A Baker's Tale

suite for narrator, tuba and piano

DAVID JASON SNOW

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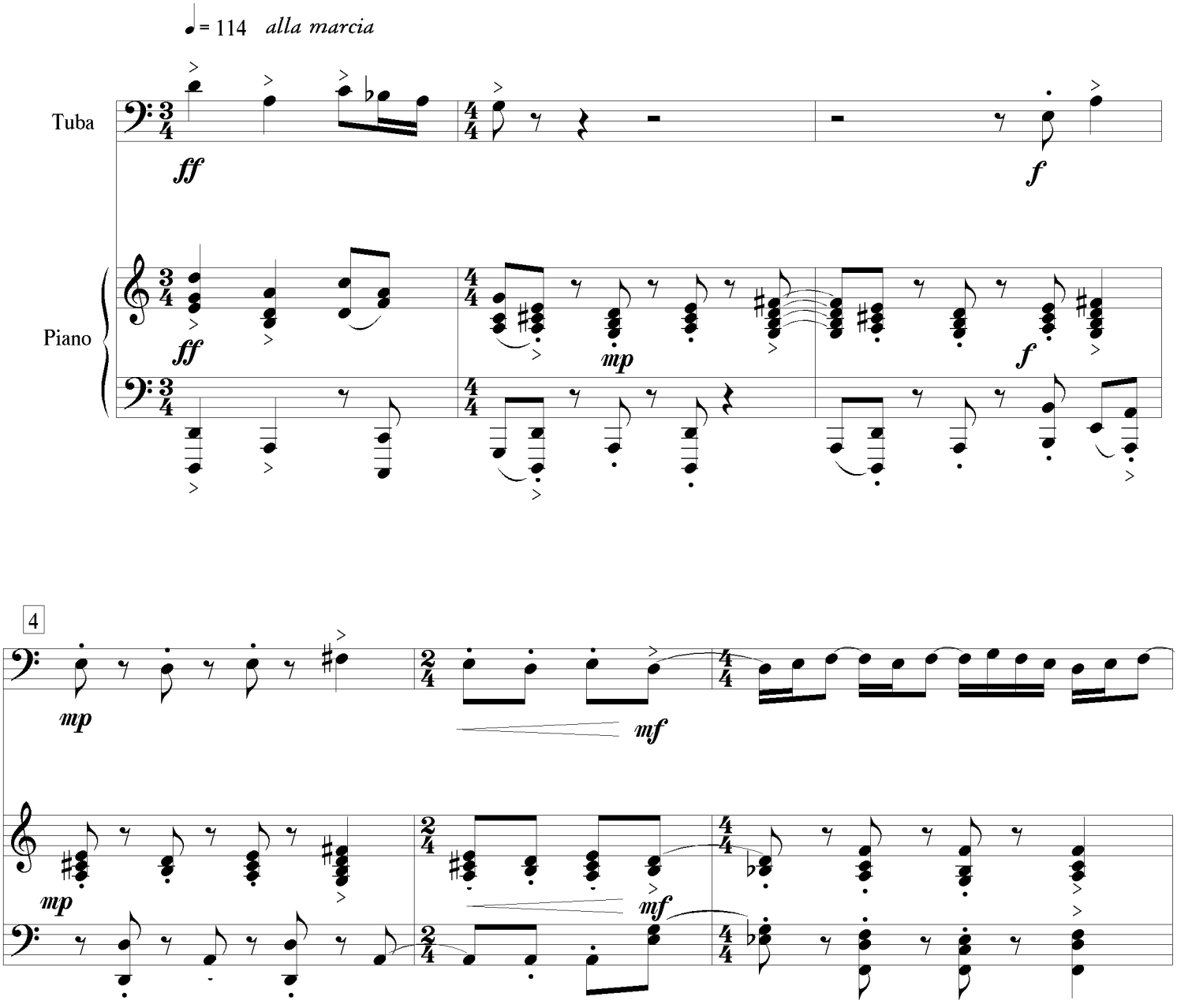
David Jason Snow

1. Le Promenade du Patissier



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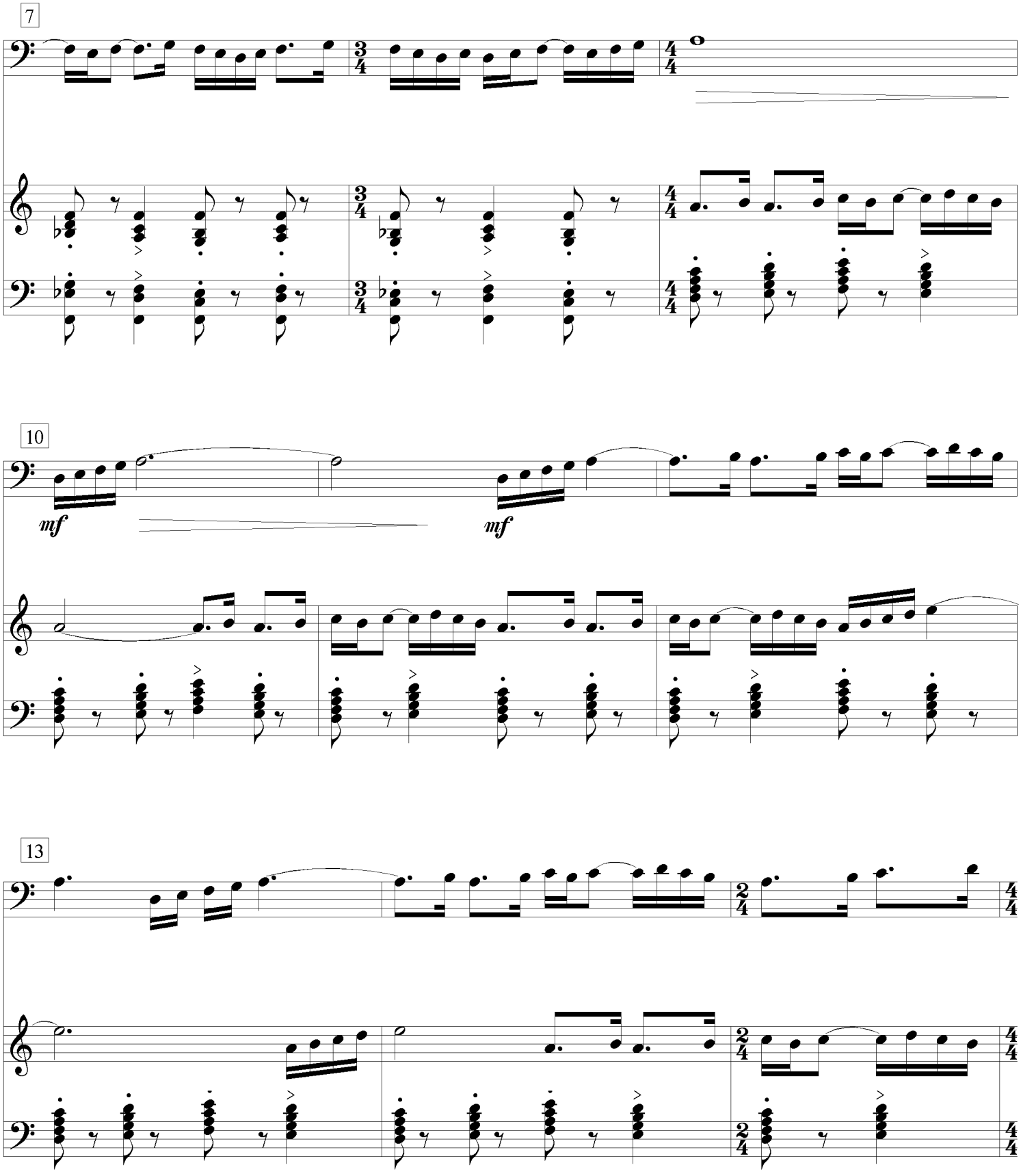
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mf
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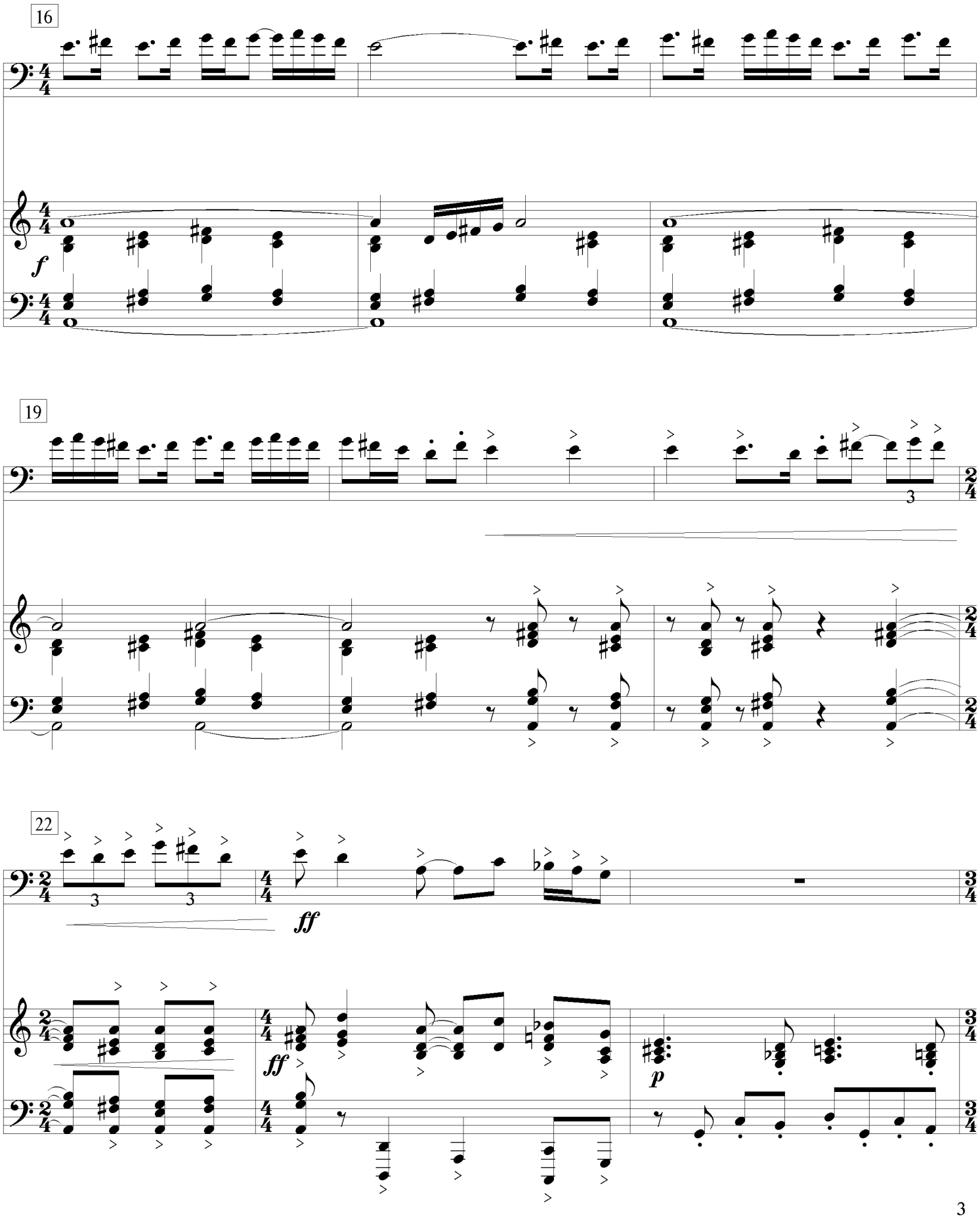
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ff
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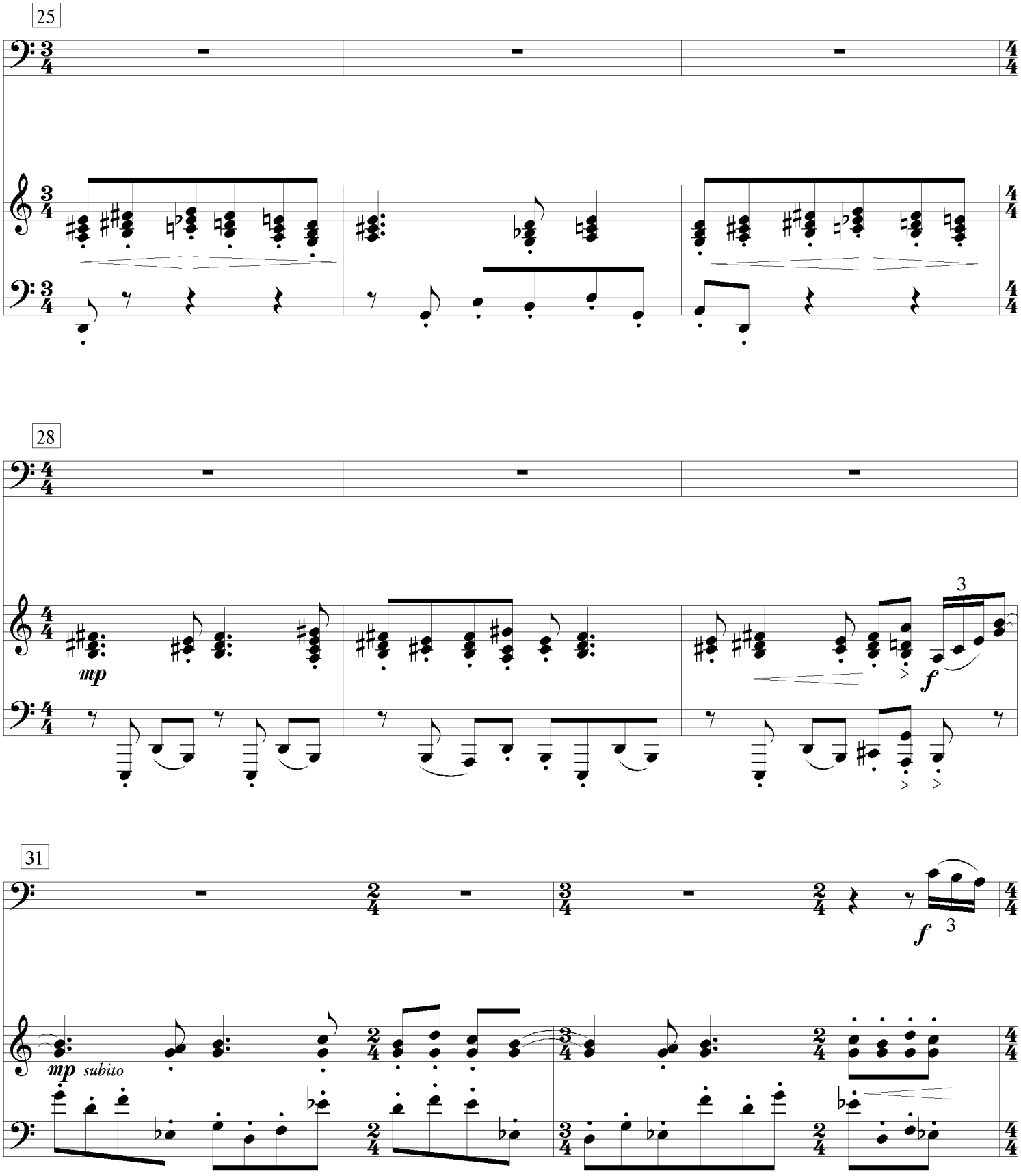
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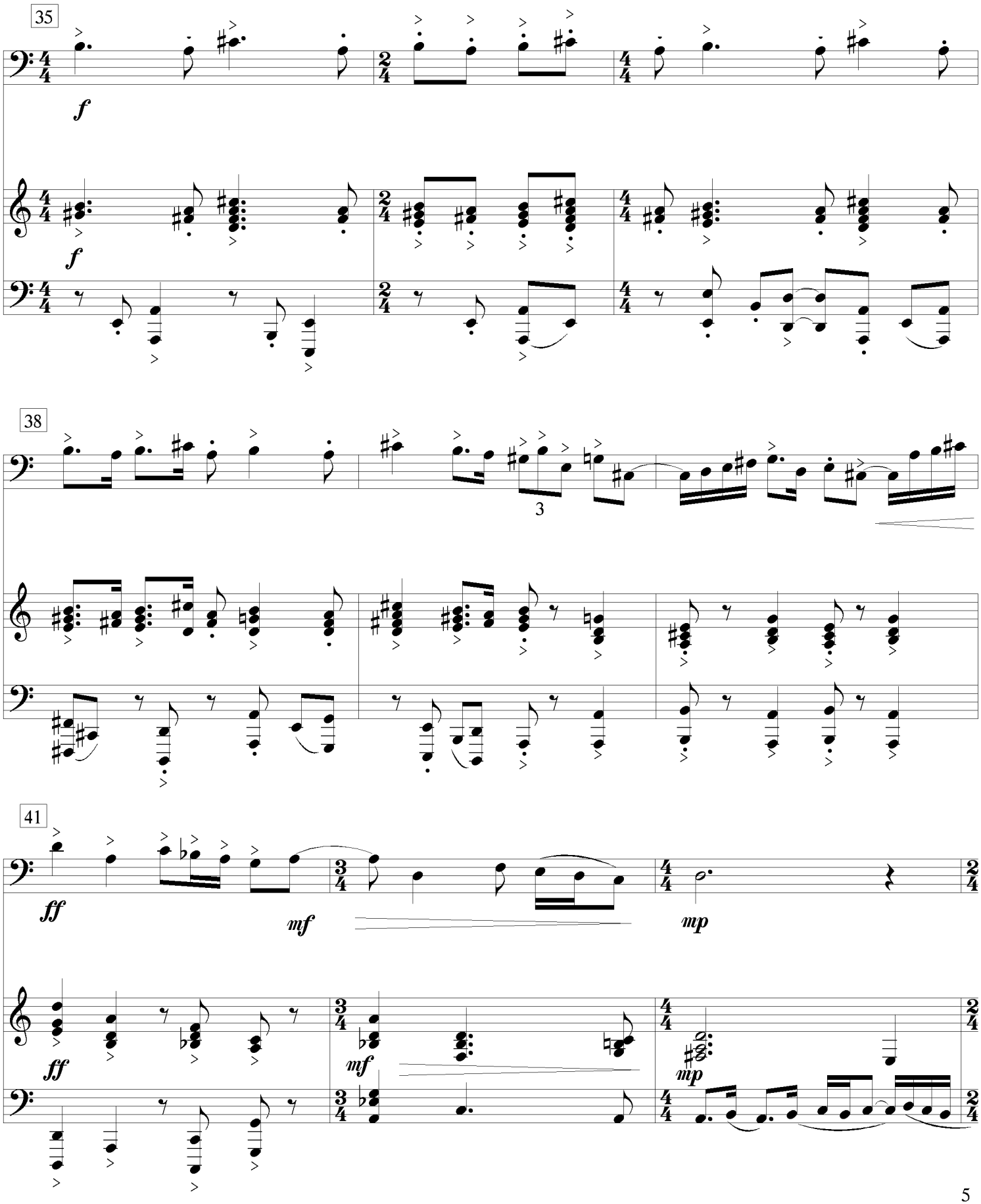
3
f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f
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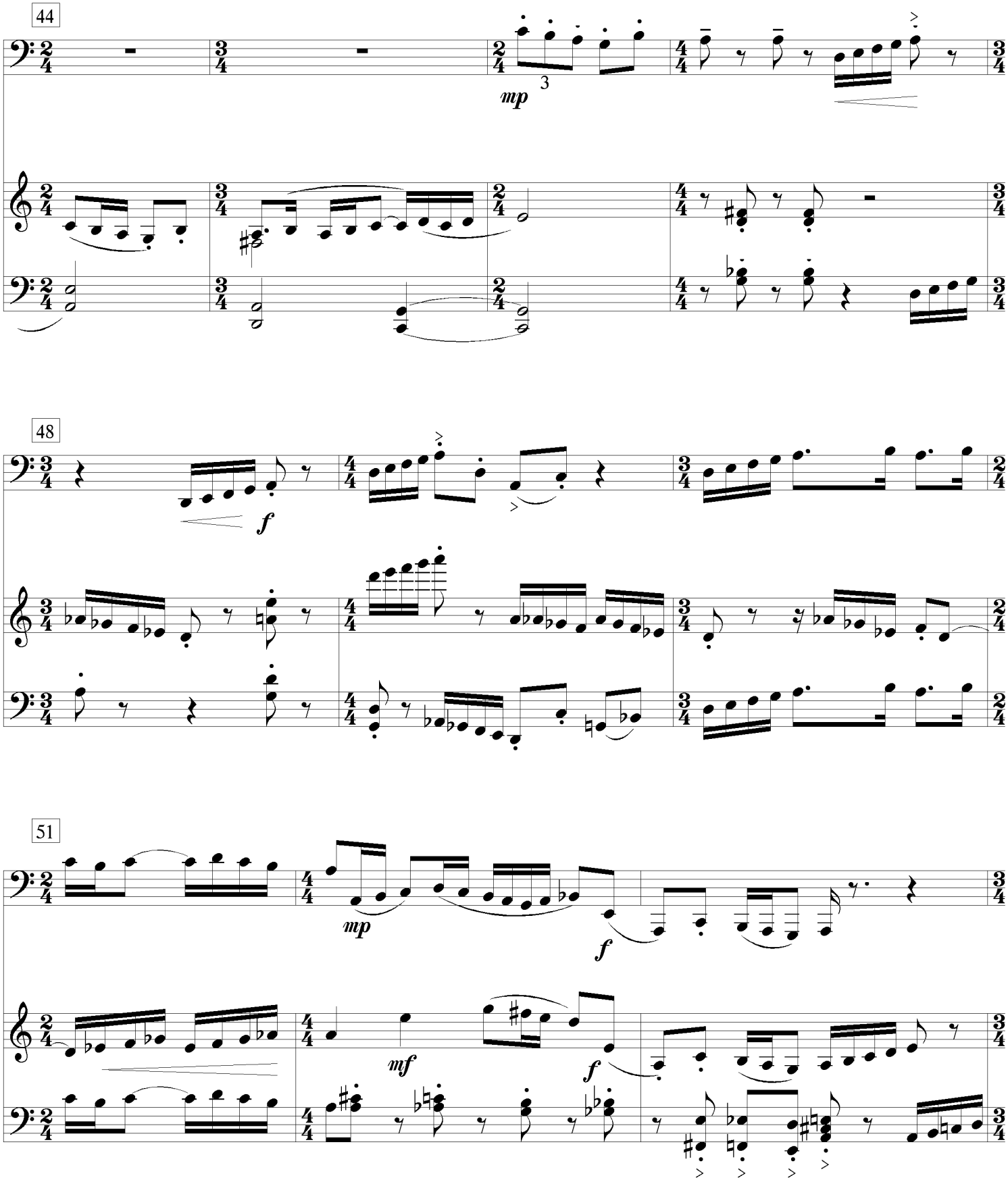
mf
mp
ff
mf
mp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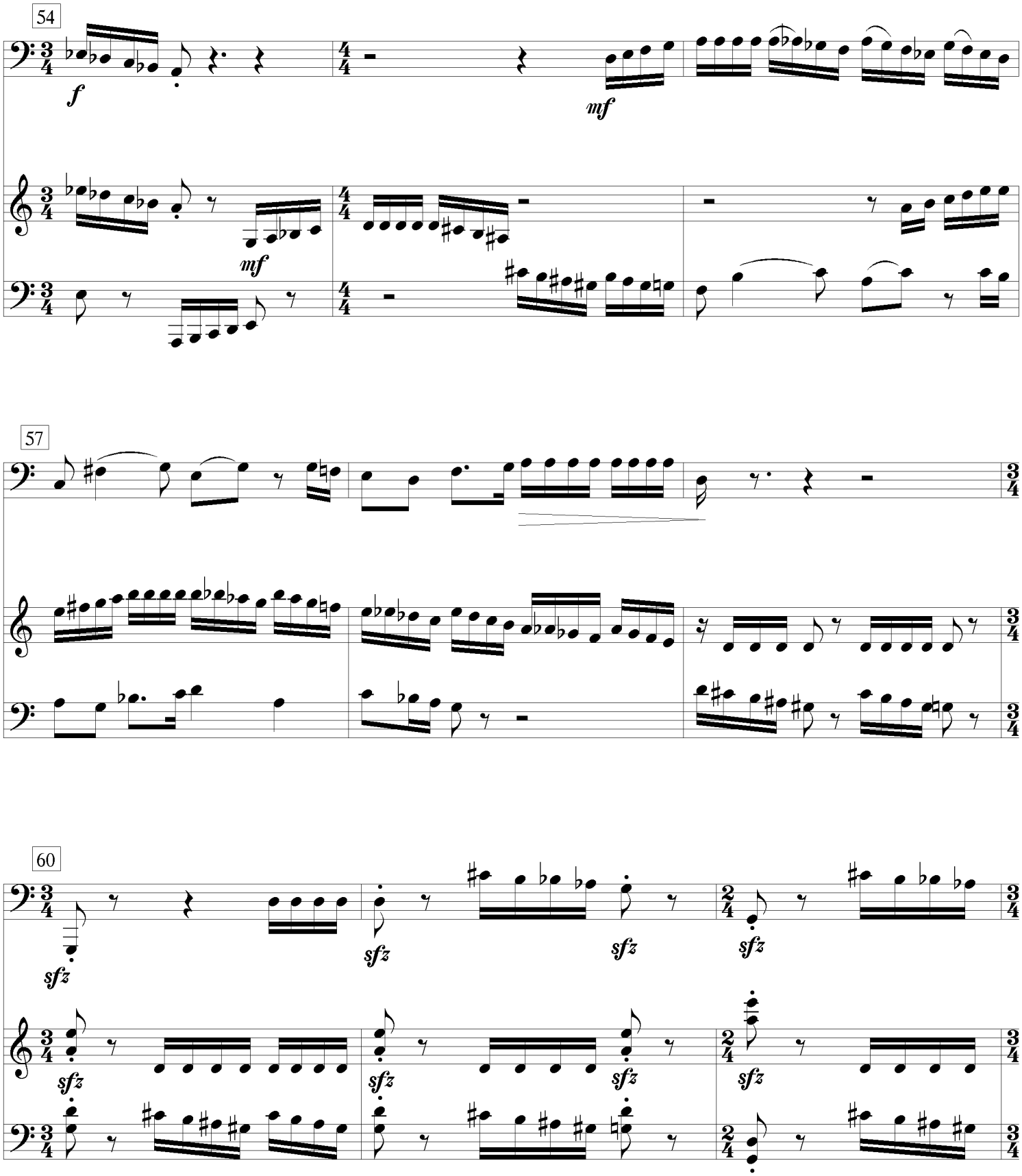
mp
f
mf
f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f
mf
mf
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sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
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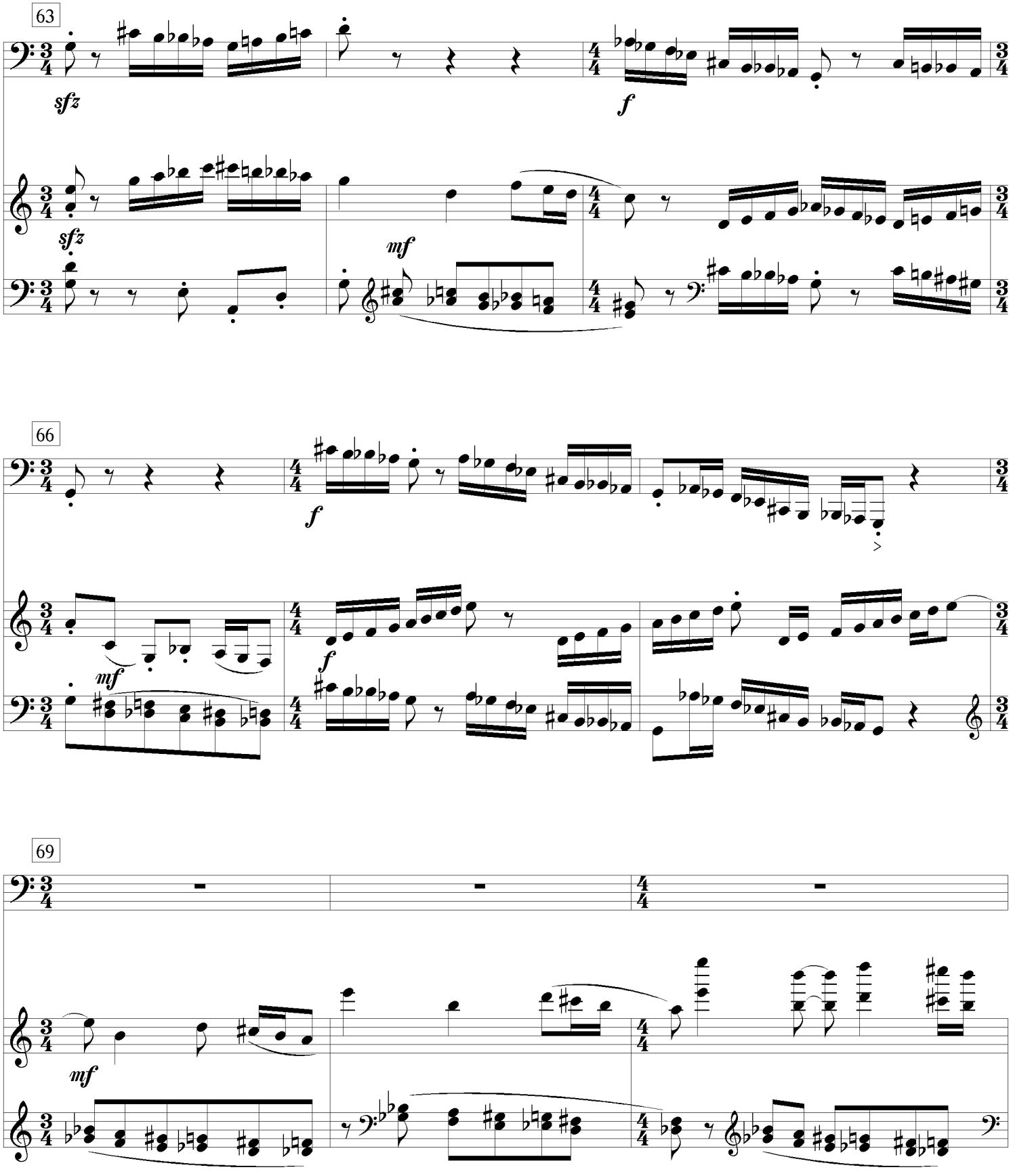
sfz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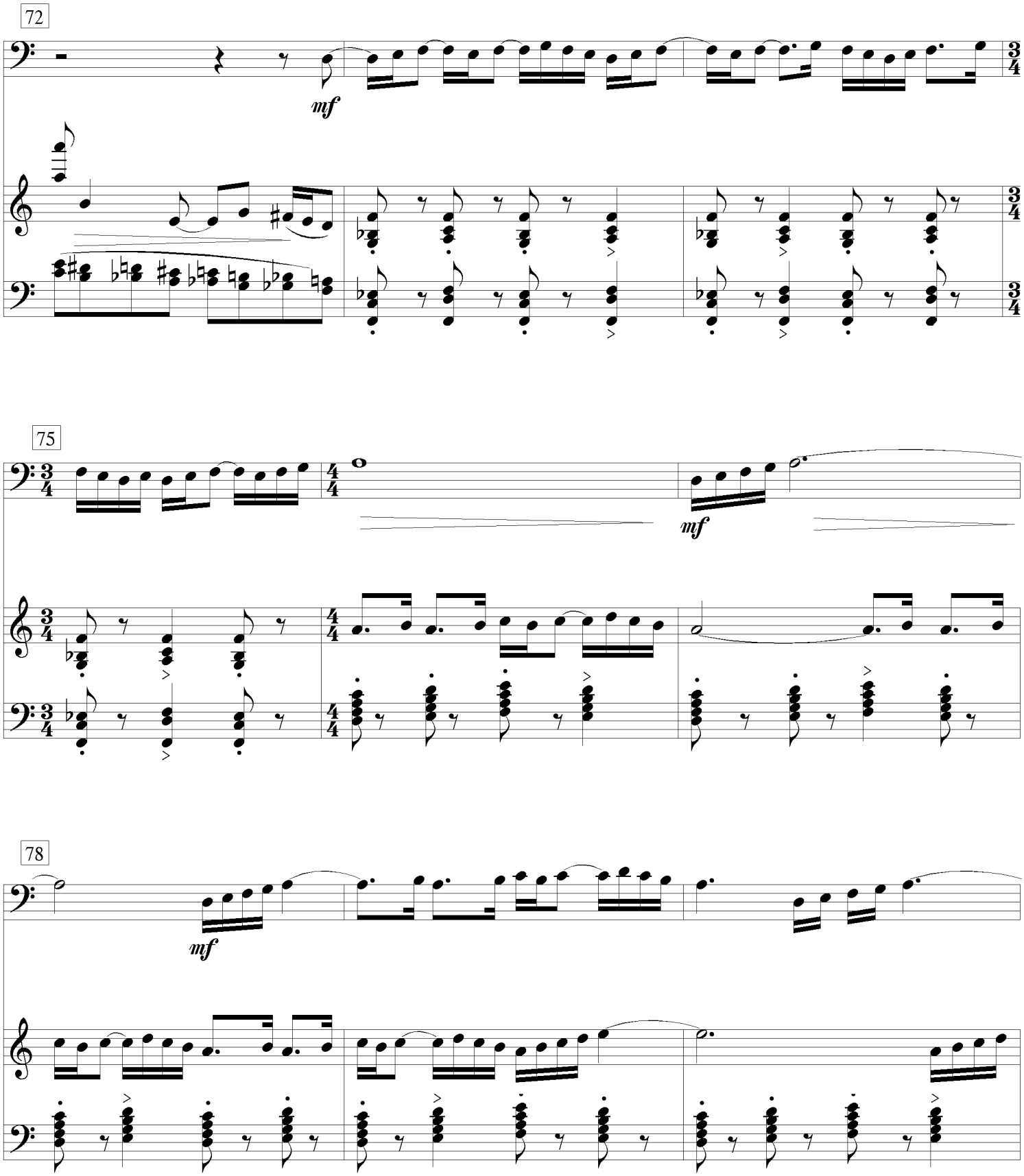
sfz
f
sfz
mf
66
f
mf
f
69
mf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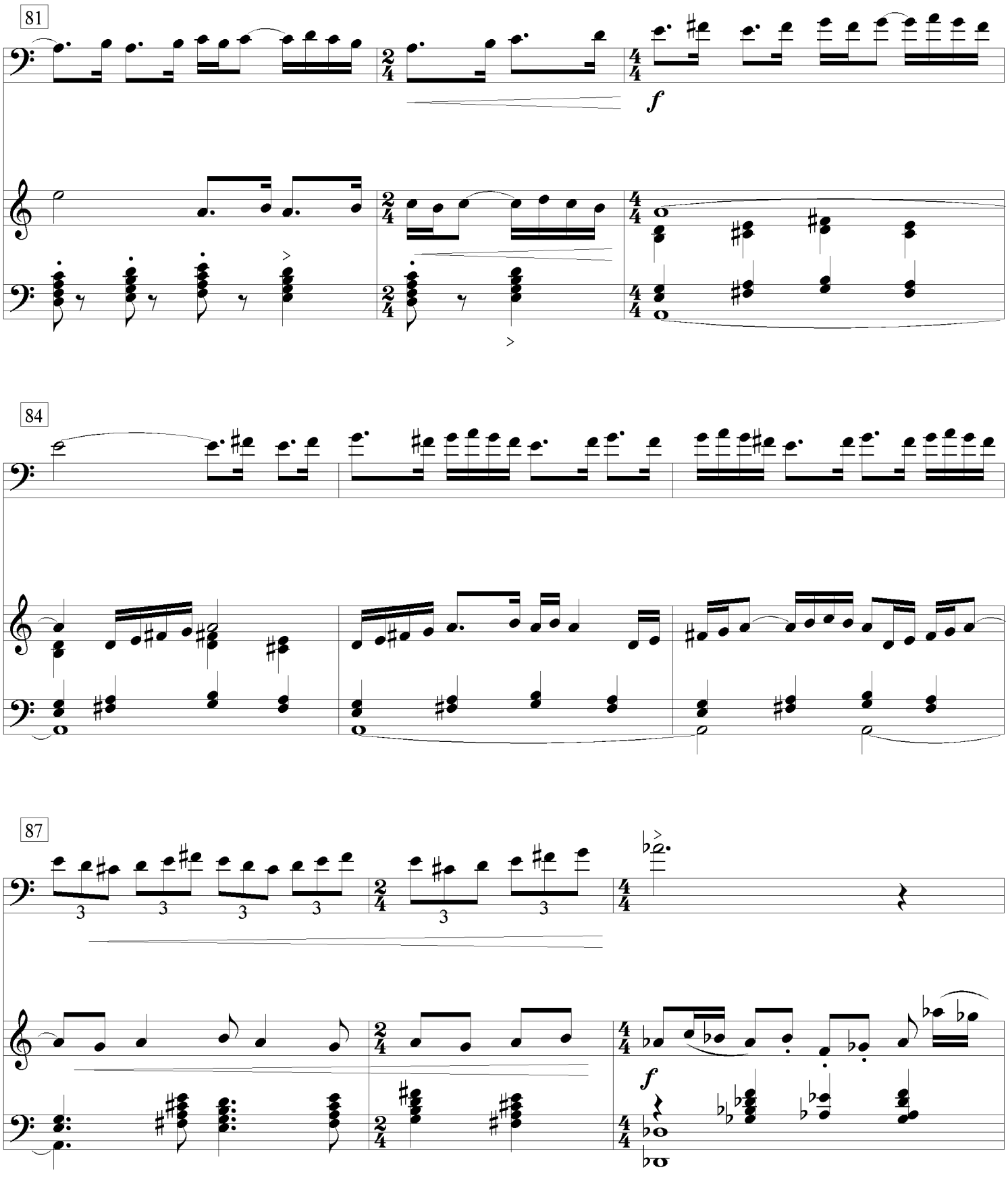
75
mf
78
mf


81
f
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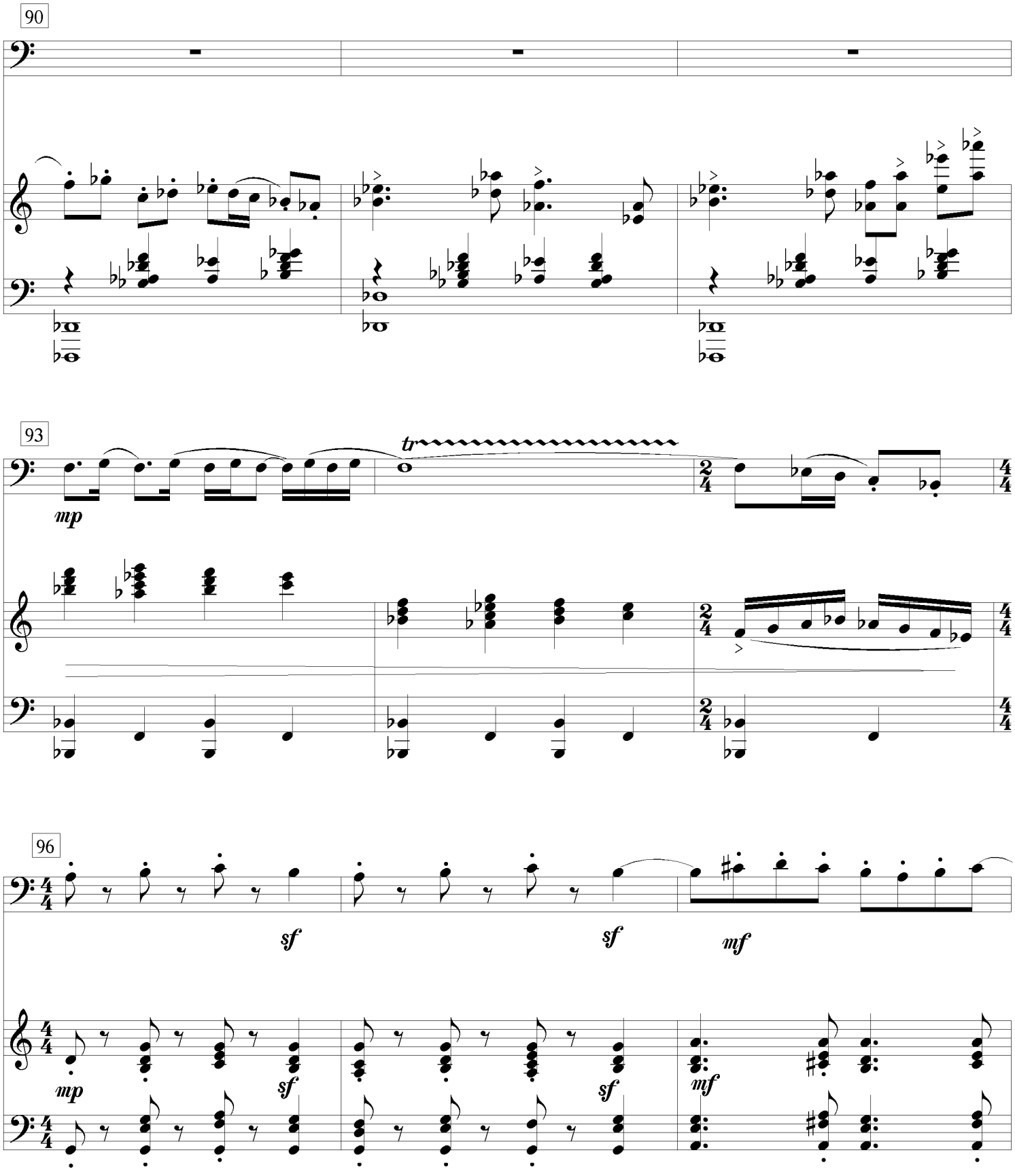
87
3
3
3
3
3
3
f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93
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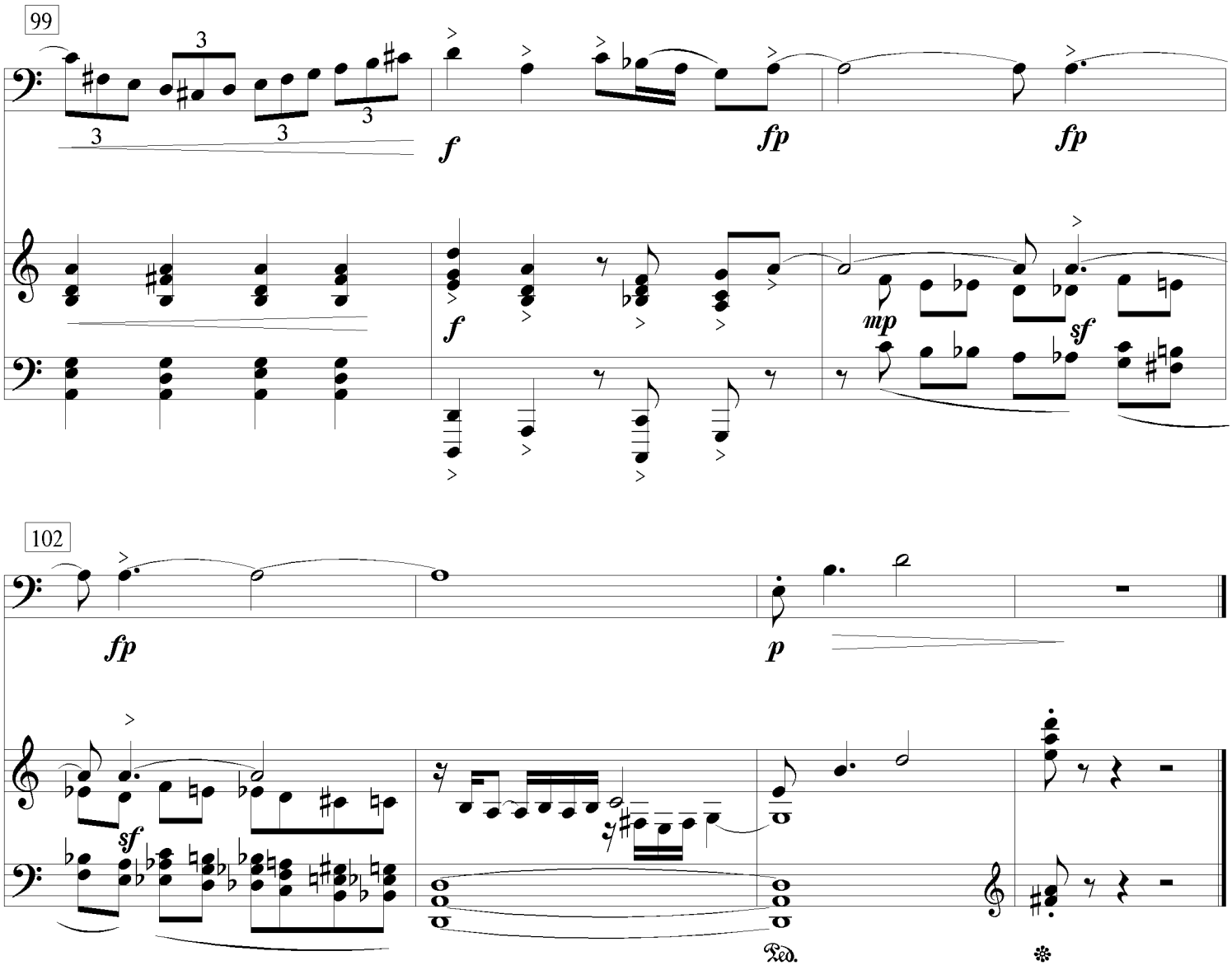
96
sf
sf
mf
mp
sf
sf
mf

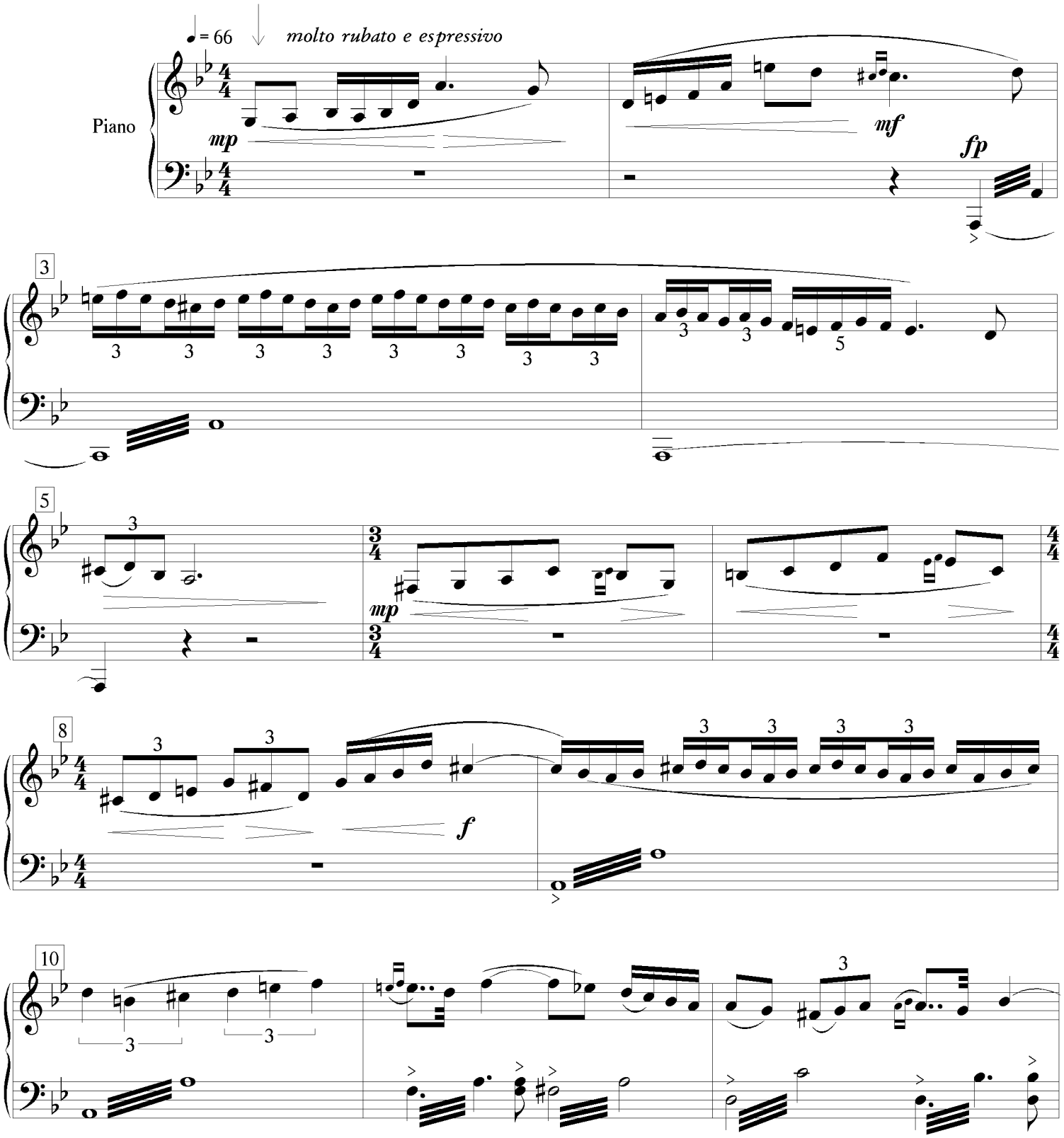

99
3
3
3
3
f
fp
fp
f
mp
sf
102
fp
p
sf
Ped.

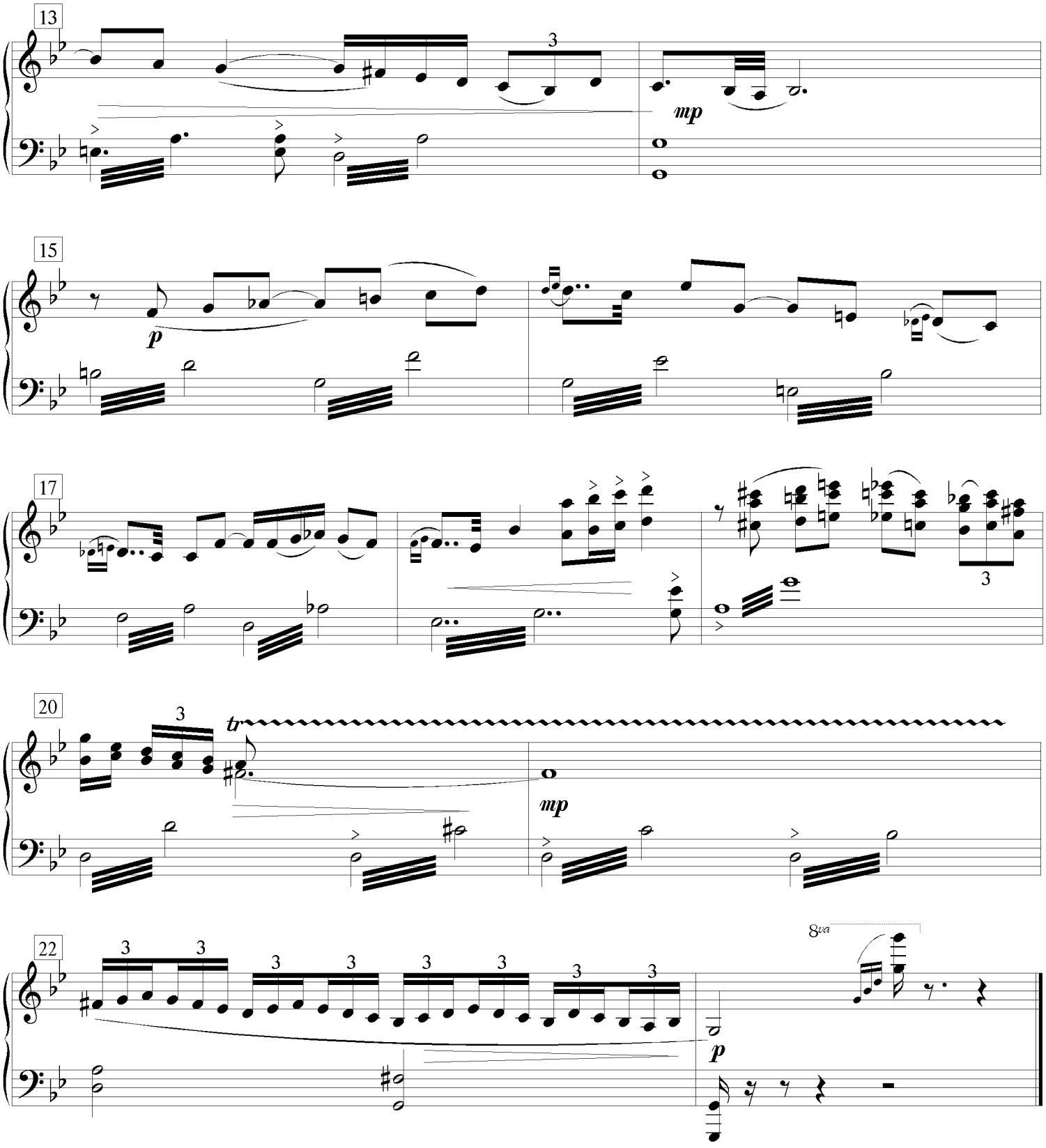
There was once a young baker... a very ambitious young baker... whose passion was croissants. Croissants, you ask? Not just croissants, but CROISSANTS: delicately flakey, extravagantly rich quarter-moons of pastry, fragrent from the oven. He would literally throw himself into his work, swiftly measuring by keen and experienced eye, deftly mixing with a few quick strokes of his wooden spoon, and then kneading, kneading with passionate vehemence or caressing tenderness as the spirit moved him, all of which spoke of some urgent longing or desperate need. For a few minutes each day he rose above the dross and drear of "la vie mondain" and become one with his work, fingers melting into dough, body rocking in rhythmic thrusts, giving life to the doughty mass, and it to him. He used to joke that someday he would turn into a croissant. This did not indicate a desire on his part to be either delicately flakey or extravagantly rich, but a longing for blissful surrender, of sacrificing mutuality between croissant and croissanteur, each defining the other out of unselfish necessity. The perfection of his art lay in its coming-into-being rather than its going-down-the-gullet. He knew well that the lustful attachment to croissants was a great source of misery in the world, and he devoted many hours a day to the contemplation of deep philosophical tracts on the topic. "You have the right to bake," he used to read, "but for the sake of baking only. You have no right to the croissants." And he applied himself diligently to this goal, seeking the still point of perfect harmony within his little kitchen, each movement utilized, graceful, mind fixed on the process not the product, a virtual ballet of renunciation. Almost. For the heady fumes made his mouth water and his knees weak, and the chafed at the chance to peek in on his still-baking creations, sometimes spoiling them in the act. "Discipline," he would say, "is the key to freedom." He was miserable.*

* Music cue (page 14, m. 1)

2. Meditations a la Croissance Spirituel

CUE: ". . . whose passion was croissants."

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3
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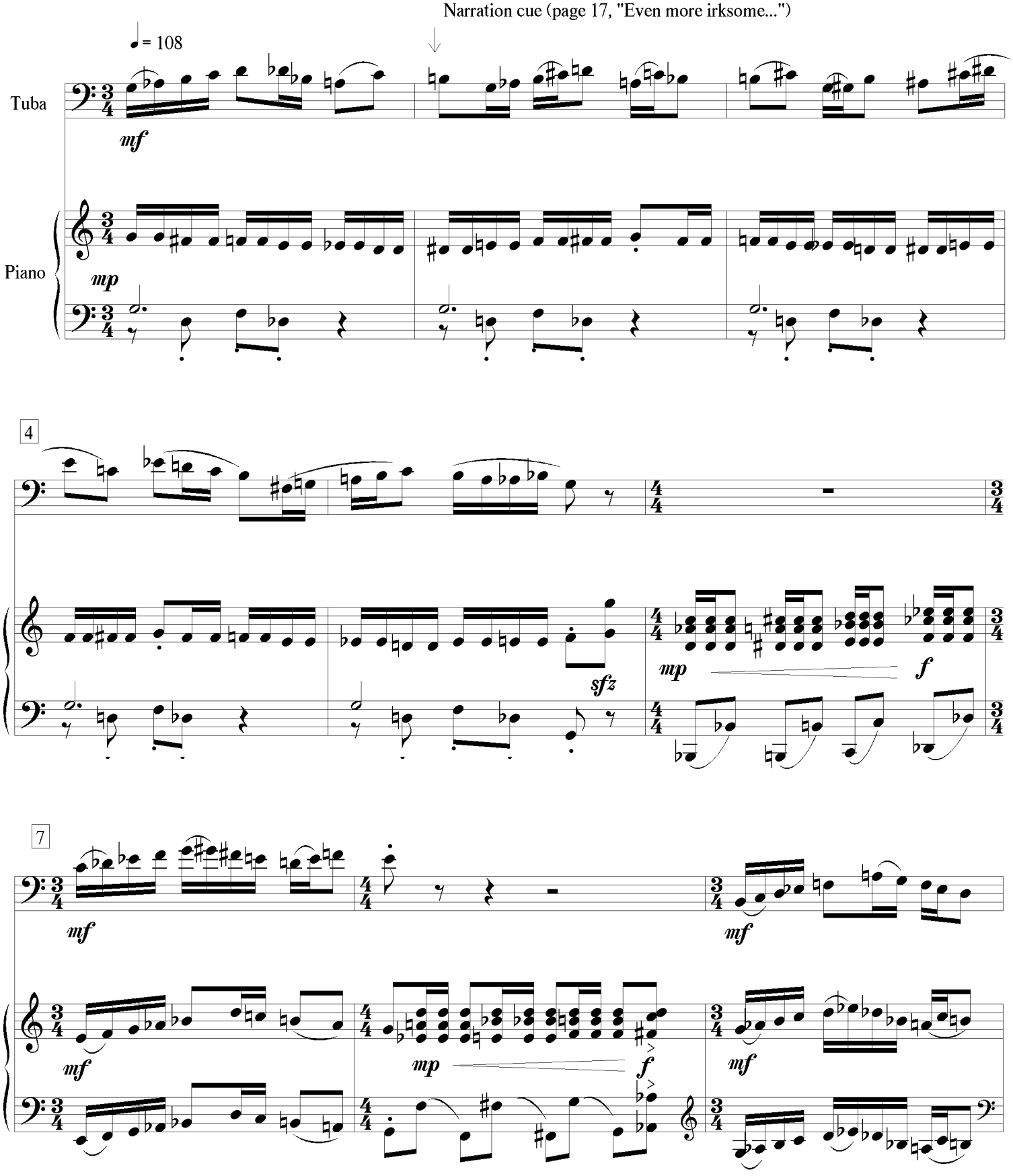
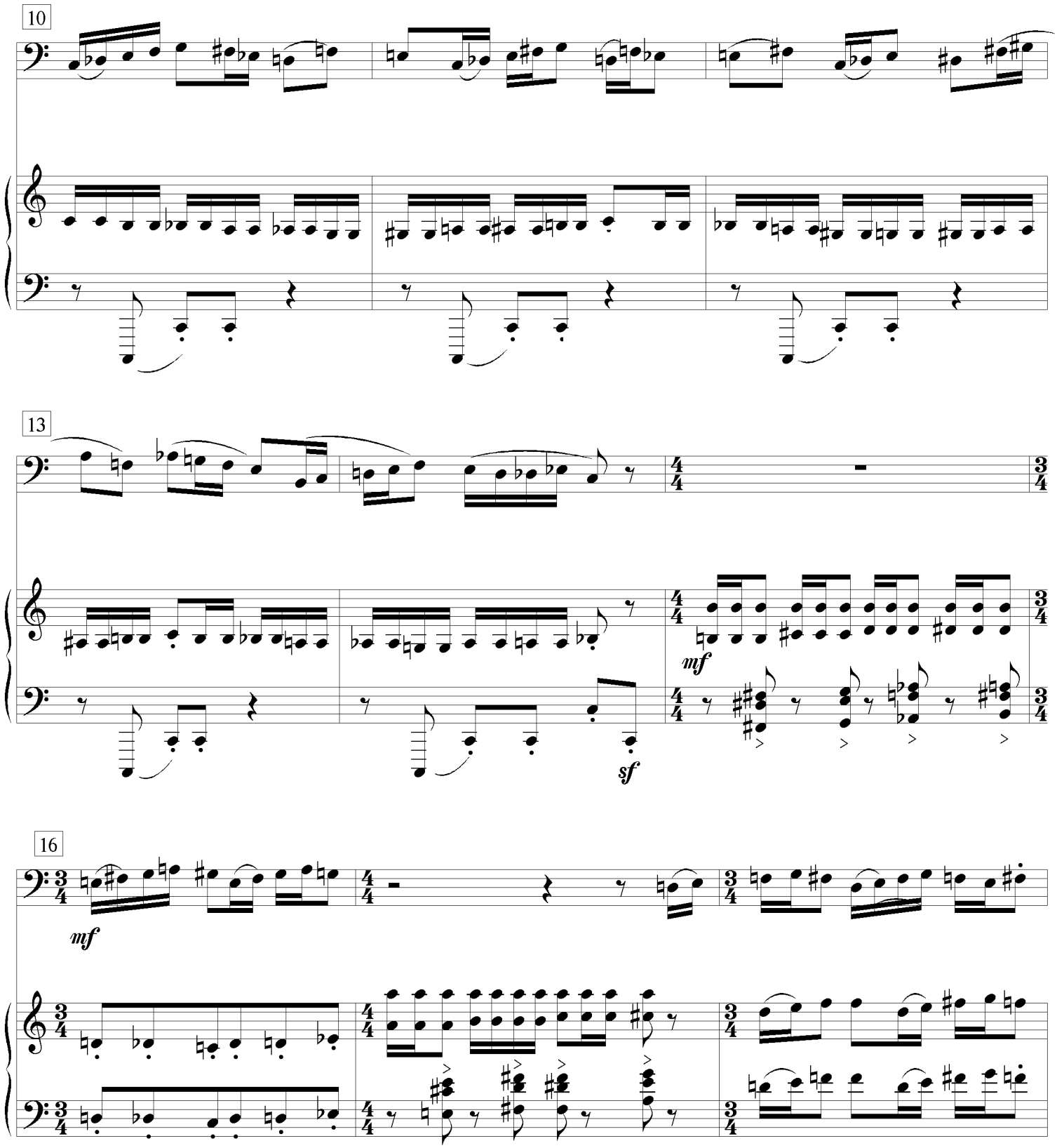
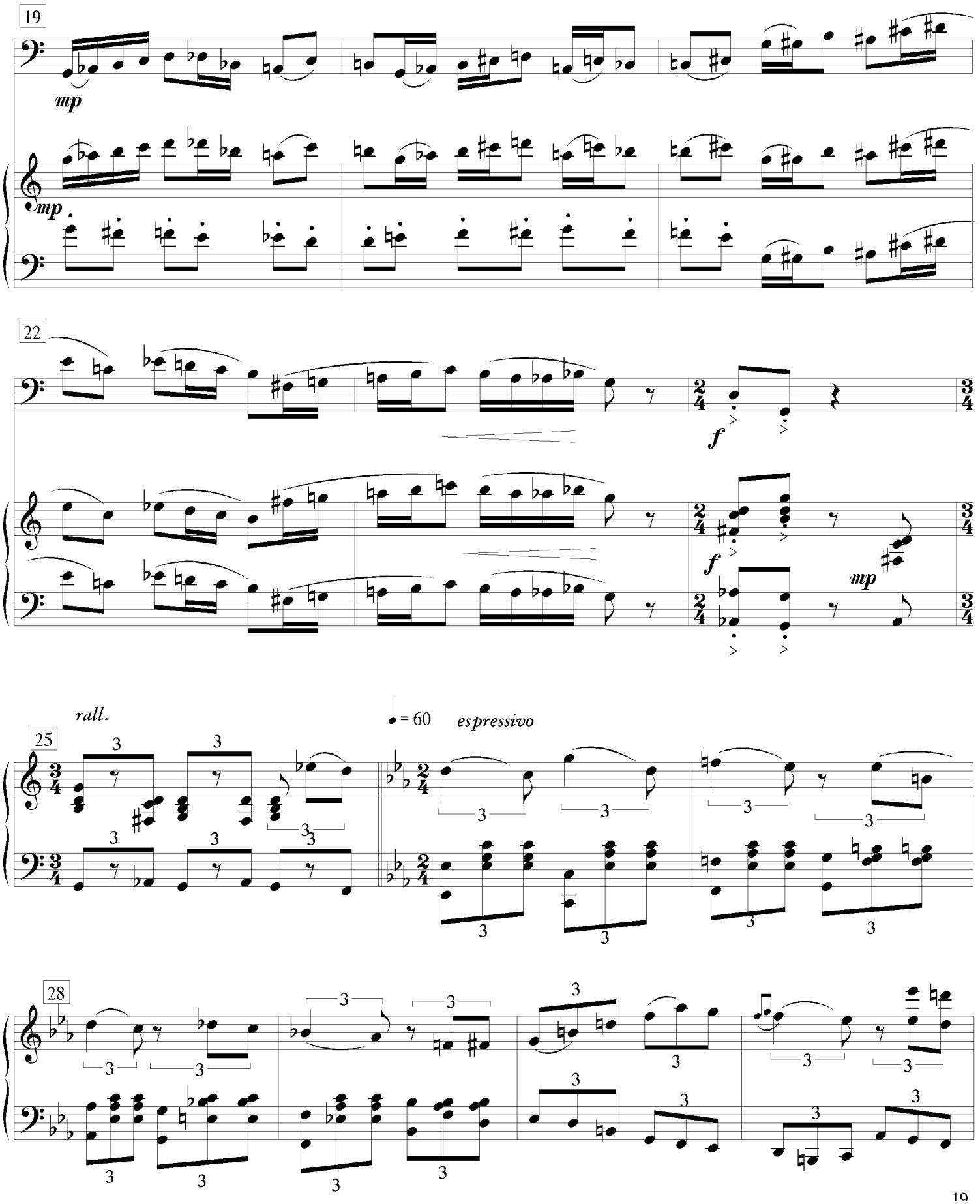
3
8va
p

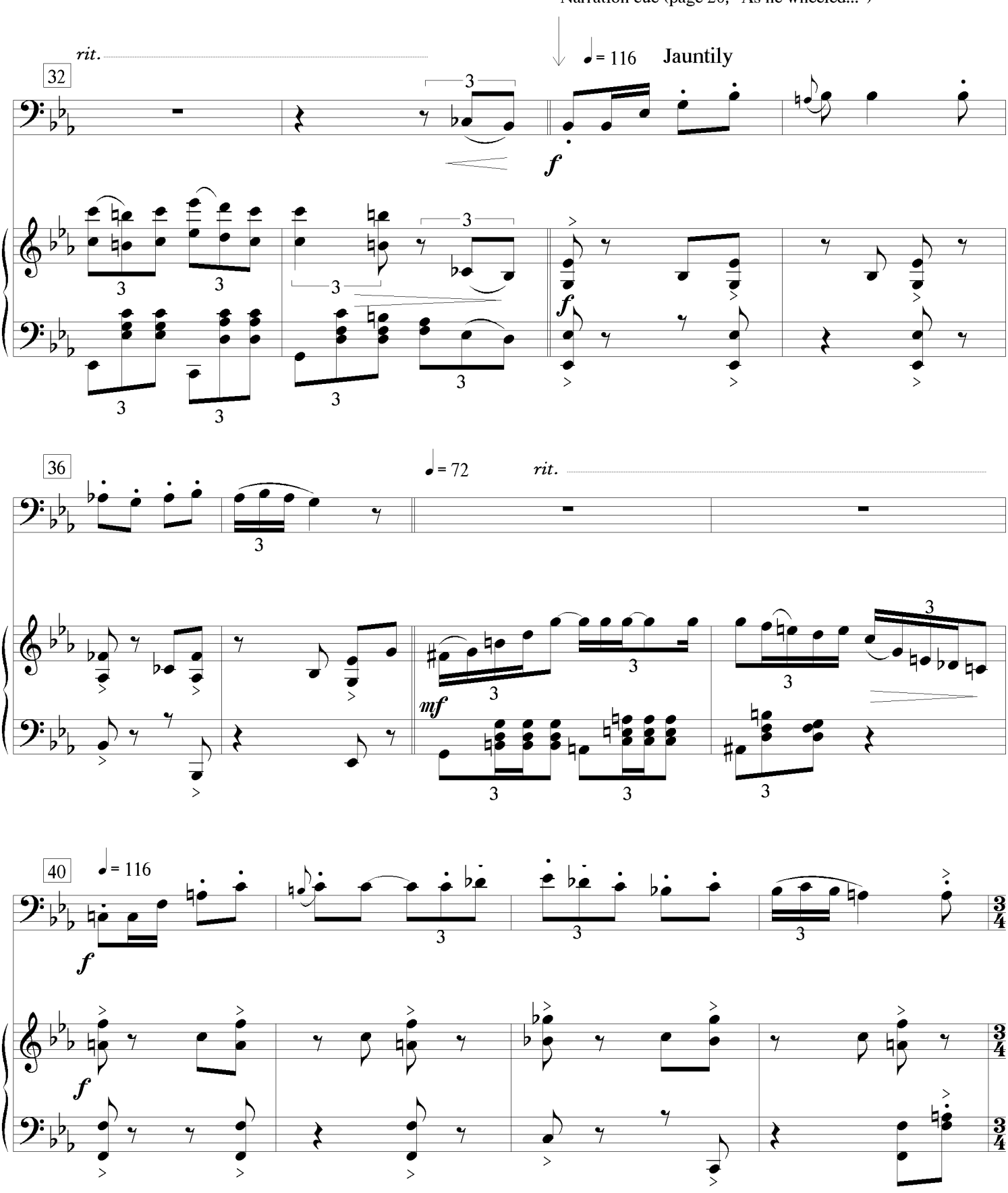

Narration cue (page 17, "Even more irksome...")
♩ = 108
Tuba
Piano
mf
mp
4
sfz
f
7

Narrator cue, page 16, m. 2

Even more irksome was the inexplicable desire to please his clientele, sometimes moving him to accomodate their tastes as best as he could guess them. There were the sophisticates who might demand an urbane Parisian croissant, or the low-lifers who might choose a coarser Bordeaux variety, of even petit-bourgeoisie who might prefer a tiny tea-croissantette. And for a time he would maintain this self-deception until ingrained habit overtook him, and he wearily reverted to culinary conventions that were, for better or worse, indisputably his own. This inclination-to-please he attributed to economic considerations, for "croissants," as he would say, "are not that by which man lives alone." Yet happiness remained but a croissant in the sky.

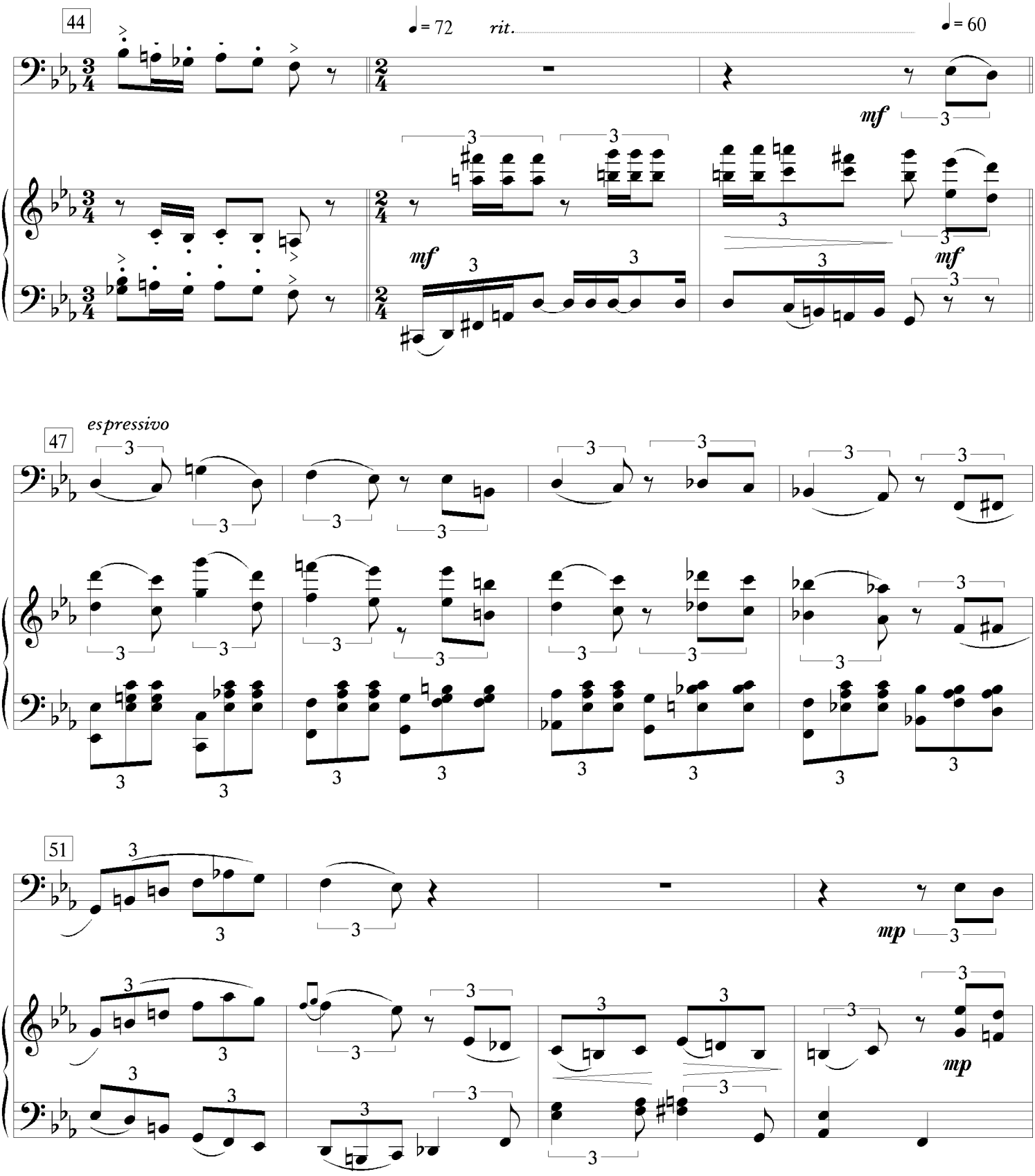

10
13
mf
sf
16
mf

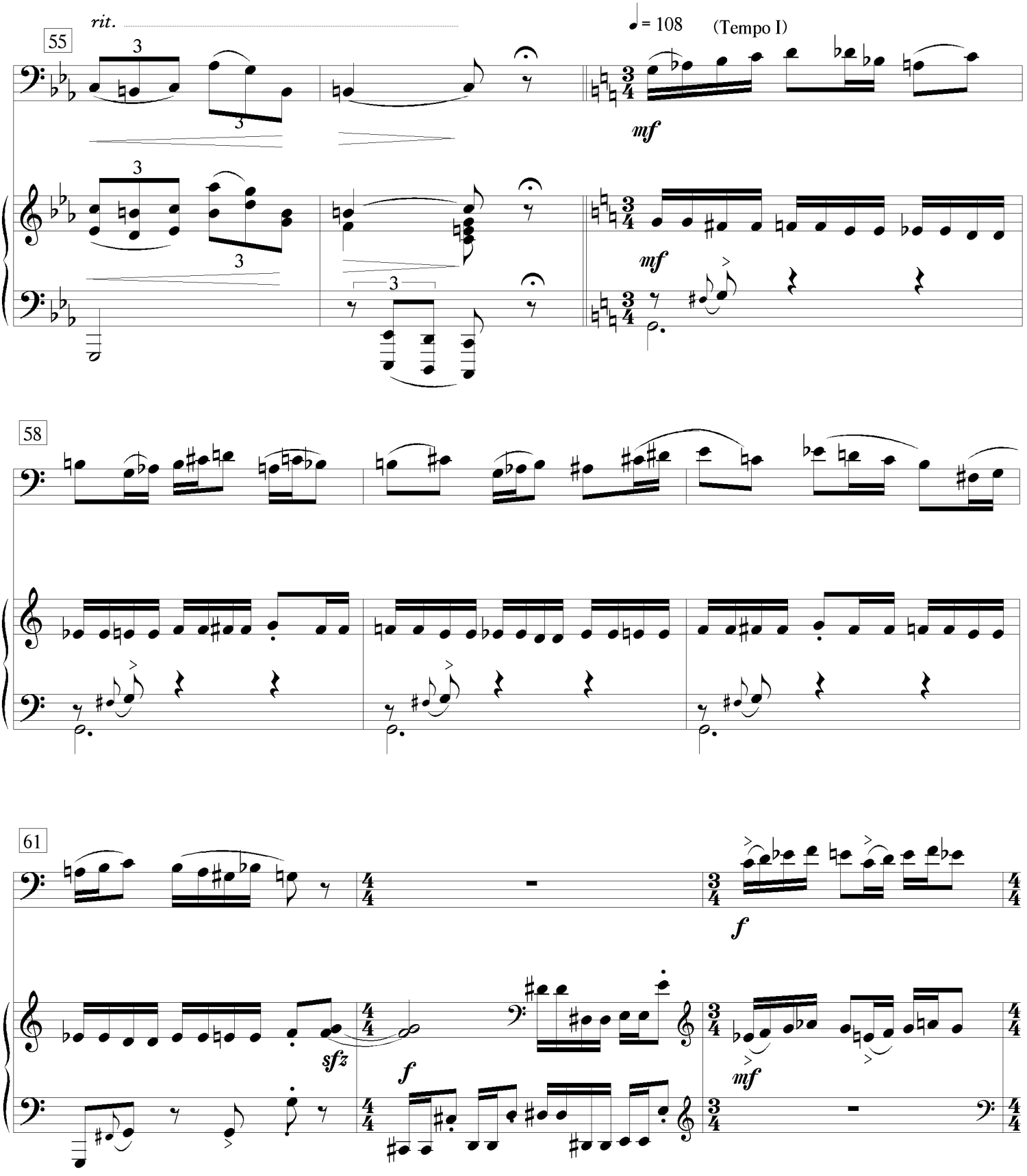

19
mp
mp
22
f
f
mp
rall.
♩ = 60
espressivo
25
28

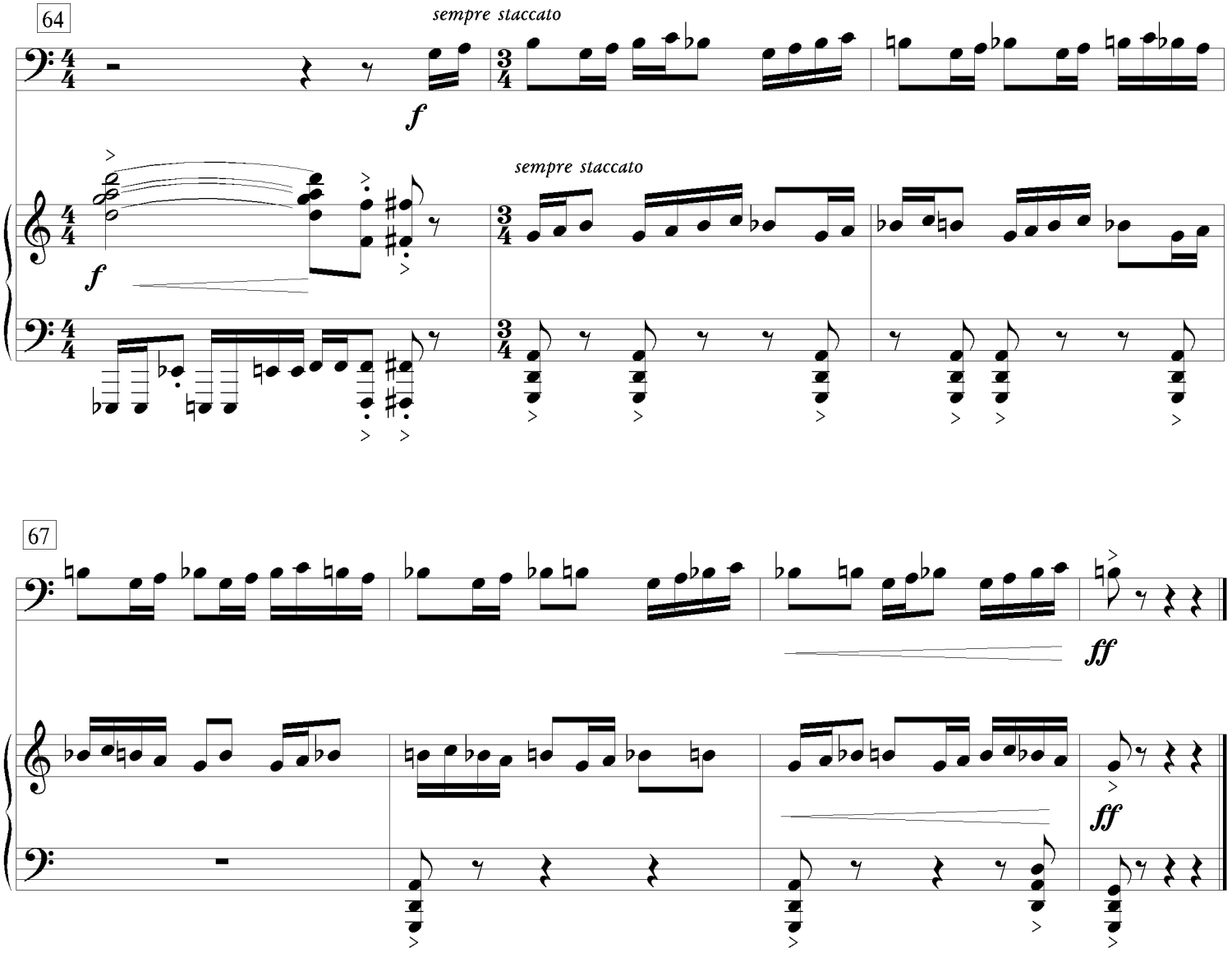

Narration cue (page 20, "As he wheeled...")
rit.
32
♩= 116
Jauntily
f
36
♩= 72
rit.
mf
40
♩= 116
f

Narration cue (page 20, m. 34)

As he wheeled his cart daily into the square of each village, he was struck time and time again by the variety of characters that inhabited the marketplace, all so unique and all so involved in their own affairs. "Do they ever think about croissants?" he wondered. "I can't imagine how so many people could care about my little cartful of buns." But come they did, and eagerly he searched their faces for signs of approval, some nodding, some frowning, some mumbling, some grumbling, some complaining about cracks and crumbs. "These people," he would say, "don't know their brioches from their petit fours." And he went on his way strangely content yet vaguely dissatisfied. "I have a long way to go yet," he would say.


44
♩= 72
rit.
♩= 60
mf
mf
mf
47
espressivo
51
mp
mp


rit.
55
♩= 108
(Tempo I)
mf
mf
58
61
f
sfz
f
mf


64
sempre staccato
f
sempre staccato
f
67
ff
ff

One day... an "exceeding fine" day as he later remembered it... he wheeled off the main road down an unpaved path towards a village only briefly visited once long ago, before he gave much thought to croissants. It was a treacherous path, full of stones and holes, and he feared upsetting his cart. And indeed he might have turned back had the air been less sweet or the sky less clear. For he remembered this place as special in a peculiar way, and he longed to make a journey that might profitably sell his wares.*

He came to the square, which was in most ways like any other, but was graced by nature and human craft beyond the requirements of mere function. There were trees, and a fountain, and greens that were neat but with wild edges, and jutting shoulders of rock that overlooked a cultivated valley below, somehow distant and foreign to this high place. And there were people about, busy with conventional concerns, but to him seeming to be not quite rooted to the ground they walked upon. And they came and bought his croissants, and he searched for signs of approval but got none. They bought all his stock before he knew it, and he hurried home to complete the next day's batch. "I must return here tomorrow," he said, "it is good business." And no sooner than he touched his threshold he set about to work. He baked all that night, though the time flew swiftly, and the next day returned at mid-morning. Again they bought his goods, though he noticed other vendors about, which stung him with jealousy, then with shame. "What right have I," he asked himself, "to claim this as my exclusive territory? It is a fair town and good profit for any decent baker. I can't afford to lose this market. I must be patient." And he went home and baked his croissants, and returned to sell them daily. Somtimes, when his wares sold only modestly or circumstance prevented the journey, he fell into dejection and cried, "surely I am losing them, all is lost!" And when he sold well, the day

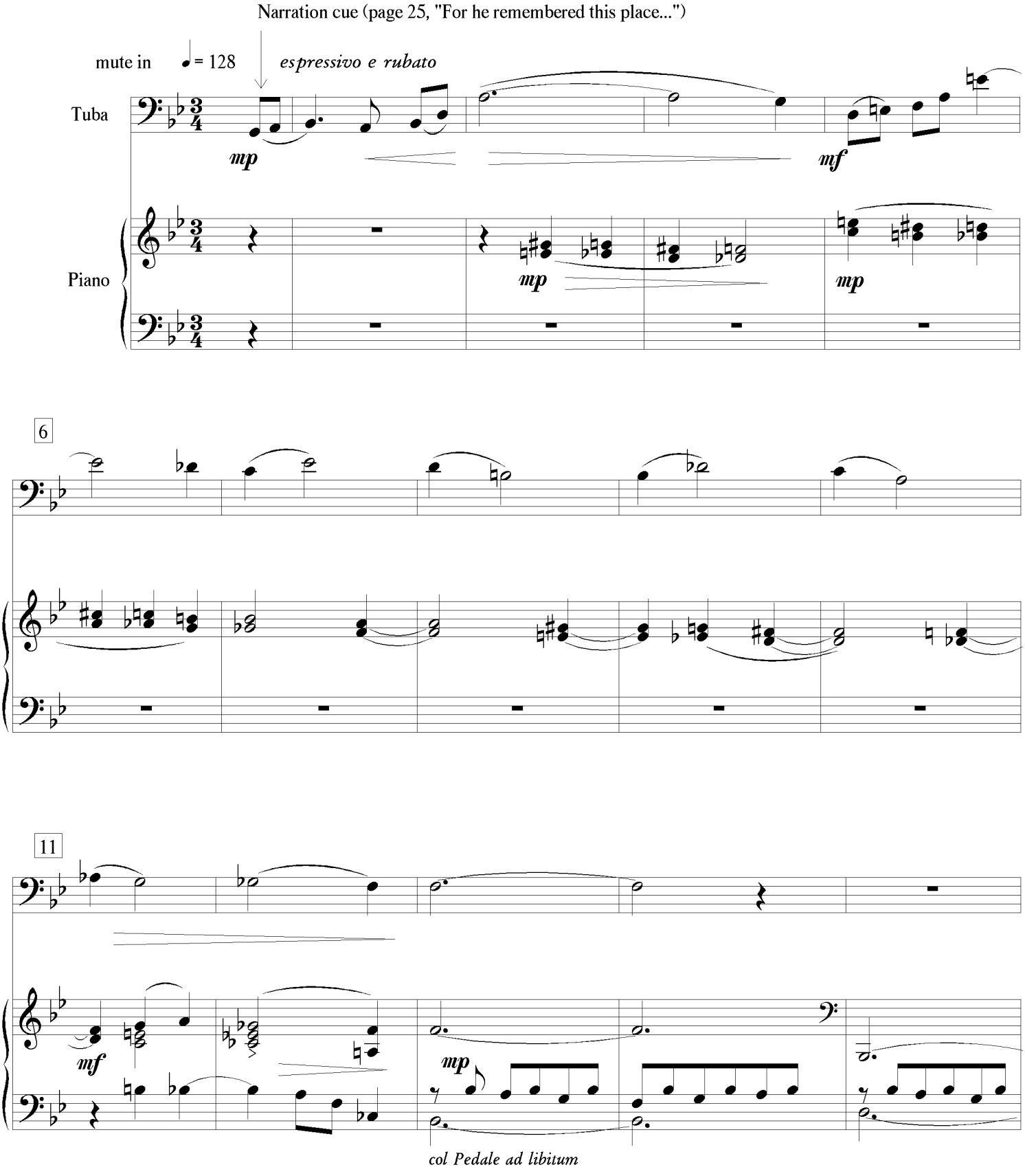
*Music cue (page 27, m. 1)

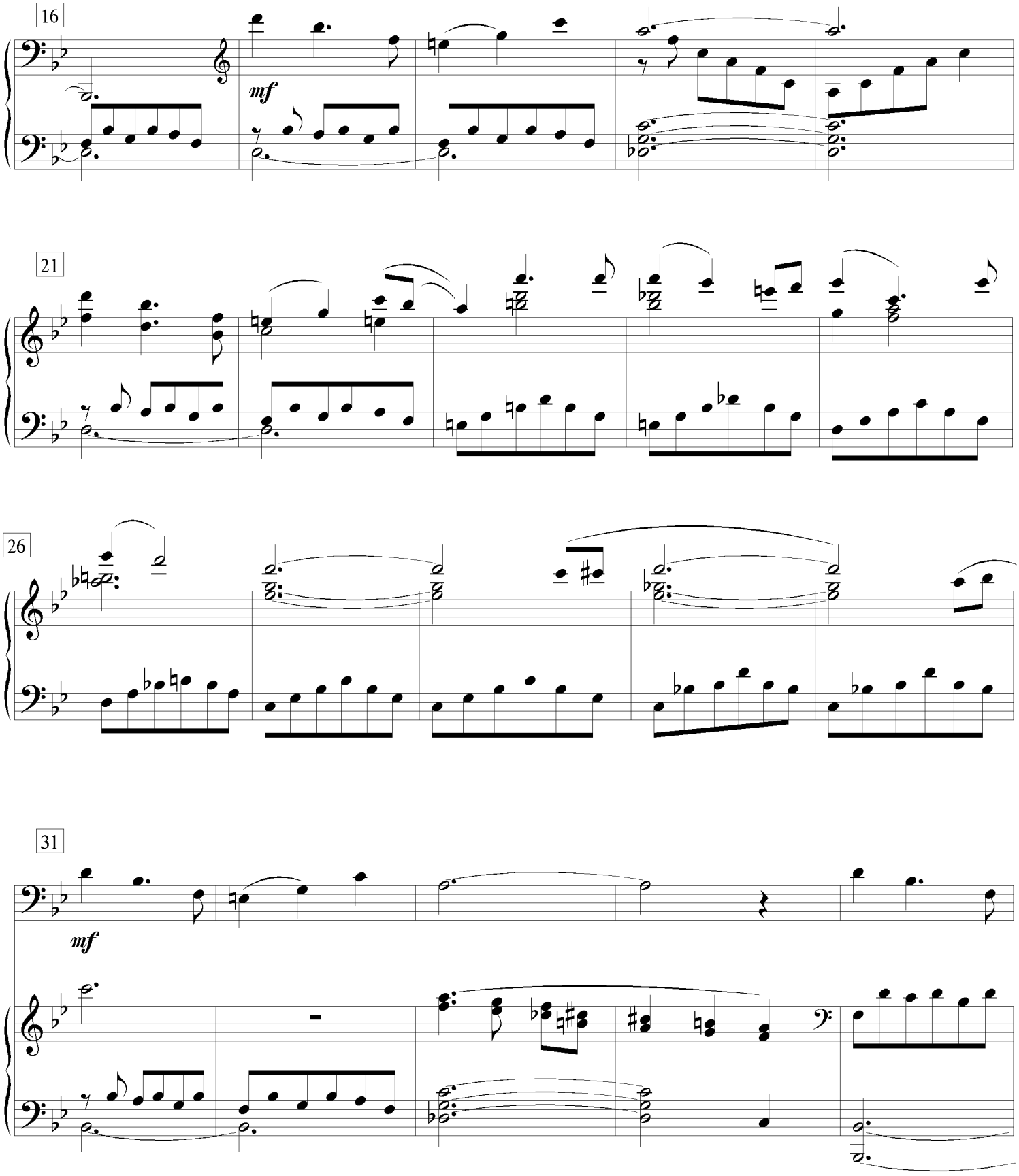
seemed eternally bright, and he sang his croissant chansons all the way home, floating, as it were, on air.

The truth was, his croissants were much appreciated and sold well against the competition, yet competition was never discouraged, as all decent folk were welcome in the town. He himself never heard an explicit word of encouragement, and found himself often poised on the brink of despair, only to the redeemed by the merest intimation of approval. But as weeks passed he grew to know the people and their tastes and to judge their hunger, and to give them what they wanted almost before they asked. And he baked, and baked, and baked daily, the same stout, dependable recipe he knew as his own, and thought of little all the while, except to anticipate loading his cart and pushing it eagerly down the now-familiar path, which wasn't so treacherous after all. And day after day he handed out his croissants in the square, and waited for approval, until one day it struck him that he had been so very busy searching the faces of his customers that he had neglected to take their change. In a panic he seized his money box. . . and found it full of coins. Then as suddenly he realized he had as a habit been neglecting to collect money for weeks now, maybe even months. "What a fool I have been," said the baker. "Here I stood searching vainly for a smile, and have found myself kissed." And as he thought back over the past weeks he recalled how each night he would trudge home tired but with a fire in his heart, and bake his croissants into the wee hours, and then sleep without a care in the world, only to awake with renewed vigor. "It wasn't for money after all," he said. And he picked up one of his croissants and looked at it, and saw how it was less than perfect, a little squished at one end, and slightly overdone, not surprising for work done far past bed-time. And he bit into it, and it crumbled generously and richly over his apron and into his pockets. "Life," he said, "is like a croissant. It must he held delicately if it is to be held at all." "And," he added, "it's pretty damned delicious."

(The End)

3. Hymne au Village Celeste

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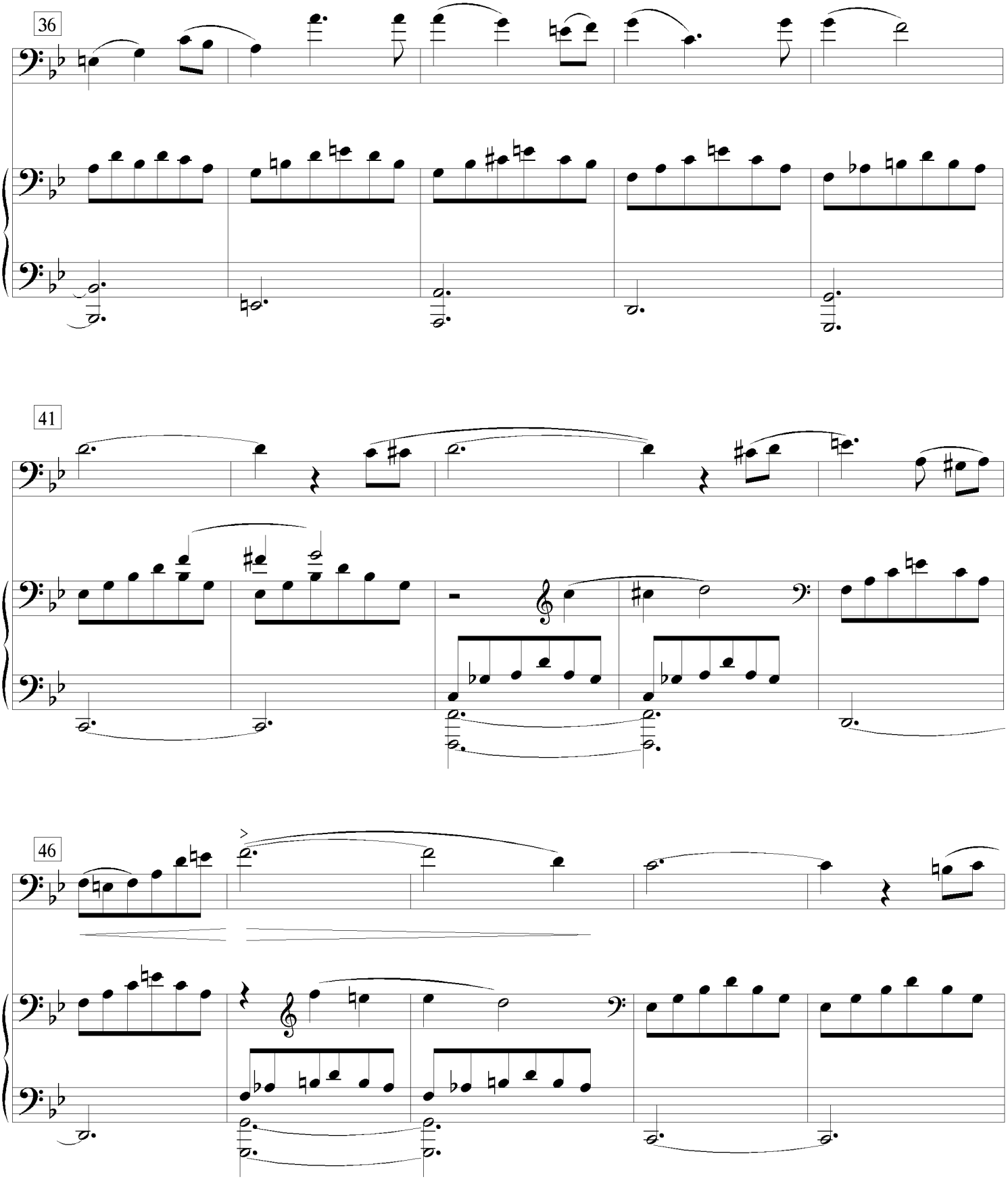
mf
21
26
31
mf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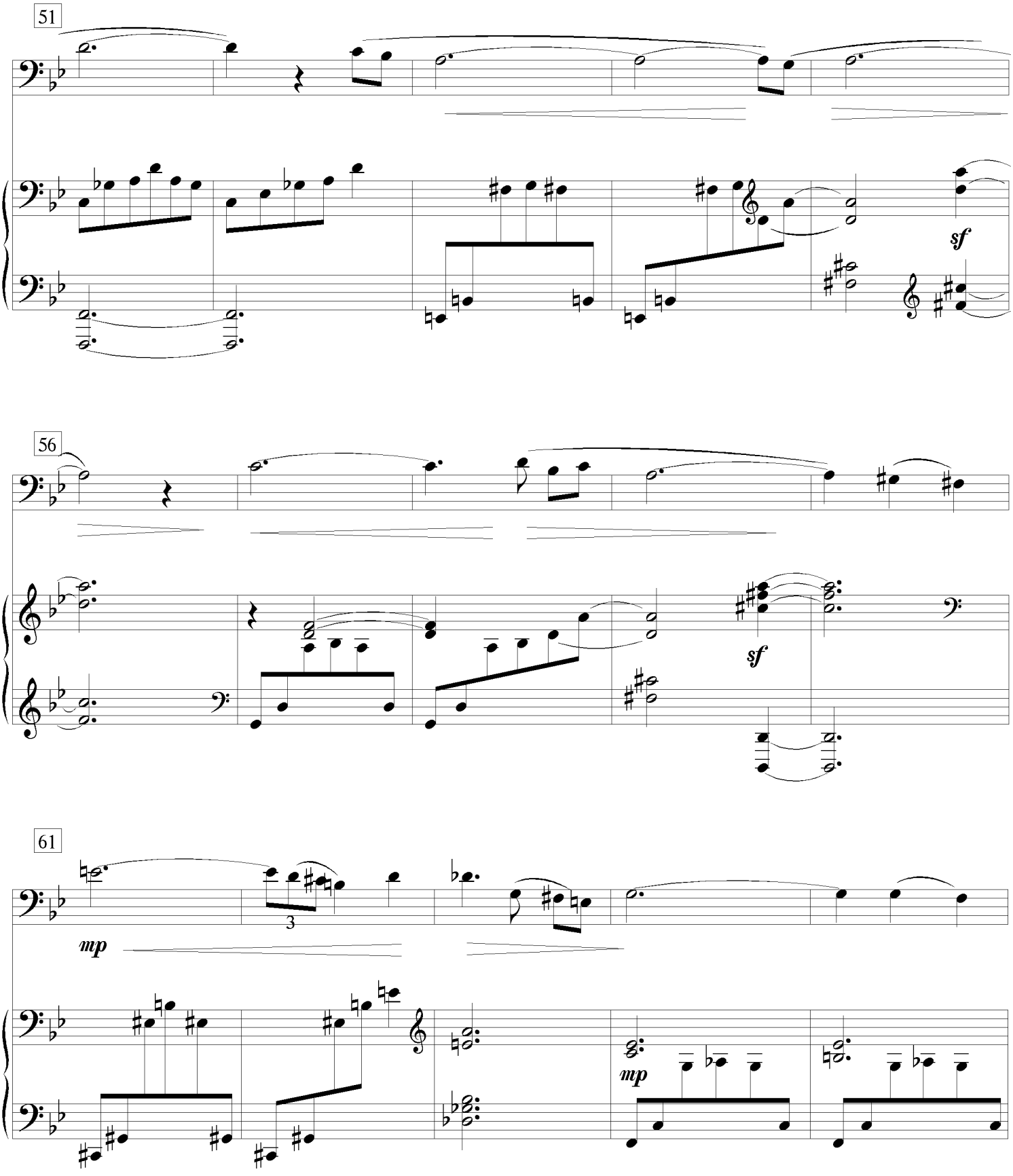
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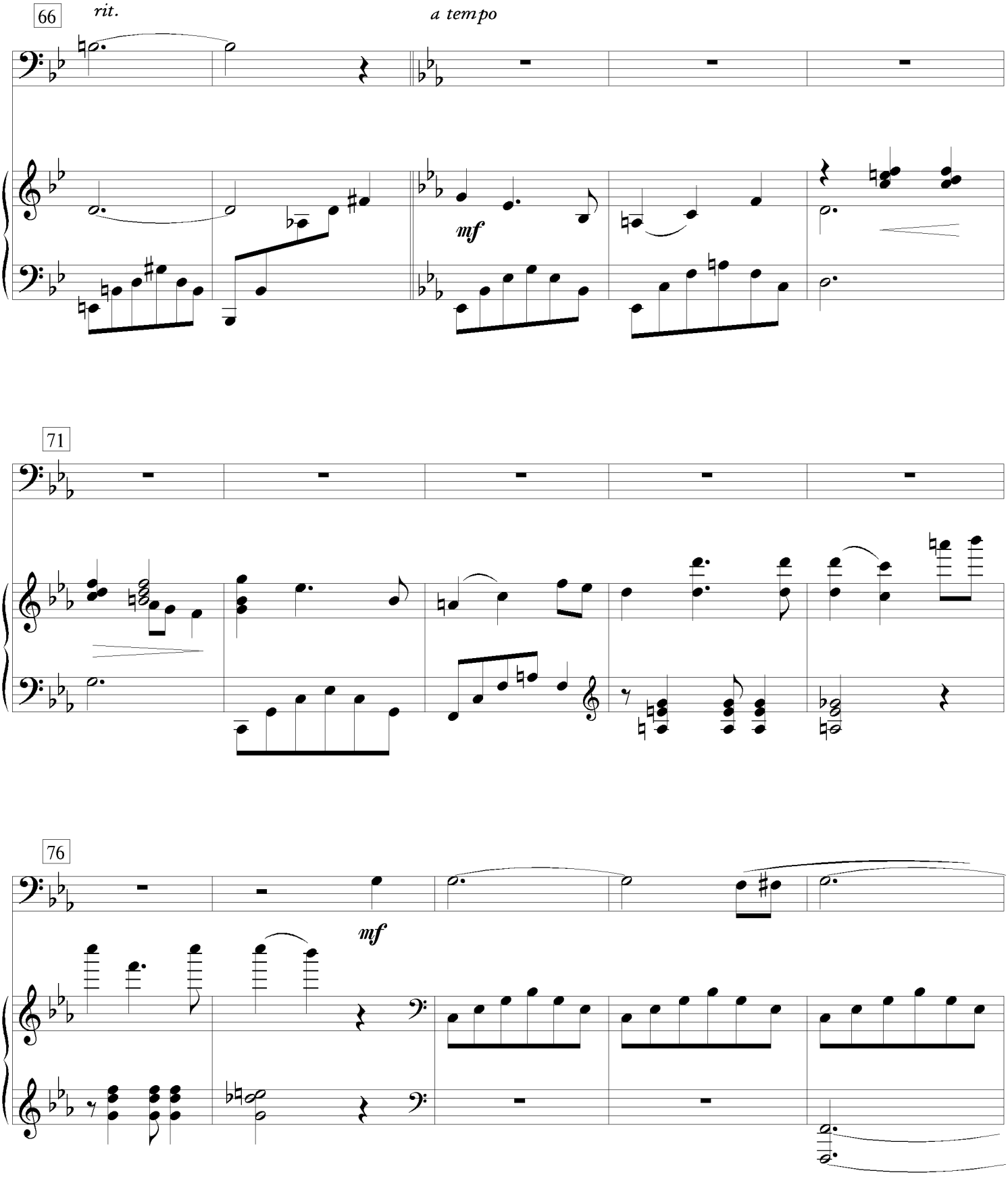
sf
56
sf
61
3
mp
mp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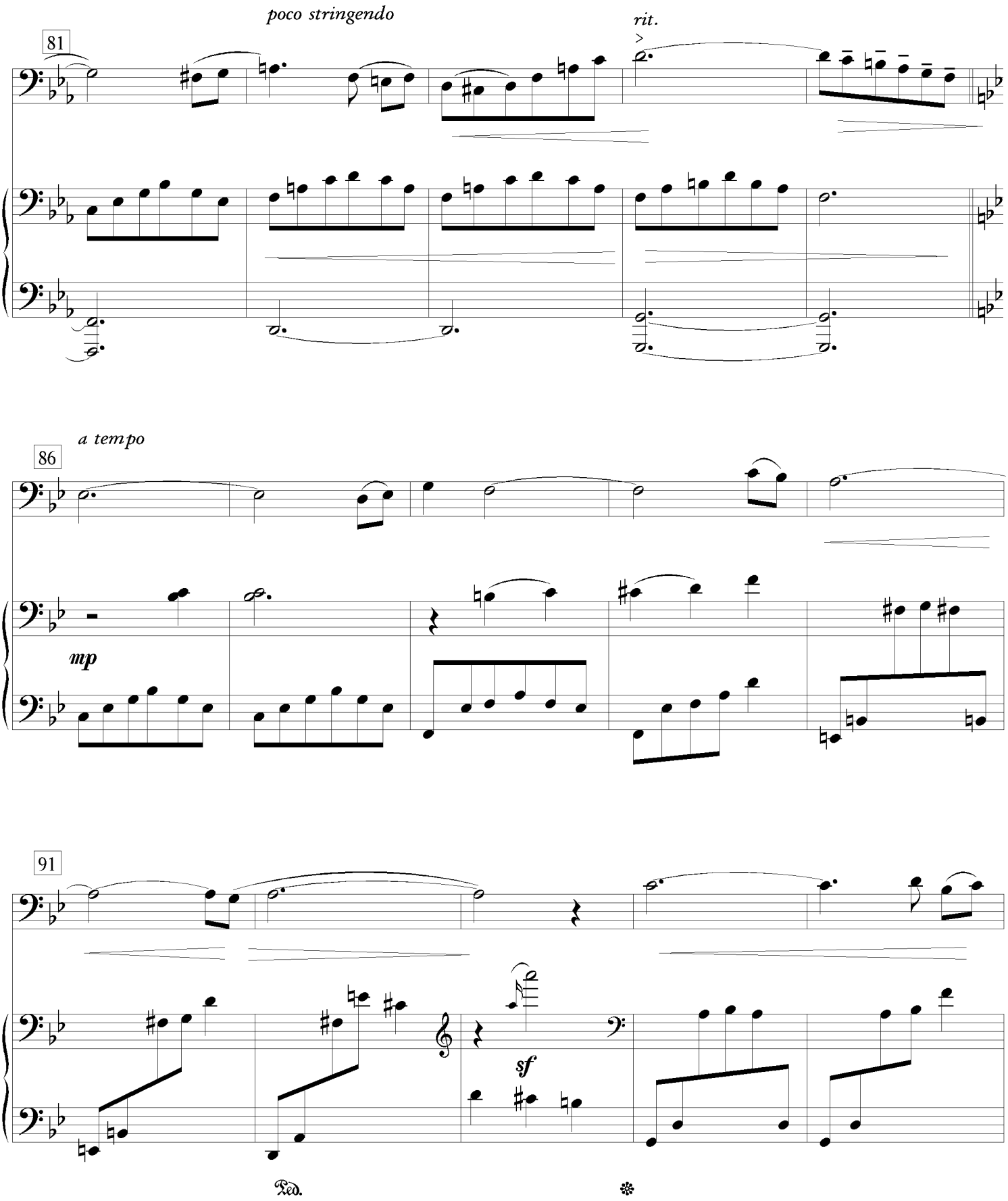
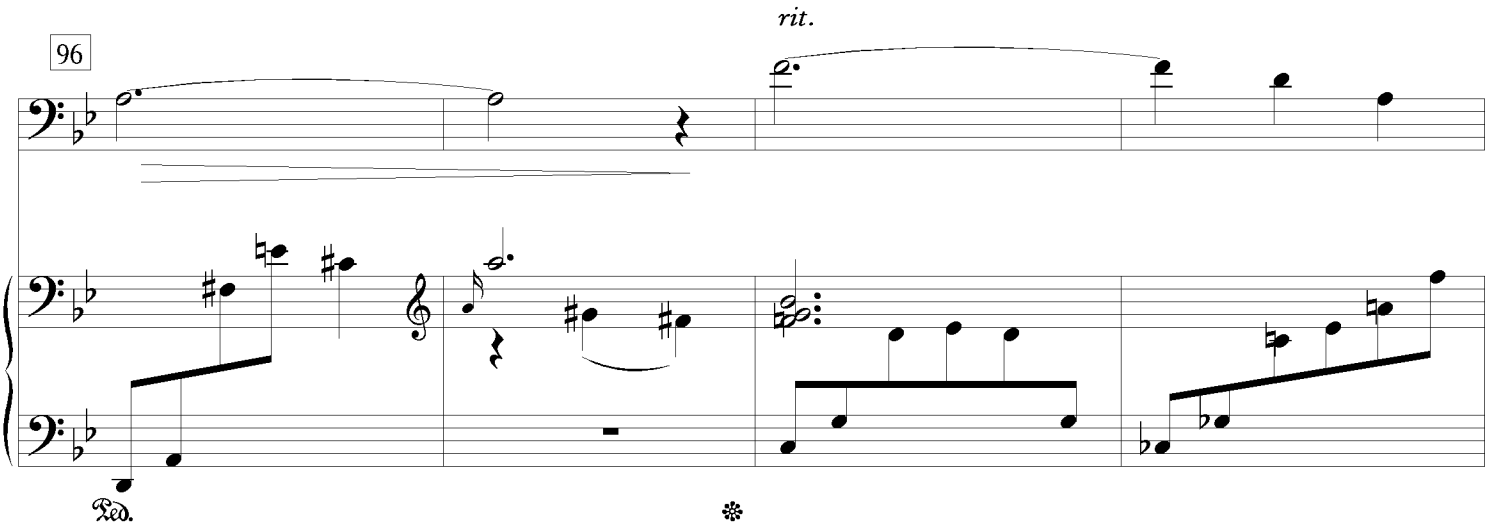
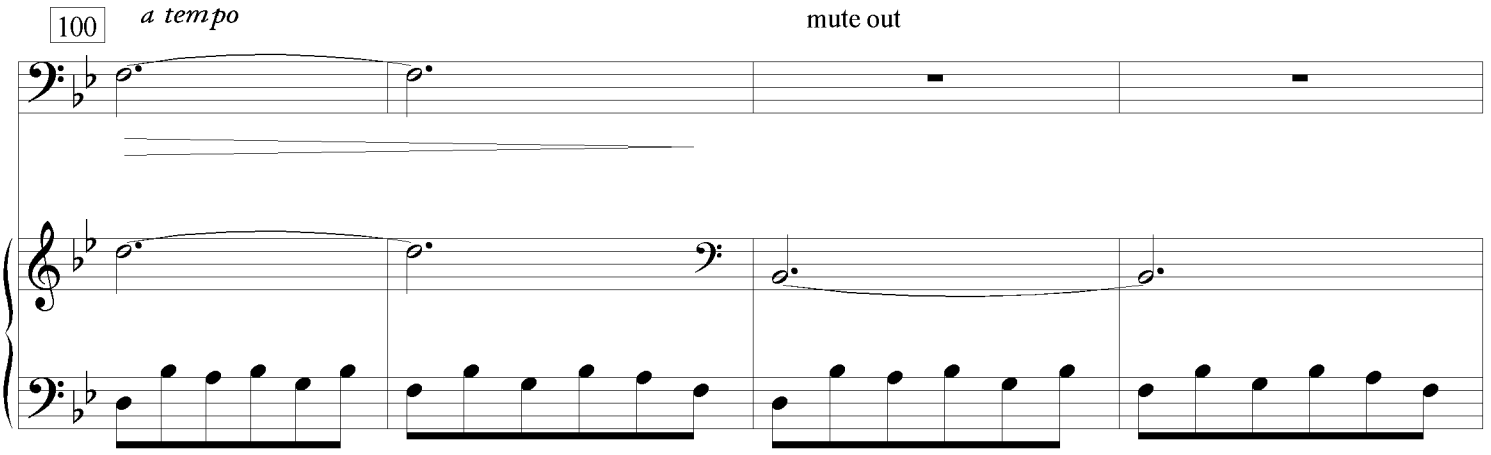
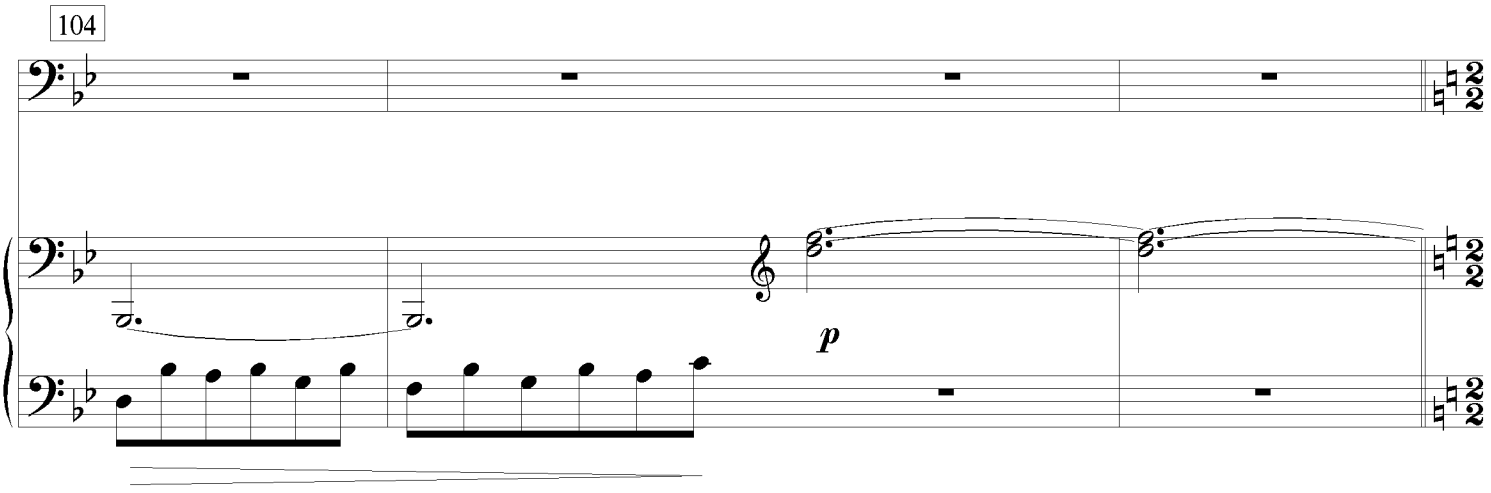
rit.
a tempo
mf
71
76
mf


poco stringendo
rit.
81
a tempo
86
mp
91
sf
Ped.


rit.
96
Ped.


100
a tempo
mute out


104
p

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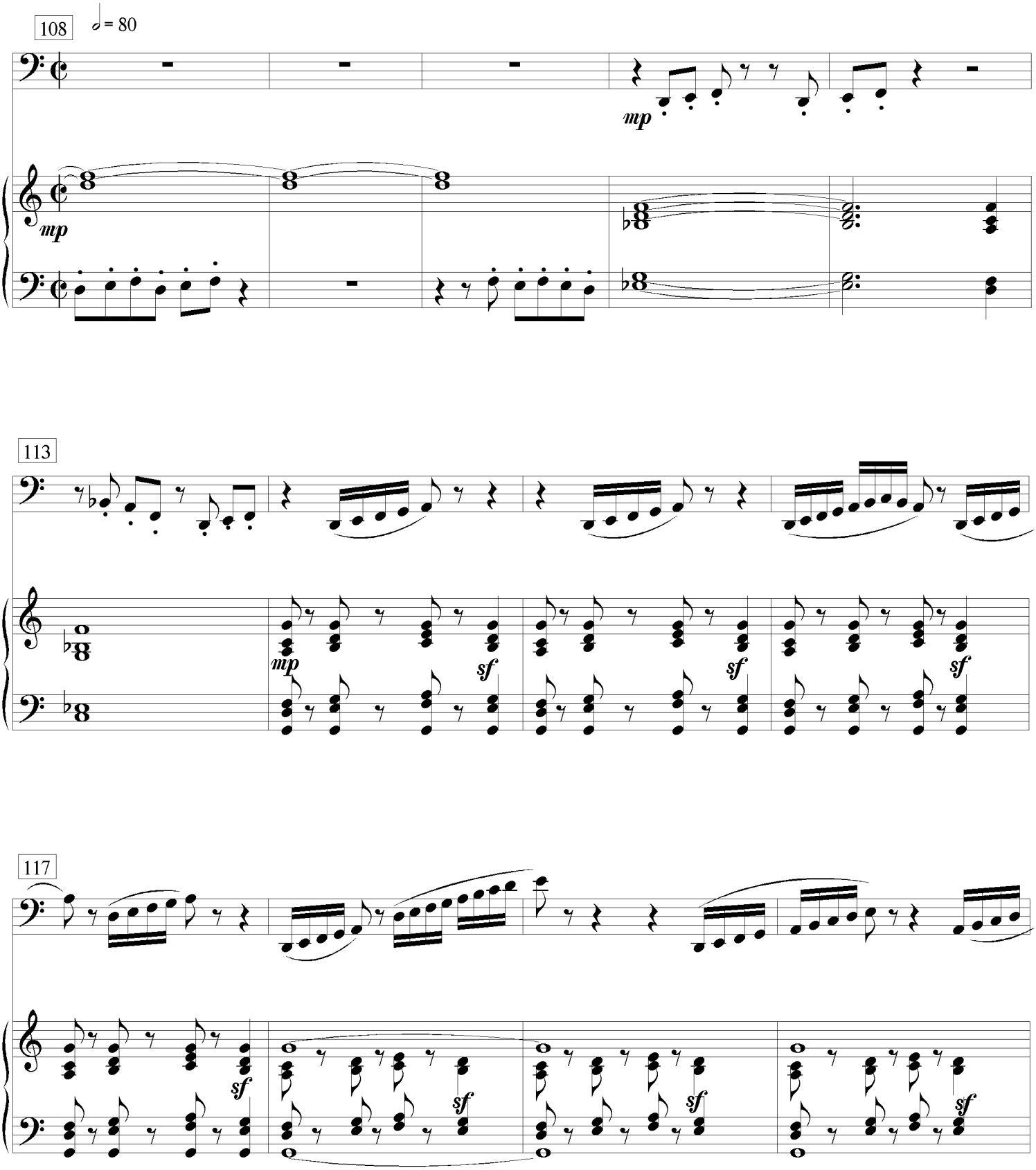

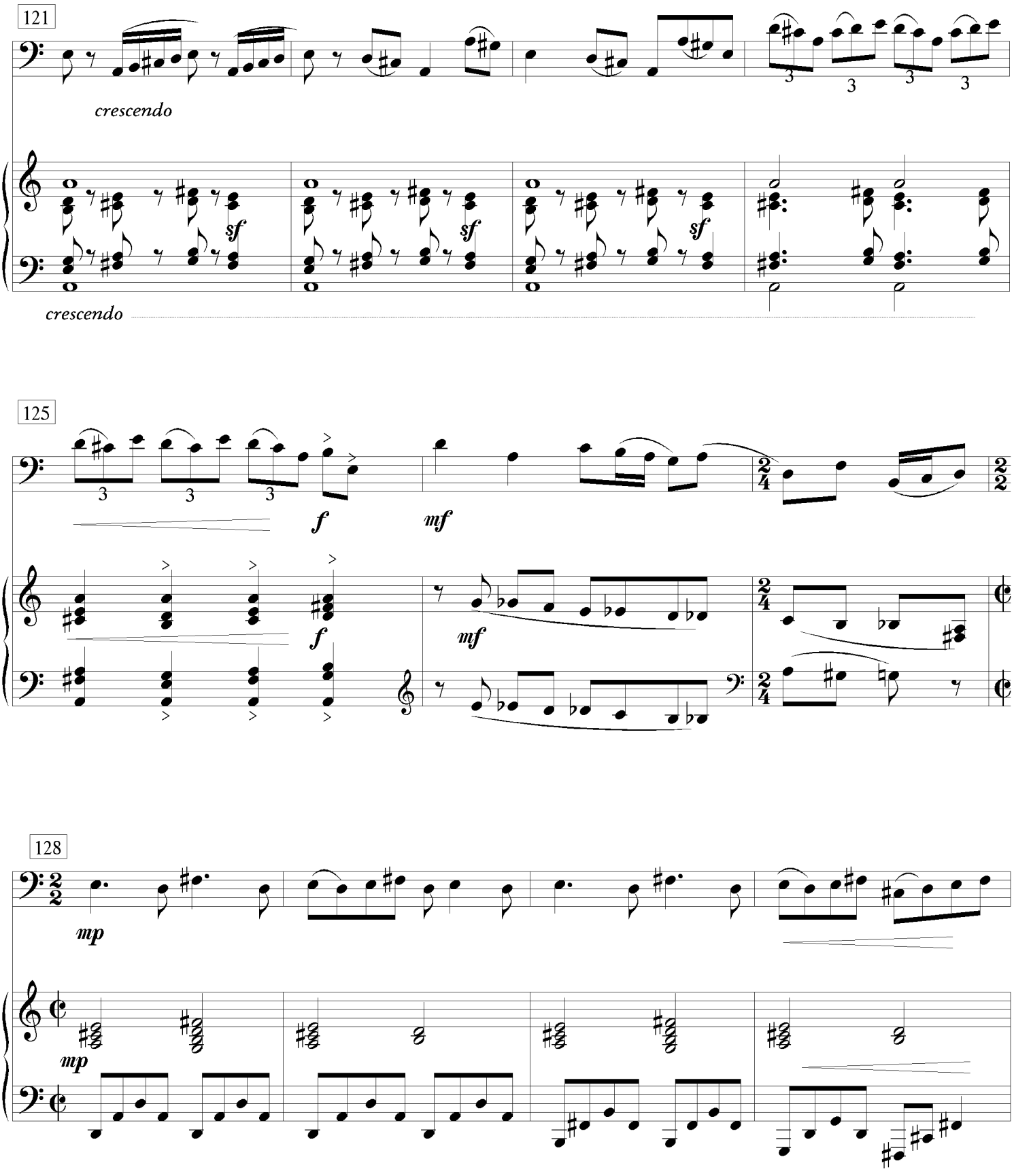
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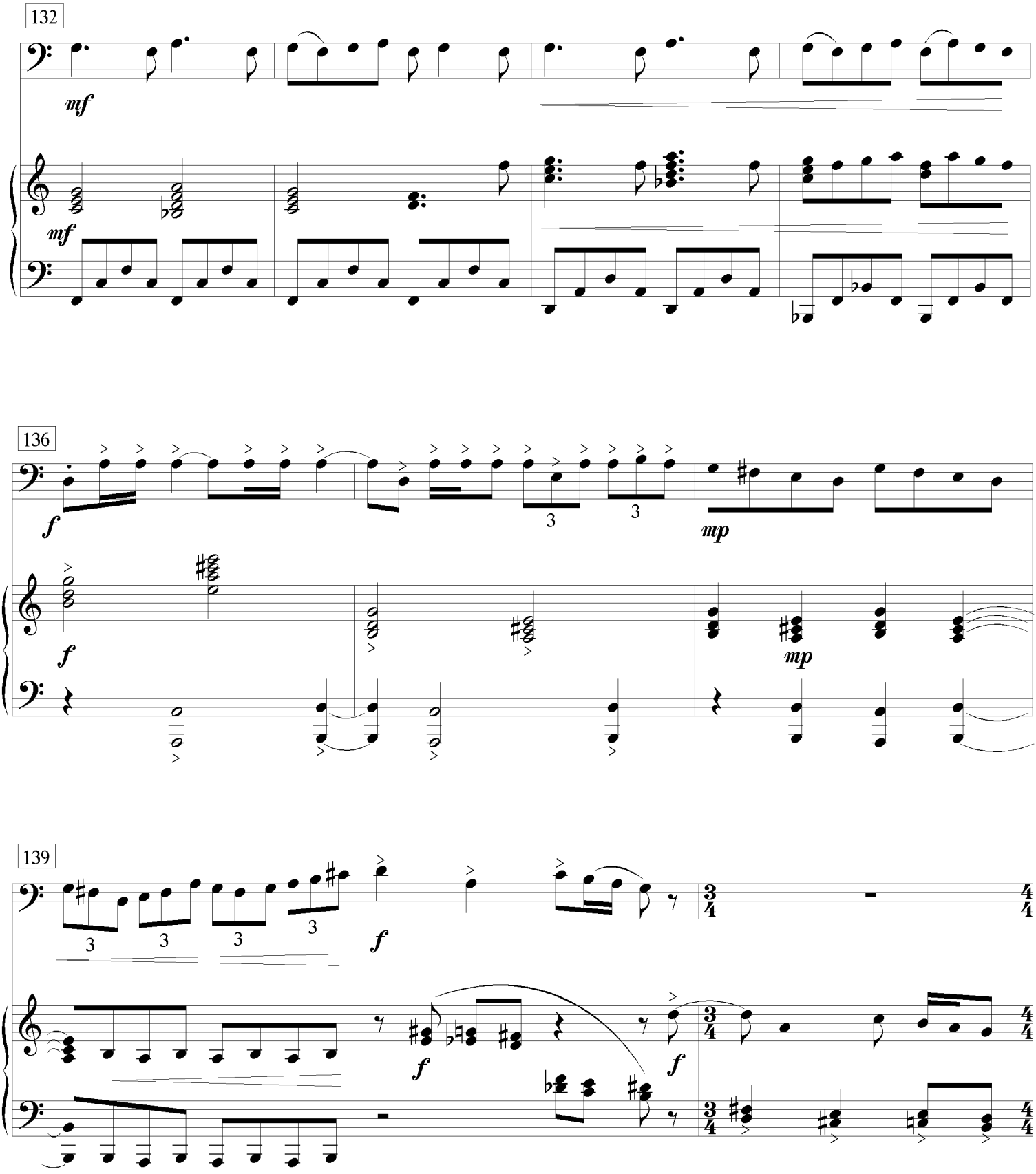
crescendo
sf
sf
sf
crescendo
125
f
mf
f
mf
128
mp
mp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mf
mf
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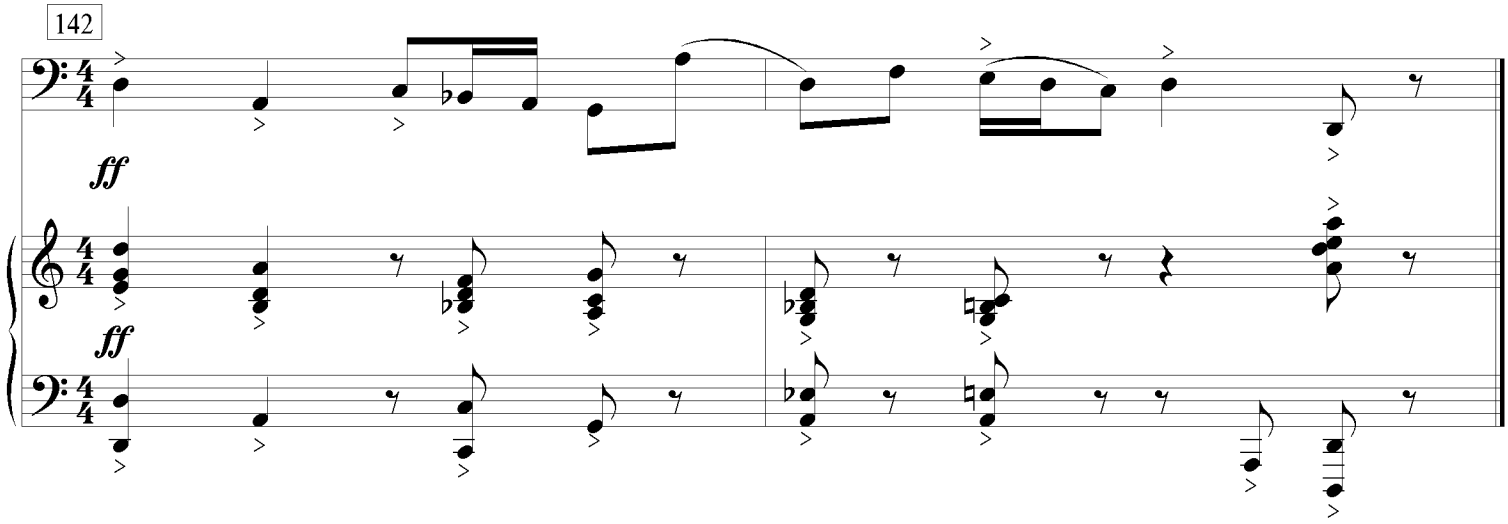
f
f
3/4
4/4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