Miriam

(a music theater trilogy)

William Osborne

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Stage Directions

Set. Downstage left a simple, small wooden table and a chair. Downstage right a simple mirror as illustrated by Figure 2. Upstage center, a wooden box with a lid on hinges. The lid opens up stage. A mask (as described below under the name "Daphne") is hanging from a hook at the top center of the side of the box facing the public.) To the stage left side of the table is a trombone stand (if applicable.) These furnishings should be simple and have a unity of style and appearance. The positioning of the items should form an isosceles triangle whose sides are about four or five meters long.

Props. On the table is a set of "Russian Dolls" (small painted, wood dolls that all fit inside each other), a clear glass pitcher of water, a glass, and a small notebook with a pencil. A red negligee is hanging on the mirror. Inside the box is an apron with four pockets that contain a baby bottle, a baby's shoes with the laces tied together, a baby's rattle, and a little doll that squeaks when squeezed. The box also contains a bottle of pills; a disassembled trombone; a long beige dress (nice but not too fancy, see) that is worn by pulling it over the head; a whimsical concert jacket (e.g. black with red lapels). *(For alternatives to the trombone see the note at the end of the text.)*

Costume. Miriam is wearing a beige slip and a beige housecoat. She and her clothing have a bedraggled look of desperation, meaninglessness and boredom. The slip, housecoat and dress all of a unity of style and light beige color. (See Figure 1.)

Masks. The box also contains three plaster or paper papier machè masks created with a unified style. The performer enters with a fourth mask.

Mary. A young, naive girl with a blond pigtail. The mask is held in front of one's face by the pigtail and held stable by placing a finger on or in its mouth.

Myrtle. A puffy, round depressed face of an obese, middle-aged woman, colorless, mostly white and gray. Over this mask is latex mask of the same person, flesh colored with heavy make-up, red lips, eye shadow, rouge, and short frayed, artificial looking red hair. The first mask is held on the performers face by a small elastic headband. The second fits firmly over the first mask and is suddenly removed revealing the mask beneath. Both masks convey a sense of desperation.

Morticia. A haughty, elegant, patrician looking mask with the lips somewhat puckered as if drawing on a cigarette or cigarette holder. The mask is held in front of the face by a handle on the performer's left side.

Daphne. A woman with the twiggy branches of a tree forming her hair. The mask should have a ritualistic, majestic and somewhat terrifying appearance.

Light. The stage is lit in three general regions. Stage left illumates the table and area around it, stage right lights the mirror and its general area, while a third lamp fills the center stage area. There should be adequate cross-over between the light of all three regions. The middle light also illuminates Miriam completely when she stands at the box. The light should descend at about a 70 degree angle and if possible leave a more or leave triangular shape on the stage floor. The performer should be able to vary the appearance of the masks by raising her face to the light or by dipping her head and shadowing them. An additional spot adds intensity to the downstage center area. As the performer moves from the box to down stage center she moves to brighter light with a gentle continious cross-over. A tight spot is focused to illuminate the "Daphne" mask when hanging on the front of the box. And a final spot, coming somewhat from the side, illuminates Miriam when she sits profile on the box. As Miriam moves about the stage, the general spots are brightened or dimmed to highlight the area she occupies.

The stage directions are coordinated with the tracks of the performance CD.

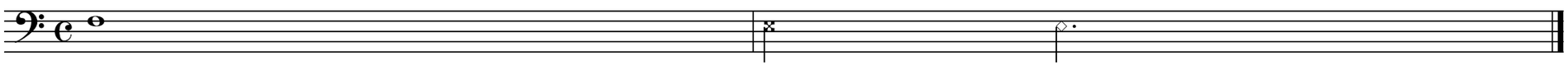
Performance Instructions for the Trombone Lament

1. The symbol in Figure 1 indicates a vibrato approximately a half tone in width played about a quarter tone above and below the indicated pitch. It is modelled after the vibrato used in Japanese Shakuhachi music. Width and speed vary according to expressive nuance.

2. The F-horn tuning slide is removed for the duration of the work. Notes played through the open tube of the F-horn are indicated by the noteheads in Figure 3.

Figure 1

Figure 2



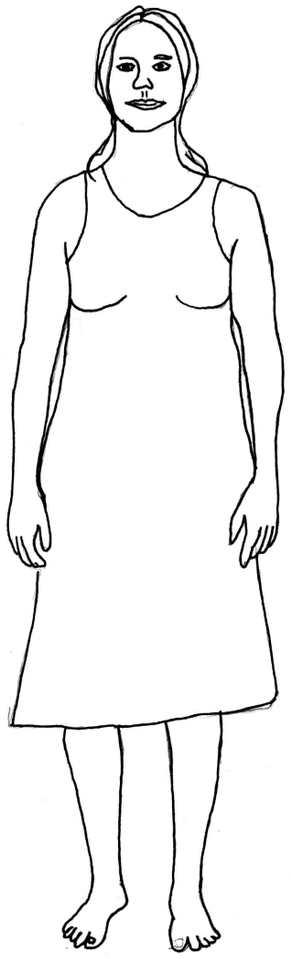


Figure 1

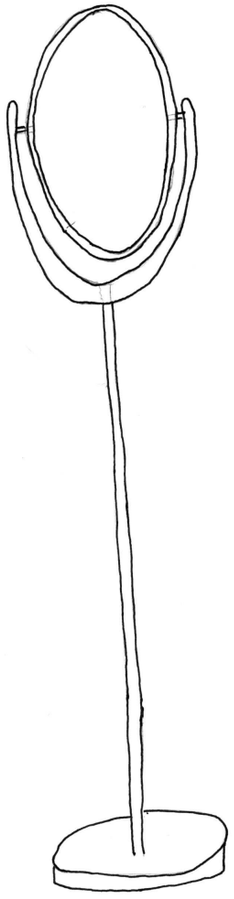


Figure 2

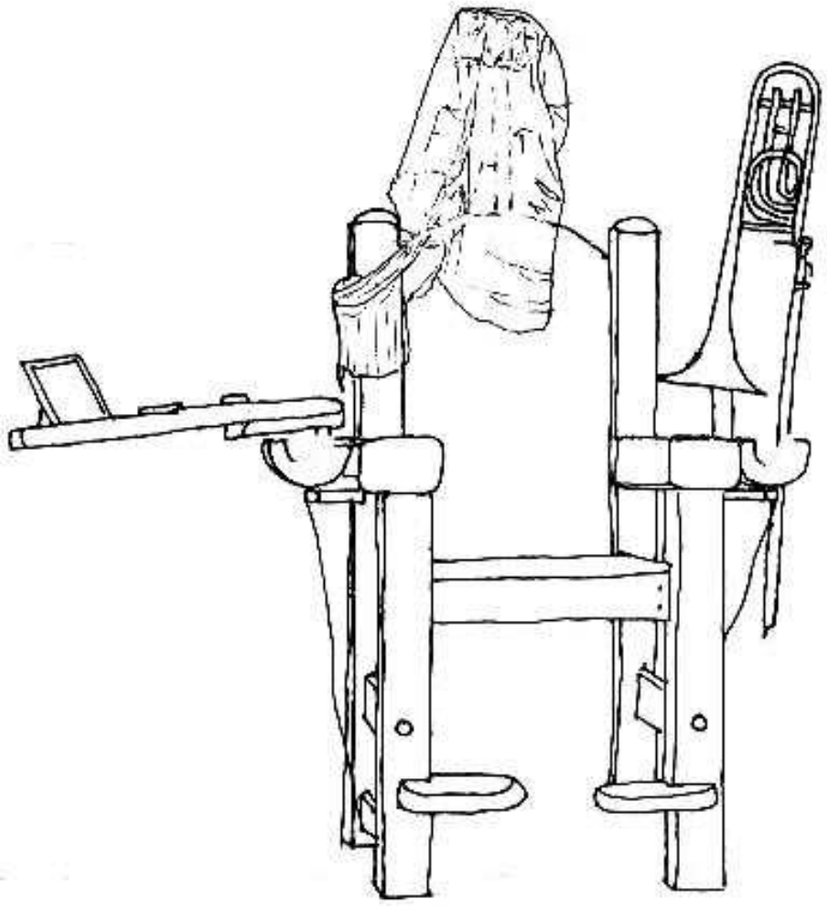


Figure 3

Figure 4

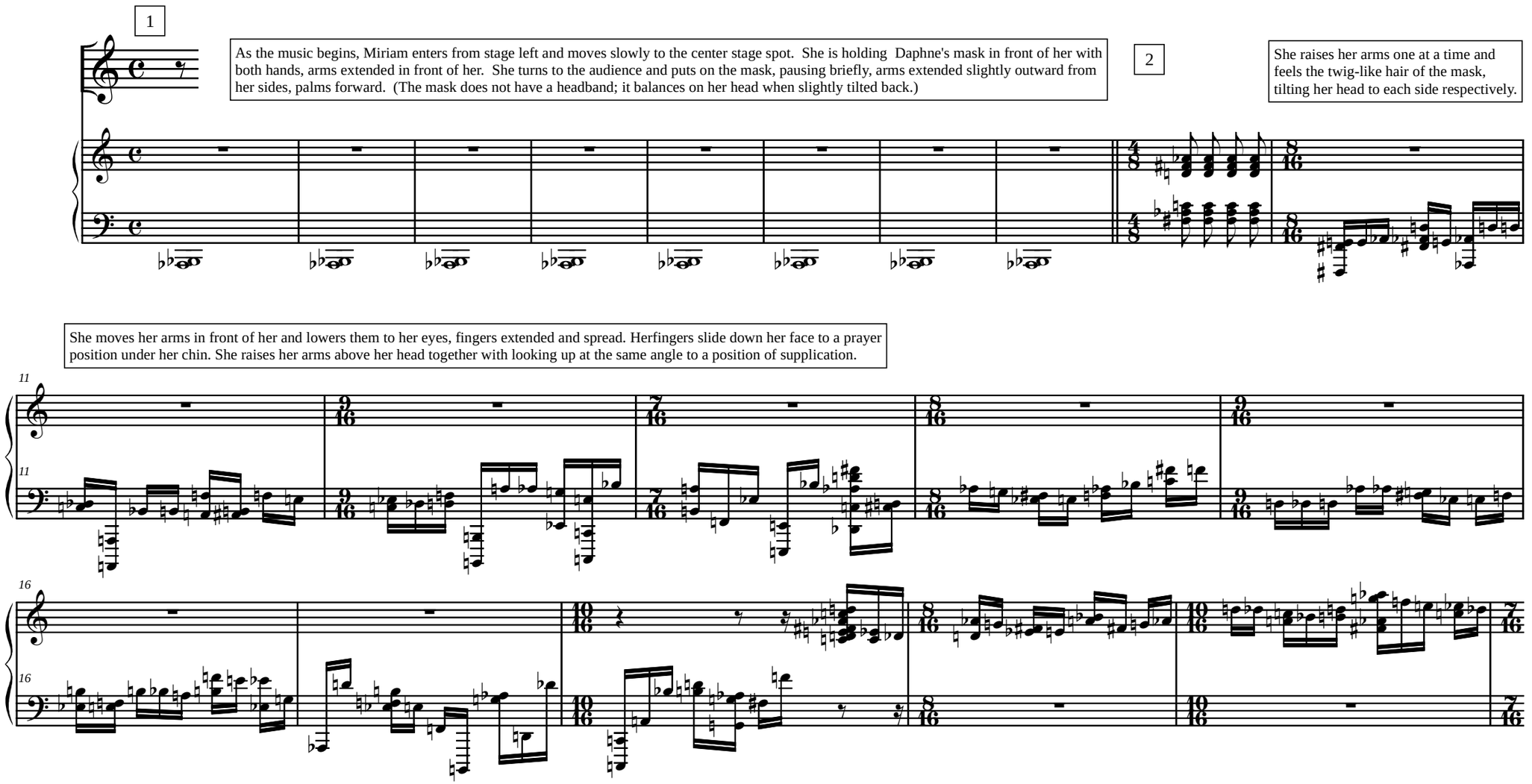
for Abbie

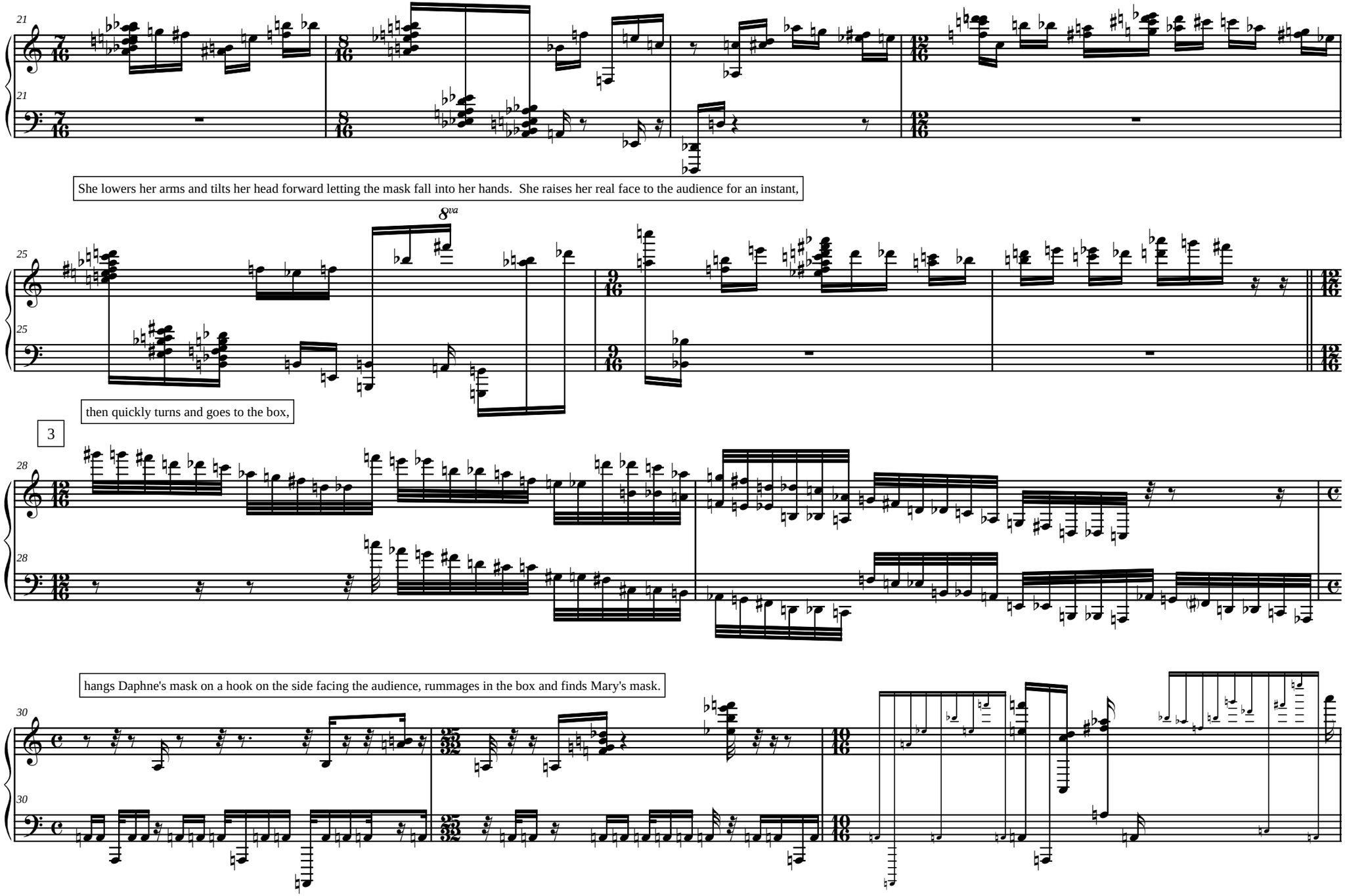
Miriam

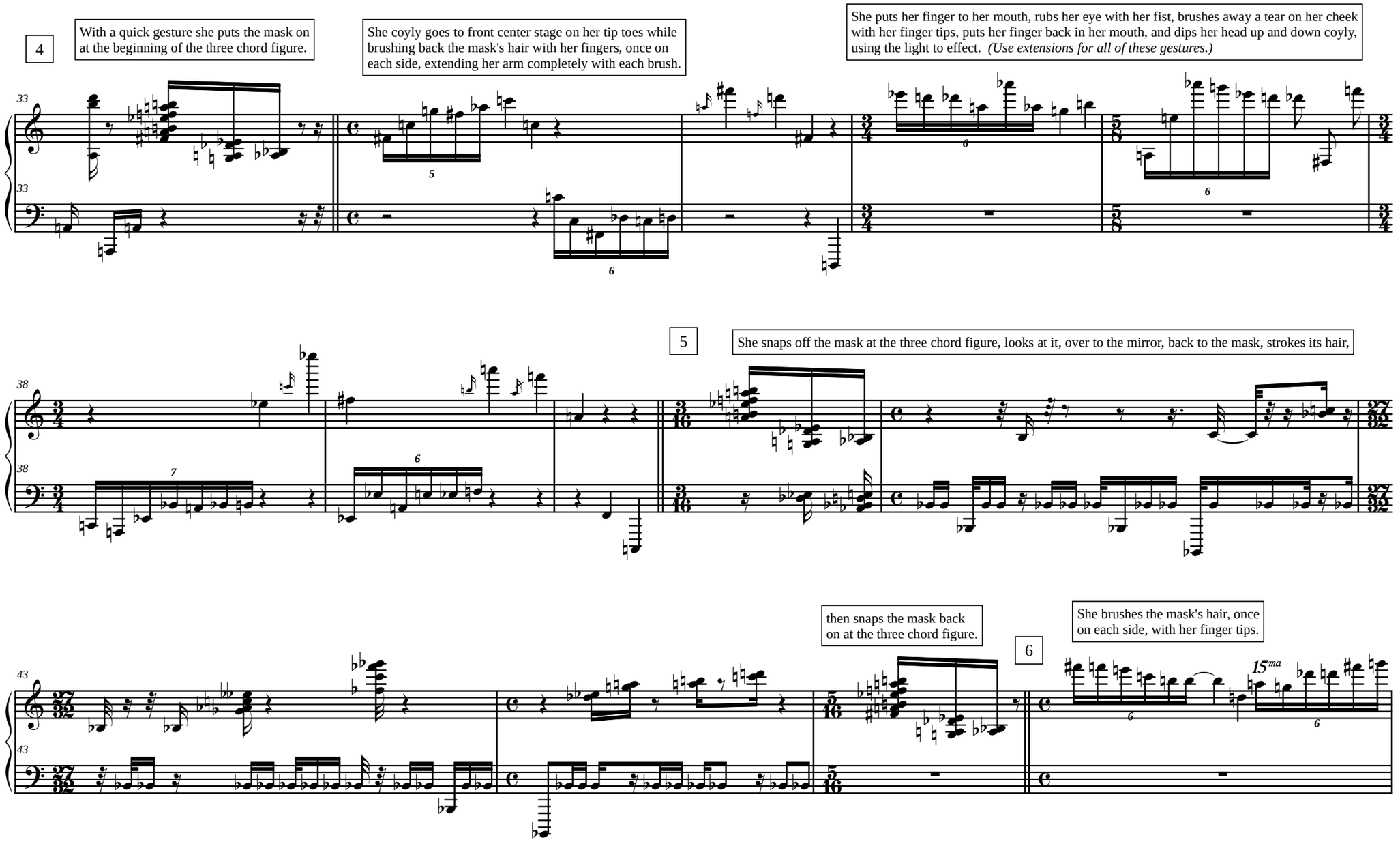
Part II: The Mirror

(For computer controlled digital piano and instrumental performance artist.)

William Osborne



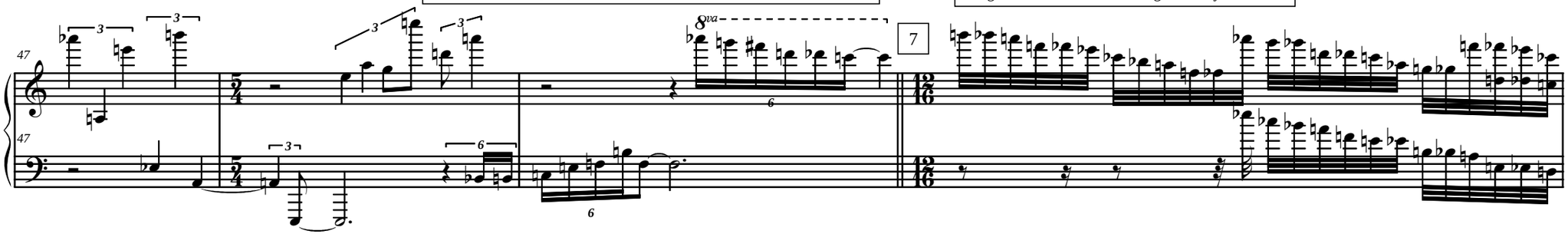

21
21
She lowers her arms and tilts her head forward letting the mask fall into her hands. She raises her real face to the audience for an instant,
8va
25
25
then quickly turns and goes to the box,
3
28
28
hangs Daphne's mask on a hook on the side facing the audience, rummages in the box and finds Mary's mask.
30
30

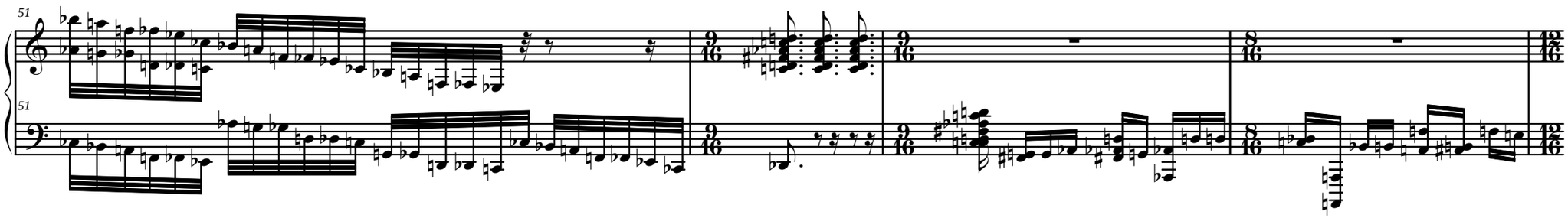

4
With a quick gesture she puts the mask on at the beginning of the three chord figure.
She coyly goes to front center stage on her tip toes while brushing back the mask's hair with her fingers, once on each side, extending her arm completely with each brush.
She puts her finger to her mouth, rubs her eye with her fist, brushes away a tear on her cheek with her finger tips, puts her finger back in her mouth, and dips her head up and down coyly, using the light to effect. (Use extensions for all of these gestures.)
5
She snaps off the mask at the three chord figure, looks at it, over to the mirror, back to the mask, strokes its hair,
then snaps the mask back on at the three chord figure.
6
She brushes the mask's hair, once on each side, with her finger tips.

With gracefully extended movements she places her chin in her hand, and dips her head coyly.

She makes a startle gesture on the last florish (upper arm extended parallel to the floor, forearm at right angle, fingers extended and spread.) She removes the mask, and holds an expression on her real face for an instant, before going to the box.

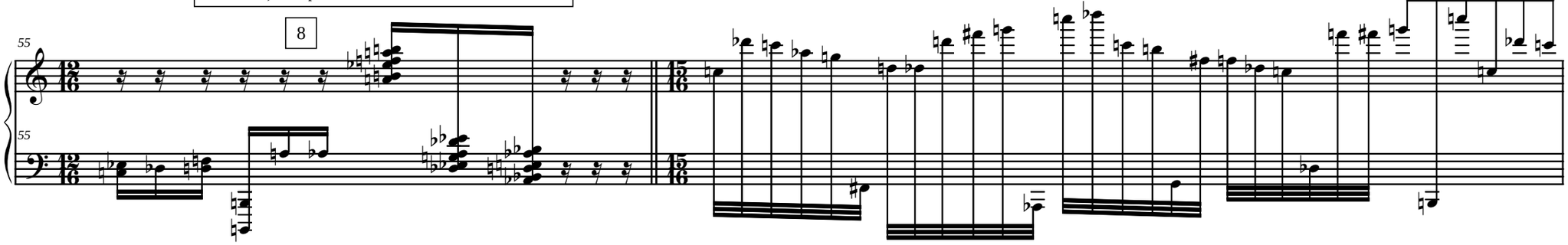
She goes to the box and rummages for Myrtle's mask.



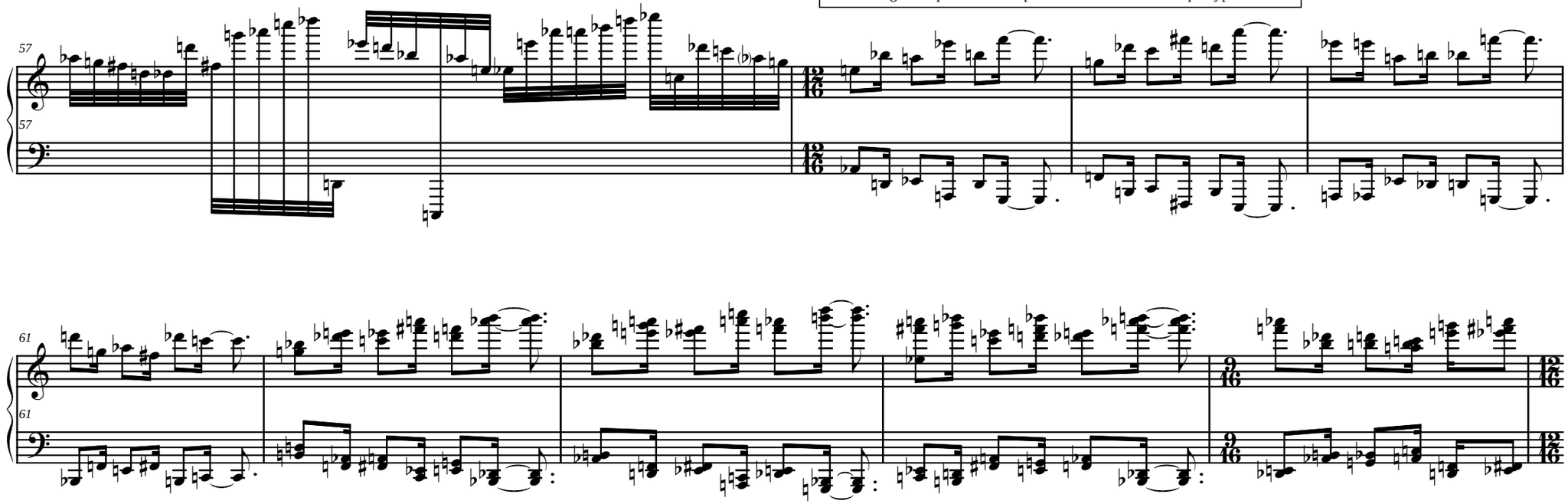


At the three chord figure she puts the mask on (including its latex cover) and spins around to face the audience.

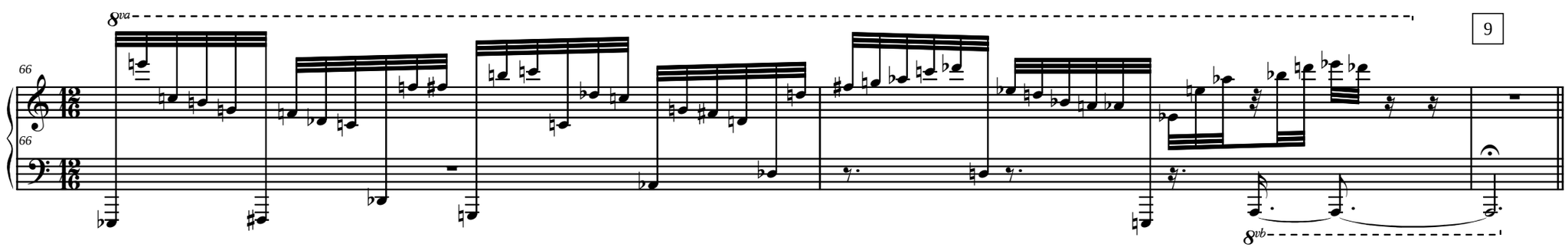
She slowly moves to front center stage looking slightly upward, rolling her face around with inviting sensuality,



and moving her hips to the thumps in the music in a burlesque type of dance.

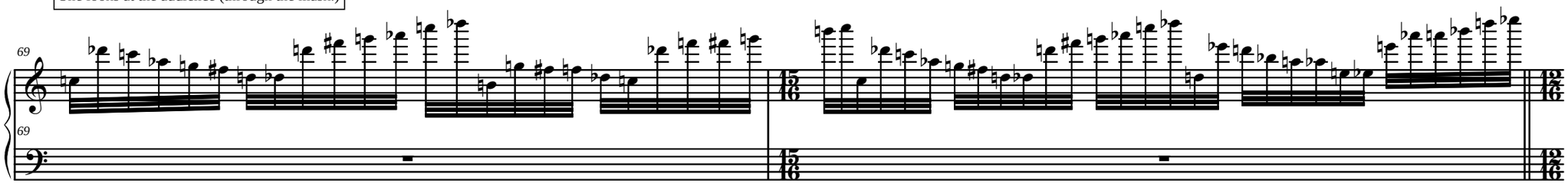


At the low note at the end of the phrase, she suddenly removes the latex make-up cover mask, holding it with her fully extended arm pointing upward at a 45 to 60 degree angle. (This reveals the mask underneath it.) She leans her head slightly back and to one side at the same angle as her extended arm, in a gesture of grief and anguish.



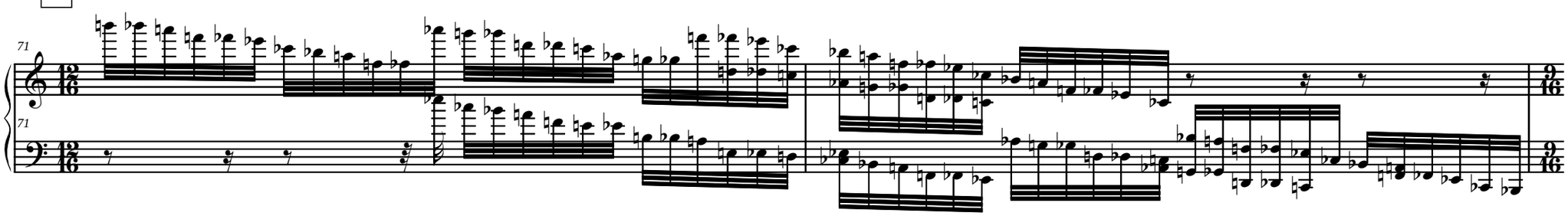
9

She looks at the audience (through the mask.)



10

As she returns to the box she removes Myrtle's mask,

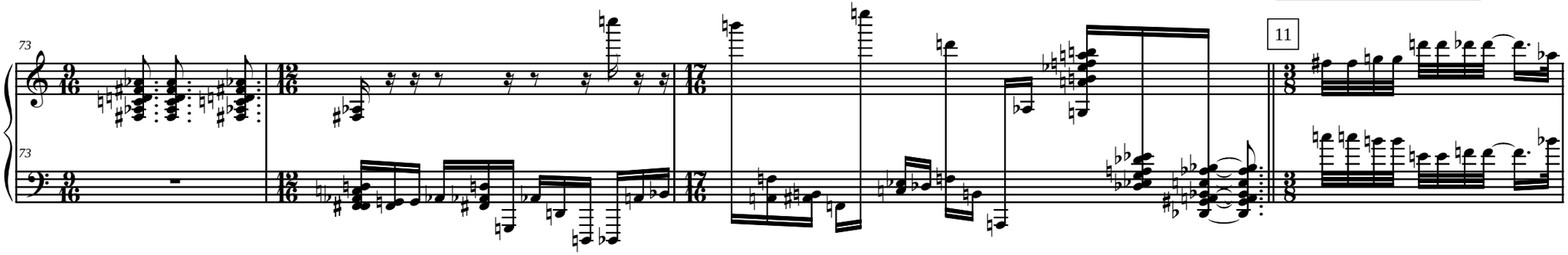


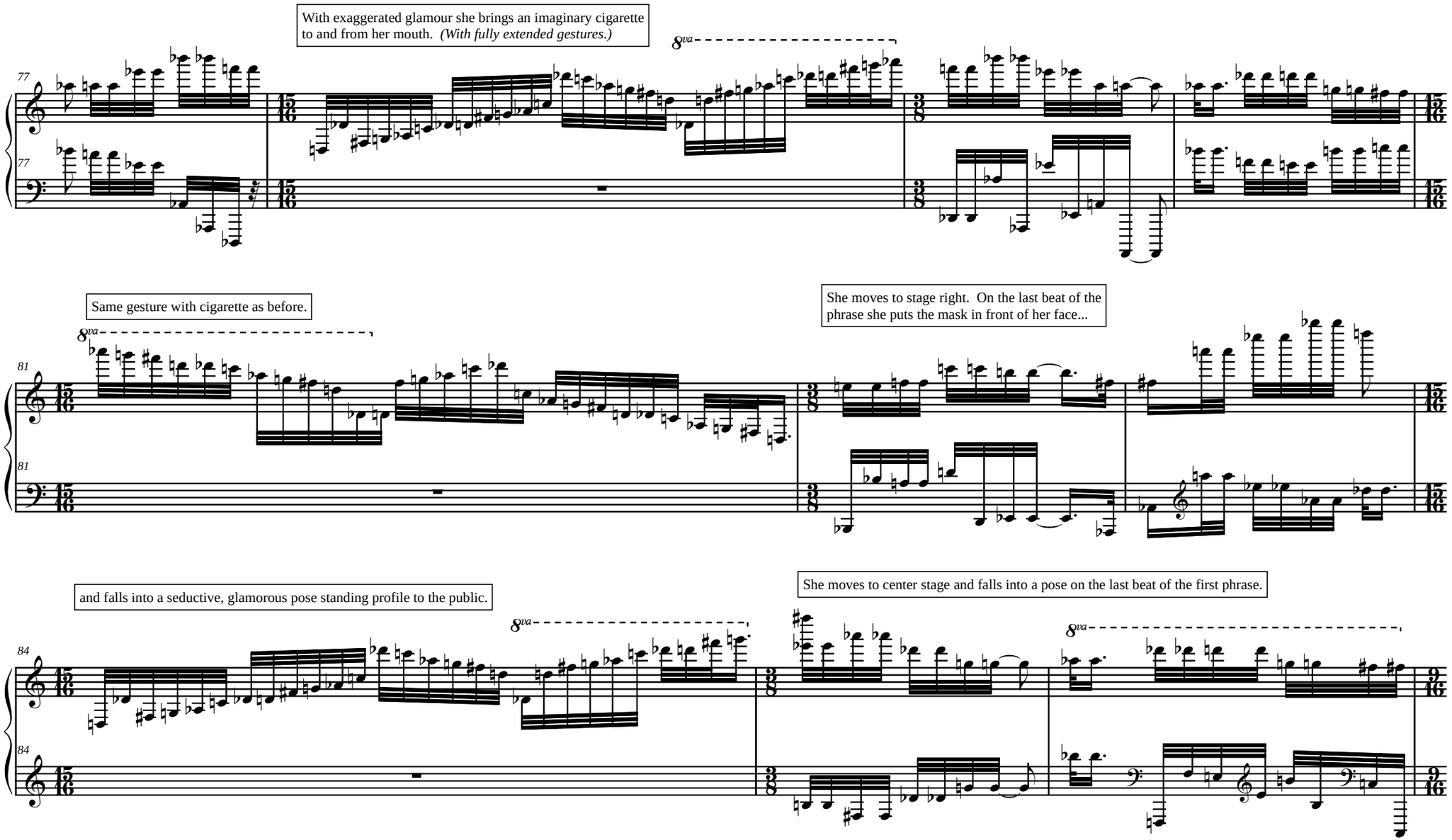
puts it back in the box and rummages for Morticia's mask.

At the three chord figure she places the mask over her breast and turns to the audience.

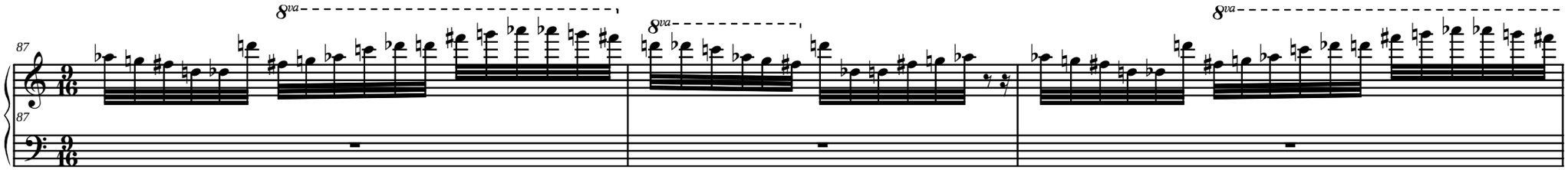
Her real face has a haughty and seductively glamorous pose.

11




With exaggerated glamour she brings an imaginary cigarette to and from her mouth. (With fully extended gestures.)
8va
77
Same gesture with cigarette as before.
She moves to stage right. On the last beat of the phrase she puts the mask in front of her face...
81
and falls into a seductive, glamorous pose standing profile to the public.
She moves to center stage and falls into a pose on the last beat of the first phrase.
84

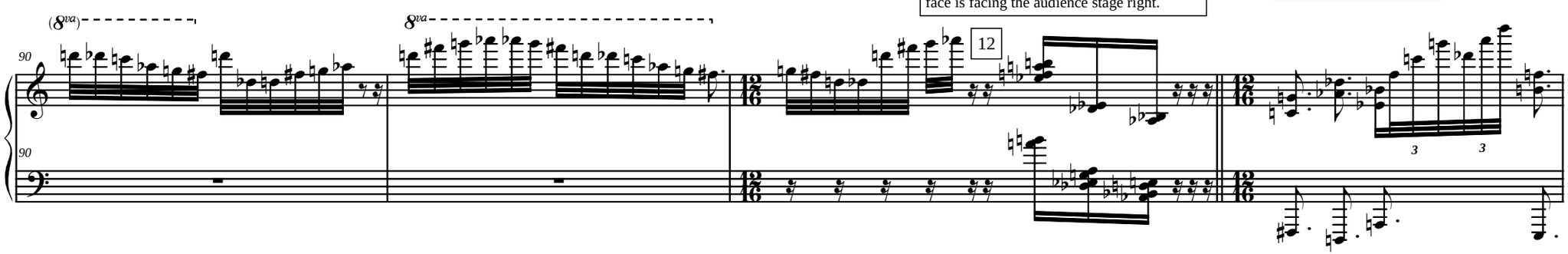
She extends her arm and moves her index fing in a gesture saying" come here," coordinating it with a seductive roll of her shoulder.



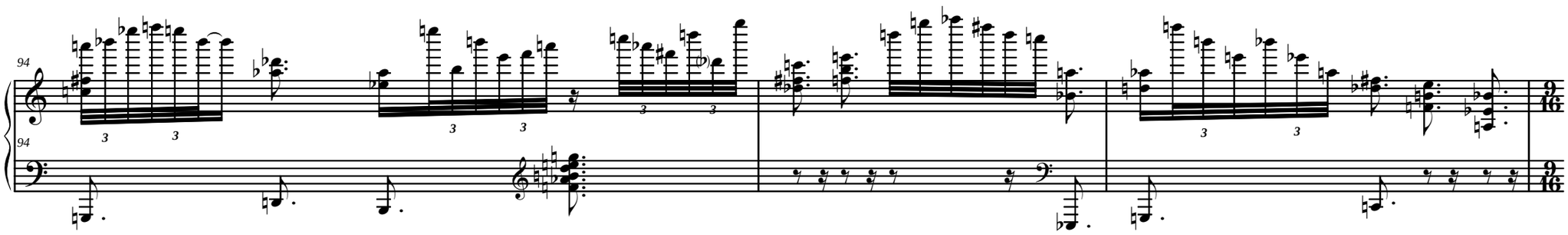
On the final florish she brings her forearm back over her right breast.

She snaps off the mask (on the three chords,) crossing her forearms at her breast. Her real face is facing the audience stage right.

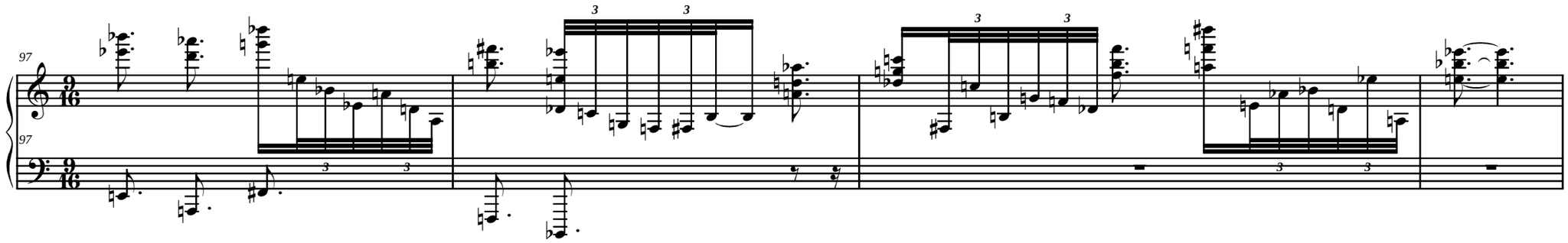
She holds for an instant and flows back to the box.



Still at the box, using fully extended gestures she puts on Annie's mask, puts its chin in her hand, dips her head coyly, and repeats the startled gesture, then returns the mask to the box.

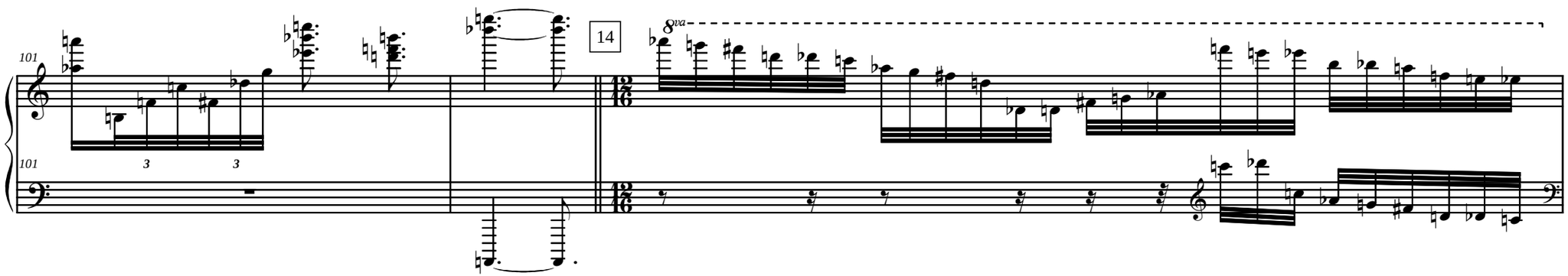


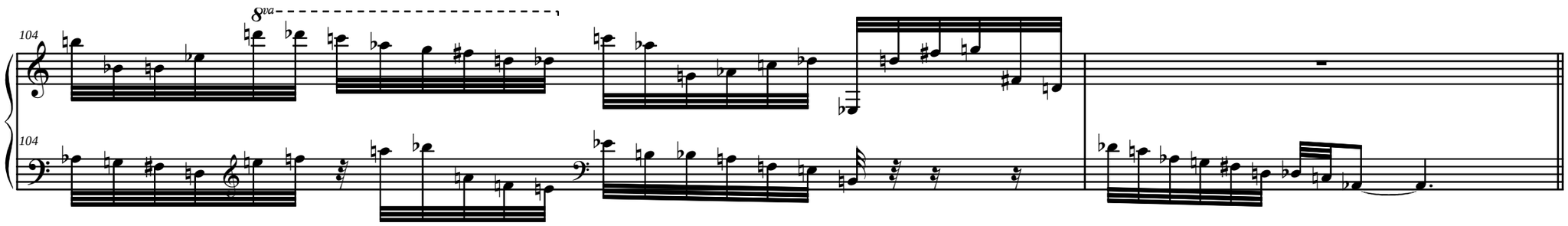
She holds Myrtle's make-up mask in the direction of the audience and makes it mouth work like a hand puppet. She protrudes her finger from its mouth and wiggles it like a tongue.

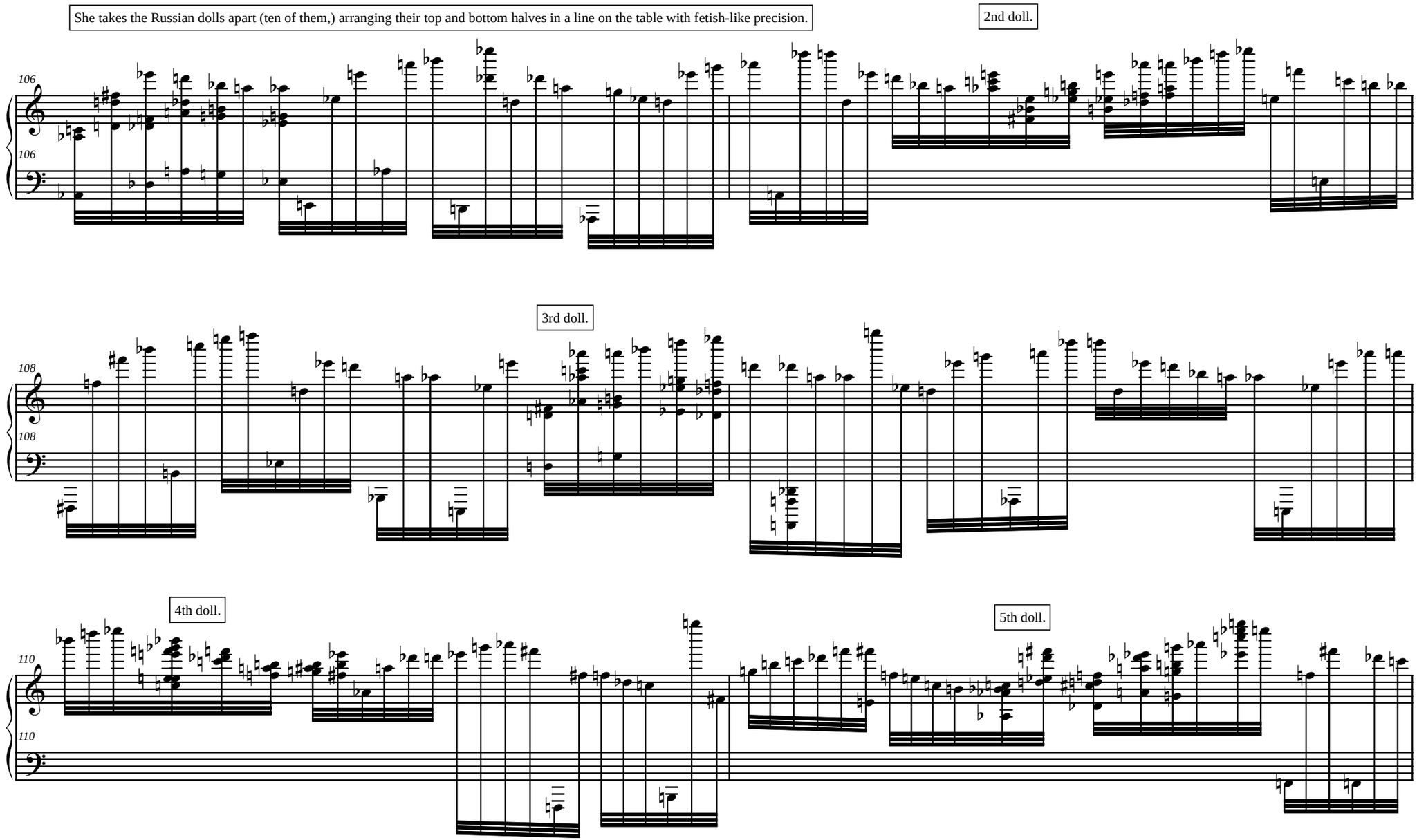


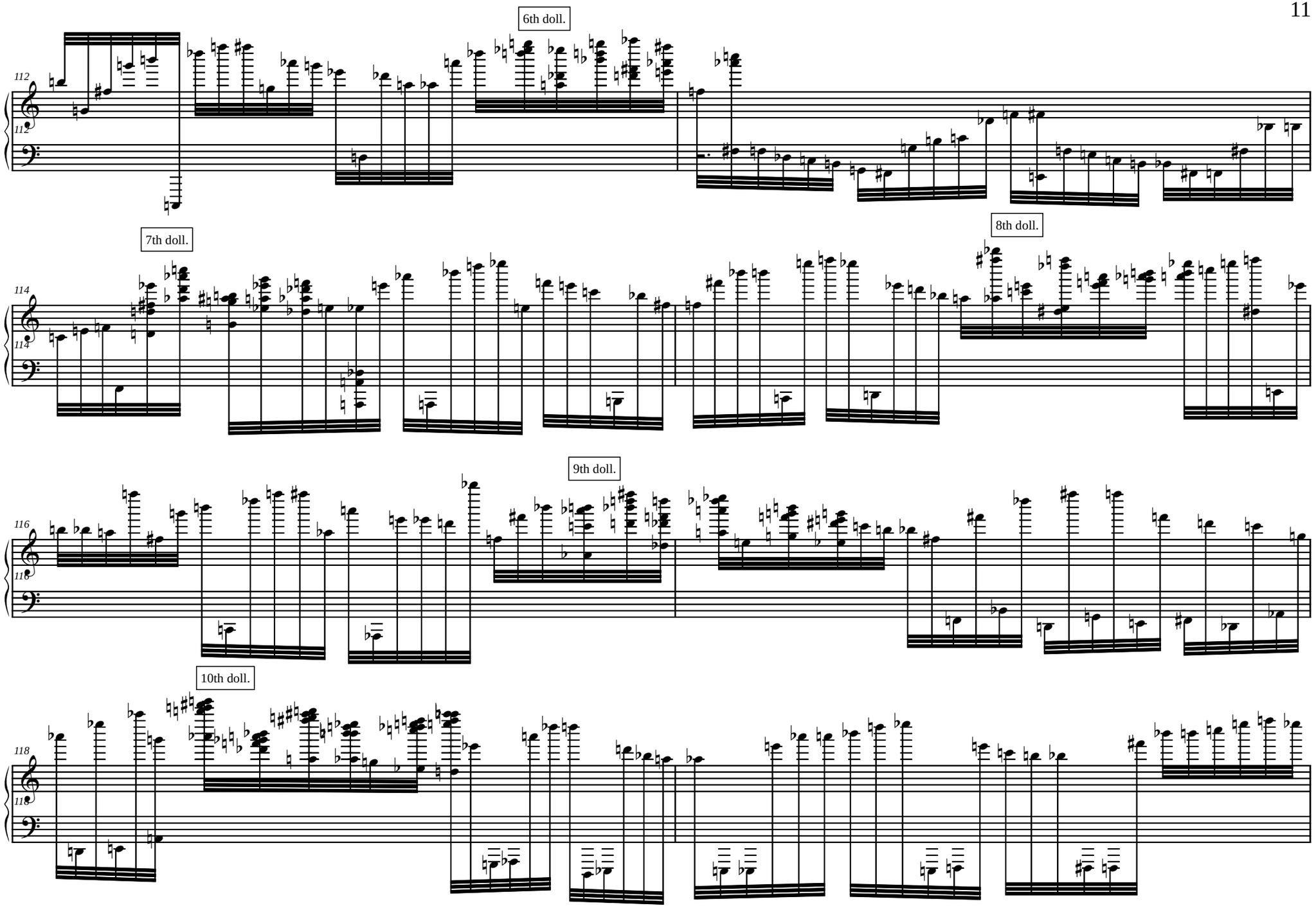
As she takes Morticia from the box, the dolls on the table distract her attention. She returns the mask to the box.

She goes to the table and seats herself.






She takes the Russian dolls apart (ten of them,) arranging their top and bottom halves in a line on the table with fetish-like precision.
2nd doll.
106
106
3rd doll.
108
108
4th doll.
5th doll.
110
110


6th doll.
112
112
7th doll.
8th doll.
114
114
9th doll.
116
116
10th doll.
118
118

In the remaining time she straightens the line of dolls.

She looks at the box.

120

120

15

She goes to the box.

123

123

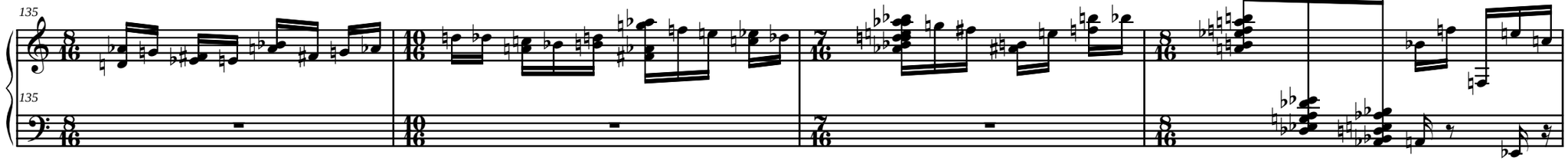
She takes her disassembled trombone out of it, slide in one hand and bells section in the other, her arms extended a bit from her body. She twirls, showing her love for her instrument, and assembles it.

126

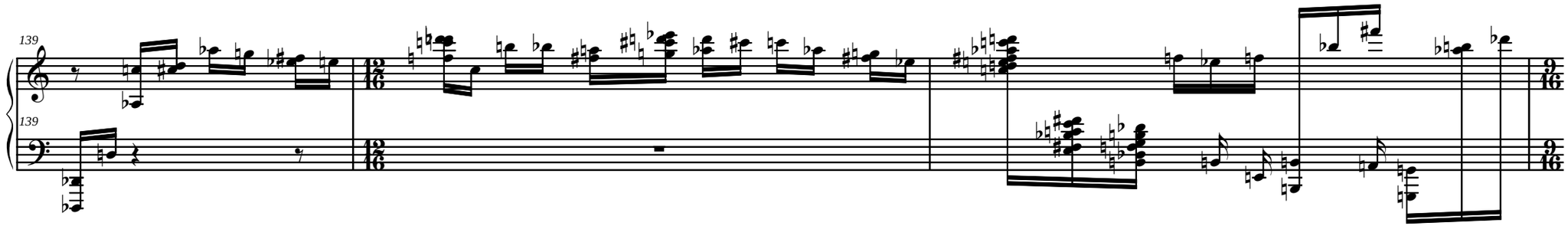
126

131

131



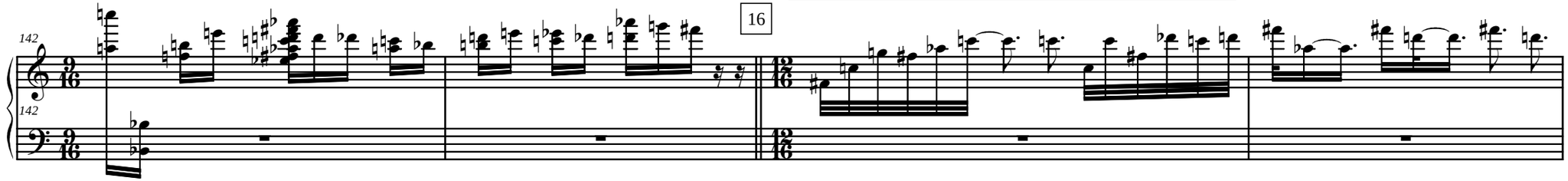
She bends over at the hips and rears back to play pointing the trombone upward.

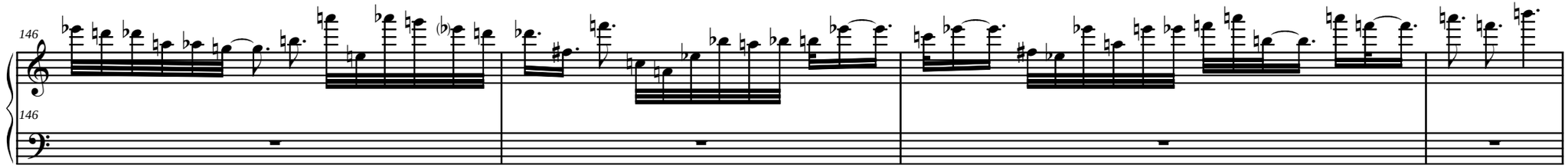


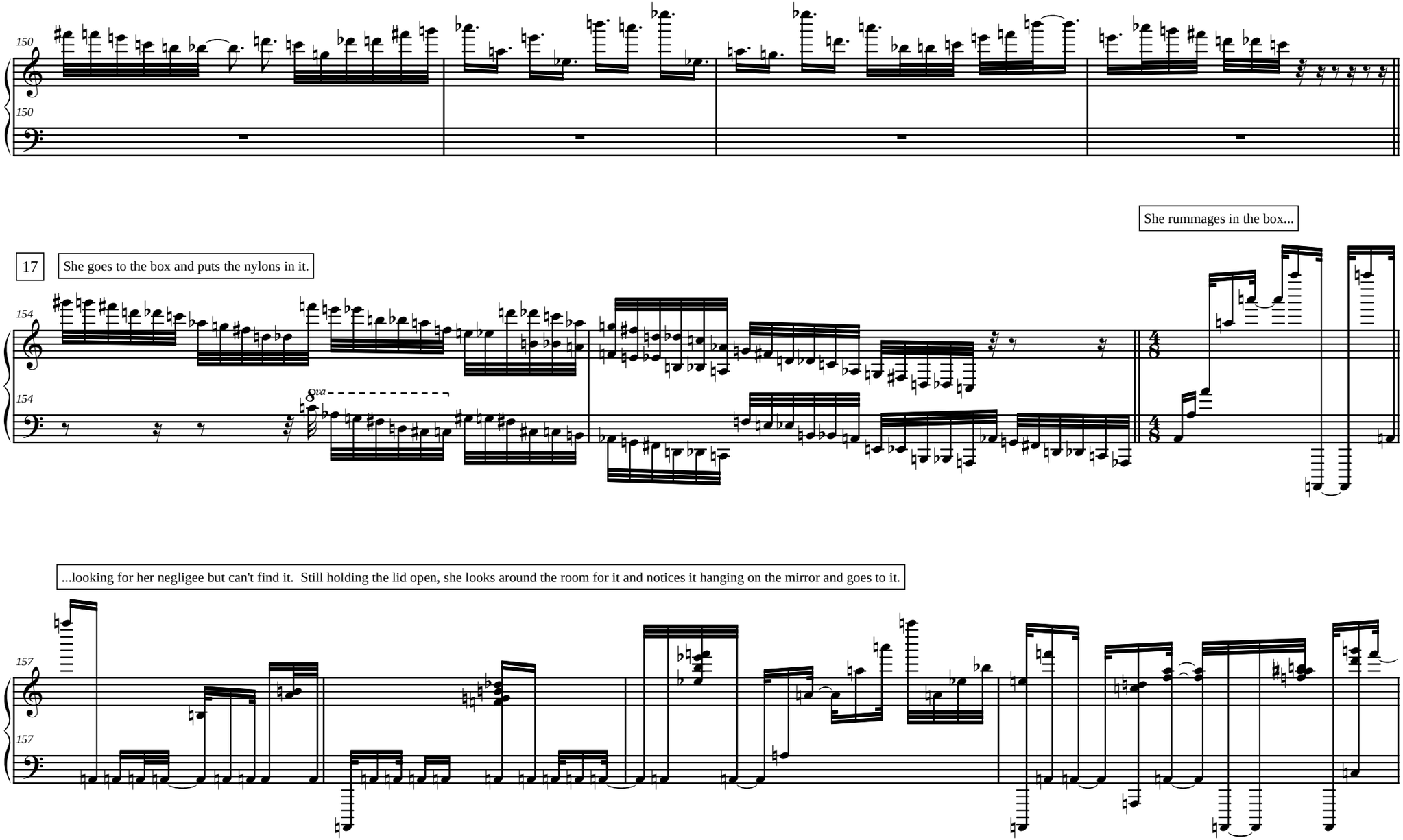
She suddenly pauses a moment in consternation, because she realizes she just saw a run in her nylons.

She places the trombone on an instrument stand next to the table, puts her foot on the chair, examines the run, then removes the nylons.

16



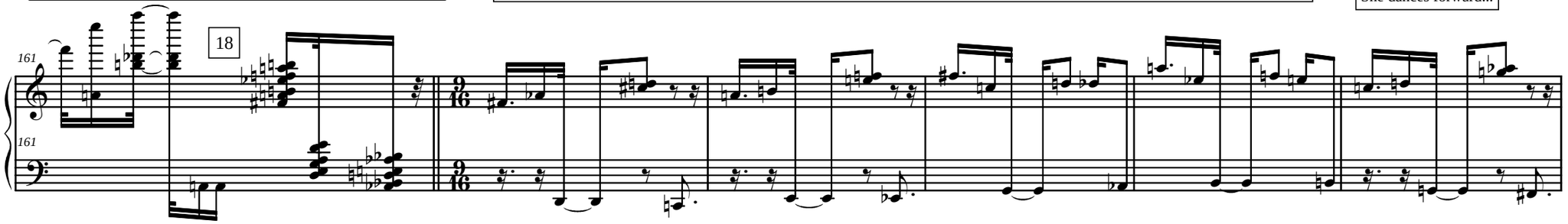



150
150
She rummages in the box...
17
She goes to the box and puts the nylons in it.
154
154
8va
...looking for her negligee but can't find it. Still holding the lid open, she looks around the room for it and notices it hanging on the mirror and goes to it.
157
157

At the three chords, she holds it against her chest as if trying it on.

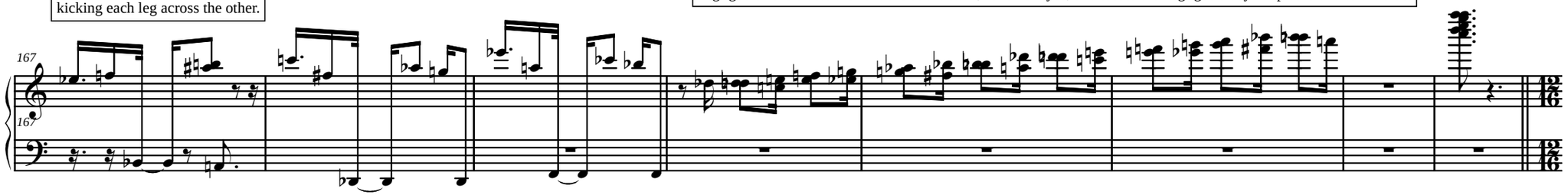
Holding the negligee over her chest, she dances backwards towards the box kicking each leg out to its own side in a sexy burlesque.

She dances forward...



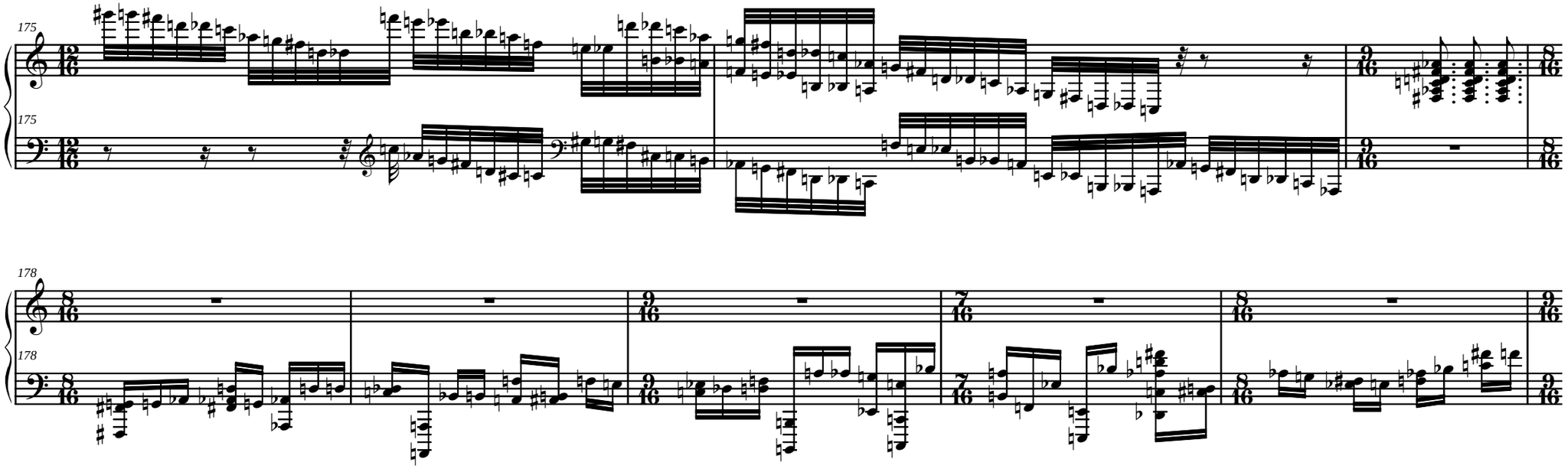
kicking each leg across the other.

She twirls the negligee over her head while rolling her breasts. A sneeze begins to build up. She sneezes into the negligee on the cluster. She looks at the stain, rolls her eyes, and tosses the negligee away -- upward and to the side.



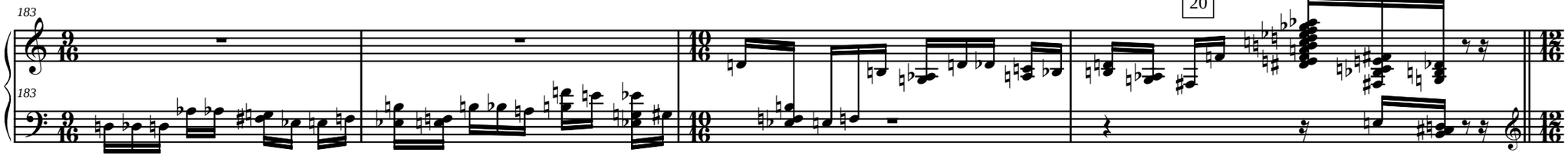
19

She returns to the box and rummages for her apron.



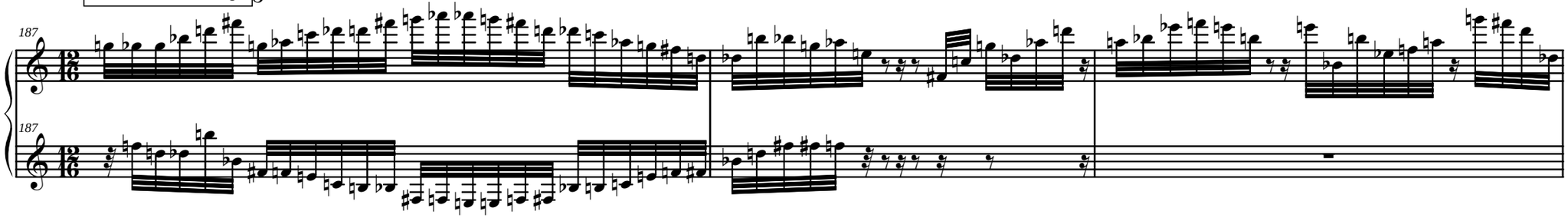
She puts it on by looping its neck strap around her neck at the three chord figure.

20

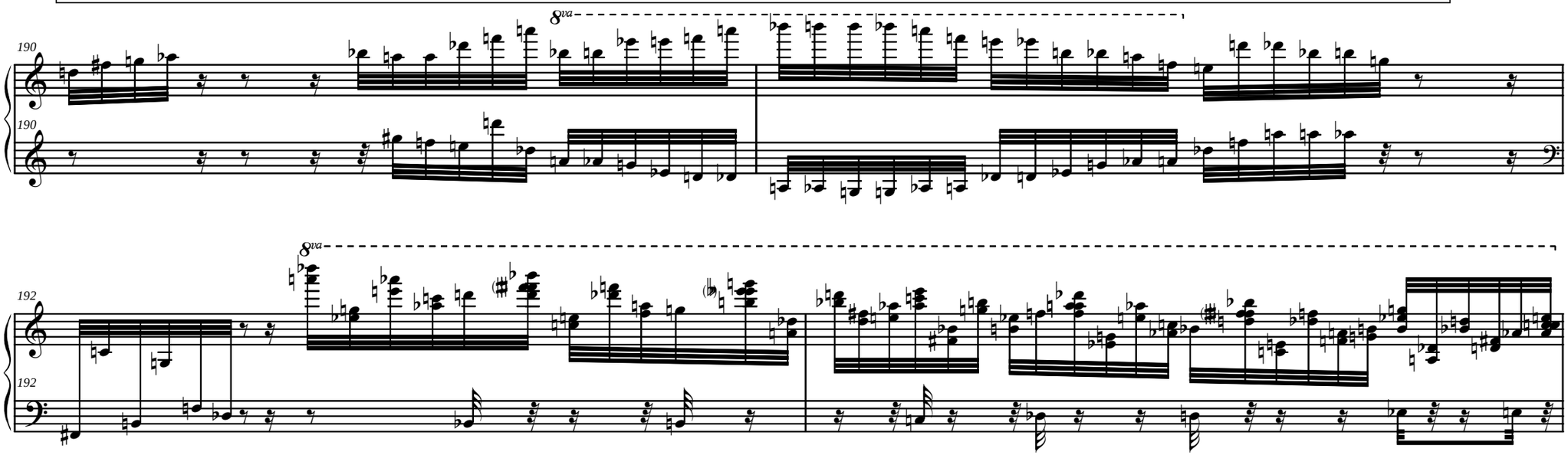


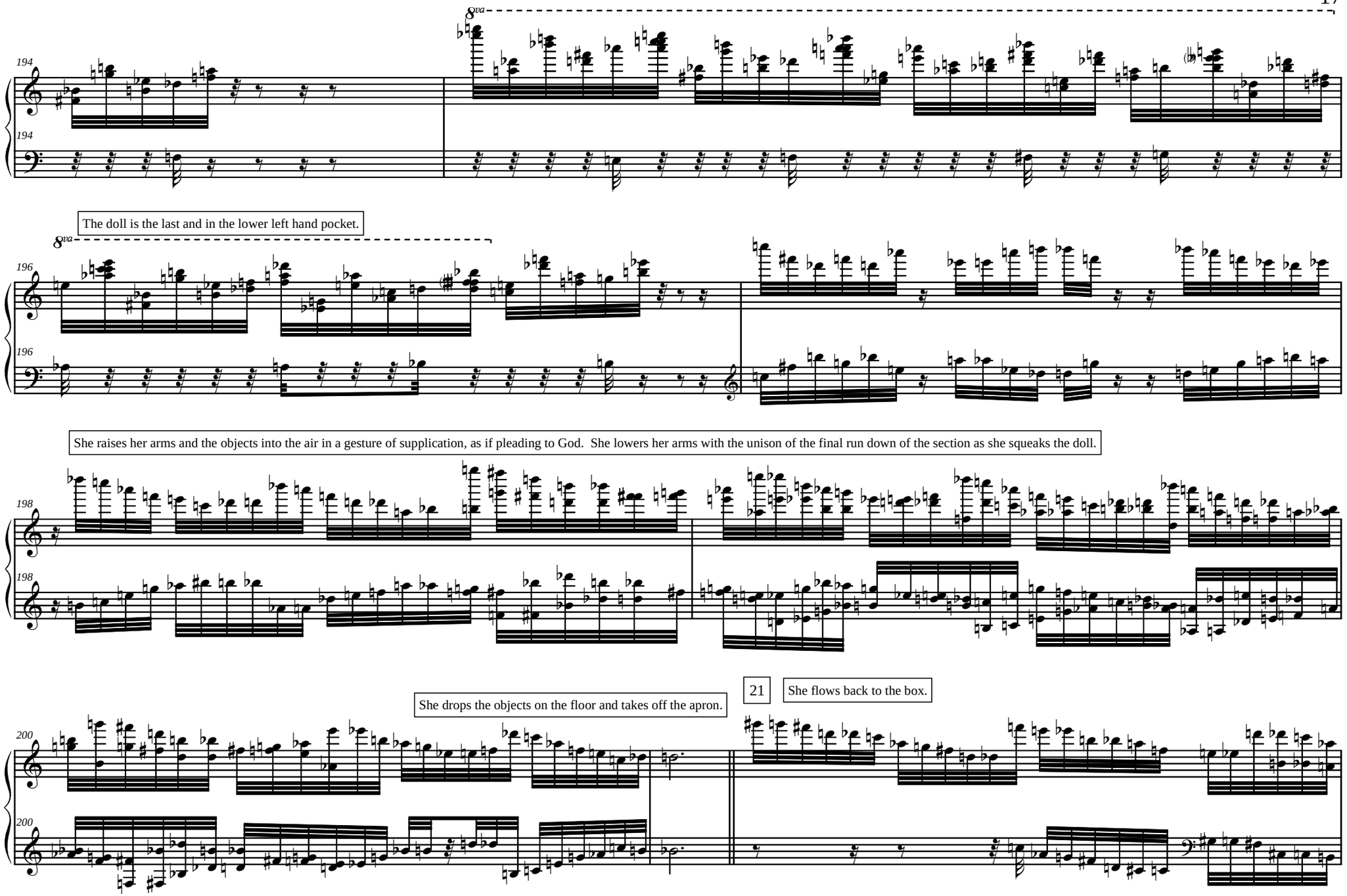
She twirls to center stage.

In the following passages, she removes various objects (with widely extended gestures) from...

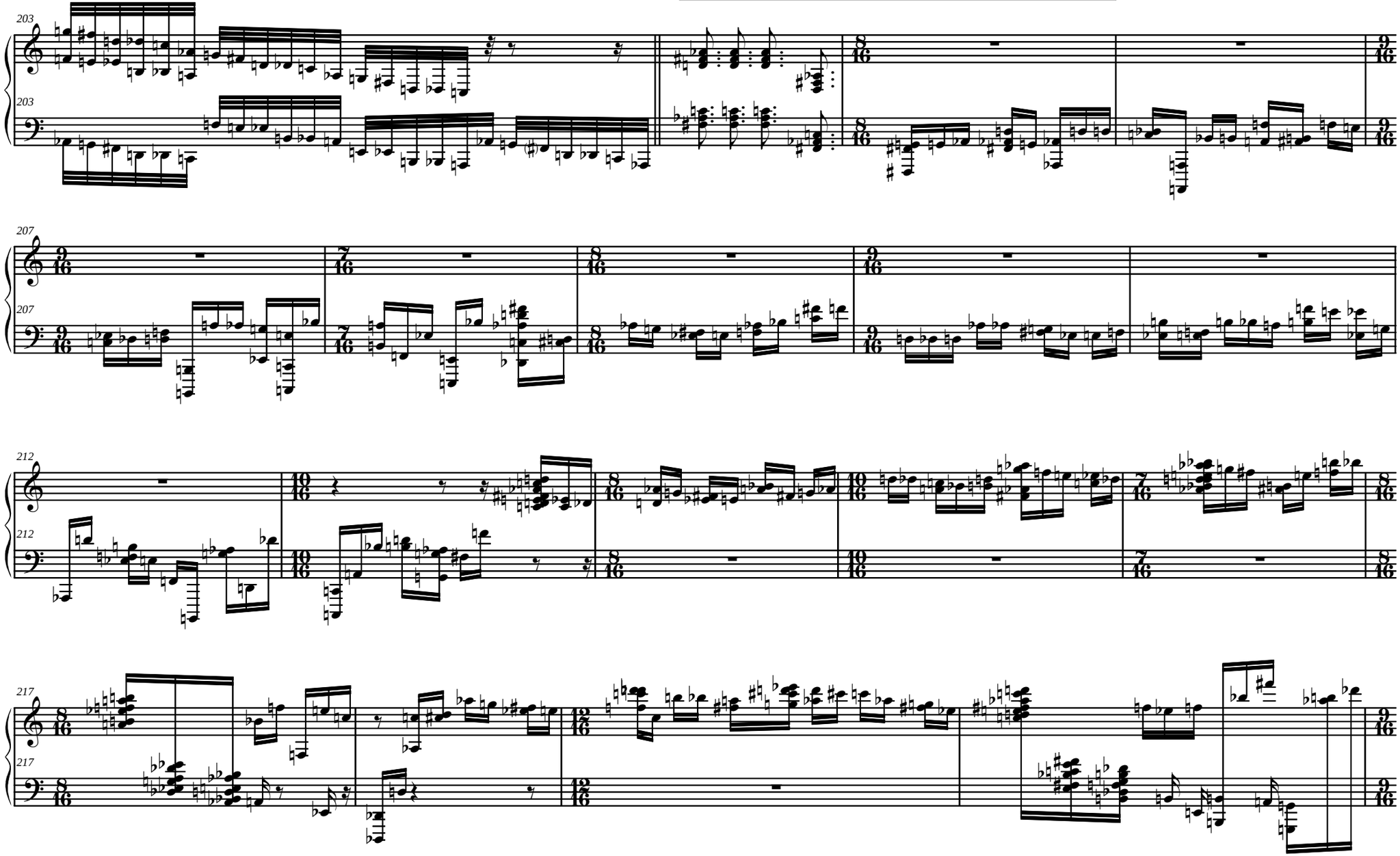


each of the apron's four pockets continuing to hold each in her hands: a baby bottle, baby shoes, a baby's rattle, and a little doll that squeaks when squeezed. (She drapes the shoes over her forearm via their tied together laces.)



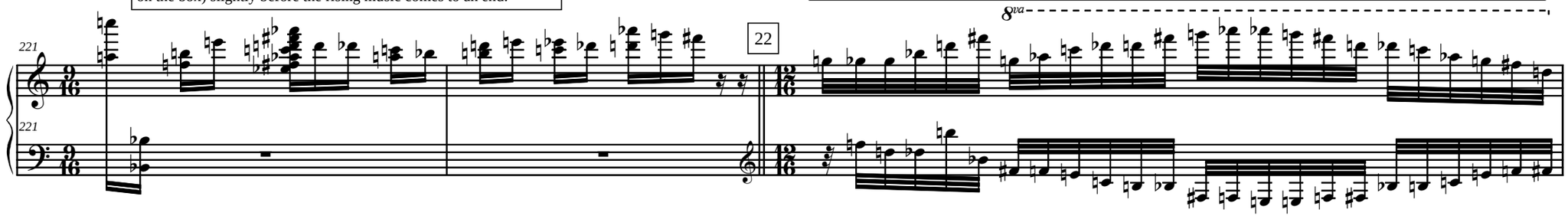

8va
194
194
The doll is the last and in the lower left hand pocket.
8va
196
196
She raises her arms and the objects into the air in a gesture of supplication, as if pleading to God. She lowers her arms with the unison of the final run down of the section as she squeaks the doll.
198
198
She drops the objects on the floor and takes off the apron.
21
She flows back to the box.
200
200

Puts the apron back in it, and removes a long, light beige dress, and puts it on.

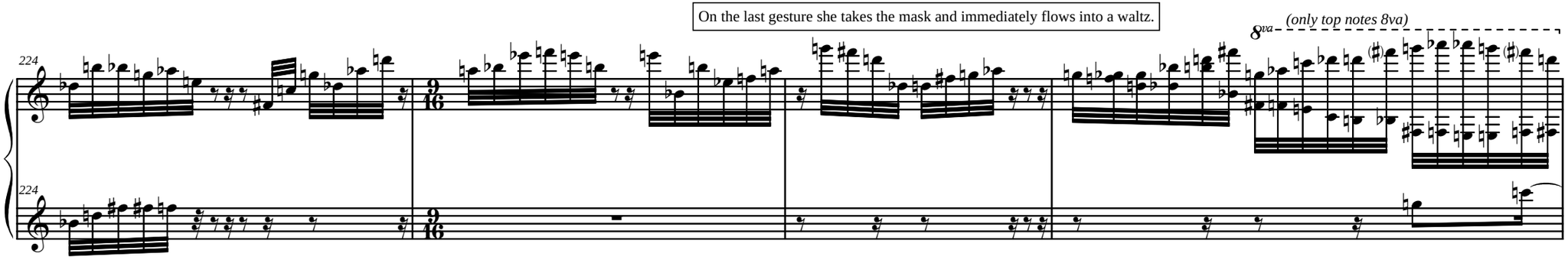


The dress now on, her attention is drawn to Daphne's mask (hanging on the box) slightly before the rising music comes to an end.

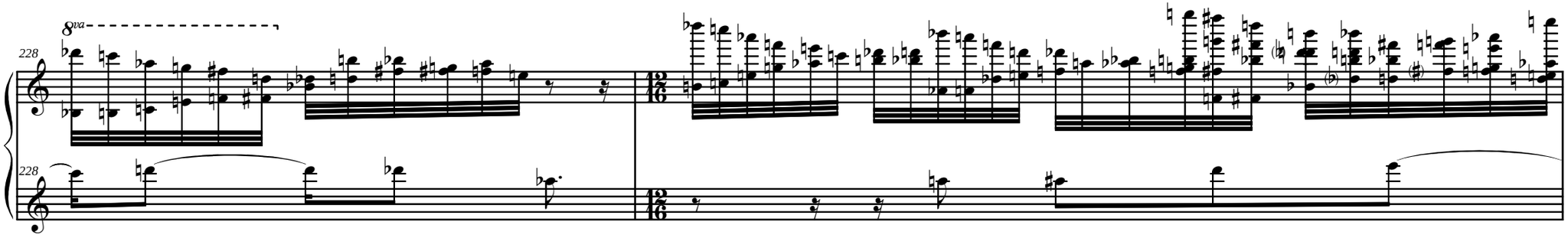
She stands to the side of the mask so that she is visible in profile, and touches its twig-hair with four graceful gestures.

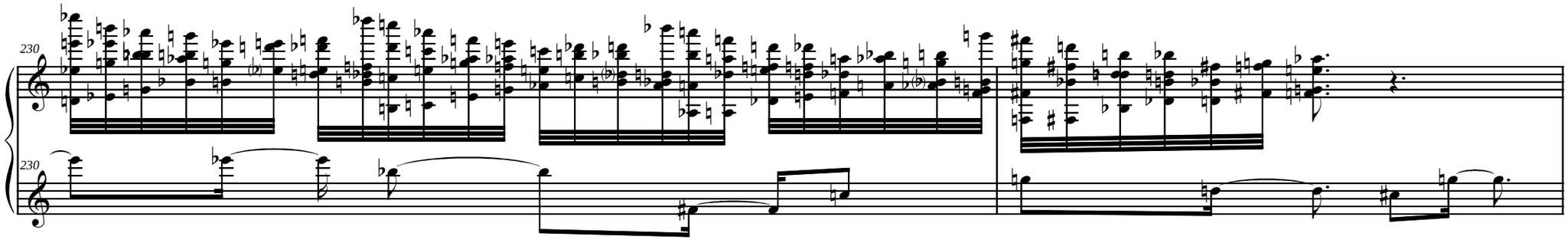


On the last gesture she takes the mask and immediately flows into a waltz.



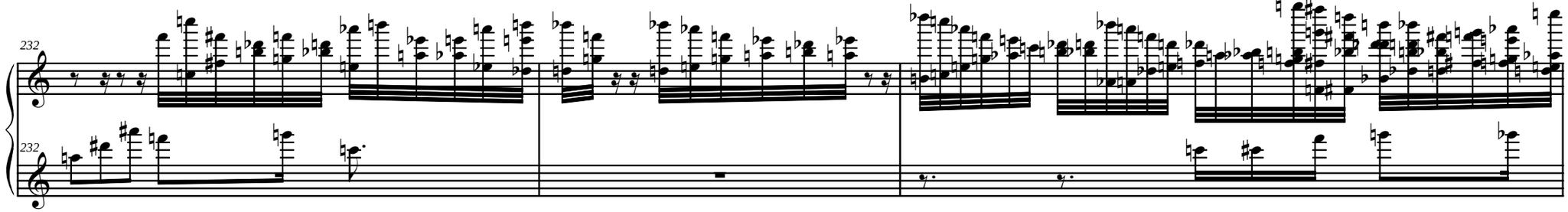
Holding the mask in front of her, she waltzes about three steps stage left, fully extending the mask in the direction she is moving (keeping its face directed toward the audience) then about three steps right in the same manner.



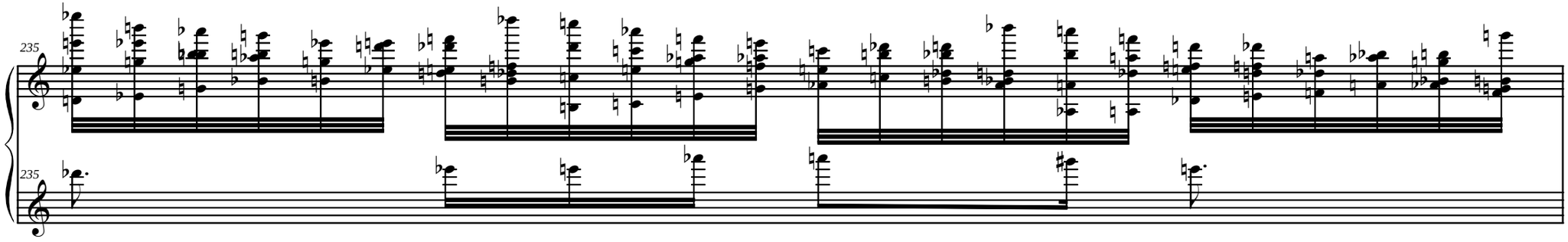


She puts the mask on at this florish (taking care not to be late,) and steps forward a little

She continues waltzing, stage left then right, extending her arms in the



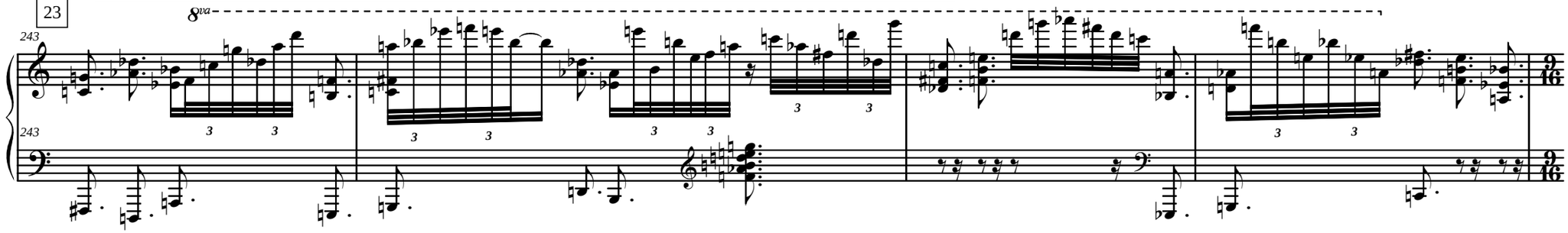
direction of her movement at the end of each phrase. (As before, the mask is held in position by tilting the head slightly back.)



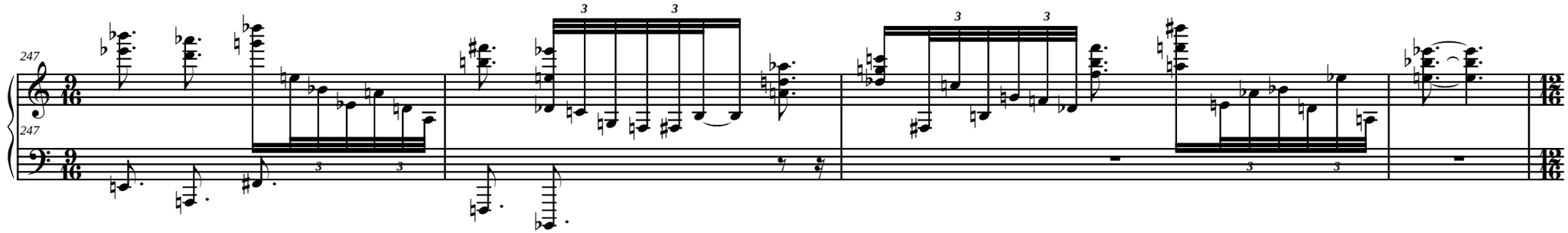
236
(top notes only)
8va
236
238
238
She steps forward to front, center stage.
240
8va
8va
8va
8va
240

She raises her arms one at a time and feels the twig-like hair of the mask, tilting her head to each side respectively. She moves her arms in front of her and lowers them to her eyes, fingers extended and spread. Her fingers slide down her face to a prayer position under her chin.

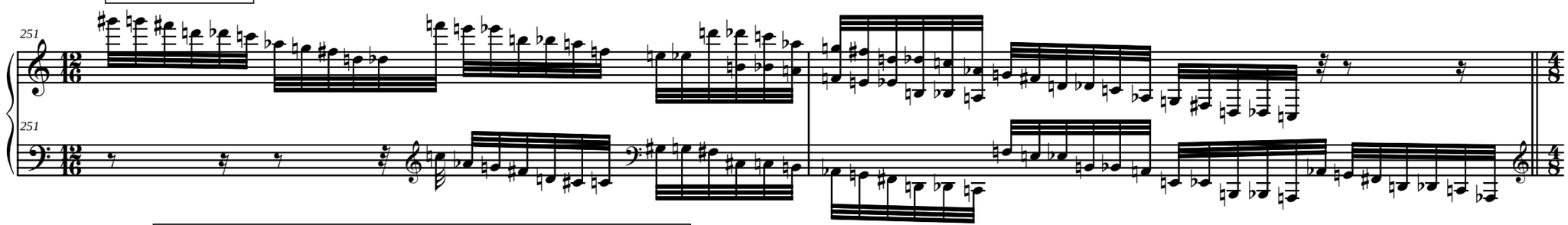
23



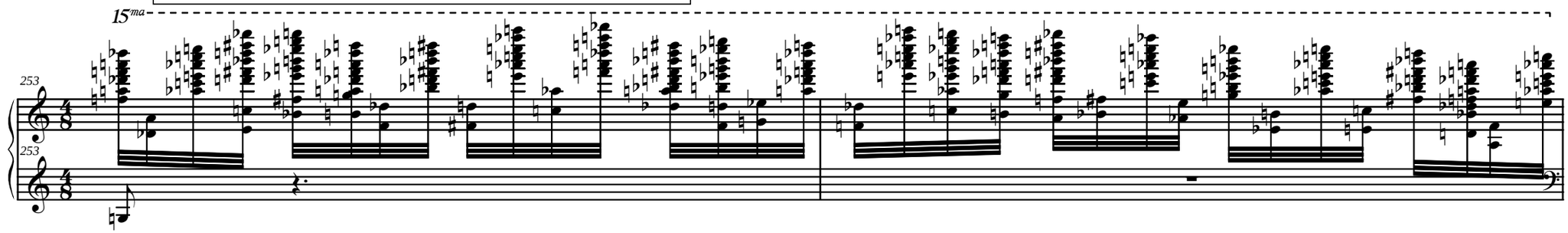
She raises her arms above her head together with looking up at the same angle to a position of supplication. She lowers her arms and tilts her head forward letting the mask fall into her hands. She raises her real face to the audience for an instant.



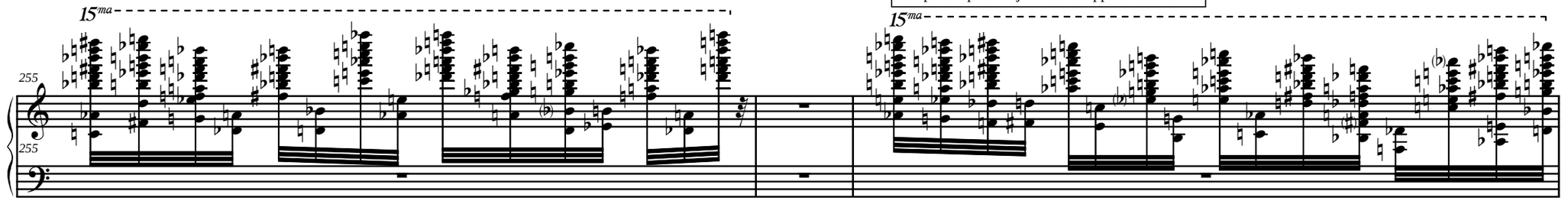
She returns to the box.



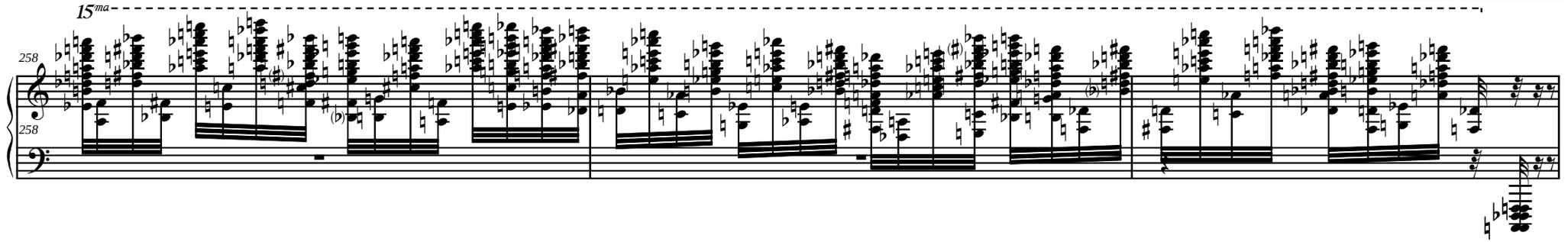
She rehangs the Daphne mask on the box, takes the apron from the box and puts it on.



She picks up the objects she dropped on the floor.

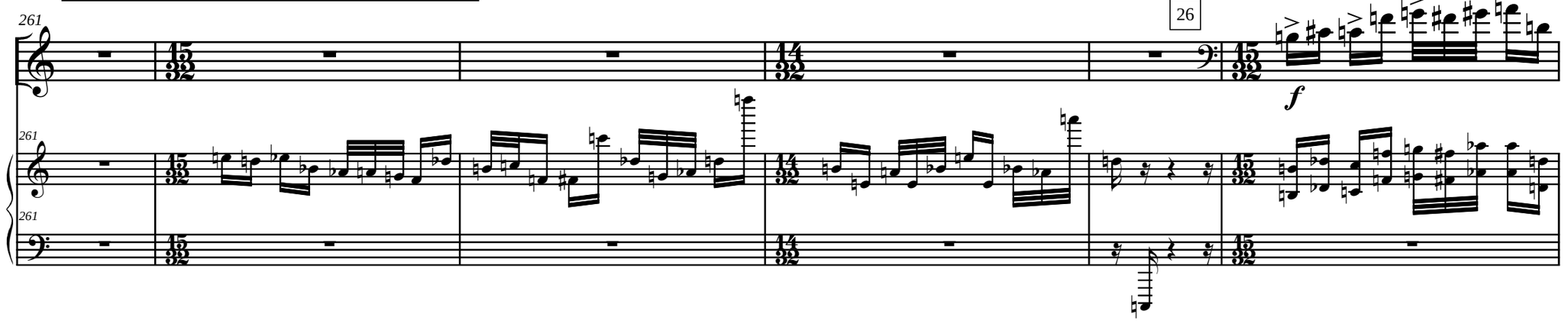


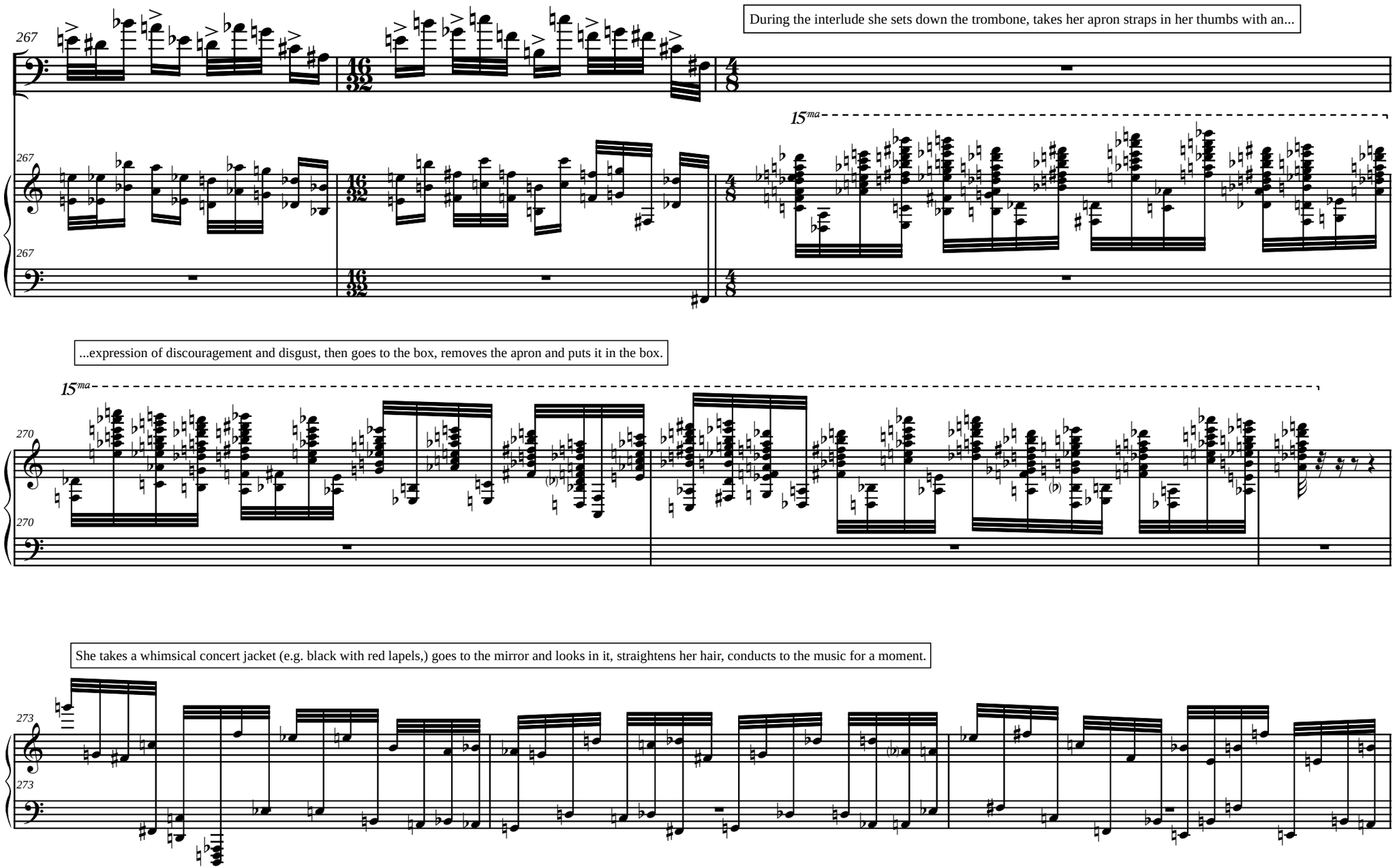
She sees the trombone an instant before the low thump in the music. *(Optional stage directions may be created for other instruments or for non-instrumental performances.)*

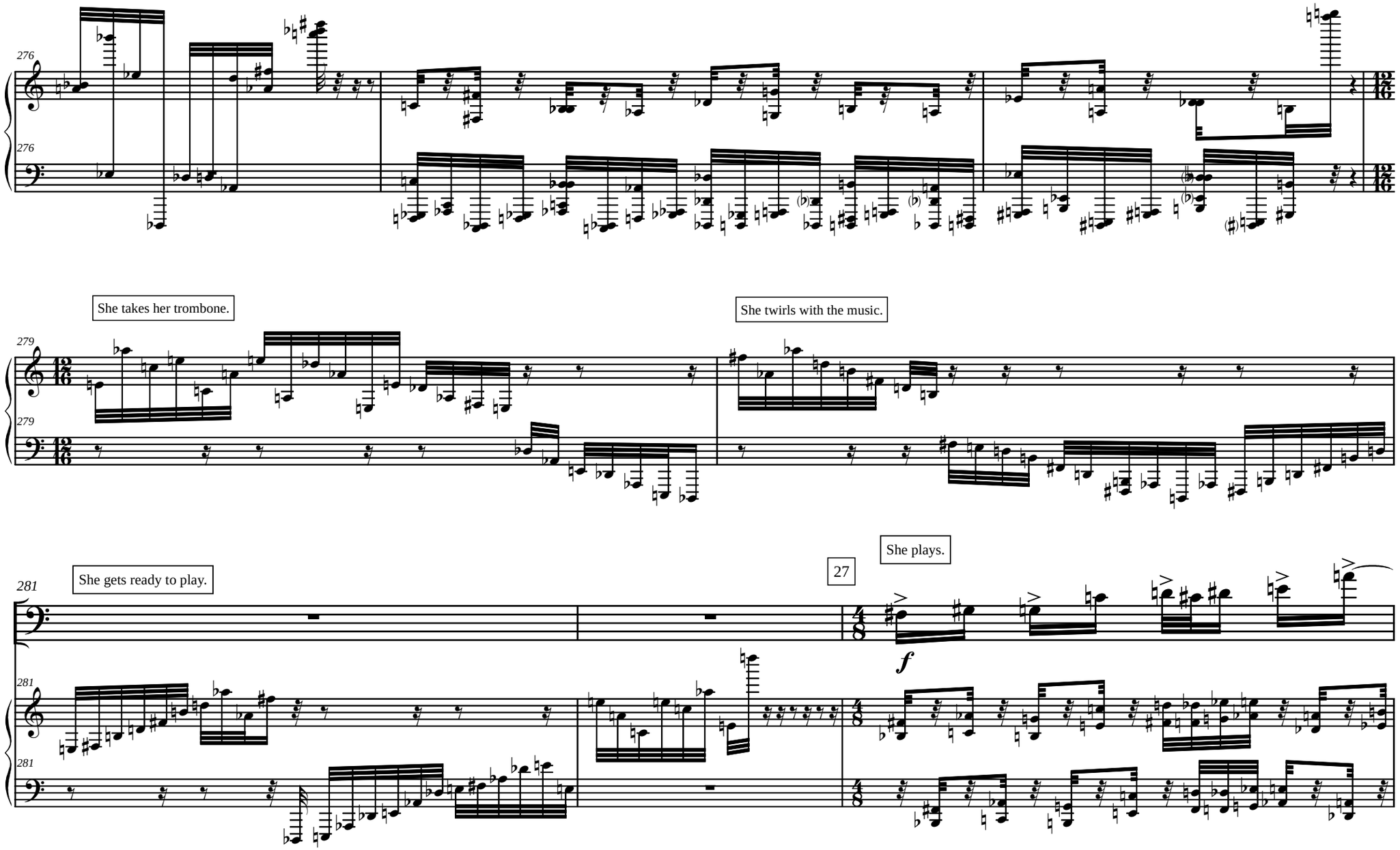


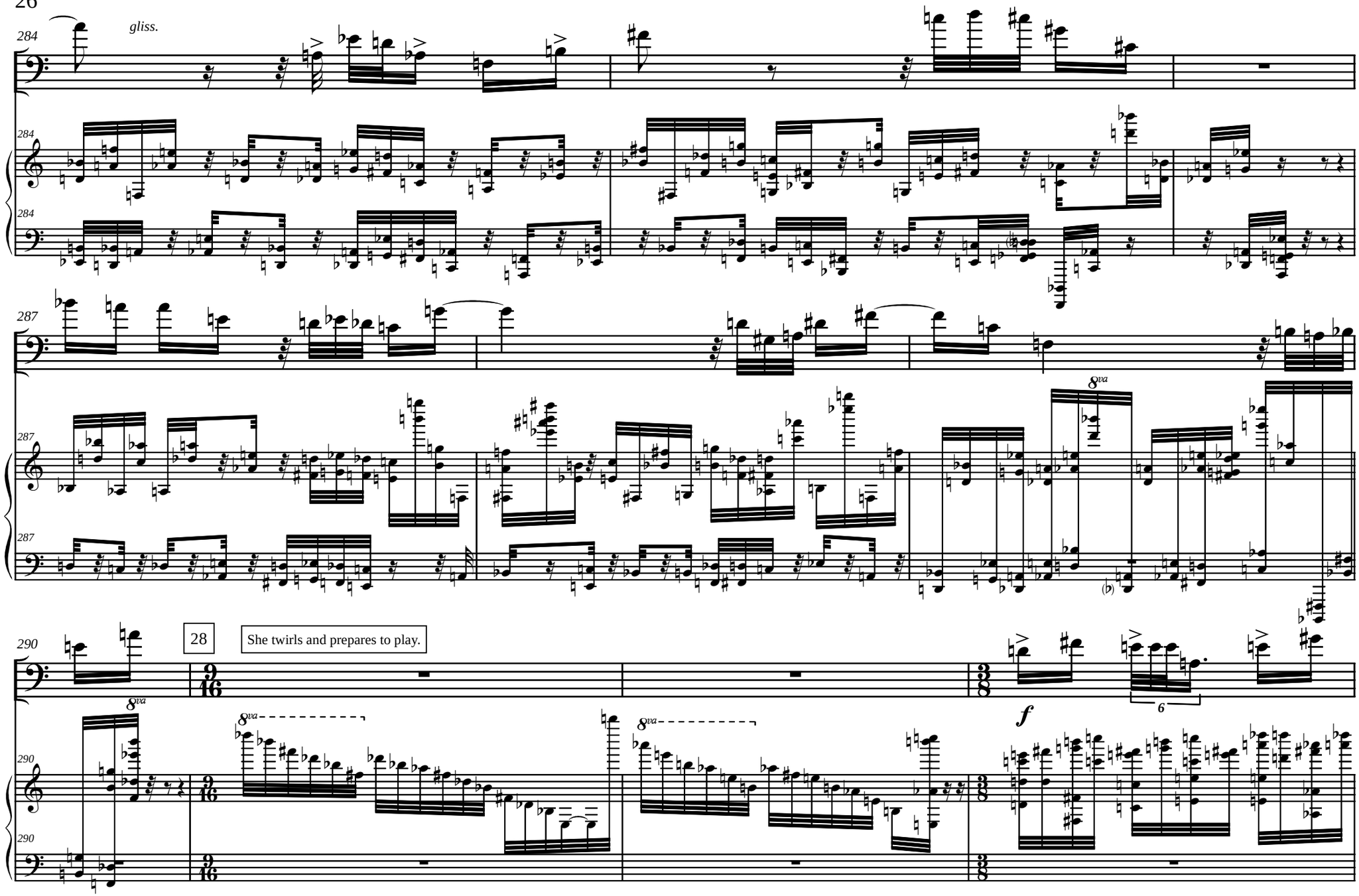
She goes to the trombone, admires it, and picks it up. When the music re-begins, she moves the slide in unison with the music.

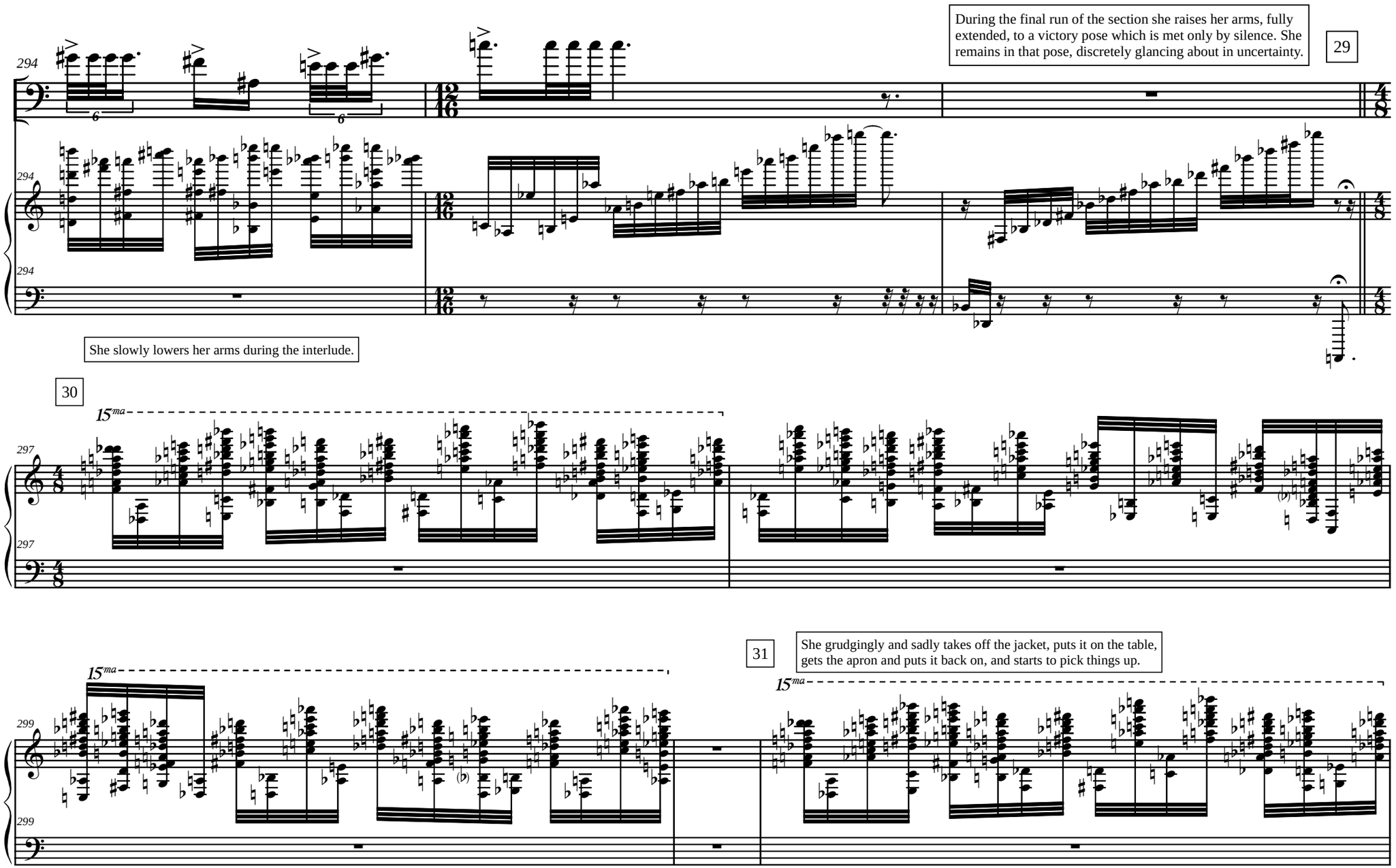
She plays the instrument.

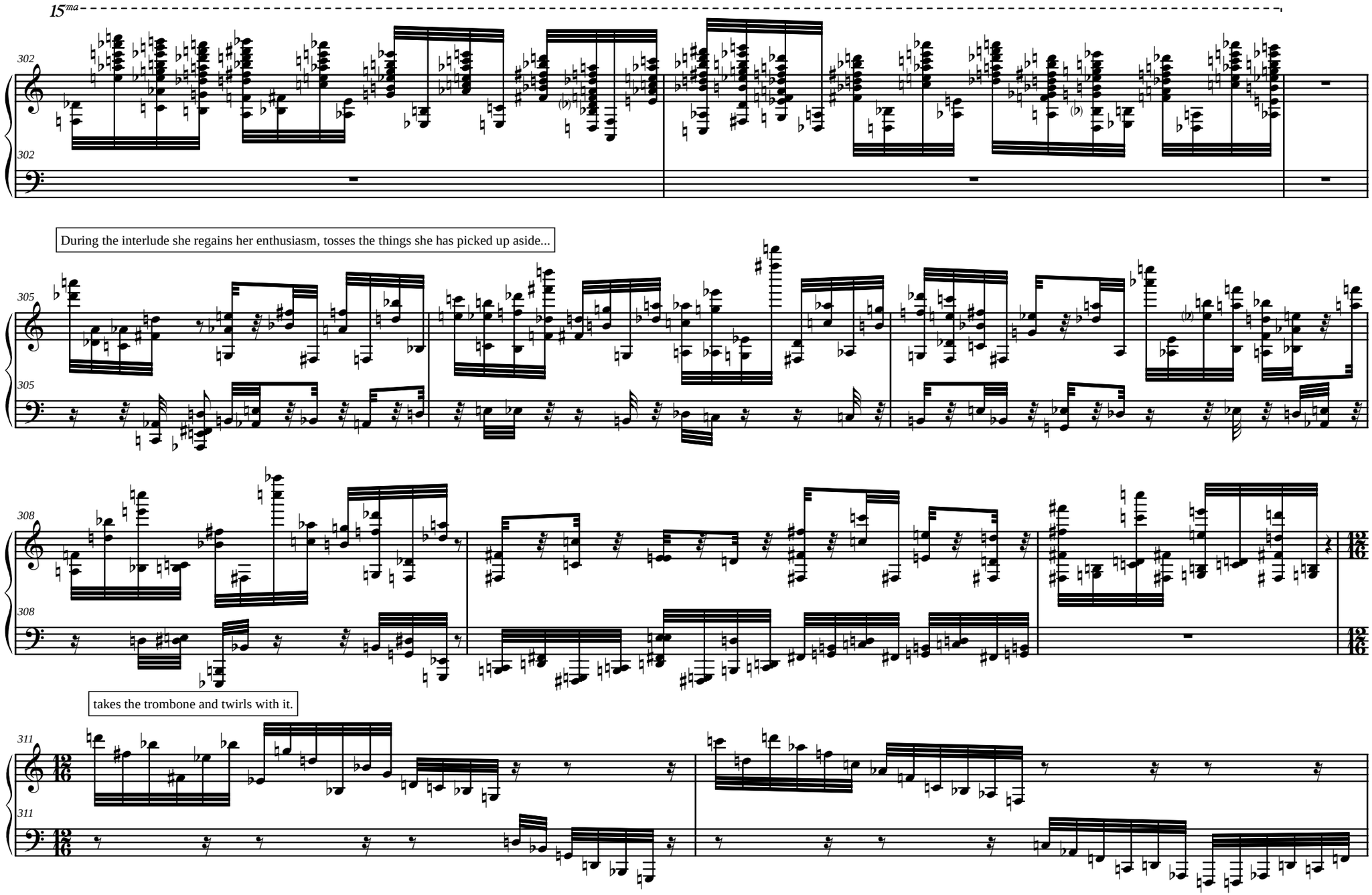


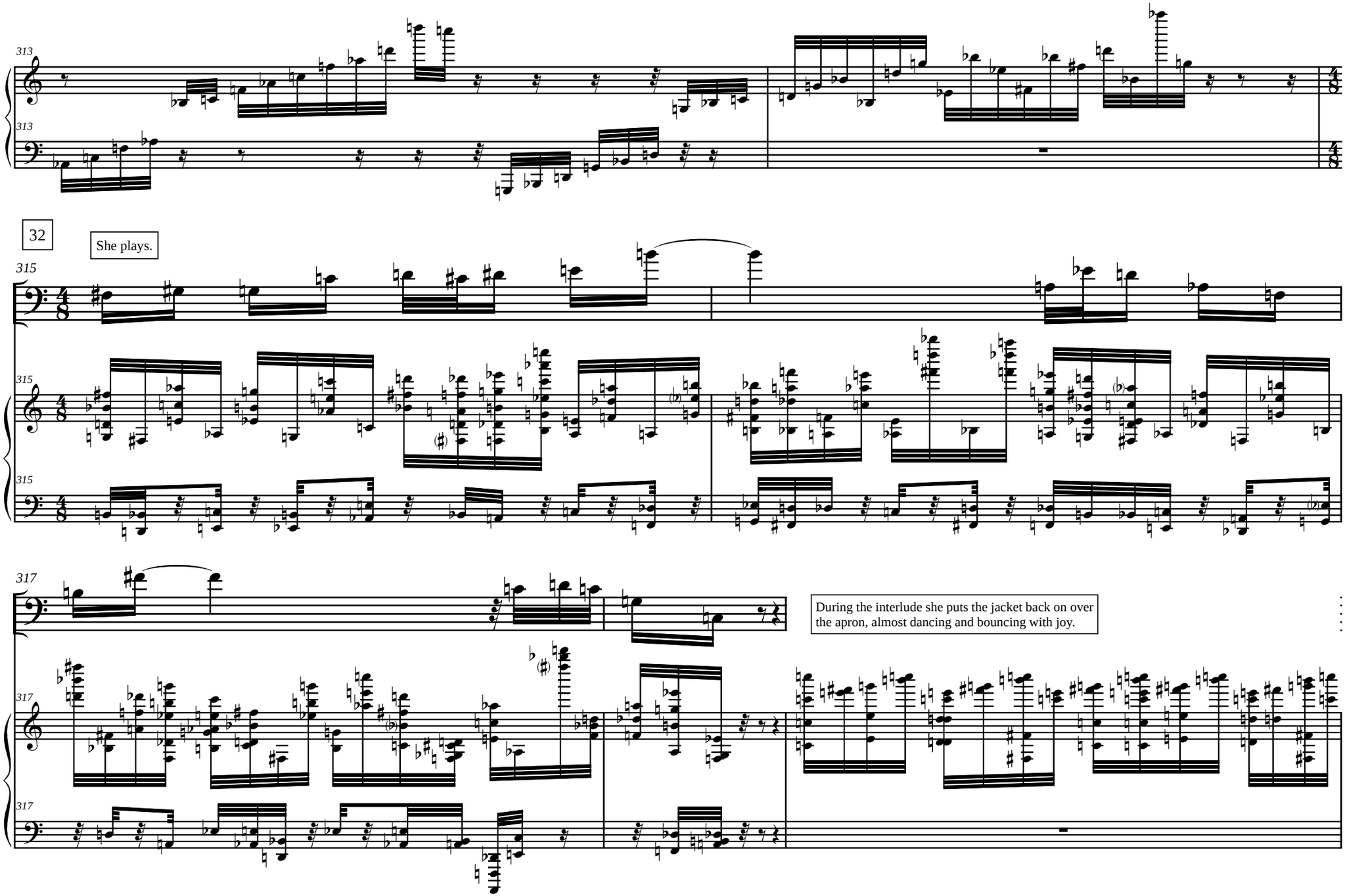

During the interlude she sets down the trombone, takes her apron straps in her thumbs with an...
...expression of discouragement and disgust, then goes to the box, removes the apron and puts it in the box.
She takes a whimsical concert jacket (e.g. black with red lapels,) goes to the mirror and looks in it, straightens her hair, conducts to the music for a moment.

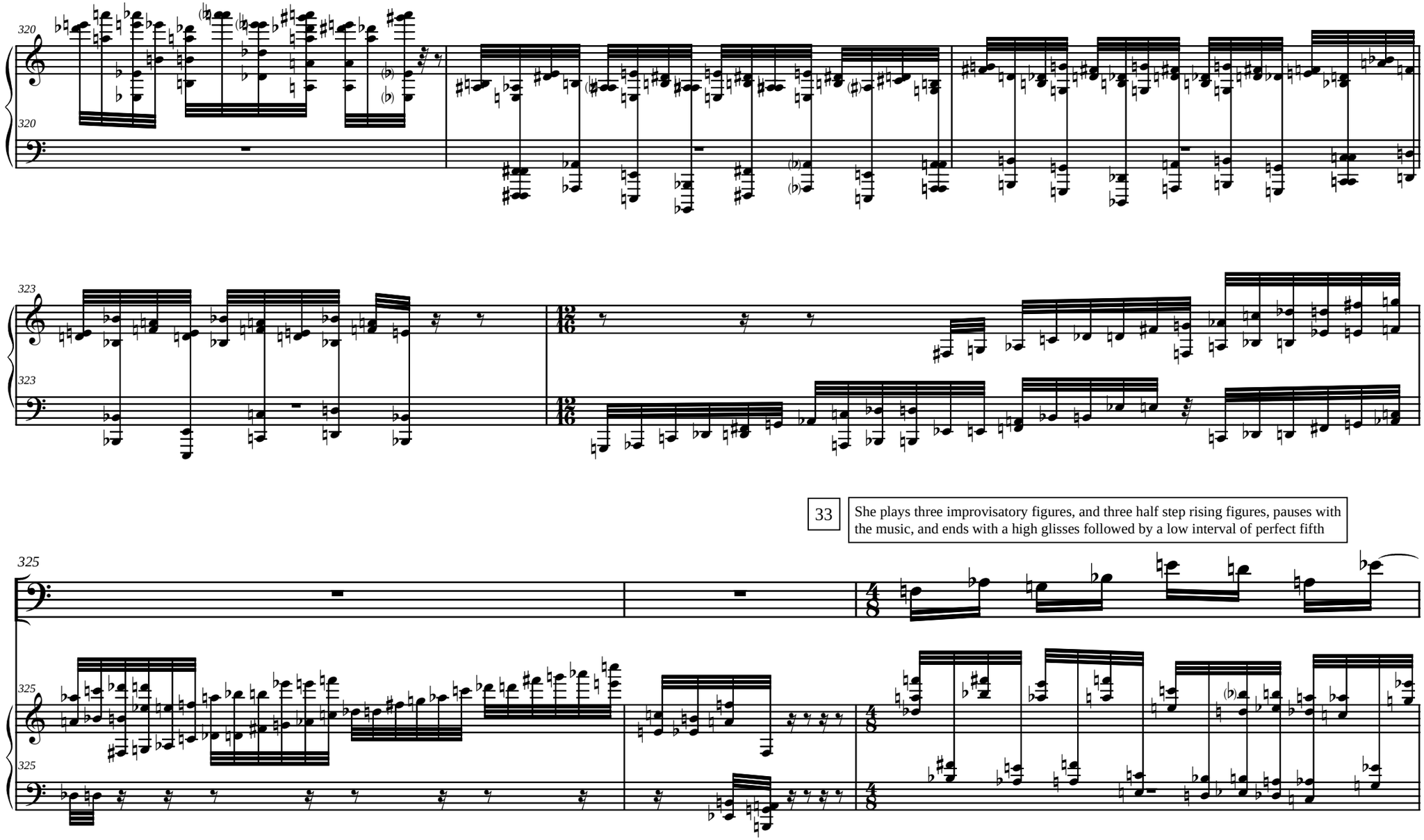

276
276
She takes her trombone.
She twirls with the music.
279
279
She gets ready to play.
27
She plays.
281
281
f

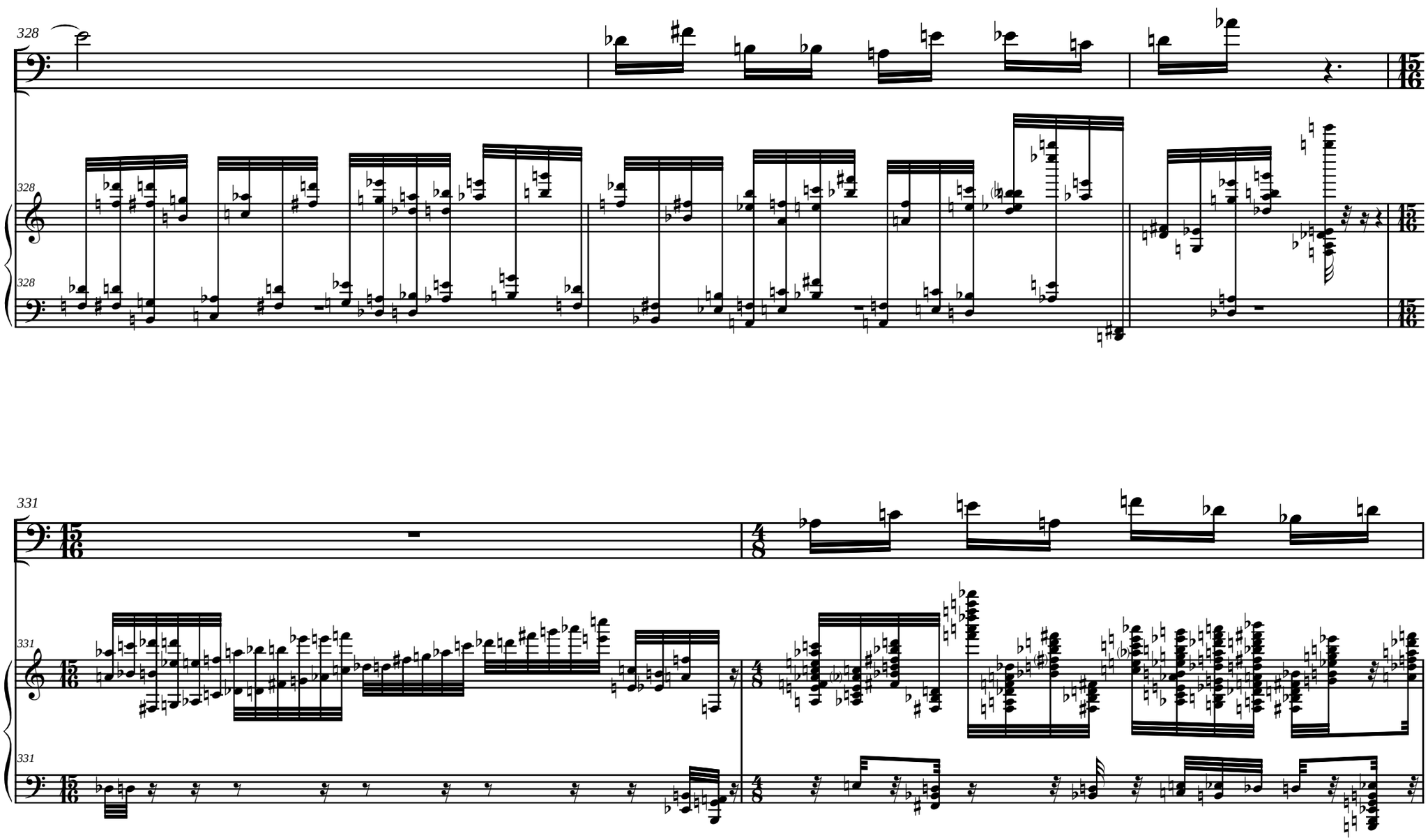

gliss.
284
284
284
287
287
287
8va
290
28
She twirls and prepares to play.
290
290
8va
8va
8va
f
6

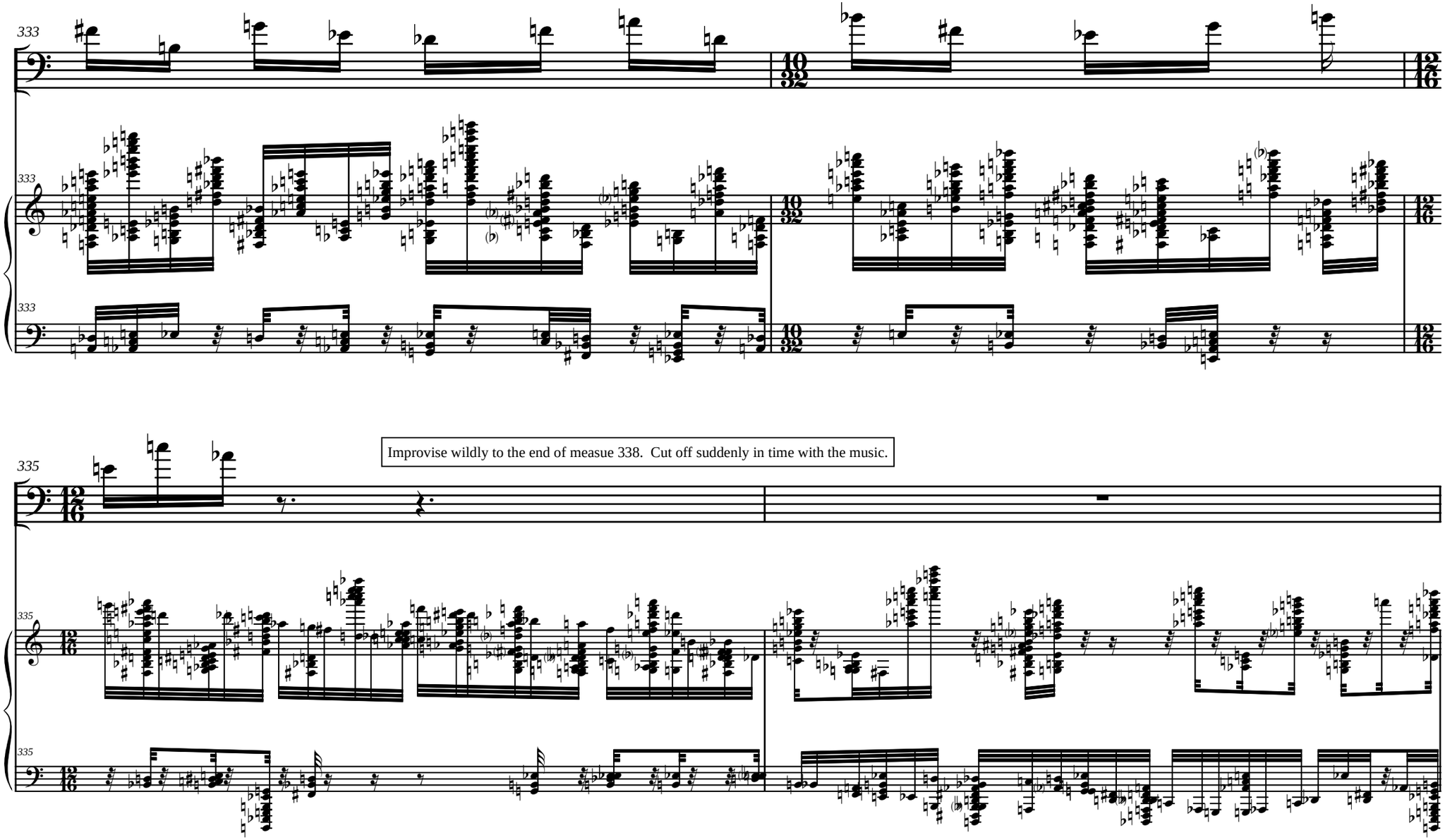

During the final run of the section she raises her arms, fully extended, to a victory pose which is met only by silence. She remains in that pose, discretely glancing about in uncertainty.
29
She slowly lowers her arms during the interlude.
30
31
She grudgingly and sadly takes off the jacket, puts it on the table, gets the apron and puts it back on, and starts to pick things up.

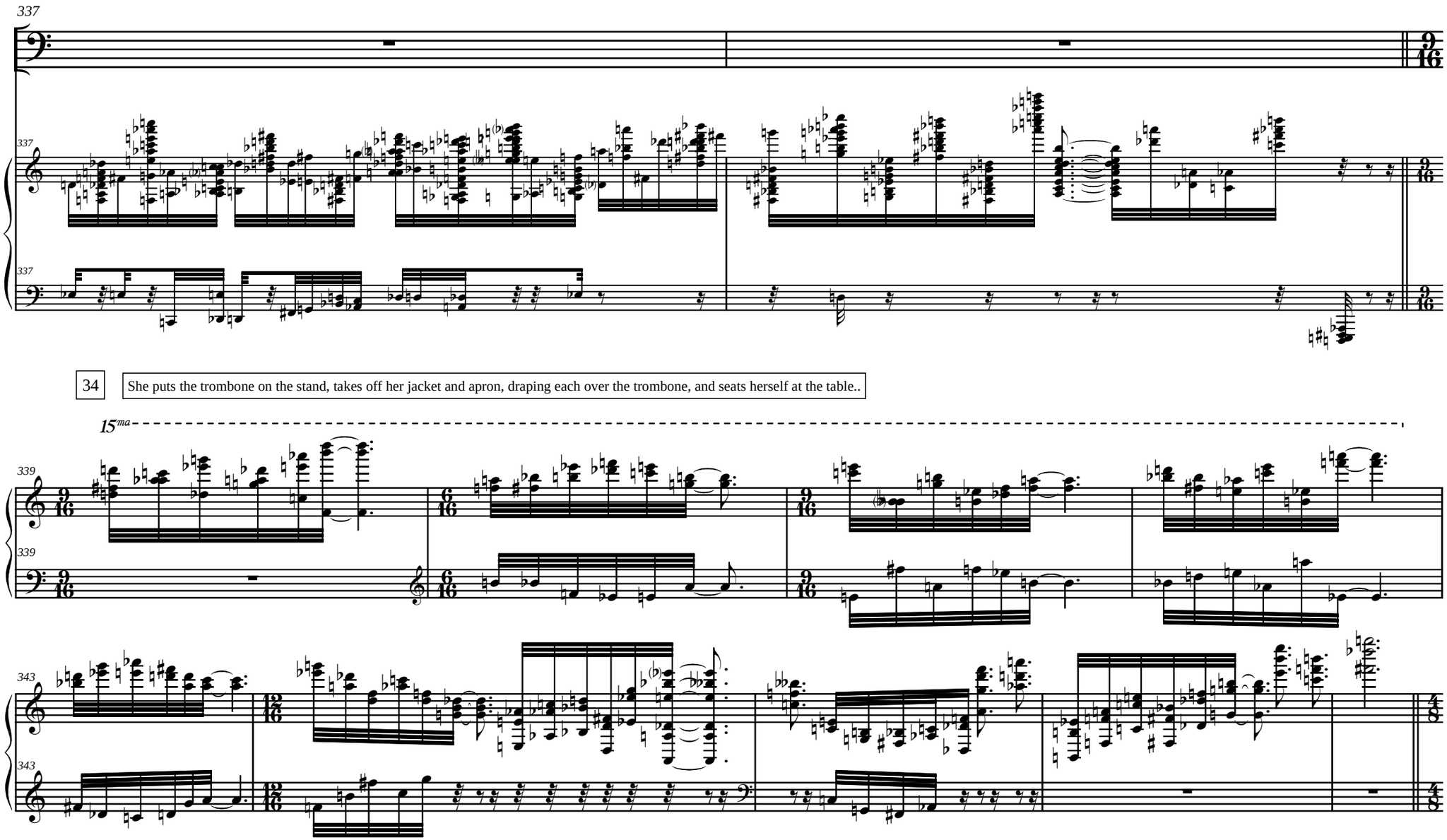

15ma
302
302
During the interlude she regains her enthusiasm, tosses the things she has picked up aside...
305
305
308
308
takes the trombone and twirls with it.
311
311

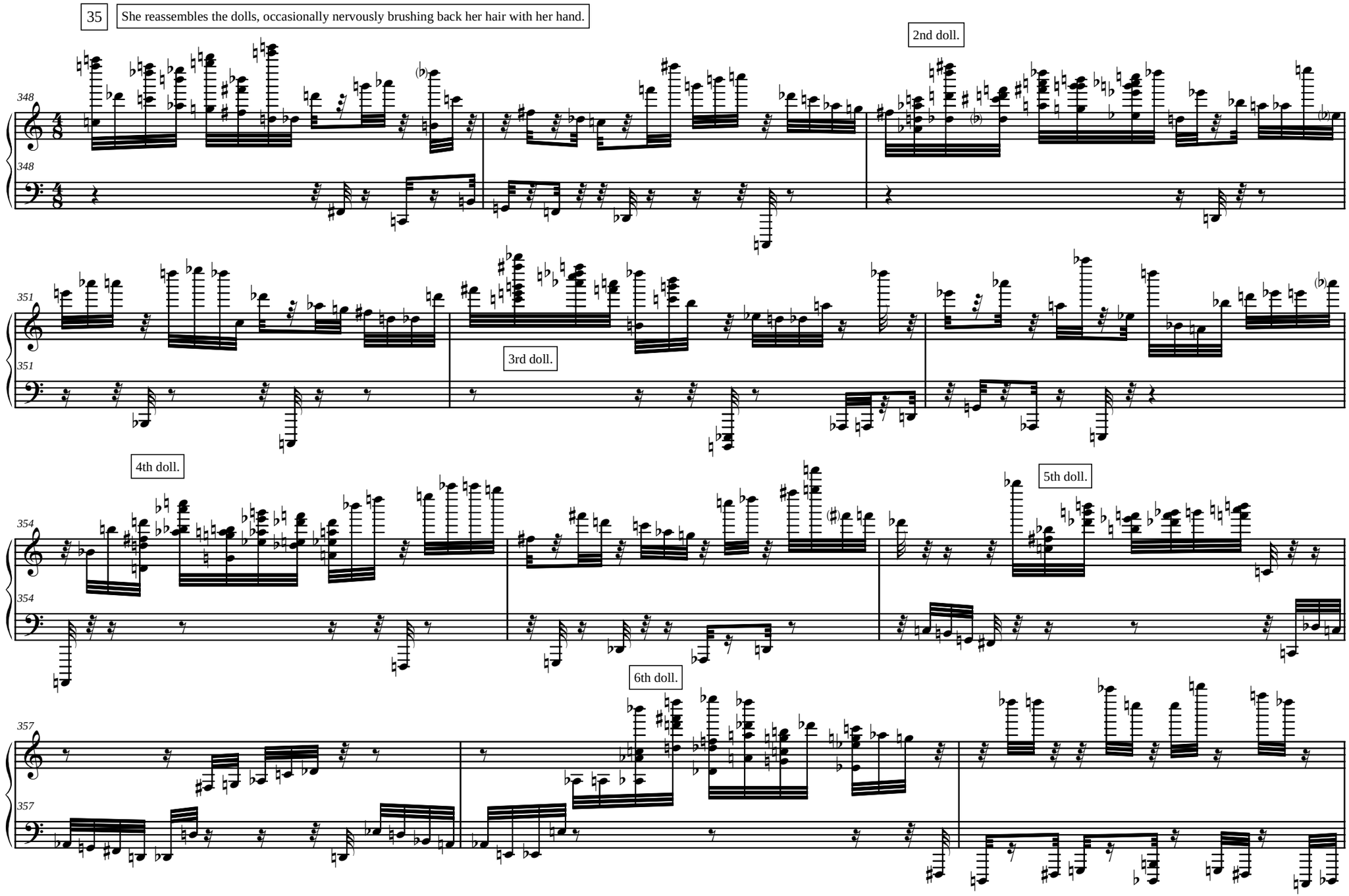

313
313
32
She plays.
315
315
315
317
317
317
During the interlude she puts the jacket back on over the apron, almost dancing and bouncing with joy.

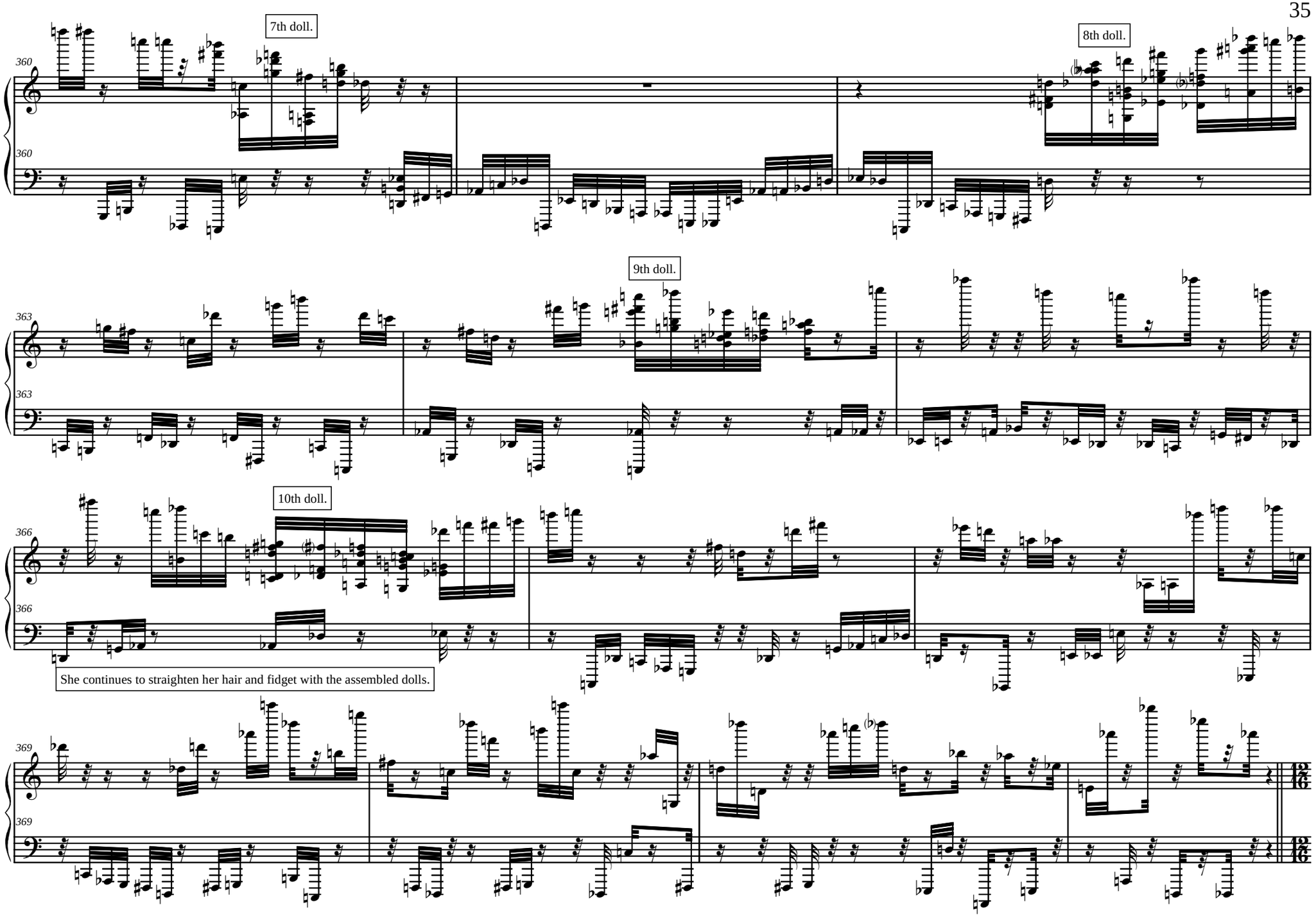

320
320
323
323
325
325
325
33
She plays three improvisatory figures, and three half step rising figures, pauses with the music, and ends with a high glisses followed by a low interval of perfect fifth


328
328
328
331
331
331


333
333
333
Improvise wildly to the end of measue 338. Cut off suddenly in time with the music.
335
335
335


337
337
337
9/16
34
She puts the trombone on the stand, takes off her jacket and apron, draping each over the trombone, and seats herself at the table..
15ma
339
339
343
343
4/8


35
She reassembles the dolls, occasionally nervously brushing back her hair with her hand.
2nd doll.
3rd doll.
4th doll.
5th doll.
6th doll.
348
351
354
357


7th doll.
8th doll.
9th doll.
10th doll.
She continues to straighten her hair and fidget with the assembled dolls.

36 She goes to the box,

373

373

rummages for a bottle of pills, returns to the table with them, puts a handful of the pills in the glass on the table, pours water into the glass from the pitcher, twirls the glass to stir them.

375

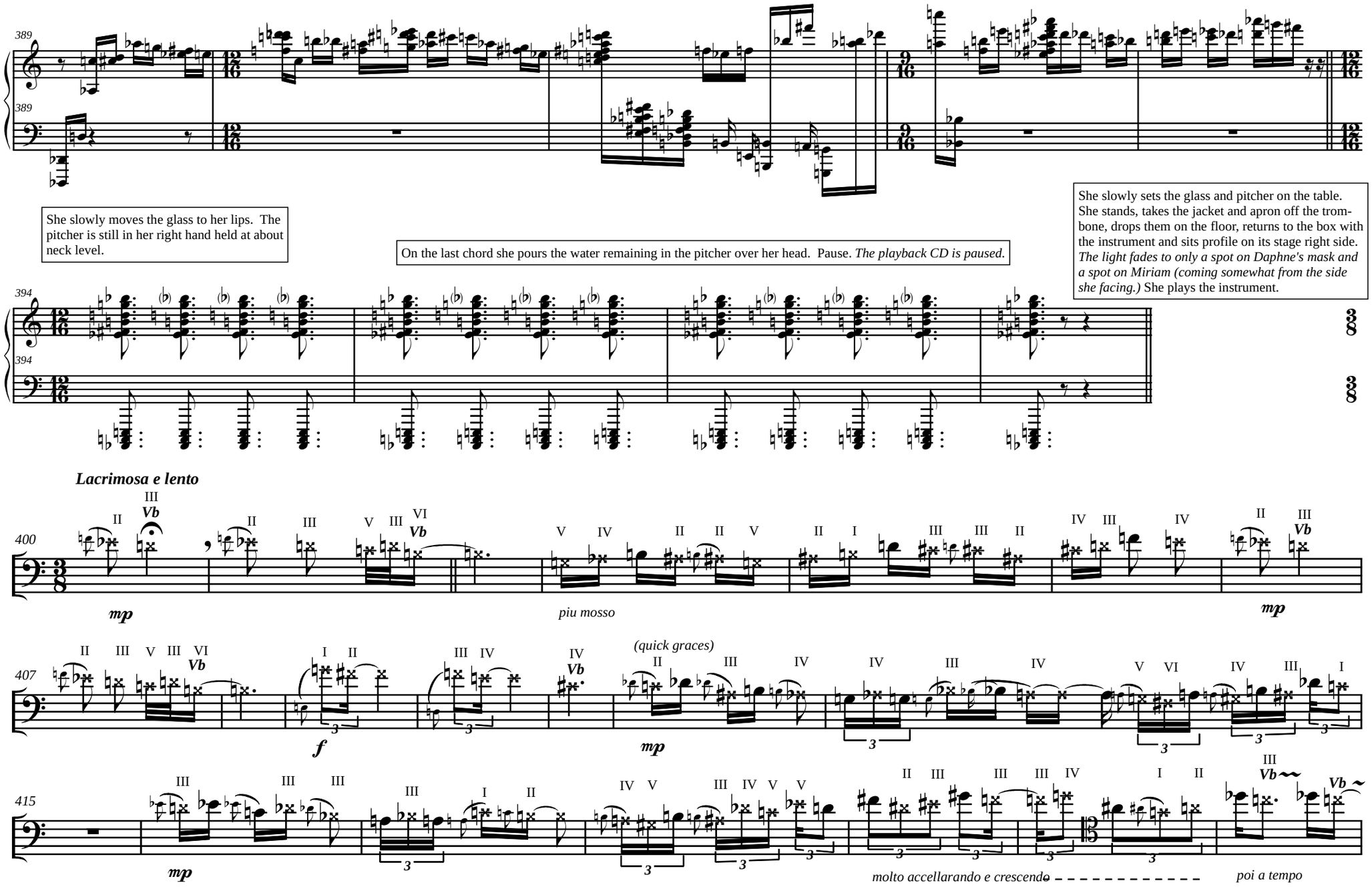
375

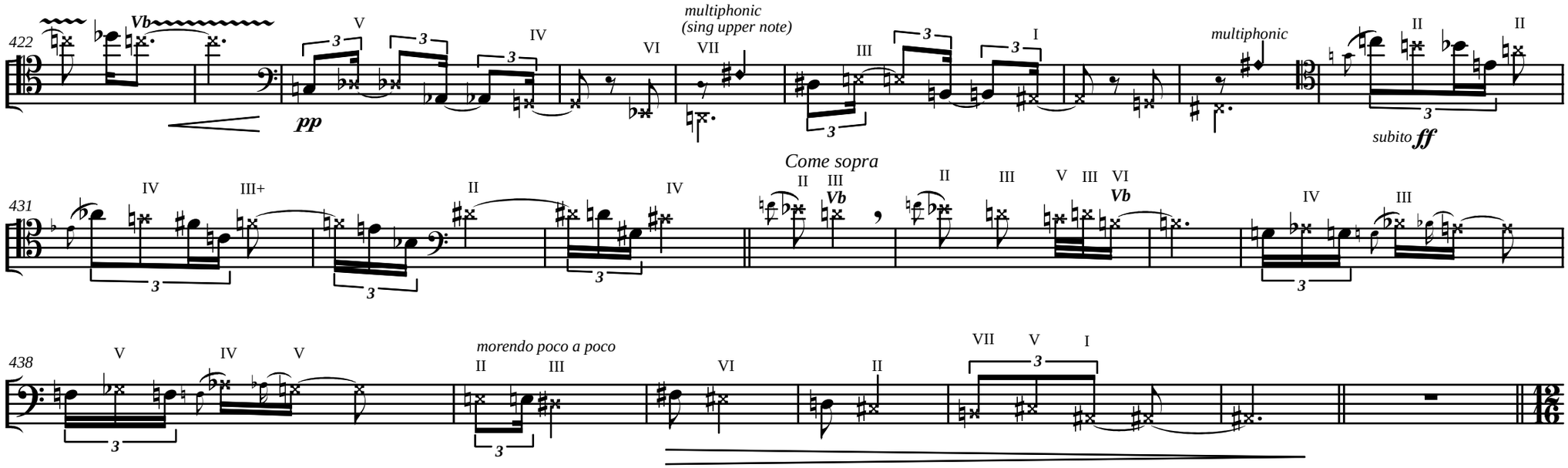
380

380

384

384


389
389
She slowly moves the glass to her lips. The pitcher is still in her right hand held at about neck level.
On the last chord she pours the water remaining in the pitcher over her head. Pause. *The playback CD is paused.*
She slowly sets the glass and pitcher on the table. She stands, takes the jacket and apron off the trombone, drops them on the floor, returns to the box with the instrument and sits profile on its stage right side. *The light fades to only a spot on Daphne's mask and a spot on Miriam (coming somewhat from the side she facing.)* She plays the instrument.
394
394
Lacrimosa e lento
400
mp
piu mosso
mp
407
f
(quick graces)
mp
415
mp
molto accellarando e crescendo
poi a tempo

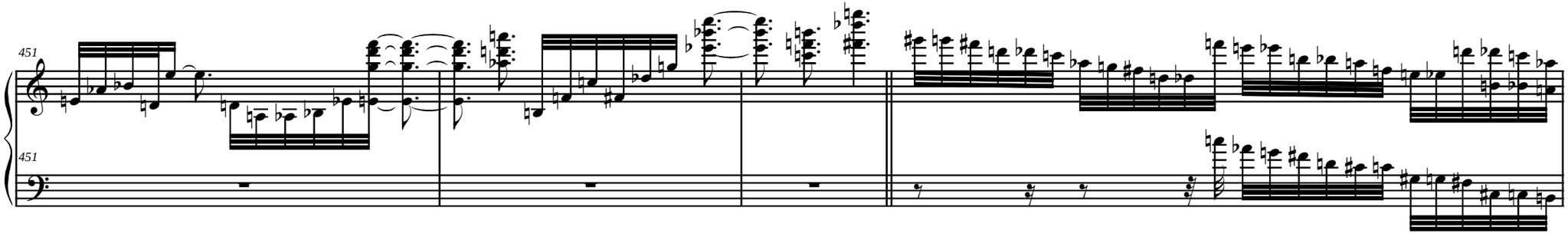


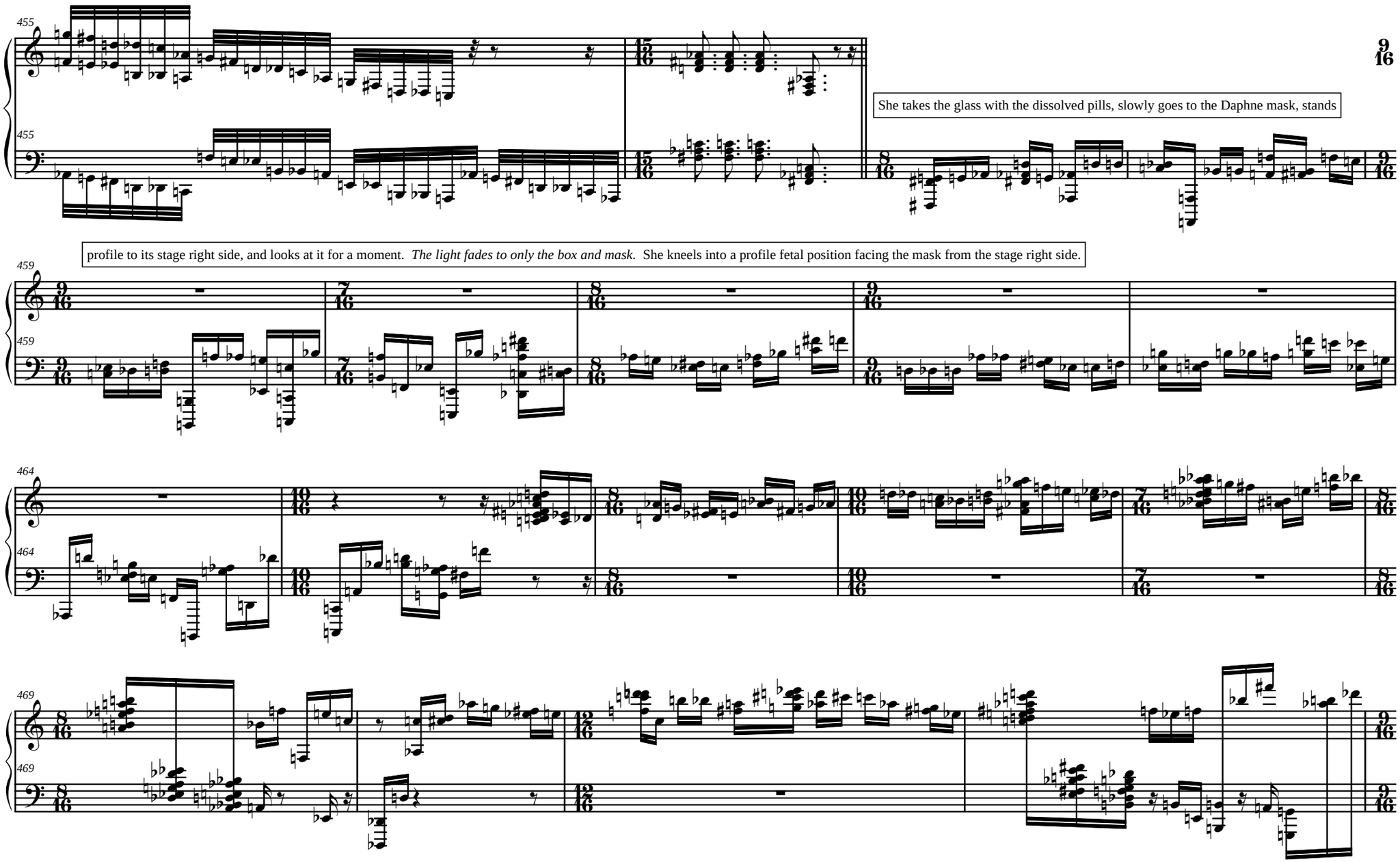
38

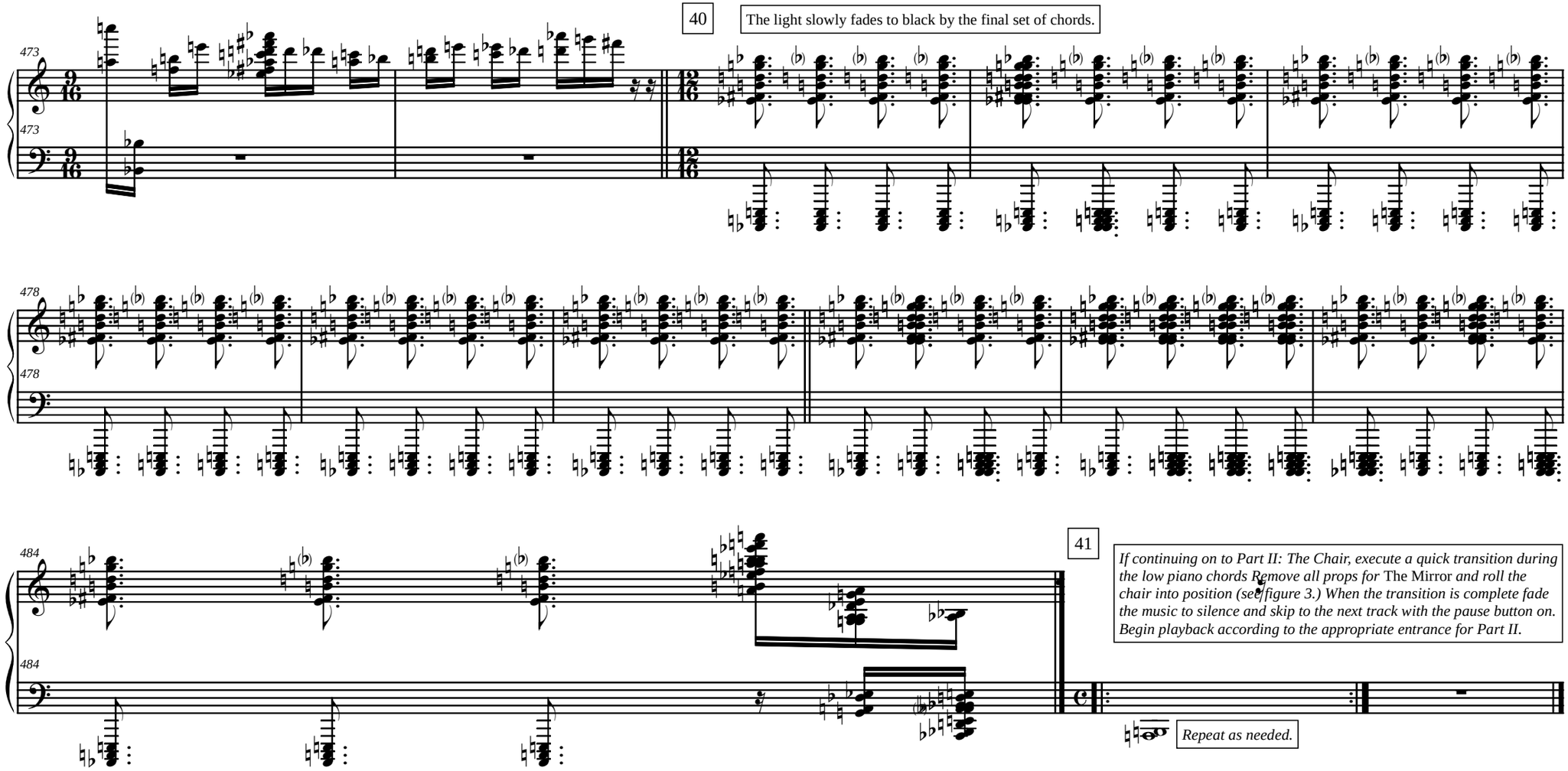
After the lament the piano music is resumed and the general light slowly rises, but to a dimmer level than before. She places the trombone on its stand and seats herself at the table.

39

She tears a sheet of paper from the notebook, writes a short note and leaves it on the table.




455
She takes the glass with the dissolved pills, slowly goes to the Daphne mask, stands
profile to its stage right side, and looks at it for a moment. *The light fades to only the box and mask.* She kneels into a profile fetal position facing the mask from the stage right side.
459
464
469


40
The light slowly fades to black by the final set of chords.
473
478
484
41
If continuing on to Part II: The Chair, execute a quick transition during the low piano chords Remove all props for The Mirror and roll the chair into position (see figure 3.) When the transition is complete fade the music to silence and skip to the next track with the pause button on. Begin playback according to the appropriate entrance for Part II.
Repeat as needed.