Five Pieces (Second Set) (1978-2023)

for piano solo

by

David Francis Urrows

1. Für Elise II
2. Polka
3. A Carol for...
4. La belle Polonaise
5. Valentine

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Five Pieces (Second Set, 1978-2023)

My first set of *Five Pieces* is a group of short piano works which I composed as an undergraduate in 1976-77. Thanks to the persistence of my friend and colleague, Milica Lawrence, this second set draws together an omnium-gatherum of four pieces from a wider time frame, and one newly-composed work to round off the whole group.

Für Elise II is dedicated to my goddaughter, and I wrote it to celebrate her second birthday. It doesn't really require any further explanation.

The *Polka* comes from incidental music I wrote in 1978 during my final year at university for Anton Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*. I had the privilege of working with the Tony Award-winning director and actor, Vivian Matalon (1929-2018) on this production. It was a memorable learning experience. In Act I there is a pause in the tension, and Chekov gives the stage direction, "Telyegin plays a polka [on his guitar]; all listen in silence." Here I have arranged the polka that I wrote (for guitar) for piano, and added a few things to the stage version. Grace notes are to be played before the beat.

The slightly jazz-influenced *A Carol for...* was written in 2015 for...somebody.

La belle Polonaise (The lovely Polish girl) comes from the musical score which I composed in 1989 (the year of the French bicentennial) for a production of Jean Giraudoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillot*. This 'imaginary' song is a plot device in the play, and heard only in half-remembered fragments until the second half of Act II, when one of the characters is finally able to recover all the words and music. Here, of course, it is presented in the equally-imaginary *Urform* of the work, somewhat in the style of a mazurka by Chopin.

Valentine is not an actual valentine, but was suggested by lines in Part Five of Tennyson's *The Princess*:

> Then rode we with the old king across the lawns
> Beneath huge trees, a thousand rings of Spring
> In every bole, a song on every spray
> Of birds that piped their Valentines, and woke
> Desire in me to infuse my tale of love
> In the old king's ear...

Into this very English scene wanders a Renaissance melody from France (Clément Jannequin's *Ce Moys de May*). But music travels after all, in time and also in space.

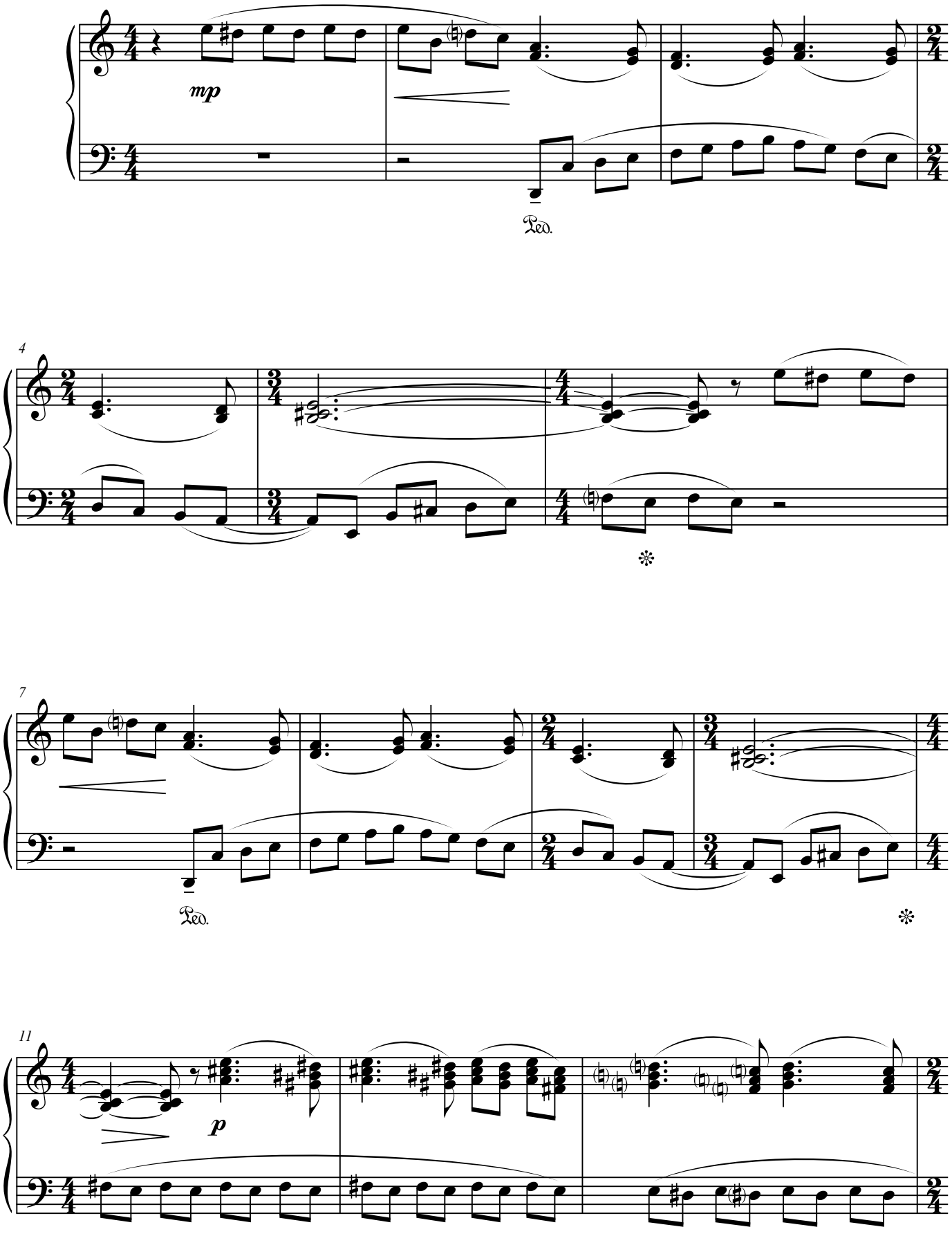
D.F.U., Manila, 2023

Meinem Patenkind Elise gewidmet

1. Für Elise II

Moderato (♩= ca. 90)

David Francis Urrows



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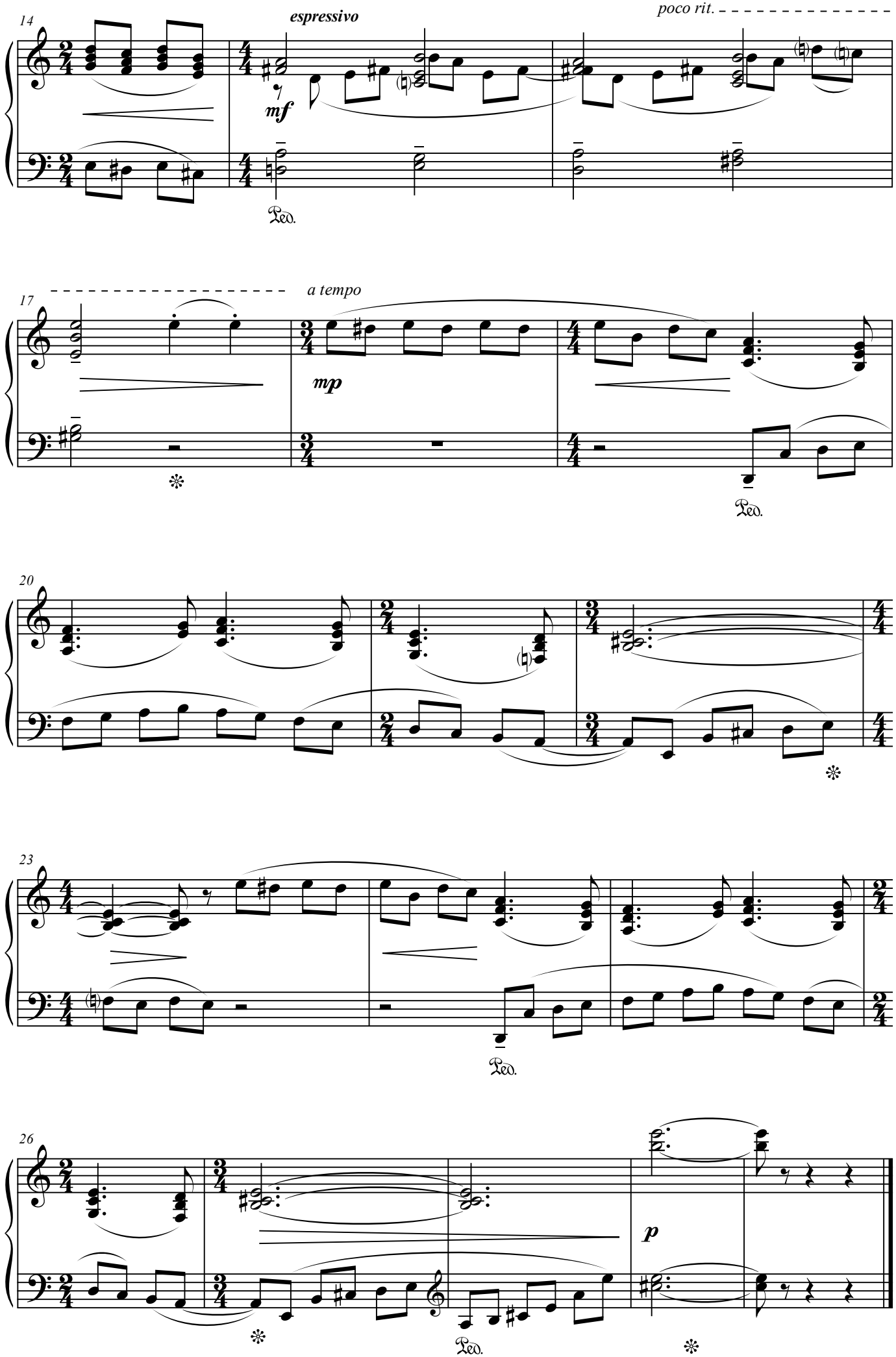
14
espressivo
poco rit.
mf
Ped.
17
a tempo
mp
Ped.
20
Ped.
23
Ped.
26
p
Ped.

2. Polka

(from the incidental music to Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*)

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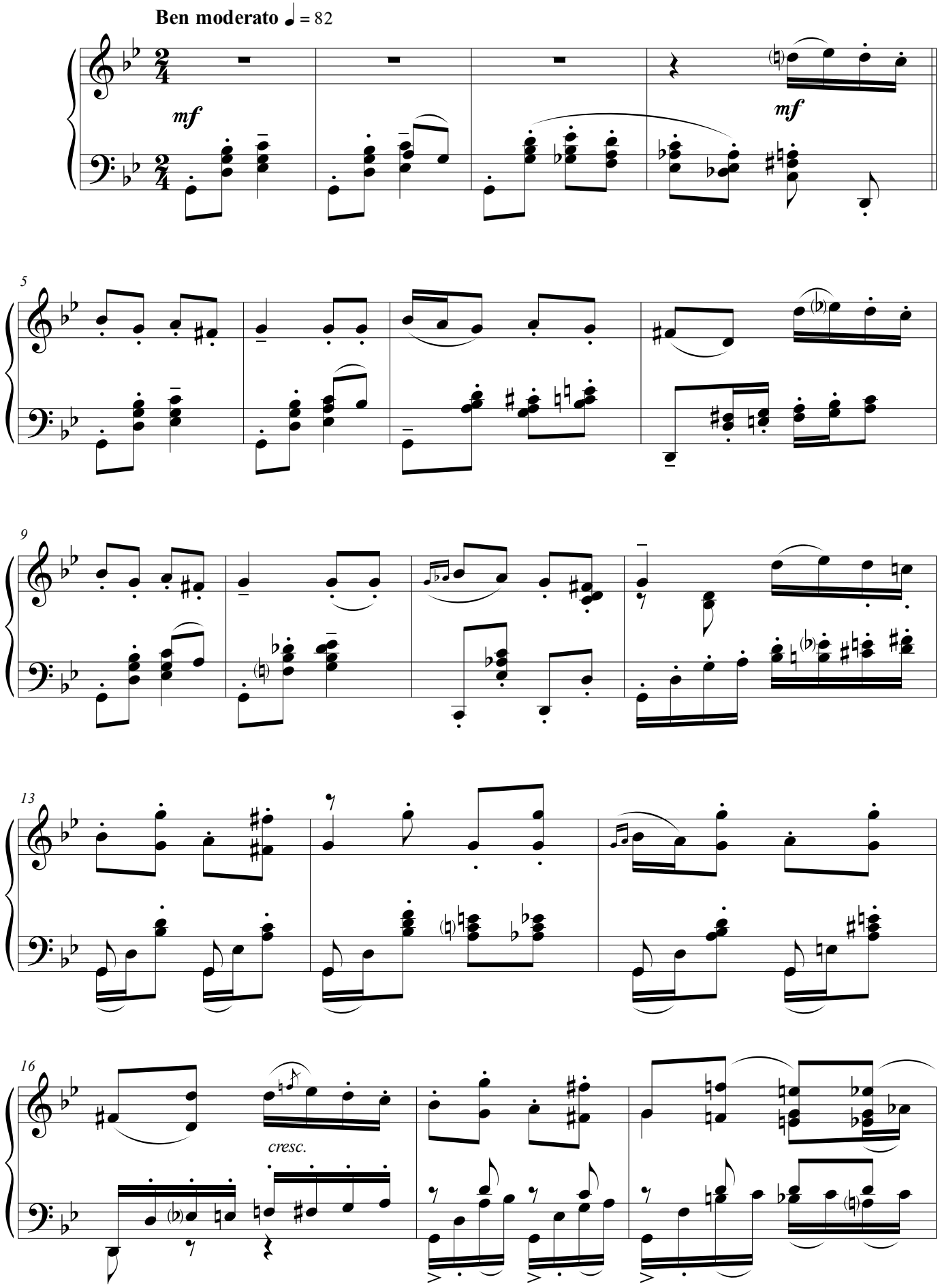

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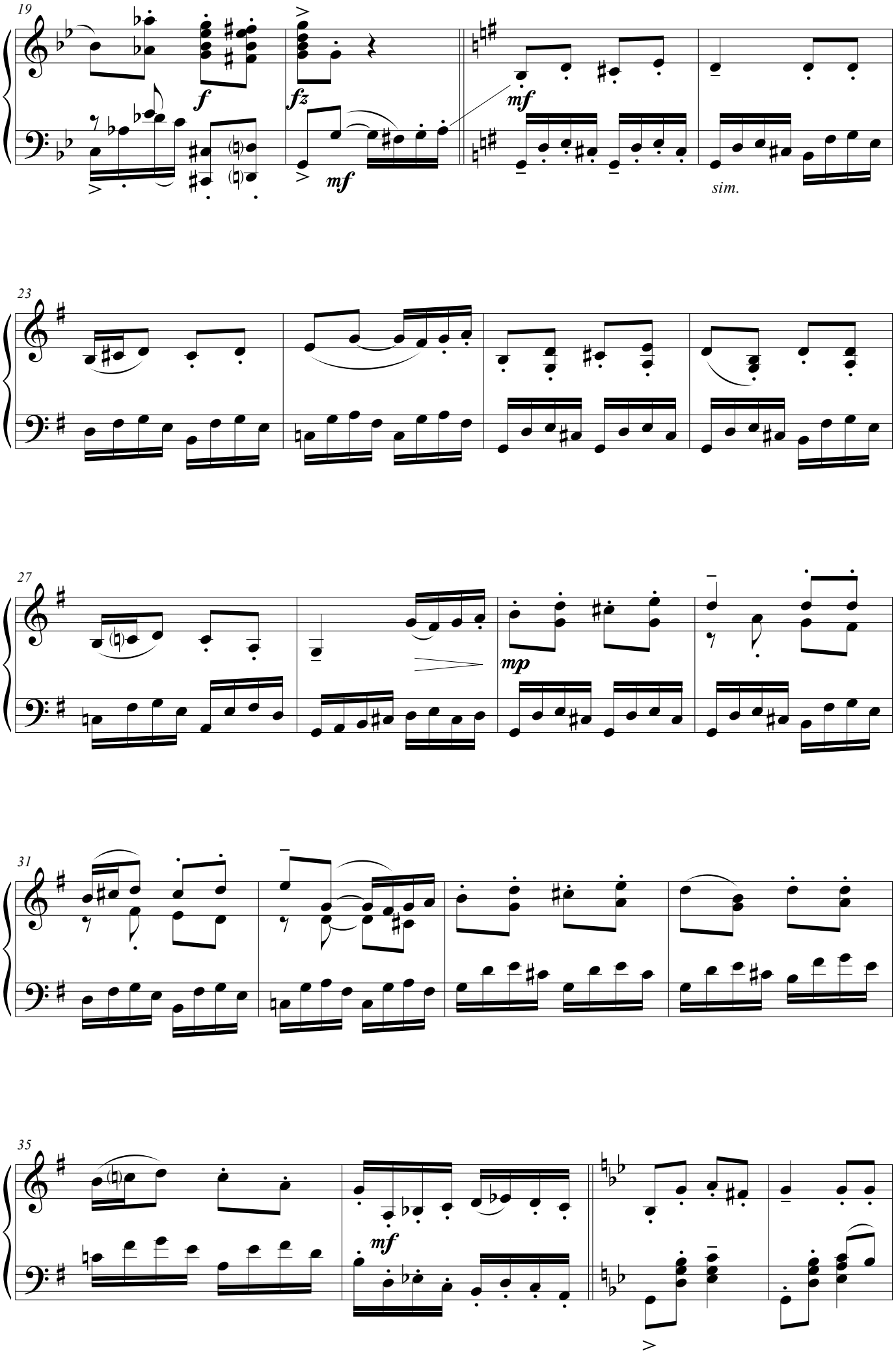
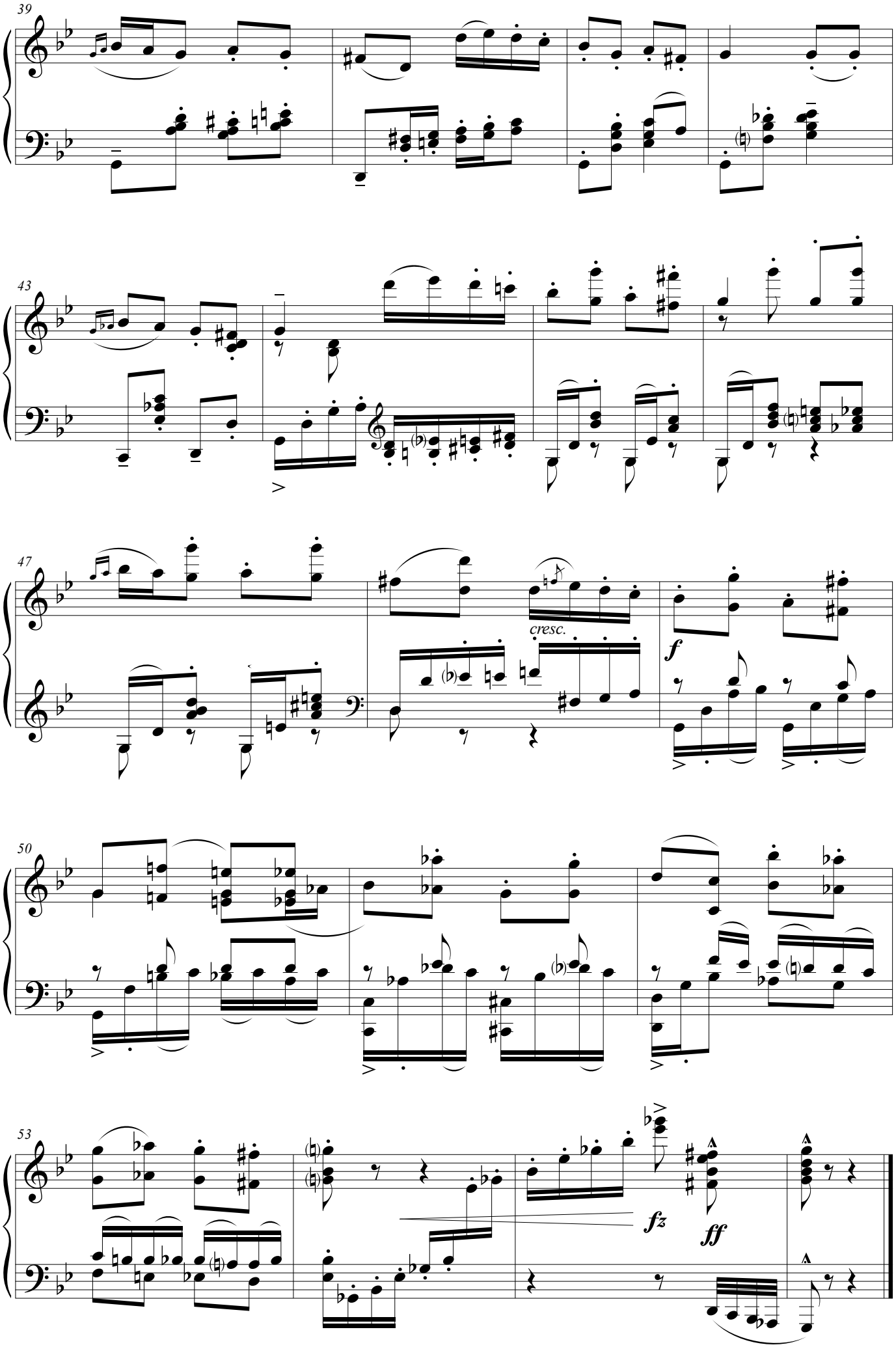
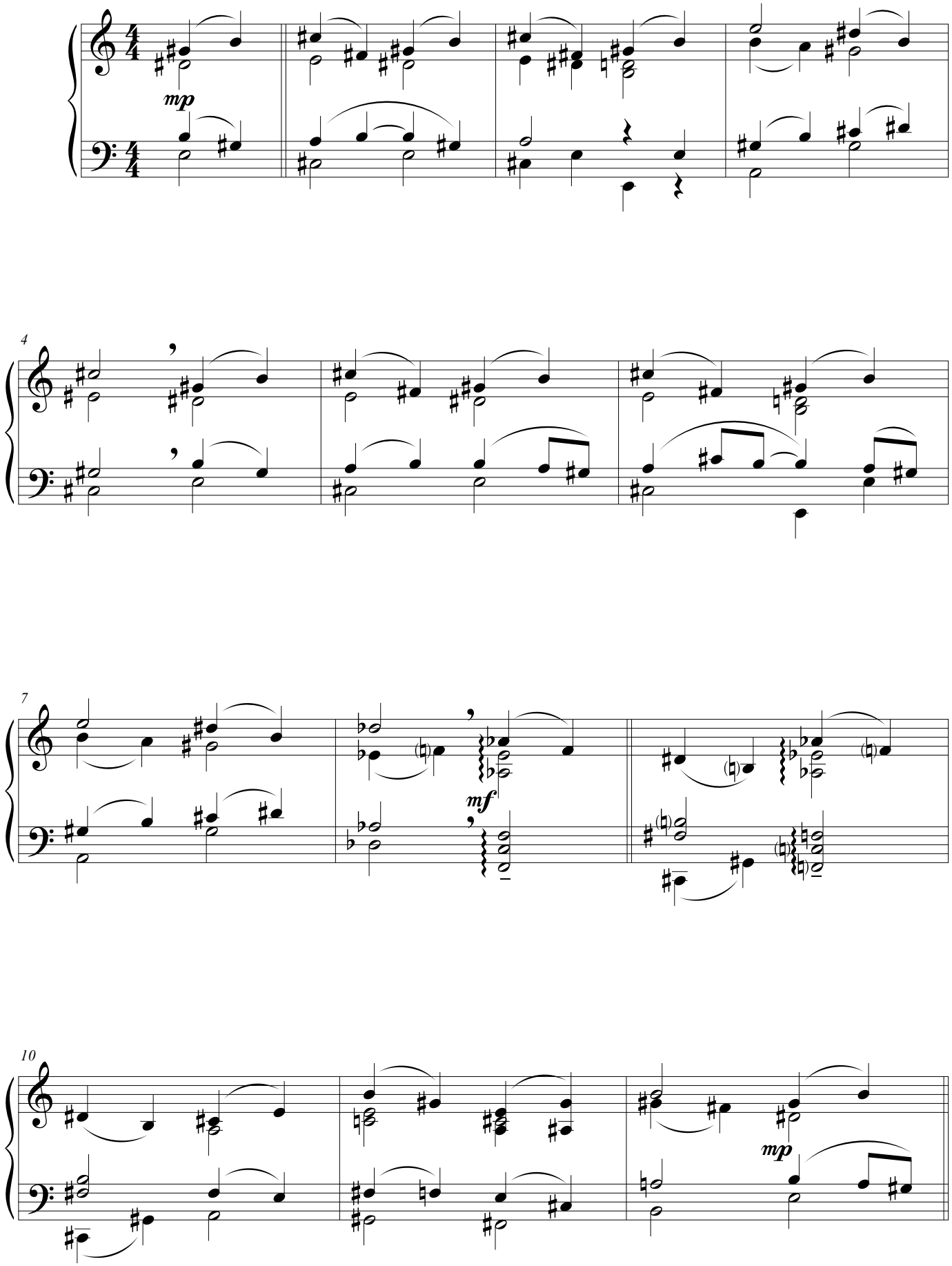

19
f
fz
mf
mf
sim.
23
27
mp
31
35
mf


39
43
47
cresc.
f
50
53
fz
ff

3. A Carol for ...

Con moto, espressivo (♩ = ca. 108) **David Francis Urrows**



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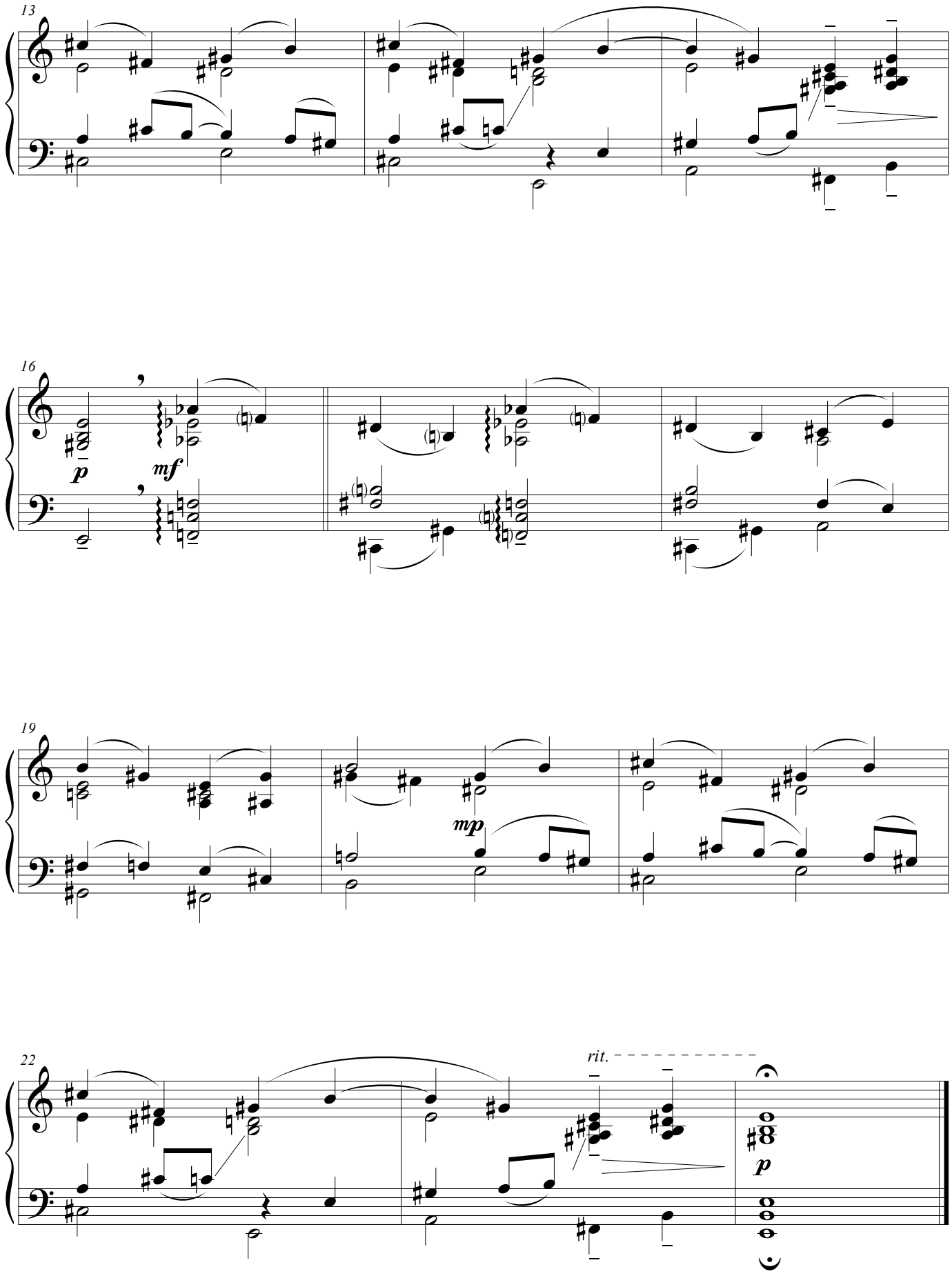
13
16
p
mf
19
mp
22
rit.
p

4. La belle Polonaise

(from the incidental music to Giraudoux's *La Folle de Chaillot*)

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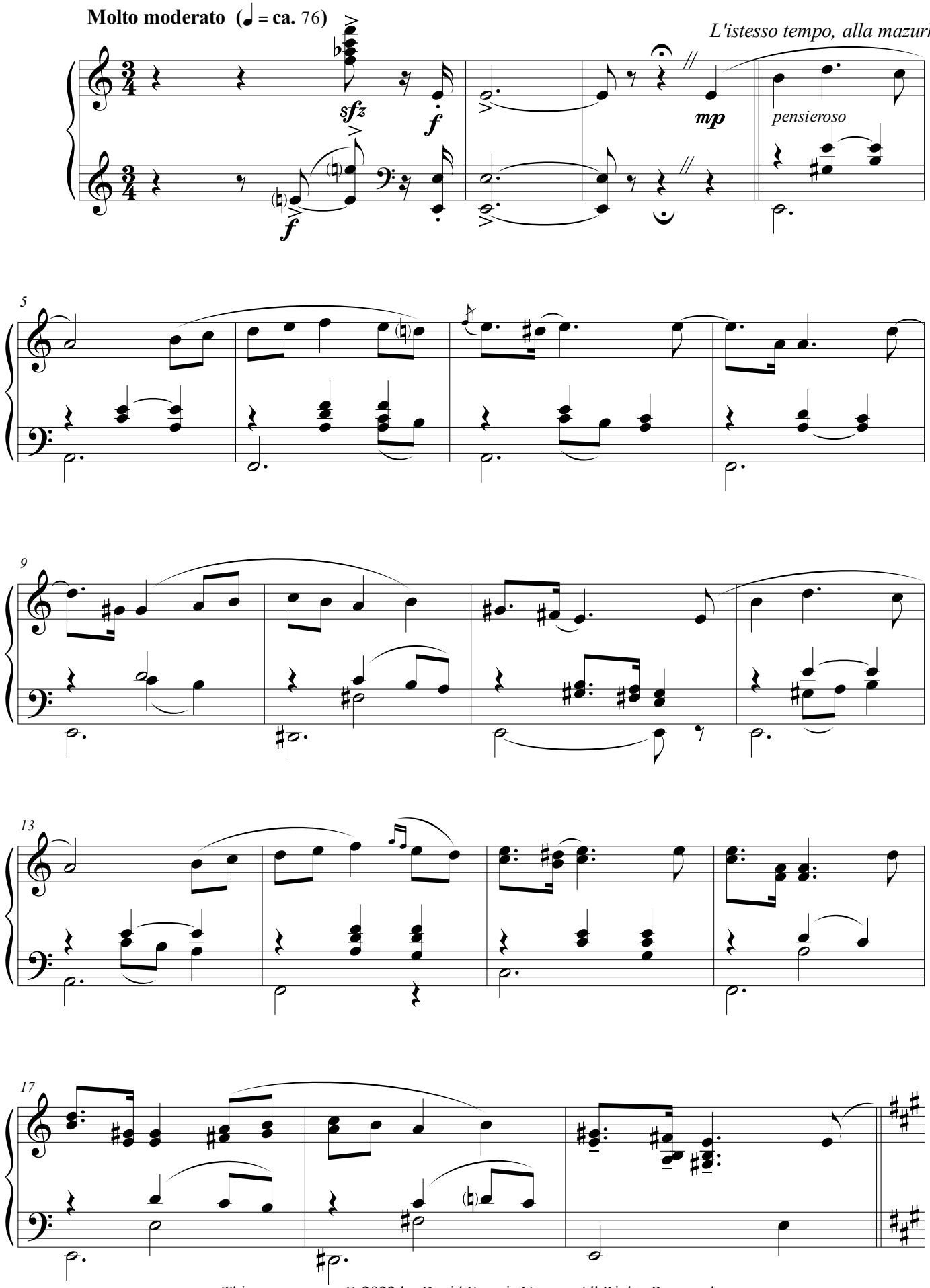
Molto moderato (♩ = **ca.** 76)

L'istesso tempo, alla mazurka



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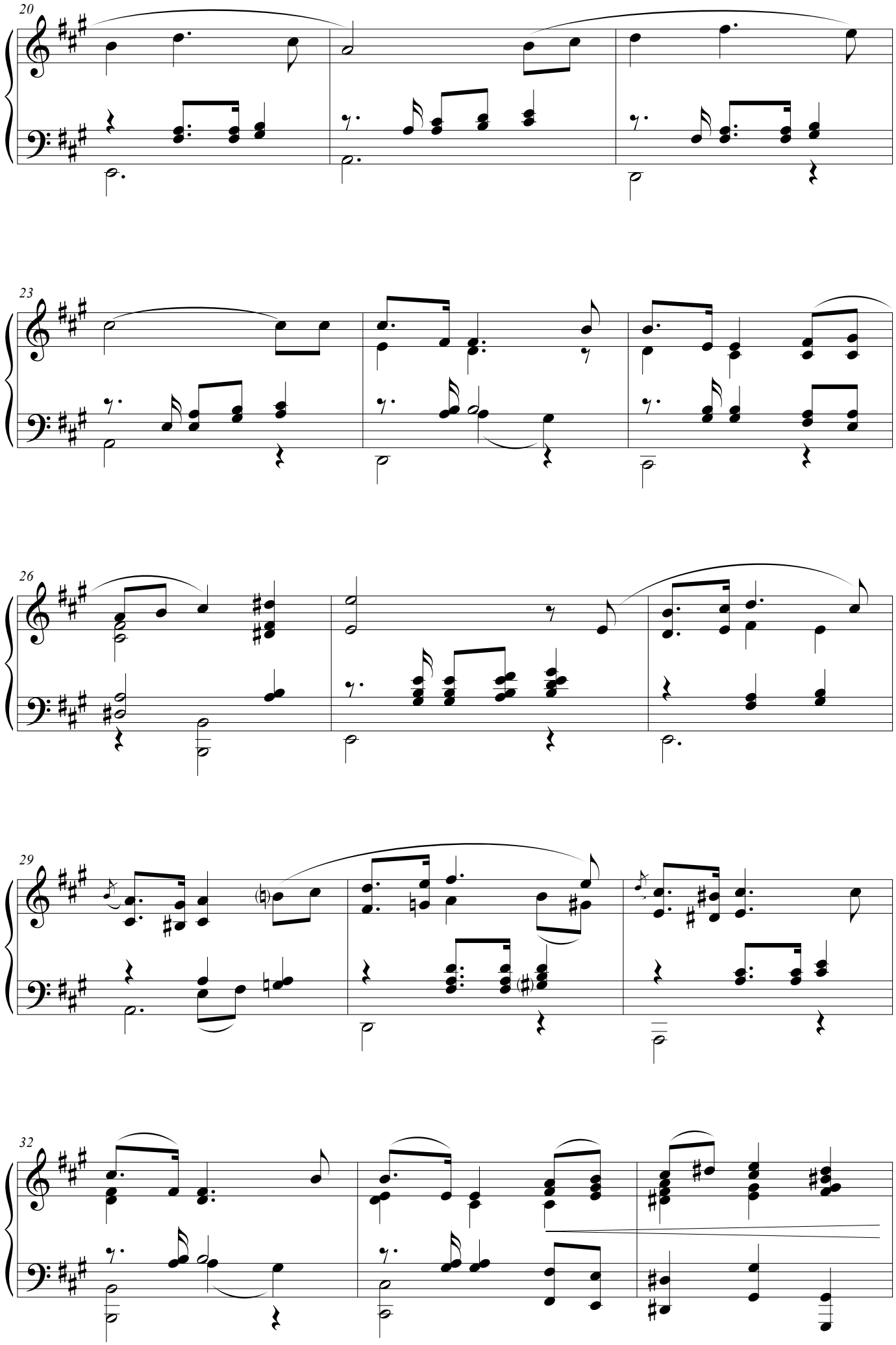
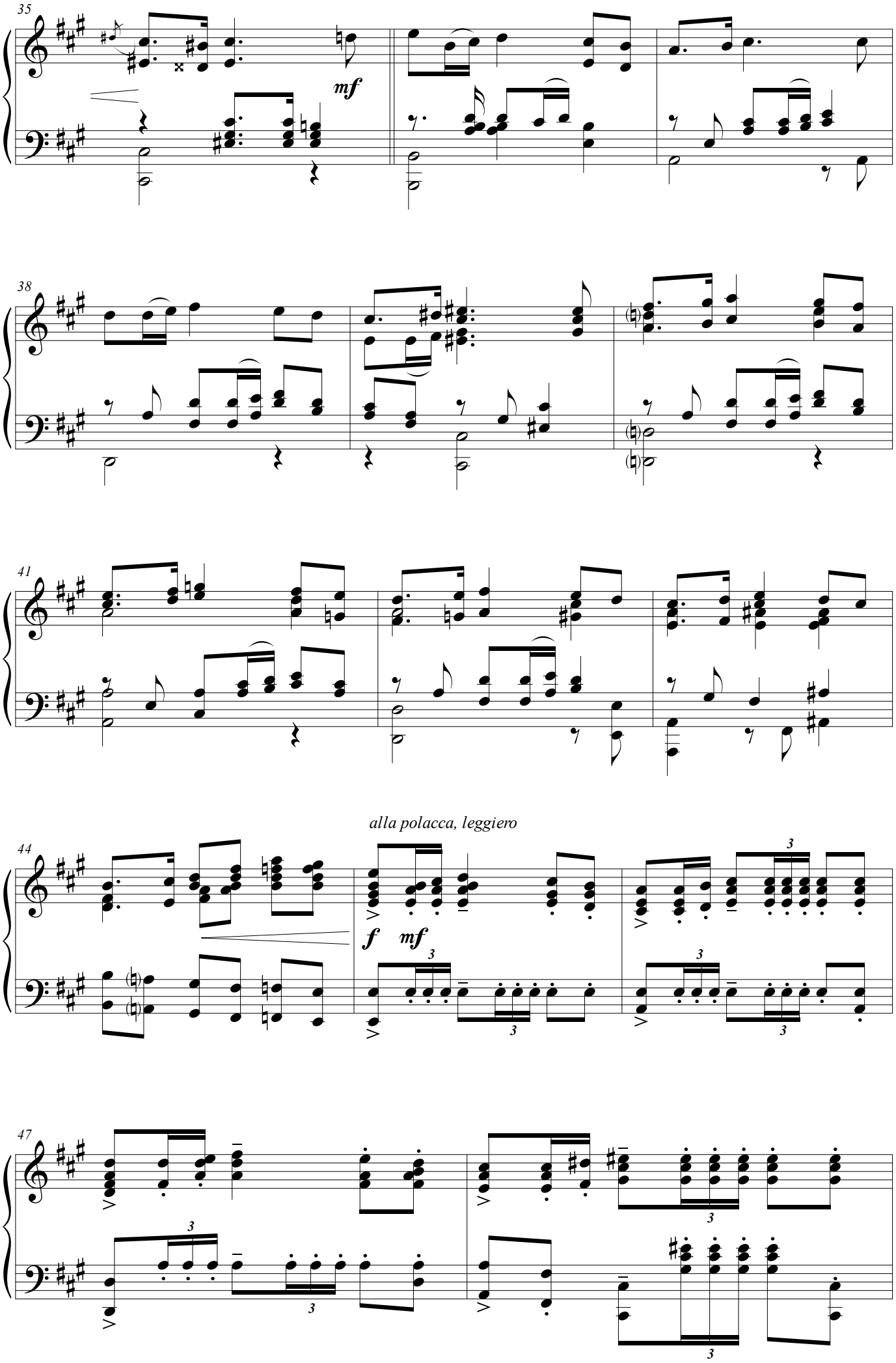
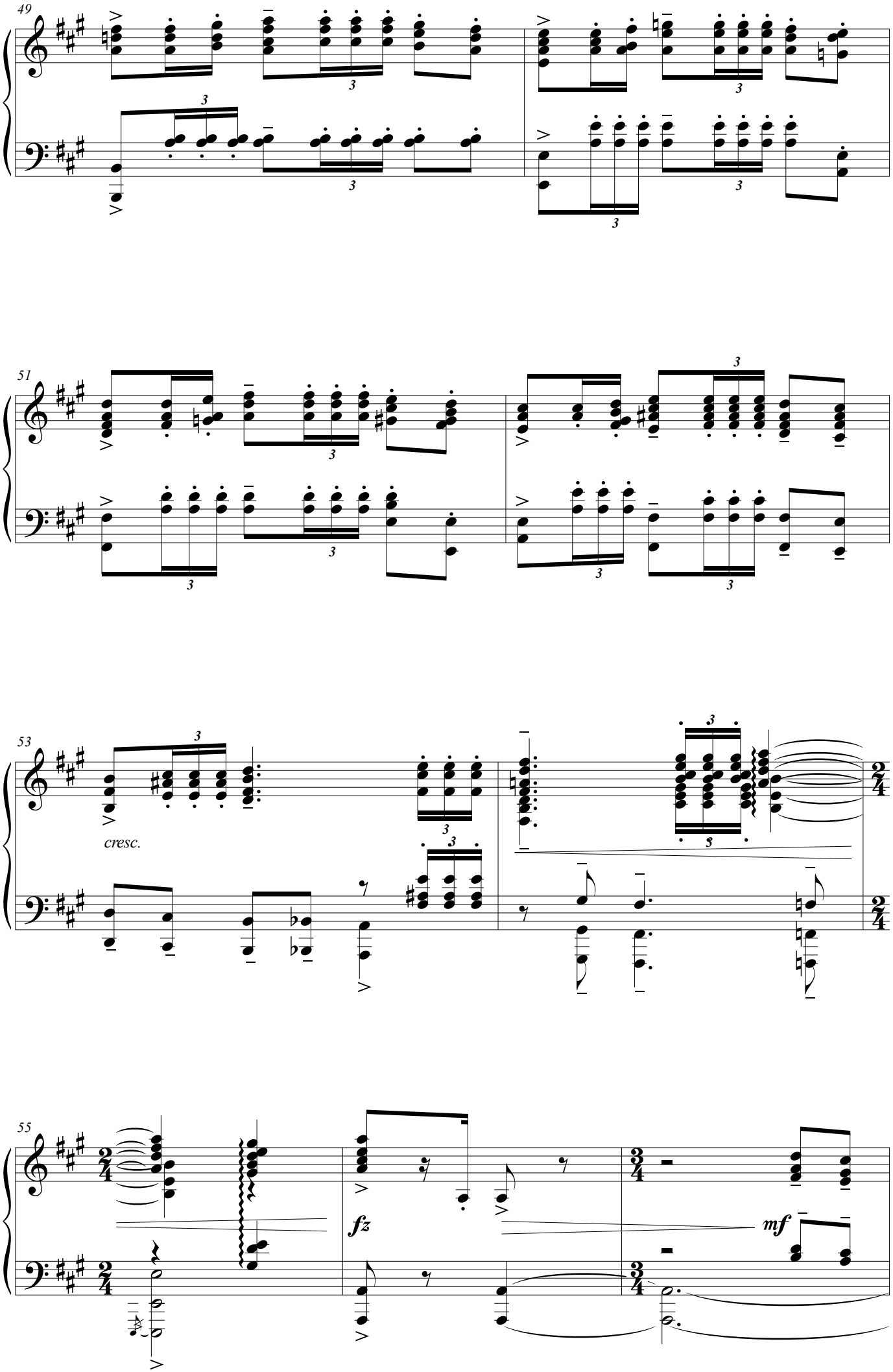
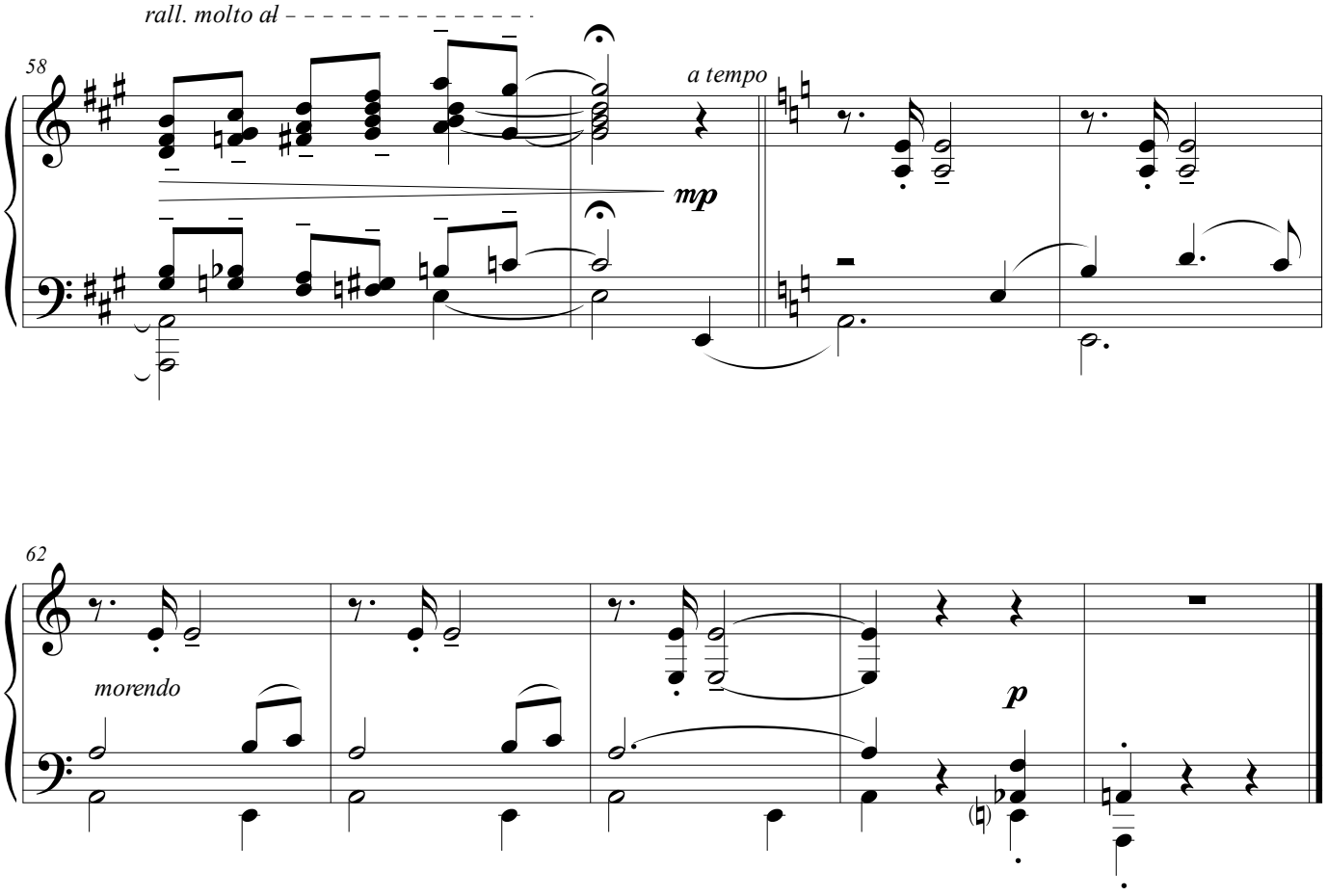

20
23
26
29
32


35
mf
38
41
alla polacca, leggiero
44
f
mf
47


49
51
53
cresc.
55
fz
mf


rall. molto al
58
a tempo
mp

62
morendo
p

5. Valentine

David Francis Urrows

Vivo commodo ♩. = ca. 90

Pedale sempre con leggerezza

5

8

mf

11

13

dim.

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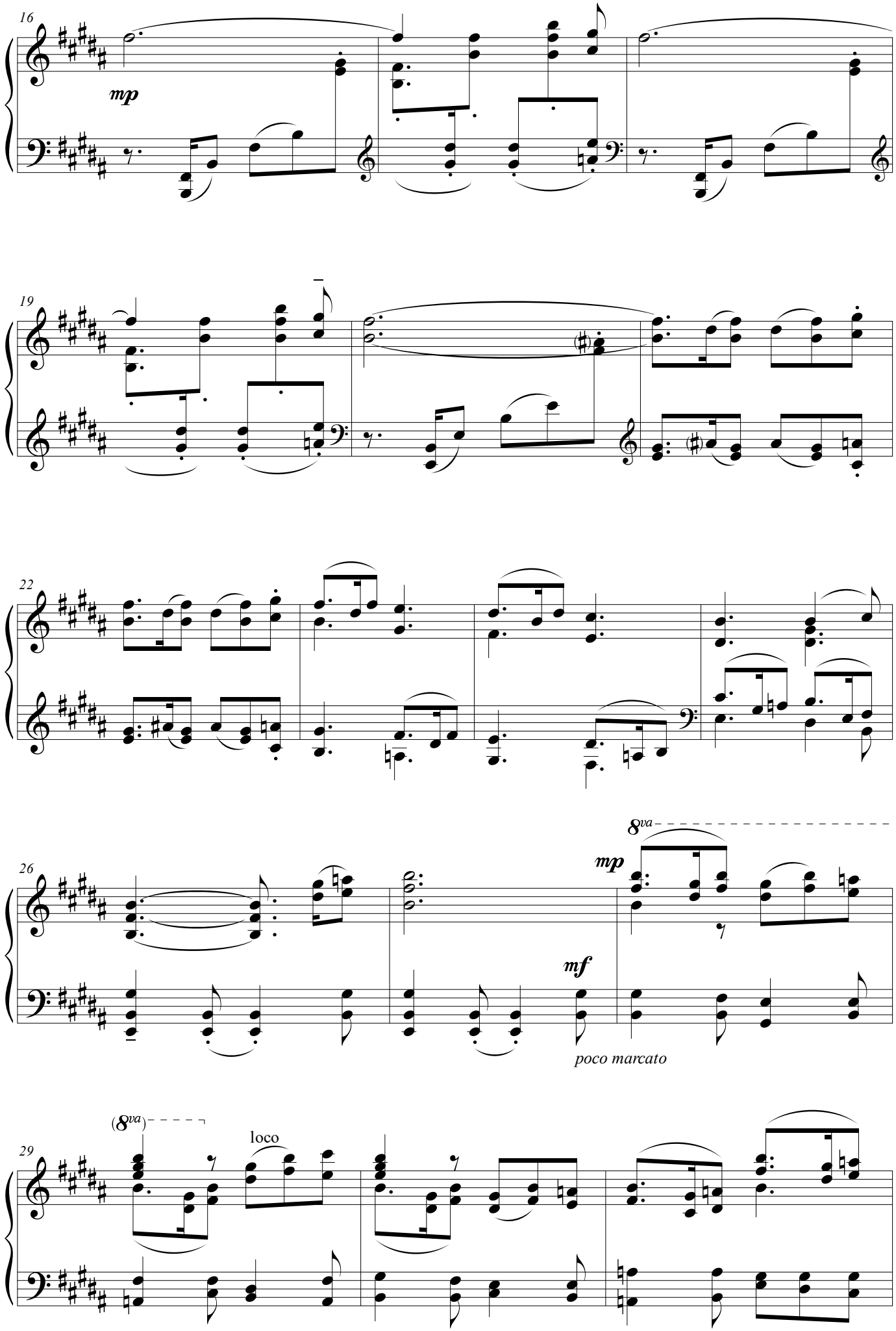
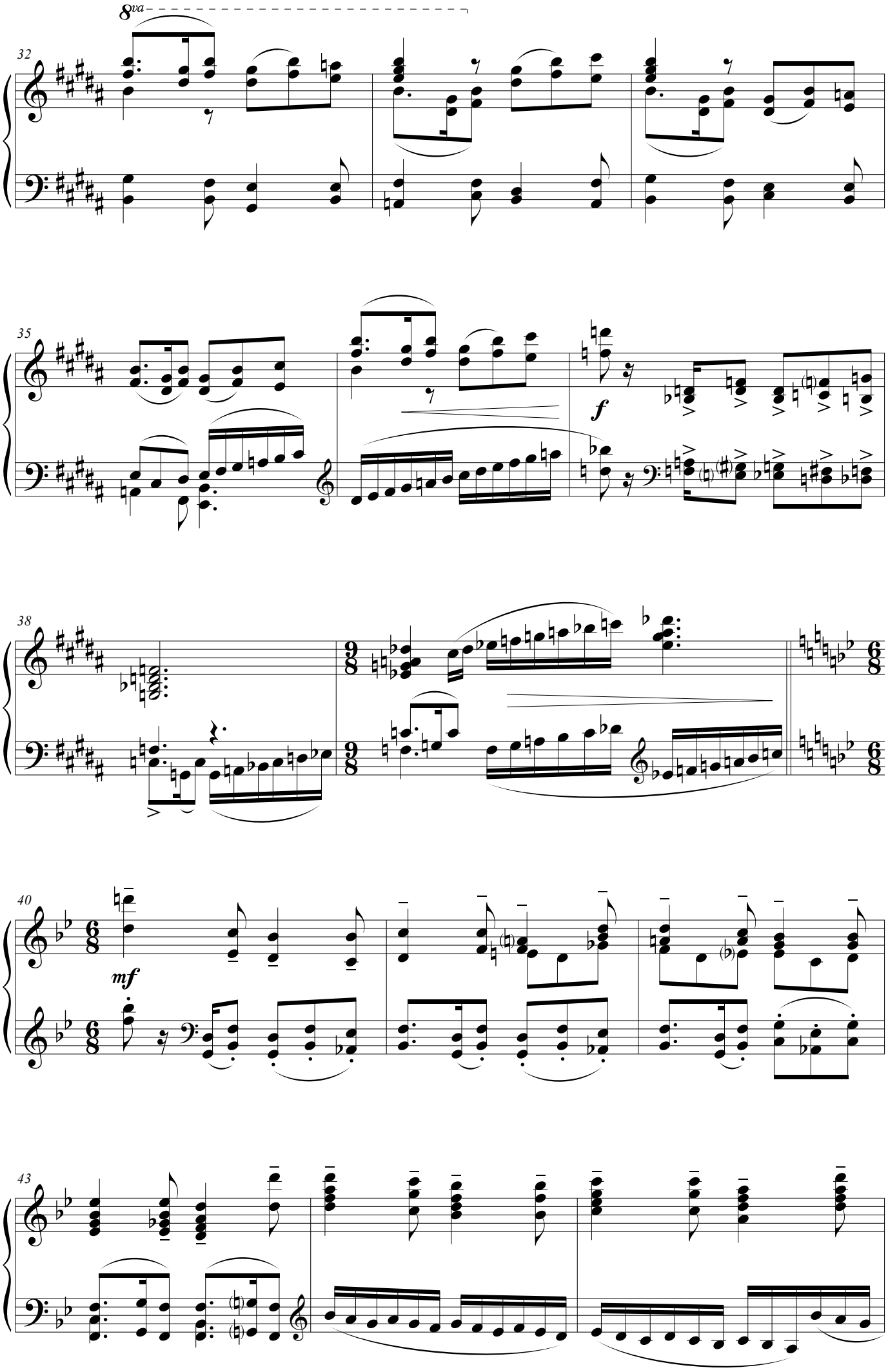
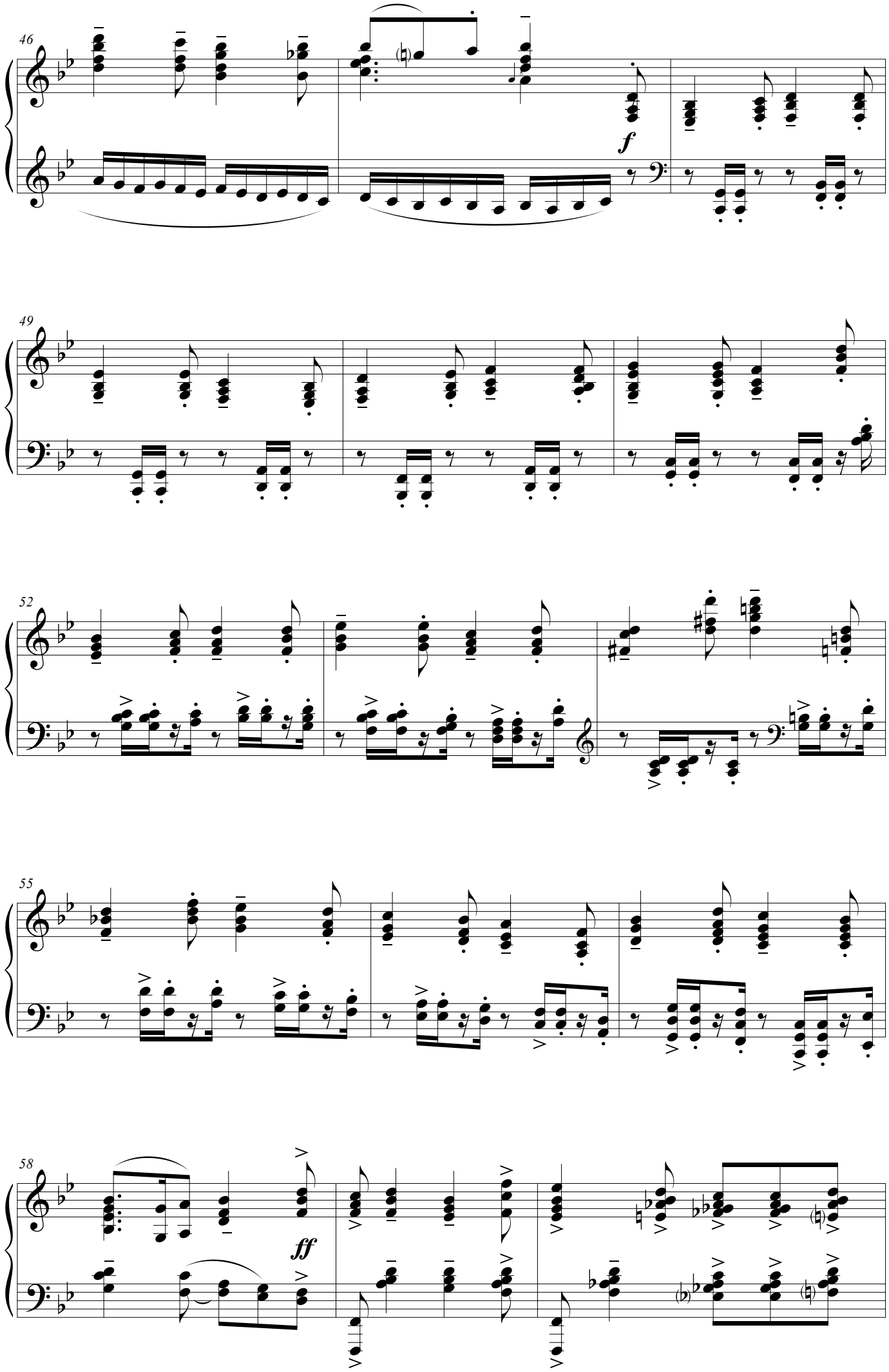
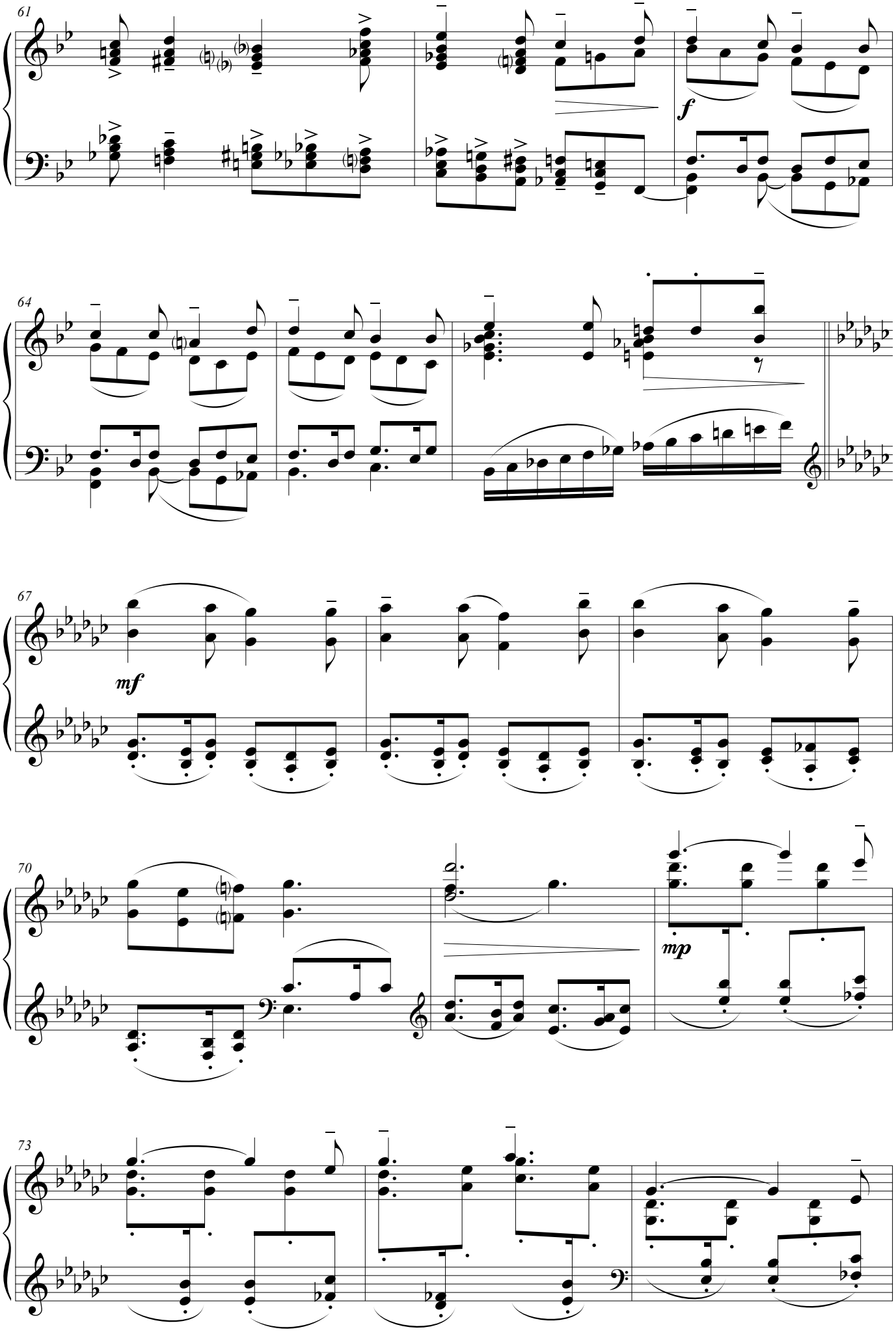
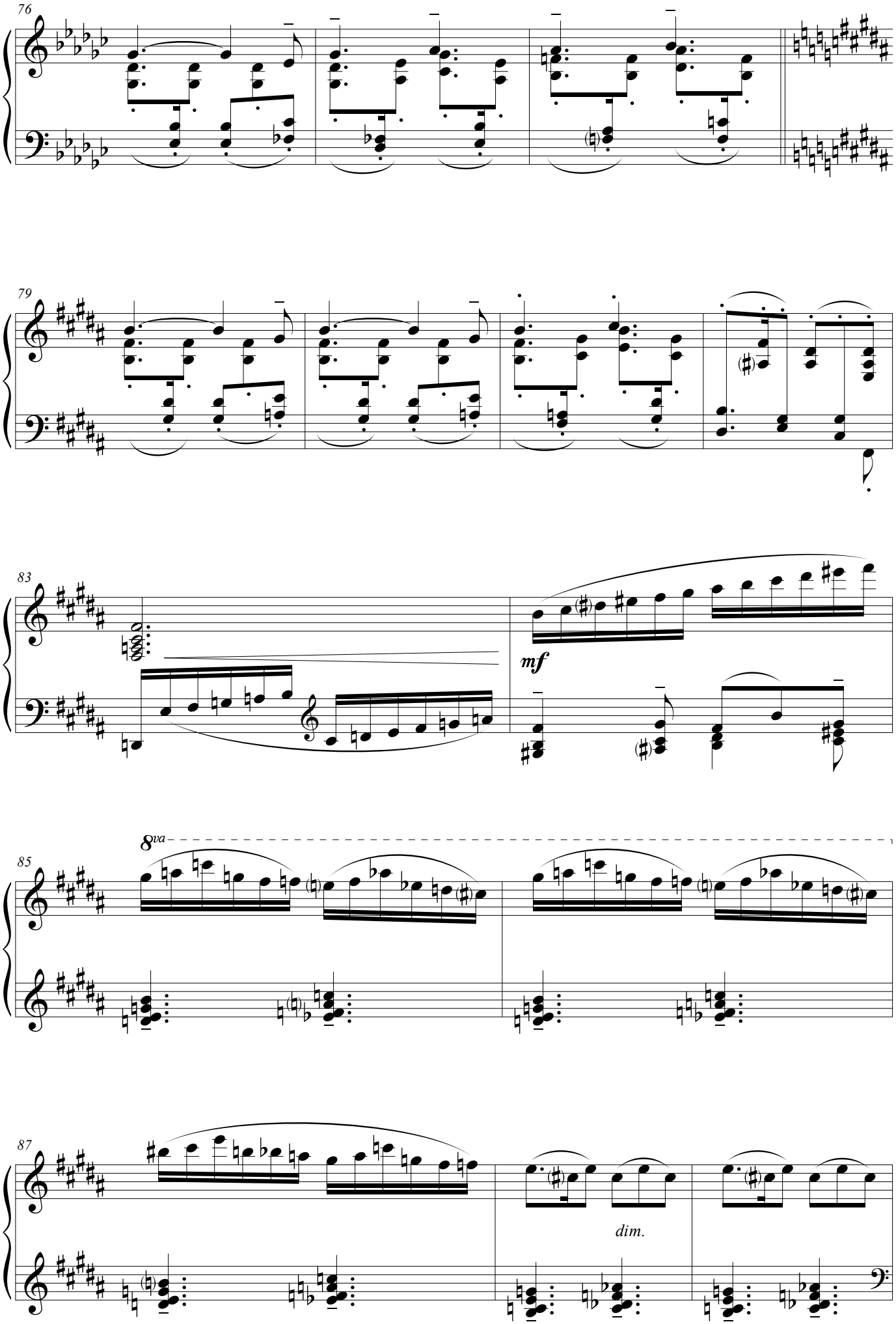
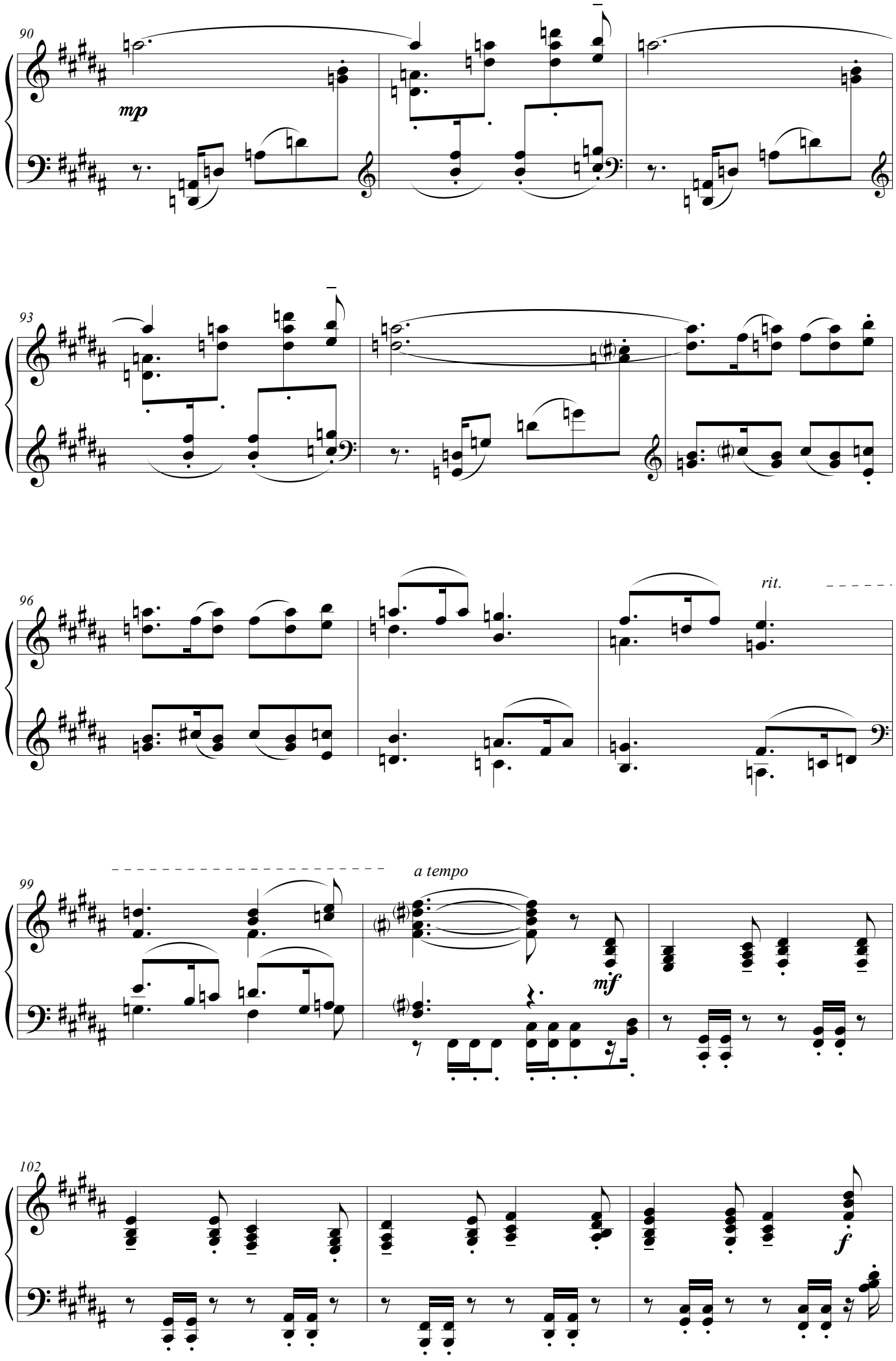

16
mp
19
22
26
8va
mp
mf
poco marcato
29
(8va)
loco

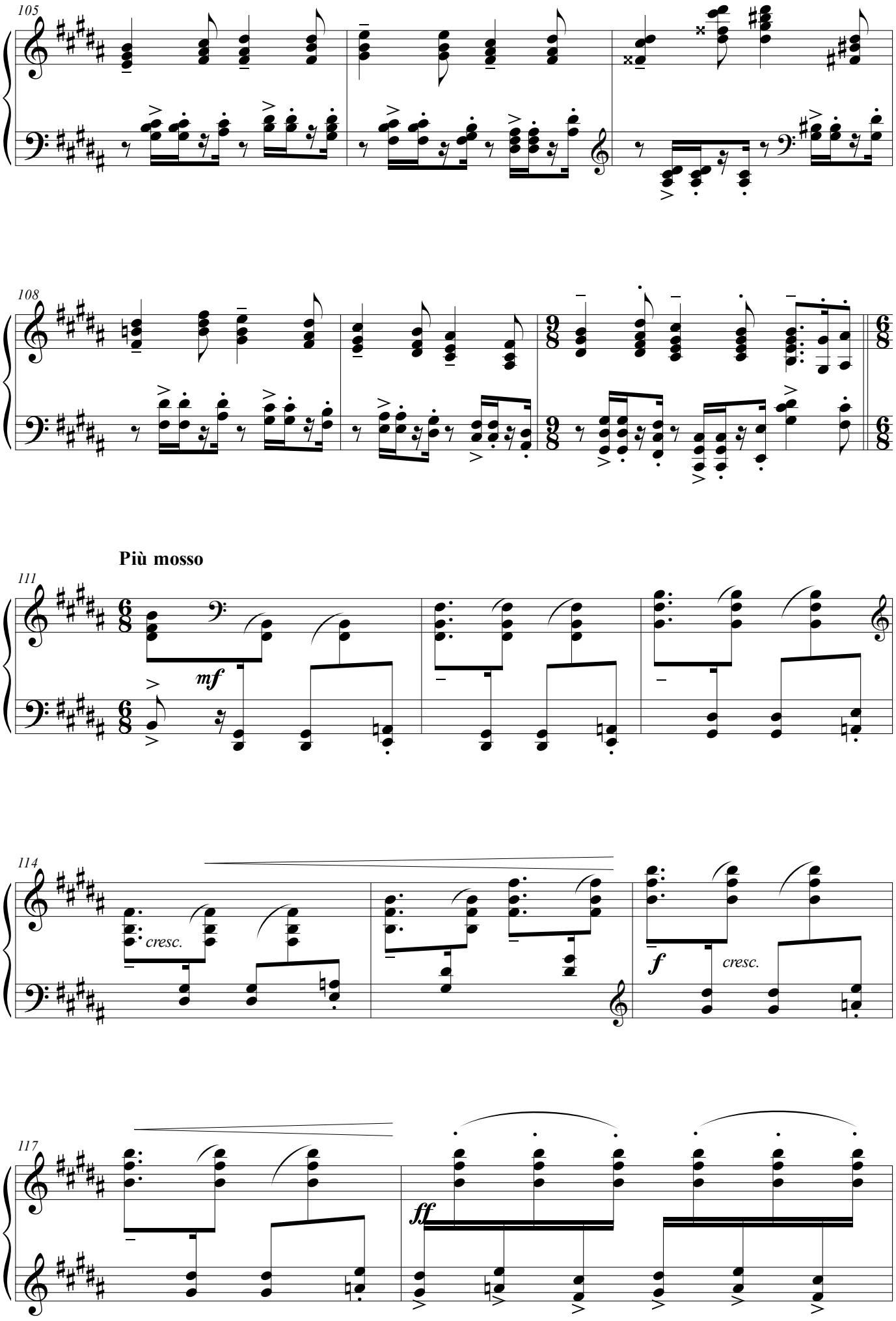

8va
32
35
f
38
40
mf
43

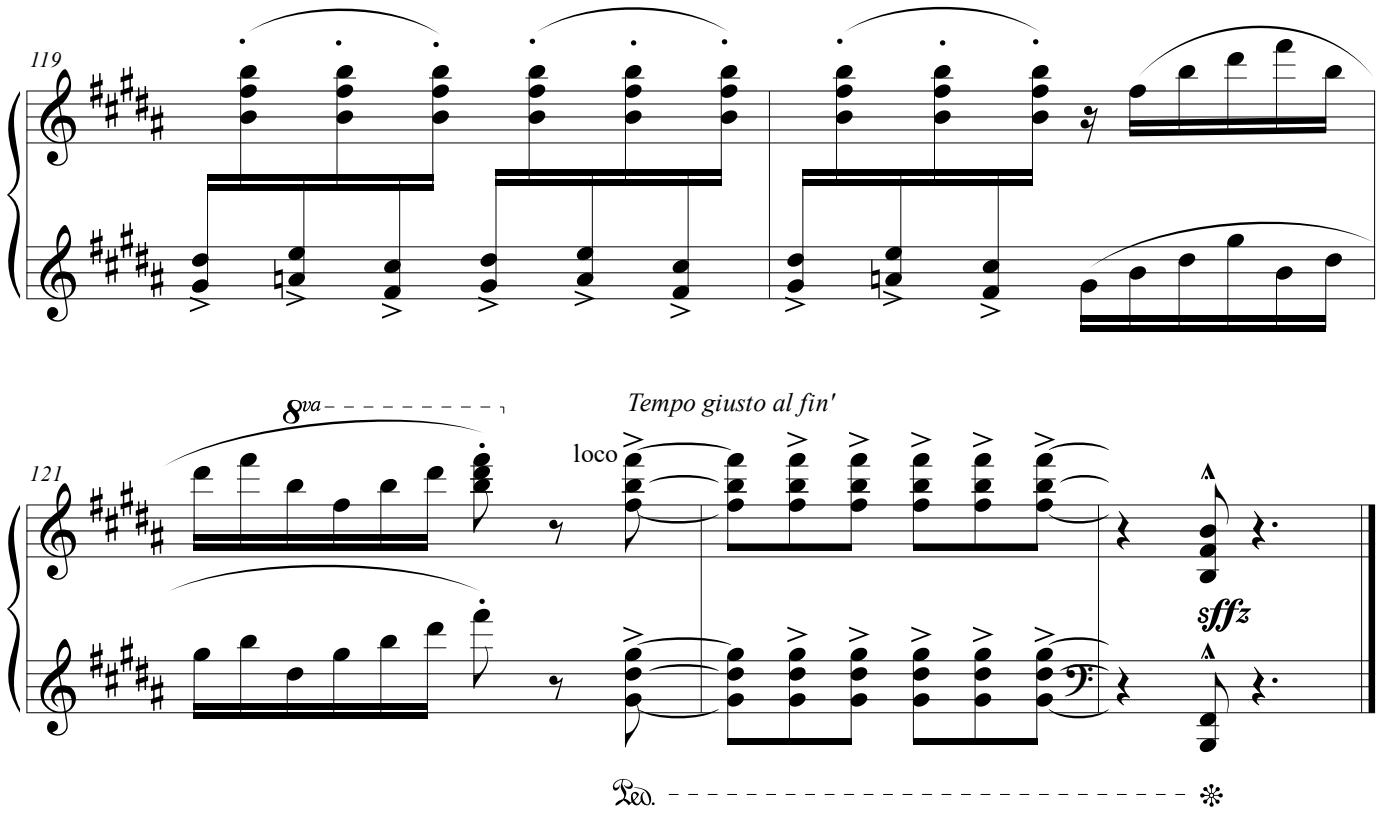

46
f
49
52
55
58
ff

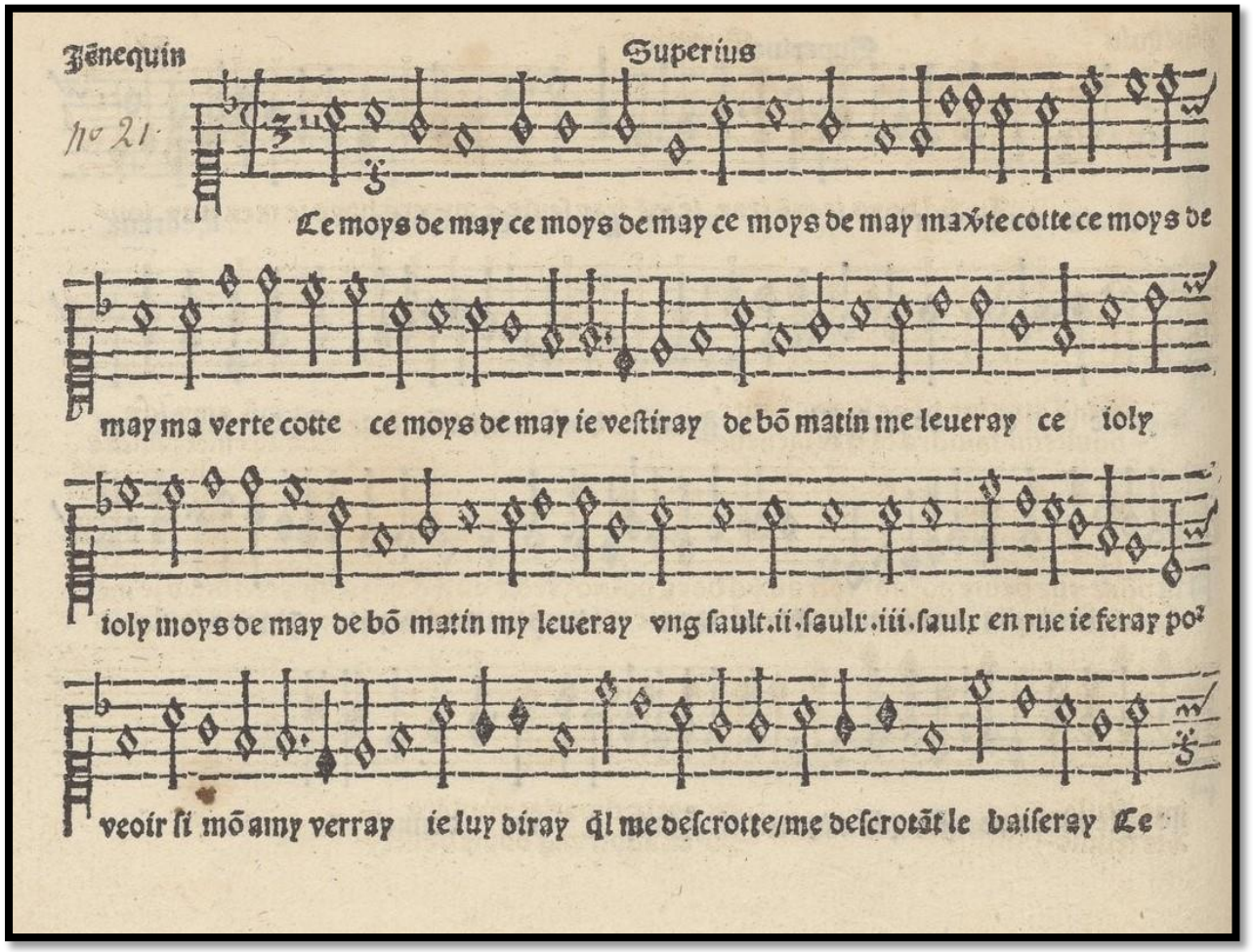

61
f
64
67
mf
70
mp
73


76
79
83
mf
8va
85
87
dim.


90
mp
93
96
rit.
99
a tempo
mf
102
f


105
108
Più mosso
111
mf
114
cresc.
f
cresc.
117
ff


119
121
8va
Tempo giusto al fin'
loco
sfffz
Ped.


Ženequin
Superius
no 21
Ce moys de may ce moys de may ce moys de may maxte cotte ce moys de
may ma verte cotte ce moys de may ie vestiray de bō matin me leueray ce ioly
ioly moys de may de bō matin my leueray vng sault.ii.saulx.iii.saulx en rue ie feray po
veoir si mō amy verray ie luy diray ql me descrotte/me descrotāt le baiseray Ce

Five Pieces

for piano solo

By

David Francis Urrows

1. *Adagietto*
2. *Allegro scorrevole*
3. *Andantino*
4. *Semplice*
5. *Molto vivace*

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These five pieces for piano solo – all short and 'aphoristic' – were written while I was an undergraduate at Brandeis University, in 1976 and 1977. They were not assignments of any kind, but I shared them with my two composition teachers at the time, Harold Shapero (1920-2013), and Arthur Berger (1912-2003). Berger was the more responsive, and while he recognized that each of them had a kind of model in the music of an earlier composer, he was also helpful and suggested many improvements. I have a kind of nostalgia for this very mixed period in my life. Tincture of time has blunted many pains from back then, and in the present these pieces still seem worth playing and hearing – on occasion. No. 1 and no. 4 are playable by students.

The sustaining pedal should be used freely, and I have indicated only a few places where a special effect is required. There are also a few things I can recall about the origins of the individual works, and which may be of interest to performers:

1. Originally entitled *Albumblatt*, and inspired by a poem (in German) descriptive of autumn foliage in the Adirondacks.

2. A kind of micro-étude, somewhat influenced by Scriabin, perhaps.

3. A *valse lent*, and a bit in the style of Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (although my old friend, the British composer Carey Blyton (1932-2002), failed to detect any nobility in it, and called it '*valse d'un ivrogne*'.)

4. A portrait of 'R.T.' I later used this melody as the second group theme in the first movement of my String Quartet (1978).

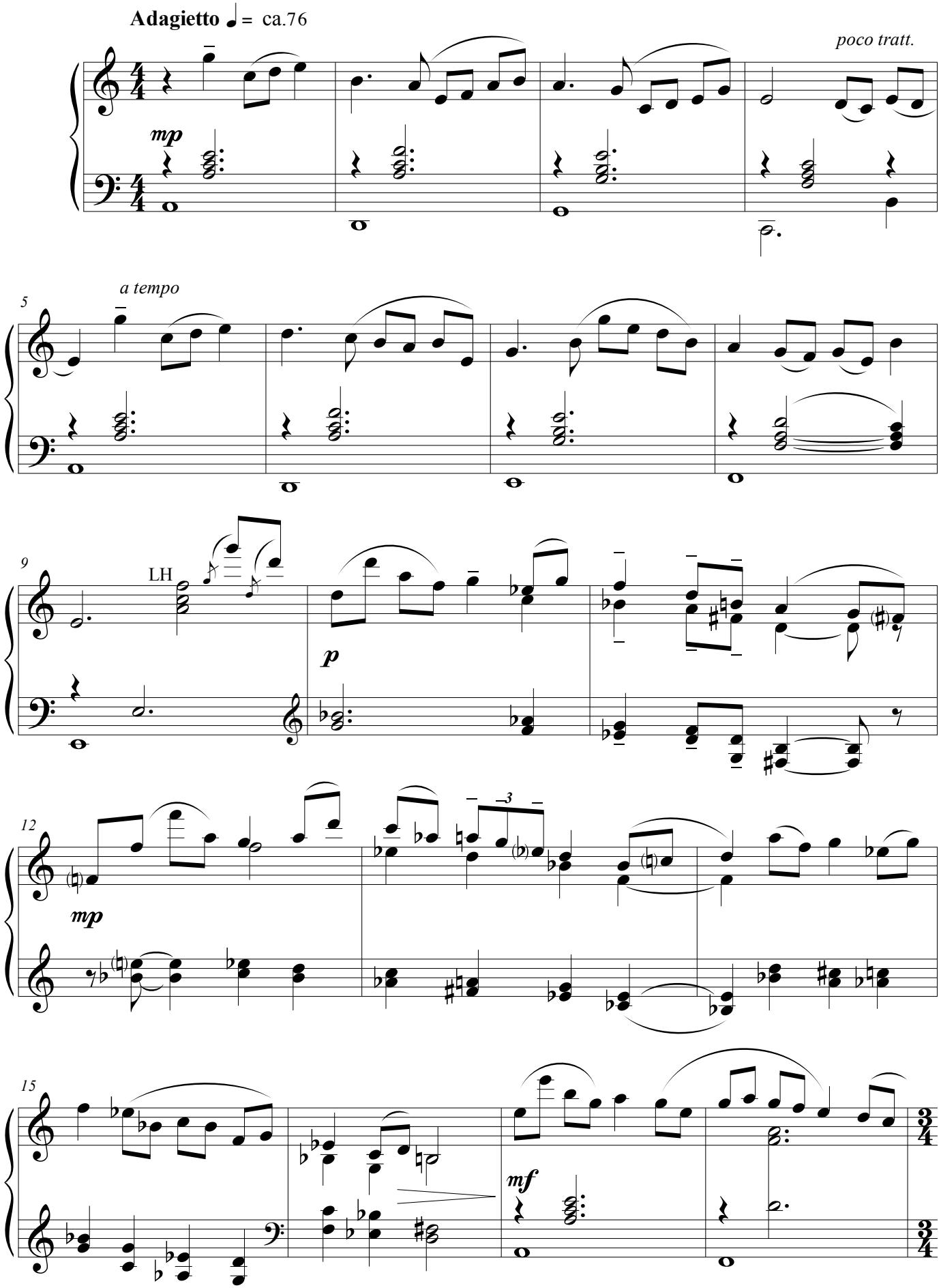
5. The theme in the left hand at m. 32 is an Appalachian fiddle tune, *Old Joe Clark*. I learned this from a banjo player in Lenox, Massachusetts, in the bicentennial summer of 1976.

D.F.U.
Cebu, Summer 2019

Five Pieces

1.

David Francis Urrows



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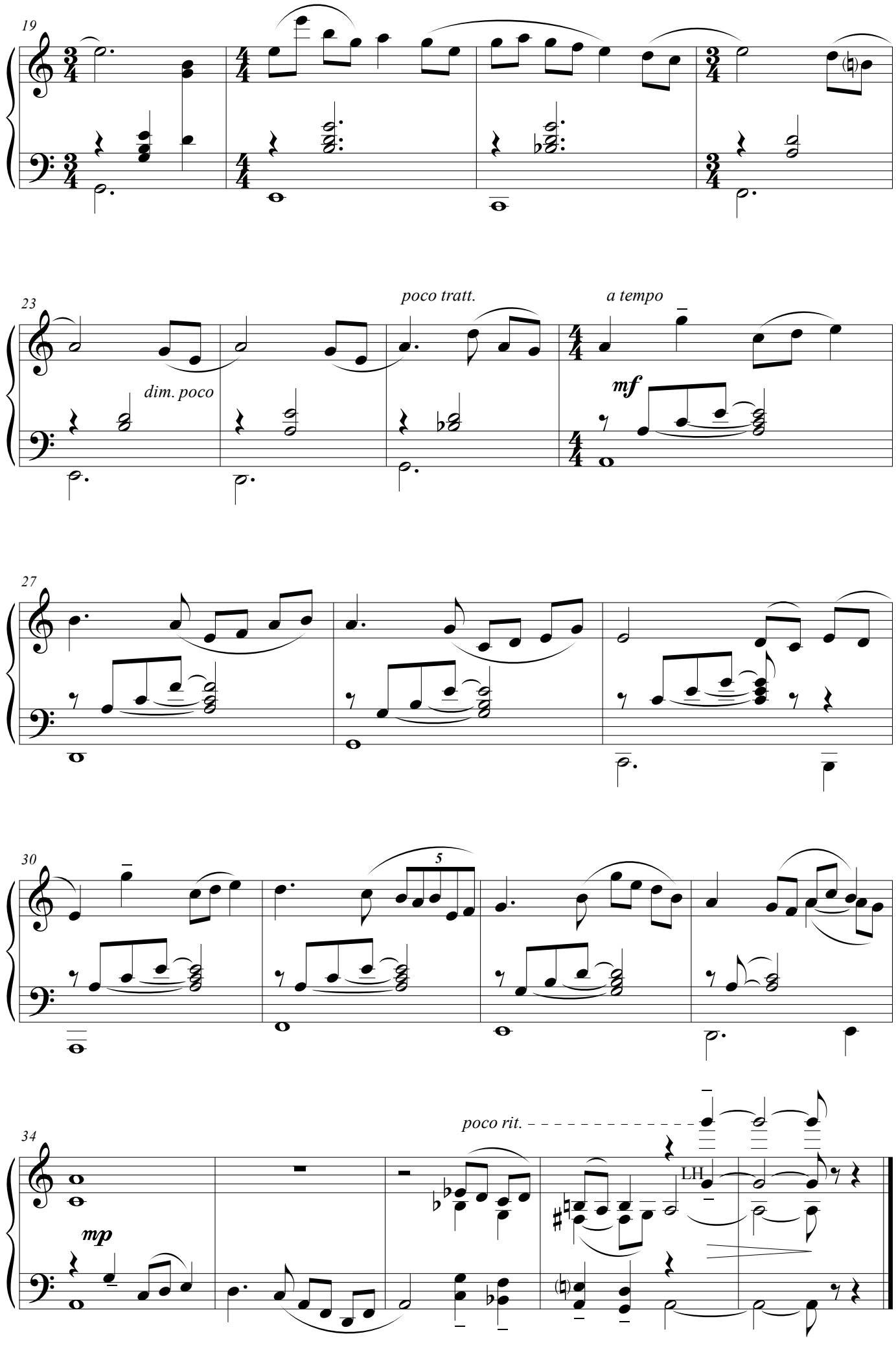
19
23
dim. poco
poco tratt.
a tempo
mf
27
30
5
34
mp
poco rit.
LH

2.

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Allegro scorrevole ♩ = ca. 88

sempre legato

mp

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

2

LH *mf la melodia in relievo* RH LH

sim.

4

LH RH LH

6

8

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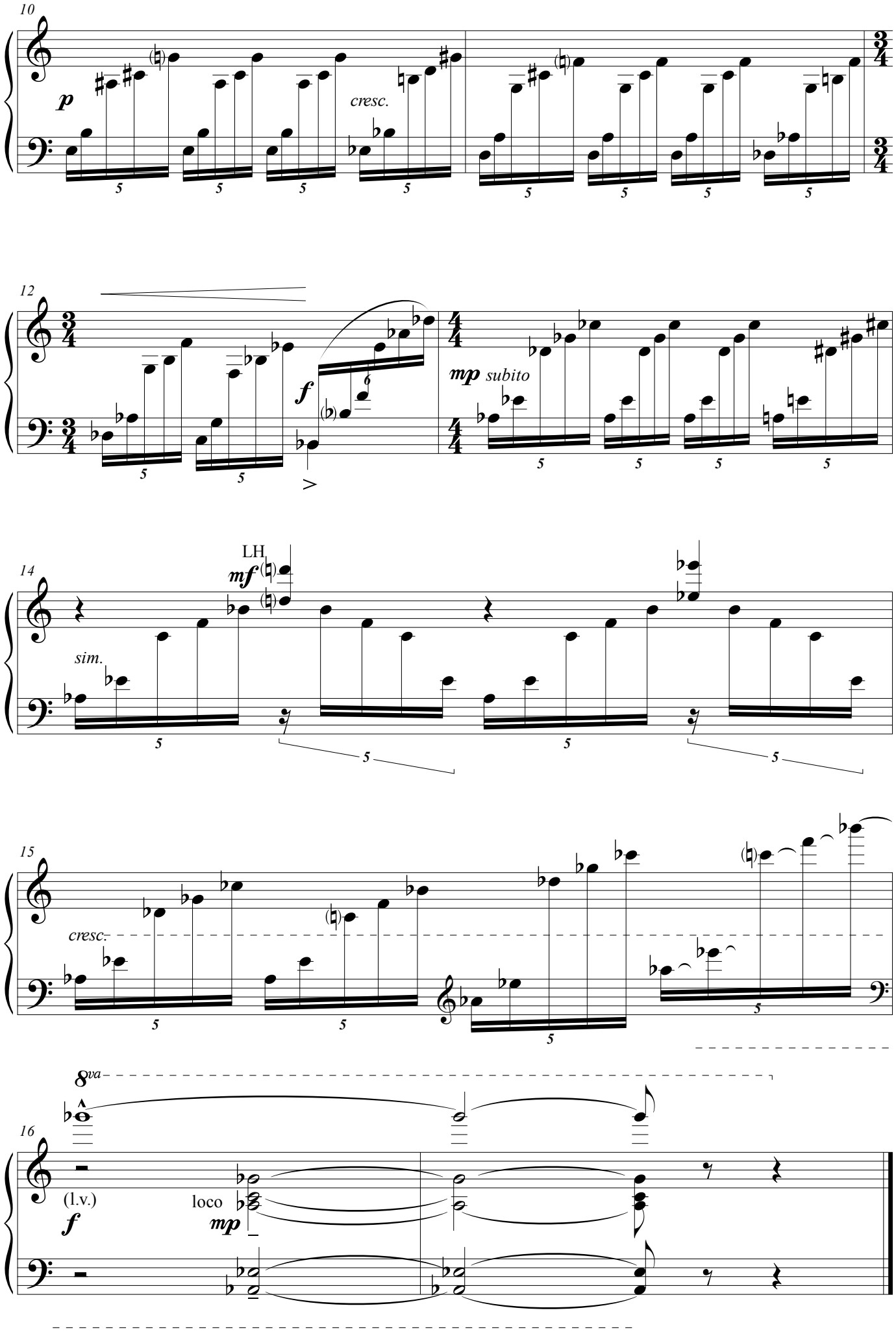
10
p
cresc.
12
f
mp subito
14
LH
mf
sim.
15
cresc.
8va
16
(l.v.)
f
loco
mp

3.

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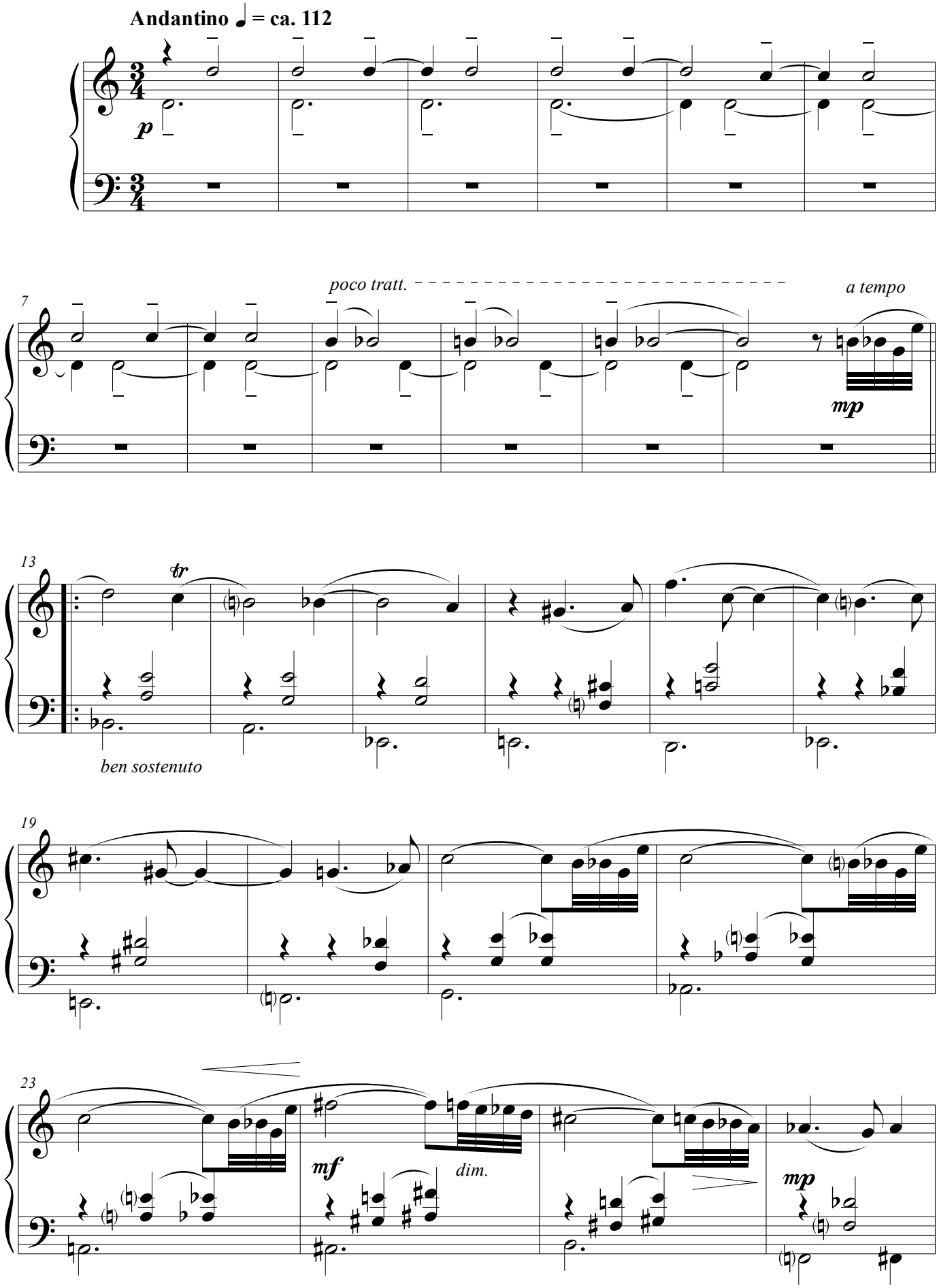
Andantino ♩ = ca. 112



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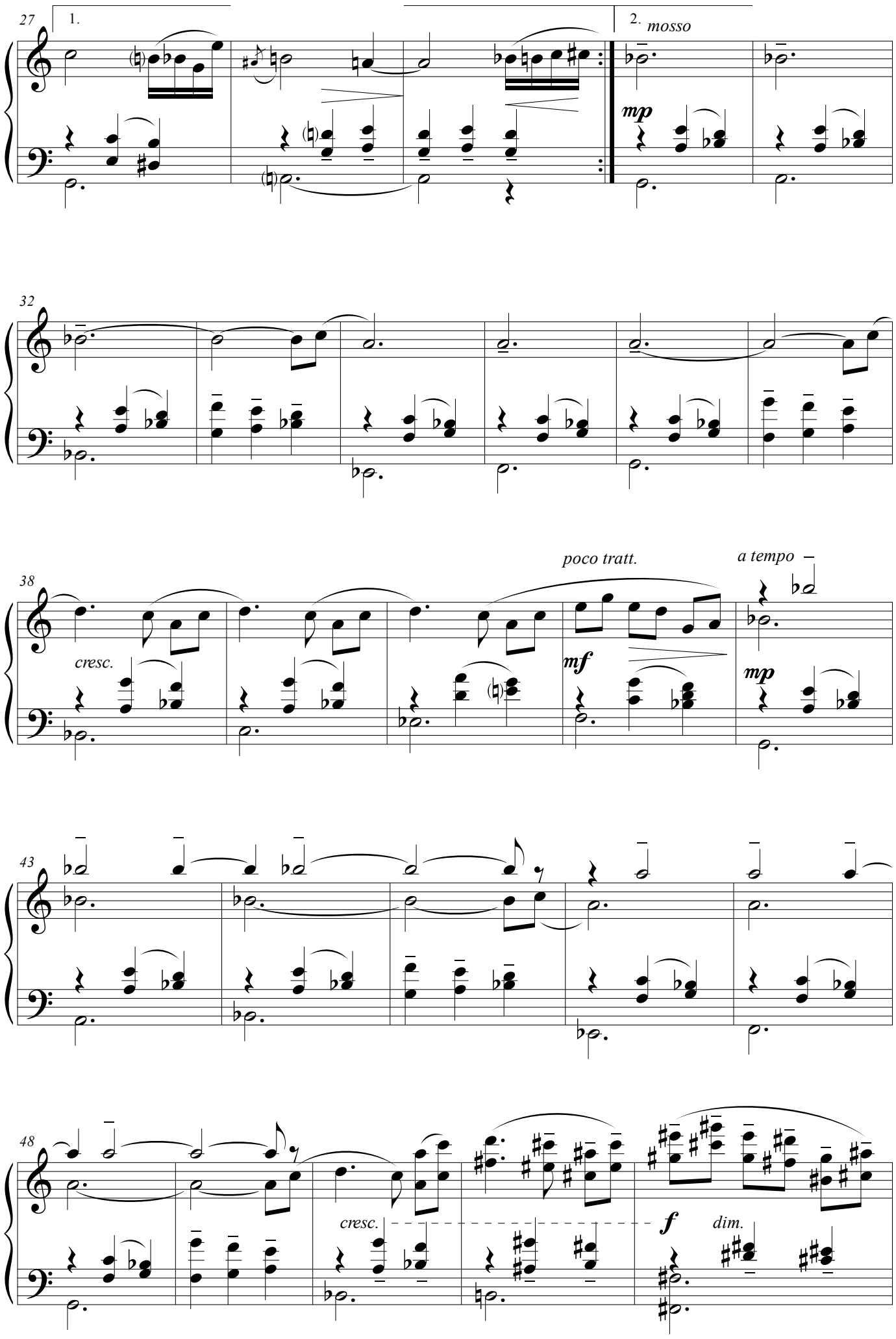
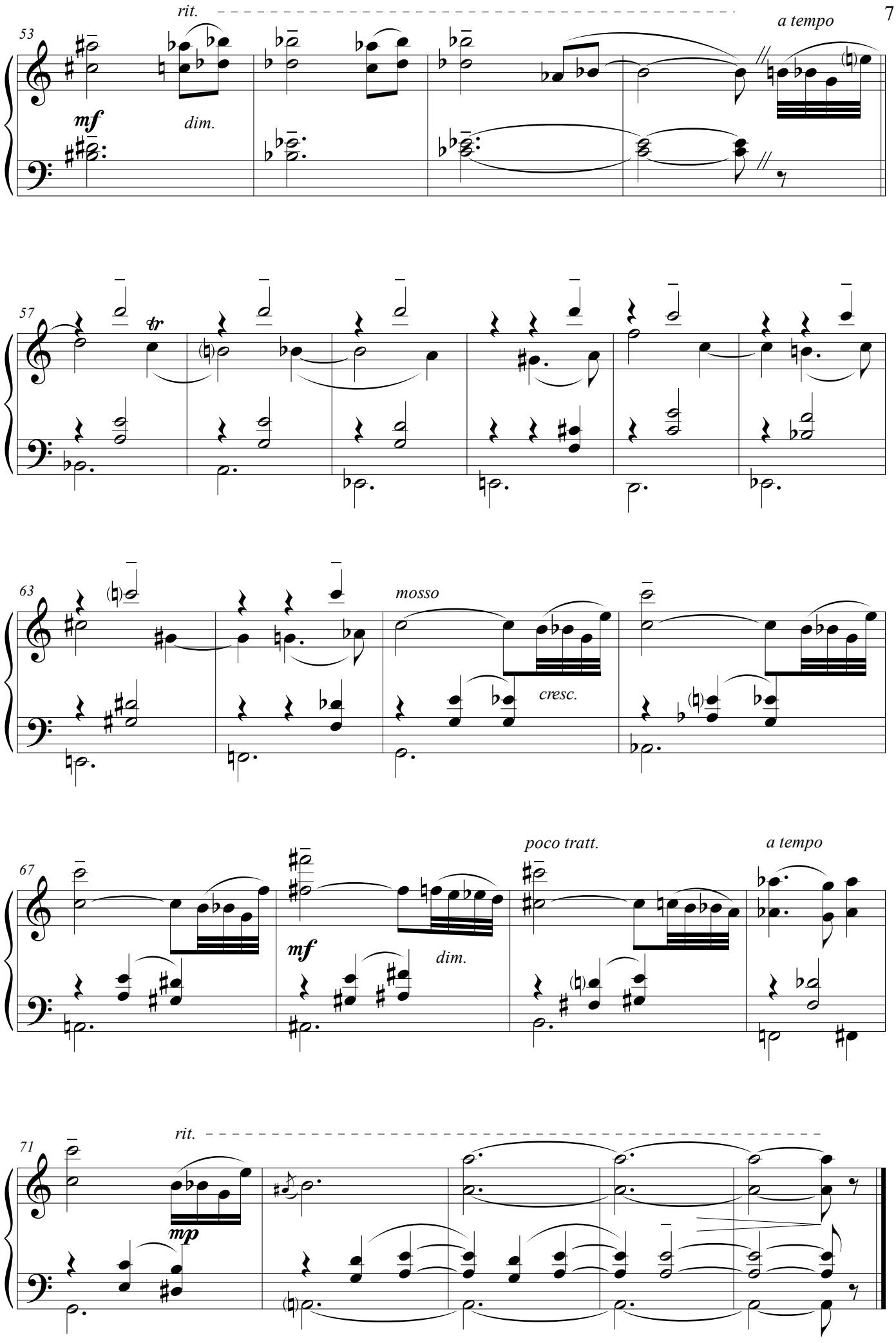

27
1.
2.
mosso
mp
32
38
poco tratt.
a tempo
cresc.
mf
mp
43
48
cresc.
f
dim.


rit.
a tempo
53
mf
dim.
57
tr
63
mosso
cresc.
67
poco tratt.
a tempo
mf
dim.
71
rit.
mp

4.

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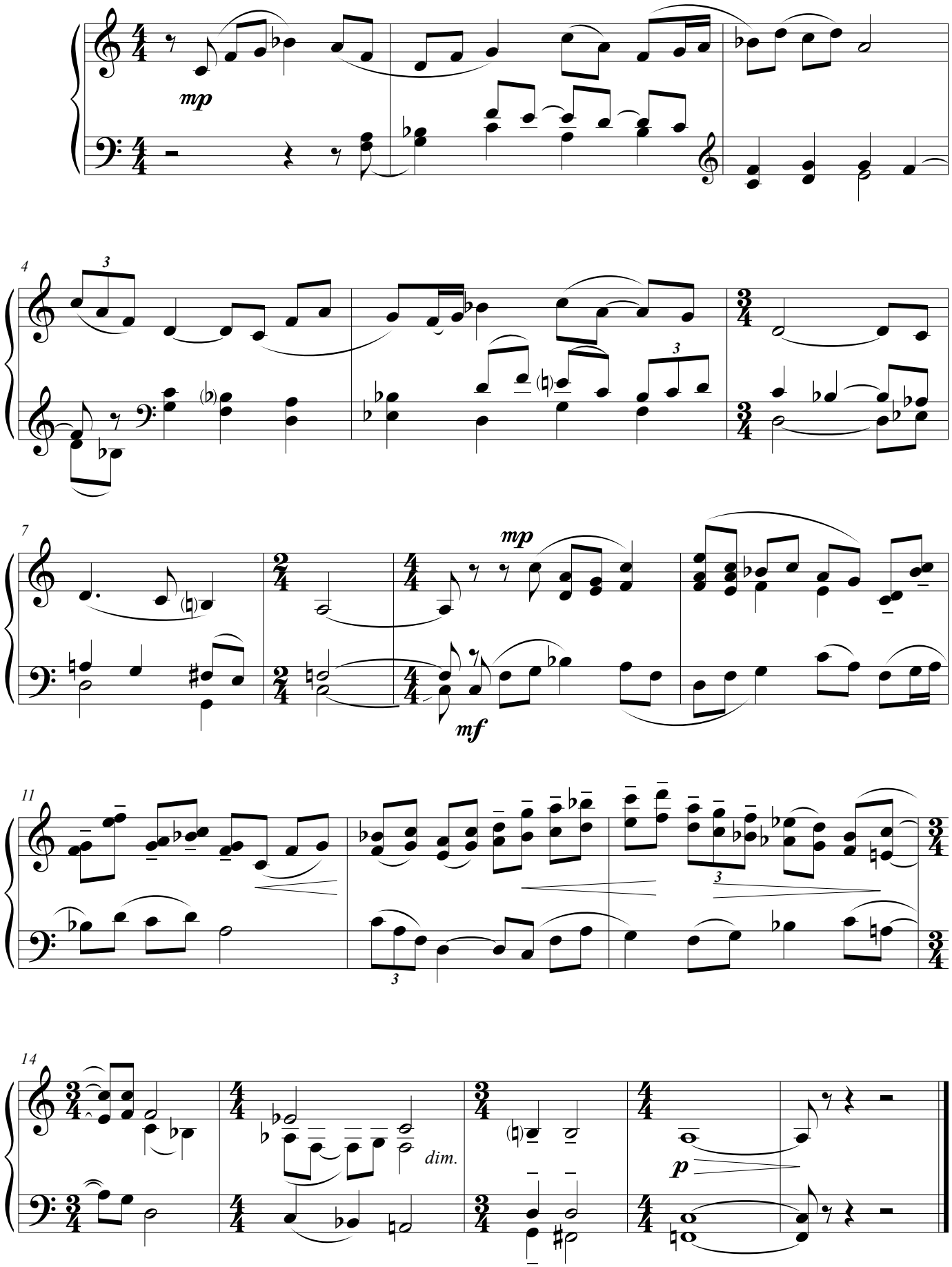
Semplice ♩ = **ca.** 66



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5.

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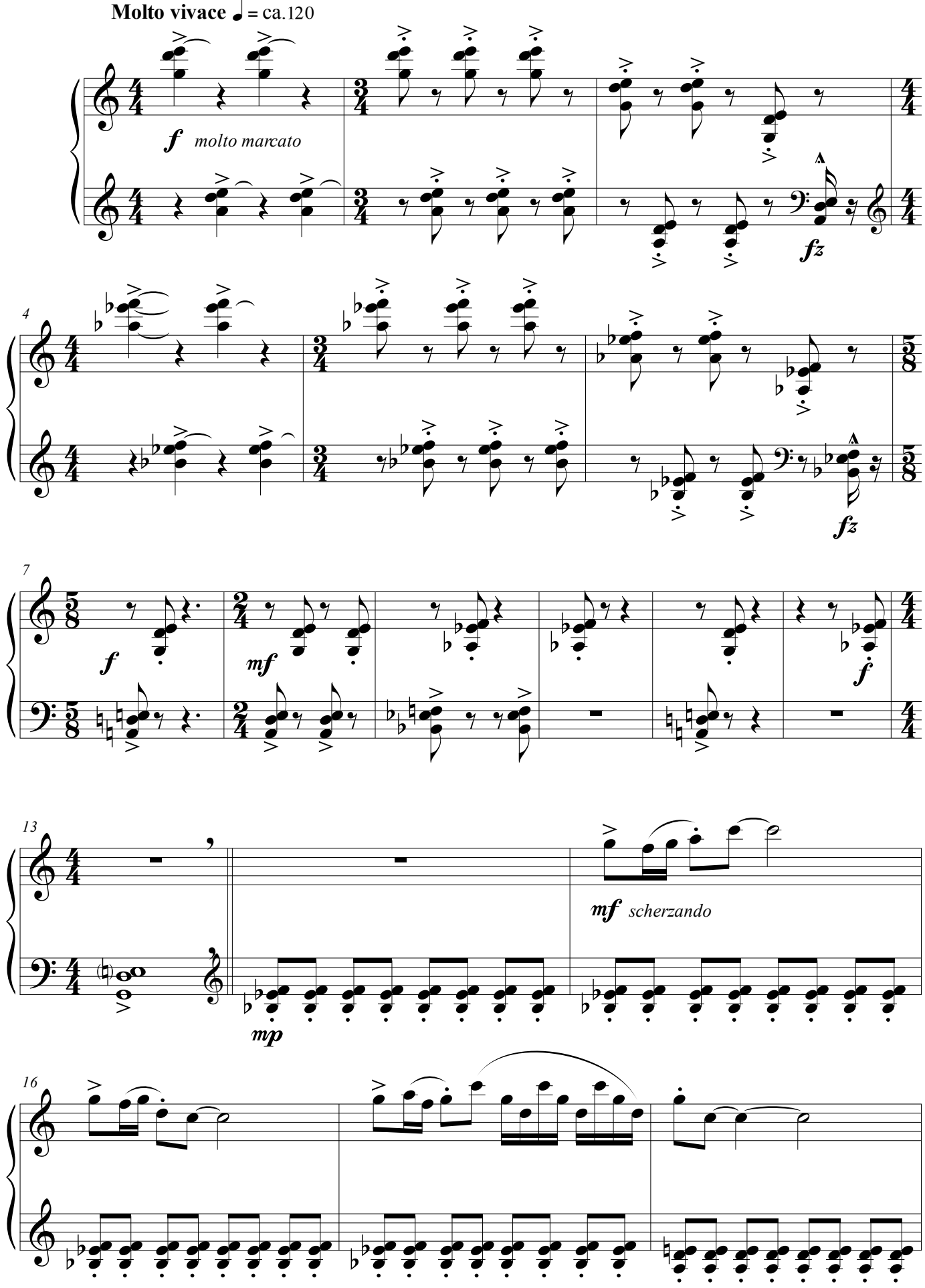

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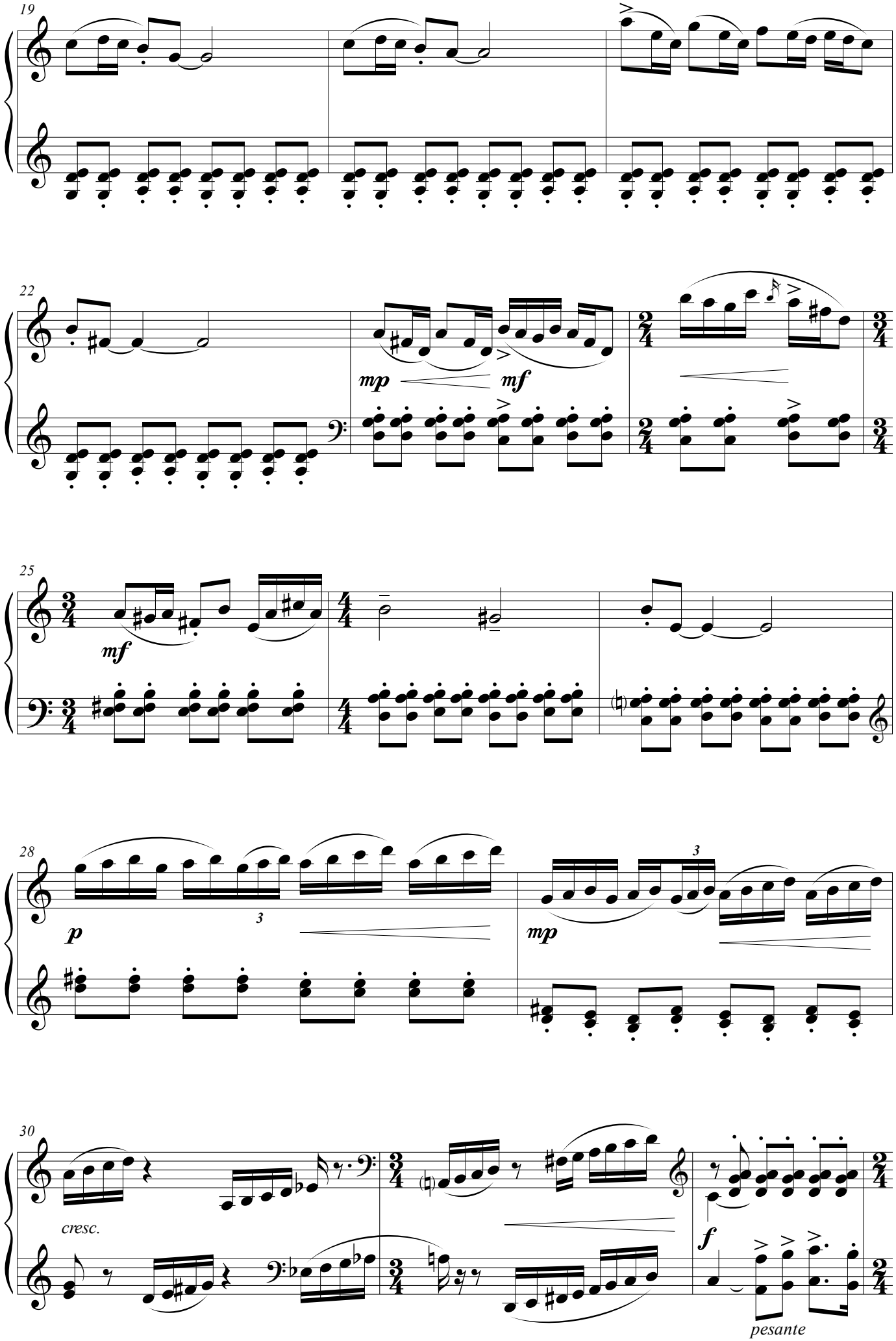
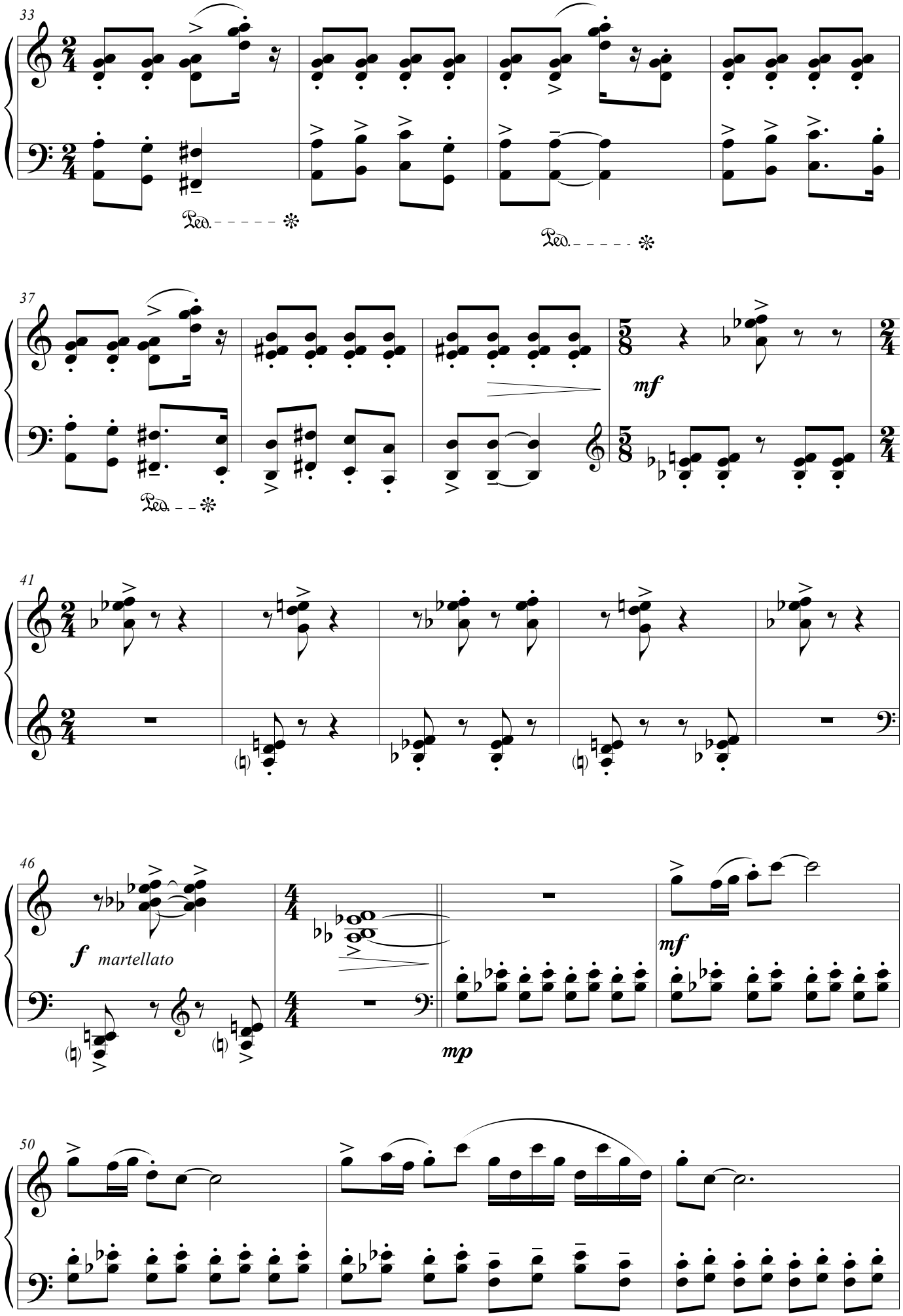
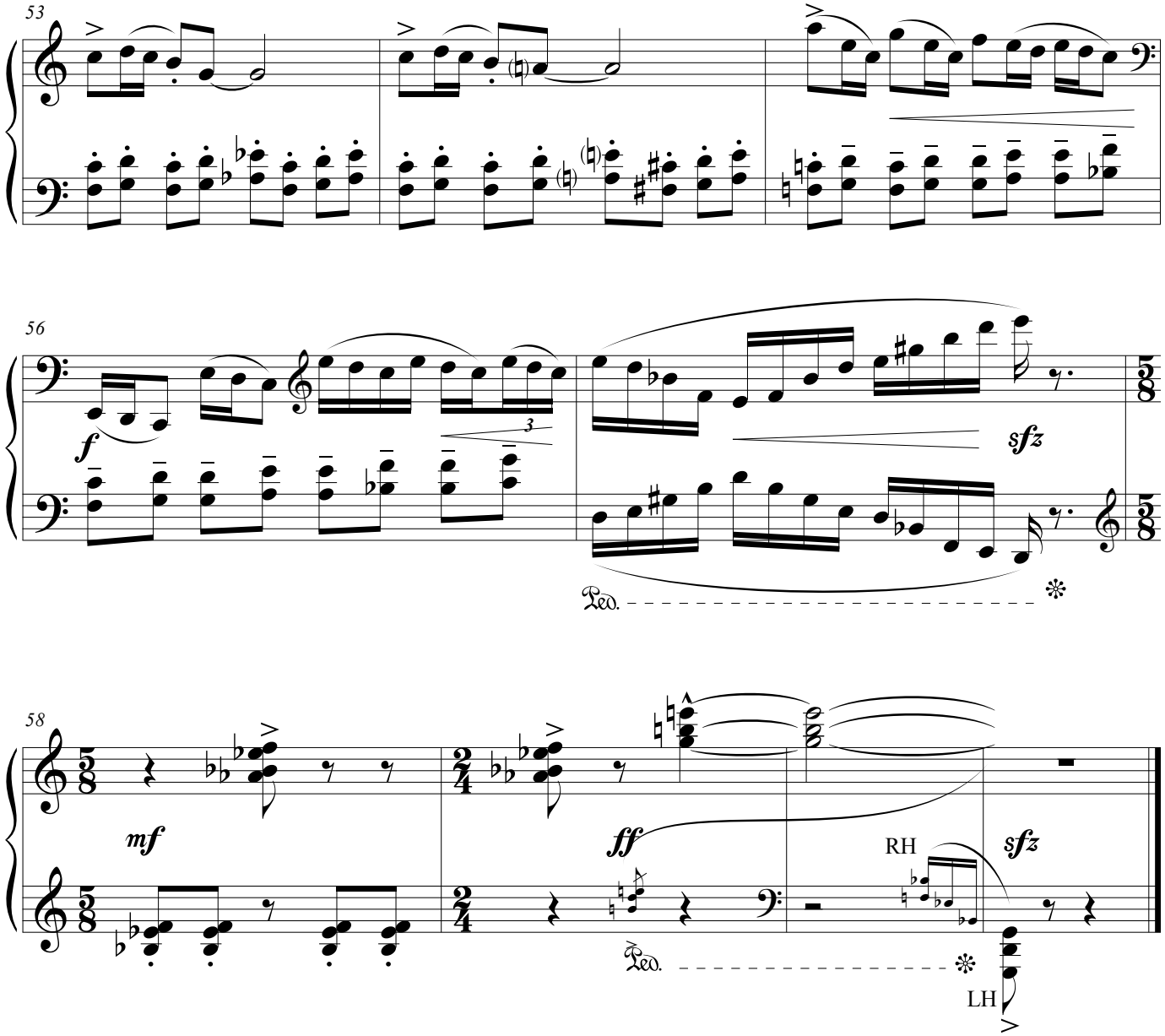

19
22
mp
mf
25
mf
28
p
3
mp
3
30
cresc.
f
pesante


33
Ped.
Ped.
37
mf
Ped.
41
46
f martellato
mp
mf
50


53
56
58
f
sfz
mf
ff
RH
LH
Ped.