Truthiness

Ryan Harper

Piano and Max/MSP

2011

Note:

Truthiness, for piano and electronics (Max/MSP), is a set of variations on political speeches by Sarah Palin, Bill O'Reilly, Keith Olbermann, Glenn Beck, and participants in the 2009 town hall health care debates. It presents language as essentially mutable, capable of endless adaptation, interpretation, and distortion. In an age of social media and digital dissemination, this quality of language can be either a curse or a blessing for political discourse.

The word "truthiness" was coined by Stephen Colbert in 2005 to describe "truth that comes from the gut, not books." The American Dialect Society in 2006 refined the definition to mean, "the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true rather than concepts or facts known to be true."

The Max/MSP patches require a standard 61-key midi controller.

Text:

Sarah Palin:

"Journalists and pundits should not manufacture a blood libel that serves only to incite the very hatred and violence that they purport to condemn."

Bill O'Reilly:

"Hey, you know, if you want to ban military recruiting fine, but I'm not going to give you another nickel of federal money. You know, if I'm the president of the United States, I walk right in to Union Square, I set up my little presidential podium, and I say, 'Listen, citizens of San Francisco, if you vote against military recruiting you're not going to get another nickel in federal funds. Fine, you want to be your own country, go right ahead. And if al-Qaeda comes in here and blows you up, we're not going to do anything about it. We're going to say, look, every other place in America is off limits to you except San Francisco. You want to blow up the Coit Tower, go ahead.'"

Keith Olbermann:

"What would you do, sir, if terrorists were killing 45,000 people every year in this country? Well the current health care system, the insurance companies, and those who support them are doing just that. Let's frame this in language even conservatives can understand. Those fighting health care reform, not those debating its shape nor its nuance, people who demand the status quo, they are killing 45,000 Americans a year. If they were killed all at once, or even a hundred at a time, Neal Boortz would be demanding martial law and government by the generals. Instead, because they die individually of disease and not disaster, Neal Boortz and those who ape him, in office and out, approve their deaths. All 45,000 of them. A year. In America. Remind me again, who are the terrorists?"

Glenn Beck:

"This president, I think, has exposed himself as a guy over and over and over again who has a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture, I don't know what it is, but you can't sit in a pew with Jeremiah Wright for twenty years and not hear some of that stuff and not have it wash over."

Hysterical woman:

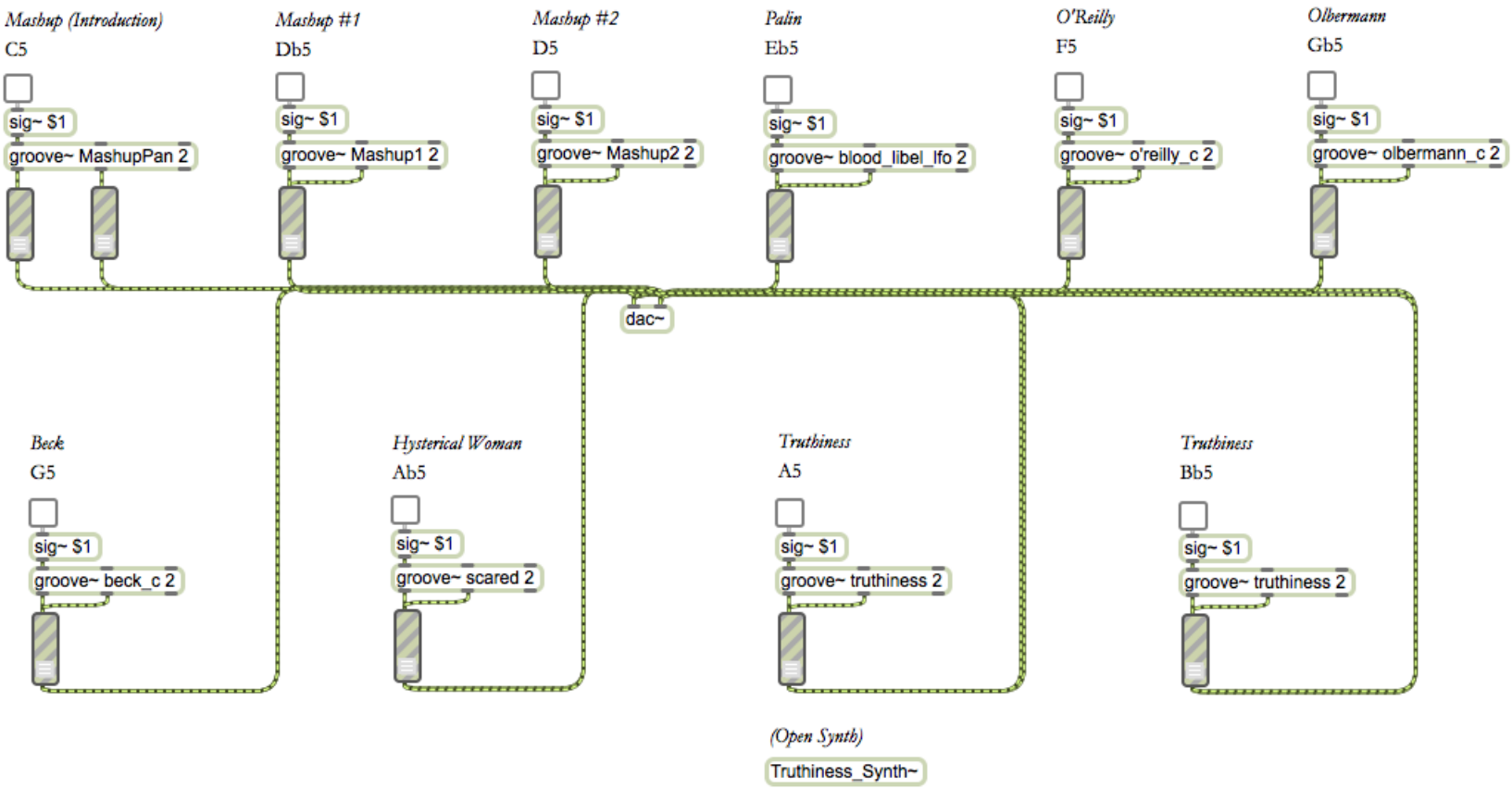
"At this point in my life I have never seen my America turn into what it has turned into. And I don't think representatives and senators are going to be able to do it. I'm scared."

Hysterical man:

"And you guys are undermining American exceptionalism."

Truthiness

Screenshot of Performance Interface



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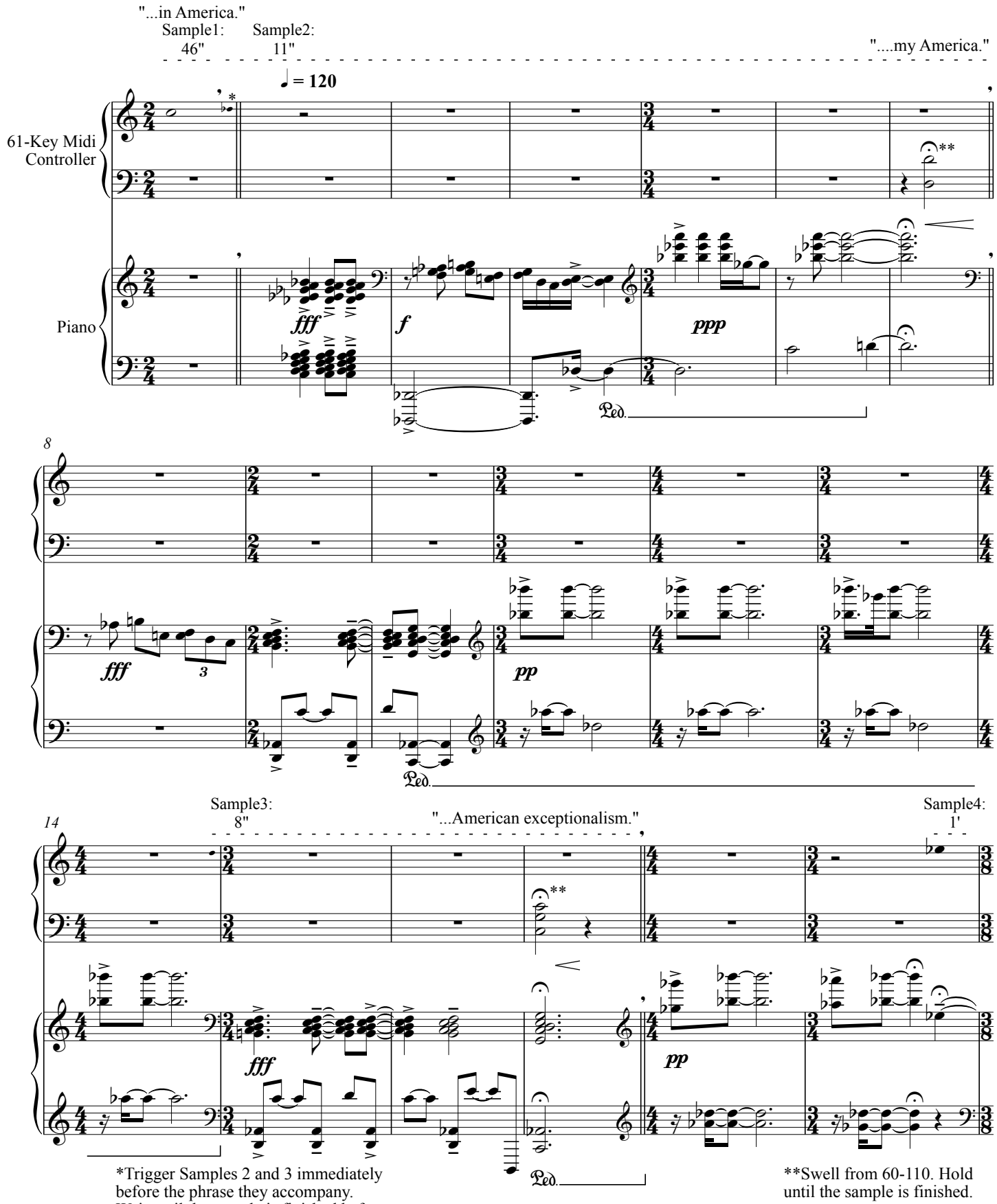

*Trigger Samples 2 and 3 immediately before the phrase they accompany. Wait until the sample is finished before moving on.

**Swell from 60-110. Hold until the sample is finished.

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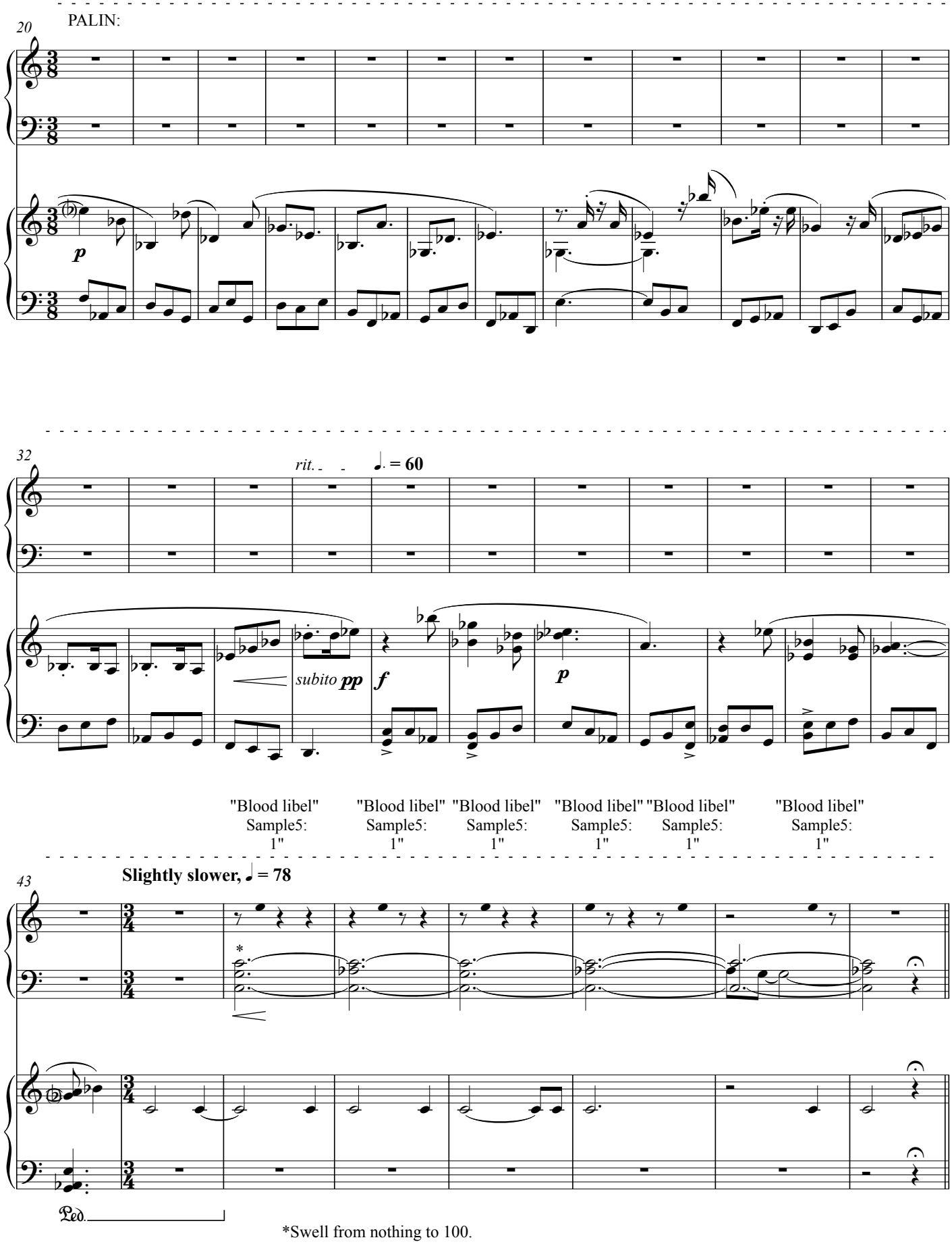
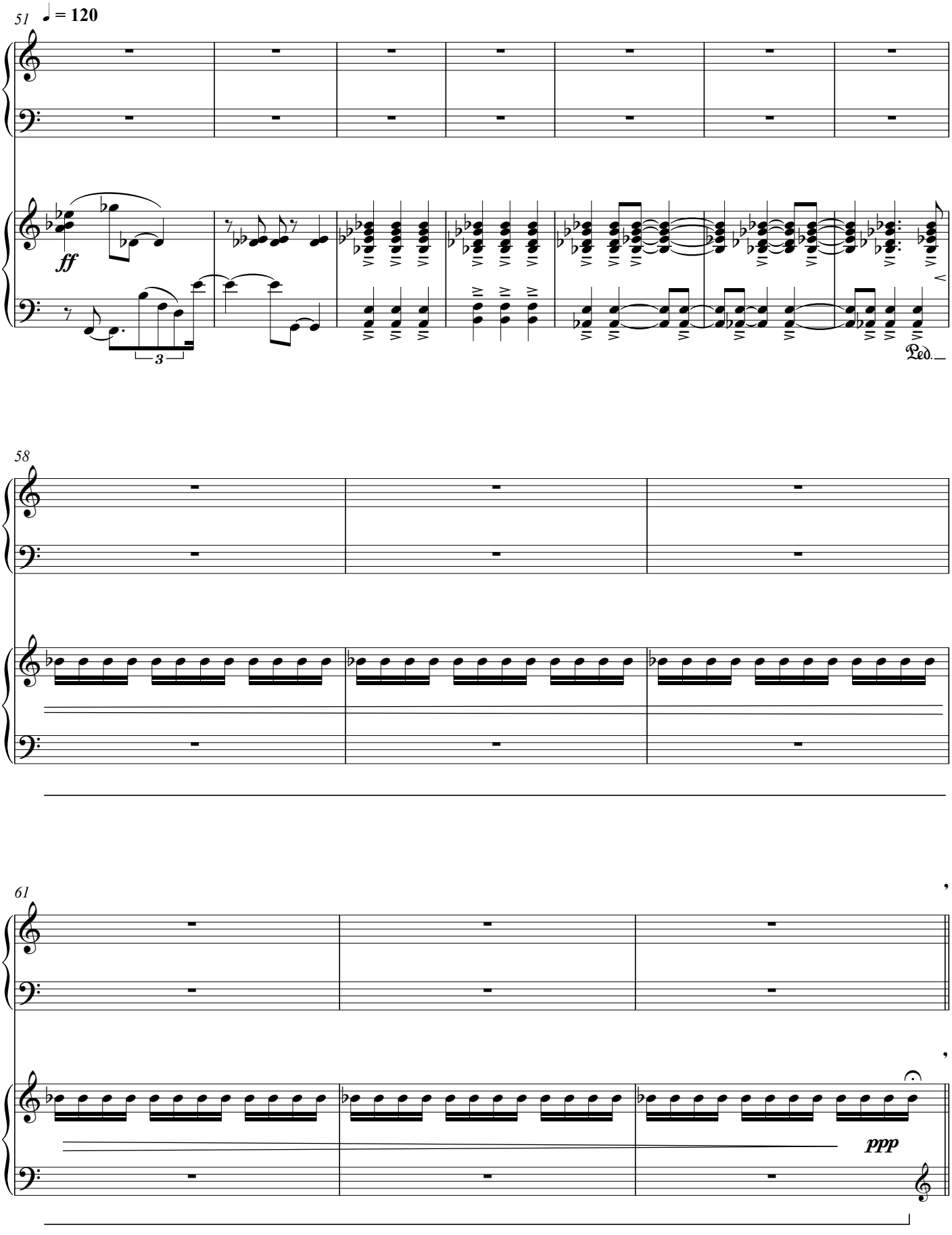


*Swell from nothing to 100.


51
♩ = 120
ff
3
Ped.
58
61
ppp

"Hey, you know..."
Sample6:
47"
O'REILLY:

"Hey, you know..."

64

♩ = 138, *dry*

Sotto voce,
mf

69

"Hey, you know..."

74

79

84

"Hey, you know..."

89

"Hey, you know..."

94

♩ = 78, *broadly*

8va

*Swell from nothing to 100.

Sample7:
25"

OLBERMANN:

101 ♩ = 60

mp pp

"...who are the terrorists?"

109

116

*Swell from 60 to 110.

BECK:

125

♩ = 120, *agitato*

f *ff* *mf*

131

mp

"...over again."

Sample7:

1"

136

f *f*

"...over again."
Sample7:
1"

142

mp

149

ff

mp

8va

pp

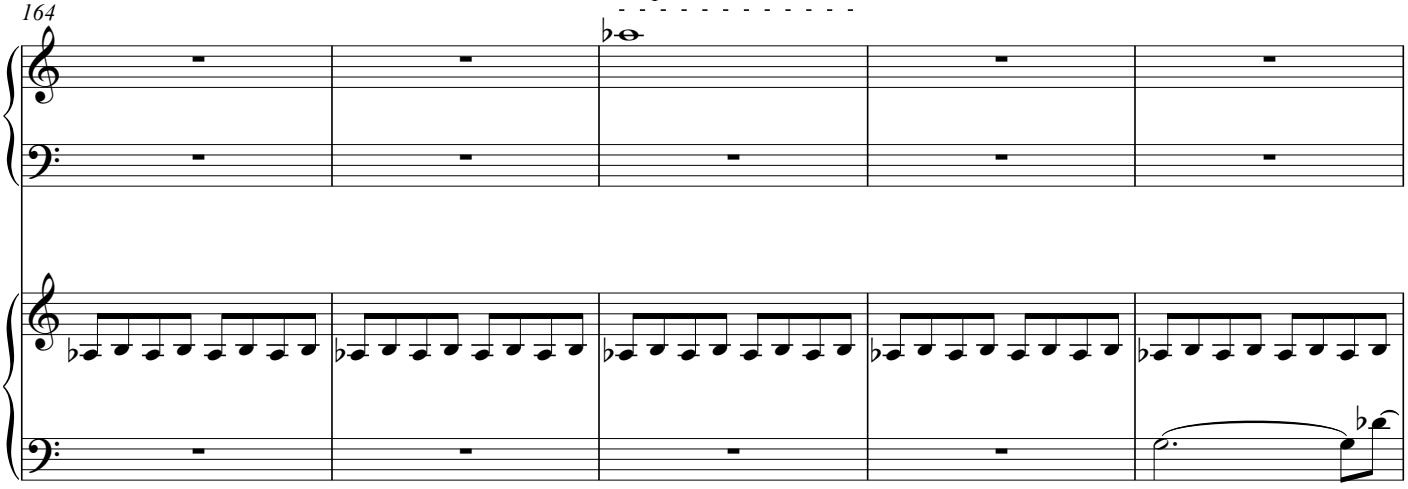
155

𝅗𝅥 = 104, *calmer*

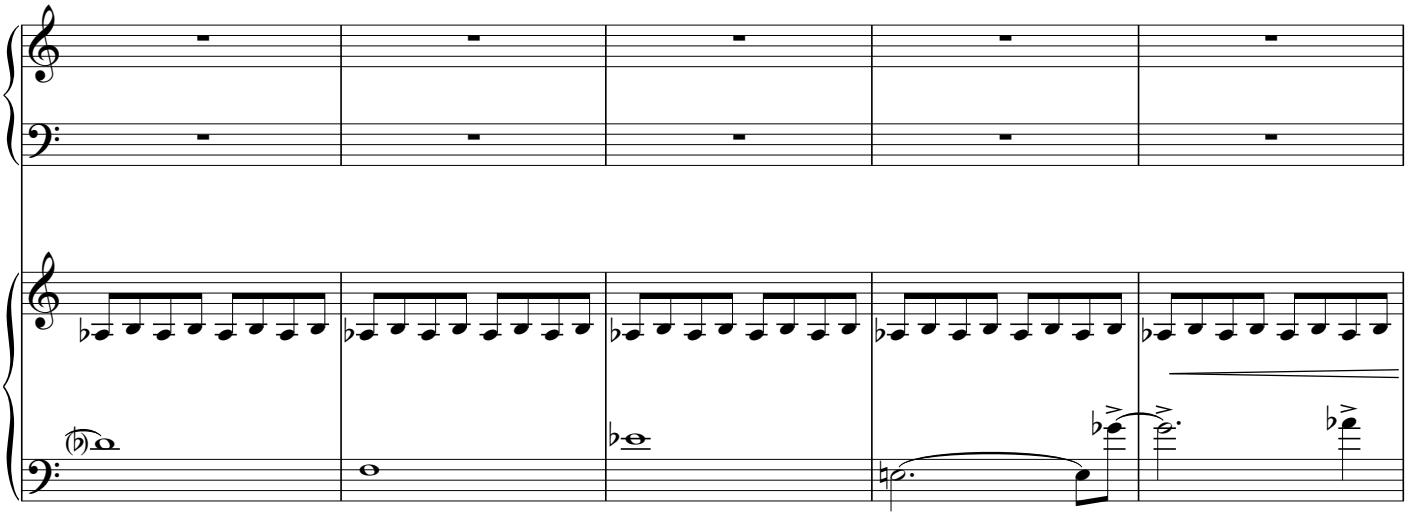
(8)

"I'm scared."
Sample8:
1"

164

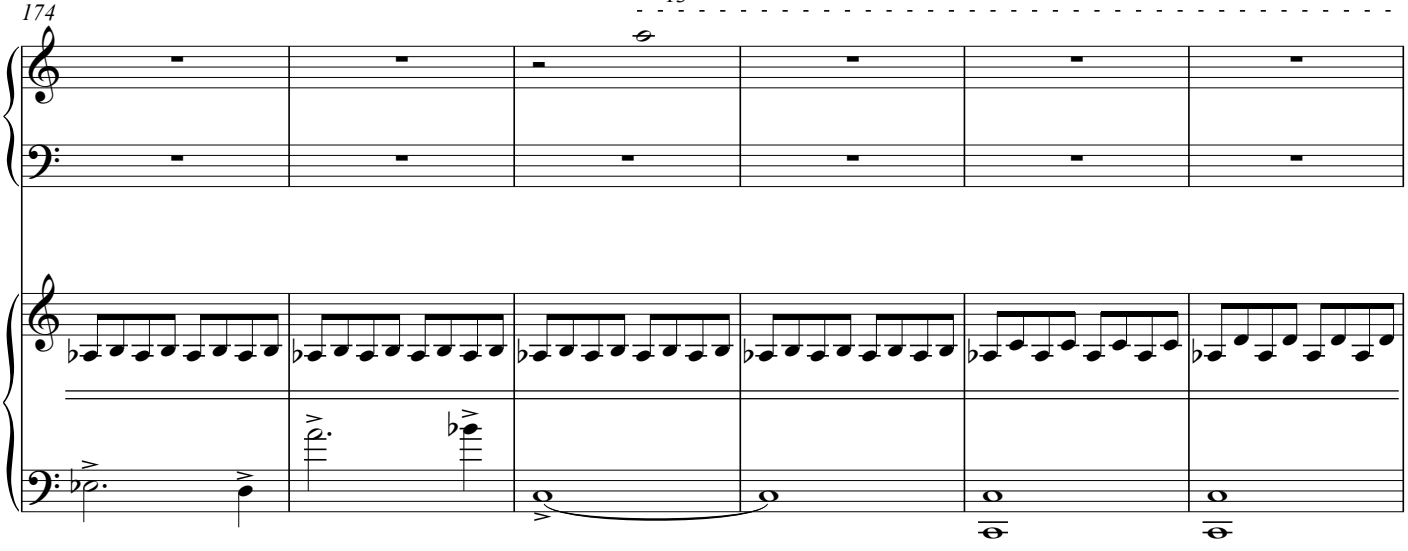


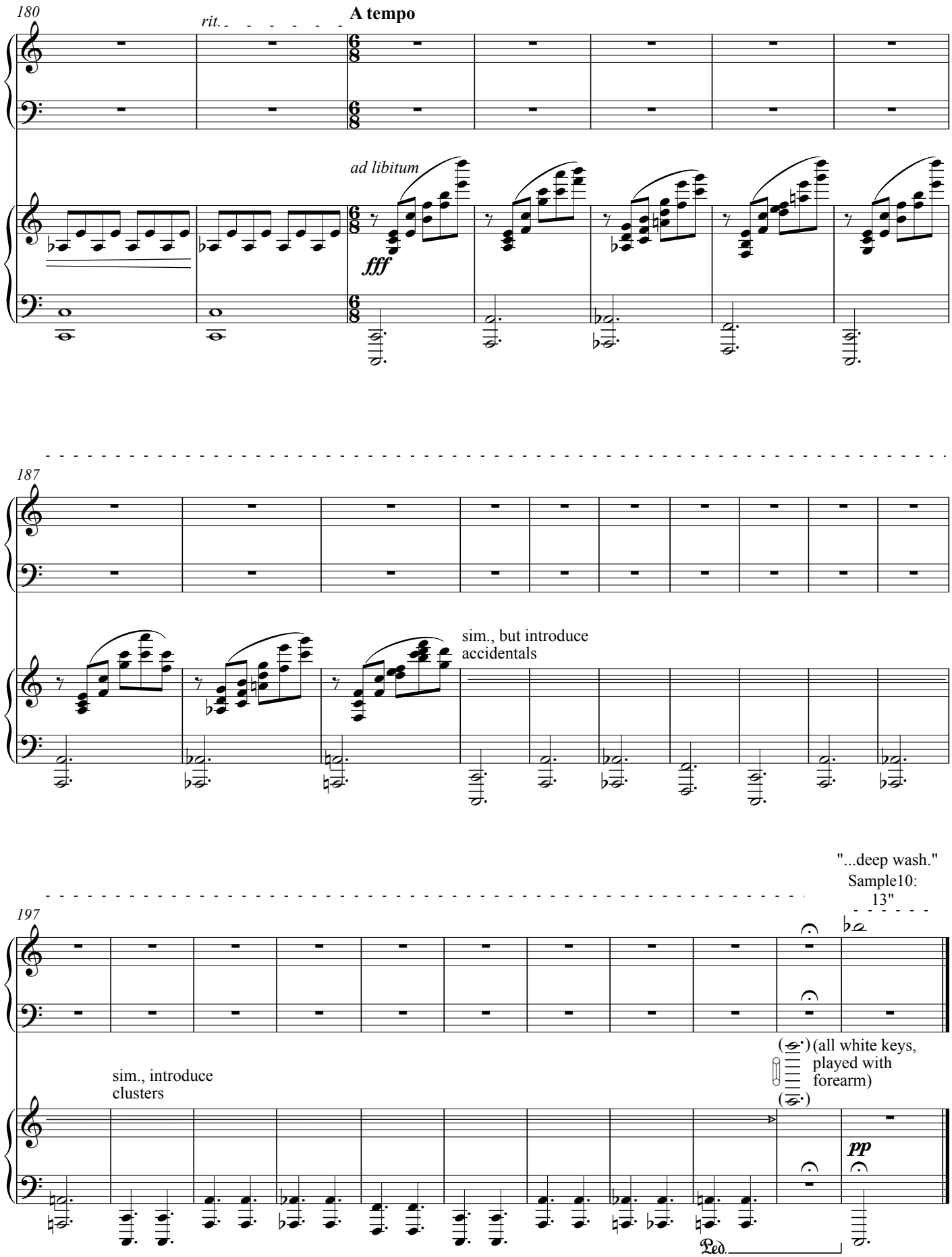
169



Sample9:
13"

174




180
rit.
A tempo
ad libitum
fff
187
sim., but introduce
accidentals
"...deep wash."
Sample10:
13"
197
sim., introduce
clusters
(all white keys,
played with
forearm)
pp
Ped.