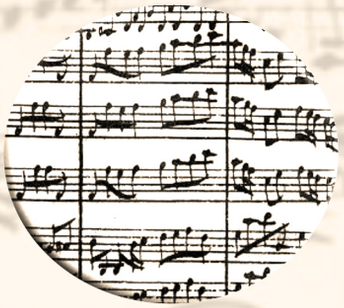
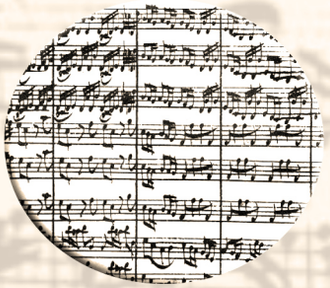
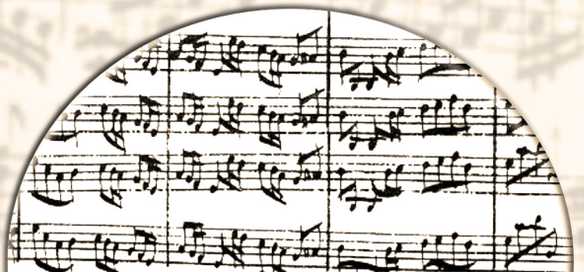
STEPPING STONES TO BACH™



48 ARRANGEMENTS
OF J. S. BACH'S MASTERPIECES
FOR EASY/INTERMEDIATE PIANO BY

ELEONOR BINDMAN





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"The music of my father has higher intentions. It is not supposed to fill the ear but make the heart move."

C.P.E. Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach left us an unparalleled legacy. His music has accompanied people through centuries of worship and brought countless moments of reflection, inner peace and wonder. It was even launched into space on the Voyager 1 space probe as one of humanity's supreme achievements. No doubt, at any given moment there is someone somewhere on Earth playing something by Bach.

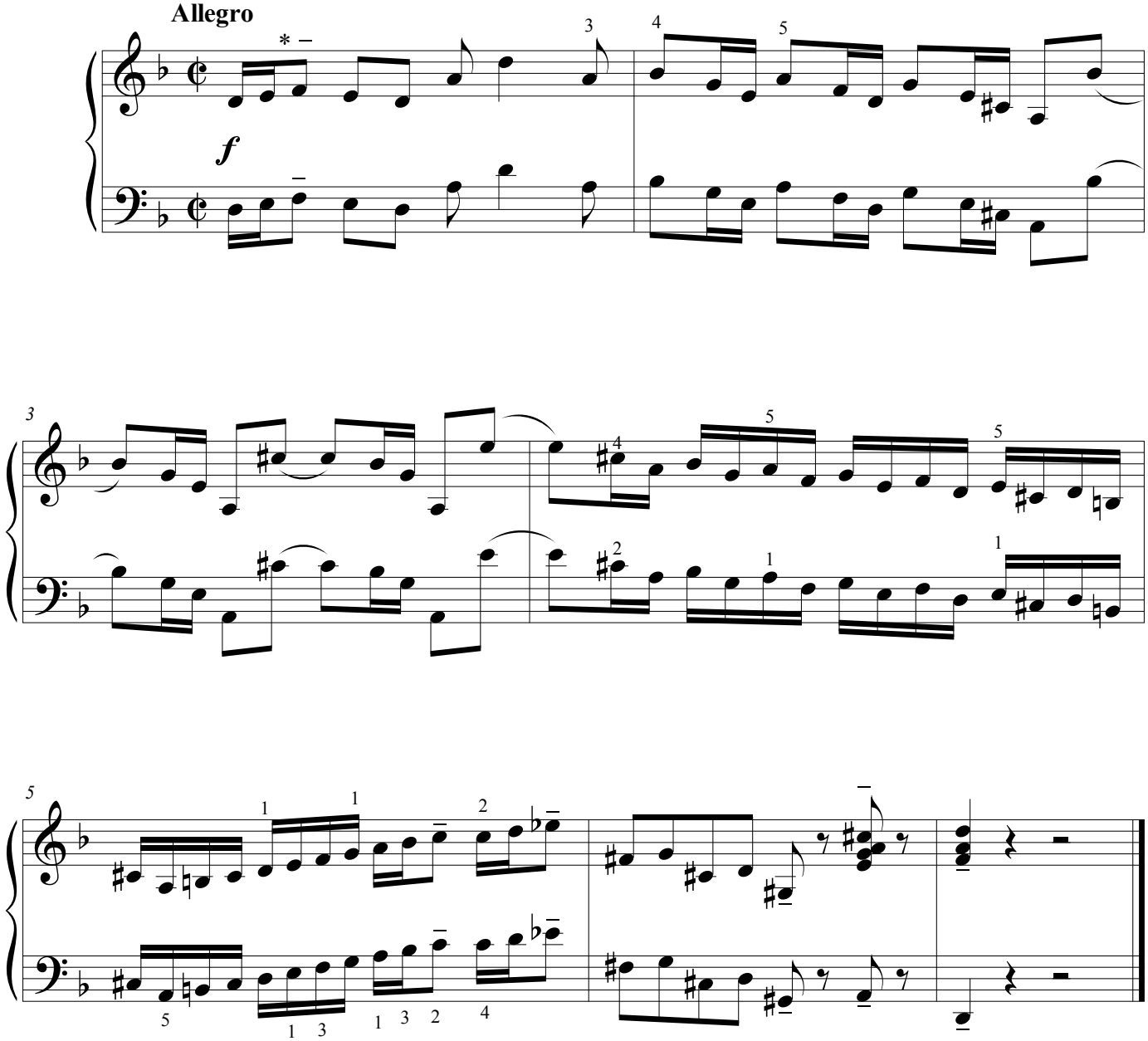
"Stepping Stones to Bach" is a new way for pianists to connect to the complete works of the great composer. Themes from masterpieces like The Brandenburg Concertos, The Passions, the Cantatas, selected Sonatas, Suites and works for organ have been simplified and adapted to the modern keyboard. As a result, students of all ages can now participate in music-making of the highest quality without having to spend months to learn one piece. With the essentials left intact and closing cadences added at suitable points, playing each "Stepping Stone" is an accessible and satisfying experience.

These 24 simple piano arrangements are excellent student recital pieces, technique studies, warm-up and sight-reading exercises and building blocks for learning more difficult works. As a supplement, I made a special "Stepping Stones to Bach" playlist on Spotify and iTunes featuring all of the original compositions, to help cultivate deeper musical connections for the younger generation. For example, while learning the "Stepping Stones" version of theme from Brandenburg Concerto #2, students will listen to the orchestral version with a sense of familiarity and belonging, with focused attention and a readiness to hear how the theme develops. Not only will their ears be filled, but their hearts will be moved and their spirits refreshed.

Eleonor Bindman, May 2019

Harpsichord Concerto in D minor

J.S. Bach



These first unison measures of Bach's keyboard concerto #1 are among the most gratifying he has ever written for keyboard. Once you learn them you'll feel wonderful energy as you play them. Enjoy!
*The articulation markings are from the autograph.

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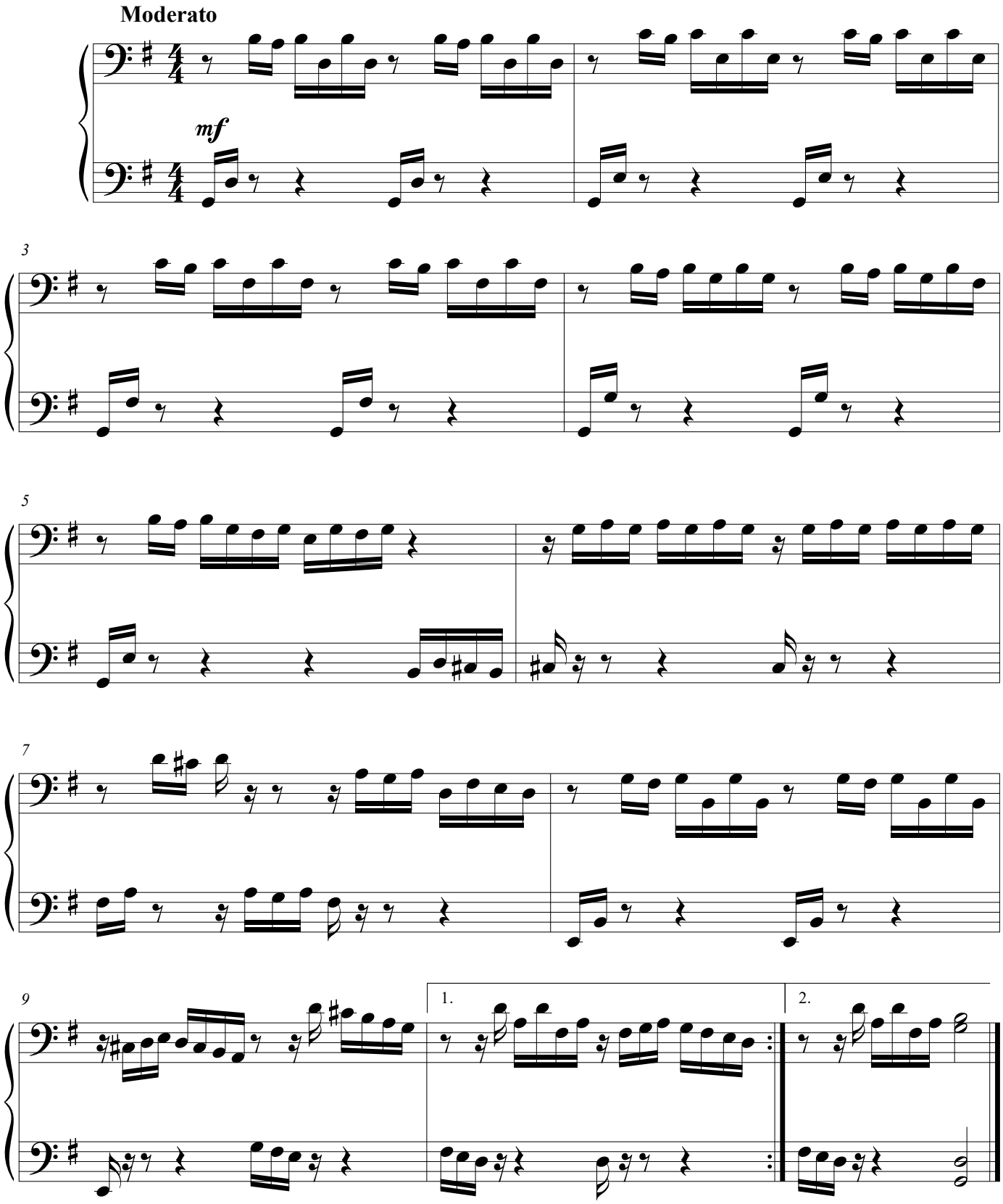
Prelude from Cello Suite #1

J.S. Bach

Arr. E Bindman



This is a great warm-up for the 4th and 5th fingers of the right hand. If you like playing the beginning fragment, you can find this beautiful cello prelude online and learn the rest.

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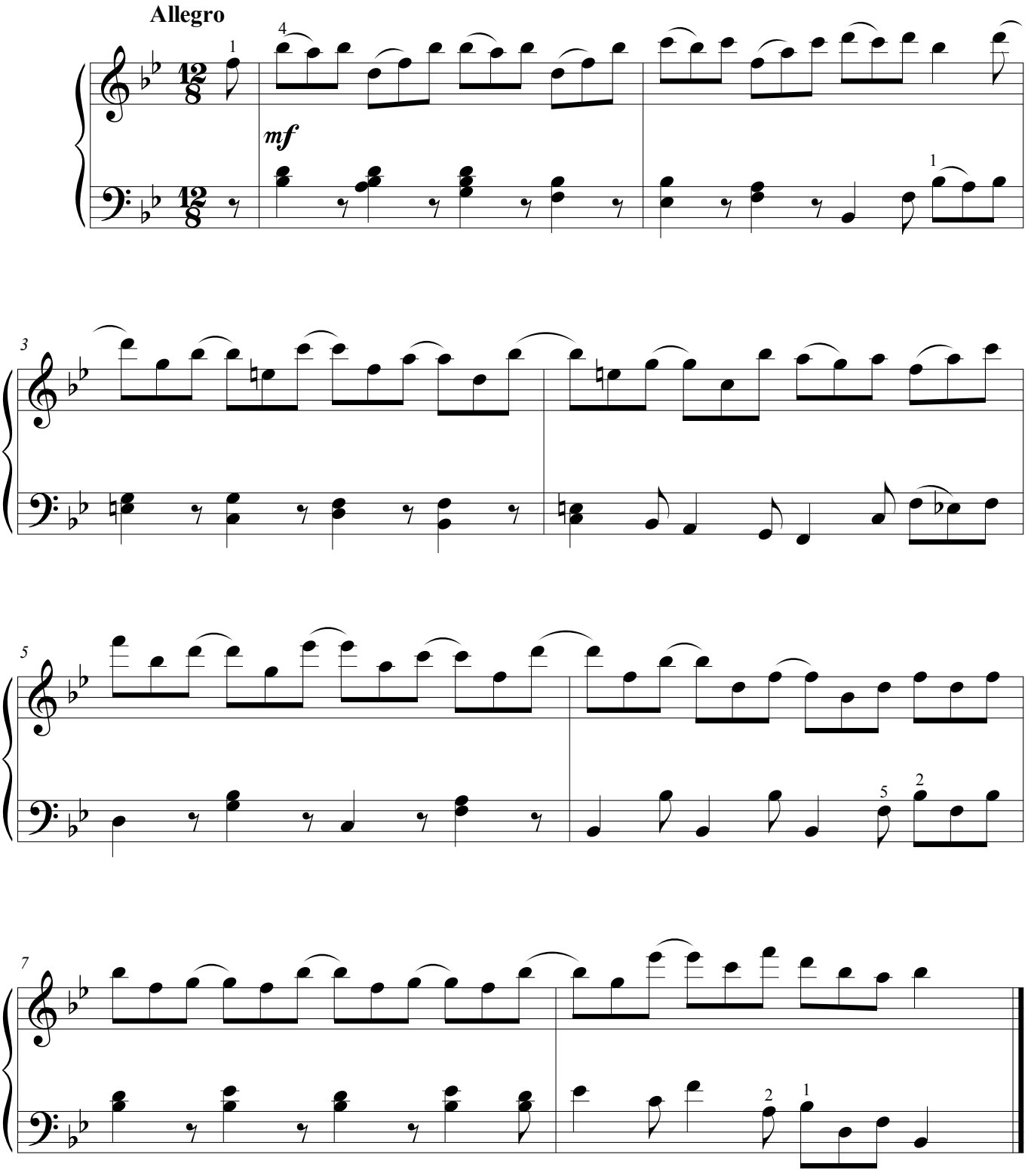
Finale of Brandenburg Concerto #6

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



Since most of the notes here are detached, there are many fingering variables.
The thumb is clearly necessary for some of the black keys.

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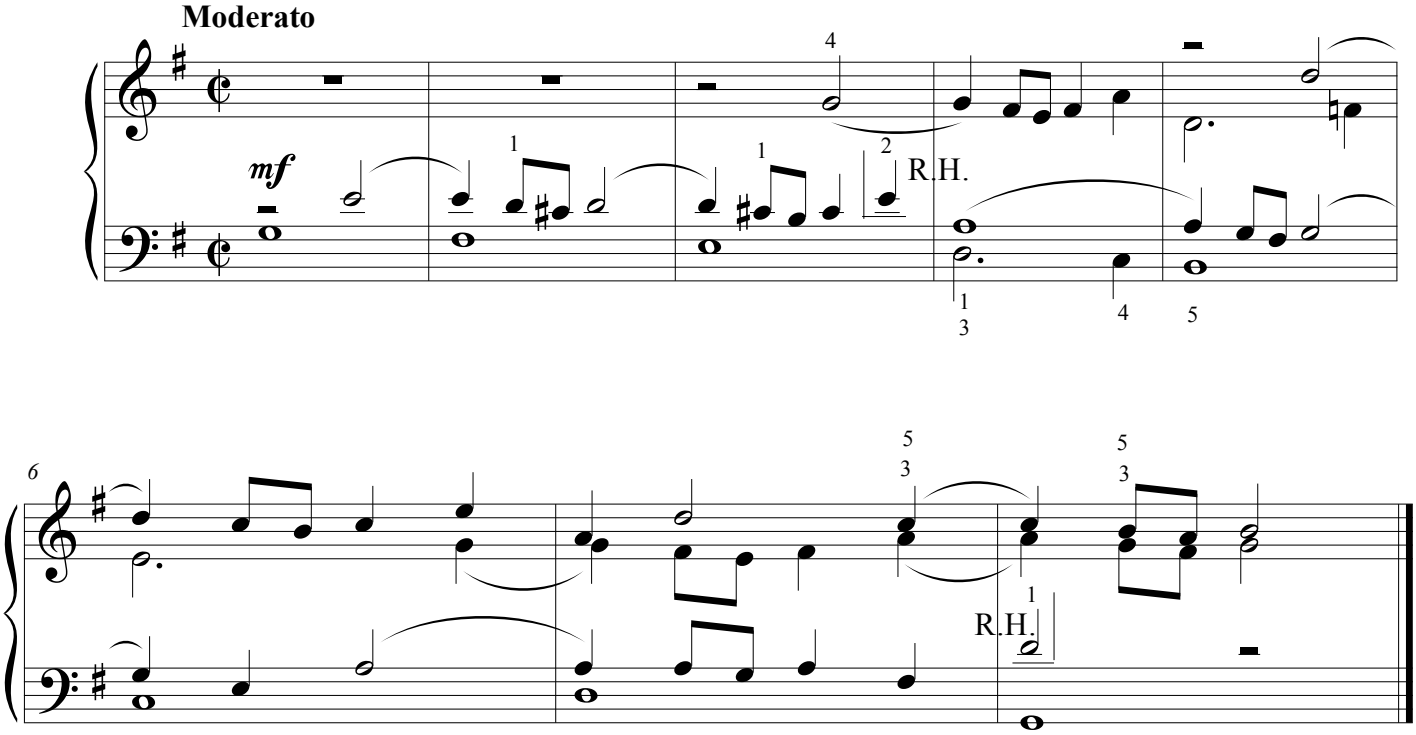
Goldberg Variation #22

J.S. Bach



Bach's "Goldberg Variations" are hard to learn in their entirety, a feat even for a concert pianist, yet some of the variations are relatively easy, if considered separately. Here is a very manageable beginning of Variation #22, a great exercise for keeping track of 4 voices. These 8 measures look easy, don't they?

The whole variation has three more sets of 8 measures like this one, just a little bit harder. Looking at each set of 8 measures separately, the piece will seem more manageable. You may choose to break it up into 4, or even 2-measure chunks. This is key to learning any piece: one section at a time.

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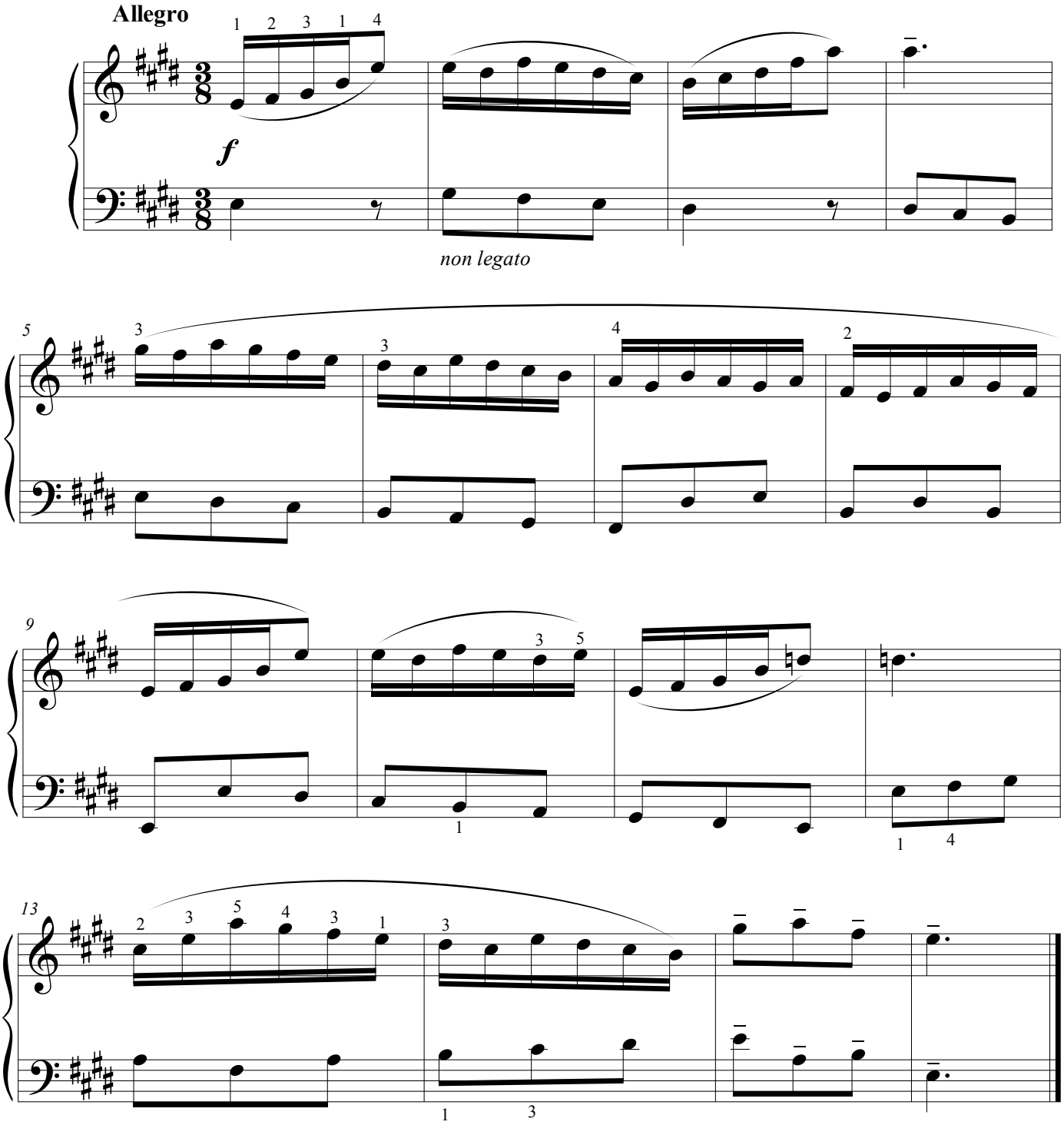
Finale of Violin Concerto #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



This joyful excerpt is perfect for a right-hand warm-up and for practicing the important coordination of legato in one hand and non legato in the other.

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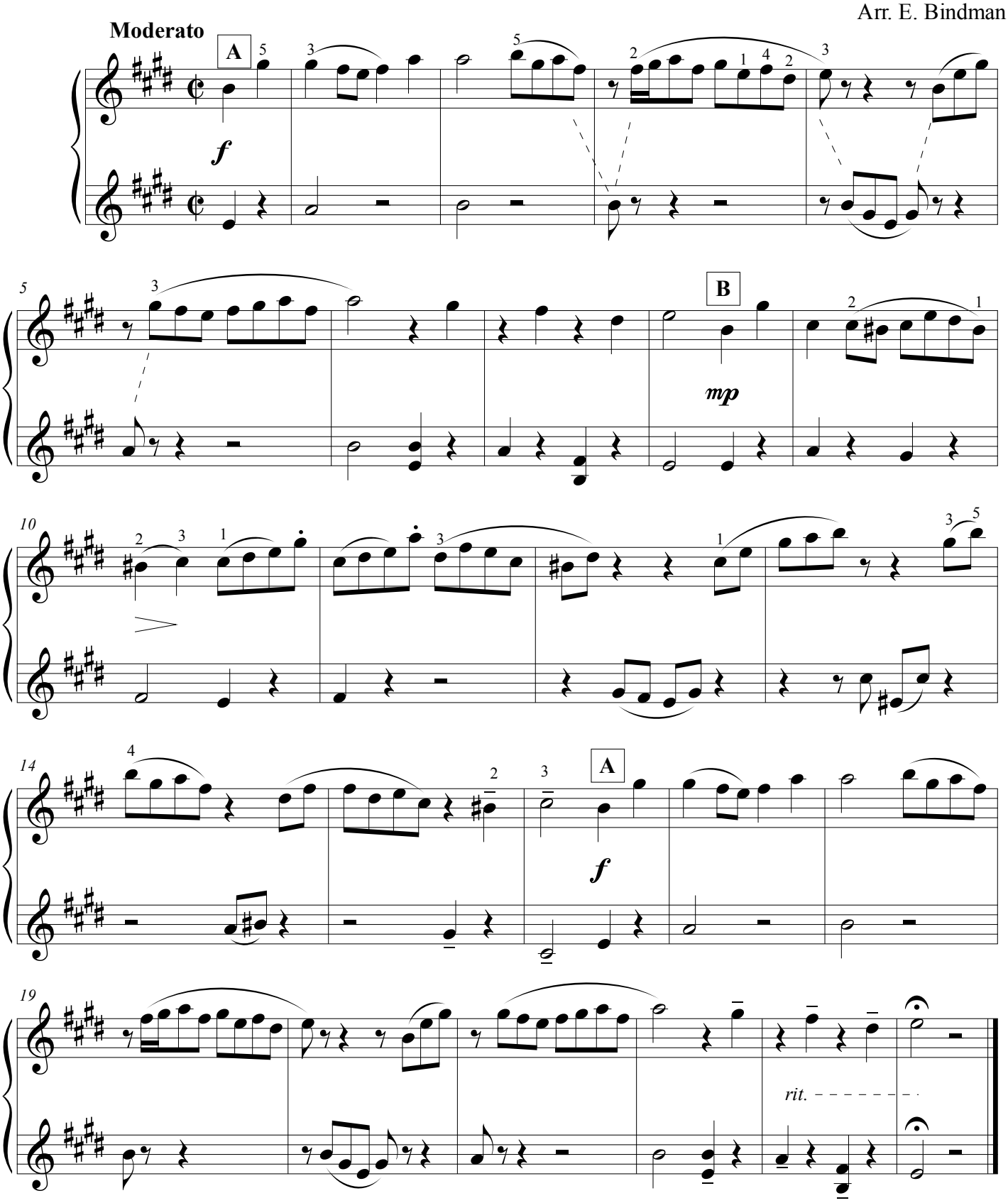
Gavotte from Violin Partita #3

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



This is an example of a simple ABA form so common in Baroque music. Since section A repeats exactly, it's useful sometimes to start practicing from section B, otherwise it will never feel as securely learned as A.

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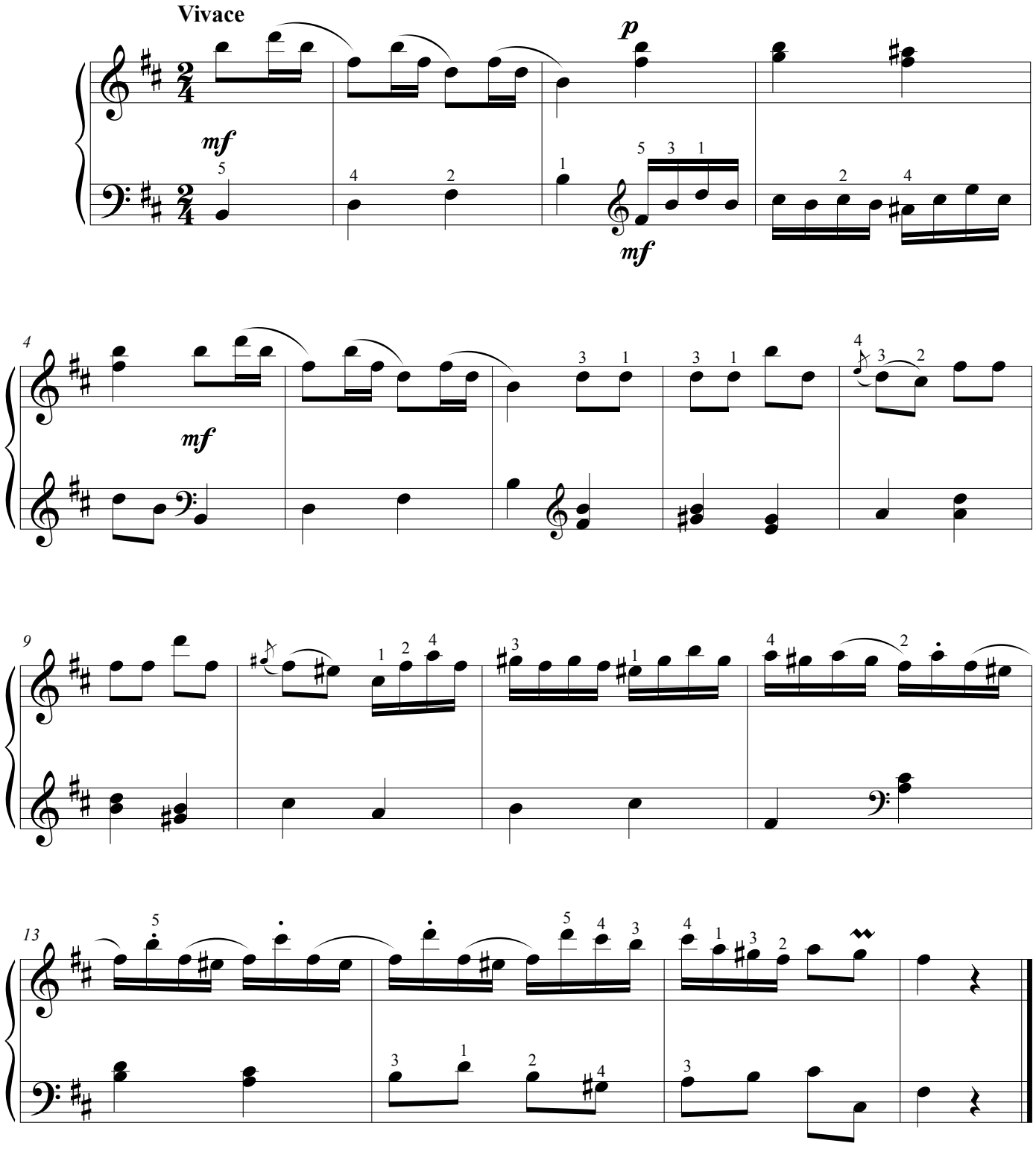
Badinerie from Orchestral Suite #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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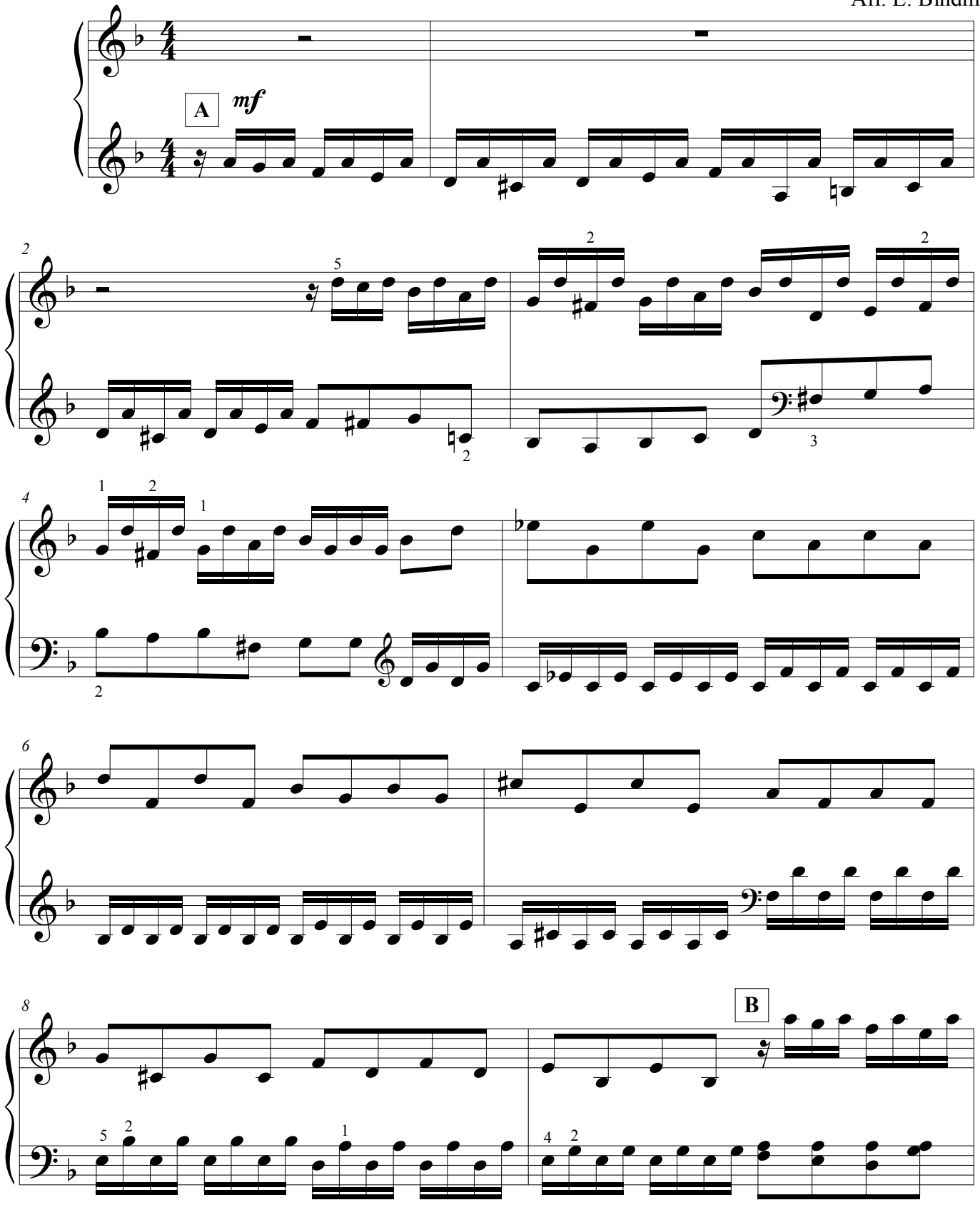
Fugue
from Toccata and Fugue in D minor for Organ

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Moderato



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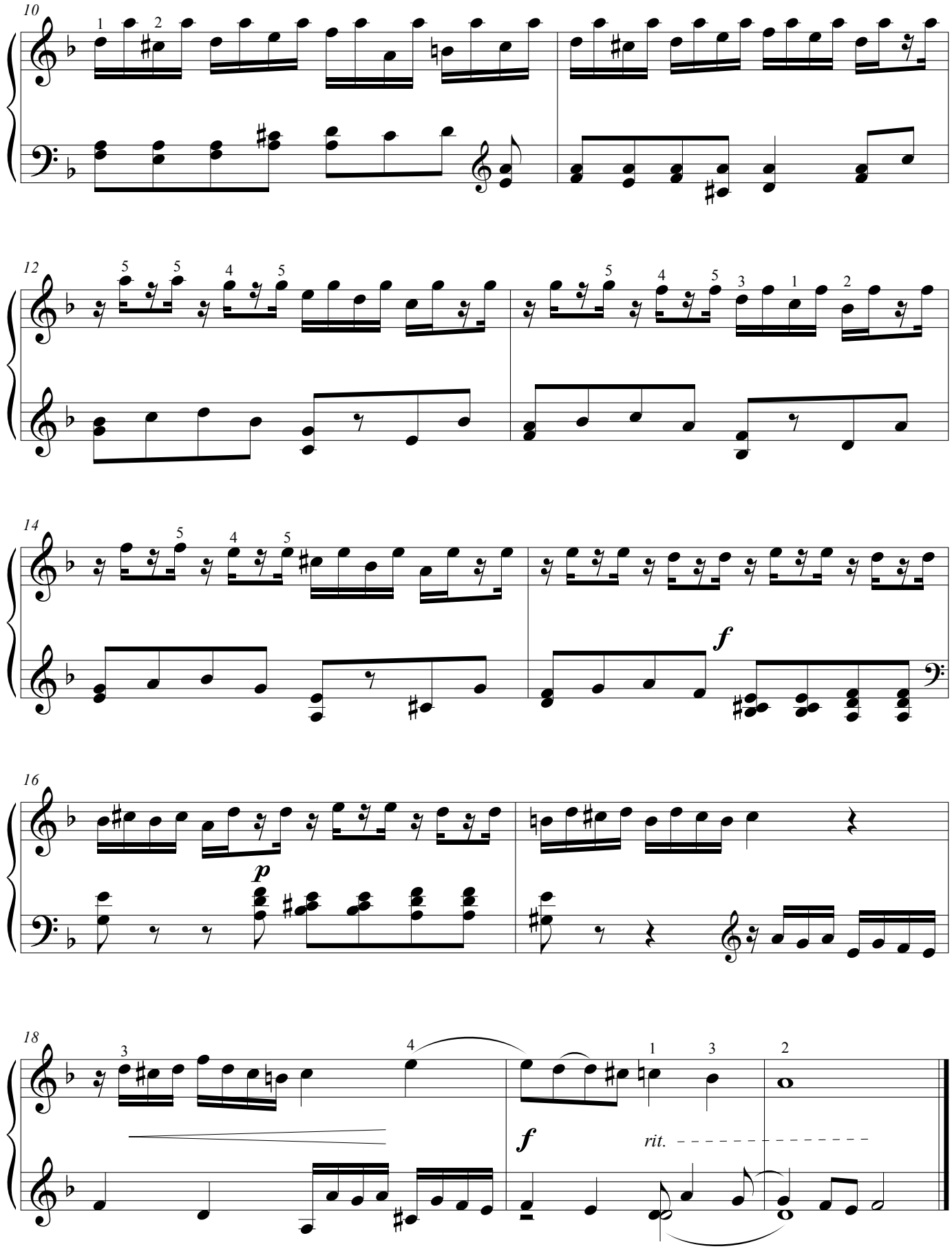
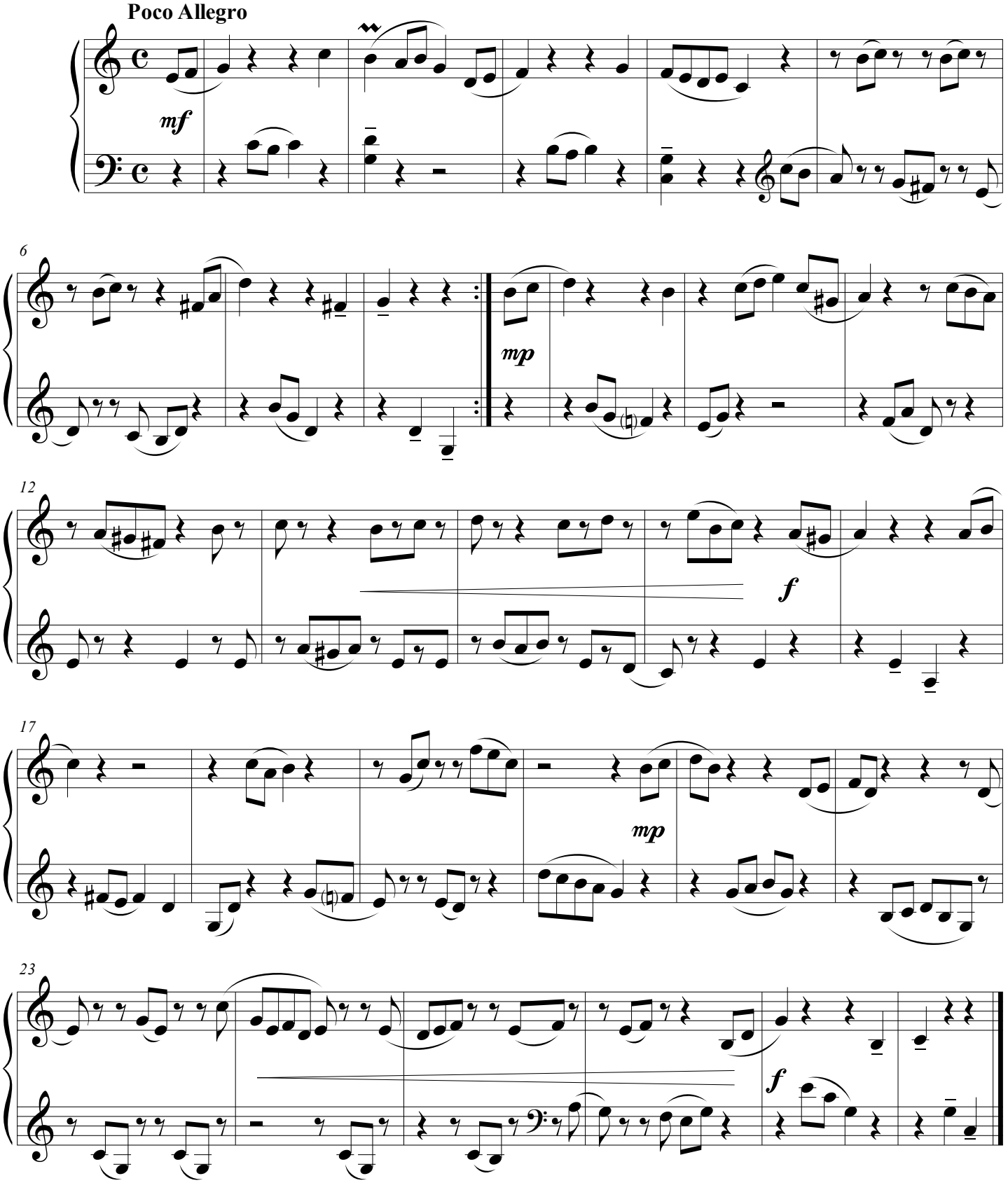


I just couldn't cut this great Fugue after one page. If it seems long, please try section A first. Then move on to section B, which looks more difficult than it is. One step at a time will get you there.

Bourrée I from Cello Suite #3

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



This Bourrée is meant to be followed by Bourrée II in the original Cello Suite.
The dynamic marking here are simply guidelines. Feel free to make your own choices.

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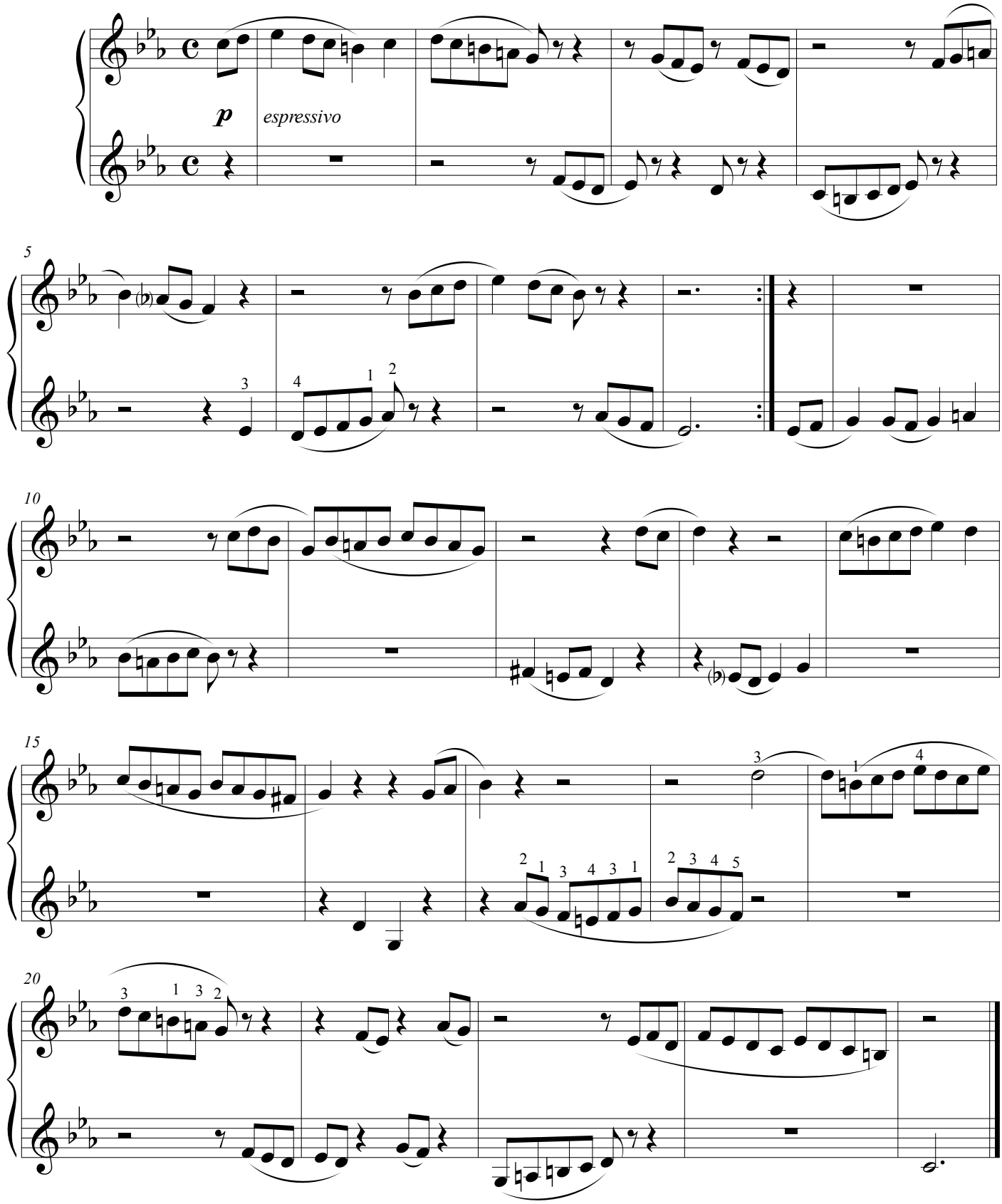
Bourrée II from Cello Suite #3

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



Bourrée II is meant be played after Bourrée I in the Cello Suite, and then Bourrée I is repeated.

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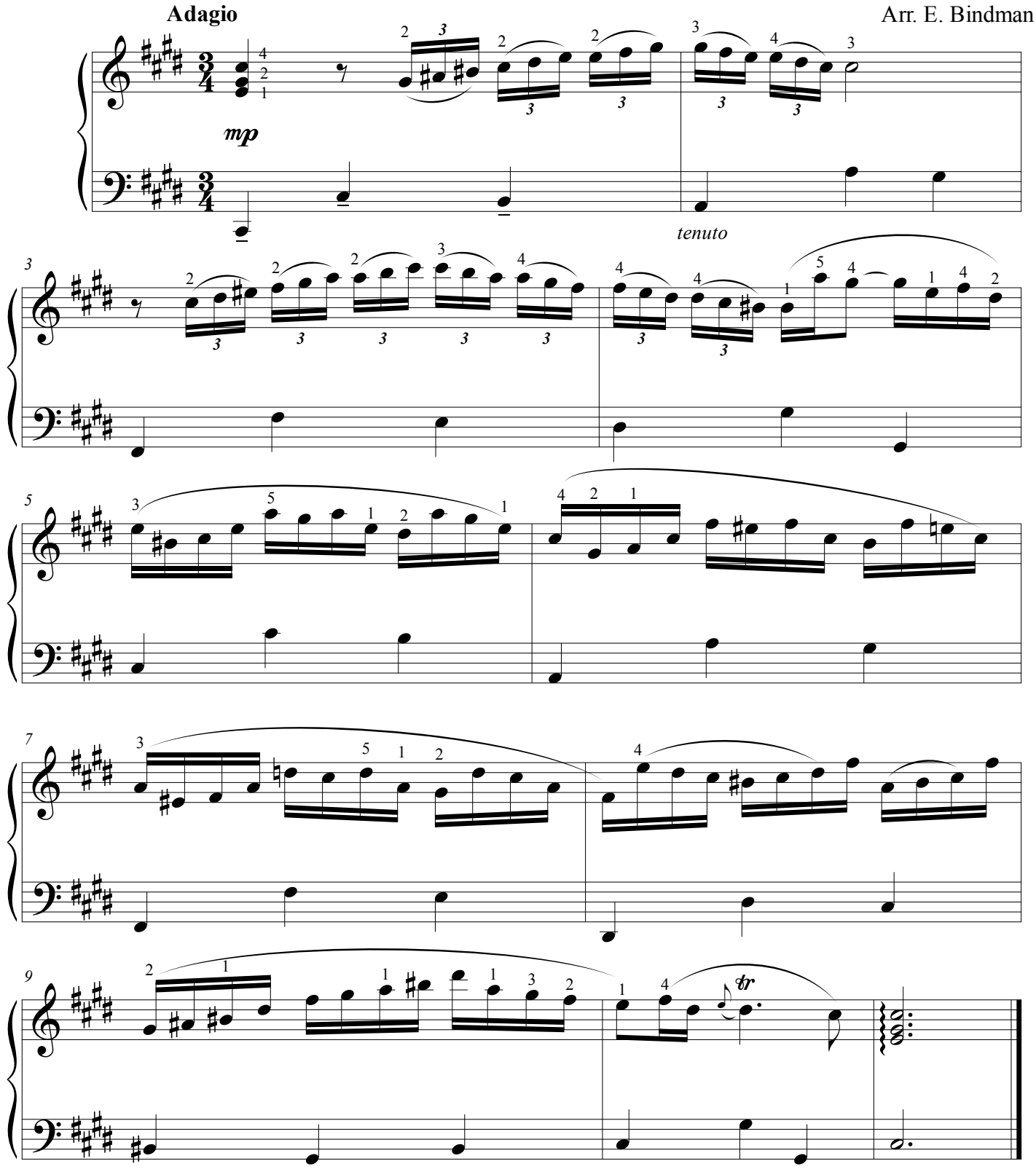
Adagio from Violin and Cembalo Sonata #3

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



If you're unfamiliar with this violin sonata, you'll love getting to know it. Keep the 8th note value in mind when counting. My fingerings for the RH triplets will help with phrasing and relaxing the wrist.

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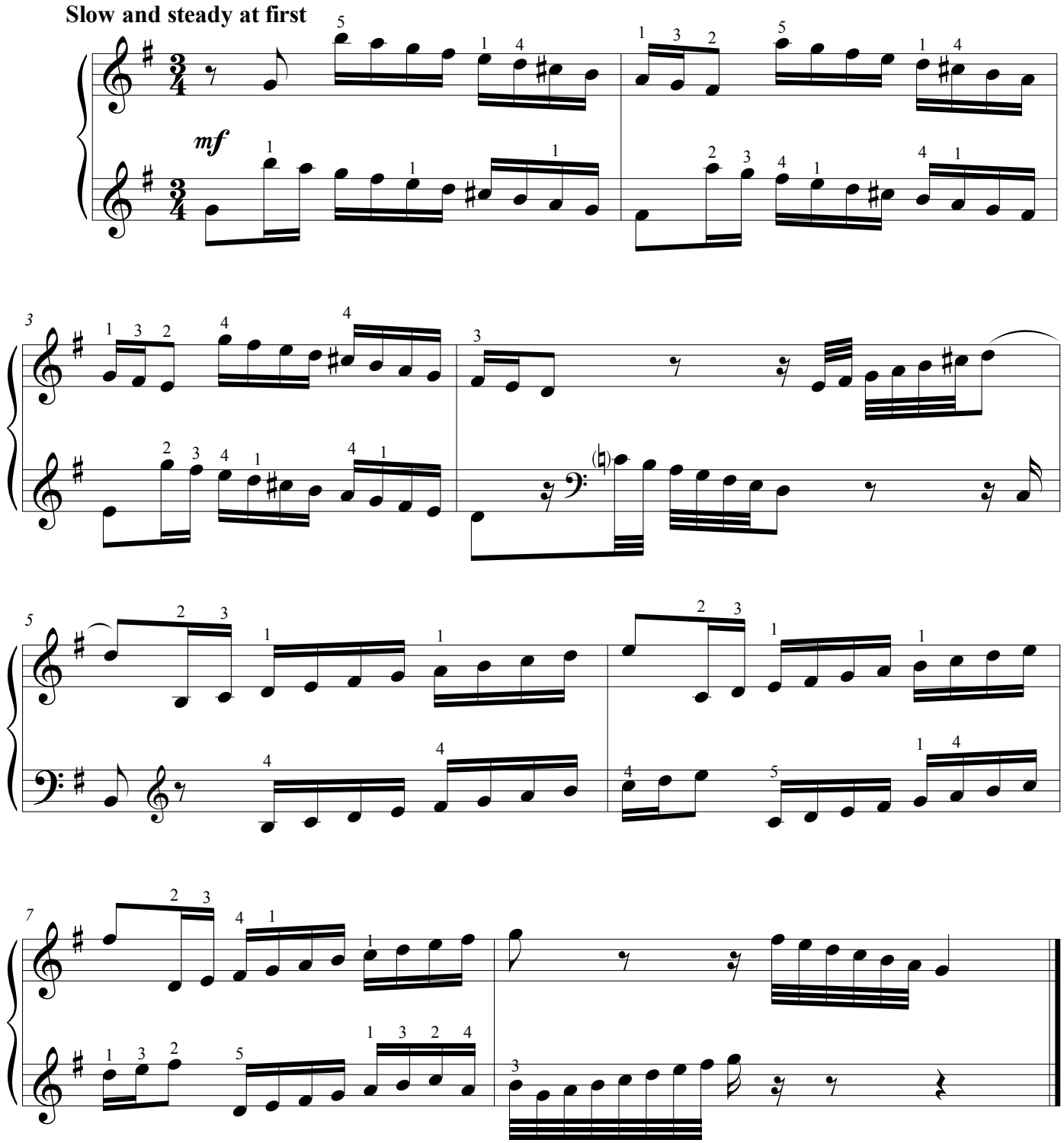
Goldberg Variation #23

J.S. Bach



Here is another excerpt from the Goldberg Variations, the fun beginning of Variation #23 which can serve as a warm-up exercise. Crossing your hands adds a new dimension to playing this canon. If you like the experience, why not brave the whole variation?

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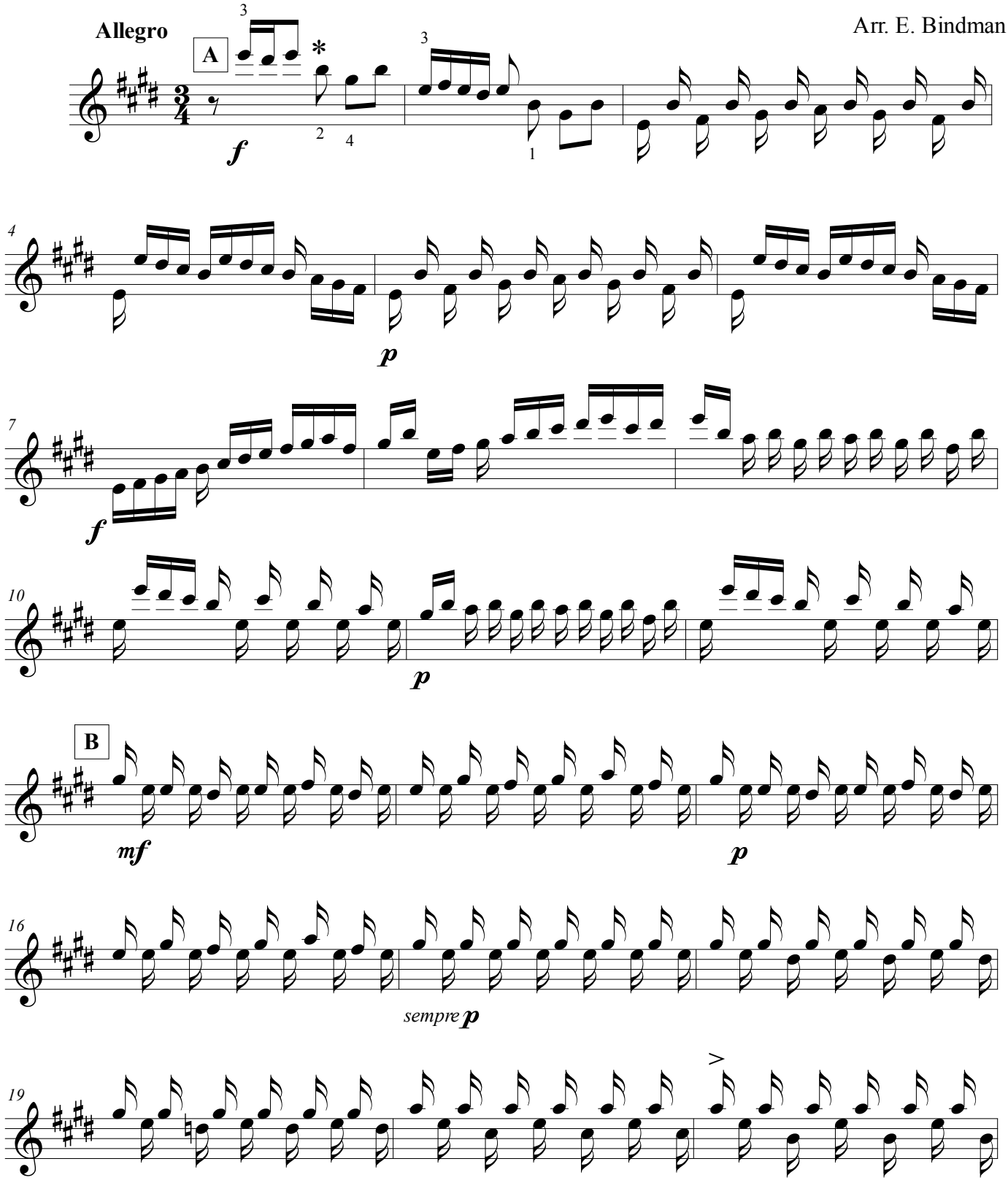
Preludio from Violin Partita #3

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



*For easier notation, the RH here plays the notes with the stems up, the LH those with the stems down.

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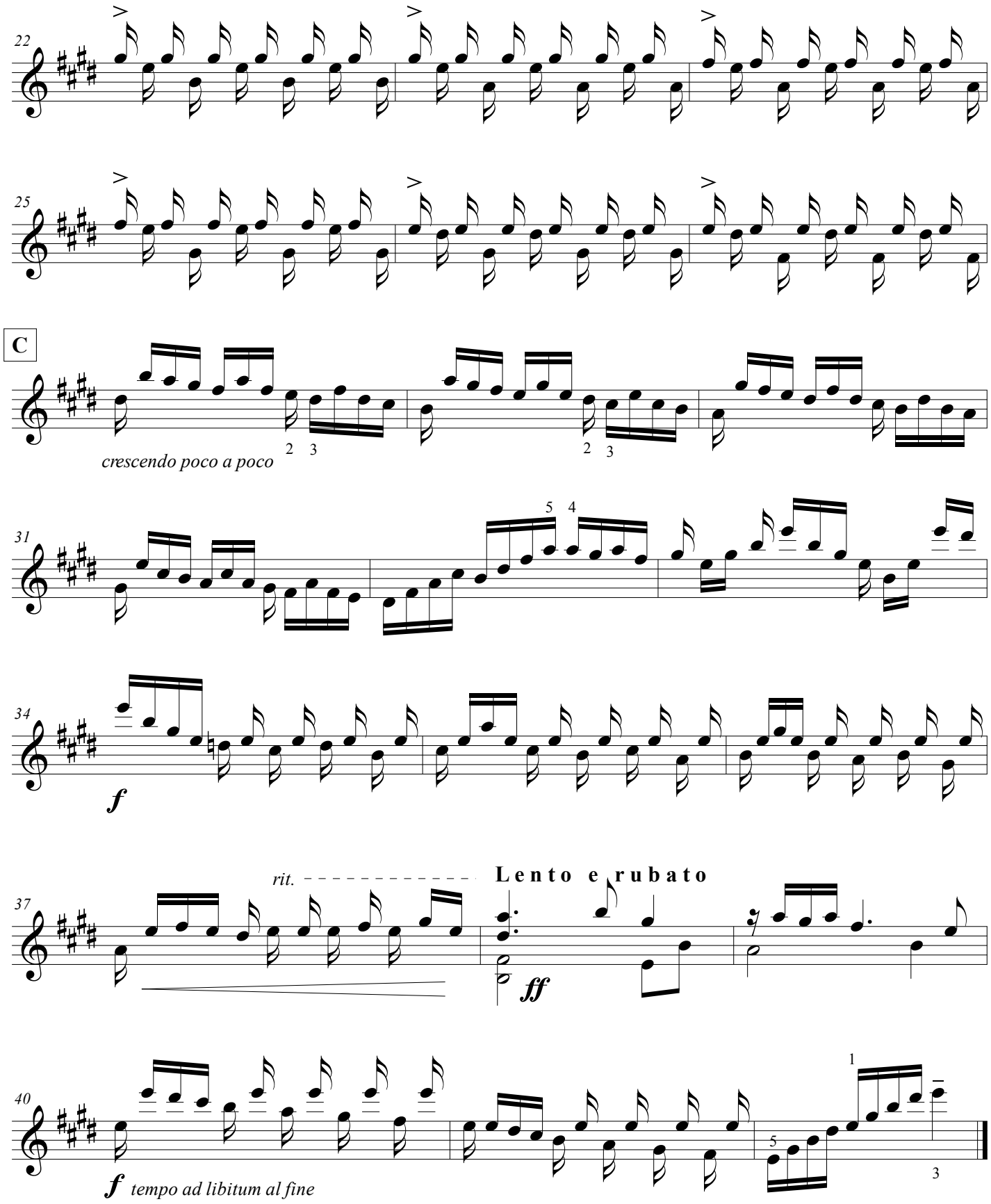
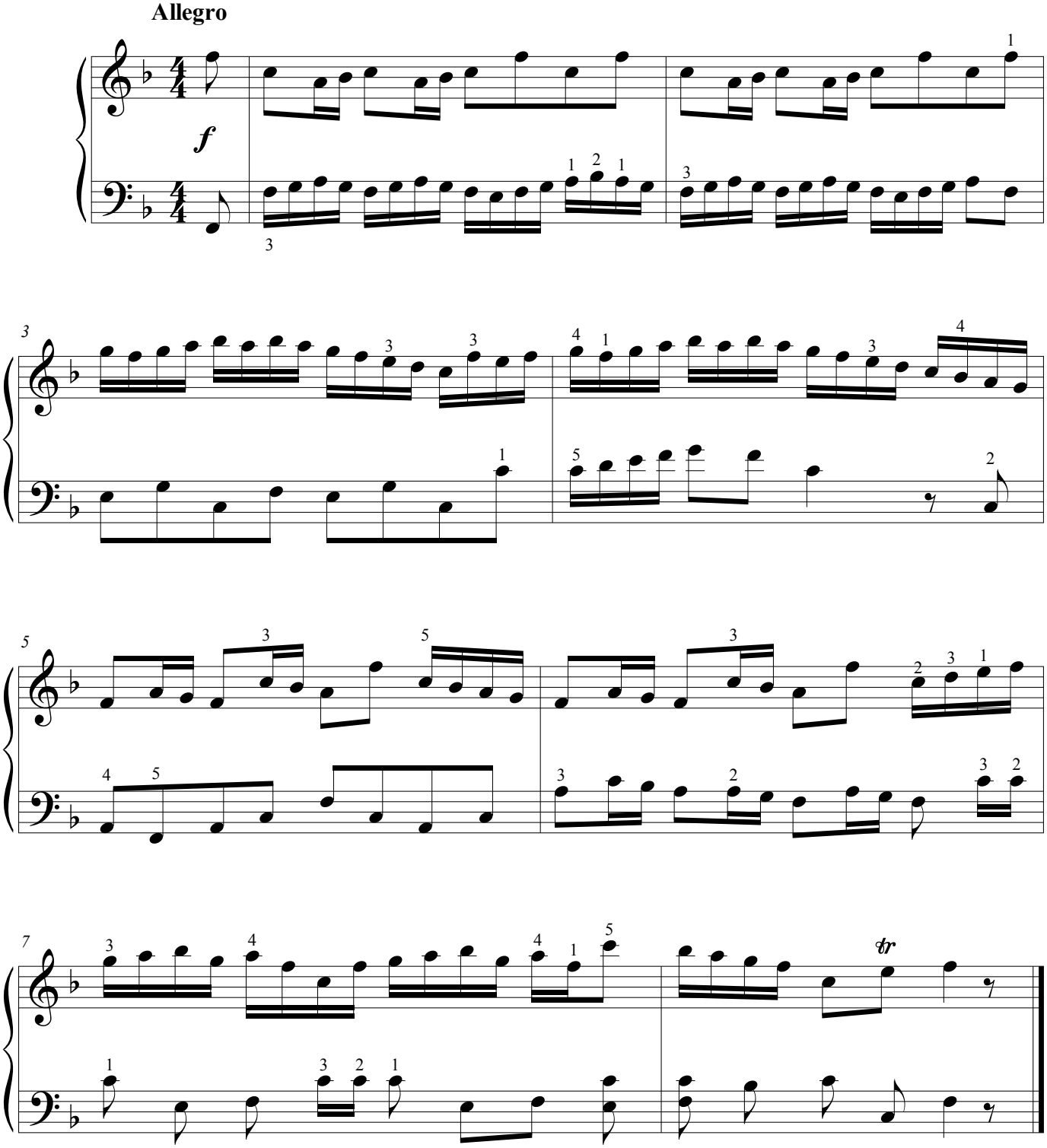


I never thought it could be so much fun to play a violin piece on the piano until I played through this arrangement. It's a wonderful exercise in freedom of movement for both arms and tone control of repeated notes. Make sure that your wrists are completely relaxed so they can be raised to accomodate the "unusual" and liberating hand positions required here.

Brandenburg Concerto #2

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



The 8th notes in this excerpt should be played non legato but feel free to experiment with the 16th notes.

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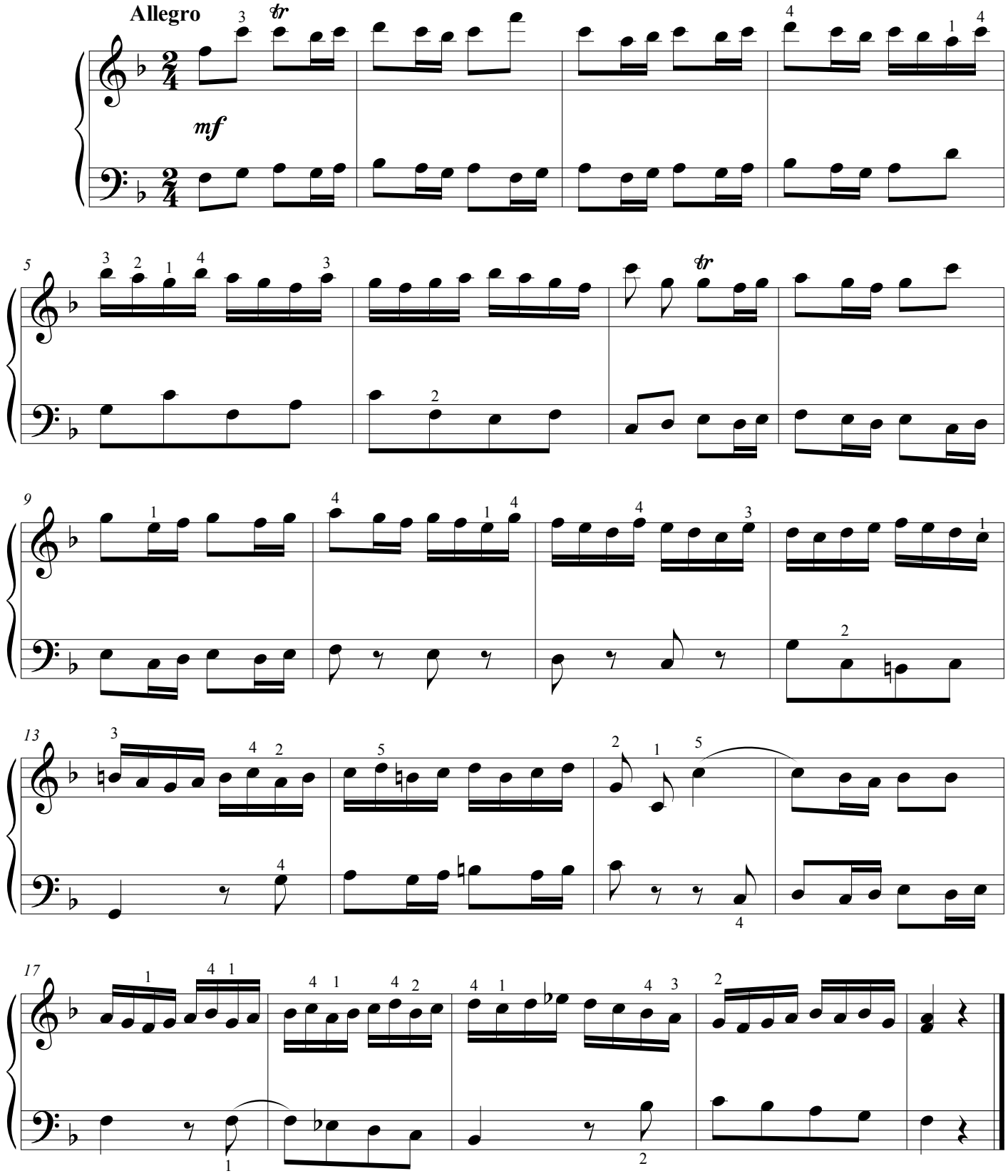
Finale of Brandenburg Concerto #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



In addition to the traditional legato 16th notes and non-legato 8ths, an option for this excerpt is to play all of the notes detached, keeping a loose wrist. You can add the trills later or skip them altogether.

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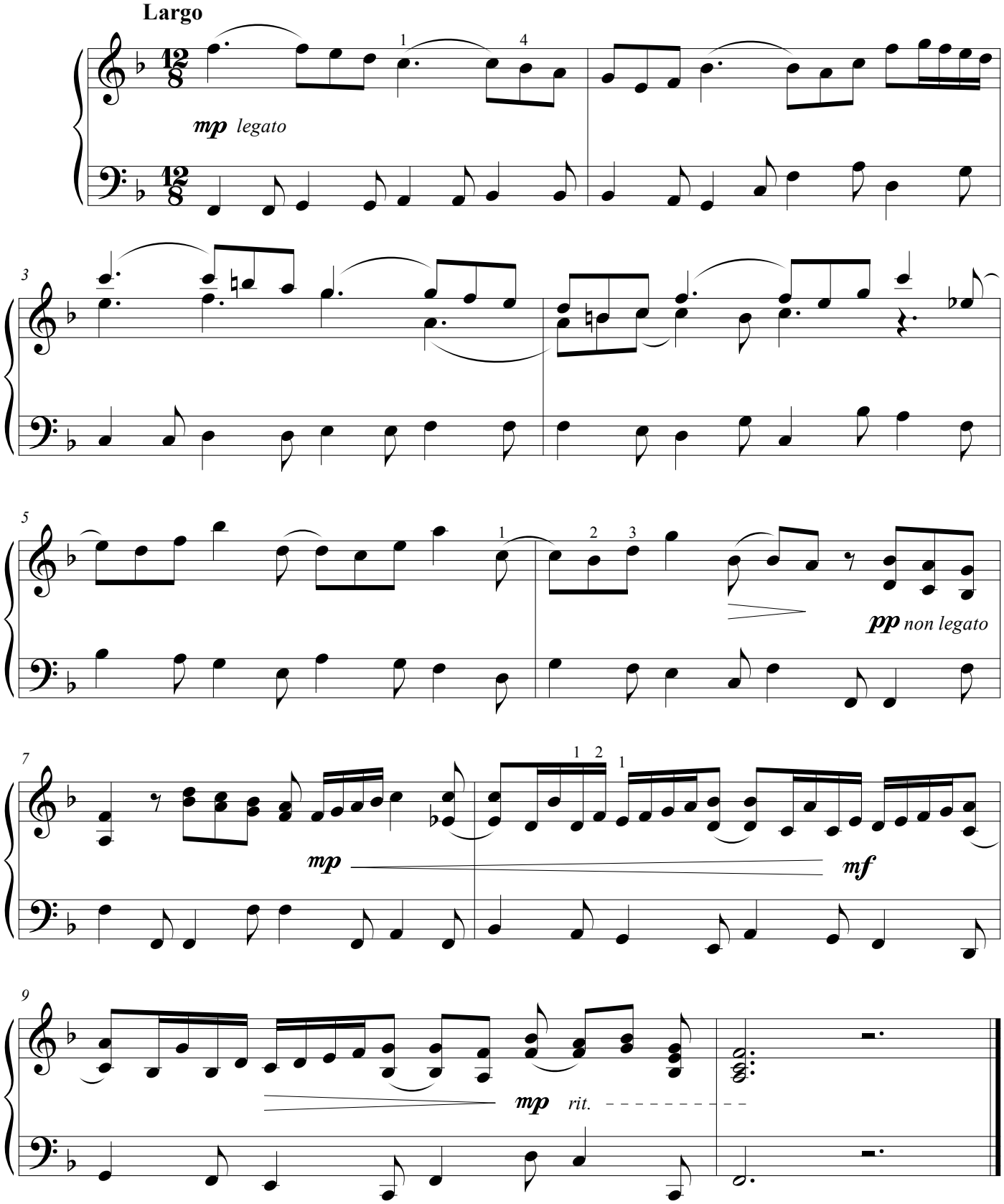
Largo from The Double Violin Concerto

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



This is an arrangemenr where a little bit of damper pedal on each of the strong beats (1,4,7 and 10) might go a long way. The tempo is very slow and the long notes will sound better with a fuller tone.

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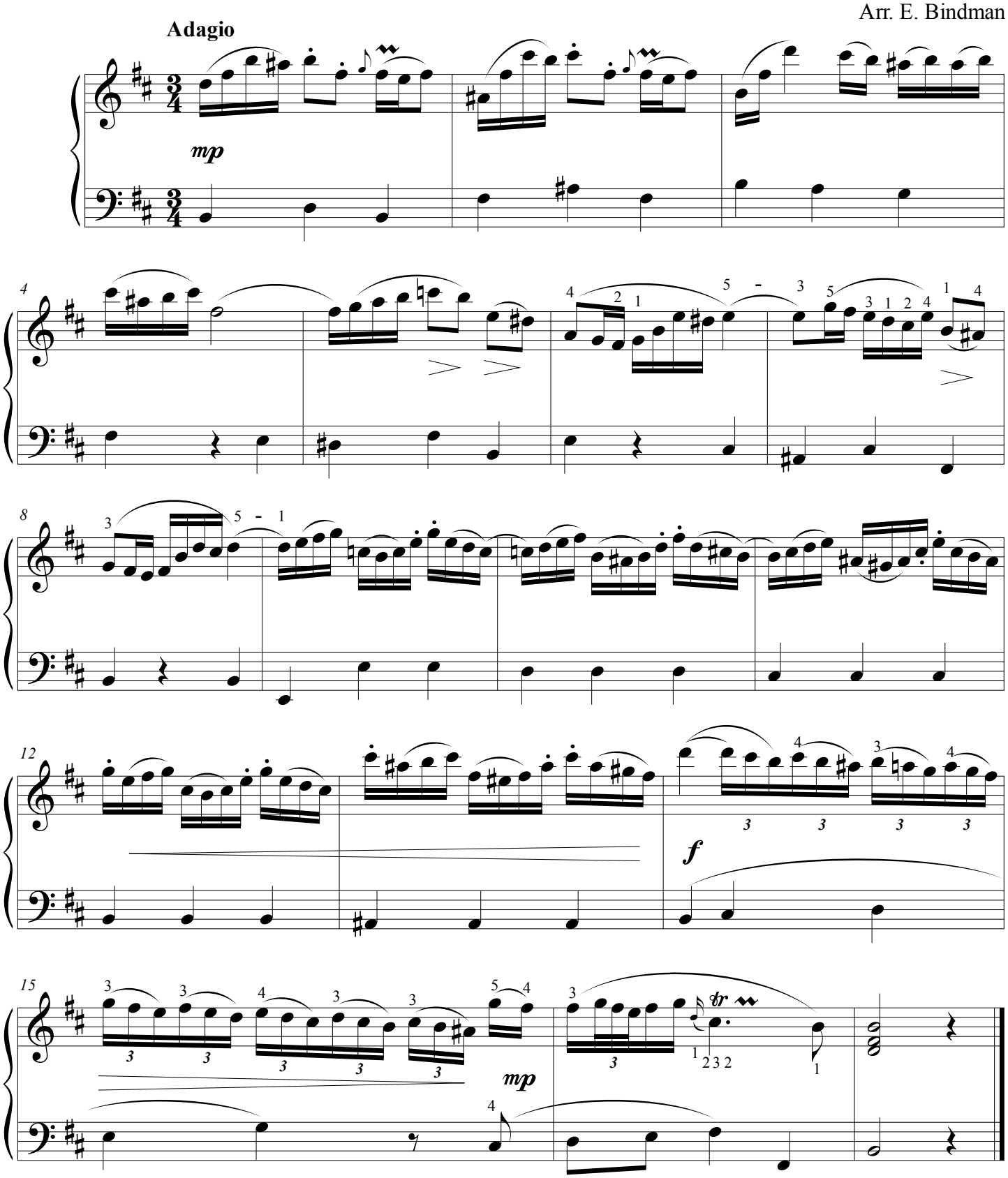
Flute Solo from The Easter Oratorio

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



The legato/staccato articulation in this arrangement is imitating the phrasing originally intended for flute or violin. Notice how Bach develops the rhythm by gradually increasing the number of notes per beat until it culminates in triplets and a graceful turn at the end.

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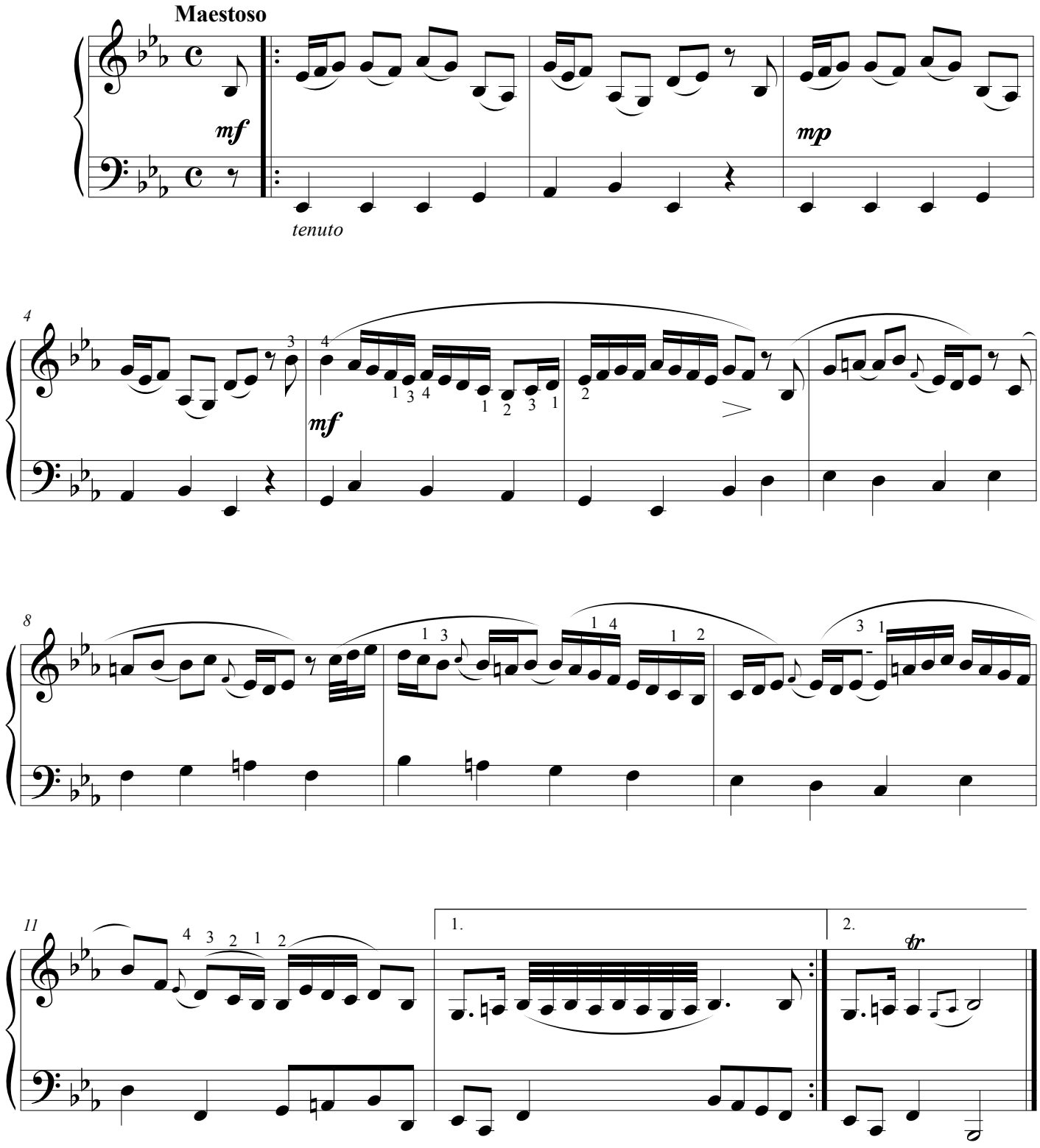
"Wachet auf " Chorale Prelude

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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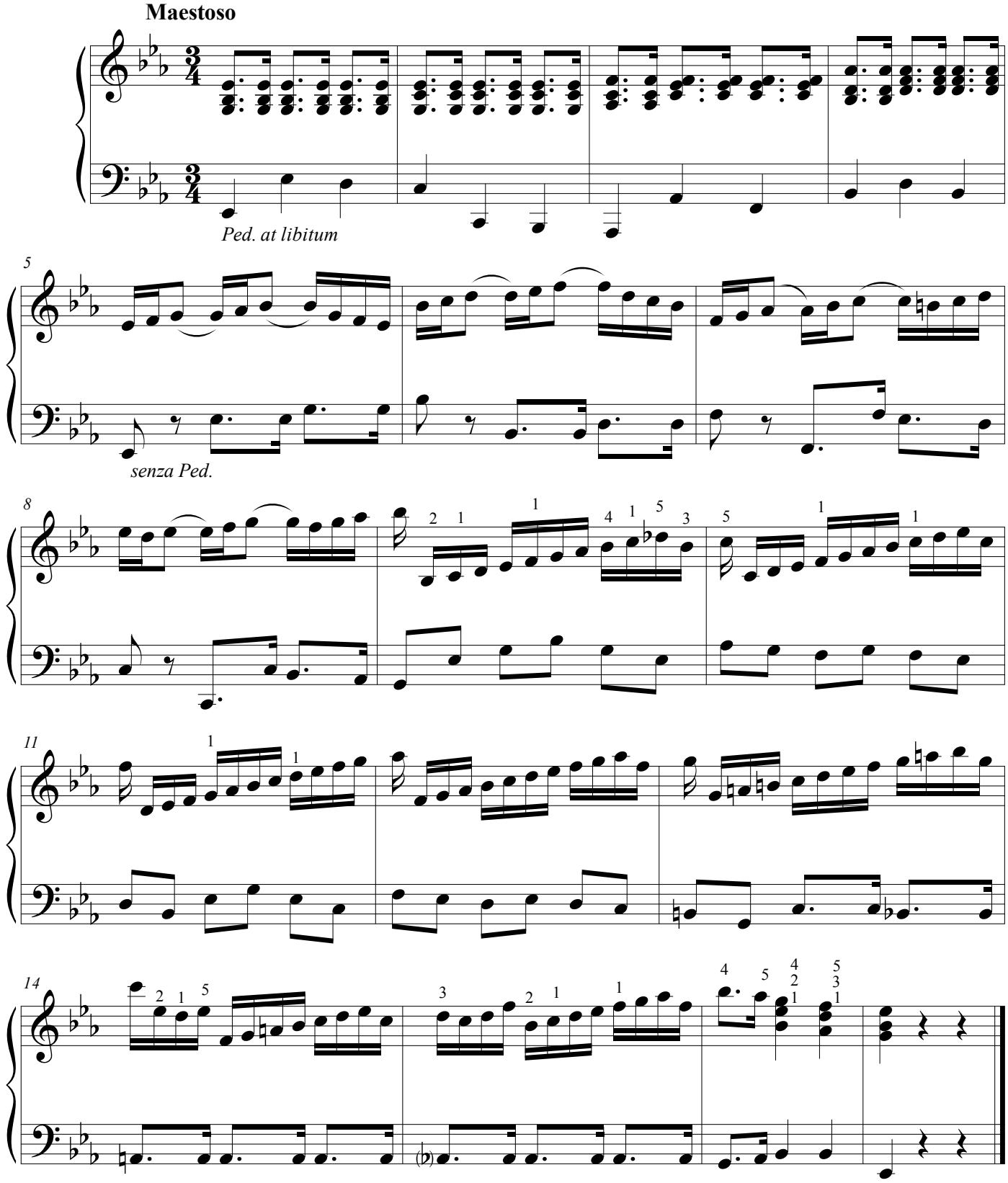
"Wachet auf " Cantata

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



Be sure the dotted rhythms have an exact 3:1 ratio - they contribute to the feeling of "awakening."
My fingerings work well in a "proper"arm position for scales, with the elbow away from the torso.

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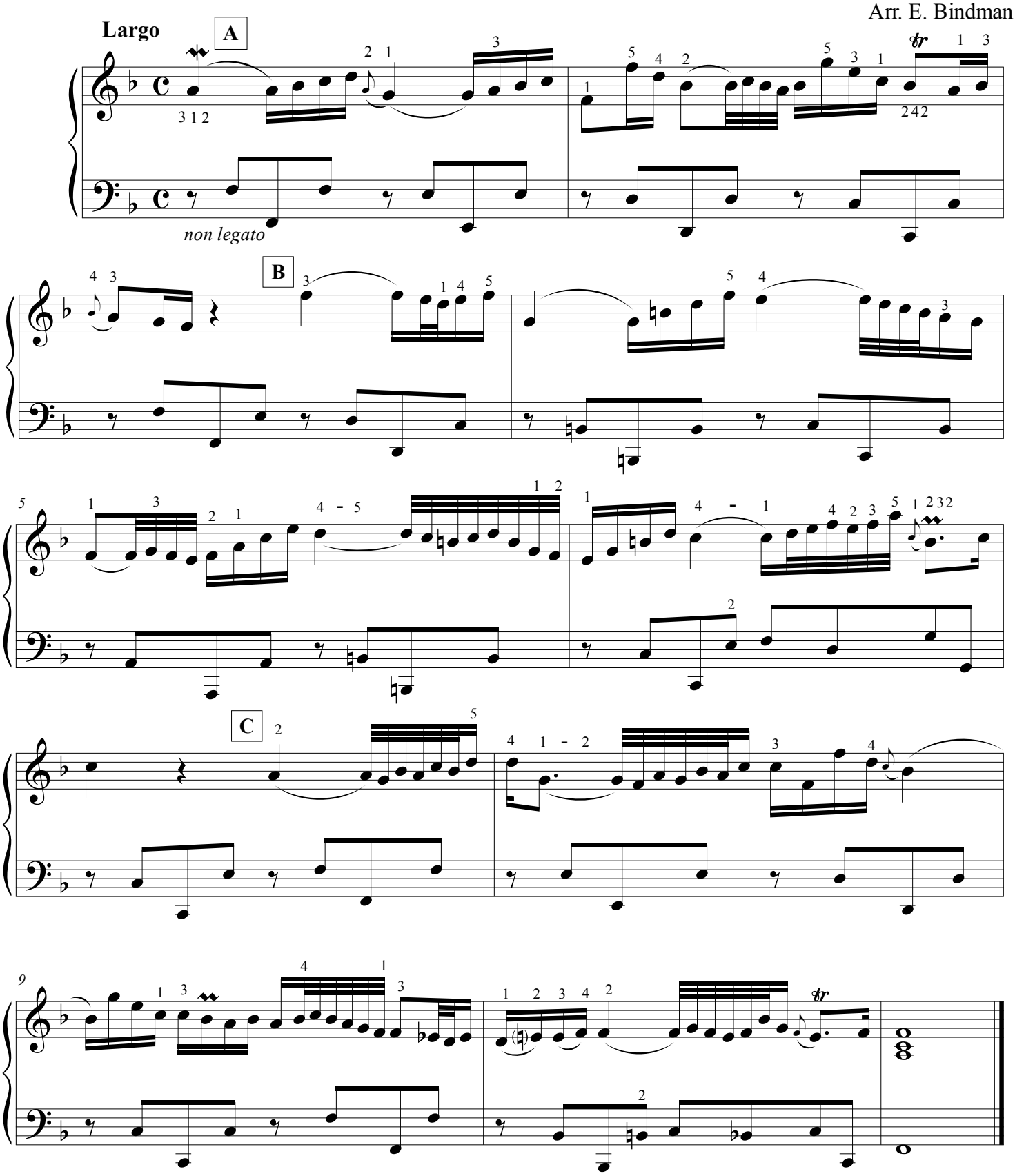
Largo from Harpsichord Concerto in F Minor

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



This gorgeous excerpt may look daunting at first but it can be played very slowly and treated as an exercise for counting 16ths, 32nd and 64th notes (use the 8th-note value as a guide.) If it looks like "too many notes," try each segment at a time: A, B, then C. When you mastered this, why not look at the original score in A-flat?

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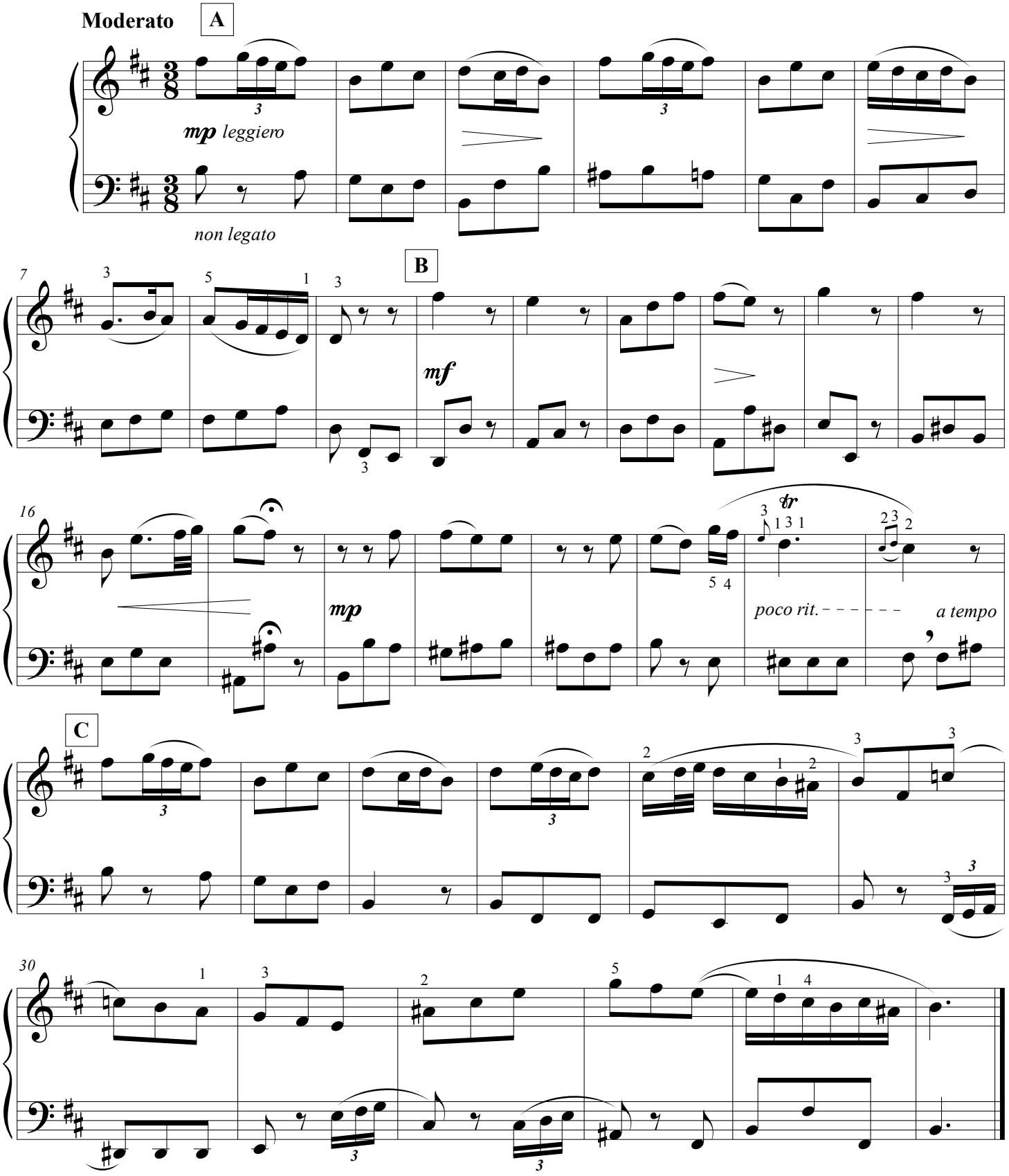
Ah, How Sweet Coffee Tastes!

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



Bach must have enjoyed writing this delightful aria from his famous "Coffee Cantata" and I loved working on this arrangement. Now it's your turn to have fun with it!

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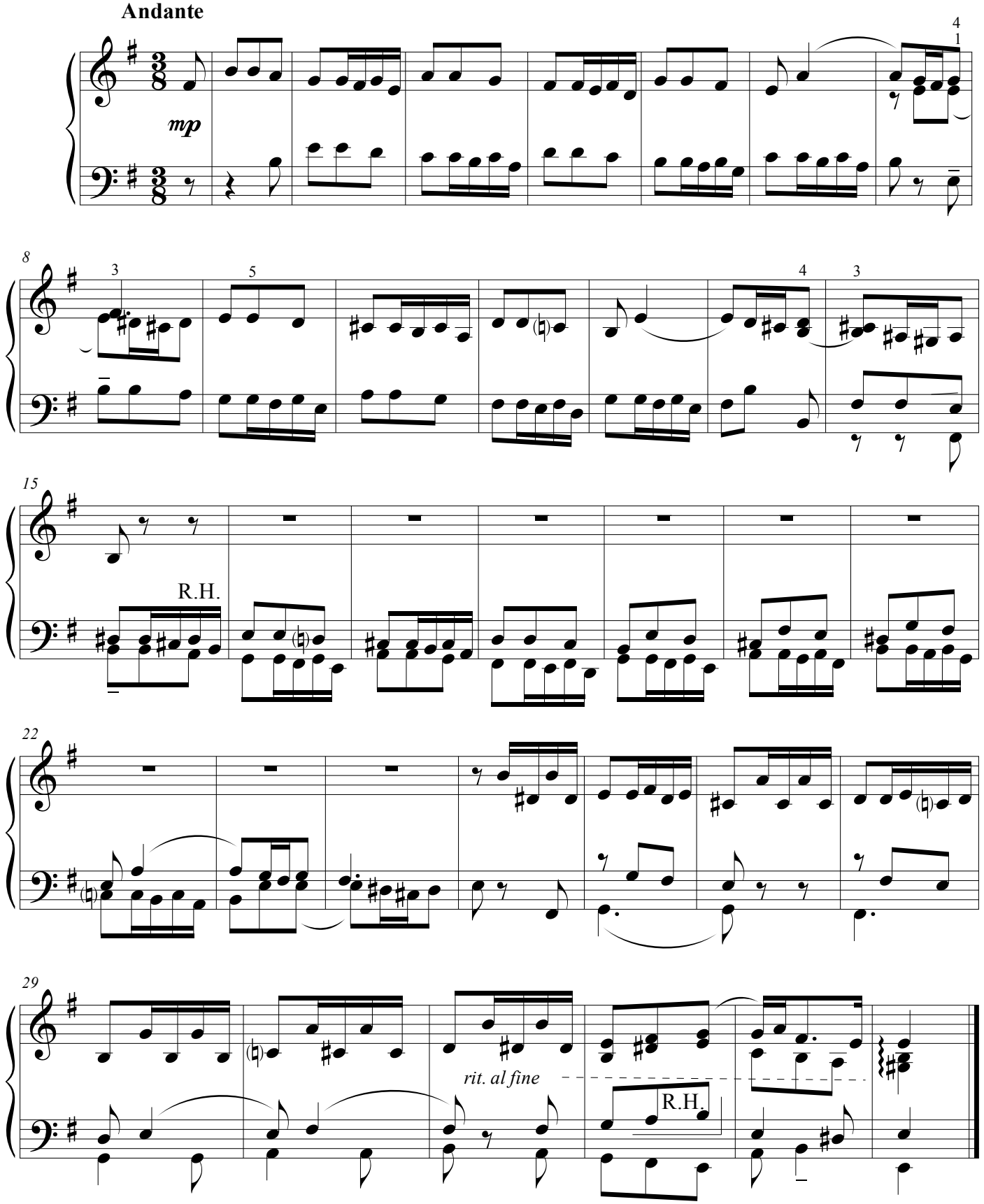
Fugue from Lute Suite #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Andante



Rushing the 16th notes will be a natural tendency here: use a metronome to keep a steady tempo.

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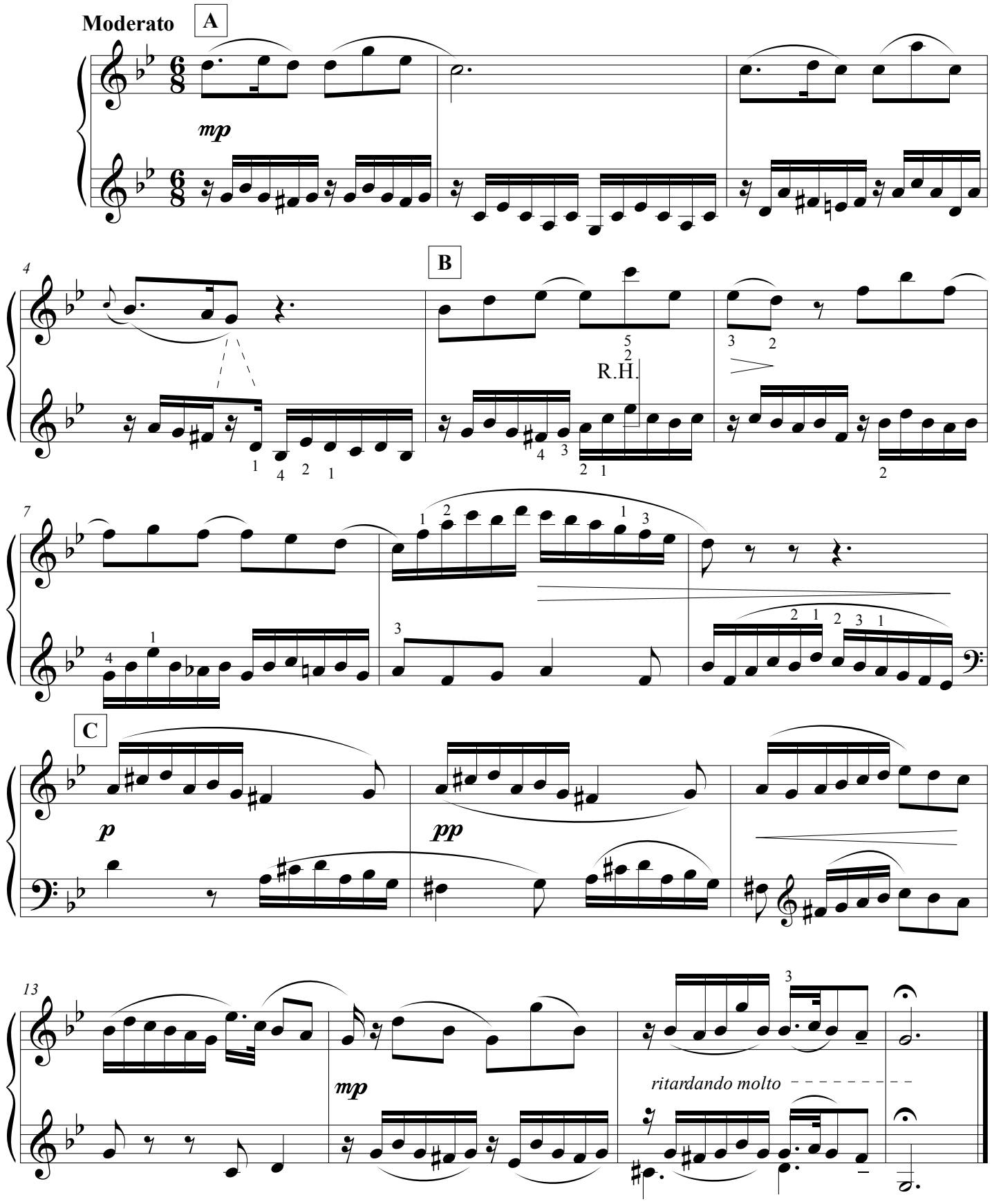
Siciliano from Flute Sonata #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



The left hand gets busy in this version of the famous Sicilano - take it slow and enjoy its winding ways.

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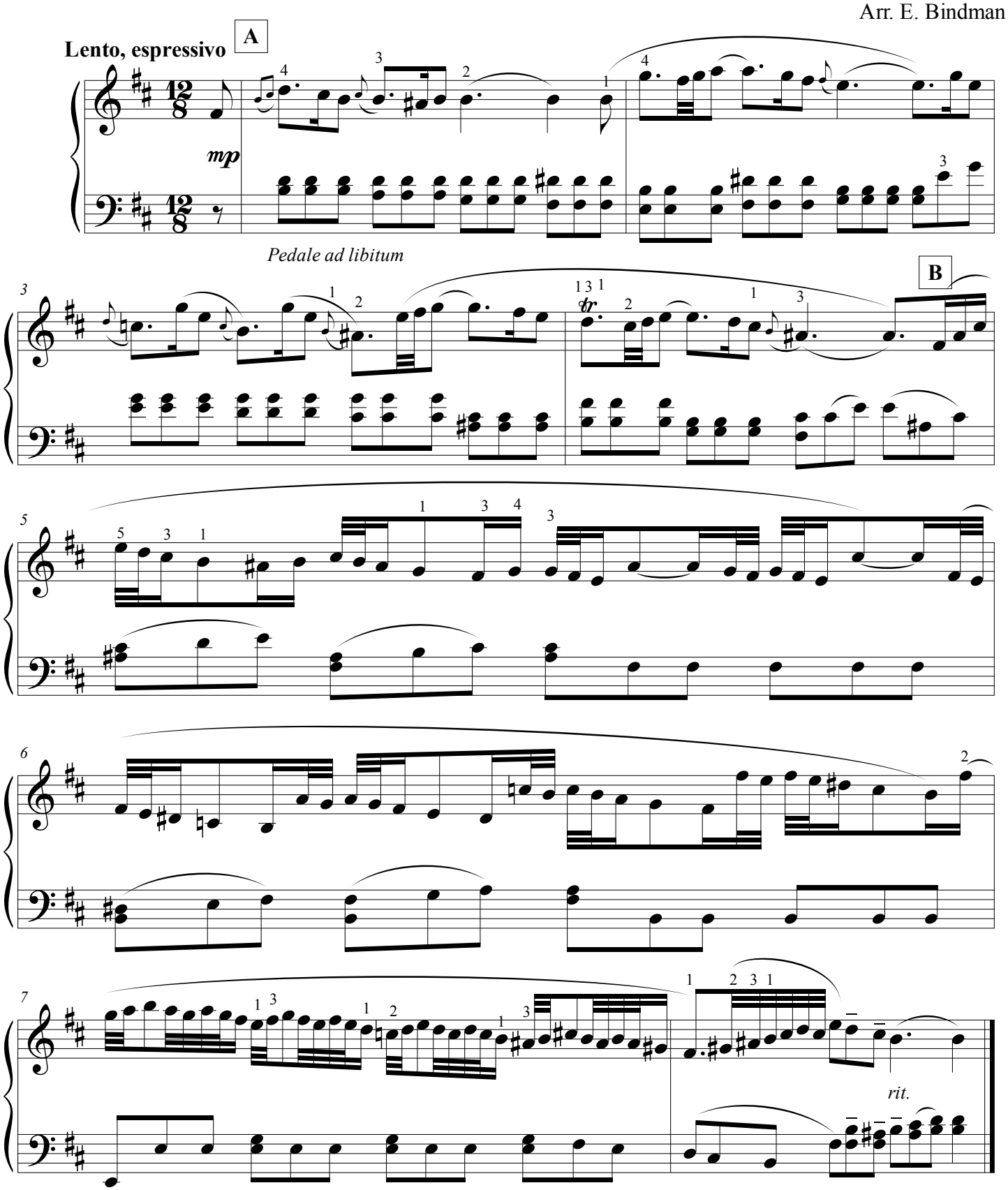
"Erbarme dich" from St. Matthew's Passion

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



This may look like a lot of notes but it's just 8 measures. Use each one to practice your counting of 16th and 32nd notes and make sure to listen to the original version in St. Matthew's Passion.

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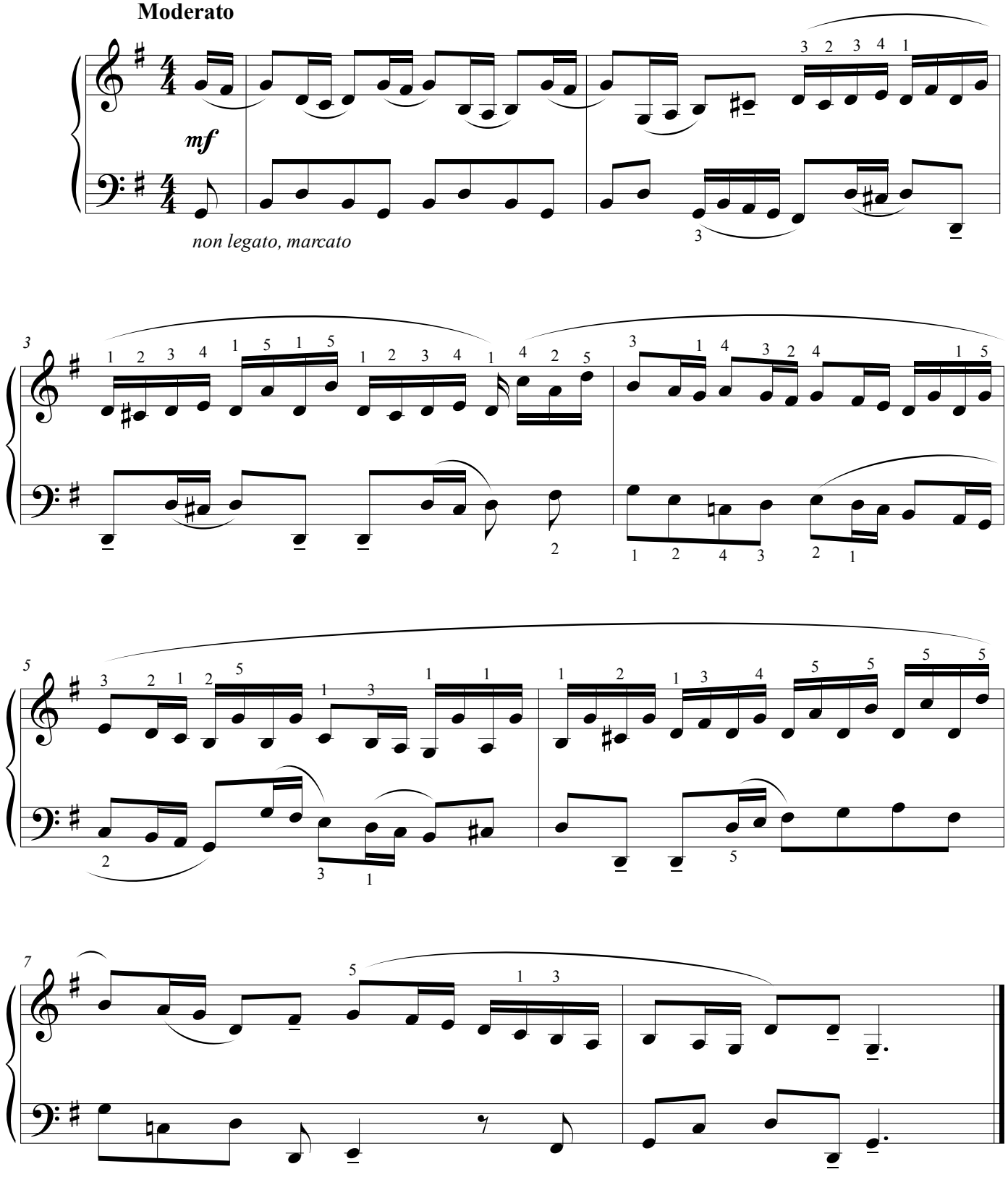
Theme from Brandenburg Concerto #3

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Moderato



The left hand should be played as distinctly and expressively as the right hand.

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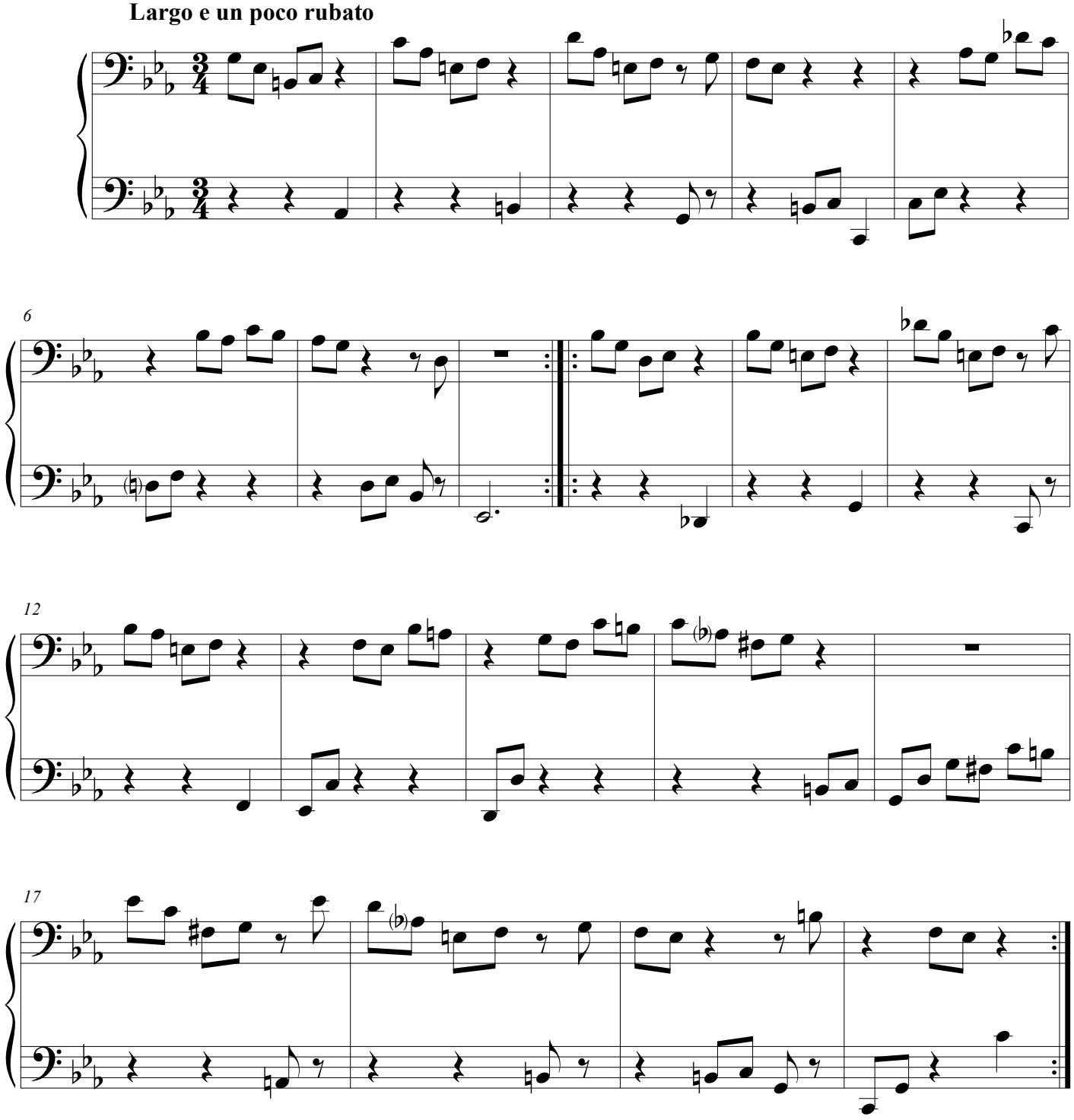
Sarabande from Cello Suite #5

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman

Largo e un poco rubato



This is a perfect piece to experiment with dynamics and articulation, making some changes when repeating each section. Legato groupings can vary from 2 to 4 or more notes, depending on how you hear the phrasing. Make sure that you listen to a cello recording to inspire your approach.

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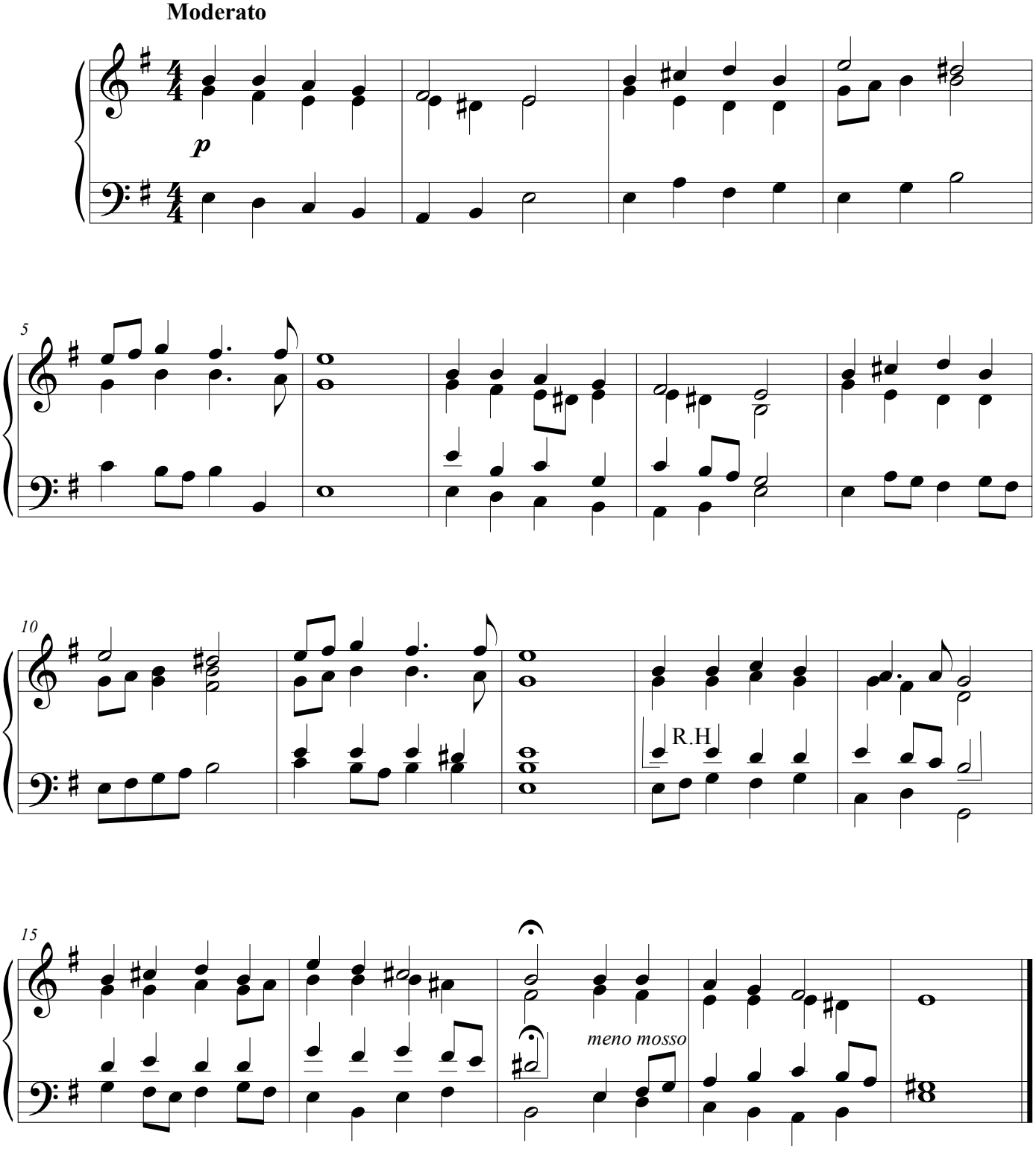
"Jesu, meine Freude" motet

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



The tenor voice of this choral texture should be played with the right hand where indicated and in some other places as well, as you feel comfortable. Pay attention to voice-leading and make sure that all of the longer notes, especially the dotted quarters, are carefully held and listened to as the lower voices change.

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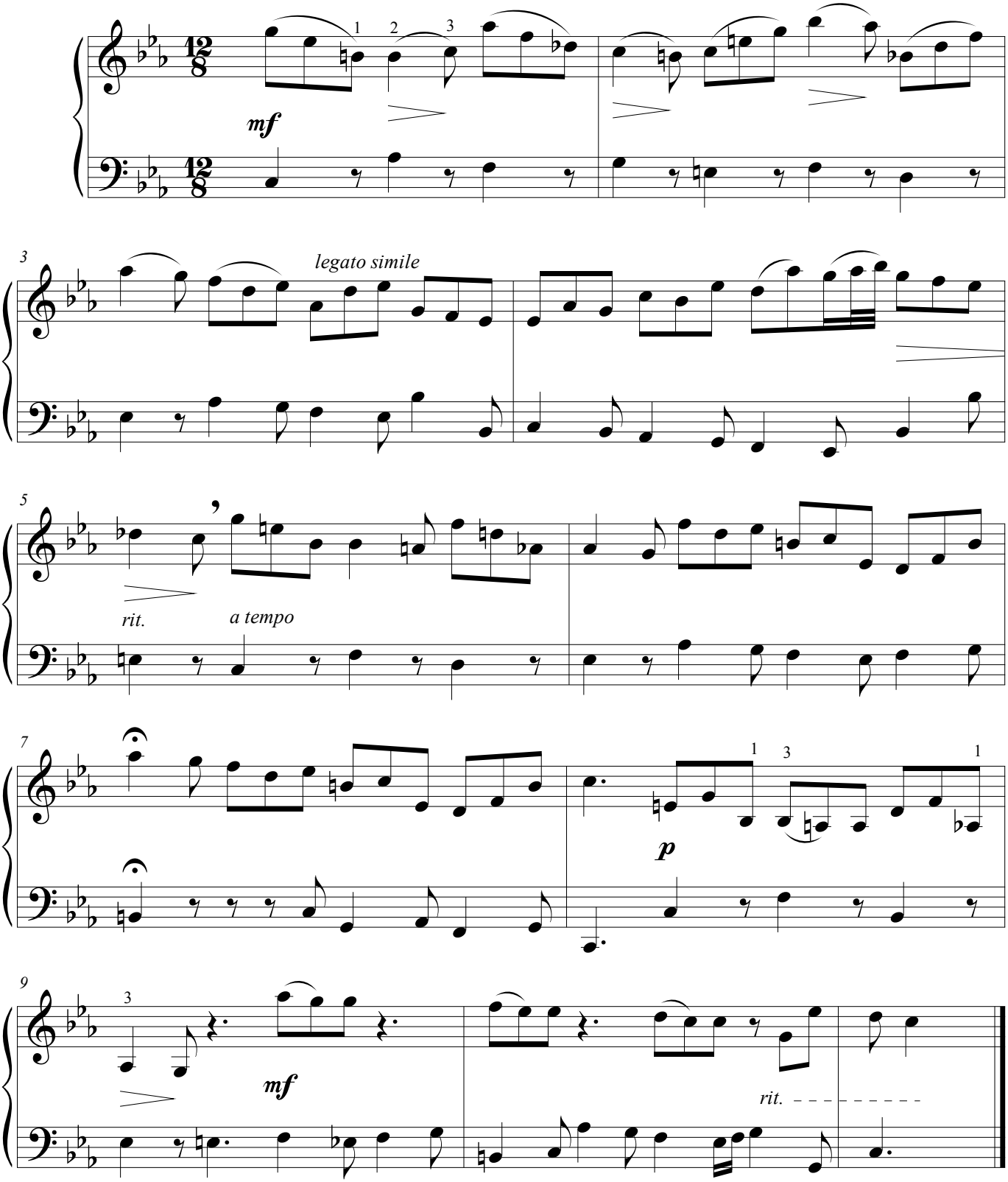
"Seufzer, Tränen, Kummer, Not"
from Cantata BWV 21

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Andante



The first measure shows two important aspects of this piece: switching fingers when a melody note repeats and making sure that the quarter + eighth note grouping is carefully phrased to end softly.

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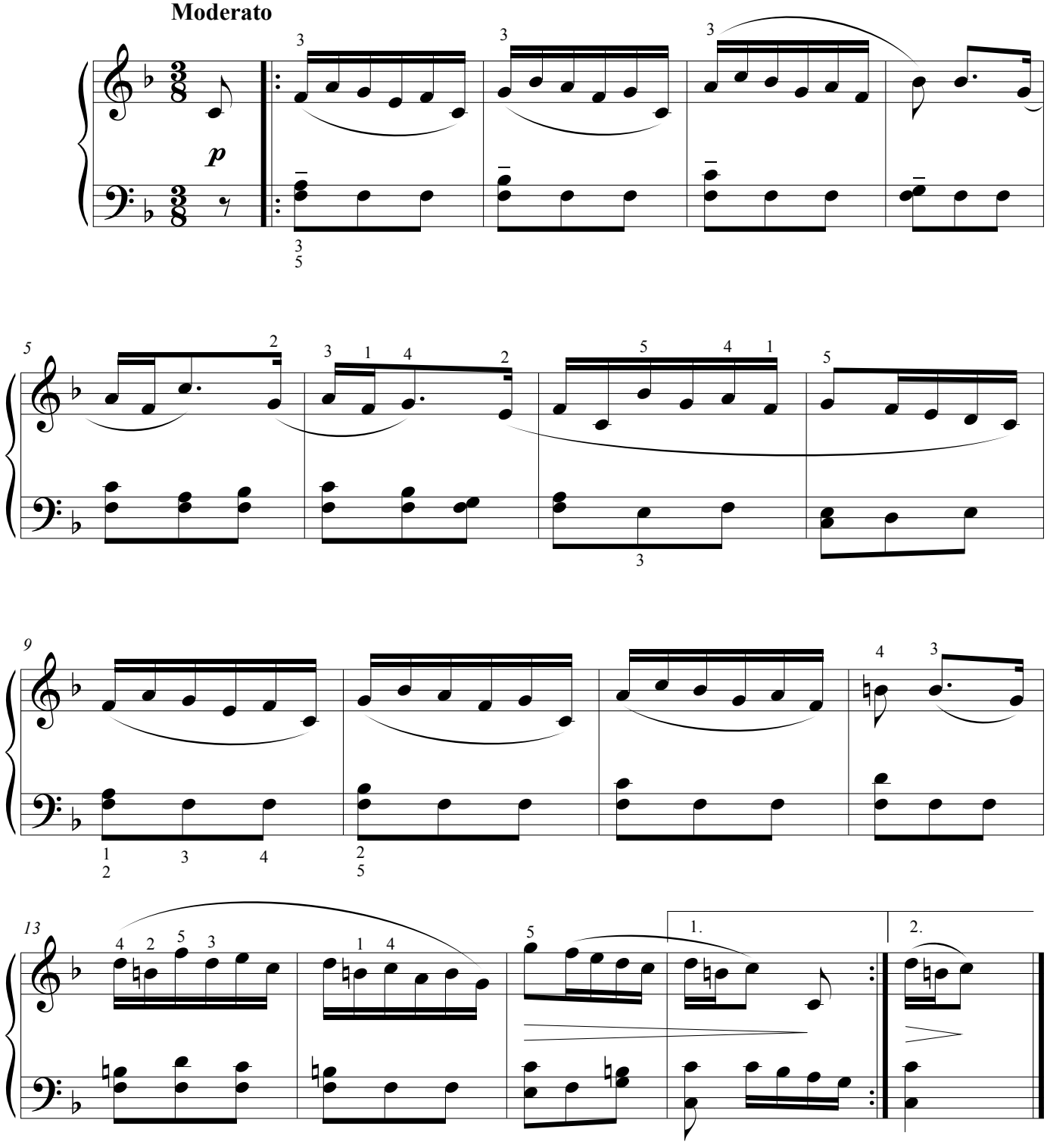
Polacca from Brandenburg Concerto #1

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



This is a nice warm up for the right hand - take your time and enjoy the stretches.
Light pedaling on each 8th note could be a good choice for this arrangement.

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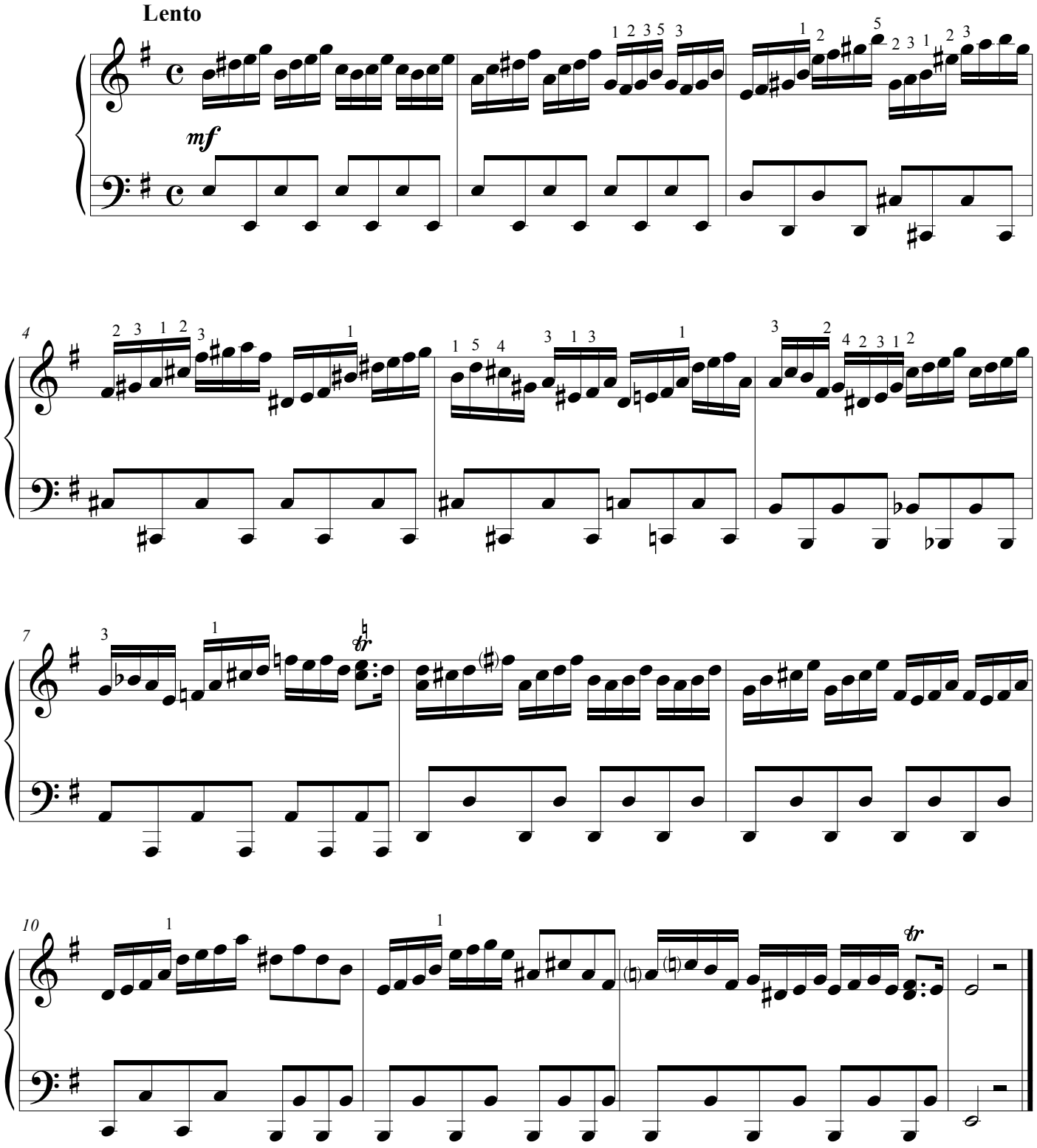
Andante from Viola de Gamba Sonata #1

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



Every performance I've heard of this interesting movement is done much slower than "Andante" so I thought a different tempo marking would be useful here. No need to rush these 16th notes at all.

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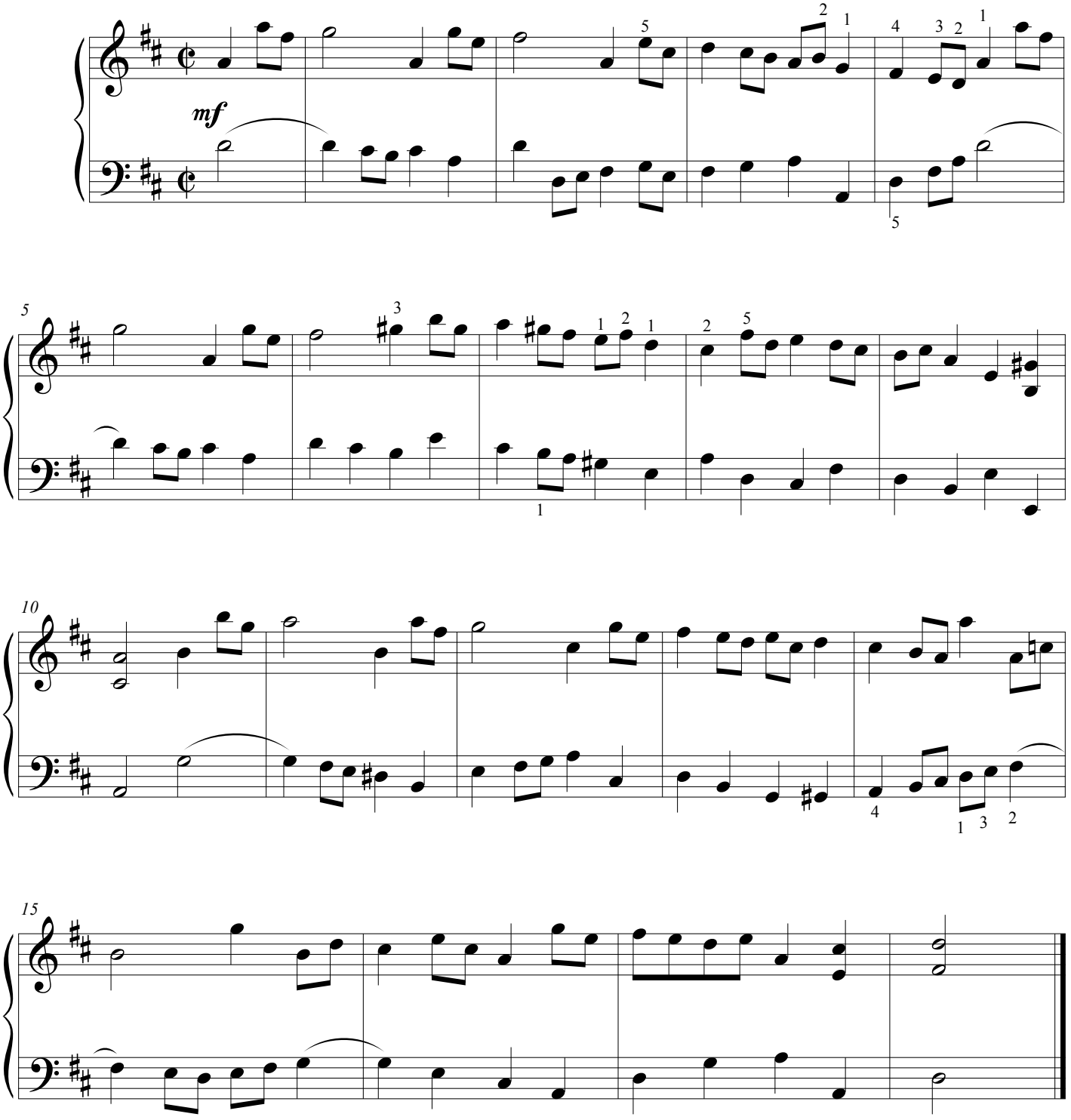
Gavotte from Orchestral Suite #3

J.S. Bach
Arr. E Bindman

Pesante



I would recommend playing all of the quarter notes non-legato here
but feel free to experiment with the articulation of the 8th notes.

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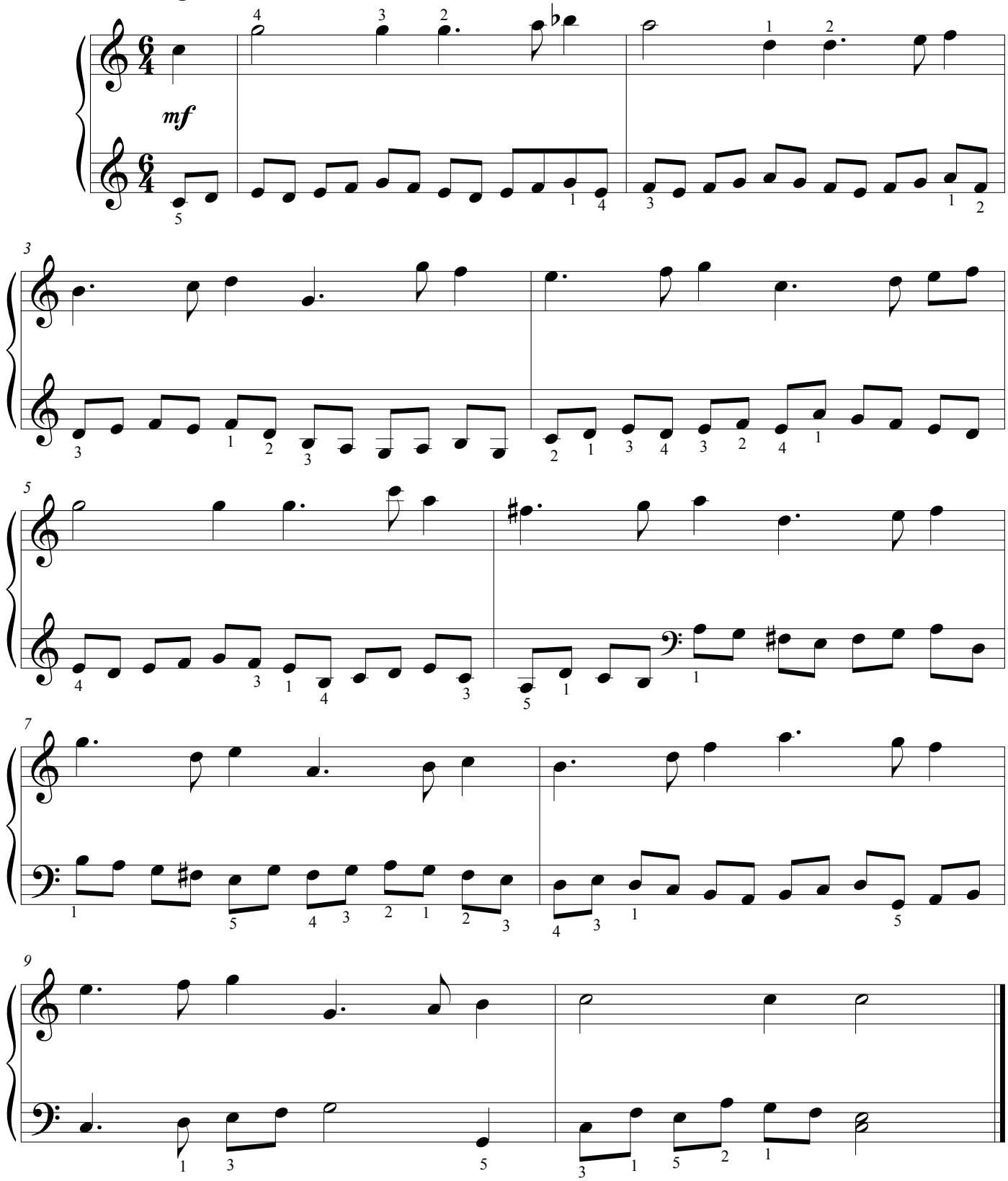
Forlane from Orchestral Suite #1

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman

Allegro



My version of the energetic Forlane is intended as an exercise for the left hand.
Start learning it by playing just the left hand slowly for a few days.

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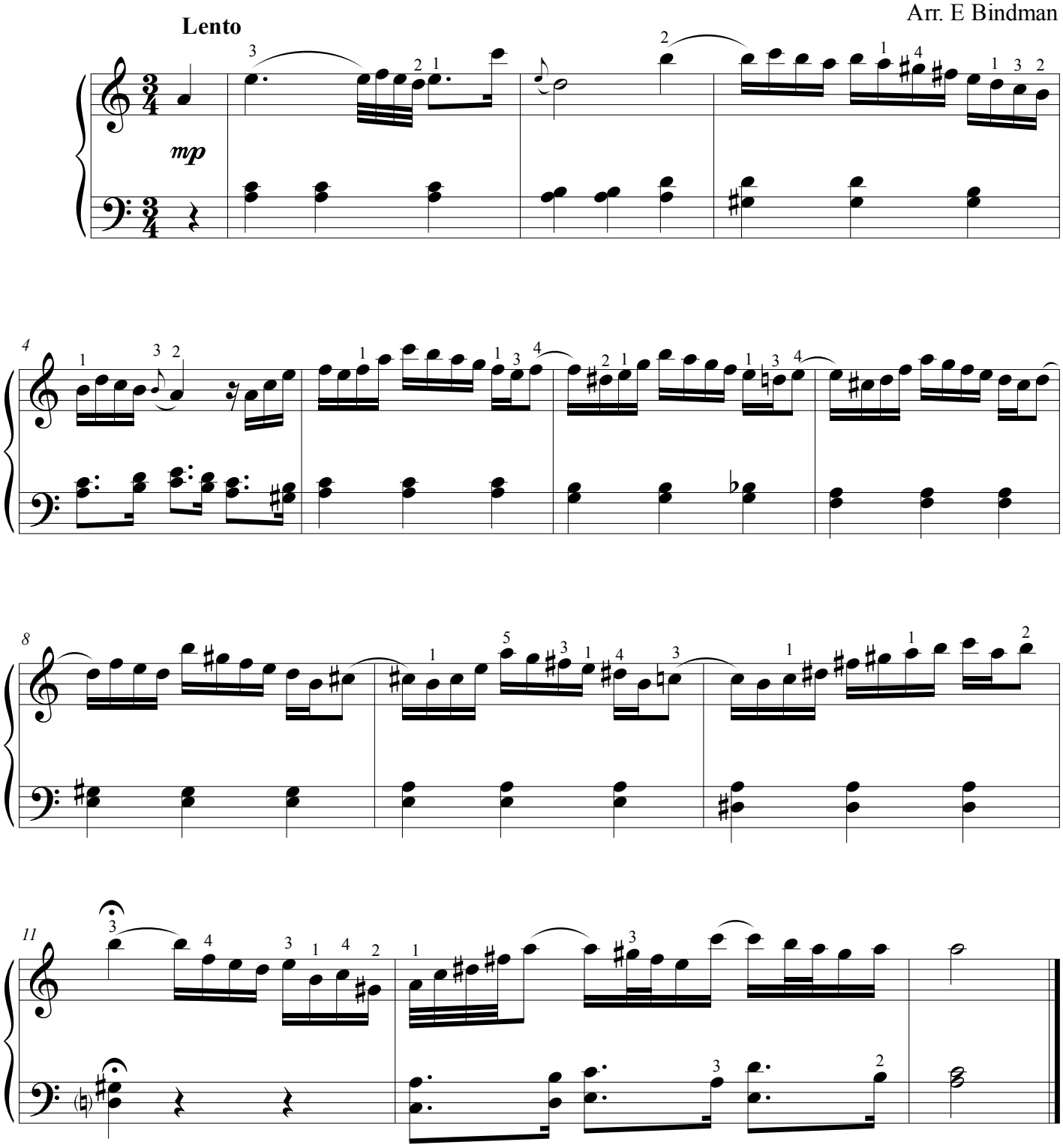
Flute solo from St. Matthew's Passion

"Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben"

J.S. Bach

Arr. E Bindman



Bach scored the accompaniment of this flute solo for two oboes, indicating a detached articulation. On the piano, a slightly pedaled sonority works as well, especially if you play at a slower tempo. Keep your right arm relaxed and listen to the tied melody notes to improve your "cantabile" touch.

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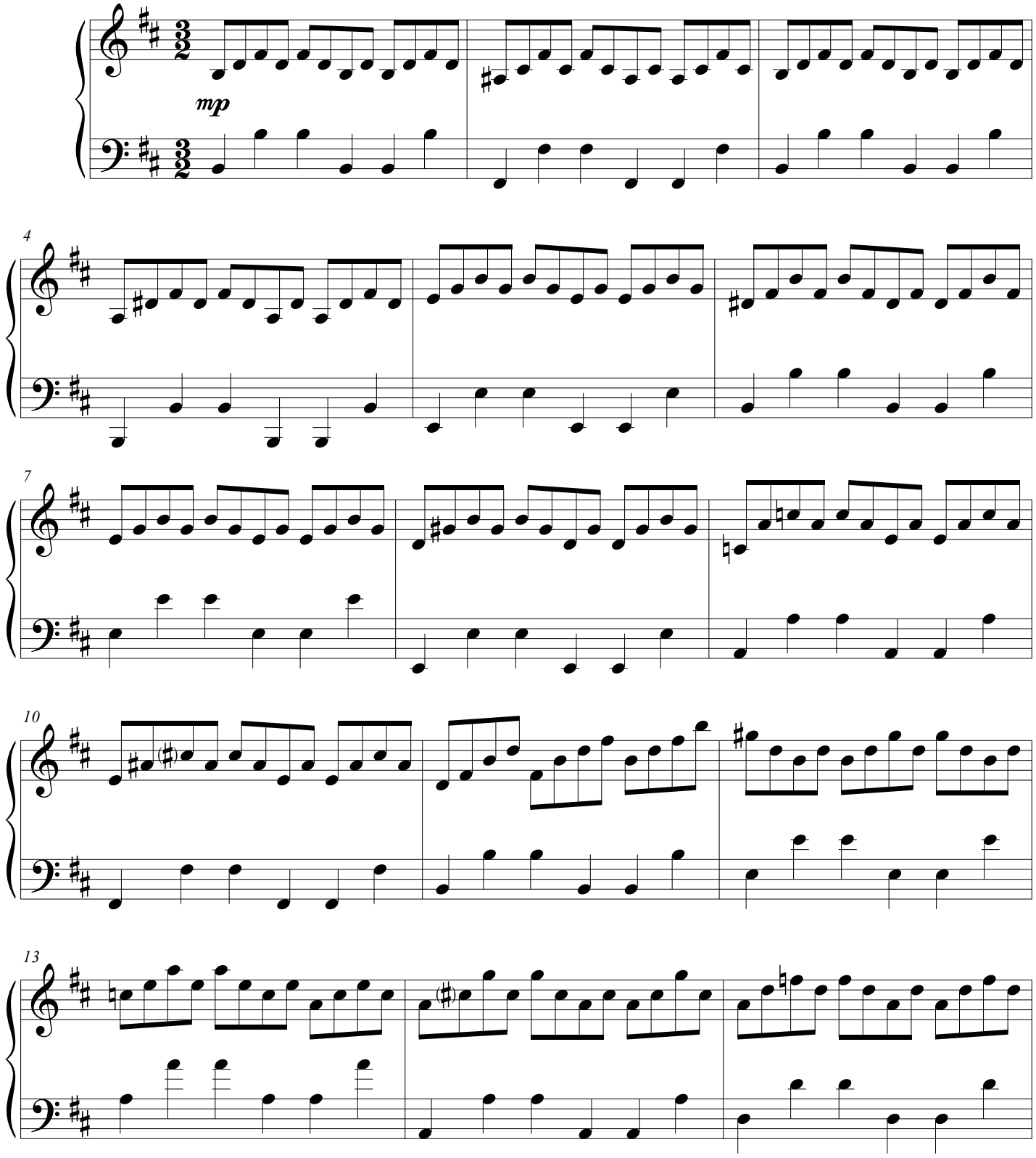
Andante and Adagio from J.S.Bach's arrangement of a Violin Concerto by Torelli

Giuseppe Torelli
Arr. J.S. Bach

Andante



The right hand gets a great broken-chord workout here and the left hand can practice cultivating an exact stretch and even tone when playing octaves.

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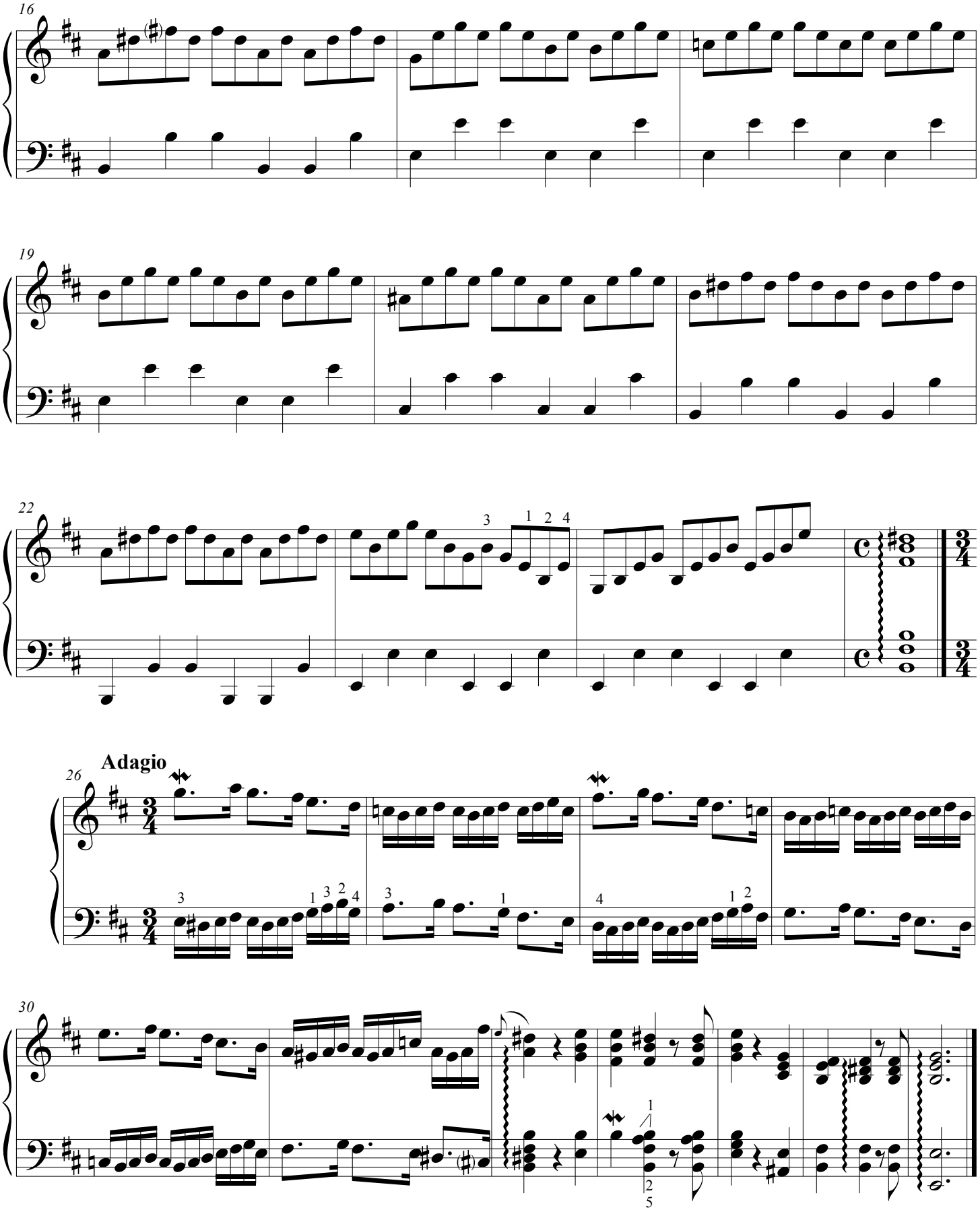
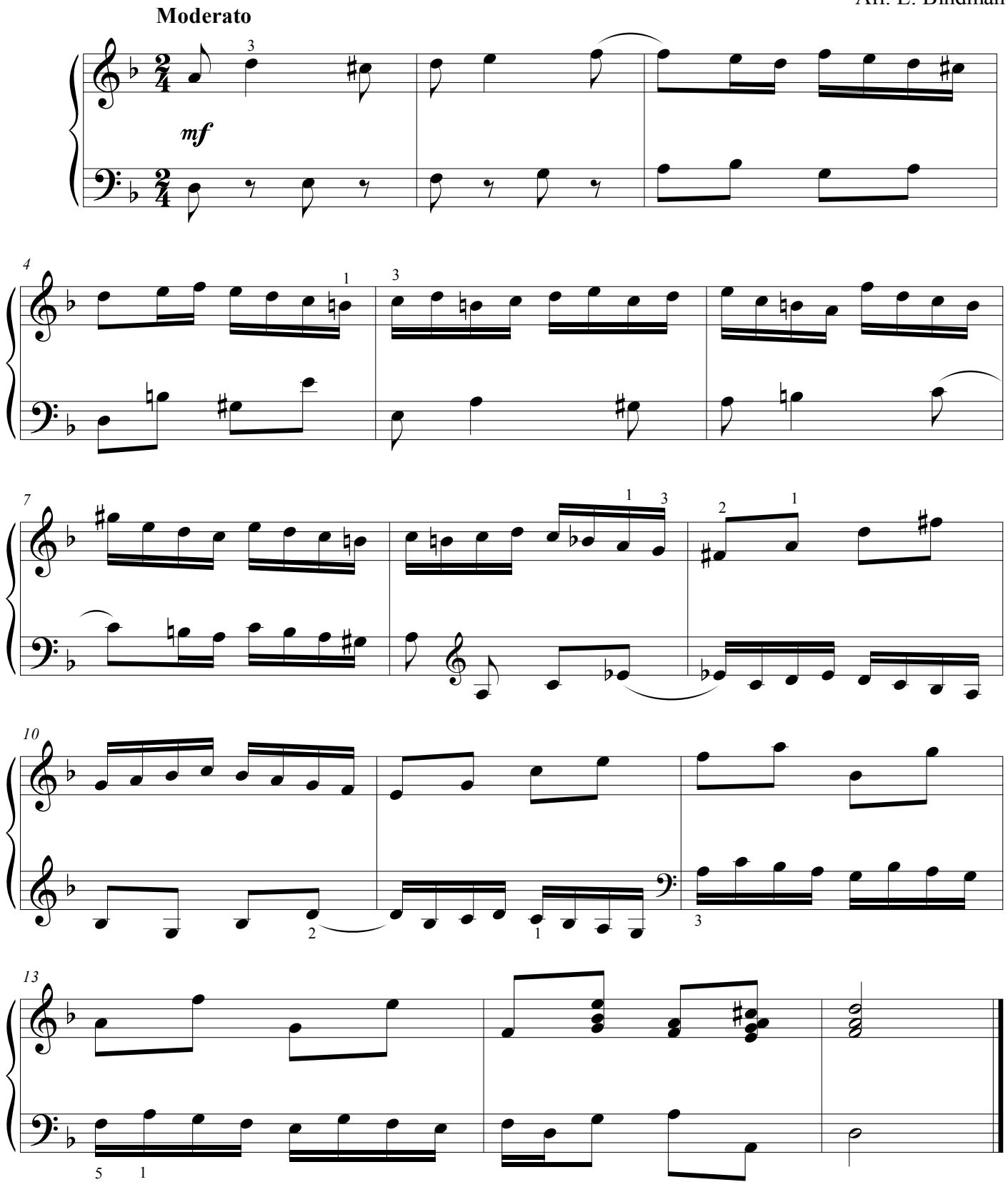


I am thrilled to include J.S. Bach's own arrangement in our collection. He made many solo keyboard versions of concertos by Vivaldi and other composers in Weimar around 1714, catalogued as BWV 972-987. The two excerpts here are from his arrangement of a violin concerto by Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709.)

Allegro from Concerto for 3 Harpsichords

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



This example reads like a 2-part invention and can be played as slowly as you need, especially while you are learning it.

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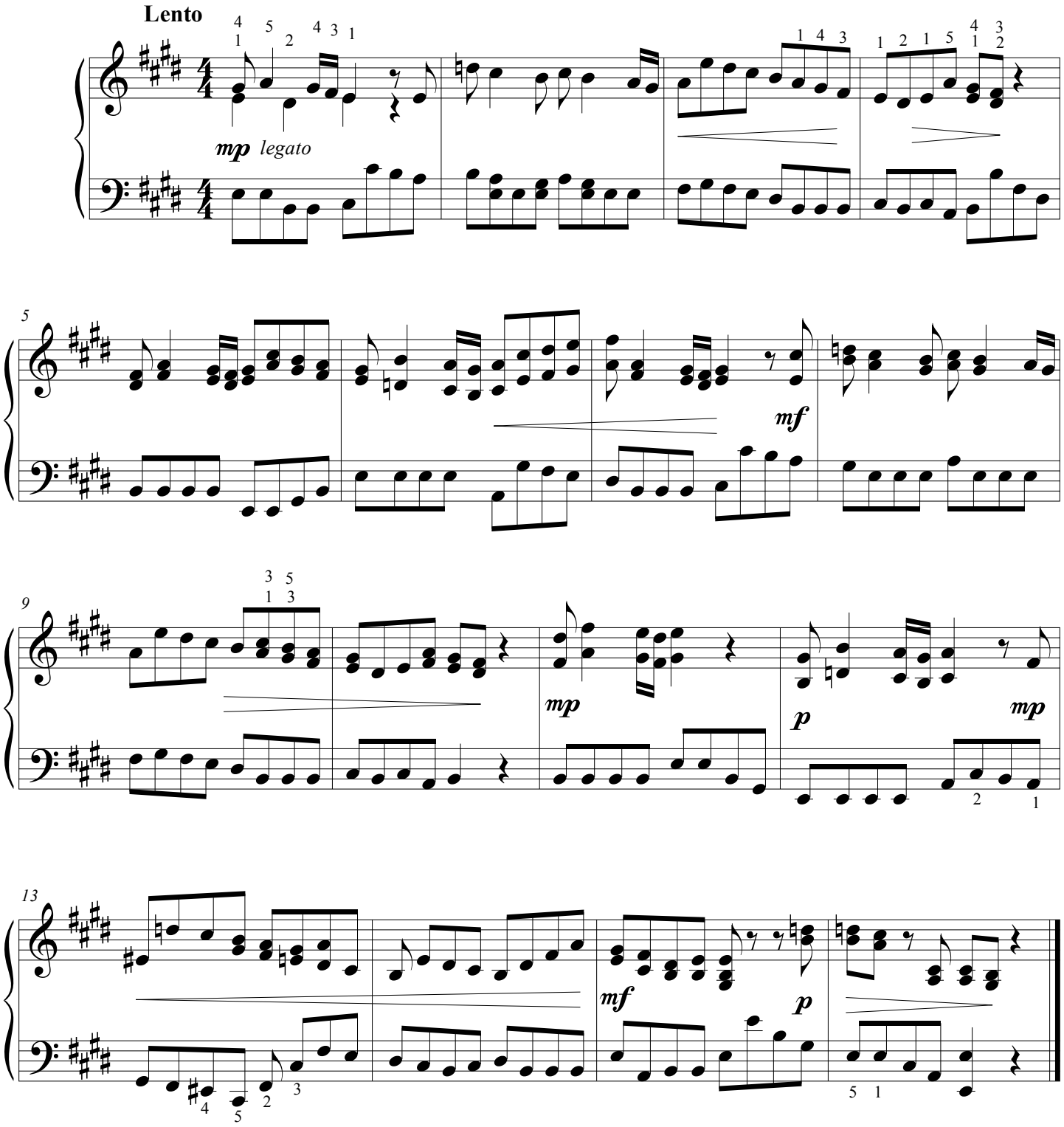
"Schlummert ein" from Cantata BWV 82

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



I changed the key to E major because the original key of E-flat would be too awkward on the piano. This gentle aria is a great exercise for controlled soft playing, especially in the left-hand repeated notes.

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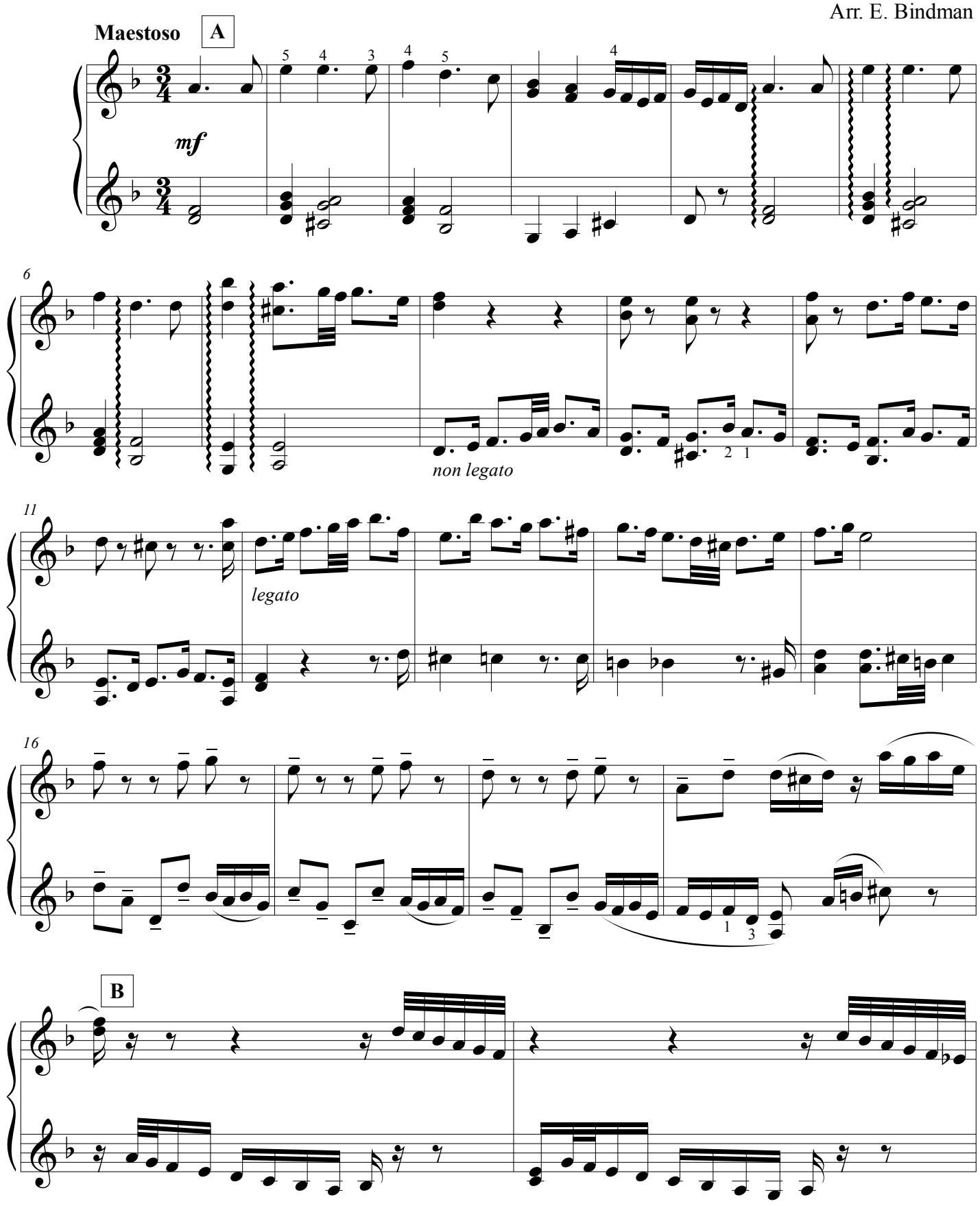
Chaconne from Violin Partita #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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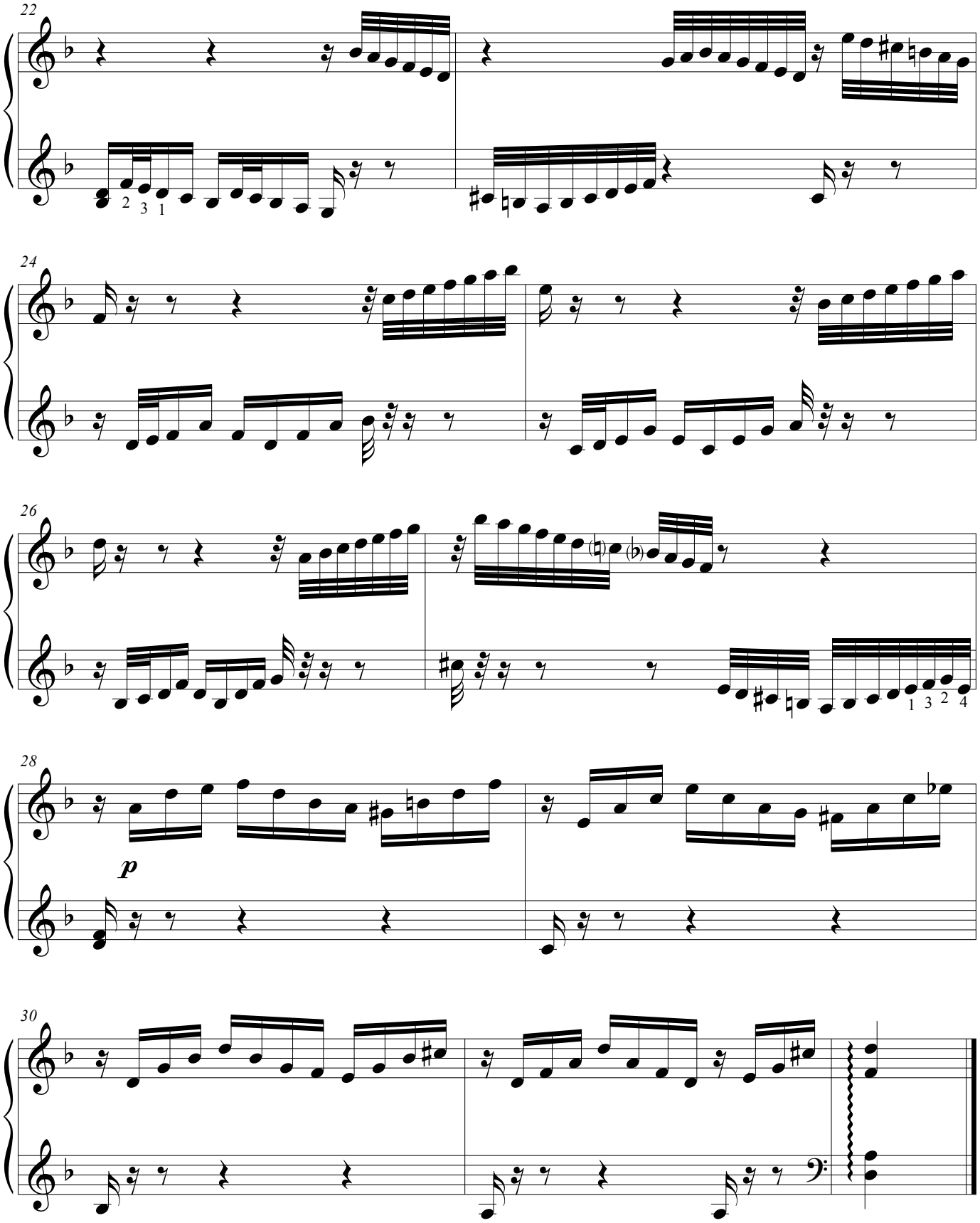
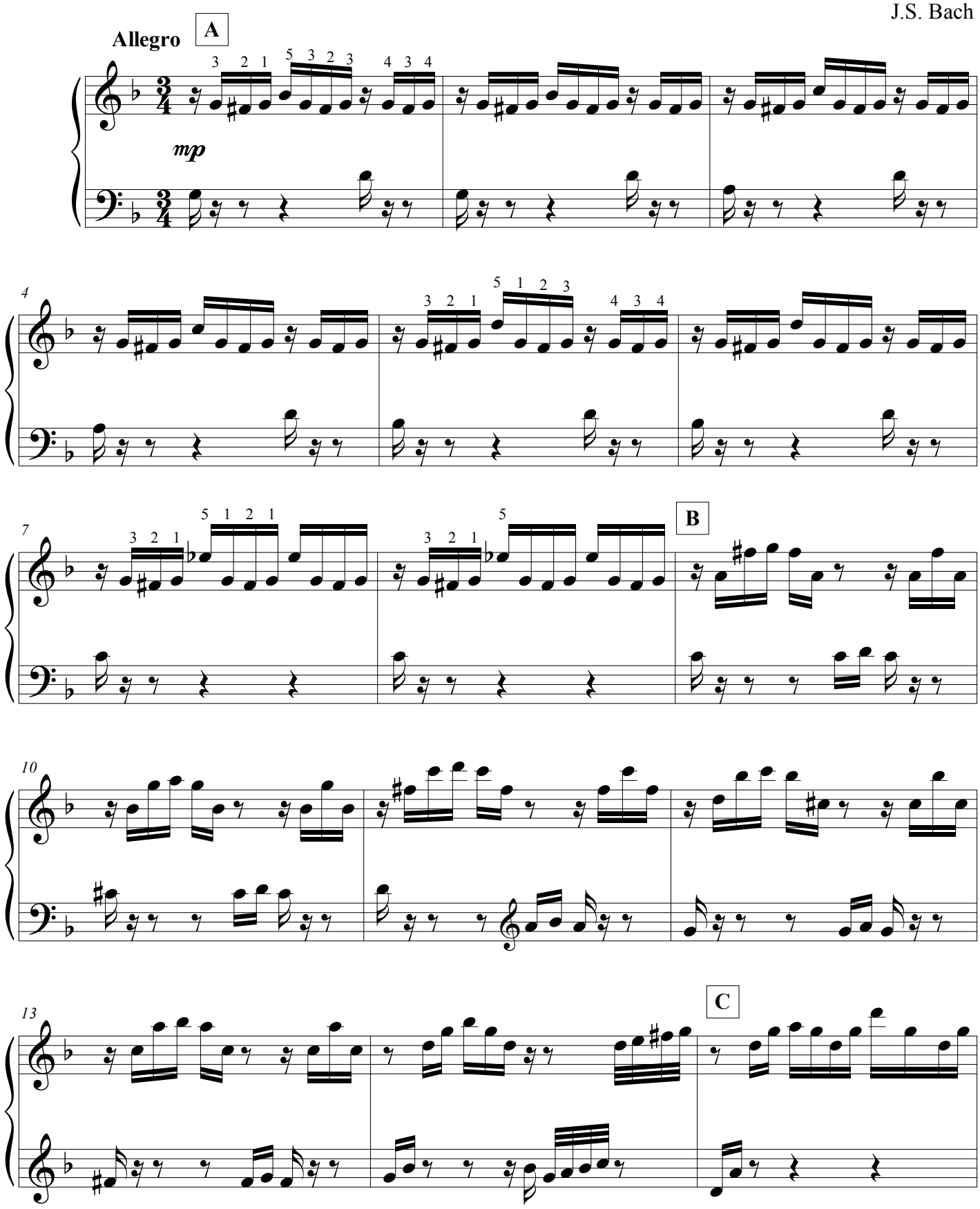


This unadorned transcription of the famous Chaconne sounds great on the piano and is fun to play. Bonus: it's also wondeful for practicing counting 32nd notes and the various dotted rhythms which need to be exact, especially in the beginning. Some pedal would be fine to amplify each chord.

Finale of Concerto in D minor

J.S. Bach



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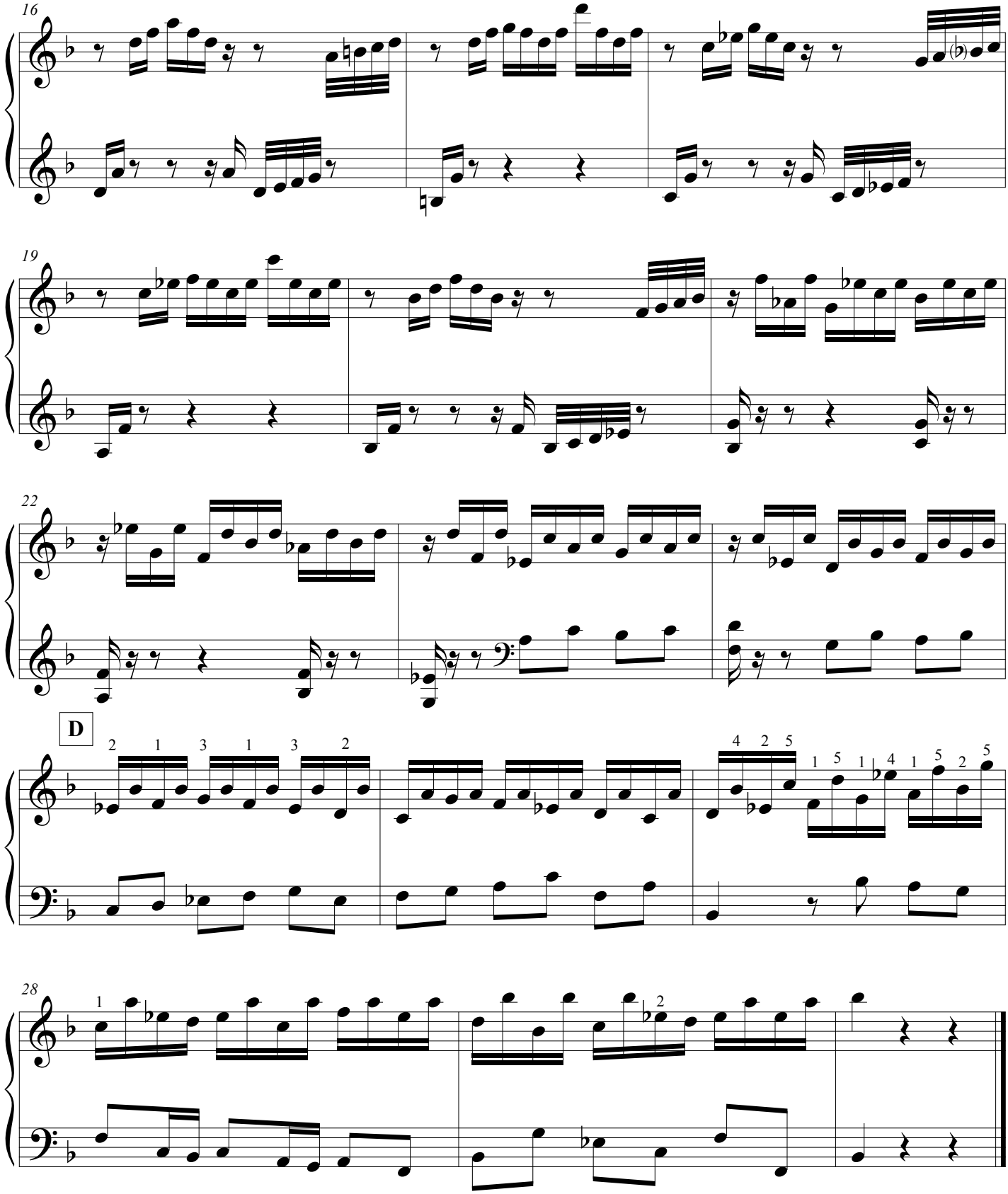
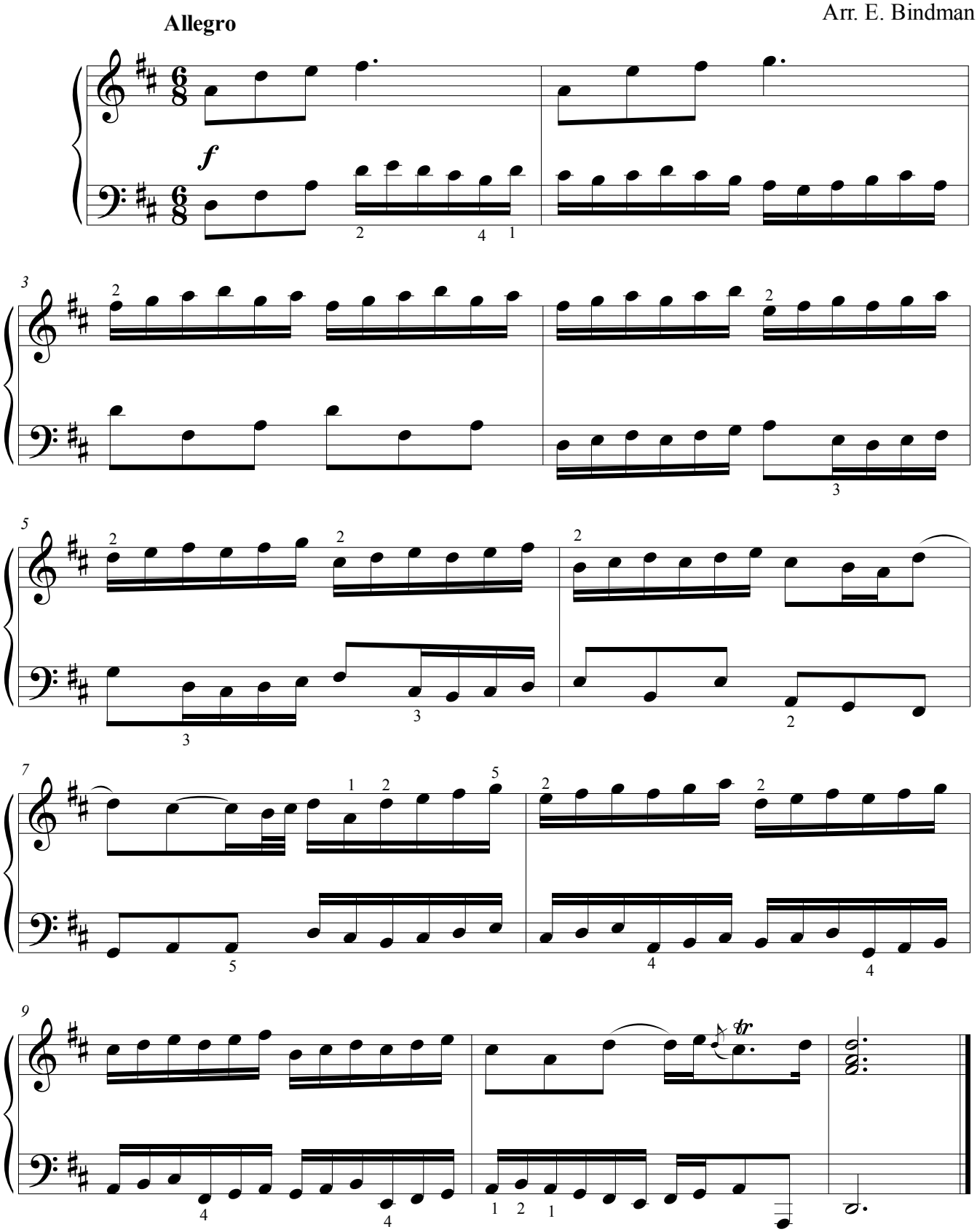


These 30 measures from Bach's most famous keyboard concerto are fantastic for practicing a light and even touch. The fingerings for section A will be very comfortable if you keep your elbow further away from the torso, angling your hand so that your thumb falls underneath the middle finger on that G key. You will see that changing the finger on G will prevent fatigue at a fast tempo.

Allegro from Viola de Gamba Sonata #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



If you start by playing each hand separately for a few days, you'll coordinate the hands more easily later.

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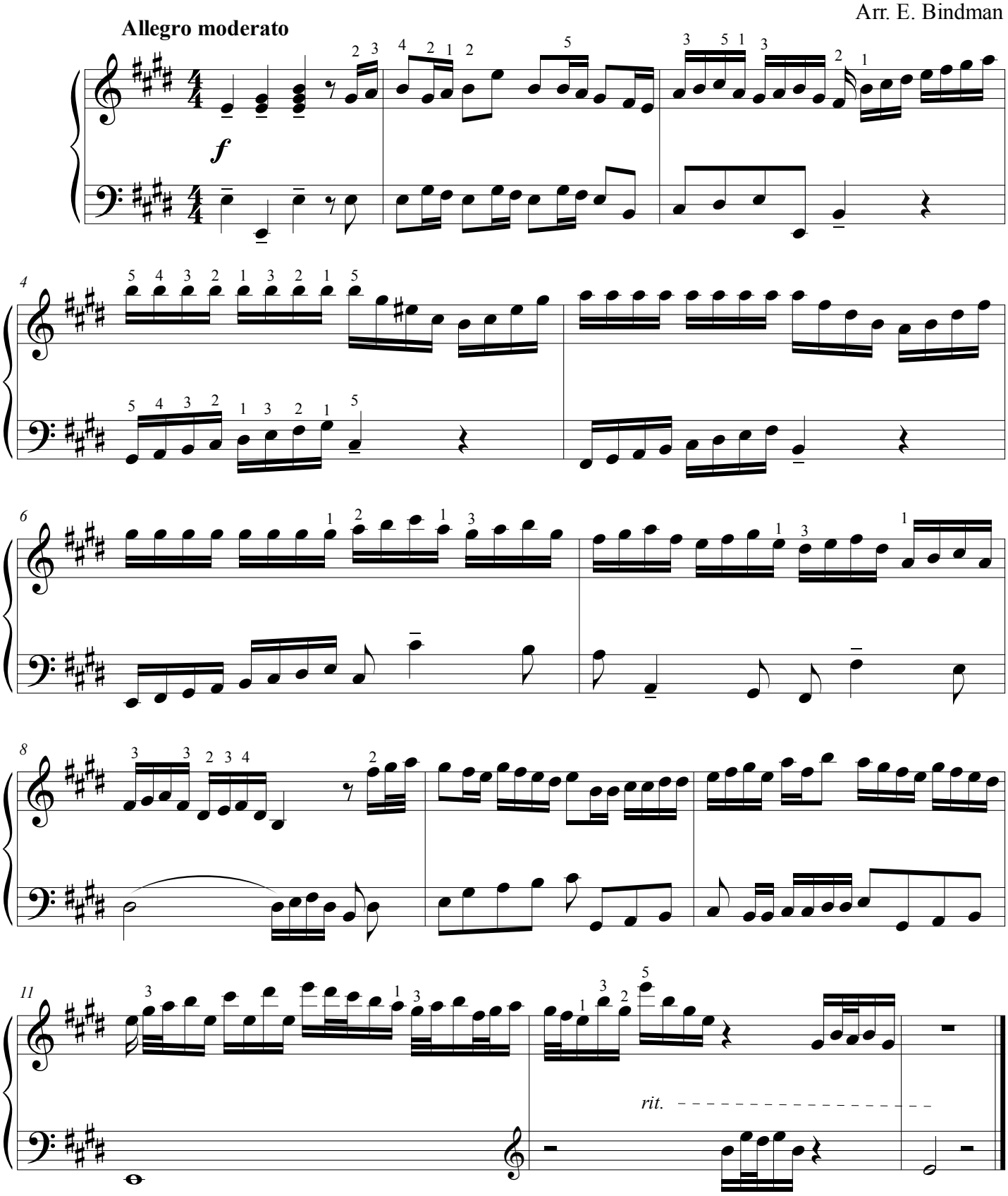
Allegro from Violin Concerto #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



The fingerings in measure 4 are a viable choice because they are "symmetrical"- when the hands play the same fingers it feels good. I recommend trying them unless, of course, you come up with ones you like better.

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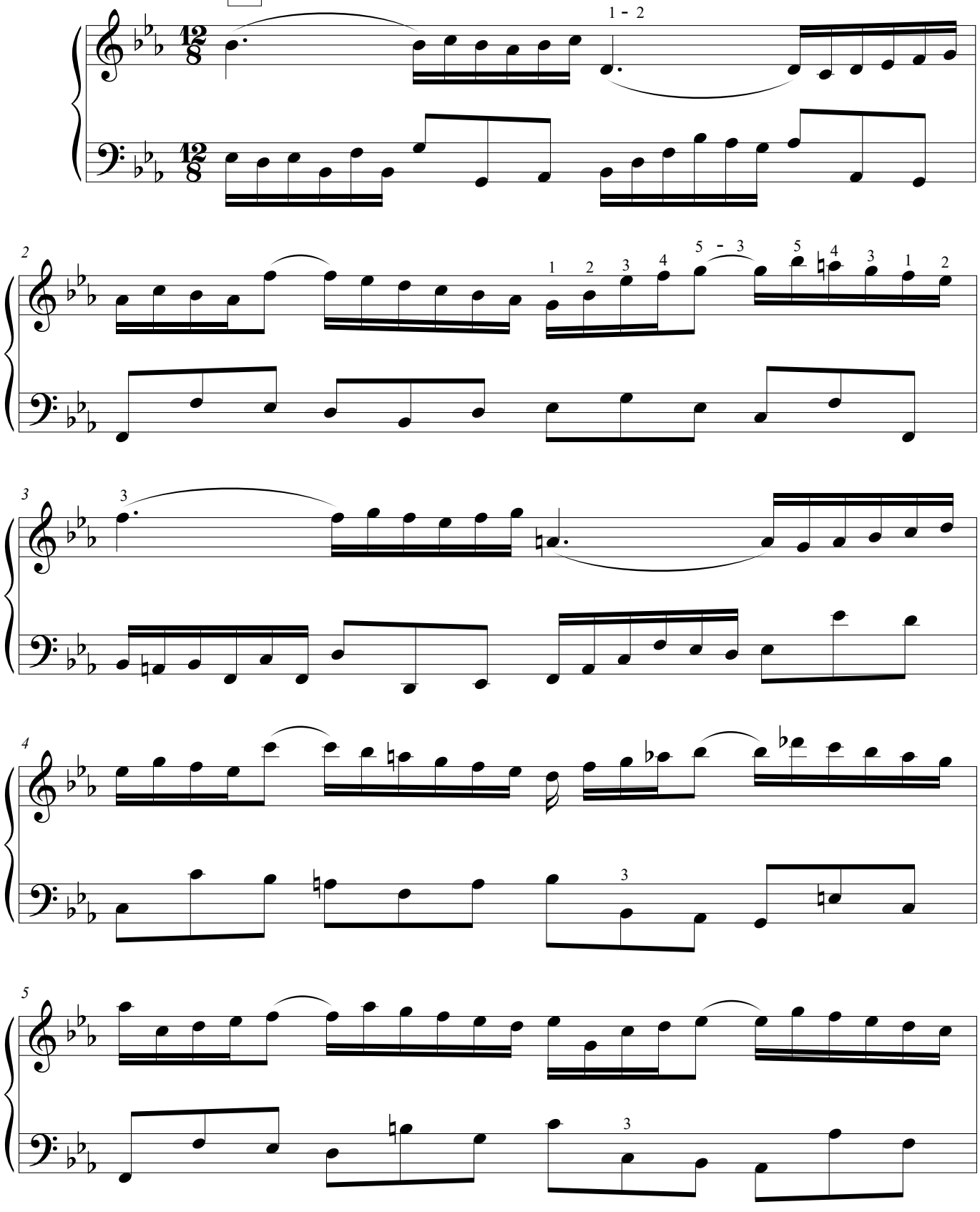
Adagio from Concerto for 2 Harpsichords

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Cantabile **A**



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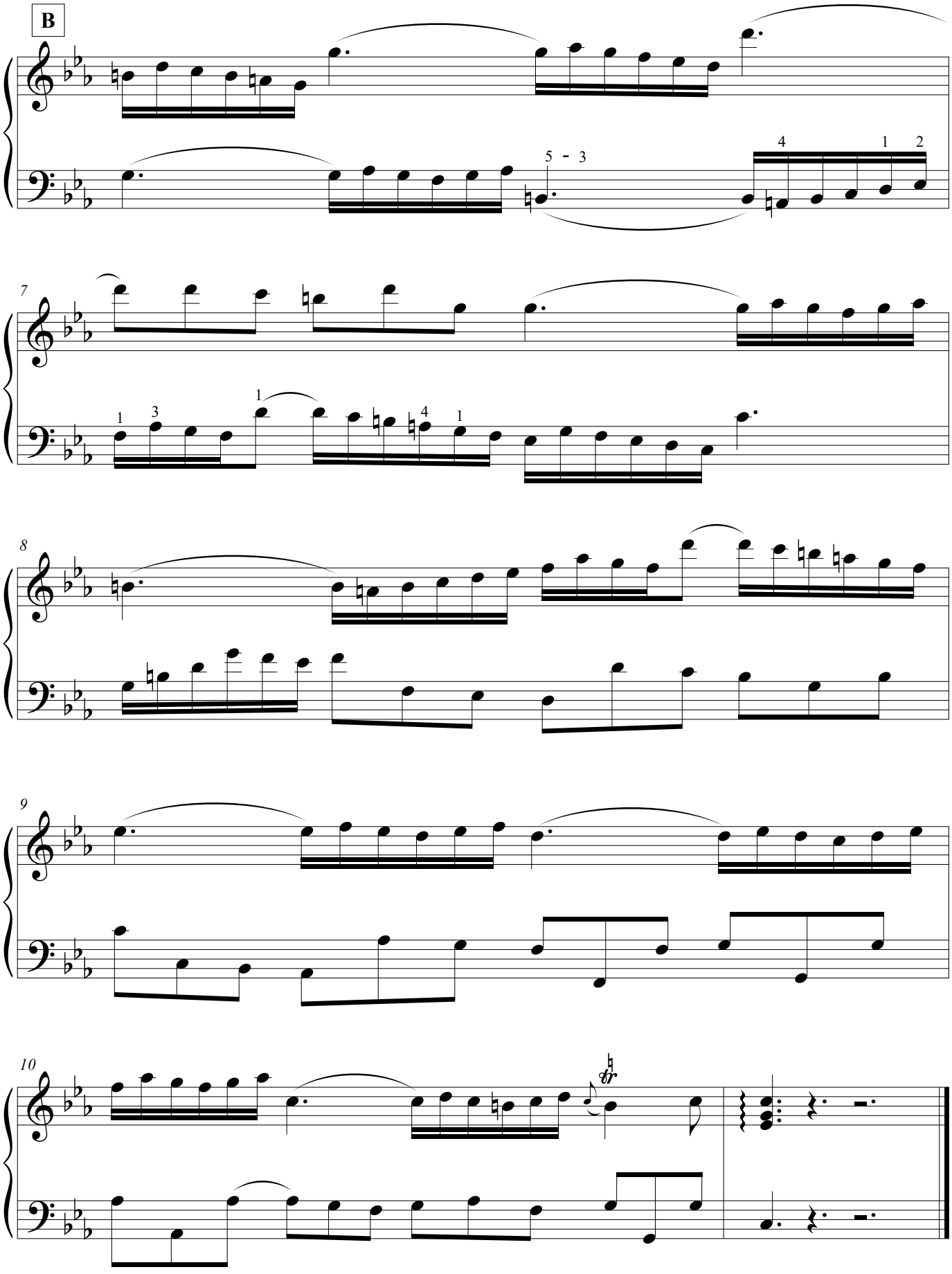
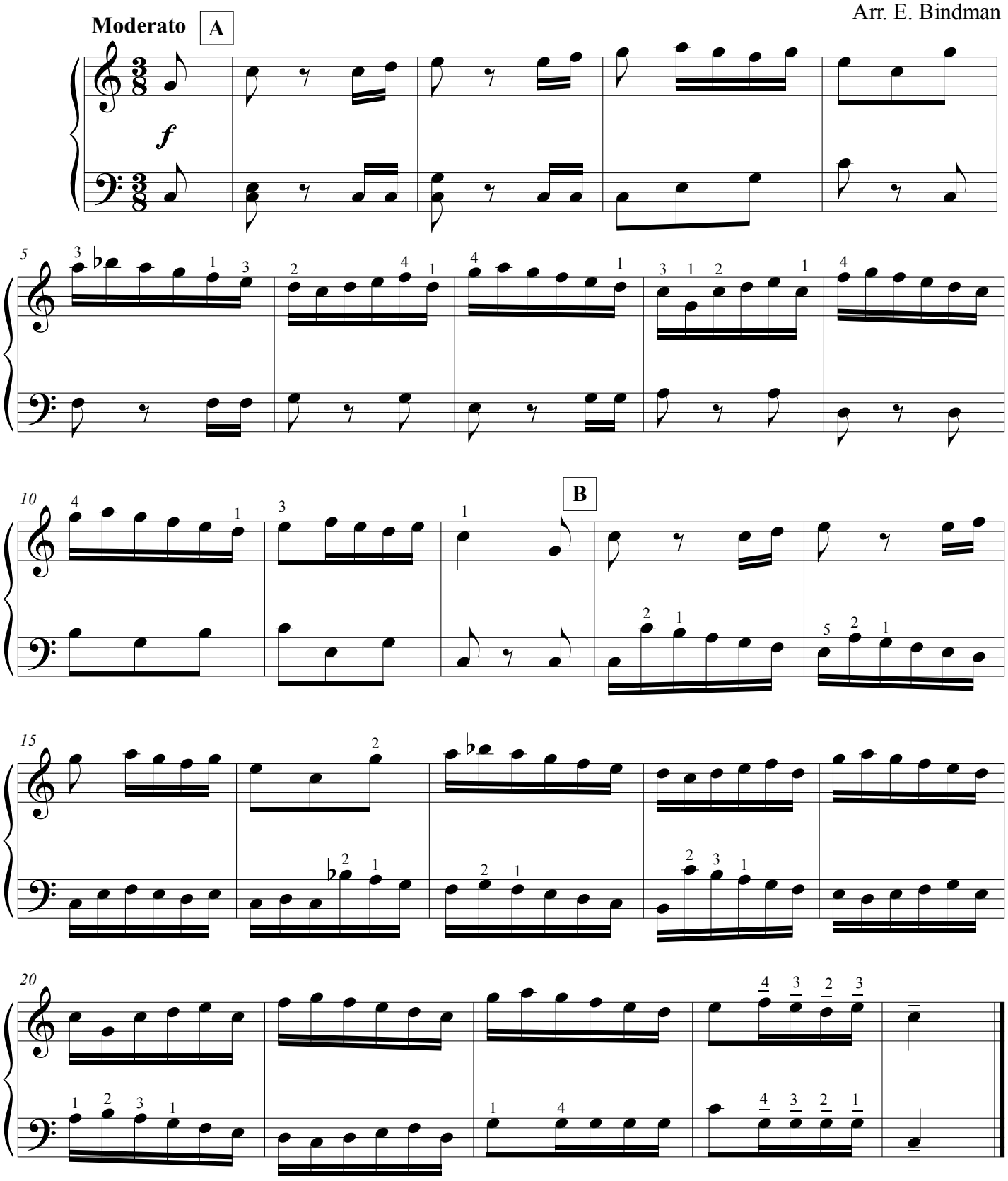


This arrangement could fit on one page but I decided to spread it out so that it looks less daunting. Unfamiliar pieces often seem intimidating, especially with lots of 16th notes, even if the tempo is slow.

"Erschallet, ihr Lieder" from Cantata BWV 172

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



Once you master the first half of this jubliant excerpt, adding the running notes in the left hand will be easier in the second half. You may try to connect or separate the shorter notes, as you wish.

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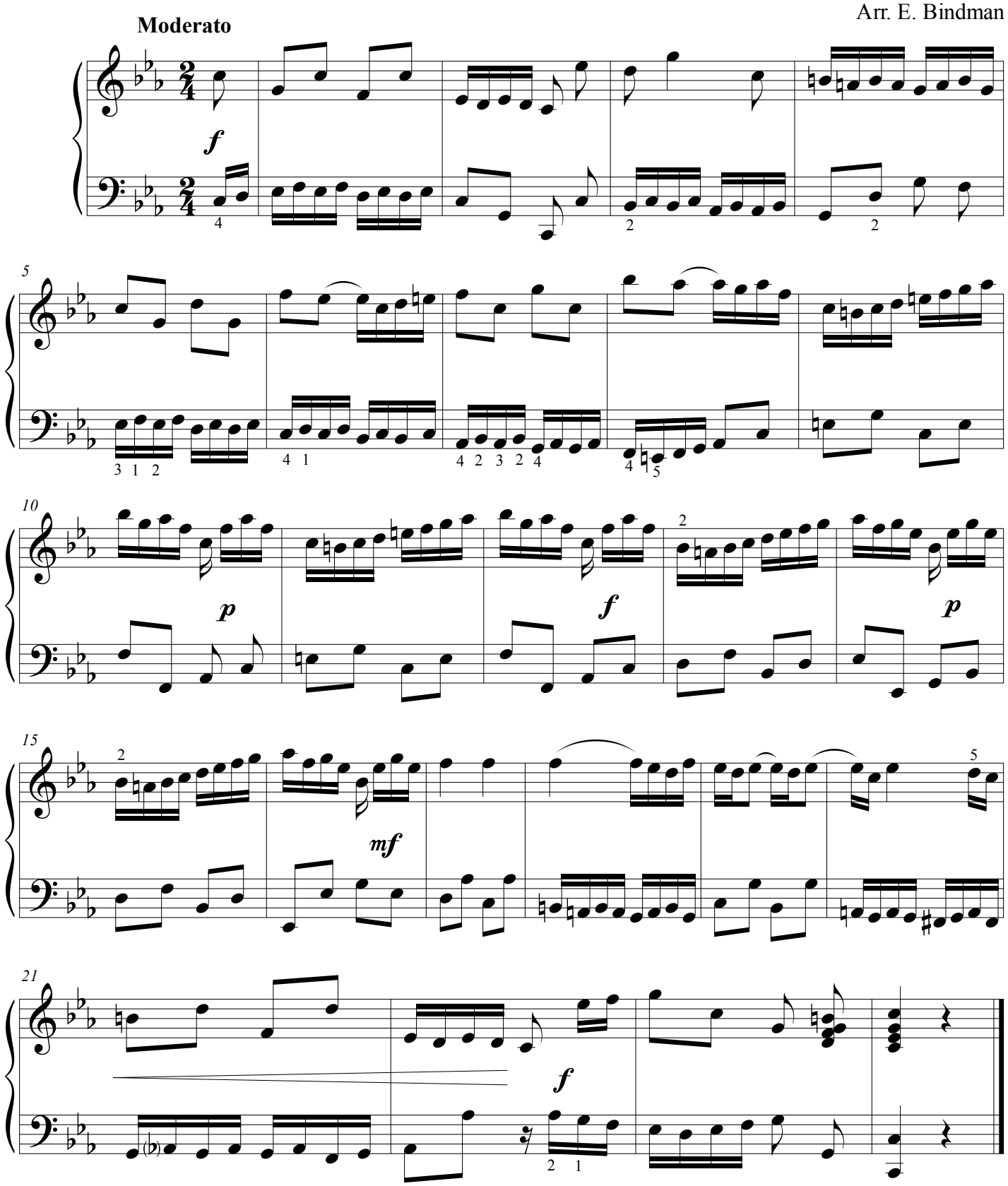
Finale of Double Keyboard Concerto in C minor

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



As in all similar pieces with a 16th/8th-note rhythmic texture, we need to pay attention to the 8th notes and make sure that we don't play them staccato or cut them short.

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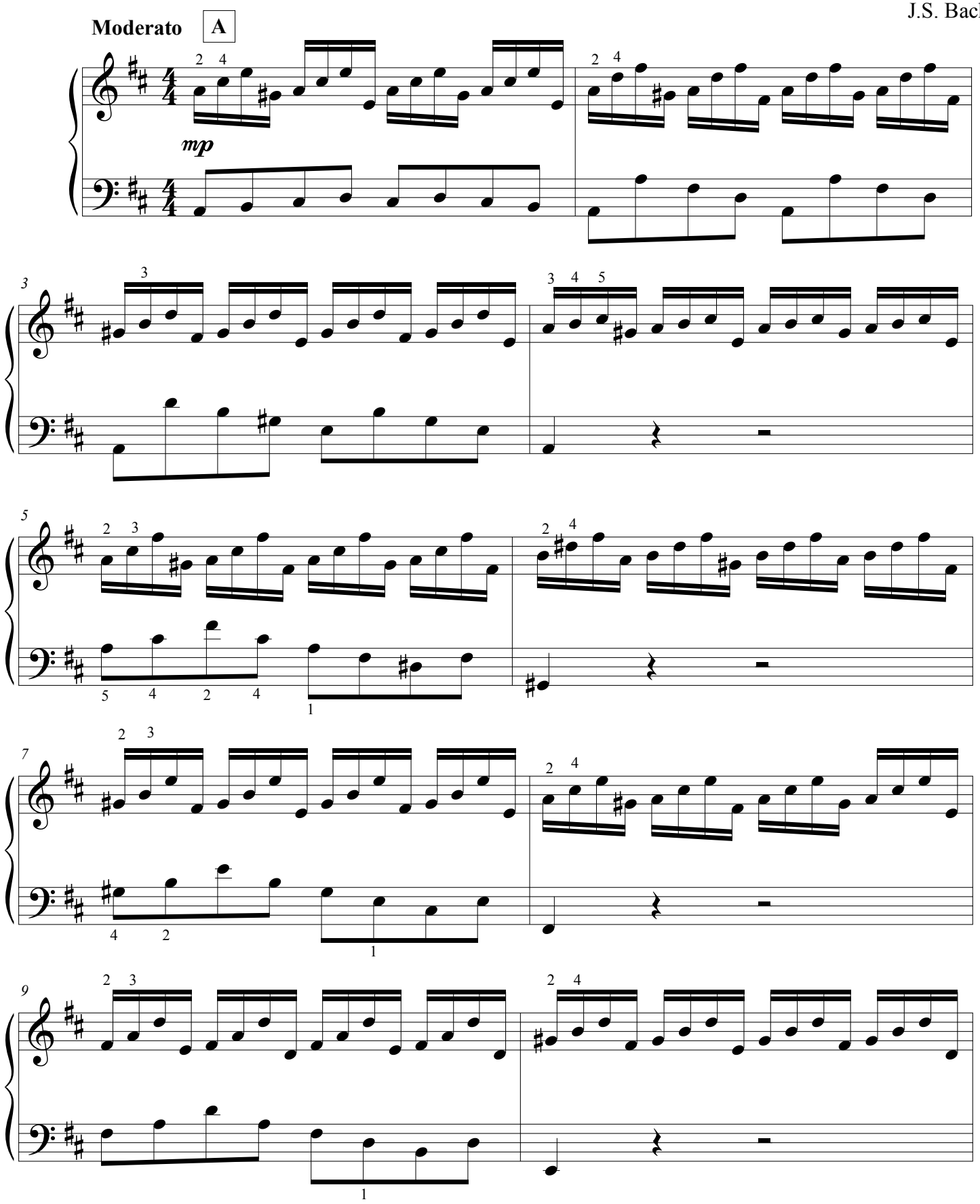
Excerpt from Brandenburg Concerto #5

J.S. Bach



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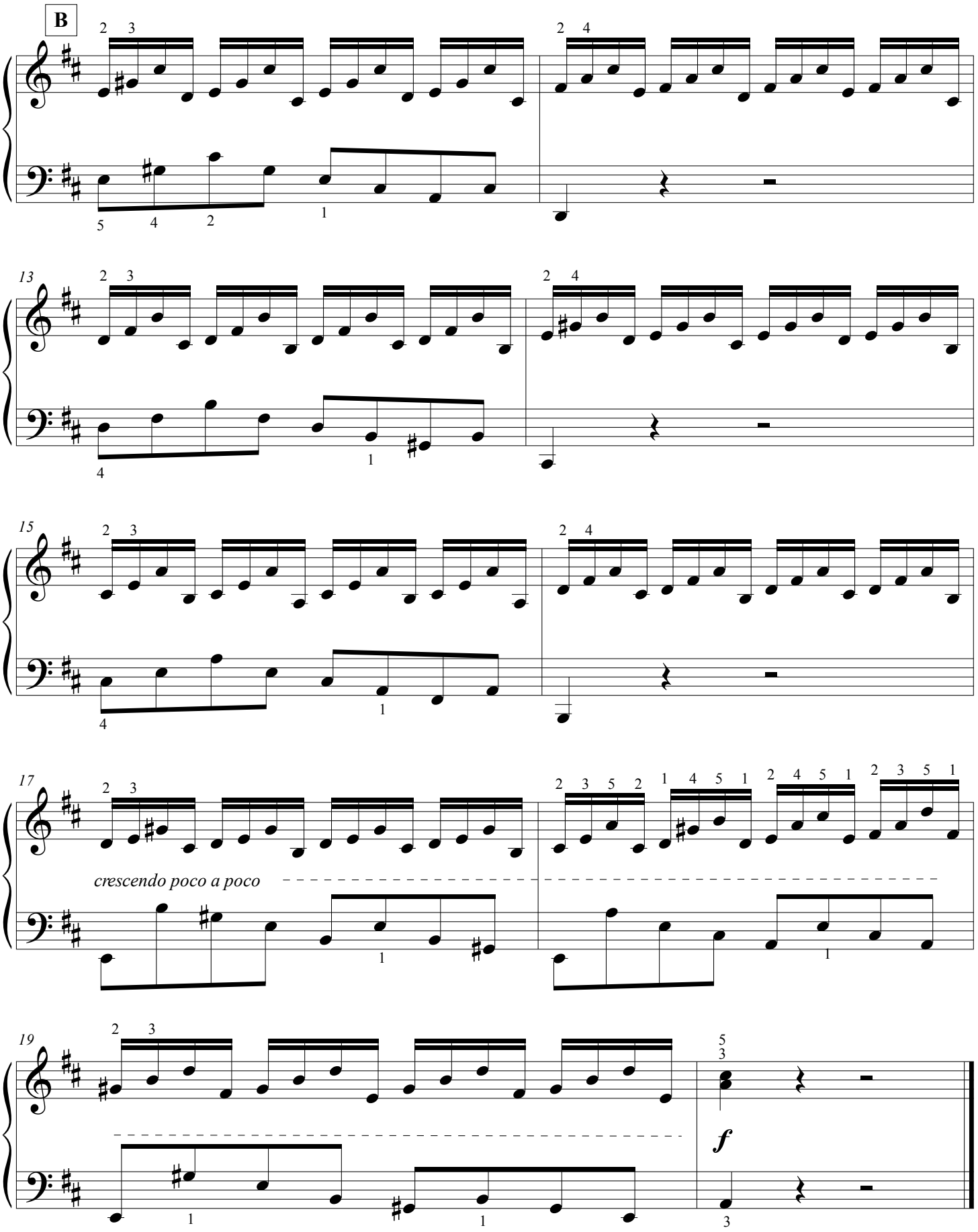
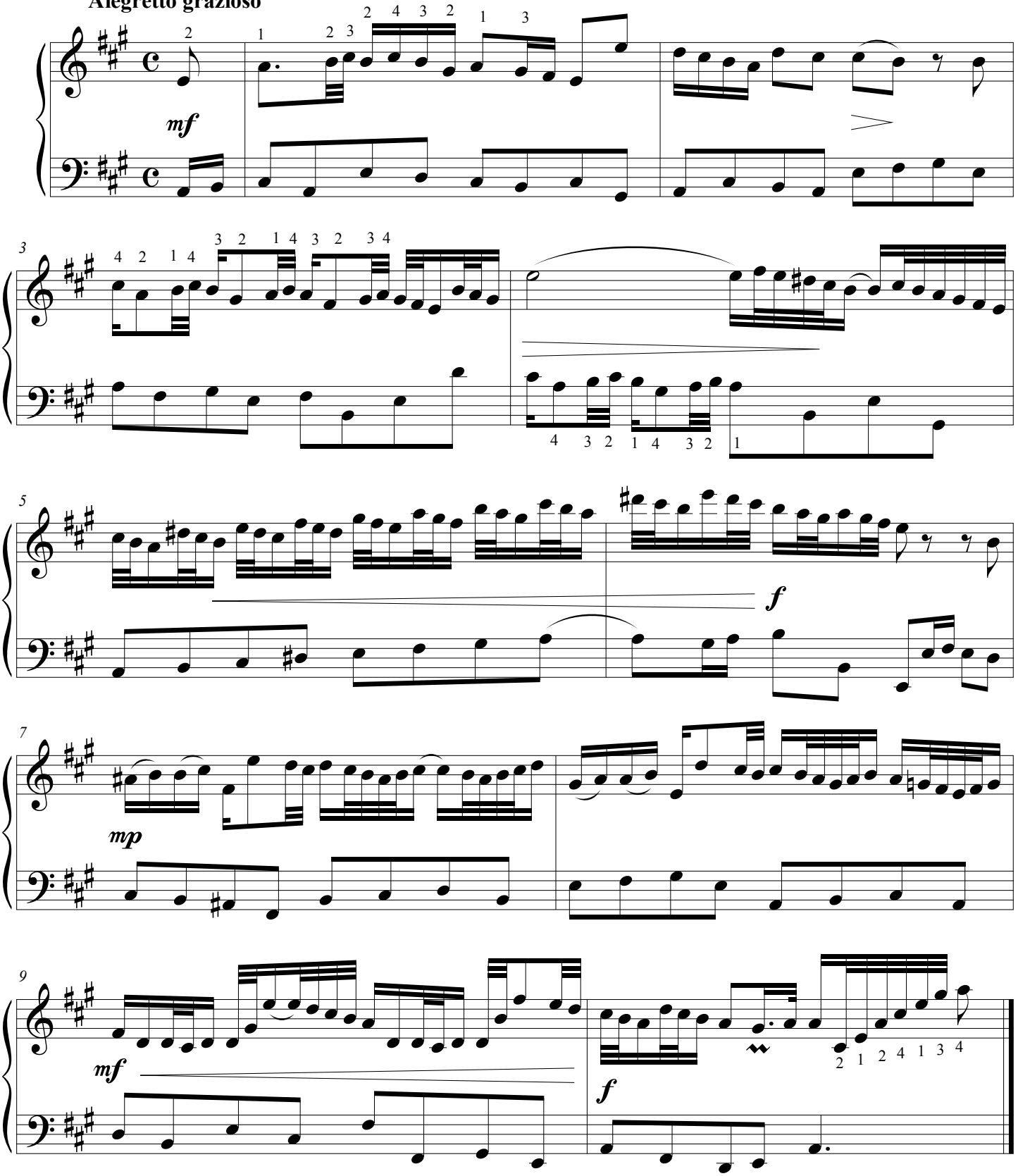


This is an excerpt from the wonderful harpsichord part, 1st movement, starting from measure 71.
It's especially useful for strengthening the 4th and 5th fingers of the R.H. and for paying attention to consistently held non legato in the LH.

"Laudamus te" from Mass in B Minor

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Alegretto grazioso



Here as well, the fingerings make sense if your arms and hands are in the proper "scales" position: wrists and elbows away from the torso and the thumbs positioned "underneath" the 2nd and 3rd fingers.

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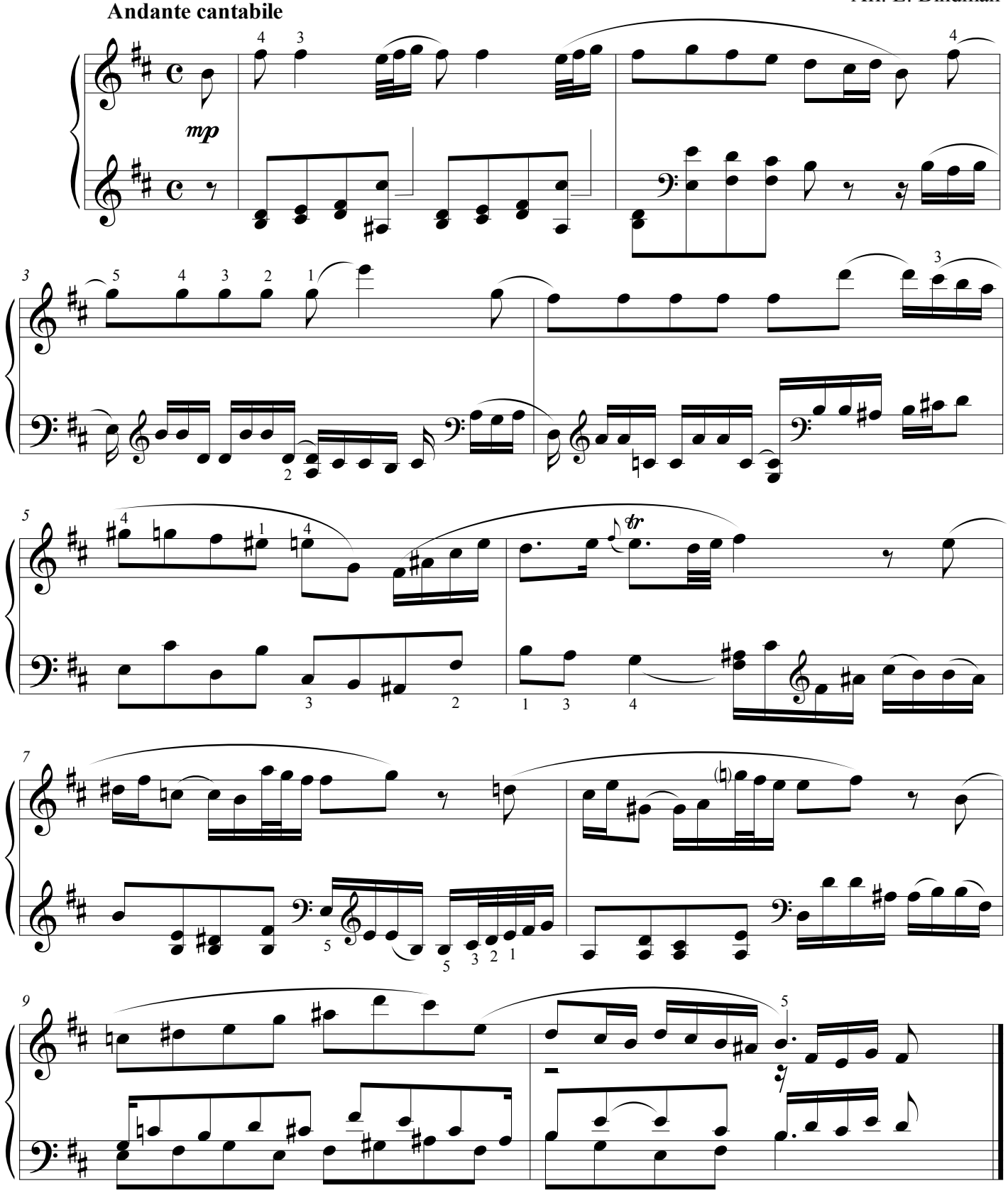
Andante from Flute Sonata in B minor

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Andante cantabile



Some careful pedaling can help this piece have a more extended, flute-like sonority.

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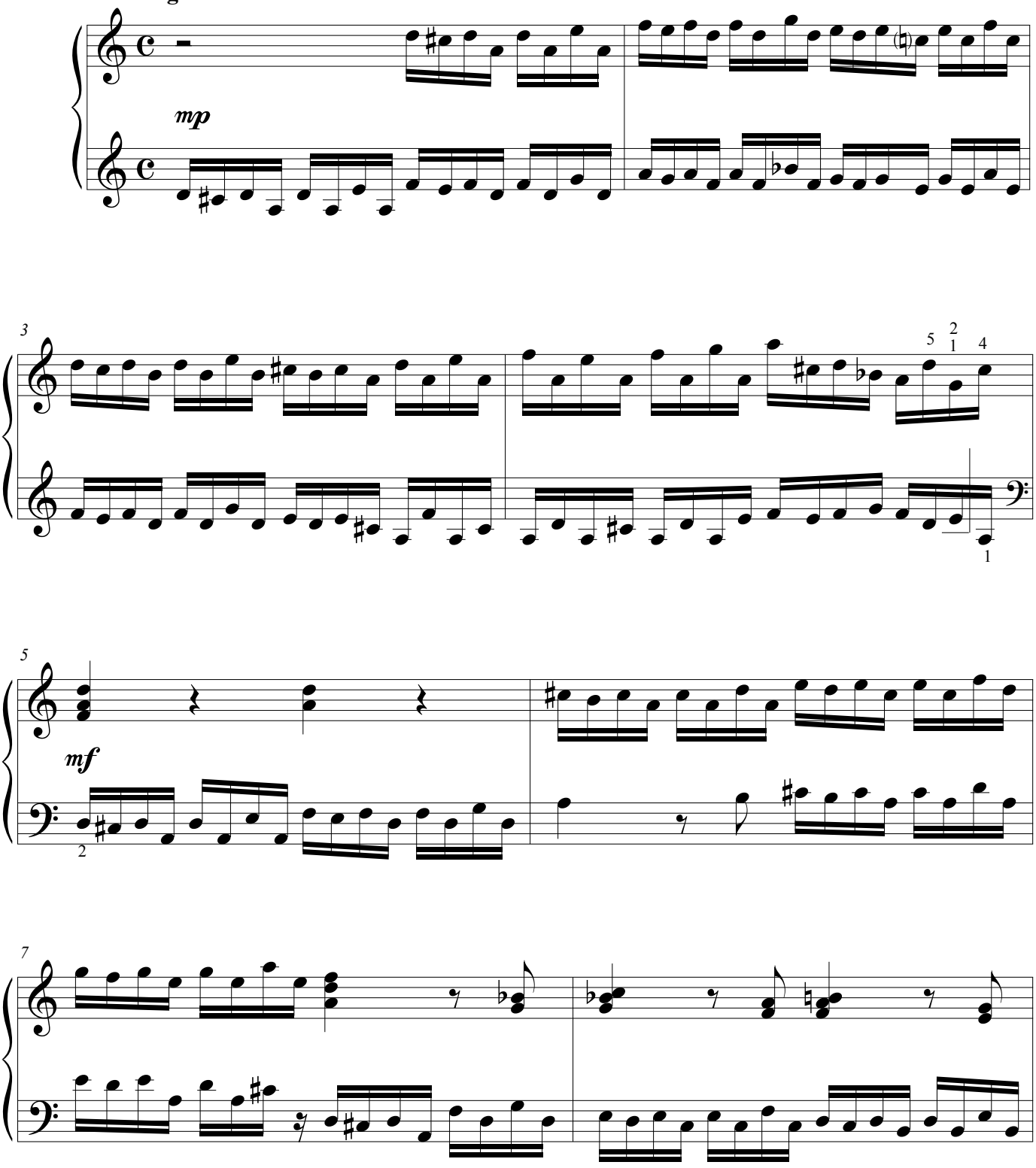
Organ Toccata in D Minor

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Allegro moderato



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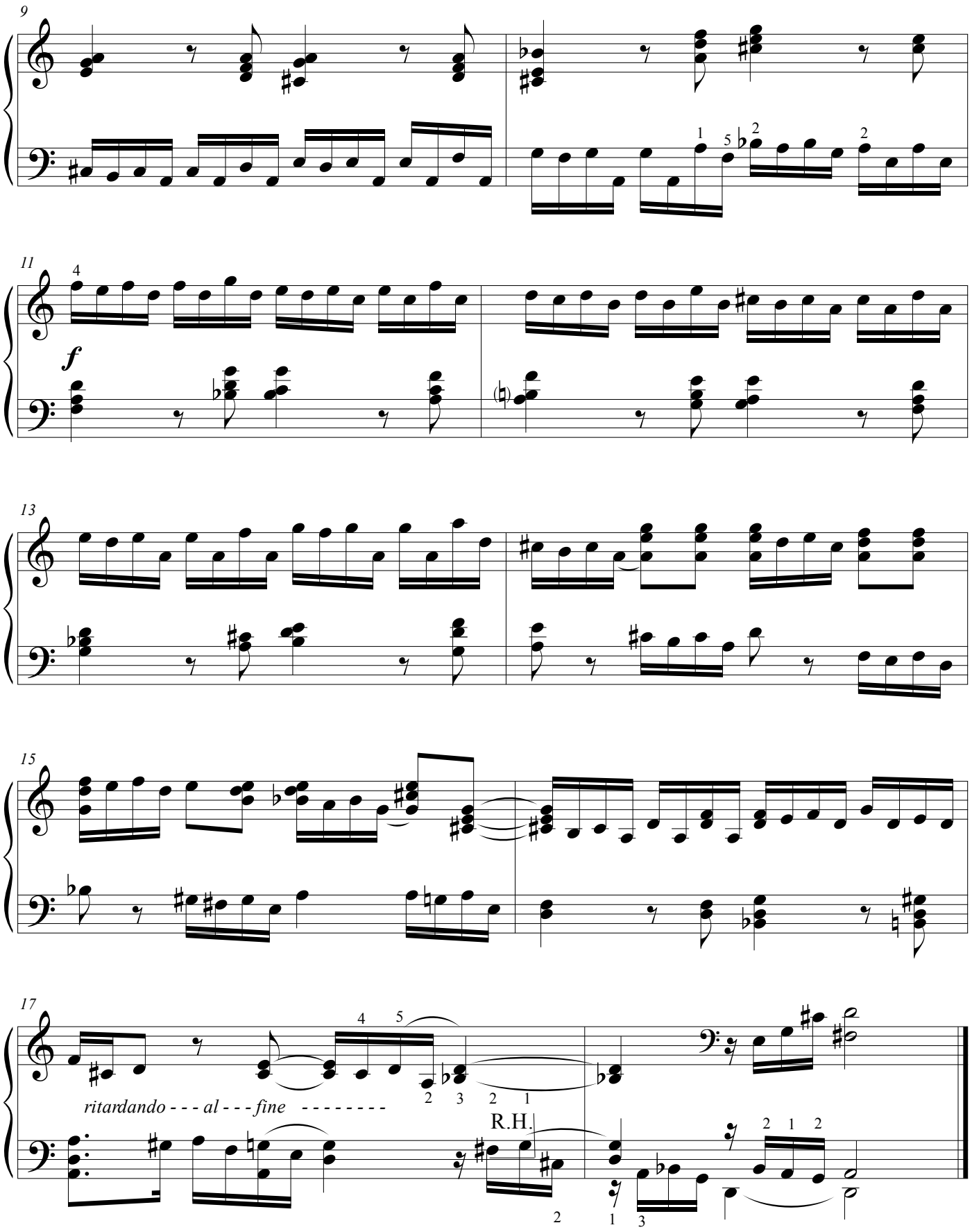
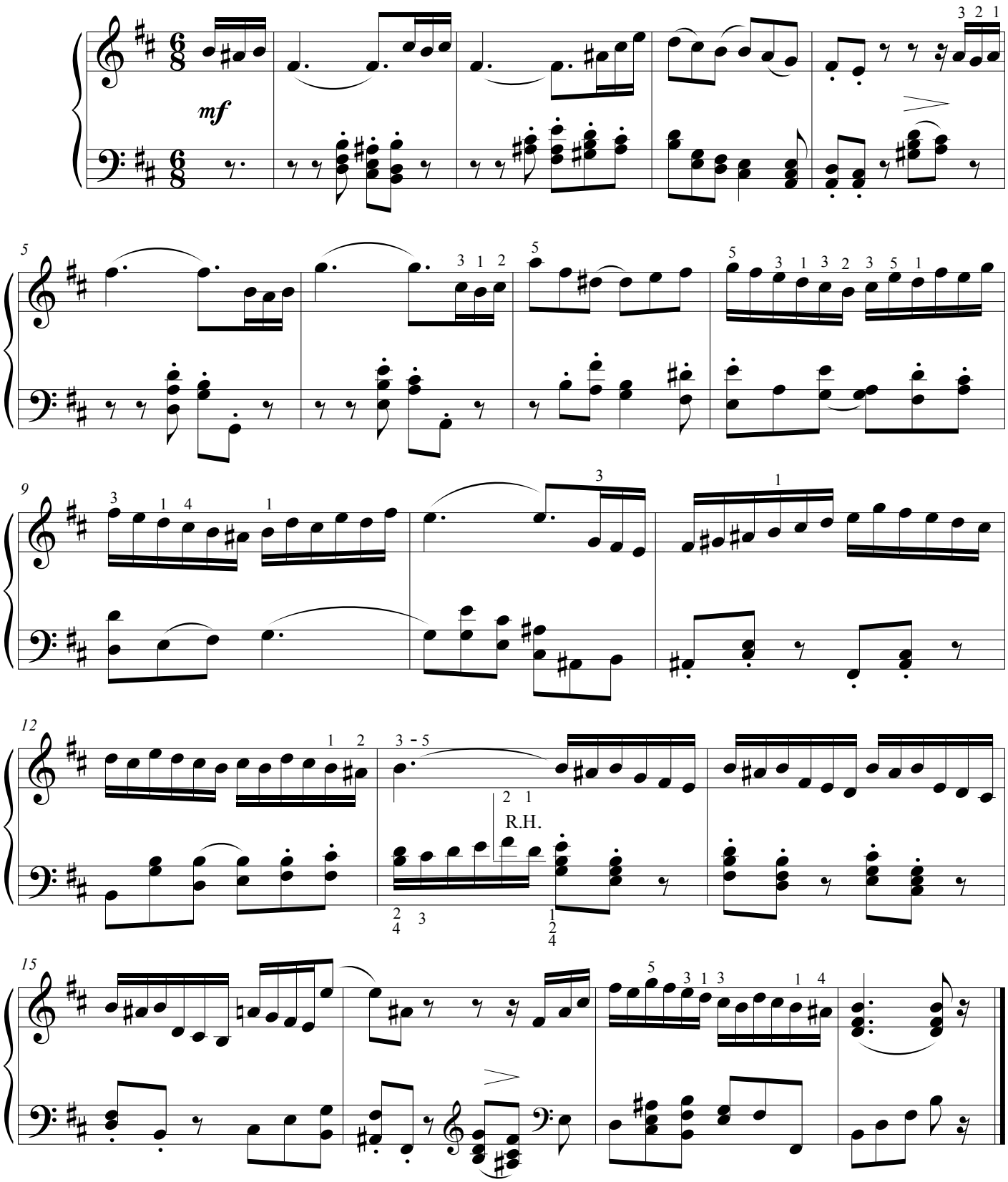


This isn't the famous organ Toccata in the key of D minor but I think it's a more dramatic one.

"Qui Sedes" from Mass in B Minor

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



The left-hand accompaniment of this elegant aria needs to be light and precise.

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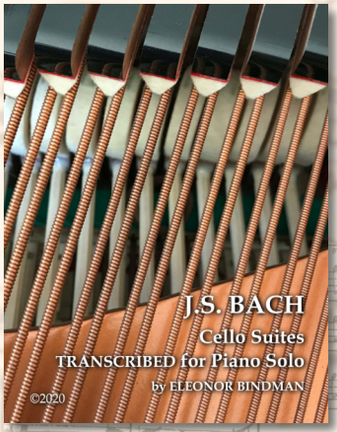

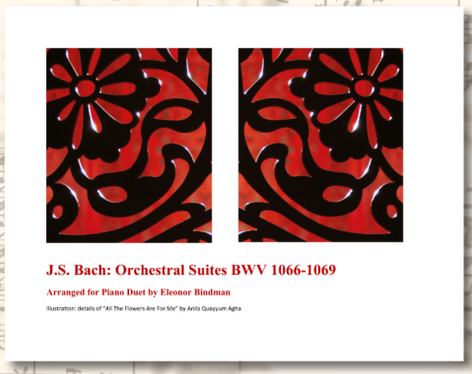

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