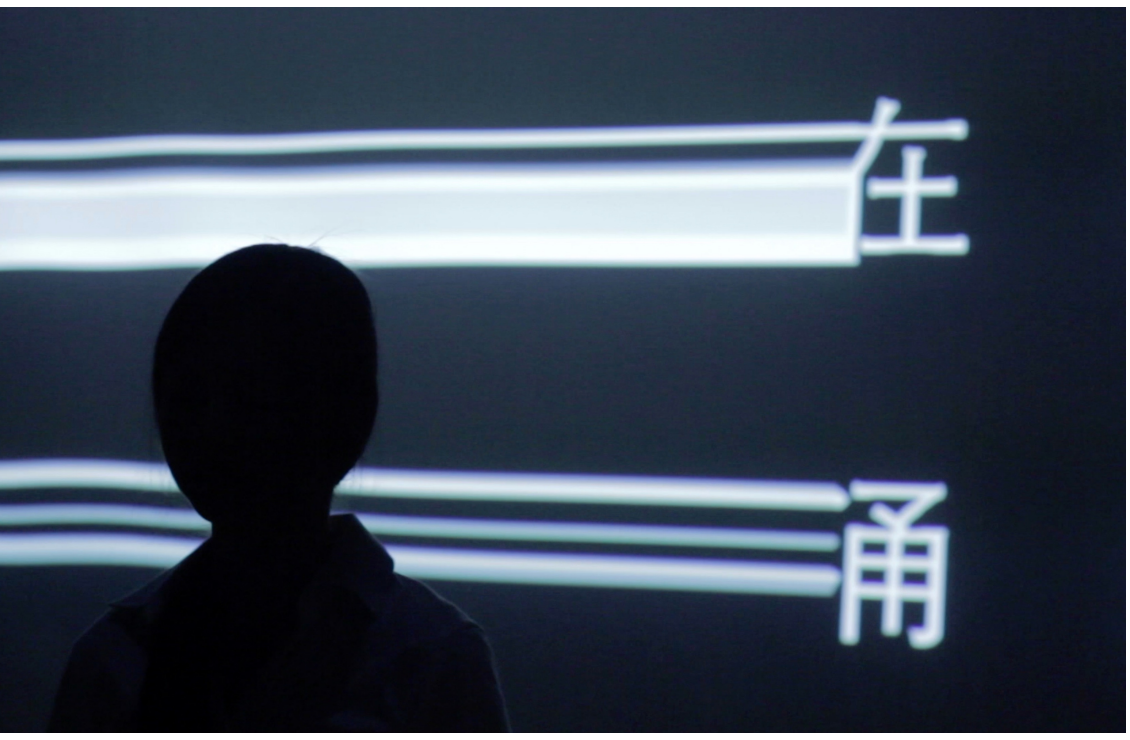
foxconn frequency (no.2) - *for one visibly chinese performer*

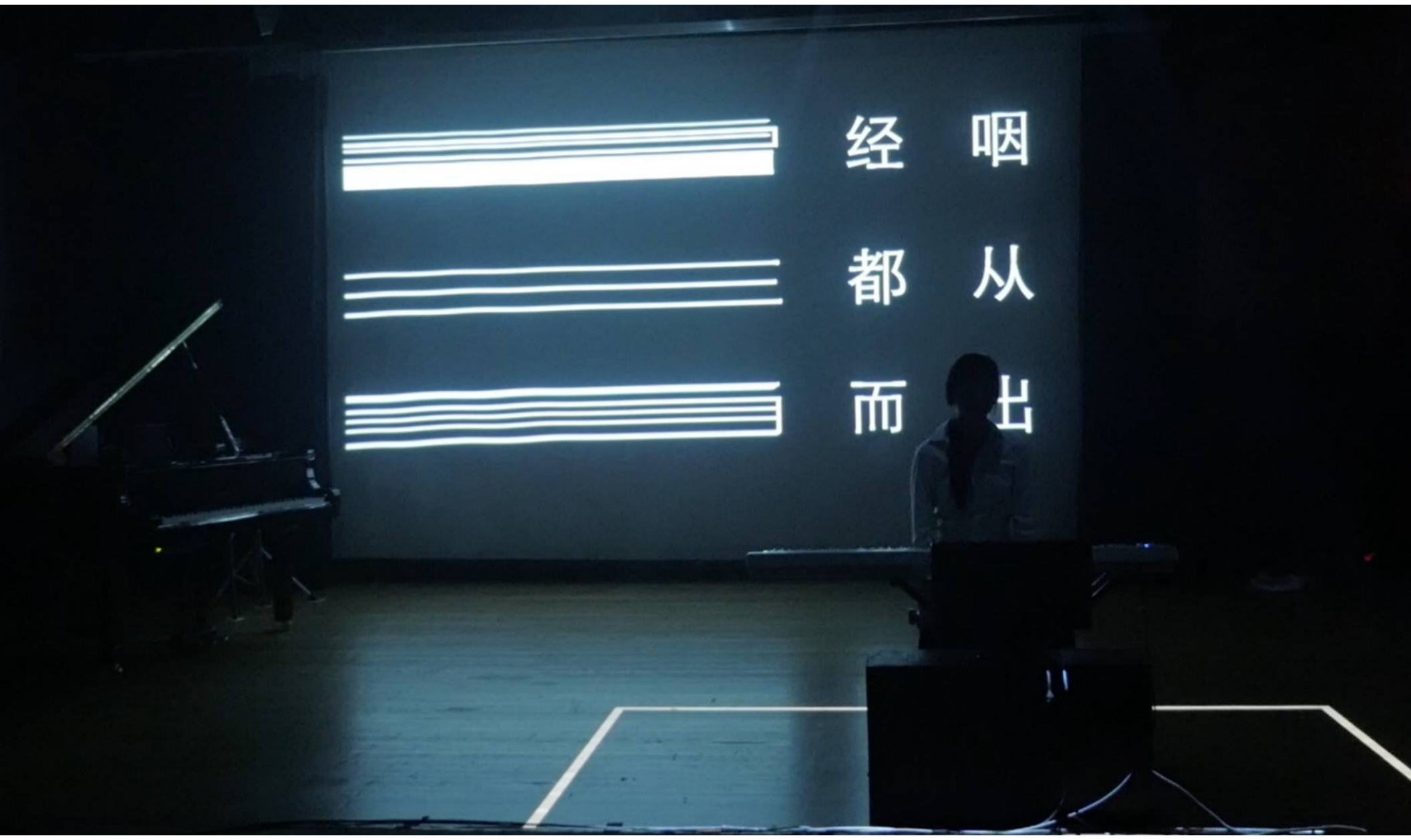
remy siu



for vicky chow

“Foxconn Frequency (no.2) — for one visibly Chinese performer” investigates the consequences of disconnecting action and labour from sound. Using the poetry of Xu Lizhi (许立志)—a former Foxconn worker—as a structural blueprint to move through a series of dictations and testings, the piece seeks to create a space for failure and stakes. The most obvious and clear negation is the purposeful disconnection between the musician and her instrument. The use of technology here is meant to disrupt, instead of enable. To create a space of new possibilities through subtraction.

A system was devised to "test" the performer's competency with multiple exercises. This system calls these "gestures" differently every performance, keeping the performer present and engaged through-out the piece. The performer must execute these gestures successfully under shifting parameters that determine overall difficulty before progressing forward. This creates a scenario for the player to fail. While traditional scores have attempted difficulty, a software-driven system allows for new permutations. The generative and responsive nature of the system subverts any attempt for the performer to prepare. The struggle becomes real and perceptible, a part of the piece as it unfolds.



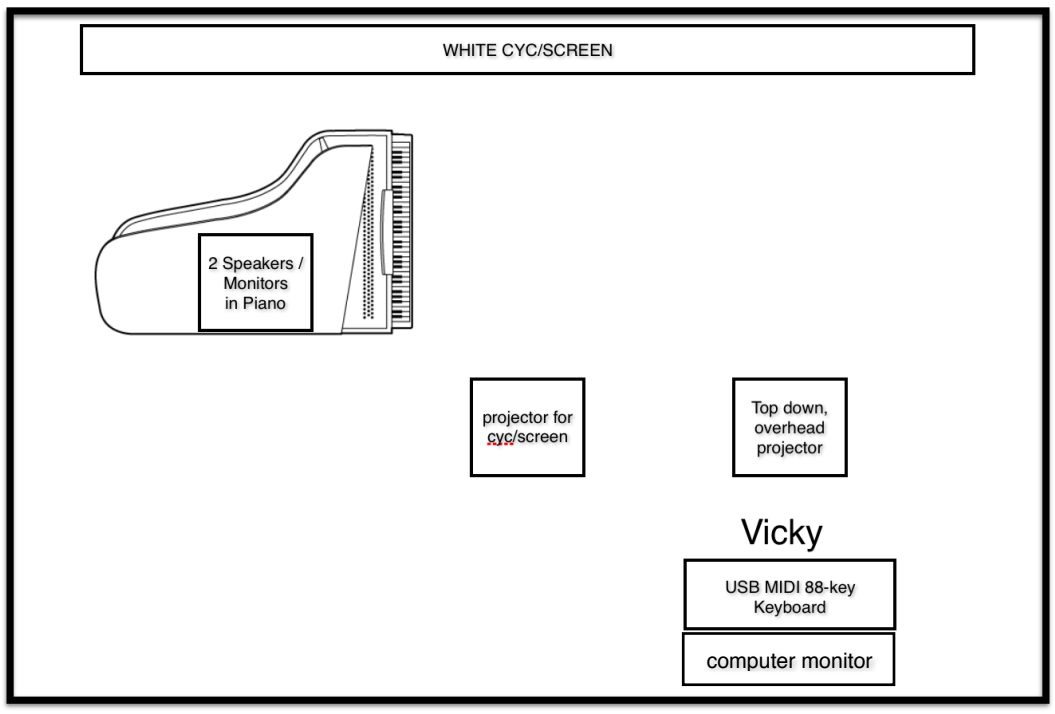
There are many reasons for the restriction of "one visibly Chinese performer." In music composition, we often specify instruments (e.g *for solo violin*), but almost never the body itself. By making this distinction, it is my intention to draw focus to the performer's identity, to engage the eyes as well as the ears, and to bring attention to the “extra-musical,” shifting the mode of audience perception to multiple modalities.

It felt necessary to specify race when confronting the narratives of Foxconn and Xu Lizhi's poetry, as it is the Chinese body at work. The piano, an iconic Western object, is an equal presence to the body, acting as the main resonator and origin of most sounds. They are separated by physical distance, allowing us to see these two entities as separate, and not together (as in most concert music), and to explore this reconfigured space.

Remy Siu

November 2016

Staging:



Tech Rider:

Light

- one (1) projector = covering cyc/screen
- one (1) projector = top down, overhead
- two (2) universal projector mounts
- one (1) surveillance camera
- one (1) video interface
- cyc/screen for projection
- one (1) haze generator ***(optional)***

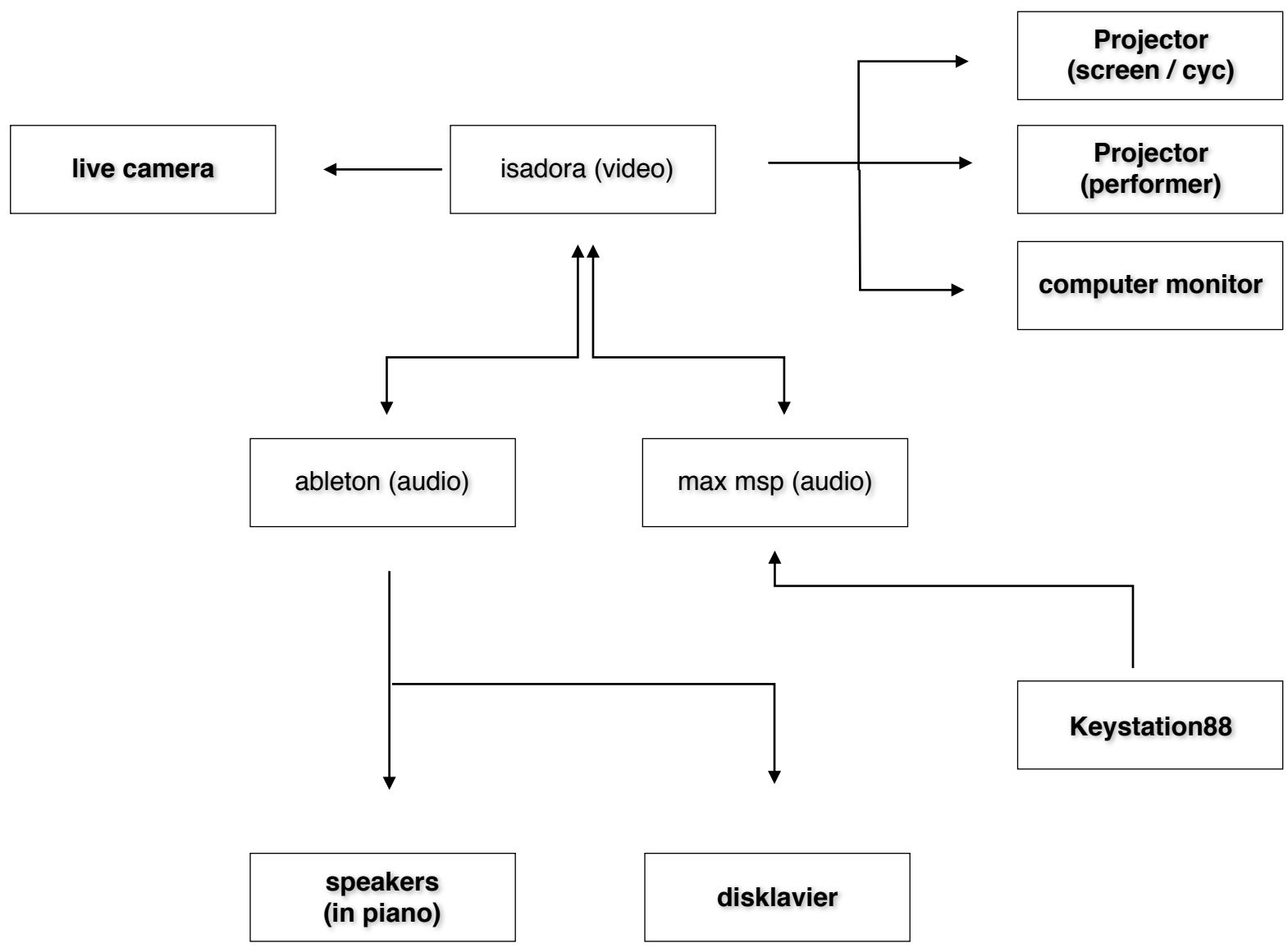
Sound

- two (2) studio monitors = to be place in piano (Yamaha H5 were used in original performance)
- one (1) stereo audio USB interface
- one (1) 88-key USB MIDI Keyboard
- one (1) grand piano *OR* disklavier
- one (1) computer monitor with HDMI or VGA input (1280x800 or higher resolution)

Cables

- one (1) 65’ USB Cable
- two (2) 50’+ VGA Cables
- one (1) 50’+ HDMI Cable
- two (2) 30-50’ 1/4 cables

Software/Hardware Flow:



A note about the score:

“Foxconn Frequency (no.2)” does not have a traditional score. The piece displays morse code and standard notation on a computer monitor for the performer. Each performance is different as the testing system is designed to keep the performer challenged and present.

The piece uses’s Xu Lizhi’s (许立志) poem, "*I Swallowed a Moon Made of Iron”*《我咽下一枚铁做的月亮》, as a structural blueprint. The poem is shown in multiple ways: Chinese Telegraph Code (morse code), Mandarin, and English.

The following score will outline what the performer sees, the testing scenario, and what the audience sees on the screen / eye.

Structure

1) Poem Line 1 (Chinese Telegraph Code)
2) Testing 1
3) Poem Line 2 (Chinese Telegraph Code)
4) Testing 2
5) Poem Line 3 (Chinese Telegraph Code)
6) Testing 3 *(live feed video)*
7) Poem Line 4 (Chinese Telegraph Code)
8) Testing 4 *(live feed video)*
9) Poem Line 5 (Chinese Telegraph Code)
10) Testing 5 *(live feed video)*
11) Poem Line 6 (Chinese Telegraph Code + Mandarin)
12) Testing 6 *(live feed video)*
13) Poem Line 7 (Chinese Telegraph Code + Mandarin)
14) Testing 7 *(live feed video)*
15) Poem Line 8 (Mandarin)
16) *English translation / Gushing*
17) Poem Line 9/10 (English)

Poem:

(Mandarin)

《我咽下一枚铁做的月亮》

我咽下一枚铁做的月亮
他们把它叫做螺丝
我咽下这工业的废水，失业的订单
那些低于机台的青春早早夭亡
我咽下奔波，咽下流离失所
咽下人行天桥，咽下长满水锈的生活
我再咽不下了
所有我曾经咽下的现在都从喉咙汹涌而出
在祖国的领土上铺成一首
耻辱的诗

(English)

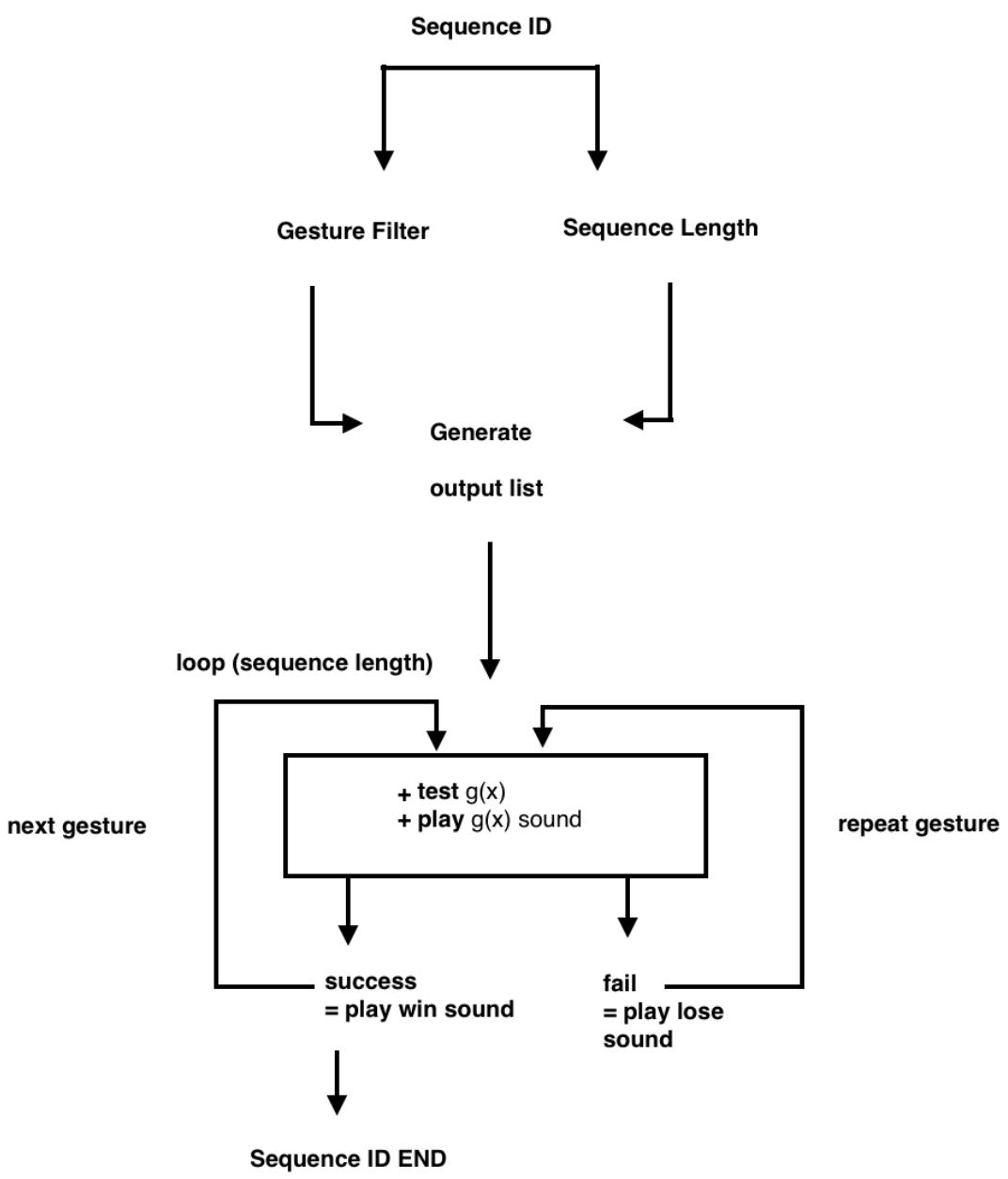
"I Swallowed a Moon Made of Iron"

I swallowed a moon made of iron
They refer to it as a nail
I swallowed this industrial sewage, these unemployment documents
Youth stooped at machines die before their time
I swallowed the hustle and the destitution
Swallowed pedestrian bridges, life covered in rust
I can't swallow any more
All that I've swallowed is now gushing out of my throat
Unfurling on the land of my ancestors
Into a disgraceful poem.

(Chinese Telegraph Code)

2053 0754 0007 0001 2653 6993 0254 4104 2588 0081
0100 0226 2116 1338 0663 0254 5828 4828
2053 0754 0007 6638 1562 2814 4104 1683 3055 1136 2814 4104 6057 0830
6719 0067 0144 0060 2623 0669 4104 7230 2504 2483 2483 1130 0072
2053 0754 0007 1149 3134 0754 0007 3177 4418 1136 2076
0754 0007 0086 5887 1131 2890 0754 0007 7022 3341 3055 6907 4104 3932 3172
2053 0375 0754 0008 0007 0055
2076 2589 2053 2582 4842 0754 0007 4104 3807 0961 6757 1783 0814 0918 3081 8673 5079 0427
0961 4371 0948 4104 7425 0960 0006 6917 2052 0001 7445
5103 6592 4104 6108

Testing Flow:



Testing Chart:

Testing Levels

ID	gate success	gate threshold	gate time	length	gestures		thresholds	time	/// description
0	2	2	1	3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5		0, 100, 75	18	introduction to success, failure, easy/hard
1	1	1	1	5	4, 5, 8, 22, 23, 24, 25		78, 82, 85, 90	18	fast, short gestures (video is introduced?)
2	2	1	2	5	6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 22		60	0, 10, 3, 6, 5	time is introduced
3	2	2	2	7	20		100	11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17	Chromatic Scale
4	1	1	1	4	6, 7, 10, 26, 27, 21, 23		60, 64, 68, 72, 75, 78, 82, 85, 90, 100	0, 1, 2, 3	Difficult 1
5	1	1	1	4	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18		85, 90, 100	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	tonic four chord exercises / Difficult 2
6	2	1	1	7	2, 3, 4, 7		100	0	IMPOSSIBLE // offset score

gate success
1 = repeat fail
2 = next fail

gate threshold
1 = random/non-stick
2 = linear/stick

gate time
1 = random
2 = linear

Thresholds Table

ID	success ratio
0	0
1	60
2	64
3	68
4	72
5	75
6	78
7	82
8	85
9	90
10	100

Time Table

ID	time min (msec)	time max (msec)
0	35000	40000
1	31000	35000
2	25000	28000
3	22000	25000
4	19000	22000
5	16000	19000
6	13000	16000
7	10000	13000
8	8000	10000
9	6000	8000
10	1000	6000
11	1000	1000
12	2000	2000
13	3000	3000
14	4000	4000
15	5000	5000
16	6000	6000
17	7000	7000
18	120000	120000

Score

1) Poem Line 1 (Chinese Telegraph Code)

What's on the screen:

2053 0754 0007 0001 2653 6993 0254 4104 2588 0081

What the performer sees and plays:

..--- ----- ....-- / ----- --... ....- / ----- ----- ----- --... / ----- ----- ----- .---- / ..--- -.... ....-- / -.... ----. ----. ...-- / ----- ..--- ....- / ....- .---- ----- ....- / ..--- ..... ---.. ---.. / ----- ----- ---.. .----

for gestures, see "gesture bank" (page 10)

for durations, see "time table" (page 5)

2) Testing 1

introduction to success, failure, easy/hard

Sequence Length: 3

Gestures: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Thresholds: 0, 100, 75

Durations: No time limit

3) Poem Line 2 (Chinese Telegraph Code)

What's on the screen:

0100 0226 2116 1338 0663 0254 5828 4828

What the performer sees and plays:

----- .---- ----- ----- / ----- ..--- ..--- -.... / ..--- .---- .---- -.... / .---- ...-- ...-- ---.. / ----- -.... -.... ...-- / ----- ..--- ....- / ..... ---.. ..--- ---.. / ....- ---.. ..--- —..

4) Testing 2

fast, short gestures

Sequence Length: 5

Gestures: 4, 5, 8, 22, 23, 24, 25

Thresholds: 78, 82, 85, 90

Durations: No time limit

5) Poem Line 3 (Chinese Telegraph Code)

What's on the screen:

2053 0754 0007 6638 1562 2814 4104 1683 3055 1136 2814 4104 6057 0830

What the performer sees and plays:

..--- ----- ....-- / ----- --... ....- / ----- ----- ----- --... / -.... -.... ...-- ---.. / .---- ..... -.... ..--- / ..--- ---.. .---- ....- / ....- .---- ----- ....- / .---- -.... ---.. ...-- / ...-- ----- .... / .---- .---- ...-- -.... / ..--- ---.. .---- ....- / ....- .---- ----- ....- / -.... ----- ..... --... / ----- ---.. ...-- -----

6) Testing 3

duration is introduced

Sequence Length: 5

Gestures: 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 22

Thresholds: 60

Durations: 0, 10, 3, 6, 5

7) Poem Line 4 (Chinese Telegraph Code)

What's on the screen:

6719 0067 0144 0060 2623 0669 4104 7230 2504 2483 2483 1130 0072

What the performer sees and plays:

-.... --... .---- ----. / ----- ----- -.... --... / ----- .---- ....- ....- / ----- ----- -.... ----- / ..--- -.... ..--- ...-- / ----- -.... -.... ----. / ....- .---- ----- ....- / --... ..--- ...-- ----- / ..--- ..... ----- ....- / ..--- ....- ---.. ...-- / ..--- ....- ---.. ...-- / .---- .---- ...-- ----- / ----- ----- --... ..---

8) Testing 4

chromatic scale

Sequence Length: 7

Gestures: 20

Thresholds: 100

Durations: 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

9) Poem Line 5 (Chinese Telegraph Code)

What's on the screen:

2053 0754 0007 1149 3134 0754 0007 3177 4418 1136 2076

What the performer sees and plays:

..--- ----- ....-- / ----- --... ....- / ----- ----- -----
--... / .---- .---- ....- ----. / ...-- .---- ...-- ....- / ----- --... ....- / -----
----- ----- --... / ...-- .---- --... --... / ....- ....- .---- ---.. / .---- .---- ...-- -....
/ ..--- ----- --... -....

10) Testing 5

Difficult 1

Sequence Length: 4

Gestures: 6, 7, 10, 26, 27, 21, 23

Thresholds: 60, 64, 68, 72, 75, 78, 82, 85, 90, 100

Durations: 0, 1, 2, 3

11) Poem Line 6 (Chinese Telegraph Code + Mandarin)

What's on the screen:

咽下人行天桥，咽下长满水锈的生活
Swallowed pedestrian bridges, life covered in rust

What the performer sees and plays:

----- --... ....- / ----- ----- ----- --... / ----- ----- ---.. -.... / ..... ---..
---.. --... / .---- .---- ...-- .---- / ..--- ---.. ----. ----- / ----- --... ....- /
----- ----- ----- --... / --... ----- ..--- ..--- / ...-- ...-- ....- .---- / ...--
----- .... / -.... ----. ----- --... / ....- .---- ----- ....- / ...--
----. ...-- ..--- / ...-- .---- --... ..---

12) Testing 6

tonic four chord exercises / Difficult 2

Sequence Length: 4

Gestures: 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Thresholds: 85, 90, 100

Durations: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

13) Poem Line 7 (Chinese Telegraph Code + Mandarin)

What's on the screen:

我再咽不下了
I can't swallow any more

What the performer sees and plays:
..--- ----- ....-- / ----- ...-- --... ..... / ----- --... ....- / ----- ----- ----- ---.. / ----- ----- ----- --... / ----- ----- .....

14) Testing 7

IMPOSSIBLE // offset score

Sequence Length: 7

Gestures: 2, 3, 4, 7

Thresholds: 100

Durations: 0

15) Poem Line 8 (Mandarin)

What's on the screen:

所有我曾经咽下的现在都从喉咙汹涌而出

What the performer sees and plays:
..--- ----- --... -.... / ..--- ..... ---.. ----. / ..--- ----- ....-- / ..--- ..... ---.. ..--- / ....- ---.. ....- ..--- / ----- --... ....- / ----- ----- ----- --... / ....- .---- ----- ....- / ...-- ---.. ----- --... / ----- ----. -.... .---- / -.... --... ..... --... / .---- --... ---.. ...-- / ----- ---.. .---- ....- / ----- ----. .---- ---.. / ...-- ----- ---.. .---- / ---.. -.... --... ...-- / ..... ----- --... ----. / ----- ....- ..--- --...

16) English translation / Gushing

17) Poem Line 9/10 (English)

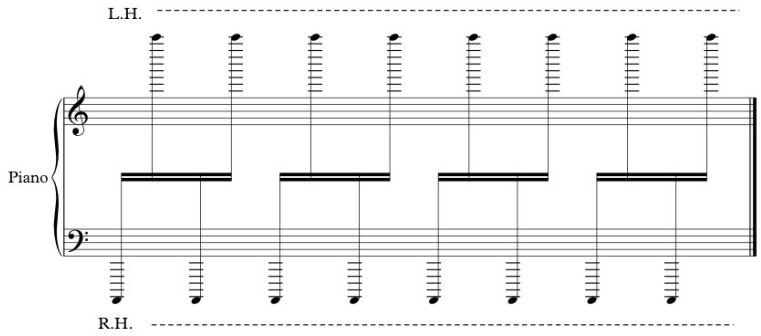
What's on the screen:

Unfurling on the land of my ancestors

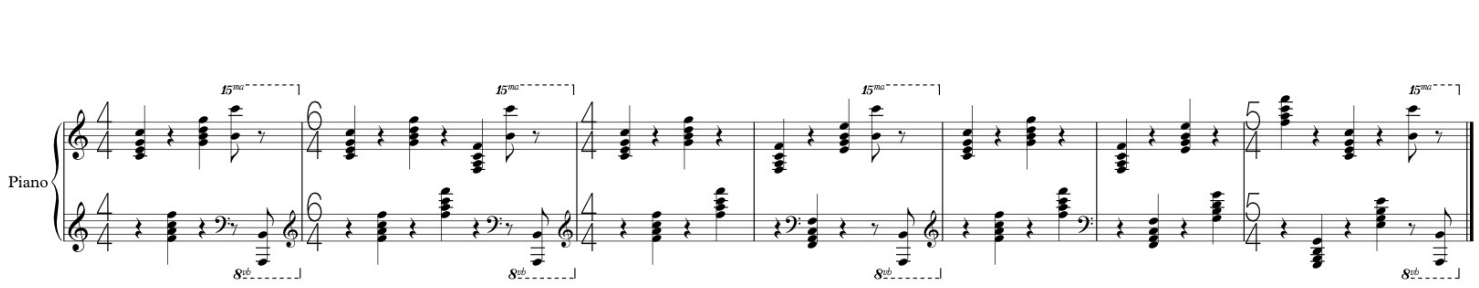
What the performer sees and plays:
..- -. ..-. ..- .-. .-.. .. -. --. / --- -. / - .... . / .-.. .- -. -.. / --- ..-. / -- -.-- / .- -. -.-. . ... - --- .-. ...

Gesture Bank

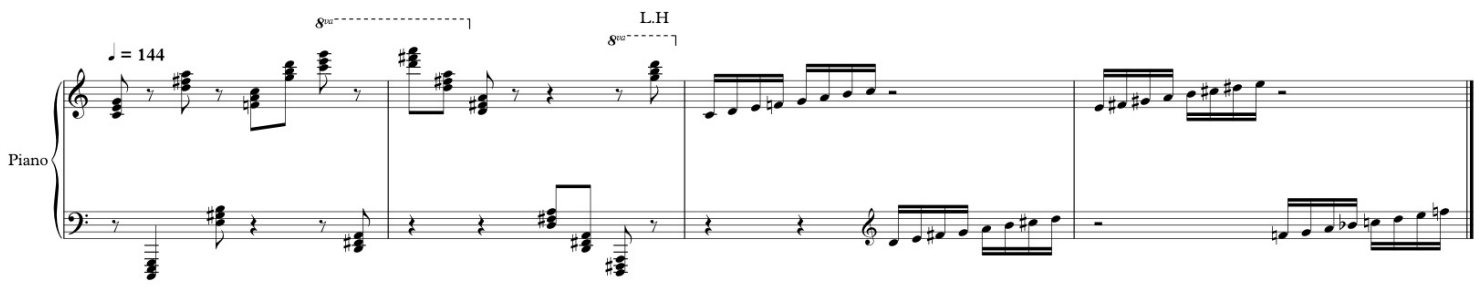
gesture 1



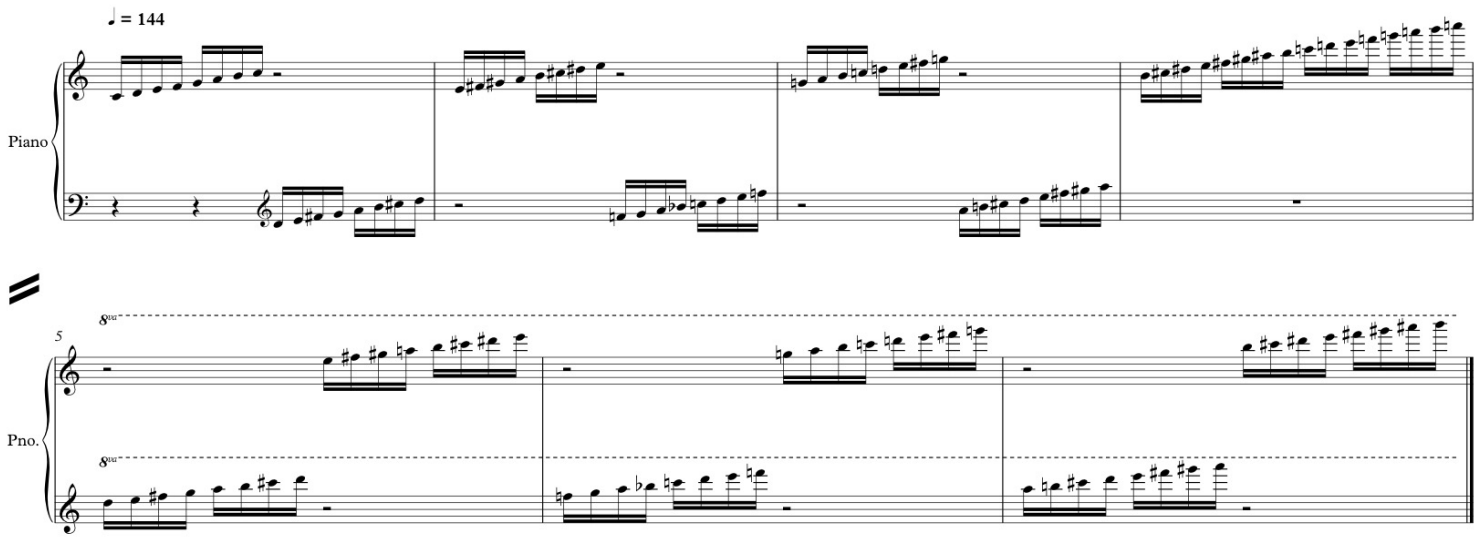
gesture 2



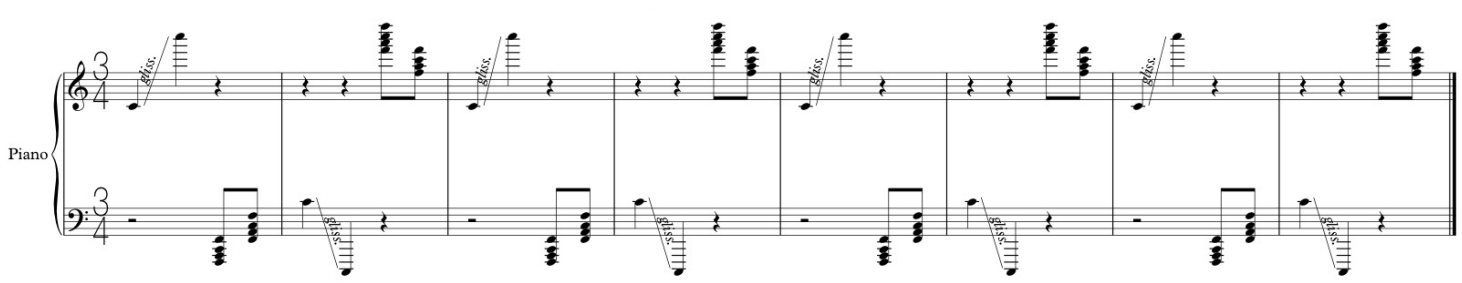
gesture 3



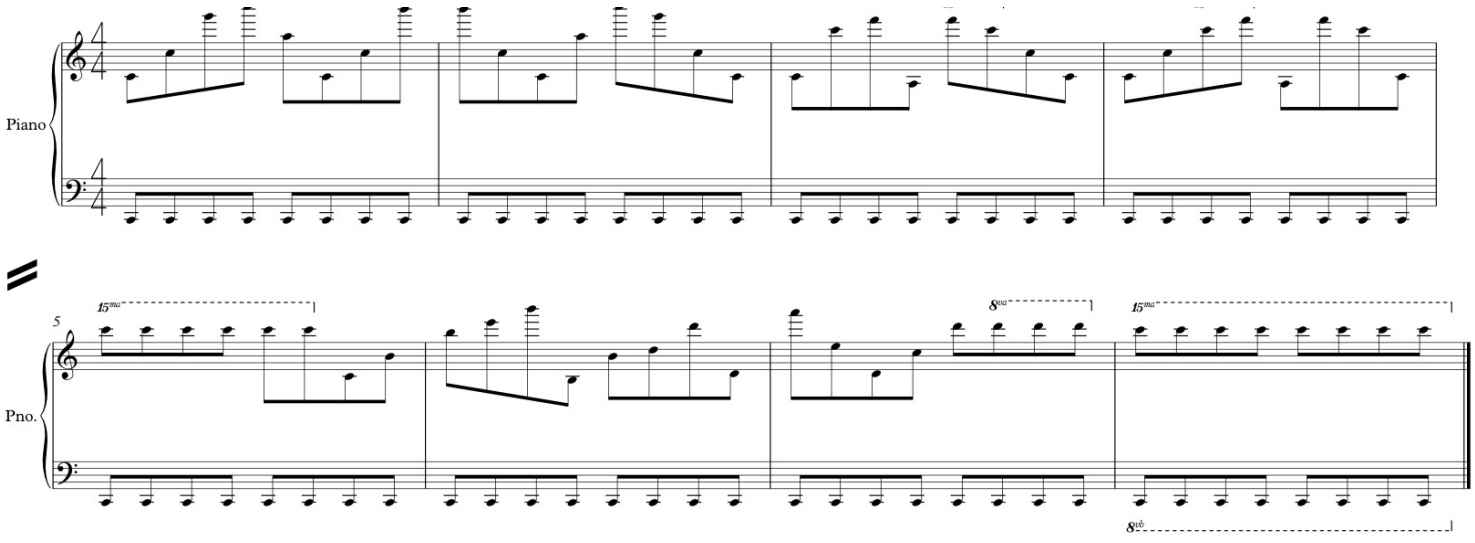
gesture 4



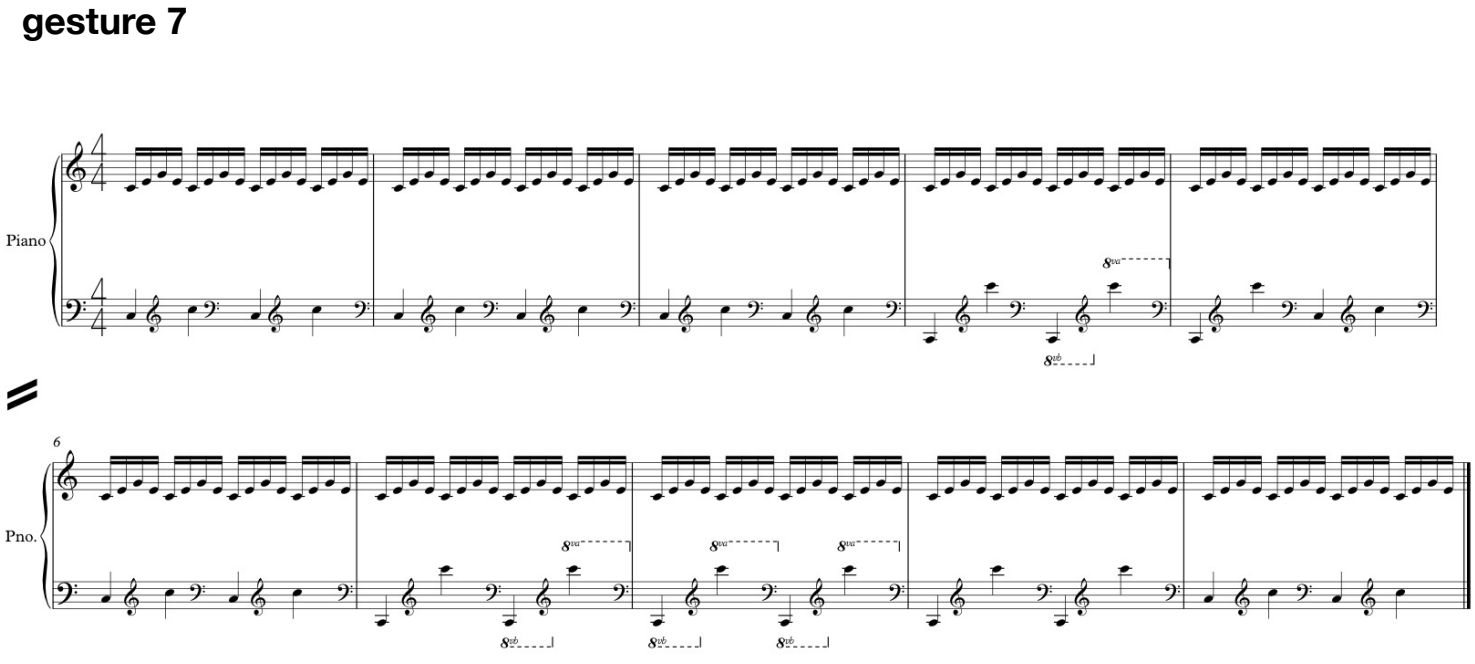
gesture 5



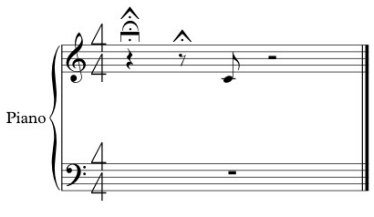
gesture 6



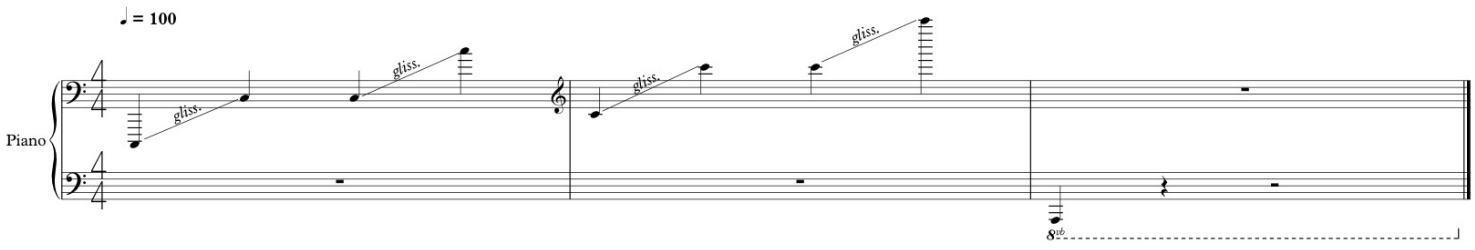
gesture 7



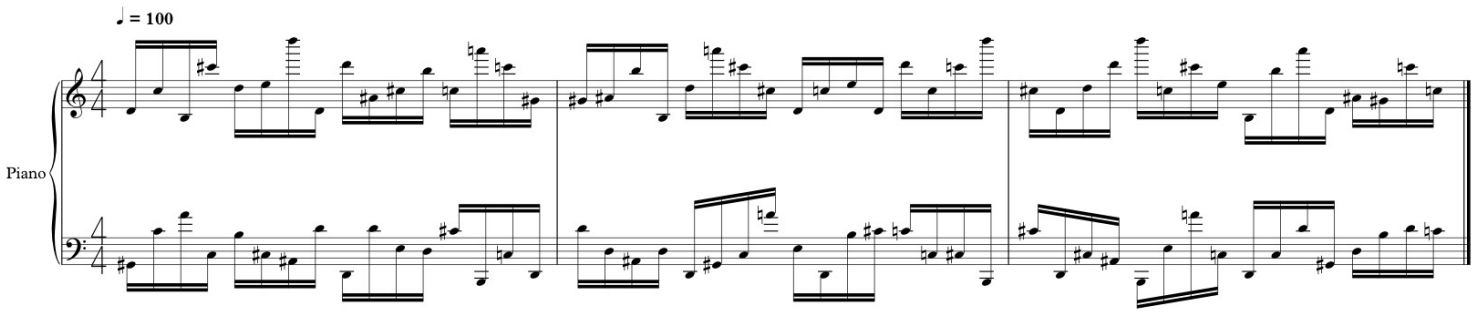
gesture 8



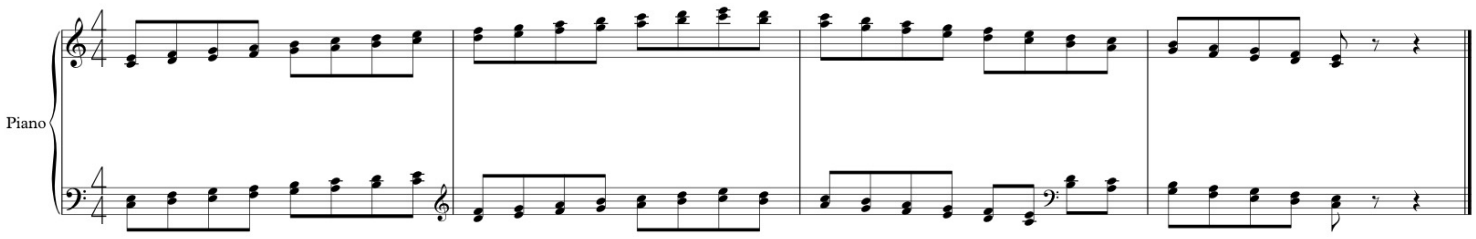
gesture 9



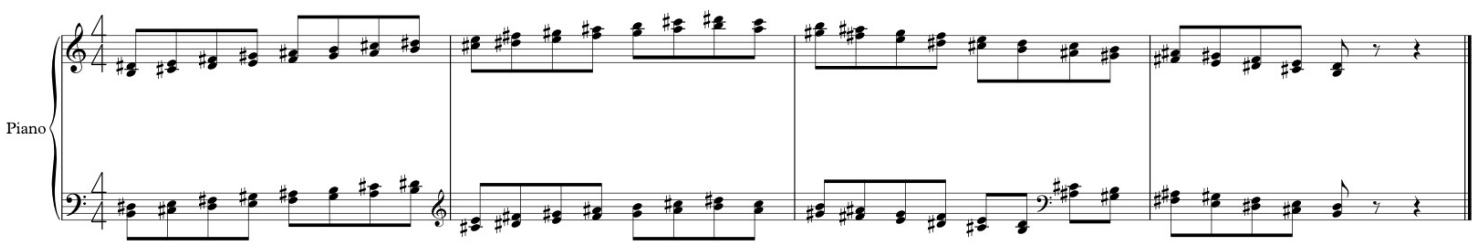
gesture 10



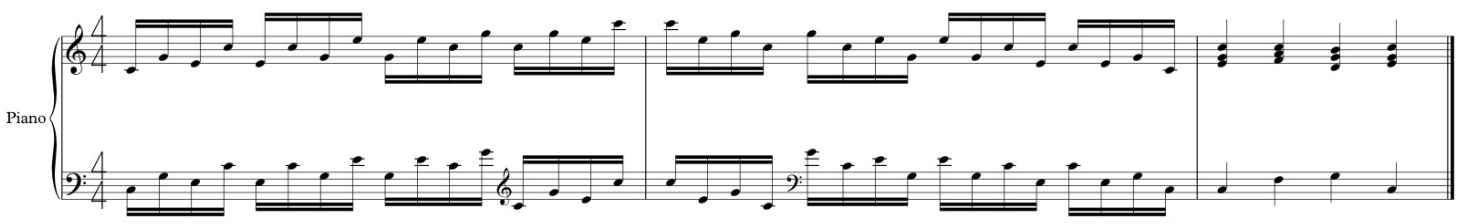
gesture 11



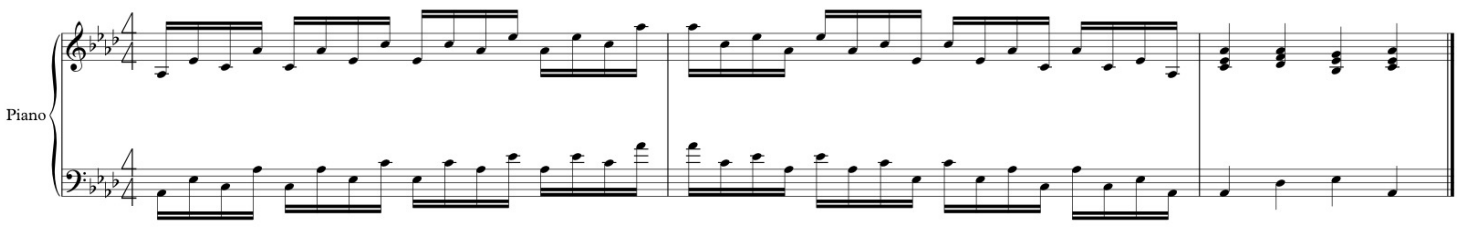
gesture 12



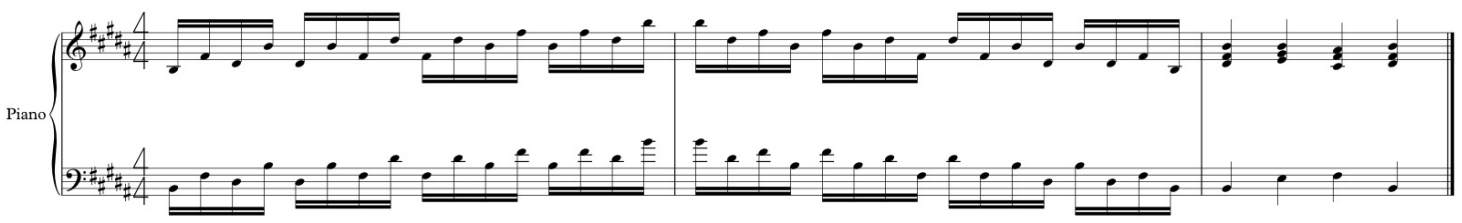
gesture 13



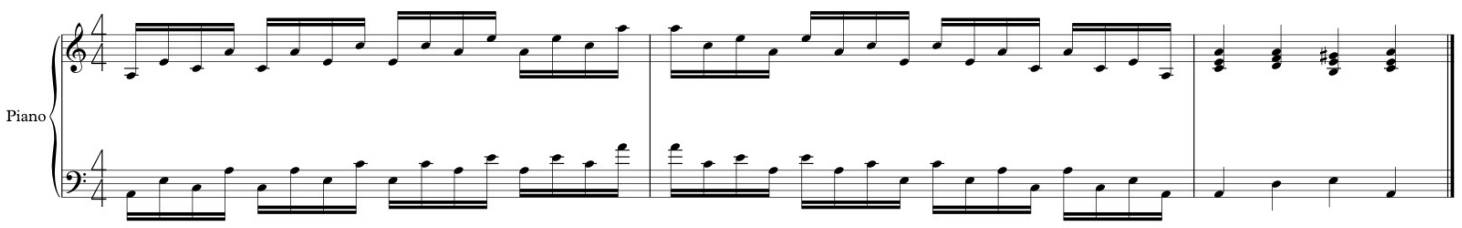
gesture 14



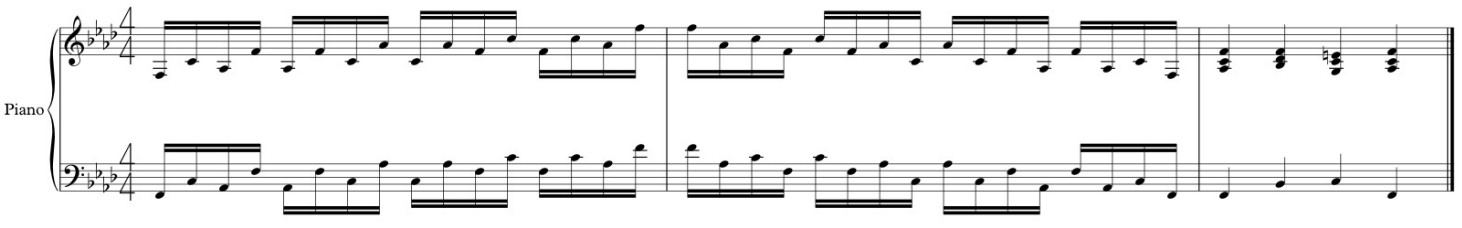
gesture 15



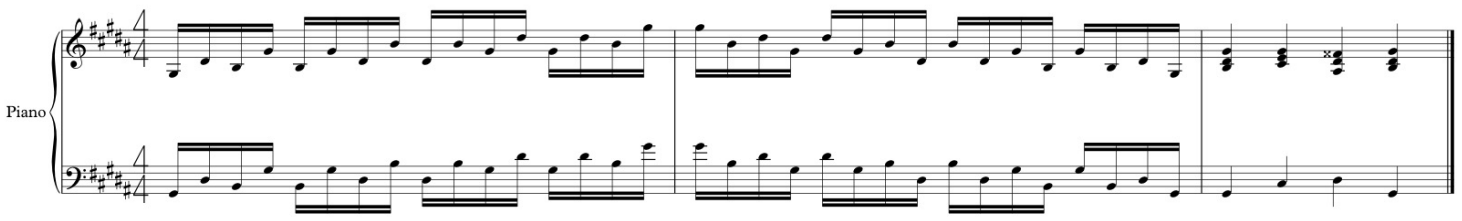
gesture 16



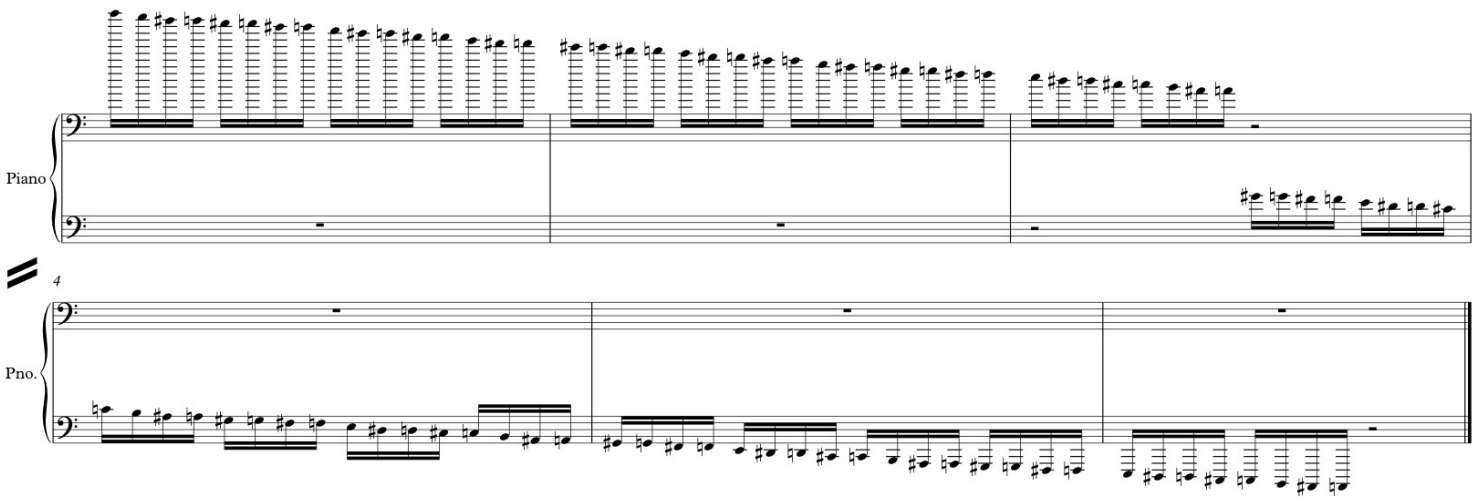
gesture 17



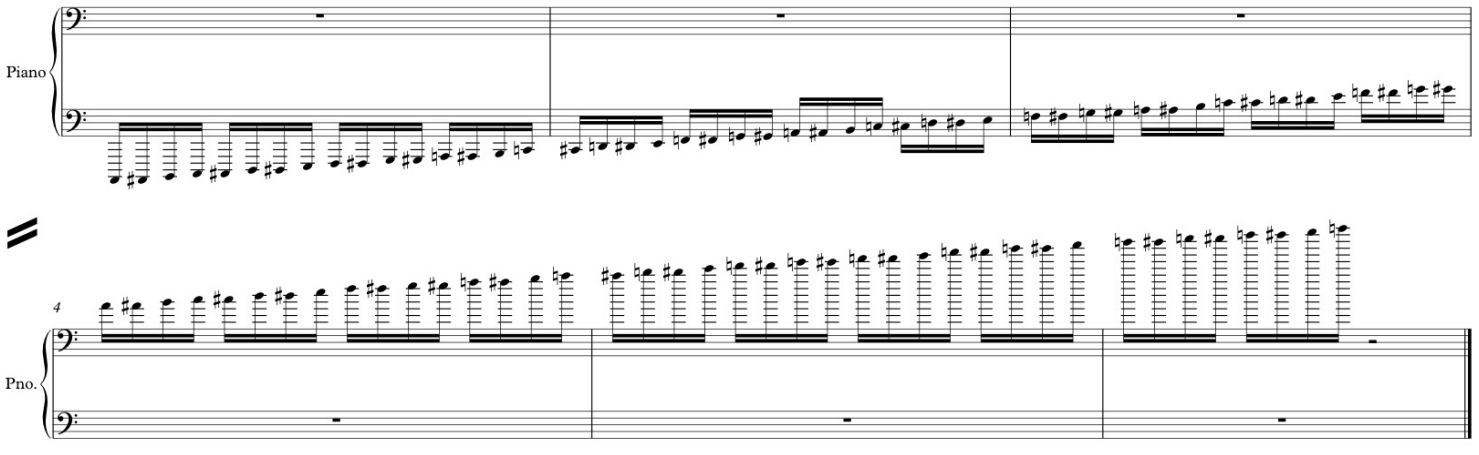
gesture 18



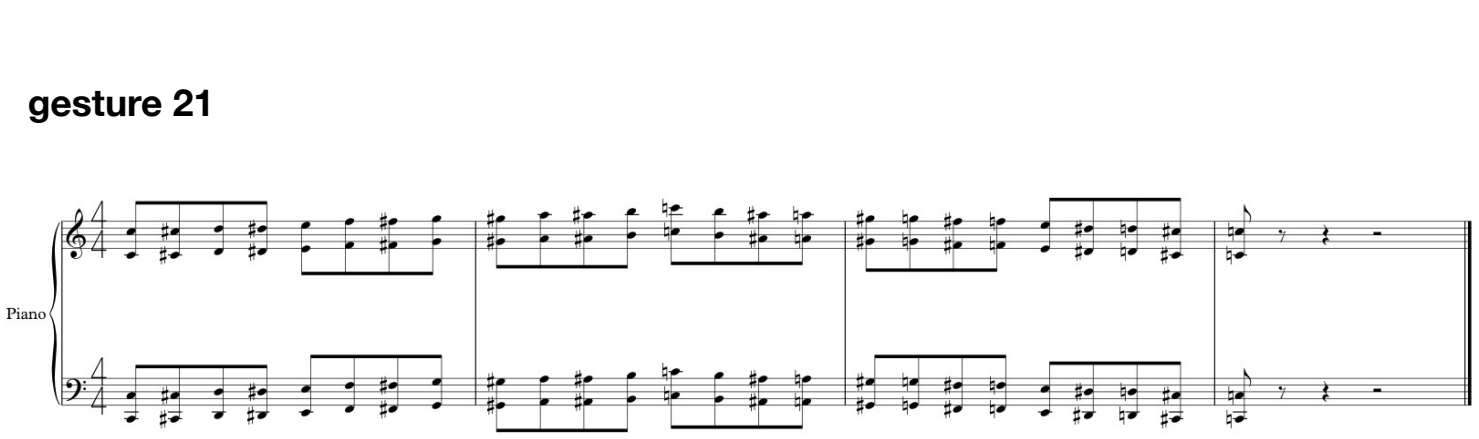
gesture 19



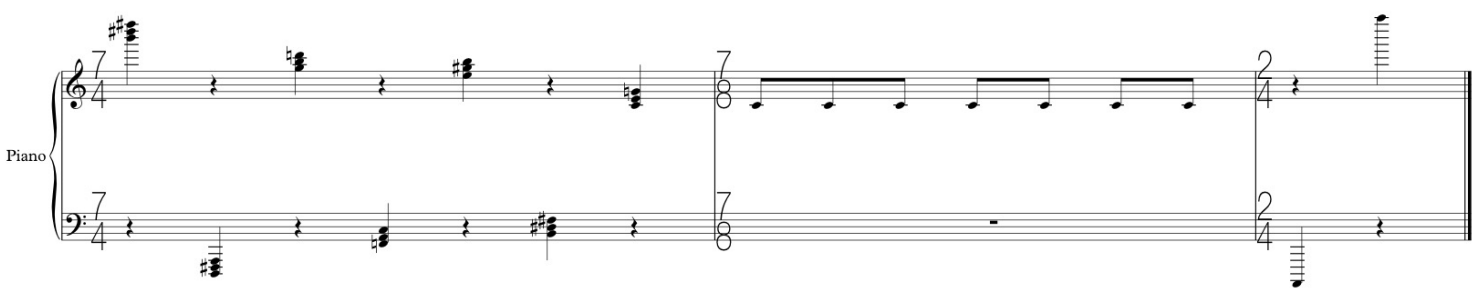
gesture 20



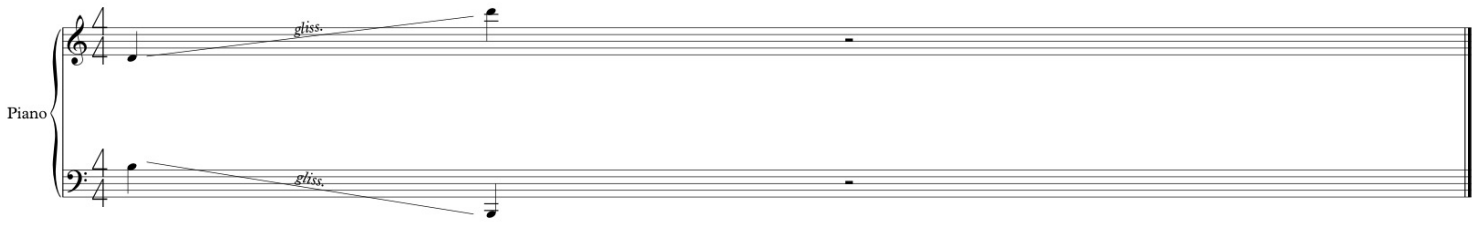
gesture 21



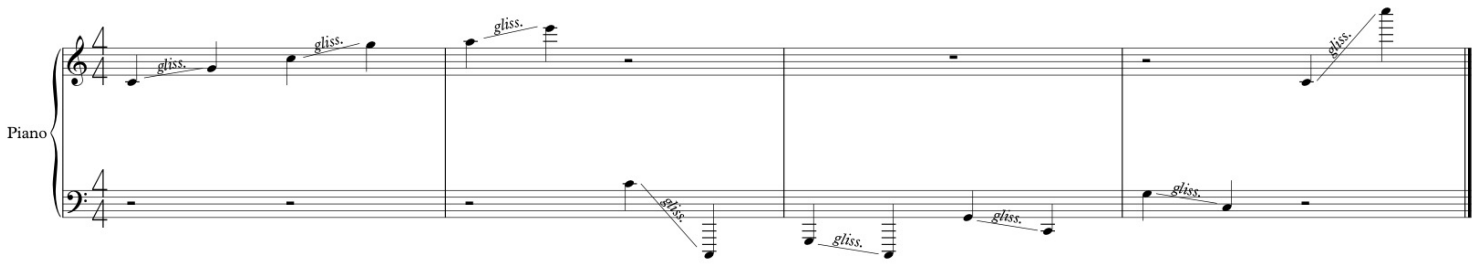
gesture 22



gesture 23



gesture 24



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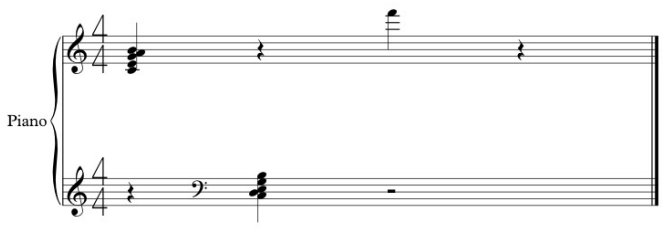
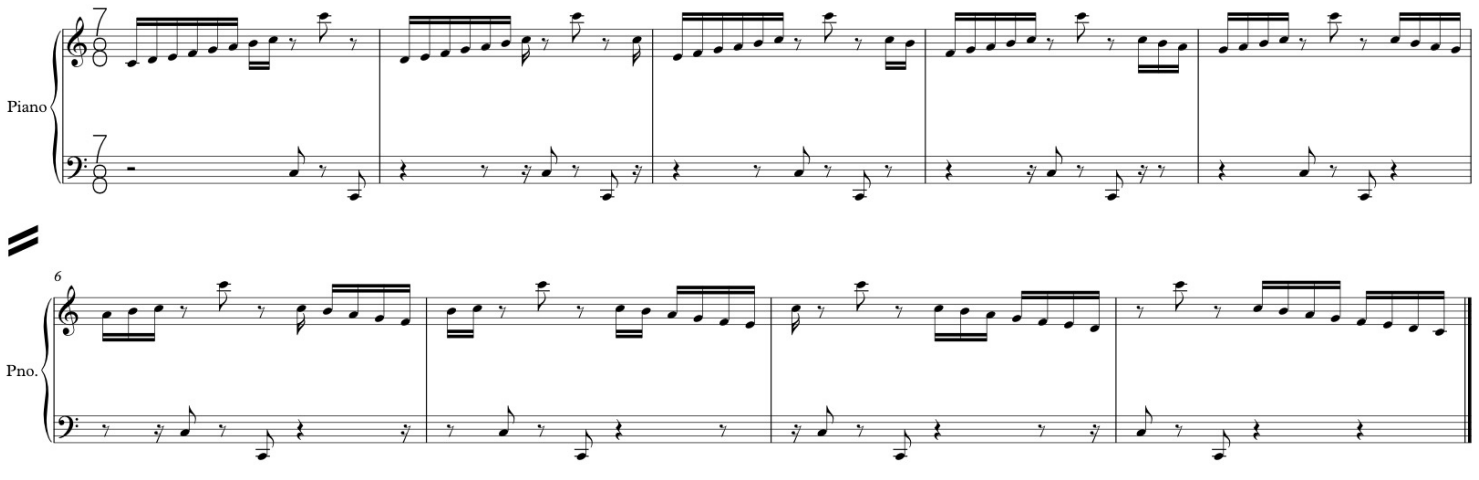
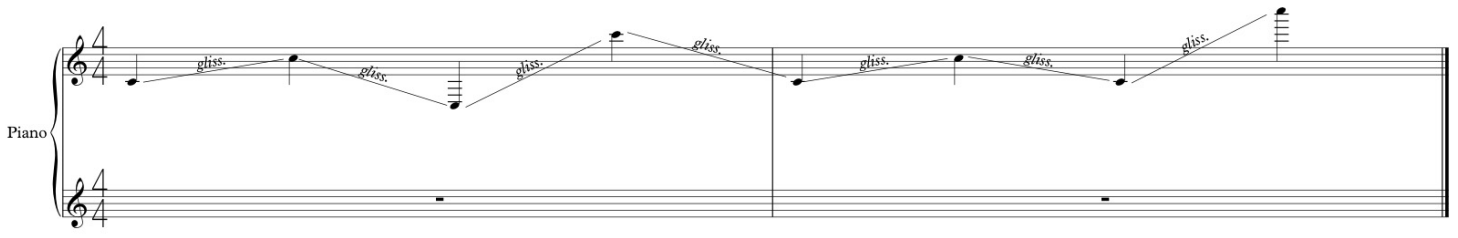


gesture 26



gesture 27