family photos

solo piano

geoffrey king

2020

When XinRu asked me told me about her plans for this piece, I was thrilled. Her plan, as part of her very ambitious PhD project spanning four full concerts of piano music, was to pair my music with Schumann's Carnaval. The final result

I wanted to write a piece about pianists – about the excesses of virtuosity and about the role the concert pianist occupies.

This interest in roles permeates my work; in general I try to establish and then break some kind of normative performance, hoping that doing so will draw attention to and appreciation of the unseen rules of art music performance.

The first movement, a long string of musical ideas, mimics Schumann's cut-based approach to his piano cycles. The second movement encourages the pianist to rest, and for the audience to consider the sounds of rest in a musical way. The third movement, filtered behind the una corda pedal, is a musical reflection of a beautiful vacation to Hastings with my husband.

In the end, XinRu briaded this music with the Schumann in an entirely novel and compelling way; in doing so she pushed my interest in questioning musical roles even farther than I could have on my own.

She became the composer.

In this spirit, the music can be presented in any number of ways. If played as presented here I hope to invite a narrative which explores the idea of the pianist, first as a virtuosity machine, then as a fully feeling human being, through whom we hear the virtuosity filtered.

The final movement may be played as a standalone salon piece.

Most excitingly, the music here may be freely intercut with other music in performance. Treat the music like your own and you're likely to find new and exciting expressivities that no one's imagined before.

for XinRu, with admiration

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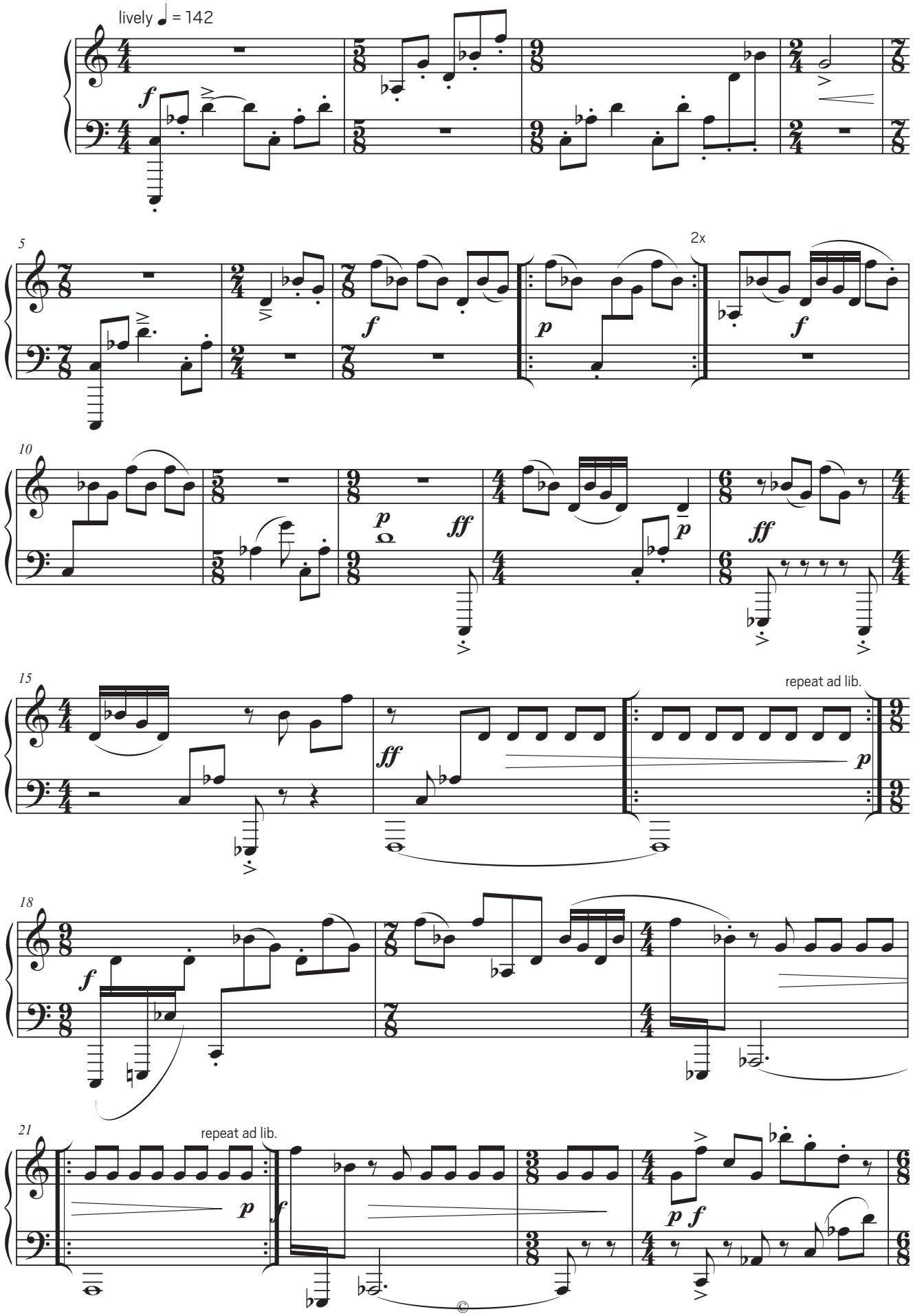
1. A few important dates, times and places



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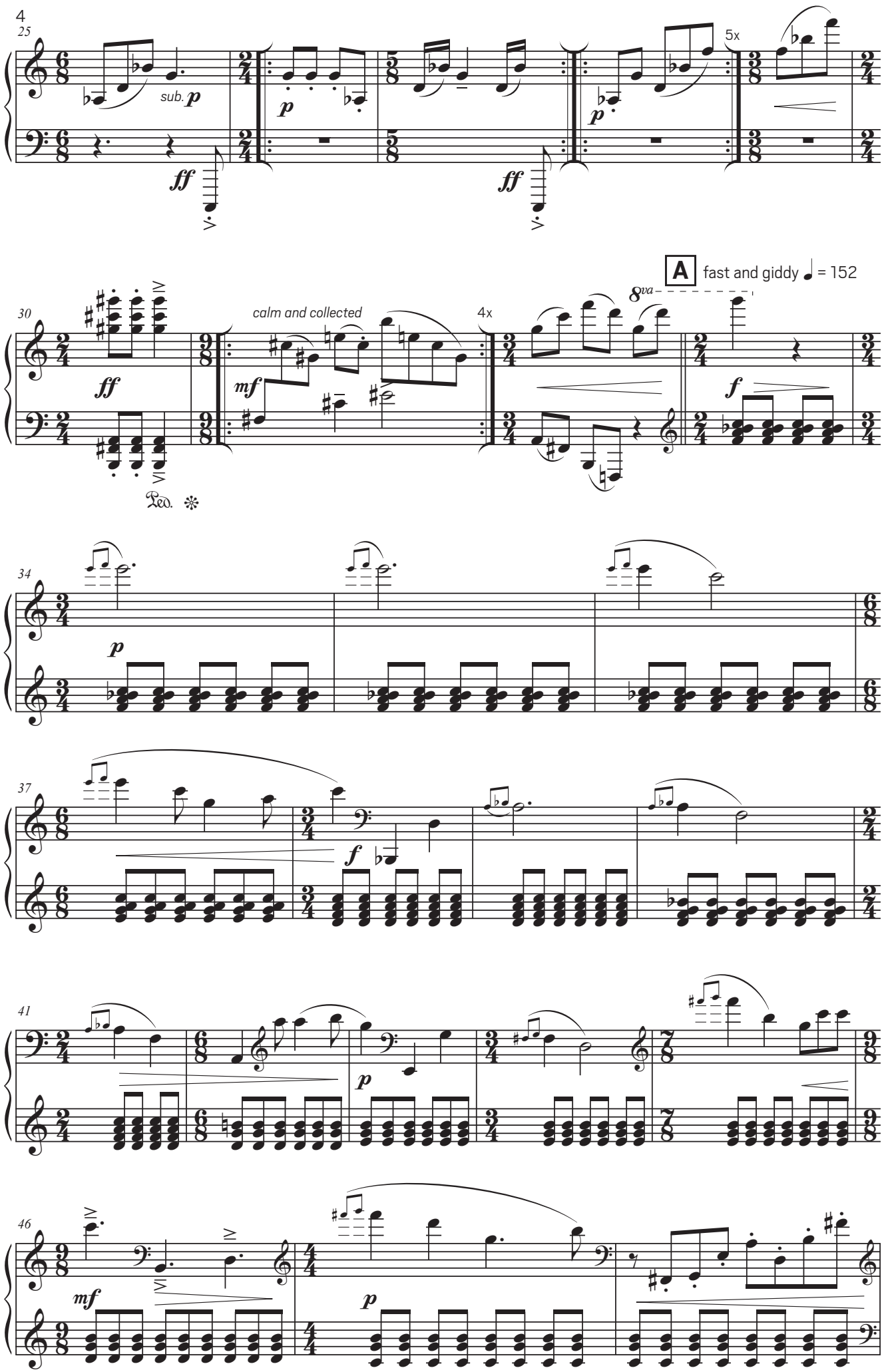
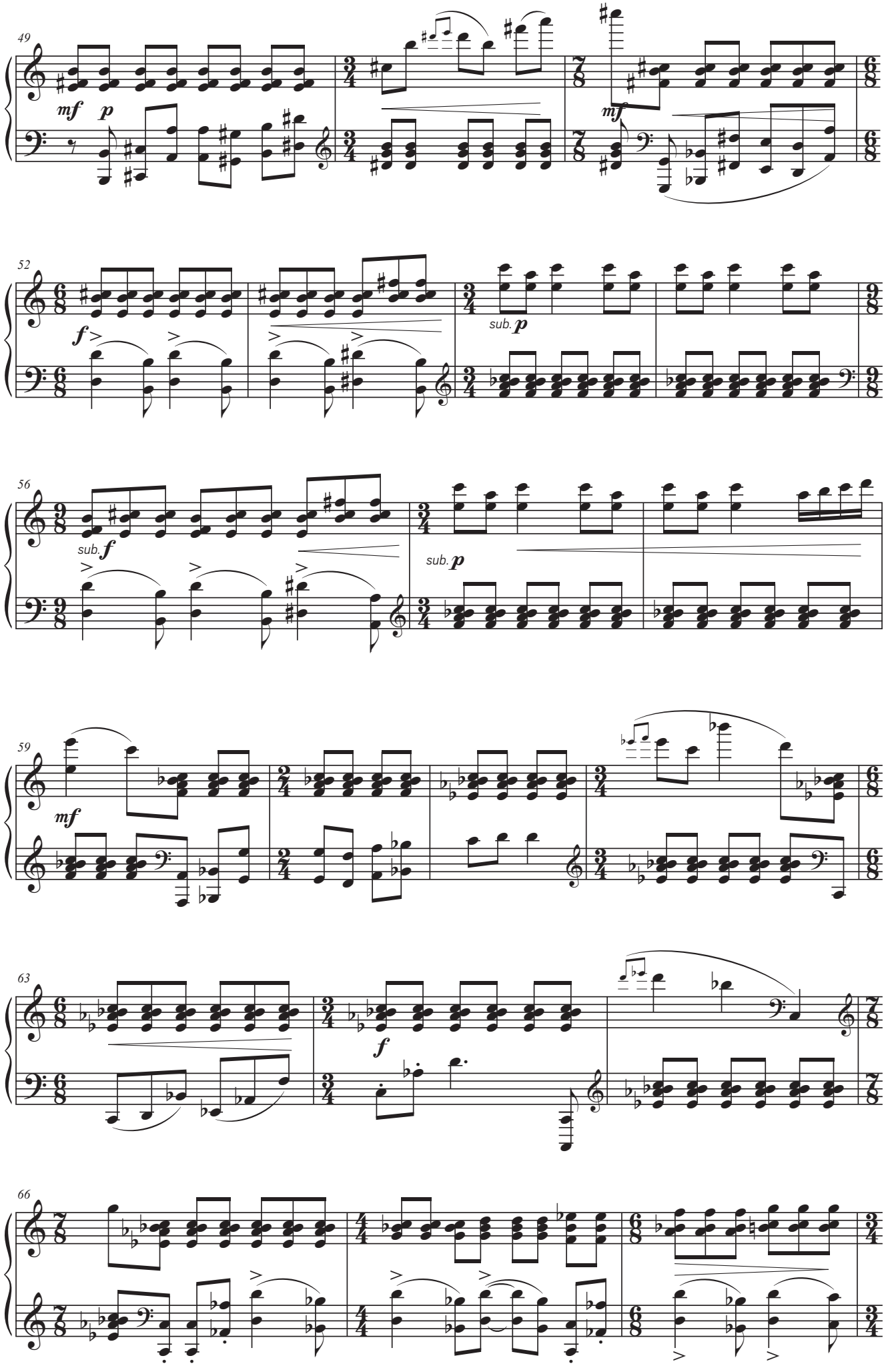
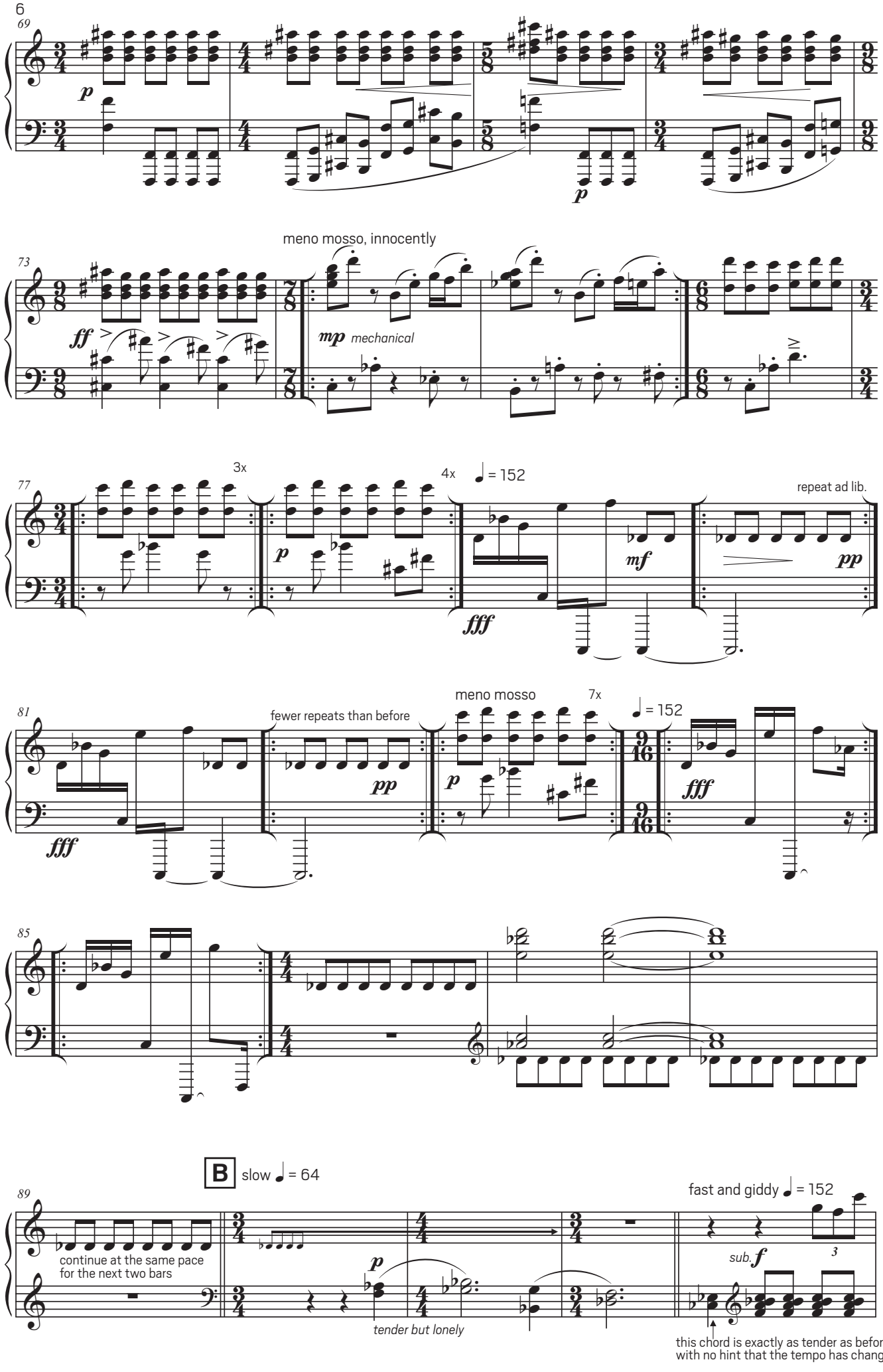
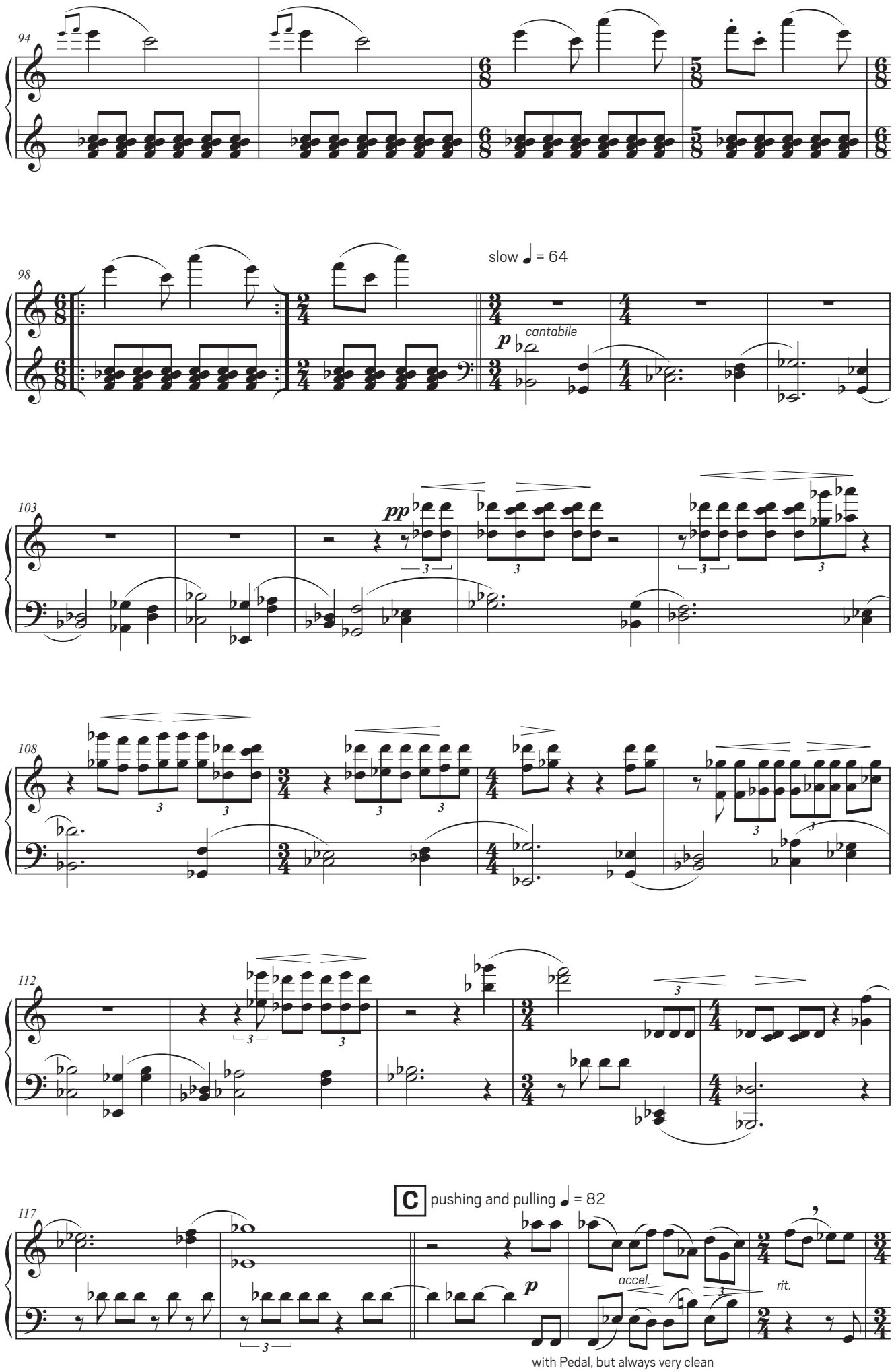
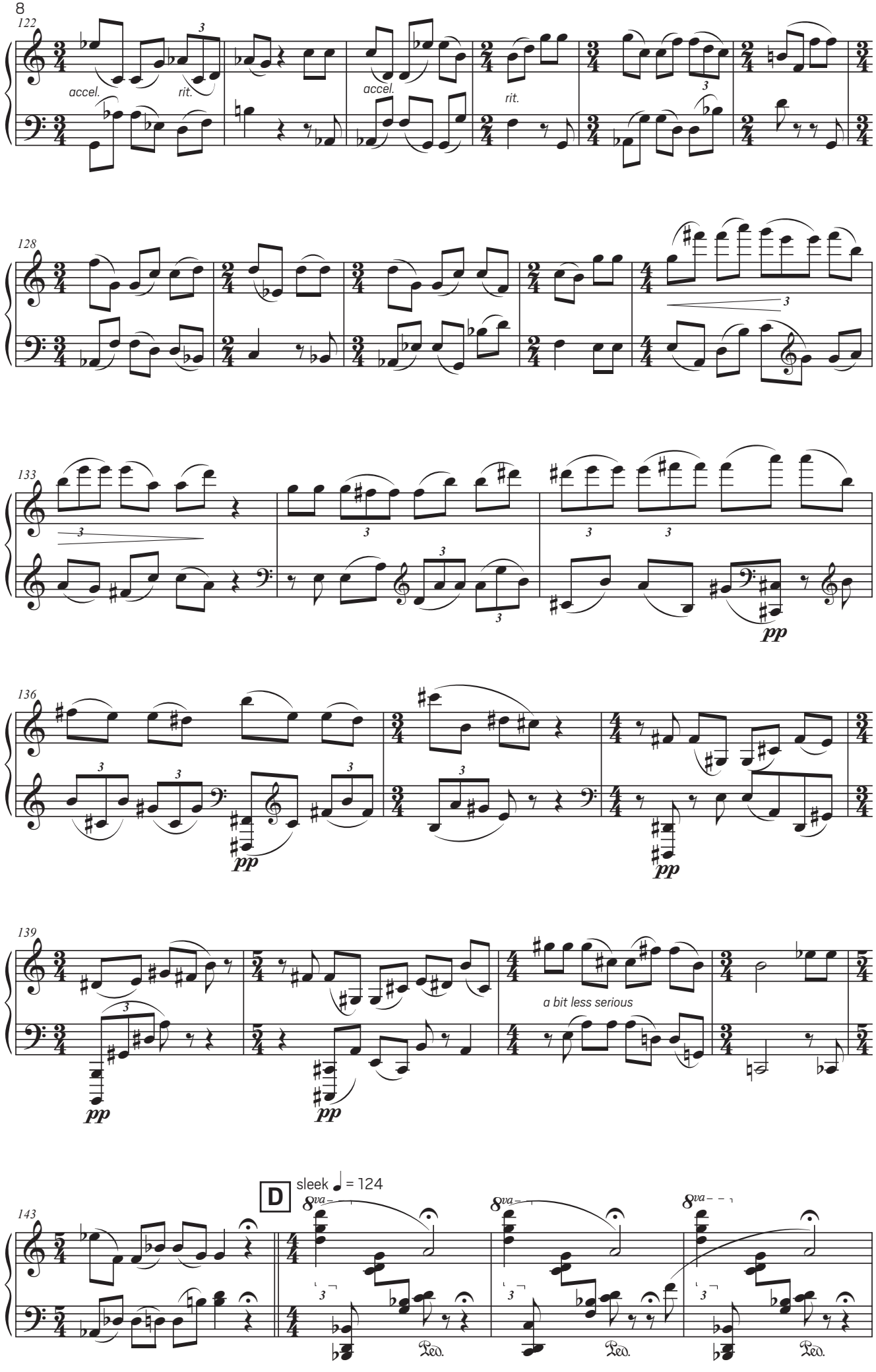
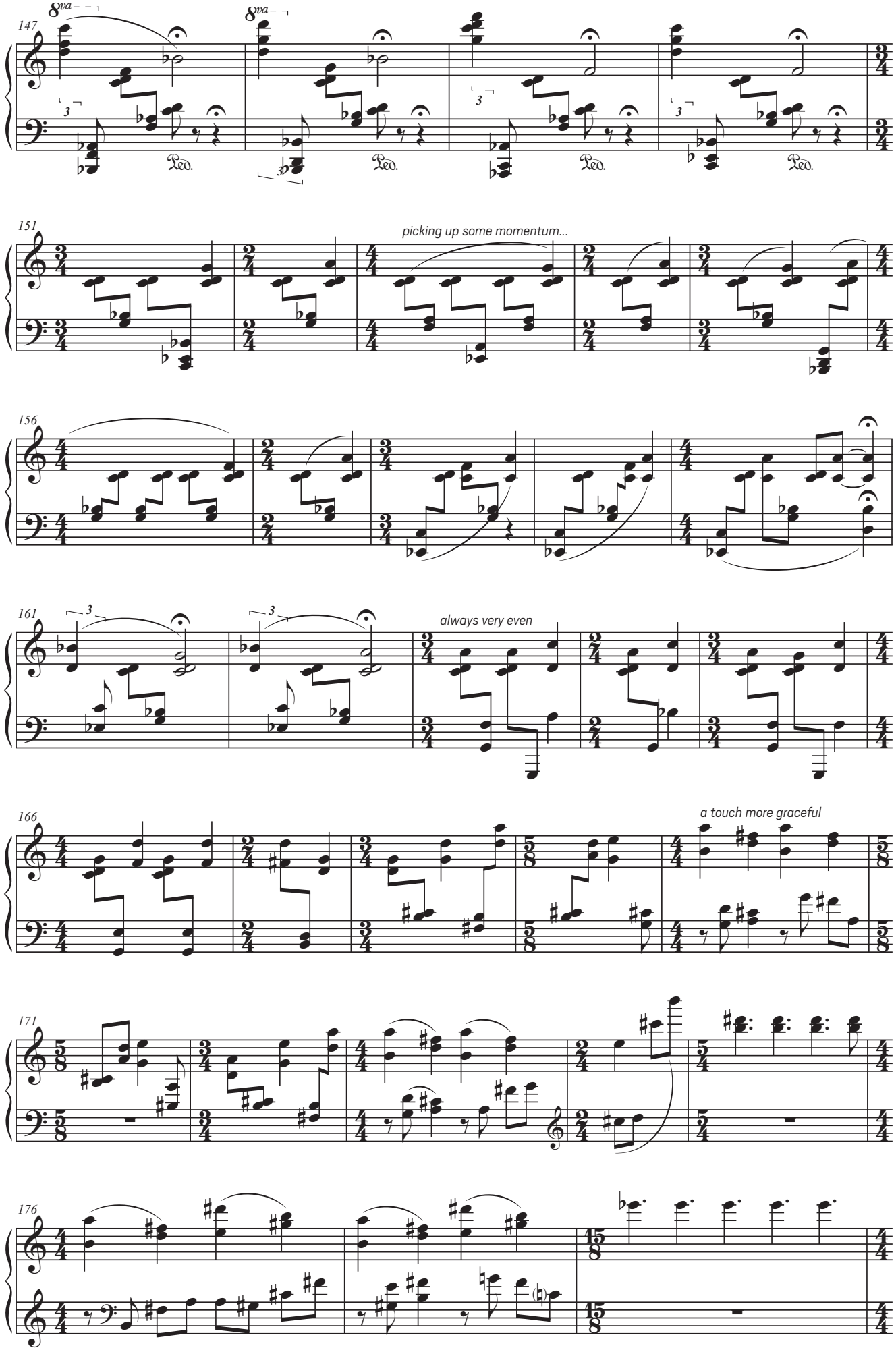

25
sub. p
ff
p
ff
p
5x
A
fast and giddy ♩ = 152
30
ff
calm and collected
mf
4x
8va
f
Ped.
34
p
37
f
41
p
46
mf
p

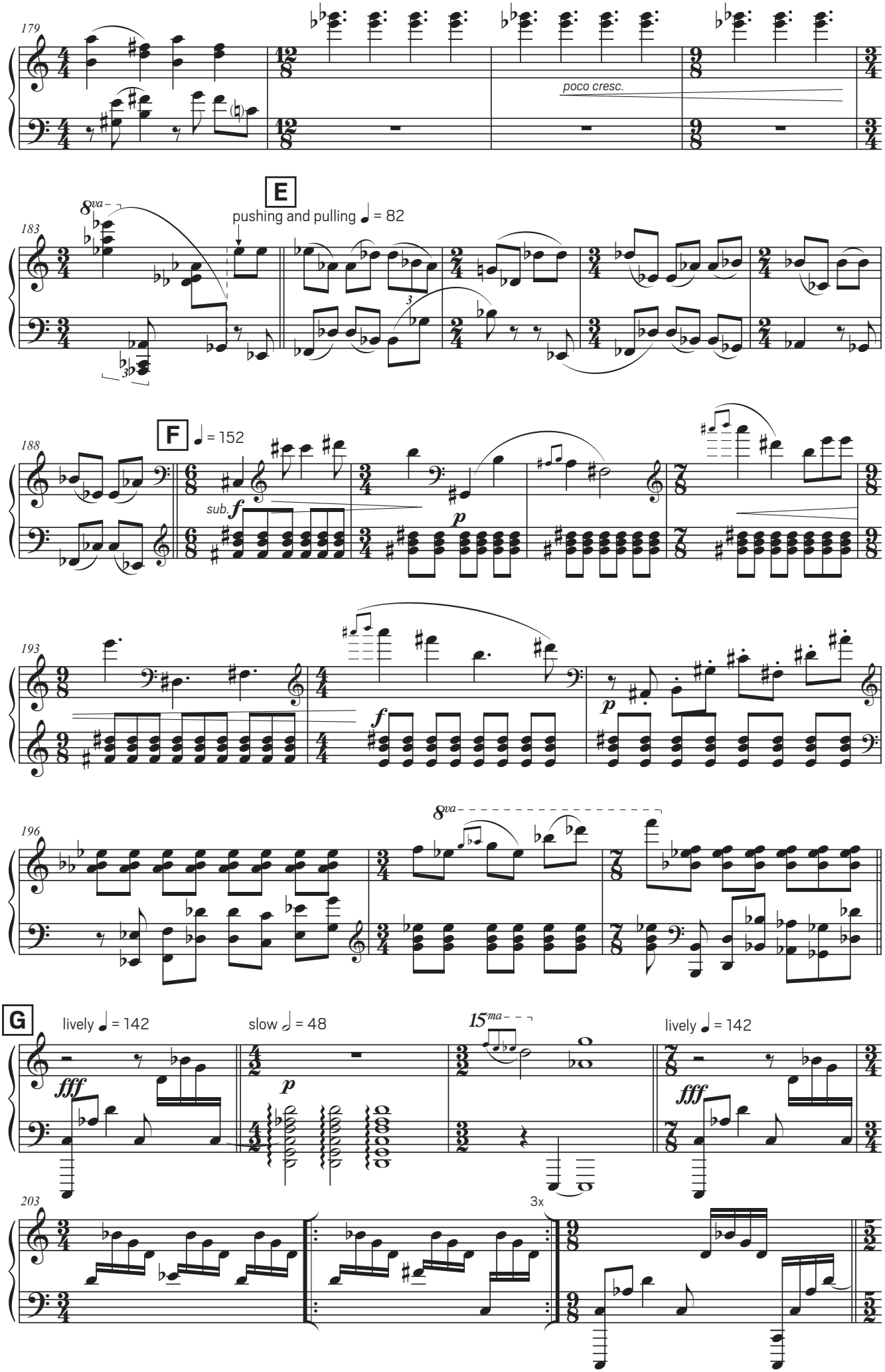

49
mf
p
mf
52
f
sub. p
56
sub. f
sub. p
59
mf
63
f
66

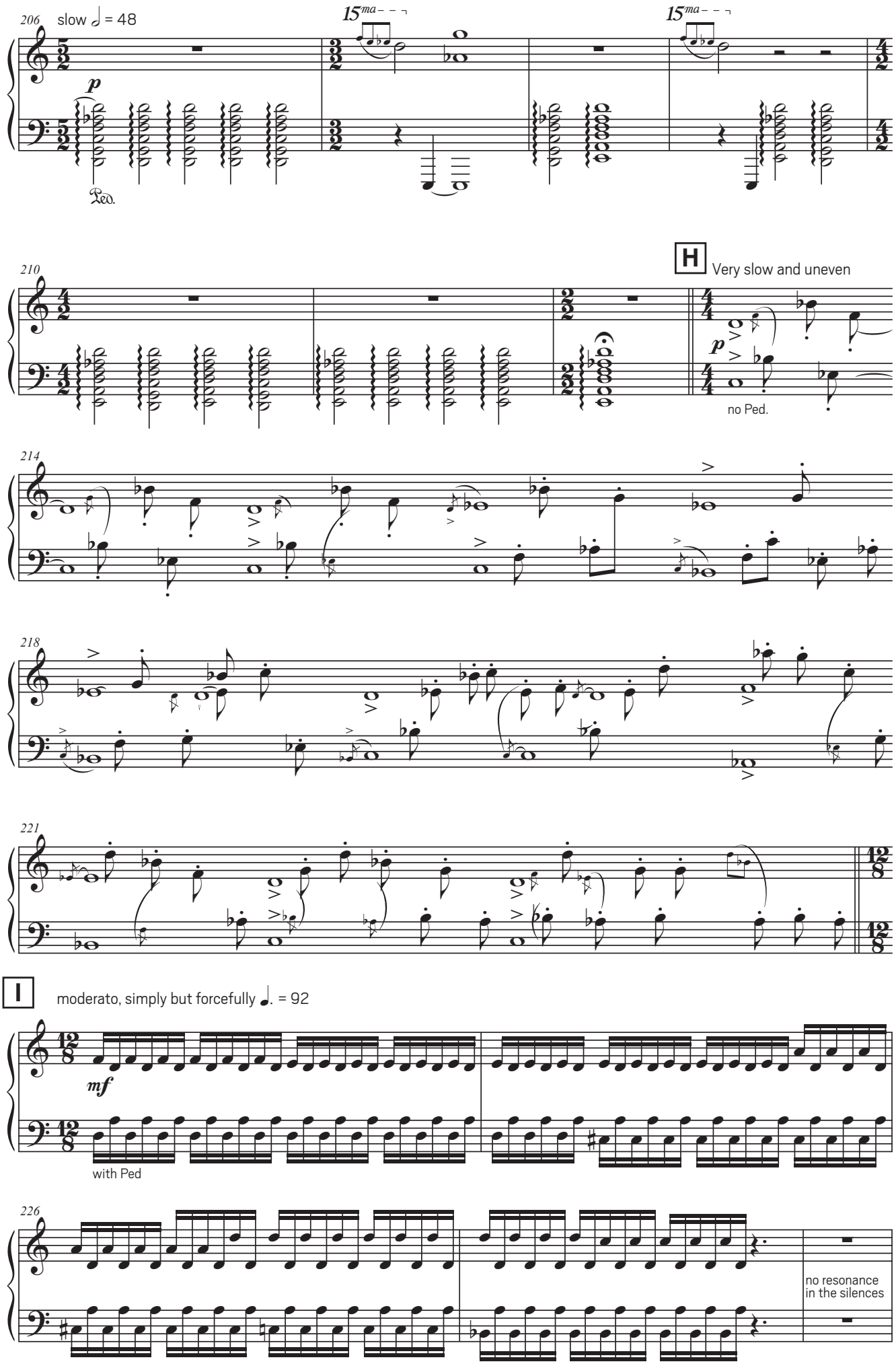

69
p
p
73
meno mosso, innocently
ff
mp mechanical
77
3x
4x
♩ = 152
repeat ad lib.
p
mf
pp
fff
81
fewer repeats than before
meno mosso
7x
♩ = 152
fff
pp
p
fff
85
B
slow ♩ = 64
89
fast and giddy ♩ = 152
continue at the same pace
for the next two bars
p
sub. f
3
tender but lonely
this chord is exactly as tender as before,
with no hint that the tempo has changed

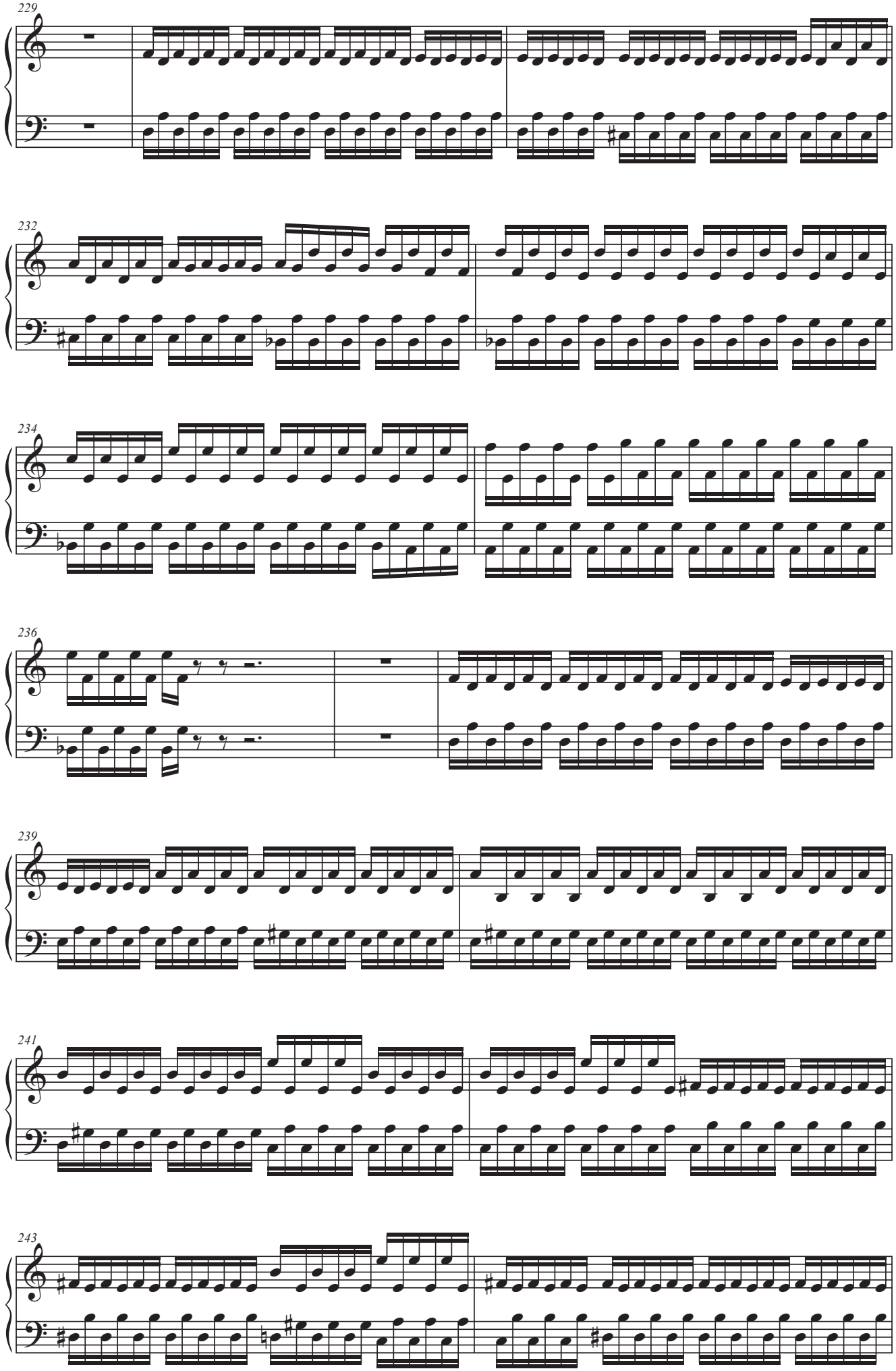

94
98
slow ♩ = 64
p cantabile
103
pp
108
112
117
C pushing and pulling ♩ = 82
p
accel.
rit.
with Pedal, but always very clean

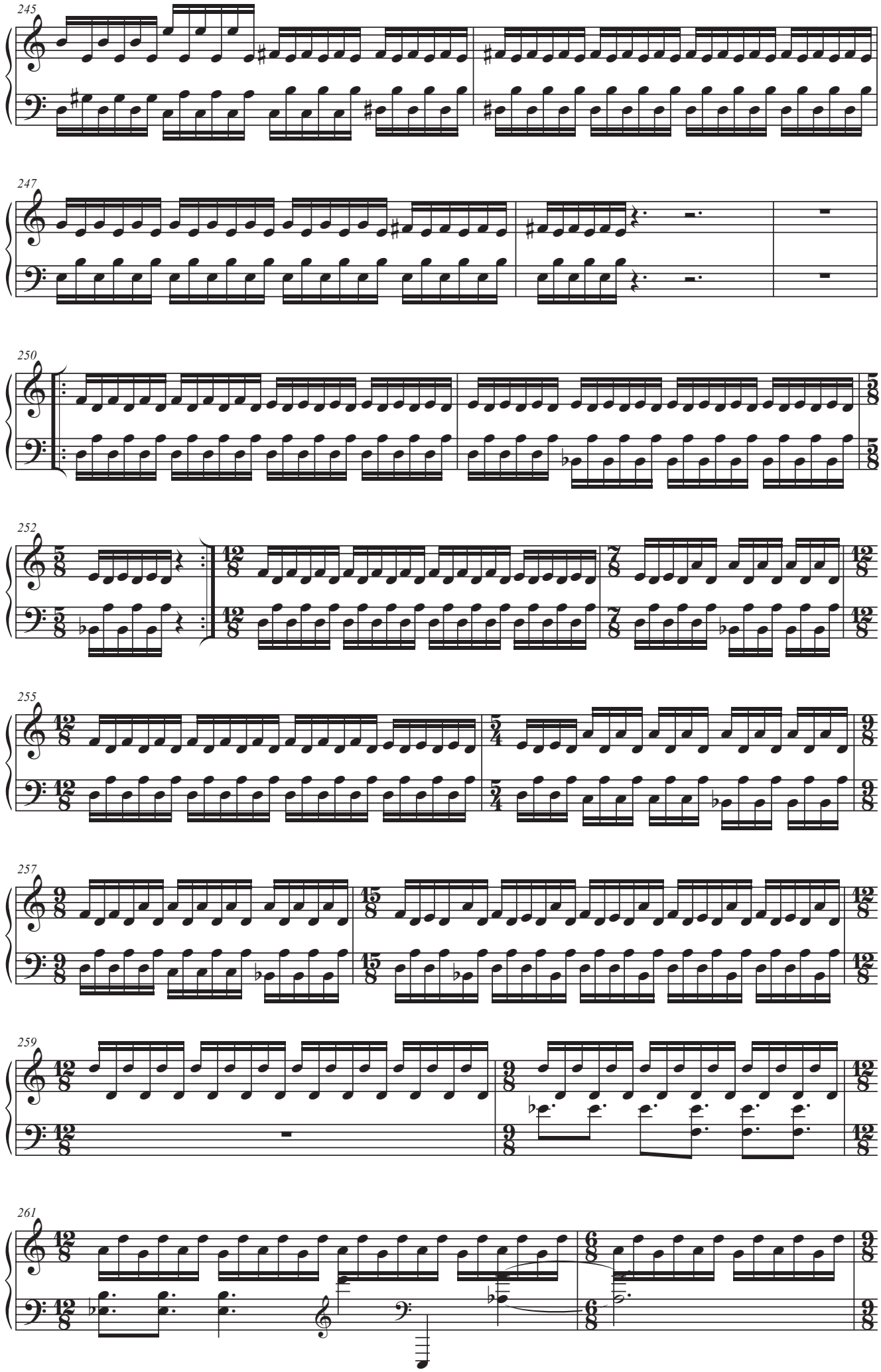

122
accel.
rit.
accel.
rit.
128
133
pp
136
pp
pp
139
pp
pp
a bit less serious
143
D
sleek ♩ = 124
8va
8va
8va
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

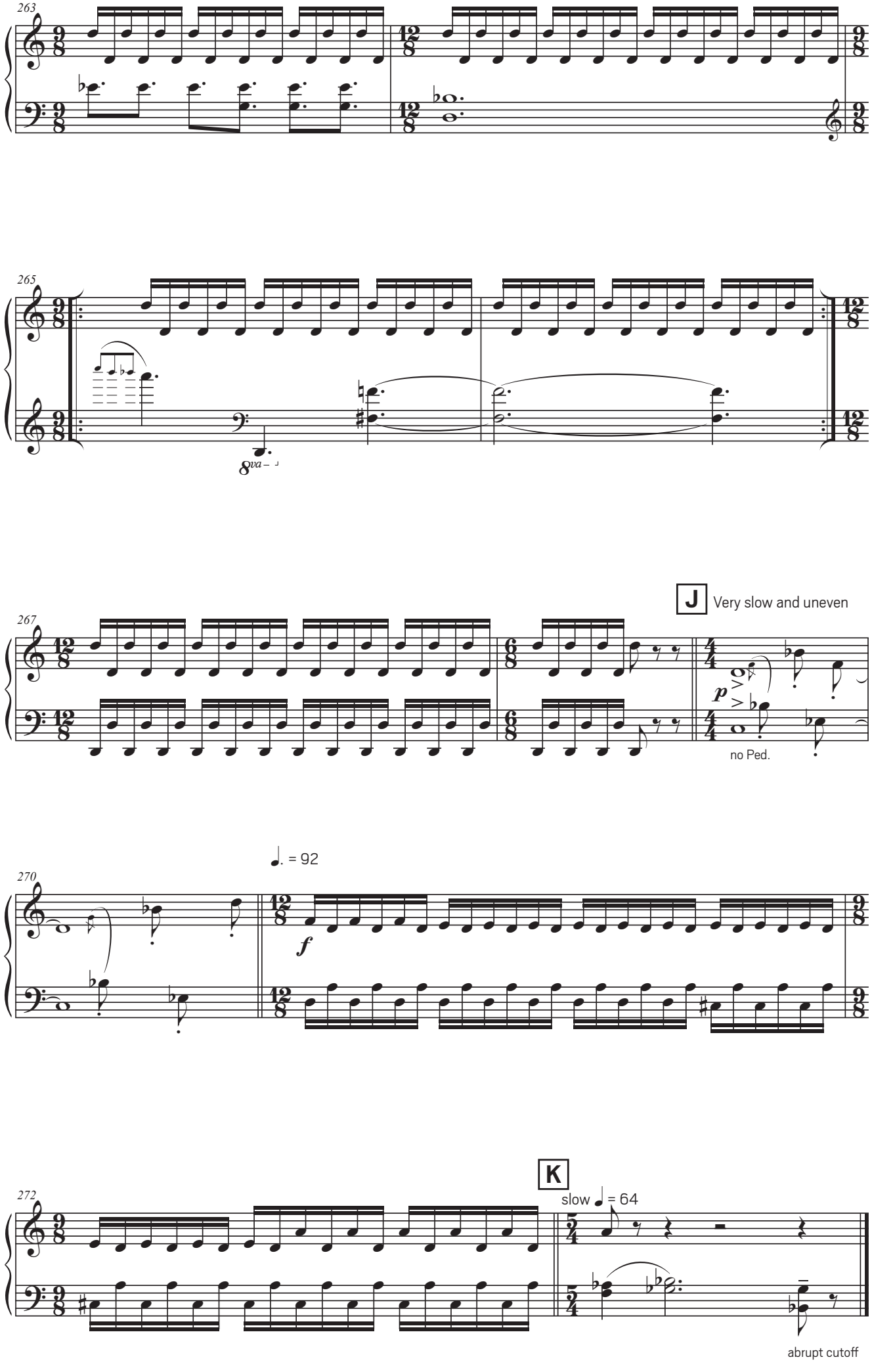

147
8va
8va
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
151
picking up some momentum...
156
161
always very even
166
a touch more graceful
171
176


179
poco cresc.
E
8va
pushing and pulling ♩ = 82
183
F
♩ = 152
188
sub. f
p
193
f
p
196
8va
G
lively ♩ = 142
slow 𝅗𝅥 = 48
15ma
lively ♩ = 142
fff
p
fff
203
3x

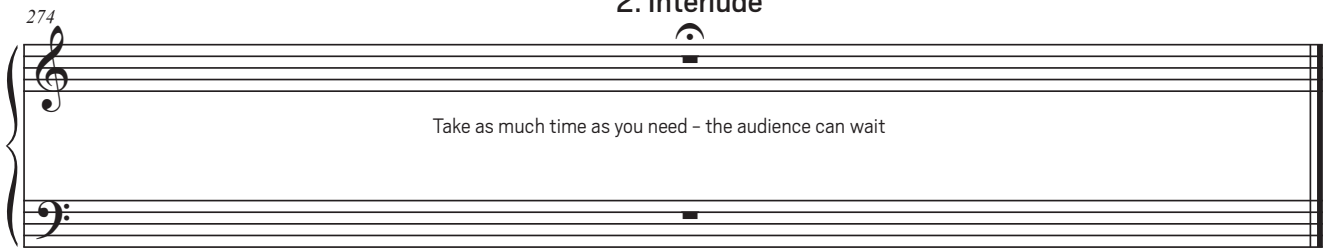

206
slow ♩ = 48
15ma
15ma
p
Ped.
210
H
Very slow and uneven
p
no Ped.
214
218
221
I
moderato, simply but forcefully ♩. = 92
mf
with Ped
226
no resonance
in the silences


229
232
234
236
239
241
243


245
247
250
252
255
257
259
261


263
265
8va
J
Very slow and uneven
267
p
no Ped.
270
♩. = 92
f
272
K
slow ♩ = 64
abrupt cutoff

2. Interlude



Abruptly close the lid of the piano

Turn away from the audience

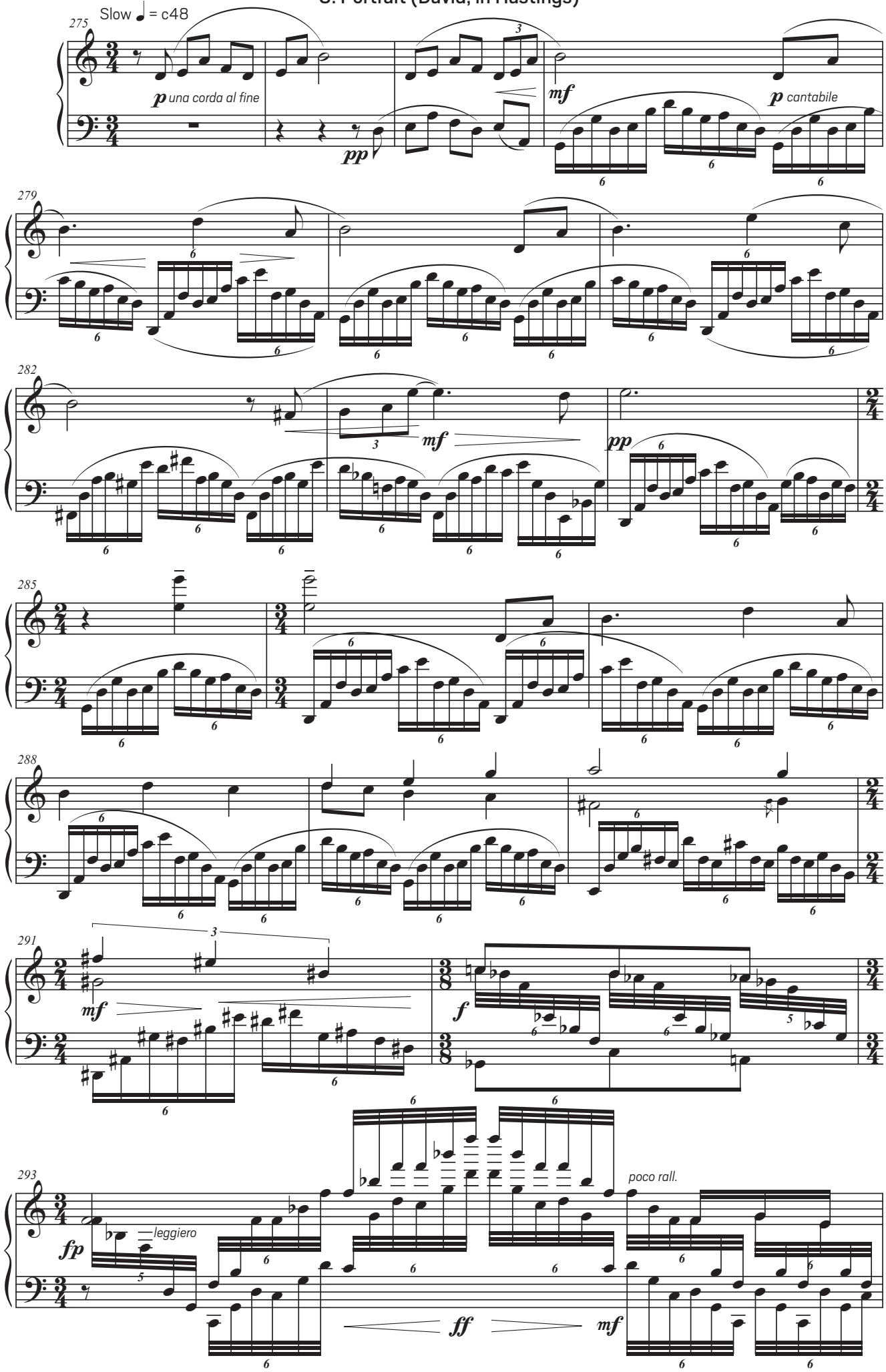
Take a drink of water if needed

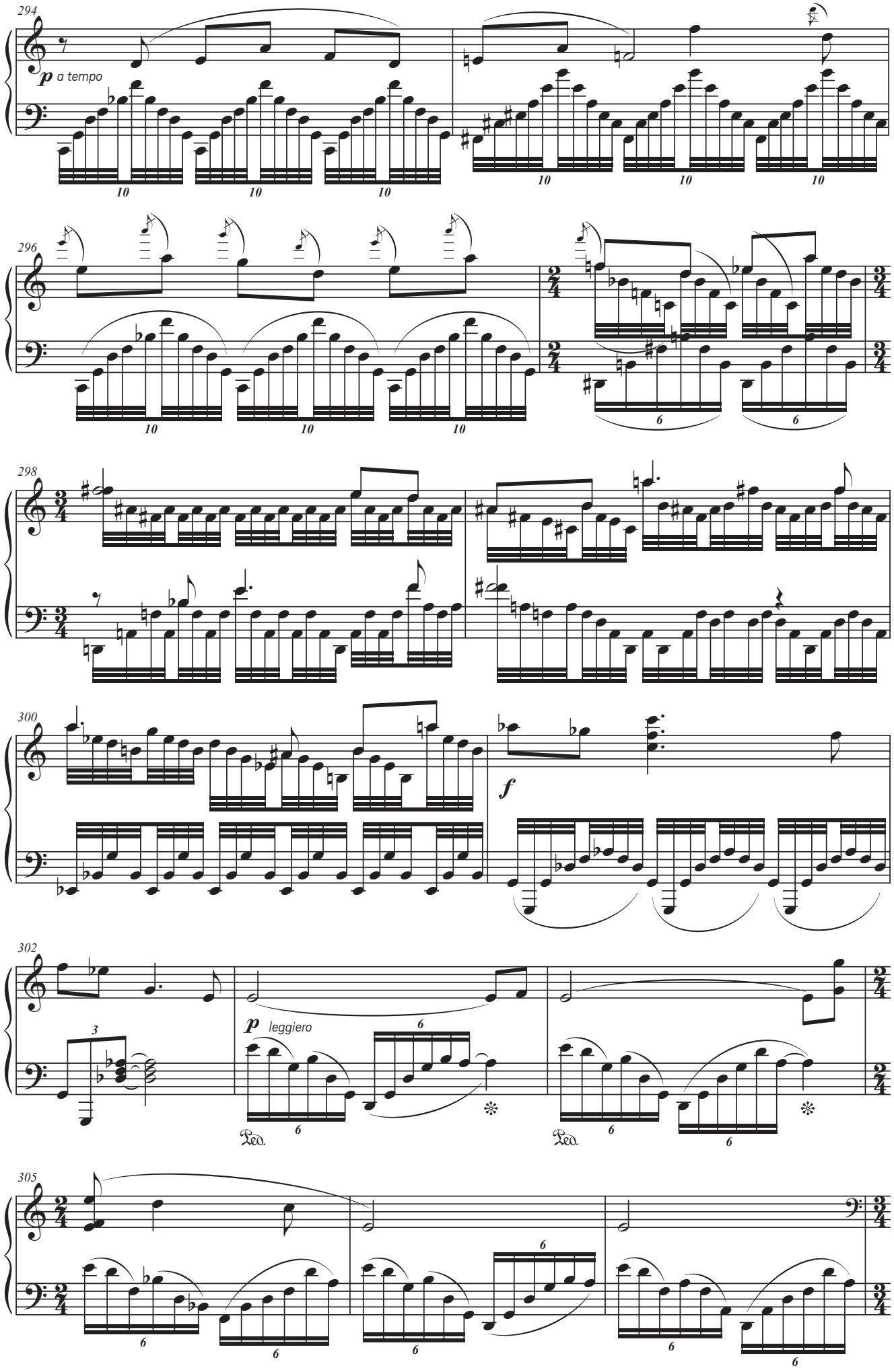
Get up, stretch, take a moment for yourself behind the piano

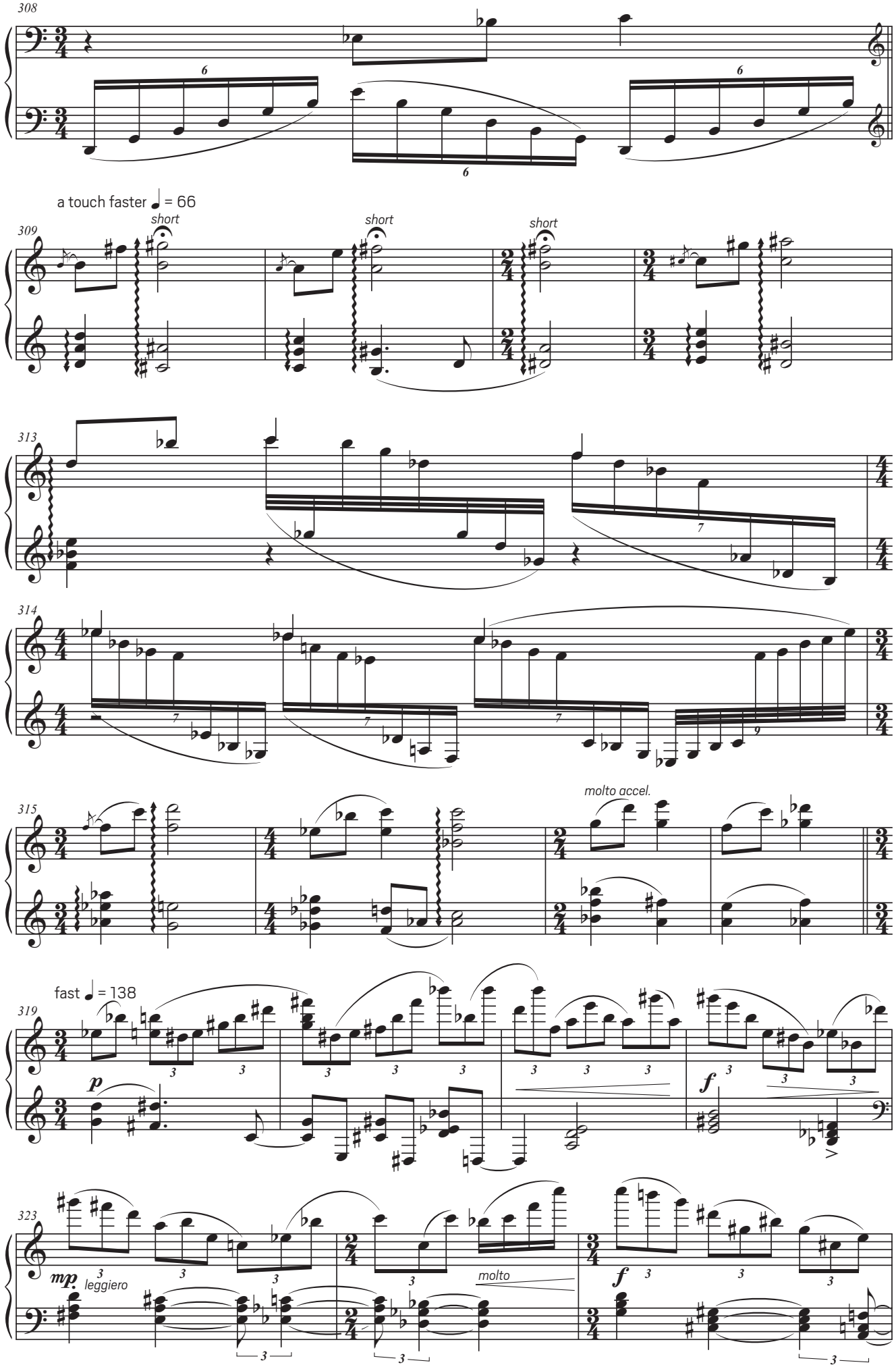
Walk around the back of the piano and put down the cover

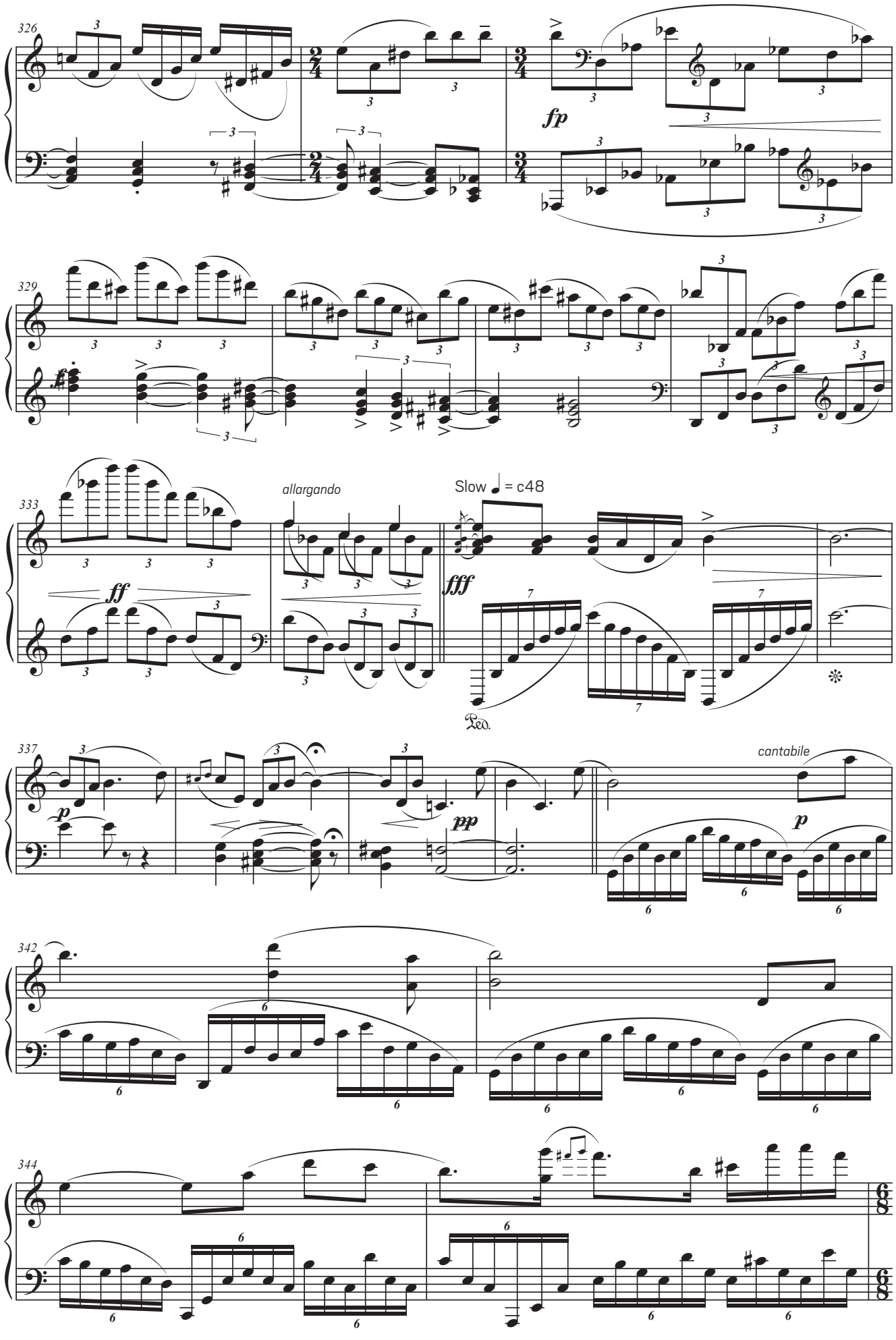
Sit down at the piano, raise the lid, take a moment and continue

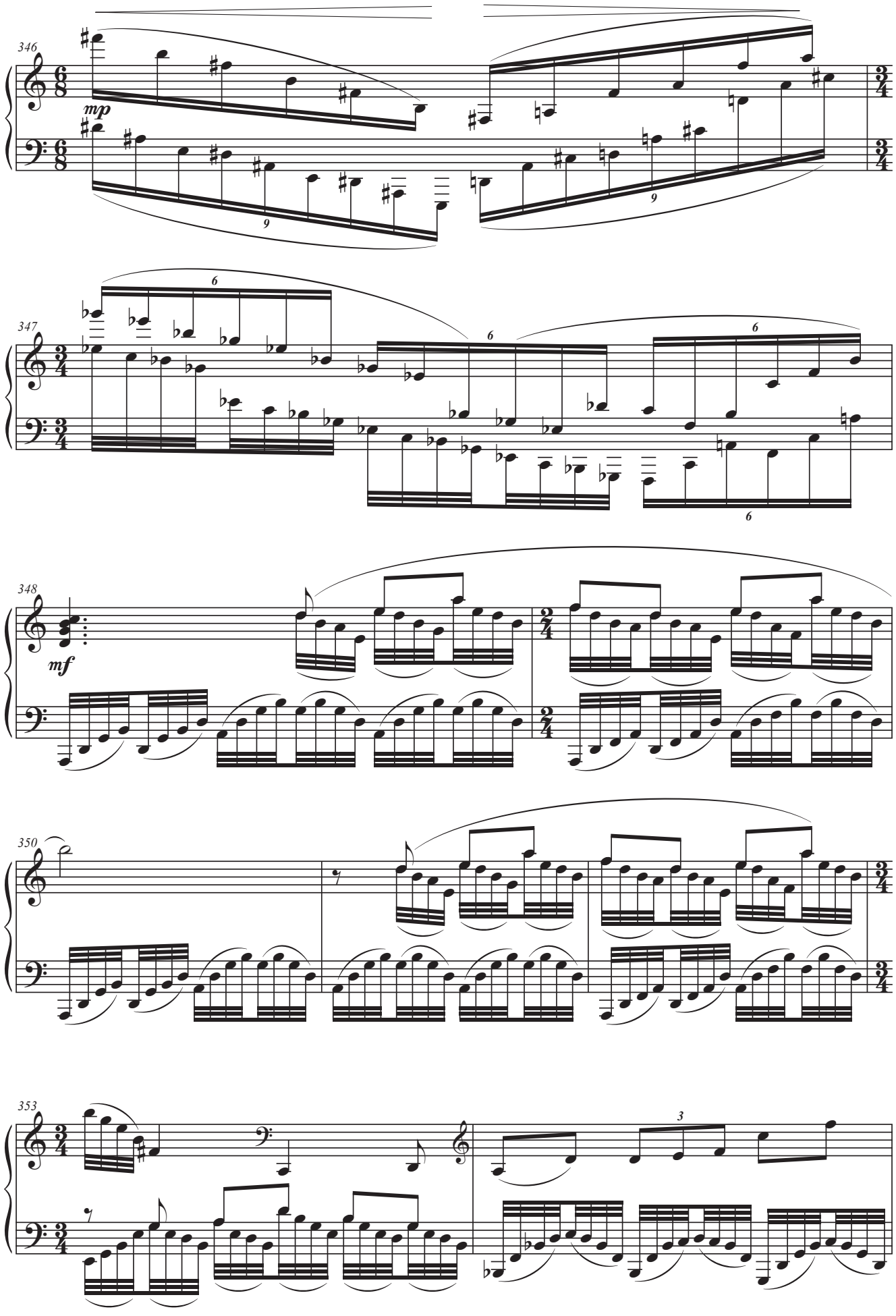
3. Portrait (David, in Hastings)

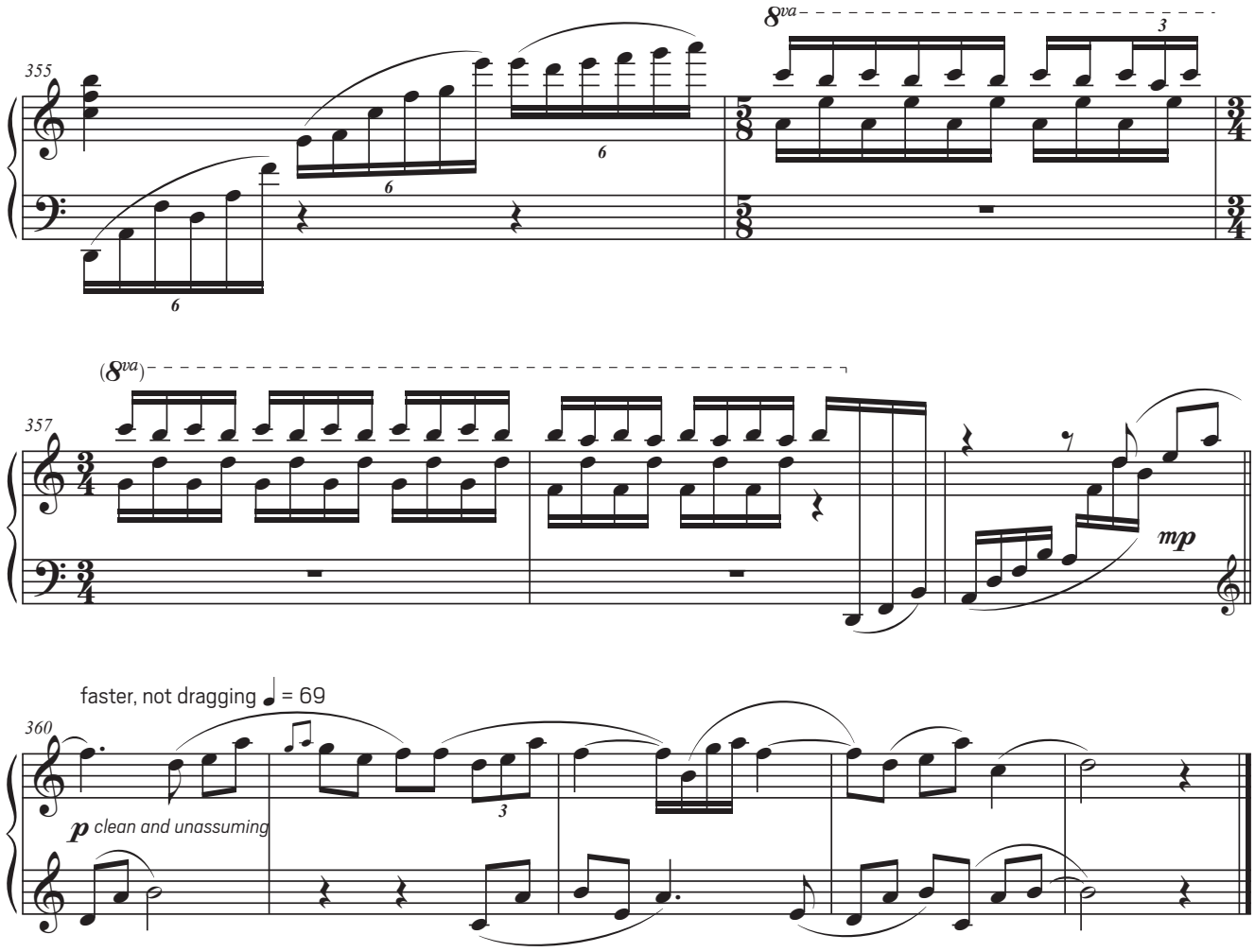



294
p a tempo
296
298
300
f
302
p leggiero
Ped.
Ped.
305


308
309
a touch faster ♩ = 66
short
short
short
313
314
315
molto accel.
fast ♩ = 138
319
p
f
323
mp
leggiero
molto
f


326
fp
329
333
allargando
ff
fff
Slow ♩ = c48
Ped.
337
p
pp
cantabile
p
342
344


346
mp
347
348
mf
350
353


355
8va
3
6
6
6
(8va)
357
mp
faster, not dragging ♩ = 69
360
3
p clean and unassuming