Nick Ray

Recollections Book II

(2013)

for piano

RECOLLECTIONS Book II for piano

These six pieces follow the same scheme as the previous book. No.1 is a 'mechanism' piece, no.2 is a landscape evocation, no.3 a light-fingered scherzo, no.4 a tribute to a favourite composer, no.5 a dramatic and aggressive conflict between irreconcilable elements, and no.6 a 'programme' piece with a direct literary inspiration.

No. 1 (*Gatcombe Brook*) recollects an unforgettable evening walk close to the ruins of Berry Pomeroy castle in Devon. The brook flows at the bottom of a small valley with wooded slopes, and on this late July evening the setting sun caught individual tree branches and illuminated them in the darkness, changing the pattern as it moved. In the piece, the murmur of the brook continues throughout and splashes of light are scattered around it. Each layer repeats its 'splash' at a different time duration, and when they coincide the process begins again in a different harmonic setting, leading to a final flourish. This piece is about as close to minimalist style as my music is ever likely to get.

In no.2 (*On Visiting the Coombe Gibbet*) a cheerful and vigorous melody ascends the slopes of Inkpen hill (on the Berkshire/Wiltshire border) but is periodically arrested by the glimpses of the gibbet that stands near the summit and all cheerful thoughts fall silent. These interruptions become more dramatic as we get nearer and the music stops and contemplates the grisly eminence for a while before setting off home more thoughtfully, casting occasional backward glances at it.

No.3 (*Starlings, Jesus Green, Cambridge*) evokes the murmuration (or 'scourge') of starlings swirling around, with the cloud growing denser or more rarefied as the individual birds' bodies turned.

No.4 (*Elegy for Déodat de Séverac*) is a tribute to a composer whose music has always appealed to me. It quotes the opening theme from his *Coin de cimitière au printemps* and treats it contrapuntally in my fashion rather than his. The central section reproduces some of his pianistic and harmonic mannerisms but transforms them in combination with more dissonant material into a passionate and grief-stricken outburst. The piece ends with a sombre quote of the principal theme's main motif.

No.5 has no title. Several contrasting elements – some angular and aggressive, others lyrical and gentle - are presented and placed seemingly without any hope of reconciliation. Over an extended trill in the central section they begin to combine and reveal links.

No. 6 *(A Grey and Boiling Street...)* parallels Stephen Crane's poem whose first line provides the title. A hearse travels slowly along 'this chasm of commerce' and an uncomfortable tension is set up between the grief of the mourners, the mild curiosity of the spectators and the unseemly haste of the hired men who only want the event to be over: "Drive man, drive.....let us finish it quickly".

Nick Ray

April 2013

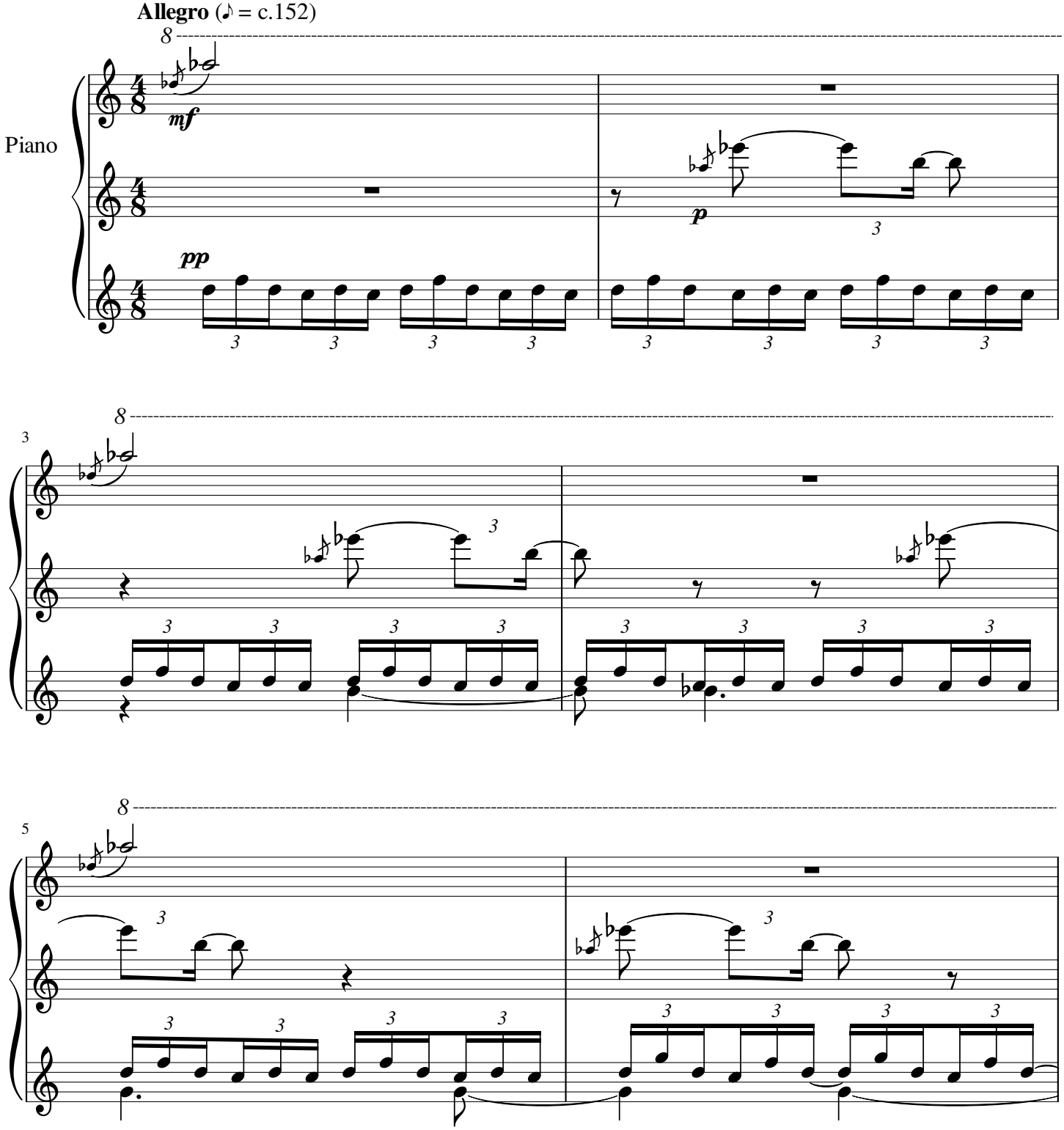
Recollections Book II was first performed by the composer at a semi-public recital in Finsbury Park, London N4 on 20 September 2014. Anthony Green gave the first public performance at Schott's recital room, Great Marlborough St, London W1 on 18 March 2017.

Recollections Book II

.1.

Gatcombe Brook

Nick Ray (2013)



Accidentals last a bar but are frequently repeated for clarity. NR

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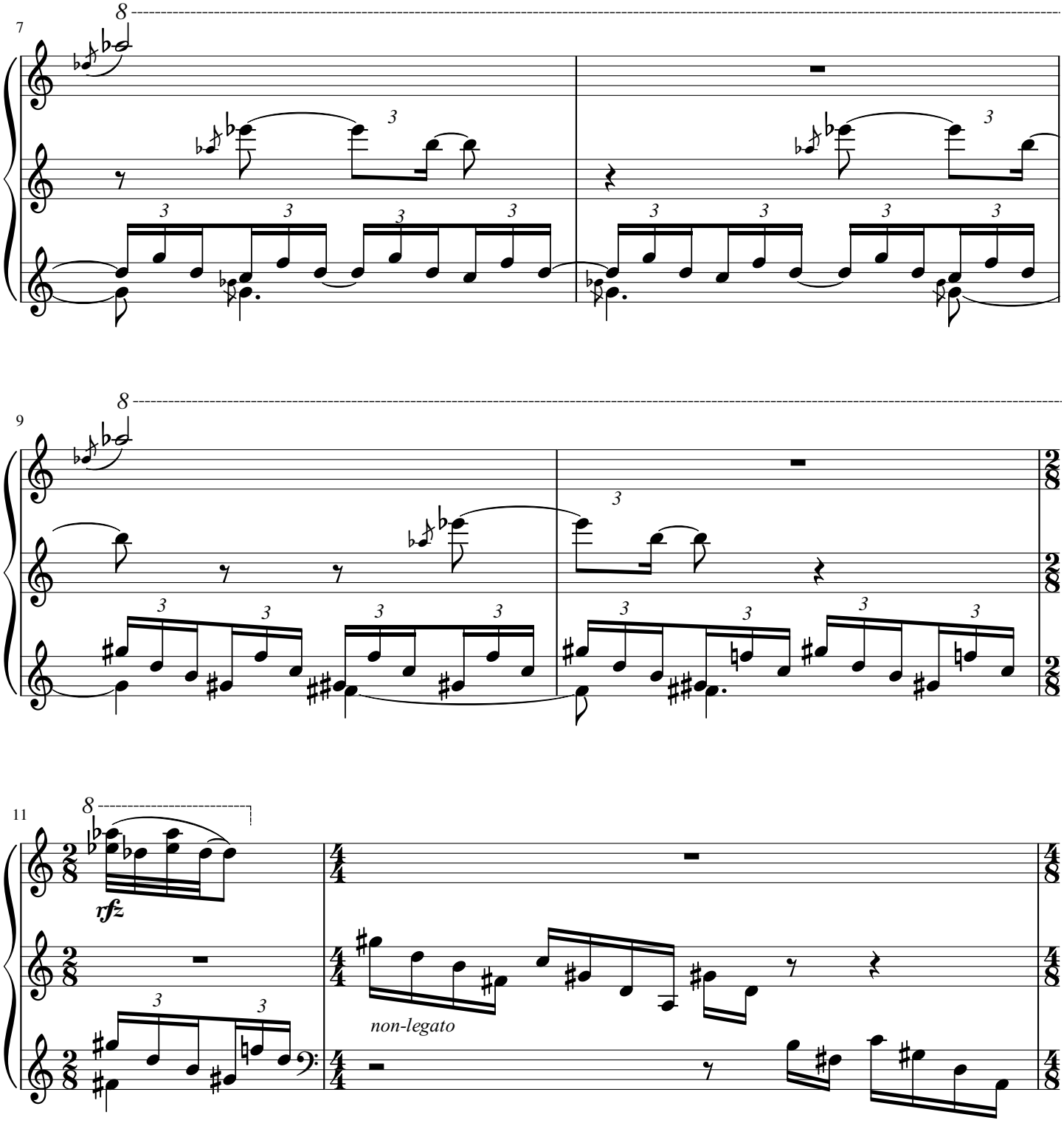

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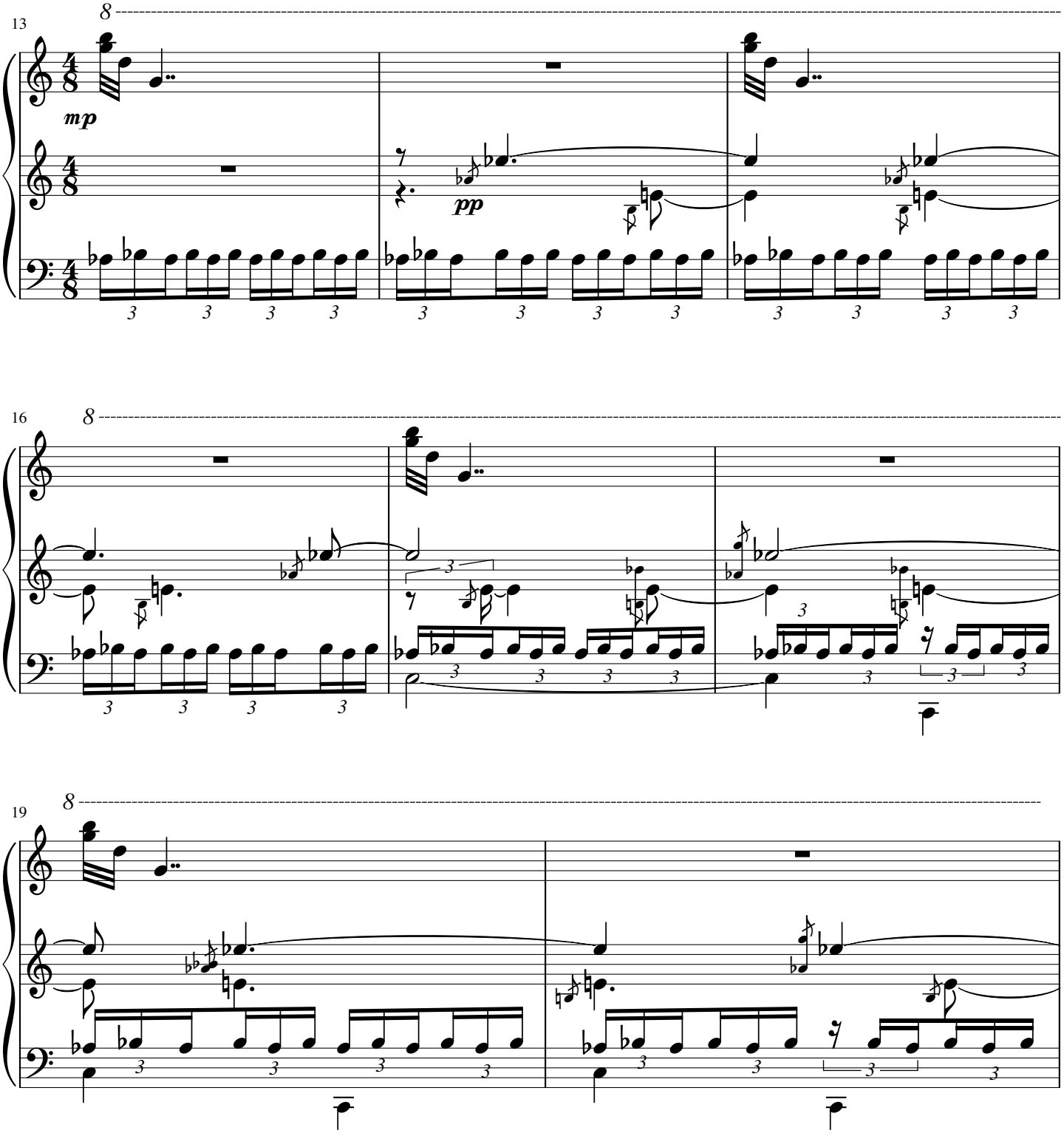

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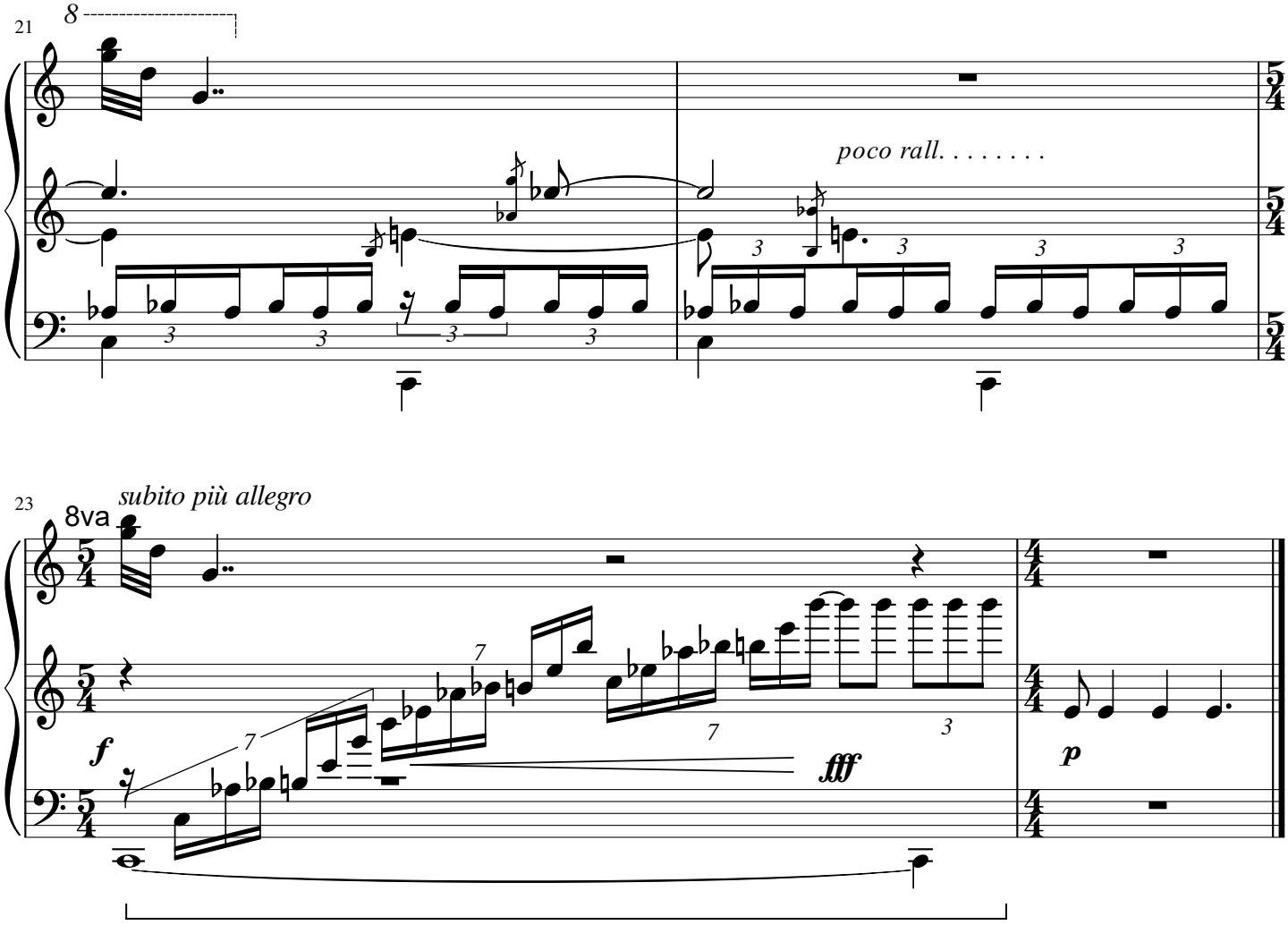

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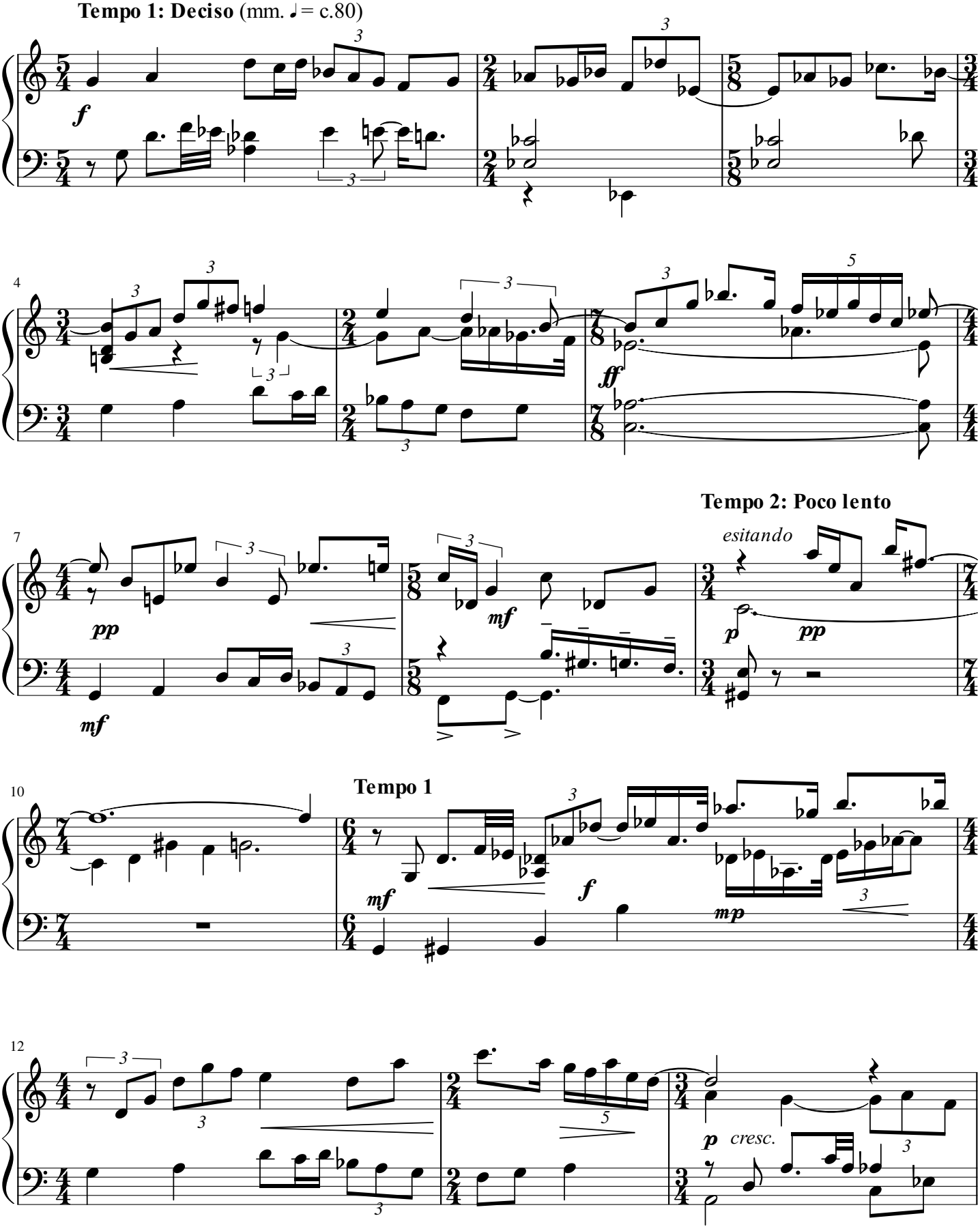
.2.

On visiting the Coombe Gibbet

Tempo 1: Deciso (mm. ♩= c.80)



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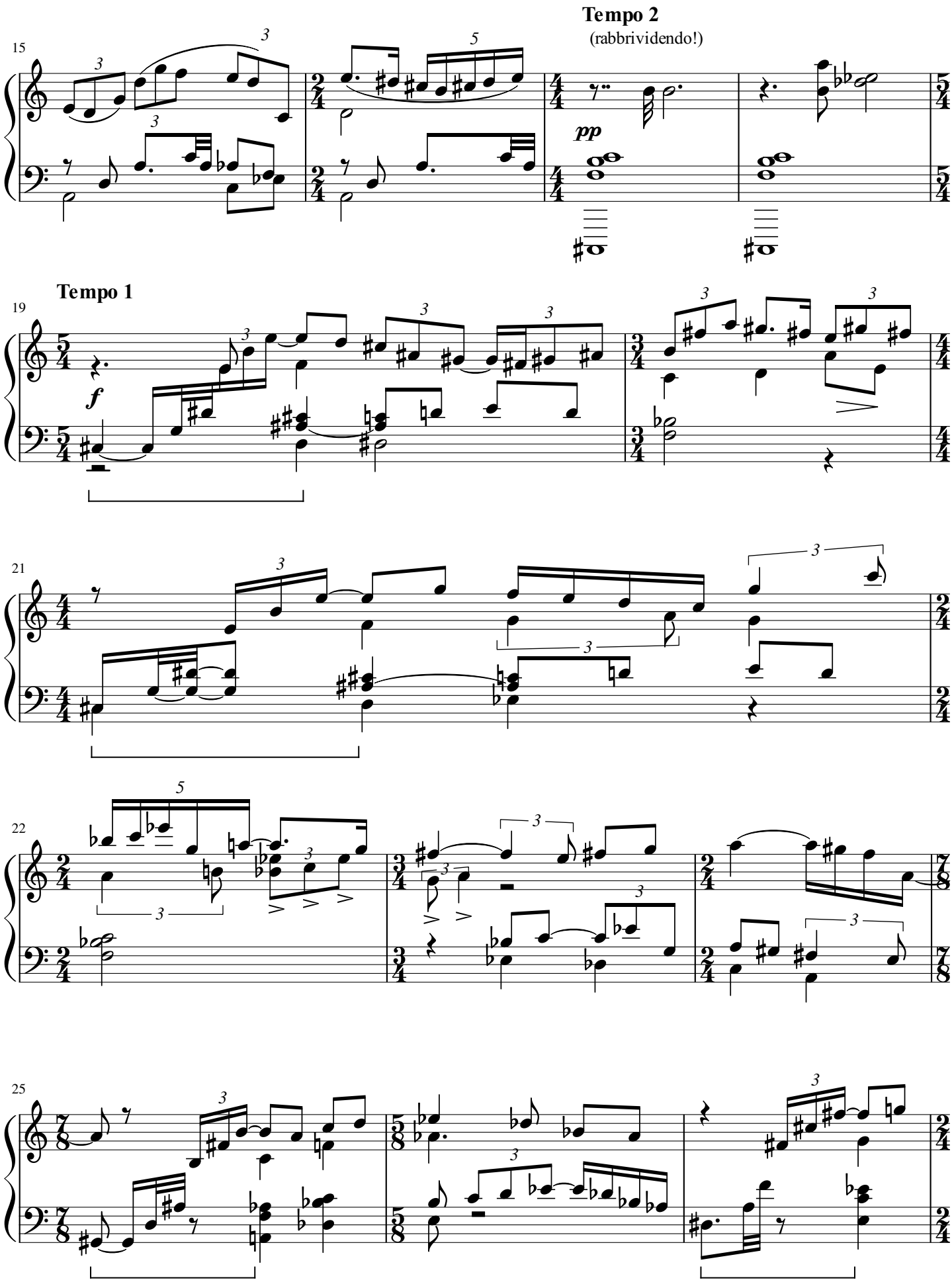

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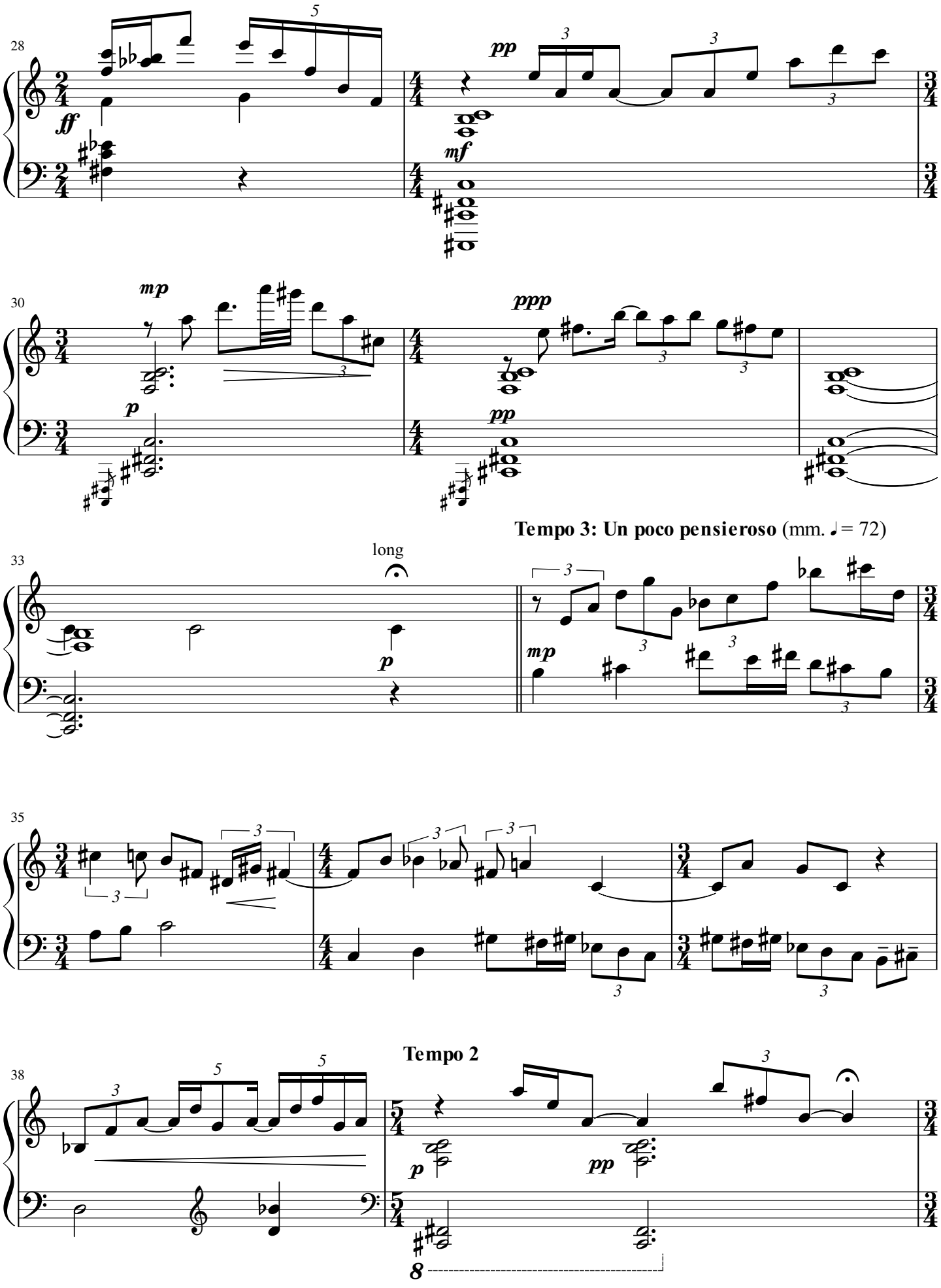

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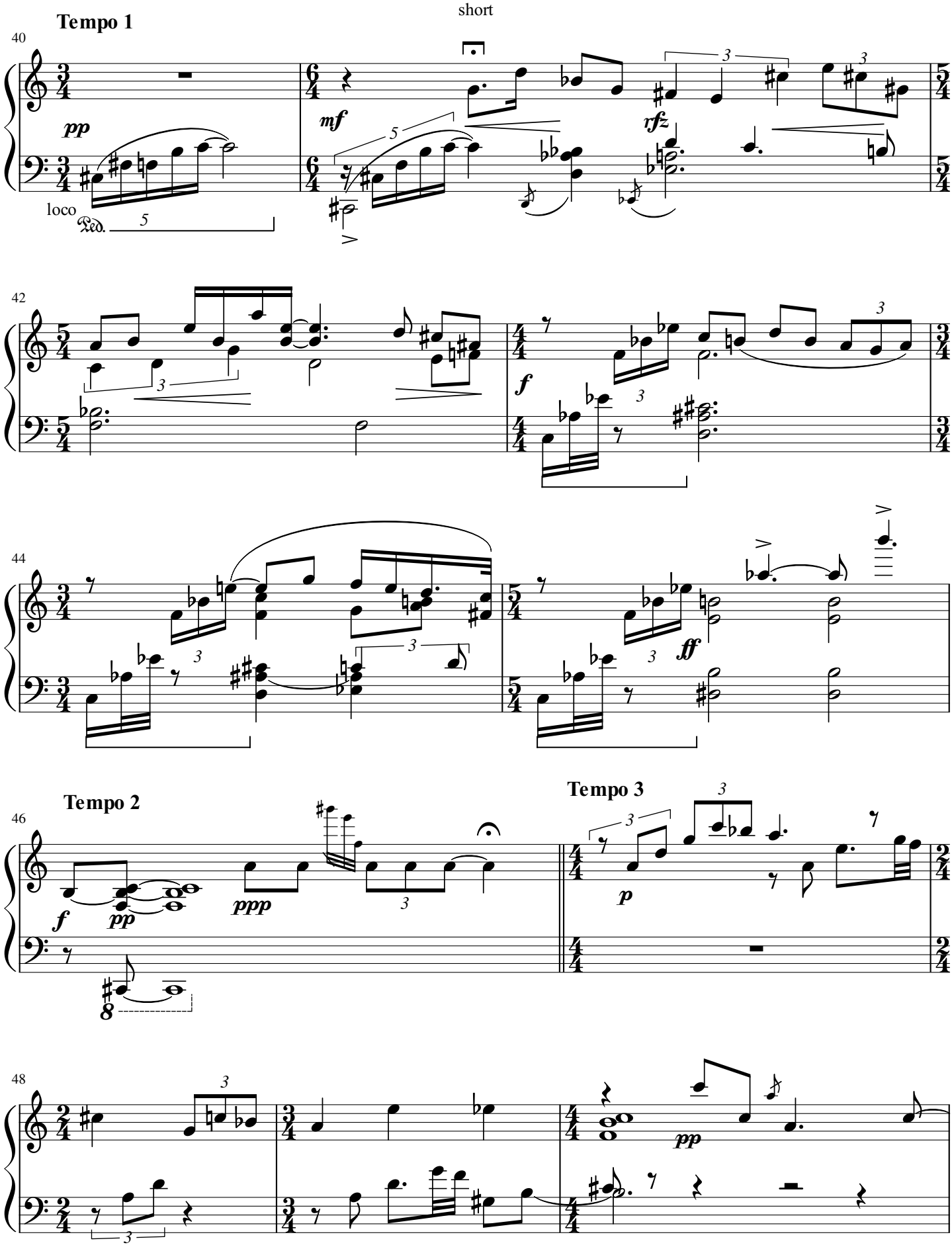

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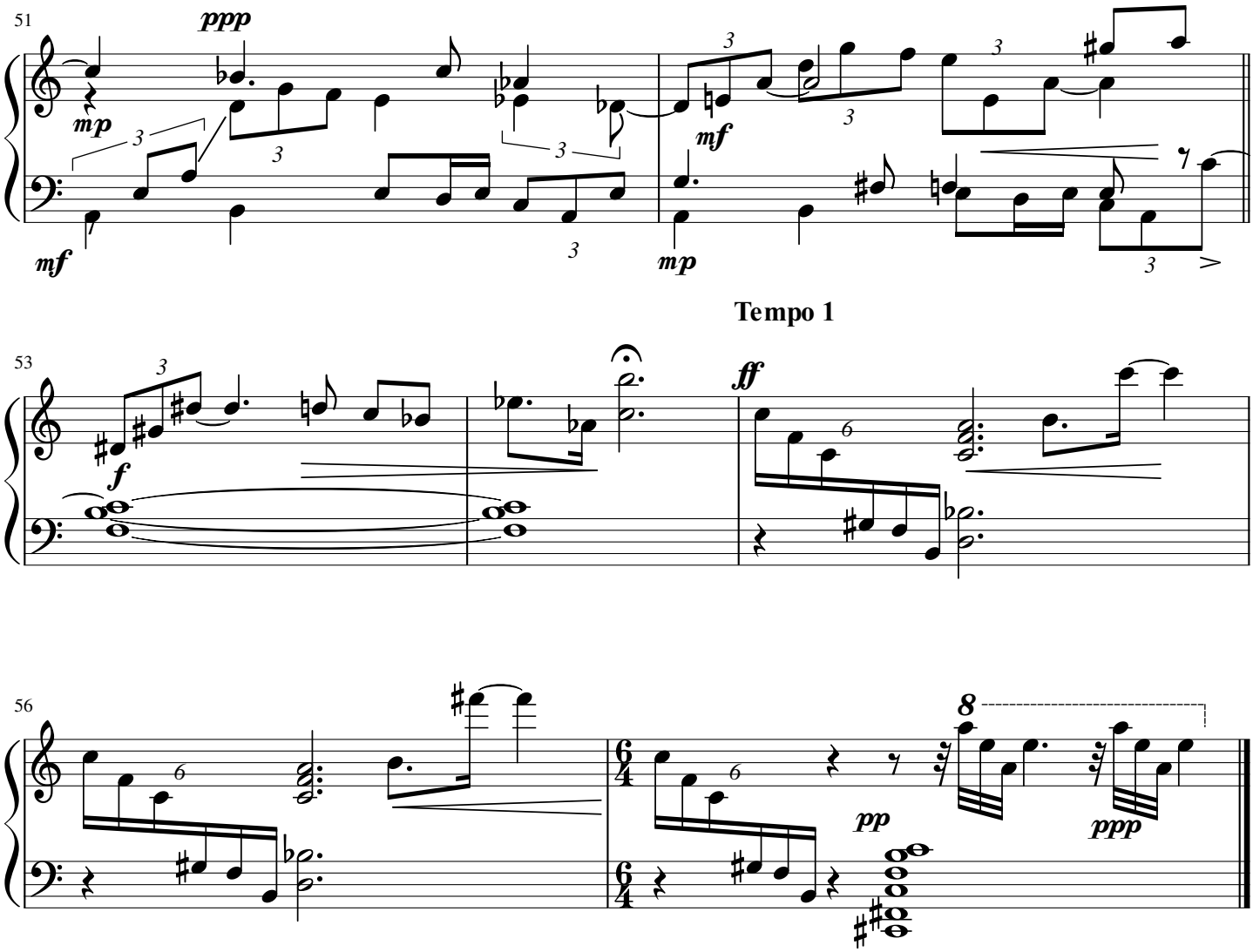

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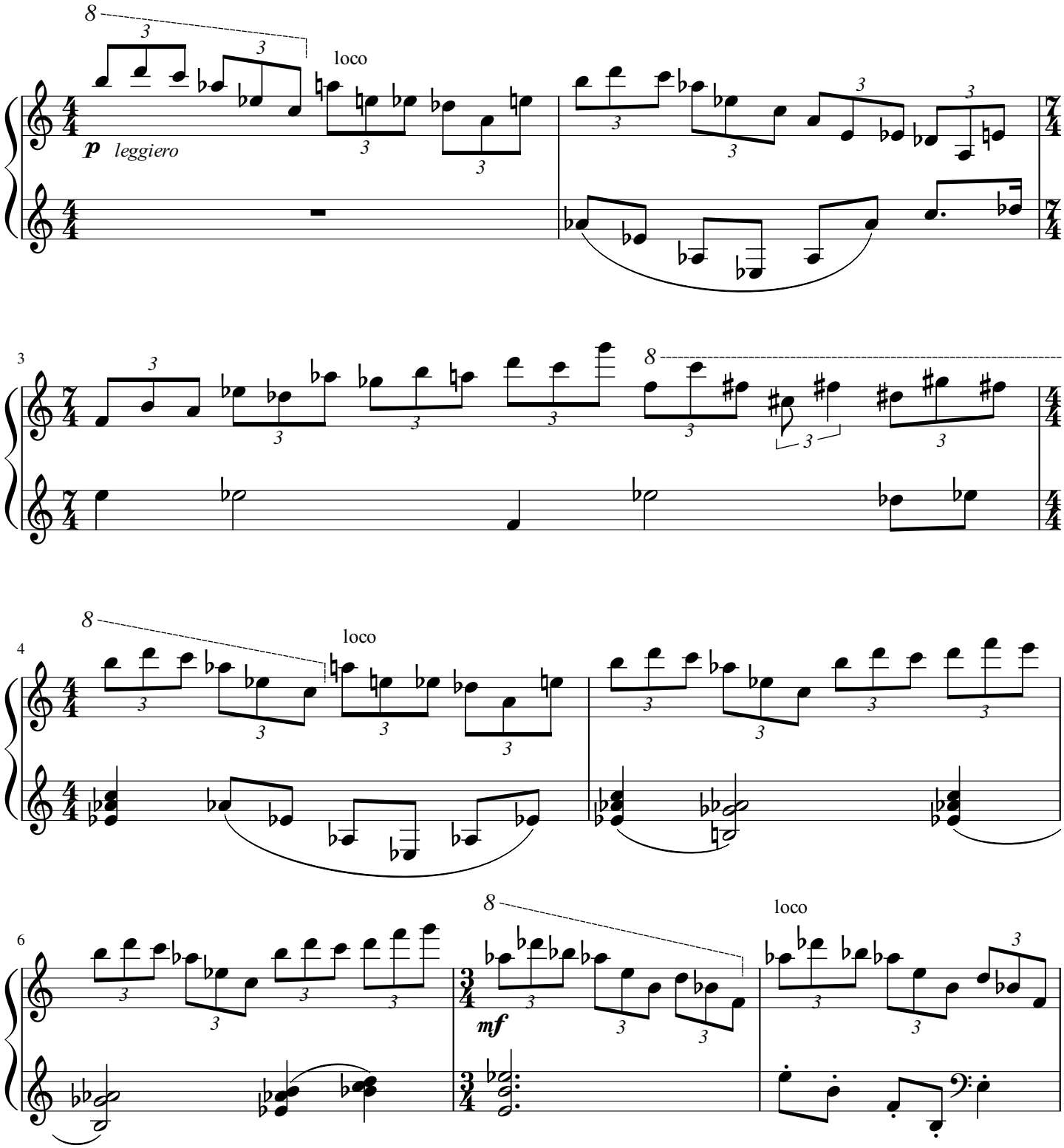
.3.

Starlings, Jesus Green, Cambridge

Tempo 1: Allegro ma non troppo (mm ♩= c.144)



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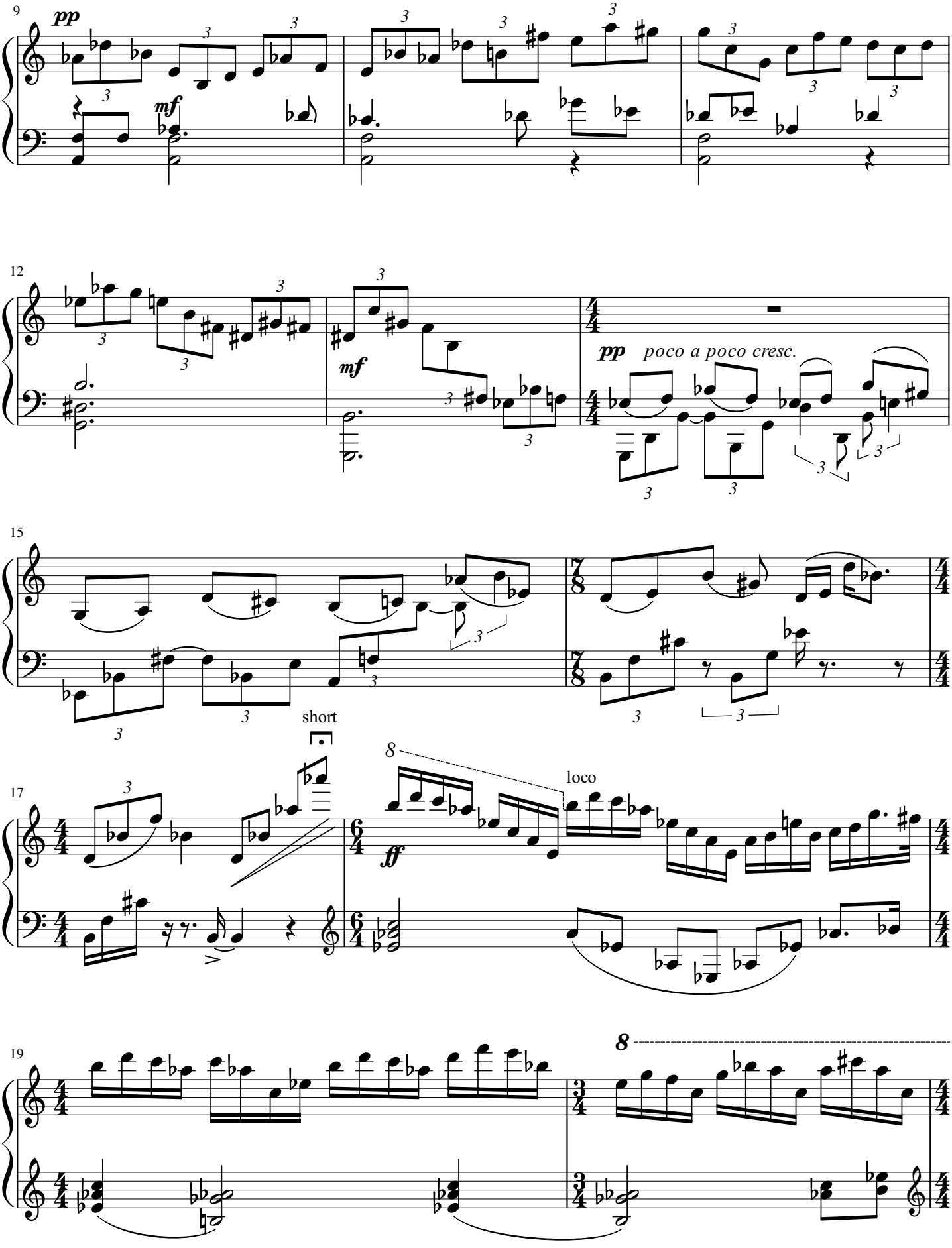

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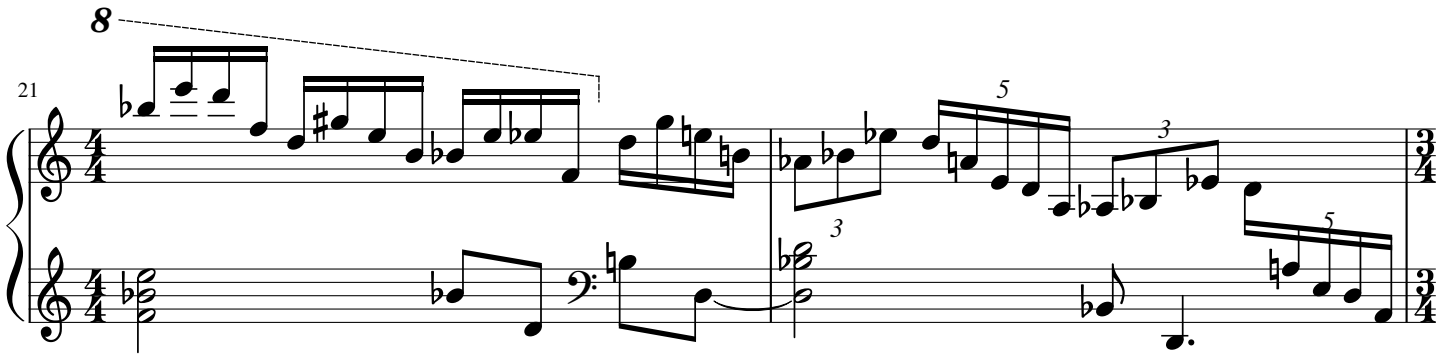
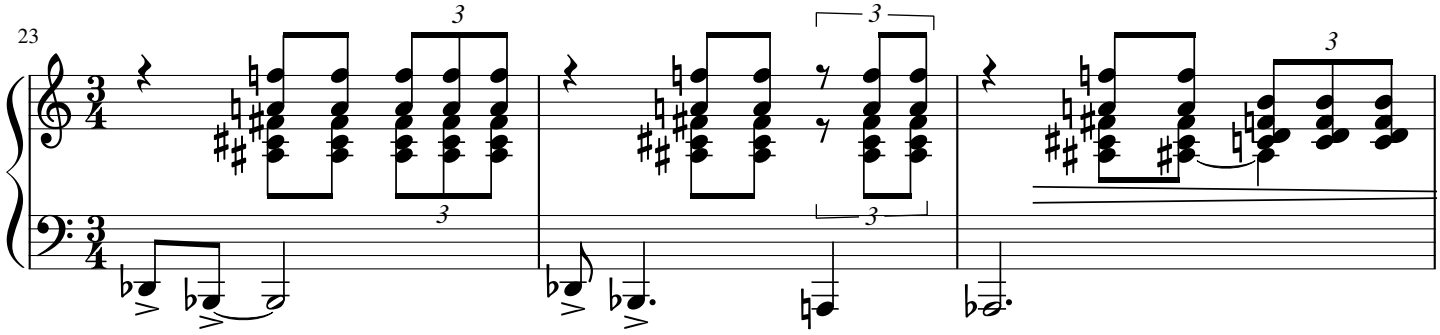
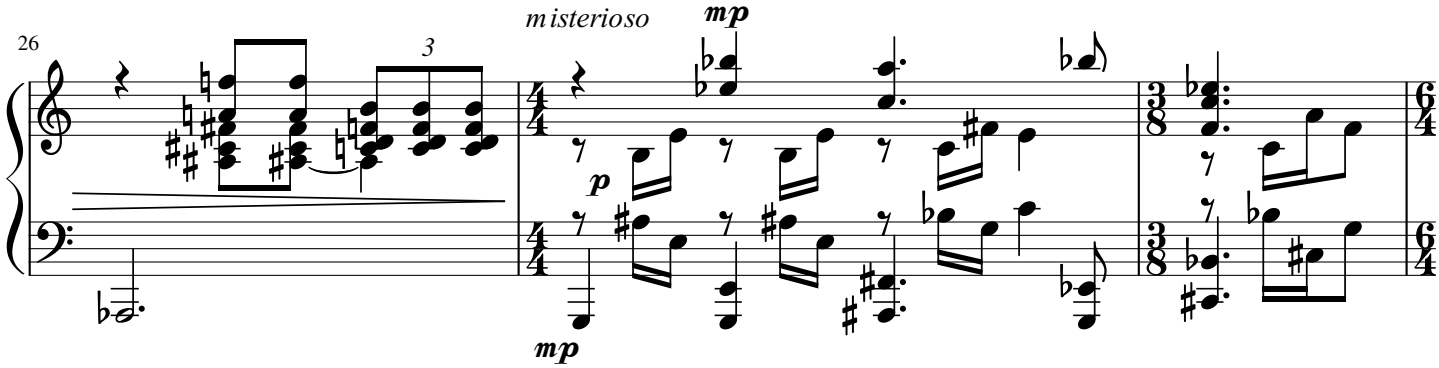
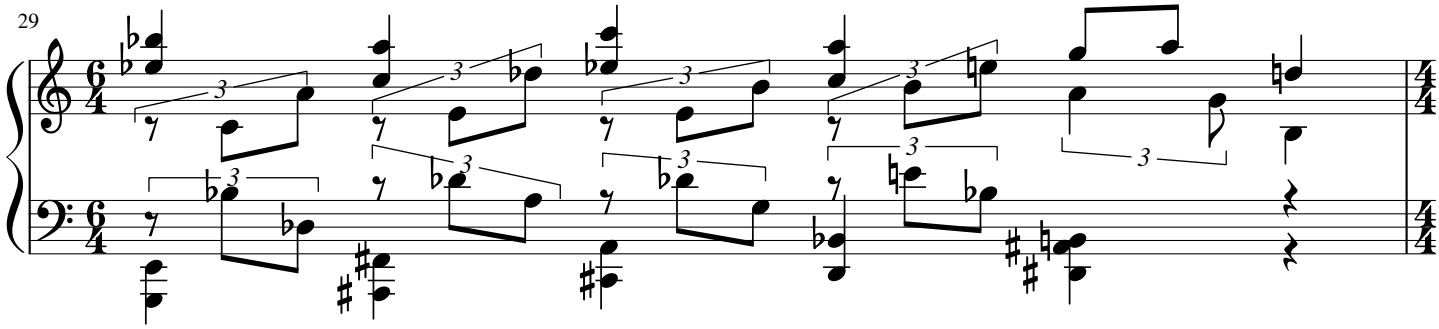
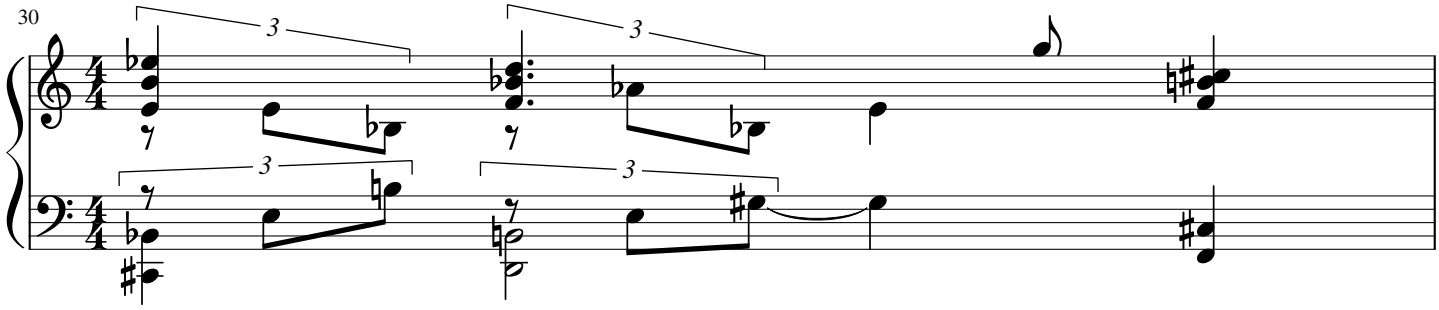


Tempo 2: meno mosso (mm. ♩= c.96)









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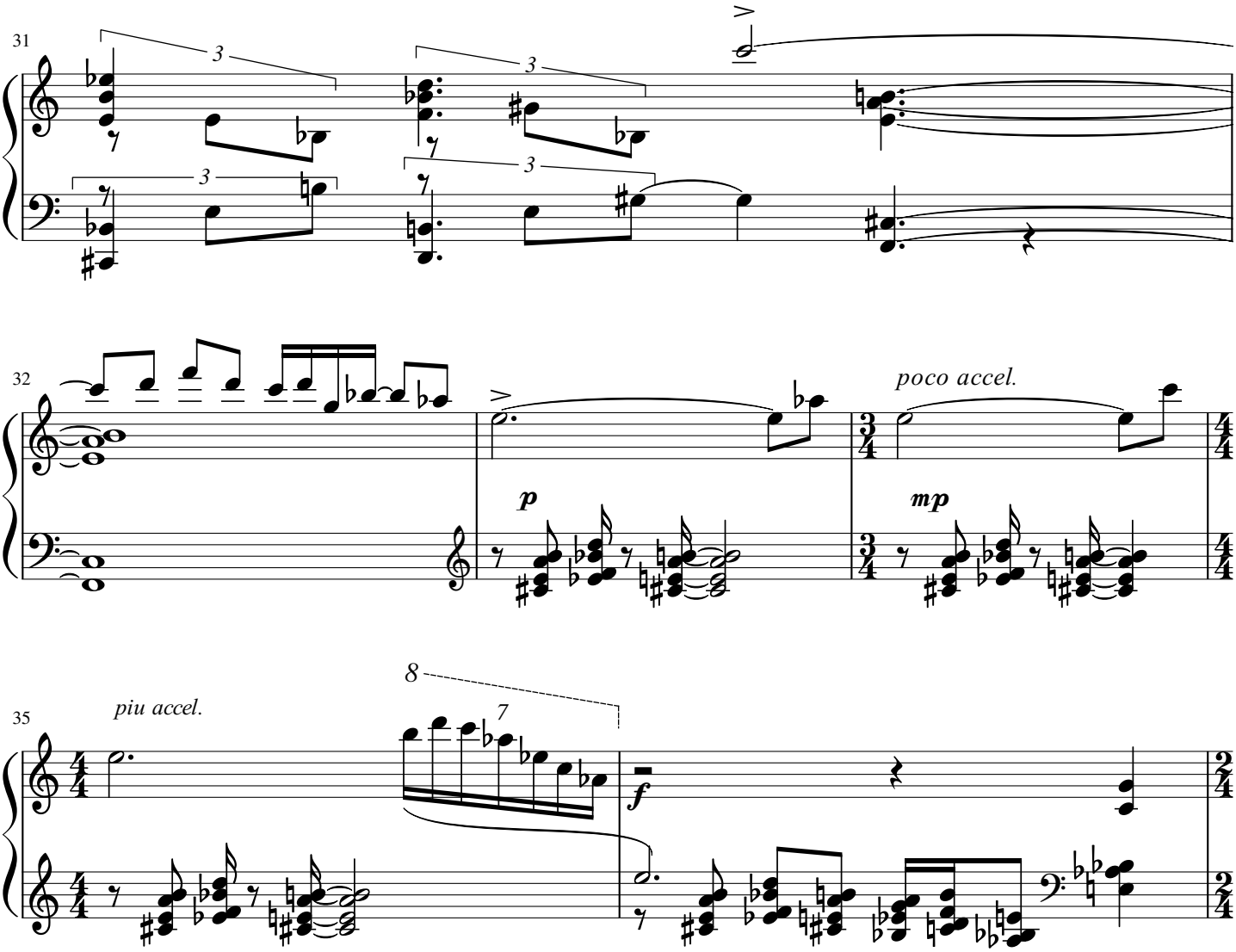
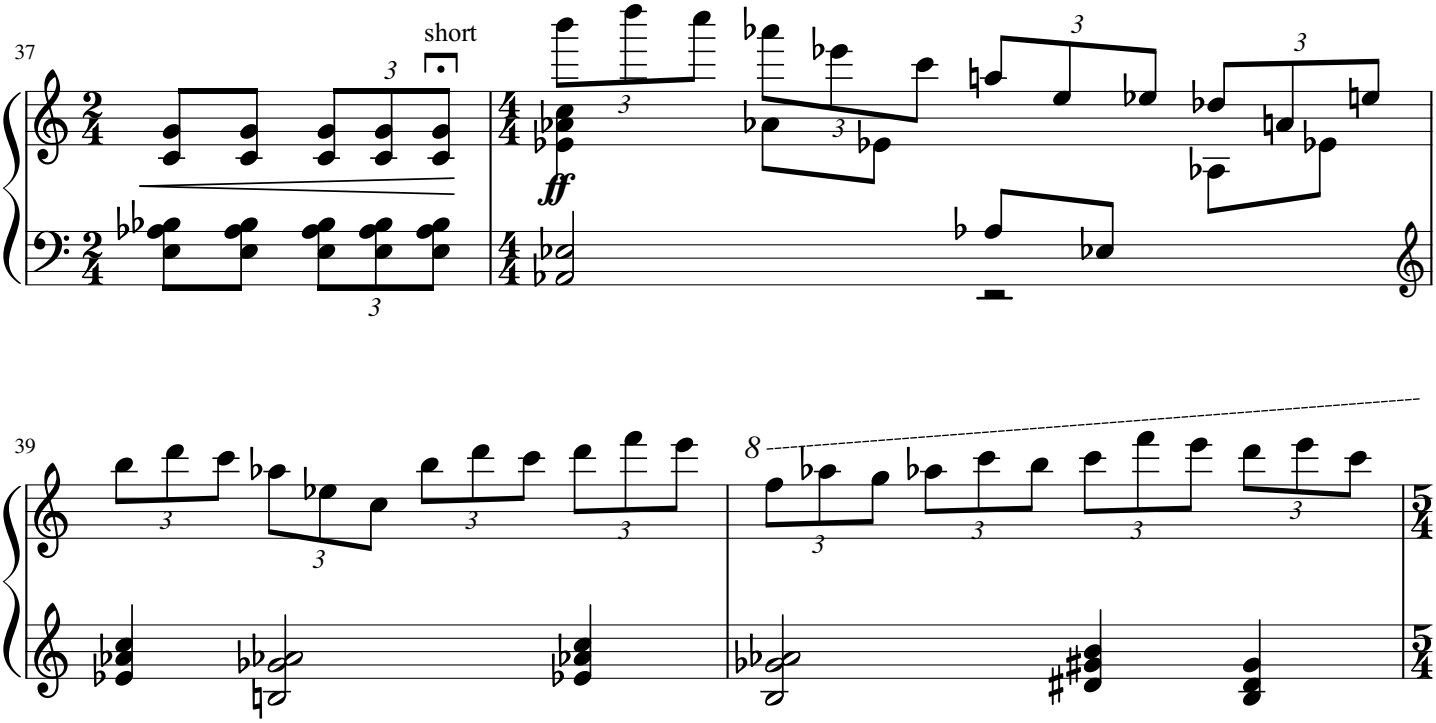


Tempo 1 (Allegro)



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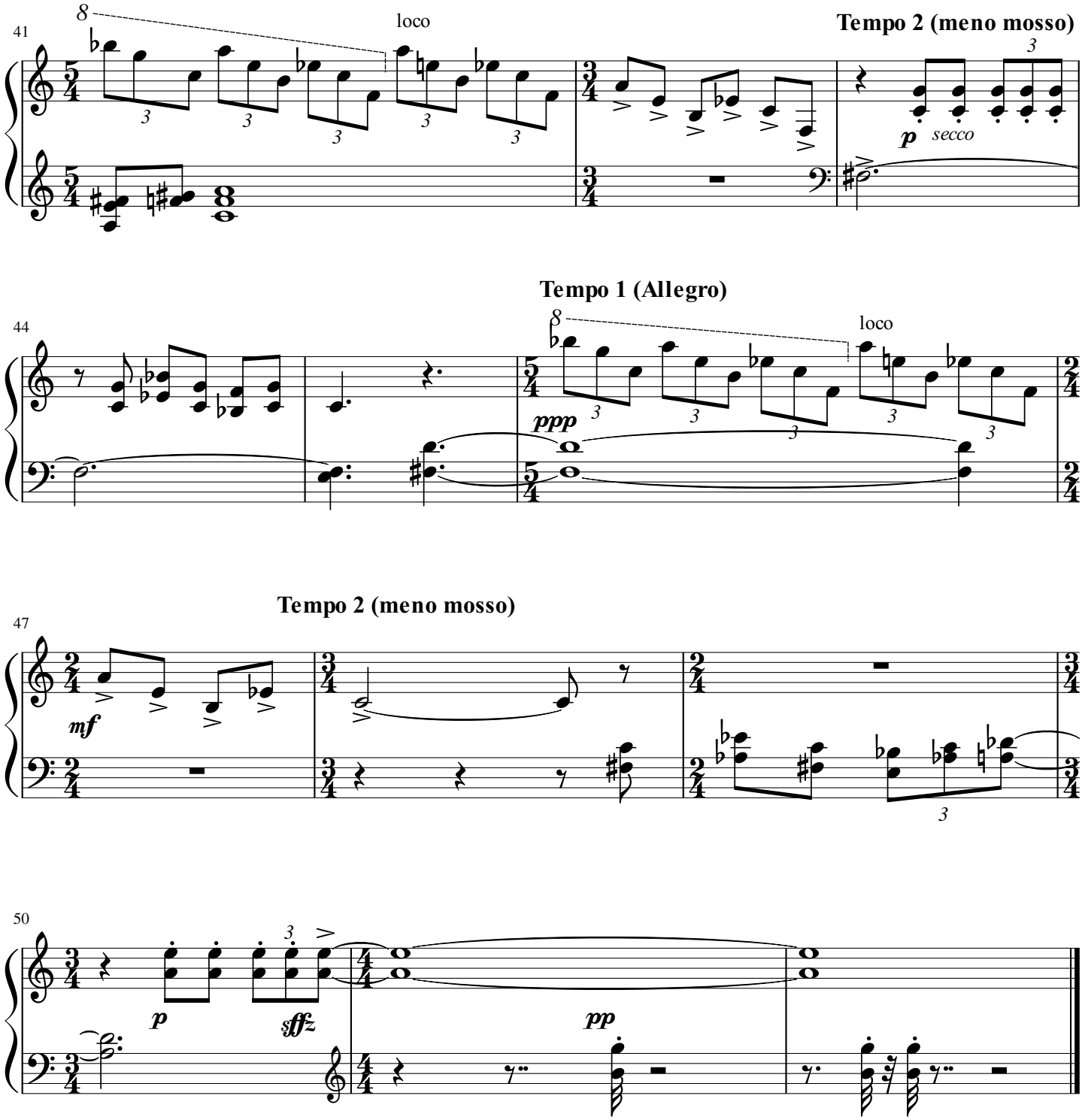

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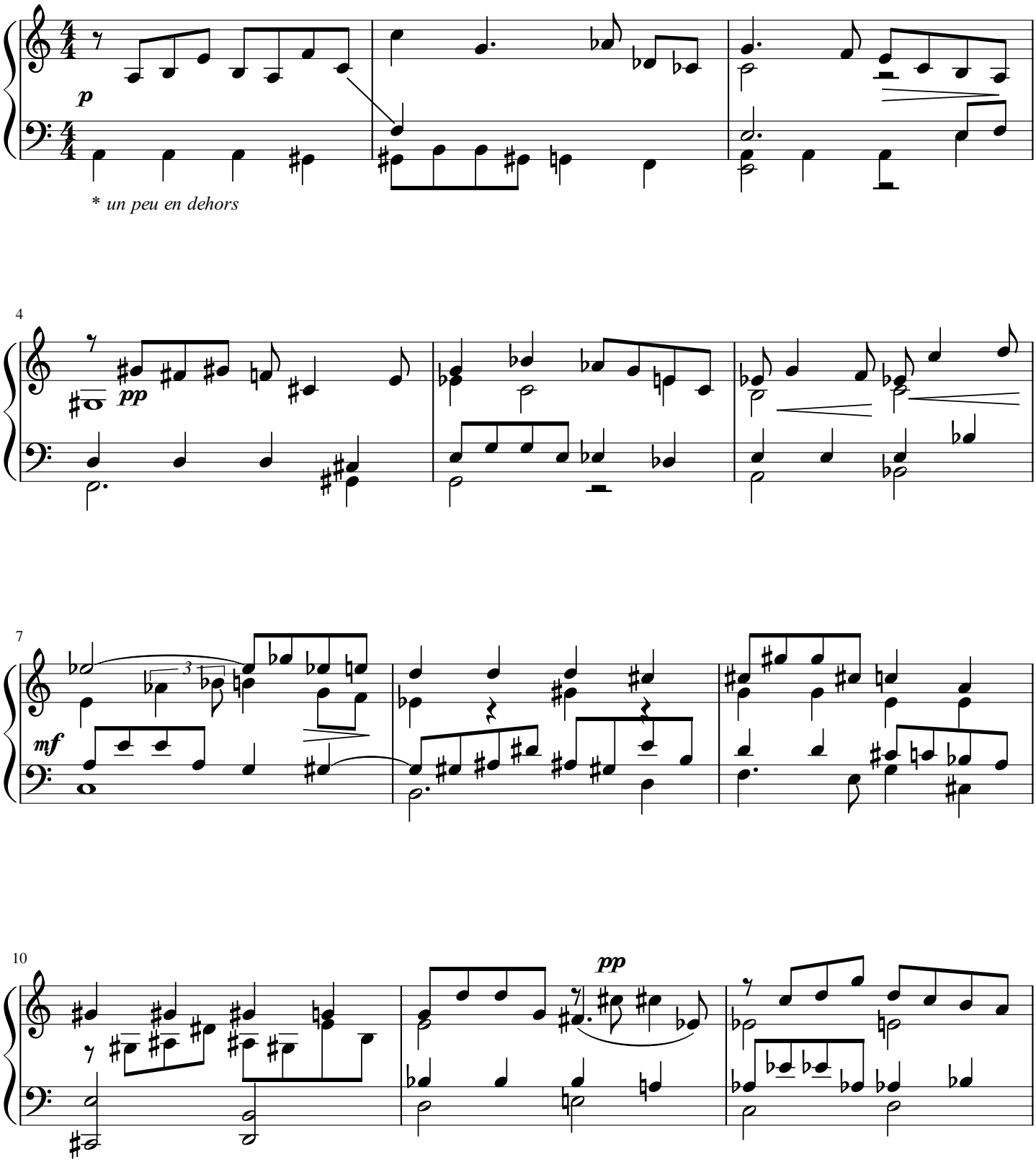
.4.

Elegy for Déodat de Séverac (1872-1921)

Tempo 1: assez lent (mm ♩= c.52)



* The theme is from *'Coin de cimitière au printemps'* (no. 4 of the *En Languedoc* suite)

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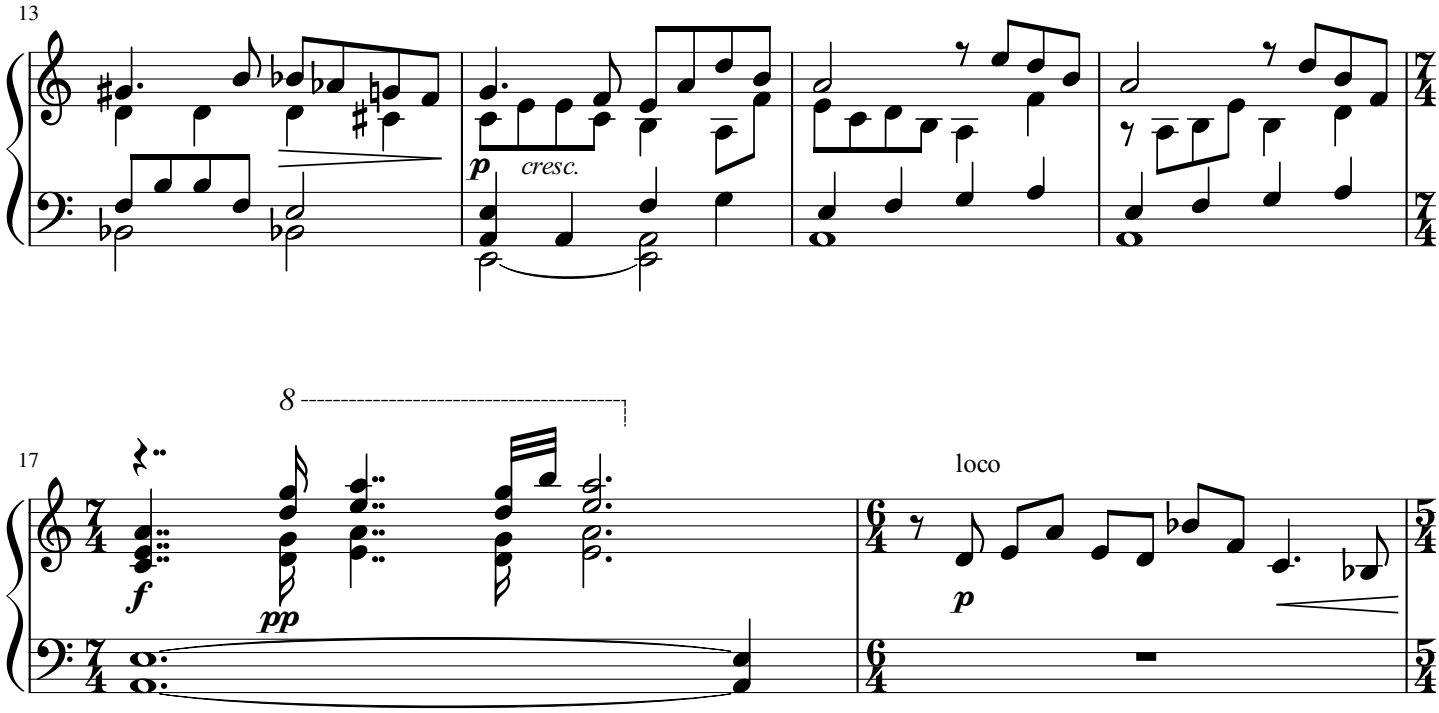
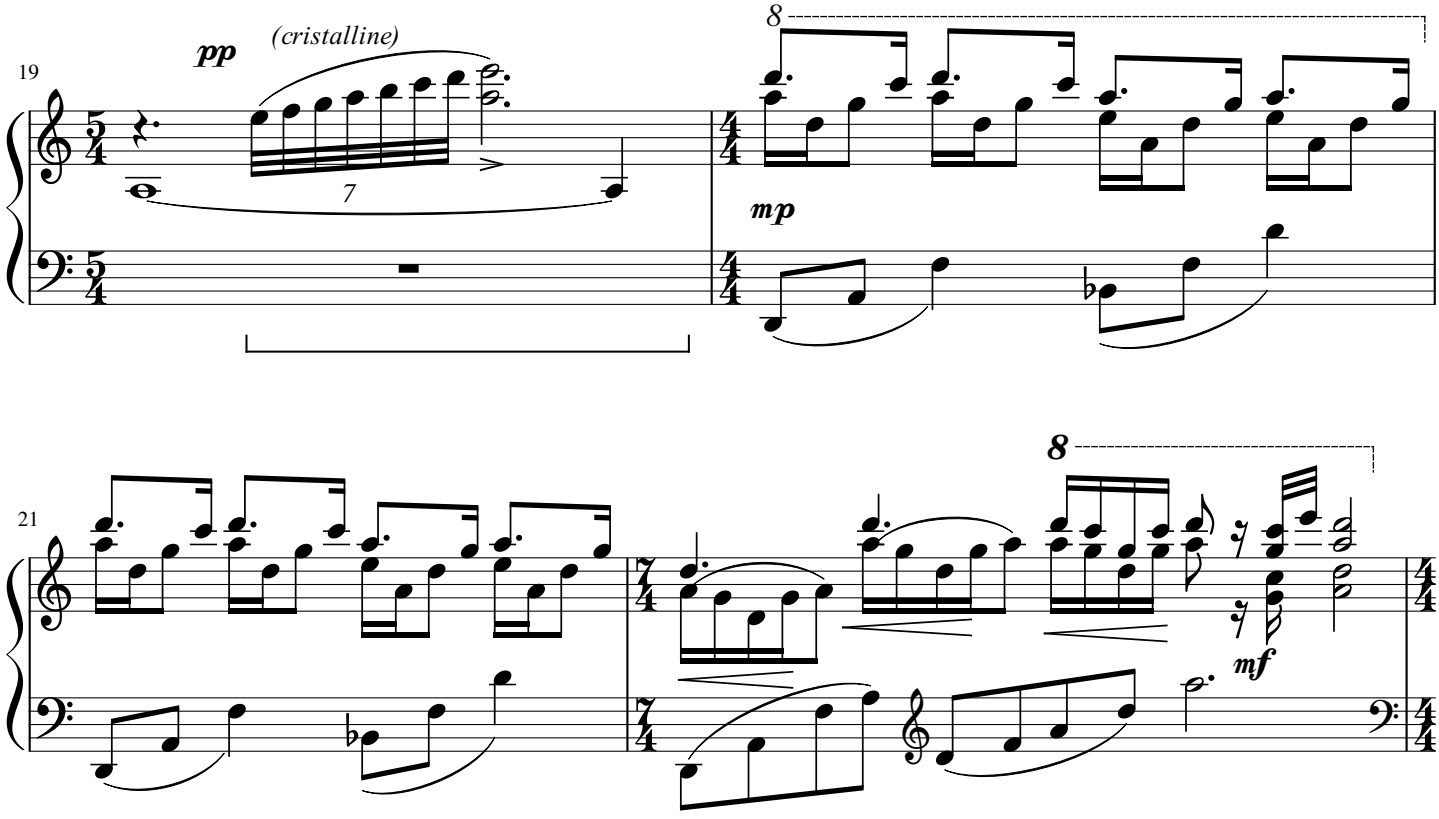


Tempo 2: un peu animé (mm ♩= c.84)



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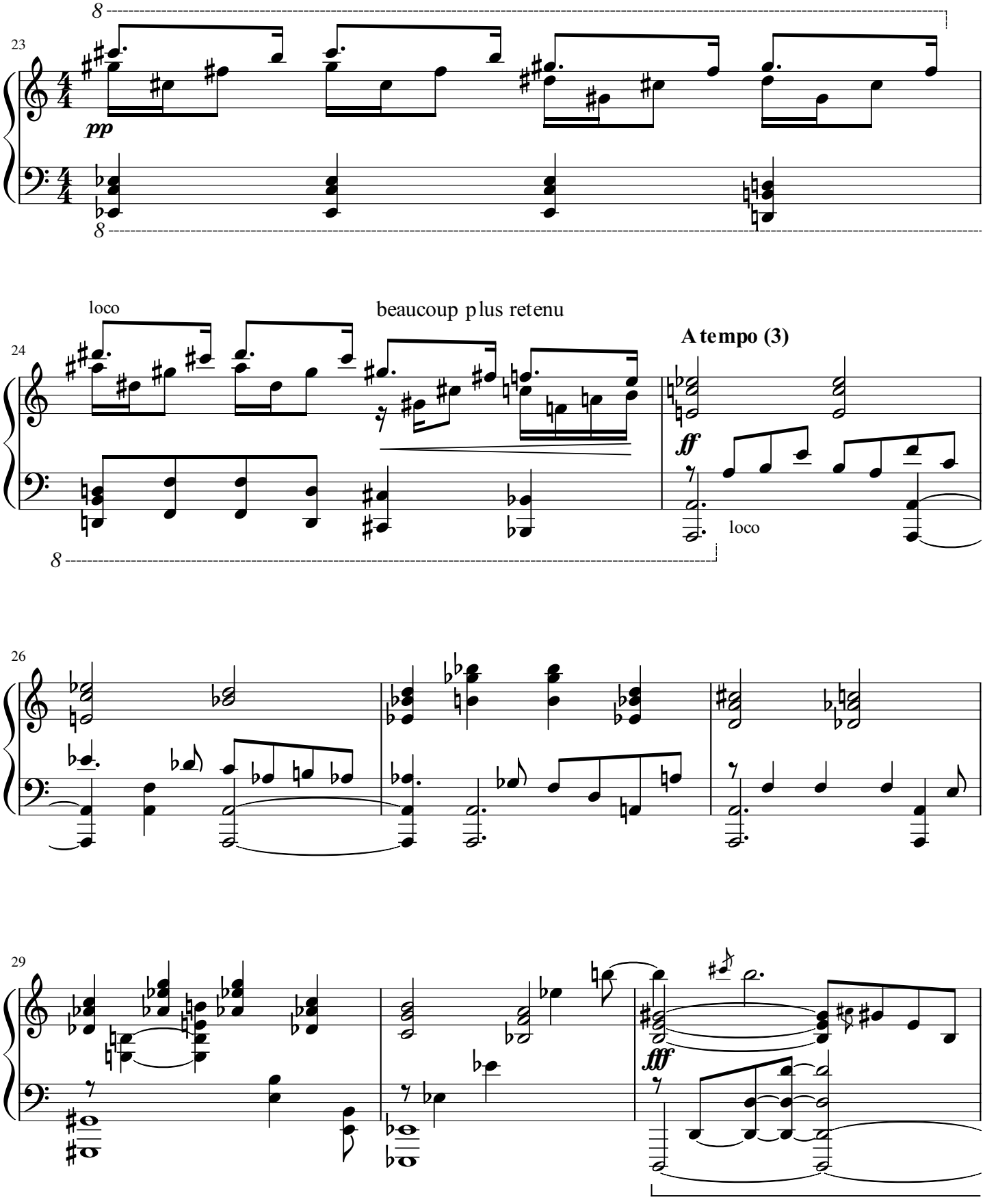
Tempo 3: un peu plus retenu (mm. ♩= c.66)



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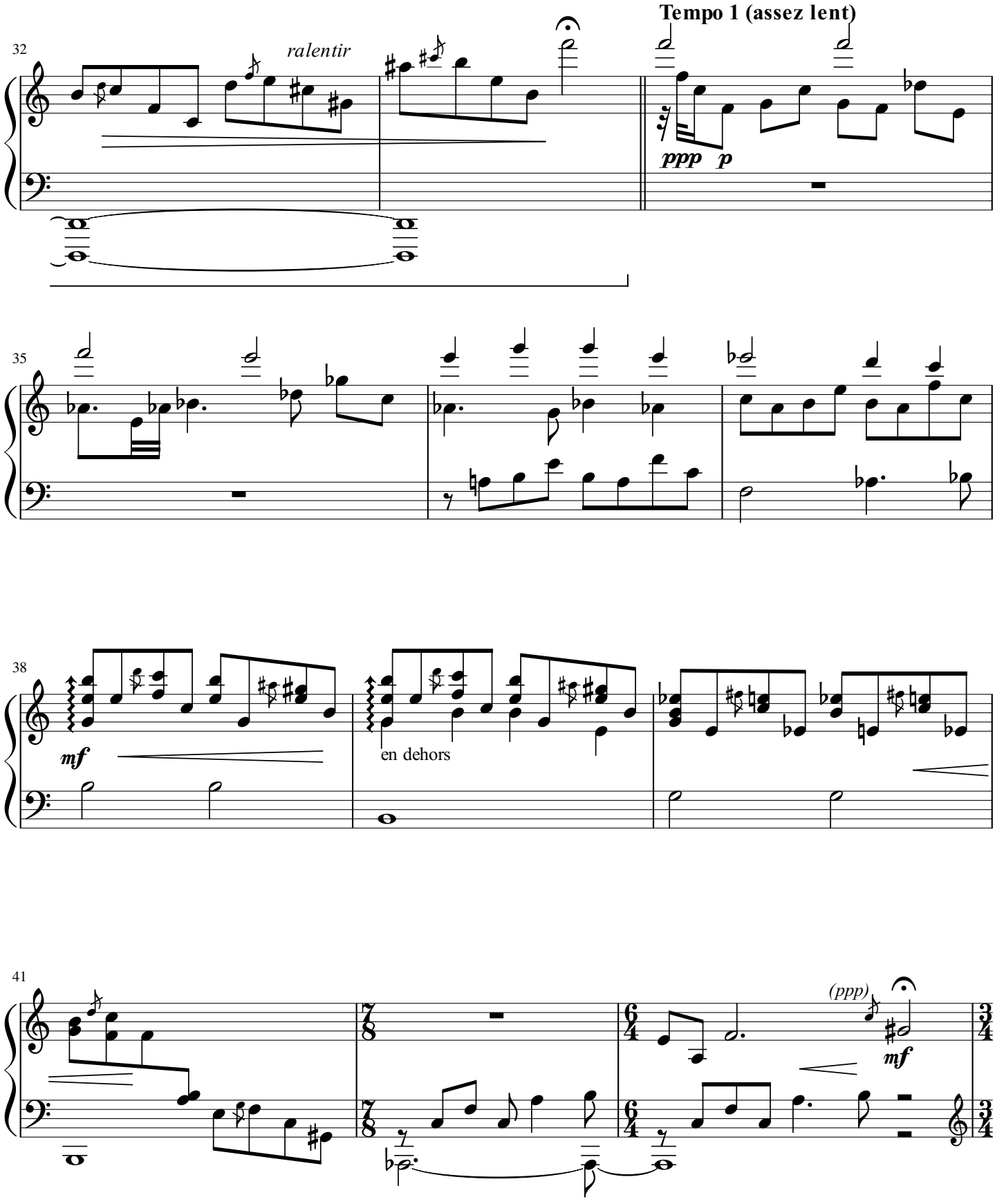

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Doucement animé

44

pp

[l'angelus, au loin]

Tempo 1

(ppp)

p

Plus animé

47

Tempo 1

mp

pp

8

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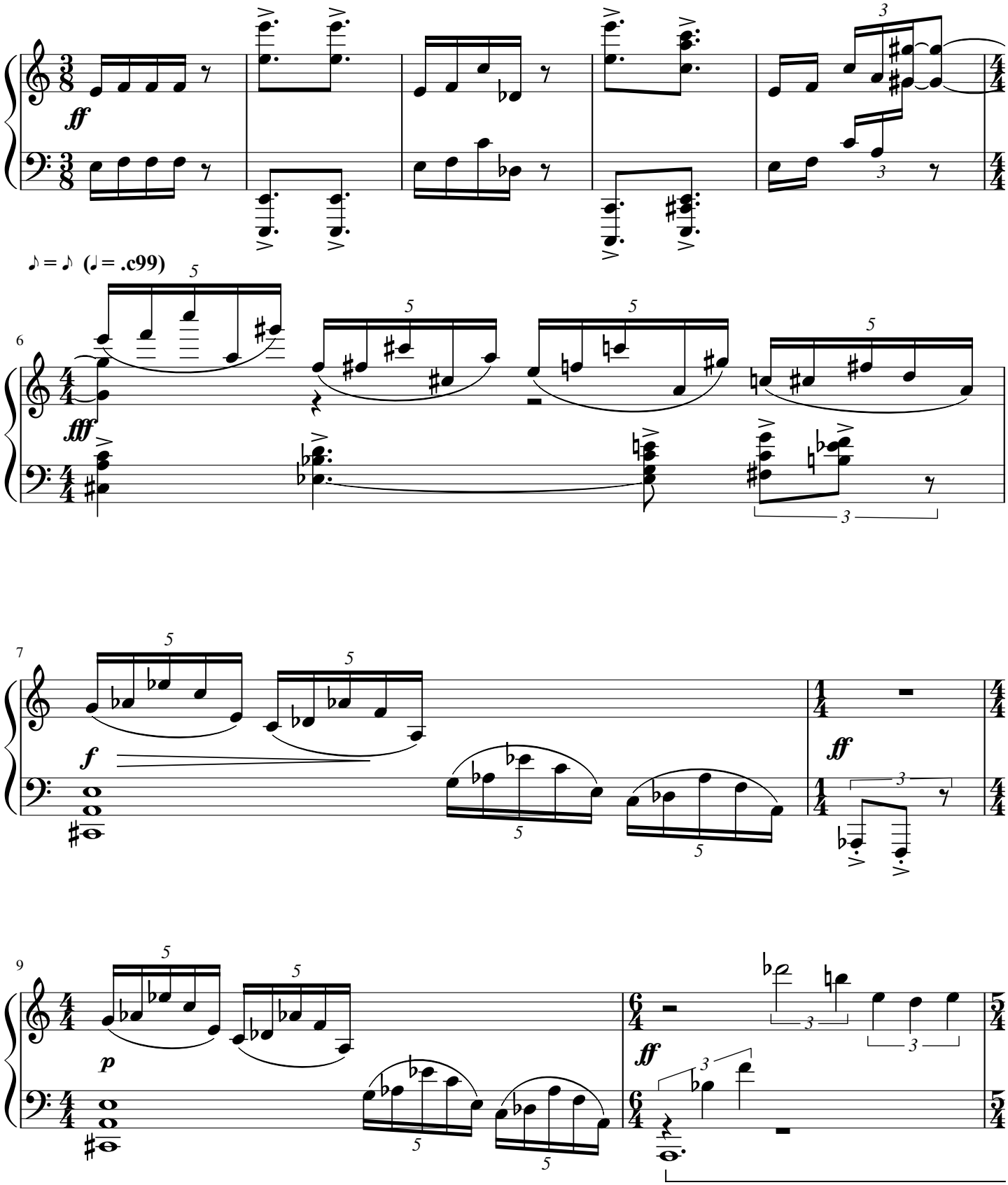
.5.

Tempo 1: Allegro feroce (mm ♩ = c.66)



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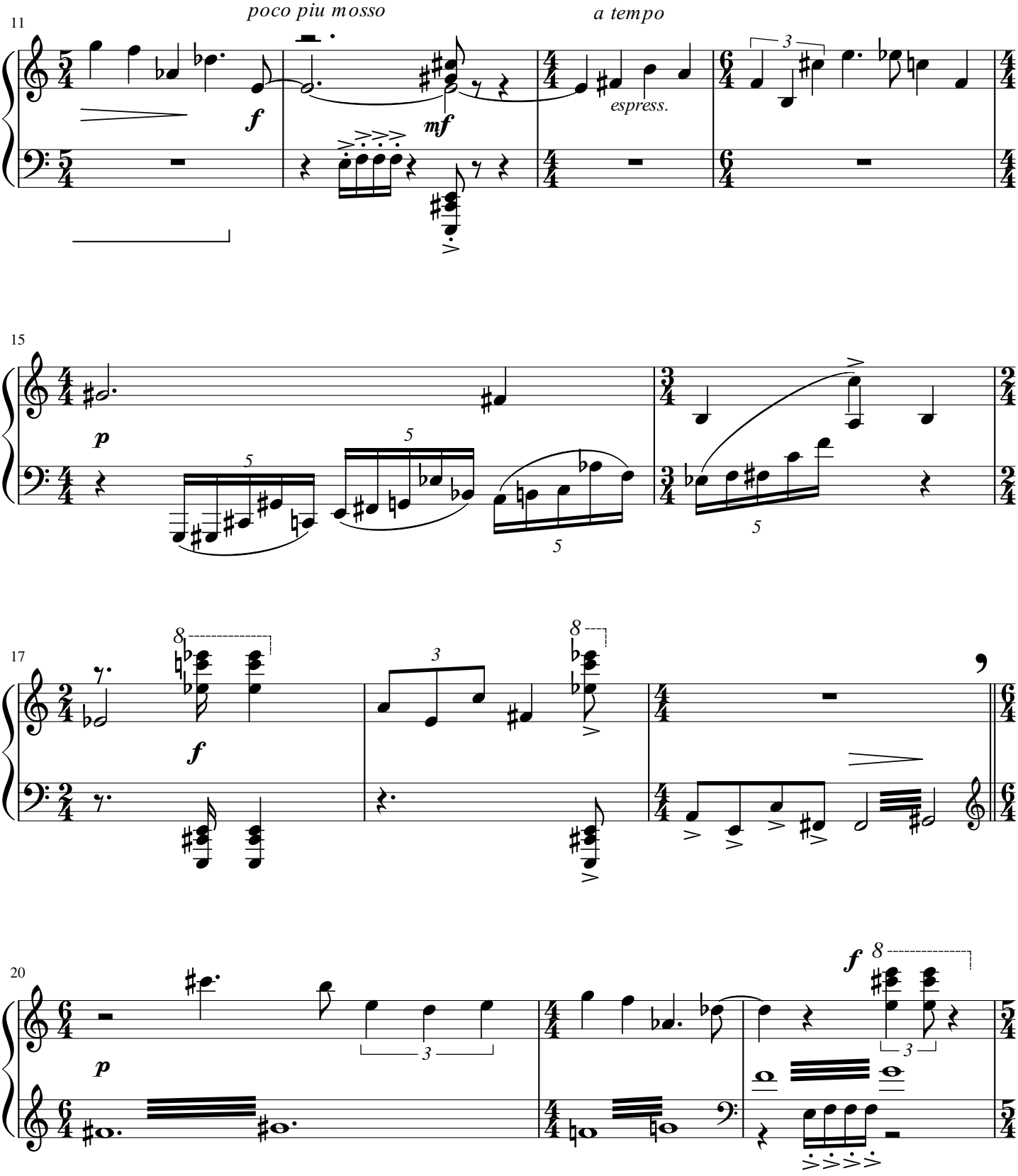

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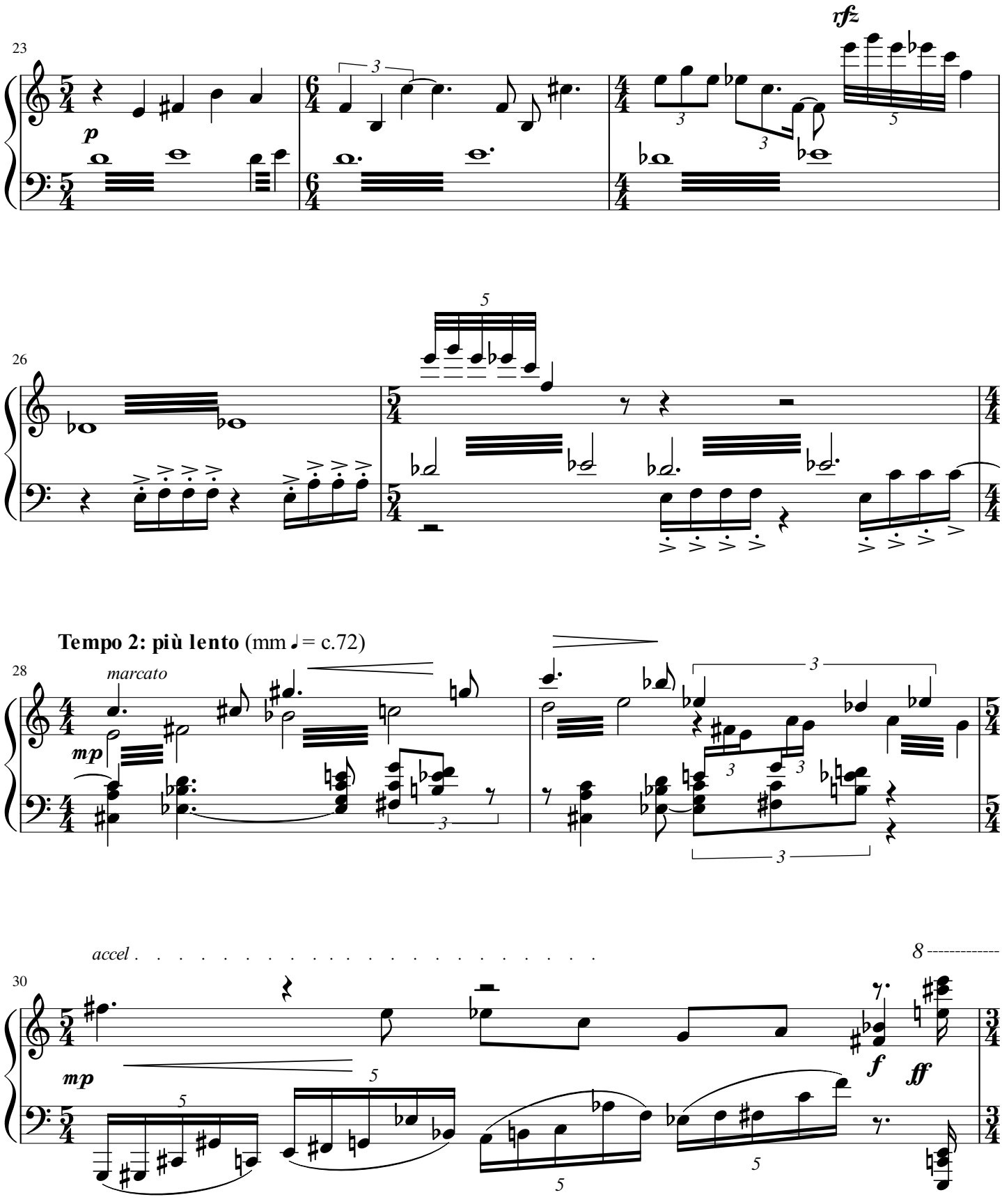
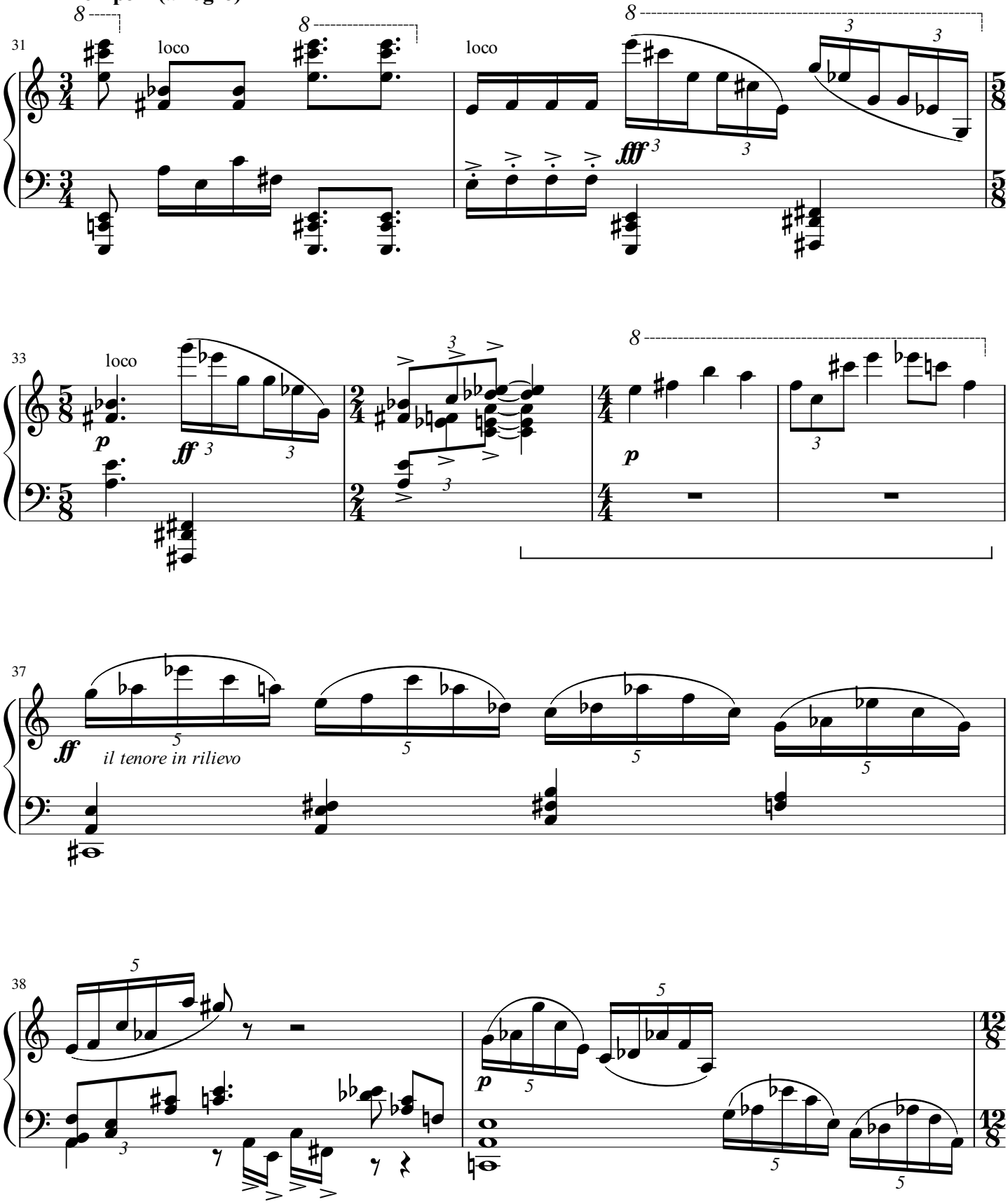

23
rfz
p
26
Tempo 2: più lento (mm ♩= c.72)
28
marcato
mp
accel
8
30
mp
f
ff

Tempo 1 (allegro)



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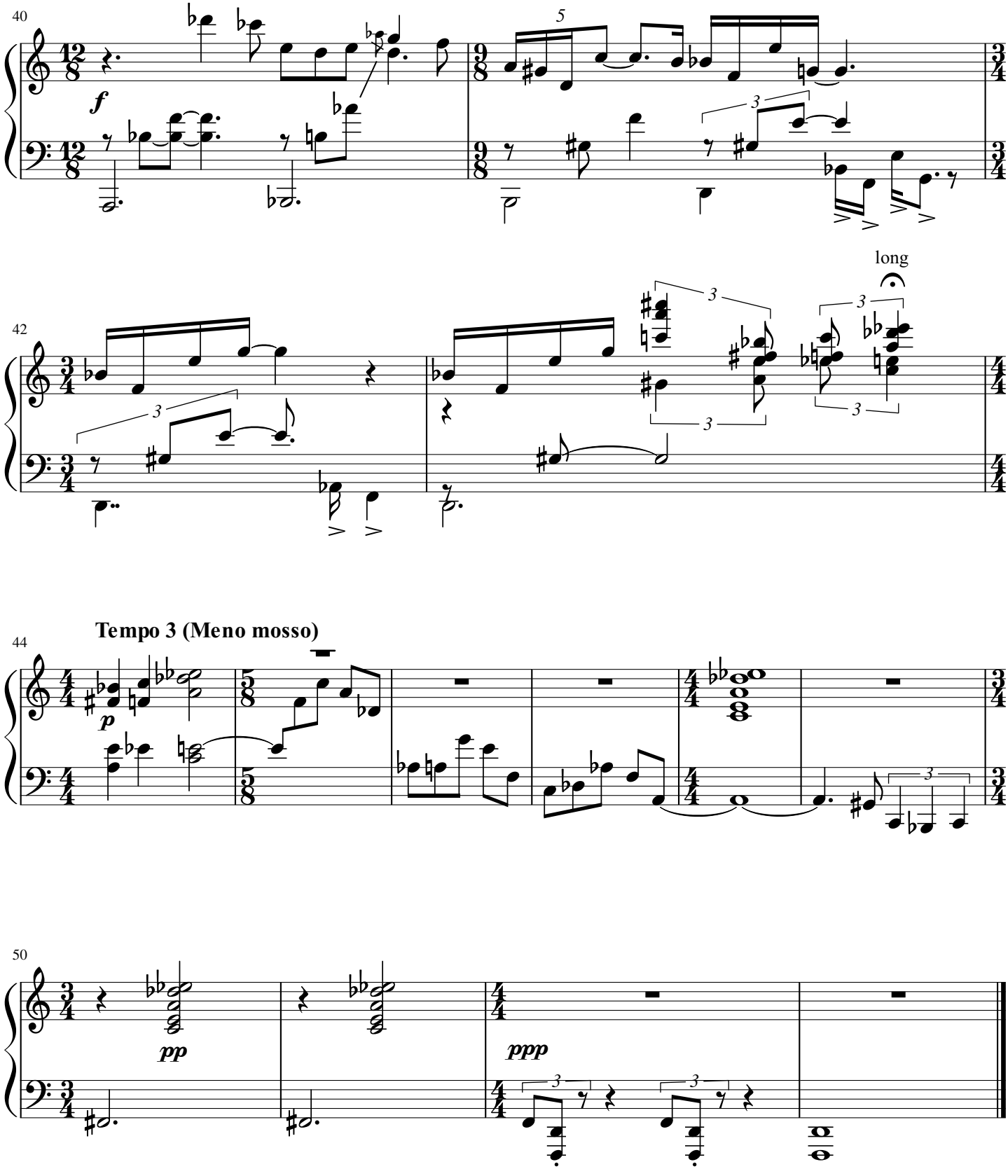

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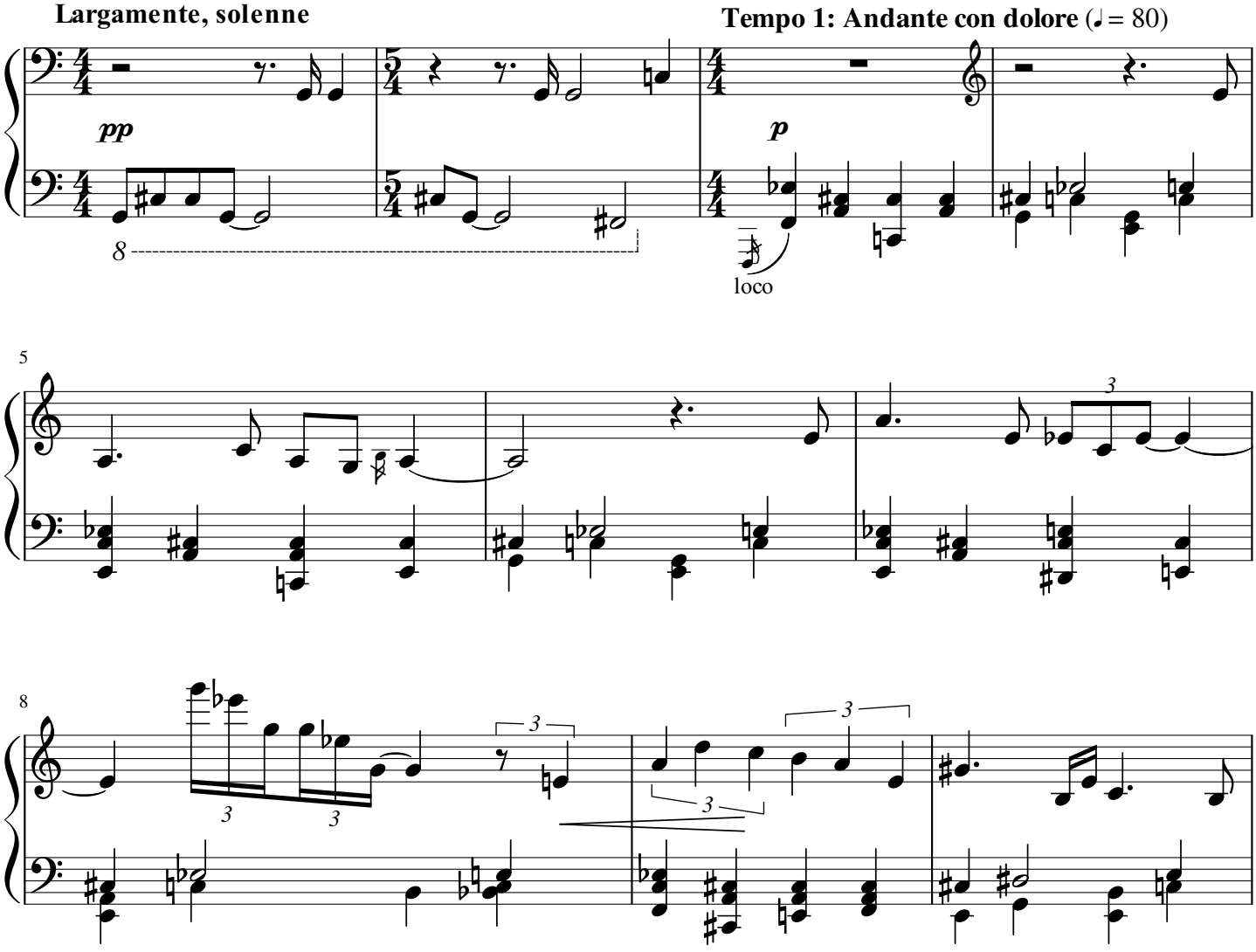
.6.

A grey and boiling street
Alive with ricketty noise.
Suddenly, a hearse,
Takes a deliberate way
Through this chasm of commerce;
And children look eagerly
To find misery behind the shades.
Hired men, impatient, drive with a longing
To reach quickly the grave-side, the end of solemnity.
Yes, let us have it over.
Drive, man, drive.
Flog your sleek-hided beasts,
Gallop - gallop - gallop.
Let us finish it quickly.

Steven Crane (1871-1900)



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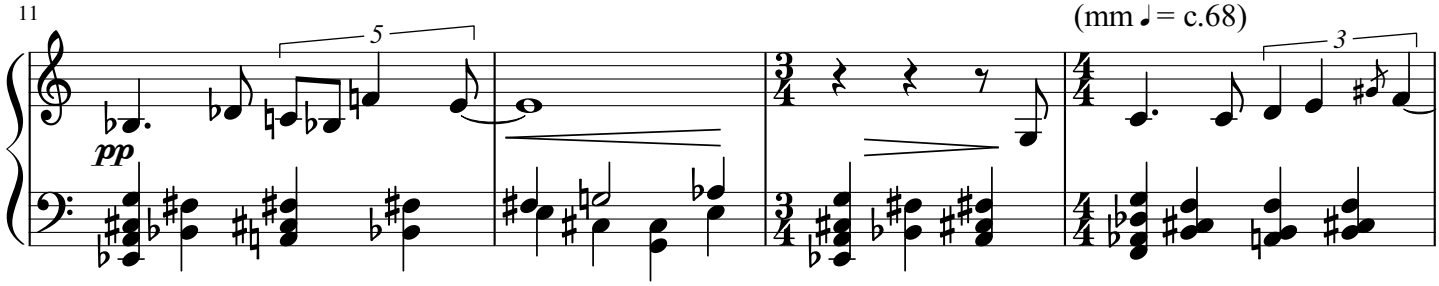
Tempo 2:
Pochiss. meno mosso
(mm ♩= c.68)

11



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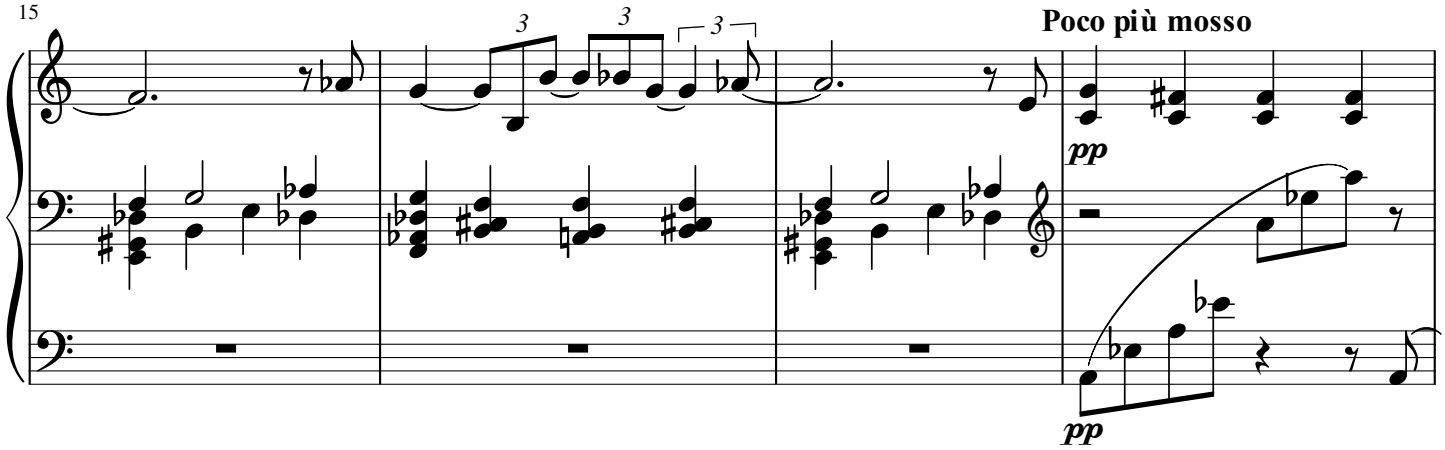

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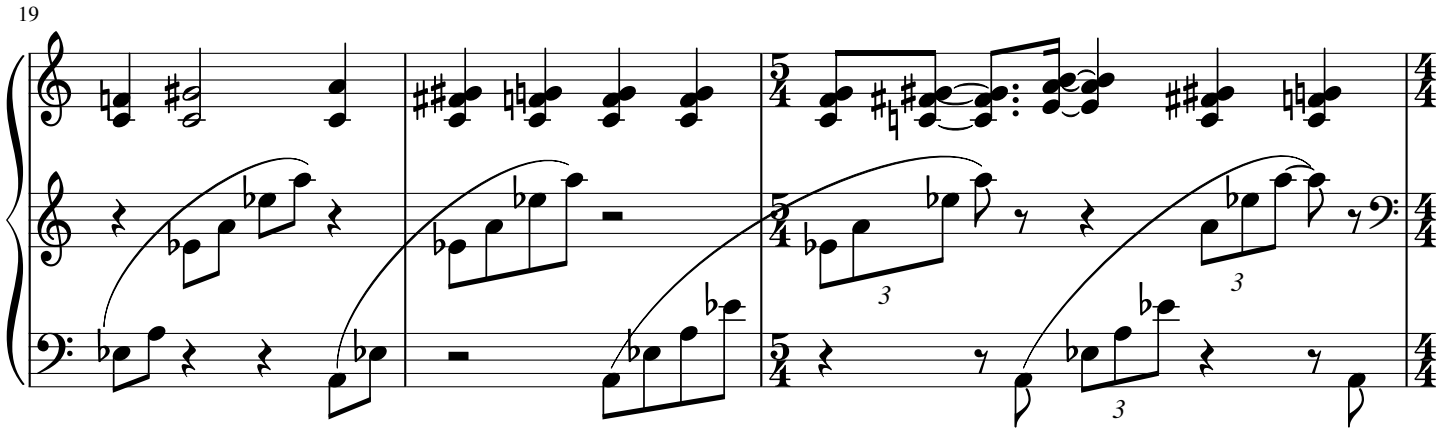

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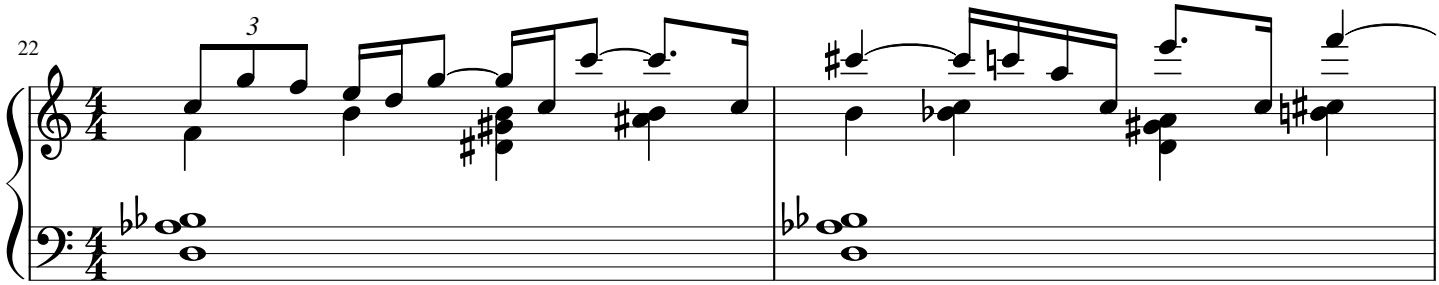

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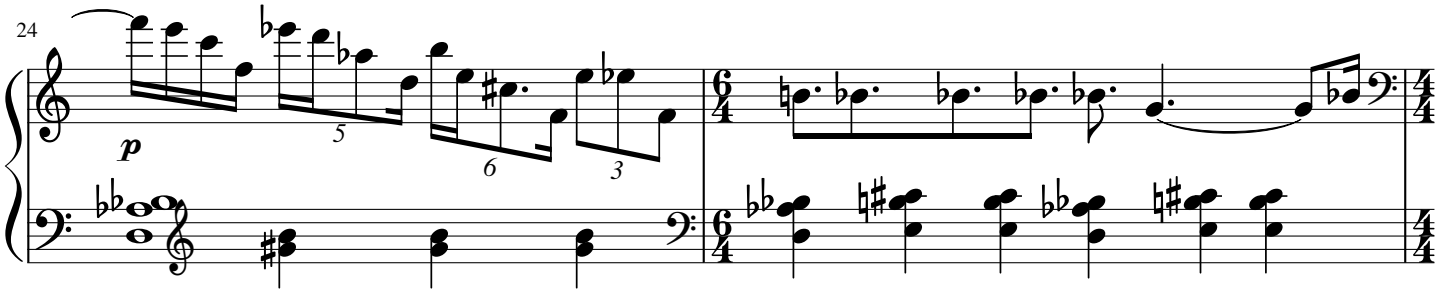
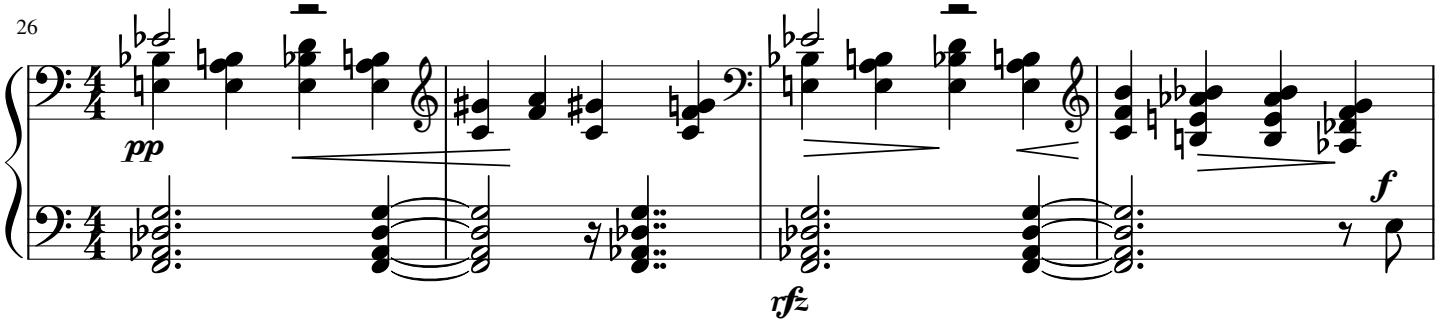
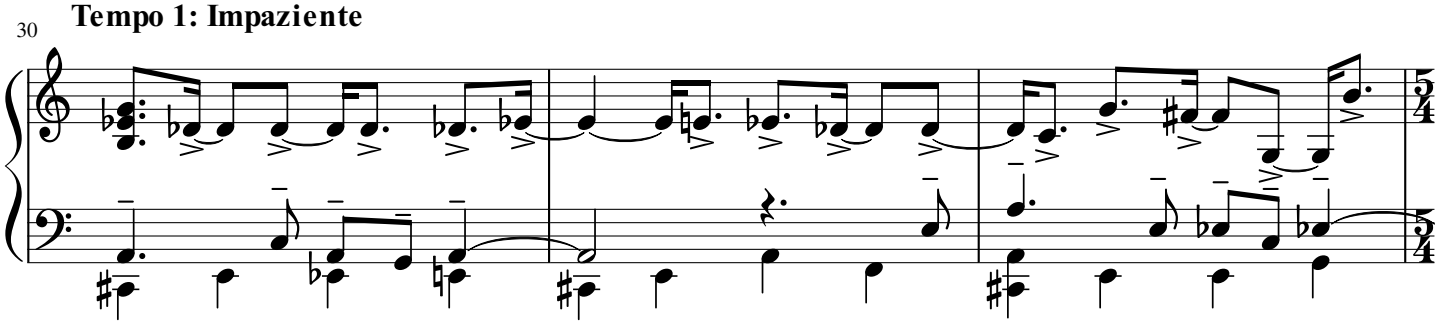


Tempo 2



Tempo 1: Impaziente



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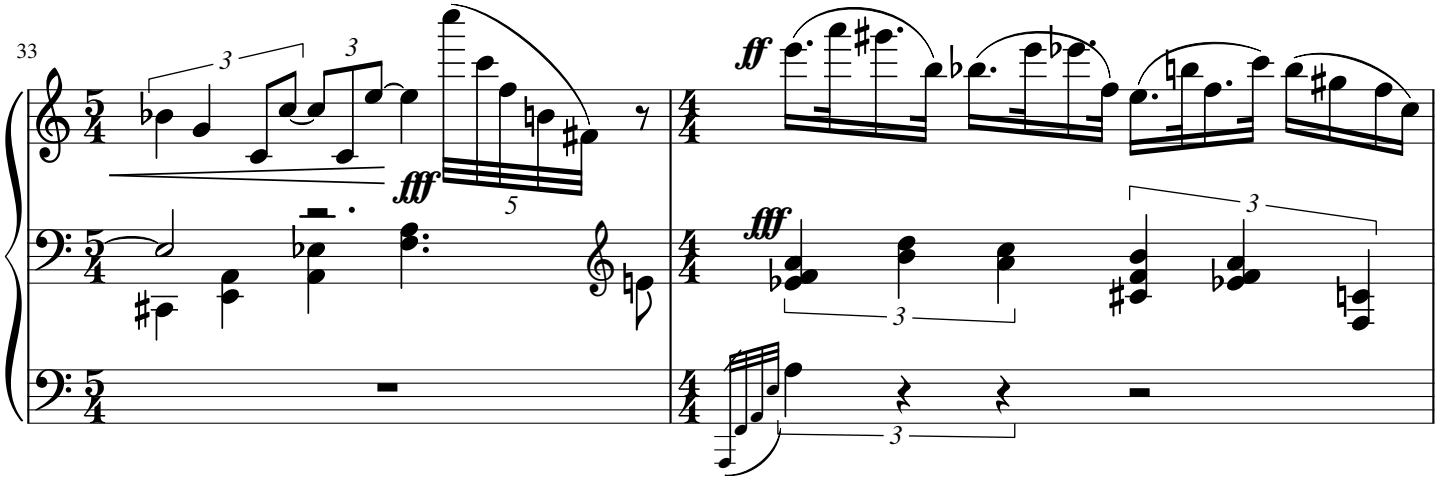

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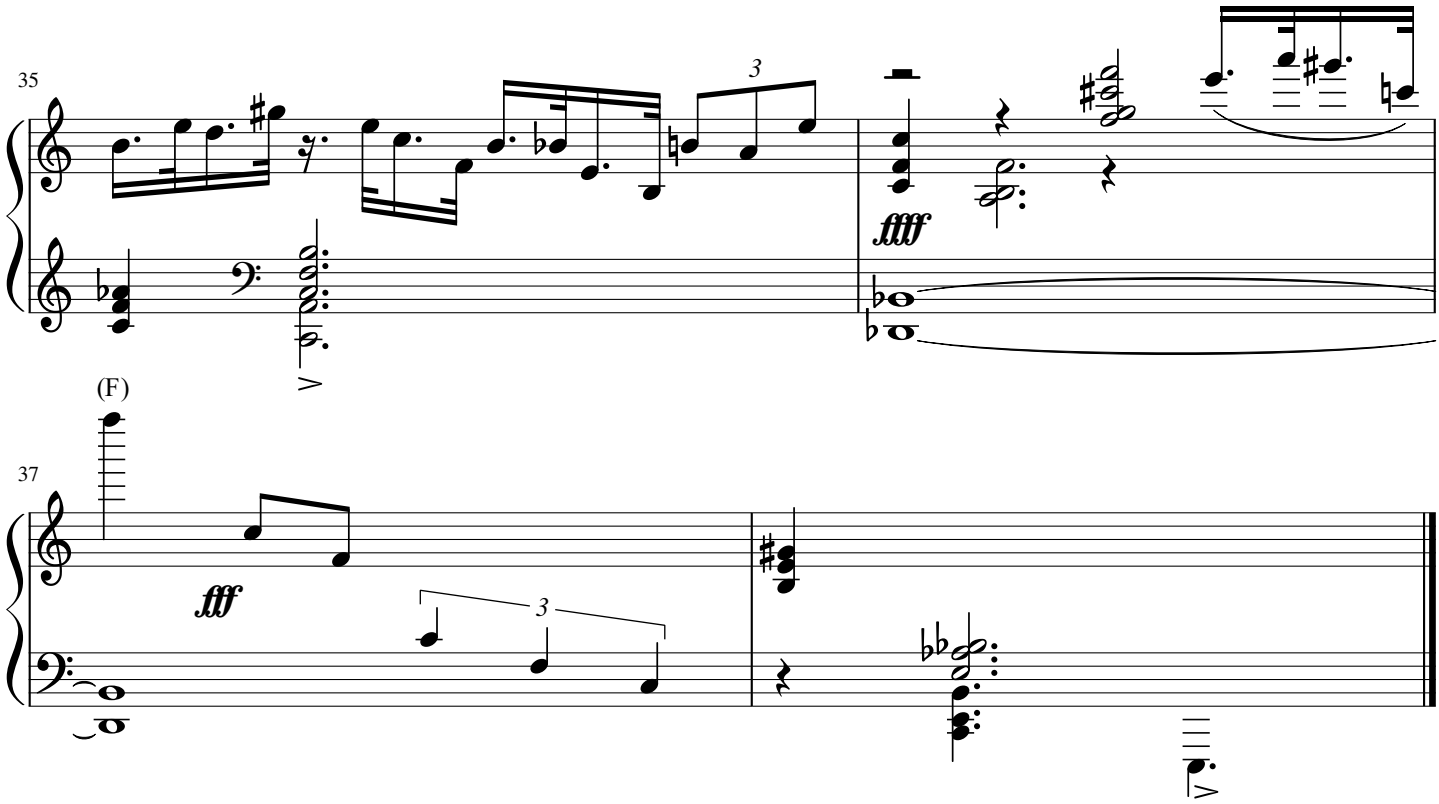

24 April 2013
Southampton

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Other works by Nick Ray (2023)

Piano solo
Three Preludes (1997)
Three Studies (1997)
Mirror Variations (2003)
Two Localities (2003)
Sonatina (2006)
Three Transcriptions from *Songs of Collision* (2006)
Variations and Finale on a theme by Anthony Green (2008)
Recollections Book 1 (2009)
Recollections Book 2 (2013)
Recollections Book 3 (2015)
Sonata (2015)
Panegyric for Anthony Green (2016)
Phoenix (2017)
Recollections Book 4 (2017)
Recollections Book 5 (2020)
Recollections Book 6 (2021)

Solo instrument and piano
Resonant Blackness (2006) [vibraphone and piano]
Bren Tor (2007) [clarinet and piano]
Epitaph for Michael Tippett (2007) [double bass and piano]
Rough Edges I and II (2010-12) [clarinet and piano]
Two pieces (2011) [vibraphone and piano]
Sonata (2020) ['cello and piano]

Solo instrument (other than piano)
London Stone (2008) ['cello]

Vocal with piano
Four Poems of Elizabeth Daryush (1999) [soprano and piano]
Dirge (Kenneth Fearing) (2000) [tenor and piano]
Two Longfellow songs (2017) [SATB, piano]

Vocal with ensemble
Songs of Collision – Twelve Poems of Stephen Crane (2004/16) [tenor, horn, clarinet, vibraphone, string quartet]
Three Walter de la Mare Songs (2008) [baritone, clarinet and 'cello]

Chamber/Instrumental
String Quartet (2008-10/revised 2017)
Five Facets for Wind Quintet (2016)
String Quartet no.2 (2022)

Orchestral
Symphony (2014)
Concerto (2018) [piano and orchestra]

Further information

See page on composition today website – also nickray55 on soundcloud.com

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