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Commissioned by
Suzanne Shulman and Erica Goodman

The Rings

for flute and harp

Eric N. Robertson

with and based on poetry by
Gary Michael Dault

Harp and Flute Score

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The Rings

Music by Eric Robertson with Poetry by Gary Michael Dault

Program Notes by the Composer:

Suzanne Shulman asked me if I would write a work for flute and harp to celebrate her golden wedding anniversary. I agreed right away as she is such a wonderful performer and because the work was to be a duo-collaboration with Erica Goodman. Erica is my favorite harpist anywhere, and we have worked together for decades. I approached Gary Dault - artist and poet and my consistent collaborator – and asked for his poetic input. The result is the wonderful cycle of poems around marriage that became my inspiration for each musical movement.

1. **Flame**

As a Scot, the dance forms of the Strathspey and Reel have always fascinated me. "Shiva dances" took an odd cultural shift and became a "sultry Strathspey".

2. **Being Golden**

Here we have a clear day with a blue sky. Clouds pass briefly and all is calm again.

3. **Coming Around**

"The ring brings us round again" in the poem is represented by five two bar rising chord sequences. In the manner of a passacaglia, these ten bars are repeated five times in various guises, and are then rounded off with a peaceful four bar conclusion.

4. **Incantation**

A lifetime of making music in churches has left me with a love of the chant. In this piece, the incantation has no words, but sings within "orbits of language".

5. **Walking on Water**

The first time I heard a harp (apart from the Celtic culture) was in a school classroom, high in a stone turret, when my music teacher, Eric Reid, played for me Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* for Flute, Clarinet, Harp, and String Quartet on 12 inch 78 rpm record. What magic that sound created! Around the same time, I fell in love with the *Moldeau* movement from Smetana's *Má Vlast* and a trace of that piece appears here to suggest water.

6. **Seasons**

Suzanne and I share a favorite Robert Burns song, *Ae Fond Kiss*. In *Seasons*, Erica begins with a Celtic tune of my devising. The flute takes up this music while the harp plays the traditional Scottish tune Burns uses in his song. Then both tunes play together as a "conjugal spring" returning.

7. **Ringside**

In this movement, the spirit of Handel takes charge of "Married time". We then stray into strange territory, but step back for "the return match".

8. **A Geometry of Love (Bells)**

I have played for many, many hundreds of weddings in my life and always associate their culmination of the ceremony with the ringing of bells. I have an abiding interest in the art of change ringing, and this piece is based on a simple peal of six bells. Add that to my love of William Byrd's virginal piece, *The Bells*, and here you have *A Geometry of Love*.

The Rings

Poetry by Gary Michael Dault

1. **Flame**
Shiva dances in a circle of flames
but so, surely do we all,
joining with him to model
the wholeness of the universe
of which marriage is a miniature

2. **Being Golden**
The alchemy of marriage
lies in this: its poignancy
fuses into a golden ring
the base metals we were
before we met

3. **Coming Around**
How much we forget!
It's as if we sometimes need to forget.
But the ring that is marriage
brings us round again
and touches us with ourselves

4. **Incantation**
Husband and wife
converse in orbits of language.
If they are lucky, they stay spellbound
by the incantation of the rings

5. **Walking on Water**
A married couple walk on water.
Someone passing on an unmarried ship
throws them a life-saver,
to which they respond
with another smile for one another

6. **Seasons**
There is sometimes sadness
in marriage: a winter that cracks the ring.
But the conjugal spring always returns,
and the ring
warms and blooms again like cherry blossoms

7. **Ringside**
If ever the intimate man and woman
fall out of married time
they must both step back
inside the ring and breathe
their gratitude for the return match

8. **A Geometry of Love**
Marriage circles the square.
There is no geometry as insistent
as the proposition that describes
the daring trajectory of a loving couple

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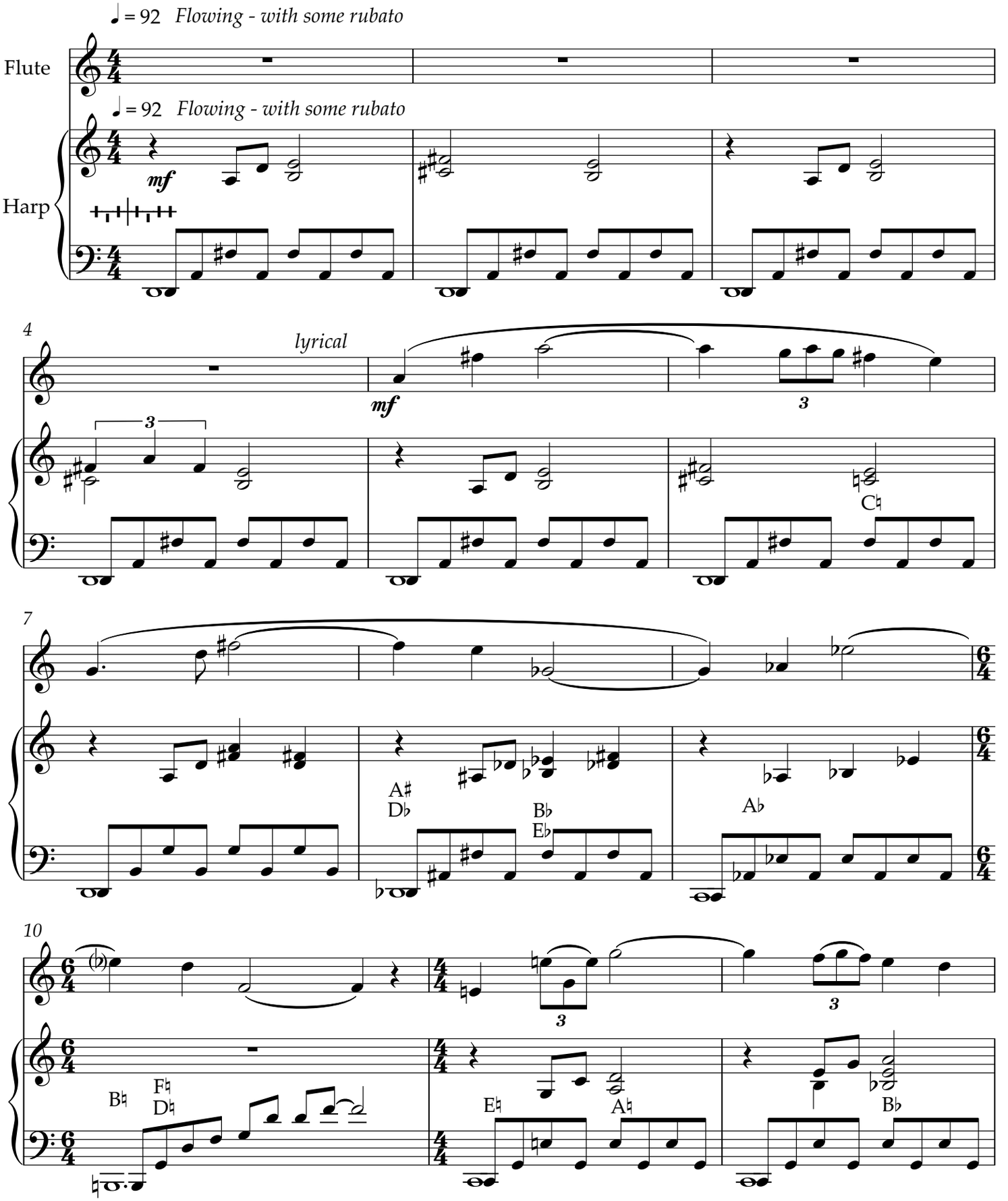
#2 Being Golden (Romanza)

The alchemy of marriage lies in this:
its poignancy fuses into a golden ring
the base metals we were before we met

Eric N. Robertson



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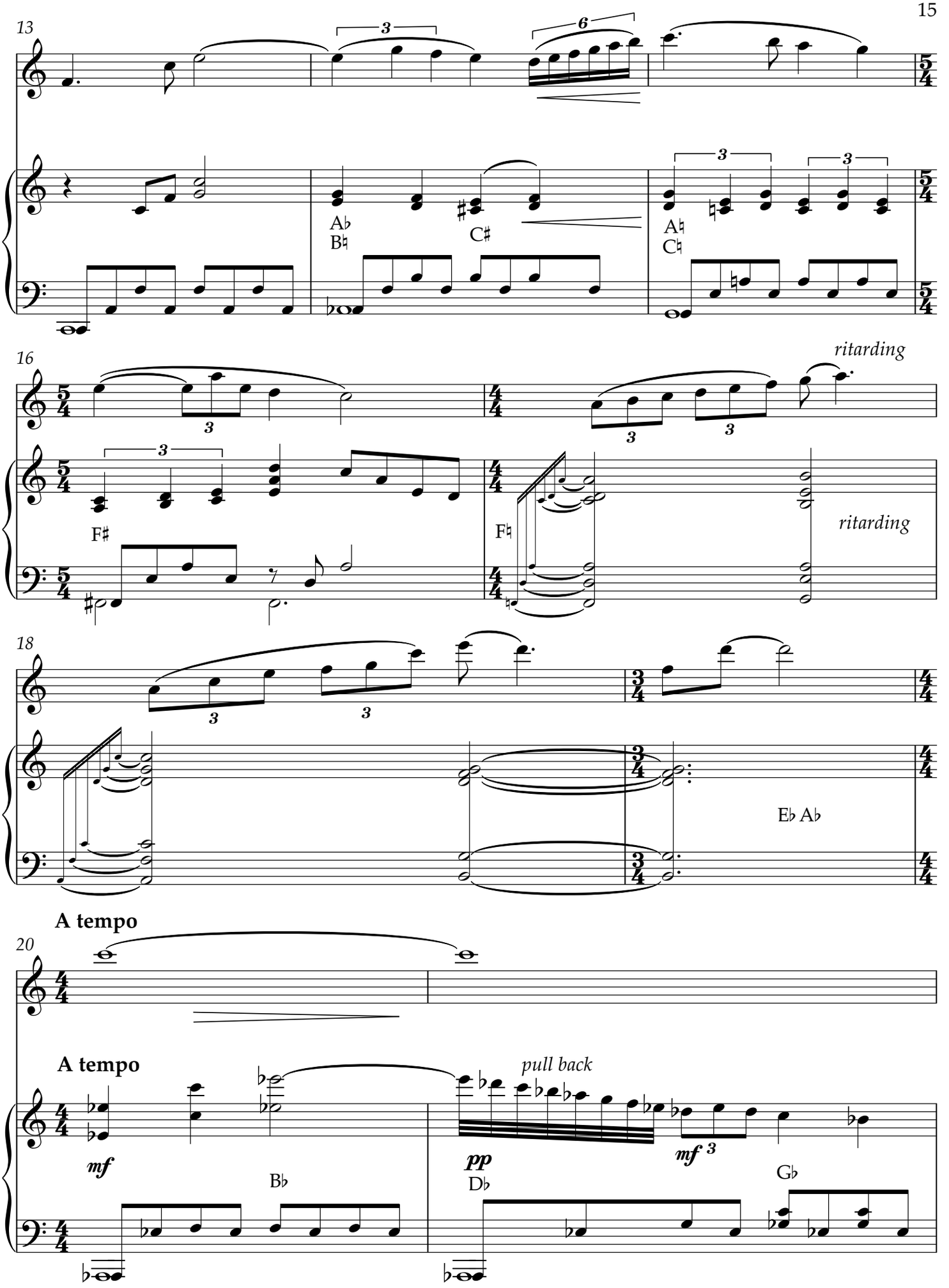
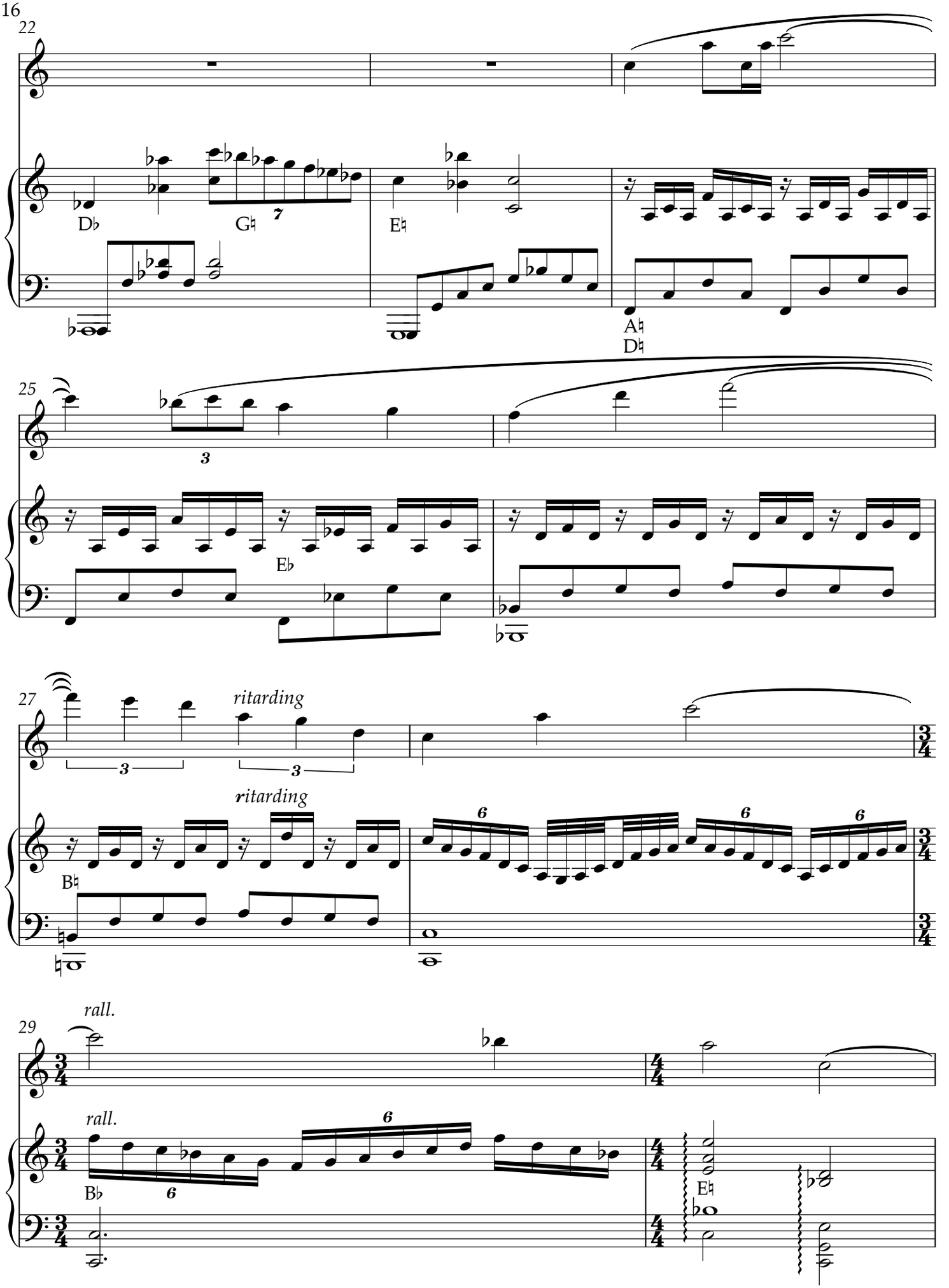
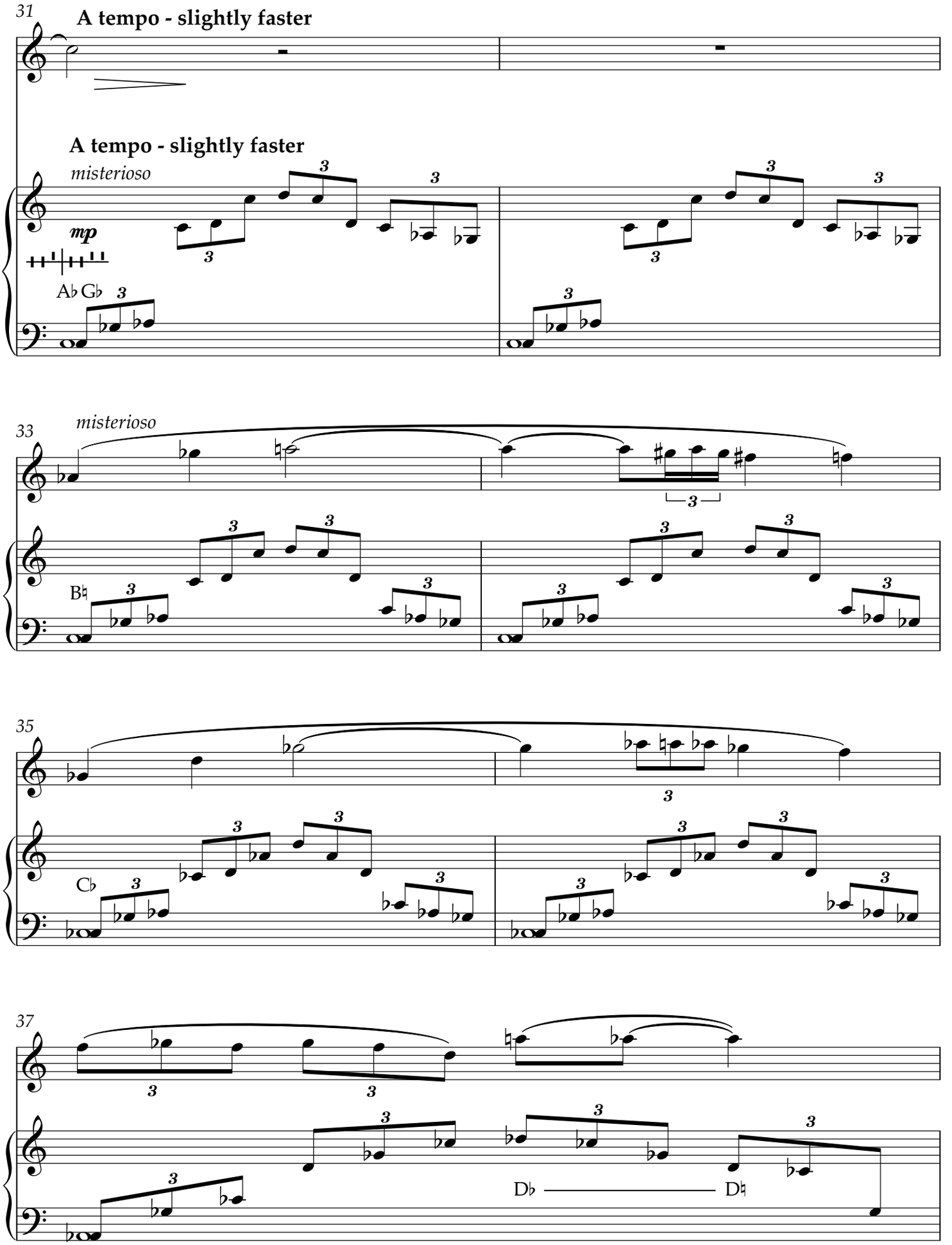
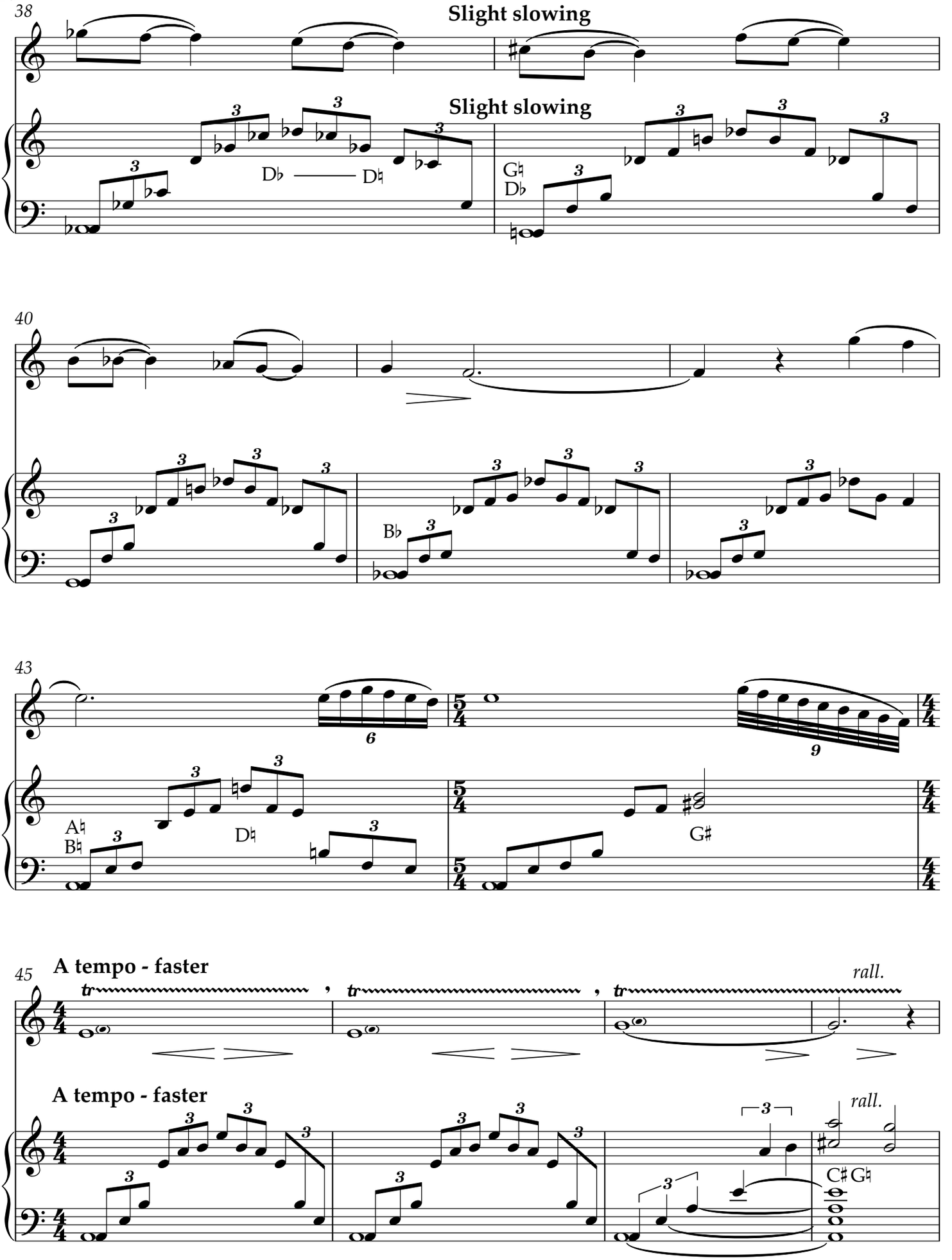
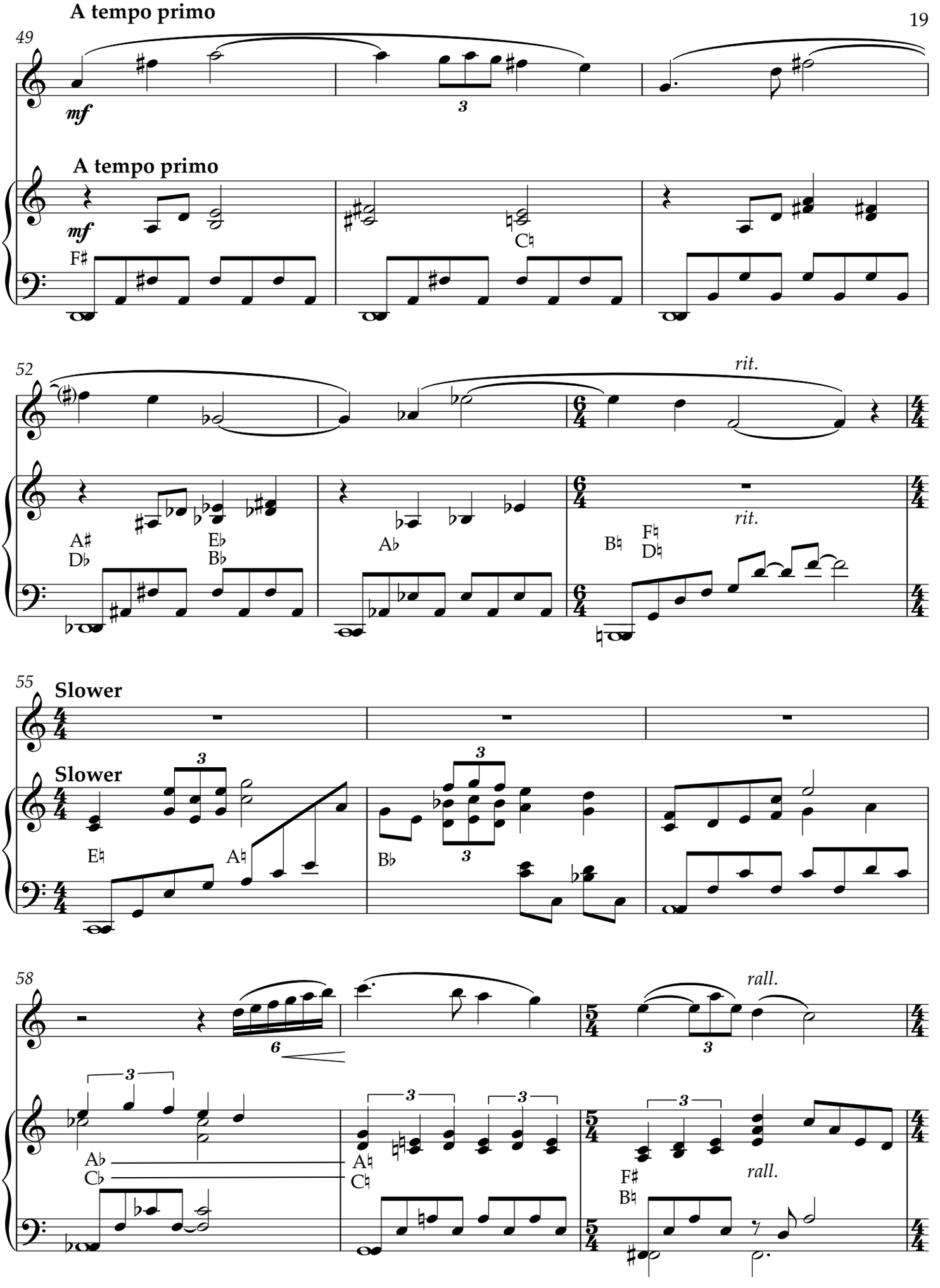
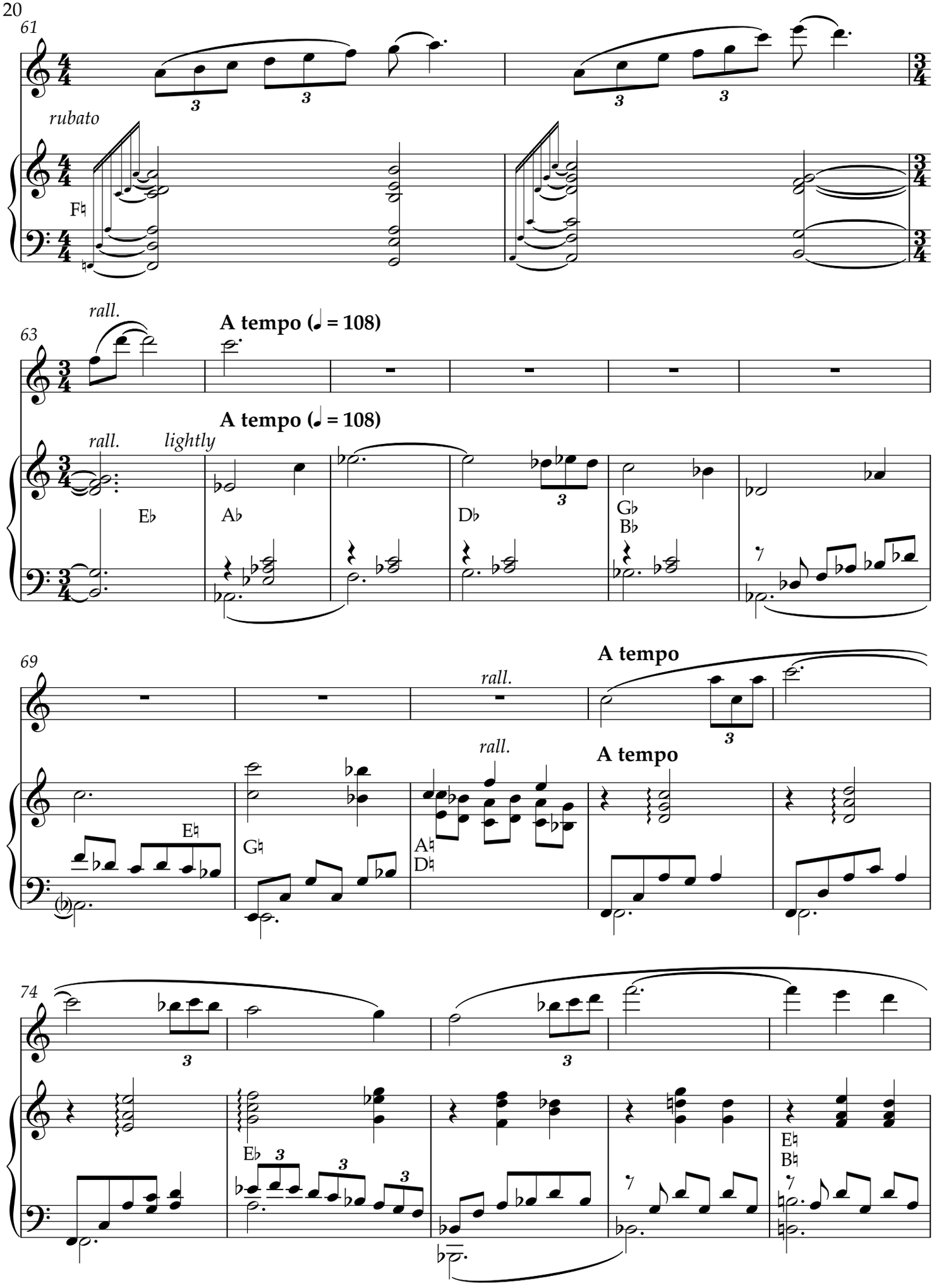

13
A♭
B♮
C♯
A♮
C♮
16
ritarding
F♯
F♮
ritarding
18
E♭ A♭
A tempo
20
A tempo
pull back
mf
B♭
pp
D♭
mf
G♭


22
25
27
ritarding
ritarding
29
rall.
rall.


31
A tempo - slightly faster
A tempo - slightly faster
misterioso
mp
33
misterioso
35
37
D♭
D♮


38
Slight slowing
Slight slowing
D♭ D♮
G♮ D♭
40
B♭
43
A♮ B♮
D♮
G♯
45
A tempo - faster
rall.
A tempo - faster
rall.
C♯ G♮


A tempo primo
49
mf
3
A tempo primo
mf
F♯
C♮
52
rit.
A♯
D♭
E♭
B♭
A♭
B♮
F♮
D♮
rit.
55
Slower
Slower
3
E♮
A♮
B♭
3
3
58
6
rall.
3
A♭
C♭
A♮
C♮
3
3
3
F♯
B♮
rall.


61
rubato
F♮
63
rall.
A tempo (♩ = 108)
rall.
lightly
A tempo (♩ = 108)
E♭
A♭
D♭
G♭
B♭
69
rall.
A tempo
rall.
A tempo
E♮
G♮
A♮
D♮
74
E♭
E♮
B♮

79

rall.

rall.

B♭

84

Slow (♩ = 69) - rubato

3

3

Slow (♩ = 69) - rubato

mf

A♭

E♭
B♮

G♭
B♭

A♮

86

Fine

mp

A♭
D♭

D♮

G♮ A♮

rubato

Fine

pp

(Approx. 4'00")

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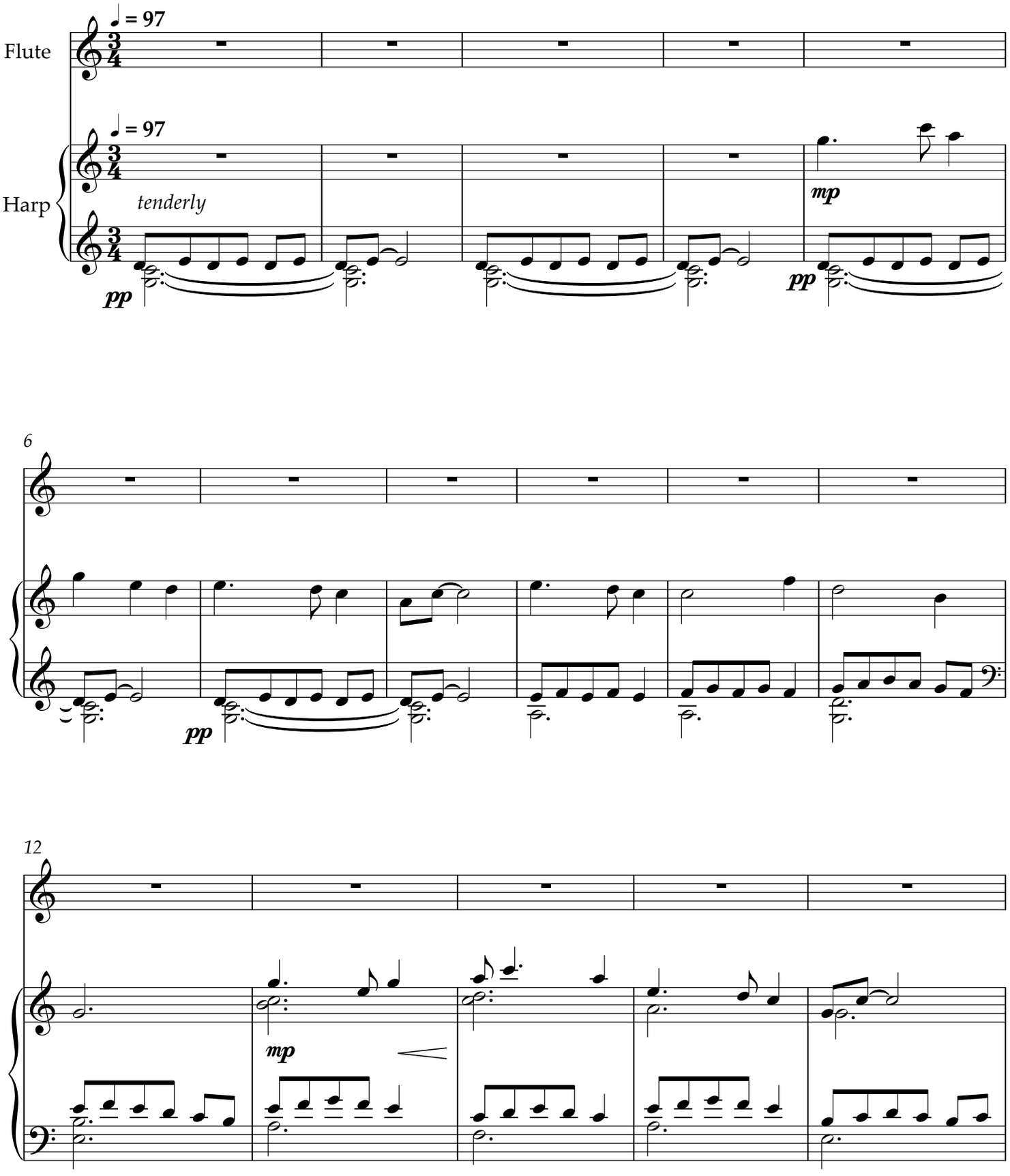
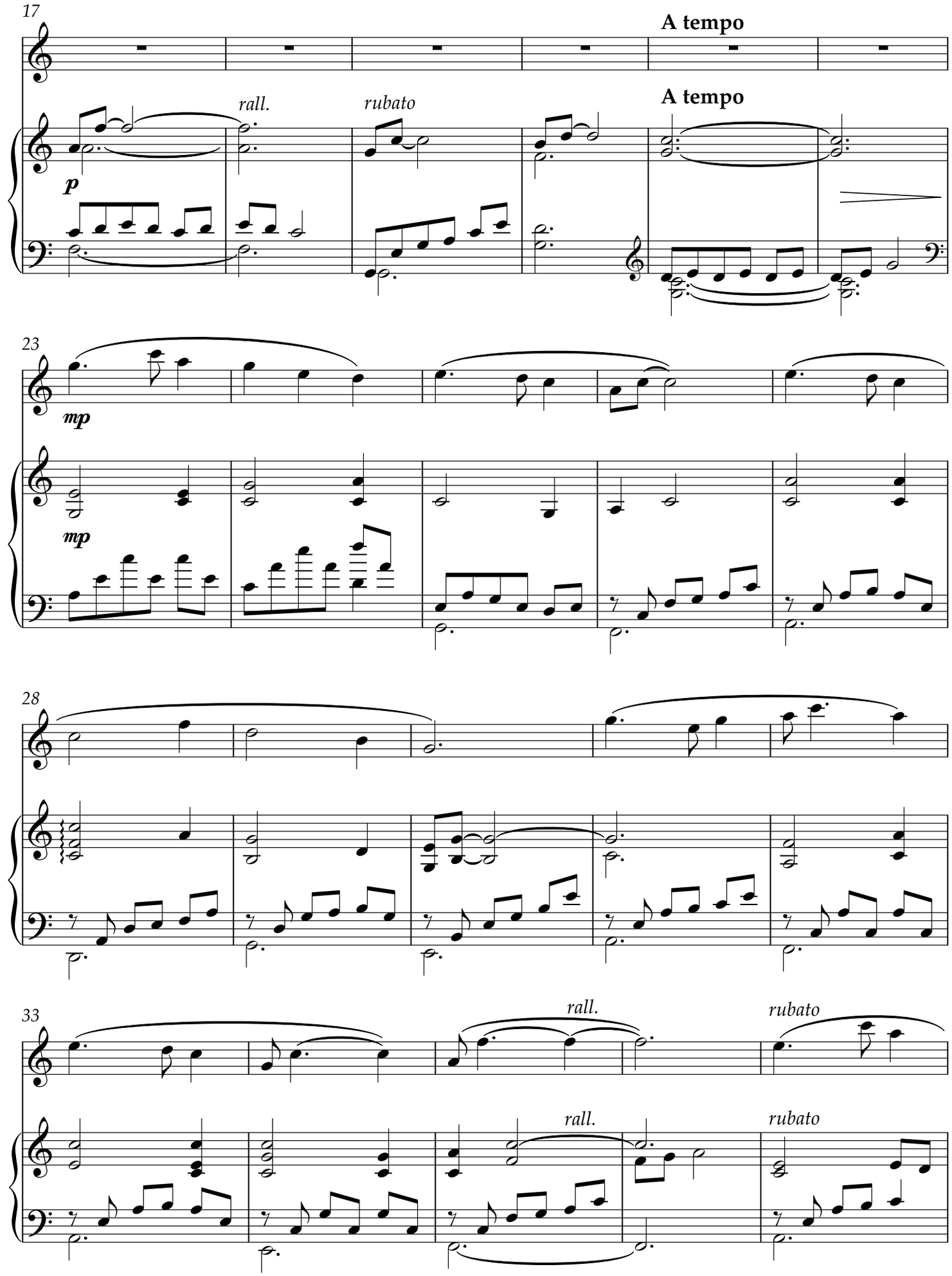
#6 Seasons (Ae Fond Kiss)

There is sometimes sadness
in marriage: a winter that cracks the ring.
But the conjugal spring always returns,
and the ring warms and blooms again like cherry blossoms

Eric N. Robertson




17
A tempo
rall.
rubato
A tempo
p
23
mp
mp
28
33
rall.
rubato
rall.
rubato

38

A tempo

p

A tempo

43

Slower

Slower

pp

46

Fine

Fine

ppp

(Approx. 2'00")

** Repeats are possible from the end of bar 42 to bar 5.*
Or alternatively, from the end of bar 42 to bar 21.

#7 Ringside

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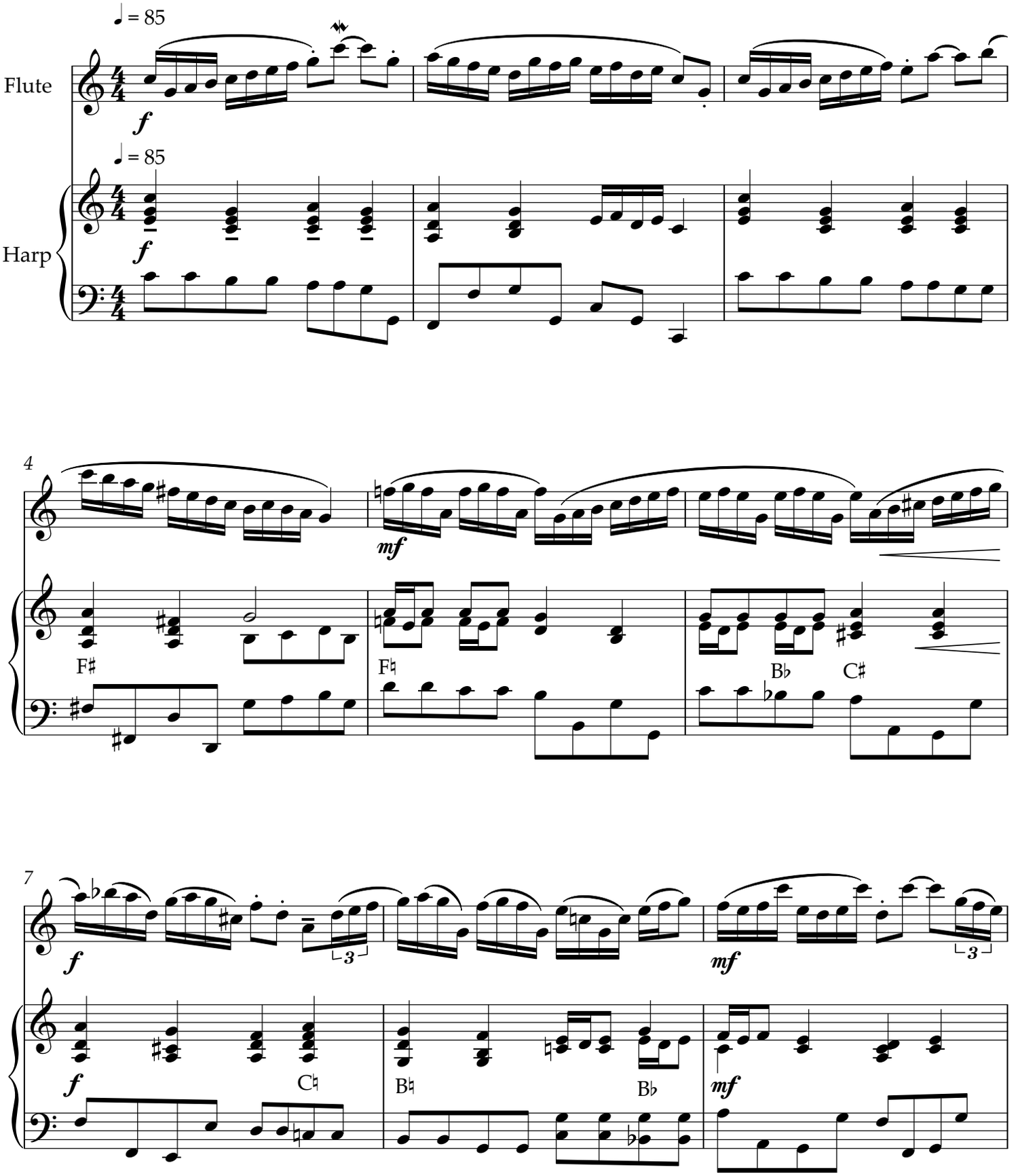
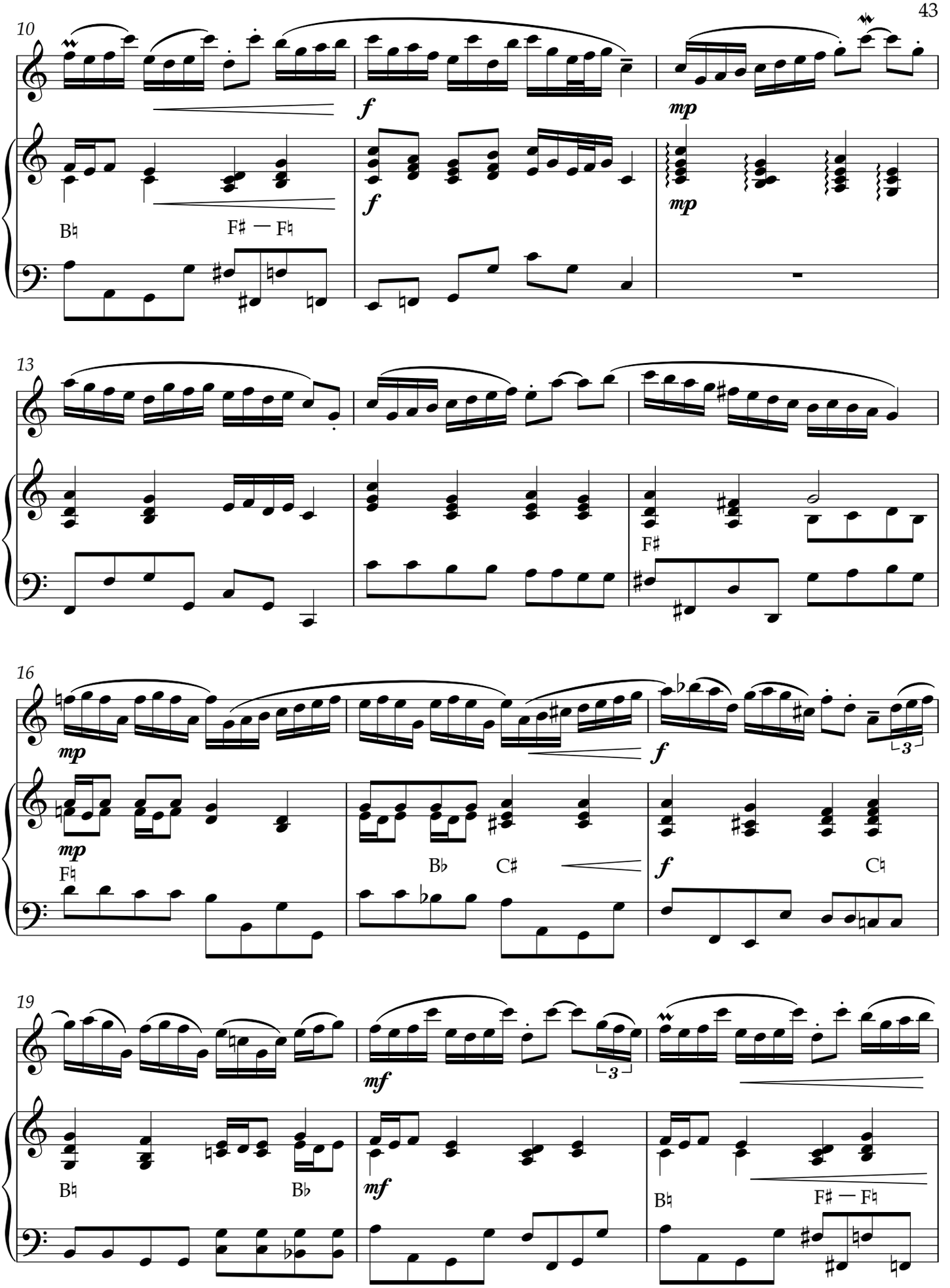
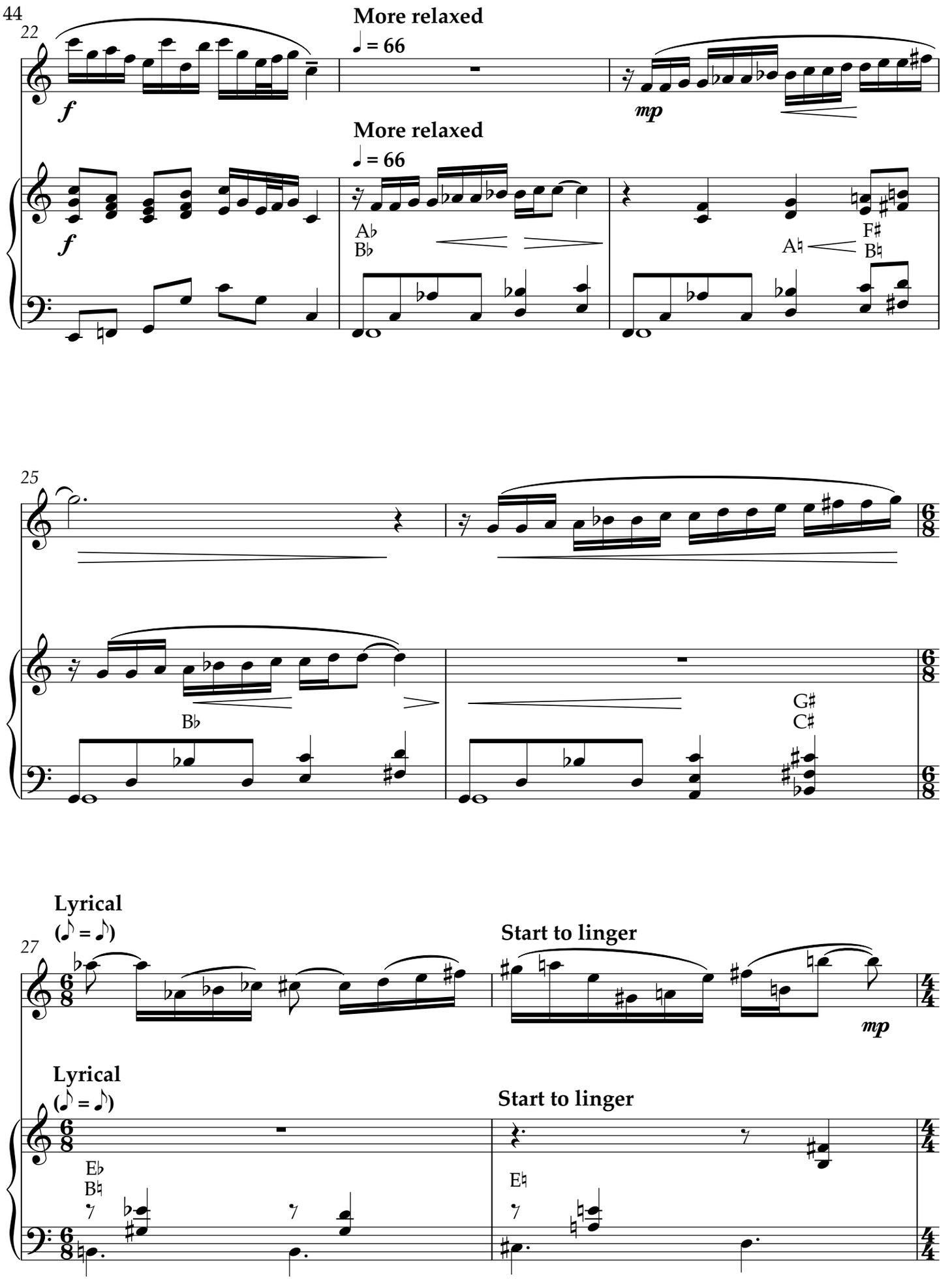
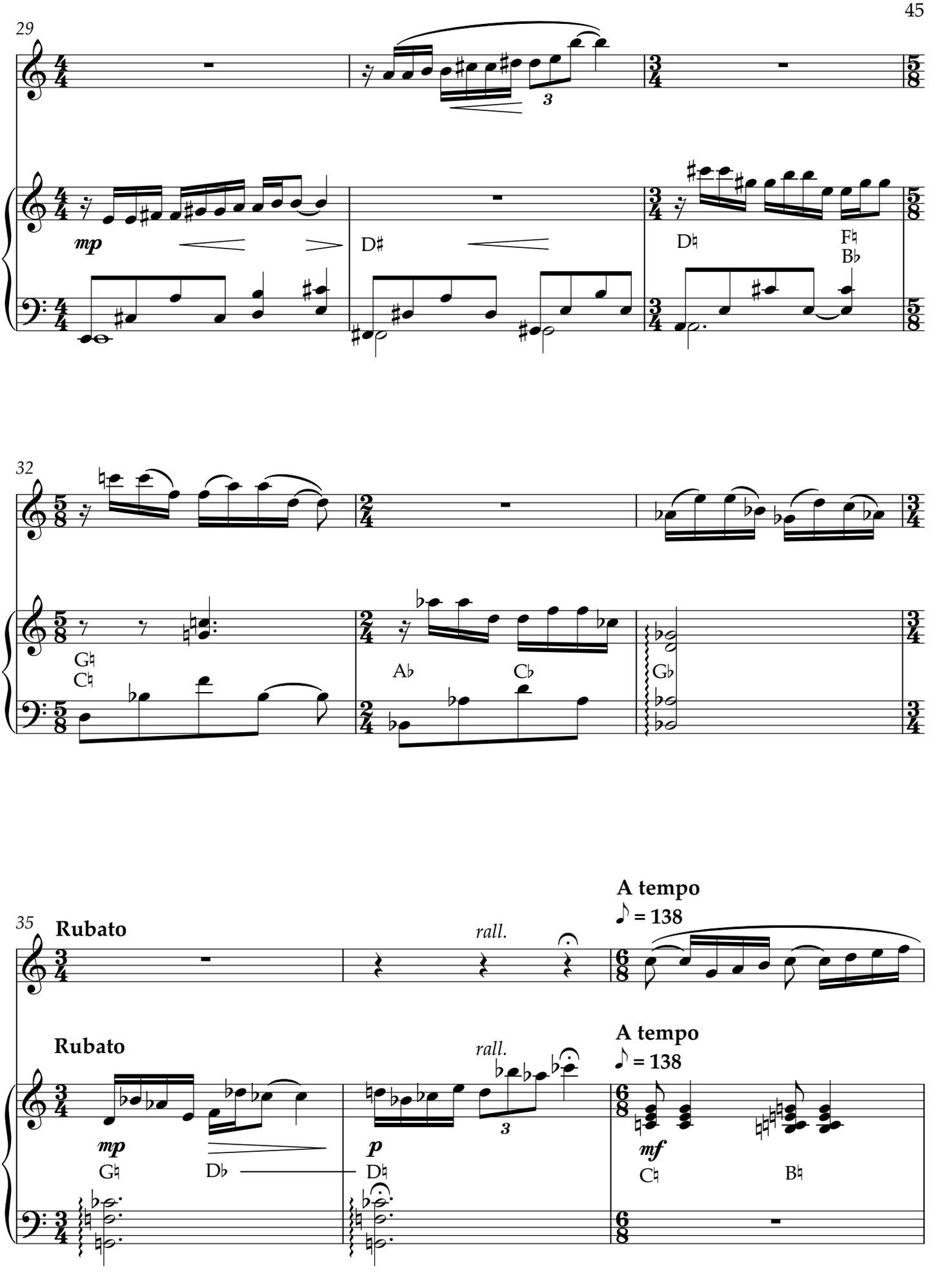
If ever the intimate man and woman
fall out of married time
they must both step back
inside the ring and breathe
their gratitude for the return match

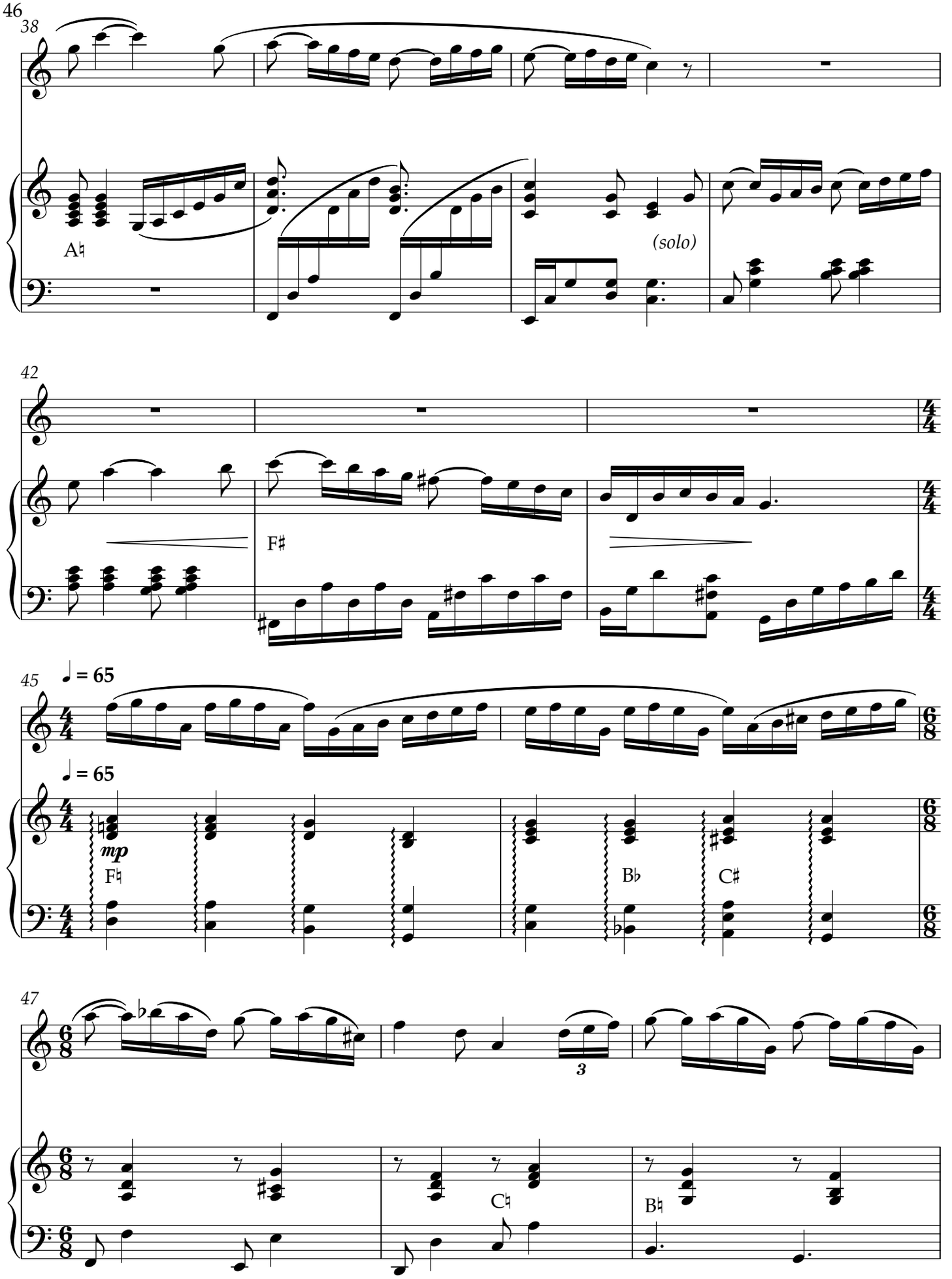
Eric N. Robertson

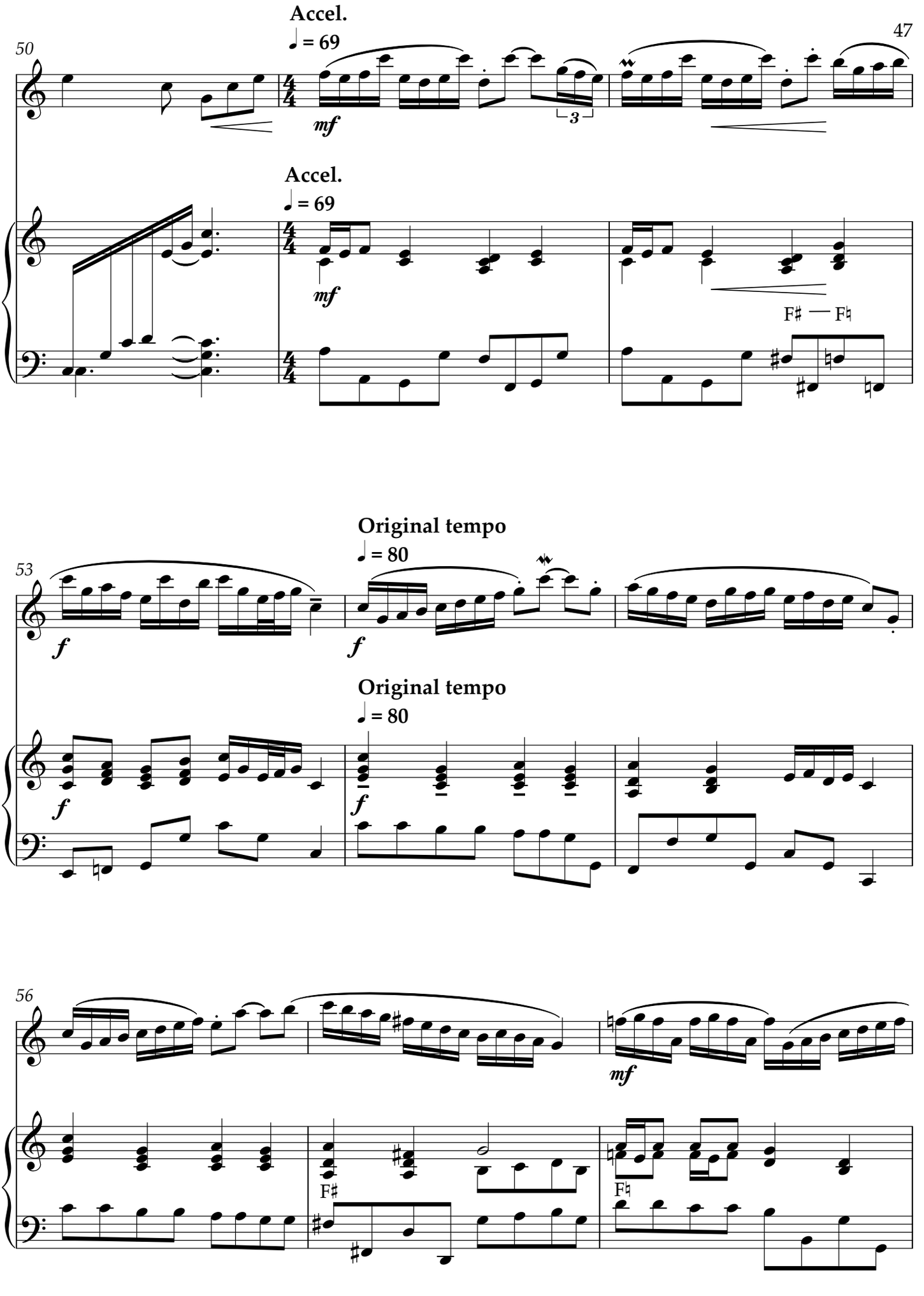


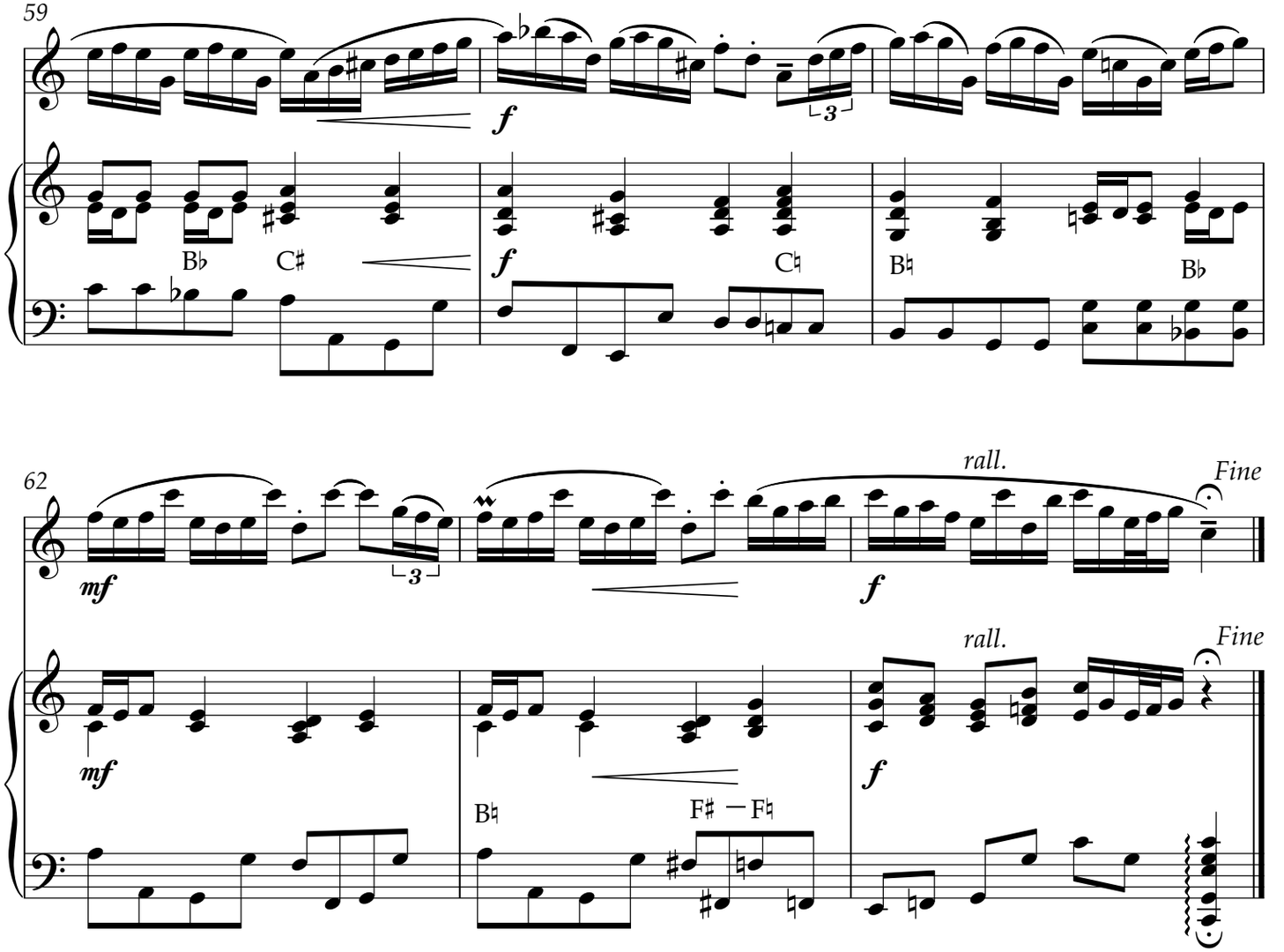

10
f
mp
B♮
F♯ — F♮
13
F♯
16
mp
mp
F♮
B♭
C♯
f
f
C♮
3
19
mf
mf
B♮
B♭
B♮
F♯ — F♮


22
More relaxed
♩ = 66
f
mp
More relaxed
♩ = 66
f
A♭
B♭
A♮
F♯
B♮
25
B♭
G♯
C♯
Lyrical
(♪ = ♪)
27
Start to linger
mp
Lyrical
(♪ = ♪)
Start to linger
E♭
B♮
E♮


29
mp
D♯
D♮
F♮
B♭
32
G♮
C♮
A♭
C♭
G♭
35
Rubato
rall.
A tempo
♪ = 138
Rubato
rall.
A tempo
♪ = 138
mp
G♮
D♭
p
D♮
mf
C♮
B♮


38
A♮
(solo)
42
F♯
45
♩ = 65
♩ = 65
mp
F♮
B♭
C♯
47
3
C♮
B♮


50
Accel.
♩ = 69
mf
3
Accel.
♩ = 69
mf
F♯ — F♮
53
Original tempo
♩ = 80
f
f
Original tempo
♩ = 80
f
f
56
mf
F♯
F♮



(Approx. 3′00″)

#8 A Geometry of Love (Bells)

Marriage circles the square.
There is no geometry as insistent
as the proposition that describes
the daring trajectory of a loving couple

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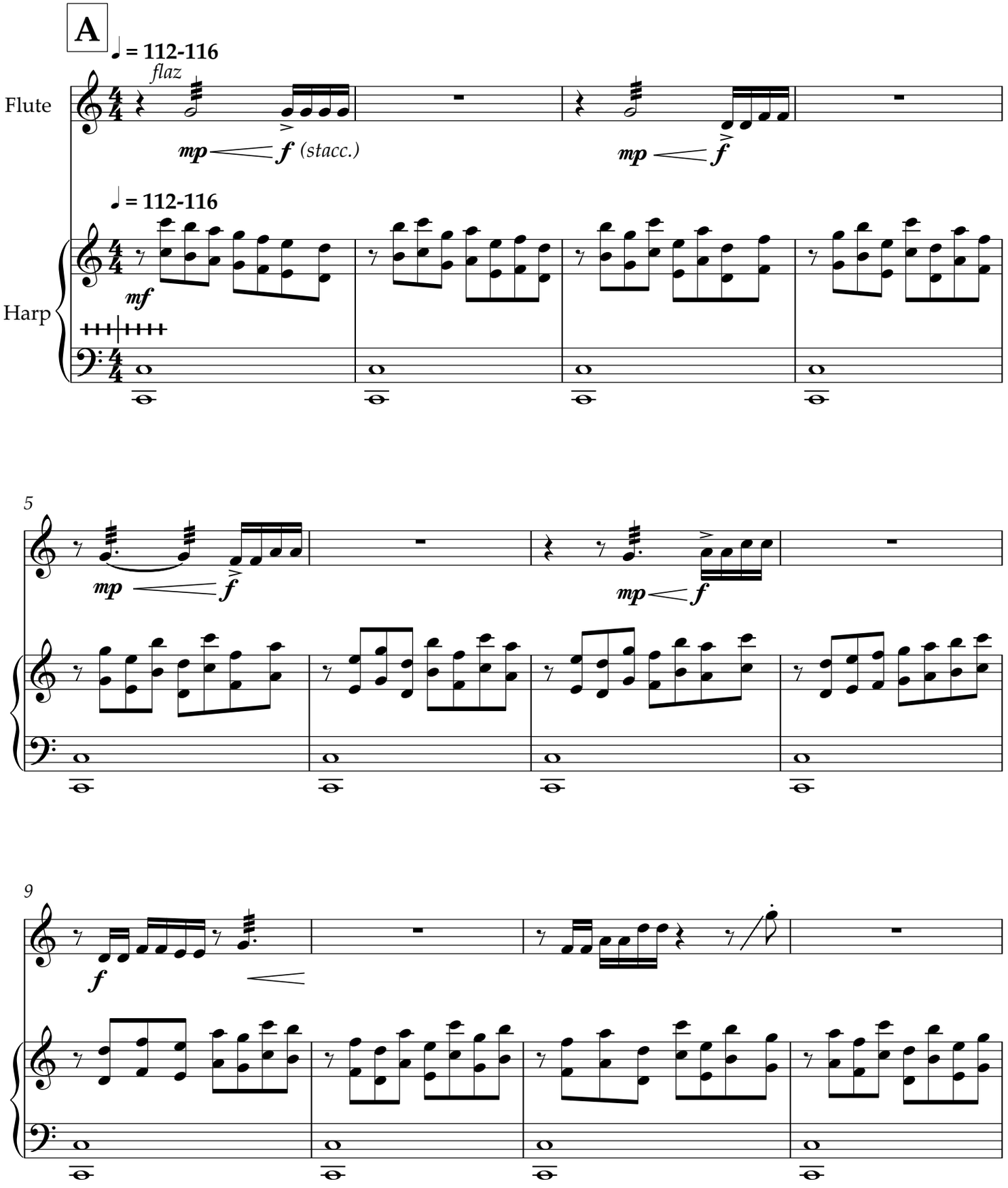
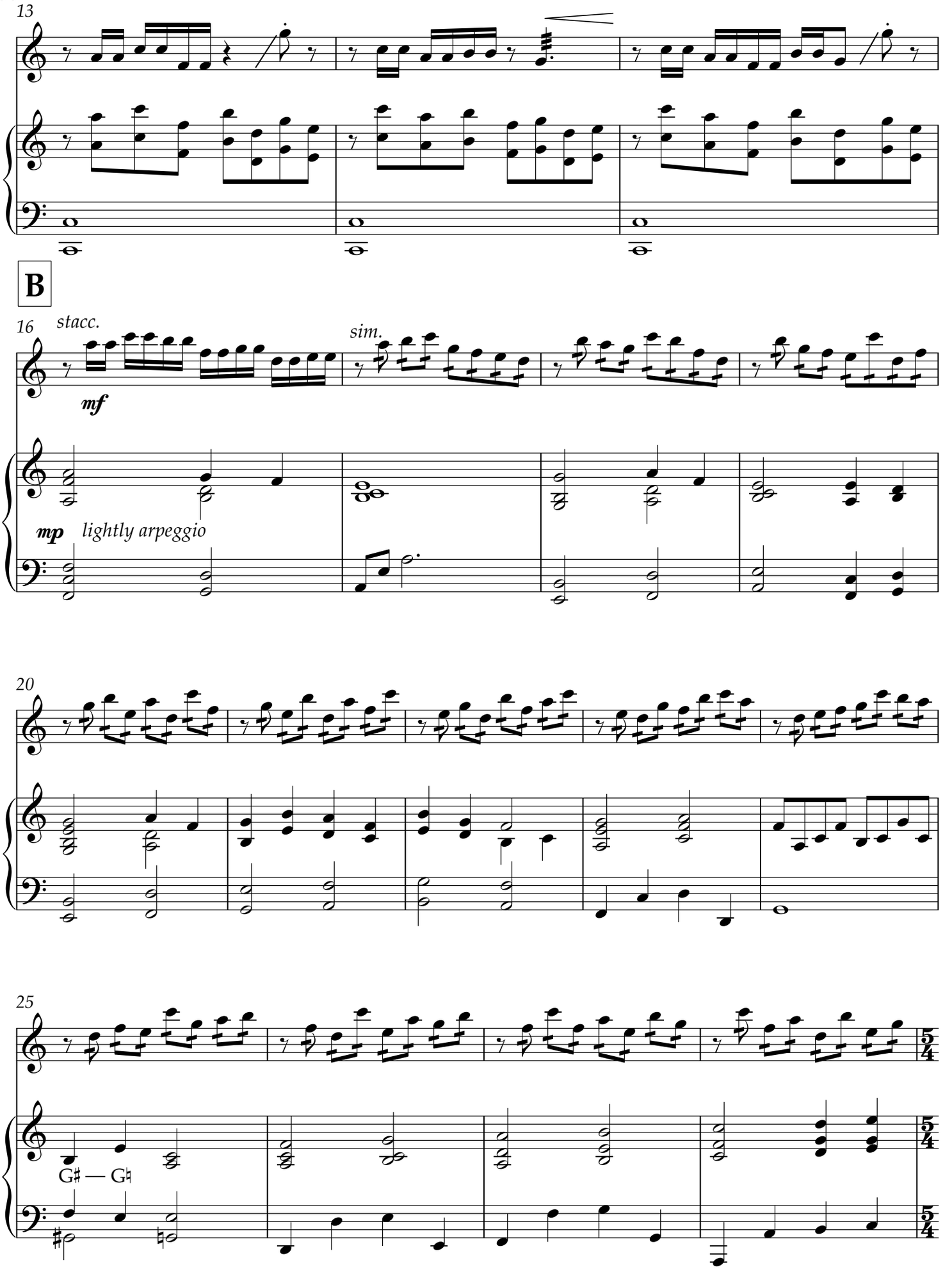
Eric N. Robertson




13
B
16
stacc.
sim.
mf
mp
lightly arpeggio
20
25
G♯ — G♮

C

29

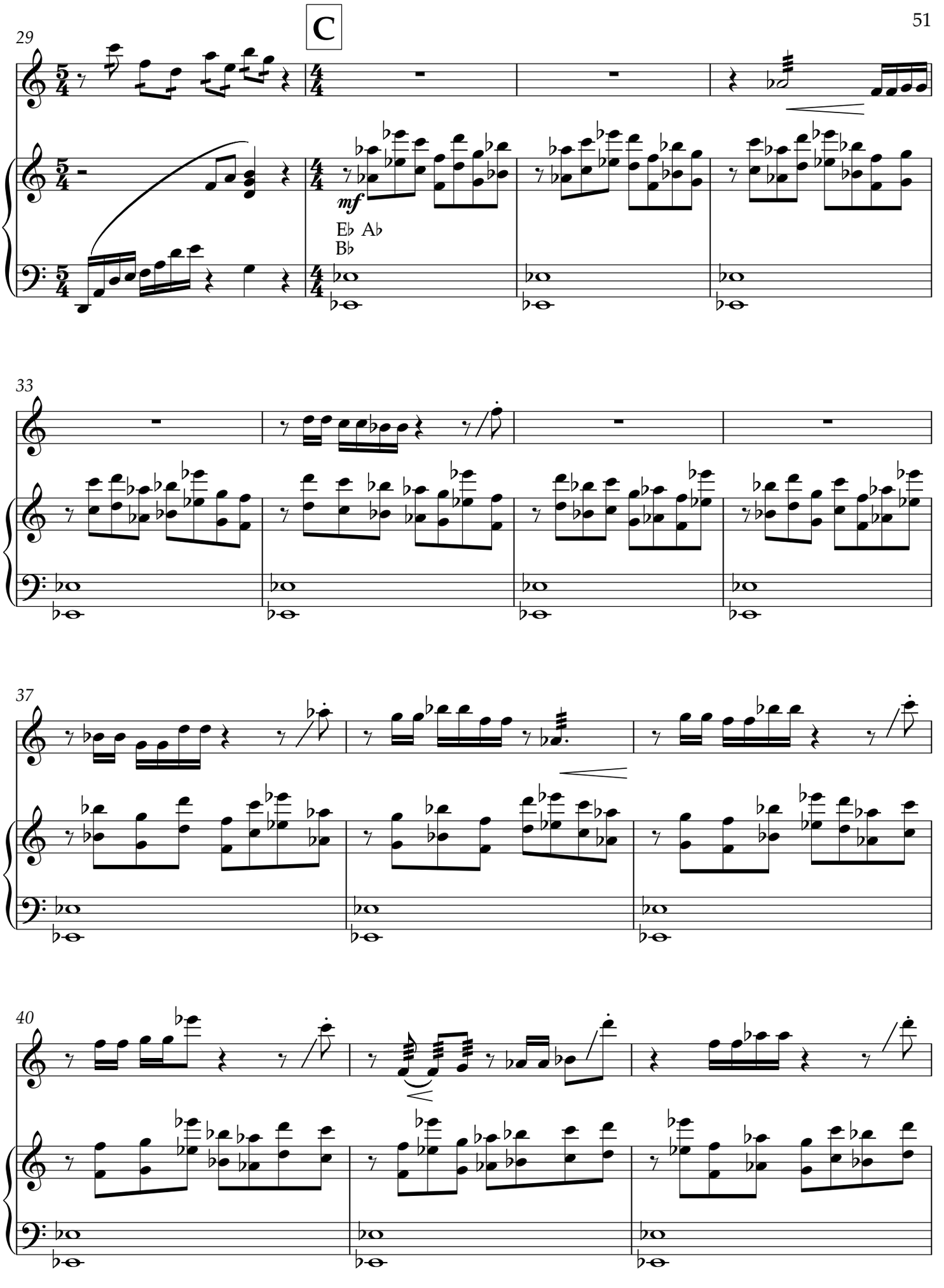
mf

E♭ A♭
B♭

33

37

40



D

43

mp

lightly arpeggio

mp A♮ E♮ B♮

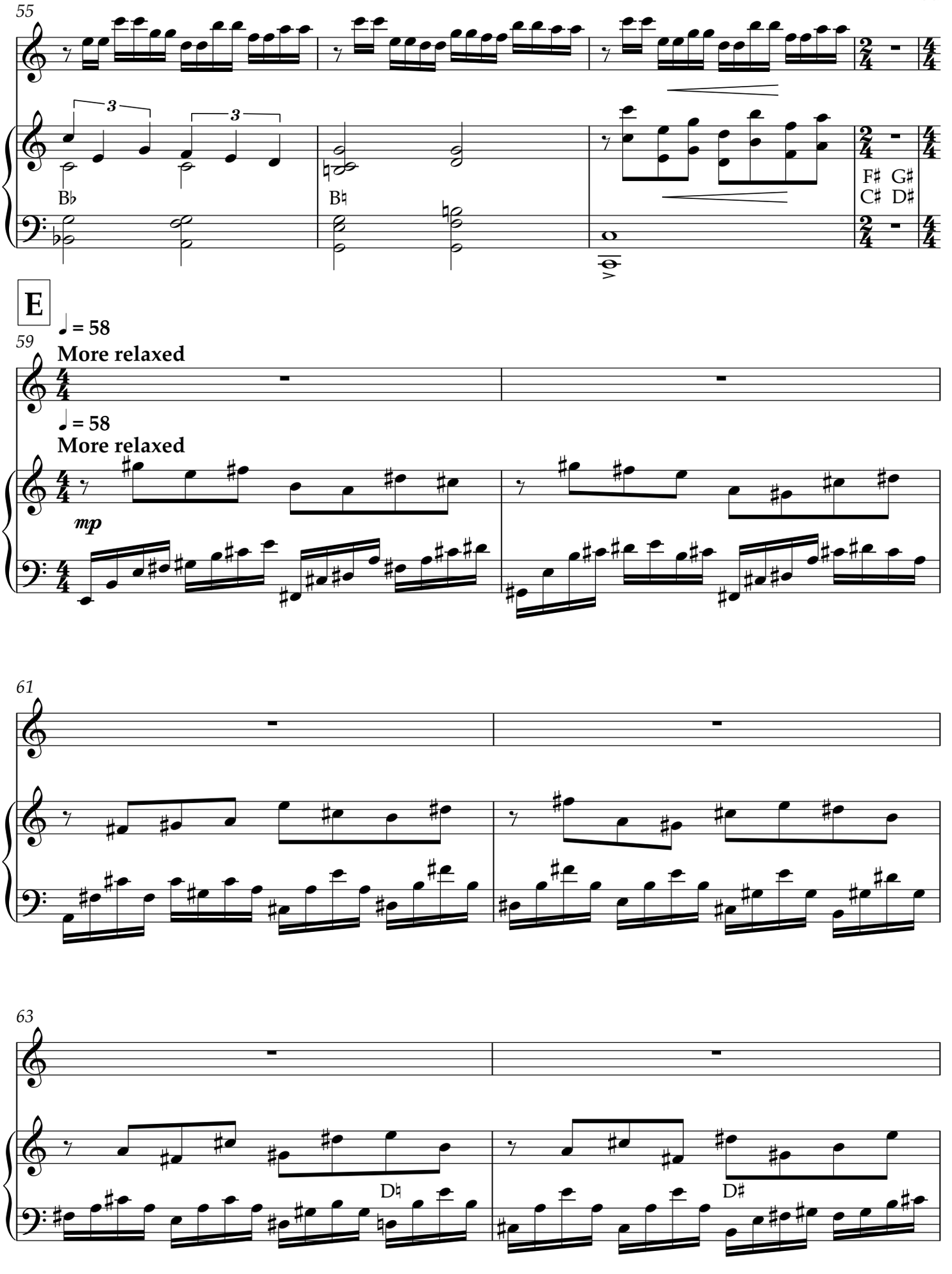
46

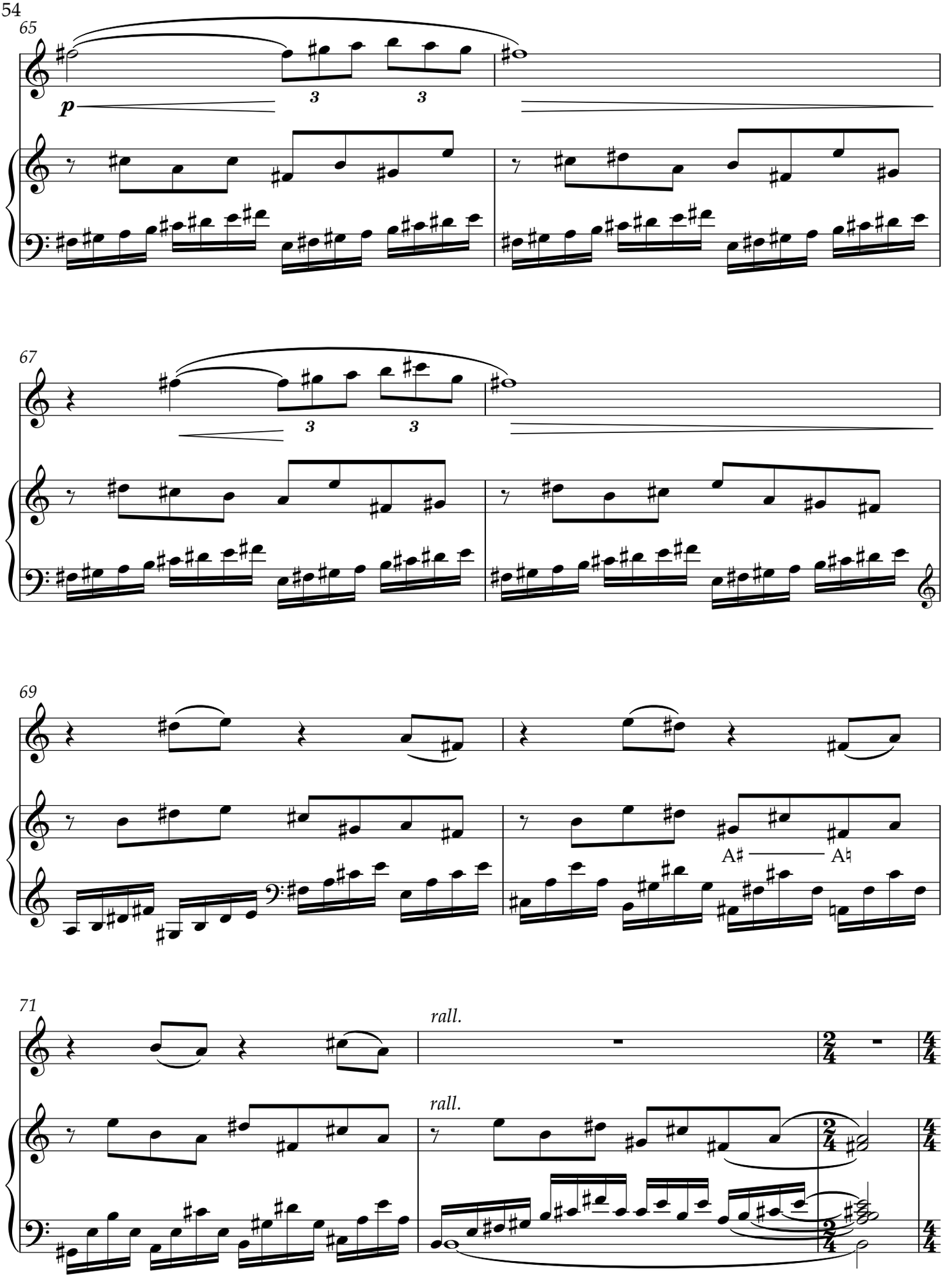
3

49

52

3 3 3 3


55
3
3
B♭
B♮
F♯ G♯
C♯ D♯
E
♩ = 58
More relaxed
59
♩ = 58
More relaxed
mp
61
63
D♮
D♯


65
p
3
3
67
3
3
69
A♯
A♮
71
rall.
rall.
2/4
4/4

F

74

♩ = 63
Largo, lyrical

mf

3

♩ = 63
Largo, lyrical

G♮ C♮

mp

D♮

F♮

78

A tempo

A tempo

10

G

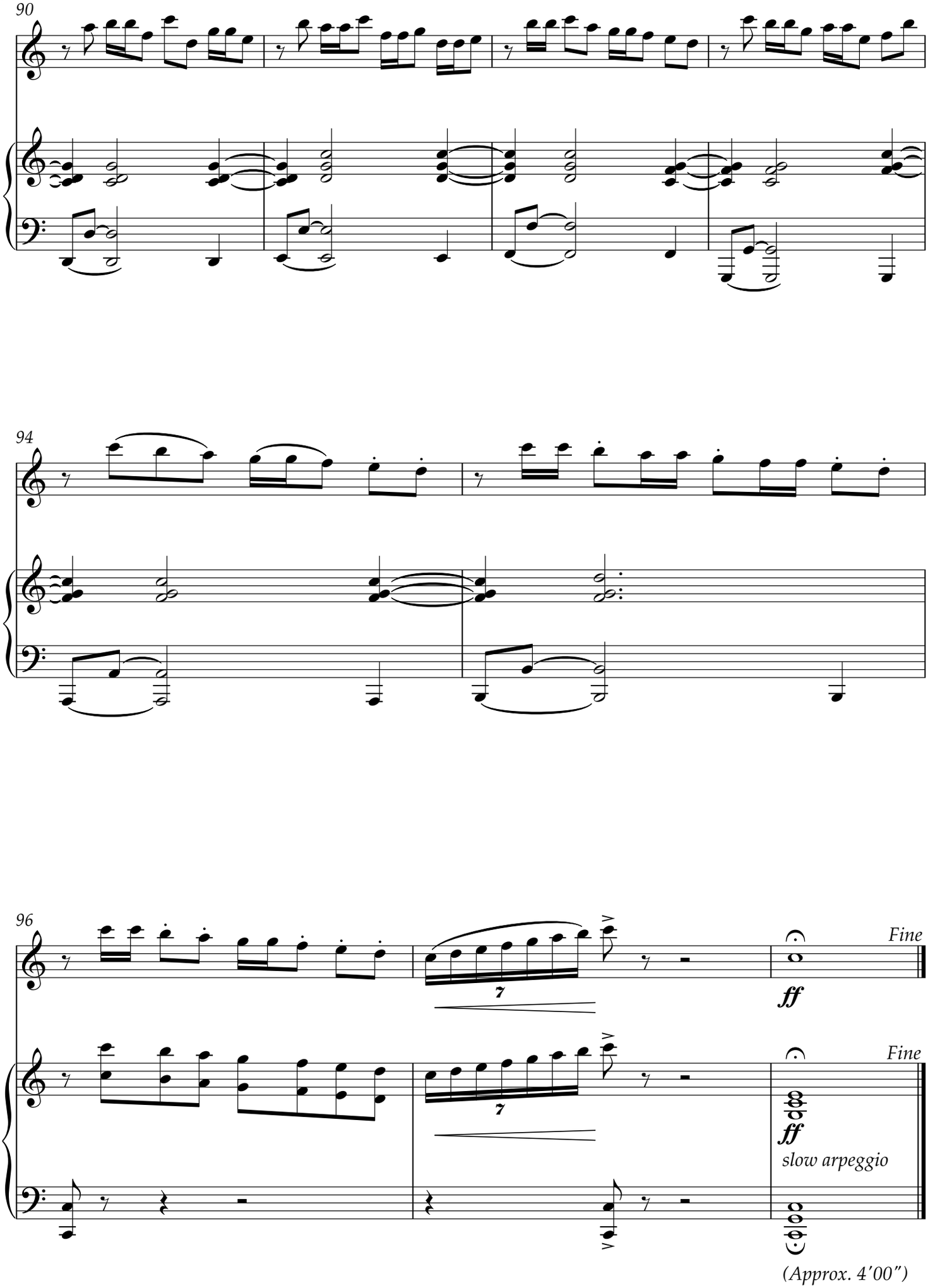
82

Presto

f

Presto

86


90
94
96
Fine
ff
Fine
ff
slow arpeggio
(Approx. 4′00″)