" and presenting through your instrument (Nelson 2020, 5). He relates the powerful expression of music with the purpose of inspiring and helping others—a concept and practice which infuses Mahayana Buddhism. Douglas (2019, 21) states that "you can play a concert and touch people in their hearts—beyond their conceptual, habitual patterns; you can move and inspire them."

5.2 Theme One: Creating Music from an Inner State of Freedom

Sokol points that the intentions of the lessons are to facilitate the learners to be free and creative. Although he provides some improvisation materials and exercises for musicianship training and accumulating certain improvisation ideas, the whole goal of the exercise was to give student freedom to create music and to express themselves instead of putting the learners into some sort of framework. The key to developing improvisational skills is an experience where the students have freedom to create and discover creative possibilities.

Improvisation is not only a help for enriching one's music style, but also improve one's performance technique in both traditional and contemporary Chinese music. I remembered that my first improvisation experience was heavily influenced by my culture and experience in learning Chinese music. Sokol transmitted to me certain contemporary improvisation music ideas, exercises, and gave me performance opportunities to facilitate my experience of musical freedom. He had been inspiring me to find my individual voice, discover creative possibilities, and motivate my potential creativity. He demonstrated musical vocabularies and showed me various ways of discovering creative possibilities. My mind, my attitude, was changed from a very traditional and serious Chinese musician to become a more relaxed, free, and creative Chinese musician.

To free my playing, I gained a better understanding of the yangqin and began to see my instrument not only from a traditional way but one that included a topographical perspective. The idea arose initially from a lesson on the topography of the piano keyboard that he presented in the class. This inspired me to see my instrument in a different way, which I found very helpful for improving accuracies of playing the yangqin. In addition, he encouraged me to discover unique sounds and techniques of the yangqin. I tried to bow the lower register of my instrument to capture the sound of a string bass and to play the wood part of the instrument by using the hands percussively to produce a drum sound.

In addition to my experience, Wang's experience in studying improvisation at the Munich Conservatory of Music demonstrates to me that the teacher encourages the learners to be extremely free without resorting to fixed patterns and to collaborate with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, who play various types of instruments. Relative to free improvisational performance, the conservatory's teaching and training also has a certain particularity, as a subject, it requires some training plan and content (Wang 2011). In the improvisation class, one is also required having a certain understanding and mastery of classical, jazz, folk music and many other types of music (Wang 2011).

Among the strengths of free improvisation is to be somewhat free of negation, even so as to include what we think of as randomness and indeterminacy. This attitude supports all that can arise in spontaneous music making, all that arises through the immediacy of one's impulse. In free improvisation, there are no a priori restrictions—no boundaries between different religions, nationalities, and cultures. However, the performers have their own playing habit in terms of rhythm, articulations, colour, music context, texture, even cultural conflict. Musical perception and expression are also significant in free improvisation. For example, one could express many possibilities of emotion such as anger or helplessness by shouting; one could tell others about a story through music; how you feel about the world pandemic by reciting and singing; one could share happiness through improvisation.

In the class, the teacher encourages the learners to discover infinitely varied timbres that have given unique meaning to each instrument (Wang 2011). For example, the overtones of the clarinet may be the whine in an African forest. If one does not put rosin on the bow when playing stringed instruments, perhaps one has joyed the unique sound of the instrument. A yangqin player could use the bottom of the bamboo stick to repeatedly scratch the string by right hand, and the other hand wears the special ring for the yangqin to slide on the string in order to mimic the sound of storm.

One great asset of free improvisational practice is the possibility of releasing oneself from restricted space or rules to discover music by experiencing the moment, embracing all living creatures, beauty of the nature sounds. The freedom to create music in the absence of predetermined stylistic agenda is an act of potential liberation for the soul. Douglas (2019, 57) points out that human beings are part of the universe that has limitation in time and space; they experience themselves; their thoughts and feelings are separated from a kind of optical delusion of their consciousness. “This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty” (Douglas 2019, 57).

5.3 Theme Two: Disciplined Approach

In the first improvisation class, Sokol usually gives couple of suggestions for students to build up an individual daily routine: 1) preparing, 2) warming-up habit, and 3) journal writing. Prof. Sokol suggests preparing a three-ring binder to house the course materials such as rhythm exercises and students’ own work such as their practice log, journal, recording log, etc., and suggests that it contain detailed information on exactly what you are trying and how you are doing with all the exercises, creative work, etc. It will contain a list of all the work one has been given to date with the rationale for its presentation and some detailed suggestions on how to approach the work.

Moreover, as he suggested, some of our warm-ups should be done before playing and should be maintained as lifelong exercises. It includes certain techniques for loosening up the joints of the shoulder and the wrist and generating an increased blood flow in the arm and hand including arm swinging; shoulder-circles; lateral arm stretch; overhead shoulder stretch; wrist extension in large forward circles; wrist torque with vertical motion, and others.

Sokol recommends documenting our efforts in a music journal, in which we detail such things as the time spent on each exercise, musicianship and related work, reflections of musicianship and improvisatory work in other musical activates, your achievements and difficulties, how you work with your obstacles, collaborative discovery with other musicians, etc. The journal tracks the fact that you worked with certain materials in a particular way on a specific day for a certain amount of time. By a regular review of the journal, one could realize which materials and exercises have been neglected for a few days and try to renew one's work with them.

In his improvisation lessons, musicianship training serves in the first half part of the lessons, including exercises in listening and rhythm, because rhythm is one of the most significant elements in music. For a free improvisation musician, rhythm contains various meaning while making spontaneous music. It will serve as a sign and cue of your playing to your partners: tempo, quality of energy, metre and cycle, recurring patterns, etc. More demanding than merely playing the written notes on the score, and requiring a higher-level rhythmic perception, the subtle differences in articulation and dynamics within a rhythmic phrase are often best conveyed with the voice.

Moreover, he begins with a rhythmic exercise, such as the “54s” pattern, cross-rhythms and cross-phrasing, Berger Fives, Guiro Clapping Music (for the instruction of exercise see Chapter 6). He also offers a rhythmic imitation exercise by singing a *mora* (a thrice repeated cross-rhythmic phrase) with finger counting to practice cross-rhythm. For example, he performed various mora patterns (Ta-din-gi-na-tom, or Ta-ki-ta, ta-ki-ta, or ta-ka-jo-nu-tong) while finger counting in 3:1 pulse feeling (three pulses per beat). Then the learners would mimic his singing. The purpose of the exercises it to use these patterns as a basis to create melody and improvise one’s rhythmic sensation.

In addition to rhythmic imitation exercises, Sokol introduced some alternative ways to represent rhythmic patterns. The “54s” pattern was presented to illustrate a common approach in the East which perceives and remembers patterns as shapes (Yati). The shapes could be expanding like a river delta, narrowing like a cow’s tail, shaped like an hourglass, etc. The Fifty-fours pattern expanded toward the middle and then tapered down again, just like the barrel shape of the South Indian classical drum—the mridangam—hence, mridanga yati. Once the learners got familiar with the pattern, they could make variations while maintaining the sense of shape of the pattern. The aim of demonstrating the variations is that he tried to infuse the idea of creative possibilities on the same material or pattern. After a brief review of these variations, he directed the drill to introduce once again the addition of a steady beat in the foot. Before saying anything to the class about the reasons for introducing the feet into the exercise, he had them stand up and continue tapping their R foot to a beat the speed of which comprised two pulses (that is, the duration of a group of two: one-two).

Once that was established, he asked the learners to alternate the marking of the feet, as if marching in place: R L R L etc. This produced a more relaxed feeling in the class and, at the same time, it seemed to enhance the overall perception and sense of rhythm – specifically of the rhythmic 'dissonance' created between the regular impulses of the beat marked in the feet, the organic phrasing in twos (resulting from the alternation of feet) and the more irregular impulses of the surface rhythm, performed either by voice and/or hand-clapping. He pointed out that one aim of musicianship work is training the body and mind to be relaxed and coordinated.

Similarly, Douglas started each lesson with a rhythmic imitation exercise. For instance, he would sing a one-bar rhythmic pattern and the class would mimic his line. This responsorial approach gradually increased in complexity of rhythmic ideas (Nelson 2020). Douglas also provided rhythmic dictation; however, he would focus on the ability of learners to transcribe whatever rhythms they heard, including those created and heard in their mind. These rhythmic exercises contain diverse rhythmic patterns from Brazil, Cuba, Africa, jazz, rock, and Stravinsky (Nelson 2020, 17). The purpose of the exercise is to bring the learners to be present in the moment, which is associated with Douglas's emphasis on improvisation as "the needlepoint of nowness" (Nelson 2020, 11). In addition, rock etudes that were written by him were offered in the class. In his teaching, he points out that the aim of "all these exercises, (is that) we are just trying to develop a relaxed presence on the needlepoint of nowness with synchronized body and mind" (Nelson 2020, 17).

Similar to Sokol and Douglas, Lukas—a Lithuanian music teacher who teaches improvisation—usually starts his classes by playing games that feature rhythmic exercises. For example, Lukas begins by clapping a rhythmic pattern, and each student mimics his pattern and adds their own; then he would point to someone to start another rhythmic pattern with a different meter, so that others could respond to it by layering various rhythmic patterns (Hedden 2017). After that, he invited a learner to play their own pattern on one key on the piano. While the student plays, Lukas improvises a melody on top of that pulse on the piano (Hedden 2017). At some point, Lukas would cue the student to switch their roles. He would play the pulse, allowing the student to improvise. After several exchanges at the piano, Lukas stopped playing and made comments to the learners (Hedden 2017).

In addition to rhythmic exercises, listening exercises are also offered in the improvisation lessons, because listening deeply is one of key elements in improvisation. Sokol introduced something called the Unison Exercise to highlight the difficulty of maintaining attention to listening while improvising with progressively difficult musical elements (See Chapter 6). The exercise, which was originally designed for pianists, requires one or two piano players only playing on the black keys. The melodies could even be random but, as soon as they heard a unison or an octave, they pause for one beat.

To introduce the exercise, Sokol asked for a volunteer who would like to try the exercise with him and demonstrated in the class. They began playing a random "melody" at the same time and at the same tempo. Two of them uses a black-note pentatonic scale and respond to the occurrence of a unison or an octave by holding that unison or octave for one more beat before beginning a new random phrase. The reasons given for beginning with a black-key pentatonic scale were: a/ with only 5 pitches, there would be a greater number of unisons and octaves than using all twelve pitches and, hence, more practice opportunities and, b/ even non-pianists could easily engage with the exercise.

After several phrases, Sokol stopped and pointed out the purpose of the held tone is for the two musicians to confirm with one another that a unison/octave has occurred. The confirmation takes place as a musical rather than a verbal experience. He also suggested when the learners make their variations, they could certainly change this response from "holding" the tone to anything else they find interesting. He wanted the students not to do this very exercise, but to realize that they themselves could easily formulate all manner of real-time listening exercises.

The learners could practice with one (or more) pianists or other musical instrumentalists in the class and develop with one of them a series of variant ways to do the exercise. This exercise is not only a listening or ear training exercise, but also an exercise that could be developed into a composition. He pointed out that the purpose of these “variations” is to begin to think about the musical development of the exercise as a composition (that is, to exercise some inventiveness while sticking to the musicianship aims), to develop the capacity for quick response and quick change on cue at particular key moments in a musical flow, and to challenge your ability to hear these unisons/octaves in increasingly different sound environments.

He also gave some suggestions on variations in the class, such as playing with a staccato articulation instead of legato, playing in faster tempos, using very quiet dynamics, introducing drones and repeated tones, introducing bass notes, playing with the sustain pedal held down so that you have to hear the new tones through the cloud of accumulated tones, and so on. He encourages the learners to try anything they like, as long as there is still the demand to listen for unisons/octaves and to respond to them. On the other hand, another thing the learner can do is to change what it is they are listening for, such as listening for thirds and sixths, or for triplets, or for a certain kind of articulation.

Nelson (2020, 7) pointed out that Douglas hosted listening sessions in his teaching studio and invited his friends and students to listen to the music together. Some of his students found that the listening sessions were beneficial. They found their minds and ears opened in many ways. One of the key focuses in Douglas’s class and individual teaching is listening to music deeply and precisely. His teaching approach was influenced by one of his teachers (Sullivan) who suggested that he listen repeatedly to the greatest music, composers, performers, and improvisers he could find and “hear the subtleties of the rhythm, intonation, phrasing, and tone color” while listening to the music (Nelson 2020, 6).

5.4 Theme Three: Creativity Training

When improvise music is played with individual interpretation, one might have imagined that the player has a personal image related to the music. For example, while classical musicians play Debussy's "La Mer", one might imagine the ocean waves. Playing and recording based on an image (photograph, painting, text, video, etc.) was offered in Sokol’s class. One that day, he suggests two possible orientations or approaches when creating music based on painting, subject, text, visual arts, etc.: 1) play the mood, 2) play the image by translating color, line, texture, etc. into musical values. The image could then be read in any fixed direction, or one could follow directions actually present and implied in the image itself. Then, the learners began to improvise based on the painting. While we improvised, he usually records everyone’s improvisation piece and shares the links to the recording after the class so that everyone could listen back to their playing and make comments.

In addition to the paintings, he brought in various examples of text [poetry, short stories, children’s story books, advertisements, restaurant menus, etc.] and visual materials [photos, reproductions of artwork, mazes, yantras, graphic score, etc.]. The leaners could also bring their own thing which might provide an interesting stimulus for improvising music. He suggests that the learners could also do something on the spot for which musical accompaniment can be provided, such as text, telling a prepared story or spontaneous poetry.

The purpose of these exercises is to motivate one’s creativity and imagination, to develop one’s ability to impart musical values to objects, narratives, or artistic images, and to develop an individual expression and description on the subject, story, image, etc. To improvise based on an object, Sokol brought two big bags of interesting objects and gave one to each individual learner. Before he gave the object to a learner, he would ask them to close eyes and only touch it. After the learner gained a sensation of the subject (weight, temperature, texture, shape, etc.,) Sokol put the object next to the learner. He asked them to put their impressions of the object into music, without having seen it. After they finished improvising, they could open their eyes, have a look at the object, and then improvise again with the impression of what it actually looked like. The pedagogical interest was to notice the difference between the differently sourced impressions of the same object. They could see that the same object could create and arouse such different impressions.

In the class, he gave me a crystal swan. While I touched the subject, I could sense the material and shape of the subject. Then, I opened my eyes and surprisingly saw a beautiful swan. While I started to improvise, I imagined a white swan was dancing in a peaceful lake and spreading its wings with elegant gestures. Through my imagination, I improvised in a major scale with a slower tempo, using both tremolo and free tempo to mimic the movement of the wings.

In addition, Wang (2011) pointed out that Sapmannshaus gave a set of postcards, and she asked him and his partner, a pianist from Slovakia, to improvise in the improvisation class. The images on the postcards contained some characters, scenery, and animals (Wang 2011). After their improvisation on these specific images, the teacher analyzed and gave some comments. The teacher then gave them an interesting game after their two years of improvisation training. Wang (2011) points out the teacher brought six different leaves of plants in different size, color, shape.

The learners secretly discussed the order of leaves they would demonstrate, so no one knew what the order of the leaves was they would improvise (Wang 2011). Before they began to improvise, the teacher covered their eyes. After they played, they saw that the teacher put almost all leaves in the correct order, that is, corresponding to their improvisations. Only two similar leaves were put in an upside-down order (Wang 2011).

Lukas introduced an exercise that he termed “surrounding sounds” in which familiar content is offered for the learners to imitate (Hedden 2017, 296). In his class, he asked each student to mimic a sound from nature, such as “icicles melting, trees budding, flowers blooming, and snow melting” (Hedden 2017, 296). Then, he developed this exercise into a group improvisation. For example, he described “there are a lot of sounds in that village. One student will be wind, another hen and chicken, others like rain and so forth” (Hedden 2017, 296). While he describes, the students mimic those sounds.

He would also offer students some interesting stories that intrigued the learners. He set the stage by singing and recounting comical stories. For example, “there is a spider who is living, and some elephant falls down” (Hedden 2017, 296). Then, he asked the learners to continue the stories. The teacher gave the tone and the character for the instrumentalist. Since it was a fanciful story, the students enjoyed listening and elaborating stories based on the original story, and they were anticipating the conclusion—how the spiders and the elephants’ end would be (Hedden 2017, 296). Because of that, the learners were very active doing the exercise; they were laughing and finally gave an ending that “elephant getting bruised and beaten by the spider” (Hedden 2017, 296). This kind of theatre exercise can also be very important for musicians because they can learn something about performance without being concerned about the musical content or their instrumental technique. Then that learning might hopefully be usefully applied to their music.

Following the "surrounding sounds" game, Lukas gradually led the learners to an exercise that is related more to individual expression. Hedden (2017) pointed out that Lukas demonstrated a picture by orally creating an image for the learners to describe with individual expression through improvisation. He prompted the learners to improvise by vocal or instrumental communication of the picture with both "subtle and overt" expression (Hedden 2017, 296).

His creative teaching approach mainly focuses on humorous situations that inspire the learners to actively participate in the class. His teaching plan is adjustable because it depends on the students' reactions to the improvisation game or exercise. Hedden (2017) point out that Lukas progressively gave longer or more complex ides when the students were comfortable and willing to continue with the exercise as, for example, in dramatically oriented improvisations. Interestingly, he asked students to create certain dramatic scene and improvise on that, as, for example, improvising a soundtrack for a movie cinematic car crash (Hedden 2017, 296). The main purpose of the exercise is to develop one's creativity and imagination, even in non-musical domains.

In addition, Lukas introduced other exercises which emphasized individual interpretation, such as showing a picture or a short video (Hedden 2017, 297). Instead of using instruments, he suggested the learners to use only their voice, body percussion, and some sources that could produce sounds in the classroom, such as chairs, books, and desks (Hedden 2017, 297). After that, Lukas asked one group of learners to go to the hallway to discuss together what they plan to play as an ensemble, while the rest of the students remained in the room guessing what they might play.

To establish a good atmosphere for the group vocal improvisation exercise, Lukas started vocalizing in rap style as he arrived in the class. The students, attracted and stimulated by his improvisation, were willing to join in. He successively cued students to participate, and eventually all the learners joined in the improvisation, even as he himself withdrew from it (Hedden 2017, 297). Some students added rhythmic accompaniment to the rap, and they finally ended the piece upon a cue from Lukas (Hedden 2017, 297). In addition to group improvisation exercises, Lukas motivated the learners to play solos in order to encourage the students to develop individual ideas and expression. Hedden's observation of his class was then described.

> He asked students if they had dreamed last night. He told a student to portray his dream. The student moved to the piano to play his interpretation, and that was followed by other students who sang. Lukas deftly lured the students into using instruments and into presenting solo improvisations. On another day Lukas began to play a piece on the piano in a minor key, establishing the meter and tone as dark and loud. Each student quickly exchanged places on the bench to play without losing a beat in the piece. When half of the students had played, Lukas quickly changed the key and meter for the remaining students to continue (Hedden 2017, 297).

These improvisation lessons offered the learner with a practical environment to discover their potential creativity and imagination and to enhance participation and musical techniques. The lessons were sophisticated in their manner of applying images, subject, and text and leaving sufficient space for the students to imitate and improvise in the classes.

5.5 Theme Four: The Setting for Improvisation

Sokol offers the learners an opportunity to improvise with dancers because the experience in working with artists in different media would stimulate an expansion of one's improvisation techniques. A few of learners from Sokol's class participated in one of the collaborative dance classes at York University. When I walked into the dance studio, I felt that the new environment created fear. We set up our instruments at a corner of the dance studio. The dancers from the dance degree program arrived and took their place in the middle of the studio and invited us to join them for a warm-up and stretching session. Sokol suggested that we all join in the session because it would help us to get more comfortable and relaxed with the new environment.

After that, each musician began to improvise with each dancer, one pair at a time. To prepare for the exercise, the dancers lined up at a corner of the studio, leaving the centre of the space free for movement. At the very beginning of the exercise, both musicians and dancers were lacking in confidence, since there were a lot of indeterminacies among us. However, I felt that the unknowns were the most interesting aspect of improvisation and of this exercise.

The exercise is about two contrasting ideas, based on the effort to balance two contrasting tendencies--both of which are very fundamental to artistic collaboration. The first idea, the one with which we normally work, is about being sufficiently sensitive to the music or dance that a strong correspondence can be achieved. But there is a second aim. Because so many artists are already highly sensitized, they also tend to be very easily influenced, hence very suggestible. So the dancer begins the exercise, their aim was to find some material (without any musical accompaniment) and to be so rooted in it that it could be maintained no matter the quality of the music. This was intended to give the musician an opportunity to experiment and find different ways of supporting the movement (by correspondence or by contrast). Similarly, when the musician initiated the duo, they were to be so grounded in their content that, even though they were carefully observing the dance, they would not change their music to better suit what they saw. Their musical stability gave the dancer an opportunity to experiment with different qualities of realization. The dual aims of accessing sensitivity while resisting suggestibility produced very unusual results and a created a very effective learning environment.

By applying these two ways of collaboration with the dancers, I realized it is easier and more comfortable to be the decision-maker, because then I knew what to play. There was no requirement to correspond to another person, but then the decision maker must still be very confident. When I gave the priority to the dancer, I felt some uncertainties in my perception of the dancer's intentions, which made it very difficult to improvise. I did not know if I could trust my musical reflection of the dancer's body moments and facial expression. Thus, I realized it might be especially difficult to improvise while both dancers and musicians are being both leaders and followers.

In Lukas's improvisation class, he also encourages the learners to improvise with various artists in different venues. The reportage by Hedden then goes on to describe the whole encounter. Lukas encouraged them to improvise in various events, taking the learners into the concert hall and simply have them sit on the stage with their instruments. Lukas also invited dancers from the dance degree program to join in on the stage. While the dancers came in and took place on the stage, the improvisation students were surprised and nervous because they did not anticipate this encounter.

Lukas started to improvise on the piano and the students, motivated by his performance, joined in with their instruments and voice accompanying for the dancers. After the students were motivated by this fascinating experience, the dances and musicians switched and exchanged the place. Thus, the dancers became musicians; musicians became dancers. The new environment might give an intimidated feeling initially and a different sound, but there were no rules applied, and everyone was happy to play.

In addition to improvising with dancers, the other opportunities that Lukas offered to the students were meeting them on the stage in the hall and sitting in a circle. Some candles were lit to simulate a friendly and private environment, and he encouraged the learners to verbalize about the experience. At this experience, Hedden felt "the freedom of creation and the intimacy of the setting allowed the students a venue that was more personal and individual nature, yet one in which the students did not judge each other" (Hedden 2017, 298).

By changing the environment, the learners were not only motivated to participate and learn, but also became confident and demonstrated improved performance skills. Such a change in atmosphere can enrich one's state and the participants may gain a better sense of their body movement. Moreover, it is interesting to search for an individual musical language that can correspond and reflect the moment, while collaborating with dancers at the moment.

5.6 Theme Five: Class Expectations

Sokol pointed out that the purpose of the improvisation exercises is to allow the students to discover creative possibilities based on the materials and to have freedom to create and express an individual conception, instead of putting their music into a particular frame. He encourages the learner to be a decision-maker while they improvise and to enrich their musical vocabulary, composition knowledge and performance skills.

Since the students who participated in his class have learnt music theory or composition, they played a particular style of music and had some basic knowledge of harmony and perspectives on the way that the music should sound. Sokol consistently encouraged them to play music that they never played and to discover the sound that they never tried; there are no "mistakes" in this studio, so that he gave a lot intellectual and emotional space for the students to develop their creativity and imagination.

Lukas also pointed out that "when rules exist, they create the opportunity for mistakes;" therefore, there were no rules and no mistakes in his improvisation class (Hedden 2017, 295). He encourages the students to break through one's musical assumptions and habits without being limited by rules. He also asserts that "…I try to get the students…maybe… to where I am wanting or expecting or hoping them to [improvise] but without trying to demonstrate anything as they should be doing" (Hedden 2017, 295).

5.7 Conclusion

By sharing and analyzing four pedagogical approaches in classroom settings, it seems to me that these methods motivate the potential creativity and imagination of the students and helps each one discover an individual voice and interpretation. These pedagogical approaches lead to positive results which could be applied in many public schools, not only in China, but also in other countries. There is a dedicated effort on balancing musicianship training and with freedom of music creation. This creative, imaginative, flexible teaching approach emphasis on creativity, imagination, practicality, musicality, and freedom enhance one's performance skills and teaching skills. Their teaching philosophy and approach offers several examples for both improvisation teachers and learners to be creative, imaginative, and inspirational.

Improvisation pedagogy was divided into three categories: 1) musicianship training, 2) brain exercise, and 3) mind opening or free playing. These exercises not only improve individual ability with musicianship and improvisation, but also help individual technique, inspiration, innovation, and interpretation. These abilities help players to create a clear mind, and “from clear mind, hands and body begin to move, simple, and strong” (Nachmanovitch 1991, 58).

CHAPTER SIX

EXPLORATION OF CONTEMPORARY CHINESE MUSIC IMPROVISATION AND MUSICIANSHIP PEDAGOGY USING THE YANGQIN

"Everyone agrees it is difficult to talk about rhythm in music, and the language of music and rhythm is complex, contentious, and highly metaphorical" (Caplin 2008, 657). Rhythm is always a fundamental component in relation to musical composition, improvisation, and creation. In the high level of Baroque style, rhythmic pulses were separated by regular accentuations, various metical and duration patterns, and metrical accent. In addition, in the early and mid-eighteenth century, rhythmic theory was continuously influenced by elements of the Renaissance mensural system. Until much later in that century, the modern concept of musical meter focused more on expressions (Caplin 2008, 657). Different rhythmic motifs produce different impressions.

For music training purposes, rhythmic exercises are indispensable for both professional and amateur musicians. In some cultures' music such as Indian musicians practice realizations of certain musical materials in certain modes and rhythmic patterns or frameworks (Berkowitz 2010, 4). In this chapter, I will introduce certain rhythmic exercises for improvisation that I collected from Sokol's Contemporary Musicianship and Improvisation course at York University, and I will share my experiences practicing and transferring them to the yangqin.

6.0 A Theoretical Framework of Discovering Improvisation Pedagogical Strategies

My understanding of improvisation includes three principles. The first one posits improvisation "as a form of music-making (that) is meant to be performed" (Monk 2013, 10). It is a way of delivering a musical performance to be listened to (Monk 2013, 10). The second principle is that improvisation is a skill that obtains through critical observation and the practice of certain exercises (Monk 2013, 10). The third principle is that improvisation could be descriptive, i.e., the improvised piece could be a storytelling, description of an object, a painting, a movie, etc., so that the music could be "understood" by the audience (Monk 2013, 10). By applying these three principles, I will use yangqin to explore some contemporary music improvisation strategies.

Azzara pointed out that developing one's musicianship through improvisation is beneficial not only to one's musicianship but also to thinking about improvisation:

> Developing your musicianship through improvisation provides a context for reading and composing music with comprehension. When musicians express themselves by putting together their own musical thoughts in compositions, they can create, develop, and reflect on musical ideas. Composers are able to "go back" or "move forward" in time as they create. This reflection and revision process is a good way to discover relationships in music, and, as a result to improve your overall musicianship. There is a powerful relationship among listening, improvising, reading, writing, and analyzing music. Each has the potential to influence the other in significant ways when presented in the context of improvisation (Azzara 2006, 4).

I have been studying overseas and I audited Sokol's improvisation class for two semesters. I remembered the first time I participated in his class; I had no idea about improvisation. By learning more improvisation strategies and having more experiences on improvisation, I realized that improvisation is not only making spontaneous music in the moment, but also a way of developing one's musicianship and listening skills. Improvisation requires some knowledge of music theory and composition, especially collaborative improvisation; it helps strengthen one's musicianship and gives practical venues for the creative realization of musicianship exercises.

6.1 Rhythmic and Melodic Exercises No. 1 “Fifty-Fours”

In the process of formulating a personal pedagogy for a contemporary Chinese practice of improvisation, I collected some rhythmic exercises that were taught in Sokol’s course at York University. In particular, I wanted to understand how to experiment with the transfer of these rhythmic exercises for yangqin. The “Fifty-Fours” rhythmic exercise is based on a “barrel shaped” pattern—the shape which in Indian rhythmic theory is called “mridanga yati.” It is a symmetrical image that is very useful for remembering a long and unusual pattern by the help of geometric or spatial memory. The exercise was also designed to temporarily thwart the tendency to hear rhythms over a metric grid (see Figure 30).

2 2
2 2
2 1 2
2 1 2
2 2 1 2 2
2 2 1 2 2
2 1 2
2 1 2
2 2
2 2

Figure 30. “Barrel Shape” or “Mridanga Yati”

Figure 30 shows the basic pattern of the exercise—a pulse-based succession of groups of ones and twos (i.e., there is no beat and no metre). The 2s represent two pulses and the 1s represent a single pulse. To share my own experience with practicing the pattern, I suggest reading through the pattern first, vocalizing the pattern in a regular flow of equal pulses with a small stress on the “ones” (ONE-two, ONE-two, ONE-two, ONE-two, ONE-two-ONE-ONE-two, ONE-two-ONE-ONE-two, etc.). Now, while vocalizing, try tapping only the ‘ones’ on one leg or on a tabletop, at a comfortable tempo.

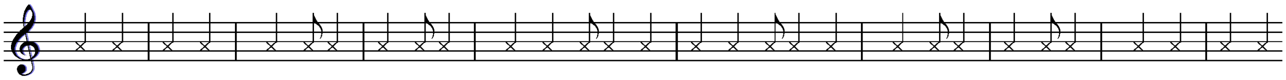
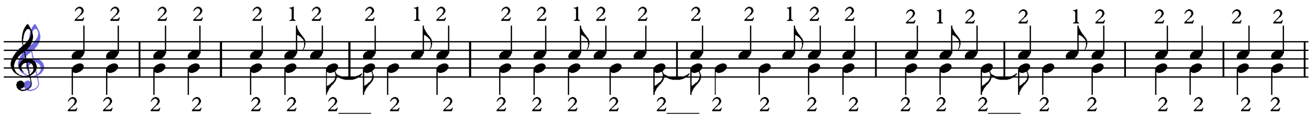


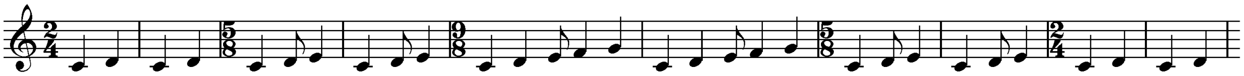
Figure 31. The rhythm of the “Fifty-Fours” pattern

After you feel comfortable and familiar with this rhythm, tap the other hand in a regular “beat,” each tap with a duration of two pulses. When that feels secure, try to maintain that beat while reciting the pattern and also tapping on the accented ONEs from the ‘Fifty-fours pattern’ in the other hand. This will allow you to experience the syncopations (the rhythmic dissonances) that result from the misalignments of the regular stresses of the beating hand against the irregular stresses resulting from the accented ONEs in the other hand. The notation is crowded and it may be too obscure to be of help, but here is a visual display of the ‘Fifty-fours’ pattern in the upper voice (stems going up) and the regular beat is in the lower voice, with stems descending.

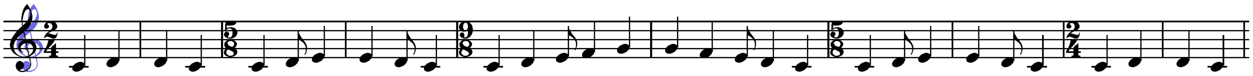


Once you have some good musical flow with this, you could try switching the role of the two hands for more musicianship practice. Eventually, the pattern may begin to become “internalized,” which means that you may be able to “read” it in your mind’s eye and you may possibly have begun to memorize the sequence of sensations. At this stage you will find some musical pleasure in the unusual flow of groupings, and you may be able to remember the barrel-shaped pattern, almost without effort. At this point you are almost ready to use it as a basis for making music.

But just before you begin creating music based on the pattern, there are certain steps or exercises that will be very helpful. Among the possible first steps is to apply a variety of melodic motives to each of the lines of the rhythmic pattern, (that is, the mridanga-shaped pattern). So after the rhythmic patterns in Figure 31 begin to feel comfortable, you can try to substitute some very simple melodic motifs. Try beginning on "doh" of any scale (here we'll use C major) and play or sing an ascending scale in the rhythm of the 54s pattern. To keep it simple, begin on 'doh' for each new line, that is, for each new rhythm. While the exercise requires that you do this without notation, here is what it looks like in standard notation – just to make sure you're doing it as described. (Time signatures are included only to help you not to get derailed, but it's better to disregard them if you can.)



And also, before launching into the more improvisatory stage of this exercise, play each even numbered bar (i.e., each repeated melodic figure) in reverse order (retrograde), that is descending instead of ascending.



Now you might feel ready to use one of the motifs from Figure 32, so you can choose one that corresponds to the rhythm of each line in the pattern. For example, motifs A and B correspond to first (and last) two lines of the barrel pattern with two quarter notes. Motifs C, D, E and F correspond to the 5/8 measures, and G, H, I and J, are intended to fit with the 9/8 rhythm. You need only to choose a starting pitch and then follow the melodic and rhythmic shape of the motif. After trying it with the help of the notation, you can try it without looking at the graphics. This begins to feel like melodic improvisation.

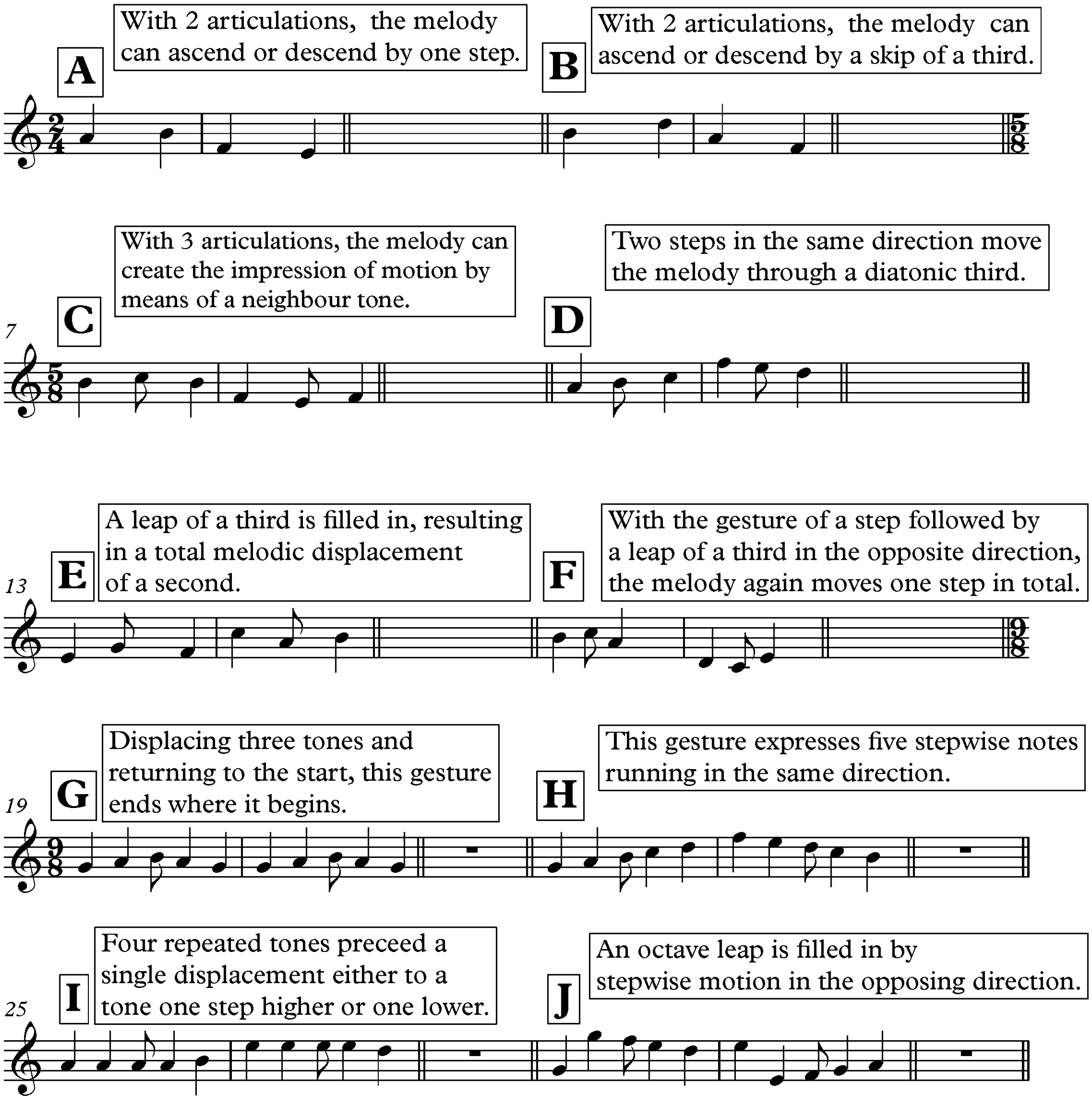

A
With 2 articulations, the melody can ascend or descend by one step.
B
With 2 articulations, the melody can ascend or descend by a skip of a third.
7
C
With 3 articulations, the melody can create the impression of motion by means of a neighbour tone.
D
Two steps in the same direction move the melody through a diatonic third.
13
E
A leap of a third is filled in, resulting in a total melodic displacement of a second.
F
With the gesture of a step followed by a leap of a third in the opposite direction, the melody again moves one step in total.
19
G
Displacing three tones and returning to the start, this gesture ends where it begins.
H
This gesture expresses five stepwise notes running in the same direction.
25
I
Four repeated tones preceed a single displacement either to a tone one step higher or one lower.
J
An octave leap is filled in by stepwise motion in the opposing direction.

Figure 32. 'Fifty-fours' exercise provided in Sokol's class.

Figure 33 shows one more intermediate step toward a more improvisatory engagement.

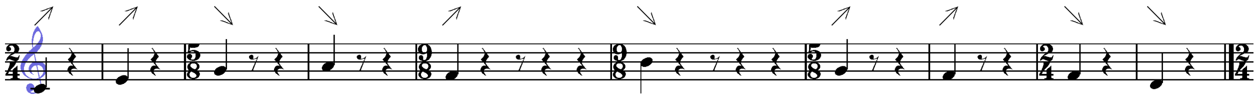


Figure 33. An Example Indicating A Melodic Outline for the "Fifty-Fours" Pattern

For many non-improvisers, working with Figure 33 is also a very important preparatory step. Each measure of Figure 33 begins with a specified pitch. For example, 1) the measure with 2 articulations could be played as stepwise motion following the direction of the arrow, 2) the measure with 3 articulations (in 5/8 metre) could be realized with a skip of a third (in the direction of the arrow, followed by "filling in" the third (that is, with stepwise motion in the opposite direction, 3) the measure with 5 articulations (9/8 metre[9]), could be realized with an initial octave leap followed by stepwise motion in the opposite direction. Figure 34 shows the realization of this in standard notation.

(Later on the player can choose any pitch (see Figure 34).

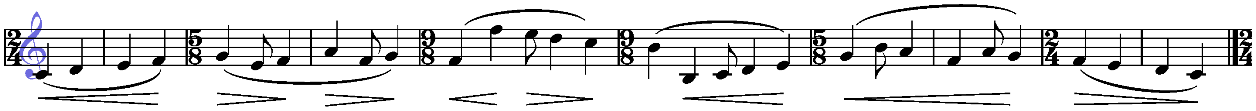


Figure 34. Realization of the improvisational "Fifty-Fours" pattern

Figure 34 shows a possible realization of a melodic outline of the "Fifty-Fours" pattern that is demonstrated in Figure 33. The phrasing and dynamic symbols are added to remind the player to allow the participation of natural expressive shape. The purpose of adding these symbols it to remind the student to play with some degree of musical expression and sensitivity, even though it is only an exercise. This is an important principle for almost any exercise. In addition, there are more melodic outlines for practice in Figure 35.

---

[9] Please note that, while 9/8 meter is normally understood as triple compound time (3+3+3), this exercise (which intentionally uses only groups of ones and twos) asks you to sense the flow of nines as (2+2+1+2+2).

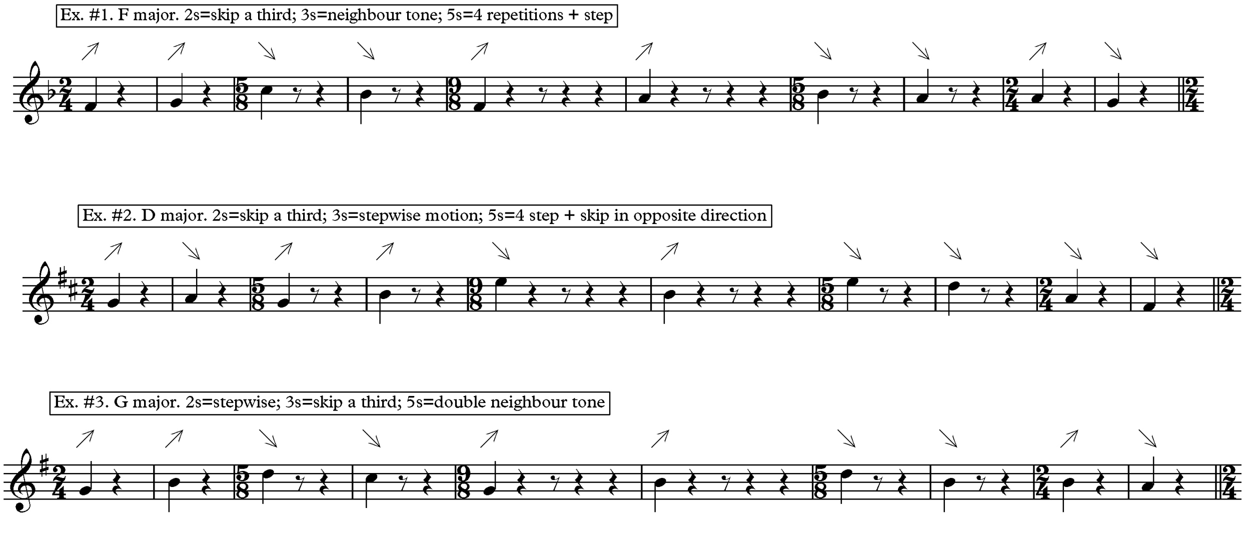

Ex. #1. F major. 2s=skip a third; 3s=neighbour tone; 5s=4 repetitions + step
Ex. #2. D major. 2s=skip a third; 3s=stepwise motion; 5s=4 step + skip in opposite direction
Ex. #3. G major. 2s=stepwise; 3s=skip a third; 5s=double neighbour tone

Figure 35. “54s” rhythmic and melodic exercise

You can now try to freely substitute the appropriate melodic motifs illustrated in Figure 32 and then also to create your own motifs and your own outline. Ultimately the improviser conceives of all these decisions at the same time—all in the moment. These exercises show you only a few ways to elaborate a rhythmic pattern. After this, one could try to improvise in “free meter,” being aware only of the constant pulse of eighth notes. To experiment on the yangqin, I tried to sense the beat on right hand with bass notes; the left hand plays the rhythmic pattern (see Figure 36). The melodic gestures no longer conform to the vocabulary shown in Figure 32; they are now improvised—conceived in the moment, governed by personal taste, and free of any formal limitations.

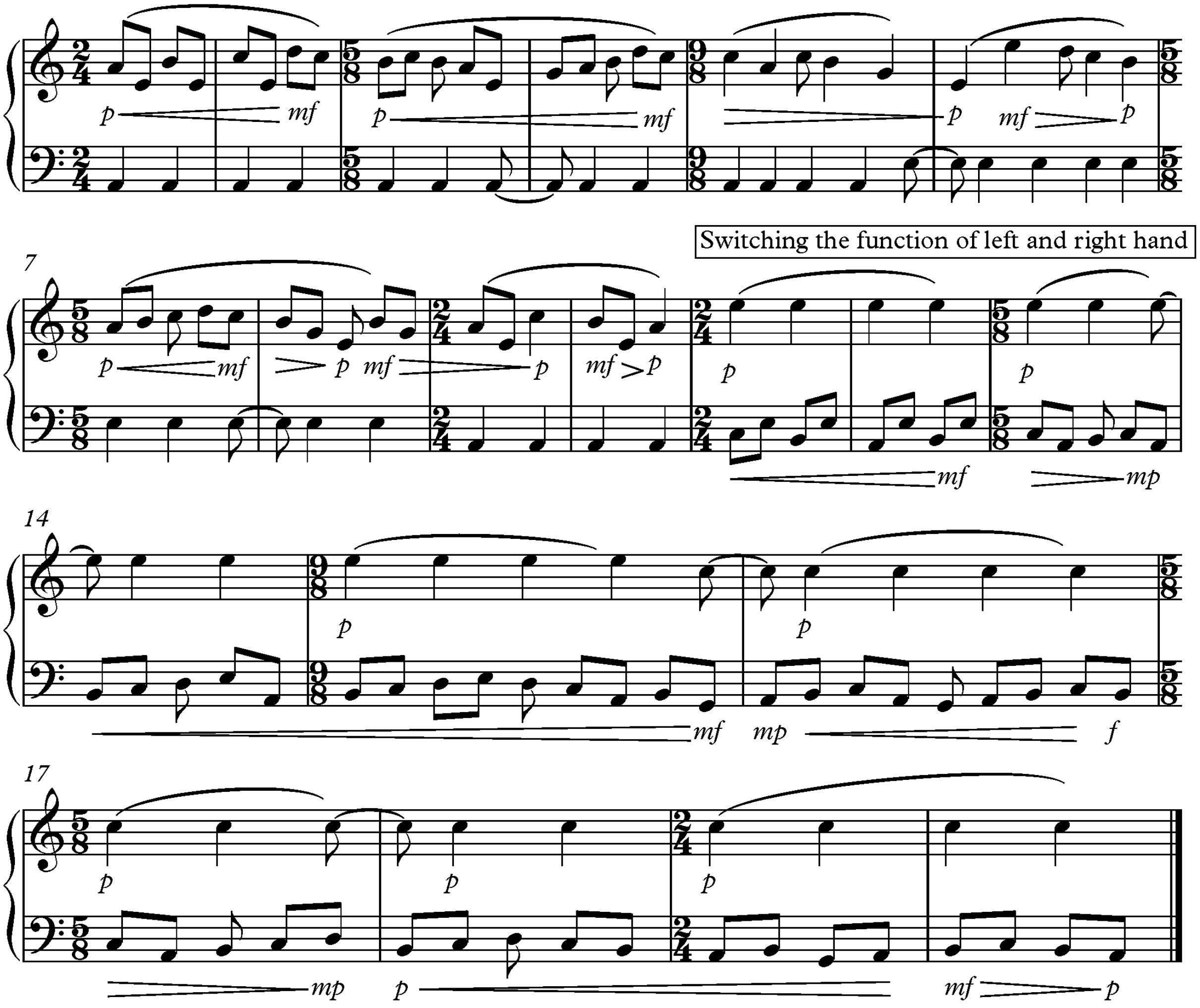

p mf
p mf
p mf p
7
Switching the function of left and right hand
p mf p mf p mf p
p p
mf mp
14
p p
mf mp f
17
p p p
mp p mf p

Figure 36. Improvisation of “54s” melody & rhythm exercise

To develop other exercises based on the "54s" pattern, Sokol wrote out all 54 pulses (see Figure 37).

12 12	RL RL	LR LR
12 12	RL RL	LR LR
12 1 12	RL R RL	LR L LR
12 1 12	RL R RL	LR L LR
12 12 1 12 12	RL RL R RL RL	LR LR L LR LR
12 12 1 12 12	RL RL R RL RL	LR LR L LR LR
12 1 12	RL R RL	LR L LR
12 1 12	RL R RL	LR L LR
12 12	RL RL	LR LR
12 12	RL RL	LR LR

Figure 37. "54s" pattern with "54" pulses

The symbol R means right hand, and L means left. The two hands are now realizing the values for the ones and the twos. To practice the pattern, I first tried playing the pattern on my legs and then played it on the yangqin (see Figure 38). For this, I kept the same right- and left-hand realization as shown in Figure 37, but substituted pitches for those values.

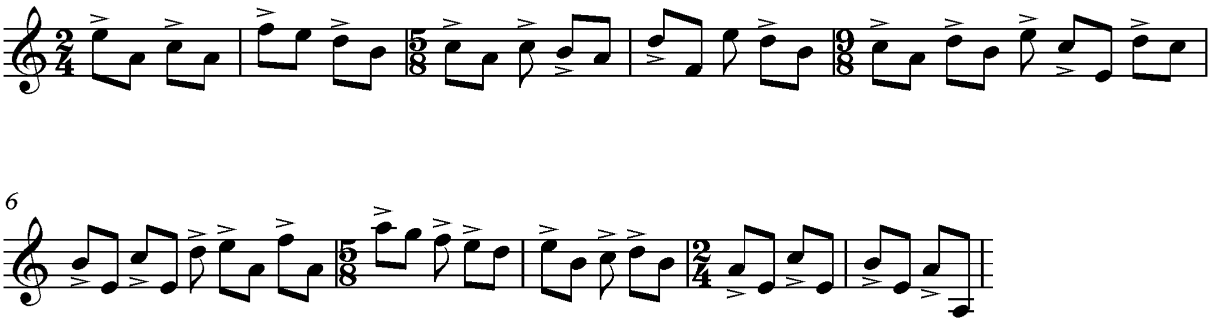
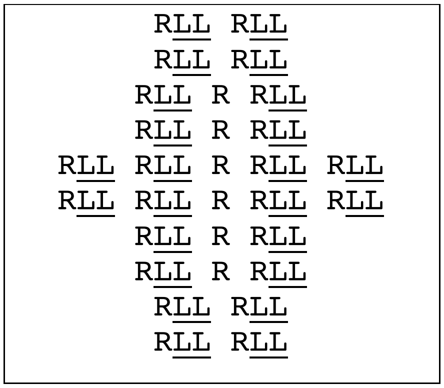


Figure 38. An improvised melody based on "54s" pattern

I experimented with this exercise, distributing the pattern between the two hands according to the principle that the RH would always begin each new unit. Therefore, all the accents fell on the "ones" and they were played with the right hand. The geometrical image of the "54s" pattern not only helps easily memorize a complex rhythm, but also gives me certain rhythmic ideas for improvisation.

In addition to practicing these patterns, there are a couple of variations that Sokol demonstrated to the class. The pattern appears with diminution of the second articulation of a group of two. The underlined text shows one level of diminished durational values, so an underlined pulse has the same meaning as adding a beam (or flag) to any duration: it diminishes the duration by half. In standard notation a quarter with an added beam becomes an eighth; an eighth with an added beam becomes a sixteenth. In this notation there is no assumption of standard notational values based on fractioning of a measure. The underline simply indicates that those units move at twice the speed. Once you get used to it, it is rather simple to read (see Figure 39).



```
      RLL RLL
      RLL RLL
    RLL R RLL
    RLL R RLL
RLL RLL R RLL RLL
RLL RLL R RLL RLL
    RLL R RLL
    RLL R RLL
      RLL RLL
      RLL RLL
```

Figure 39. First variation of "54s" Pattern

Moreover, for studying or teaching purposes, if you wanted to avoid the underlines, the whole pattern could be rewritten in diminished time. It means that a single beat "R" would now be written as "R-", i.e., as two faster subdivisions. The entire rewritten pattern of variation with a diminished pulse flow is shown in Figure 40.

```
        R-LL  R-LL
        R-LL  R-LL
      R-LL  R-  R-LL
      R-LL  R-  R-LL
R-LL  R-LL  R-  R-LL R-LL
R-LL  R-LL  R-  R-LL R-LL
      R-LL  R-  R-LL
      R-LL  R-  R-LL
        R-LL  R-LL
        R-LL  R-LL
```

```
        R--L  R--L
        R--L  R--L
      R--L  R-  R--L
      R--L  R-  R--L
R--L  R--L  R-  R--L R--L
R--L  R--L  R-  R--L R--L
      R--L  R-  R--L
      R--L  R-  R--L
        R--L  R--L
        R--L  R--L
```

Figure 40. Second and third variation of "54s" Pattern

In addition to the third variation, a fourth variation could be realized with double-diminished values in parts of the pattern. In this case, the lone "1" in the middle of the phrases of 5 and 9 pulses have been double underlined to show "sixteenth-note" values, just as if they were notes written with a primary and secondary beam (see Figure 41).

```
       R--L  R--L
       R--L  R--L
     R--L rlrl R--L
     R--L rlrl R--L
R--L R--L rlrl R--L R--L
R--L R--L rlrl R--L R--L
     R--L rlrl R--L
     R--L rlrl R--L
       R--L  R--L
       R--L  R--L
```

Figure 41. Fourth variation of “54s” pattern

Figure 42 shows another instance of variation by omission. It is on the third articulation of the four articulations representing the double diminished group of “one.” The pattern is shown in Figure 42.

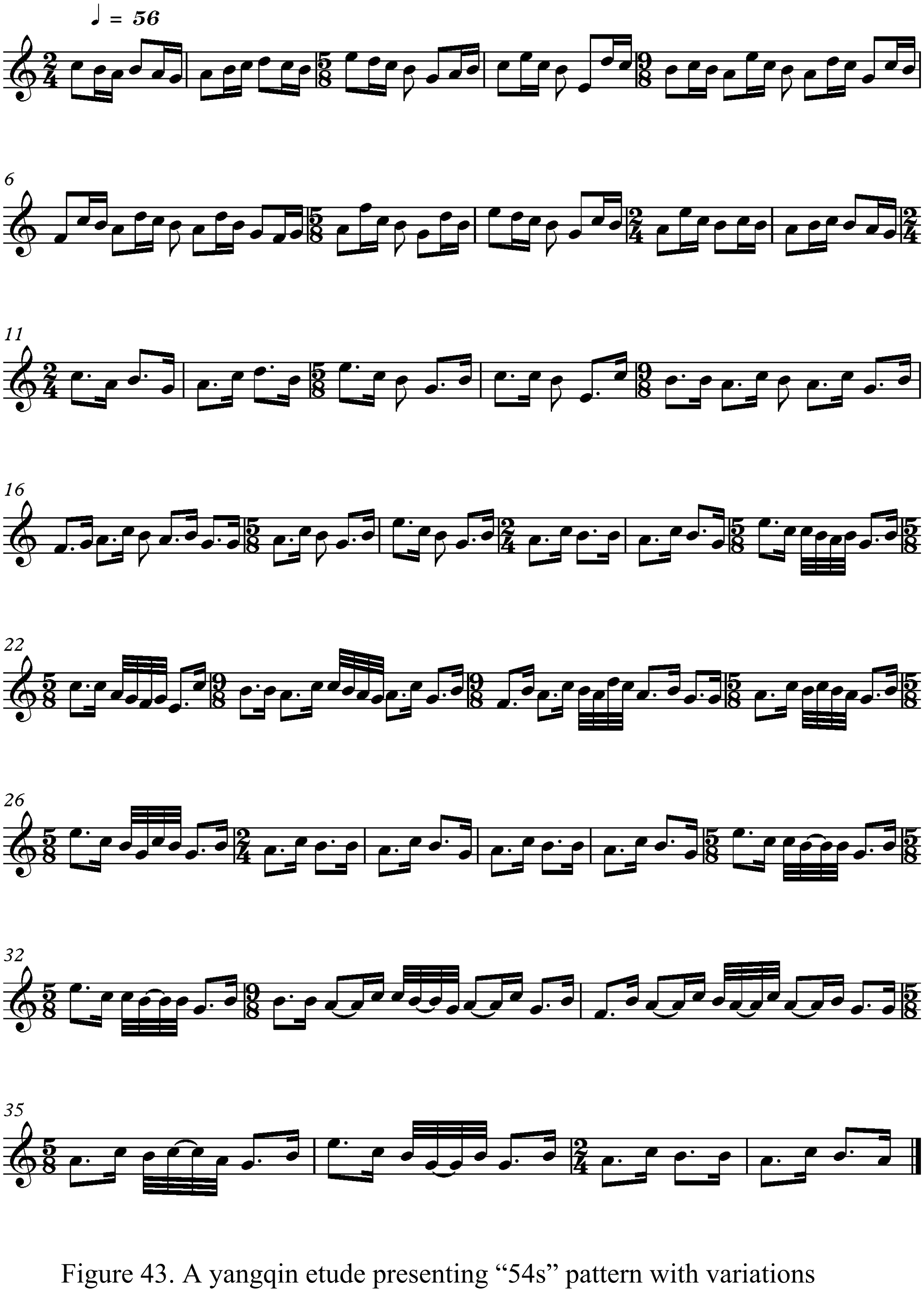
```
        R--L  R--L
        R--L  R--L
     R--L  rl-l  R--L
     R--L  rl-l  R--L
R--L R--L  rl-l  R--L R--L
R--L R--L  rl-l  R--L R--L
     R--L  rl-l  R--L
     R--L  rl-l  R--L
        R--L  R--L
        R--L  R—L
```

Figure 42. Fifth variation of “54s” pattern

After I practiced all the variations of the pattern on my leg, I tried associating the resulting rhythms of all variations with improvised melodic motives. To share my experience on the exercise, I played it as a yangqin improvisation but notate it below as a warmup etude, presenting all the variations of “54s” pattern (see Figure 43).

54s Pattern Exercise

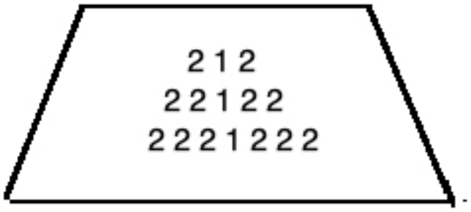
Di Zhang



♩ = 56
6
11
16
22
26
32
35

Figure 43. A yangqin etude presenting "54s" pattern with variations

Moreover, the main pedagogical idea of the “54s” pattern is the perception of its shape, and not only of its rhythm. Improvisation based on a shape is one of the most significant features of Carnatic rhythm. “Mridanga” yati is so named because it resembles the shape of the mridangam drum: its greatest girth is in the middle. But there is also: hourglass shape (slim in the middle), river delta shape (getting larger as it continues), cow’s tail (getting smaller), sama yati (same length for each successive line), vakra yati (random). So “yati” just means shape and mridanga is one particular shape. But there are no specific durations associated with any of the shapes. The shape can be anything that the players would like to experience. For instance, it can be a shape of triangle, trapezoid, etc., and the “1s” and “2s” can represent a motive, rhythm, melodic pattern, theme, etc. I created a pattern based on the shape of yangqin as an example (see Figure 44).



```
RL-L  rlrl RL-L
RL-L RL-L  rlrl  RL-L  RL-L
RL-L  RL-L  RL-L rlrl RL-L RL-L RL-L
```

Figure 44. A rhythmic pattern created based on the “river-delta” shape.

In this pattern, the “2” at the beginning and end of the phrases means `RL-L`, and the lone “1” in the middle of the phrases of 5, 9, and 13 pulses double underlined it to show “sixteenth-notes”. An example of improvisation based on the pattern is showed in Figure 45.

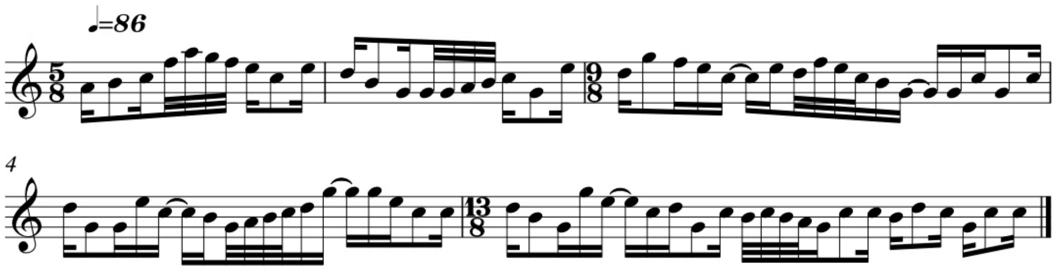


Figure 45. Improvisation of the rhythmic pattern of trapezoid shape from figure 44

Moreover, I designed a pattern of triangle shape and found out a theme for the pattern (see Figure 46).

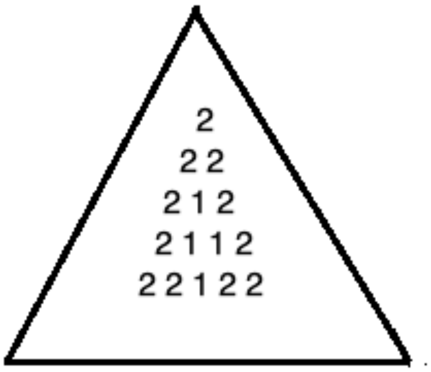


Figure 46. The pattern of triangle shape/srotovaha Yati

While I experimented with the pattern of triangle shape, I was very much attracted by my home decoration. I thought it would be interesting to play a music by sensing different colors, then I defined all “2s” represent a sense of various colors, and all “1s” as a sign for changing the meter. An example of a creative work based on the pattern is shown in Figure 47; for the full piece see

Appendix A. The composition is not intended as a strict remapping of the triangle shape into a musical form. It is just a light-hearted translation using the form as a musical inspiration.

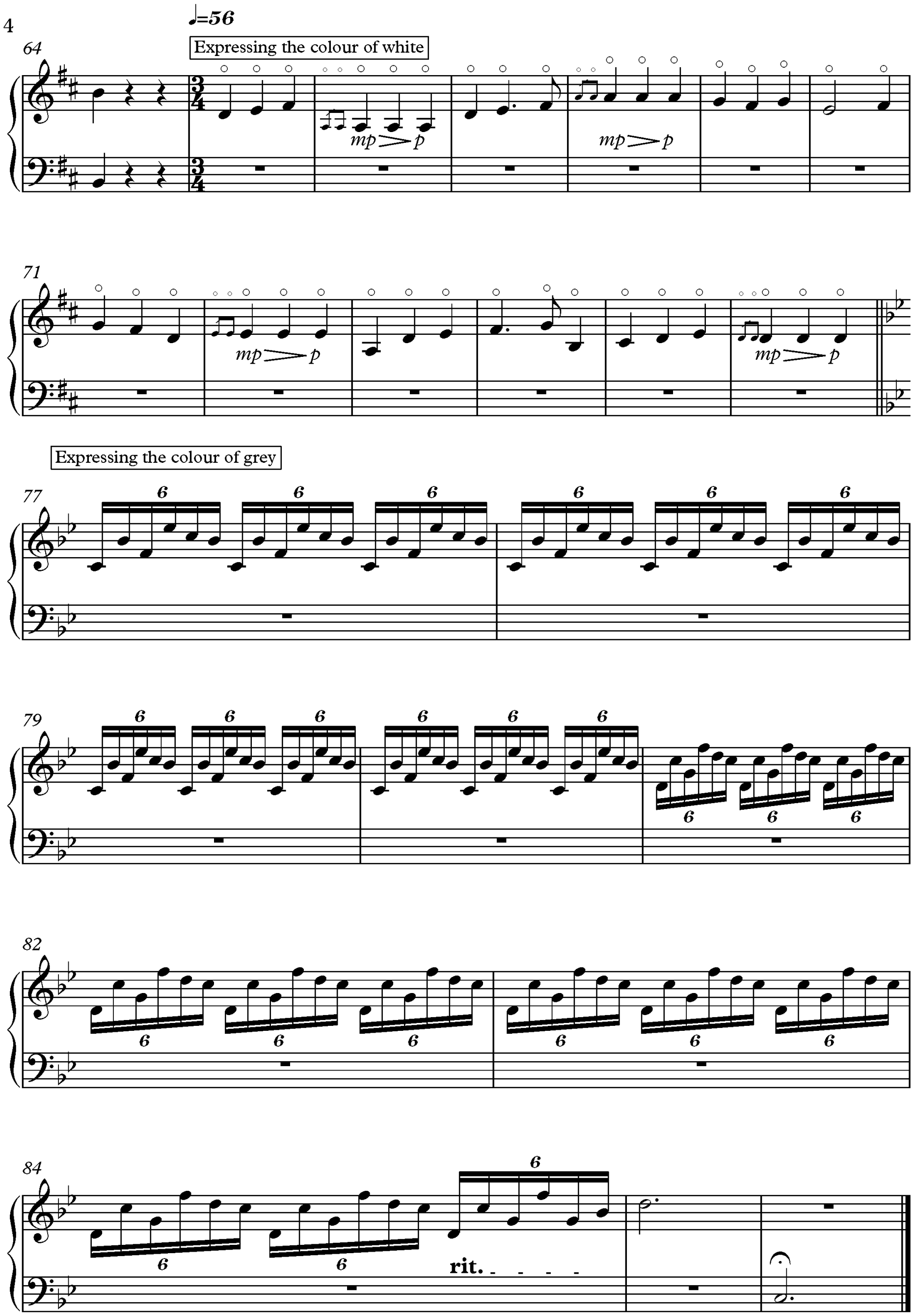

4
♩=56
Expressing the colour of white
64
mp
p
71
Expressing the colour of grey
77
6
79
82
84
rit.

Figure 47. Improvisation based on an innovative pattern from figure 46

One of the most interesting aspects of the exercise is that the “54” pattern allows players to innovate their own shape and pattern for rhythmic and melodic exercises. The players could practice the basic rhythmic pattern for musicianship training purpose; the pattern could then be used for a melodic exercise of improvisation. The final aim of these exercises is one could improvise by expressing one’s individual voice; these realization exercises could help to accumulate ideas that could be used while one improvises.

6.2 Rhythmic and Melodic Exercises No. 2 “Cross-rhythm”

Another beneficial and practical rhythmic exercise that was introduced to the class was based on cross-rhythms. To get the idea and to master the exercise, he recommended a sequence of six steps:

1) The first step is to set up three slow beats in the left hand by tapping on the thigh and naming each of them: 1 2 3.
2) The second step is to diminish the flow of the counting to two subdivisions per beat and over the same three taps you count: 1& 2& 3&. The effect of diminishing or shortening the duration of the notes is that you are speeding up your counting by a factor of two, that is, you are doubling the speed of your counting.
3) The third step is to change the names of the six subdivisions from “1 & 2 & 3” & to “1 2 3 1 2 3.” By changing the names and also giving some emphasis to the first count of each group of three, you have now diminished the flow of the threes in the right hand, so that you are now counting two groups of three against the three left

hand beats. As a result, the sensation has changed from three groups of two pulses to two groups of three pulses.

4) The fourth step uses your right hand to tap the right thigh when you say “one.” You are now tapping two-against-three, that is, the right hand is marking two groups of three pulses against the left hand, which is marking three groups of two pulses. This is what is meant by 2-against 3. It means two groups against three groups. You are now ready to go into “cross-phrasing” or a cross-rhythm at a higher “level.”
5) The fifth step is to create phrases of two beats in the left hand by turning the palm upward on every even numbered beat, that is, [Down / Up].
6) The last step is to create phrases of three beats in the right hand by turning the palm upward on every third beat, that is, [Down / Down / Up]

Sokol pointed out that the cross-rhythm was initially presented as a diminution of threes. He asked everyone on the class to mark a steady beat by the left hand and to name the beats as “one – two – three.” When that felt established, he invited everyone to sense a diminished pulse flow inside each of these three beats, naming them “one-and-two-and-three-and.” He was trying to establish the fact that there were simply six pulses and that the names were, to some extent, irrelevant. For instance, we could rename them as “two-two-two-two-two-two” or “four-four-etc.” This was to see that the names of the subdivisions could be changed without disturbing the sensation of the beat or of the cross-rhythm.

Prof. Sokol then asked everyone to rename them as “one-two-three-one-two-three”, and then to give some accentuation on the ones, as “ONE-two-three-TWO-two-three.” The left hand tapped the single slow three, which could now be sensed as a kind of rhythmic dissonance, that is, a cross-rhythm against the two quicker groups of three in the right hand. An example of two-against-three by exercise from Sokol's class material is showed in Figure 48.

Left Hand:
X X X
Voice:
1 2 3 (counting aloud)
1 & 2 & 3 & (counting and sensing this diminished flow)

1 2 3 1 2 3 (rename the six pulses)
1 2 3 2 2 3 (sense it as One-2-3 and Two-2-3)
Right Hand:
1 – – 2 – – (right hand marks beginning of each group of 3)

Figure 48. Cross-rhythm exercise

The cross-rhythm is a shorthand way of saying that two groups of three-pulses-each are regrouped over those same six pulses into three groups of two-pulses-each (see Figure 49).

[123456] as 2 groups of 3 = [**A** B C **A** B C] or [A - - A - -
[123456] as 3 groups of 2 = [**B** C **B** C **B** C] or [B - B - B -

Figure 49. "2 groups of 3" against "3 groups of 2"

The idea of the graphic with the alignment of the two lines above was demonstrated in Prof. Sokol's class. The first and second lines indicate the same six pulses regrouping them as 2 groups of 3 and 3 groups of 2. When playing these two groupings simultaneously and only articulating the beginning of each grouping, one would hear 2 against 3. It is important to clearly understand cross-rhythm since it would help performers accurately practice it as two different groupings of a fixed number of pulses (like a common denominator) performed one against another.

I worked on the exercise and improvised on the yangqin toward thinking about "cross phrasing:" playing higher level cross rhythms "over" the 2:3 cross rhythms. I firstly practice the cross rhythms with hand gestures (turning the palm down or up). The left hand tapped three beats as Down/Down/Up while the right hand tapped its two-beats as Down/Up. Then, I improvised on the yangqin the second stage of the exercise "cross-phrasing" by creating a melody (see Figure 50). A "crossing" of the cross-rhythms is achievable by creating any kind of distinction such as sound, sensation, gesture, etc.; therefore, it can be effected by using accents, different pitches or chords, instrumentation, etc. An example of improvisation based on cross-rhythm on the yangqin.

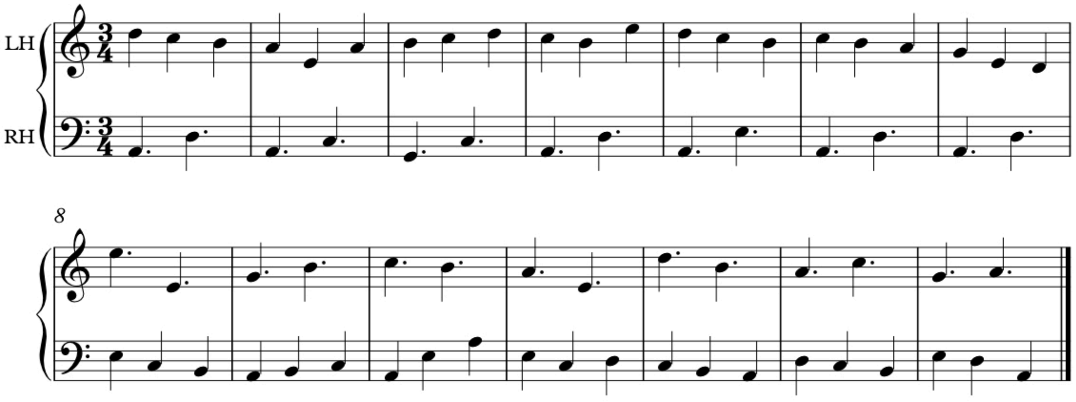


Figure 50. An example of cross-rhythm by creating sound

To improvise on the yangqin by giving a melodic realization, I practiced 3:2 and 2:3; left hand played three and right hand played two, and switch. This exercise could be used by any other instruments, ensembles, etc., which is the fundamental relationship of the beat of the left to right hand. This is the fundamental pattern of a higher crossing pattern 6:9 another level of cross rhythm. By knowing the arithmetic theory of the exercise, one could experience many other cross rhythms with more accuracy.

6.3 Rhythmic and Melodic Exercises No. 3 “Peter Garland’s Guiro/ Clapping music”

One day, Sokol demonstrated Peter Garland’s Guiro/ Clapping music in his class (see Figure 51). We played the clapping music using two hands, hands with voice, and feet with hands. We needed two rhythmic sources in order to maintain the perception of a surface rhythm over a steady beat of either 2, 3, or 4 subdivisions. I first tried to play through the clapping music with two hands and voice, and then I only played the accents by omitting the rest of subdivisions. While I got familiar with the clapping exercise, I improvised on the yangqin by realizing a melody with all subdivisions, and then I improvised by emphasizing the accents by omitting the rest of subdivisions.

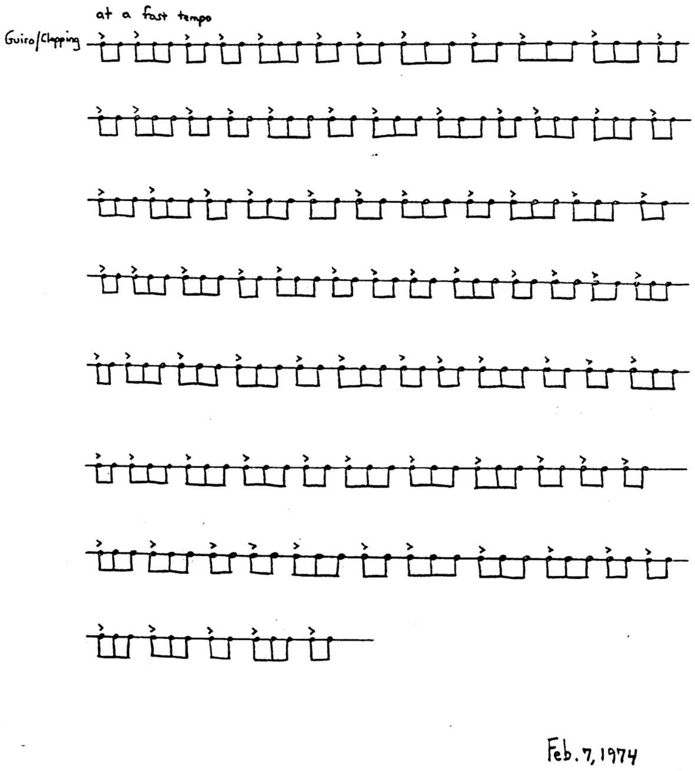


Figure 51. Guiro/Clapping Music

Peter Garland: A Preliminary Inventory of His Paper and Soundings Recoding in the Manuscript Collection: (Garland 1952-1977, 91.10)

To give the exercise greater pedagogical benefit, I practiced the exercise by exploring creative possibilities on the yangqin. The exercise gives a clear idea of how music is developed from a simple form to a complex one. The purpose of these exercises is to understand how to explore creative possibilities and accumulate varies improvisational and compositional ideas. To practice elaborating the exercise I applied a number of variation techniques including change of texture, pitch substitution, ornamentation, omission, interval coupling, modulation to a different key, rhythmic diminution, etc.

I began by choosing the opening line of the Guiro Clapping Music from which I made a Sibelius file. As we can see in figure 52, the piece was composed by organizing a constant flow of eighth-notes into groups of twos and threes. The reason that I chose to show only the first line of the piece (that is the first 29 pulses) is because it contains the essential material of the whole piece. Its very compact and semi-repetitive material lends itself to composing (and improvising) creative variations which could then establish the basis for a discussion about the creative process. Notating this first staff as a measure of 29/8, might make the subsequent steps reveal themselves (see Figure 52).

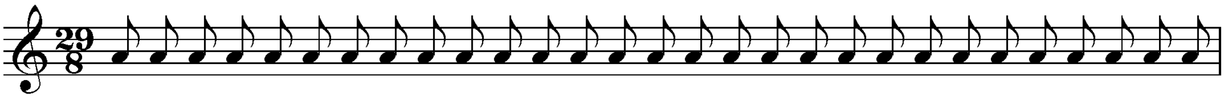


Figure 52. Twenty-nine eighth-note pulses

Although the severely limited materials seem boring, the minimalist character of the piece provides a fertile ground for musical elaboration, while making it easy to maintain close relationship to the rhythmic character of Garland's score. Because the stream of eighth-notes is organized only into groups of twos and threes, no sense of meter is created. Most students in the course found difficulty to naturally experience a group 29 pulsations. It seems that most humans prefer to sense repeating groups of three or four, rather than what seems like a random mixing of groups. However, when we generate some kind of musical differentiation, it becomes more possible to hear groups of pulsations with sensations of constancy, acceleration, and deceleration. To explore some creative possibilities in this regard, I transcribed the first “line” of Guiro/Clapping music into Sibelius in order to illustrate different kinds of musical “play” (see Figure 53).

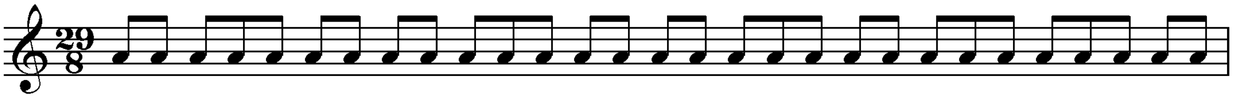


Figure 53. The first “line” of Guiro/Clapping Music without the accents

The composer not only limits himself to two groupings (twos and threes) but he never uses a grouping more than three times consecutively. There is no variation in note duration and no other variations such as diminution and augmentation in each grouping, which makes it a valuable material to study various compositional and improvisation strategies. In the score, each grouping is visually distinguished by the beaming and the accented notes, which makes the score easy to read at sight (see Figure 54).

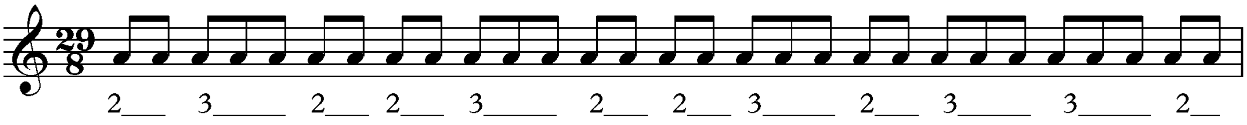


Figure 54. Grouping of twos and threes

In the published score, the groupings of twos and threes are shown very clearly by the use of beams—one of several notational devices designed to show groupings. This means that the player does not have to read each note; it is simpler to simply notice if there are two or three notes to be played as an accented group.

If you practice sight-reading the whole piece, you will find that you are very quickly tired of reading each note, and you naturally begin to read groups 'two' and 'three' instead of individual notes. It also takes far less energy to see a group of two plus three than it is to count, "one two, one two three." I tried to read through the score by counting "one two, one two three," and "two, three," and played it on the yangqin. I found that less energy was spent and fewer mistakes were made while I counted "two and three."

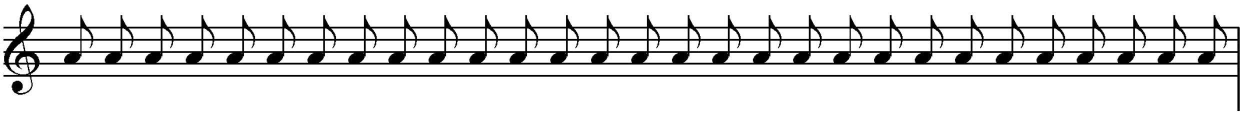


Figure 55. Notation of groups of three using only accents and no beams

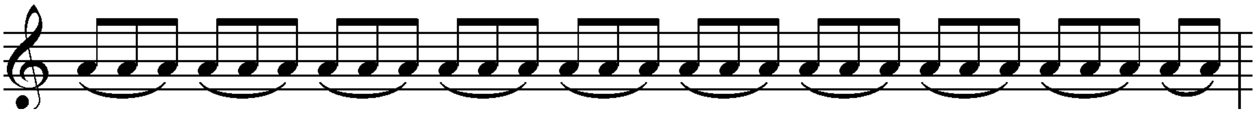


Figure 56. Notation of groups of three using only beams and no accents

Figure 56 and 57 clarify that simple grouping, beaming the note-stem is one of the easiest notation graphics to read. Although notation is not the theme of this exercise, a few variants of notation practice are offered here by way of helping to explain form. In the staff below, the groupings are additionally set off from one another by the use of slurs that indicating grouping of twos and threes.

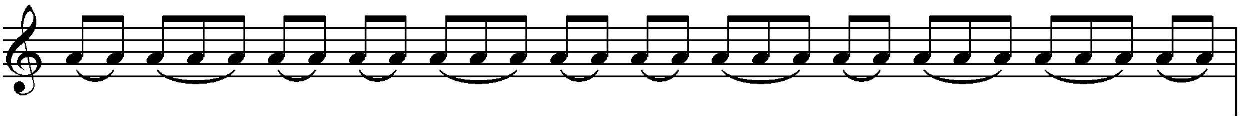


Figure 57. A variation of notation indicating grouping of twos and threes

These groupings in Figure 57 are taken from the original Garland score, Figure 51, Guiro/Clapping Music. The second exercise is to create another kind of distinction by which the groups can be differentiated. A pitch substitution at the beginning of each group readily serves the purpose of clarifying the different groupings. It is important to understand that these same groupings could also be made very clear with other musical means. The "b" shows the beginning of each group (see Figure 58).

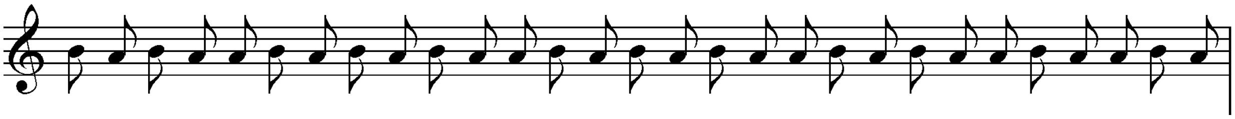


Figure 58. Pitch substitution in the beginning of each group

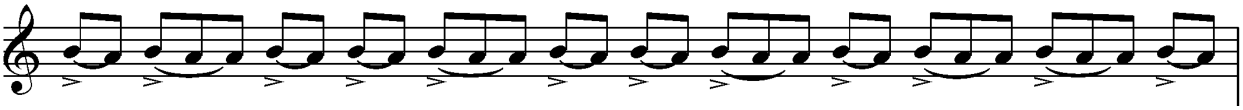


Figure 59. Further highlighting of the groupings by adding beams, slurs, and accents

Although the use different pitches could help to identify the groupings, adding beams, articulation and/or accents, and slurs all make the score still easier to sight-read. The next figure shows that simple differentiation could be made by closer associations with the musical characteristics.

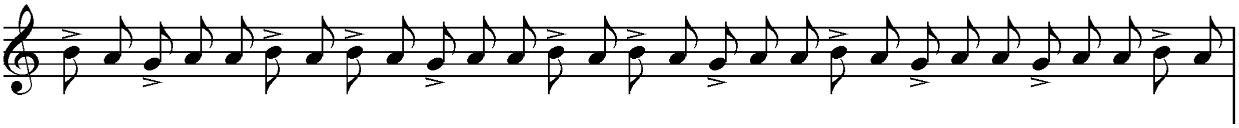


Figure 60. Different pitch substitution in the beginning of each group

As we can see in the figure 60, the "b" is used only to introduce the groups of two pulses, and the "g" introduces the groups of three. Since the Bs and Gs can serve as a signal to identify the groupings, they can be called “functional.” That just means that they become associated with that grouping and it then delineates the beginning of ‘form,’ as well as producing a very rudimentary melodic character.

The third exercise is to give more interesting textures by adding a hint of harmonic movement by means of coupling to the functional notes. On the next figure, these coupled pitches are used to emphasize the beginning of each group (Figure 61).

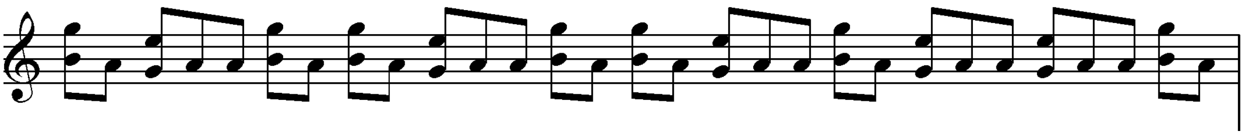


Figure 61. Coupling a sixth to the initial note of each grouping

Then, one could practice omitting the eighth-notes that were filling the groups of twos and threes. This is an effective way of adding more rhythmic variety (Figure 62).

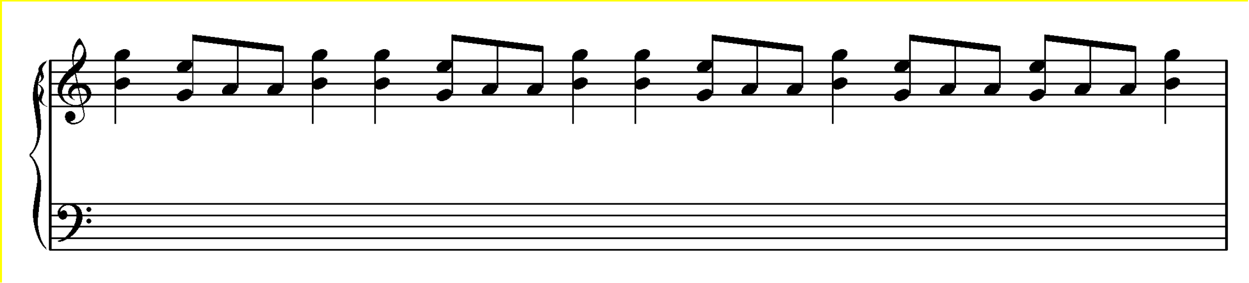


Figure 62. Omission on the groups of twos

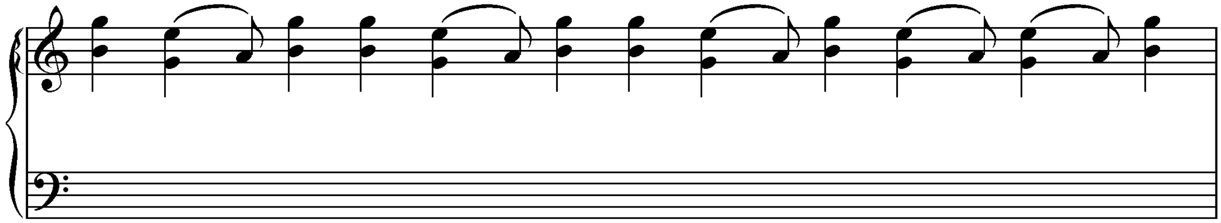


Figure 63. Omission on the groups of twos and threes

Omission can be as enlivening as thickening the texture with more notes of short duration. The omitted notes are within a string of notes of identical length, which means that the duration of the remaining notes is lengthened. In this exercise, I treat the 2-groups and 3-groups in this way.

The following exercise is to achieve melodic variety through simple pitch substitution. In this exercise, the two instances of "a" highlighted with an arrow in the Figure 64 are the substitutions of the “g” in the connected two groups of “twos”. In addition to the pitch substitution, permutation is indicated in the next exercise (see figure 65).

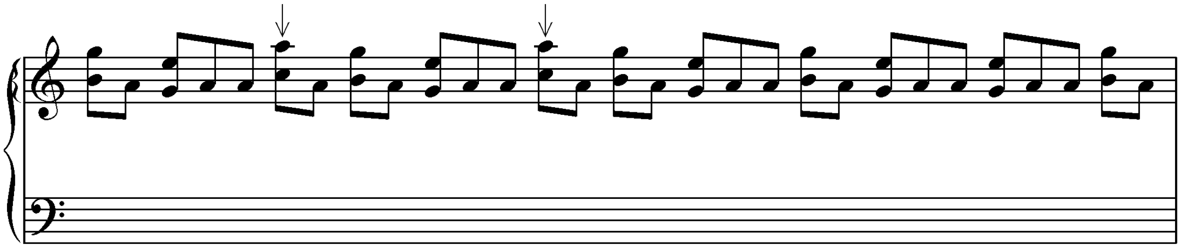


Figure 64. Pitch substitution

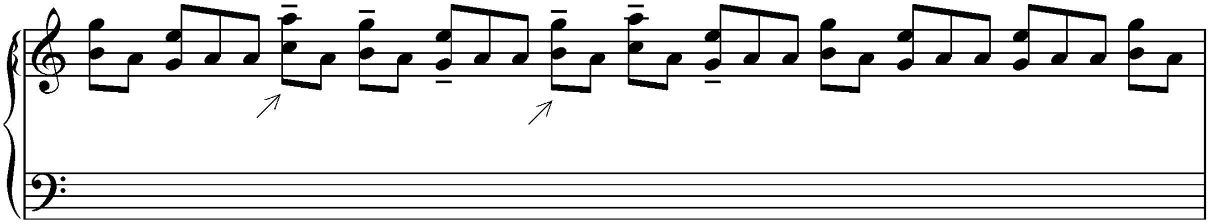


Figure 65. Permutation

Changing the order of the pitches (permutation) is a very typical ancient, simple and fascinating method of creating variations. Permutation could be a very practical improvisation strategy since it does not require a lot of additional pressure on the attention to vary a melodic form. This is likely the reason for its ubiquitous application in many cultures’ music creation. I also put the slurs to indicate the phrases, which give the exercise a more musical meaning in the Figure 65. And again, regarding notated music, slurs can still help with organizing one's sight-reading.

Then, one could practice ornamentation or embellishing tones, including passing tones, escape tones, neighbor tones, grace notes, rhythmic augmentation, diminution etc. There are many books that gives examples of all the rudimentary gestures for ornamenting or embellishing tones[10], which have been used throughout many centuries and many cultures.

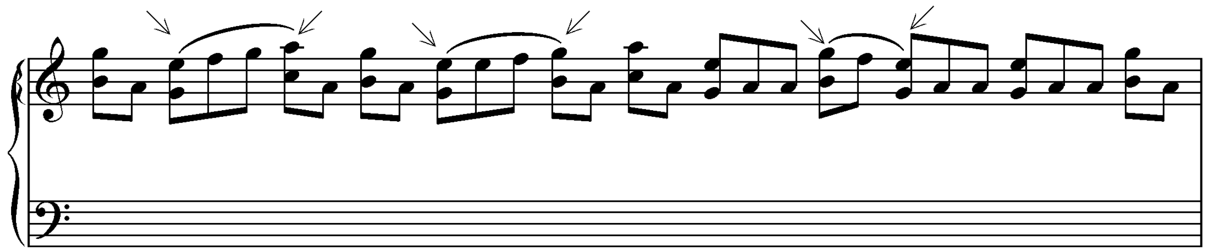


Figure 66. Adding passing tone

Figure 66 shows the addition of passing tones to walk up or down from one pitch to another, such as walking through the interval of third or fourth (see Figure 66). The same figure shows the incorporation of neighbor tones embellish the interval of a second by a simple departure and return to the original note (See figure 67).

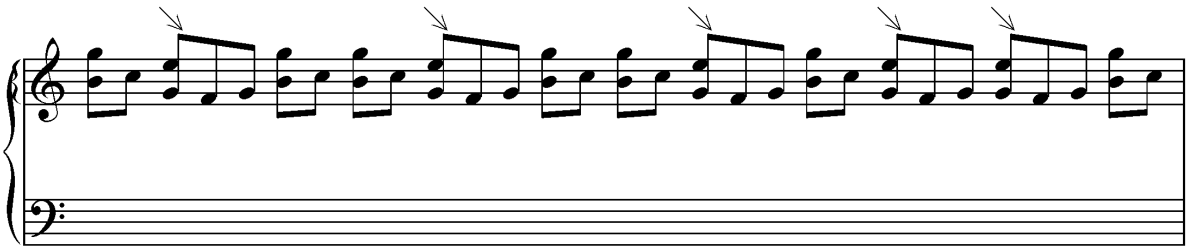


Figure 67. Adding neighbor tones

Moreover, I practice the exercise by adding escape tones for embellishing melodic intervals of a second.

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[10] For further reading, you could read an online textbook titled *Open Music Theory* written by Shaffer, Hughes, and Moseley published by Hybrid pedagogy Publishing in 2014.

The figure below can be seen as escape tones (ESC). While one practices the exercise, one could use any other embellishing gestures such as incomplete neighbor tones, anticipation (ANT), and suspension. Since it is an improvising (composing) exercise, you can do whatever your sense of taste allows.

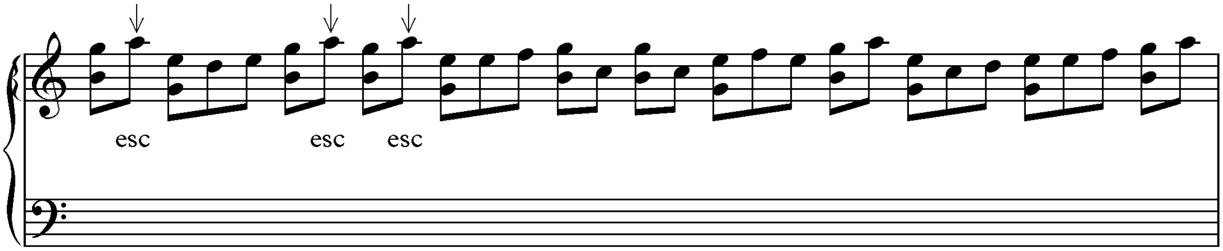


Figure 68. Adding escape tones

In addition to adding passing tones, neighbor tones, and escape tones, grace notes could be added and rhythmic augmentation and diminution could make for more exciting variations (see Figure 69).

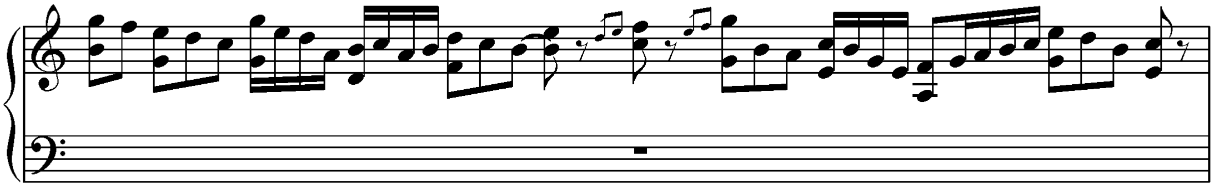


Figure 69. Rhythmic augmentation, diminution, harmonic variety, and grace notes

For the purpose of practicing the exercise, I tried to practice it with rhythmic diminution and pitch substitution (see Figure 70).

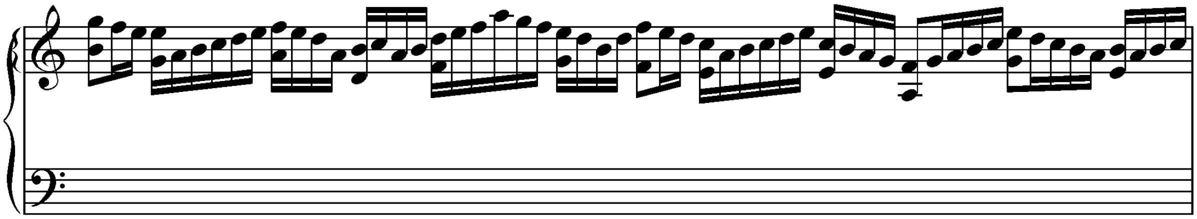


Figure 70. Rhythmic diminution

It seems that there is no end to the number of realizations even if I limit the exercise to the simplest gestures of ornamentation. The highly ornamented simple melodies establish an ideal point of departure for composing a technical study using a limited gestural vocabulary or a composition in a very tight compositional style (see Figure 70). This variation gives further indication that ornamentation can change the character of a melody in substantial ways.

The next exercise is to add another voice—in the manner of "interlocking parts"—so that it could represent either the non-melodic hand or a second instrument, such as piano, yangqin, etc. For example, the low register of the yangqin is on the right side of the instrument; the high register is on the left side. Therefore, the upper voice is mostly played by the left hand; the lower voice is mainly played by the right hand. In this exercise, I use some octave displacement as bass notes (Figure 71b and c).

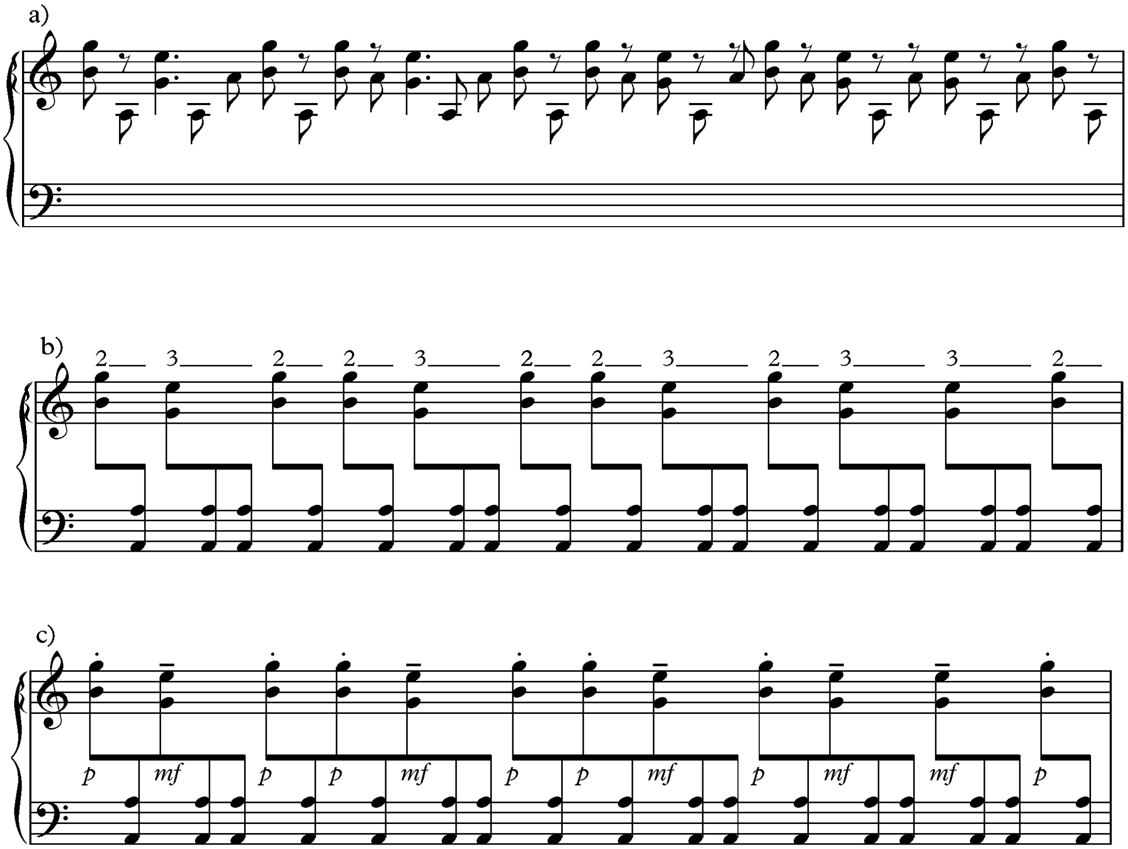
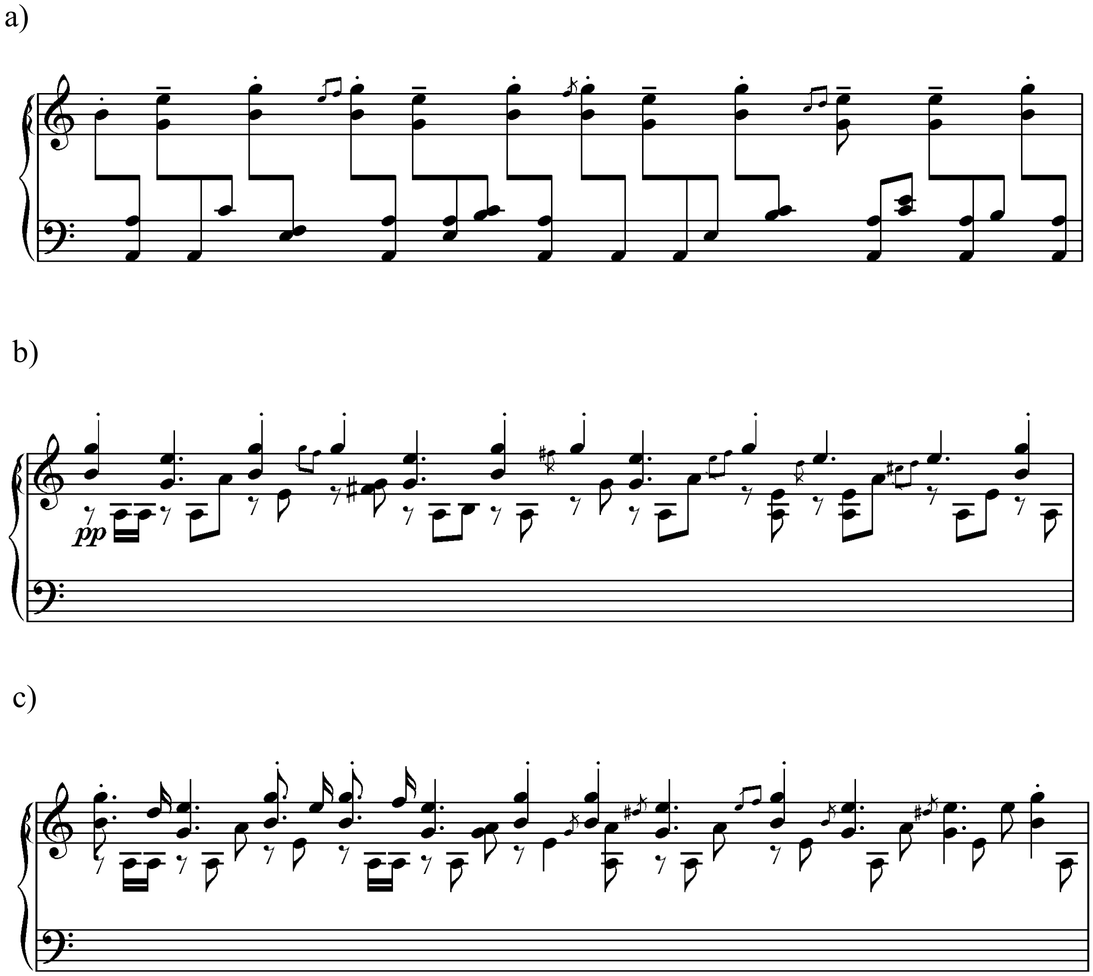


Figure 71. Shows various possibilities of applying octave displacement

I indicate with numerals the rhythmic grouping of the first line of the original piece again to remind the readers that the repeating sequence, that is, the short phrase [2-3- 2-2-3- 2-2-3- 2-3-3- 2], is all that is used in these exercises. The reason that I only use the first line of the original piece is because the purpose of these materials is not to make a composition, but rather to show some ideas that might be applied to the rhythm or any other materials one would be keen to try. The notation in Figure 71 section a) and b) use the same split-staff notation to best display the big range between melodic voice and bass accompaniments for the yangqin; it introduces an element of syntax. Each beam group is completed only following the final group of three, after which the next group begins with a 2-group. This beaming may make it easier to read, but it may prompt many new musical ideas.

It seems to me that differentiations in a flow of pulses are a critical element in establishing a rhythmic flow. It can be done by using different pitches, different registers, different harmonies, melodies, etc. In Figure 72 section c), the flow is strengthened by the use of articulation. In these exercises, octave displacement, more interval coupling, grace notes, articulation, and a crush was applied.

Although I use two-staff notation in these exercises, it might be convenient for some musicians who prefer or have experienced in reading. Therefore, it may sometimes be unnecessary or even make for cumbersome reading for some musicians who are not familiar with reading two-staff notation. While one practice the exercise, what any one musician prefers has to do with their visual sensibility as well as their previous experiences in reading. These exercises that I explore on the yangqin that left hand and right hand presenting different voice and registers; therefore, I use the two-staff notation that makes it easier to differentiate and elaborate elements in each hand.



a)

b)

c)

Figure 72. Octave displacement with interval coupling, grace notes, articulation

The following exercise is a melodic upper voice that would be played on the left hand on the yangqin with articulation and phrases with a busy (Balkan-style) obbligato based on secundal motion (see Figure 73 section a). The following exercise is based on the previous exercise that is given a incise melodic part that accentuates the ongoing rhythmic groupings with adding new voices or the second yangqin that rhythmic variations and varied intervals (see Figure 73 section b).

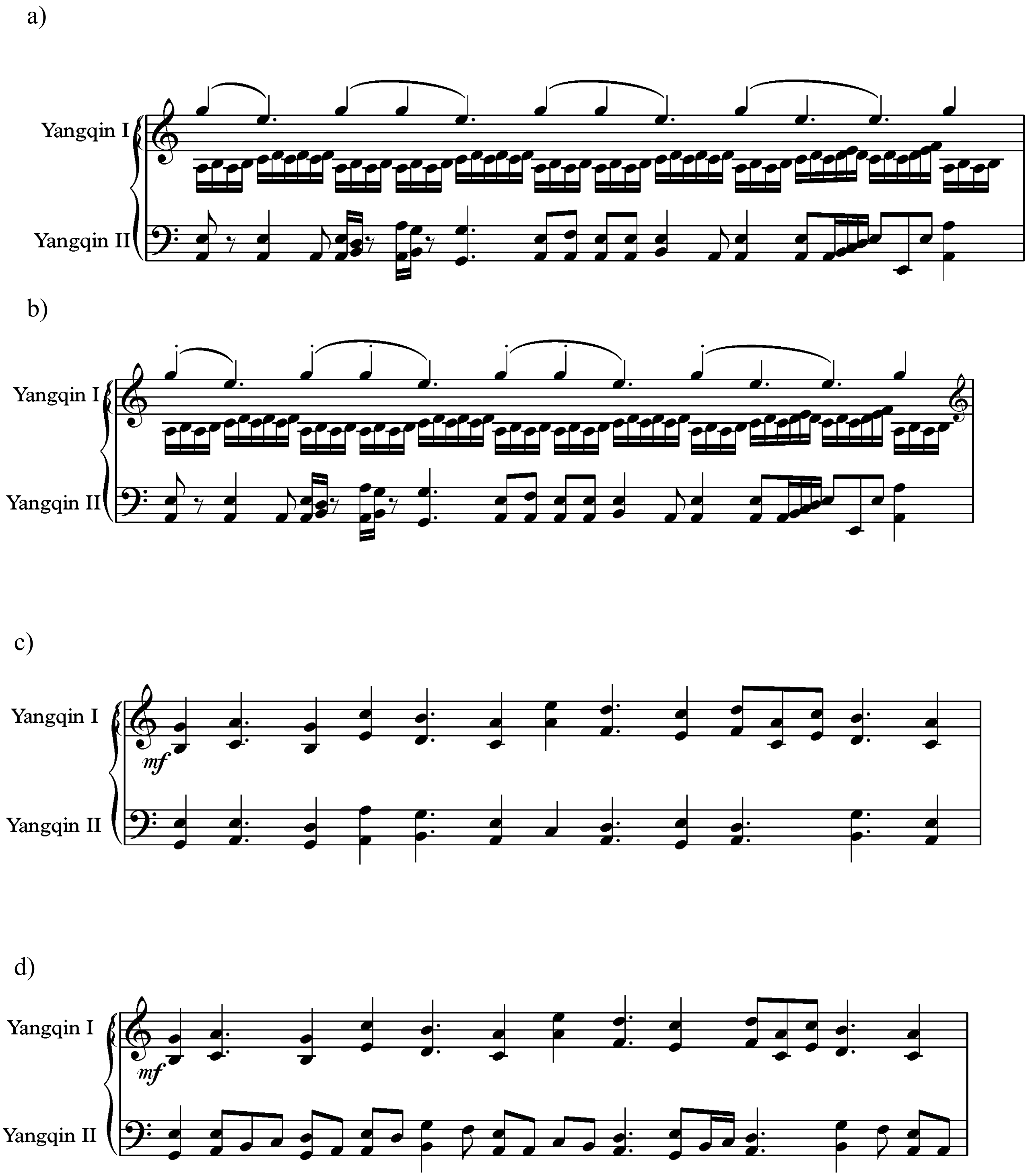

a)
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
b)
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
c)
Yangqin I
mf
Yangqin II
d)
Yangqin I
mf
Yangqin II

Figure 73. Augmentation and adding new voices

Then, I change the pace: treating the two durations (2s and 3s) as sustained notes. This exercise, if played with augmented values or with a much slower tempo, could also serve as an exercise for practicing harmony, that is, for treating the groups of twos and threes as points for harmonic movement (see Figure 73 section c). In addition, multi-part writing could be approached by means of bifurcation of the bass part. Filling in between the longer duration notes serve to highlight the rhythmic energy; however, filling in can also makes the rhythm seem pedestrian: filled with many bodies (see Figure 73 section d).

The following example has a slightly different melody and an unprepared modulation to "G" at using stepwise motion as well as a greater degree of bifurcation in the bass, which allows for some simple part writing. For melodic skips, whether used as embellishment or as integral to the melody are generally filled in near the leap with stepwise motion.

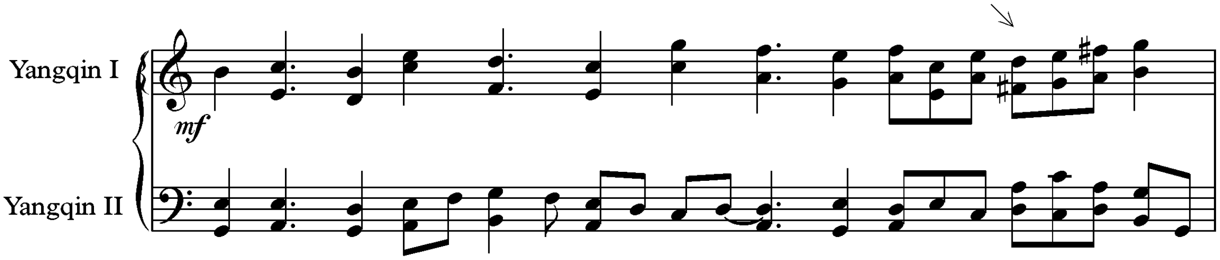


Figure 74. Unprepared modulation

In addition to these elaborations, figure 75, which retains the sound of the coupled sixths, has a more playful flow owing to the inclusion of quicker movement (including the sixteenth-note triplets) and the pulsating tonic drone in Yangqin II. The recurring drone pulsing in Yangqin II contributes to the stylistic coherence of this and some other examples.

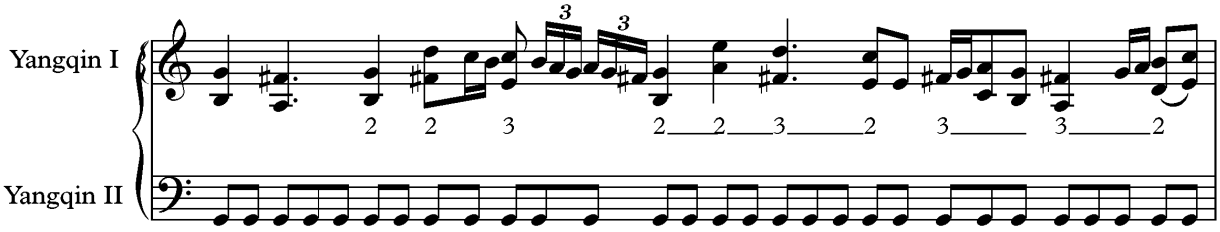

Yangqin I
Yangqin II
3
3
2 2 3 2 2 3 2 3 3 2

Figure 75. Yangqin II plays a pulsing drone on "G" while yangqin I continues the sound of coupled sixths with greater rhythmic variation

To give a broader sound of the music, the next variation practices the opening broad chord presenting a new and strong energy that gives a new power of the music (see Figure 76).

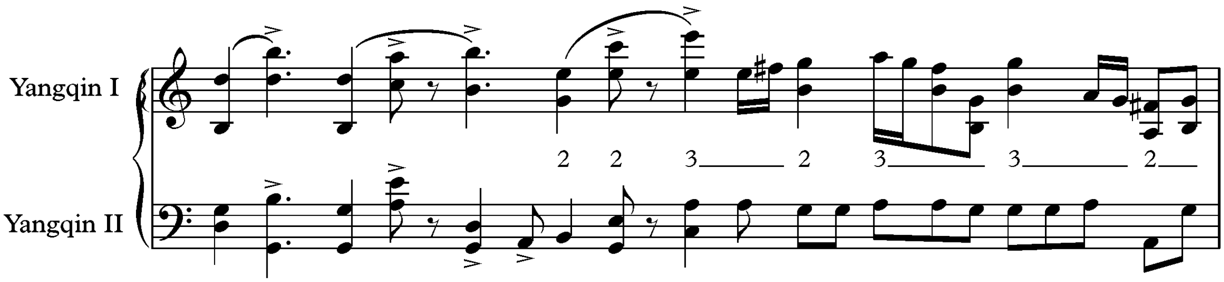

Yangqin I
Yangqin II
2 2 3 2 3 3 2

Figure 76. An extension of the block-chord texture

Having played a series of block chords with Yangqin I, the second yangqin now fills in the longer durations with a busy accompaniment figure moving in continuous sixteenth-notes.

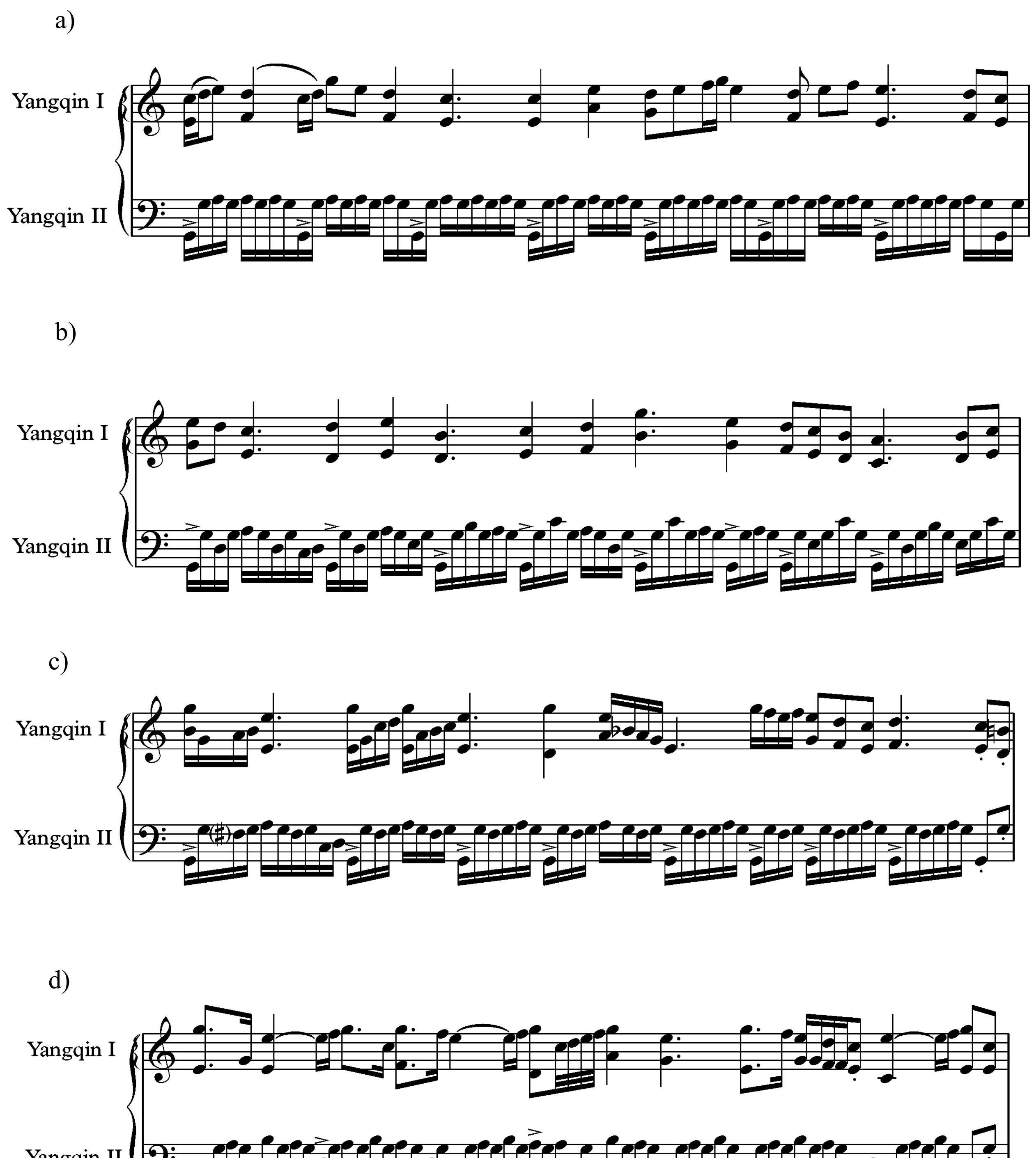

a)
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
b)
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
c)
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
d)
Yangqin I
Yangqin II

Figure 77. Ostinato pattern in the second yangqin

While the first yangqin plays melodic variations incorporating pitch substitution and rhythmic augmentation and diminution, Yangqin II lays down a strongly shaped ostinato pattern in the bass (see Figure 77 a, b, c, d). Since the main purpose of these examples was to explore creative variation, rather than to compose a piece, I tried writing three different bass lines in the second yangqin, while maintaining the main melodic and rhythmic character of the first yangqin.

In the next exercise, the melody is simplified as is the rhythm, which mostly blocks in the groups of 2s and 3s with sustained chords (see Figure 78). These chords are picked randomly, that is, without thinking about it.

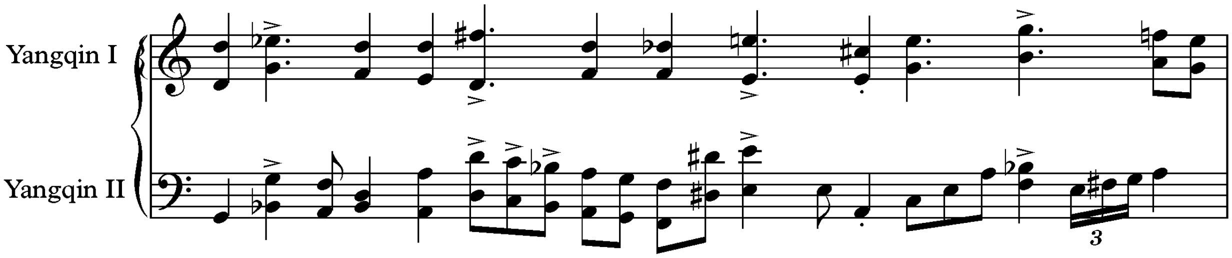


Figure 78. Random chords

This kind of exercise encourages you to have some "fun," since it gives an opportunity to include certain random elements that might be considered inappropriate or 'wrong' according to traditional music theory. While each figure (each variation) is intended to represent a coherent musical example, the whole sequence of examples is not intended to form a stylistically coherent piece of music. Even though each staff line is a suggestion and invitation to compose further on that material, one could sometimes have fun and relax in some of these exercises.

This next exercise is constructed mainly by stepwise motion of the coupled sixth intervals moving through certain scales degrees according to the size of the underlying grouping. It also employs grace notes to give the music a feeling of fun and relaxed, tasteful optimism (see Figure 79).

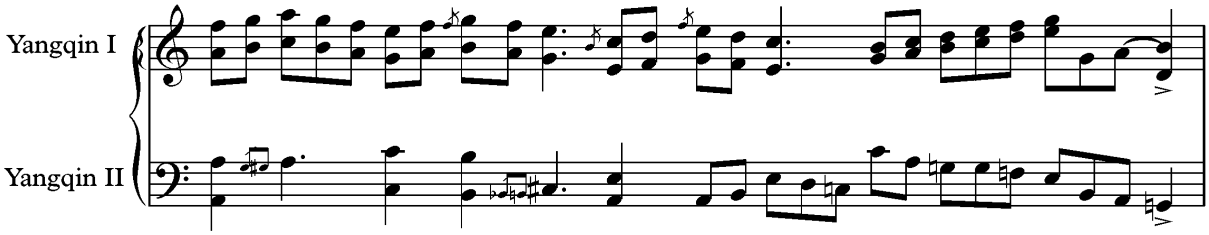


Figure 79. Stepwise motion and grace notes

In addition, for next exercise, one could abandon melodic content and uses open-voiced broken (arpeggiated) chords. These figures involve large intervallic jumps, so the player could swing one beater around the centre note to more easily reach the highest and lowest notes.

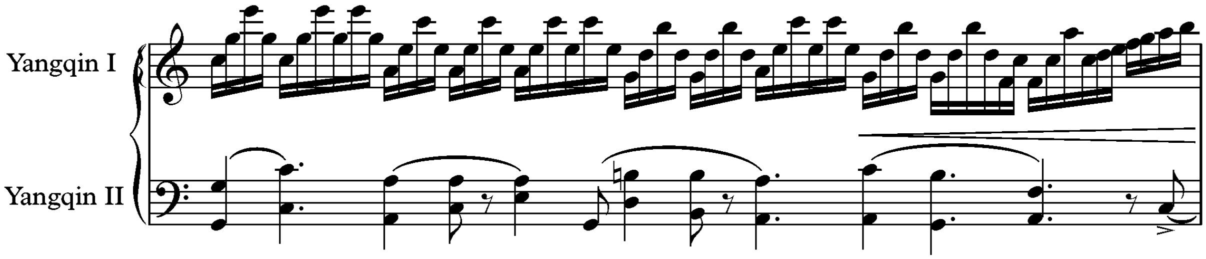


Figure 80. Open-voiced broken chords

The following exercise, Figure 81, de-emphasizes the rhythmic structure by eliminating filler notes and, in this way, the rhythm begins to ‘float.’ Again, this floating quality is due to the fact that the melody no longer contains any intrinsic metric information (see Figure 81). Additionally, I chose to use a special yangqin tremolo technique in the next exercise (see Figure 82). One could add or create the special techniques demonstrated in these exercises, and there are many more traditional techniques for elaboration that can be used as well.

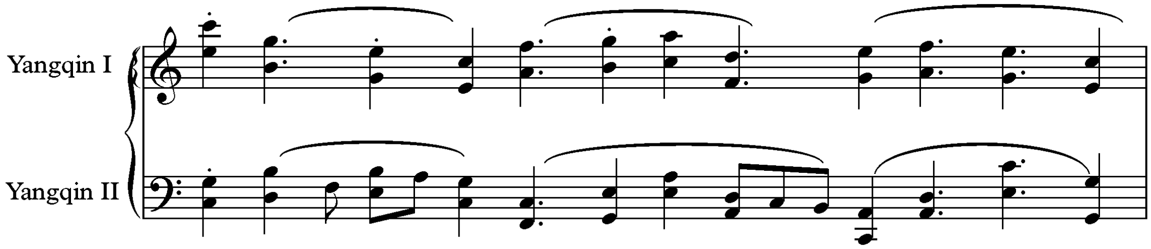

Yangqin I
Yangqin II

Figure 81. Augmentation and articulation

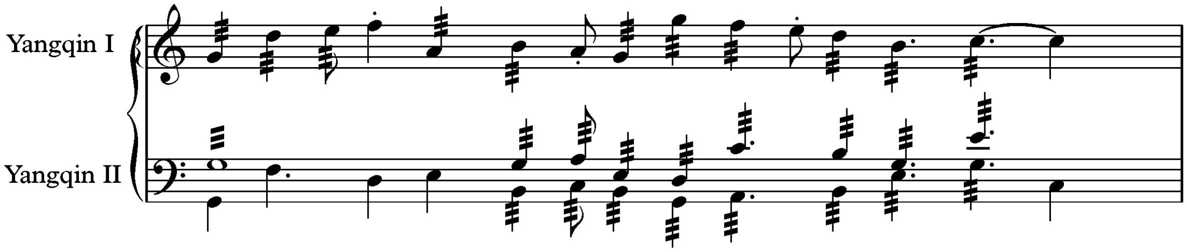

Yangqin I
Yangqin II

Figure 82. Adding special techniques

The exercise could be continued indefinitely, by applying the full range of improvisational and compositional techniques. To end this exercise section, I chose to use the 'largesse' of a slow tempo to make it sounds like an ending (Figure 83).

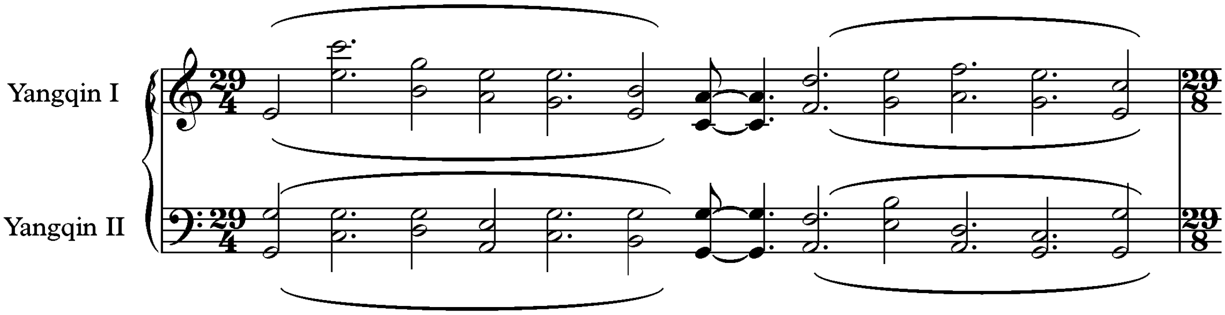
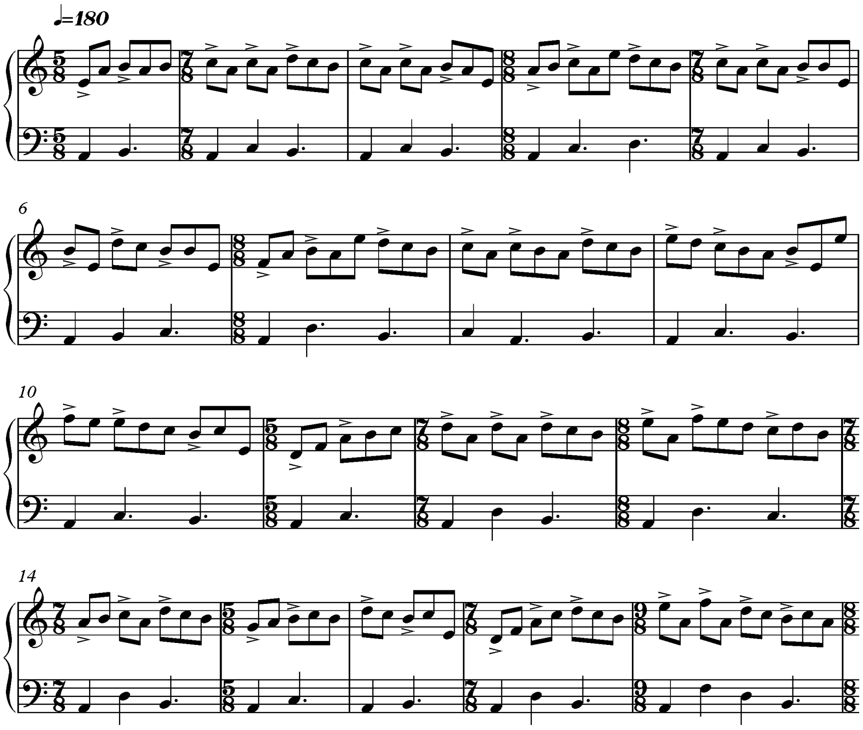

Yangqin I
Yangqin II
29
4
29
8

Figure 83. Doubling the duration of the group of twos and threes

Playing full chords will add richness. Played on string instruments, the spacing and voicing of the passage in Figure 83 might sound very good, but the quality might suffer if played on plucked instruments such as Chinese lute. For the yangqin the voicing of such widely spaced chords would sound rich because the instrument has many continuing vibrations if you do not purposely mute the strings. If one intends make a piece of music based on these exercises, some real melodic content needs to be developed. Since all this is only an exercise, I suggest you can work on it in any way you prefer. The purpose of this exercise is to help accumulate ideas for improvisation and composition, gain some ideas for possible realizations of simple rhythmic patterns, and to explore creative possibilities.

These exercises illustrate that there are many ways to improvise on the basis of Garland's clapping music. One could realize these rhythms with more variation in articulation, augmentation, diminution, ornamentation, embellishment, octave displacement, etc. In addition, the piece could serve as a structure for ensemble composition and improvisation. One could create a new version of the "clapping music" simply through permutation of the groups of ones and twos. To indicate some other ways of practicing the exercise of Guiro Clapping music, I made a realization on the yangqin (see Figure 84).



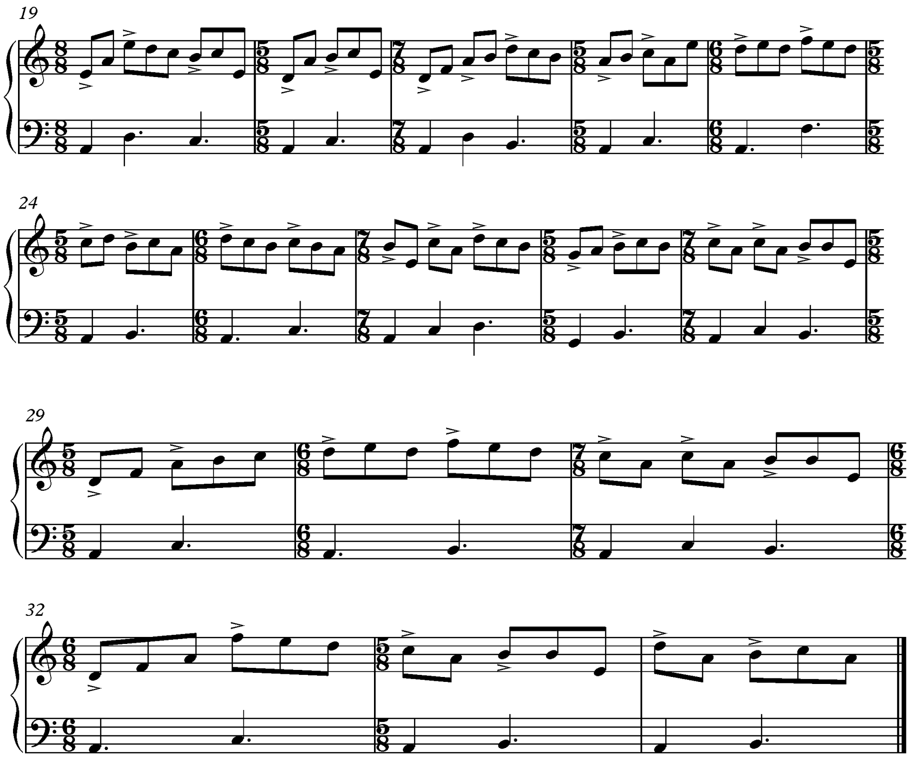


Figure 84. Realization of Peter Garland's Guiro/ Clapping Music

The purpose of this exercise is to practice the original rhythm and a left-hand technique that was a highly required technique for a yangqin performer. This exercise makes for worthwhile practicing for the yangqin players because these rhythmic patterns are not commonly used in Chinese music. For this exercise, one could make their own realizations that apply their own musical tastes and preferences.

6.4 "Berger Fives" Rhythmic Patterns

"Berger Fives" is a thirty-two-pulse additive pattern that was introduced by Prof. Sokol in his class. It is the rhythmic structure of a jazz head called, "Time Is" by Karl Berger. The pattern consists of a succession of pulses of uniform duration, with successive phrases first lengthening and then shortening. The hyphens represent pauses or rests, also of only one pulse: [||:1- 12- 123- 1234- 12345- 1234- 123- 12- :||]. As the exercise is elaborated, each grouping is repeated twice, then three times and up to five times each. It could be notated in this way ||: 1-1-12-12-123-123-1234-1234-12345 etc. :||

In the class, we realized the pattern with two hands, hands with voice, and with feet with hands. Rhythmic syllables (solkattu or bols) were also used to perform each phrase.

1– can be vocalized as Tom -
12– can be vocalized as Ta Tom -
123– can be vocalized as Ta ka Tom -
1234– can be vocalized as Ta ki ta Tom -
12345—can be vocalized as Ta ka di mi Tom—

After we became familiar with the pattern, three or more students played the pattern while facing with each other, in the manner of a Canon. An example of the facing exercise is showed in Figure 85.

```
1-12-123-1234-12345-1234-123-12-
--1-12-123-1234-12345-1234-123-12-
----1-12-123-1234-12345-1234-123-12-
```

Figure 85. The “Berger Fives” exercise

This piece could be very interesting to practice with mixed ensembles, even if only try clapping the rhythm. I also practice the exercise on the yangqin by creating a melody, which I felt more challenging than clapping the rhythm with voice. The first time that I tried on the yangqin I was focusing more on creating melody and counting the rhythm simultaneously, so I got easily lost. After that, I first tried to merely count the rhythm and create a random melody and the I tried to create a melody where the actual shape counts itself. For example, the melody could begin on "re" (that is, "2") and then continue: 2, 23-, 234-, 2345-, 23456-, etc. In this way, the melody can actually help count the rhythm. Figure 86 is the original score transcribed into Sibelius.

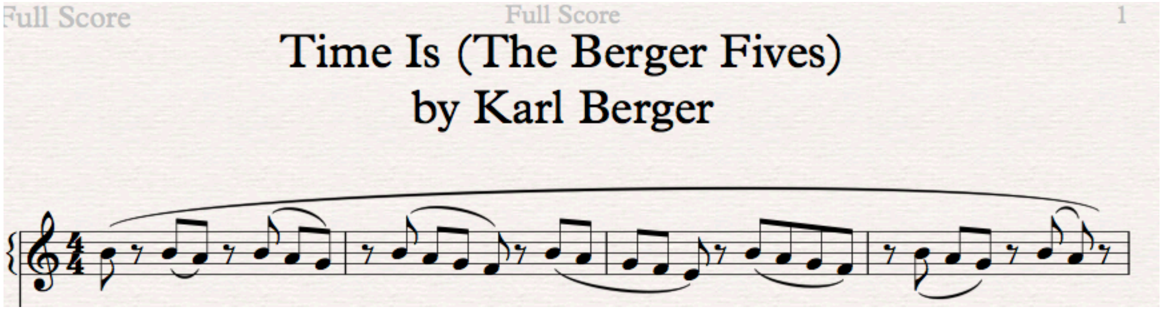


Figure 86. The original score of Berger Fives by Karl Berger is transcribed into Sibelius.

As I encountered each new difficulty, I realized that one of the most interesting aspects of these improvisation exercises is to have your own challenges and find your ways to solve them. To make the exercise more challenging, I thought it would be interesting to play with an ensemble. The most interesting part of ensemble practice finding your place once you lose the count or get lost for any other reason. One needs to find a moment to start again, then the music would sound very interesting.

To experiment with the rhythmic exercise on the yangqin, I applied two melodies on the pattern. The first melodic line was created to help maintain the count. Playing a scalar pattern allows the music to “count itself” (see Figure 87); the second melodic line was improvised (see Figure 88).

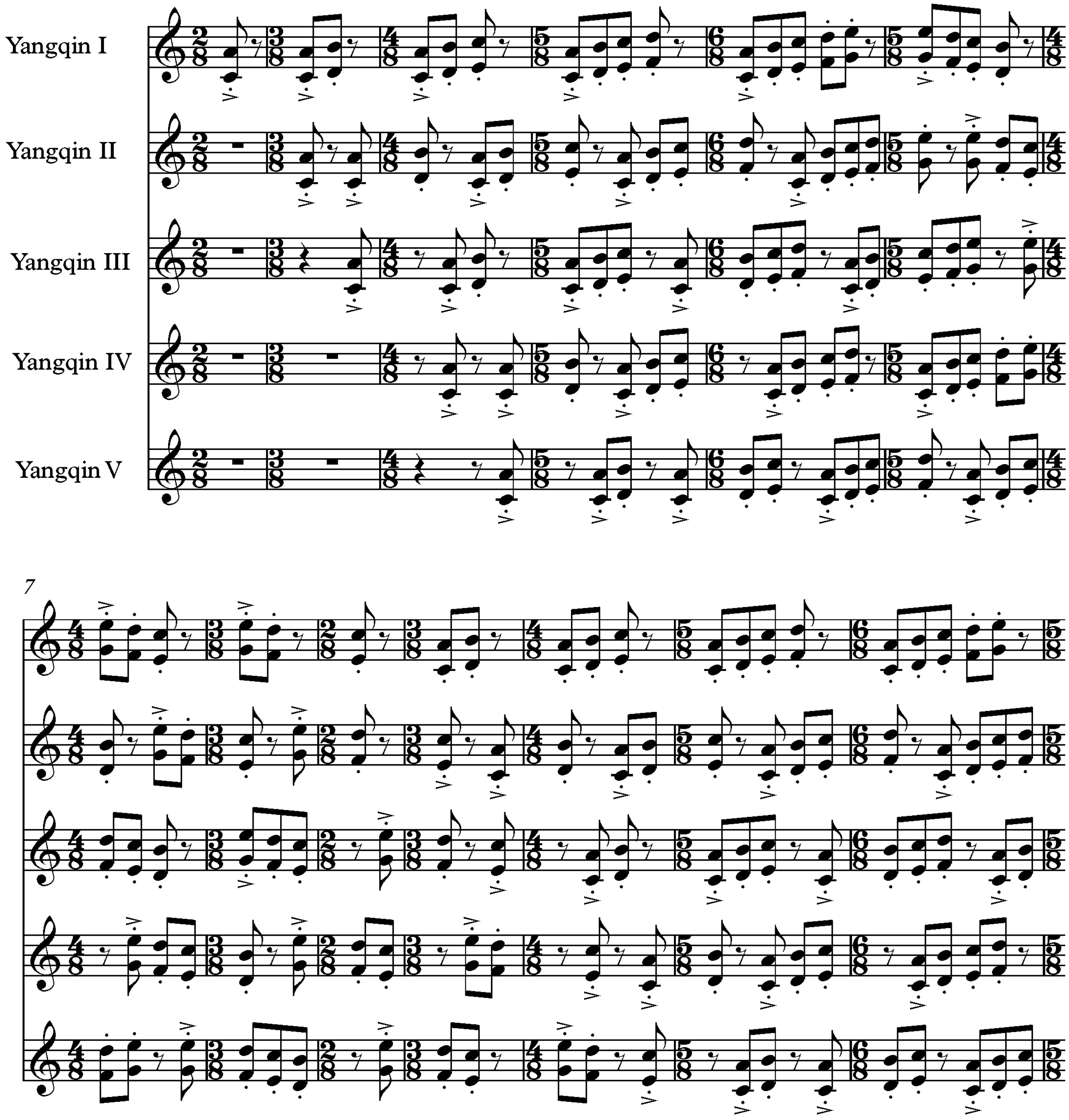

Yangqin I
Yangqin II
Yangqin III
Yangqin IV
Yangqin V
7

Figure 87. The first realization of the "Berger Five" exercise on the yangqin

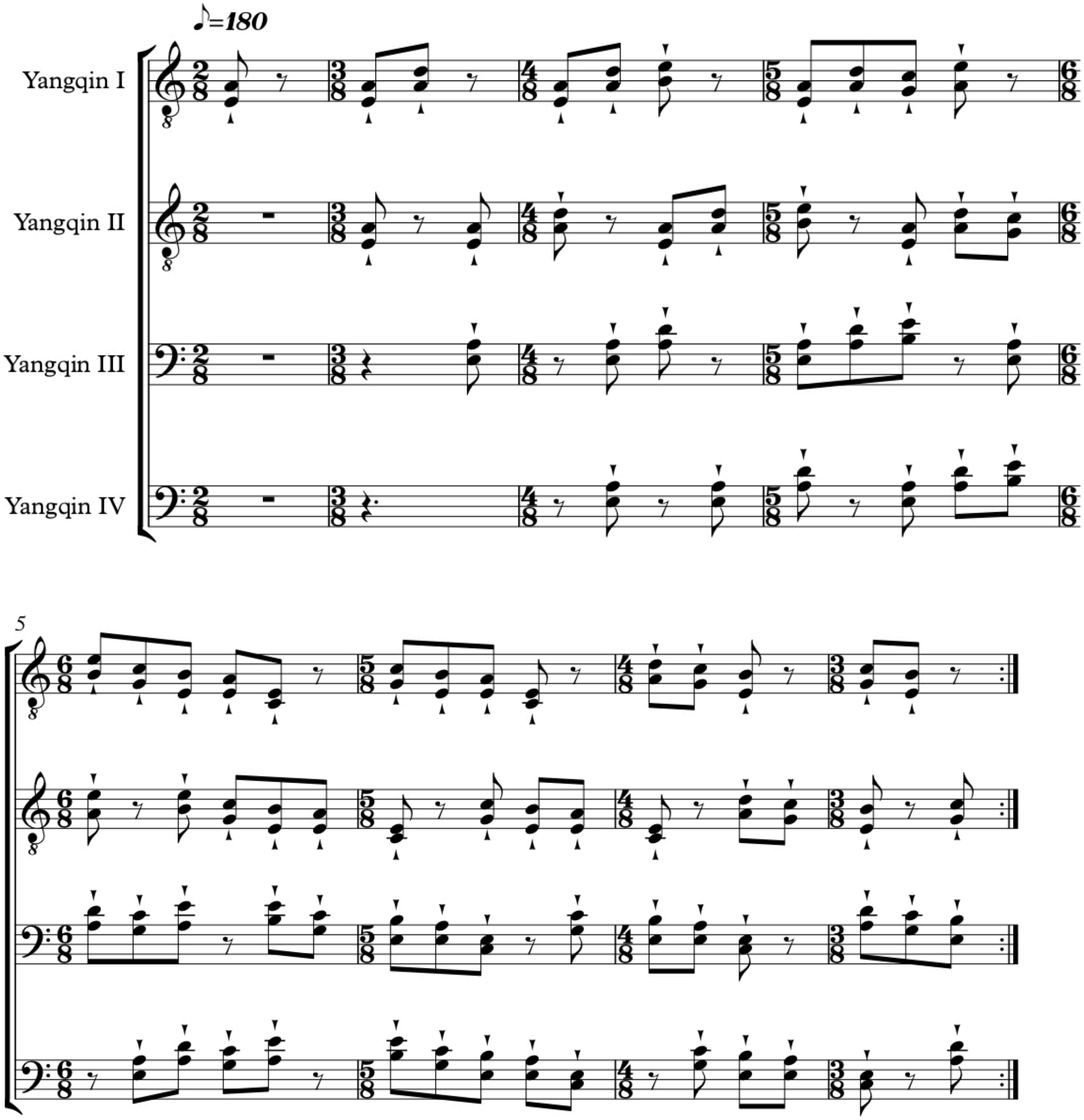


Figure 88. The second realization of the "Berger Fives" exercise on the yangqin

The first realization was helping to practice the rhythmic pattern on the yangqin, so I used a minor scale and called them by numbers instead of using solfeg syllables: 6, 67-, 671-, 6712-, 67123-, etc. In this way the motives actually count them pattern automatically. After that, I tried to improvise a melody based on the pattern; I applied a special yangqin technique "*dùnyīn*" as you can see on the symbol on top of each notes. The technique is to use the hands to mute the sound after one's playing, which could also help counting the spaces. In addition, the realization of the exercise would help one to gain a better understanding of the idea of the exercise. It is easier and much more interesting to understand the concept of the exercise instead of reading a score.

6.5 Realization on Bill Douglas's *Vocal Rhythm Etude No. 2*

Rhythm is one of the most crucial elements in music and, since not everyone can find appropriate and interesting material to practice, I am suggesting these rhythm studies below. They are challenging but they might help overcome one's weakness in musicianship. There are some vocal rhythm etudes composed by Bill Douglas, which are shared in Appendix A. I suggest practicing one of these exercises that you are interested in. Since it is a vocal rhythm etude, the syllables (or vocables) were given by the composer. However, one could practice only the rhythm without reading the lyrics, or you could give your own lyrics such as da, ta, tom, etc. After that, one could improvise on their own instruments.

I chose a very interesting and challenging vocal rhythm exercise to practice and realize on the yangqin. It was composed by Bill Douglas [11]—a bassoonist, pianist, composer and music teacher. From his collection of Vocal Rhythm Etudes I chose No. 2. (see Appendix A). To practice the exercise, I first switched the original lyrics to my word "da" and practiced it with a sufficiently slow tempo that I could read though without making mistakes. After I got familiar with the rhythm, I practiced the etude with a little bit faster tempo, and that gave me some challenges. Next, I tried to read the original lyrics with articulations, accents, and rhythmic sensations until I memorized it. Memorization is not required; it is a long-standing personal habit. Finally, I improvised on the yangqin by giving a melody to the rhythmic etude (Figure 89).

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[11] For more information about Bill Douglas, see Nelson, "The Classroom and Individual Teaching Methods of Bill Douglas."

Rhythm Etude

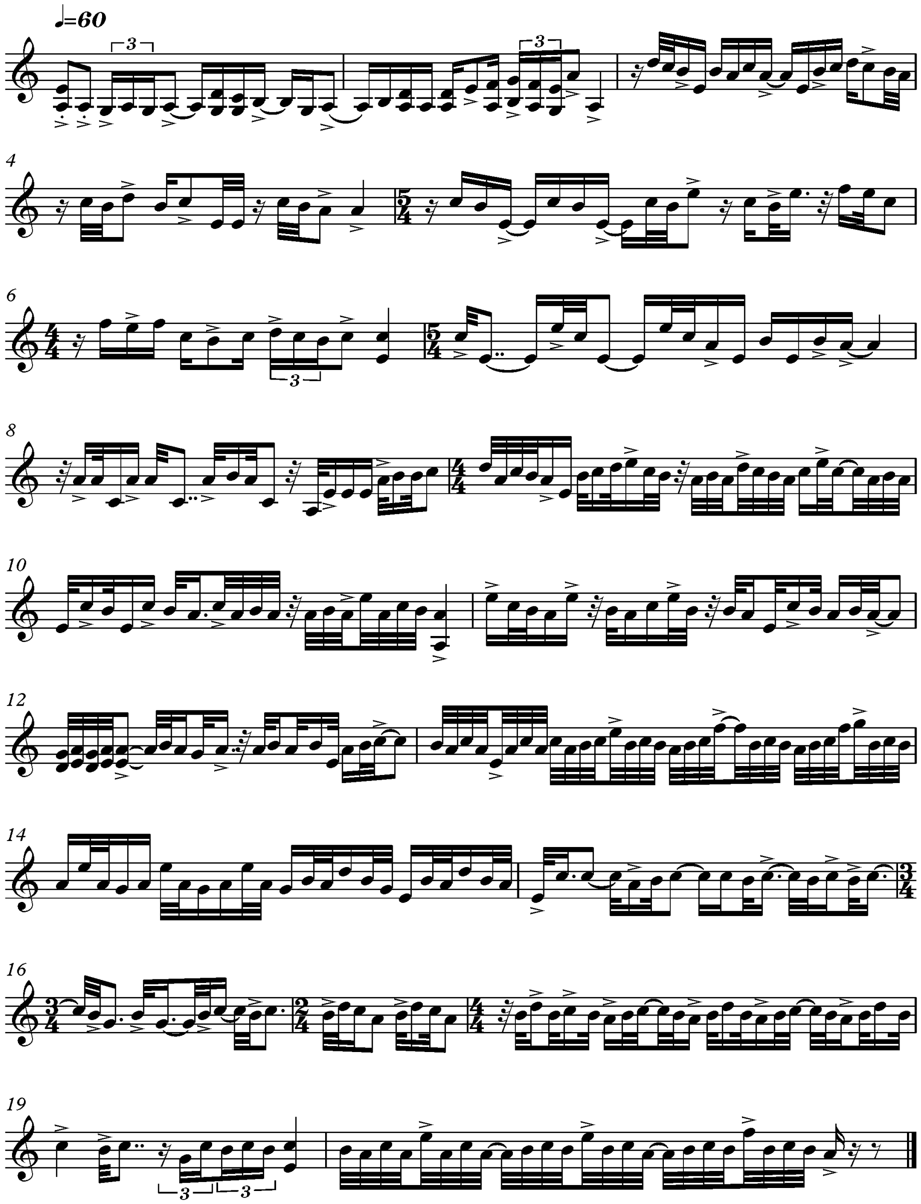


Figure 89. An example of improvisation based on vocal rhythm etude No. 2

The advantages of rhythm exercises are to help improvisers quickly assimilate and incorporate complex rhythmic structures such as the “54s”, Perter Garland’s clapping music”, “Berger Fives”, and Douglas vocal rhythm etudes, all of which help develop music with percussive content. It would also help performers who are interested in developing skills in improvisation or composition to accumulate some powerful ideas about form, momentum, continuity, energy distribution through a phrase, and more. With the help of the rhythmic exercises, improvisers may elect to play in a percussive style or with more nuance in their rhythmic sensibilities.

Rhythmic exercises are not at all boring; they can have some satisfying sense of structure and wholeness as music composition. One could try using any material as a starting point, which is one principle of creative practice. Some points of departure may be richer with possibilities than others; however, searching for the most interesting intrinsic qualities is also part of the creative process. It seems to me that the simplicity of the original score is an asset because it can give inspiration and more room to have fun to discover creative possibility.

6.6 Listening Exercise—"Unison Exercise” and Making a Layered Piece

The objective of the “Unison Exercise” is to improve one’s listening acuity and to provide another venue for creative responses in the context of musicianship work. This interesting ear training exercise was introduced by Sokol in his improvisation class. He pointed out two general purposes of this exercise: 1) to learn and to recognize and identify basic musical values as direct sensations rather than by thinking about them and analyzing them, and 2) to apply one’s enhanced listening acuity to the benefit of more sensitive ensemble playing. One important ramification of this is that one could then pay equal attention to the outside sphere rather than merely focusing on one's own playing; when playing with a dancer or actor, you would not so easily lose the thread of your own music.

As mentioned in Chapter five, the original form of the exercise is the two pianists begin playing a random melody by using the same pitch set (e.g., a black-note pentatonic scale) at the same time and at the same tempo. (The choice of black keys only is to make the exercise accessible to non-pianists and also to minimize fatigue by limiting the degree of dissonance.) The two pianists respond to the occurrence of a unison or an octave by holding that unison or octave for one more beat before beginning a new random phrase. The purpose of the held tone is for the two musicians to confirm with one another that a unison/octave has occurred. You could make your own variations and certainly change this response from "holding" the tone to anything else you find interesting.

The original exercise is for piano; however, to develop the exercise for the yangqin, I paint all the sharps and flats in black on the bridges of the yangqin so that players who do not know how to play the yangqin could also practice the listening exercise on the yangqin by playing the black bridges. It is easier for a yangqin player to listen to the intervals without being disturbed by thinking about the black-notes. For yangqin performers, one could transpose to different keys to practice the exercise by playing a pentatonic scale. I practiced several times with my friend to develop our listening skills and making spontaneous music at the same time. It is a very practical exercise for both developing musicianship and creating music at the moment. I share our experiment on the exercise:

> We first practiced the exercise by playing single notes on each beat. At the very beginning, we missed some the unisons, and there was a lack of fluency and music flow. With more practice, we got familiar with the materials, enabling us to work at faster speeds, and this allowed a more musical approach to the exercise. Although we missed some of the unisons, we got much better than the first-time practice. After we could successfully respond to most of the unisons, we developed with a series of variant ways to do the exercise, such as playing two

notes on each beat, ornamentation, etc., so that we could finally make the exercise into a composition at the moment.

An example of the unison exercise is shown in Figure 90.

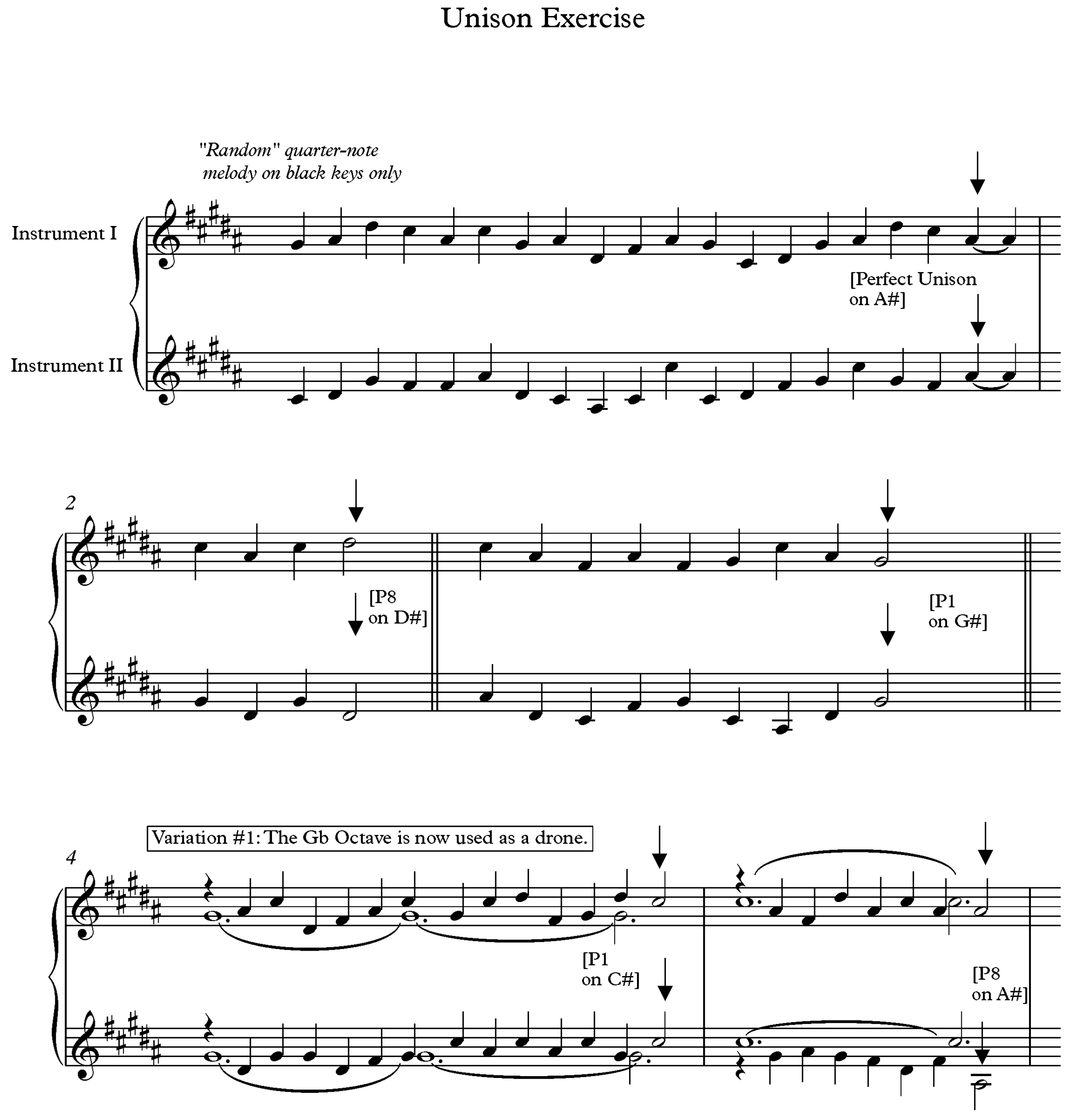

Unison Exercise
"Random" quarter-note melody on black keys only
Instrument I
Instrument II
[Perfect Unison on A#]
2
[P8 on D#]
[P1 on G#]
4
Variation #1: The Gb Octave is now used as a drone.
[P1 on C#]
[P8 on A#]

Figure 90. An example of Unison exercise

Each ensemble could have their own variations, for example, they could make melodic ornamentation. However, ornaments should be short and 'tight' to the following beat so as not to confuse the ornament with the upcoming main tone. Then, if, for example, the phrases become so long that you can no longer hear the drone, you could decide on a variation that allowed for an occasional repetition of the drone. The repetitions would have to be struck on the "off-beats," in order not to confuse them with a main note of the melody. The complexity can be beautiful but the effort to distinguish the melody notes from the repeated drone can also make for useful ear-training.

They could try anything they find interesting, as long as there is still the demand to listen for unisons/octaves and to respond to them. Another possibility is to substitute a different intervallic or rhythmic value for the unisons and proceed with the exercise by listening for those values. Depending on the need of the musicians they could listen for thirds and sixths, or for triplets, or for a certain kind of articulation, etc. The exercise can be easily adapted, but the central idea is to keep it in real-time (so that it does not become an intellectual activity) and to maintain a level of musicality that makes it a worthwhile artistic exploration.

The purpose of making variations is to begin to think about the musical development of the exercise as a composition. This is an exercise that has some inventiveness combined with the musicianship aims. It can develop the capacity for quick responses and quick changes on cue at particular key moments in a musical flow; this challenges your ability to hear these unisons/octaves in increasingly challenging sound environments.

In addition to Unison Exercise, I explored an interesting listening exercise that I named “layered improvisation exercise,” which involves layering newly improvised music on already recorded tracks. I found that to improvise along with a previous recording was very useful for developing my musicianship and listening skills. The idea of the exercise came from my experience participating in SEM conference where we had the opportunity to improvise along with a recorded track. I joined the section and recorded a few tracks based on the original tracks. I find it is a fun exercise for a pedagogical purpose because it is a way to develop one's listening skills. To improvise based on the original recording, one firstly could listen to the track and figure out the key, meter, scale, pitches, bass line, and rhythm and could mostly transcribe the piece by listening to the recording. Secondly, one could think about what to improvise based on the recording, such as creating a melody based on the bass line, octave displacement, mimic the original rhythmic patterns, augmentation, etc. Thirdly, one could improvise and record their playing while listening to the track.

To summarize, practicing the exercise could follow these steps: 1) listen to a recorded track; 2) find out the keys, scale, meter, pitches, bass line, rhythm; 3) improvise based on the recording (one could try to play exactly the same as the recording by using one's own instrument or play a completely different thing); 4) listen back to your playing or put together the original recording with one's improvisation recording.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to illustrate how a worthwhile exercise can be formed from almost any material. By introducing increasing levels of complexity, the simplest materials can become challenging musicianship exercises for the development of listening and rhythm, and they can also be developed in a tasteful way to make interesting and compelling music.

Chapter Seven: Exploring Improvisation Pedagogical Strategies for Chinese Contemporary Music Creation

In this chapter, I will present some improvisation strategies and exercises with which I have been experimenting, including permutation, variation, cycle of fifths (topography), and ostinato bass line. These exercises have practical and pedagogical implications for developing one's improvisation strategies and skills and accumulating improvisation ideas that are knowledge-based and suitable for performers' needs in making spontaneous music. In addition to demonstrating the improvisation exercises, I will share my experience in applying some improvisation ideas on the yangqin, including storytelling, movies, images, and musical forms.

7.0 Permutation Exercise

Pressing (1988) pointed out the differences between an expert's knowledge base and that of a beginner as follows:

> One difference between experts and nonexperts is in the richness and refinement of organization of their knowledge structures…The novice has a set of techniques that are incomplete in detail and poorly linked…[and thus] are sparse, limiting the capacity for generalization. The distinguished expert has materials that are known in intimate detail, and from differing perspectives, and materials or modules are cross-linked by connections at various levels of the hierarchical knowledge structure… improvisational fluency arises from the creation, maintenance and enrichment of an associated knowledge base, built in long-term memory (Pressing 1998, 53).

In the previous chapter, I introduced some ideas and materials from Sokol's course about creating my own music and improvisation on the yangqin. To learn, practice, and memorize certain rhythmic patterns for improvisation, the formulas described in the previous chapter introduced basic pedagogical ideas for improvisation and musicianship exercises. In Pressing's terminology, "formulas constitute musical 'objects' that must be committed to memory so that they can be produced spontaneously when improvising" (Berkowitz 2010, 19). Learning and practicing these rhythmic patterns serve not only to develop the knowledge base so that one could improvise at the moment, but also are essential for musicianship training.

In addition to rhythmic and musicianship exercises, I intend to introduce some pedagogical strategies for improvisation practice, such as permutation. It is a prominent improvisation strategy in a wide variety of musical traditions; it has been used by many generations of improvisors and composers. The use of permutations (a combinatorial strategy) was more commonly employed in eighteenth-century music and culture—the fascinating idea of *ars combinatoria*, "the method through which two or more elements can be combined" (Eckert 2000, 57). The idea of *Ars combinatoria* is attributed to Ramon Lull, a thirteenth-century Spanish philosopher. Later, for the purpose of analysis and synthesis of existing knowledge, the concept was further developed by seventeenth/eighteenth-century scientist and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who suggested that the recombination of the music elements could create new knowledge (Berkowitz 2010, 19).

Ars combinatoria became important in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' musical culture in the West. This concept was certainly used in musical pedagogy (Berkowitz 2010, 19). One salient example can be found in Josef Riepel's composition treatise, *Anfangsgrunde zur musicalischen Setzkunst (Fundamentals of Musical Composition)* from the mid-eighteenth century (Berkowitz 2010, 19). Eckert, a music theorist, mentioned Riepel's use of *ars combinatorial* as follows:

> Riepel begins the *Anfangsgrunde* by establishing an inventory of compositional material which ranges from individual notes to measures, groups of measures, minuet-sections, and finally whole minuets…While [Riepel] encourages the [student] to vary and rearrange the resulting materials, specifically discussing permutation and combination in all possible ways, he gives reasons why certain combinations are preferable to others… (Eckert 2000, 98).

In addition, Leonard Ratner, a music theorist, pointed out the purpose of using *ars combinatoria* in pedagogy as follows:

> All the theorists who treat of permutation…do so for a practical reason—to unlock the imagination of the student. The method is mechanical; the materials are few and simple; but the possibilities are unthinkably vast (Ratner, 1970, 350).

Permutation has practical meaning for improvisation pedagogy since it can lead students to discover creative possibilities by merely applying a mechanical method. This improvisation strategy is not only used in Western music, but is also featured in a wide variety of musical cultures. There are three quotations describing permutation or recombination in three different musical cultures as followed:

Ethnomusicologist and sitarist Slawek describes Hindusatani (North Indian Classical) music:

> …[S]omething has to be there to do next. And since what is there is not concrete or written down, it must be something remembered and reproduced intact on the spot, or something created extemporaneously by recombining stored musical information in a new way that is appropriate to the musical situation of the moment… (Slawek 1998, 356).

In Cowdery's study of Irish music, he uses the term recombination to describe:

> Complex permutations based on melodic pools…certain melodic moves are seen to belong together not as a fixed chain of event but more as a system of potentialities …motives can recombine in various ways, expanding or contracting, to make new melodies which still conform to the traditional sound (Cowdery 1990, 88).

Ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner describes a typical rehearsal for jazz improvisation:

> In the natural course of artists' musings in the practice room, they focus on exploring the potential of particular figures. They might hold one of them in mind, perhaps or perform it repeatedly, while trying out its combination with other vocabulary patterns… as individual figures encounter one another in thought, they can produce various types of imaginative unions (Berliner 1994, 185).

"Lord's singer of tales, never stops in the process of accumulating, recombining, and remodeling formulas and themes, thus perfecting his singing and enriching his art" (Lord 2000, 26). It seems that learning how to recombine musical materials is a crucial skill for improvisors, who could then begin to discover creative possibilities based on the inventory pre-existing knowledge.

Permutation exercises were introduced in Sokol's class. I found this exercise beneficial to performers because it gives some mathematical or readily understandable mechanical ideas of music creation. This exercise is very practical because its results are highly transferable to real music making situations. To practice the exercise, one could first write out the 6 permutations of G, A, B, in 4/4 time, notated as: two quarter-notes and a half-note (see Figure 91). The reason for suggesting this rhythm is to allow for a breath on the fourth beat and also to allow an intentional break to mentally picture the next permutation to be sung.

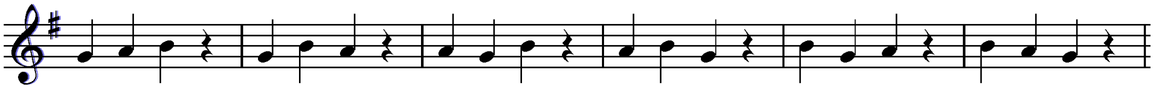


Figure 91. An example of six permutations

Secondly, write them out again showing the 'anticipation' embellishment moving in eighth-notes through the seconds, that is, already arriving at the goal tone a half-beat early. We will not yet embellish the intervals of a third (see Figure 92).

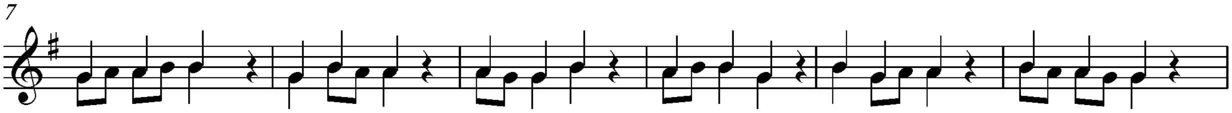


Figure 92. An example of six permutations with anticipation embellishments

Thirdly, one could write out the 6 permutations again using the embellishment of 'going-back' on each of the seconds. This embellishment is written for the moment as an eighth and two sixteenths, and no embellishments on the intervals of a third (See Figure 93).

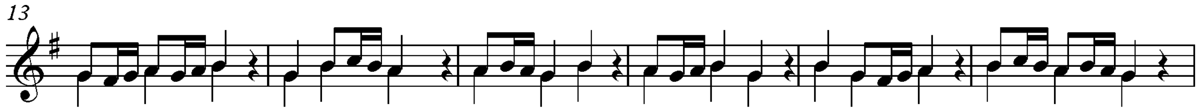


Figure 93. An example of six permutations which initially move away from the goal tone

Fourthly, one could write out the 6 permutations one last time using the embellishment of 'going beyond the goal' on each of the seconds. This embellishment is written (for the moment) as an eighth and two sixteenths. It is also a kind of 'anticipation,' since the goal tone is sounded before the beat on which it takes it real place (No embellishments on the intervals of a third).

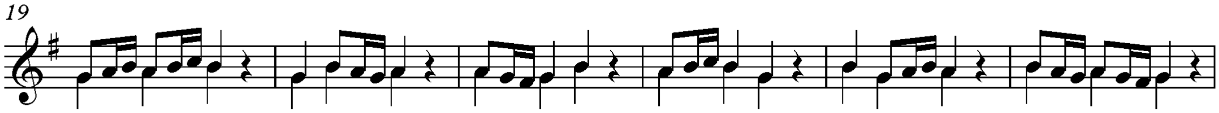
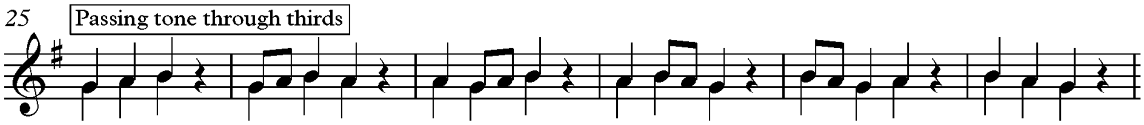


Figure 94. An example of six permutations with going-forward embellishments

Fifthly, one could write out embellishments on each of thirds, such as passing tone, "going back," and "going past" (No embellishments on the intervals of a second) (see Figure 95).



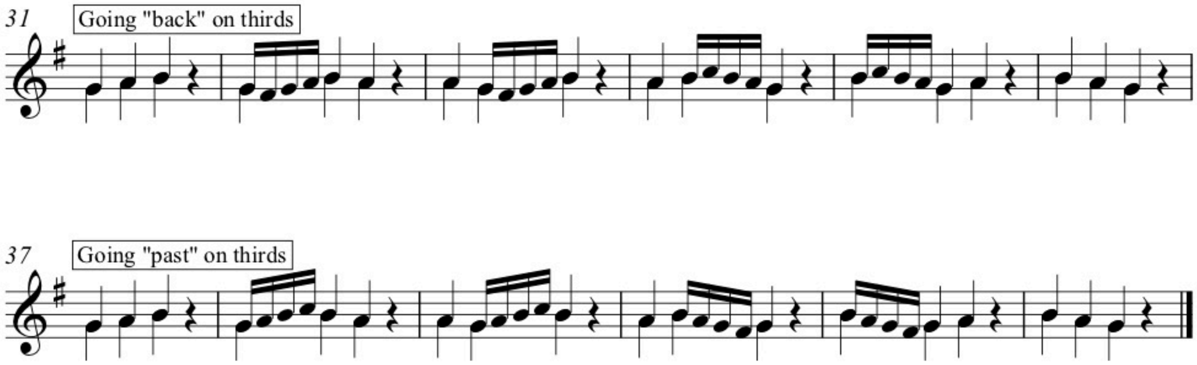


Figure 95. An example of six permutations on each of thirds with passing tone, “going-back”, and “going past” embellishments

The exercise could place a greater demand on attention by alternating between two groupings of three-note permutation (see Figure 96). For instance, use C, D, E as one group and E, F, G as the other, and then adding embellishments. In Figure 96 each pair of measures uses the same permutation, but the permutations could also be sequenced in turn for each new group of three tones. The exercise could be elaborated quite far with this and other ideas, as well as using different modes, different durations, etc.

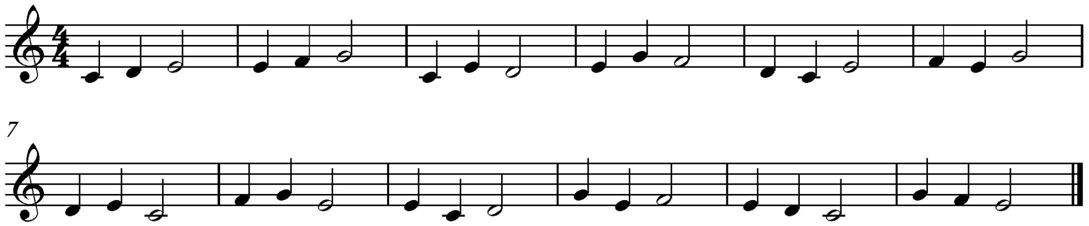


Figure 96. An example of three-note permutations on alternating groups of three tones: CDE and EFG

After practicing the three-note permutations, one could try working with the twenty-four melodic shapes resulting from permutations of a tetrachord (see Figure 97).

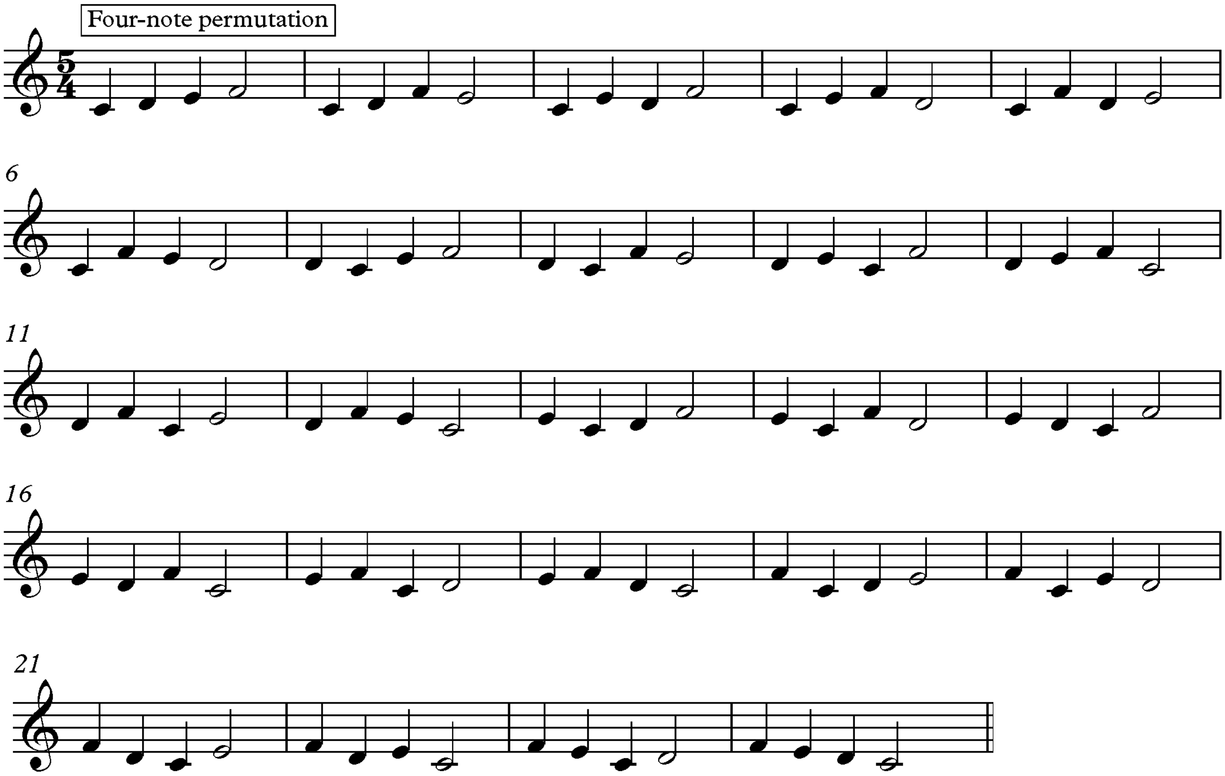


Figure 97. Twenty-four permutations

In addition, one could try to add embellishments, such as ‘anticipation,’ ‘going-back,’ and ‘going beyond the goal tone’ etc. (see Figure 98, 98 & 100).

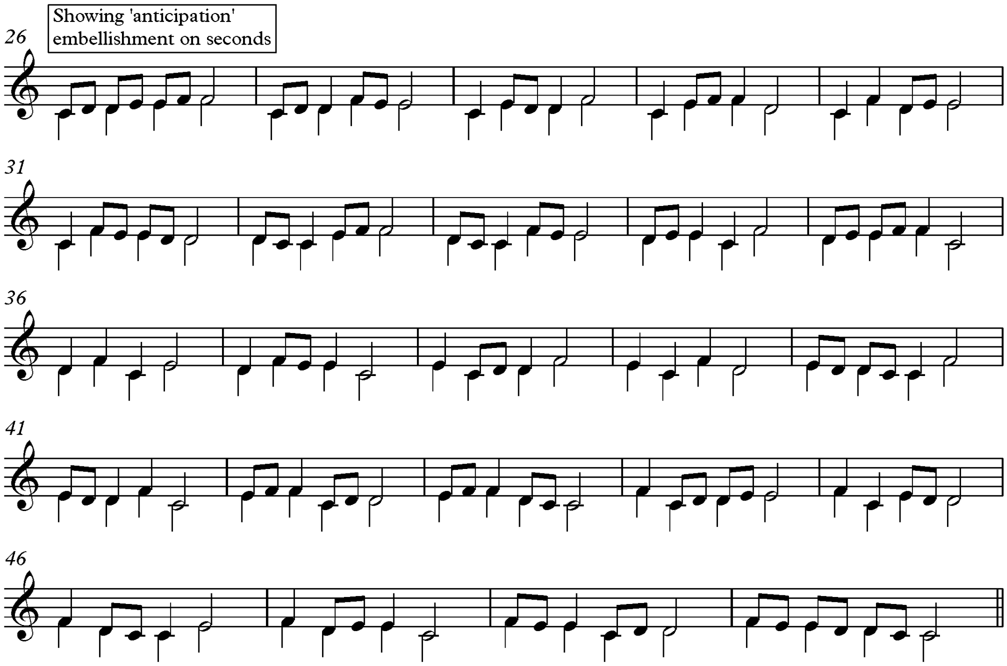

Showing 'anticipation' embellishment on seconds
26
31
36
41
46

Figure 98. 'Anticipation' on seconds

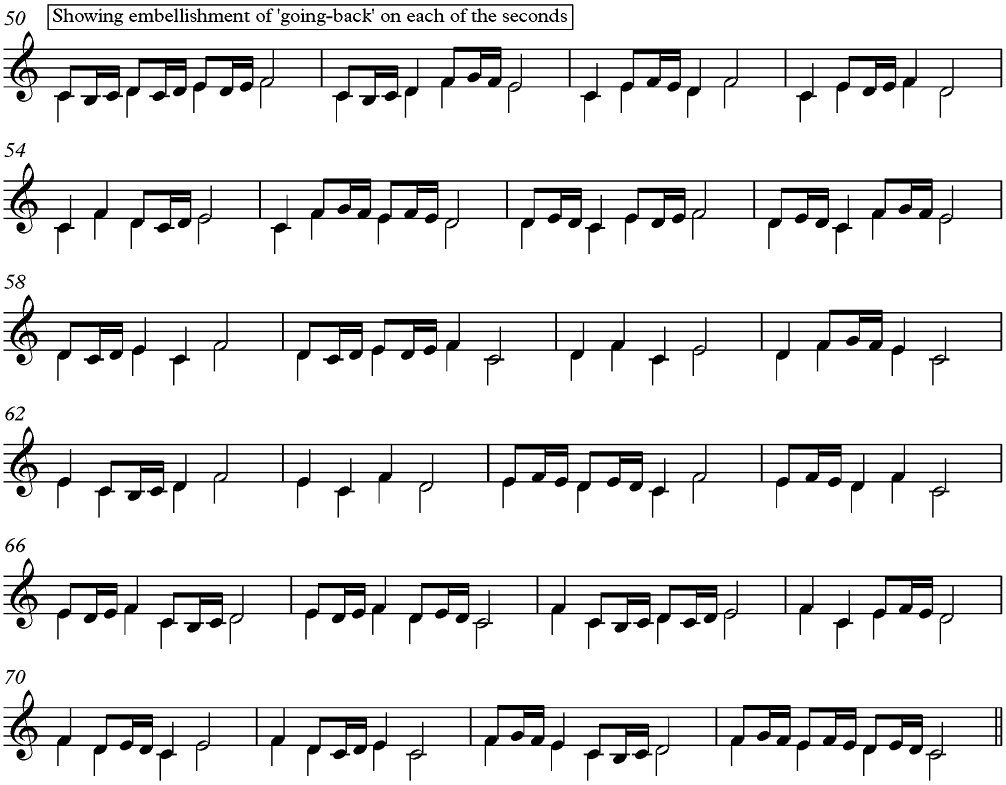

Showing embellishment of 'going-back' on each of the seconds
50
54
58
62
66
70

Figure 99. Embellishment of 'going away from the goal tone' on each of the seconds

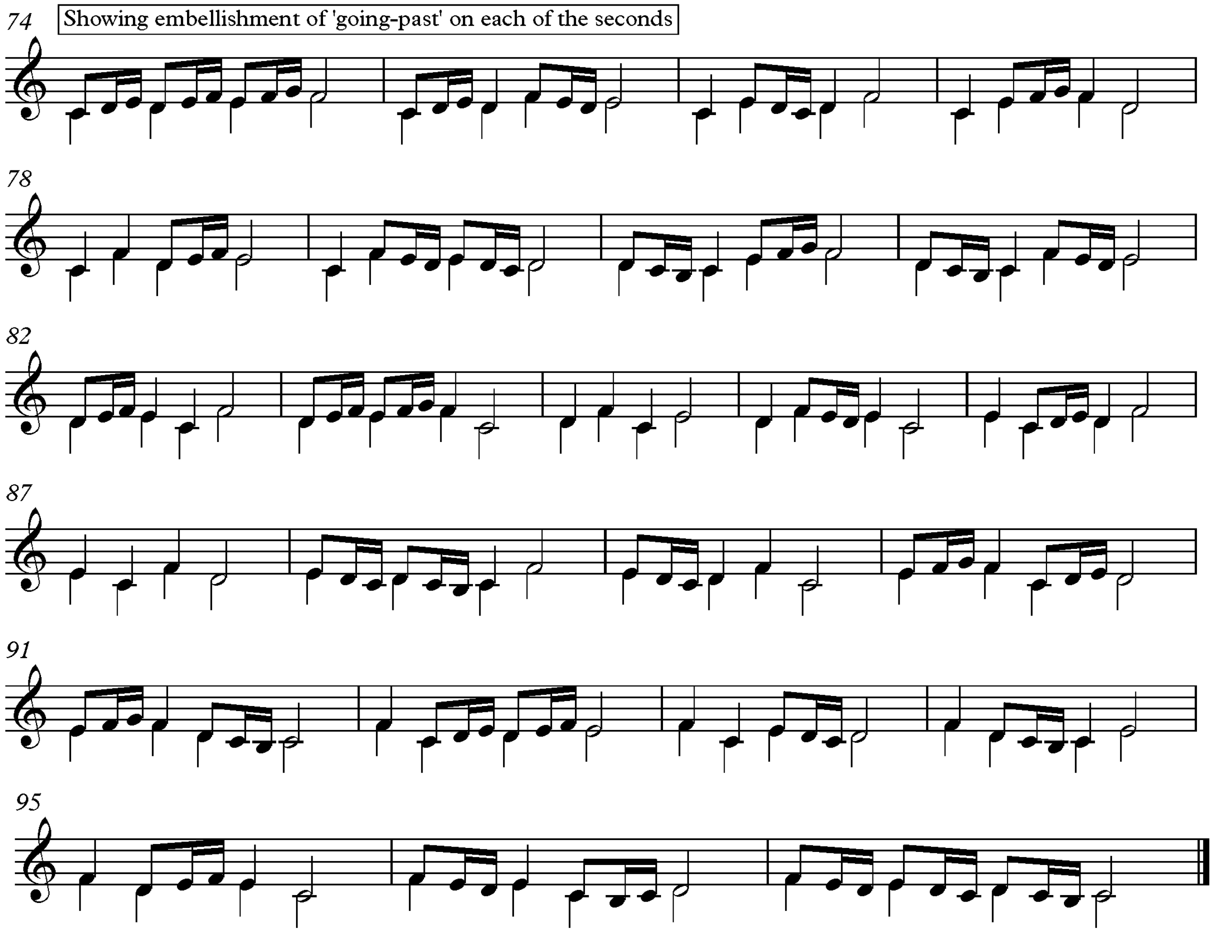

74
Showing embellishment of 'going-past' on each of the seconds
78
82
87
91
95

Figure 100. An example of a four-note permutation exercise with embellishments

To make it more challenging, you can play at the tempo of your choice but with no hesitations or stops. You should generally practice in a definite tempo and meter, which is one of the key elements in developing confidence and important for all improvisation exercises. In part, this is very significant capacity for performers to have so that they will succeed at a given task such as playing the correct note at the correct time.

Moreover, to develop the exercise with more stylistic compositional considerations, one could choose three or four notes in several different scales, such as from China and Japan, so that one could both practice the permutation exercise as well as produce compelling music at the same time. The aim of this exercise is to discover creative possibilities by recombining and re-ordering the notes.

7.1 Variation Exercise

Variation is an important pedagogical strategy for teaching and learning improvisation and composition. Pressing (1984, 350) pointed out that "one common teaching system is always to represent several versions of each new concept or movement sequence, so that the student intrinsically thinks of variation and a certain controlled fuzziness." Variation, a basic musical technique, is one of most common musical techniques being used in composition since the early 1600s. In the first years of the Baroque era, one of the most popular variation types was variation over a bass, however, other kinds of variations were developed by some composers (Berkowitz 2010, 19). For example, J.S. Bach composed *Goldberg* Variations published in 1741 the lengthy theme (16+16 measures) that presents 30 variations before a return to the simple original theme (Augustyn, Zeidan, et al. 2014). The variations use diverse metres and tempos, which is considered as "one of the true monuments of fugal-contrapuntal variation" (Augustyn, Zeidan, et al. 2014).

The last movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* demonstrates the creativity and freedom with which Beethoven could handle variation form. Moreover, Joseph Haydn's *Sonata for Violin and Piano in C Major* and the final movement of *Hornsignal Symphony in D major* are well-known examples of ensemble variations (Augustyn, Zeidan, et al. 2014). W.A. Mozart tend to use melodic variations for ensemble, occurring in his *Sonata in F major for Violin and Piano and the Clarinet Quintet* (Augustyn, Zeidan, et al. 2014).

Variation also developed in the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century. For example, Arnold Schoenberg and composers who studied with him developed "the single major innovation in the technique of variation" (Augustyn, Zeidan, et al. 2014). The most significant contribution that they made is serial technique, which is based on the concept of a 12-tone row (Augustyn, Zeidan, et al. 2014).

Variation is not only used in Western music, but also other cultures' musical traditions such as that of southern India, gamelan music of Indonesia, jazz, Chinese folk music, etc. As I wrote in chapter three, Chinese folk music often presents a fixed melody to be memorized note for note, and one can make variations by adding ornamentation, articulation, dynamics, and special techniques. Similar to Chinese folk music, Carnatic music from South India makes variations based on a raga that comprises a particular "scale pattern, various melodic formulas, and melodic relationships and fragments peculiar to this raga" (Augustyn, Zeidan, et al. 2014). Moreover, variation in jazz and Javanese gamelan are described as the following two quotations:

Jazz, a description and an analysis of Bill Evan's improvisations:

> [T]he process does not involve a large number of melodic maneuvres… but a limited number of consistent ways for moving about the keyboard… There is no reason to suppose that the patterns identified here are memorized and fitted together… since the basic patterns can be easily modified and embellished to fit a variety of rhythmic-harmonic situations. And they can be readily used to create other melodic figures by analogy (Berkowitz 2010, 9).

Javanese gamelan:

> [In] the Javanese situation…there is no fixed "text" to be memorized verbatim, yet the scope of a performer's freedom is not large, being restricted mainly to choice of pattern and realization of patterns from stocks of possibilities. [T]hrough the drawing of connections and analogies, interpretation involves adapting and recreating musical practices, patterns, and the like, within one's own frame of reference. Through inference,

> an individual discovers order and utilizes that order to create and act upon analogies… (Berkowitz 2010, 10)

The use of variation appears in many cultural traditions, as has been described above. In each of these traditions, variations allow for the discovery of creative possibilities based on a theme. Learning how to make variations would help improvisers to accumulate ideas that psychologist David Rubin has called a "collection of instances" that could be used in improvisation (Berkowitz 2010). By efficiently drawing upon these instances, the learner would make spontaneous music in the moment of performance. Thus, besides variation as a principal of musical design, variation is a pedagogical strategy in the present-day for teaching and learning both classical, contemporary, and diverse cultures' improvisation.

As one of the most essential strategies for improvisation and composition, the principles and techniques of variation have been taught in many academic courses. For instance, in Berkowitz's lessons with Robert Levin and Malcolm Bilson, when he has added embellishments, they have mostly demonstrated plenty of alternative possibilities for embellishment (Berkowitz 2010). Variation techniques have always been taught in Sokol's class. He will typically invite the students to name and give examples for all the variation processes they can think of. One such (incomplete) list is shown in Figure 100.

Highlighting	1. Dynamics: accent, shape (crescendo, decrescendo, etc.) 2. Duration: articulation, held notes, drones, etc. 3. Texture change: stacking/lineation 4. Embellishments: decorative (graces, crushes, etc.), structural (passing tones, escape tone, neighbour tones, anticipation, etc.), harmonically oriented (chordal arpeggiation) 5. Displacement/Substitution
Pitch Alteration/Substitution	1. Permutation 2. Displacement: octave displacement (single tones, part of motif, whole motif), modal/diatonic sequence 3. Event substitution: single tone substitution (within the same pitch set, from a new pitch set such as change of inflection, modal modulation), substitution of pitch group (within the same pitch set, from a new pitch set)

Rhythmic Variation/ substitution	1. Metric displacement 2. Metric modulation (pulse modulation) including augmentation and diminution 3. Permutation of durations 4. Event substitution (transformation) 5. Regrouping (see Highlighting strategies)
Textural Variation	1. Pattern lineation: complete/ partial lineation 2. Blocking (stacking, verticalizing): complete/partial 3. Bifurcation: layering (background/foreground/mid-ground), polyphony
Altering Pattern Syntax: Extension/contraction	1. Repetition: whole or part (literal repetition), repetition with variation (pattern extension through combination that refers to whole sheet of variation devices) 2. Adding new material: prefix, infix, suffix 3. Omitting material: omission with pattern contraction, omission creating unarticulated positions

Figure 101. A list of variation

To practice variations, I referred to the list of variations shown in Figure 100 and created a motif with which to begin. In Sokol's class, a minimalist piece, Cantation I—a piece published in the 1970 edition of the *Experimental Music Catalogue* as well as in Michael Nyman's book, *Experimental Music – Cage and Beyond*, was introduced for the students to practice variations. It was introduced because of its simplicity of materials. It consists of short repeated phrases which are limited to stepwise melodic motion, a narrow scope of diatonic scalar material, and the only variations are adding and subtracting notes. So it leaves it wide open for students to try all kinds of other things.

To share my experience practicing the variation exercise using the yangqin, I created an original motif of two-bars with which to make new motifs based on the variation list as I mentioned above. To give a better explanation of the exercise, I would indicate and analyze the piece that I composed for the yangqin by using variations (see Figure 102). As we can see the first two measures in Figure 102, it indicates the original motif that I created with a pentatonic scale A, C, D, E, G, which is also named *Yu* or "羽" scale in Chinese music.

In addition to these variations, I gave performance indications such as crescendo, decrescendo, and pianissimo, in the first two measures in order to provide some musical expressions. In the following four measures, rhythmic augmentation and articulation was introduced to the part for yangqin II and permutation for yangqin I. From measure 7 to 18, I used textural bifurcation by means of a sustained note and permutation. I added a special yangqin tremolo technique from measure 7 to 10 to bring a new texture, following which a modulation to G major was made from measure 19.

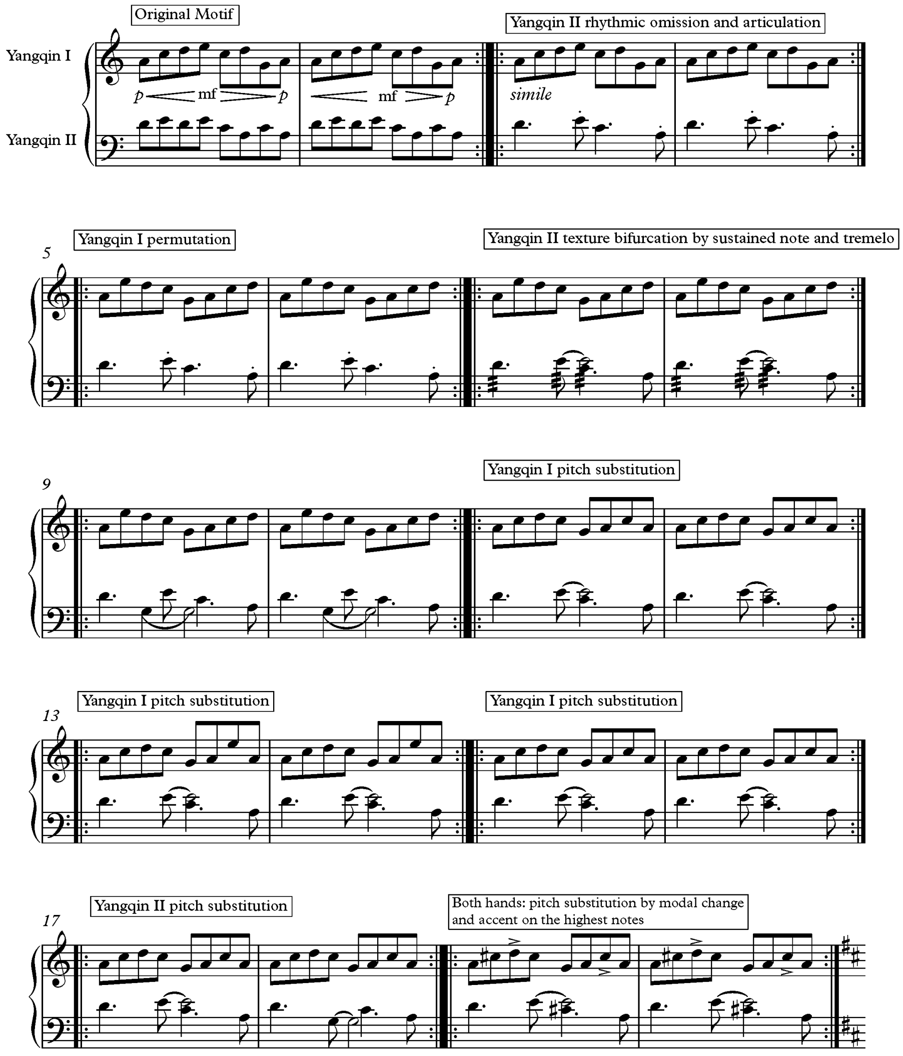

Original Motif
Yangqin II rhythmic omission and articulation
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
p
mf
p
mf
p
simile
5
Yangqin I permutation
Yangqin II texture bifurcation by sustained note and tremelo
9
Yangqin I pitch substitution
13
Yangqin I pitch substitution
Yangqin I pitch substitution
17
Yangqin II pitch substitution
Both hands: pitch substitution by modal change
and accent on the highest notes

Figure 102. Variation example one

There are certain variations, including pitch substitution by displacement and sequence, pitch coupling, augmentation, ornamentation (especially grace notes), partial diminutaion, rhythmic augmentation, tremolos, that were indicated from measure 21 to measure 40 (see Figure 103).

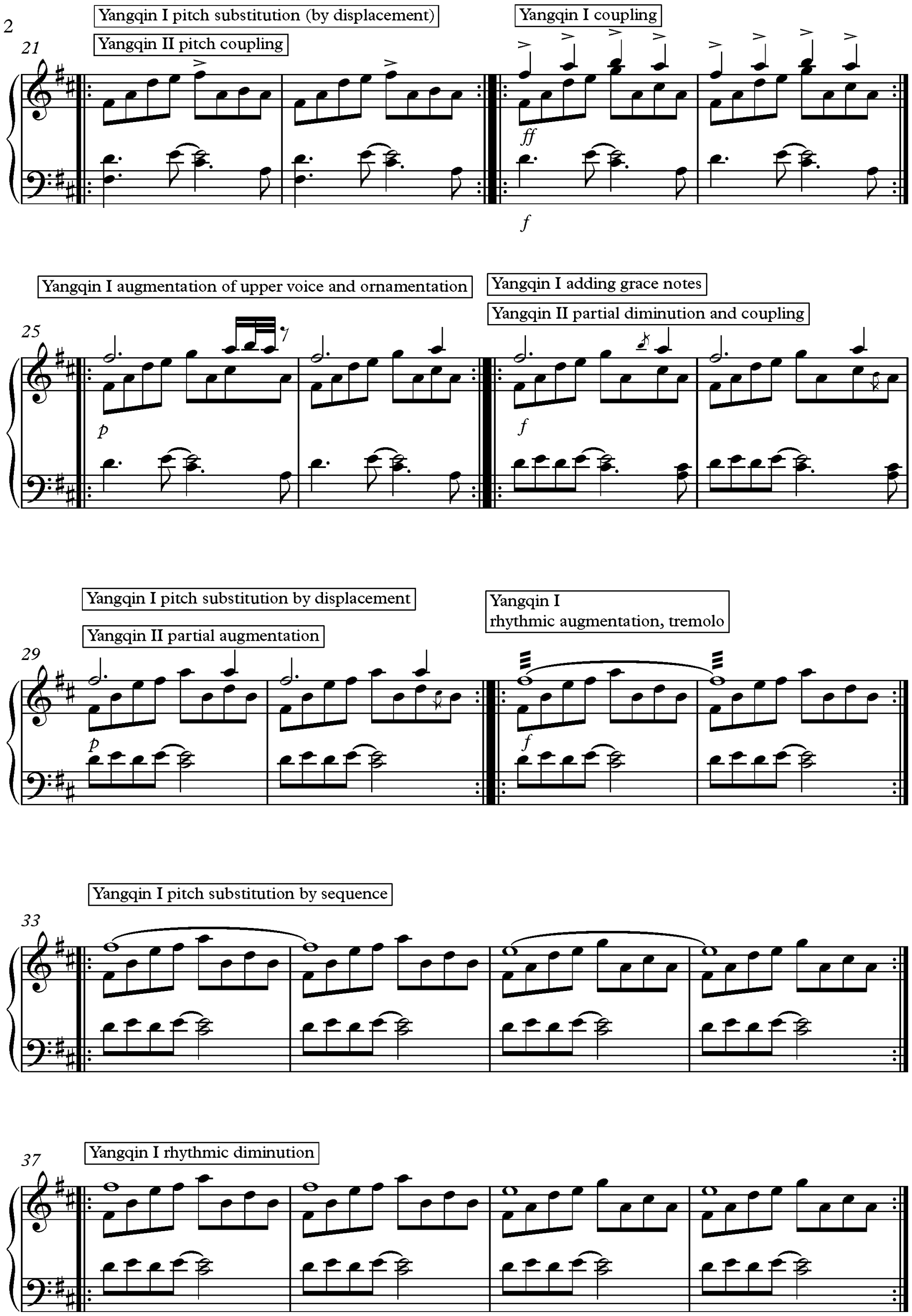

2
21
Yangqin I pitch substitution (by displacement)
Yangqin II pitch coupling
Yangqin I coupling
ff
f
25
Yangqin I augmentation of upper voice and ornamentation
Yangqin I adding grace notes
Yangqin II partial diminution and coupling
p
f
29
Yangqin I pitch substitution by displacement
Yangqin II partial augmentation
Yangqin I
rhythmic augmentation, tremolo
p
f
33
Yangqin I pitch substitution by sequence
37
Yangqin I rhythmic diminution

Figure 103. Variation example two

To make more variations, I used pattern extension, diminution, pitch substitution, displacement, octave displacement, motivic ornamentation, and omission with pattern contraction from measure 41 to 59 (see Figure 104).

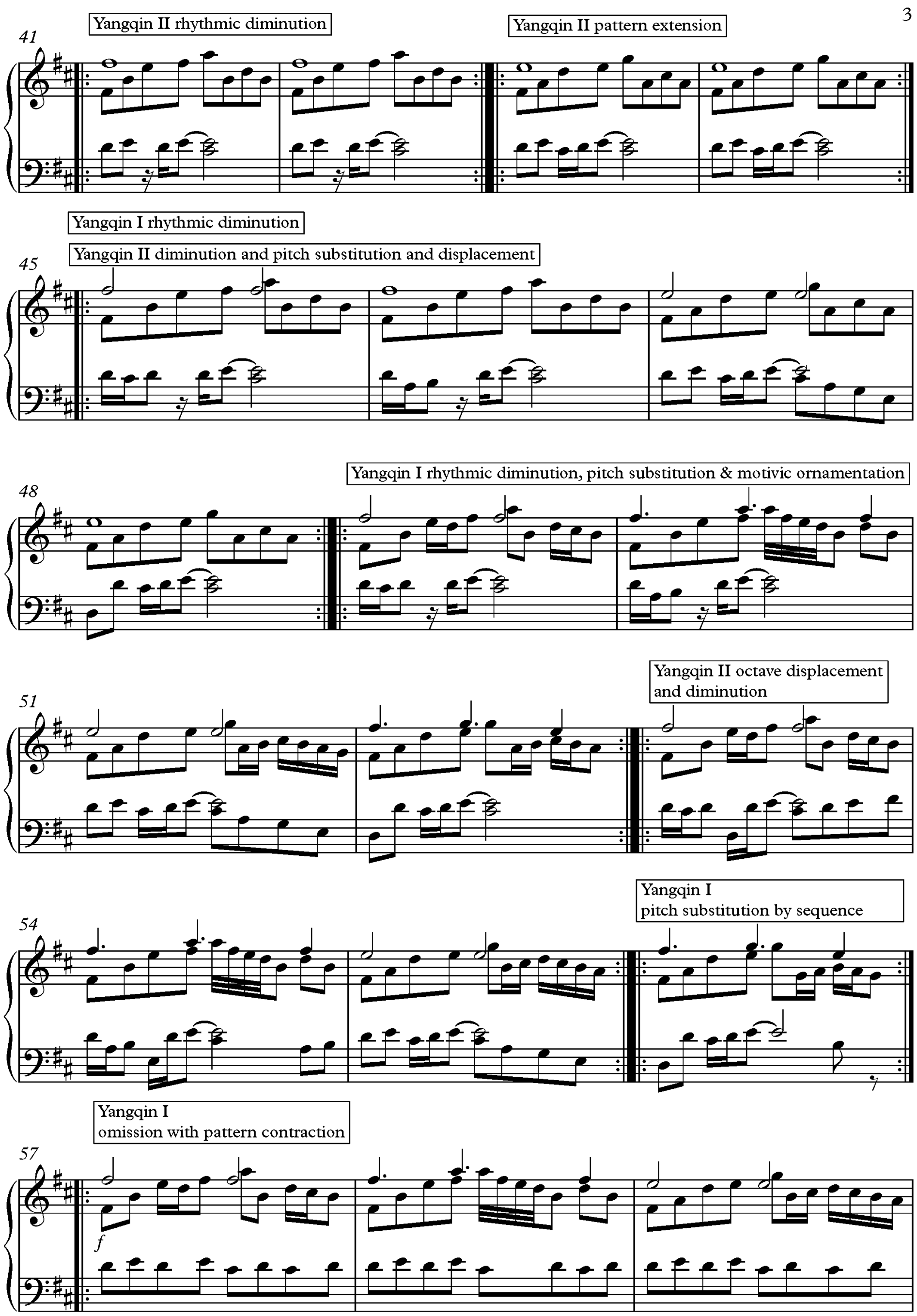

3
41
Yangqin II rhythmic diminution
Yangqin II pattern extension
45
Yangqin I rhythmic diminution
Yangqin II diminution and pitch substitution and displacement
48
Yangqin I rhythmic diminution, pitch substitution & motivic ornamentation
51
Yangqin II octave displacement and diminution
54
Yangqin I pitch substitution by sequence
57
Yangqin I omission with pattern contraction
f

Figure 104. Variation example three

In the following four measures, I omited the lower part of the yangqin I and substitute the pich by sequence in the yangqin II. Then, I used more pitch substitution, rhythmic augmentation, coupling with diatonic sixth, pich substituion by octave displacment, and then I played an improvised solo as a way to break from the rigorous continuity and exit from the strict form of the exercise (see Figure 105).

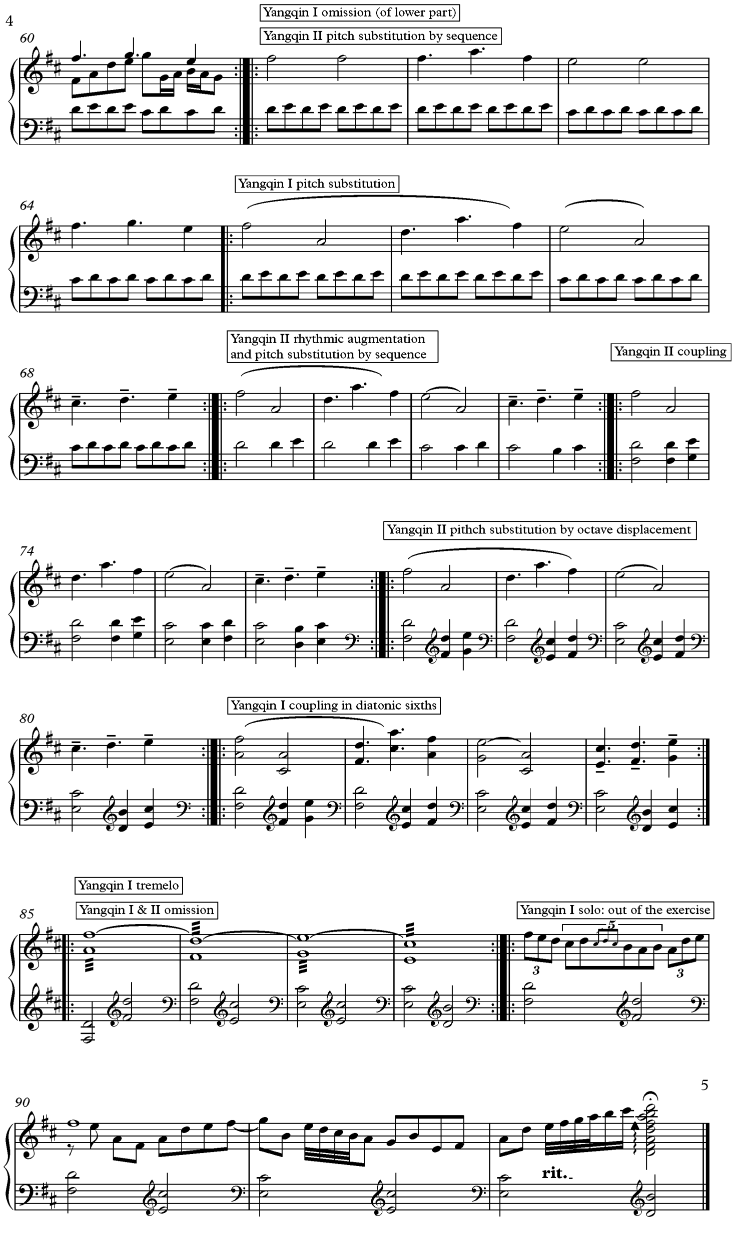

4
60
Yangqin I omission (of lower part)
Yangqin II pitch substitution by sequence
64
Yangqin I pitch substitution
68
Yangqin II rhythmic augmentation and pitch substitution by sequence
Yangqin II coupling
74
Yangqin II pithch substitution by octave displacement
80
Yangqin I coupling in diatonic sixths
85
Yangqin I tremelo
Yangqin I & II omission
Yangqin I solo: out of the exercise
90
5
rit..

Figure 105. Variation example four

To practice the variation exercise, I started from my orginal motif and used diverse variation stratergies and devices for practicing purposes and an example of making my own variation exercise. I found this variation exercise is very practical for improviser and composers because one could improvise or compose by applying some vocabulary with which I am already familiar. It is also very interesting to create a simple motif and, starting from there, to make a set of small or incremetal variations. It seems to give a little insight into how the master composers may have worked.

The purpose of the exericse is to help musicians become more conversant with the the kinds of processes and musical vocabularies that give rise to more sophisticated music creation. This might be helpful for building up one's improvisation and compostion skills, as they develop better strategies for improvisation and composition. By working through this kind of exercise, it is more possible to understand how variation is one of the most fundamental improvisational and compositional strategies. It also has pedagogical implications for teaching and learning improvisation and composition.

7.2 Cycle of Fifths Exercise

As illustrated with Cantation I, one could also make variation exercises based on the Cycle of Fifths. While the Cycle of Fifths exercise is not a variation exercise per se, the aims of the exercise are augmented by bringing variation skills to develop more materials. It will help players to gain another view of their instruments, such as its layout and design, that is, how its tonal possibilities are embodied in its physical structure. Traditionally, the yangqin players learn the instrument by memorization. They memorize the location of the strings on the yangqin by practicing many times. For instance, the instructor would teach scales in different keys, and one would practice the scales and repertories to gain a physical memory on playing the instrument. To develop an improvisation pedagogy for Chinese music, it would be best for players to have a new and broader view of the structure of their instrument, as would be acquired by studying the topography of the instrument.

As I mentioned in chapter two, the layout of the yangqin strings is based on the principle of fifths and seconds, where the parallel bridges are fifths and neighboring bridges are seconds. Therefore, the Cycle of Fifths exercise might help yangqin performers to know their instrument from another angle that perhaps breaks out of the traditional pedagogy. I made a chart of the circle of fifths to begin with, so that one could have a visual display of the note names (see Figure 106). By knowing the notes, one could try to look at these notes on topographical aspects of their instruments. After one finds out the structure of the Cycle of Fifths and gets familiar with it, one could try to make exercises based on it.

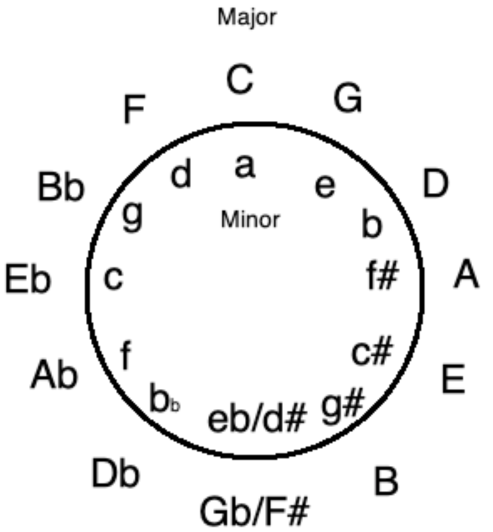


Figure 106. A chart of Circle of Fifths

For pedagogical purposes, I composed exercises based on the circle of fifths, to help a yangqin player practice and learn the pattern in various ways (see figure 107). By practicing the exercise, one would be able to have a better understanding of the structure of the instruments. The exercise is originally composed for two yangqins, but it could be played by any other instruments.

The exercise starts from a sequence of ascending perfect fifths C, G, D, A, E, B, #F, etc., and then a sequence of descending perfect 5ths is displayed as ascending perfect 4ths B, E, A, D, G, C, F, bB, bE, etc. (see Figure 107). In the section C, I reduced the cycle to a span of one octave because it is easier for instruments, such as yangqin and piano, to work with these intervals. The same cycle is displayed as 16th-notes and shown in parallel octaves in section D. Note that the 12-note cycle is also written with its retrograde form, making it a 24-note pattern in section E. Letter "F" is the same cycle, but it is displayed as "fourth-chords" sequenced by minor thirds. Measures 9, 10, 11, show that the first two notes of each three-note group are combined, presenting the quartal harmony with a different texture and rhythm. In section G, I used the first three notes of the cycle as a motif which is sequenced by semitones.

The Cycle of Fifths: Exercises

Di Zhang (After Casey Sokol)

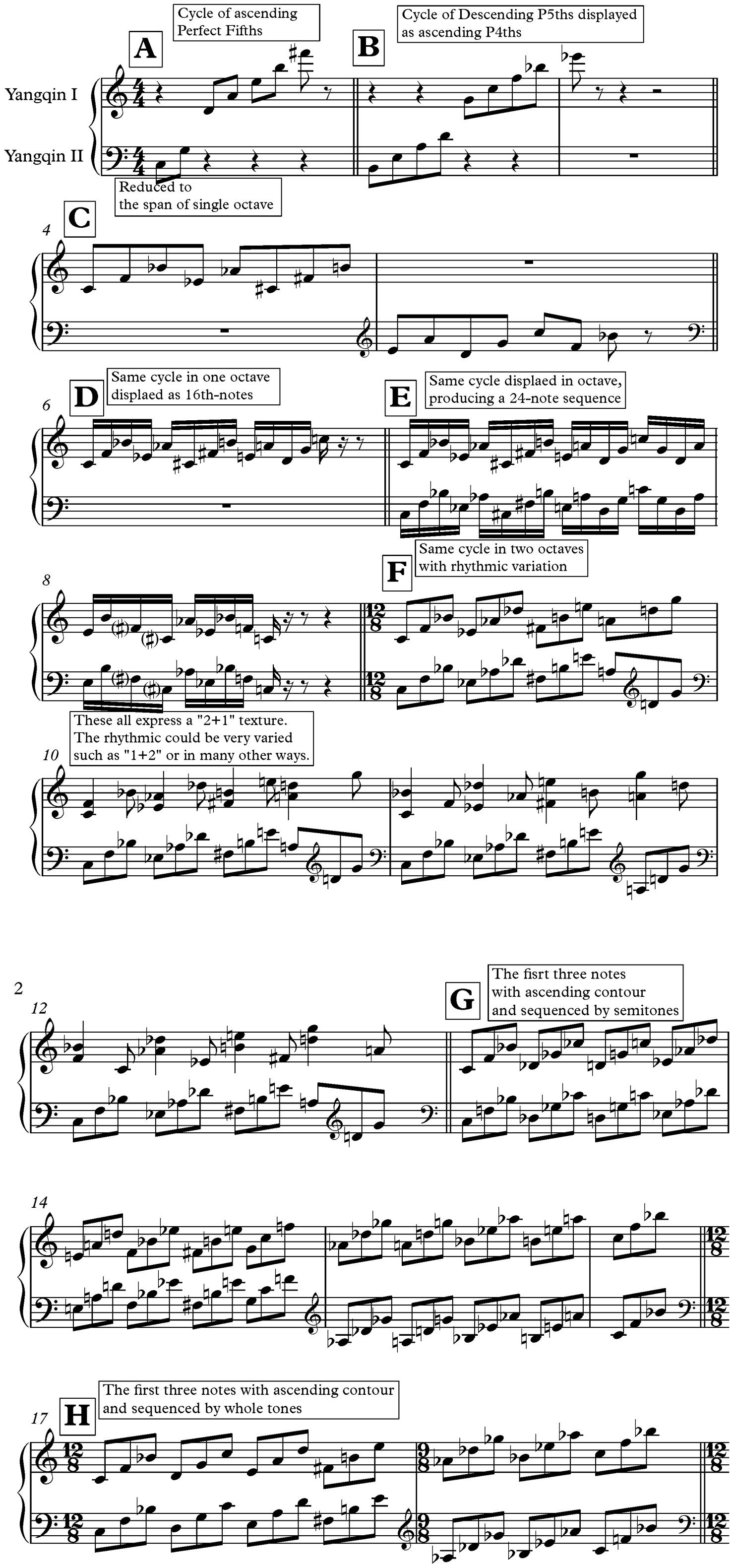
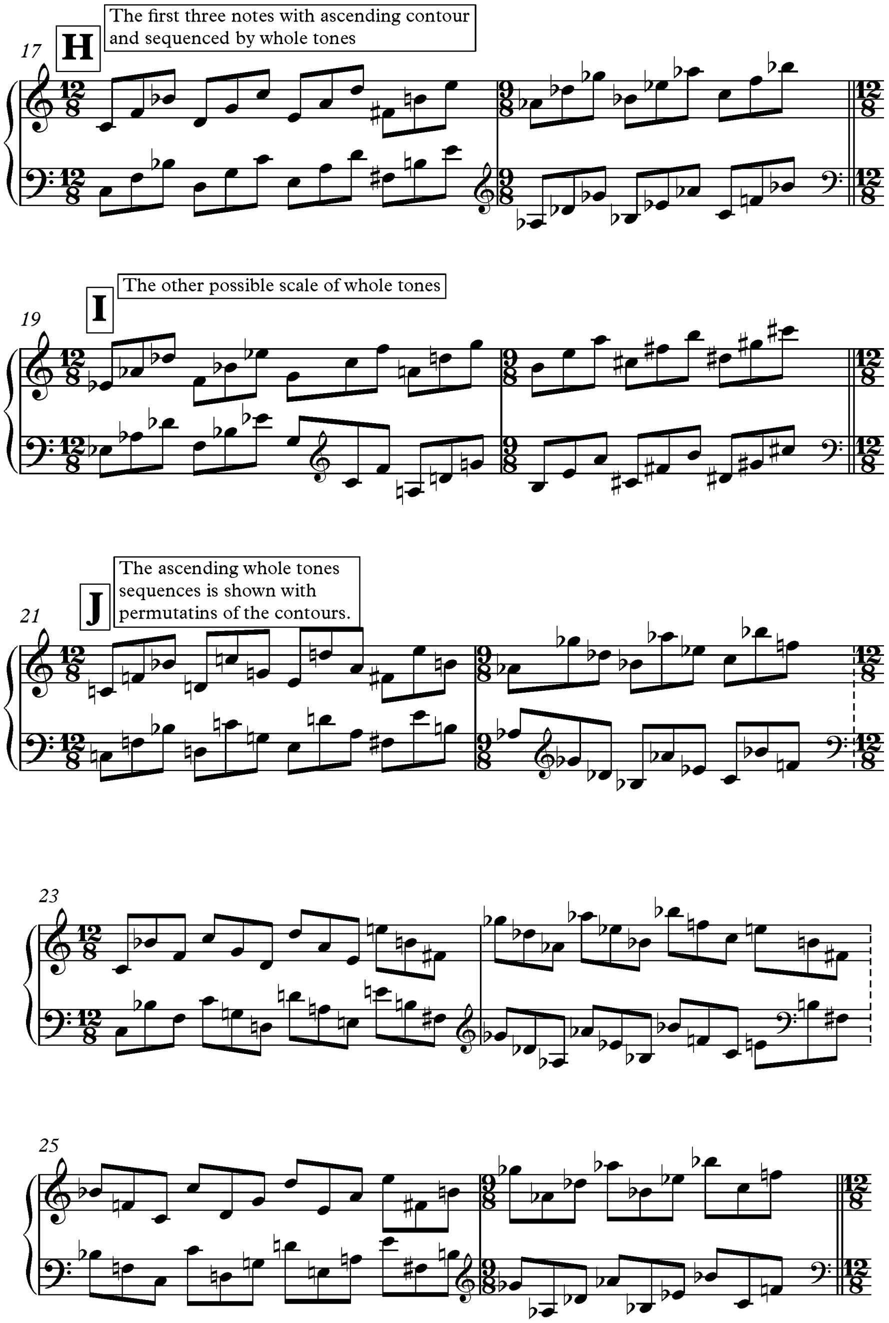

A
Cycle of ascending Perfect Fifths
B
Cycle of Descending P5ths displayed as ascending P4ths
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
Reduced to the span of single octave
4
C
6
D
Same cycle in one octave displaed as 16th-notes
E
Same cycle displaed in octave, producing a 24-note sequence
8
F
Same cycle in two octaves with rhythmic variation
These all express a "2+1" texture. The rhythmic could be very varied such as "1+2" or in many other ways.
10
2
12
G
The fisrt three notes with ascending contour and sequenced by semitones
14
17
H
The first three notes with ascending contour and sequenced by whole tones

Figure 107. Cycle of Fifths, example one

In addition to practicing the cycle in a semitone sequence, one could play the first three notes in a whole-tone sequence (see Figure 108). The section I in Figure 108 shows the other possible scale of whole-tones bE, F, bG, A, B, #C, #D. Letter J in Figure 108 demonstrates the ascending whole-tone sequence with permutations of the contours.



The first three notes with ascending contour and sequenced by whole tones

The other possible scale of whole tones

The ascending whole tones sequences is shown with permutatins of the contours.

Figure 108. Cycle of Fifths, example two

In Figure 109 section K and L, I combined different contours with permutations in the two yangqins. In addition, I made a metric displacement, permutations, and texture change in section M and N (see Figure 109).

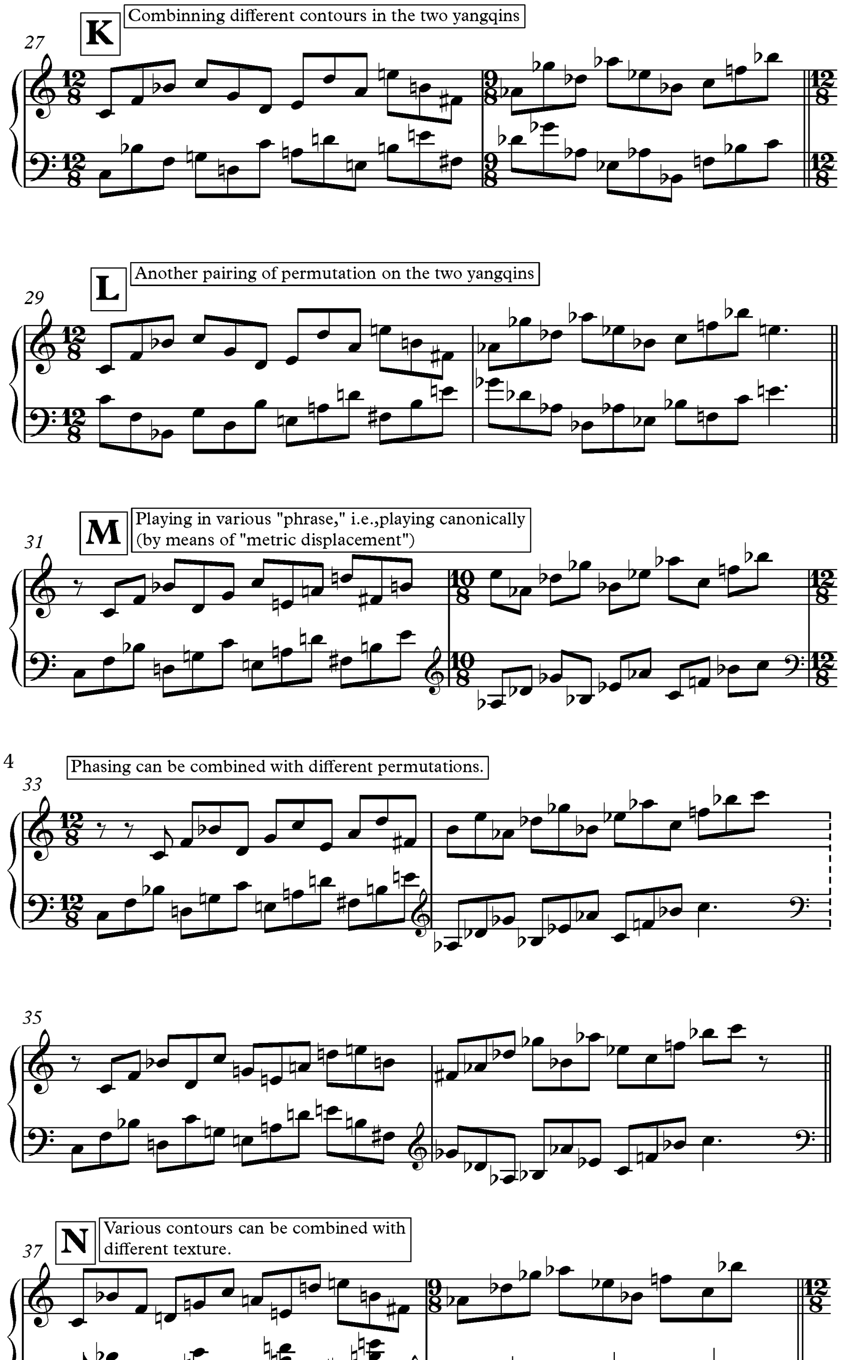

K
Combinning different contours in the two yangqins
27
L
Another pairing of permutation on the two yangqins
29
M
Playing in various "phrase," i.e.,playing canonically (by means of "metric displacement")
31
4
Phasing can be combined with different permutations.
33
35
N
Various contours can be combined with different texture.
37

Figure 109. Cycle of Fifth, example three

Section O demonstrates ascending sequences of descending motives by major 2nds: bB, C, D, E, bG, bA, bB. Then, I made descending sequences of descending motives by major 3rds in alternating octaves in section P (see Figure 110). To make the exercise more interesting, various parallel intervals, such as major 10ths and major 2nds, were added in section Q (See Figure 110).

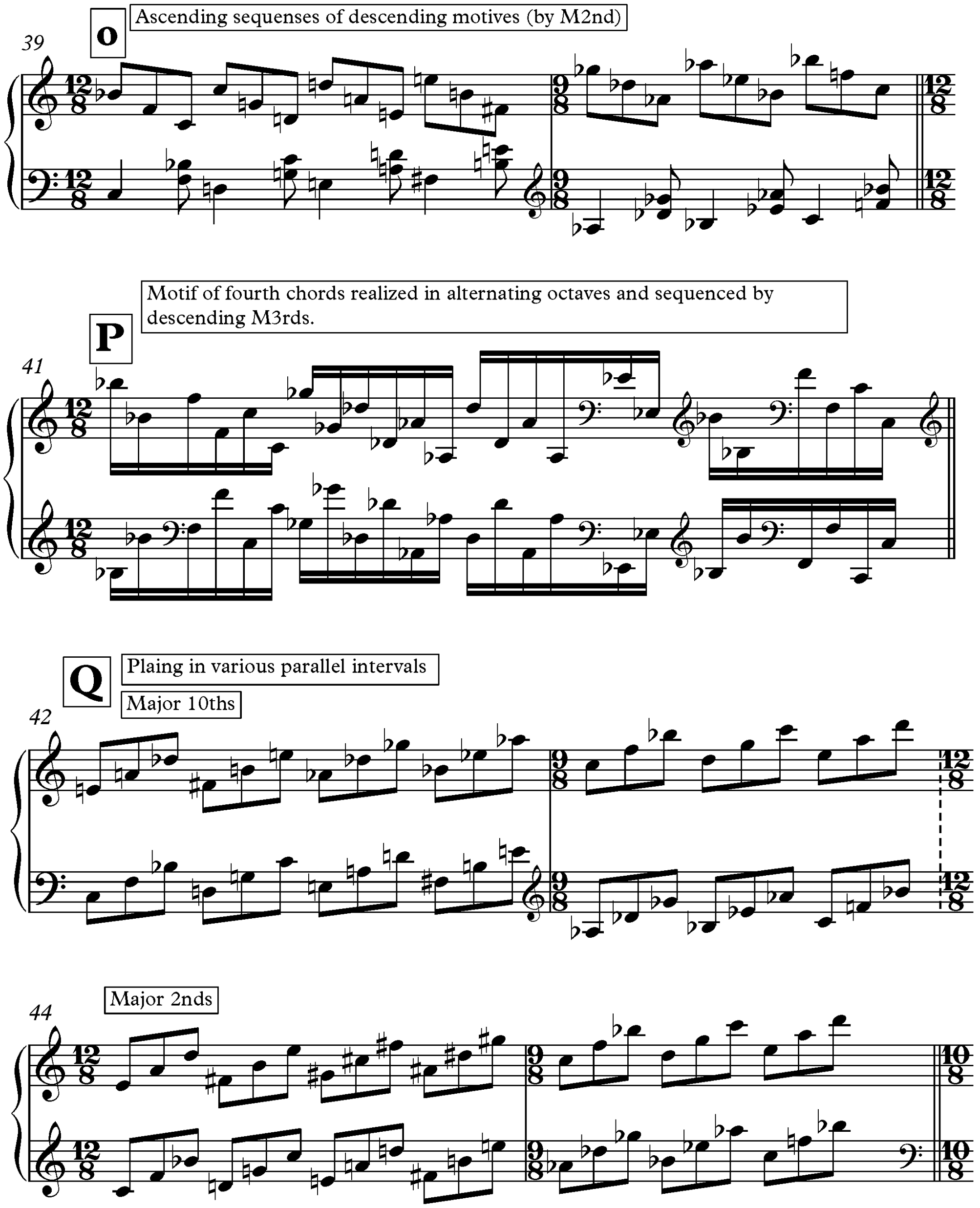
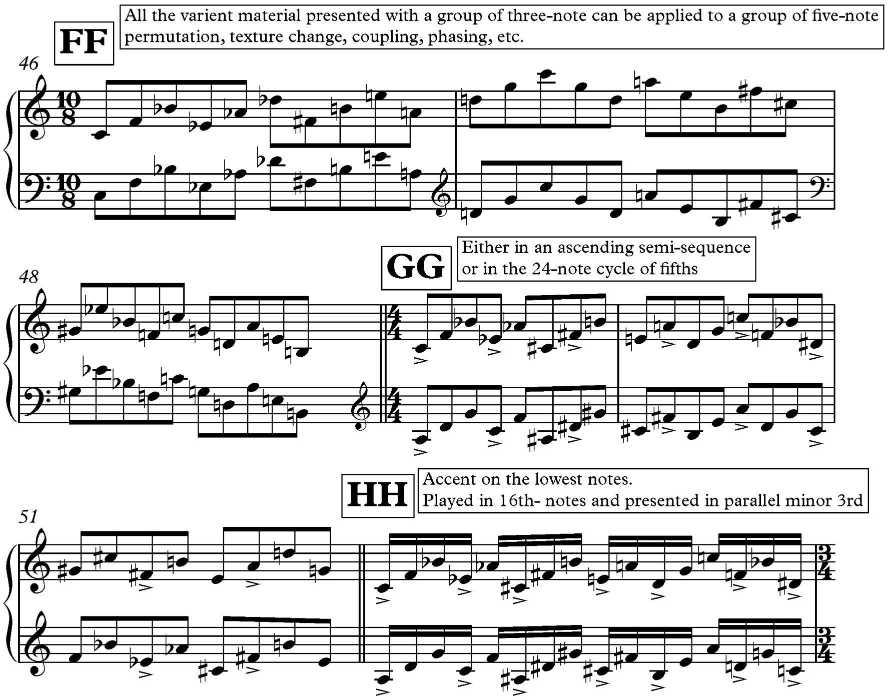

O
Ascending sequenses of descending motives (by M2nd)
39
P
Motif of fourth chords realized in alternating octaves and sequenced by descending M3rds.
41
Q
Plaing in various parallel intervals
Major 10ths
42
44
Major 2nds

Figure 110. Cycle of Fifths, example four

One could also work with five-note groups and apply the same set of variation strategies such as permutation, texture change, coupling, and phasing (see Figure 111). In section FF, I replaced units of three notes to five notes, and then, I displayed the cycle in an ascending semitone sequence. The next section, "HH," shows that the duration of each note has been changed from eighth-notes to sixteenths and is now presented in parallel minor 3^{rds}, with accents added on the lowest notes of each grouping. This variation, which uses accents to emphasize the contour of the pattern, results in a rhythmic dissonance of sorts. The accents produce a highly syncopated and energized rhythm. In addition, the texture was changed in section II and, at JJ, the displacement of the yangqin I pattern phases with the yangqin II in five ways (see Figure 111 section II & JJ).


FF
All the varient material presented with a group of three-note can be applied to a group of five-note permutation, texture change, coupling, phasing, etc.
46
48
GG
Either in an ascending semi-sequence or in the 24-note cycle of fifths
51
HH
Accent on the lowest notes.
Played in 16th- notes and presented in parallel minor 3rd

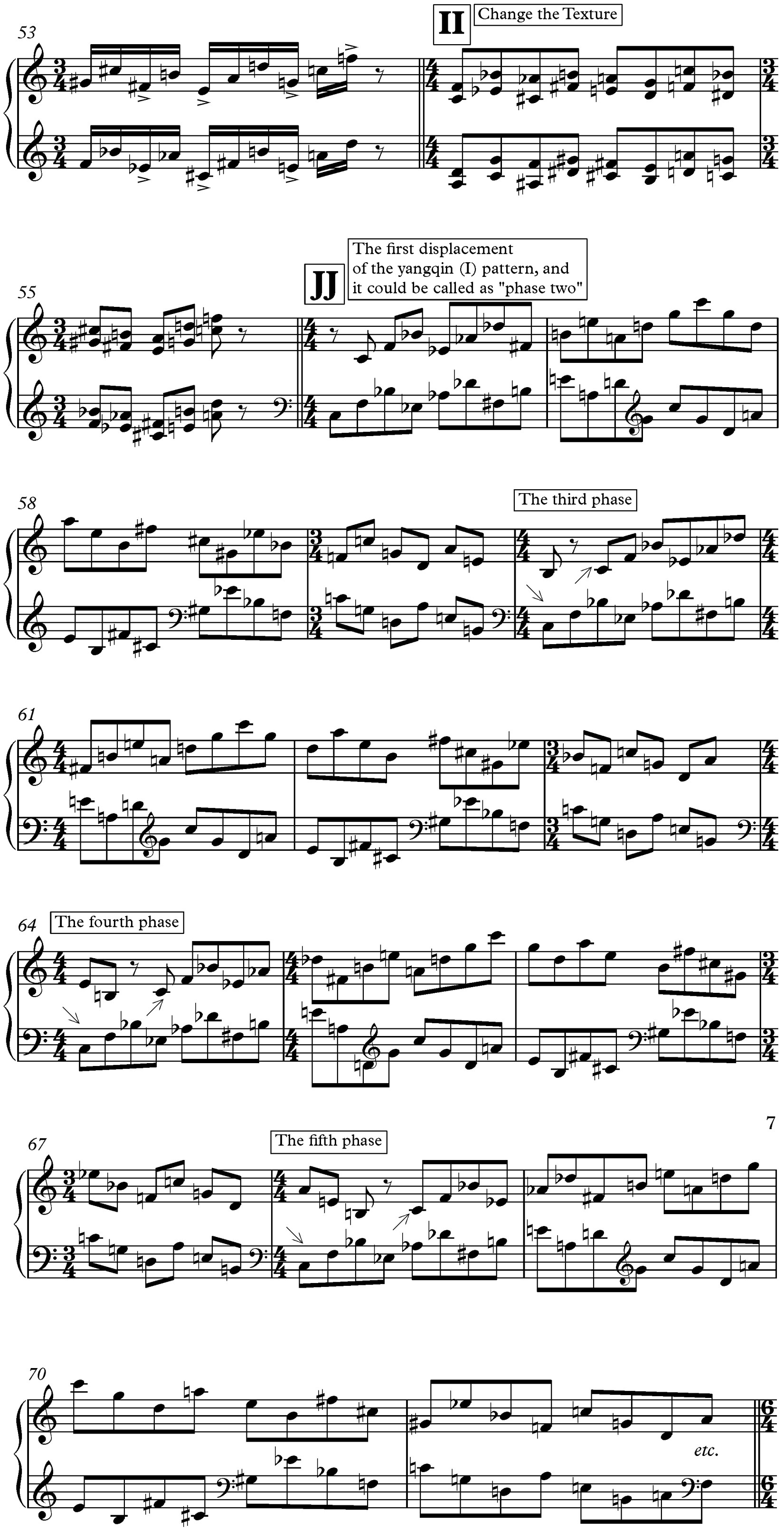

53
II
Change the Texture
55
JJ
The first displacement
of the yangqin (I) pattern, and
it could be called as "phase two"
58
The third phase
61
64
The fourth phase
7
67
The fifth phase
70
etc.

Figure 111. Cycle of Fifth, example five

At the end of the exercise, textural change was applied to both yangqin I and II. From measure 71 to 73 diads used by yangqin II prompted a change in its rhythm to “3+2+2+3+2” and then to “1+2+2+1+2+2” in the following three measures (see Figure 112). The last three measures in section KK, both yangqin I and yangqin II applied changes in texture and added new articulations.

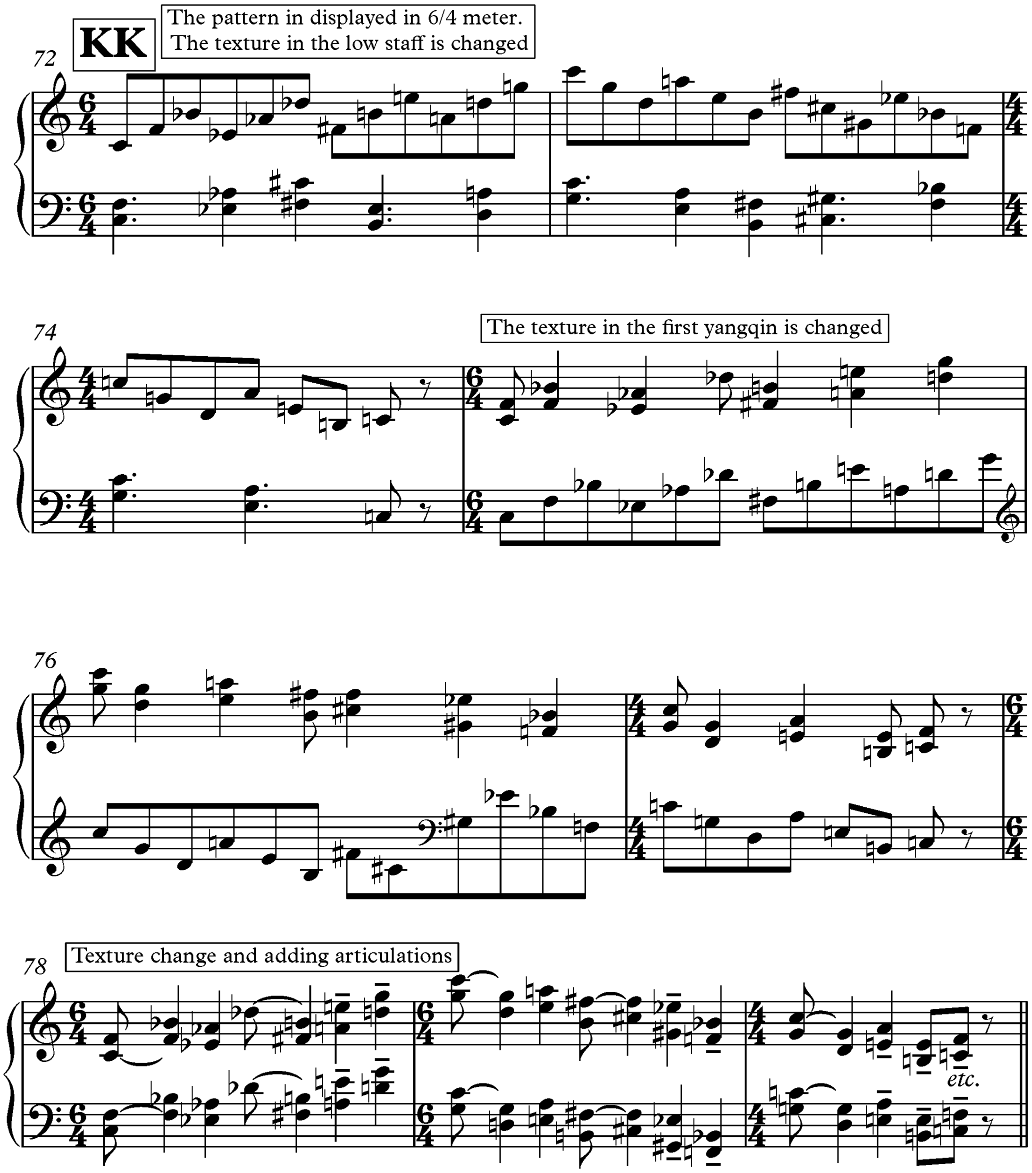

KK
The pattern in displayed in 6/4 meter.
The texture in the low staff is changed
72
74
The texture in the first yangqin is changed
76
78
Texture change and adding articulations
etc.

Figure 112. Cycle of Fifths, example six

The pedagogical purpose of presenting all these variation on the Cycle of Fifths exercise is simply to encourage other musicians to find new materials in the traditional materials they may already be using. By means of applying a new pattern of use—a new protocol, it may be possible to break through the tradition and to develop a new and deeper understanding of one's instrument from topographical perspectives. This would help improve one's playing accuracy on the instrument and develop a more contemporary performance technique.

7.3 Improvisation Based on Ostinato Bass Line

Improvisation over a bass line is a common creative strategy for both improvisers and composers. One could make possible realizations of the ostinato bass and invent a melody based on the bass line. To improvise based on certain bass lines, the student had a wide repertoire of possible harmonic and melodic invention upon which to draw" (Berkowitz 2010, 7). Several treatises point out that some prerequisite abilities are necessary for improvisors to successfully create a melody over a bass line (Berkowitz 2010, 9). For instance, C.P.E Bach stated that improvising a fantasia requires "…a thorough understanding of harmony and acquaintance with a few rules of construction… [and] natural talent…" (Berkowitz 2010, 9).

To improvise on a bass line, I share my experience in creating music on the yangqin based on an ostinato bass line. Improvising on the yangqin and making collaborative improvisation work, I invited my friend Kenny to improvise and record a duo*, Improvisation Based on Ostinato Bass Line* (see Appendix B). The story of creating the music as followed:

> We sat down in the studio, and I started playing the descending ostinato bass line (A, Ab, G, Gb, F, D, E, E) on the right hand and I improvised a melody on the left hand. When I

> finished playing the solo section at the beginning, I slowed down so that Kenny could have a chance to come in. He started playing ostinato bass line two times faster than my playing so that I improvise a melody based on his accompaniment. Then, we improvised two different melodies together to make polyphony. After that, Kenny played back to ostinato bass line accompaniment; I kept improvising melody with a yangqin technique tremolo. (Zhang 2020, 21).

The music was created spontaneously at the moment of recording, so there are diverse musical elements contained in the piece, including consonant and dissonant. When I listened back to the recording, I was attracted by the melody that I created at the moment. Therefore, I composed a piece *Unlimited Sound* for a yangqin ensemble by using the melody and ostinato bass line. In addition to creating a melody inspired by a bass line, there are certain chord progressions one could practice. For instance, one could start practicing from the basic chord progression (I, IV, V, I), (I, VI, IV, V), (IV, V, III, VI, II, V, I), (IV, V, IV), etc. I will skip the pedagogical study of figured bass and chord progression here because most of Chinese musical instruments are single line melodic instrument and one could find many good pedagogical books on figured bass, chord progression, and harmony.

In addition to creating music based on an ostinato bass line, I created a melody on top of Johann Sebastian Bach's Prelude I, from the WTC, Book I. To improvise based on the given material, I invented a melody and rearranged it for yangqin I, yangqin II, and cello based on the chord progression of the original piece. The full score is attached in Appendix A. Based on the piece that I arranged, I thought it might be interesting to play with the piano. To experiment with my idea, I invited Kenny to play with the ensemble. We played the given material; then, Kenny changed his rhythmic pattern on the bass line, and I improvised a rhythmic variation. The video of the piece *Improvisation Johann Sebastian Bach Preludium I* is attached in Appendix B. This improvisation idea, requiring some knowledge of music theory, was to create an individual voice based on a pre-existing material.

7.4 A basic improvisation: “Rigor & Relaxation”

The exercise “Rigor & Relaxation” was introduced in Sokol’s class. Rigor means an act of strictness that music follows a specific form and tempo; relaxation means being free from tension, that music plays freely with rubato. As Prof. Sokol pointed out, the idea of the exercise is to intentionally alternate between “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces in musical flow, or those aspects that go more in the direction of “form” vs. those which go more indirection of “expression”.

The reason that he chose this “title” is to help remember the point of the exercise. Although they are not really in opposition, they are different in their intention as well as in the means by which they are achieved. The exercise is simply to play a freely flowing and lyrically oriented melodic line with some simple accompaniment, such as a held drone or a short ostinato figure, and alternating it with a more structured section involving a high degree of repetition. The repeated phrase should be lifted directly from the free-flowing material, thus beginning to establish a rich and reliable relationship between the elements in one’s creative work that depend on memory and other elements of disciplined activity and those that arise more spontaneously from feeling.

To practice the exercise, I invited my friends Kenny Kwan (pianist) and David Benitez (percussionist) to improvise together. I started improvising a rubato melody based on David’s drum tuning while David improvised a freely flowing rhythmic pattern as an accompaniment. At the end of the phrase, I slowed down so that we could leave the free section and enter to the section with a fixed beat, and then each of us played solo with free tempo. After we left the solo section, we all entered a fixed tempo with ritardando to end the piece. The video of the piece *Free Improvisation* is shared in Appendix B.

The sequence may only consist of two or three sequenced iterations of the motive, however, the focus of the exercise is the act of entering and leaving and also to develop one's intention to change and the corresponding capacity to effect that change. While one gets the idea of the exercise, one should consider the performance values of the exercise in order to put a constant and unflagging effort to play well, attending to the sound of articulation, phrasing, and dynamic nuance.

When this was presented, there are many ways to practice this idea of "more free" versus "more fixed." One could try this with free, unmeasured rhythm alternating with playing in a fixed beat and fixed meter. For example, one could be a soloist who improvises a rubato melody over an accompaniment played by a band or ensemble in strict tempo alternating with melodic passages played in "quantized" time. One could also alternate more chromatic playing with more tonal, atonal, or modal playing.

7.5 Improvisation based on a large form

The exercises introduced in this chapter and chapter five have dealt with small forms such melodies, rhythms, and variations. In this section, I intend to give some ideas about large forms because "larger forms are combinations of smaller forms to express added meaning to the contents given by small forms" (Mazzola, Park, and Thalmann 2011, 107). To better understand the construction of larger forms, I exemplify the form of a classical sonata and a loosely defined structure that is commonly used in yangqin music repertoires (see Figure 112 and Figure 113). The reason I describe certain structures for improvisation is because understanding these frameworks for improvisation and composition can be used to help create your own forms and organize smaller ideas into larger structures.

As we can see in Figure 113, the process that is referred to as classical sonata form is generally described as having five parts: exposition, development, recapitulation, cadenza, and coda. Each part includes large parts and small parts and parts of parts, down to single phrases and motives. However, composers have often "upended" these norms when the compositional flow demanded special treatments for their musical expressions (Mazzola, Park, and Thalmann 2011, 107). For example, Beethoven's Sonata op. 109 applied a big sequence of six variations of a single theme in the last movement (Mazzola, Park, and Thalmann 2011, 107).

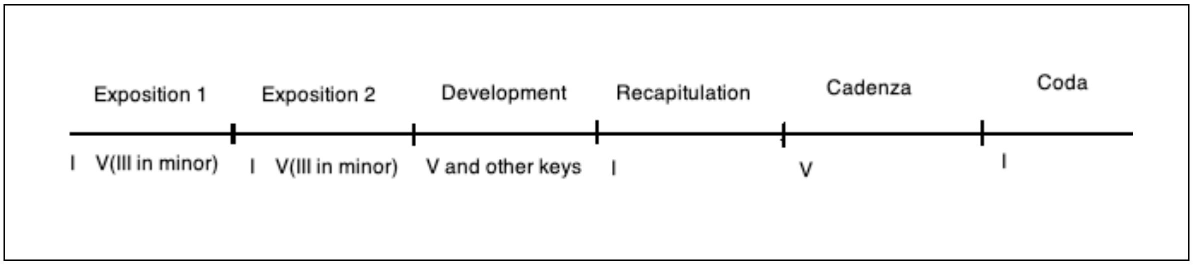


Figure 113. A sonata form

To make a comparison with the sonata form, I introduce a typical Chinese music structure that contains six parts: introduction, adagio, allegro, cadenza, lento, coda (see figure 114). The introduction contains free tempos such as rubato and accelerando, which give performers a space to have one's individual expressions. The adagio section presents the theme with two or more variations and yangqin techniques such as tremolo. The next section mainly focuses on rhythmic patterns; and then, similar to the introduction, the cadenza section indicates free playing and more individual expressions. Lineation, open chords, modulation, tremolo are applied in lento section; then, coda section mostly repeats the theme with a quiet ending.

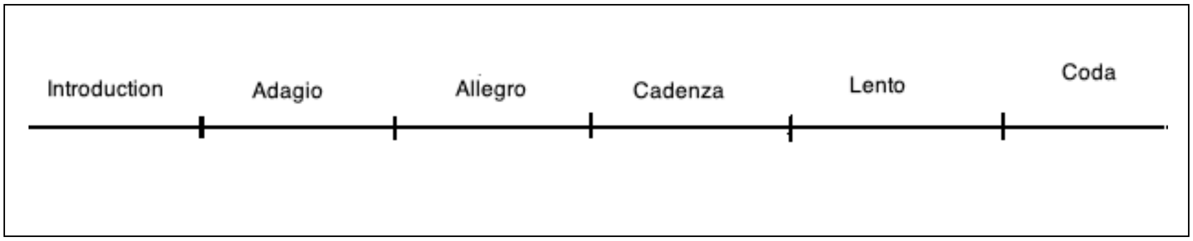


Figure 114. A typical yangqin music form

There are a plenty of frameworks one could use and create. However, when one creates small forms and put into a larger form, one could try to express one's individual voice in a logically clean way. Schoenberg in his book, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, pointed out that there are two criteria for a good large form: logic and coherence. Mazzola, Park, and Thalmann (2011, 111) states as followed:

> The criterion of coherence, if it is not a logical one, must be an aesthetical one, dealing with the refined connection between parts in a large form. Schoenberg adds that composing a large form is not comparable to a child who juxtaposes wooden cubes; the composer creates a living organism, not just a collection of separated material units. But the logic of this organism is not sufficient, it needs to be complemented by an elegant connectivity. And we should add that this connectivity should be a movement between parts, like a living body that is not just a collection of dead of limbs but lives by their smooth interaction.

While one improvises based on a larger form, the logic and coherence and connections between smaller forms should be considered. I am not going to introduce entire categories of large forms, which are numerous. My idea is that these large forms provide frameworks that can be used by improvisors and composers to help them assemble and reorganize their smaller ideas, that is, to give them a stronger connectivity. My personal experience with improvisation based on a music structure is followed:

> Sitting down in the studio with Kwan and Benitez, I was thinking what we could discover and experiment together. An idea of improvisation based on a structure came out of my mind. Then, I shared my idea with them and introduced a typical music structure that is mostly used in Chinese music compositions, including Introduction (free tempo), Adagio, Allegro, Cadenza, Lento, and Coda. After we improvise, Benitez enjoyed very much about the idea since it gives him more ideas about what to play and a bigger picture of creating makes (Zhang 2020, 17).

In addition to improvising on the basis of compositional forms, artists also create by association with natural objects and processes such as paths, rivers, trees, and other features of our environment. Goldstein (1988, 4) states:

> Some people raise the question of "structure" in improvisation (as if the two are incompatible). Consider: variety of trees, brooks, clouds, the world around us, but also as the realization (enactment of a living process) of a becoming-in-form-within-place-through-time (experience: varieties of interaction, pressures, yieldings, stresses, coming together, etc.) of various energies…and so a living "object" takes one form: structure as manifestation of coherence, through this living (time/place) of energies, interacting.

Jade Mountain Sounding, a piece created by Goldstein in 1983, is shown in figure 115. To play the piece, the performer could "start at the beginning of any line and follows it in any direction" (Goldstein 1988, 4). This composition focuses on the quality of sound and expression of texture through the performance of a string instrument. The basic considerations of the piece are bow pressure and speed and body movement to generate the string in order to produce sound. To play the piece on the yangqin, one could bow the strings of the yangqin and use the special rings to slip on the strings to make unique qualities of sound.

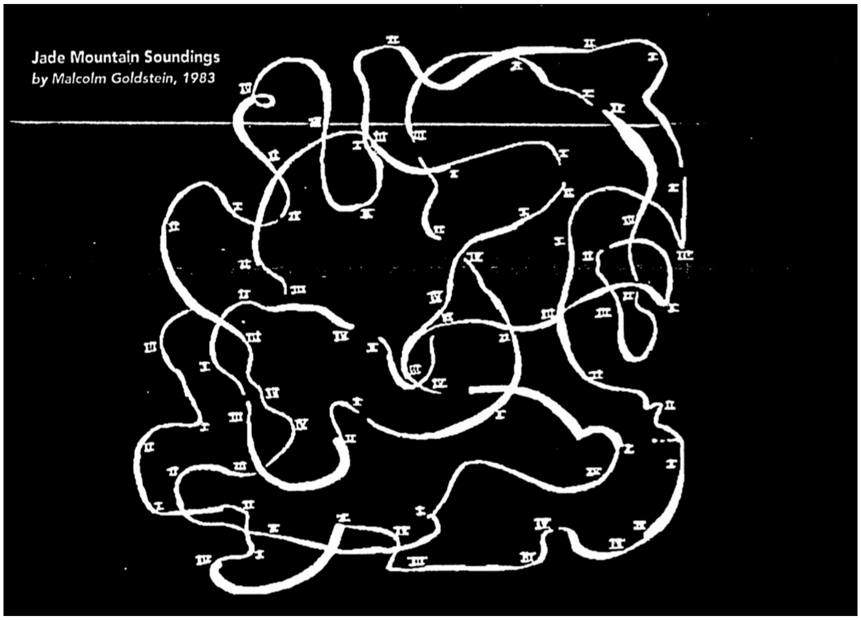


Figure 115. The score of Jade Mountain Soundings

Soundings the Full Circle: Concerning Music Improvisation and Other Related Matters:

Malcolm Goldstein (1988, 4).

7.6 Improvisation for Painting, Video, and Films

Certain improvisation strategies are indicated in the previous sections. I find these ideas could be used for teaching contemporary Chinese music improvisation. The final artistic destination for practising these exercises is to help one to be able to create spontaneous music in the moment, which imbues these exercises with a practical meaning. Through practicing these exercises, one could accumulate certain strategies for creative work. In the interest of formulating a way to approach the teaching of music improvisation within Chinese culture, I will share my experience in working with these concepts and exercises.

With the hope of expanding my artistic palette of improvisational ideas, I improvise with musicians from different cultures and with artists working in different mediums: dancers, singers, paintings, videographers, and film-makers. The activity of improvising for paintings, photographs, videos and films has been brought to a number of classes. As previously stated in Chapter Five, to improvise for video and films, Sokol pointed out three possible orientations to realization in his class: 1) playing the mood, 2) playing the image, and 3) playing the narrative. We tried to play for photos as if a film director showed us a few stills of a storyboard and wanted to see if we could find some appropriate music, based on what we imagined how the story might unfold. One could improvise based on mood that was conveyed, such as romance, sadness, and giddiness, etc. While I improvise for a video or film, I enjoy playing the mood of the story because it gives me more space to express a sense of emotion. The approach to realizing the music requires sensitivity to emotions, dynamics, articulations, tempo, body expressions, etc.

In addition to playing the mood, playing the image as if it were a score, one could translate or 'remap' the values of color, line, and texture onto musical values. The image could then be read in any fixed direction, or one could follow directions actually present and implied in the image itself. This approach to realization is associated with visual art. In the treatise of *Point and Line to Plane,* Kandinsky (1979, 21) points out the syntactic organization of abstract visual elements. In his treatise, semantic elements, such as shape and color, were mentioned at the outset. Points or lines that could be of different sizes and widths represent the shape; lines can be straight or curved (Kandinsky 1979, 21). The transfer of such elements to sound becomes increasingly obvious as one work with the images.

Additionally, colors could display various levels of intensity. For instance, yellow presents a very loud and sharp impression, while blue could indicate very quiet and heavy (Kandinsky 1979). Other than sharp, Kandinsky (1979) asserts that the color yellow can represent thin, light, sick, or feverish, but the terminology is not given by him. The purpose of associating qualities with colors or lines is to develop the improvisor's sense of intention to create music with diverse expressions and a different set of cognitive mechanisms (Kandinsky 1979, 73).

A question was raised: "how do you go about playing an improvisation for silent film?" What follows is a letter to Soundless from pianist, Jeffrey Chappell, concerning his experience in improvising for a silent film:

> Dear Soundless:
>
> I watch the film once while taking notes on the story. I then assign musical motifs to each character and event—for example, the hero, the heroine, the big struggle, and the victory at the end. Sometimes these are my own original ideas, but the film subject might also suggest specific material that already exists. For example, a film set in 1920s Paris would invite the use of music by French composers of that time. I also hold to the purpose of playing music that supports the story without drawing attention to the music itself. I have found that repertoire such as Shostakovitch Preludes or Poulenc Nocturnes is very useful in this regard, because they are unfamiliar enough to escape recognition by the audience while still being fresh and tonal enough to be easily accessible. I conscientiously avoid any familiar clichés that the audience would associate with silent films, such as villain or chase scene music.
>
> For the screening, I have the first page of several pieces of music on the piano in front of me, one for each musical motif, usually photocopied in reduced size to eliminate any page turning. As I watch the film, I refer to these "reminder" notations. Occasionally, I play what is written, but most of the time I just improvise on that material. This means using a lot of sequences, repetition, modulation, and fragmentation of the musical ideas. The action on the screen dictates the tempo and dynamics of the music. It also tells me when a particular important moment needs a precisely coordinated musical commentary to illustrate it.
>
> The real challenge is to keep playing non-stop for the duration of the film, which could be up to two hours. There is rarely any opportunity to rest one's eyes or hands.
>
> — J.C. 2020.

I really appreciated Chappell's approaches to realization of silent films, in particular that they include creating musical motifs to portray different characters and events, such as the hero, the heroines, etc. It is interesting that while he performed for the screening, he had a few pages of several pieces of music to improvise by applying certain improvisation and composition ideas, such as sequences, repetition, modulation, and fragmentation.

Neil Brand who has been accompanying silent films for approximately 30 years and is considered to be one of the greatest "exponents of improvised silent film accompaniment in the world" simply prepares a few chords in the moments before playing (Podlucki 2015). He creates music as he watches the film. For some well-known films, the music is already in his memory, because he has accompanied for the films very often. An interview that was conducted by Podlucki (2015) with composer and silent film accompanist Neil Brand is follows:

> **MP**: **Do you usually prepare a set piece of music for each film you accompany? How much improvisation is involved when you play?**
>
> NB: I seldom if ever prepare anything except the first few chords in the seconds before I play, as I much prefer to be 'in the moment' and feel the music working as I watch and accompany the film. With some well-known movies I have played them so often that a 'score' has begun to form, made up of ideas that seem to work. Those have given me the basis for the orchestral scores I have written. But usually I see what comes out during a movie and follow those ideas and themes to see where they go (Podlucki 2015).
>
> **MP: What would you say are the key elements of effective musical accompaniment?**
>
> NB: First and most importantly not to let the audience 'out' of the film – the music must feel as if it's being created by the film and must hold the audience inside the movie, making them forget everything else. That's why I don't play familiar music and often try to make the music as simple as possible. Then, the music should reflect the movie from second to second, so that there is no slippage between what we are seeing and what we are hearing. That way the audience can really lose themselves in a film (Podlucki 2015).
>
> **MP: Why is silent film important? What would you say to convince someone to try one?**
>
> Silent film gives us at least two experiences in one – film and music. The effect is actually very theatrical and unlike either cinema or a live concert – every performance is unique and will touch us as an audience in a way no other art form can. It is very hard to explain that to somebody who has never experienced it so I can only say, if you haven't tried it, give it a go. You will be doing yourself a favour and will want to see more. Also,

> if you don't try it, you are missing out on the riches of the first thirty years of cinema (Podlucki 2015).

7.7 Conclusion

Permutations and variations are commonly used as compositional and improvisation strategies. By sharing my realizations on the permutation and variation exercise, my hope is that the reader will be encouraged to use these techniques in their own creative work. With some disciplined study, these exercises would develop one's musical vocabularies, creativity, and knowledge of music theory. In addition, several creative and imaginative exercises were provided, such as improvising to image, text, color, and large form. One could also use any other interesting concepts and ideas to use in an improvisational context. The exploration of improvisation pedagogy for the yangqin may give new ideas for study and new directions for contemporary Chinese music education. These exercises and strategies may help Chinese performers to develop their intellectual creativity and also help them find new ways to bring their musical knowledge into practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION

In this research, I point out that the Chinese hammered dulcimer, yangqin, was spread by the Marin Silk Road and developed through the establishment of People's Republic of China. To begin the work of formulating a contemporary Chinese improvisation pedagogy, I explore improvisation techniques used in traditional yangqin music and propose that improvisation helps enrich and give a new content to the original material. In trying to address the issue of Chinese music education in modern Chinese society, I refer to my own experiences studying music in China and Canada and observe others' experience studying improvisation in North America and Europe to discovering a pedagogical approach of teaching improvisation. By examining contemporary Chinese music improvisation and musicianship pedagogy using the yangqin, I sought certain pedagogical strategies for teaching improvisation suitable for Chinese contemporary music creation.

The intention animating this research is to discover an approach to yangqin improvisation that would help support a genuine enhancement of Chinese music education—in particular, by fostering an approach that recognizes and addresses the need to include the latent creativity in each student. To substantiate the main thesis, I explore an improvisation pedagogy for the yangqin that supports the development of one's individual voice and of enhancing one's creativity and imagination. In the search for a new approach to teaching yangqin on a more creative basis, there were two questions that guided this research. 1) How can the value of individual creative work be transmitted to the society as a vital component of Chinese music education? 2) What are the most practical strategies for the development of skills and the teaching of improvisation? In this chapter, I summarize some of the possible solutions that the research has been searching for.

In Western universities and conservatories, improvisation classes mainly emphasize on two aspects: 1) musicianship training, and 2) creative and imaginative training. For the most part, each class tends to begin with musicianship training, including rhythmic and listening exercises; then, the class progressively moves into creative training, including improvisation on a subject, image, text, story, book, movie, dance, and free playing. I observe that professors who teach improvisation take responsibility to inspire their students, to create an environment in which they can explore their individual voice and expression, and provide them with many materials to use in their search to discover possible realizations.

By sharing my decade of experience studying Chinese music performance, I point out that modern Chinese music education is lacking in creativity and imagination. Thus, it seems that it is a top priority to develop a creative and imaginative approach for a further improvement of Chinese music education in modern global society. Through regular participation in the improvisation course at York and observing and analyzing other improvisers' experiences, I have begun by separating my thoughts into five themes: the setting for improvisation, class expectations, the breadth and specifics of disciplined training, the scope of creative work, and lastly, ways to improvise and compose with the support of one's knowledge and training yet remaining free of the restricted behaviours that typically attach to our training. To this end, I explore and share with the reader a rich set of ideas ad improvisation exercises and strategies.

Next Studies

Since I would like to teach in a university environment, both in the West and in China, I need to consider how to tailor these ideas and exercises to make them ideally suitable for the different modes of thought and perception. Just as good teaching must address the individual student as well as the whole class, I realize that any pedagogical formulations must address not only the most general ideals of musicianship training and creative work, but they must also take into account the specific attributes of the culture in which the teaching is taking place. This alone will require a great deal of sensitive work, trial and error, and acute observation. I am interested and ready to engage in this large and important undertaking.

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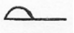
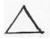
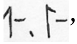
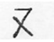
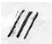
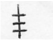
Appendix A: Additional Materials (Techniques of Modern Yangqin, Scores for Original Yangqin Music)

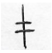
Explanations of the Yangqin Technique

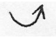
1. *Fǎnzhú* ""*: Fǎn* in Chinese pinyin system means the back side. The symbol means playing the yangqin using the back side of the bamboo stick to produce a bright, sharp tone that imitates the sound of the pipa.
2. *Mēnzhú* " "*: Mēn* (a verb) means cover; *zhú* means the bamboo sticks. The technique is to use the top section of the sticks strike the strings, and then immediately mute the sound. The tone of the *menzhú* sounds like a staccato.
3. *Fǎnmēn* " "*:* This technique is similar to *mēnzhú*. It involves using the back side of top section of the stick to strike, and then immediately mute the vibration. This technique produces a brighter tone colour than does *mēnzhú*.
4. *Liántán* ""*:* The symbols look like left and right arrows. They mean that the left or right hand is to play a triplet, duplet, triplet, quadruplet, etc. from where the symbols start, and end where the symbols appear again.
5. *Shuāngyīn* "  "*: Shuang* means tow; *yin* means tone. This technique is hands together, the left hand playing the original note and the right hand playing an octave below.
6. *Shuāngyīnjiàn* " "*: Jiàn* the Chinese term for the bamboo sticks. *Shuāngyīnjiàn* in Chinese means two-headed bamboo sticks; this symbol indicates the use of the special two-headed bamboo sticks in order to play chords.
7. *Tremolo* "  "*:* by alternating between the left and right hand, the musician should play as fast and as evenly as possible.

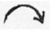
8. *Làngzhú* "  ": *Làng* means waving. This special technique is to use the bottom of the bamboo stick as a pivot pressing on the strings and continuously moving the stick up and down. The technique creates a special tonal effect that mimics the sound of wind and waves.

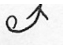
9. *Zuǒ Tánlún* " ": *Zuo* in Chinese means left. *Tánlún* is a term of a technique particular to the yangqin. To create *tánlún*, the left thumb presses the bamboo stick while the middle and fourth finger hold the bottom part of the stick to make the top part of the stick vibrate naturally. The strings are then touched, the stick vibrations producing many notes in a single strike.

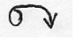
10. *Yoù Tánlún* " ": *You* means right. This is similar to *zuǒ tánlún*, except that with *you tánlún* the right hand is used rather than the left.

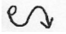
11. *Shuāng Tánlún* "  ": This technique is similar to the previous two, except that it is executed with both hands.

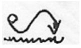
12. *Shàng Huátán* "  ": *Shang* means upward; *huátán* means glide. This is the same technique as 9, 10 and 11 above, except that the musician must glide up to more than one interval, though less than a fifth above the original note.

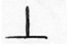
13. *Xià Huátán* "": *Xià* means downward. This technique is like *shàng Huátán* except the gliding goes downwards, below the original note.

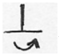
14. *Shàng Huámě* "": The left hand wears a special ring, which it uses to press the strings and move from the left side to the right after the right hand has struck the strings. A glissando on an ascending scale is achieved.

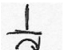
15. *Xià Huámě* “”*:* This is similar to *shàng huámě* except that the movement is from the right side to the left, thus producing a glissando on a descending scale.

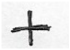
16. *Huí Huǎmě* “”*: Hui* means backward and forward. The technique is similar to *shàng huámě* and *xià huámě*. The difference is the direction of movement, where the glissando is produced through a forward-to-backward movement.

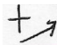
17. *Roú Huǎmě* “”*: Roú* means rubbing. It is a similar to the previous technique, but instead calls for a backward-to-forward movement, repeated many times in order to create a special vibrato effect.

18. *Roúyā* “”*: Yā* means pressing. This technique involves creating vibrato by using the middle and fourth fingers of the left or right hand to rub the strings after the other hand has struck the other side of the strings.

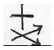
19. *Shàng Huároú* “”*:* This is similar to the above technique, but calls for striking one side of the strings first, then pressing the other side to produce an ascending trill. The tone of the technique is to mimic the sound of the zhēng.

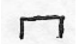
20. *Xià Huároú* “”*:* A similar technique to the above, calling for pressing one side of the strings first then striking their other side to produce a descending trill.

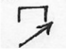
21. *Boxián* “”*: Bo* mean plucking. This technique is to use the bottom part of the bamboo stick to pluck the strings, thus producing a bright sound that mimics that of the pipa.

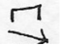
22. *Shàng Huábo* “”*: Huábo* means glissando. The left or right hand holds the bottom of the stick and uses its bottom part to pluck the strings from the bottom to the top to create a glissando.

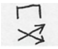
23. *Xià Huábo* “ *”:* This is similar to the technique above, with the difference in the direction of the plucking: in this case, top to bottom.

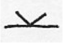
24. *Shàngxià Huábo* “ *”:* This technique is collaboration between the left and right hand. One hand plucks the strings from top to bottom while the other plucks from bottom to top at the same time.

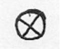
25. *Zhījiă Boxián* “  *”: Zhijia* means fingernails. This technique is to use the fingernails to pluck the strings. The middle finger usually plucks the melody note, and the thumb and index finger usually pluck the intervals. It is one of the techniques used to play chords.

26. *Zhījiă Shàng Huábo* “  *”:* The musician uses the fingernails to pluck the strings from bottom to top.

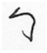
27. *Zhījiă Xià Huábo* “ *”:* This is like the previous technique, except that the strings are plucked top to bottom.

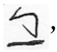
28. *Zhījiă Shàngxià Huábo* “  *”:* One hand uses the fingernails to pluck the strings from top to bottom; the other plucks them from bottom to top at the same time.

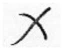
29. *Yáobo* “*”: Yao* means shaking. The right hand uses a special bamboo stick that has a triangular-shaped metal pick at its bottom, or else the right index finger wears a pipa pick which is uses to pluck the strings as fast and evenly as possible. This technique mimics a technique of the pipa.

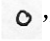
30. *Shŏuzhĭ Huábo* “  *”: Shŏuzhĭ* means fingers. The technique is to use one hand to pluck the string from bottom to top or from top to bottom using the bottom part of the bamboo stick, and then the other hand mutes strings except for the last one plucked.

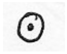
31. Zhāiyīn “ ”*: Zhāi* means picking. The left thumb and index finger clench the strings to be plucked, and the right hand plucks the strings using the bottom part of the bamboo stick. This mimics a particular tone of the pipa.

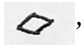
32. Shǒuzhǐ Boxián “”*:* The musician plucks the strings using the top part of the middle finger without any tools or nails.

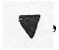
33. Guāroú “”*: Guā* means scraping. After plucking the strings on the left-hand side with the left middle or index finger, the right middle finger presses the other side of the strings plucked to create vibrato.

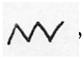
34. Jībǎn “”*: Ji* means striking; *ban* means board. The technique is to strike the wooden parts of the instrument to mimic the sound of drums.

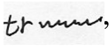
35. Fànyīn “”*: Fànyīn* means harmonics. One hand strikes the strings while the middle finger of the other hand touches the strings halfway up (from the roller to the bridge) to produce a sound an octave up, one-third of the way up to produce a perfect fifth, and one-quarter of the way up to produce a sixteenth.

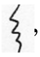
36. *Diàn Fànyīn* “”*:* The musician strikes the strings halfway up with the sticks to produce a soft and pure sound.

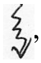
37. *Fàng Fànyīn* “”*:* One hand strikes the strings while the other presses down on the roller or the bridge of the instrument.

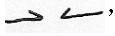
38. *Dùnyīn* (Staccato) “”. One hand beats the strings while the other hand mutes the sound with the middle and fourth fingers.

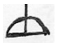
39. *Bōyīn* (Mordents) “”: This is a rapid single alternation between an indicated note, the note above, then back to the indicated note.

40. *Chànyīn* (Trill) “”: This is a rapid alternation between an indicated note and the one above.

41. *Páyīn* (arpeggio) “”: This is playing a broken chord in ascending order. This technique was derived from the Western compositional techniques.

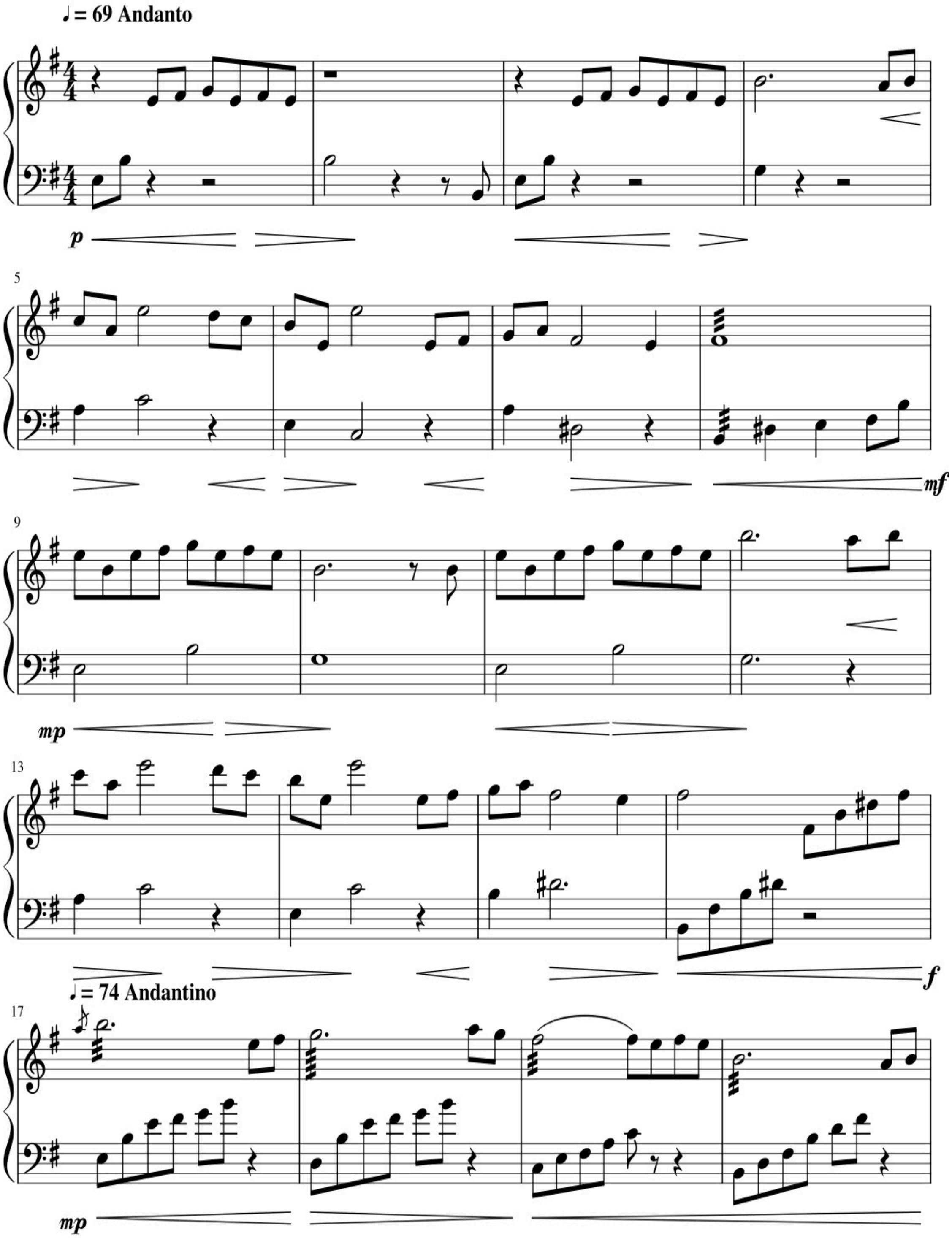
42. *Xiàxíng Páyīn* (arpeggio) “”*: Xiàxíng* means descending order. This technique is to play a broken chord in descending order.

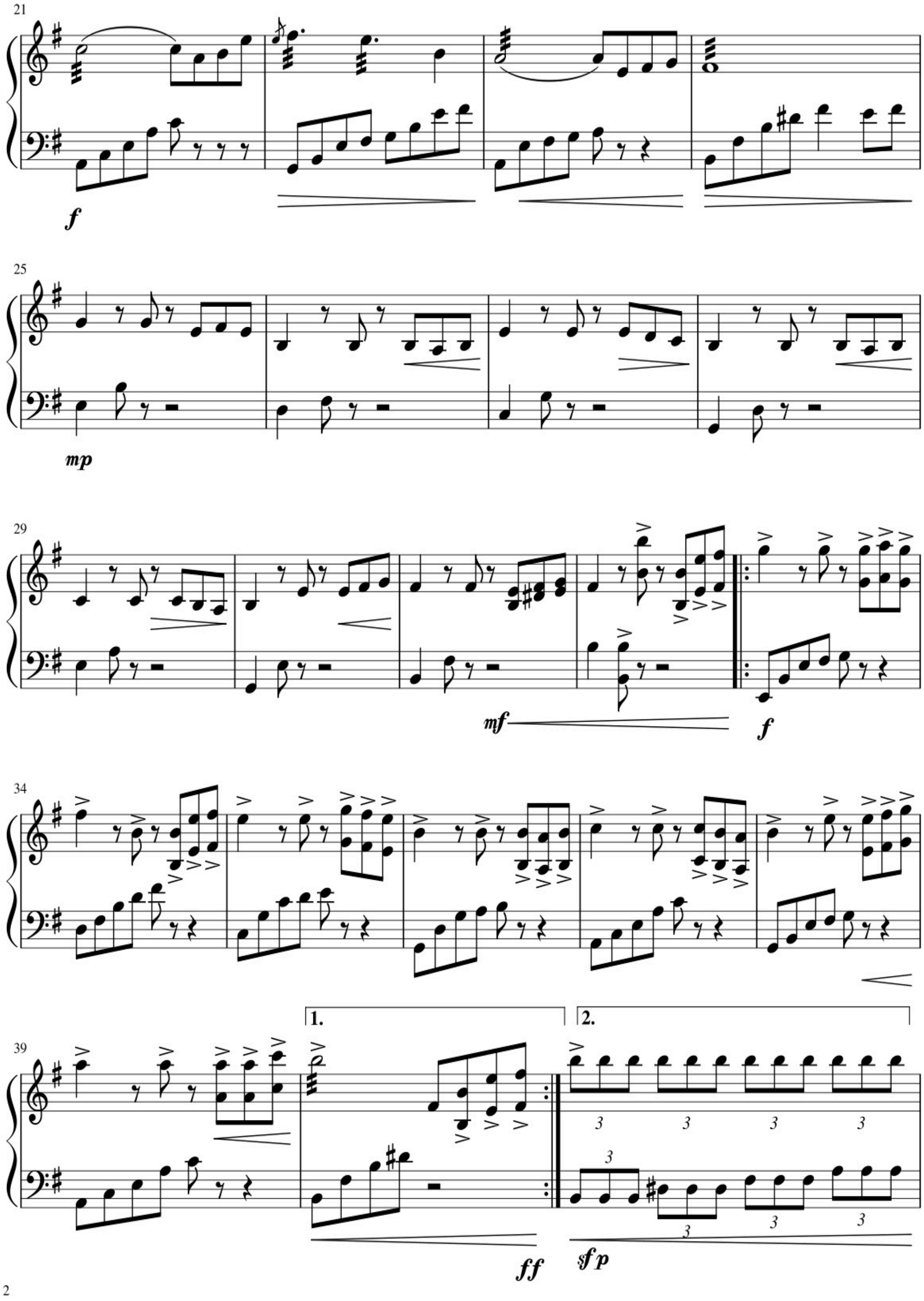
43. Jīfă Liánzoù “”*: Jìfă* means techniques. The symbols indicate the starting point of a special technique and then its ending point.

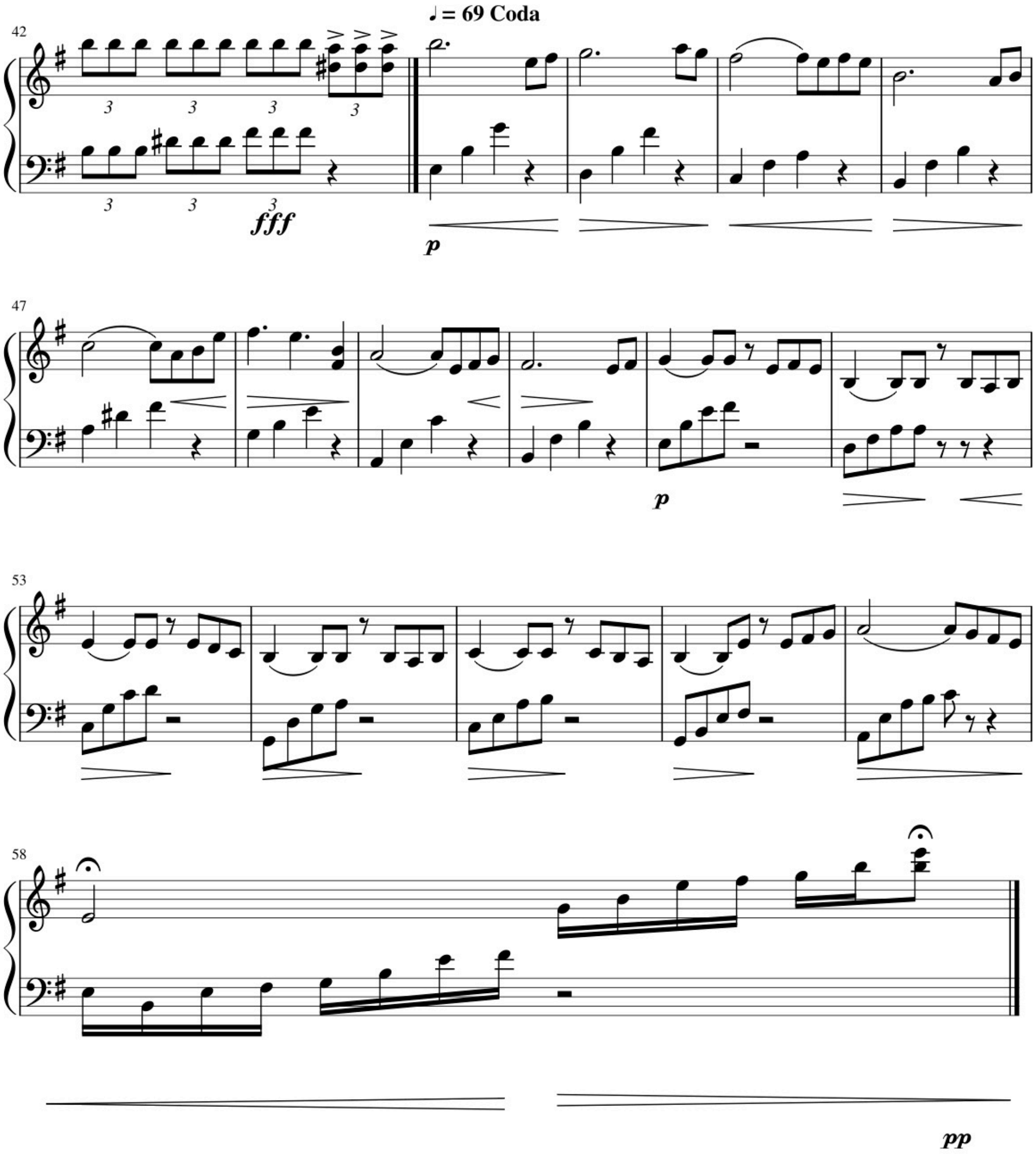
44. Zhǐyīn Tàbăn “”*: Zhǐyīn* means muting the sound, and *tàbăn* means pedal. The symbol is for use with a special yangqin that is designed with a pedal to mute the sound.

Love in Asia

Di Zhang
2017-11-20

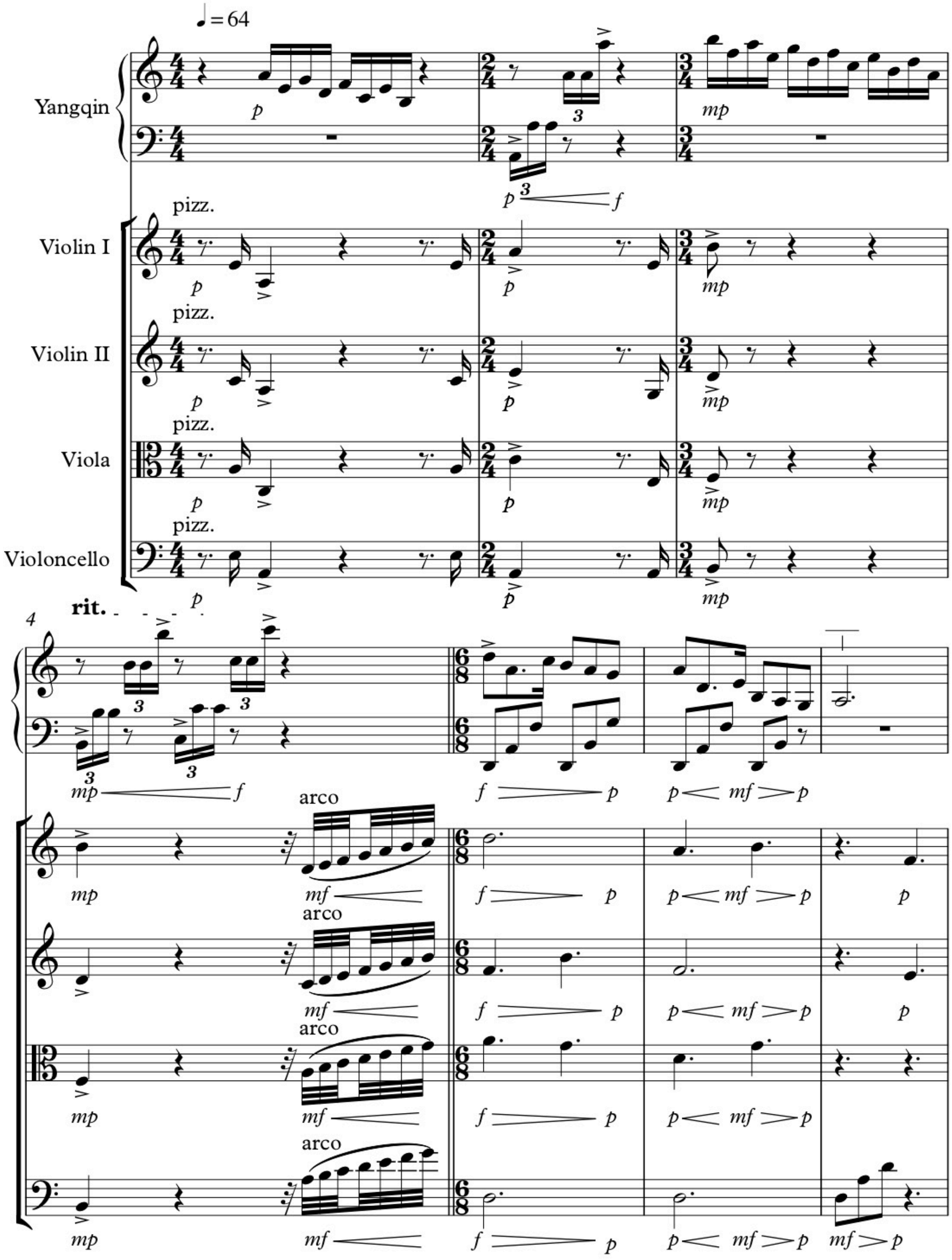

♩= 69 Andanto
p
5
mf
9
mp
13
f
♩= 74 Andantino
17
mp


21
f
25
mp
29
mf
f
34
39
1.
2.
3
ff
sfp


♩ = 69 Coda
42
3
fff
p
47
p
53
58
pp

Di Zhang

Building the Walls


♩ = 64
Yangqin
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
pizz.
arco
rit.
4
p
mp
mf
f

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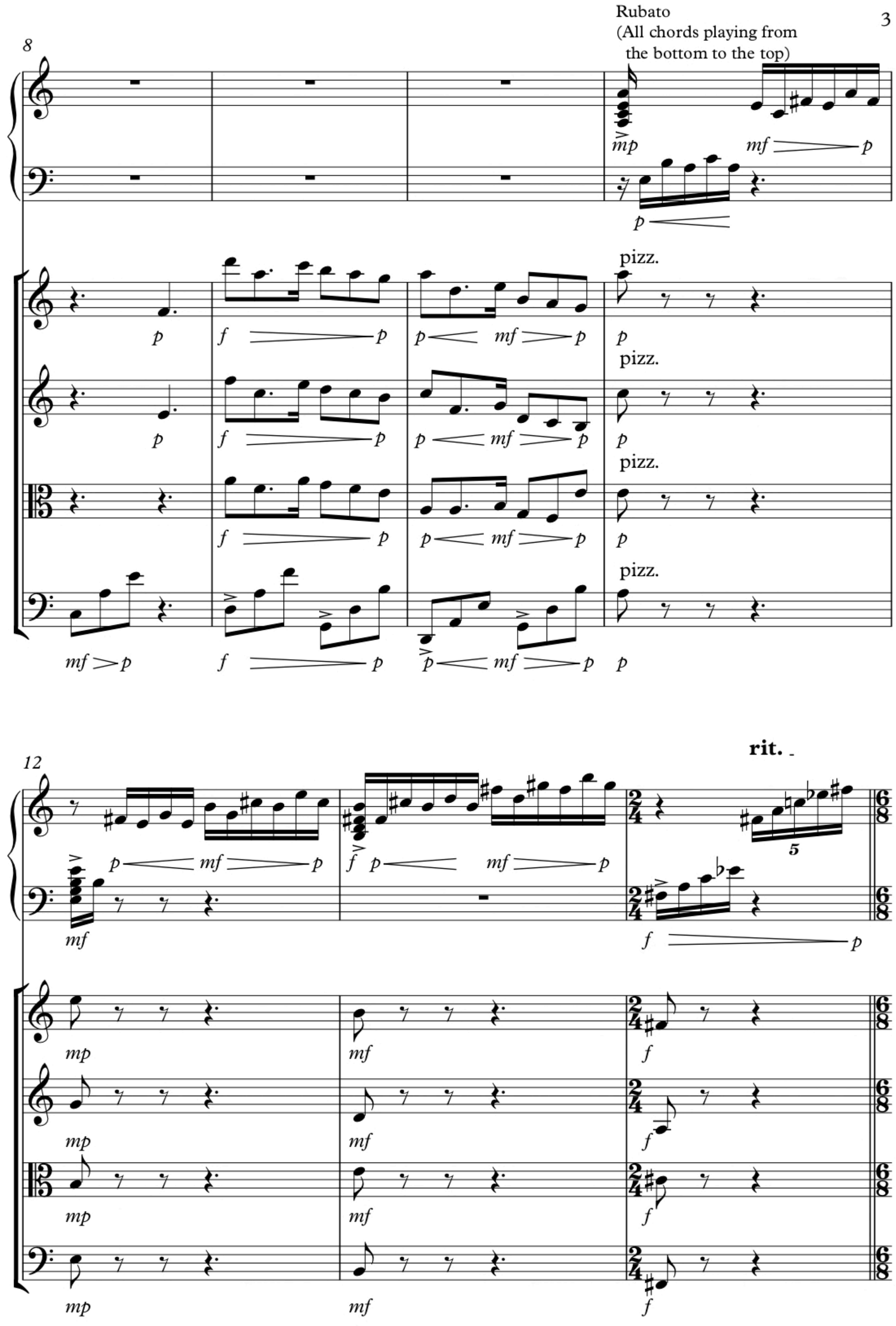
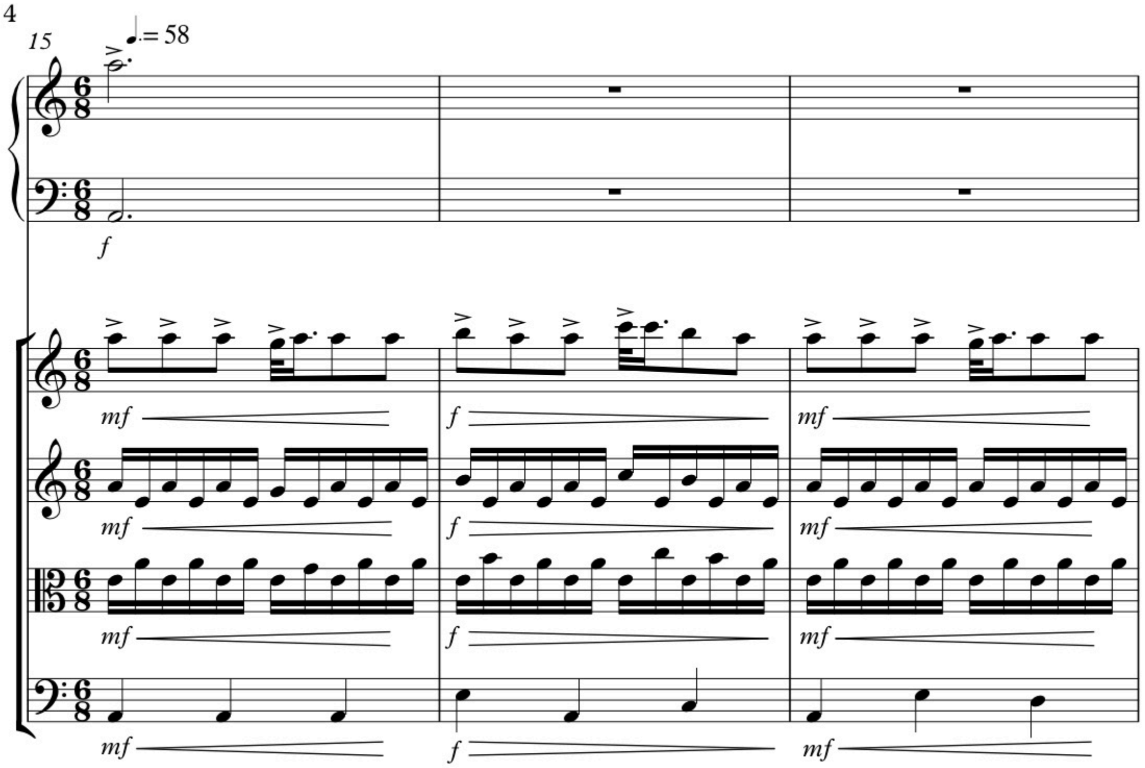
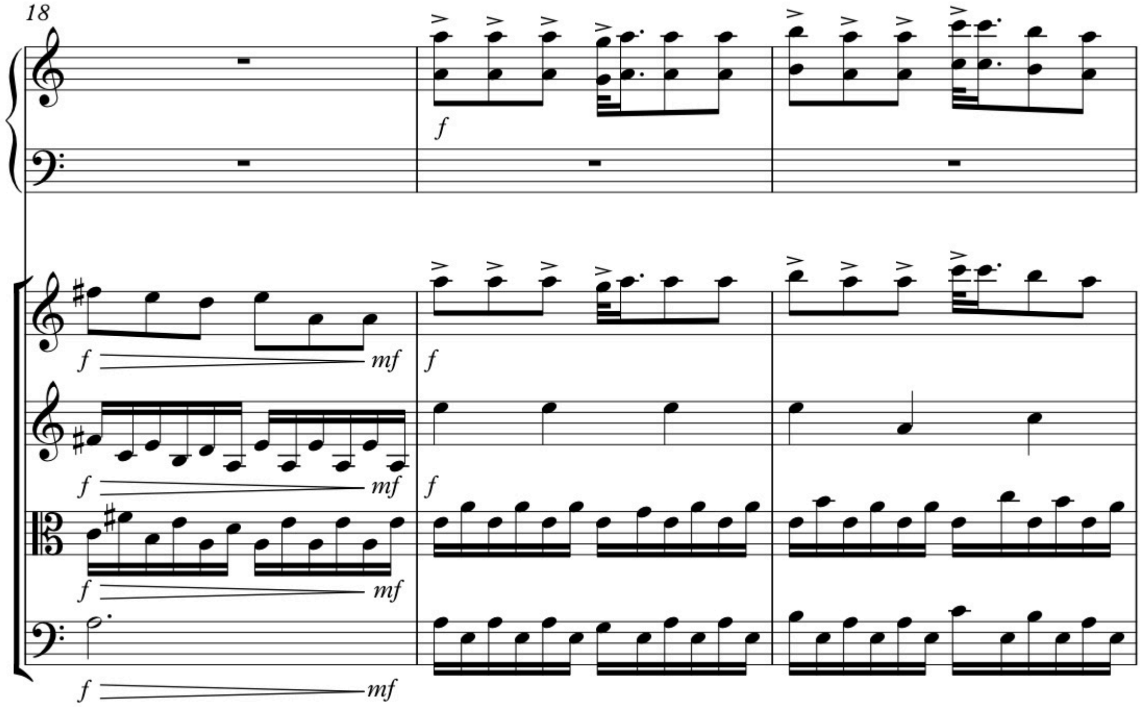
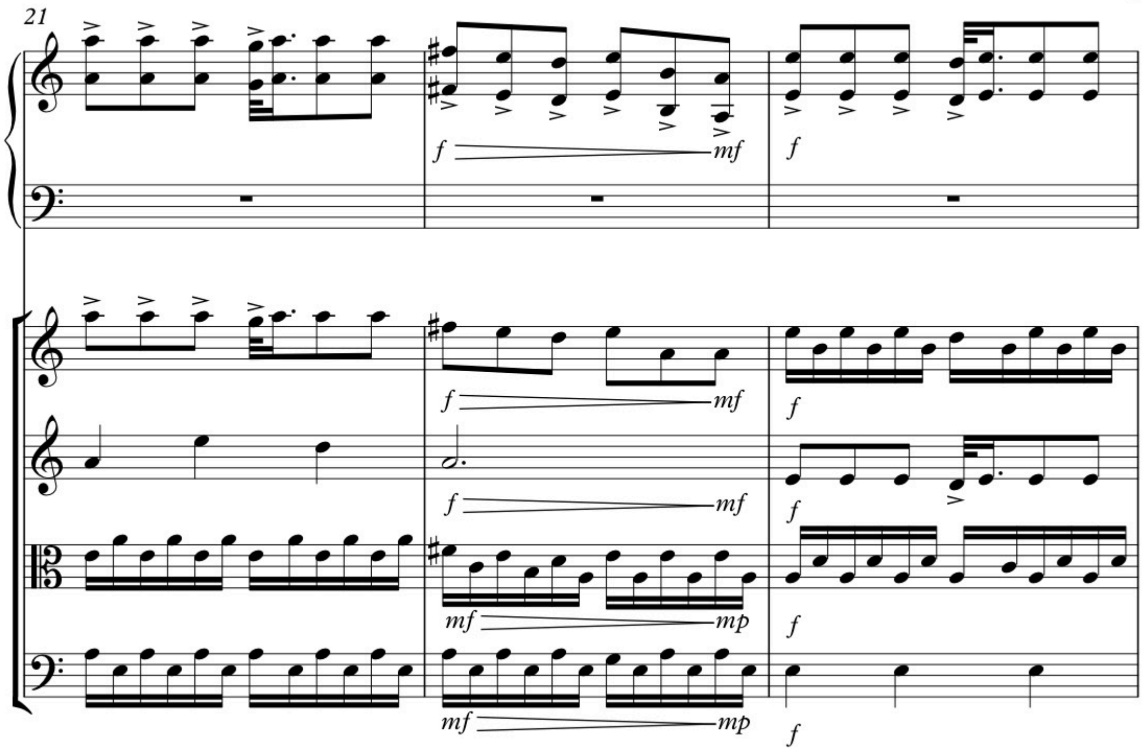
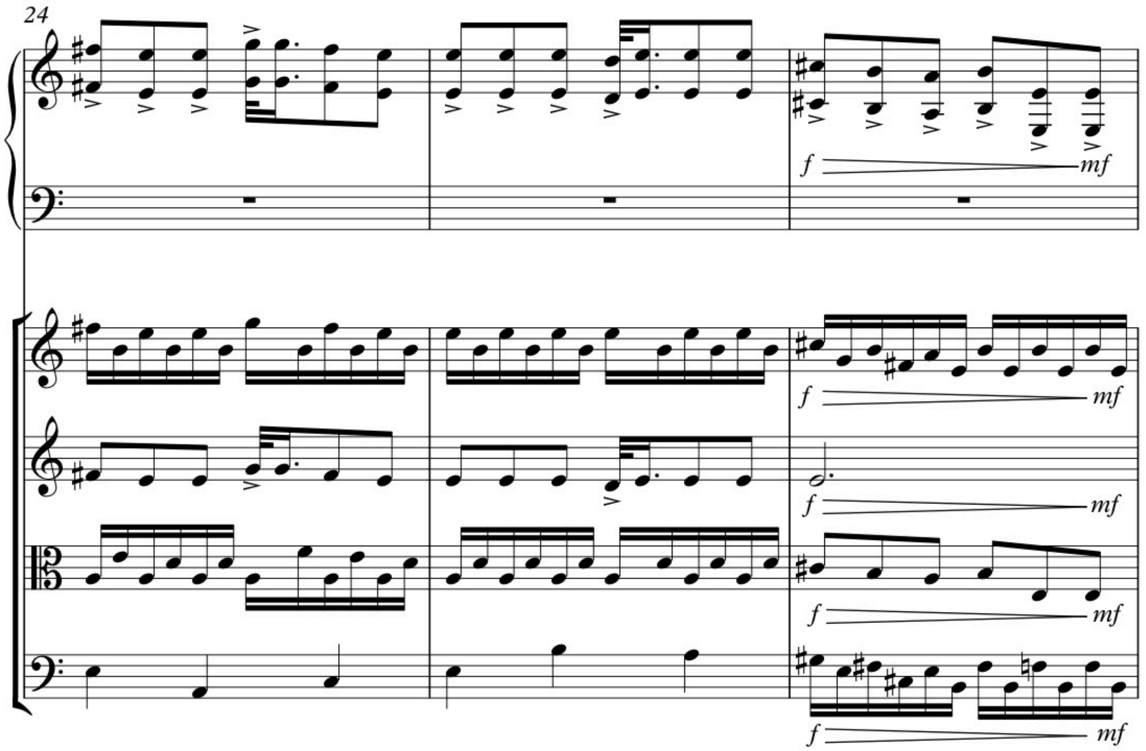
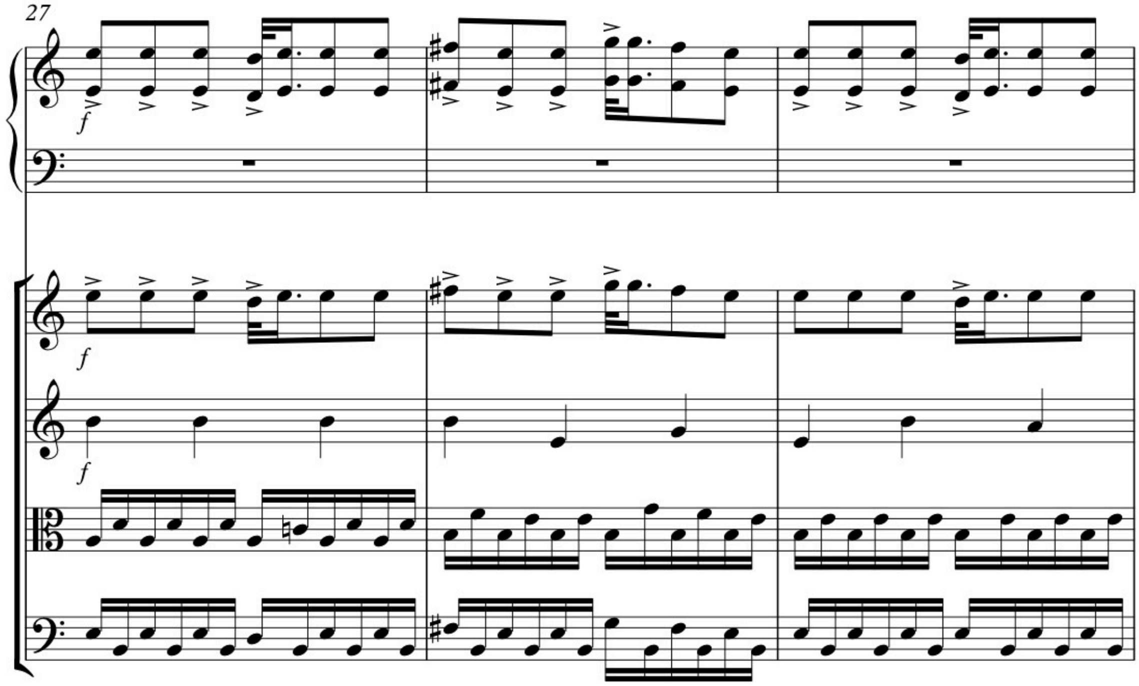

8
Rubato
(All chords playing from the bottom to the top)
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
mp mf p f p mf
12
rit.
5
mp mf f

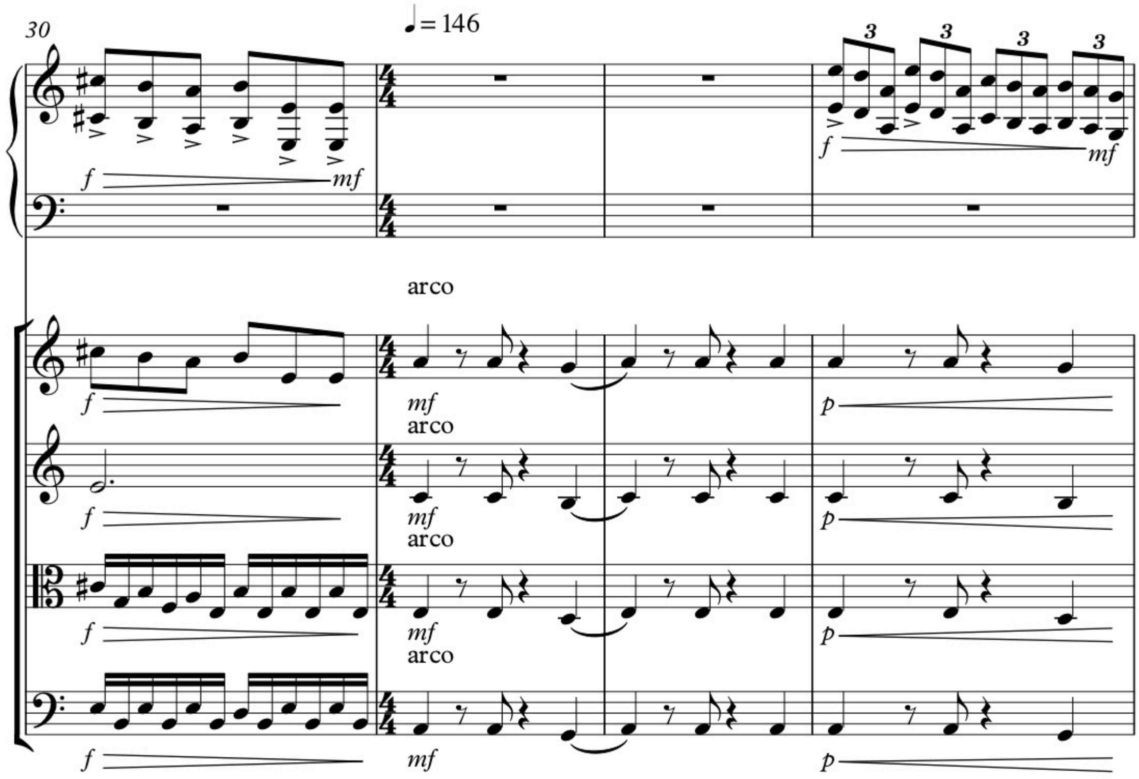

15
♩. = 58
f
mf
f
mf

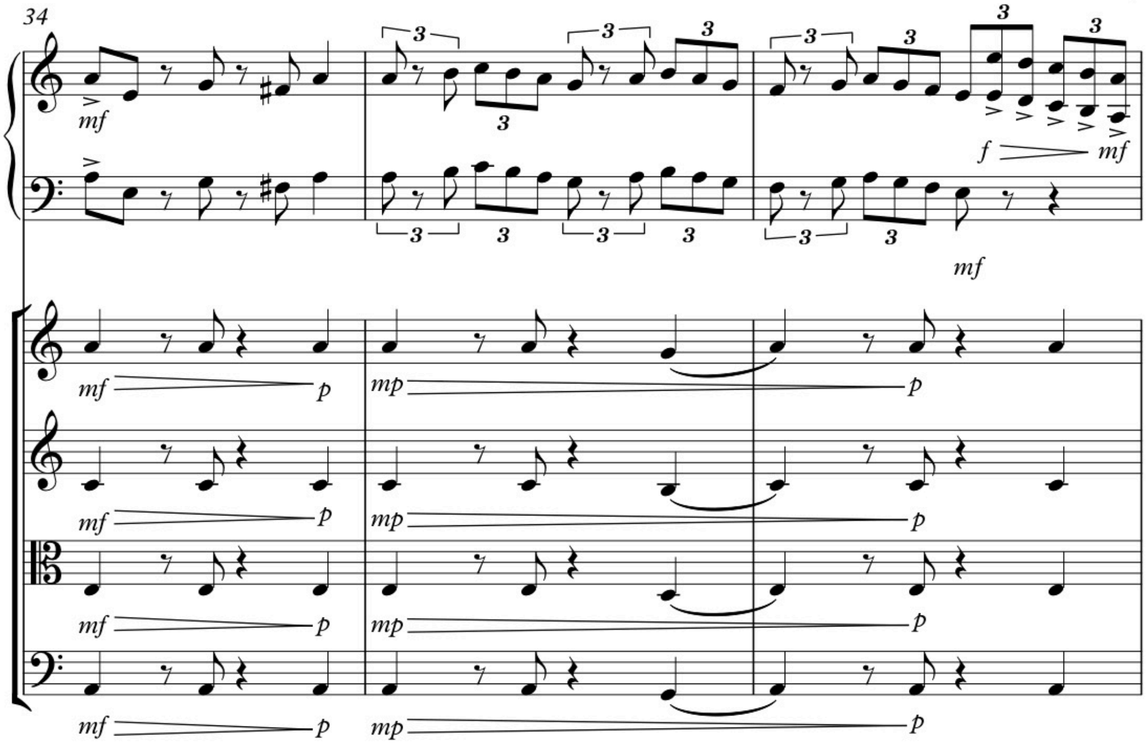

18
f
f
mf
f
mf

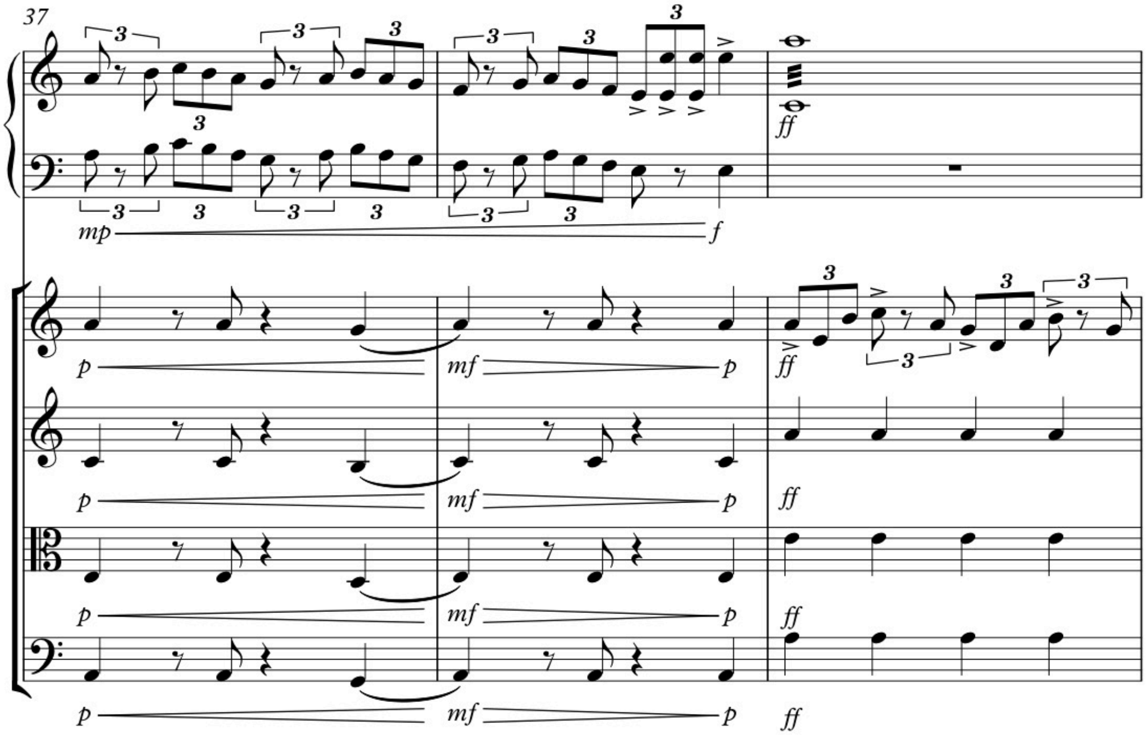

21
f
mf
f
f
mf
f
f
mf
f
mf
mp
f
mf
mp
f

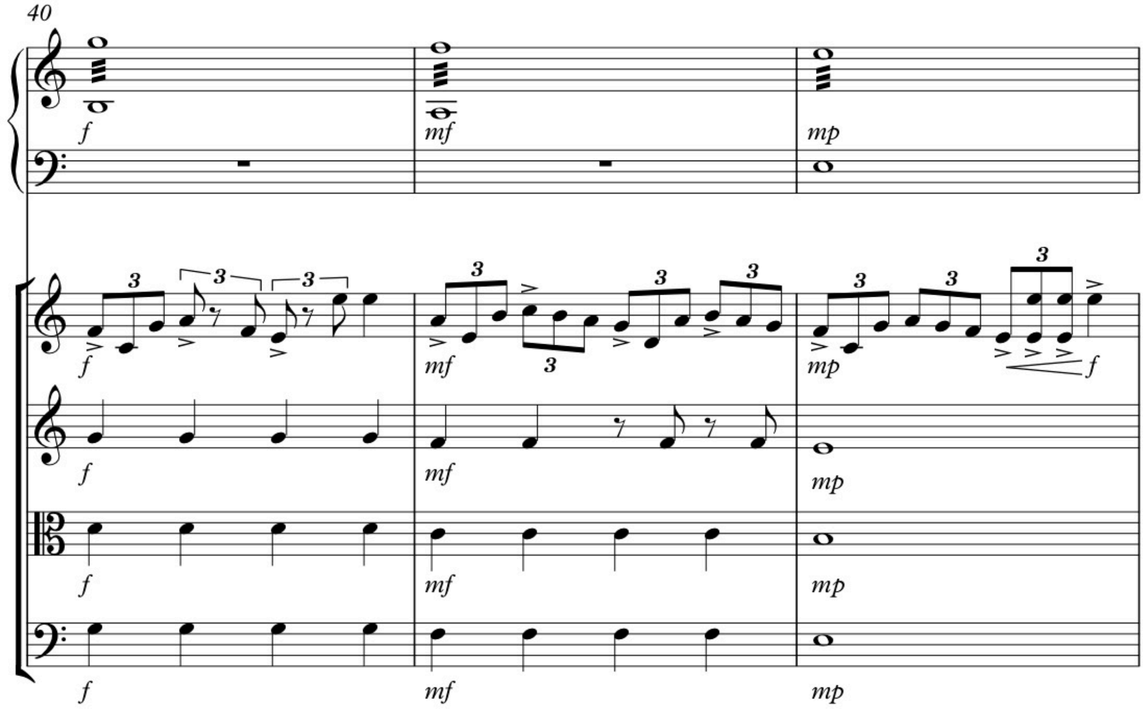

24
f
mf
f
mf
f
mf
f
mf
f
mf

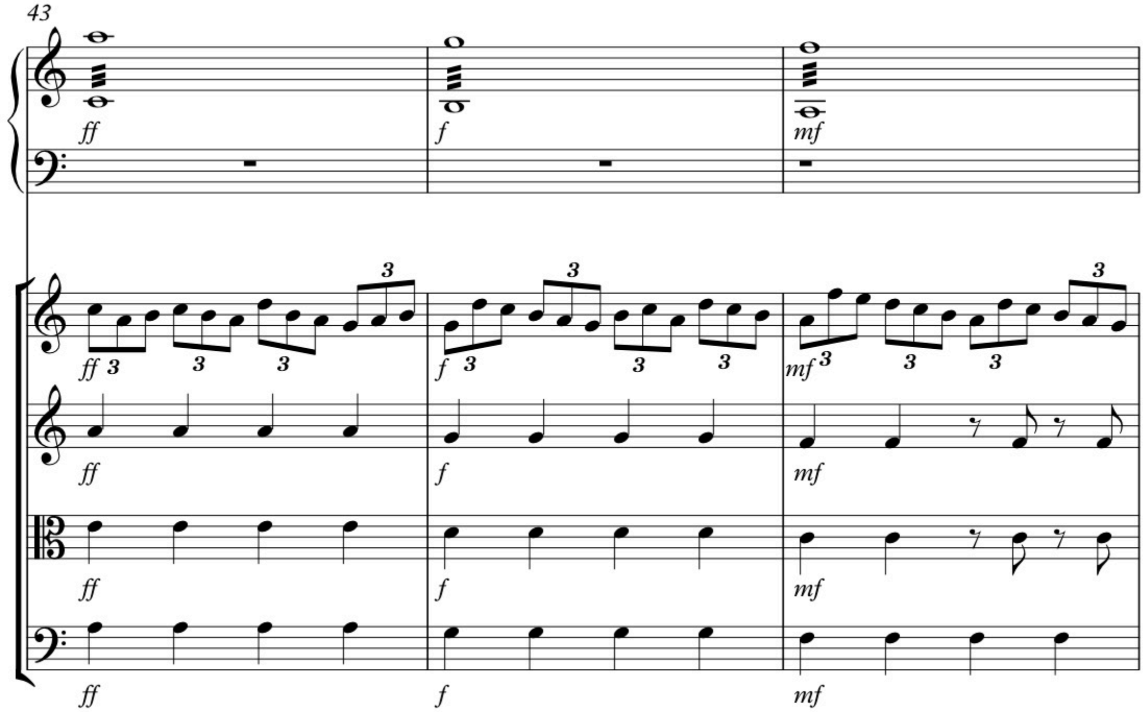

27
f
f
f

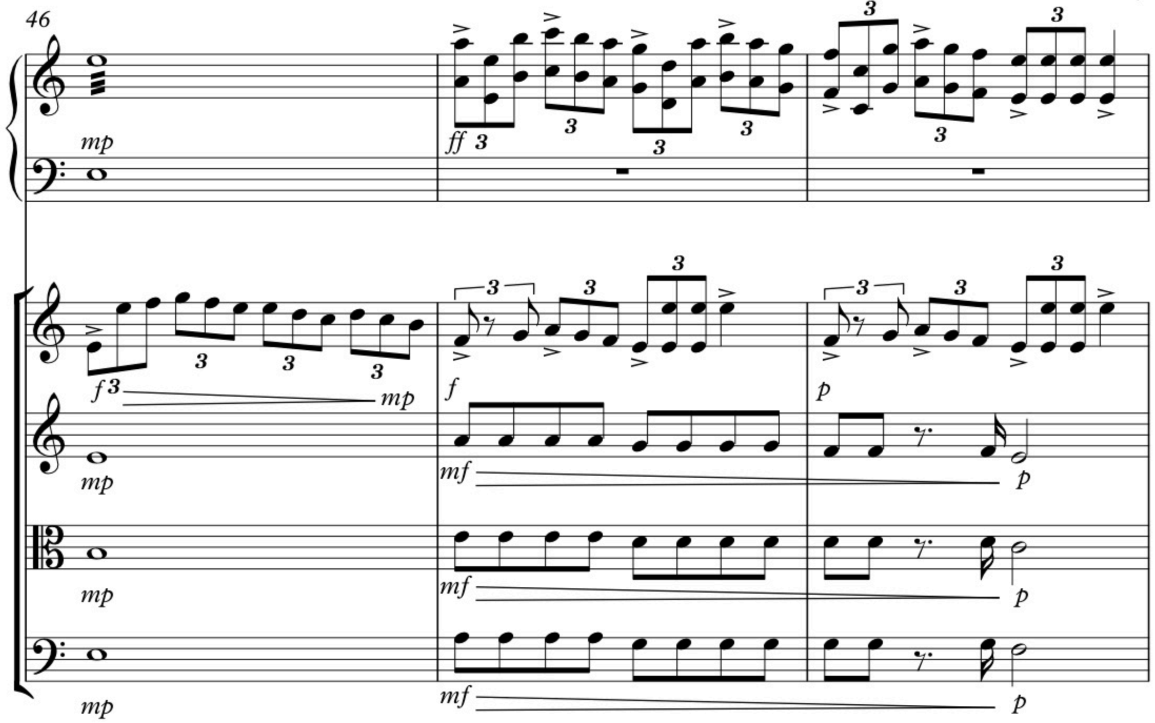

30
♩= 146
3
3
3
3
f
mf
f
mf
arco
f
mf
p
arco
f
mf
p
arco
f
mf
p
arco
f
mf
p

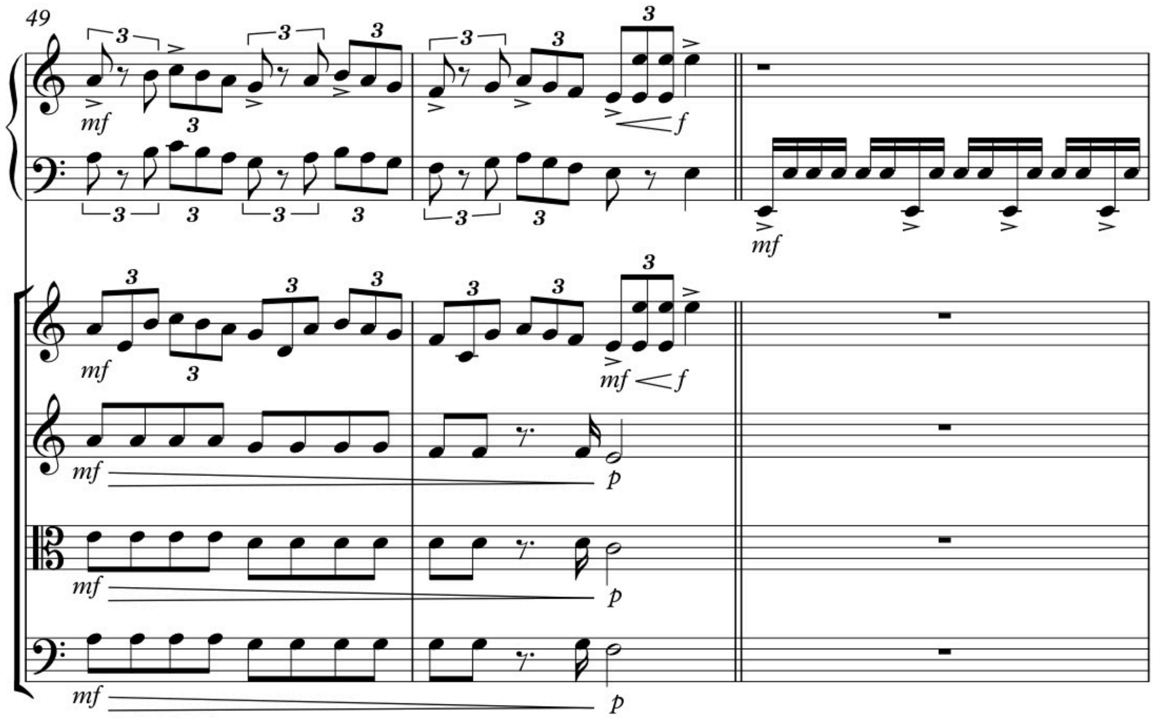

34
mf
f
mf
mf
mf
p
mp
p
mf
p
mp
p
mf
p
mp
p
mf
p
mp
p

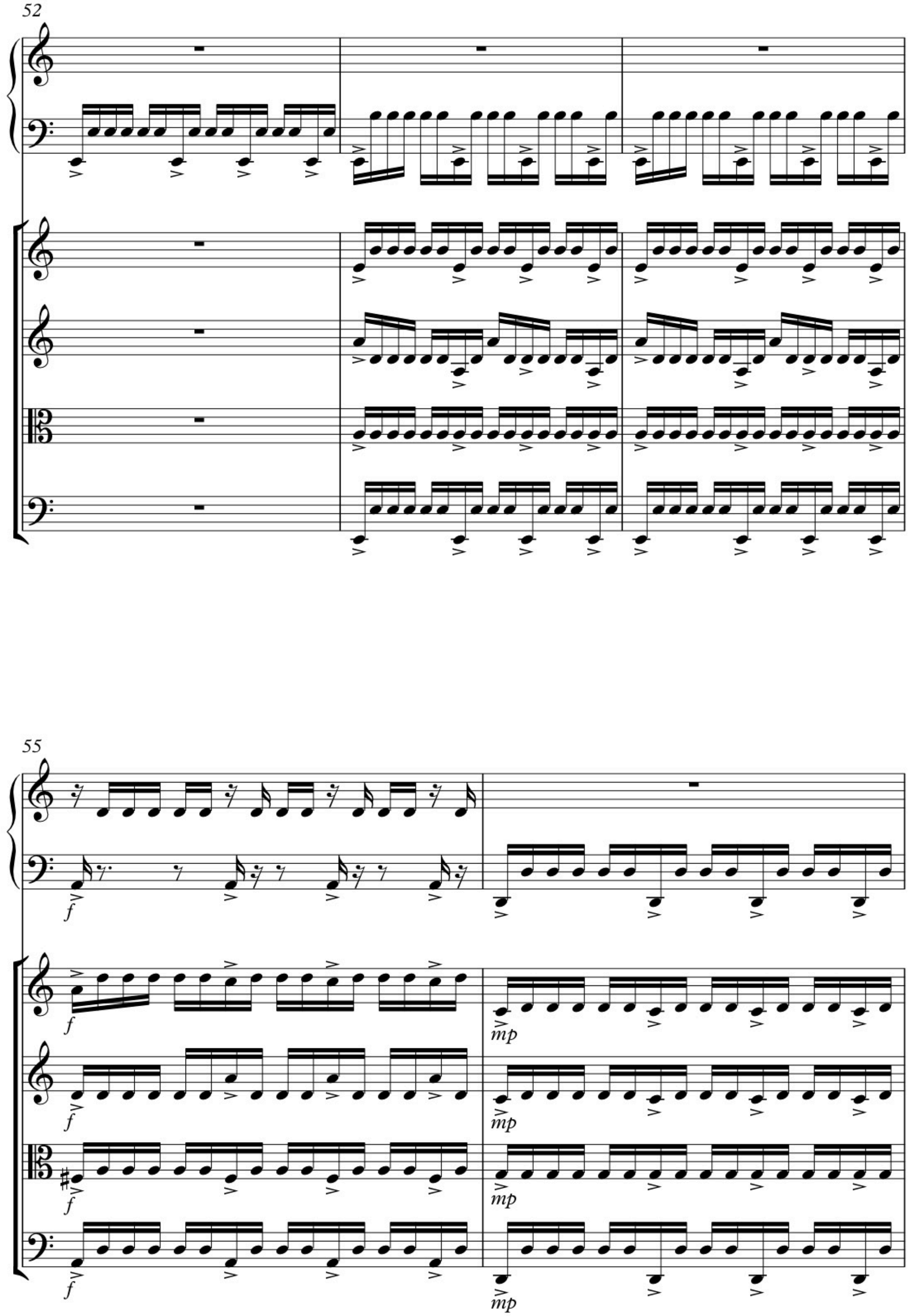

37
ff
mp
f
p
mf
p
ff
p
mf
p
ff
p
mf
p
ff
p
mf
p
ff

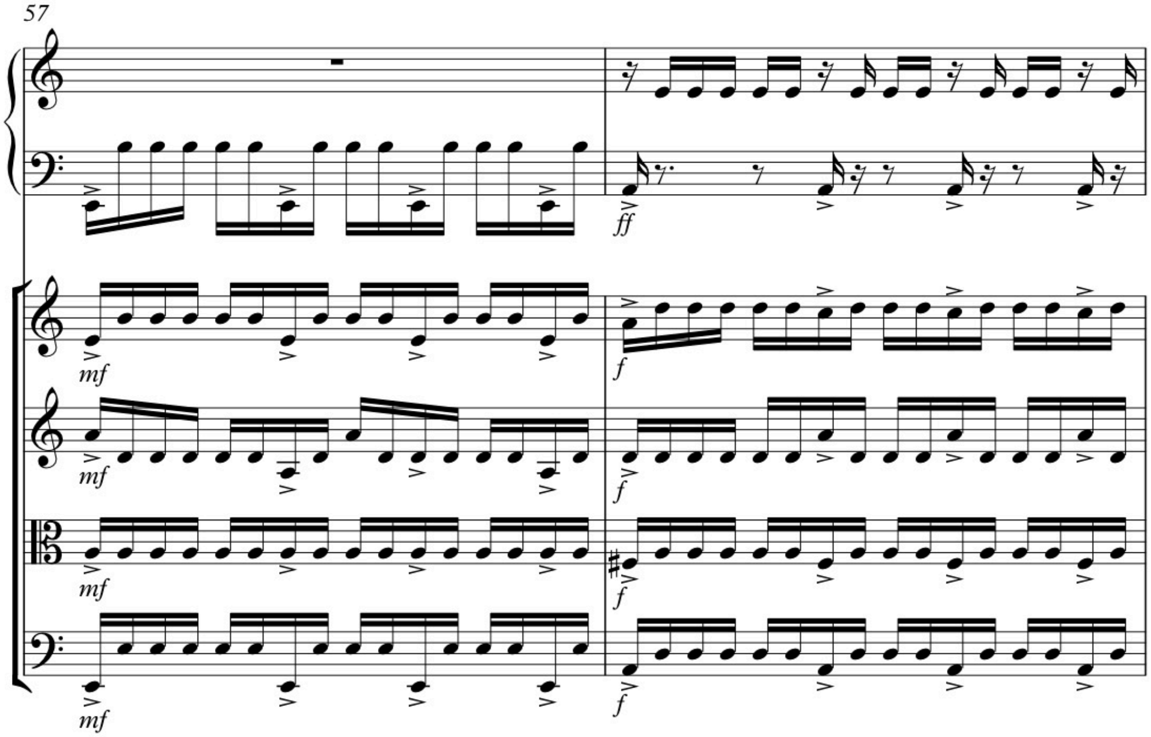

40
f
mf
mp
3
f
mf
mp

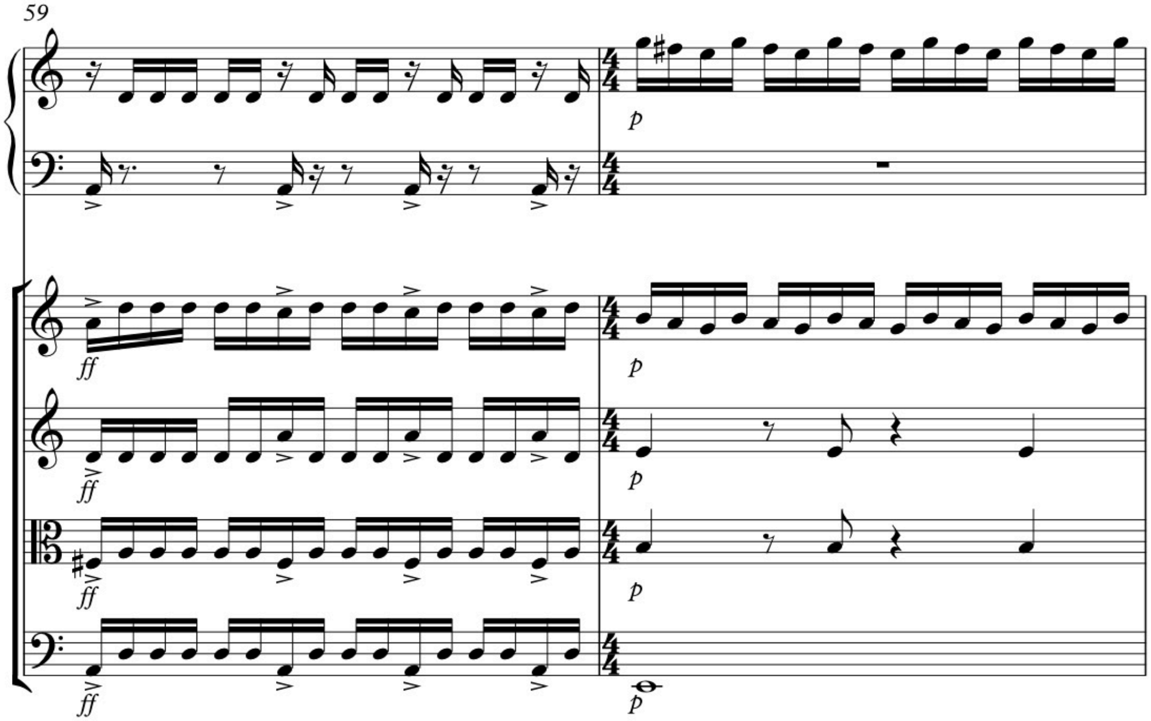

43
ff
f
mf
3

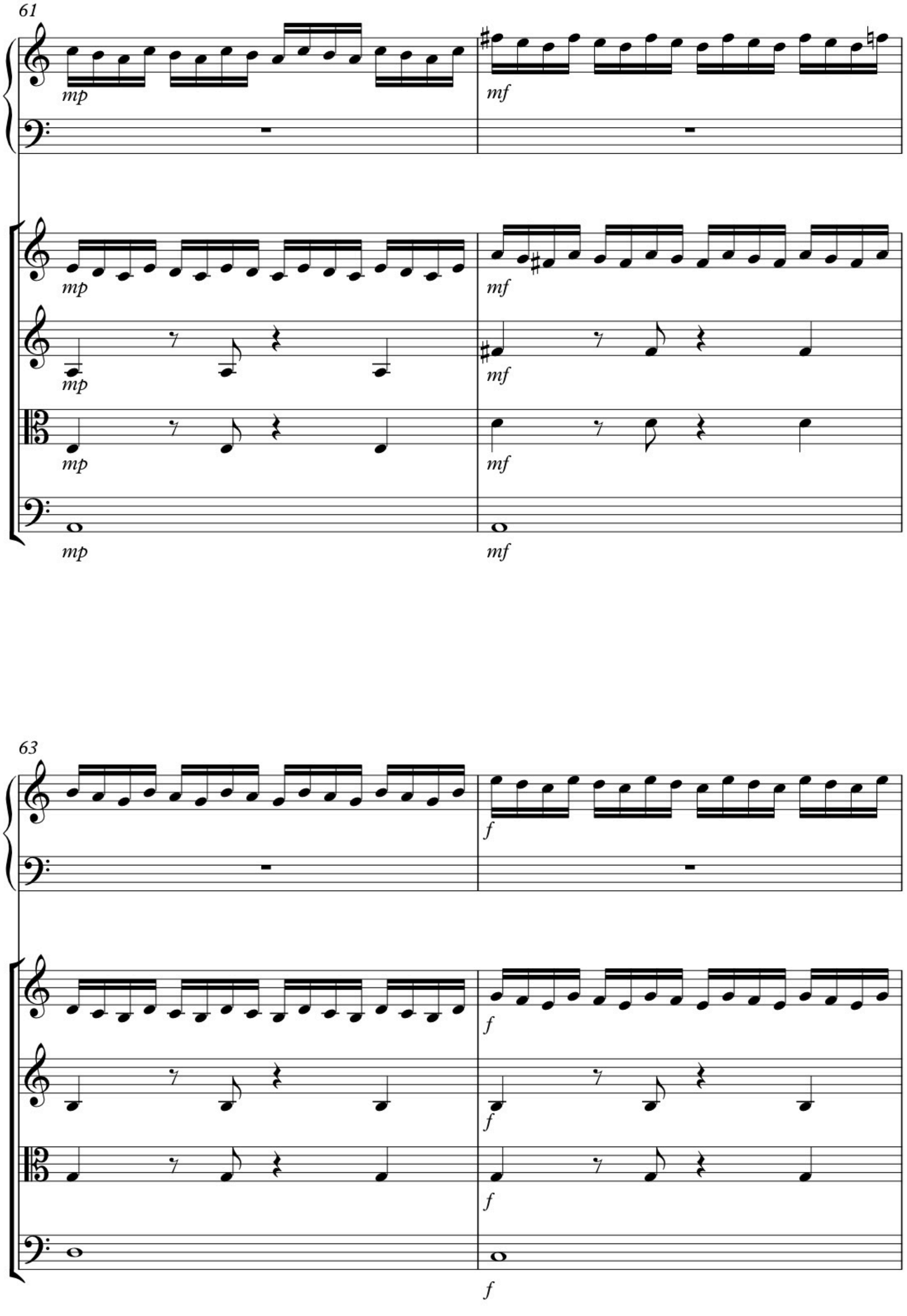

46
mp
ff
f
mp
p
mf
mf
mf
mp
mp
mp
p
p
p
3

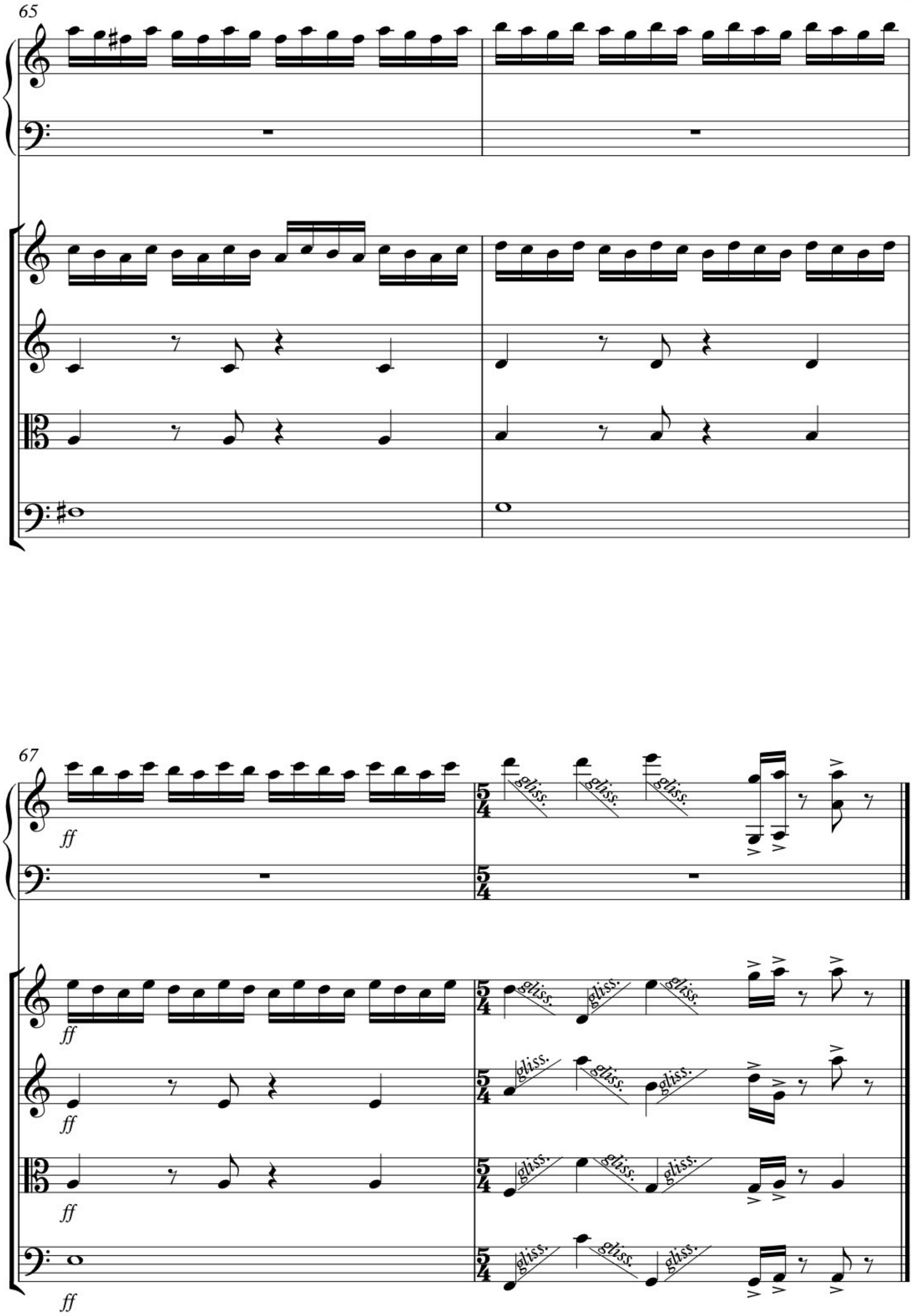

49
mf
f
mf
mf
f
mf
mf
mf
p
p
p
3

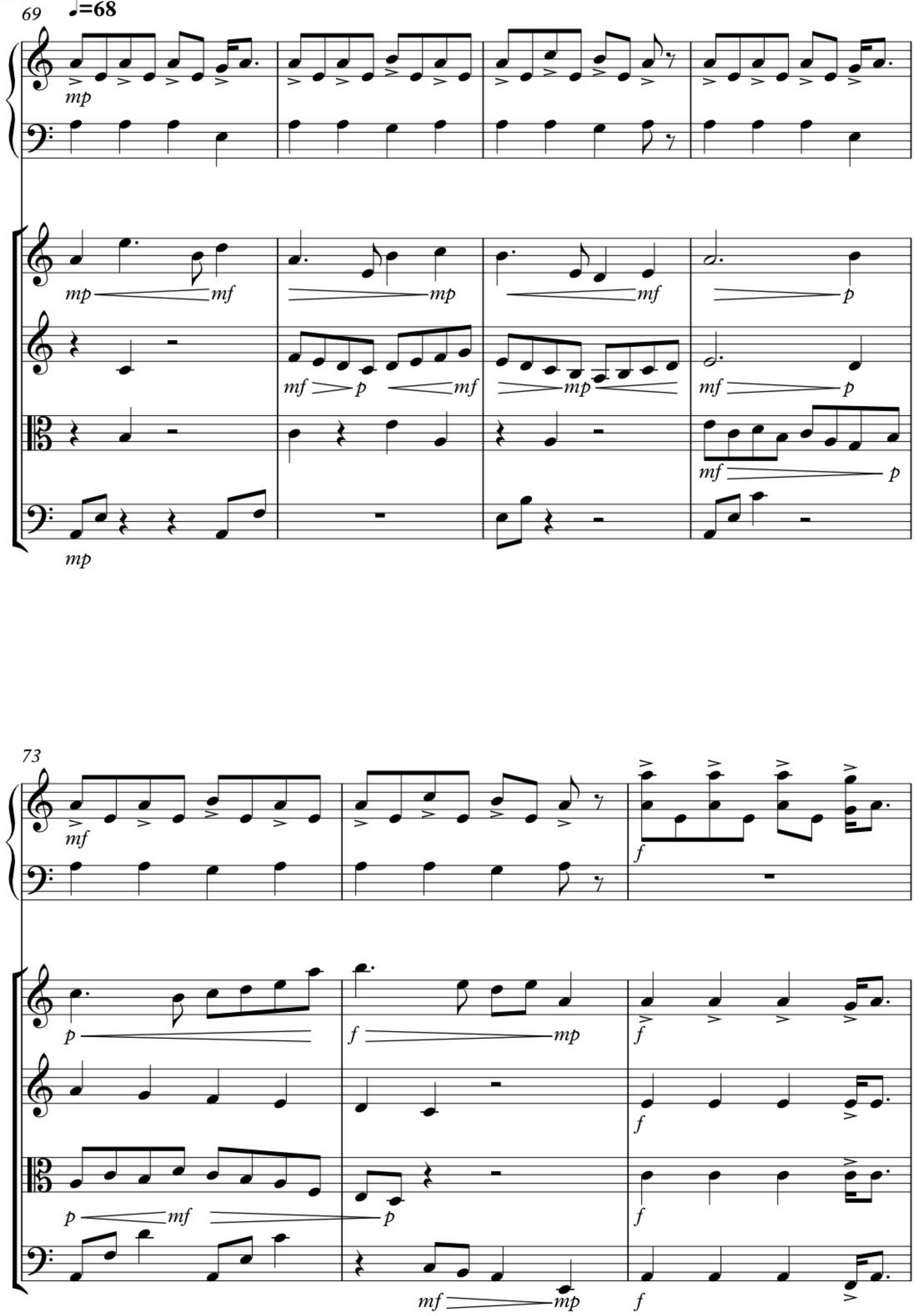

52
55
f
f
f
f
f
mp
mp
mp
mp

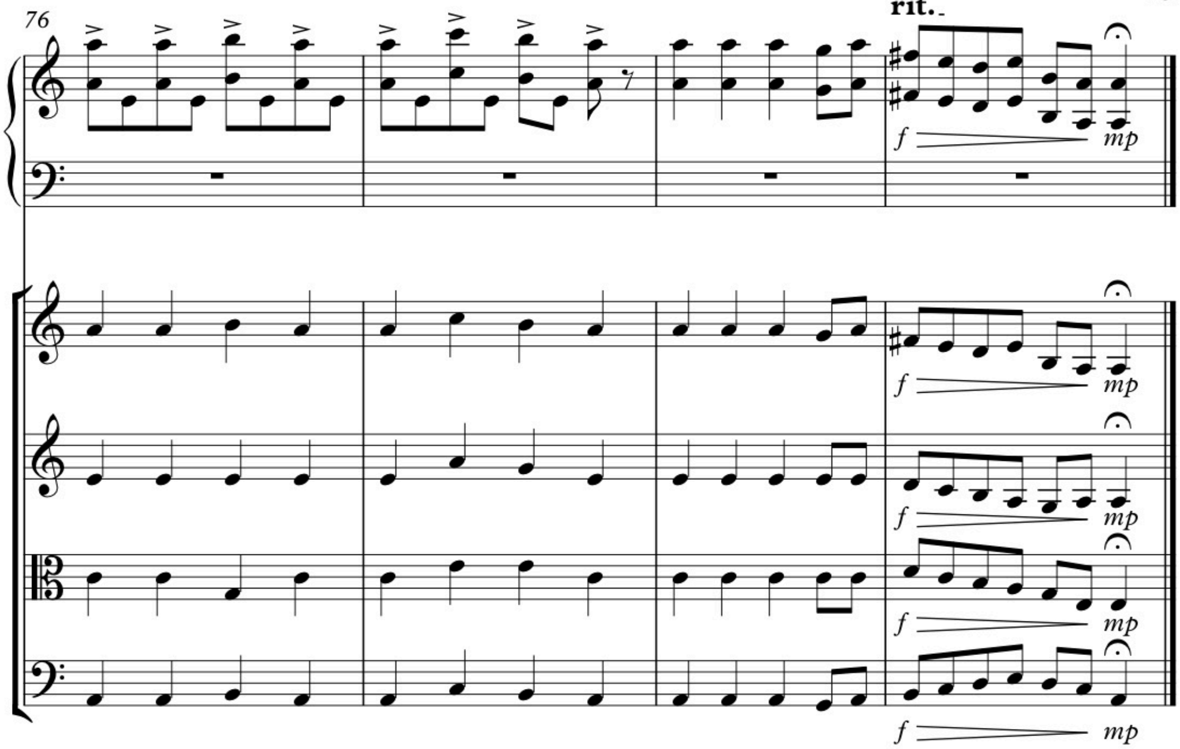

57
mf
mf
mf
mf
ff
f
f
f
f


59
ff
ff
ff
ff
p
p
p
p
p


61
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
63
f
f
f
f
f

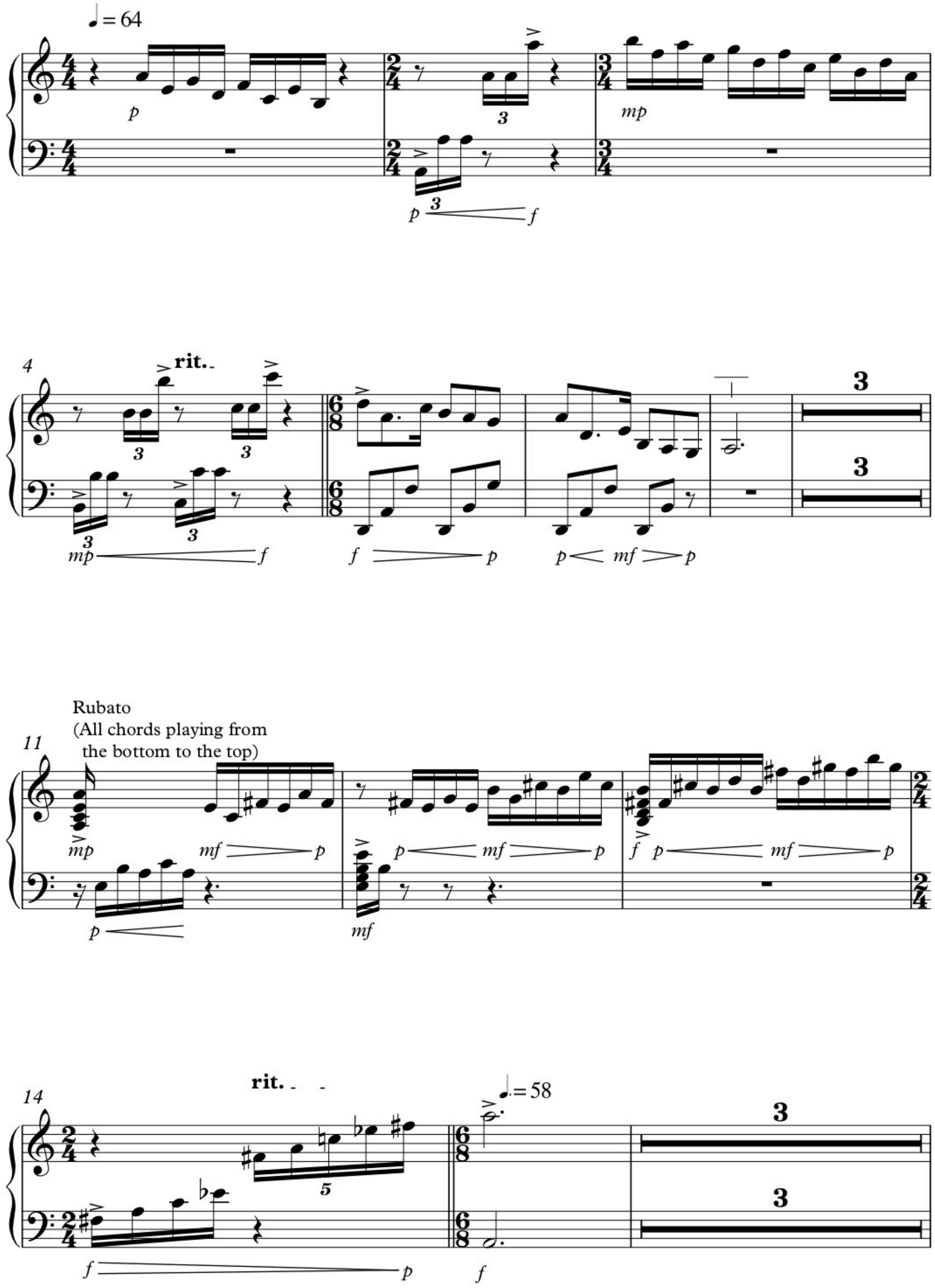

65
67
ff
ff
ff
ff
5
4
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.

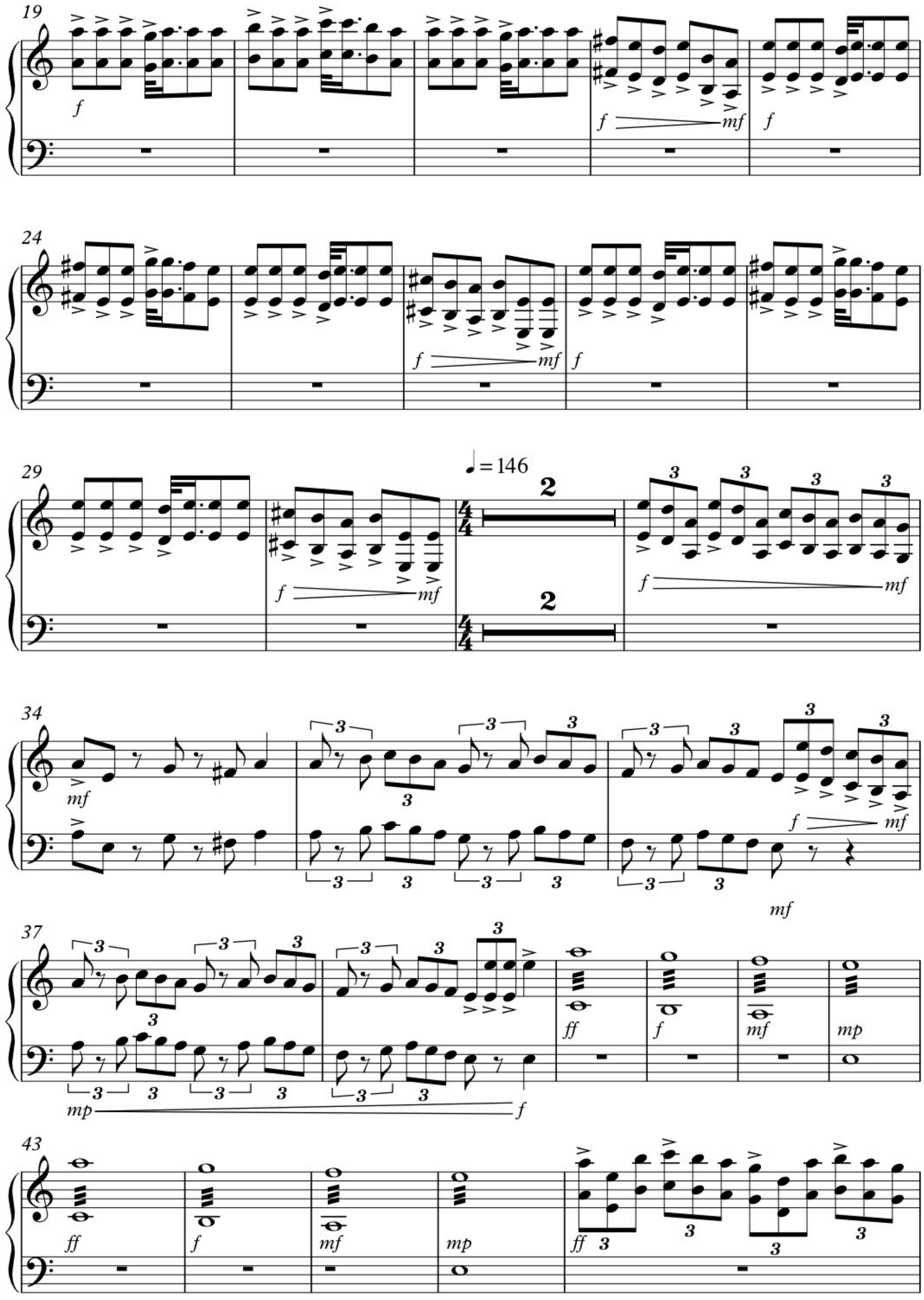

69
♩=68
mp
mp
mf
mp
mf
p
mf
p
mf
mp
mp
mf
p
mf
p
mp
73
mf
f
p
f
mp
f
f
p
mf
p
f
mf
mp
f


76
rit.
f
mp
f
mp
f
mp
f
mp
f
mp

Yangqin

Building the Walls


♩ = 64
p
mp
p
f
4
rit.
mp
f
f
p
p
mf
p
Rubato
(All chords playing from
the bottom to the top)
11
mp
mf
p
p
mf
p
p
f
p
mf
p
mf
14
rit.
♩. = 58
f
p
f
3
5


19
24
29
34
37
43
♩ = 146
2
4/4
f
mf
ff
mp
3

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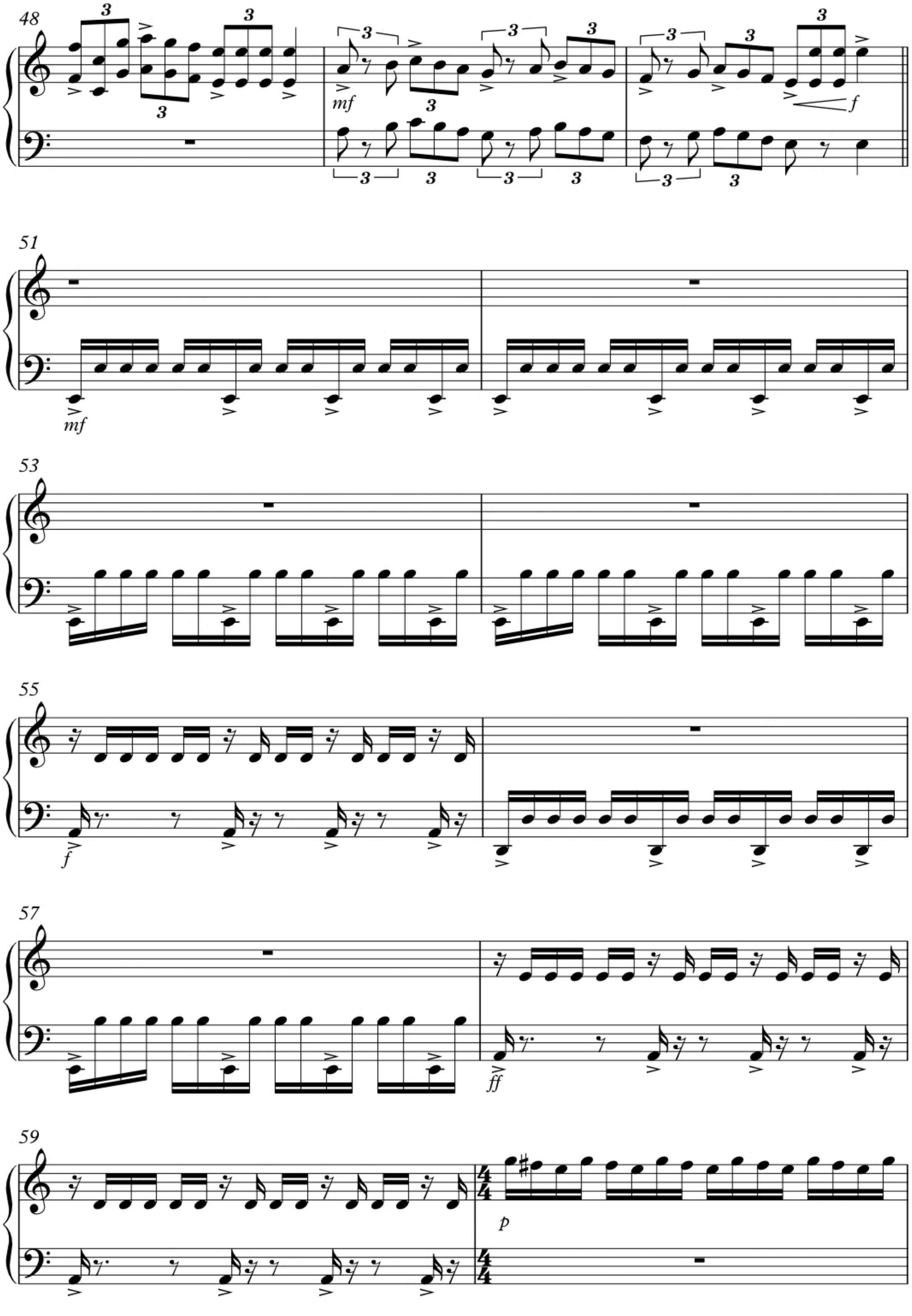
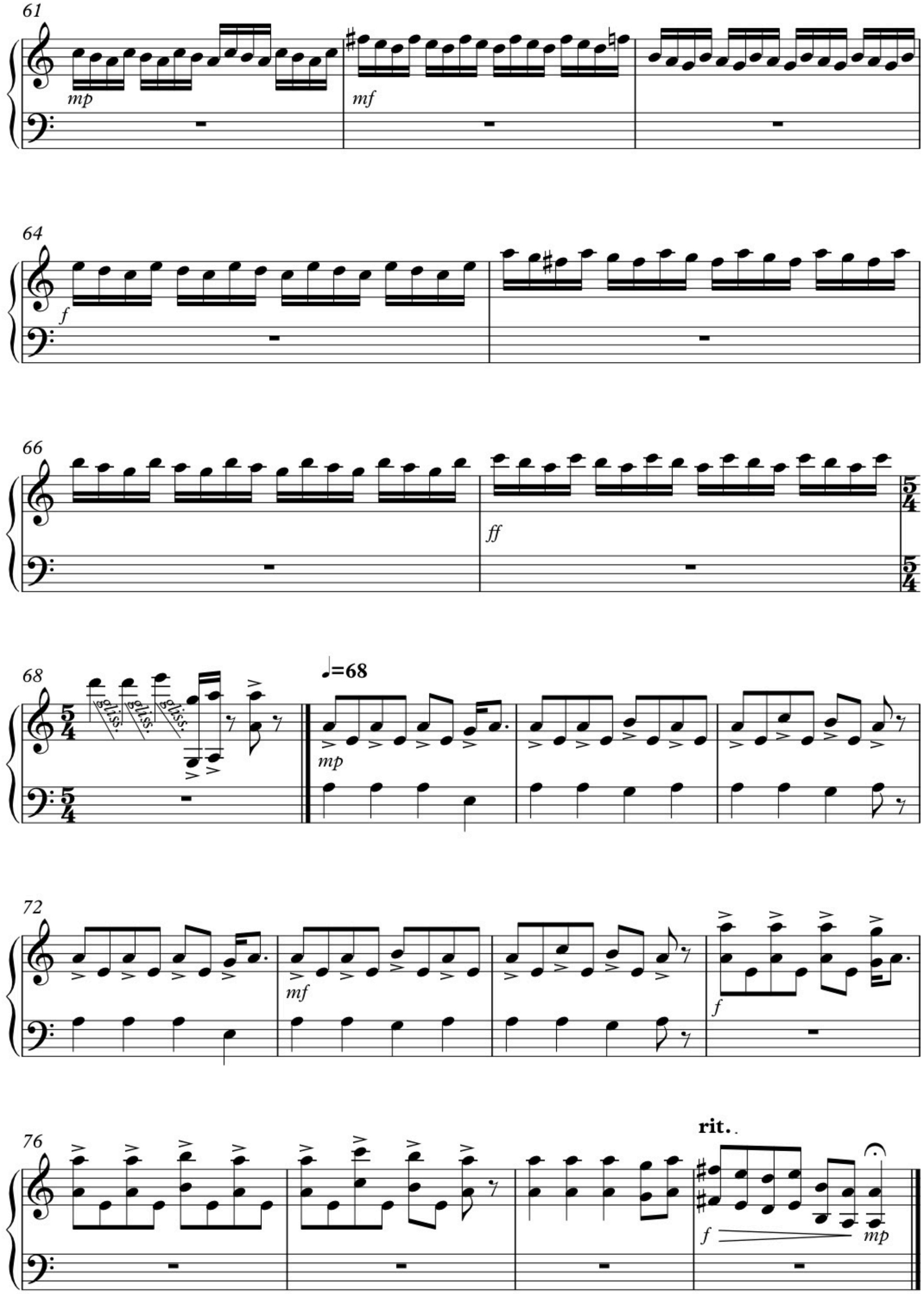

48
mf
f
51
mf
53
55
f
57
ff
59
p

V.S.

Copyright 2019 Di Zhang


61
mp
mf
64
f
66
ff
5/4
68
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
♩=68
mp
72
mf
f
76
rit.
f
mp

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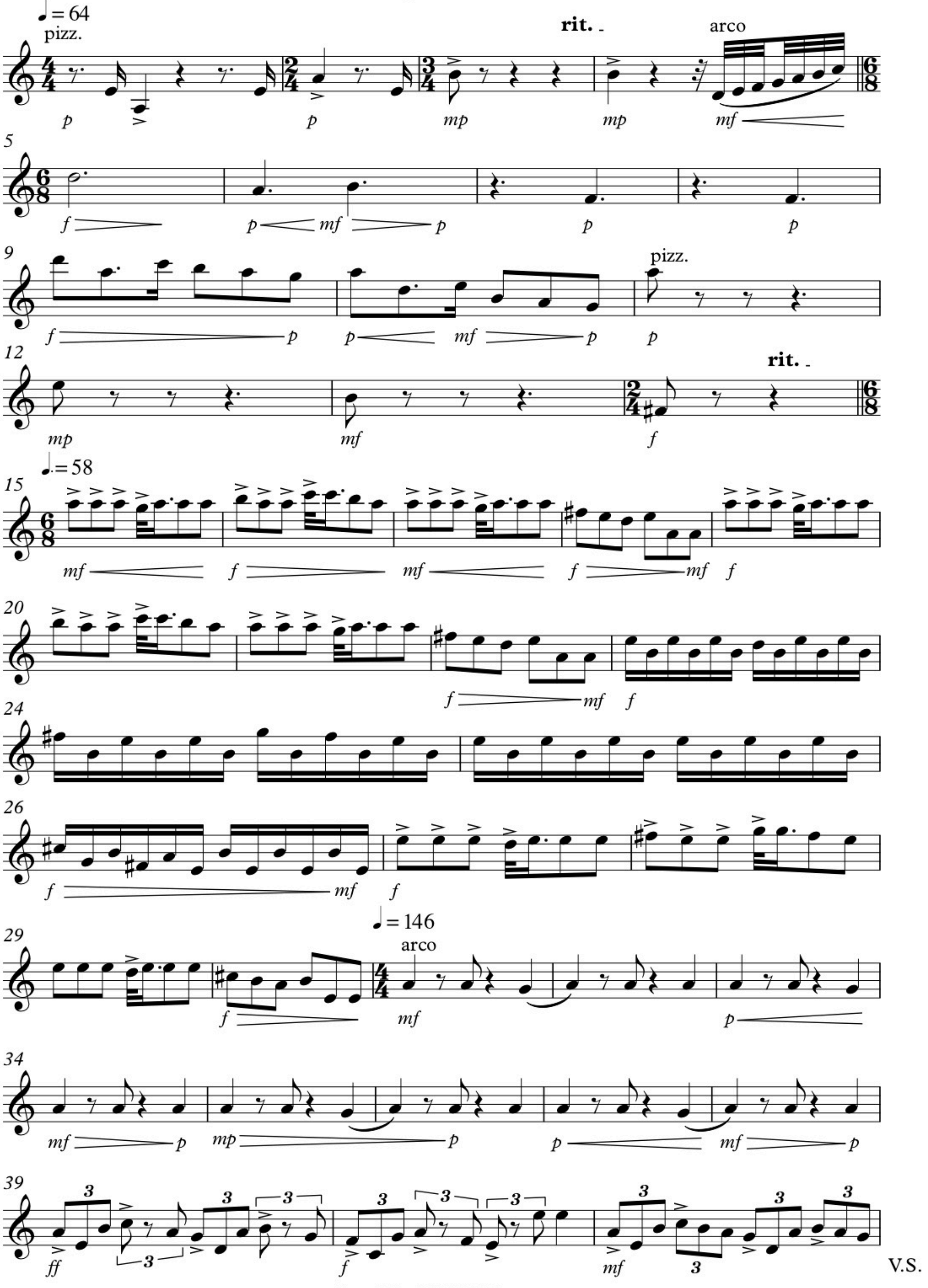
Building the Walls



♩= 64
pizz.
rit.
arco
p
p
mp
mp
mf
5
f
p
mf
p
p
p
9
f
p
p
mf
p
pizz.
p
12
mp
mf
rit.
f
♩.= 58
15
mf
f
mf
f
mf
f
20
f
mf
f
24
26
f
mf
f
29
♩= 146
arco
f
mf
p
34
mf
p
mp
p
p
mf
p
39
3
ff
f
mf
V.S.

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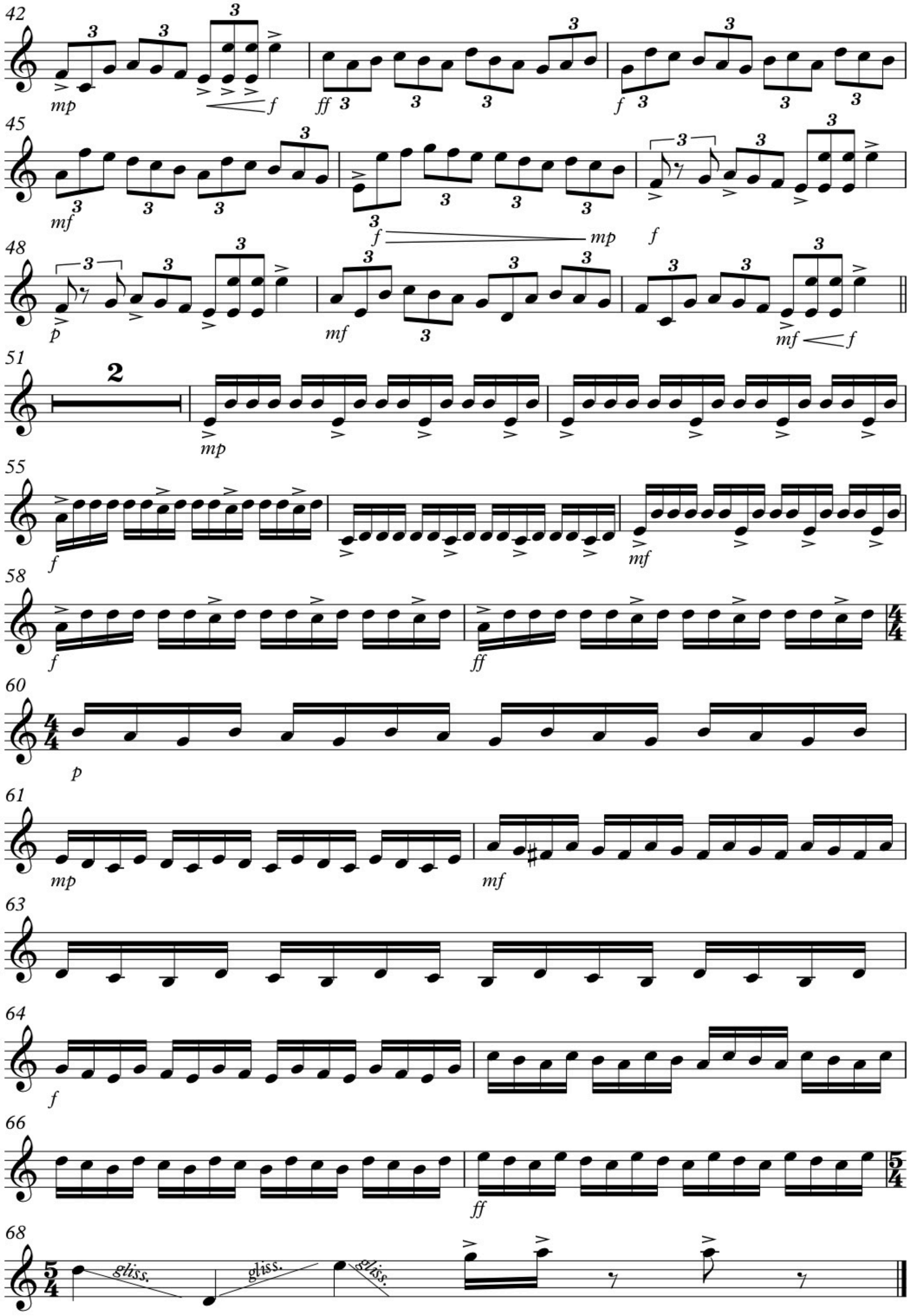
42
mp
f
ff
f
45
mf
f
mp
f
48
p
mf
mf
f
51
2
mp
55
f
mf
58
f
ff
60
p
61
mp
mf
63
64
f
66
ff
68
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.

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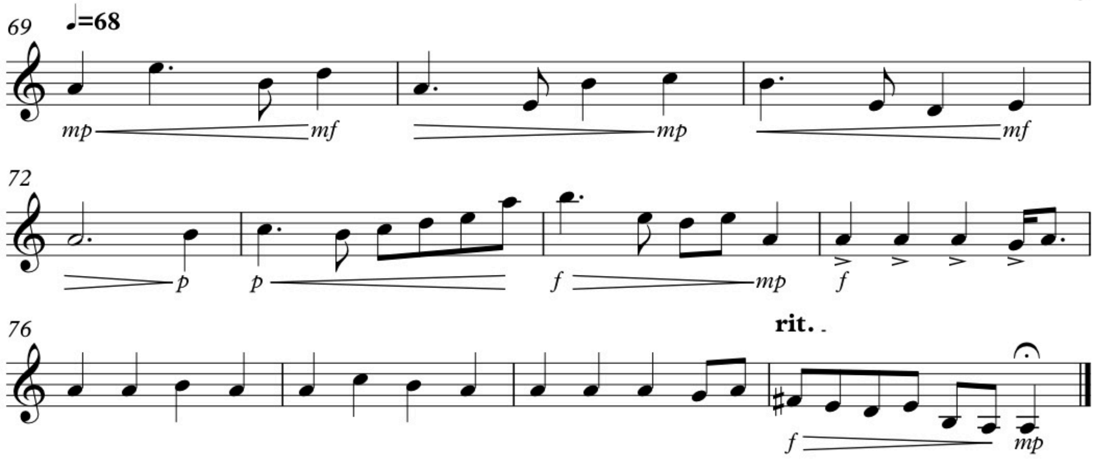
69
♩=68
mp
mf
mp
mf
72
p
p
f
mp
f
76
rit.
f
mp

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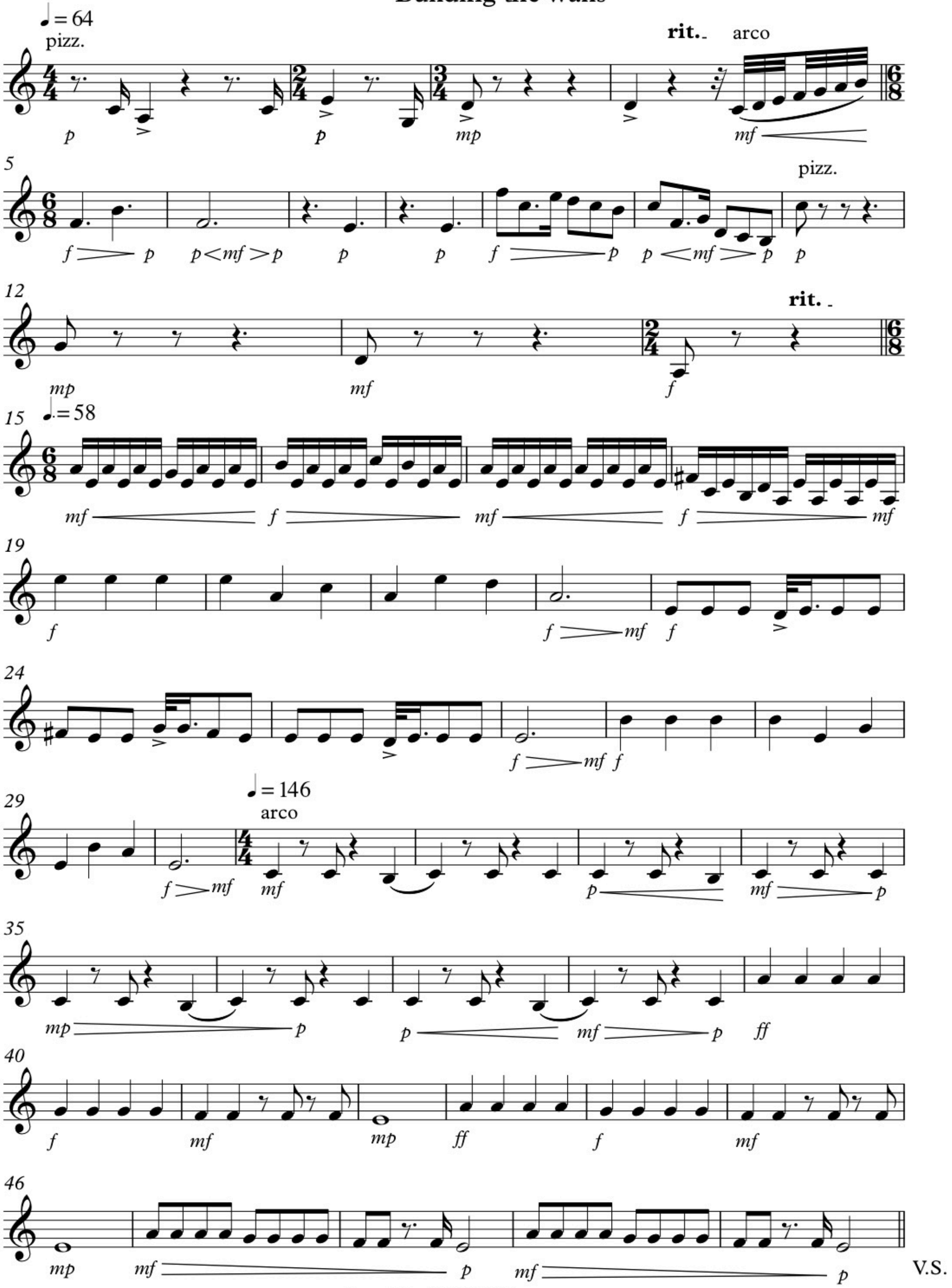
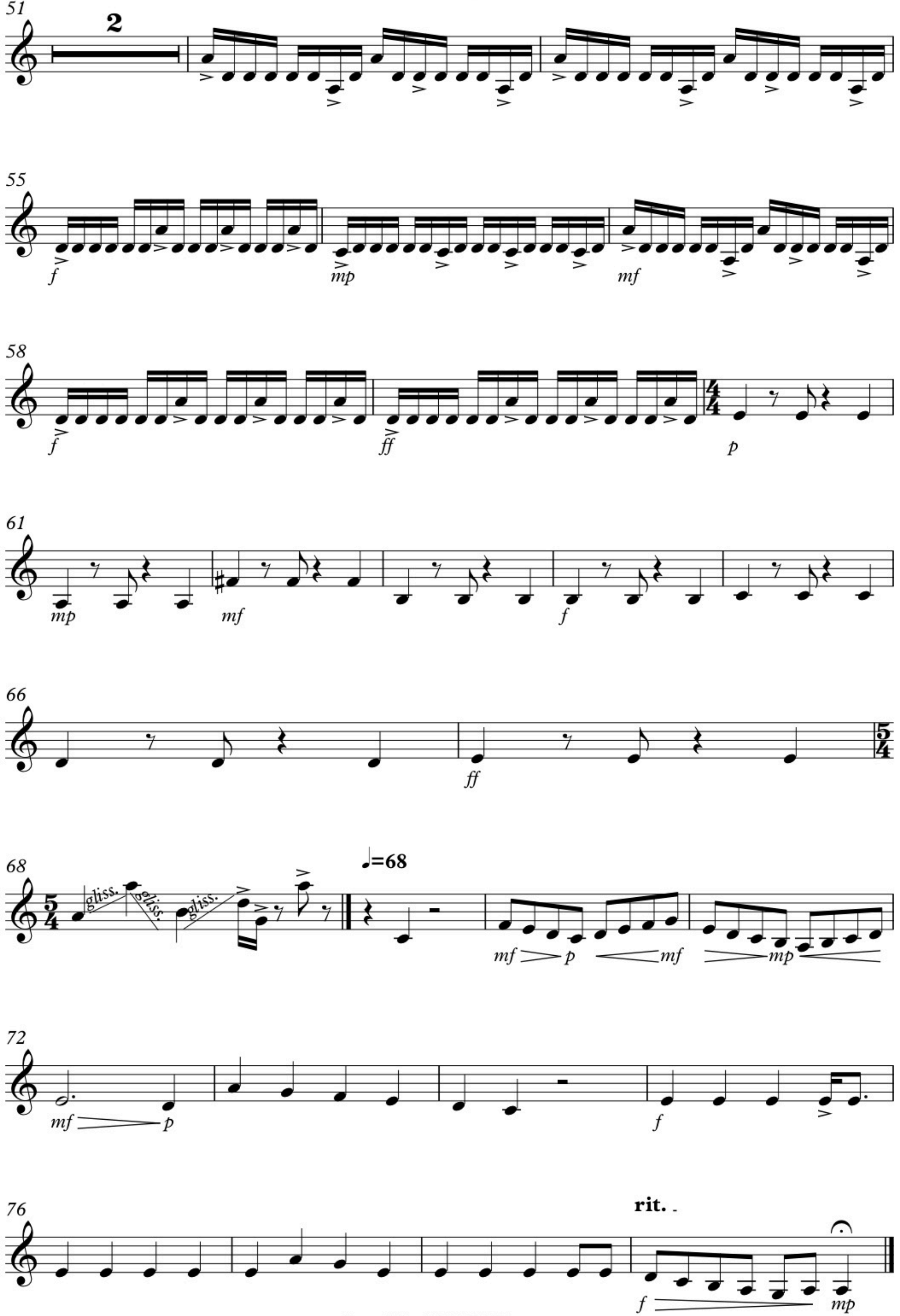
Violin II

Building the Walls


♩= 64
pizz.
p
p
mp
rit.
arco
mf
5
f
p
p
mf
p
p
p
f
p
p
mf
p
pizz.
p
12
mp
mf
rit.
f
15
♩.= 58
mf
f
mf
f
mf
19
f
f
mf
f
24
f
mf
f
29
♩= 146
arco
f
mf
mf
p
mf
p
35
mp
p
p
mf
p
ff
40
f
mf
mp
ff
f
mf
46
mp
mf
p
mf
p
V.S.

Copyright 2019 Di Zhang


51
2
55
f
mp
mf
58
f
ff
p
61
mp
mf
f
66
ff
68
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
♩=68
mf
p
mf
mp
72
mf
p
f
76
rit.
f
mp

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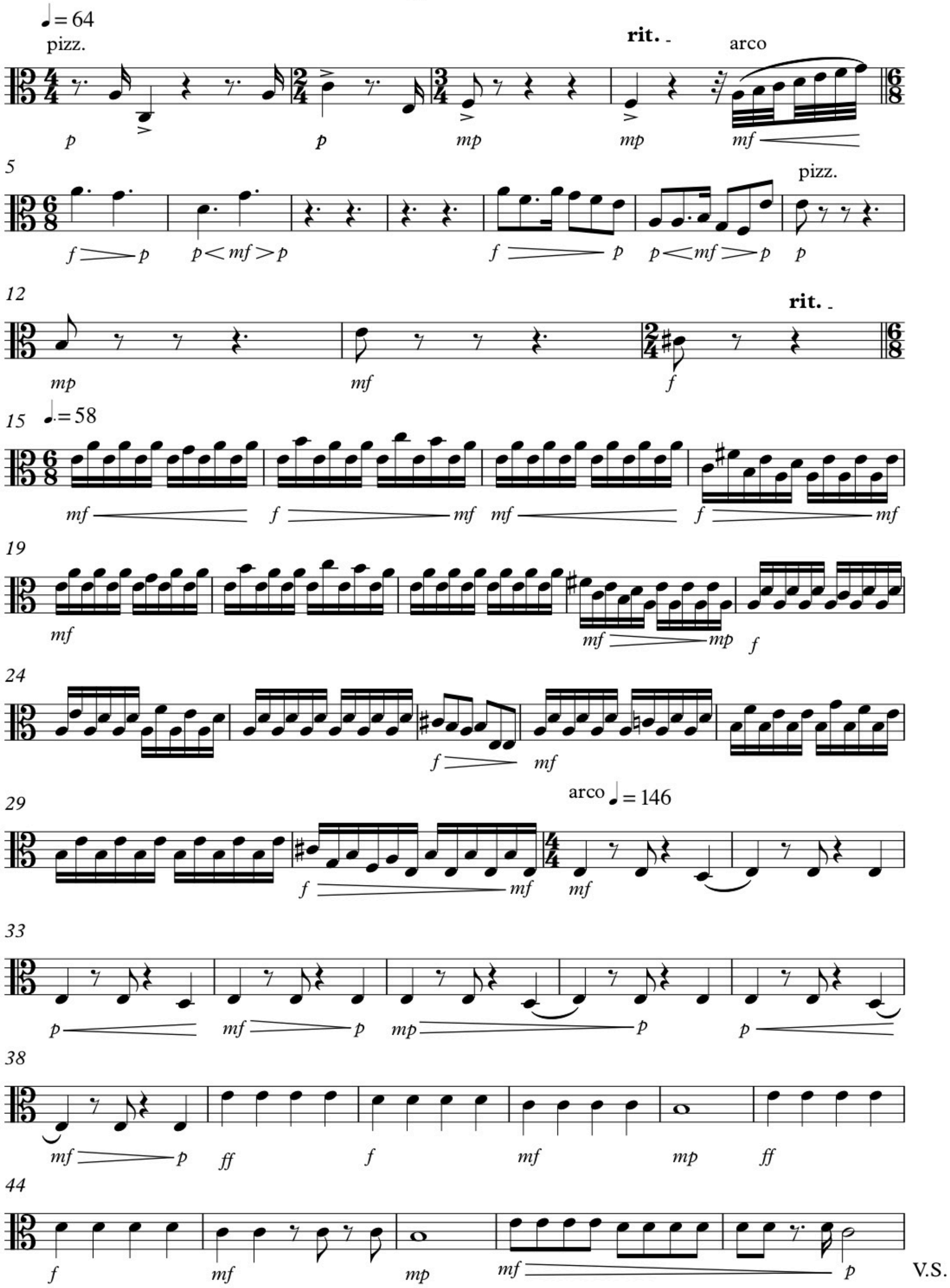
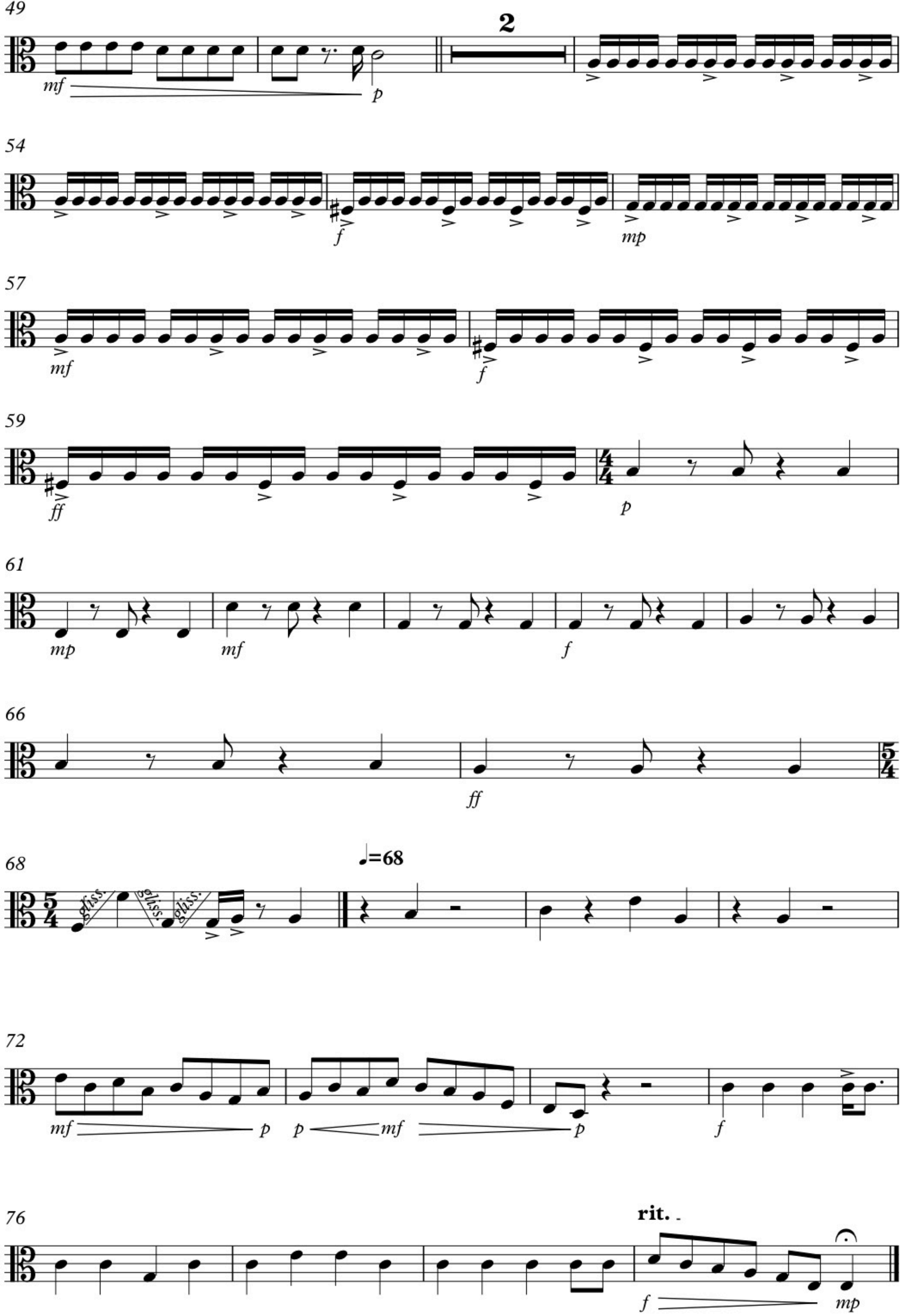
Viola

Building the Walls


♩= 64
pizz.
rit.
arco
p
mp
mf
5
f
pizz.
12
rit.
15
♩.= 58
19
24
29
arco ♩= 146
33
38
44
ff
V.S.

Copyright 2019 Di Zhang


49
mf
p
2
54
f
mp
57
mf
f
59
ff
4/4
p
61
mp
mf
f
66
ff
5/4
68
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
♩=68
72
mf
p
p
mf
p
f
76
rit.
f
mp

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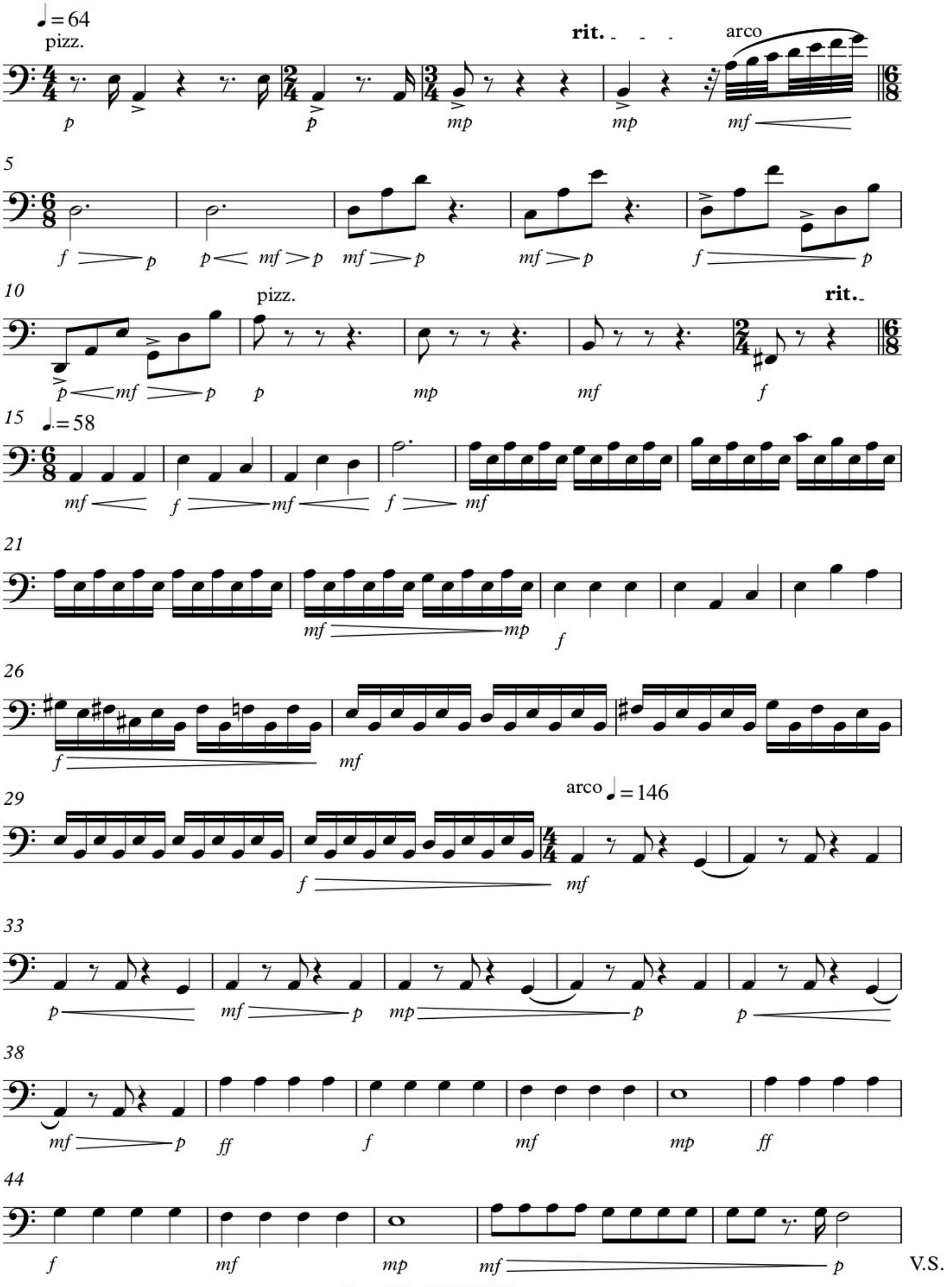
Violoncello

Building the Walls


♩= 64
pizz.
rit.
arco
p
mp
mf
5
f
10
pizz.
rit.
15
♩.= 58
21
26
29
arco ♩= 146
33
38
ff
44
V.S.

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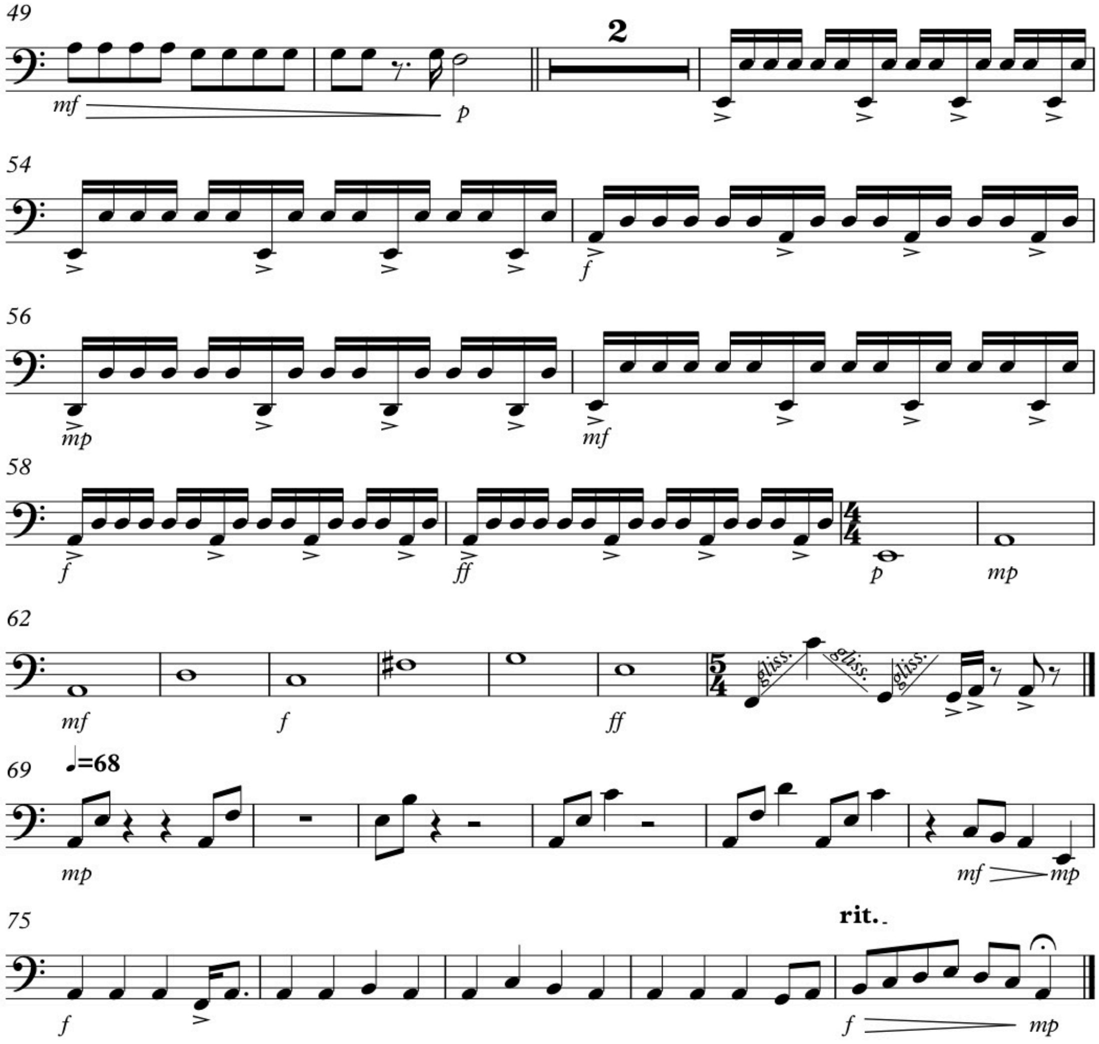
49
mf
p
2
54
f
56
mp
mf
58
f
ff
p
mp
62
mf
f
ff
gliss.
gliss.
gliss.
69
♩.=68
mp
mf
mp
75
rit.
f
f
mp

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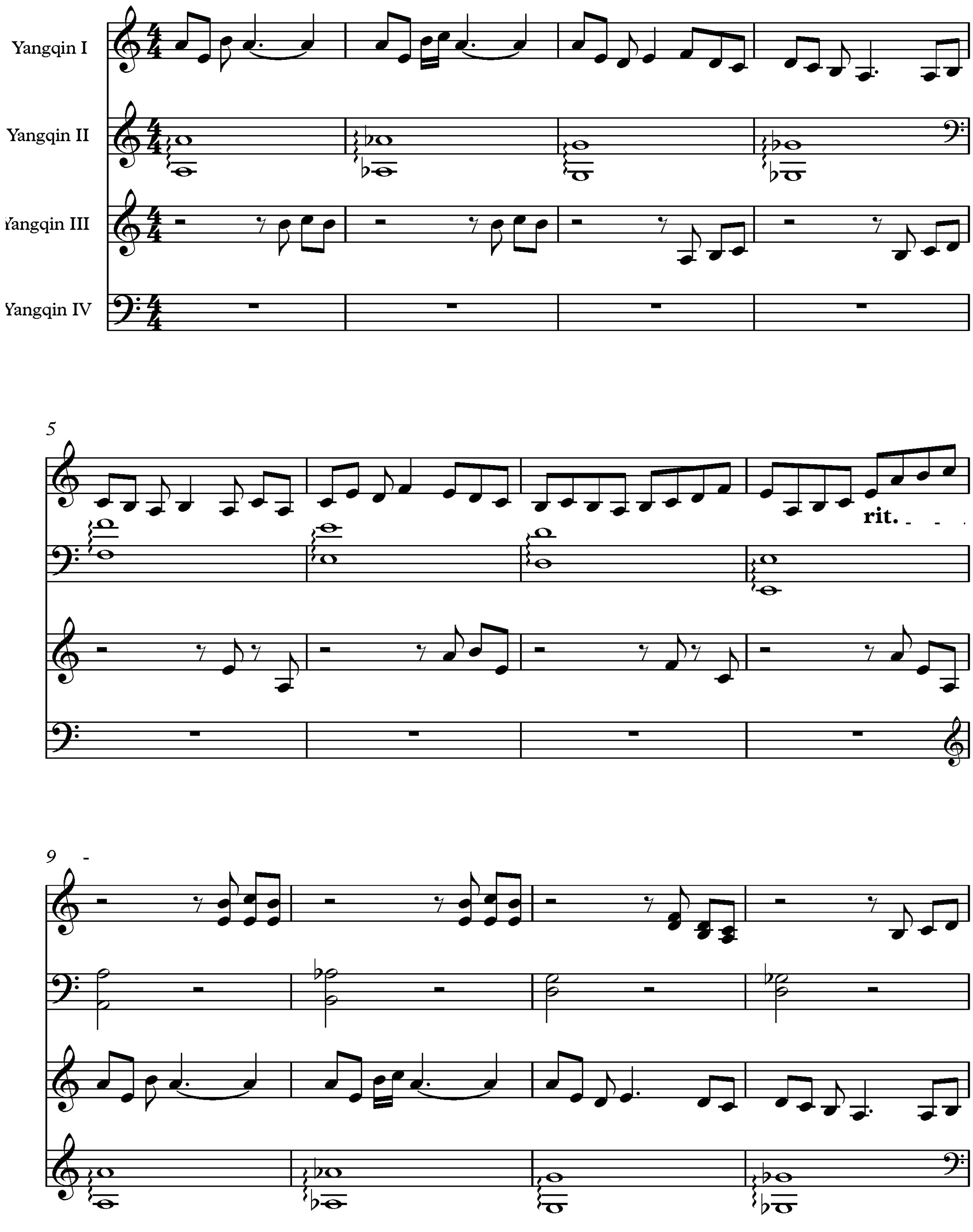
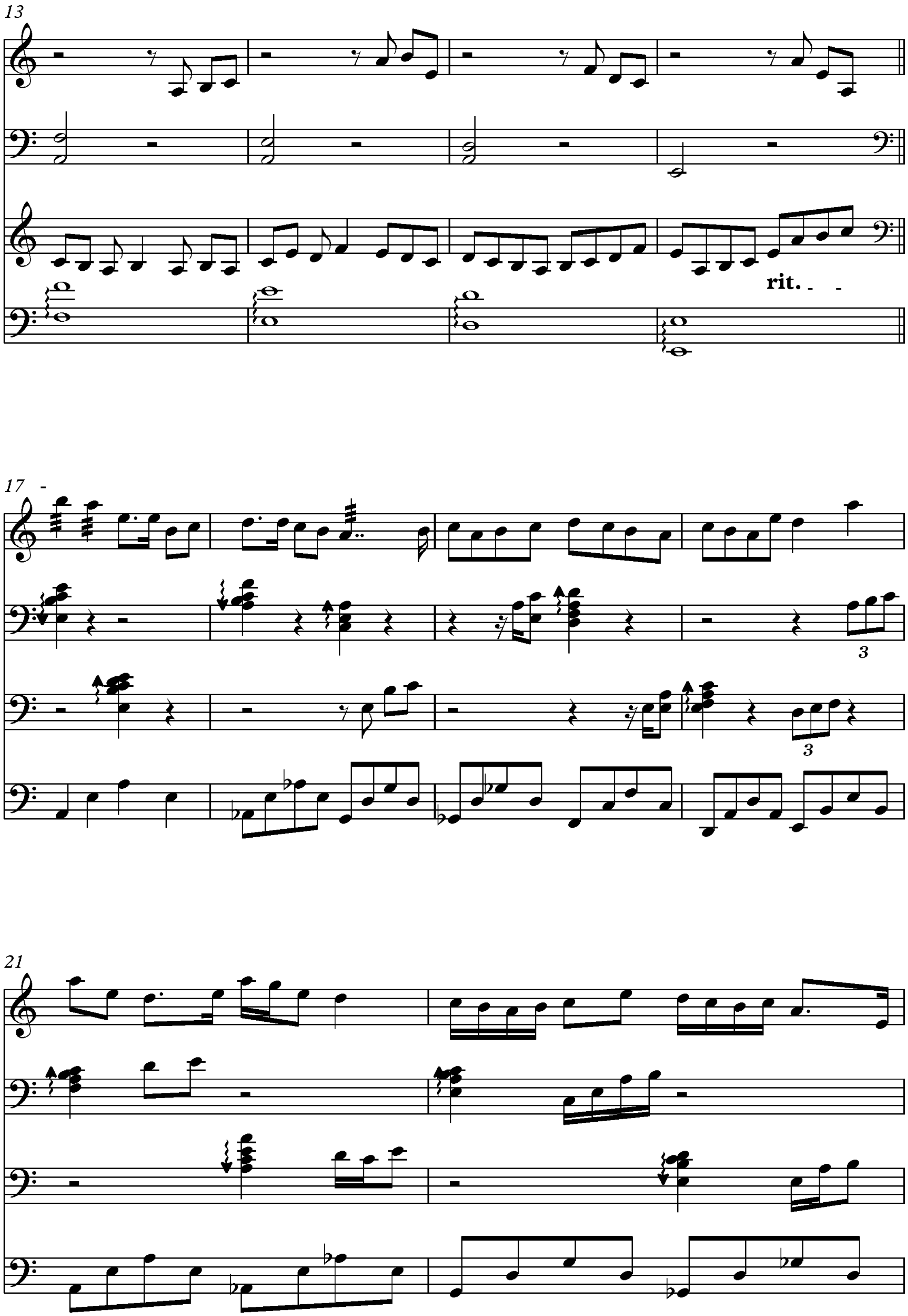
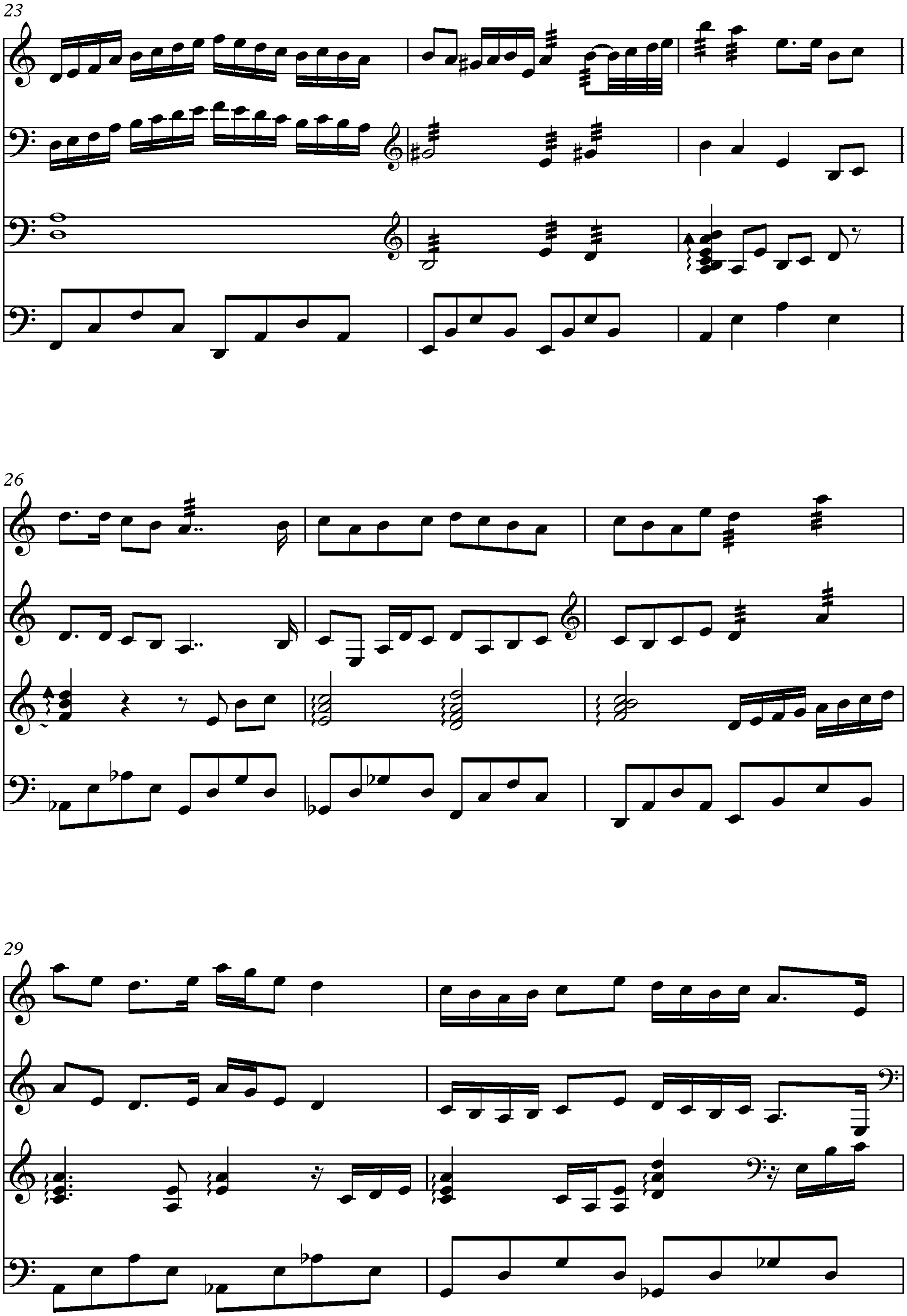
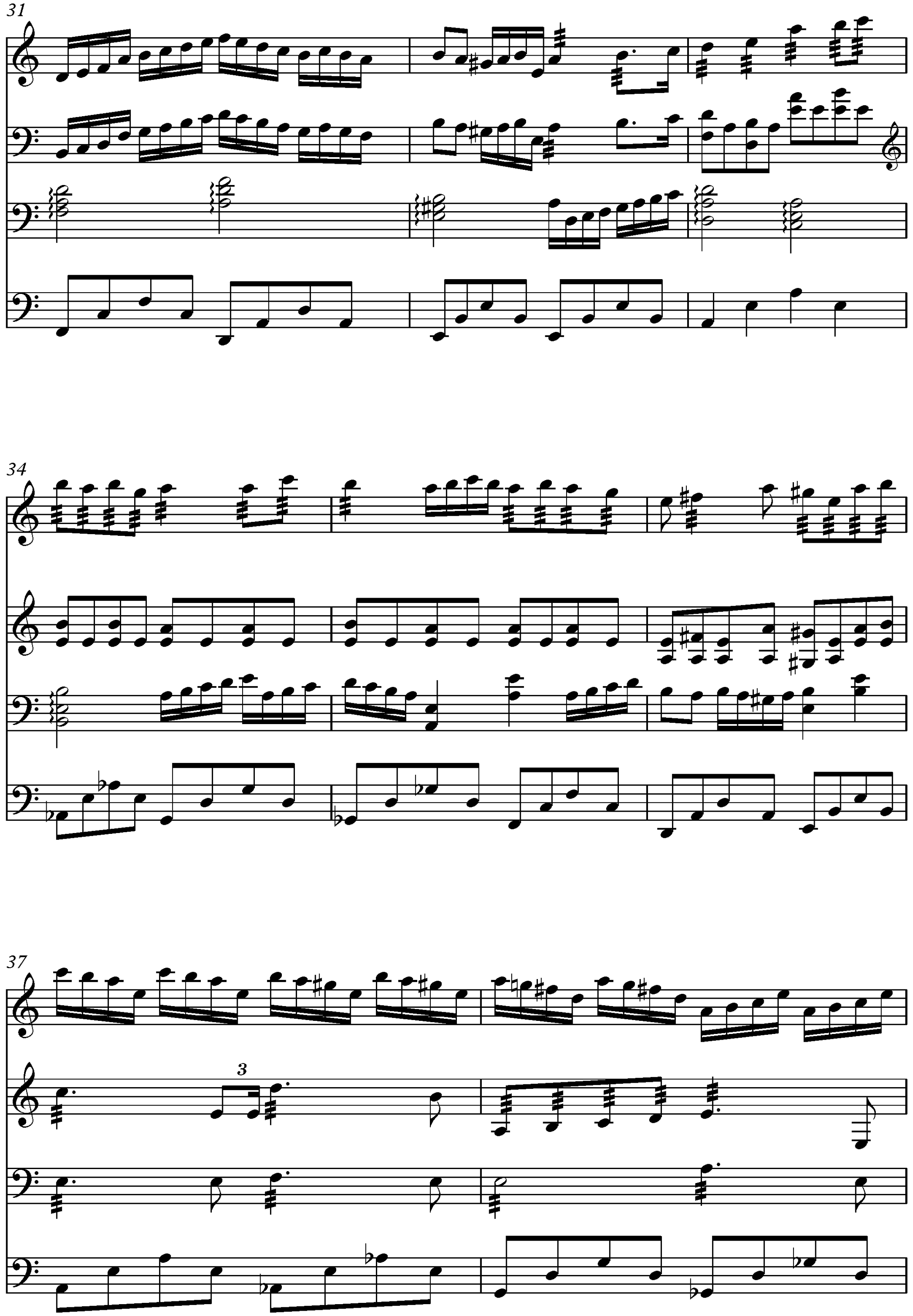
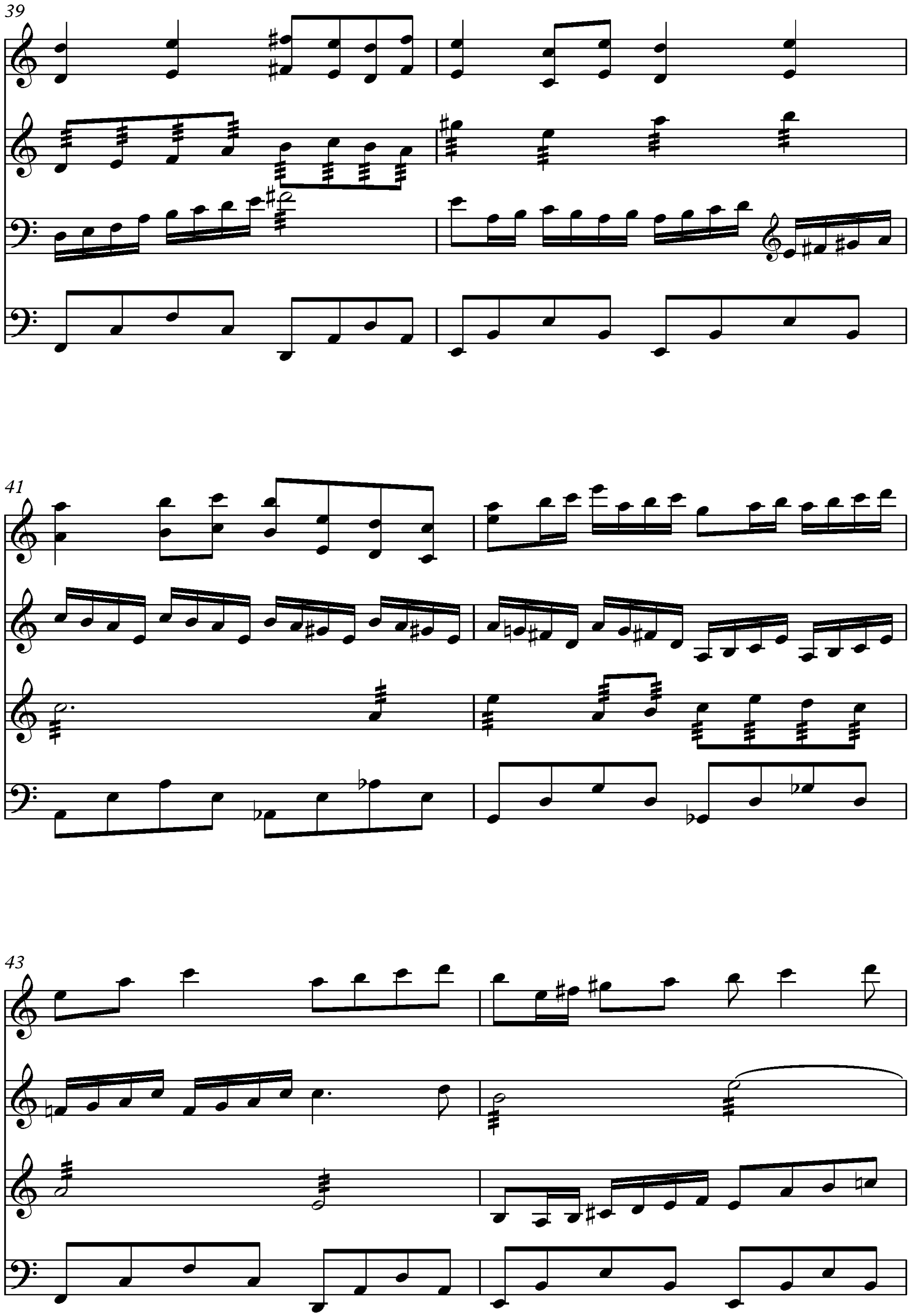
Rolling

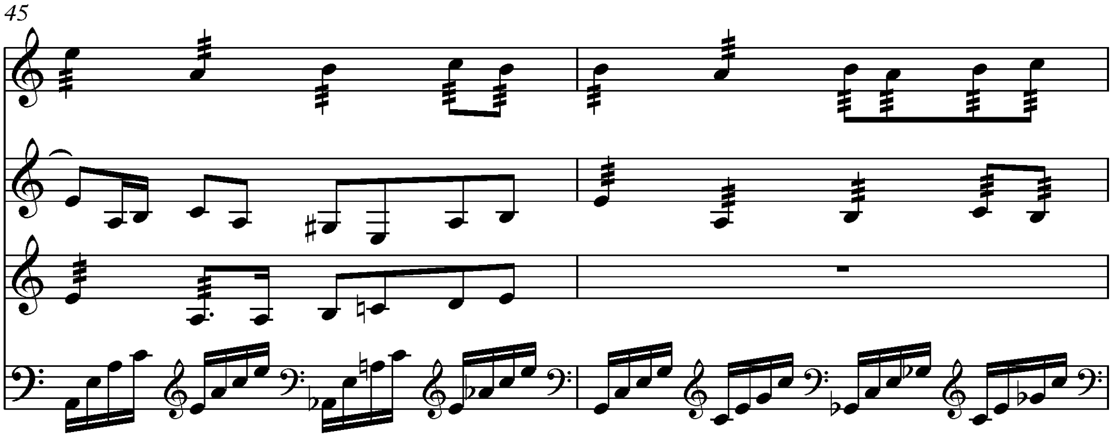

Yangqin I
Yangqin II
Yangqin III
Yangqin IV
5
rit.
9

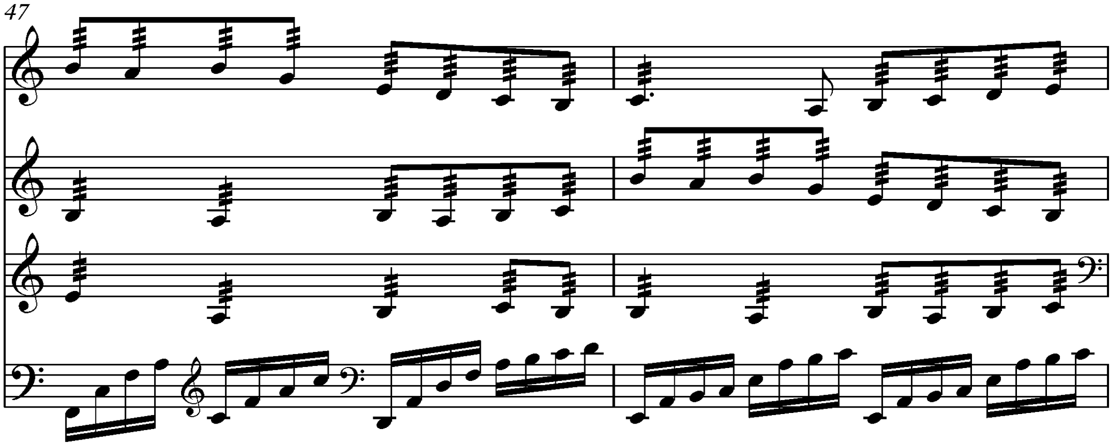

rit.

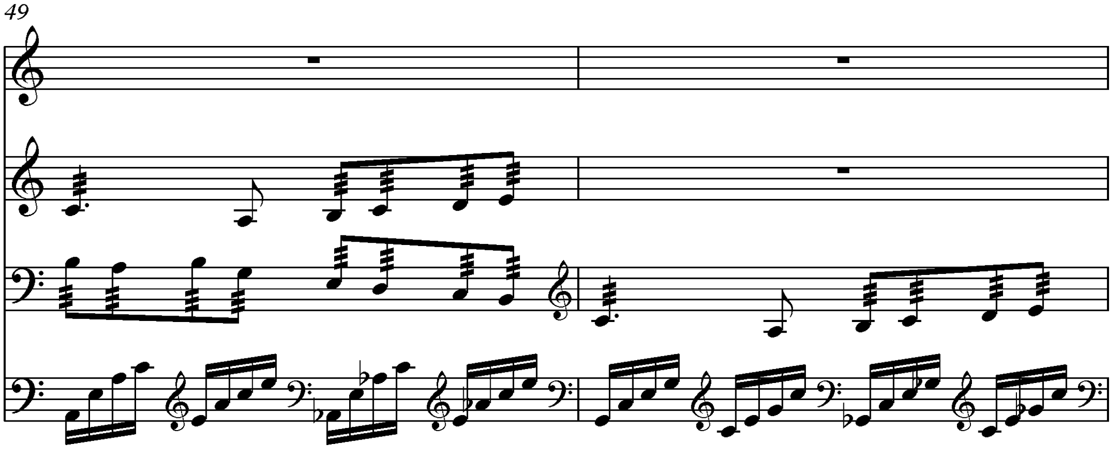


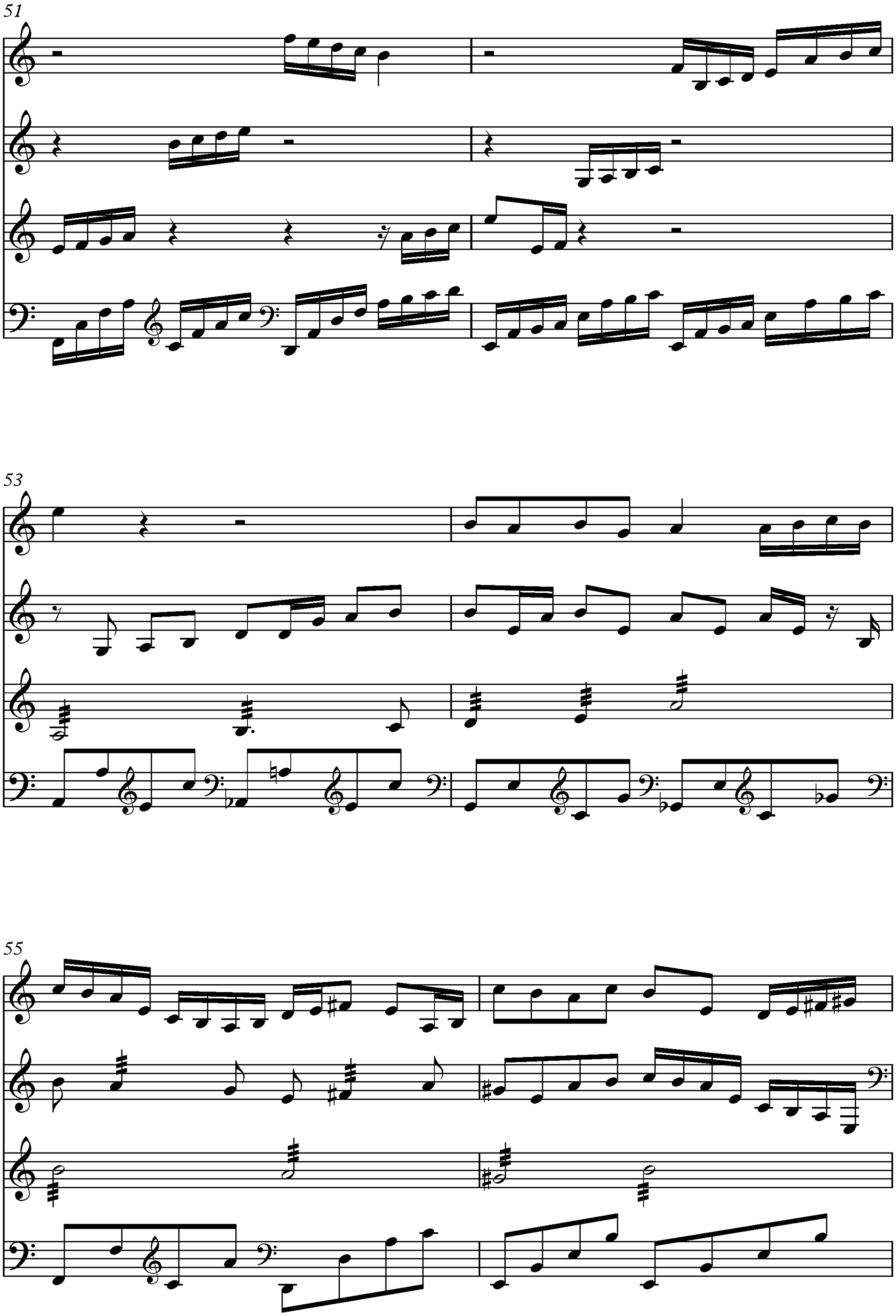


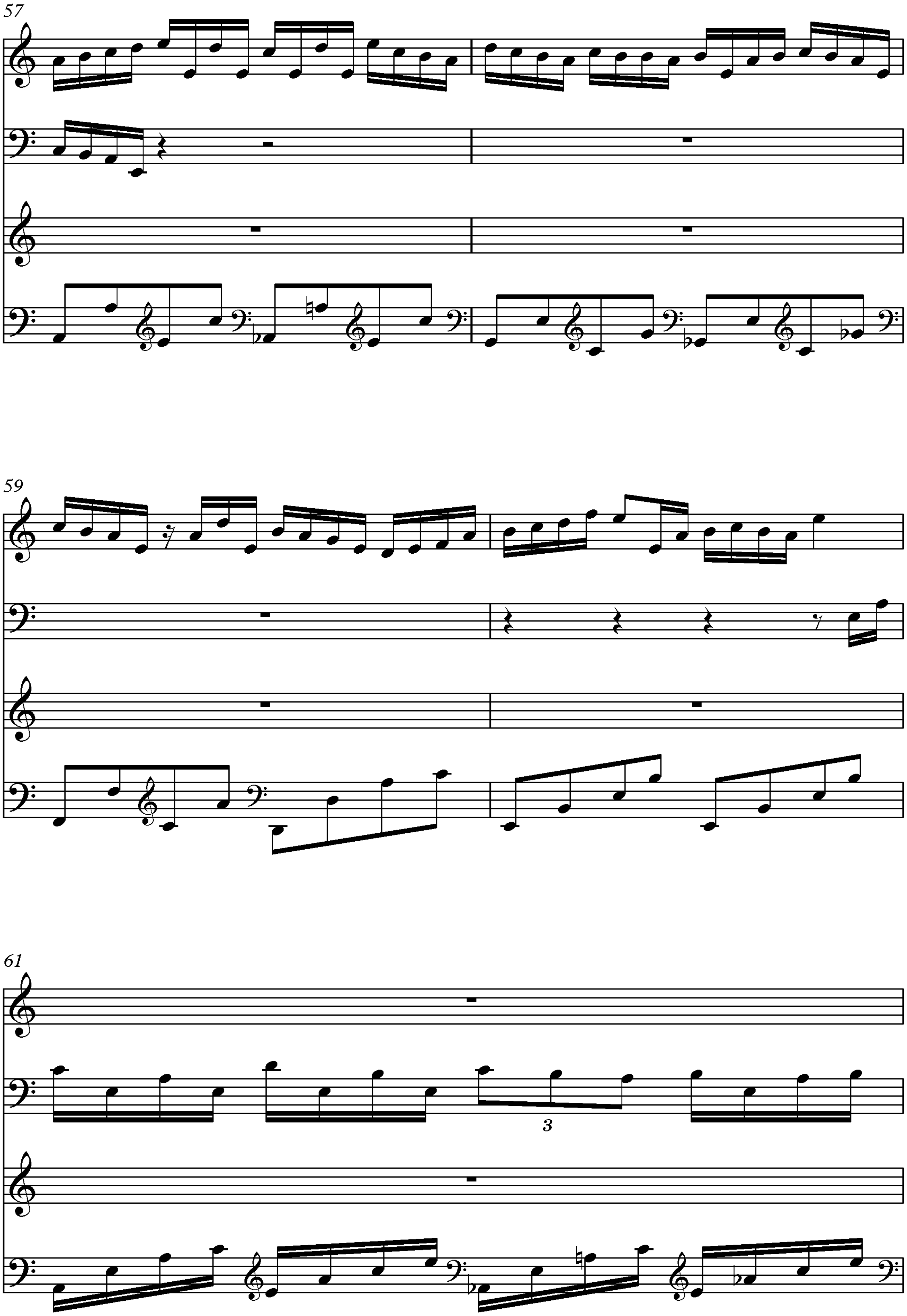


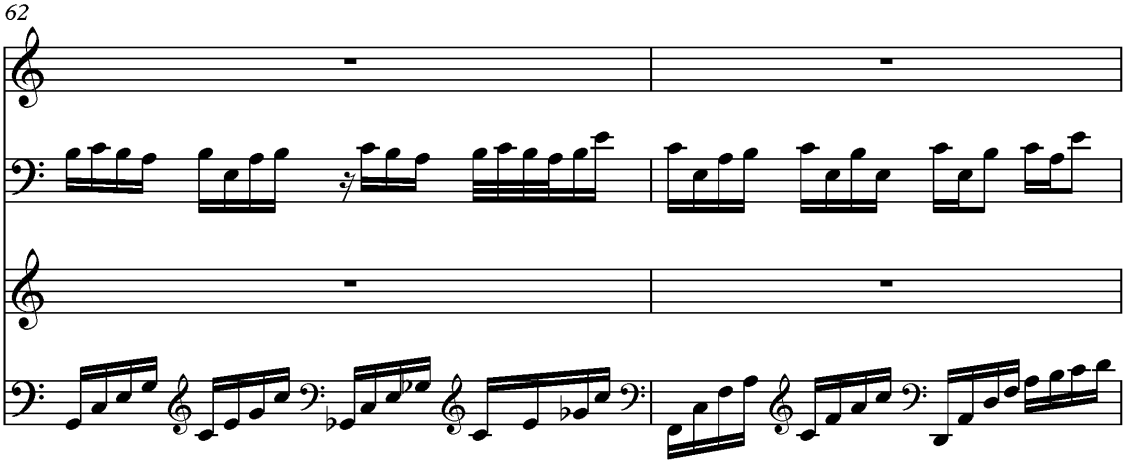

45

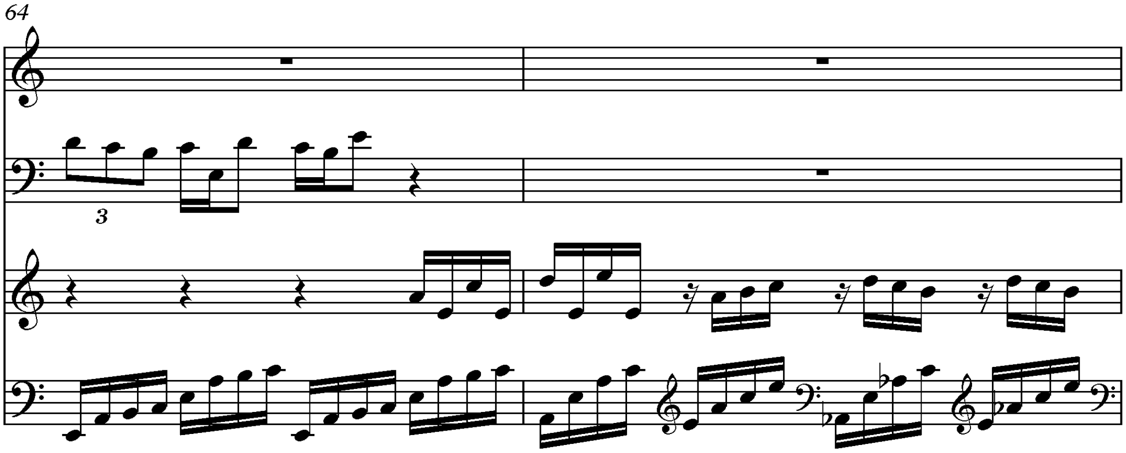

47

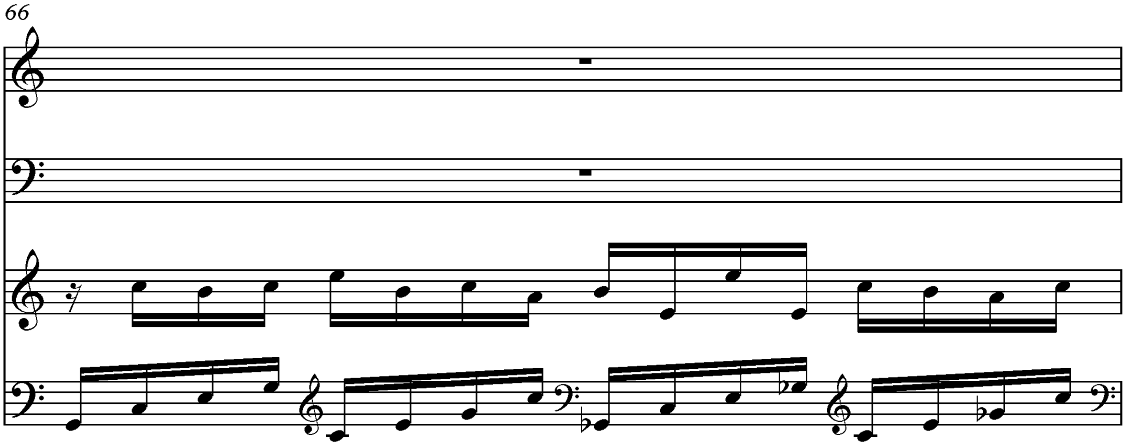

49

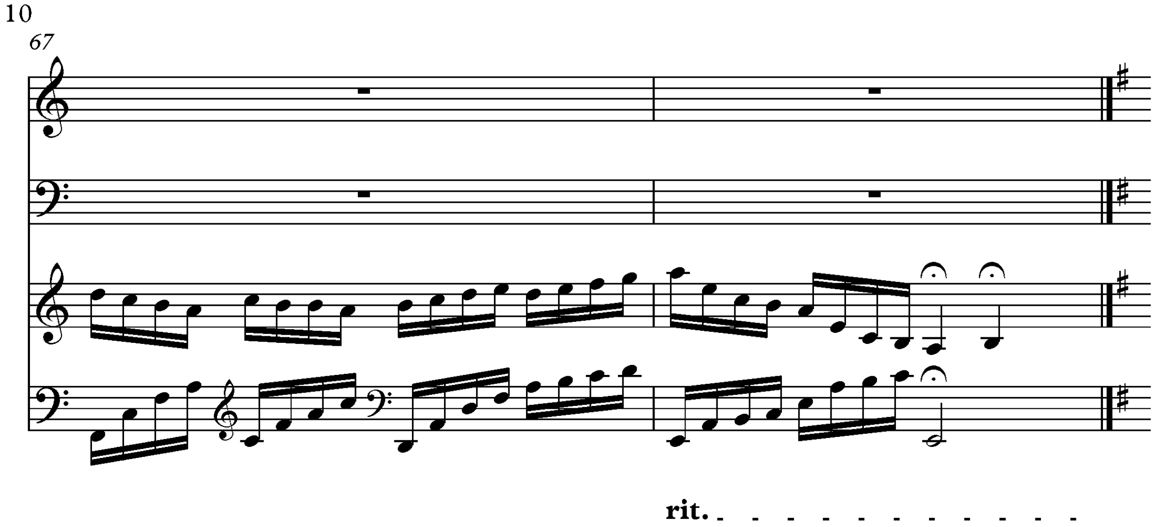





62


64
3

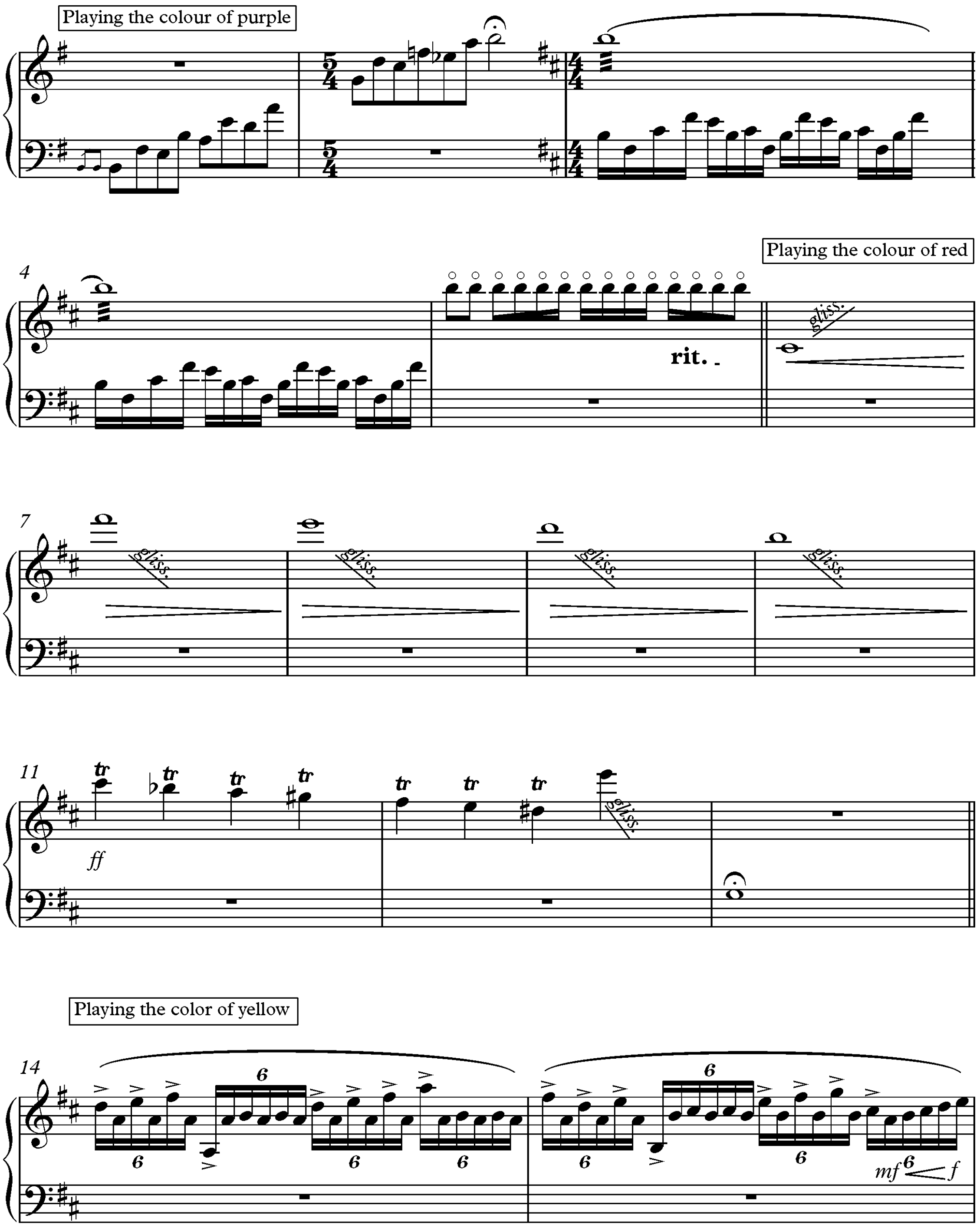

66


10
67
rit.

Yangqin Improvisation Etude

Rubato

Di Zhang


Playing the colour of purple
4
Playing the colour of red
rit.
gliss.
7
11
tr
ff
Playing the color of yellow
14
6
mf
f

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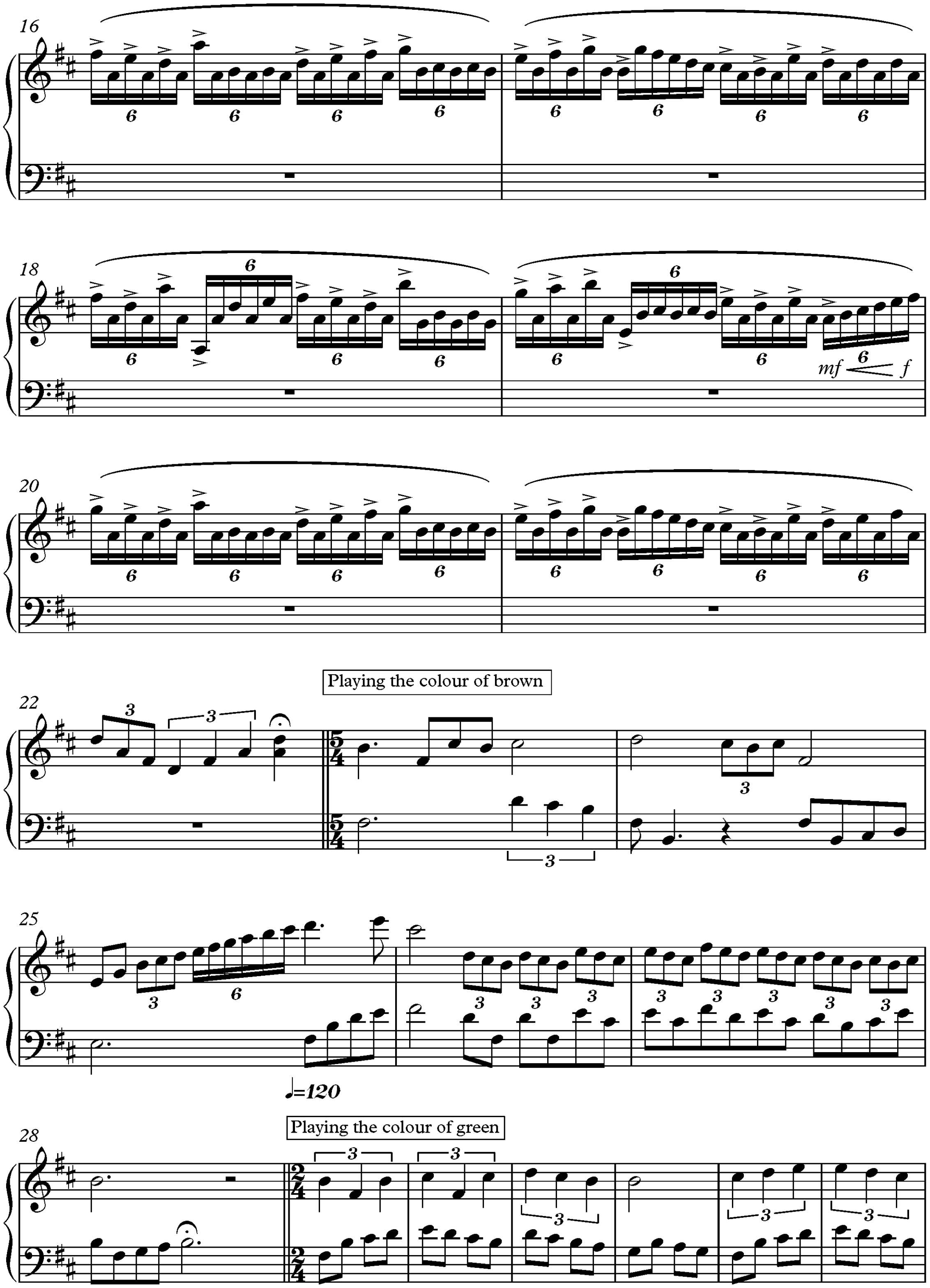
16
18
mf
f
20
Playing the colour of brown
22
25
♩=120
28
Playing the colour of green

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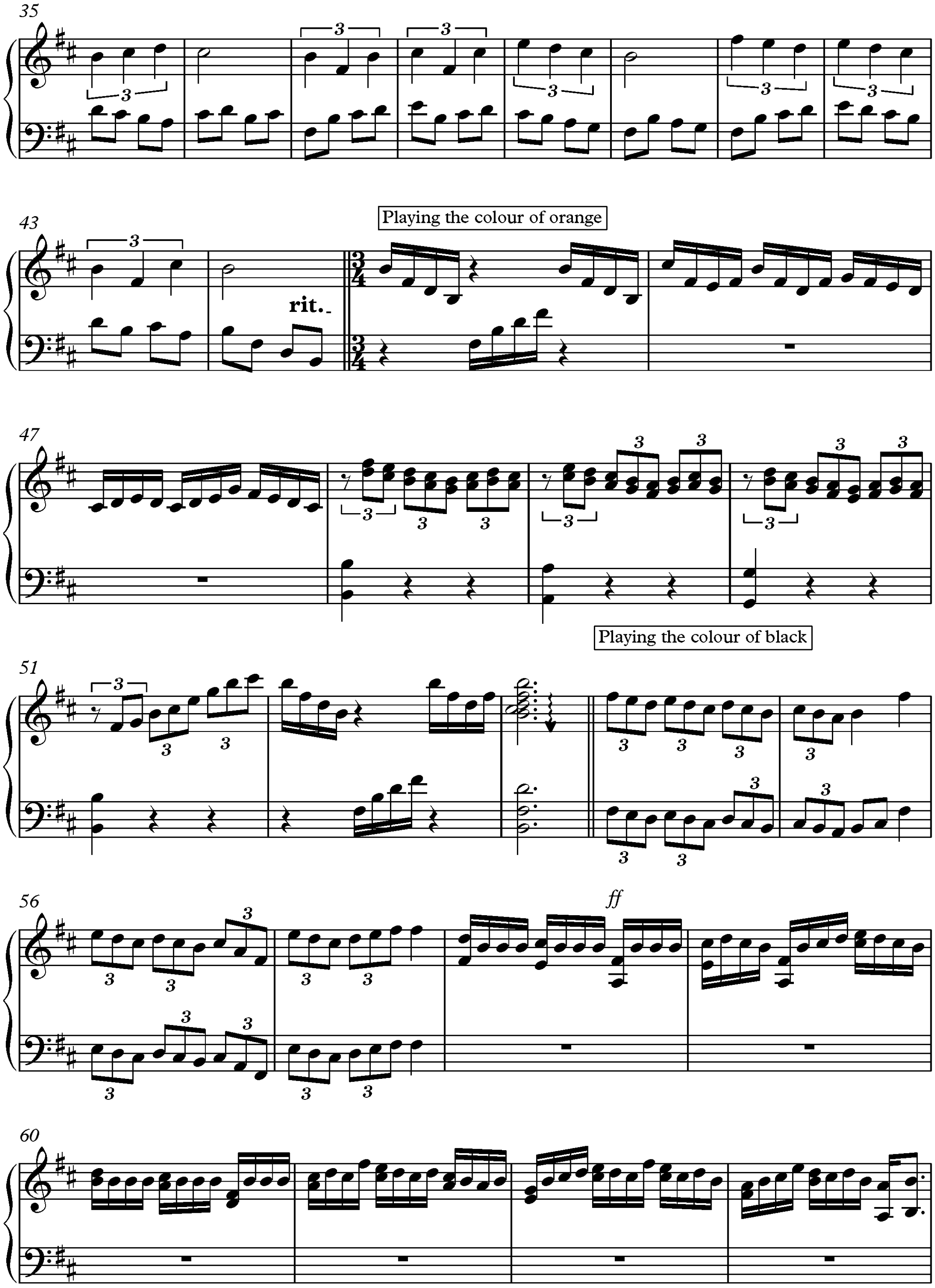
35
3
43
Playing the colour of orange
rit.
47
Playing the colour of black
51
56
ff
60

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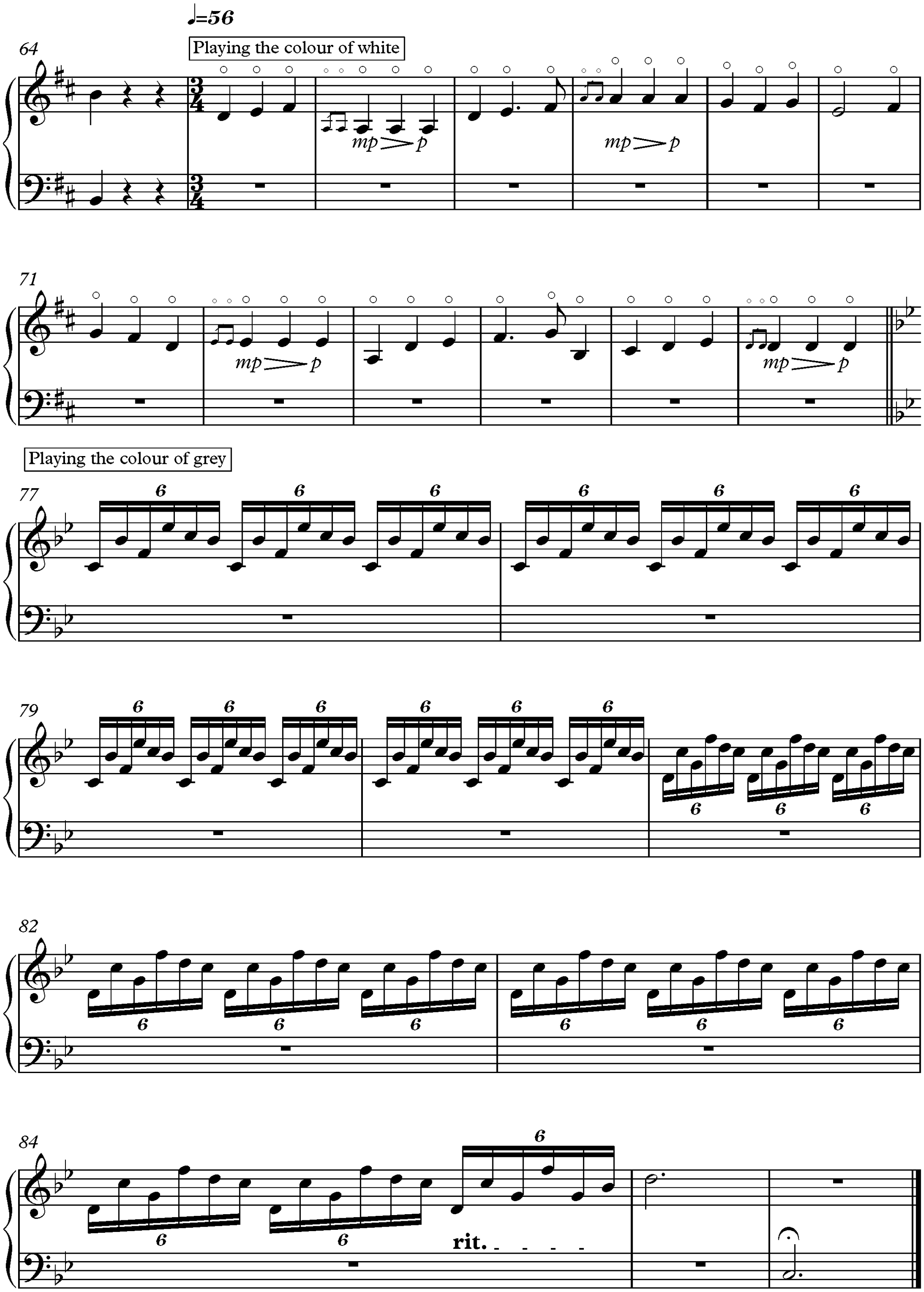
♩=56
Playing the colour of white
64
mp
p
71
Playing the colour of grey
77
6
79
82
84
rit.

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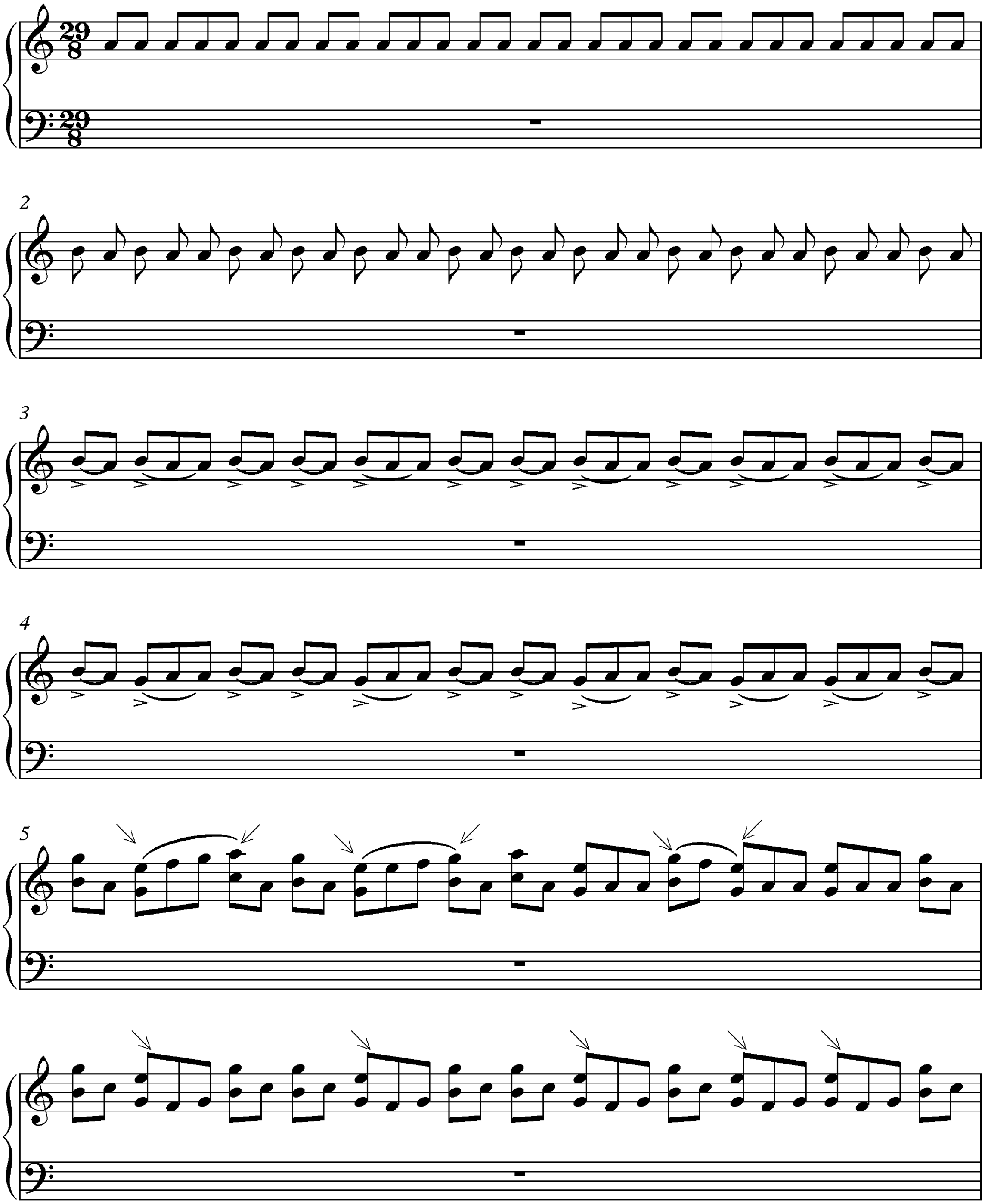
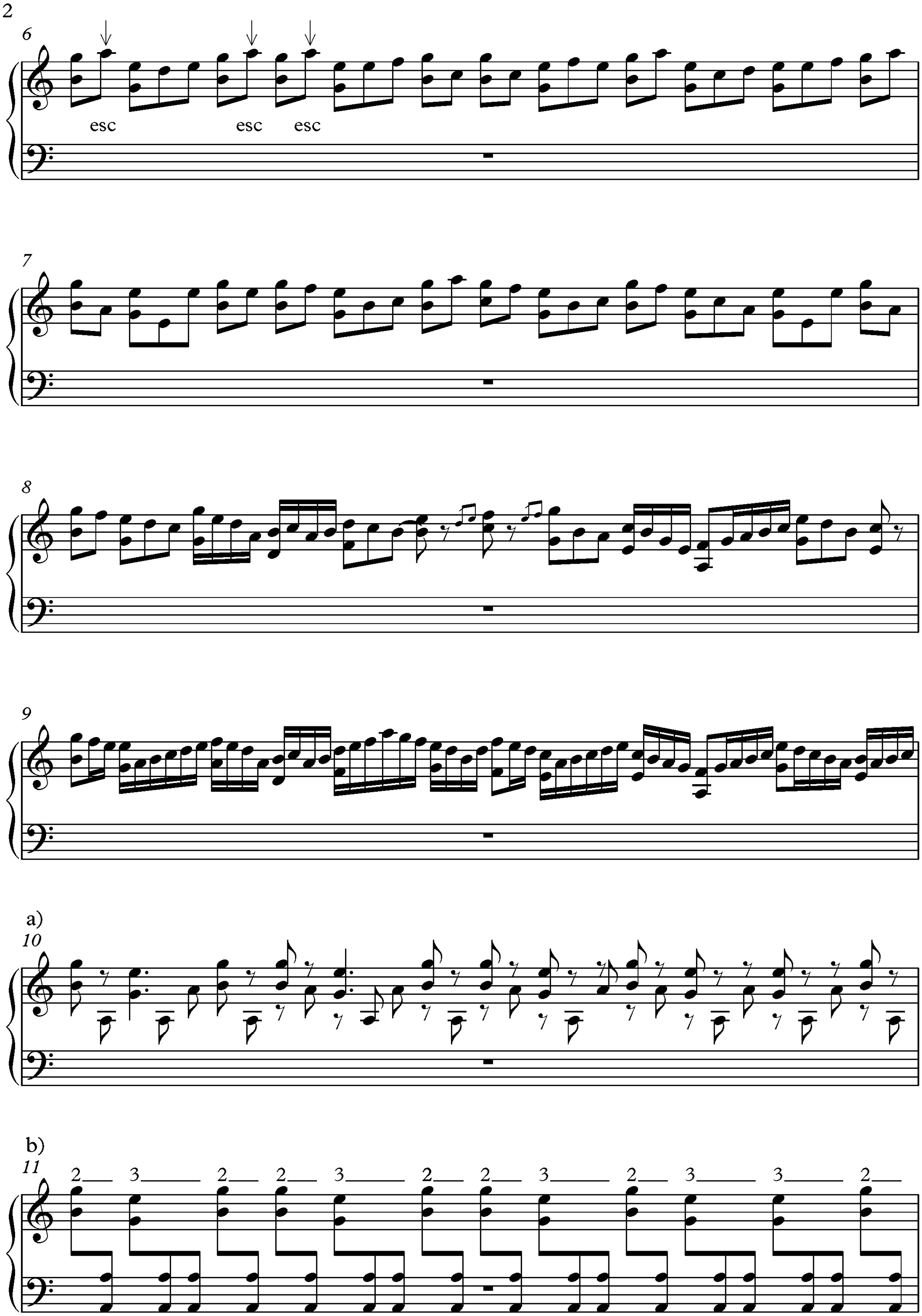
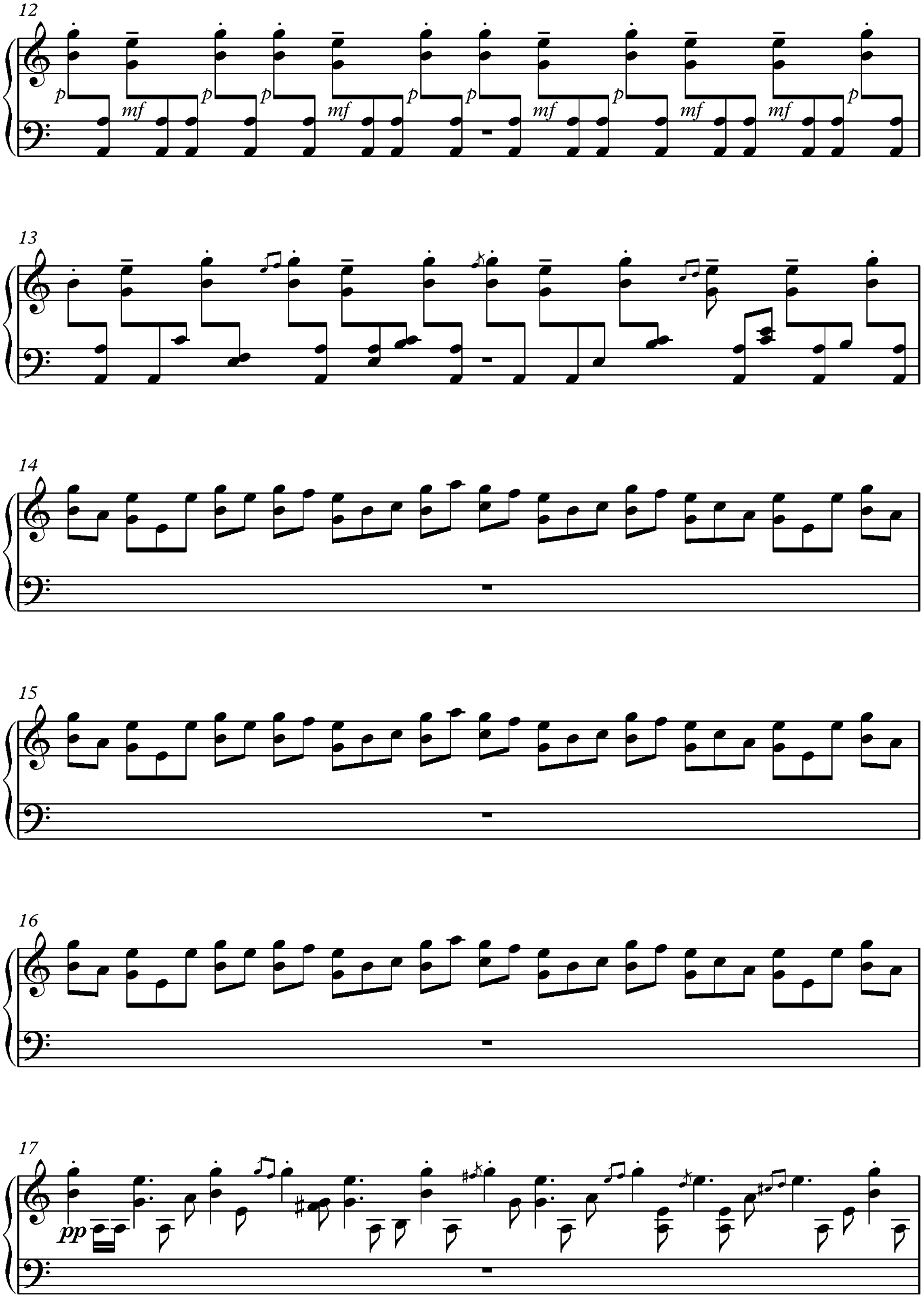
Guiro Clapping Music

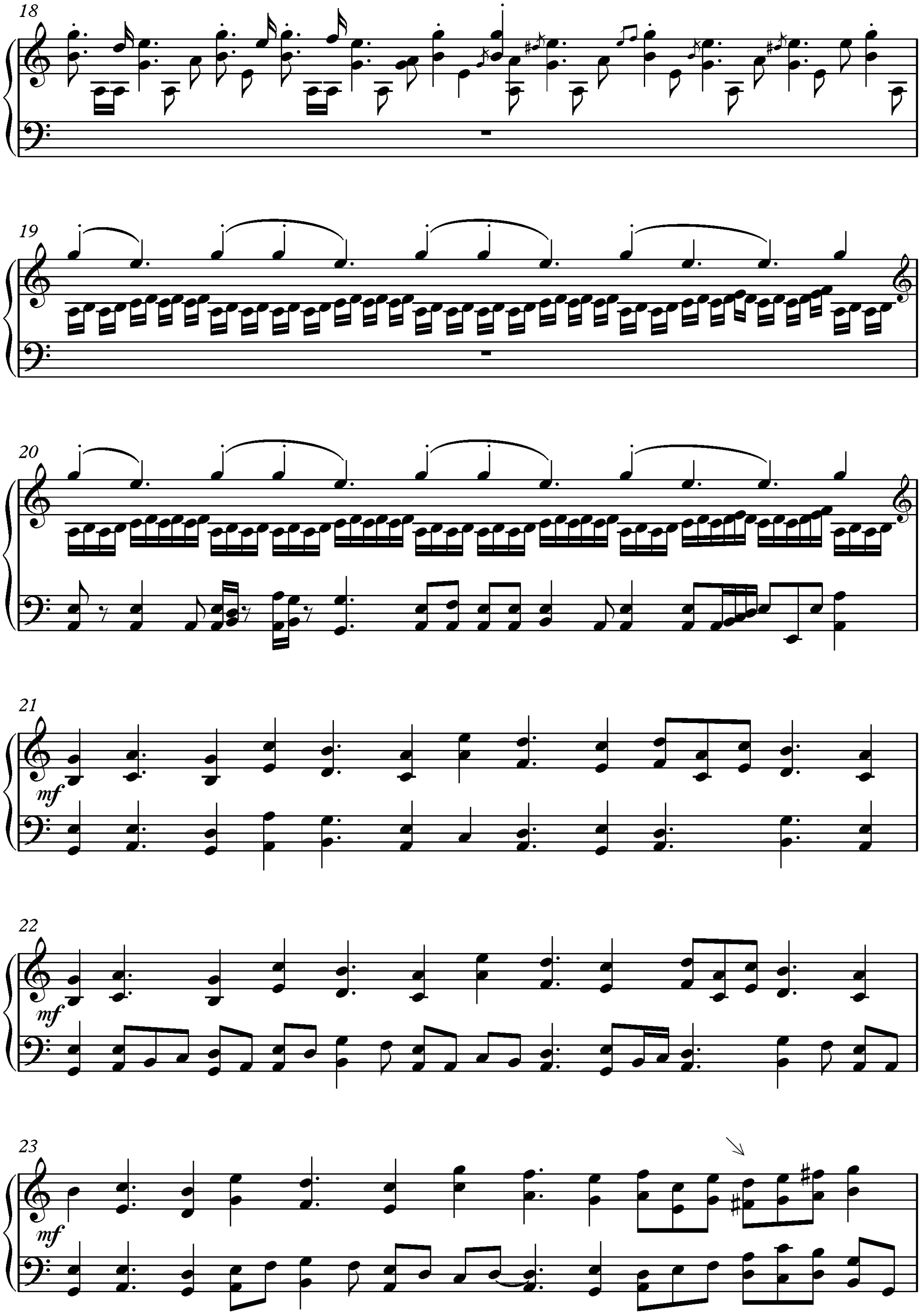
Peter Garland—composer
Di Zhang—realizations (yangqins)

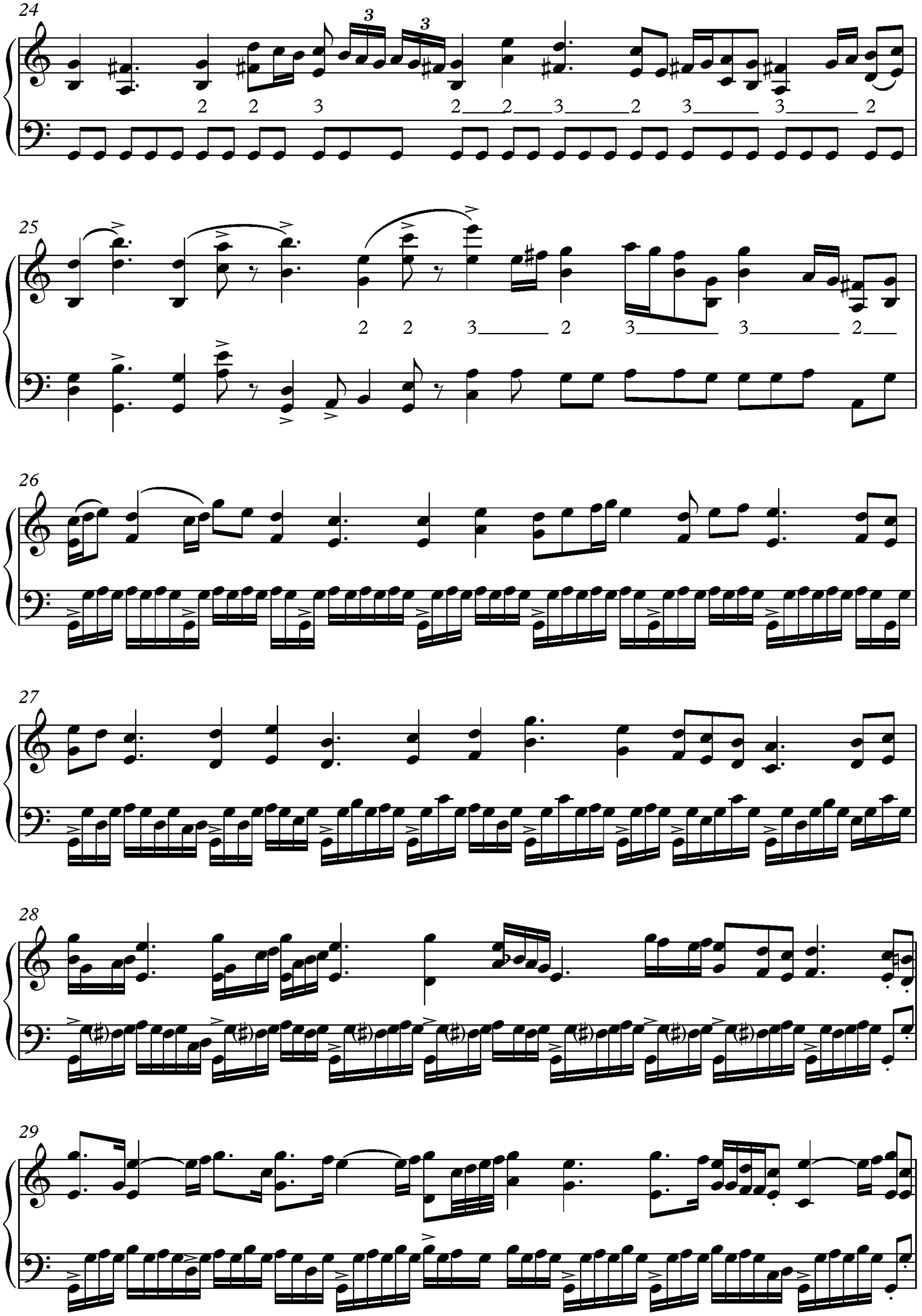


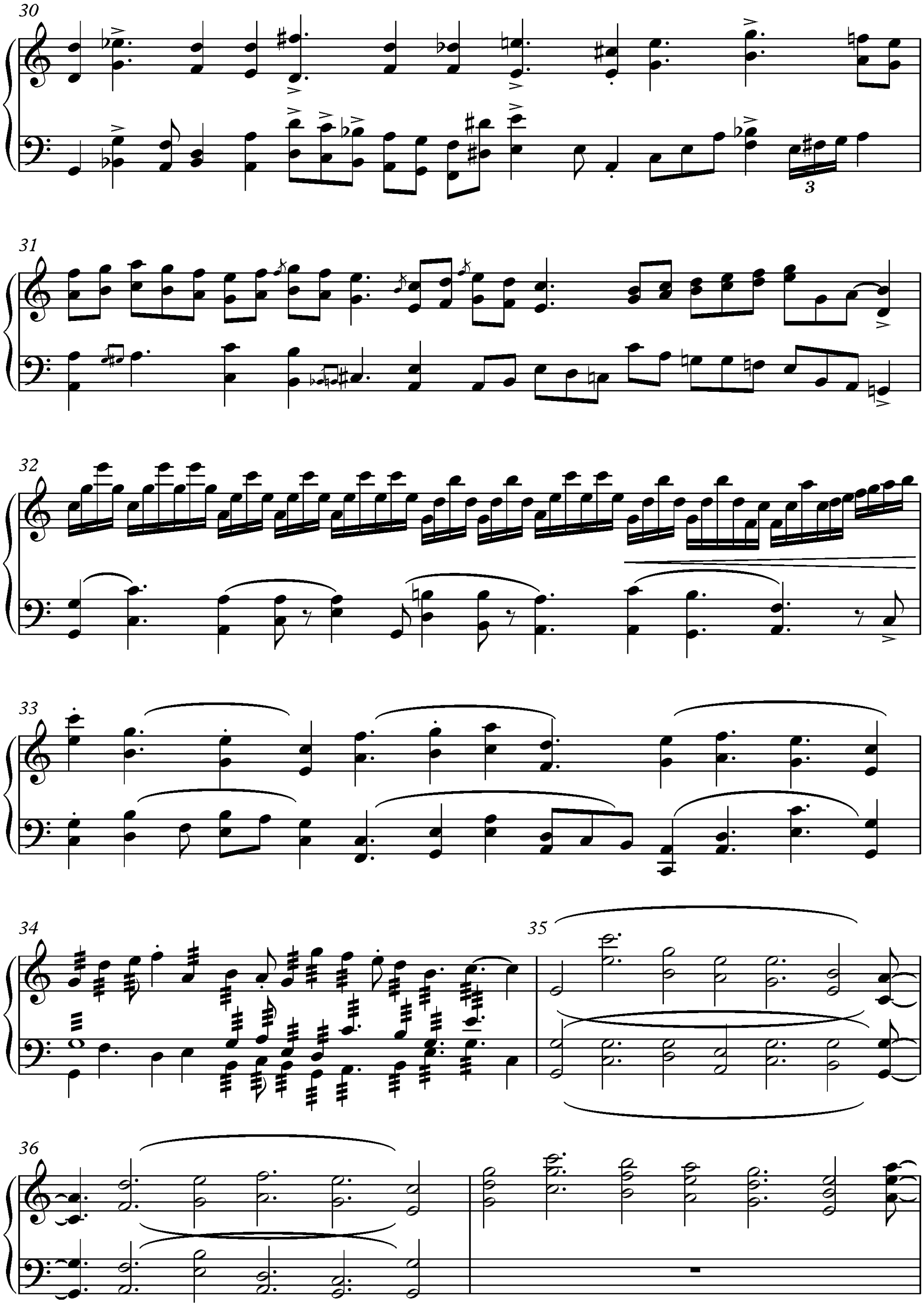

6
esc
esc
esc
7
8
9
a)
10
b)
11
2 3 2 2 3 2 2 3 2 3 3 2

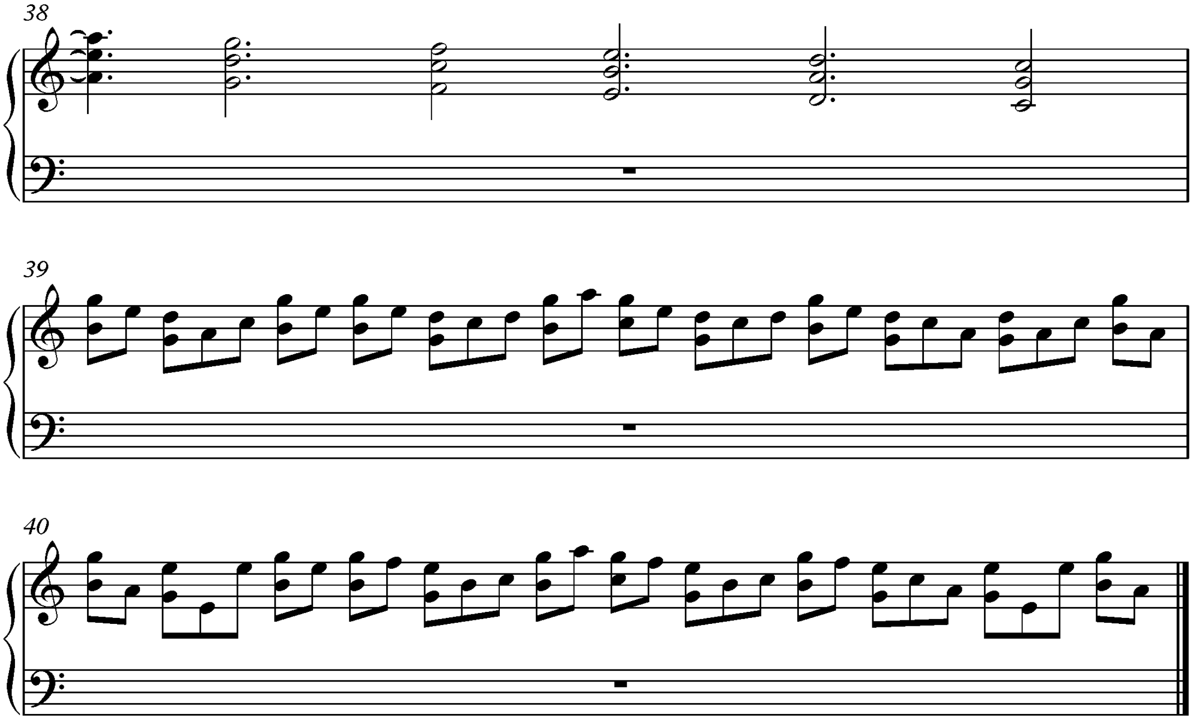
c)


12
p
mf
13
14
15
16
17
pp

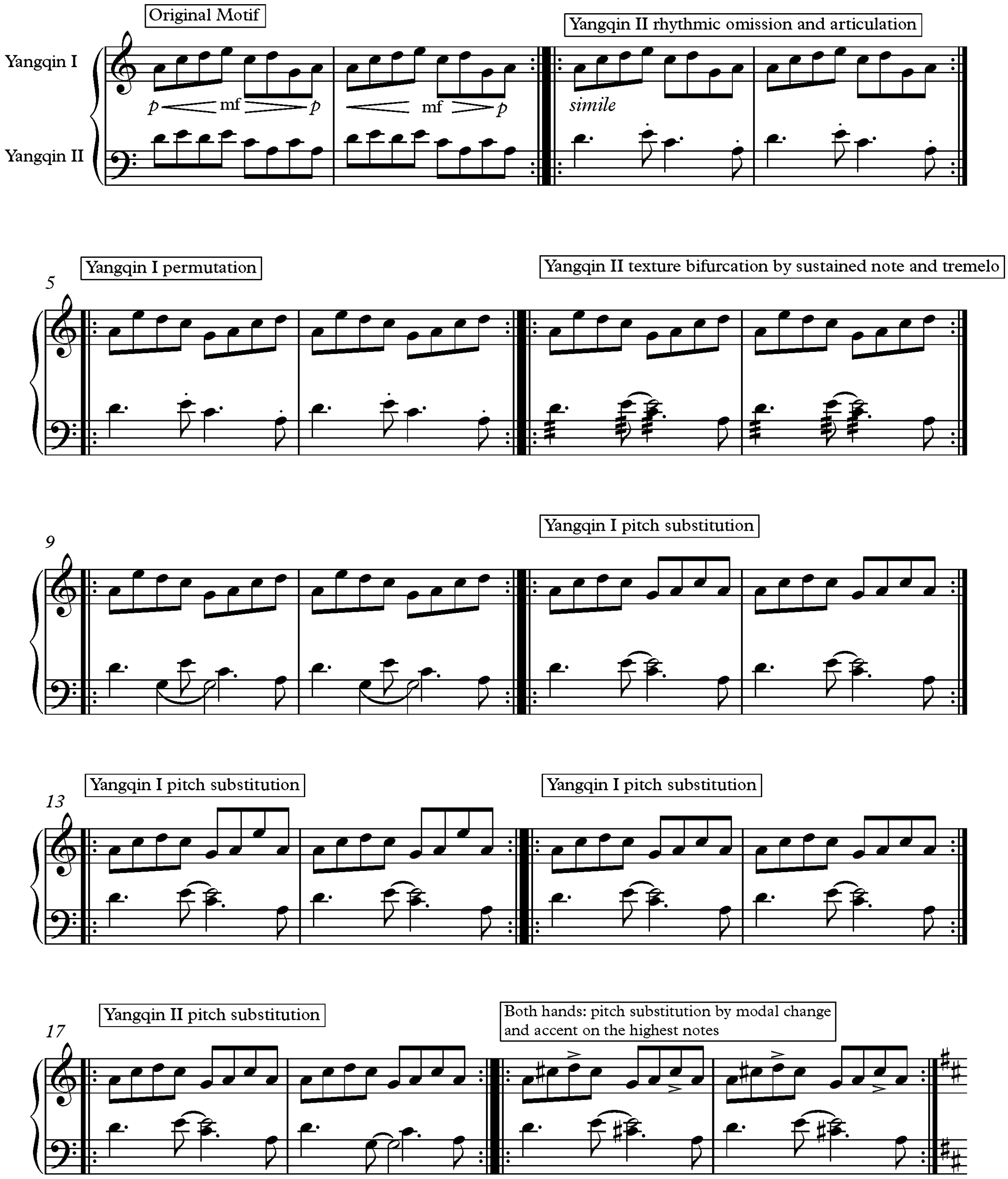

mf
mf
mf

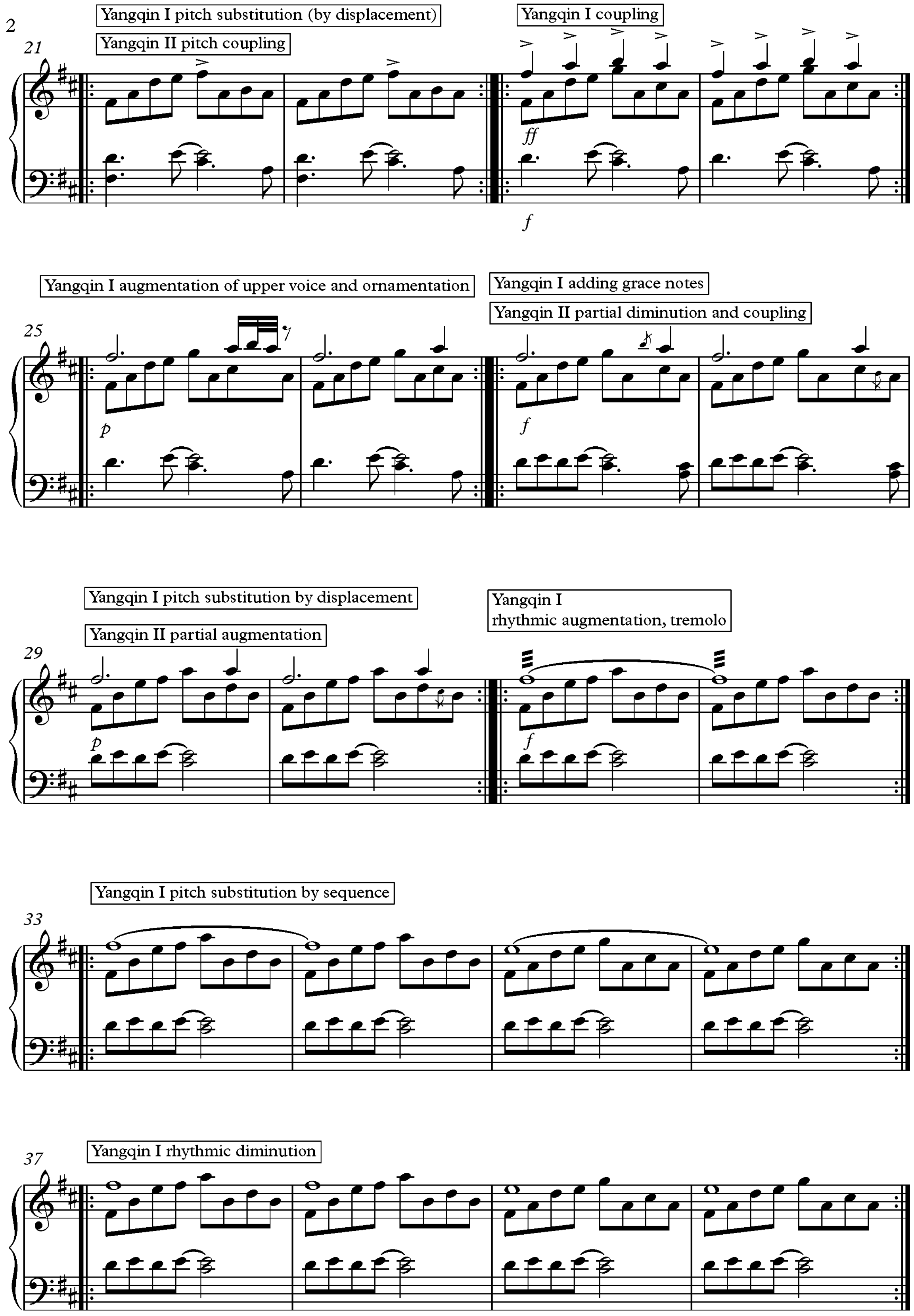

(♯)

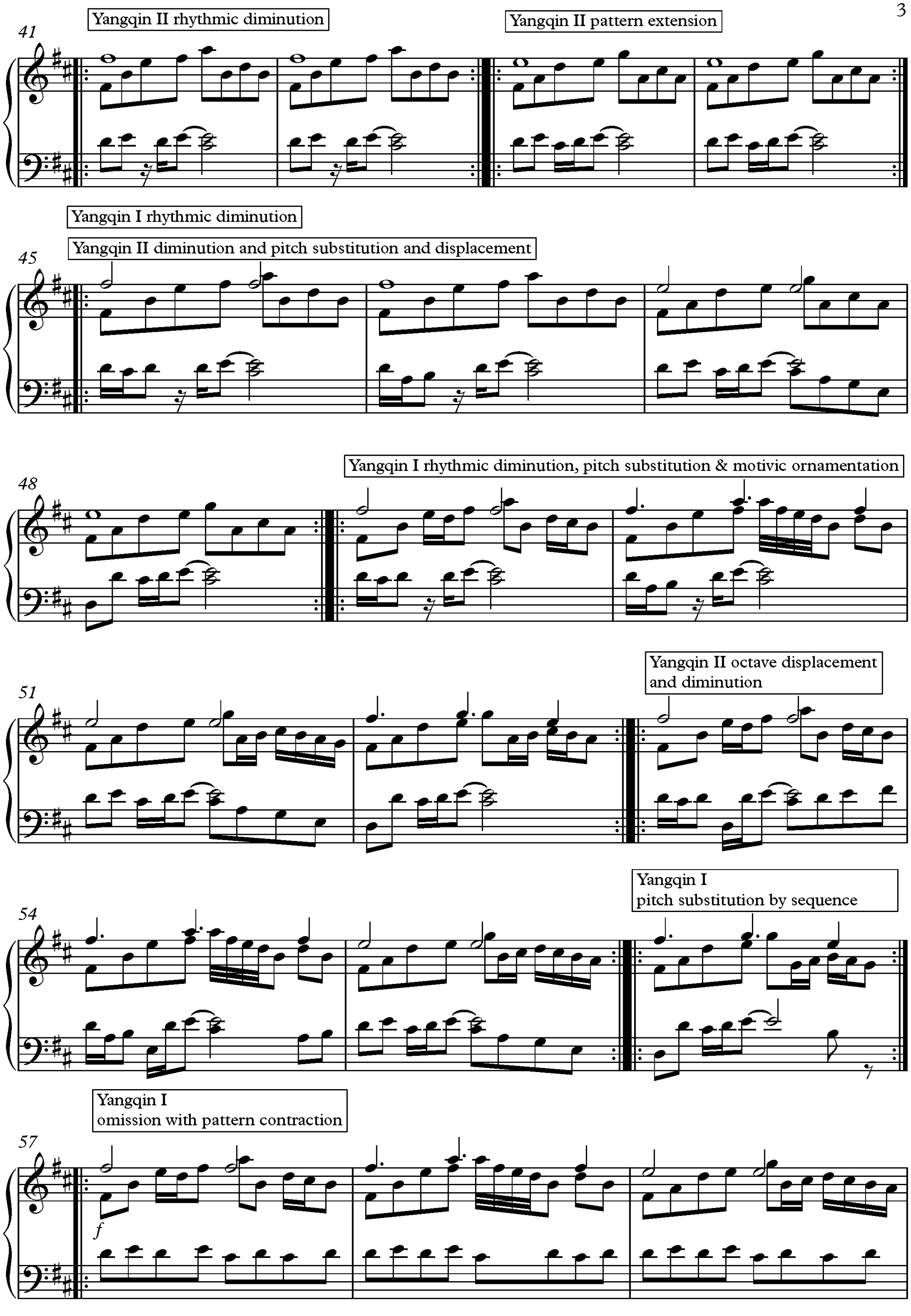




Variation Exercise (Yangqin)


Original Motif
Yangqin II rhythmic omission and articulation
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
p
mf
p
mf
p
simile
5
Yangqin I permutation
Yangqin II texture bifurcation by sustained note and tremelo
9
Yangqin I pitch substitution
13
Yangqin I pitch substitution
Yangqin I pitch substitution
17
Yangqin II pitch substitution
Both hands: pitch substitution by modal change
and accent on the highest notes


2
21
Yangqin I pitch substitution (by displacement)
Yangqin II pitch coupling
Yangqin I coupling
ff
f
25
Yangqin I augmentation of upper voice and ornamentation
Yangqin I adding grace notes
Yangqin II partial diminution and coupling
p
f
29
Yangqin I pitch substitution by displacement
Yangqin II partial augmentation
Yangqin I
rhythmic augmentation, tremolo
p
f
33
Yangqin I pitch substitution by sequence
37
Yangqin I rhythmic diminution



Yangqin II rhythmic diminution

Yangqin II pattern extension

Yangqin I rhythmic diminution

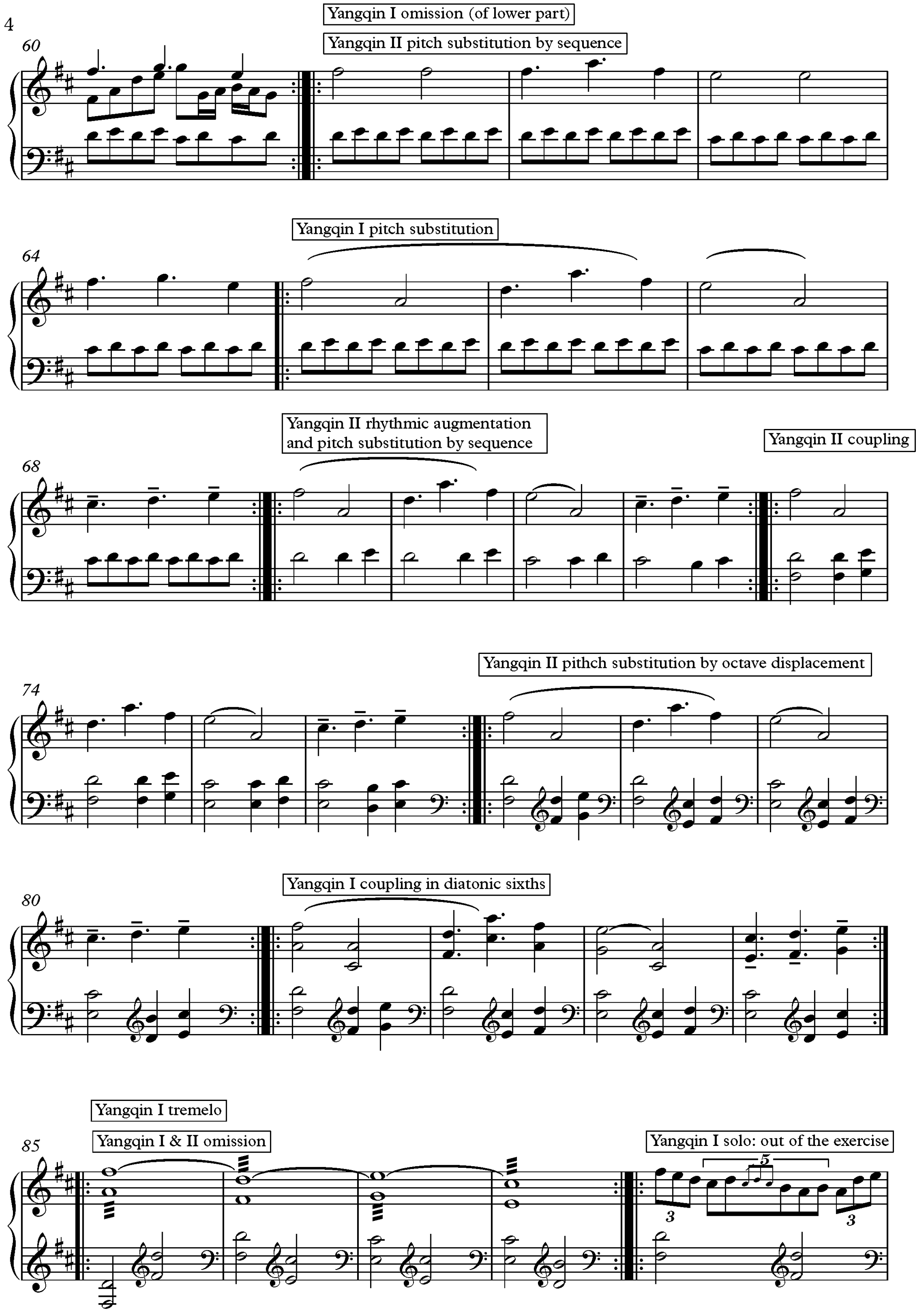
Yangqin II diminution and pitch substitution and displacement

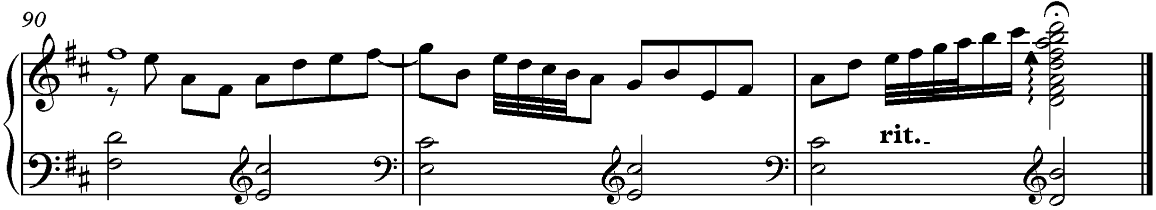
Yangqin I rhythmic diminution, pitch substitution & motivic ornamentation

Yangqin II octave displacement
and diminution

Yangqin I
pitch substitution by sequence

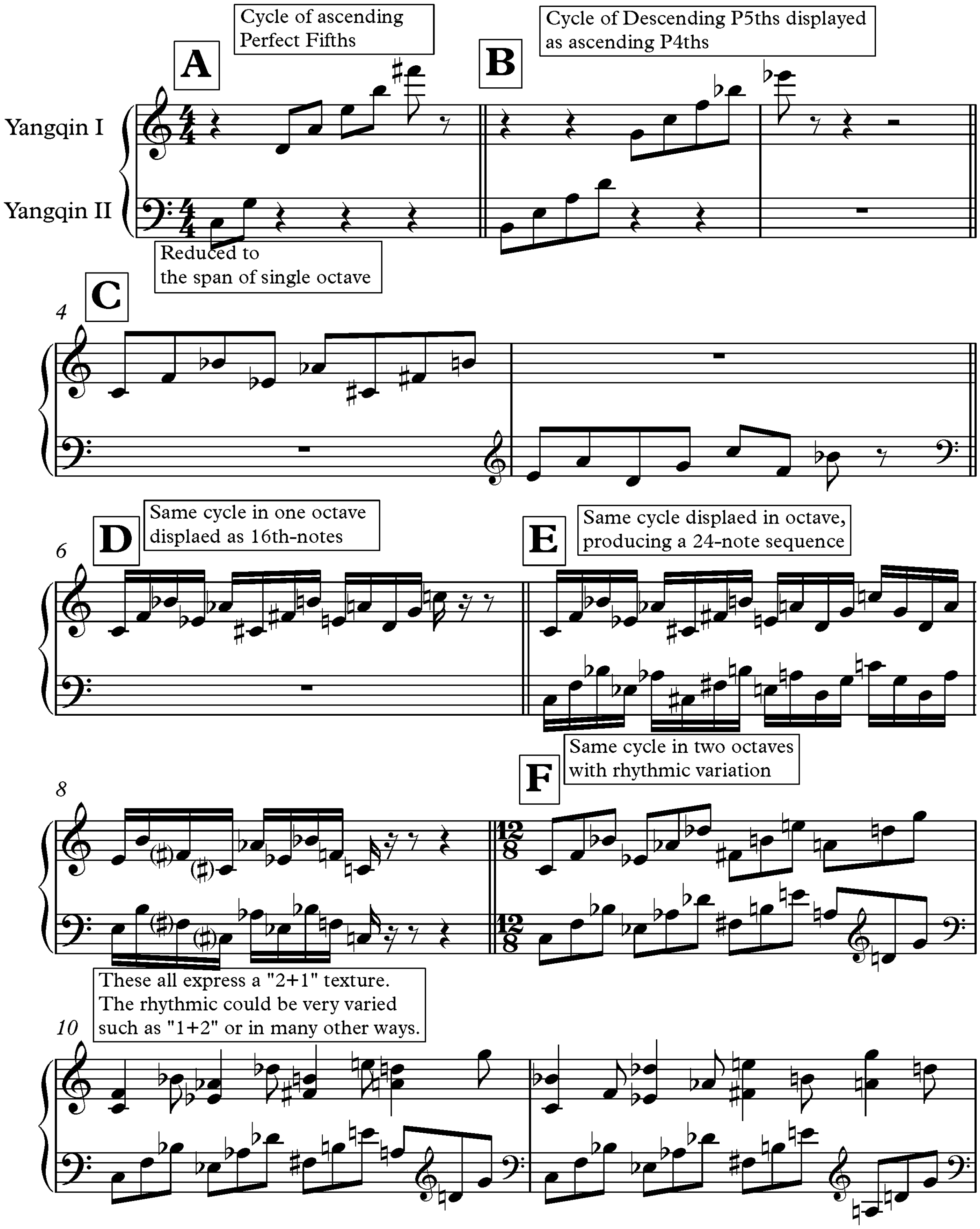
Yangqin I
omission with pattern contraction

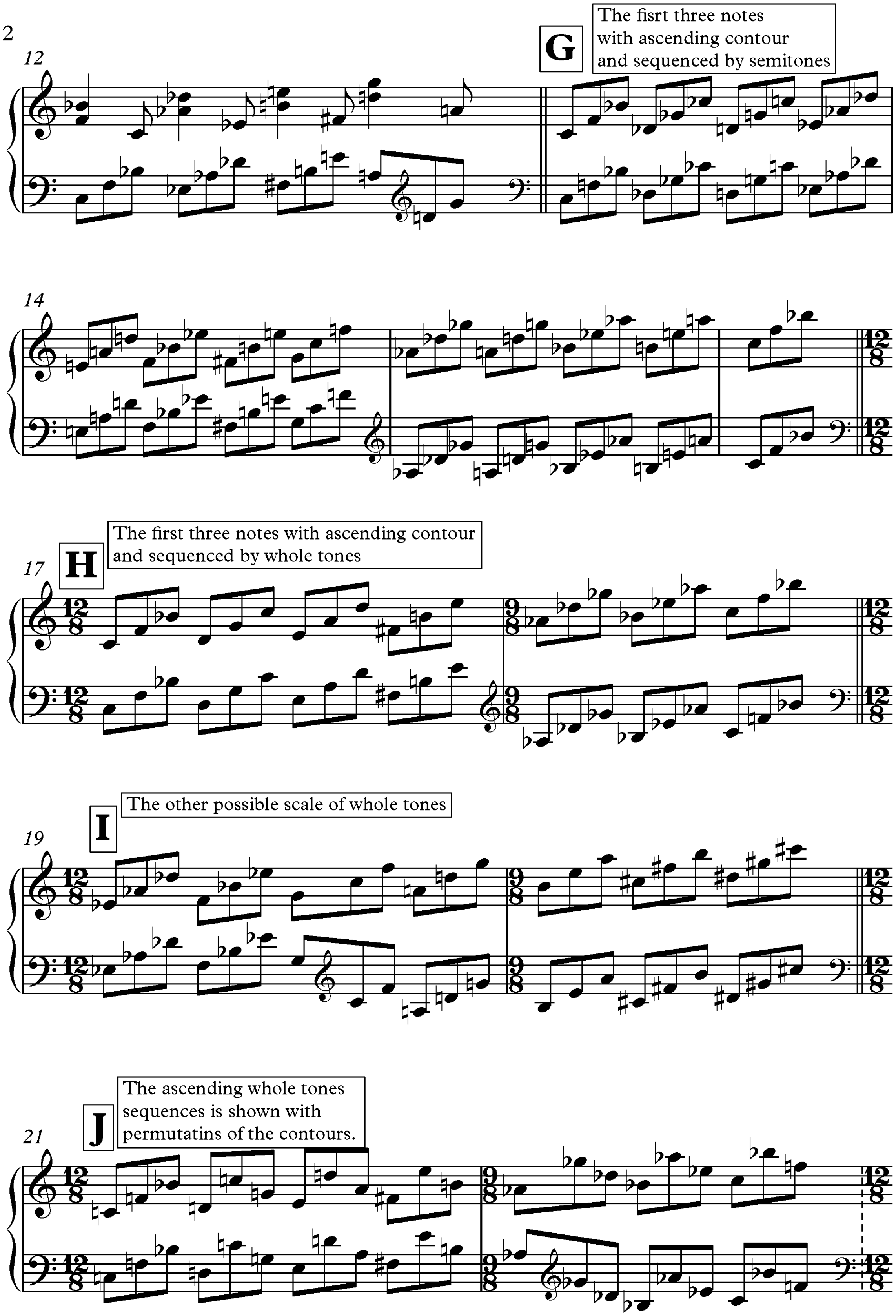

Yangqin I omission (of lower part)
Yangqin II pitch substitution by sequence
60
64
Yangqin I pitch substitution
Yangqin II rhythmic augmentation and pitch substitution by sequence
Yangqin II coupling
68
Yangqin II pithch substitution by octave displacement
74
Yangqin I coupling in diatonic sixths
80
Yangqin I tremelo
Yangqin I & II omission
Yangqin I solo: out of the exercise
85
3
5
3


90
rit.

The Cycle of Fifths: Exercises

Di Zhang (After Casey Sokol)


A
Cycle of ascending Perfect Fifths
B
Cycle of Descending P5ths displayed as ascending P4ths
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
Reduced to the span of single octave
4
C
6
D
Same cycle in one octave displaed as 16th-notes
E
Same cycle displaed in octave, producing a 24-note sequence
8
F
Same cycle in two octaves with rhythmic variation
These all express a "2+1" texture. The rhythmic could be very varied such as "1+2" or in many other ways.
10

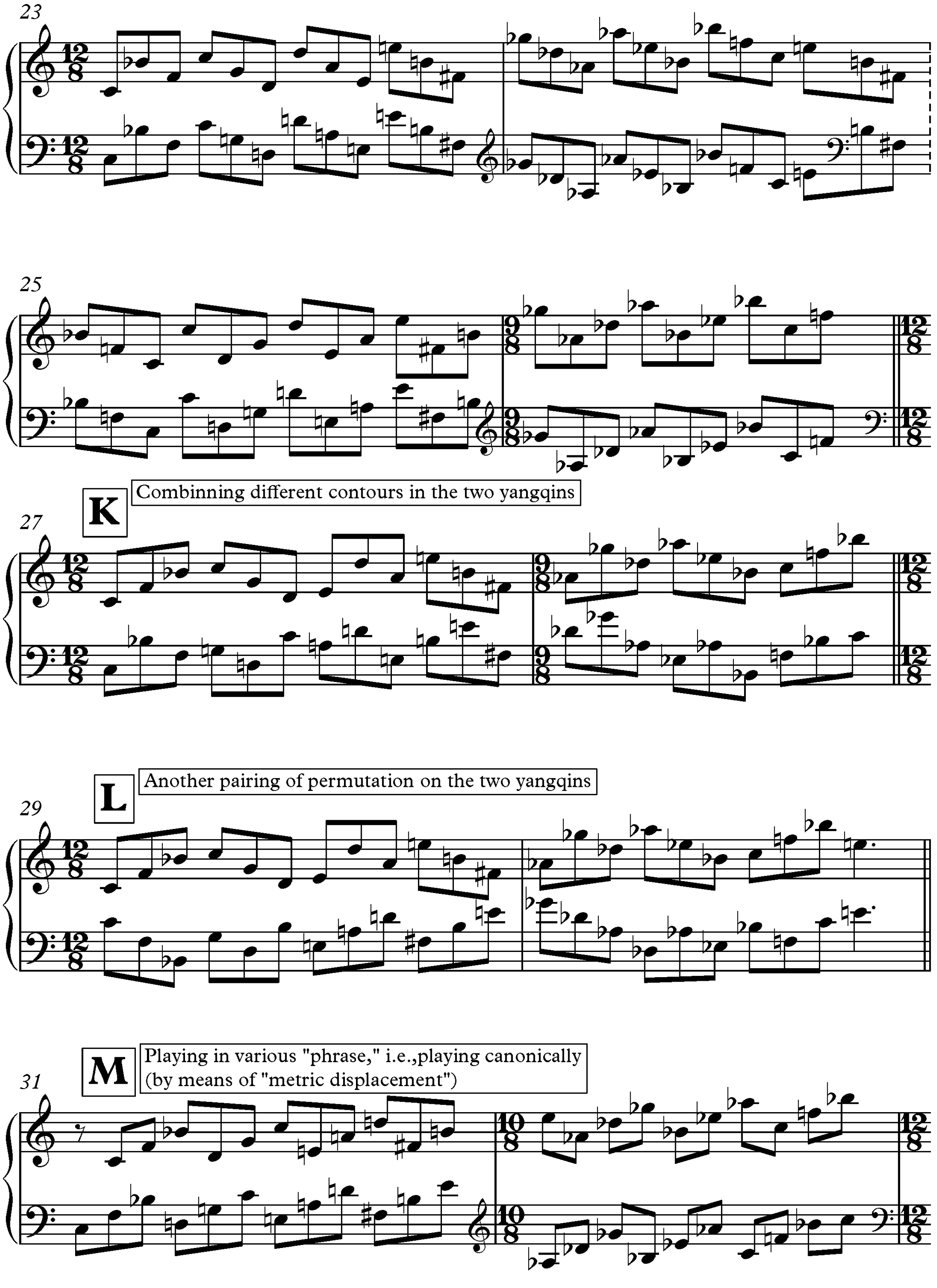


G: The fisrt three notes
with ascending contour
and sequenced by semitones

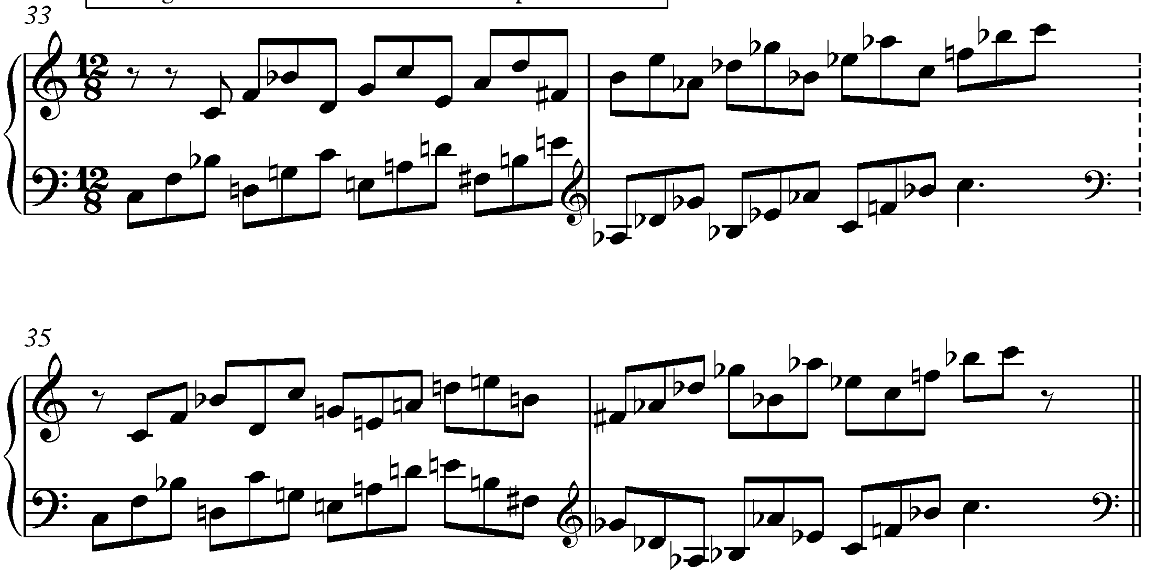
H: The first three notes with ascending contour
and sequenced by whole tones

I: The other possible scale of whole tones

J: The ascending whole tones
sequences is shown with
permutatins of the contours.

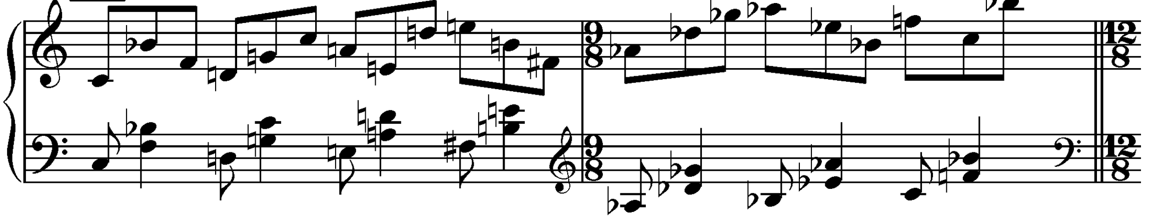

23
25
K
Combinning different contours in the two yangqins
27
L
Another pairing of permutation on the two yangqins
29
M
Playing in various "phrase," i.e.,playing canonically
(by means of "metric displacement")
31

Phasing can be combined with different permutations.



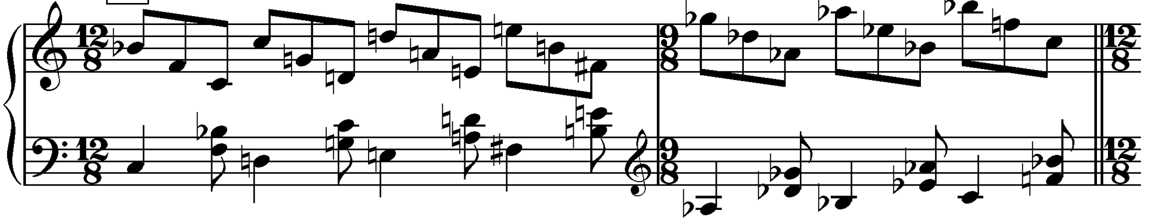
N

Various contours can be combined with different texture.



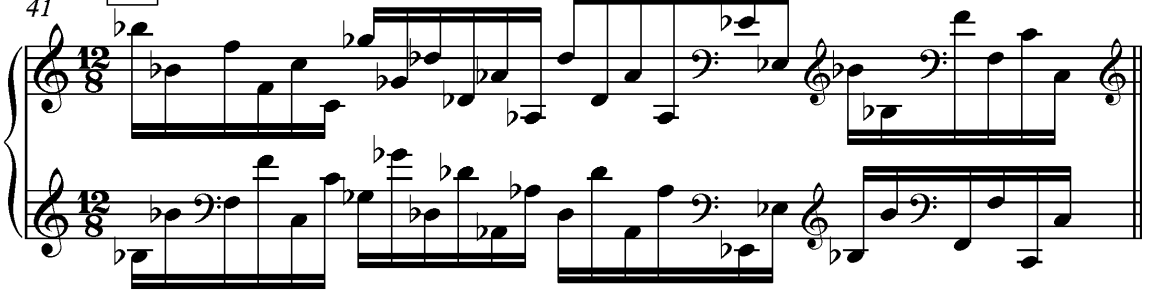
O

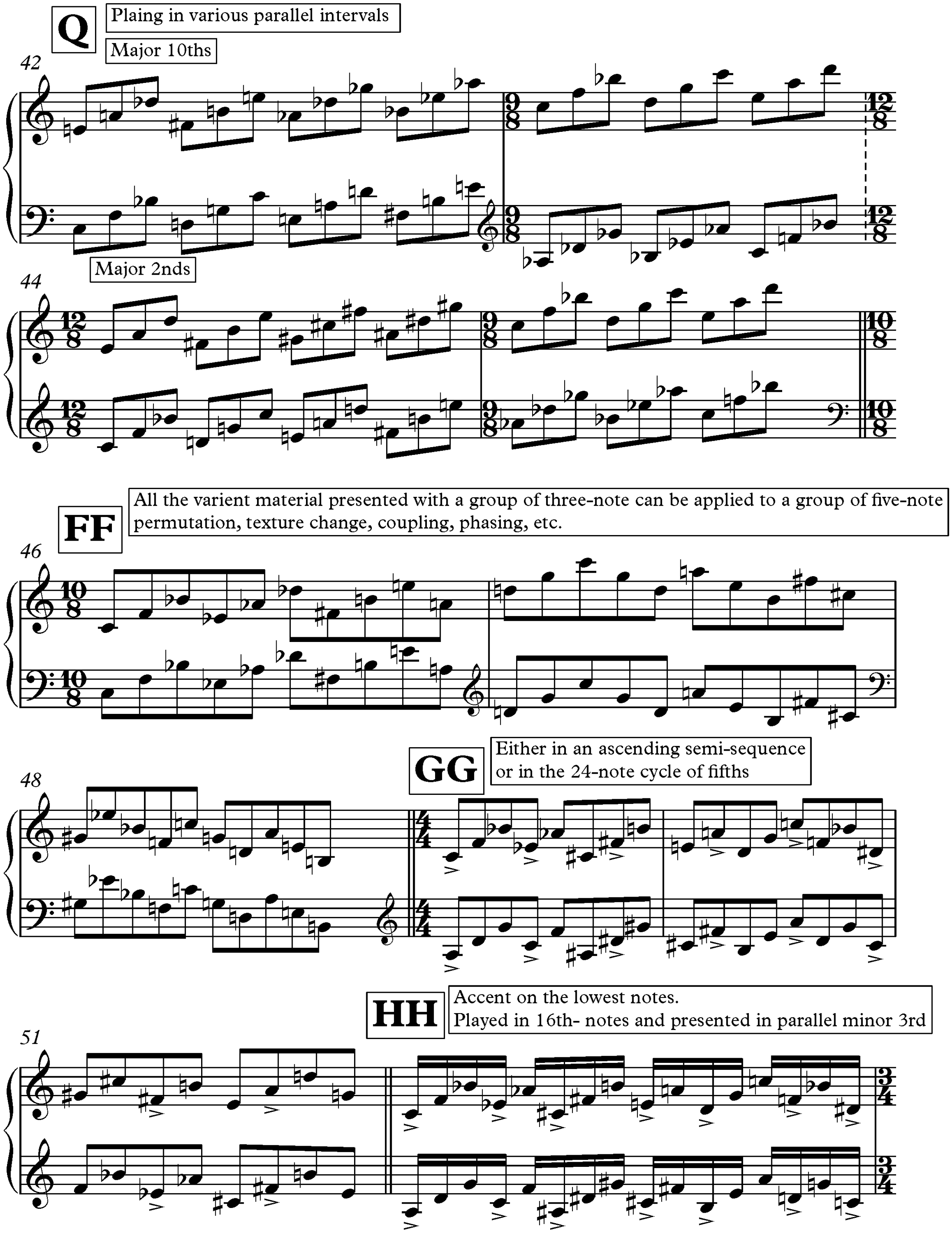
Ascending sequenses of descending motives (by M2nd)

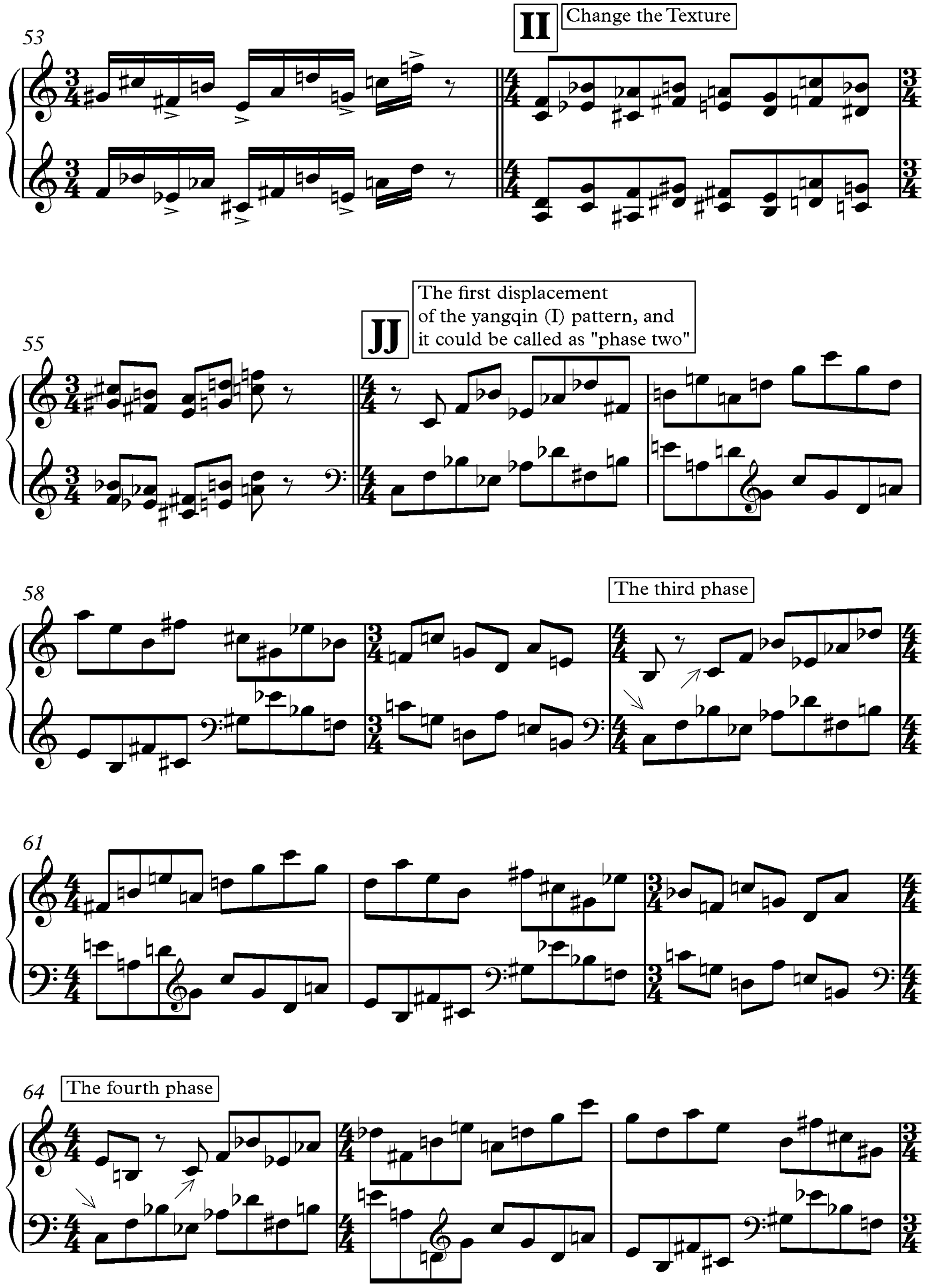


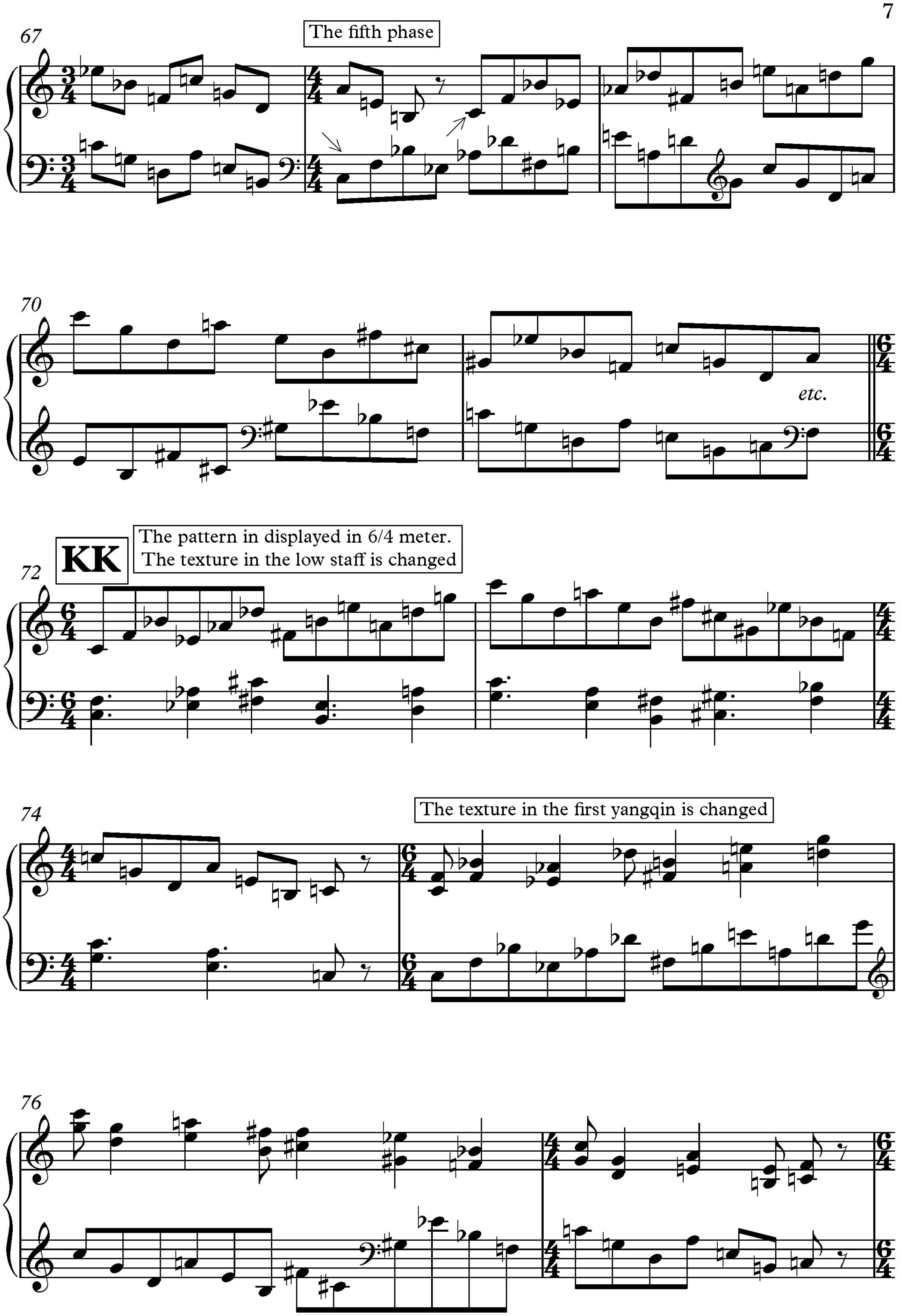
P

Motif of fourth chords realized in alternating octaves and sequenced by descending M3rds.




Q
Plaing in various parallel intervals
Major 10ths
42
Major 2nds
44
FF
All the varient material presented with a group of three-note can be applied to a group of five-note permutation, texture change, coupling, phasing, etc.
46
48
GG
Either in an ascending semi-sequence or in the 24-note cycle of fifths
HH
Accent on the lowest notes.
Played in 16th- notes and presented in parallel minor 3rd
51


53
II
Change the Texture
55
JJ
The first displacement of the yangqin (I) pattern, and it could be called as "phase two"
58
The third phase
61
64
The fourth phase


The fifth phase

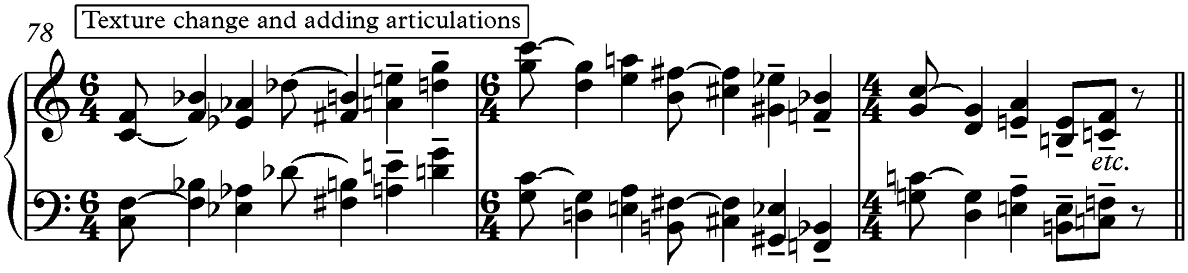
KK

The pattern in displayed in 6/4 meter.
The texture in the low staff is changed

The texture in the first yangqin is changed

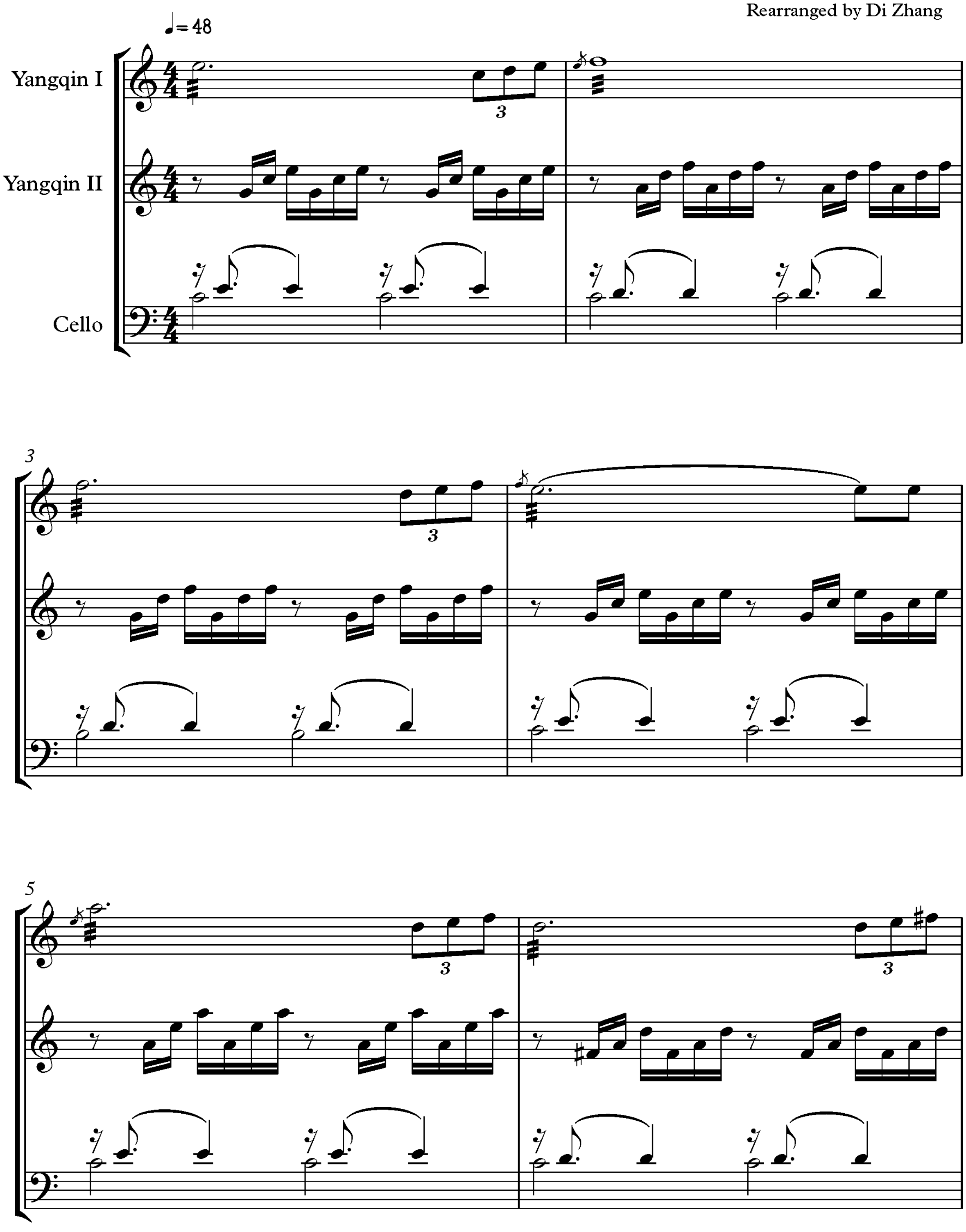
67
70
etc.
72
74
76

8

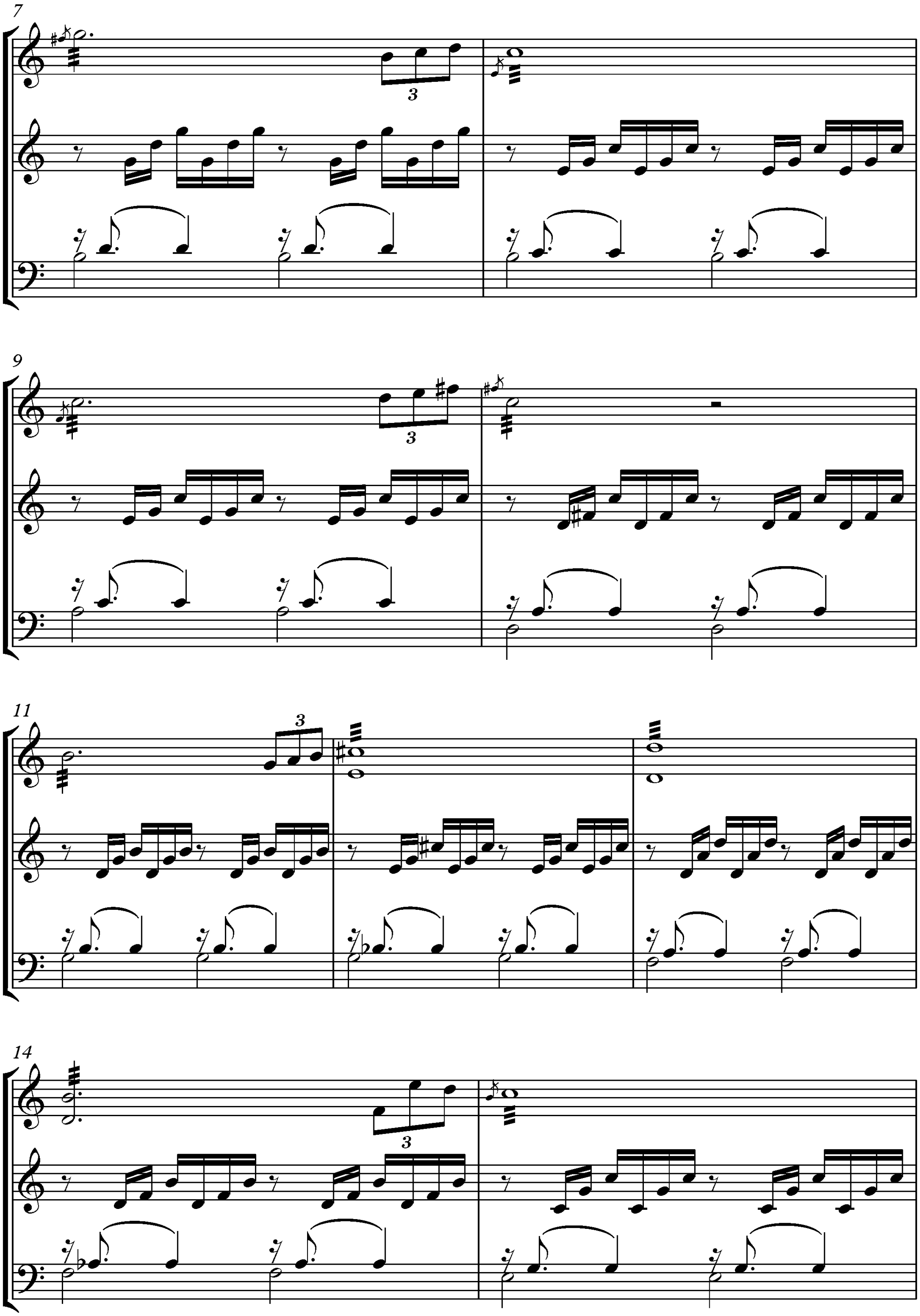

78
Texture change and adding articulations
etc.

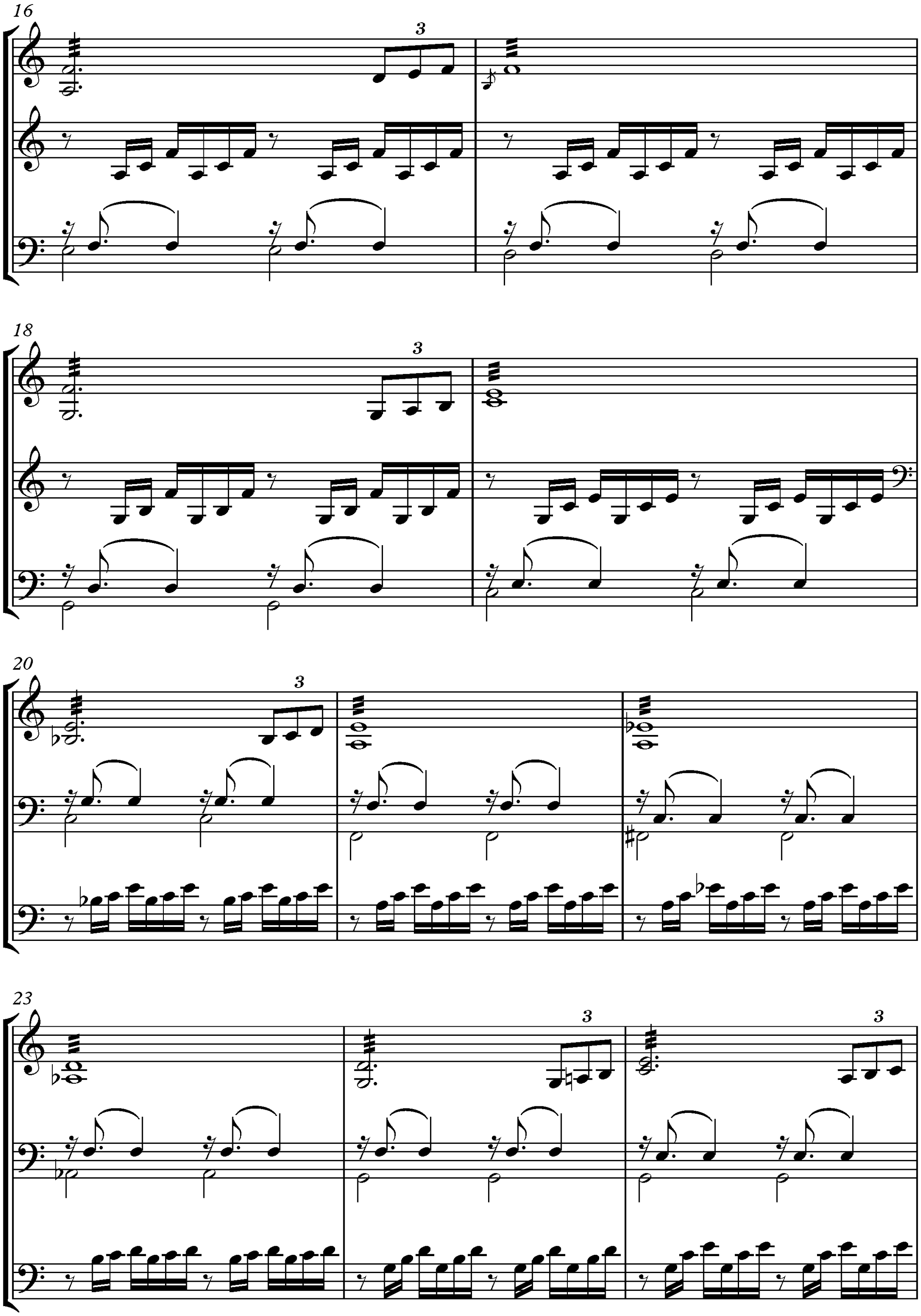
Preludium I
Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I, BWV 846

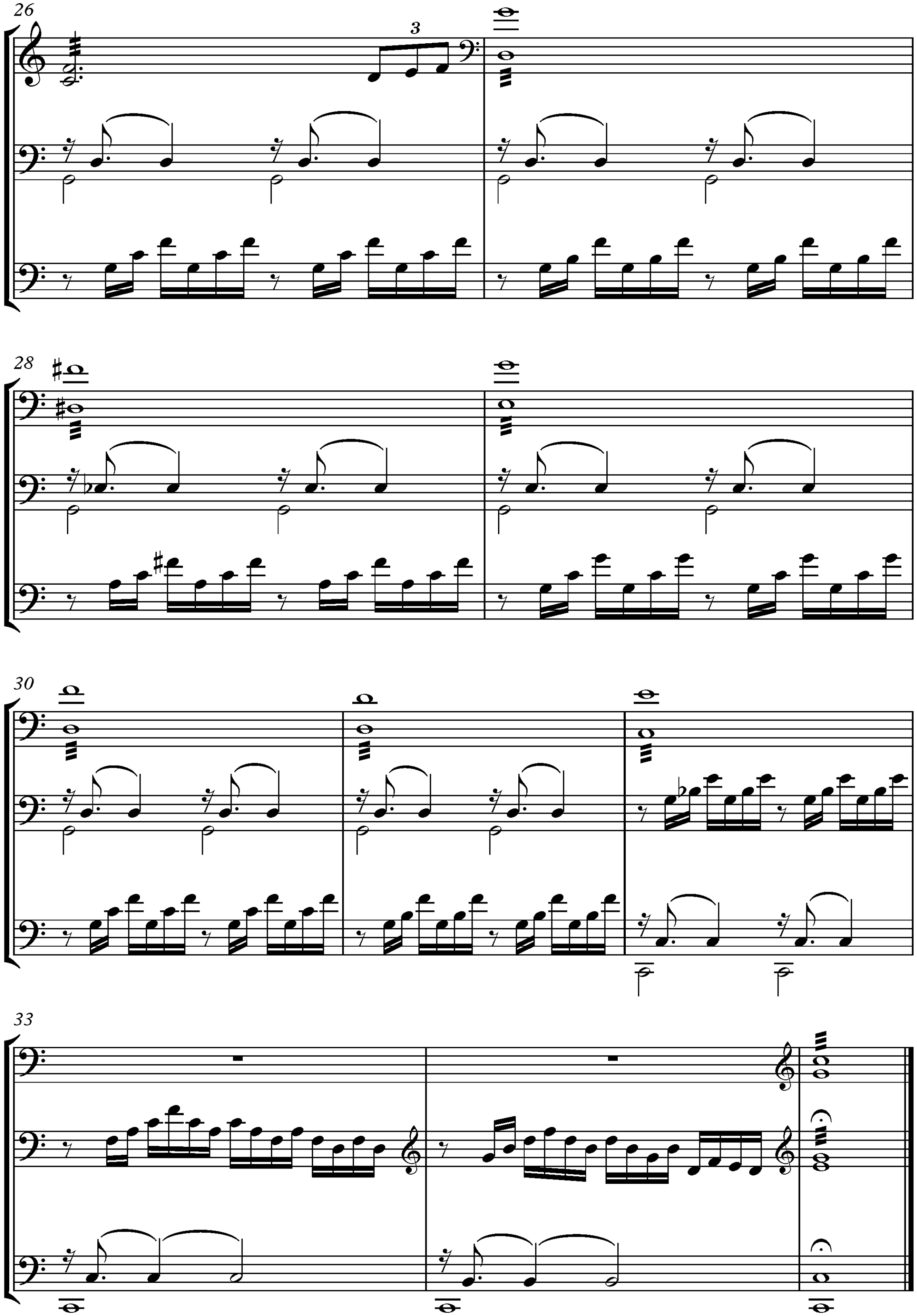
Johann Sebastian BACH
(1685-1750)
Rearranged by Di Zhang



♩= 48
Yangqin I
Yangqin II
Cello
3
5

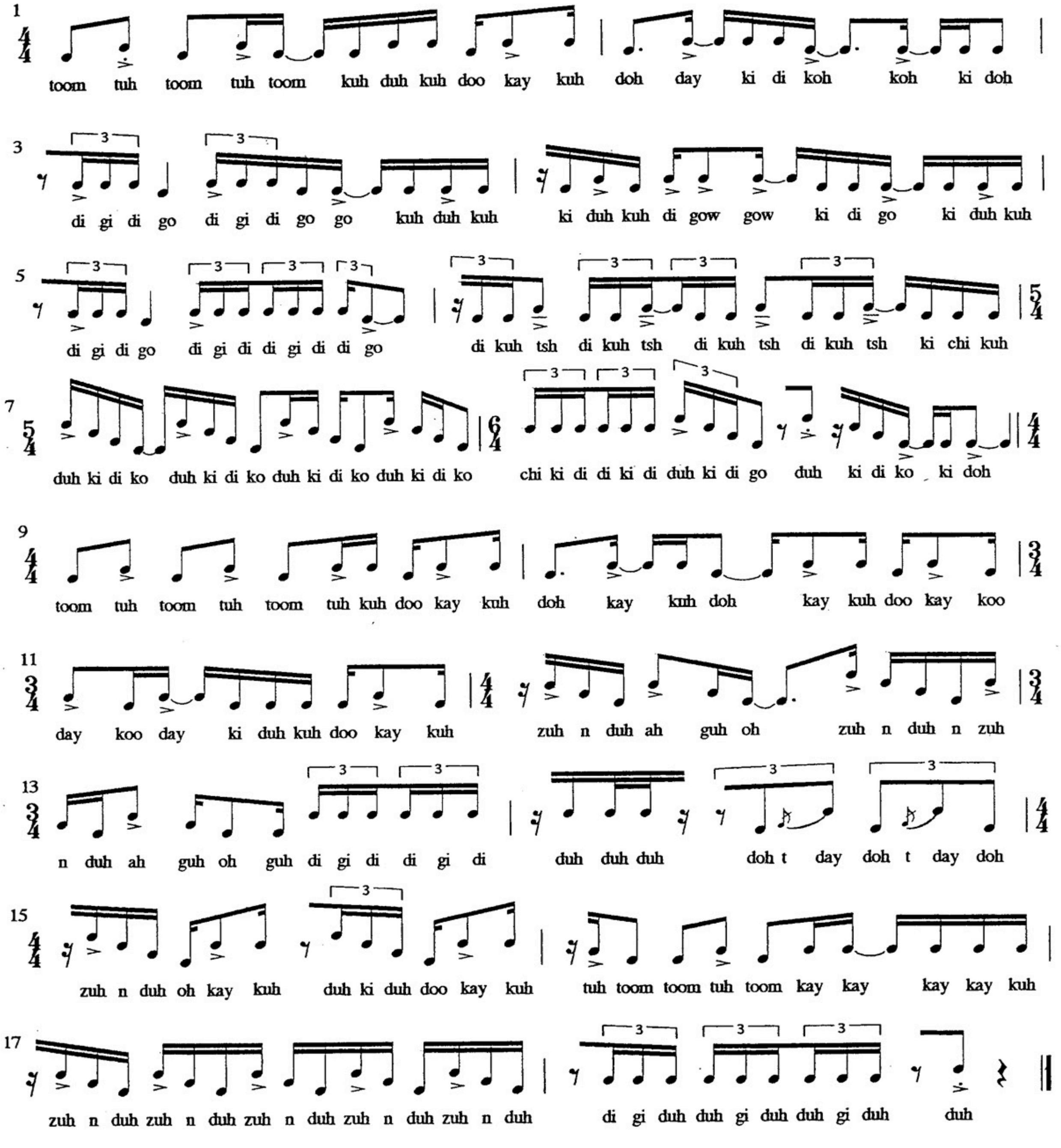






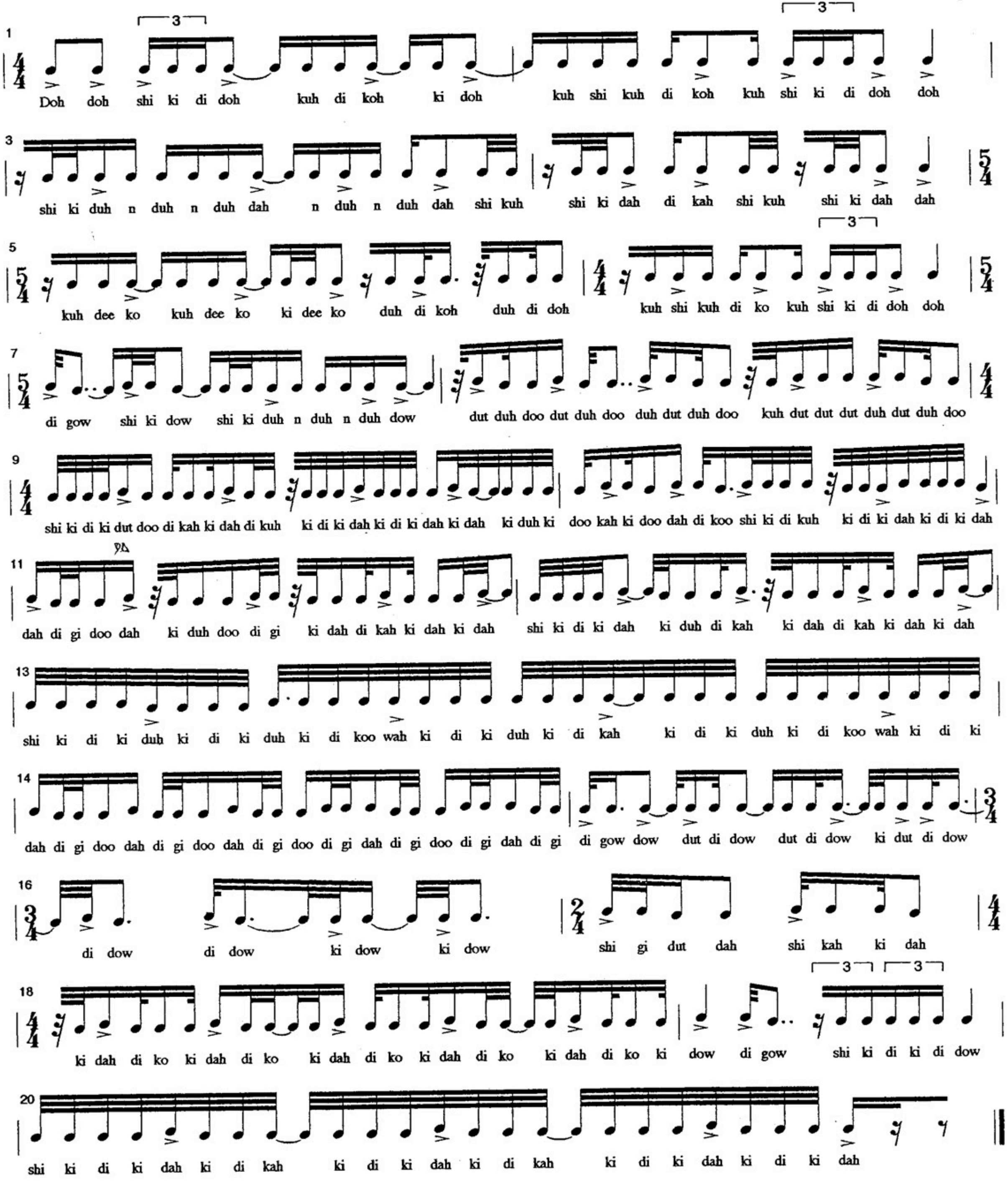
Vocal Rhythm Etude No. 1

Bill Douglas


1
toom tuh toom tuh toom kuh duh kuh doo kay kuh doh day ki di koh koh ki doh
3
di gi di go di gi di go go kuh duh kuh ki duh kuh di gow gow ki di go ki duh kuh
5
di gi di go di gi di di gi di di go di kuh tsh di kuh tsh di kuh tsh di kuh tsh ki chi kuh
7
duh ki di ko duh ki di ko duh ki di ko duh ki di ko chi ki di di ki di duh ki di go duh ki di ko ki doh
9
toom tuh toom tuh toom tuh kuh doo kay kuh doh kay kuh doh kay kuh doo kay koo
11
day koo day ki duh kuh doo kay kuh zuh n duh ah guh oh zuh n duh n zuh
13
n duh ah guh oh guh di gi di di gi di duh duh duh doh t day doh t day doh
15
zuh n duh oh kay kuh duh ki duh doo kay kuh tuh toom toom tuh toom kay kay kay kay kuh
17
zuh n duh zuh n duh zuh n duh zuh n duh zuh n duh di gi duh duh gi duh duh gi duh duh

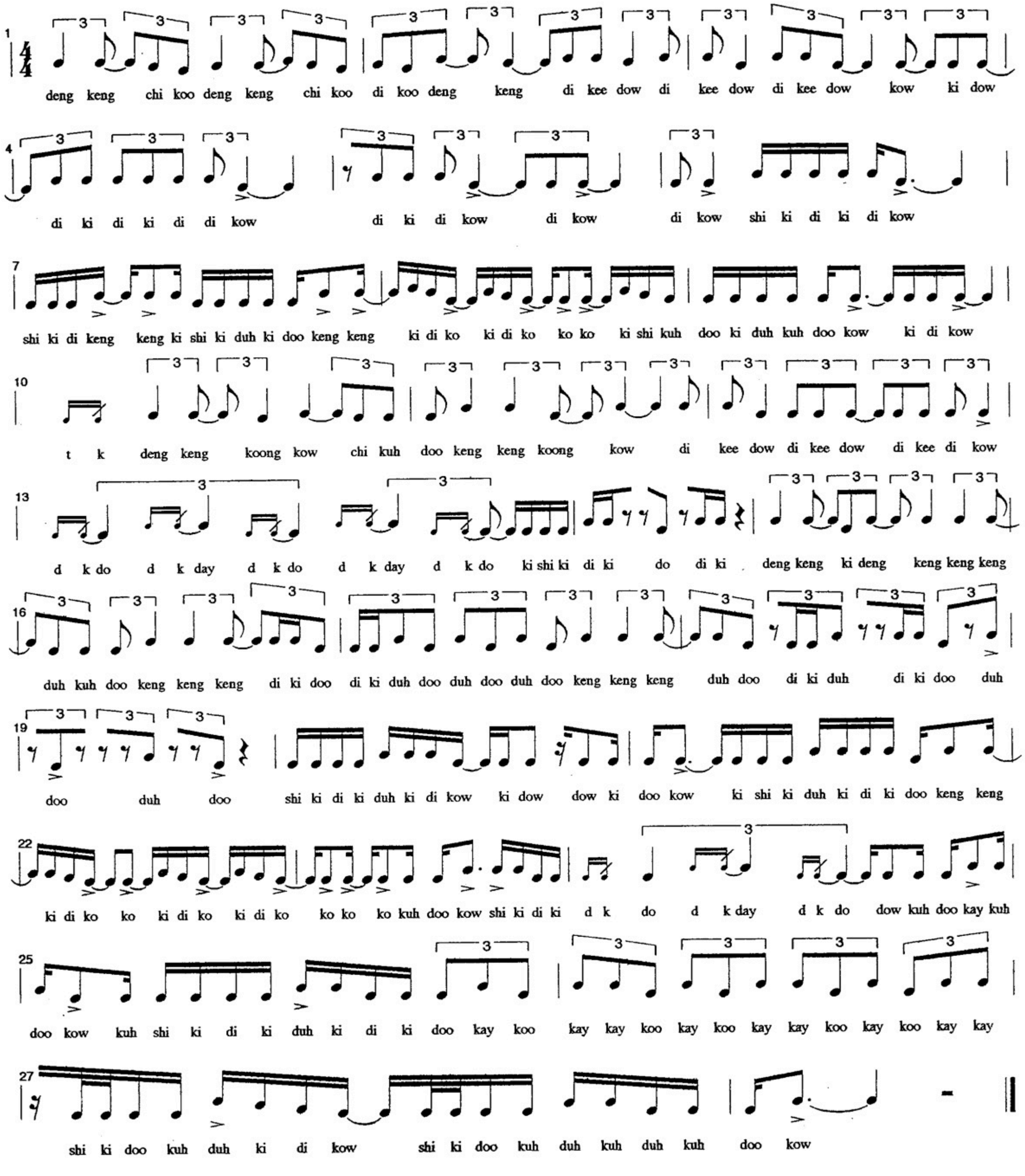
Vocal Rhythm Etude No. 2

Bill Douglas


1
Doh doh shi ki di doh kuh di koh ki doh kuh shi kuh di koh kuh shi ki di doh doh
3
shi ki duh n duh n duh dah n duh n duh dah shi kuh shi ki dah di kah shi kuh shi ki dah dah
5
kuh dee ko kuh dee ko ki dee ko duh di koh duh di doh kuh shi kuh di ko kuh shi ki di doh doh
7
di gow shi ki dow shi ki duh n duh n duh dow dut duh doo dut duh doo duh dut duh doo kuh dut dut dut duh dut duh doo
9
shi ki di ki dut doo di kah ki dah di kuh ki di ki dah ki di ki dah ki dah ki duh ki doo kah ki doo dah di koo shi ki di kuh ki di ki dah ki di ki dah
11
dah di gi doo dah ki duh doo di gi ki dah di kah ki dah ki dah shi ki di ki dah ki duh di kah ki dah di kah ki dah ki dah
13
shi ki di ki duh ki di ki duh ki di koo wah ki di ki duh ki di kah ki di ki duh ki di koo wah ki di ki
14
dah di gi doo dah di gi doo dah di gi doo di gi dah di gi doo di gi dah di gi di gow dow dut di dow dut di dow ki dut di dow
16
di dow di dow ki dow ki dow shi gi dut dah shi kah ki dah
18
ki dah di ko ki dah di ko ki dah di ko ki dah di ko ki dah di ko ki dow di gow shi ki di ki di dow
20
shi ki di ki dah ki di kah ki di ki dah ki di kah ki di ki dah ki di ki dah

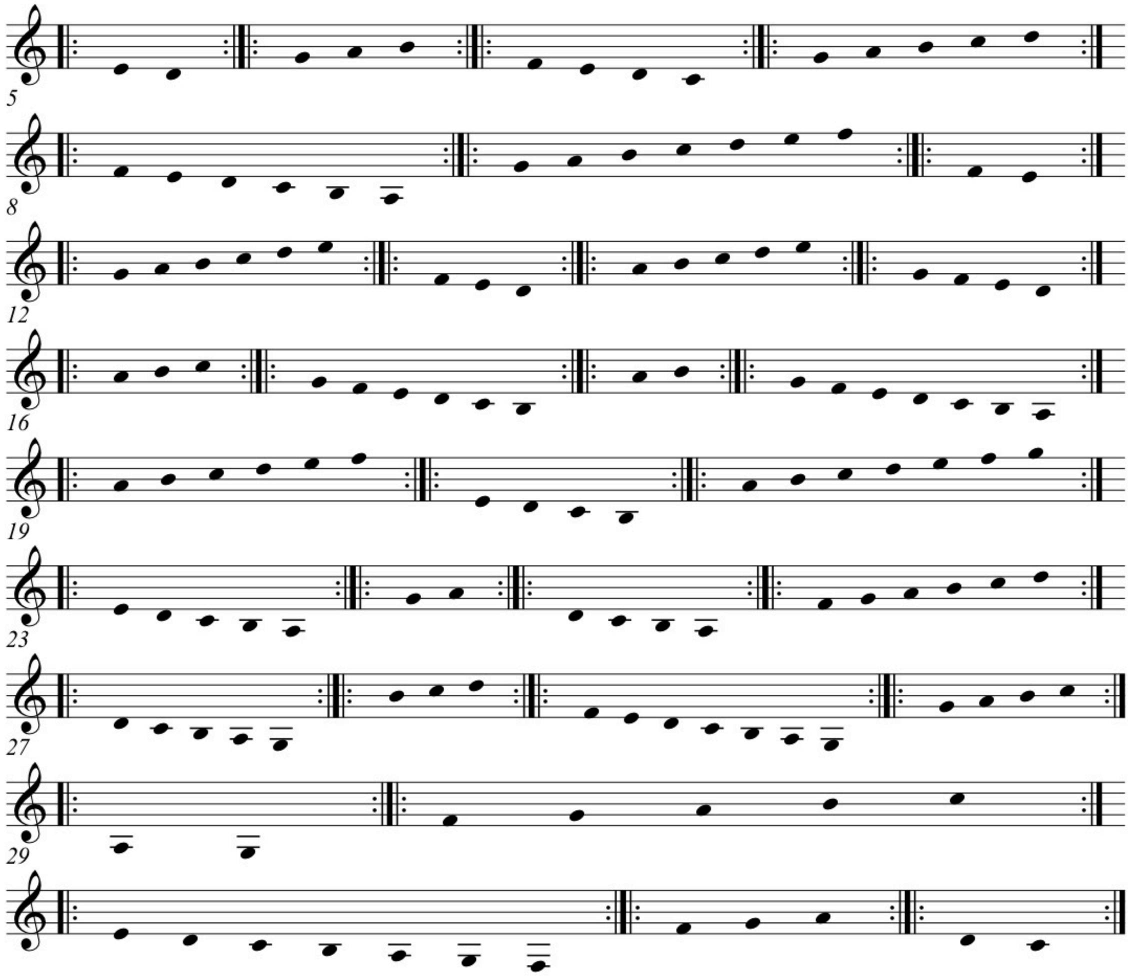
Vocal Rhythm Etude No. 6

Bill Douglas


deng keng chi koo deng keng chi koo di koo deng keng di kee dow di kee dow di kee dow kow ki dow
di ki di ki di di kow di ki di kow di kow di kow shi ki di ki di kow
shi ki di keng keng ki shi ki duh ki doo keng keng ki di ko ki di ko ko ko ki shi kuh doo ki duh kuh doo kow ki di kow
t k deng keng koong kow chi kuh doo keng keng koong kow di kee dow di kee dow di kee di kow
d k do d k day d k do d k day d k do ki shi ki di ki do di ki deng keng ki deng keng keng keng
duh kuh doo keng keng keng di ki doo di ki duh doo duh doo duh doo keng keng keng duh doo di ki duh di ki doo duh
doo duh doo shi ki di ki duh ki di kow ki dow dow ki doo kow ki shi ki duh ki di ki doo keng keng
ki di ko ko ki di ko ki di ko ko ko ko kuh doo kow shi ki di ki d k do d k day d k do dow kuh doo kay kuh
doo kow kuh shi ki di ki duh ki di ki doo kay koo kay kay koo kay koo kay kay koo kay koo kay kay
shi ki doo kuh duh ki di kow shi ki doo kuh duh kuh duh kuh doo kow

Cantation I

Hugh Shrapnel
for X031 (C. Sokol)



This piece may be played on one or two pianos.

The first figure is played on the left hand, after a while adding the second figure with the right hand, then the third figure with the left hand, and so onall through the piece, each new figure being superimposed exactly so that the first note of the new figure coincides with the first note of the existing figure to start off with.

If the piece is played on two pianos, they should begin with each hand out of phase with its corresponding part in the other piano.

The tempo must be strictly maintained throughout. The figures are played as smoothly and evnly as possible; the sustaining pedal may be used. Dynamics are loud. Duration between fifteen and thirty minutes.

The piece may also be played on two or more woodwind instruments (preferably the same) following the instructions above. Breathing should be between figures and staggered in such a way that there are always at least two instruments sounding at any given time. The music may be transposed to any suitable range.

Appendix B: Links, CD Album, DVD to Performances of Traditional, Modern, and Improvised Yangqin Music

The link to CD album *The Path to Contemporary:*
https://www.dropbox.com/home/The%20Path%20to%20Contemporary

1. Farewell at Yangguan (music from the Tang Dynasty)
2. Capriccio of Man Village (Chinese modern music composed in 1989)
3. Tarantella Napoletana (Italian folk music)
4. Memory of Hometown (improvisation based on Japanese pop)
5. Castle in the Sky (improvisation based on Japanese film music),
6. Habitats (free improvisation)
7. For Us (free improvisation)
8. Song For Casey (free improvisation)
9. The Future (free improvisation)
10. Asian Story (free improvisation)