Peter McKenzie Armstrong

No!

trifle for piano solo

Opus 21

Edition Ottaviano Petrucci

NOTES

This work was inspired by J. H. Conway's cellular automaton game, "Life", specifically by a striking instance of the game illustrated in Martin Gardner's *The Colossal Book of Mathematics* (Norton, '01) via superimposition (p. 419) of the instance's initial and final states. From a meager row of dots along a single straight line, the pattern had evolved into a sparsely dotted rectangle spanning several thousand units, displaying absolute bilateral symmetry along both axes. All told, an image of growth, for a while promising but ultimately broken up and boxed in! I set about to realize the image as music.

A first step was choosing D4 as the center of pitch, thus invoking the keyboard mirror to incarnate, for the player physically, this image's intervallic symmetry. The game's initial configuration, the dot row, would be set to that pitch. A second task, mapping the rest of the position data to corresponding musical parameters (pitchwise the chro–matic scale, timewise a unit note value) was straightforward in itself, but left essential formal aspects unrealized. Thirdly, then, for a strict organic pitchwise modelling of the game's subpatterns, I pursued enharmonic respellings, making sure to take opposite tacks where inversion was involved. Fourthly, to provide rhythmic structure (without analogue in the game output) that could make its time–mapped proportions humanly performable, I improvised a scheme of meters highlighting the overall time reflection. Some implied voice divisions and a several stategic accents finished the job.

This title was my exclamation upon hearing the first draft. As no better name has yet suggested itself, I've settled on a tempo to match.

Re the extreme parenthesized notes in measures 5 & 13: a "page turner", standing at the pianist's back, may play all three outside pairs.

– PMA

Duration: ~22 seconds.

to Rebecca Raffaelli

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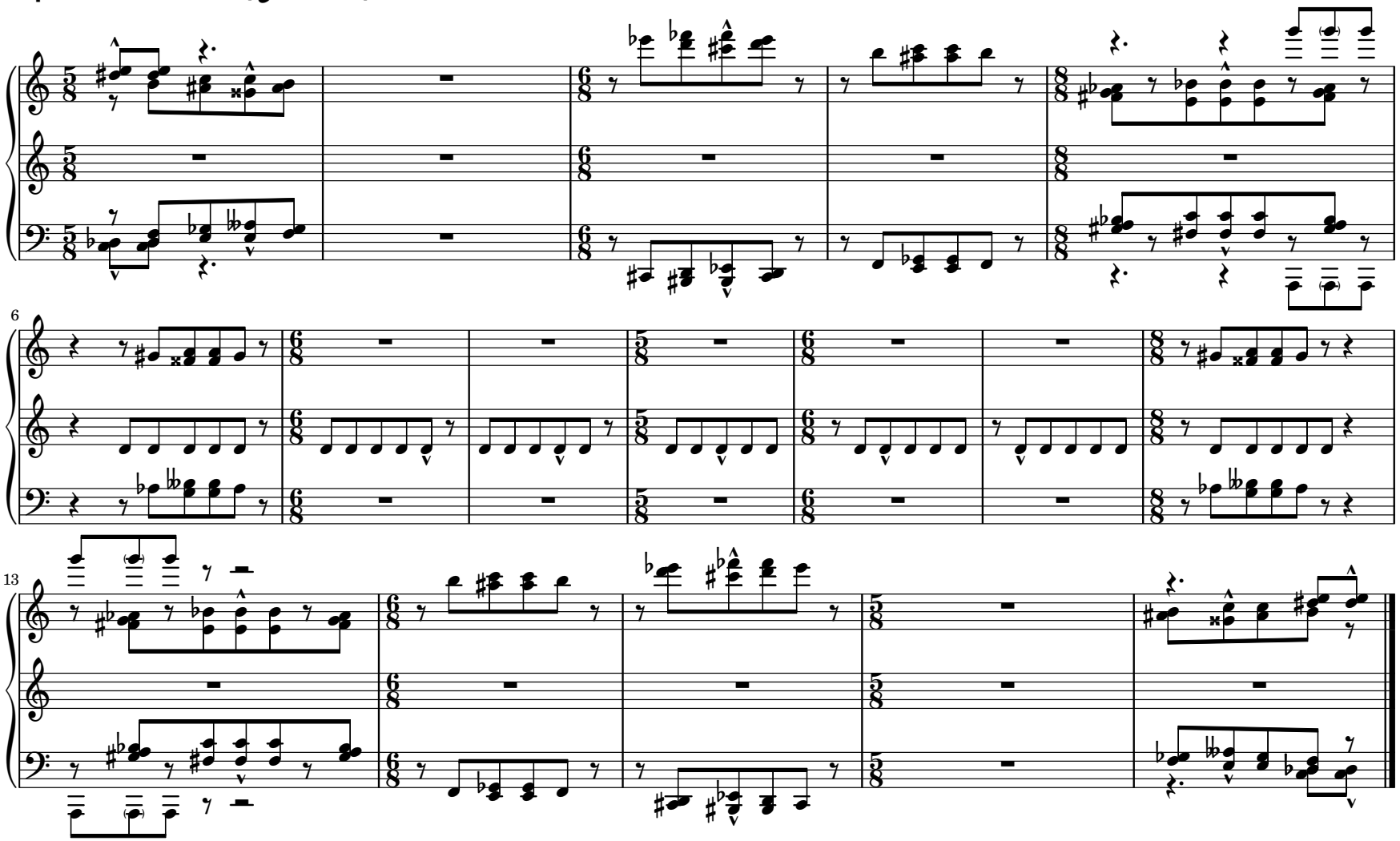
Spiccato frustrato (= 369)



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