Degu Sounds

for solo piano

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Completion date: March/August 2015.

Performance notes:

The pieces are presented in the order they were composed. Any number of them may be played in a program, in any sequence. Performance notes for individual pieces are to be found at the end of each piece.

Note on the music:

The music is based on vocalizations of the common degu (*Octodon degus*). These Chilean rodents are known, among other things, for their extensive vocabulary of vocalizations: they employ about twenty different types of sounds. Each piece is based on one of those types, but the actual vocalizations are never rendered in a straightforward way. The actual sounds are isolated and magnified, or radically slowed down and transposed, or used as blueprints for different ideas. An extraneous musical vocabulary is used when necessary: transpositions to convey the idea of an individual degu, large chords to convey the idea of sleep, and so on. Thus a single short whirr from a degu may be interpreted here as 60 seconds full of different sounds, but the same 60 seconds can then be interpreted as an encounter between several animals, simply because of the nature of the original sound.

The result is simultaneously based heavily on degu vocalizations and mostly unrecognizable as such even by those who are intimately familiar with the animals' behavior. Most importantly, I hope the work attains the quality the original vocalizations have: while types of sounds may be identified as conveying e.g. fear, or a desire for grooming, the details may forever stay beyond our reach. A single soft warbling sound from a degu, identified securely as a welcome intended for a conspecific, invariably contains dozens of individual notes, and there doesn't seem to be a way of knowing how much information a single one of those notes carries. In these circumstances, a single trill in the music may be understood as conveying many things – or nothing at all without its context.

Degu Sounds – No. 6

Often Stimulates Reciprocal Chittering From Conspecific and
Further Nose-nose Contact or Allogrooming

Jashiin
2015

♩=40

11

Ped.

Ped.

23

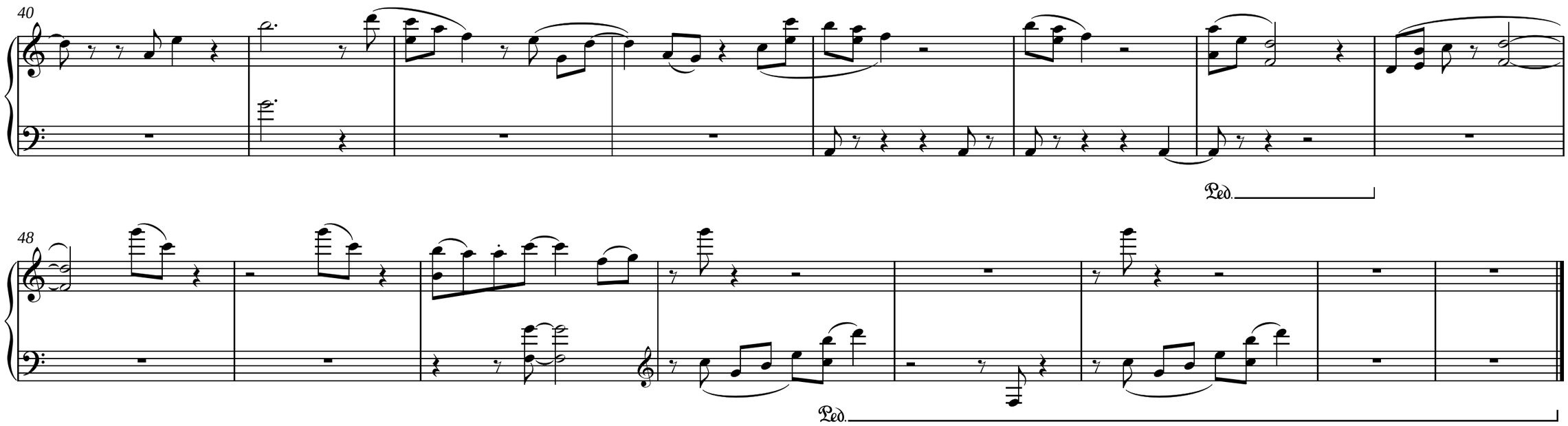
Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

33

Ped.

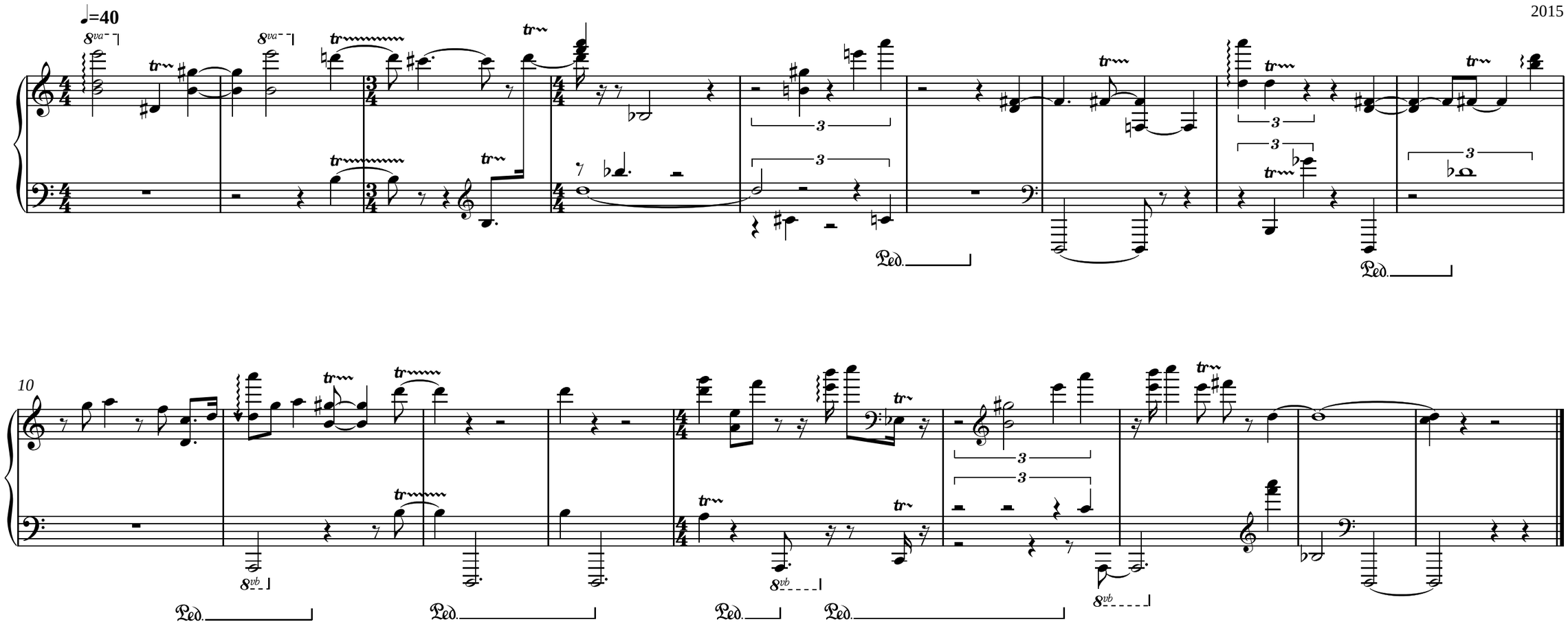


Mezzo forte to *forte* throughout the entire piece. The tempo indicated is approximate,
and you can use any amount of rubato.

Degu Sounds – No. 2

...Lunging, Scrabbling with Forepaws and Boxing. Causes Conspecific to Move Away from Subject.

Jashiin
2015

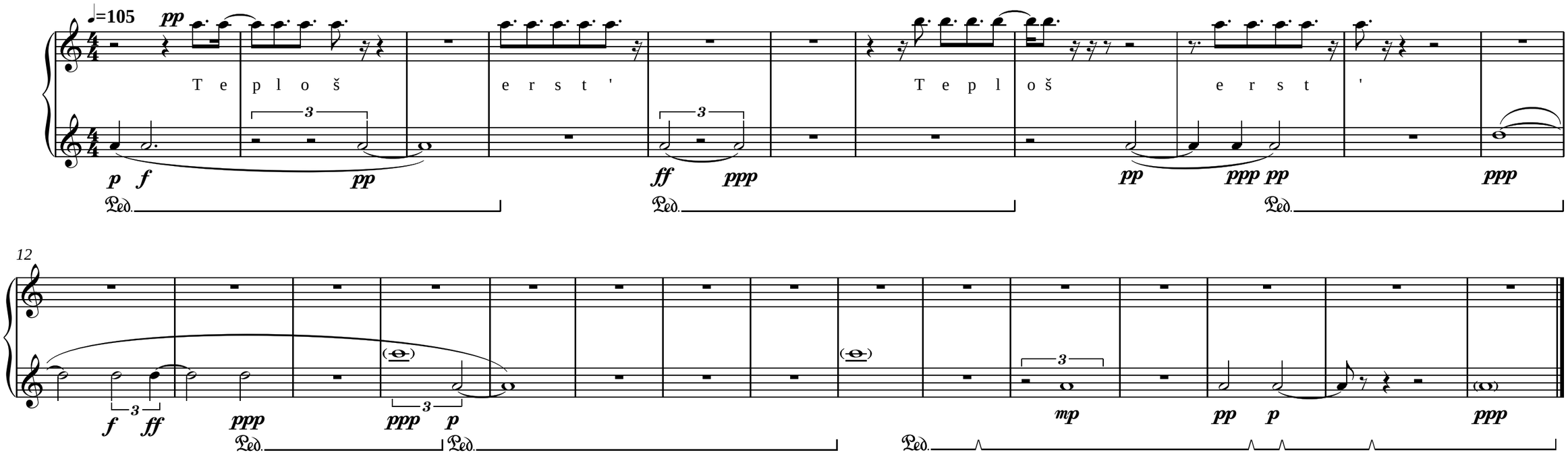


Piano to mezzo piano throughout the entire piece, possibly with a few accented notes.
The tempo indicated is approximate.

Degu Sounds – No. 15

Use Decreases Until Pups Are Roughly Two Weeks Old

Jashiin
2015



Dynamic indications in the bottom staff are approximations. Play with subtle gradations of piano and forte, creating a dynamics melody, if you will. The top staff pitches must all be the same, and played pianissimo. The text below them is a name which is not meant to be read aloud, or understood as the title of the piece.

Degu Sounds – No. 10

Warning of Immediate Agonistic Action Intended to Repel Conspecific

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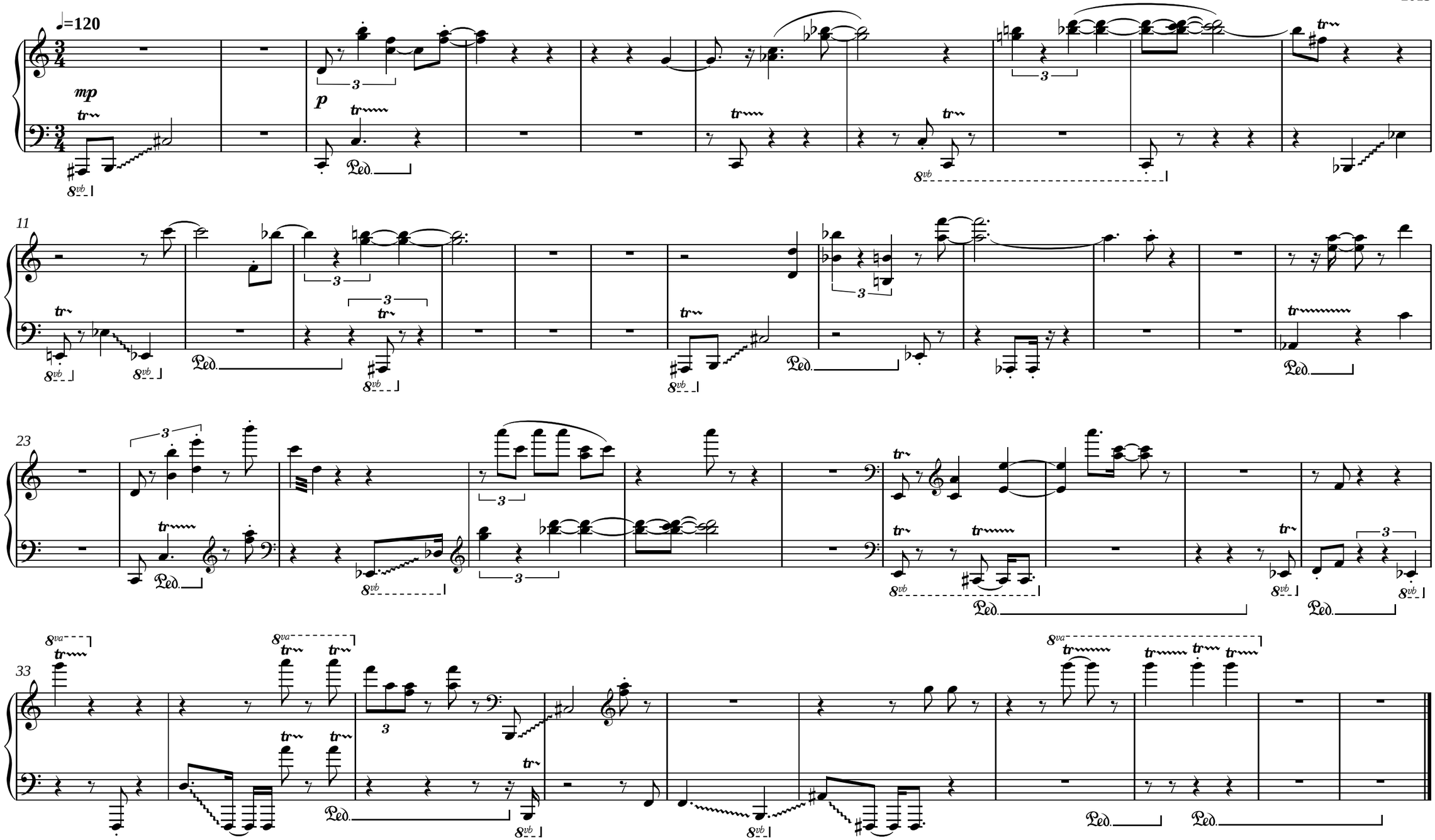
2015

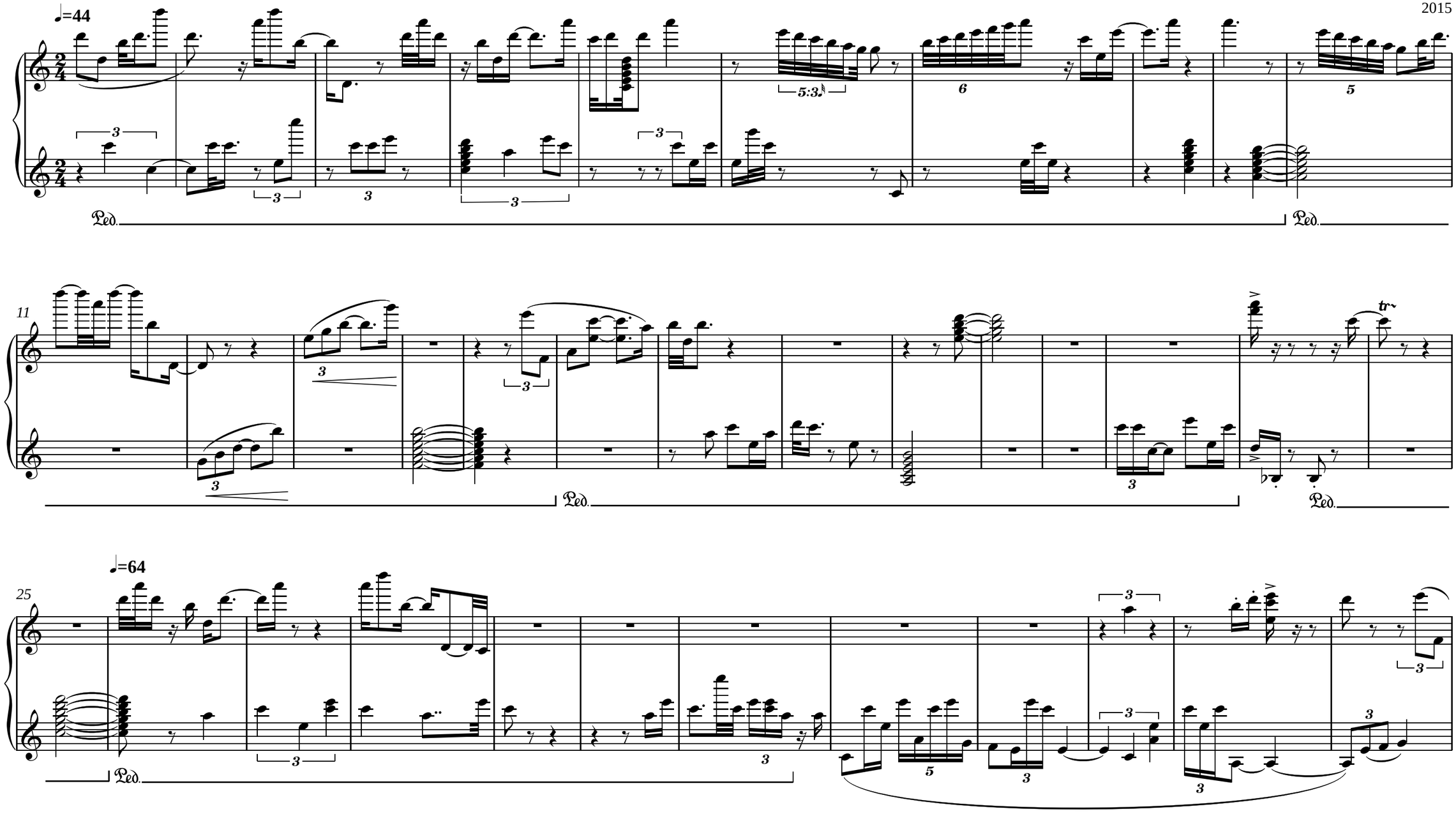


Glissandi may be white notes only, or chromatic. Dynamics are just one option, and using a wider range will benefit the music.

Degu Sounds – No. 4

Can Trigger Chittering, Tail Beating and Sometimes Warbling
in Conspecifics Within Auditory Range.

Jashiin
2015



The impression should be of a gentle piece with a few quirks, not something harsh. Most of the music should be played mezzo piano or mezzo forte with a few accents, and a natural increase in volume where large chords are employed. Glissando in bar 69 is played on white notes only.

37

8va

♩=54

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

47

♩=64

Ped. Ped.

55

♩=54

♩=44

Ped.

65

♩=64

♩=44

Ped.