# *THE RHYTHM VARIATIONS*

**piano solo**

**DAVID MORNEAU**

## Winner of the 2004 Ruth Friscoe Prize in Composition

These twelve Variations use as their theme the harmonic progression from George Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm*—the so-called *rhythm changes*.

## performance notes

These Variations may be played singly, in combination, or as a complete set.

*The Changes* should be played only with three or more Variations.

Accidentals are provided in two methods. In the *Bird's Stream-of-Conscious Variation* and *The Meditative Variation* the barlines are absent so accidentals apply only to the note that they are attached. In this case, repeated notes are each given their own accidental and courtesy accidentals have been provided where it makes sense to do so. In the other Variations, with barlines present, traditional rules apply.

*THE CHANGES* 2
The "theme" for this set of variations is presented here in a simple chorale style.

*HANON'S DISTRACTED VIRTUOSO VARIATION* 3
Practicing one's scales and technical exercises can be tedious. Here's what happens when that tedium takes over.

*KRUPA'S TOCCATA VARIATION* 10
In the orchestra the piano will be grouped with the percussion section, supporting the claim that it is indeed a cross between a percussion and a stringed instrument. Is the piano really just a big drum?

*THE WIND-UP VARIATION* 12
This simple movement is reminiscent of a mechanical music box.

*THE STRIDE VARIATION* 15
The stride style, a staple of the jazz pianist, is here given an unusual off-kilter treatment.

*THE LIGHT BLUE FUGHETTA VARIATION* 22
The first of two movements exploring a blues extension of the original form, this variation is built from several common blues motives.

*THE LEFT HANDED VARIATION* 26
For one hand only, this movement is composed from standard, left handed boogie-woogie patterns.

*THE ILL-TEMPERED VARIATION* 28
Bach's music is difficult for many pianists and can be an endless source of frustration. This variation only makes things worse.

*THE DARK BLUE SONG VARIATION* 34
This variation, the second to use the blues form, is built around the tension inherent in "blue notes."

*THE MEDITATIVE VARIATION* 37
Derived from the minimalist style, this variation presents *rhythm changes* in its barest harmonic statement.

*BIRD'S STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS VARIATION* 44
Charlie Parker's innovative bebop style is explored fully in this wild variation.

*THE SHORTEST VARIATION* 51
This concise statement is short in length and articulation.

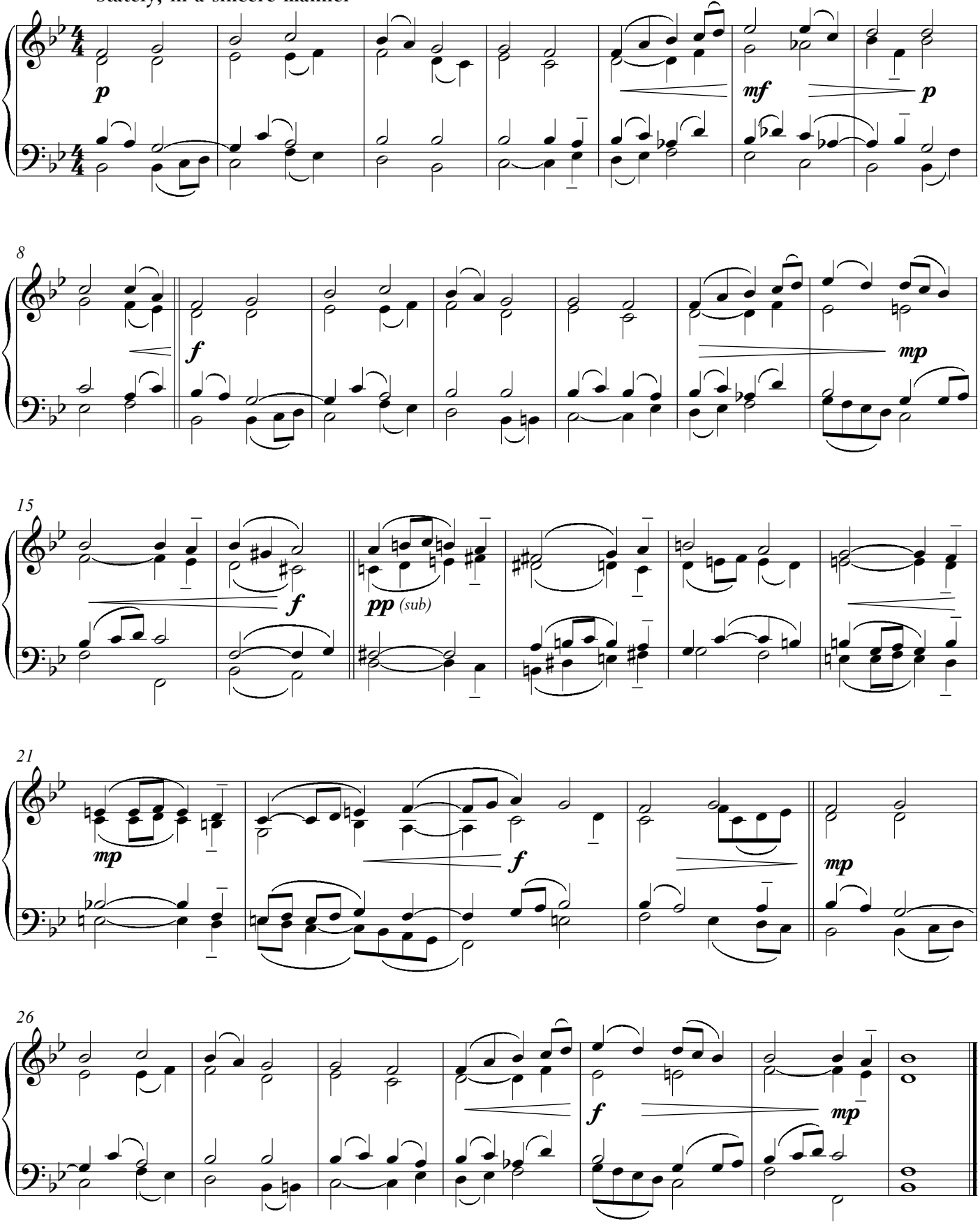
*THE FUNKISH VARIATION* 52
Based on a jazz-funk groove, this final variation is built from a couple of motives that are recombined in several ways.

# THE RHYTHM VARIATIONS

## THE CHANGES

**David Morneau**

**Stately, in a sincere manner**

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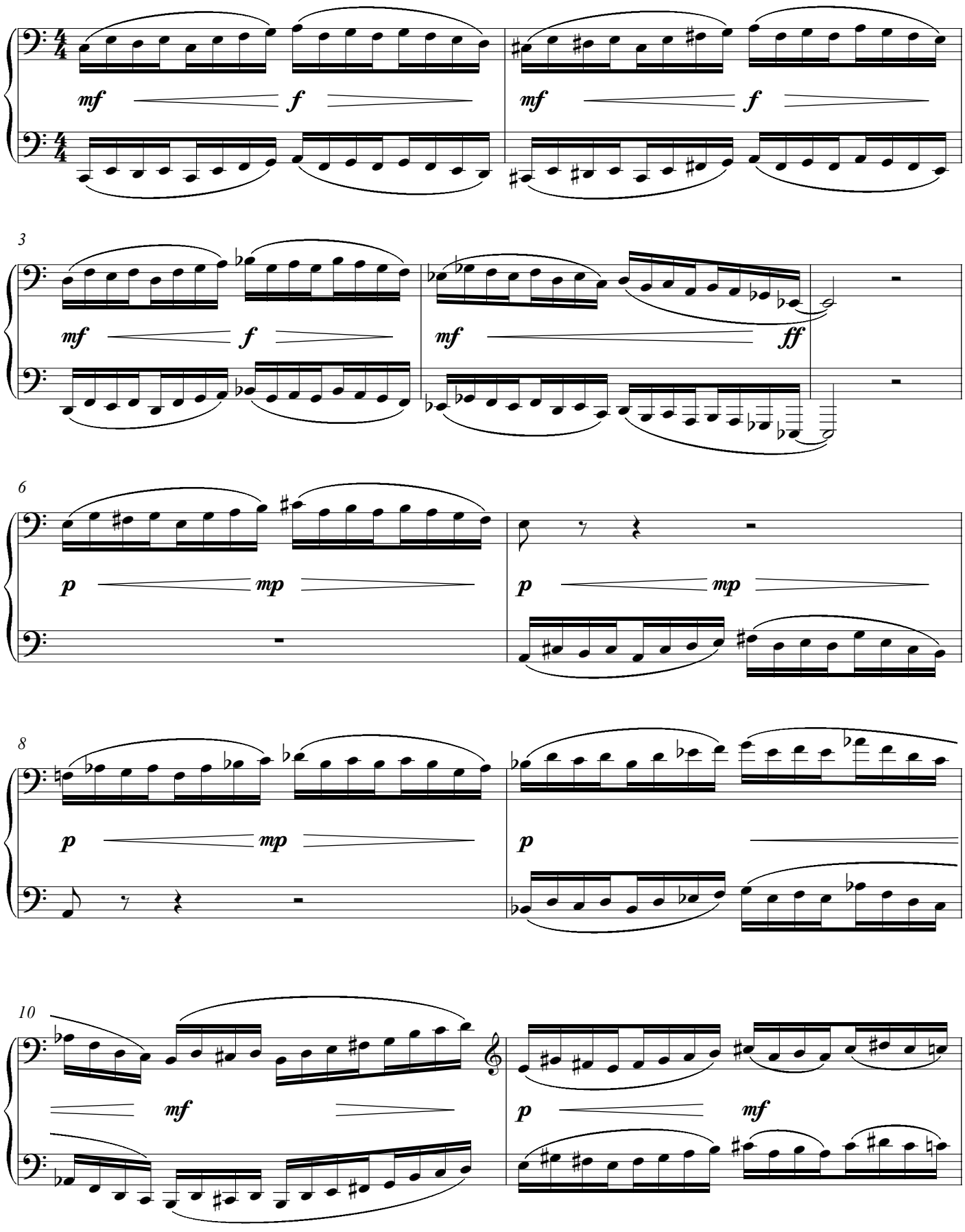
*for Constance*

# *HANON'S DISTRACTED VIRTUOSO VARIATION*

**Quickly, dutifully (♩=110-120)**



[ you got it… ]

12

*f*

15

*ff* *mp (sub)* *mp*

[ Here's a little chord progression… ]

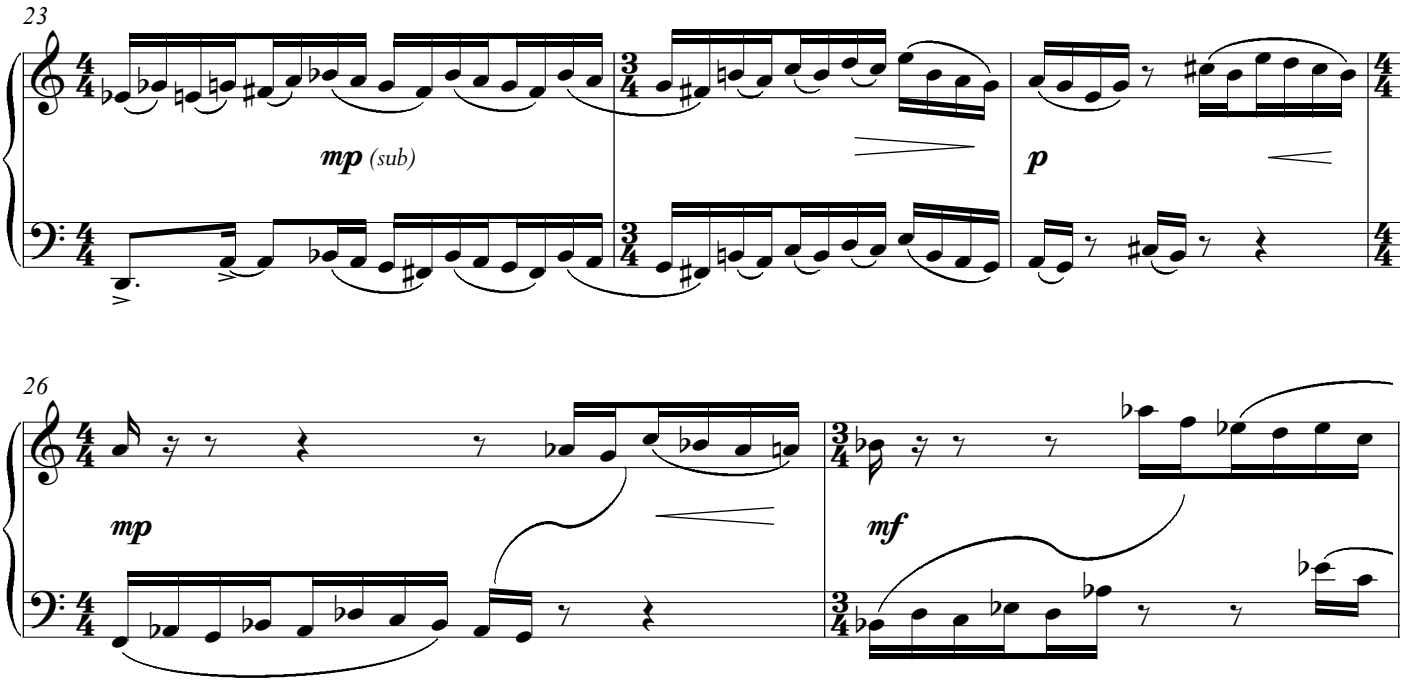
17

*f* *pp* *mp* *f*

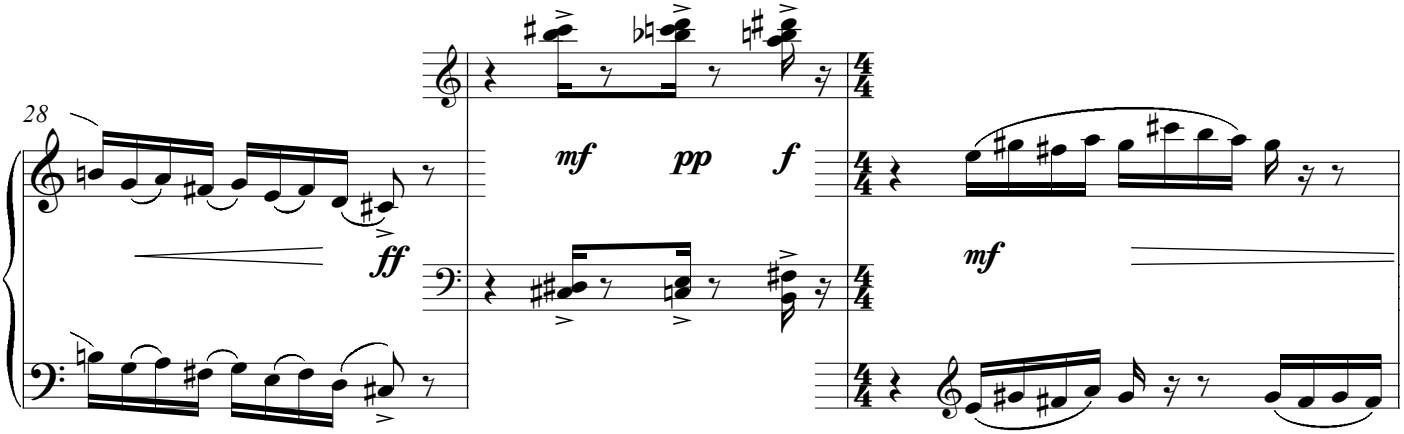
20

*mf* *f*

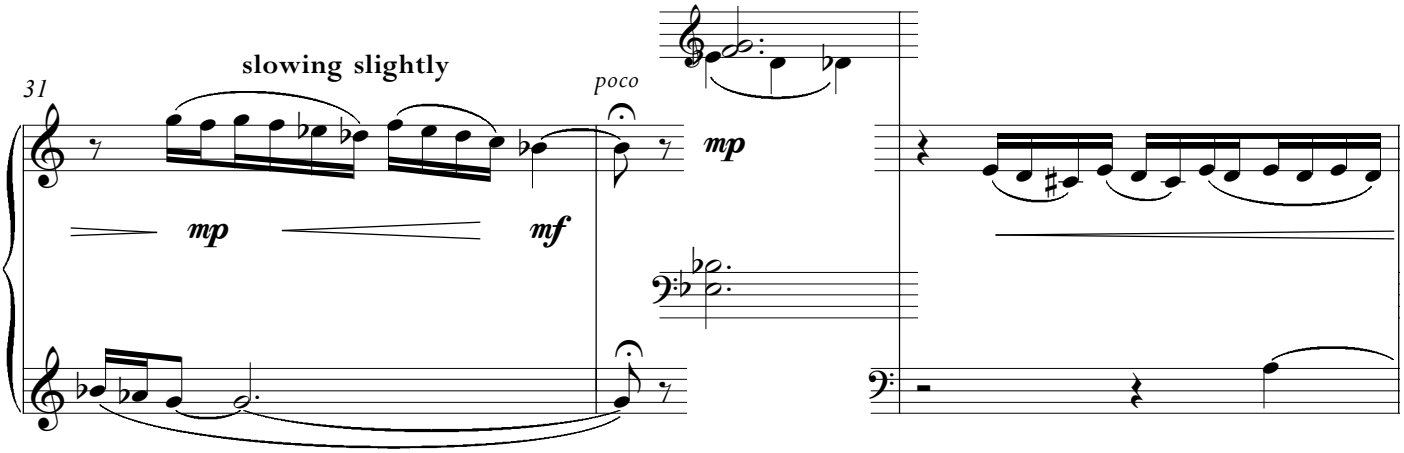
[ hmmm…fascinating ]

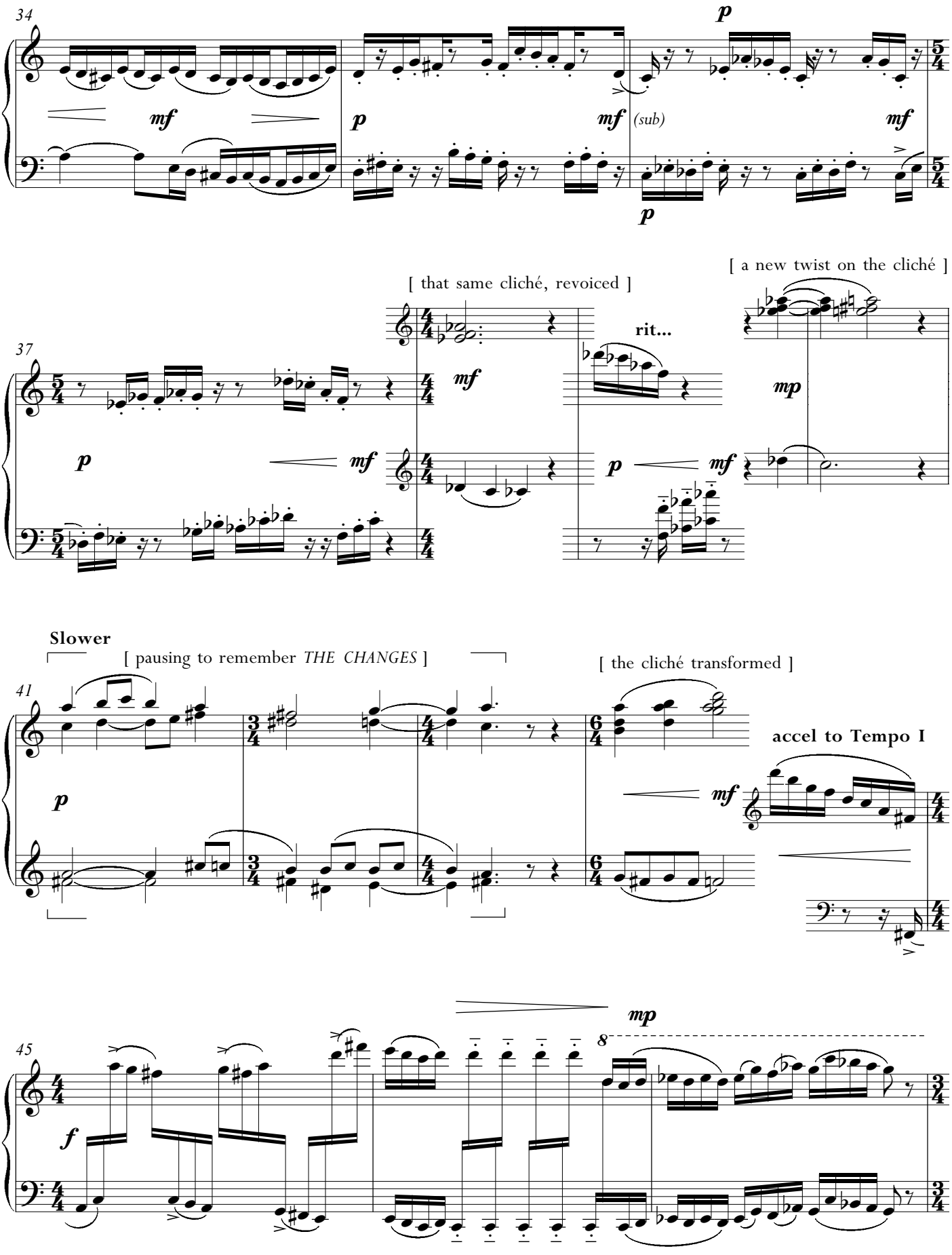


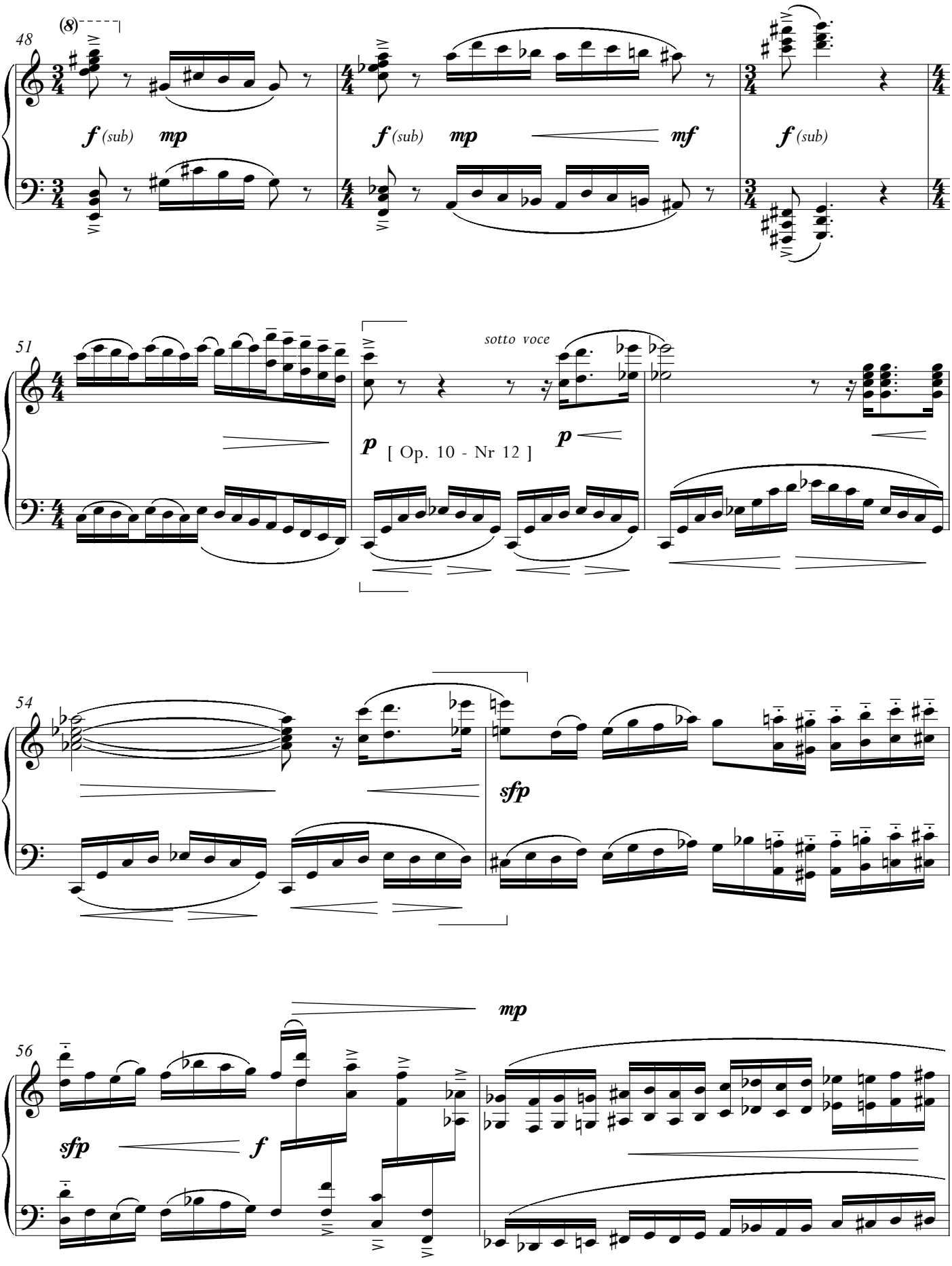

[ Here's that progression again, transposed... ]

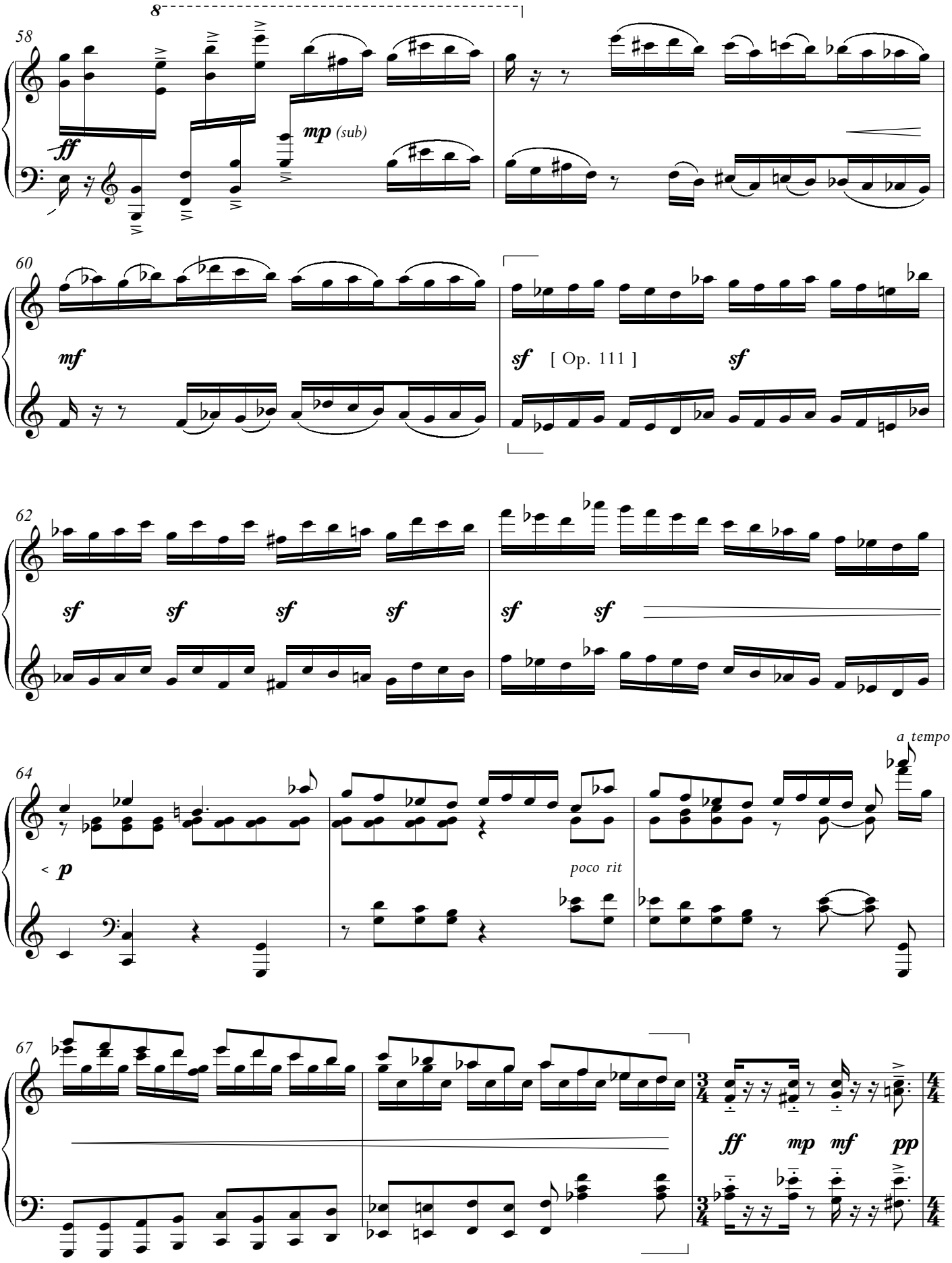


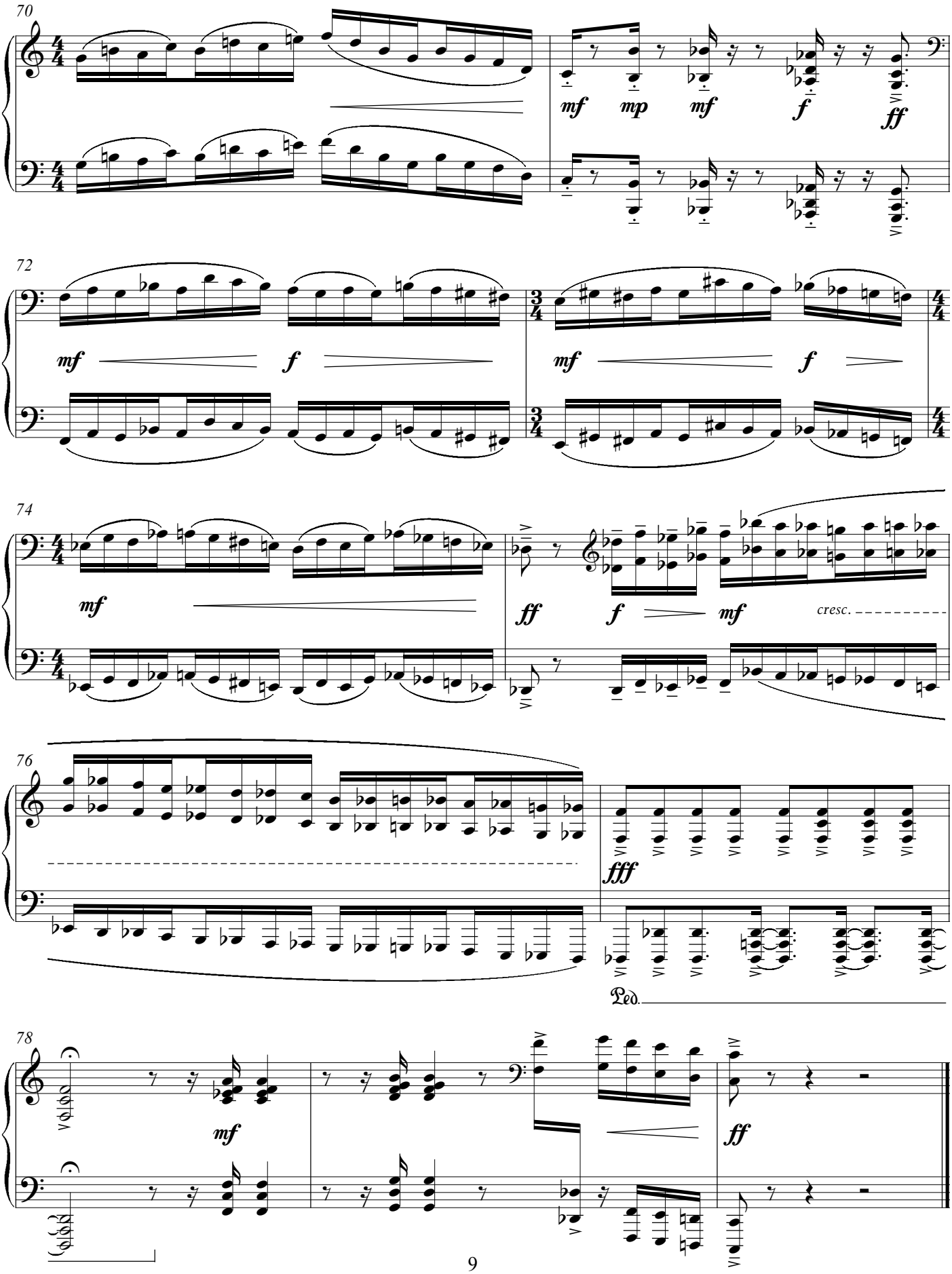

[ Here's a common cliché ]



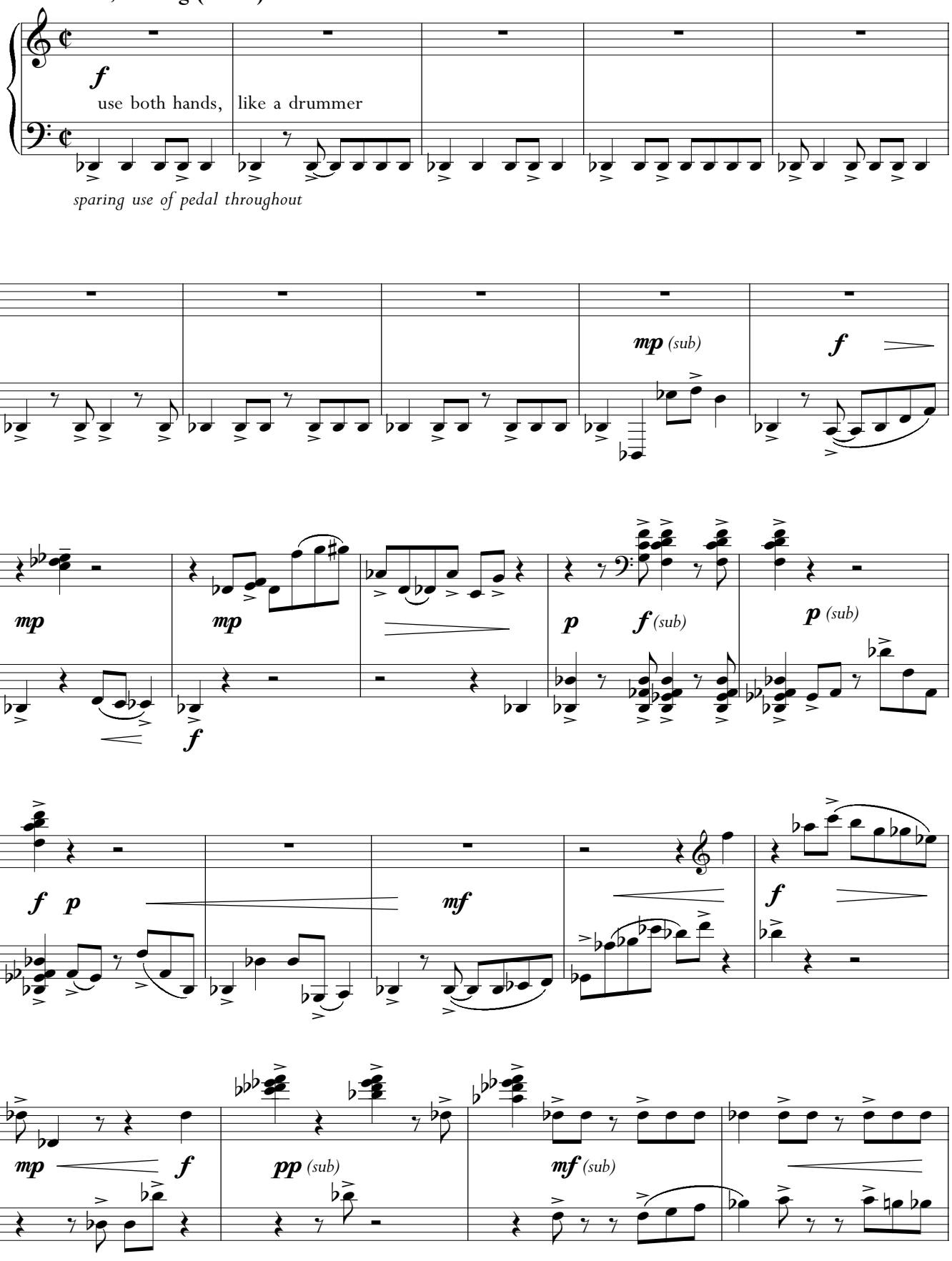

34
mf
p
mf
(sub)
p
mf
p
37
[ that same cliché, revoiced ]
rit...
mf
p
mf
[ a new twist on the cliché ]
mp
Slower
[ pausing to remember THE CHANGES ]
41
p
[ the cliché transformed ]
mf
accel to Tempo I
45
f
mp
8

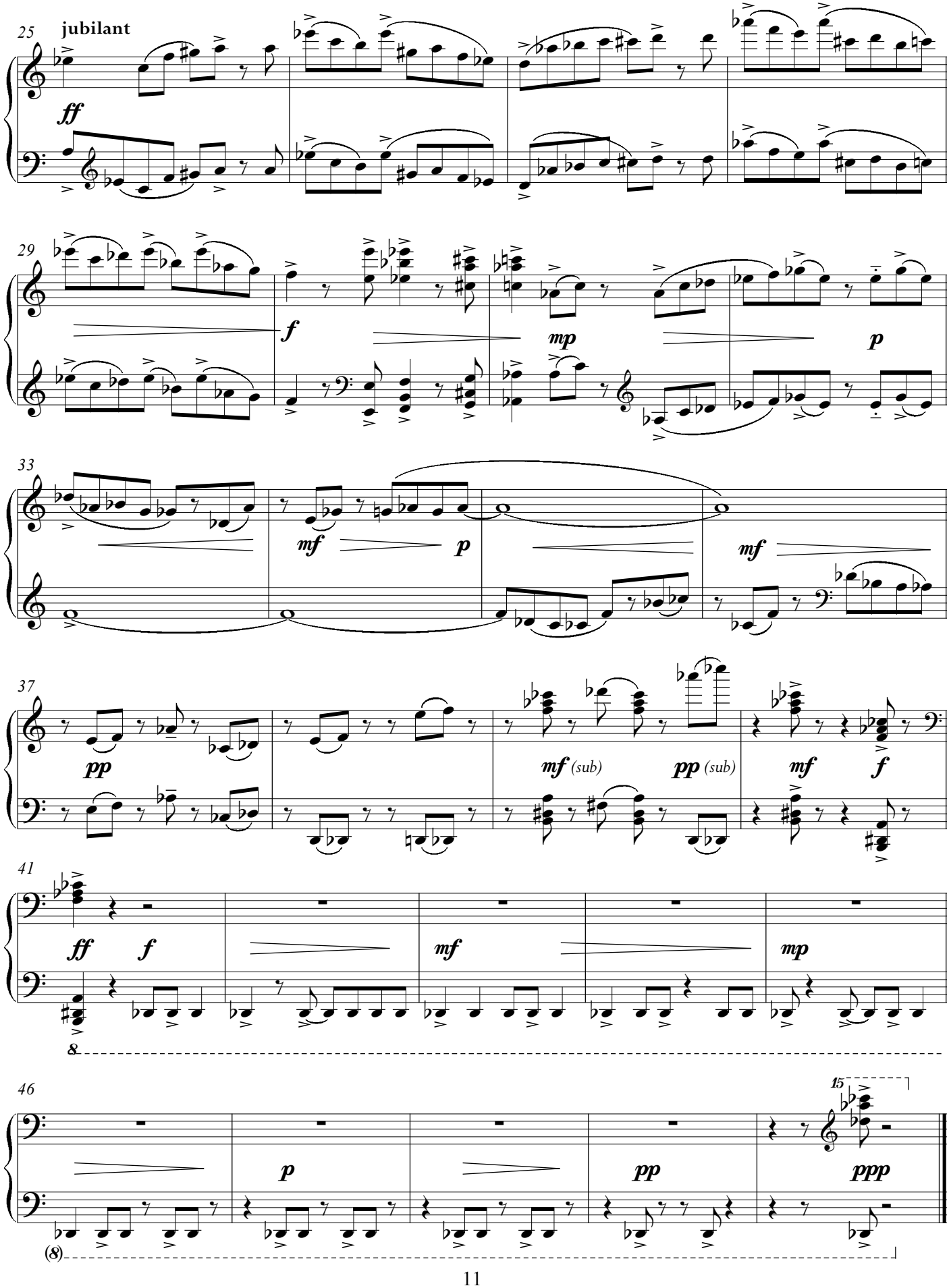

48
(8)
f (sub)
mp
f (sub)
mp
mf
f (sub)
51
sotto voce
p
[ Op. 10 - Nr 12 ]
p
54
sfp
56
mp
sfp
f

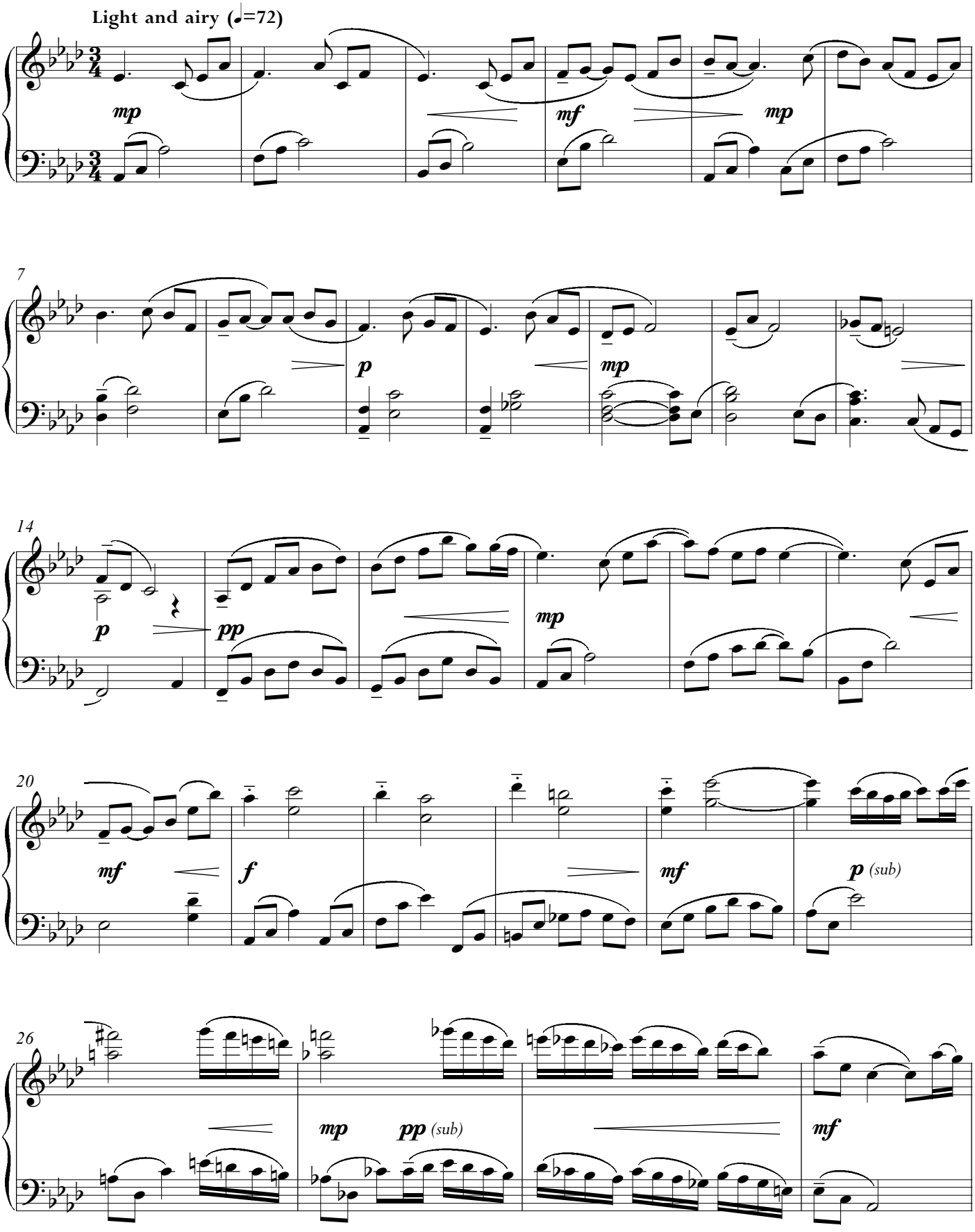

8
58
ff
mp (sub)
60
mf
sf [ Op. 111 ]
sf
62
sf sf sf sf
sf sf
64
a tempo
p
poco rit
67
ff mp mf pp

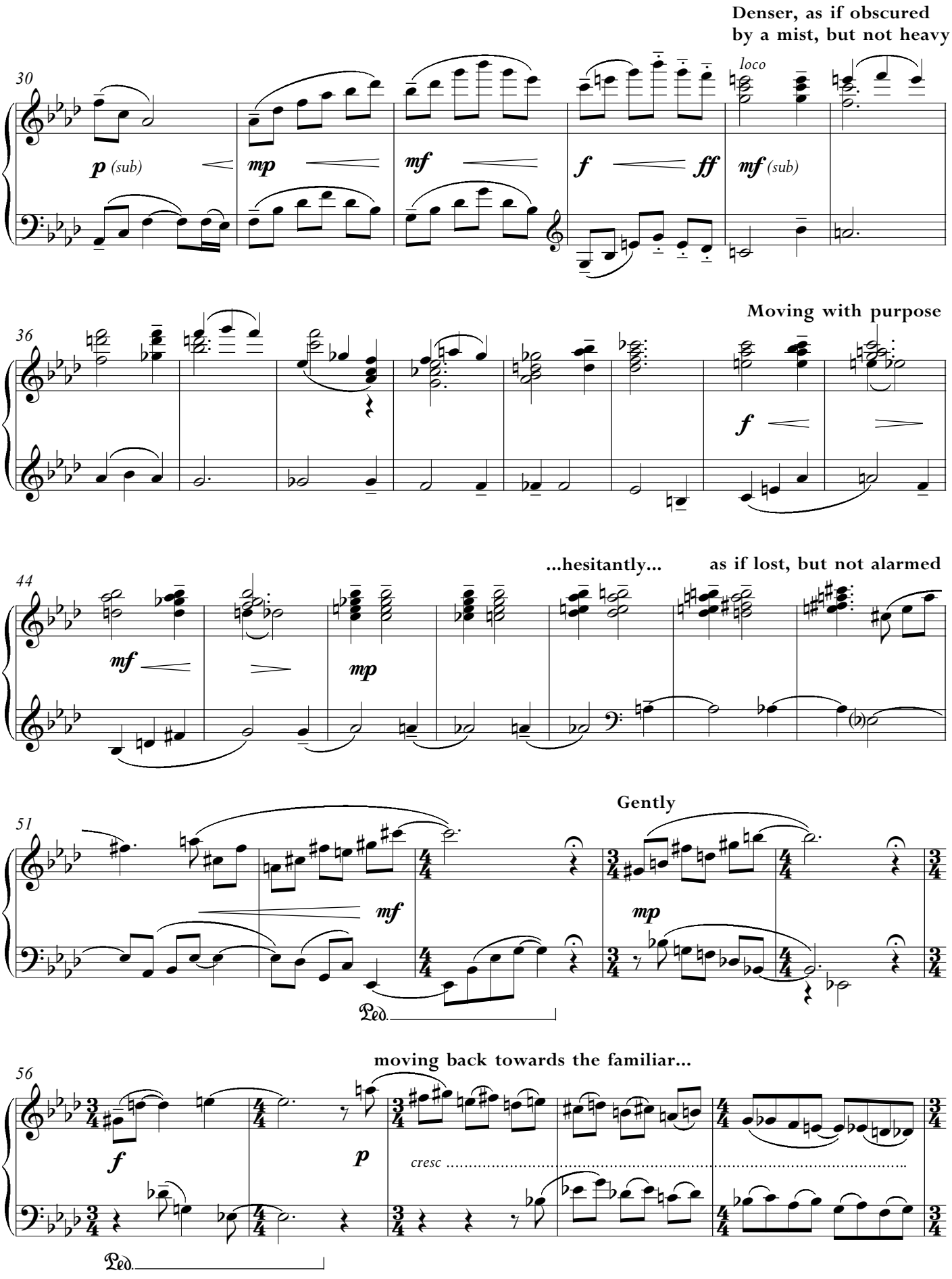

70
mf
mp
mf
f
ff
72
mf
f
mf
f
74
mf
ff
f
mf
cresc.
76
fff
Ped.
78
mf
ff

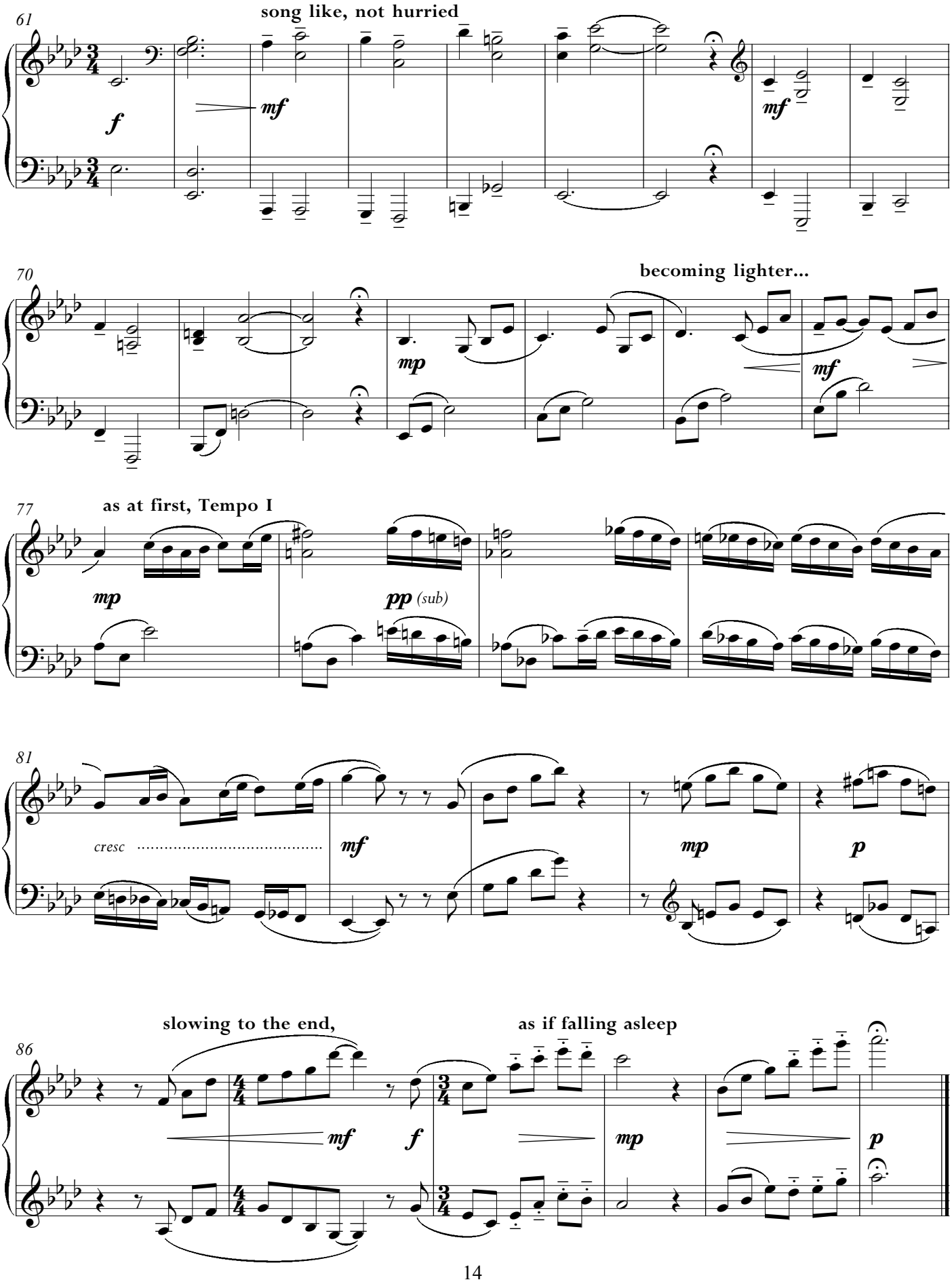
**Hard, driving (♩=120)**




25
jubilant
ff
29
f
mp
p
33
mf
p
mf
37
pp
mf (sub)
pp (sub)
mf
f
41
ff
f
mf
mp
8
46
15
p
pp
ppp
(8)


Light and airy (♩=72)
mp
mf
mp
7
p
mp
14
p
pp
mp
20
mf
f
mf
p (sub)
26
mp
pp (sub)
mf

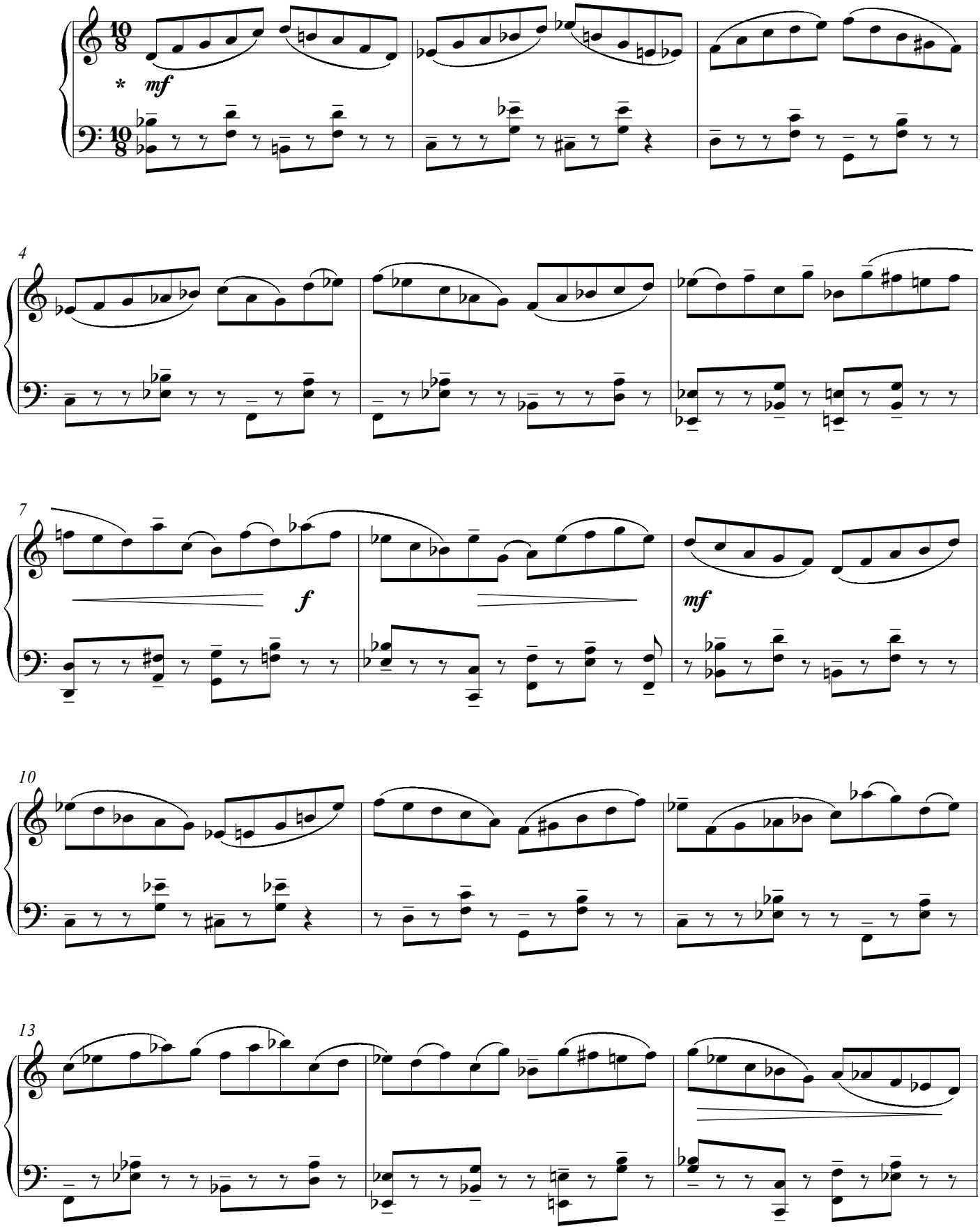

Denser, as if obscured
by a mist, but not heavy
30
loco
p (sub)
mp
mf
f
ff
mf (sub)
Moving with purpose
36
f
...hesitantly...
as if lost, but not alarmed
44
mf
mp
Gently
51
mf
mp
Ped.
moving back towards the familiar...
56
f
p
cresc
Ped.


61
song like, not hurried
f
mf
mf
70
becoming lighter...
mp
mf
77
as at first, Tempo I
mp
pp (sub)
81
cresc
mf
mp
p
86
slowing to the end,
as if falling asleep
mf
f
mp
p

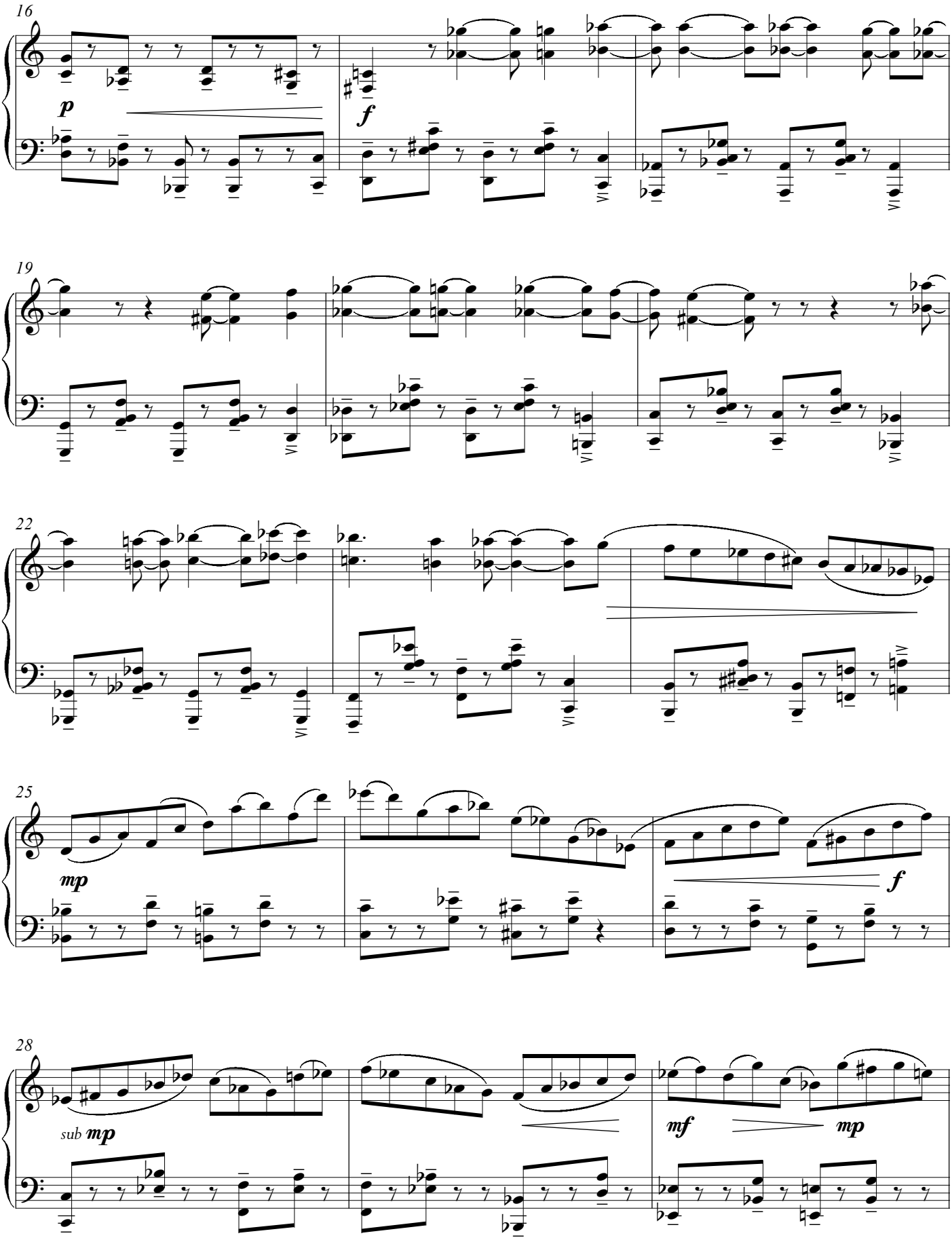
*for Anna*

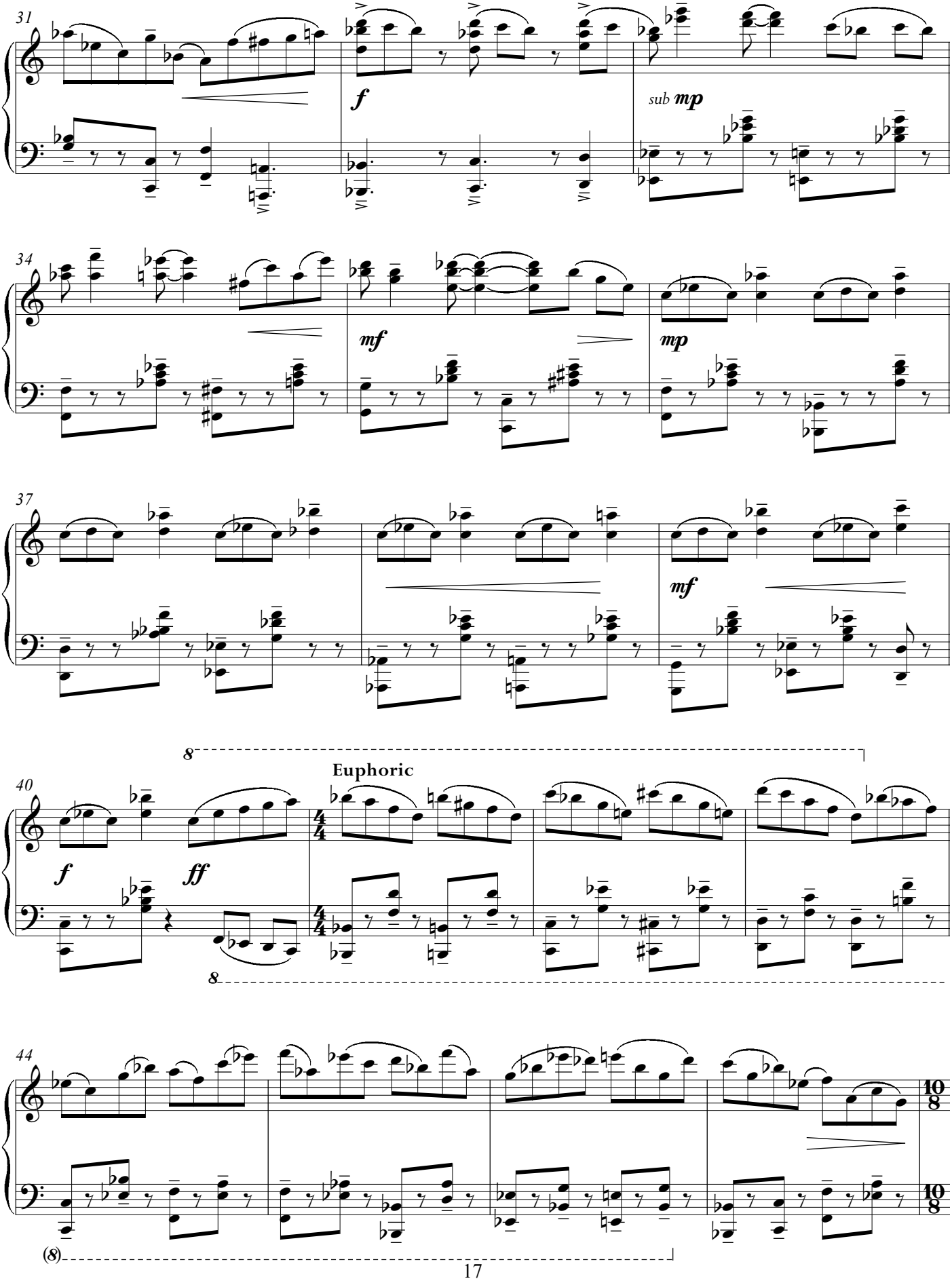
# *THE STRIDE VARIATION*

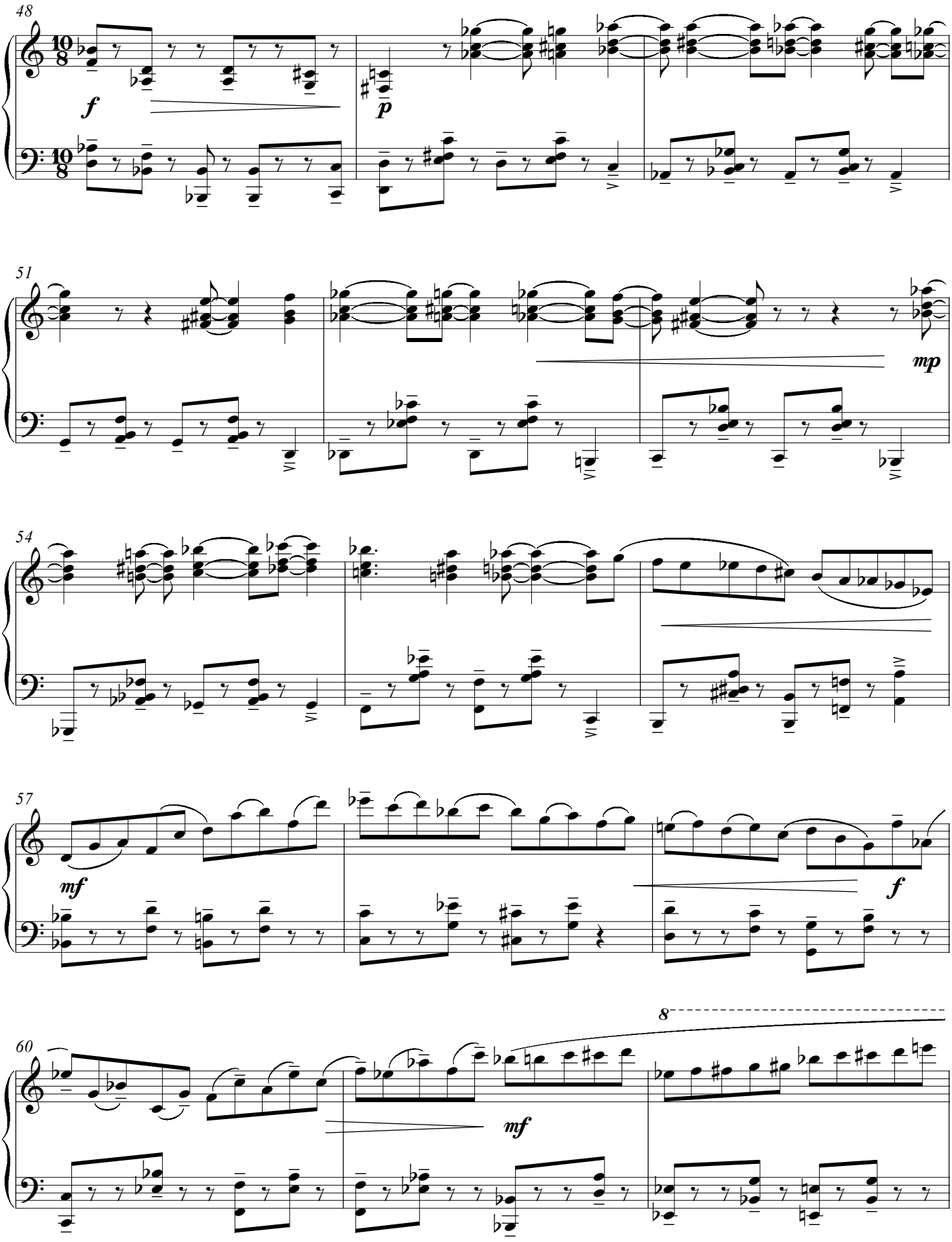
**Bursting with joyful energy, manic (♩=270)**

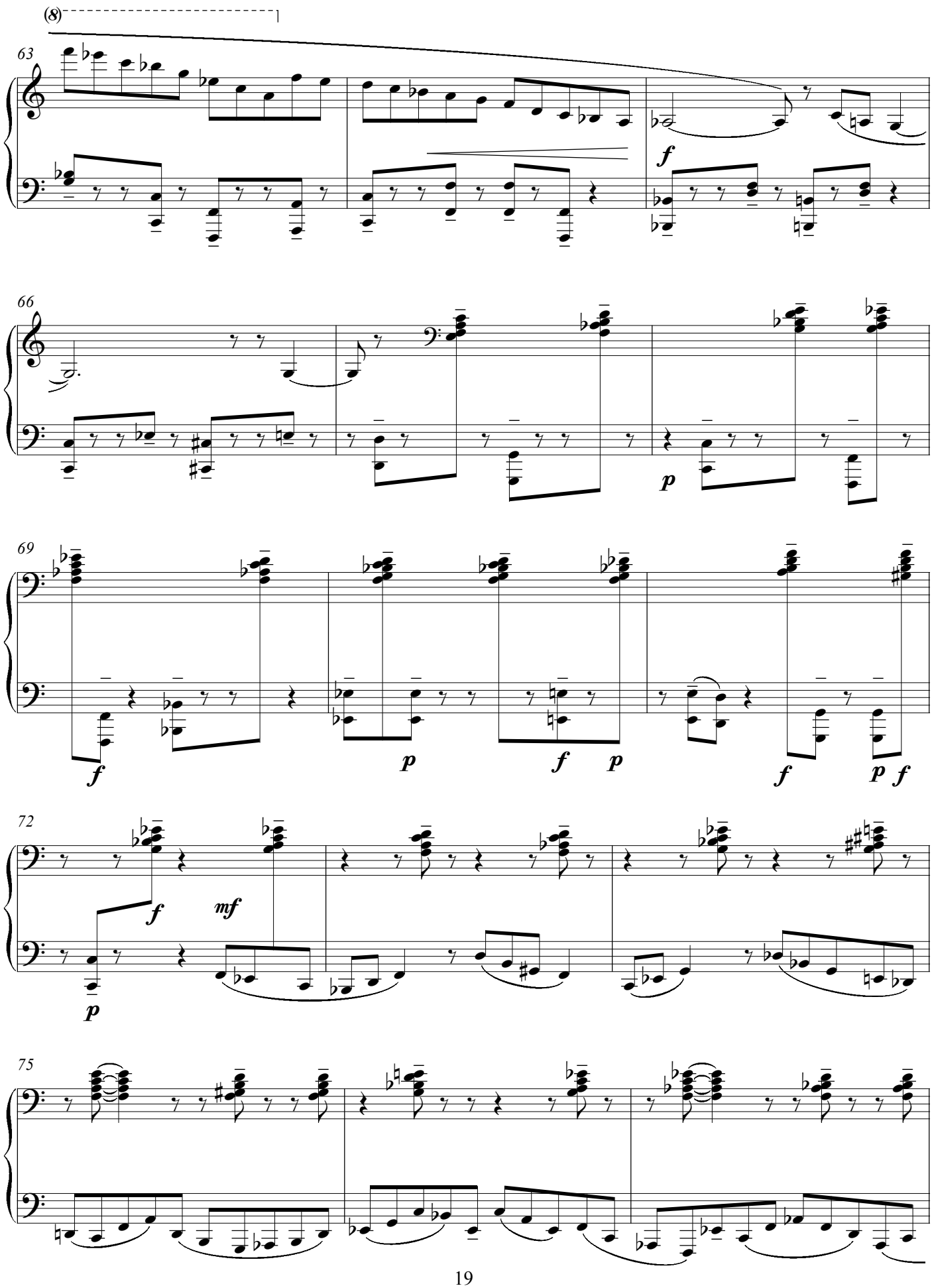


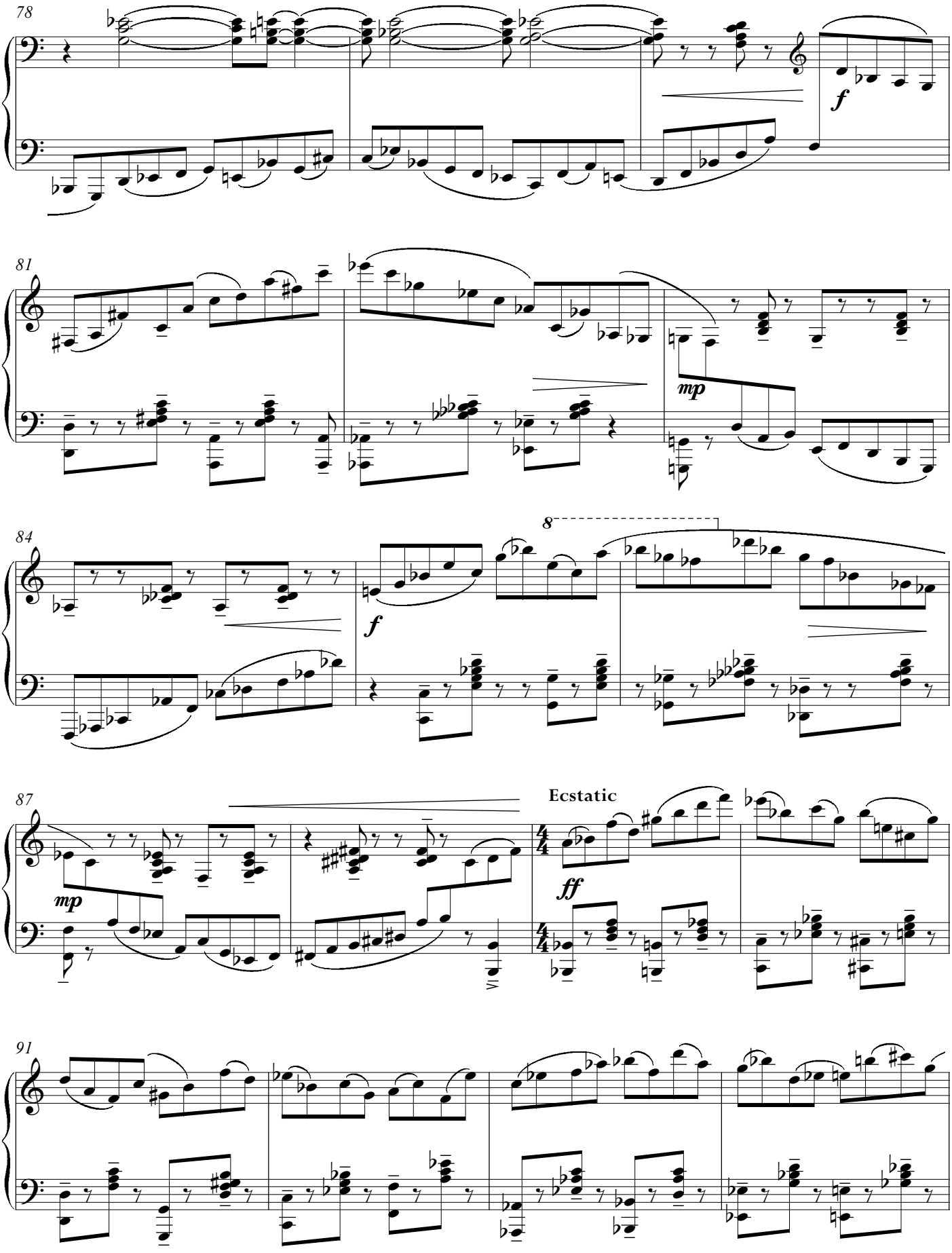

* In 2 ( ♩♪ + ♩♪ )

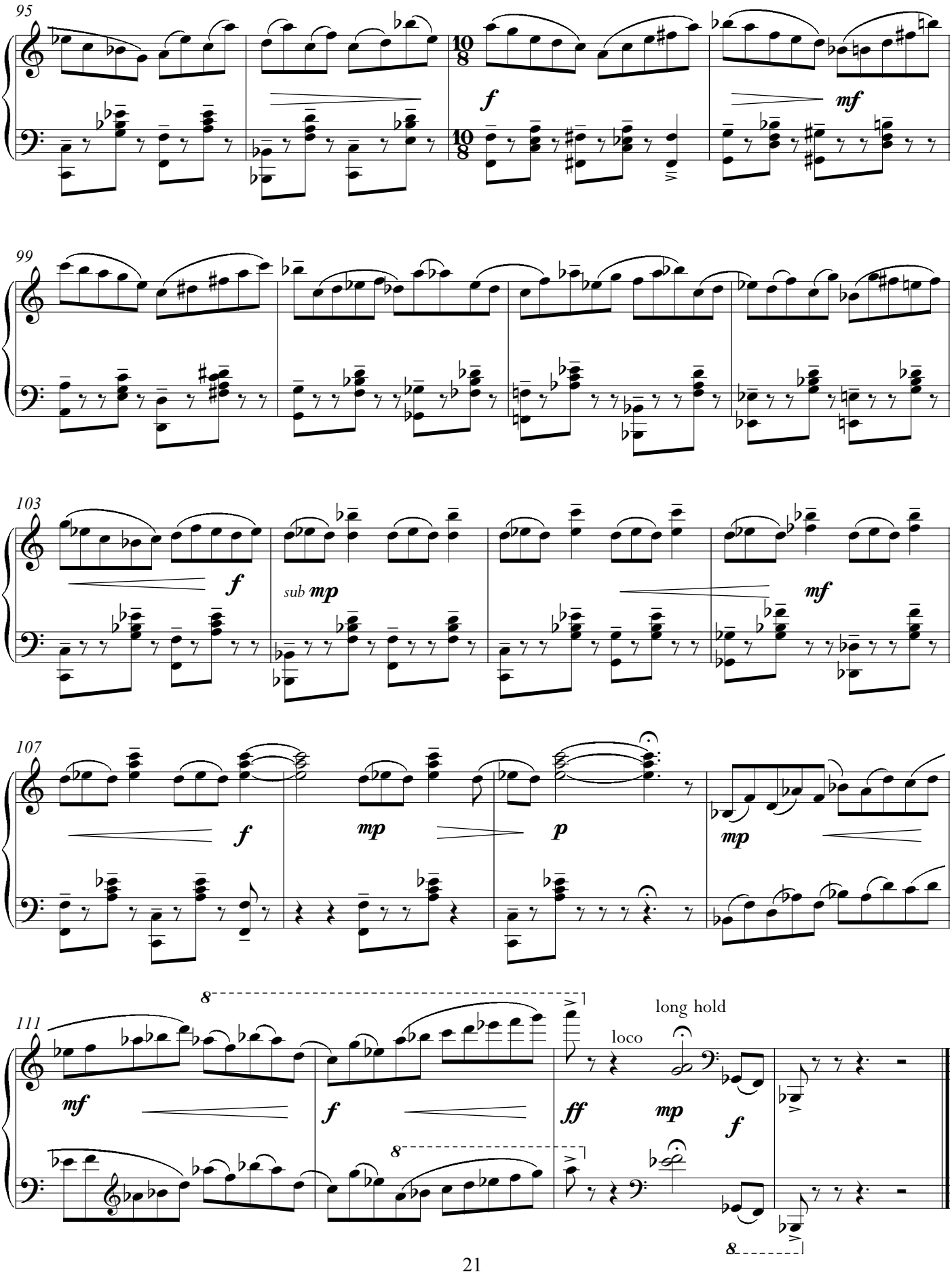

16
p
f
19
22
25
mp
f
28
sub mp
mf
mp

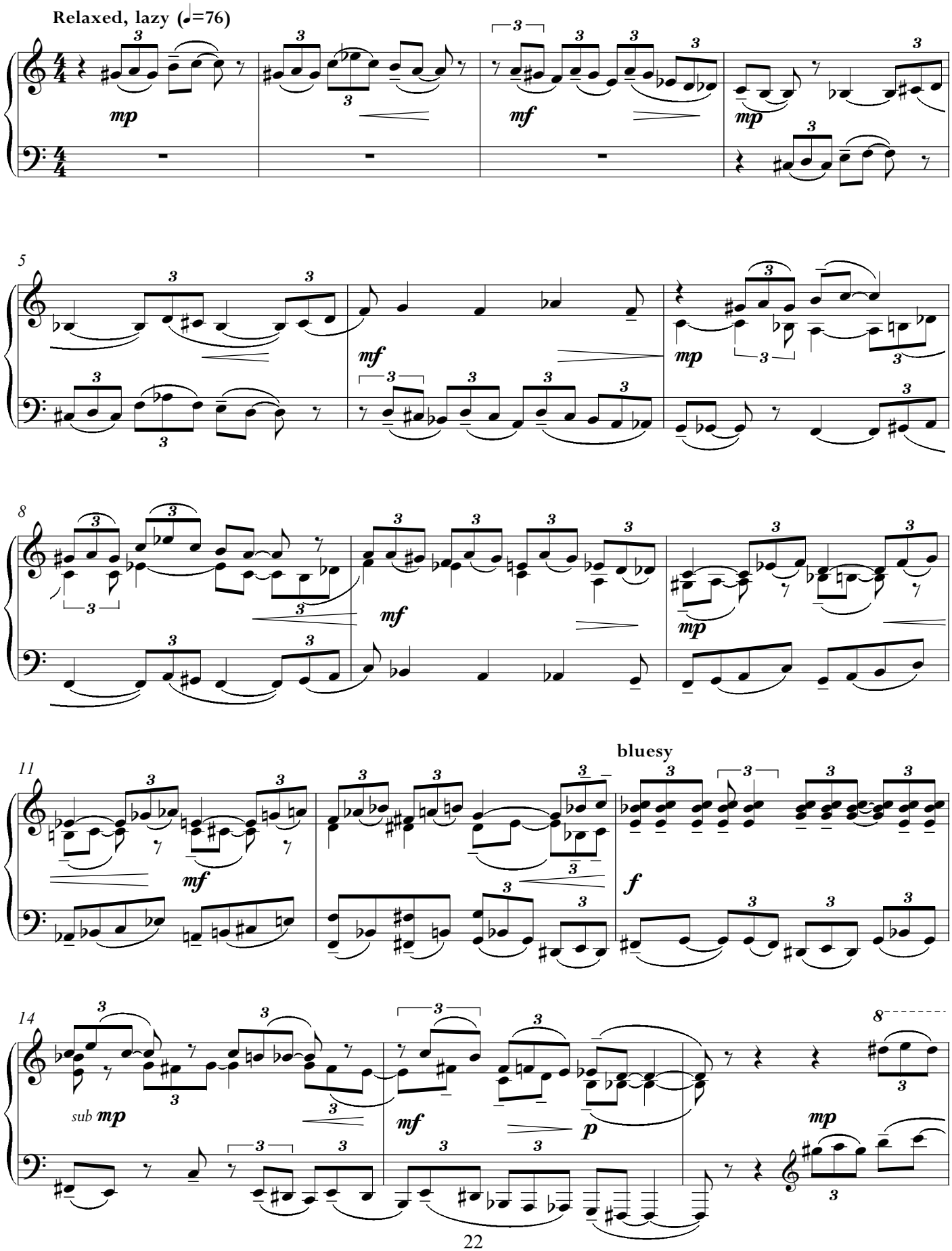

31
f
sub mp
34
mf
mp
37
mf
8
Euphoric
40
f
ff
4/4
8
44
10/8
10/8
(8)

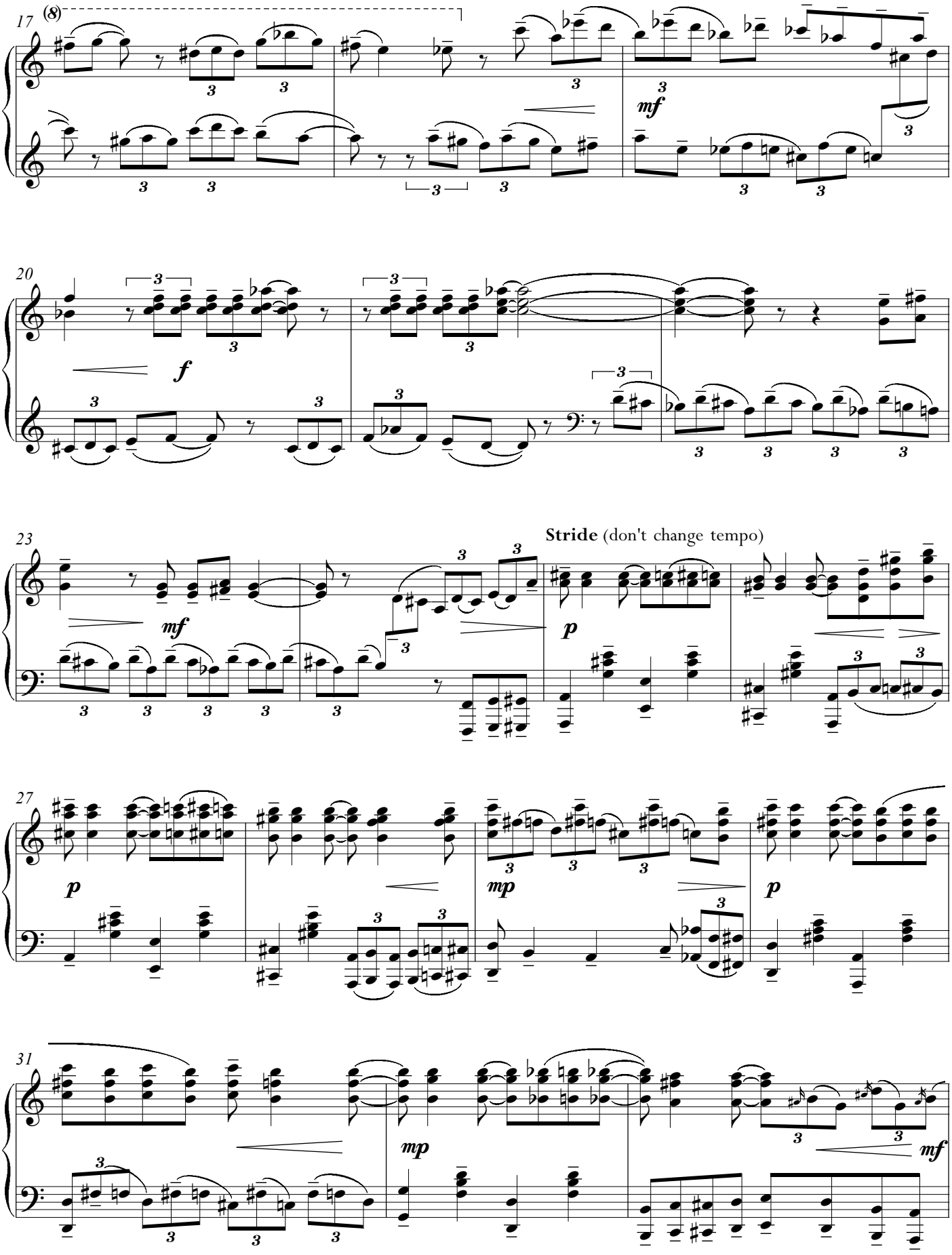

48
10/8
f
p
51
mp
54
57
mf
f
60
8
mf

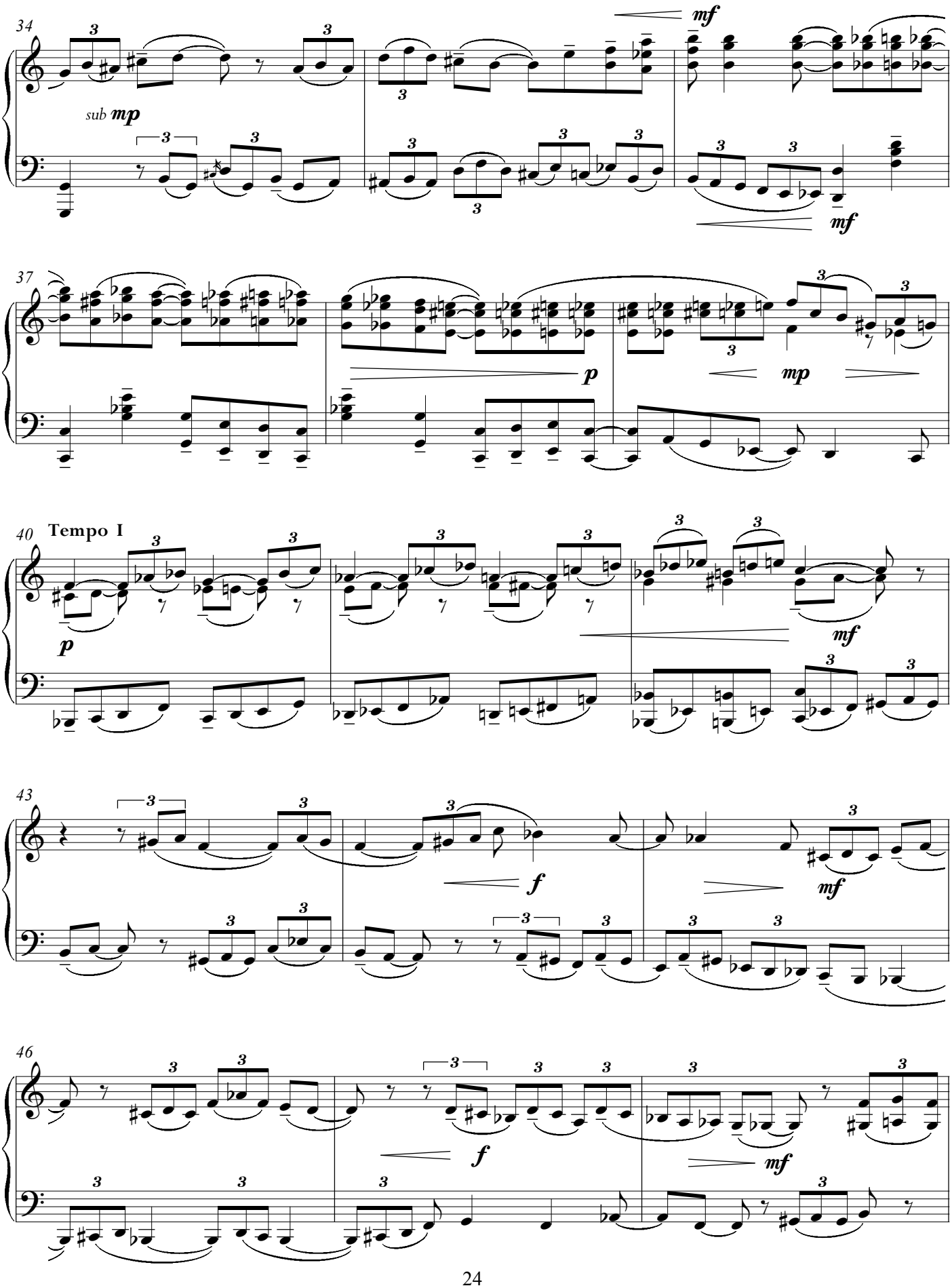

(8)
63
f
66
p
69
f
p
f
p
f
p
f
72
f
mf
p
75

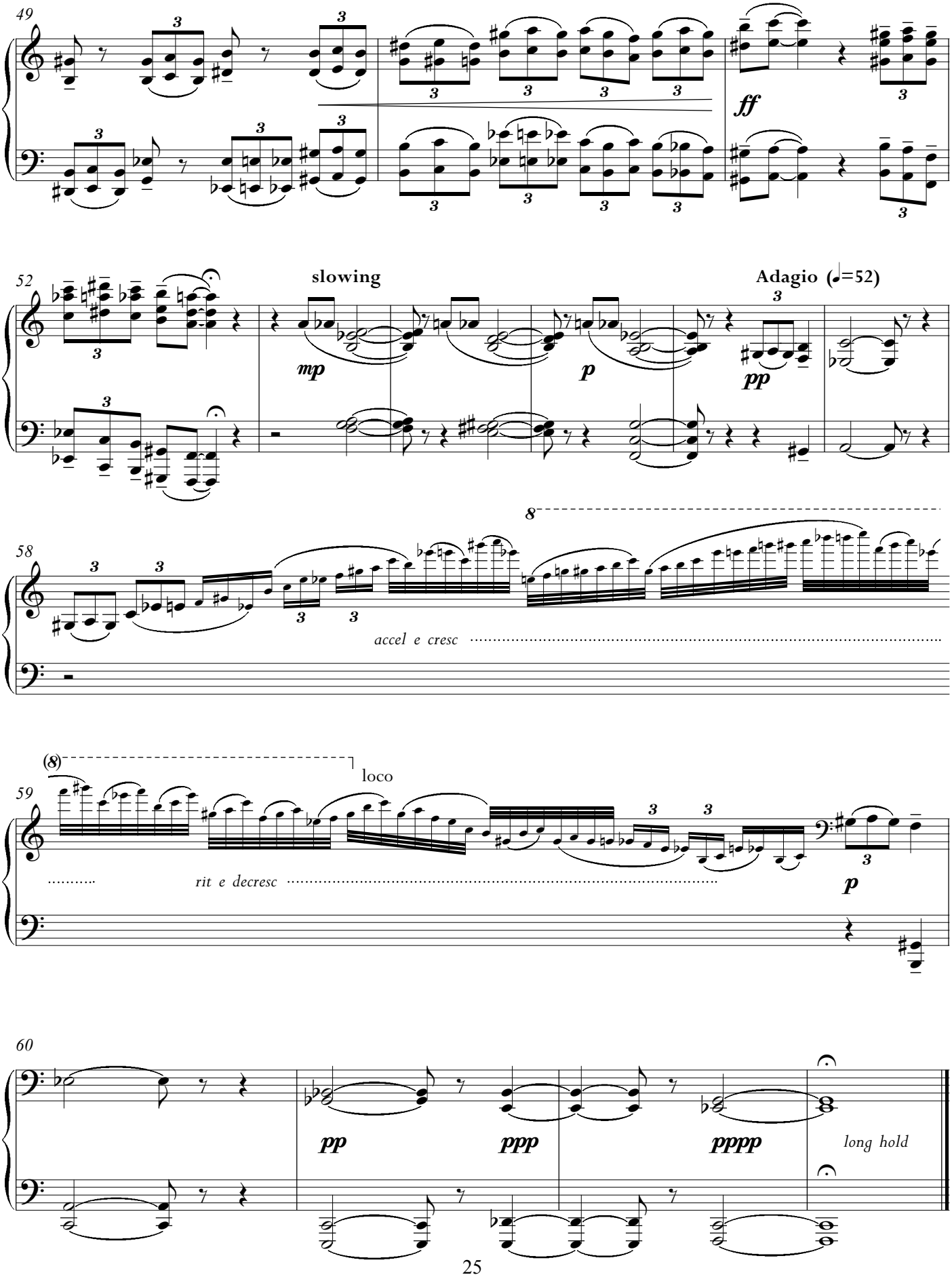

78
f
81
mp
84
8
f
87
mp
Ecstatic
ff
91

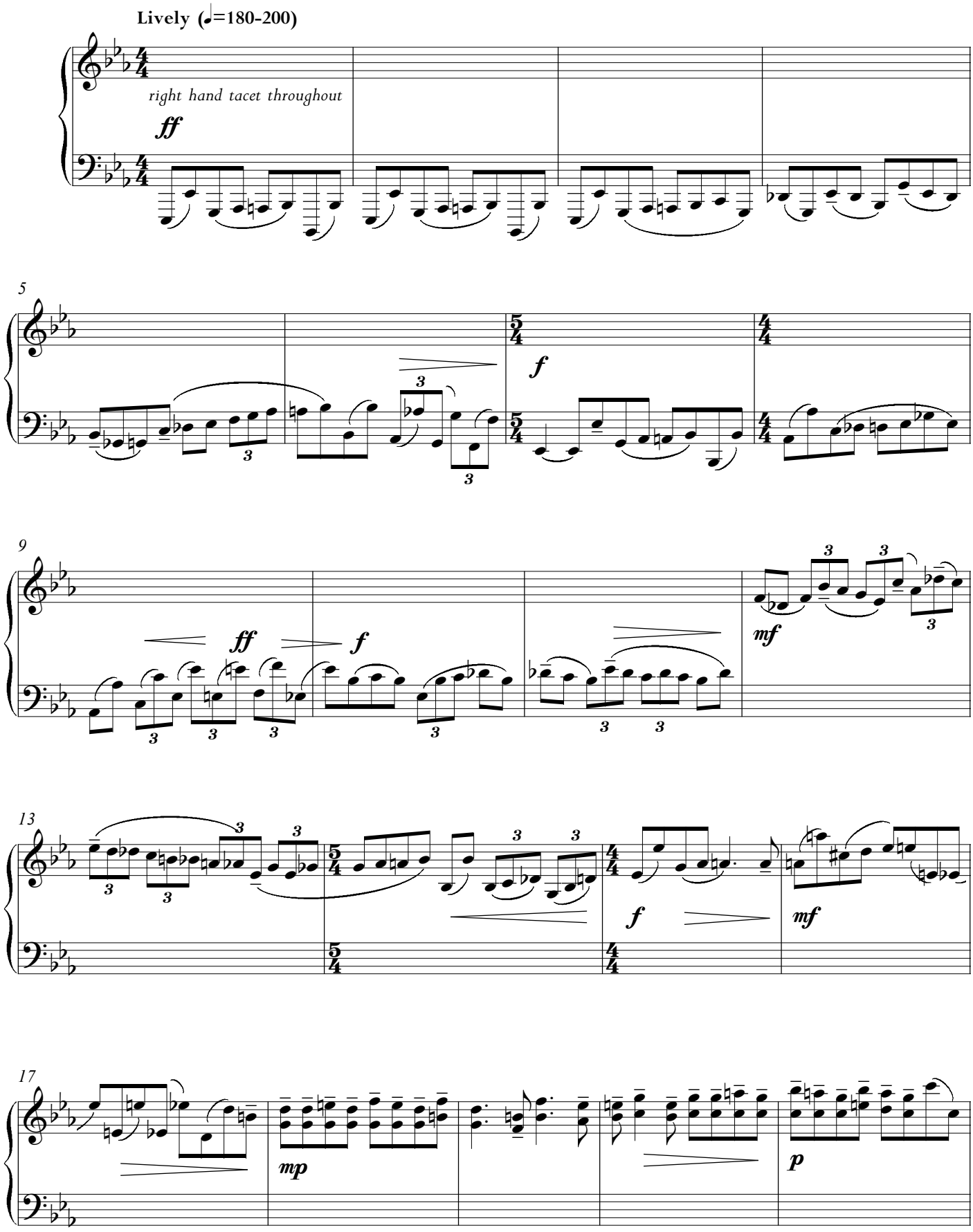

95
f
mf
99
103
f
sub mp
mf
107
f
mp
p
mp
111
8
mf
f
ff
mp
long hold
loco
f
8
8

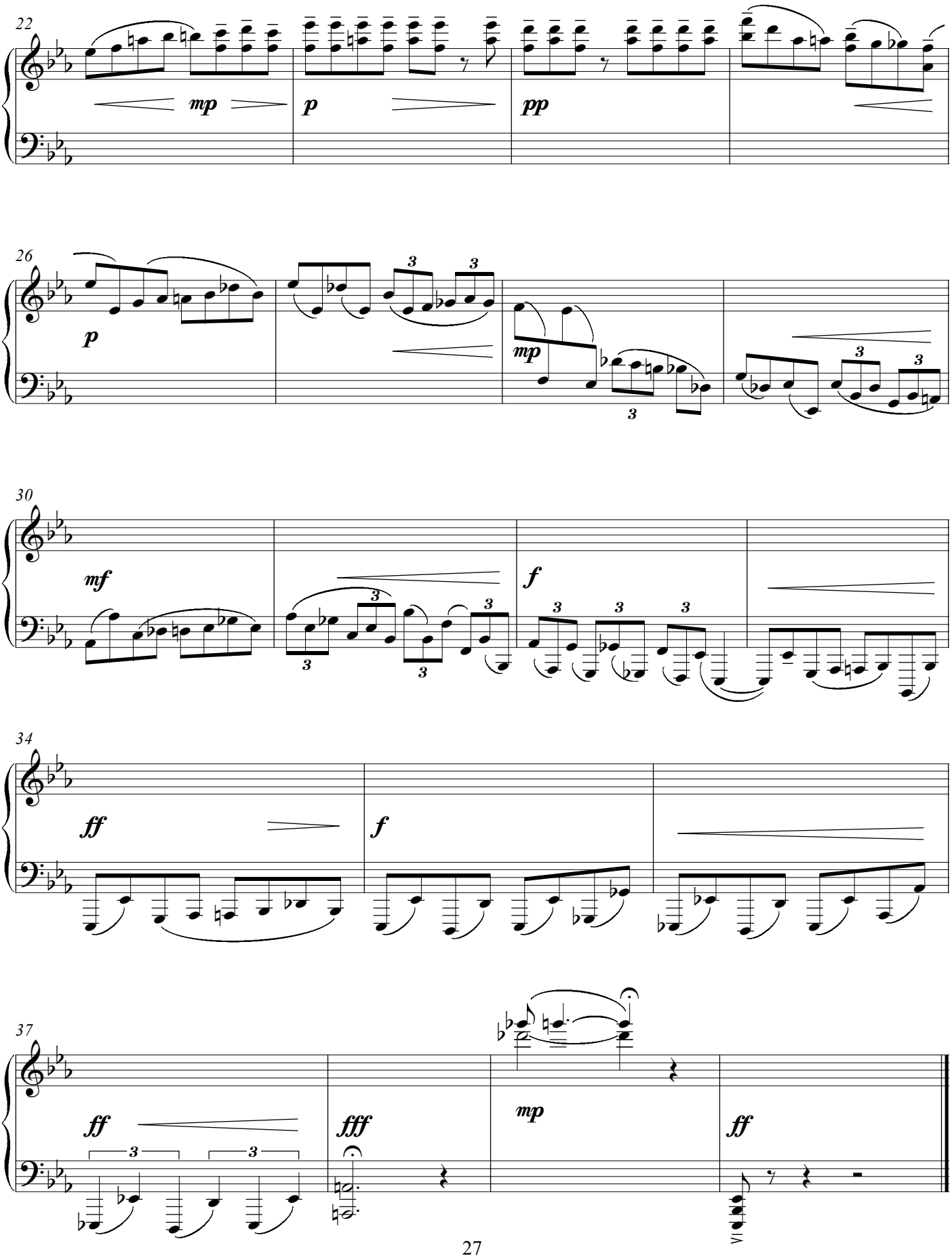

Relaxed, lazy (♩=76)
mp
mf
mp
5
mf
mp
8
mf
mp
bluesy
11
mf
f
14
sub mp
mf
p
mp
8


17
(8)
mf
20
f
23
mf
Stride (don't change tempo)
p
27
p
mp
p
31
mp
mf


34
sub mp
mf
mf
37
p
mp
40
Tempo I
p
mf
43
f
mf
46
f
mf


49
ff
52
slowing
mp
p
pp
Adagio (♩=52)
58
accel e cresc
(8)
loco
59
rit e decresc
p
60
pp
ppp
pppp
long hold


Lively (♩=180-200)
right hand tacet throughout
ff
5
f
9
ff
f
mf
13
f
mf
17
mp
p


22
mp
p
pp
26
p
mp
30
mf
f
34
ff
f
37
ff
fff
mp
ff

*for Erika*

# *THE ILL-TEMPERED VARIATION*

**Collected, under control (♩=110-120)**

*sempre* ***f***

*sparing use of pedal throughout*

3

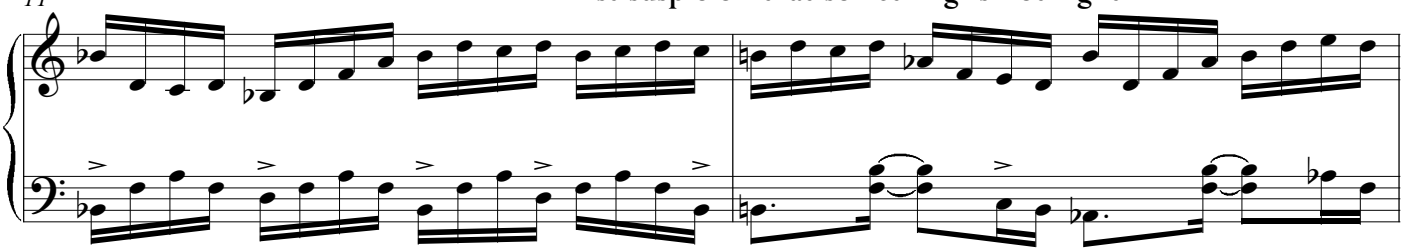
5

7

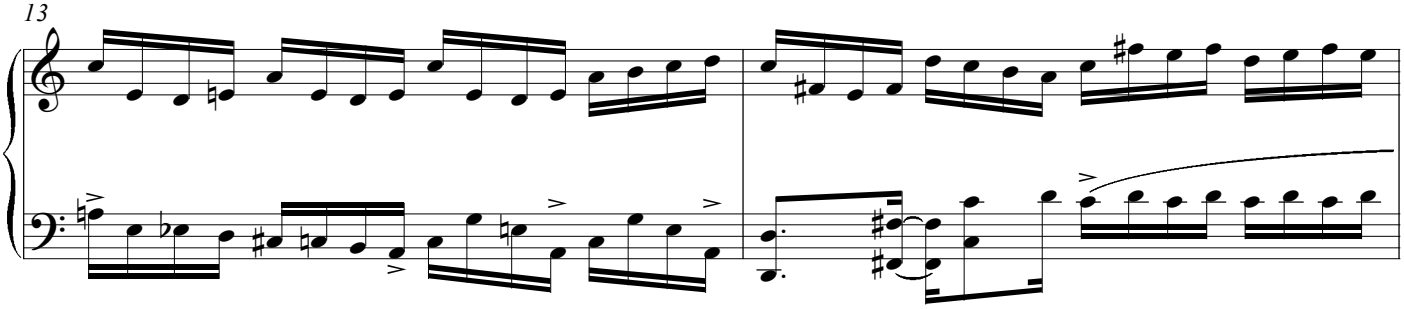
**With a growing urgency,**
**but still controlled**

9

11 **first suspicion that something is not right**



13



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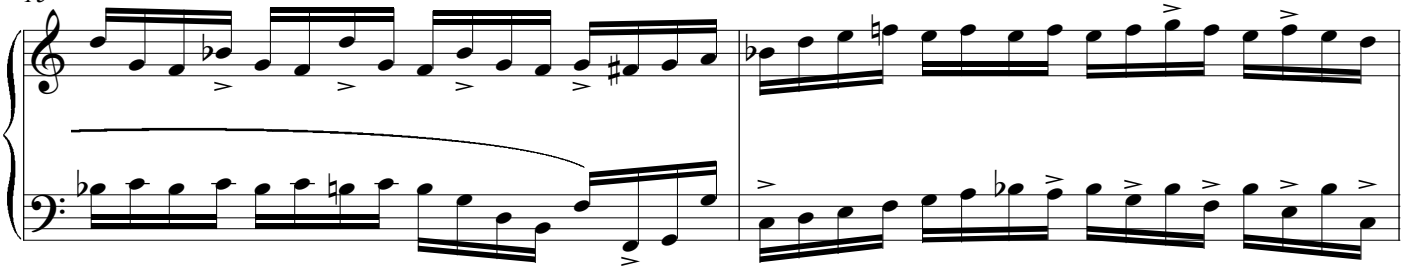
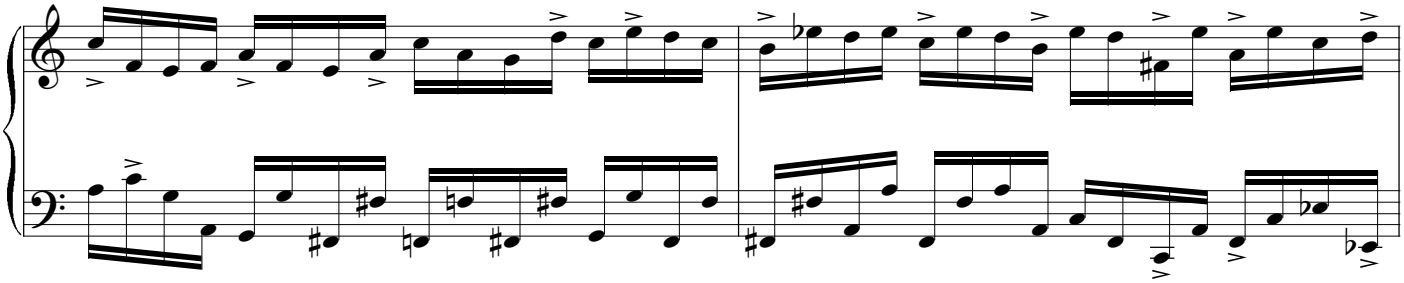
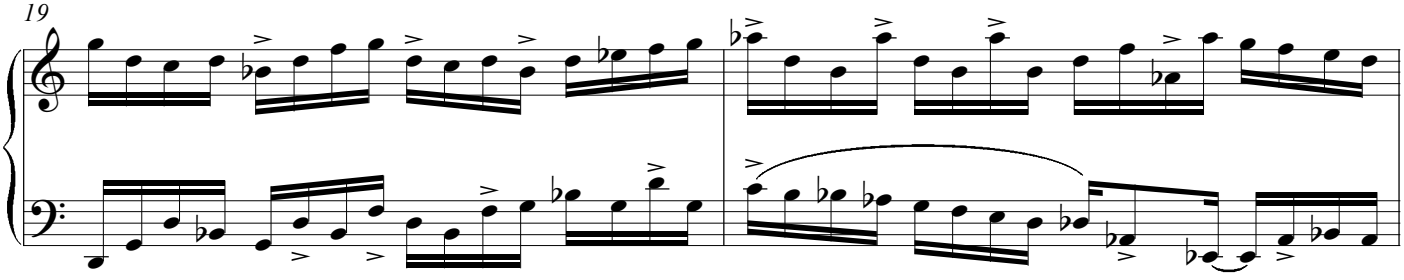
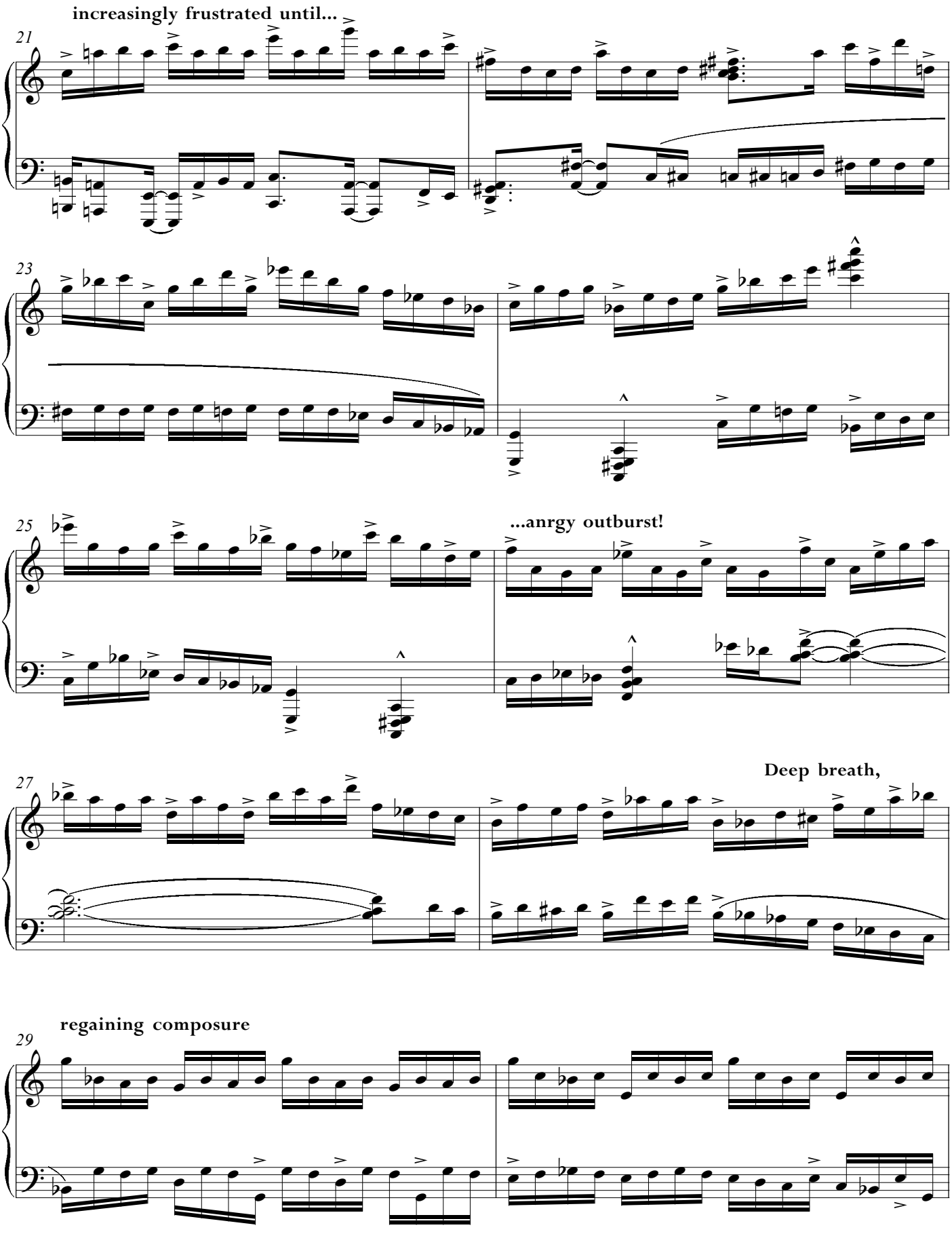


17 **don't lose it**



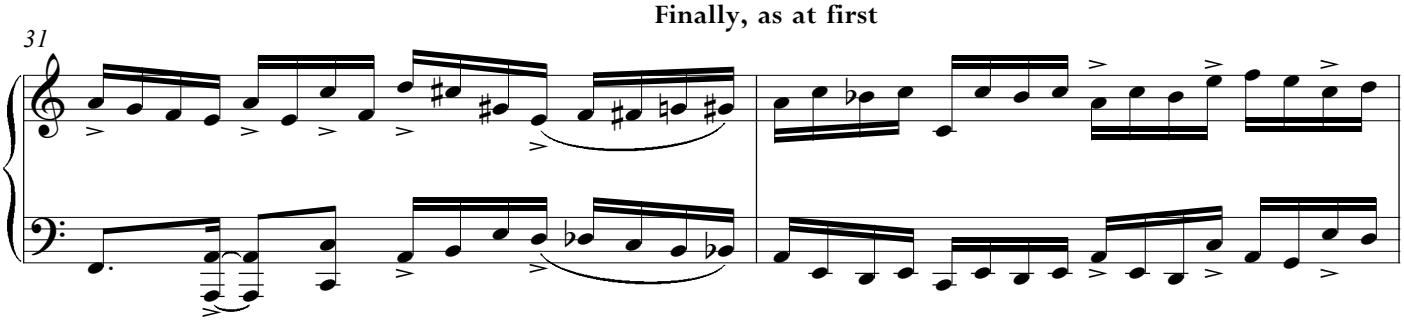
19




increasingly frustrated until...
21
23
25
...anrgy outburst!
27
Deep breath,
regaining composure
29

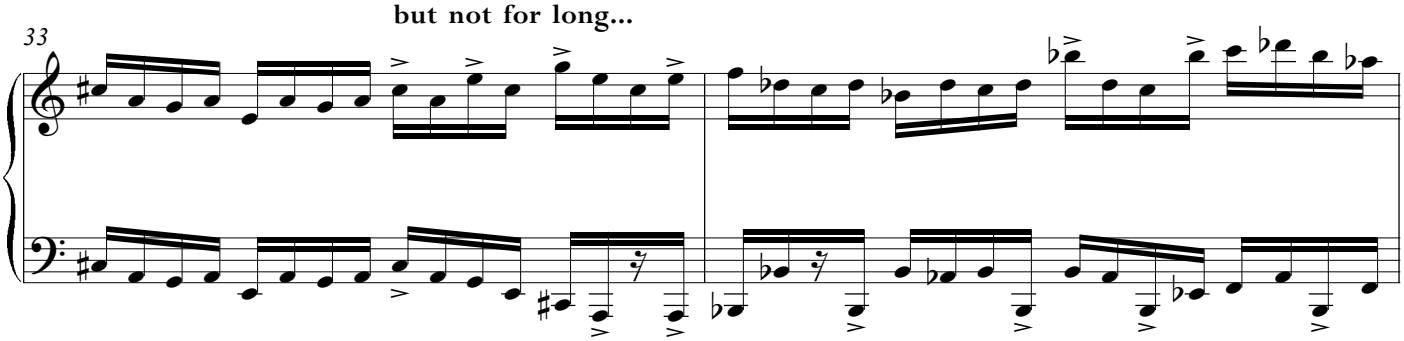
Finally, as at first

31



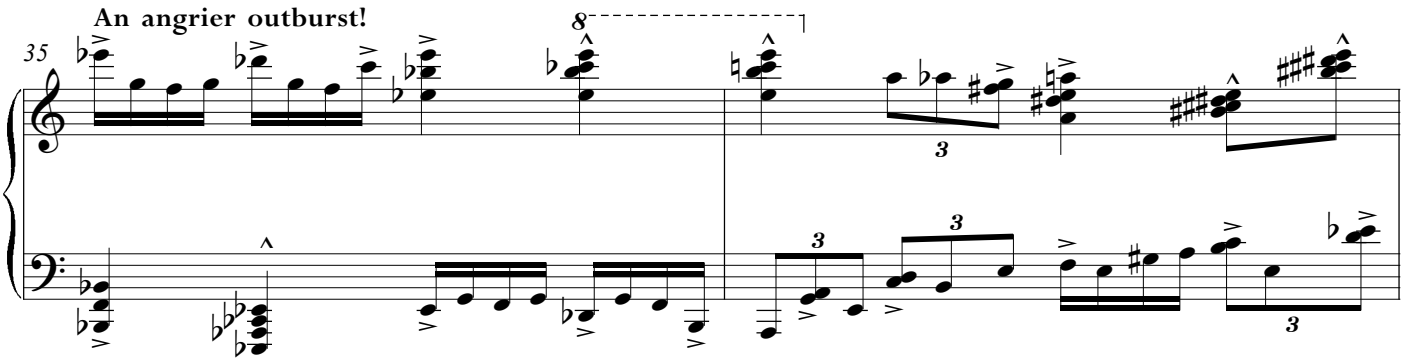
but not for long...

33

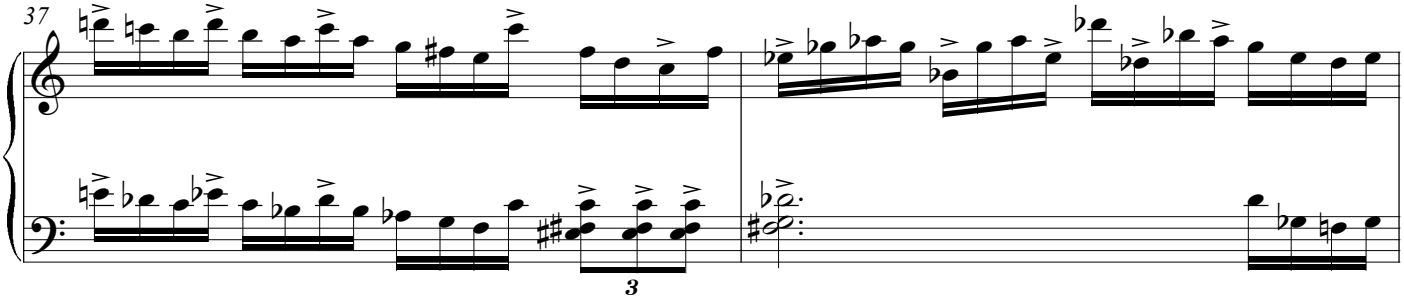


An angrier outburst!

35

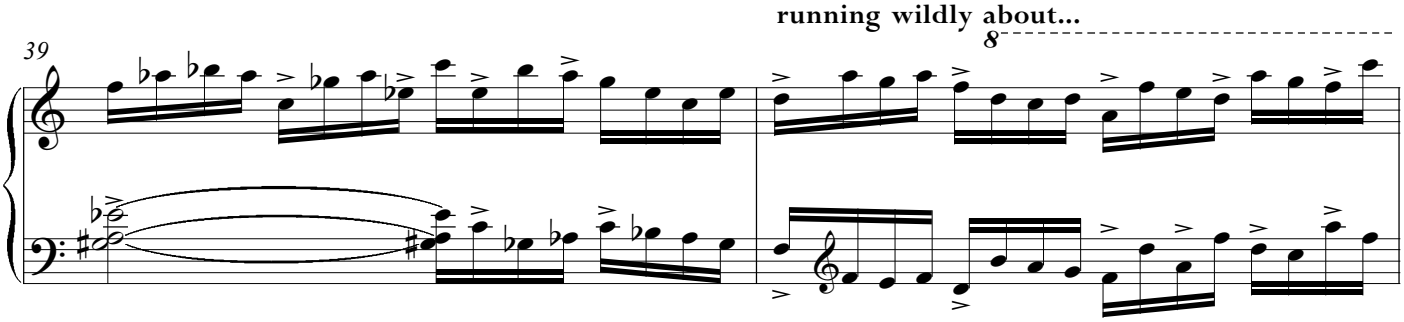


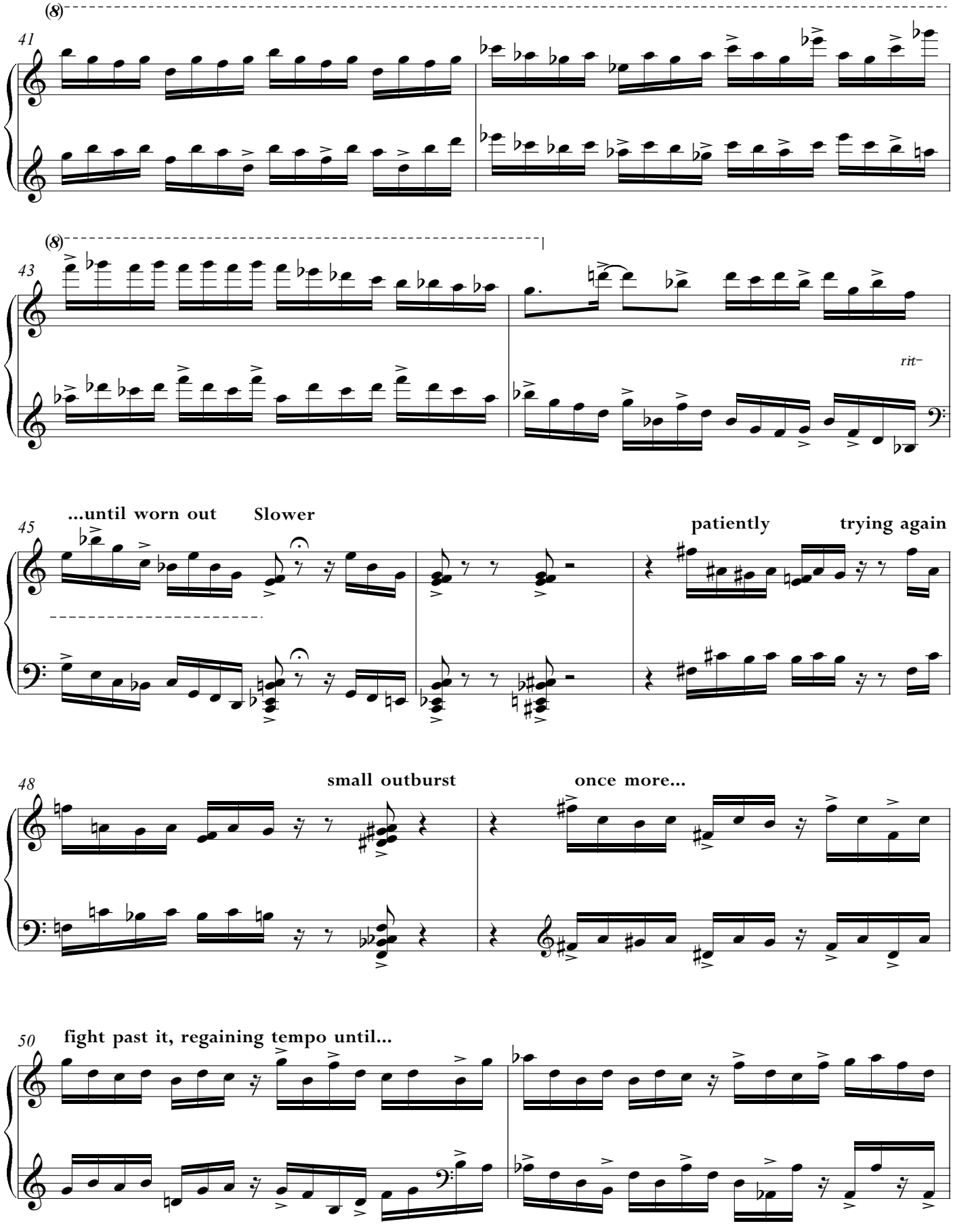
37

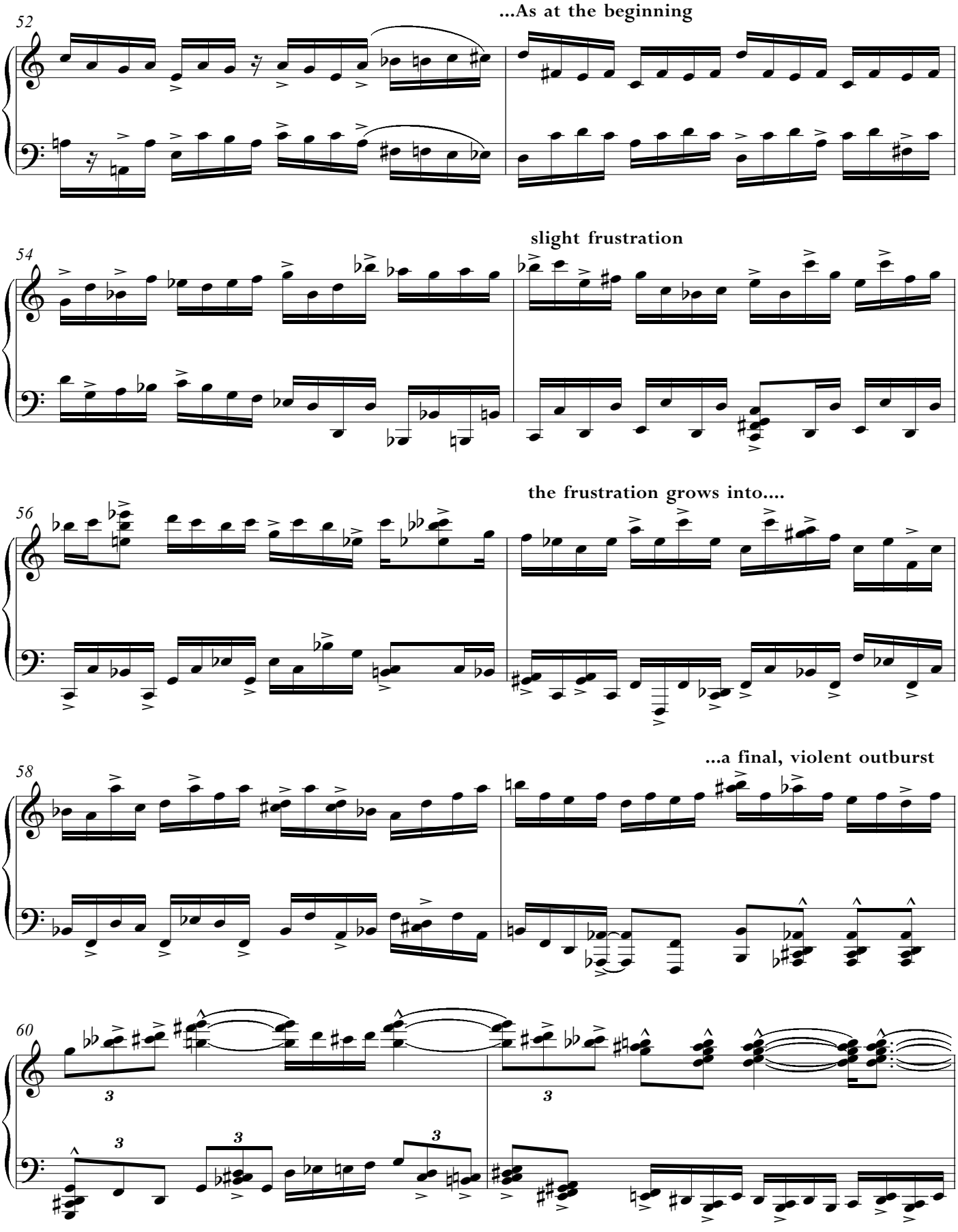


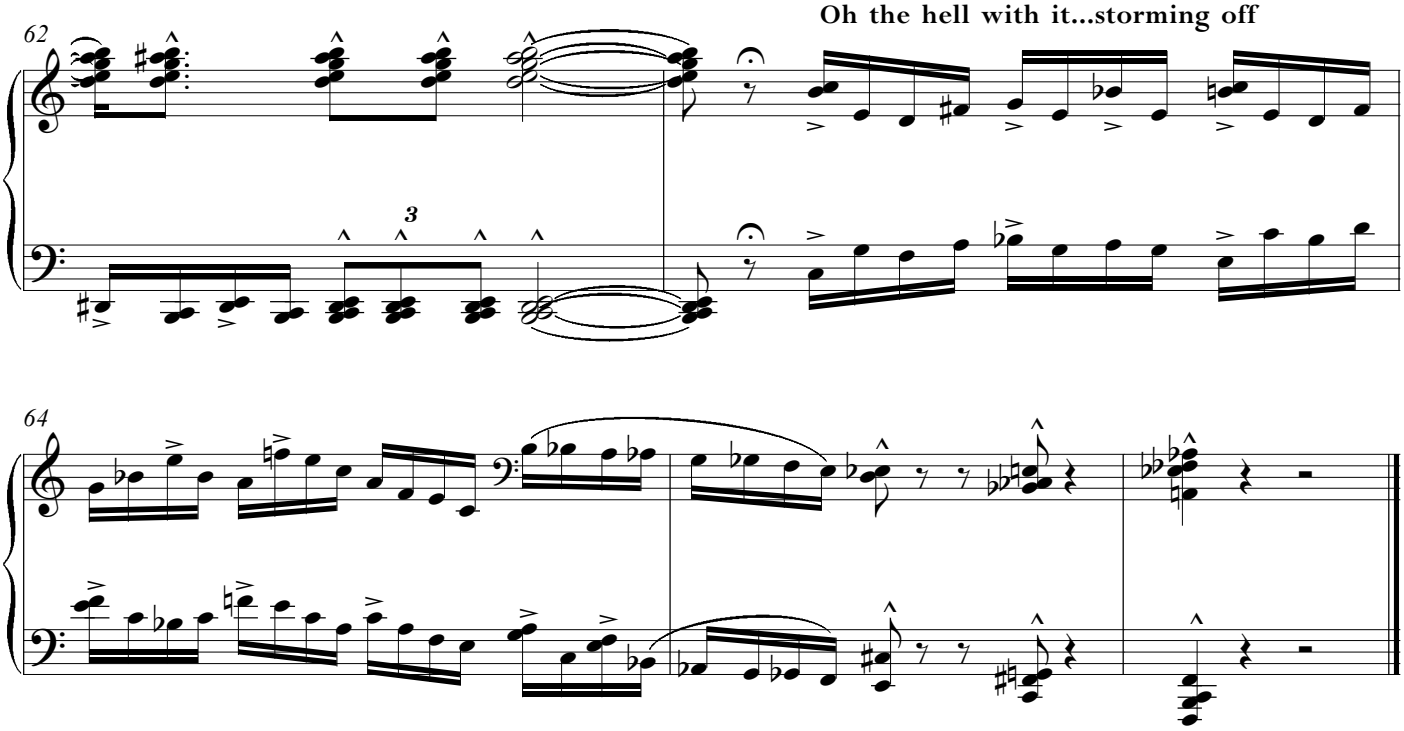
running wildly about...

39



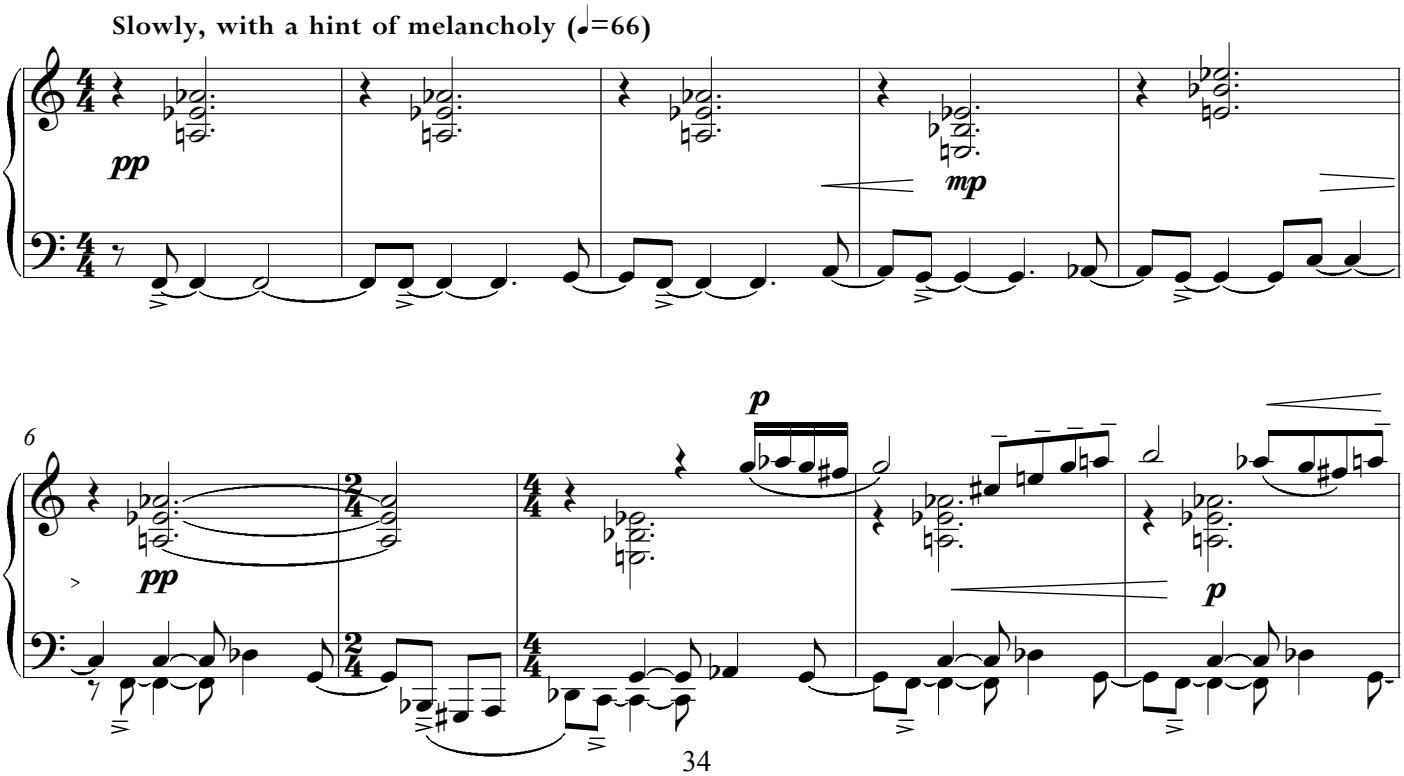

(8)
41
(8)
43
rit–
...until worn out
Slower
45
patiently
trying again
48
small outburst
once more...
50
fight past it, regaining tempo until...

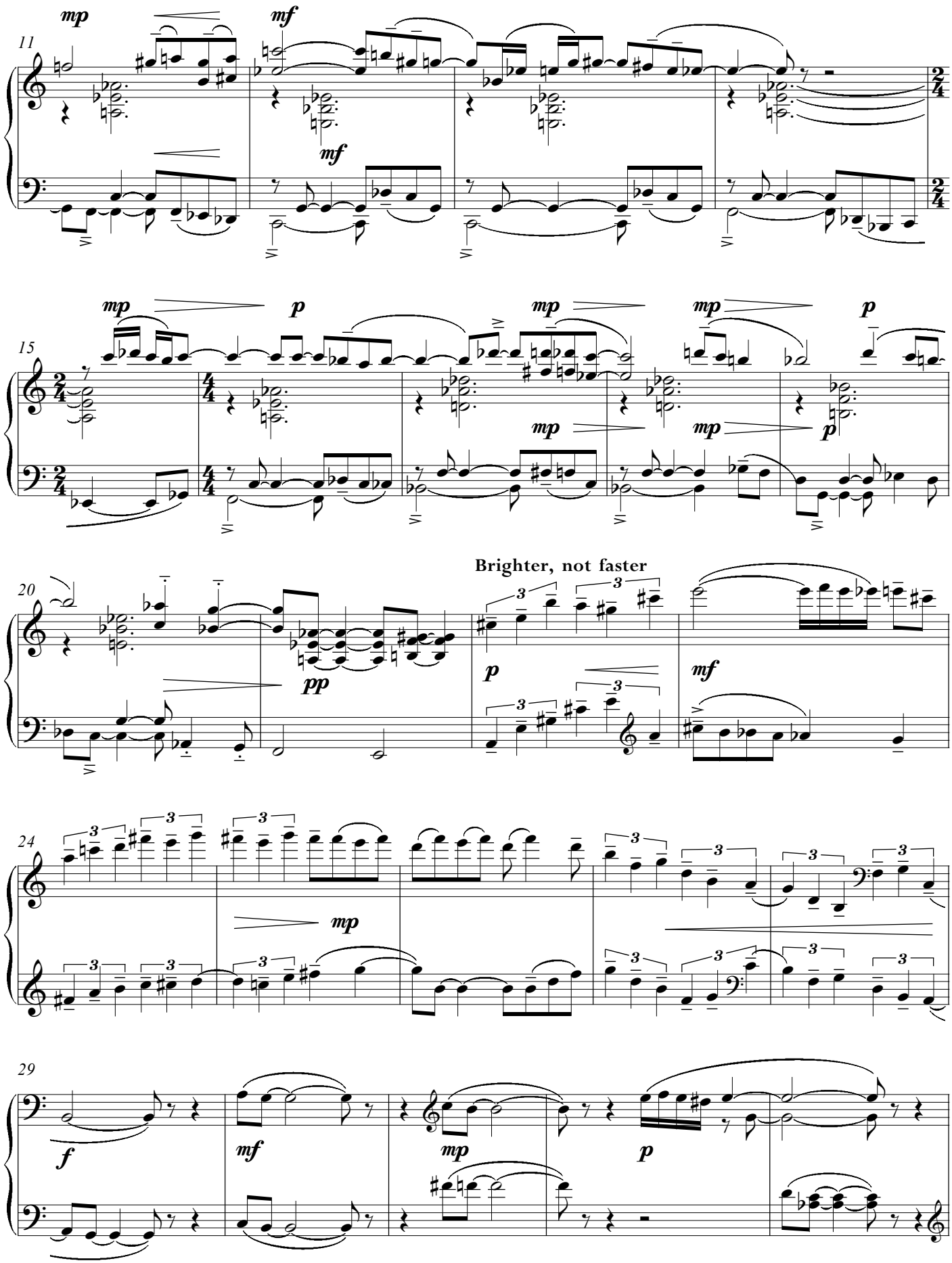

...As at the beginning
52
slight frustration
54
the frustration grows into....
56
...a final, violent outburst
58
60

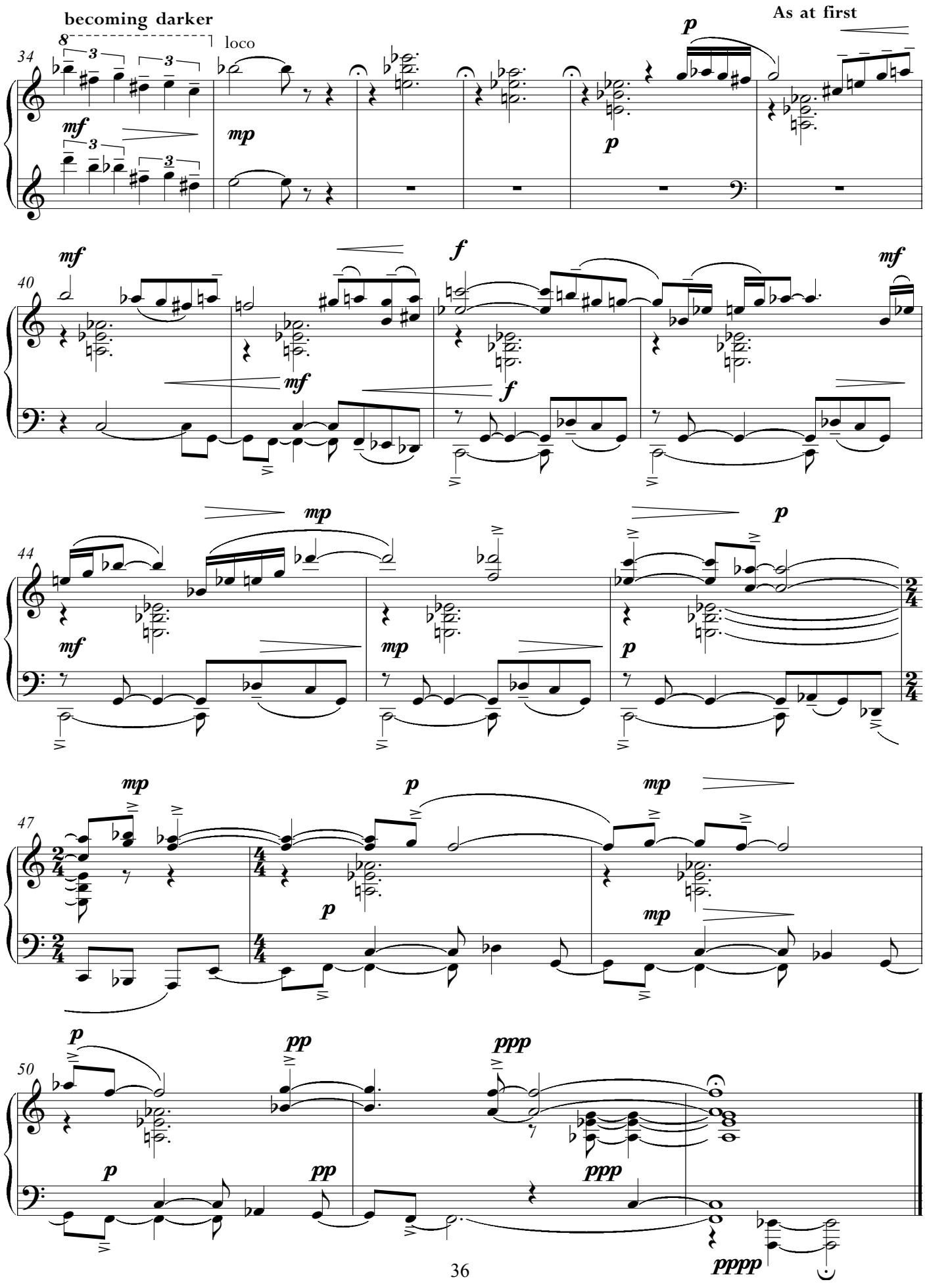



*for Sarah*

## *THE DARK BLUE SONG VARIATION*




11
mp
mf
mf
15
mp
p
mp
mp
mp
p
20
pp
Brighter, not faster
p
mf
24
mp
29
f
mf
mp
p


becoming darker
loco
As at first
34
40
44
47
50
36

**Calm, like ripples in a stream (♩=165)**

8

*pp*

3 (8)

*cresc.*

5 (8)

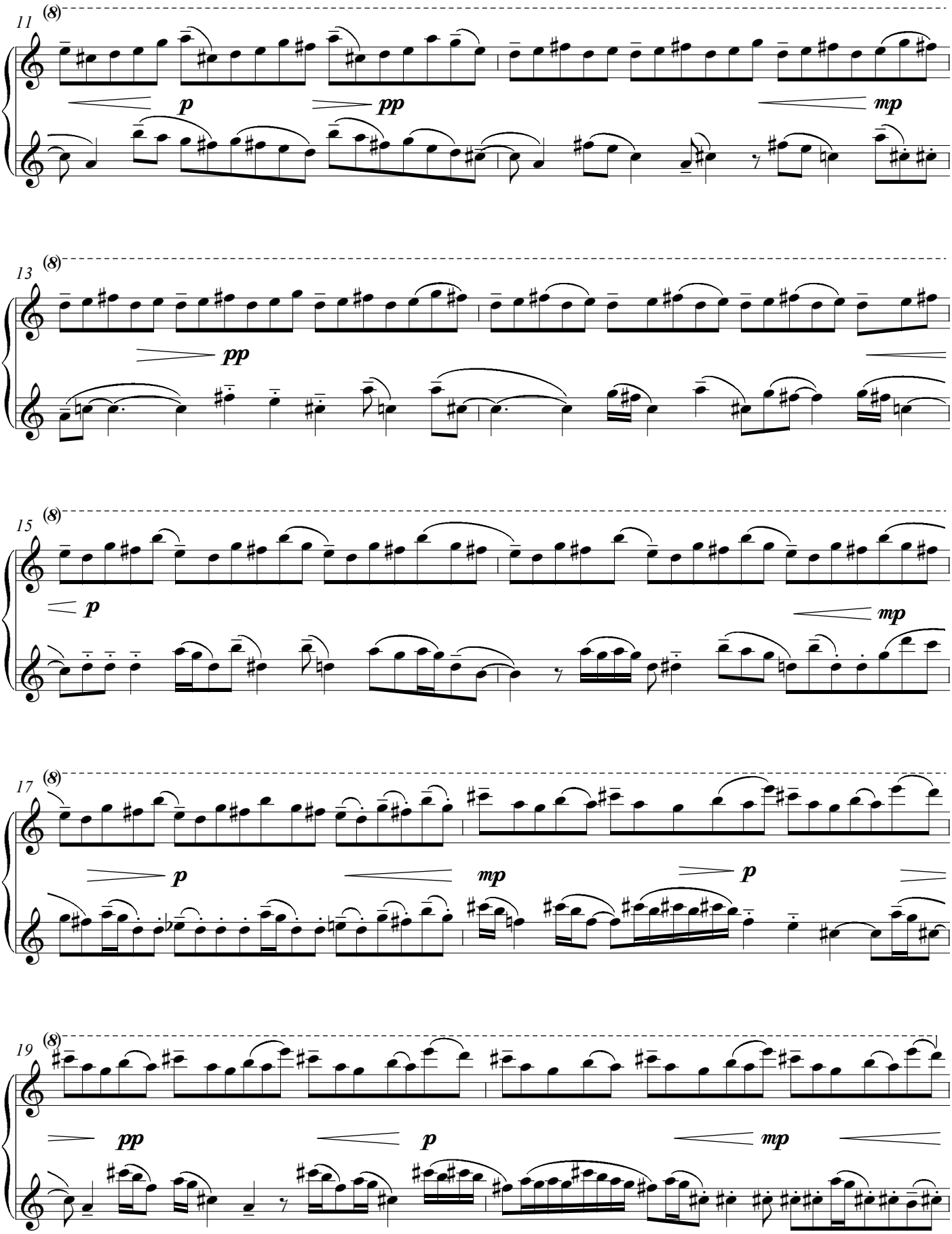
*mp*

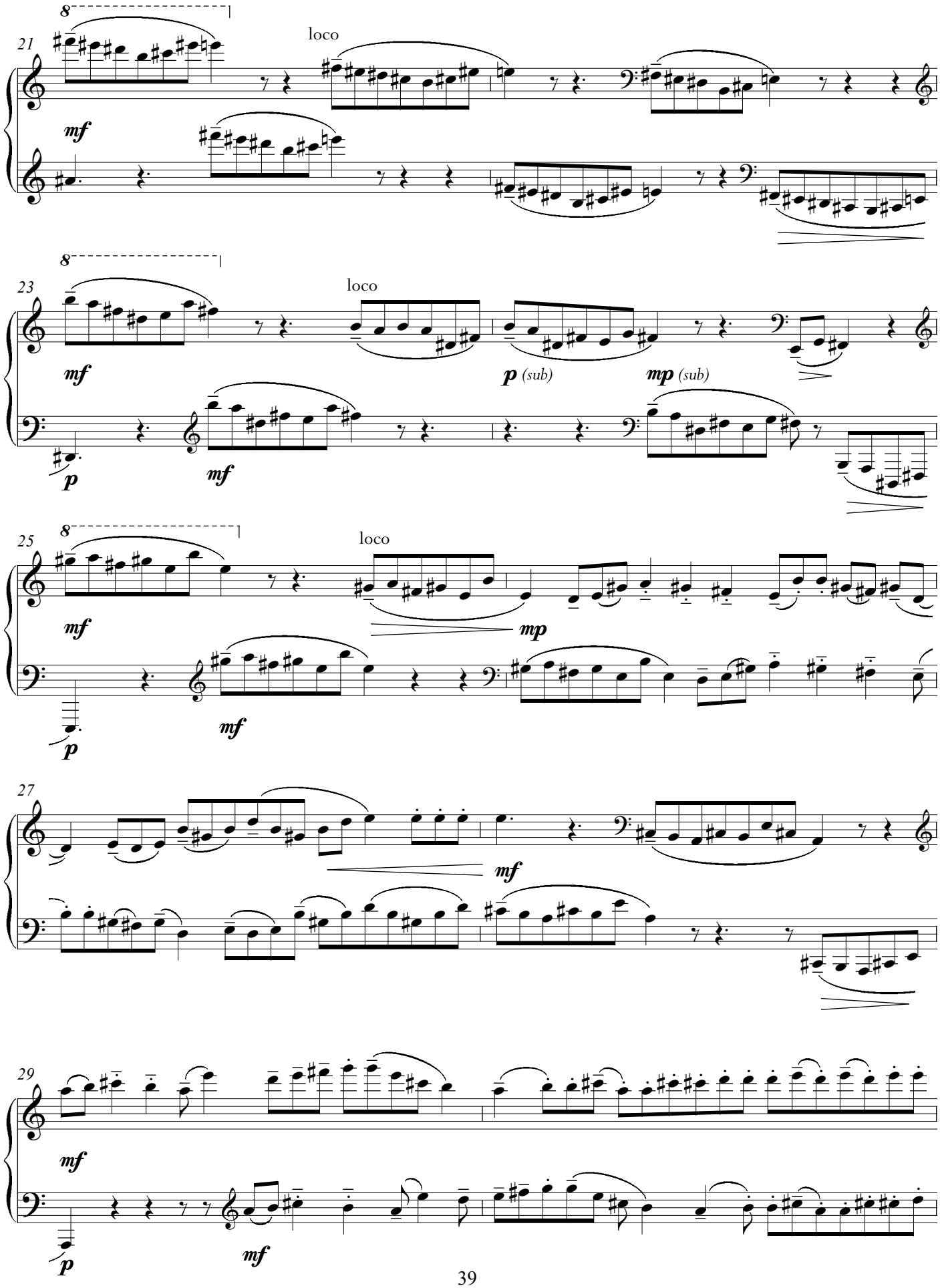
7 (8)

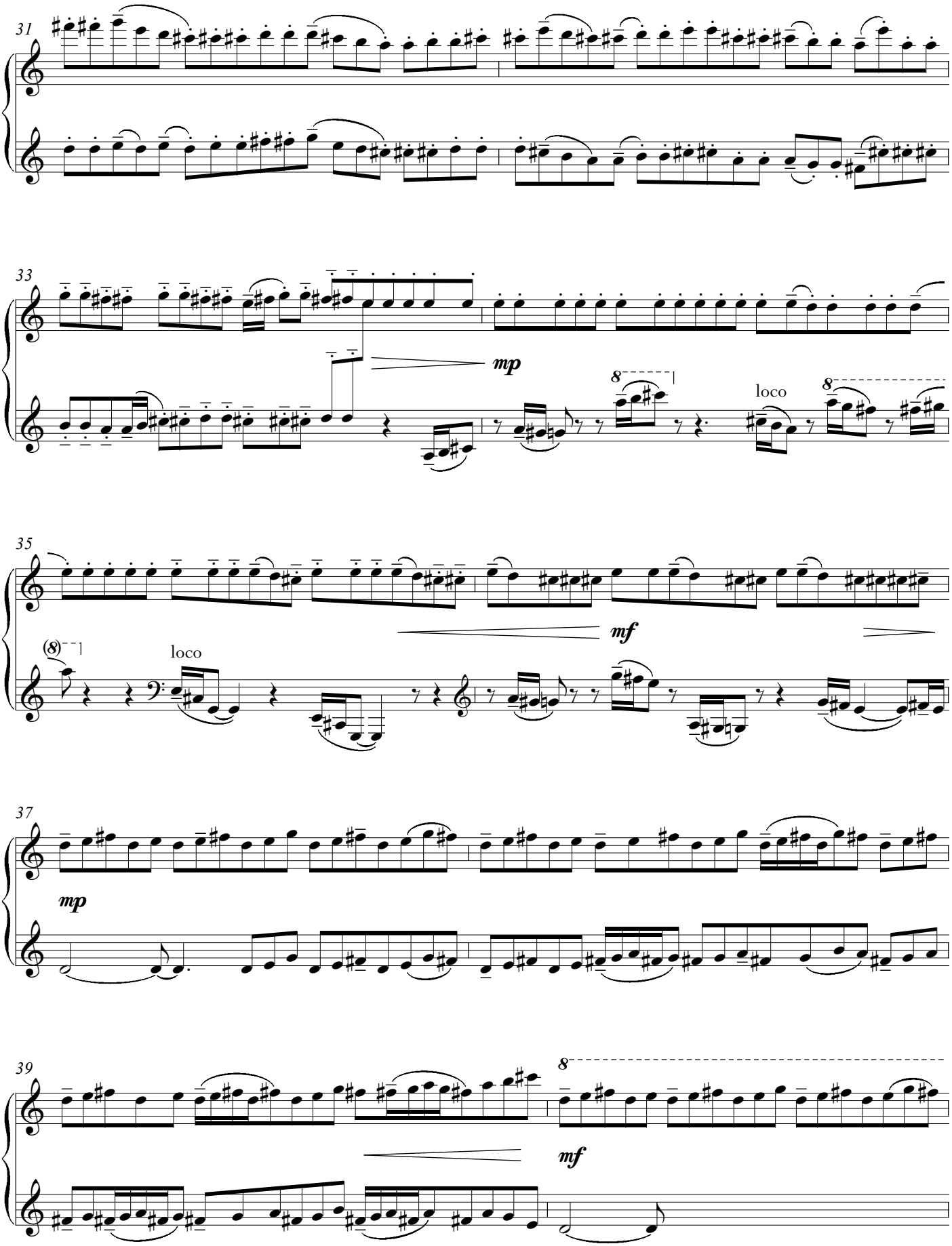
*decresc*

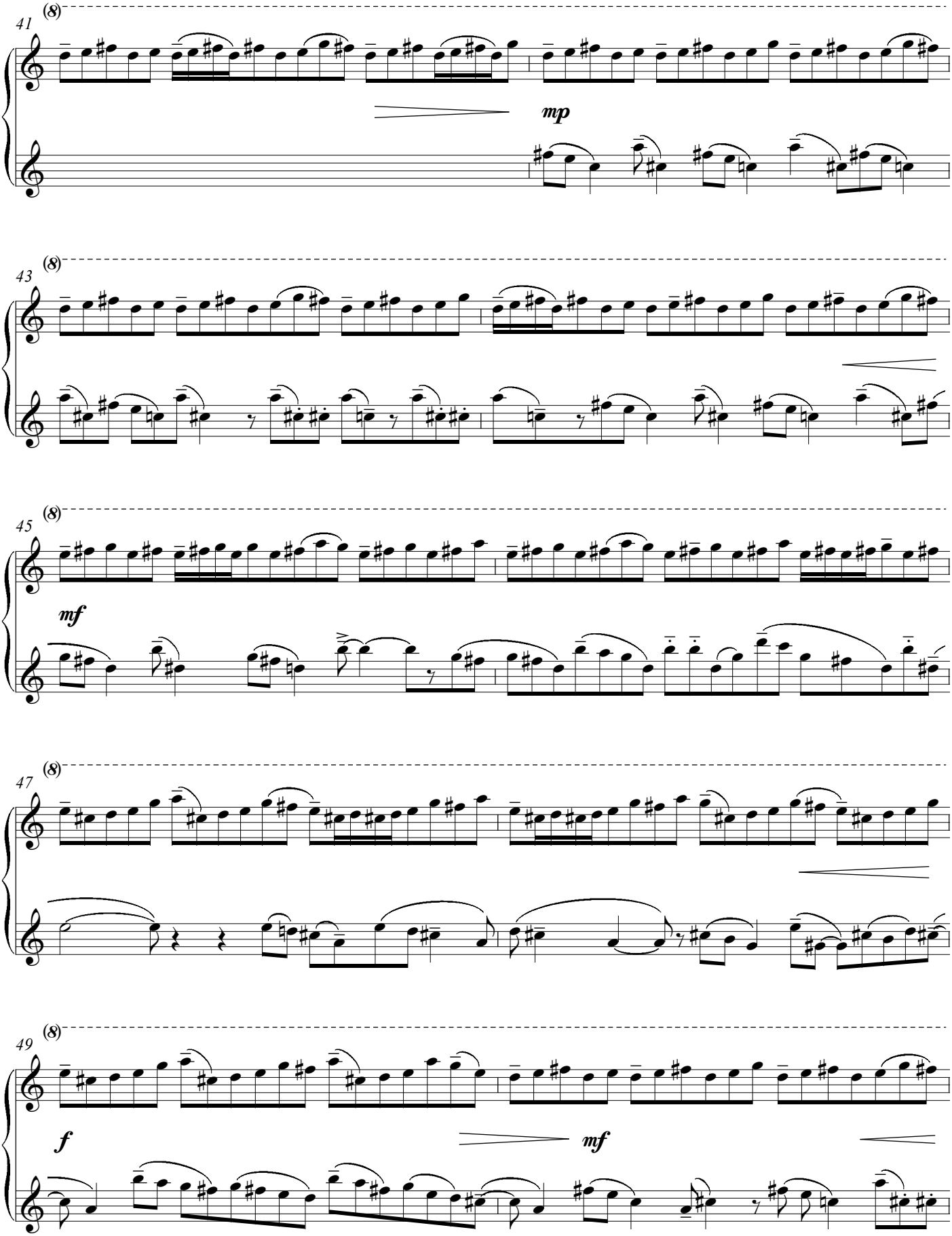
9 (8)

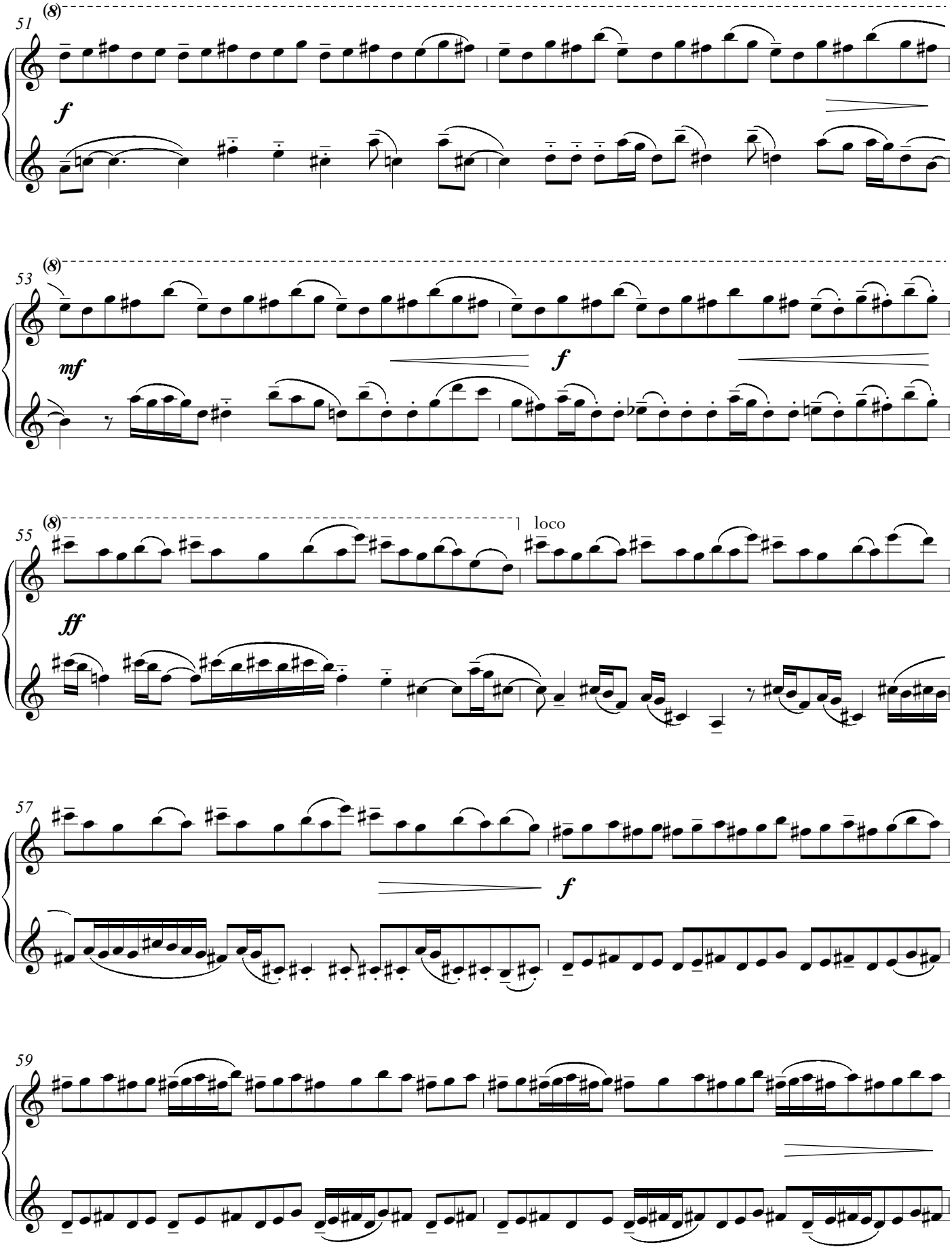
*pp*

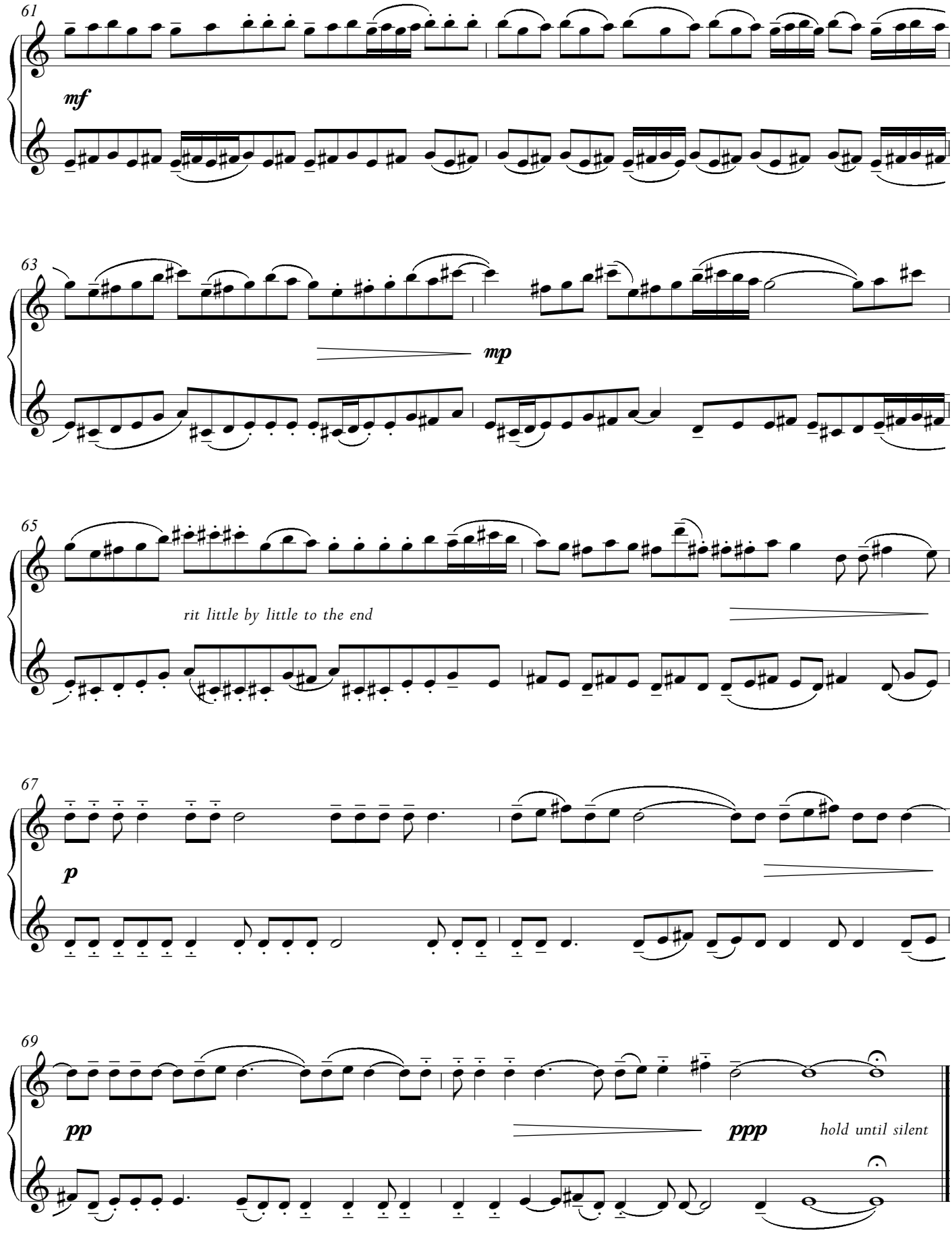

11
(8)
p
pp
mp
13
(8)
pp
15
(8)
p
mp
17
(8)
p
mp
p
19
(8)
pp
p
mp


8
21
loco
mf
8
23
loco
mf
p (sub)
mp (sub)
p
mf
8
25
loco
mf
mp
p
mf
27
mf
29
mf
p
mf


31
33
mp
8
loco
8
35
mf
(8)
loco
37
mp
39
8
mf

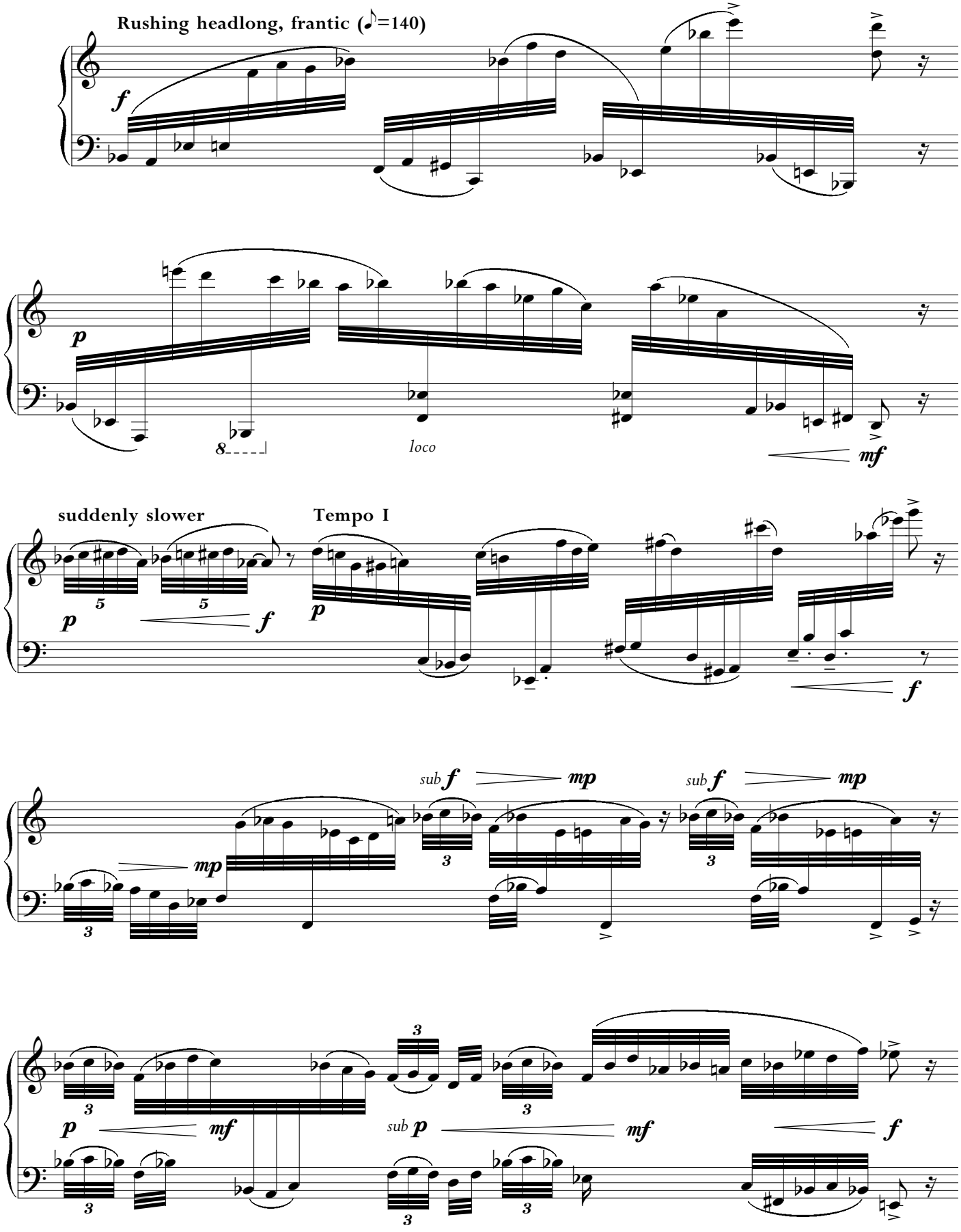

41
(8)
mp
43
(8)
45
(8)
mf
47
(8)
49
(8)
f
mf

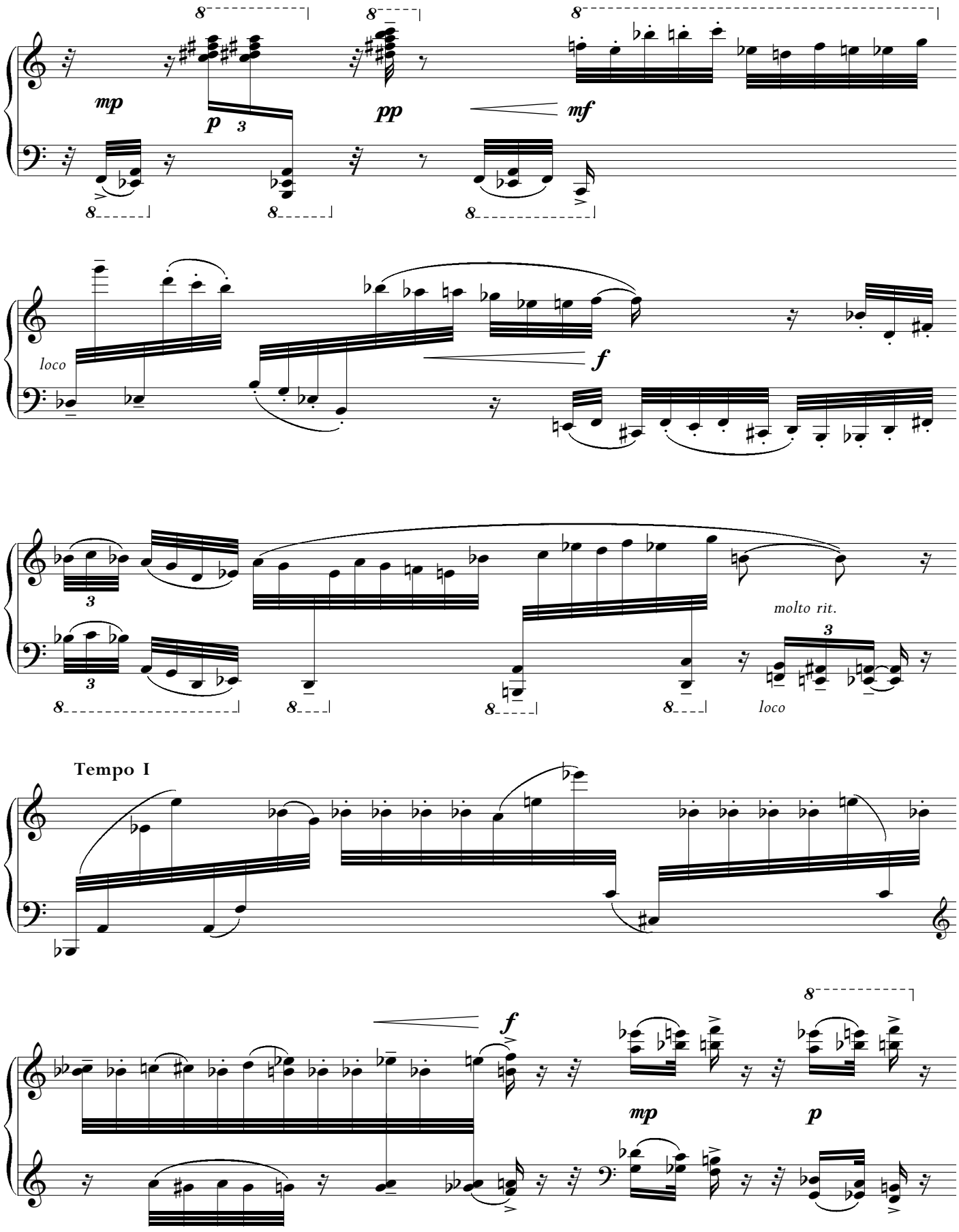

51
(8)
f
53
(8)
mf
f
55
(8)
loco
ff
57
f
59

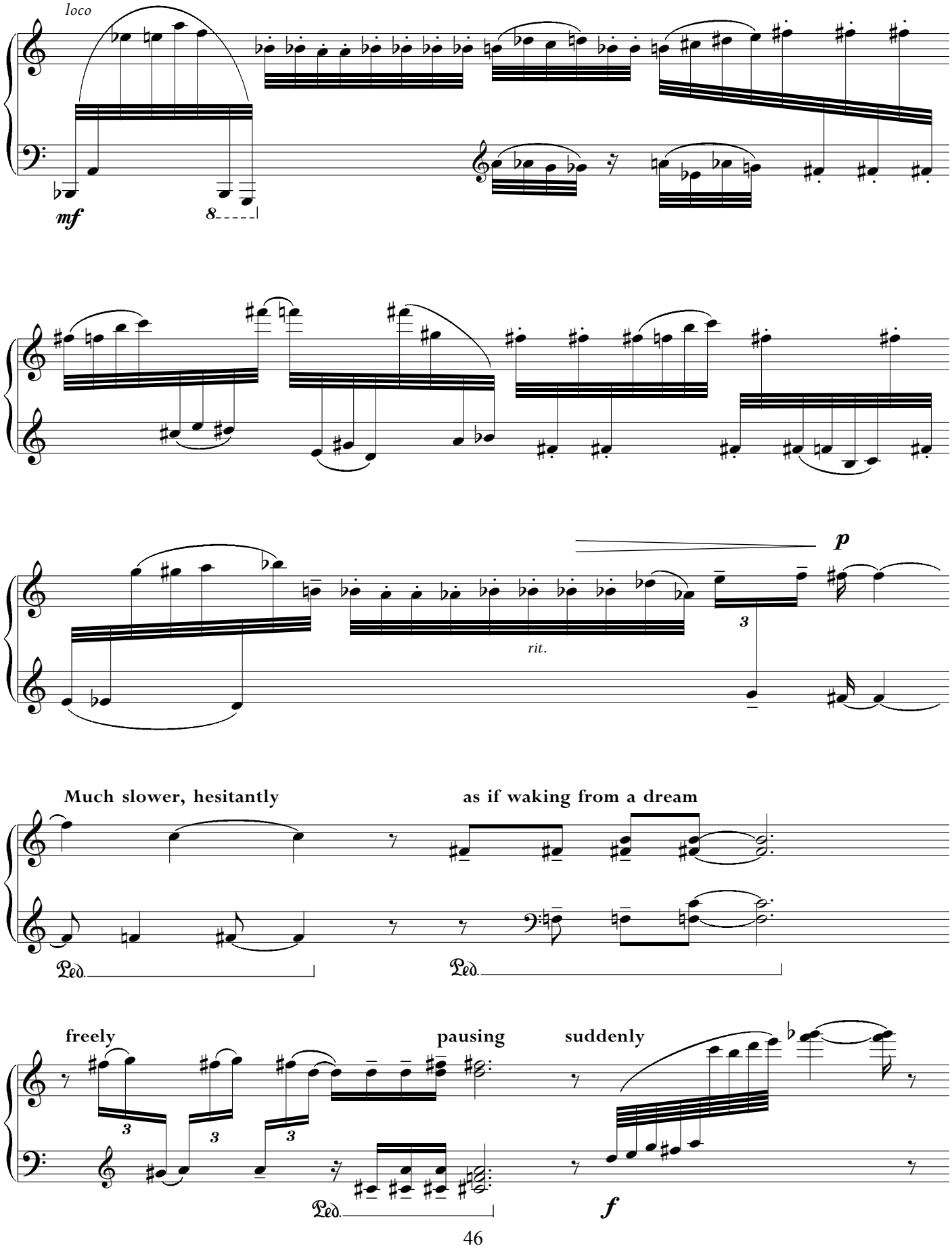

61
mf
63
mp
65
rit little by little to the end
67
p
69
pp
ppp
hold until silent

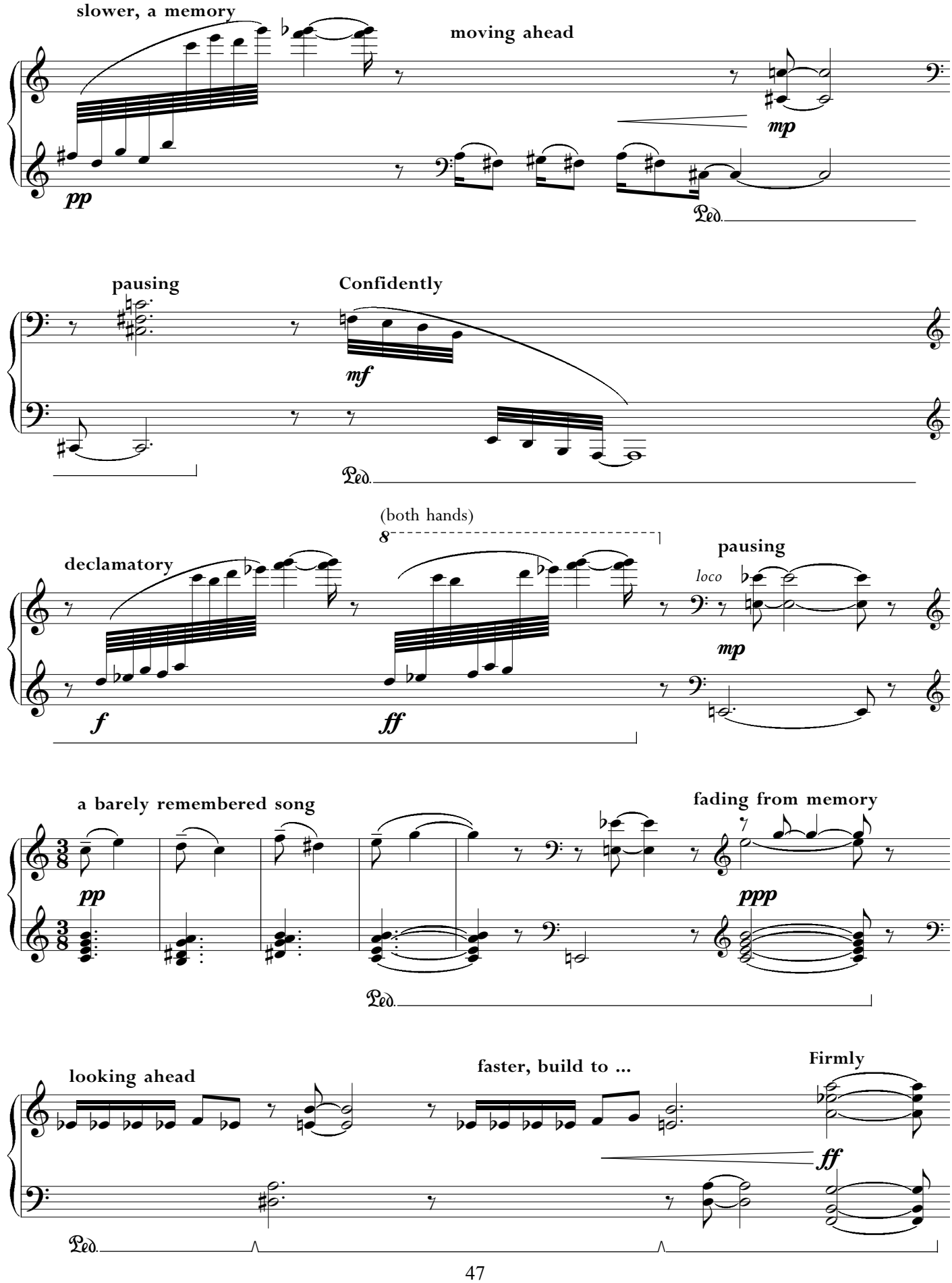
# *BIRD'S STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS VARIATION*

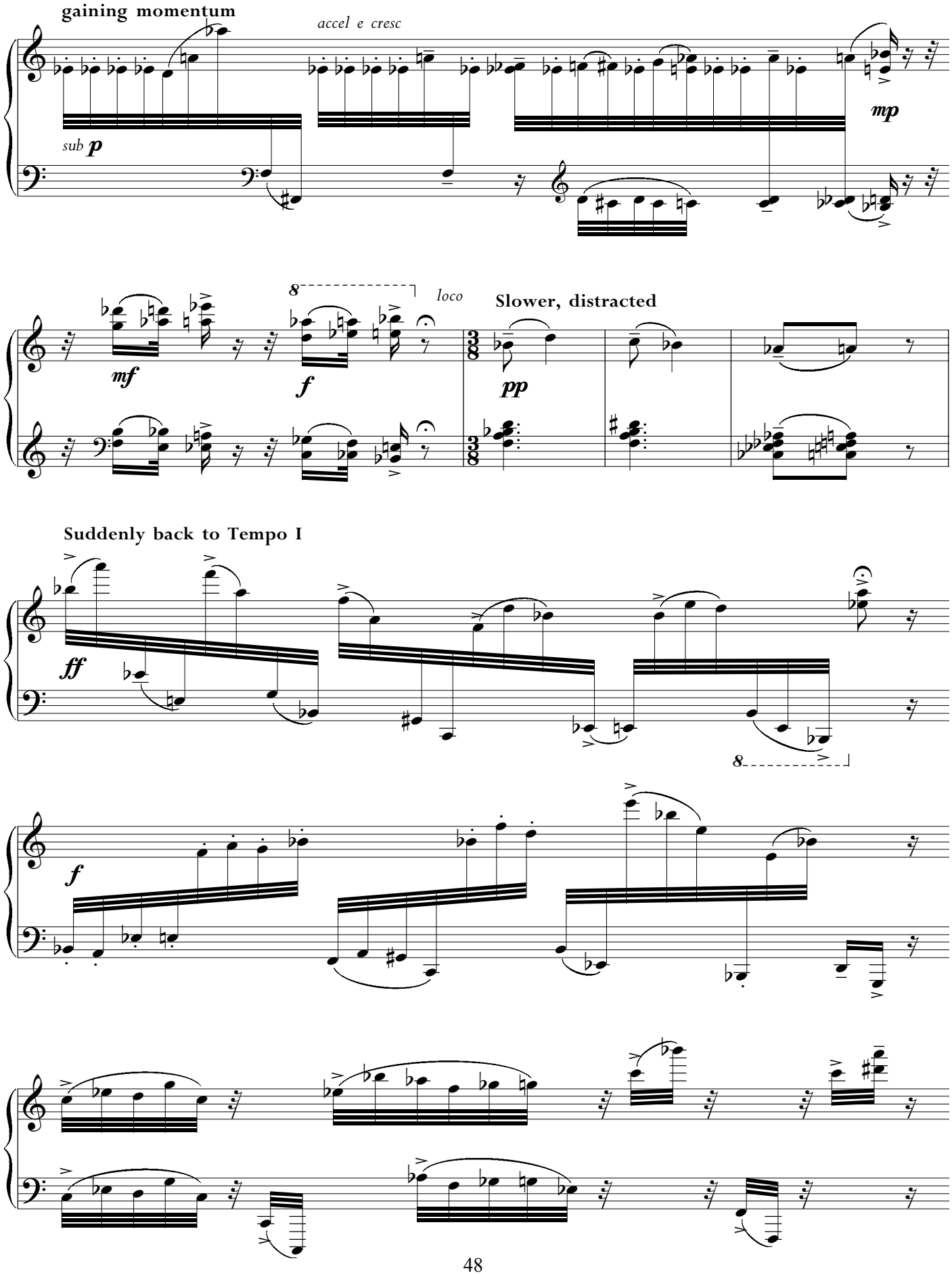
from Charlie Parker's *Anthropology*

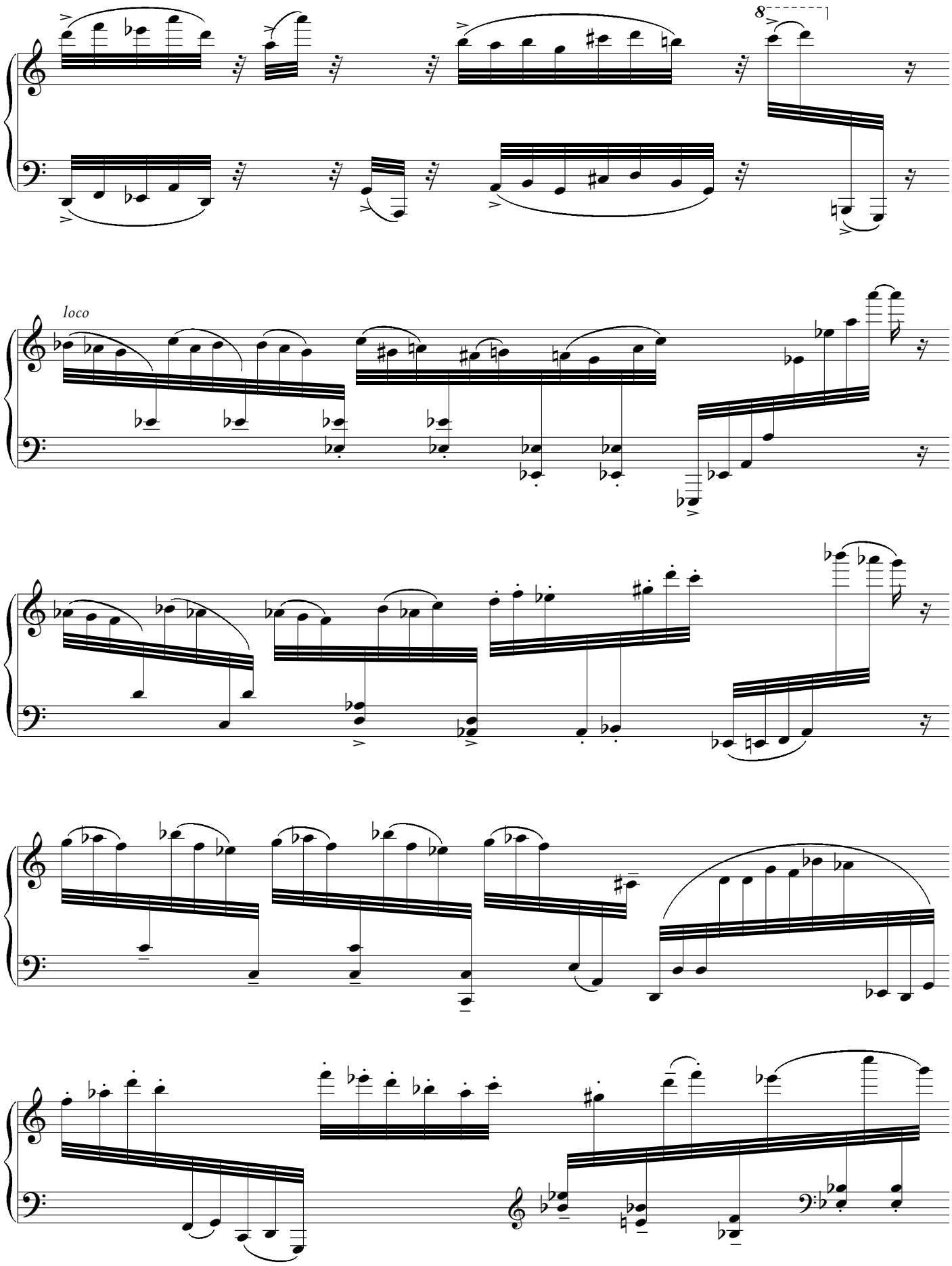


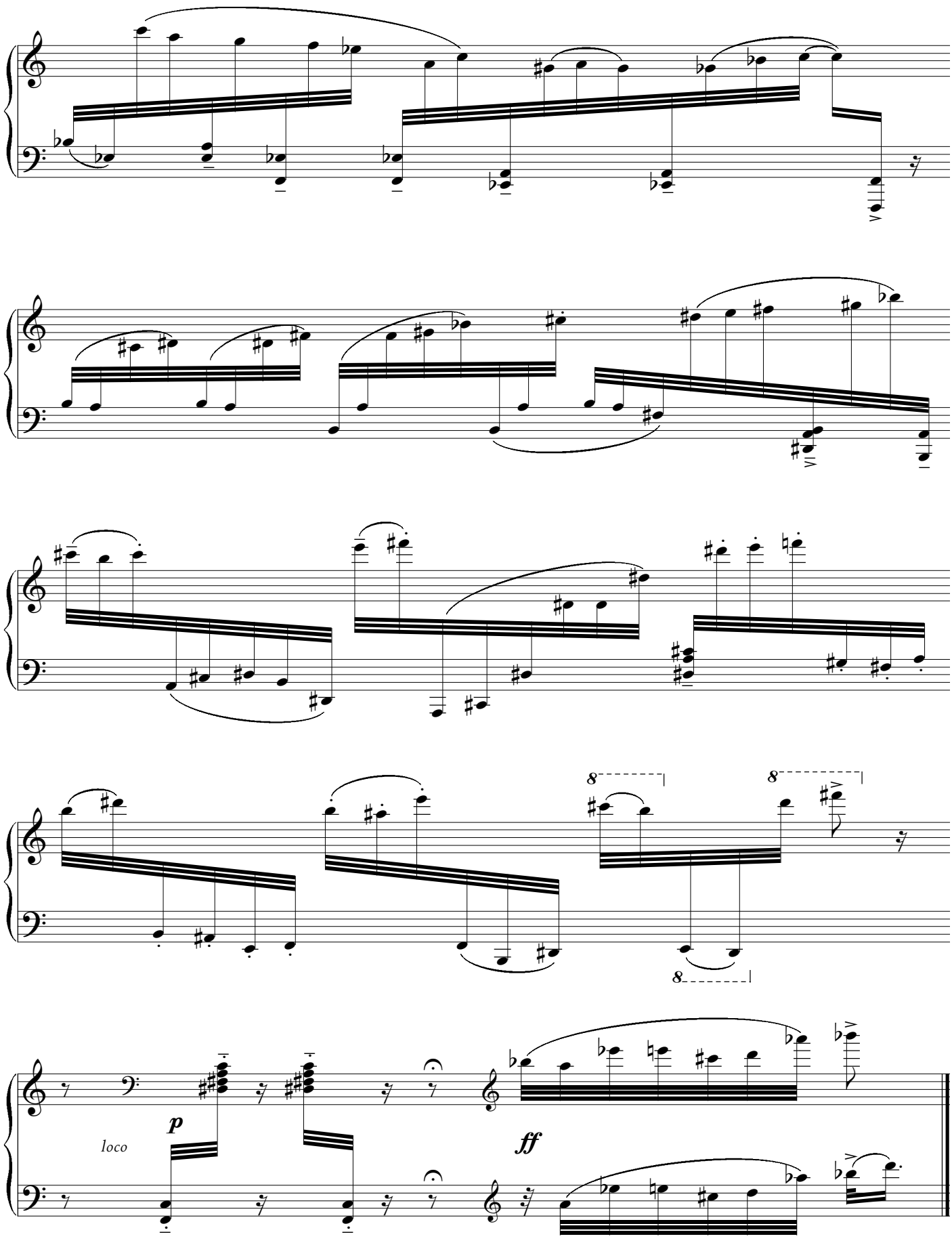

mp
p
3
pp
mf
loco
f
molto rit.
3
loco
Tempo I
f
mp
p

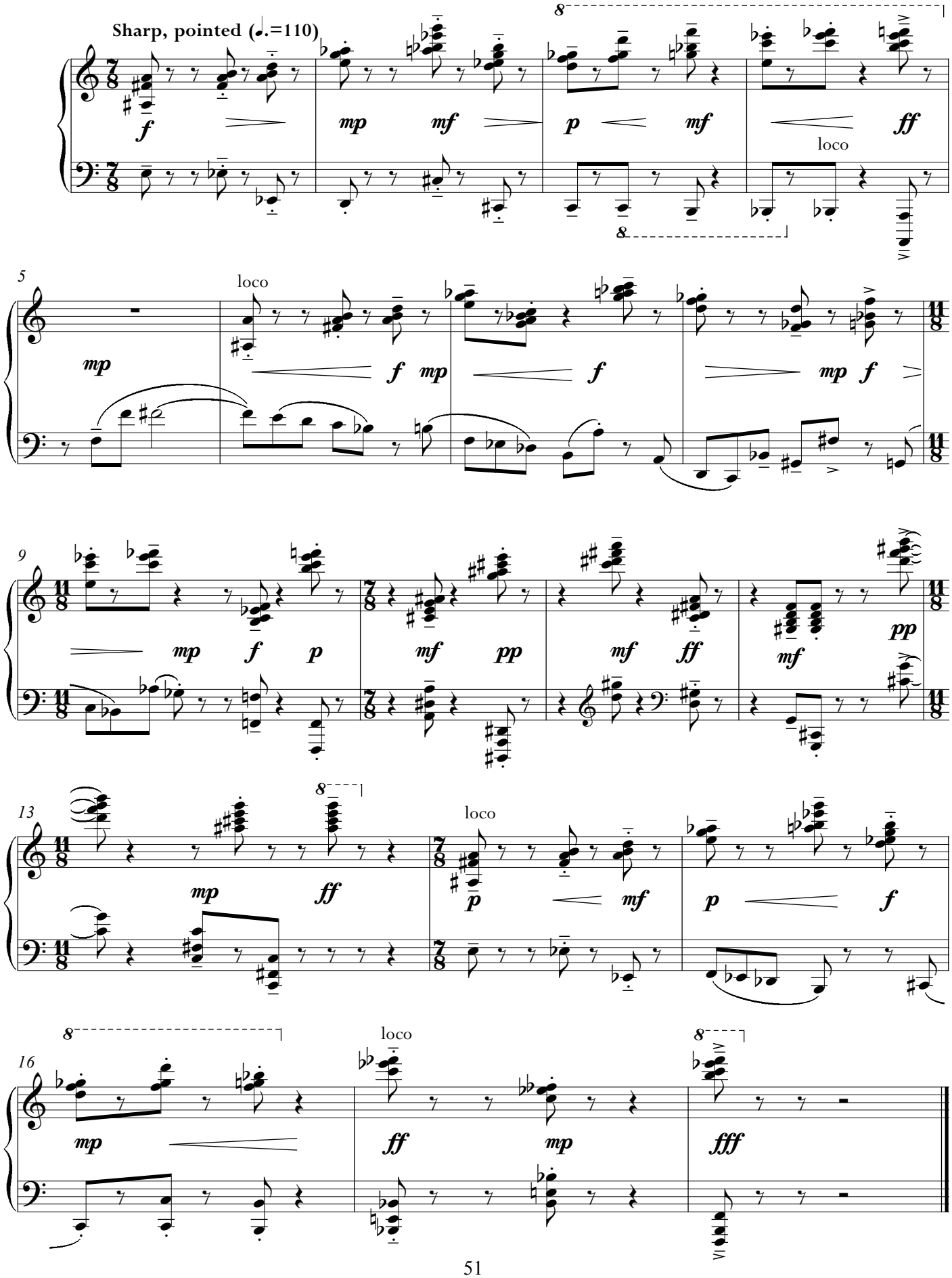

loco
mf
8
rit.
p
3
Much slower, hesitantly
as if waking from a dream
Ped.
Ped.
freely
pausing
suddenly
3
3
3
Ped.
f

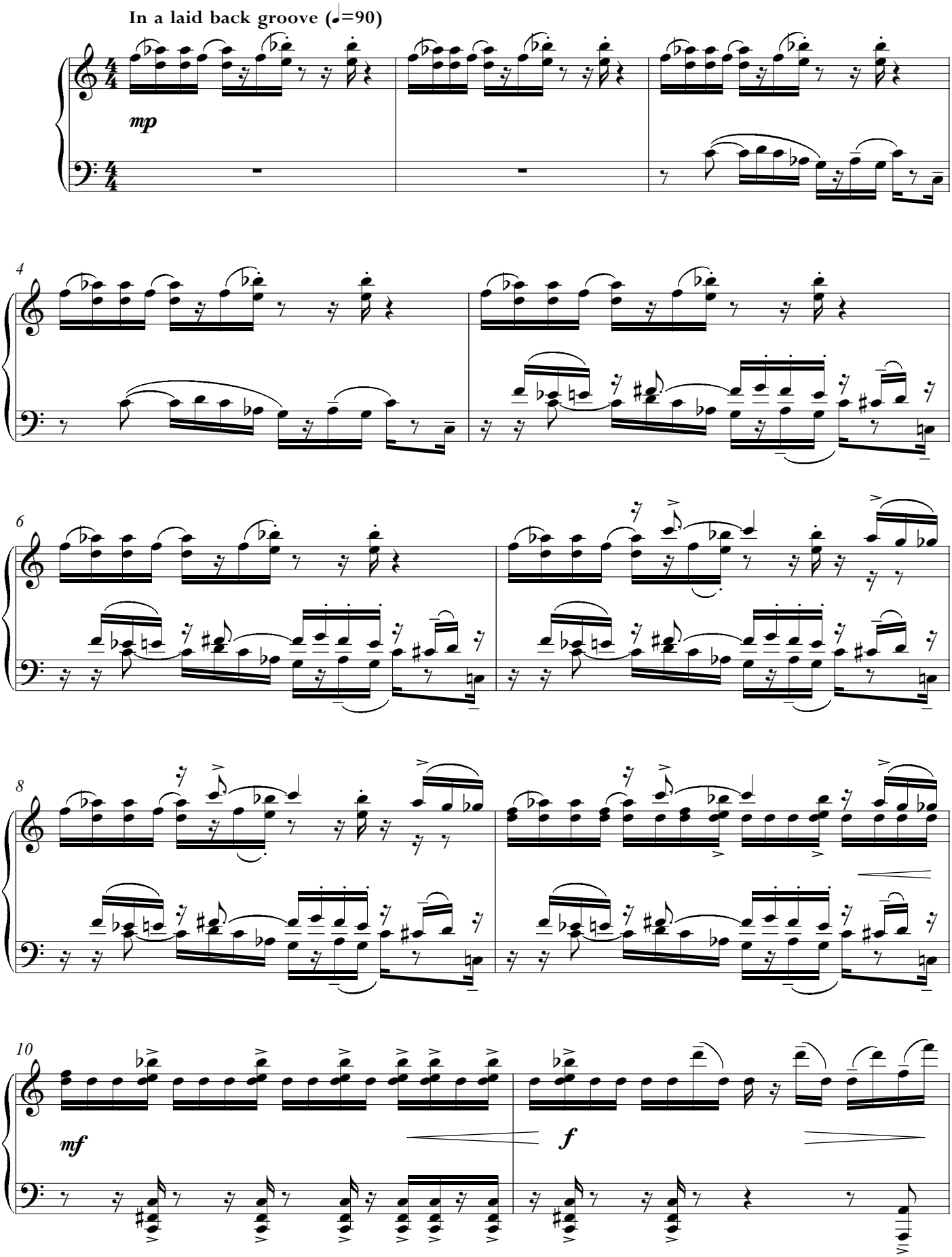

slower, a memory
moving ahead
pp
mp
Ped.
pausing
Confidently
mf
Ped.
(both hands)
8
declamatory
pausing
loco
f
ff
mp
a barely remembered song
fading from memory
pp
ppp
Ped.
looking ahead
faster, build to ...
Firmly
ff
Ped.

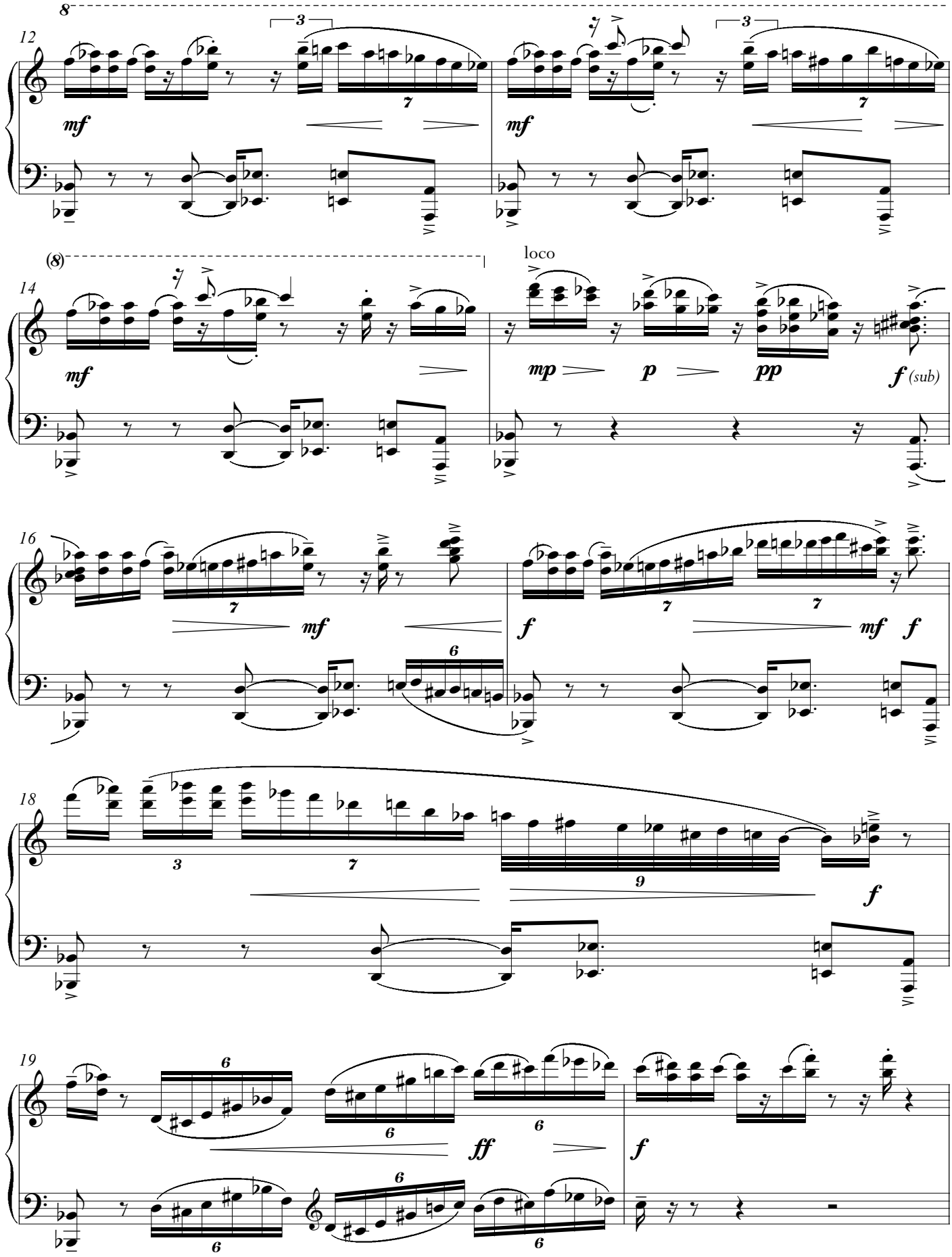

gaining momentum
accel e cresc
sub p
mp
8
loco
mf
f
Slower, distracted
pp
Suddenly back to Tempo I
ff
8
f

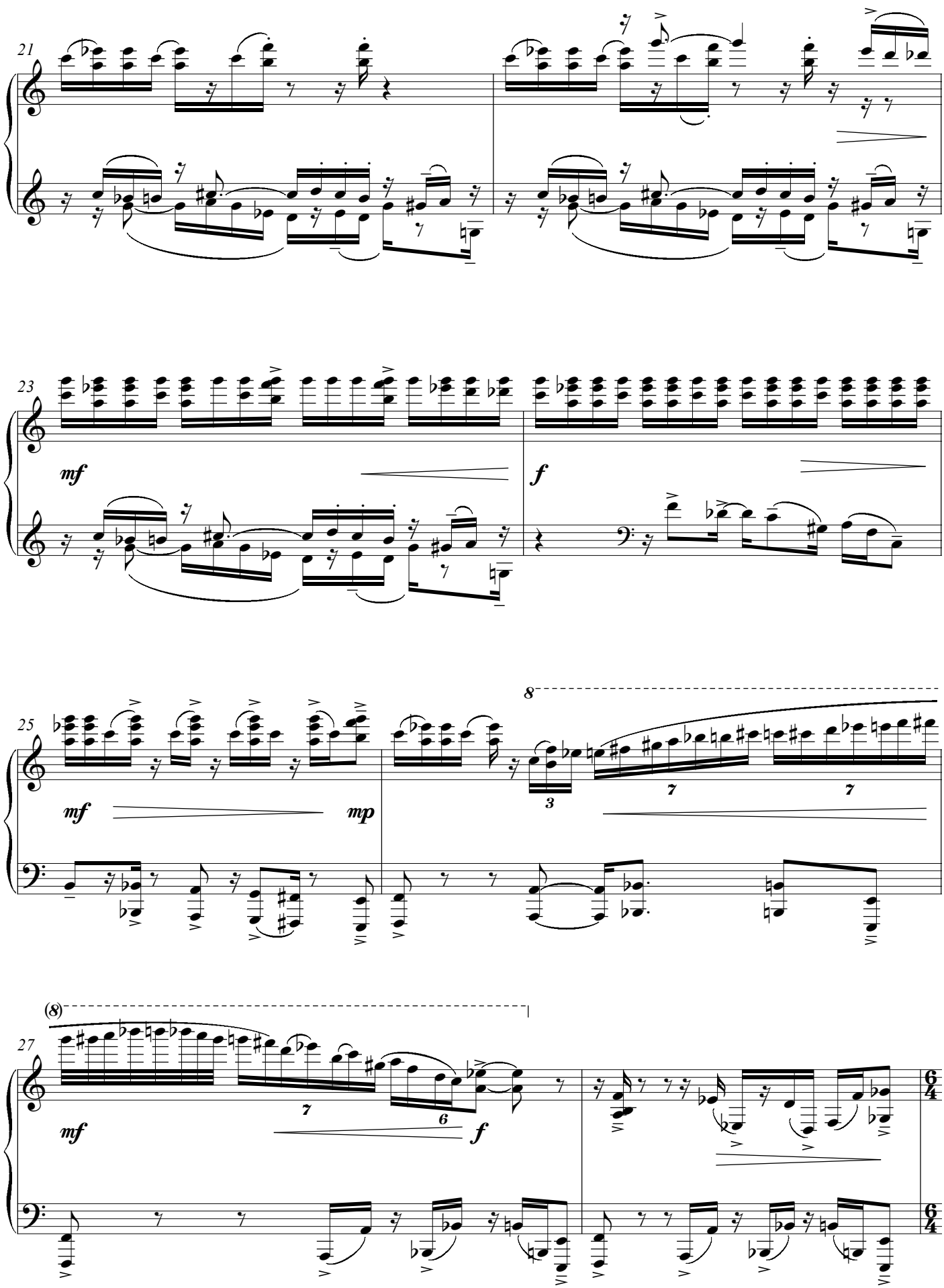

8
loco

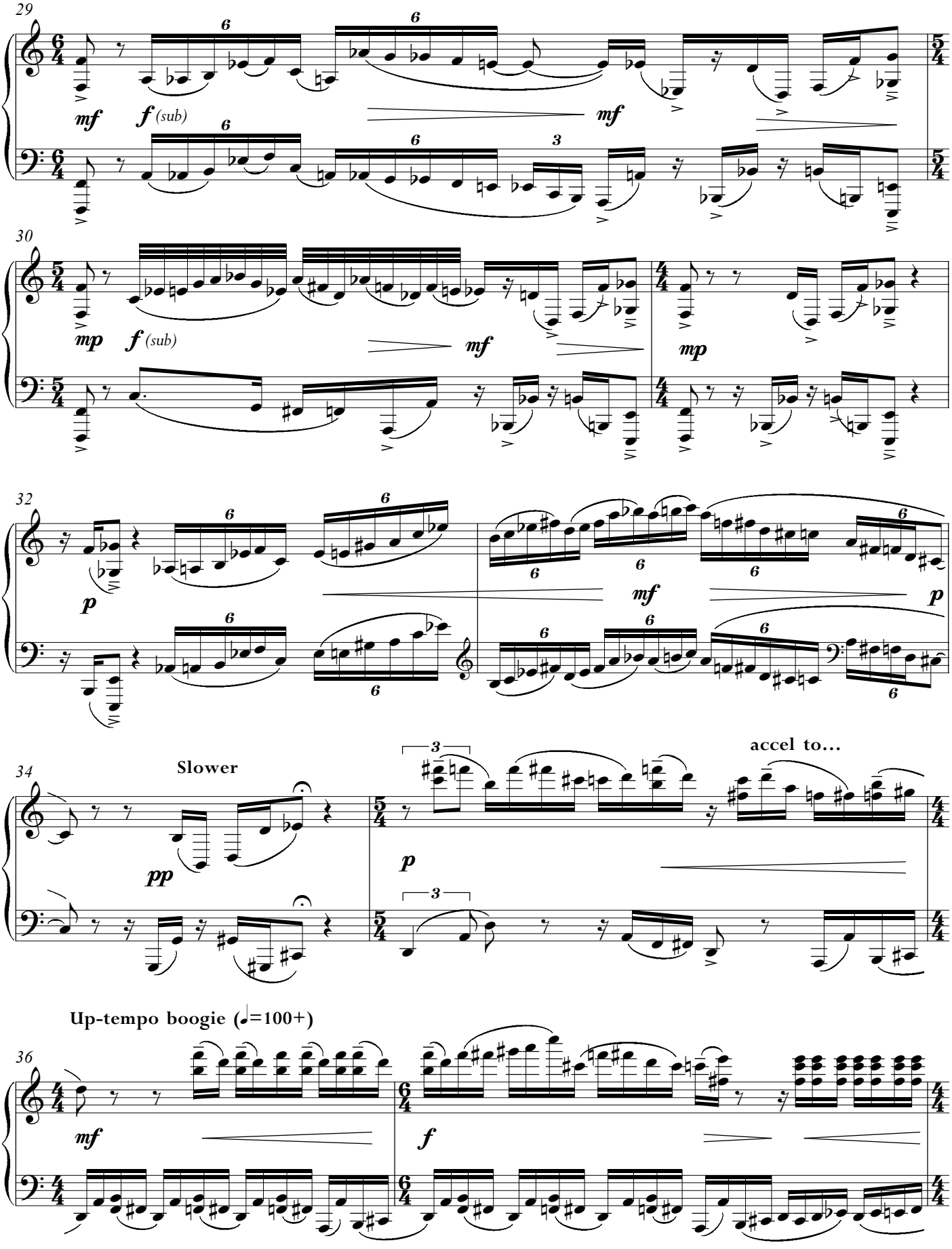

8
8
8
p
loco
ff

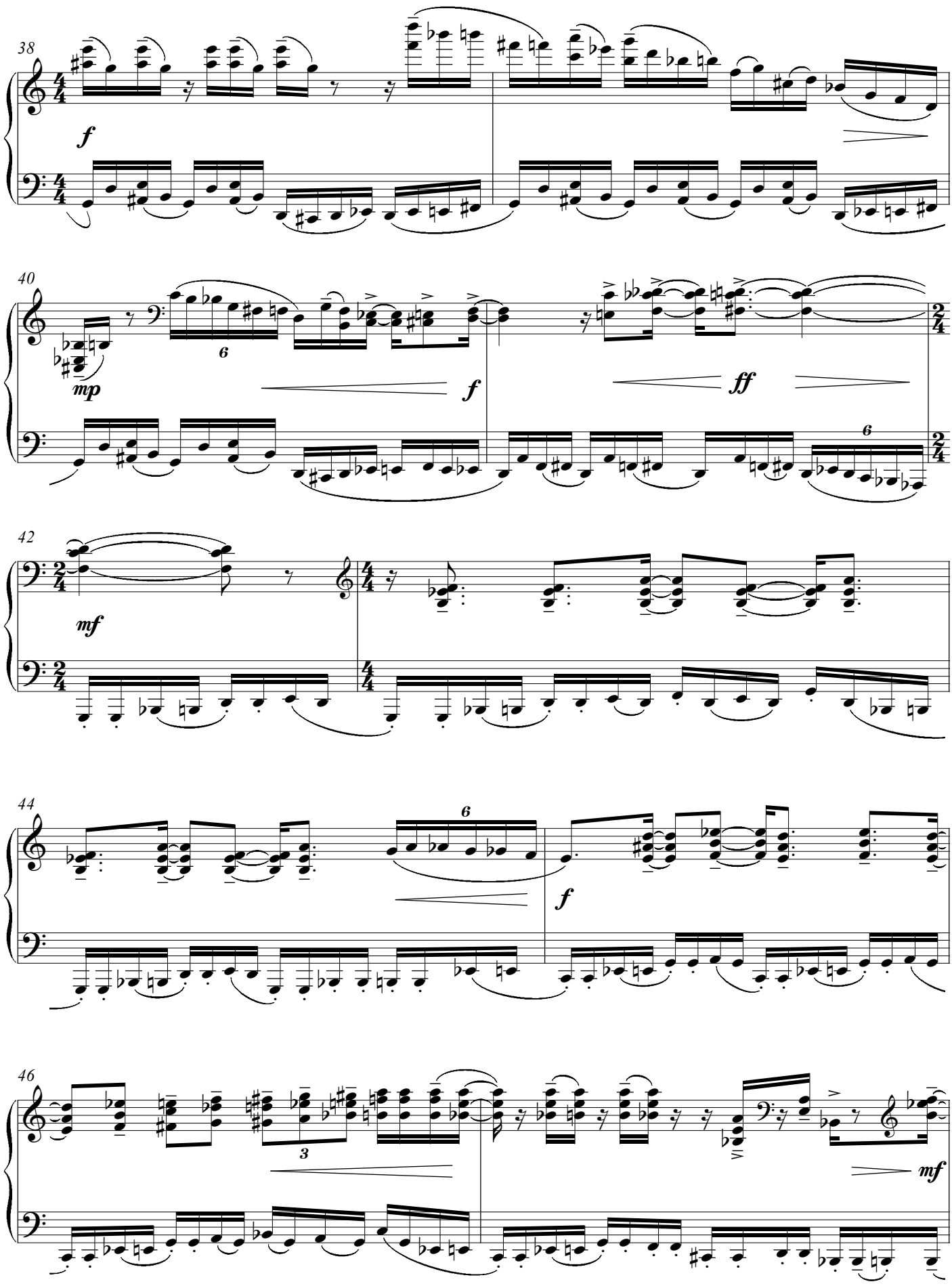

Sharp, pointed (♩.=110)
loco
5
loco
9
13
loco
16
loco

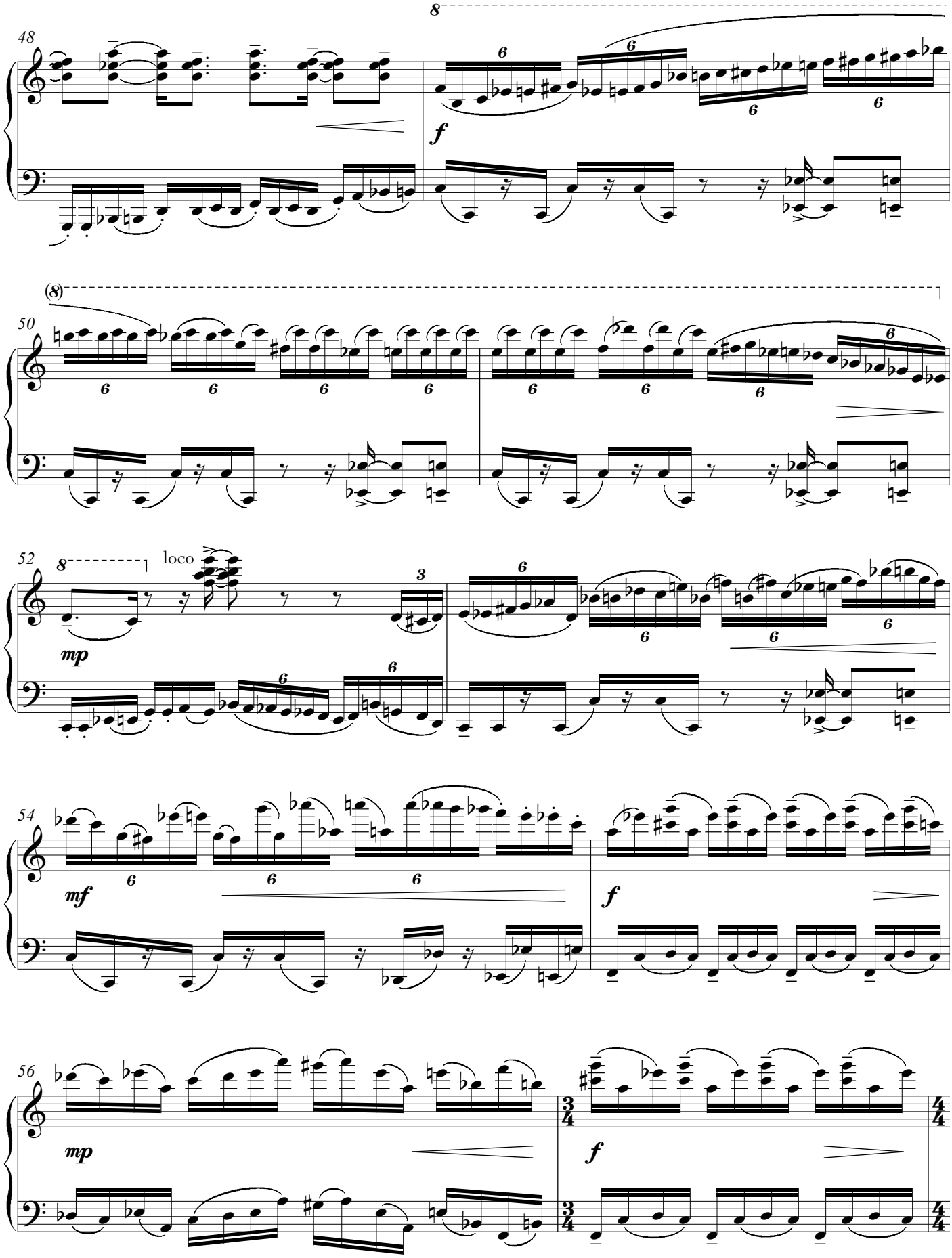

In a laid back groove (♩=90)
mp
4
6
8
10
mf
f

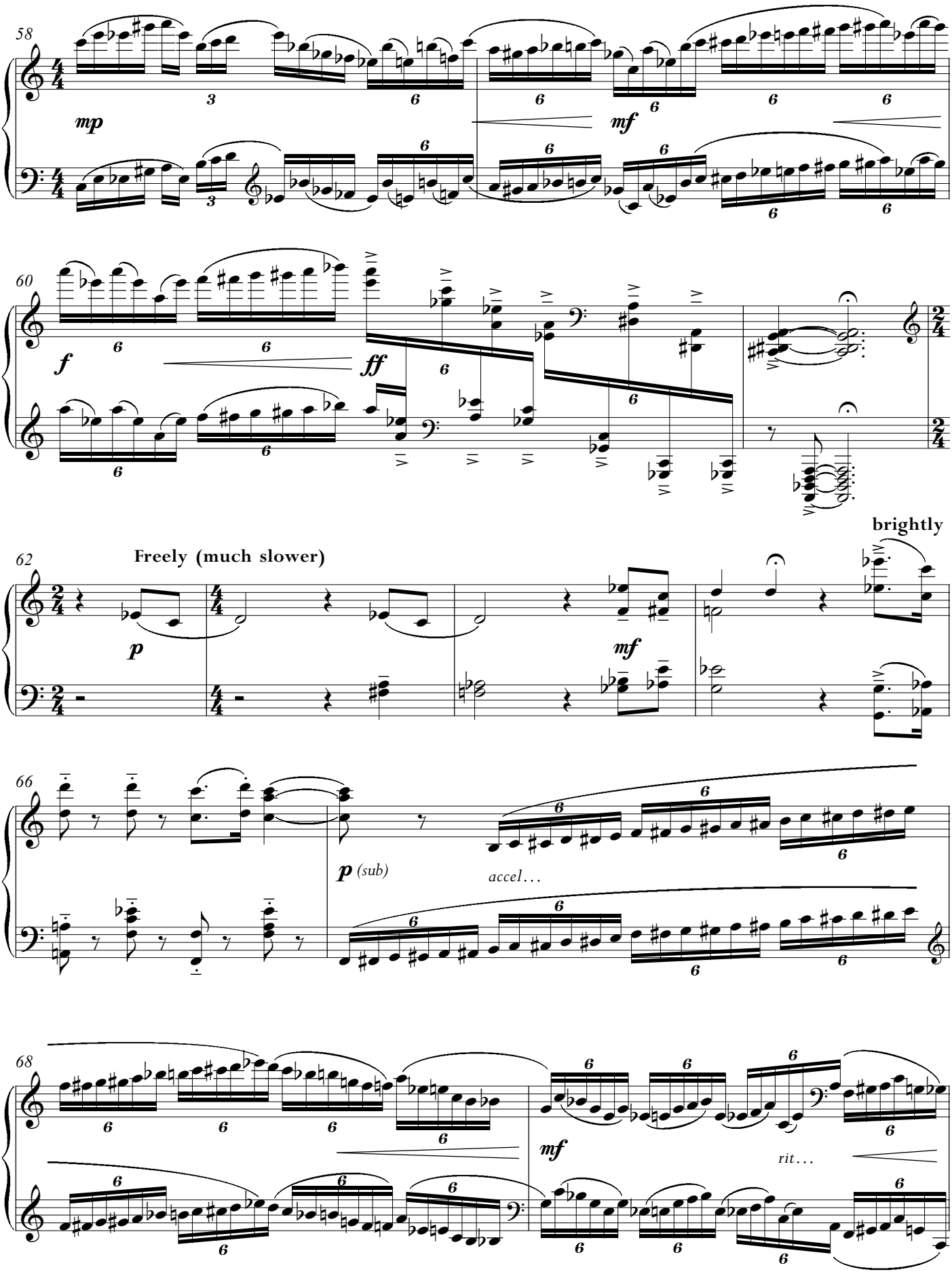

8
12
mf
mf
(8)
14
mf
loco
mp
p
pp
f (sub)
16
mf
f
mf
f
18
f
19
ff
f

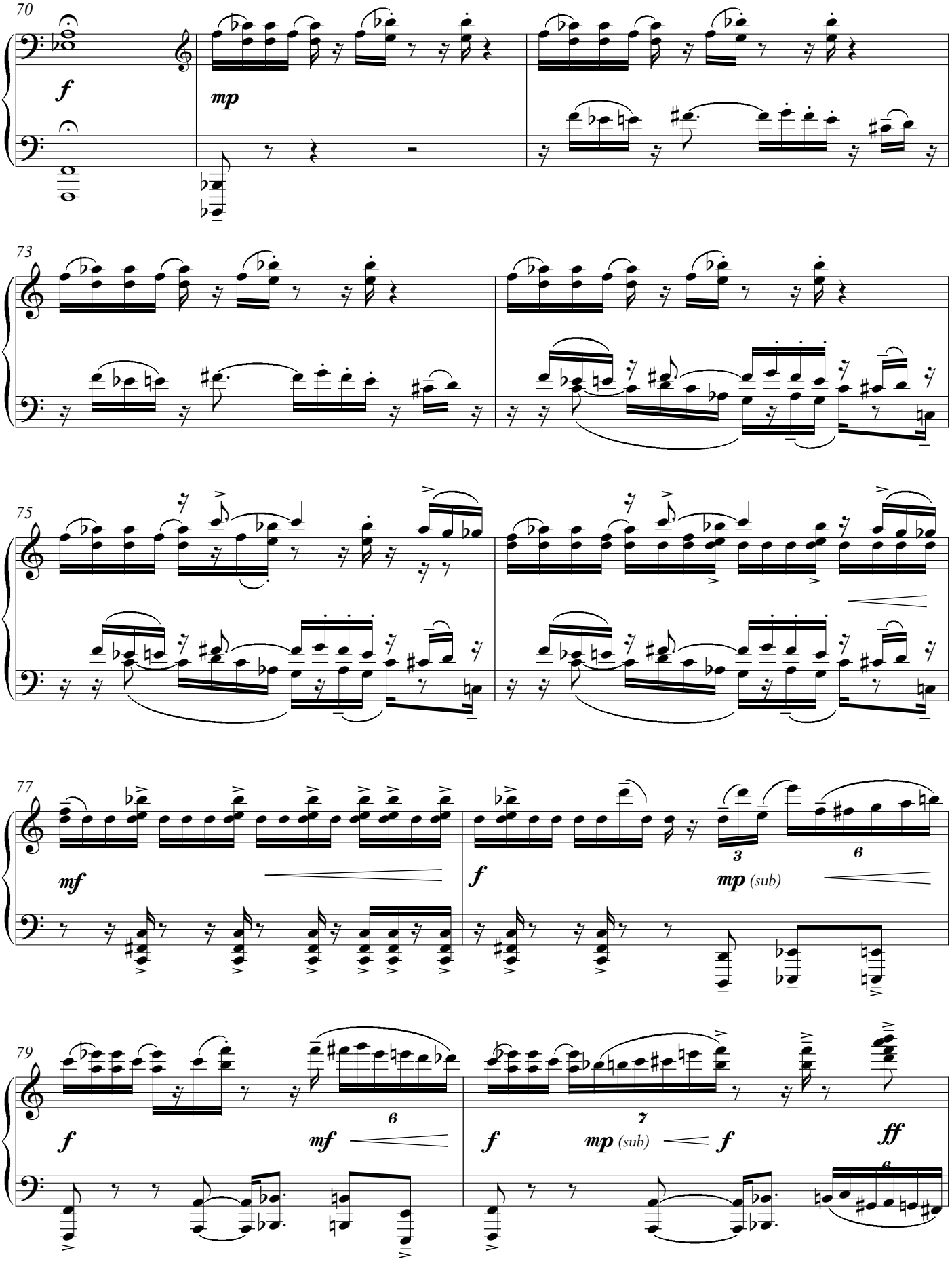

21
23
mf
f
25
mf
mp
8
3
7
7
(8)
27
mf
7
6
f
6/4

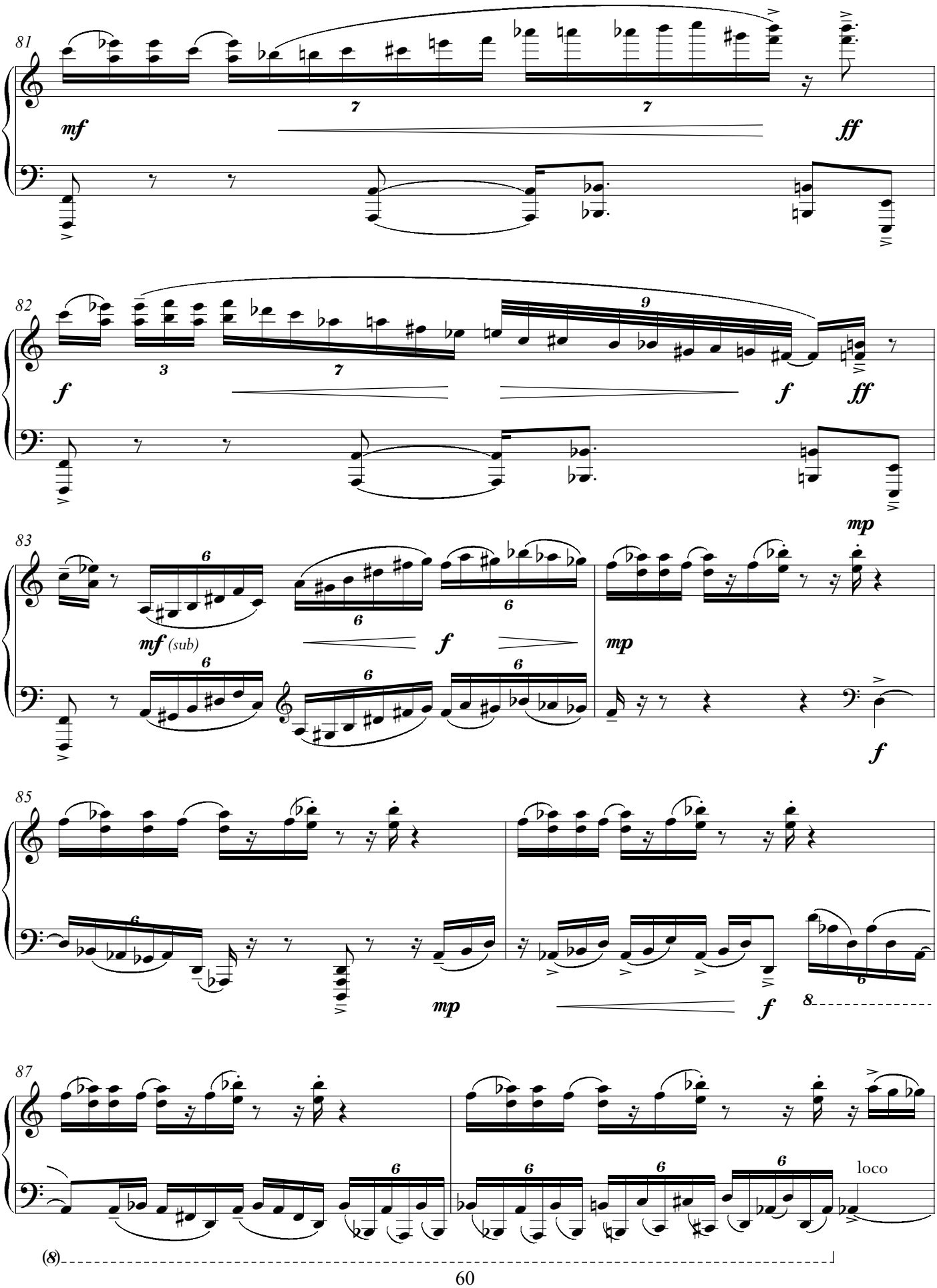

29
mf
f (sub)
mf
30
mp
f (sub)
mf
mp
32
p
mf
p
34
Slower
pp
accel to...
p
Up-tempo boogie (♩=100+)
36
mf
f

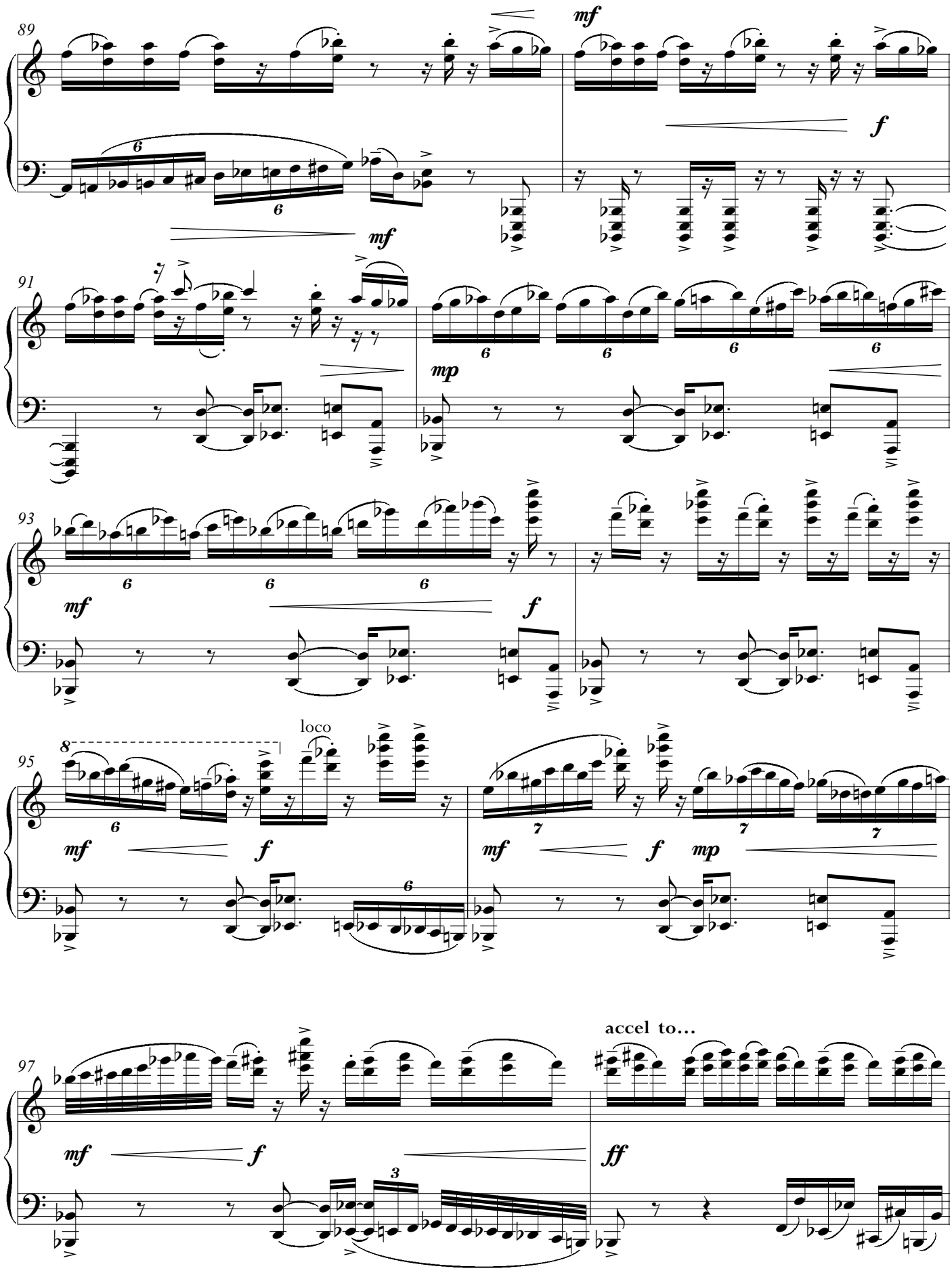

38
f
40
mp
6
f
ff
6
42
mf
44
6
f
46
3
mf


48
8
f
(8)
50
52
8
loco
mp
3
54
mf
f
56
mp
f
3/4
4/4

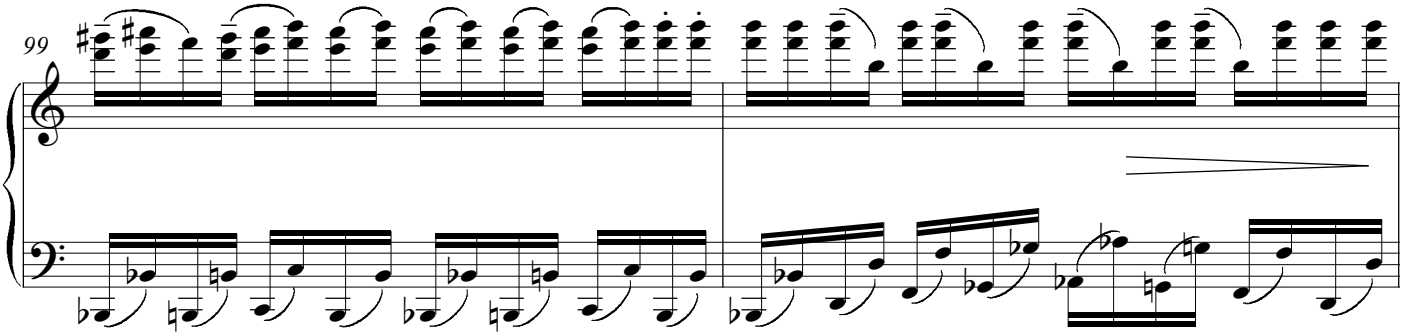

58
mp
mf
60
f
ff
62
Freely (much slower)
p
mf
brightly
66
p (sub)
accel...
68
mf
rit...

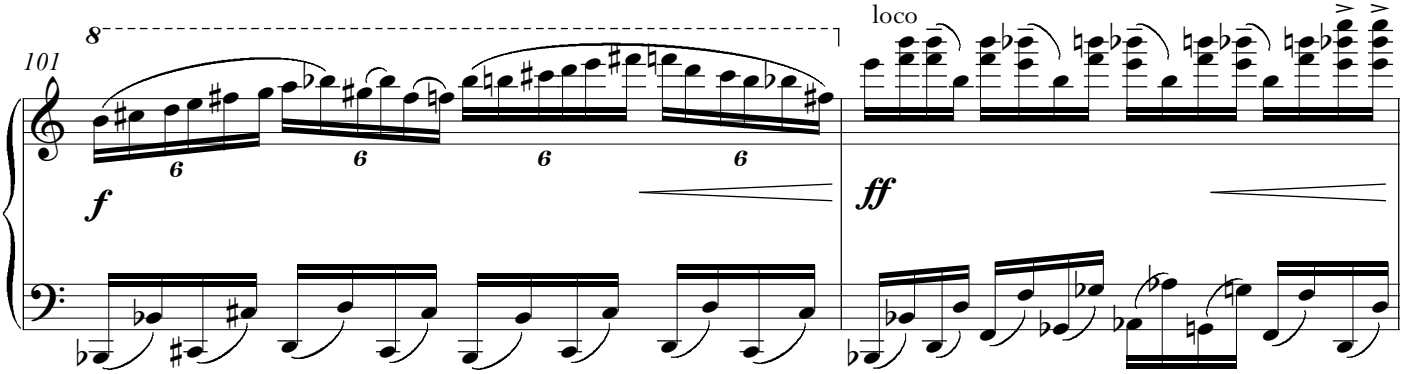

70
f
mp
73
75
77
mf
f
mp (sub)
3
6
79
f
mf
6
f
mp (sub)
7
f
ff
6


81
mf
ff
82
f
f
ff
9
83
mf (sub)
f
mp
mp
f
85
mp
f
8
87
loco
(8)

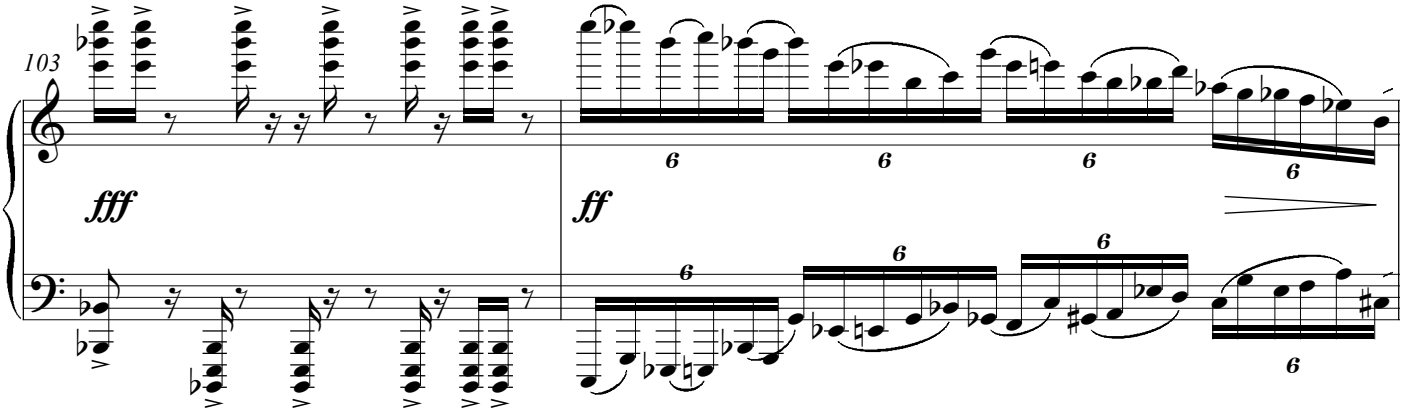

89
mf
f
mf
91
mp
93
mf
f
95
loco
8
mf
f
mf
f
mp
97
accel to...
mf
f
ff

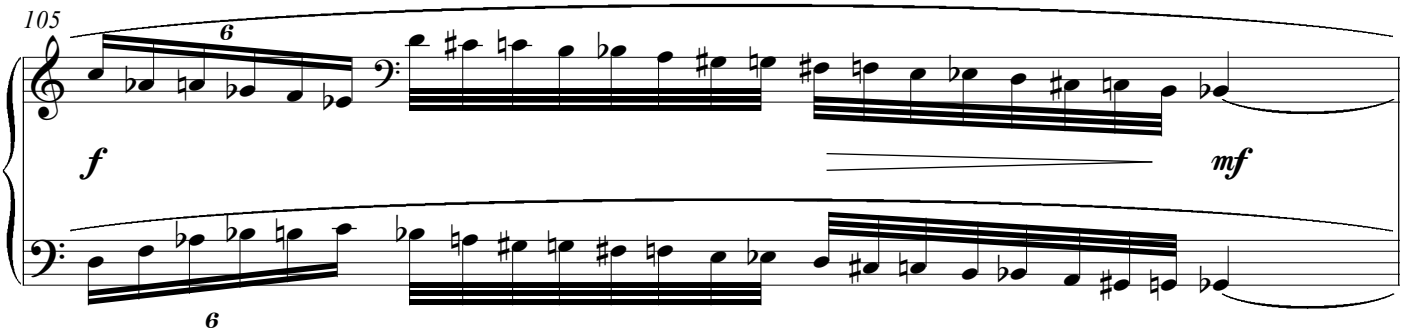
**Up-tempo boogie (♩=100+)**

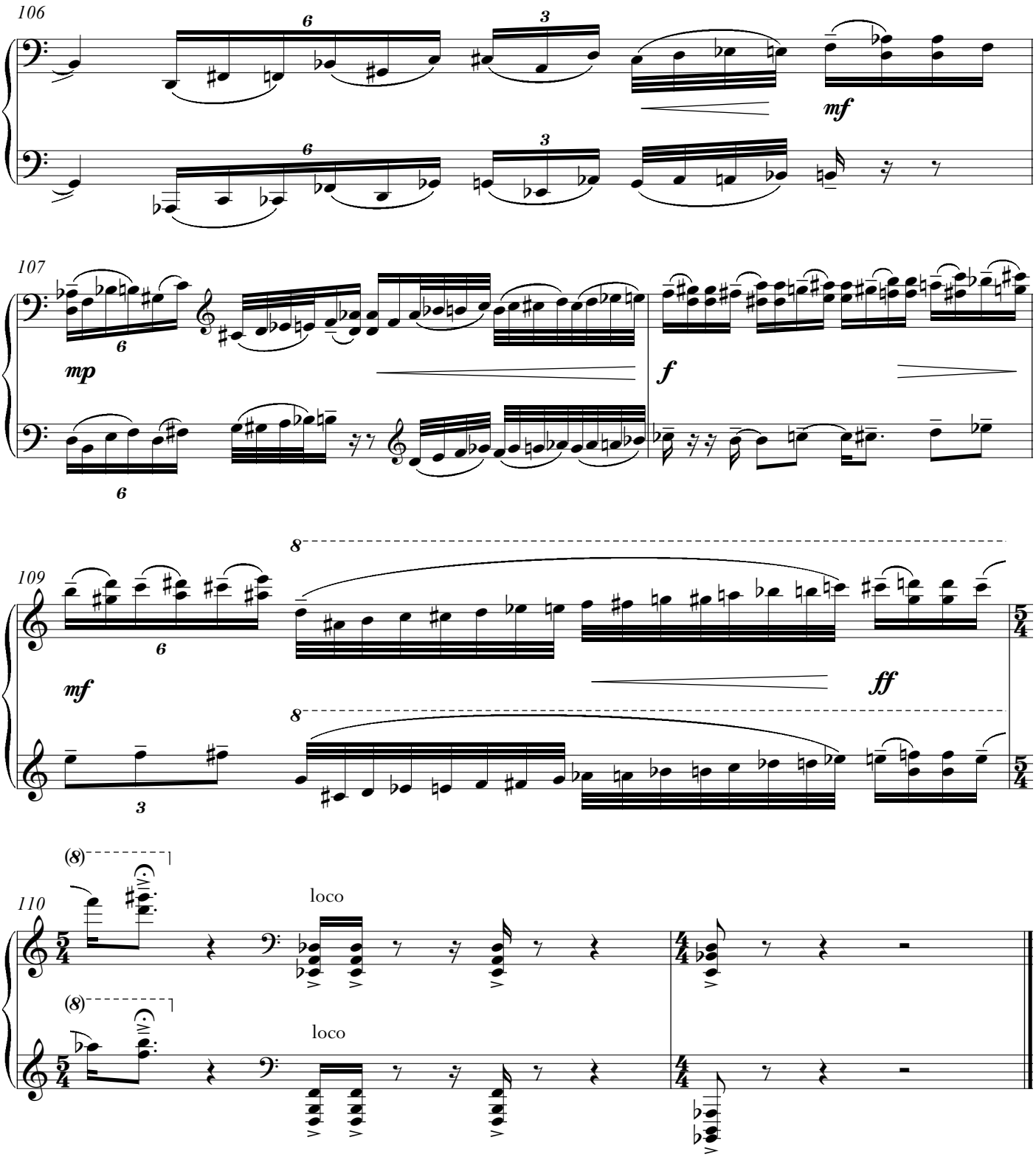



**Tempo I (subito)**




106
mf
107
mp
f
109
mf
ff
110
loco
loco