SPECTRAL MUSIC

In general, spectral works do not use themes or motives.

Instead, the surface of most spectral works consists of the presentation and alteration of a sonority using a quasi-homogenous combination of instrumental and electronic sounds. In other words, the musical line of continuity is transmitted by modifying the spectra.

Tristan Murail - Desintegrations

It is scored for fixed electronics and 17 instruments and is 22 minute long.

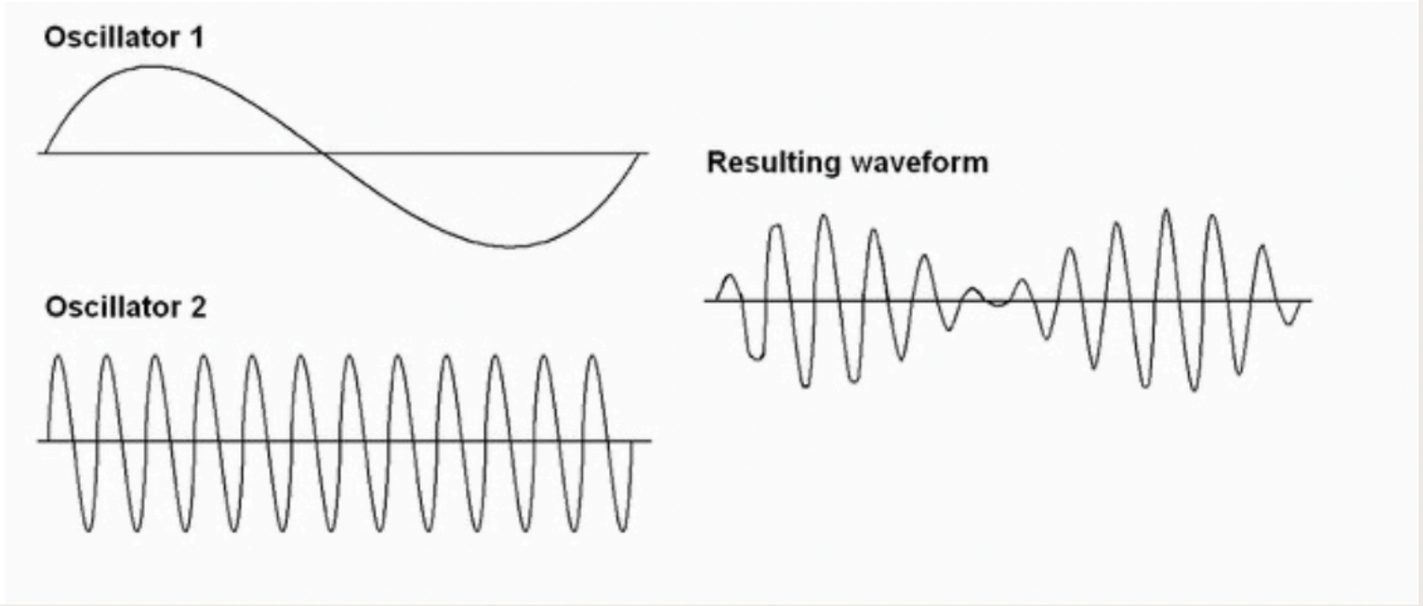
The piece is divided into eleven distinct sections, each characterized by a different type of spectrum, rhythmic profile, and texture. The processes of spectral transformation use techniques that gradually change one chord into a second chord.

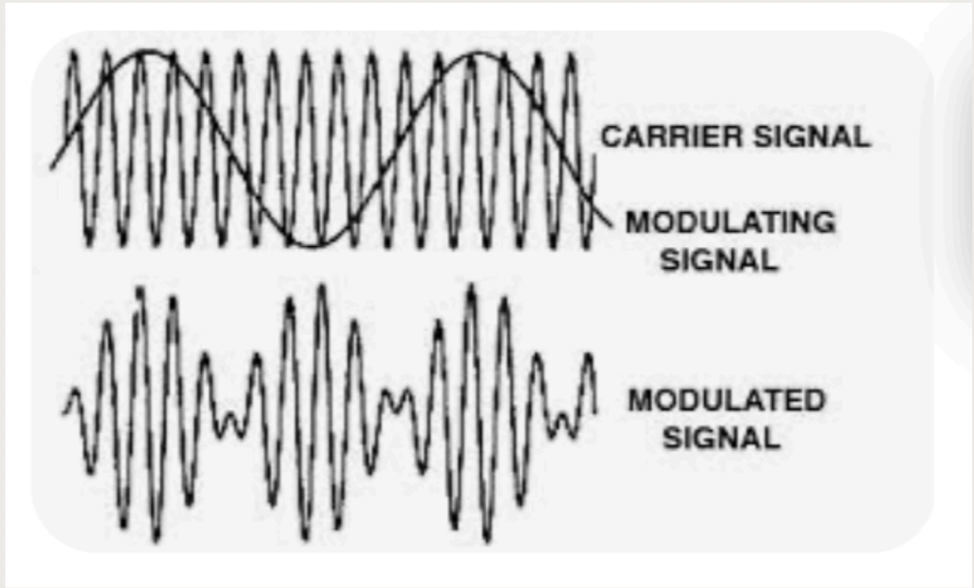
One of these techniques is known as mutation, where one chord is slowly changed into a second chord, using only the notes in both chords.

A more complex operation is known as interpolation. Interpolation occurs when a starting chord is slowly changed into a second chord, achieved by a glissando between the voices of the chords.

There is also the process known as spectral distortion, where a spectrum is altered by changing the distance between partials, which either compresses or expands the spectrum.

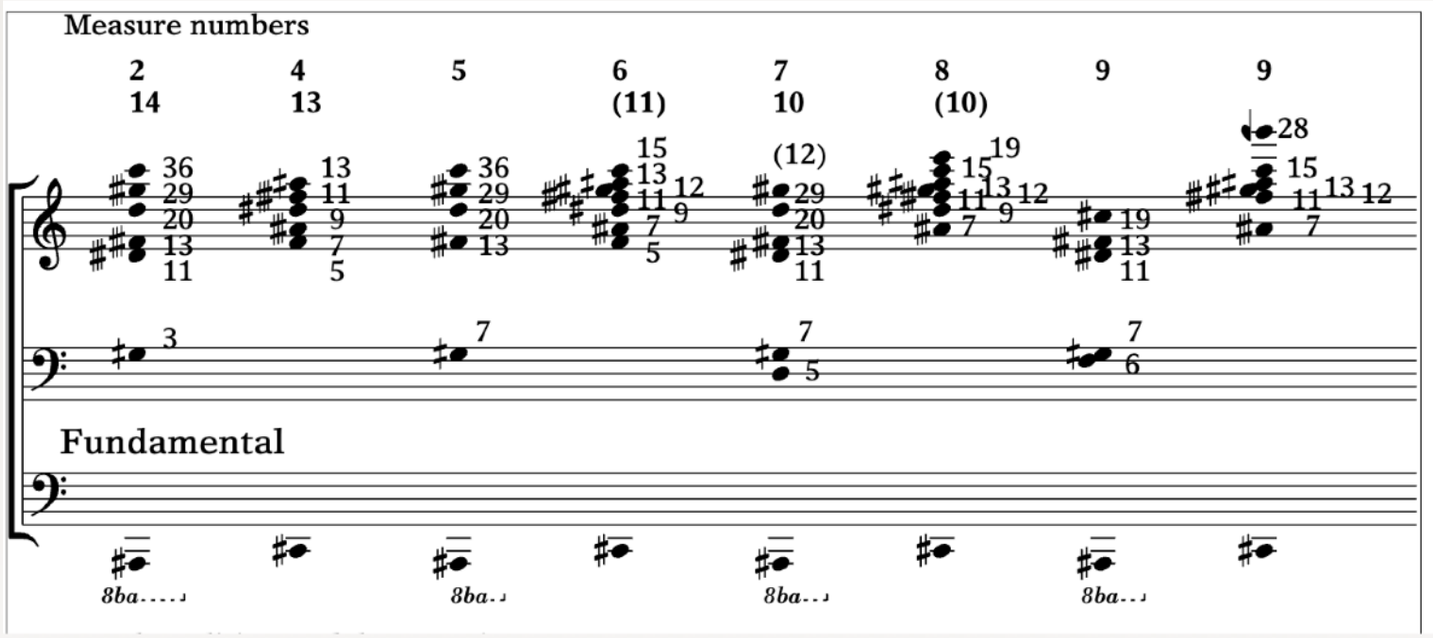
Ring Modulation





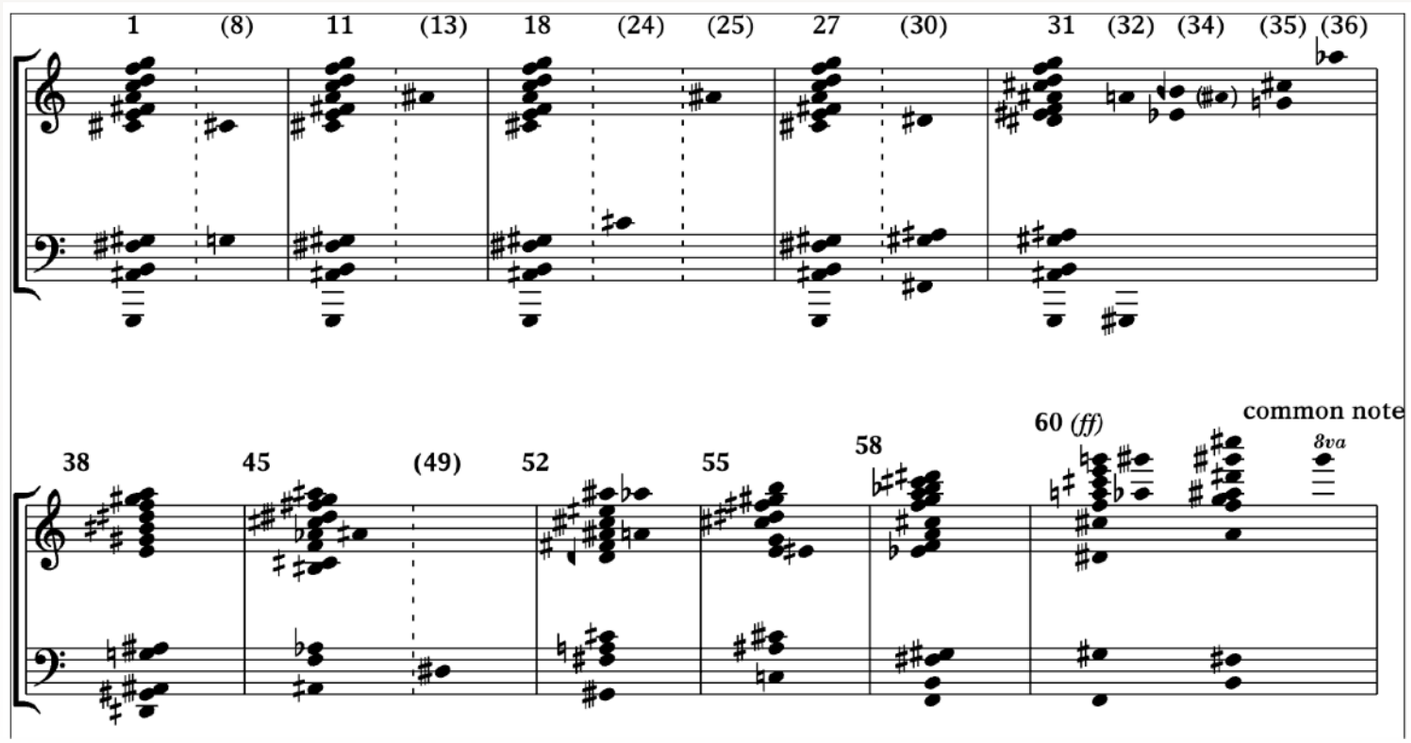
Tristan Murail - Desintegrations

Section I



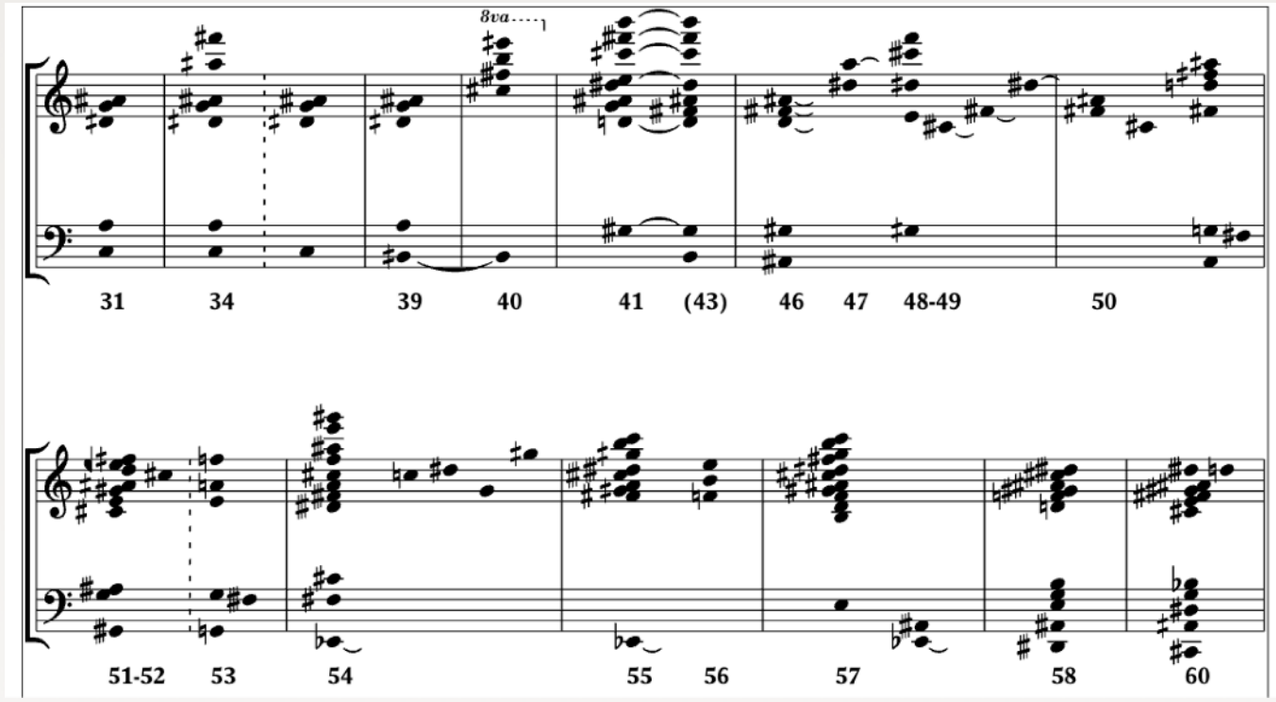
The spectrum is based on two fundamentals, the low A sharp and C sharp. The chords increase in density until bar 30. The spectra are now inharmonic and are produced by using ring modulation.

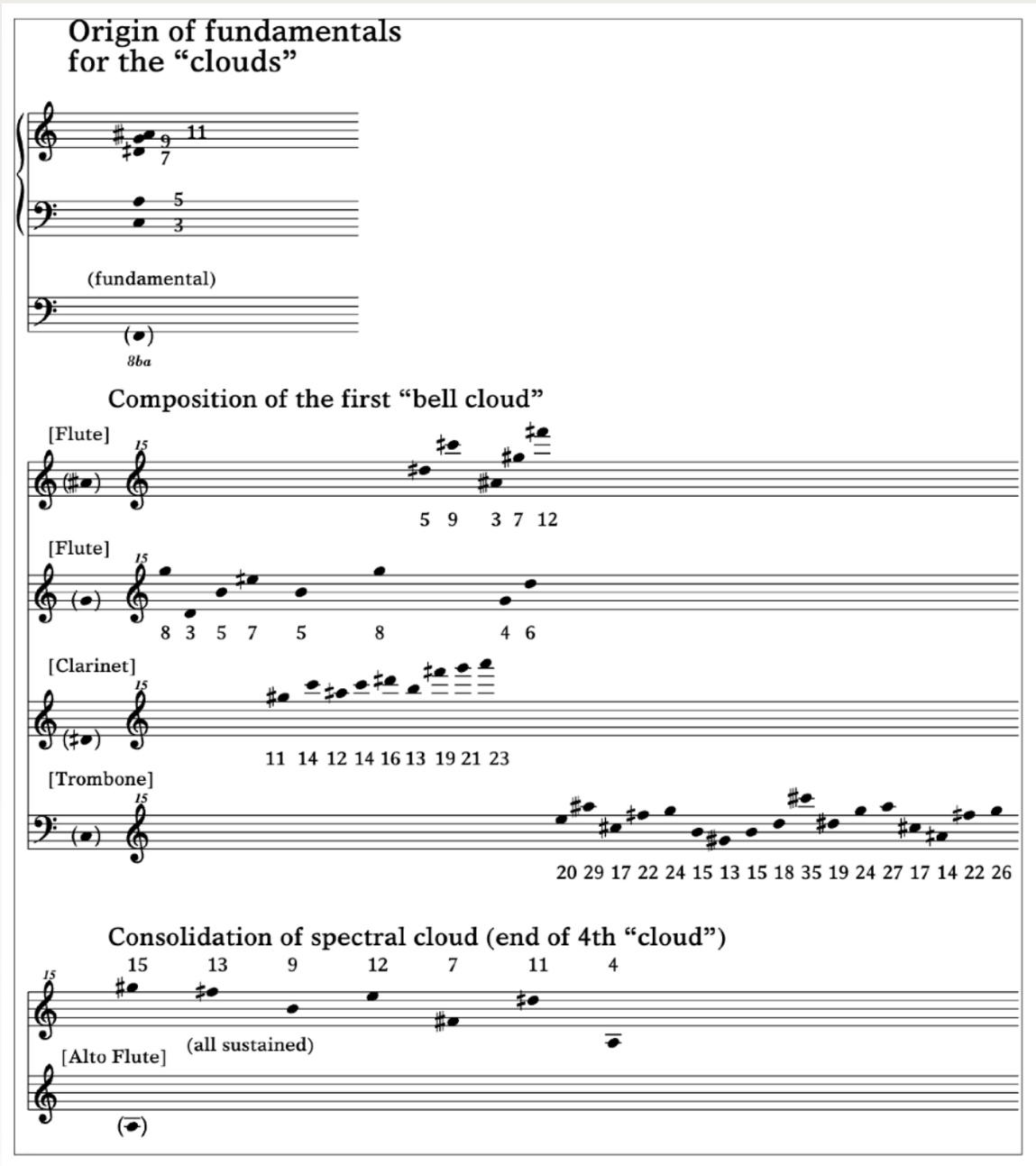
Section II



Slow harmonic motion, timbre chord was produced with RM Modulation.

Section III



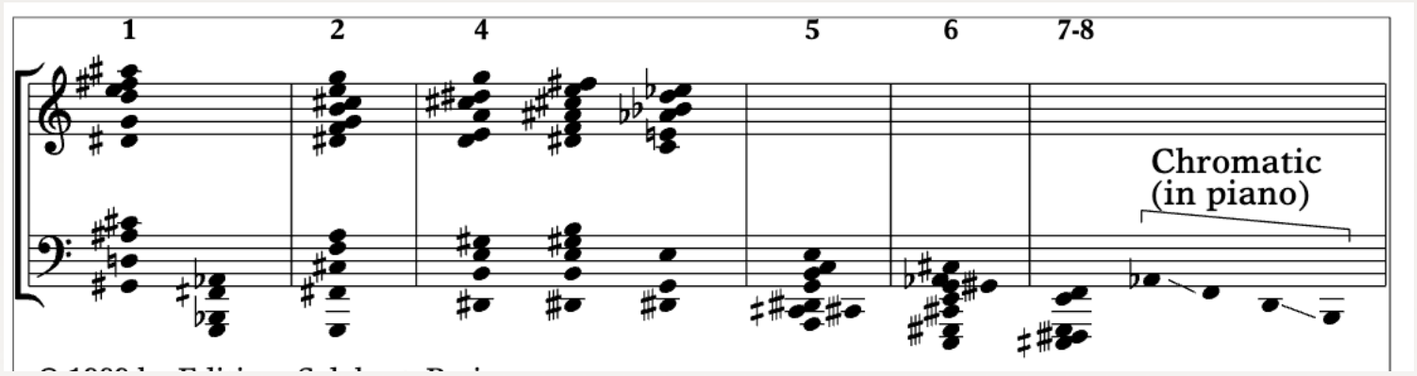


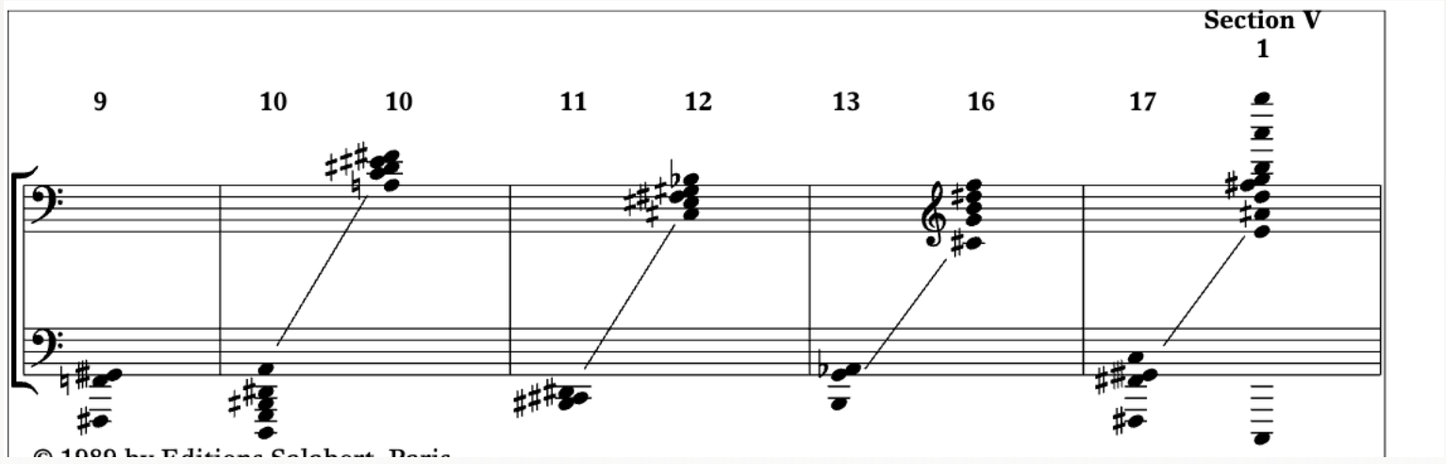
“Cloud of small bells”

The texture is starkly different, consisting of glockenspiel, crotales, and piano, all playing rapid figurations in an extremely high register.

Tristan Murail - Desintegrations

Section IV

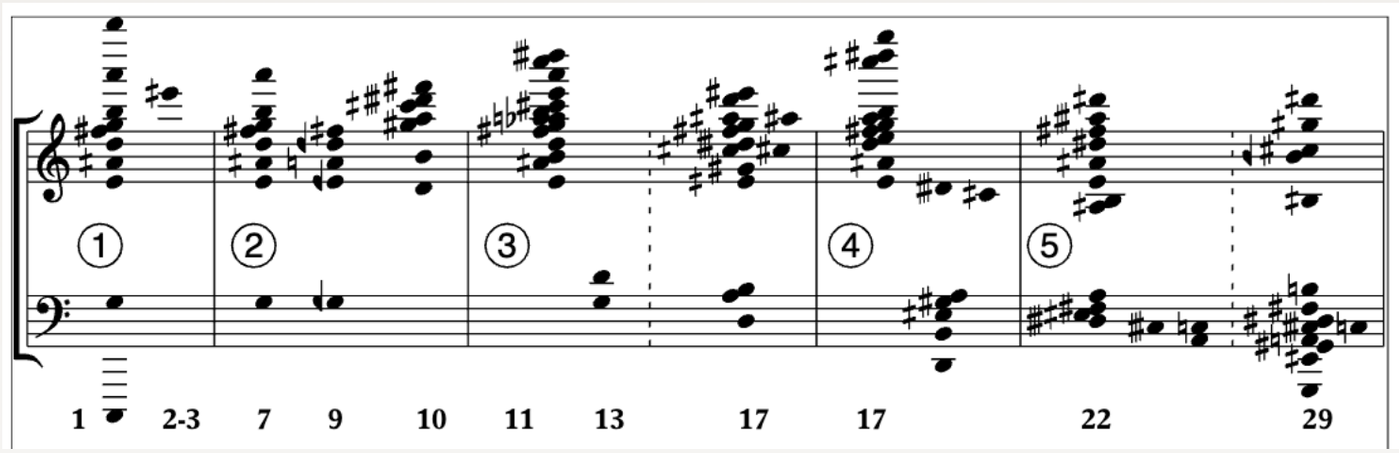




The harmonic motion and gesture are fused into one element, described as “a violent rupture.”

An interpolation process is directly responsible for the surface of the music, since the process simultaneously produces the harmonic motion and an implied musical line, the chords moving upwards

Section V

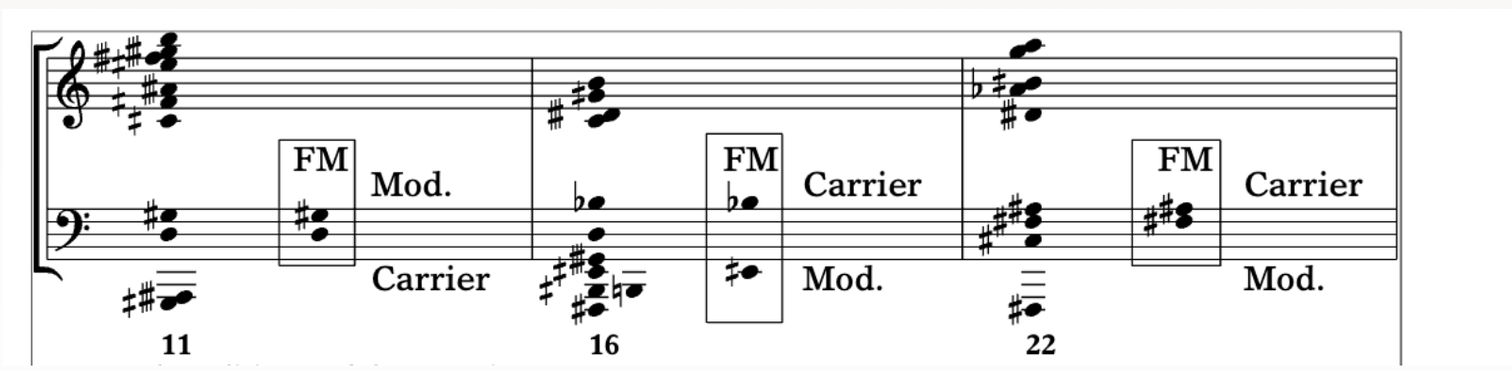


The beginning of Section V is a major arrival for the piece, and the section starts with a harmonic spectrum on C.

Murail uses a chord based on the natural harmonic series to indicate a point of arrival, as he did at the beginning of the work.

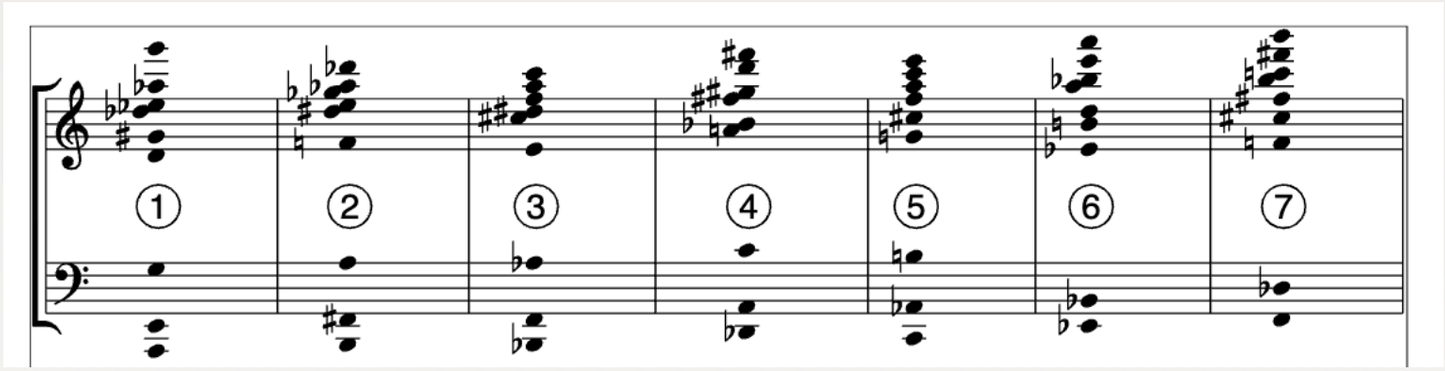
As the section progresses, the pure spectrum disintegrates into one that is inharmonic.

Section VI



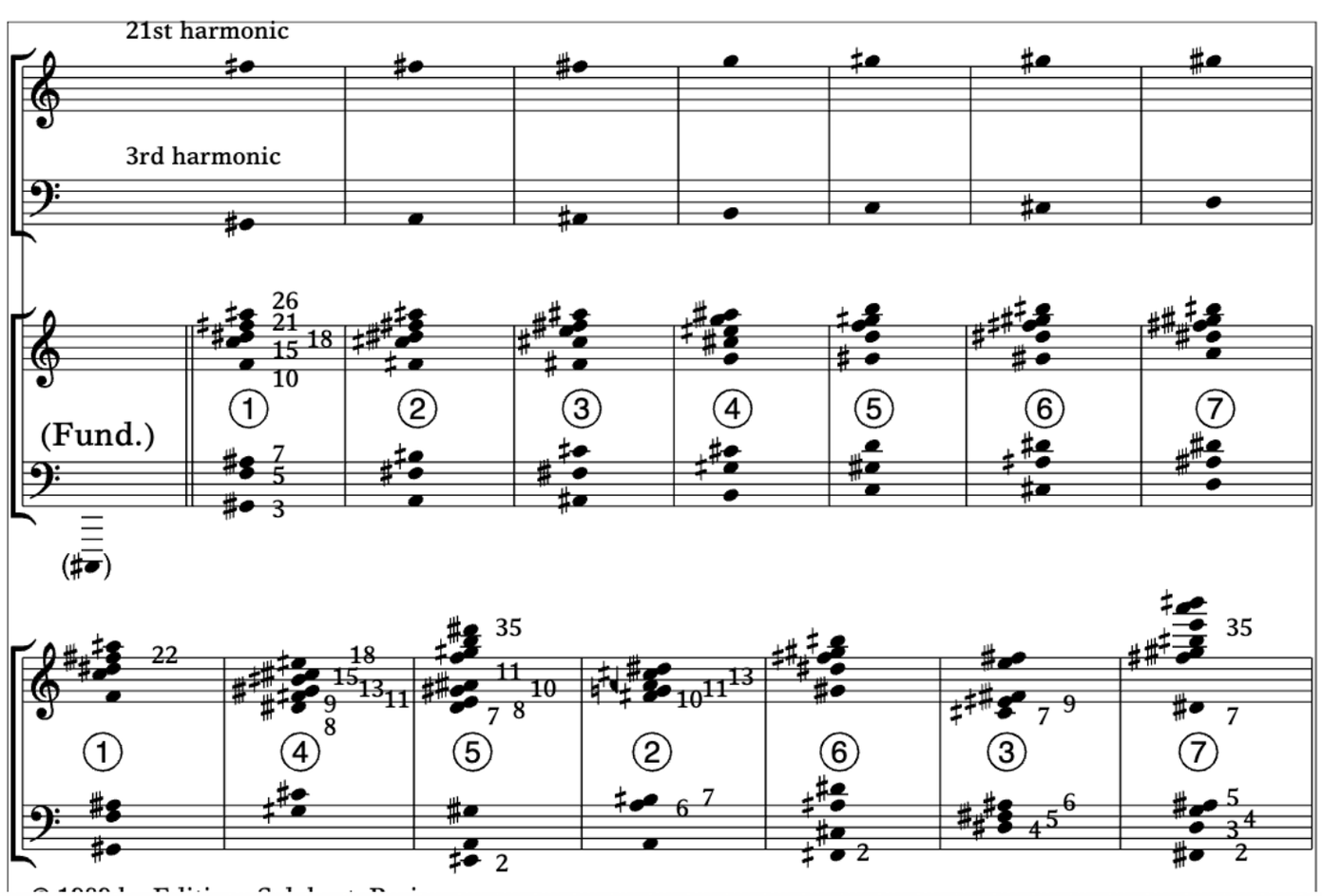
Following each chord are the carrier and modulating frequencies for the FM operation that produces the chord.

Section VII



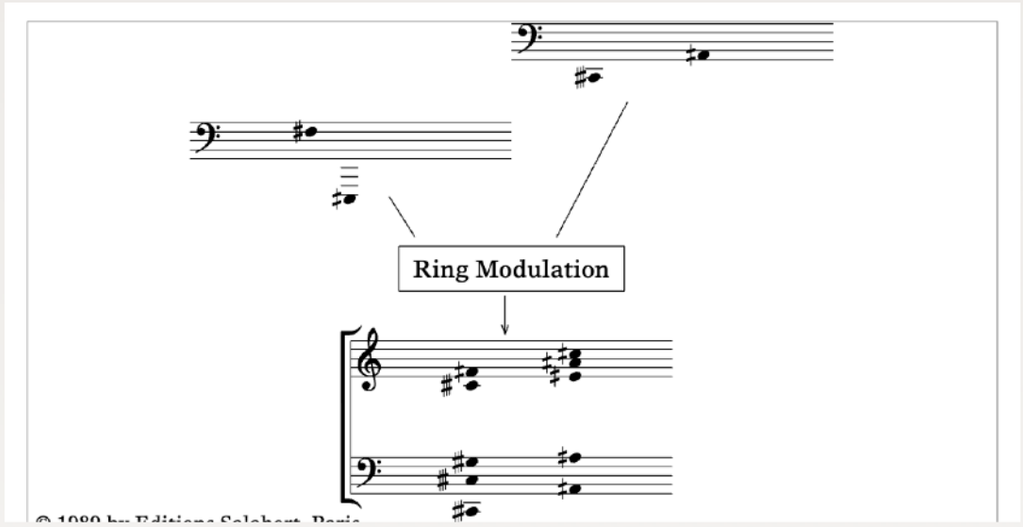
steady stream of sixteenth notes played by the entire ensemble. The 49 measures of this section are based on seven chords that are repeated throughout. Their order constantly changes.

Section VIII



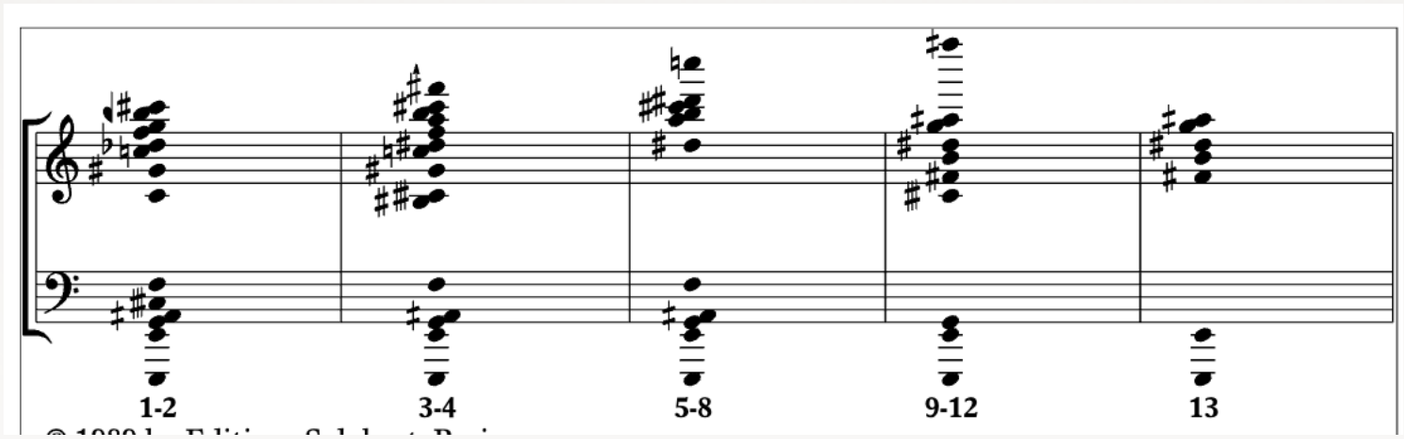
The shortest section in Désintégrations, consists of one gesture:
sustained chords that gradually move from harmonic to inharmonic. To produce the chords for this section, Murail made use of a special technique that he terms “spectral distortion.”

Section IX

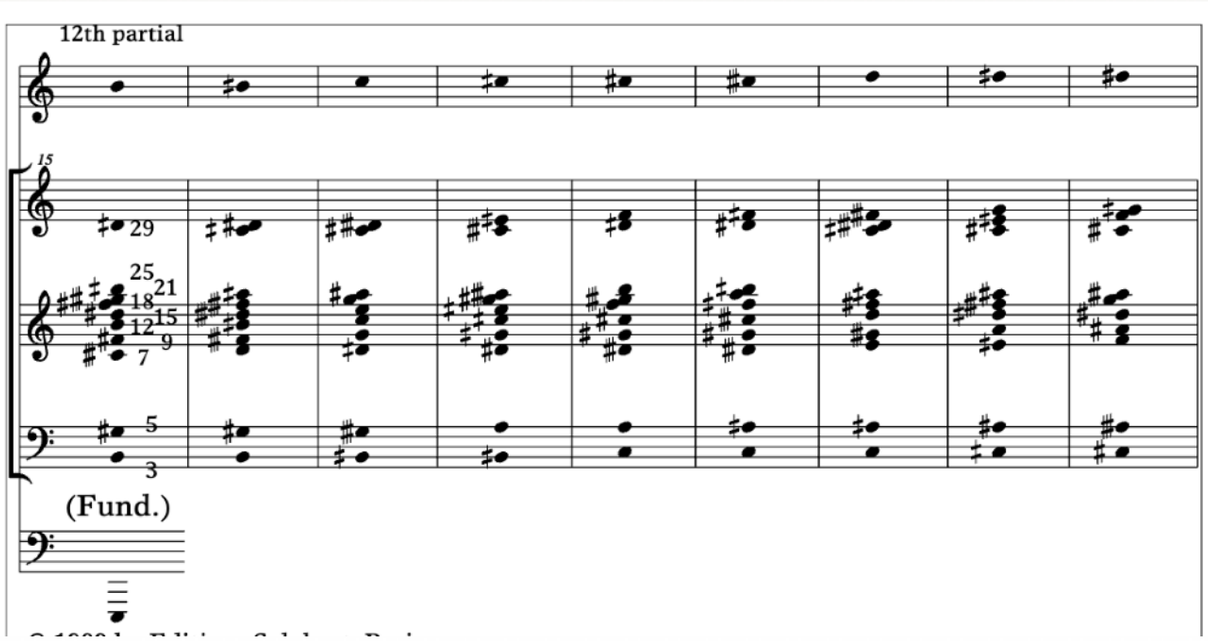


Based upon the gradual unfolding of a chord constructed using RM techniques.

Section X



Based Spectral distortion



Section XI

Based upon the gradual unfolding of a chord constructed using RM techniques.