James D. Matthews

Piano music

James D. Matthews

Piano Music

"I always try to make music that is engaging to mind, ear and heart. I try to use enough dissonance to make my music interesting but not harsh —
to hurt just in the right way, where it counts.
I love to fall in love with the melody and harmony, and how they meet and clash."

- James D. Matthews,
Now and always

"You have no idea..."

Claudia Stevens, piano teacher
(Commenting upon the cruelty of the music world)
College of William and Mary, ca. 1983

"There are lots of pieces still to be composed in the key of C."

Edgar Warren Williams, theory teacher and ardent serialist
(Quoting A. Schoenberg)
College of William and Mary, ca. 1983

"I felt as if I had been beaten by sticks."

Sergei Taneyev, Counterpoint teacher of Alexander Scriabin
ca. 1909, upon hearing Scriabin's "Poem of Ecstasy"

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xraymanjm@gmail.com

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SEE NOTES, ESPECIALLY THE FIRST PAGE!
THEY MAY HELP WITH PERFORMANCE
AND INTERPRETATION.

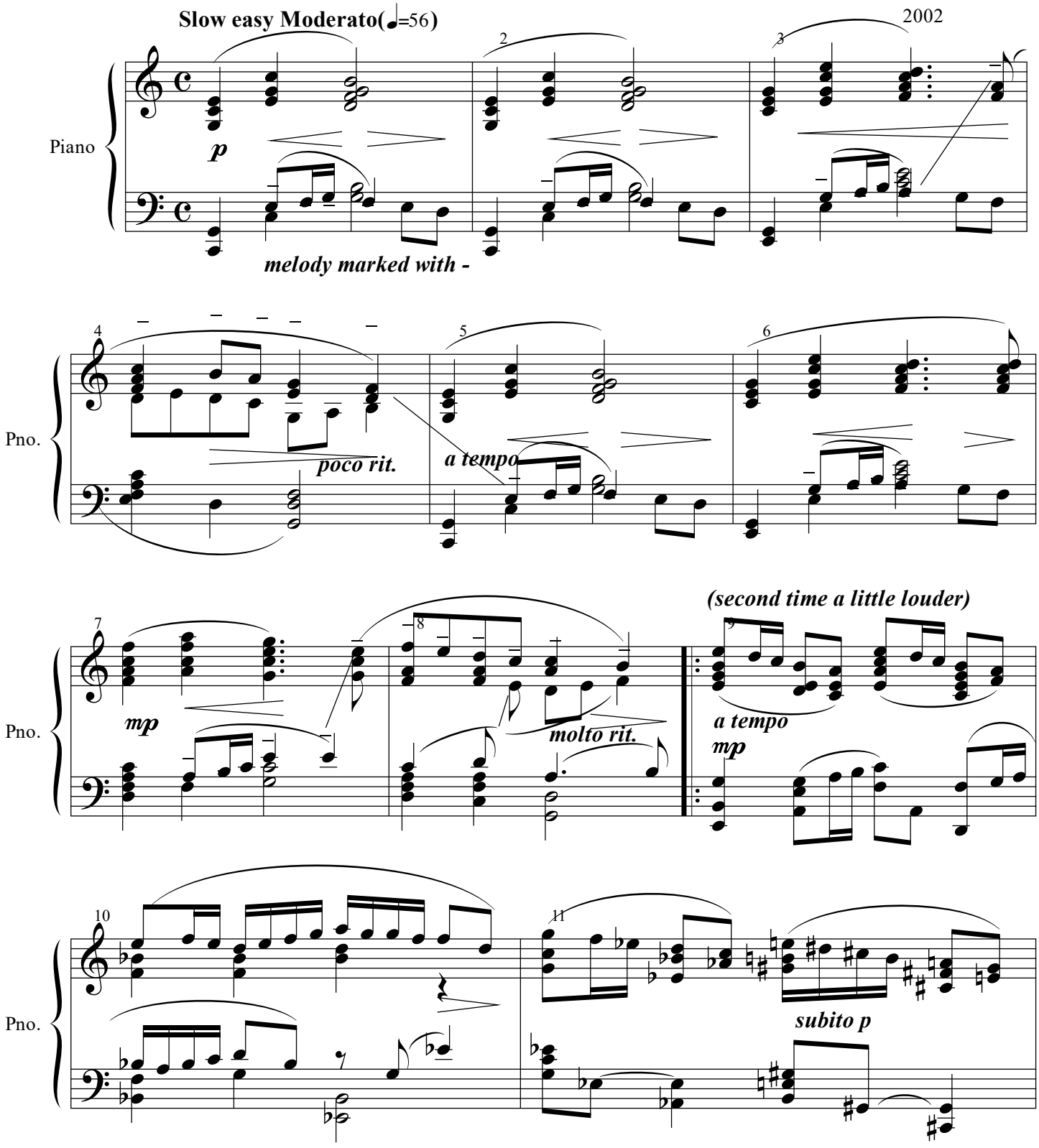
The Sacred Love Grove

Peace dwells therein; No prying eye
Into the Grove intrudes to see
God kissing us, that sacred touch,
With breath of Wind,
Of Sky and Tree.

JM
(Gratuitous snip of poetry — but then, what is music
if not gratuitous poetry?)

Lullaby

James Matthews
2002



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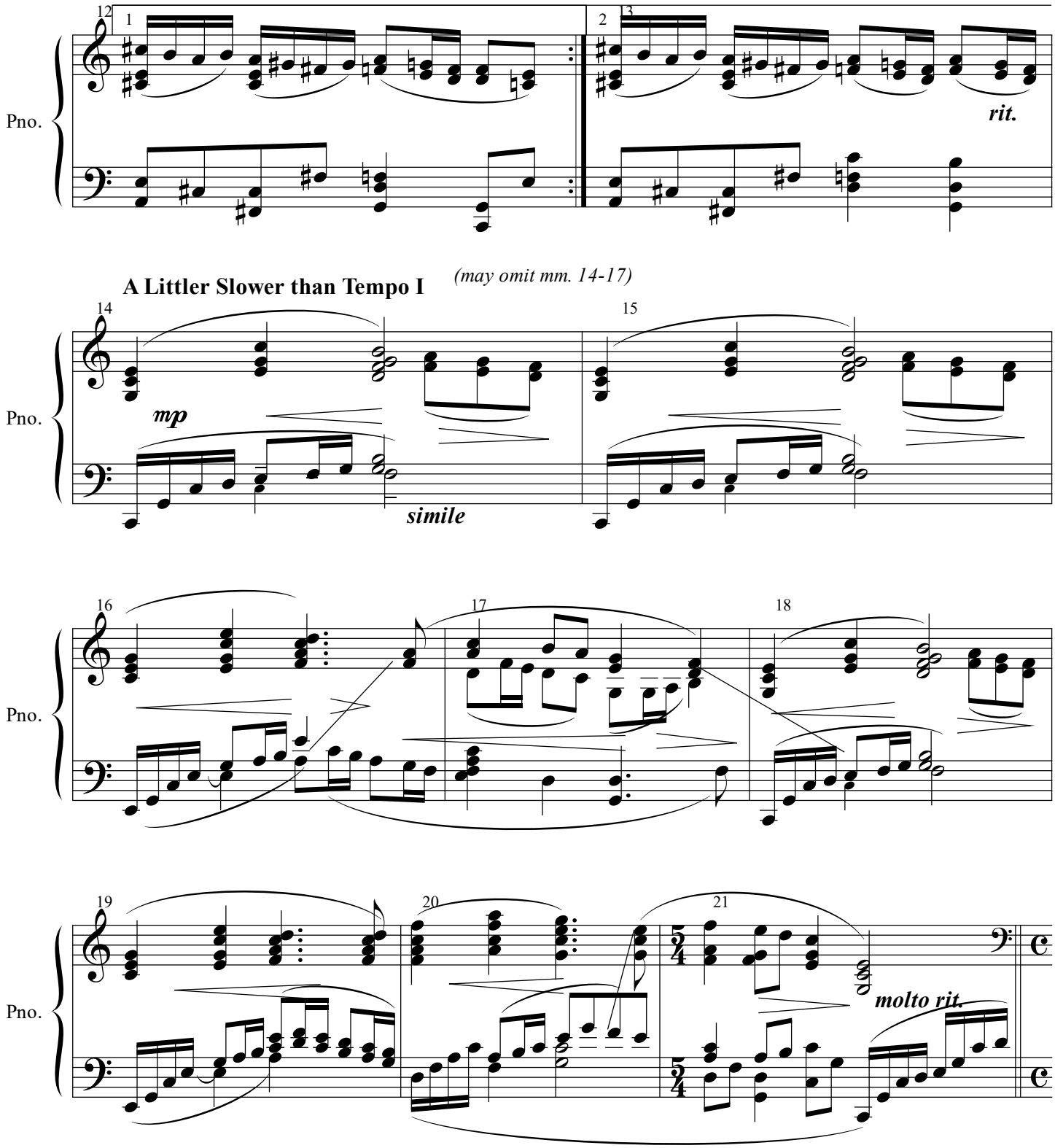
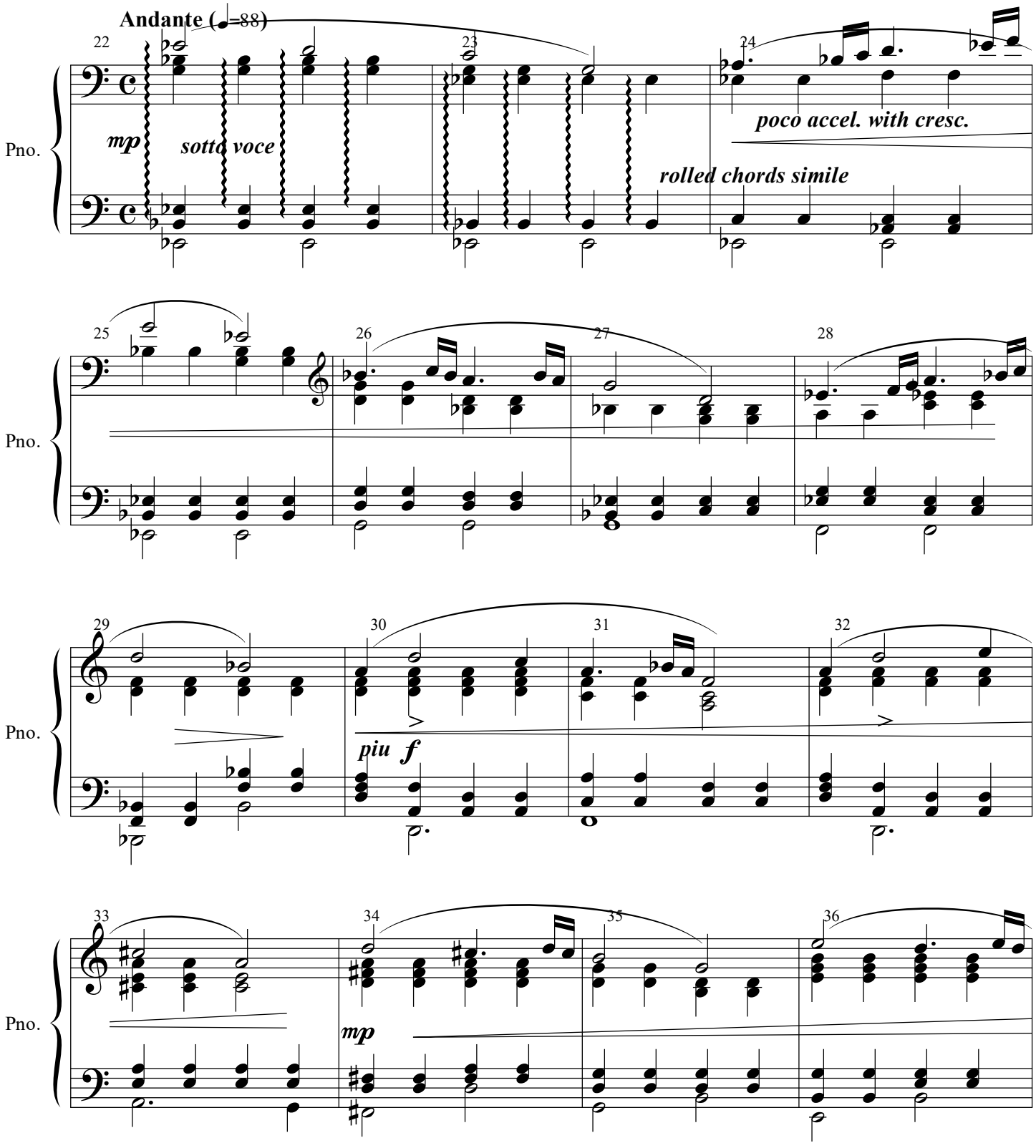
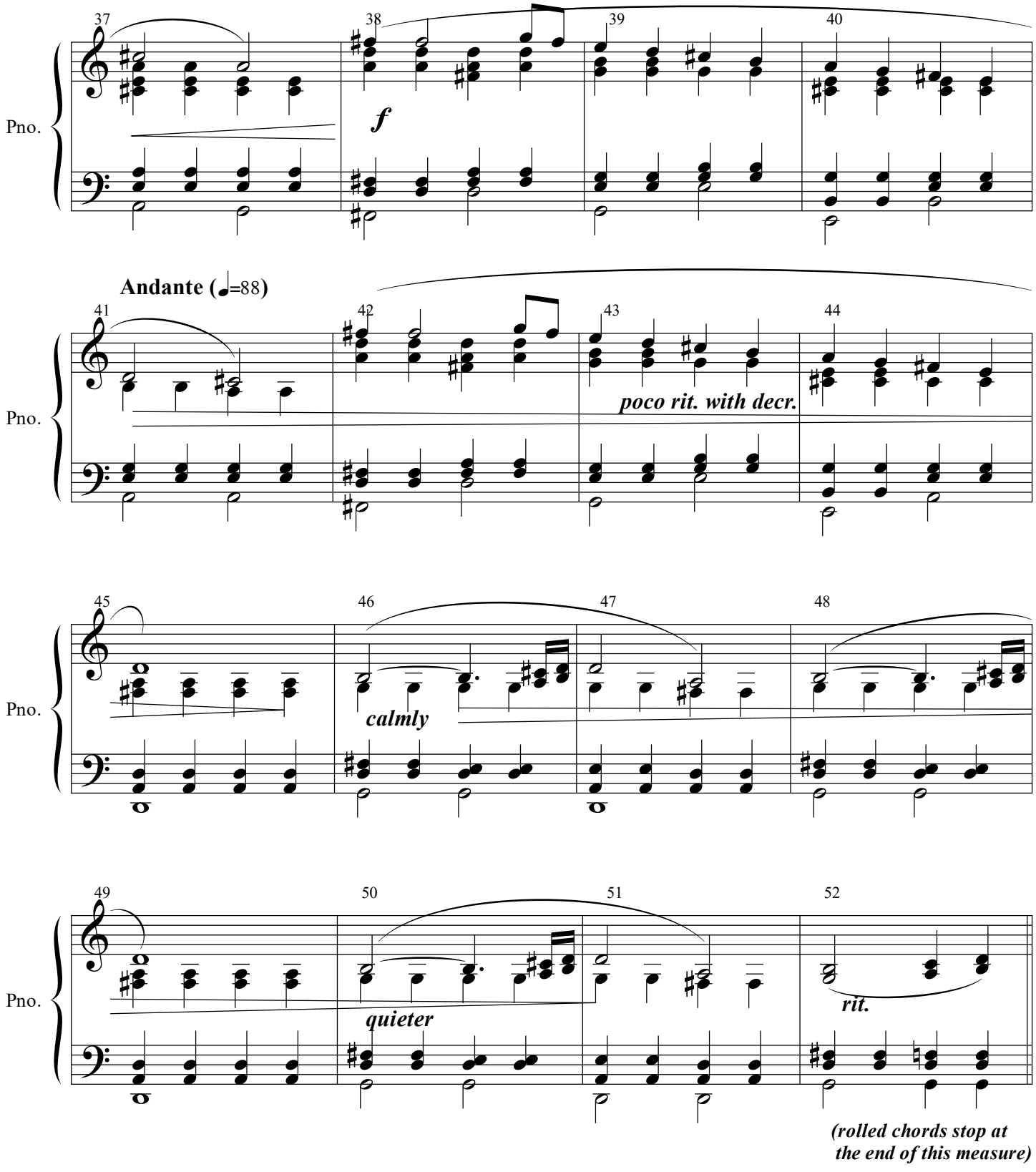
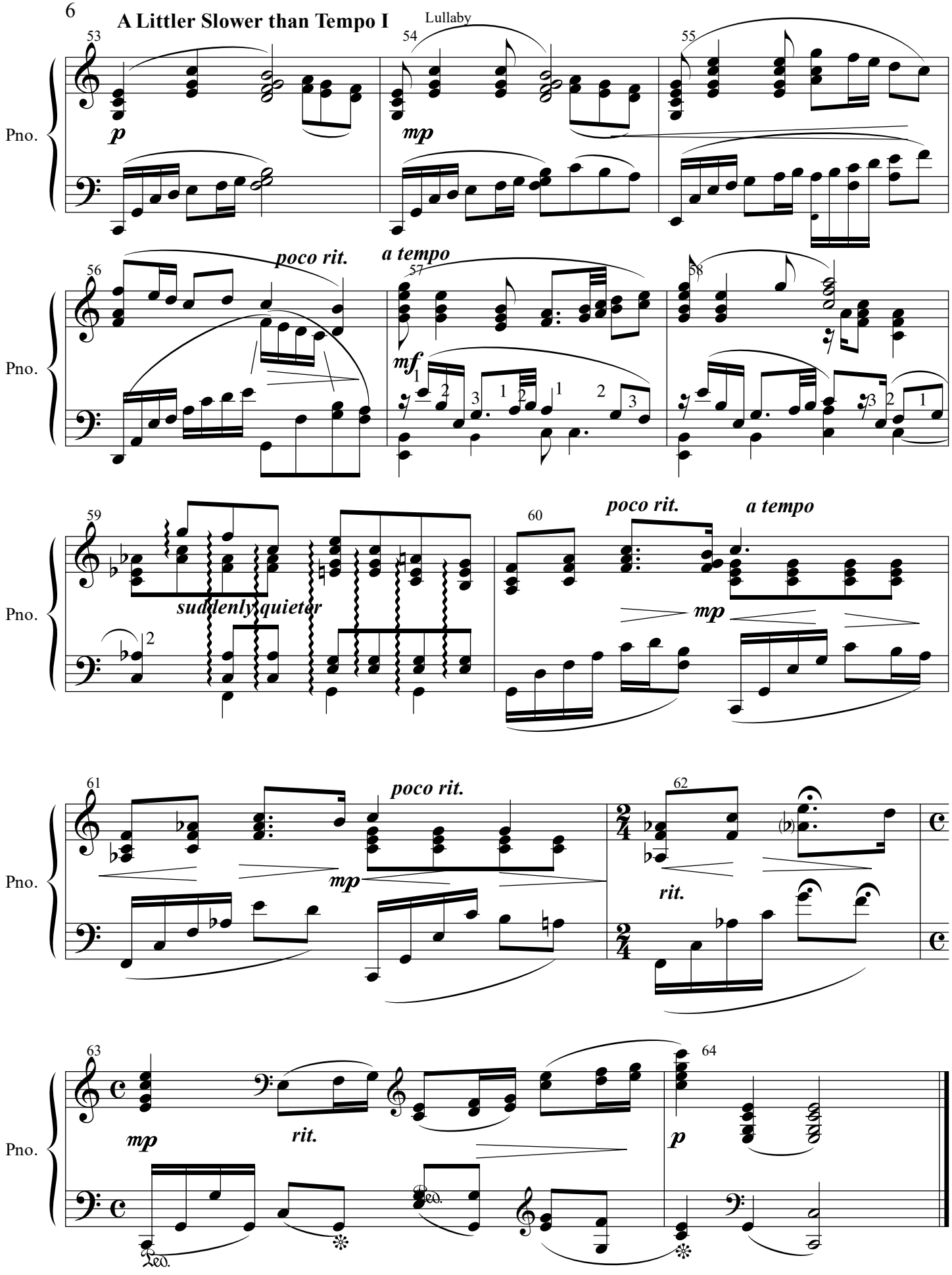

12
1
2
13
Pno.
rit.
A Littler Slower than Tempo I
(may omit mm. 14-17)
14
15
mp
simile
16
17
18
19
20
21
molto rit.


Andante (♩=88)
22
23
24
Pno.
mp
sotto voce
poco accel. with cresc.
rolled chords simile
25
26
27
28
Pno.
29
30
31
32
Pno.
piu f
33
34
35
36
Pno.
mp


37
38
39
40
Pno.
f
Andante (♩=88)
41
42
43
44
Pno.
poco rit. with decr.
45
46
47
48
Pno.
calmly
49
50
51
52
Pno.
quieter
rit.
(rolled chords stop at
the end of this measure)

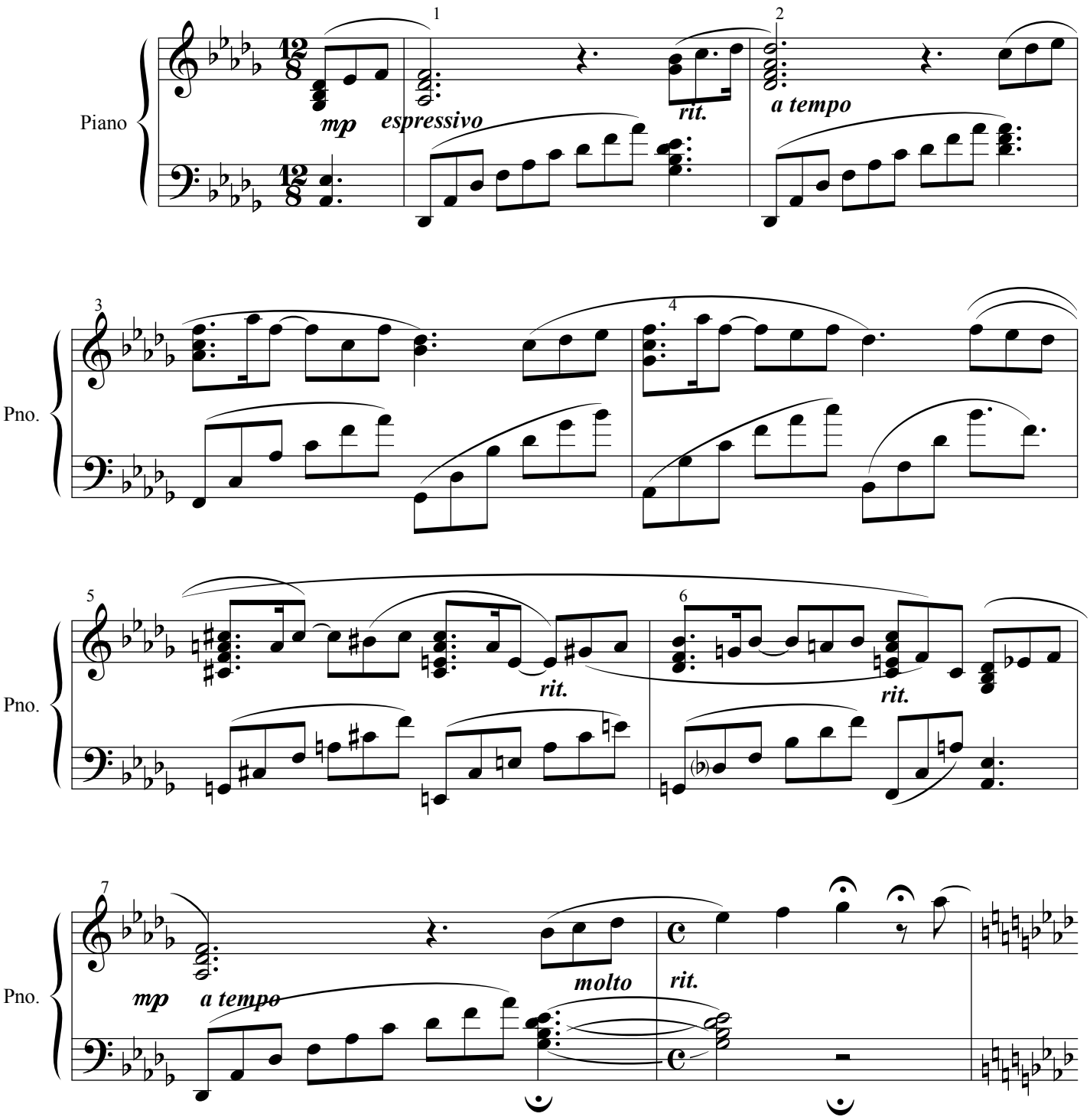

A Littler Slower than Tempo I
Lullaby
Pno.
53
54
55
p
mp
poco rit.
a tempo
56
57
58
mf
59
60
suddenly quieter
poco rit.
a tempo
mp
61
62
poco rit.
mp
rit.
63
64
mp
rit.
p
Ped.
Ped.

Sonata en Suite

James D. Matthews
September 1999

1. Rhapsody-Impromptu
"Searching"
7:00

Adagio (♩. = 66)



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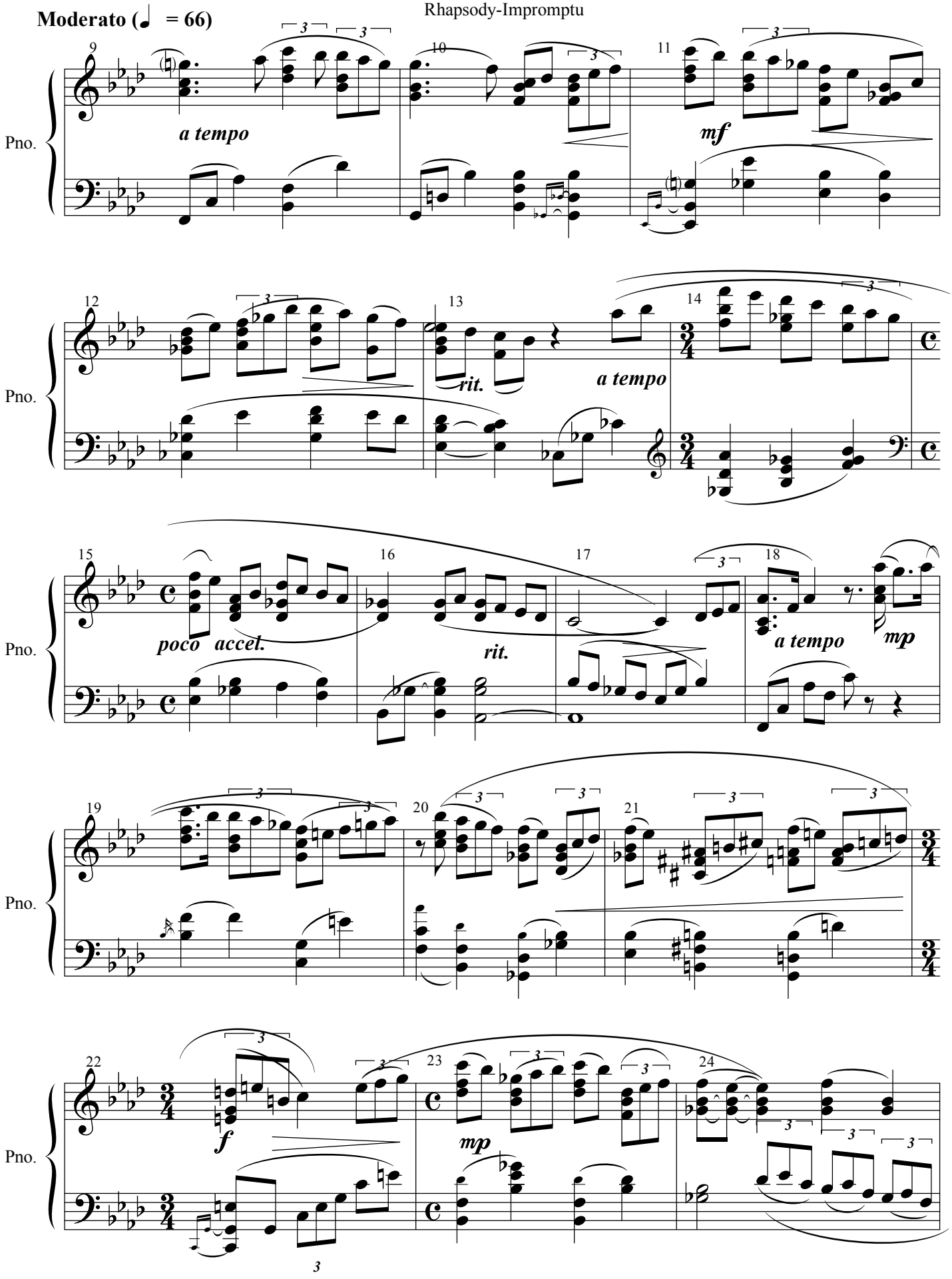
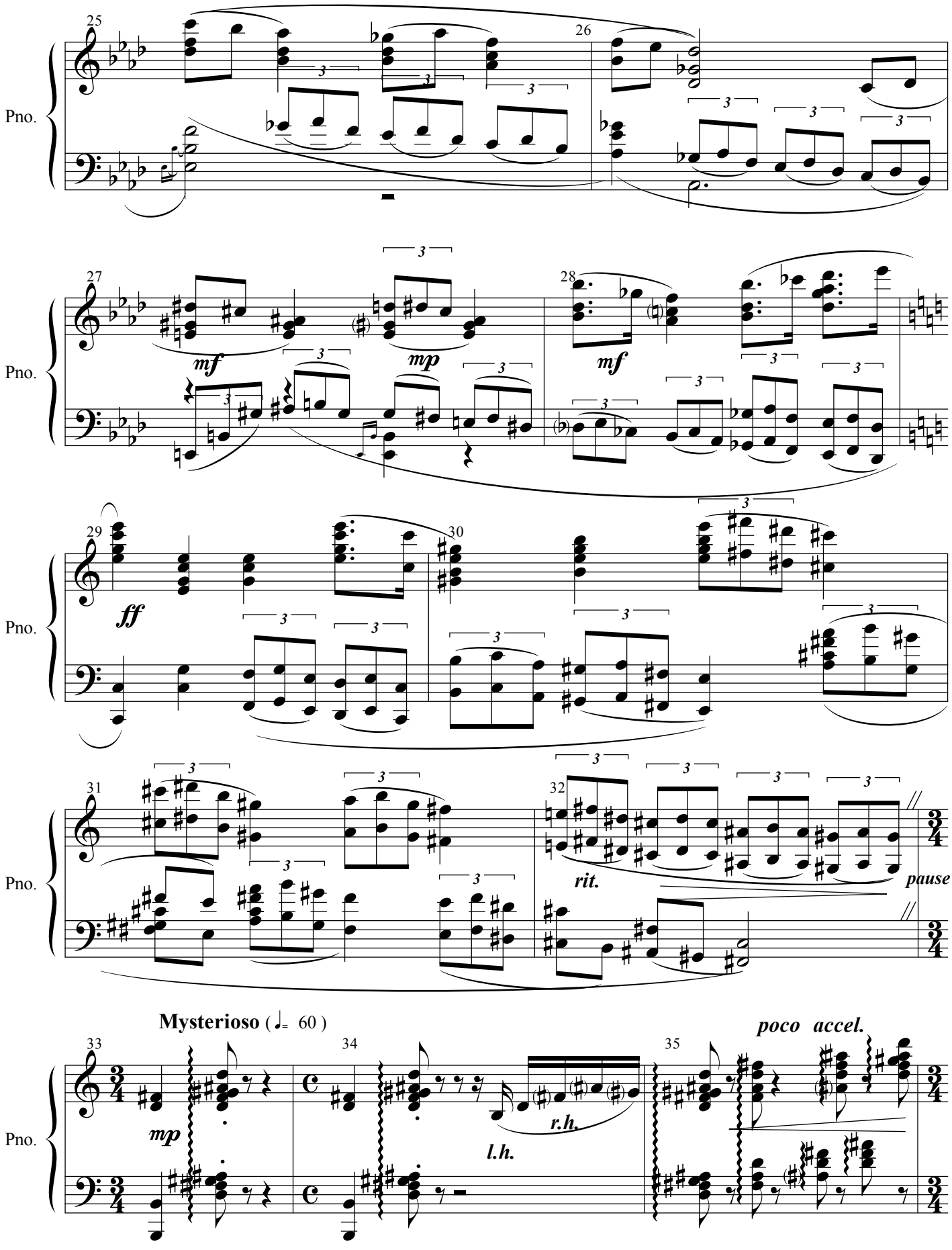
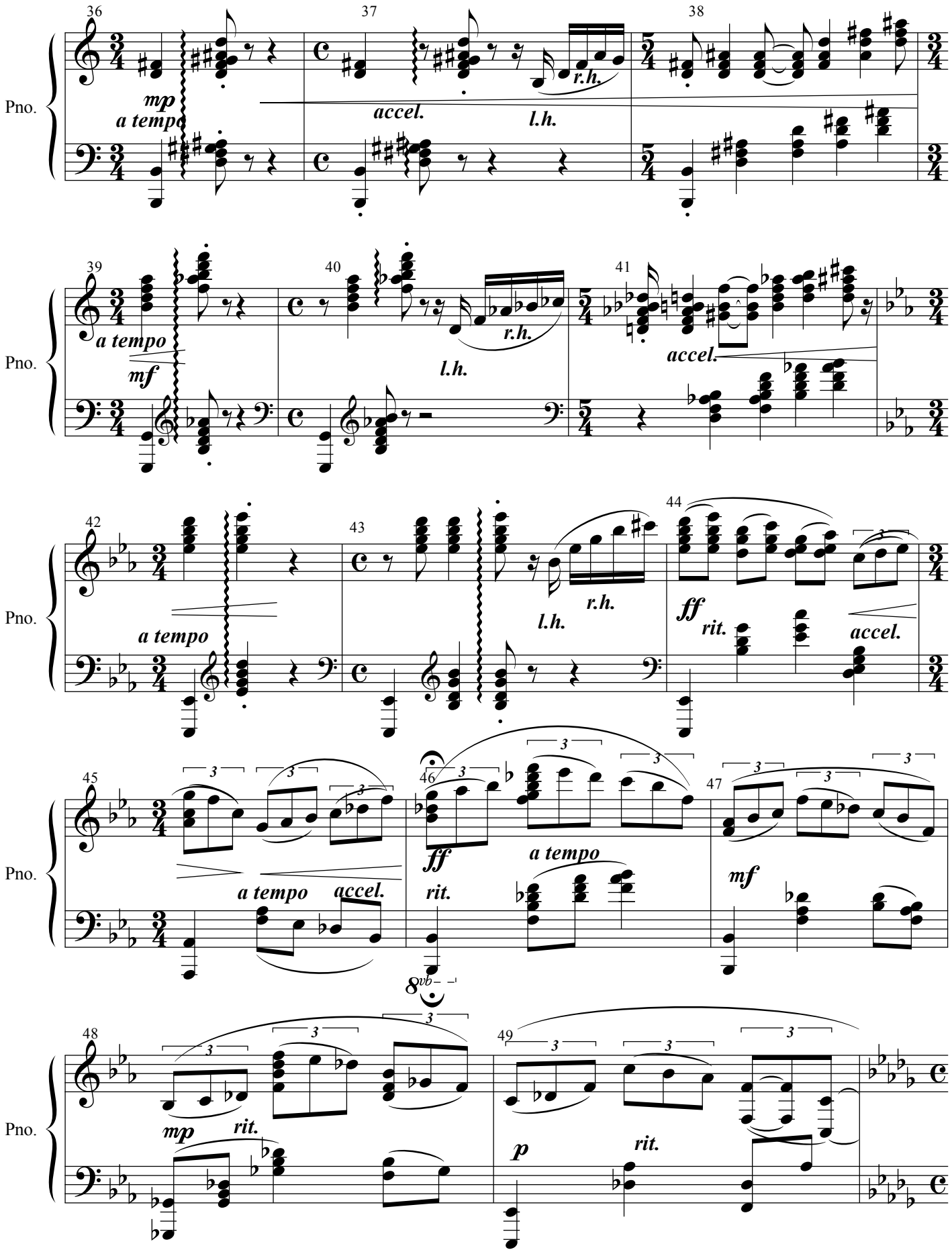
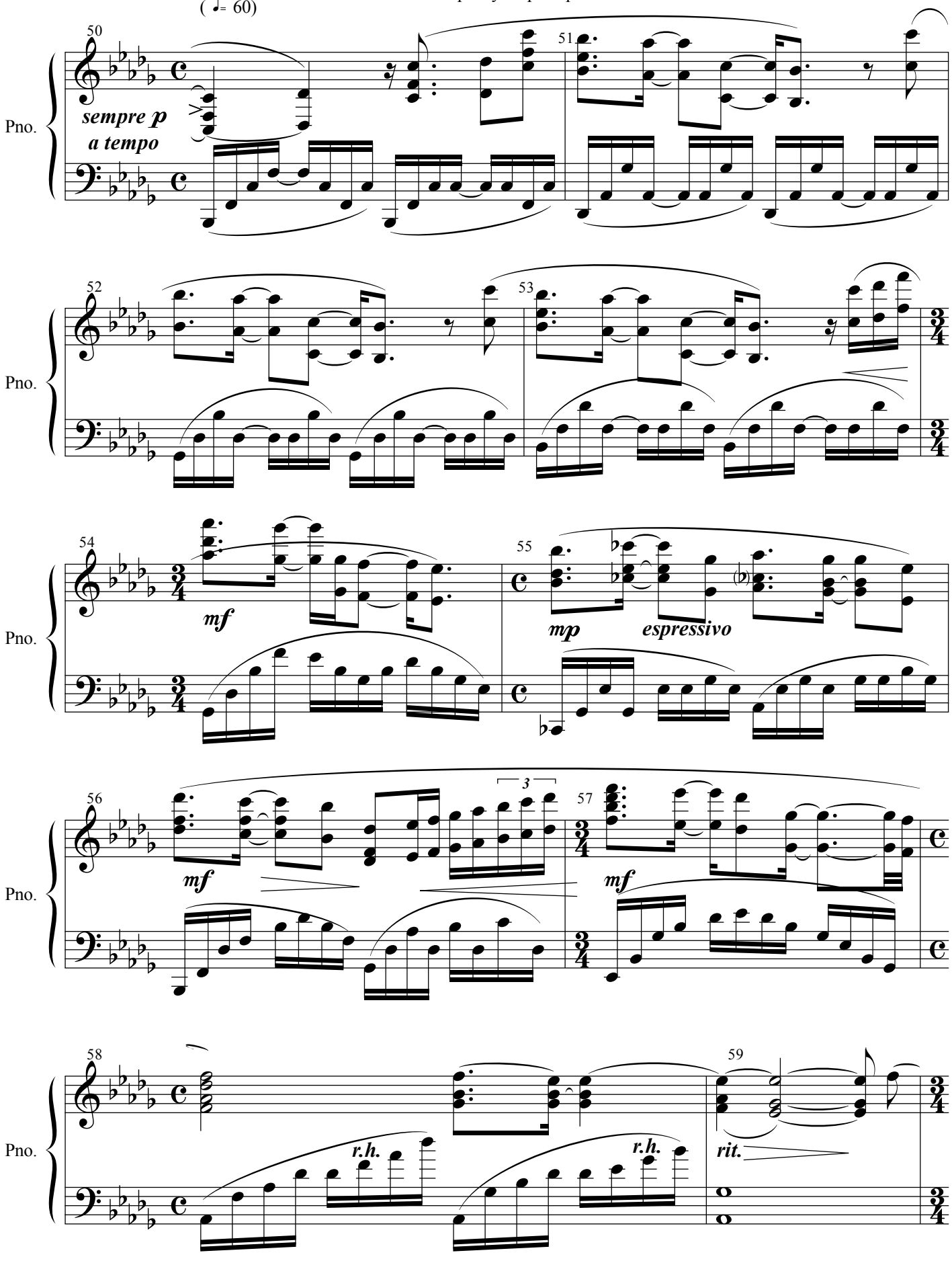
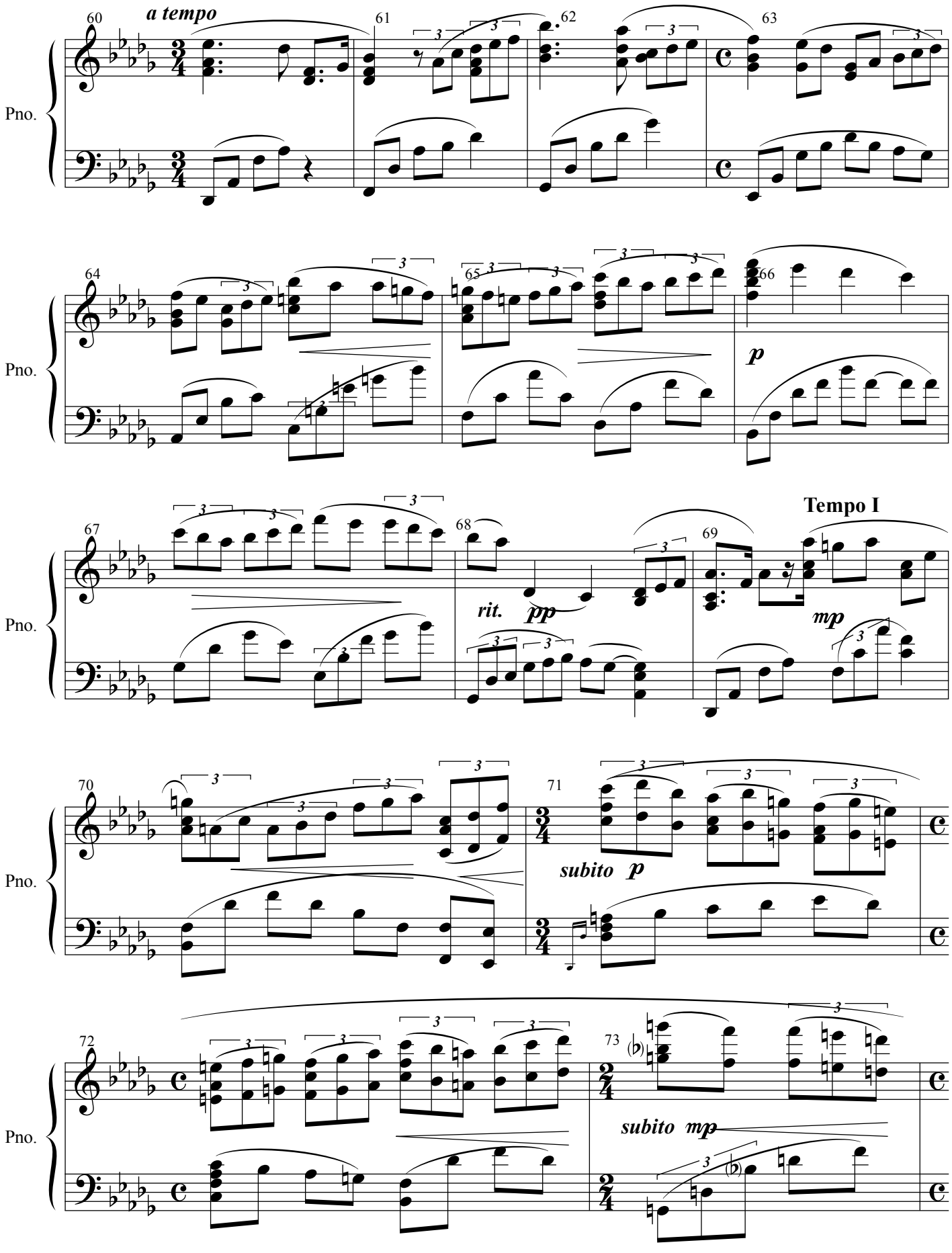
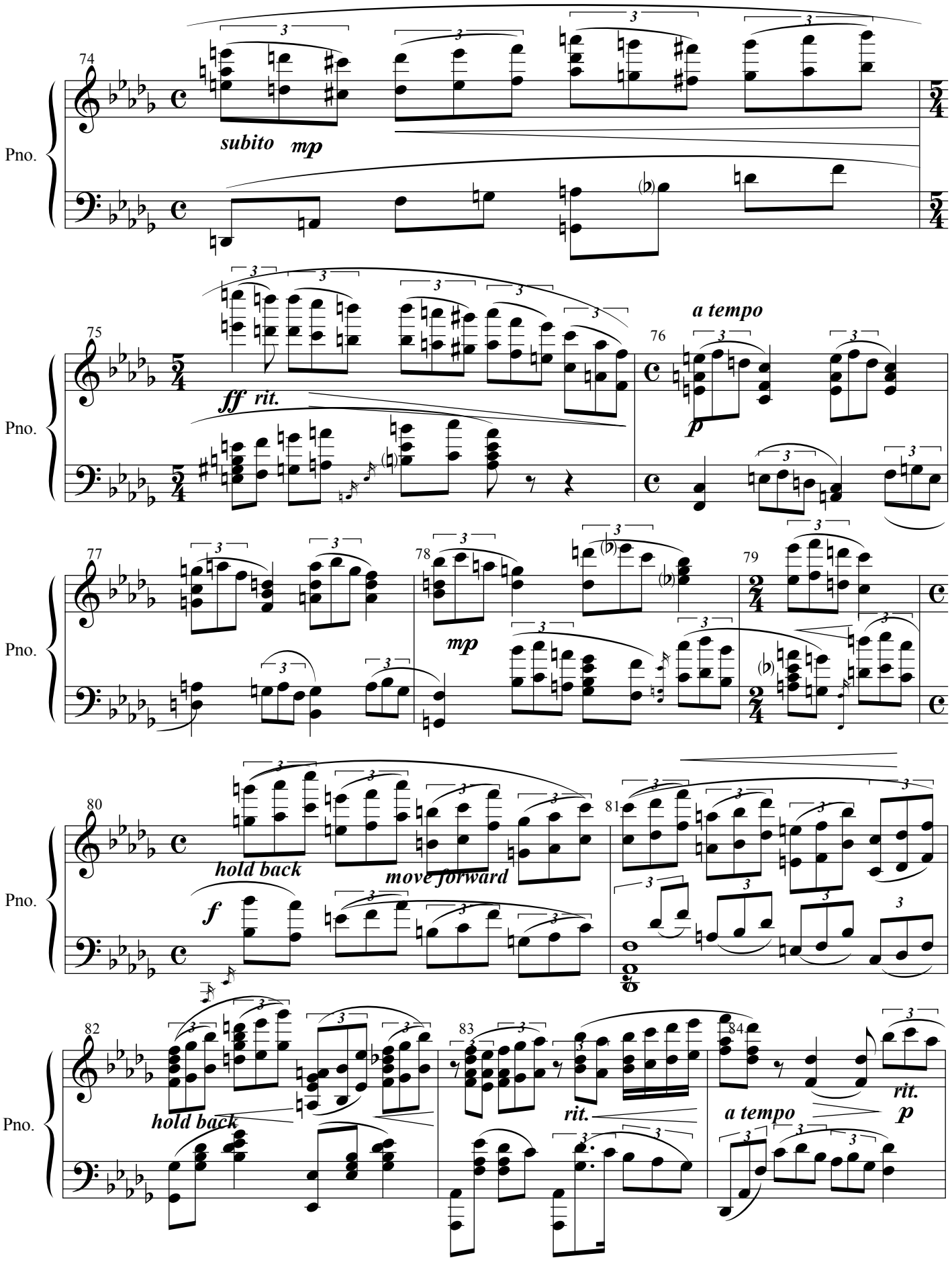

Moderato (♩ = 66)
Pno.
a tempo
mf
rit.
a tempo
poco accel.
rit.
a tempo
mp
f
mp

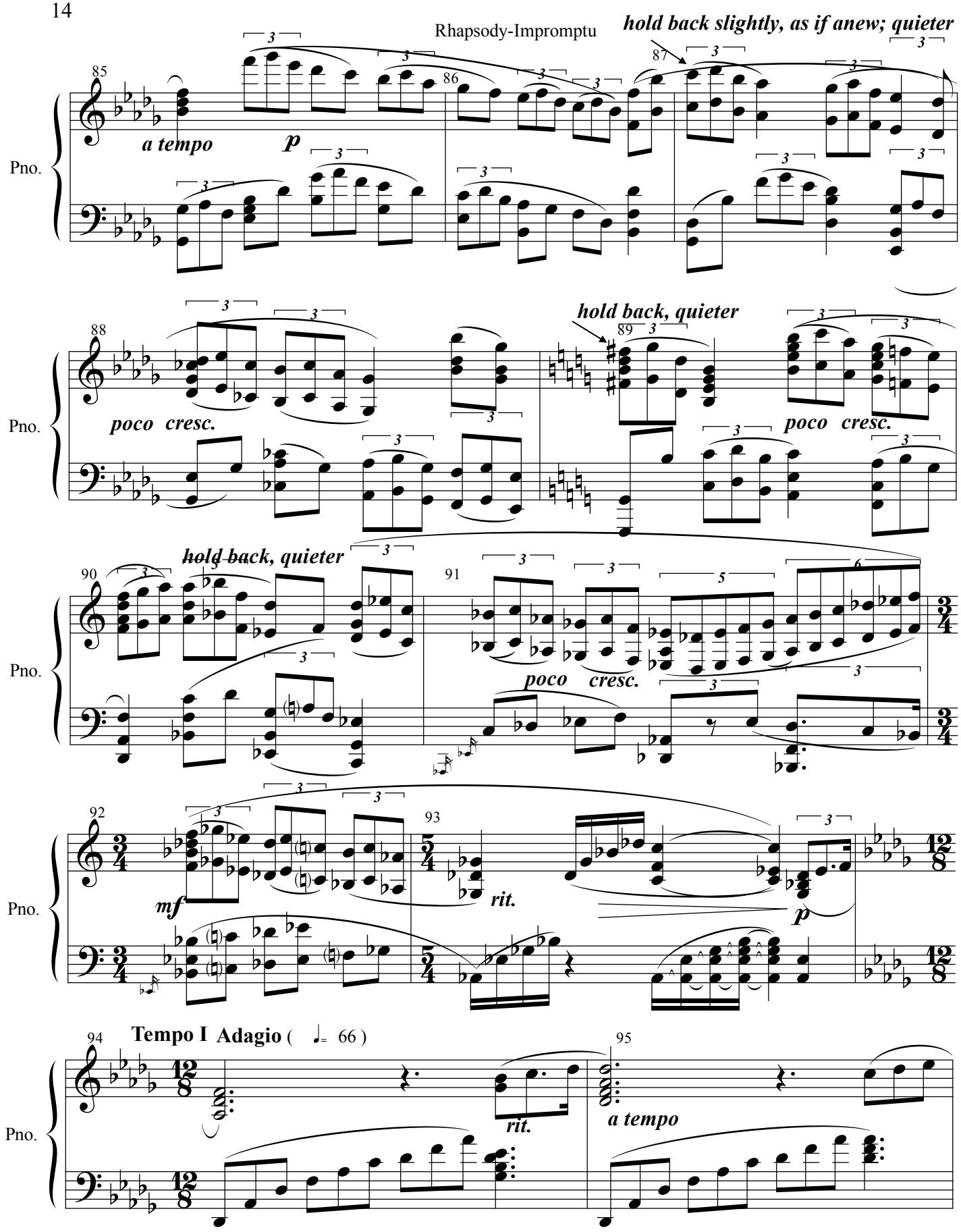

25
26
Pno.
27
28
mf
mp
mf
Pno.
29
30
ff
Pno.
31
32
rit.
pause
Pno.
Mysterioso (♩= 60)
poco accel.
33
34
35
mp
l.h.
r.h.
Pno.

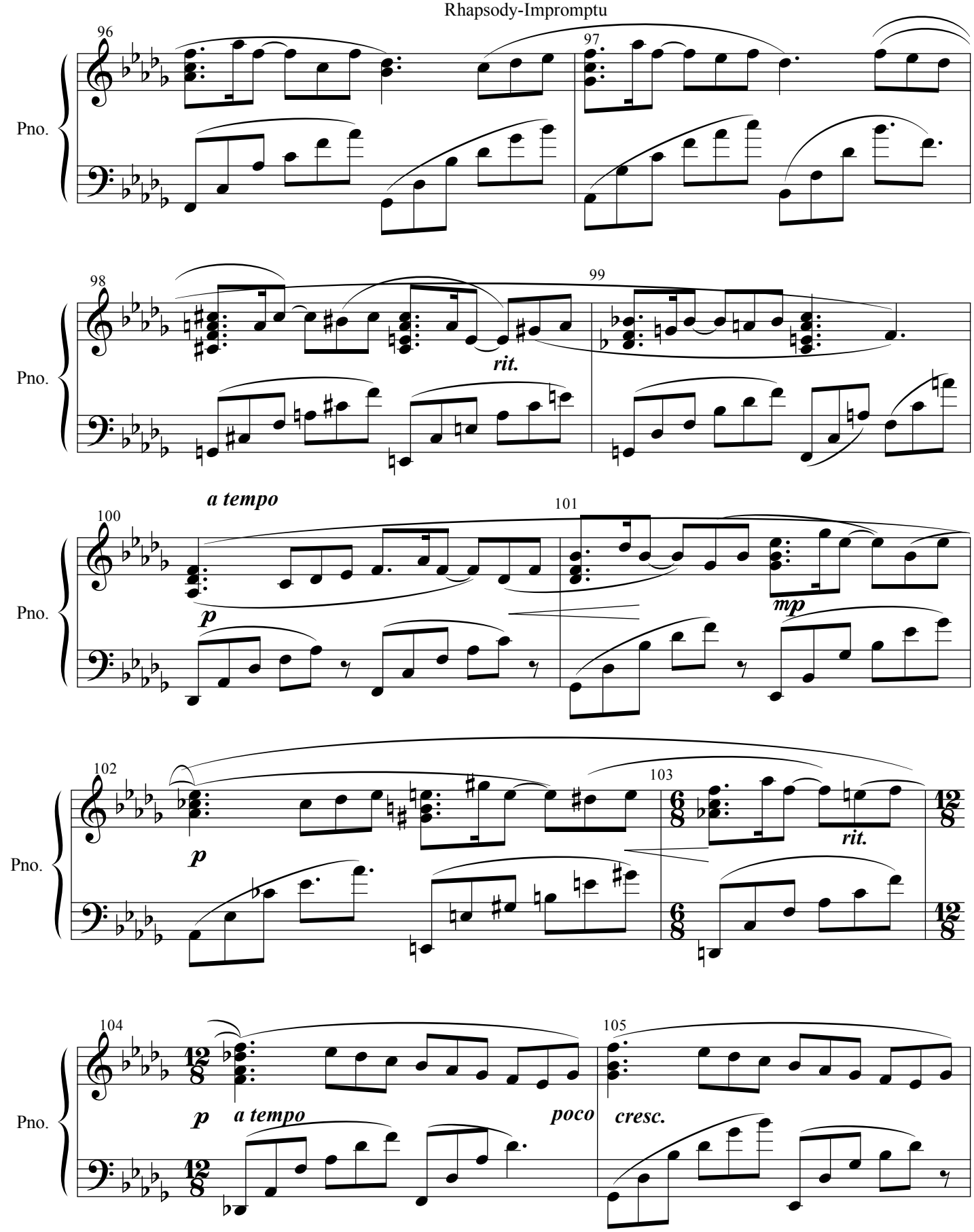

36
37
38
Pno.
mp
a tempo
accel.
l.h.
r.h.
39
40
41
a tempo
mf
l.h.
r.h.
accel.
42
43
44
a tempo
l.h.
r.h.
ff
rit.
accel.
45
46
47
a tempo
accel.
ff
rit.
a tempo
mf
8vb
48
49
mp
rit.
p
rit.

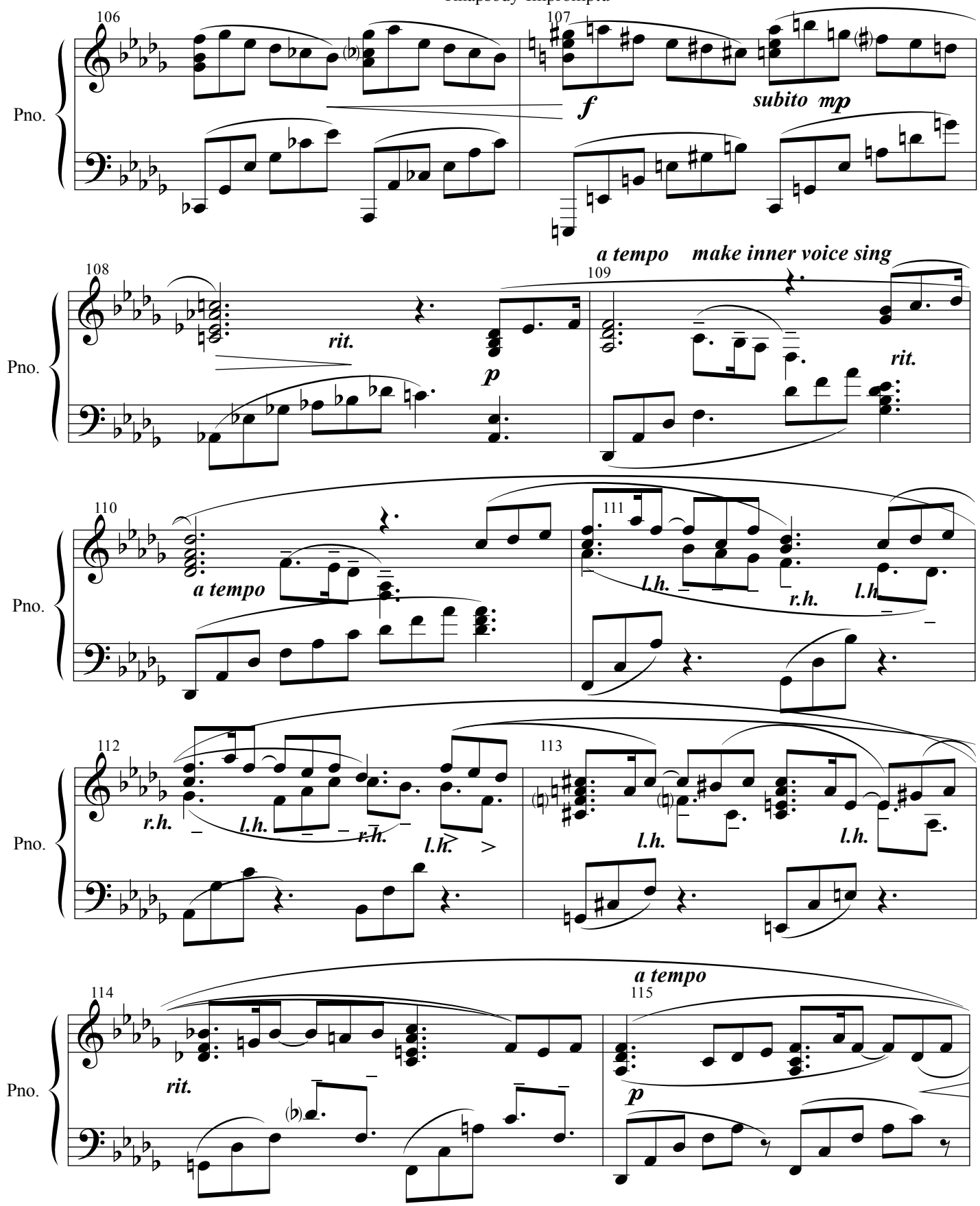

(♩= 60)
50
51
Pno.
sempre p
a tempo
52
53
Pno.
54
55
Pno.
mf
mp
espressivo
56
57
Pno.
mf
3
mf
58
59
Pno.
r.h.
r.h.
rit.

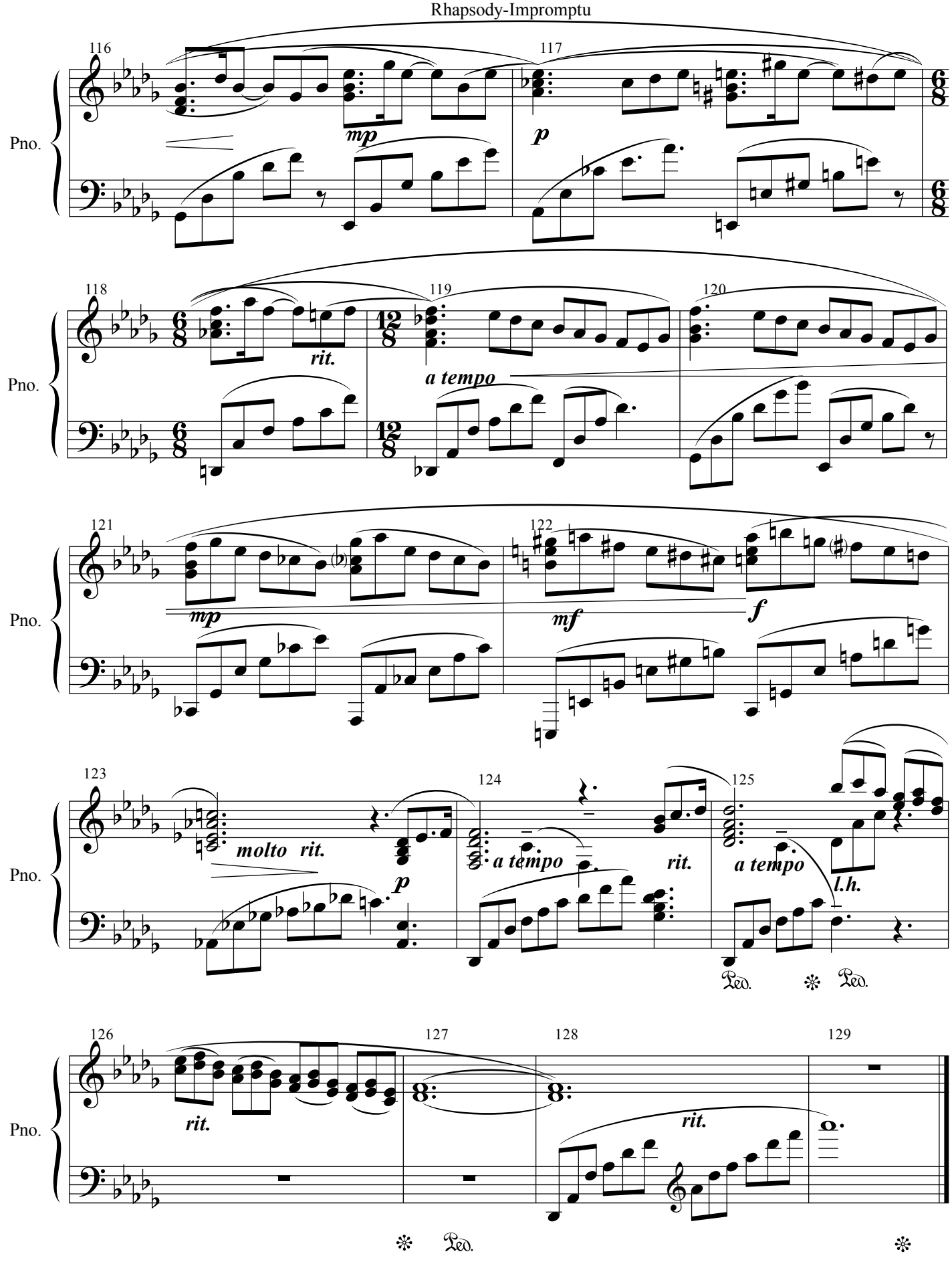

60
a tempo
61
62
63
Pno.
64
65
66
p
Pno.
67
68
69
Tempo I
rit.
pp
mp
Pno.
70
71
subito p
Pno.
72
73
subito mp
Pno.


74
Pno.
subito mp
75
ff rit.
a tempo
76
p
77
78
mp
79
80
hold back
move forward
f
81
82
hold back
83
rit.
84
a tempo
rit.
p


hold back slightly, as if anew; quieter
85
86
87
a tempo
p
Pno.
hold back, quieter
88
89
poco cresc.
poco cresc.
Pno.
hold back, quieter
90
91
poco cresc.
Pno.
92
93
mf
rit.
p
Pno.
94
Tempo I Adagio (♩= 66)
95
rit.
a tempo
Pno.


96
97
Pno.
98
99
rit.
Pno.
a tempo
100
101
p
mp
Pno.
102
103
p
rit.
Pno.
104
105
p
a tempo
poco
cresc.
Pno.


106
107
Pno.
f
subito mp
108
109
a tempo
make inner voice sing
rit.
p
rit.
110
111
a tempo
l.h.
r.h.
l.h
112
113
r.h.
l.h.
r.h.
l.h.
l.h.
l.h.
114
115
a tempo
rit.
p


116
117
Pno.
mp
p
118
119
120
rit.
a tempo
121
122
mp
mf
f
123
124
125
molto rit.
p
a tempo
rit.
a tempo
l.h.
Ped.
Ped.
126
127
128
129
rit.
rit.
Ped.

2. Scherzo

Study in 6ths

1:40 - 2 min

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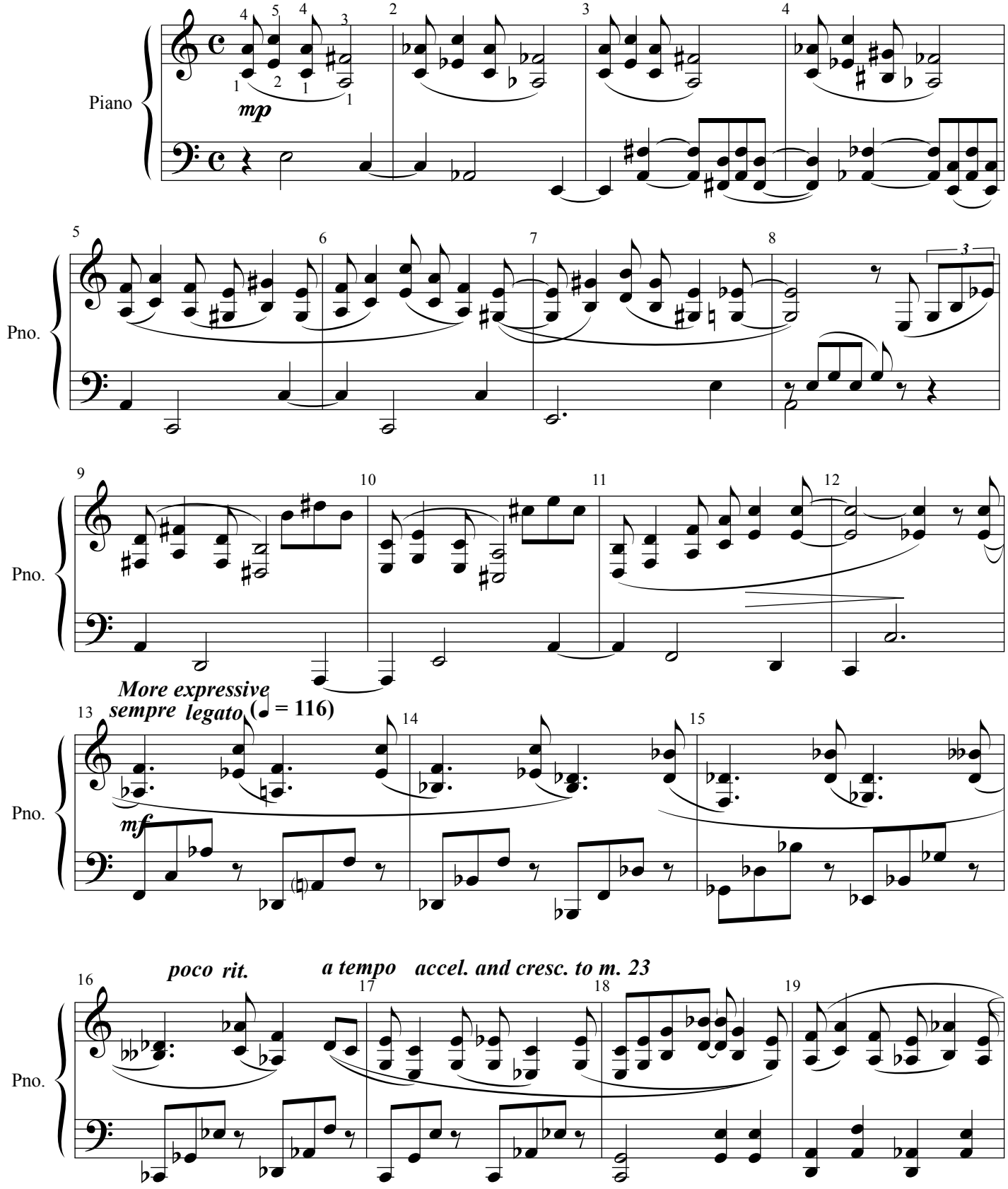
September 1999

Allegretto (♩ = 108)



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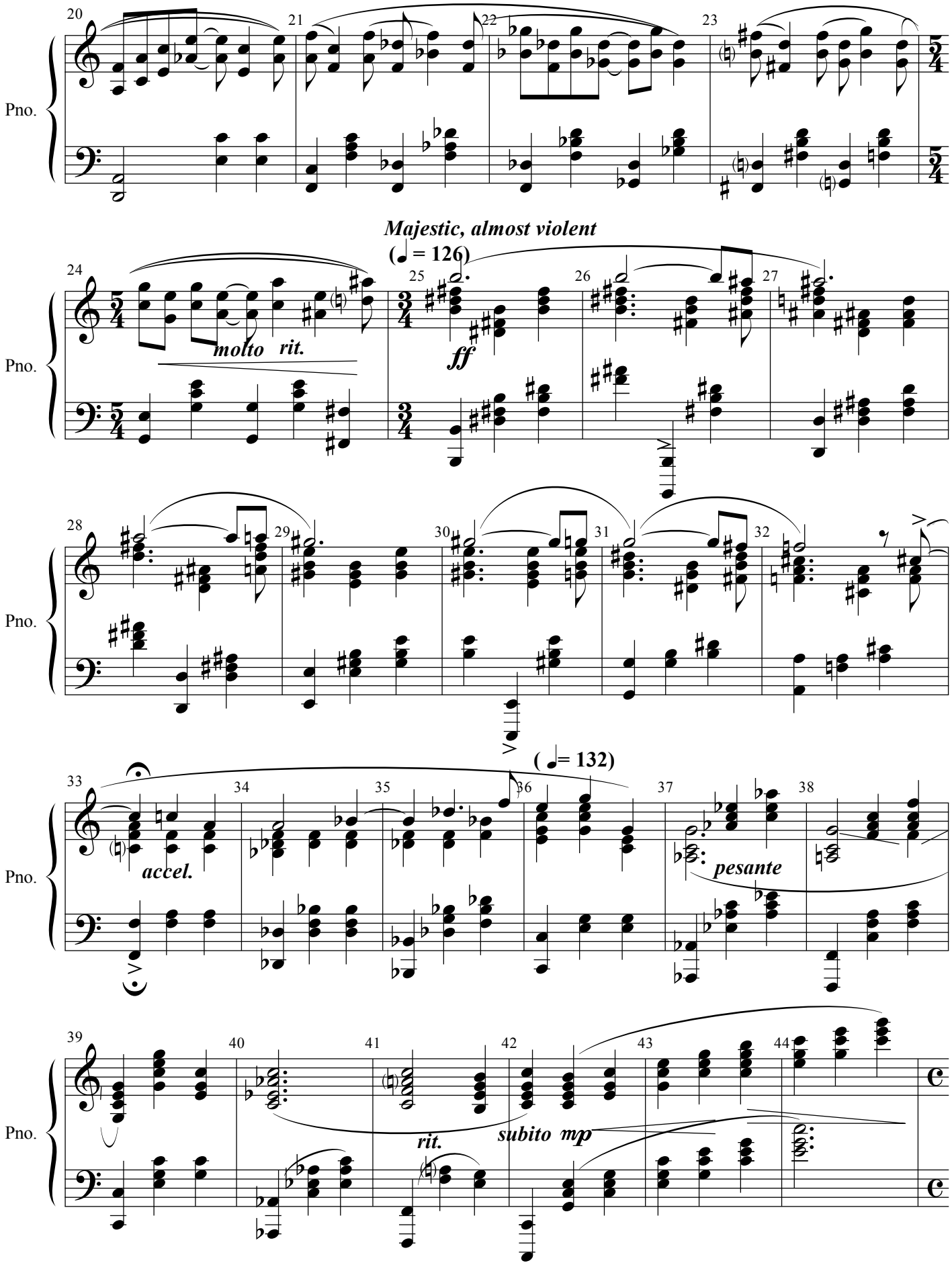
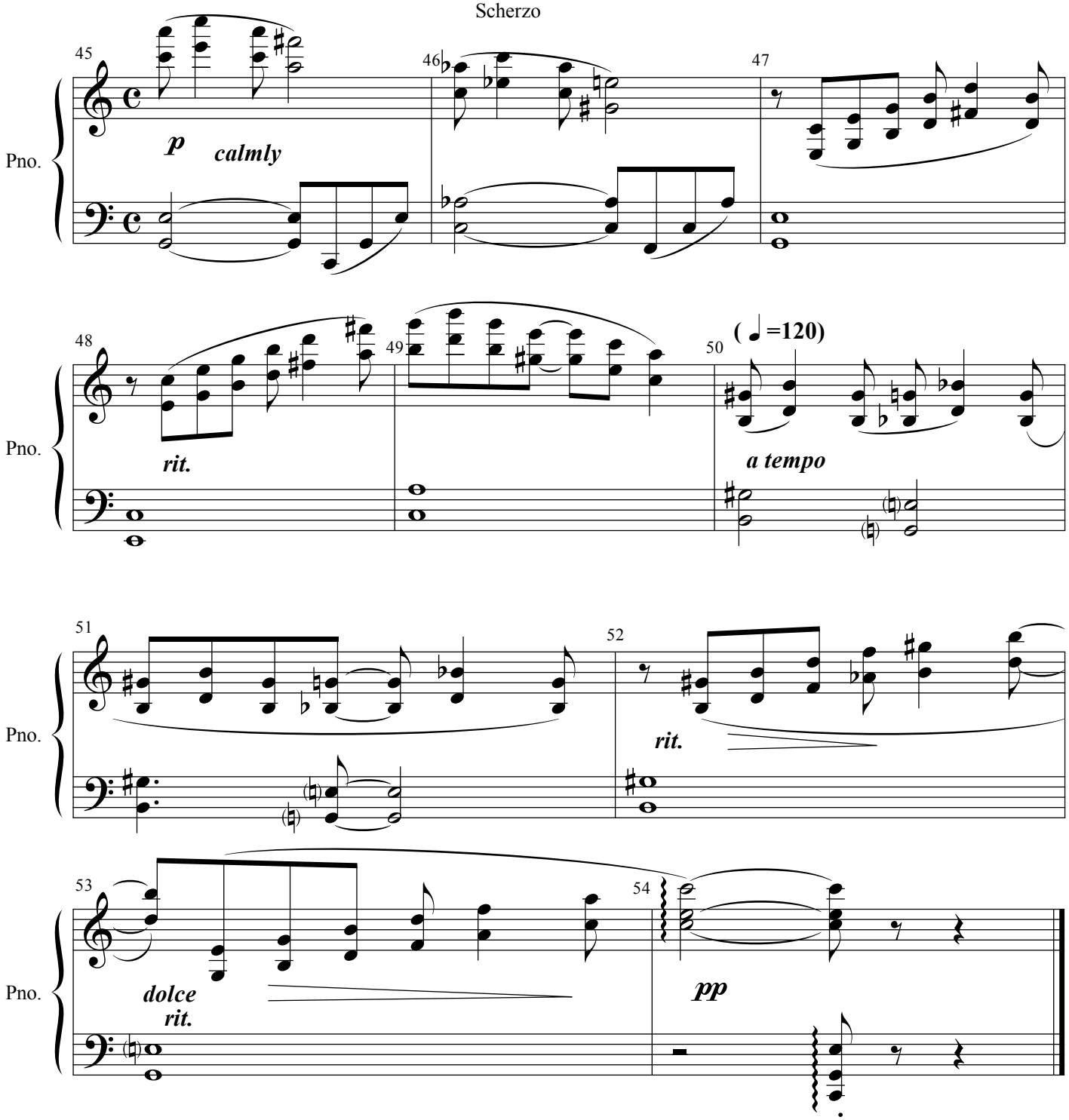

Pno.
20
21
22
23
Majestic, almost violent
(♩= 126)
24
molto rit.
25
ff
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
(♩= 132)
33
accel.
34
35
36
37
pesante
38
39
40
41
rit.
42
subito mp
43
44

Tempo I or slightly slower

Scherzo



Mvt. #3 Nocturne:

The soul gives voice — a solo expressive melody, singing its song in quiet ecstasy.
The grief of loneliness interjects — the passionate cry for another to sing with, as the festival is heard in the distance.
The soul sings again with renewed passion and expression
When another voice joins, and they sing a duet.
Sadness is just the echo of a memory, and the soul knows with conviction it has found a mate.

3. Nocturne: Song; Loneliness; Dance for Two

Moderato (♩ = 92-100) 7 min

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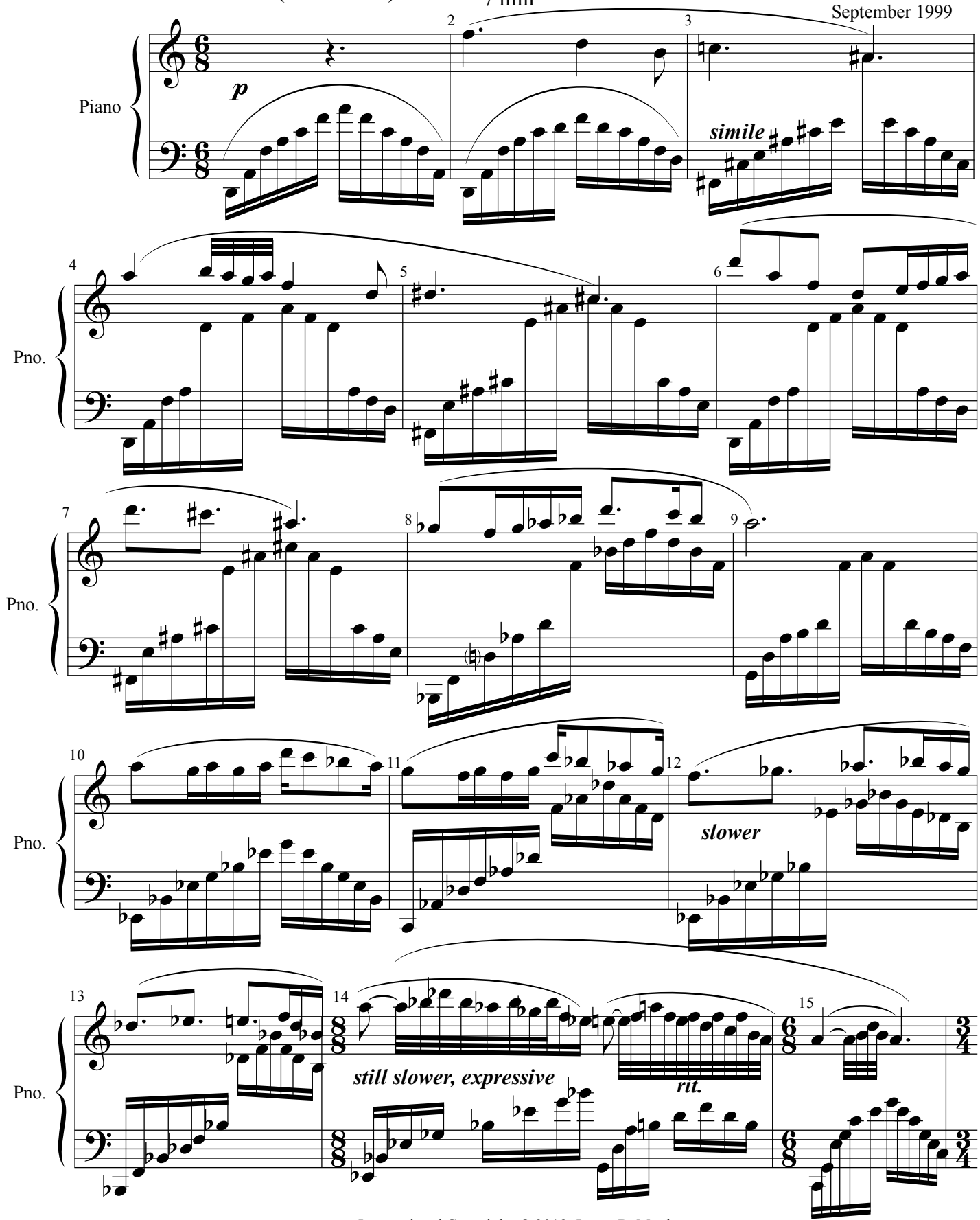
September 1999



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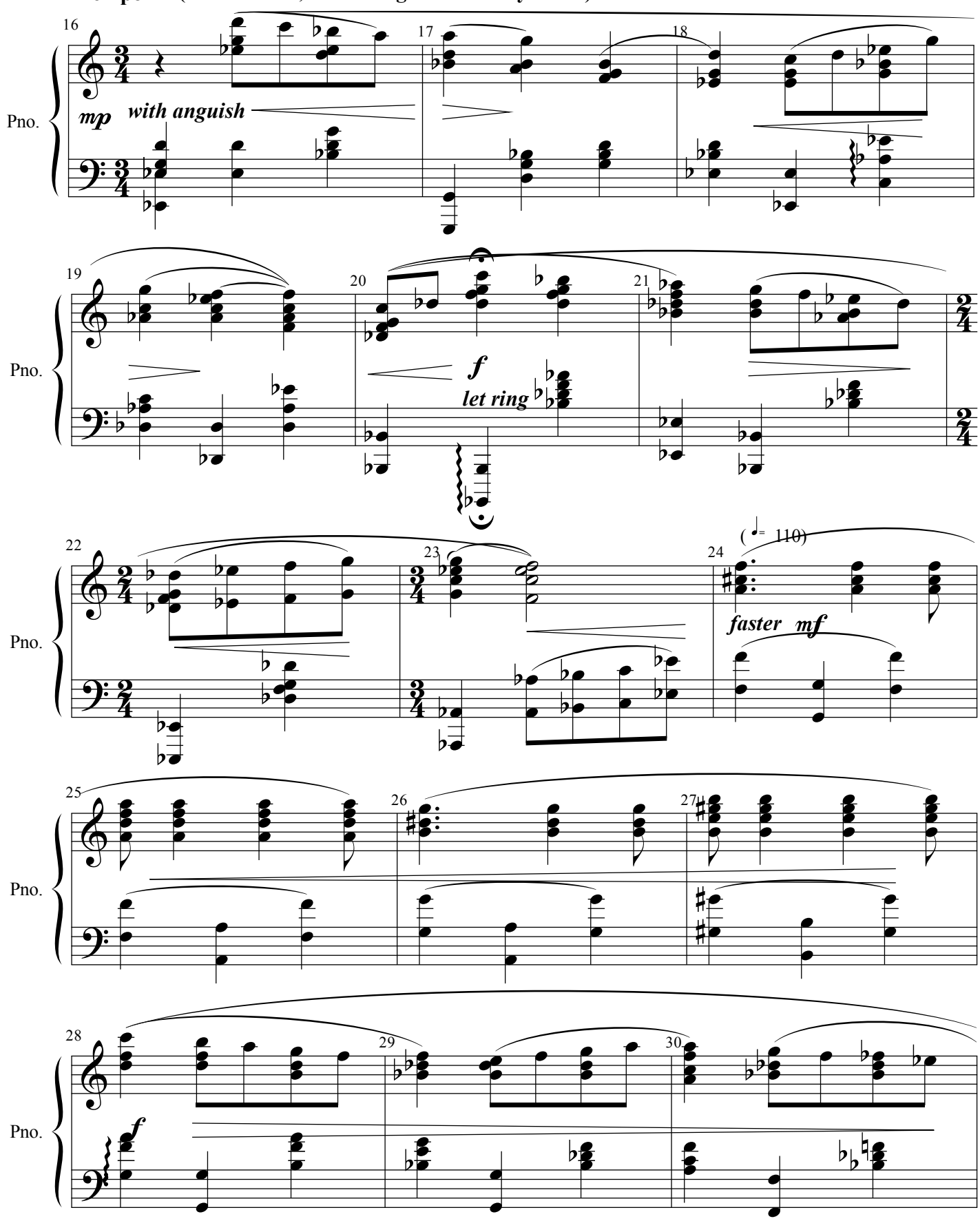
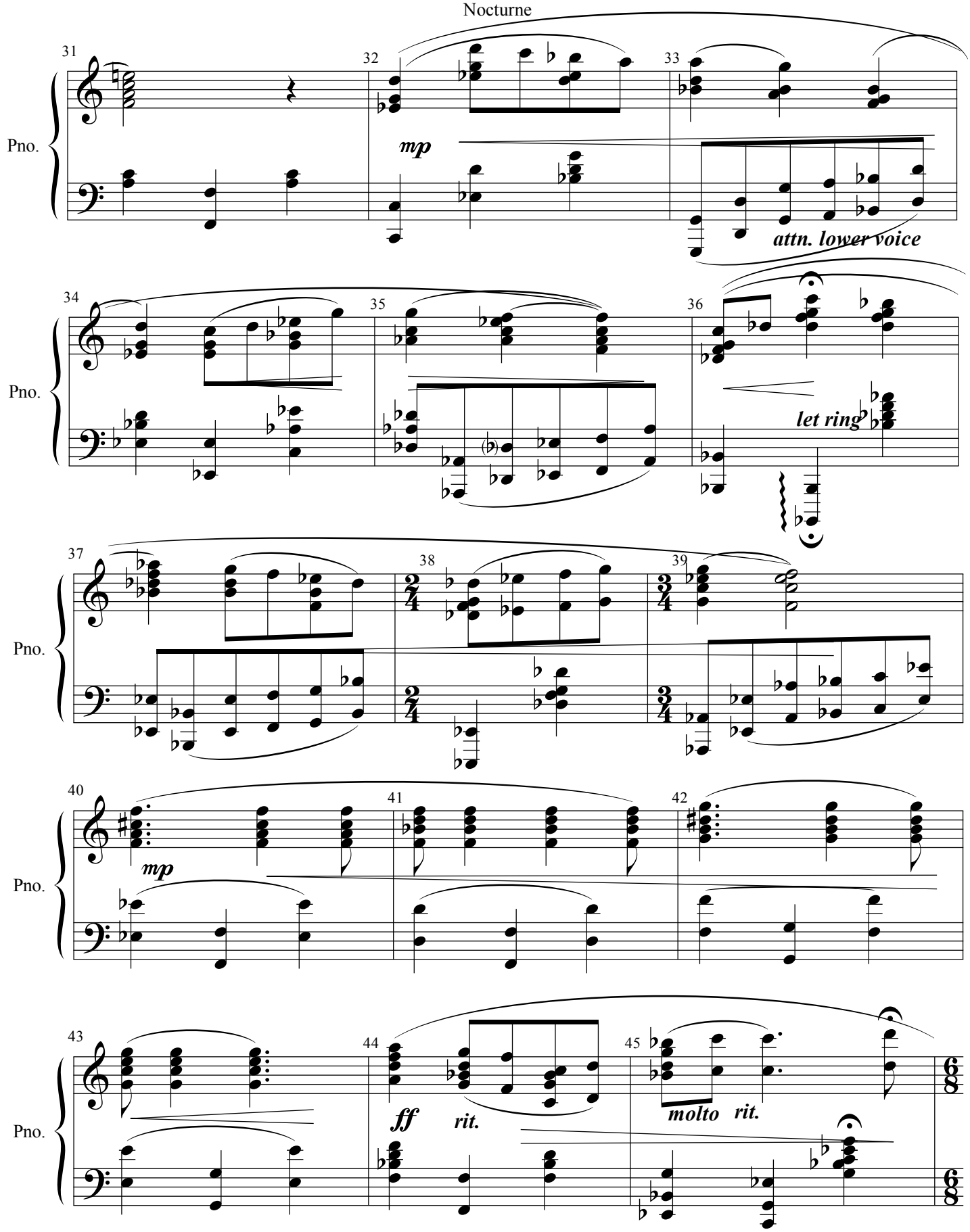
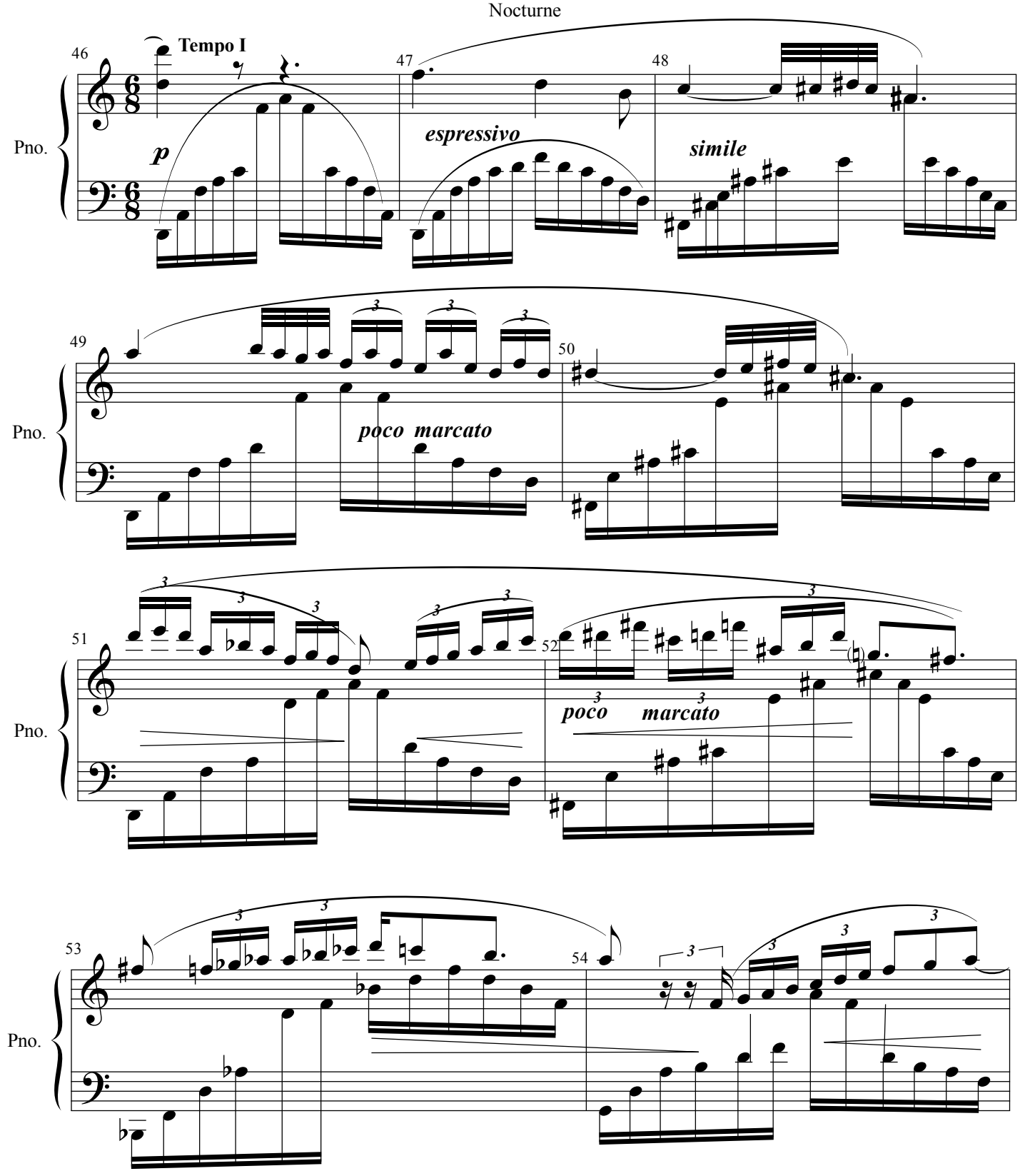
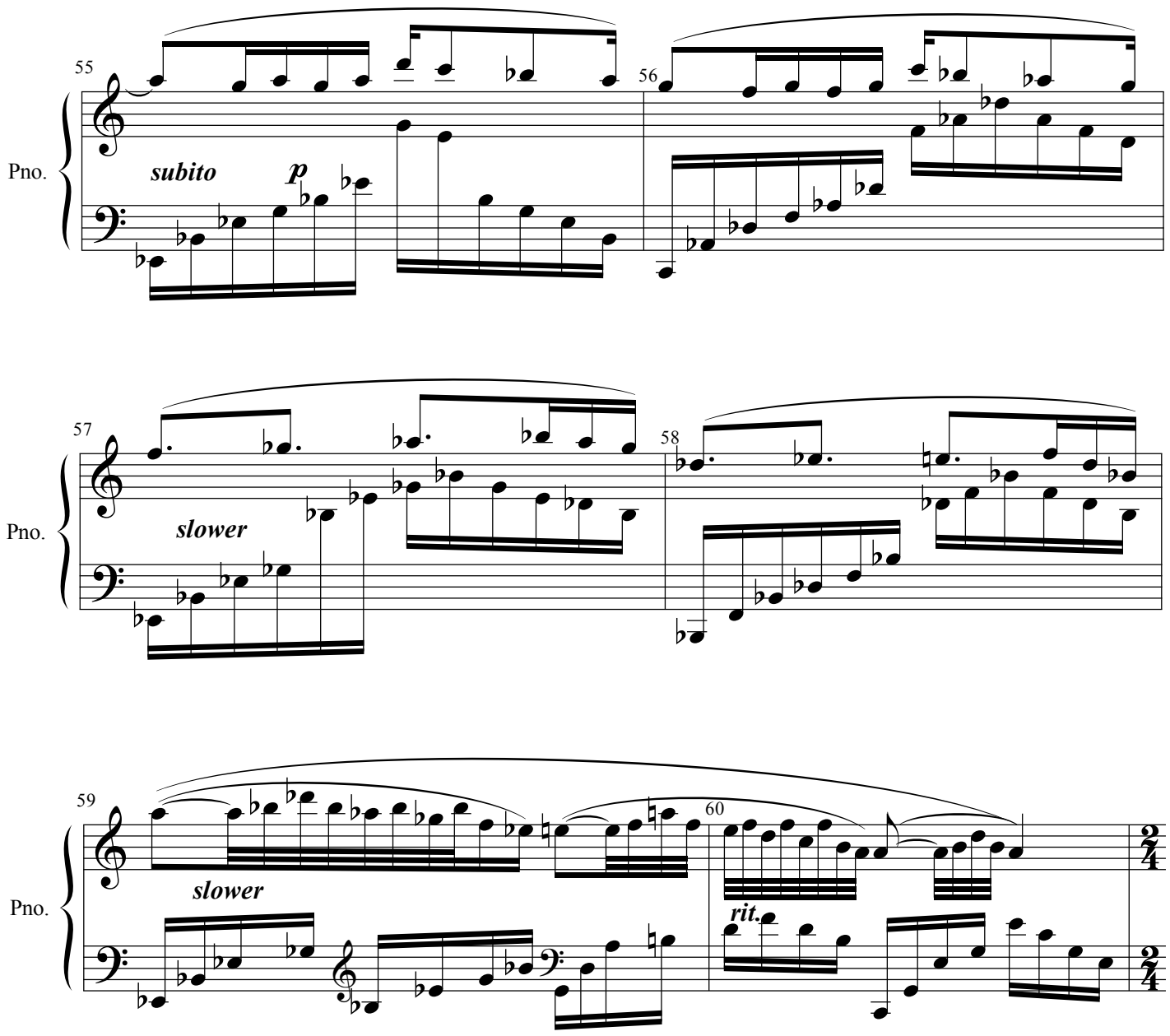
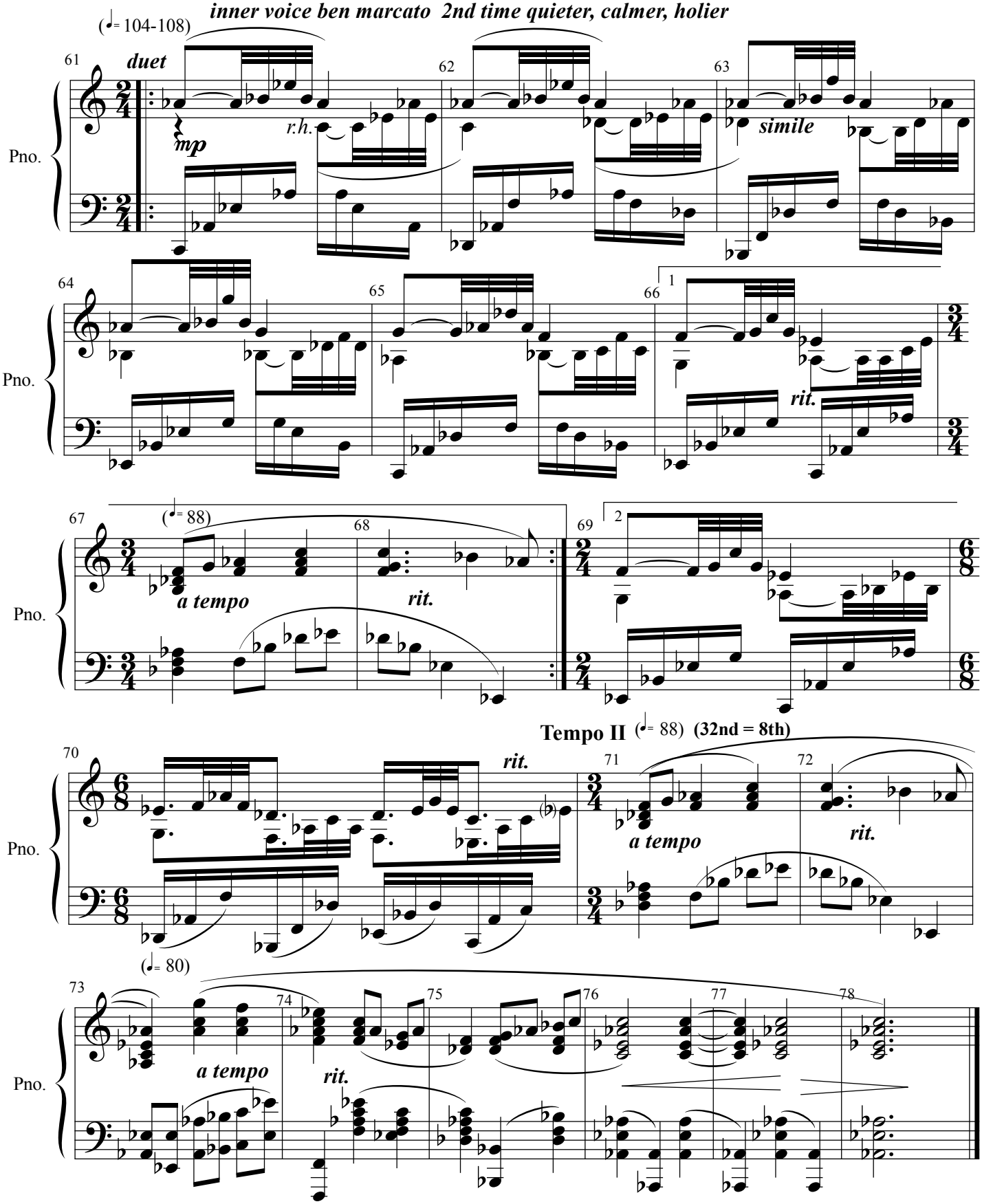

Tempo II (start ♩ = 92, increasing to ♩ = 96 by m. 23)
16
17
18
Pno.
mp with anguish
19
20
21
Pno.
f
let ring
22
23
24
Pno.
(♩= 110)
faster mf
25
26
27
Pno.
28
29
30
Pno.
f


31
32
33
Pno.
mp
attn. lower voice
34
35
36
Pno.
let ring
37
38
39
Pno.
40
41
42
Pno.
mp
43
44
45
Pno.
ff
rit.
molto rit.


46
Tempo I
47
48
Pno.
p
espressivo
simile
49
50
poco marcato
51
52
poco marcato
53
54


55
56
Pno.
subito
p
57
58
Pno.
slower
59
60
Pno.
slower
rit.


inner voice ben marcato 2nd time quieter, calmer, holier
(♩= 104-108)
61
duet
mp
r.h.
62
63
simile
Pno.
64
65
66
1
rit.
67
(♩= 88)
a tempo
68
rit.
69
2
Tempo II (♩= 88) (32nd = 8th)
70
rit.
71
a tempo
72
rit.
(♩= 80)
73
a tempo
74
rit.
75
76
77
78

4. Four Bar Finale

Rejoicing

2:50

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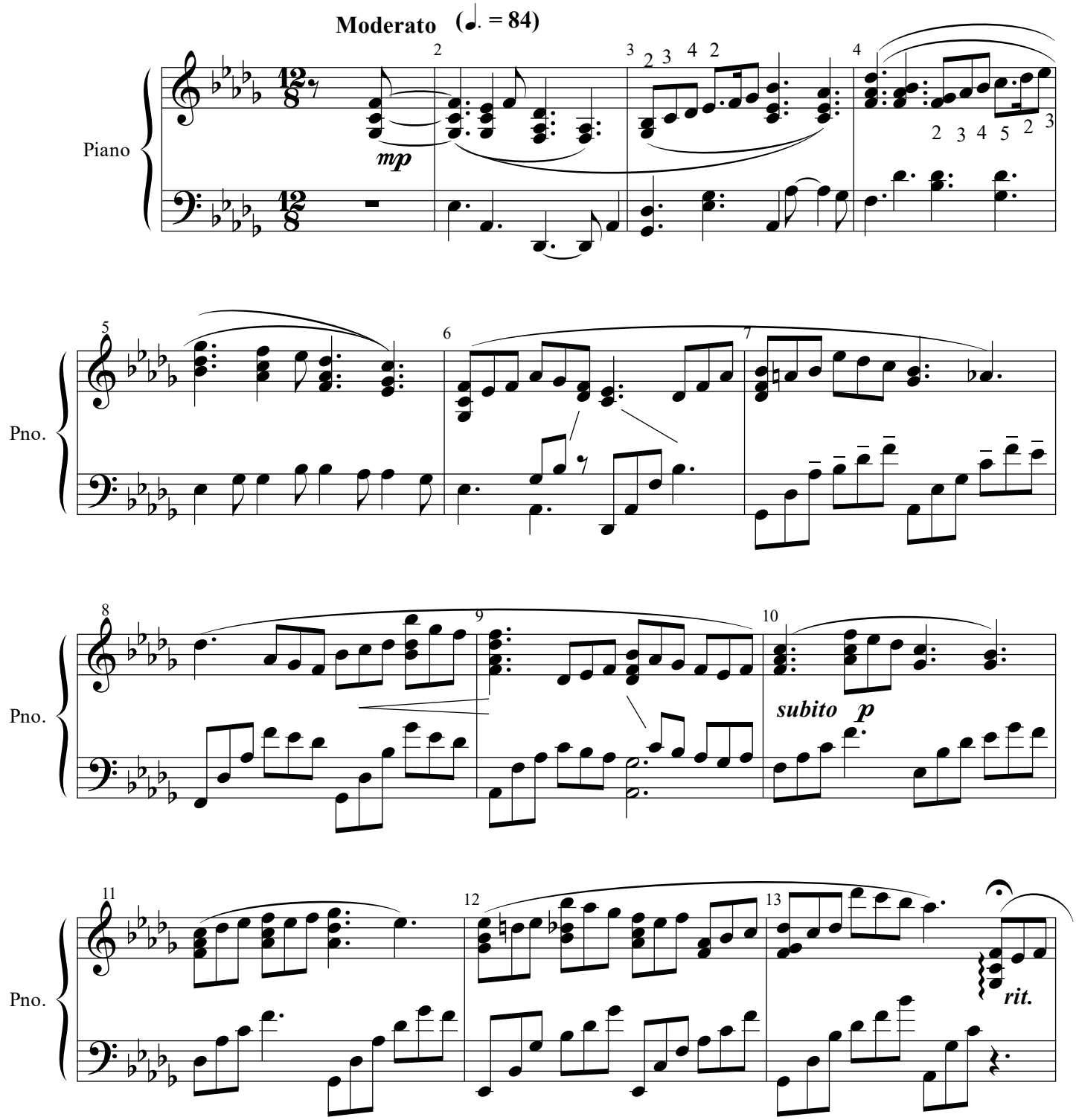
September 1999



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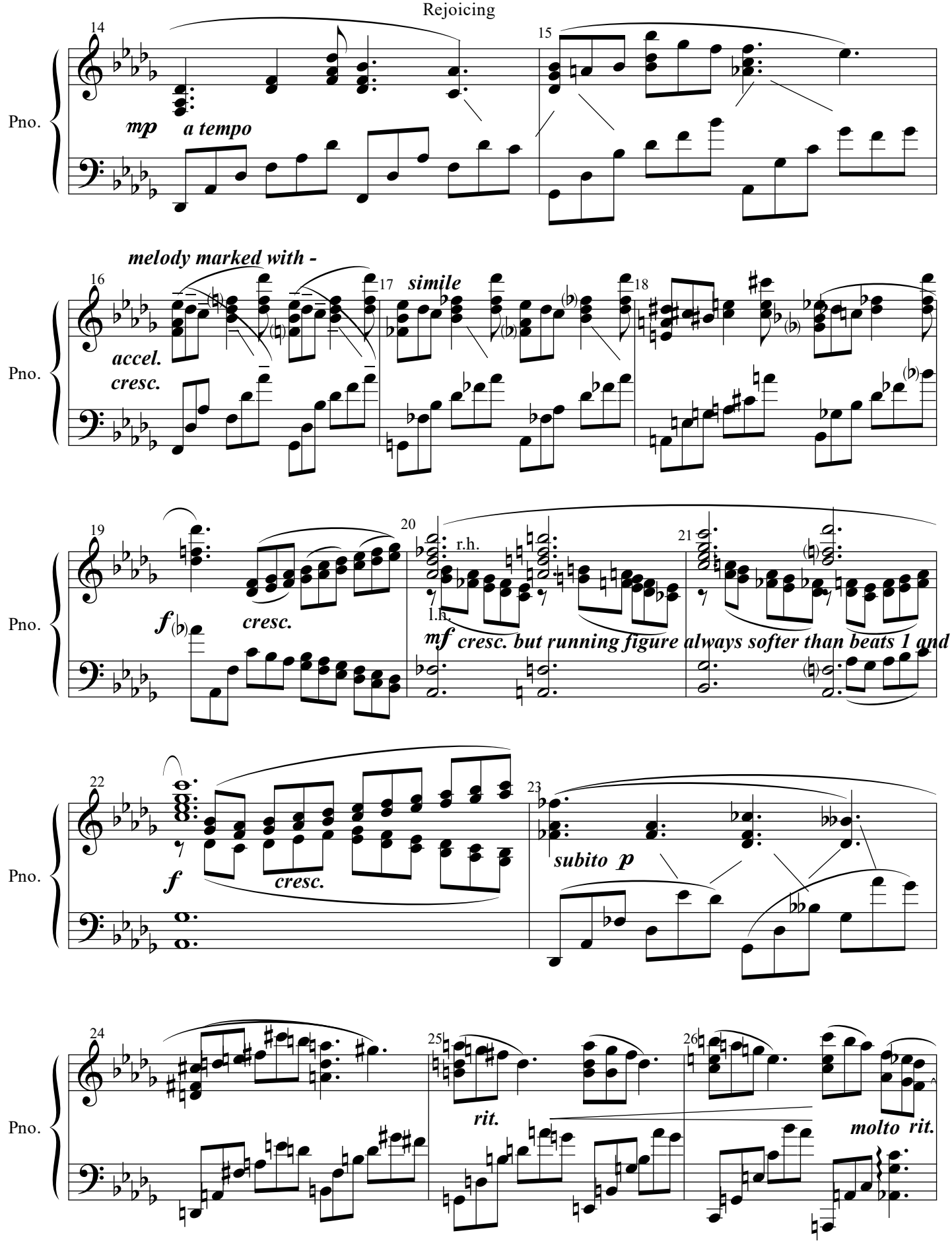
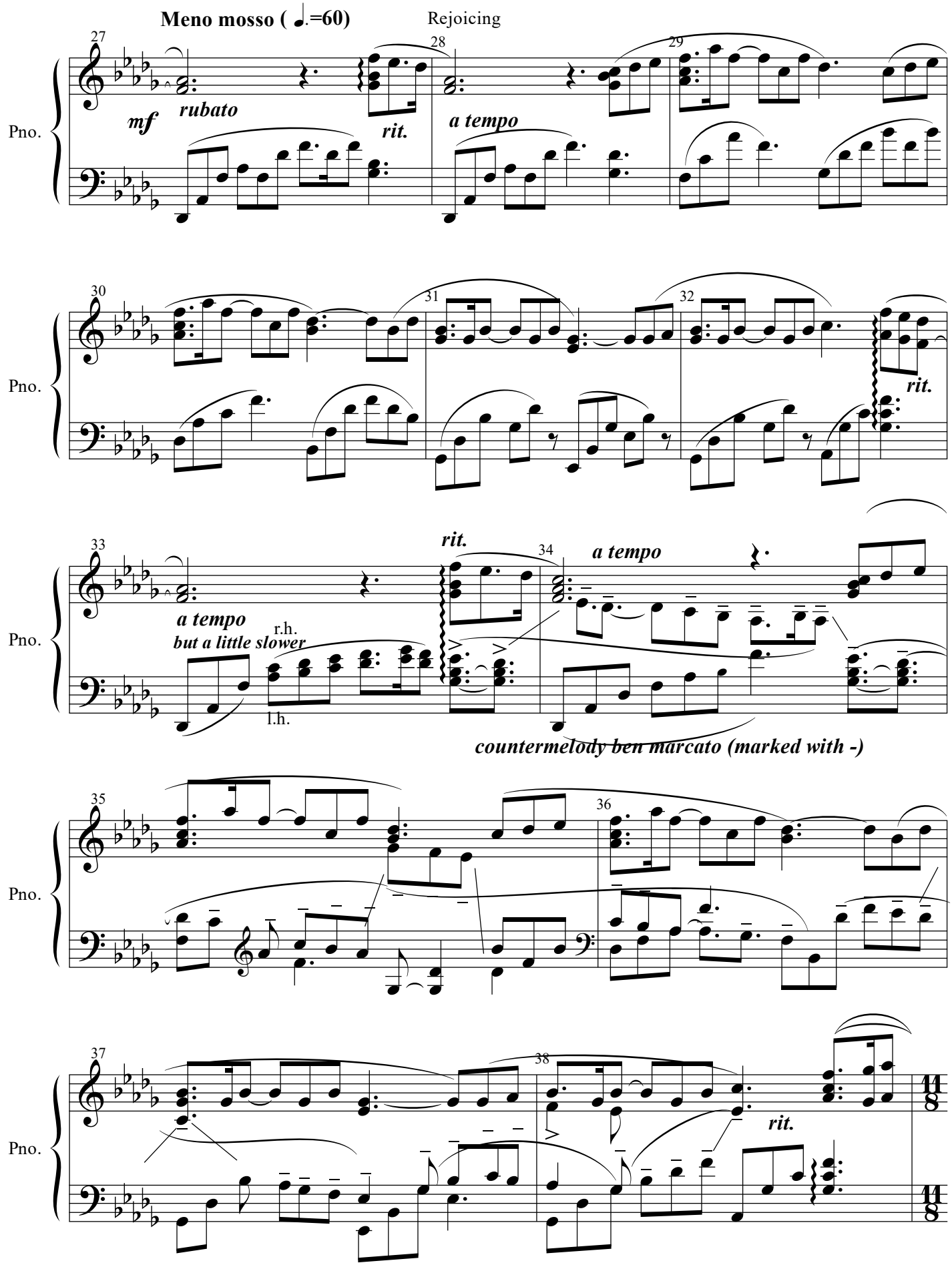
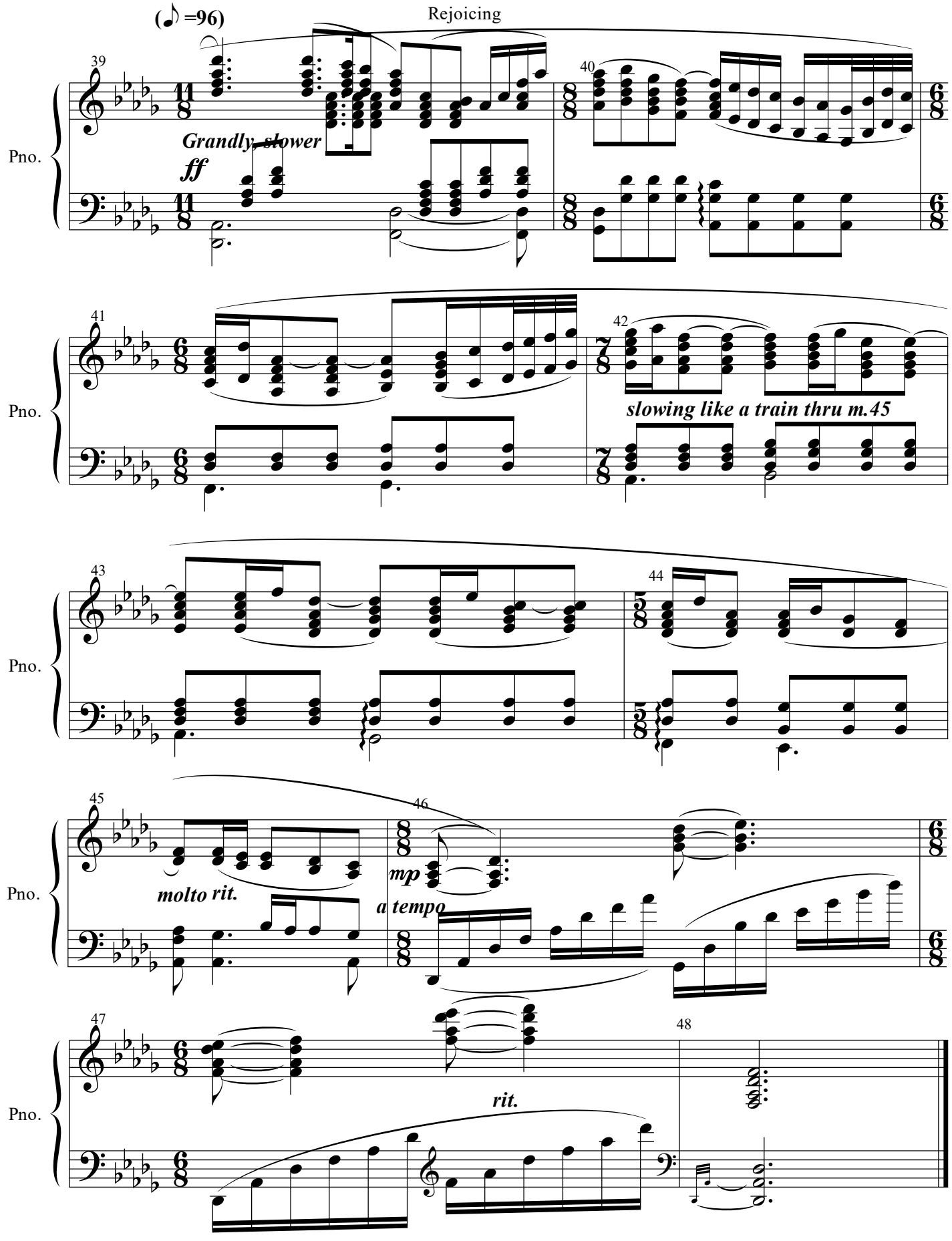
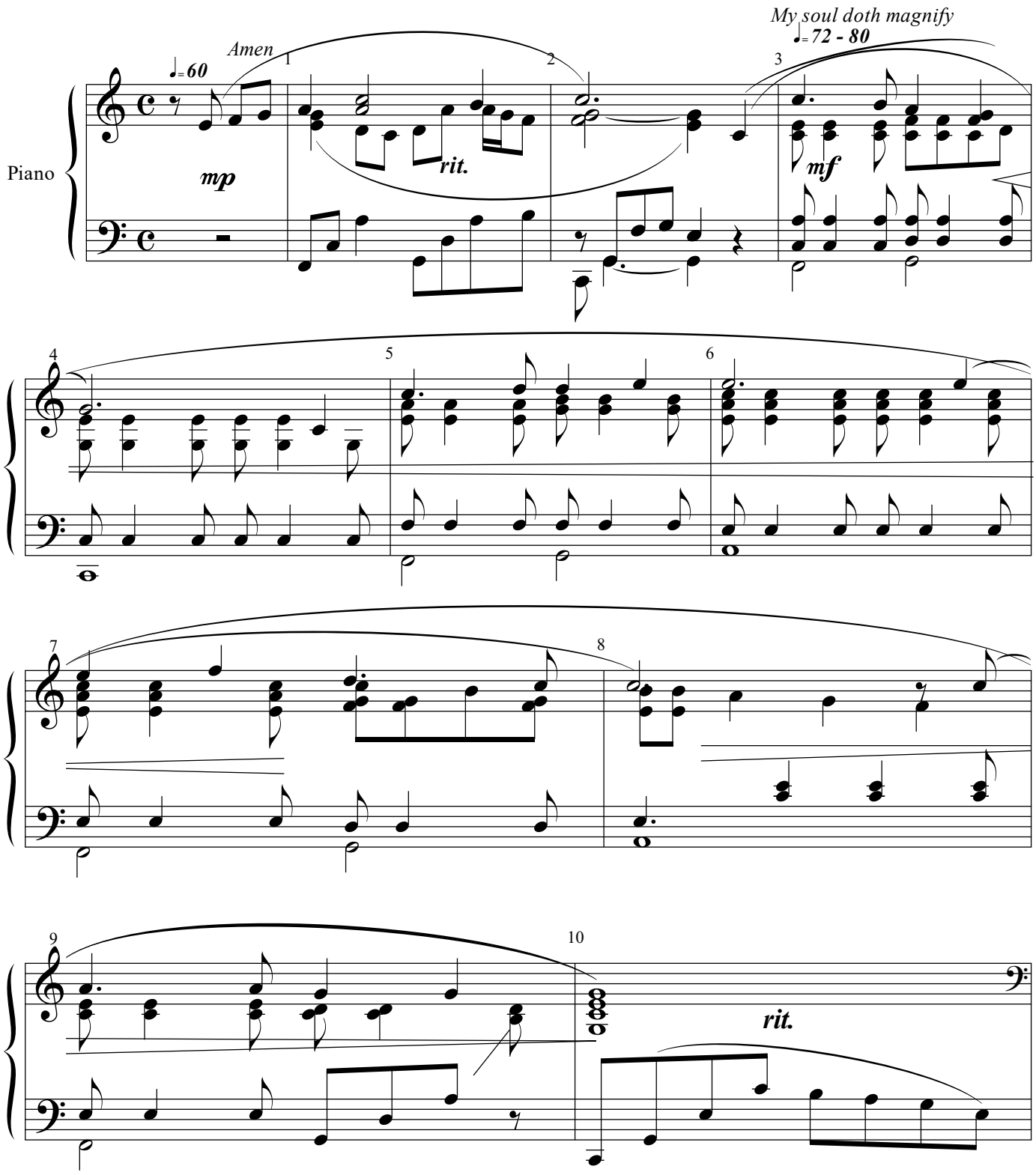

Rejoicing
14
15
Pno.
mp
a tempo
melody marked with -
16
17
simile
18
accel.
cresc.
19
20
21
f
cresc.
r.h.
l.h.
mf cresc. but running figure always softer than beats 1 and 3
22
23
f
cresc.
subito p
24
25
26
rit.
molto rit.


Meno mosso (♩.=60)
Rejoicing
27
28
29
Pno.
mf
rubato
rit.
a tempo
30
31
32
Pno.
rit.
33
34
Pno.
rit.
a tempo
a tempo
but a little slower
r.h.
l.h.
a tempo
countermelody ben marcato (marked with -)
35
36
Pno.
37
38
Pno.
rit.


(♪ =96)
Rejoicing
39
40
Grandly, slower
ff
Pno.
41
42
slowing like a train thru m.45
Pno.
43
44
Pno.
45
46
molto rit.
mp
a tempo
Pno.
47
48
rit.
Pno.

Sonata #2 (Liturgical)
1. Song of Praise (A Modern Magnificat)

James D. Matthews
2002



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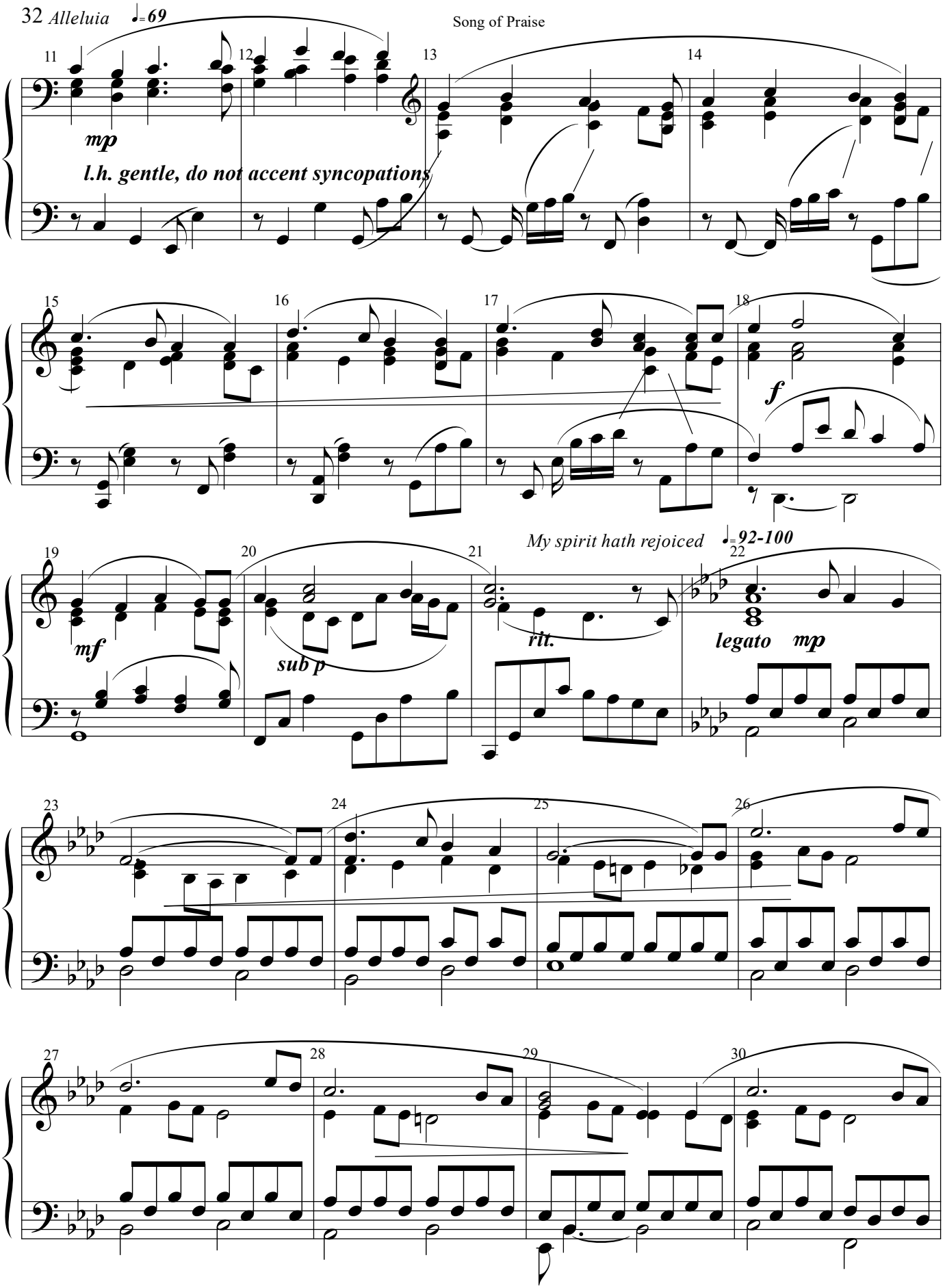
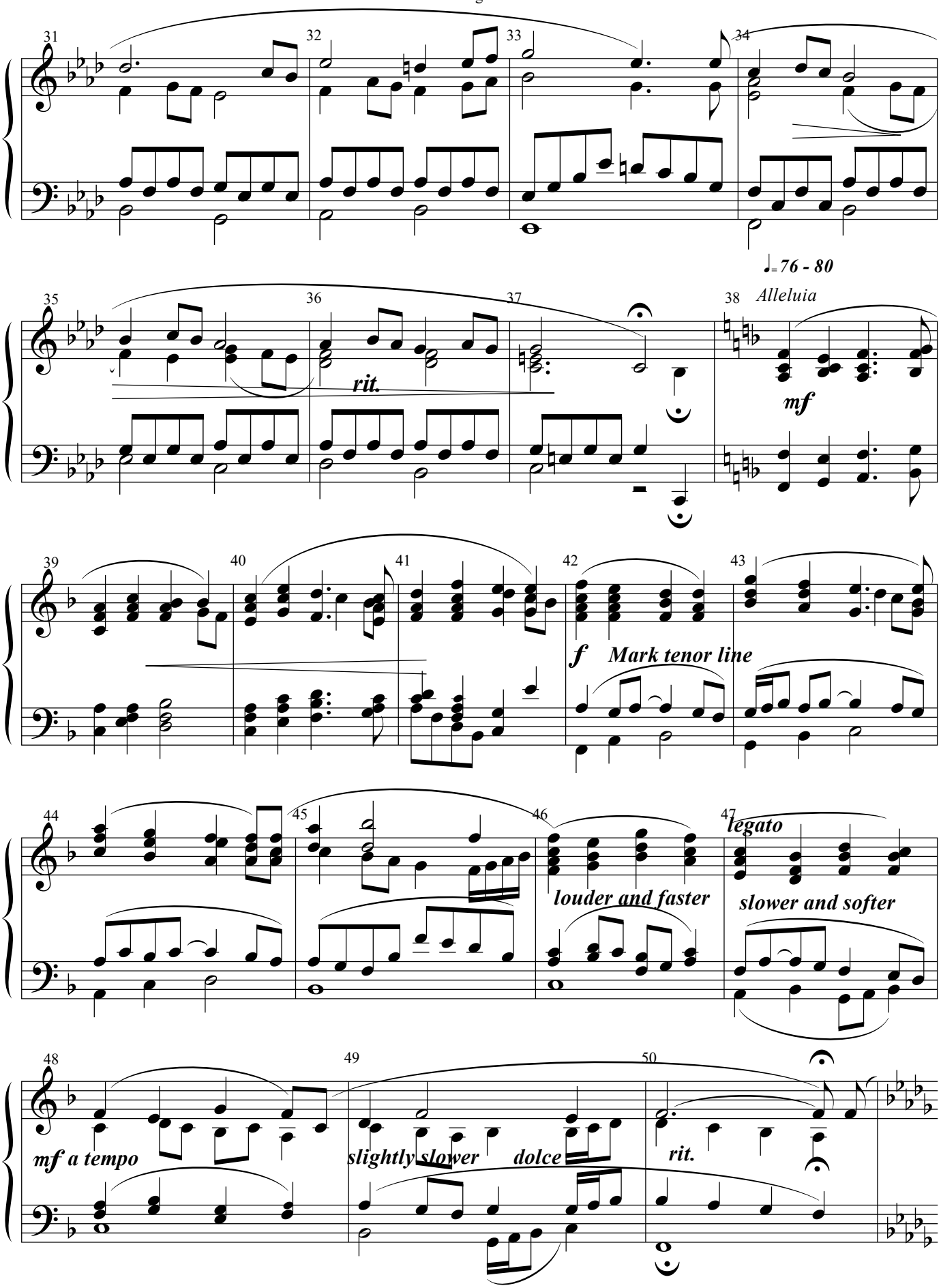
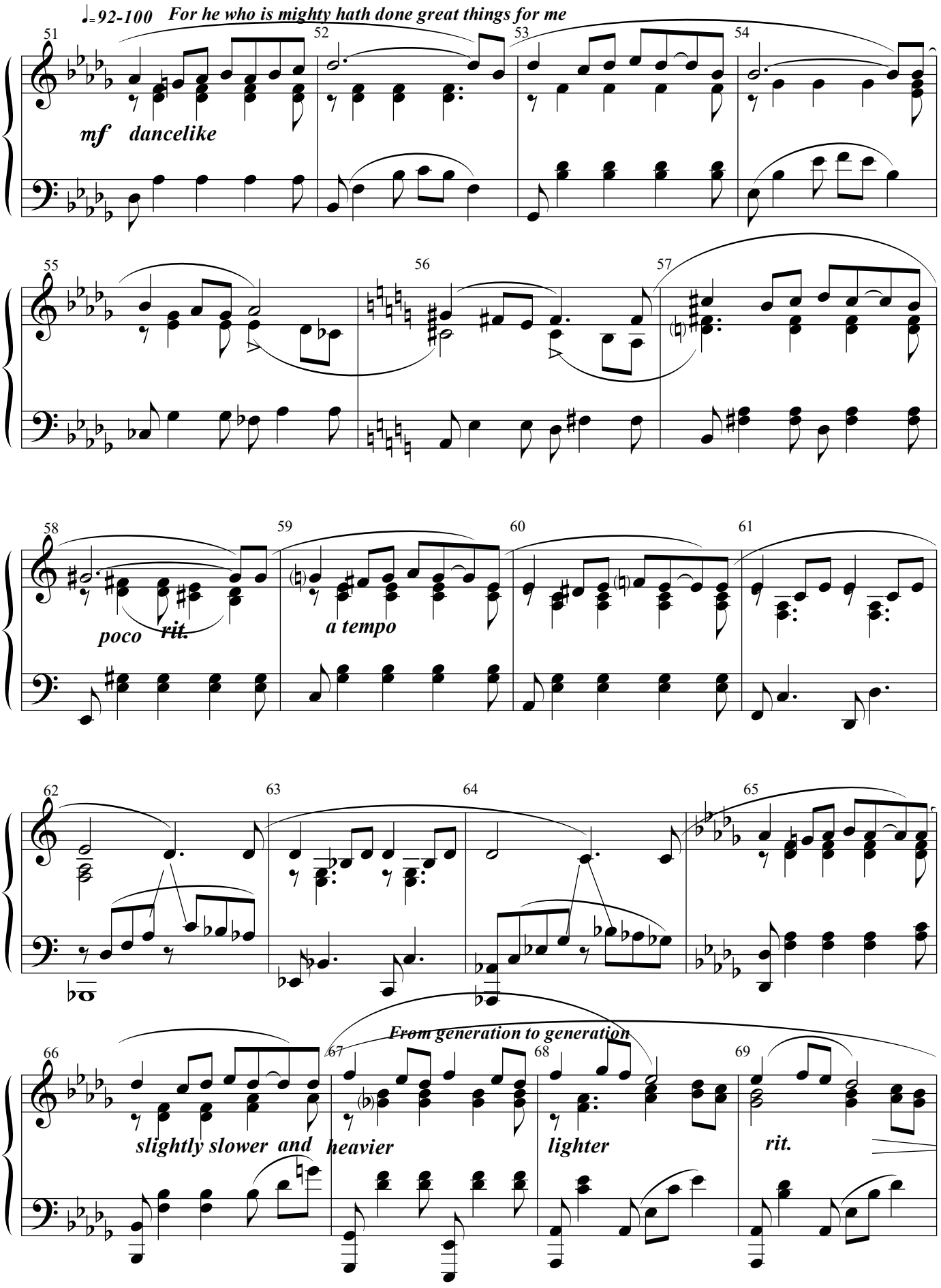
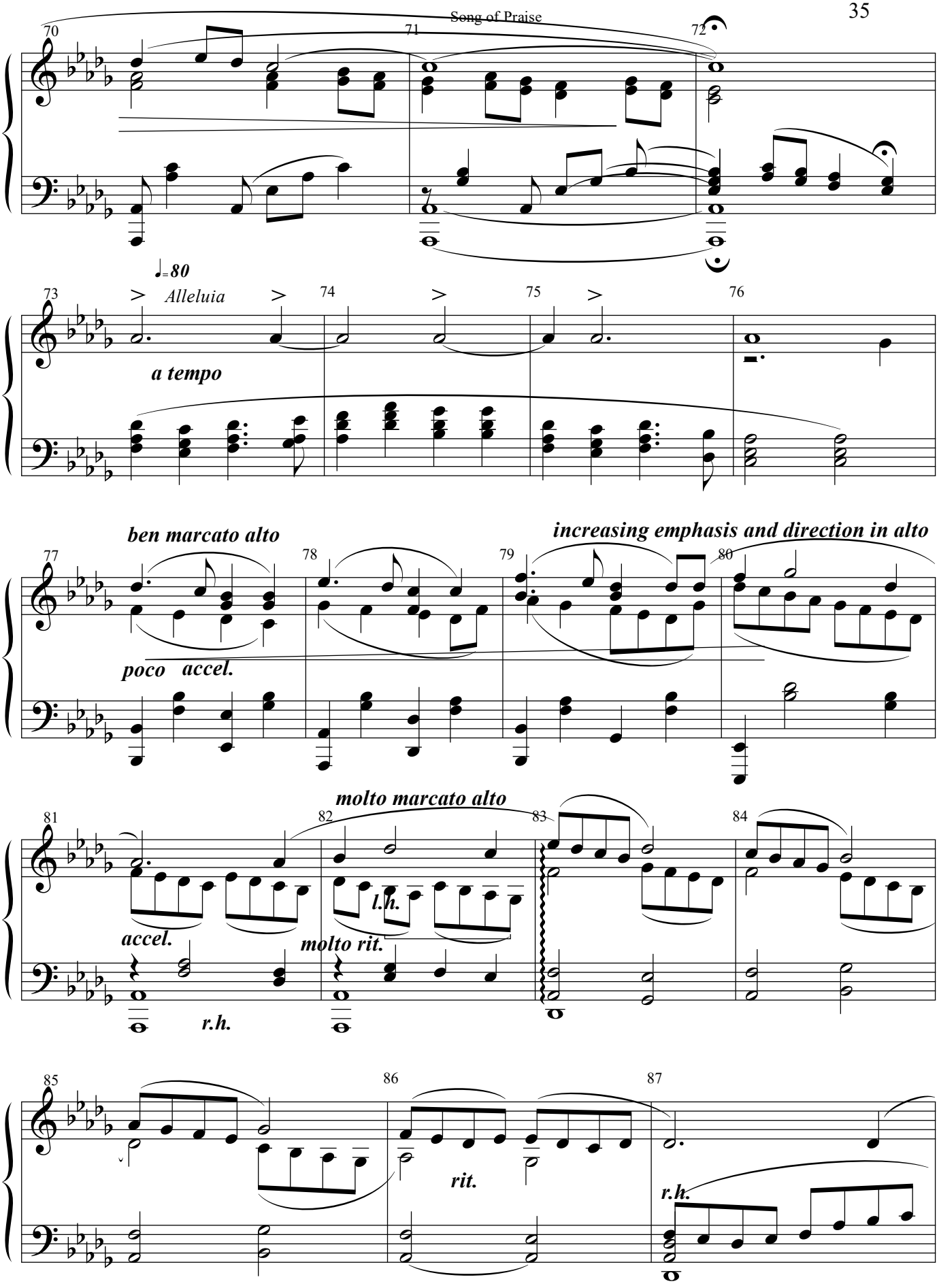
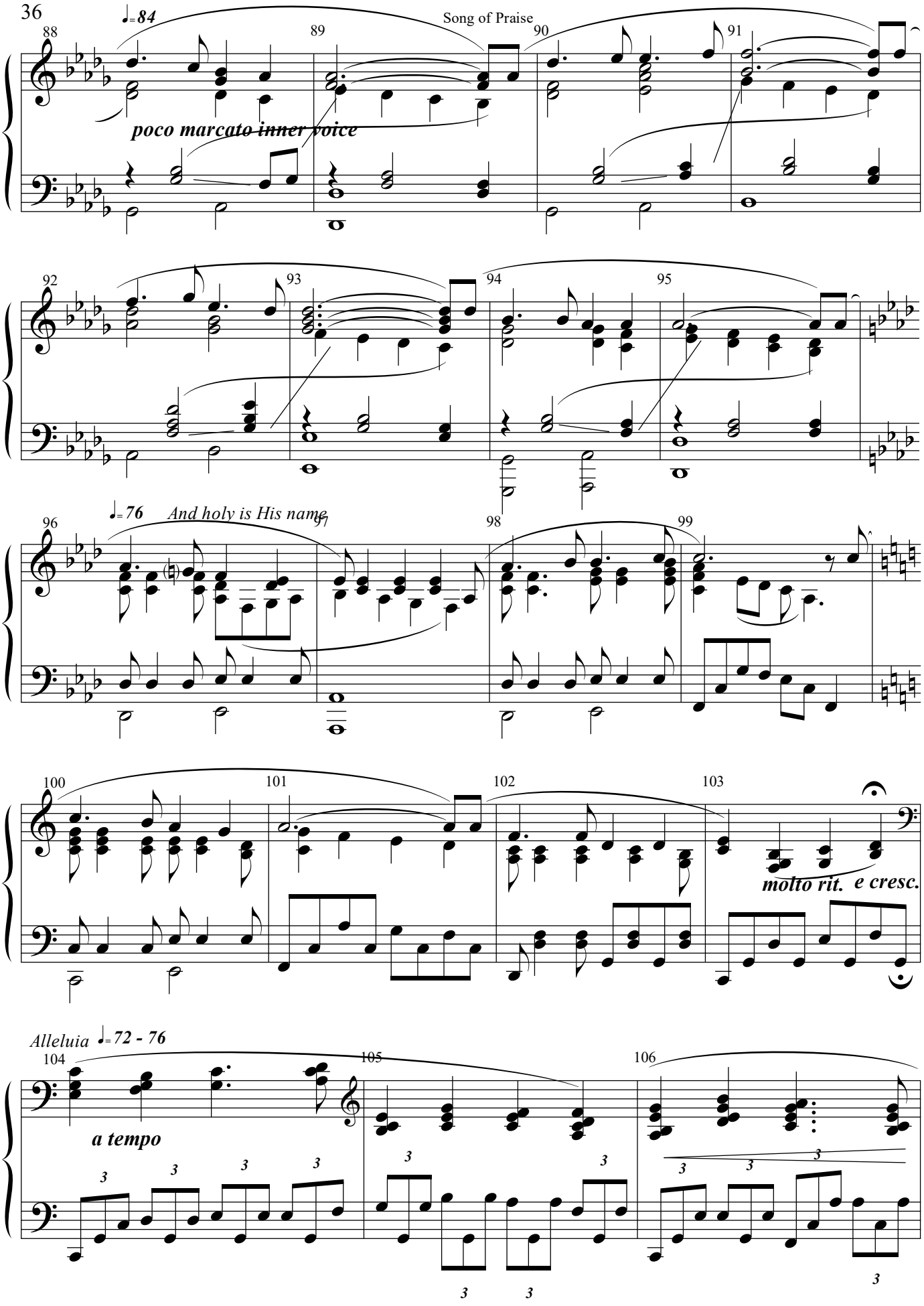
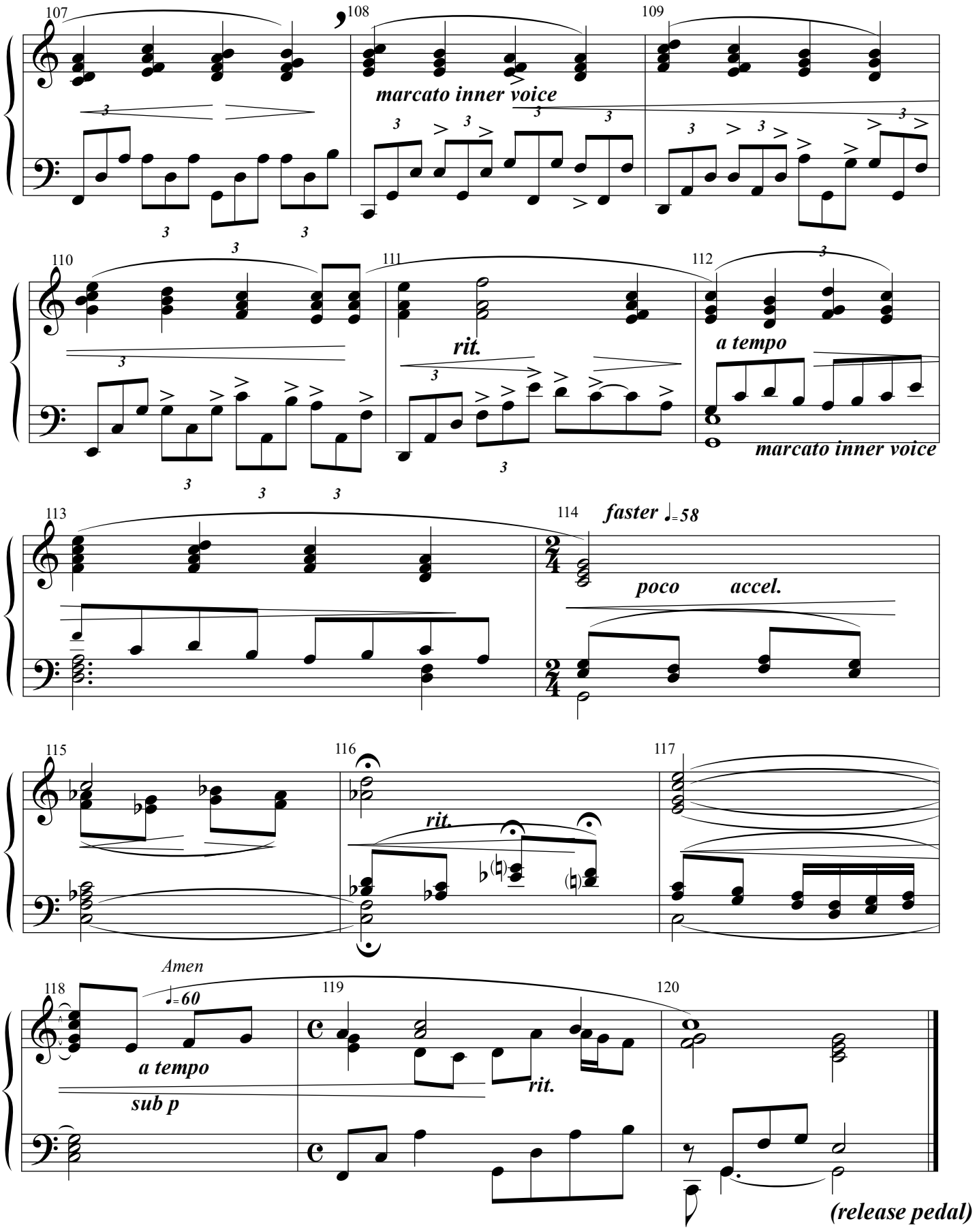

11
12
13
14
mp
l.h. gentle, do not accent syncopations
15
16
17
18
f
19
20
21
My spirit hath rejoiced
♩= 92-100
22
mf
sub p
rit.
legato mp
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

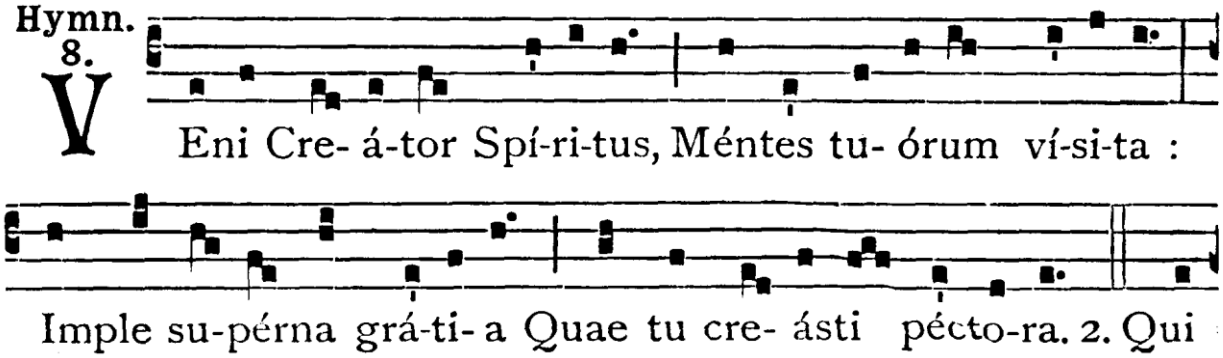

31
32
33
34
♩= 76 - 80
35
36
rit.
37
38
Alleluia
mf
39
40
41
42
f
Mark tenor line
43
44
45
46
louder and faster
47
legato
slower and softer
48
mf a tempo
49
slightly slower
dolce
50
rit.


♩= 92-100
For he who is mighty hath done great things for me
mf dancelike
poco rit.
a tempo
From generation to generation
slightly slower and heavier
lighter
rit.

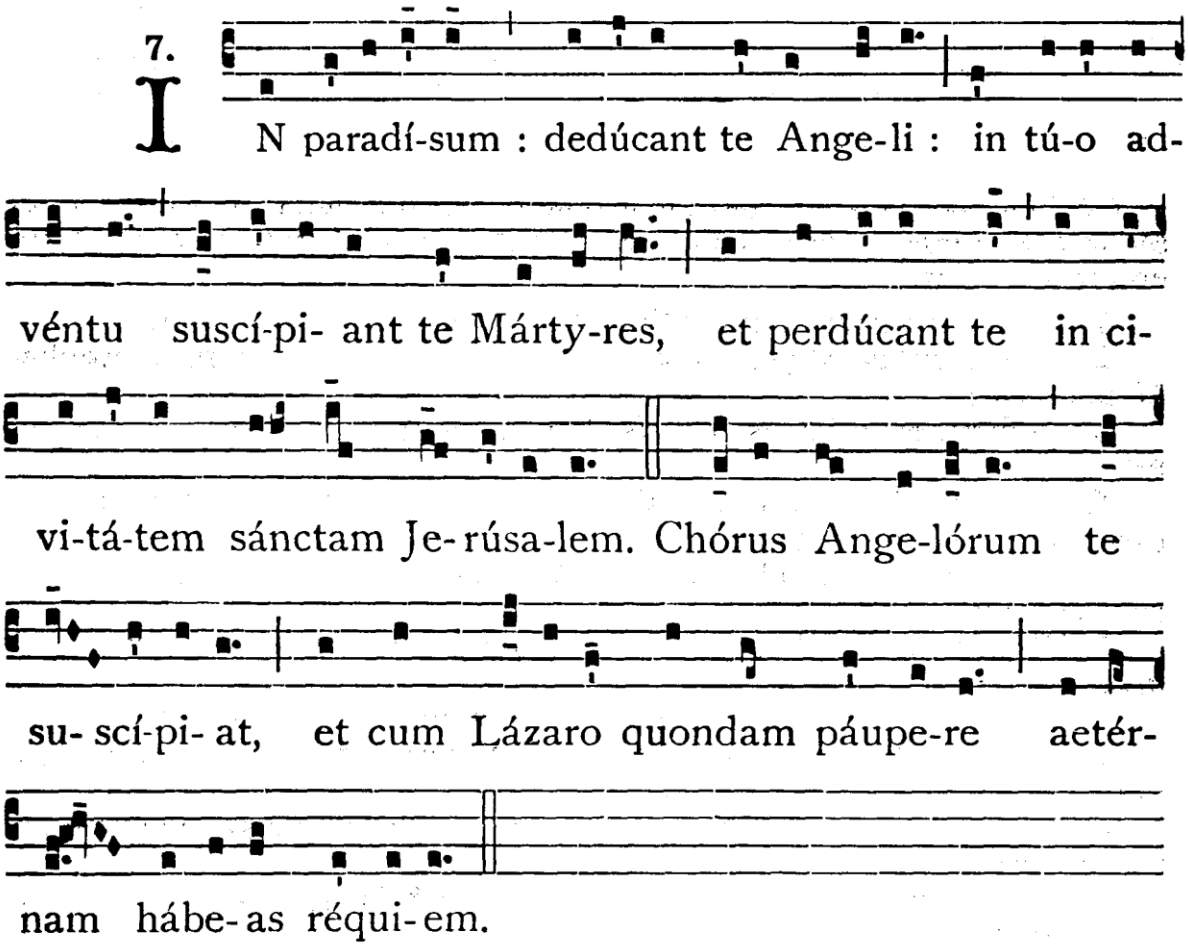

70
71
72
♩=80
Alleluia
73
74
75
76
a tempo
ben marcato alto
increasing emphasis and direction in alto
77
78
79
80
poco accel.
molto marcato alto
81
82
83
84
accel.
l.h.
molto rit.
r.h.
85
86
87
rit.
r.h.


Song of Praise
♩= 84
poco marcato inner voice
♩= 76
And holy is His name
molto rit. e cresc.
Alleluia
♩= 72 - 76
a tempo


107
108
109
marcato inner voice
110
111
112
rit.
a tempo
marcato inner voice
113
114
faster ♩= 58
poco accel.
115
116
117
rit.
Amen
118
119
120
♩= 60
a tempo
sub p
rit.
(release pedal)



Movement 2:
Come Creative Spirit! Visit our minds:
Fill with supernal grace the hearts you created.



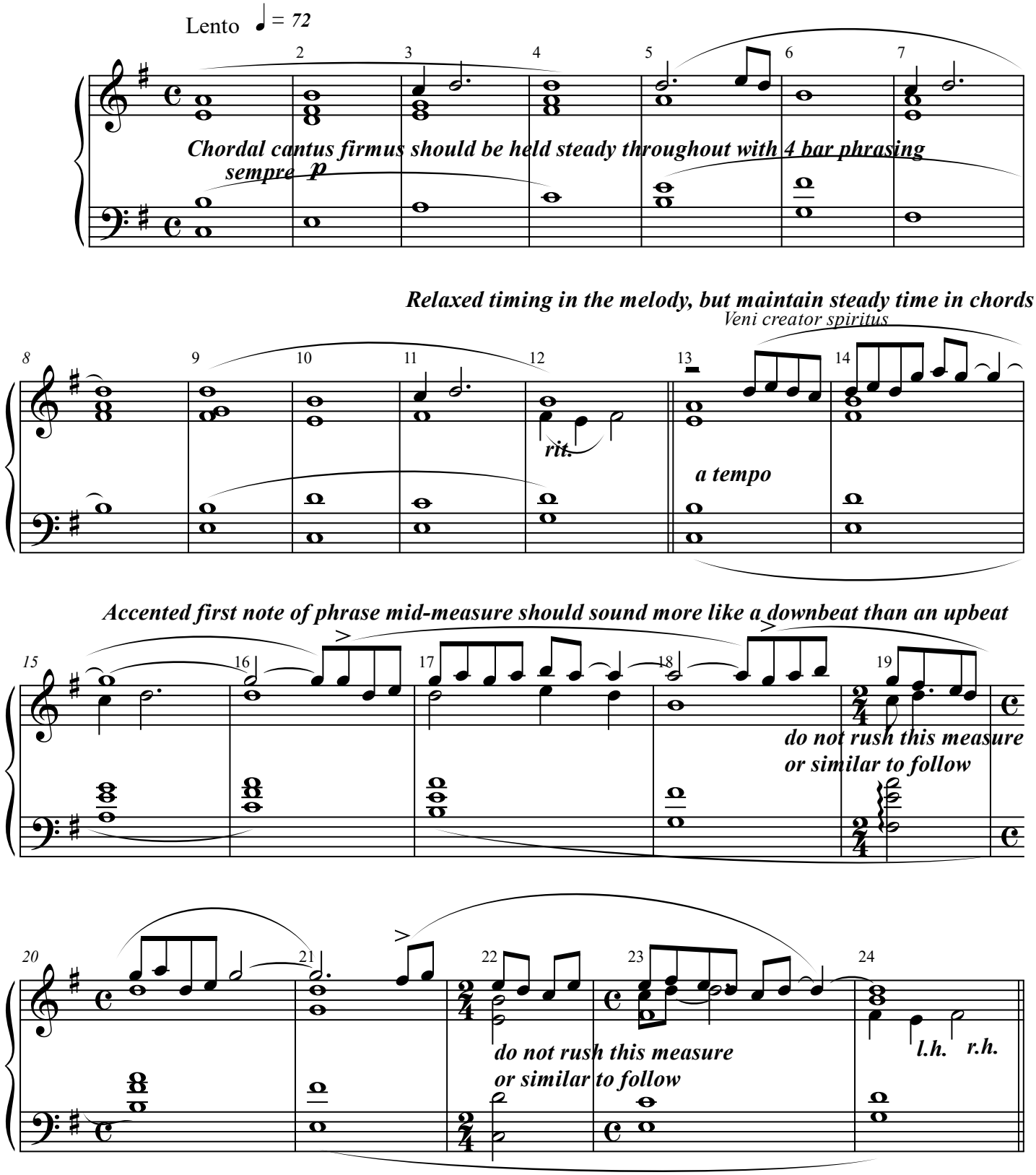
Movement 4:
In Paradise, may the Archangels lead you:
May the Saints greet your coming and lead you to the Holy City, Jerusalem.
May the Choir of Angels greet you, and with Lazarus, once a pauper, may you have eternal rest.

Translations James D. Matthews. Plainchants from *Liber Usualis*, public domain.

2. Veni Creator Spiritus

Come Creator Spirit

James D Matthews
2012



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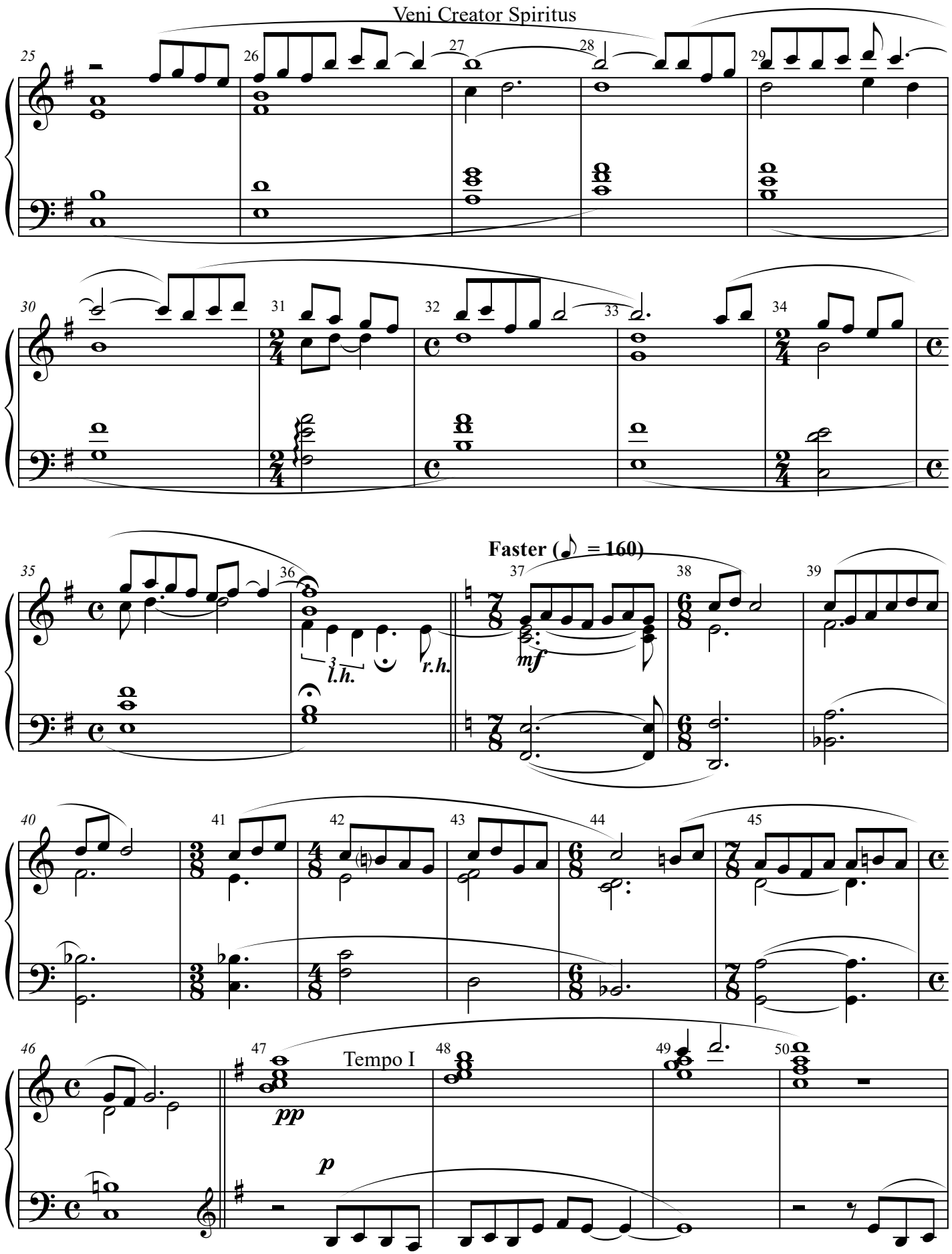
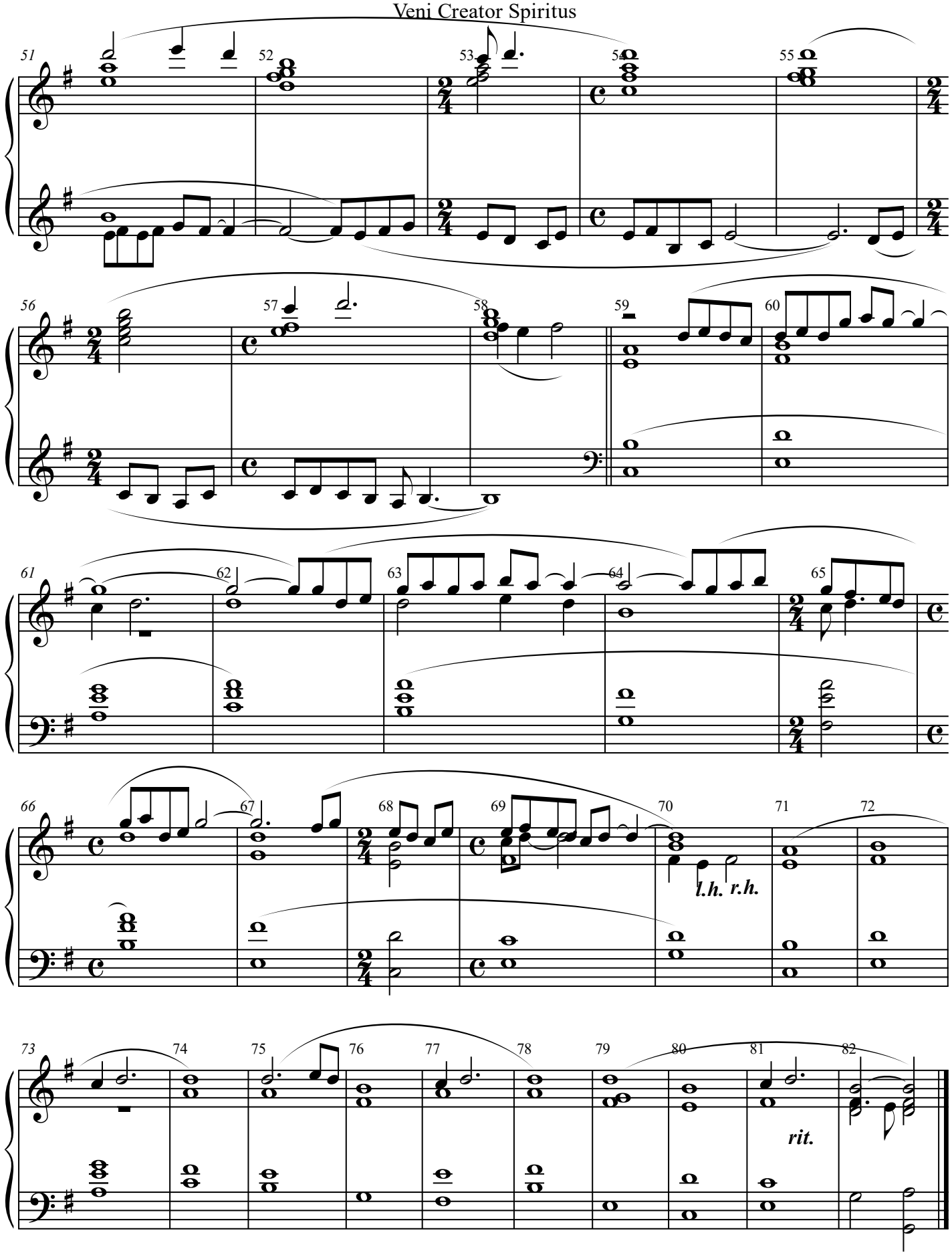

25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
Faster (♪ = 160)
37
38
39
l.h.
r.h.
mf
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
Tempo I
48
49
50
pp
p

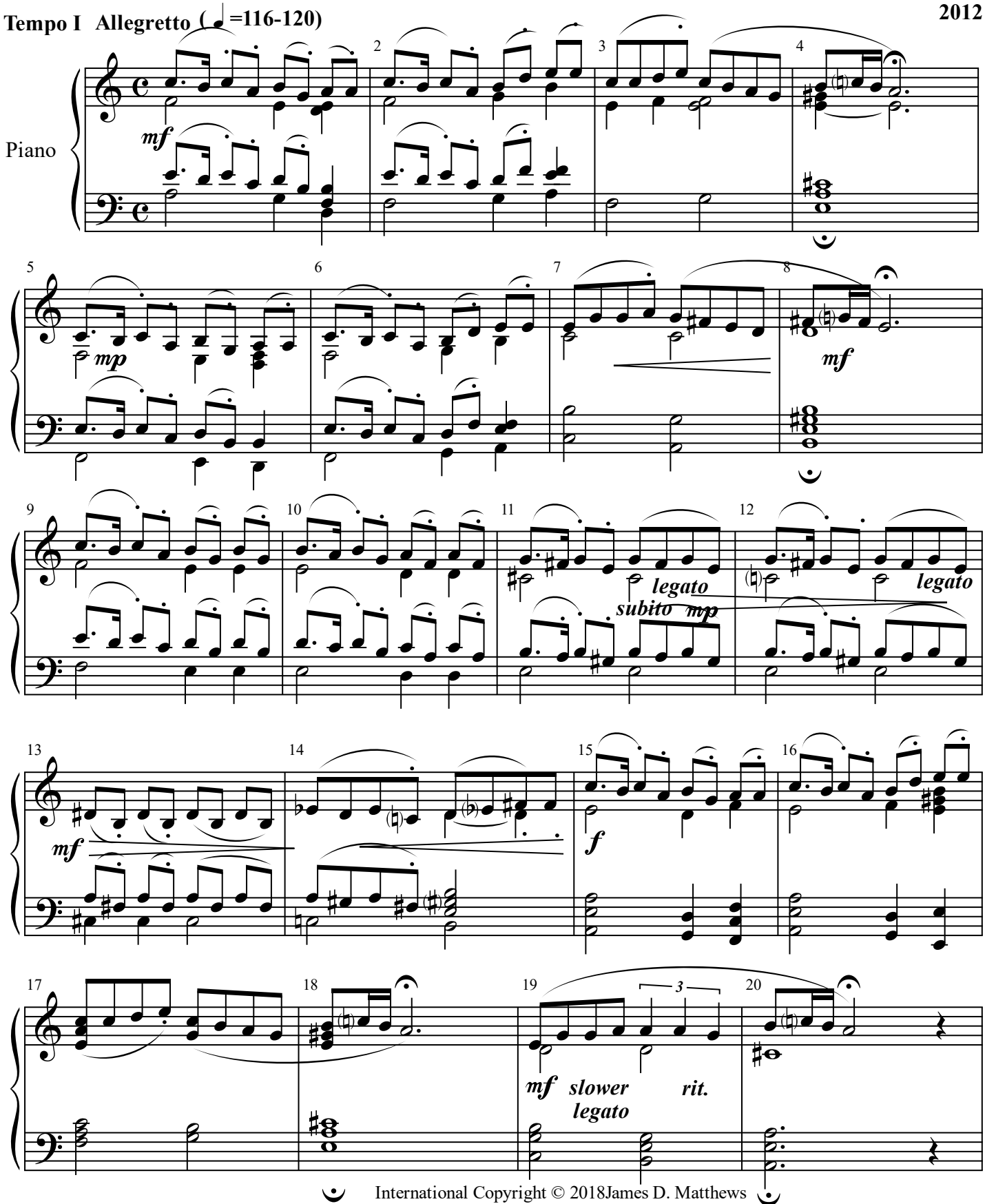

51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
l.h.
r.h.
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
rit.

3. Dies Irae

Day of Wrath

James D. Matthews
2012

Tempo I Allegretto (♩=116-120)



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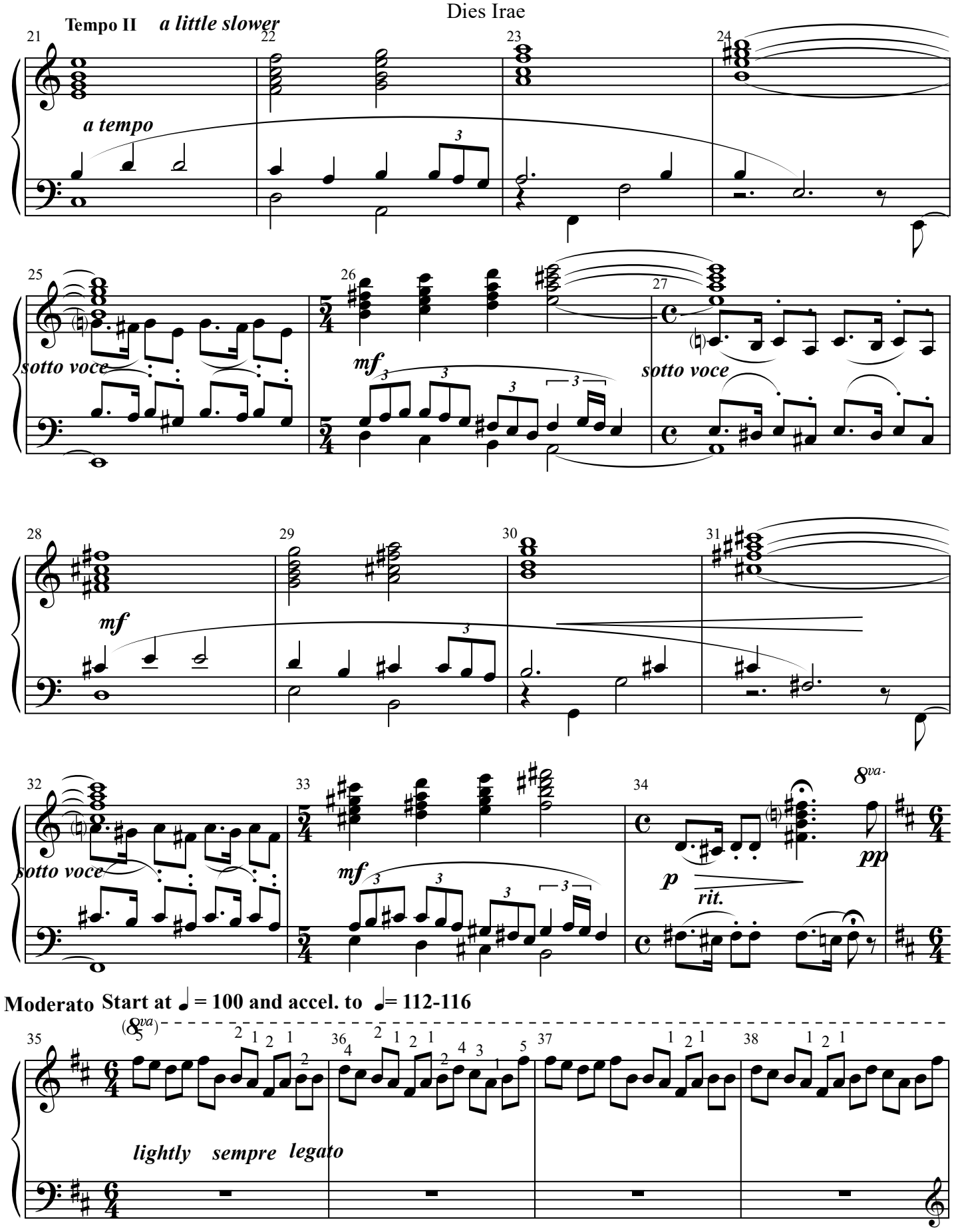
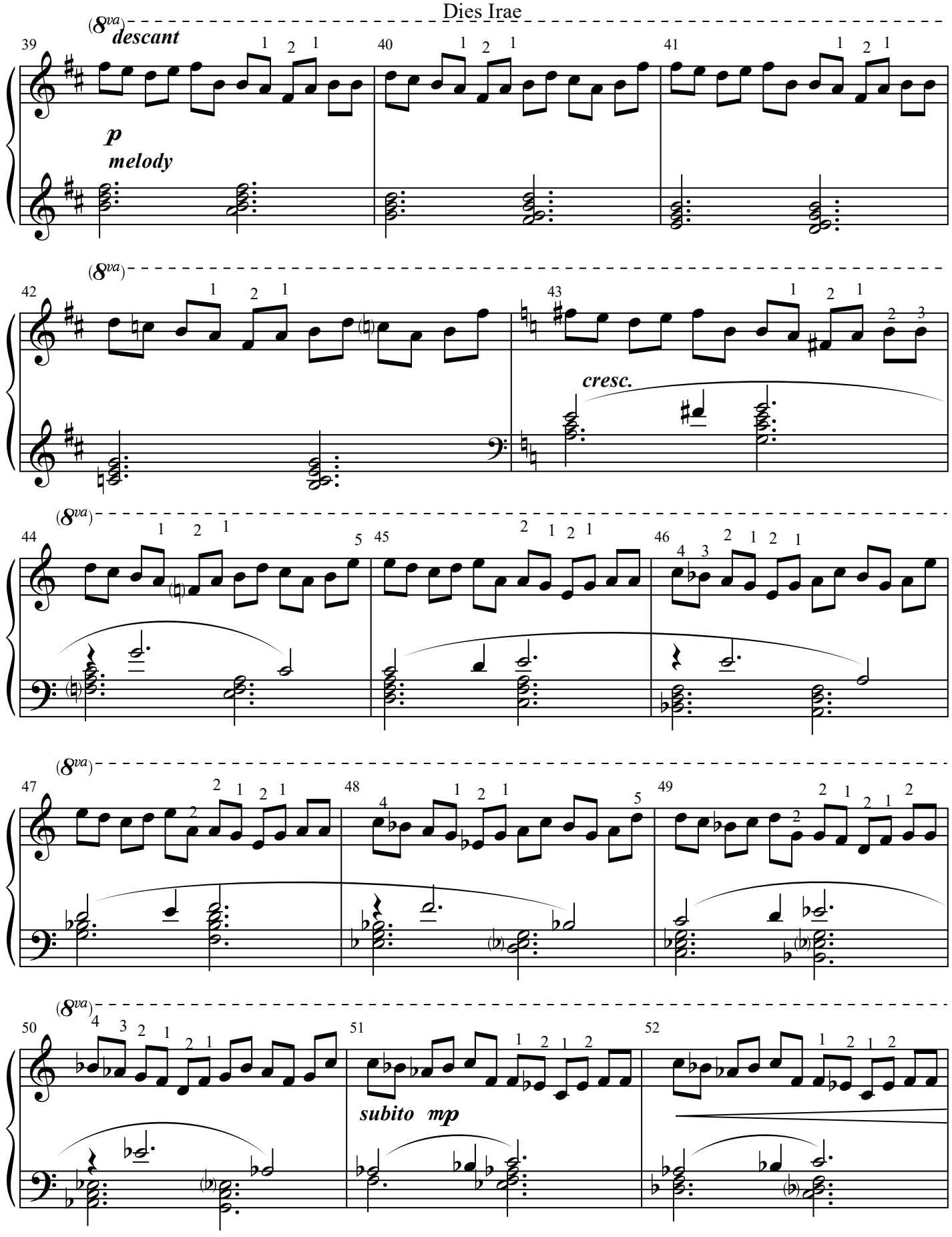
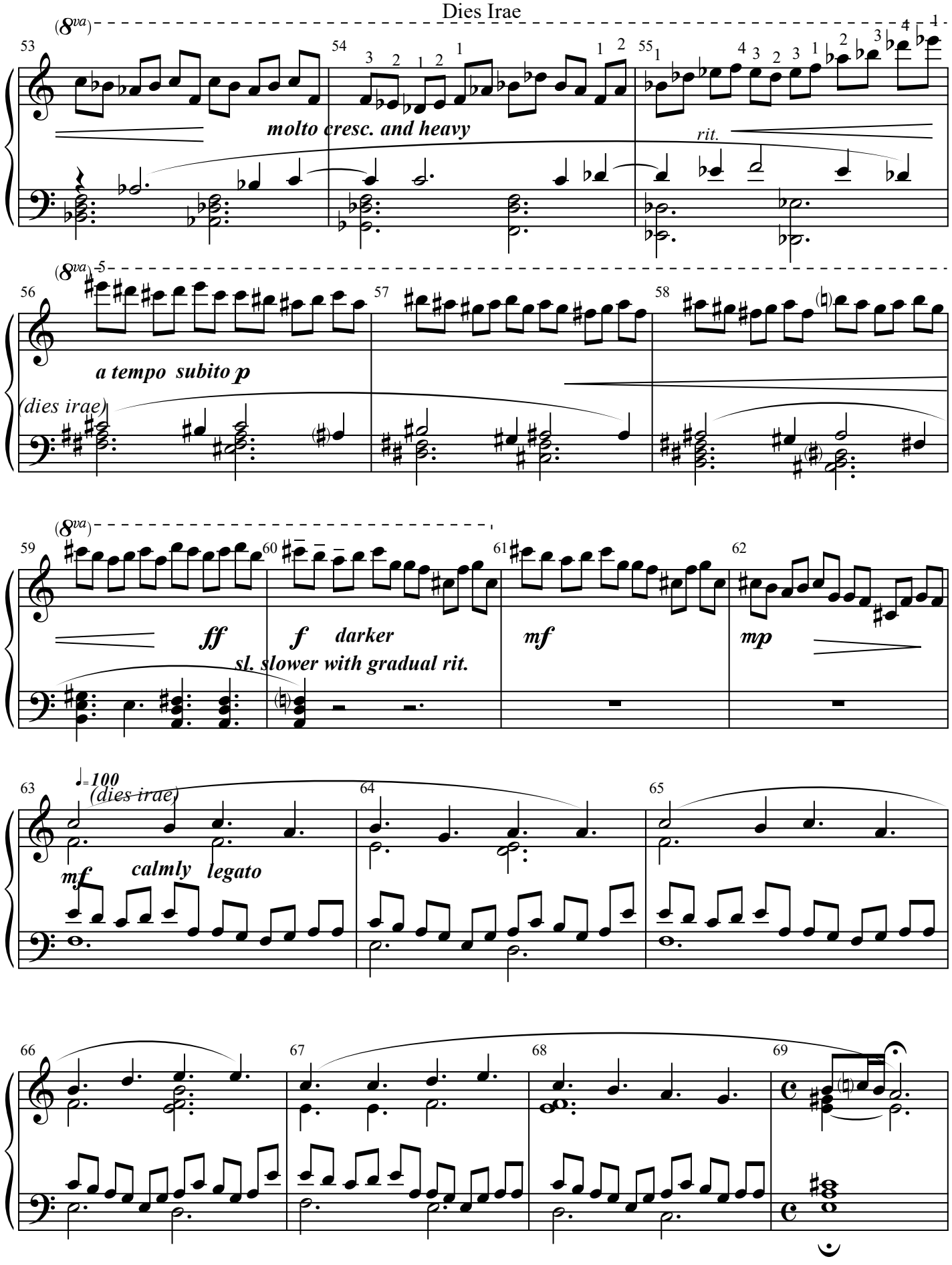
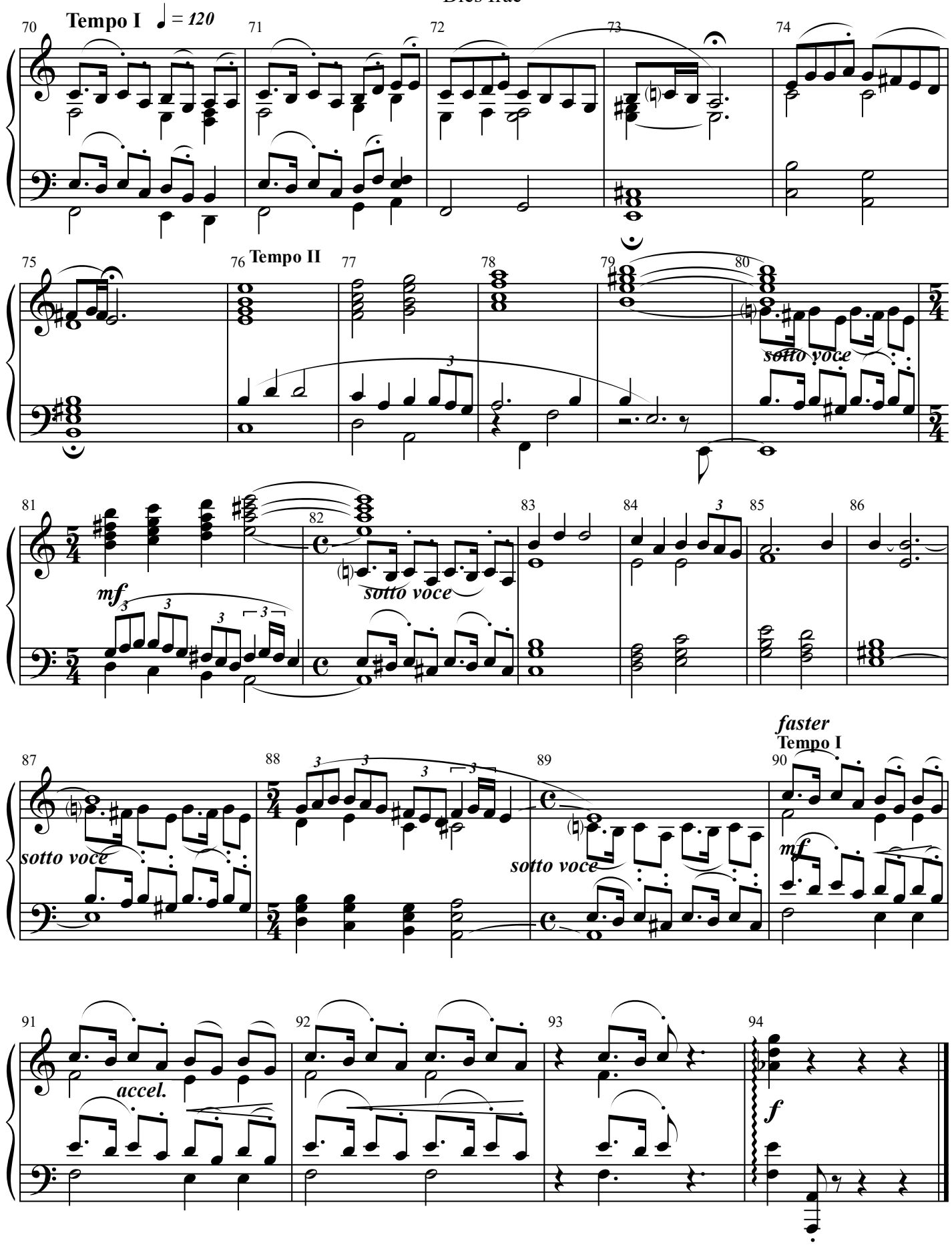

Tempo II
a little slower
a tempo
sotto voce
mf
sotto voce
mf
sotto voce
mf
p
rit.
8va
pp
Moderato
Start at ♩ = 100 and accel. to ♩= 112-116
(8va)
lightly
sempre
legato

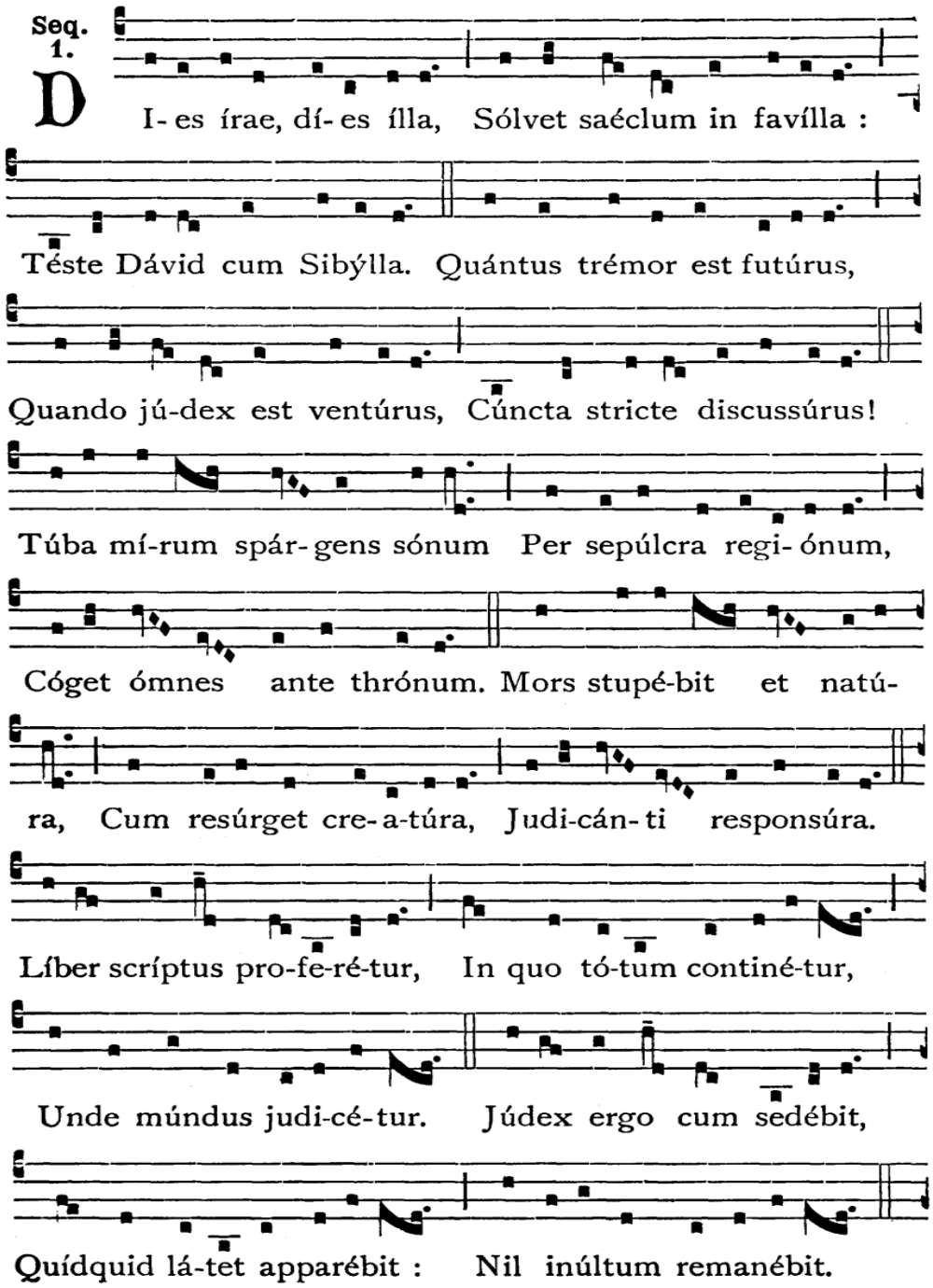
Dies Irae


(8va)
descant
39
40
41
p
melody
(8va)
42
43
cresc.
(8va)
44
45
46
(8va)
47
48
49
(8va)
50
51
52
subito mp


(8va)
molto cresc. and heavy
rit.
(8va)
a tempo subito p
(dies irae)
(8va)
ff
f darker
sl. slower with gradual rit.
mf
mp
♩= 100
(dies irae)
mf
calmly legato

Dies Irae


70
Tempo I
= 120
71
72
73
74
75
76
Tempo II
77
78
79
80
sotto voce
81
82
mf
sotto voce
83
84
85
86
87
sotto voce
88
89
sotto voce
faster
Tempo I
90
mf
91
accel.
92
93
94
f



Day of wrath, Oh that day, when the world will dissolve in ashes: as David and the Sibyl swore.
What quaking to come, when the Judge arrives, shattering everything!
The marvelous trumpet will scatter sound through the regions of the dead
And will gather all before the throne.
Death and nature will be confounded as creation resurges to answer the Judge.
The Book will be brought forth in which all is contained, by which the world will be judged.
The Judge will sit, and all hidden will appear: nothing unavenged will remain hidden.

Translation James D. Matthews; plainchant *Liber Usualis*, public domain.

4. The Dream/In Paradisum

James D. Matthews
2006-2012

Moderato Tempo I ♩ = 50-52

Piano

mp

Pno.

mf

(melody)

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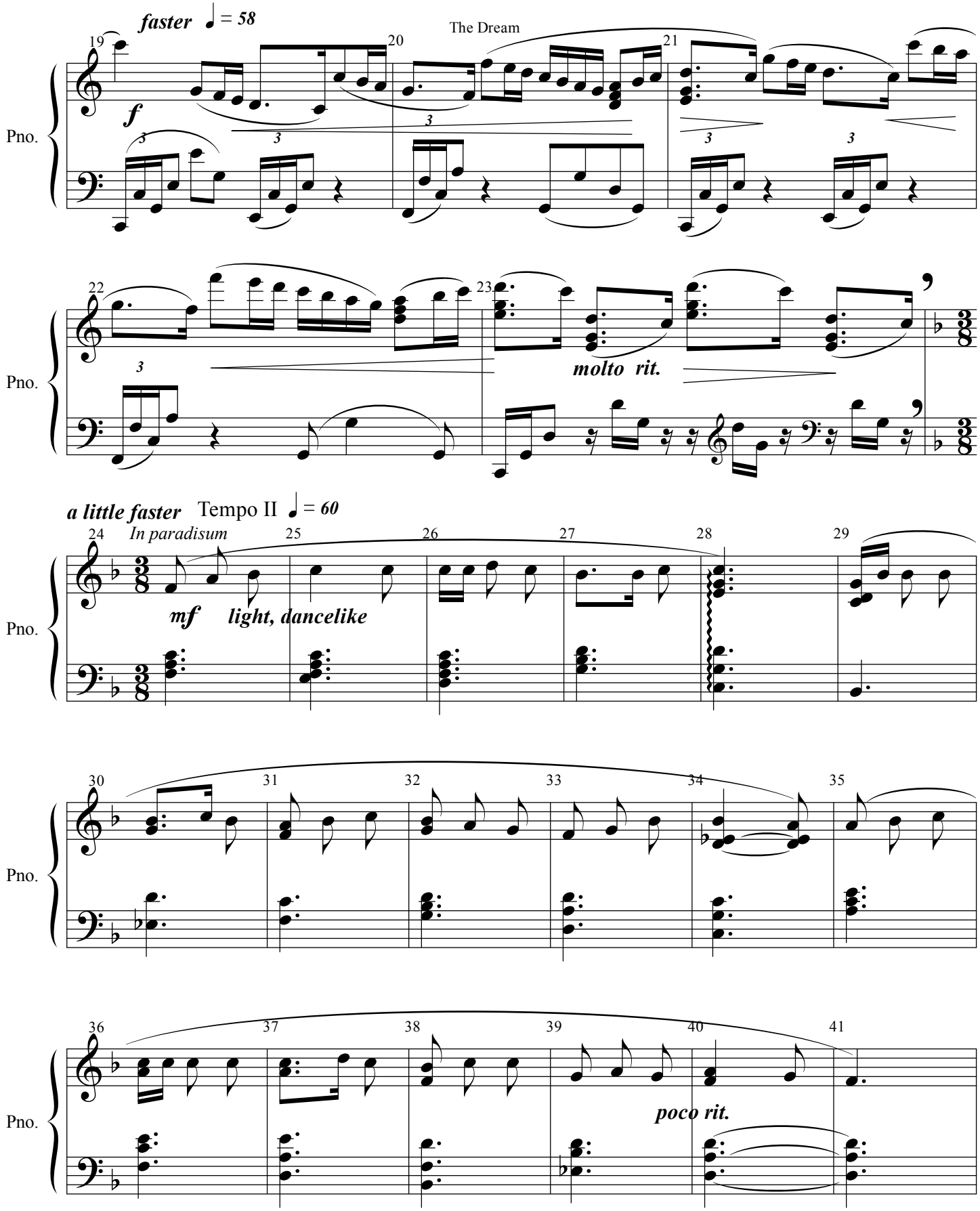
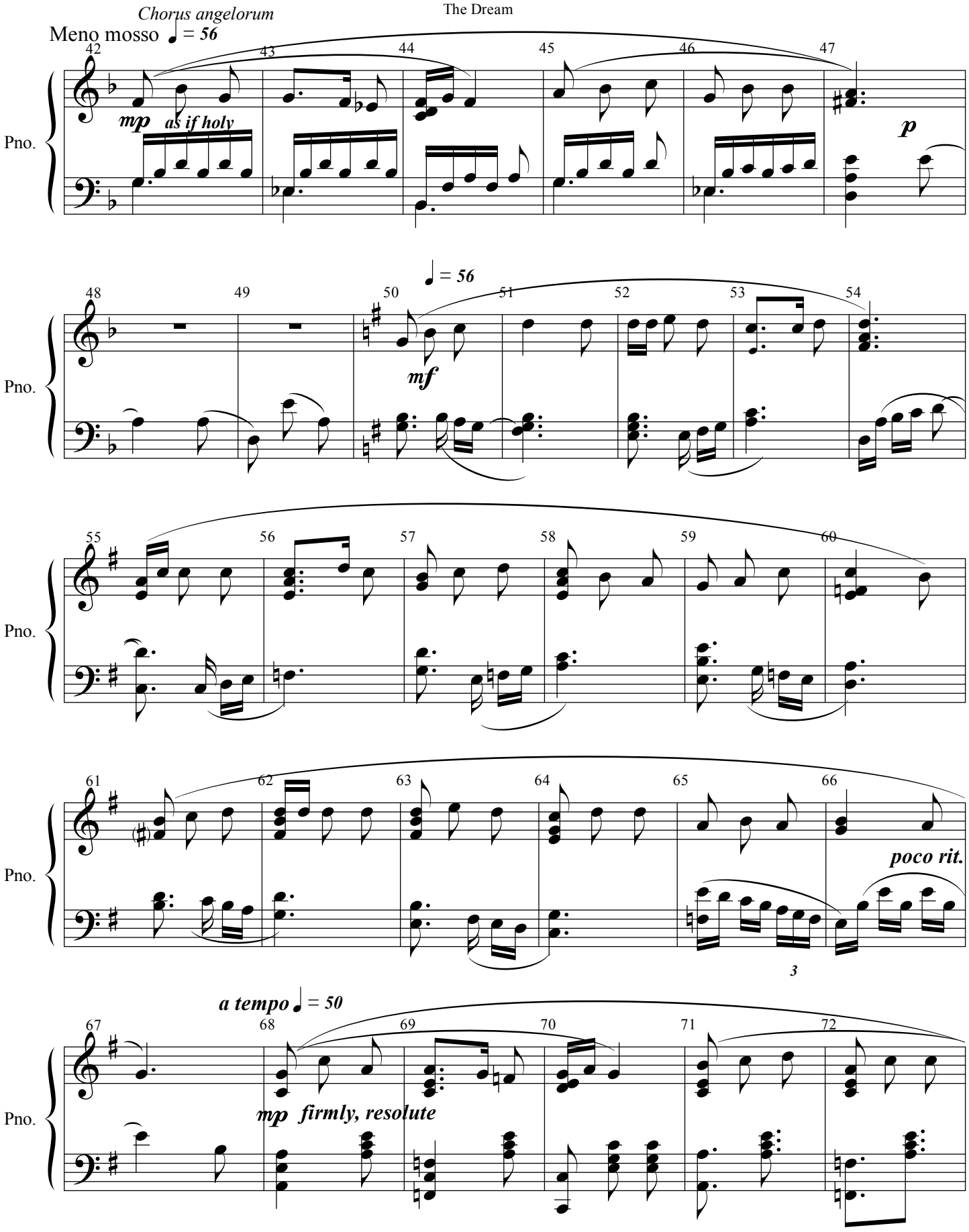
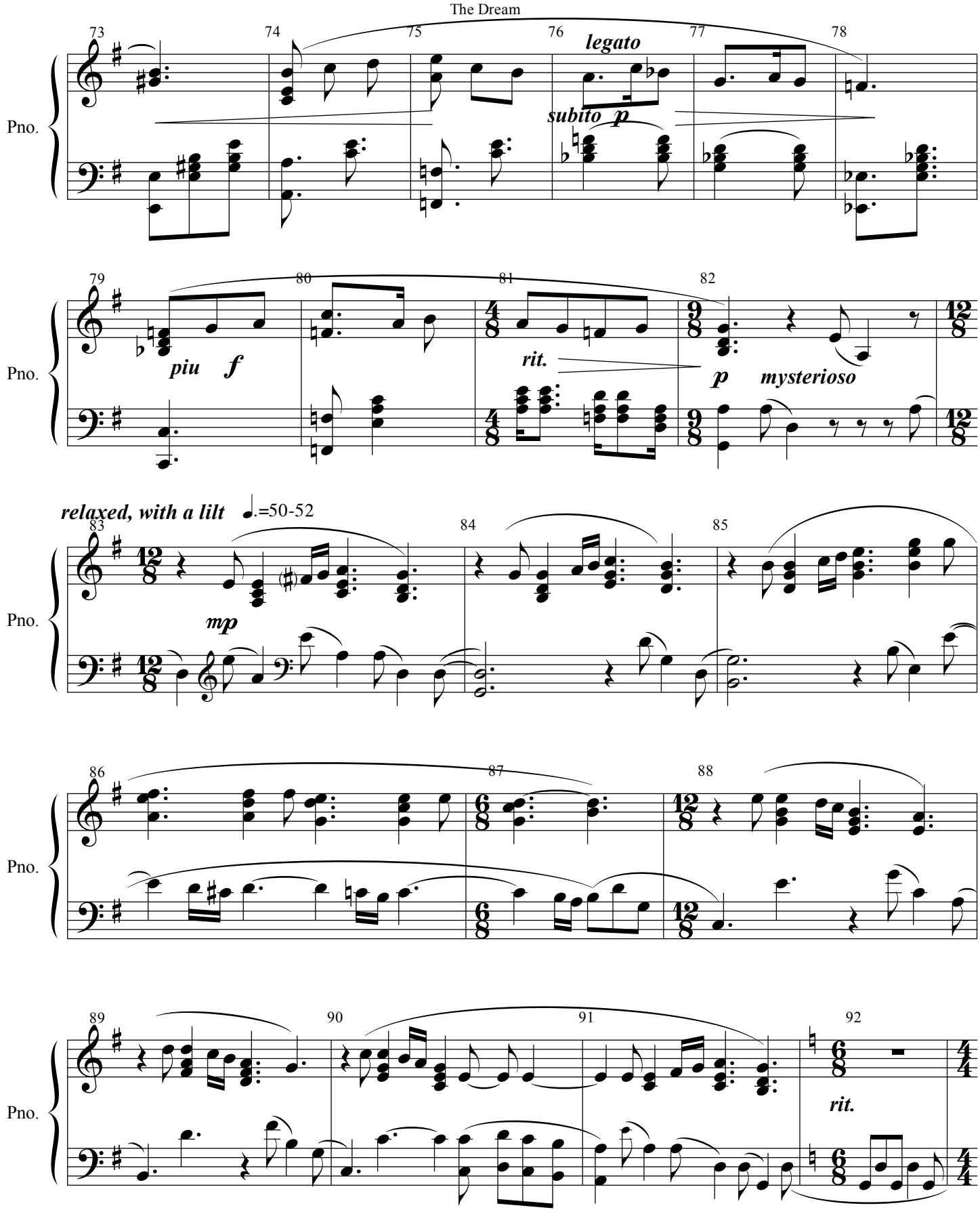
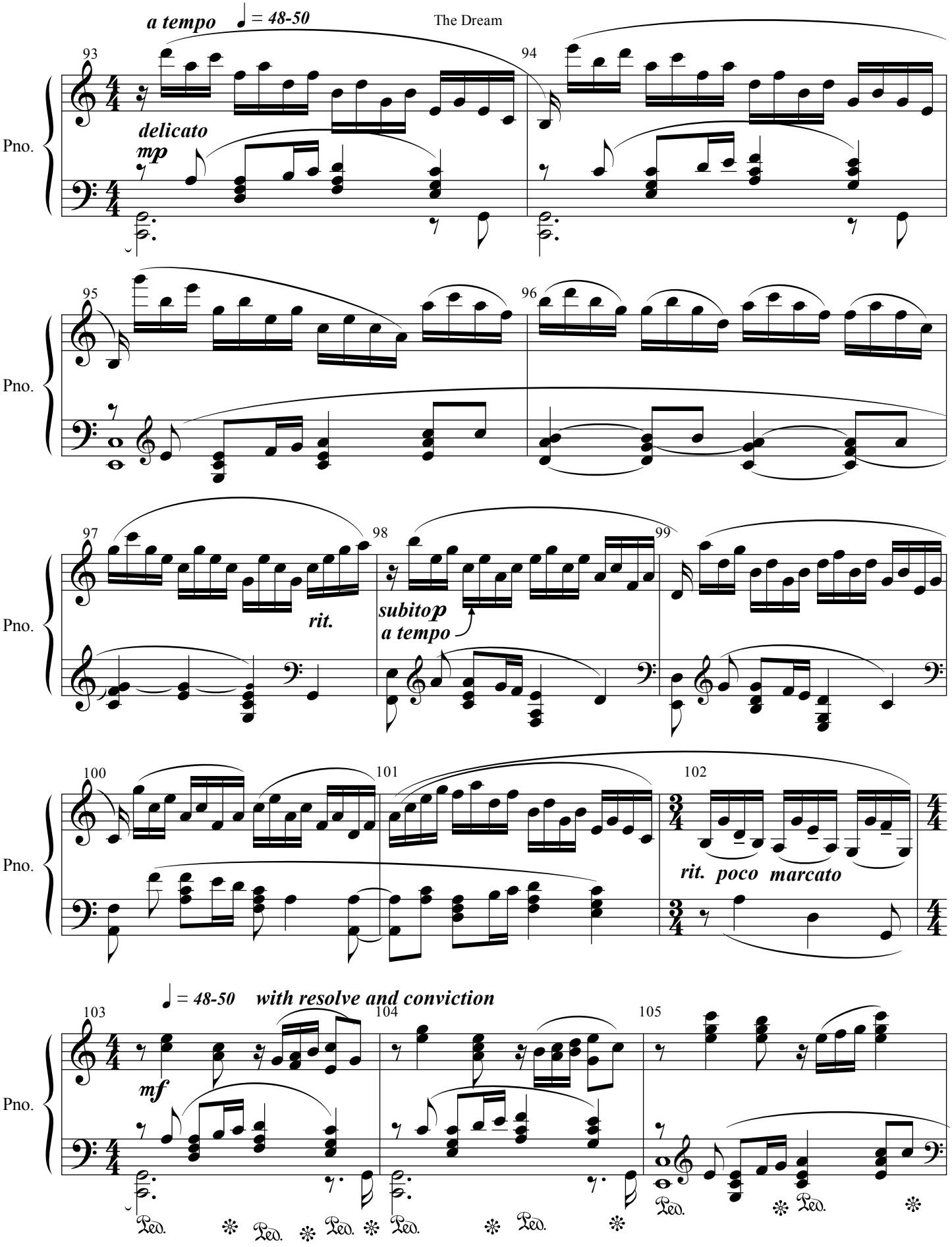
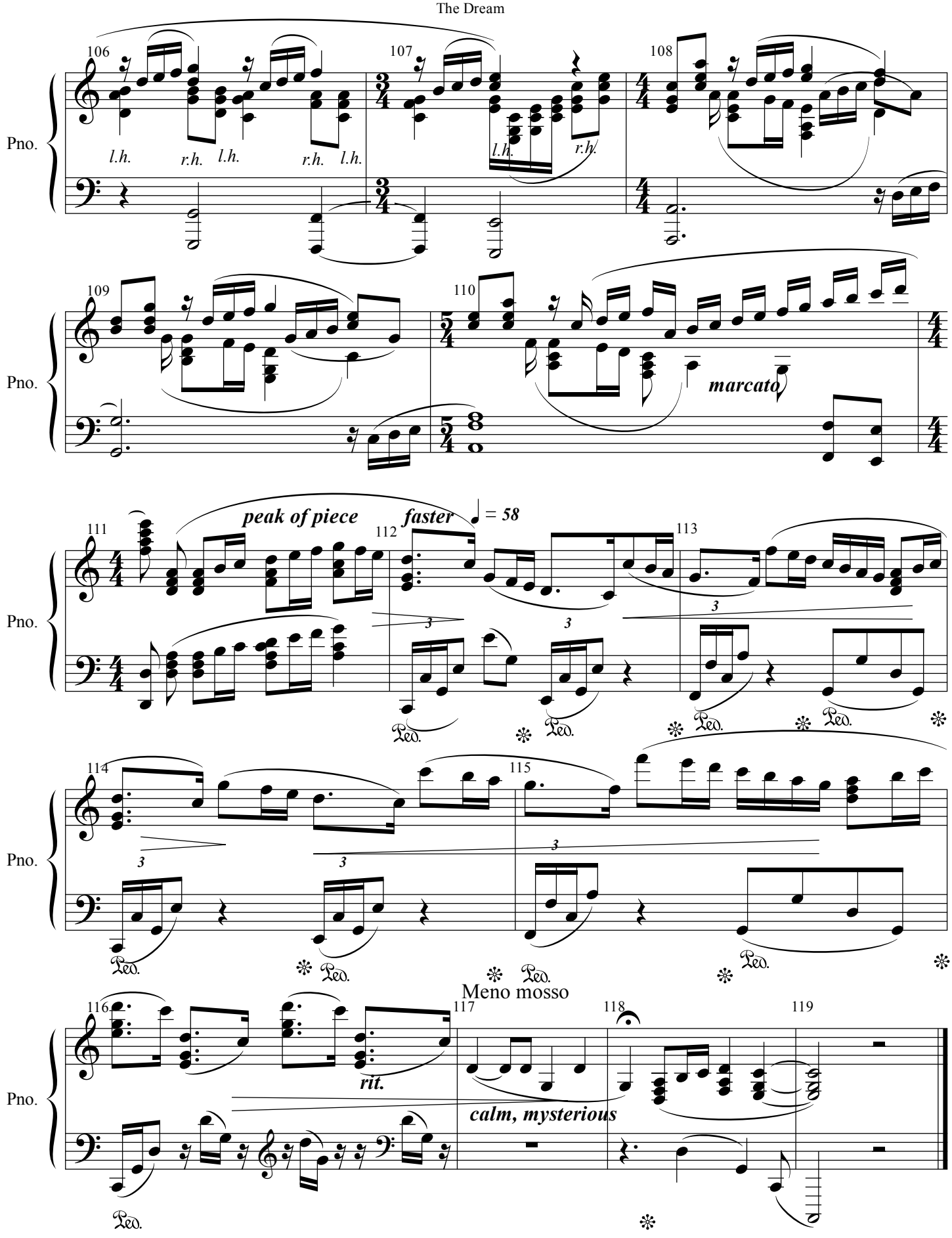

faster ♩ = 58
The Dream
19
20
21
f
Pno.
22
23
molto rit.
a little faster Tempo II ♩ = 60
24
In paradisum
25
26
27
28
29
mf light, dancelike
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
poco rit.


The Dream
Chorus angelorum
Meno mosso ♩ = 56
mp as if holy
p
♩ = 56
mf
poco rit.
3
a tempo ♩ = 50
mp firmly, resolute
Pno.


The Dream
Pno.
legato
subito p
piu f
rit.
p mysterioso
relaxed, with a lilt ♩.=50-52
mp
rit.


a tempo
♩ = 48-50
93
94
delicato
mp
Pno.
95
96
97
98
99
rit.
subito p
a tempo
100
101
102
rit. poco marcato
♩ = 48-50
with resolve and conviction
103
104
105
mf
Ped.

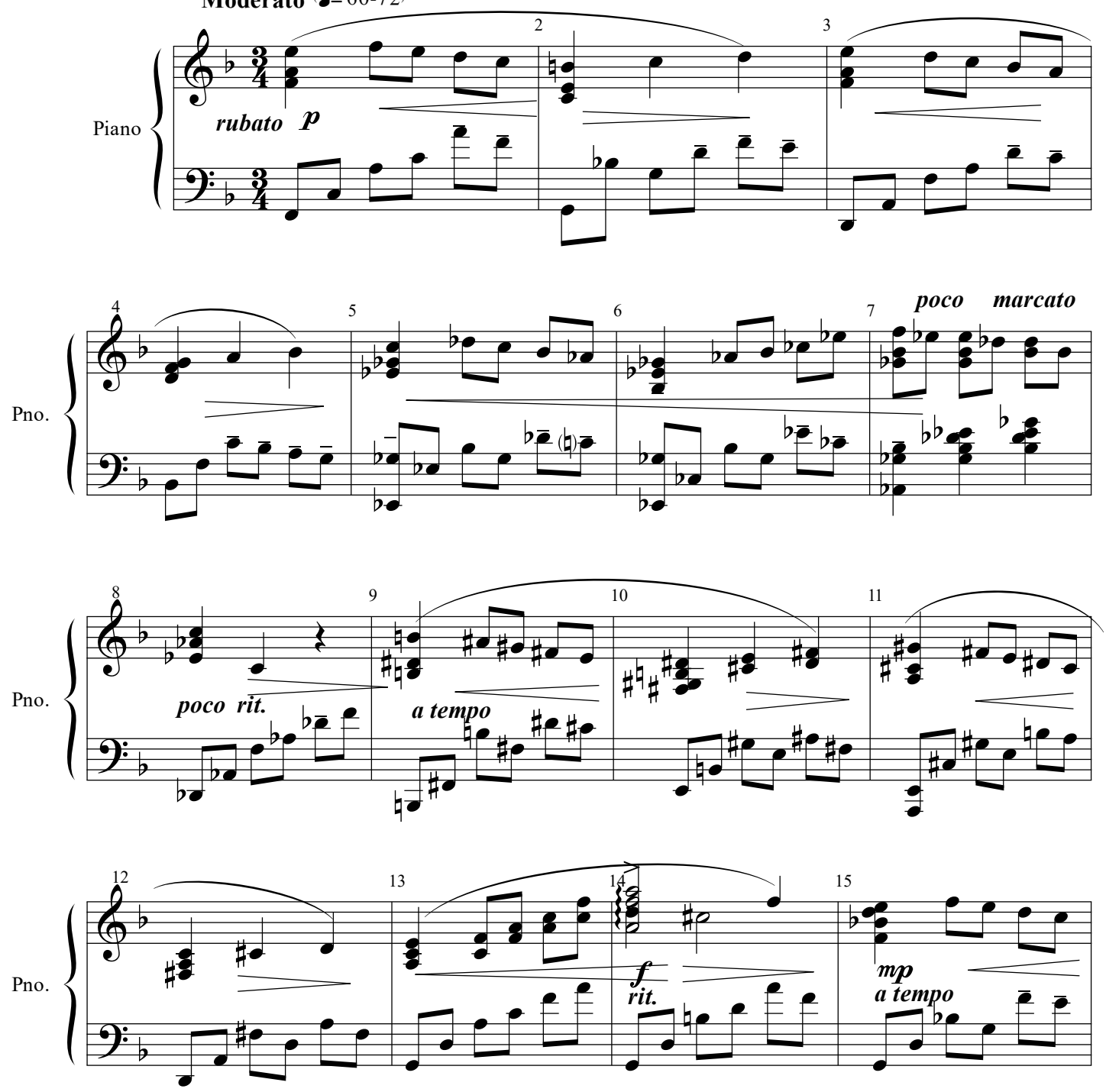

106
107
108
Pno.
l.h.
r.h.
l.h.
r.h.
l.h.
l.h.
r.h.
109
110
Pno.
marcato
111
peak of piece
faster
♩ = 58
112
113
Pno.
3
3
3
Ped.
114
115
Pno.
3
3
3
Ped.
Meno mosso
116
117
118
119
Pno.
rit.
calm, mysterious
Ped.

Variations

James D. Matthews
Feb 2000

Theme

Moderato (♩= 60-72)



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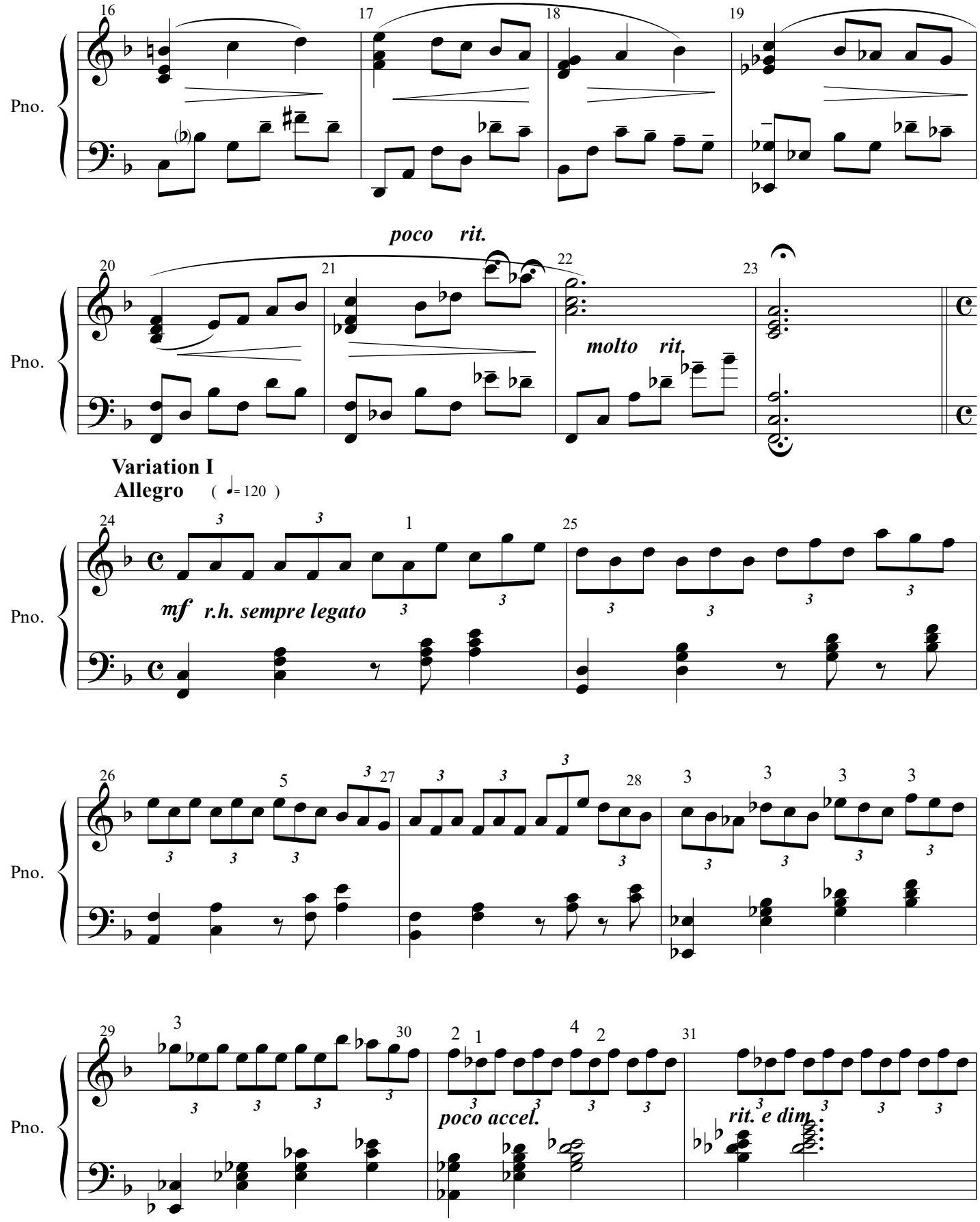
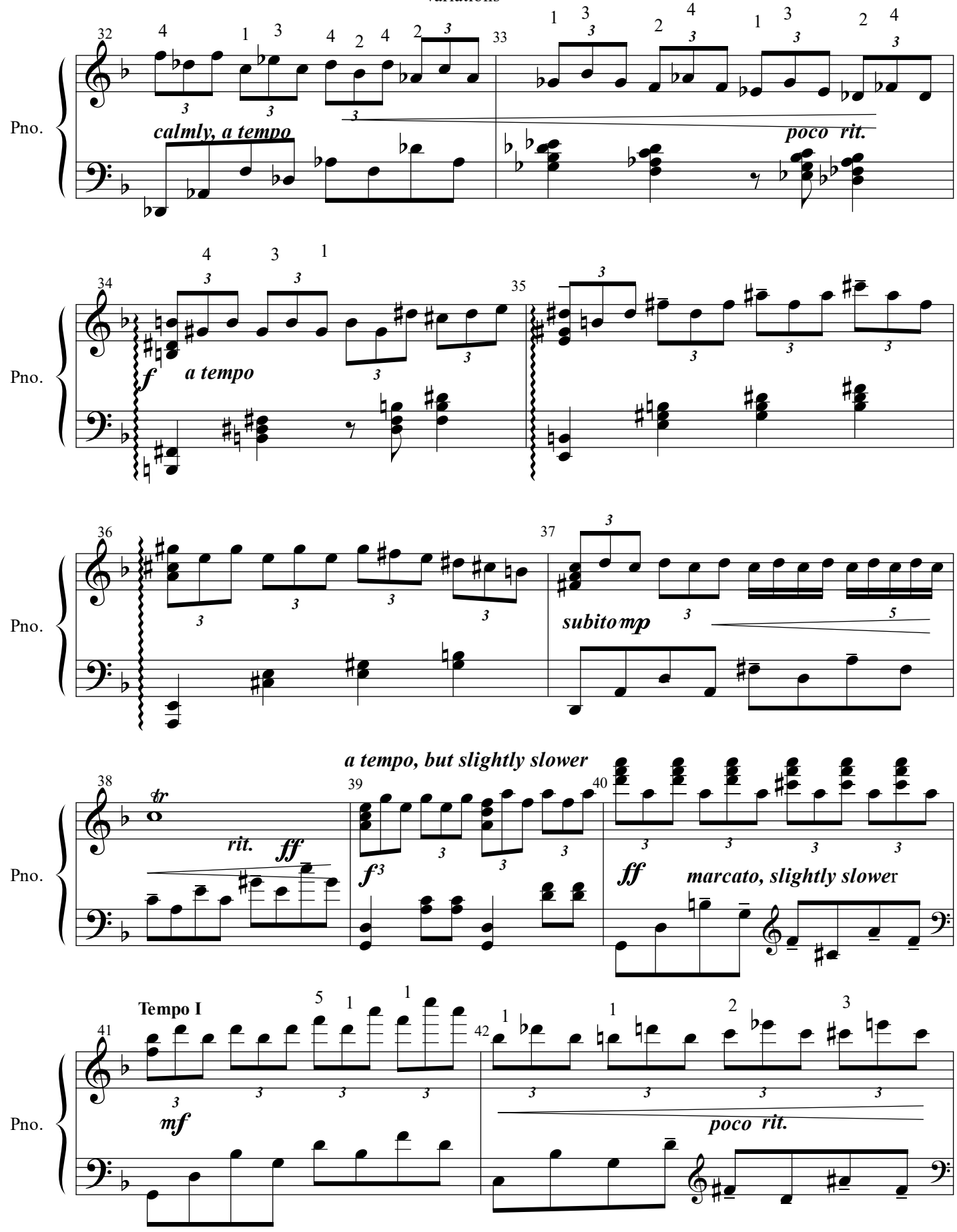
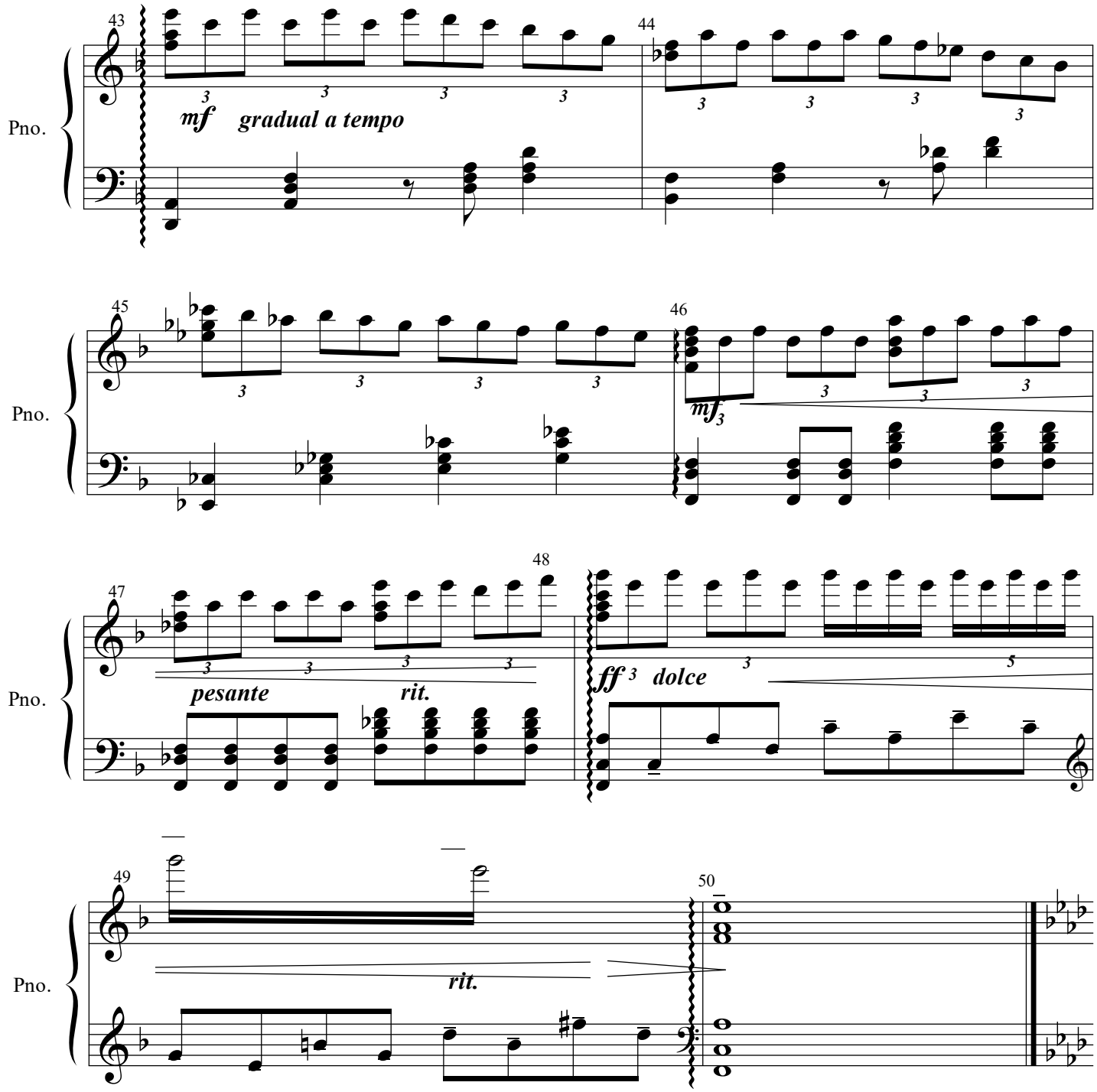
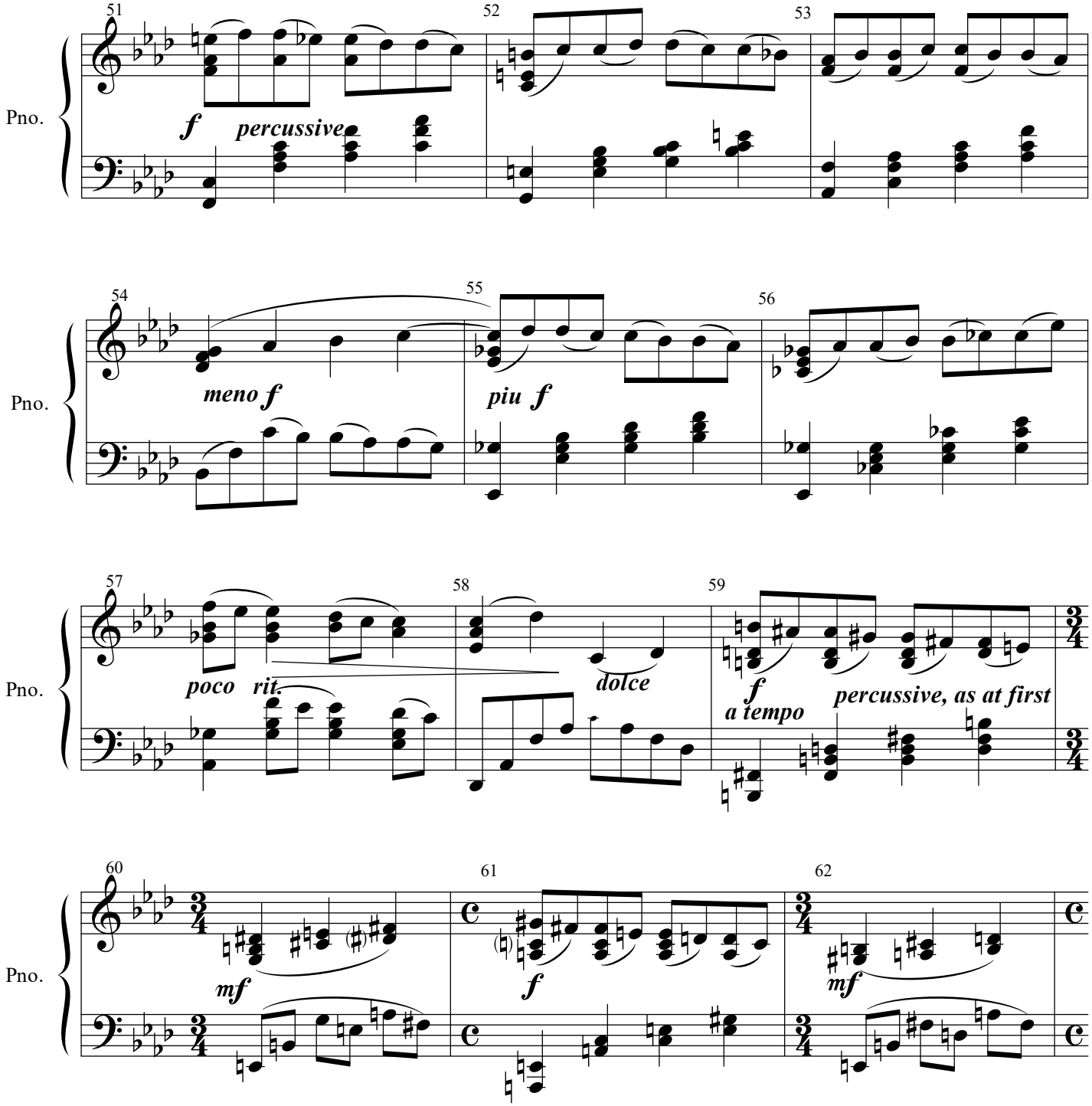

16
17
18
19
Pno.
poco rit.
20
21
22
23
molto rit.
Variation I
Allegro (= 120)
24
25
mf r.h. sempre legato
26
27
28
29
30
31
poco accel.
rit. e dim.

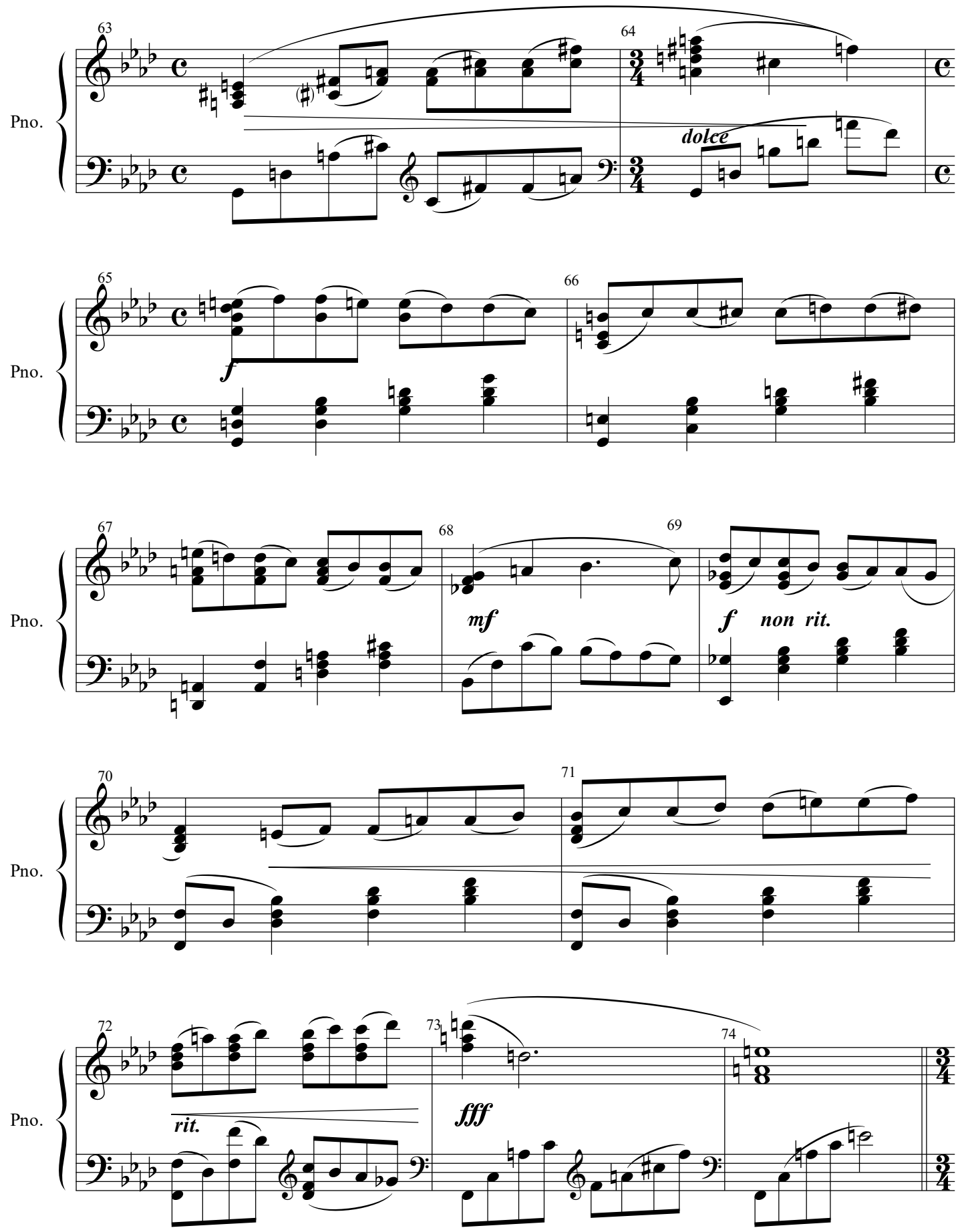

Pno.
calmly, a tempo
poco rit.
a tempo
subito mp
a tempo, but slightly slower
rit.
ff
marcato, slightly slower
Tempo I
mf
poco rit.


43
44
Pno.
mf gradual a tempo
45
46
Pno.
mf
47
48
Pno.
pesante
rit.
ff dolce
49
50
Pno.
rit.

Variation II

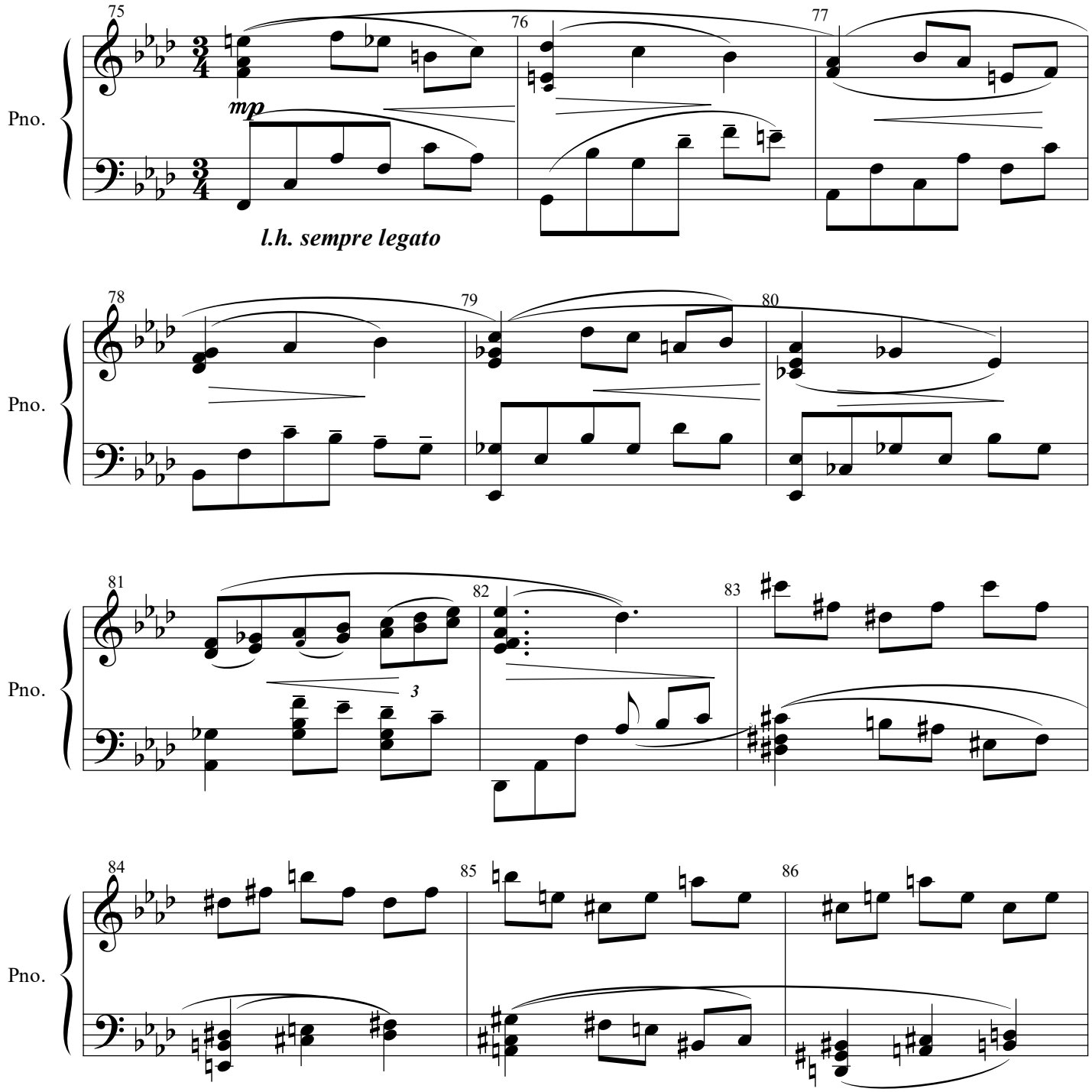
Allegro (= 138)

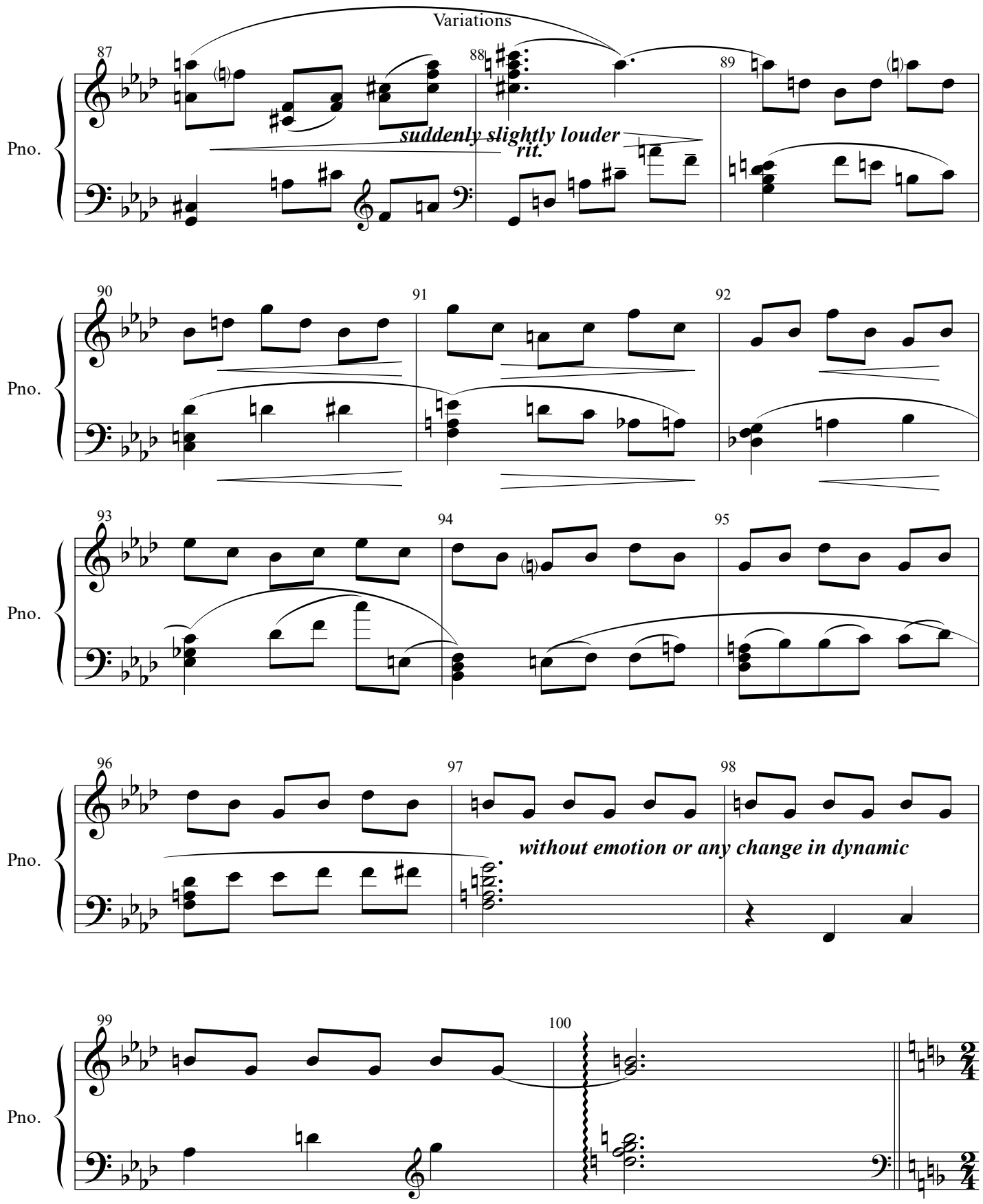



63
64
Pno.
dolce
65
66
Pno.
f
67
68
69
Pno.
mf
f non rit.
70
71
Pno.
72
73
74
Pno.
rit.
fff

Variation III

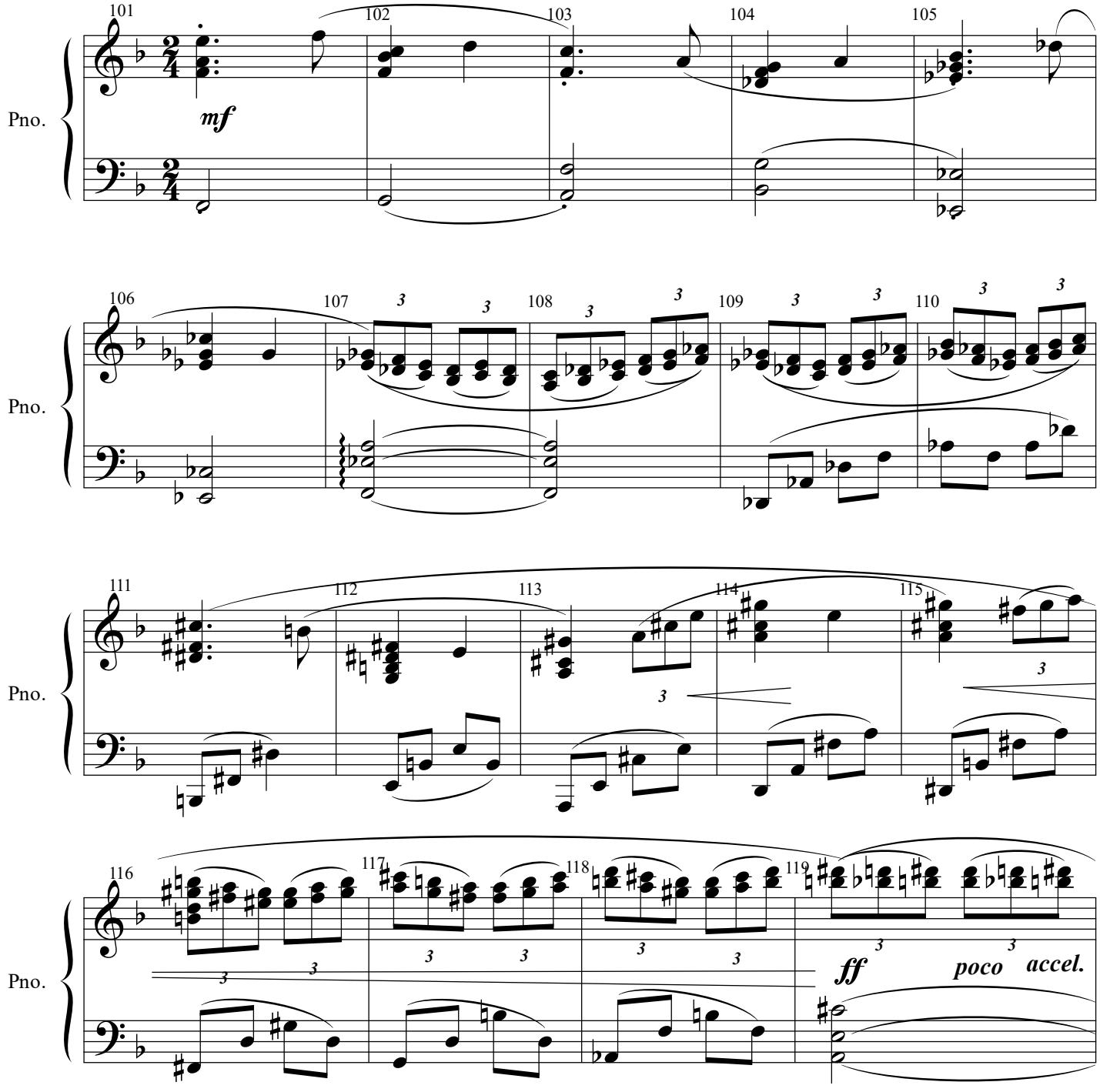
Adagio (♩=88)

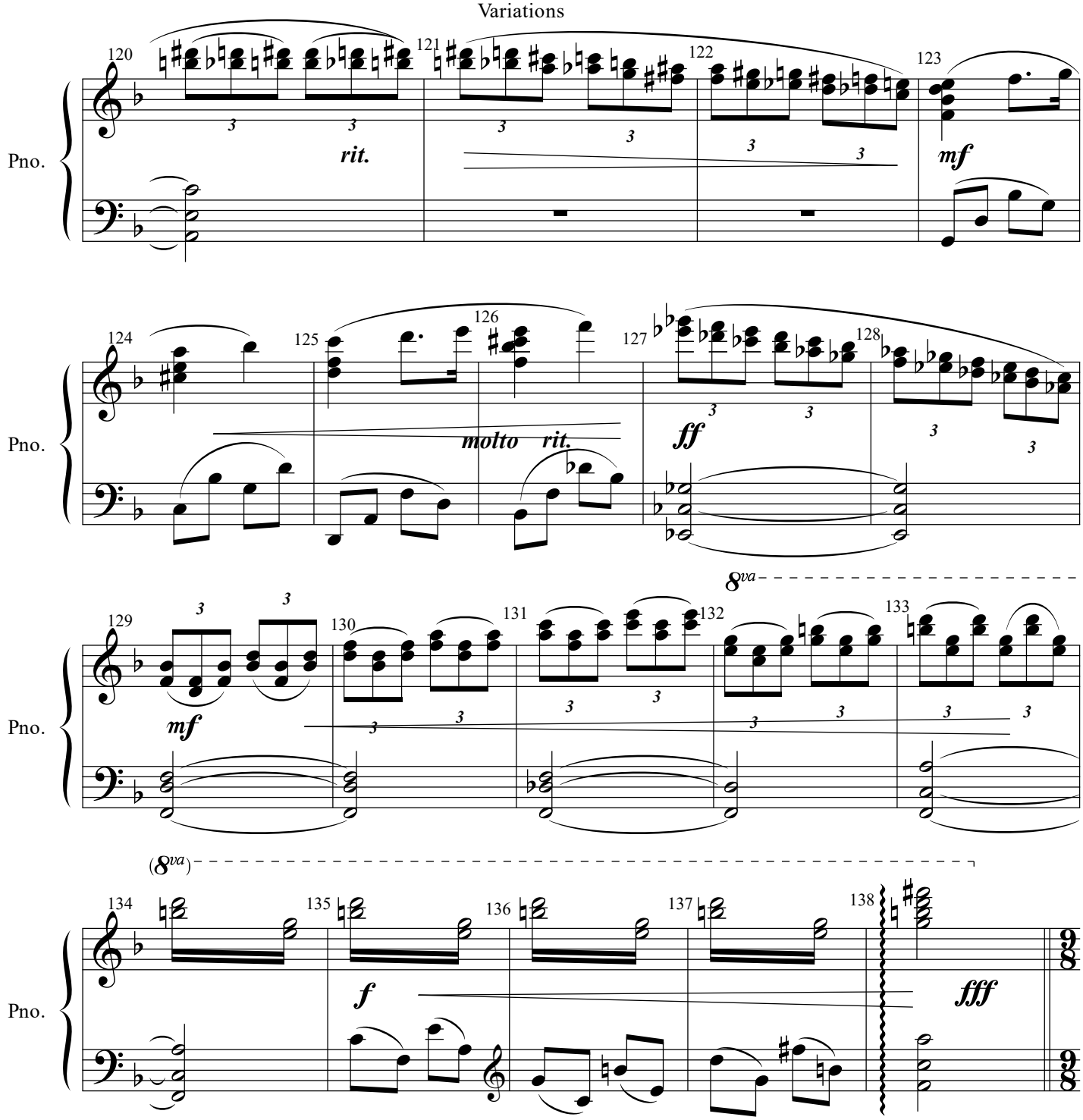



Variations
87
88
89
Pno.
suddenly slightly louder
rit.
90
91
92
Pno.
93
94
95
Pno.
96
97
98
Pno.
without emotion or any change in dynamic
99
100
Pno.

Variation IV

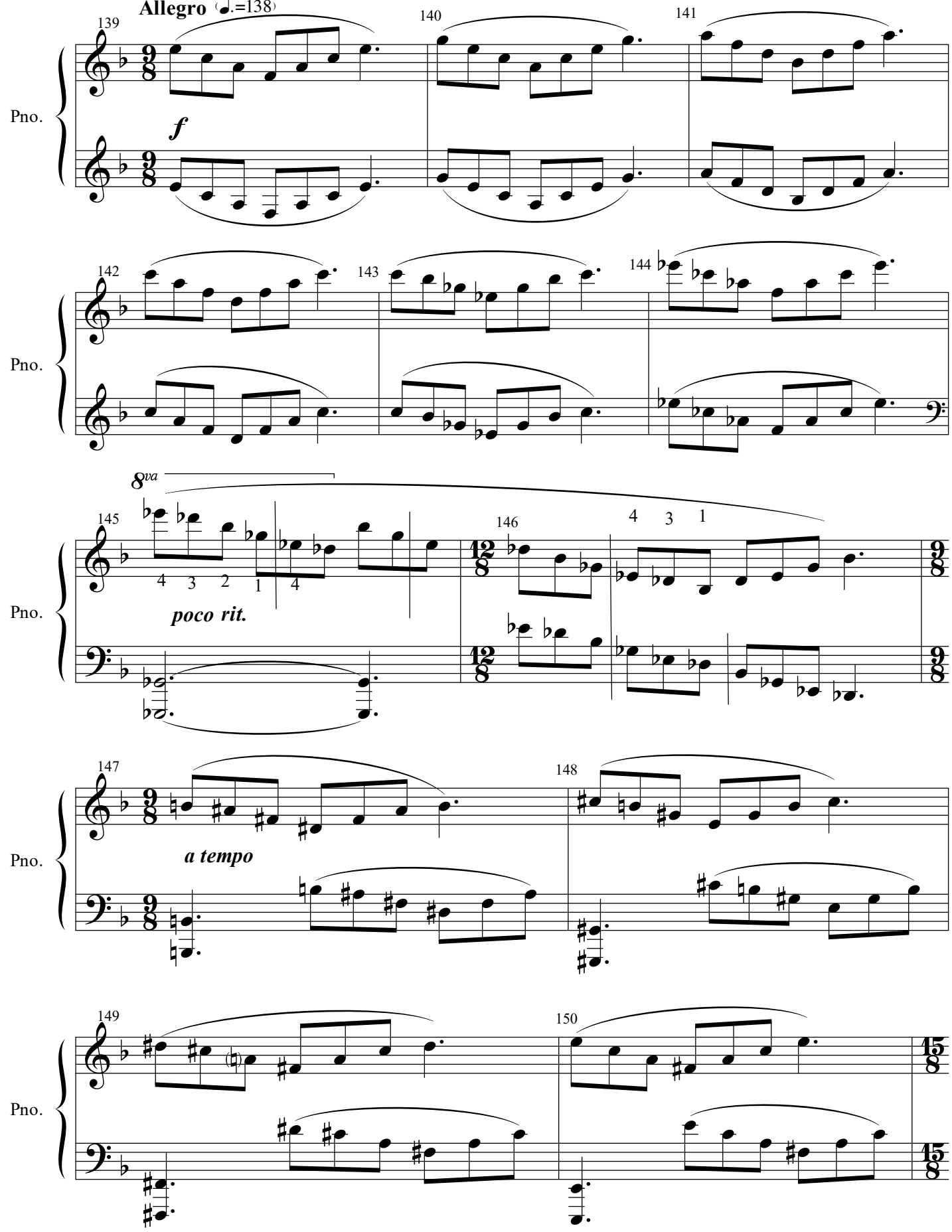
Moderato (♩=112)

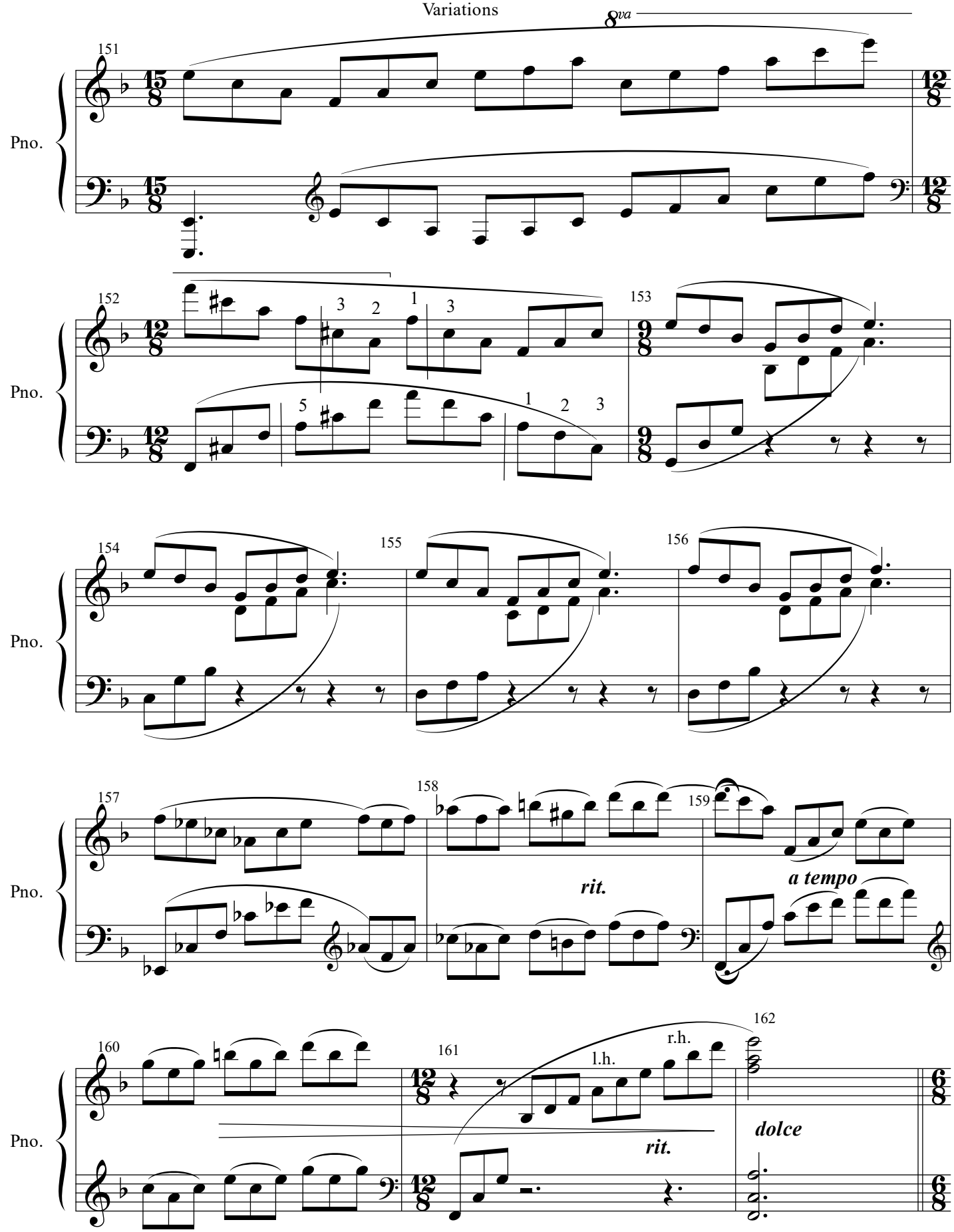



120
121
122
123
Pno.
rit.
mf
124
125
126
127
128
molto rit.
ff
129
130
131
132
133
8va
mf
(8va)
134
135
136
137
138
f
fff

Variation V

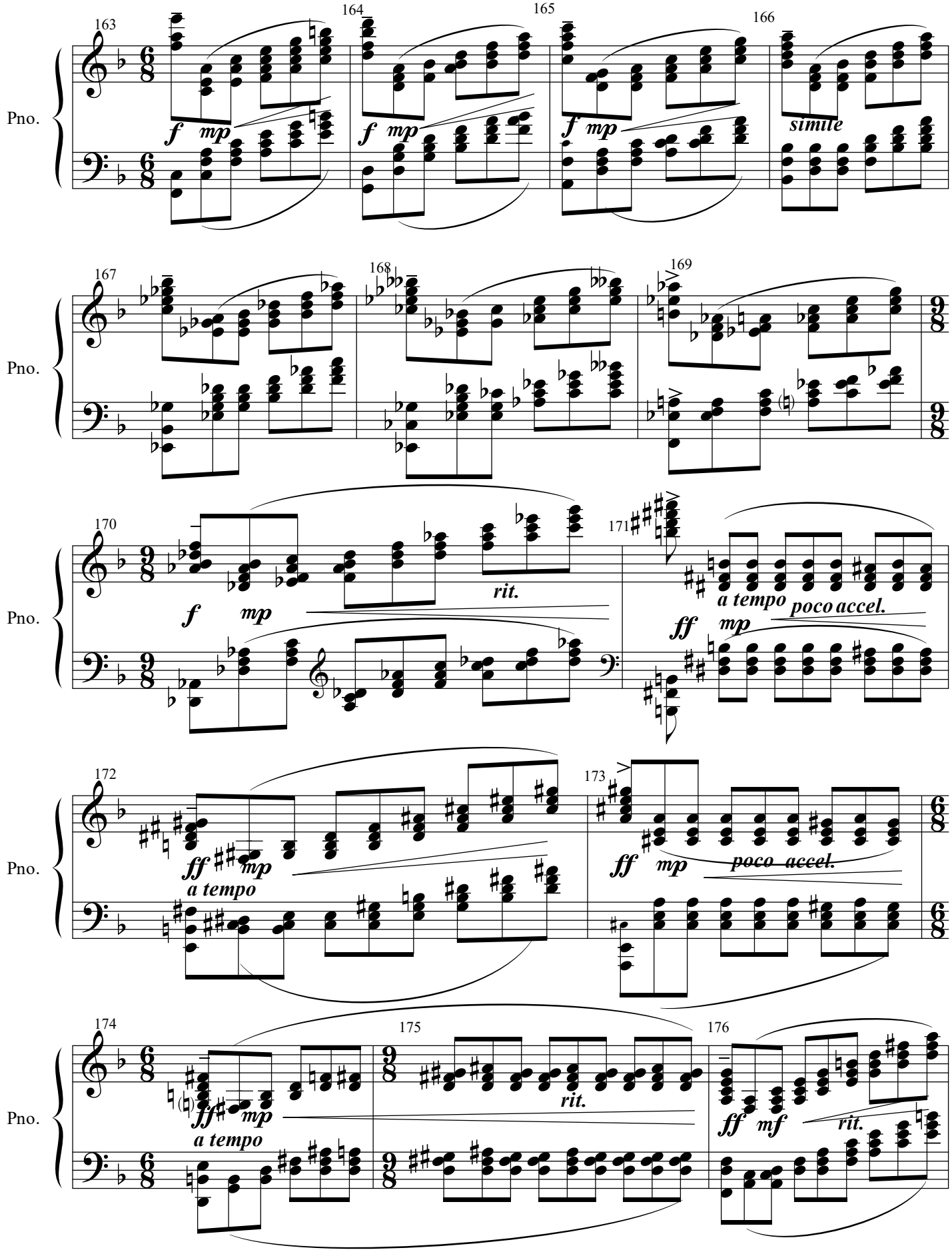
Allegro (♩.=138)

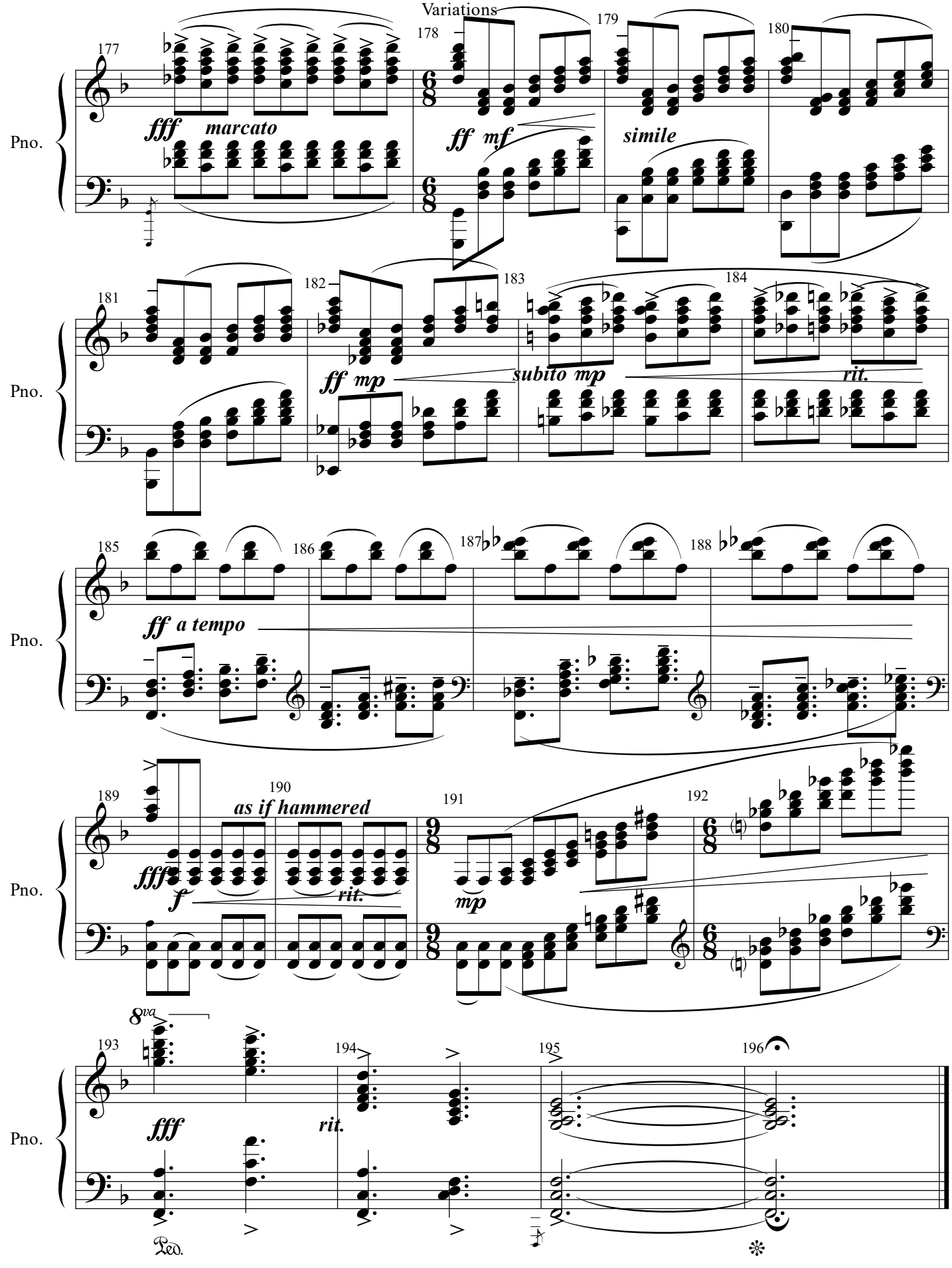



8va
151
Pno.
152
153
154
155
156
157
158
159
rit.
a tempo
160
161
162
l.h.
r.h.
rit.
dolce

Variation VI - Finale

Moderato maestoso (♩.=56)




177
178
179
180
Pno.
fff marcato
ff mf
simile
181
182
183
184
Pno.
ff mp
subito mp
rit.
185
186
187
188
Pno.
ff a tempo
189
190
191
192
Pno.
fff
f
as if hammered
rit.
mp
8va
193
194
195
196
Pno.
fff
rit.
Ped.

Nocturne (E-flat)

Tempo I **Moderato** (♪=126)

James D. Matthews, 1998

una corda

Piano

mp

(replay g)

quasi echo

l.h.

simile

(replay bflat)

quasi echo

l.h.

mf

rit.

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Nocturne E-flat

Slower (♪=126)

17 18 19

simile

Note r.h. tuplets start on 16th with line and go with number of 16ths in parenthesis in l.h. However, play freely.

20 21 22

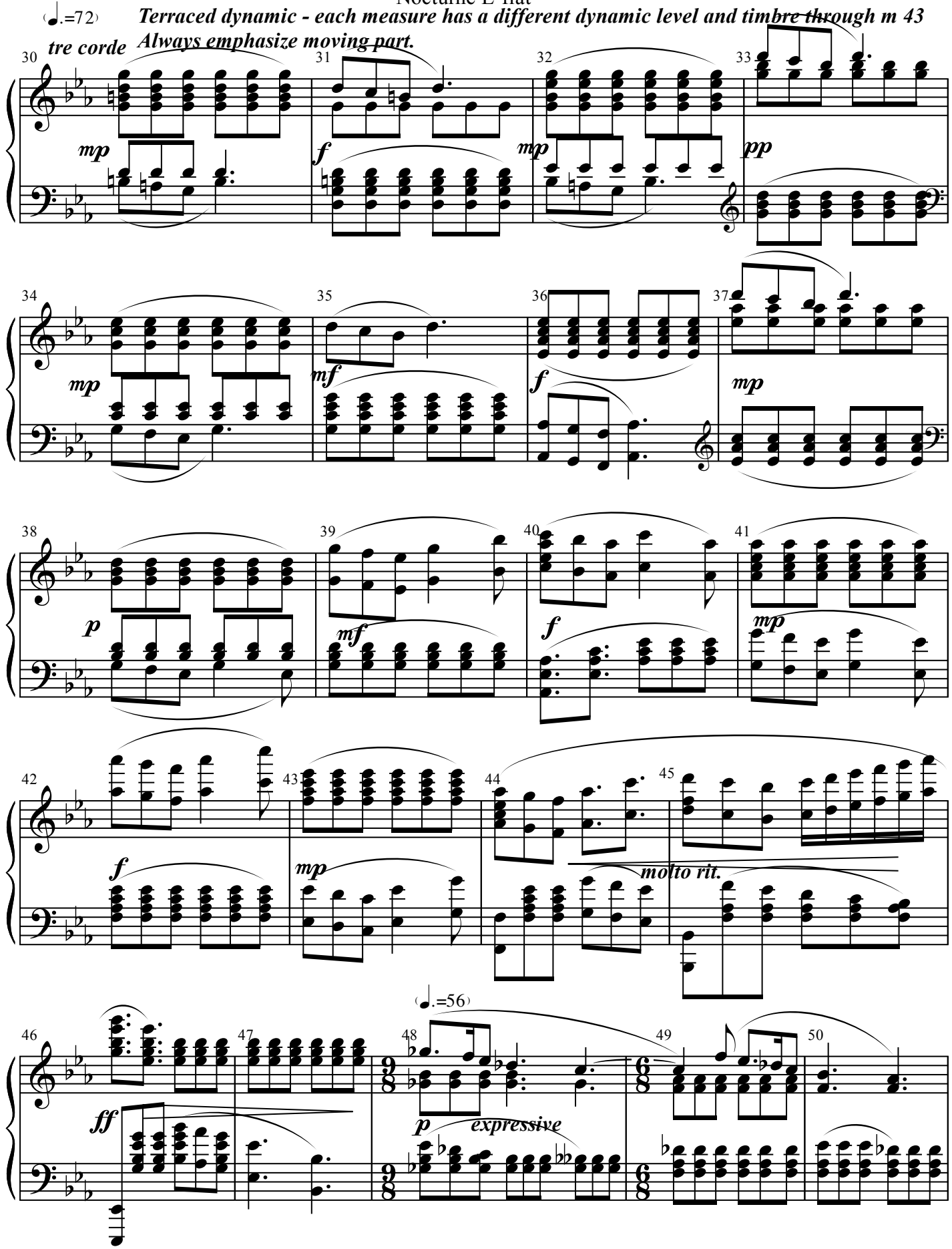
23 24

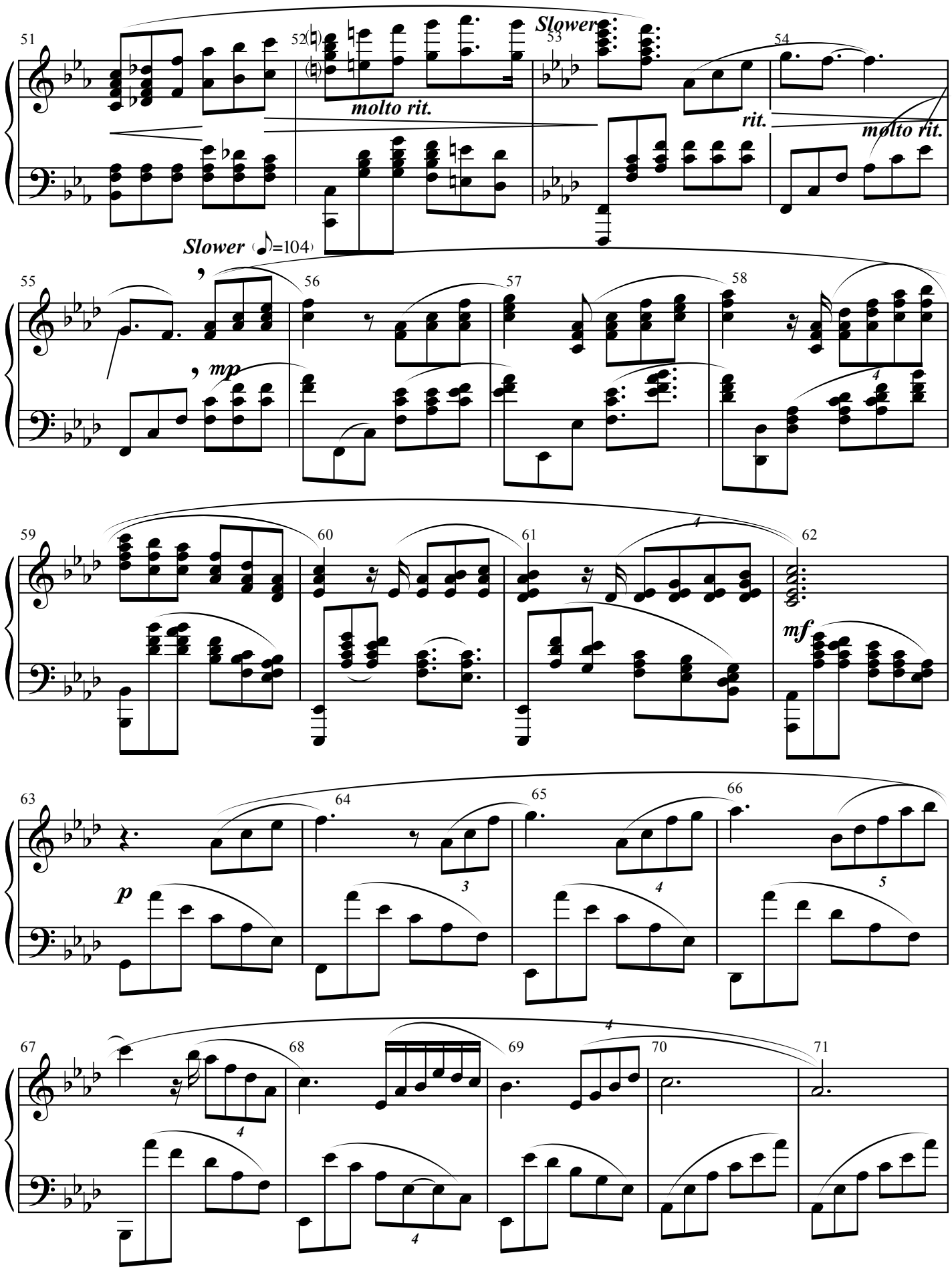
25 26 27

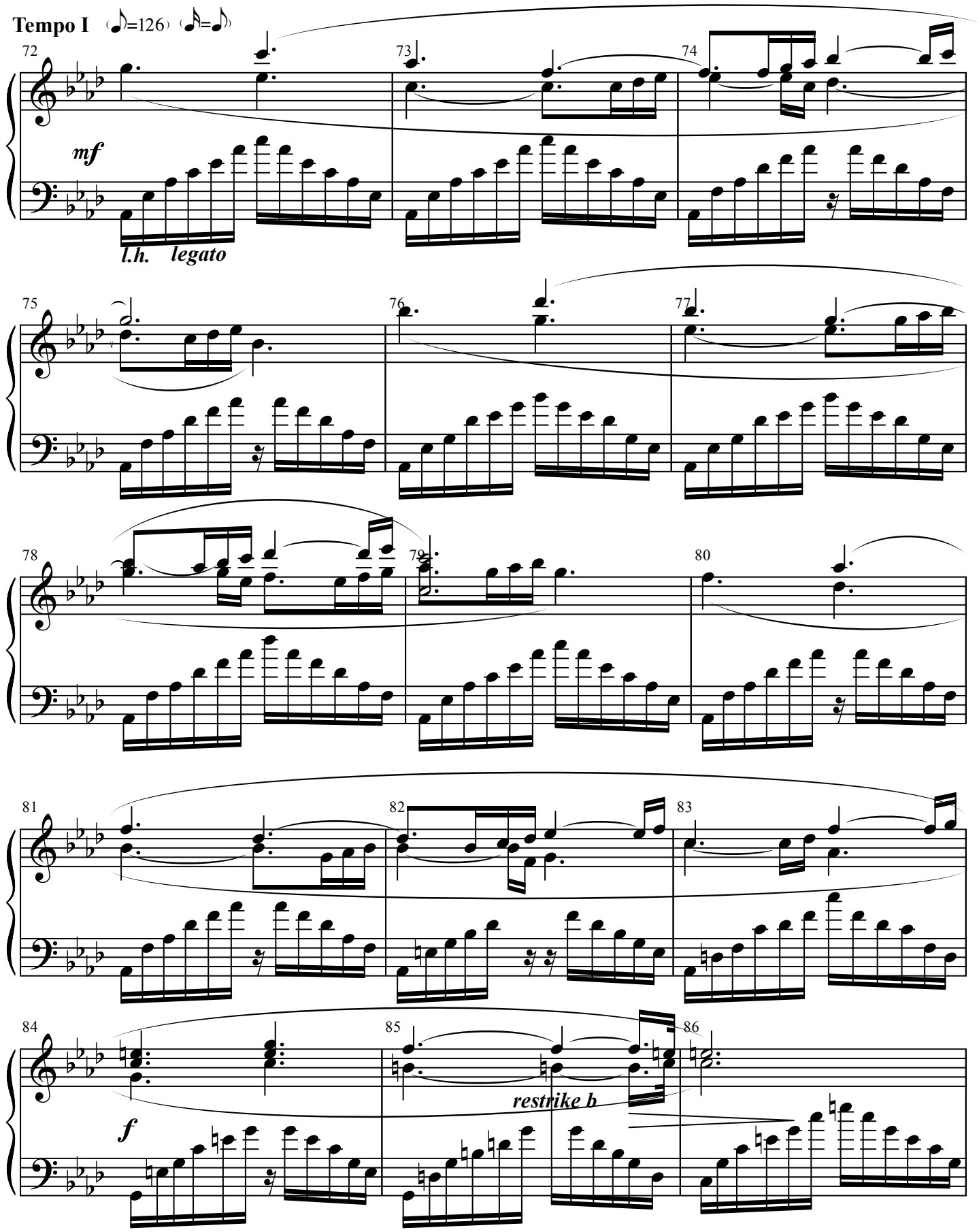
28 29

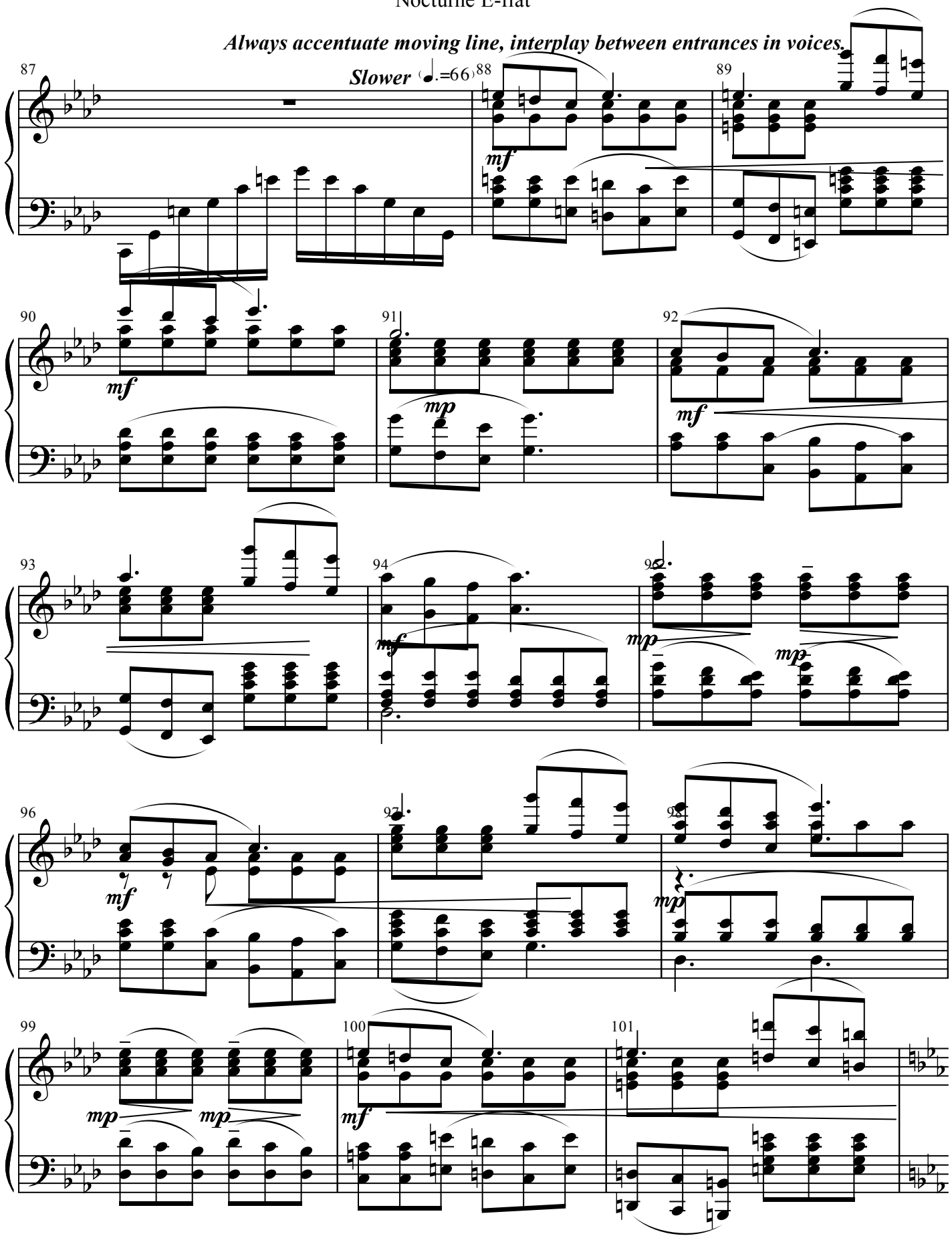
(stop tr)

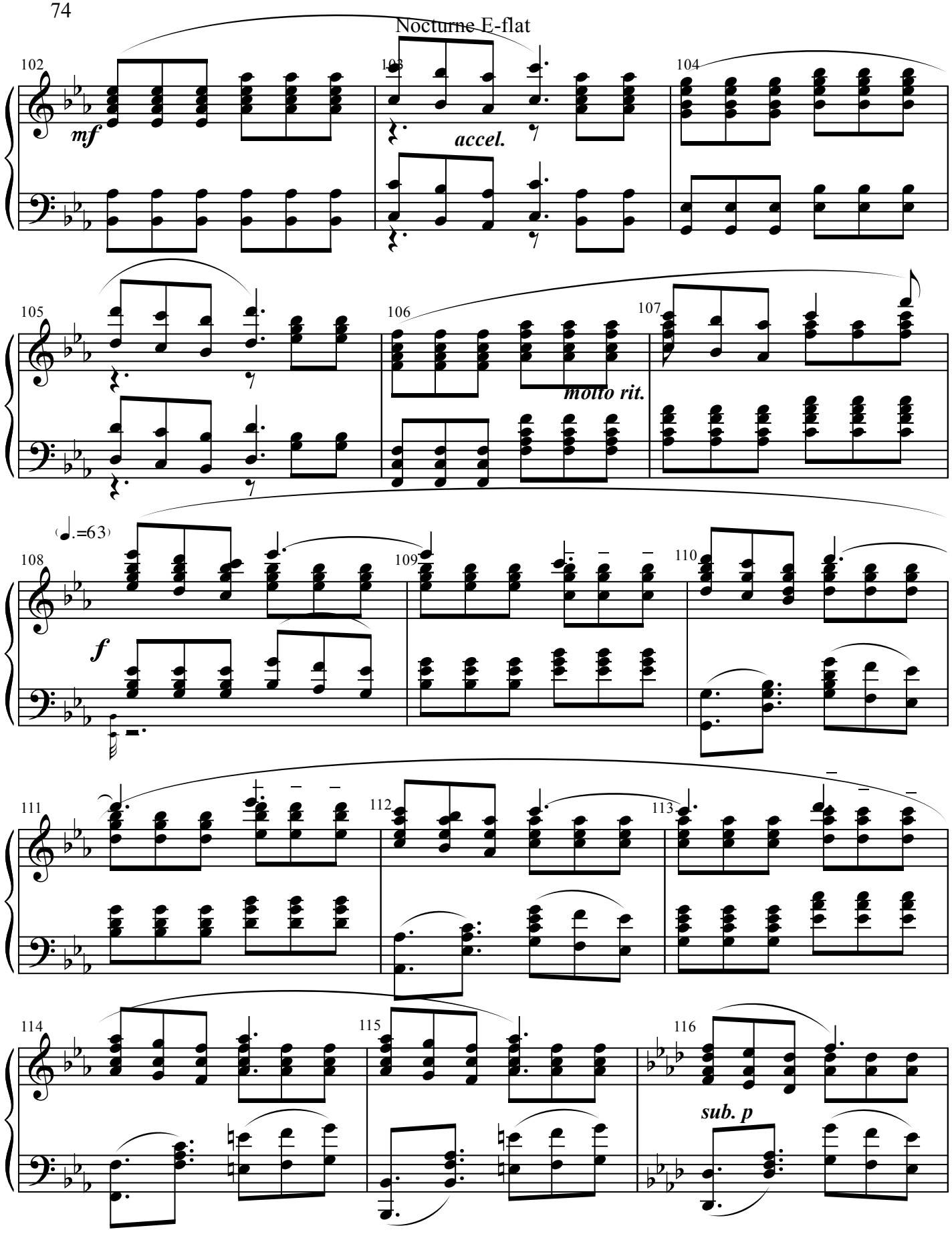
rit.

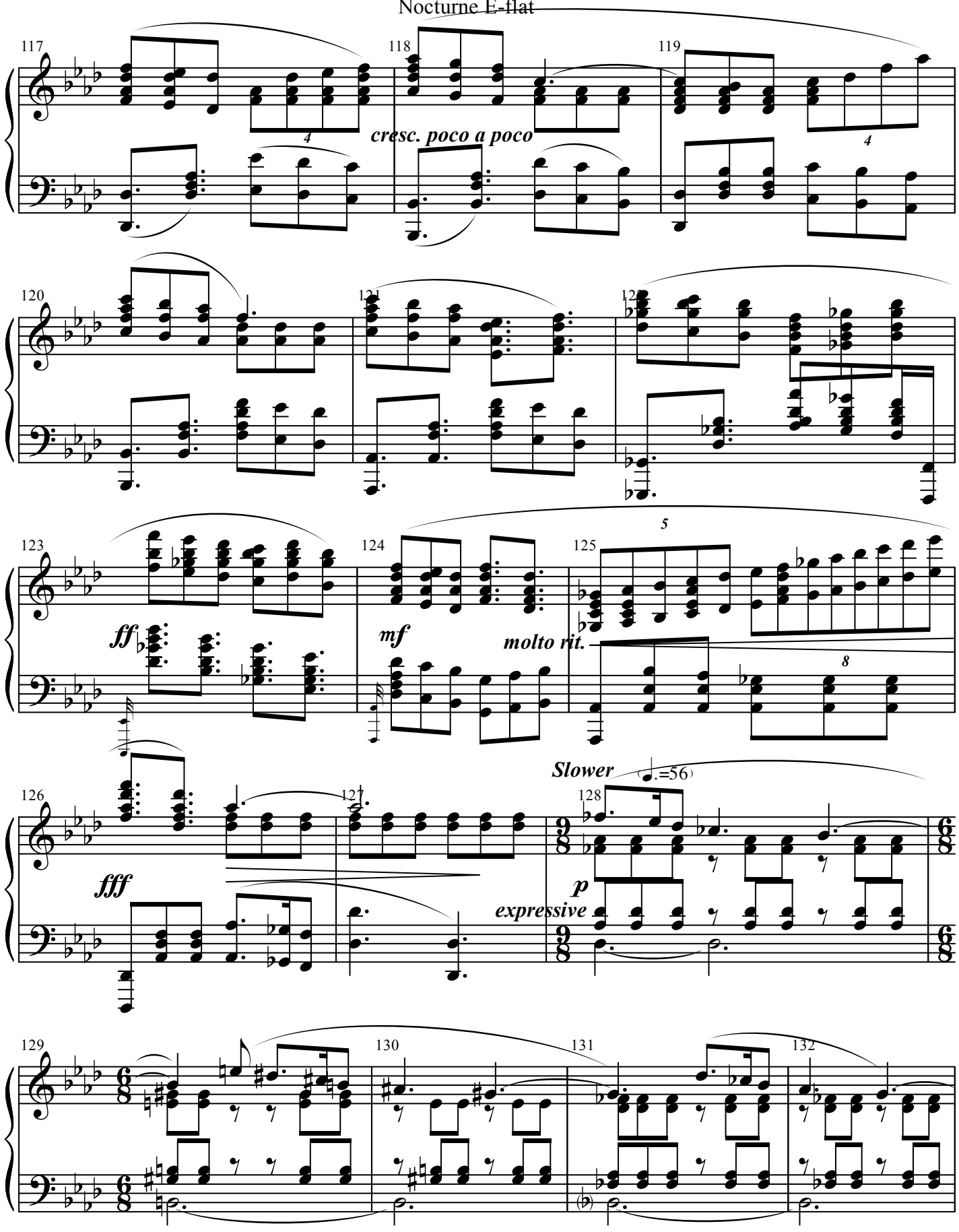

(♩.=72)
Terraced dynamic - each measure has a different dynamic level and timbre through m 43
Always emphasize moving part.
tre corde
molto rit.
(♩.=56)
expressive

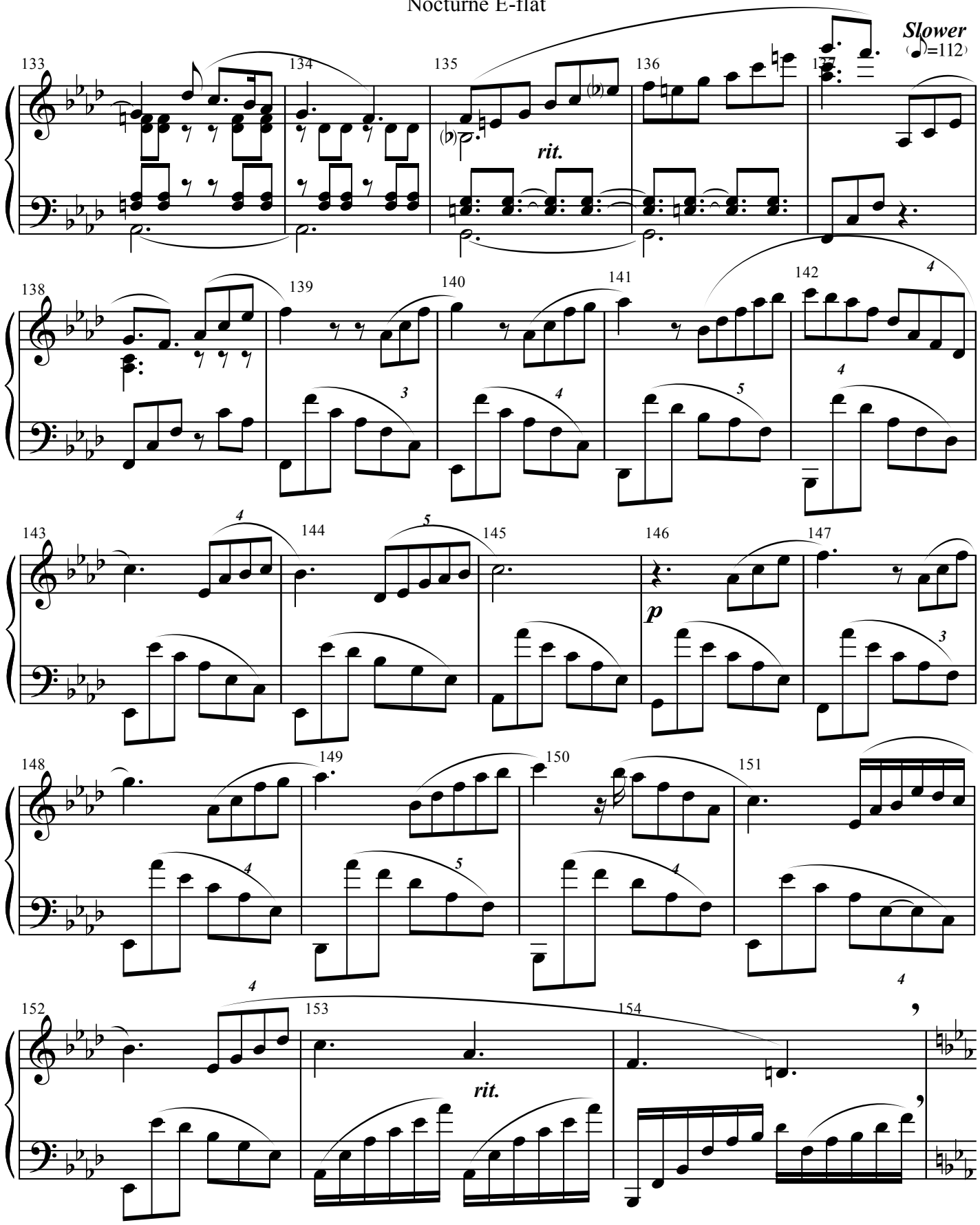

51
52
53
54
Slower
molto rit.
rit.
molto rit.
Slower (♪=104)
55
56
57
58
mp
4
59
60
61
62
4
mf
63
64
65
66
p
3
4
5
67
68
69
70
71
4
4
4

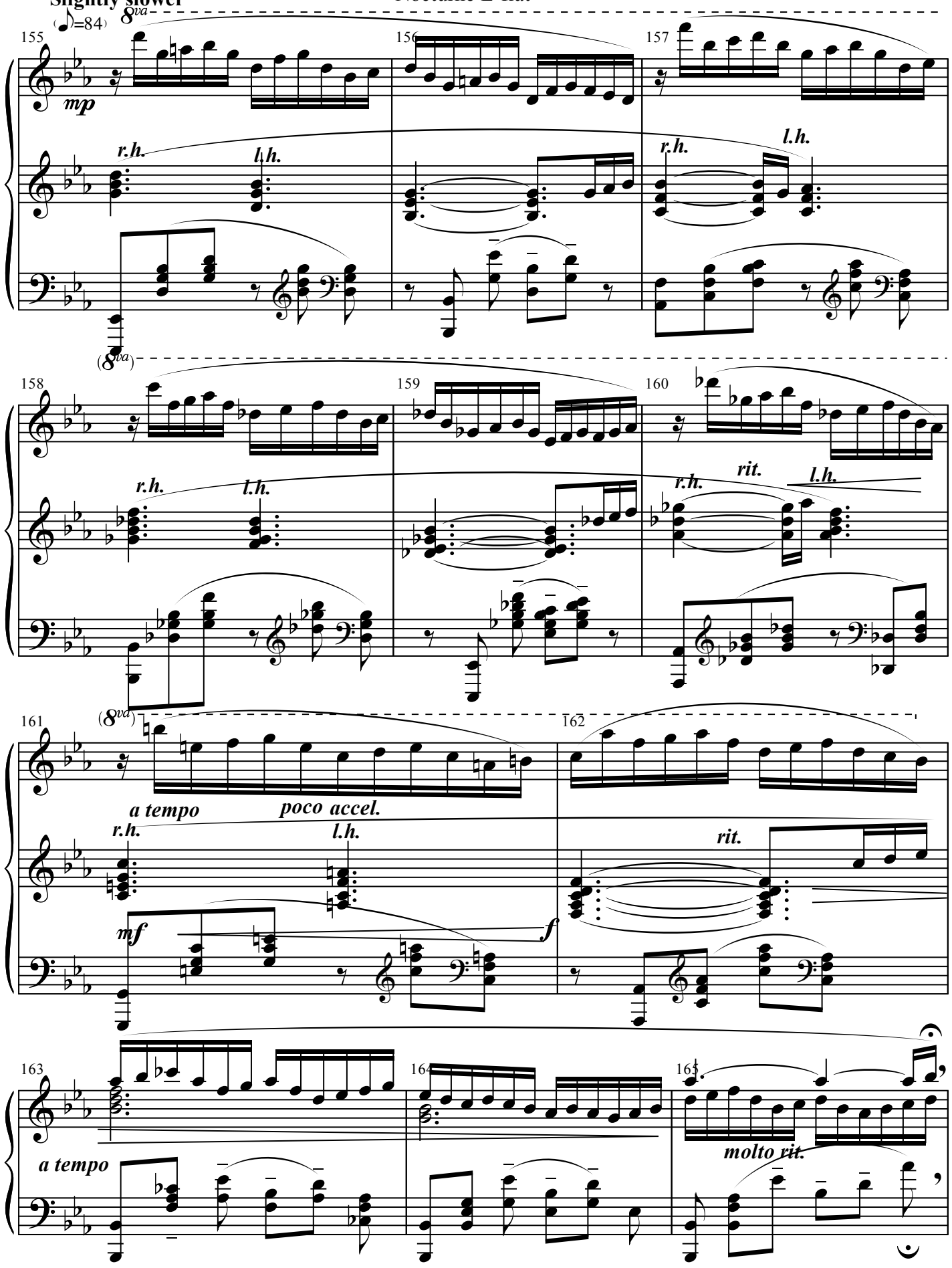

Tempo I
72
73
74
mf
l.h. legato
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
restrike b
f

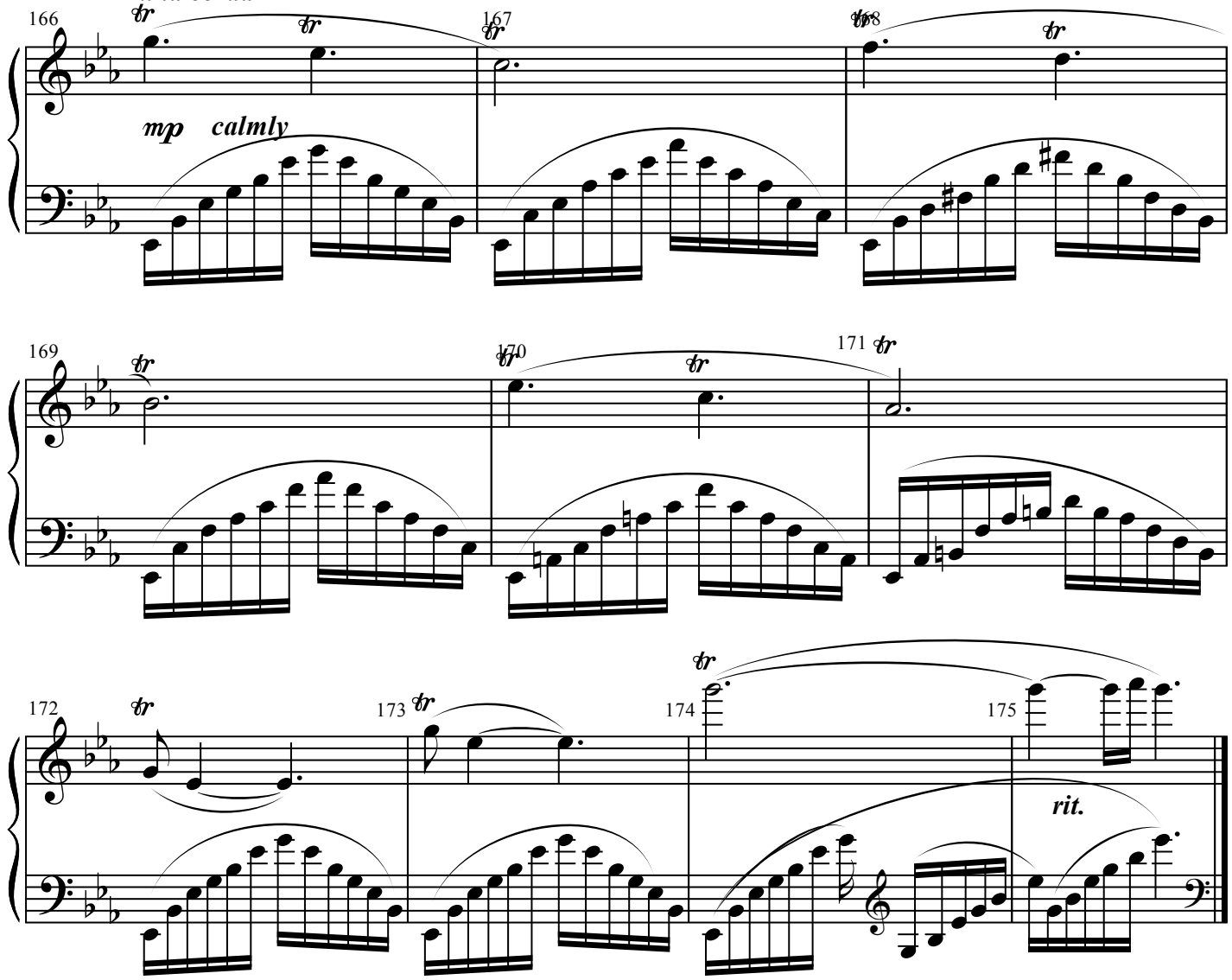

Always accentuate moving line, interplay between entrances in voices.
Slower (♩.=66)
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100
101
mf
mp


102
mf
103
accel.
104
105
106
molto rit.
107
(♩.=63)
108
f
109
110
111
112
113
114
115
116
sub. p


117
118
119
cresc. poco a poco
120
121
122
123
124
125
5
ff
mf
molto rit.
8
126
127
128
Slower
fff
p
expressive
129
130
131
132


Slower
♪=112
rit.
p
rit.


Slightly slower
(♪=84)
8va
155
156
157
mp
r.h.
l.h.
(8va)
158
159
160
rit.
161
162
a tempo
poco accel.
mf
f
163
164
165
molto rit.

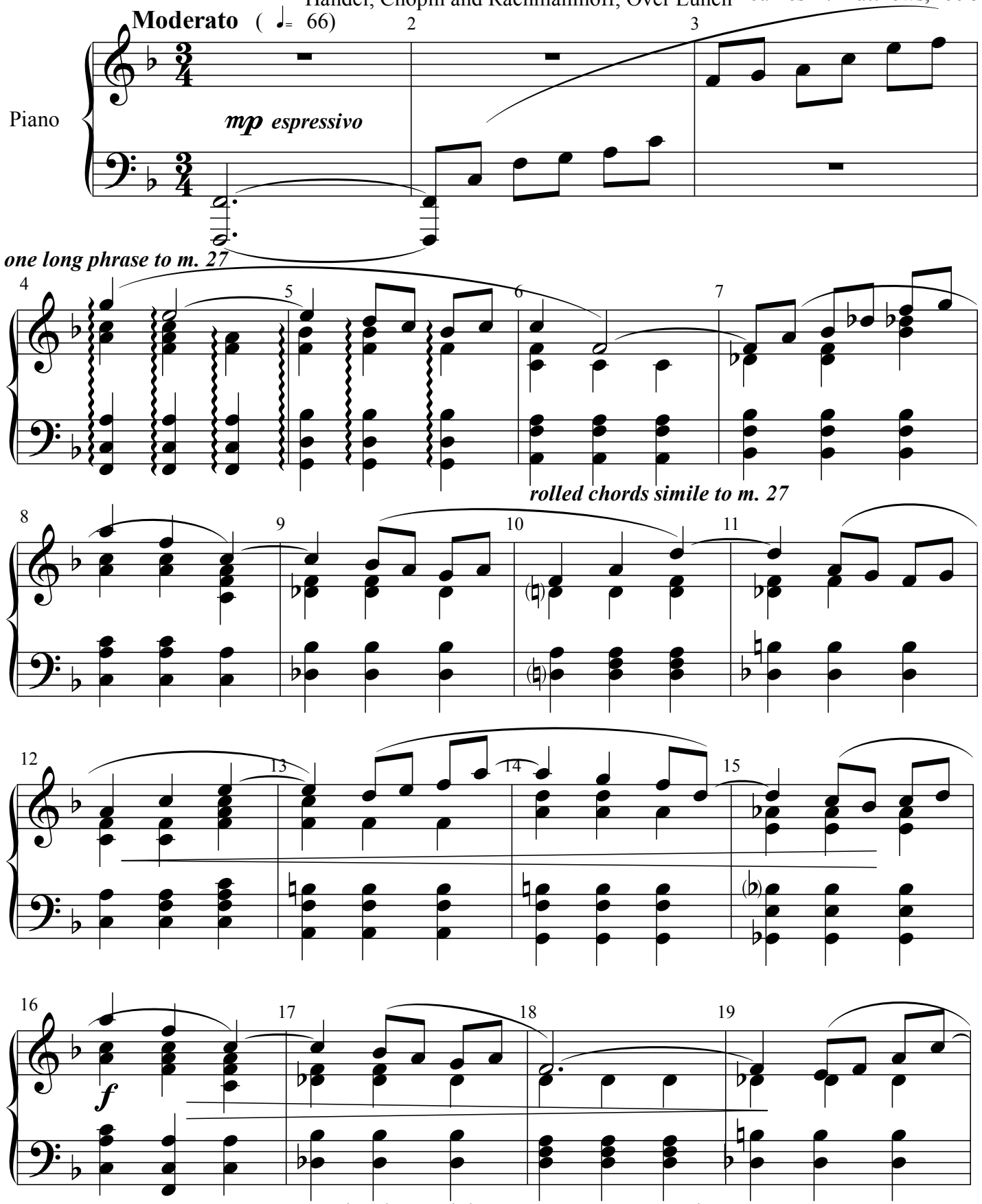

una corda
♪=104
166
167
168
mp calmly
169
170
171
172
173
174
175
rit.

Notes

Nocturne HCR

Handel, Chopin and Rachmaninoff, Over Lunch

James D. Matthews, 1998



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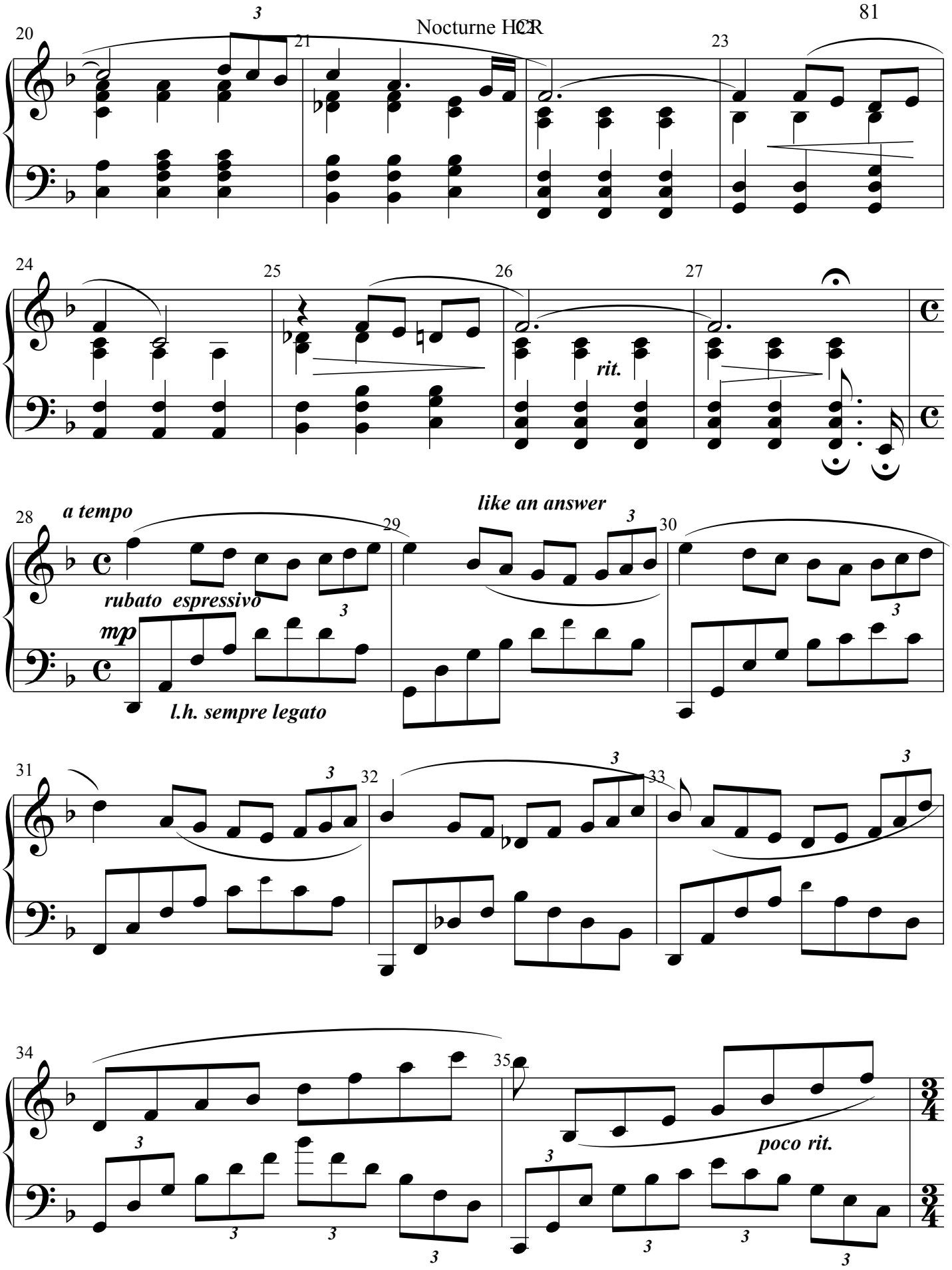
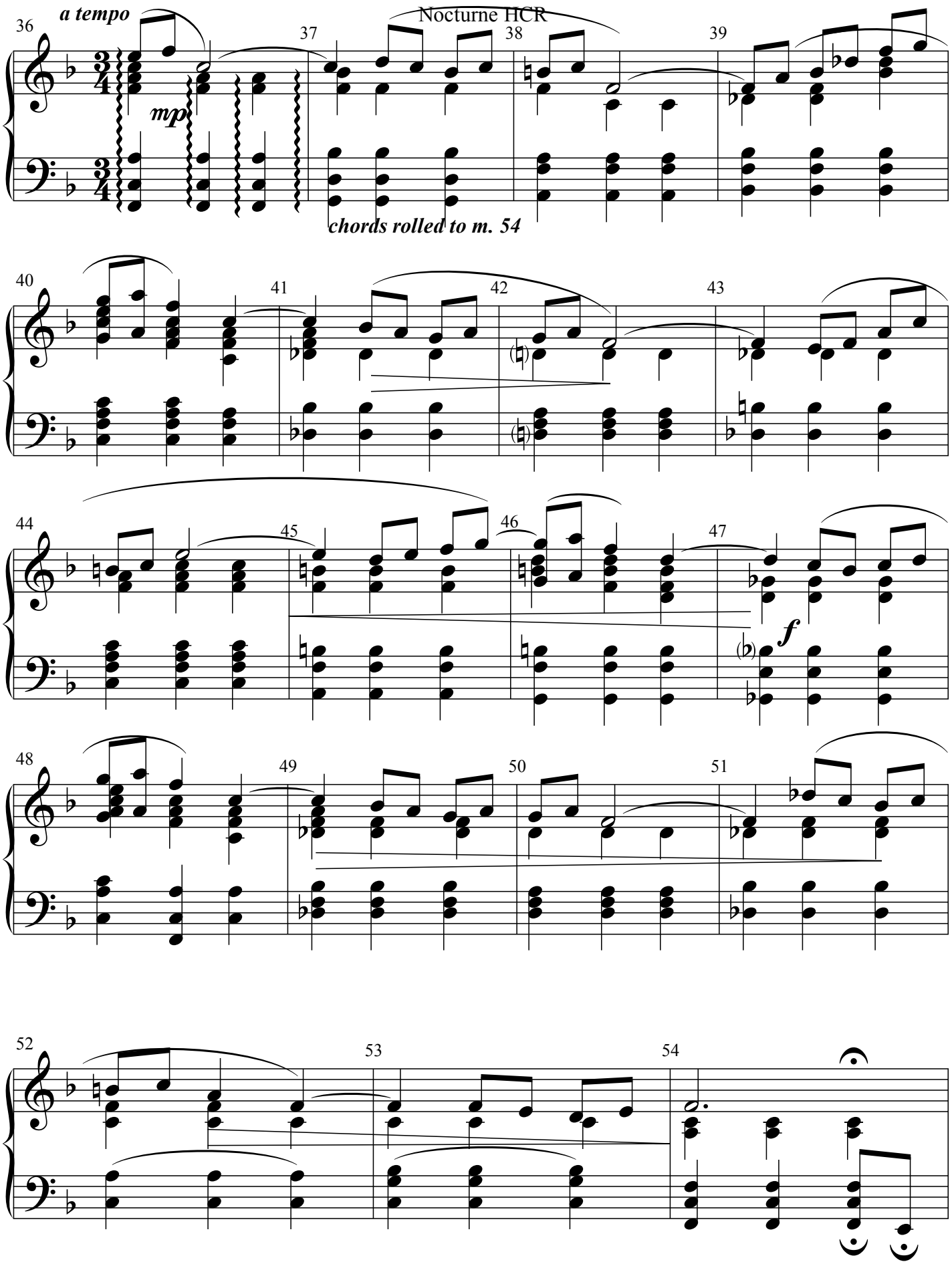
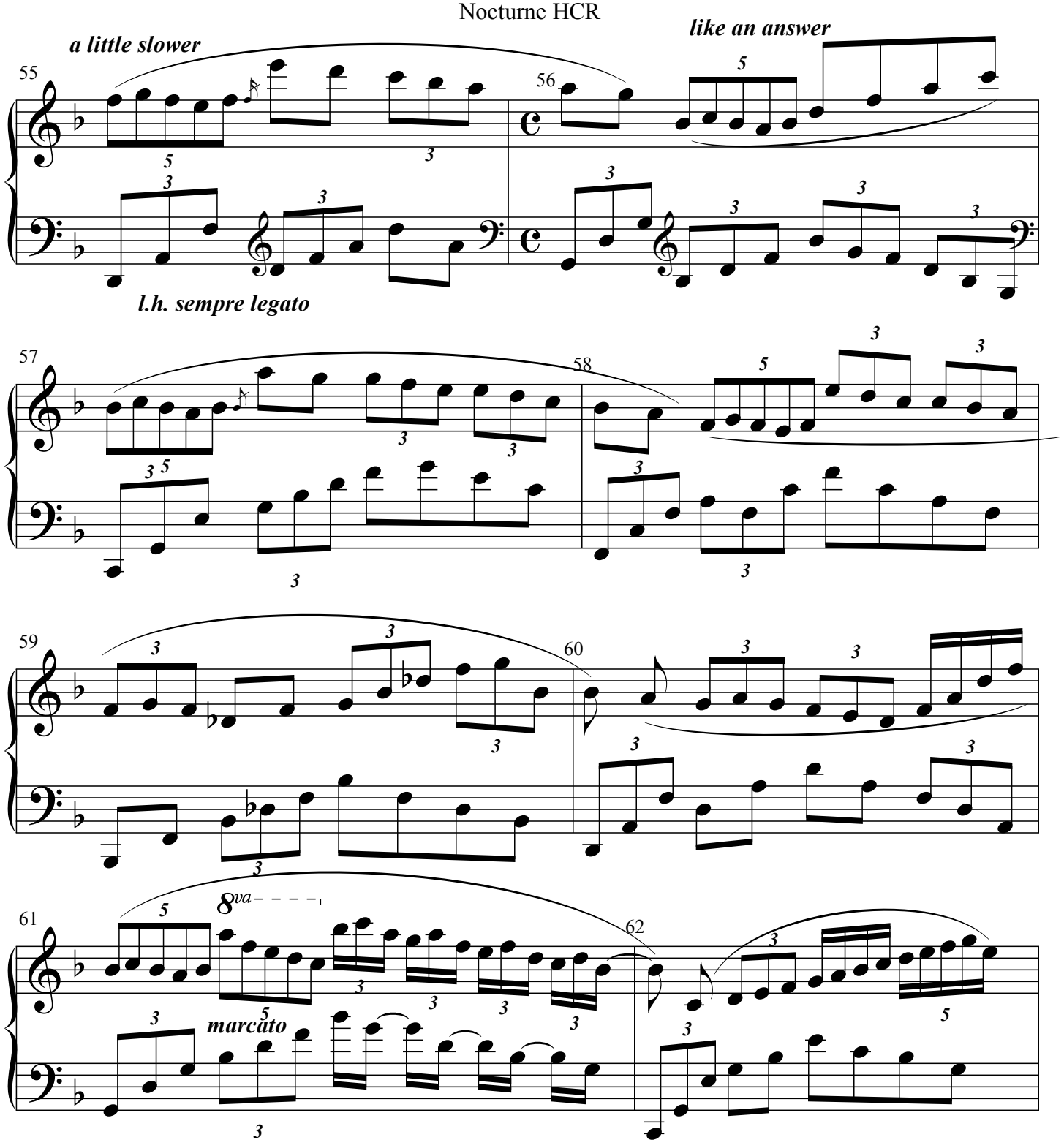
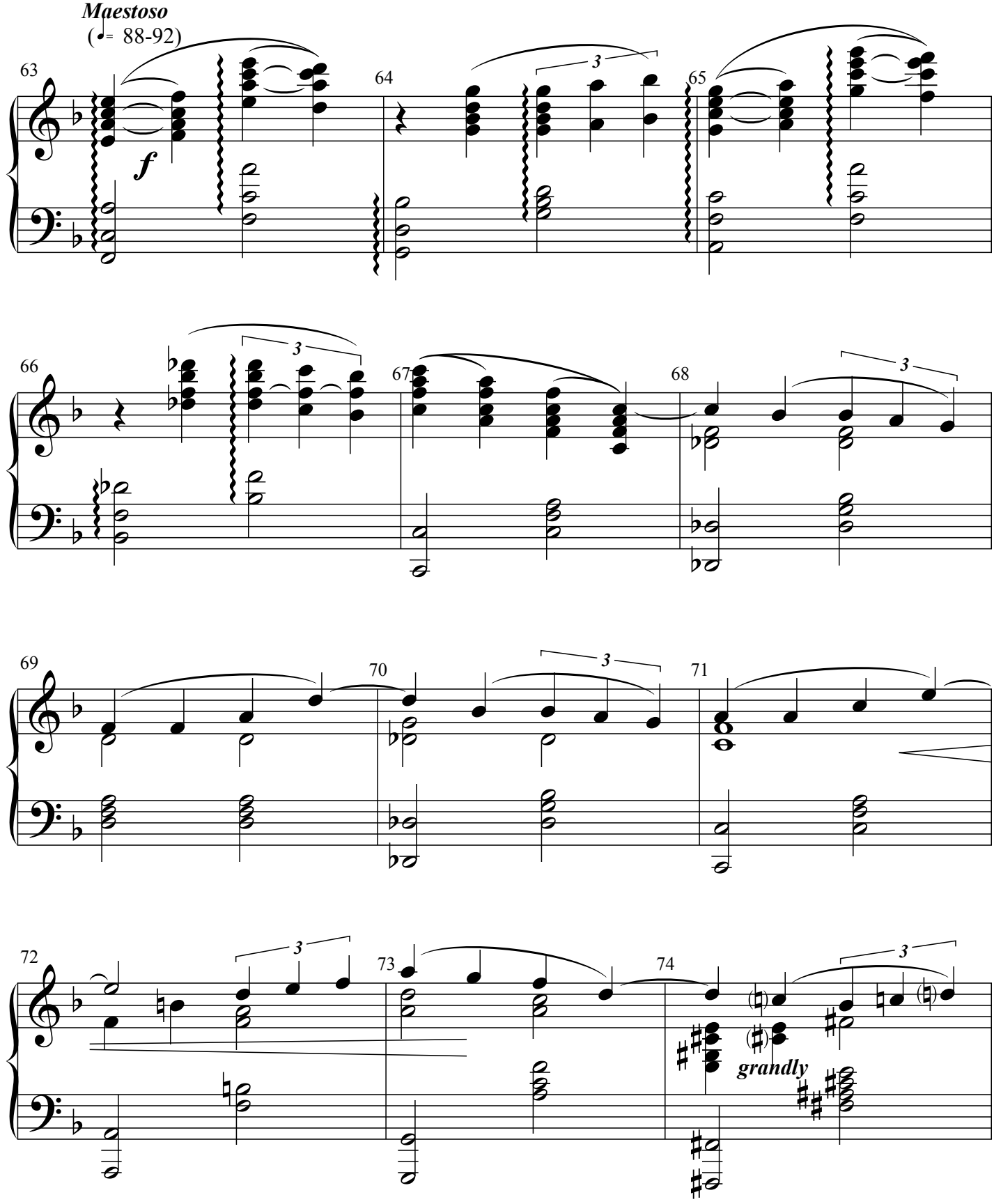
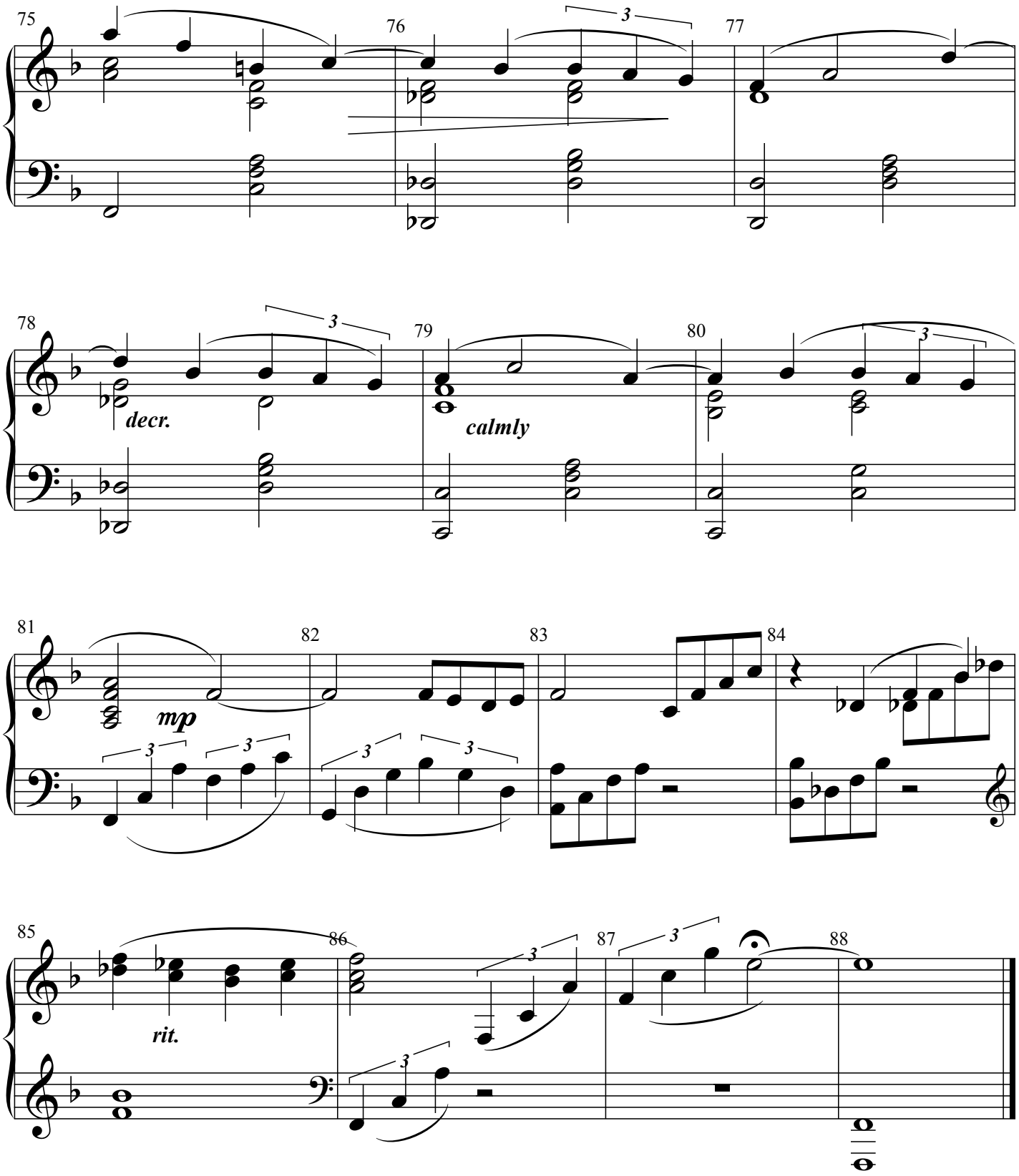

20
21
23
24
25
26
rit.
27
28
a tempo
like an answer
29
30
rubato espressivo
mp
l.h. sempre legato
31
32
33
34
35
poco rit.


a tempo
mp
chords rolled to m. 54
f


a little slower
like an answer
l.h. sempre legato
8va
marcato

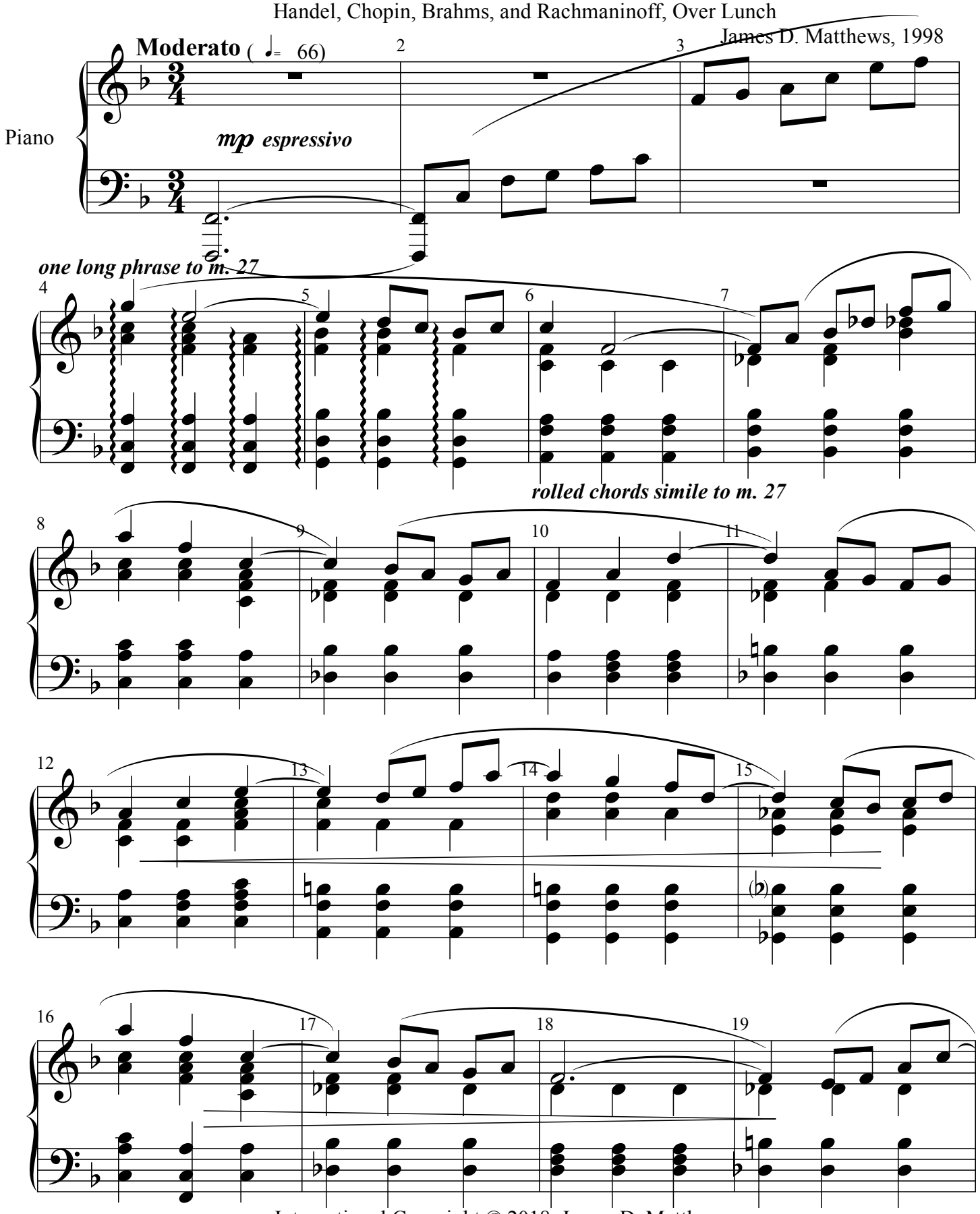

Maestoso
(♩= 88-92)
63
f
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
grandly


75
76
77
78
decr.
79
calmly
80
81
mp
82
83
84
85
rit.
86
87
88

Nocturne HCBR

Handel, Chopin, Brahms, and Rachmaninoff, Over Lunch

James D. Matthews, 1998



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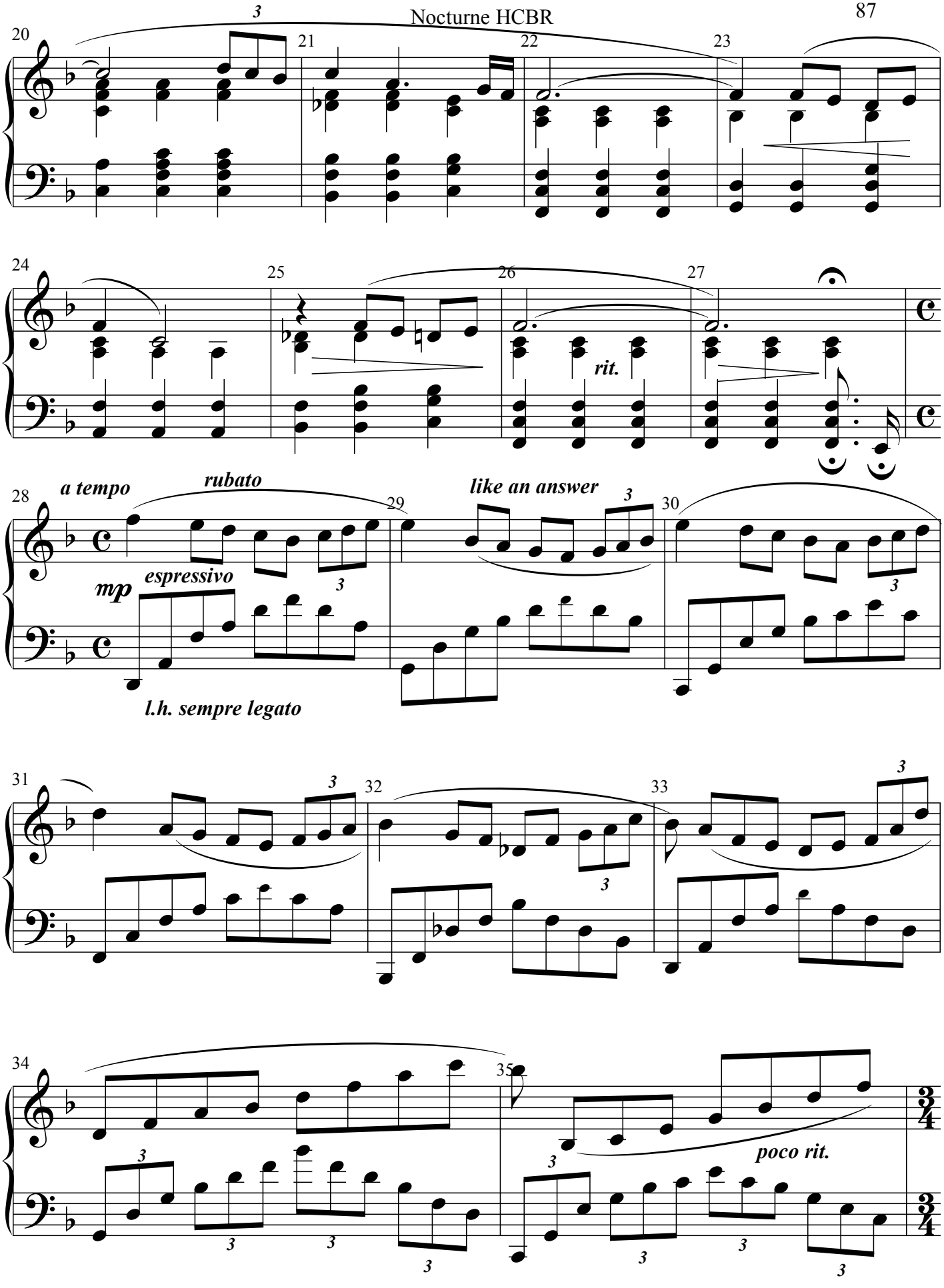
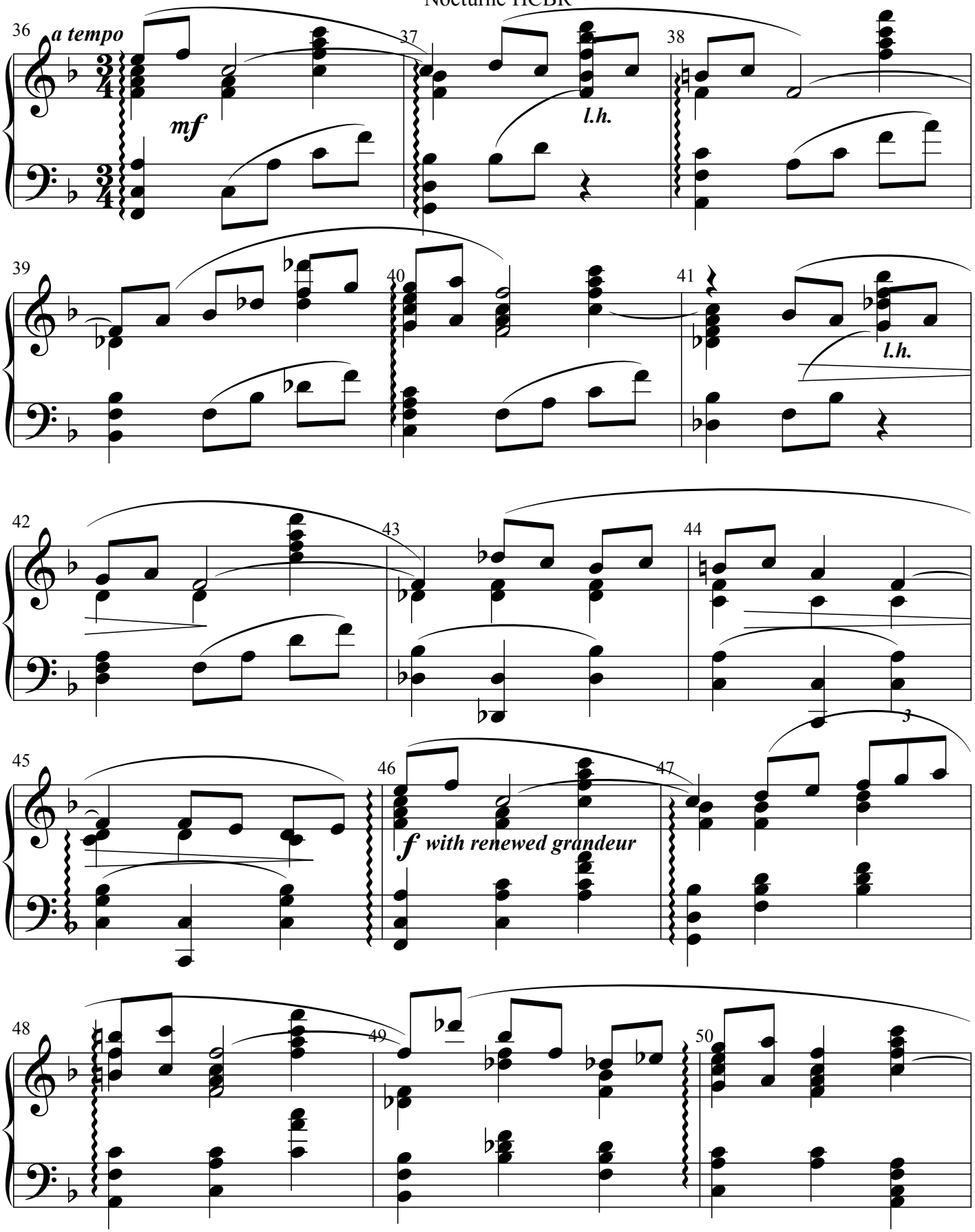
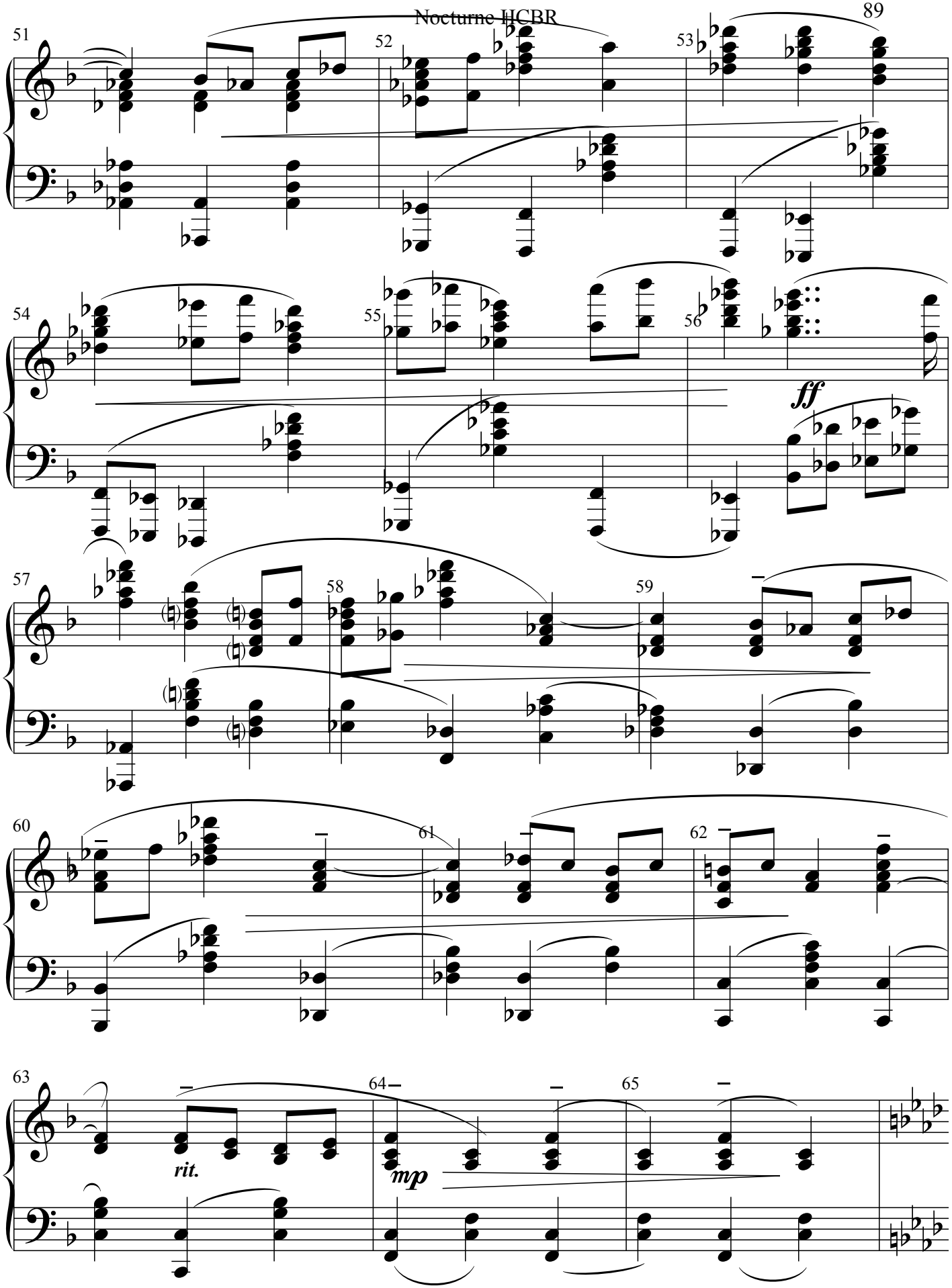
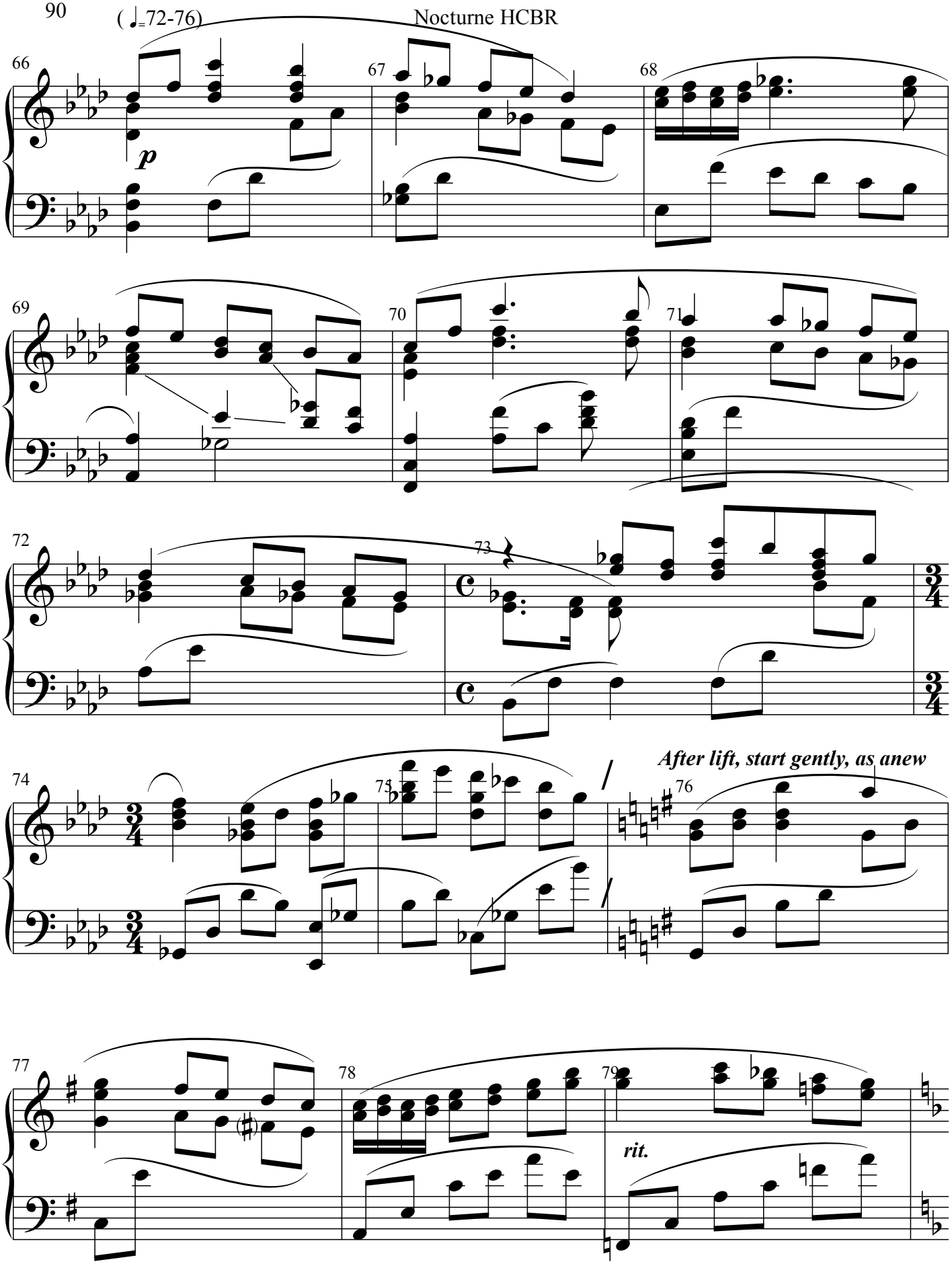
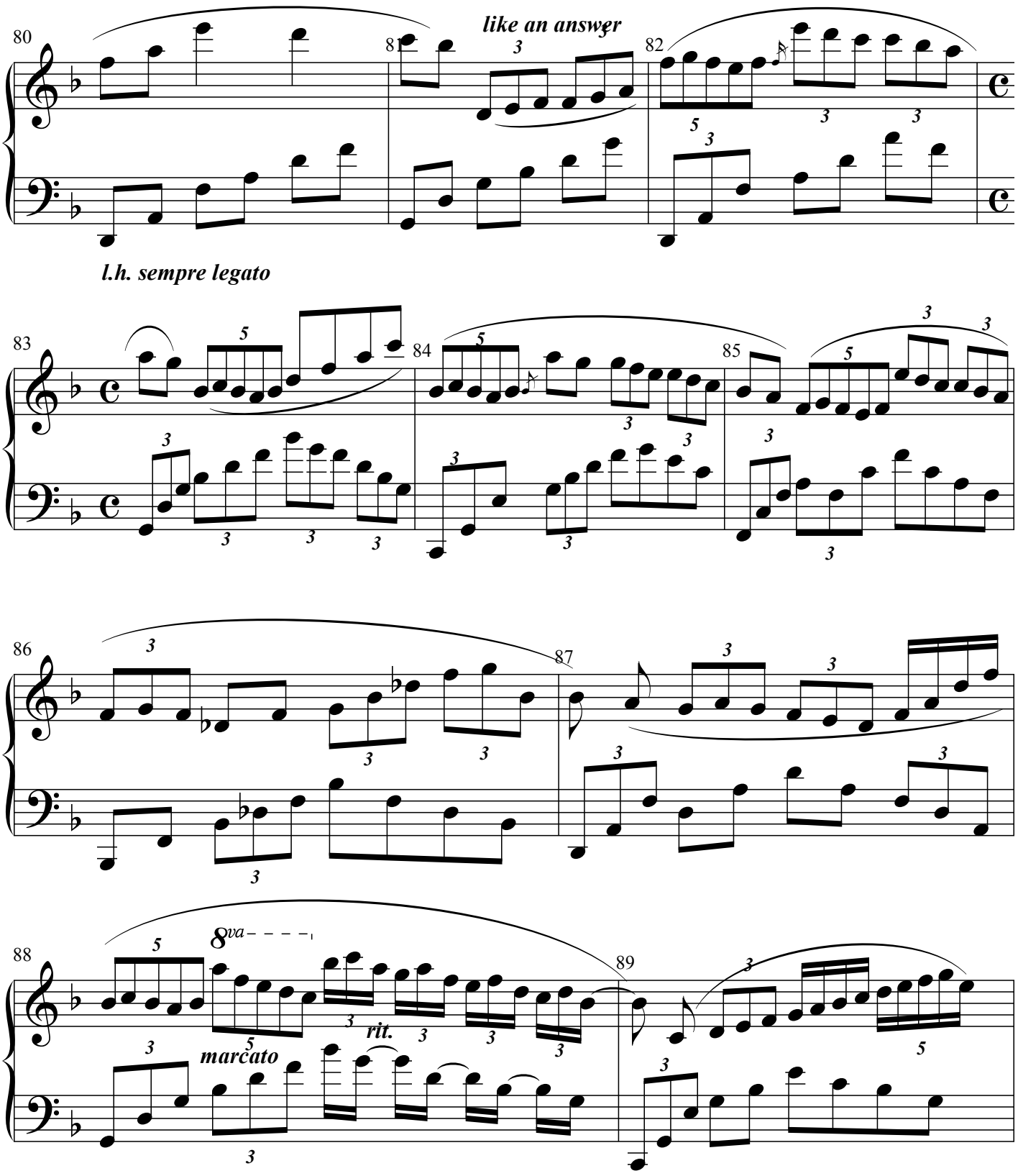
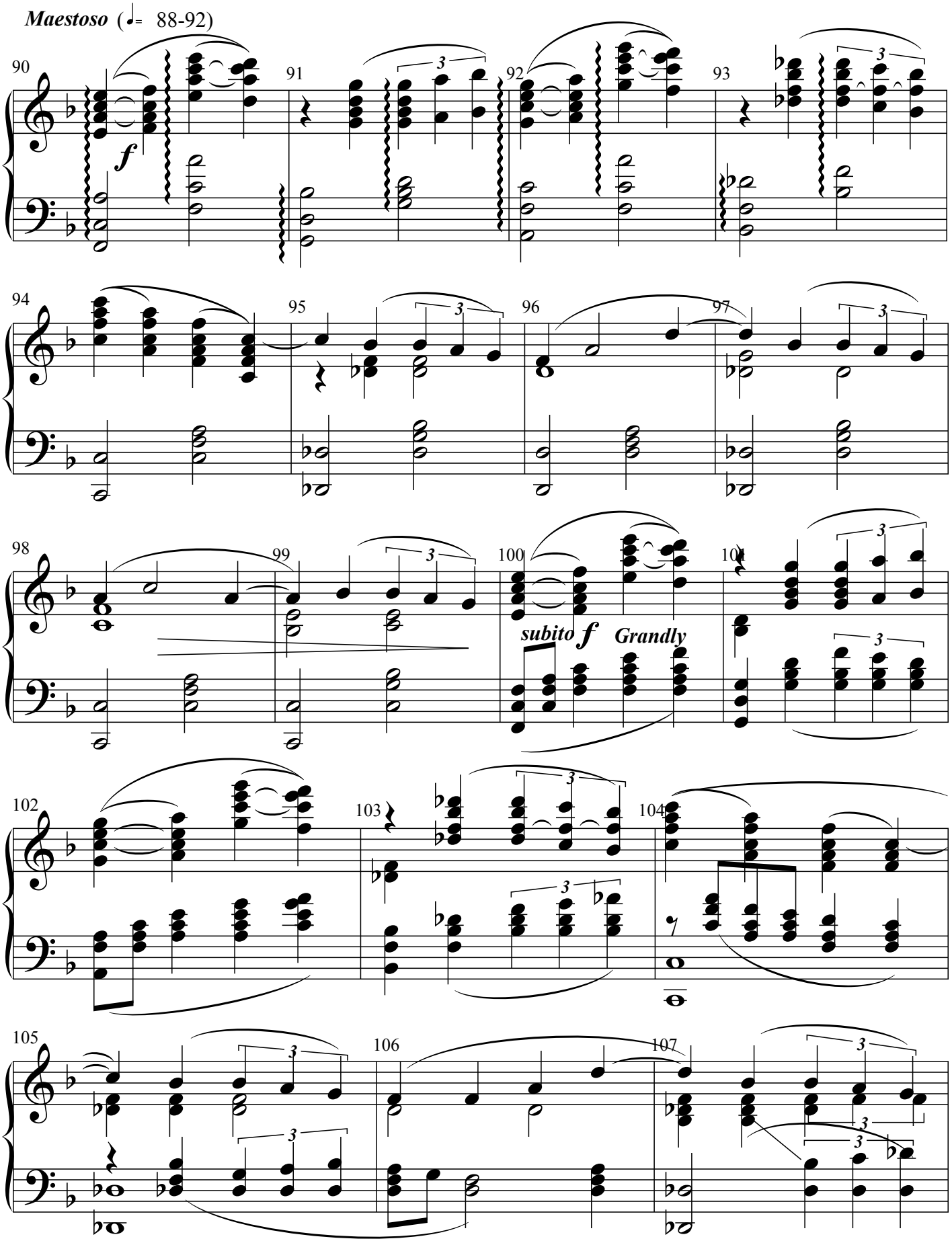

20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
rit.
28
a tempo
rubato
like an answer
mp
espressive
l.h. sempre legato
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
poco rit.

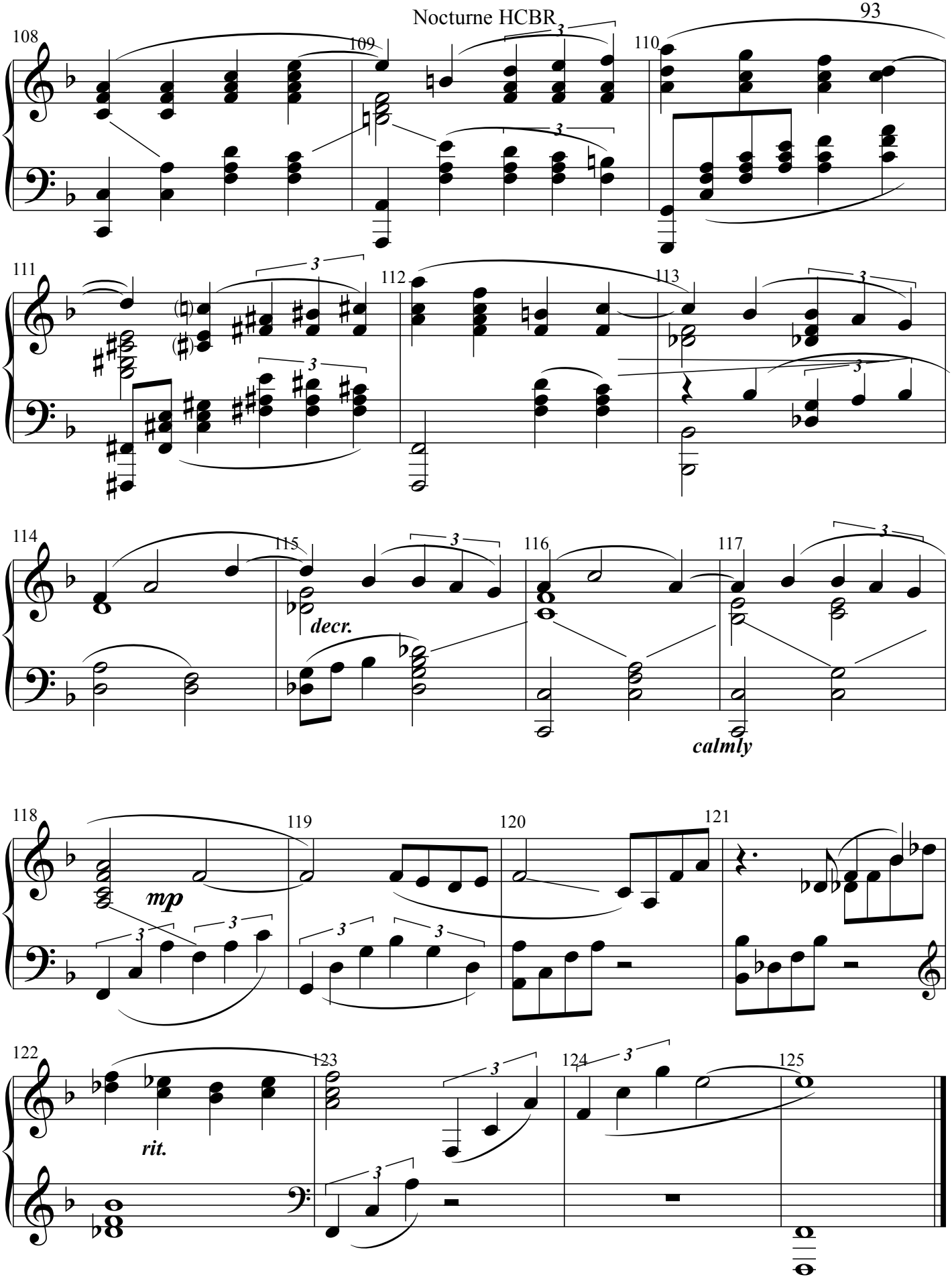

36
a tempo
mf
37
l.h.
38
39
40
41
l.h.
42
43
44
3
45
46
f with renewed grandeur
47
48
49
50


51
52
53
54
55
56
ff
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
rit.
64
mp
65


66
67
68
p
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
After lift, start gently, as anew
77
78
79
rit.


like an answer
l.h. sempre legato
8va
rit.
marcato


Maestoso (♩= 88-92)
f
subito f
Grandly

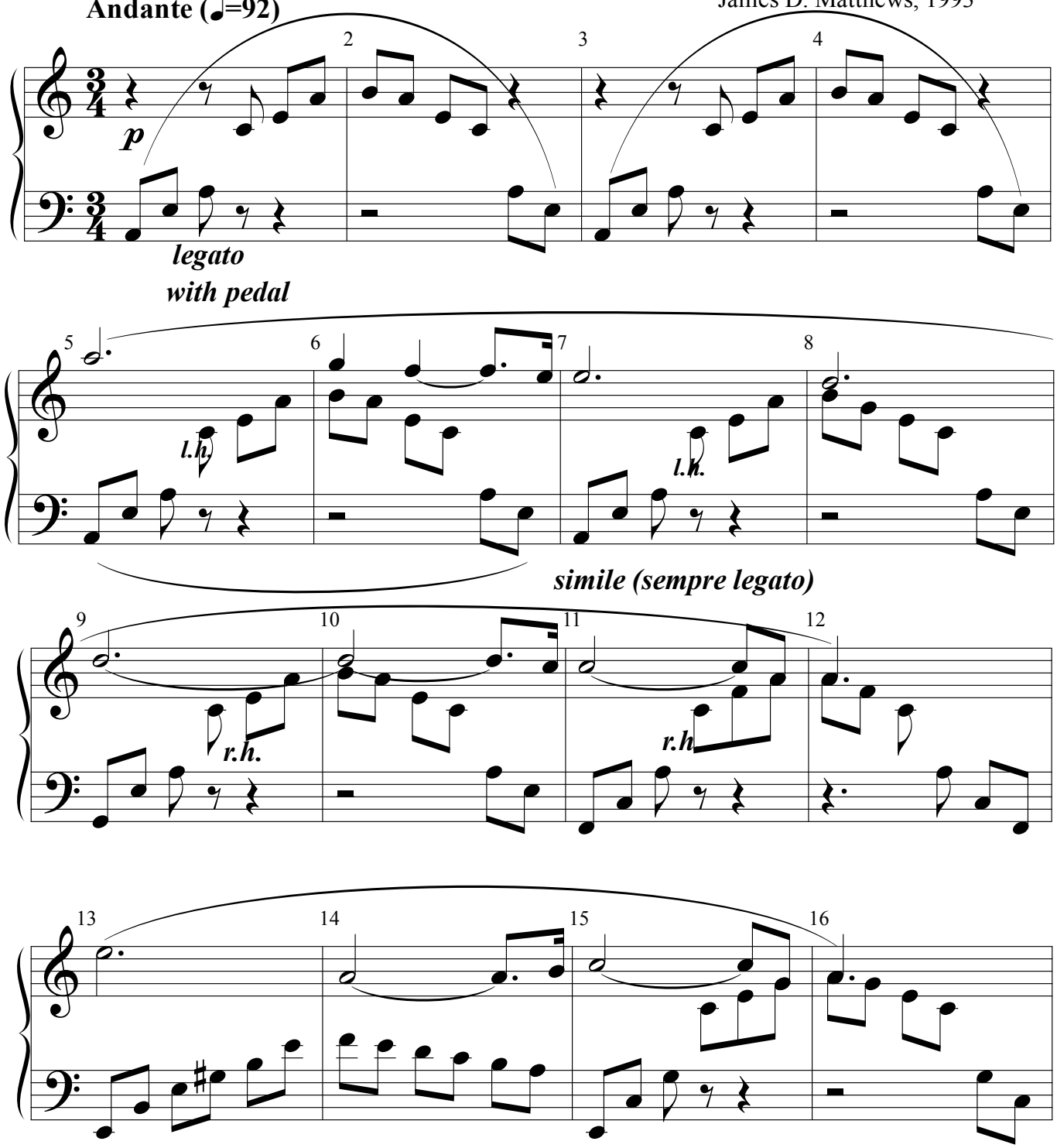

108
109
110
111
112
113
114
115
decr.
116
117
calmly
118
mp
119
120
121
122
rit.
123
124
125

NOCTURNE

St. Louis

To SDD, April 30 - May 31, 1993

James D. Matthews, 1993



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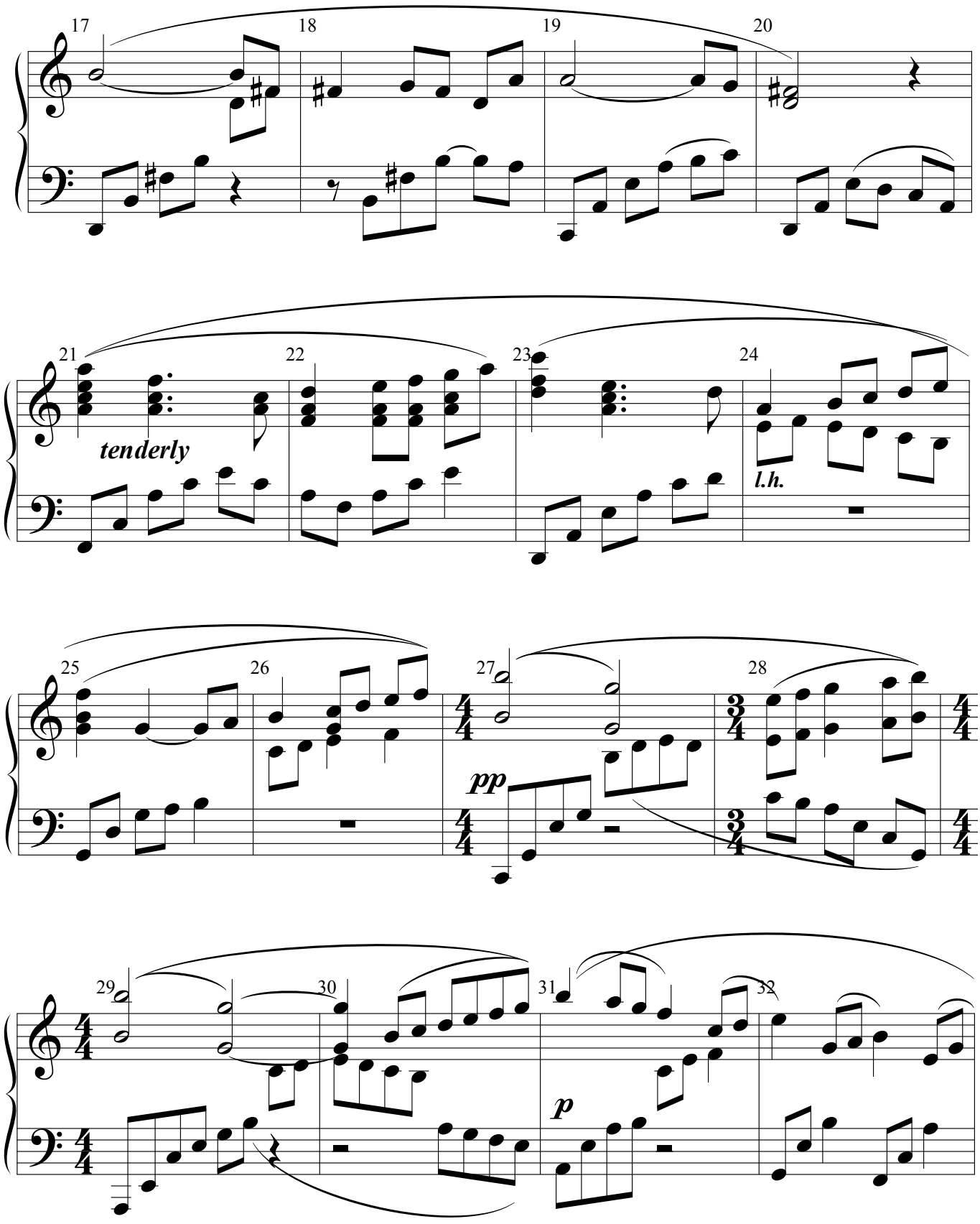
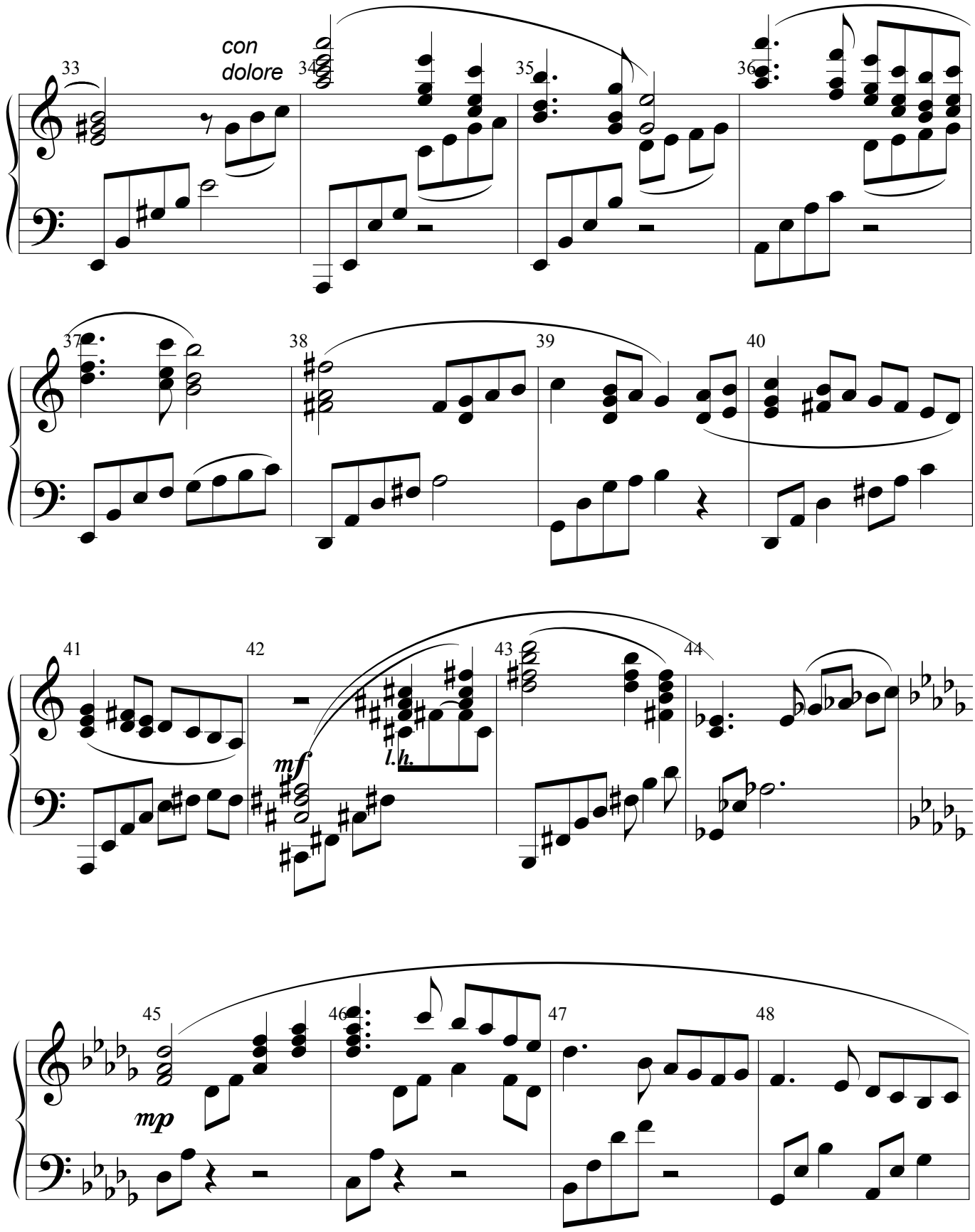
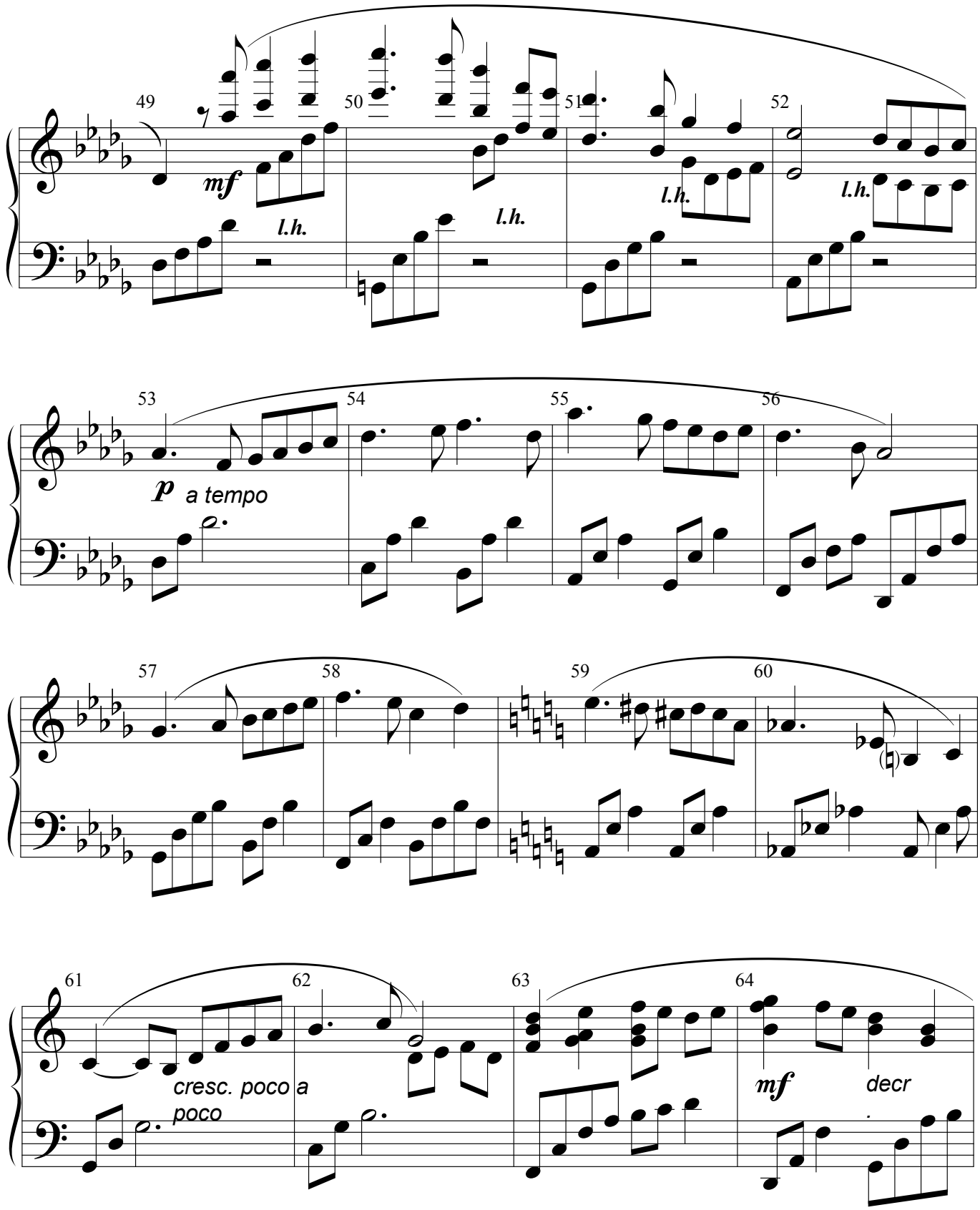
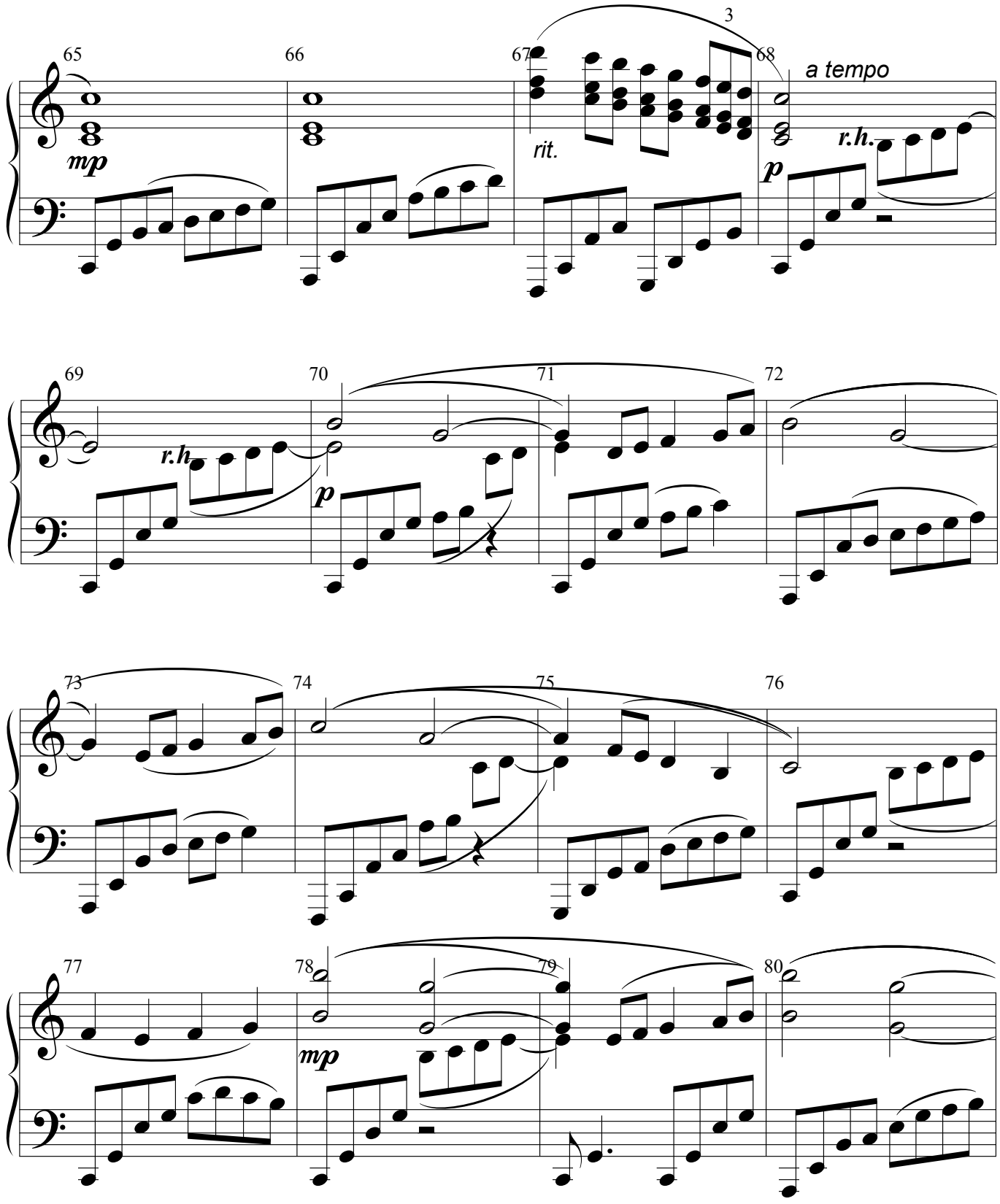
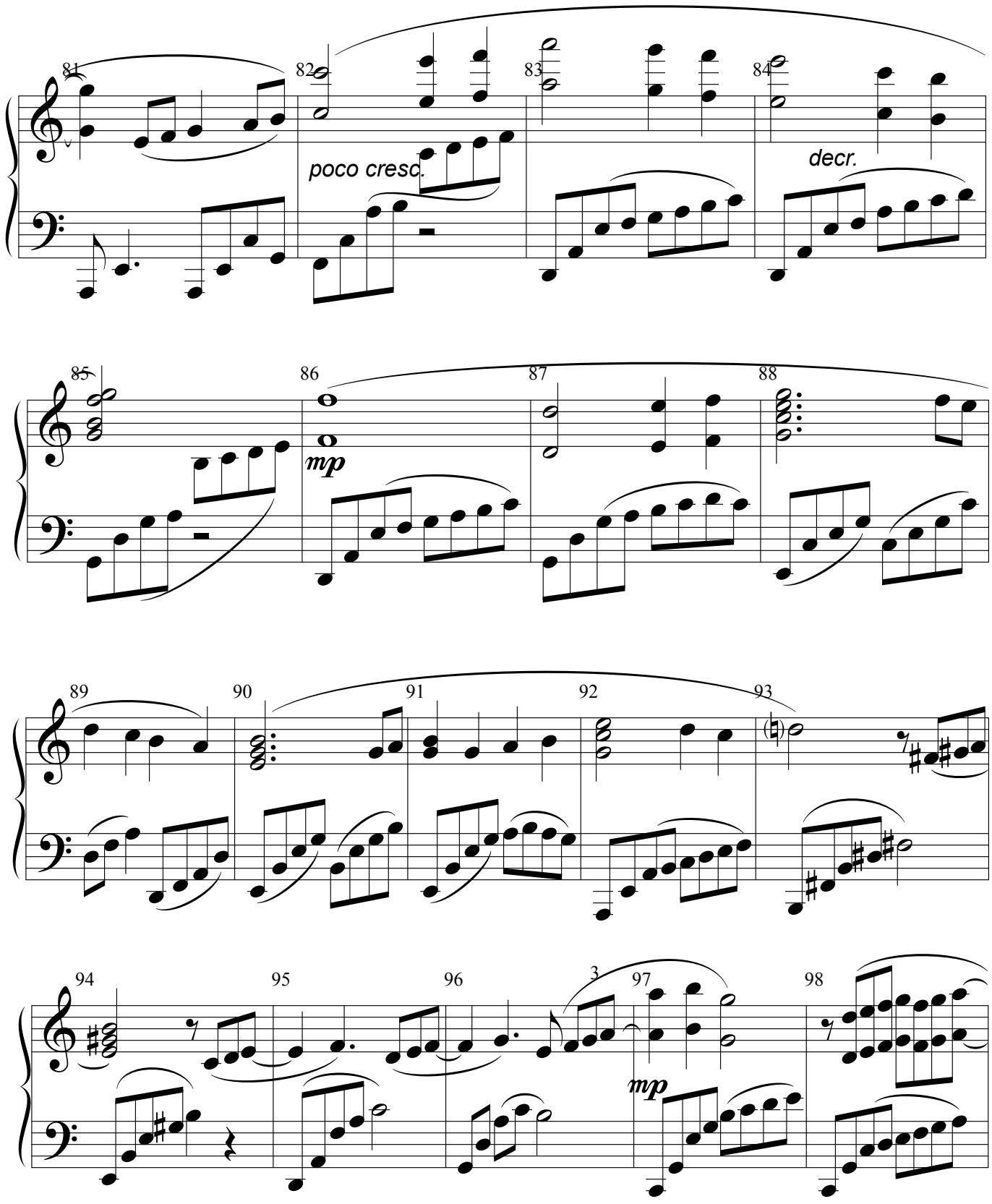
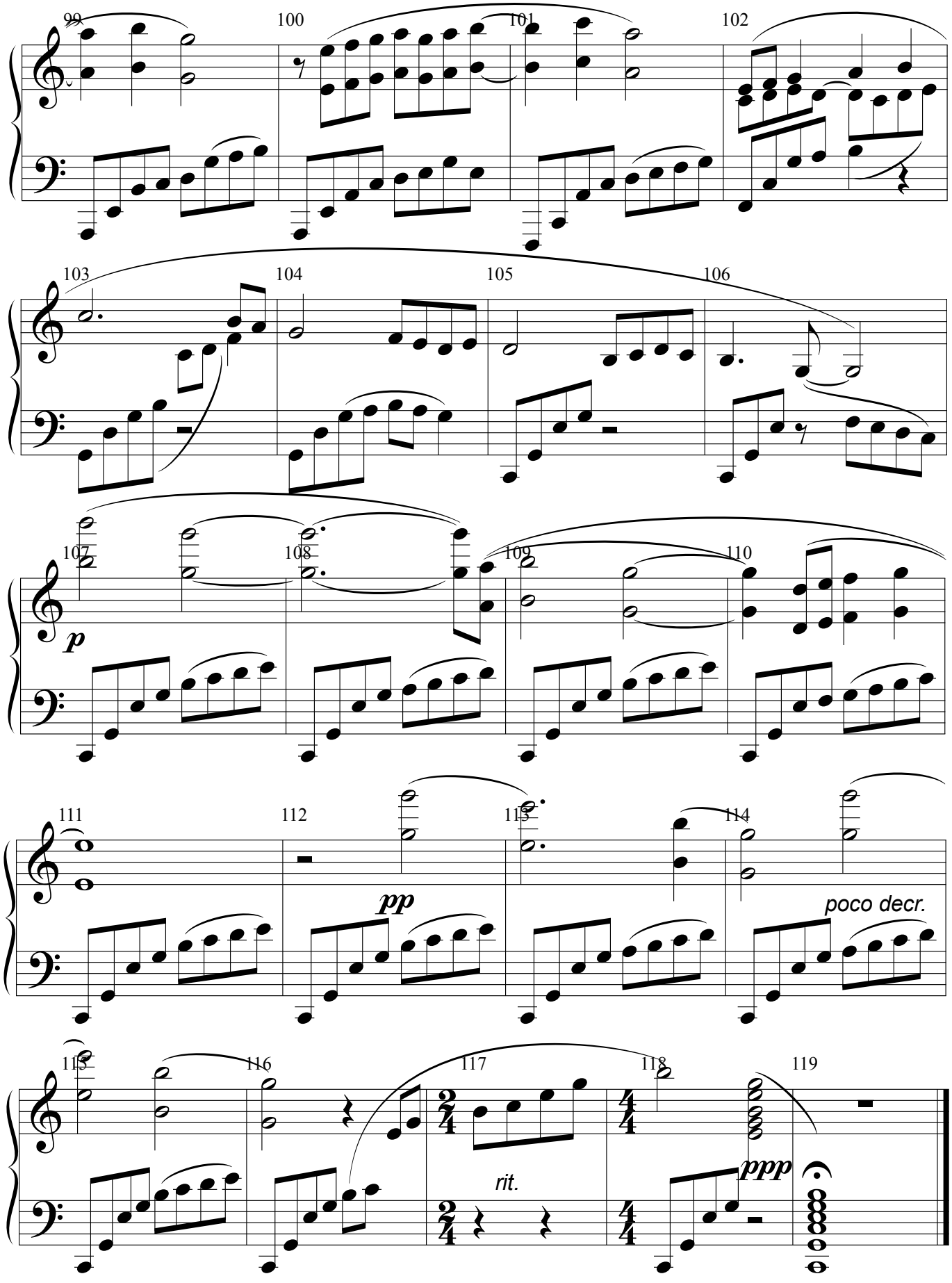

17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
tenderly
l.h.
25
26
27
28
pp
29
30
31
32
p


con
dolore
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
mf
l.h.
45
46
47
48
mp


49
50
51
52
mf
l.h.
l.h.
l.h.
l.h.
53
54
55
56
p
a tempo
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
cresc. poco a poco
mf
decr

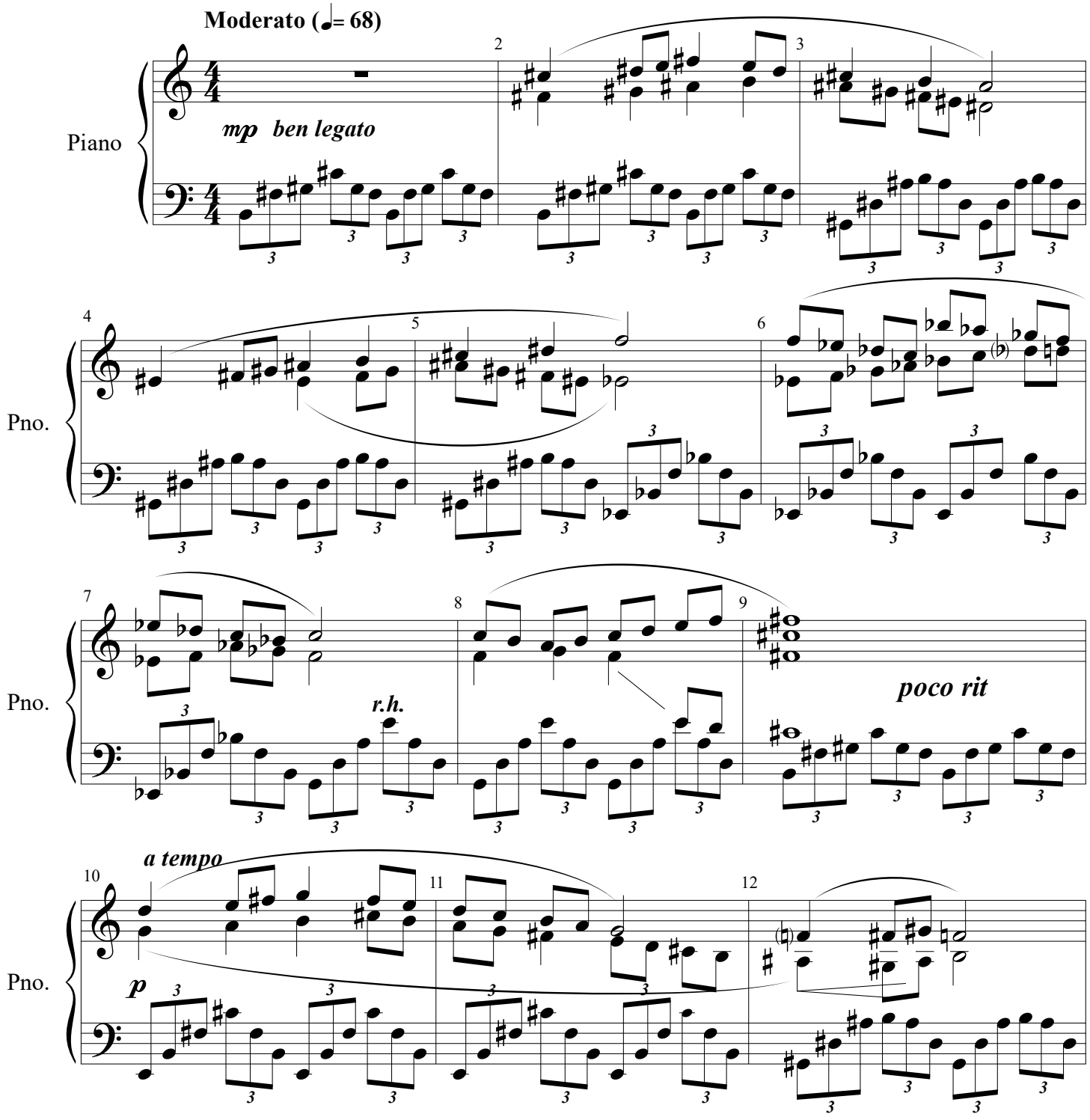

65
66
67
3
68
mp
rit.
a tempo
r.h.
p
69
70
71
72
r.h
p
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
mp


81
82
83
84
poco cresc.
decr.
85
86
87
88
mp
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
3
97
98
mp


99
100
101
102
103
104
105
106
107
108
109
110
p
111
112
113
114
pp
poco decr.
115
116
117
118
119
rit.
ppp

Impromptu

James D. Matthews, 1984



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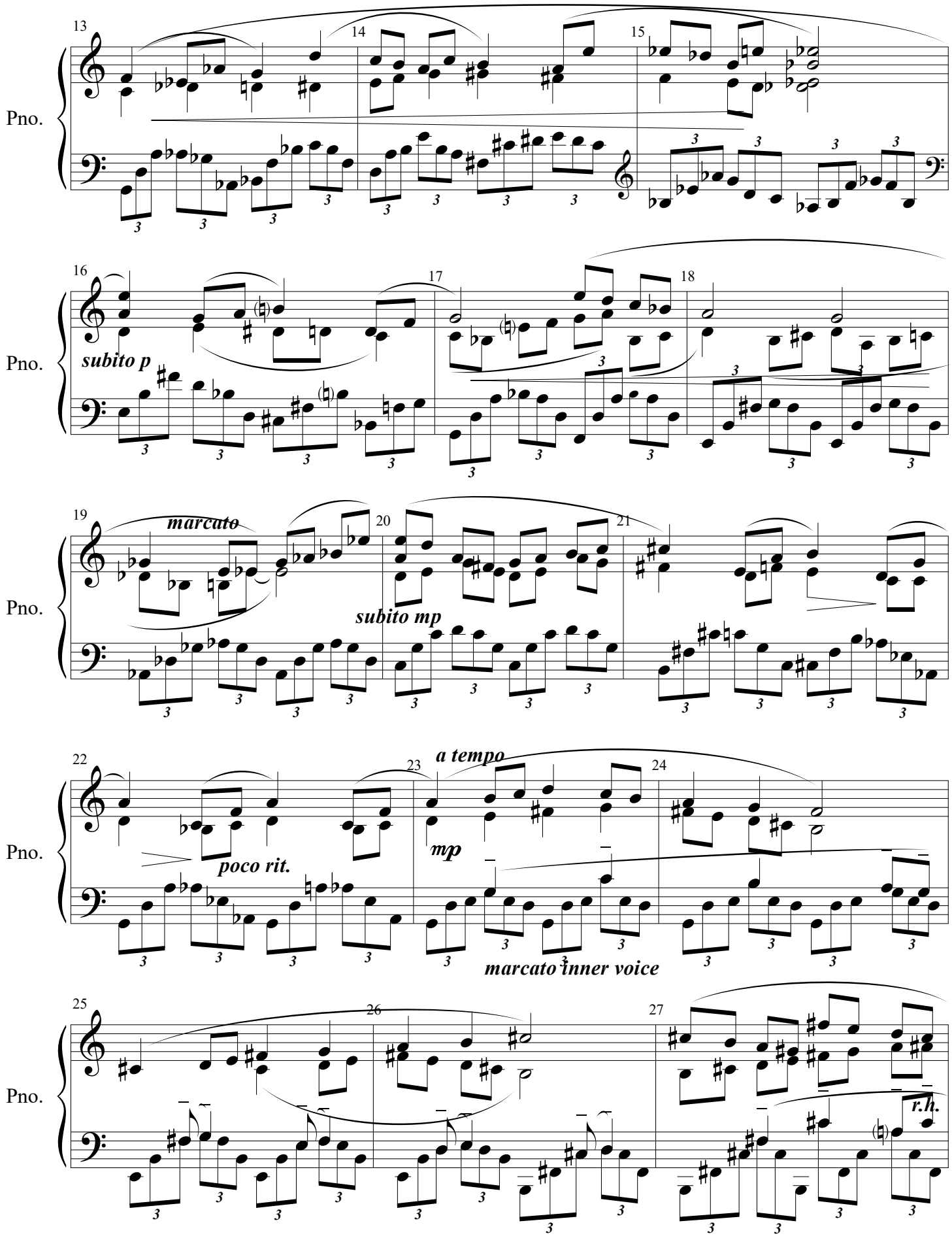
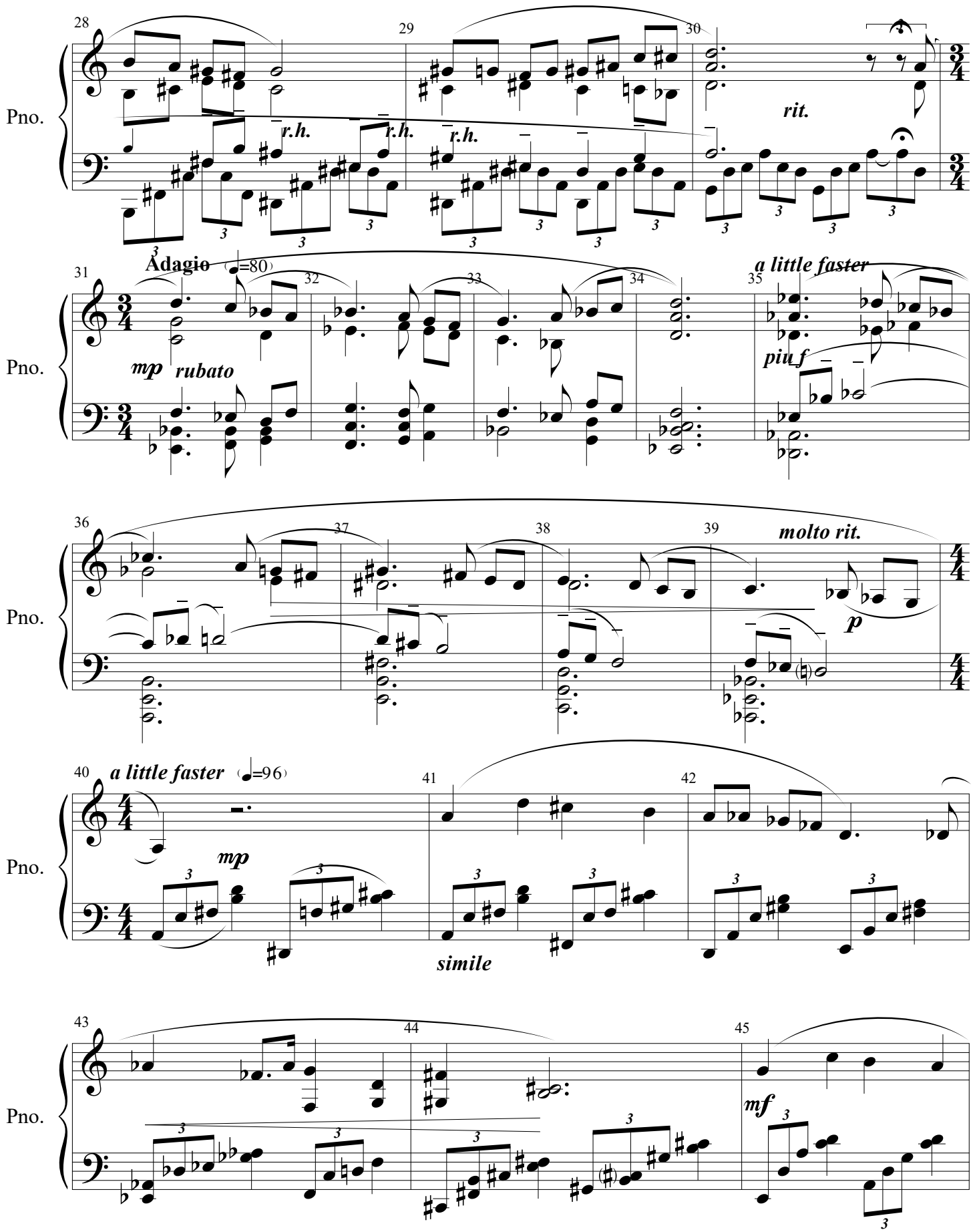
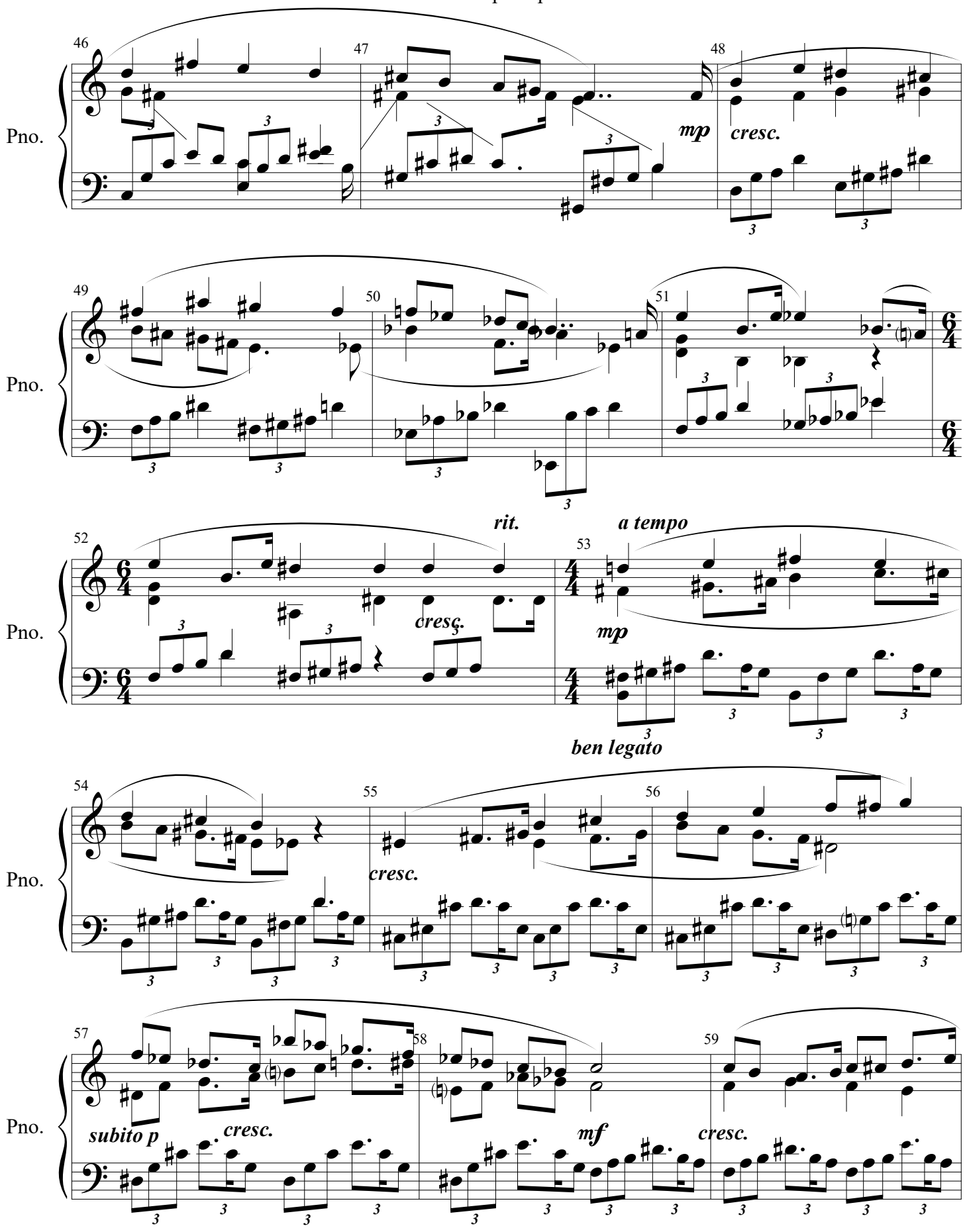
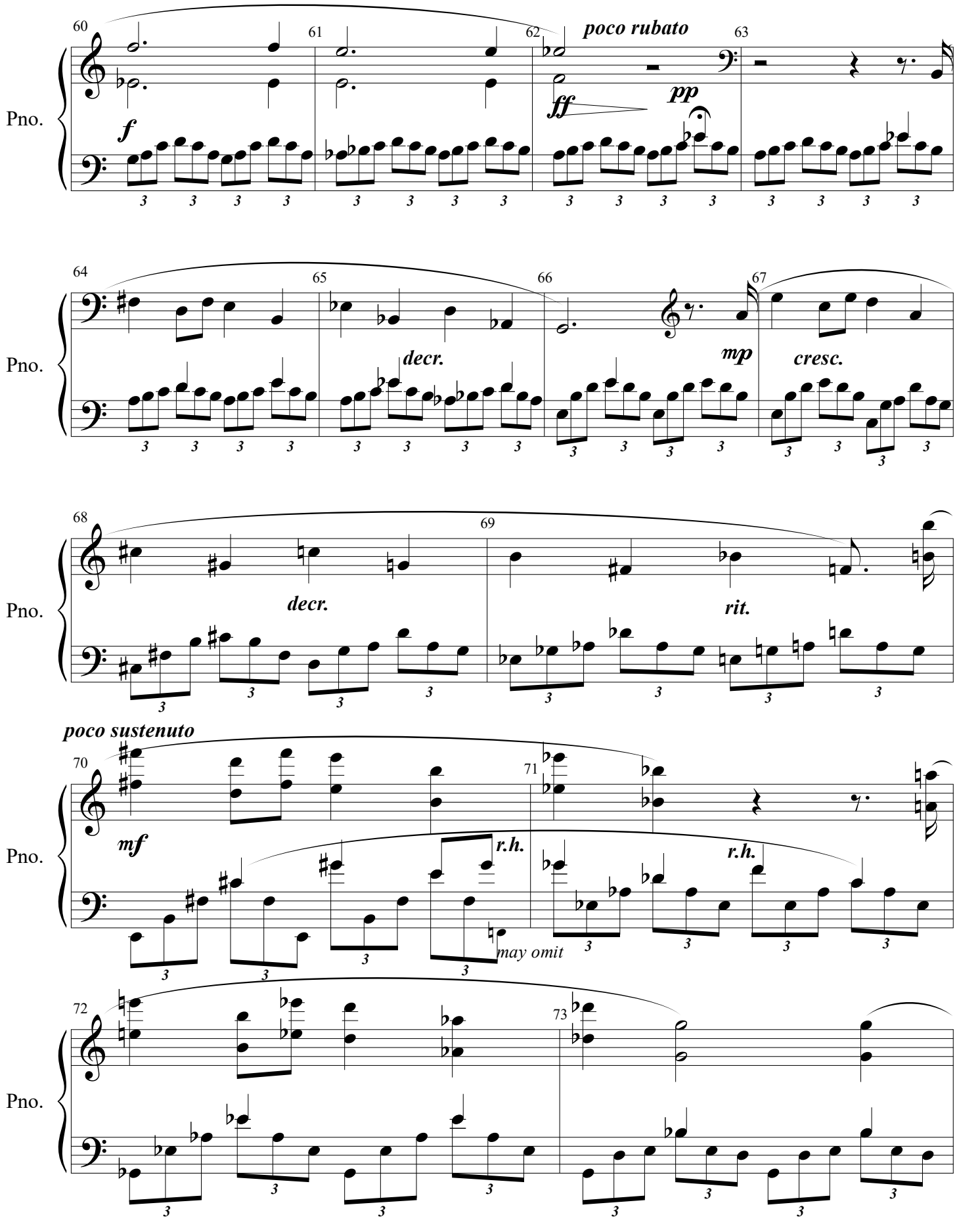
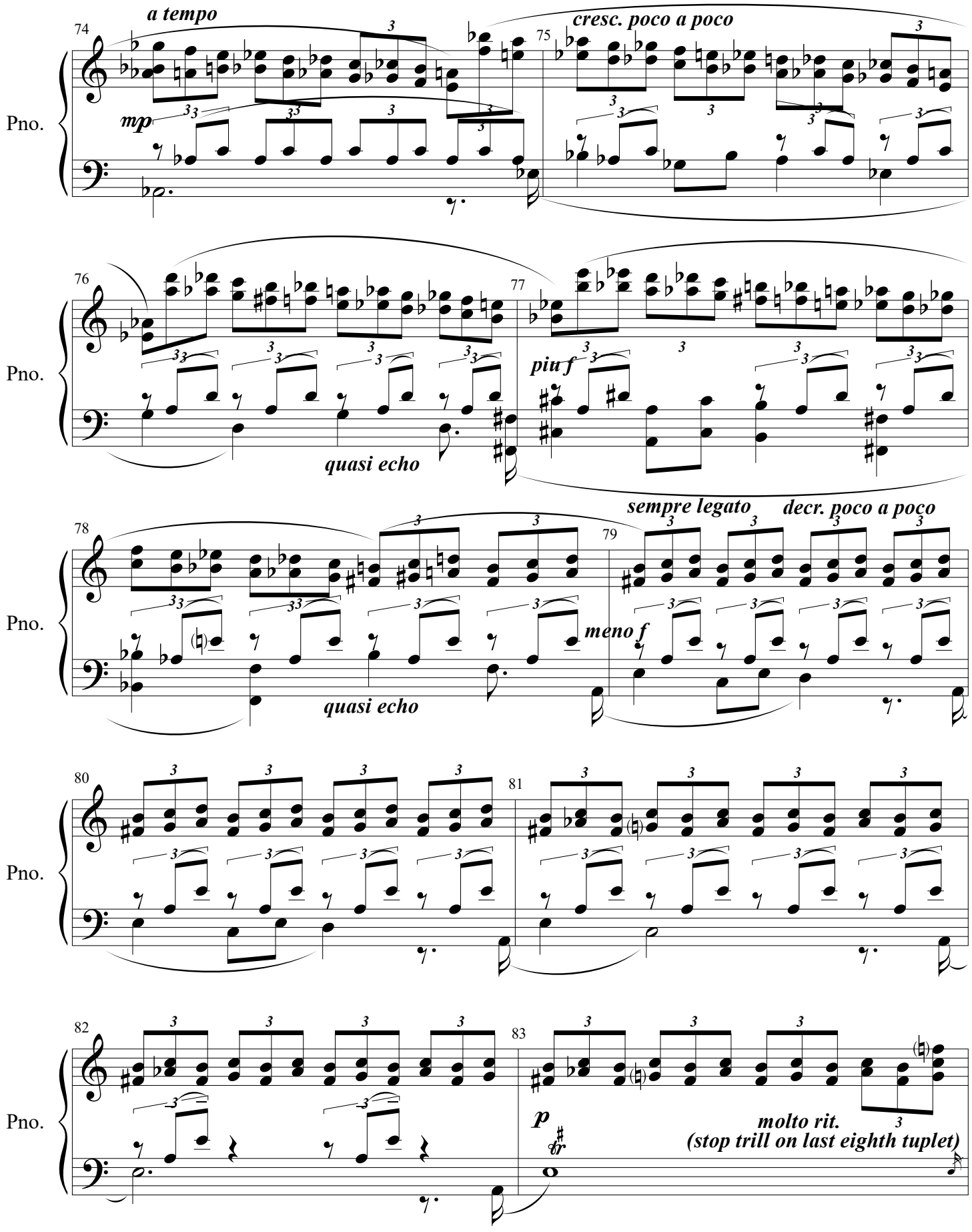
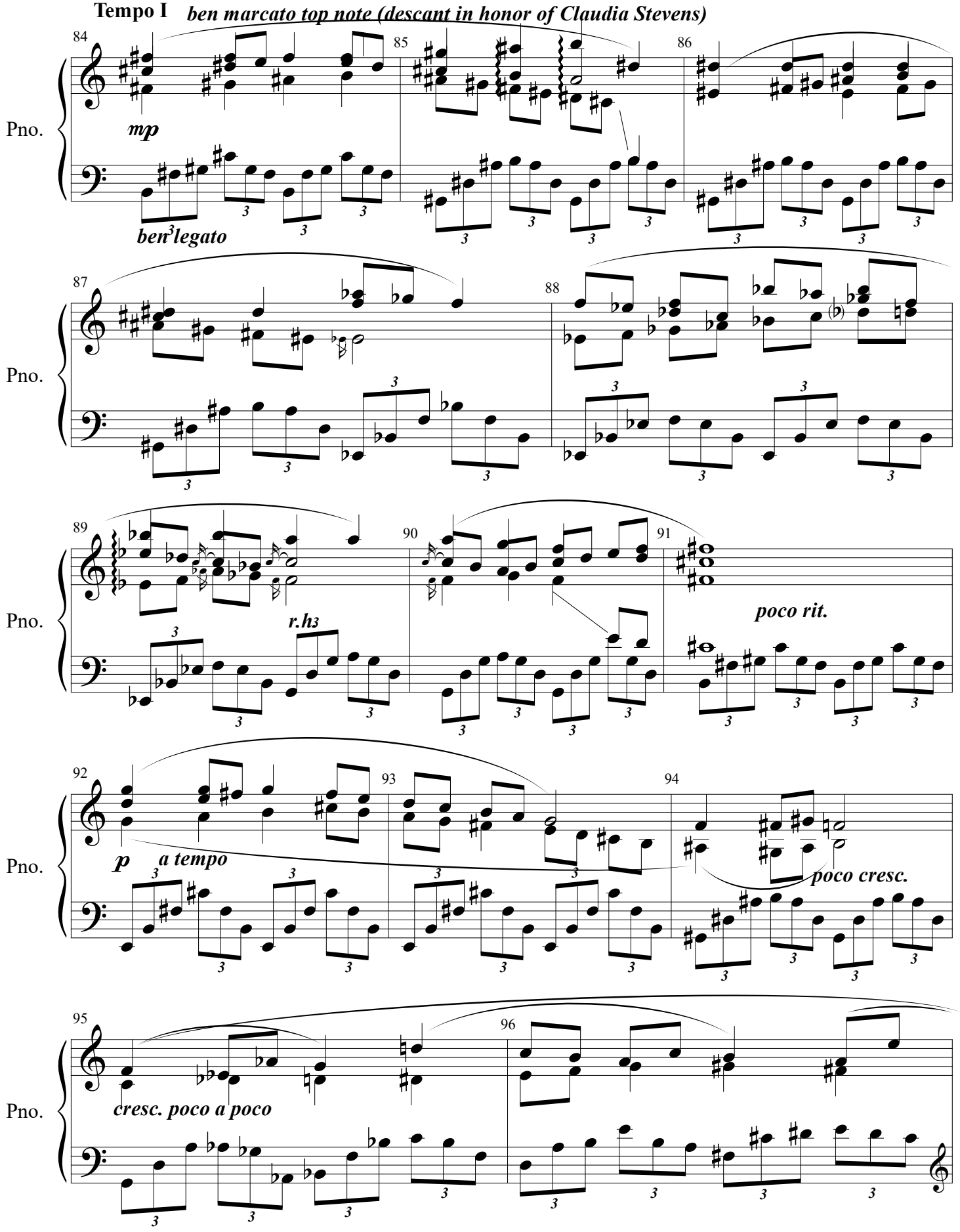

13
14
15
Pno.
16
17
18
Pno.
subito p
19
20
21
Pno.
marcato
subito mp
22
23
24
Pno.
poco rit.
a tempo
mp
marcato inner voice
25
26
27
Pno.
r.h.

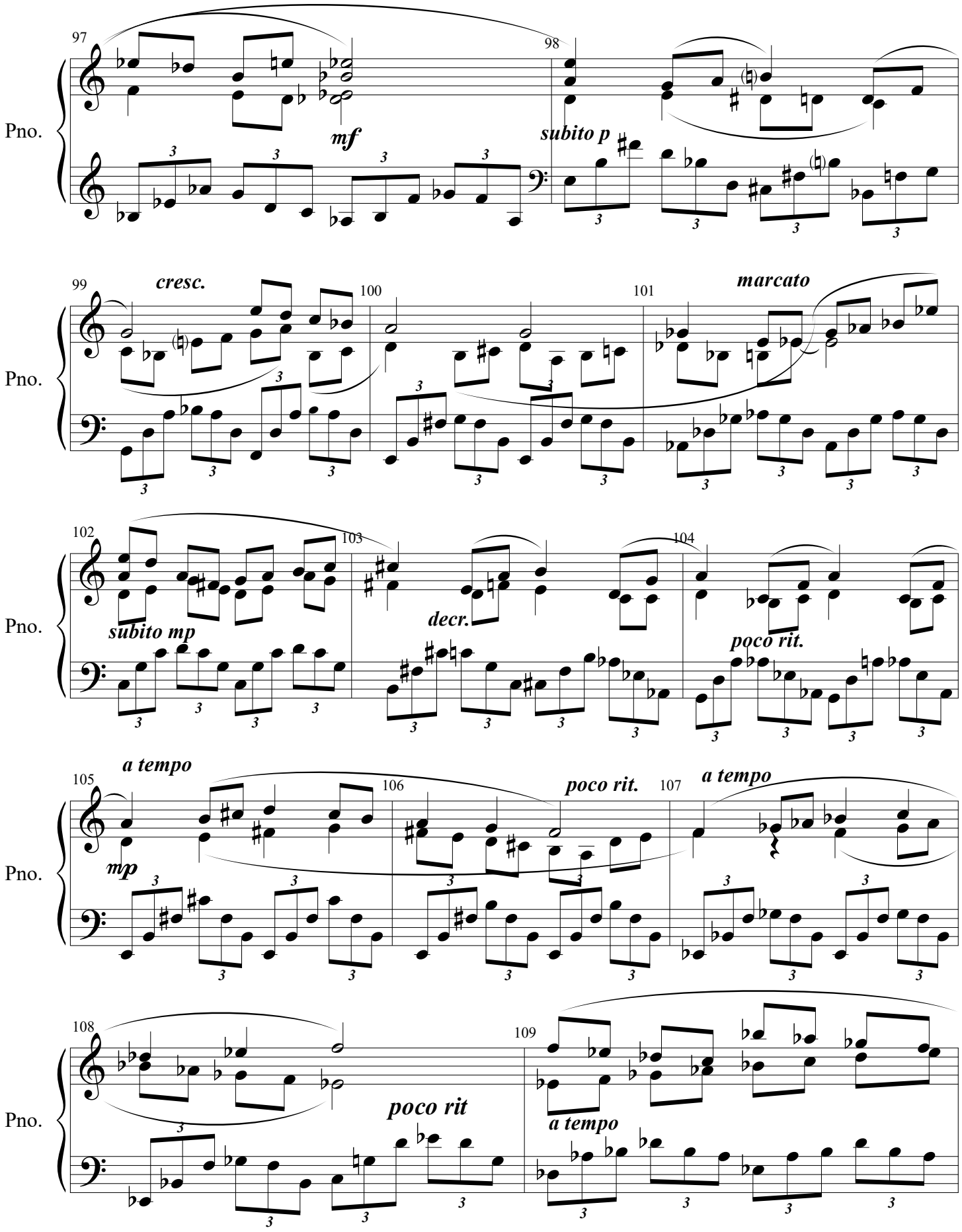

28
29
30
Pno.
r.h.
r.h.
r.h.
rit.
Adagio ♩=80
31
32
33
34
35
a little faster
mp rubato
piu f
36
37
38
39
molto rit.
p
40
a little faster ♩=96
41
42
mp
simile
43
44
45
mf

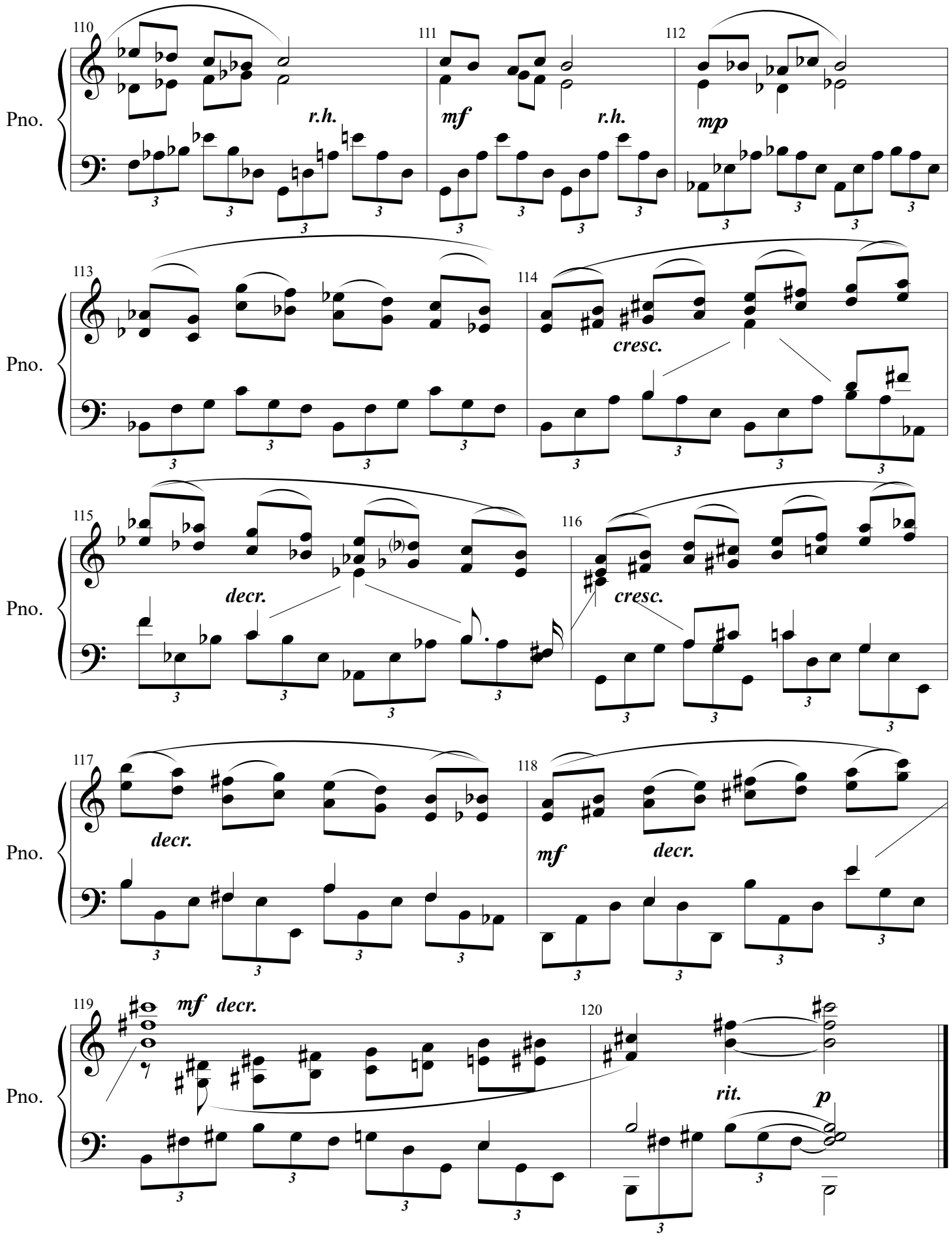

46
47
48
Pno.
mp
cresc.
49
50
51
Pno.
rit.
a tempo
52
53
Pno.
cresc.
mp
ben legato
54
55
56
Pno.
cresc.
57
58
59
Pno.
subito p
cresc.
mf
cresc.


60
61
62
poco rubato
63
Pno.
f
ff
pp
64
65
66
67
Pno.
decr.
mp
cresc.
68
69
Pno.
decr.
rit.
poco sustenuto
70
71
Pno.
mf
r.h.
r.h.
may omit
72
73
Pno.


74
a tempo
mp
75
cresc. poco a poco
Pno.
76
quasi echo
77
più f
Pno.
78
quasi echo
79
sempre legato
decr. poco a poco
meno f
Pno.
80
81
Pno.
82
83
p
molto rit.
(stop trill on last eighth tuplet)
Pno.


Tempo I
ben marcato top note (descant in honor of Claudia Stevens)
84
85
86
Pno.
mp
ben legato
87
88
Pno.
89
90
91
Pno.
r.h.
poco rit.
92
93
94
Pno.
p
a tempo
poco cresc.
95
96
Pno.
cresc. poco a poco


97
98
Pno.
mf
subito p
99
cresc.
100
101
marcato
Pno.
102
103
104
Pno.
subito mp
decr.
poco rit.
105
a tempo
106
poco rit.
107
a tempo
Pno.
mp
108
109
Pno.
poco rit
a tempo

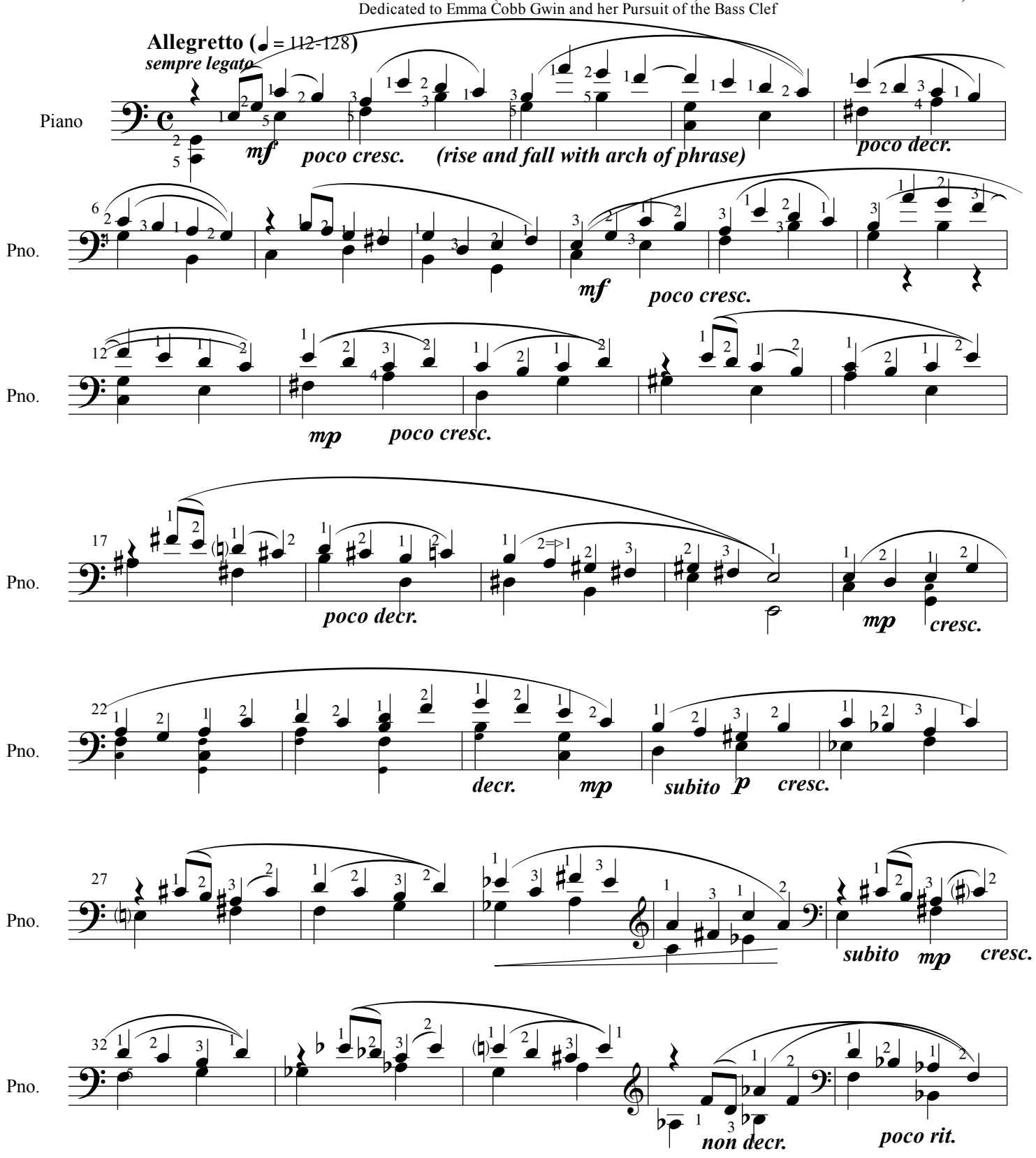

110
111
112
Pno.
r.h.
mf
r.h.
mp
113
114
Pno.
cresc.
115
116
Pno.
decr.
cresc.
117
118
Pno.
decr.
mf
decr.
119
120
Pno.
mf decr.
rit.
p

Three Studies
1. Finger Twister

For left hand alone (suggested fingering for LH),
or both hands (small notes for two hands)

James Matthews, 2006

Dedicated to Emma Cobb Gwin and her Pursuit of the Bass Clef



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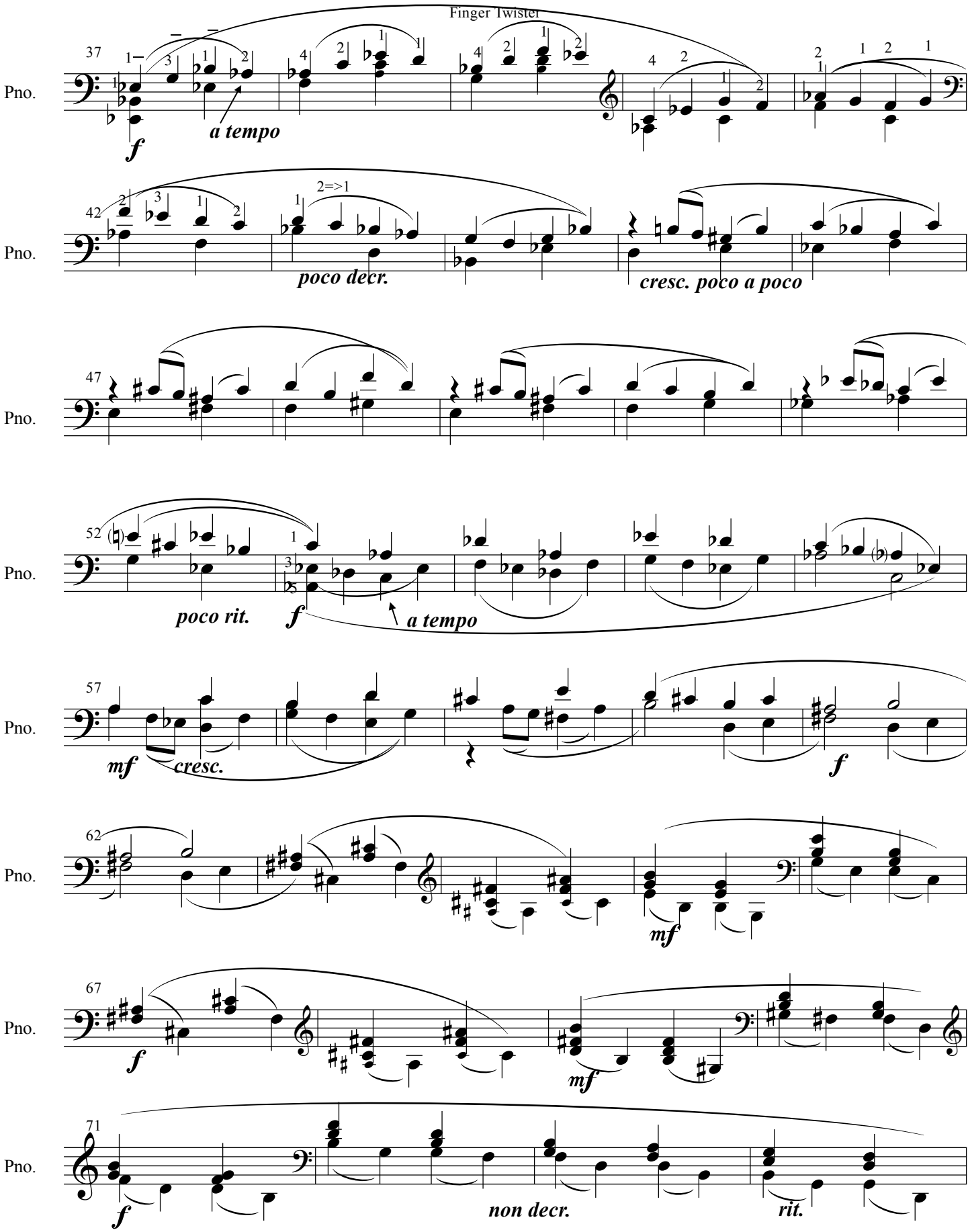
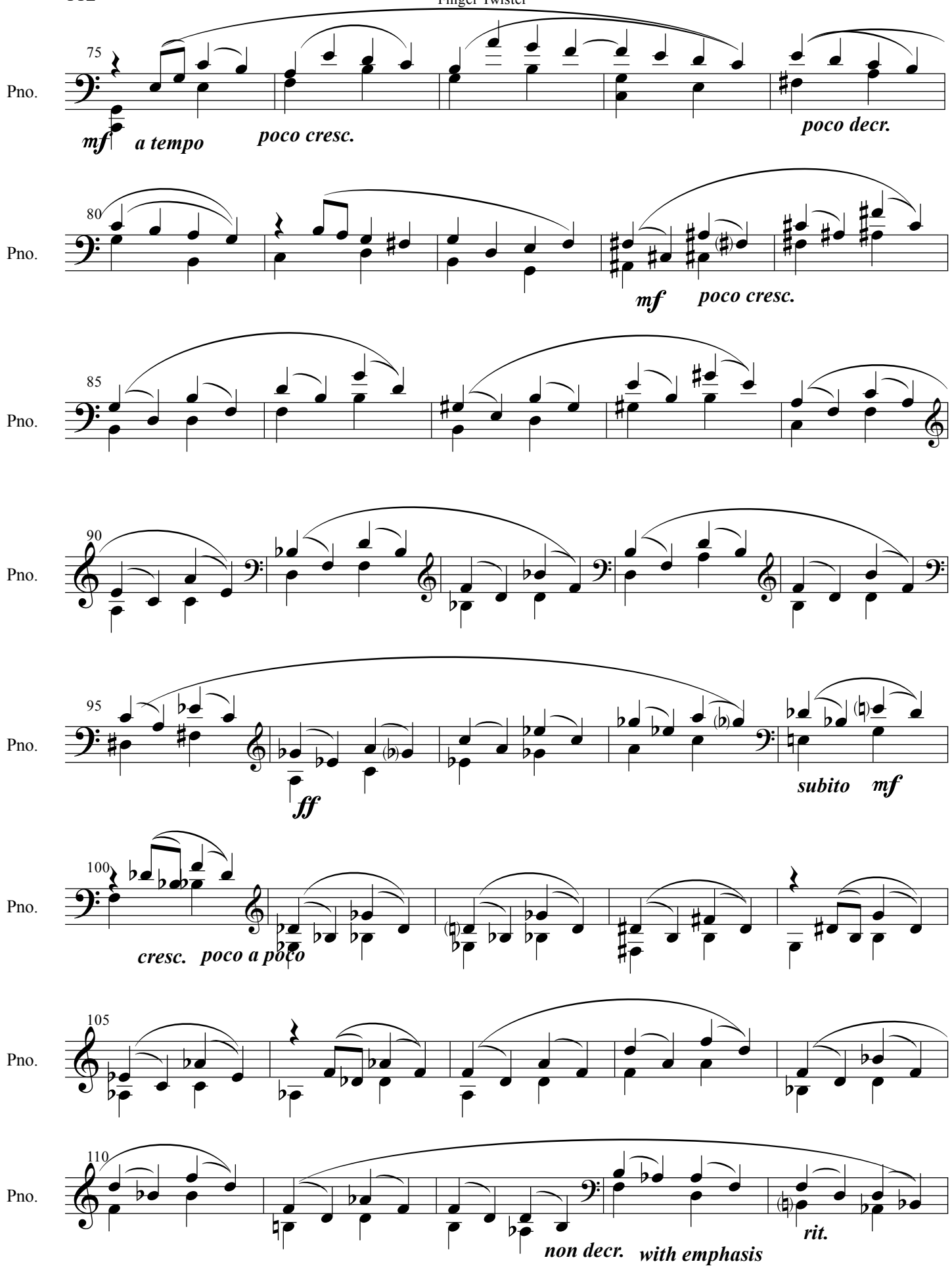
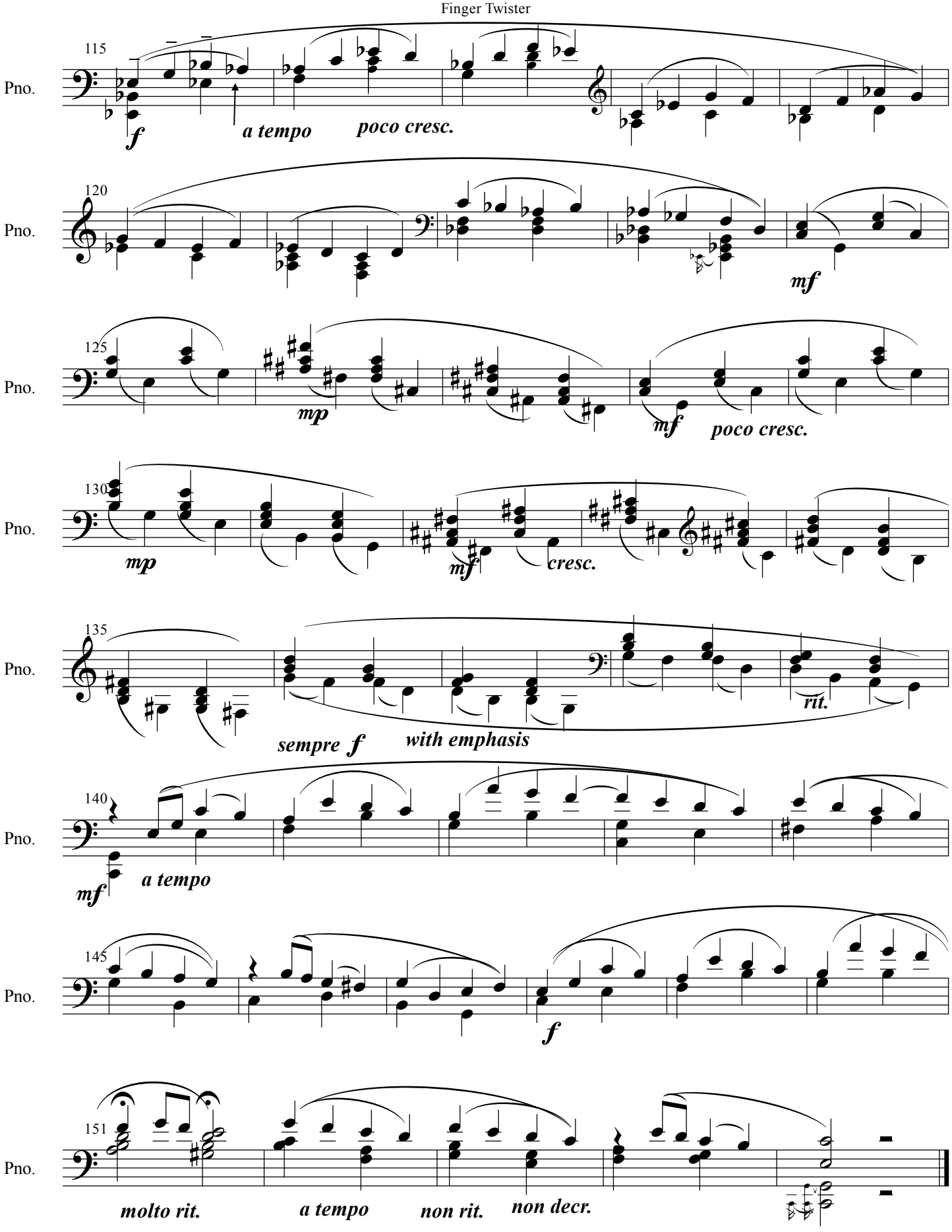

Finger Twister
37
Pno.
f
a tempo
42
Pno.
poco decr.
cresc. poco a poco
47
Pno.
52
Pno.
poco rit.
f
a tempo
57
Pno.
mf
cresc.
f
62
Pno.
mf
67
Pno.
f
mf
71
Pno.
f
non decr.
rit.

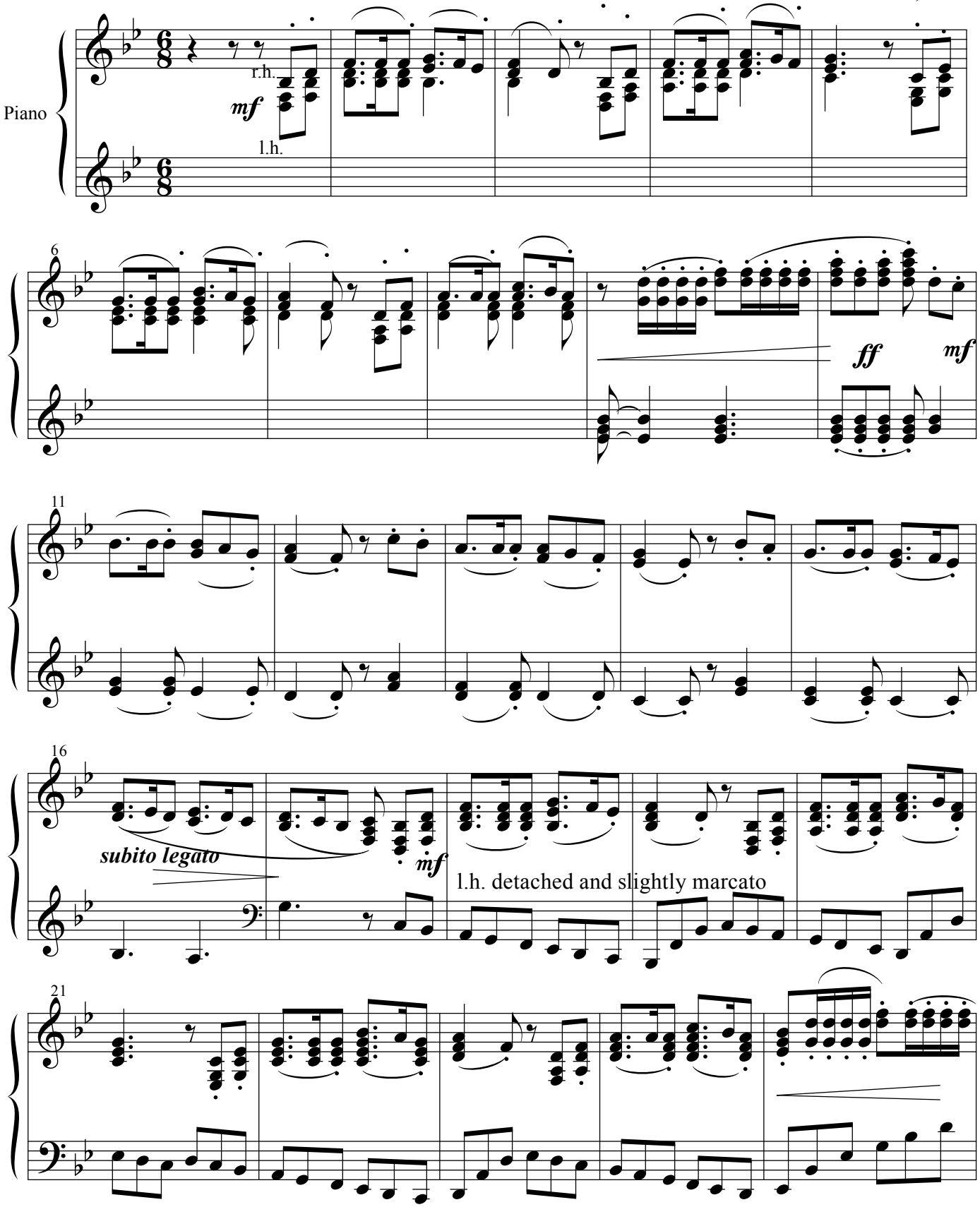

75
Pno.
mf
a tempo
poco cresc.
poco decr.
80
Pno.
mf
poco cresc.
85
Pno.
90
Pno.
95
Pno.
ff
subito
mf
100
Pno.
cresc.
poco a poco
105
Pno.
110
Pno.
non decr.
with emphasis
rit.


115
Pno.
f
a tempo
poco cresc.
120
Pno.
mf
125
Pno.
mp
mf
poco cresc.
130
Pno.
mp
mf
cresc.
135
Pno.
sempre f
with emphasis
rit.
140
Pno.
mf
a tempo
145
Pno.
f
151
Pno.
molto rit.
a tempo
non rit.
non decr.

2. Fanfare

Allegro (♪ = 176)

James D. Matthews, 2006



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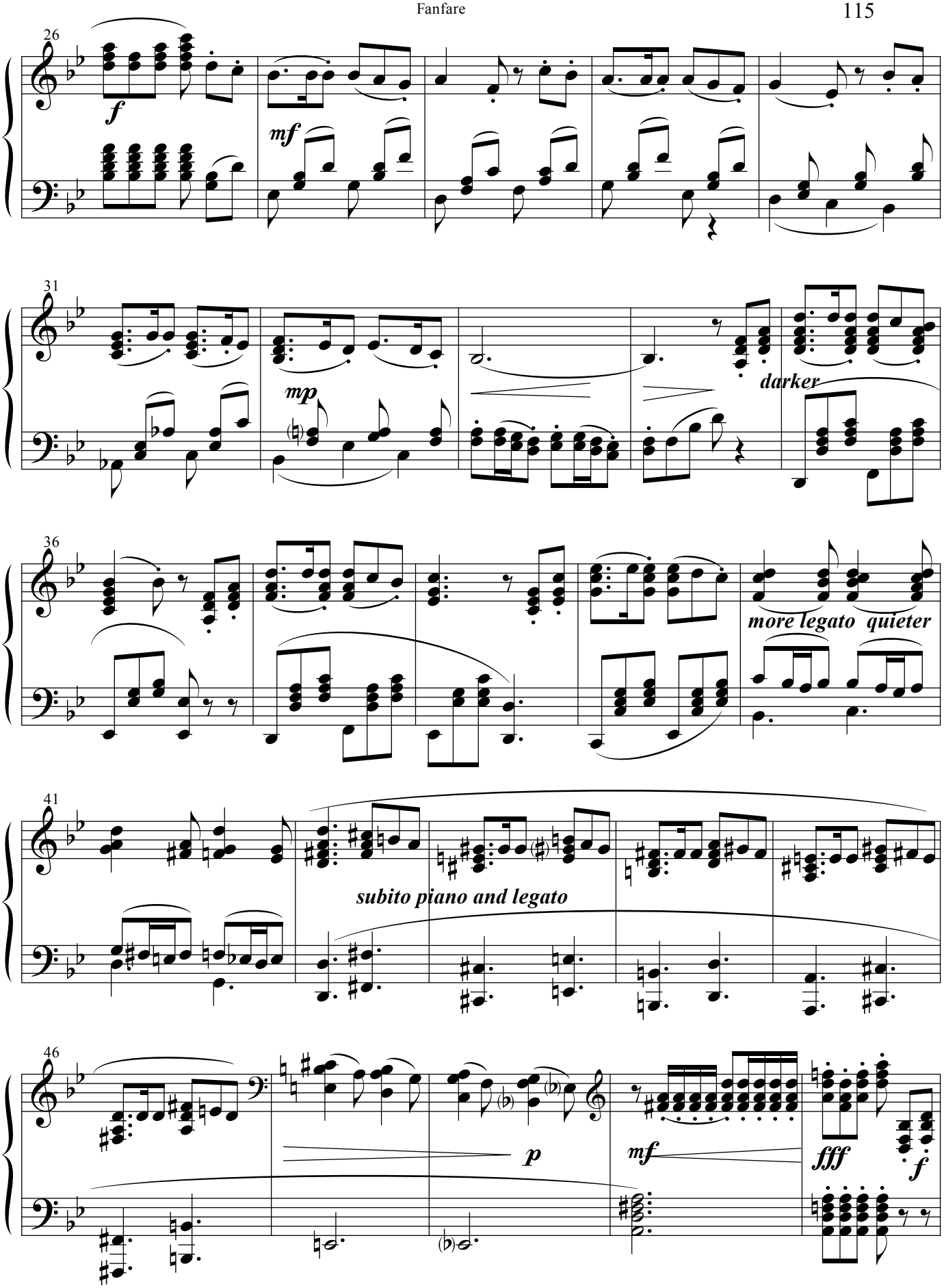
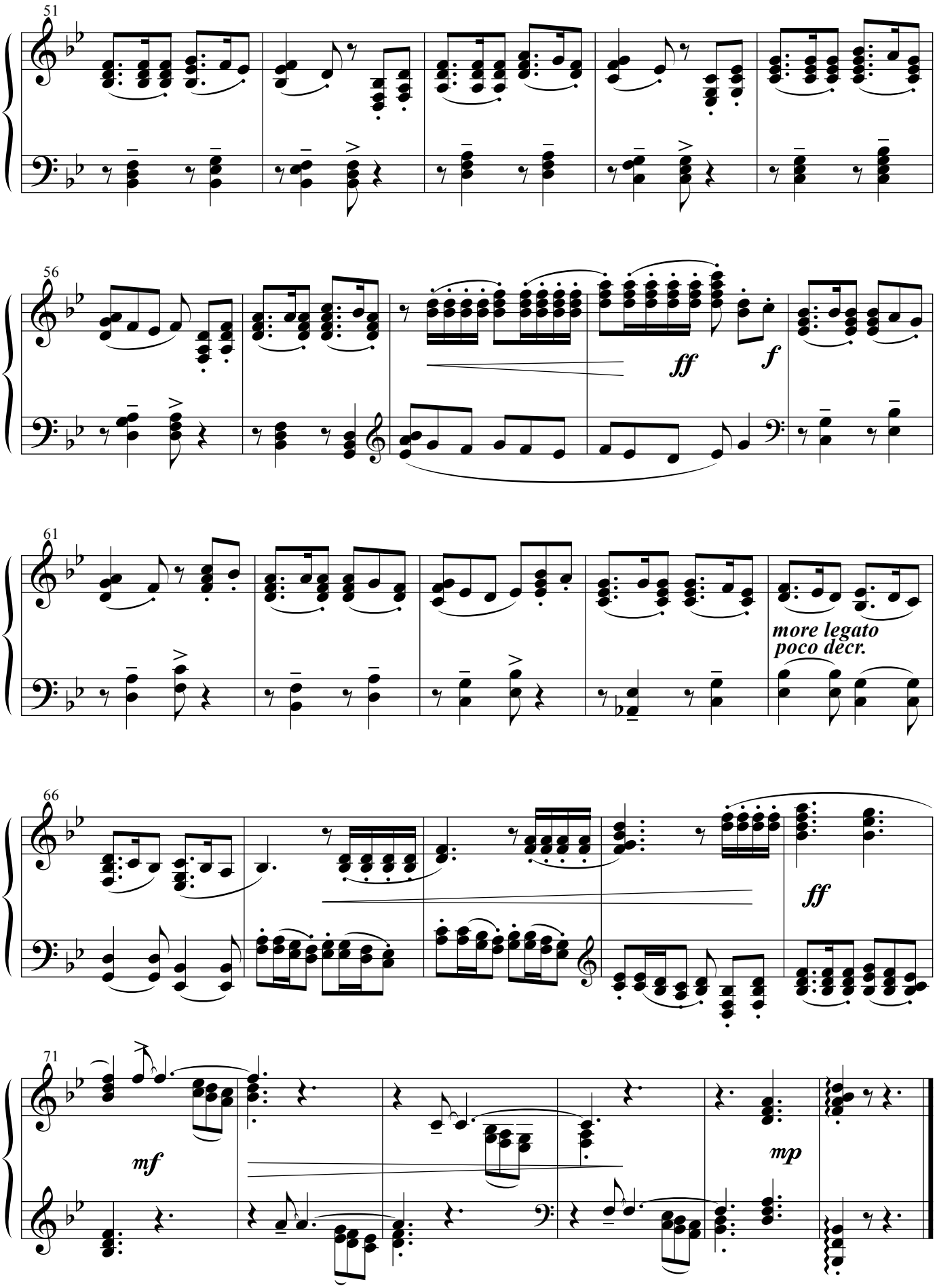
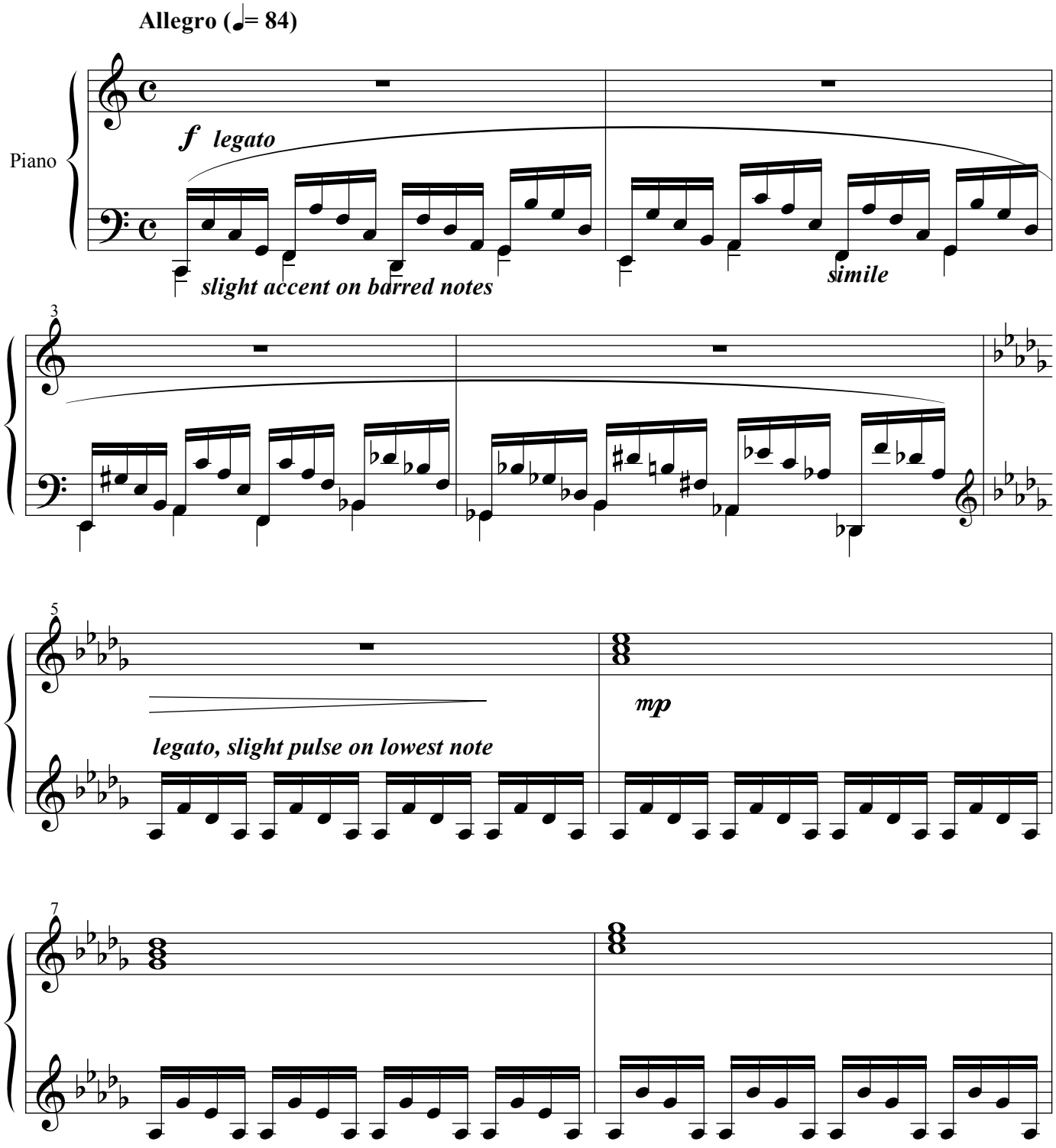

26
f
mf
31
mp
darker
36
more legato quieter
41
subito piano and legato
46
p
mf
fff
f


51
56
ff
f
61
more legato
poco decr.
66
ff
71
mf
mp

Notes

3. Just Playin'

James D. Matthews, 2005



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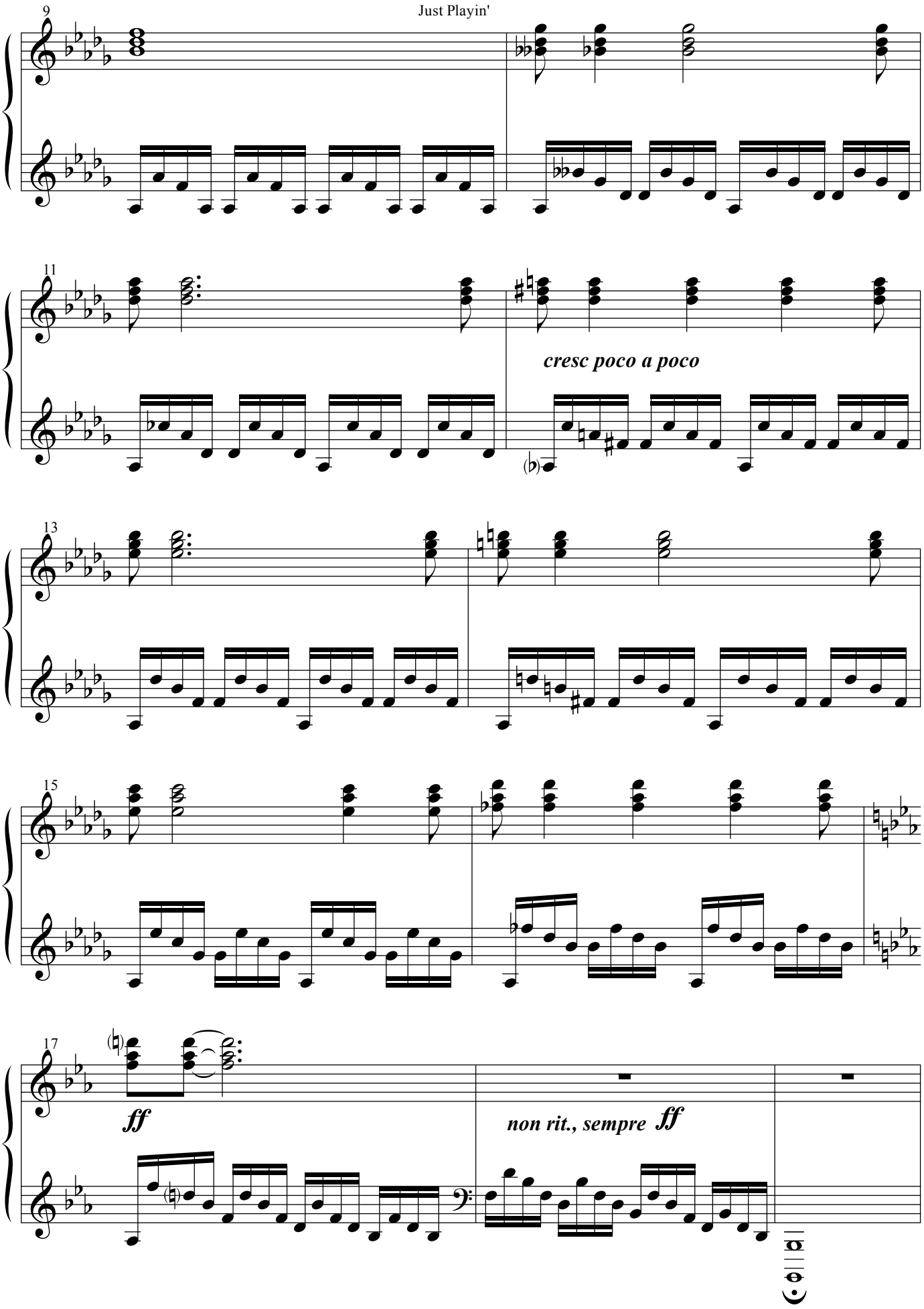
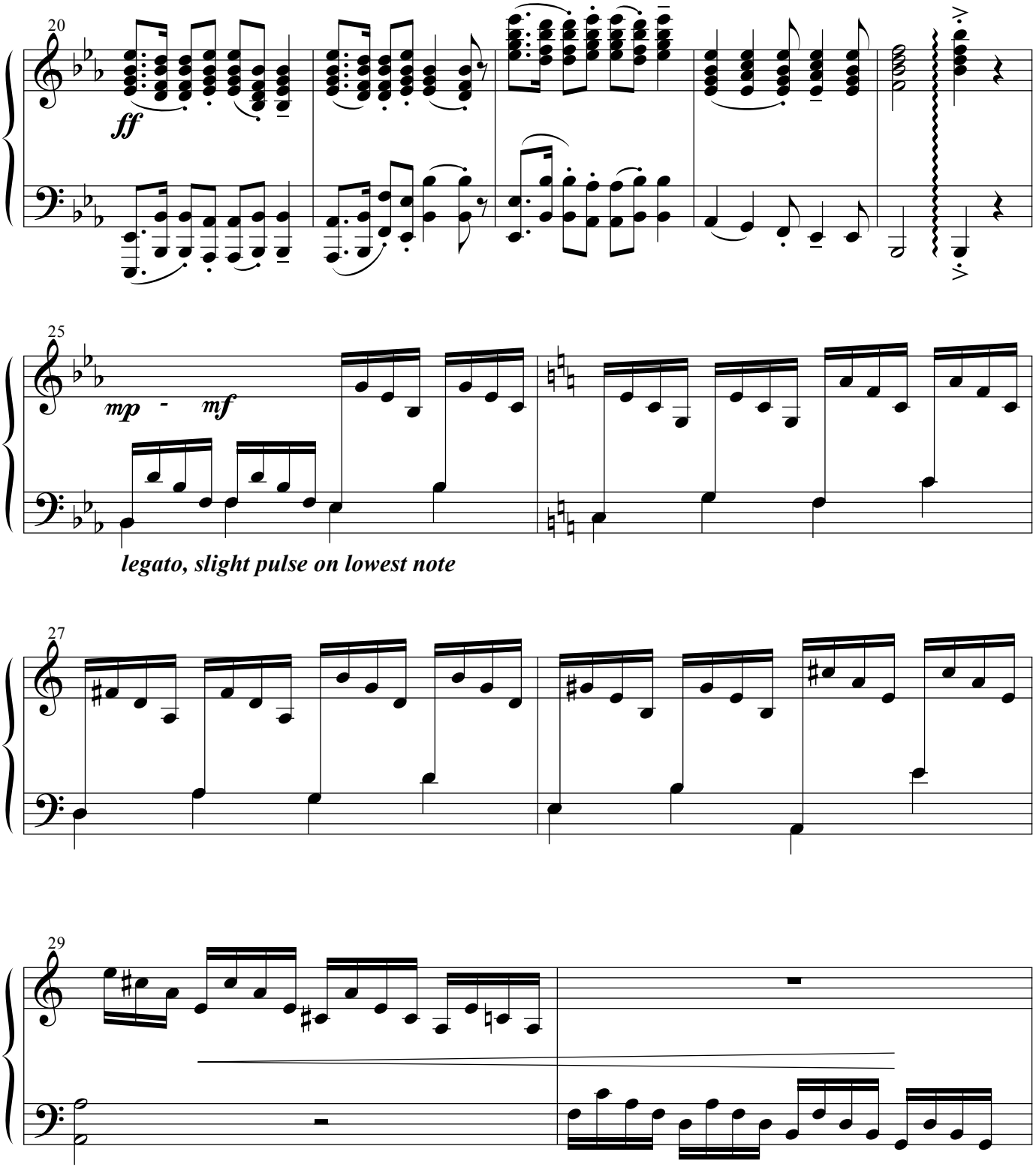
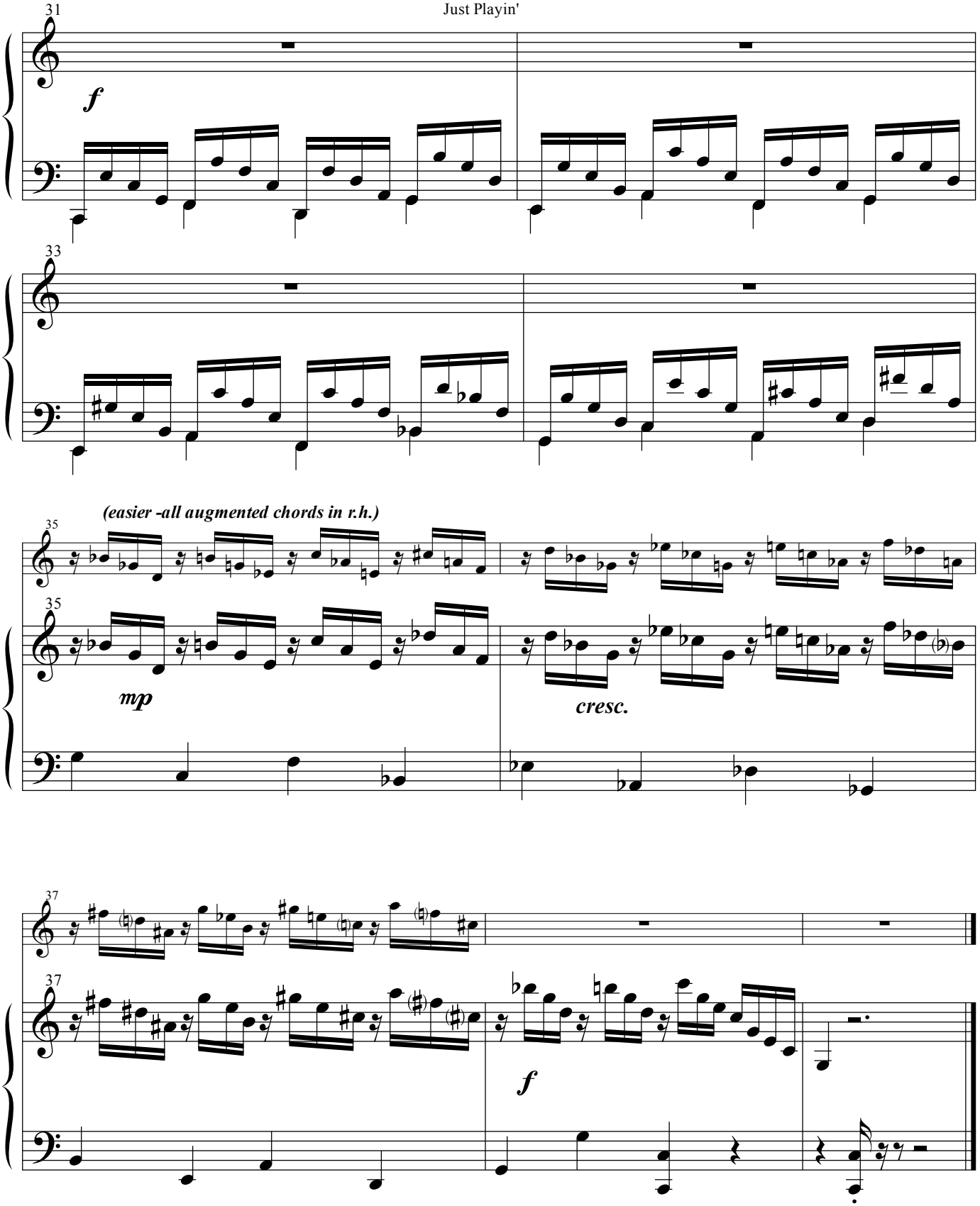

9
11
cresc poco a poco
13
15
17
ff
non rit., sempre ff


20
ff
25
mp - mf
legato, slight pulse on lowest note
27
29


31
f
33
(easier -all augmented chords in r.h.)
35
35
mp
cresc.
37
37
f

Three Preludes for Coloratura Piano
No. 1 Bewitchment

James D. Matthews
1997

Play running 32nds as fast as possible regardless of subdivision

Presto (♪=160-168) ***relentlessly driving***

mf

pedal heavily to create wash of sound, but always with melody clearly heard and slightly stressed

2

L.H

4

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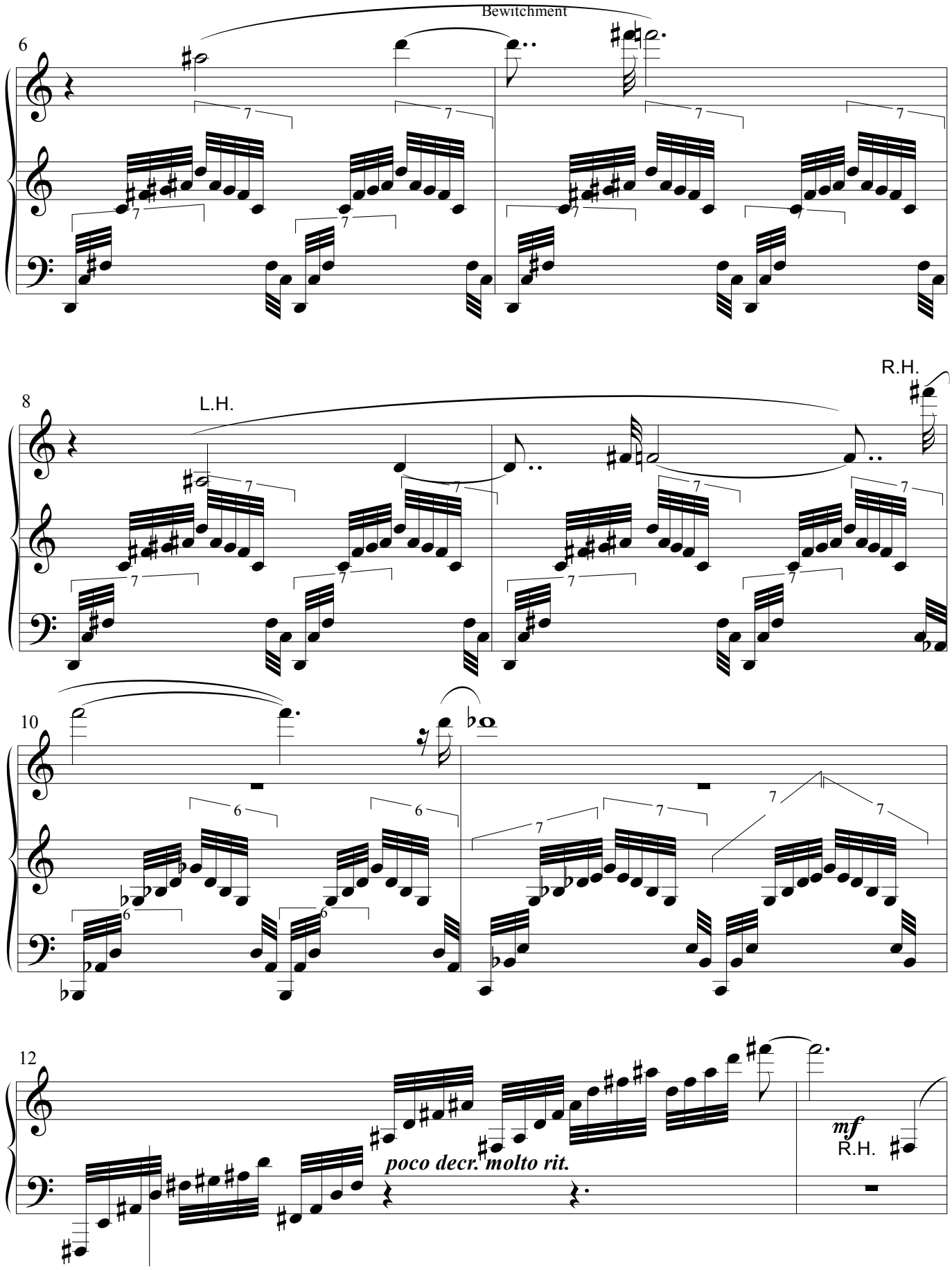
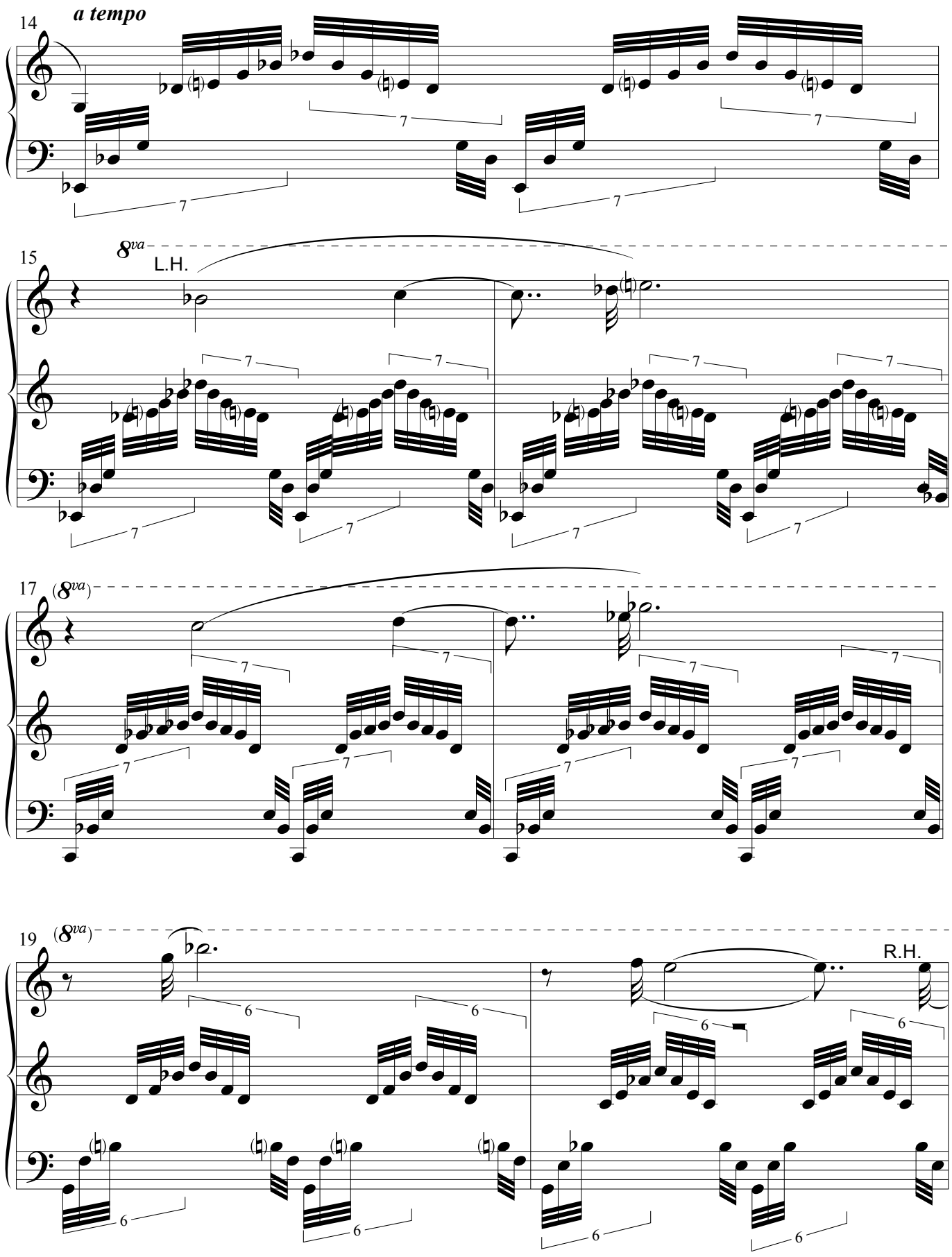
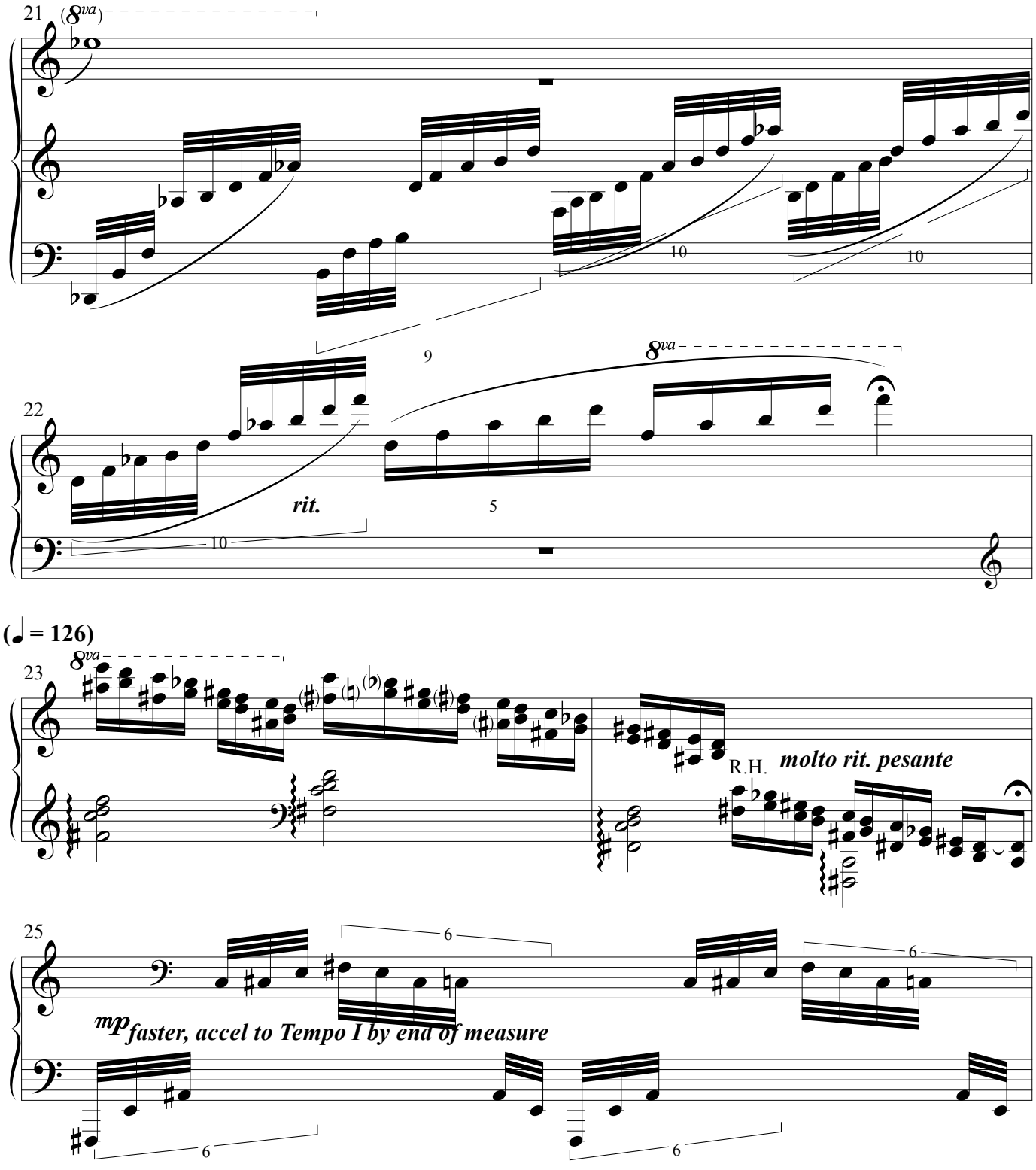
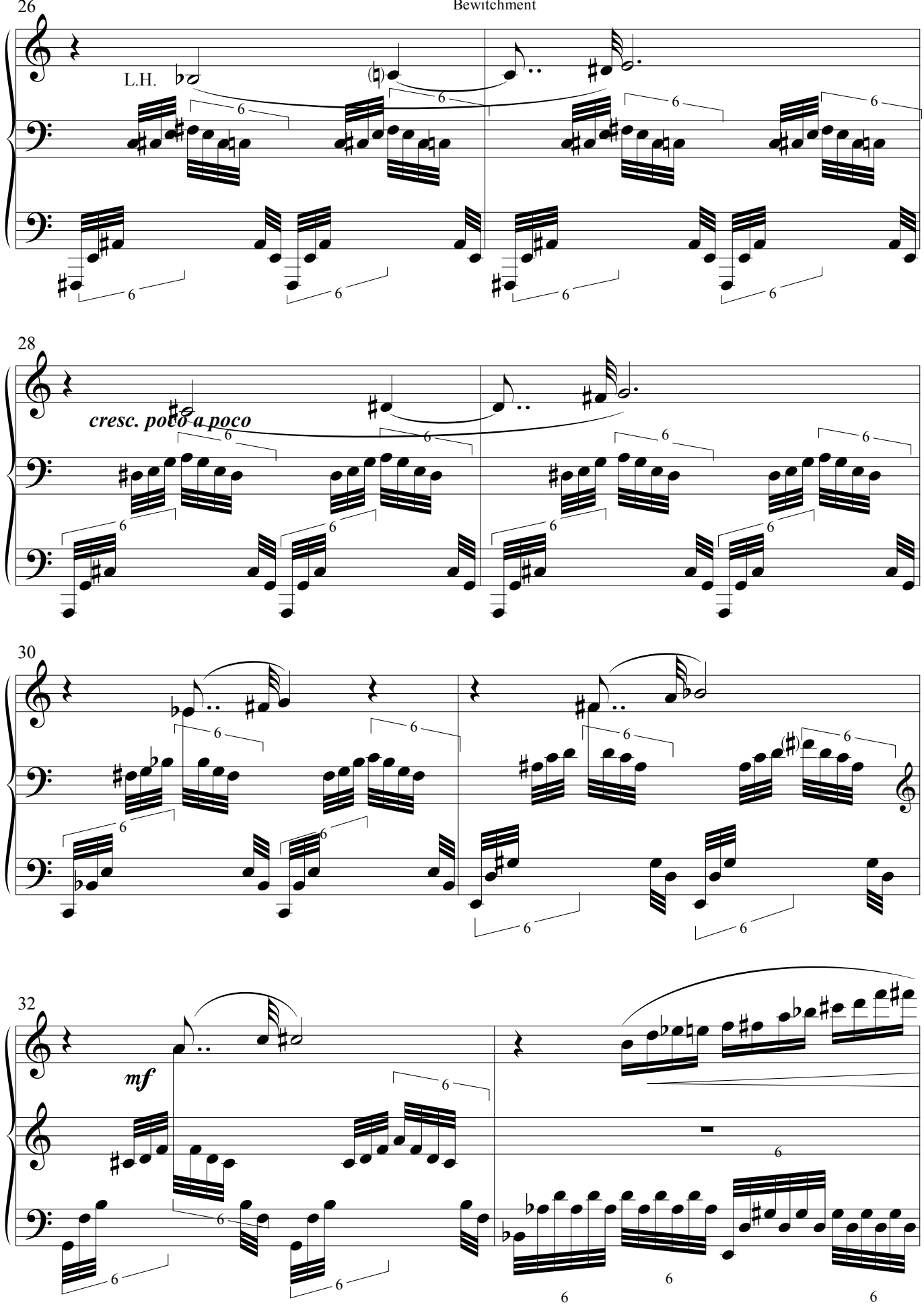
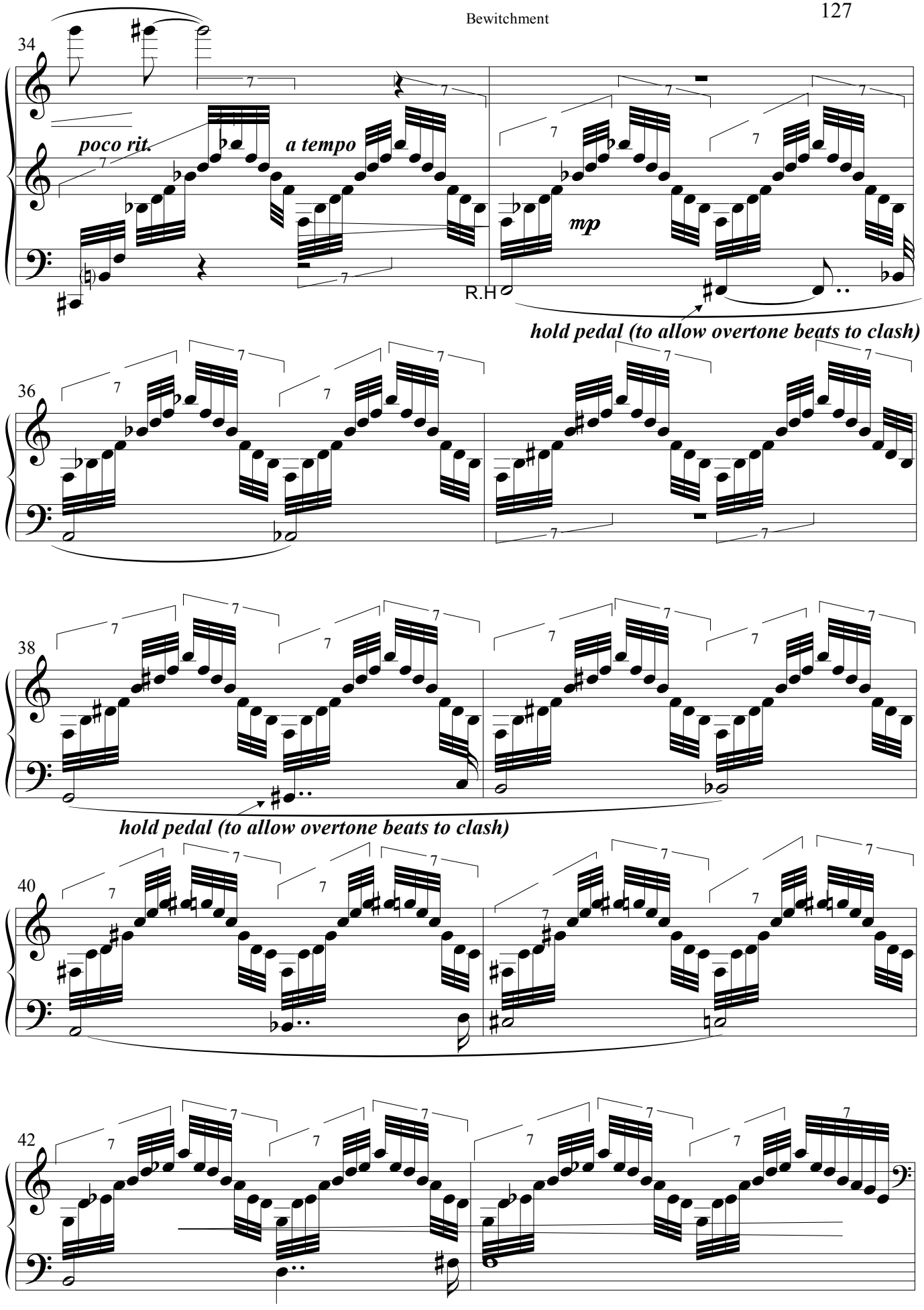
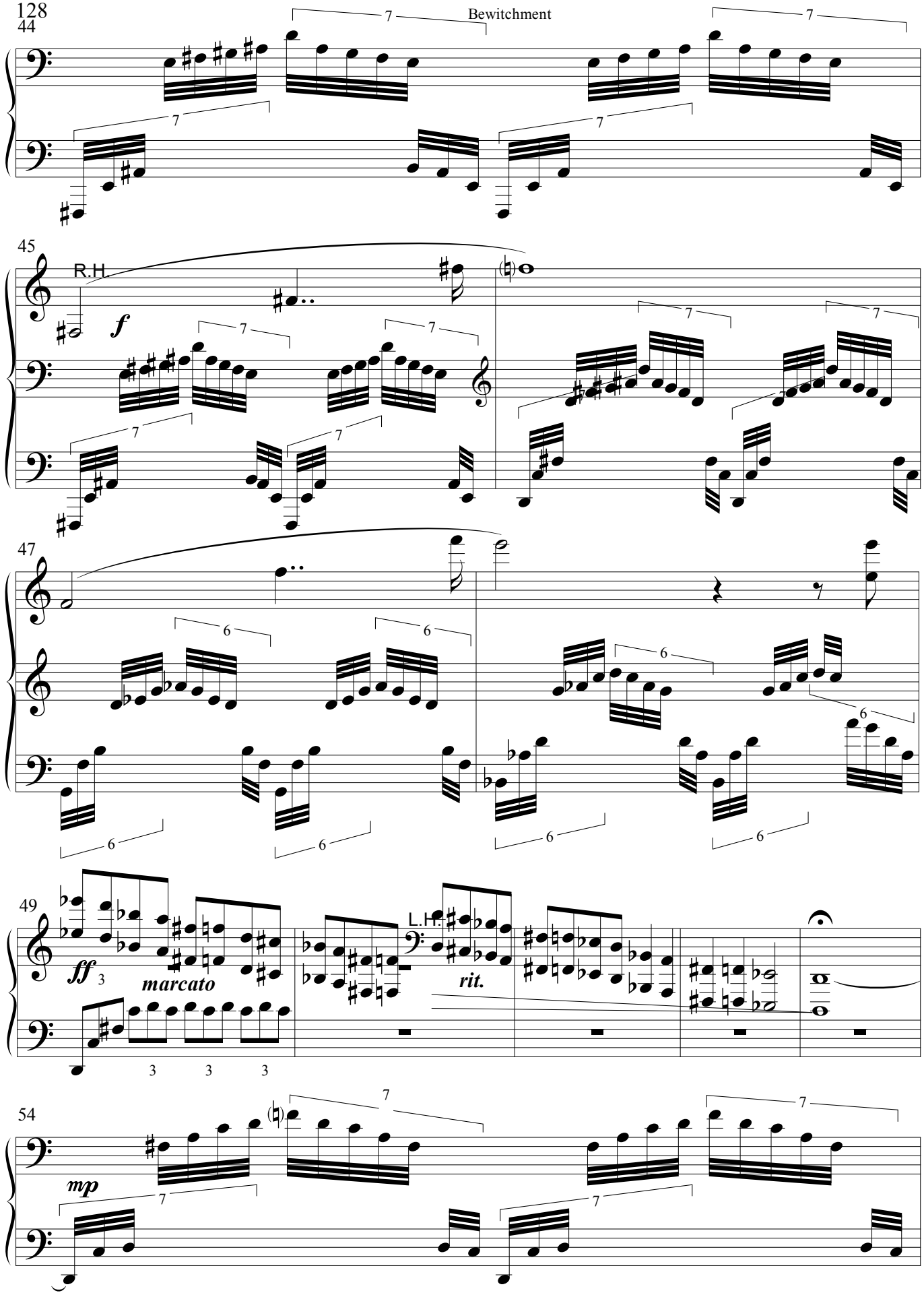

Bewitchment
6
8
L.H.
R.H.
10
12
poco decr. molto rit.
mf
R.H.

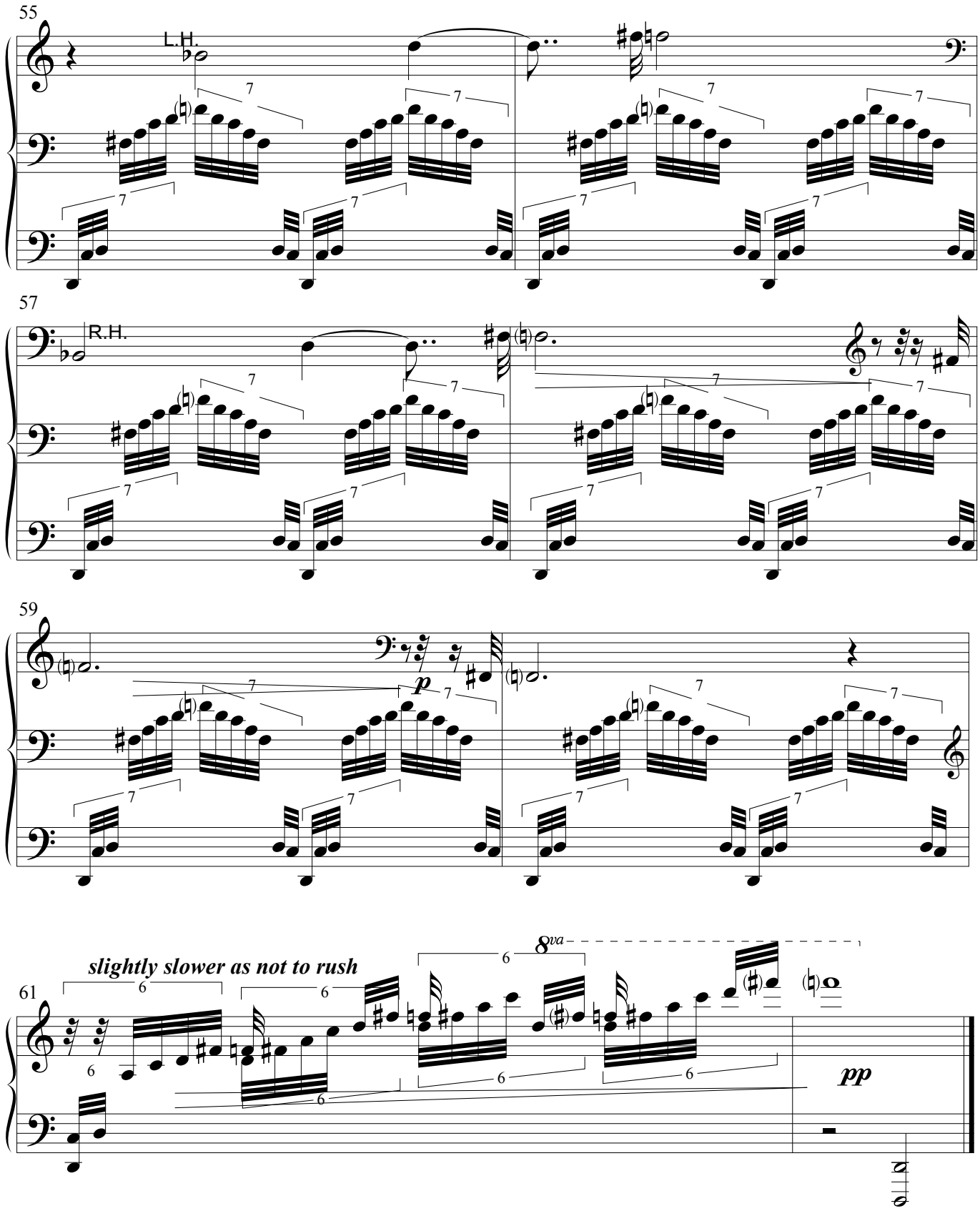

14
a tempo
15
8va
L.H.
17
(8va)
19
(8va)
R.H.


21
(8va)
10
10
9
22
8va
rit.
5
10
(♩ = 126)
23
8va
R.H.
molto rit. pesante
25
6
6
mp faster, accel to Tempo I by end of measure
6
6


26
L.H.
28
cresc. poco a poco
30
32
mf


34
poco rit.
a tempo
mp
R.H
hold pedal (to allow overtone beats to clash)
36
38
hold pedal (to allow overtone beats to clash)
40
42

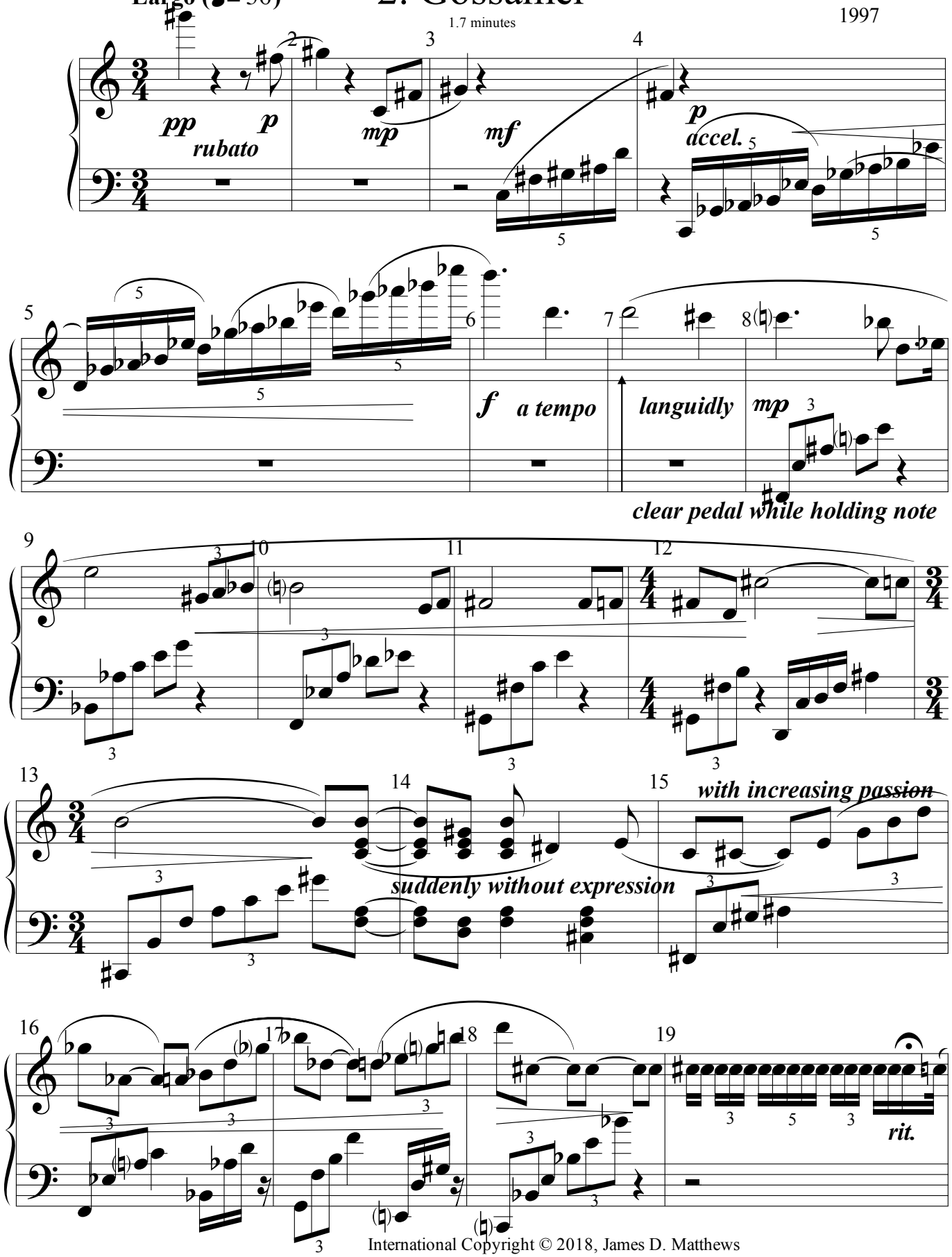

44
45
R.H.
f
47
49
ff
marcato
L.H.
rit.
54
mp


55
L.H.
57
R.H.
59
p
61
slightly slower as not to rush
8va
pp

2. Gossamer

1.7 minutes

James D. Matthews
1997



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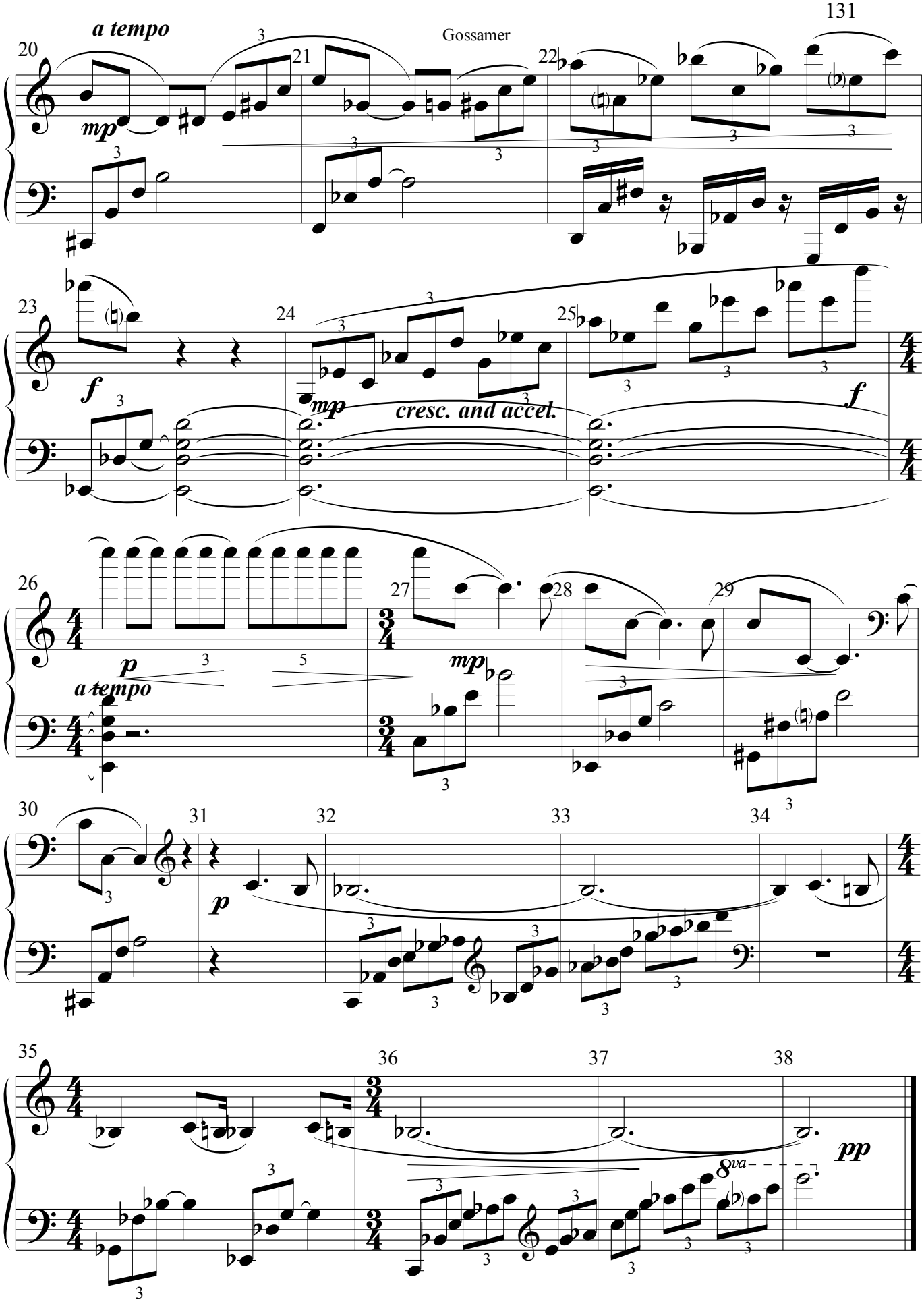
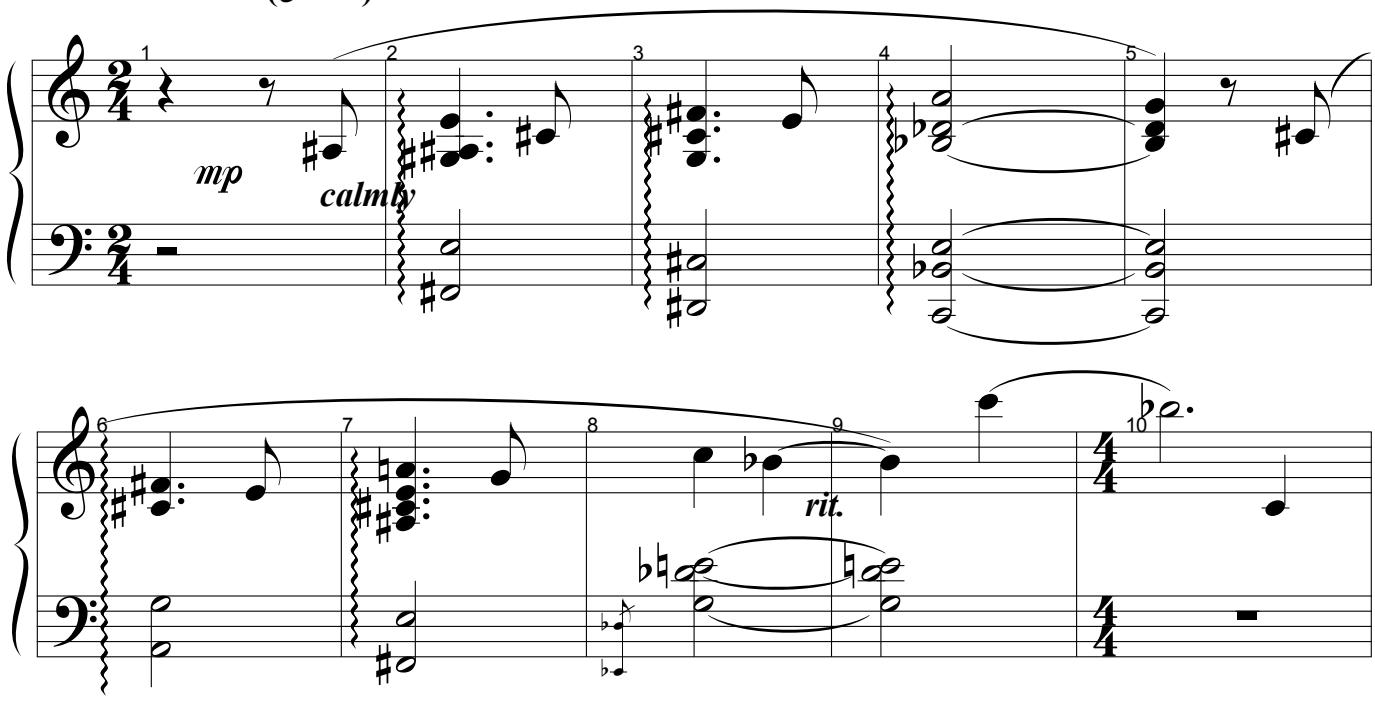

a tempo
mp
f
mp
cresc. and accel.
f
p
a tempo
mp
p
pp
8va

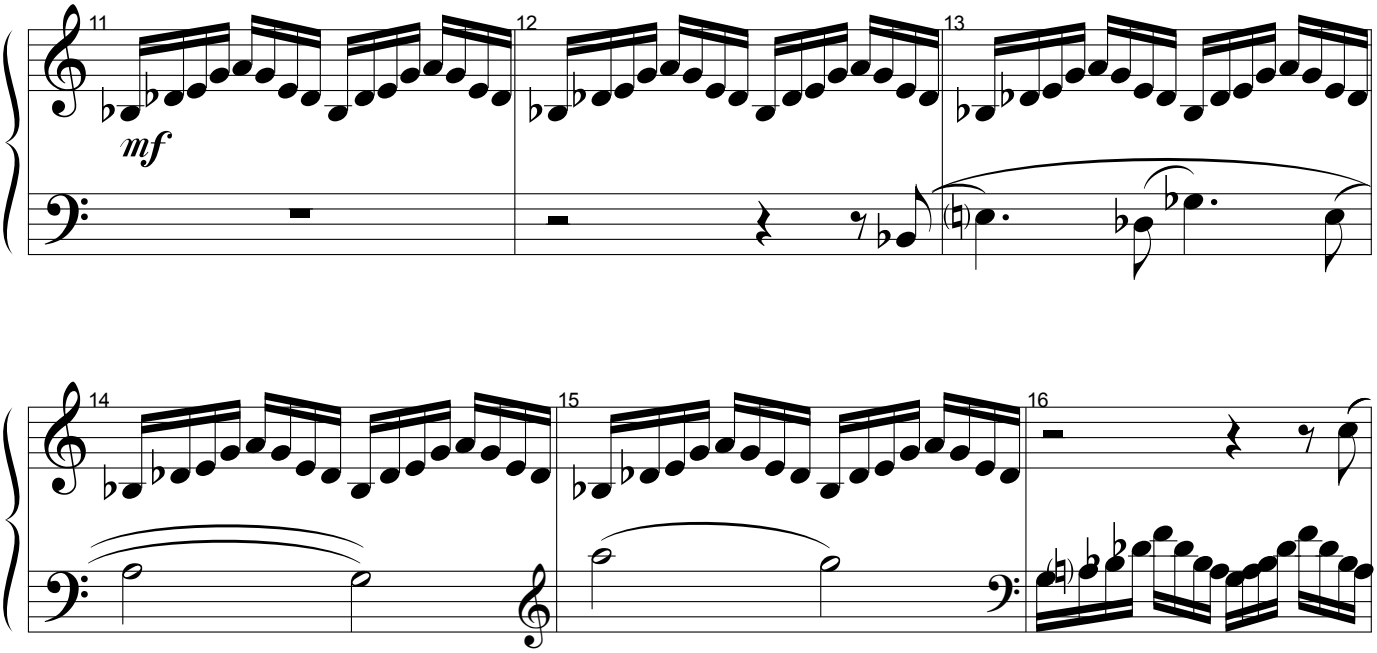
3: Sound and Fury

Moderato (♩= 80)

James D. Matthews, 1997



Allegro (♩ = 126-132) ***motoric, demonically pushing forward***



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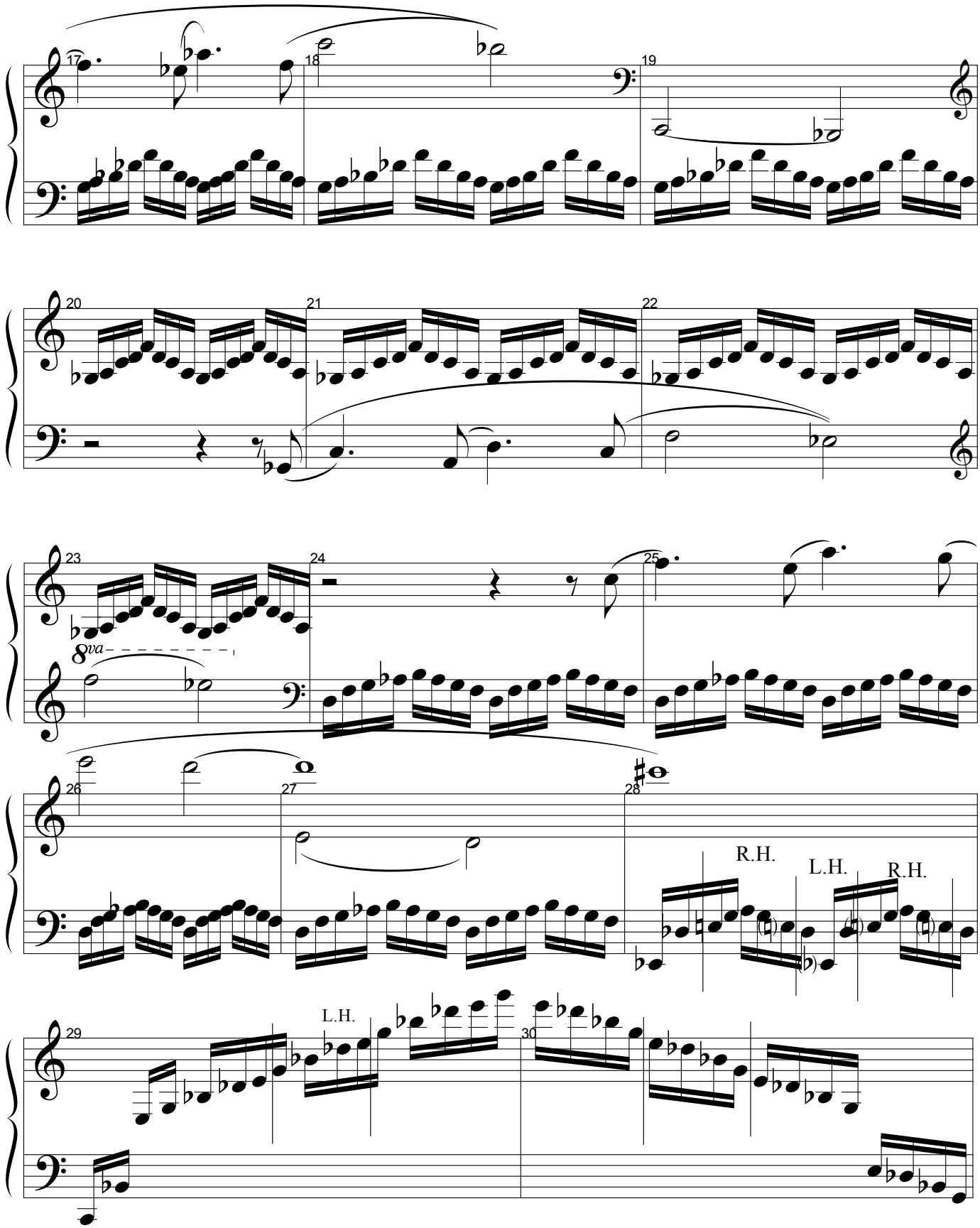
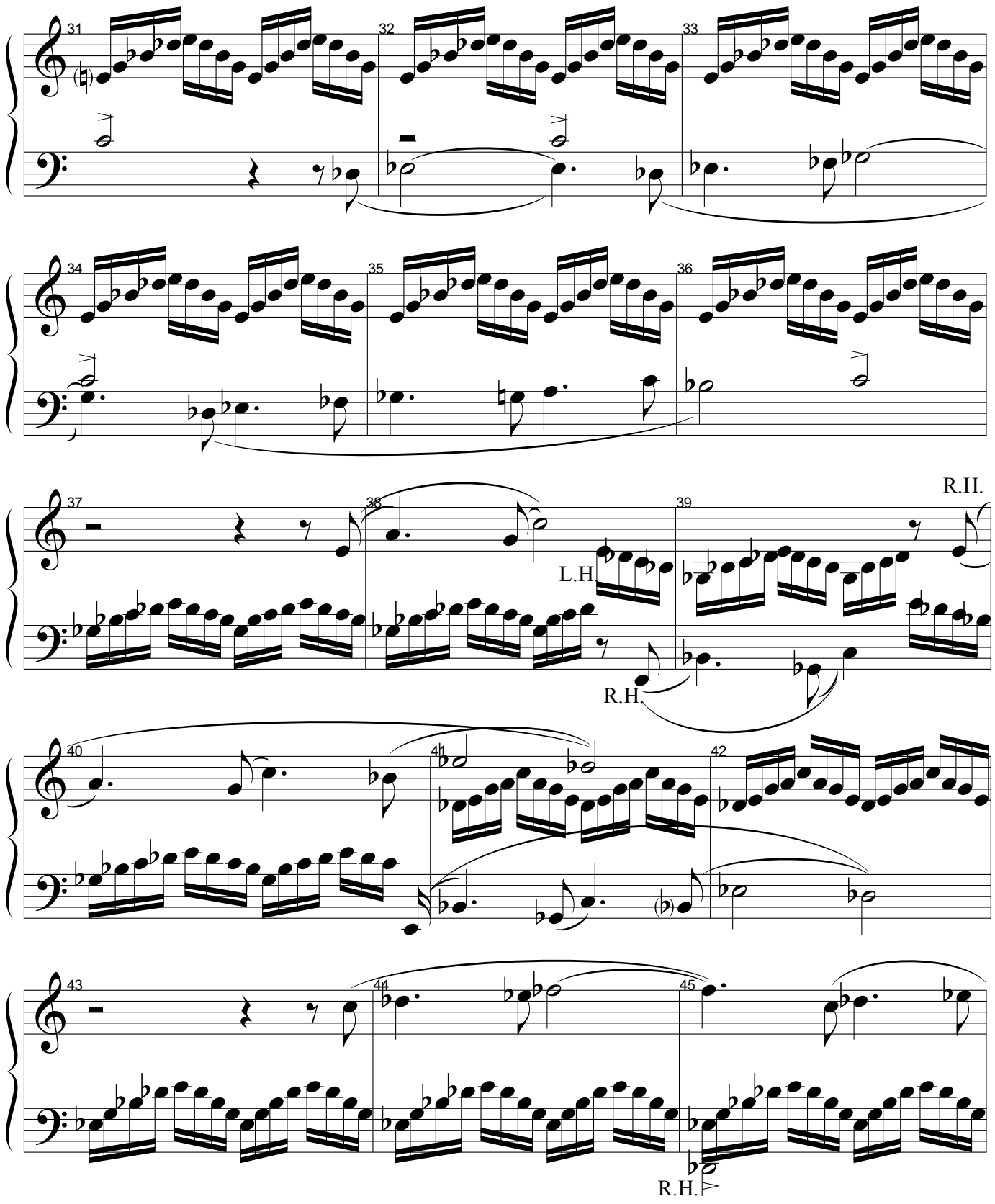
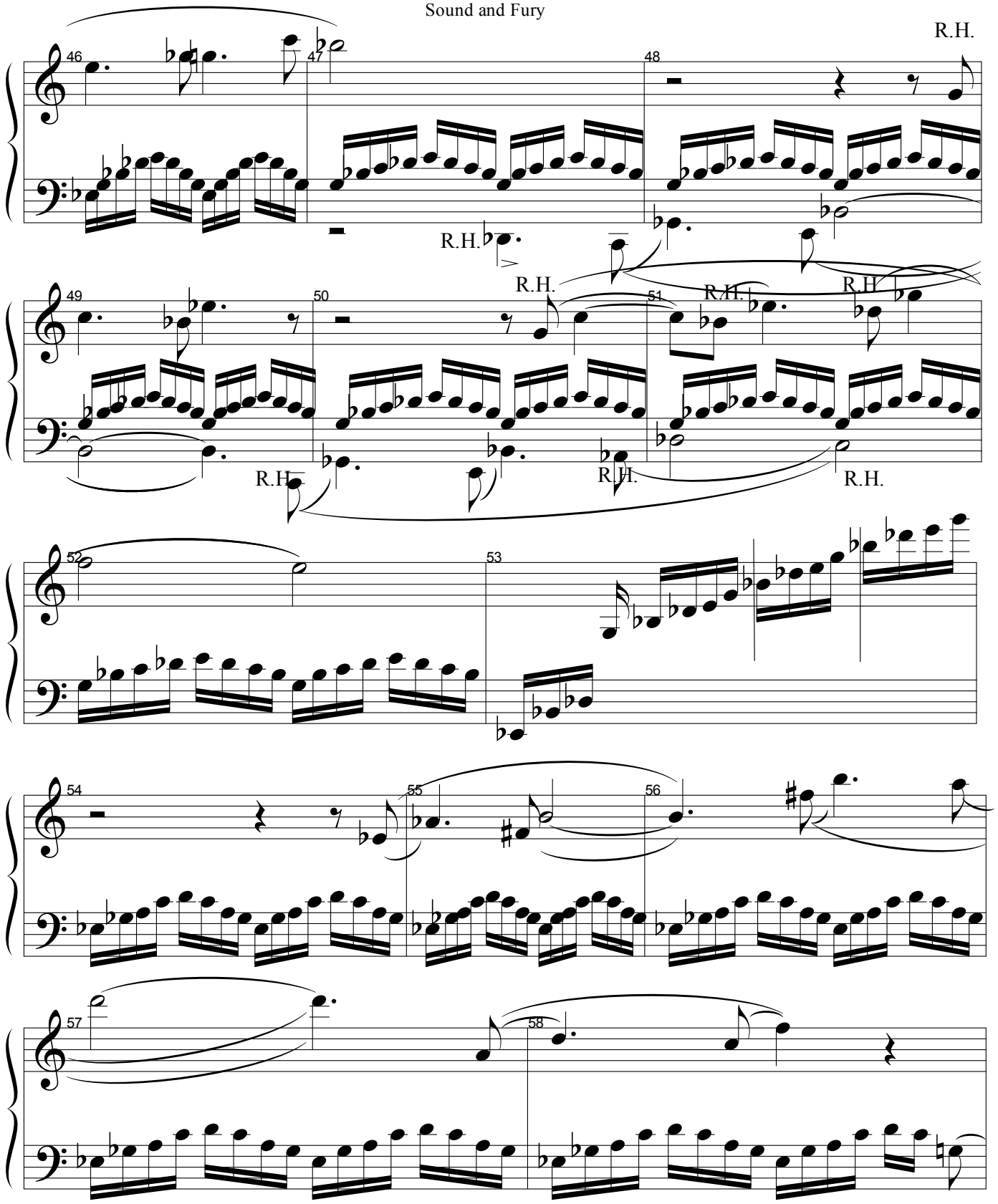
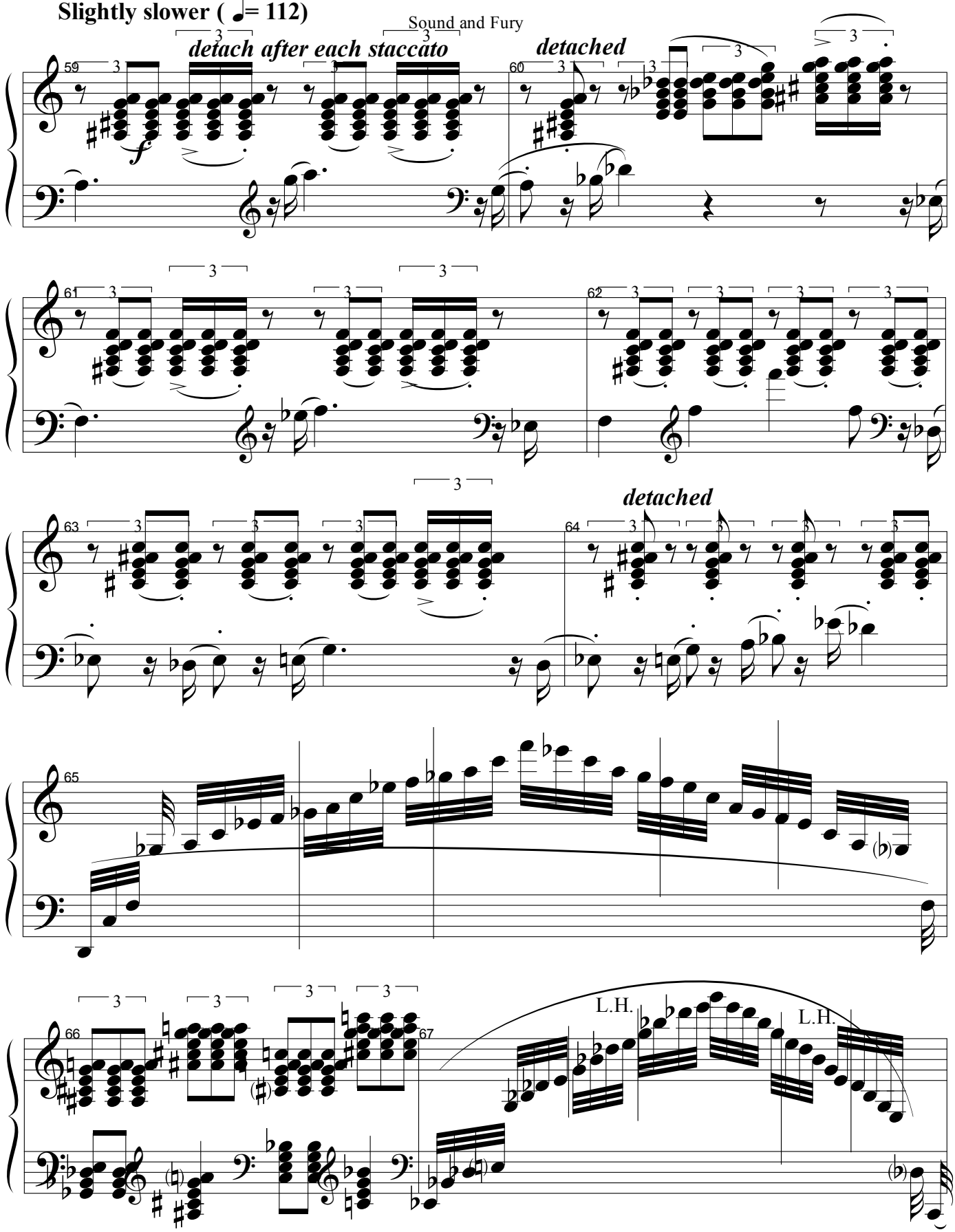

17
18
19
20
21
22
23
8va
24
25
26
27
28
R.H.
L.H.
R.H.
29
L.H.
30

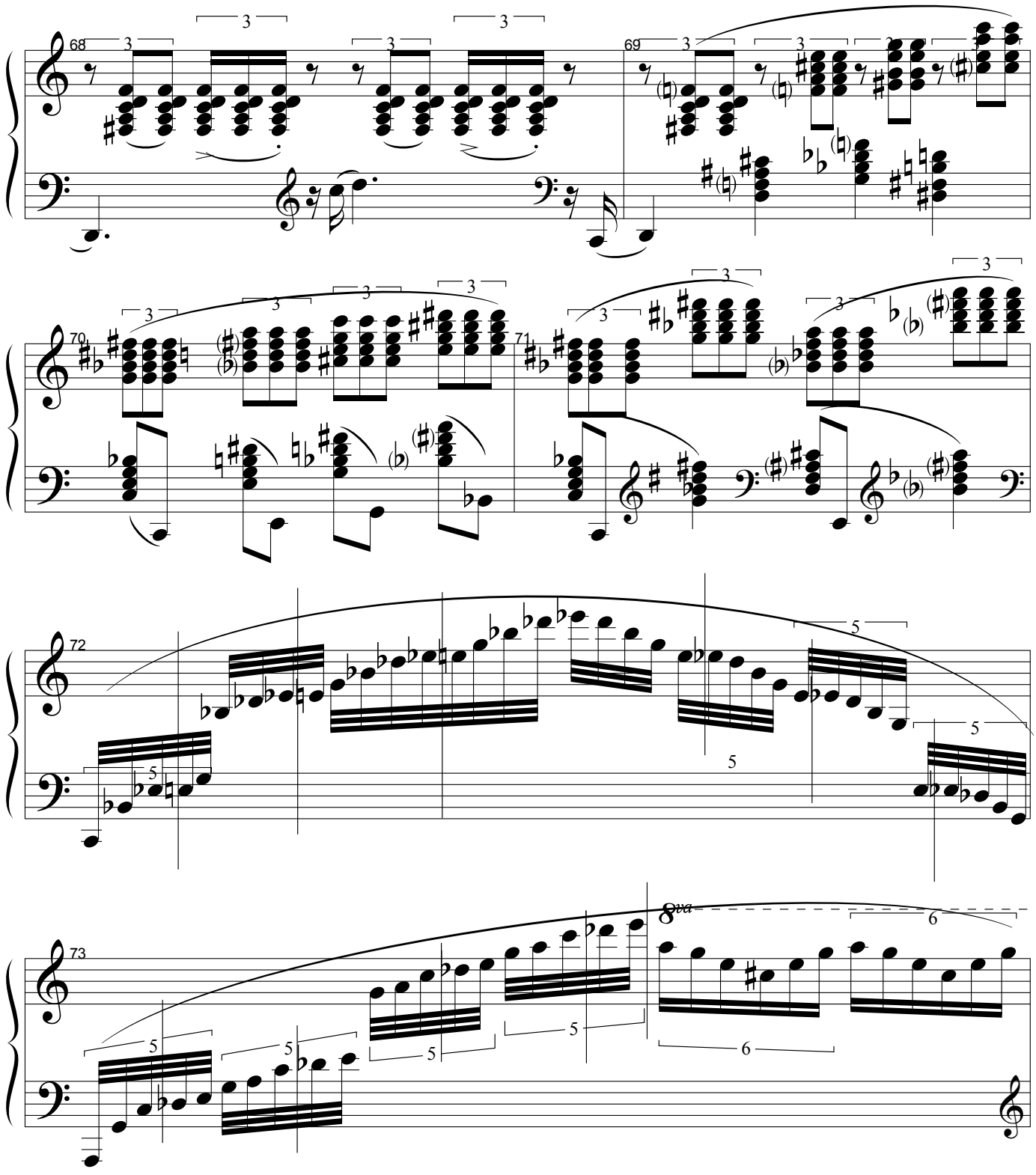

31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
R.H.
L.H
R.H.
40
41
42
43
44
45
R.H.

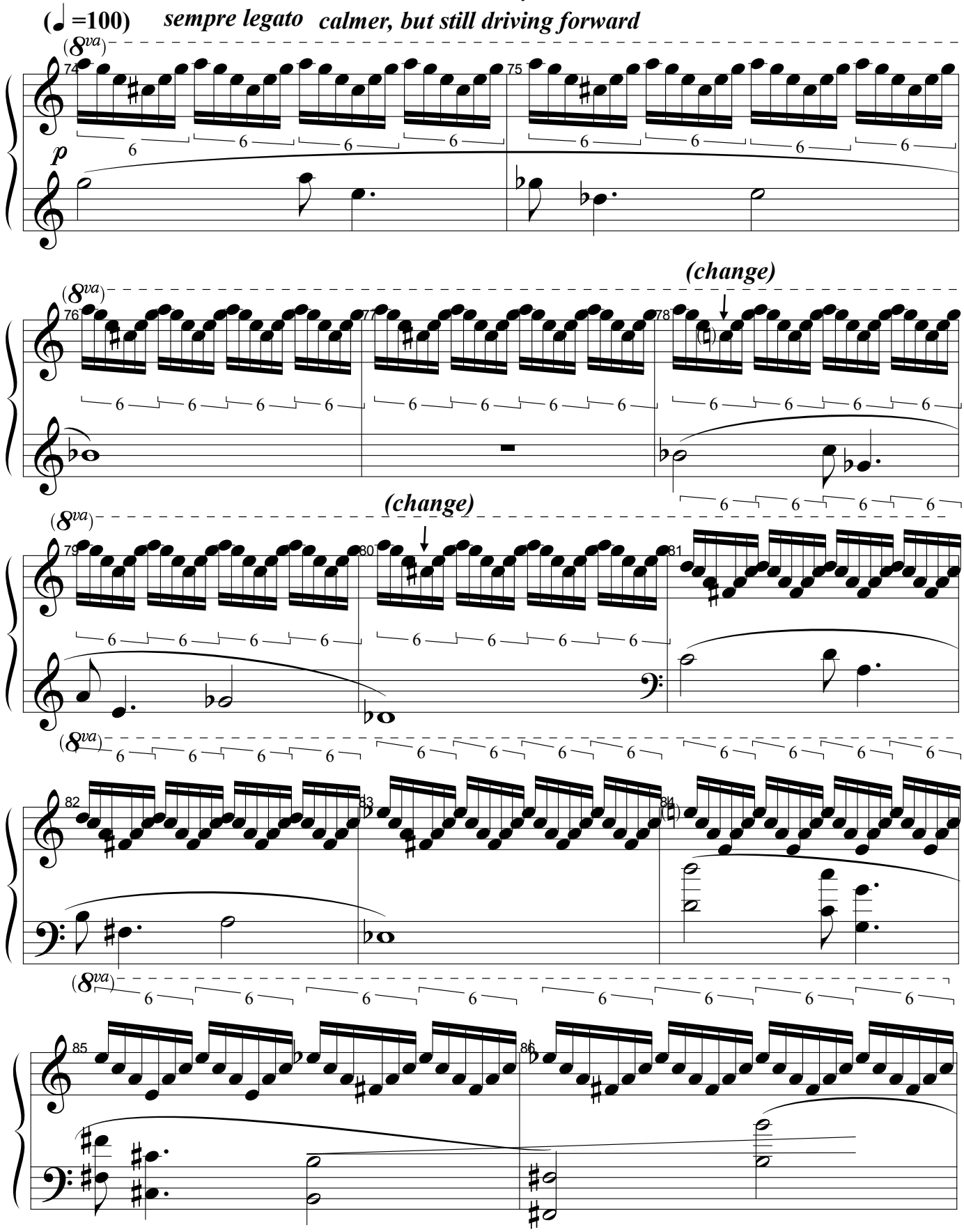
Sound and Fury

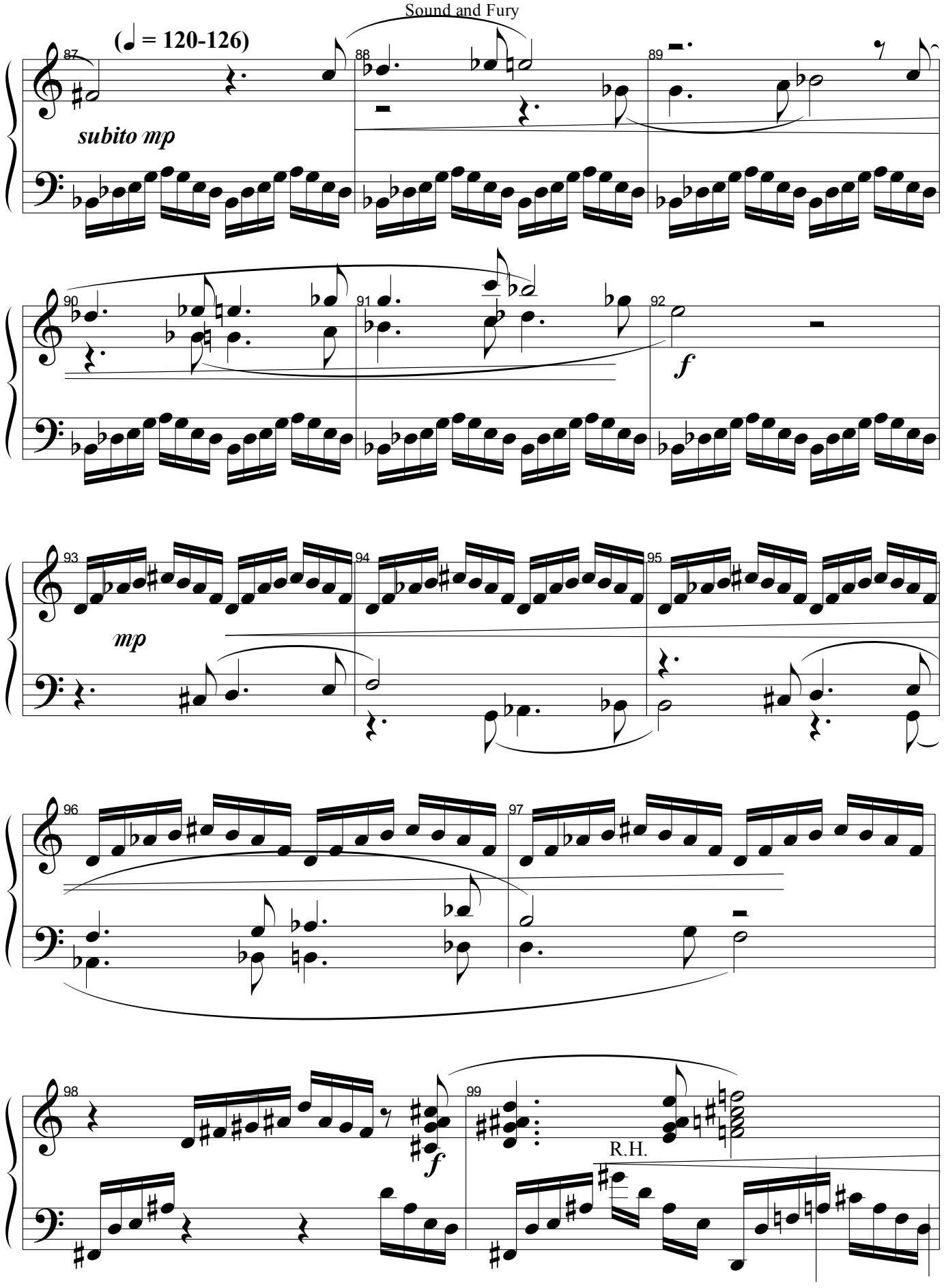


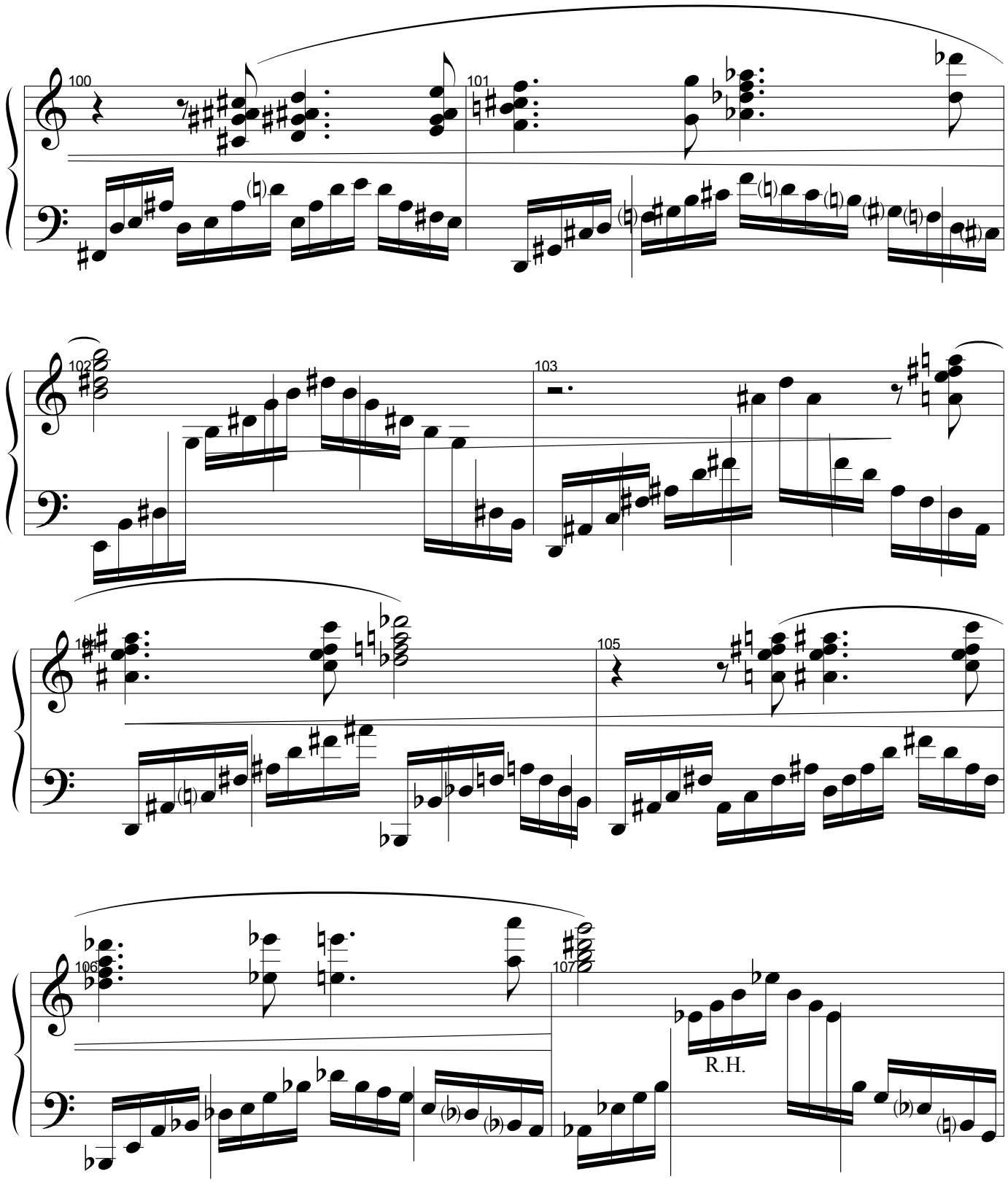
Slightly slower (♩= 112)

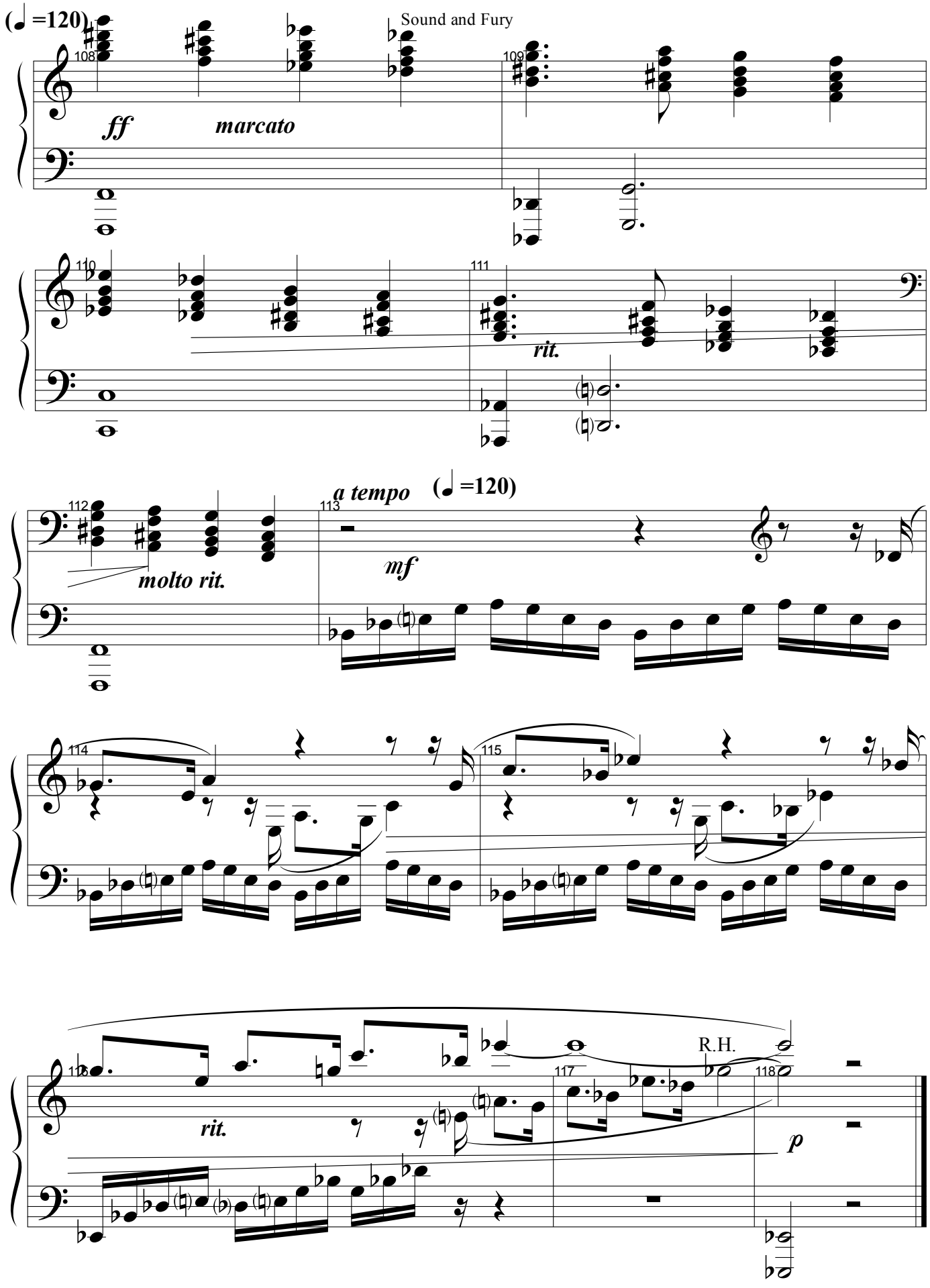



68
69
70
71
72
73
8va


(♩=100)
sempre legato
calmer, but still driving forward
(8va)
74
75
p
(change)
76
77
78
(change)
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86


(♩ = 120-126)
87
88
89
subito mp
90
91
92
f
93
94
95
mp
96
97
98
99
f
R.H.

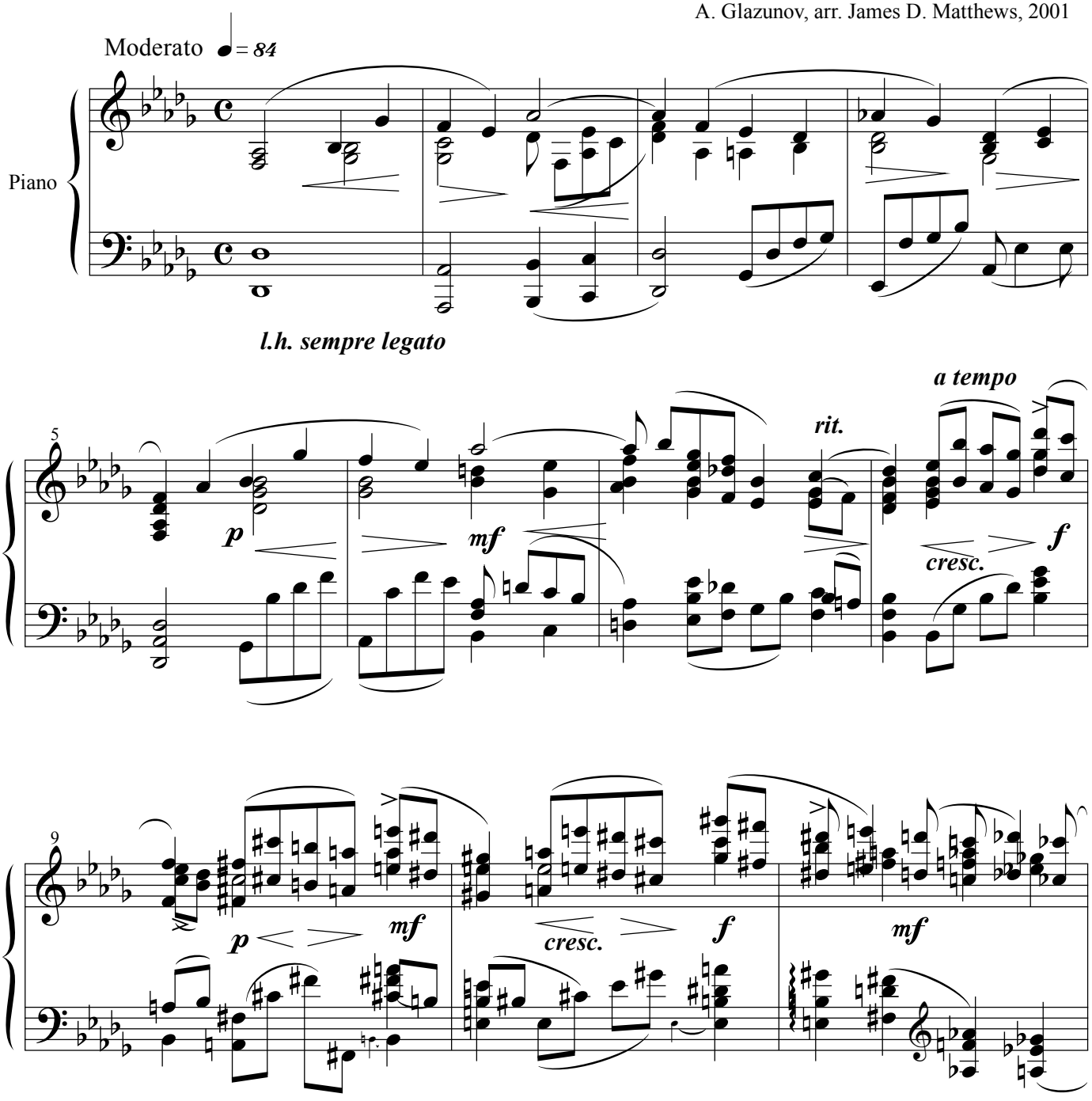

100
101
102
103
104
105
106
107
R.H.


(♩ =120)
Sound and Fury
108
109
ff
marcato
110
111
rit.
112
113
molto rit.
a tempo
(♩ =120)
mf
114
115
116
117
118
rit.
R.H.
p

Prelude

in D-flat major

A. Glazunov, arr. James D. Matthews, 2001



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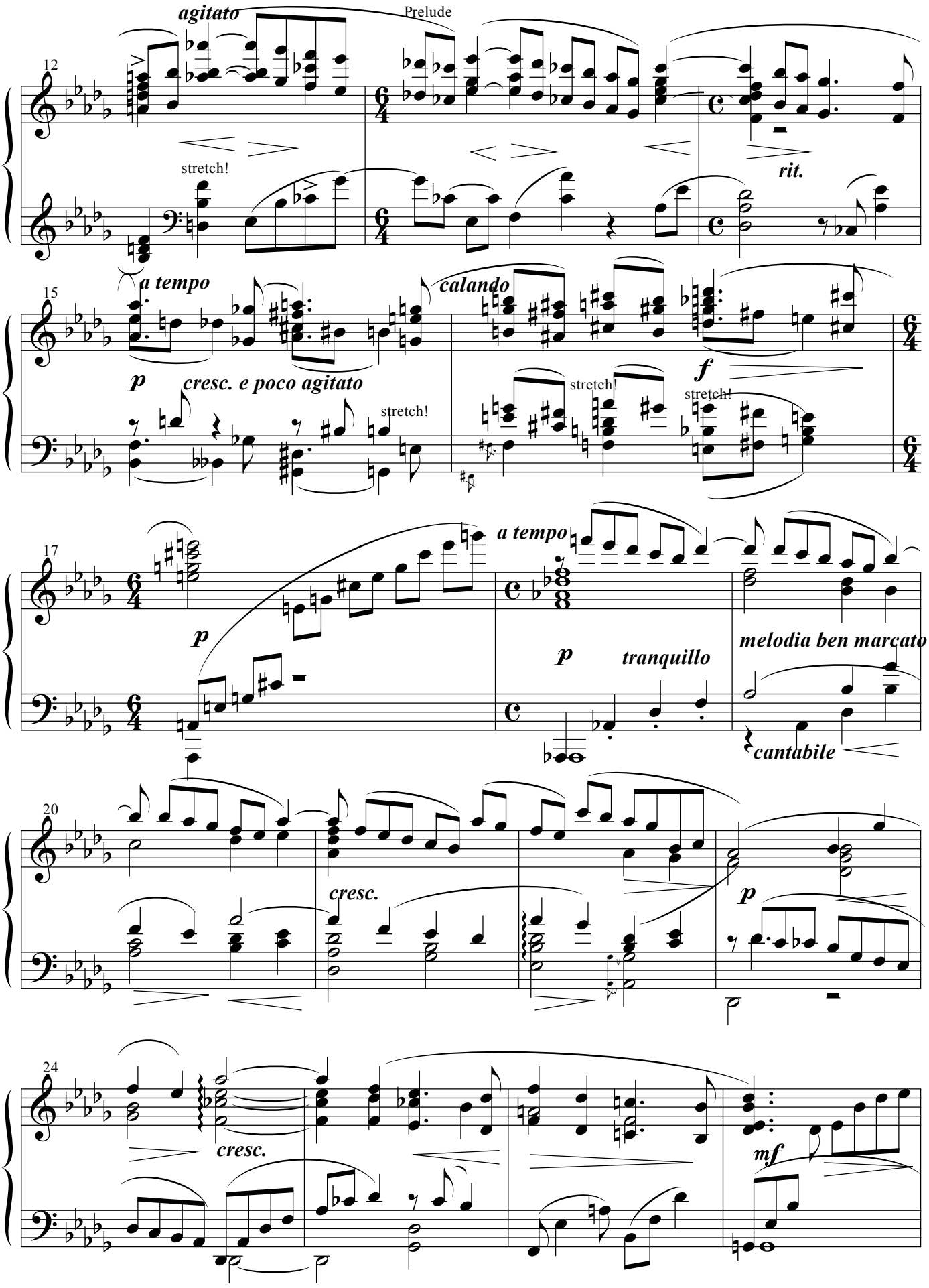
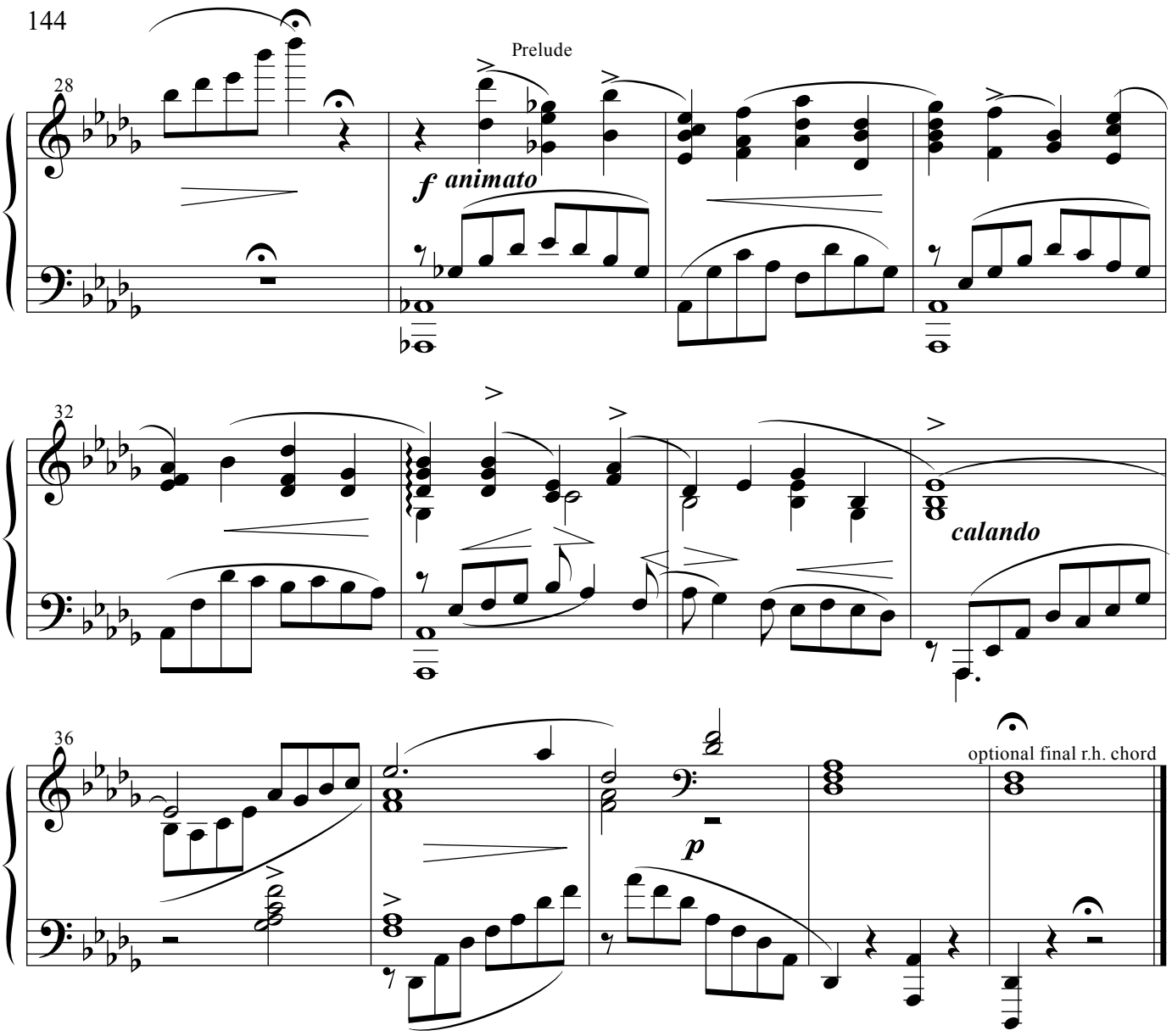

Prelude
agitato
12
stretch!
rit.
a tempo
15
calando
p
cresc. e poco agitato
stretch!
stretch!
stretch!
f
17
a tempo
p
p
tranquillo
melodia ben marcato
cantabile
20
cresc.
p
24
cresc.
mf


Prelude
28
f animato
32
calando
36
p
optional final r.h. chord

Notes by the Composer

I should probably stop while I'm ahead and not say anything, let the music speak for itself, not make a further fool of myself, and all that. Or not, as the case may be. Since I don't have a legion of scholars analyzing every musical sketch, version, and carbon copy of my correspondence, I suppose I'll just tip my hand a little and share a bit about these pieces, my inspiration and intent.

First, a few notes on performance. Pedal marks are few in these scores. I tend to use a heavy pedal, as the harmonies build on the successively struck notes to make a glorious wash of sound, (See the B-flat fermata chord in the third movement of the first sonata.) Same with major-minor, seventh-ninth chords and chords built on stacked thirds. That said, the melody should never be obscured. The melody, or often more than one simultaneous melodies, is part of and contrasts to those harmonies. I also heavily use the una corda pedal to soften the tone of the piano. Like Debussy, I want to de-emphasize the percussive nature of the piano.

As I mentioned in my quote on the back of the title page, I love the clash of harmony, melody, and accompaniment. I love the collision of the opposing directions of each, the mild discord this causes (it is intended to hurt in just the right way), and the feeling of sweet release as they become untangled. "Soft dissonance" is the term I like to use. To me it is sweet. This is the intent of how the pieces should be played. Strive for the beautiful.

I find these pieces are best suited for the acoustic piano, especially given the immense pile-up of notes and overtones. I personally have a hard time playing electronic keyboards, even while I acknowledge that they are likely the future of pianos — if pianos even have a future.

With regard to passages containing rhythmic complexity, don't sweat it. Sure, play what's written. But after years of playing Scriabin, I have concluded there is no way anyone could play what is written there in a literal, mathematically correct way. I have come to see from his work, and mine, the concept of "avoidance of simultaneity" — if the melody and accompaniment always coincide, the music may sound dull and mechanical. Avoiding simultaneity by use of polyrhythms, can make the music all the richer. Focus on this end, rather than worrying about whether the playback is mathematically correct, and you'll get what I'm trying to achieve.

Some note heads in the scores are smaller. These are sometimes duplicates where melody and harmony collide, and since only one hand has to commit, the other is displayed smaller. There are also notes I prefer to be played, but have made smaller as optional omits to make playing easier, especially 10ths in the left hand that are less comfortable as I get older.

"Lullaby" was written well into my composing career. I have presented it first because it is fairly easy to play and listen to, and represents my style well. The germ of this piece is the slow rise and fall of breath during sleep. "Lullaby" assumed greater meaning when I became a parent in 2007 (and again in 2010), and by combining the personal and universal, it became a Christmas lullaby as Mary sings to her child and comments on the goings on around them. In particular, the second section attempts to depict the approach of the choir of angels — the heavens opening up with their song and then closing up as they retreat into the distance. This was captured in a setting for solo voice with optional cello or viola accompaniment often sung by my lovely and talented step-daughter, Emma Cobb Gwin.

"Sonata-en-Suite" was so named to emphasize similarities to the traditional sonata form — four movements of contrasting character, including scherzo-like and slow movements — and to de-emphasize any attempt to adhere strictly to the original forms. Hence, it is a suite of pieces, presented as a sonata.

The first movement has a germinal idea (1-2-3-3 or -5) presented in the opening theme, which gets lost before it is finished. The movement proceeds trying to grasp hold of this idea, each time losing it to other ideas (many based on a wandering triplet motive), many of them far afield. It's like working through angst, or lostness, with all the peaks and valleys, culminating in eventual rediscovery of the idea and its full statement. The theme is repeated with a countermelody (my blessing or curse) and ends peacefully. Reminiscent of life?

The second is a palate cleanser, using sixths prominently. The middle part is based on a chord progression in Wagner's Götterdämmerung that caught my ear.

The third movement, "Nocturne," is another journey, the feeling of solitude — ecstatic, sad — followed by the grief of loneliness, while a carnival is heard in the distance. The movement ends in a duet, a pas-de-deux celebration of finding one's mate. This section firmly took me into A-flat major and refused to be pulled back to the opening key. Again — life, anyone? (Especially those twenty- or thirtysomething searching years.)

The finale is just rejoicing, and is possibly the happiest thing I have written. Its motive is related to the germinal idea in the first movement. This movement also illustrates my changing approach to naming pieces: originally all were technical or classically inspired, later less so, and then with an attempt to give a more casual, contemporary name to each piece. It was initially called "Passacaglia" in reference to the recurring bass line or harmonic progression. This eventually lead to "Four-Bar Finale," more in keeping with jazz and rock improvisation, and finally to the statement of what it is — Rejoicing — after all that searching and angst.

My second Sonata, "Liturgical," comes from an extended period when I found a way back to the church, a place I had rejected in my teens when I realized I could either be a good Baptist or I could live the life that I was given to live, pleasing to God — whatever that would mean. (In other words I could either be Baptist, and live (or die) a hypocrite, or accept my gay soul with God's blessing and have life more abundantly.) That toehold back is based on a never-lost deep spirituality, in part based in music, and a much broader interpretation of the inflexible faith I was taught as a child. I was inspired by the writings of John Spong and the realization that a man in and of the Church (an Episcopal Bishop) and I (a dedicated agnostic/atheist) could have similar thoughts about the nature of God and faith, each of us on our respective journeys in and out of the church over the course of a half-lifetime. I was also inspired by the example of my pastor husband, Joseph L. "Joe" Cobb.

The first movement was inspired by hearing a contemporary Magnificat and my desire to set my own version to music. Instead of the full text, I chose parts that spoke to me and combined them

with an expression of praise, an Alleluia. The combination said exactly what I felt and seemed appropriate. Originally a piano piece, this was also set for choir and eventually performed.

But it was mightily frustrating, given my journey, my reconnection after long alienation, and the very personal nature of this "Song of Praise," to find out that in traditional church liturgy, an incomplete Magnificat was a less than acceptable one. Moreover, Magnificats are often performed during Lent, when the ban on doing something as natural and joyful as saying or singing the word Alleluia — Praise Be to God — would be anathema to the posture of spiritual fasting, so Magnificats are sung to articulate praise without actually saying Alleluia. Thus was the difficulty in finding a place in the church for my piece — that fatal combination of the Magnificat Song of Praise and the word Alleluia. I suppose the church and I have some more ground to cover before I feel more than a toehold there.

So the piece, and this piece of me, having been (once again) found unacceptable to the church, was reverted to the original piano version, which was not beholden to the limits of liturgy, nor of the weekly offertory time slot. As such, it says exactly what I want to say as a Song of Praise to the divine. The Alleluia tag, which starts and ends the piece, as well as forms interludes between the verses, should tug at your heart.

The next two movements are somewhat more sparse than the lush style I usually use. The "Veni Creator" plainchant is stated and restated at different parts of the scale with an almost invariable harmonic progression underneath — think the immutable cosmic Druids in Ives' "Unanswered Question." "Dies Irae" is set with ironic menace. The plainchant is sometimes the melody, sometimes the accompaniment. Cantus firmus, anyone?

The final movement is my depiction of my Dream: partner, home, family. Domestic bliss, long may it bliss! The opening, original melody is set to the mental words "How long have I strived for a dream I would die for," and "Oh, what I would give for a dream I could live for." After that, the lyrics went downhill and got even more maudlin. I'm sure a more talented lyricist could come up with something befitting the American Songbook. I used this piece as my wedding vow.

This theme is paired with the plainchant "In Paradisum," describing the entrance of the triumphant soul into the eternal city amongst angel docents.

The "Dream" theme, like many others, fits in one hand, harmony and all. See also the kernel of the Alleluia theme from "Song of Praise," "Finger Twister" (which may be performed left hand alone), and "Fanfare." I have often thought that this came from messing with the piano while my other arm cradled an infant. That was certainly true as I replayed them and worked them out, but some of these ideas predate the birth of my first child in 2007. I'm not sure what that is all about.

So, the "Dream" theme occurred to me in one hand, with melody, countermelody, harmony and rhythm all tangled up. I knew I wanted to say that combination of things, but at first, I was not sure what was what. After several attempts that were clearly not right, I finally teased the

different components apart. I idealize Mozart as having been able to conceive of these things in three dimensions, knowing them at first and at once for their individual and true identities, whereas I saw the two-dimensional projection of them, all superimposed and glommed together, and only after some thought was able to pry the layers apart. Ah, well, he was probably smarter than me. And did music for a living. And had Costanza to be a copyist/editor. And to take care of the house.

"Variations" is an example of good coming from bad, or of recognizing the opportunity in what might be initially conceived of as a mistake. I was doodling on the piano in the key of F when I hit a ii chord (g) with both a B and a B-flat. A friend laughed and commented how awful it sounded. Later, I thought, "I will show him by taking that goof, putting it in context (of soft dissonance), and making a piece about it." It became the theme, and that idea, with a lot of piled third harmonies, formed the piece. The finale is especially tricky. The measures often start with suspensions and then snap into the stacked third pattern (with exceptions), eventually "going off the rails" as the chord changes from F to F sharp major. The final chords reference the predominant ending tone of the preceding sections of the piece.

In general, I don't like theme and variations, especially when the theme is so recognizable it feels like it's just being repeated. I hope my variations feel sufficiently different and interesting. I also acknowledge that structurally, a lot of my work is theme and variations, from the four-bar phrase that I riff on at the end of the "First Sonata" to pieces with recurring themes that are varied with each reappearance.

A note about the technical difficulty of my writing. I always imagined that an accomplished professional would play my pieces, not me with my imperfect technique and stage-fright-quivering hands. Specifically, some of my pieces were written with Ruth Laredo in mind, who, as a tiny person with gargantuan technique, managed to play Scriabin's crazy-difficult works to perfection. I saw her in Roanoke late in her career and had her sign the cover of some old Scriabin vinyl LP jackets, which amused her to no end. She gave me her card, and I sent her some of my scores, but never heard back. I was shocked some time after to hear that she had died. It is a regret that I never got to hear her thoughts about my work. I had assumed that she thought they were beneath comment. It may have been that battling ovarian cancer eclipsed all else. We won't ever know.

Any accomplished pianists out there want to give it a go?

The "Nocturne E-flat" gets its main theme from a classical piece. Should I bare all my secrets and sources? It is the Schumann Piano Concerto, when the main theme comes back in the major key in the development, with strings sighing an echo at the end of each phrase. The contrasting theme is a four note motive that bounces back and forth from bass to treble and in between all over the keyboard. When it returns, it also bounces on top of itself in stretto, eventually leading to the big bombastic theme of the piece, one of those you love to love in all their wretched excess. The coda theme should tug at your heart, like Chopin in his famous Second Concerto middle movement. In my world, the great composers enter and comment at will. (After all, I am a 7th generation music student descendant of Beethoven, via Czerny and Schnabel, for whatever that's worth.)

To wit, the "Nocturne HCR, for Handel, Chopin and Rachmaninoff (over Lunch)" is based on the theme from Handel's "Xerxes," seen though a Matthews lens. They're all gathered at a café, when Handel says something memorable. Chopin answers with a different idea, then restates Handel's idea in his terms. Rachmaninoff comes in and gives his take on Chopin's idea and Handel's theme. Matthews is transcribing all this. Please don't look for anything literal in these descriptions — rather something of the style and tone of these other composers' works.

After I finished this piece, Brahms stumbled onto the private lunch, and, as he always does, made things complicated. I have a complicated relationship with Brahms. There are individual pieces of his that I love, but to me, his music, while romantic and often rhapsodic, feels inhibited, and restrained in a bad way. While some restraint is good, and perhaps I could use a touch more myself, I always feel like there is a large stone in the middle of Brahms' river that breaks the stream. His penchant for rhythmic shifts against the meter, for obscuring the divisions of the sections in his sonata forms, in addition to his emotional dam, drive me crazy.

So Brahms elbows his way to the table (mm. 46-51) and interrupts Chopin with his own take on Handel's idea, throwing in some hemiola and dragging the poor theme far afield harmonically. He states a contrasting idea, and starts holding forth, when Rachmaninoff jumps in to save the day, pulling the material back to his take on Chopin and Handel and then writing a sketch for his next Piano Concerto, before everything calms down and the guys have coffee and dessert.

It isn't easy being me.

I've included both versions because I can't decide which I like best. On my 2000 recording of my first batch of work, "From the Heart," I used the HCBR version as definitive. Some time later, however, I heard Thomas B. Field, my oldest friend and number one player of my music, play the earlier version. I thought, "What a sweet piece" without the Brahmsian complications. Like I say, it's complicated. You decide.

Nocturne St. Louis is admittedly an immature piece and perhaps should have been left out of this collection. It was written many years after the Impromptu, which is much richer and more sophisticated, but it was written after having endured the rigors of medical school and radiology residency, and having dwelled in a left-brain place for a long time. It was the first time, after that long pause, that I freed my musical voice. The piece was inspired by a short, frustrating romance I had after the end of my first long term relationship of ten years. I start with the sadness and frustration of the end of something I'd hoped would last and grow, and grieve while referring to the main theme. After searching and wandering, I come back to the main theme, an expression and memory of the love as it had felt in the beginning, untainted by the disappointment that came after. I included it because it's a good, relatively simple demonstration of the collision of melody, accompaniment, and harmony that typifies my work, and despite its weaknesses, is a sweet little piece.

"Impromptu" (called "Etude" on my 1984 senior recital) is the oldest of the works here. (There is an older set of variations I omit.) Written in college, it comes from an idealistic search for a different harmonic language based on fourths and fifths. I was hoping to save classical music from the ardent atonality that spoiled so much of the twentieth century and killed so much of the audience for classical music. (OK, there was merit there. Robert Shaw, while preparing the St. Louis Symphony Chorus on Barber's "Prayers of Kierkegaard," mused on that loss, but acknowledged that "it sure widened the scope of our harmonic language.") Sure, we have Barber's gorgeous "Nocturne," with a twelve tone melody and tonal harmony. But who listens to Copeland's atonal serially composed music? It's "Appalachian Spring" and "Rodeo" that get played.

I still hope to help save classical music by writing listenable but interesting works. I gave up on the quartal/quintal harmonic language for something more direct, as evidenced in the remainder of the works here. There is a choral work, "The Impatient Earth," that would make for a string quartet first movement, with this "Impromptu" as second movement, and a rondo third movement that exists only in bits. It may come forth if I ever get around to it.

The next three pieces are also drier than my usual stuff, as an intentional departure or pause from my heavier language. These were written between the "Song of Praise" and the completion of "The Dream," when I concluded that I liked the more emotionally charged atmosphere of my earlier work.

"Finger Twister" was written for my step-daughter, Emma Cobb Gwin, when she was struggling with bass clef during piano lessons. As a soprano vocalist who has gone on to get advanced degrees in vocal performance-opera, bass clef was obviously not as natural to her. Feel free to play it with one or both hands, or mostly one hand with occasional assists. I gave this to Emma as a Christmas present. She promptly stopped taking piano. It's not easy being me...

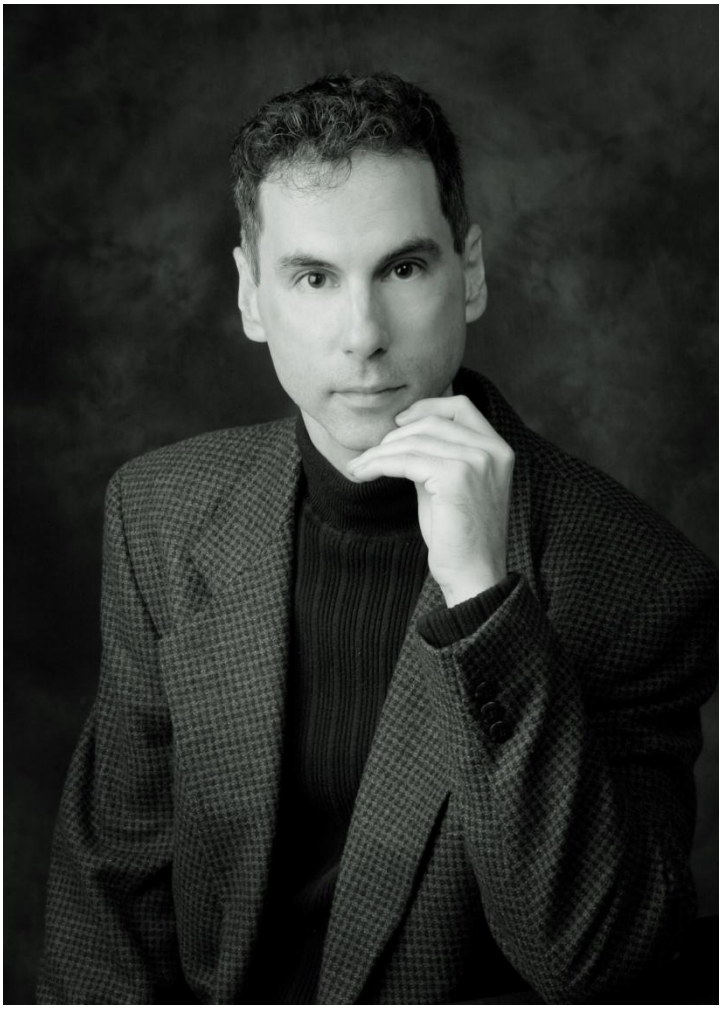
"Fanfare" and "Just Playin'" are just fun.

The "Three Preludes" are a bit of a hangover from a long period of intense fascination with the music of Scriabin. My music here is dark but beautiful at the same time. The "Third Prelude" middle section was actually written when I was furious at a boyfriend I took to Mardi Gras in New Orleans six months into our relationship. (Bad judgment? Unreasonable expectations?) He proceeded to furtively hit on everyone (else). I vented my bile in that section. When I listen to it now, I laugh at the violence of the fury, but at the same time, I like the music.

These "Preludes" were written, as are all my pieces, with me playing them during the compositional process. I soon gave up on the first and third as too difficult, and in lieu of tossing them altogether, indicated that they were intended for synthesizer driven by a computer. I changed my mind on that, including them here with some edits to make them playable, if still difficult.

The Glazunov "Prelude" arrangement was made to be more comfortable to play.

That's all for now. Play well and play on.



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James D. Matthews is a graduate of the College of William and Mary where he was a music and biology major, with focus on piano performance with Claudia Stevens and composition with Edgar Warren Williams. He studied privately with Paul Mathews of Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. A lifelong student and patron of the arts, compositionally he is largely self-taught, or at least taught by experience and passion. The work is his own unique voice, though influenced by some of his favorites: Chopin, Scriabin, and Ravel, with an overlay of contemporary/new age sound. He has always strived to write music that is passionate, intelligent, and listenable - and above all beautiful. Beauty as a goal of art may be out of fashion, but not here. Scarlatti worked in isolation; Chopin was criticized for composing only for piano; Bach's style was considered anachronistic in his day. "If this is the company I am doomed to be with, then I am content." As he works outside the musical field (he's also a doctor and dad), he has also worked in relative isolation. Come play, and enter the world of these anachronistic, individualistic - and beautiful - piano works.

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