Der Todesreigen
Holocaust Remembrance Suite

Moon Landscape, 1942-44, Theresienstadt
Yad Vashem, Art Museum Collection

Stephan Beneking & Hal Freedman

Berlin/Philadelphia, 2013

Introduction

It is the artists duty to remind and remember.
"We will not be silent"
(quote from The White Rose)

This Suite for solo piano is an unique remembrance project, which has grown out of a collaboration between Stephan Beneking, composer based in Berlin, and pianist Hal Freedman from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Hal Freedman has been a solo recitalist at colleges, universities and various venues including the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. He is also a well-known piano teacher and respected recording artist.
halfreedmanpianist.com/

The innocence and beauty of pure piano classical music poses a stark contrast to the horrors of the Third Reich and the Holocaust.

Each piece in the Holocaust Remembrance Suite contains a vital message about the war crimes and atrocities of the past. Unfortunately, the message is applicable to conditons that persist in our world today. It is our sincere hope to raise social awareness of these problems through this important project.

The Suite is accompanied by dramatic videos showing images, which further tell the story behind each individual piece:
www.youtube.com/user/steveberlin0815
www.youtube.com/user/hmfreedman/featured

The 'Holocaust Remembrance Suite' can be downloaded as an album from BandCamp, iTunes, and many other platforms.

All proceeds will be donated to:
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, USA:
http://www.ushmm.org/
Yad Vashem, Israel:
http://www.yadvashem.org/
Aktion Sühnezeichen, Germany:
https://www.asf-ev.de/en/start.html
Die Anstifter, Germany:
http://www.die-anstifter.de/

You can also listen to the recordings for free here:
http://beneking.bandcamp.com/album/holocaust-remembrance-suite-charity-album

The booklet can be downloaded for free here:
http://www.beneking.com/hrs

Picture on Frontpage:
"Moon Landscape" by Petr Ginz (February 1, 1928 September 28, 1944). His drawing and his "Prague diary" became world famous after the drawing perished in the 2003 Columbia space shuttle tragedy. The drawing had been taken along on the voyage by Israeli astronaut Colonel Ilan Ramon.

Compositions: Stephan Beneking
Recordings: Hal Freedman
Spoken introduction: Stephan Beneking
Booklet: Stephan Beneking & Hal Freedman

Brennende Bücher
Burning Books

On the 10th of May 1933, 80 years ago, Nazi student organizations burned tens of thousands of "un-German" books on the Opera place in Berlin. These book burnings took in many other German cities as well. The Nazis tried to extinguish and eradicate this part of German culture.

Among the hundreds of poets and writers, whose books were banned and burned, were Bertold Brecht, Albert Einstein, Heinrich Heine, Franz Kafka, Erich Kästner, Heinrich and Klaus Mann, Stefan Zweig and many others. Some authors were expatriated or even put into concentration camps (e.g. Carl von Ossietzky).

Heinrich Heine, one of the most famous German poets, wrote prophetically in 1821 (but referring to a burning of the Koran!):

"This is a prelude only, where they burn books, they will in the end also burn people."

The Burning of books has ocurred throughout history; unfortunately it still happens today.

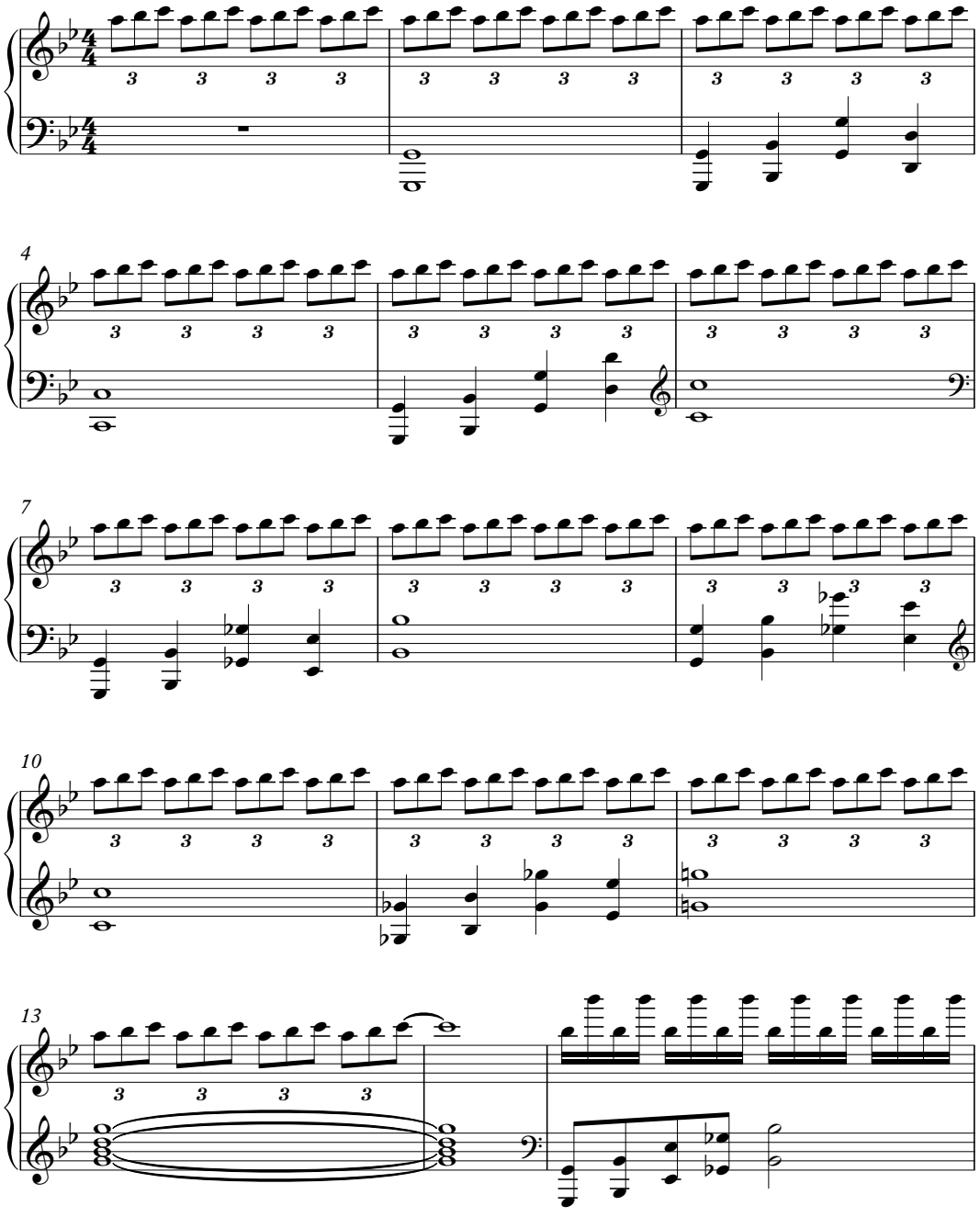
Wikipedia articles:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_book_burnings
http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bücherverbrennung_1933_in_Deutschland
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_authors_banned_during_the_Third_Reich

The composition:
It is difficult to capture in music such a frightening event as the burning of books.
The piece begins with the melody "A-B-C" in the right hand, "A-B-C" standing for the letters in the books.
This is followed by the middle section which consists of many "B-B" octave tremelos and repeating octaves, which stand for the B-urning of the B-ooks.
In the final section, the dark G-minor tonality resolves to the brighter G-major tonality in order to illustrate hope: that the book burning was not successful, and the books survived and exist today. We can still read all of them.

Brennende Bücher
Burning Books

Im Gedenken an die
Bücherverbrennung am 10. Mai 1933 auf dem Berliner Opernplatz
"Das war ein Vorspiel nur, dort wo man Bücher verbrennt,
verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen." - Heinrich Heine

Stephan Beneking
www.beneking.com
Berlin, 2013



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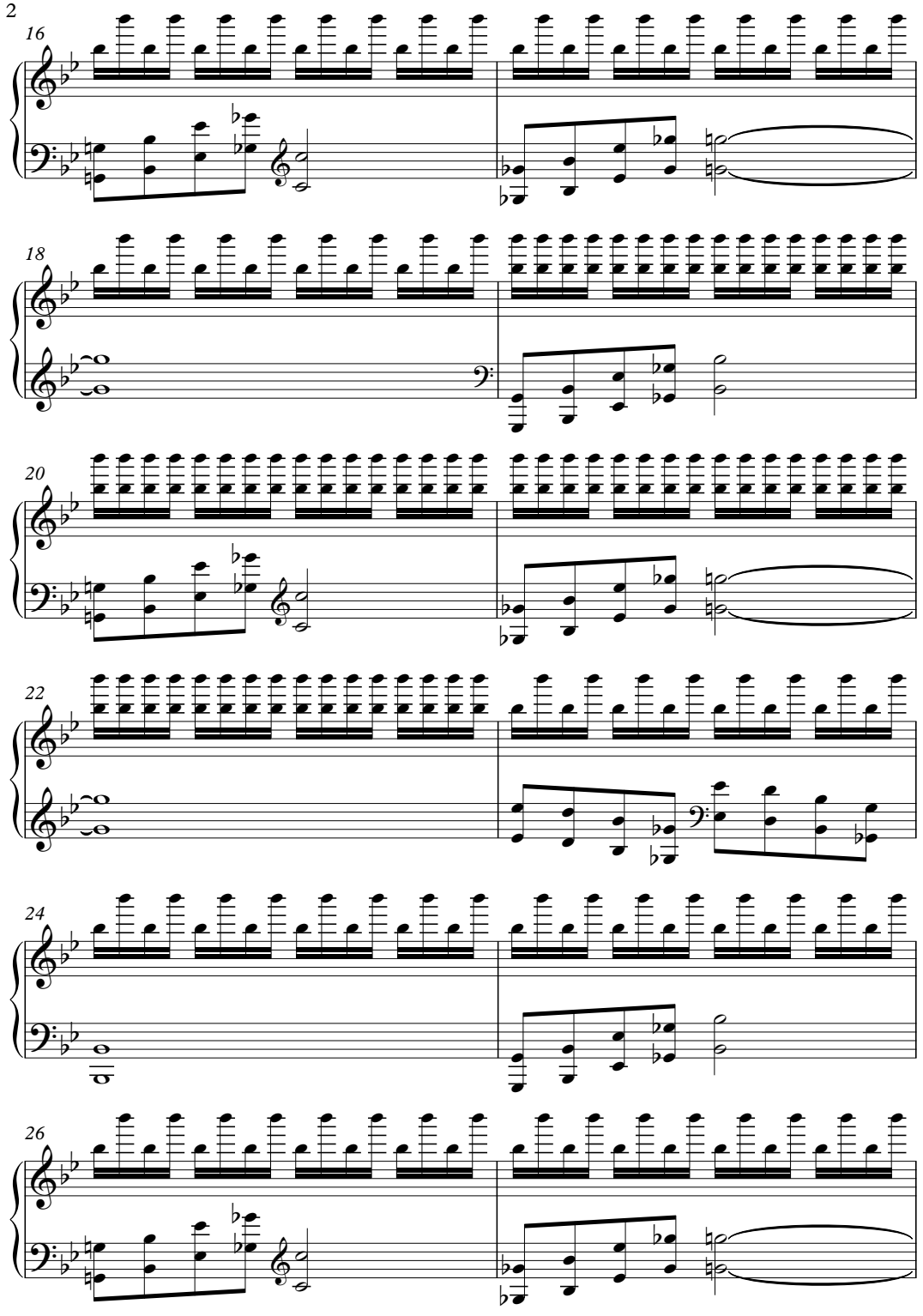
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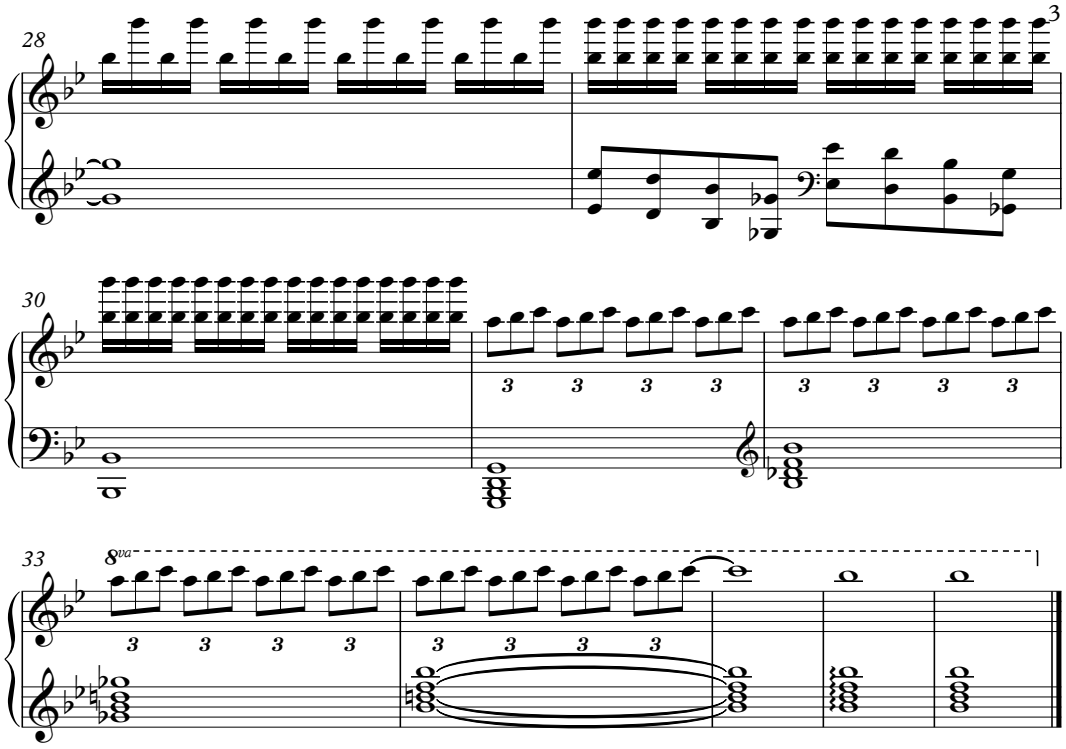
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Der Kuss
The Kiss

What can be more tender, what can be more innocent - than a kiss? However, under the Third Reich, kisses between men were forbidden, and punishable by death. Consequently, thousands of gay men were persecuted and murdered in the concentration camps. A pink triangle was fastened to their prison uniforms.

Today, the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community continues to be persecuted in many parts of the world. Violence and discrimination against them occurs daily, even in "civilized" societies.

'Der Kuss' is a remembrance of the thousands of gay men murdered in the concentration camps, and of all those of the LGBT community who suffer from injustices today.
The piece is therefore dedicated "to a friend´s friend"...

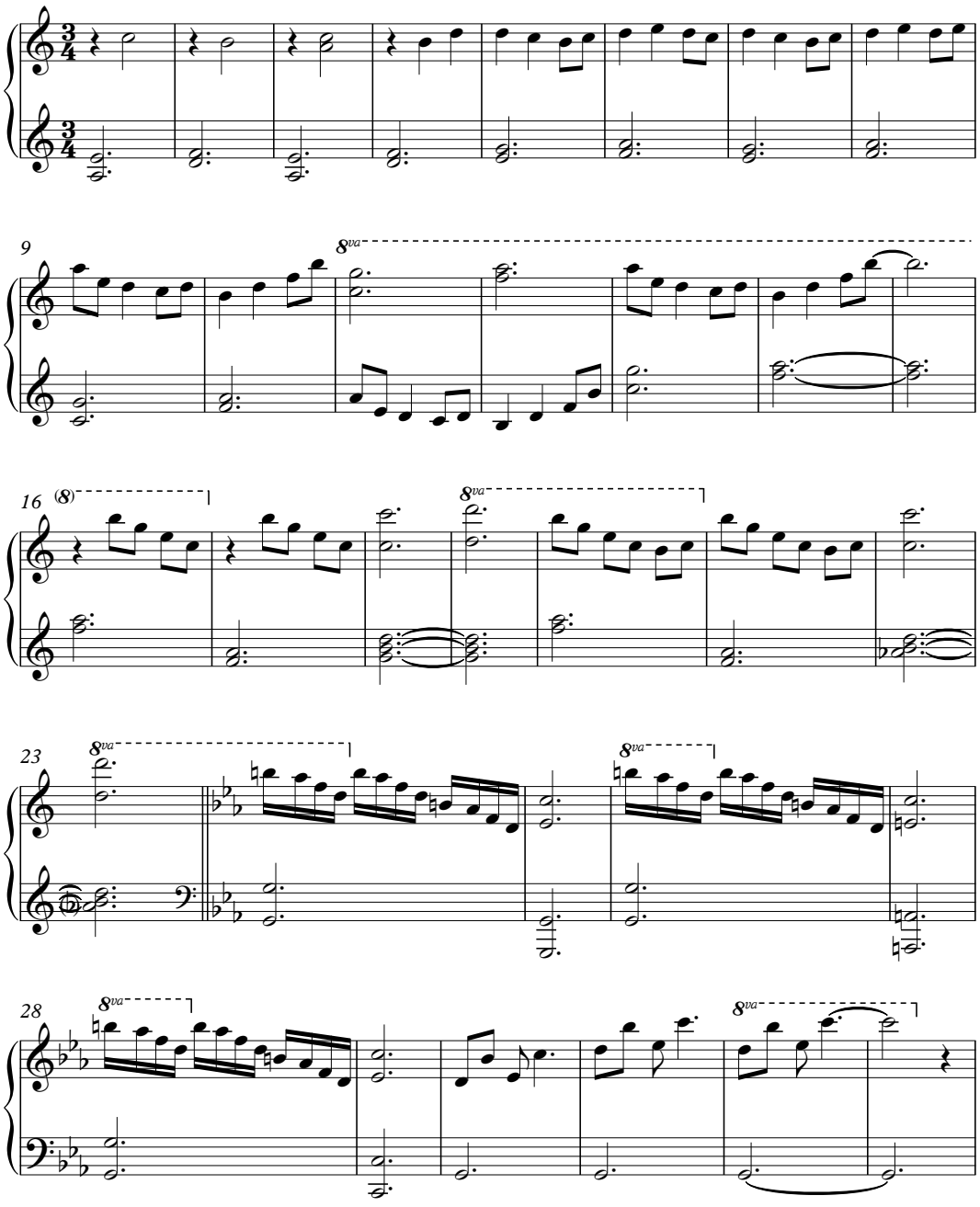
The picture is taken from the "Memorial to Homosexuals persecuted under Nazism" in Berlin, where an endless film loop shows two men (and in a more recent version also two women) kissing each other.

Wikipedia links:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pink_triangle
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_to_Homosexuals_Persecuted_Under_Nazism
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_homosexuals_in_Nazi_Germany_and_the_Holocaust

Der Kuss
The Kiss

Stephan Beneking
www.beneking.com
Berlin, 2013

Für eines Freundes Freund...



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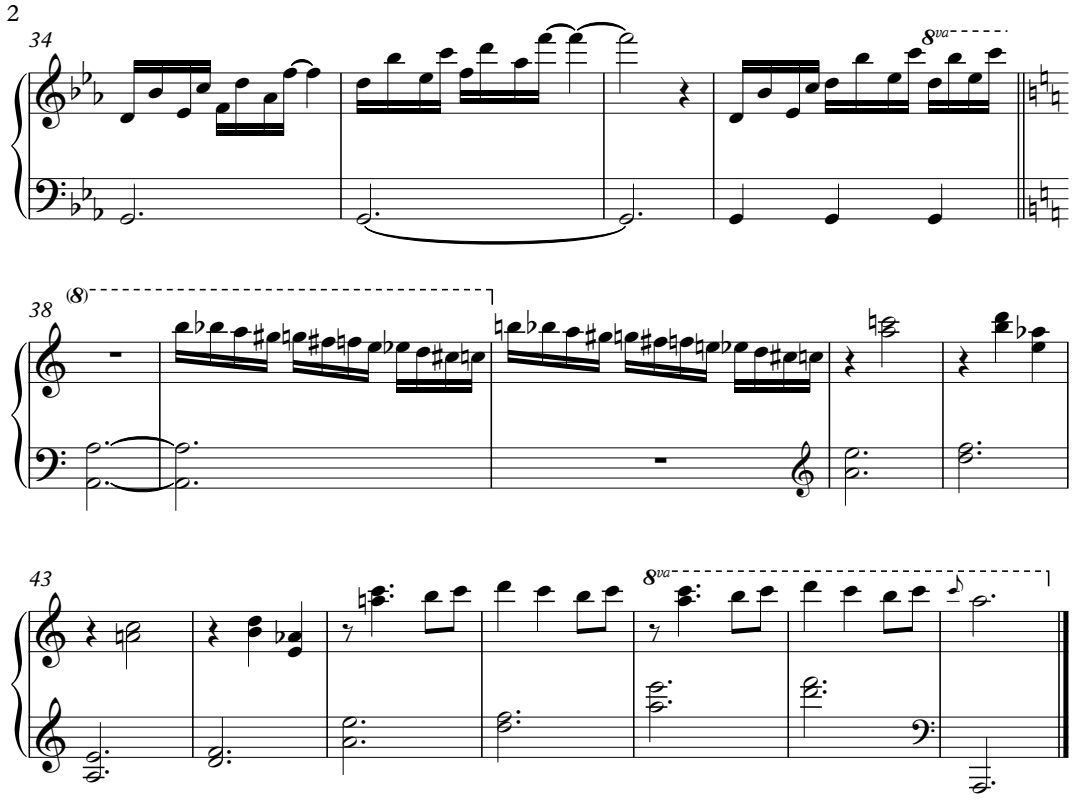
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Kristallnacht
Night of Broken Glass

The night of November 9th through the morning of the 10th in 1938, is known as the "Kristallnacht", or the "Crystal Night" or the "Night of Broken Glass". It was a night of extreme destruction, violence and suffering that marked the beginning of the Holocaust and the 2nd world war.

About 1.400 Synagogues were burned, and thousands of Jewish shops were destroyed. Neighbours watched, even applauded, while their neighbours were tortured.

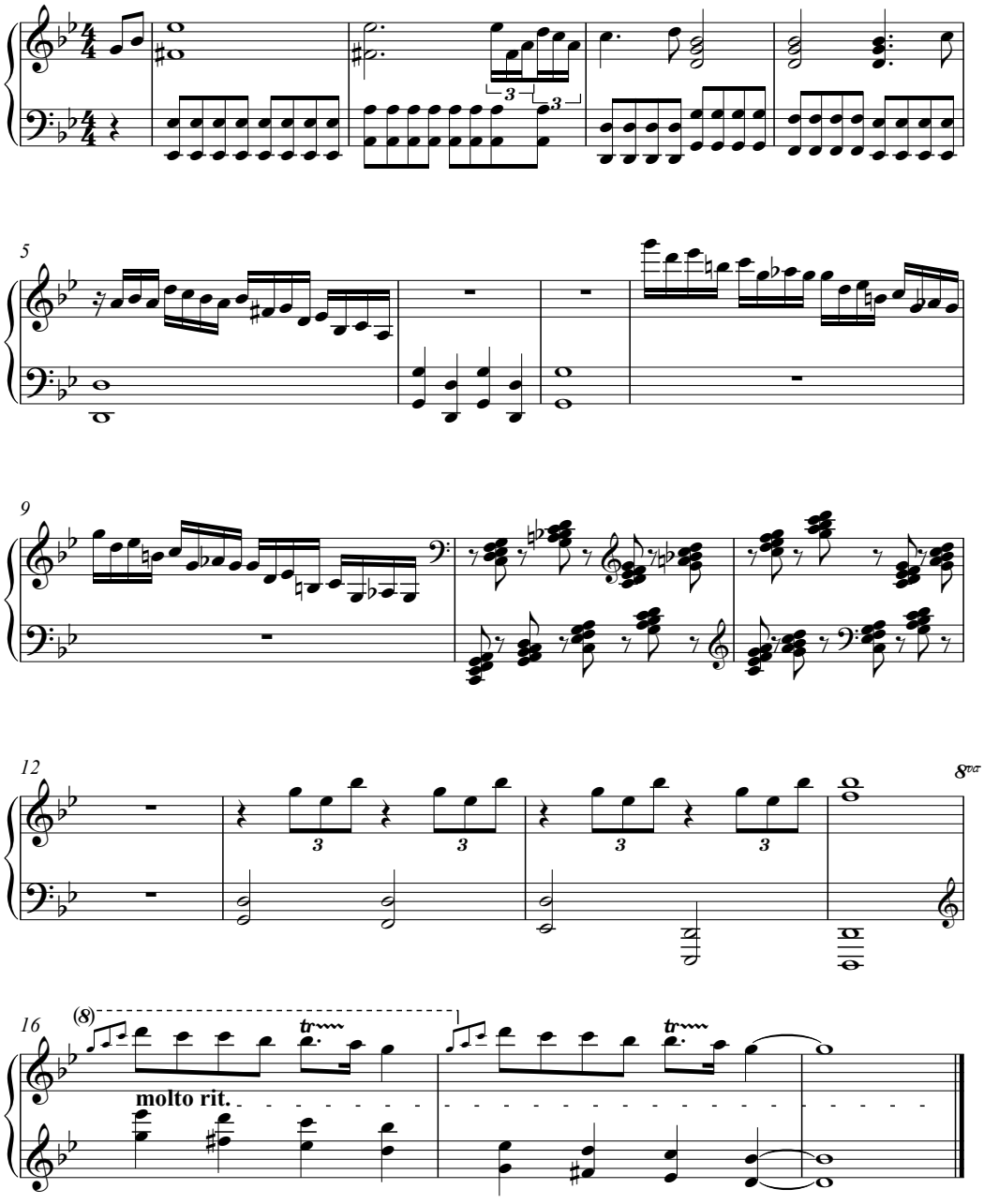
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kristallnacht

This short -and disturbing- musical tribute goes out to the the hundreds that died during "Kristallnacht" and the millions that were murdered thereafter.

Picture: Destroyed Synagogue in Fasanenstrasse, Berlin

Kristallnacht - Crystal Night

Stephan Beneking
www.beneking.com



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Kindertransporte
Children´s Transports

Kindertransport (Children's Transport) was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts between 1938 and 1940, which brought thousands of mostly Jewish children to Great Britain from Nazi Germany.

This piece goes out to all of the children...
To the 10,000 children sent on trains to the West, who were saved.
To the 1.5 million children sent on trains to the East, who were lost.

Following the violent pogrom staged by the Nazi authorities upon Jews in Germany and Austria known as Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) of November 9-10, 1938, the British government eased immigration restrictions for certain categories of Jewish refugees. Spurred by British public opinion and the persistent efforts of refuge aid committees, most notably the British Committee for the Jews of Germany and the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany,

British authorities agreed to permit an unspecified number of children under the age of 17 to enter Great Britain from Germany and German-annexed territories (namely, Austria and the Czech lands).

Private citizens or organizations had to guarantee to pay for each child's care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. In return for this guarantee, the British government agreed to allow unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country on temporary travel visas. It was understood at the time that when the "crisis was over," the children would return to their families. Parents or guardians could not accompany the children. The few infants included in the program were tended by other children on their transport. The first Kindertransport arrived in Harwich, Great Britain, on December 2, 1938, bringing some 200 children from a Jewish orphanage in Berlin which had been destroyed in the Kristallnacht pogrom.

The last transport from Germany left on September 1, 1939, just as World War II began, while the last transport from the Netherlands left for Britain on May 14, 1940, the day on which the Dutch army surrendered to German forces. In all, the rescue operation brought about 9,000 10,000 children, some 7,500 of them Jewish, from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland to Great Britain.
Source: http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005260

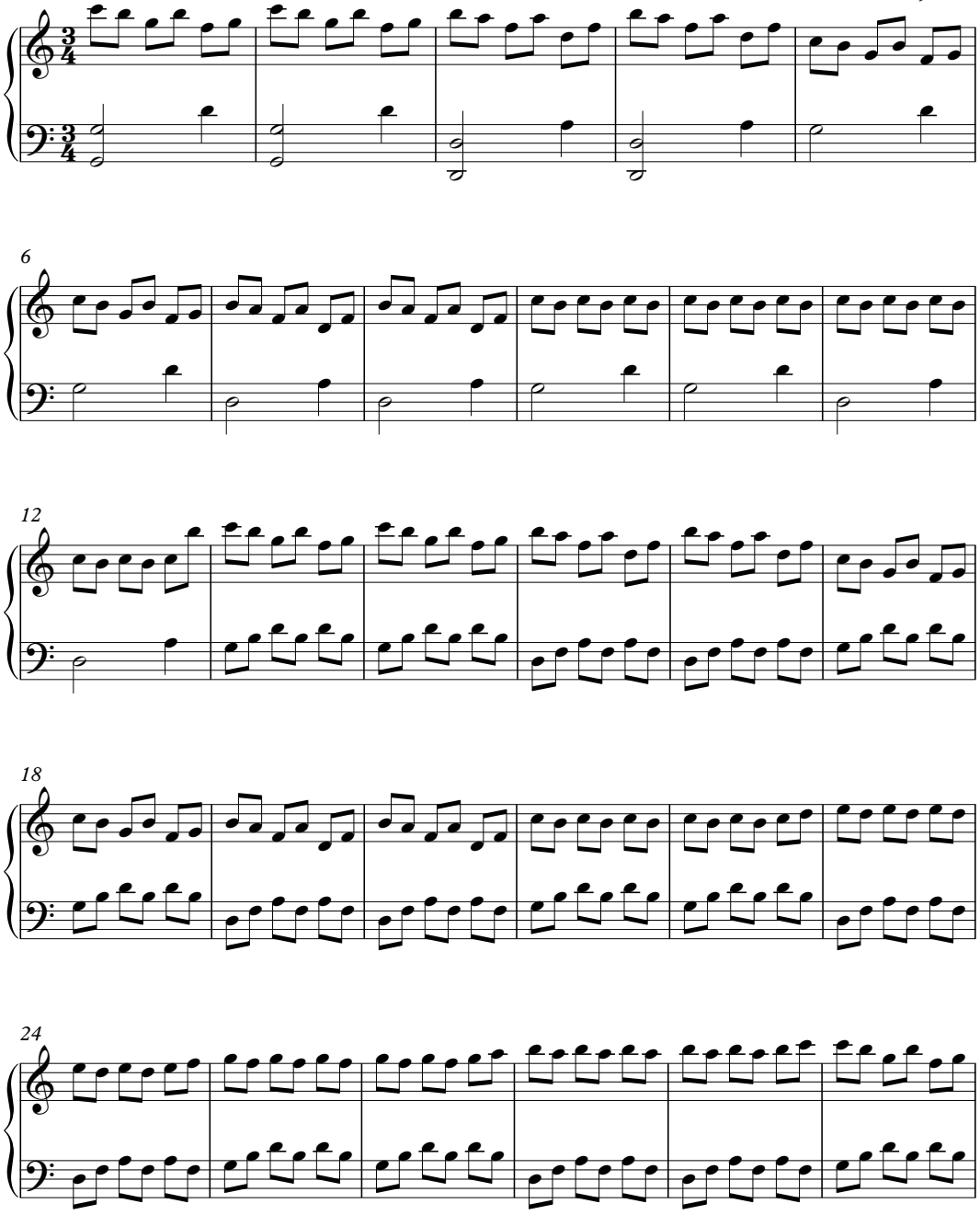
Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindertransport
Kindertransport association: http://www.kindertransport.org/

Picture: US Holocaust Memorial Museum

Kindertransporte

Für all diese Kinder...
für die, die in den Westen fuhren,
und besonders für die, die in den Osten fuhren...

Stephan Beneking
www.beneking.com
Berlin, 2013



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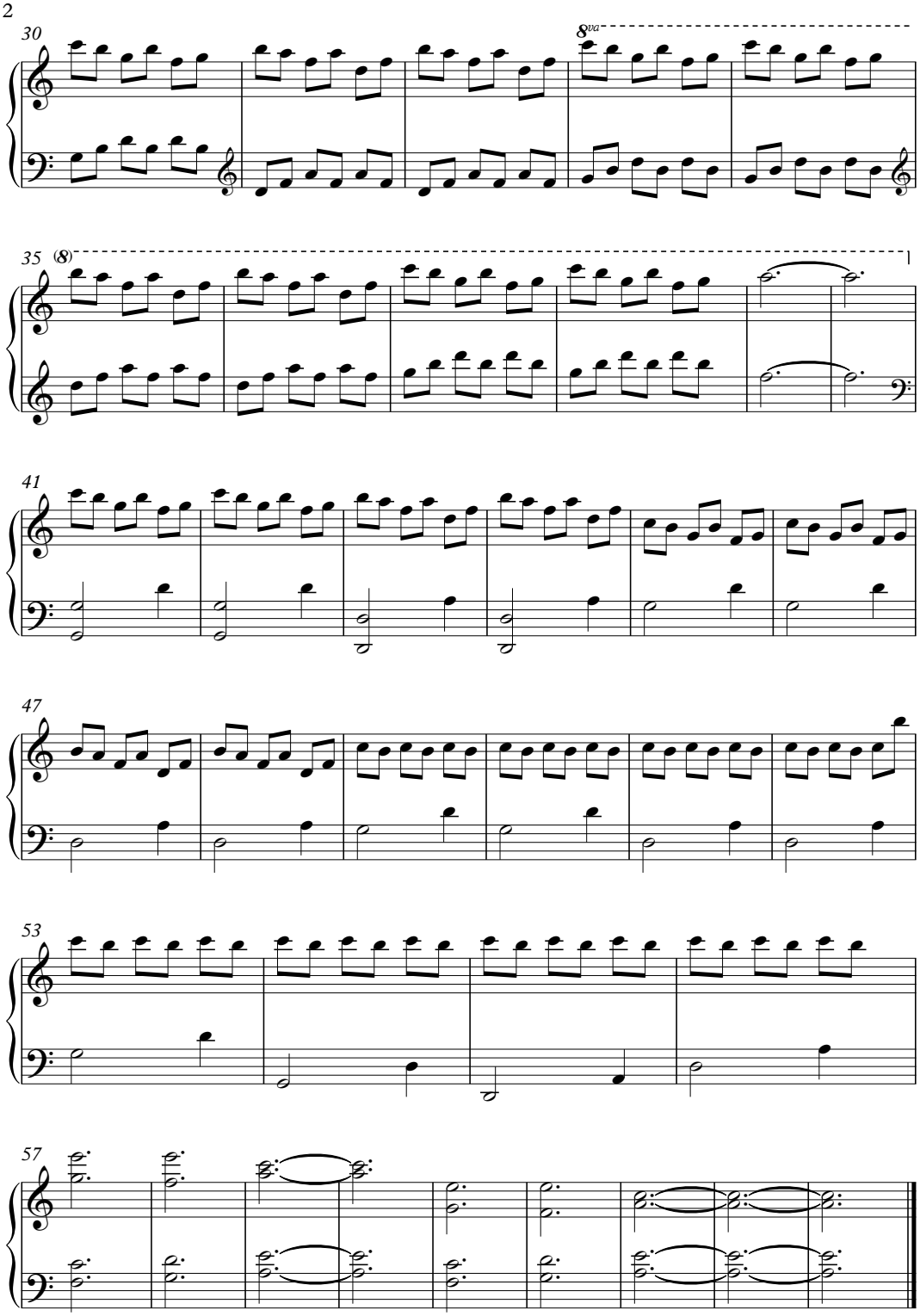
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Zyklon B

There is no other product name linked as much to the horrors of the holocaust as "Zyklon B". About 1.5 million human beings were killed using Zyklon B. It was invented in 1922 and used worldwide as pesticide. It is still produced today.

During the Holocaust, Zyklon B was used by Nazi Germany to "exterminate" prisoners in the gas chambers of the concentration camps Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Majdanek, and in Sachsenhausen concentration camp; most of the victims were Jews and Poles. The chemical was deliberately made without a warning odorant.

Composition:
The piece is composed in B flat minor on black keys only. It symbolizes the heartbeat of those murdered using Zyklon B.

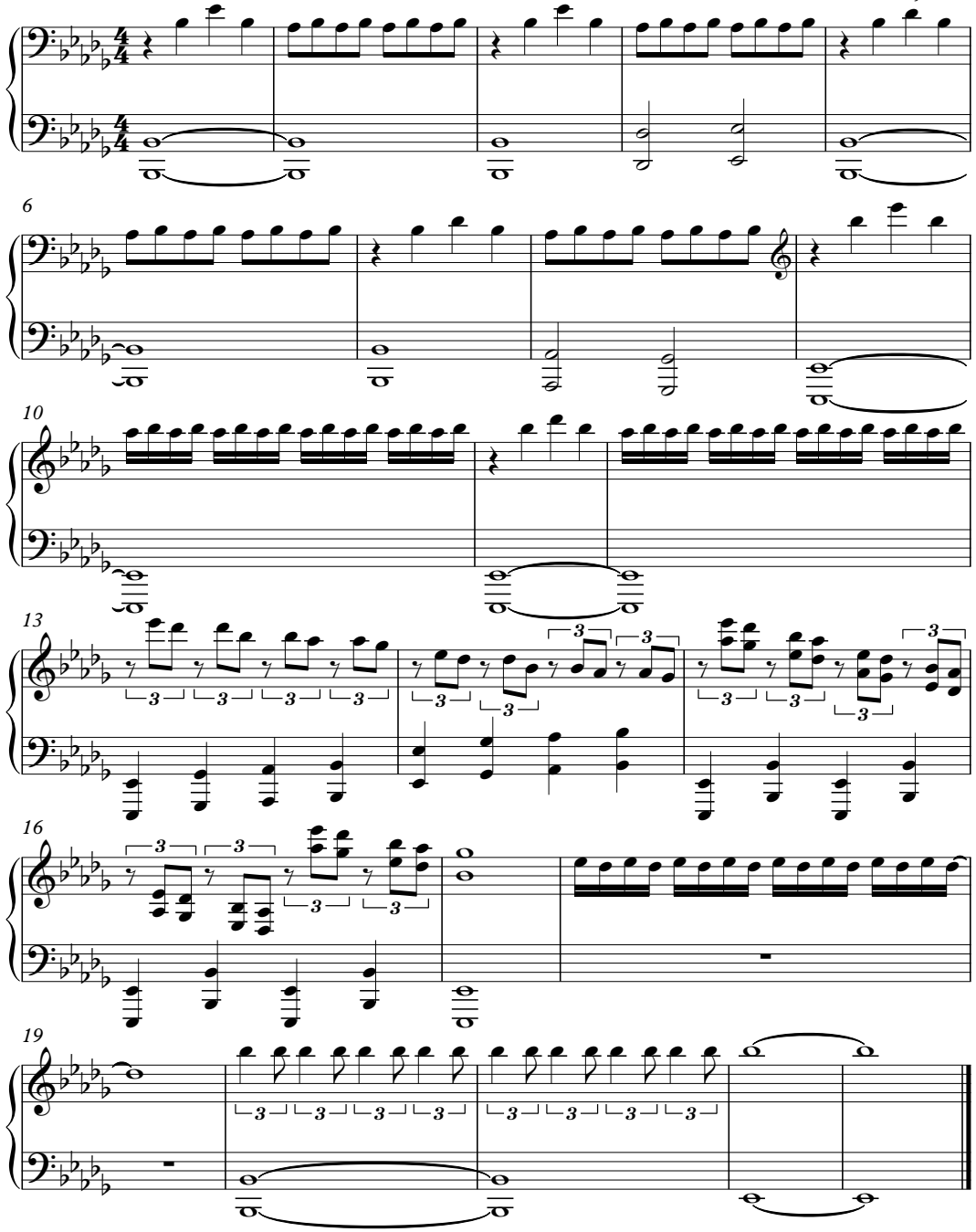
Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zyklon_B

Picture: Empty Zyklon B cans found in Auschwitz

Zyklon B

In Erinnerung an alle Menschen,
die durch Zyklon B vergast wurden.

Stephan Beneking
www.beneking.com
Berlin, 2013



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Die weiße Rose
The White Rose

In 1943, 70 years ago, guillotines in Munich and other German cities beheaded human beings every day. Among them were the young members of "Die weiße Rose".

The composition:
"Die weiße Rose" is composed in A minor, on white keys only as a tribute. It is a bittersweet piece. The white Rose is one of the most beautiful flowers - but it always will be associated with "Die weiße Rose" and their message: "We will not be silent." "Die weiße Rose" has thus become a symbol for the fight for freedom, worldwide, in all times.
May our music contribute.

About "Die weiße Rose"
Die Weiße Rose ("The white Rose") was a non-violent, intellectual resistance group in Nazi Germany, consisting of students from the University of Munich and their philosophy/musicology professor.

Wikipedia:
English: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Rose
German: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weiße_Rose

Among various other actions they wrote 6 well-written leaflets ("Flugblätter"), which were printed and distributed in secret to make the German population aware of the atrocities of the Nazi Regime.

One of the most famous statements, which is still an important message today, is from the 4th leaflet:
"We will not be silent.
We are your bad conscience.
The White Rose will not leave you in peace!"
Leaflets in
English: http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/White_Rose
German: http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/nazi/widerstand/weisserose/

This piece of music goes out to the members of the White Rose, who were tried, and beheaded at the guillotine in Munich. They sacrified their young lives for freedom and peace in Germany and the world.

Sophie Scholl 9.5.1921-22.2.1943
Hans Scholl 22.9.1918-22.2.1943
Christoph Probst 6.11.1918-22.2.1943
Prof. Kurt Huber 24.10.1893 - 13.7.1943
Alexander Schmorell 16.9.1917-13.7.1943
Willi Graf 2.1.1918 - 12.10.1943

We also remember the many thousands of brave women and men in Germany and other countries, who were active in the Resistance and got beheaded, hung, shot or beaten to death.

Our message also goes out to those, who even today raise their voice, fight and sacrifice their lives for freedom in countries like North Korea, Syria and many others.
"We will not be silent."

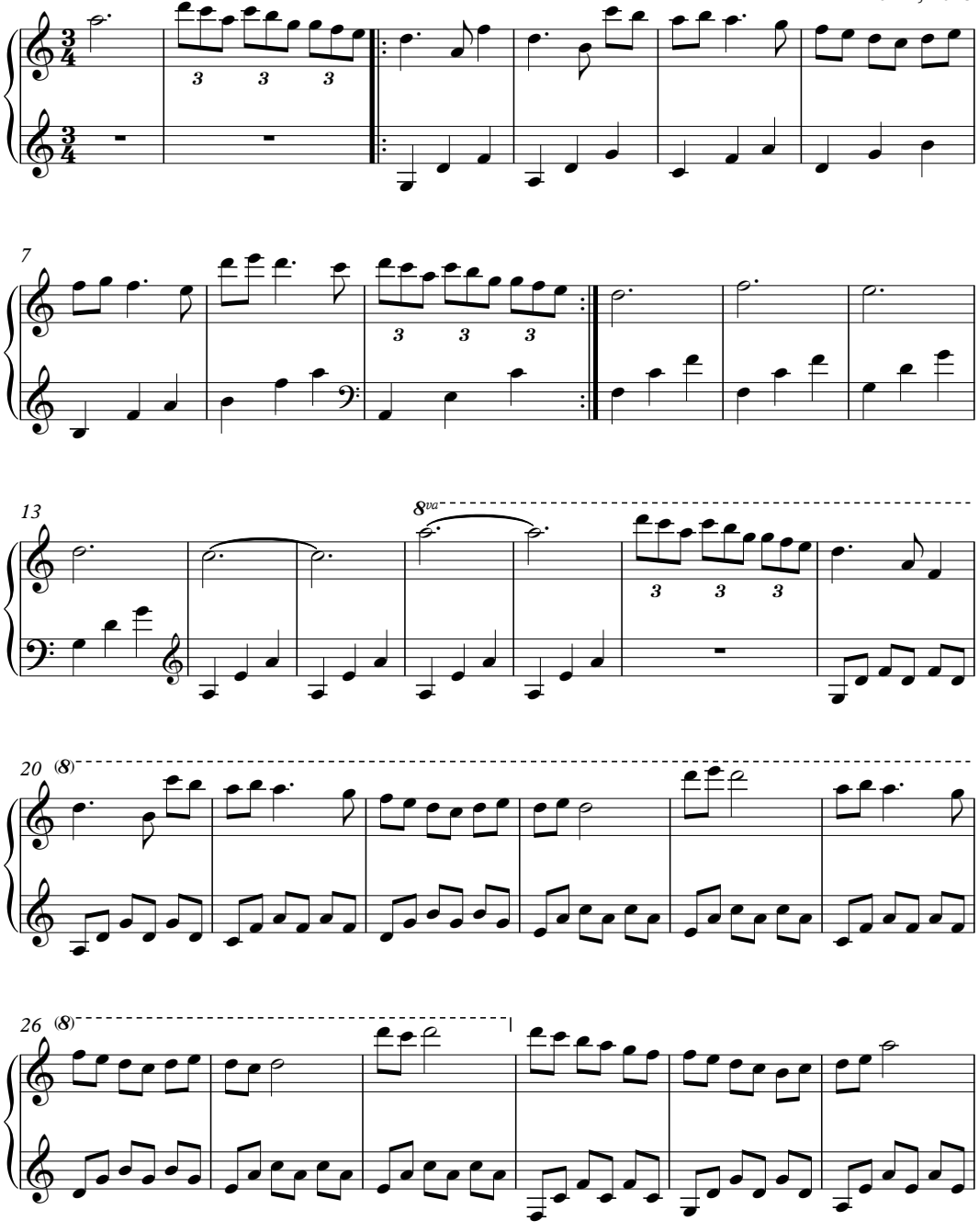
Memory:
The "Weiße Rose Stiftung", founded by relatives, keeps the memory alive: http://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/
Dozens of schools in Germany are named "Geschwister-Scholl-Schule", streets in nearly every city are named after the members of the group.
Organizations worldwide remember and spread the message.

Picture:
Hans Scholl, Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst, 1942

Die weiße Rose
The white Rose

Im Gedenken an
Sophia Magdalena Scholl 9.5.1921 - 22.2.1943
Hans Fritz Scholl 22.9.1918 - 22.2.1943

Stephan Beneking
www.beneking.com
Berlin, 2013



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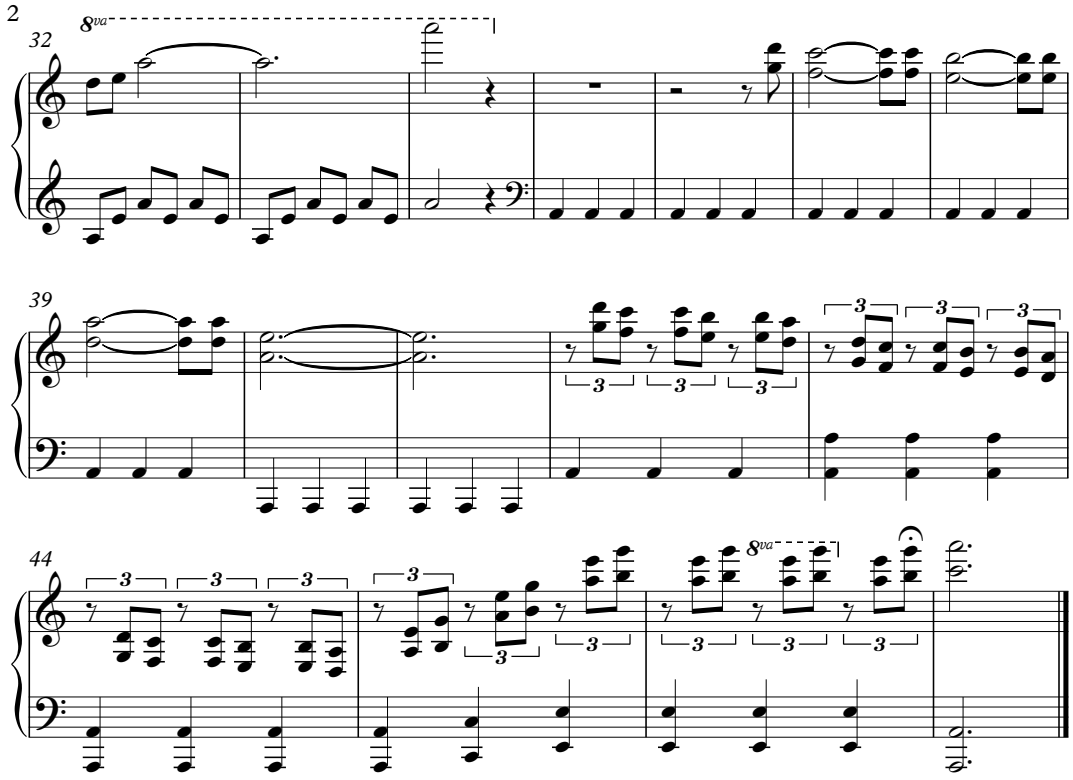
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Petr Ginz

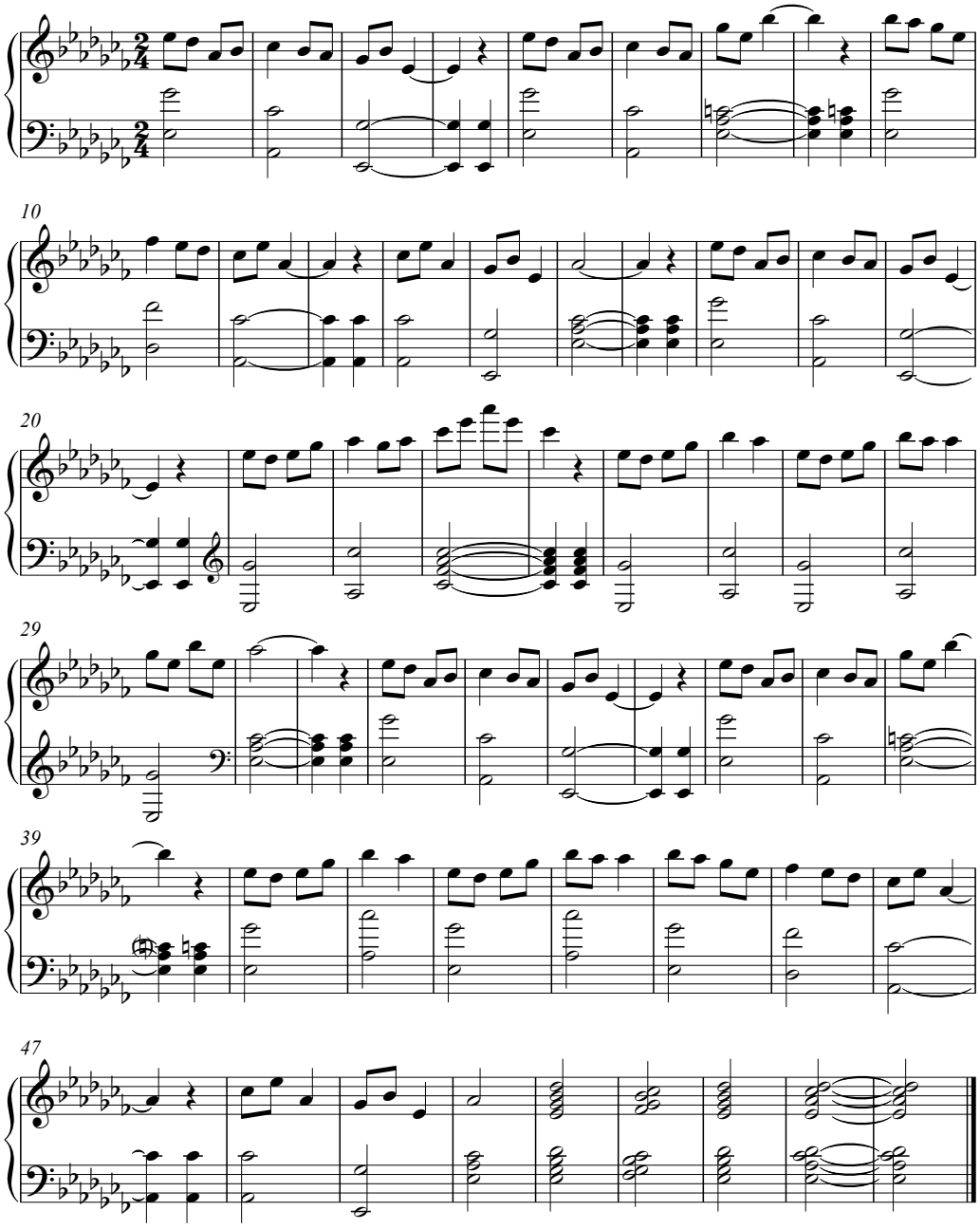
This piece is devoted to Petr Ginz (February 1, 1928 September 28, 1944), a very creative young boy and multi-talented artist, who lived in Prague and was murdered in the Holocaust.

His painting "Moon Landscape" and his "Prague diary" became world famous after the 2003 Columbia space shuttle tragedy.
Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut and the son of an Auschwitz survivor, had borrowed the drawing from the collection of the Yad Vashem Museum in Israel and taken it with him on the Columbia voyage. When the shuttle exploded over Texas and the story of Petr's drawing was told, a man contacted Yad Vashem saying that he had discovered Petr's old copybooks in the attic of his home in Prague.
Source: NY Times http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/10/books/10ginz.html?_r=0

Petr Ginz stands for immeasurable loss of talent in the Holocaust. But he is also a symbol of hope, as his diary and many of his paintings did survive.
Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petr_Ginz

Petr Ginz

Stephan Beneking, 2011
www.beneking.com



Der Tanz der Vergessenen
The Dance of the Forgotten

Among the millions of victims of the Nazi Regime and the Holocaust, one group is still forgotten today: the nearly 400.000 victims were people with disabilites in the so called "Euthanasie" programs. In fact, they were the first victims of the Nazi regime, and they were the first human beings killed in gas chambers. The "technology" of gas chambers and "death plants" ("Todesfabriken") was first developed for and tested on the German people with disabilities.

They were regarded as "unwertes Leben" ("unworthy life") and "Ballastexistenzen" ("ballast people"), "wertlose Menschenhülsen" ("worthless human bodies") and "nutzlose Esser" ("useless eaters"). At the end of the programme nearly

everybody was in danger, who could not work, even elderly people and wounded soldiers were "euthanized".

Their names are still kept secret. Many of their families still feel "ashamed" today. They feared being viewed as having been "infected" by their disabled relatives ("erbkrank").

The victims of "Euthanasie" were legally not accepted as persecuted by the Nazis and thus did never receive any reparation. It took until the year 2007 (sic!) that the German Bundestag declared the "Erbgesundheitsgesetz" for illegal.

Most of the involved doctors continued their normal lives after the war. The victims were forgotten.

This piece goes therefore out to these forgotten victims of "Euthanasie", because "if we forget the victims, we murder them a second time."

The eradication of people with disabilities took place in steps:

"**Erbgesundheitsgesetze**"
The "Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses" ("Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring") was one of the first laws the Nazi regime enacted, on July 14, 1933. It allowed the compulsory sterilisation of any citizen who in the opinion of a "Genetic Health Court" ("Erbgesundheitsgericht") suffered from a list of alleged genetic disorders - many of which were not, in fact, genetic. Over 400,000 people were sterilized against their will
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_for_the_Prevention_of_Hereditarily_Diseased_Offspring

"**Aktion T4**"
"Action T4" was the name of Nazi Germany's "Euthanasia programme" during which physicians murdered thousands of people who were "judged incurably sick, by critical medical examination". The programme officially ran from September 1939 to August 1941, but it continued unofficially until the end of the Nazi regime in 1945. It was financed by the golden teeth of the victims.

At least 200,000 physically or mentally handicapped people were killed by medication, starvation, or in the gas chambers of the 6 so called "special treatment centers" ("Zentren für Sonderbehandlung") between 1939 and 1945. "Special treatment" ("Sonderbehandlung") was the Nazi´s secret code for "extermination".
After this "job was done", the "killing experts" moved on the the East to set up the "killing plants" ("Todesfabriken" of the "Aktion Reinhardt").

The name T4 was an abbreviation of Tiergartenstraße 4, the address of a villa in the Berlin borough of Tiergarten which was the headquarters of the organisation.

In October 1939, Hitler signed a back-dated "euthanasia decree" to September 1, 1939, which authorised to carry out the programme of euthanasia (translated into English as follows):
"Reich Leader Bouhler and Dr. med. Brandt are charged with the responsibility of enlarging the competence of certain physicians, designated by name, so that patients who, on the basis of human judgment [menschlichem Ermessen], are considered incurable, can be granted mercy death [Gnadentod] after a discerning diagnosis."
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_T4

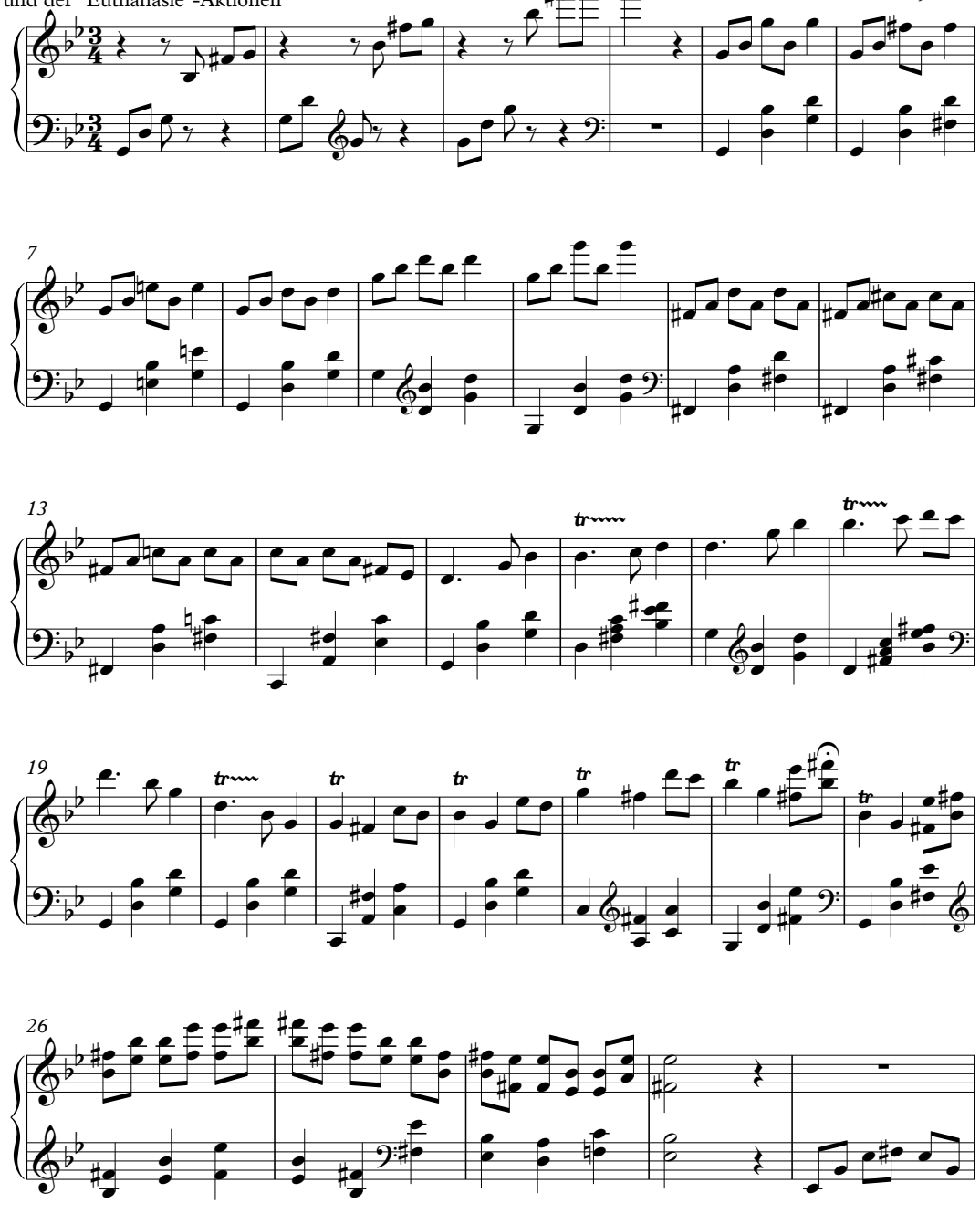
"**Kindereuthanasie**"
"Child Euthanasia" was the name given to the organised murder of severely mentally and physically handicapped children and young people up to 16 years old during the Nazi era in over 30 so-called special children's wards.
At least 5,000 children were victims of this programme, which was a precursor to the subsequent murder of children in the concentration camps.
The doctors and midwives had to report children that were "not normal", and these children were then taken away from their parents under the promise of a better medical treatment. But in fact their children were killed by starvation or poison, shortly thereafter.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_euthanasia_in_Nazi_Germany

Picture: Anna Lehnkering (2.8.1915 - 7.3.1940)
Anna was as a young girl sterilized and later on killed in the gas chamber of Grafeneck.
http://www.sigrid-falkenstein.de/euthanasie/anna.htm

Der Tanz der Vergessenen
The Dance of the Forgotten

Für die vergessenen Opfer
des "Erbgesundheitsgesetz"
und der "Euthanasie"-Aktionen

Stephan Beneking
www.beneking.com
Berlin, 2013



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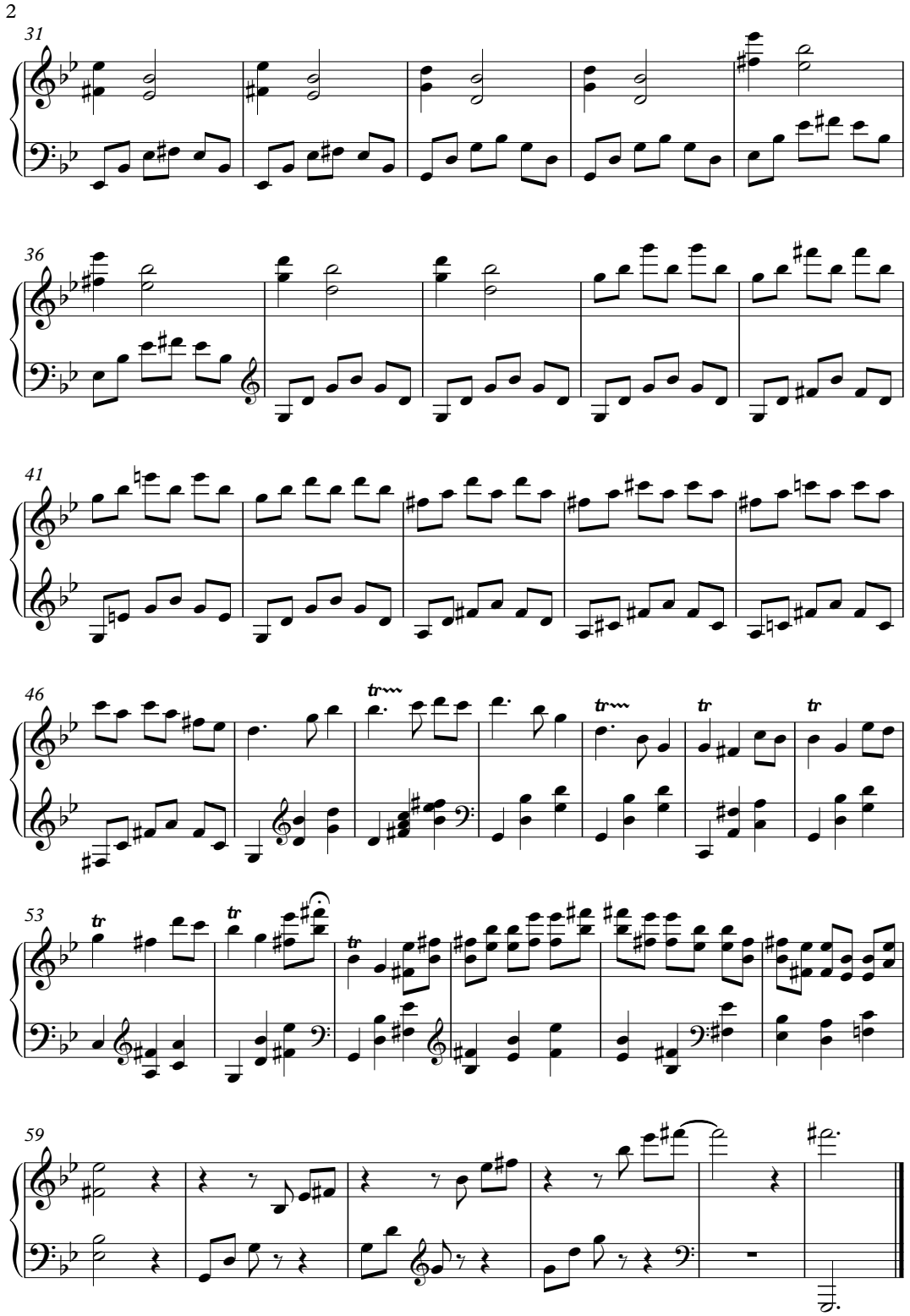
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Die Todesfuge
The Death Fugue

Death Fugue is a poem written by the Romanian poet Paul Celan and was first published in 1948. It is Celan's most famous poem. It describes the horror and bizarreness of life in the concentration camps, where victims often had to perform music to entertain the murderers.

The most frequently quoted expression in the poem is
"Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland, sein Auge ist blau."
(Death is a Master from Germany his eye is blue.)

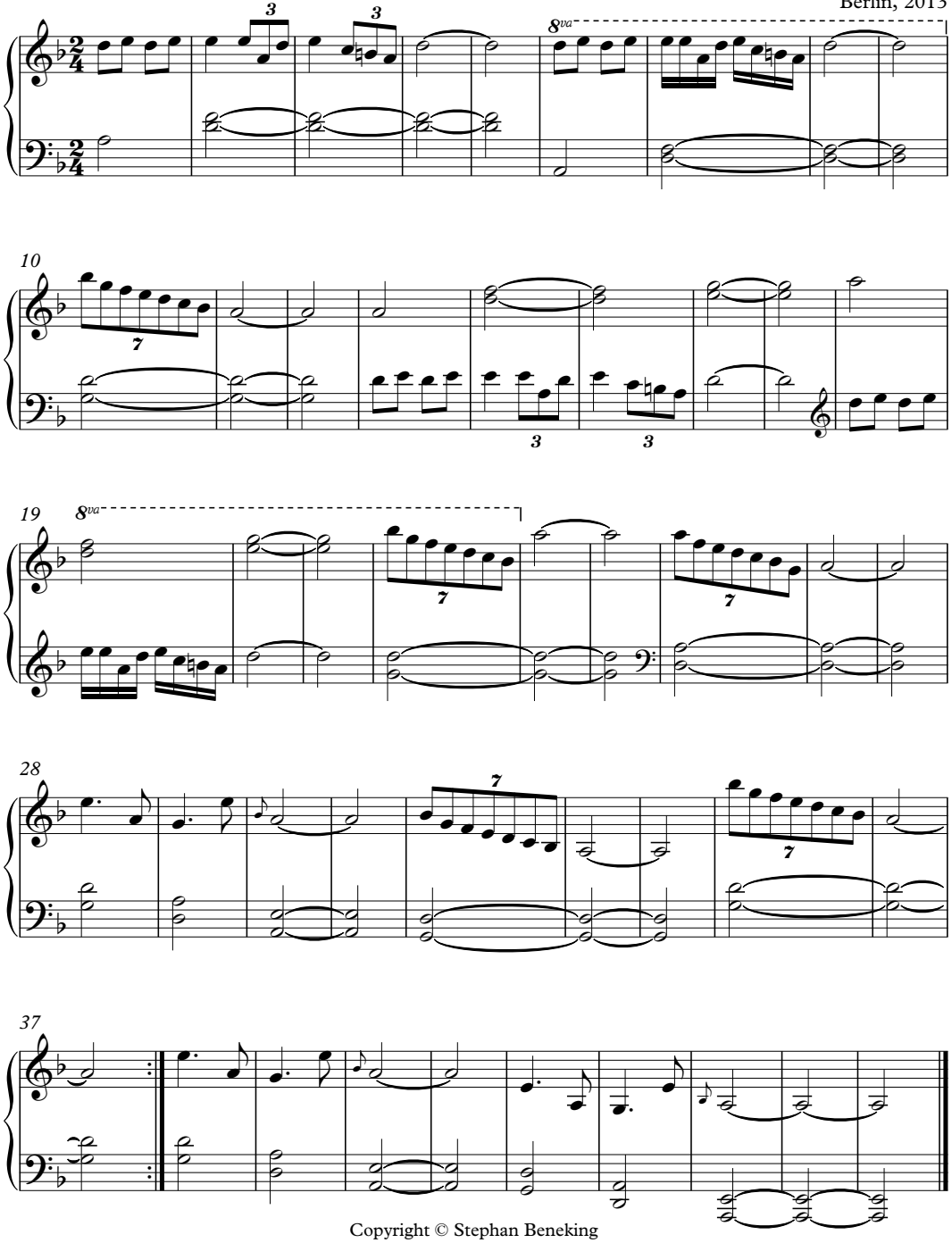
The melody of the composition is based on the notes of this famous phrase:
D-E-r to-D ist E-in mEistEr Aus DEutscHlAnD,
sEin AuGE ist BlAu
This melody gives the piece a very special effect.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Todesfuge

Die Todesfuge

nach Paul Celan:
DEr toD ist Ein mEistEr Aus DEutsCHlAnD, sEin AuGE ist BlAu

Stephan Beneking
www.beneking.com
Berlin, 2013



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Epilogue

May our music contribute
to always remember
the victims
and their murderers.

"We will not be silent."