J.S. Bach: Orchestral Suites, BWV 1066-69

Arranged for Piano Duet by Eleonor Bindman

J. S. Bach

Orchestral Suites

For Piano Duet

Transcribed by Eleonor Bindman

Cover Illustration: “All The Flowers Are For Me”
by Anila Quayyum Agha (detail photo)

ABOUT THE TRANSCRIPTION

This arrangement was made in the spirit of one of my favorite quotes of Rosalyn Tureck: “The informed performance of Bach is contained in understanding the concepts expressed in his form and insight into the significance of his art as a whole.” J.S. Bach’s orchestral writing represents a language quite different from his keyboard music, one just as complex but more exuberant emotionally. When translated into the vocabulary of a keyboard, the orchestral texture becomes transparent and more balanced while the contrapuntal, melodic and harmonic concepts gain focus and clarity. It’s a fresh perspective for us pianists, a new window into understanding the concepts of the Master’s art.

My work on the 4 Orchestral Suites started in January of 2019 with the first rough draft of Suite 2 and ended in February of 2023 after countless edits, rehearsals, score formatting and printing, research and continuous refining the piano duet score through the recording and afterwards. The goal was to make this great music accessible to pianists of all ages and levels by retaining all of the essential material yet simplifying the arrangement as much as possible. I hope that getting acquainted with these masterworks will help you creatively interpret other baroque music and, together with my “Brandenburg Duets” (2018), will provide you and your friends and piano partners with many enjoyable hours together.

As with any arrangement, it’s important to study the original source. Please listen to orchestral versions for overall sound, tempi, character and specific instrumentation and timbres of solos. My favorite “stylistically correct” recordings are the 1971 Decca release of Neville Marriner conducting the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and the 1995 Archiv version by Trevor Pinnock and The English Concert. Then listen to the world premiere recording of this transcription (Grand Piano label, 2022) for repeat strategies, embellishments, dynamics and “color” changes more appropriate for the modern keyboard.

Bach indicated very few dynamic markings in his orchestral scores. They are reproduced in this transcription and my additional suggested dynamics appear in parentheses but please feel free to decide how loud or how soft you want to play any of this. I also kept Bach’s occasional articulation markings: even though they mostly apply to strings and wind instruments, pianists can strive to approximate the effect. There is so much to imitate: sparkling flute solos and comical bassoon accompaniments, timpani rolls and trumpet fanfares. My preferred tempi are given but the choice is yours. As far as fingerings are concerned, we need to rely on ourselves for finding the best ones. Experience and confidence come as a result of trial and error. Just remember that fingerings which seem fine at a slow tempo sometimes need to be reconsidered when speeding up. Finally, a reminder of what most of you already know: trills usually start from above the main note, even if you don’t see grace notes before them.

Hand positions: when the partners’ hands have to cross or get “too close for comfort,” the primo LH usually assumes a higher-wrist position close to the black keys while the Secondo RH goes flatter and lower toward the edge of the white keys. At times Secondo can go higher and Primo lower: whoever plays more black keys is better off in a high position. Decide on high/low hand positions and mark them in your scores so you also remember how to position your hand while practicing alone.

Page turns: Primo is closer to the page on the right and usually turns the page. I tried to format the score accordingly but sometimes it’s more convenient for Secondo to turn if that part is less busy. It helps to mark the lower right corner of each page in the score, to avoid confusion at the last moment. It also helps to put little sticky “post-its” on the sides of Primo pages so that you can quickly grab and turn. It’s always best to manage without a page turner, if possible.

Enjoyment: this is the most important part of it all. Remember to smile!

Eleonor Bindman
February 2023

NOTES TO ORCHESTRAL SUITE 1

*1: The key to playing any fugue is analyzing the subject, deciding how we want to present it and then doing so uniformly. Here Bach starts with 4 compelling 8th notes followed by 2 upward 16ths and a series of intervals. Many pianists can lose focus once the 16ths appear and reduce this theme to the initial 4-note "announcement." To avoid this pitfall, I suggest vocalizing it. Notice the ascent to A beyond the beginning Gs, the descending triad AFD followed by an upward 4th, a downward octave and an upward 7th: a strong juxtaposition of directions and intervals. Keep up the energy level through all those "turns" and it will carry the entire fugue.

*2: The score contains *tutti* and *trio* markings which imply corresponding dynamic levels.

*3: In this Courante it's important to play the eighth notes lightly with a smooth legato.

*4: Here and in the last measure of the Courante, Secondo can "improvise" an embellishment before repeating the section. For possibilities please listen to the piano duet recording.

*5: Despite Bach's time signature, this Forlane's pulse is really 2 dotted half notes per measure.

*6: These articulation marks are present Bach's score. Without careful emphasis and phrasing this movement will lose its character.

*7: As in *4, embellishments can be used effectively here. Listen to the recording for possible examples.

NOTES TO ORCHESTRAL SUITE 2

*1: The subject of this fugue is very different from the one in Suite 1. It's divided into halves and moves mostly stepwise and downward, implying a relaxed mood. Inspired by one orchestral recording, I chose to connect the 1st and 3rd downbeats with the following half notes, resulting in graceful 2 - note slurs reminiscent of appoggiaturas. I invite you to listen to the piano duet recording and see if you want to do the same.

*2: Breaking this chord downward is a good choice.

*3: I like to play the Sarabande very simply the first time, using all the embellishments only upon repeat.

*4: It's tempting to play these quarter notes staccato but please count carefully or they will rush the tempo (and Primo) too much.

*5: A tricky repeated G here, I would recommend using the 3rd finger for the first one and the 4th for the second.

*6: The dashed line is meant to connect the notes which belong to the same voice. In this case, the last D belongs in both voices but it will sound better and fuller if played with the left hand.

*7: The final B may be played with the RH to emphasize the melody or with the LH to underscore the characteristic upward 4th.

*8: In Bach's time, double dots weren't used. This Polonaise is usually played as if double-dotted.

*9: The flute melody (Primo) has the "appoggiatura" grace notes in the orchestral score but the otherwise identical violin part (Secondo) does not. You may skip the grace notes altogether, play them in both parts or just in the Primo. Since this section has to be played 3 different times, the choices are yours. You can listen to the piano duet recording to hear all three variants.

*10: Lucky Primo gets an amazing opportunity to imitate a flute in this movement. Please make the most of it and listen to several orchestral recordings to learn how to have fun with "improvised" embellishments.

*11: This articulation was indicated in the string parts by Bach.

*12: As in comment 4, the Secondo should take care not to rush these short notes and keep a steady pace.

*13: If this passage isn't comfortable for your LH, try switching hands and playing with the RH while crossing the LH over to the high notes.

NOTES TO ORCHESTRAL SUITE 3

*1: Since Suites 3 and 4 are scored with trumpets and timpani, it makes sense to use those parts for variety in repeats. This recurring dotted triplet rhythm in the LH of Secondo is meant to convey a timpani roll. If you repeat the beginning of the Overture, you can hold a D octave the first time around and play the "rolls" the second time.

*2: Make sure to convey the energetic upward motion of the subject every time it occurs.

*3: Measures 51-56 benefit from some pedal to create a more atmospheric sound for each chord area: F#7, B7, E7 and A7. The same goes for the corresponding part in mm. 82-87.

*4: The repeats in these Gavottes are written out. In Gavotte I, section A has new voicings for Secondo while sections A and C have appoggiaturas (played on the strong beat) for Primo. In Gavotte II, Secondo doubles the opening statements in sections E and G and Primo adds the trumpet parts in mm. 79-80, 100-101, 104-105, 108-109 and at the end.

*5: The repeats of the Bourrée are also written out and voiced differently. Due to added trumpet and timpani parts, the repeats will be louder.

*6: This lively Gigue is very satisfying to play on the piano. Do listen to a recording to get the feel for it and choose a manageable tempo.

NOTES TO ORCHESTRAL SUITE 4

*1: This “hunting horn signal” of eighth and quarter notes on the same pitch happens throughout the movement (mm. 27, 28, 31, 32 34, 44 etc.) The quarter note has to be uniformly sustained to keep the rhythm balanced and the tempo steady.

*2: You may like starting Bourrée I softly and playing the repeat louder for reasons explained in the next comment.

*3: Suites 3 and 4 are scored with trumpets and timpani, so it makes sense to use those parts for variety in repeats. In Bourrée I, Secondo has a recurring trumpet flourish of 2 eight notes and a quarter in mm. 2, 6, 8, 30 and at the end. Primo has them in mm. 10, 12, 14 etc., where the LH takes over the long melody notes and the trumpet part is shown with stems up in the RH.

*4: This movement is great practice for the “Mannheim Sigh:” putting more weight on the first note of a 2-note slur.

*5: In Bourrée II, I suggest skipping the LH of Primo the first time around. That lets the Secondo RH have an expressive solo, especially if phrased with some legato. For the repeat, the Secondo RH can switches to all staccato to help Primo handle the quick turns in the LH. You can stream the 2022 Grand Piano recording to hear the suggested interpretation.

*6: For variety on the recording, we chose to play the da Capo of Bourrée I with frequently contrasting dynamics. If you like this approach, it can be used in repeats of other movements as well.

*7: This Gavotte has an almost exaggerated “pesante” character with the repeated heavy chords alternated between Primo and Secondo. Don’t be shy to “stomp” a little here: it will contrast nicely with the lightly-footed Menuets.

*8: I like to designate one movement in each Suite as a generally “soft” one. In this case, the Menuets fit that purpose well.

*9: Menuet II is scored as a “Trio” of 2 violins, viols and continuo and sounds very soft, almost muted in an orchestral recording. This is a good opportunity to use the una corda (soft pedal) – I am sure Bach would have approved using all possibilities of the modern piano.

*10: As in comment 4, it makes sense to use the timpani “effects” for the repeats in the Réjouissance. Secondo should skip the notes with downward stems - in the beginning as well as in mm. 13-16, 29-32, 39 and 46-48 – the first time around.

*11: Playing this movement with trills sounds more authentic but skipping them allows for a faster tempo and a more defined rhythm. It’s good to listen to recordings and try both ways.

*12: The voices are written out in each hand for counterpoint clarity. As always in piano music, you may switch hands or combine notes in one hand, whatever is comfortable.

*13: It’s important to keep these 8th notes long in order to maintain tension against Primo’s syncopated quarter notes.

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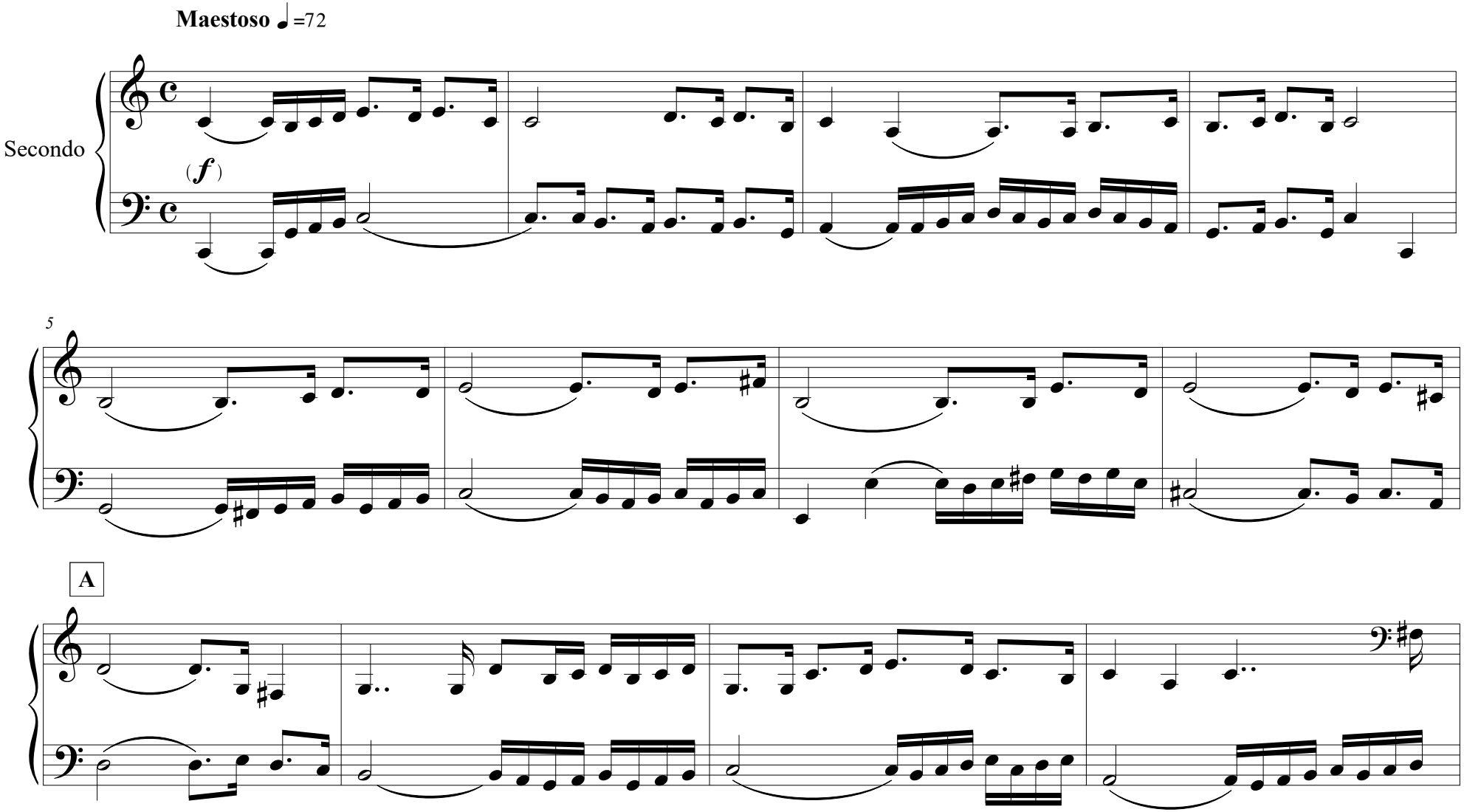
Orchestral Suite No. 1

BWV 1066

Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C Major

Overture

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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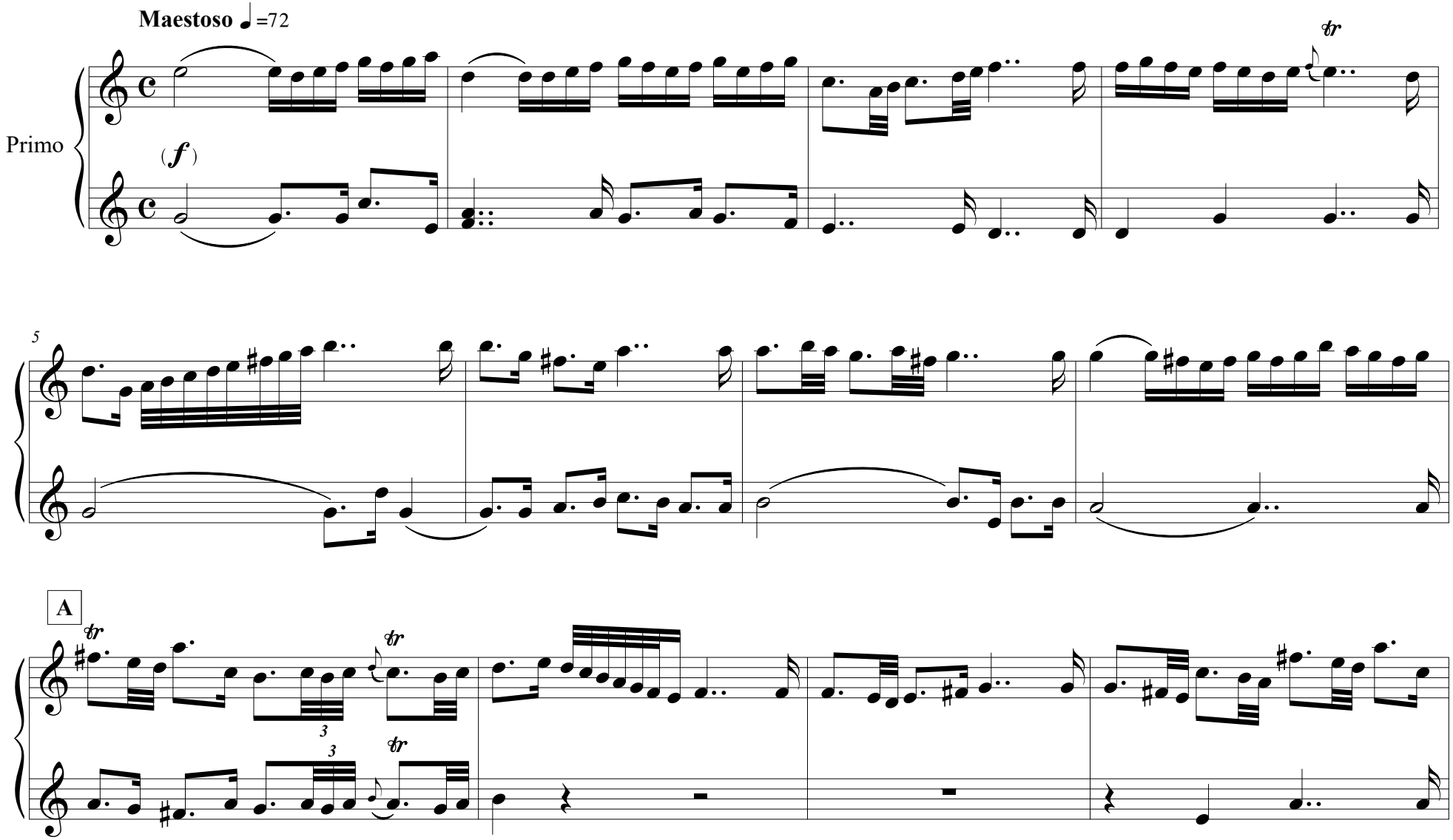
Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C Major

Overture

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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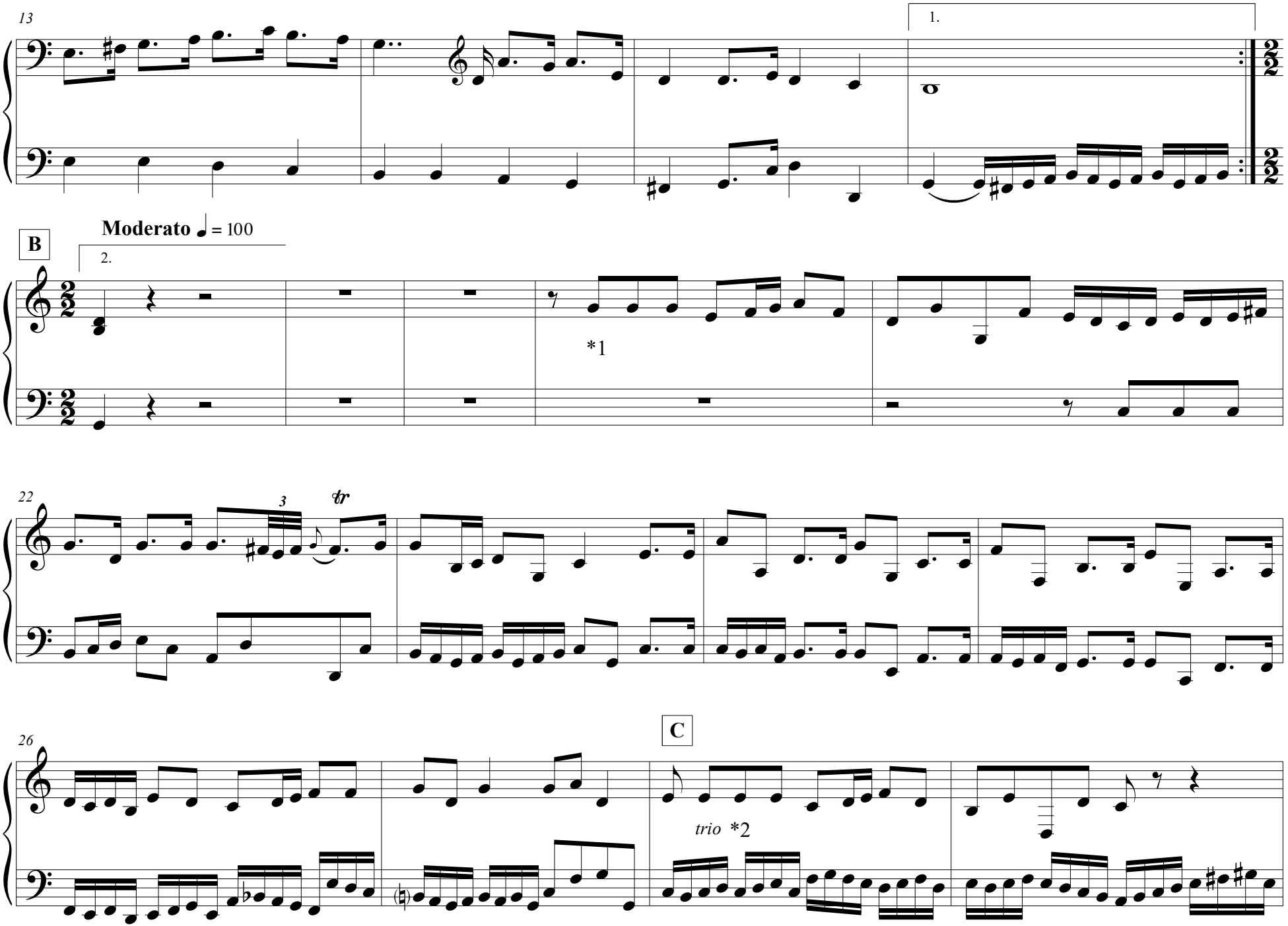
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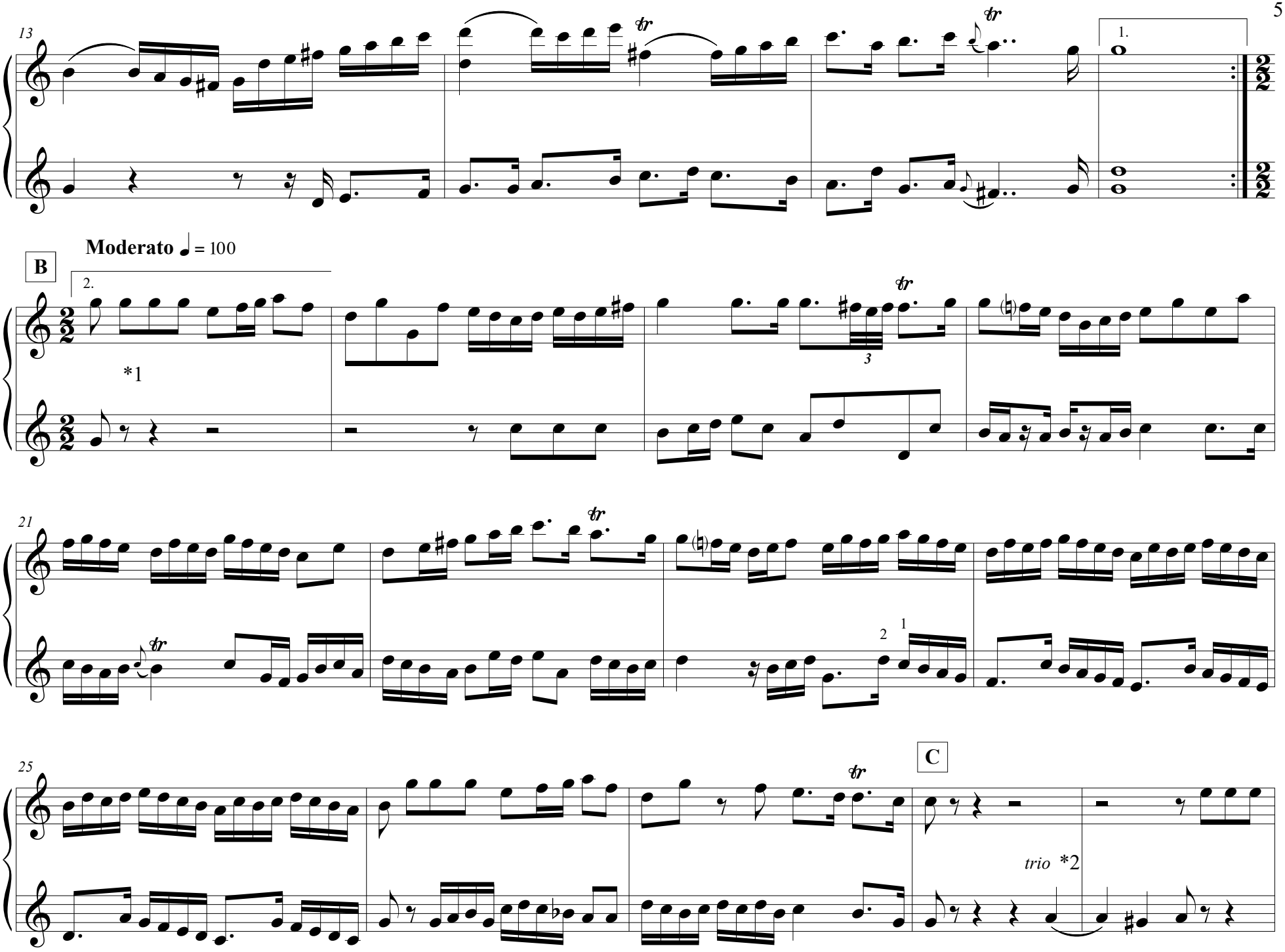
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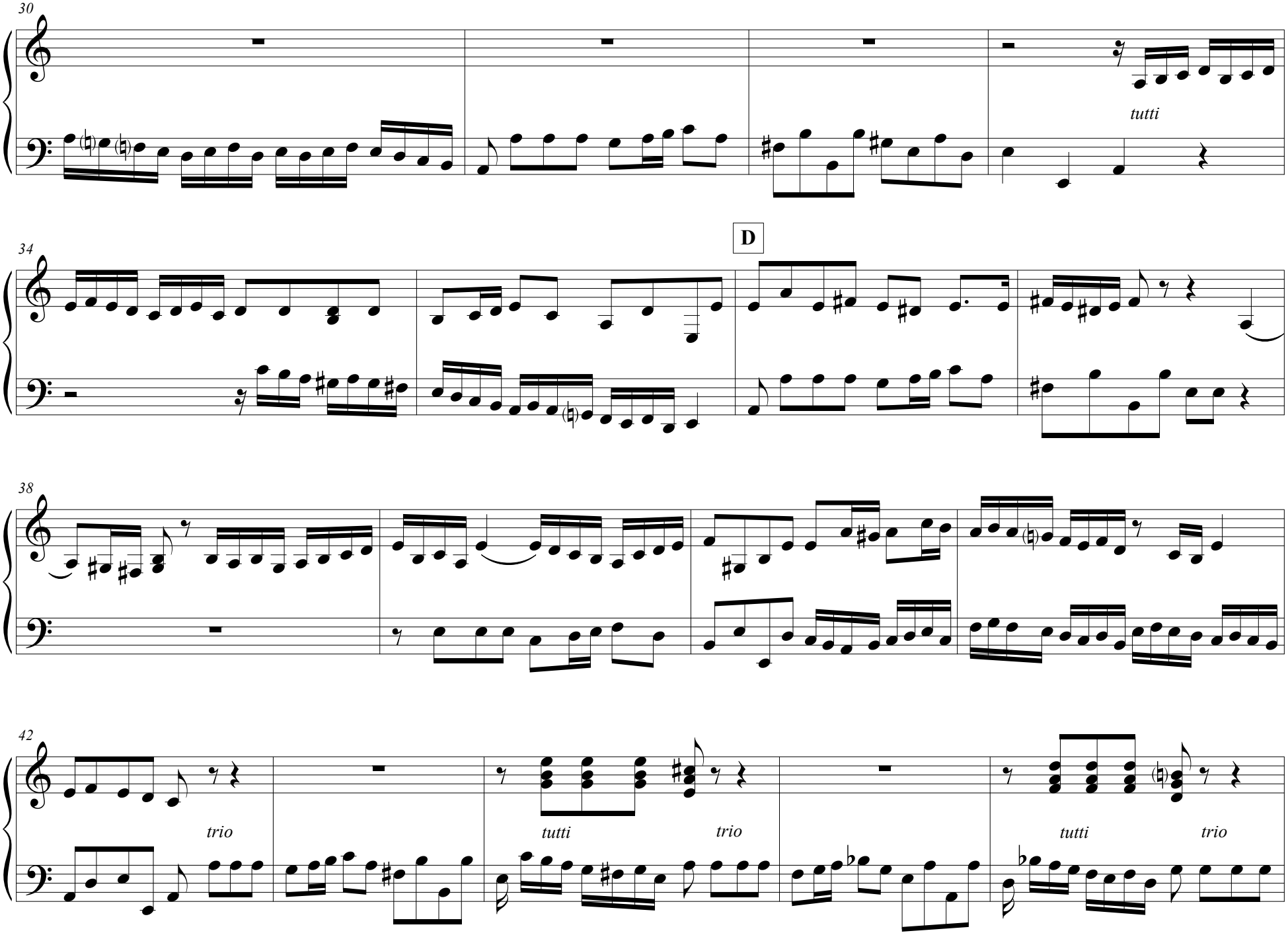
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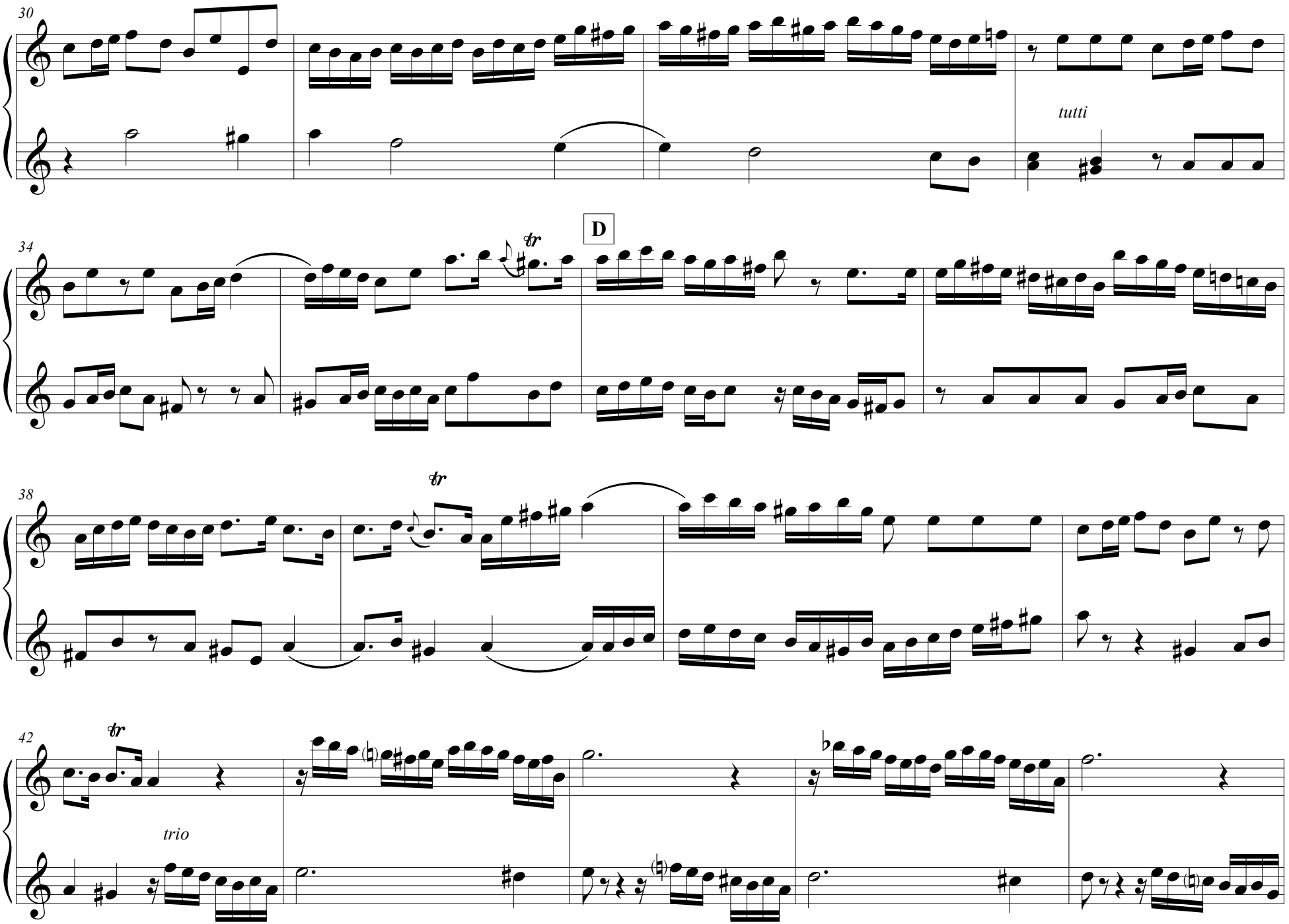
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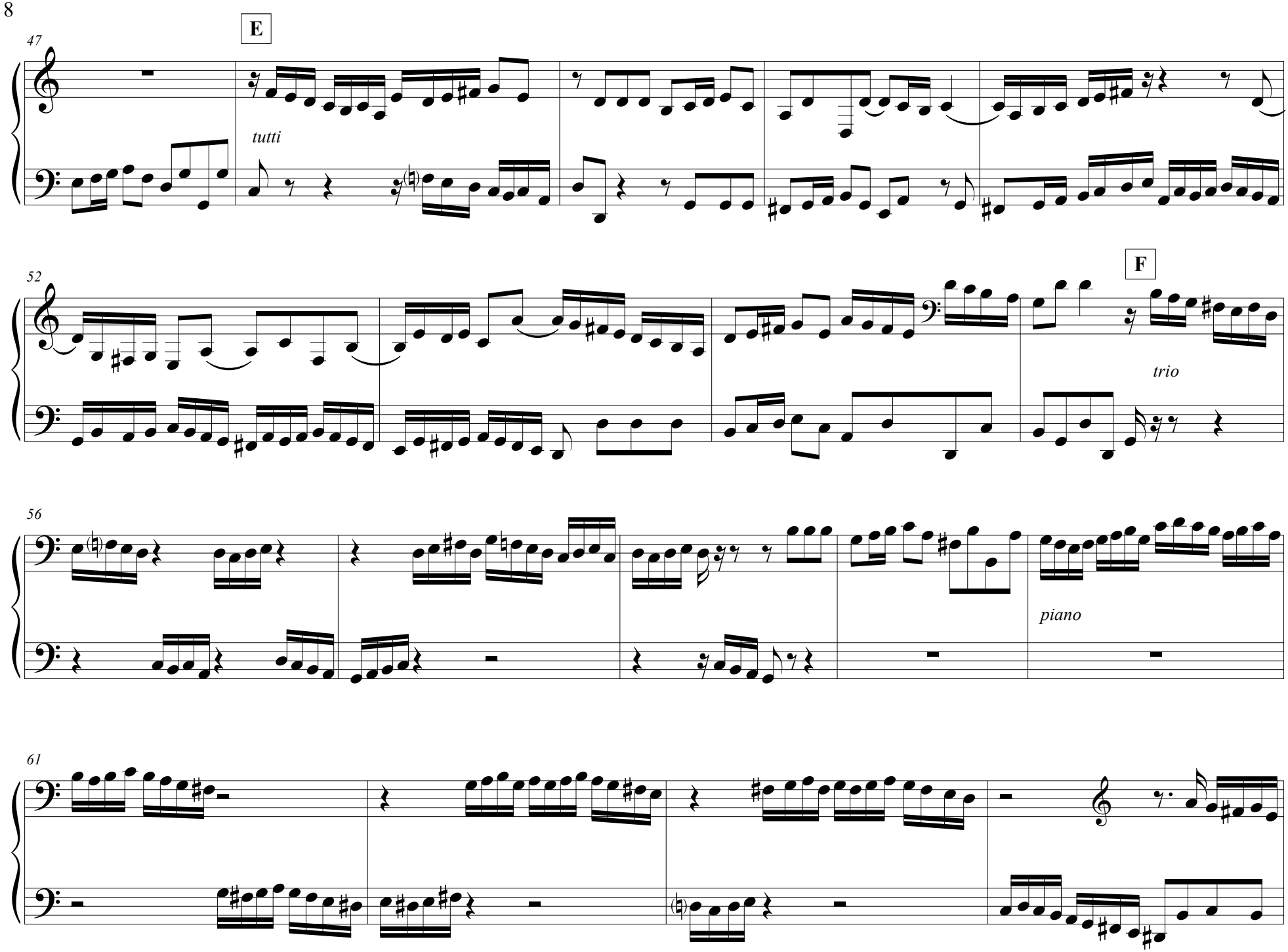
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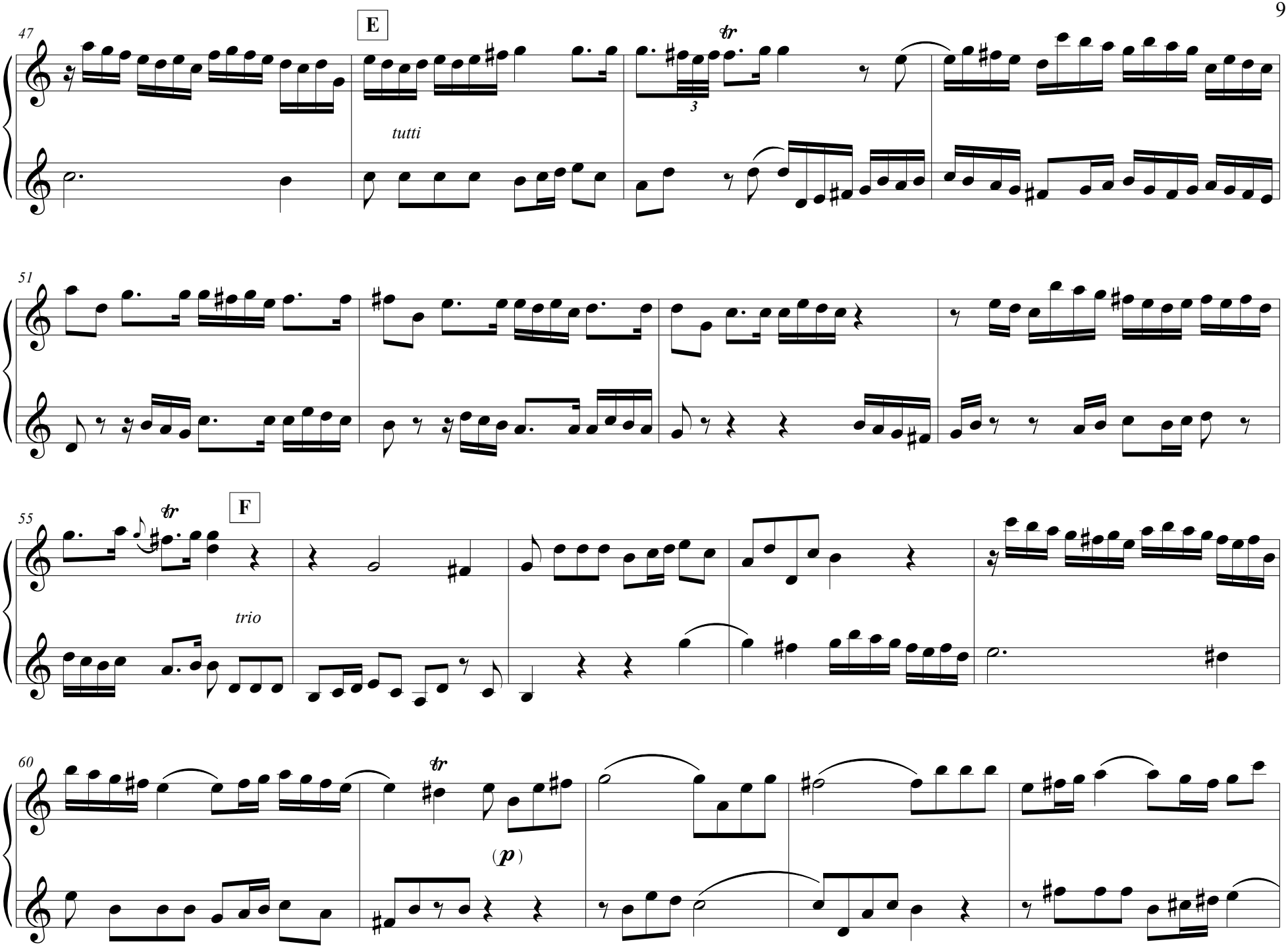
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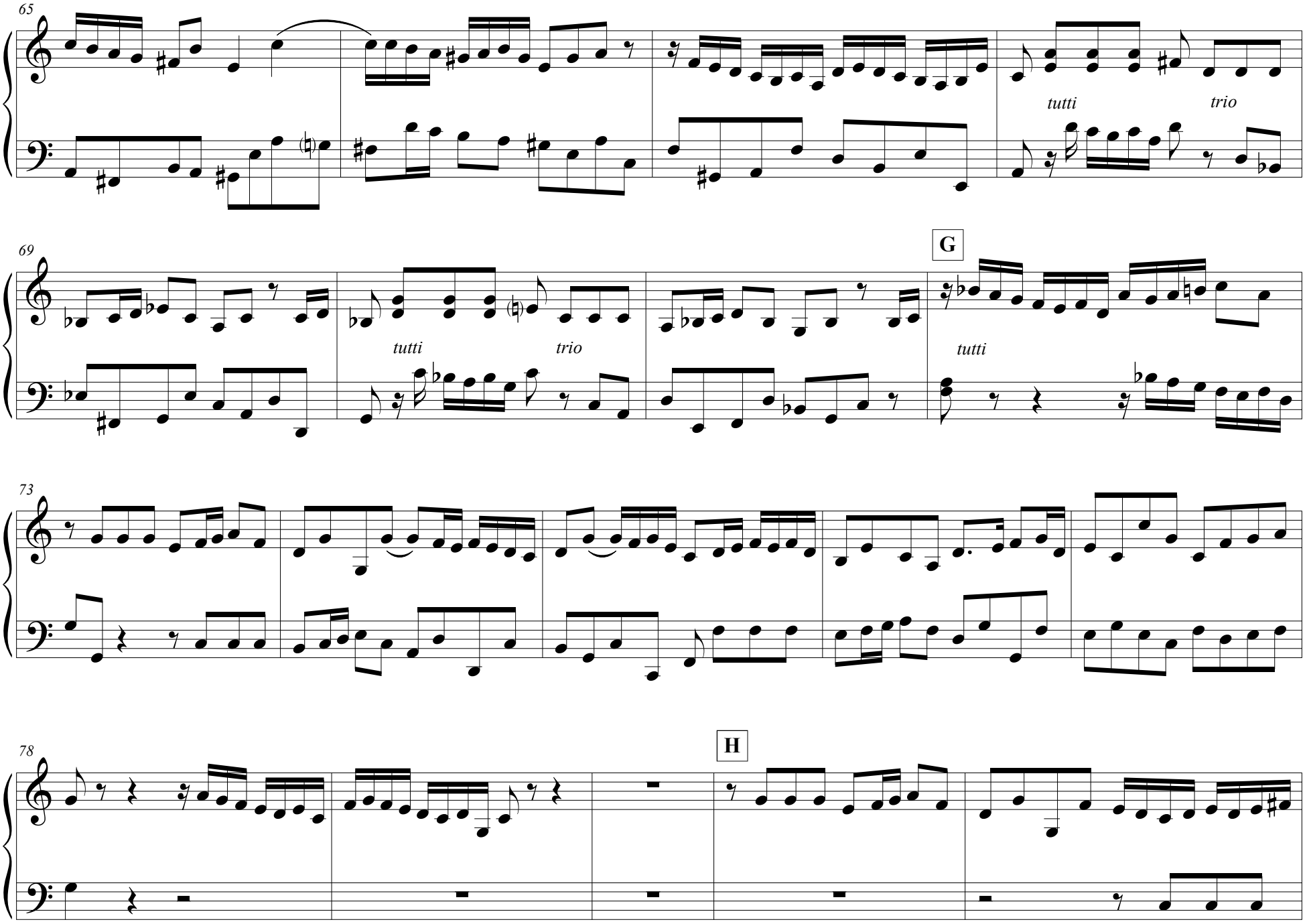
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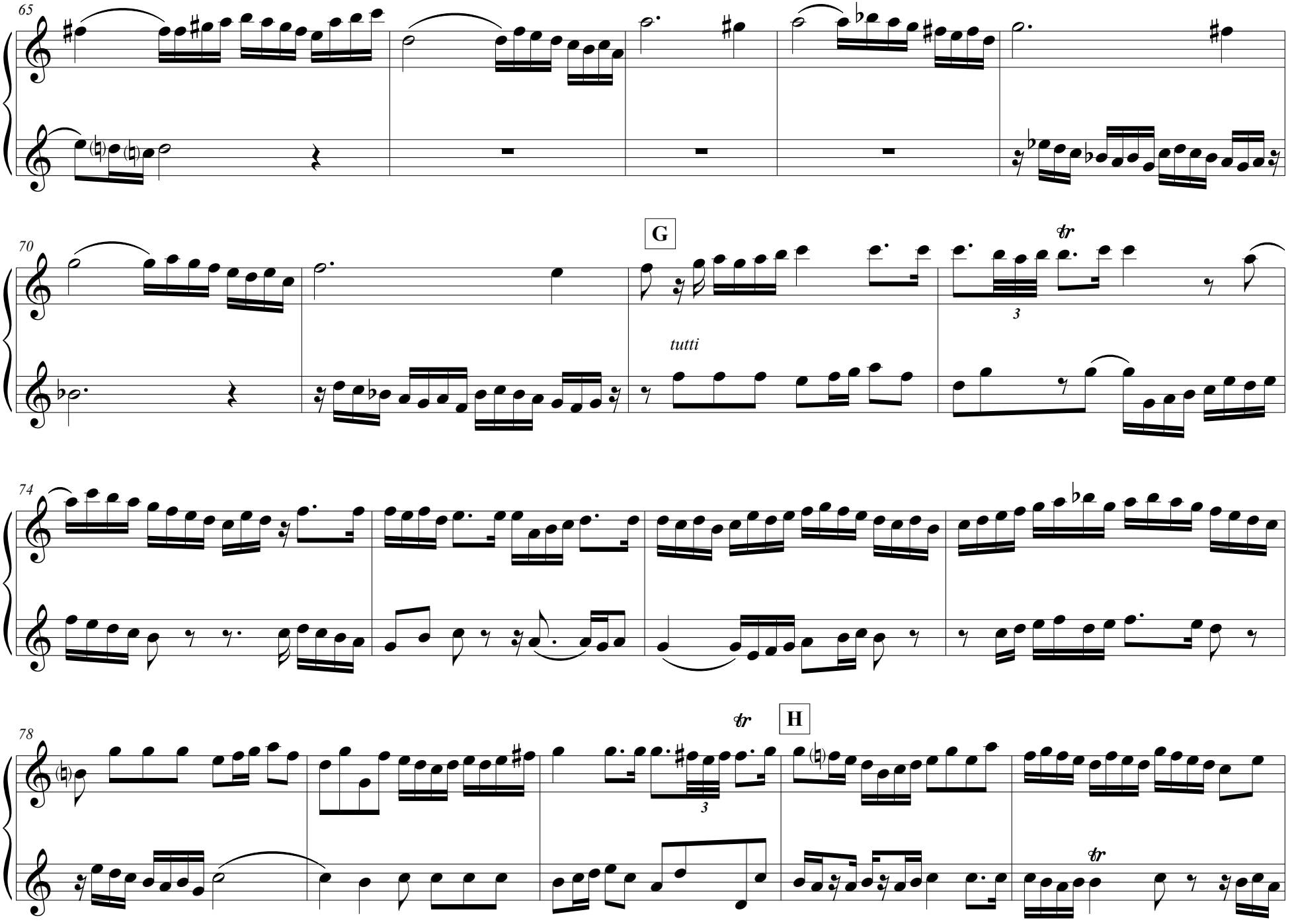
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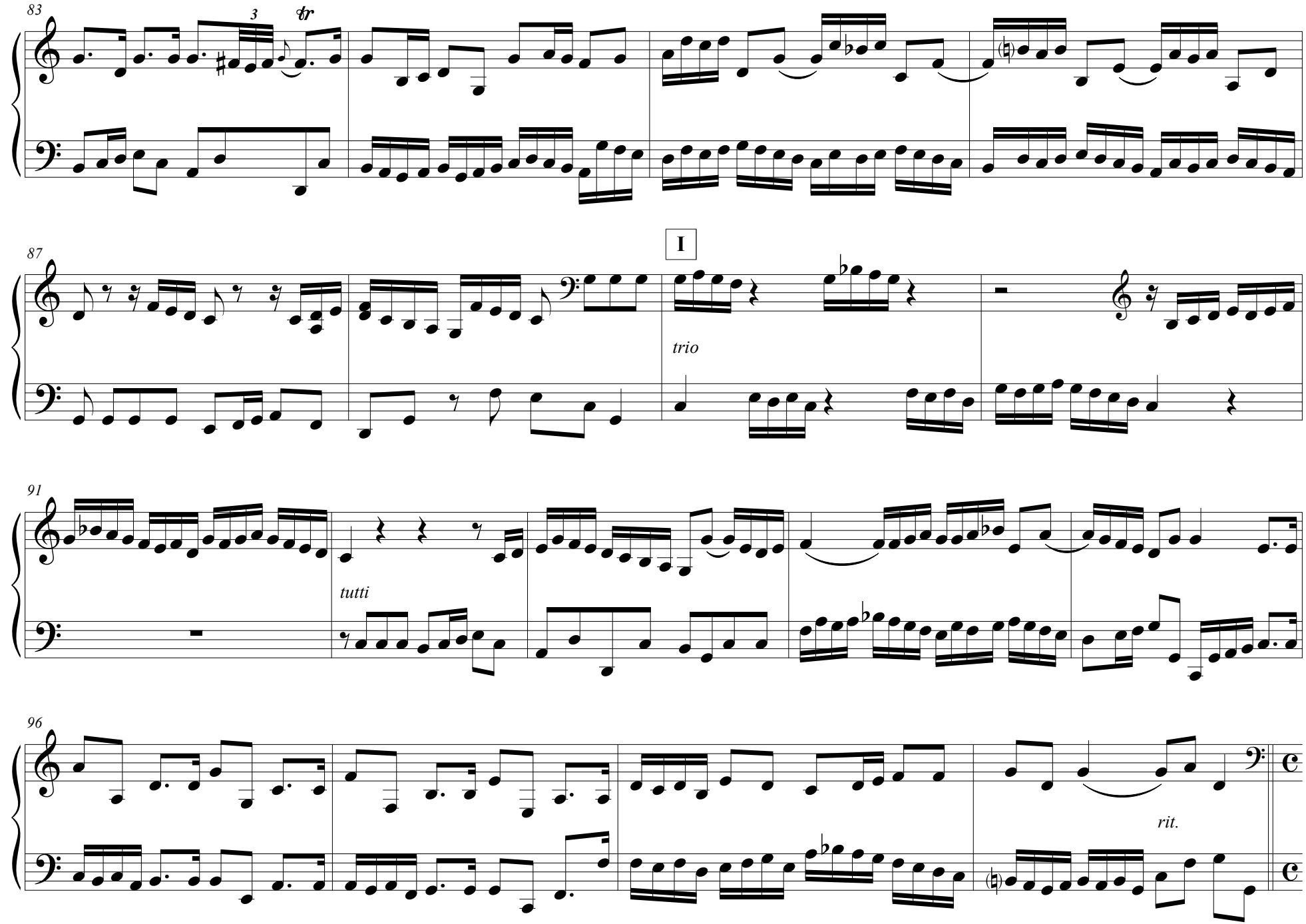
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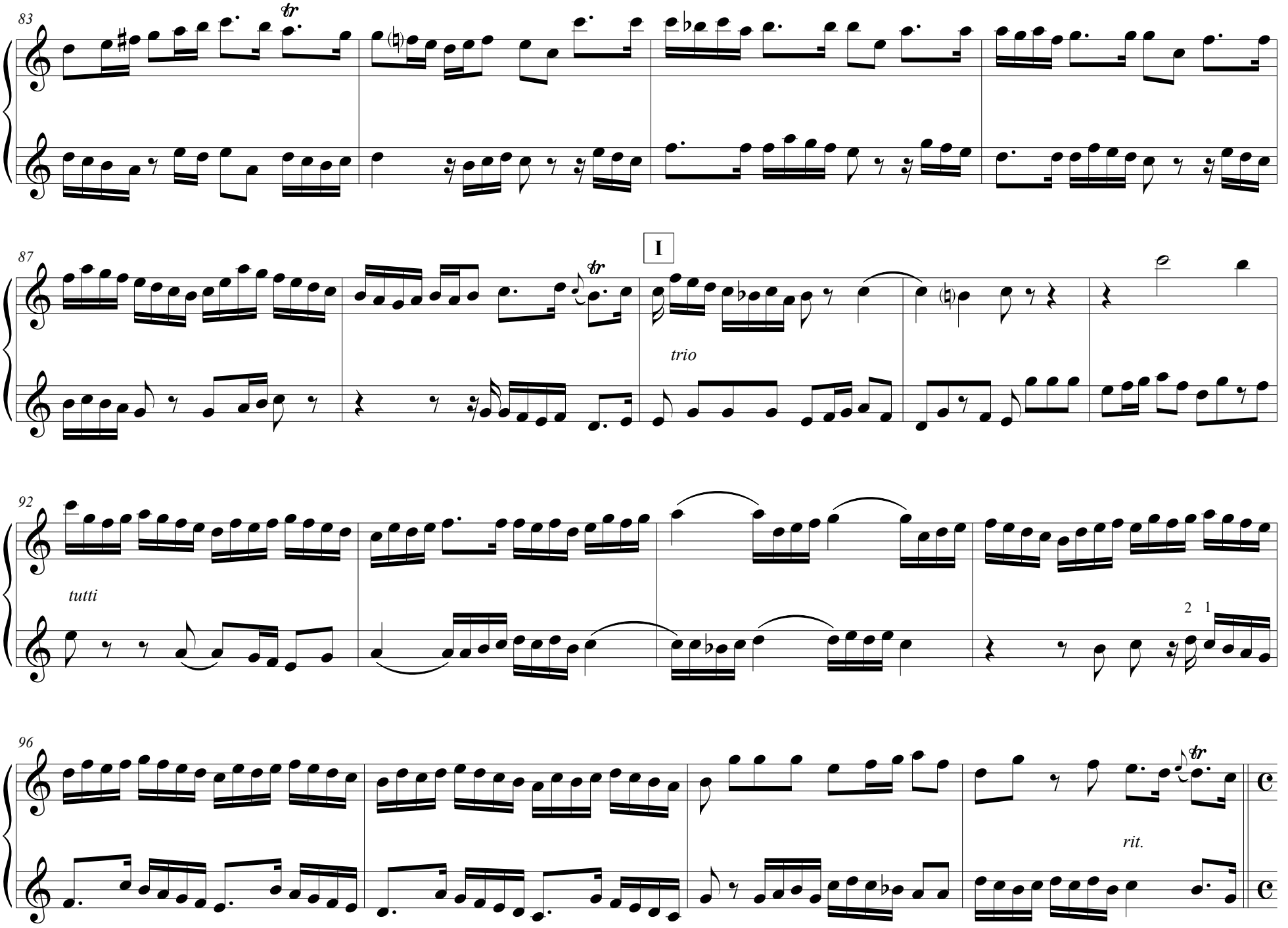
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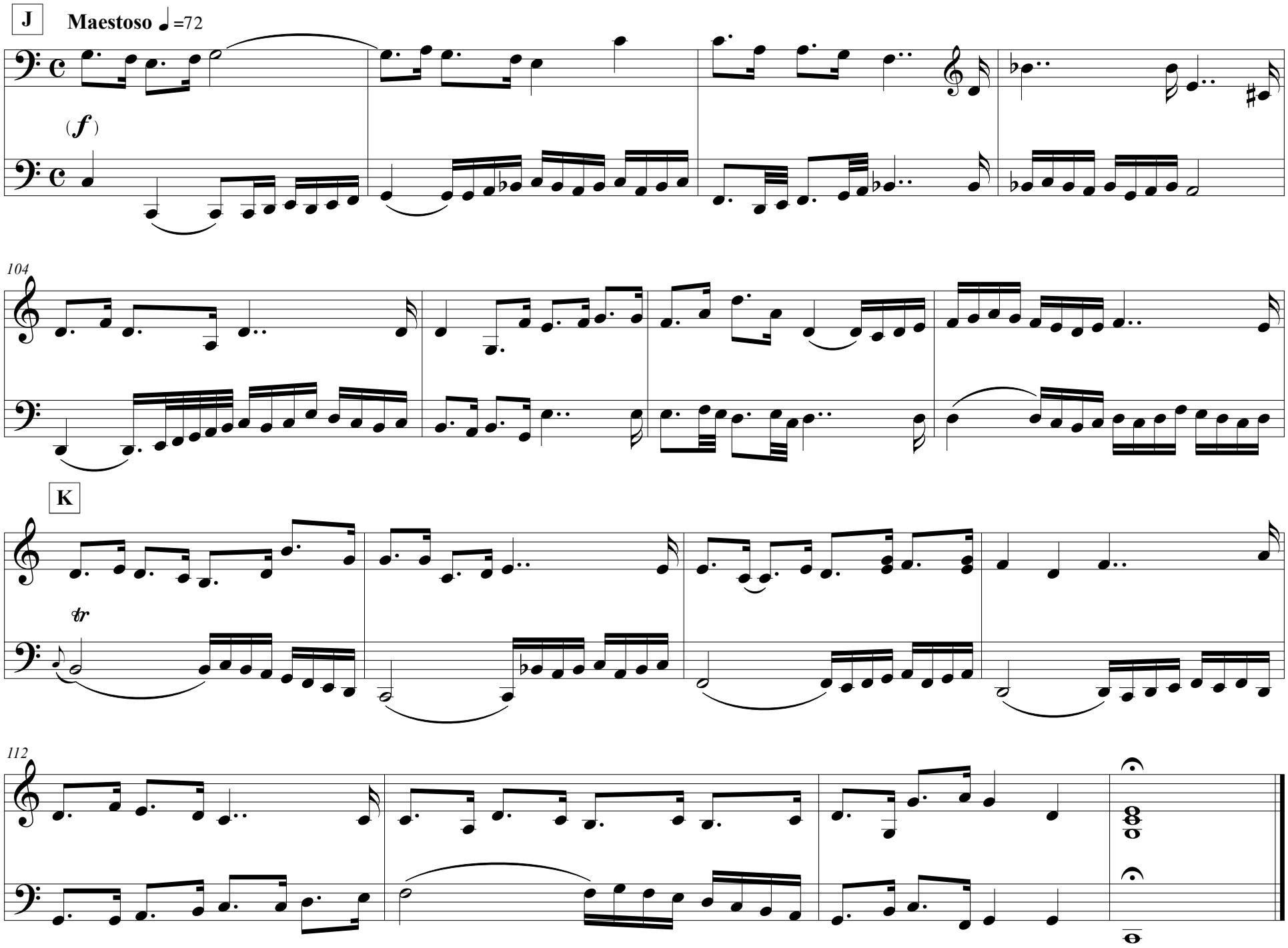
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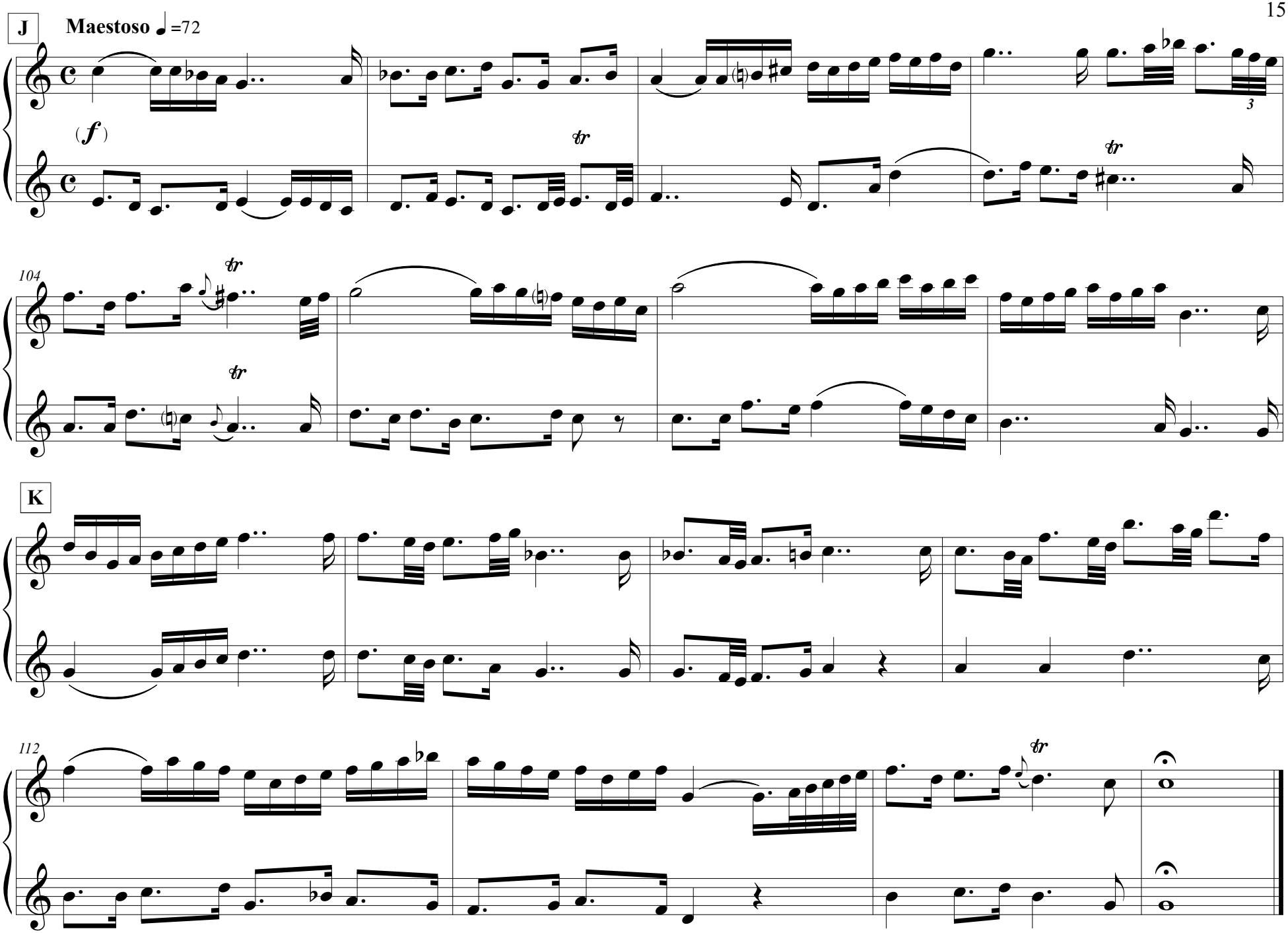
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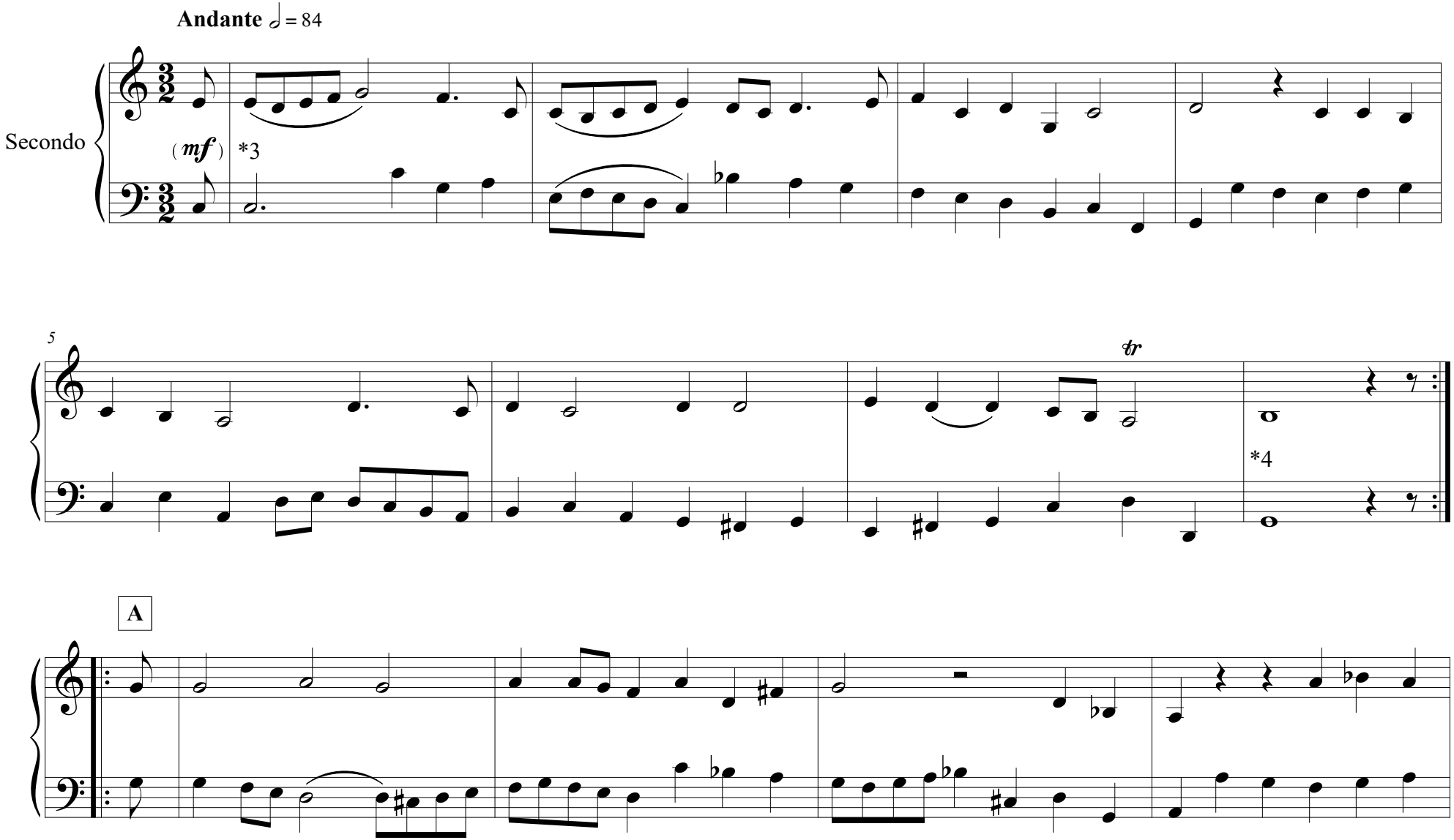
Courante



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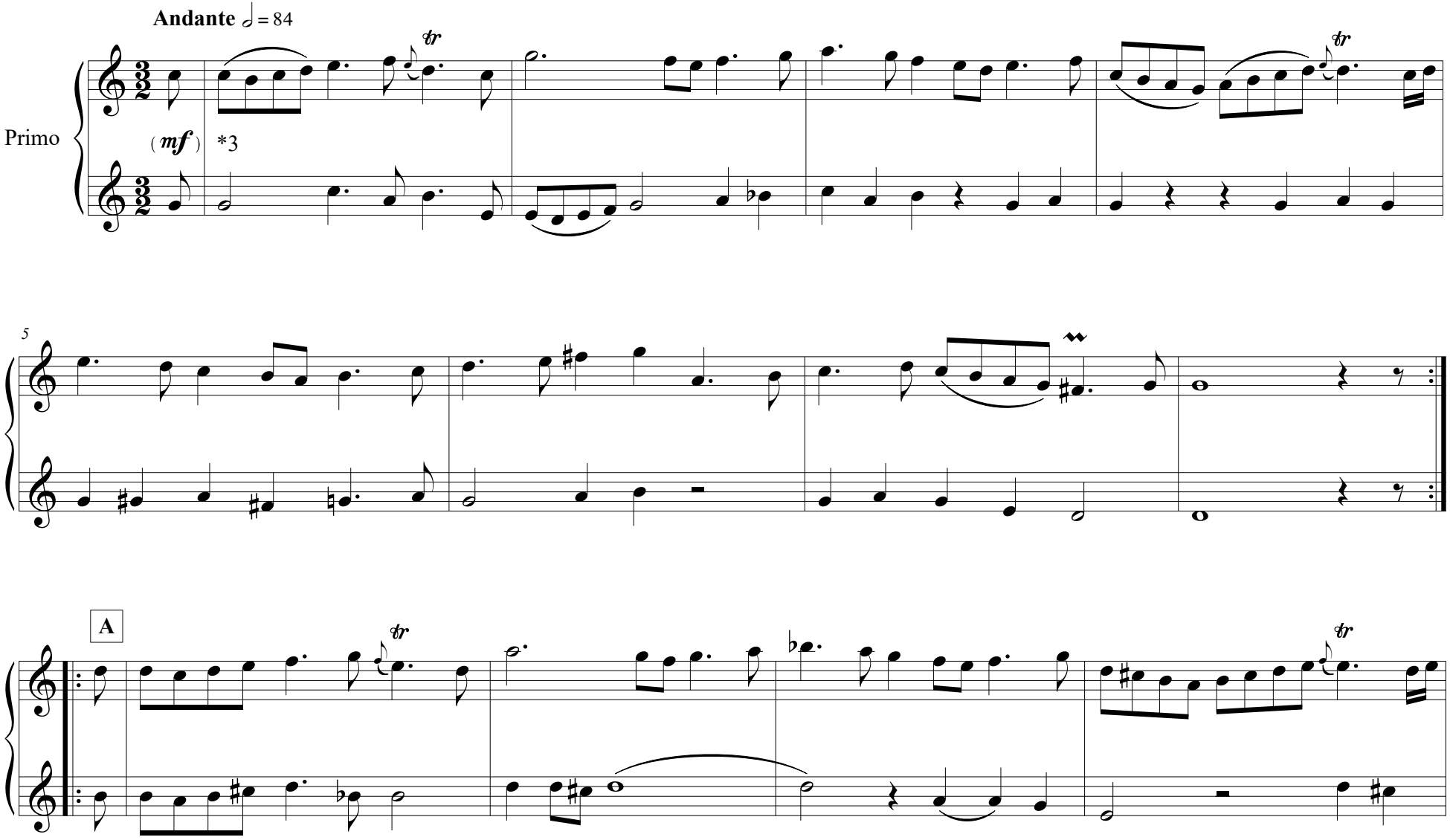
Courante



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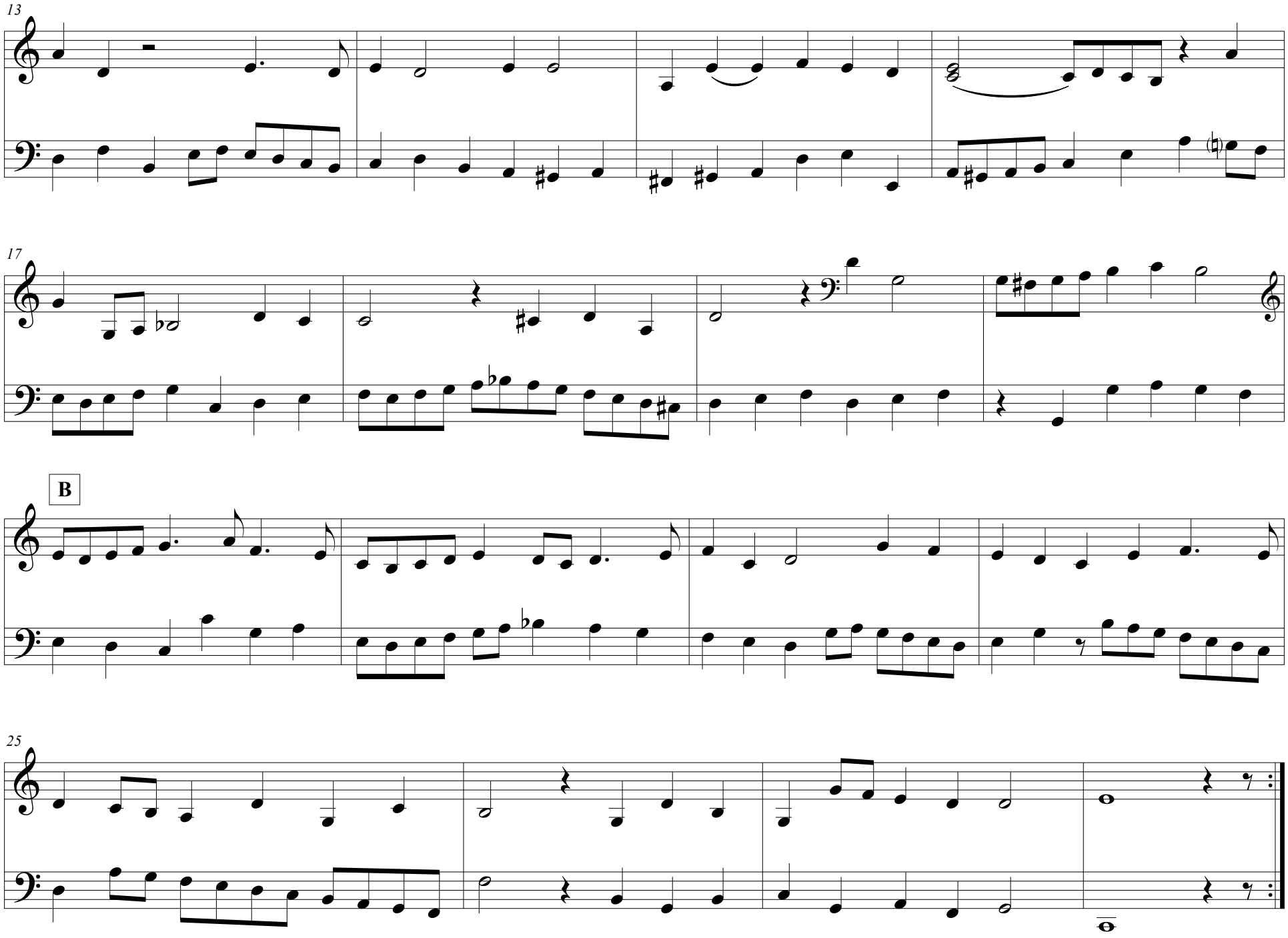
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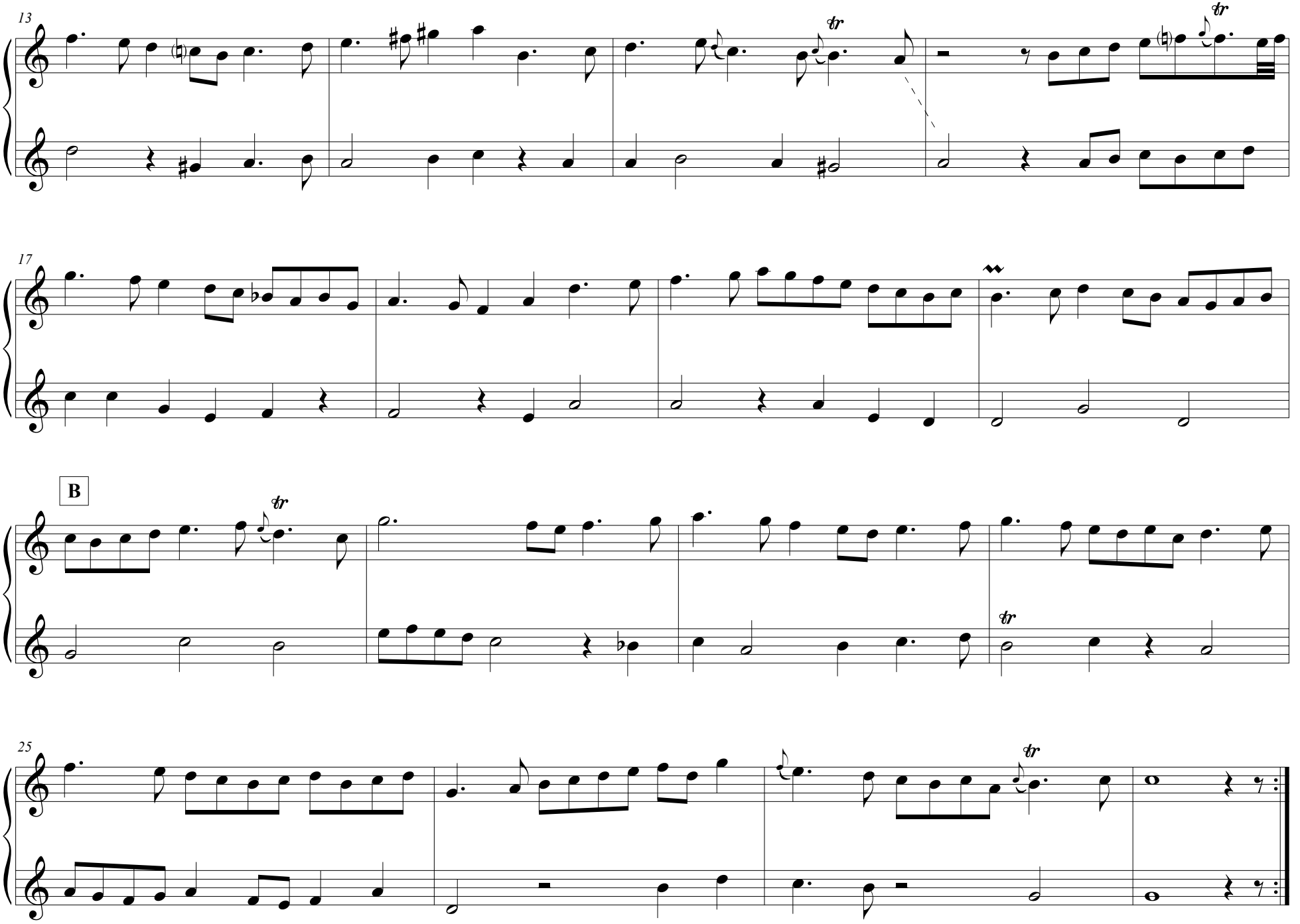
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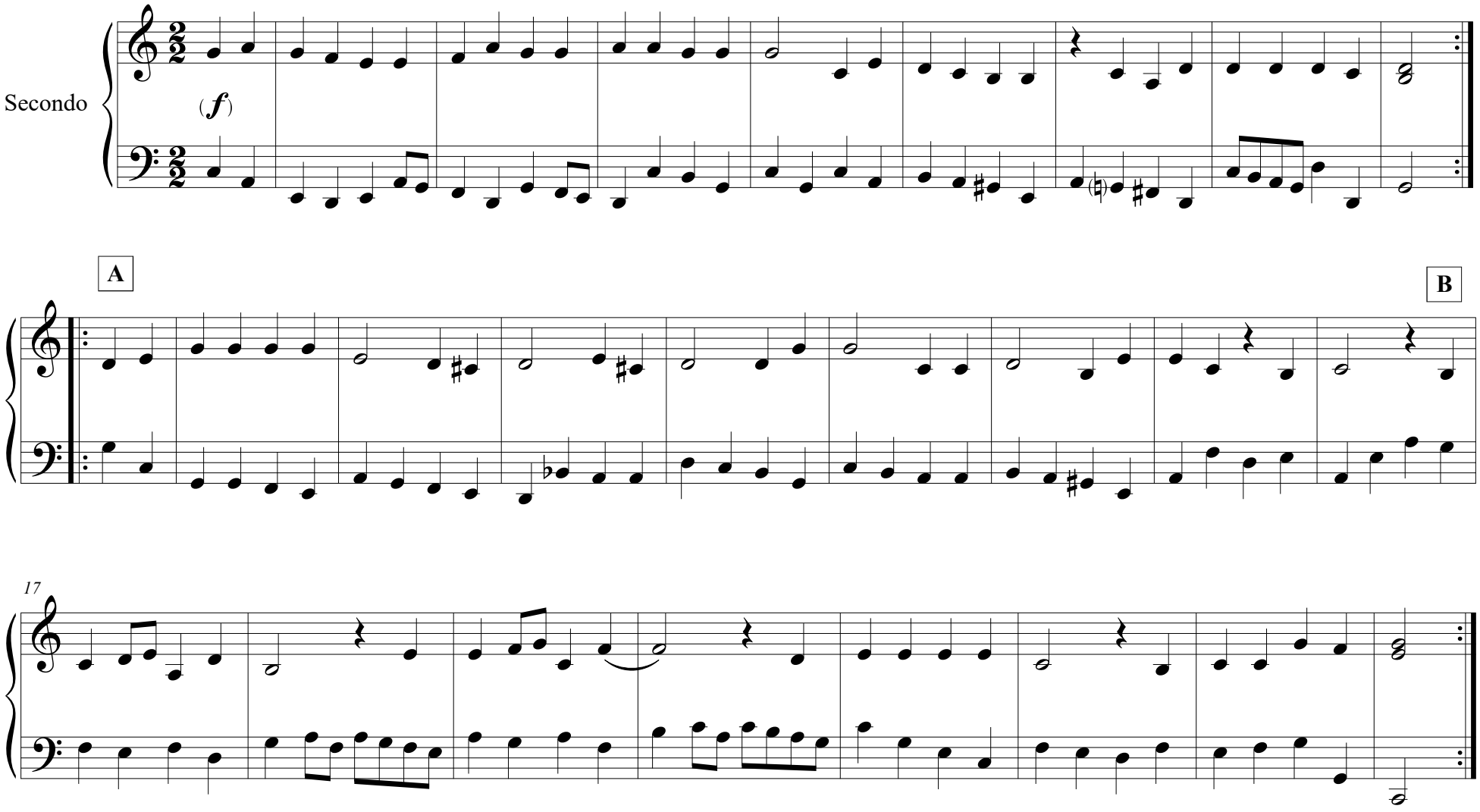
Gavottes

Gavotte I

Moderato ♩ = 92



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Gavottes

Gavotte I

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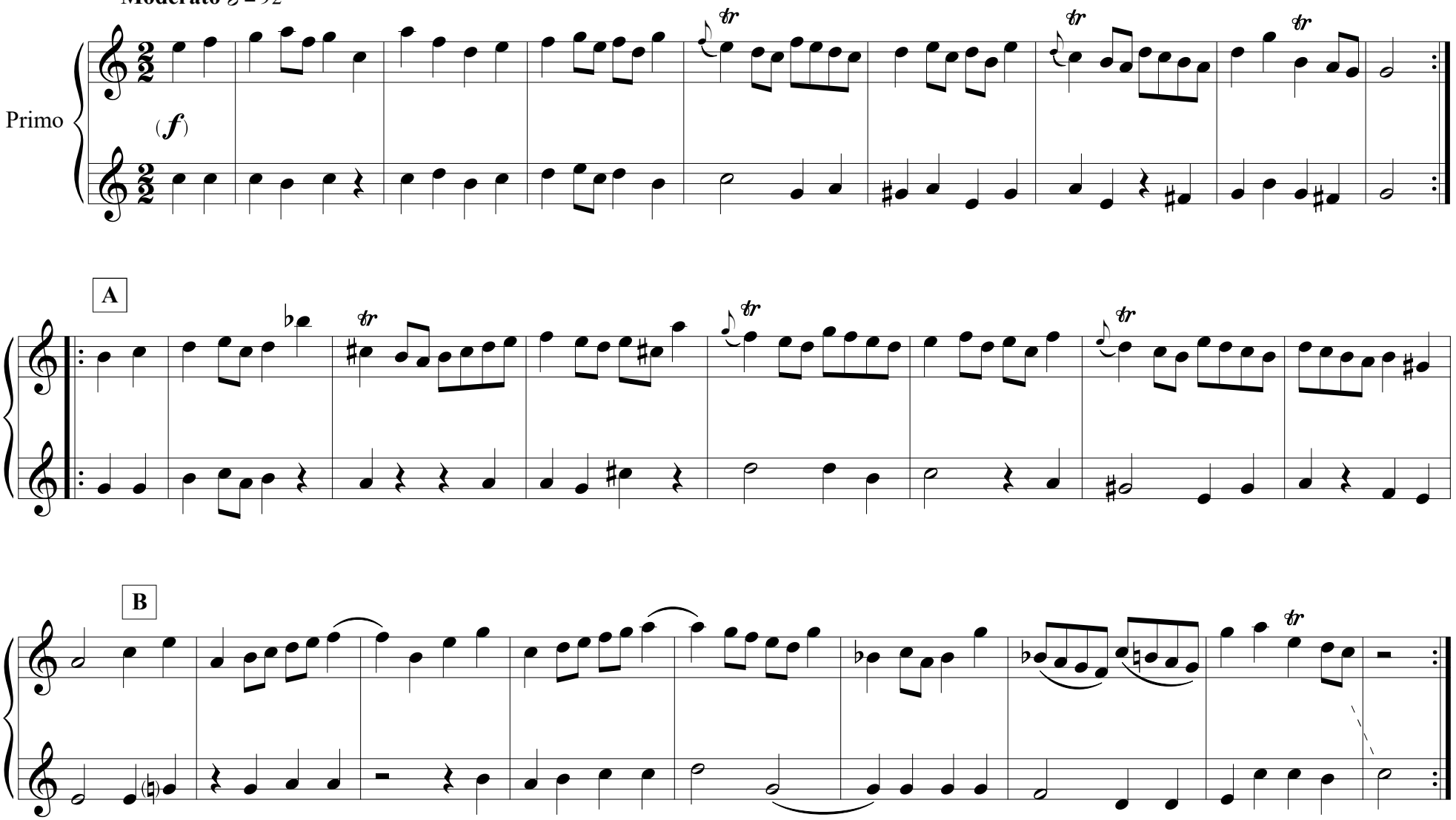

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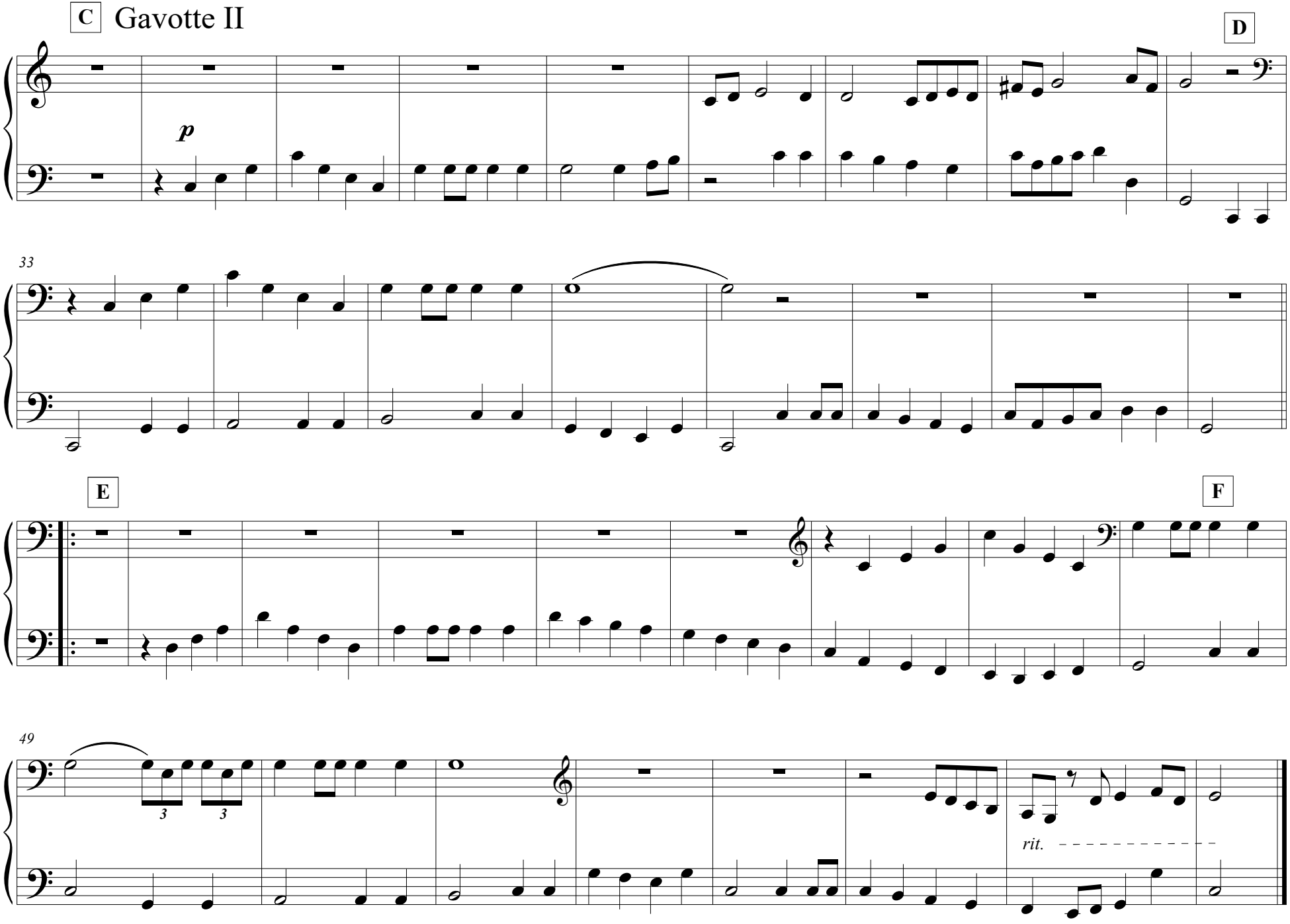
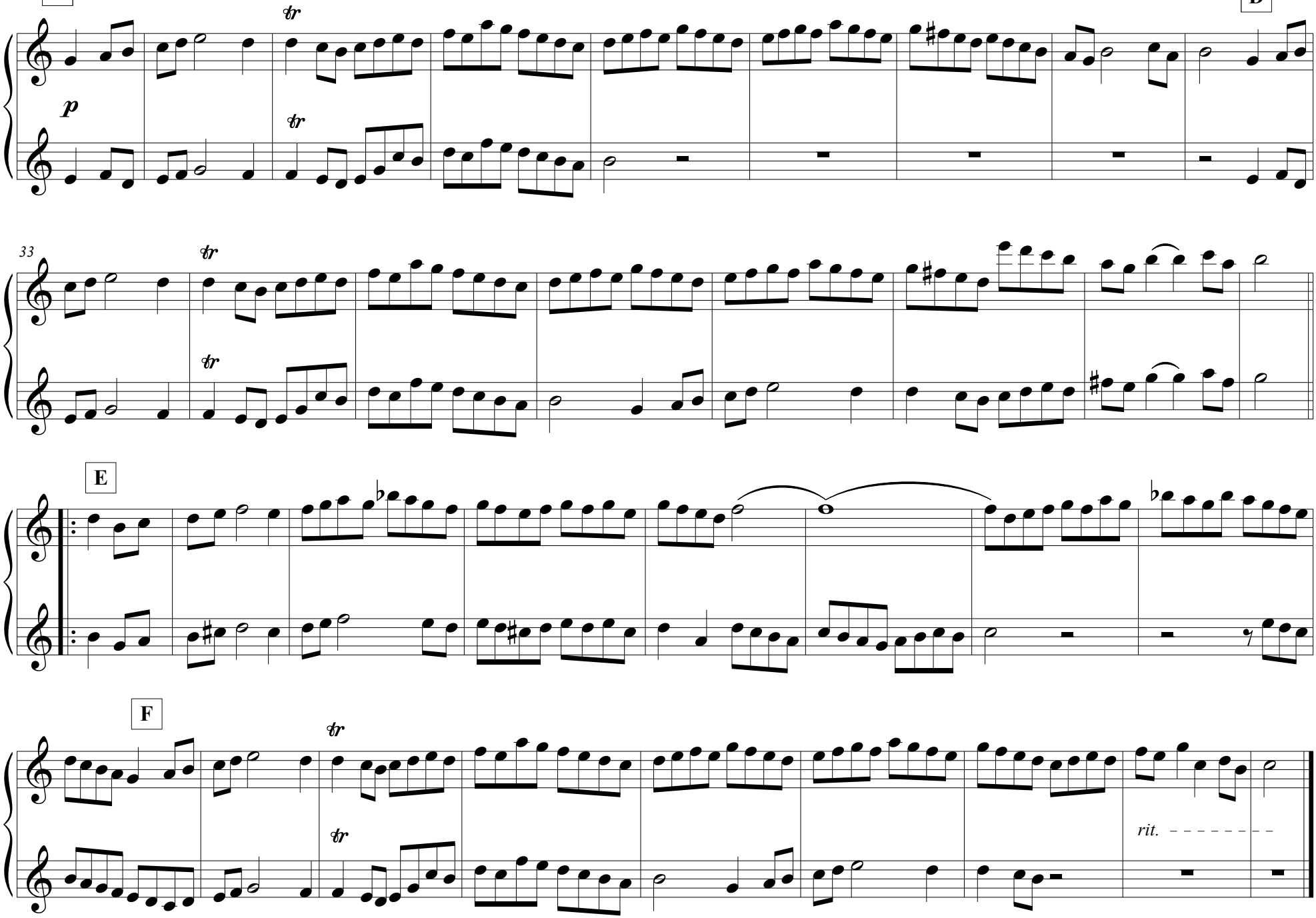
C Gavotte II



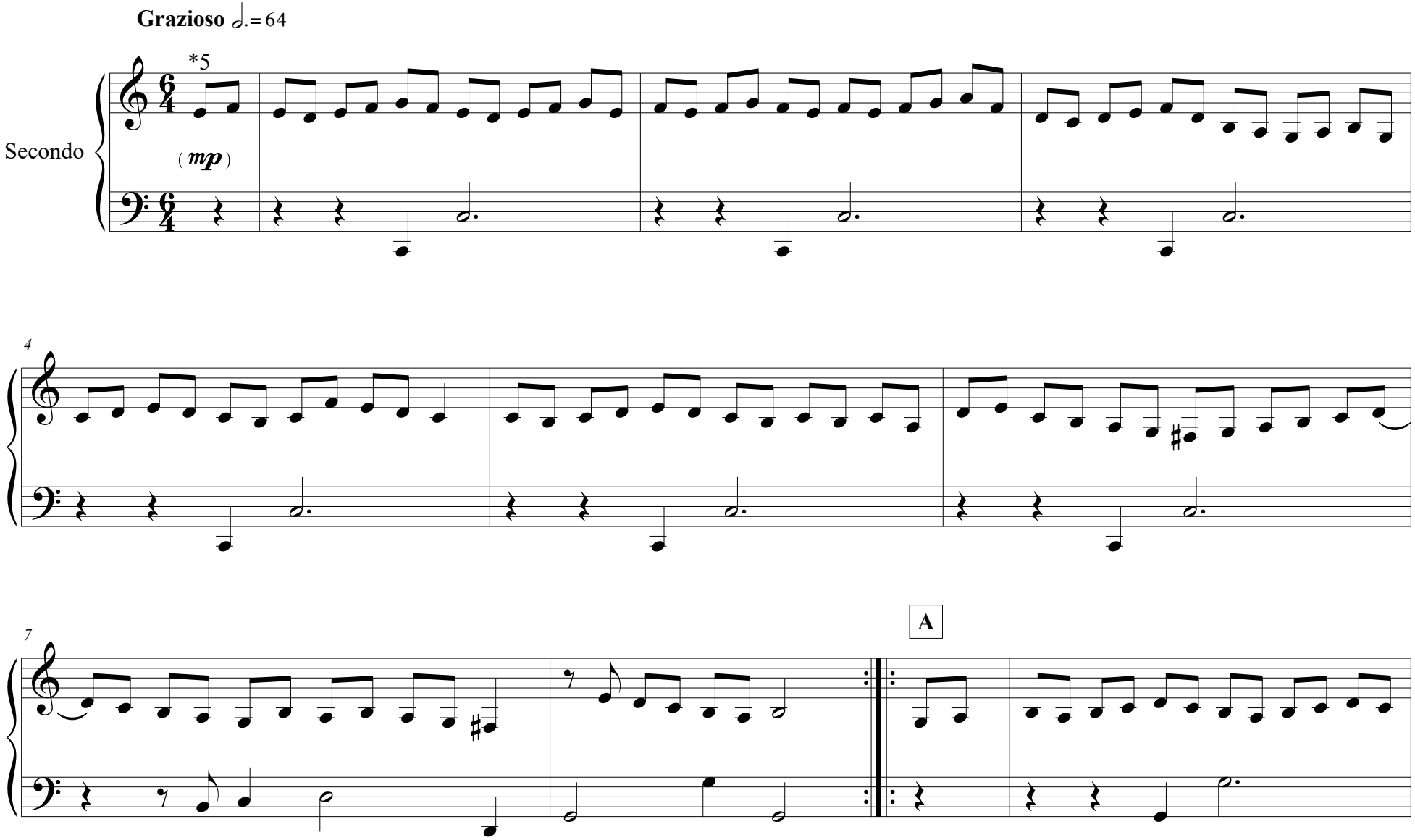
Gavotte I da Capo, senza repetizione

C Gavotte II



Gavotte I da Capo, senza repetizione

Forlane



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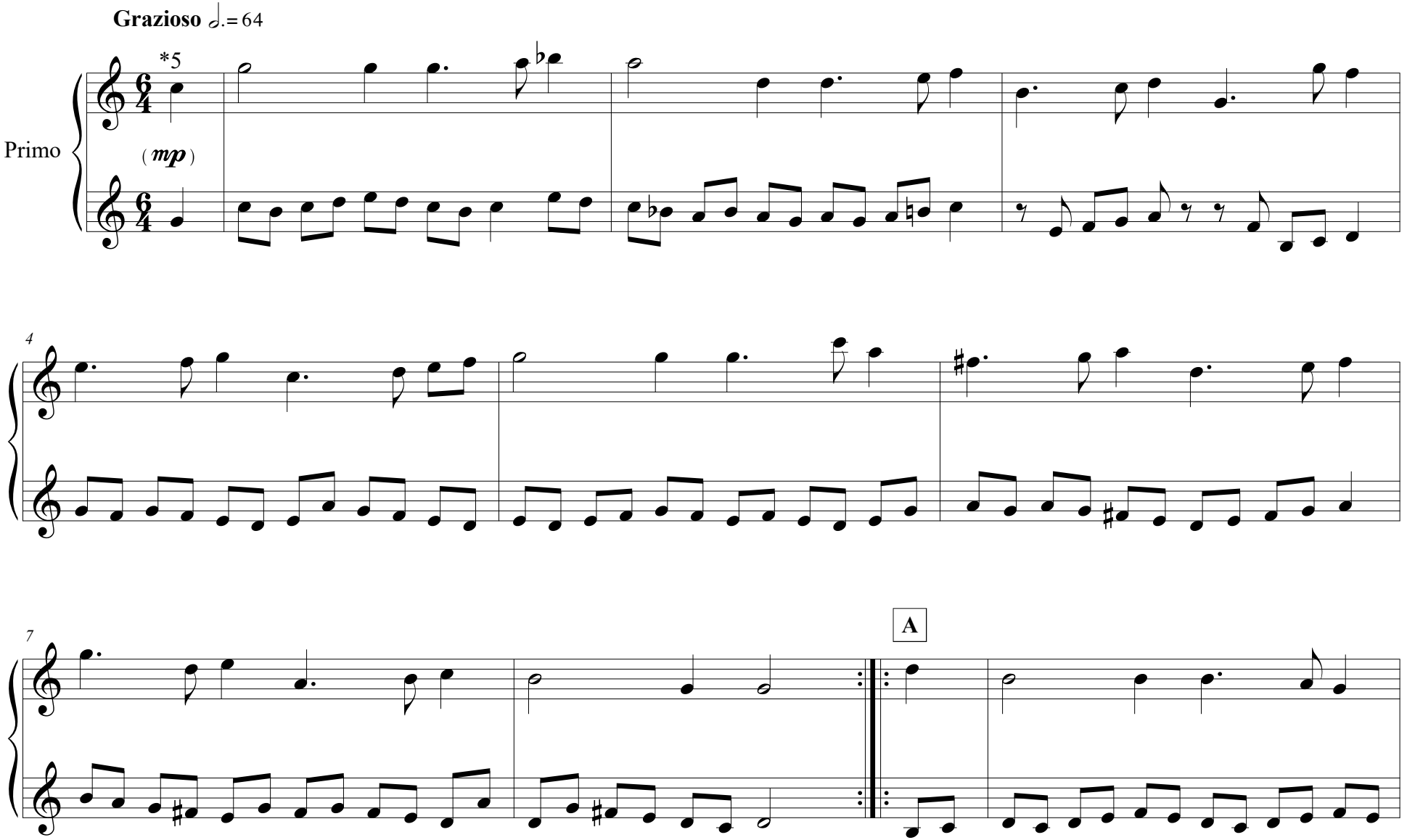
Forlane



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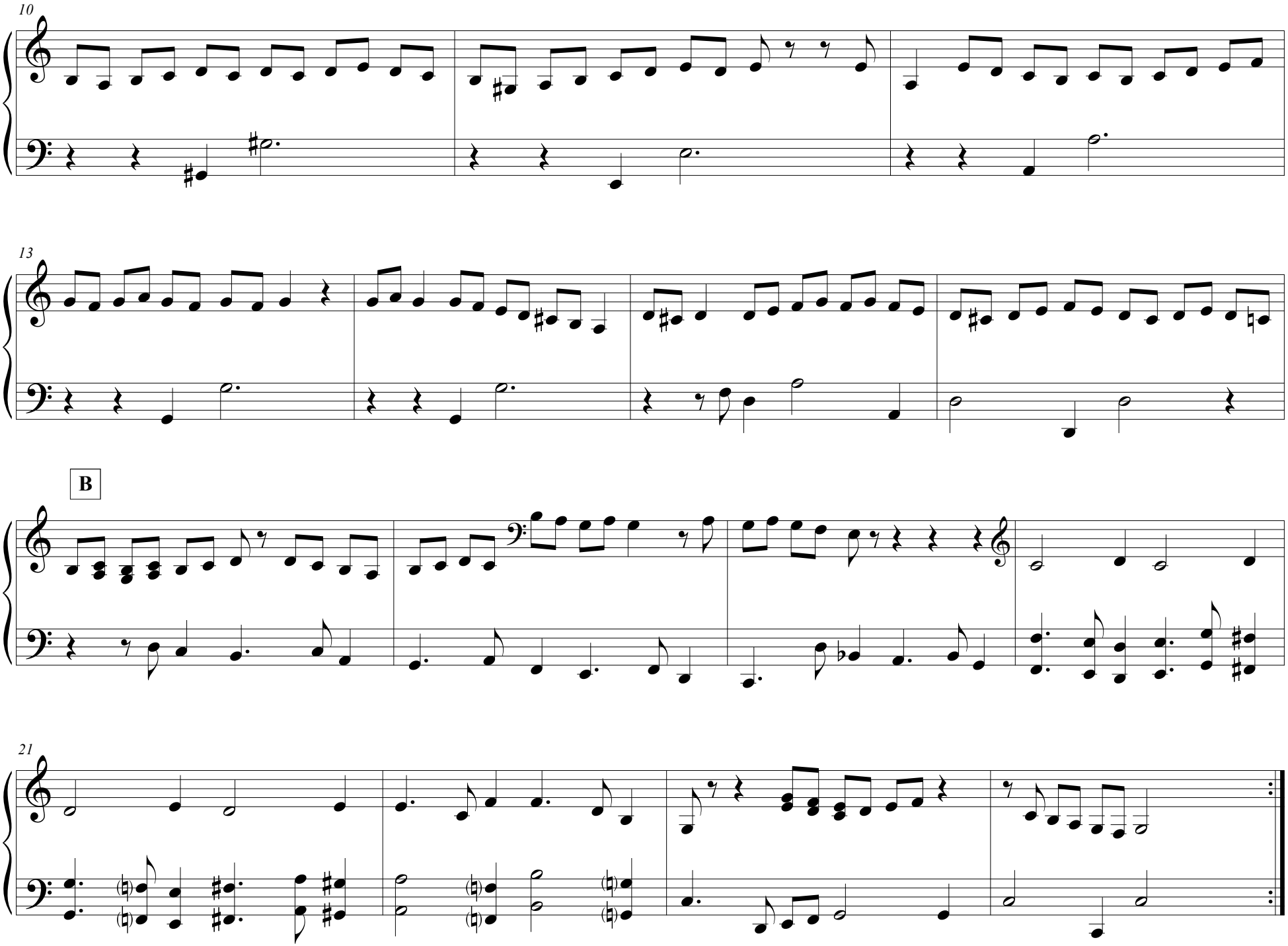
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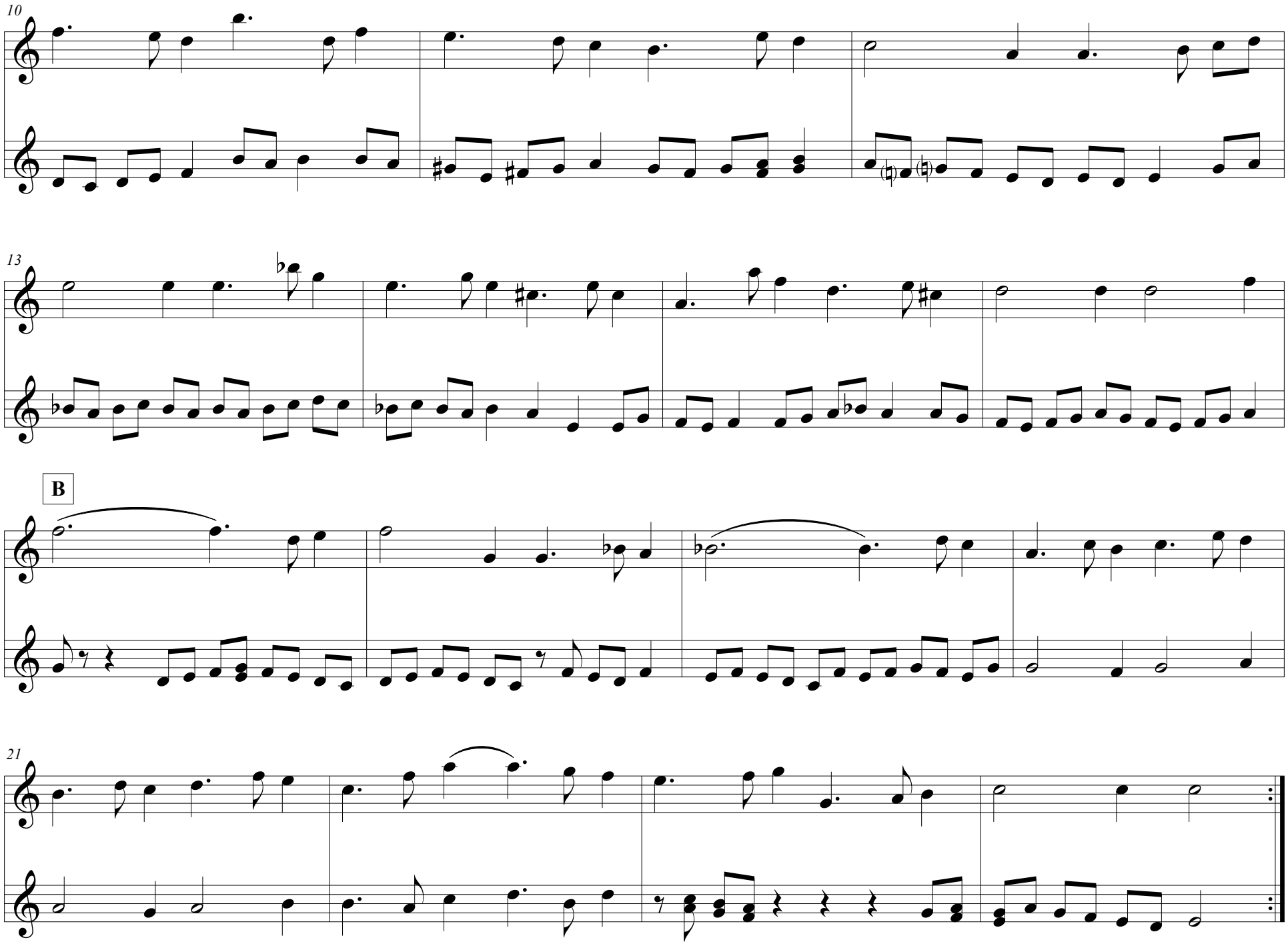
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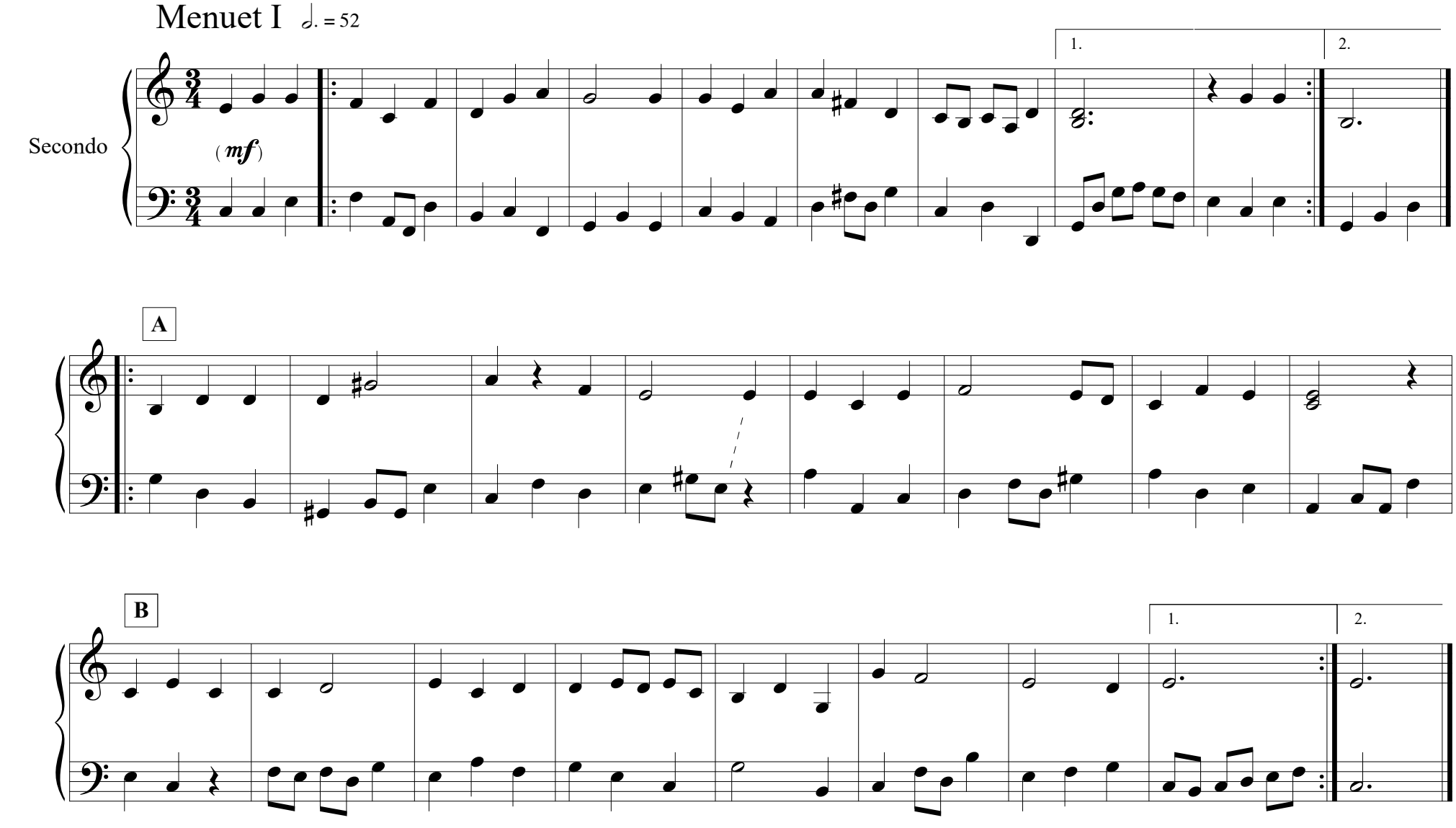
Menuets

Menuet I



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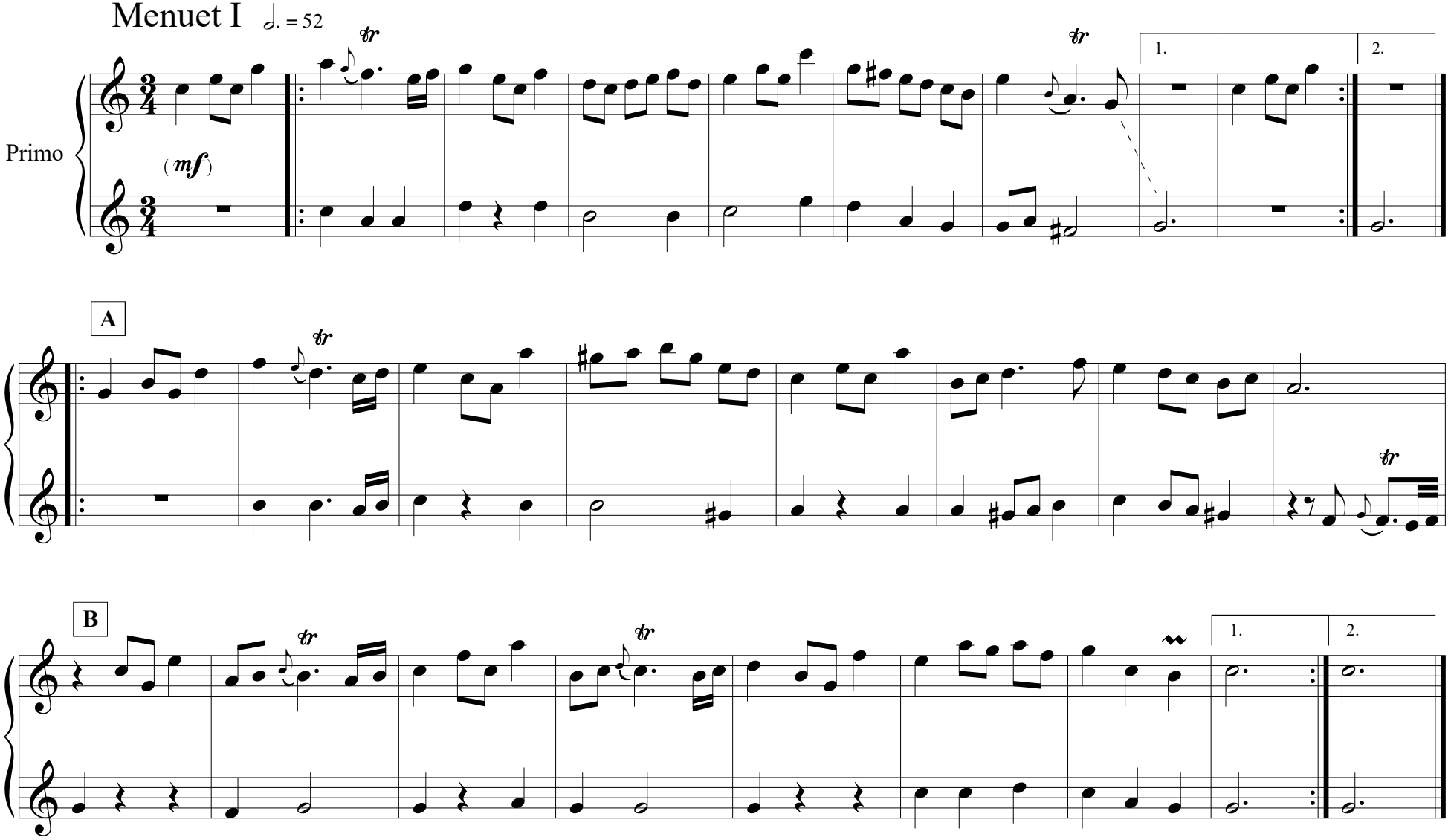
Menuets



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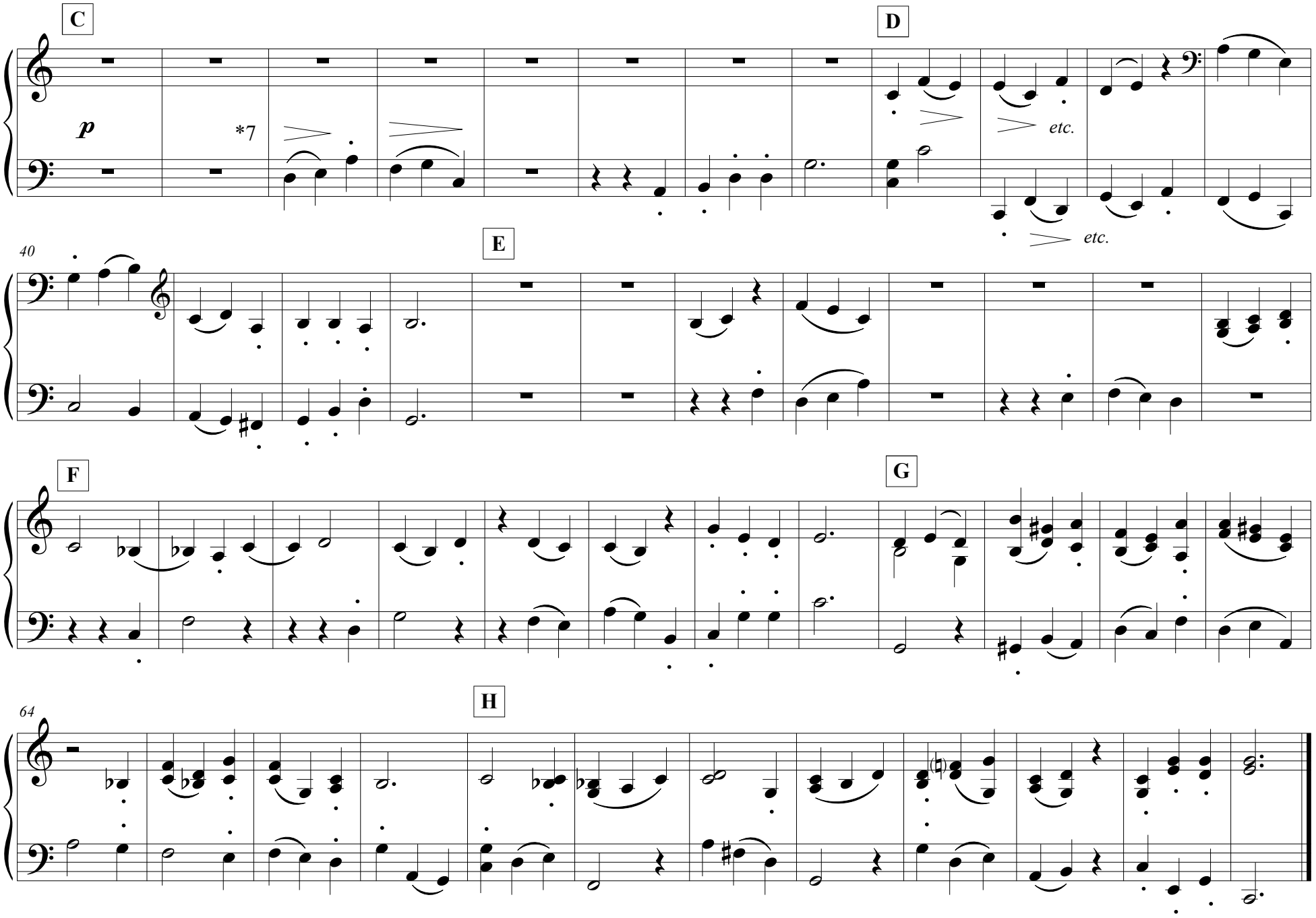
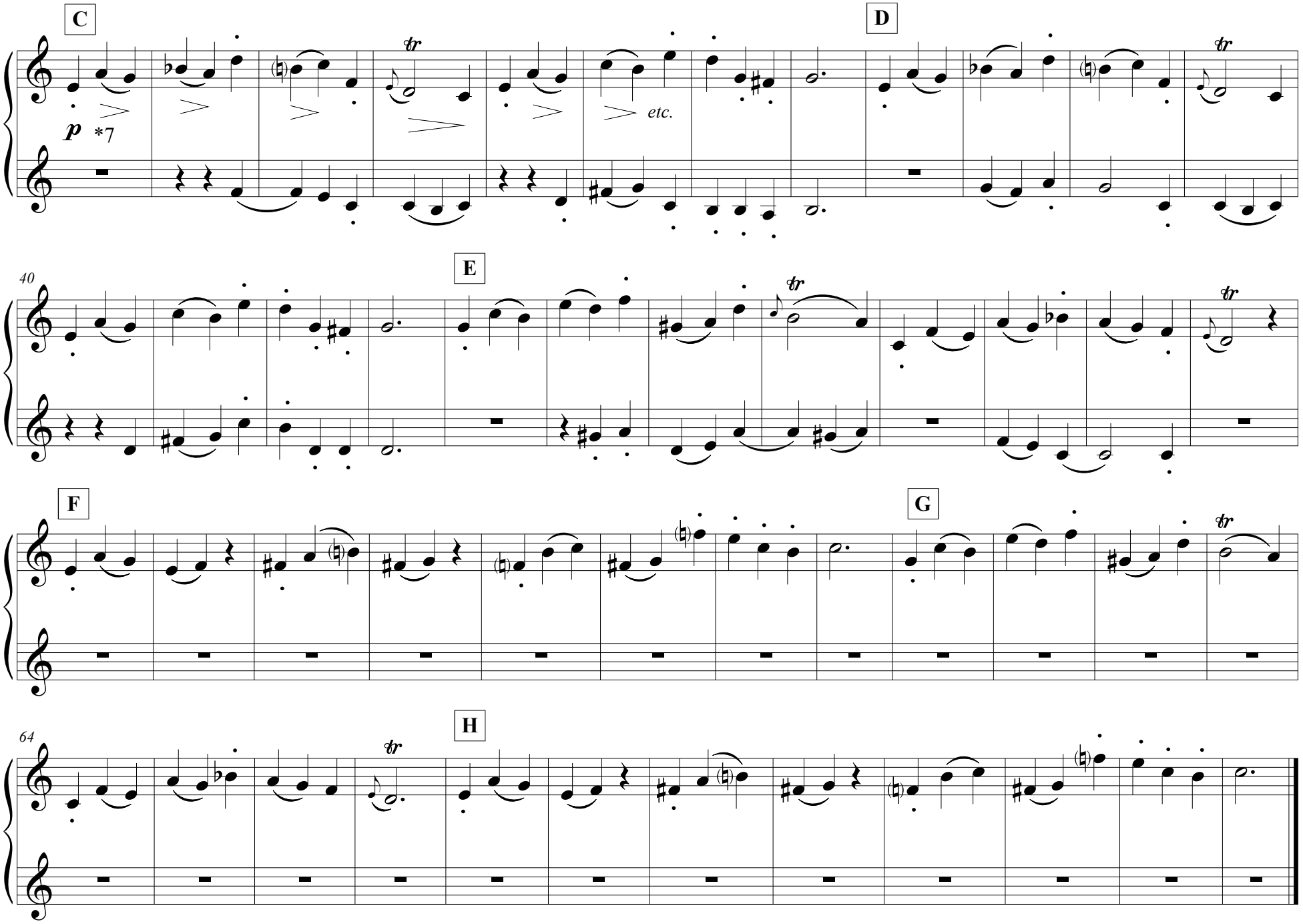
Menuet II



Menuet I da Capo senza repetizione

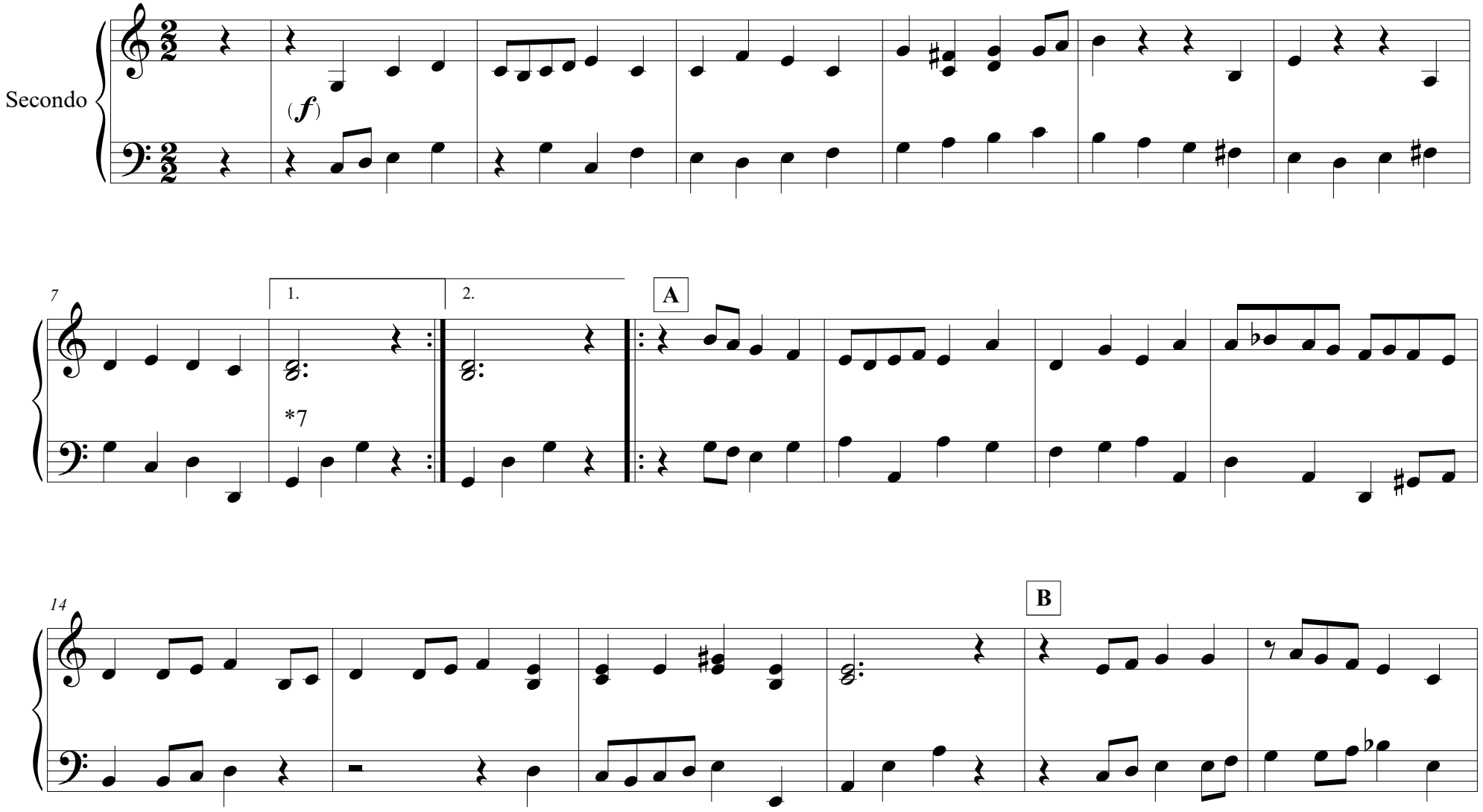
Menuet II



Menuet I da Capo senza repetizione

Bourrées

Bourrée I ♩= 96



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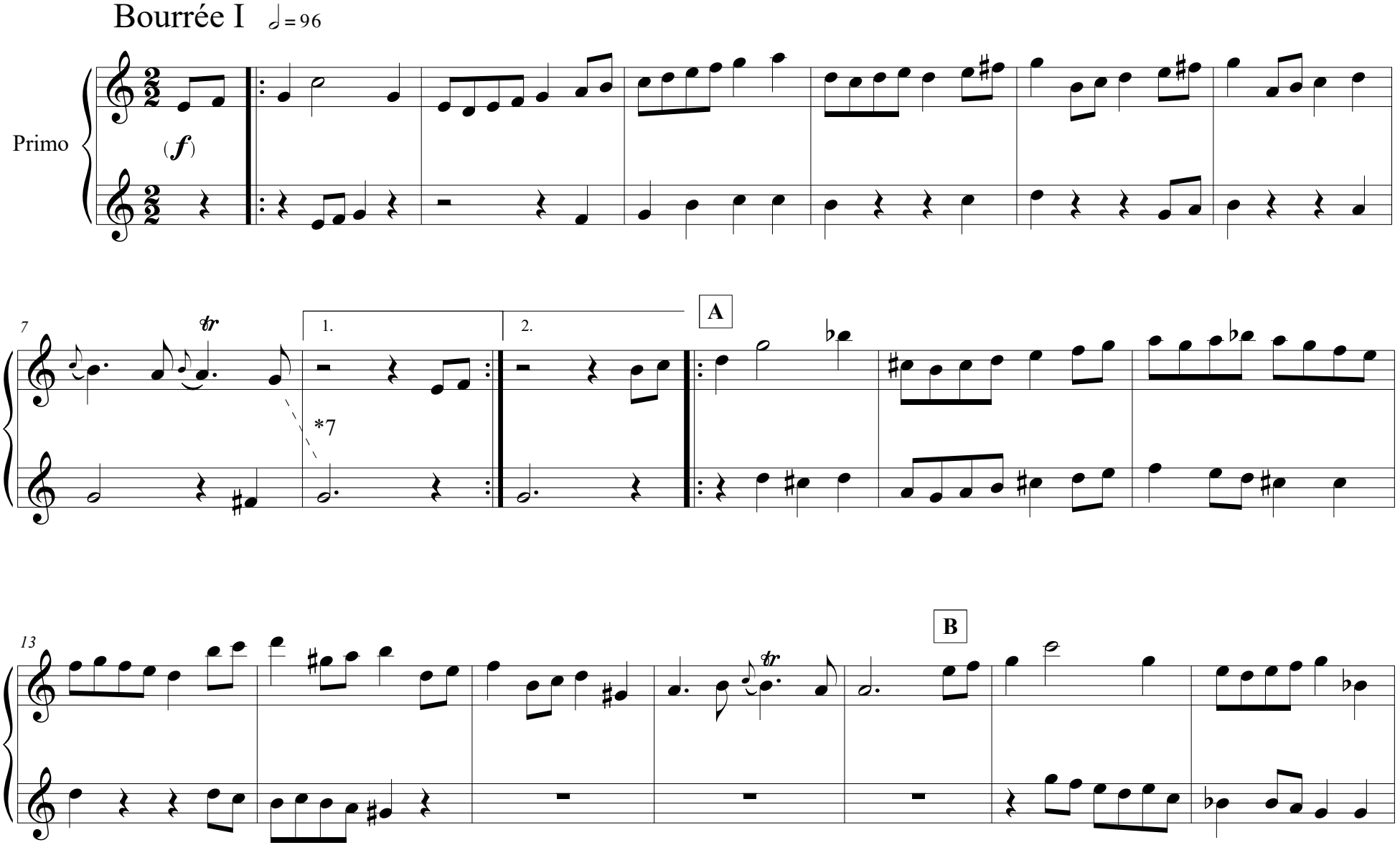
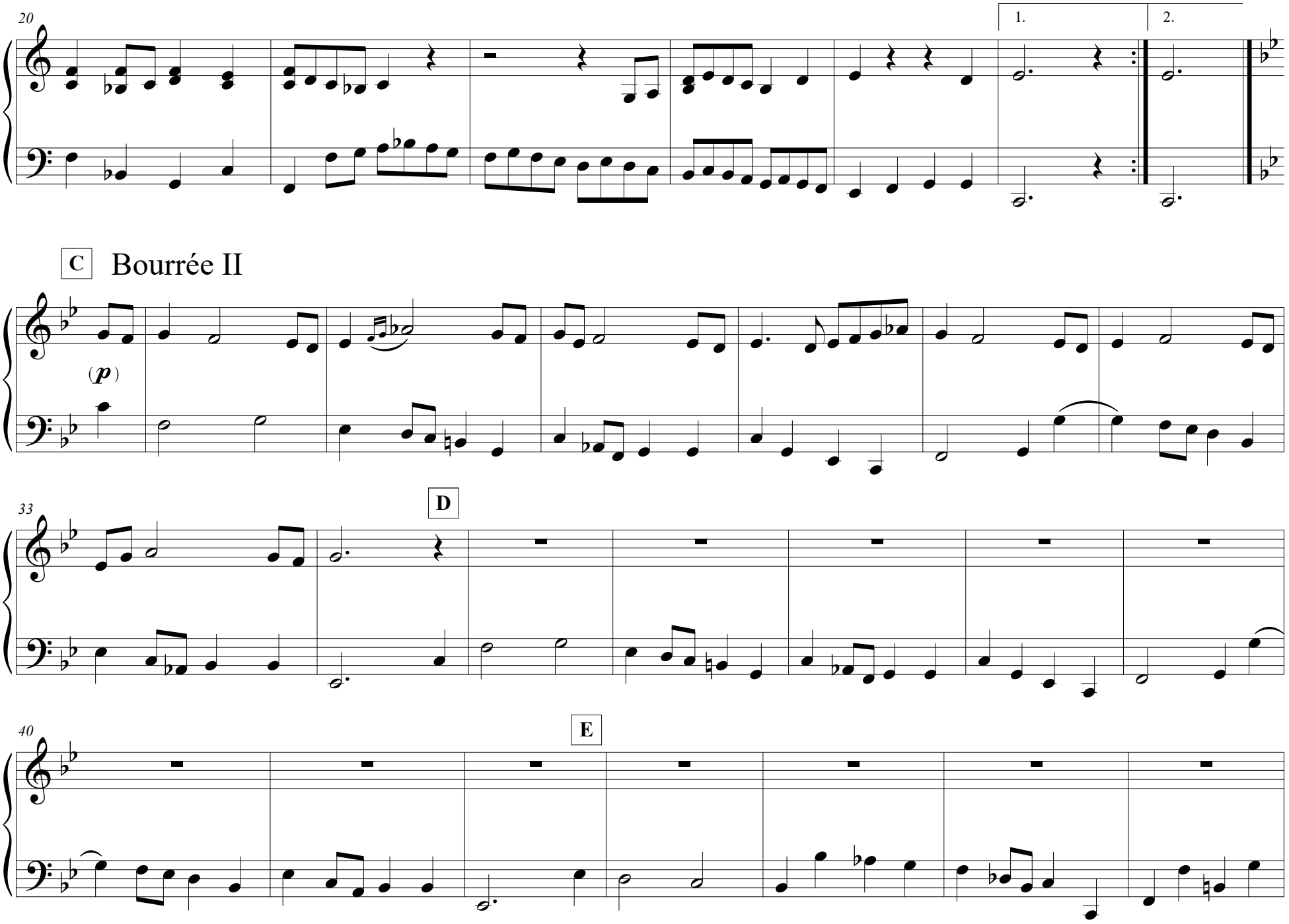
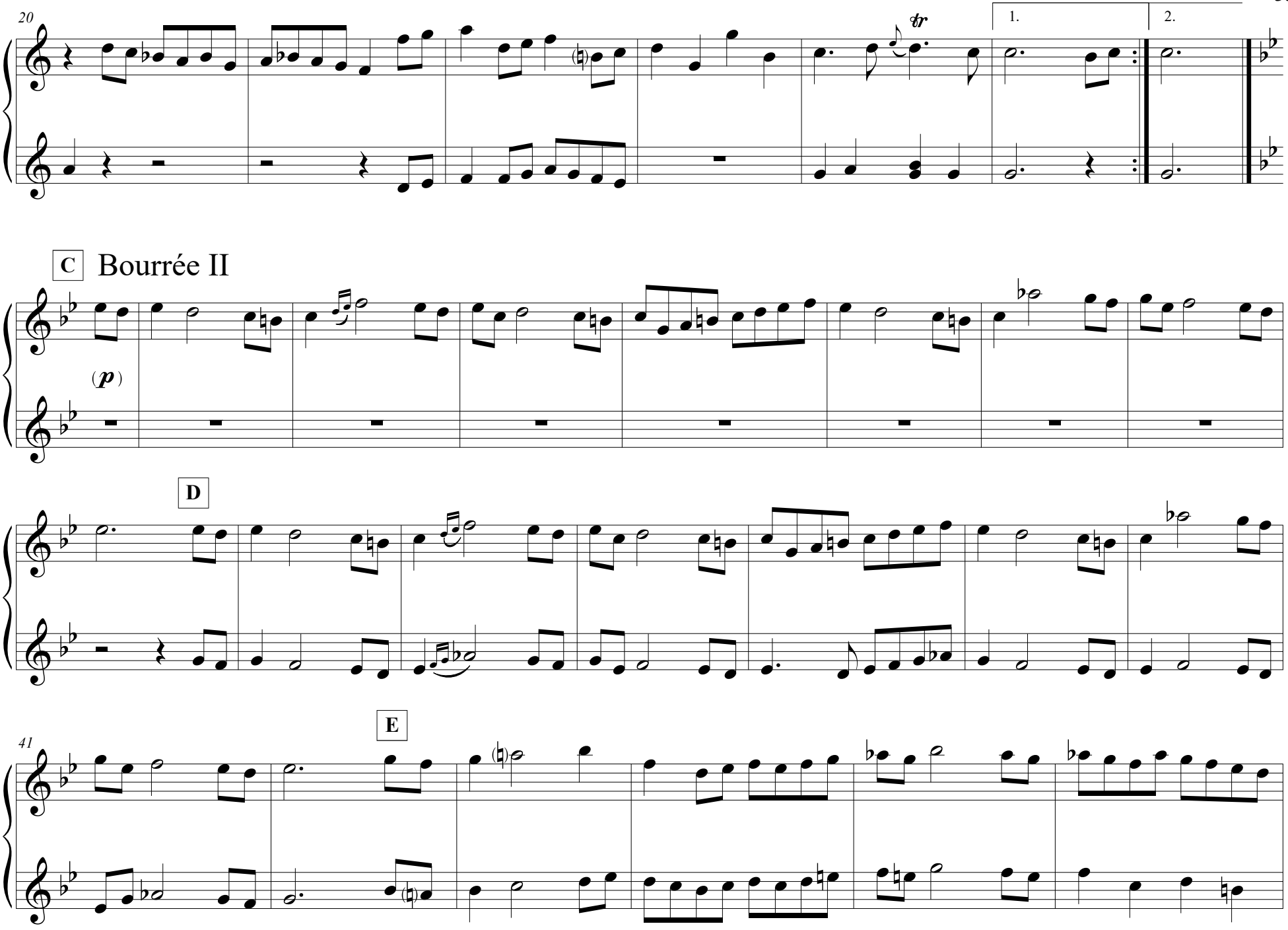
Bourrées

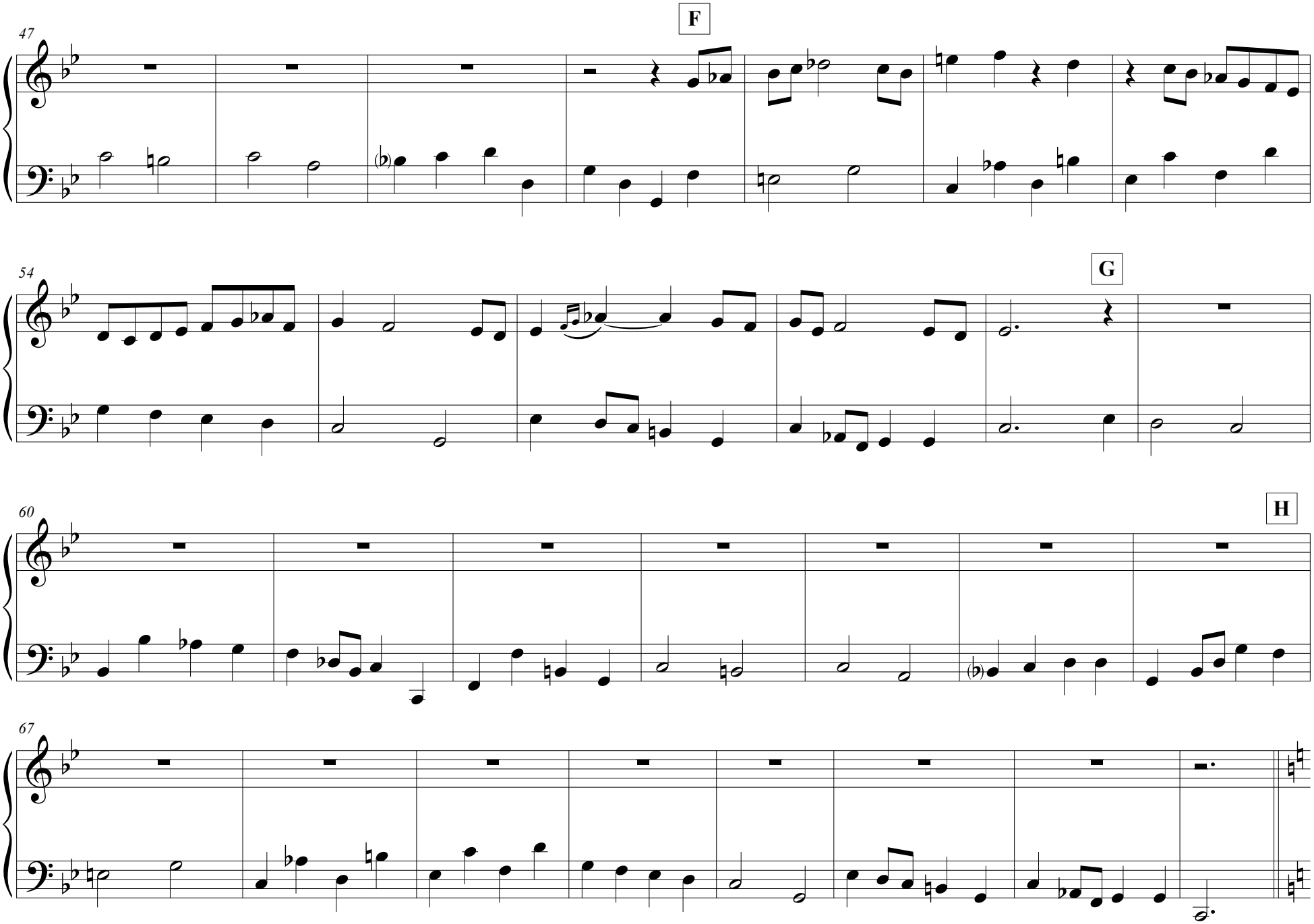
Bourrée I

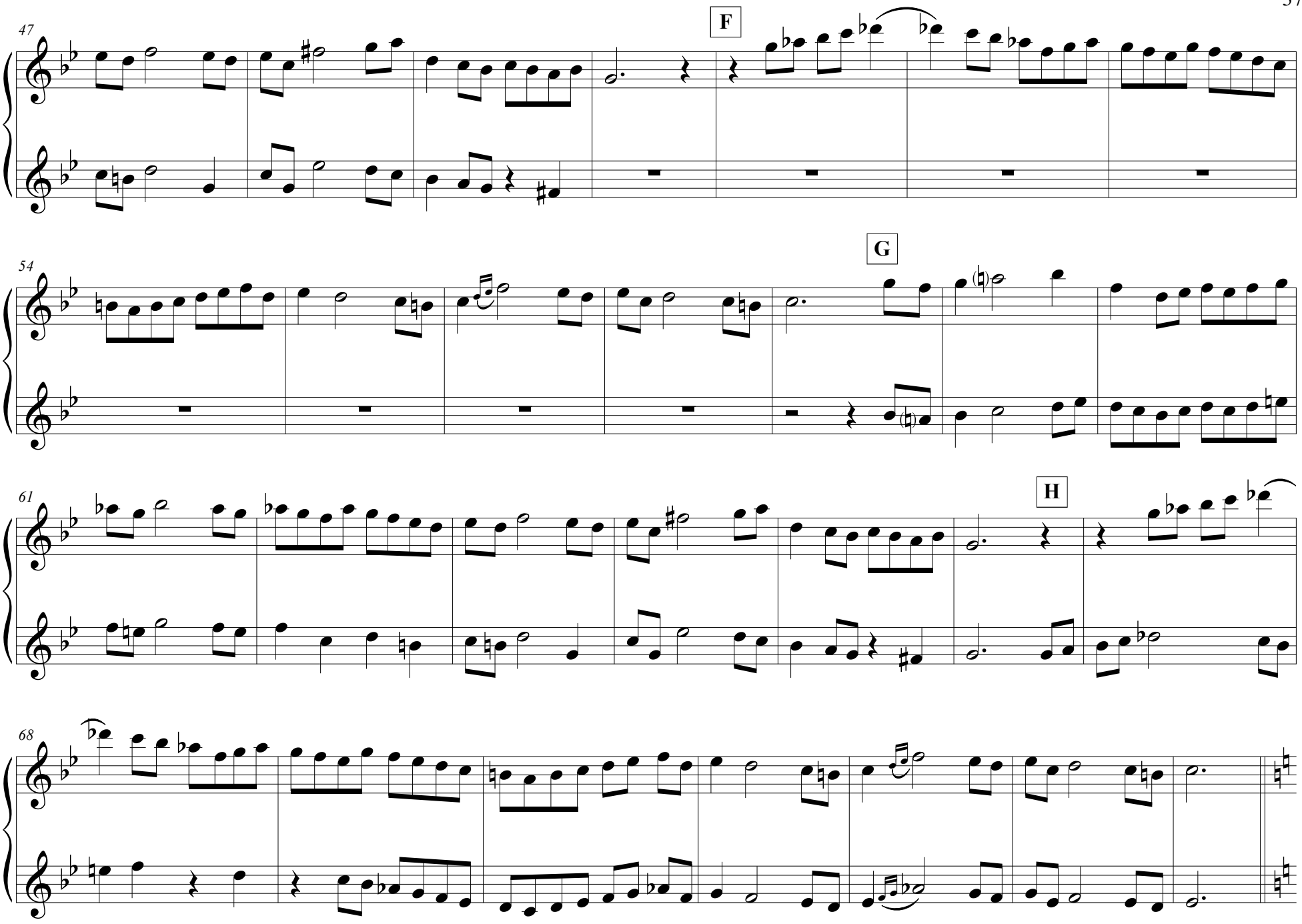


©2022

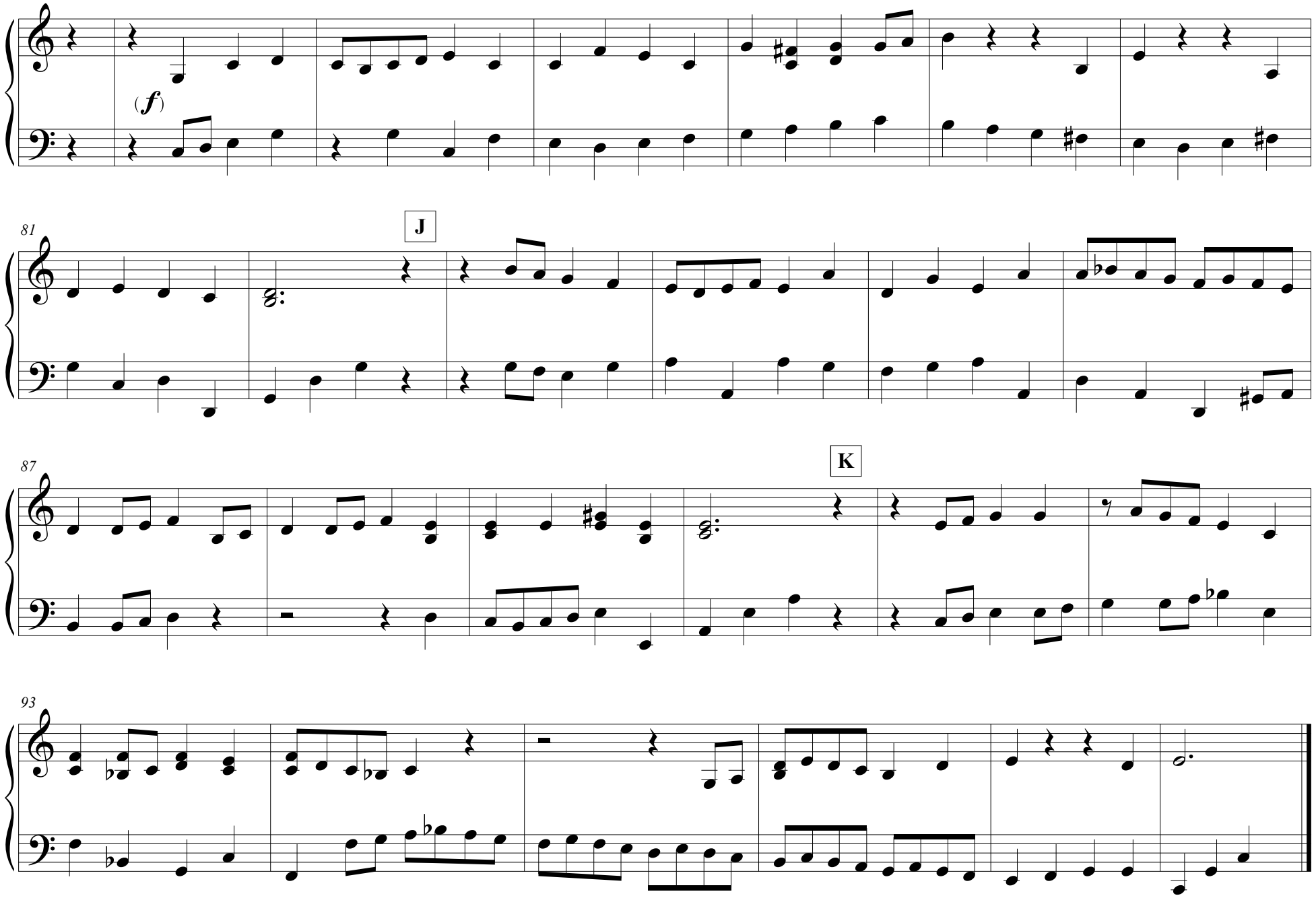

20
1.
2.
C
Bourrée II
(p)
33
D
40
E

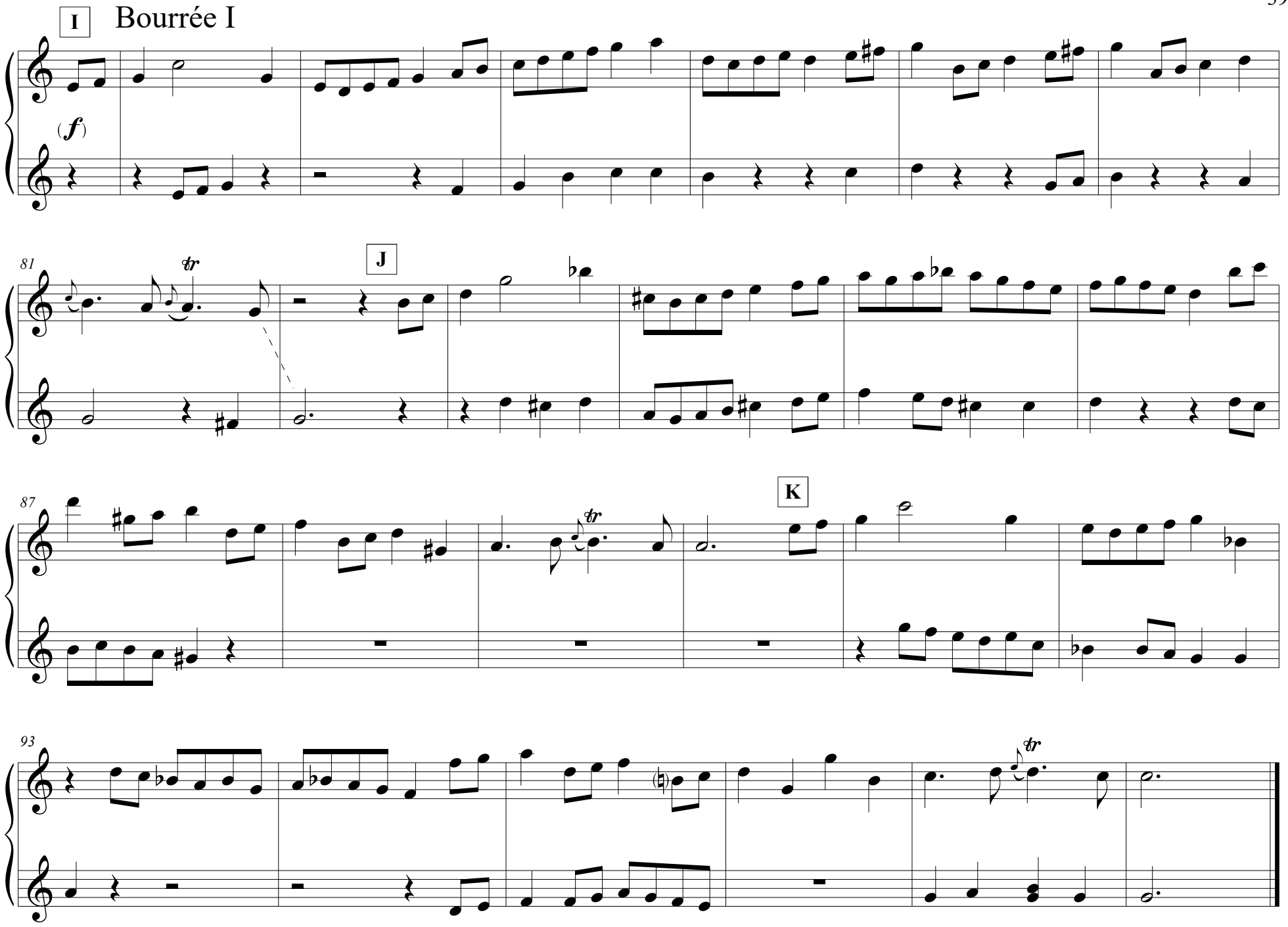

20
1.
2.
C
Bourrée II
(p)
D
E
41


47
F
54
G
60
H
67


47
F
54
G
61
H
68

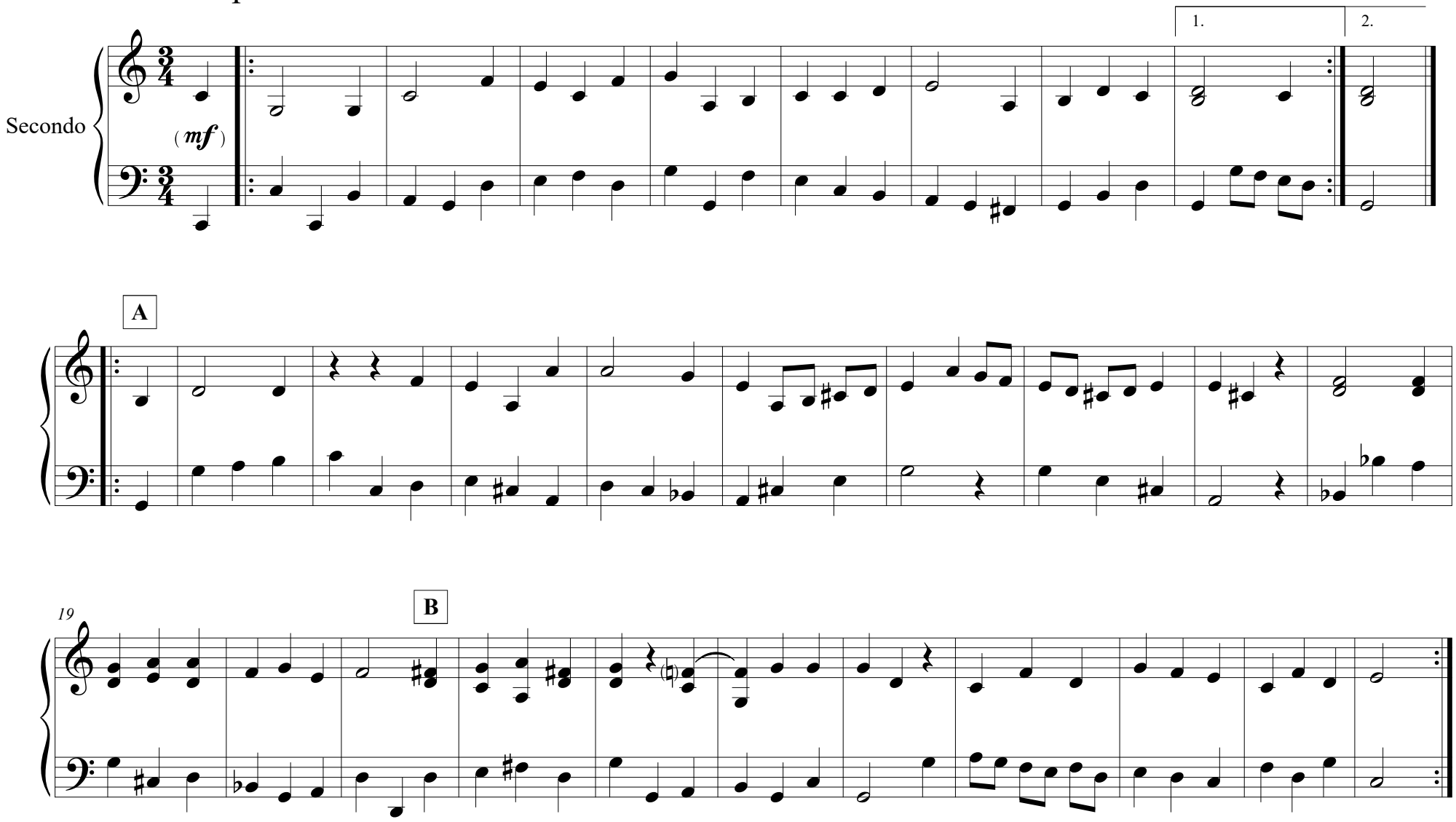
I Bourrée I




I
Bourrée I
(f)
81
J
87
K
93

Passepieds

Passepied I ♩ = 152



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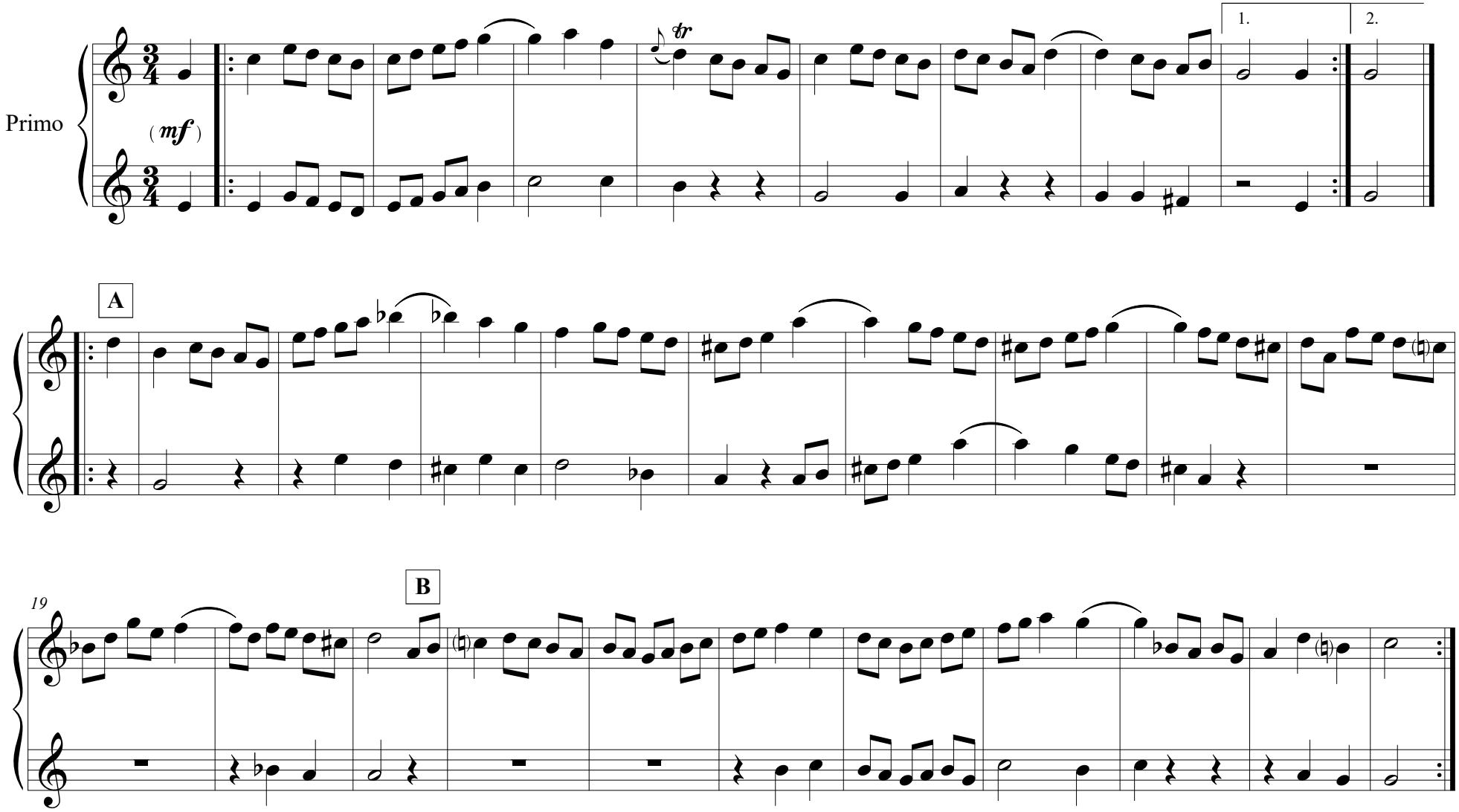
Passepieds

Passepied I ♩ = 152

Primo



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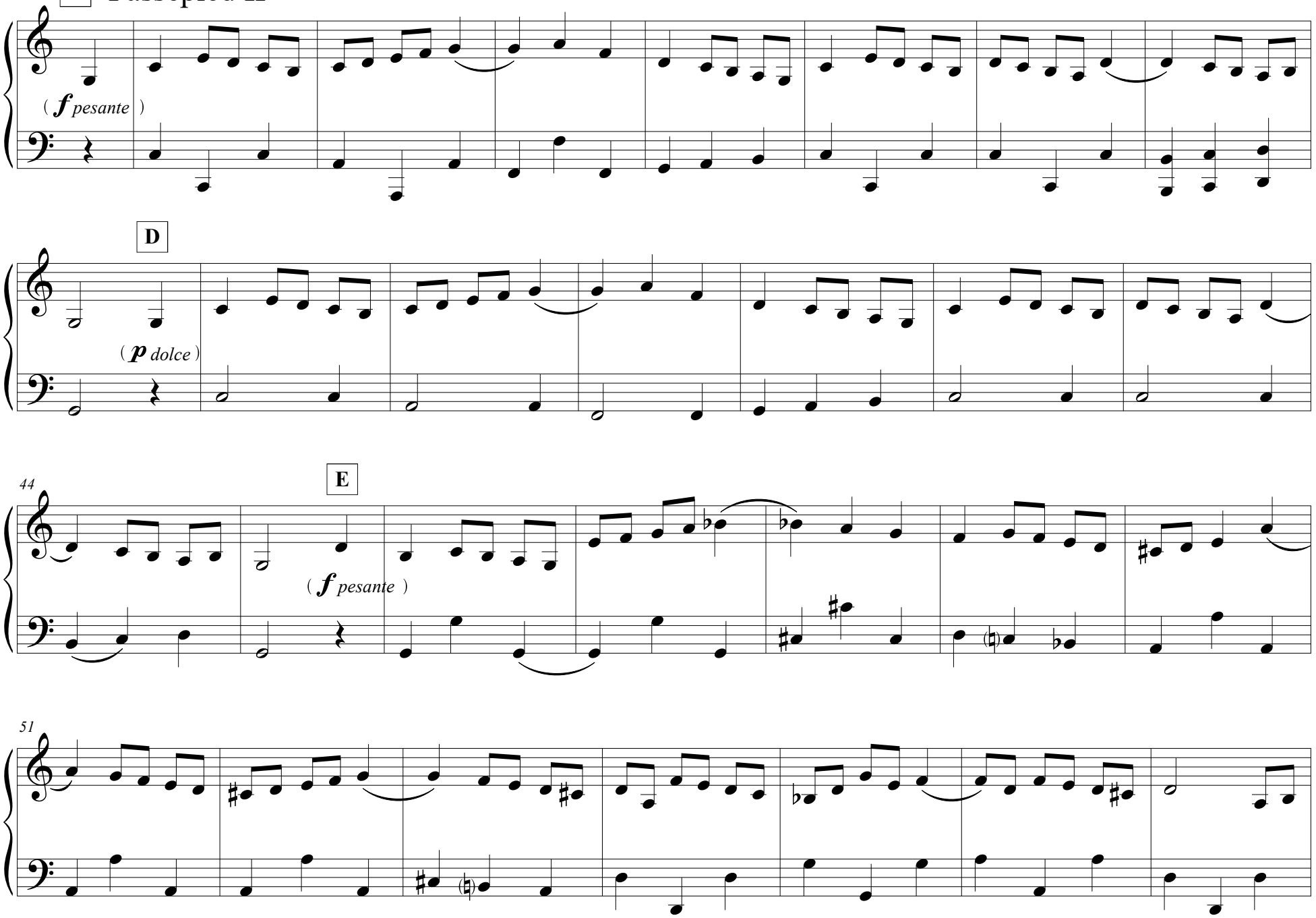
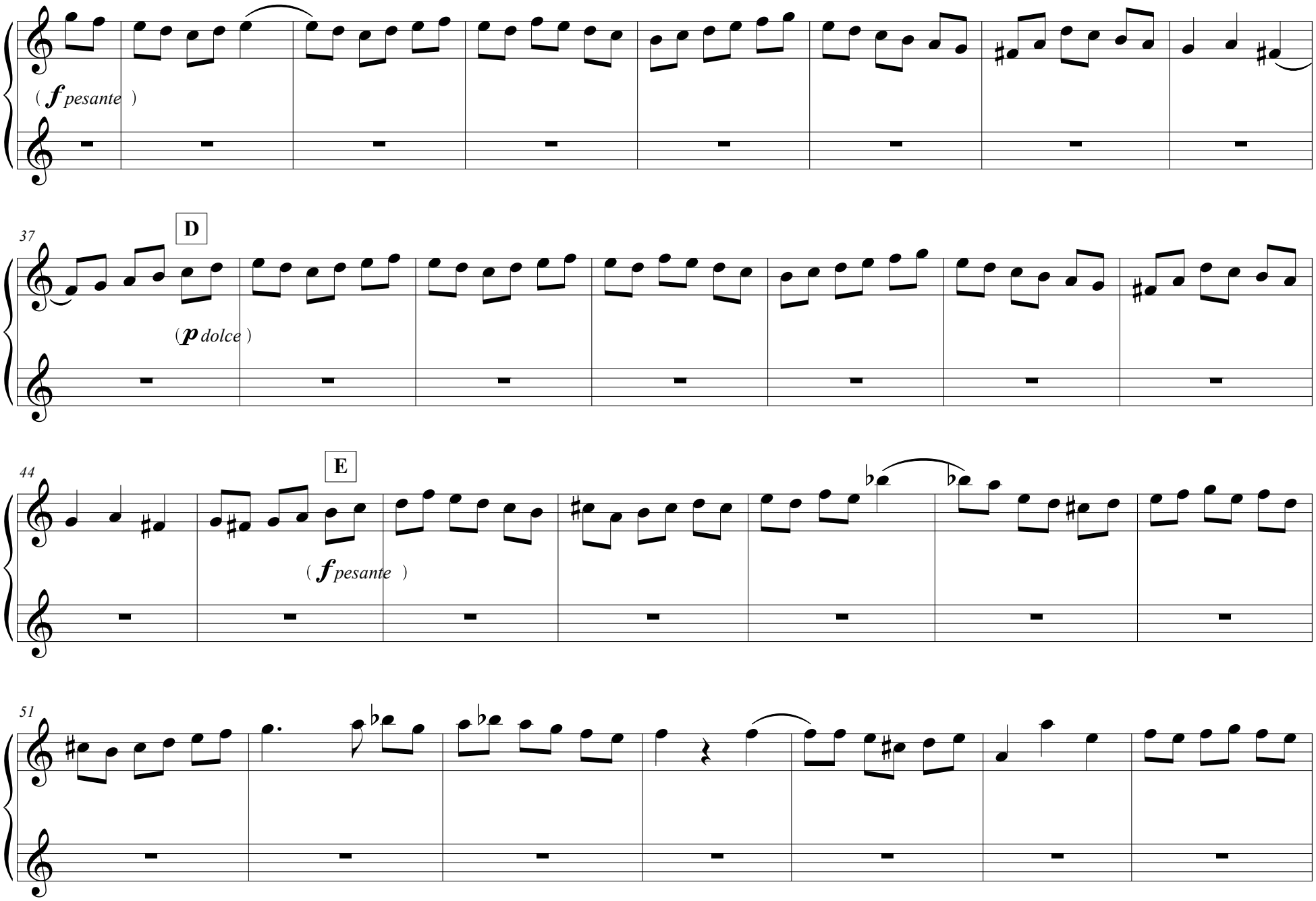
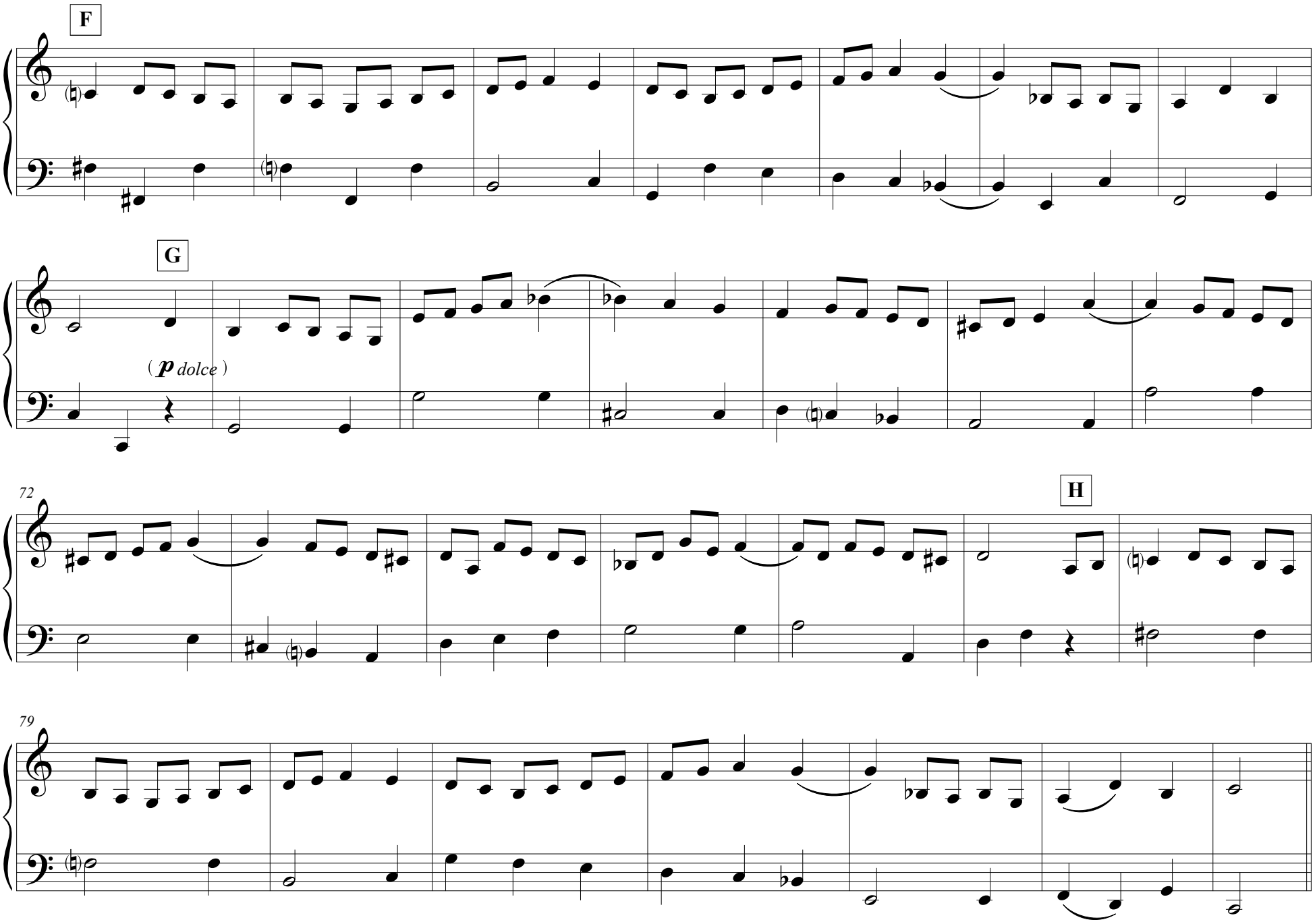
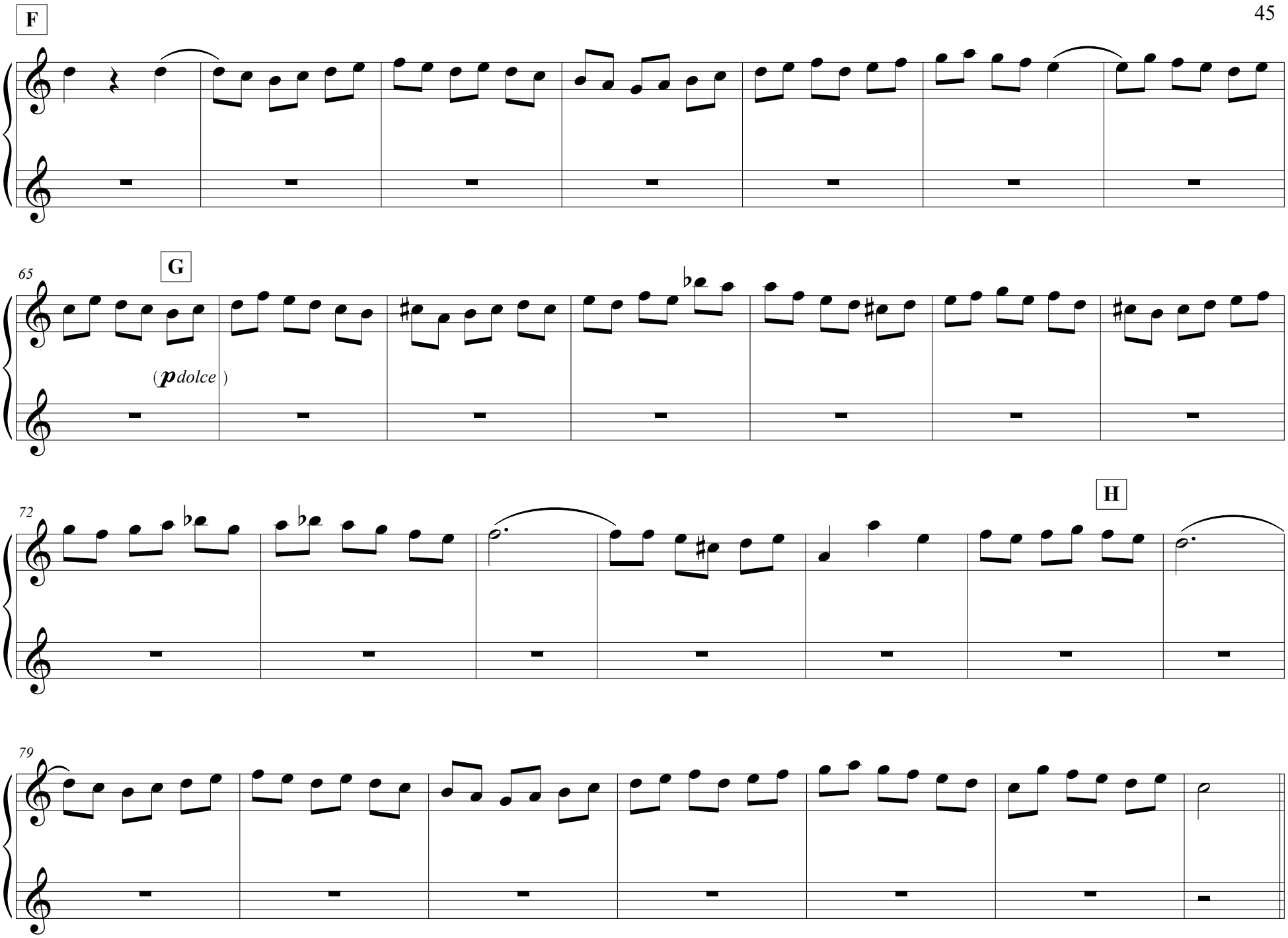
C Passepied II

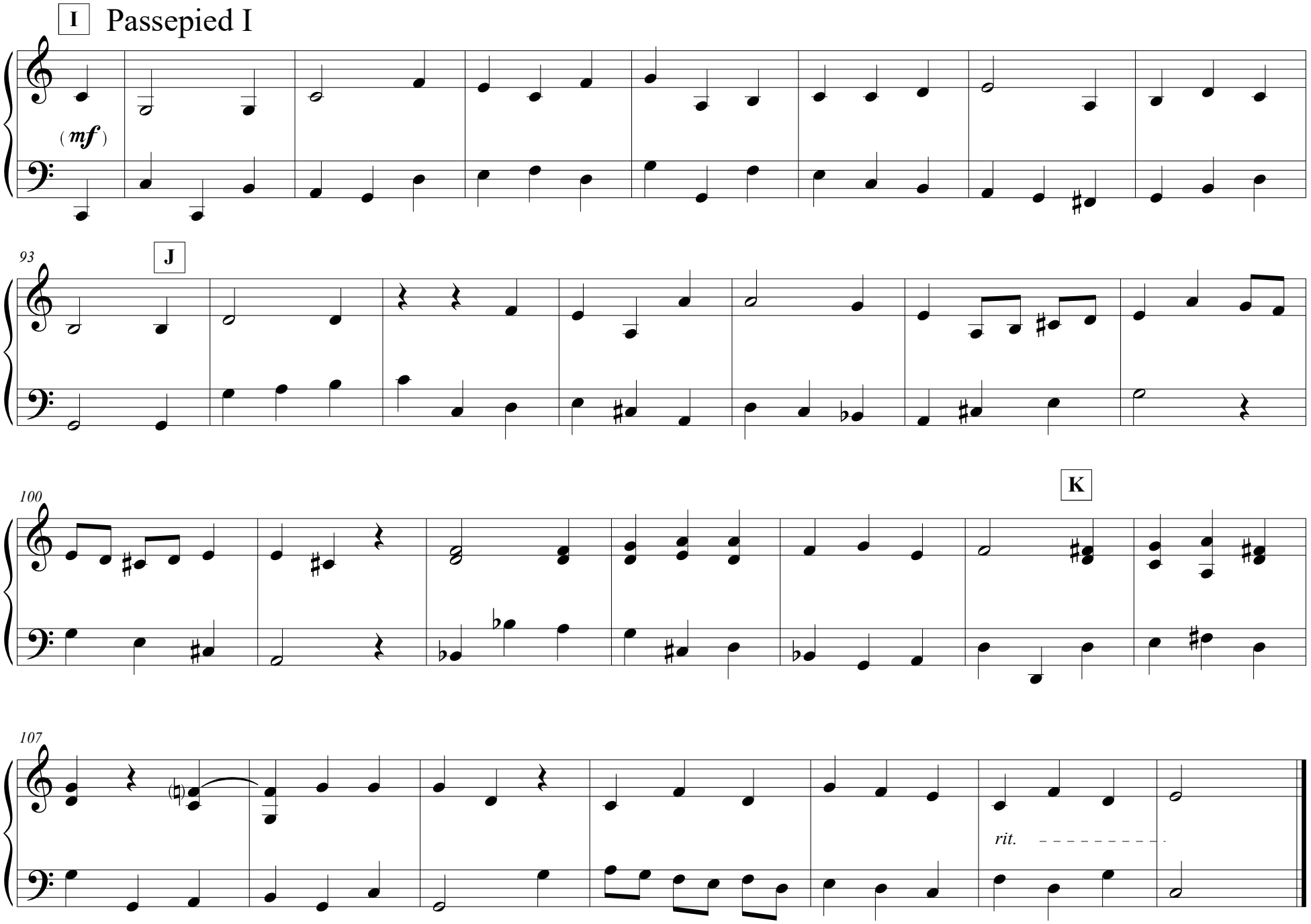


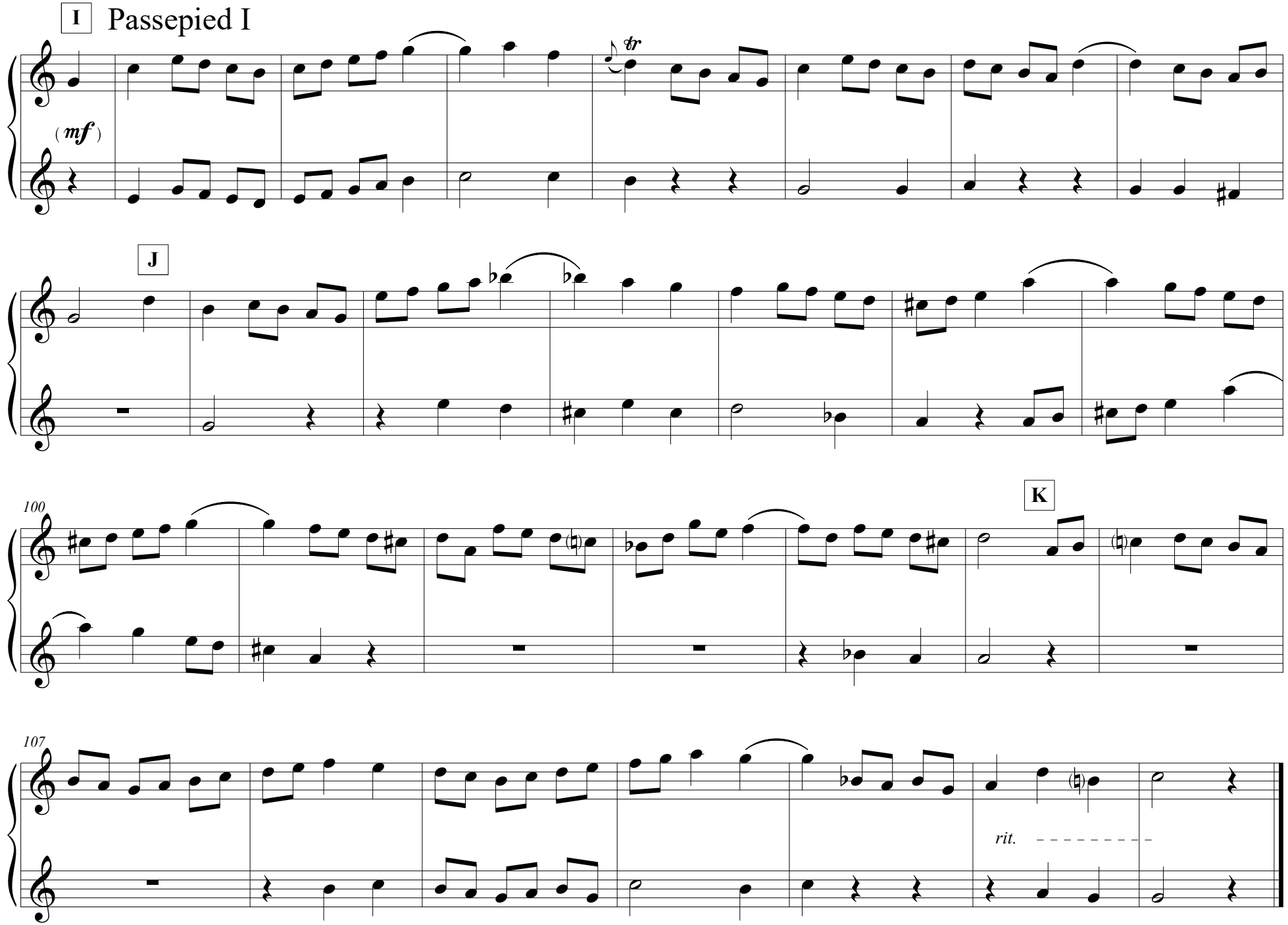
C Passepied II




F
G
(p dolce)
72
H
79


F
65
G
(pdolce)
72
H
79


I
Passepied I
(mf)
93
J
100
K
107
rit.


I
Passepied I
(mf)
tr
J
100
K
107
rit.

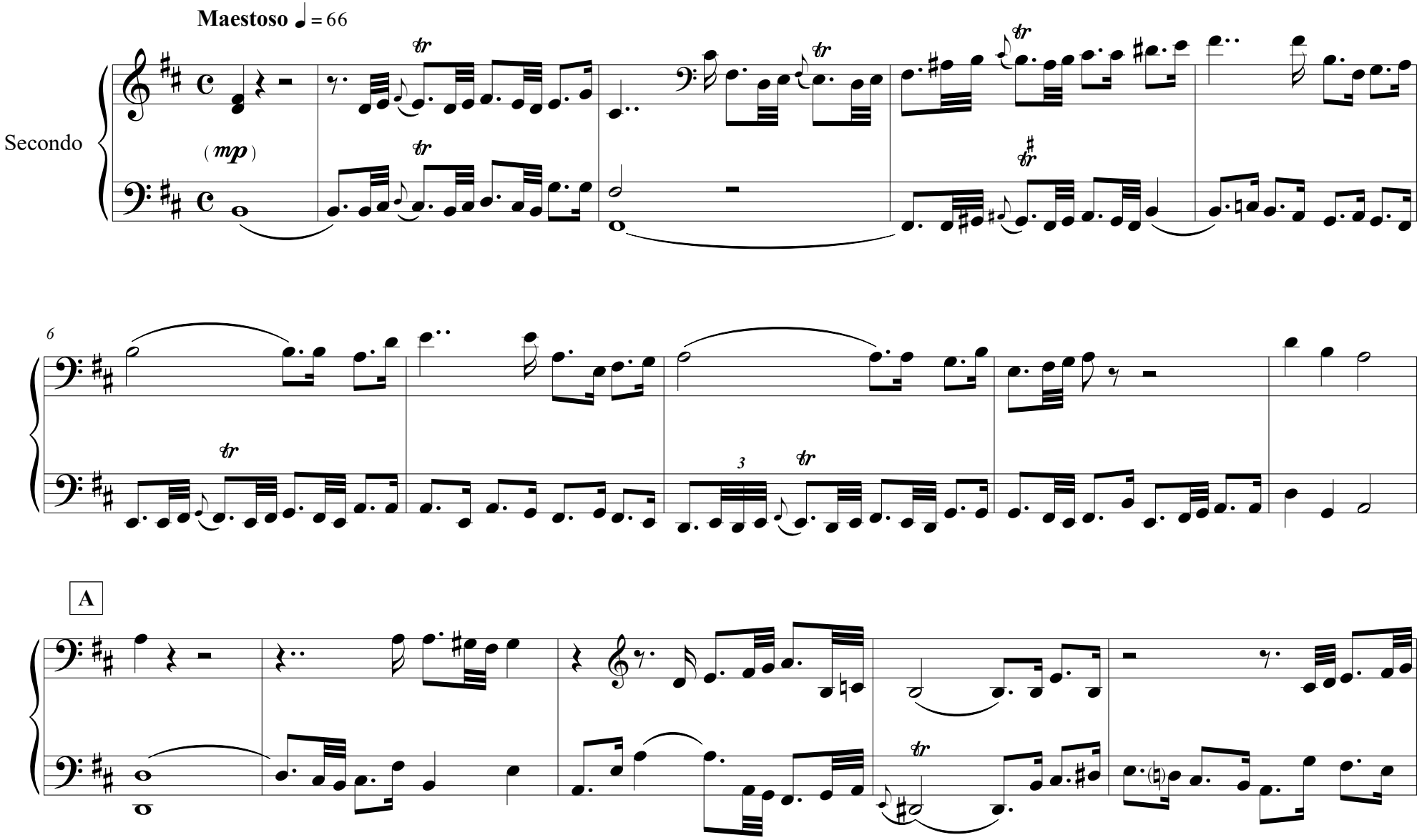
Orchestral Suite No. 2

BWV 1067

Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B Minor

Overture

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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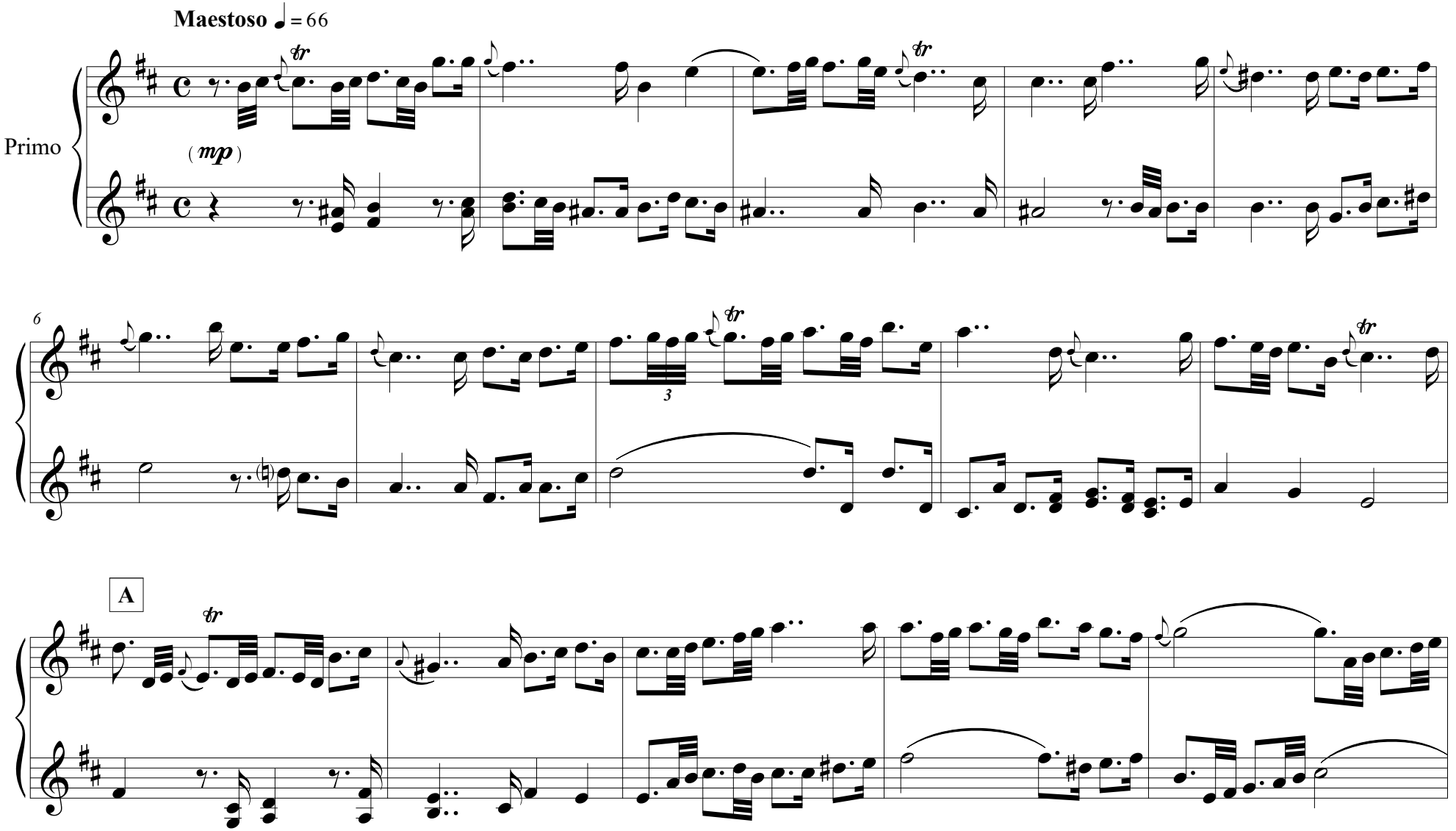
Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B Minor

Overture

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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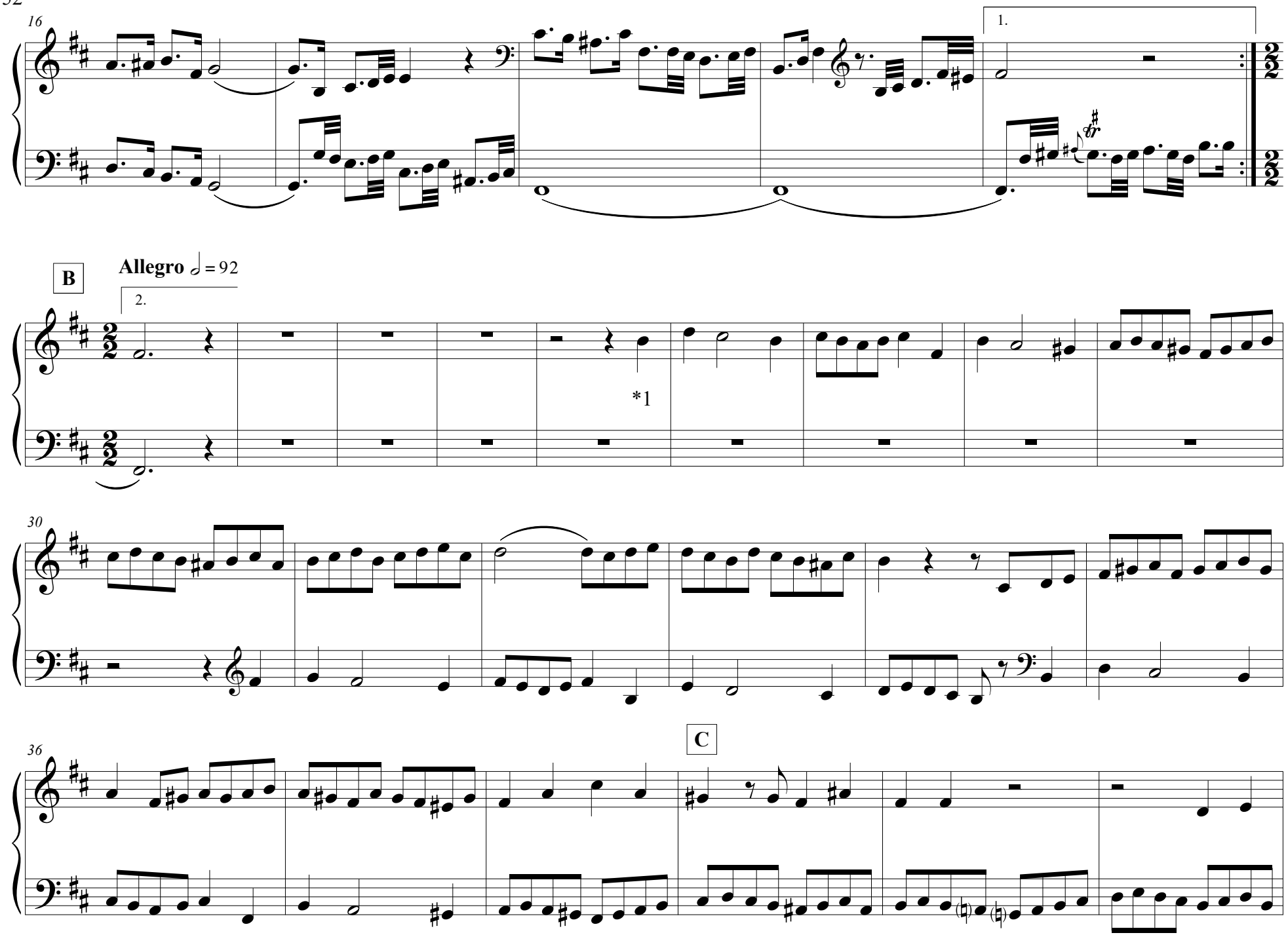
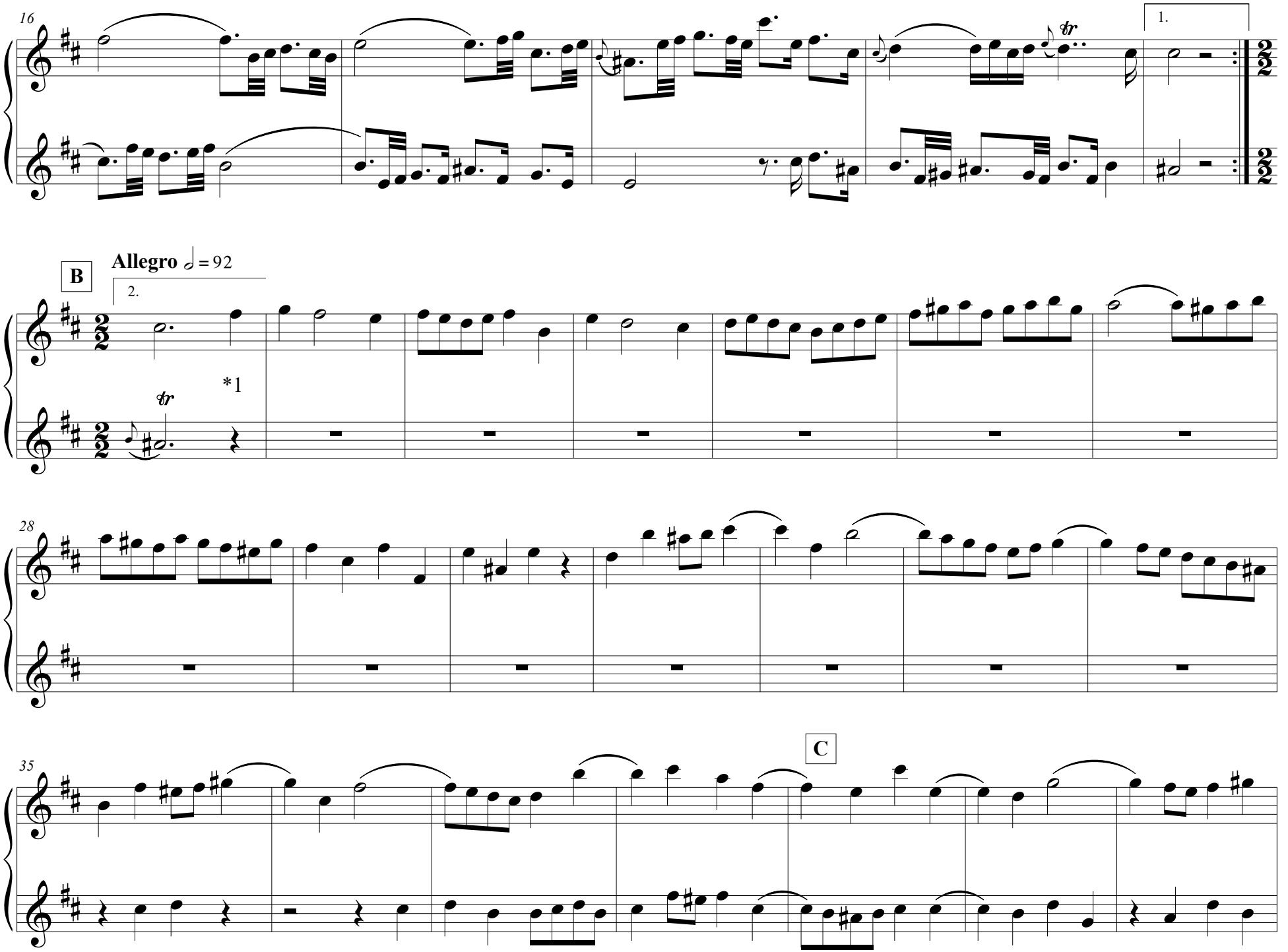
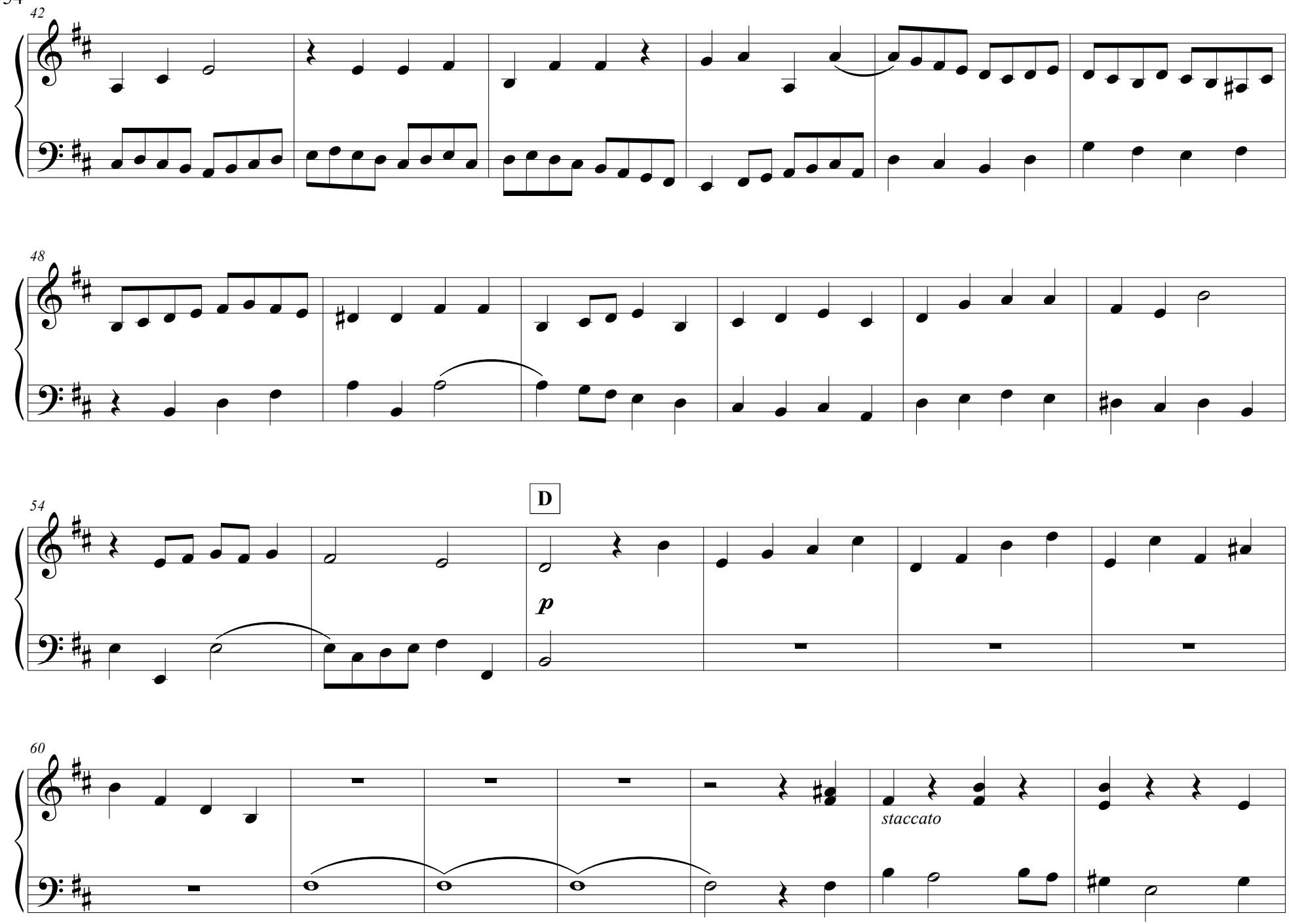
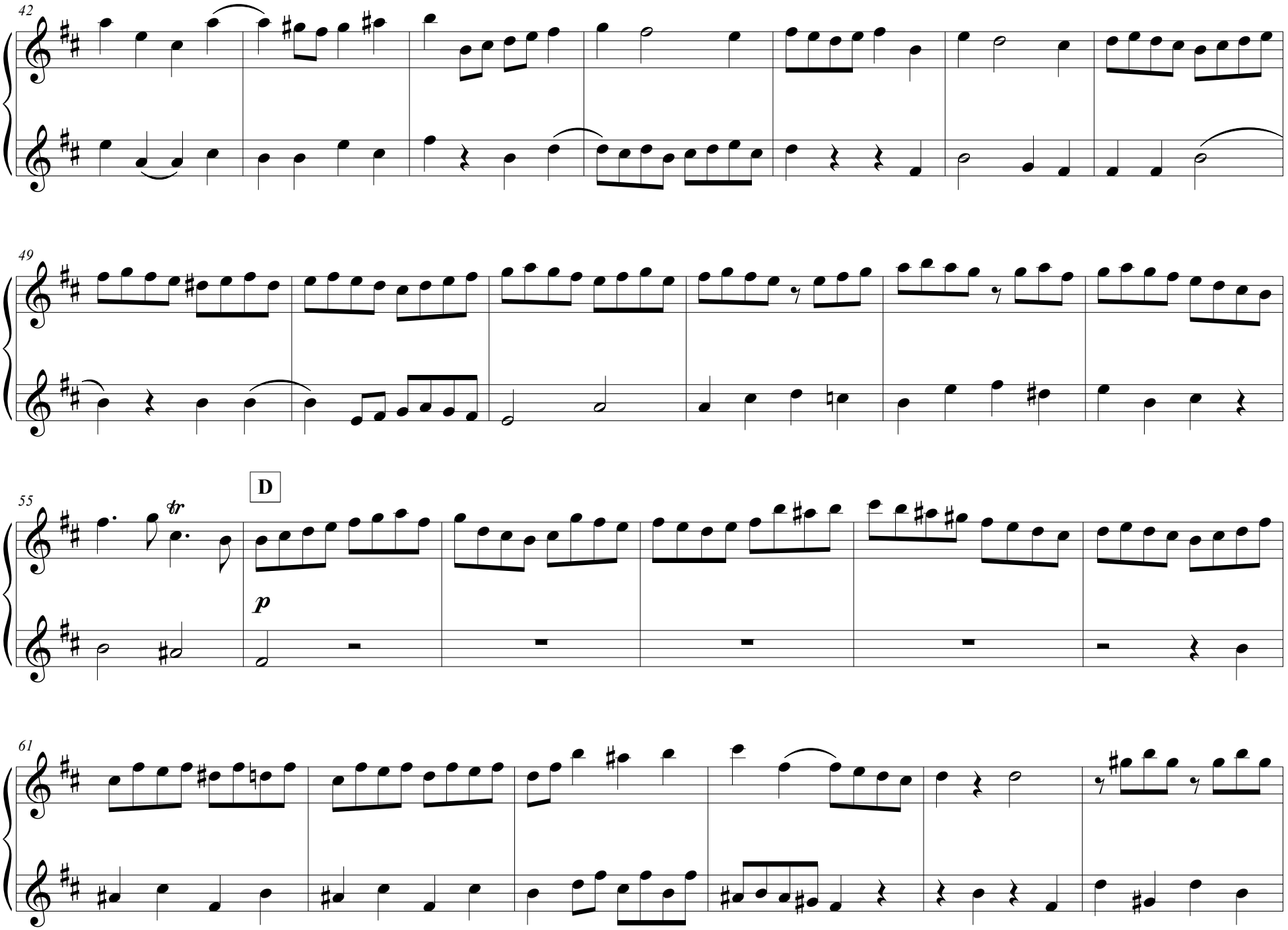
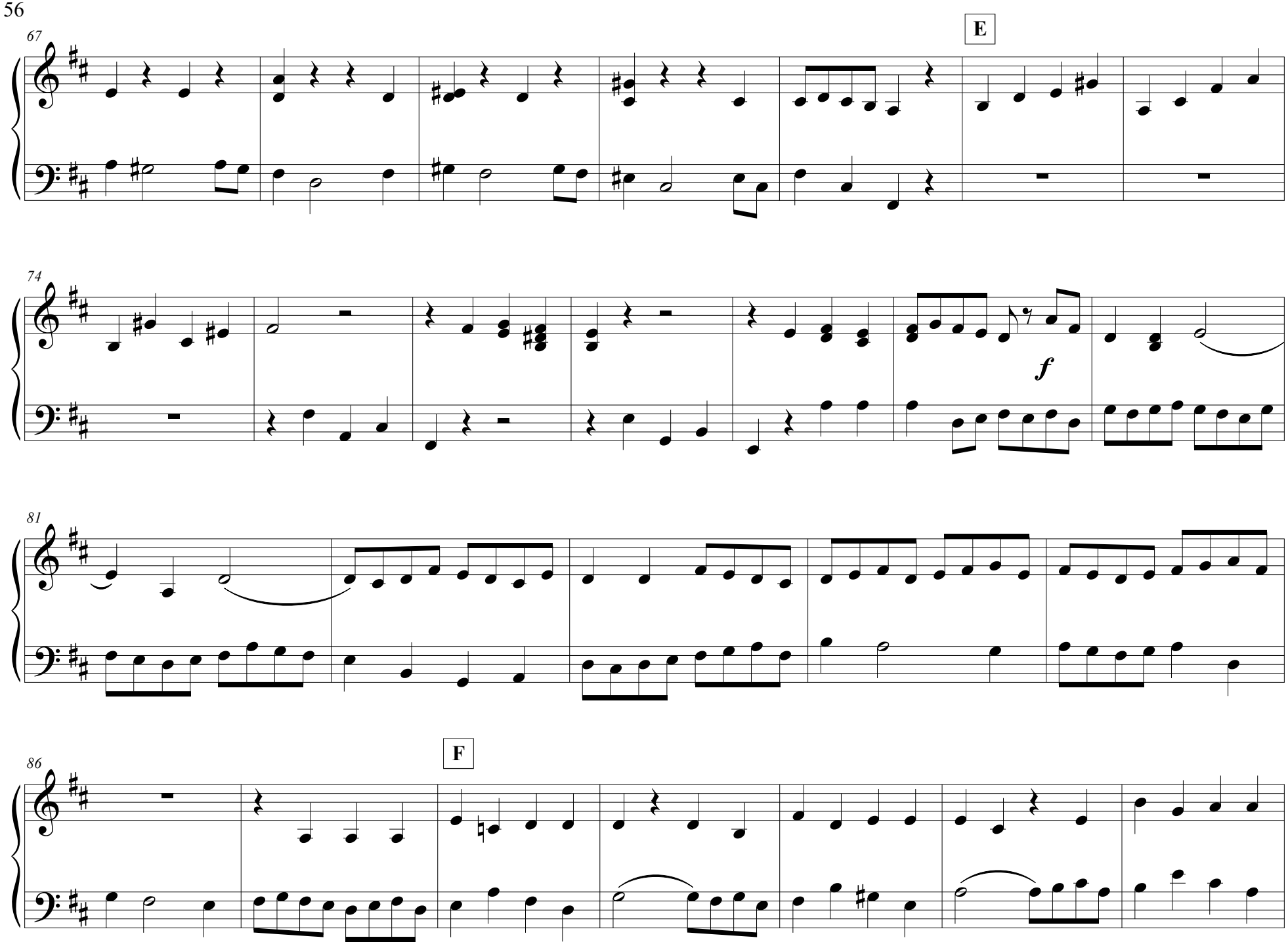
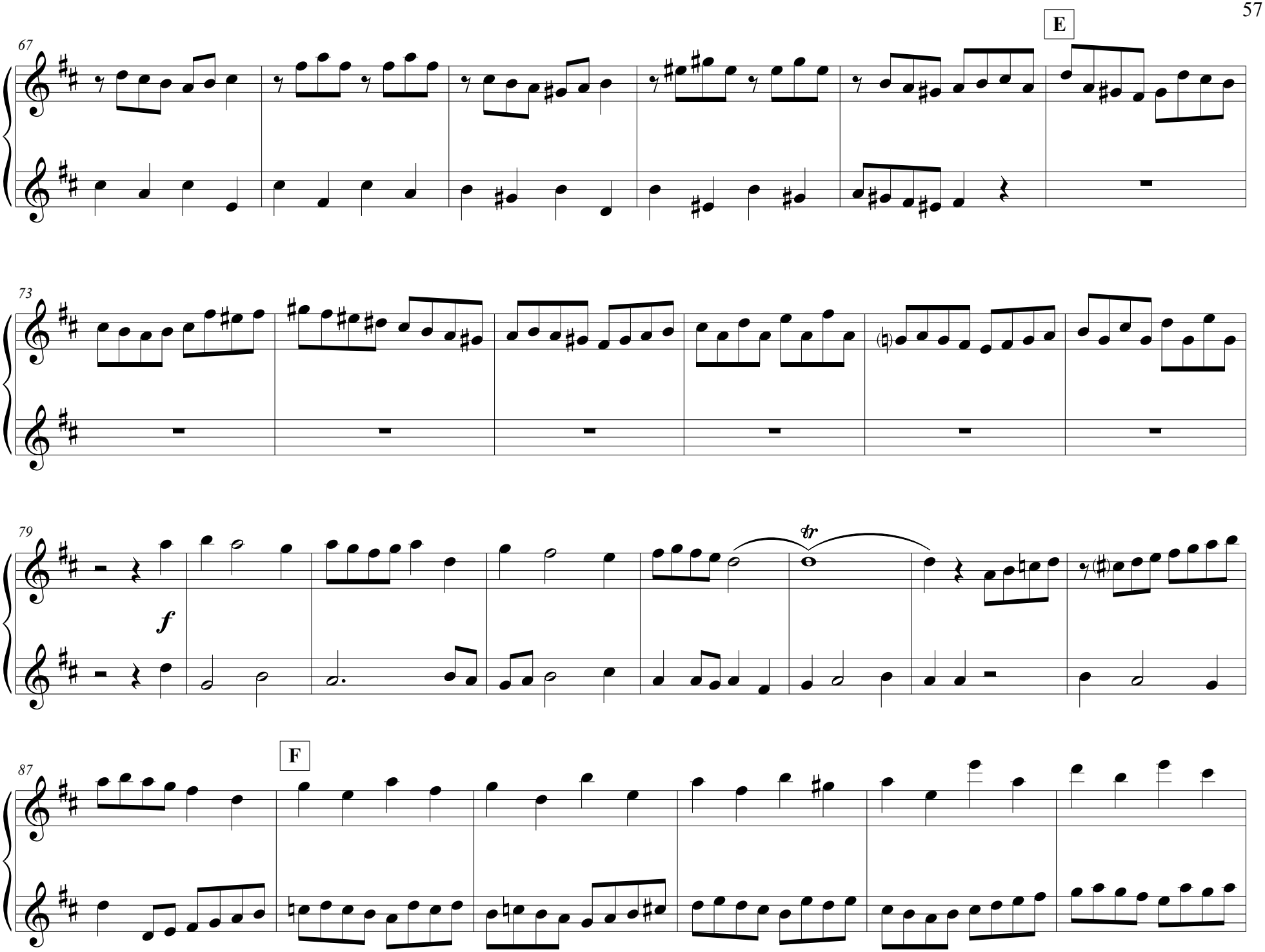

16
1.
B
Allegro ♩ = 92
2.
*1
30
C
36

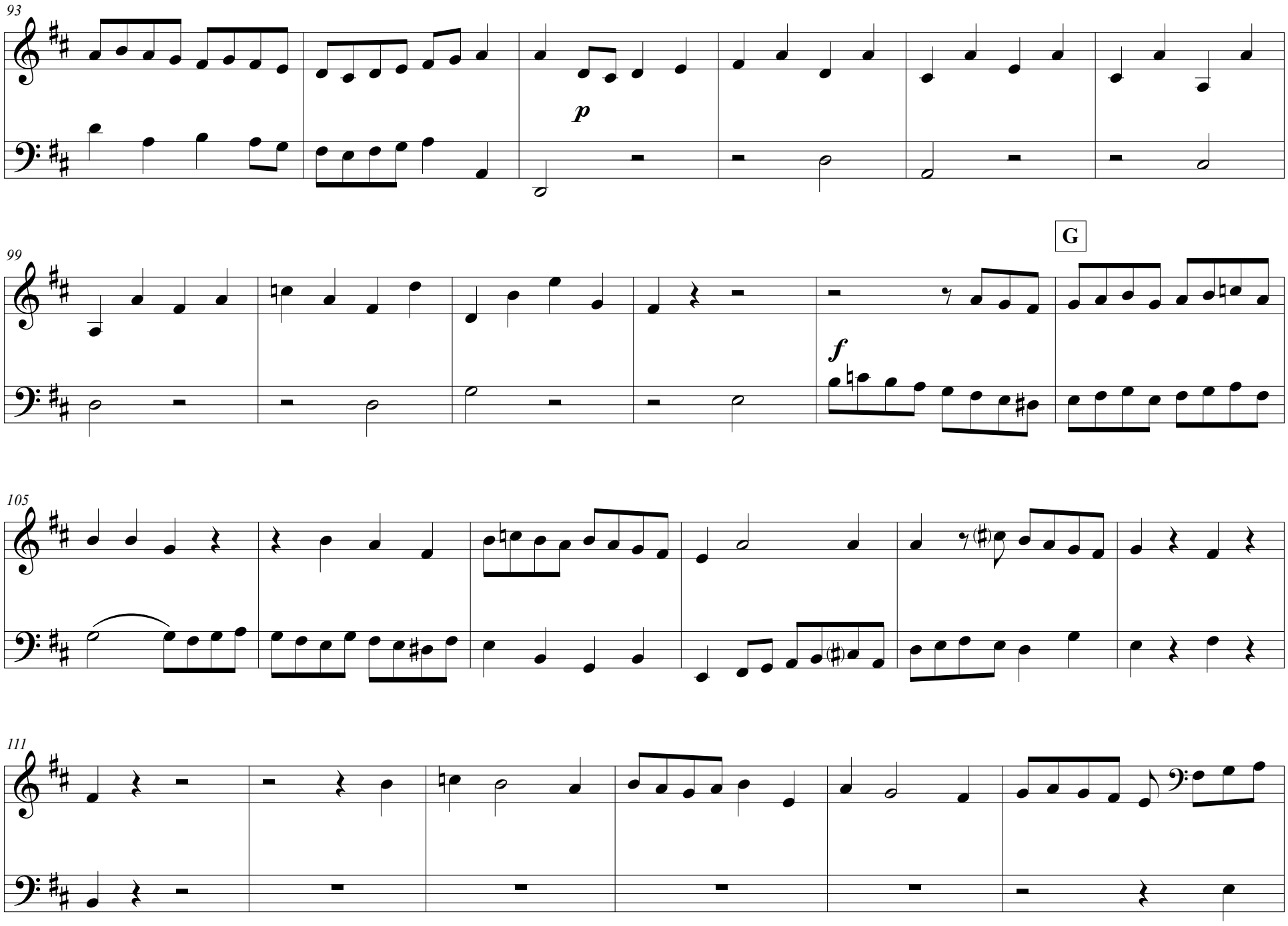

16
1.
B
Allegro ♩ = 92
2.
*1
28
C
35

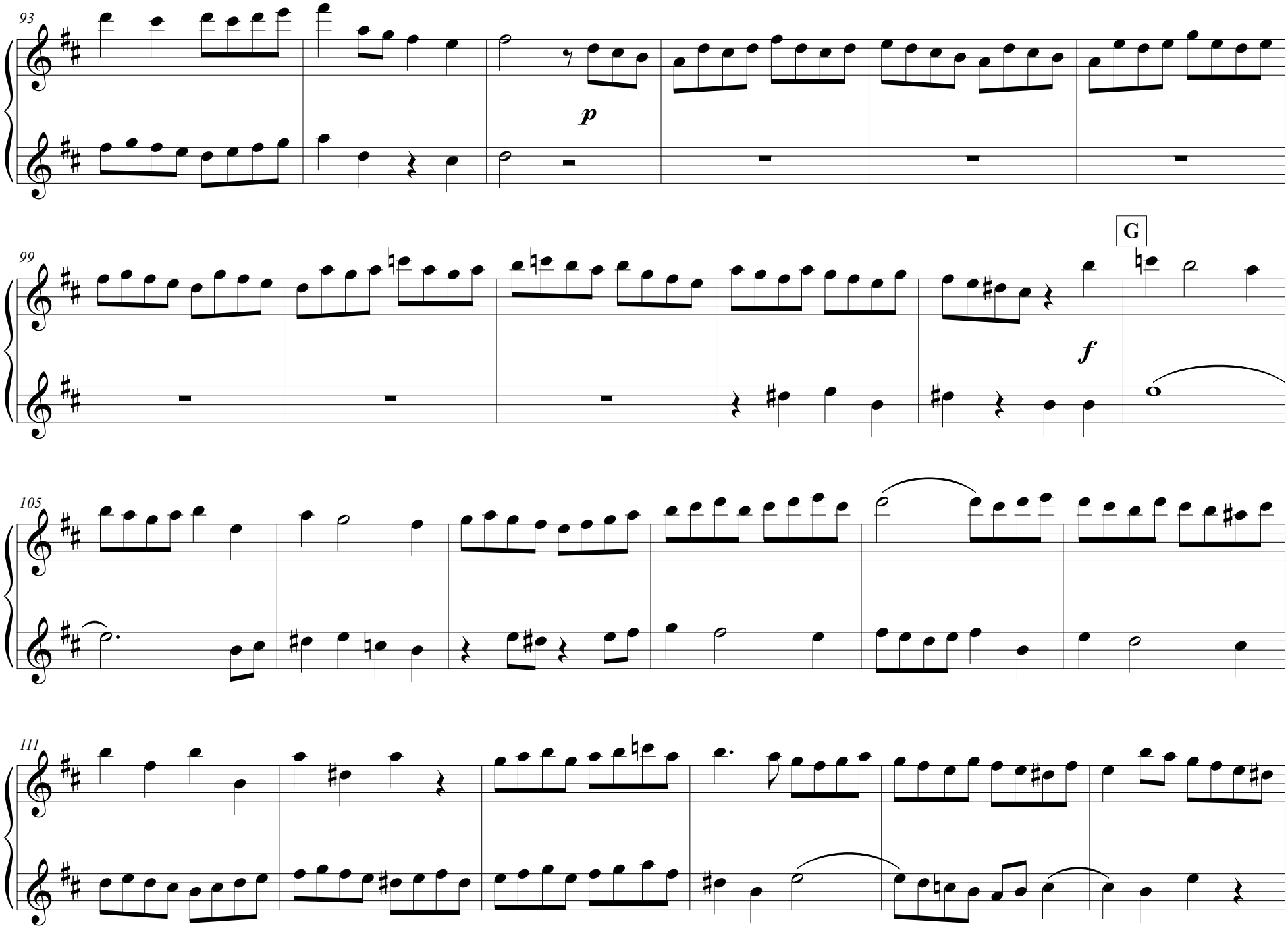

42
48
54
D
p
60
staccato

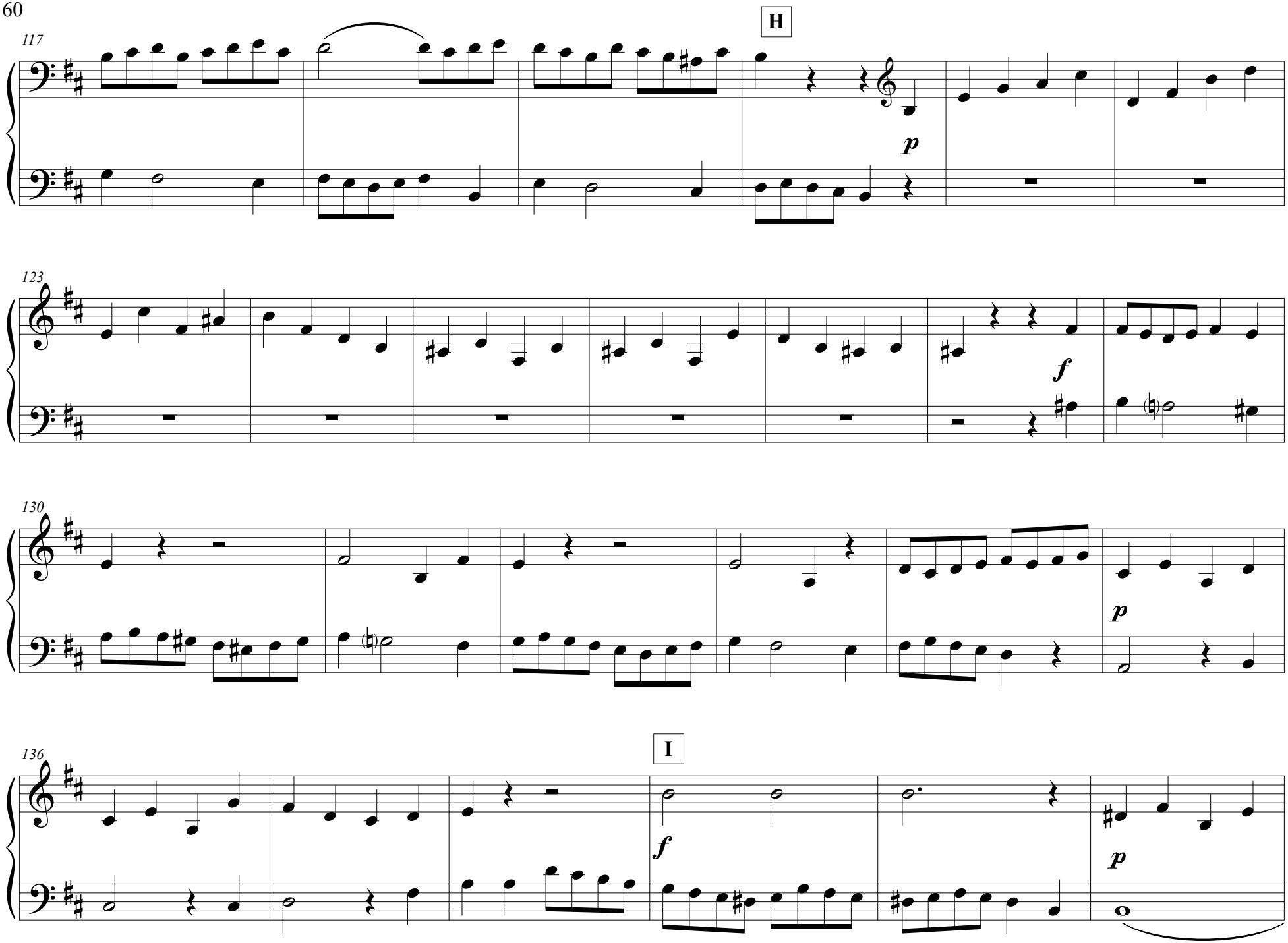

42
49
55
D
tr
p
61

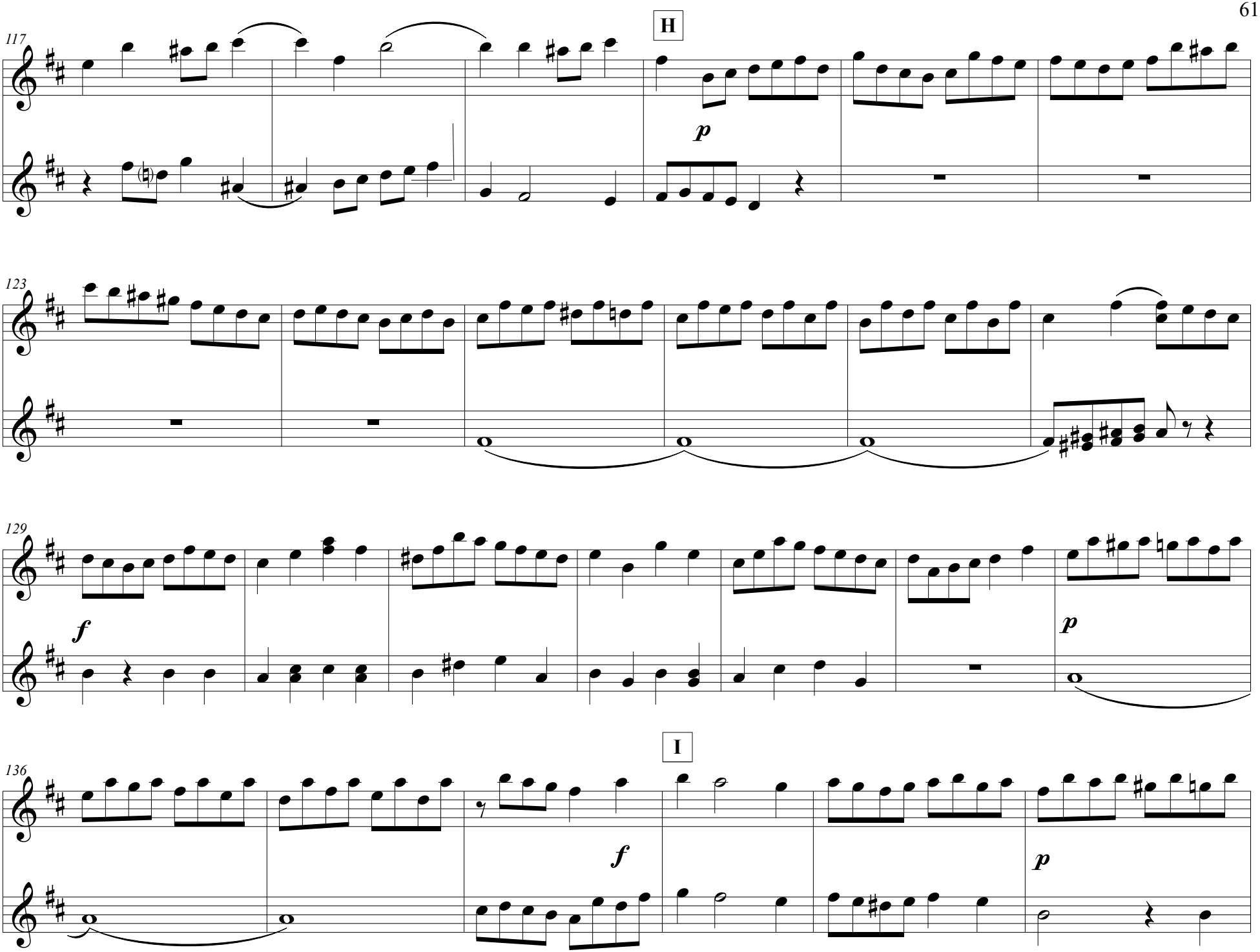

67
E
74
f
81
86
F

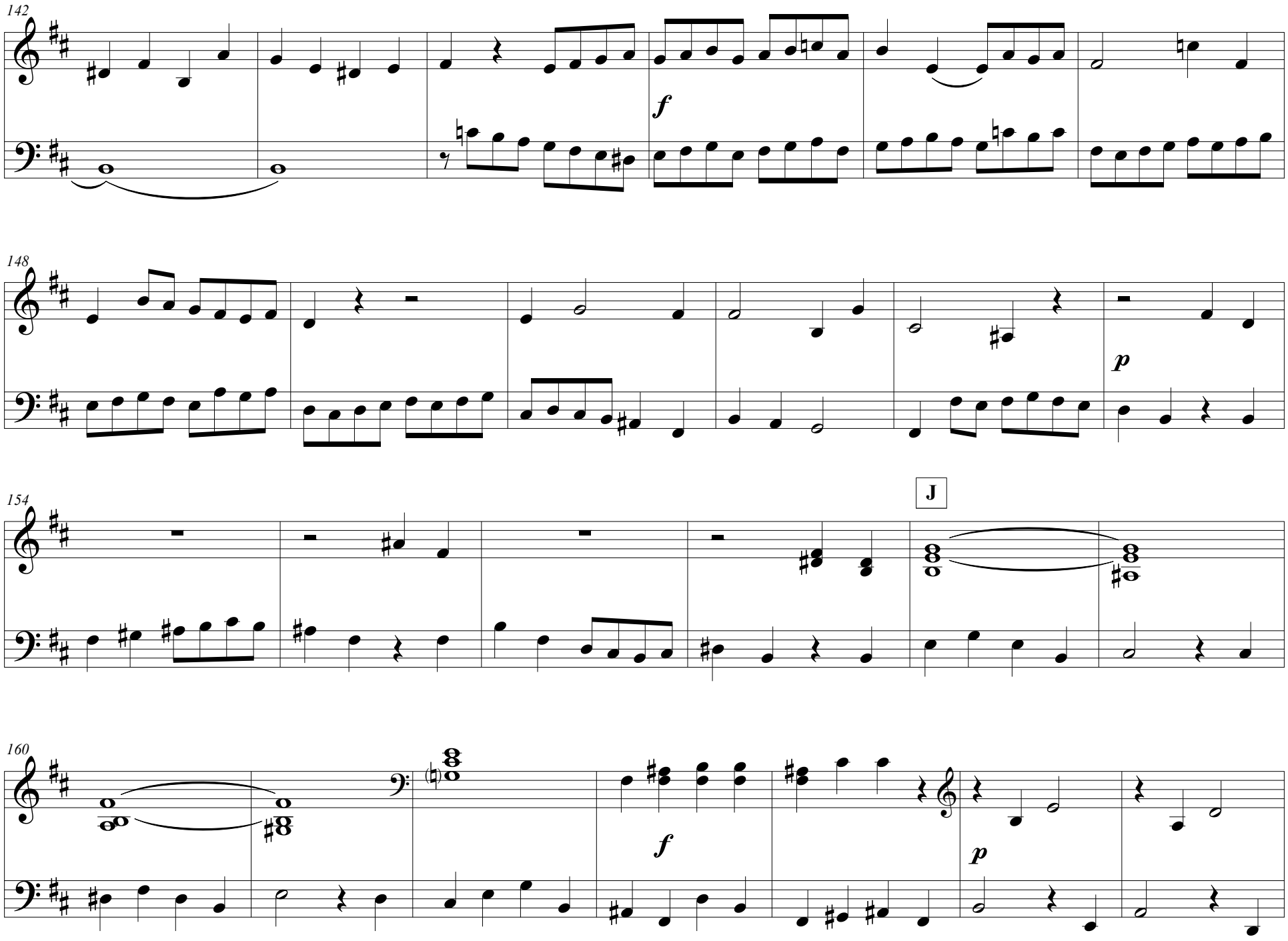

E
67
73
79
f
tr
F
87

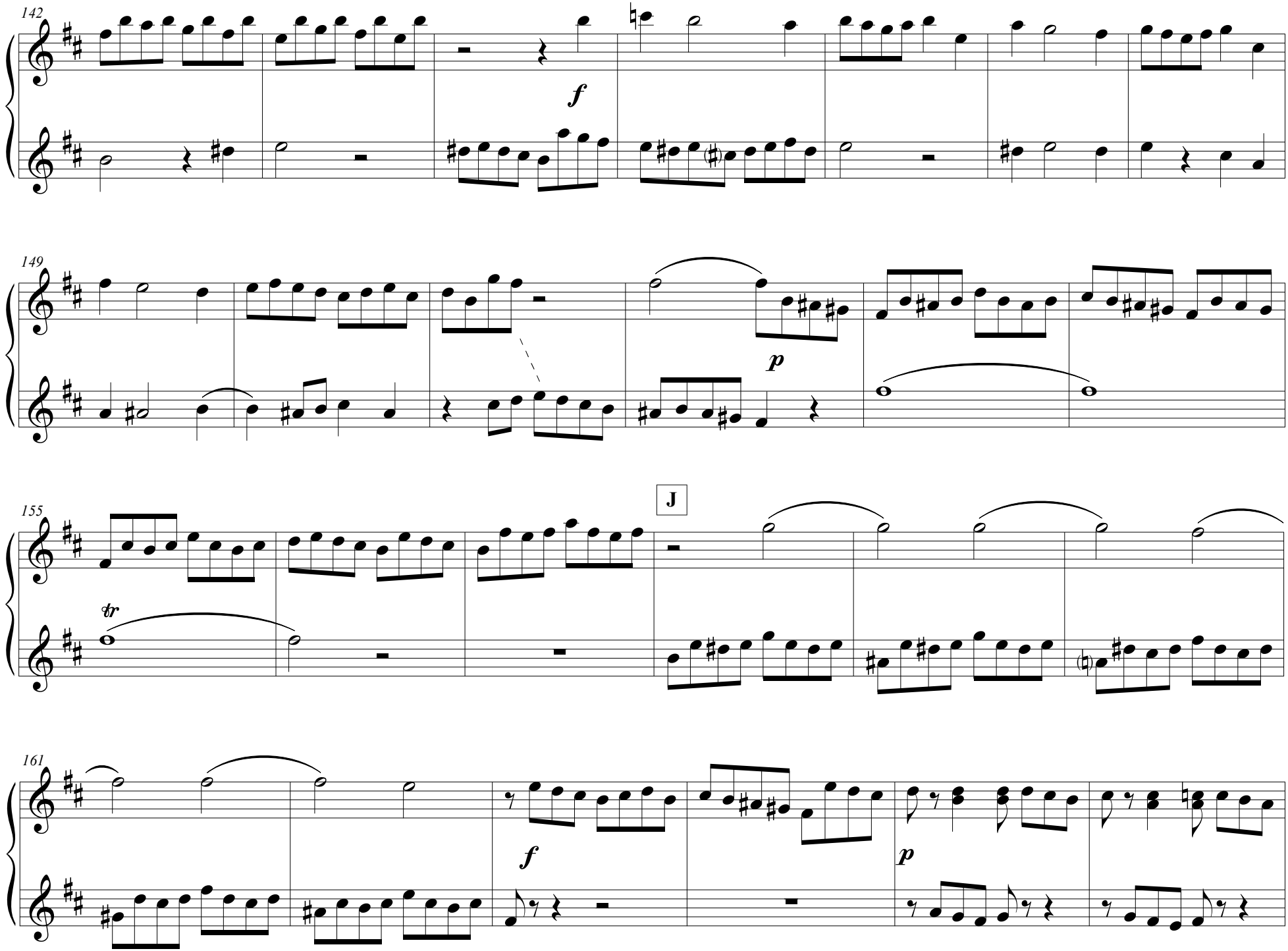

93
p
99
G
f
105
111

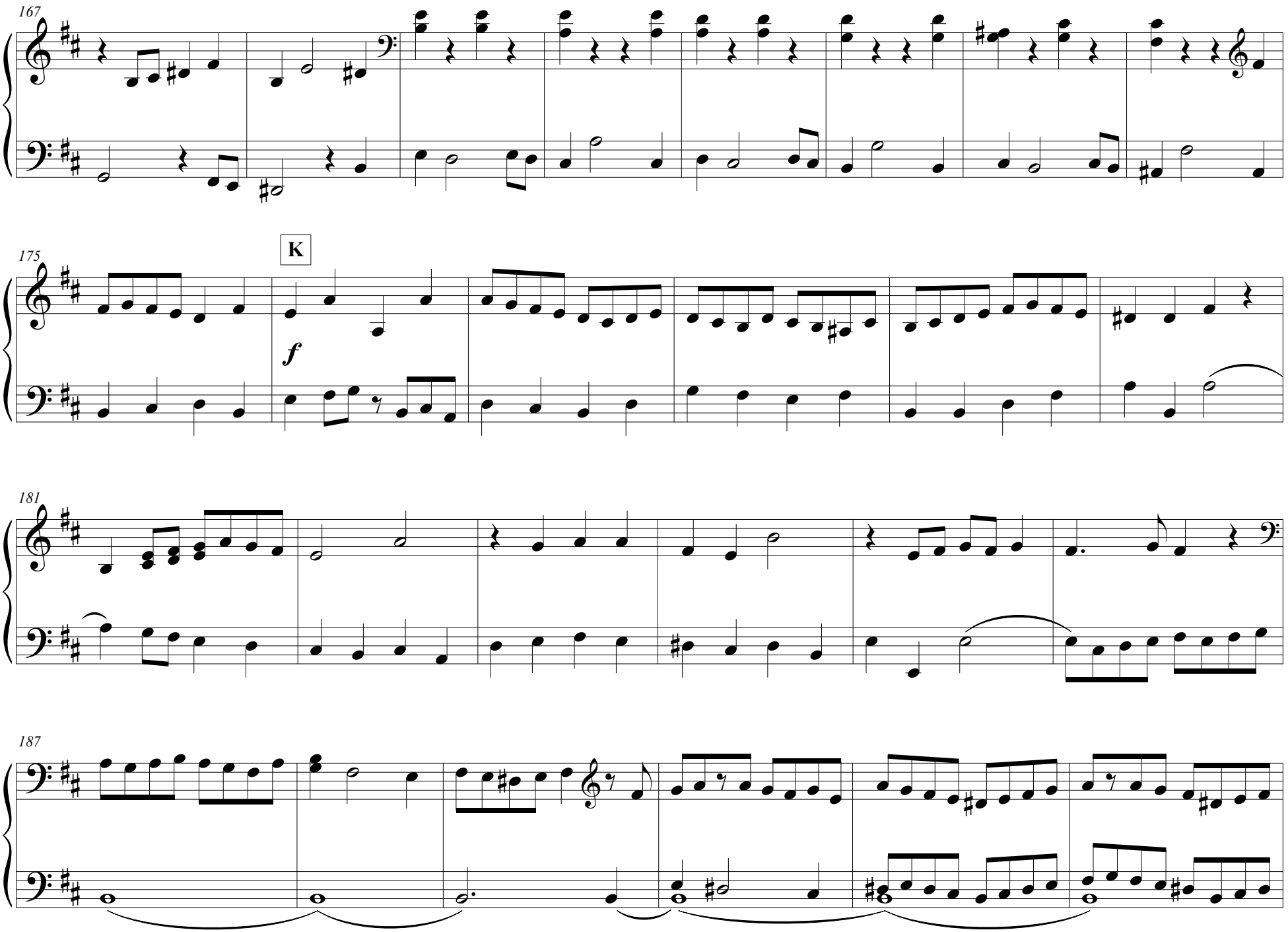

93
p
99
G
f
105
111

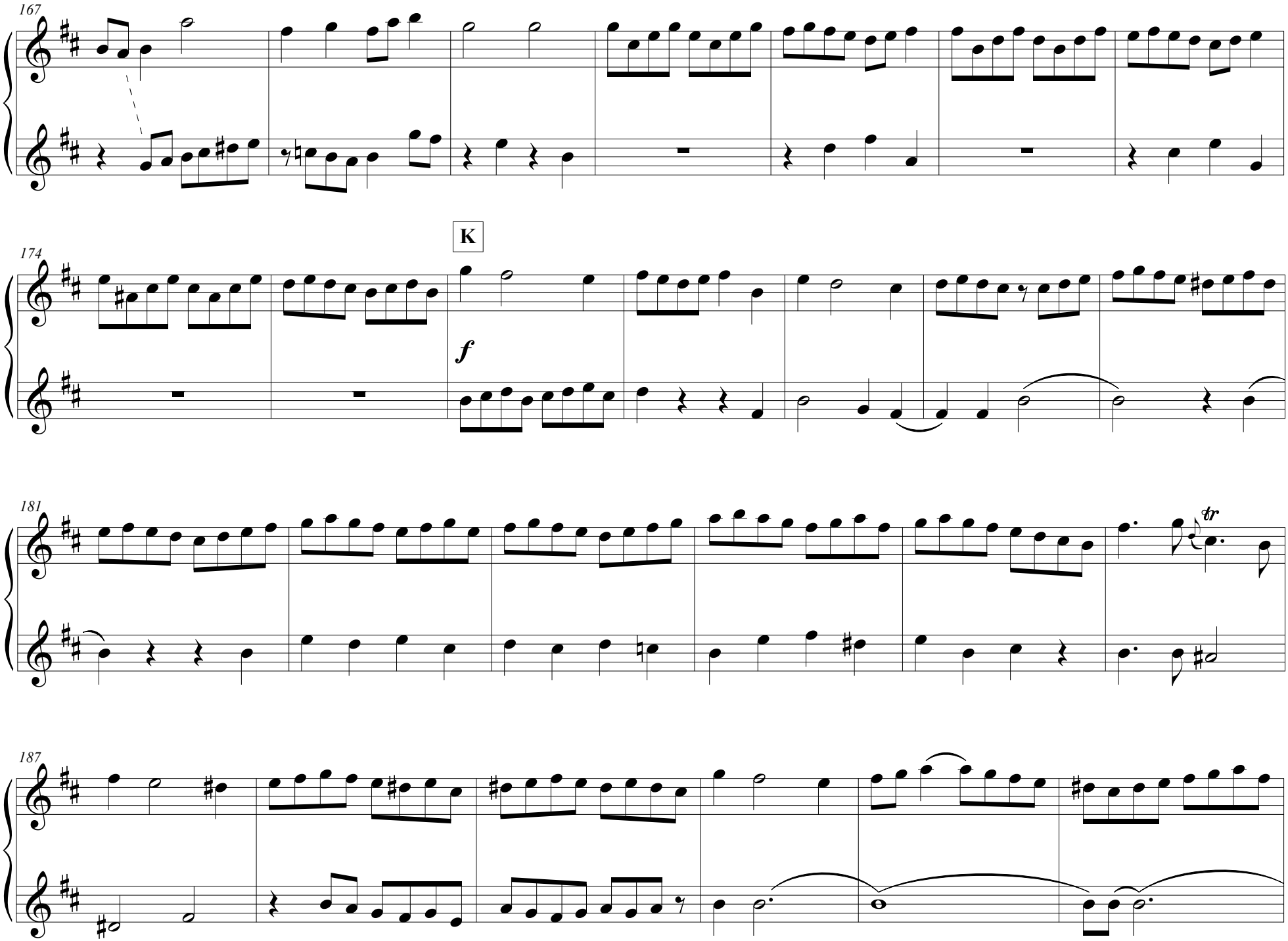

H
117
p
123
f
130
p
I
136
f
p


H
117
p
123
129
f
p
I
136
f
p


142
f
148
p
154
J
160
f
p


142
f
149
p
155
J
tr
161
f
p


167
175
K
f
181
187


167
K
174
f
181
tr
187

193

rit.

L **Maestoso** ♩ = 66

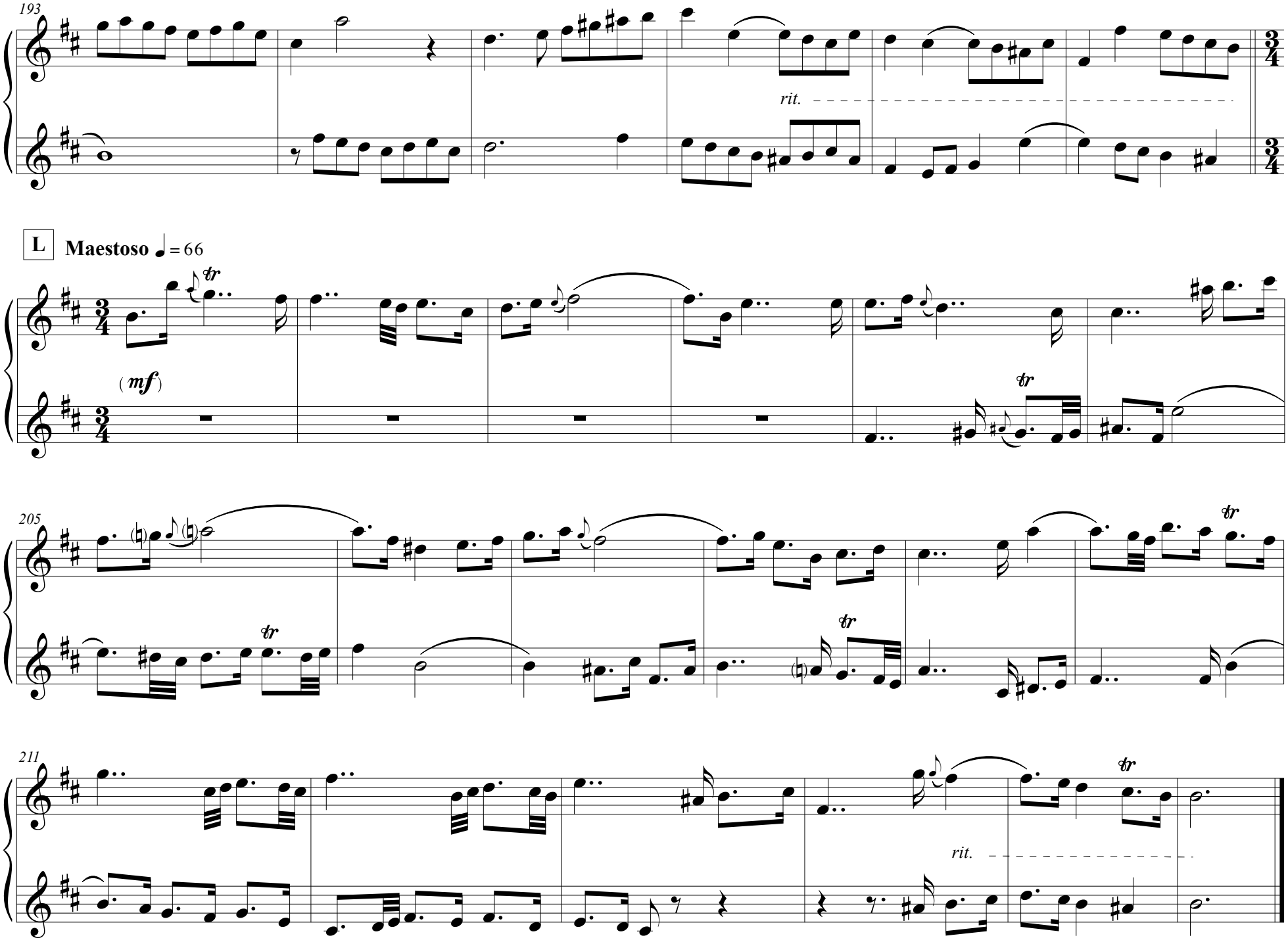
(*mf*)

205

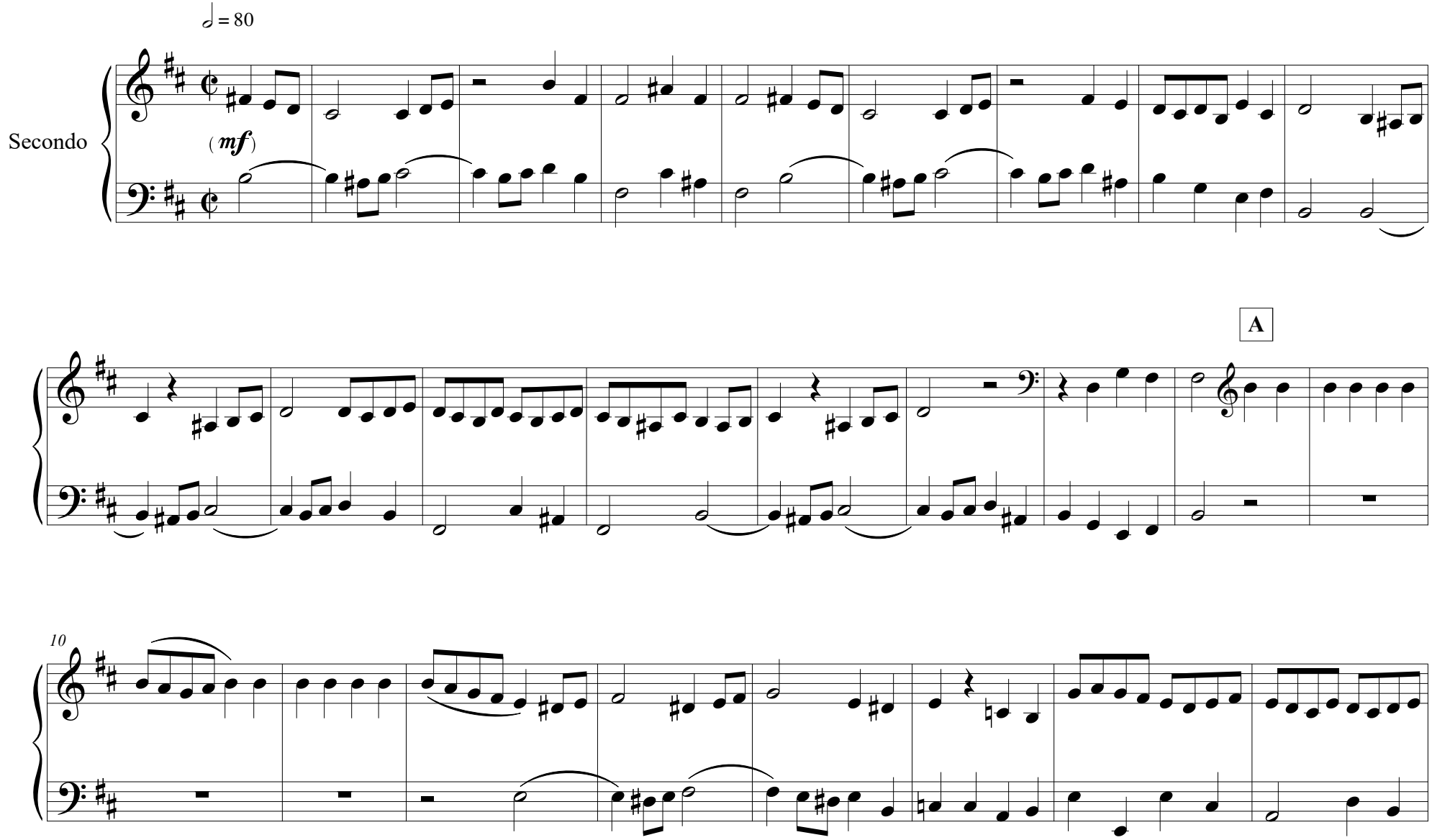
211

rit.

*2


193
rit.
L
Maestoso ♩ = 66
(mf)
205
211
rit.

Rondeau



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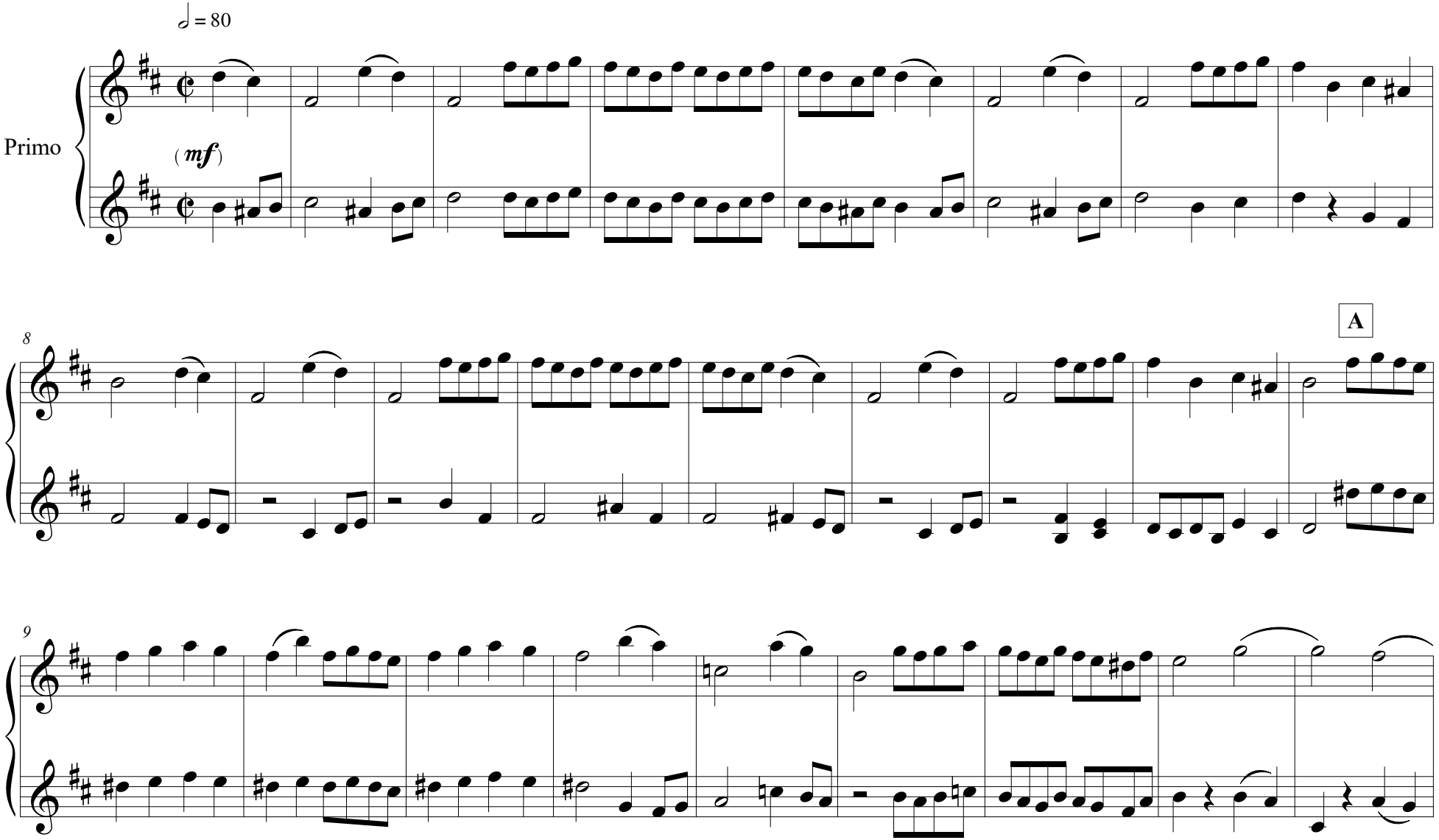
Rondeau



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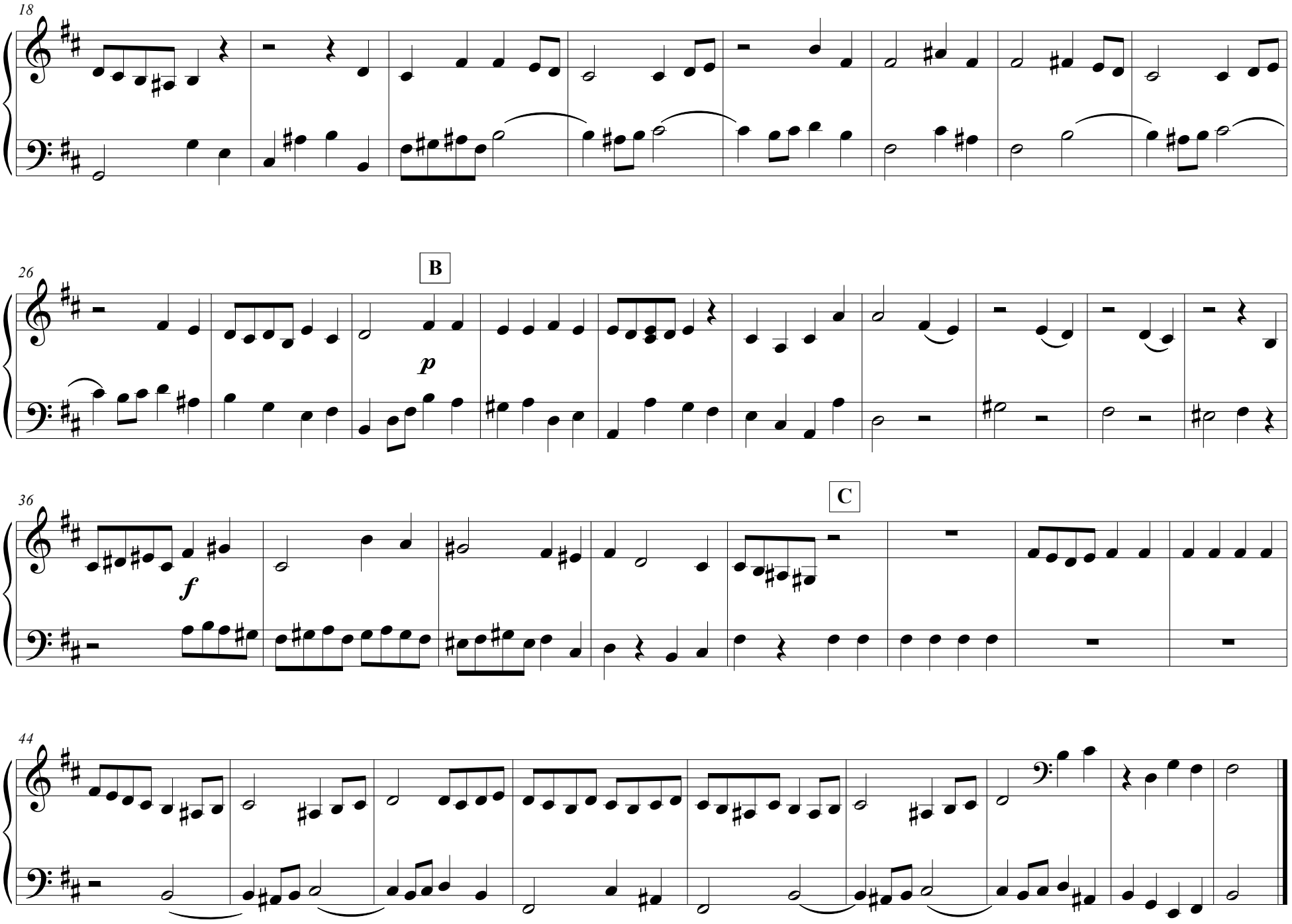
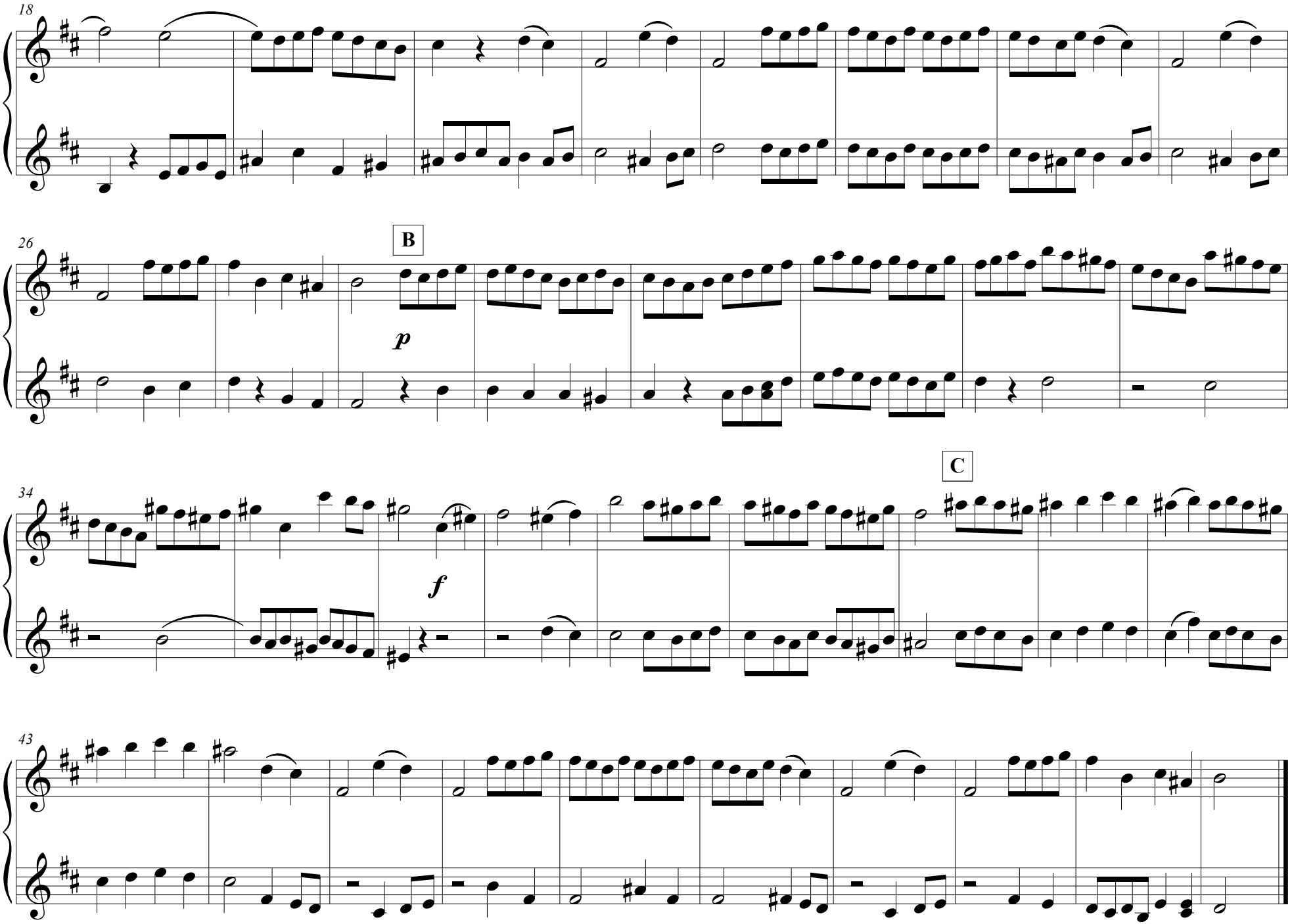
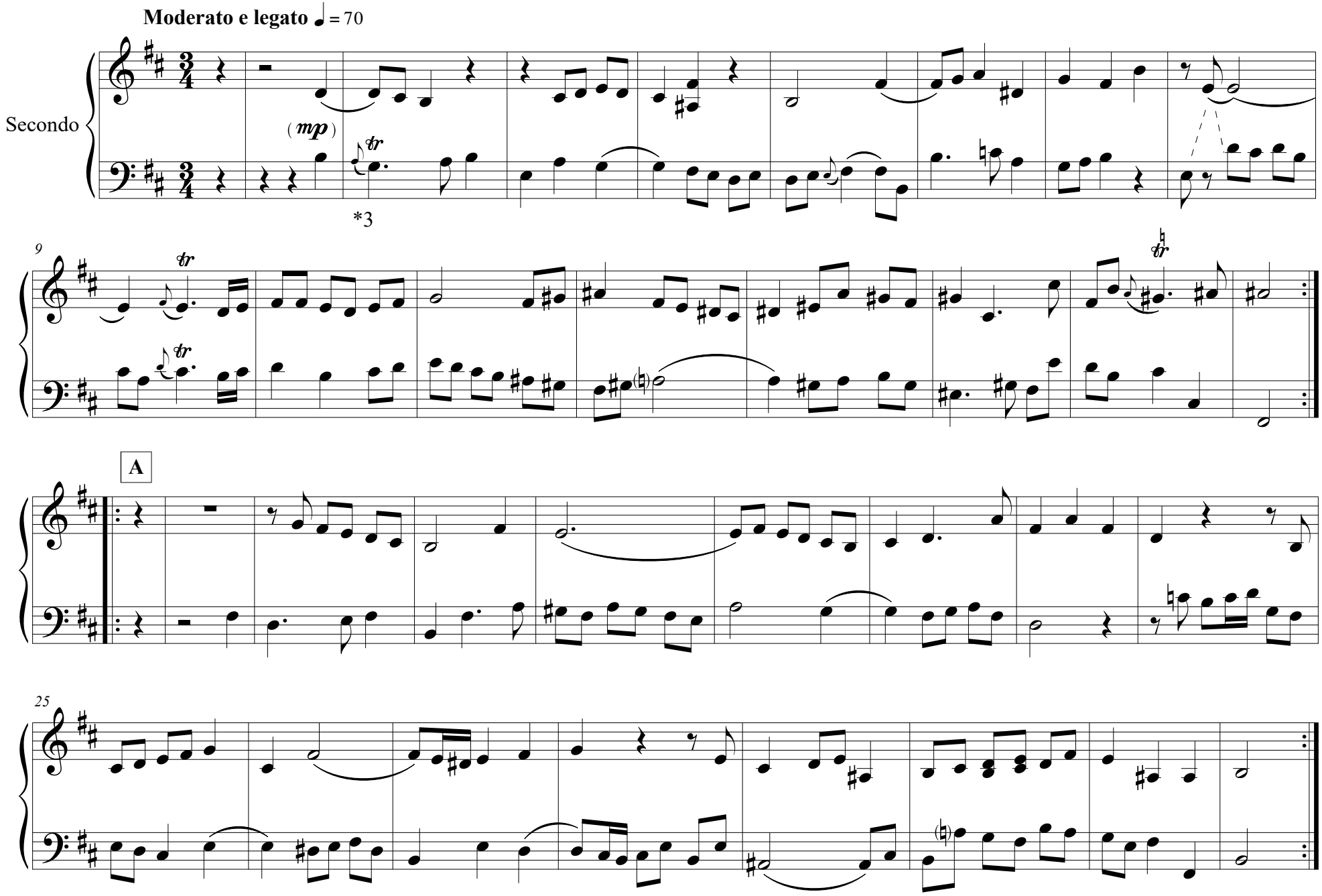

18
26
B
p
36
f
C
44


18
26
B
p
34
f
C
43

Sarabande



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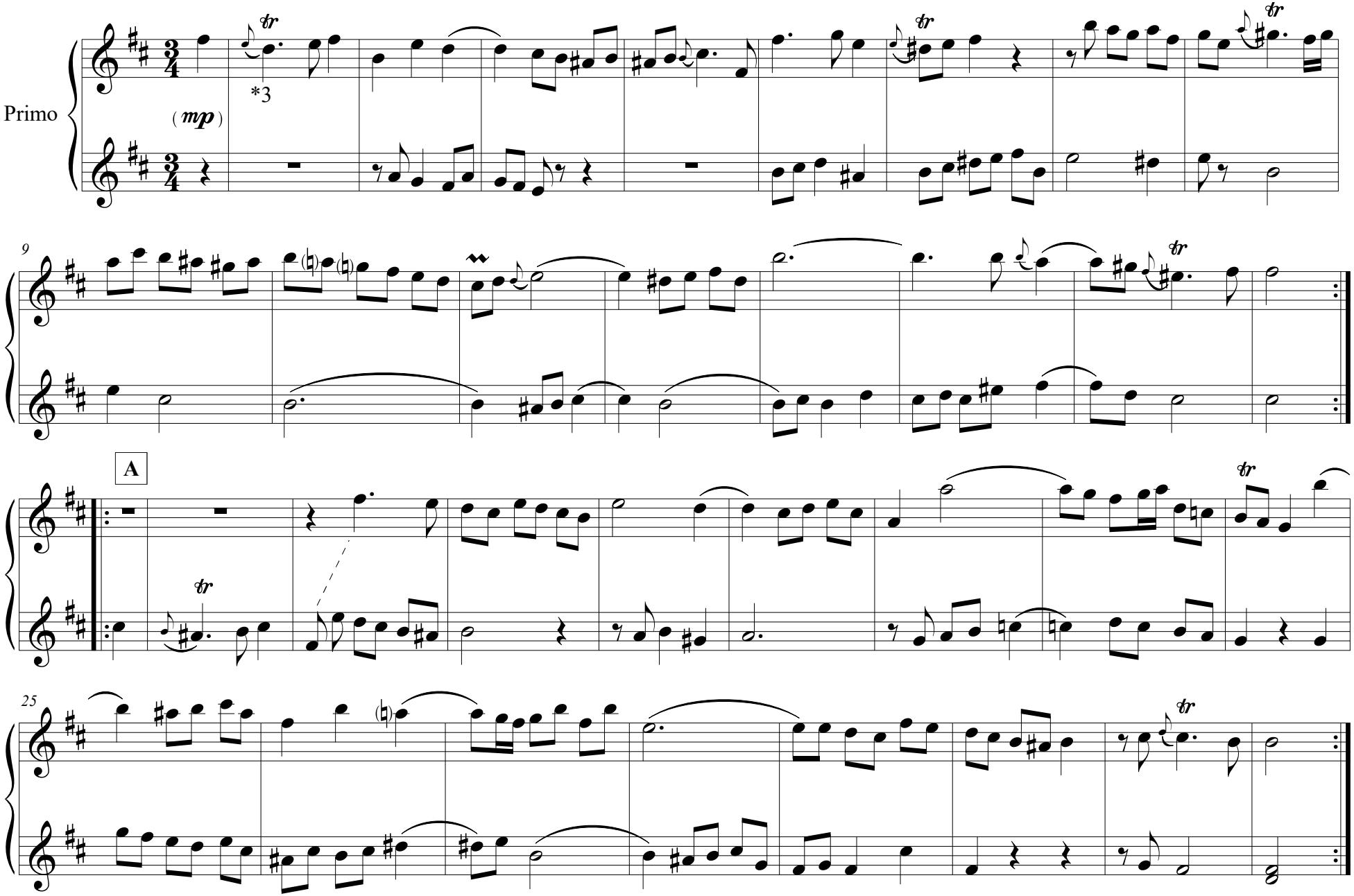
Sarabande

Moderato e legato ♩ = 70



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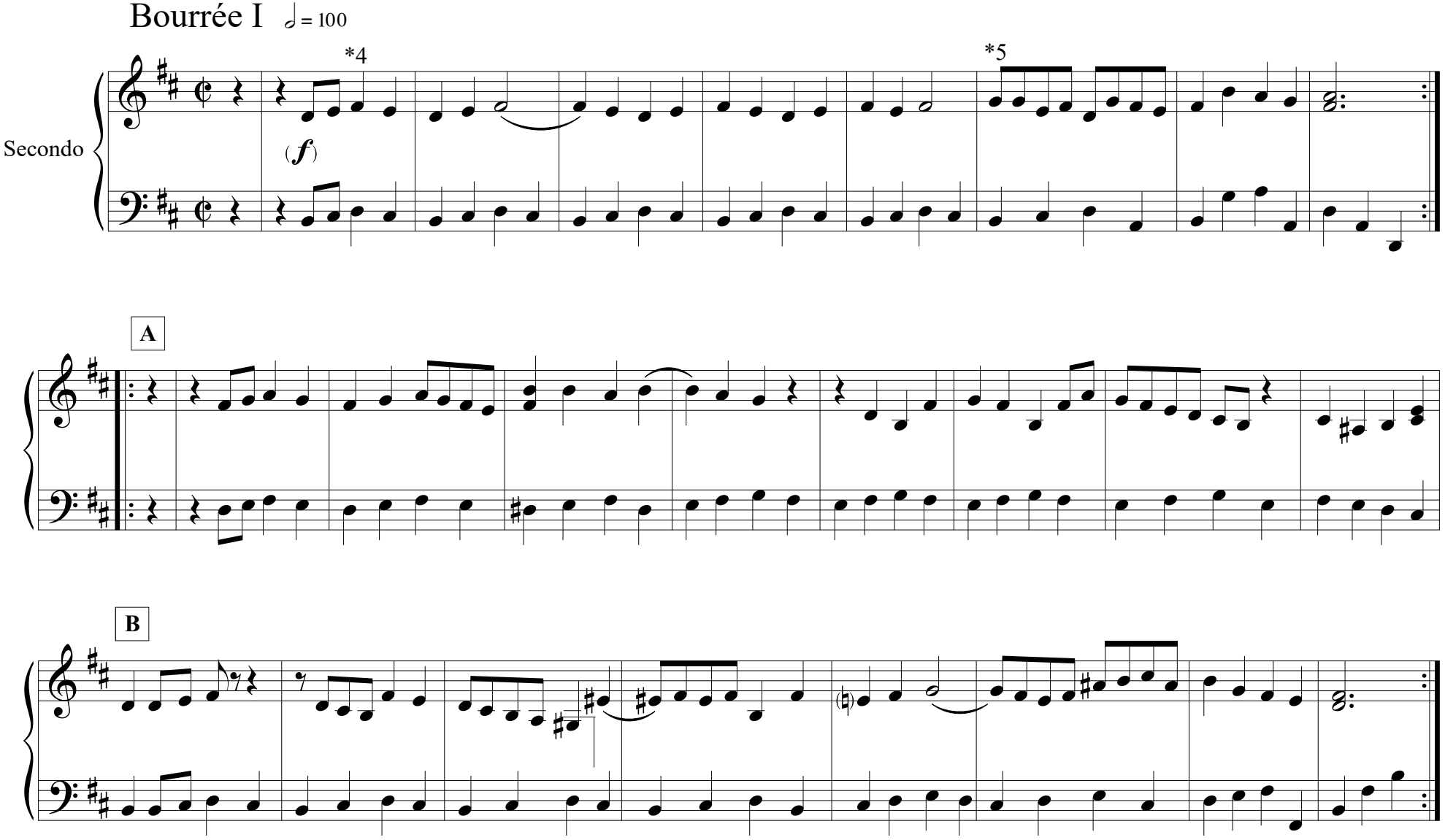
Bourrées

Bourrée I



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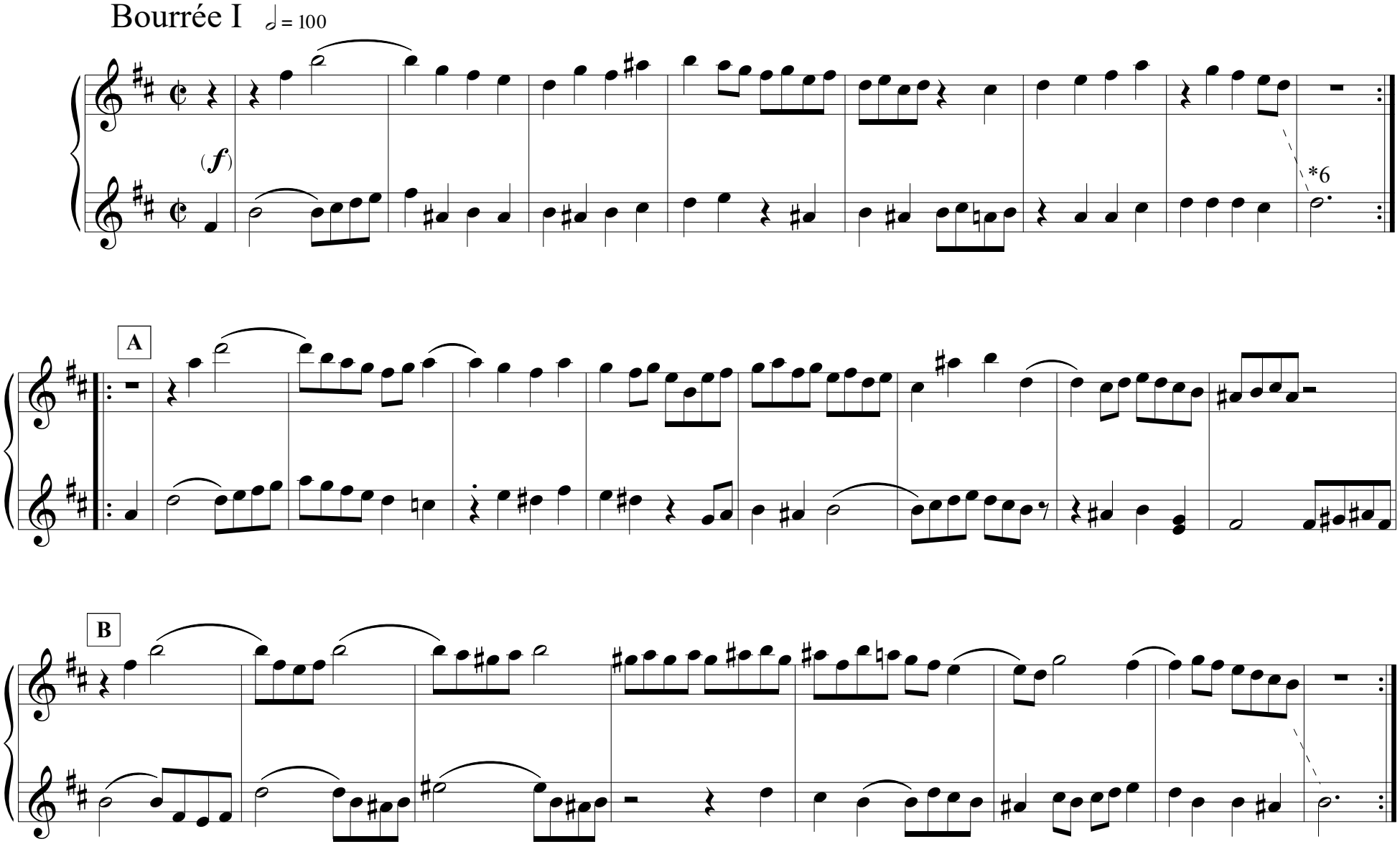
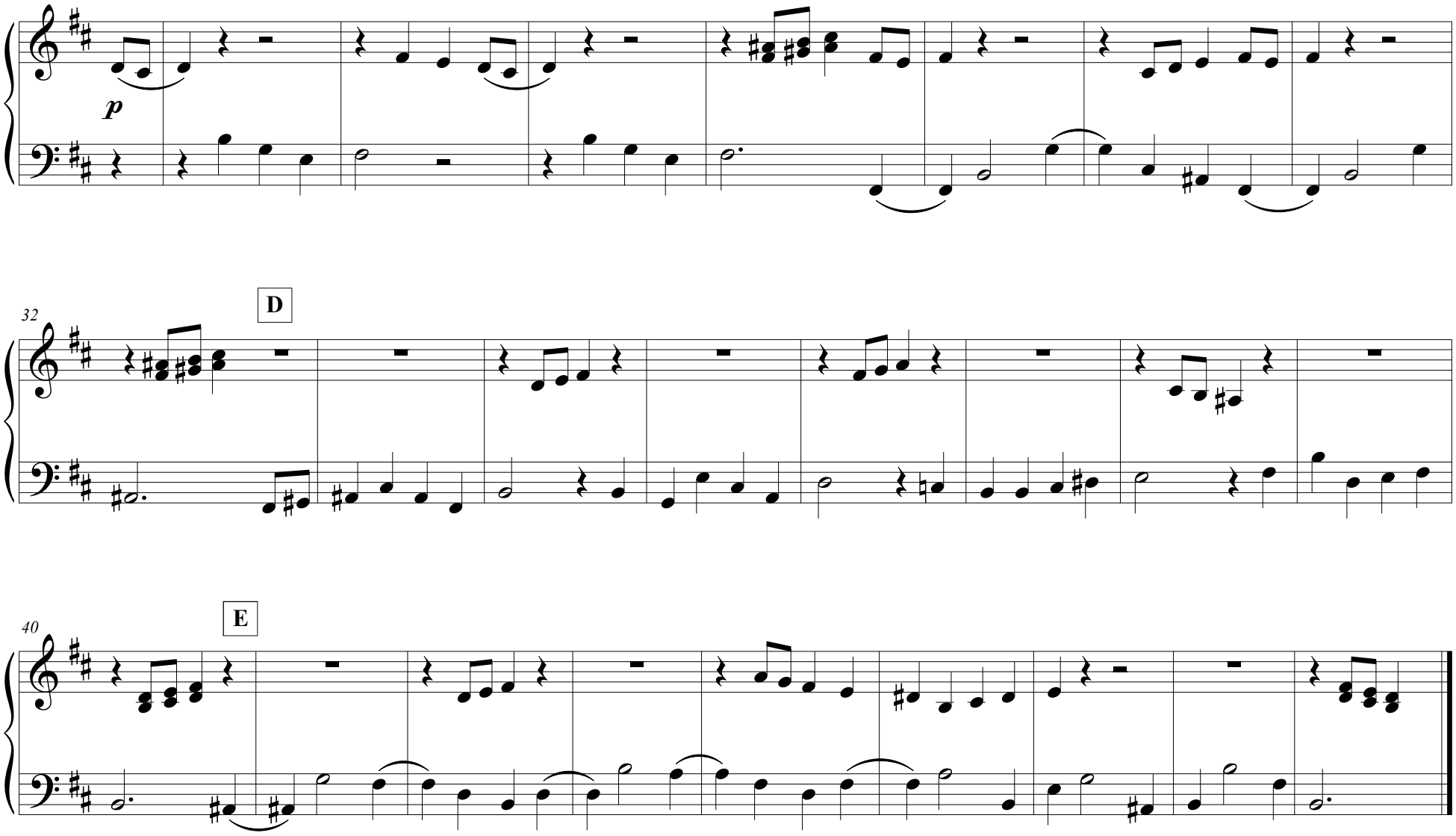
Bourrées

Bourrée I



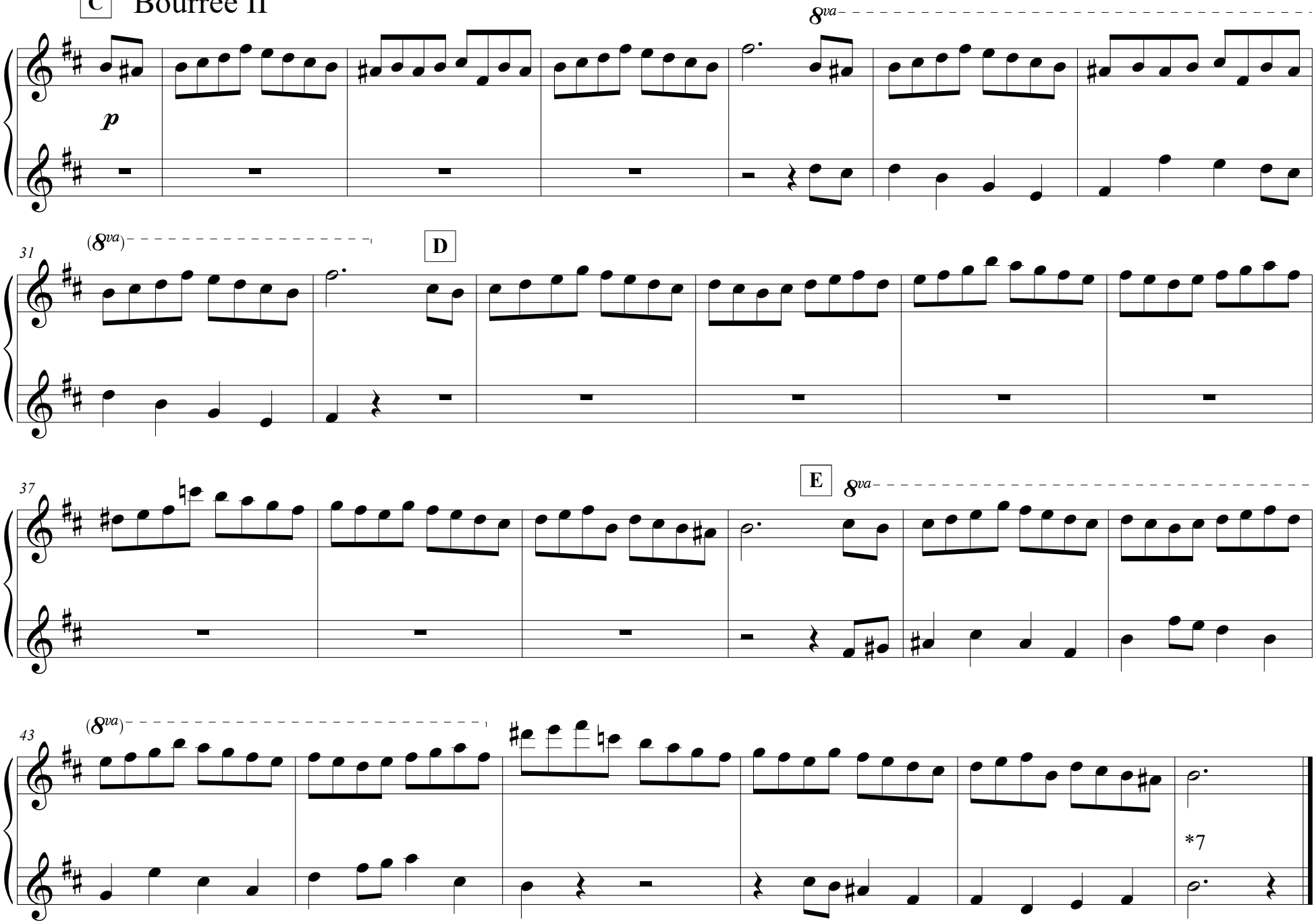
©2022

C Bourrée II



Bourrée I da Capo senza repetizione

C Bourrée II



Bourree I da Capo senza repetizione

Polonaise and Double

Polonaise

Moderato e staccato ♩ = 60

Secondo

(*mf*) *8

1. 2.

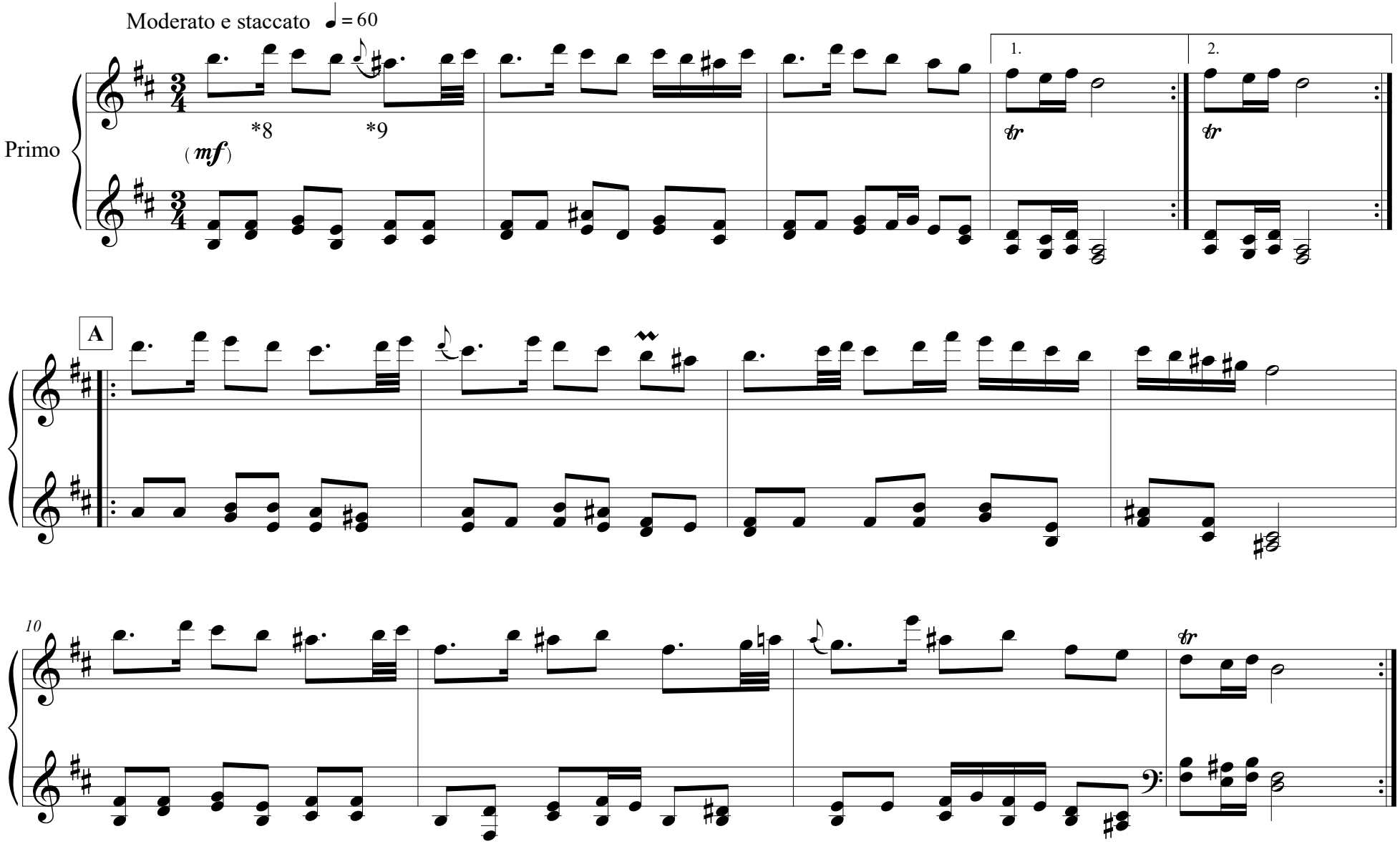
A

10

©2022

Polonaise and Double

Polonaise



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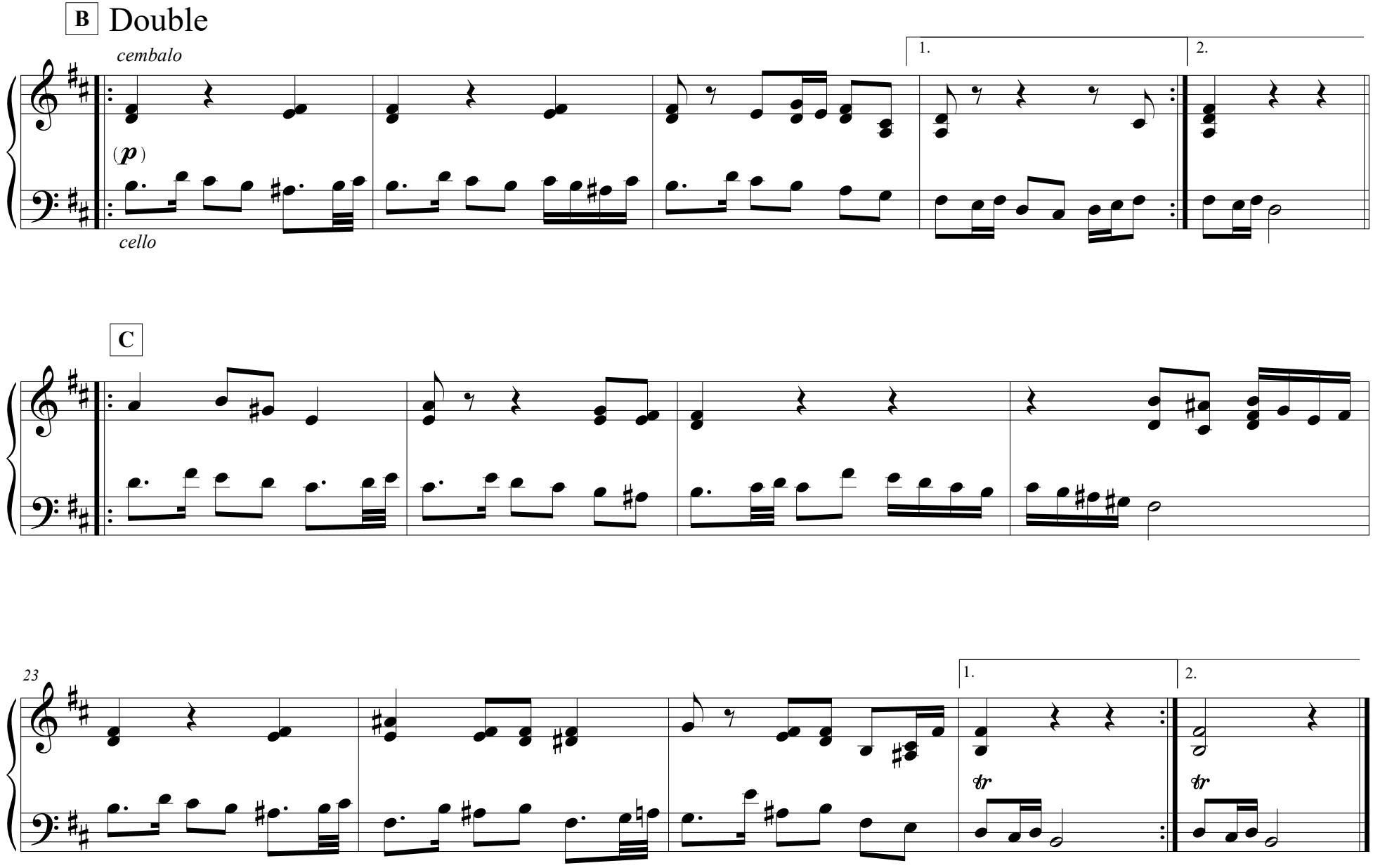
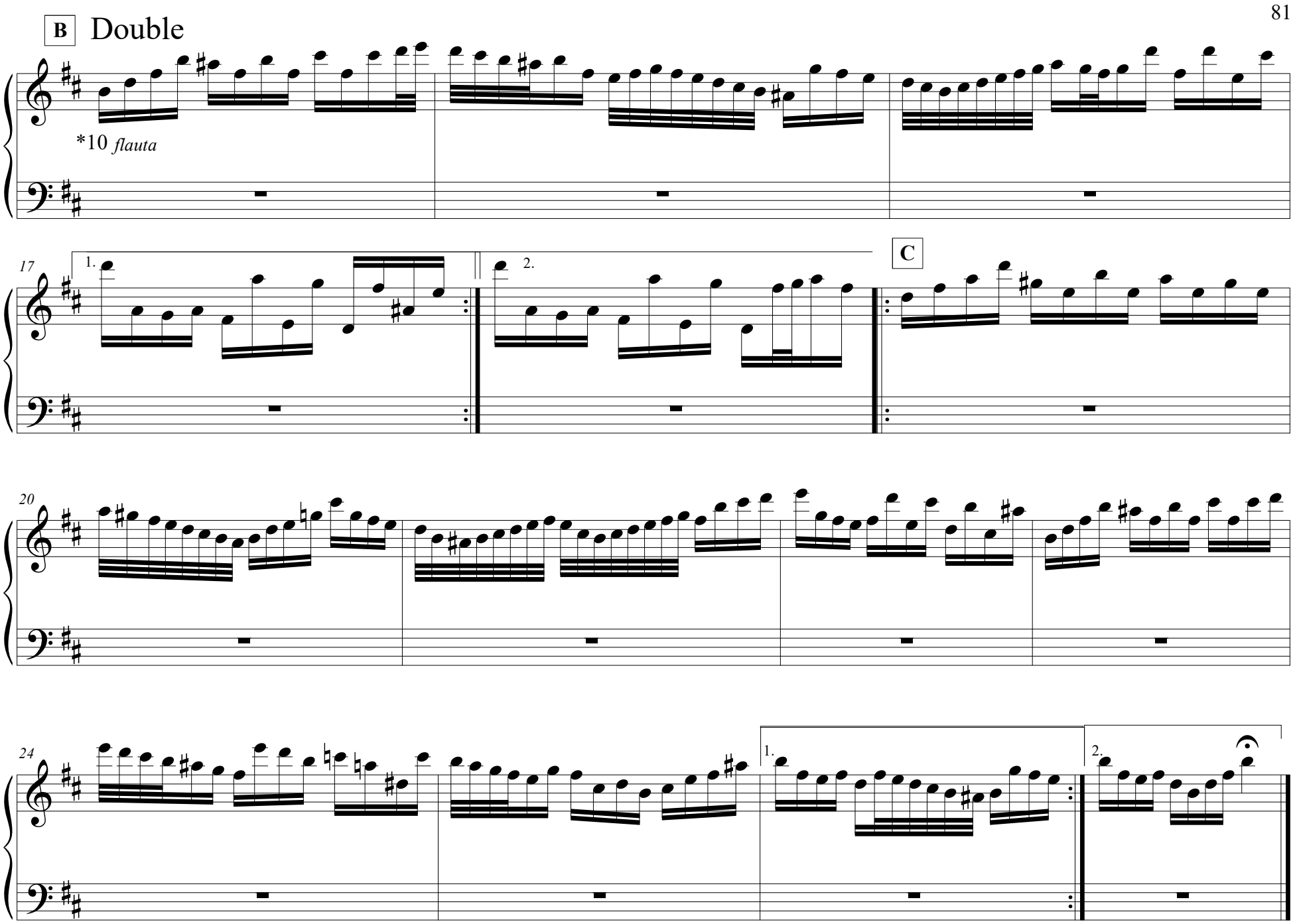
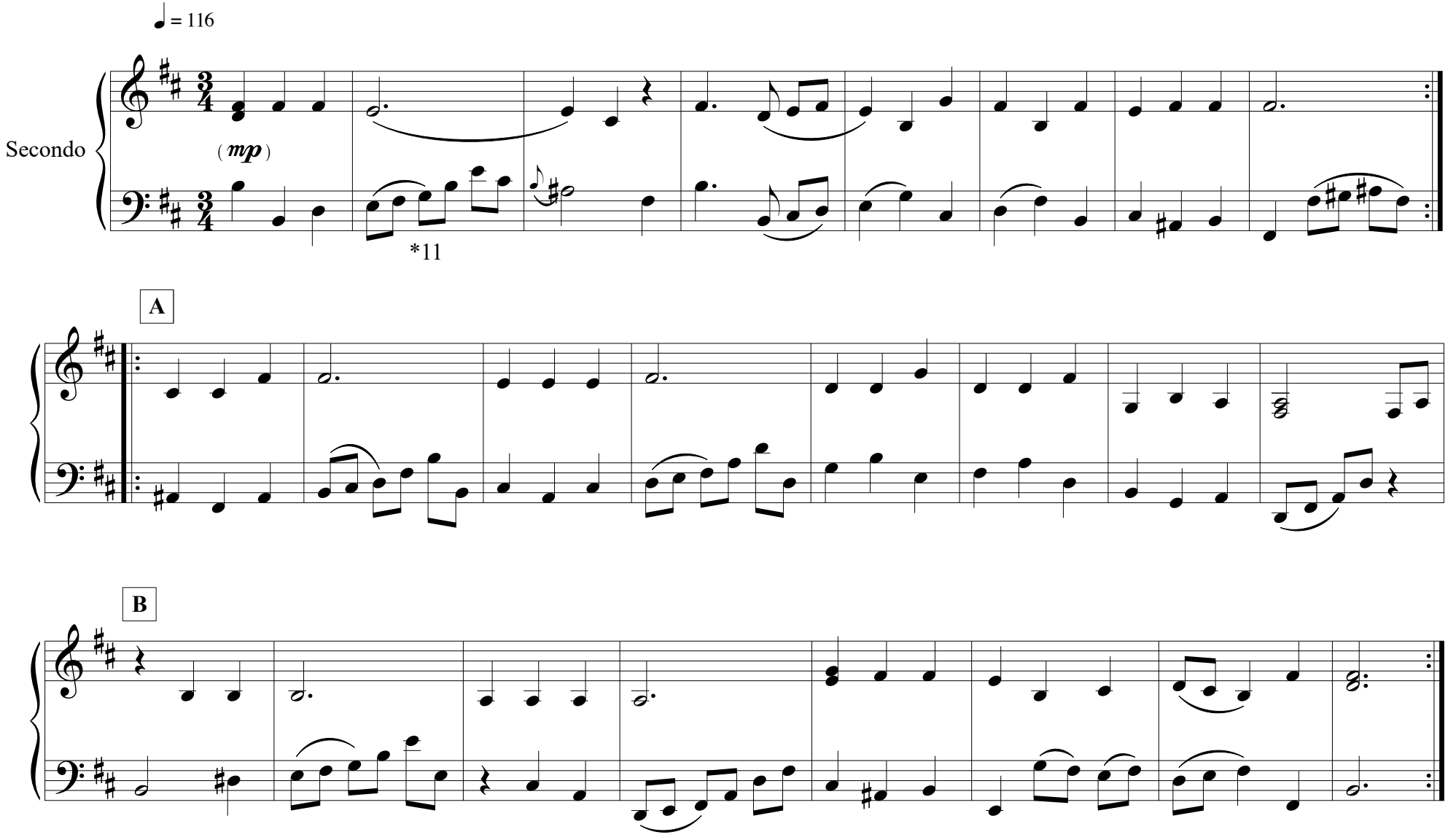

B
Double
cembalo
(p)
cello
1.
2.
C
23
1.
2.
tr
tr


B Double
*10 flauta
17
1.
2.
C
20
24
1.
2.

Menuet



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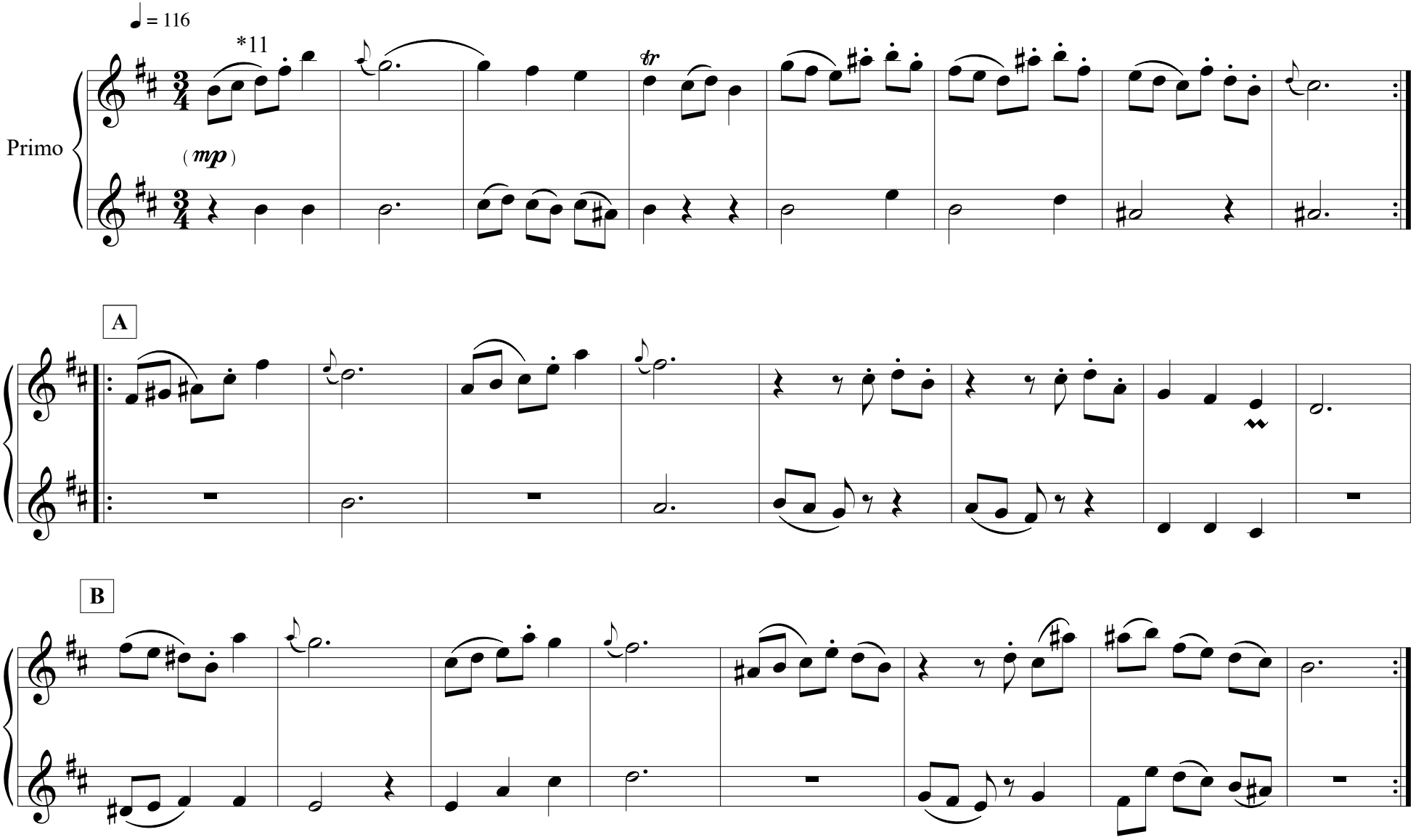
Menuet



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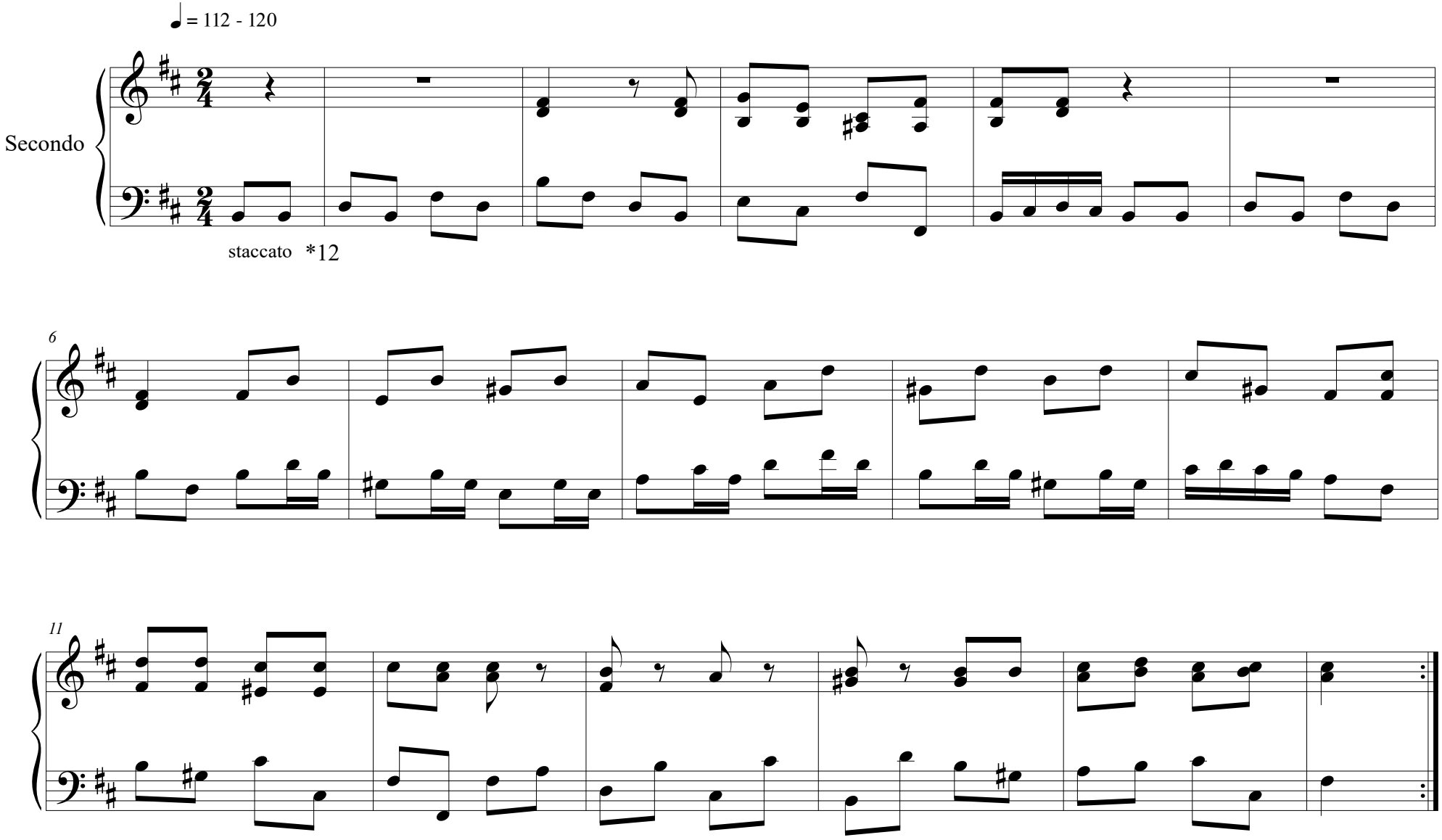
Badinerie



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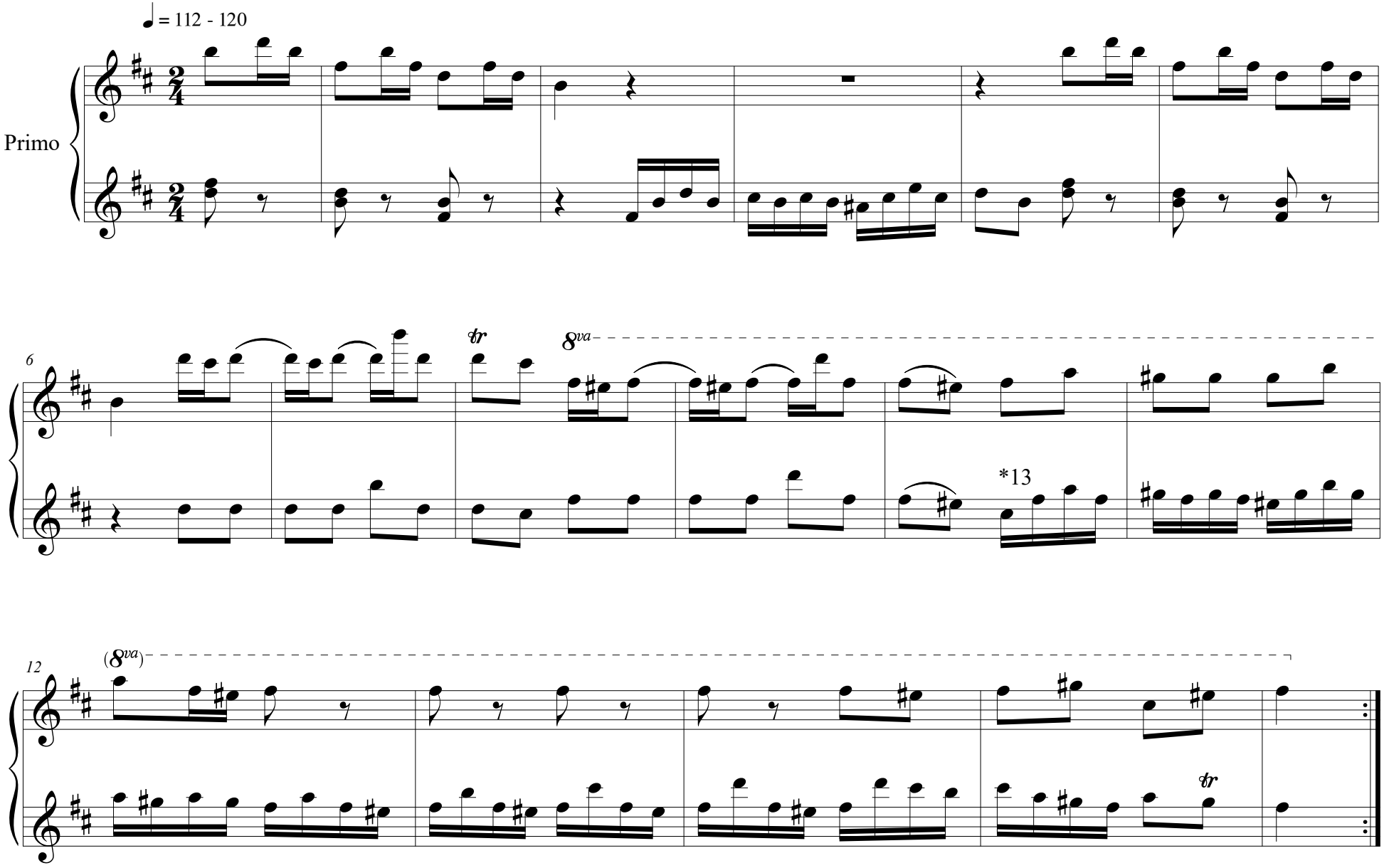
Badinerie



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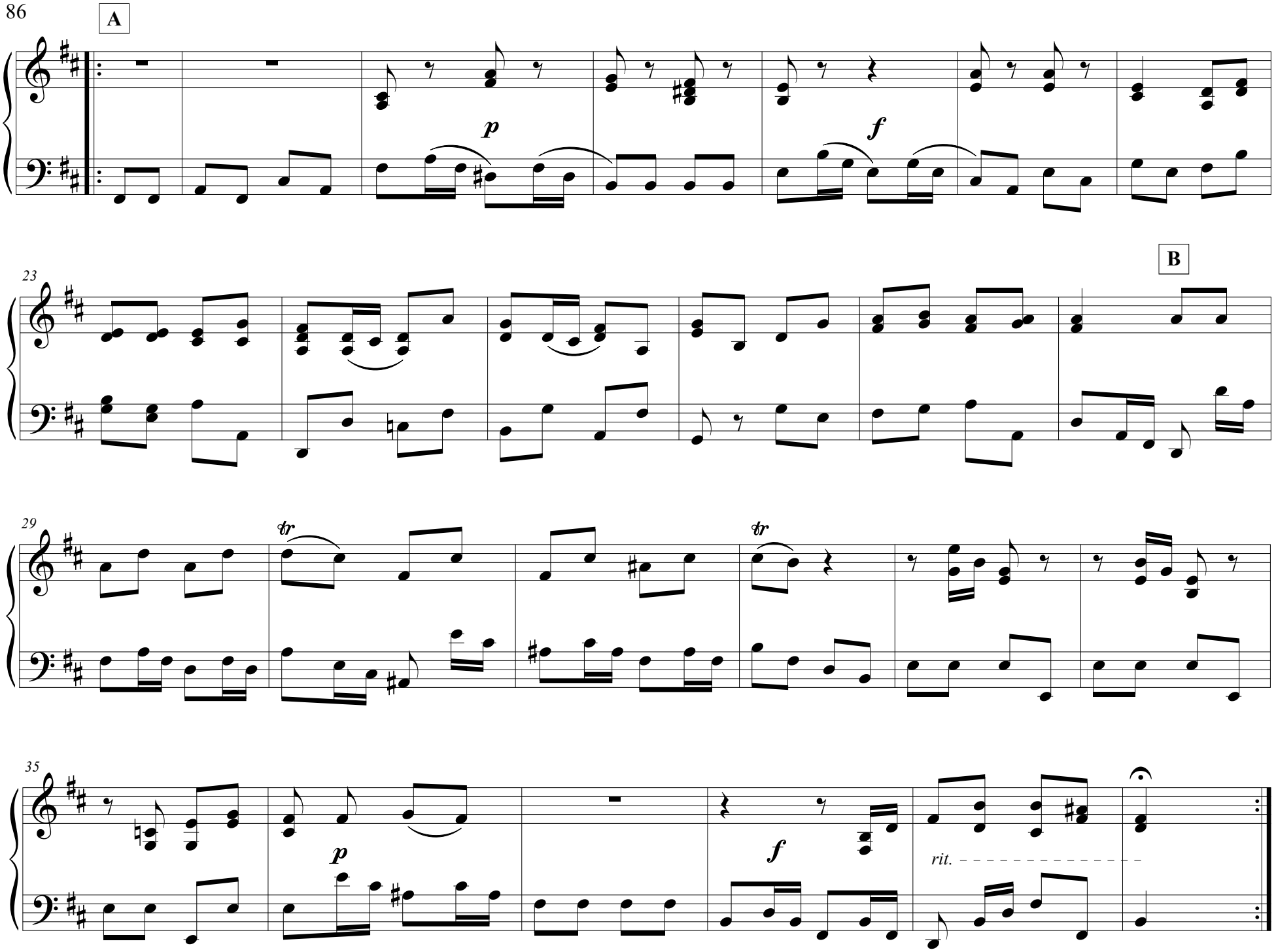
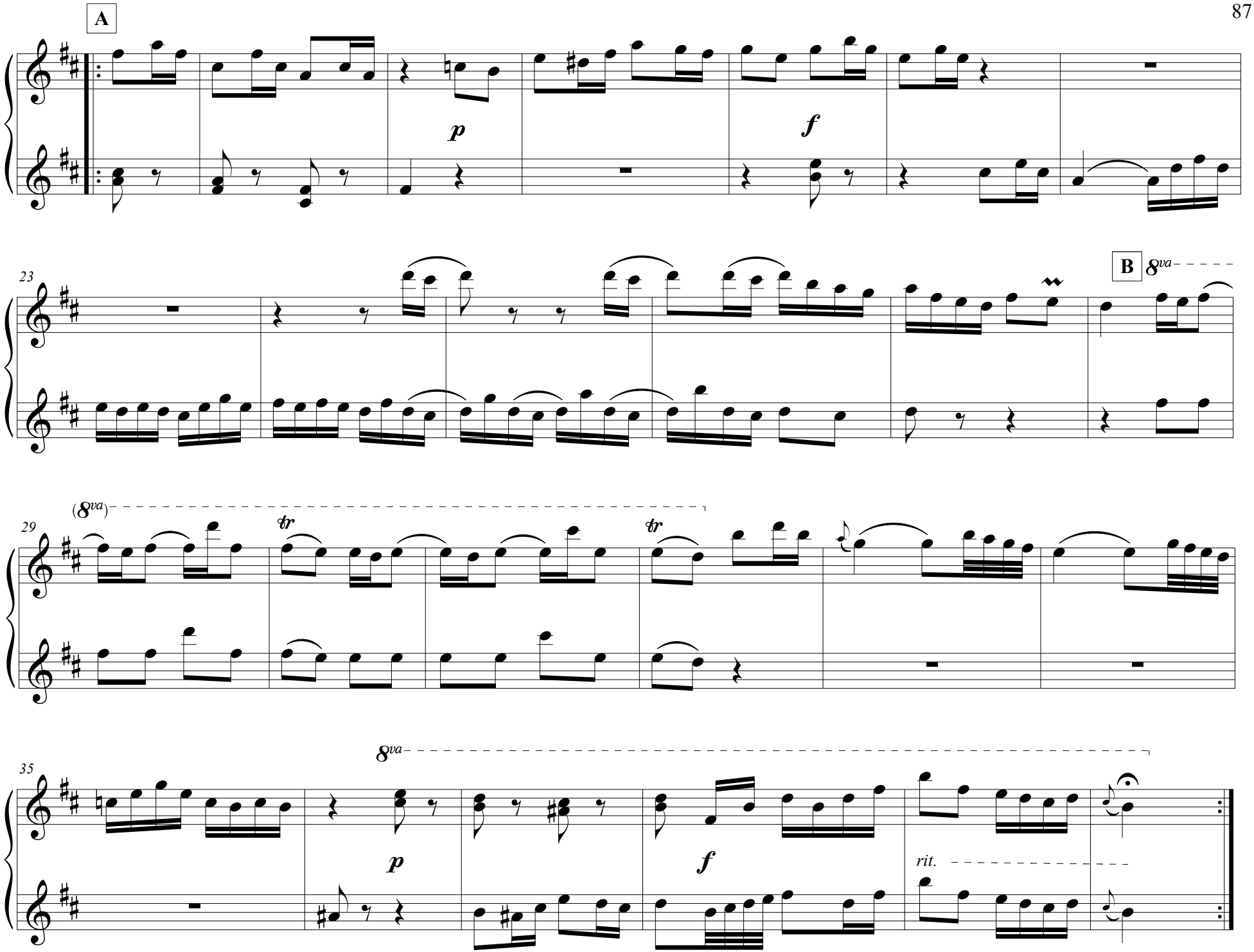

A
p
f
23
B
29
tr
tr
35
p
f
rit.


A
p
f
23
B
8va
(8va)
29
tr
tr
8va
35
p
f
rit.

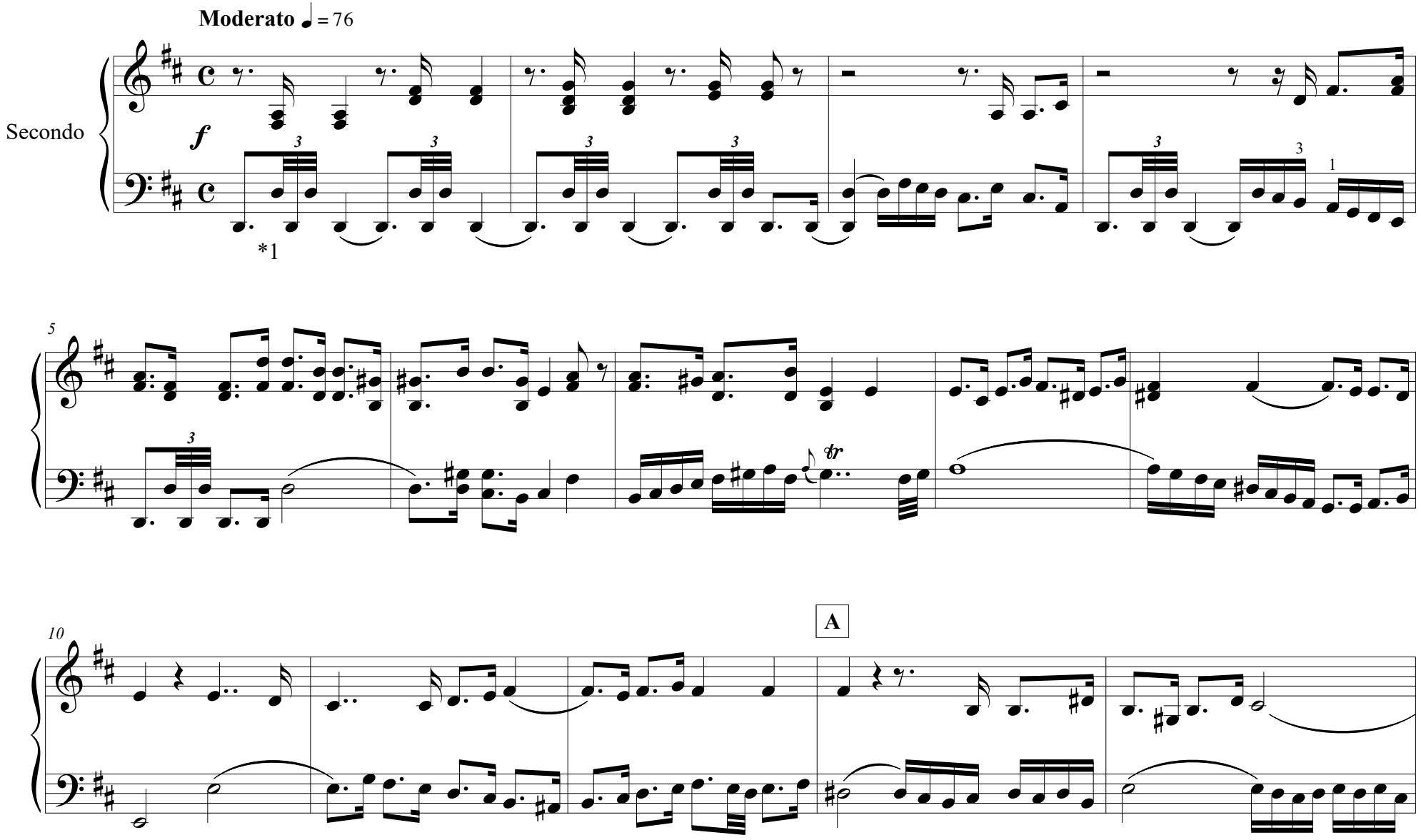
Orchestral Suite No. 3

BWV 1068

Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major

Overture

J.S. Bach
Arr. by E. Bindman



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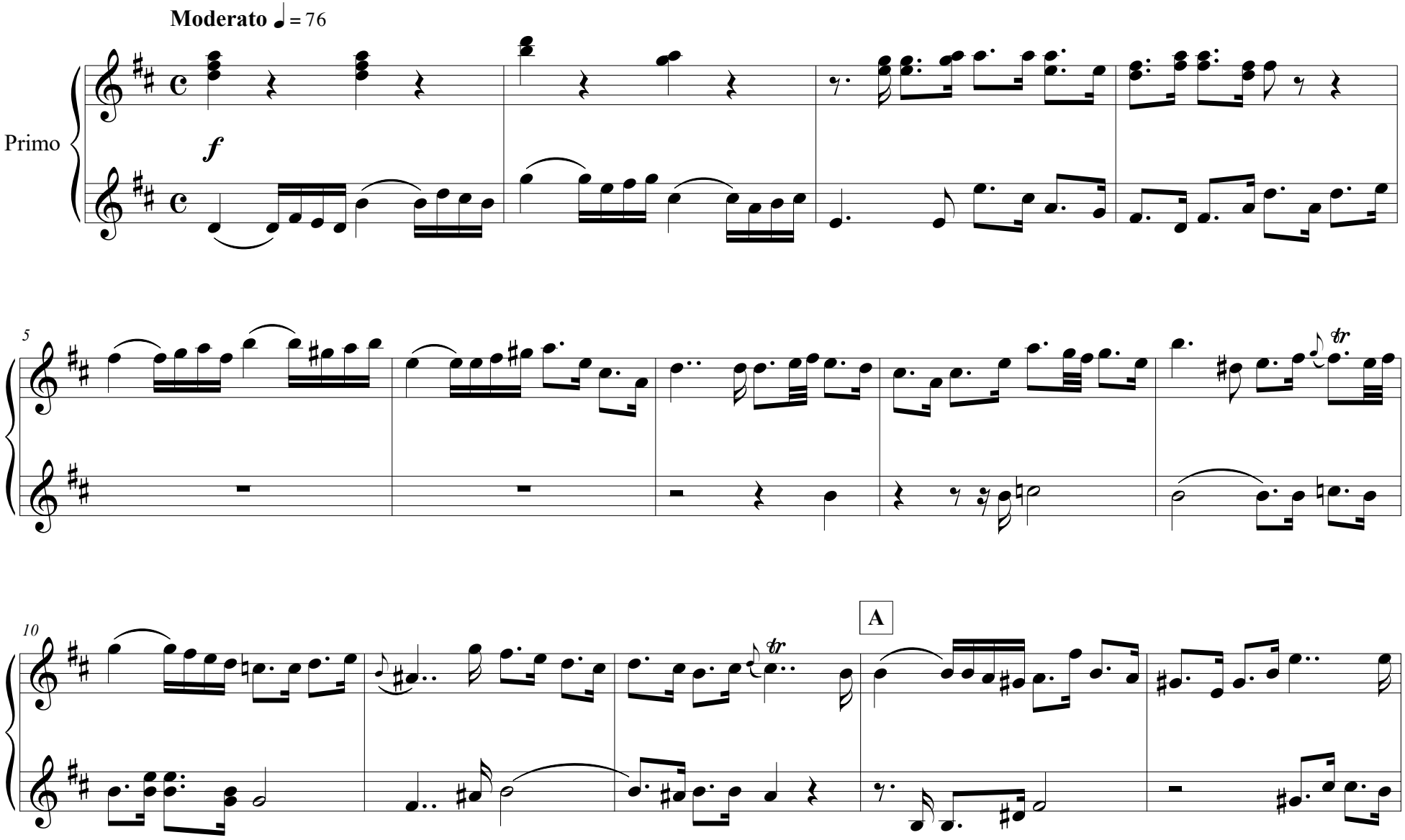
Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major

Overture

J.S. Bach
Arr. by E. Bindman



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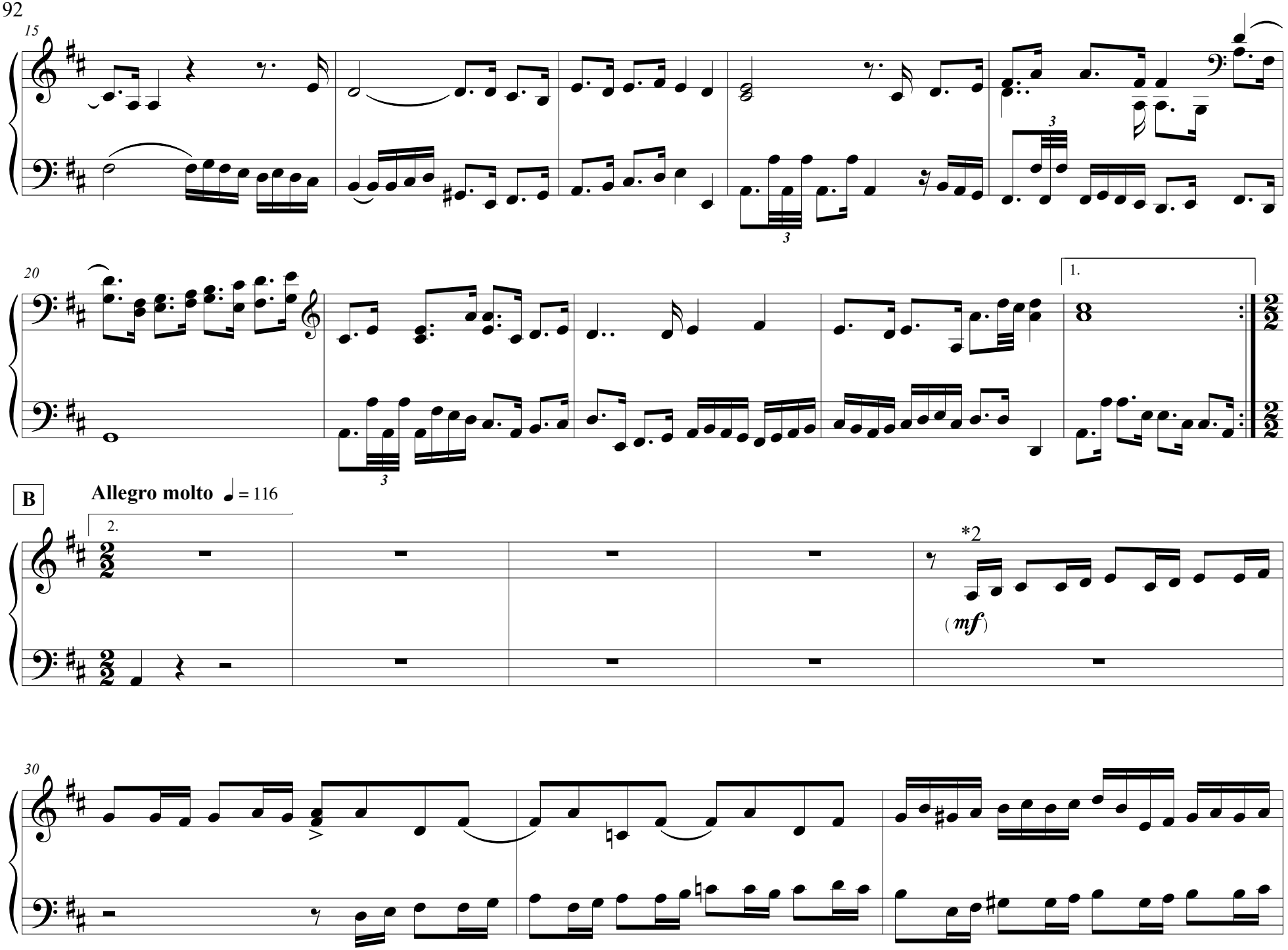
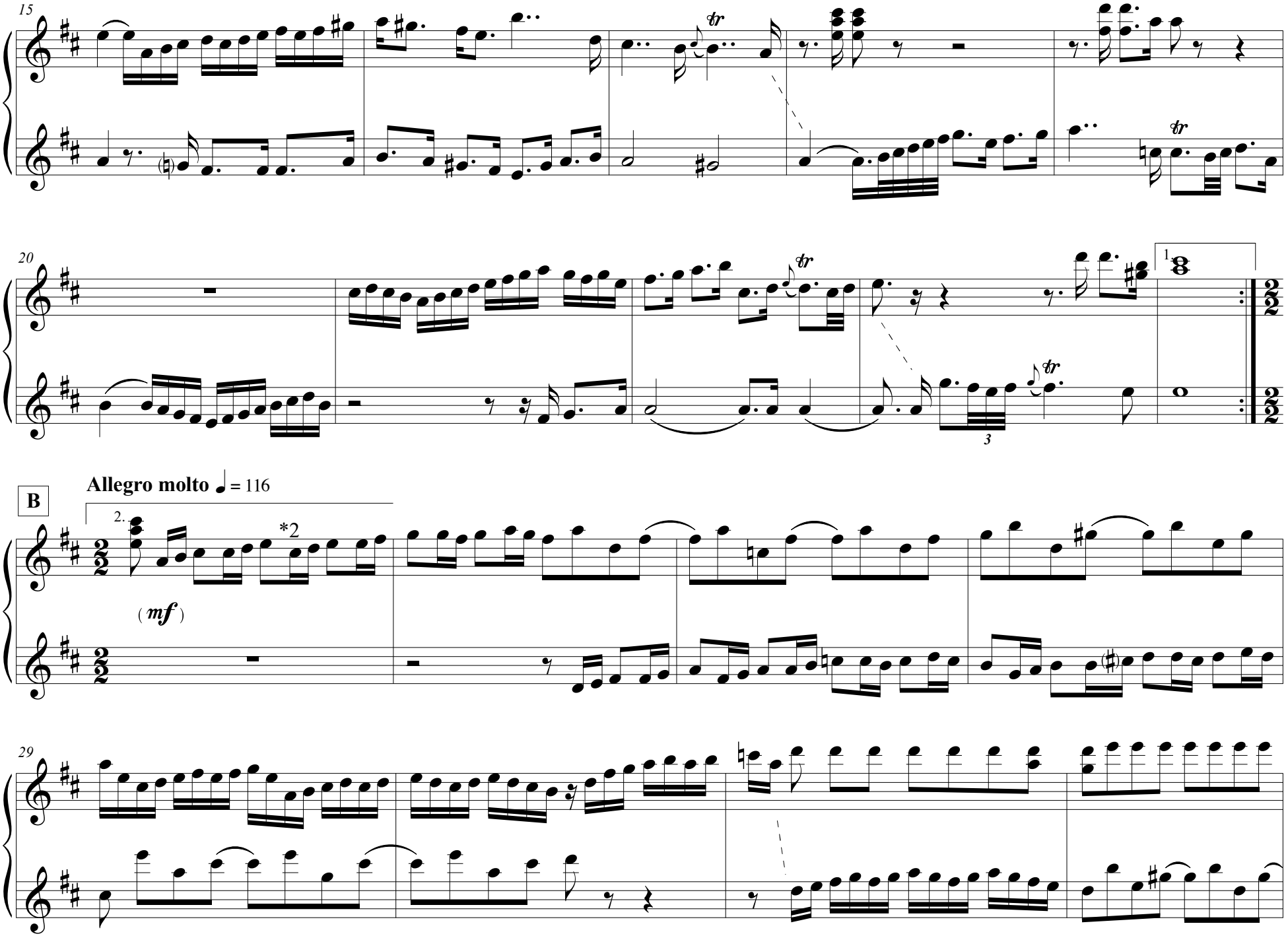
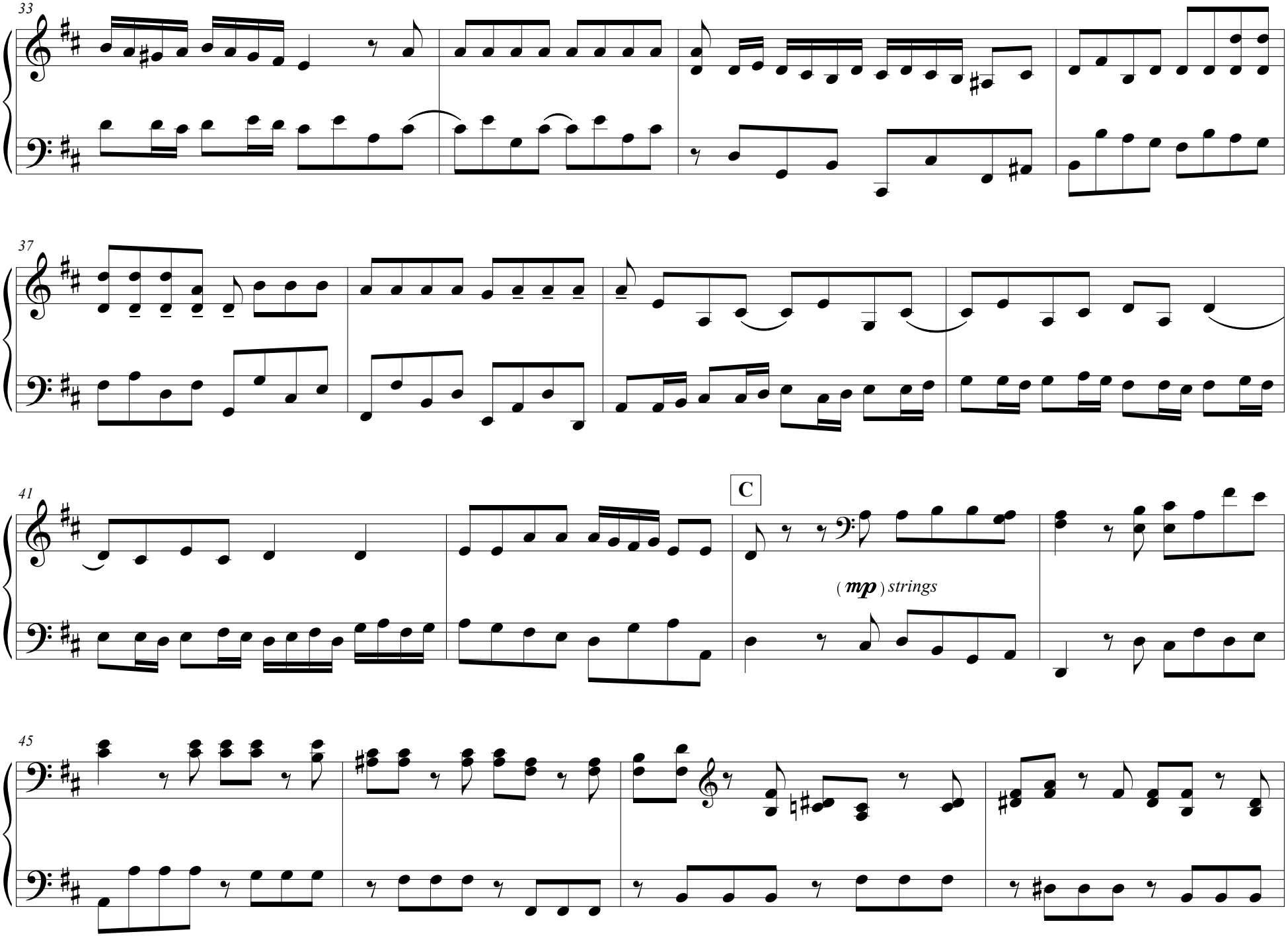
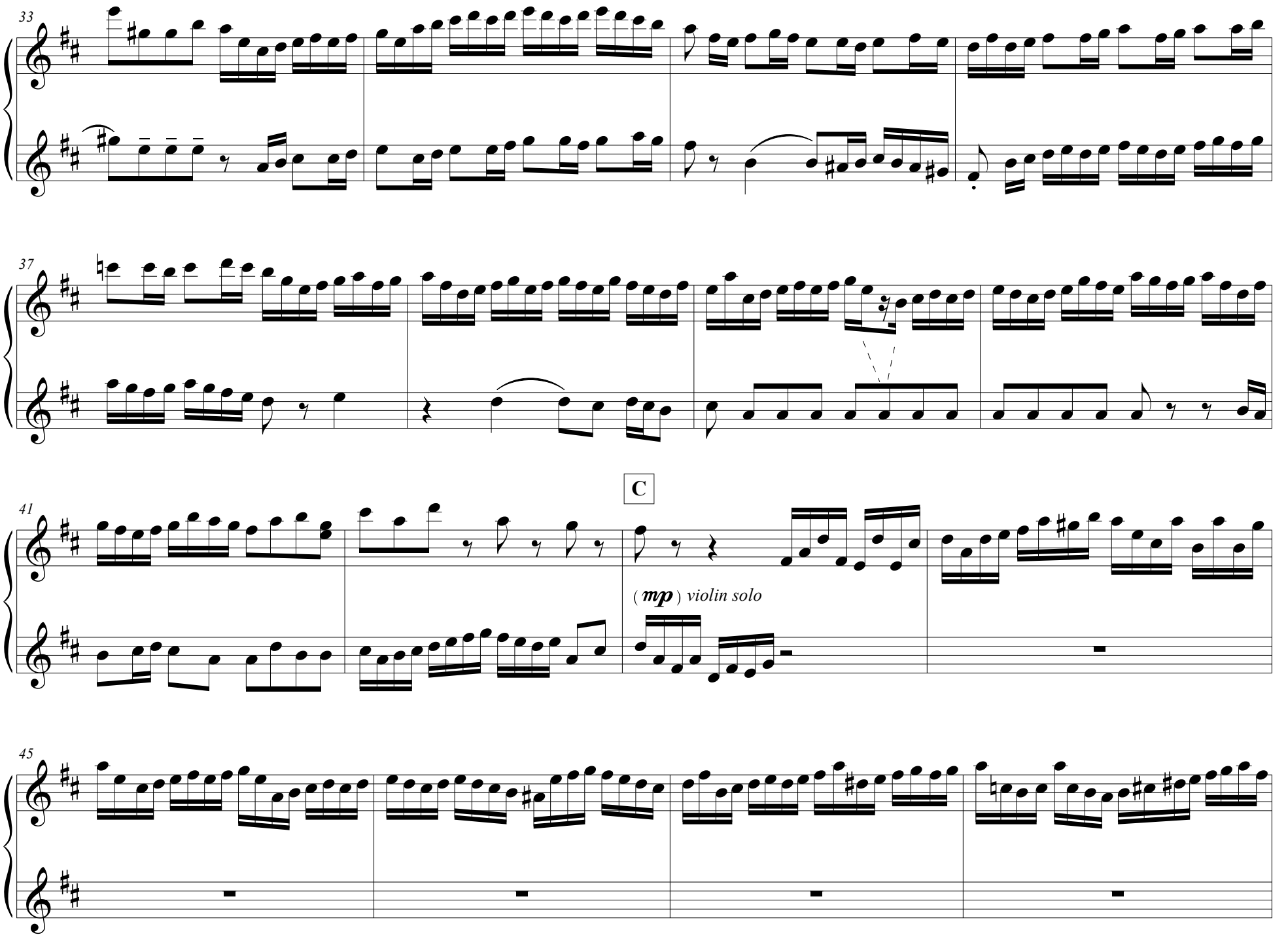
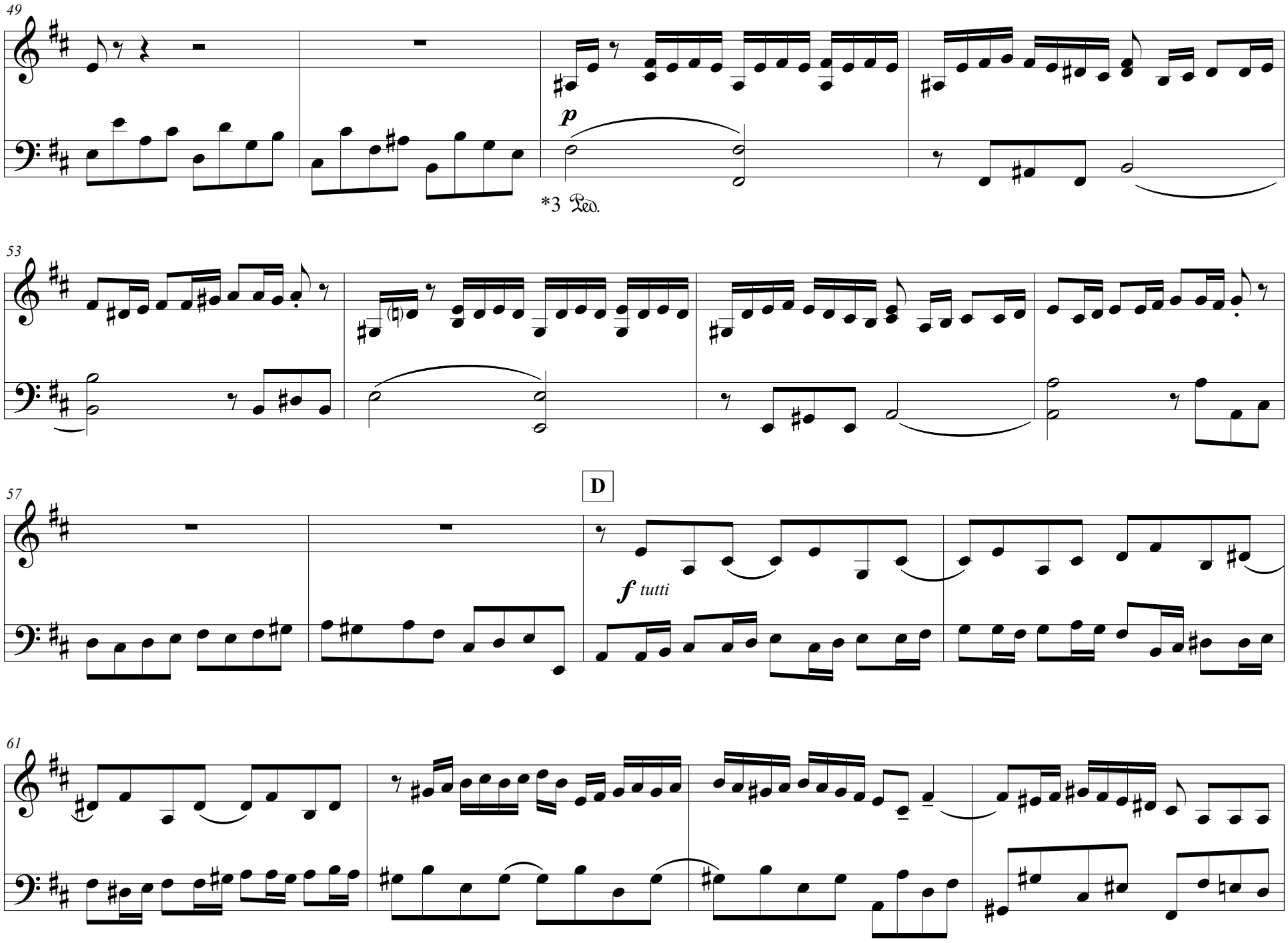
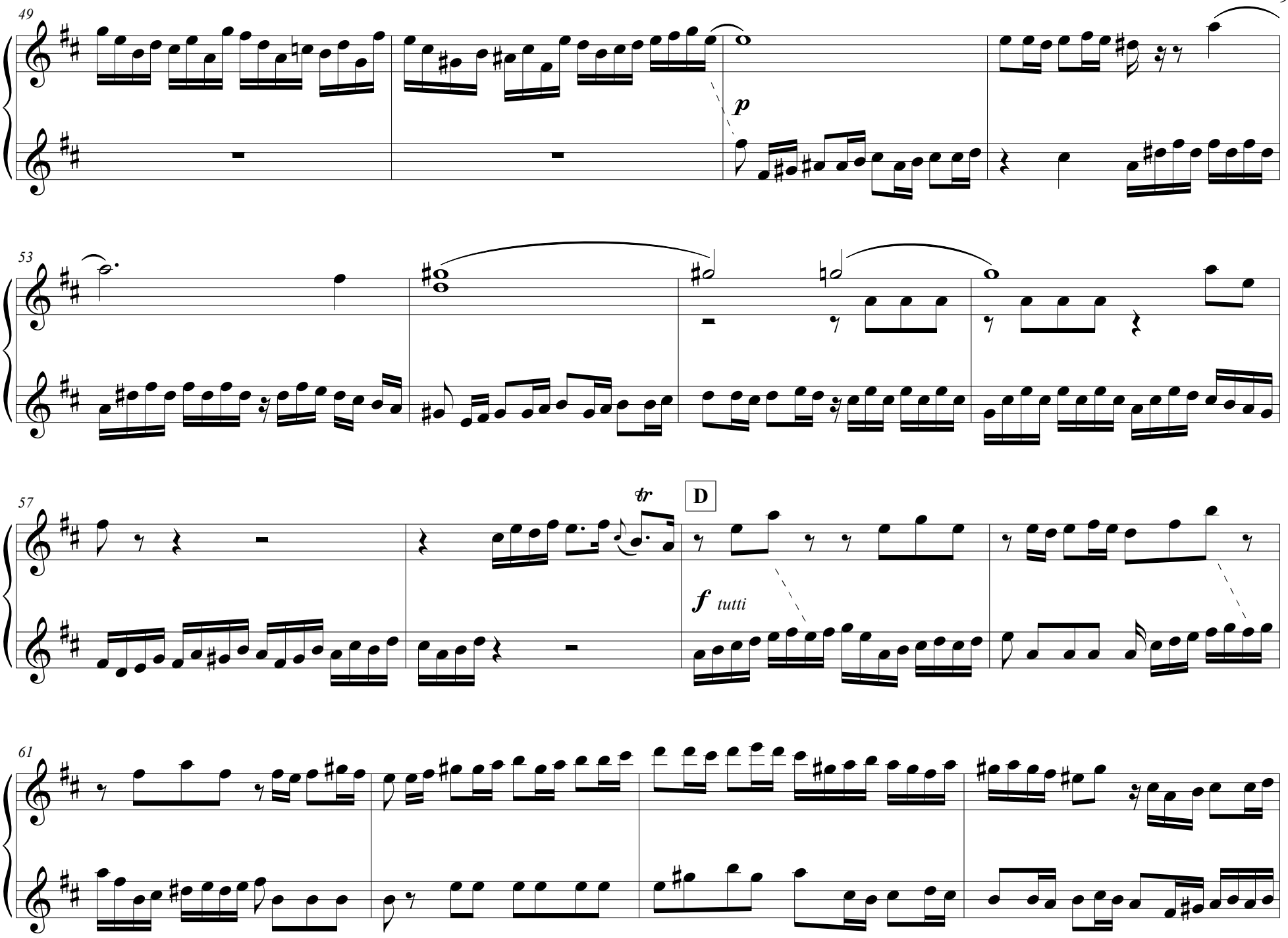

15
20
1.
B
Allegro molto ♩ = 116
2.
*2
(mf)
30

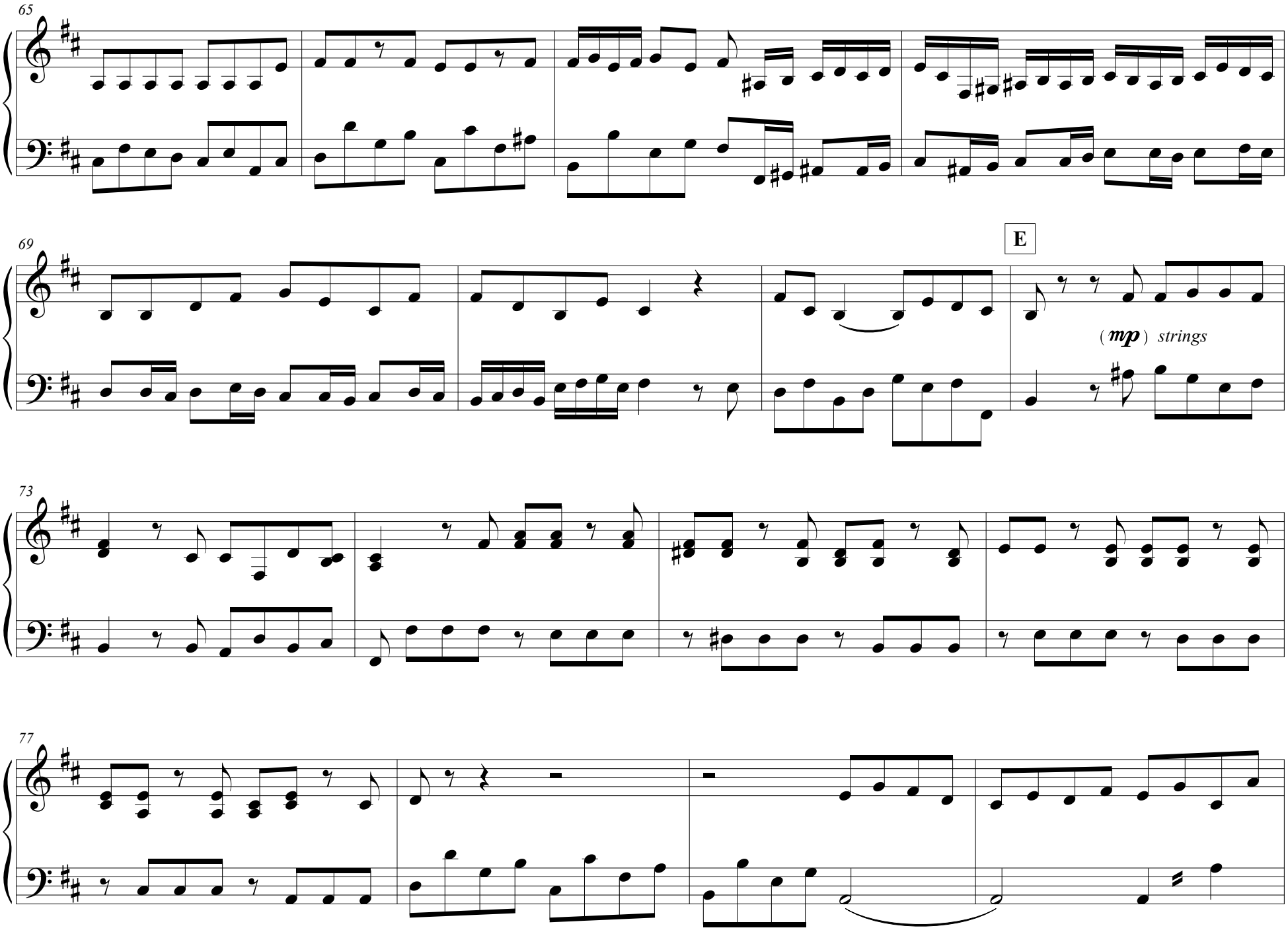

15
20
1
B
Allegro molto ♩ = 116
2.
*2
(mf)
29

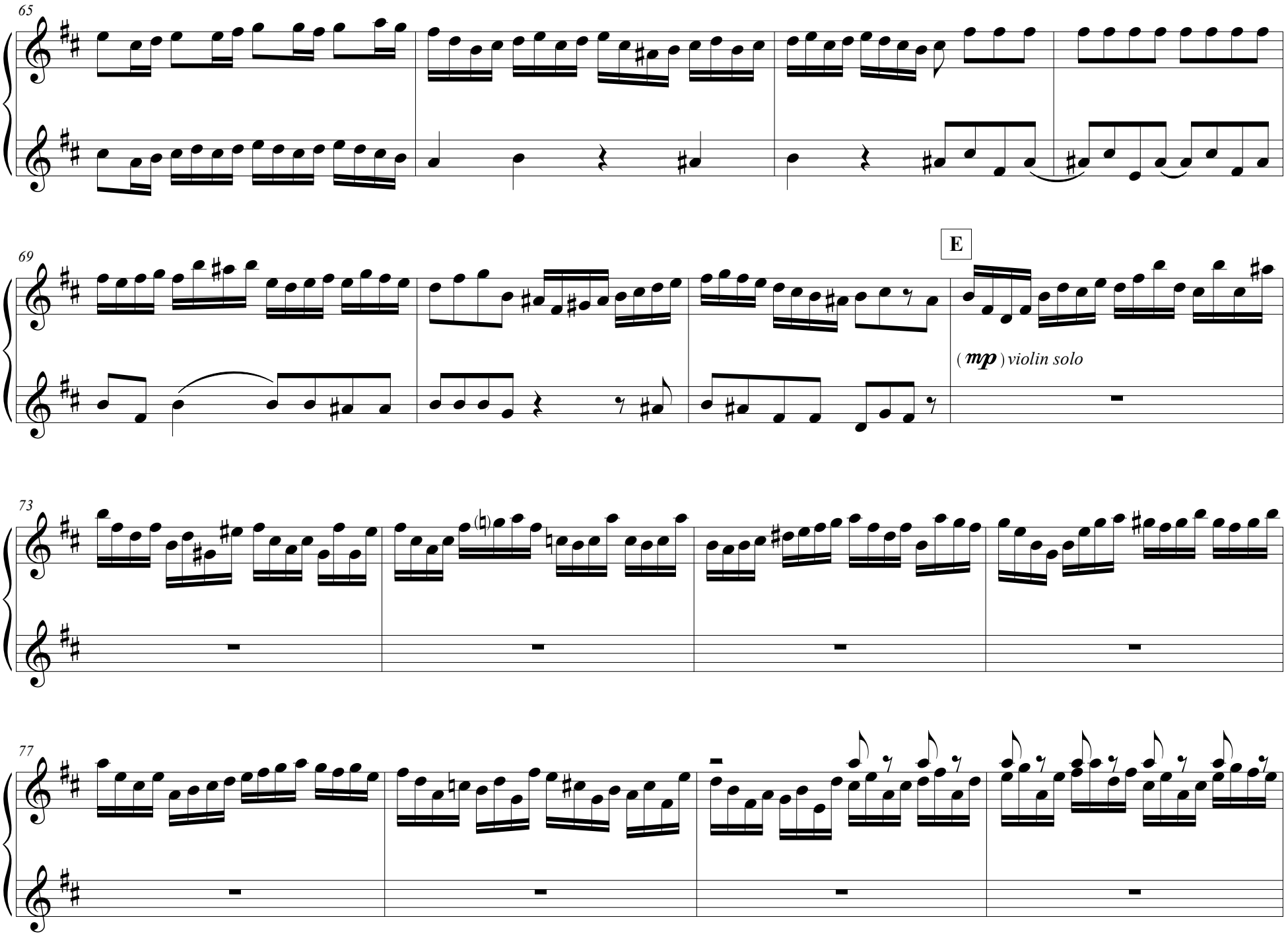

33
37
41
C
(mp) strings
45

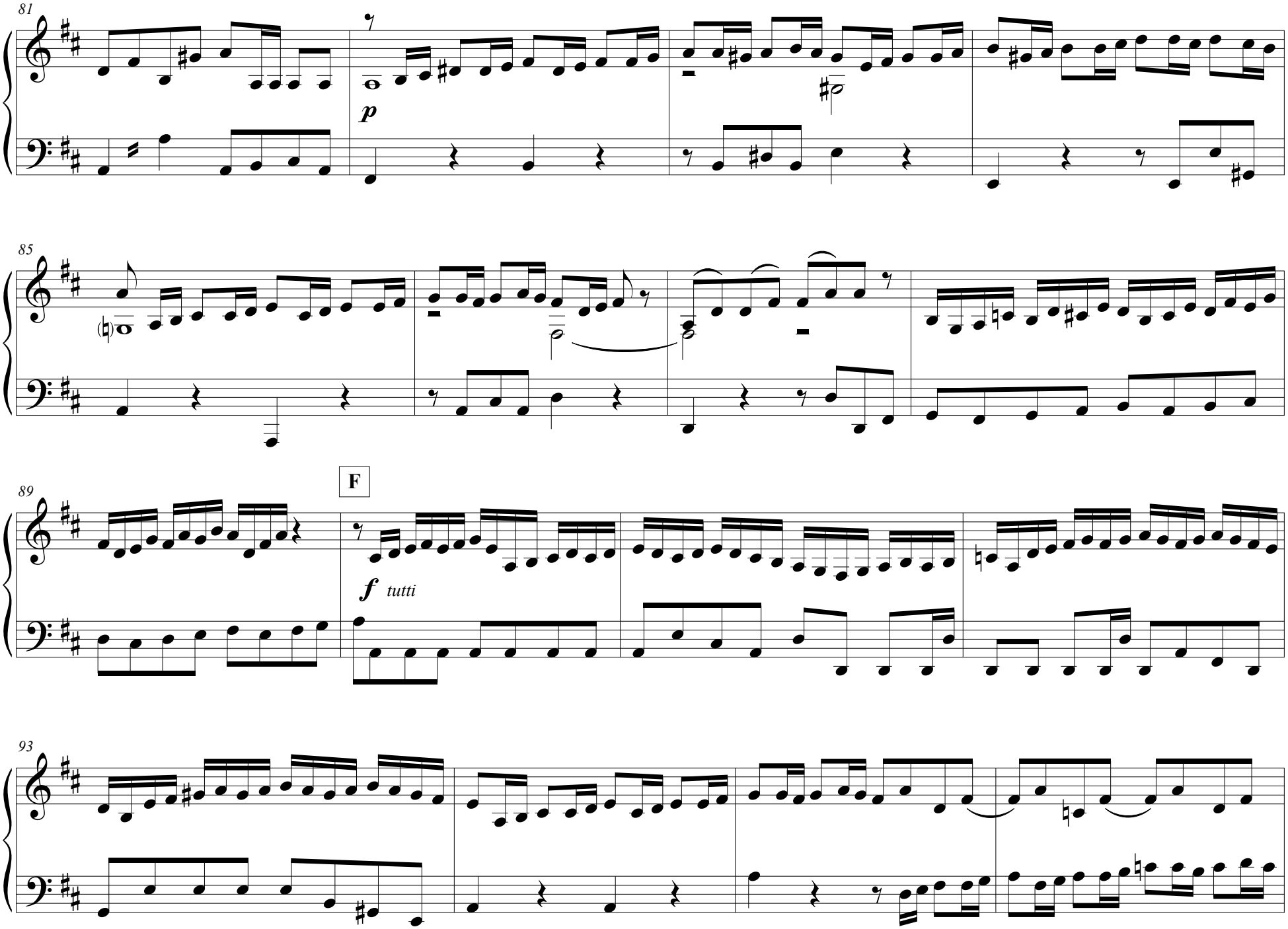

33
37
C
41
(mp) violin solo
45

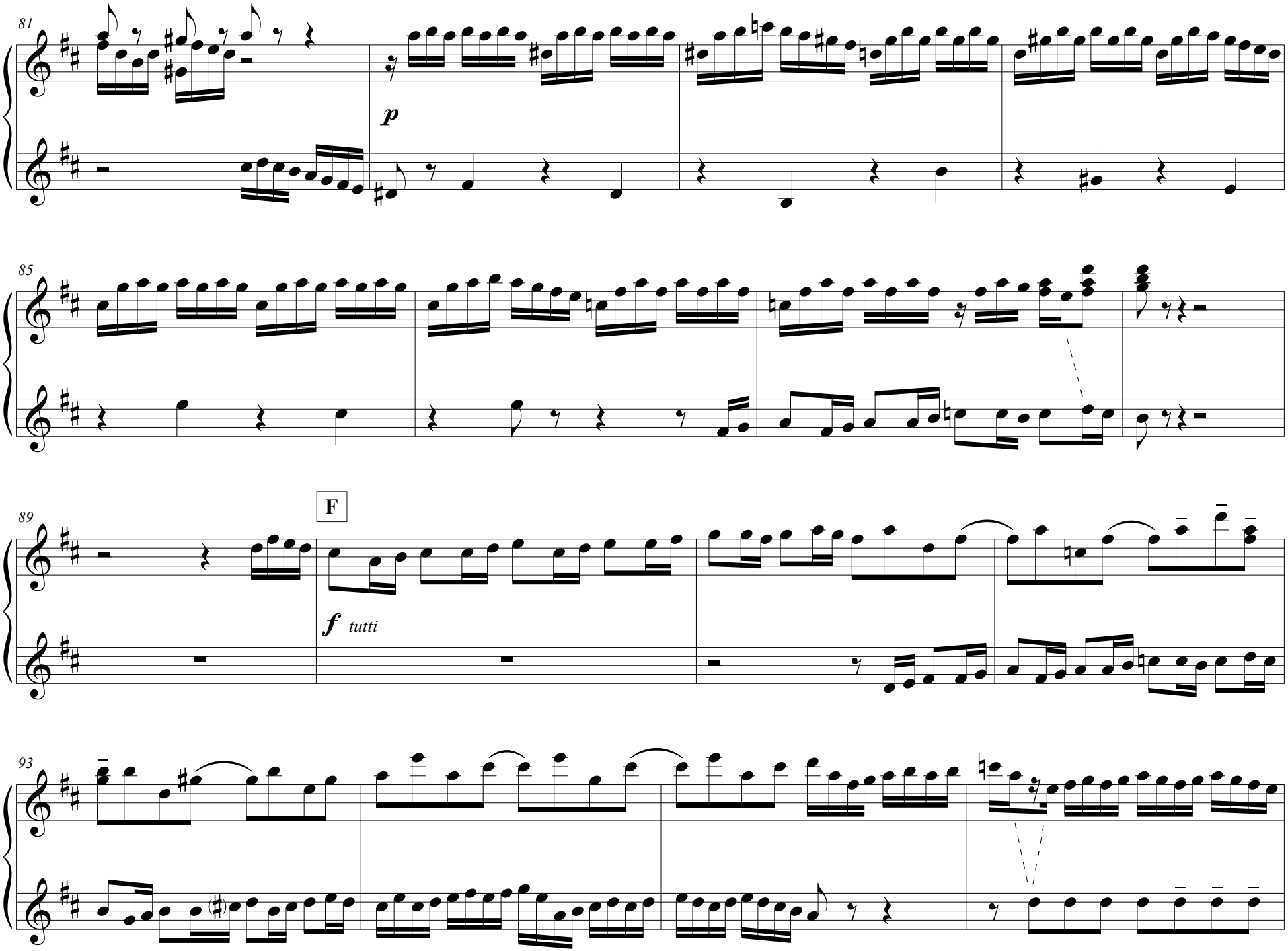

49
p
*3 Ped.
53
57
D
f tutti
61

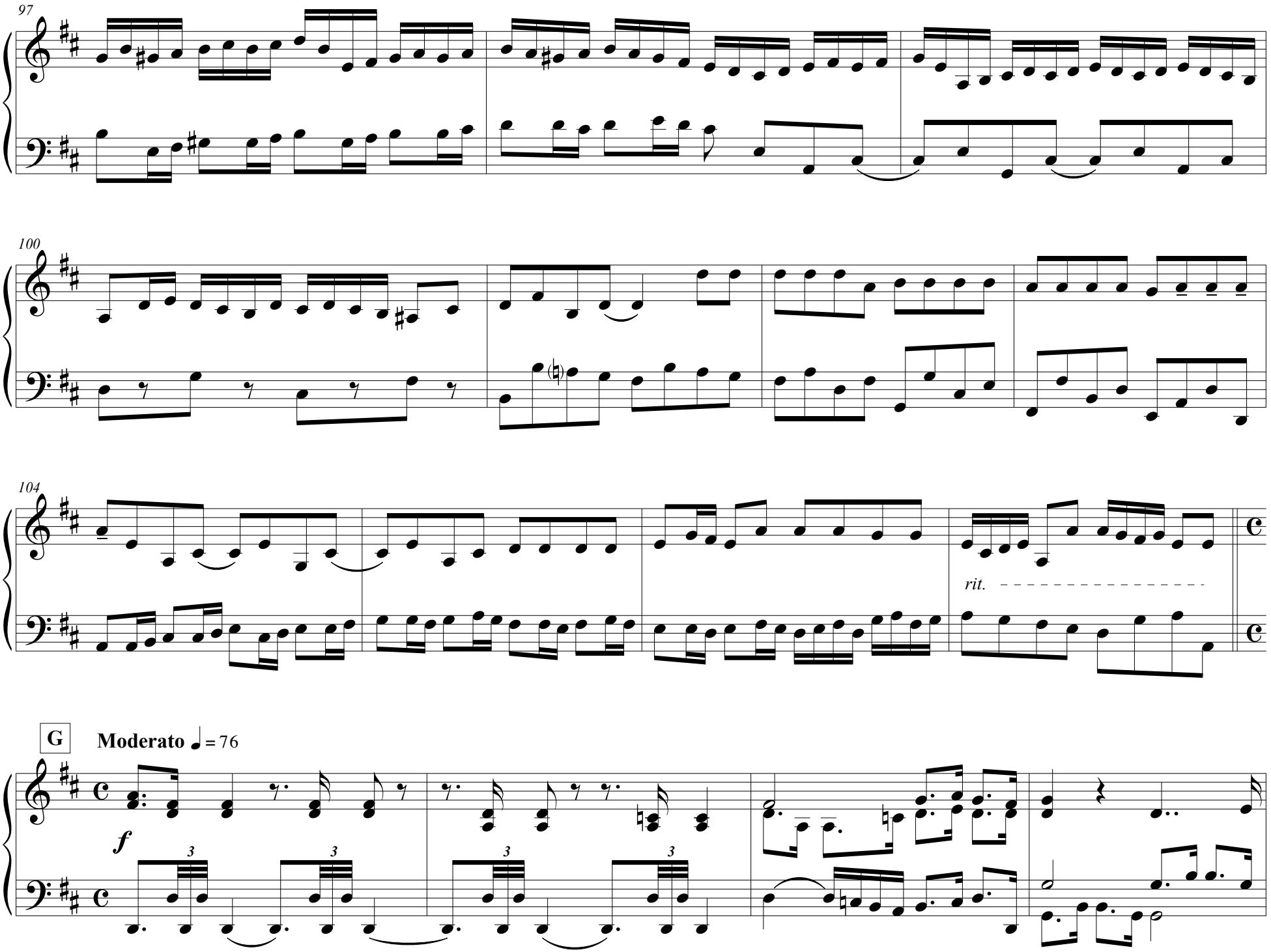

49
p
53
57
tr
D
f tutti
61

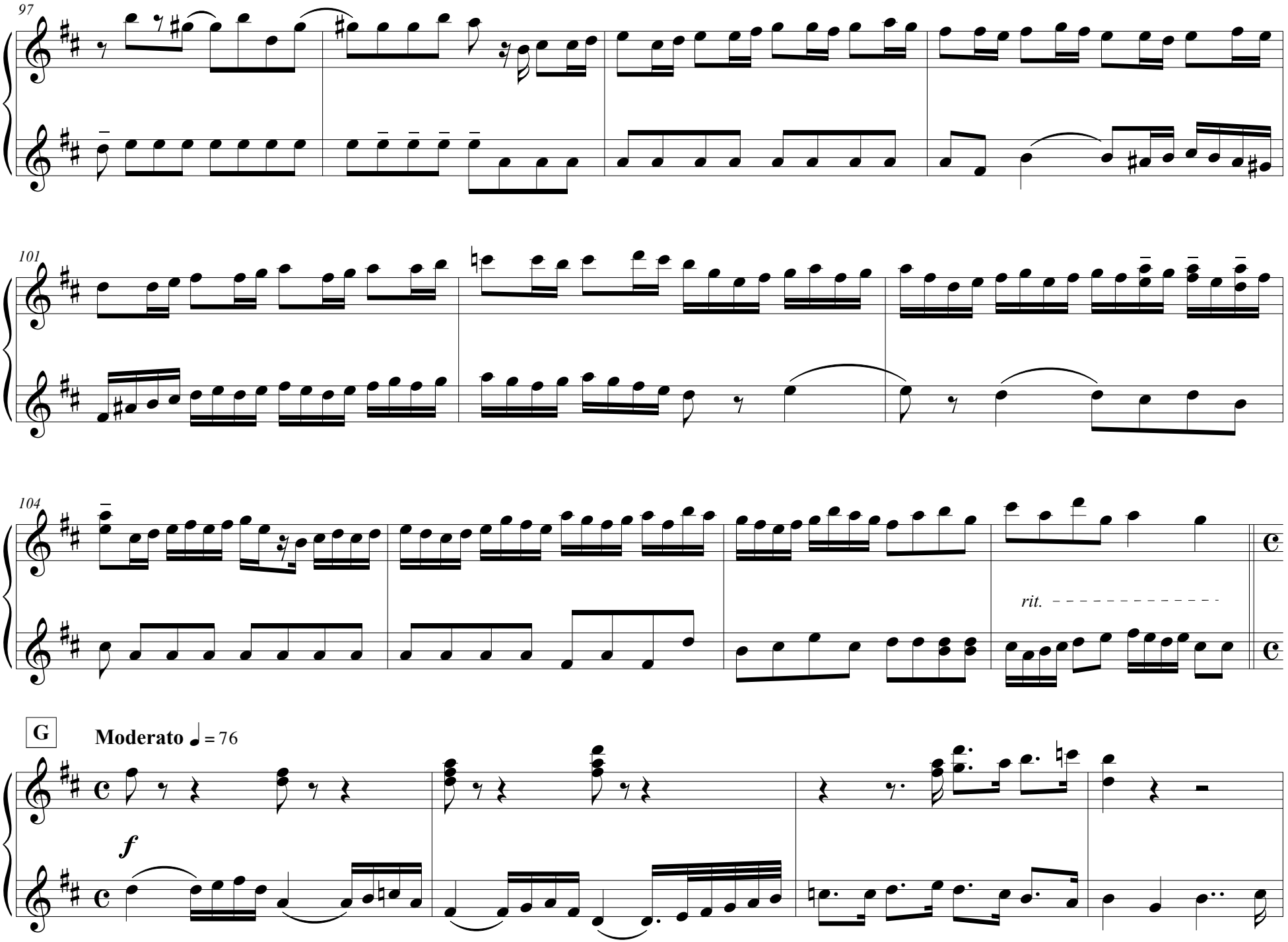

65
69
E
(mp) strings
73
77

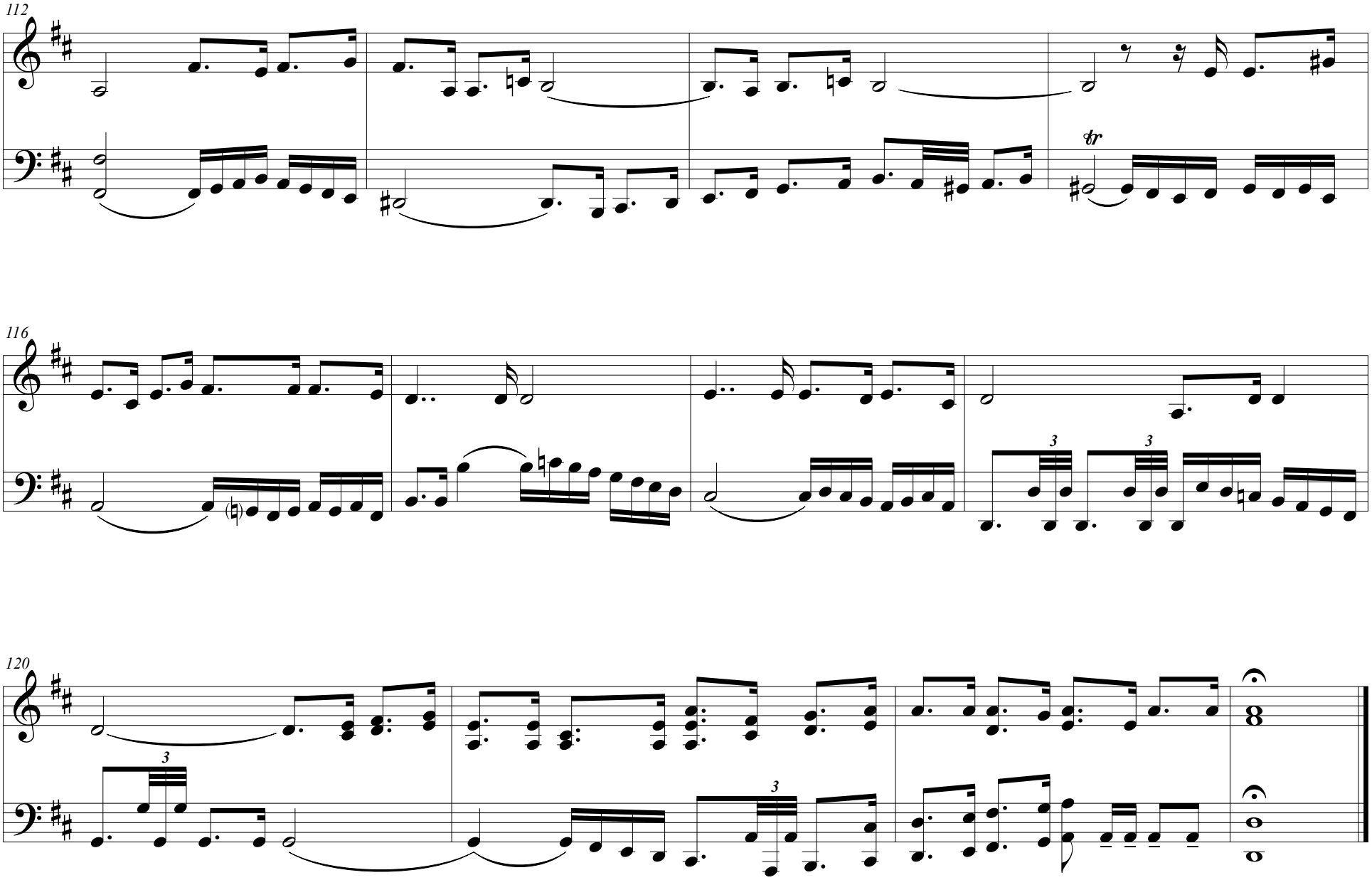

65
69
E
(mp) violin solo
73
77

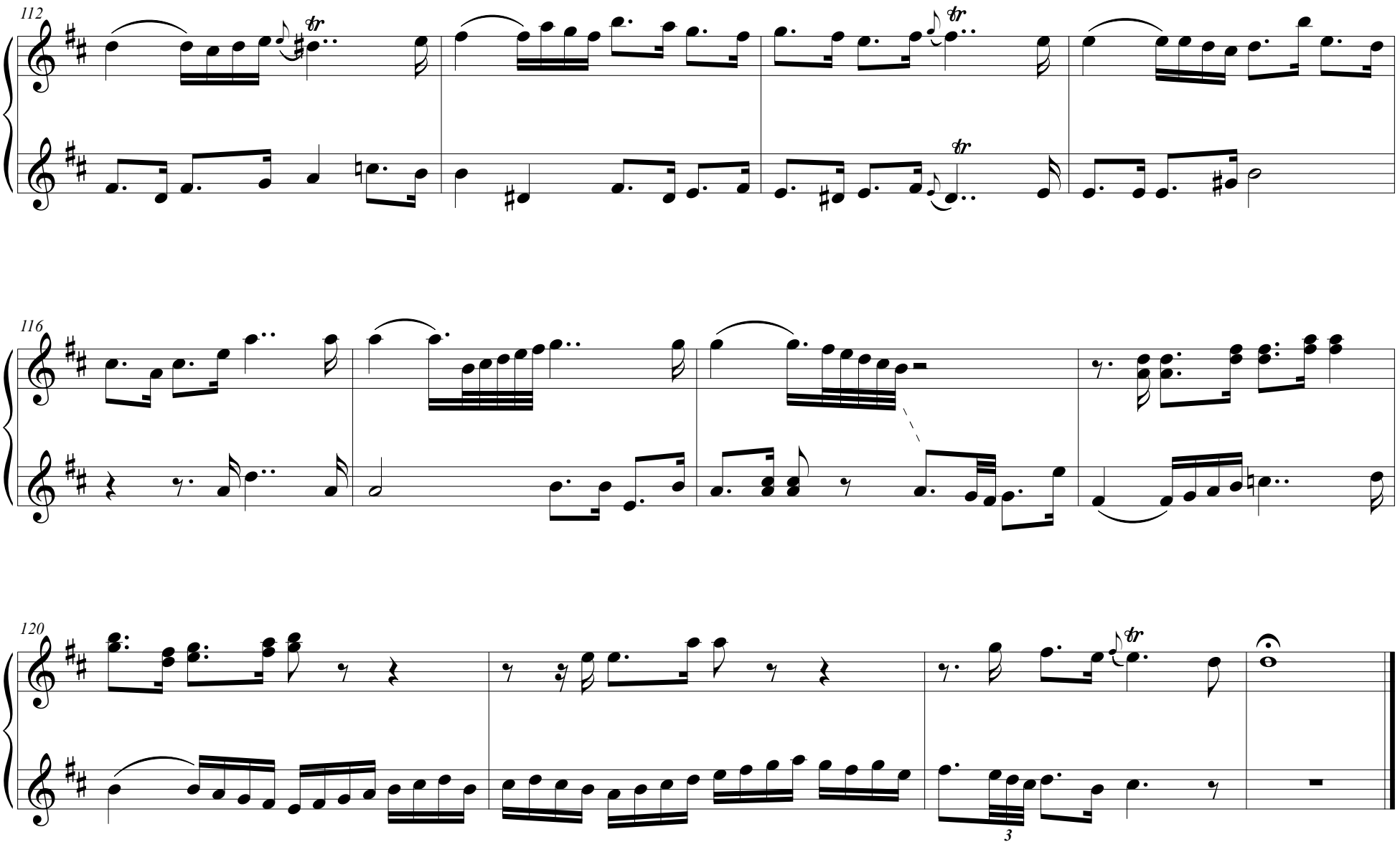

81
p
85
89
F
f tutti
93


81
p
85
89
F
f tutti
93

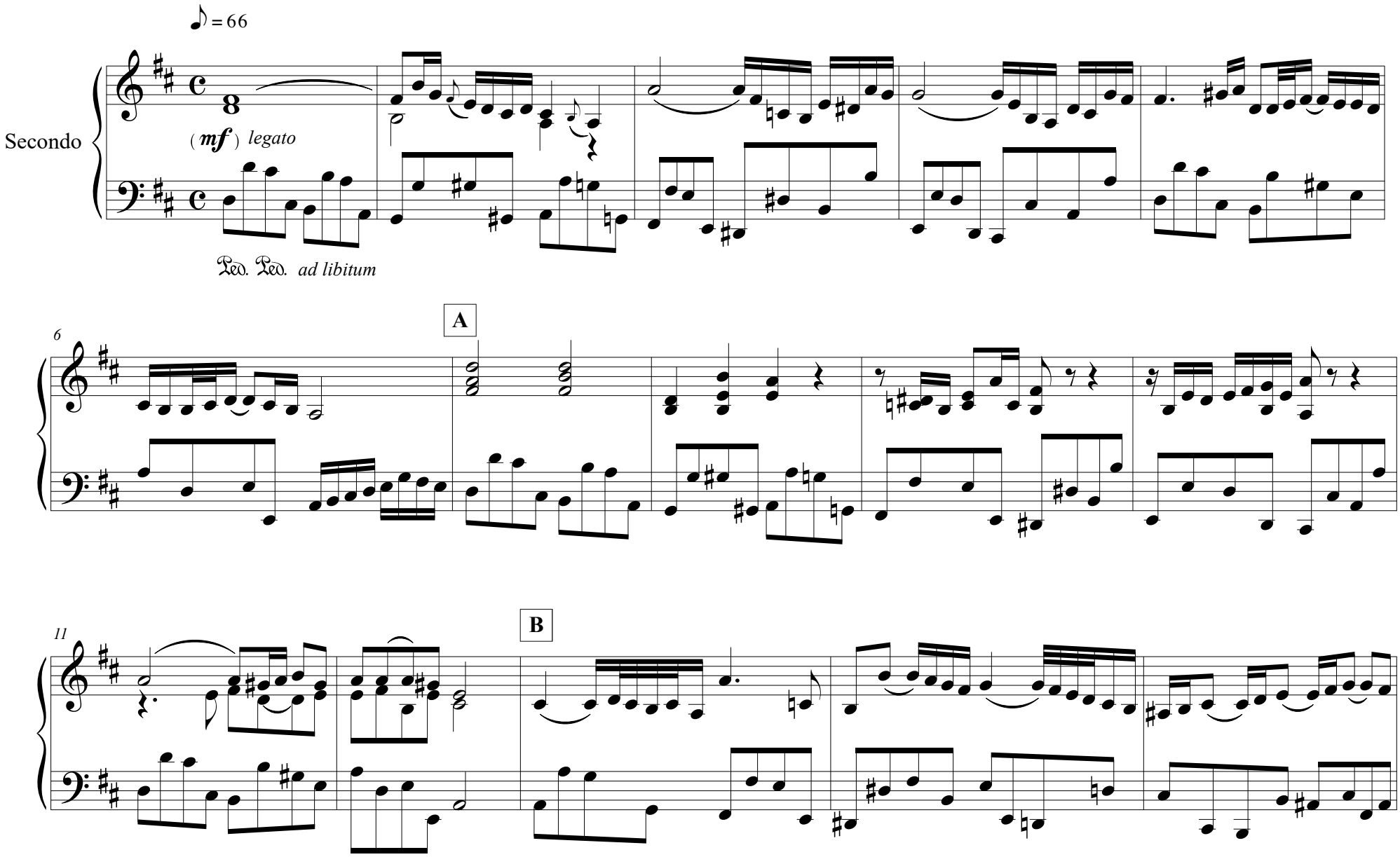

97
100
104
rit.
G
Moderato ♩= 76
f


97
101
104
rit.
G
Moderato ♩ = 76
f


112
tr
116
3
3
120
3
3


112
116
120
3

Air



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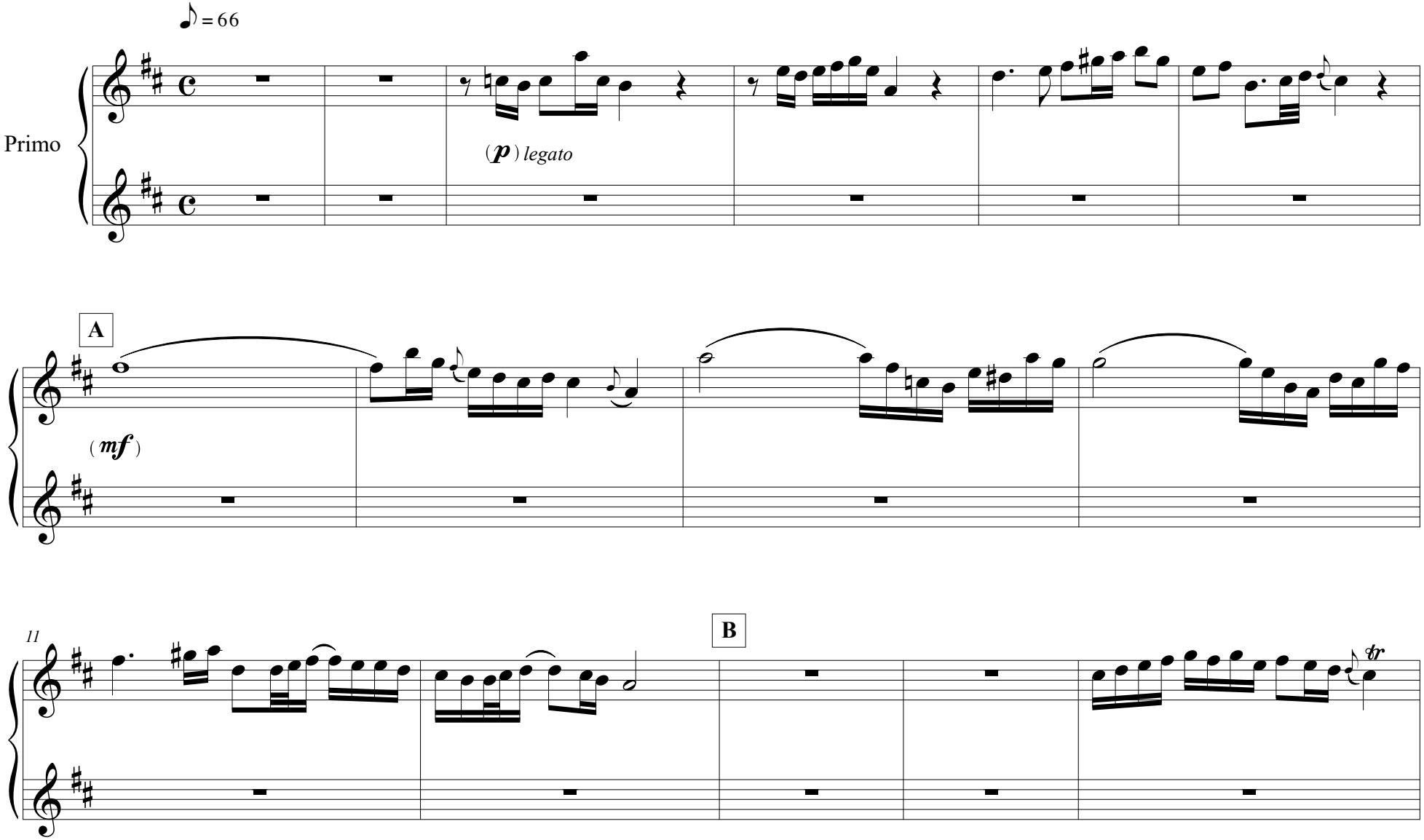
Air



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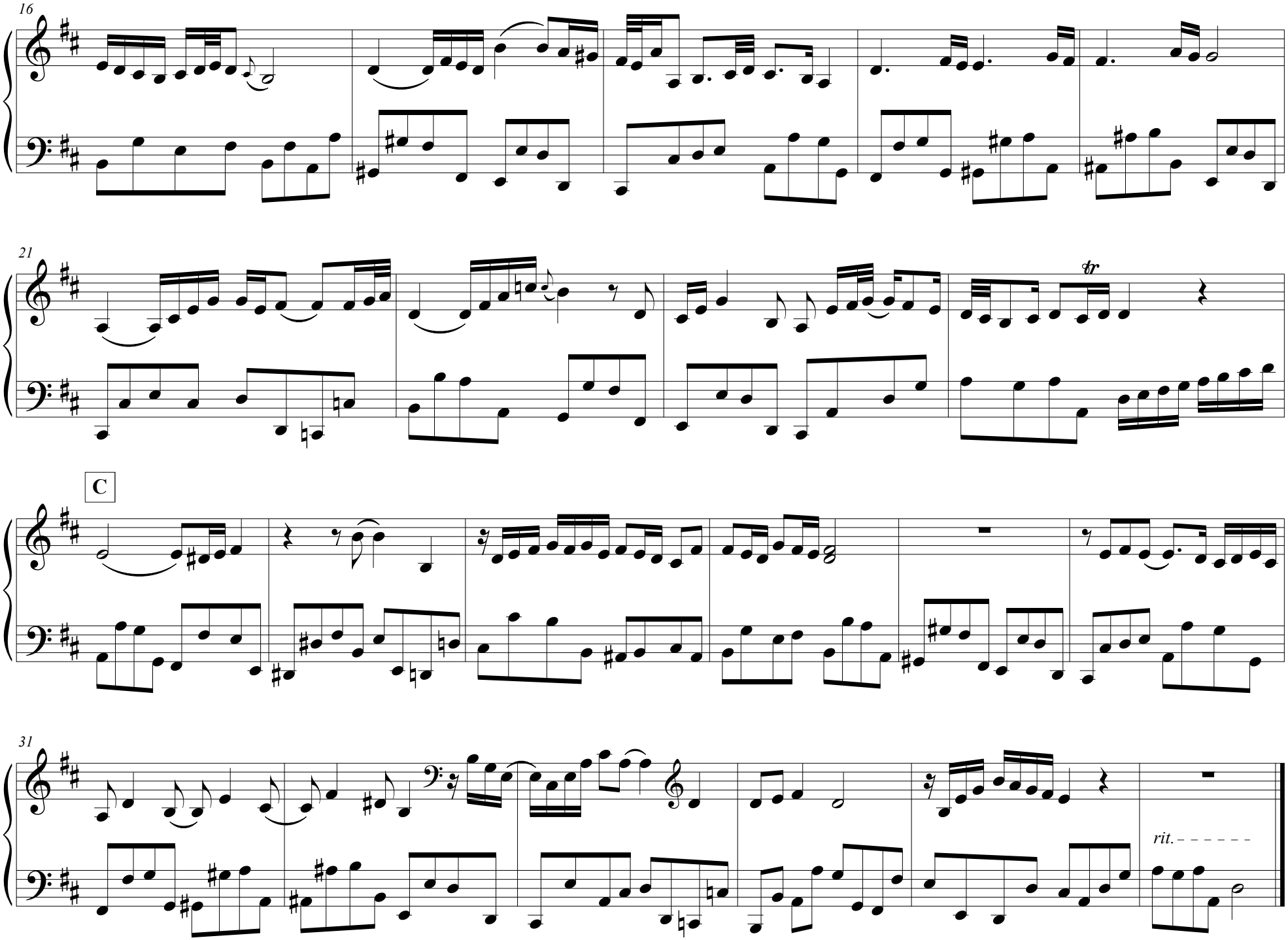
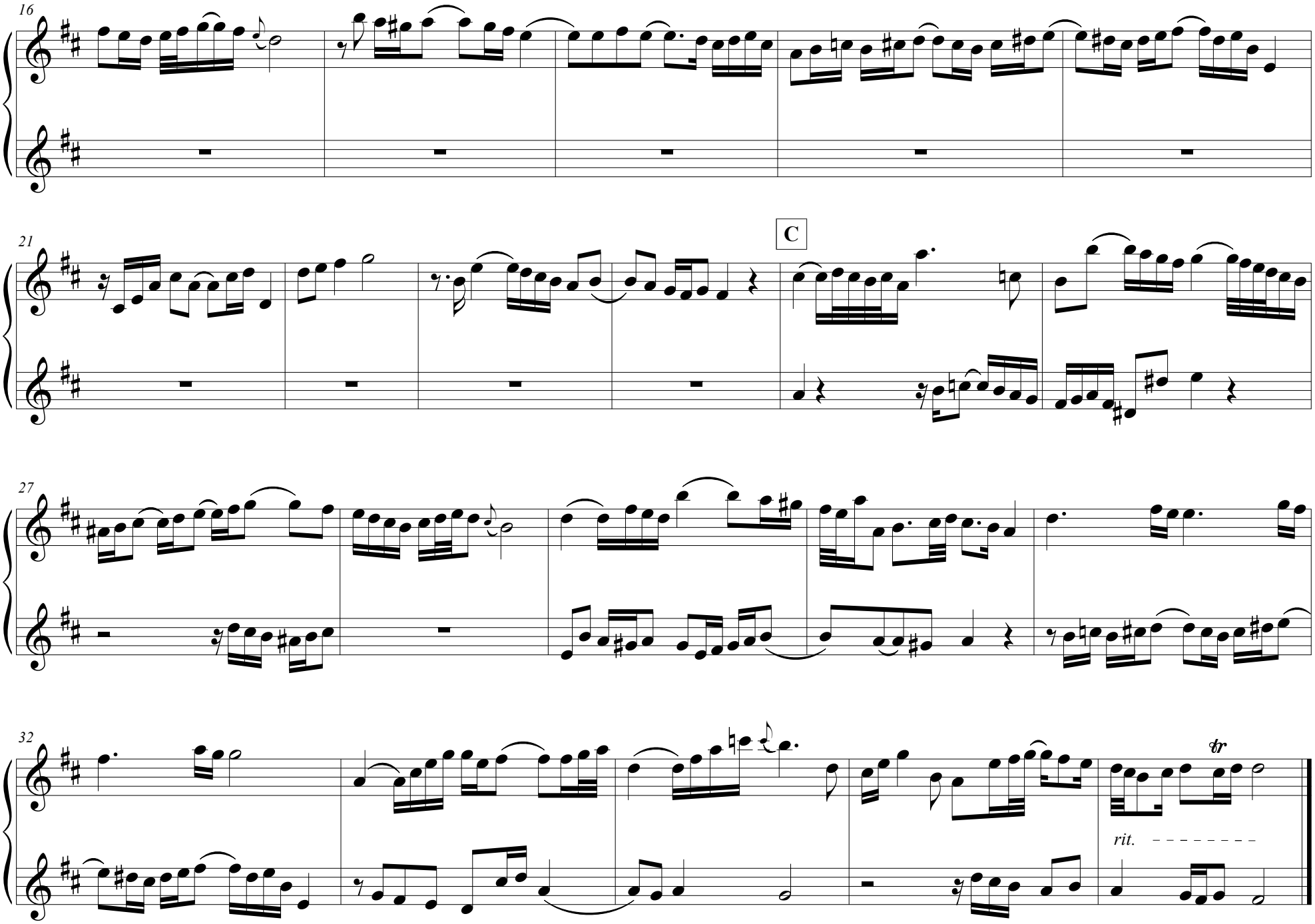
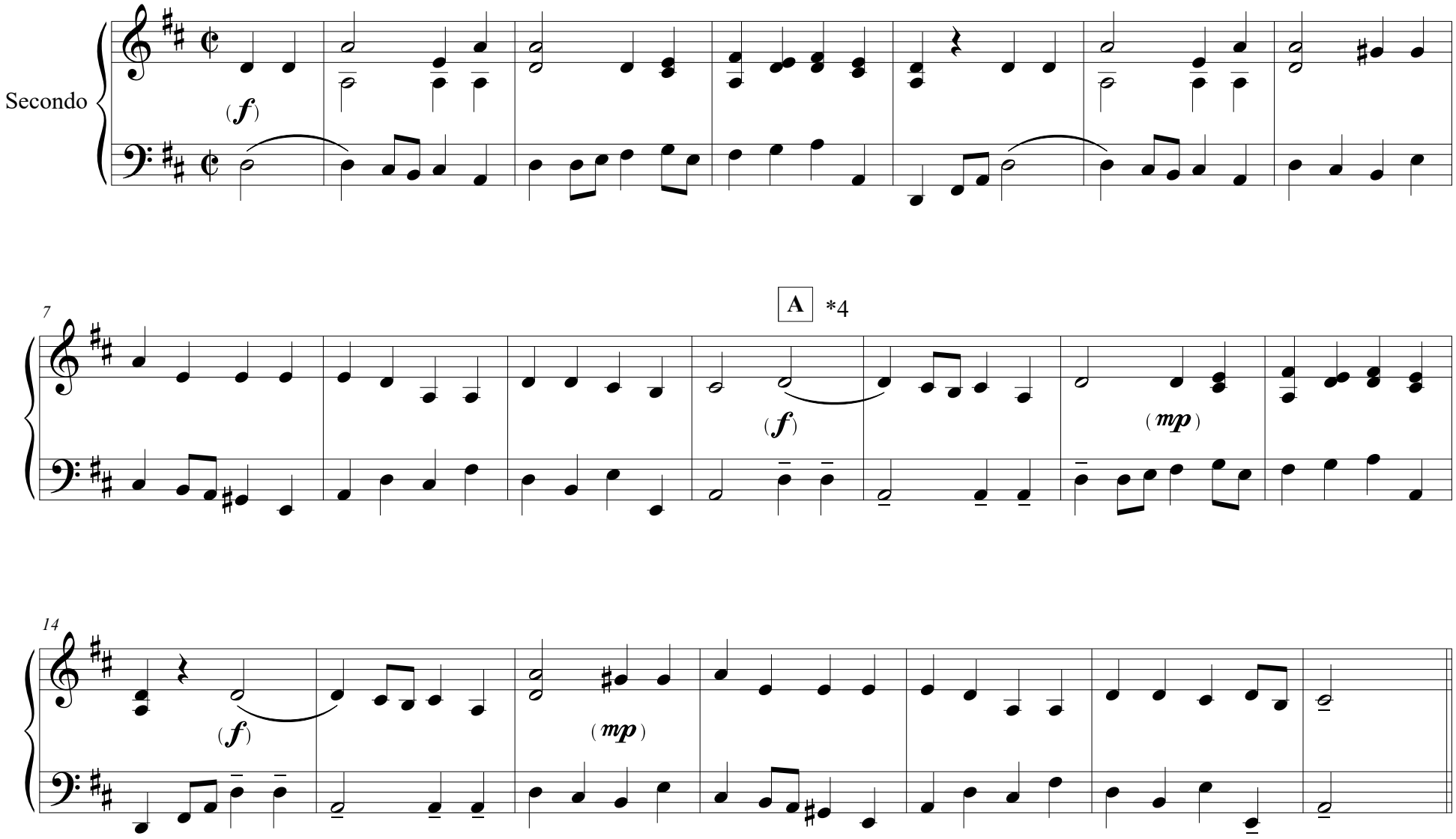

16
21
tr
C
31
rit.


16
21
C
27
32
tr
rit.

Gavottes

Gavotte I ♩ = 80



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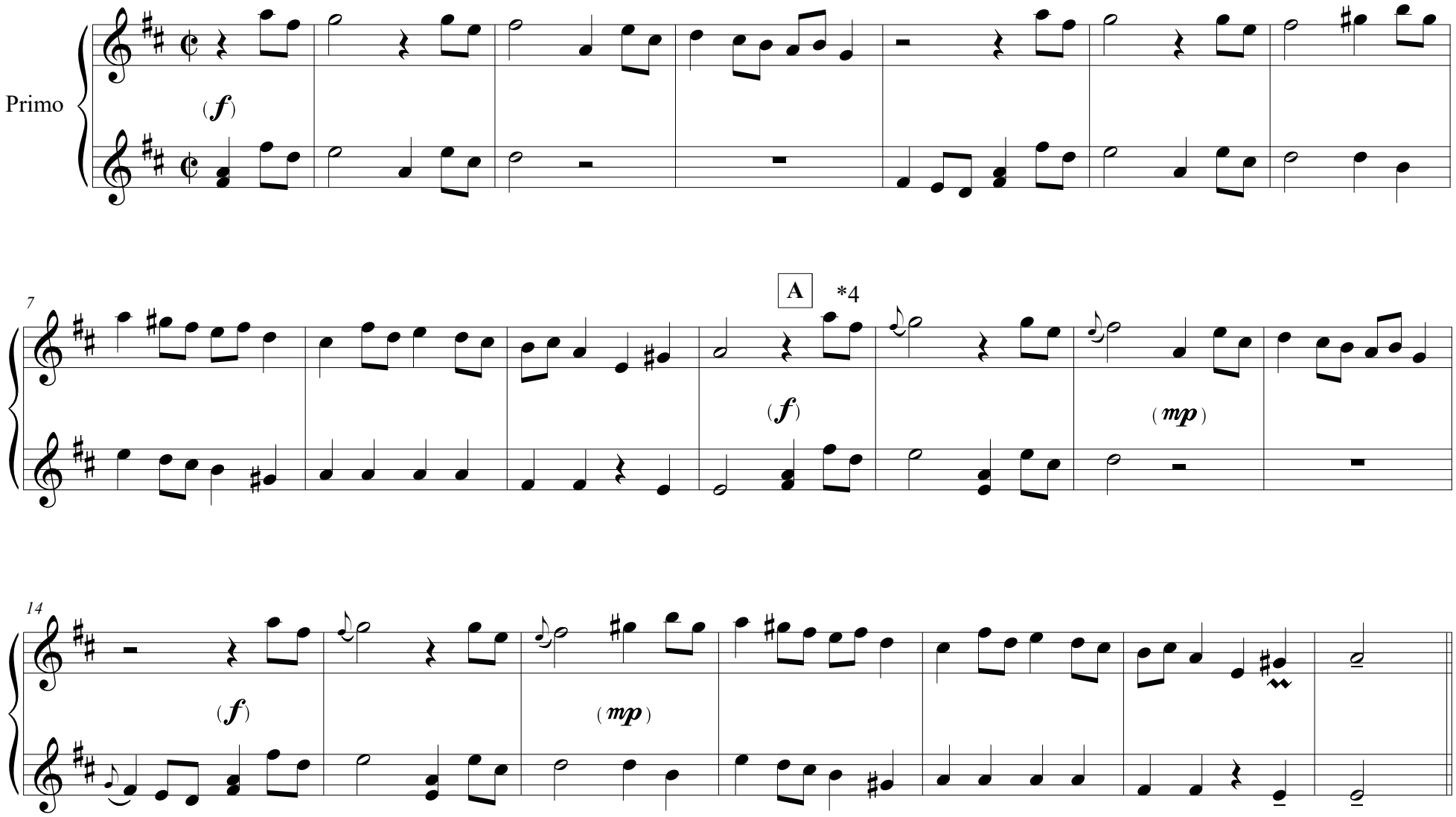
Gavottes

Gavotte I ♩ = 80



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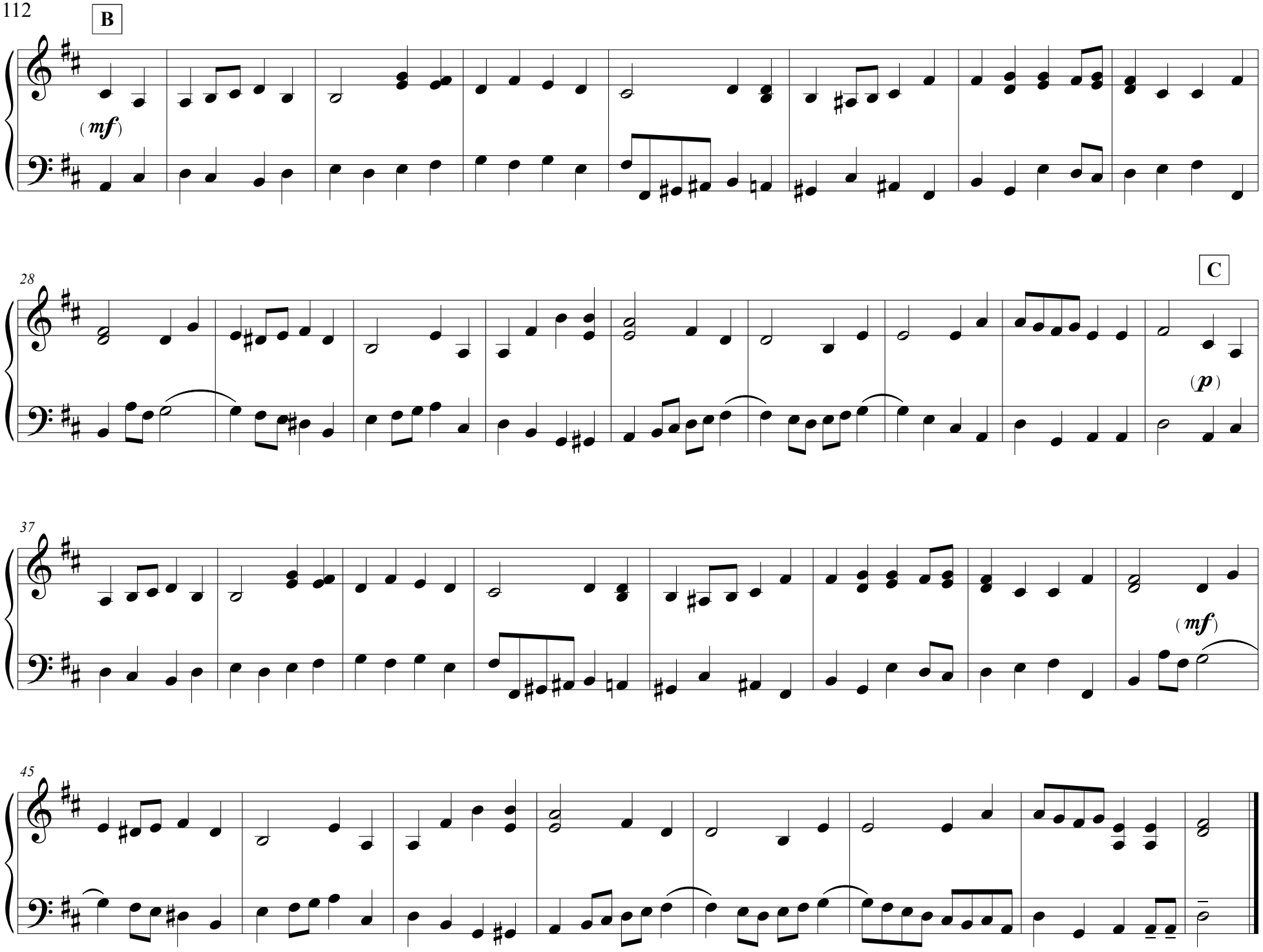
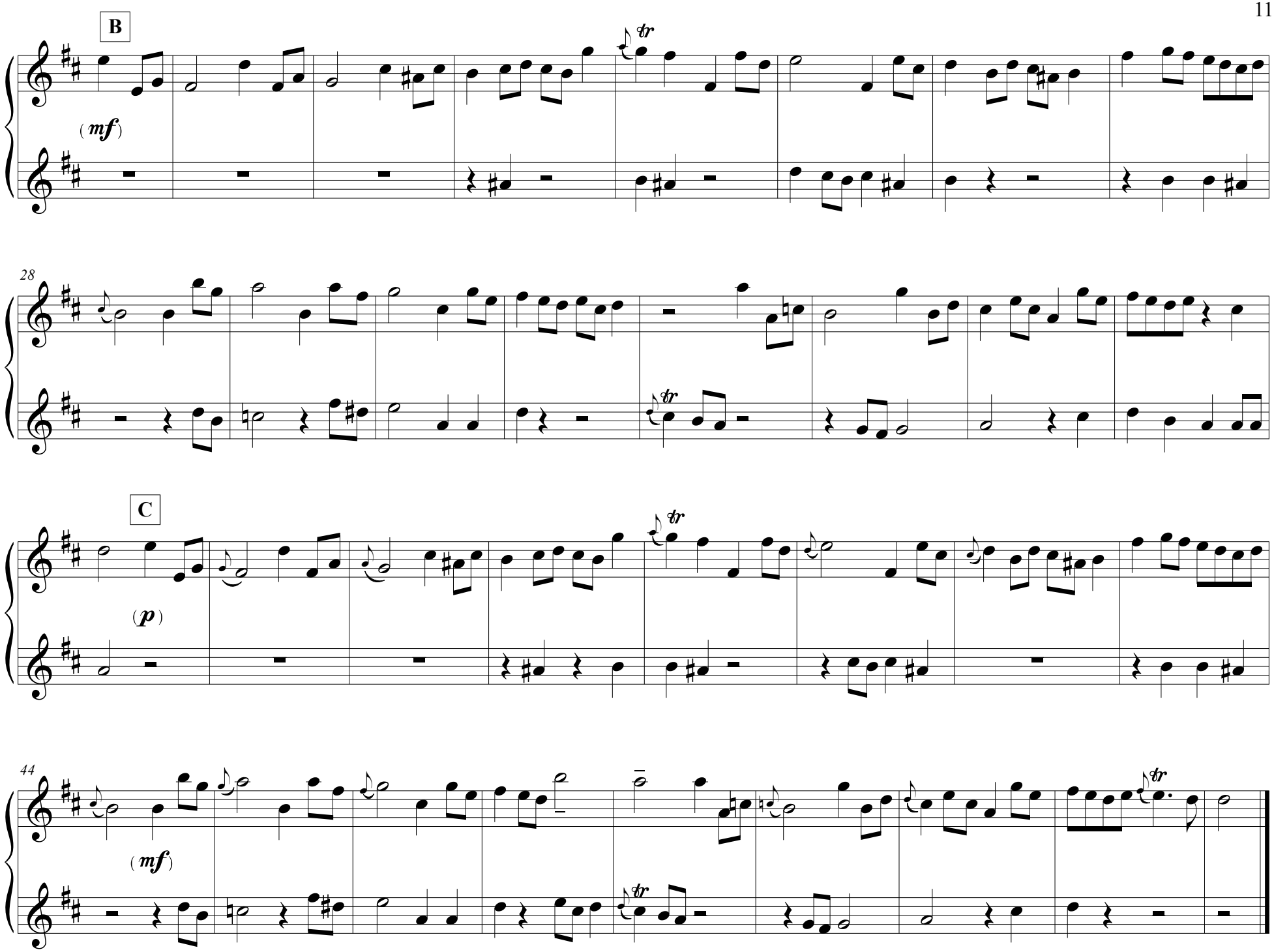
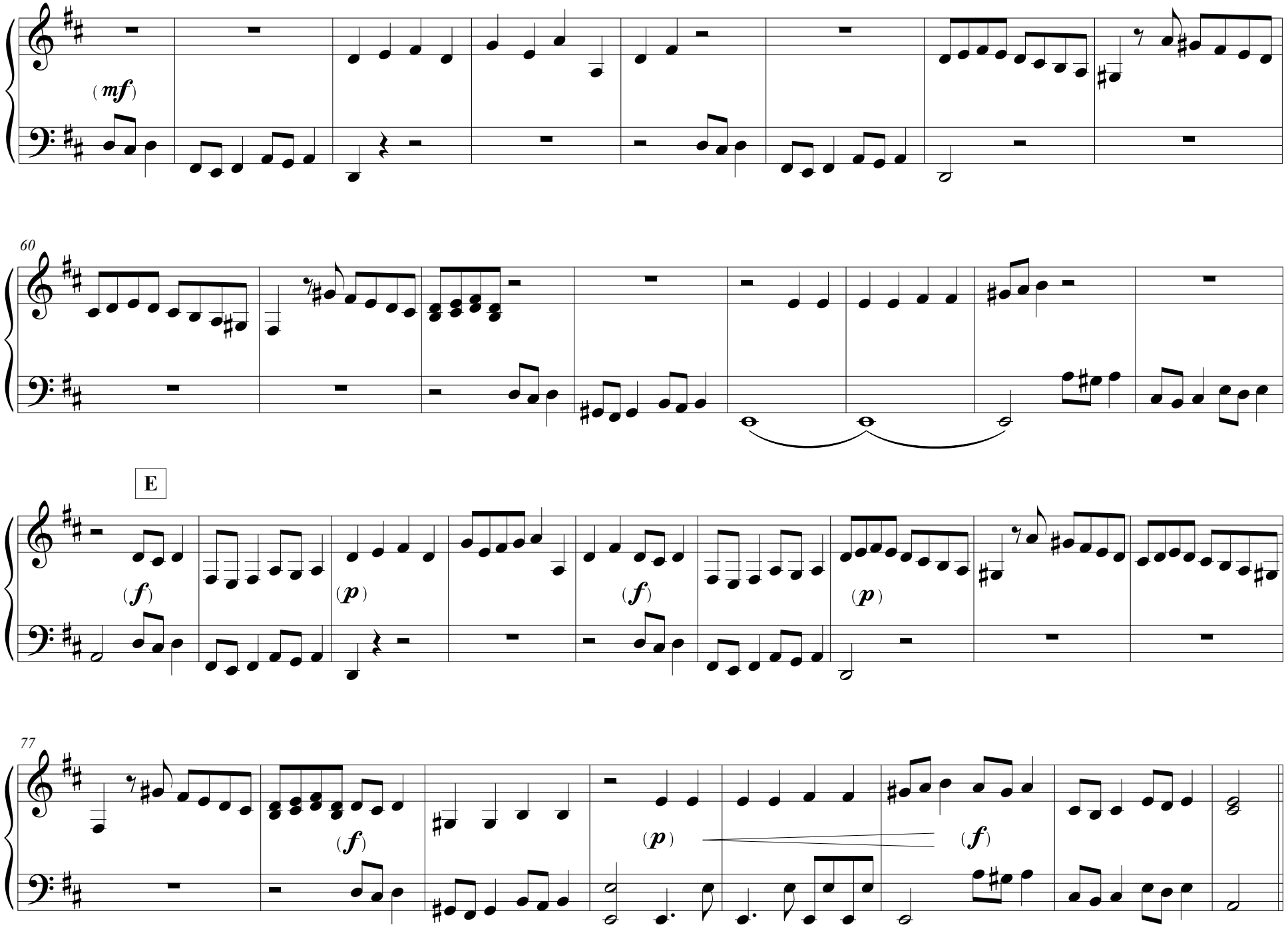
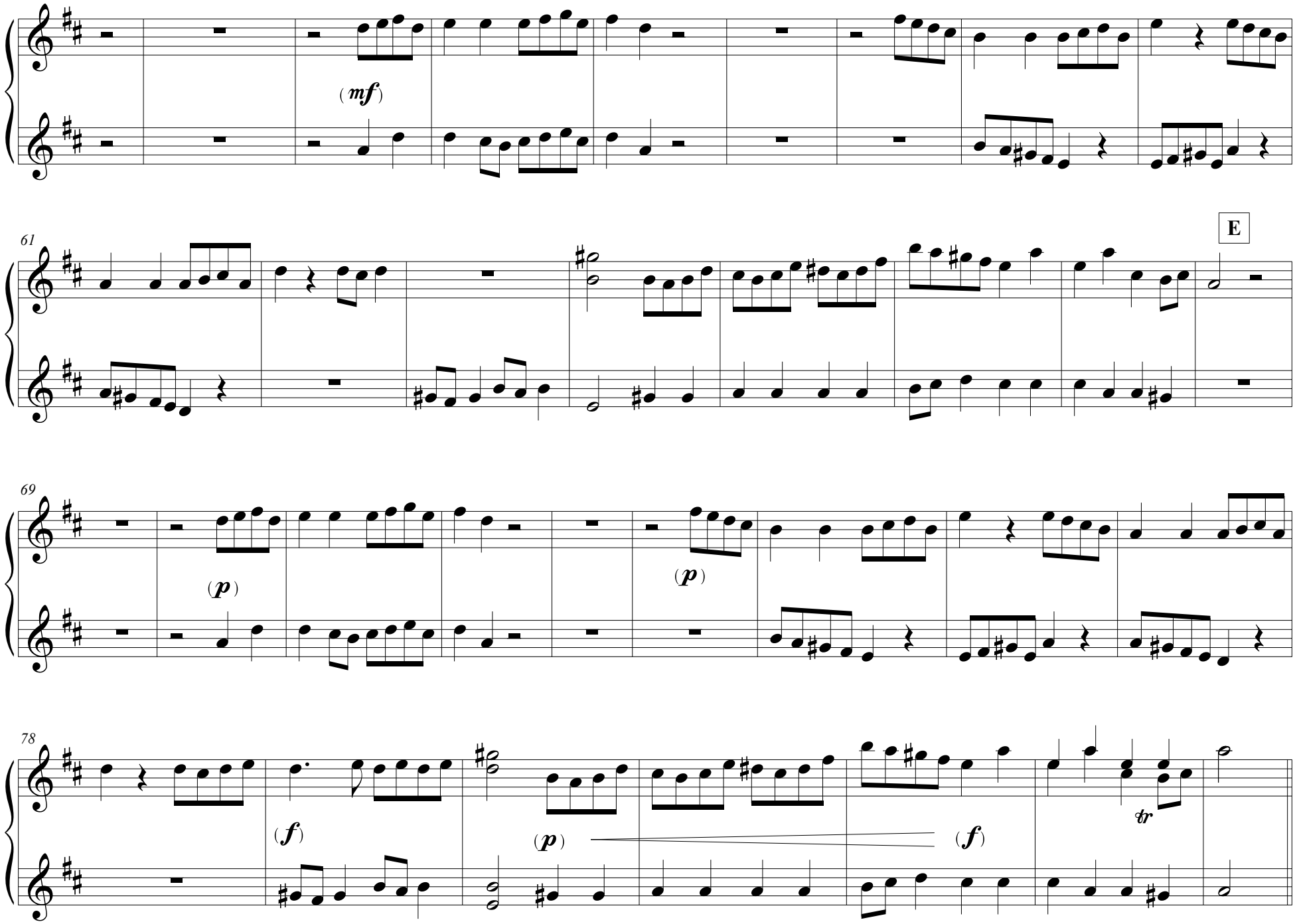

B
(mf)
28
C
(p)
37
(mf)
45

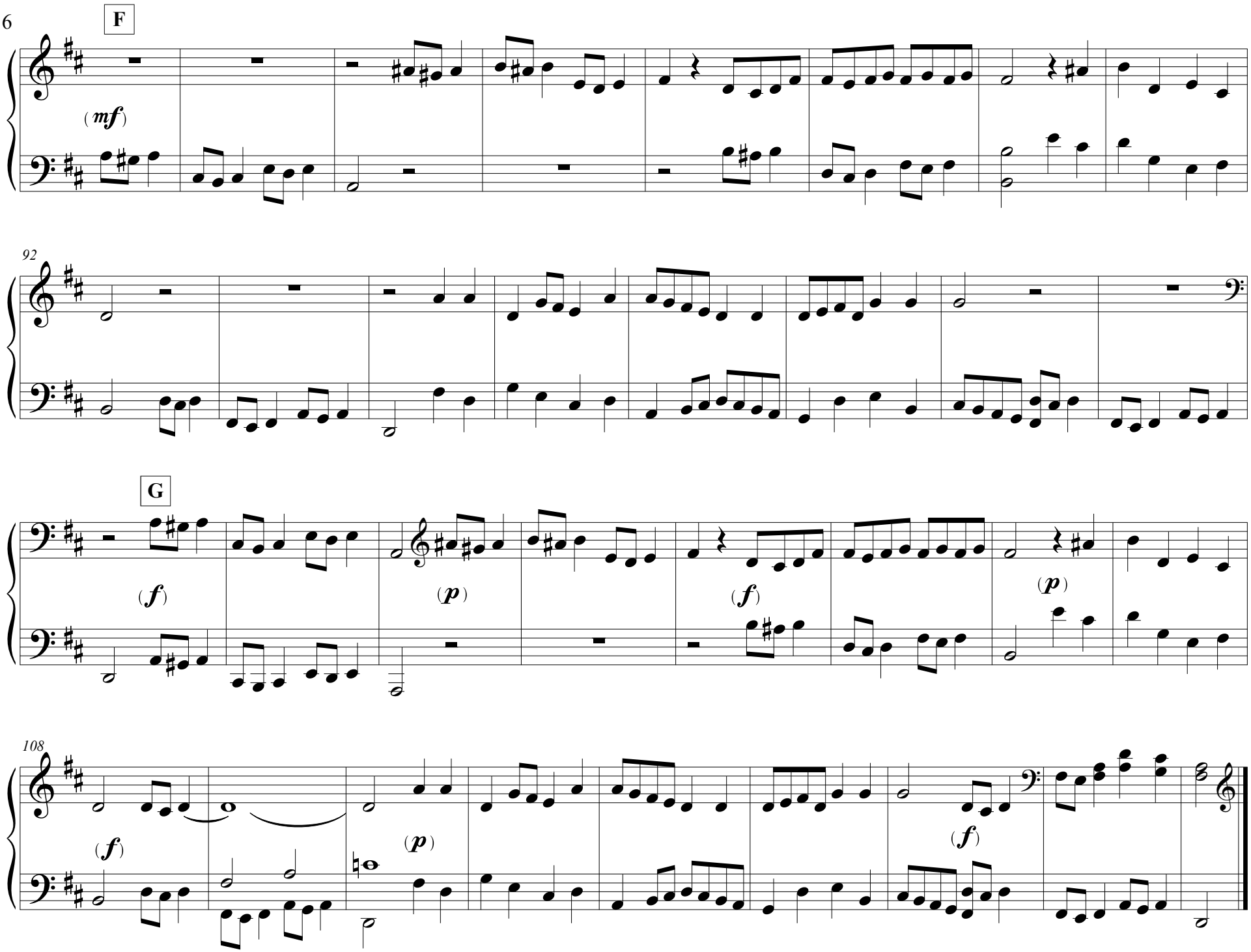

B
(mf)
28
C
(p)
44
(mf)

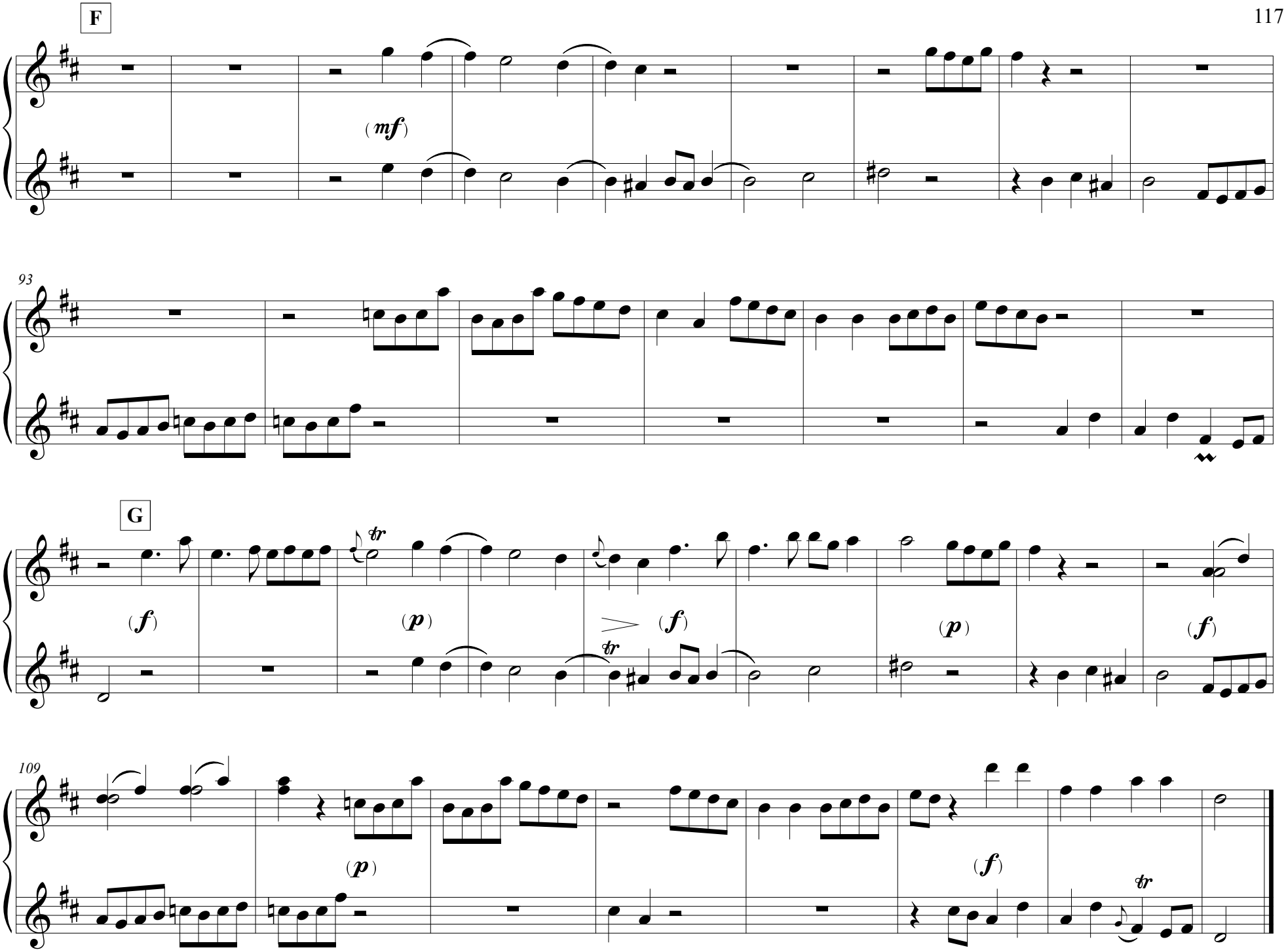
D Gavotte II



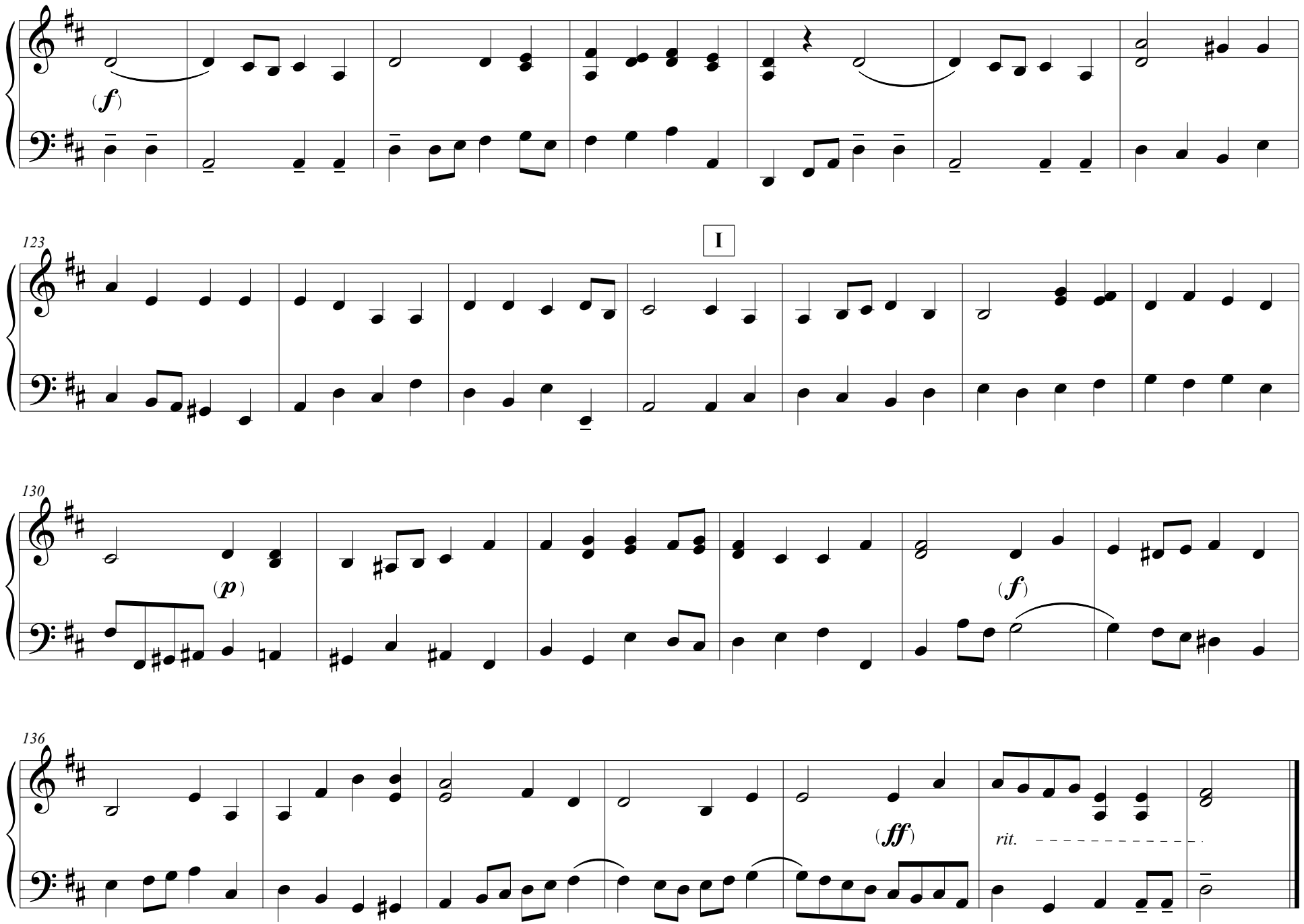
D Gavotte II



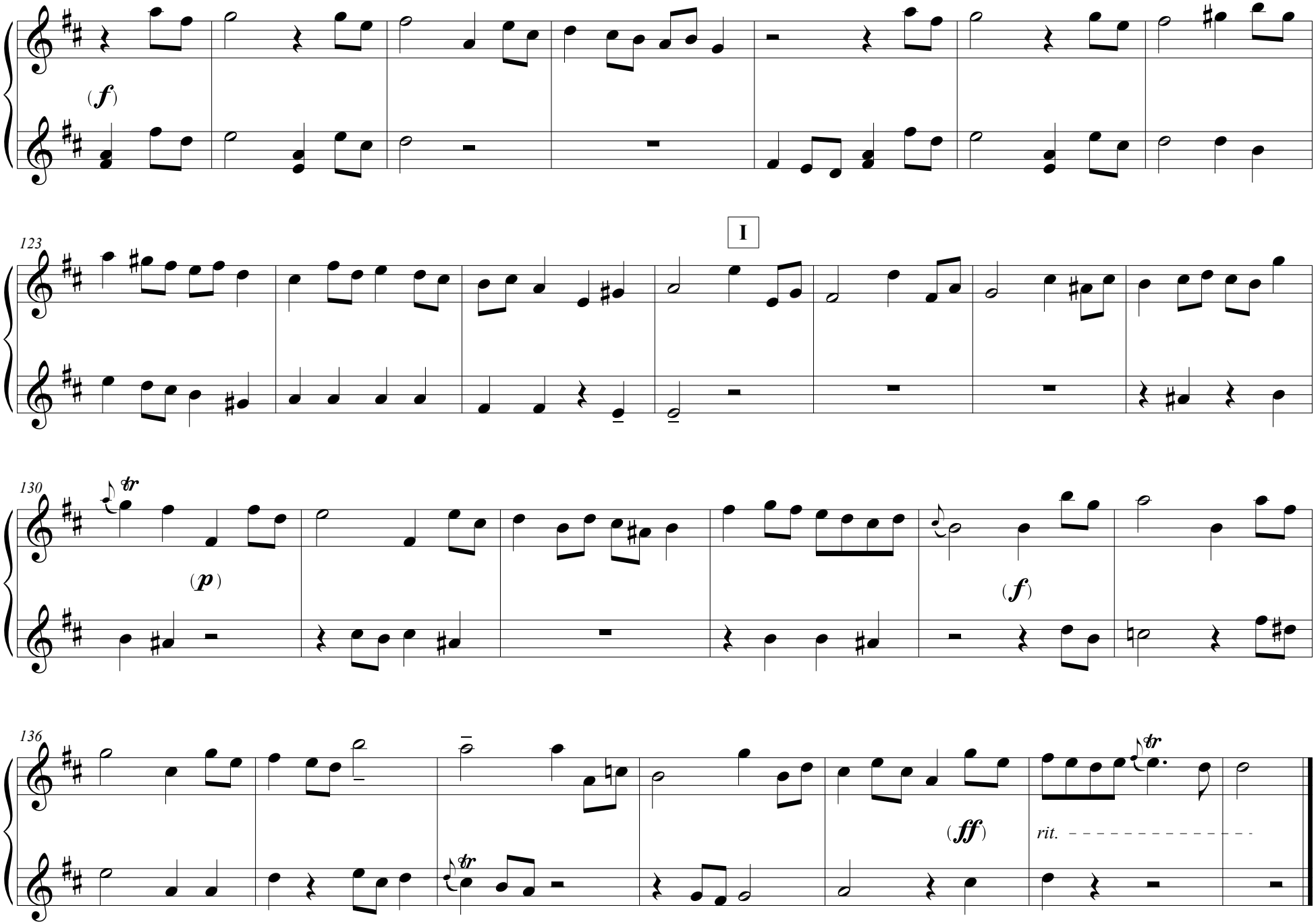

F
(mf)
92
G
(f)
(p)
(f)
(p)
108
(f)
(p)
(f)


F
(mf)
93
G
(f)
(p)
(f)
(p)
(f)
109
(p)
(f)

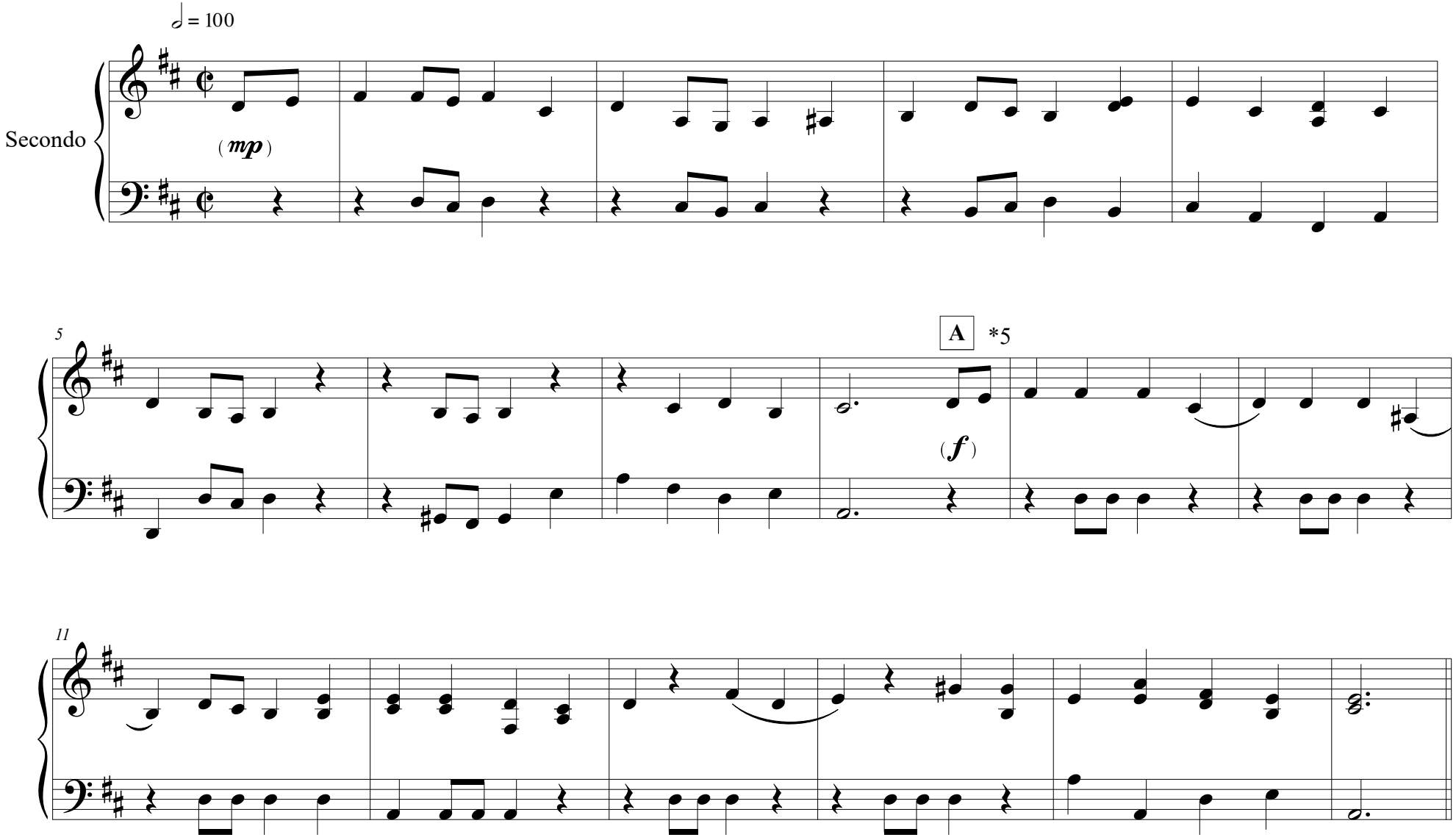
H Gavotte I



H Gavotte I



Bourrée



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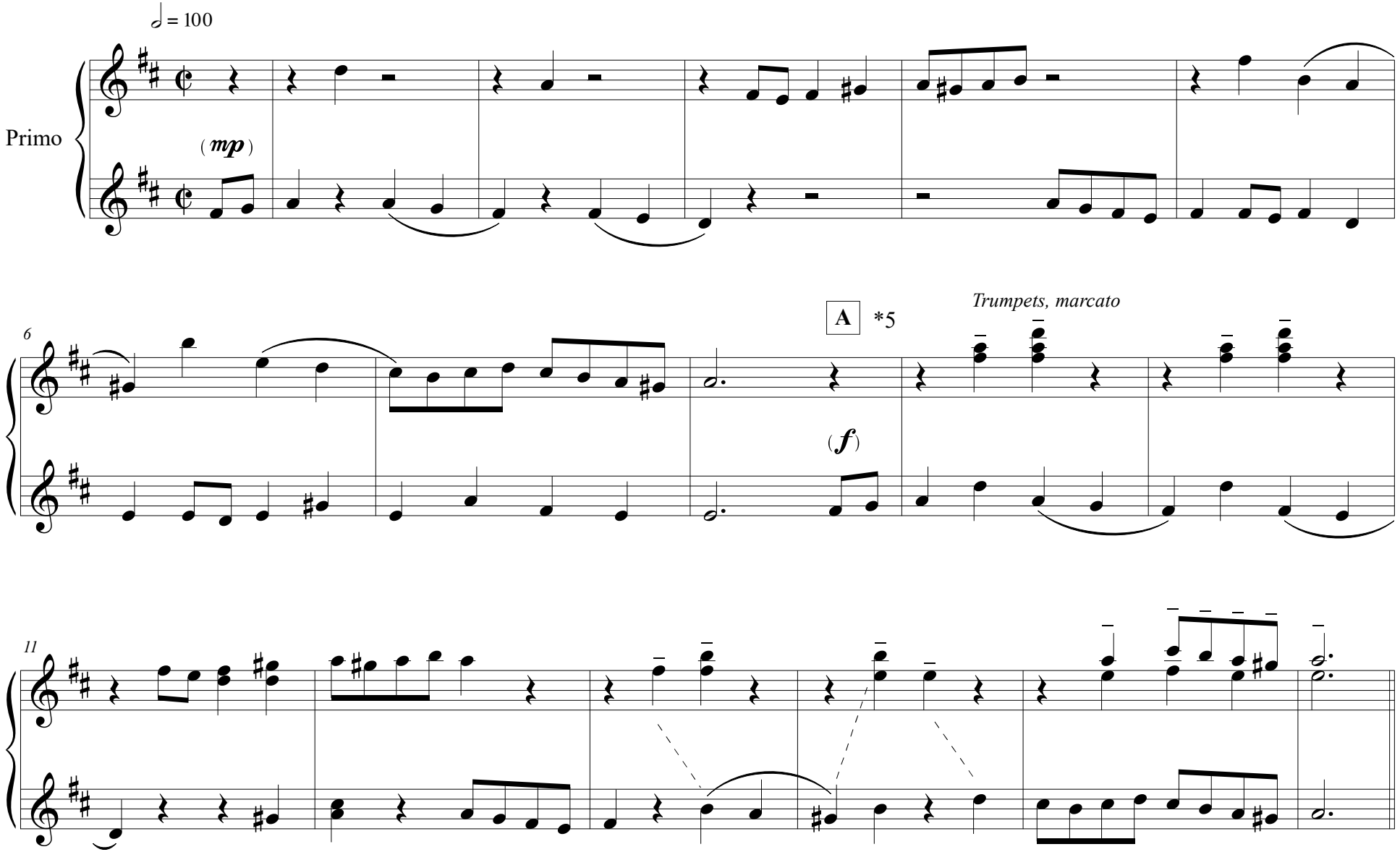
Bourrée



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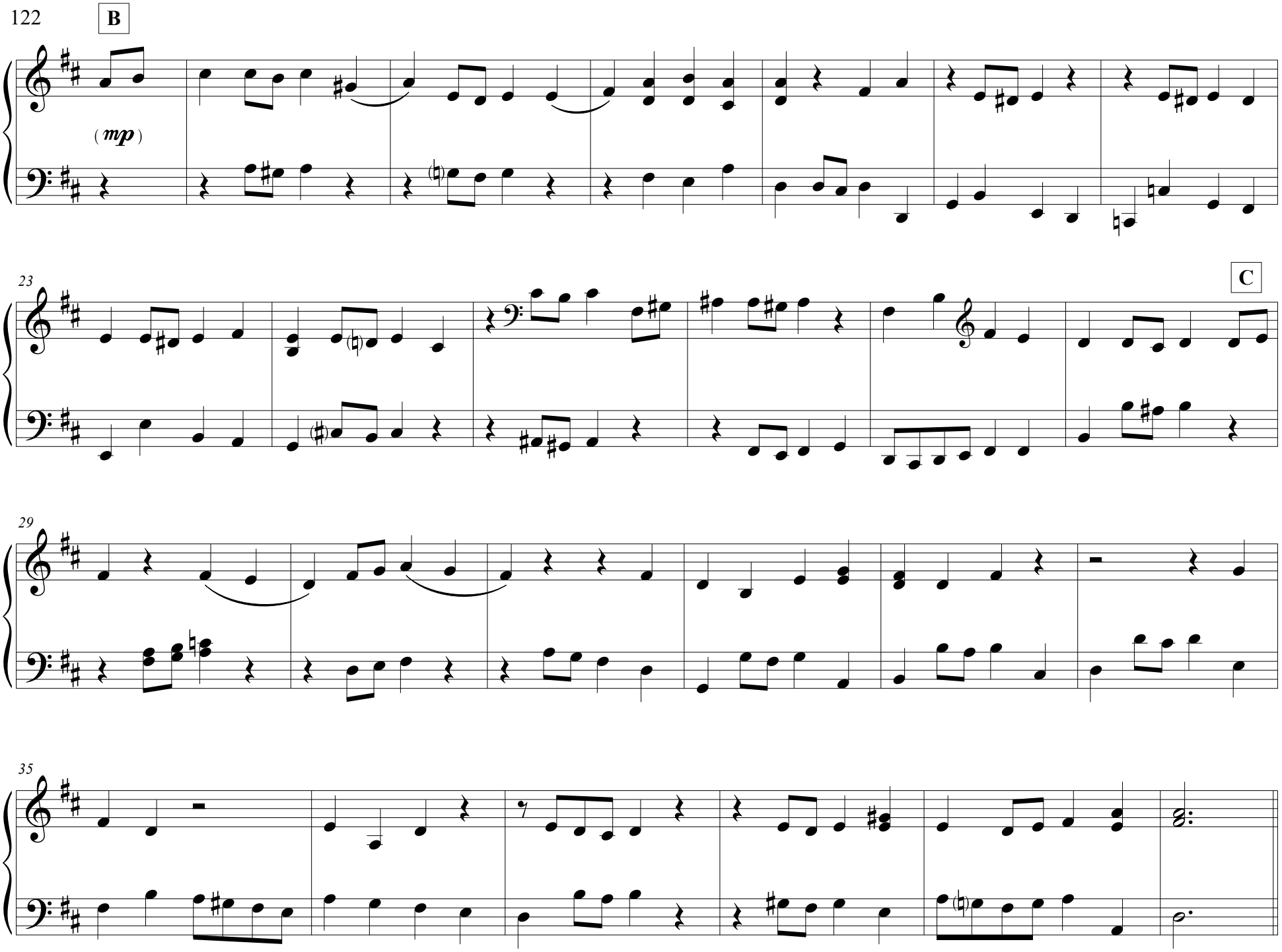
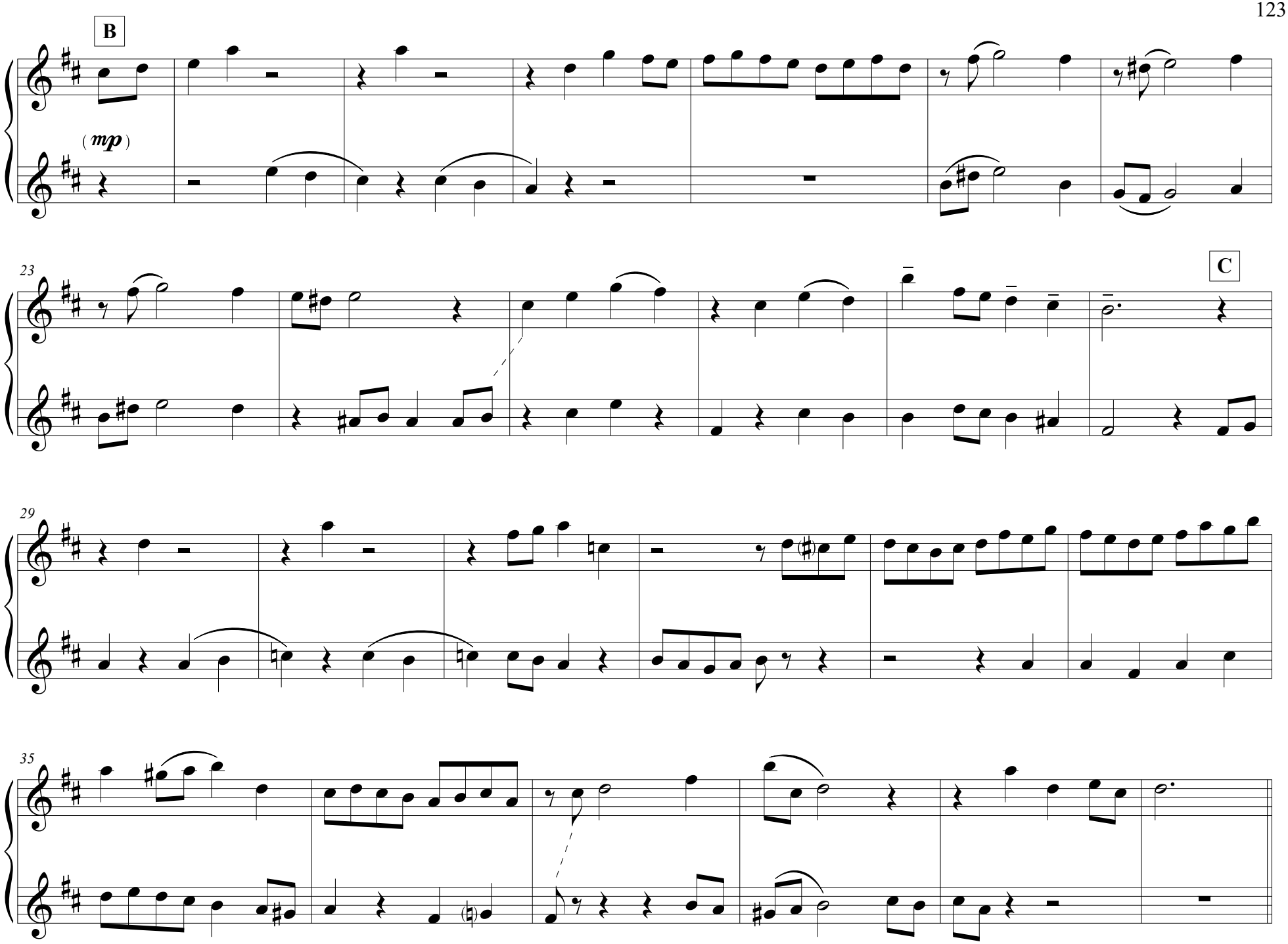
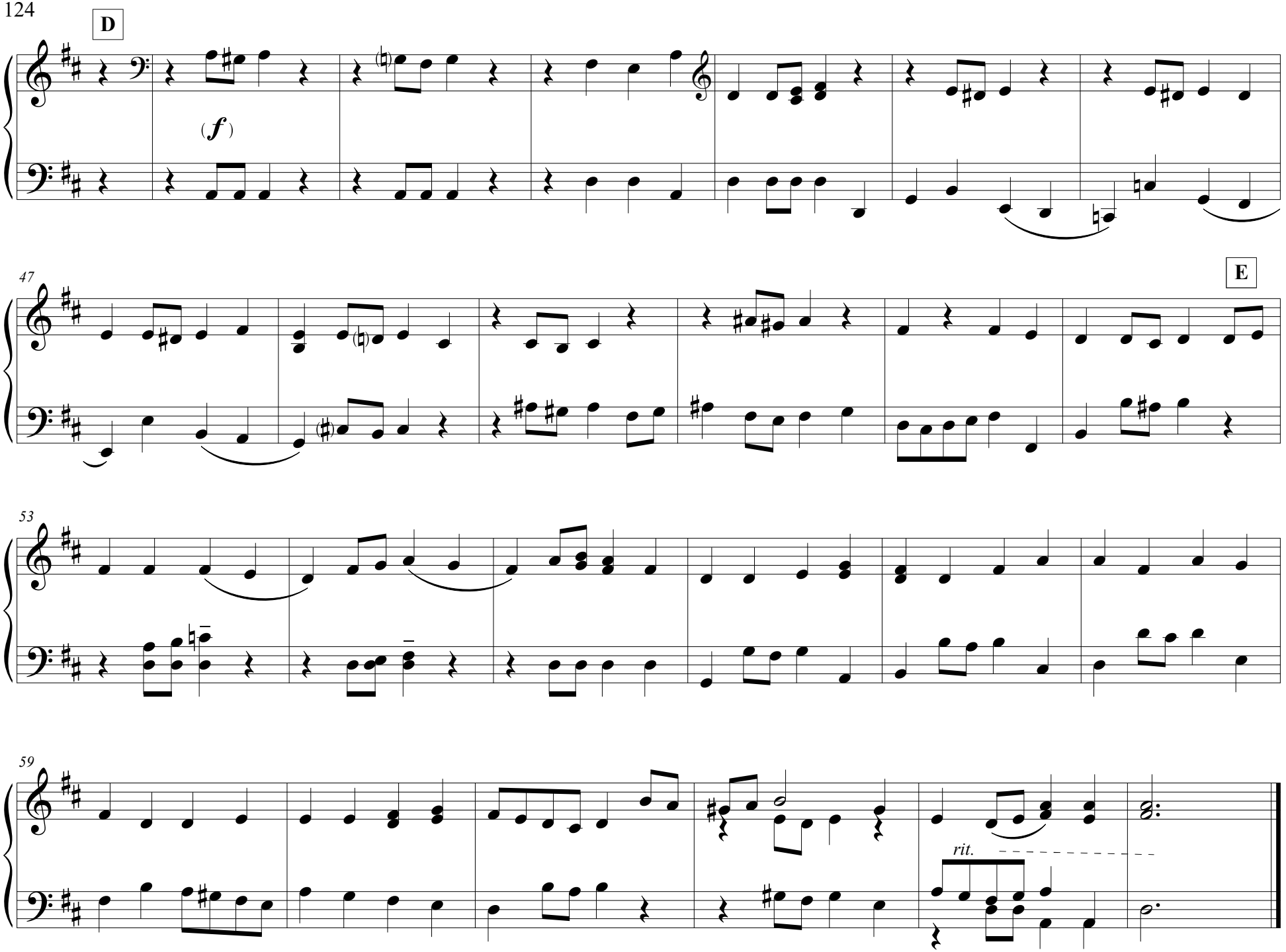
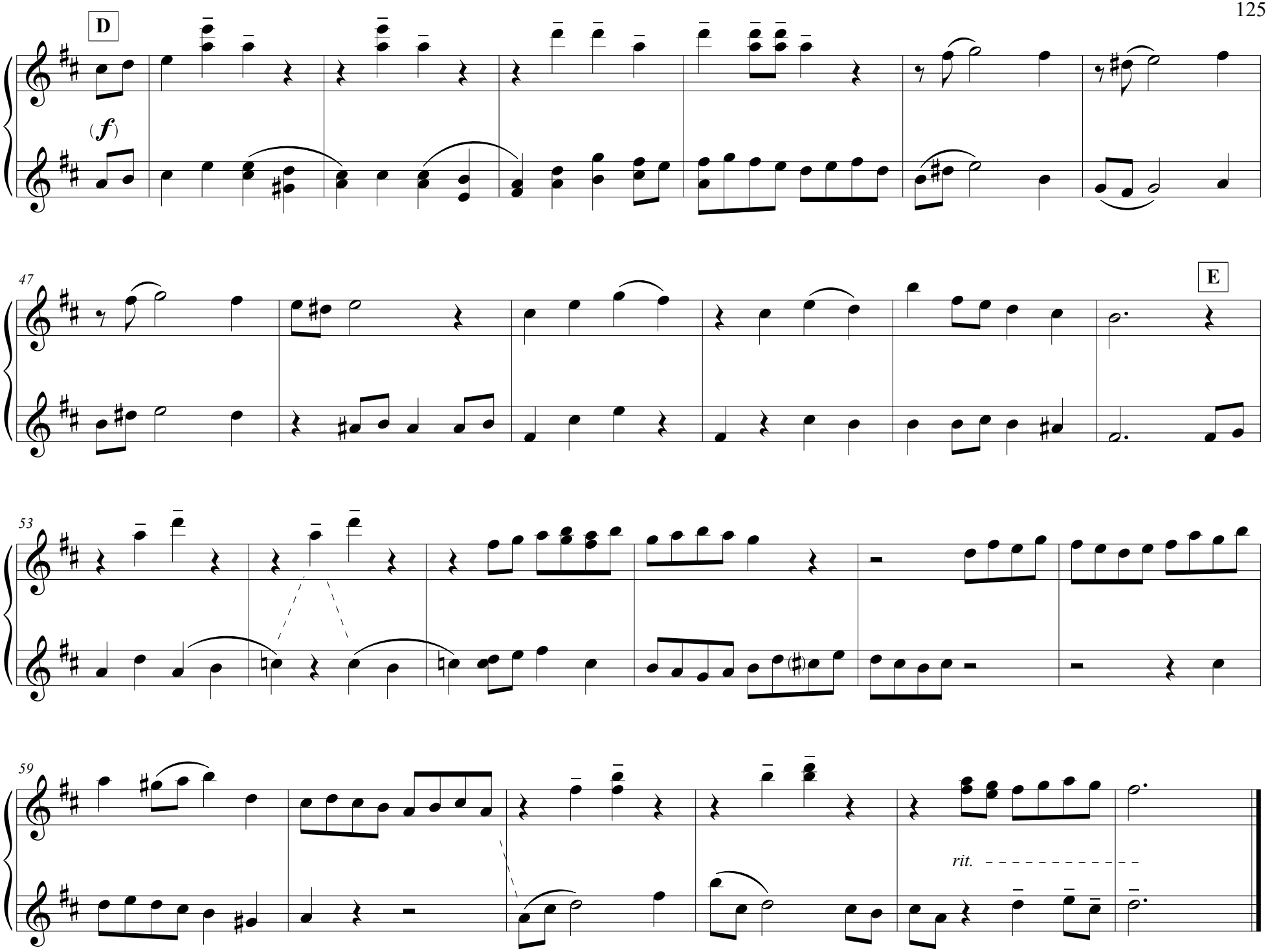
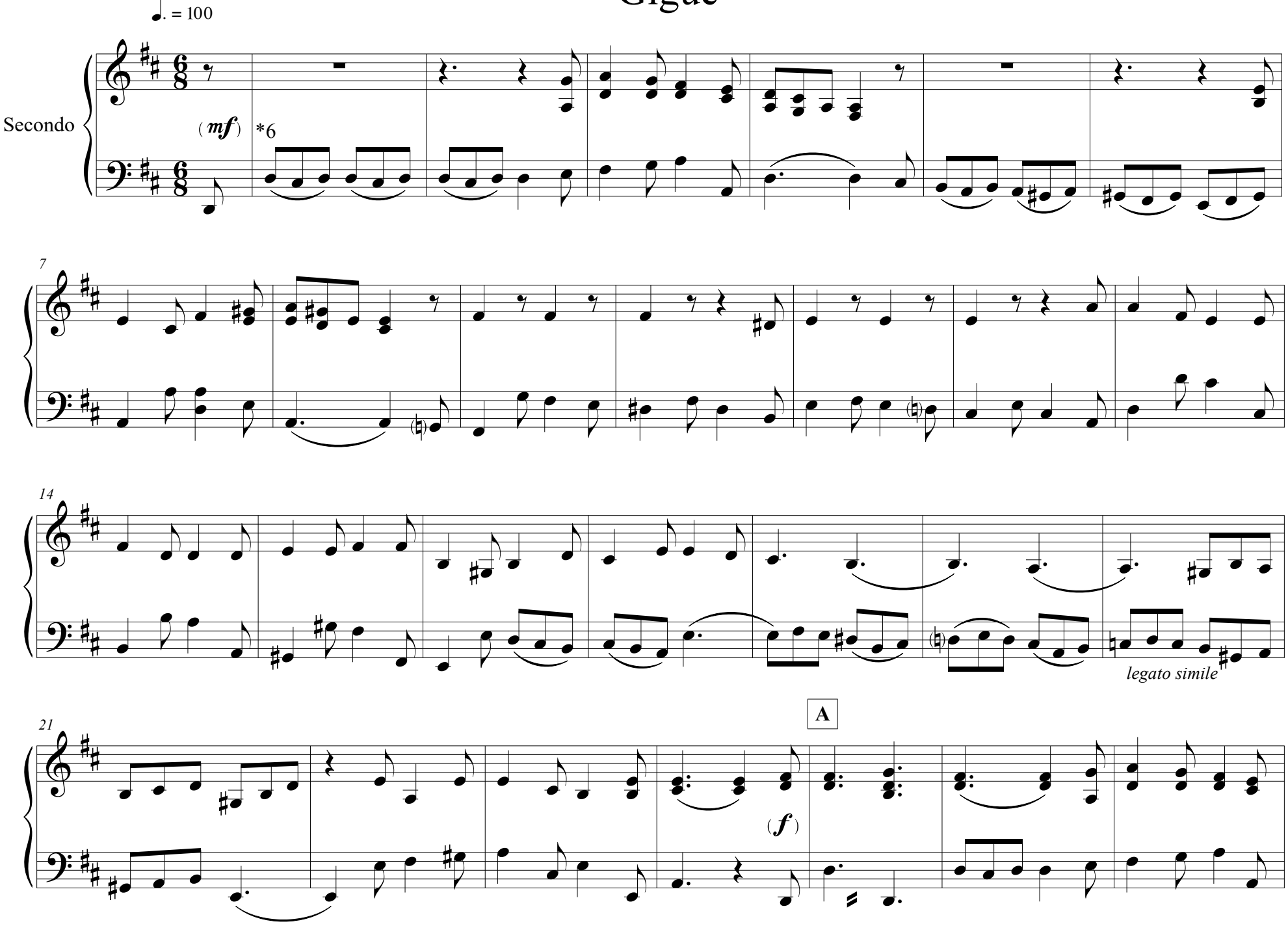

B
(mp)
23
C
29
35


B
(mp)
23
C
29
35


D
(f)
47
E
53
59
rit.


D
(f)
47
E
53
59
rit.

Gigue



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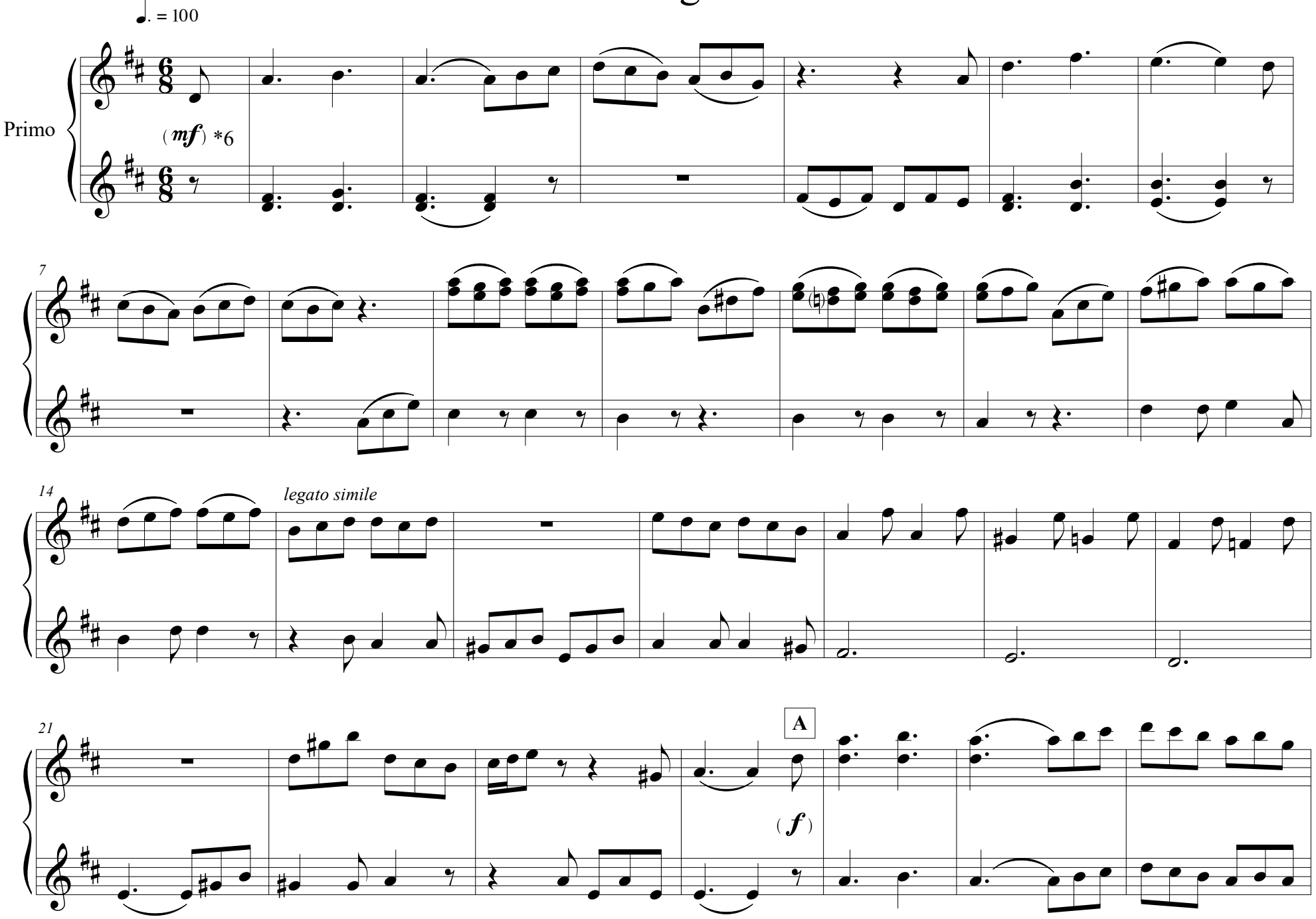
Gigue



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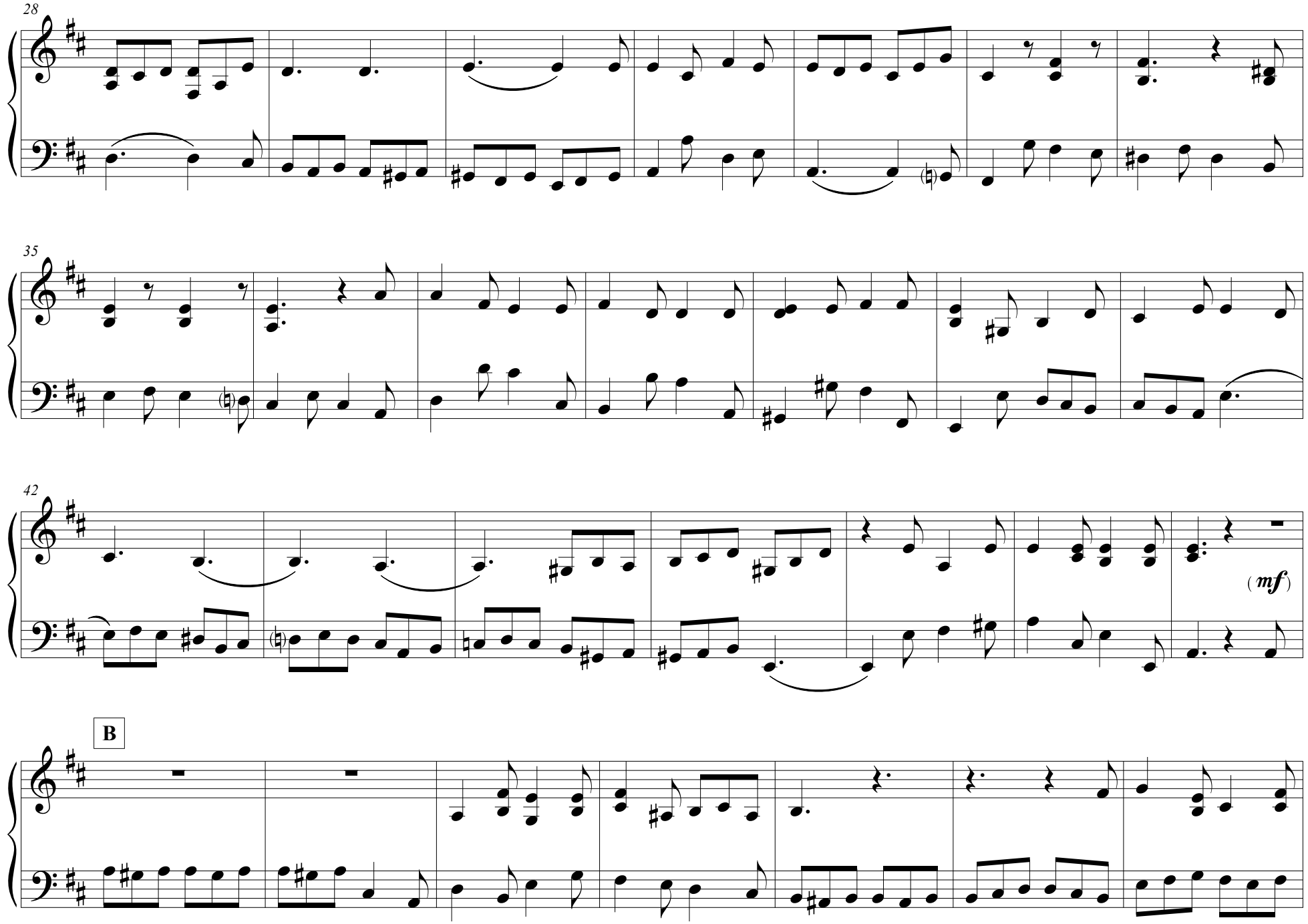
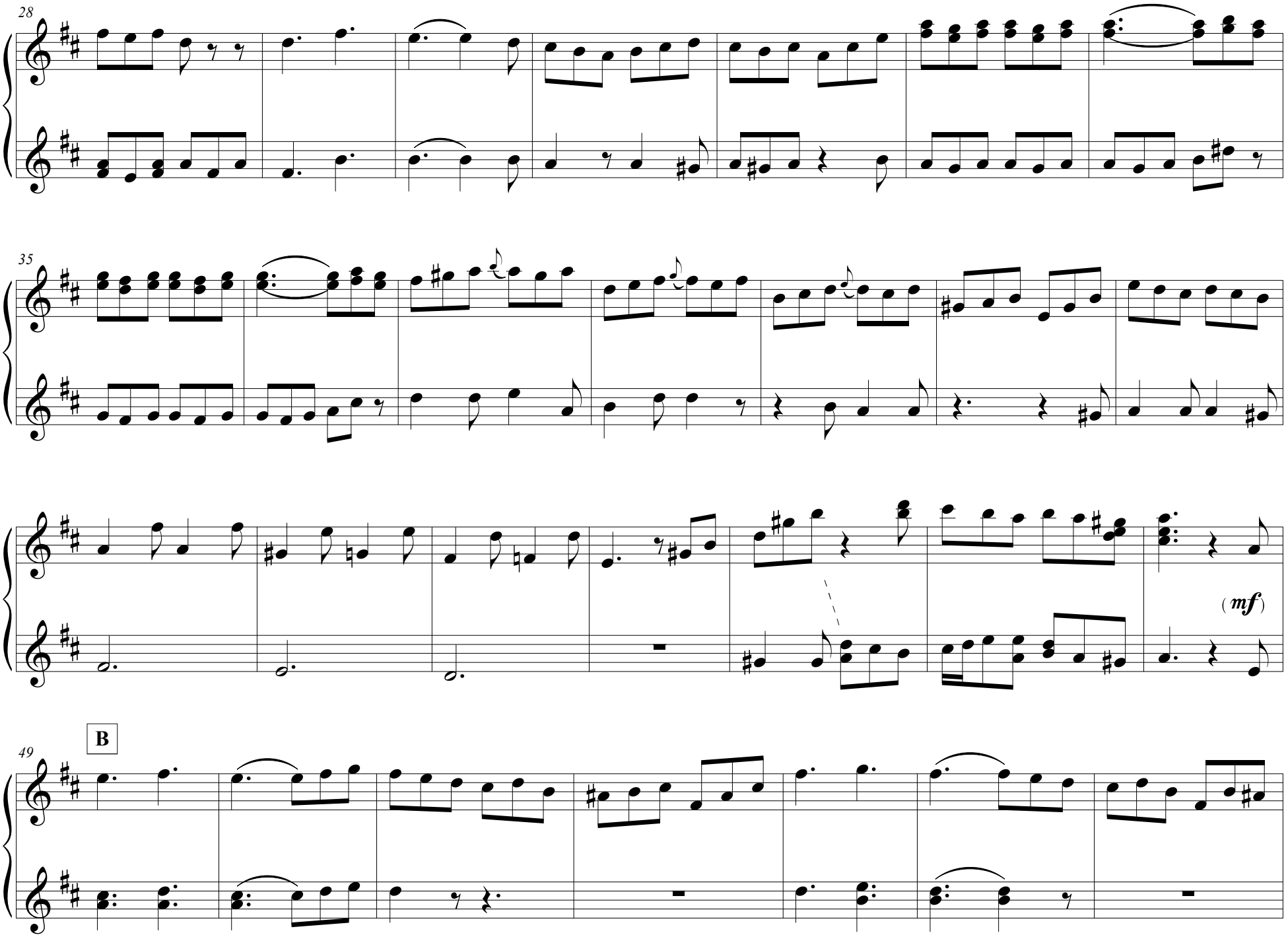
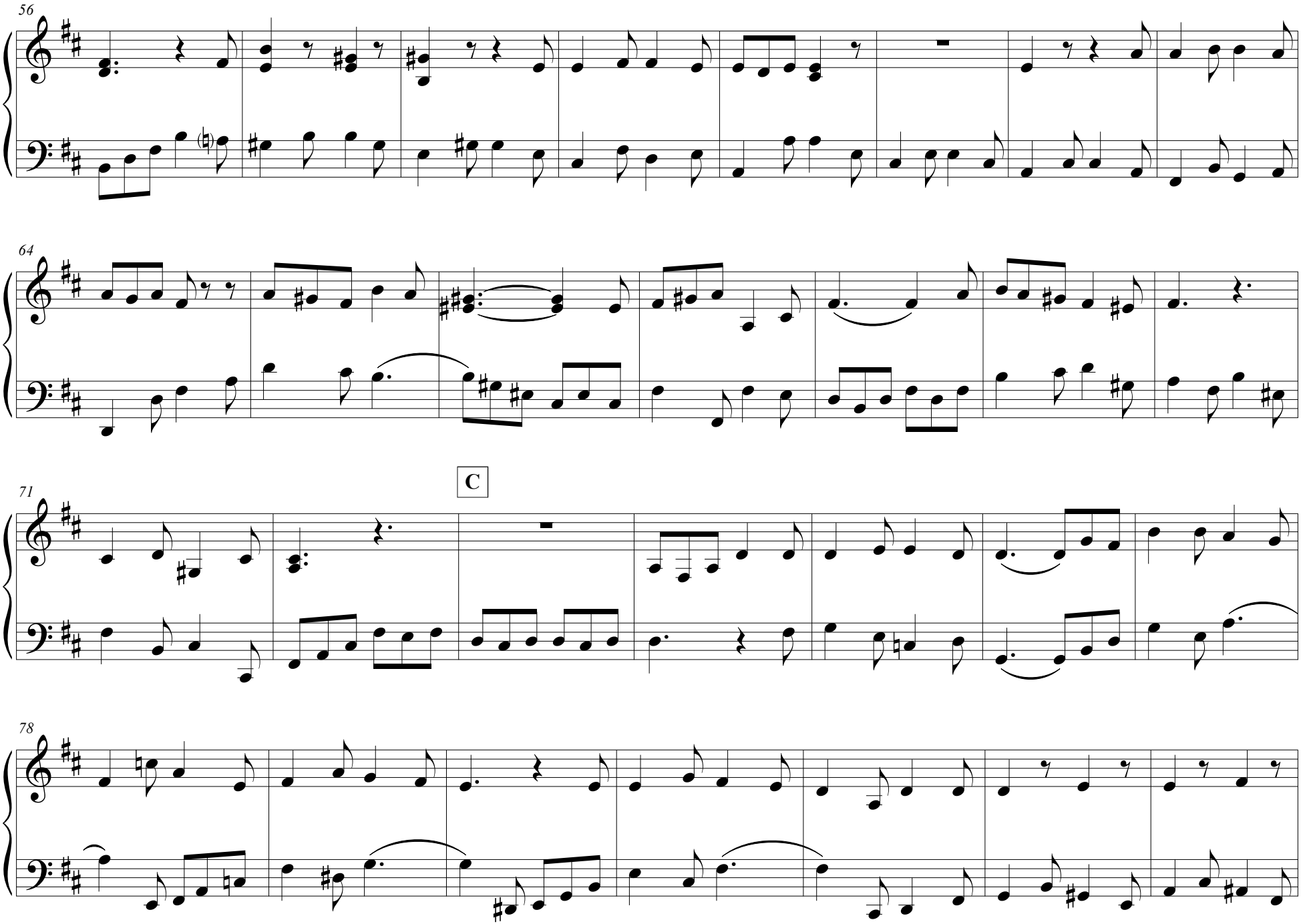
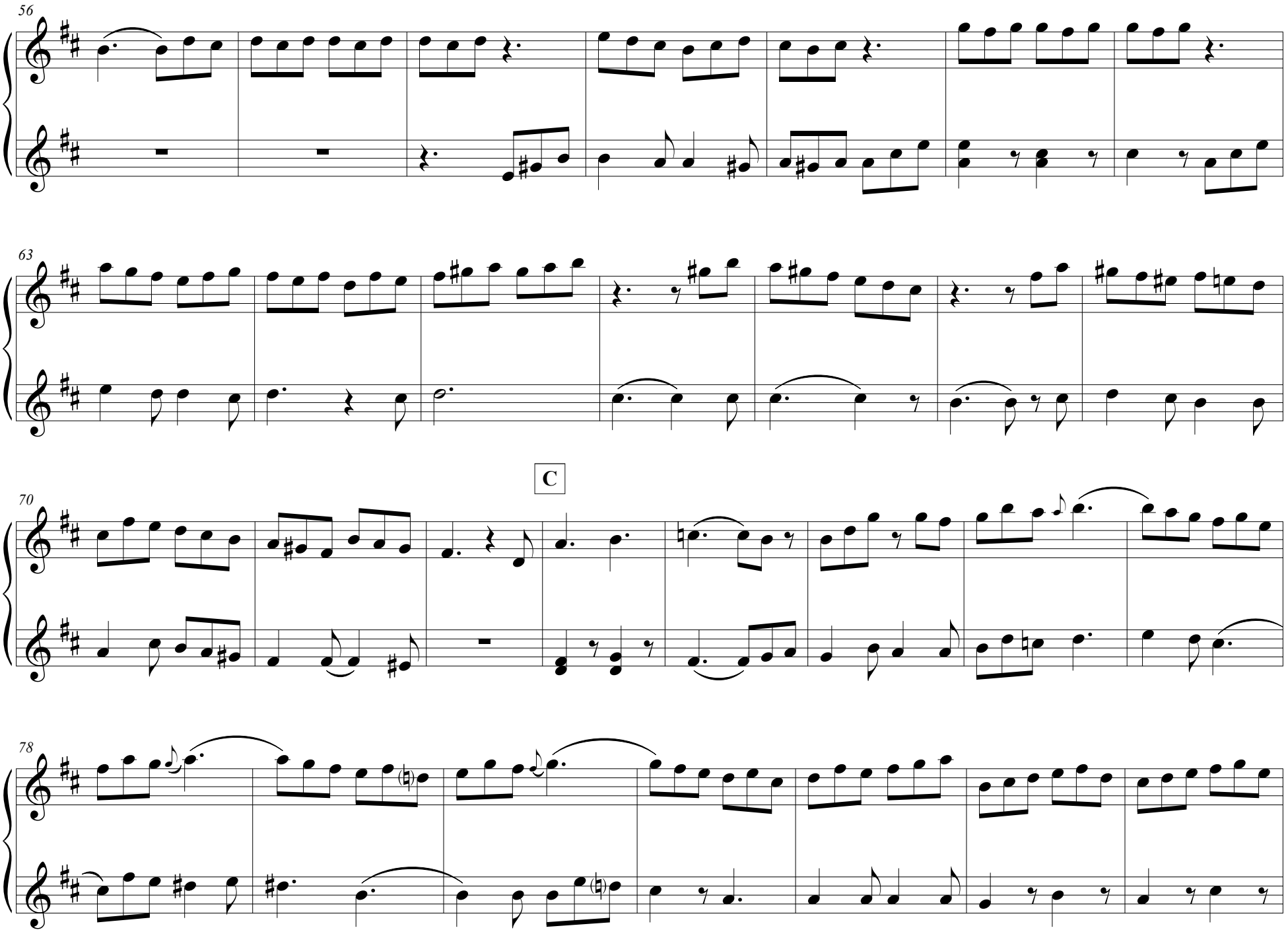
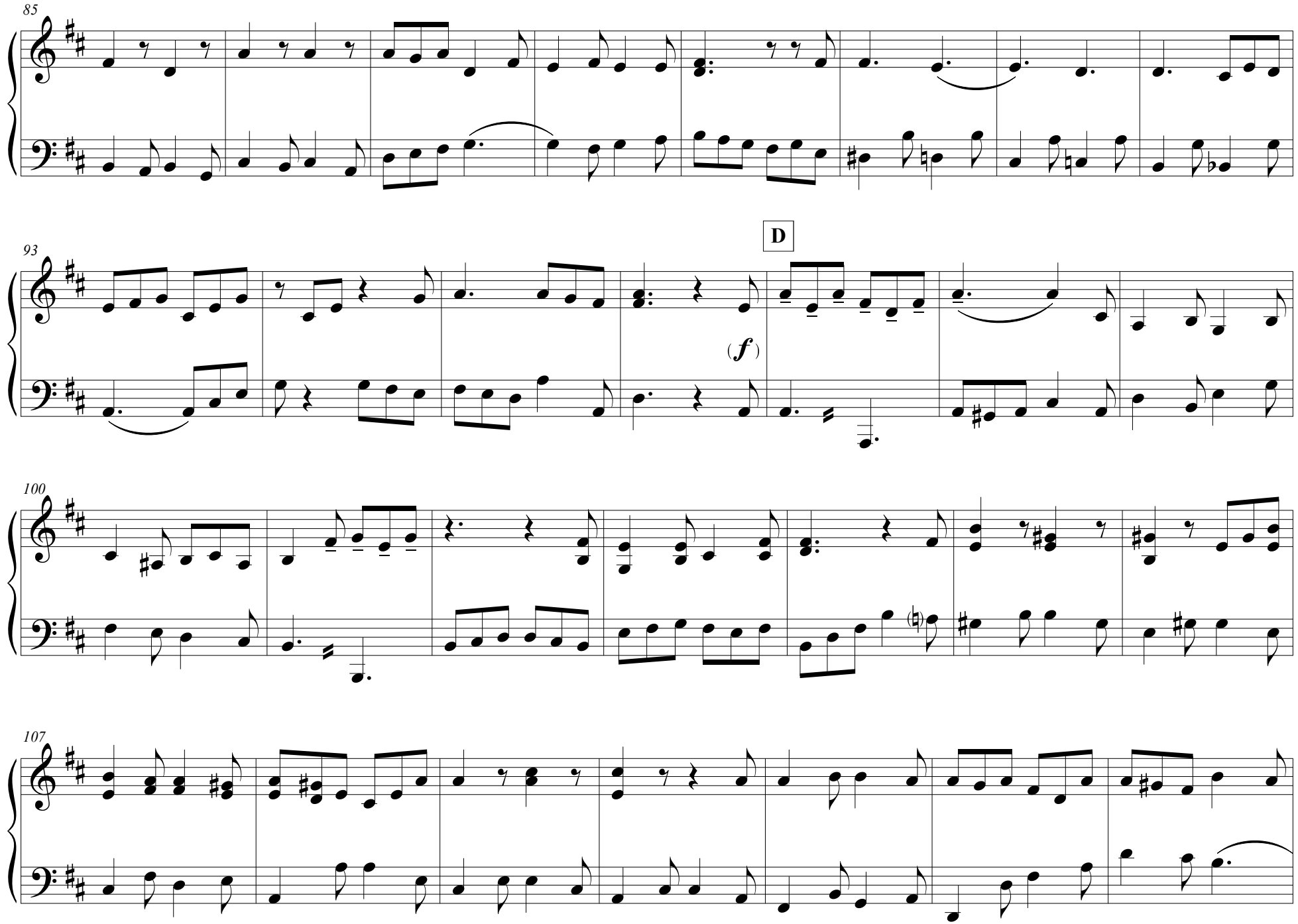
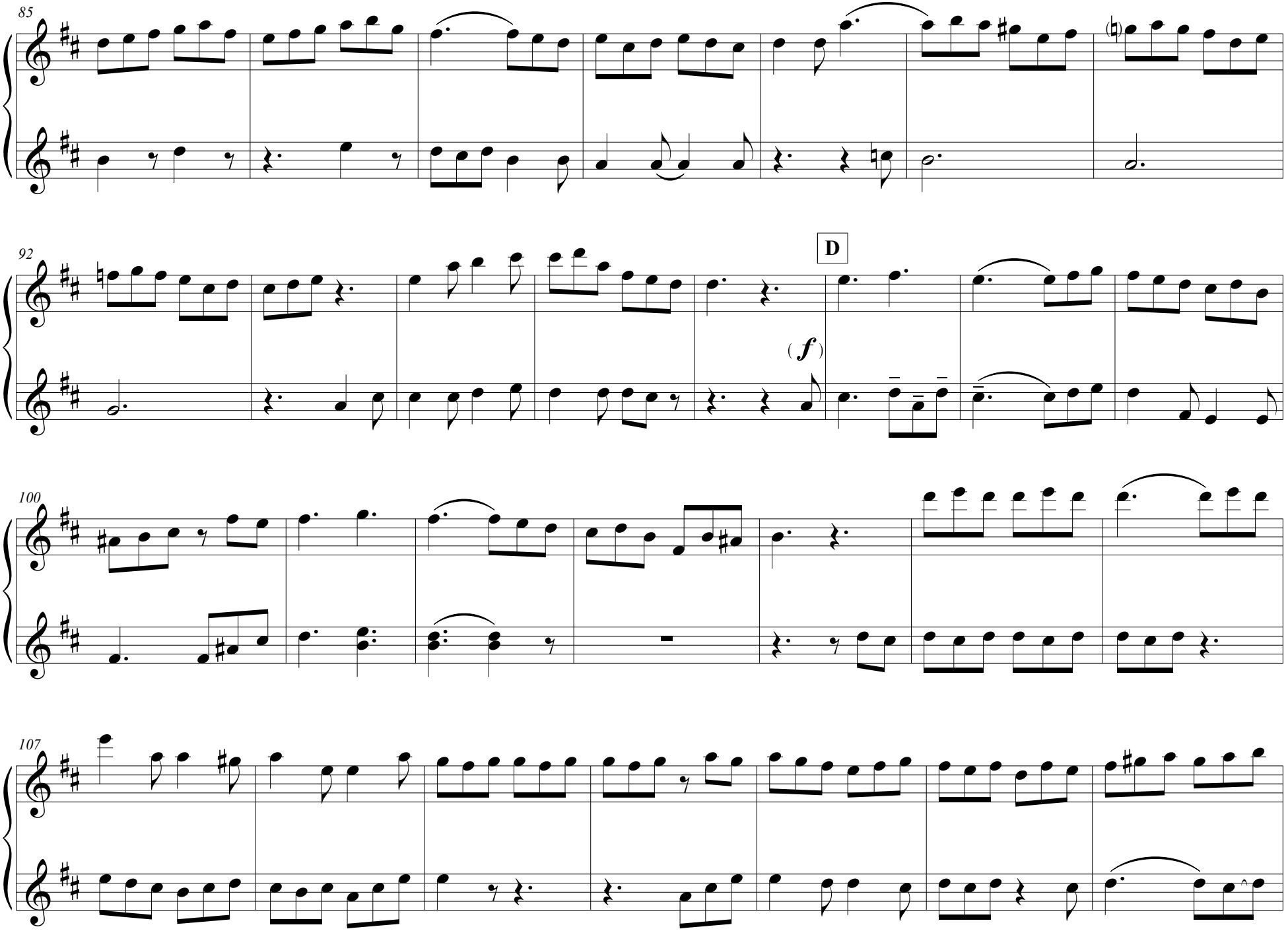

28
35
42
(mf)
B

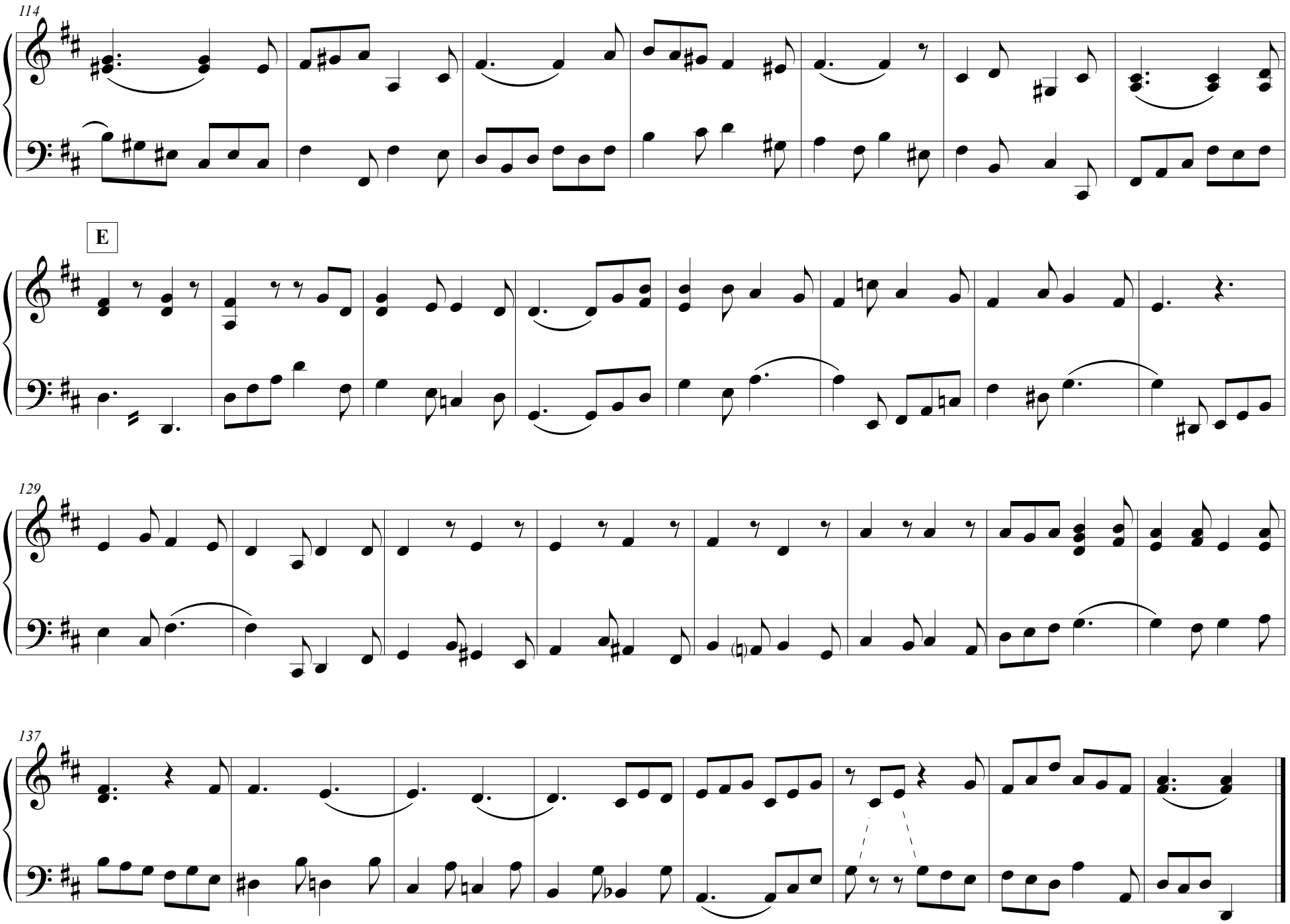

28
35
(mf)
B
49

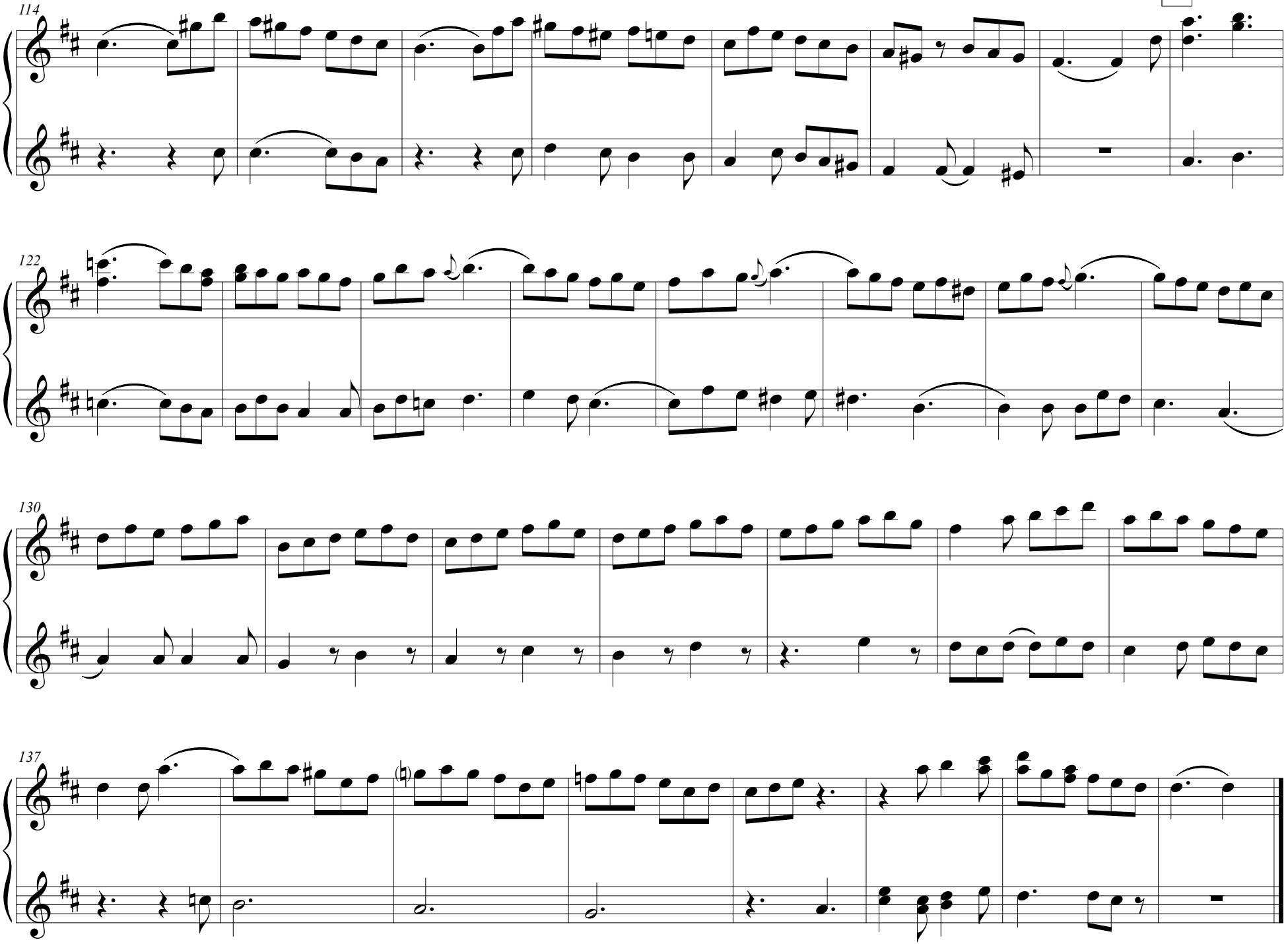

56
64
C
71
78


56
63
C
70
78


85
93
D
(f)
100
107


85
92
D
(f)
100
107


114
E
129
137


114
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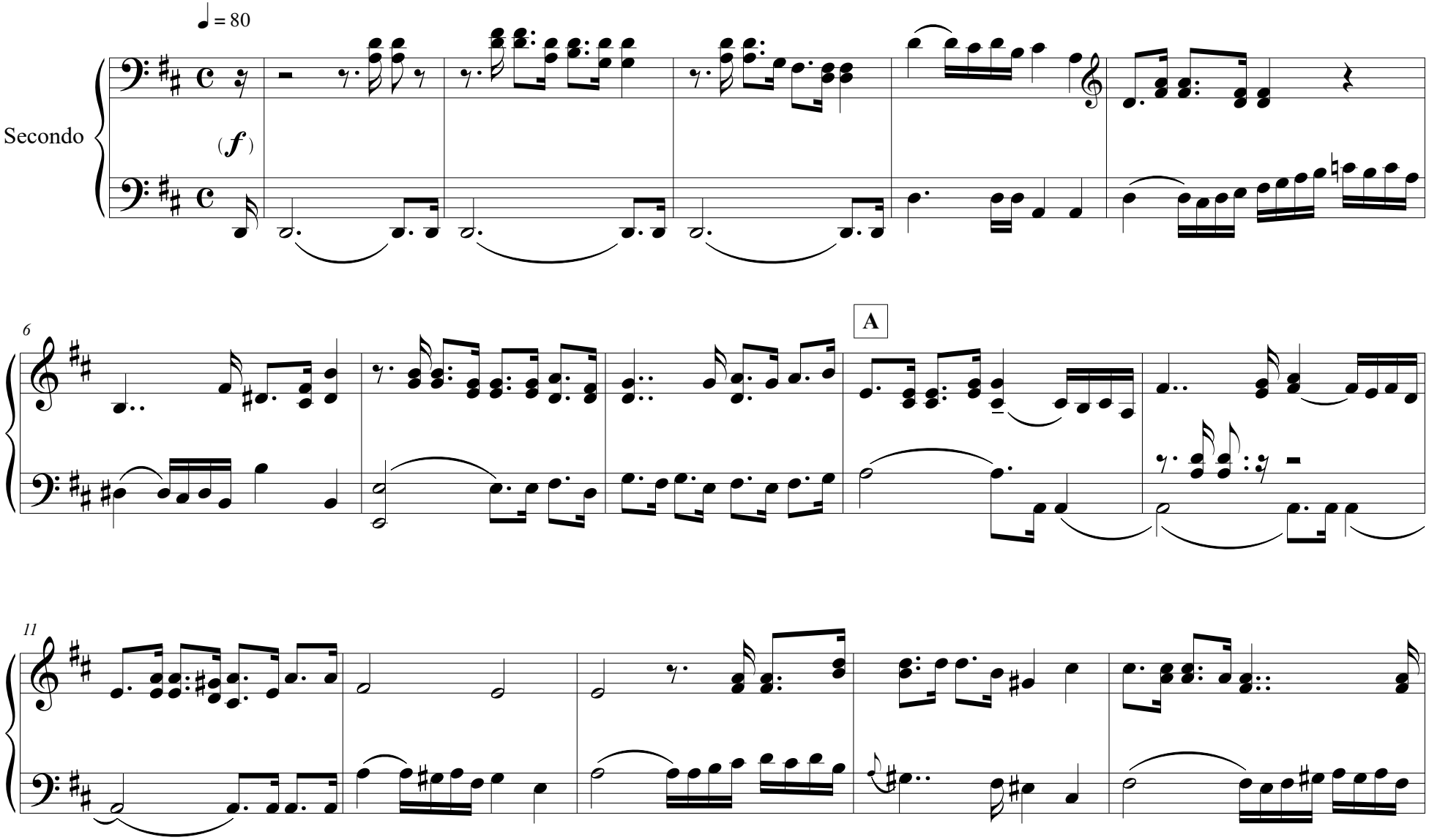
Orchestral Suite No. 4

BWV 1069

Orchestral Suite No. 4 in D Major

Overture

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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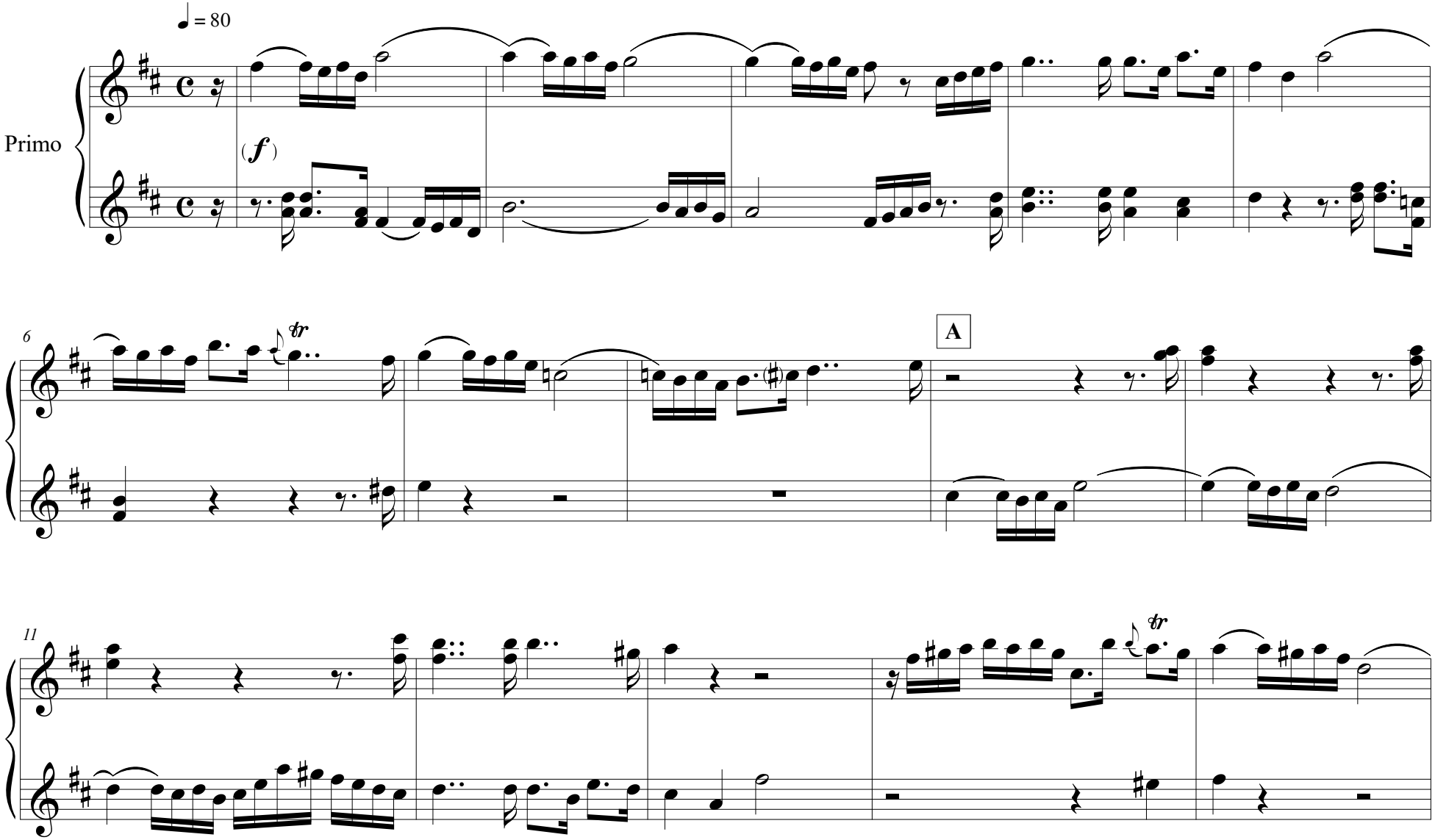
Orchestral Suite No. 4 in D Major

Overture

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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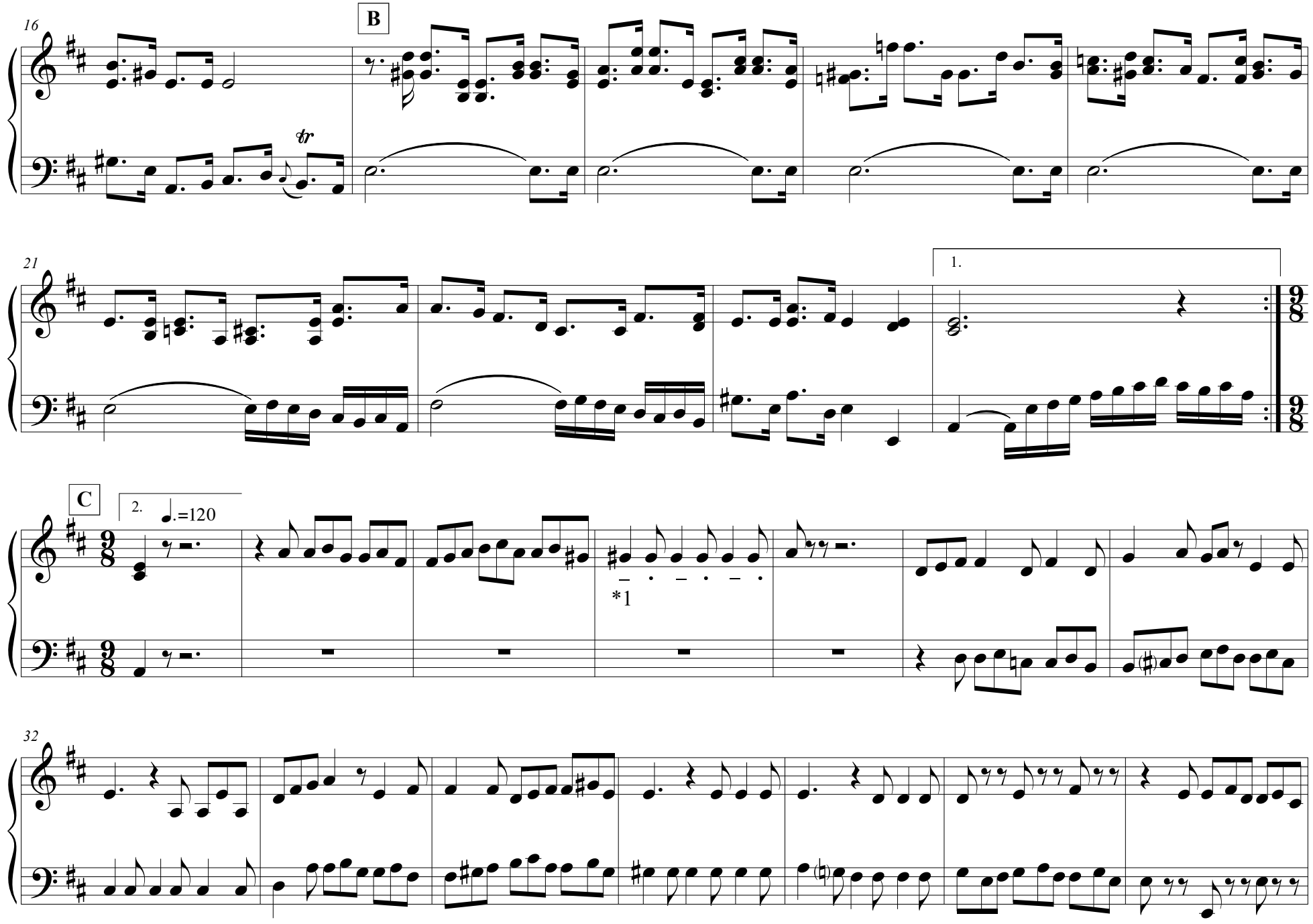
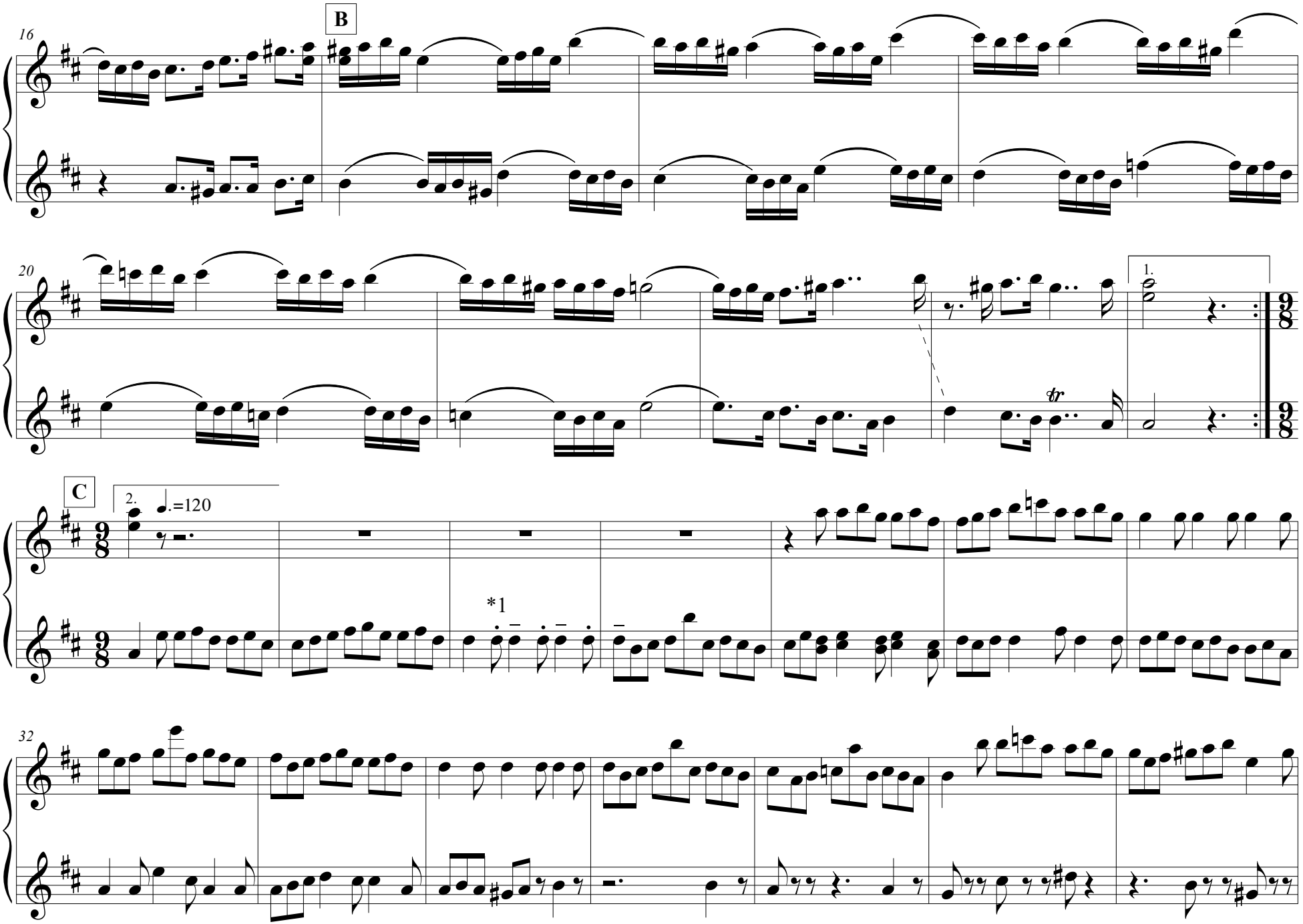
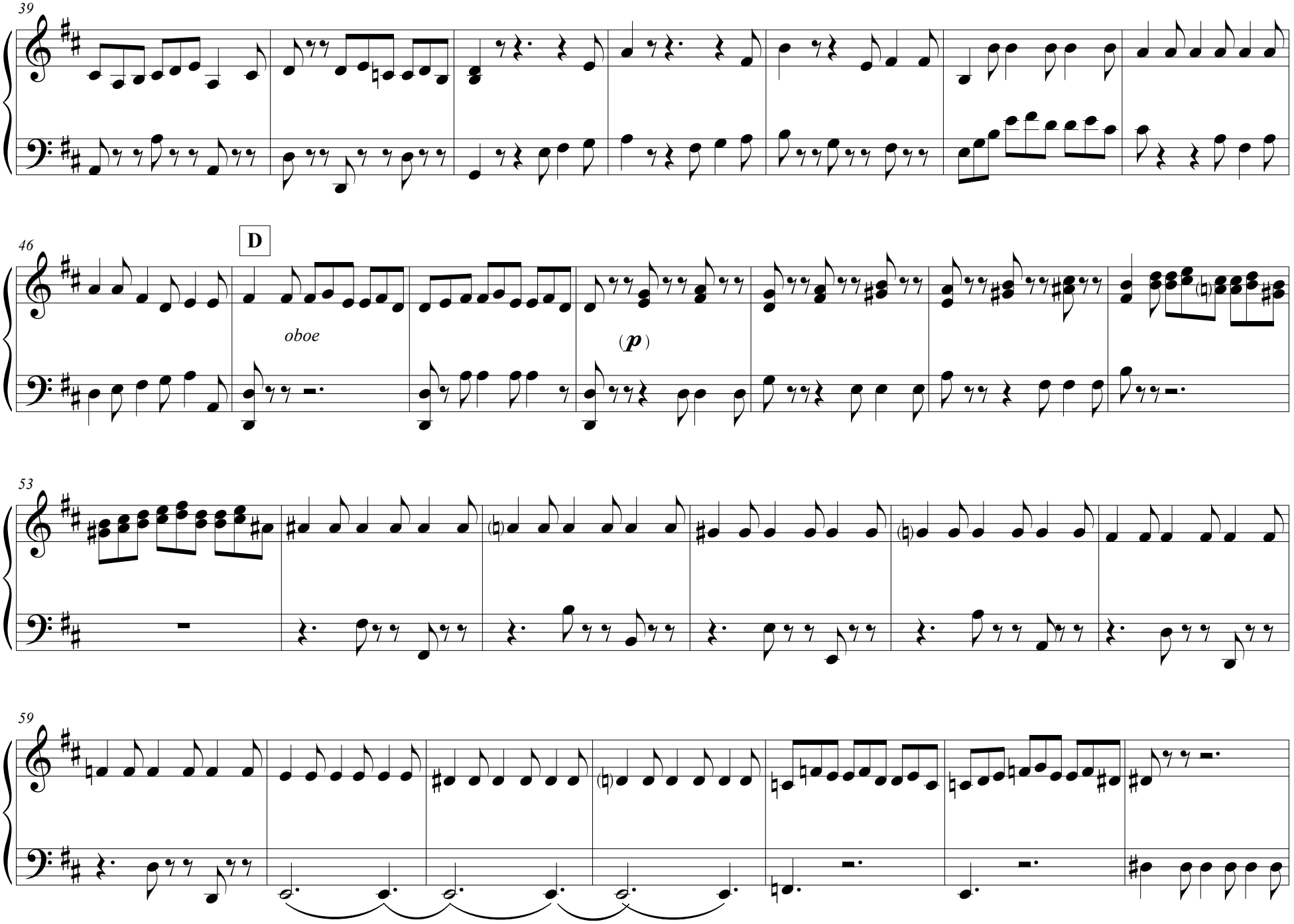
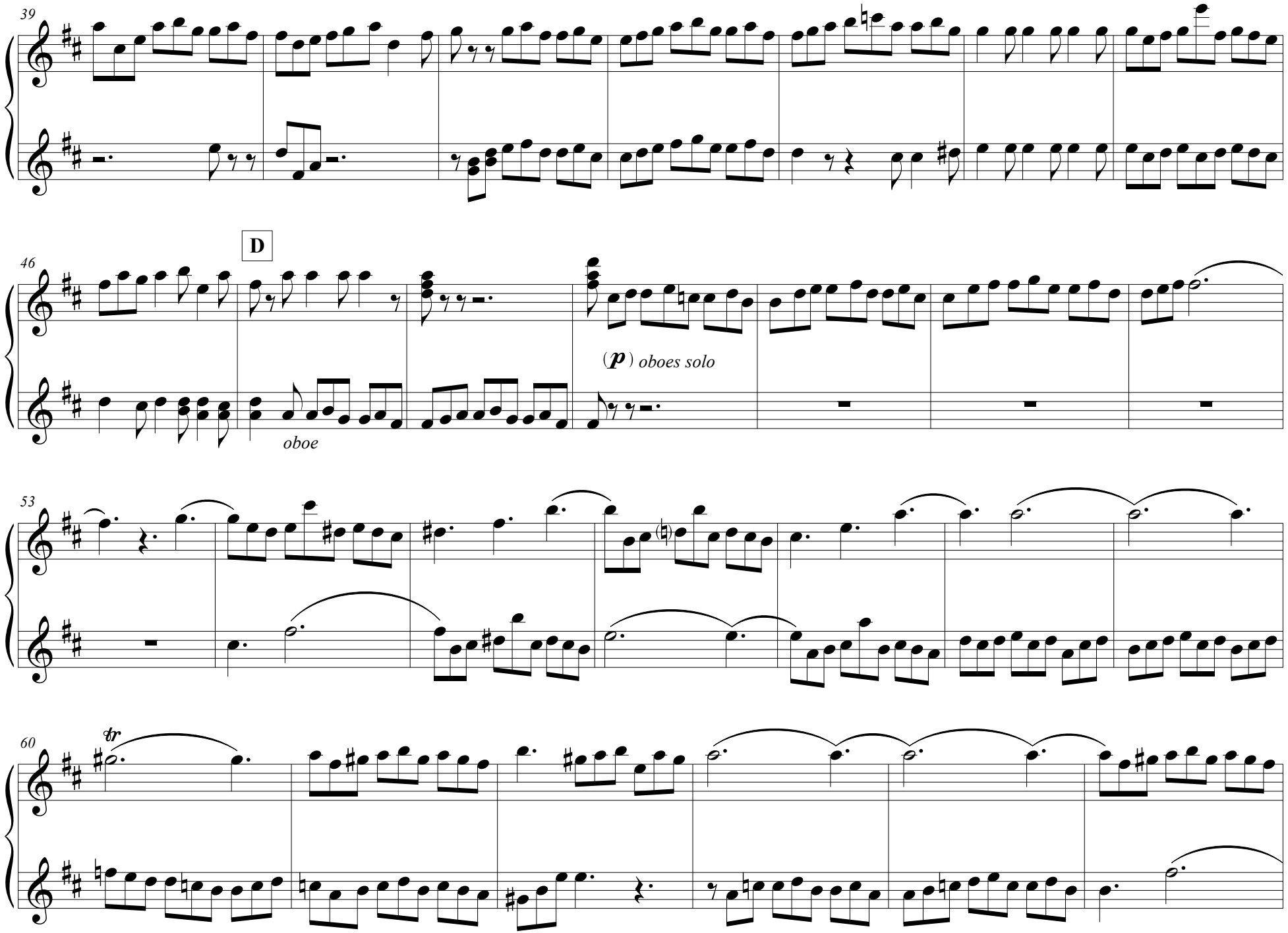
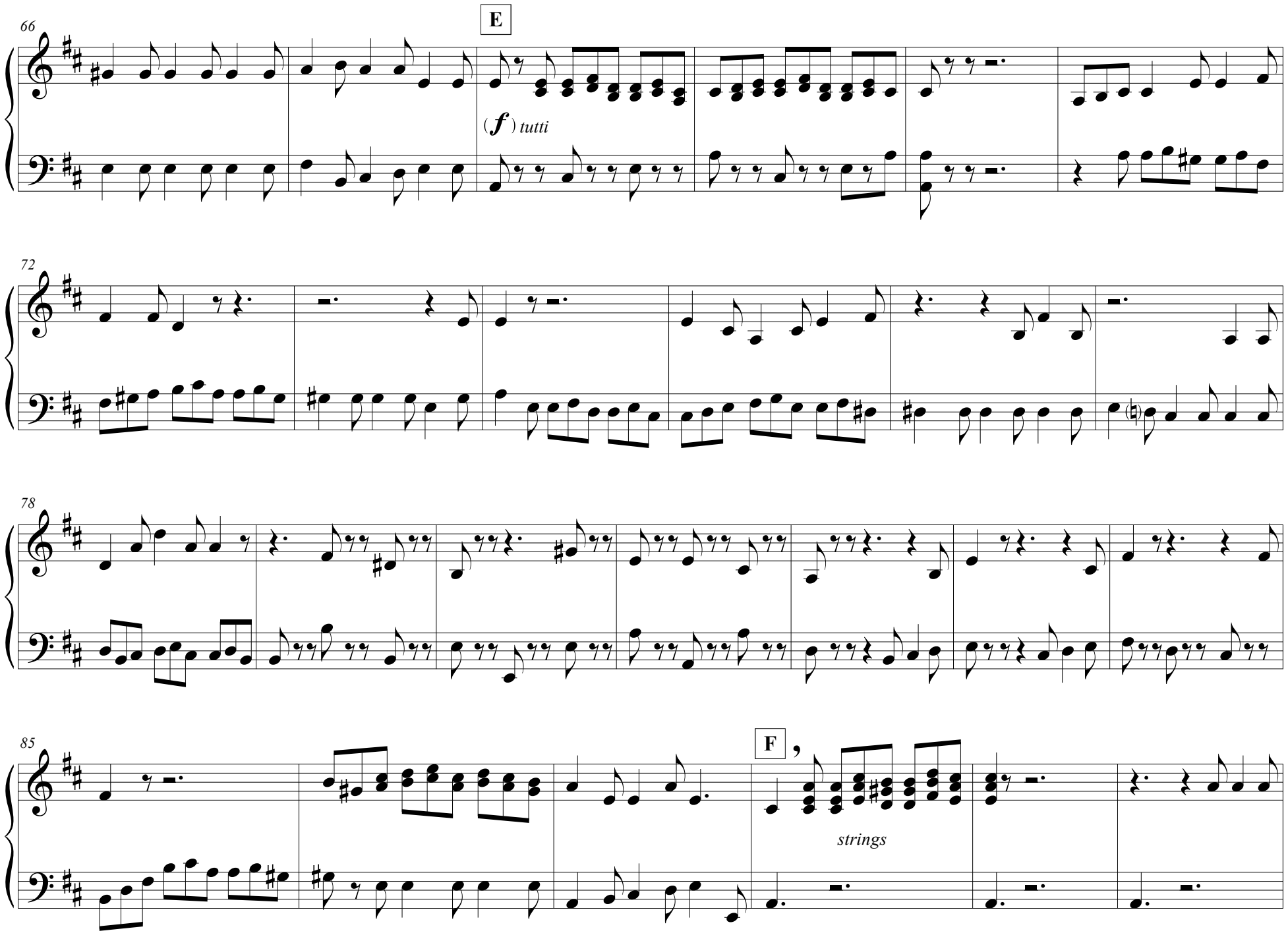
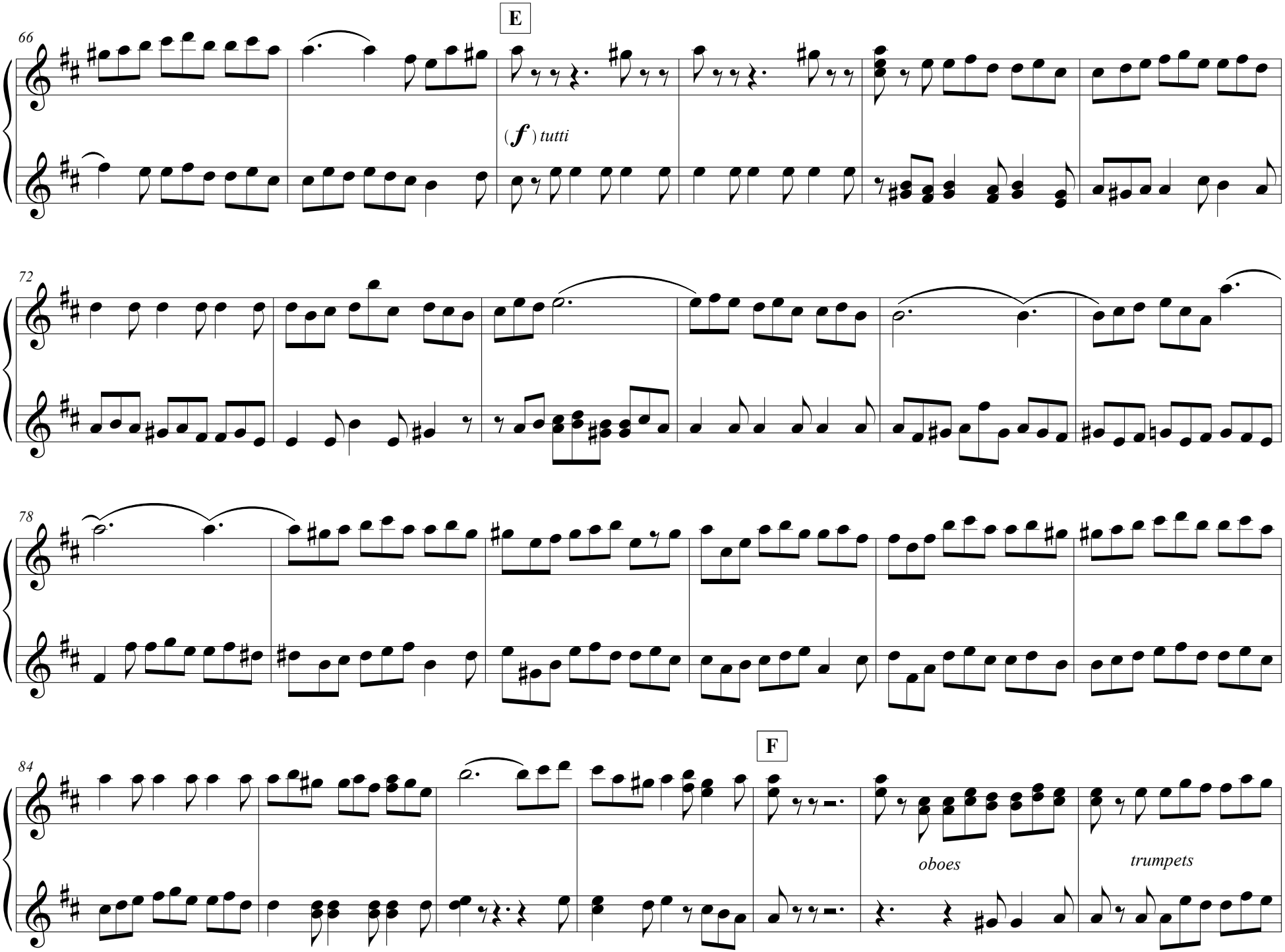

16
B
tr
21
1.
C
2.
♩.=120
*1
32

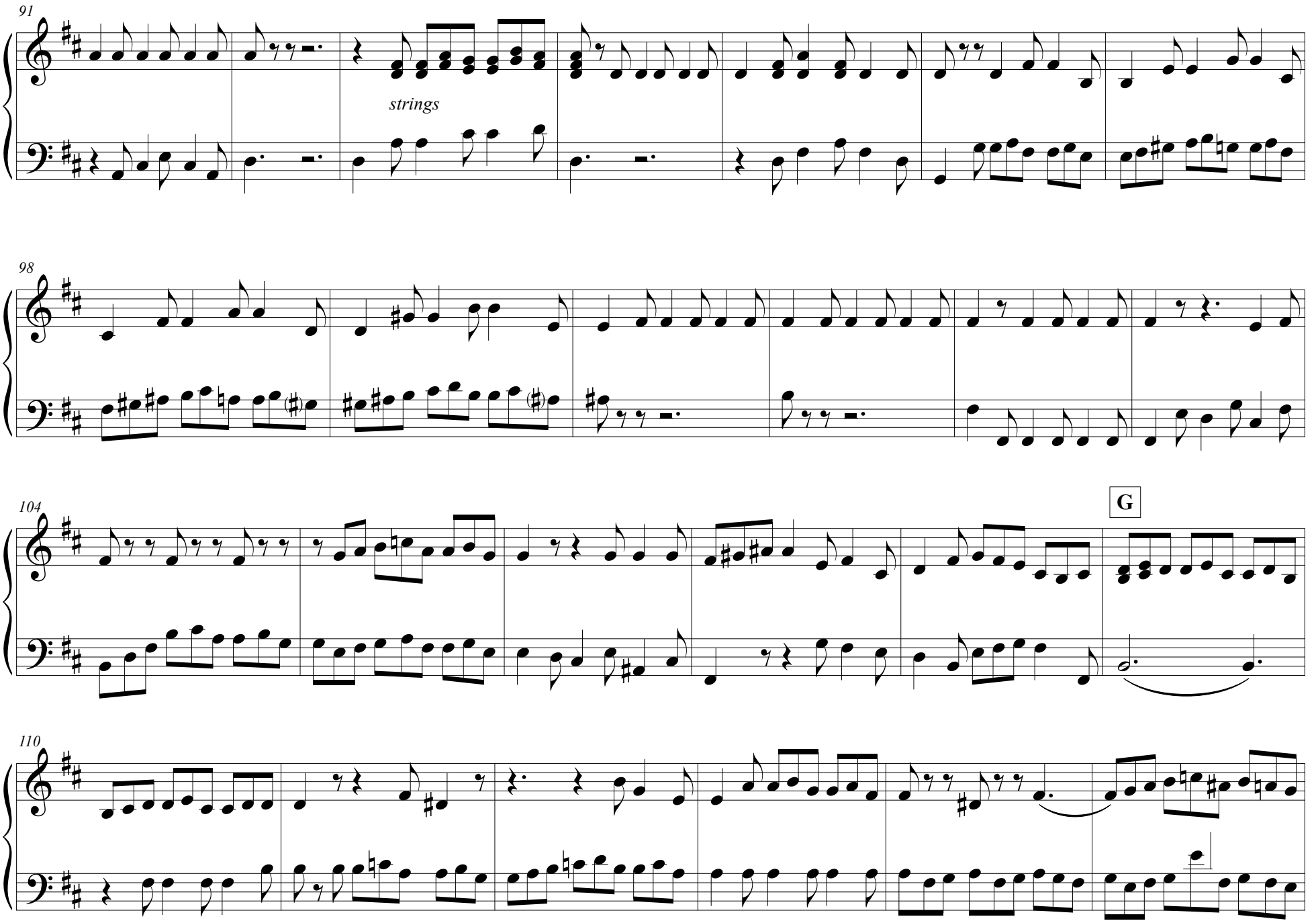

16
B
20
1.
tr
C
2.
♩.=120
*1
32

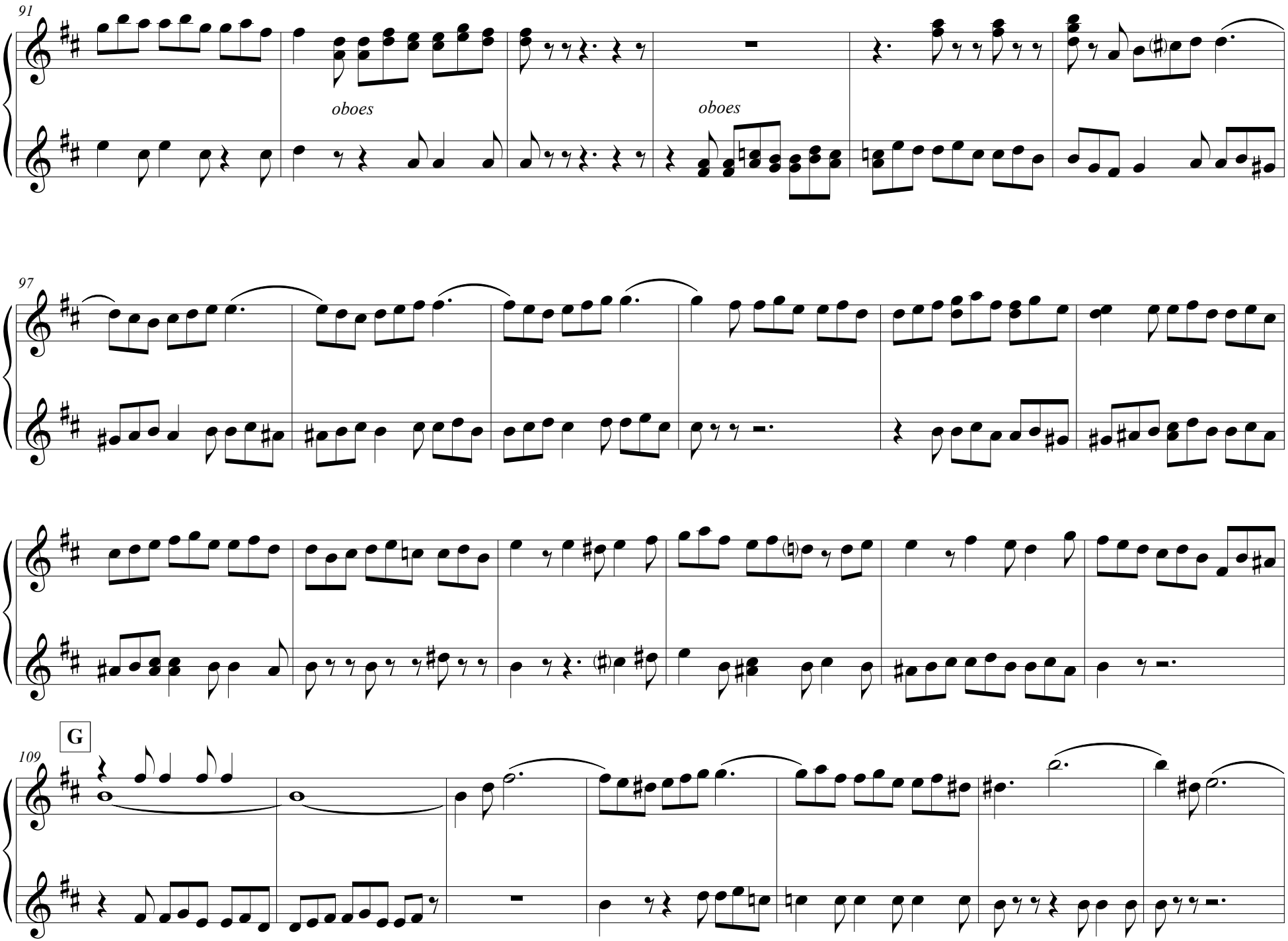

39
46
D
oboe
(p)
53
59

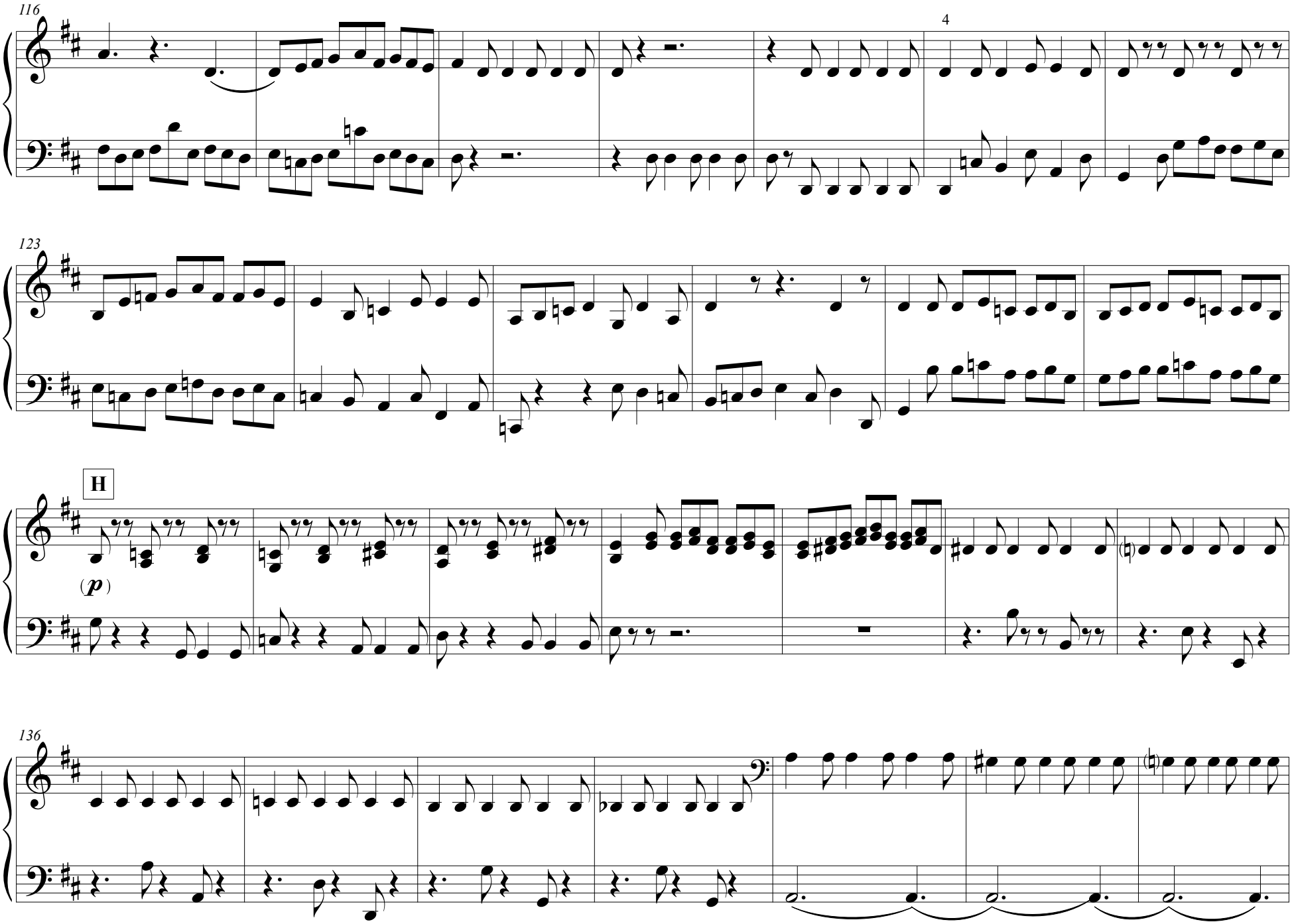

39
46
D
(p) oboes solo
oboe
53
60
tr

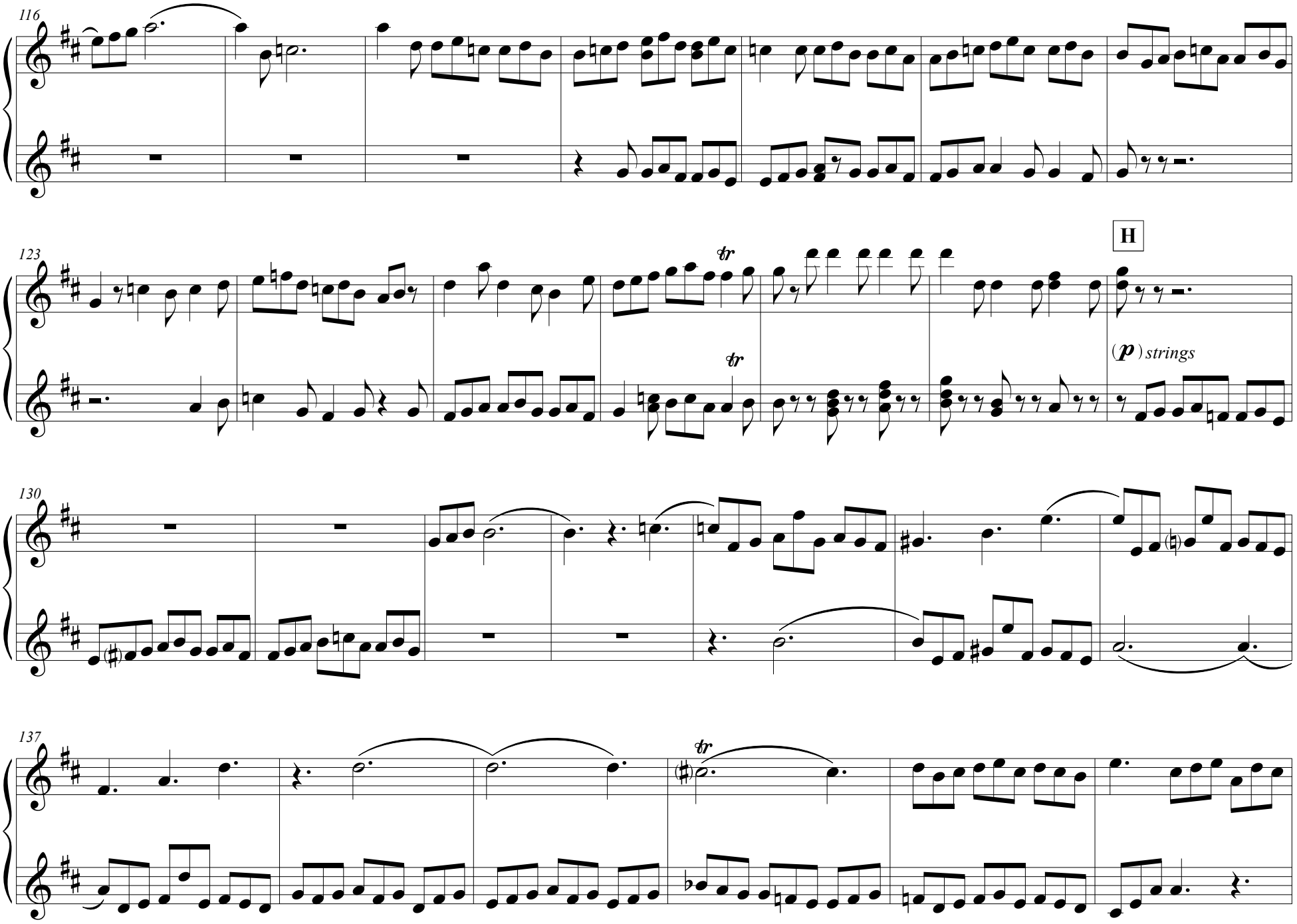

66
E
(f) tutti
72
78
85
F
strings

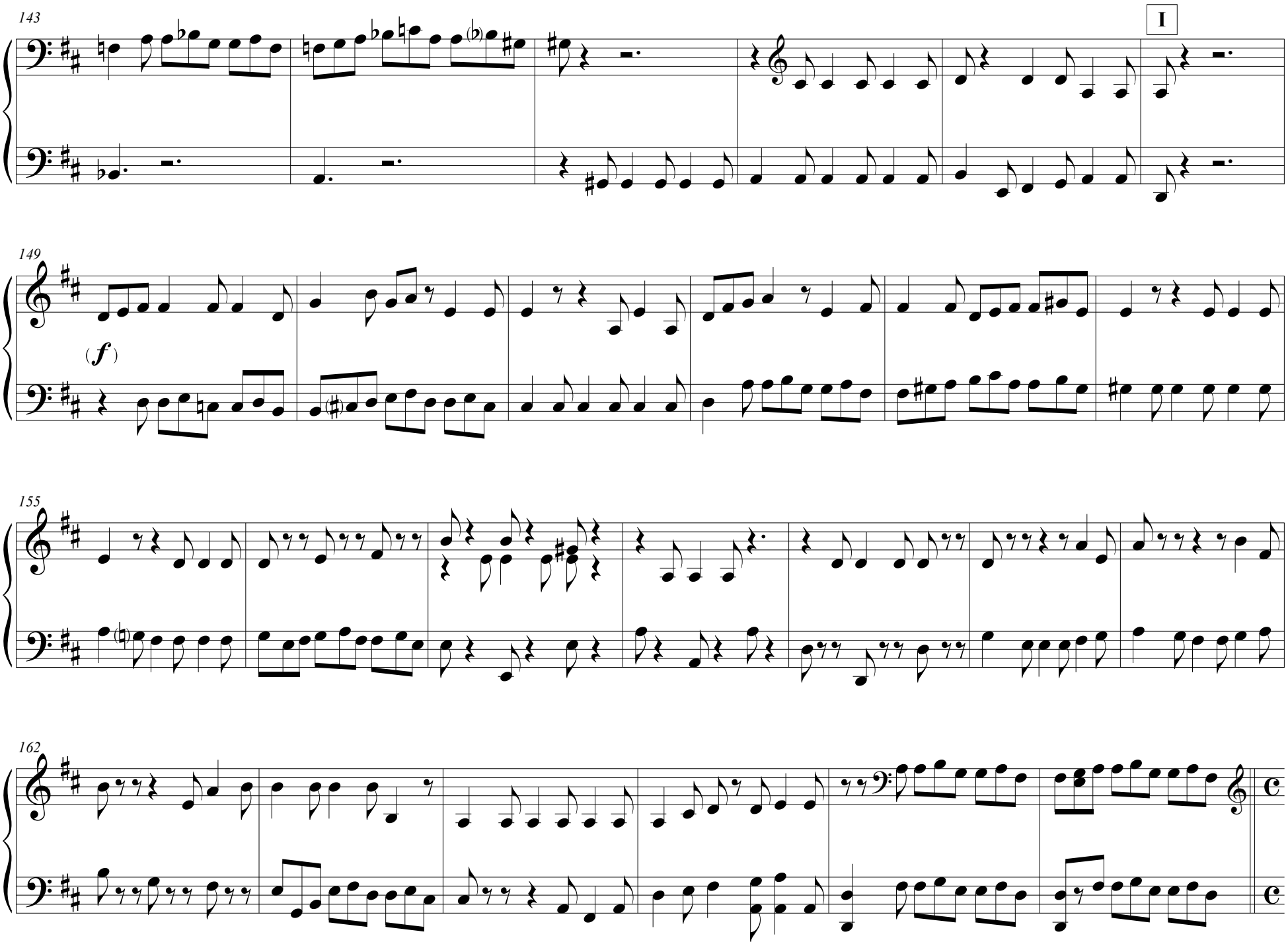

E
66
(f) tutti
72
78
F
84
oboes
trumpets

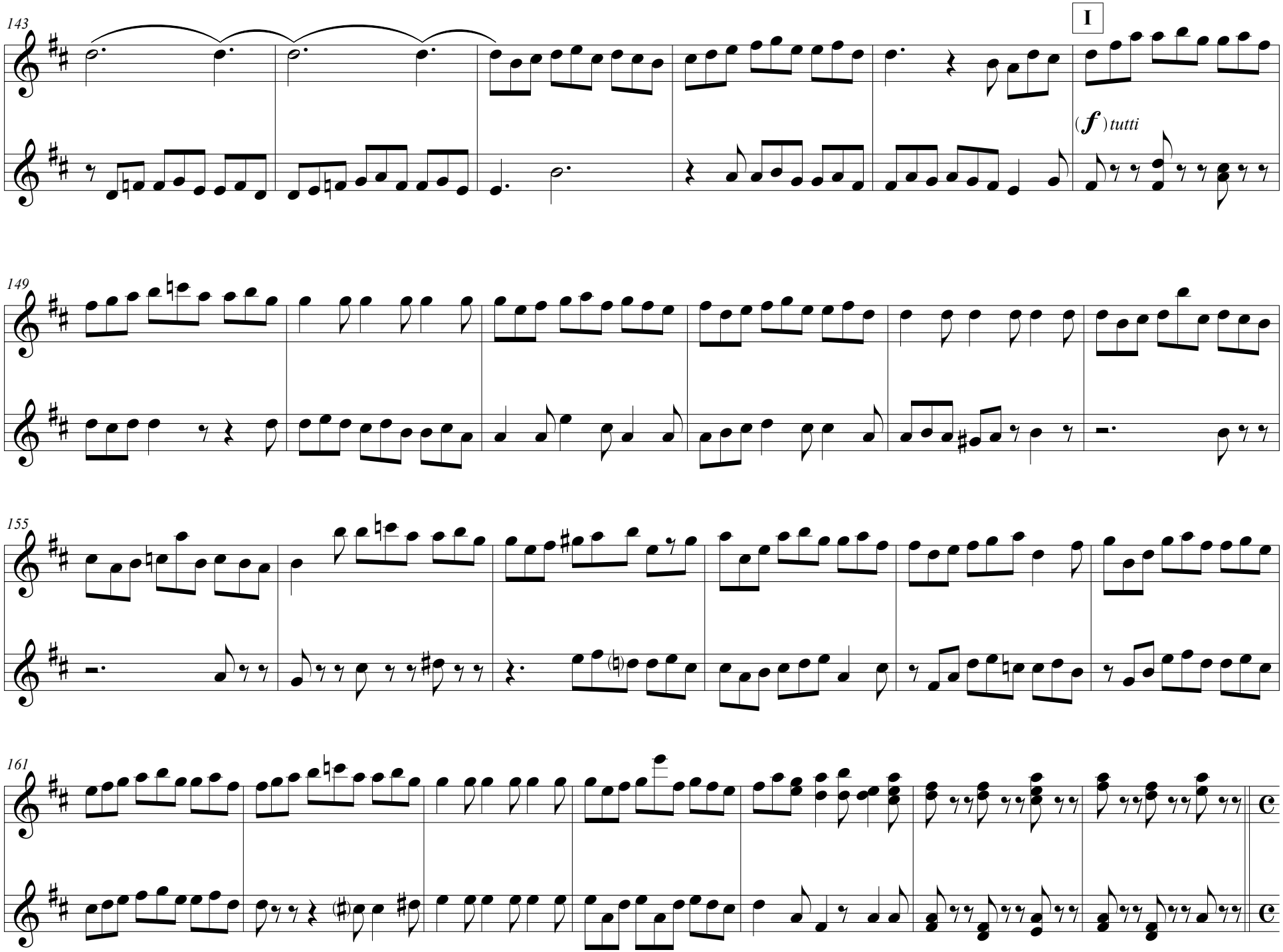

91
strings
98
104
G
110

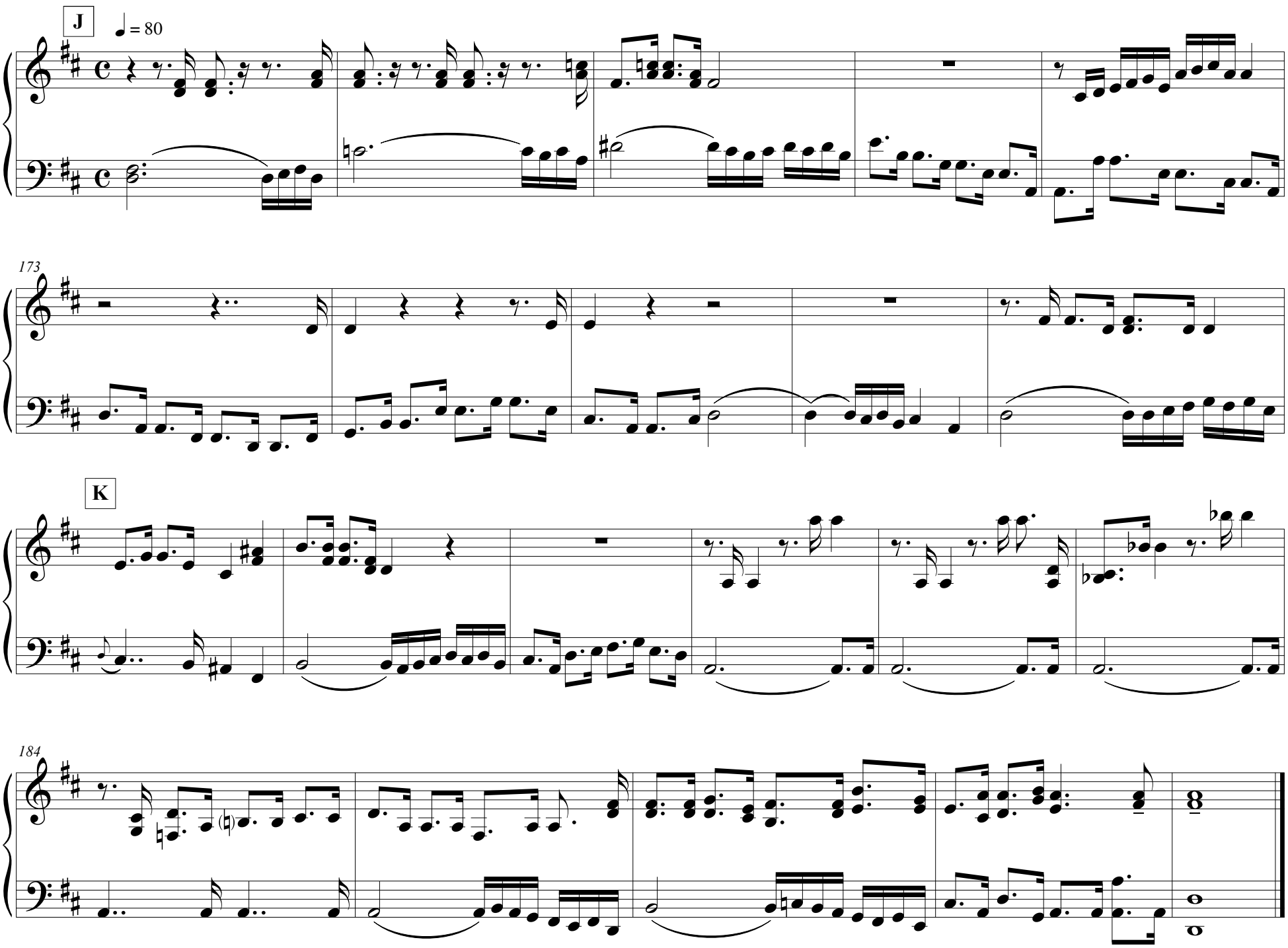

91
oboes
oboes
97
G
109

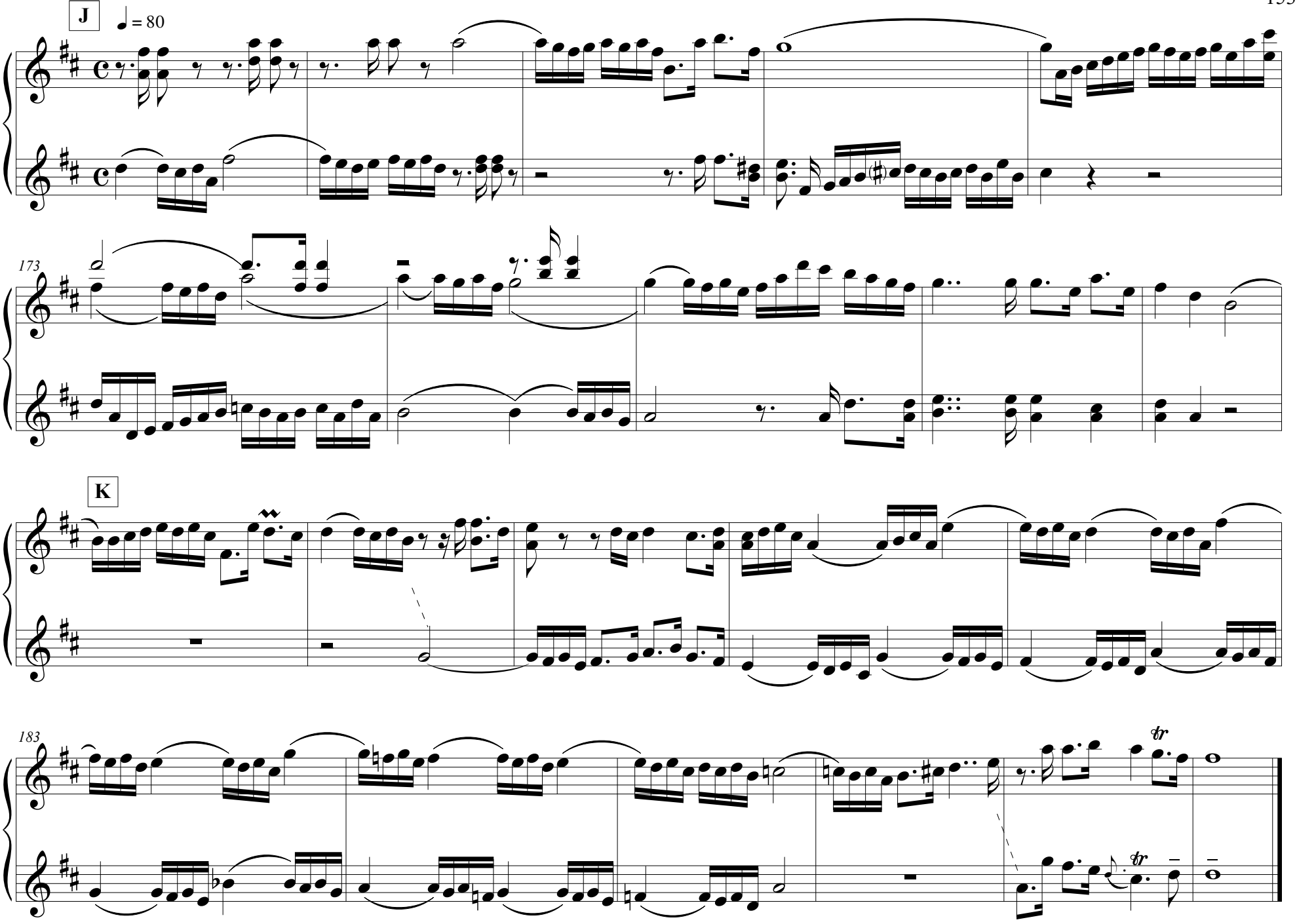

116
4
123
H
(p)
136


116
123
H
(p) strings
130
137


143
I
149
(f)
155
162

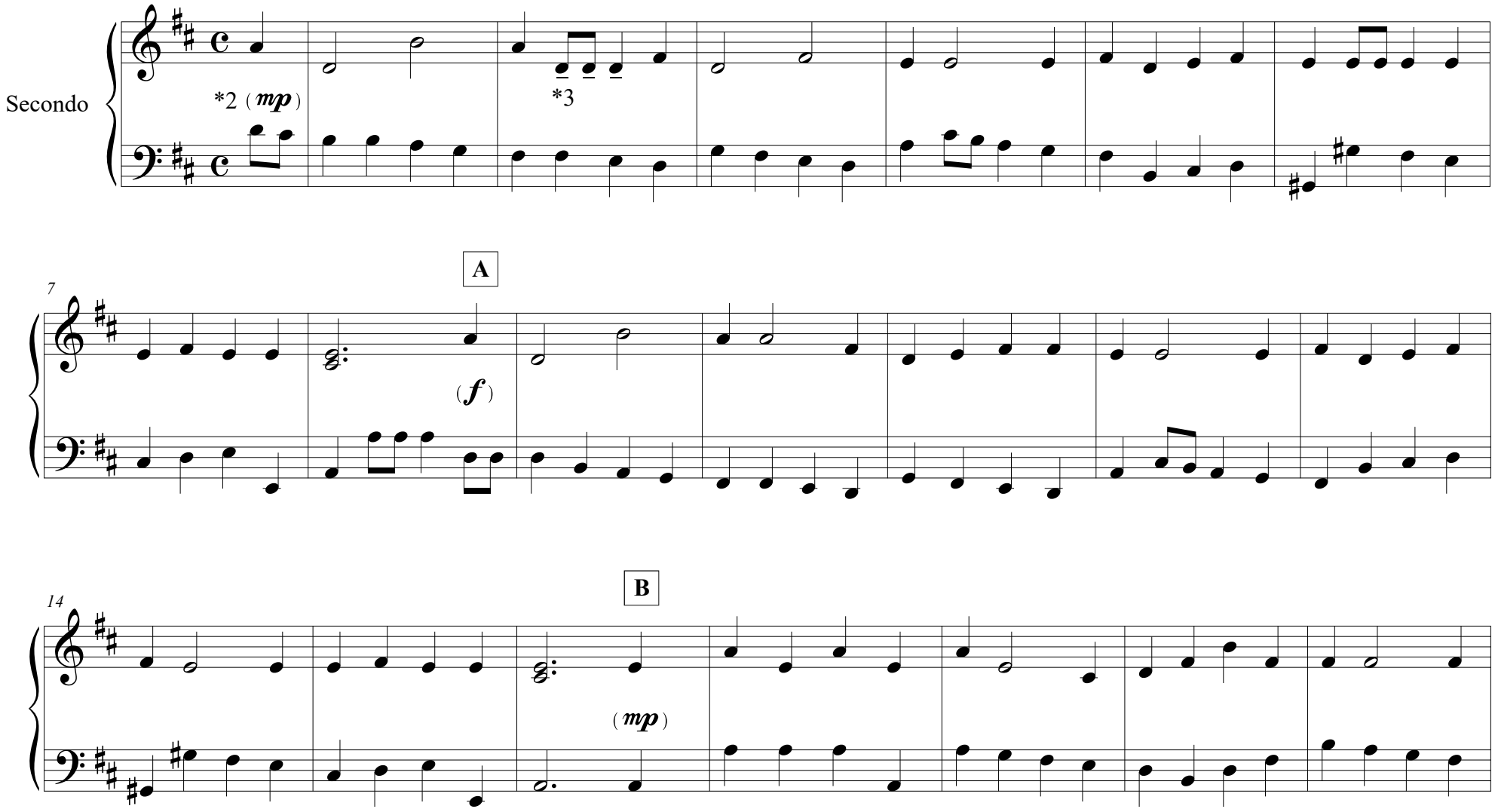

143
I
(f) tutti
149
155
161


J
= 80
173
K
184


J
♩ = 80
173
K
183
tr
tr

Bourrées

Bourrée I ♩ = 94



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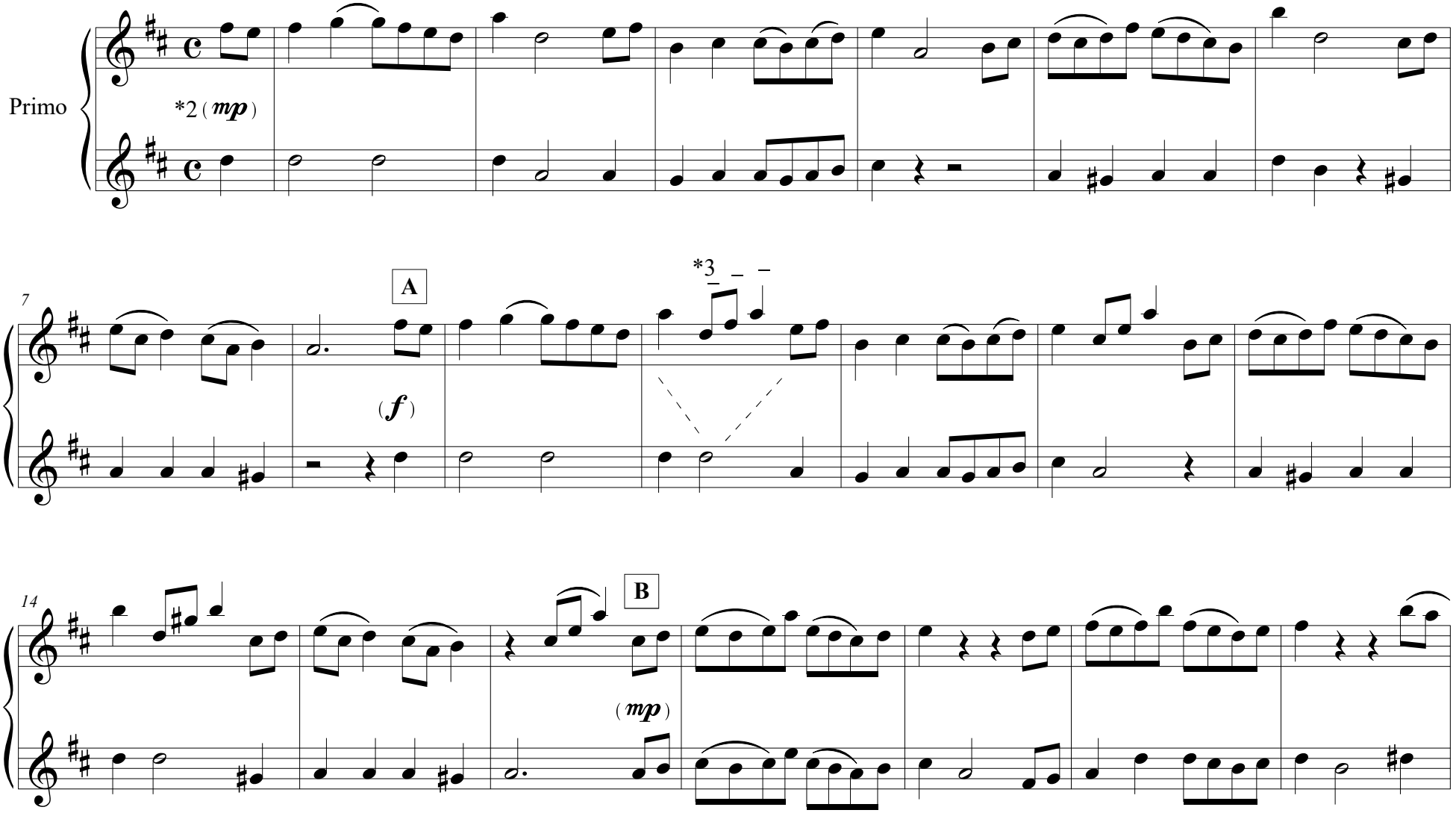
Bourrées

Bourrée I ♩ = 94



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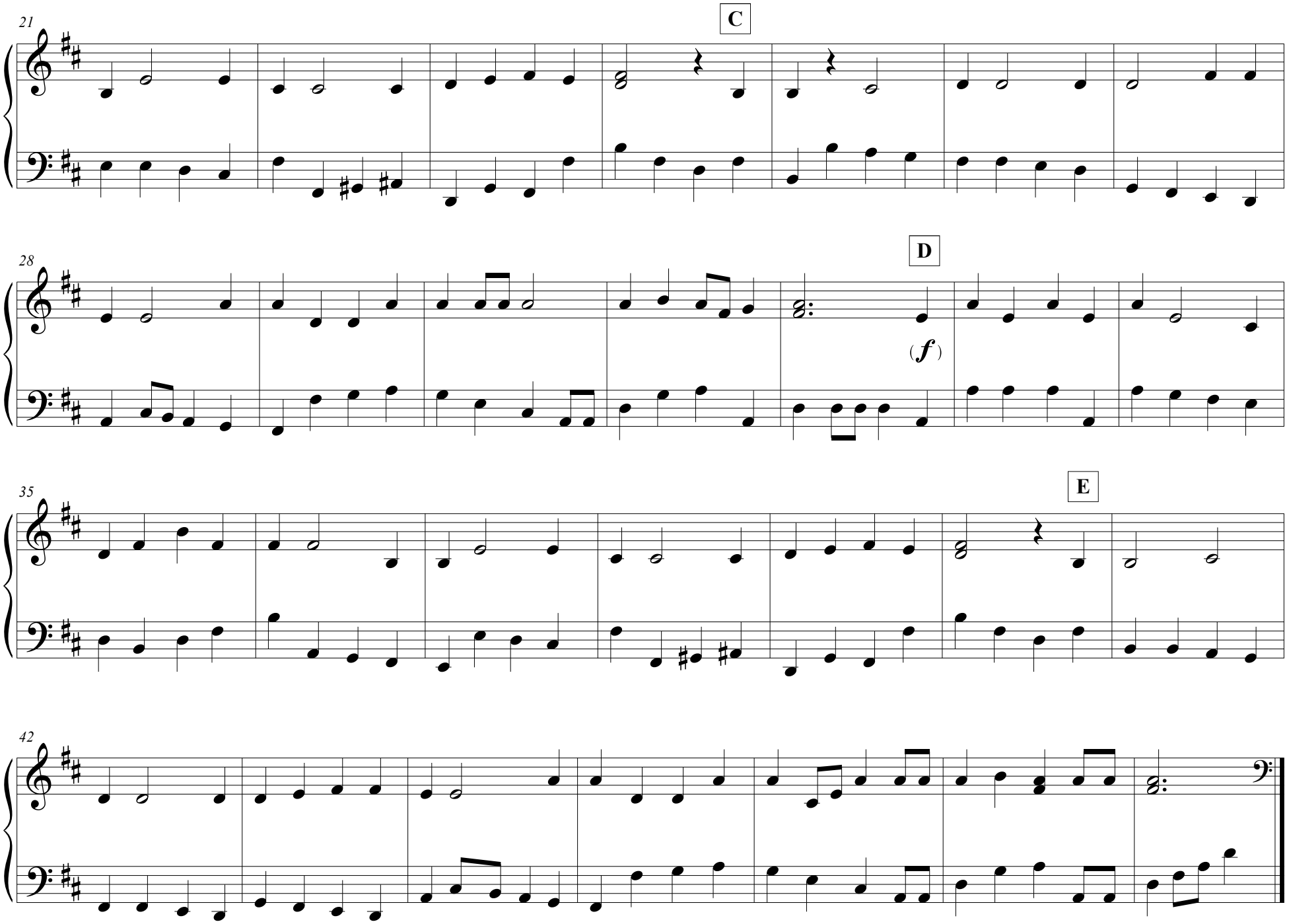
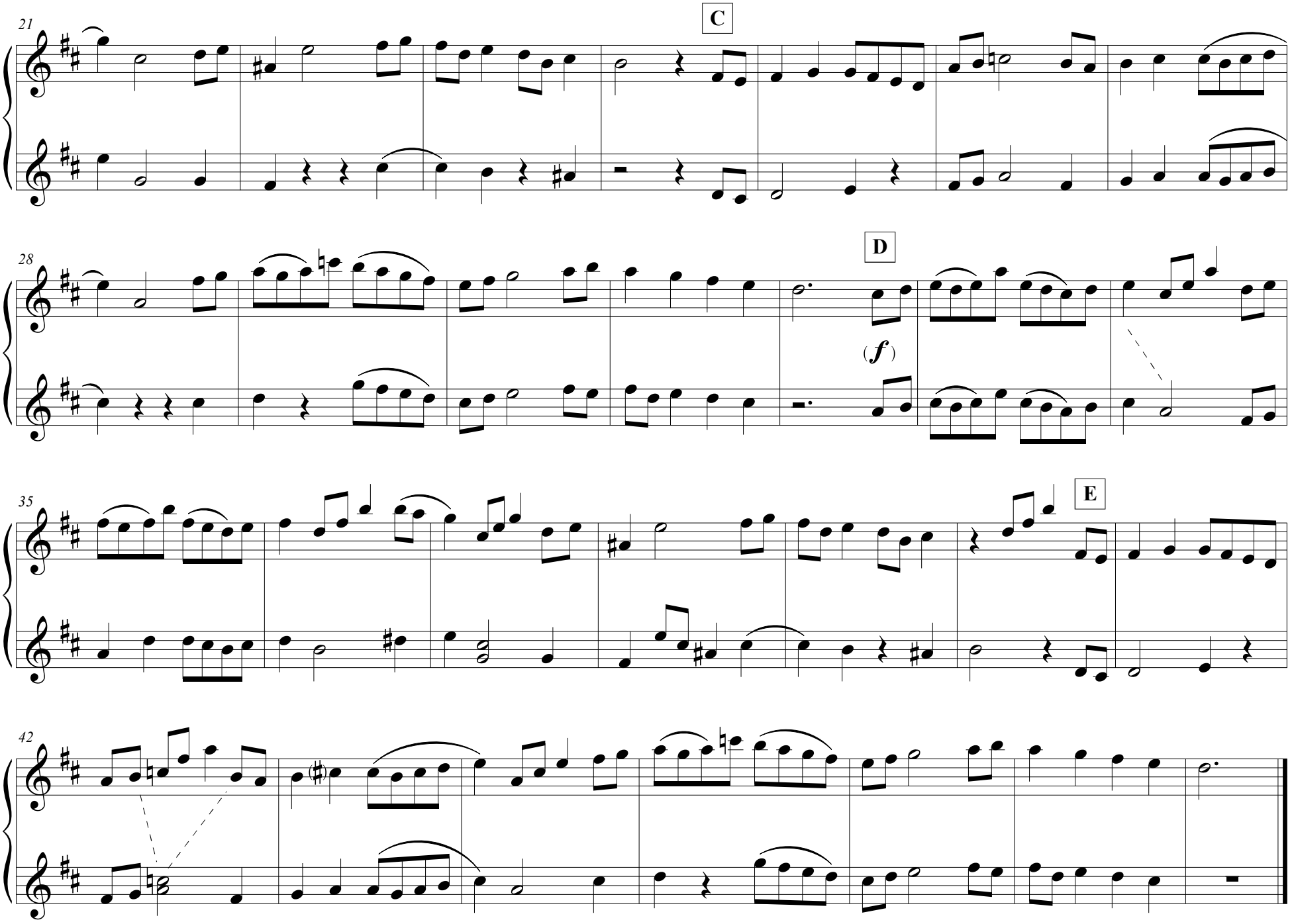
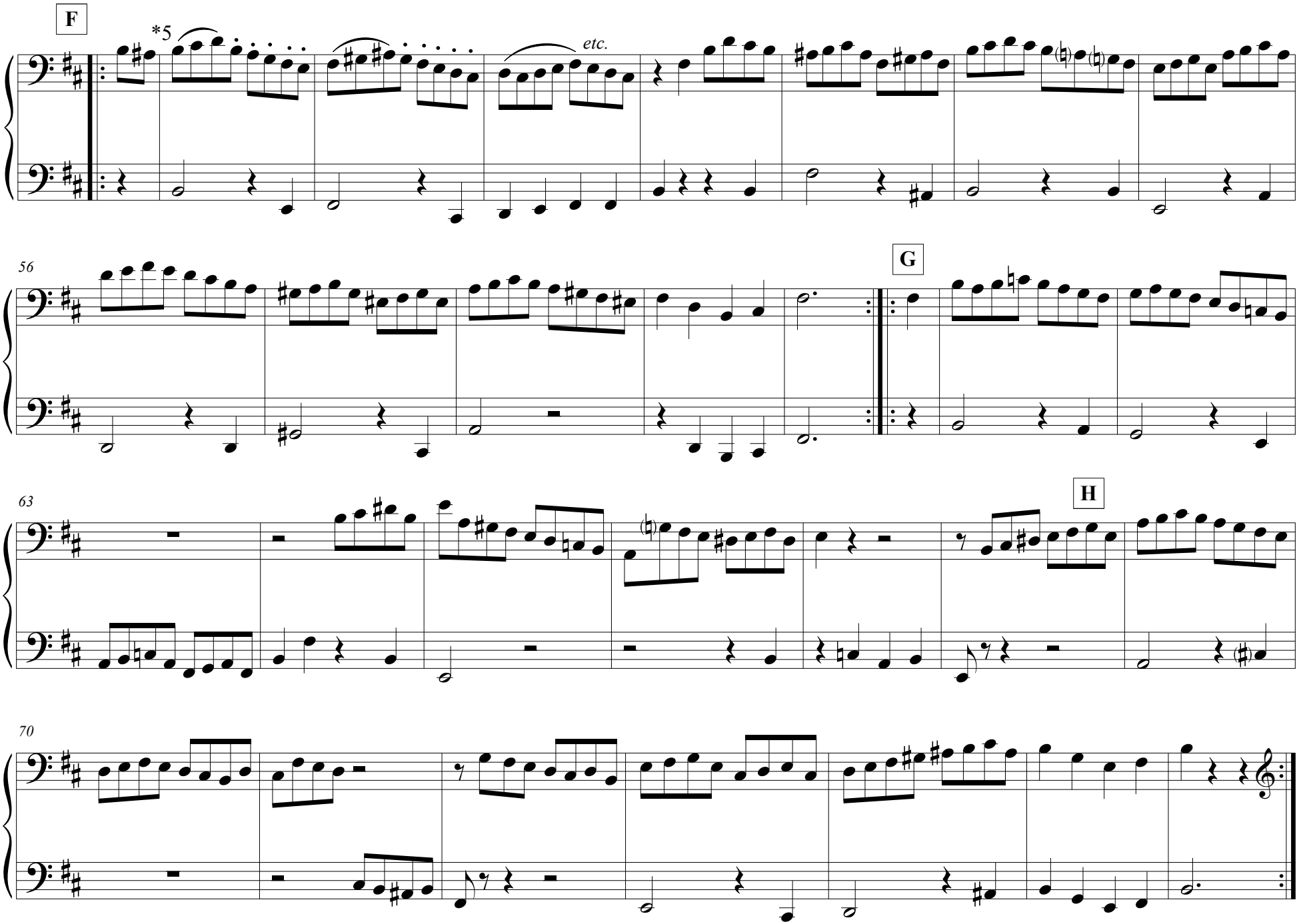
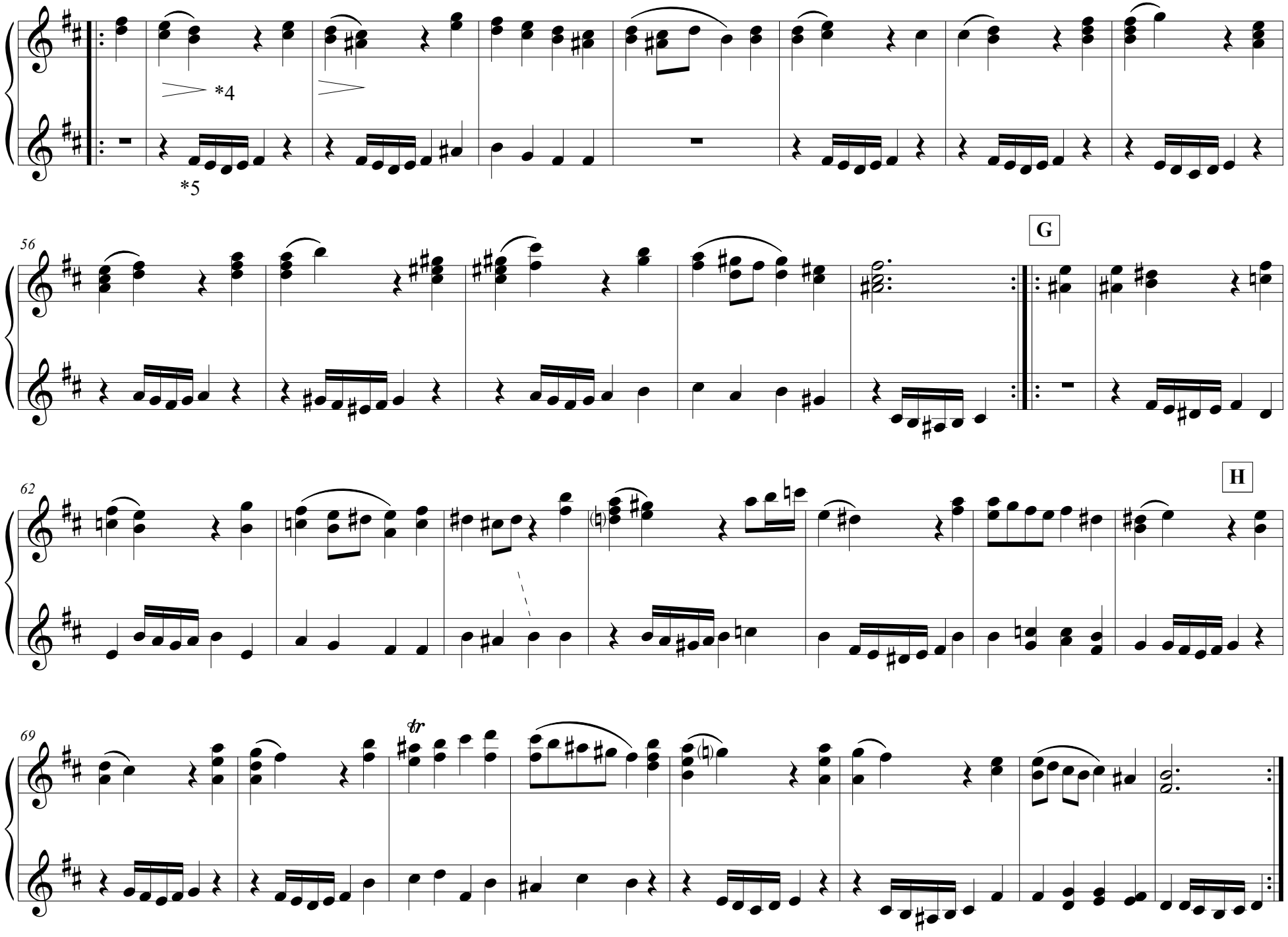

21
C
28
D
(f)
35
E
42


21
C
28
D
(f)
35
E
42

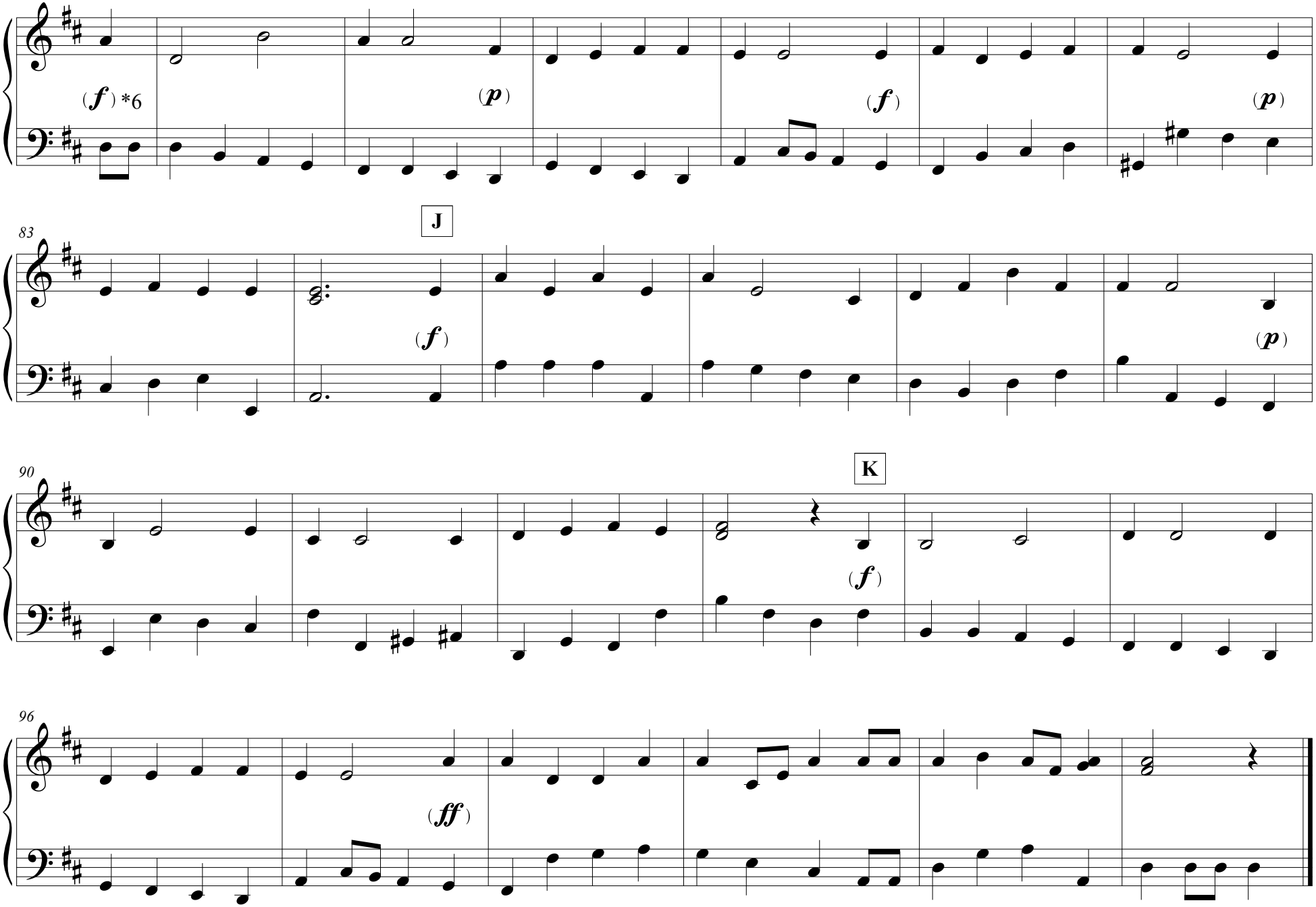
Bourrée II

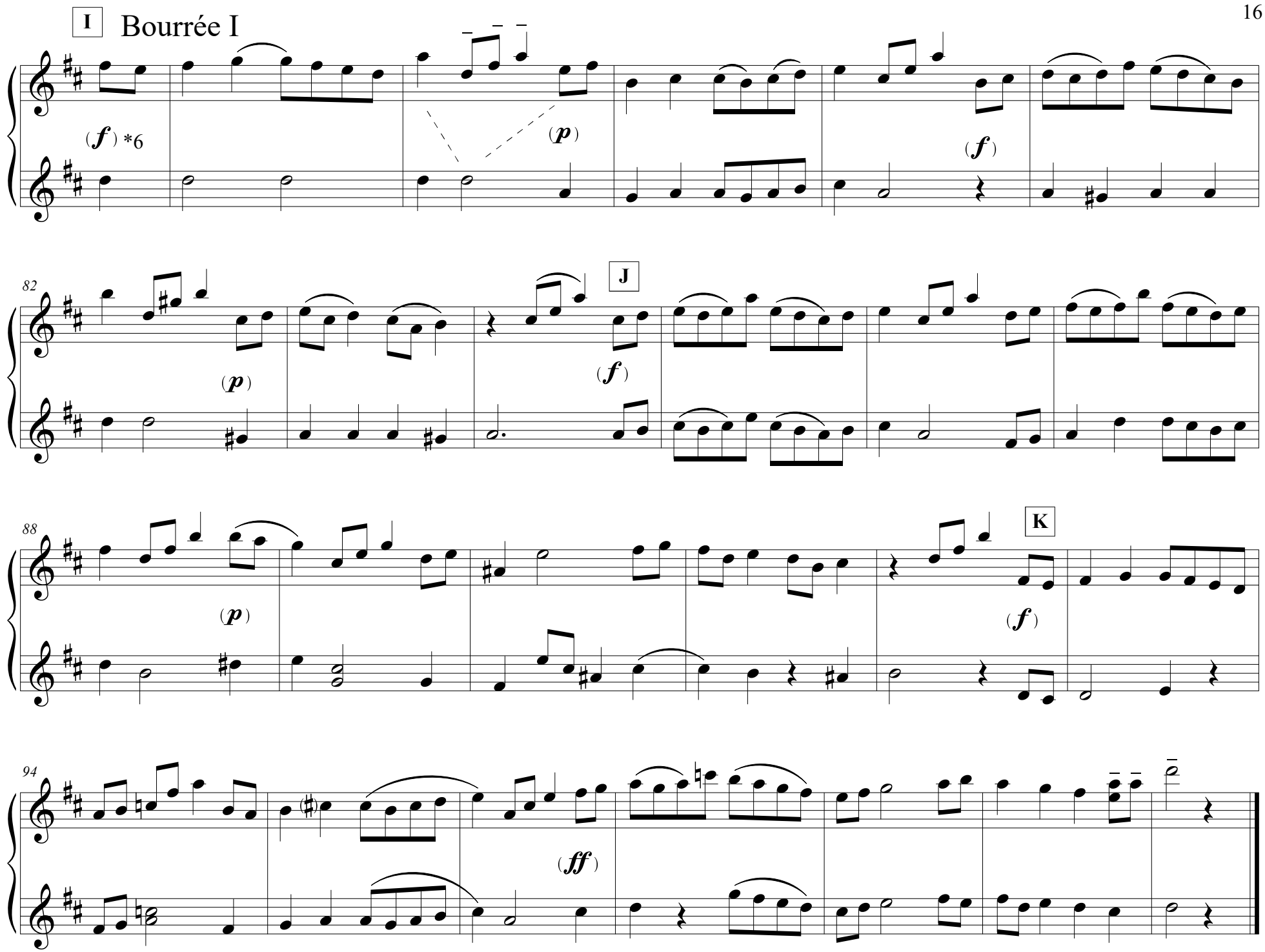


F Bourrée II

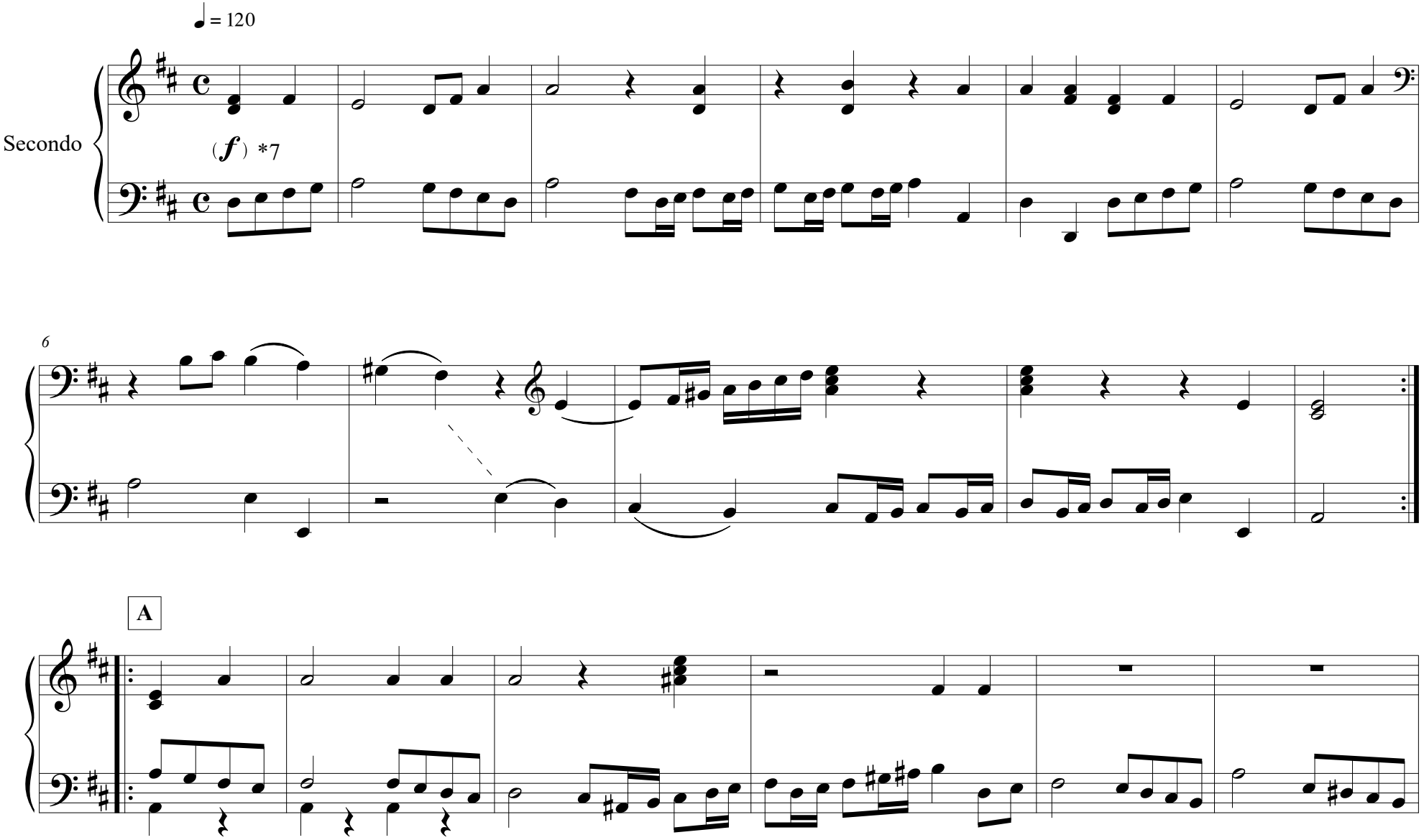


I Bourrée I




I
Bourrée I
(f) *6
(p)
(f)
82
J
(p)
(f)
88
K
(p)
(f)
94
(ff)

Gavotte



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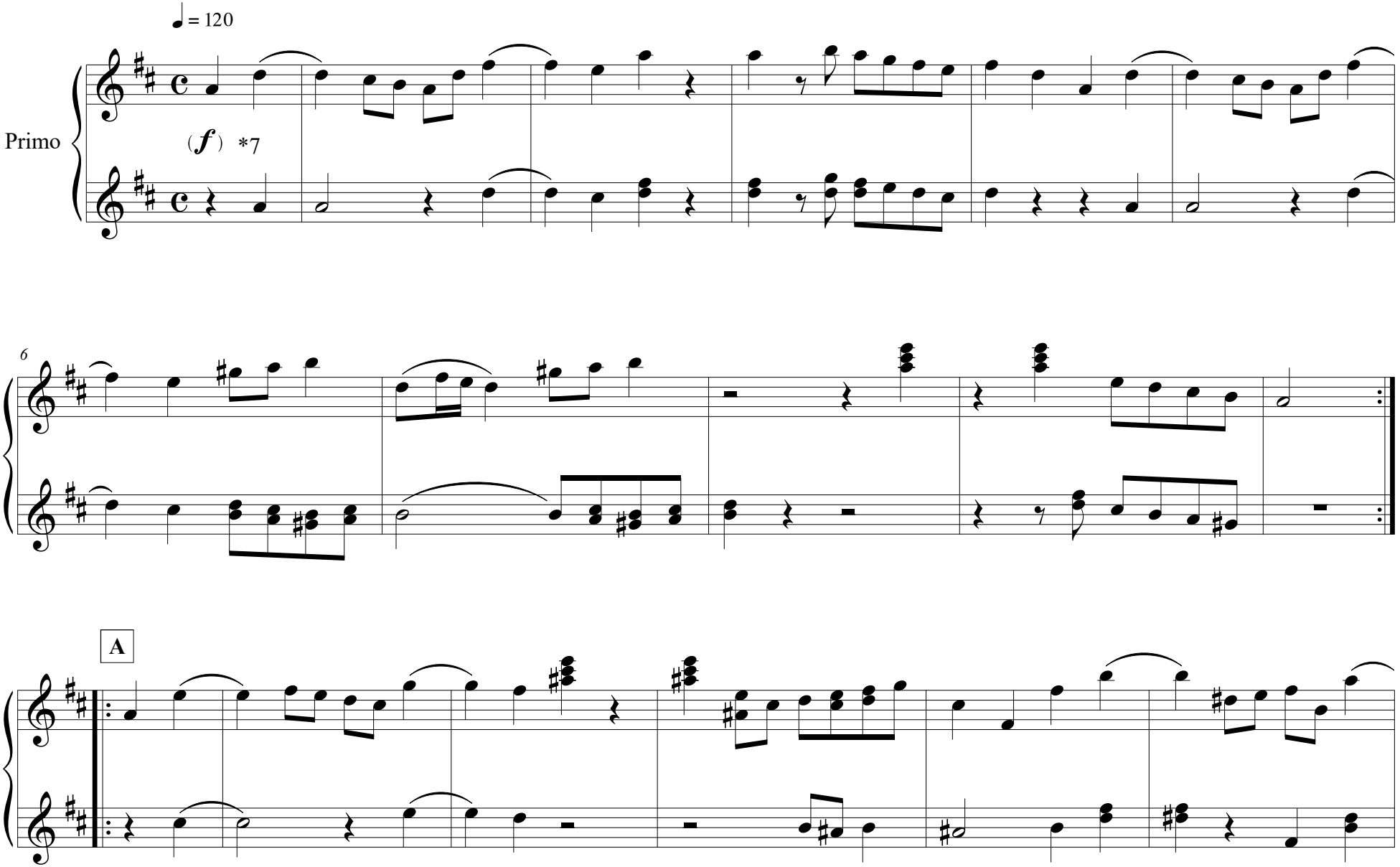

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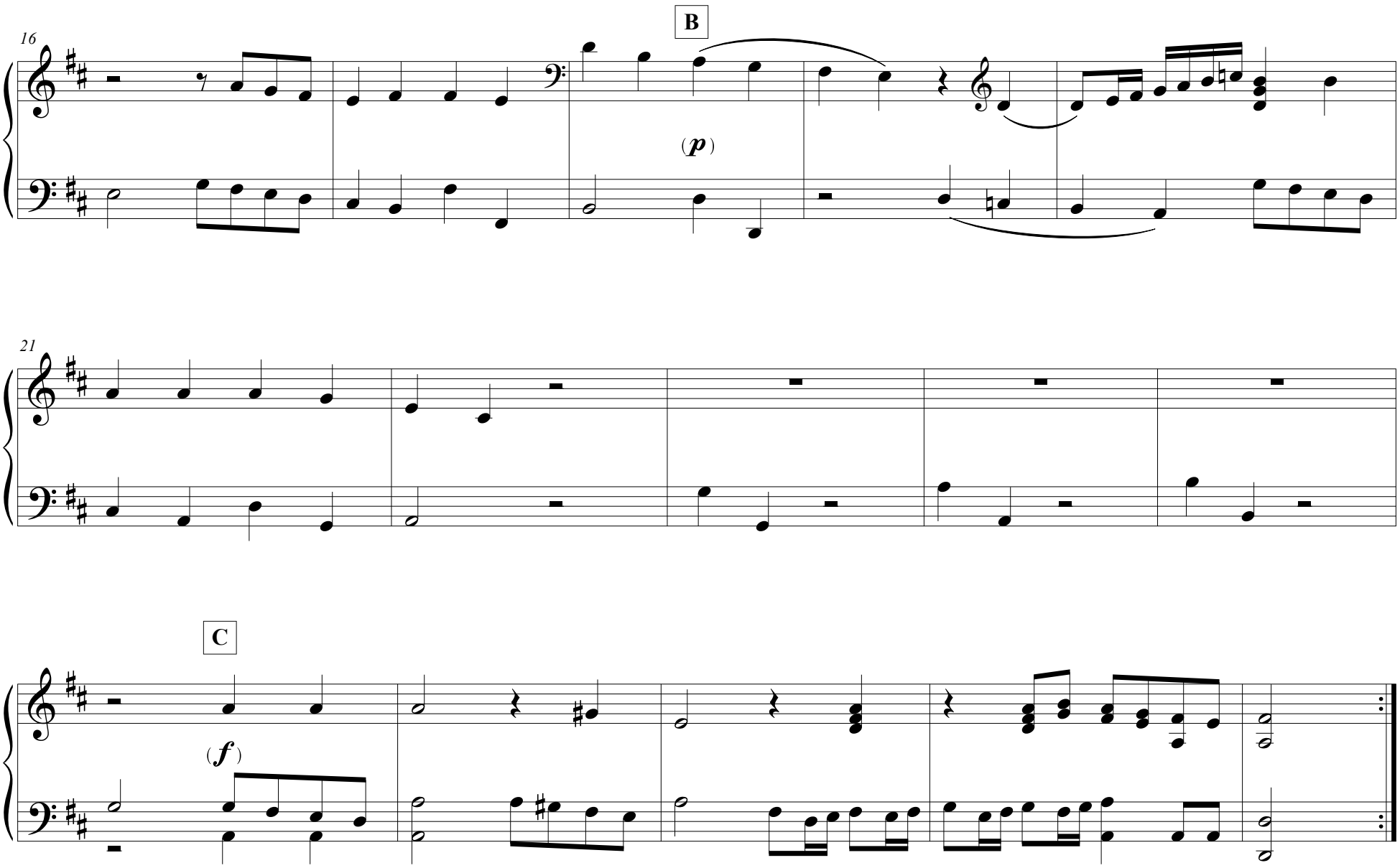
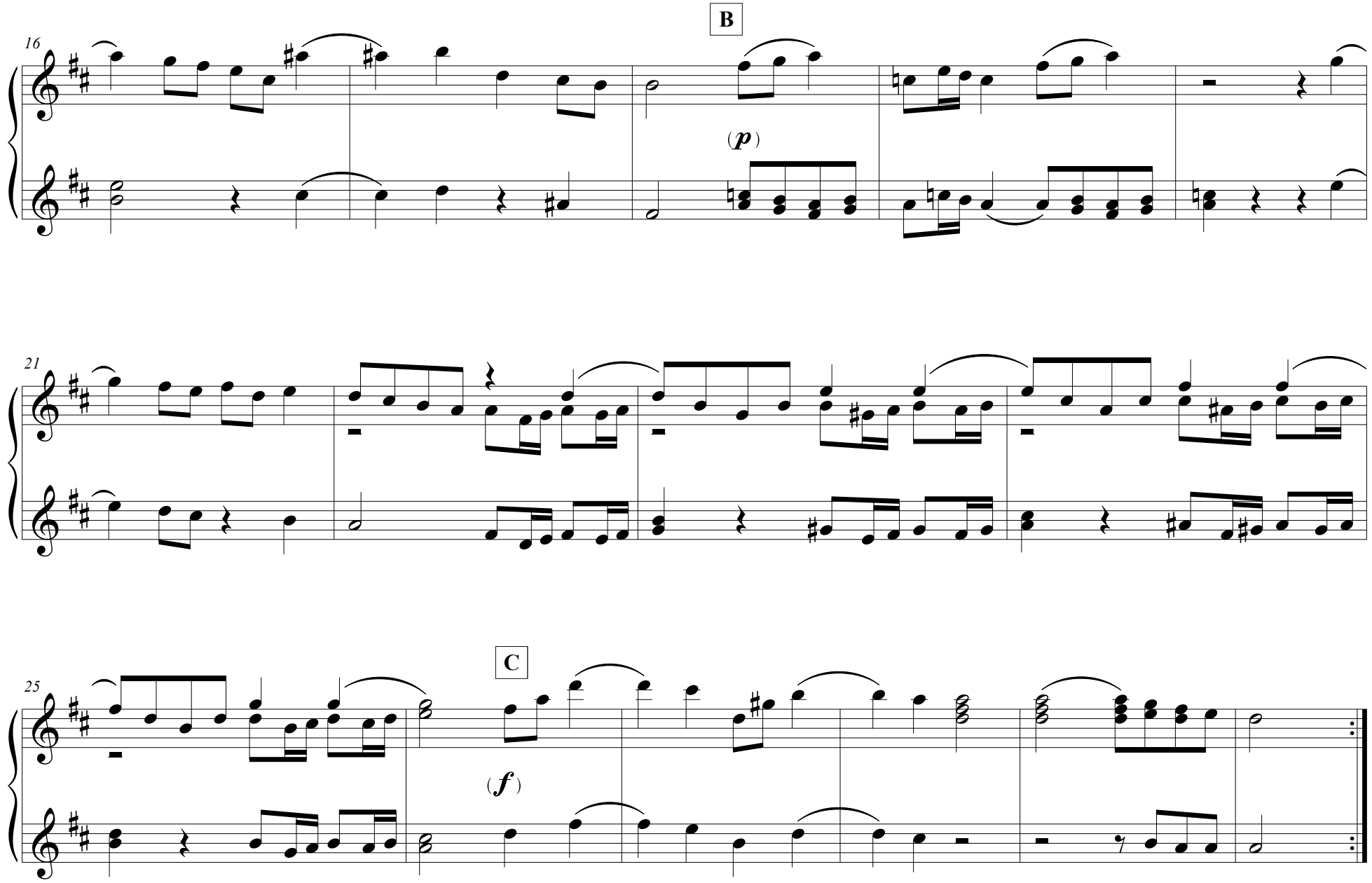
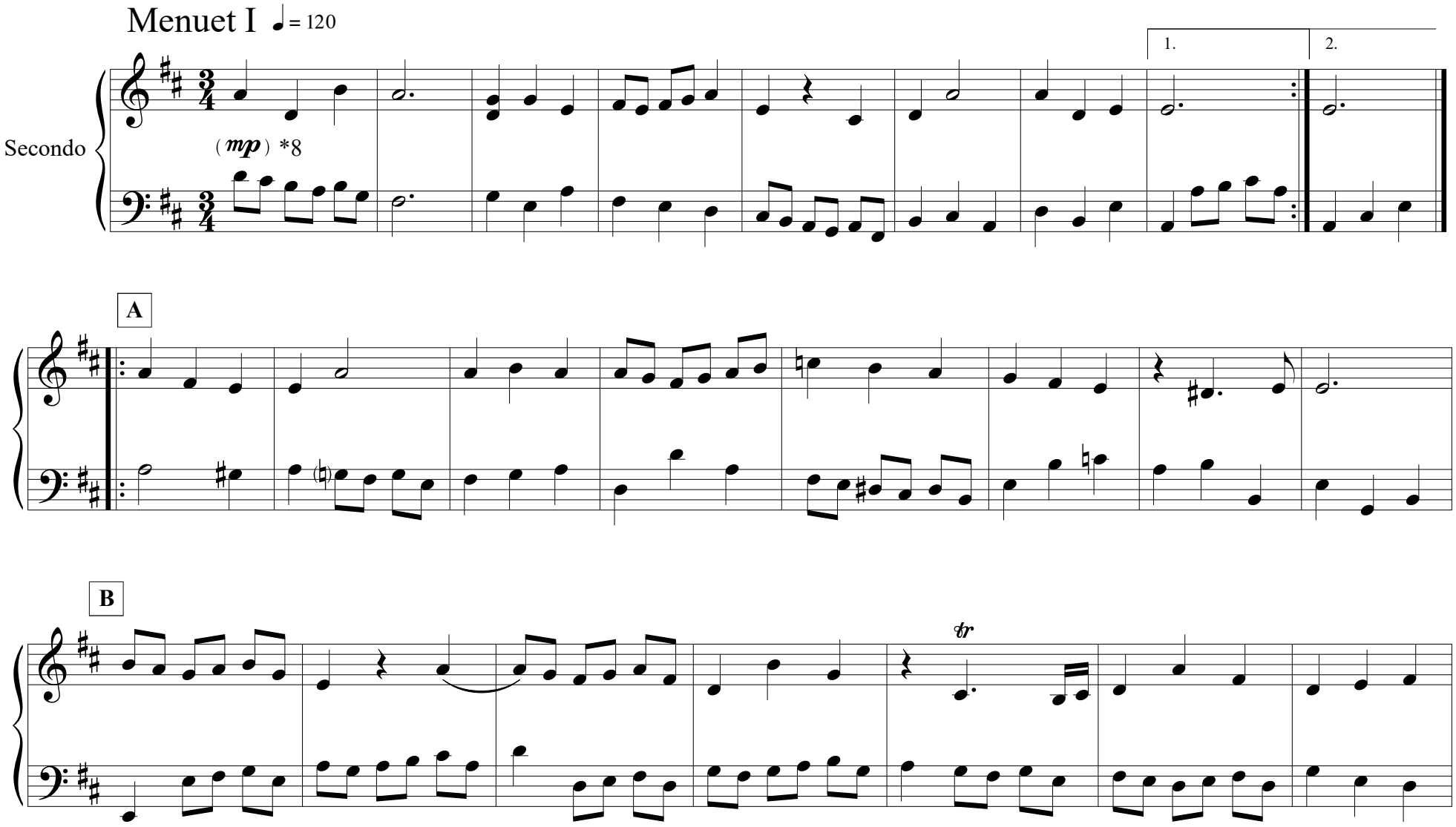

16
B
(p)
21
C
(f)


B
16
(p)
21
C
25
(f)

Menuets

Menuet I



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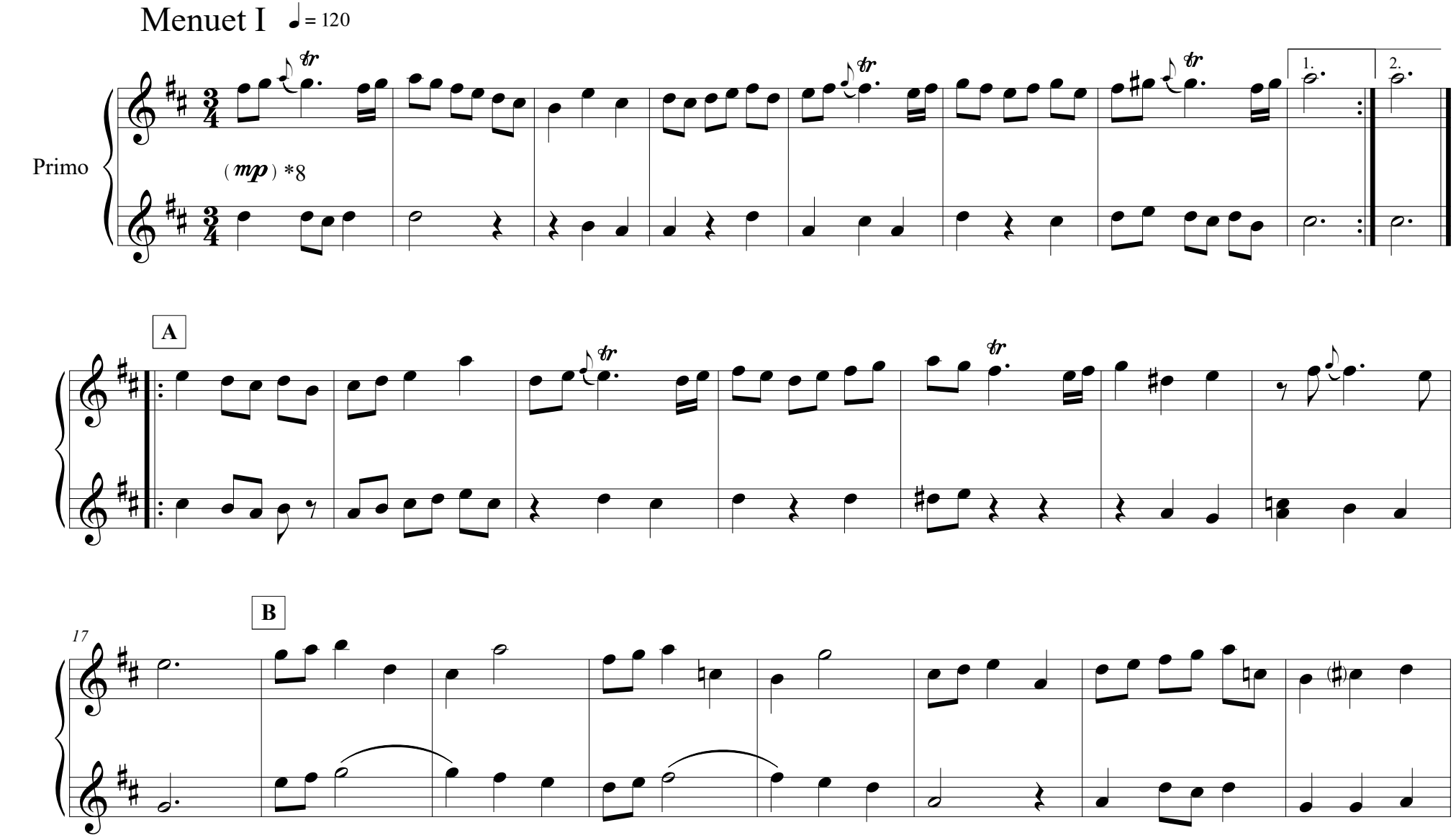
Menuets

Menuet I



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25

C

D Menuet II

(p) *9

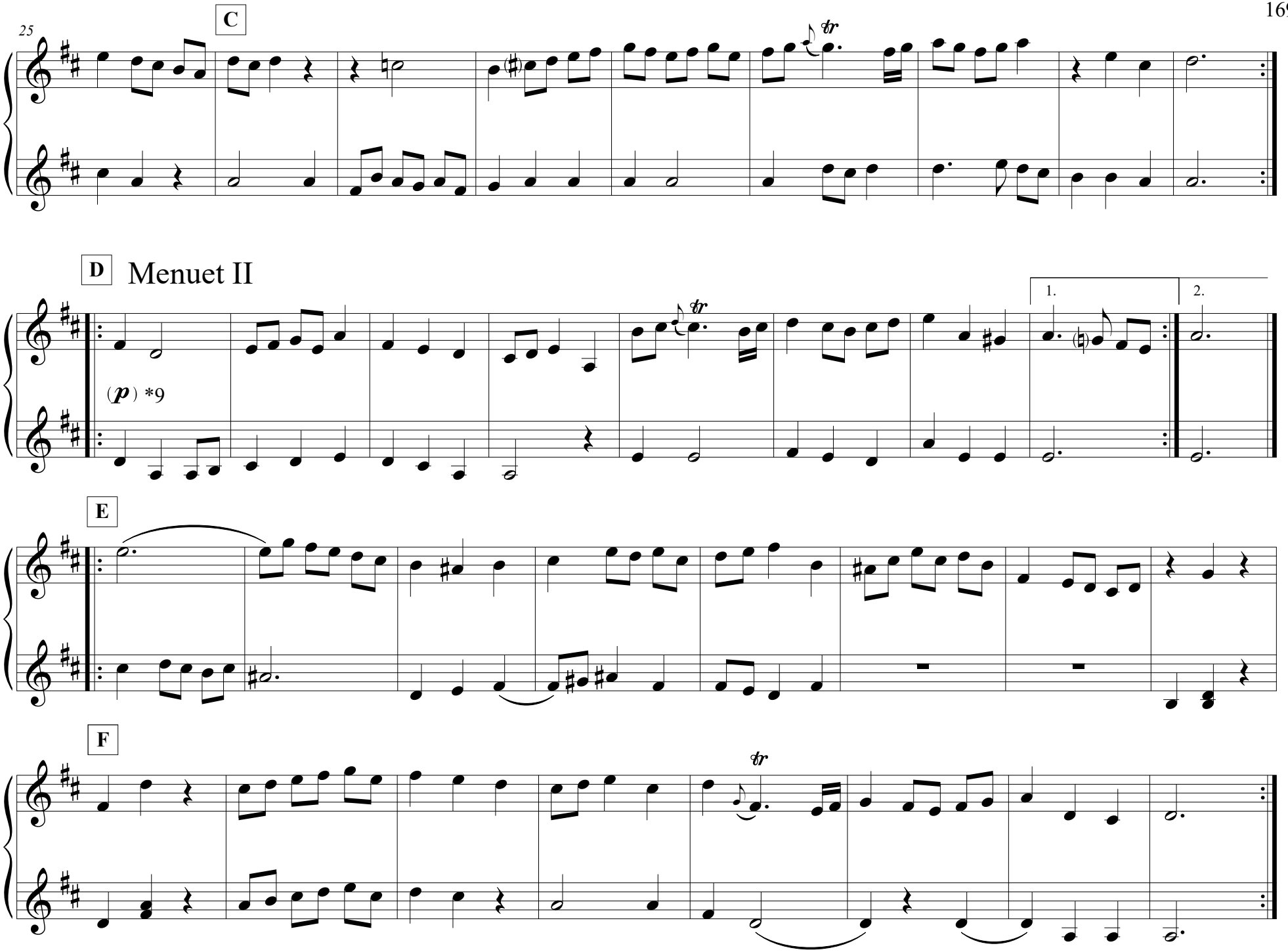
1. 2.

E

F

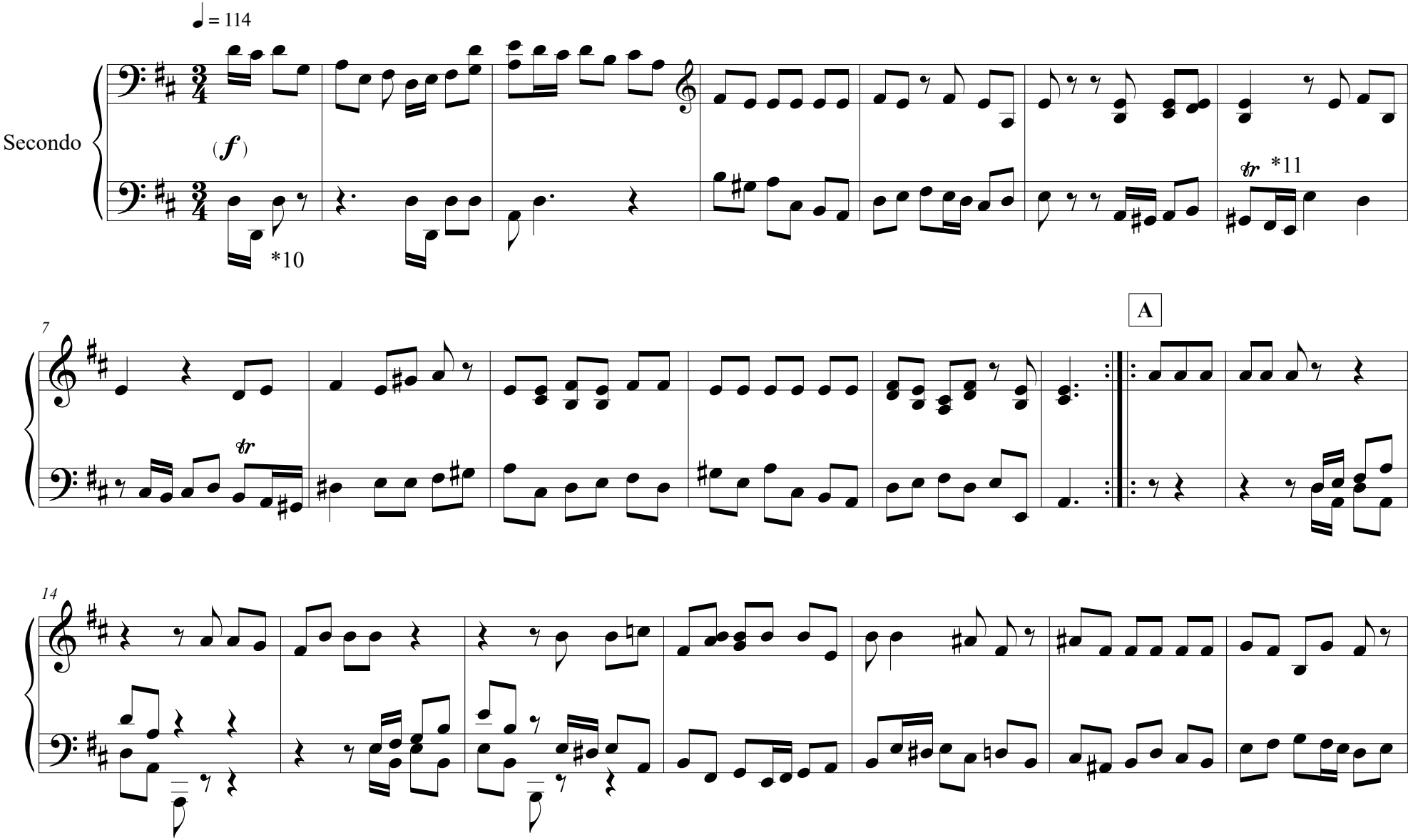
tr

Menuet I da Capo senza repetizione



Menuet I da Capo senza repetizione

Réjouissance



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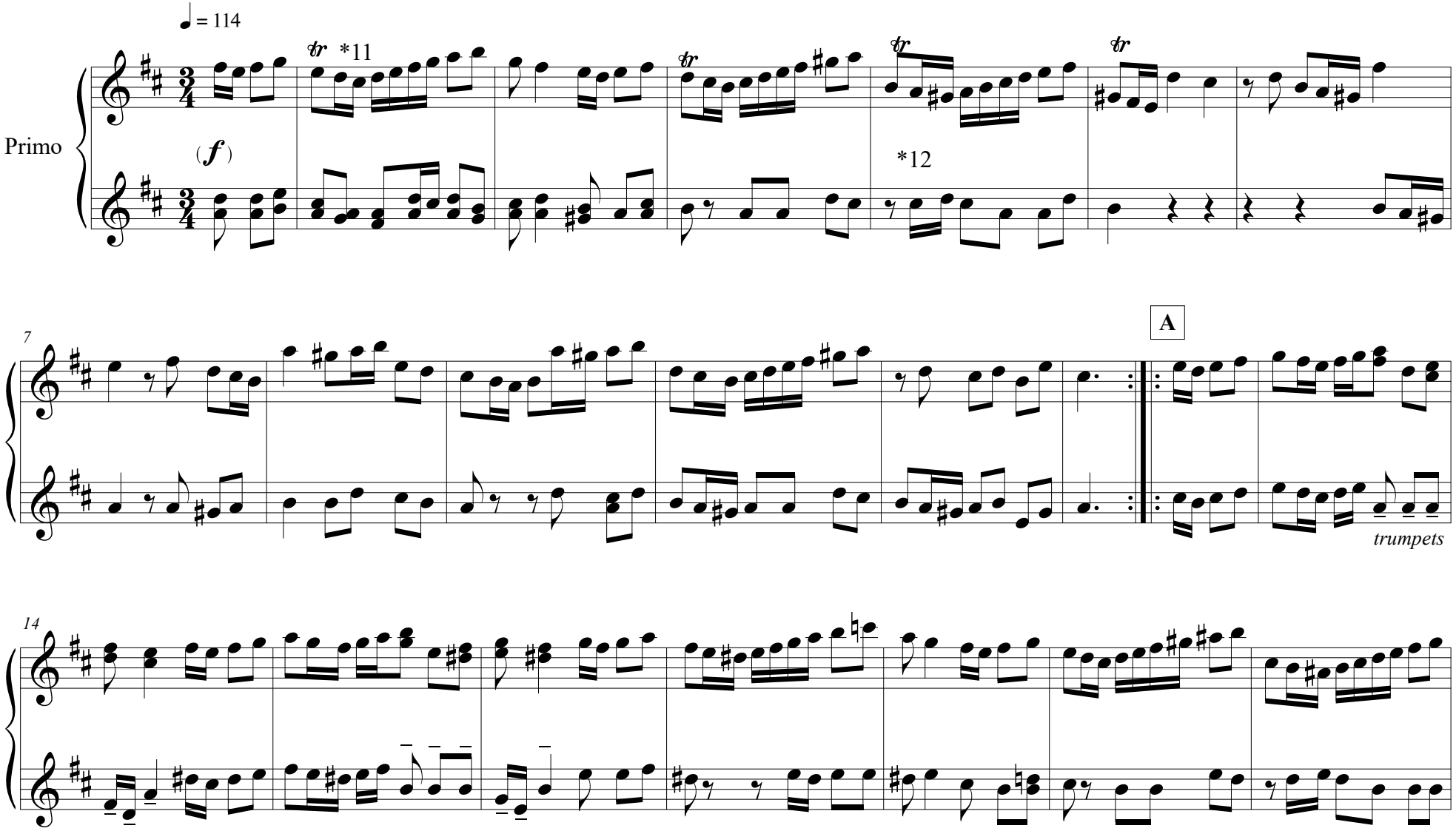
Réjouissance



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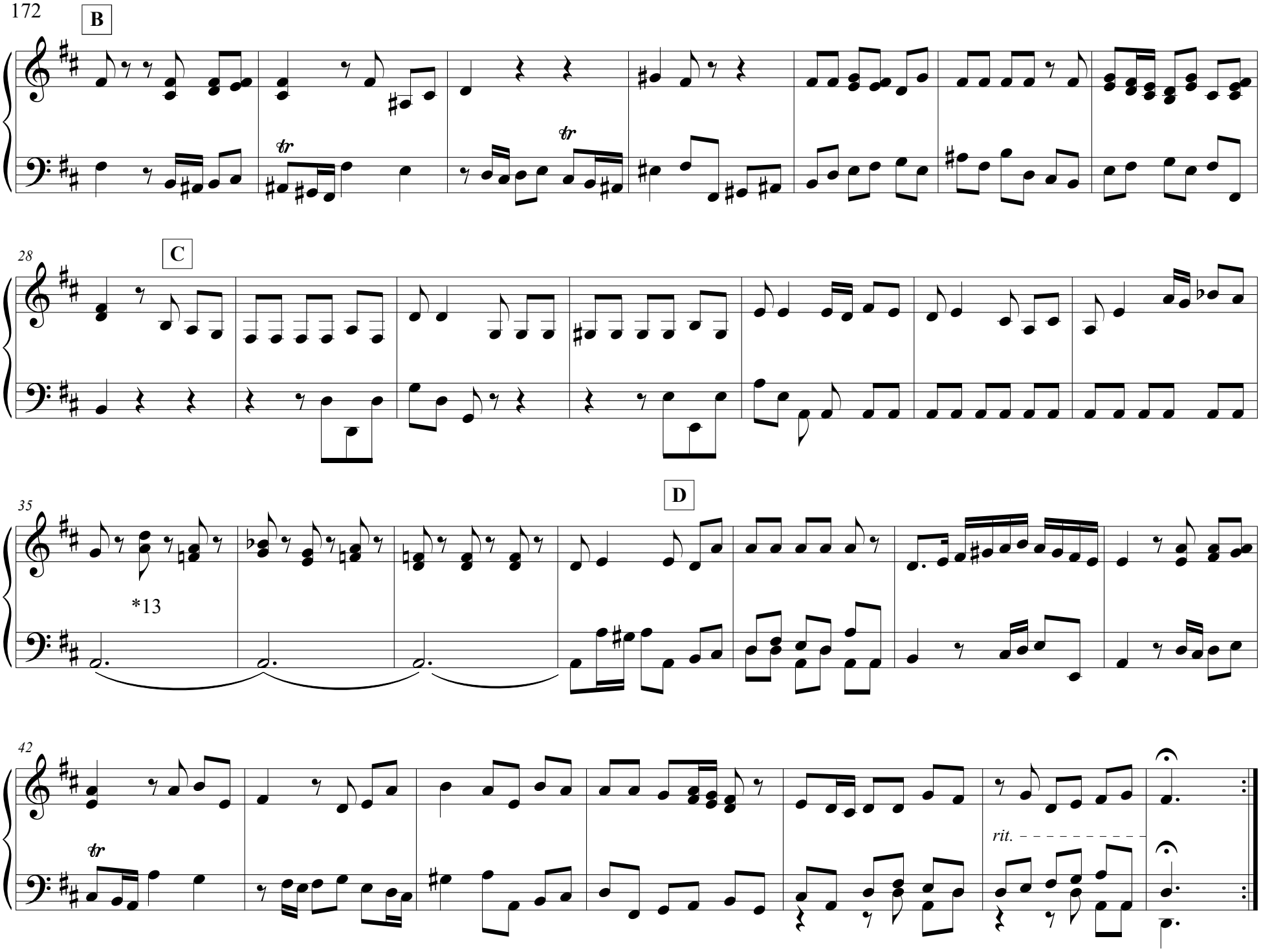

B
C
28
D
35
*13
42
rit.

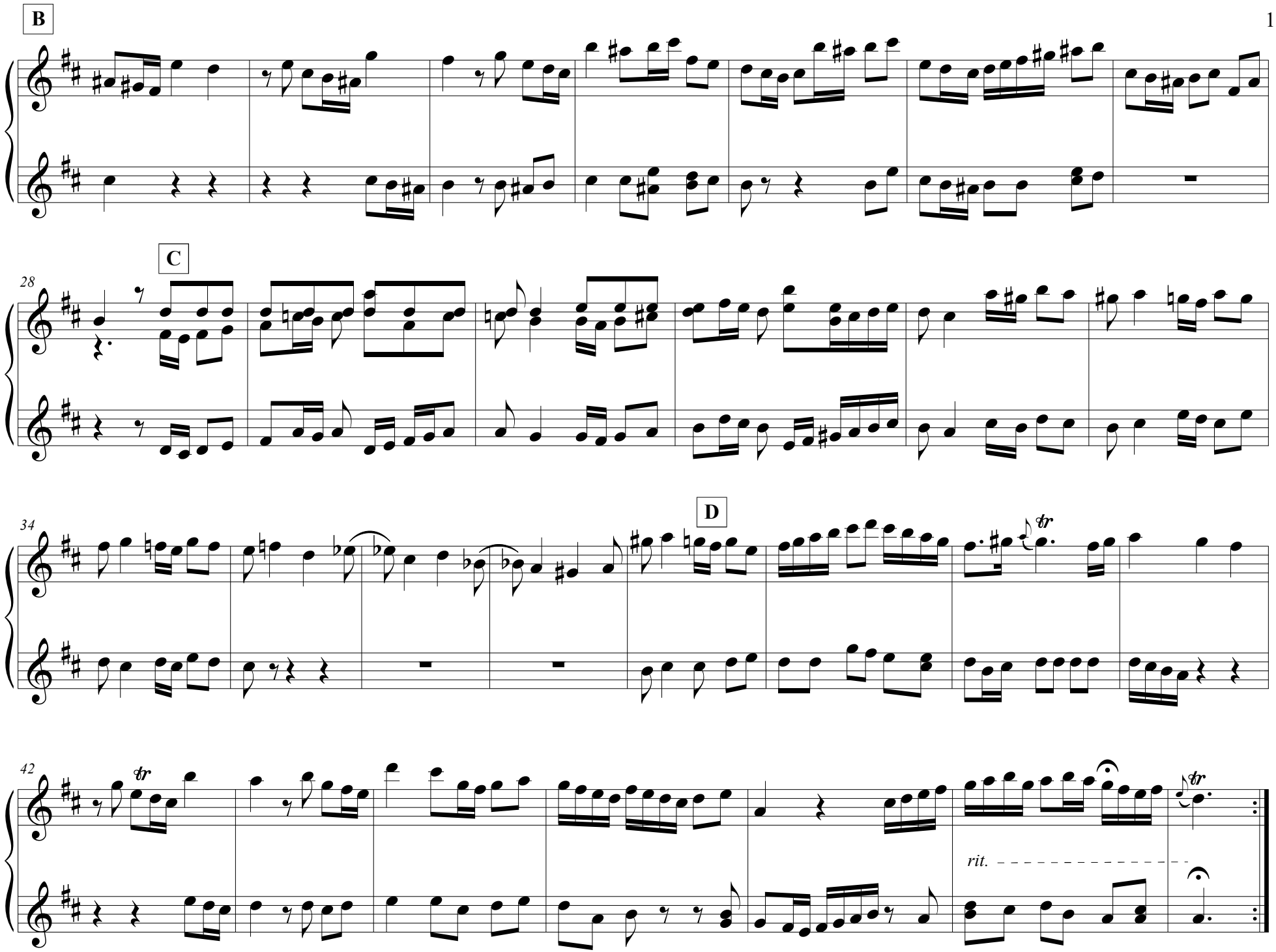
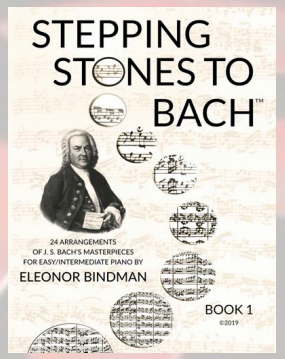
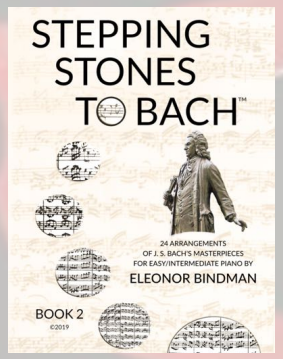

B
C
28
D
34
42
rit.

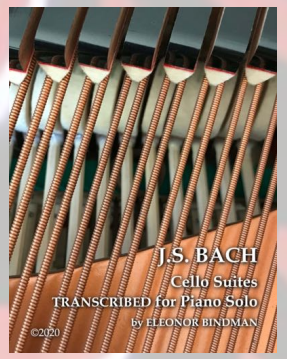
Illustration: details of “All The Flowers Are For Me” by Anila Quayyum Agha

“Bindman draws upon the suite’s dance movements…and succeeds in conveying the music’s vitality and beauty in a new medium.”

Also Available at EleonorBindman.com







J.S. Bach: Orchestral Suites, BWV 1066-69
Arranged for Piano Duet
by Eleonor Bindman
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