Nick Ray

Recollections Book I

(2009)

for piano

RECOLLECTIONS Book I for piano

I wrote these six pieces in the spring of 2009. They are all short and dominated by one principal idea.

No. 1 (*Some bells*) combines four different layers of bell sounds on pitches G, Eb, C/E and G# where each bell-note has a different duration, quickly creating a complex texture underneath which an urgent tune in sixths appears.

No. 2 (*Dartmoor Aug 2005*) is a reminiscence of a walk taken to High Willhayes (near Okehampton in Devon). A long melody gradually unfolds over a repeated rising 4-note chordal figure, briefly becoming quite animated as the extensive view is revealed at the summit.

No. 3 features a melody (in groups of acciaccature) which leans consistently on a simple drone that undergoes only slight changes during the piece. The mood is skittish and playful throughout and the piece disappears into the highest register on a repeated C.

No. 4 (*Fanfare for the Uncommon Man*) is a tribute to Aaron Copland. It uses the first three chords from the slow final movement of his *Piano Sonata* (1941). These are developed and short melodic phrases for a pair of trumpets also undergo their own expansion and extension, framed always by the chords.

No. 5 features a gentle and lyrical melody which uneasily coexists with a turbulent and aggressive lower part. The melody manages to preserve its independence to the end after the aggressive element has exhausted itself, but the tension between the two is never fully resolved. The main theme from the fifth movement of my string quartet is quoted at the culminating point.

No. 6 (*...and still the light grew)* is programmatic and based on the last three pages of the final chapter of C.S. Lewis' allegory *The Great Divorce*, in which the ultimate terrifying dawn arrives, marking the end of time and eternal destruction for those unprepared. "The rim of sunrise that shoots Time dead with golden arrows and puts to flight all phantasmal shapes" is evoked by an A major chord spreading outwards and eventually covering the entire range. The narrator, overwhelmed with terror, suddenly finds the whole vision dissipating and collapsing and realises he has been dreaming. "I awoke in a cold room, hunched on the floor beside a black and empty grate, the clock striking three, and the siren howling overhead."

Anthony Green gave the first performance of *Recollections Book I* at St Cyprian's Church, Glentworth Street, London N1 on 9 October 2010.

Nick Ray

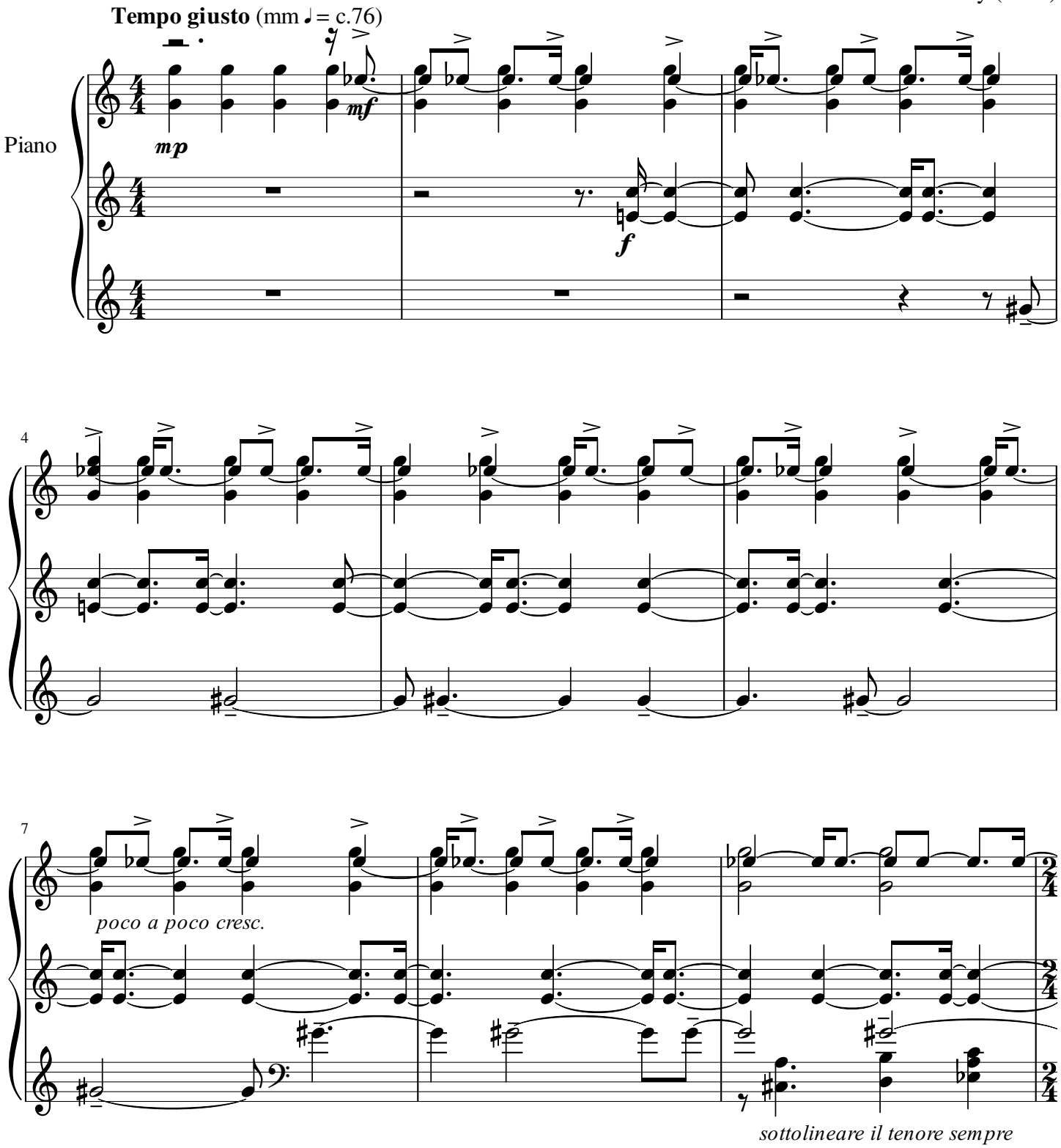
for Tom Hain

Recollections Book I

.1.

Some bells

Nick Ray (2009)



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

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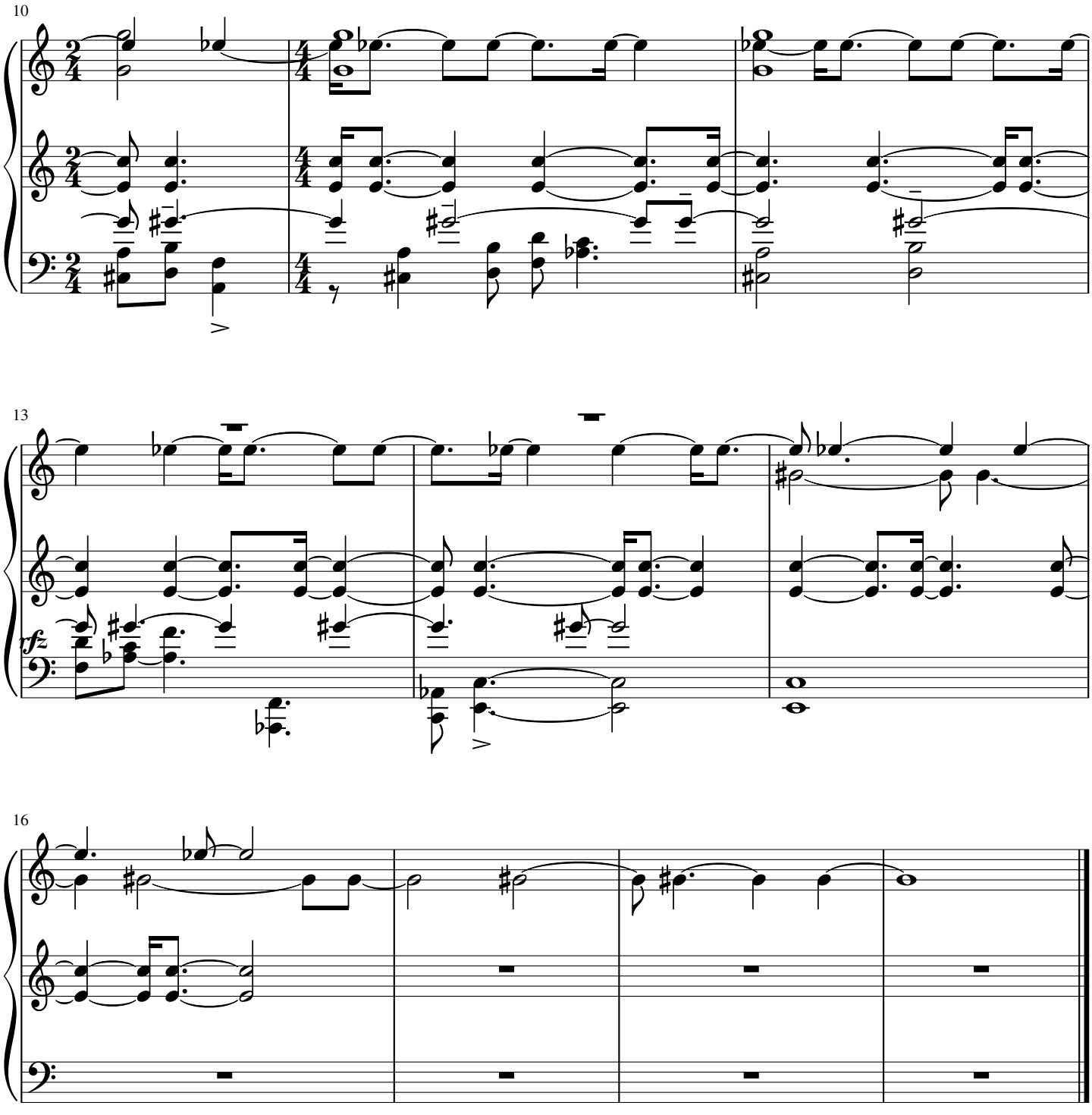

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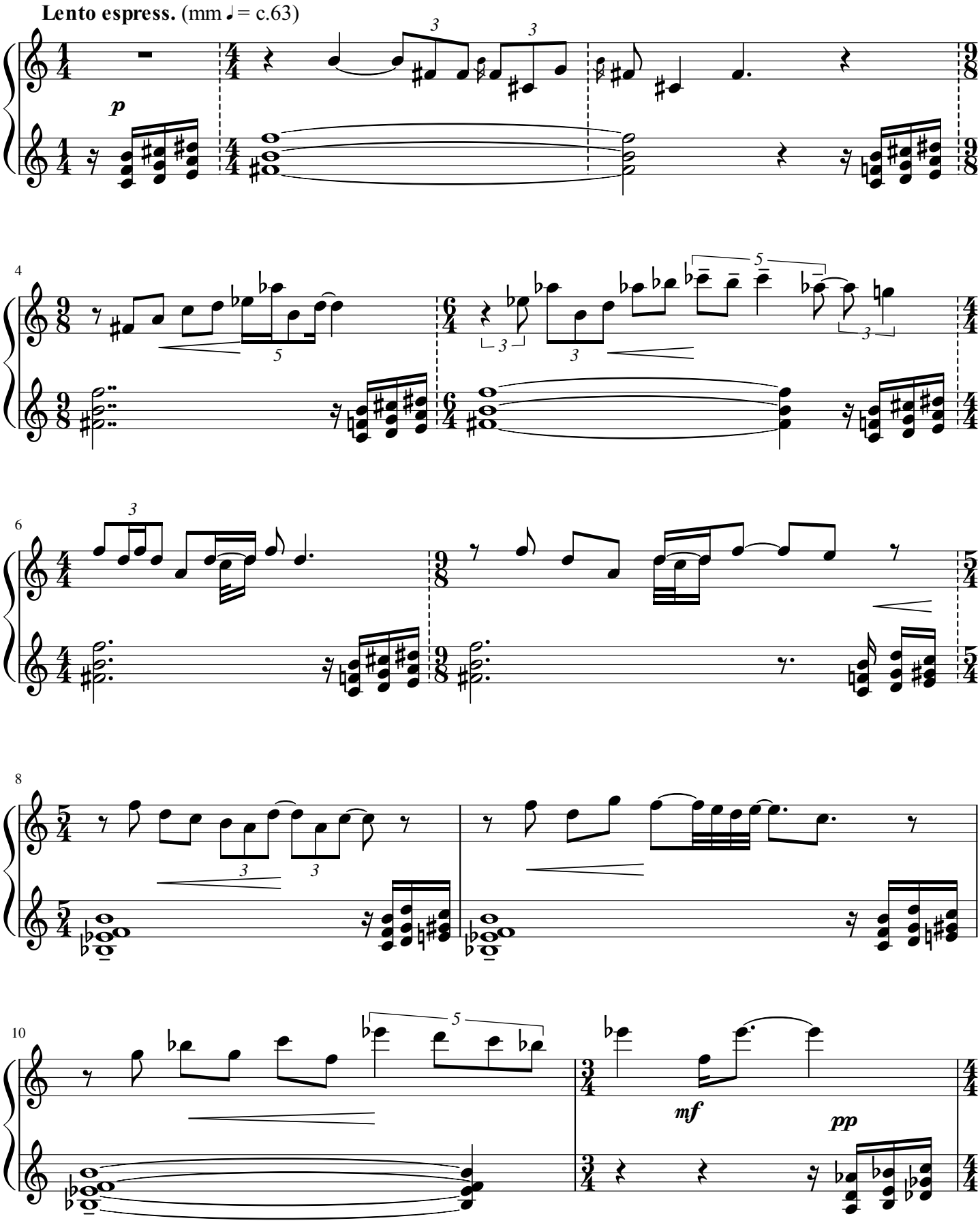
.2.

Dartmoor, August 2005



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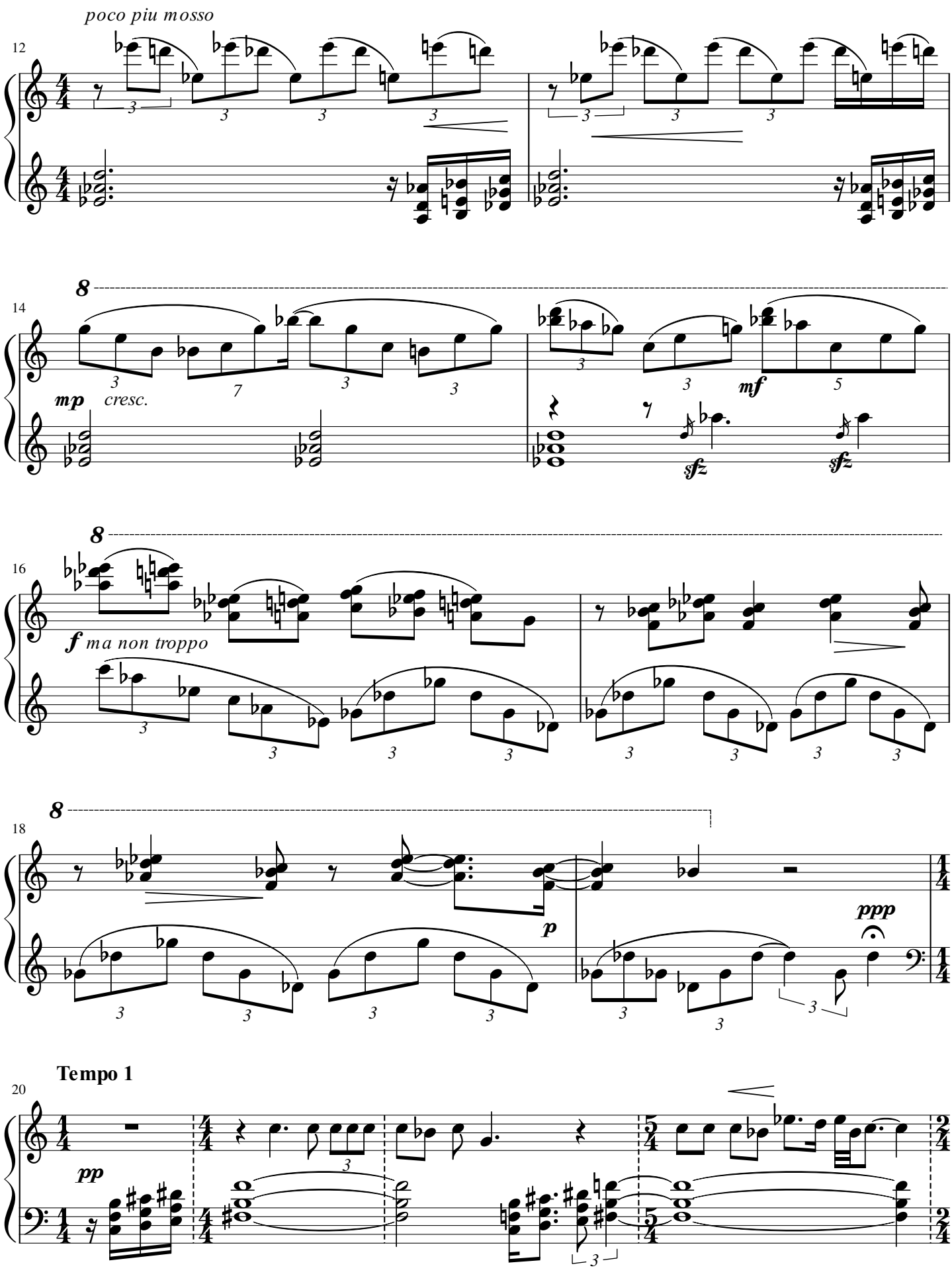

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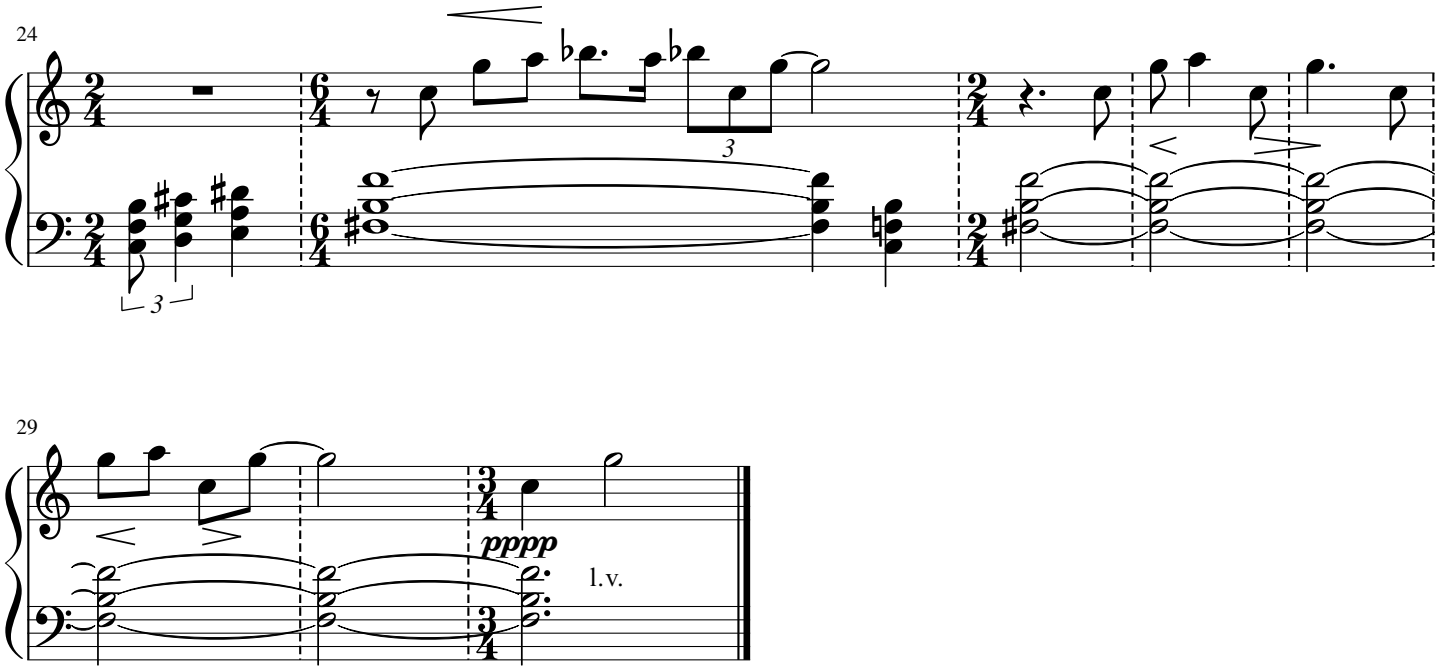

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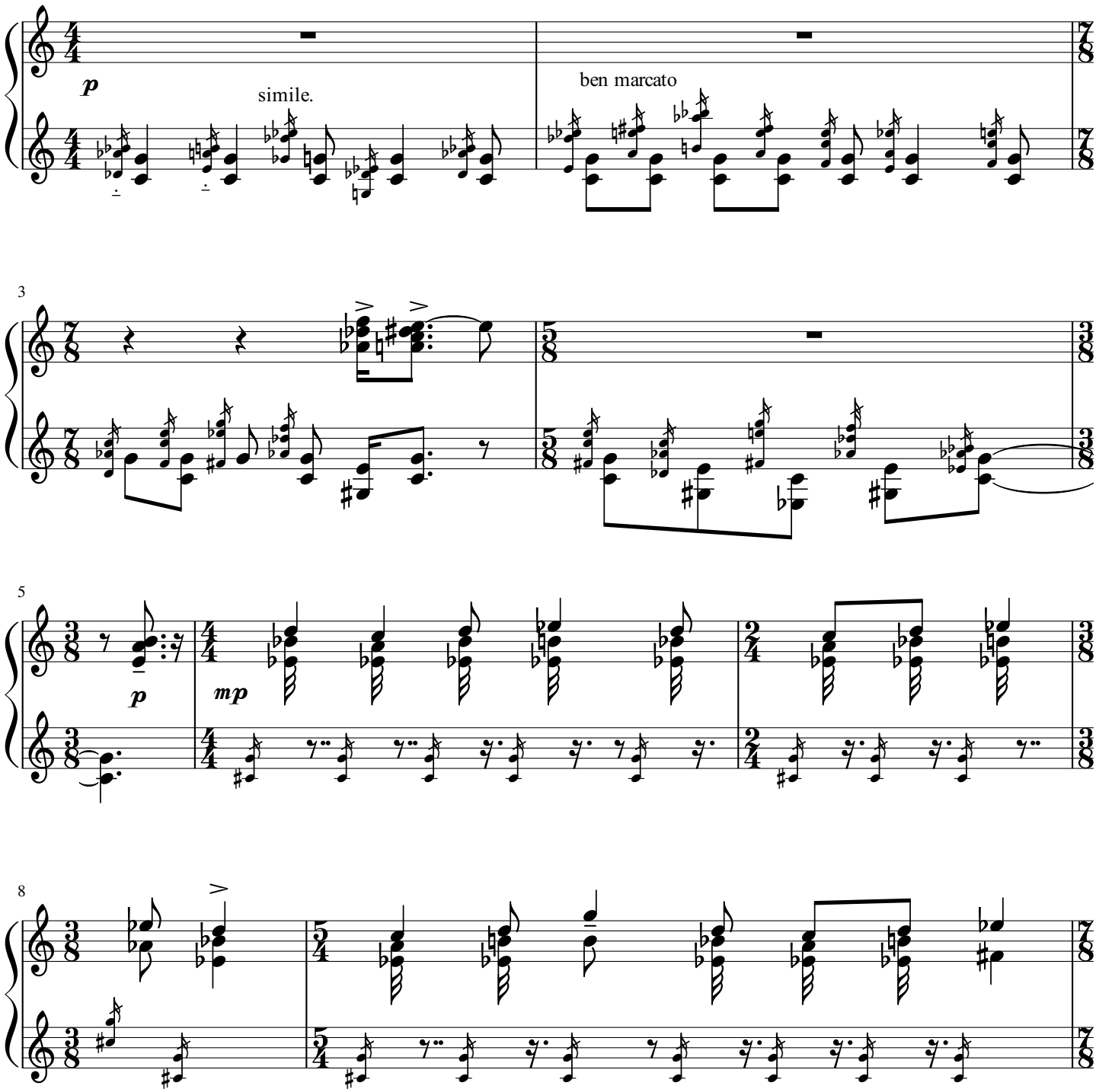
.3.

Vivo, molto scherzando (mm ♩= c.88)



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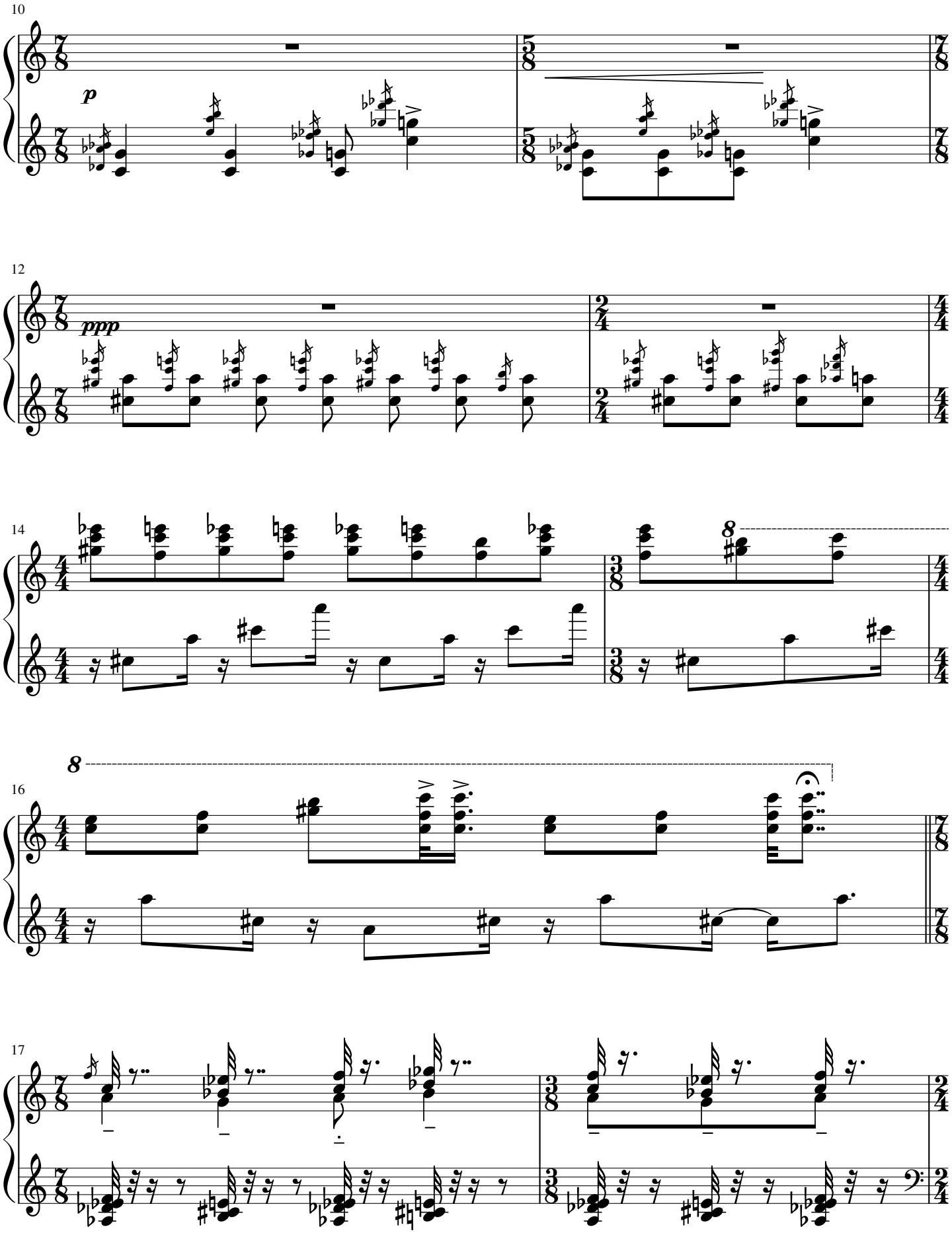

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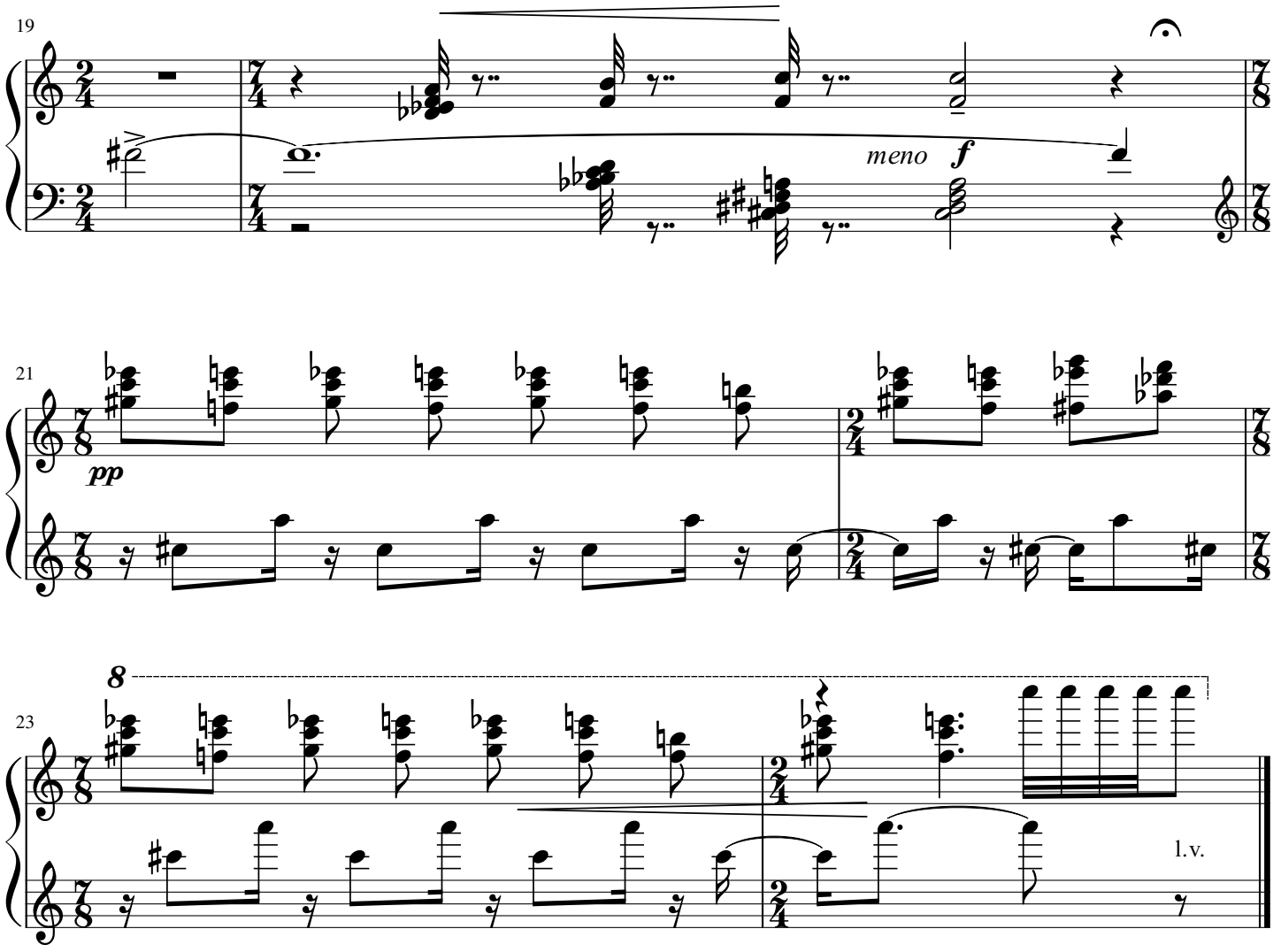

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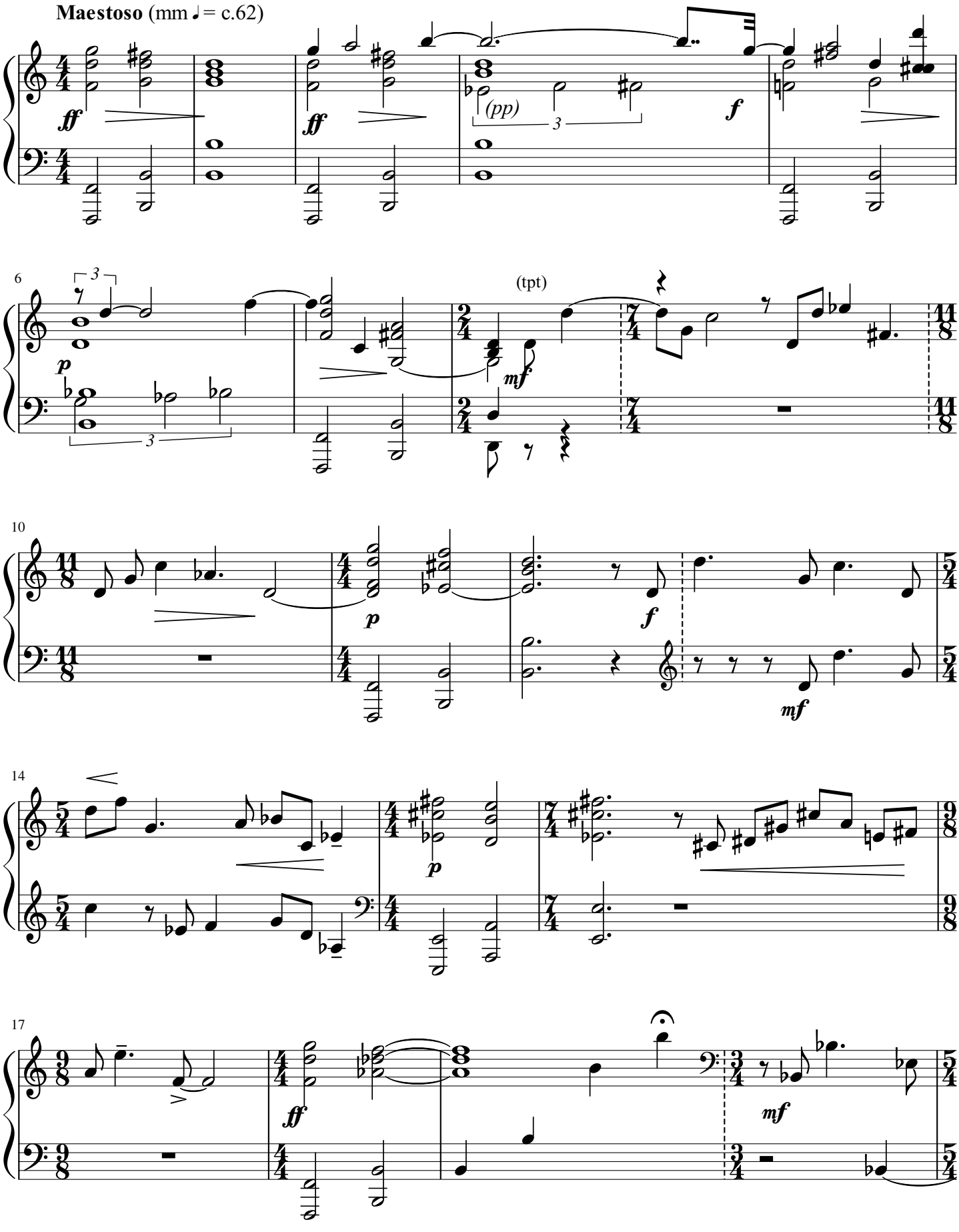
.4.

Fanfare for the Uncommon Man



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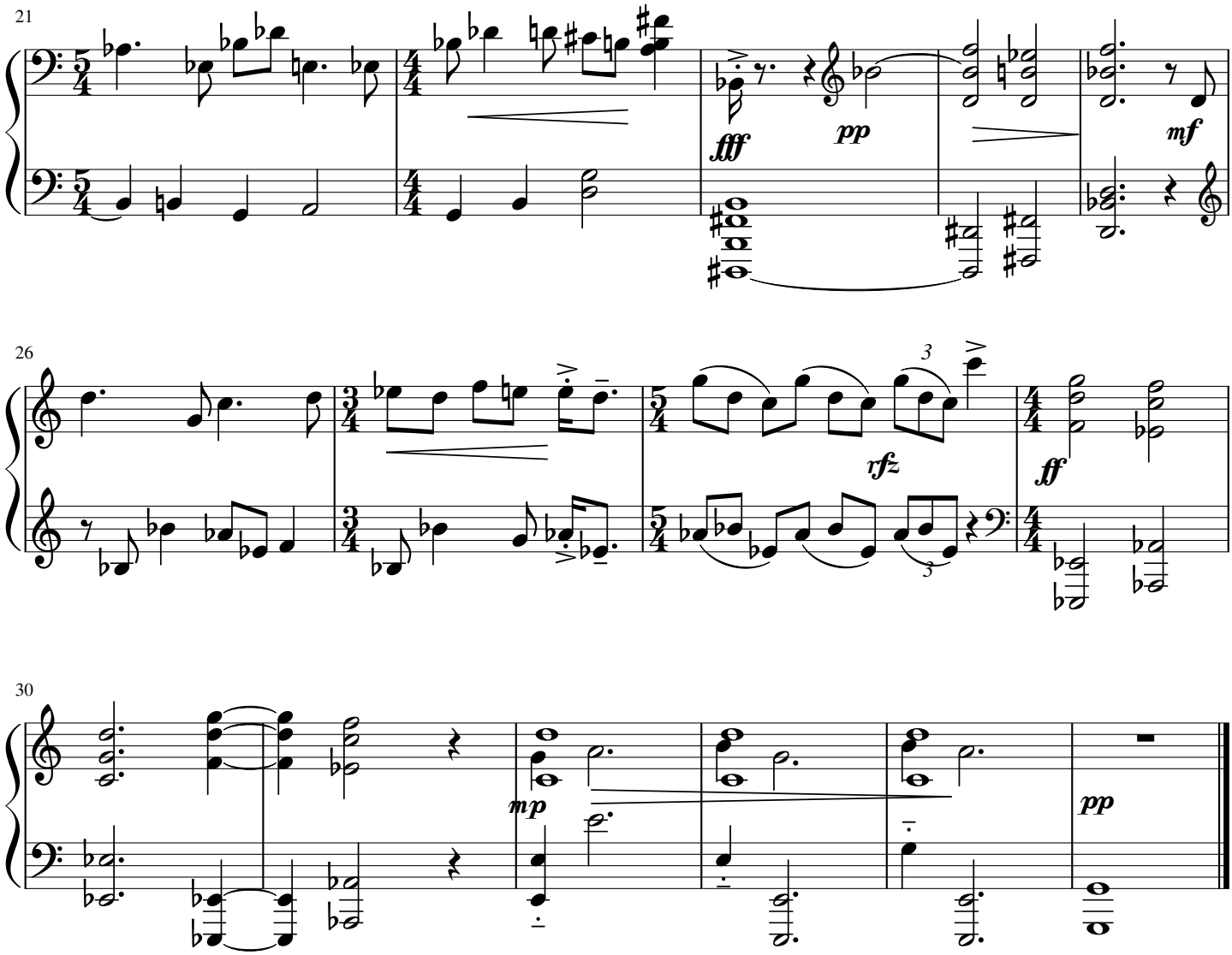

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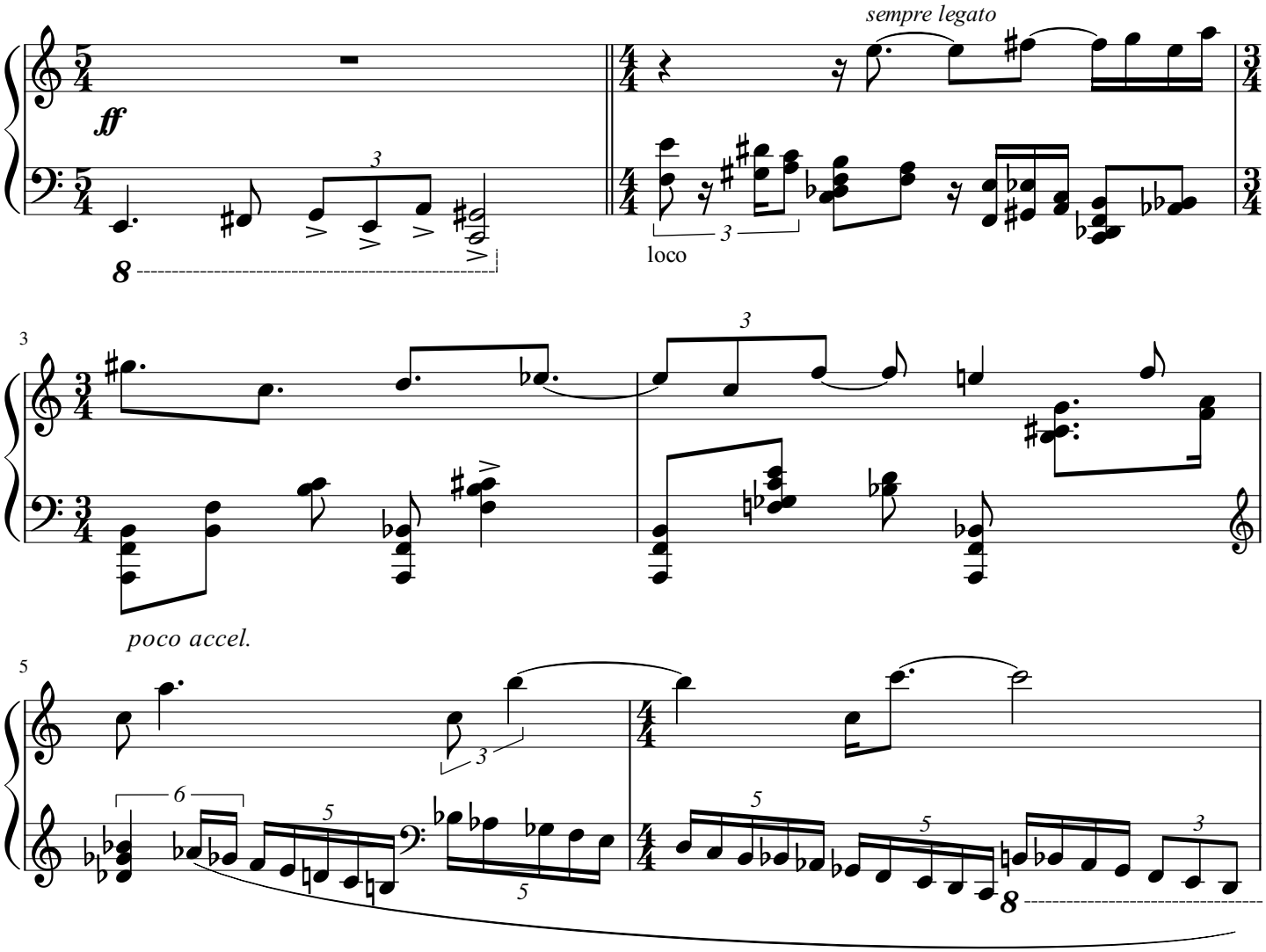
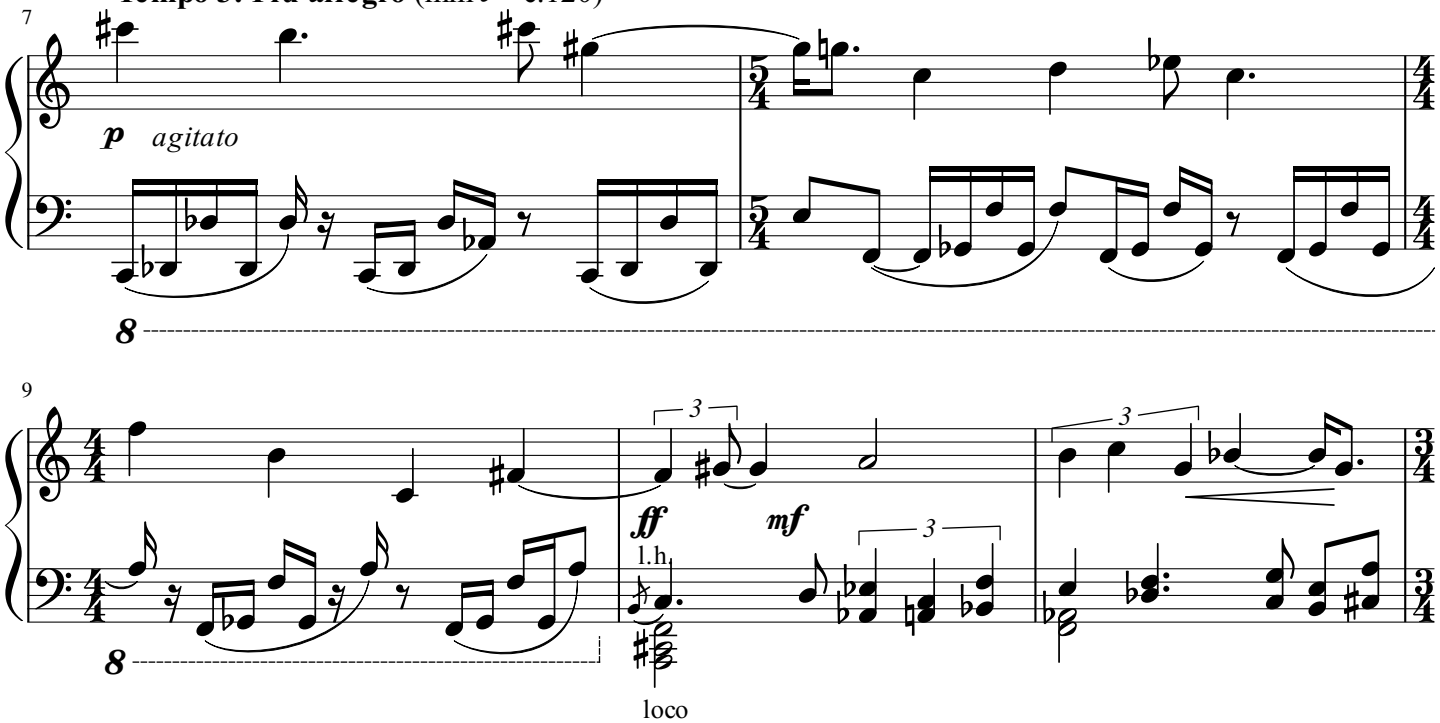
.5.

Tempo 1: Moderato

Tempo 2: Allegro feroce (mm ♩= c.96)



Tempo 3: Più allegro (mm ♩= c.120)



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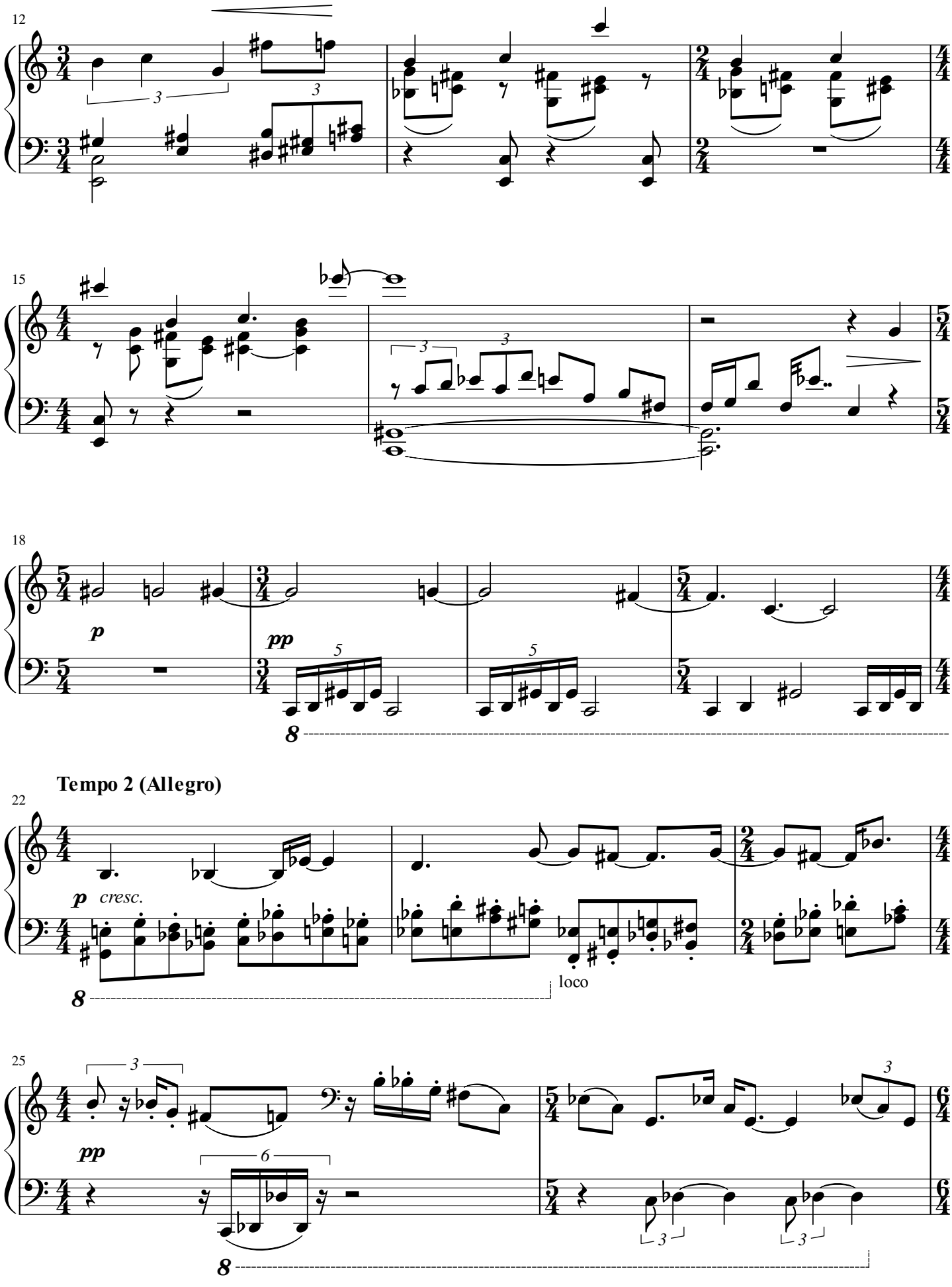

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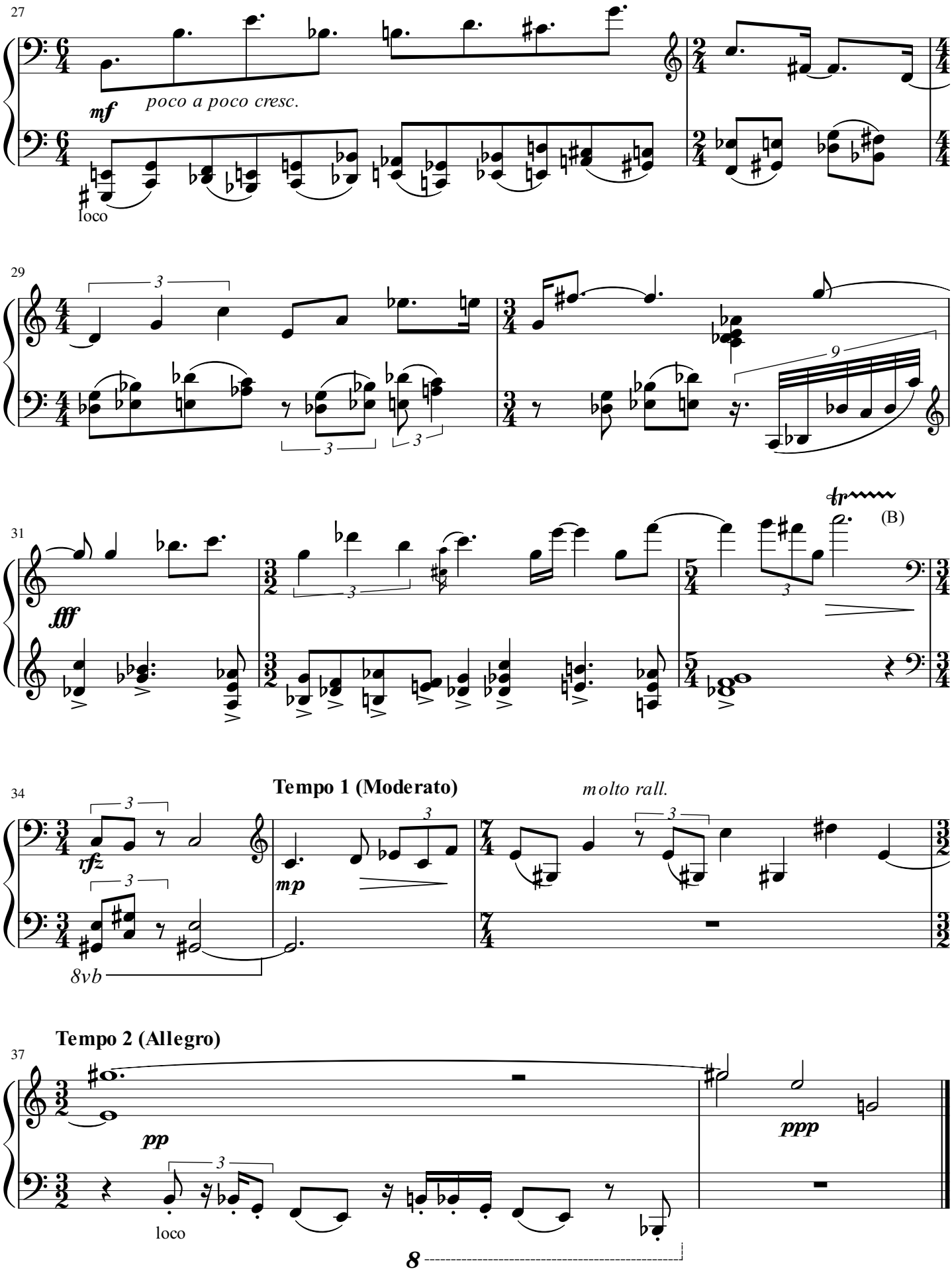

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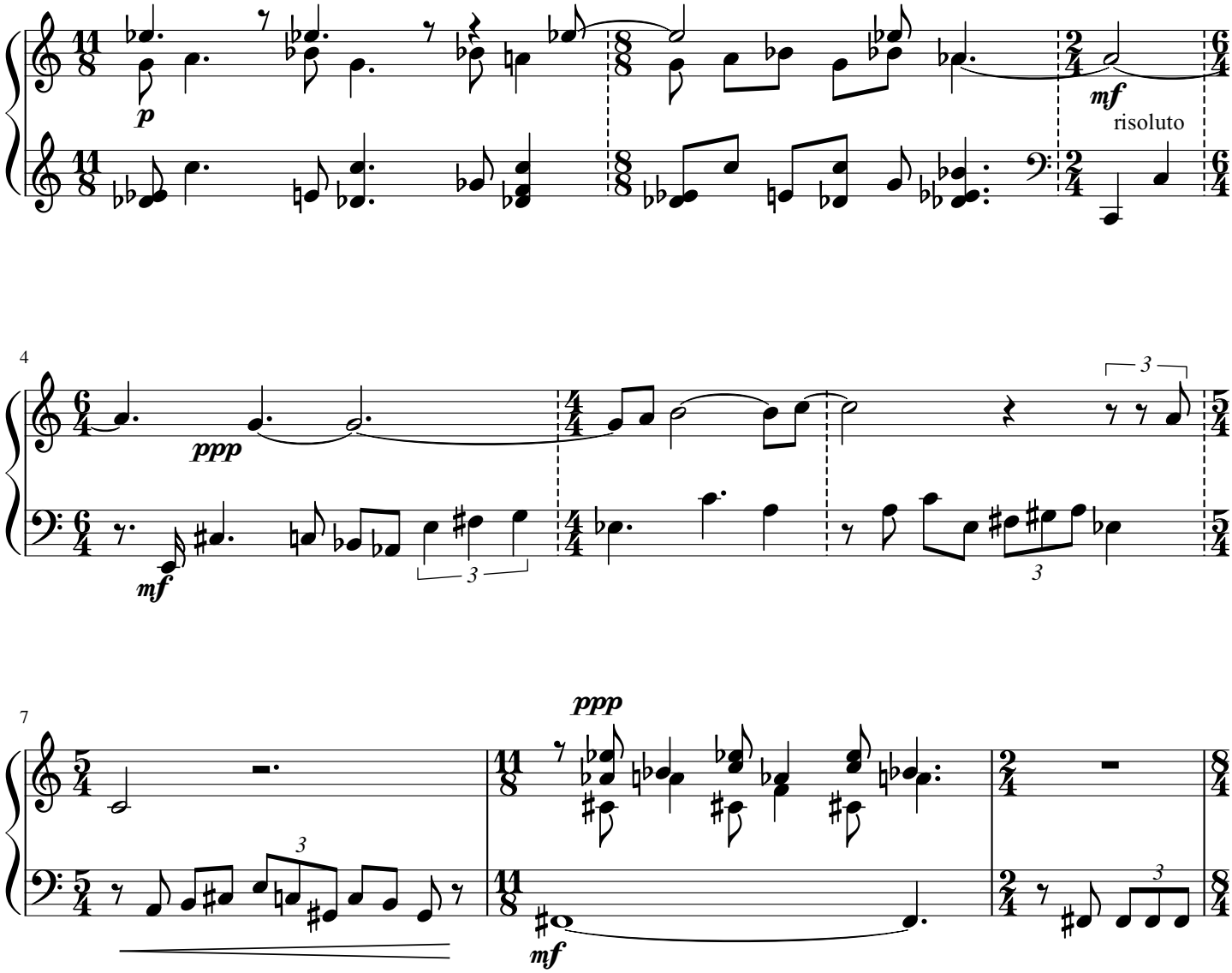
.6.

"...and still the light grew..."

Then…I saw something that sent a quiver through my whole body. I stood at that moment with my back to the mountains… A fern.….turned golden. The eastern side of every tree-trunk grew bright. Shadows deepened. All the time there had been bird noises, trillings, chatterings, and the like; but now the full chorus was poured from every branch; cocks were crowing, there was music of hounds, and horns; above all this the ten thousand tongues of men and wood--land angels and the wood itself sang. 'It comes, it comes!' they sang. 'Sleepers awake! It comes, it comes, it comes.' One dreadful glance over my shoulder I essayed - not long enough to see (or did I see?) the rim of sunrise that shoots Time dead with golden arrows and puts to flight all phantasmal shapes. Screaming, I buried my face in the fold of my Teacher's robe. 'The morning! The morning!' I cried, 'I am caught by the morning and I am a ghost.' But it was too late. The light, like solid blocks, intolerable of edge and weight, came thundering upon my head. Next moment the folds of my Teacher's garment were only the folds of the old ink-stained cloth on my study table which I had pulled down with me as I fell from my chair.…I awoke in a cold room, hunched on the floor beside a black and empty grate, the clock striking three, and the siren howling overhead.

C.S. Lewis (*The Great Divorce*)

Poco inquieto, rubato (mm. ♩= c.86)



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Moderato, giusto (mm ♩= c.92)

10

mf

pppp

13

rfz

16

sempre cresc.

* (before the beat)

18

f

ff

20

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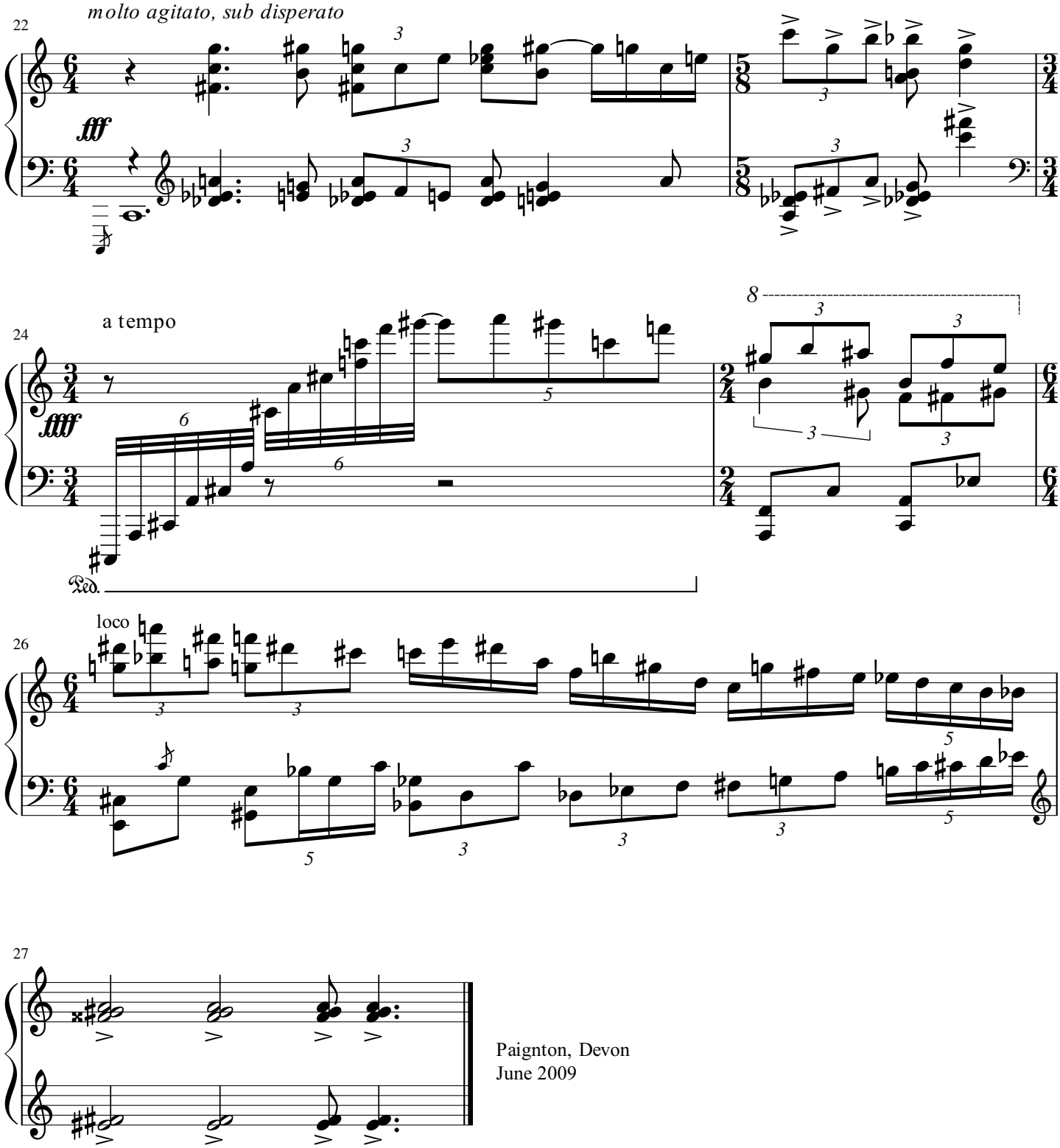

Paignton, Devon
June 2009

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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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