

# SONATA #2

*for Bass Clarinet and Piano*

(2023)

JONATHAN RUSSELL

## SONATA #2 FOR BASS CLARINET AND PIANO

Duration: c. 17:30

by Jonathan Russell

I think of *Sonata #2 for Bass Clarinet and Piano* as a sort of exhale after the tumultuous Trump and Covid-19 years. During that time, I wrote a series of pieces responding pretty directly to external events – the Trump presidency, the covid-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This had not been typical of my artistic output previously, which was generally more abstract and non-programmatic. But something about the Trump years in particular made artistic engagement with the outside world feel unavoidable. *Sonata #2* – as the generic title implies – is in many ways a return to this less topical, more abstract approach to composing. There is no program behind the piece, and no issue or event it is consciously responding to. Now that the immediate crises of the pandemic and the Trump presidency are behind us, perhaps there is some space to breathe again, and to create art that is not so directly concerned with politics and human affairs.

However, if the piece *is* an exhale, it's a somewhat *anxious* one. The major issues of the past several years are hardly resolved. The after-effects of the pandemic linger, the war in Ukraine still rages, and Trump could very well be a year and a half away from another presidential term (or a prison term, or both). So while the piece is not consciously addressing anything outside of itself, and generally has a more relaxed, joyful vibe than my other recent works, there is lingering uncertainty as well. In each of the three movements, the same upbeat, pop-y chord progression gives way to darker, more sinister harmonies. And while each movement ends gently and serenely, it is with the sense of a lingering question rather than a resolution. Are we in the process of closing a dark chapter in our history? Or is this merely the calm before the much larger storm that is about to come crashing down on us? Only time will tell.

Musically, the first and third movements are energetic, groove-based, and influenced by pop music. In the first movement, the piano lays down the fierce, swinging groove, and the bass clarinet sings improvisatory lines above. In the third movement, it's the bass clarinet that lays down the grooves, with the piano adding color and shoring up the bass. The second movement is a different animal, meditative and serene, with a pronounced influence from the timeless slow movements of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. As it progresses, however, it becomes increasingly expressive and anguished, culminating in a searing high bass clarinet note over pounded dissonant piano chords, before ending with a gently melting coda.

The outer movements are best performed with the energetic, bold, confident drive of pop music, rather than with the classical refinement that many performers may be more accustomed to. Both bass clarinetists and pianists are strongly encouraged to listen to the audio mockup to get a sense of the feel and style, which is not possible to fully capture in musical notation. The mockup can be found here:

<https://on.soundcloud.com/ikAAU>

*Sonata #2 for Bass Clarinet and Piano* was generously commissioned by a consortium of 61 bass clarinetists. I am deeply grateful to every single one of them for believing in the vision of this piece and coming along on the journey. The members of the consortium are:

Amy Advocat, Andrea Vos-Rochefort, Andrew Greci, Andrew Rutten, Anthony Costa, Ben Freimuth, Bill Kirkley, Brian Almanza, Brian Corbin, Brian Gnojek, Bruce Abbott, Cameron Page, Celine Ferro, Christina Rawady, d'Art Richard, Dalton Ringey, Daniel Dorff, Elisabeth Stimpert, Elizabeth Bley, Gary Gorczyca, Gary Whitman, Georg Kühner, George Georgiou, Henry McNamara, Jacob Jackson, Jacques Pion, Jeff Anderle, Jenny Ziefel, Jeremy Wohletz, Jessica Harrie, Jesus Olivares, Joanna Wiltshire, Joel Russell, John Harden, Johnny Engelke, Josh Woods, Joshua Gardner, Julie Stuckenschneider, Katherine Carleton, Katherine Ravenwood, Katie Rice, Kimberly Fullerton, Kristin Fray, Lara Mitofsky Neuss, Laura Ramsey Russell, Leonardo Palma, Lucas Gianini, Matthias Höfer, Nicholas Chesemore, Noah Stone, Rachel Jones, Rongbing Shen, Rudy Rodriguez, Stefanie Gardner, Stephen White, Steven Henry, Tim Young, Timothy Hanley, Tyler Mazone, Wolcott Humphrey, and Yannick Joseph.

# Sonata #2 for Bass Clarinet and Piano

Commissioned by a consortium of 61 bass clarinetists

Jonathan Russell

**I. Confidently grooving** ♩ = 144

Bass Clarinet

Piano

*mf*

B. Cl.

Pno.

B. Cl.

Pno.

**A**

*mf singing*

B. Cl.

Pno.

11

B. Cl.

Pno.

15

B. Cl.

Pno.

19

B. Cl.

Pno.

22

B. Cl. **B** 25 *f*

Pno. **B** 25 *f*

B. Cl. 29

Pno. 29

B. Cl. 32

Pno. 32



B. Cl. 35

Pno. 35

B. Cl.   
Pno.   
*mp* a bit more gentle and lyrical

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

B. Cl. 52

Pno. 52

Detailed description: This system covers measures 52 to 54. The Bass Clarinet part (top staff) features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and some slurs. The Piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) consists of chords and moving lines in both the right and left hands, with some slurs and dynamic markings.

B. Cl. 55

Pno. 55

Detailed description: This system covers measures 55 to 57. The Bass Clarinet part continues with a melodic line, including a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and a box containing the letter 'D'. The Piano accompaniment includes a dynamic marking of *f* and a box containing the letter 'D'. There are also slurs and phrasing marks in both parts.

B. Cl. 58

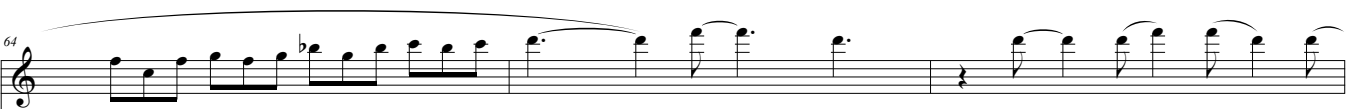
Pno. 58

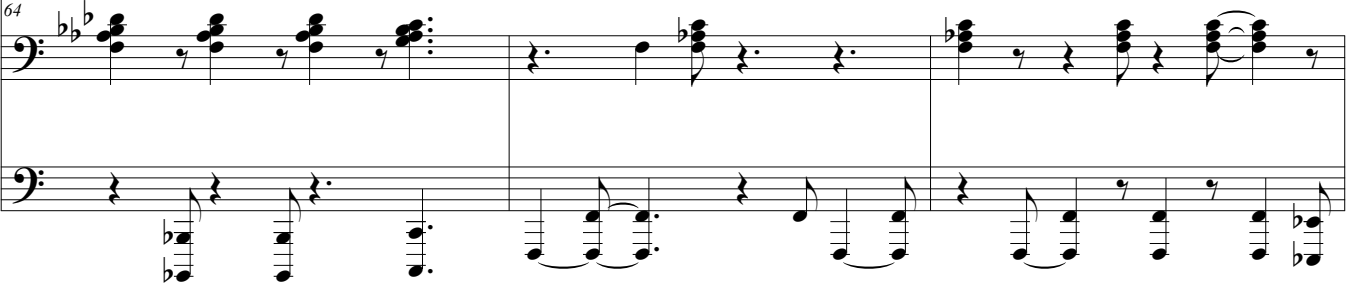
Detailed description: This system covers measures 58 to 60. The Bass Clarinet part has a melodic line with slurs. The Piano accompaniment features a more active bass line with eighth notes and chords, with slurs and phrasing marks.

B. Cl. 61

Pno. 61

Detailed description: This system covers measures 61 to 63. The Bass Clarinet part has a melodic line with slurs. The Piano accompaniment continues with a rhythmic bass line and chords, with slurs and phrasing marks.


B. Cl. 


Pno. 


B. Cl. 

Pno. 

B. Cl. 

Pno. 

B. Cl. 

Pno. 



B. Cl. 77

Pno. 77

This system covers measures 77 to 79. The Bass Clarinet part (top staff) features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, often beamed together. The Piano part (bottom two staves) provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both the left and right hands.

B. Cl. 80

Pno. 80

This system covers measures 80 to 82. The Bass Clarinet part continues with a similar melodic texture. The Piano part features more complex chordal structures and rhythmic patterns.

B. Cl. 83

Pno. 83

This system covers measures 83 to 85. The Bass Clarinet part shows some chromatic movement. The Piano part includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*, and features a crescendo hairpin.

B. Cl. 86

Pno. 86

This system covers measures 86 to 88. The Bass Clarinet part has a long, sustained note marked with a forte (**F**) dynamic. The Piano part continues with its harmonic accompaniment, also featuring a forte (**F**) dynamic marking.

B. Cl.

Pno.

Measures 90-92: The Bass Clarinet part features a melodic line with a long slur over measures 90-92. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the left hand and a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand.

B. Cl.

Pno.

Measures 93-95: The Bass Clarinet part continues with a melodic line. The piano accompaniment features chords in the left hand and a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand.

B. Cl.


Pno.


Measures 96-98: The Bass Clarinet part features a melodic line with a slur and a fourth fingering mark. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the left hand and a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand.


B. Cl.

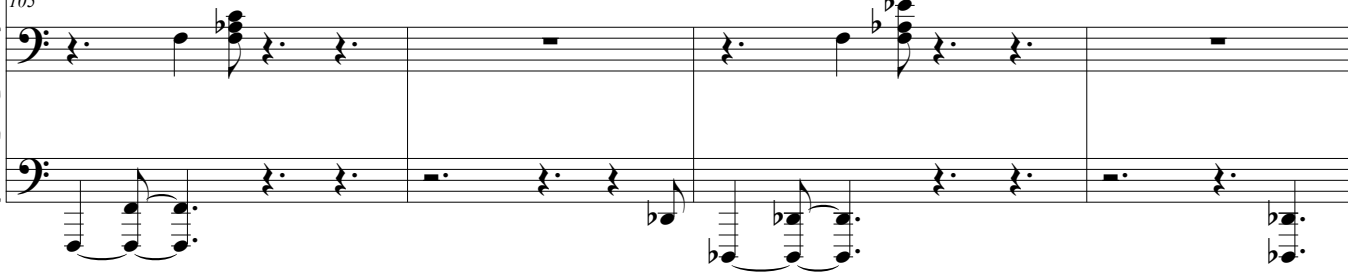
Pno.

Measures 99-101: The Bass Clarinet part features a melodic line with a slur. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the left hand and a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand.

B. Cl. 

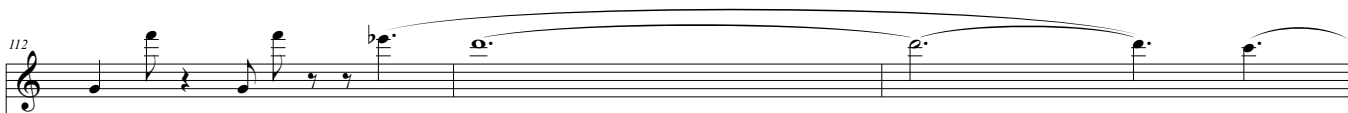
Pno. 

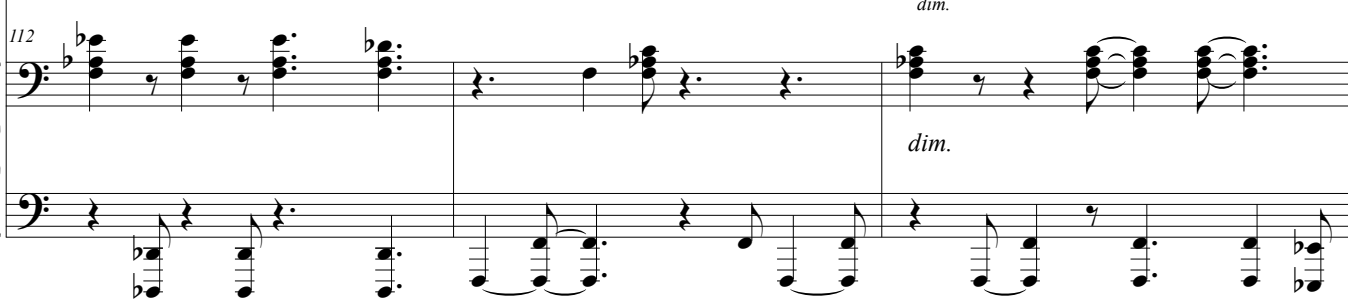
B. Cl. 

Pno. 

B. Cl. 

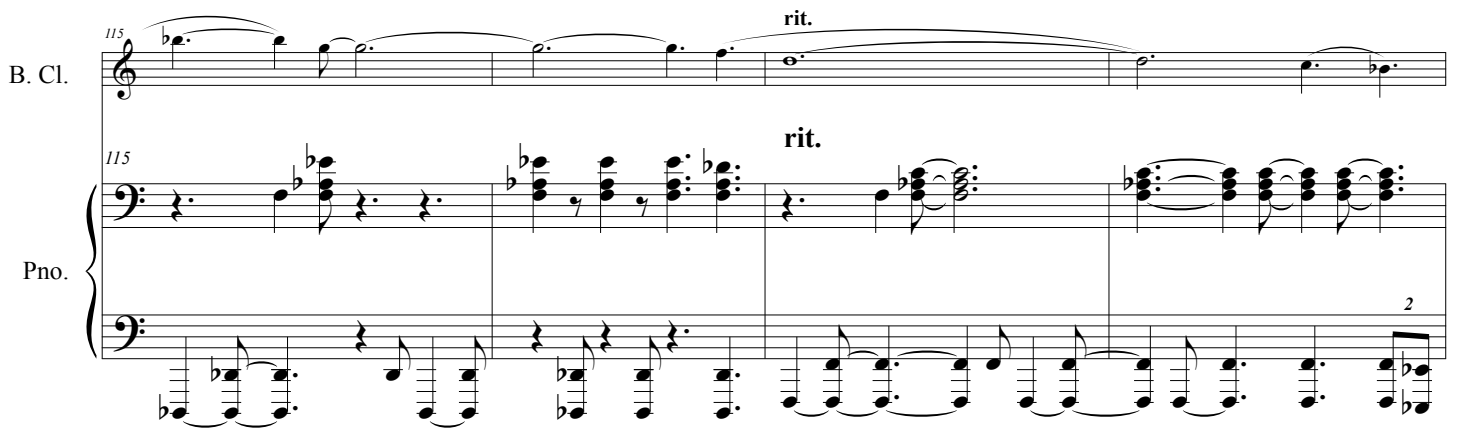
Pno. 

B. Cl. 

Pno. 

Sonata #2 for Bass Clarinet and Piano

B. Cl. *115* *rit.*



Pno.

B. Cl. *119*



Pno.

*8va*

*Pea.*

\*

**II. Meditative and dreamy** ♩ = 42

B. Cl.

Pno. **II. Meditative and dreamy** ♩ = 42 *let the harmonic changes drive the expressivity*

*p* *simile*

*ped.* \* *ped.* each harmony throughout

B. Cl.

*p* *gently expressive*

Pno.

B. Cl.

*mf* *start slow, speed up* (no tr.)

Pno.

B. Cl.

*f*

Pno.

*f* *mp*

B. Cl. *p*

Pno. *p*

B. Cl. poco rit. I a tempo *p piu espressivo*

Pno. poco rit. I a tempo *p piu espressivo*

B. Cl. *mf*

Pno. *mf*

B. Cl. *p*

Pno. *p*

B. Cl. *rit.* **J** *a tempo* *p*

Pno. *rit.* **J** *a tempo* *p*

B. Cl. *mp* *start slow, speed up* (no tr.) *p*

Pno. *mp* *p*

B. Cl. *poco rit.* **K** *a tempo* *p piu espressivo*

Pno. *poco rit.* **K** *a tempo* *p piu espressivo*

B. Cl. *cresc. poco a poco*

Pno. *cresc. poco a poco*

B. Cl. *f*

Pno. *f*

B. Cl.

Pno. *cresc.*

B. Cl. *fff* **L**

Pno. *fff* **L** *p*

B. Cl. *p*

Pno.

All trills: start slow and gradually speed up



B. Cl. *199* *(no tr.)*

Pno.

B. Cl. *202* *poco rit.* *a tempo* *pp*

Pno.

B. Cl. *208* *rit.*

Pno.

III. Confidently grooving ♩ = 167

B. Cl. *f*

Pno.

B. Cl.

Pno. *mf*

M

B. Cl.

Pno.

B. Cl.

Pno.

B. Cl. <sup>231</sup>

Pno.

B. Cl. <sup>236</sup>


Pno.


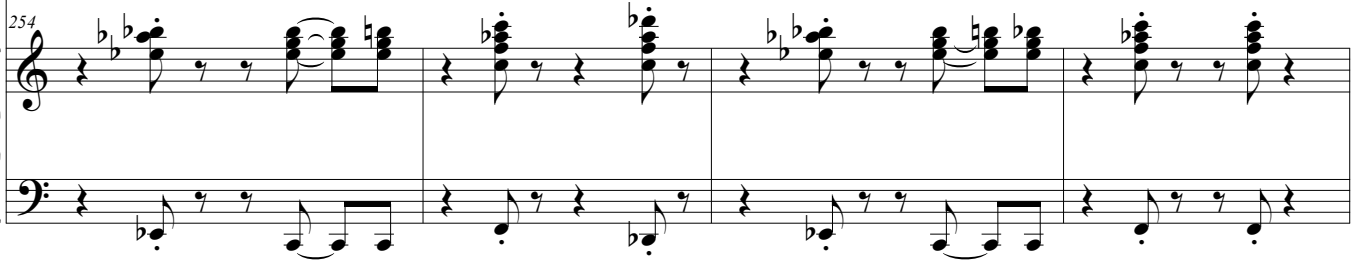
B. Cl. <sup>241</sup>


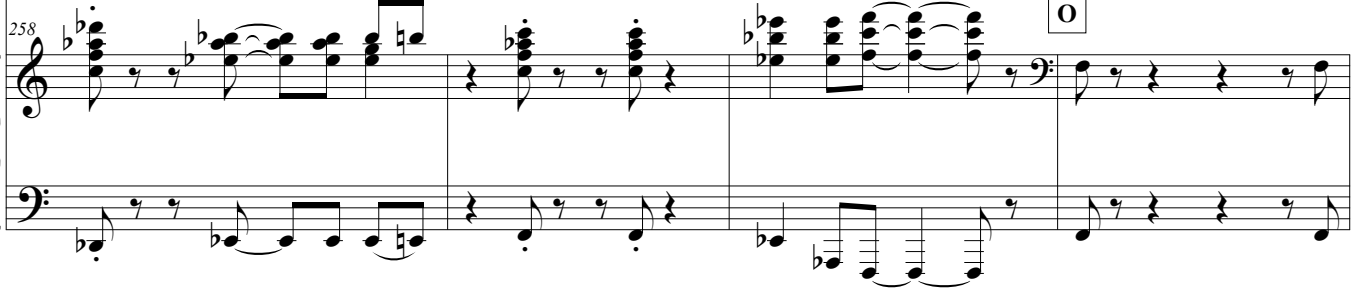
Pno.

B. Cl. <sup>245</sup> **f**

Pno. **f**

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

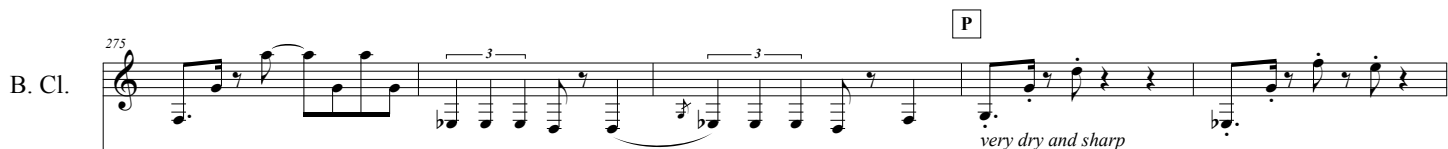
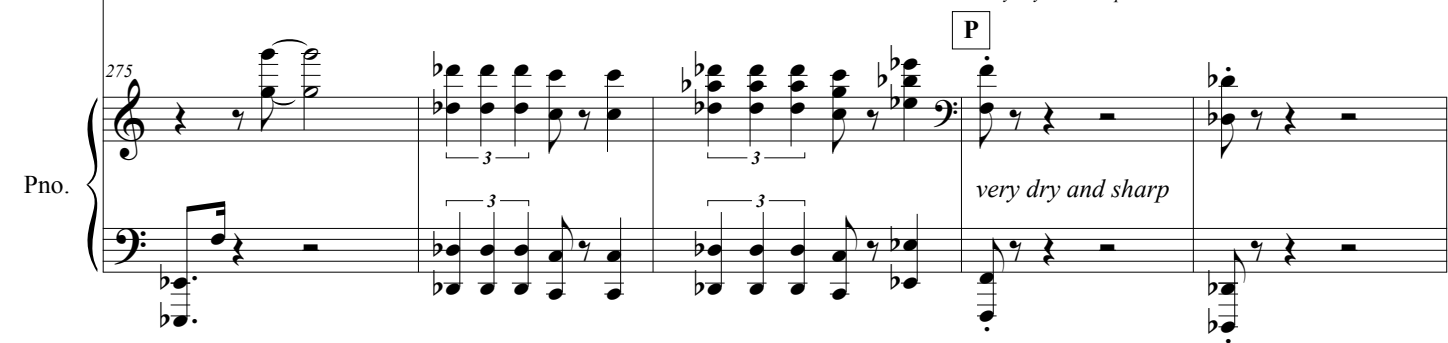
B. Cl.   
Pno. 

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

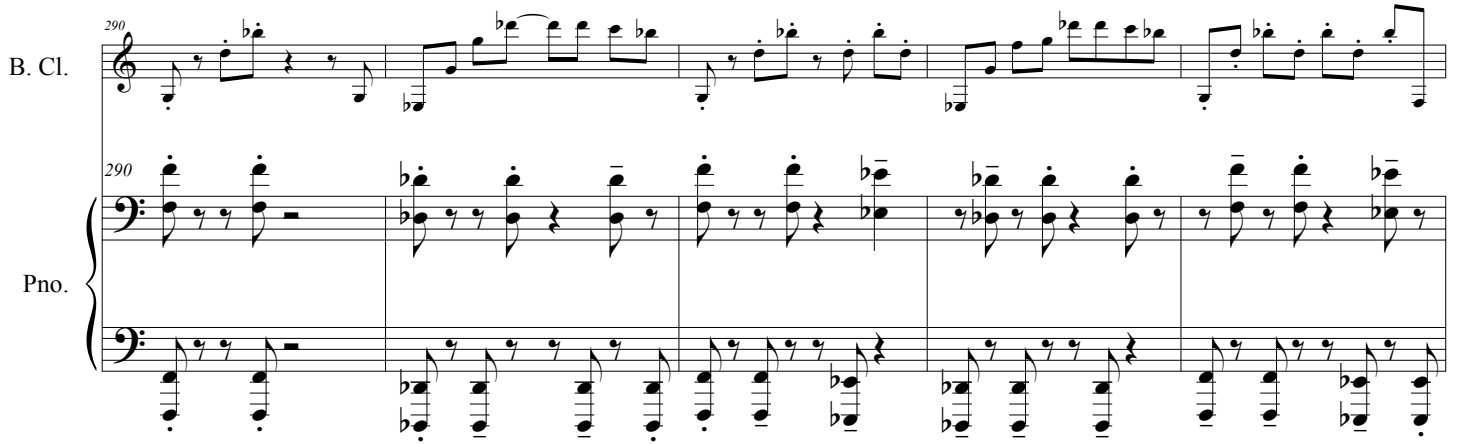
B. Cl.  Pno. 

B. Cl.  Pno. 

B. Cl.  Pno.   
*very dry and sharp*

B. Cl.  Pno. 

B. Cl. 

B. Cl. 

B. Cl. 

B. Cl. 

B. Cl. R

Pno.

B. Cl.

Pno.

B. Cl.

Pno.


B. Cl. S

Pno. S

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

B. Cl.   
Pno. 

B. Cl.   
Pno. 



B. Cl. <sup>339</sup>

Pno.

This system contains measures 339 to 342. The Bass Clarinet part features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, some with slurs. The Piano accompaniment consists of a right-hand part with chords and eighth notes, and a left-hand part with a steady eighth-note bass line.

B. Cl. <sup>343</sup>

Pno.

This system contains measures 343 to 346. The Bass Clarinet part continues with a similar melodic pattern. The Piano accompaniment maintains its harmonic structure with chords and a consistent bass line.

B. Cl. <sup>347</sup>

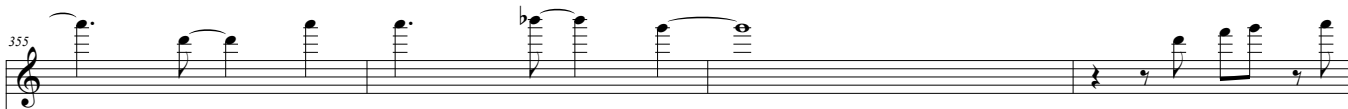
Pno.

This system contains measures 347 to 350. The Bass Clarinet part shows a slight change in melodic contour. The Piano accompaniment continues with its characteristic chordal and bass-line texture.

B. Cl. <sup>351</sup>

Pno.

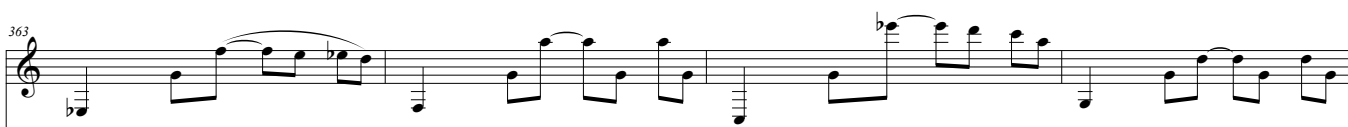
This system contains measures 351 to 354. The Bass Clarinet part concludes with a melodic phrase. The Piano accompaniment provides a steady harmonic and rhythmic foundation.

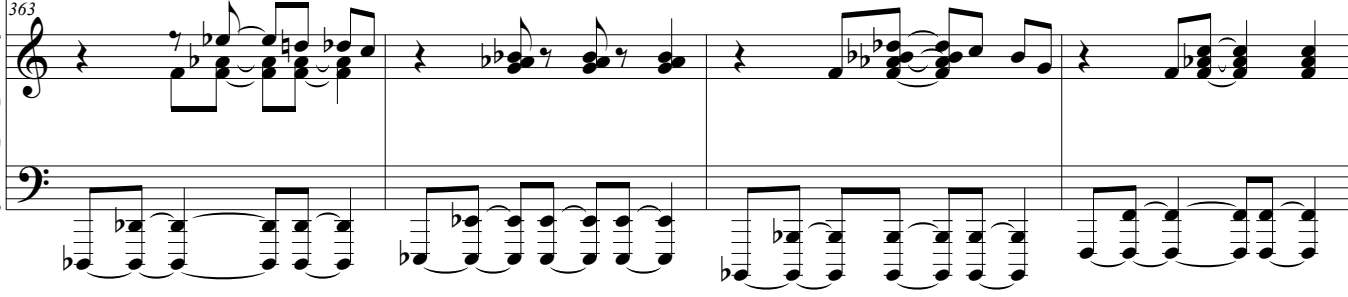
B. Cl. 


Pno. 

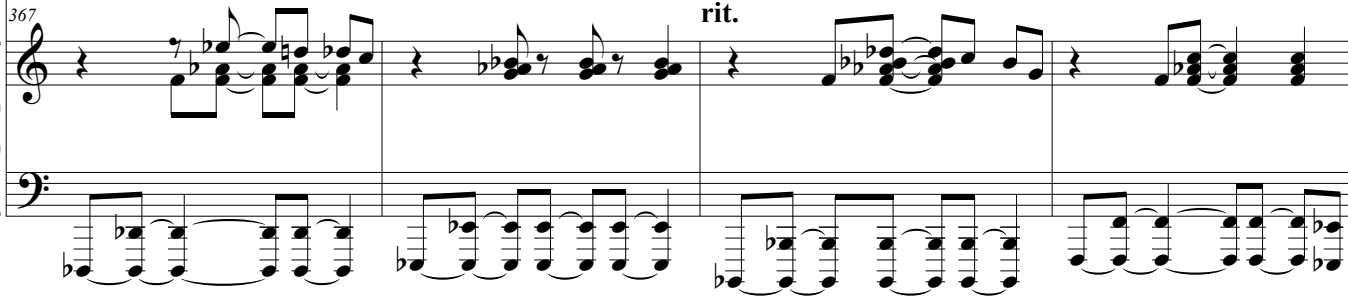
B. Cl. 

Pno. 

B. Cl. 

Pno. 

B. Cl. 

Pno. 

B. Cl. *molto rit.* V Slower ♩ = 78

Pno. *molto rit.* V Slower ♩ = 78

B. Cl.

Pno.

B. Cl. *rit.*

Pno. *rit.*

B. Cl. W Slower still ♩ = 66 *mp dim.*

Pno. W Slower still ♩ = 66 *mp dim.*

B. Cl. *rit.* *a tempo*

Pno. *rit.* *a tempo* *p*

*And.*

B. Cl. *rit.*

Pno. *rit.*

