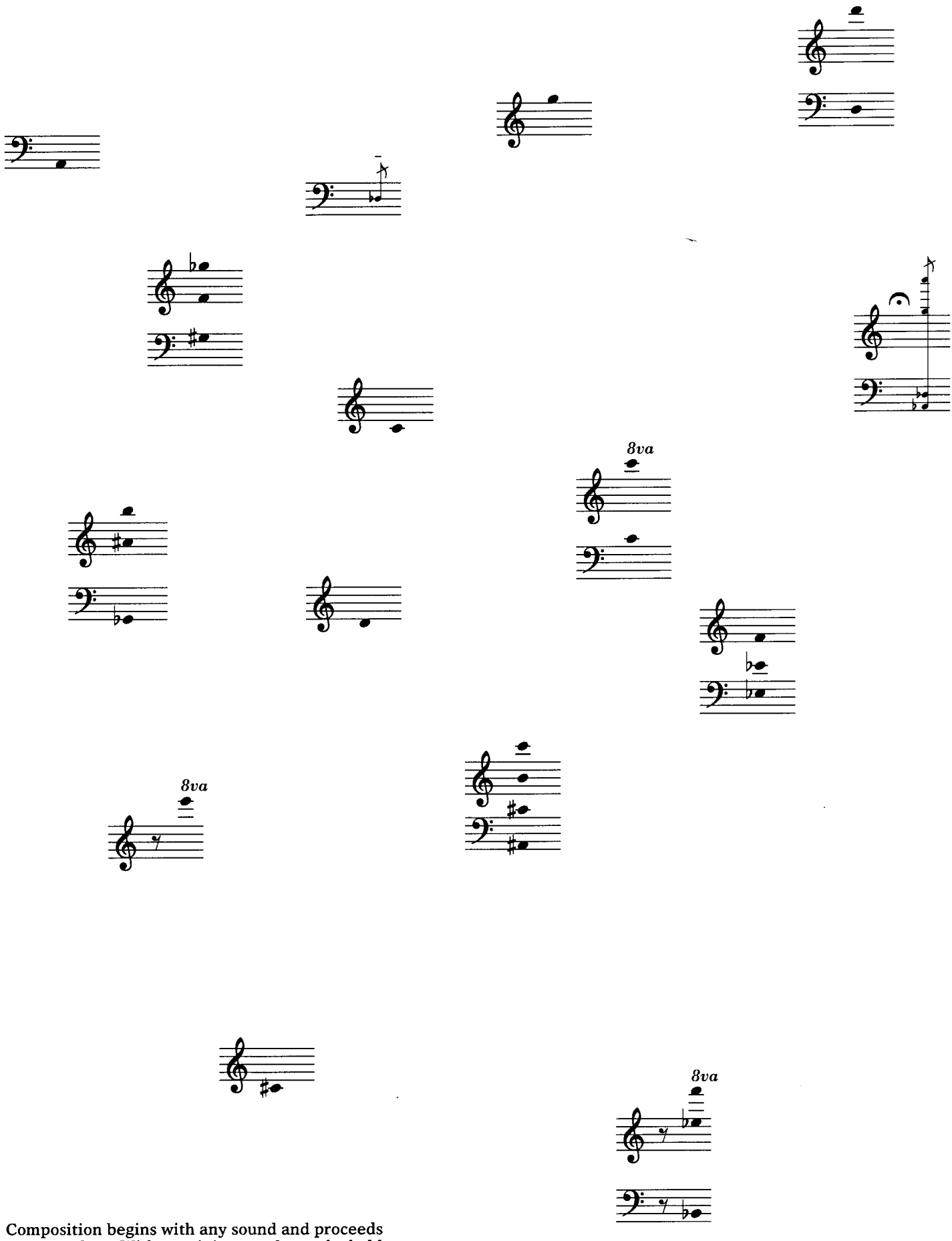
Intermission 6
(for 1 or 2 Pianos)

Morton Feldman
(1953)



Composition begins with any sound and proceeds to any other. With a minimum of attack, hold each sound until barely audible. Grace notes are not played too quickly. All sounds are to be played as softly as possible.

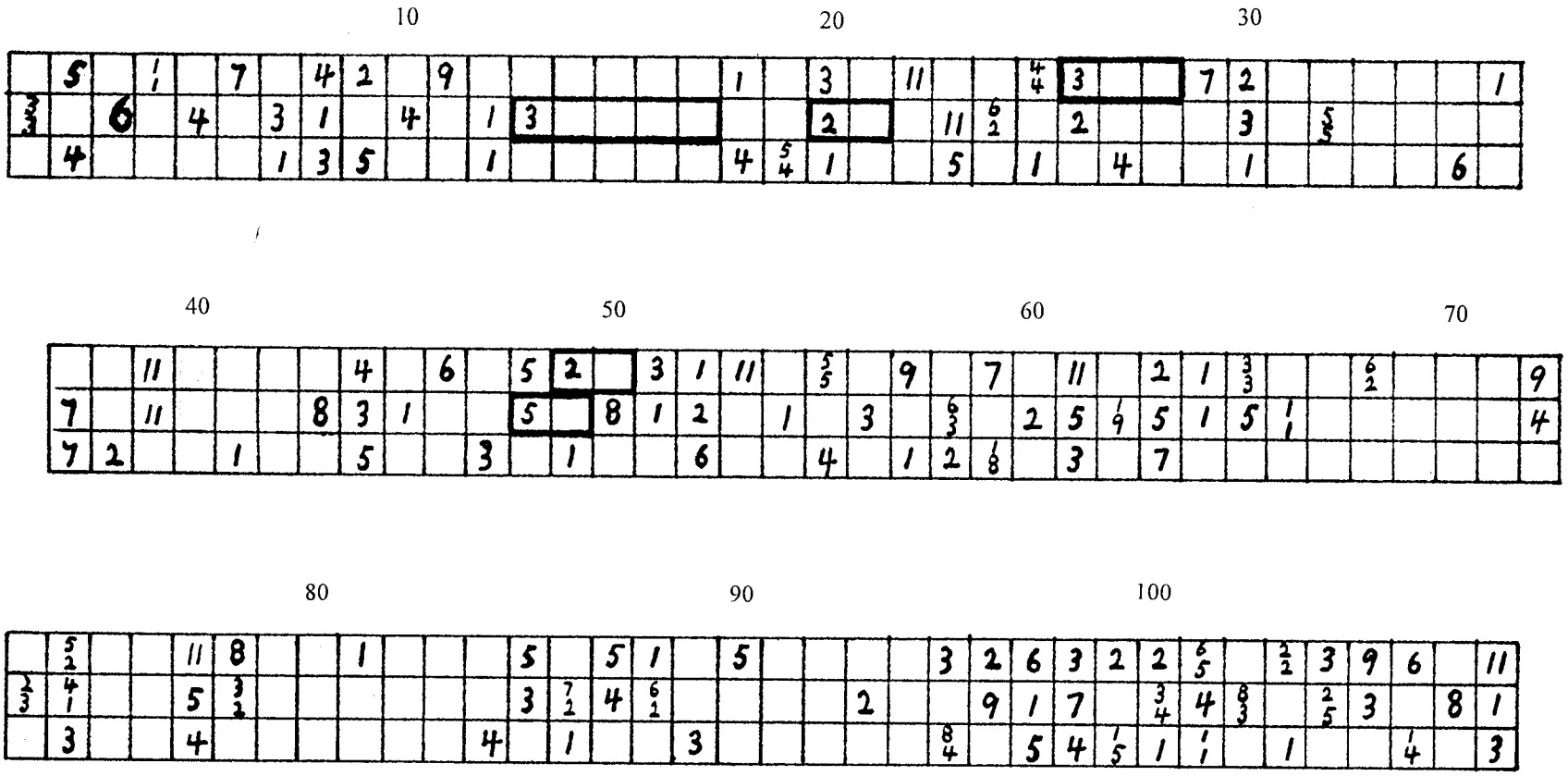
Copyright © 1963 by C.F. Peters Corporation
373 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016
International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved.
Alle Rechte vorbehalten.

To David Tudor

INTERSECTION 3

Morton Feldman
(1953)

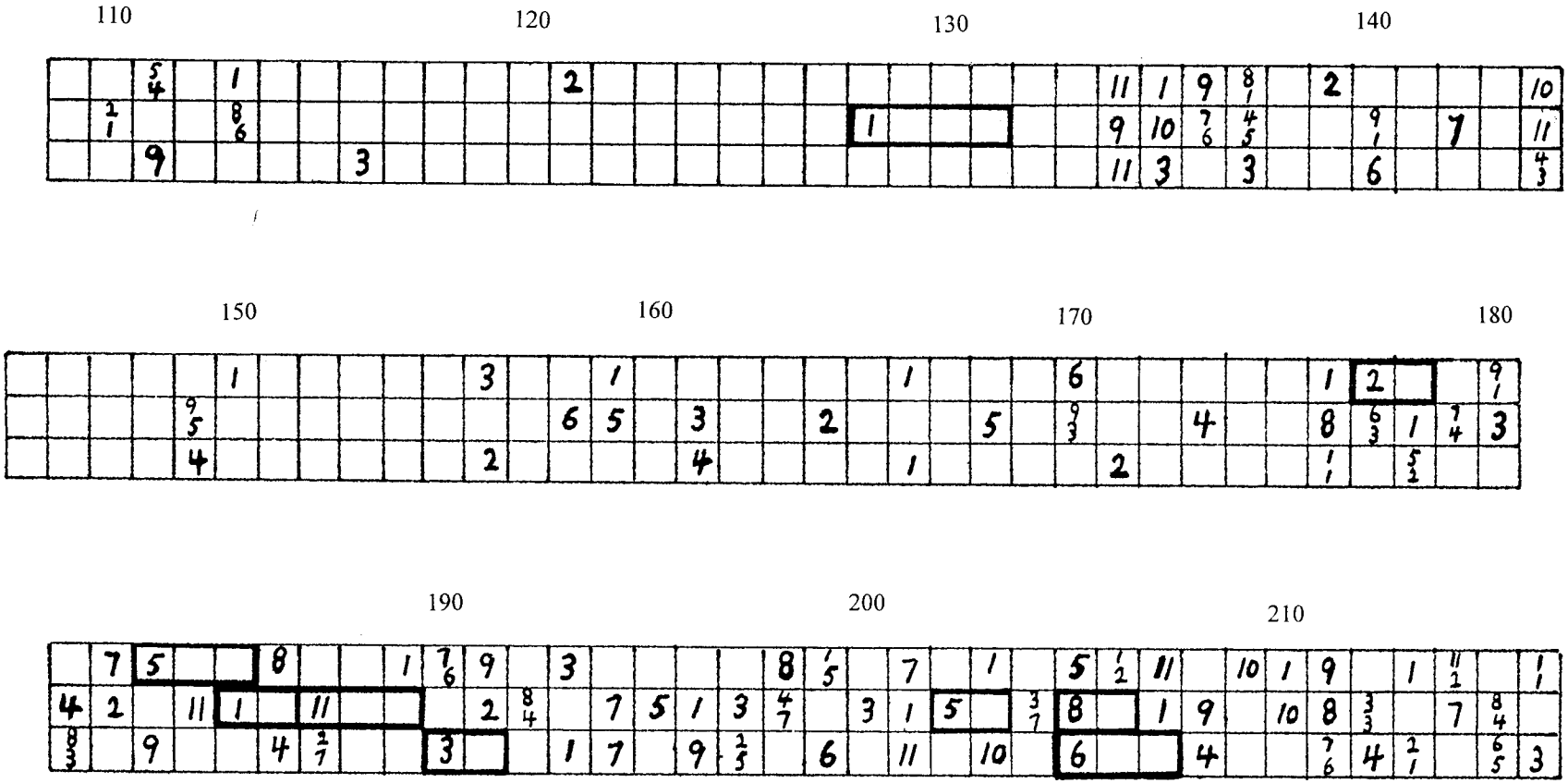
□ = 176



Each box is equal to MM. 176. Each system is notated vertically as regards pitch: high, middle, low. The numbers indicate how many keys one plays. Where there are two numbers for one register any part of the register can be used. The player is free to choose any dynamic and to make any rhythmic entrances on or within a given situation. Sustained sounds once played must be held to the end of the notated duration.

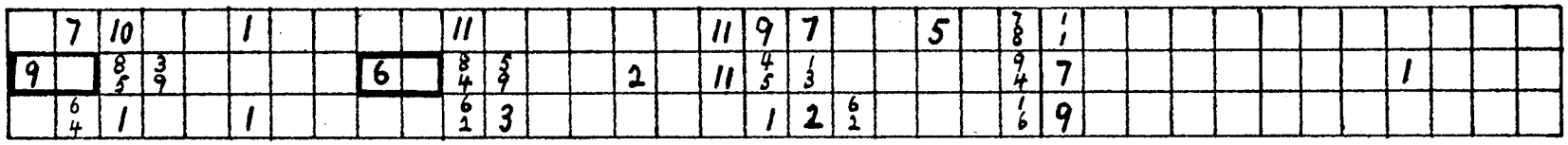
Copyright © 1962 by C. F. Peters Corporation
373 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016
International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved.
Alle Rechte vorbehalten.

INTERSECTION 3

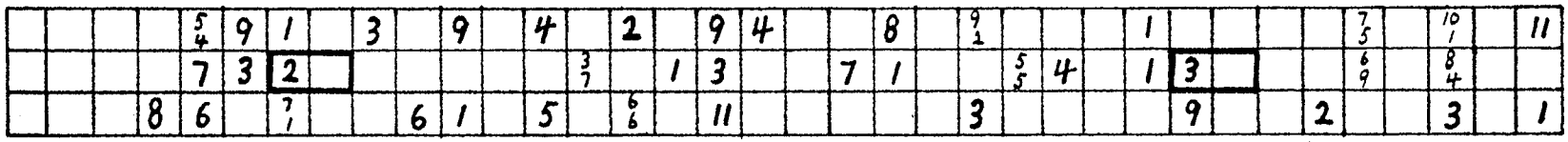


INTERSECTION 3

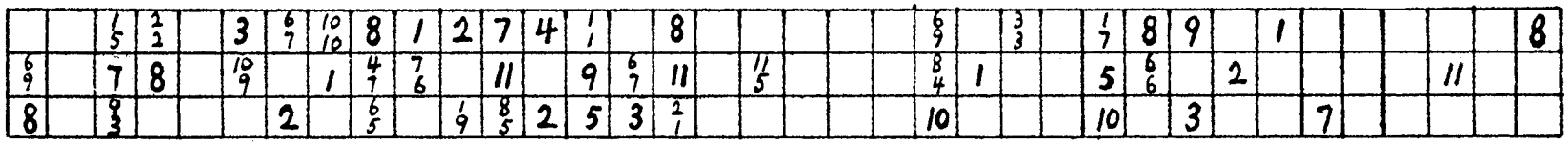
220 230 240 250



260 270 280

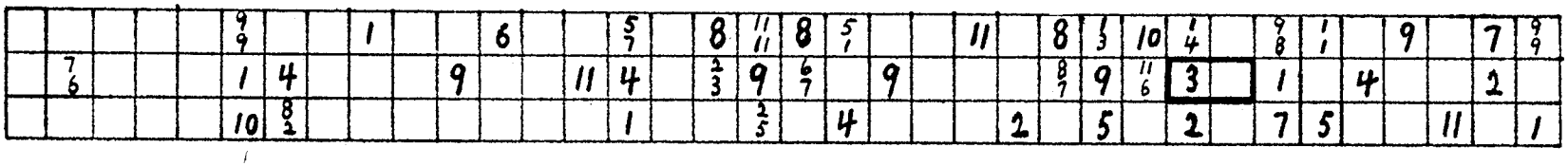


290 300 310 320

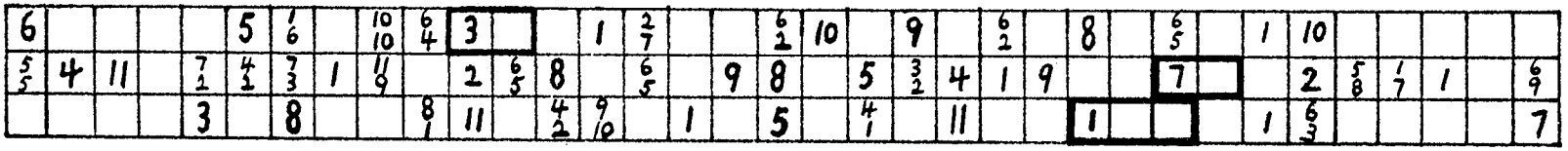


INTERSECTION 3

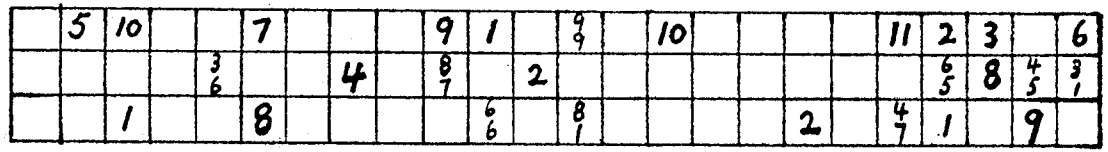
340 350 360



370 380 390



400 410

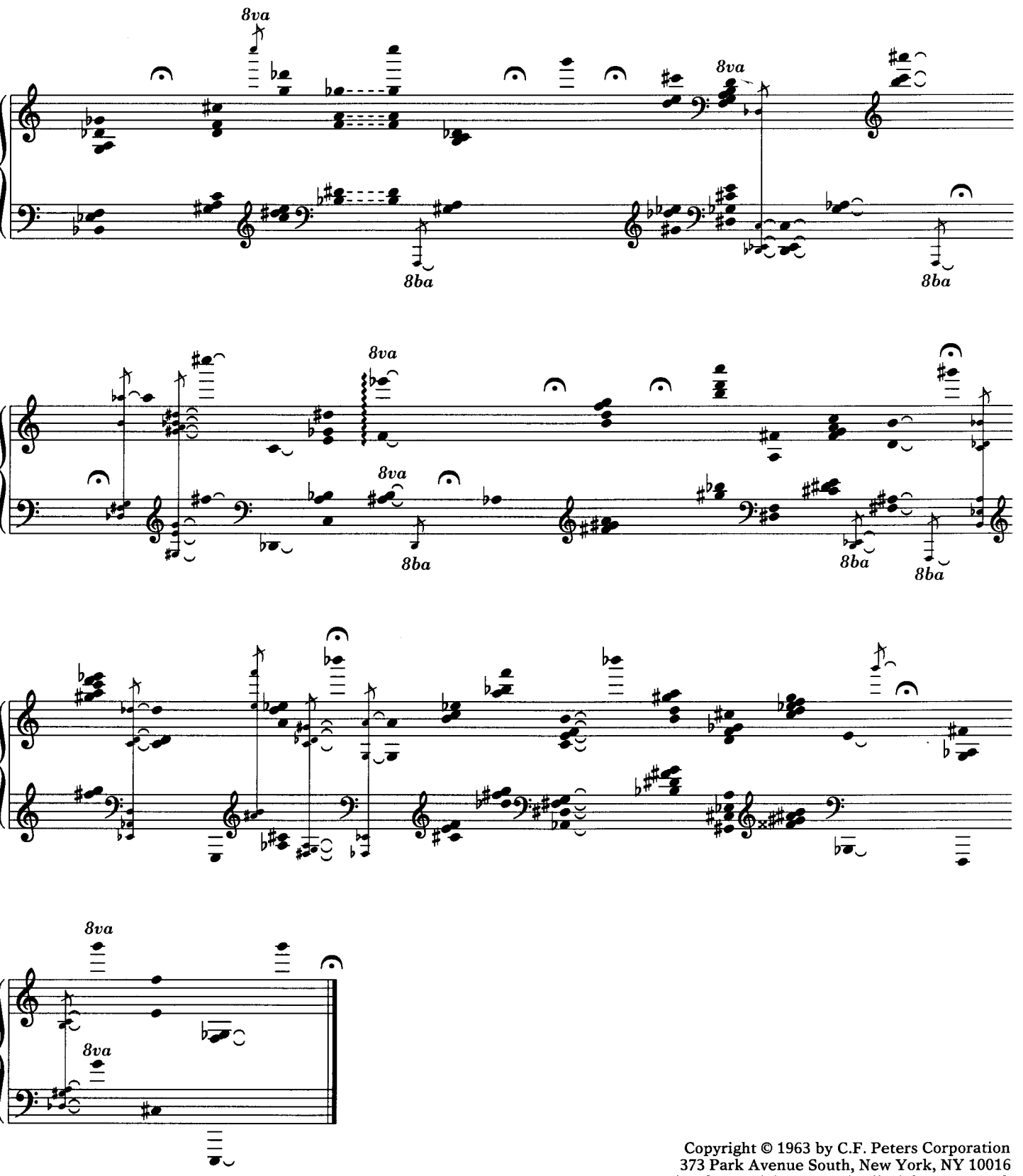


APRIL, 1953

Vertical Thoughts 4

Morton Feldman
(1963)

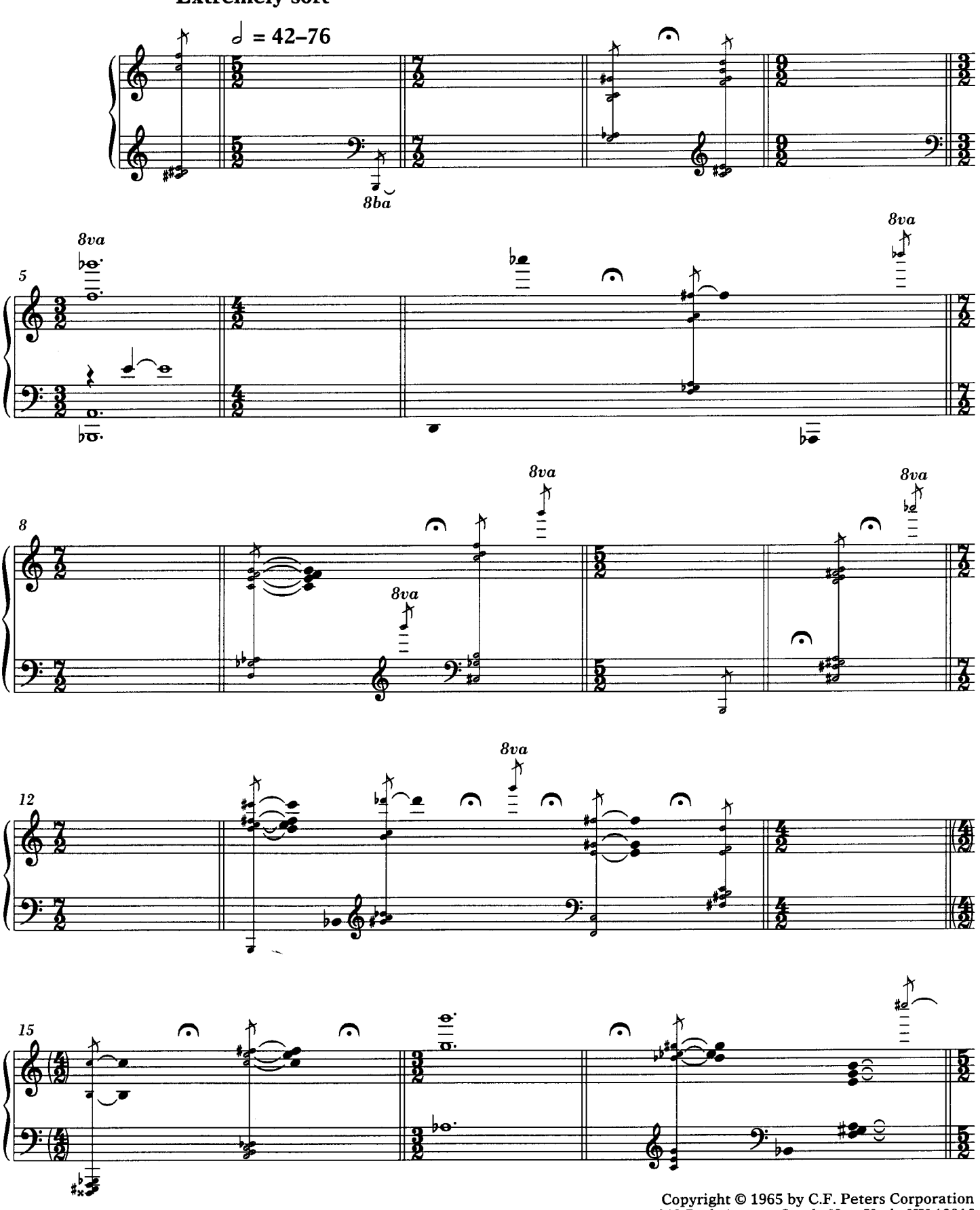
Extremely soft. 𝅗𝅥 **= 66 - 88**



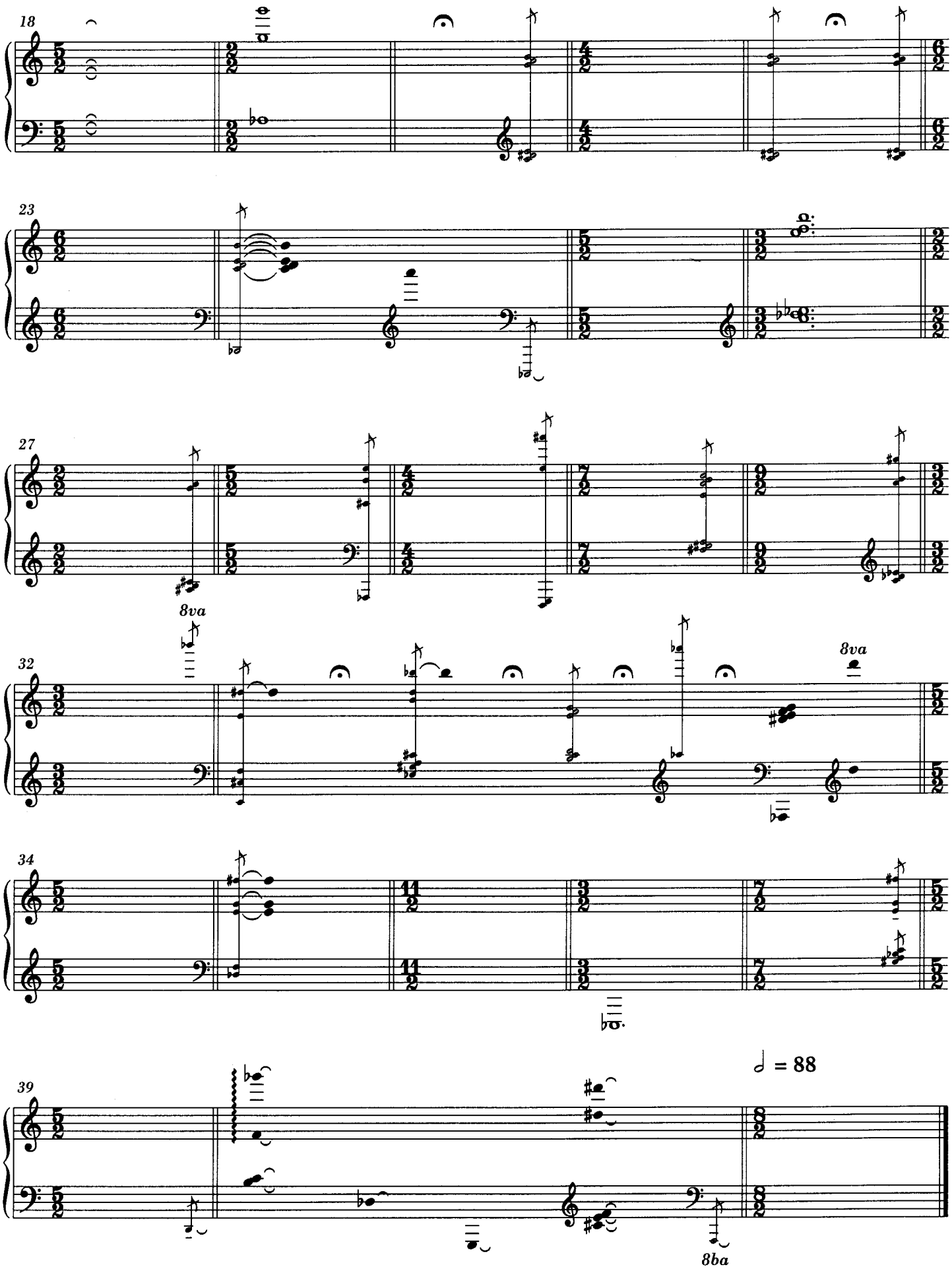
Copyright © 1963 by C.F. Peters Corporation
373 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016
International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved.
Alle Rechte vorbehalten.

Piano Piece (1964)

Morton Feldman



Copyright © 1965 by C.F. Peters Corporation
373 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016
International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved.
Alle Rechte vorbehalten.


18
23
27
8va
32
8va
34
39
♩ = 88
8ba

A NOTE ON THE NEWLY PUBLISHED PIANO PIECES

In addition to the complete solo piano pieces previously published by C. F. Peters, and here newly engraved, the present volume includes *Nature Pieces*, *Variations* and *Intermissions 3* and *4*, works published here for the first time.

Nature Pieces for piano combines musical elements of Feldman's youth with those that remain in the composer's mature musical language. The work, dated 1951, was premiered by David Tudor at Hunter College in New York City on January 18, 1952, as the accompaniment to Jean Erdman's dance *Changing Woman*. The program for the evening indicates the following three-part solo: I. Forest voice, Wind voice, Brook voice, Earth voice. II. Sea voice, Desert voice. III. Moon voice. The distribution of these segments among Feldman's accompanying five piano pieces (numbered I through V) remains uncertain. Only the third piece suggests a three-part division, while the others adhere to one character.

The soft arpeggios with wide intervals in No. I employ a limited number of notes, from which the repetition of central notes in different registers becomes apparent. Again and again, especially towards the end, Feldman establishes one and two-note models which he repeats with rhythmic shifts, generally separated by long general pauses. He uses this procedure also in No. III, although there with up to five-note models. The passage of long sustained tones in the middle section resumes the quiet chordal structure of No. II, likewise using major sevenths and minor ninths as the characteristic interval framework. In addition, both Nos. II and III abandon the dynamic uniformity of No. I, a feature which reappears, however, in the parallel piece No. IV, with its simple scale segments. Simple oscillating models are here repeated up to four times – a procedure typical of the mature Feldman. No. V, on the other hand, with its Webernesque leaping chords, is reminiscent of the youthful *Illusions* of 1948. Its total range is again a major seventh, here spread over three octaves, and its framework interval is constantly present in frequent appearances in the outer notes. The repetition of the entire piece finally brings about formal unity.

Also intended for a solo dance, *Variations* was composed in 1951 for Merce Cunningham. In this piano piece, Feldman's typical style of the early fifties appears for the first time. Dynamics are to be kept "as softly as possible"; sometimes extremely long general pauses give brief single sound events enough space to continue sounding; and the musical material is limited to a few aggregates containing characteristically soft dissonant intervals. These aggregates appear in various combinations and as different rhythmic models that are often repeated. In this way, time seems to stand still. In place of development, Feldman substitutes a changing atmosphere. And his extended pauses blur any feeling of a defined meter. The start of the sounds becomes unpredictable, even with rhythmically precise repetition (such as the four-note chord which sounds six times in the middle of the piece).

Feldman completed the score on March 24, 1951, in time for the guest appearance of Cunningham and Cage at the University of Washington in Seattle. It was there that the two, to whom the work is dedicated, first performed the dance (with the title V*ariation* [sic]) with Feldman's music. That this piece was repeated only a few times was due to the enormous (actually unperformable) complexity of the choreography which had been constructed by chance operations. Cunningham commented as follows:

> "...They were classic ballet steps, arranged in a chance order, and it was impossible, *I* couldn't do it. You're supposed to do without preparations four pirouettes, suddenly. ... There was one day when I was working in the studio when I found a way to do it, but I could never do it again, I just couldn't hold it. It was in three parts, an andante, an adagio, and an allegro; the first two were separate, and the second went from the adagio directly into the allegro. It wasn't terribly long, two or three minutes at the most, but it was just impossible to do."*

For this reason the score disappeared into the archive of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and was probably, like the *Nature Pieces*, not performed again during the next half century.

Two short pieces from the piano cycle *Intermissions*, composed between 1950 and 1953, met a similar fate. When Feldman signed an exclusive contract with C. F. Peters in 1962, the firm published Numbers 1 and 2 as *Two Intermissions* (1950). *Intermission 5* (1952) was also published and in the following year *Intermission 6*, but numbers 3 and 4 were not. These pieces were found in David Tudor's archive only after Feldman's death.

The performance history of the *Intermissions* is complex. On July 5, 1951, at the University of Colorado in Boulder, David Tudor premiered Nos. 1, 2 and 3 as "Three Intermissions" (with the composition date January 1951). And on February 10, 1952, at the Living Theatre in New York, he played "Three Intermissions" (Nos. 3, 4 and 5), in which Nos. 4 and 5 were first performances. At Black Mountain College, he programmed respectively Nos. 4 and 5 (August 12, 1952) and 1 through 3 (August 19, 1952).

This leads to the problem which has repeatedly occupied me during the preparation of an edition of these unpublished works: does the fact that Feldman chose not to have certain scores published in the 1960s mean that he did not consider them valid and that he withdrew them? Were *Nature Pieces*, *Variations* and *Intermissions 3* and *4* works that Feldman intentionally deleted from his work catalogue and did not wish performed? I have been unable to find any relevant comment by the composer regarding these piano pieces. One could infer that he regarded them as less significant and hence did not have them published. With the *Intermissions,* where the missing Nos. 3 and 4 make the cycle incomplete, one might be tempted to believe that he thought these pieces to be the weakest in the cycle. But there is no letter to Peters in which Feldman forbids publication of these works. Therefore, my decision to make these pieces – already known in musicological circles – accessible to a wider public is reinforced by my conviction that it is more important to return this wonderful music to life than to heed the composer's *possibly changed* attitude to works that had only been performed a few times since their creation.

Intermission 3, while somewhat similar to the familiar Nos. 1 and 2, is the only one of Feldman's piano pieces in which he notates a third voice of silently depressed keys, whose strings are set into vibration by other frequencies related to them. The amorphous sounding space which is created in No. 5 by the constant depressing of the sustaining pedal is here in a sense through-composed in mostly chordal sustained sounds. The normally struck strings create typical major sevenths and minor thirds, while single events clearly remain isolated from each other. Connections are less clearly presented than in Nos. 1 and 2, where motives are repeated, or gestural events occur with higher density.

Intermission 4 contains only one literal repetition (a minor ninth which had occurred before in a different position and as an inversion), but the central note g-sharp appears four times two octaves above middle C and three times in other registers. In this way Feldman attains sonorous unity even without long continuing oscillating models, as in No. 5. Interestingly, the *Intermission* cycle concludes with No. 6 (1953) in which 15 aggregates or single tones are freely distributed throughout the single-page score, to be performed very quietly and in any order by one or two pianists. The work is one of the first examples of "open form", in which the performer is presented with specific tonal materials but can himself determine the final structure of the composition.

I would like to express my appreciation to Don Gillespie and Bruce J. Taub of C. F. Peters and to John Holzaepfel and Philipp Vandré for their valued assistance in the publication of this volume. I am deeply grateful to Nancy Perloff of the Getty Center's David Tudor Archive and David Vaughan of the Cunningham Dance Foundation Archive for permission to use hitherto unpublished Feldman manuscripts.

**Merce Cunningham. Fifty Years*. Chronicle and Commentary by David Vaughan, New York 1997, pages 62–63

Volker Straebel, Berlin and New York, spring 1998

English translation by Kurt Michaelis

Recording: Mode 66 (Philipp Vandré)