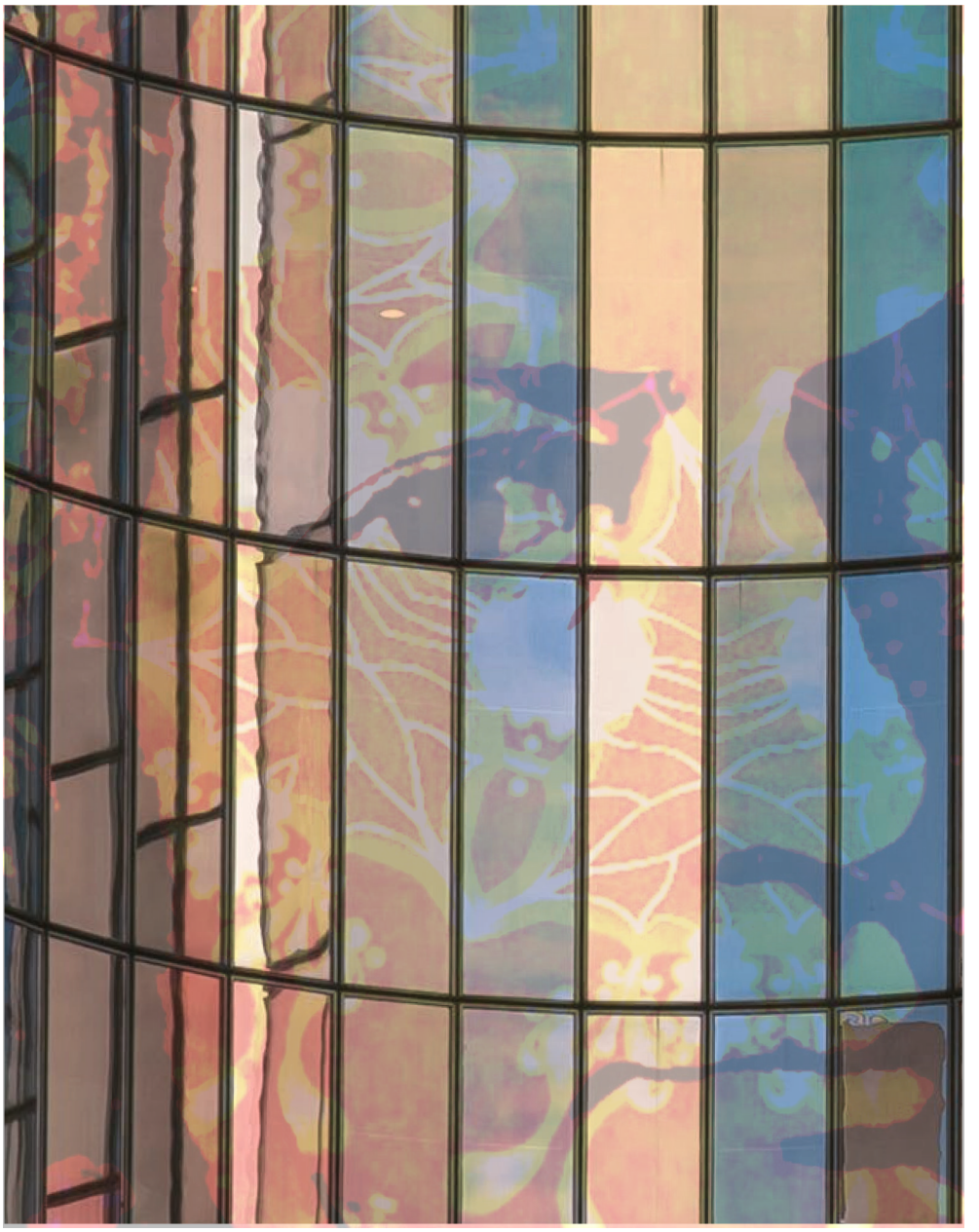


Andante from Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, BWV 1049
J.S. Bach
Arranged for Piano Solo by Eleonor Bindman

Andante from Brandenburg Concerto No. 4, BWV 1049.

While transcribing the complete Brandenburg Concertos for piano duet, I realized that some of the slow movements could work really well for solo piano. Not having been familiar with them previously, I was enchanted by their lyricism. The *Andante* from the 4th concerto was the first one I transcribed for solo piano because, as with all of my transcriptions, I wanted to be able to play it myself.

This movement is built on echoes between the orchestra (tutti) and the soloists which easily translate onto the keyboard. Tutti passages are louder and lower in register than the solos. Some tutti phrases are luxuriously long and need to be pedaled carefully to help sustain the legato effect without muddling the harmony. Listening to an orchestral recording is the best reference as it will clearly delineate the different parts in your mind. Since this complex texture can seem daunting to non-professional pianists, I would like to offer some guidance below.

The first question which normally arises is: "How do I hold all the long notes?" The answer is that they don't have to be held "exactly" in a transcription. An arranger's job is to faithfully convey the composer's intentions (in my opinion) and I try to present the layers of orchestral parts as Bach wrote them. When the flute or violin holds long notes they have to be notated accordingly so that a pianist understands the polyphony. They are either sustained with the help of the pedals or just sounded for as long as possible. Another issue is reaching all the inner voices despite the important melodic treble and foundational bass lines being far apart. Most of the time it should be clear which hand takes the middle notes. But if a stretch is too wide you may need to "break" that chord or interval.

If a section is challenging, you may omit some doubled notes or put them in another octave as an alternative. For example, the C and B octaves in mm. 28 and 30 can't be played "verbatim" but they can be sustained by using the middle, "sostenuto" pedal if your piano has one. If not, the right pedal will sustain it for at least one beat and that's good enough. To further simplify things, you can skip the upper notes and just hold one C and one B in the right hand. The slow tempo gives you time to manage all the voices and create the needed sound balance.

I don't indicate fingerings for most of my transcriptions because I strongly believe that one has to learn (by trial and error) to figure them out without help. Keeping a flexible wrist/hand will facilitate many different positions and angles which you should experiment with in order to arrive at the most comfortable fingering. I wrote in only a few fingerings which work for the inner voice of m. 28 as an example but since the pedals eliminate the need for "finger legato" there can be many other options. The pedal can be used as often as 6 times in each measure here; without it the orchestral sound can't be approximated. Embellishments should be slow at this tempo - feel free to play more or less of them, as appeals to you. Remember: since this is an arrangement, nothing is written in stone. What matters is the overall sound and your enjoyment.

This *Andante* ends on the dominant chord, an unresolved harmony. The next movement is in the key of G major, leaving us with this open question. I hope that you will enjoy the sound of this last chord and let it linger for a while.

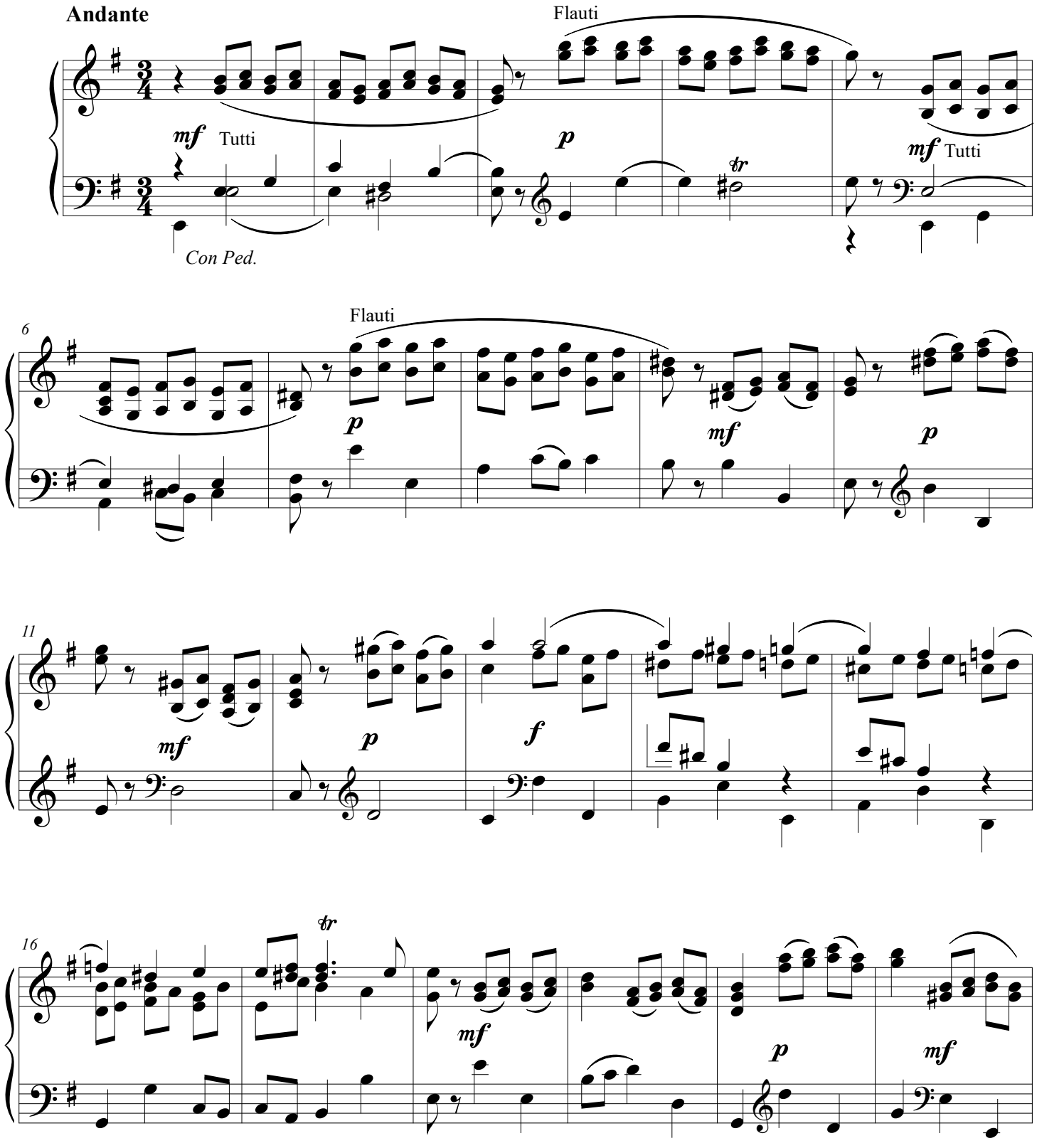
Eleonor Bindman
March 2023

Andante from Brandenburg Concerto No. 4

For piano solo

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



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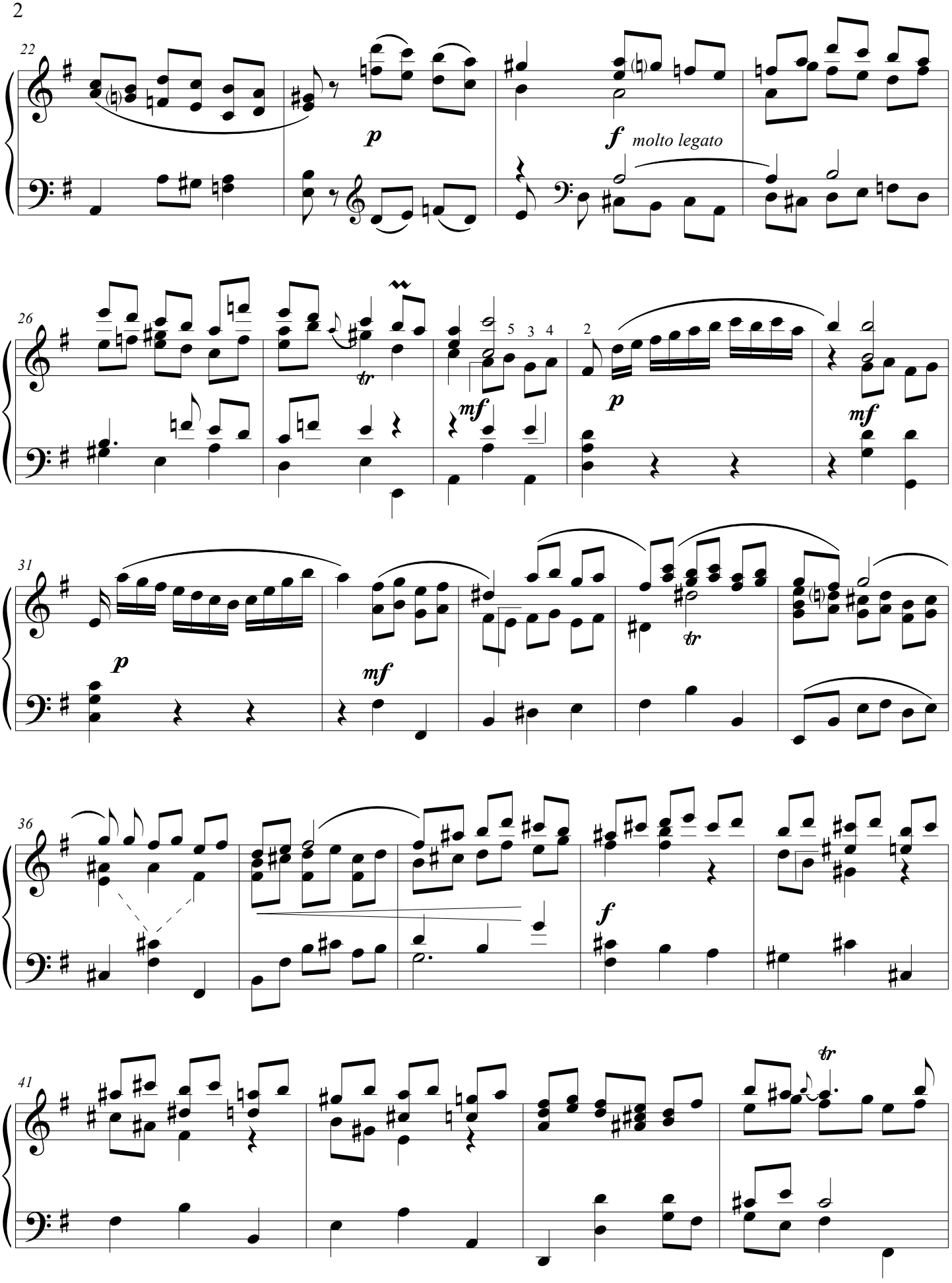
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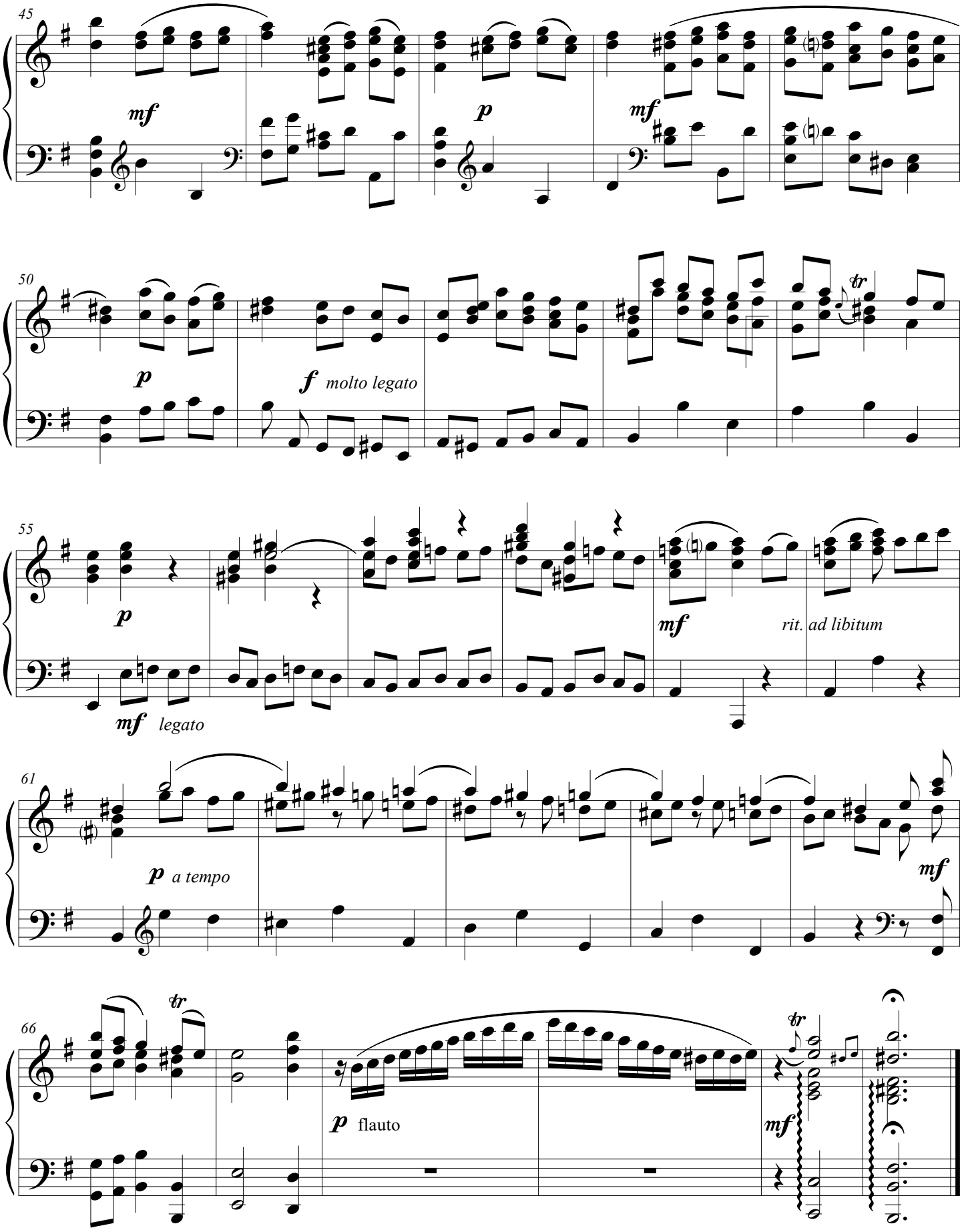
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