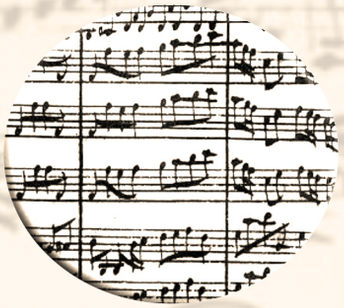
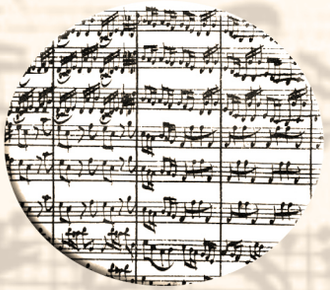
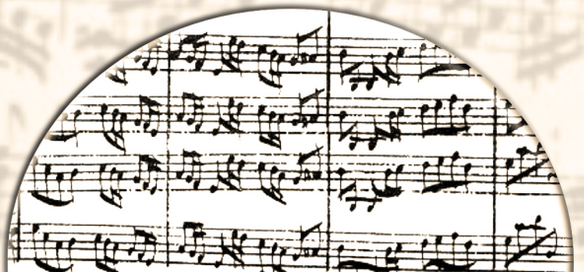
STEPPING STONES TO BACH™

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."

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach

Stepping Stones to Bach was created to connect amateur pianists and students to the orchestral, choral and various instrumental masterpieces of J.S. Bach. These 48 arrangements make excellent recital pieces, technique studies, warm-up and sight-reading exercises, and building blocks for learning more difficult works. I grouped them into 2 sets of 24 selections as a tribute to *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Pianists of all ages can enjoy playing Bach's music from this volume without having to spend months perfecting a single piece. Themes from various iconic compositions such as the Brandenburg concertos are adapted to the easy/intermediate piano level, with the melodic and harmonic essentials left intact. Closing cadences are added at suitable points, resulting in a manageable and satisfying playing experience.

I recommend streaming my *Stepping Stones to Bach playlist*, a supplement to this volume, on Spotify or Apple Music. It will be especially useful for younger students, for stylistic reference and fostering the habit of listening to classical music.

A quick note about fingerings: I indicate only a few as guidelines. Trial and error is the best way to find the right solution for you. (Remember, fingerings that feel right at a slower tempo may be much more difficult at a faster one.)

I hope *Stepping Stones to Bach* will fill your ears and move your heart—as it has mine. Feel free to reach out to me at eleonorbindman.com with any questions or feedback.

Eleonor Bindman, June 2023

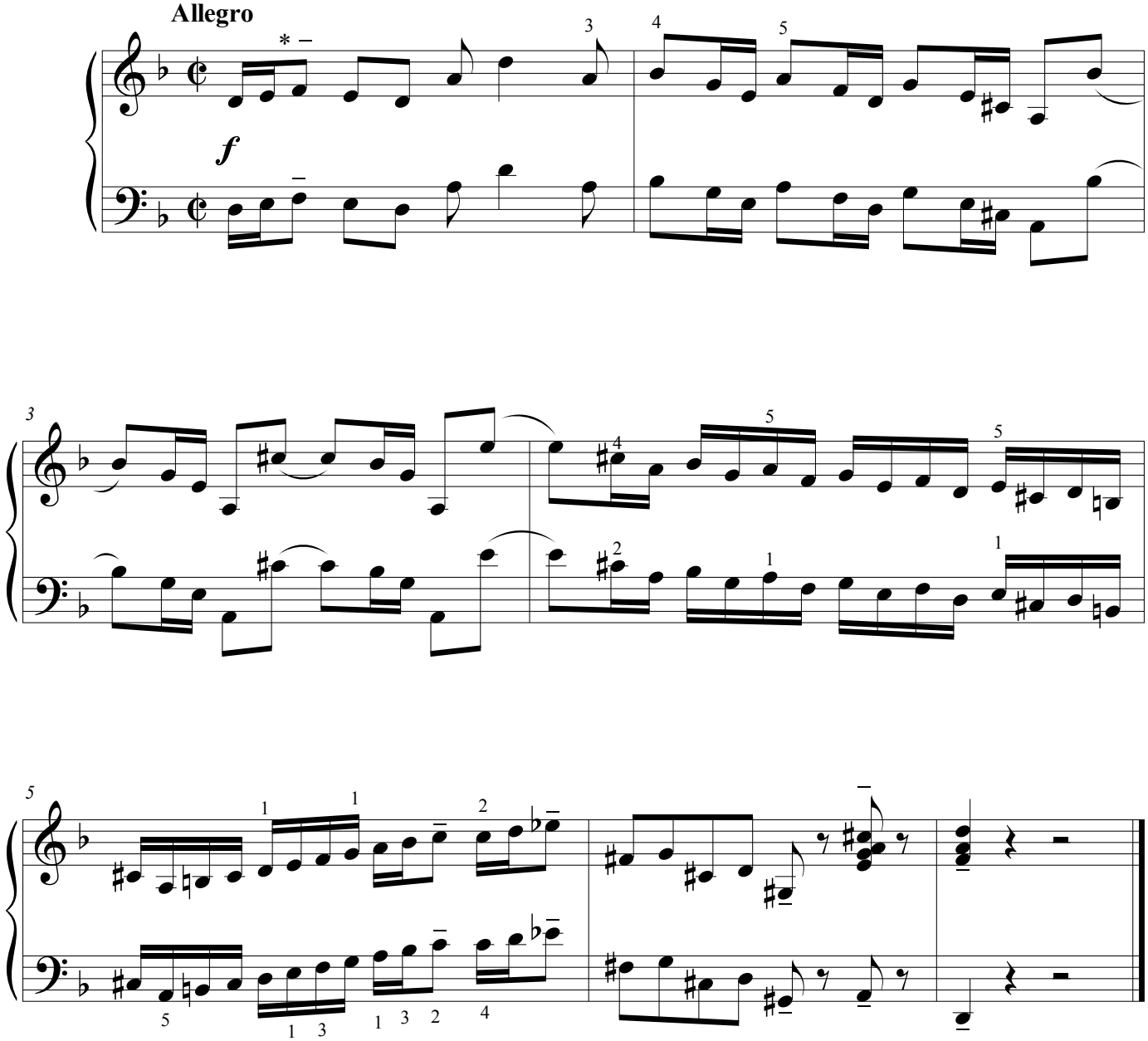
Stepping Stones To Bach

Book 1

1. Harpsichord Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052……..p.3
2. Sarabande from Cello Suite #5, BWV 1011……..p.4
3. Finale of Brandenburg Concerto #6, BWV 1051……..p.5
4. Prelude from Cello Suite #1, BWV 1007……..p.6
5. Finale of Violin Concerto #2, BWV 1042……..p.7
6. Gavotte from Violin Partita #3, BWV 1006……..p.8
7. Badinerie from Orchestral Suite #2, BWV 1067……..p.9
8. Chaconne from Violin Partita #2, BWV 1004……..p.10
9. Bourrée I from Cello Suite #3, BWV 1009…… .p.12
10. Bourrée II from Cello Suite #3, BWV 1009……..p.13
11. Adagio from Violin and Cembalo Sonata #3, BWV 1016……..p.14
12. Polacca from Brandenburg Concerto #1, BWV 1046……..p.15
13. Preludio from Violin Partita #3, BWV 1006……..p.16
14. Brandenburg Concerto #2, BWV 1047……..p.18
15. Finale of Brandenburg Concerto #2, BWV 1047……..p.19
16. Largo from the Double Violin Concerto, BWV 1043……..p.20
17. Flute Solo from the Easter Oratorio, BWV 249……..p.21
18. “Wachet auf” Chorale Prelude BWV 645……..p.22
19. “Wachet auf” Cantata, BWV 140……..p.23
20. Largo from Harpsichord Concerto in F minor, BWV 1056……..p.24
21. “Ah, How Sweet Coffee Tastes” from Coffee Cantata BWV 211……..p.25
22. Fugue from Lute Suite #2, BWV 996……..p.26
23. Menuet from Orchestral Suite #2, BWV 1067……..p.27
24. “Erbarme dich, mein Gott” from St. Matthew’s Passion, BWV 244……..p.28

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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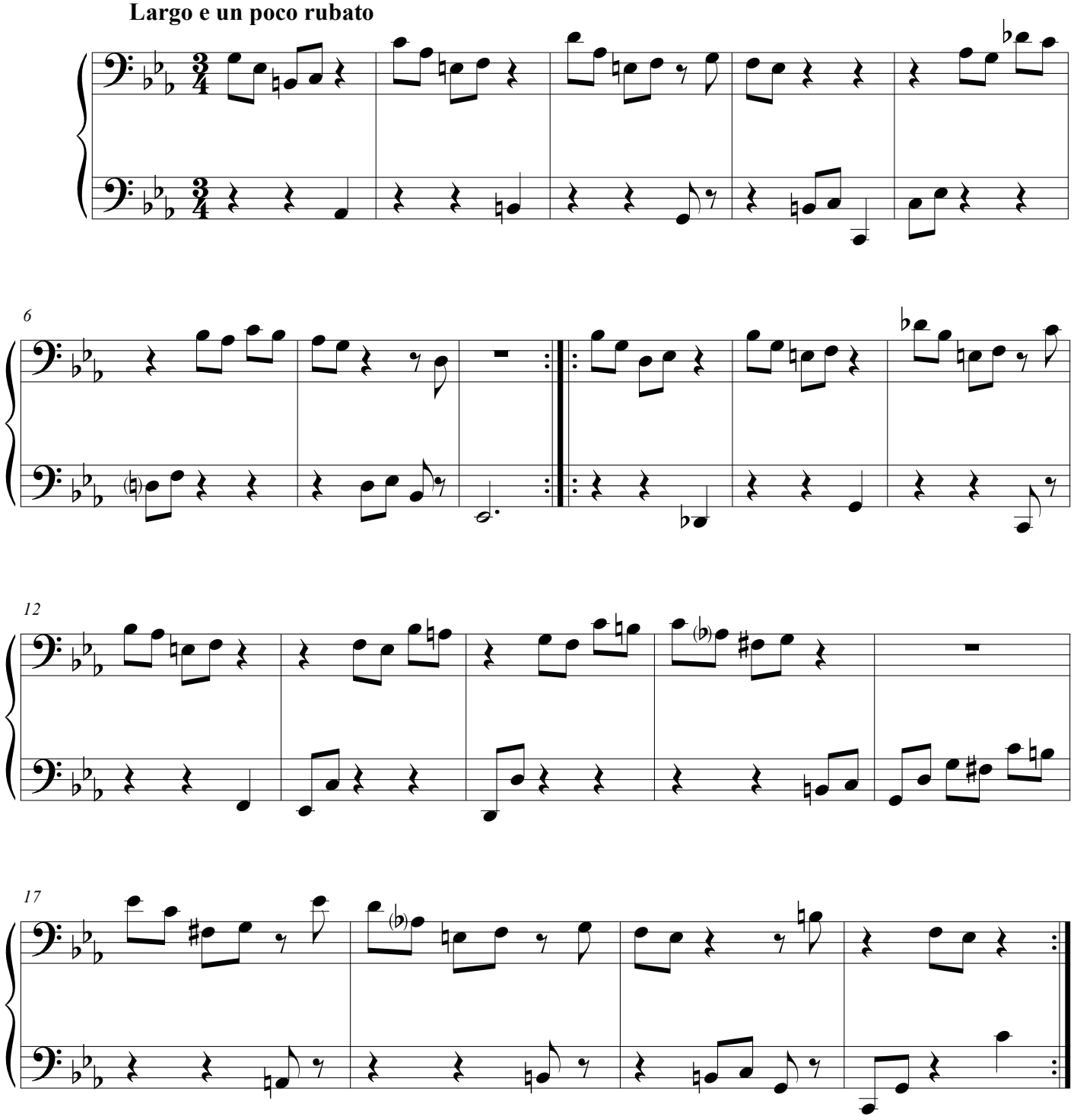
Sarabande from Cello Suite #5

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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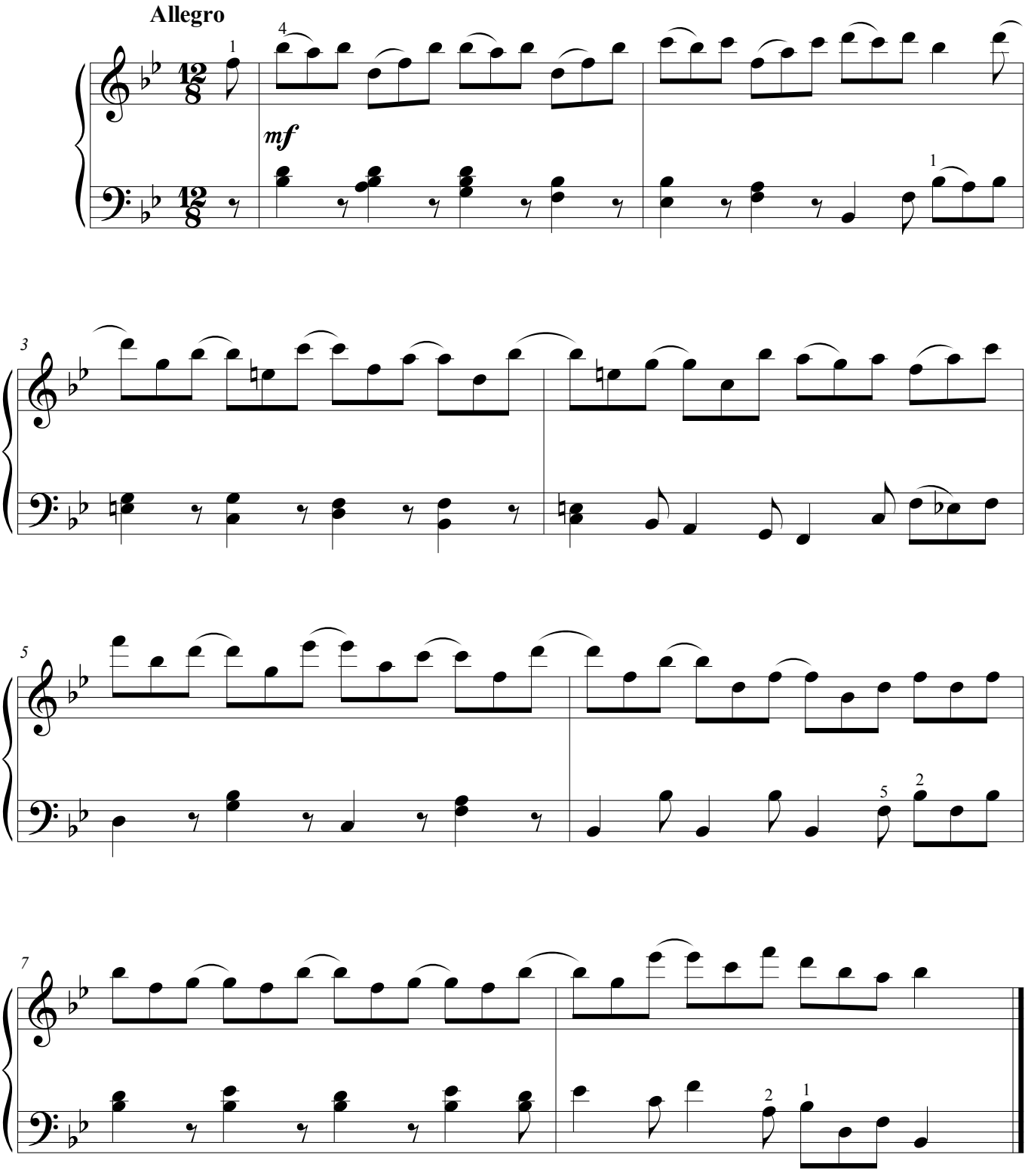
Finale of Brandenburg Concerto #6

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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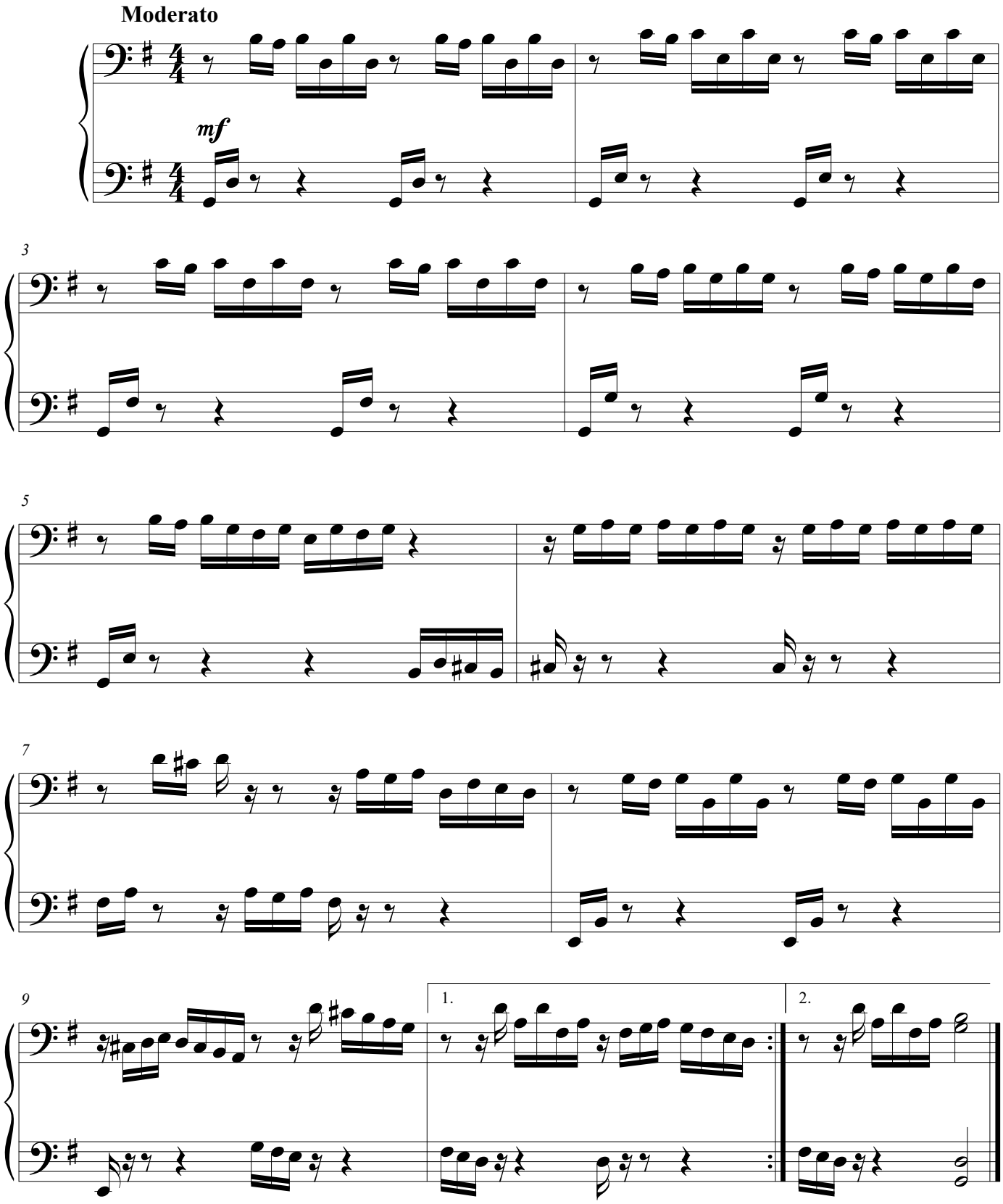
Prelude from Cello Suite #1

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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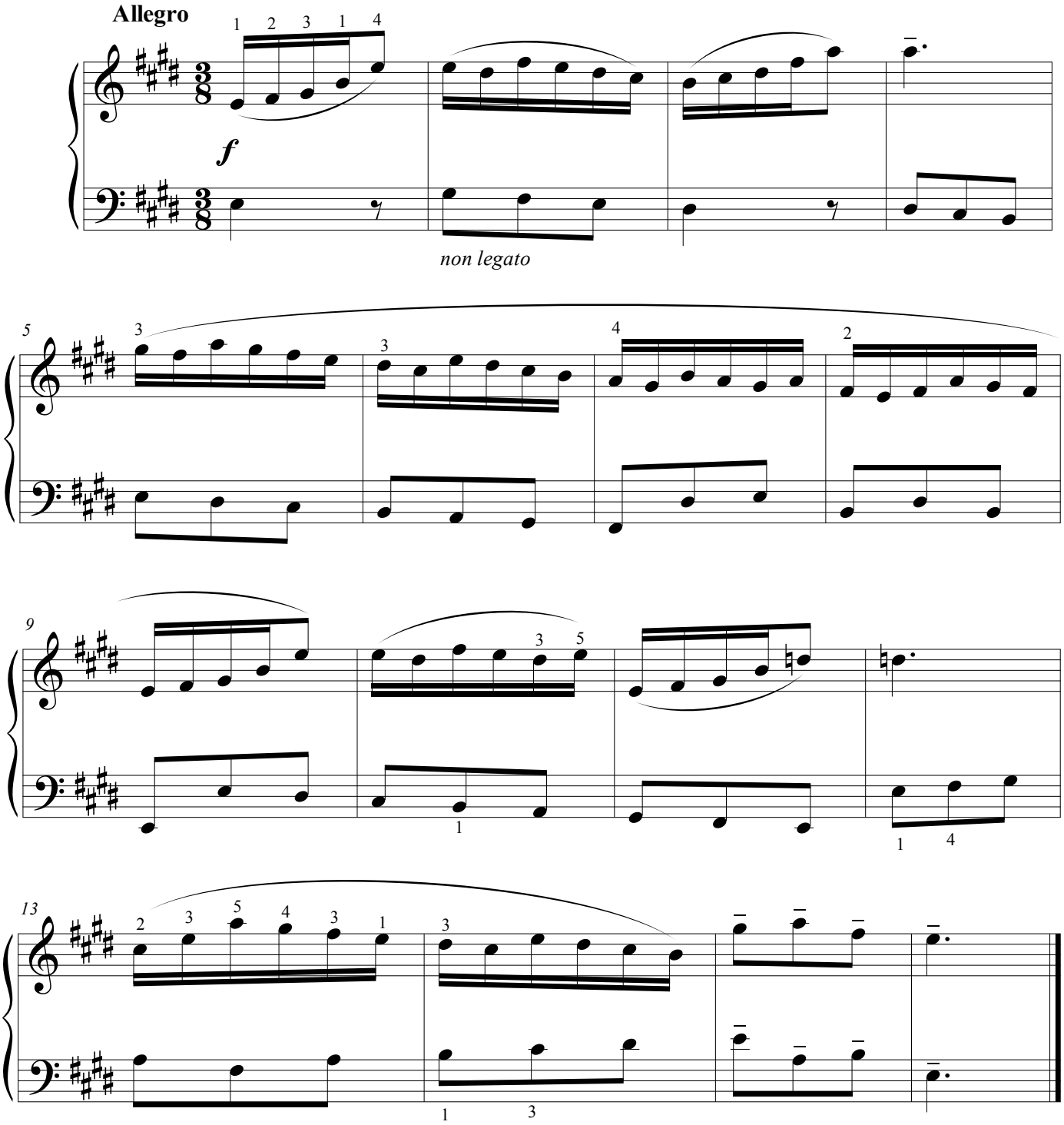
Finale of Violin Concerto #2

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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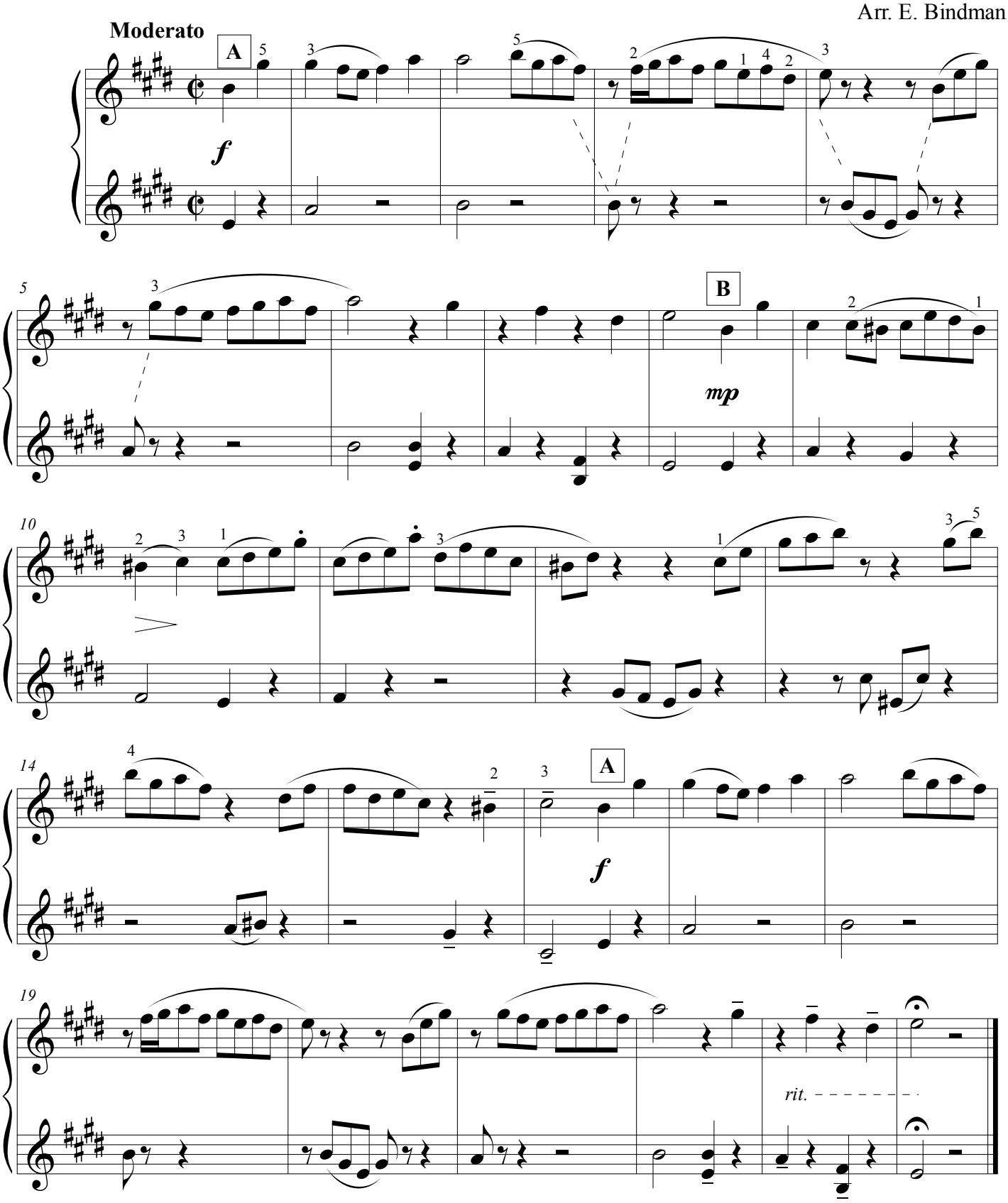
Gavotte from Violin Partita #3

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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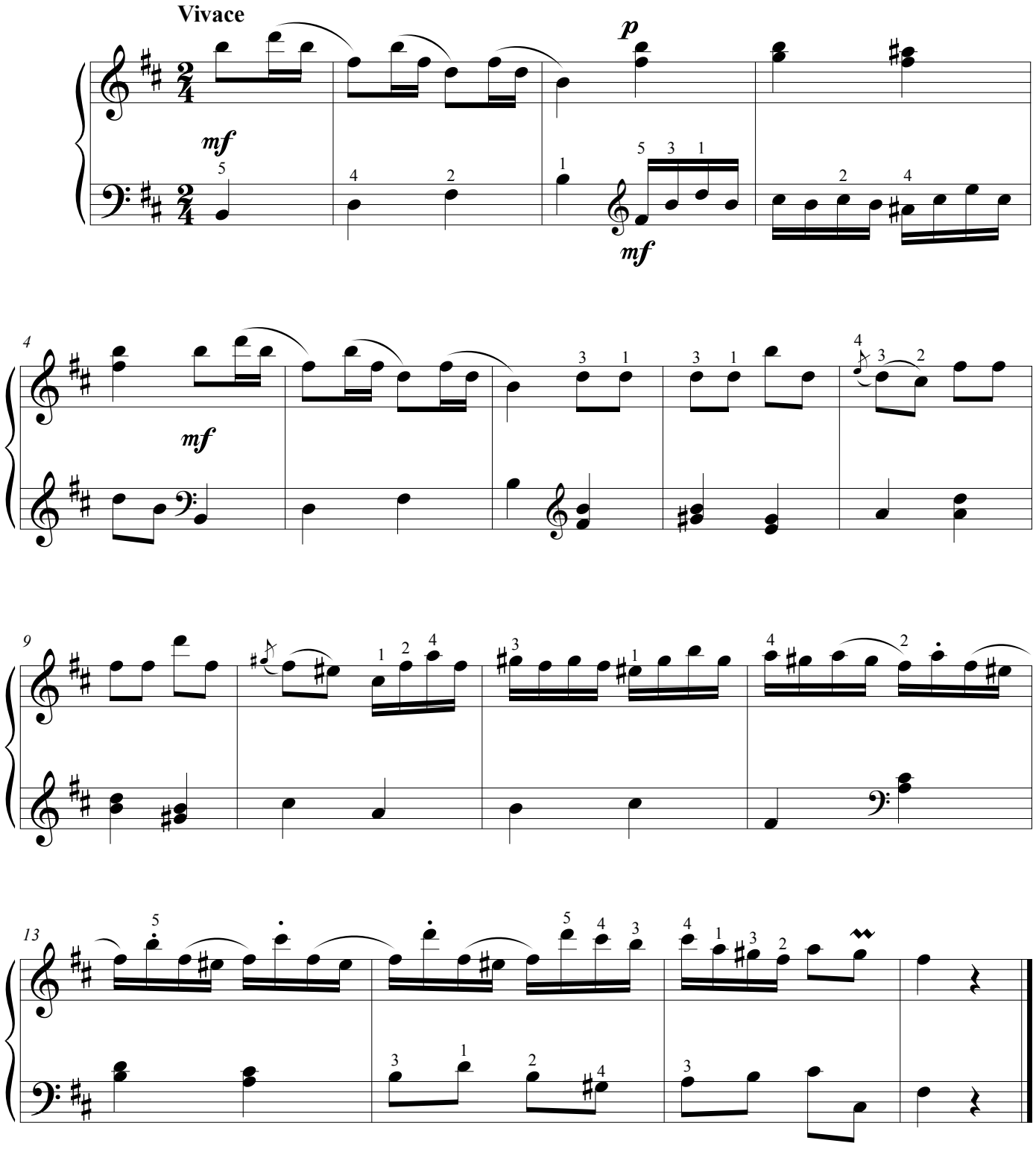
Badinerie from Orchestral Suite #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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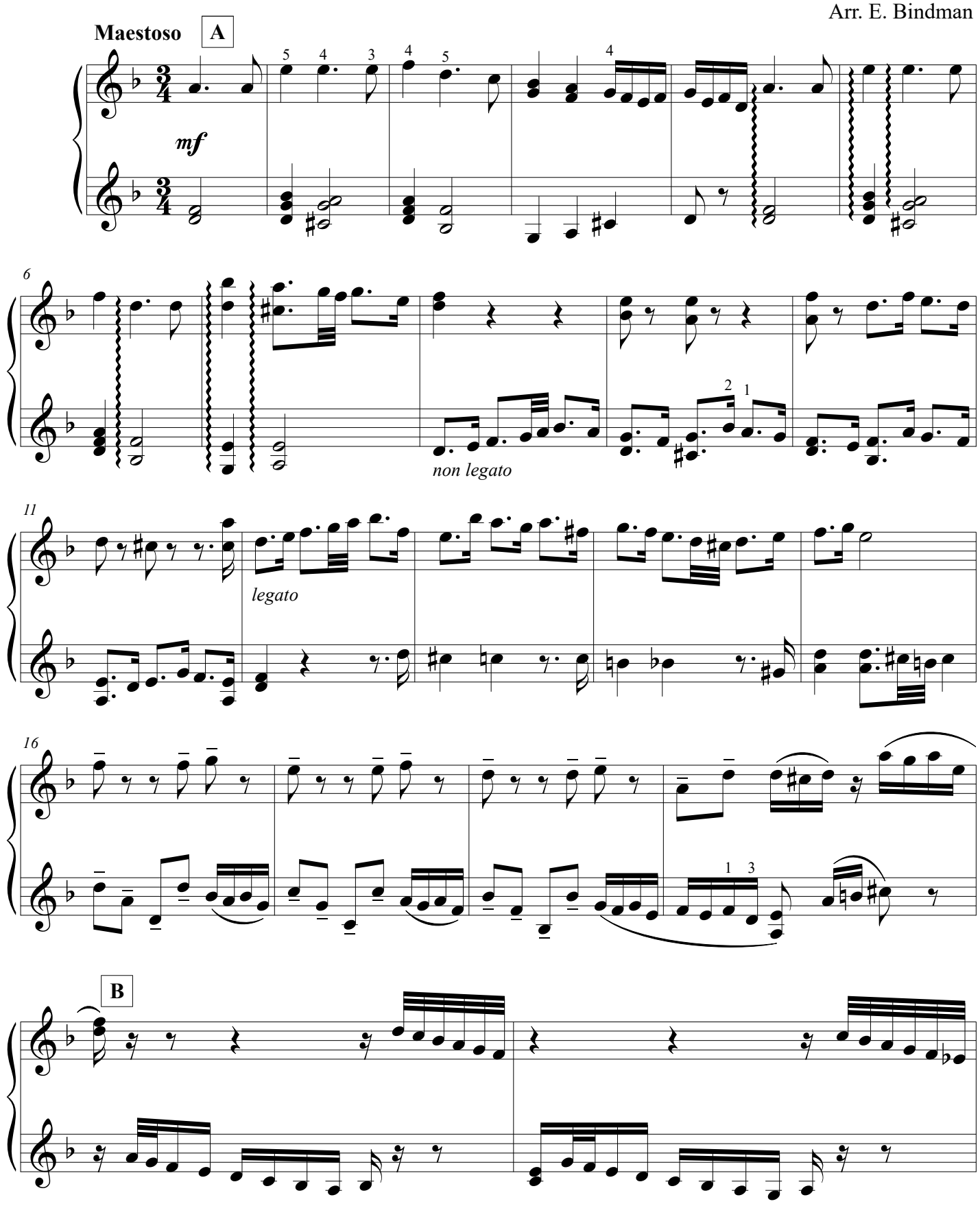
Chaconne from Violin Partita #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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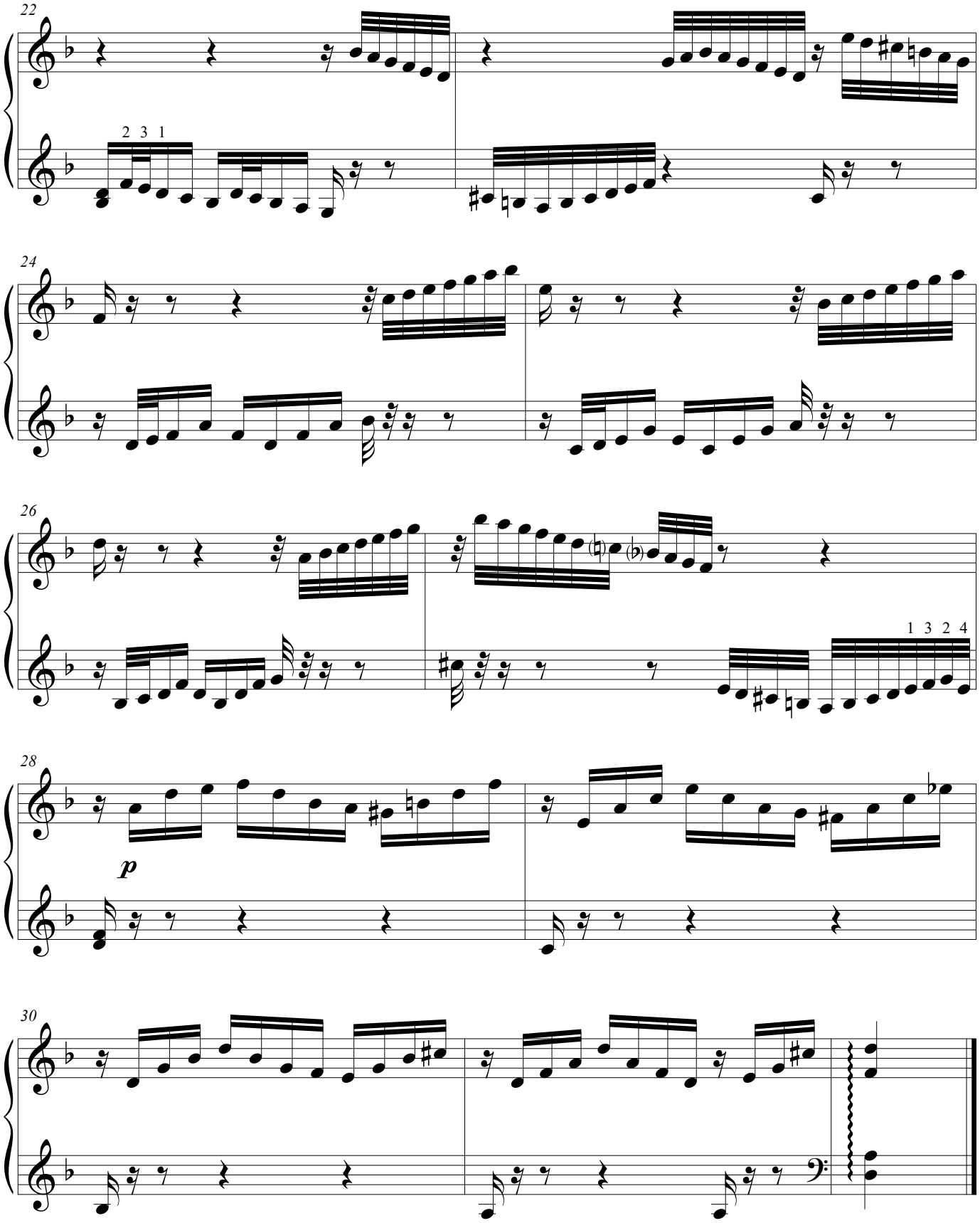
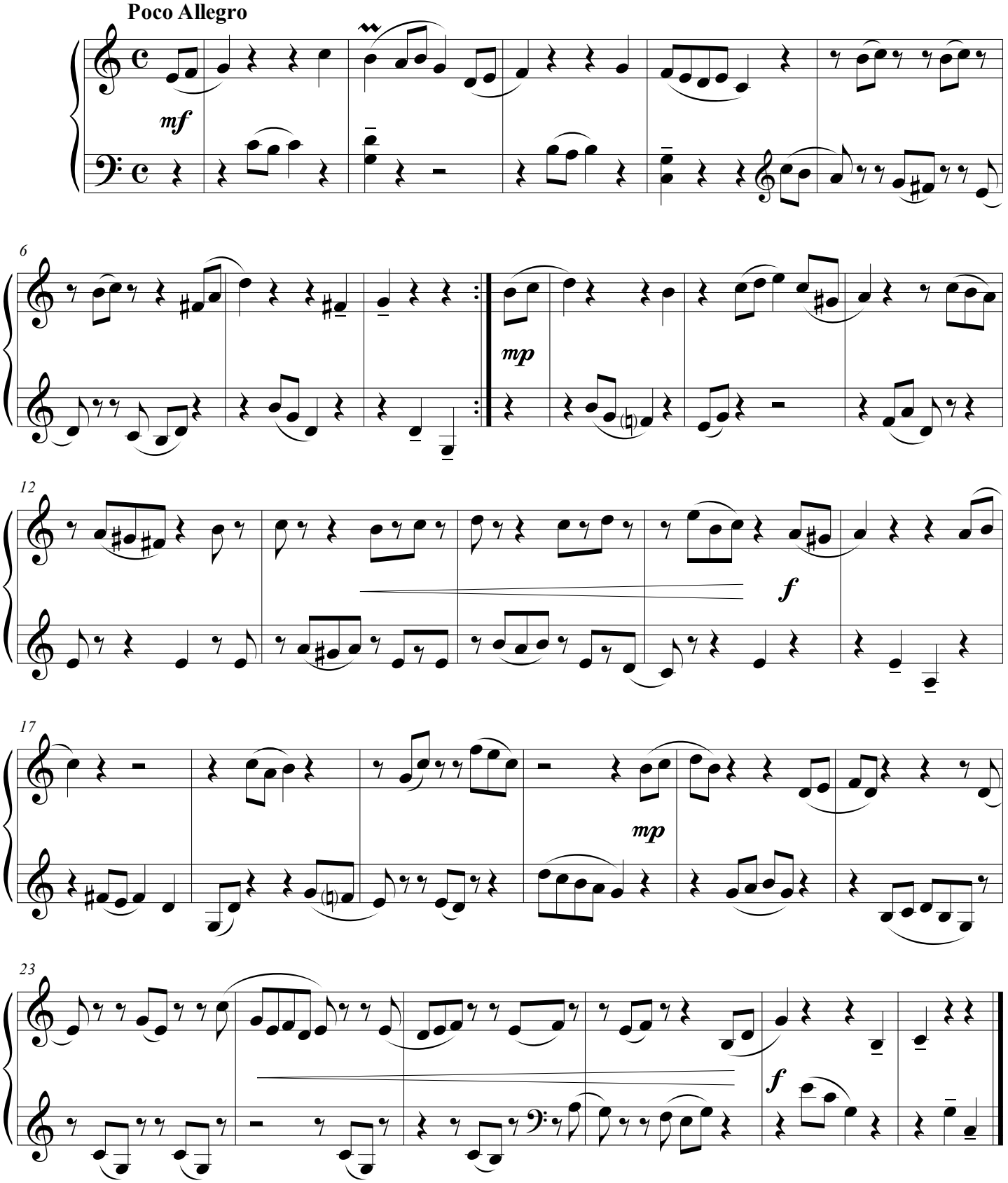


This unadorned transcription of the famous Chaconne sounds great on the piano and is fun to play. Bonus: it's also wondeful for practicing counting 32nd notes and the various dotted rhythms which need to be exact, especially in the beginning. Some pedal would be fine to amplify each chord.

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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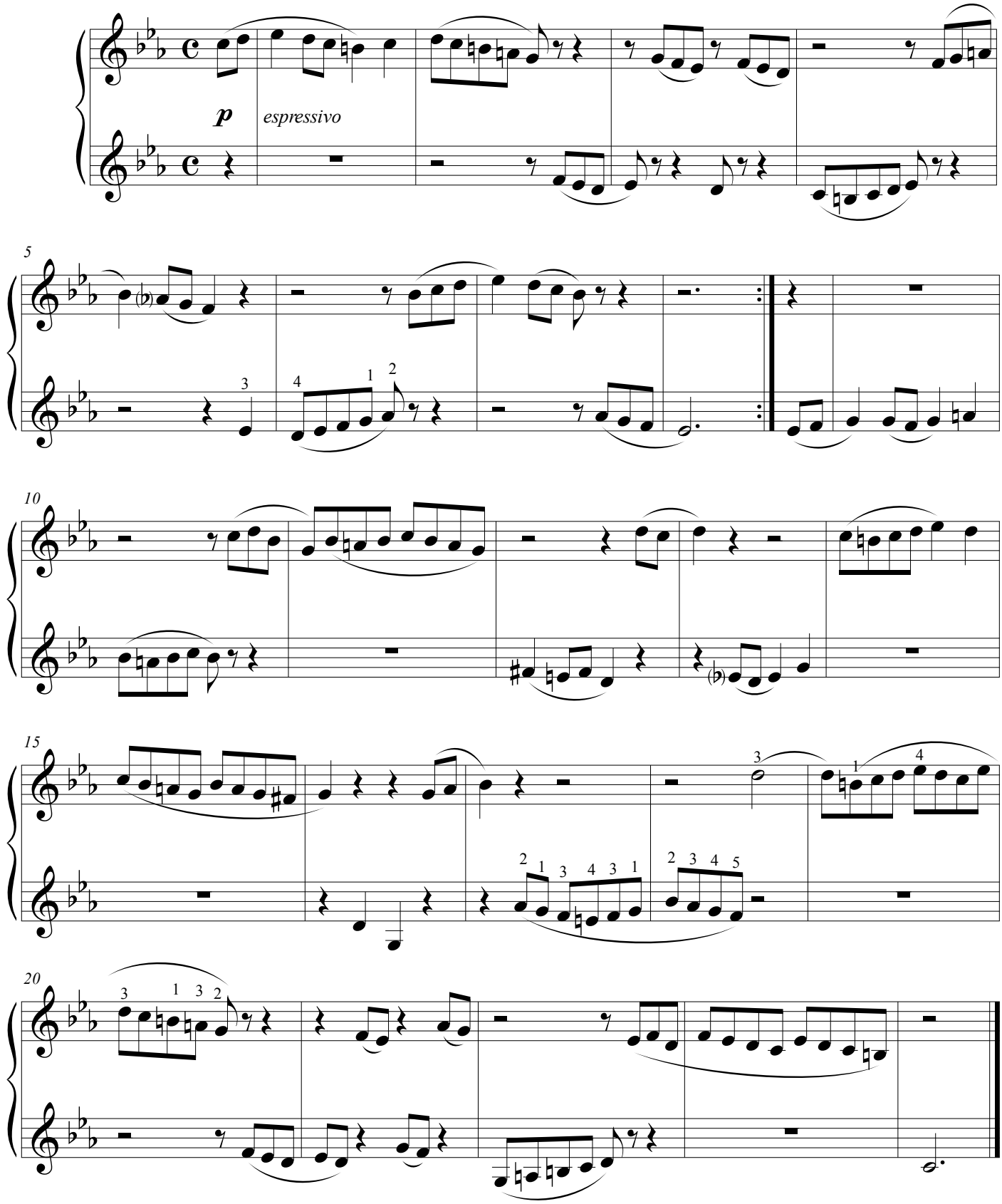
Bourrée II from Cello Suite #3

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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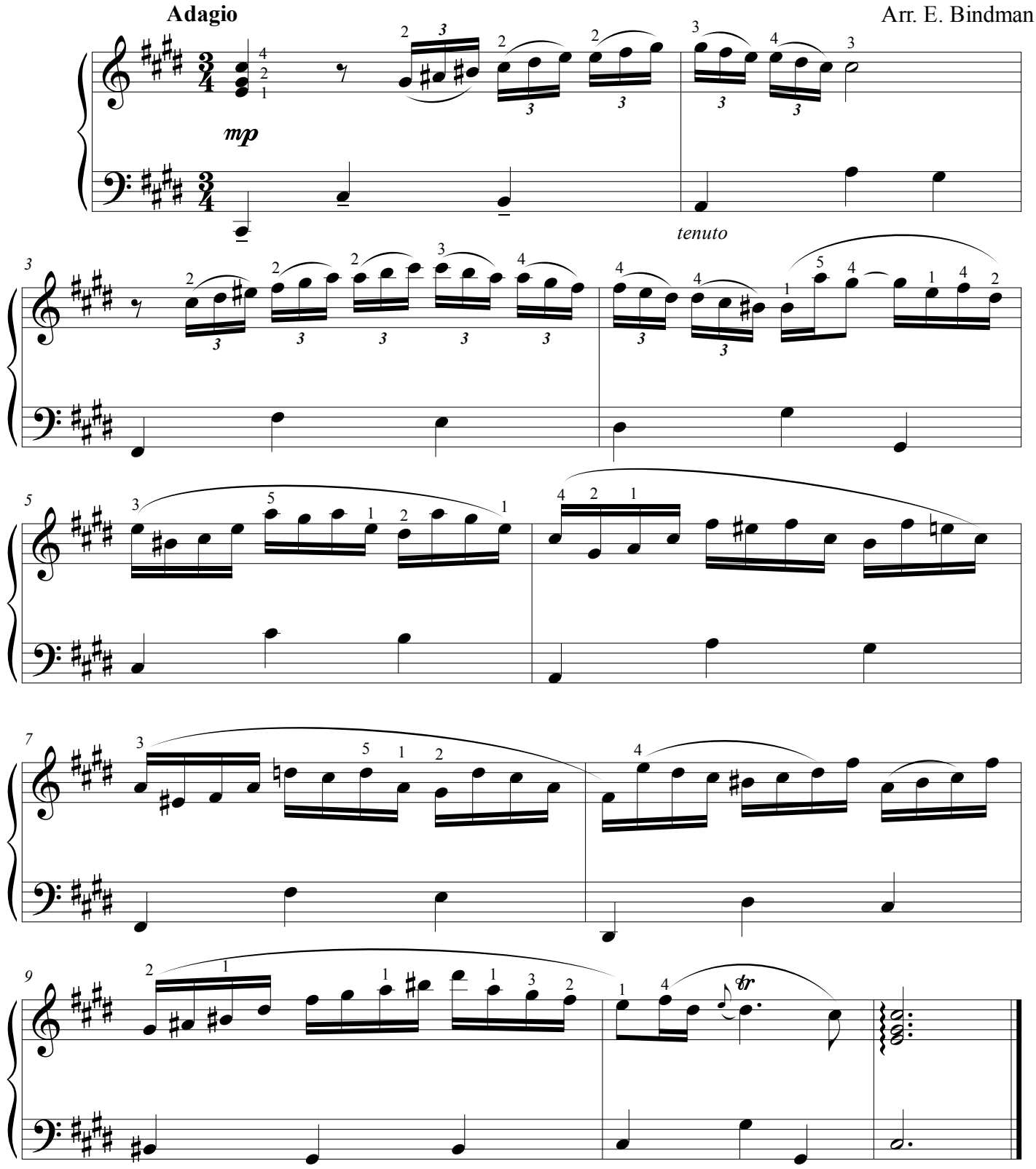
Adagio from Violin and Cembalo Sonata #3

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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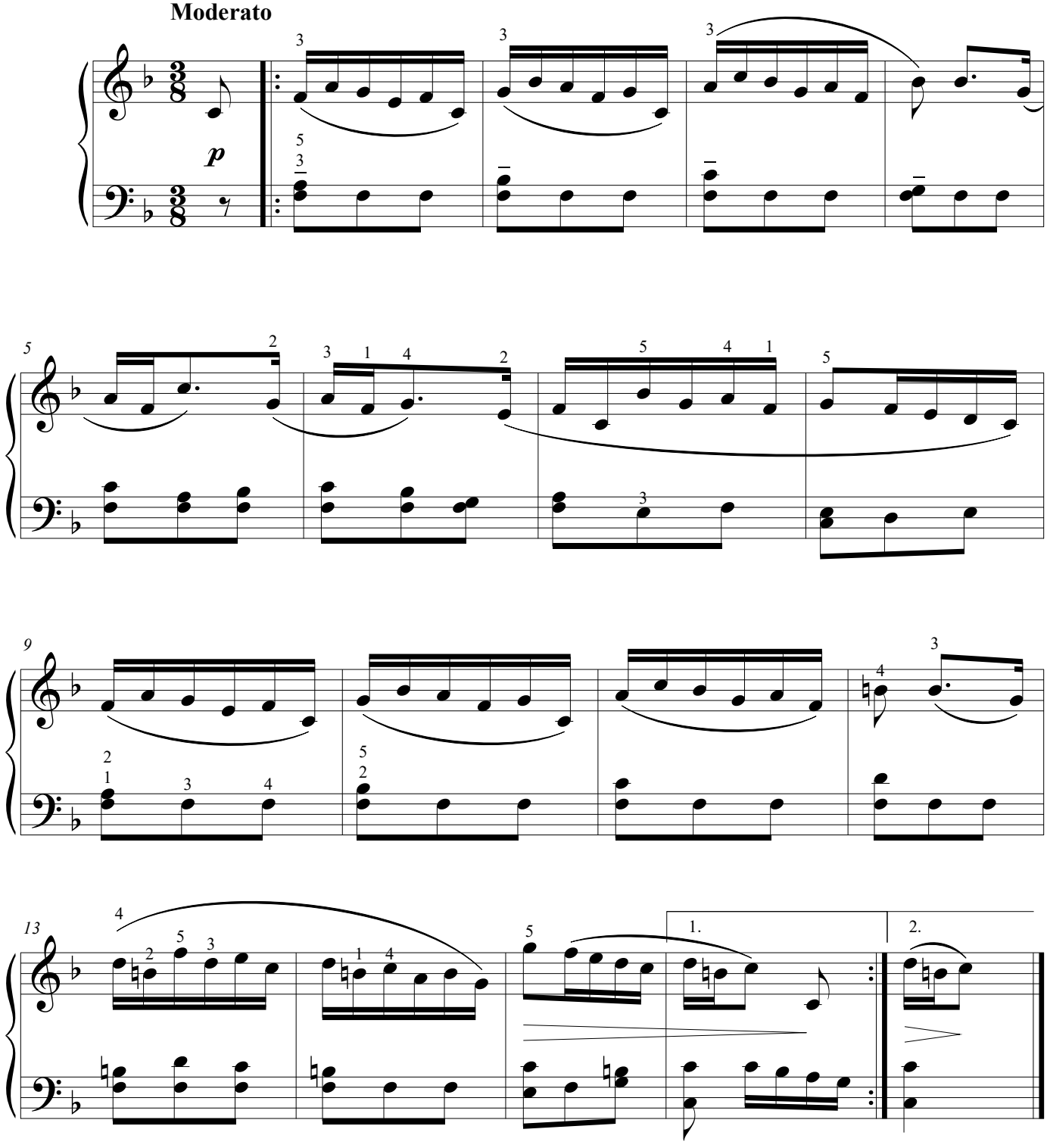
Polacca from Brandenburg Concerto #1

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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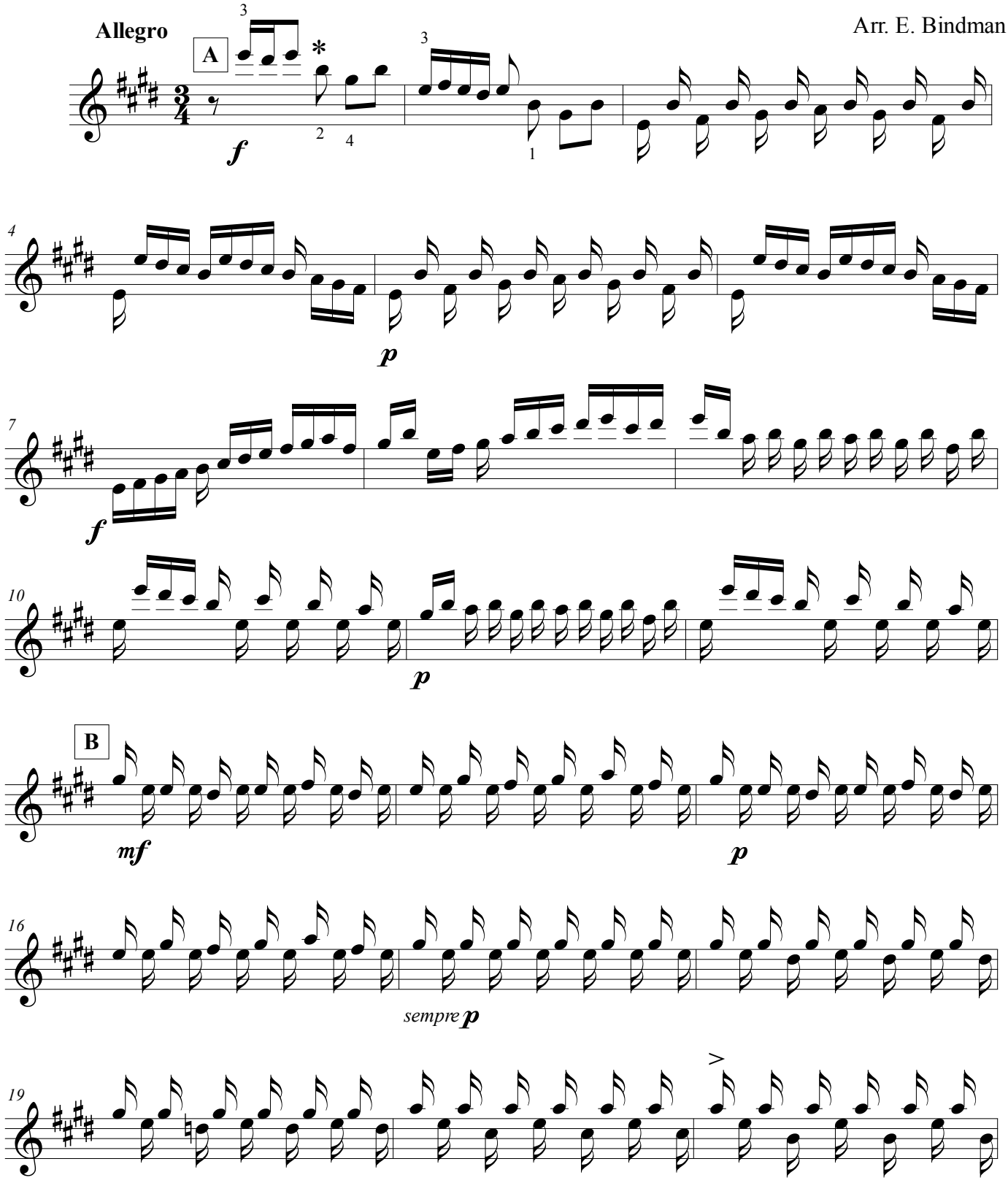
Preludio from Violin Partita #3

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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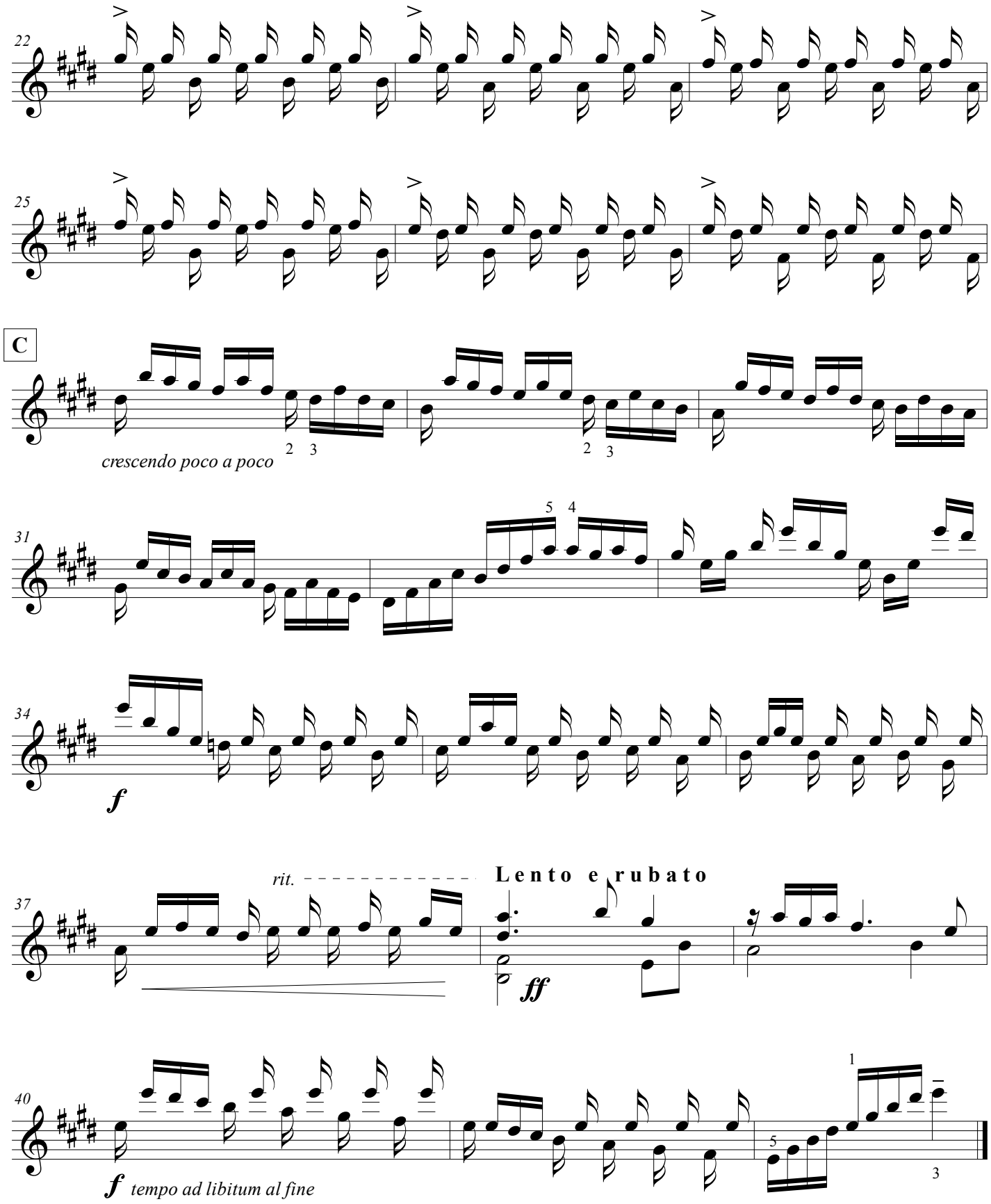
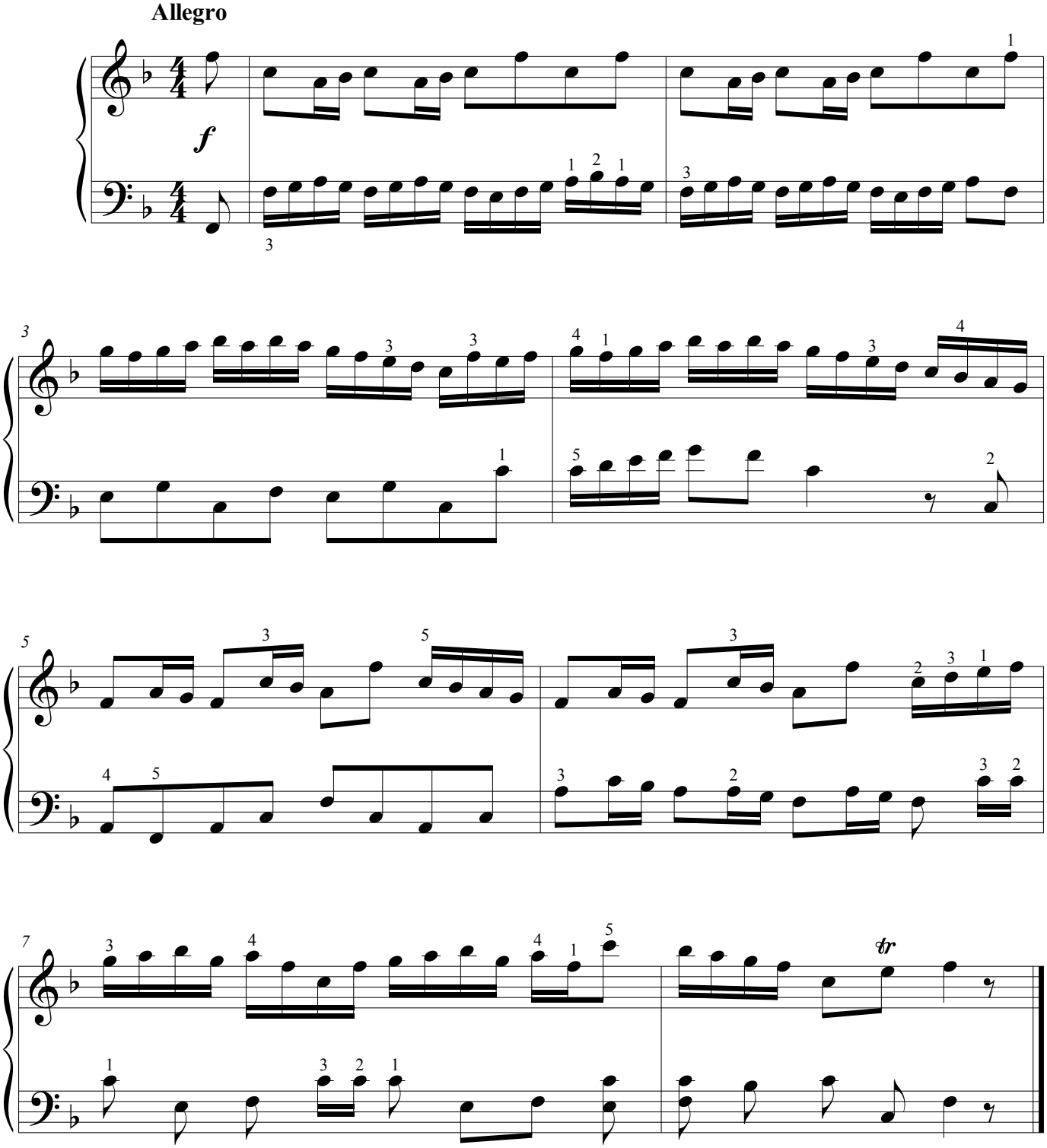


I never thought it could be so much fun to play a violin piece on the piano until I played through this arrangement. It's a wonderful exercise in freedom of movement for both arms and tone control of repeated notes. Make sure that your wrists are completely relaxed so they can be raised to accomodate 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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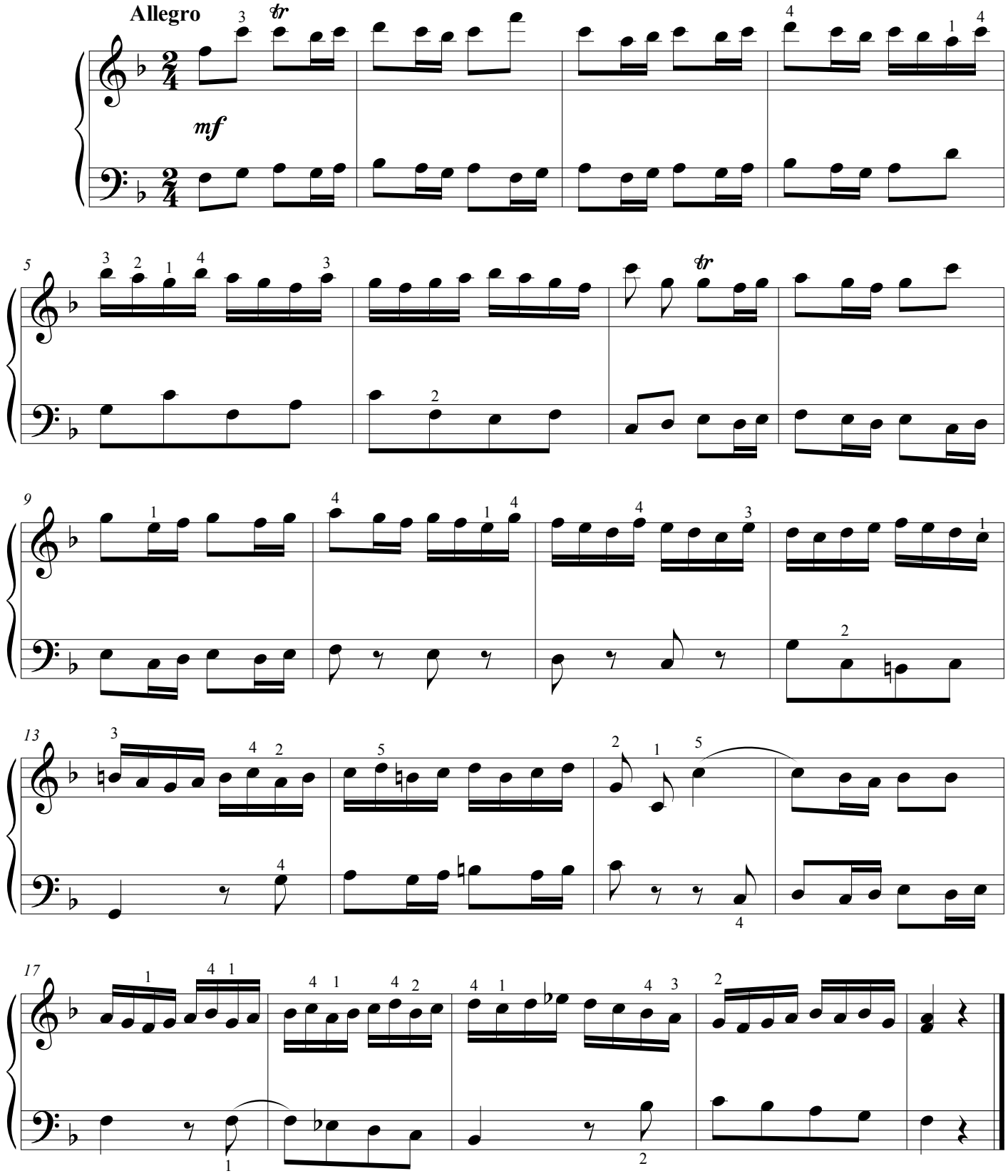
Finale of Brandenburg Concerto #2

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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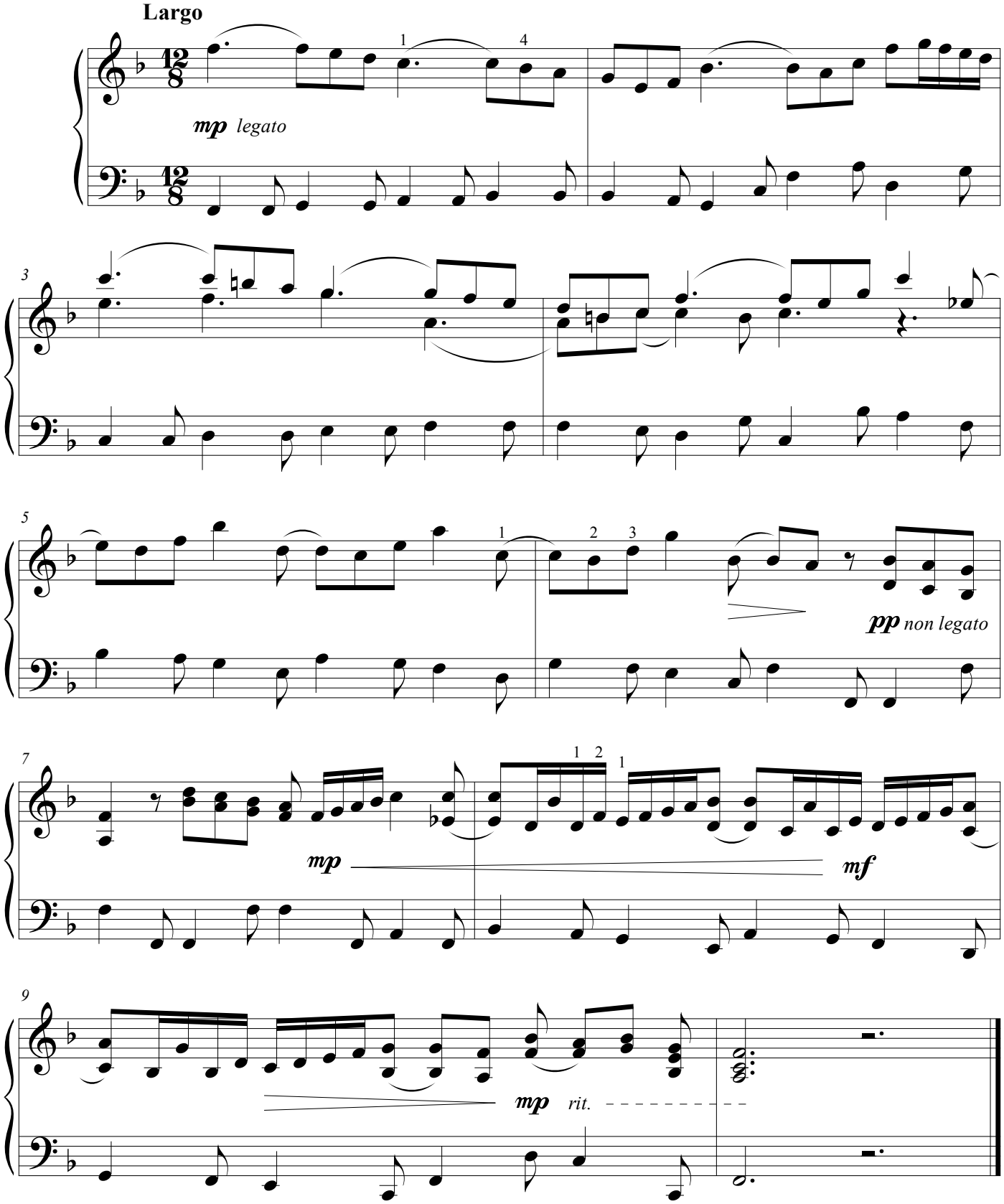
Largo from The Double Violin Concerto

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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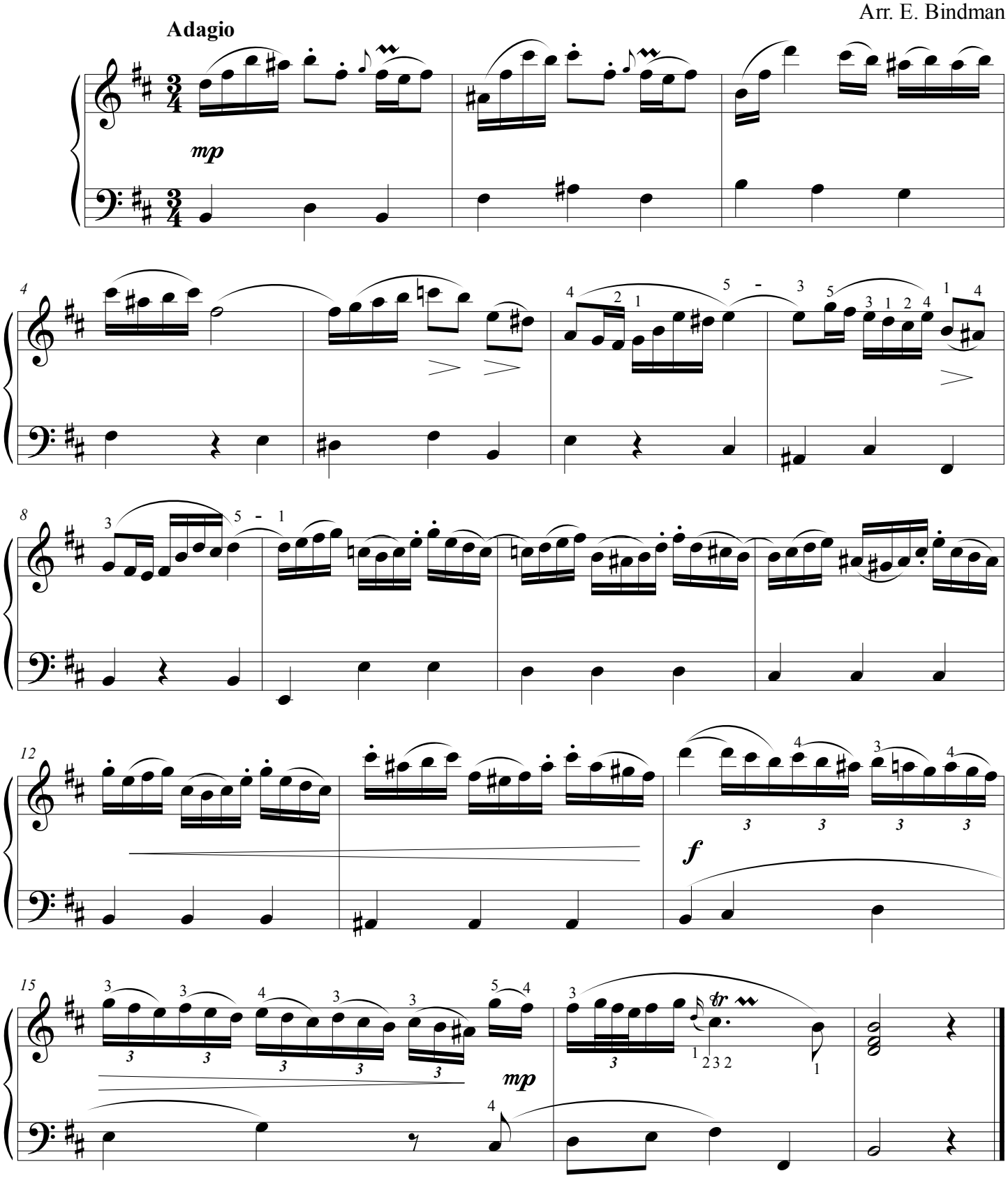
Flute Solo from The Easter Oratorio

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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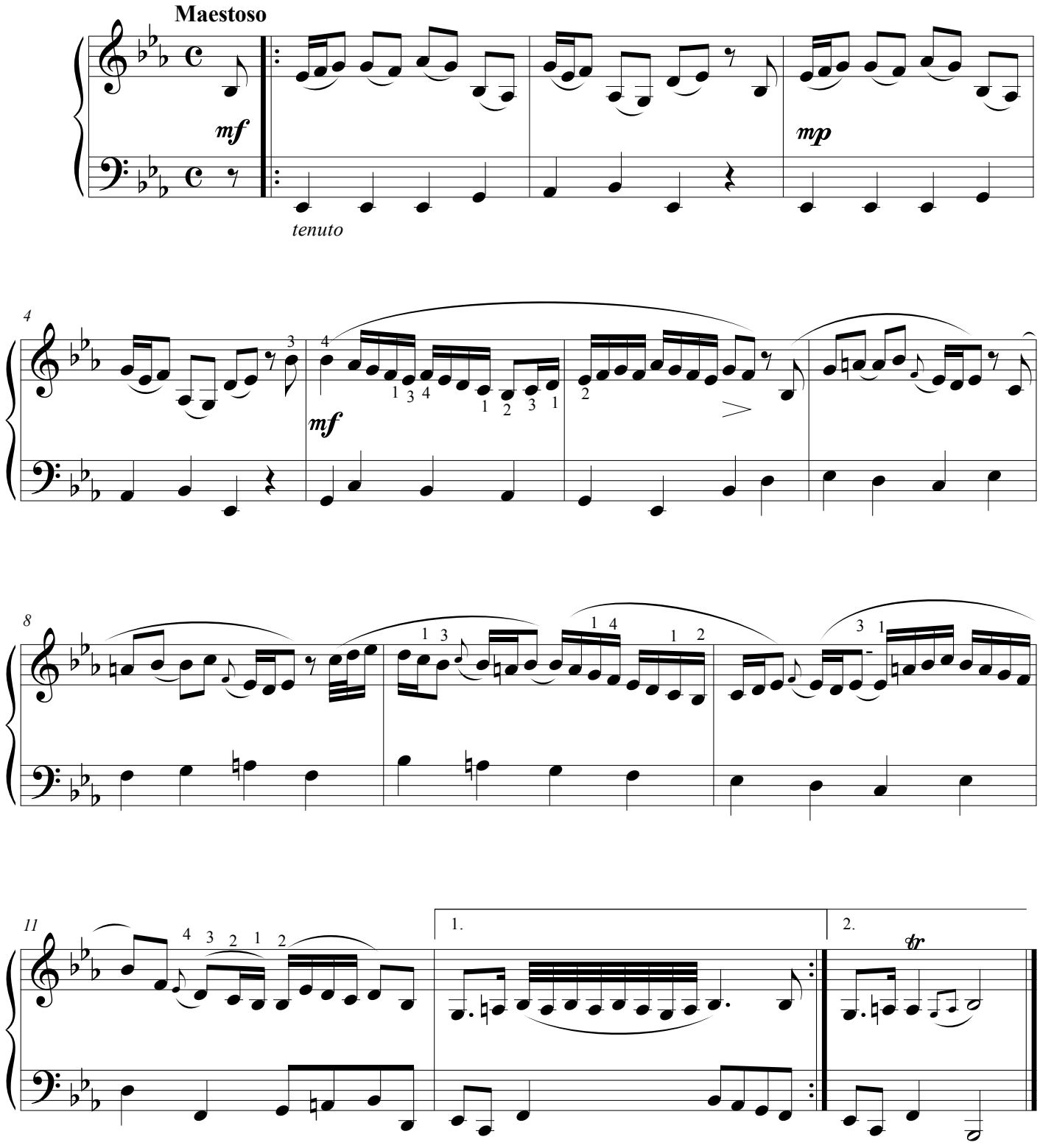
"Wachet auf " Chorale Prelude

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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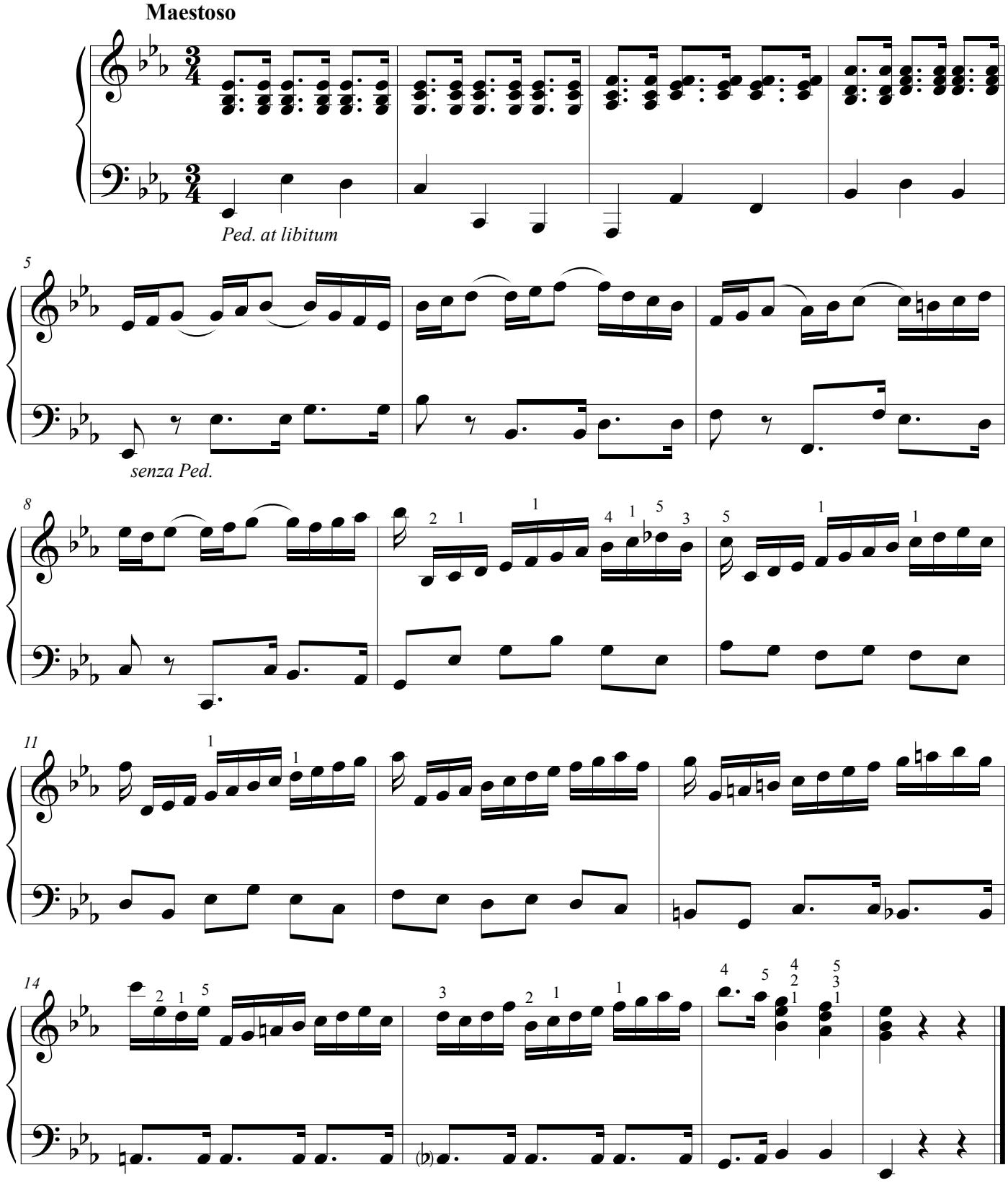
"Wachet auf " Cantata

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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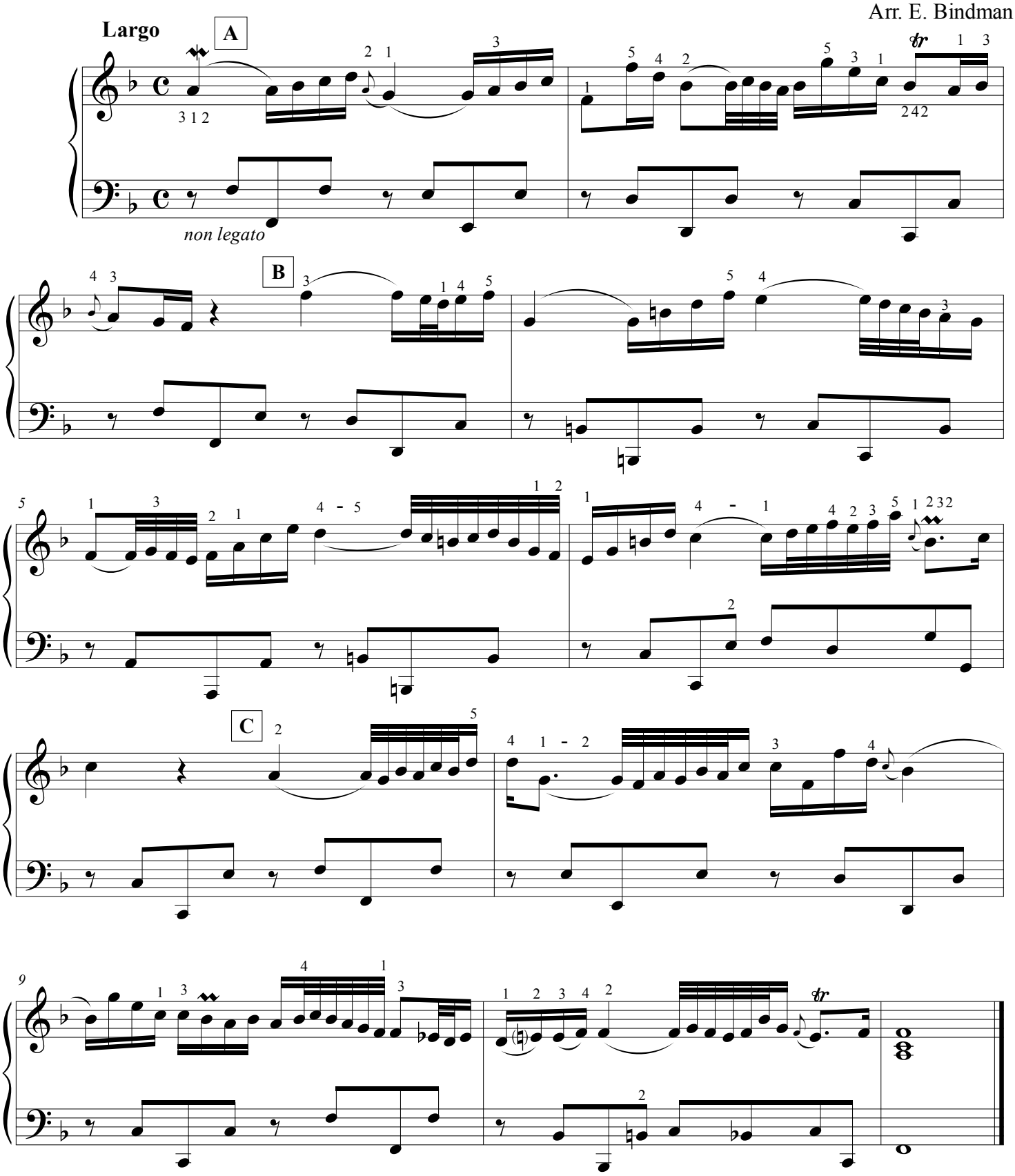
Largo from Harpsichord Concerto in F Minor

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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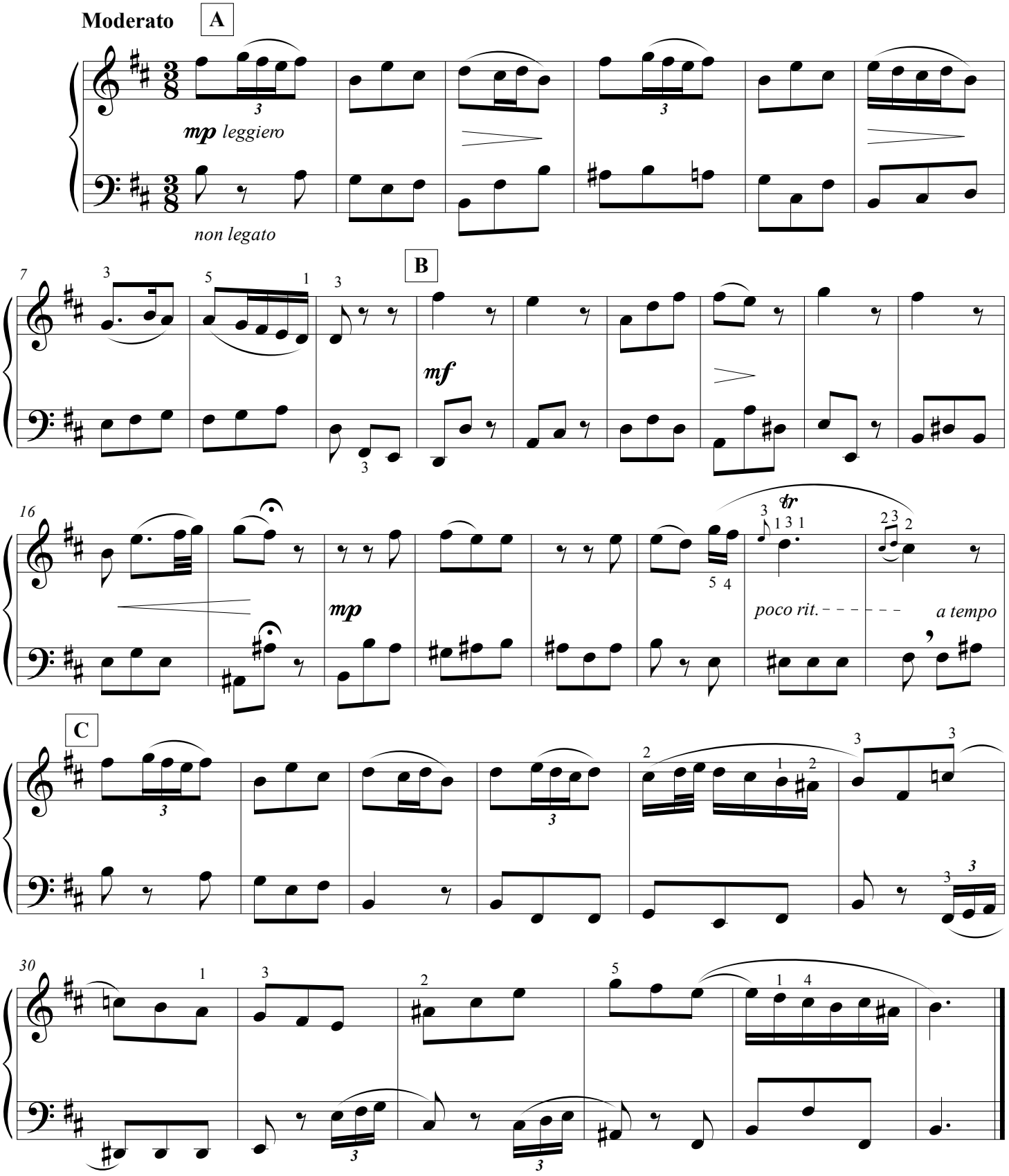
Ah, How Sweet Coffee Tastes!

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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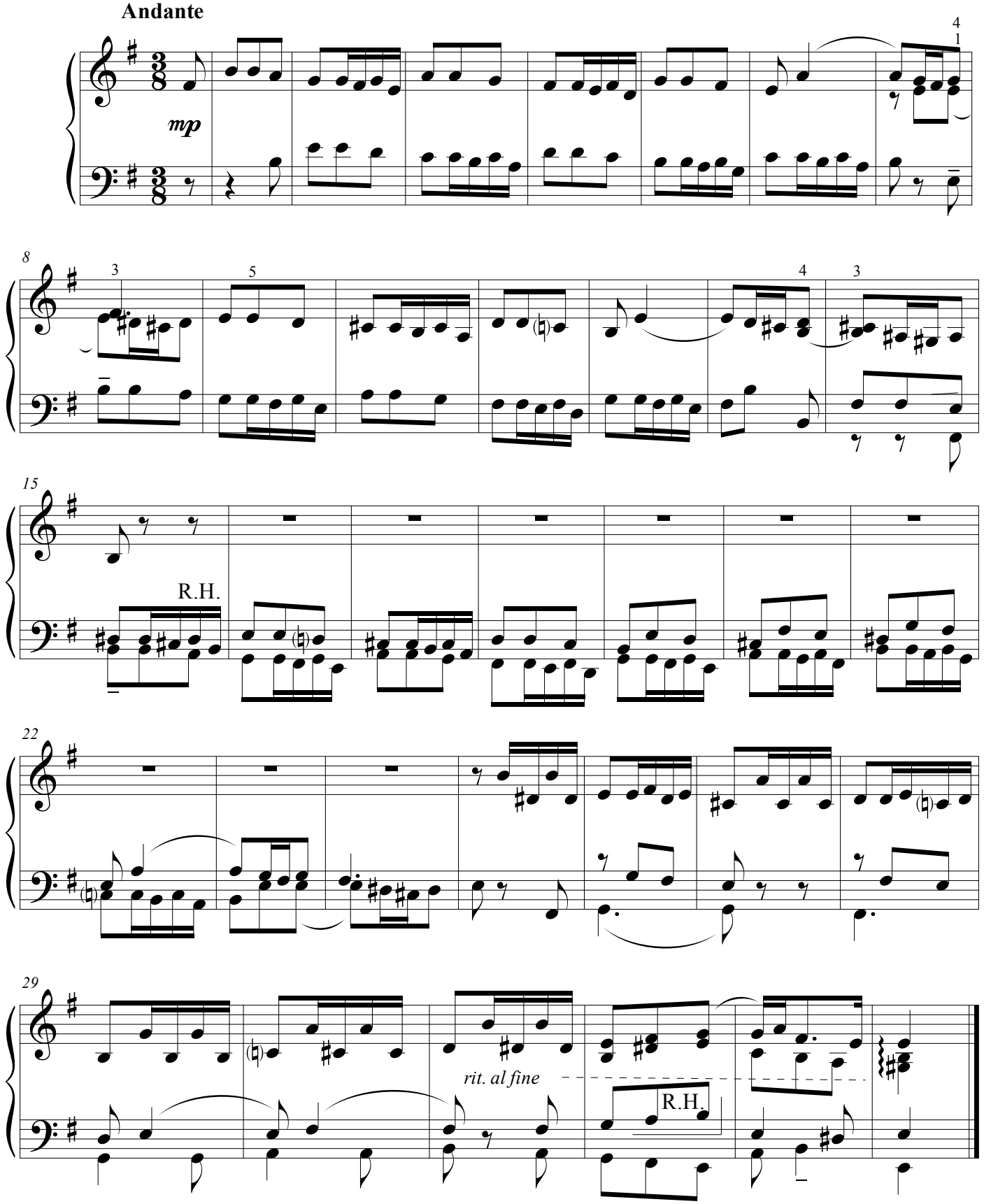
Fugue from Lute Suite #2

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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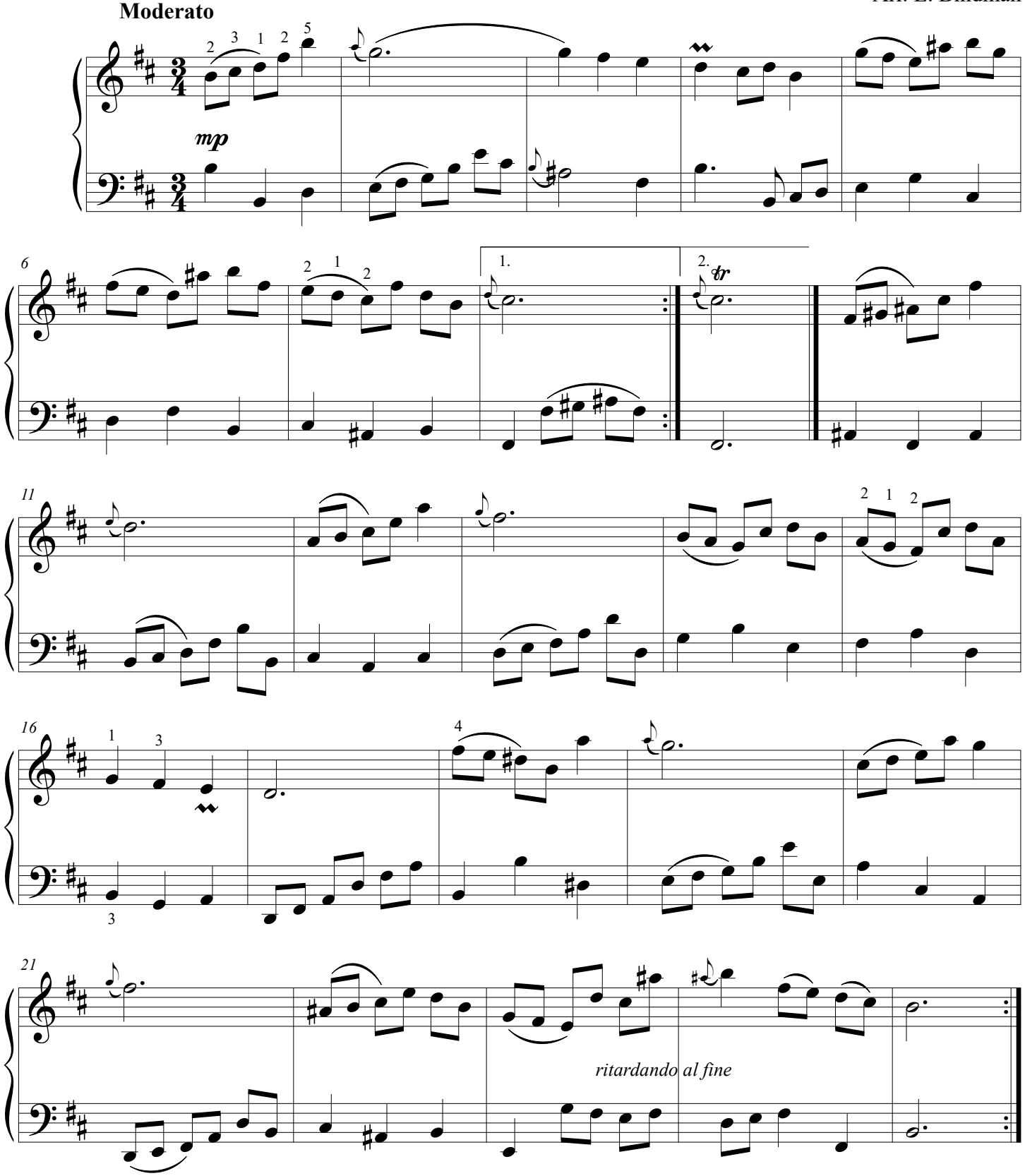
Menuet from Orchestral Suite #2

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



The grace - note appoggiaturas should be started on the beat, sounding like 8th notes.
In the orchestral version, the violins play 3 8th notes at the start of each measure on the same bow. It's useful to imitate that phrasing on the piano, for sound balance and wrist flexibility.

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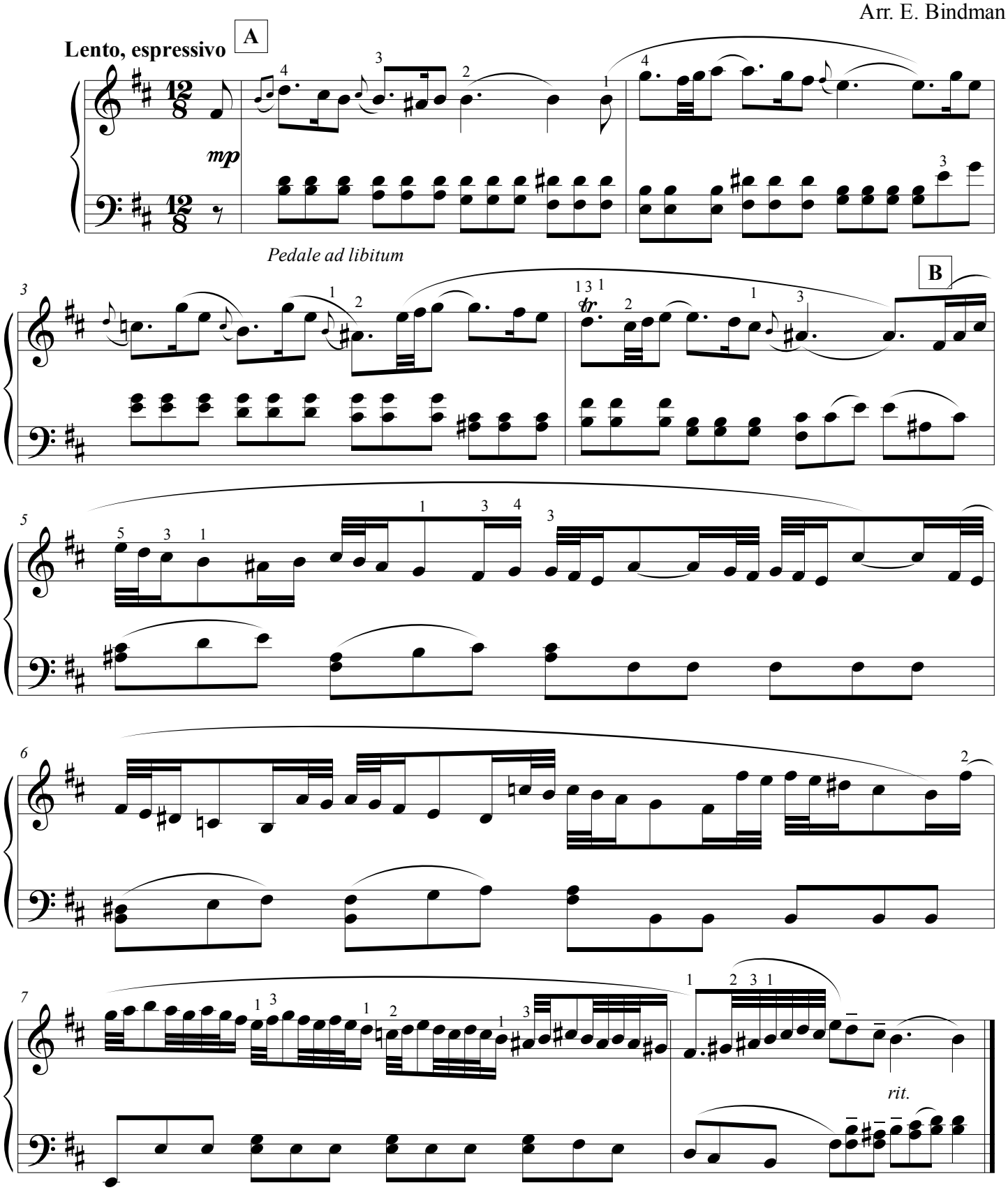
"Erbarme dich" from St. Matthew's Passion

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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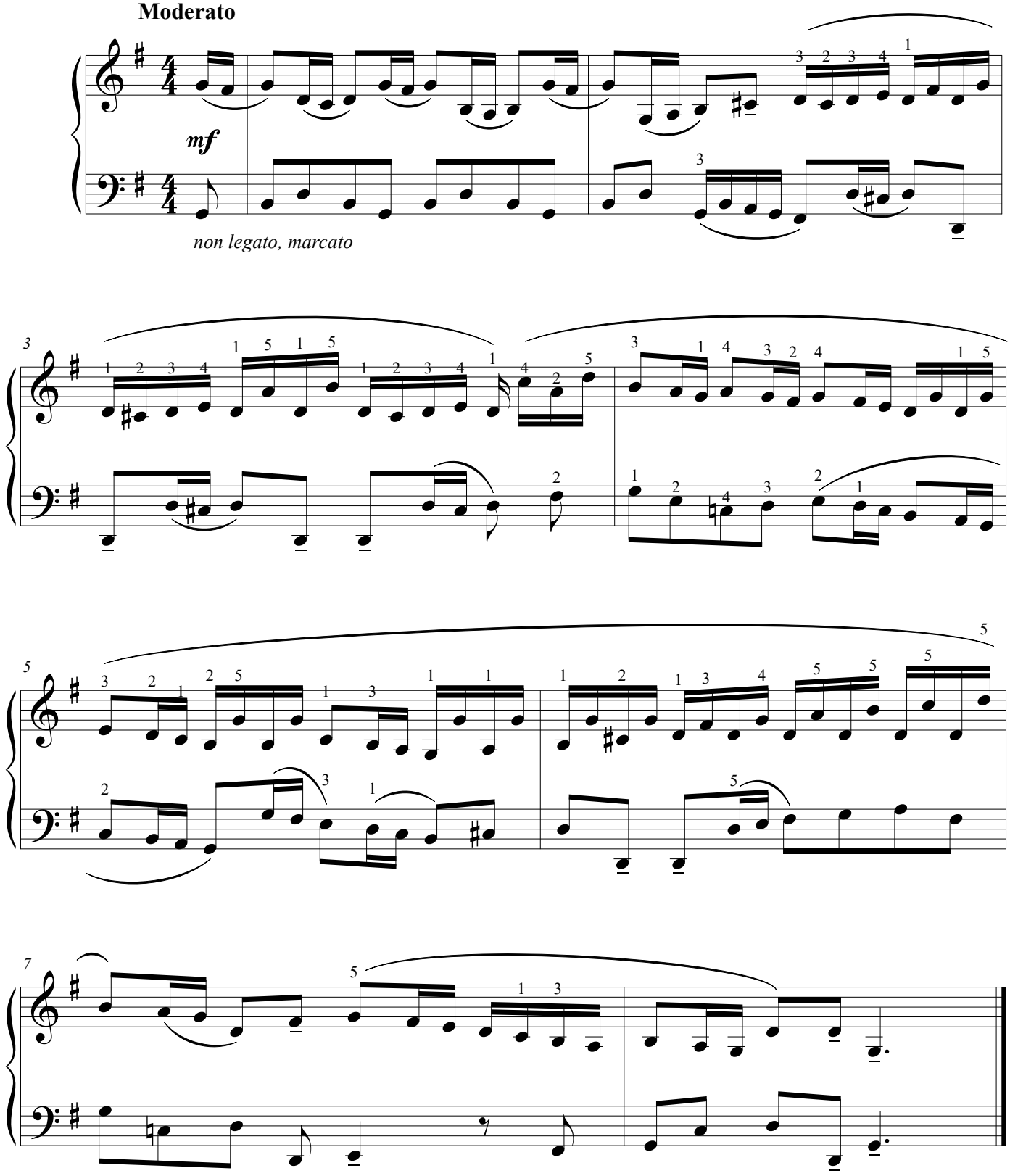
Stepping Stones To Bach

Book 2

1. Theme from Brandenburg Concerto #3, BWV 1048……..p.30
2. Motet: "Jesu, meine Freude," BWV 227……p.31
3. Andante from Viola de Gamba Sonata #1, BWV 1027……p.32
4. "Seufzer, Tränen, Kummer, Not" from Cantata BWV 21……p.33
5. Gavotte from Orchestral Suite #3, BWV 1068……p.34
6. Flute solo from St. Matthew's Passion, BWV 244……p.35
7. Forlane from Orchestral Suite #1, BWV 1066……p.36
8. Canon from Brandenburg Concerto #5, BWV 1050……p.37
9. Andante and Adagio from Torelli's Violin Concerto, BWV 979……p.38
10. Allegro from Viola de Gamba Sonata #2, BWV 1028……p.40
11. "Schlummert ein" from Cantata BWV 82……p.41
12. Finale of Harpsichord Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052……p.42
13. Adagio from Concerto for 2 Harpsichords, BWV 1060……p.44
14. "Erschallet**,** ihr Lieder" from Cantata BWV 172……p.46
15. Finale of Concerto for 2 Harpsichords, BWV 1060……p.47
16. Excerpt from Brandenburg Concerto #5, BWV 1050……p.48
17. Fugue from Organ Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565……p.50
18. "Laudamus te" from Mass in B Minor, BWV 232……p.52
19. "Qui sedes" from Mass in B Minor, BWV 232……p.53
20. Siciliano from Flute Sonata #2, BWV 1031……p.54
21. Allegro from Violin Concerto #2, BWV 1042……p.55
22. Cello Solo from Cantata BWV 41…… p.56
23. Andante from Flute Sonata #1, BWV 1030……p.57
24. Organ Toccata in D Minor, BWV 538……p.58

Theme from Brandenburg Concerto #3

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman



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

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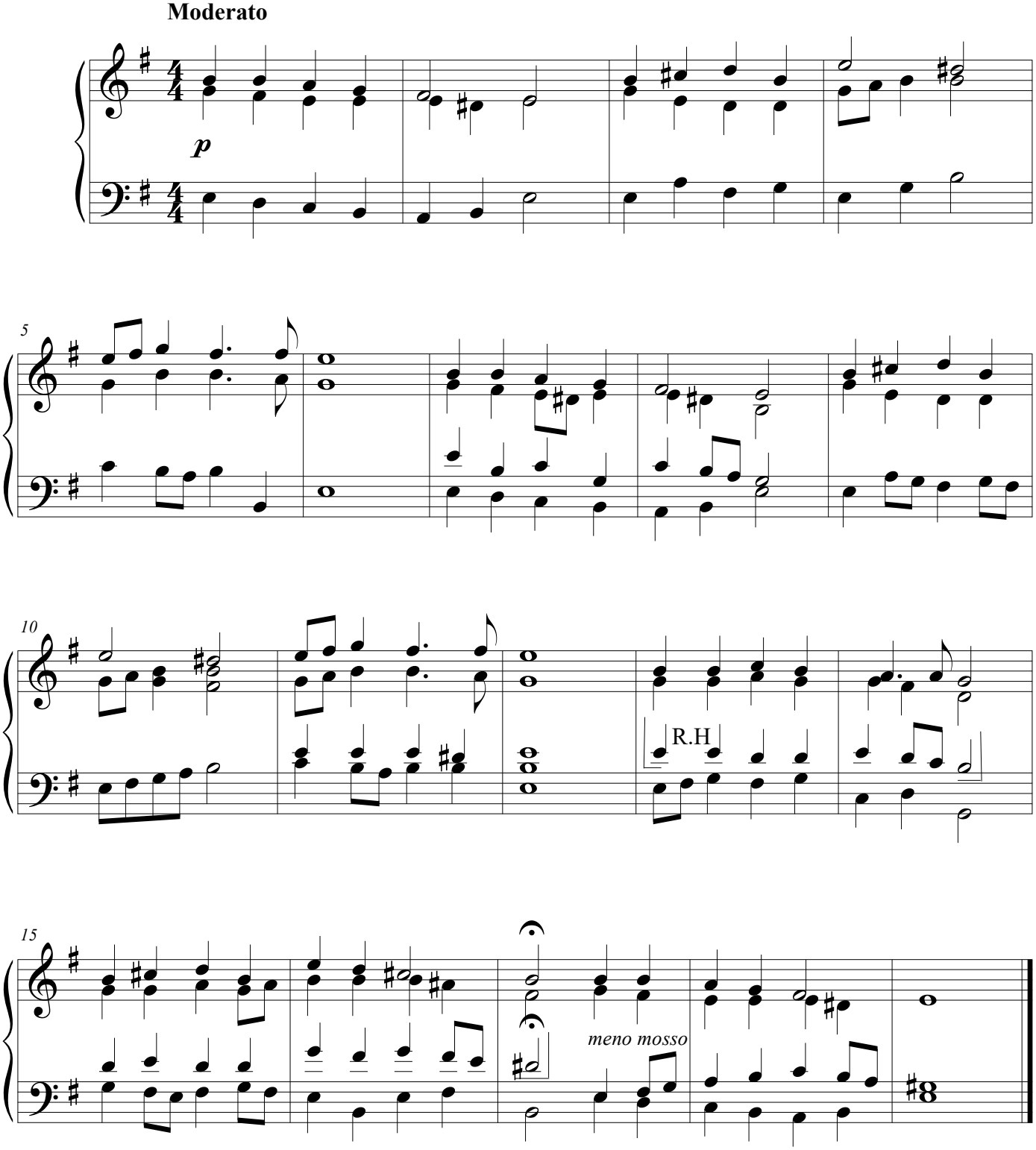
"Jesu, meine Freude" motet

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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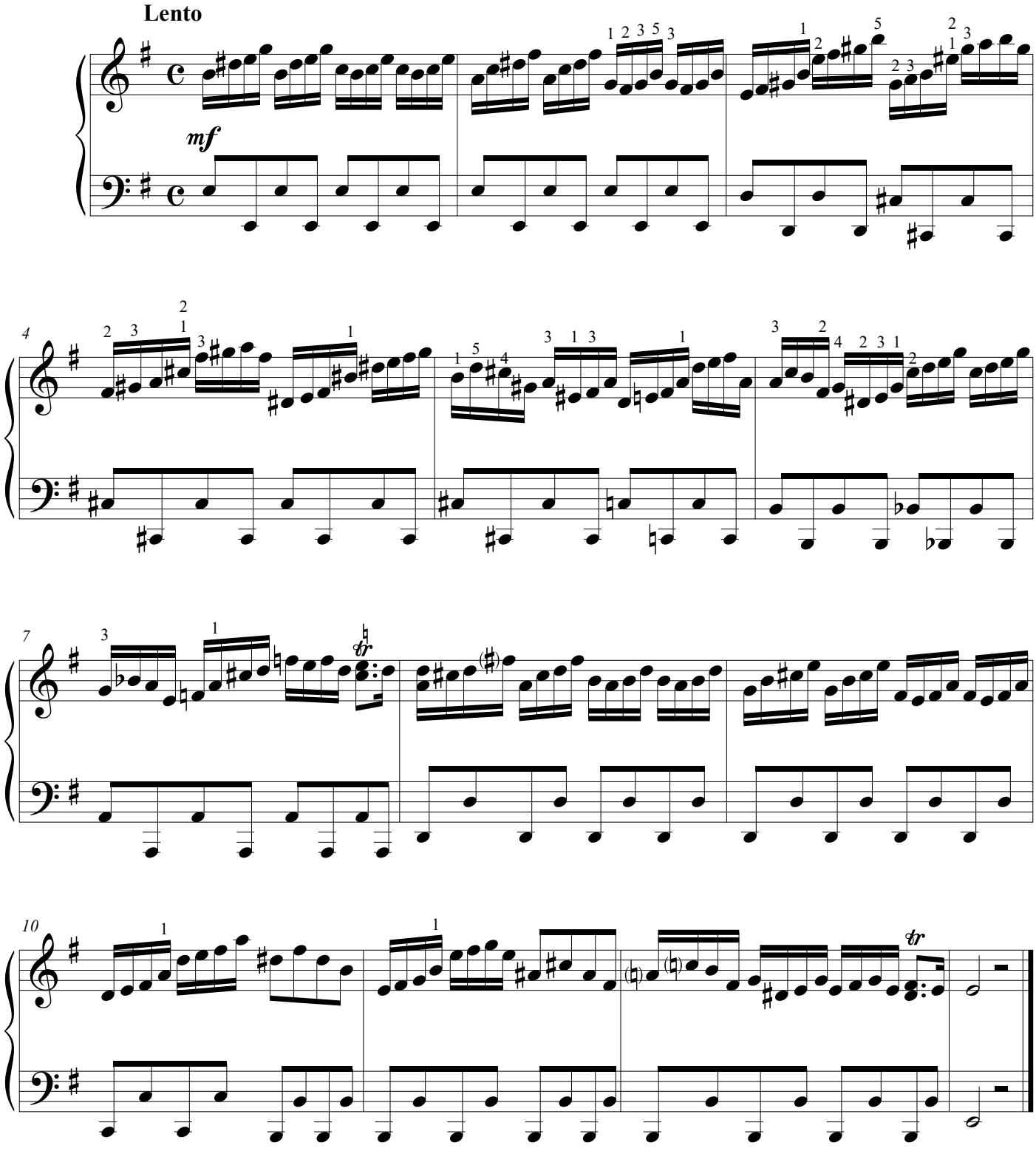
Andante from Viola de Gamba Sonata #1

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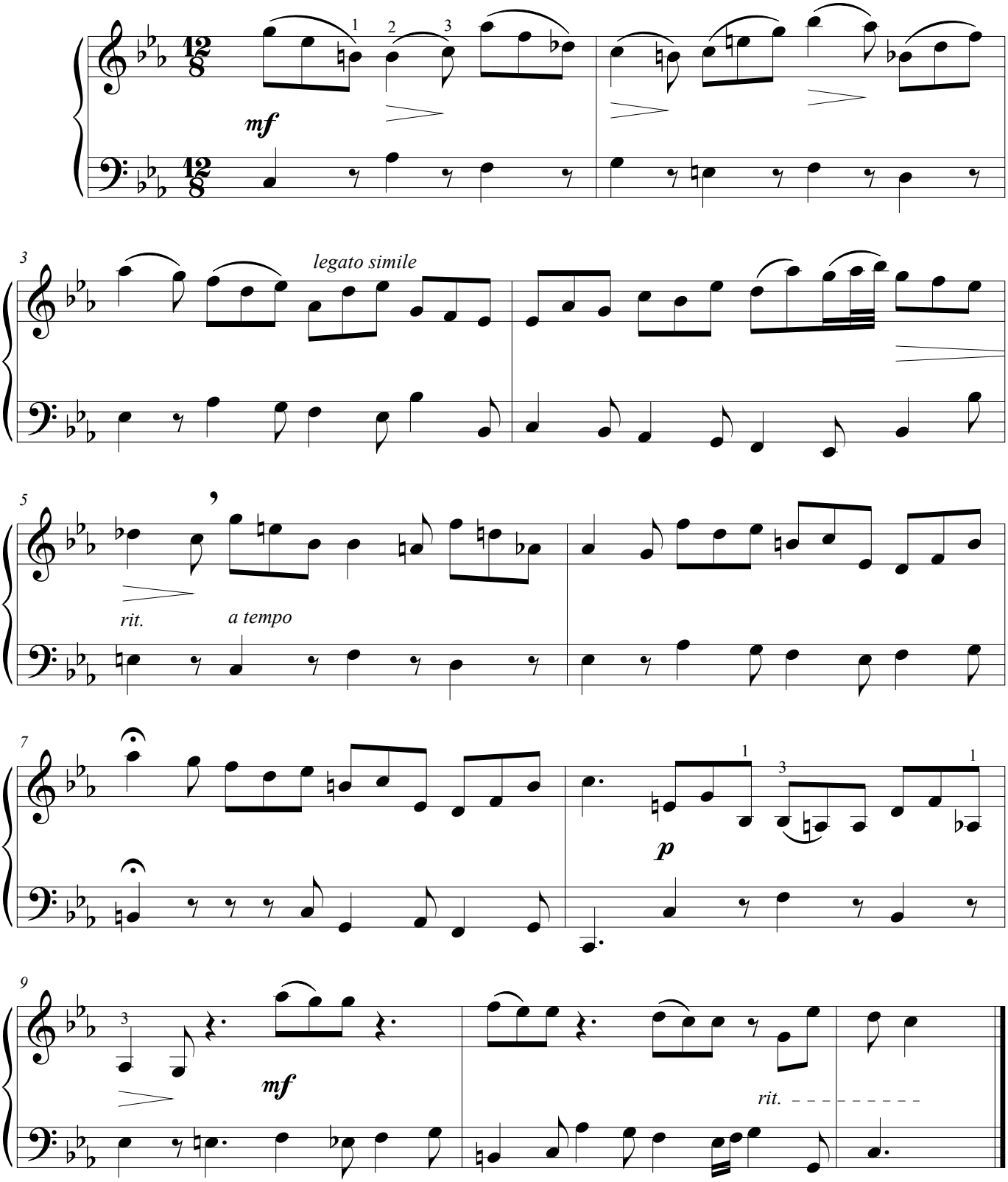
"Seufzer, Tränen, Kummer, Not"
from Cantata BWV 21

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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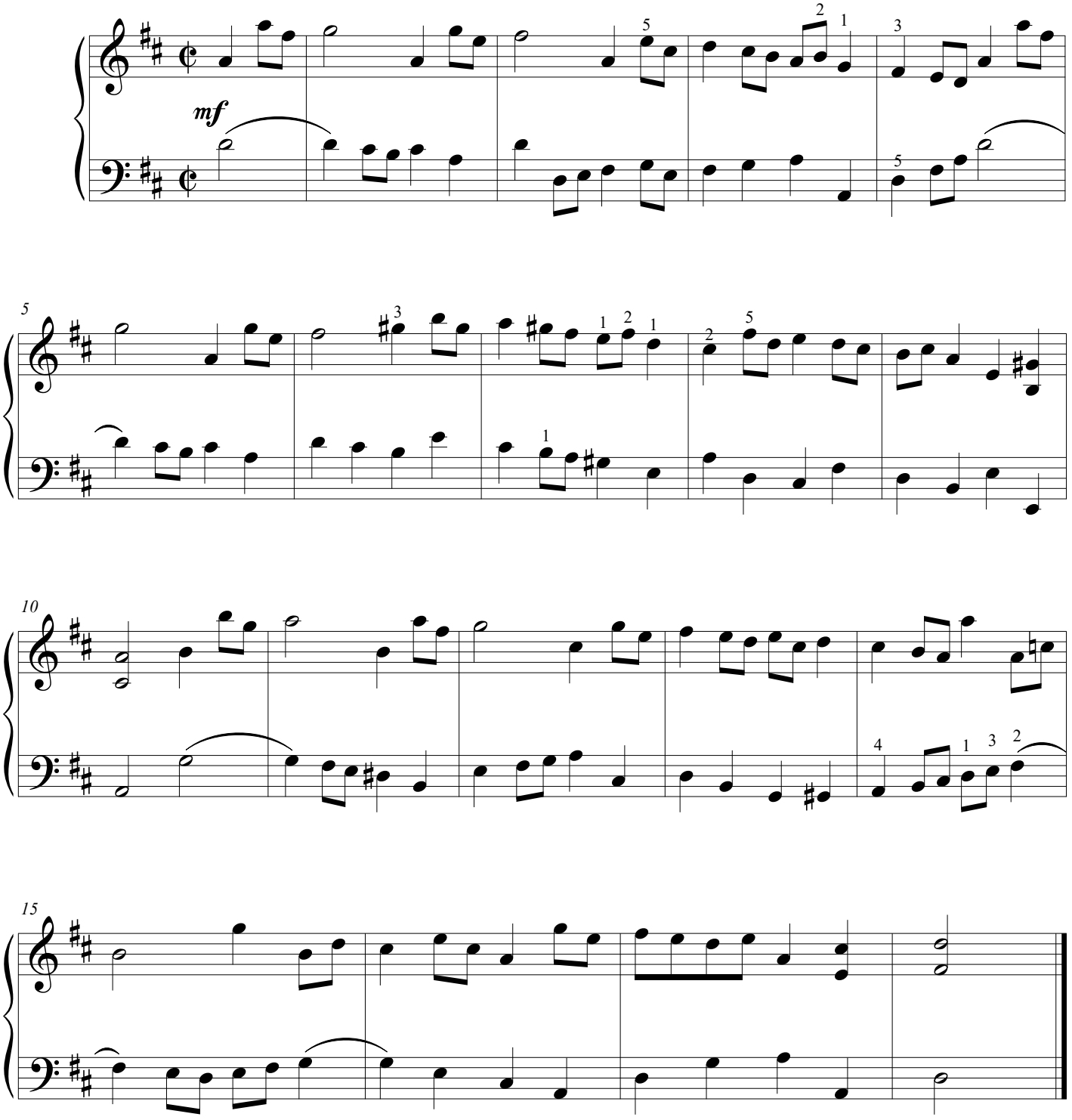
Gavotte from Orchestral Suite #3

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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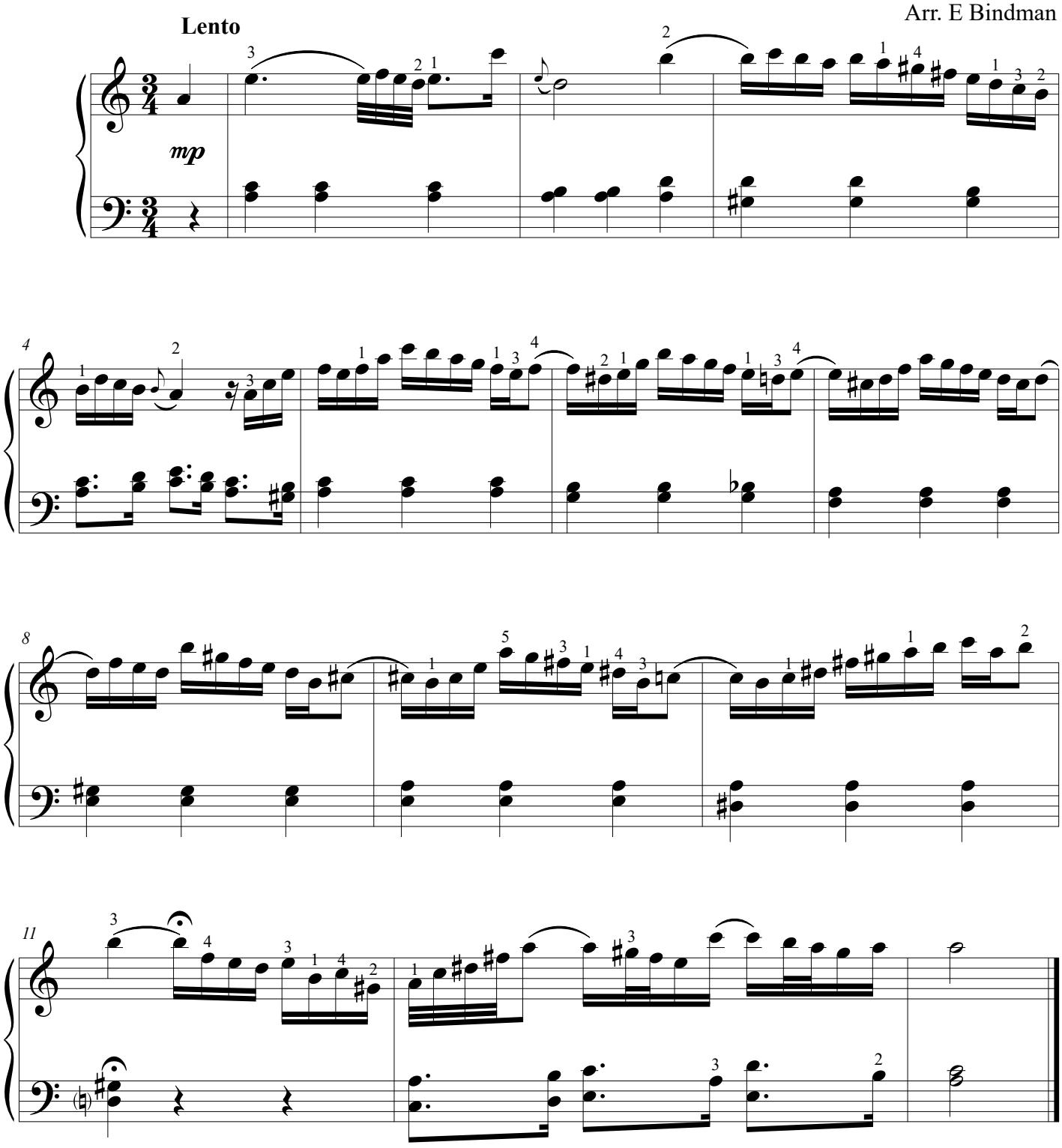
Flute solo from St. Matthew's Passion

"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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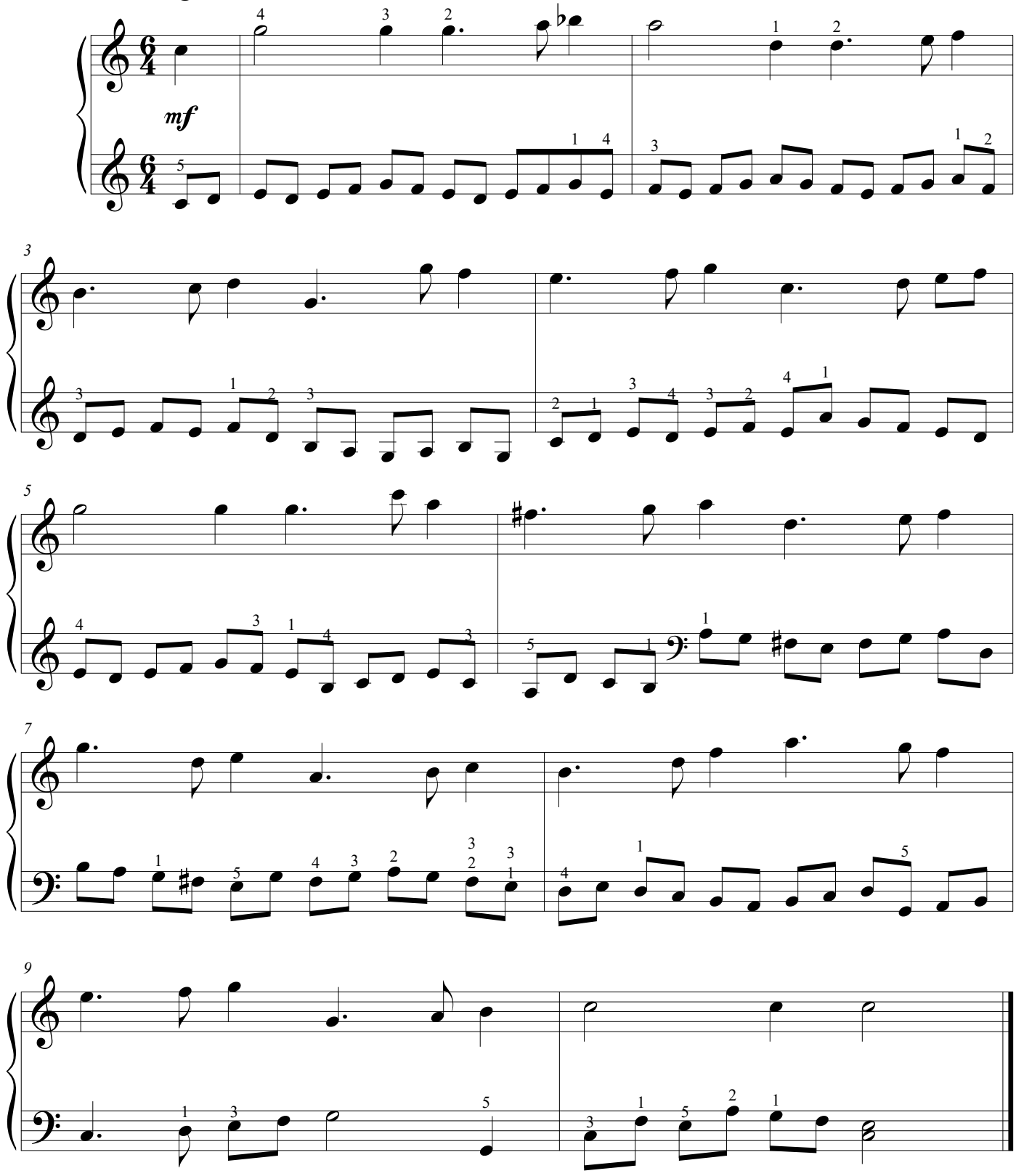
Forlane from Orchestral Suite #1

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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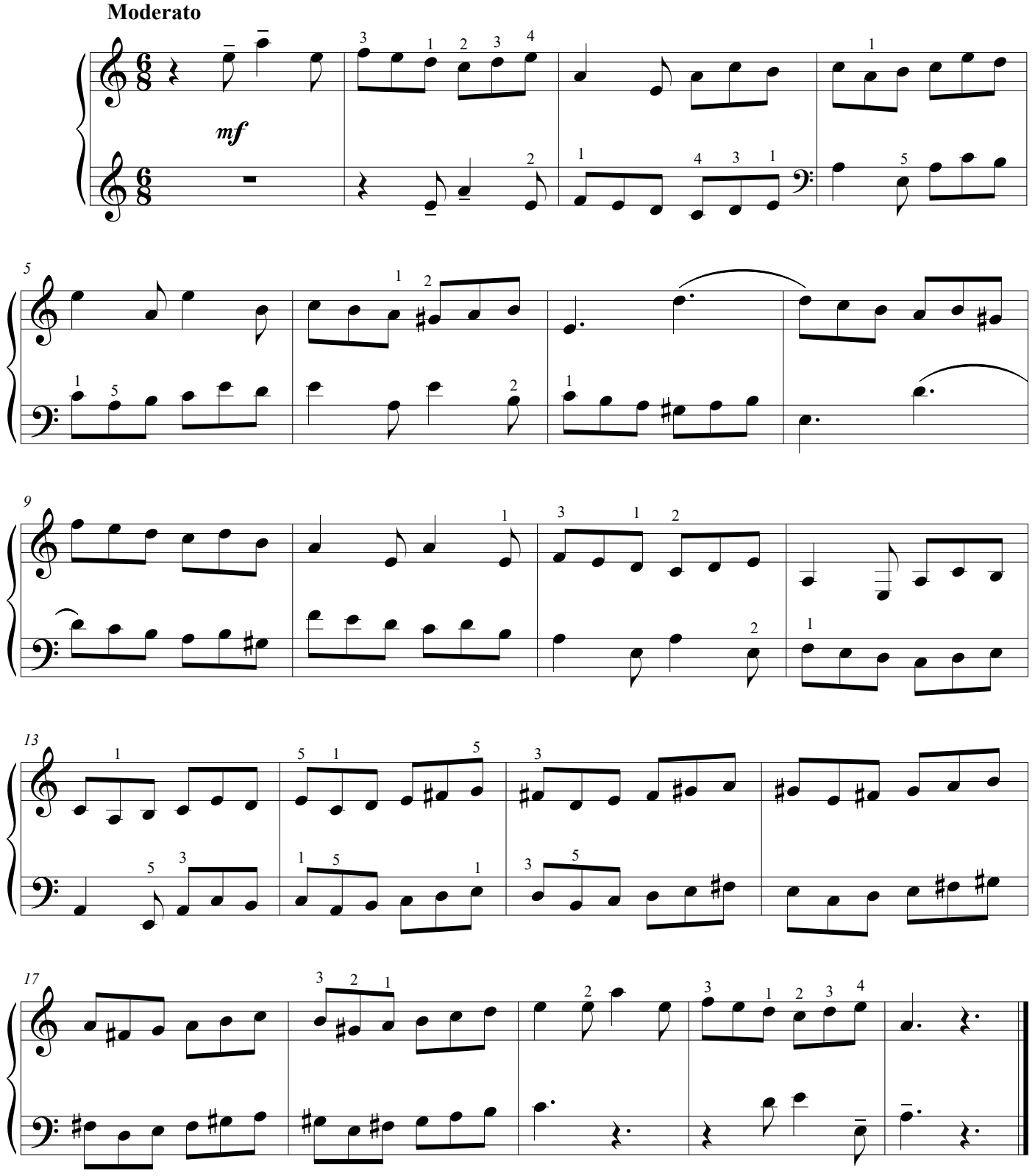
Canon from Brandenburg Concerto #5

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



I transposed this interesting canon from the last movement of Brandenburg #5 from B minor into A minor to make it more manageable. The 8th notes should be played legato, in groups of 3 or 6.

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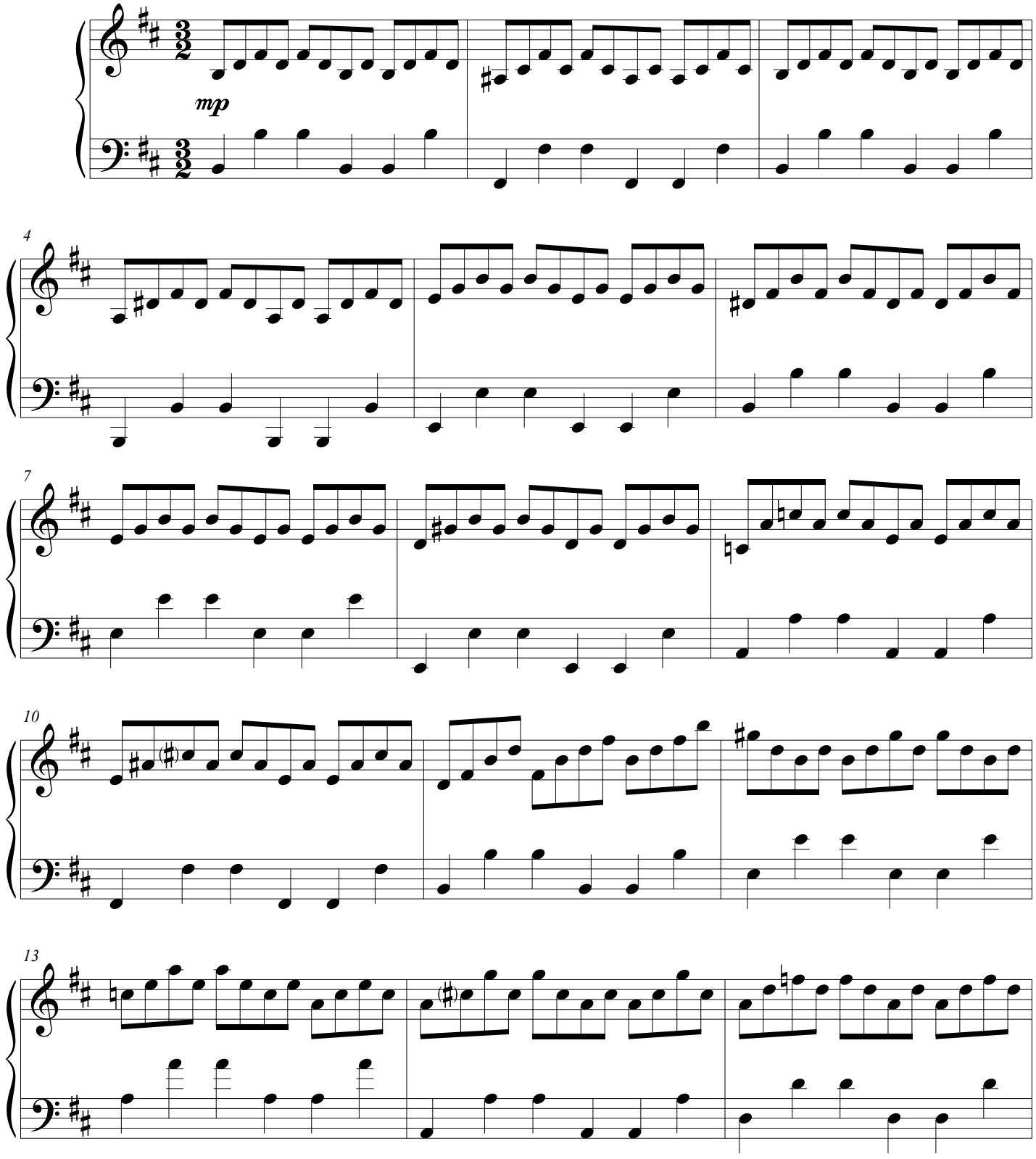
Andante and Adagio from J.S.Bach's arrangement of a Violin Concerto by Torelli

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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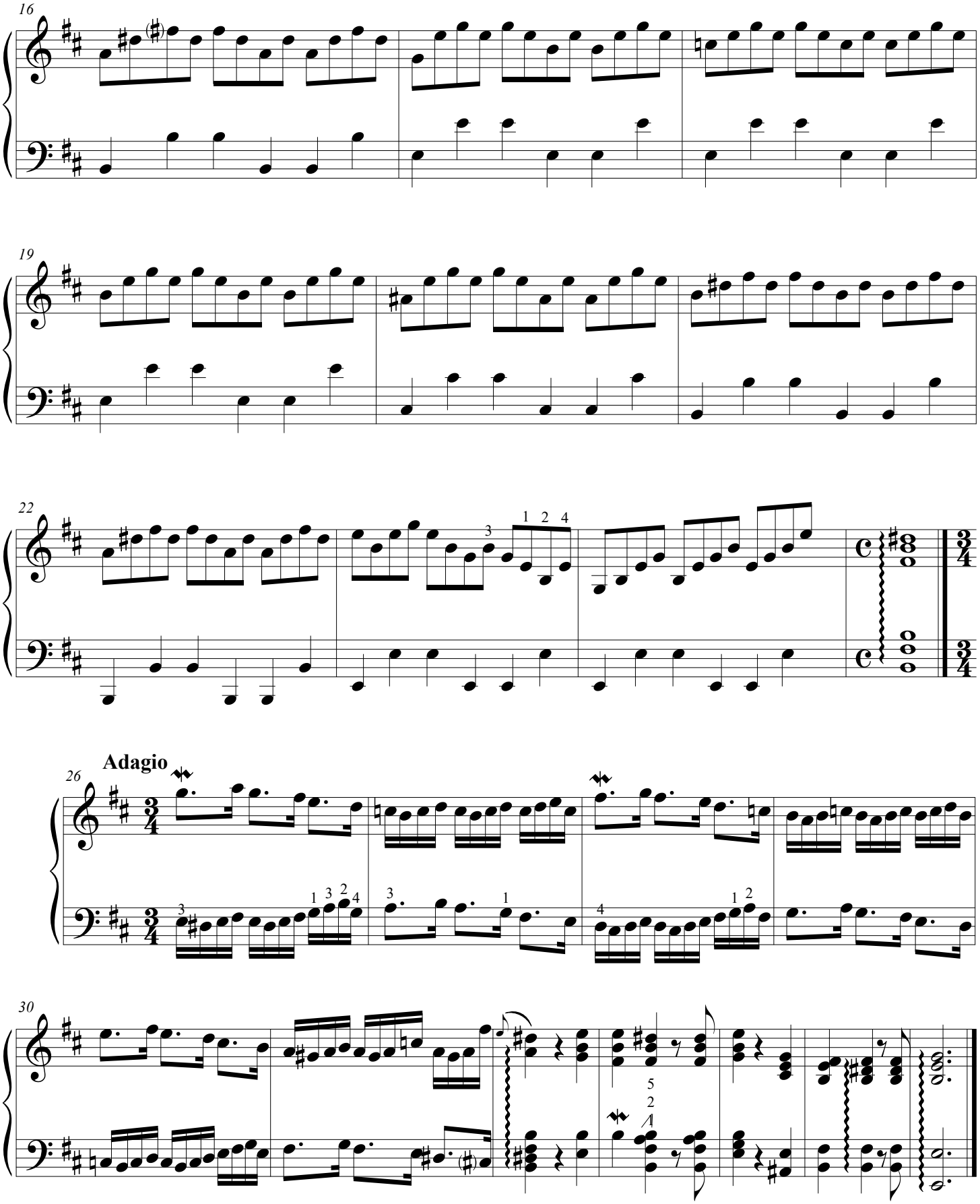
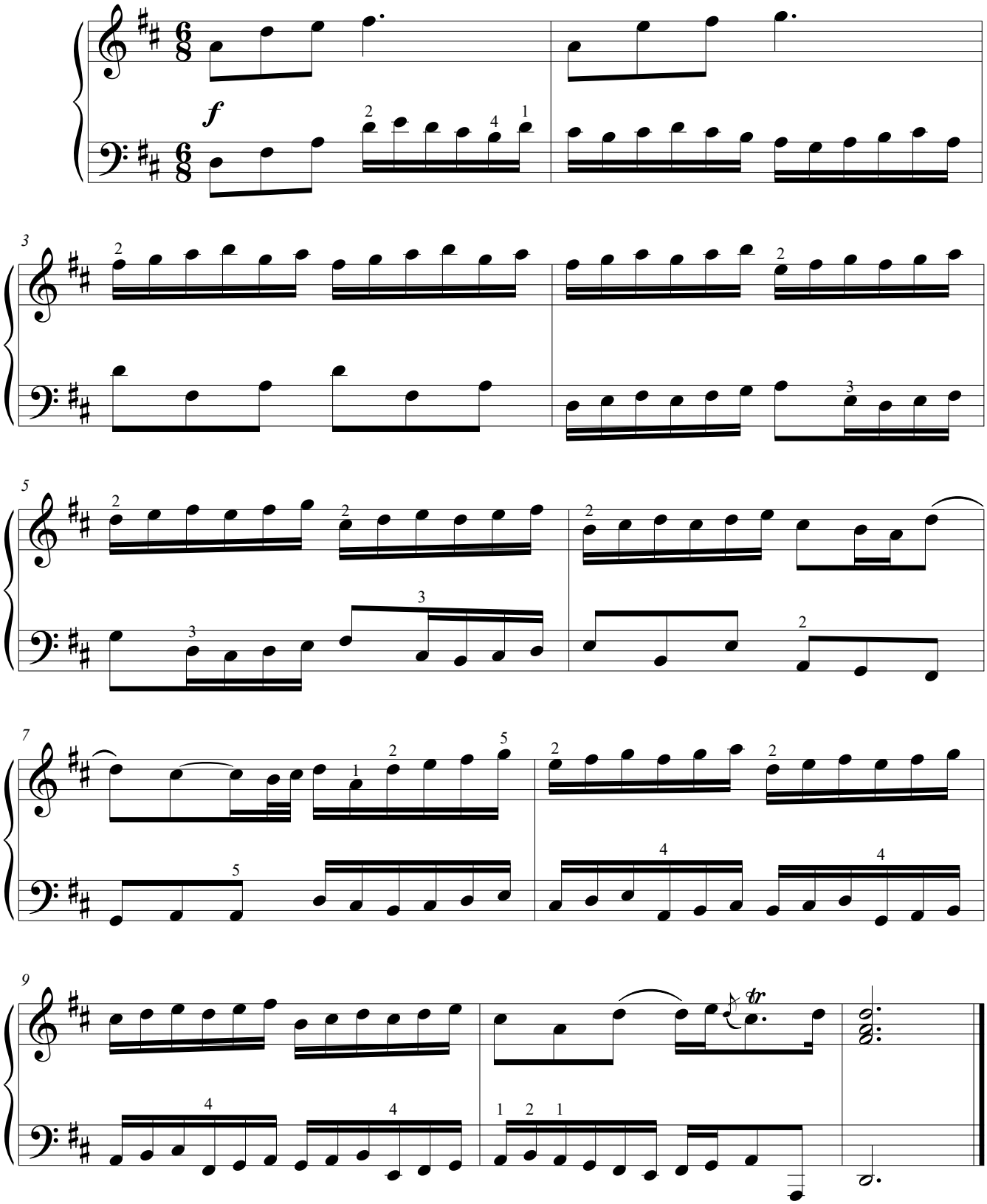


I am thrilled to include J.S. Bach's own arrangement in our collection. He made many solo keyboard versions of concertos by Vivaldi and other composers in Weimar around 1714, catalogued as BWV 972-987. The two excerpts here are from his arrangement of a violin concerto by Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709.)

Allegro from Viola de Gamba Sonata #2

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Allegro



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

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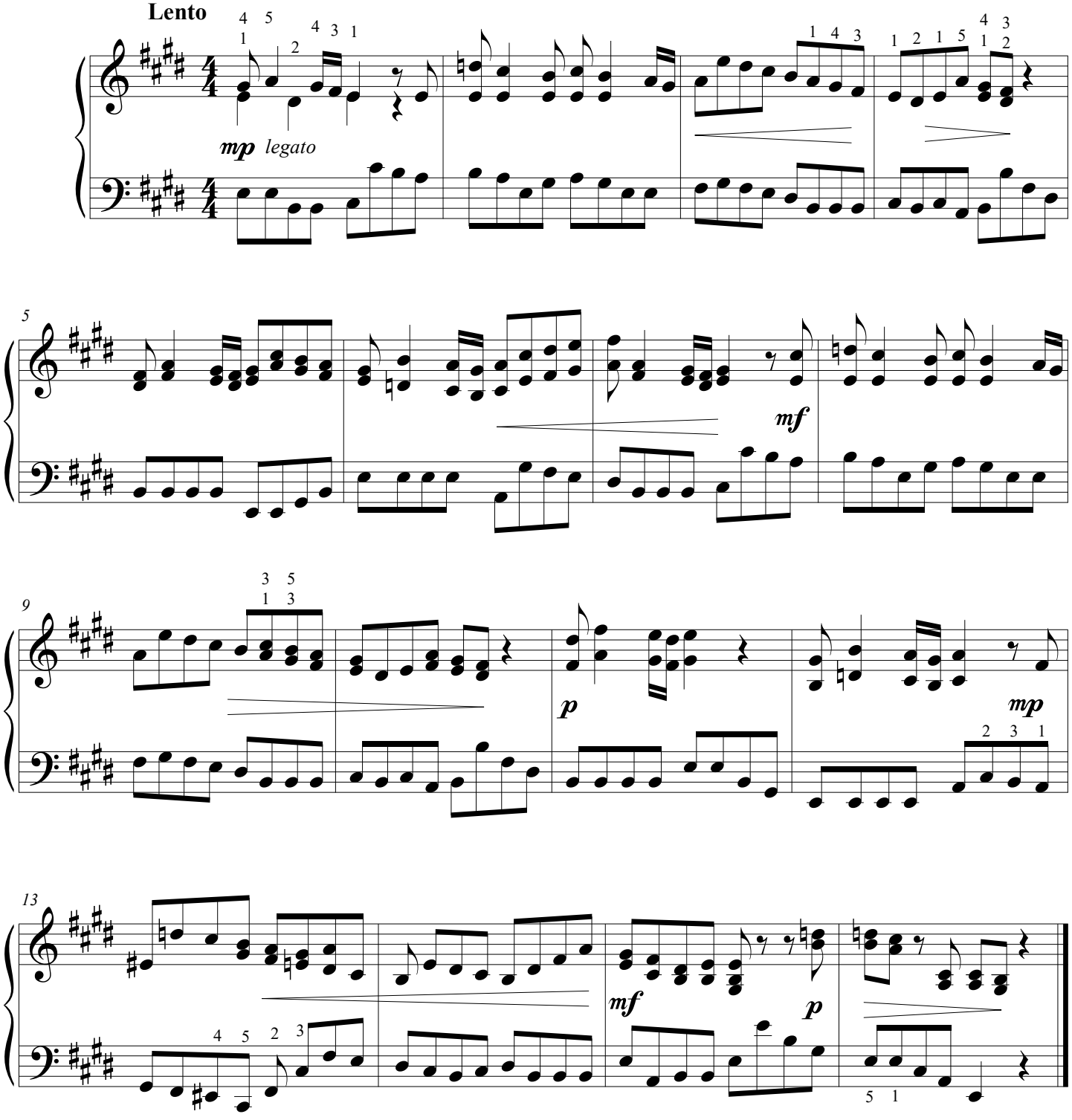
"Schlummert ein" from Cantata BWV 82

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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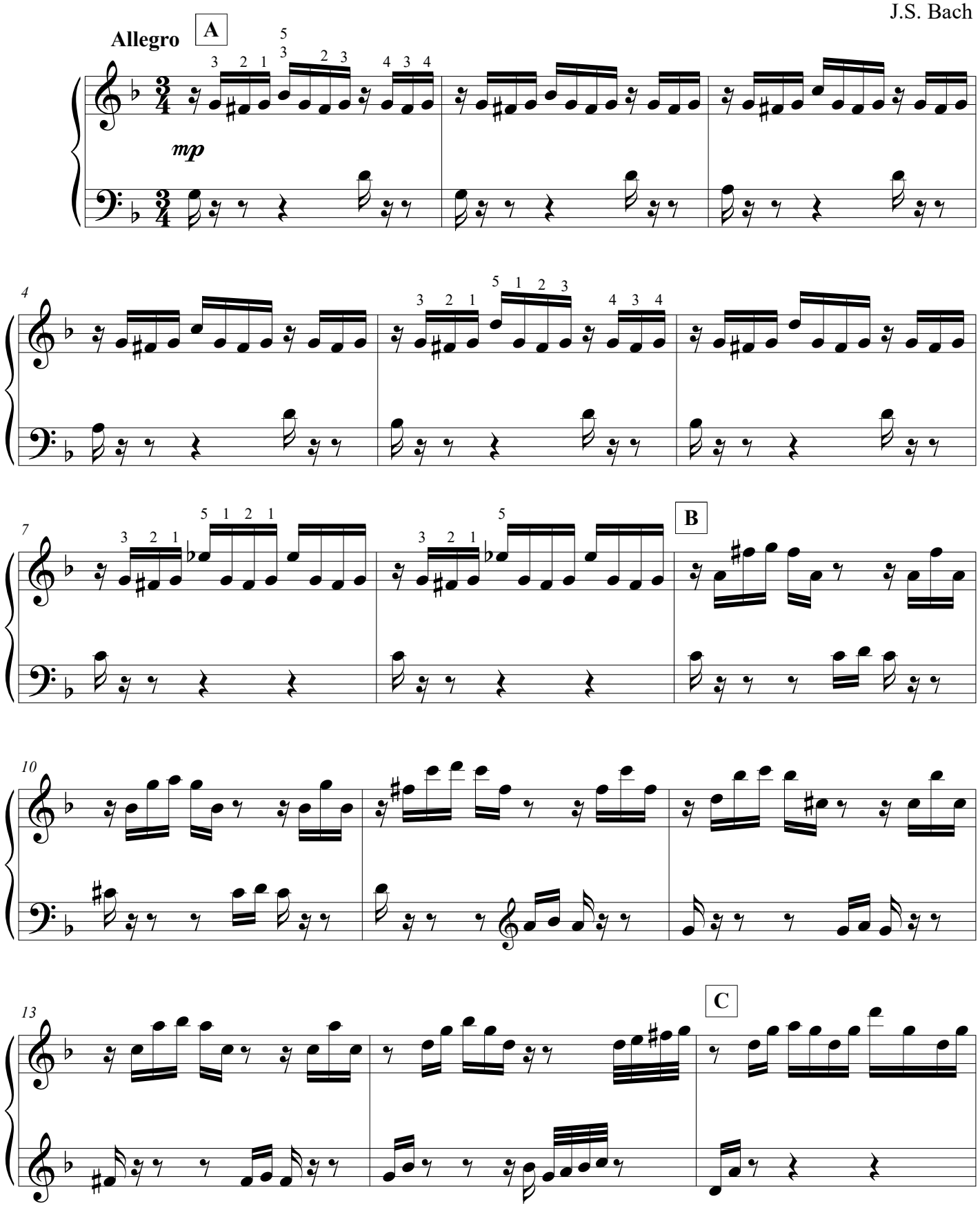
Finale of Harpsichord Concerto in D minor

J.S. Bach



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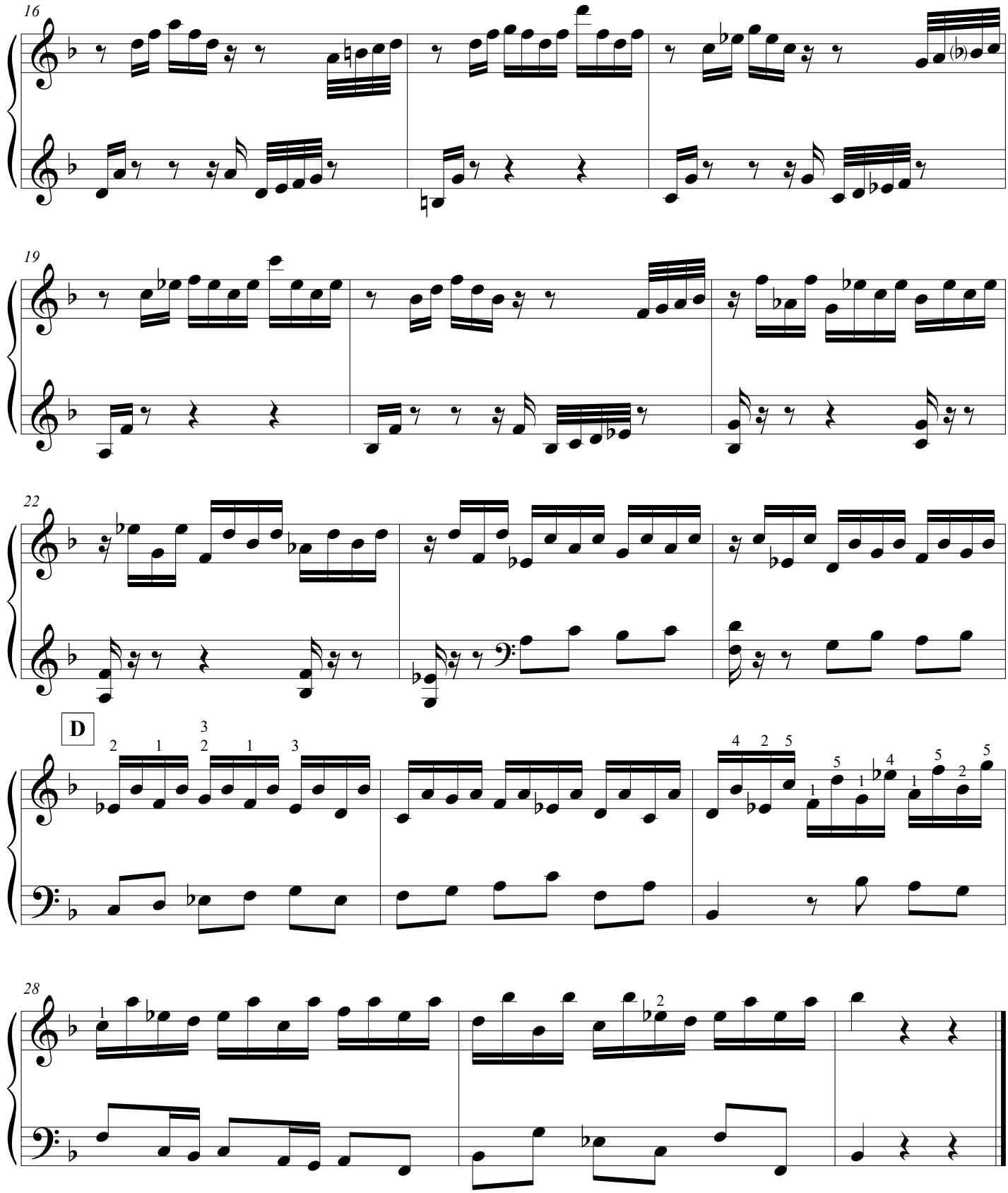
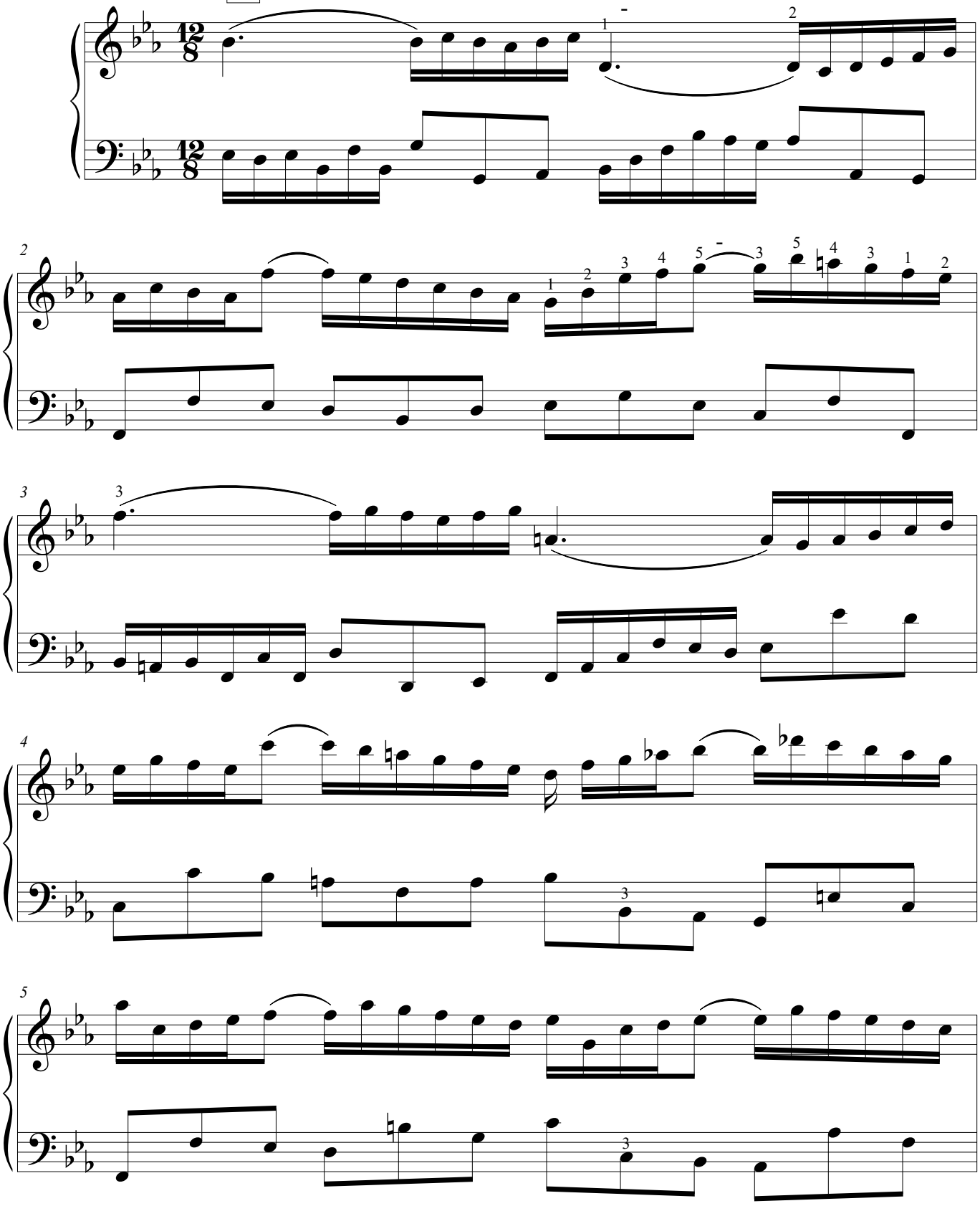


These 30 measures from Bach's most famous keyboard concerto are fantastic for practicing a light and even touch. The fingerings for section A will be very comfortable if you keep your elbow further away from the torso, angling your hand so that your thumb falls underneath the middle finger on that G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

Adagio from Concerto for 2 Harpsichords

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Cantabile **A**



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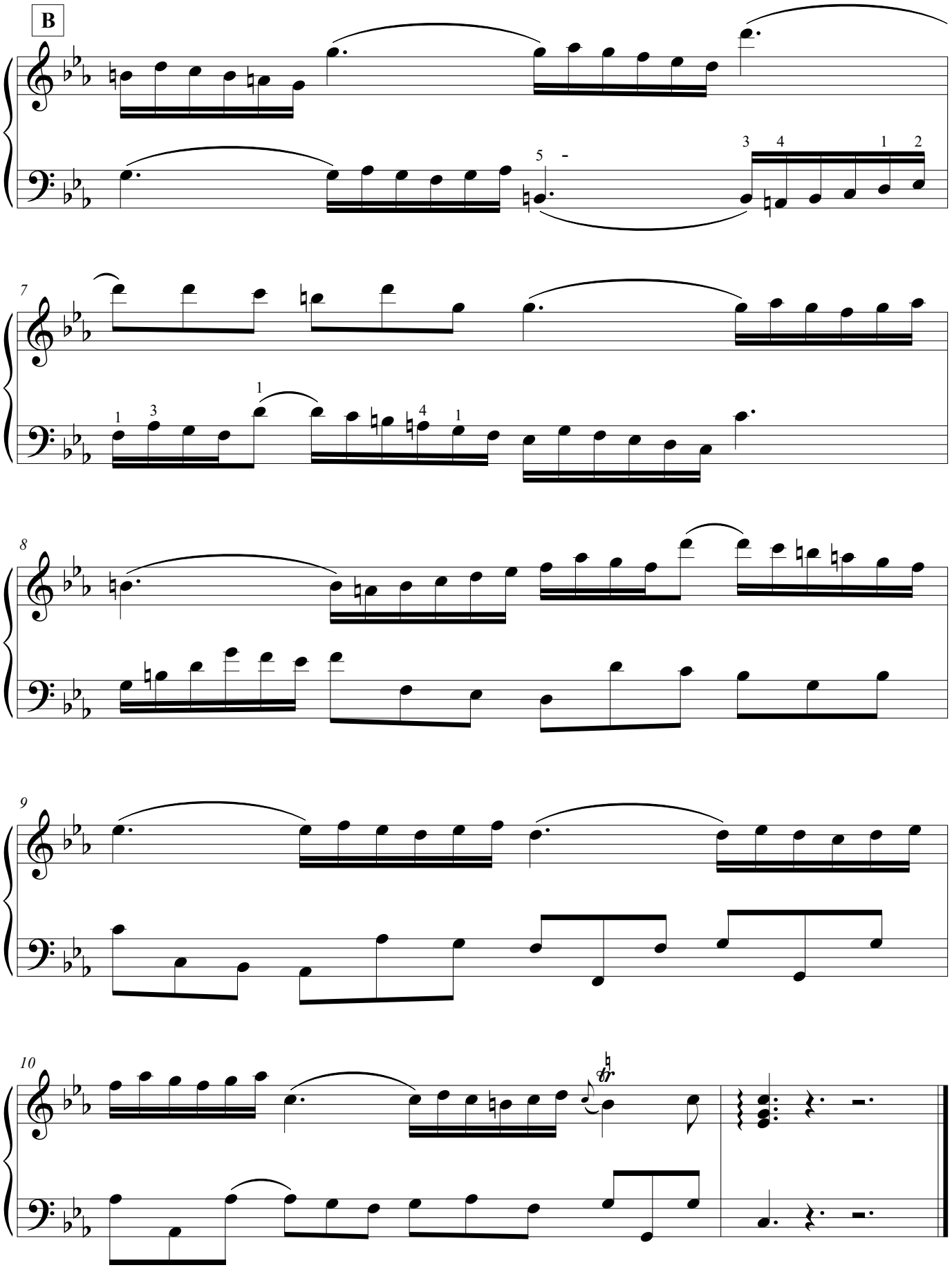
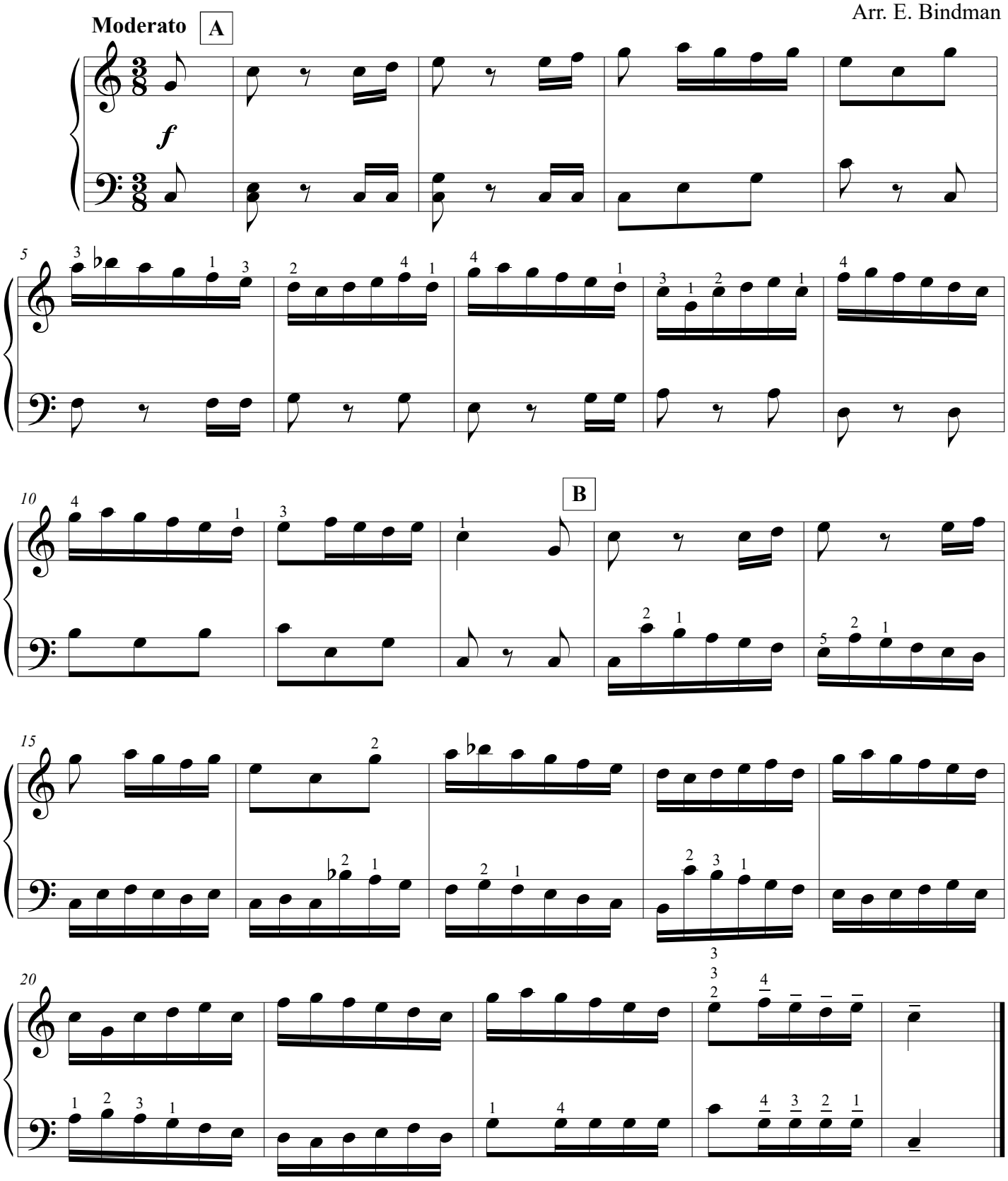


This arrangement could fit on one page but I decided to spread it out so that it looks less daunting. Unfamiliar pieces often seem intimidating, especially with lots of 16th notes, even if the tempo is slow.

"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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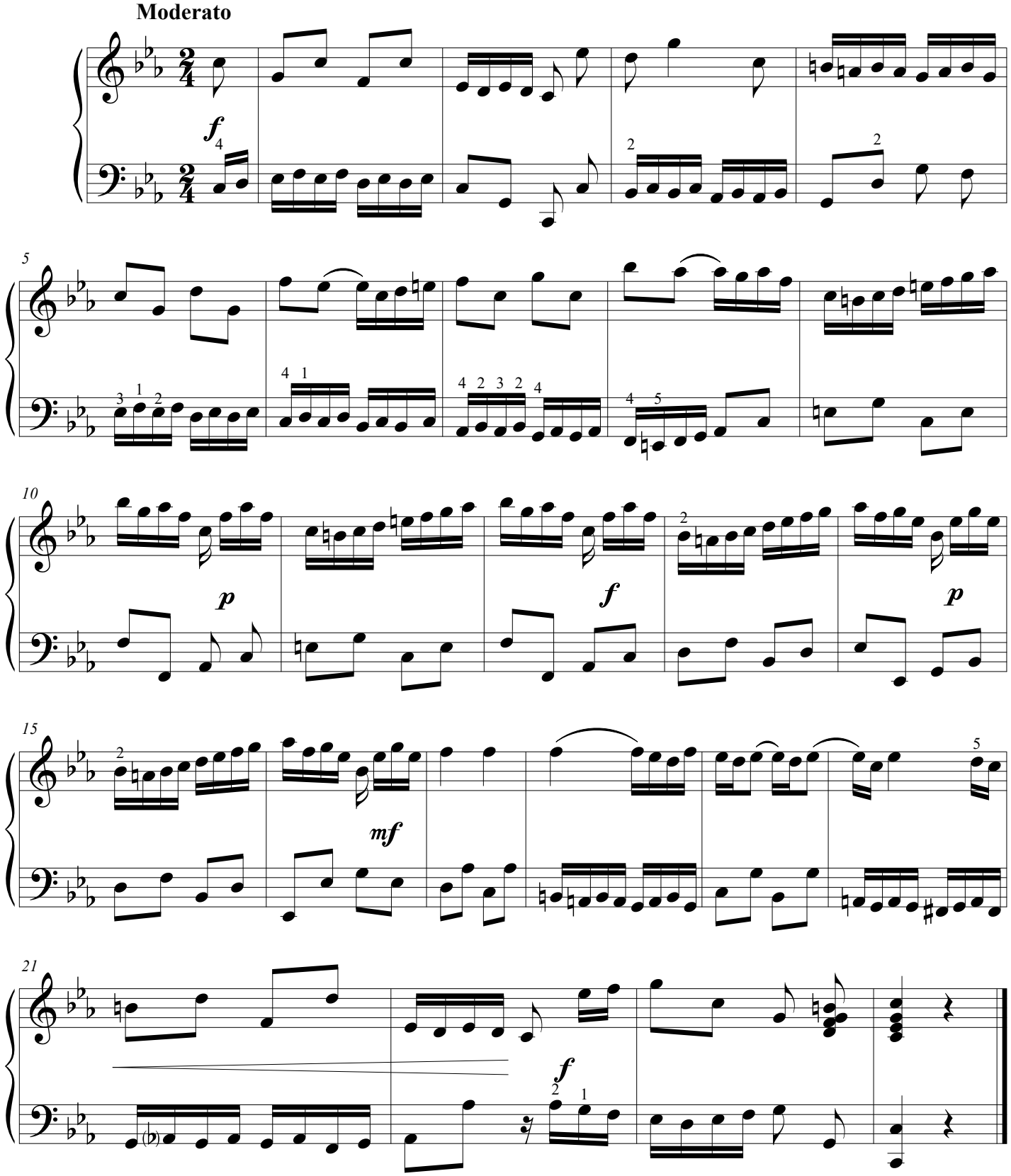
Finale of Concerto for 2 Harpsichords

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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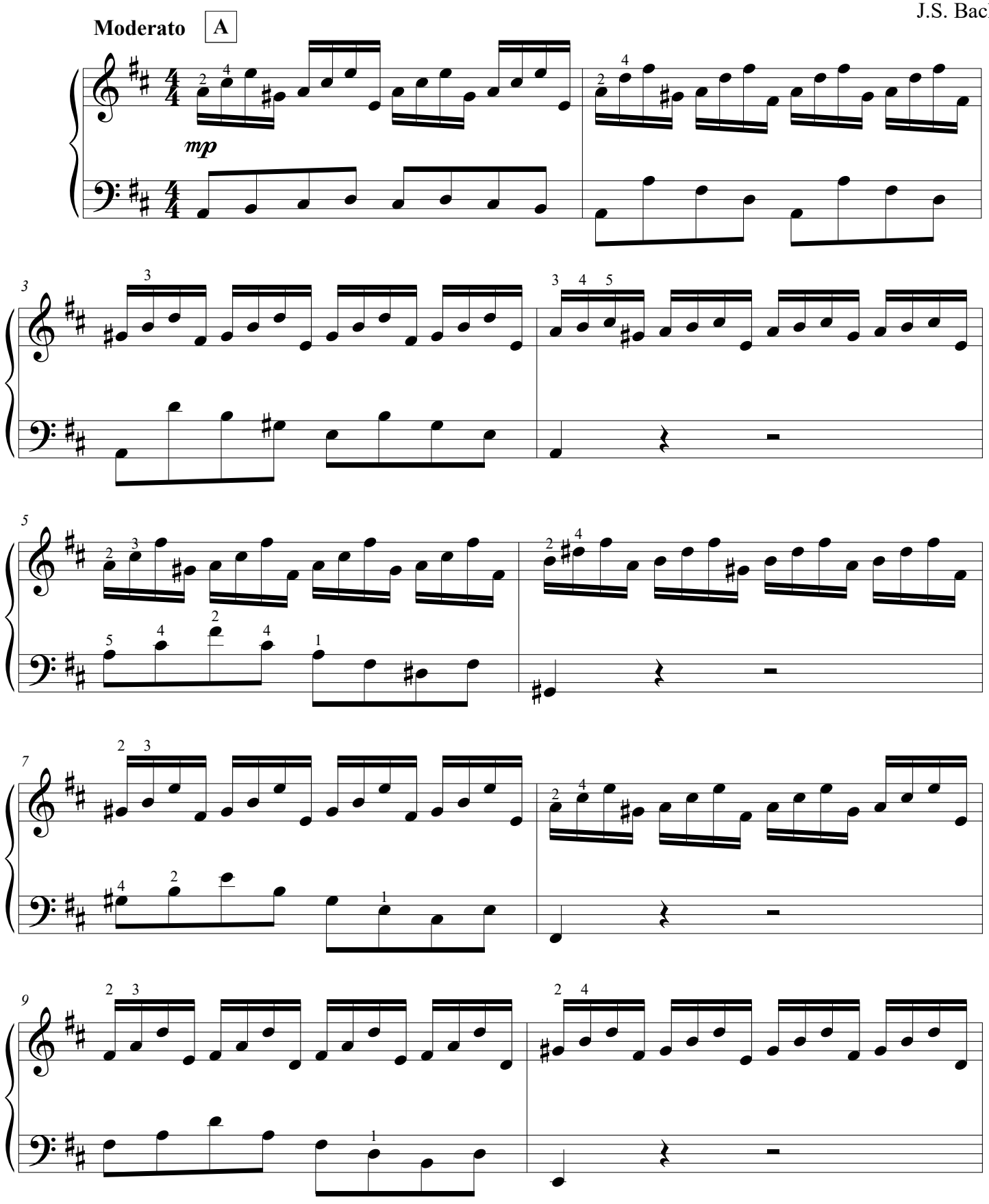
Excerpt from Brandenburg Concerto #5

J.S. Bach



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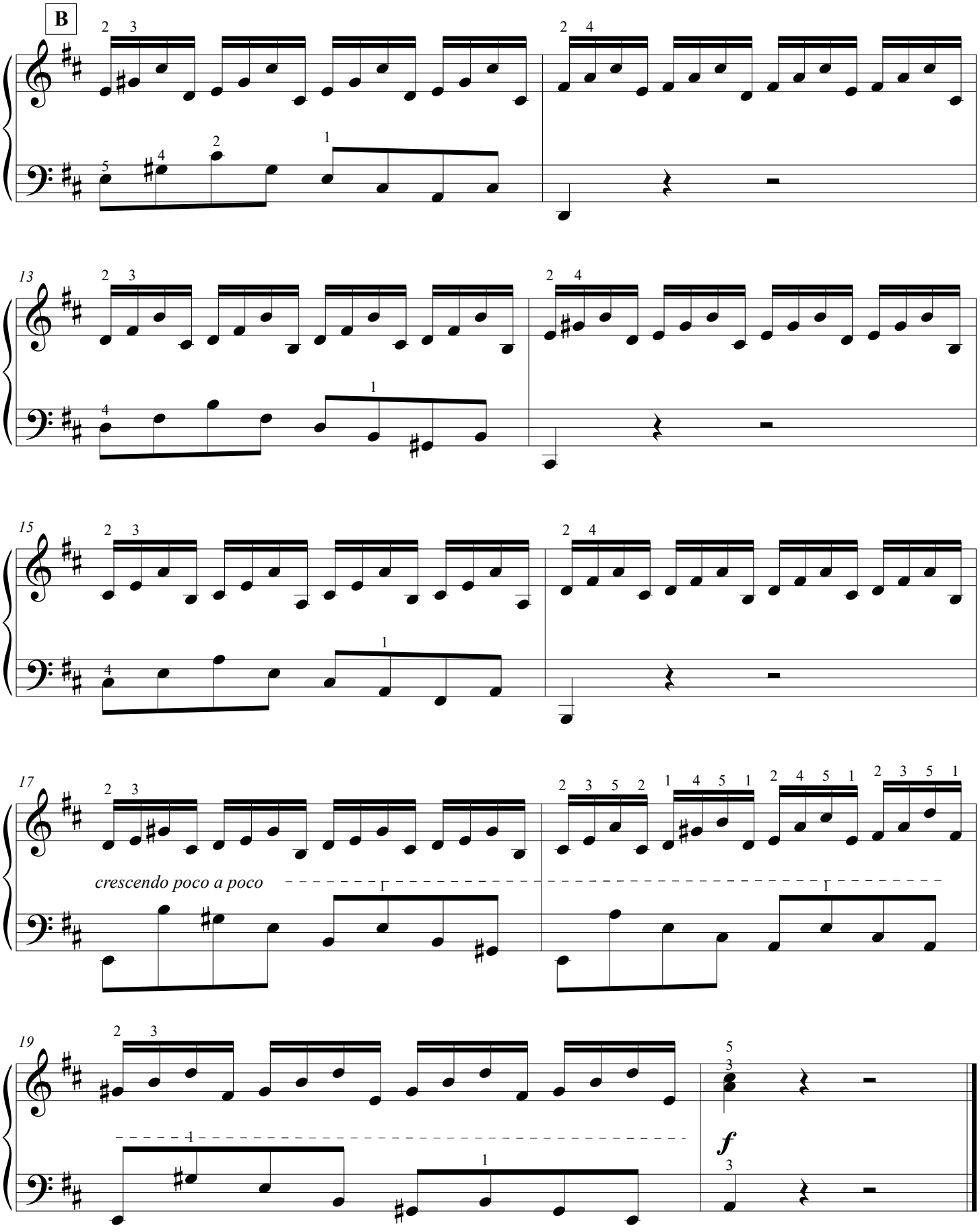
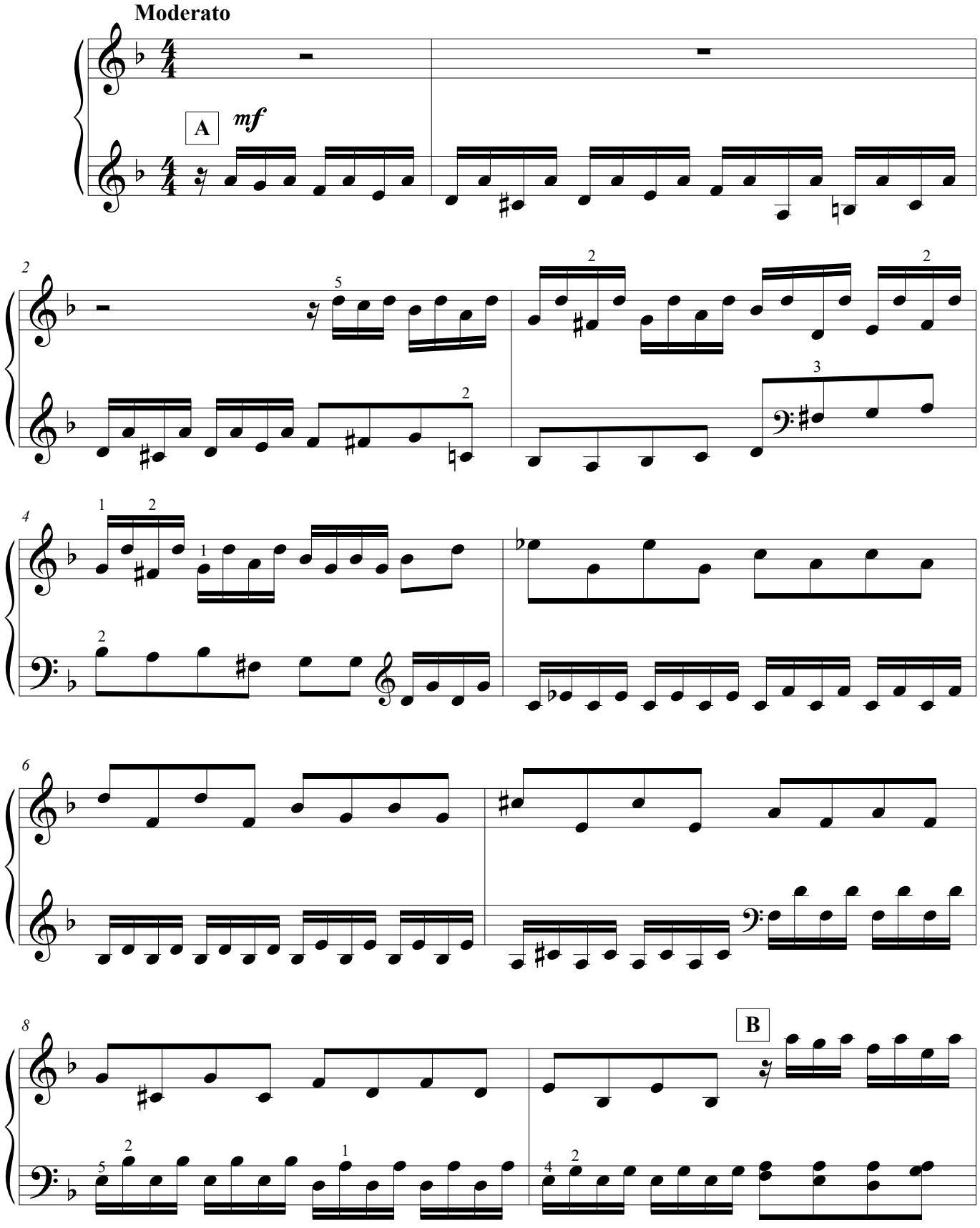


This is an excerpt from the wonderful harpsichord part, 1st movement, starting from measure 71.
It's especially useful for strengthening the 4th and 5th fingers of the R.H. and for paying attention to consistently held non legato in the LH.

Fugue in D Minor
from Toccata and Fugue for Organ



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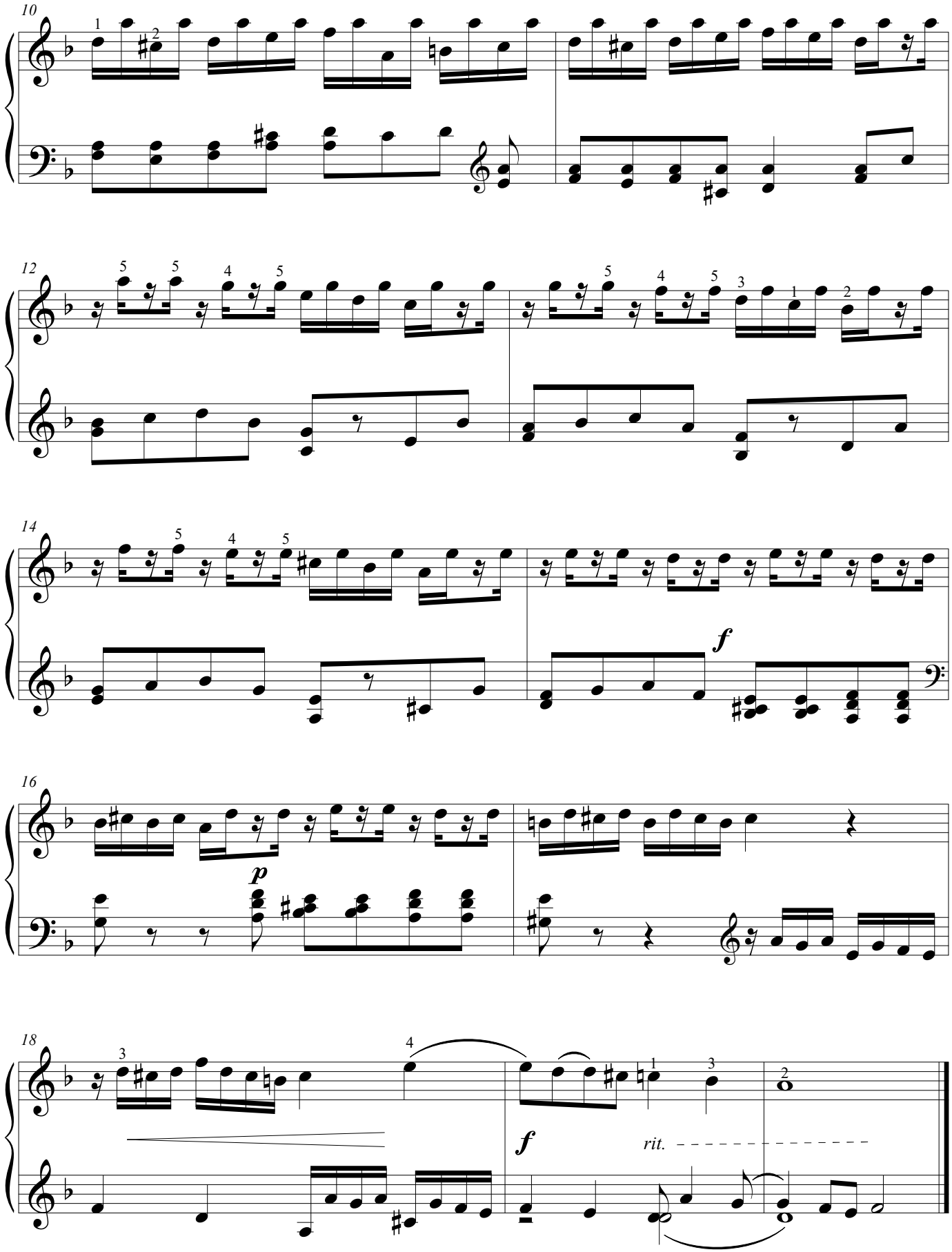
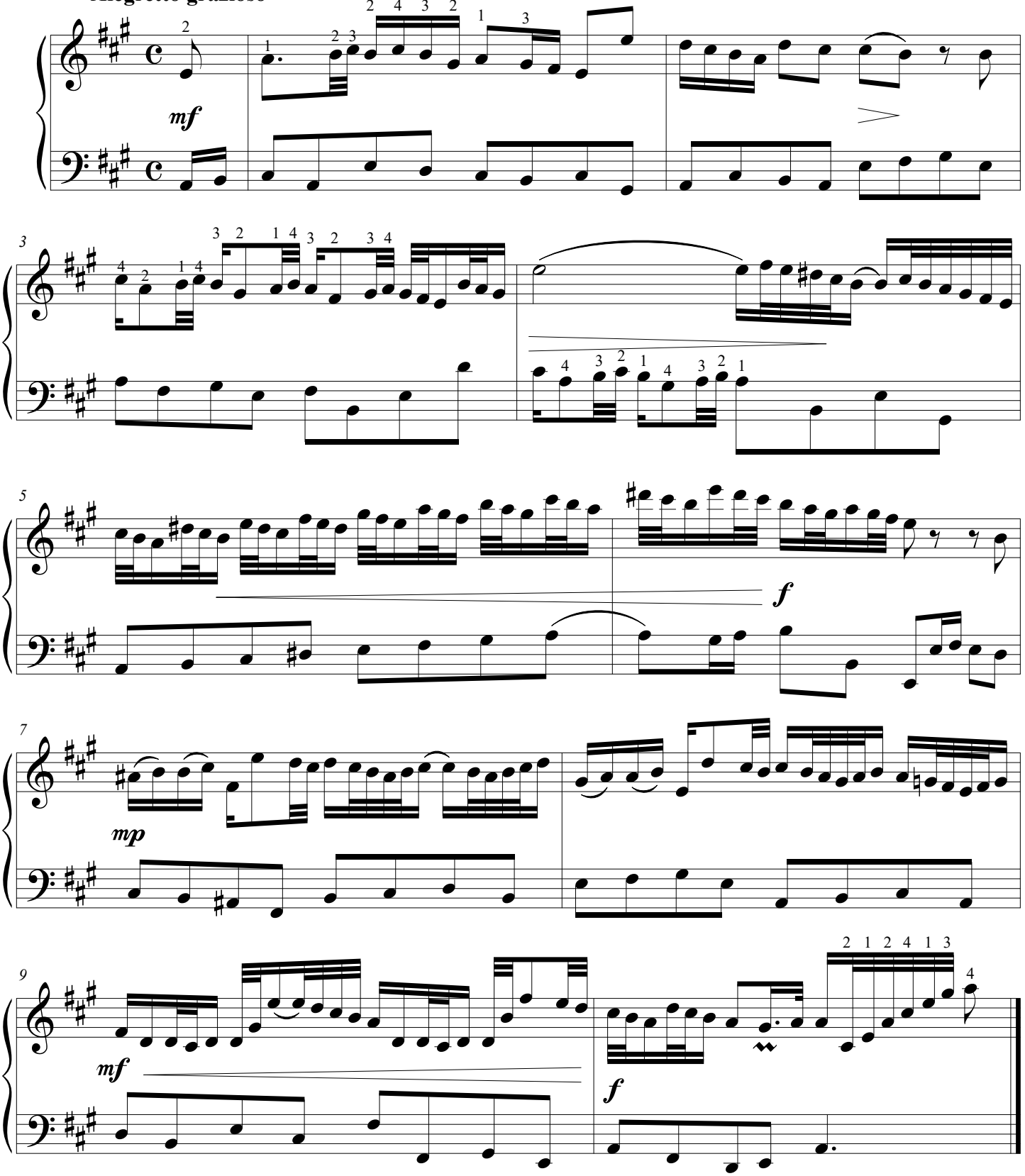


I just couldn't cut this great Fugue after one page. If this seems long, please try section A first. Then move on to section B, which looks more difficult than it is. One step at a time will get you there.

"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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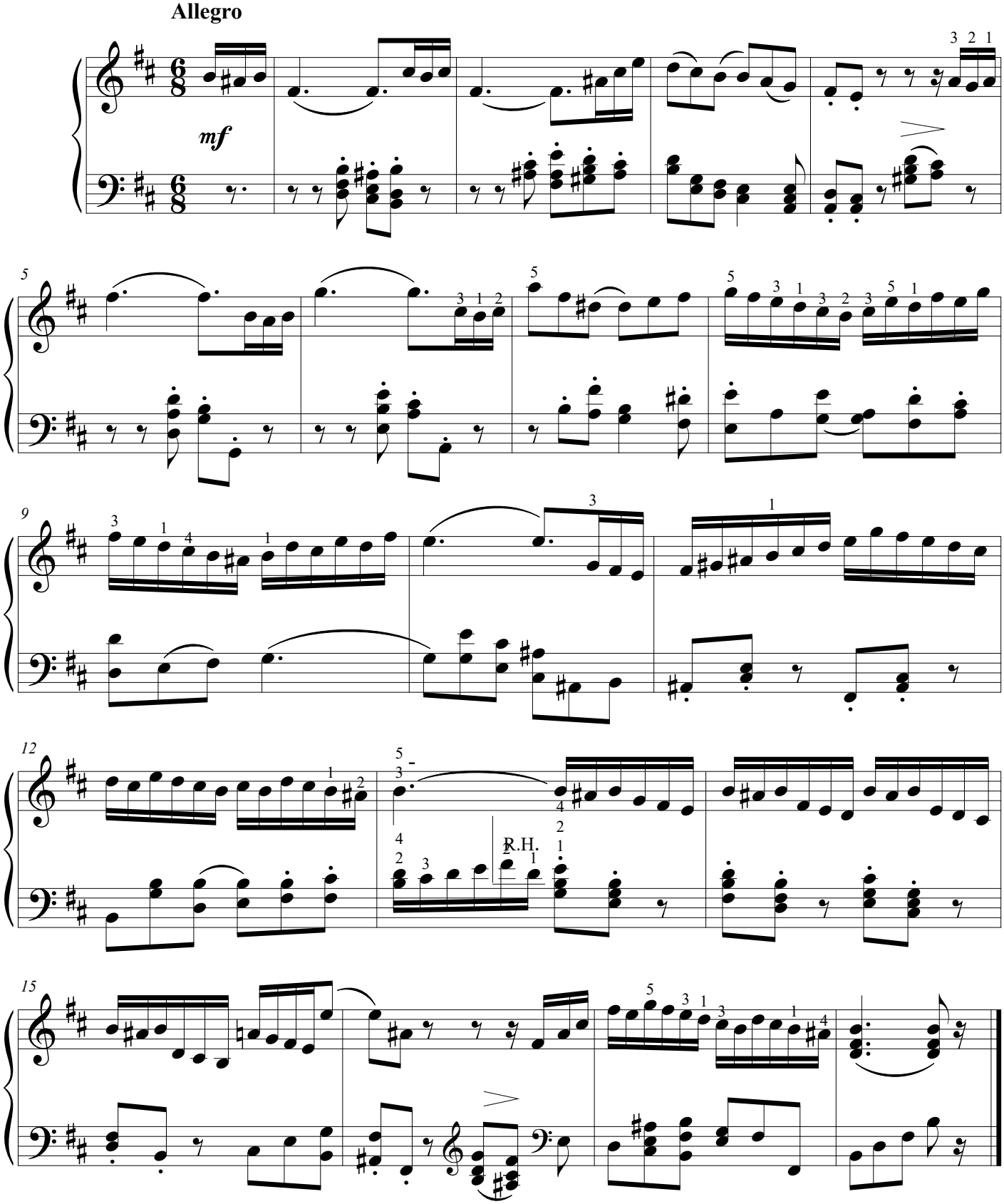
"Qui Sedes" from Mass in B Minor

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman



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

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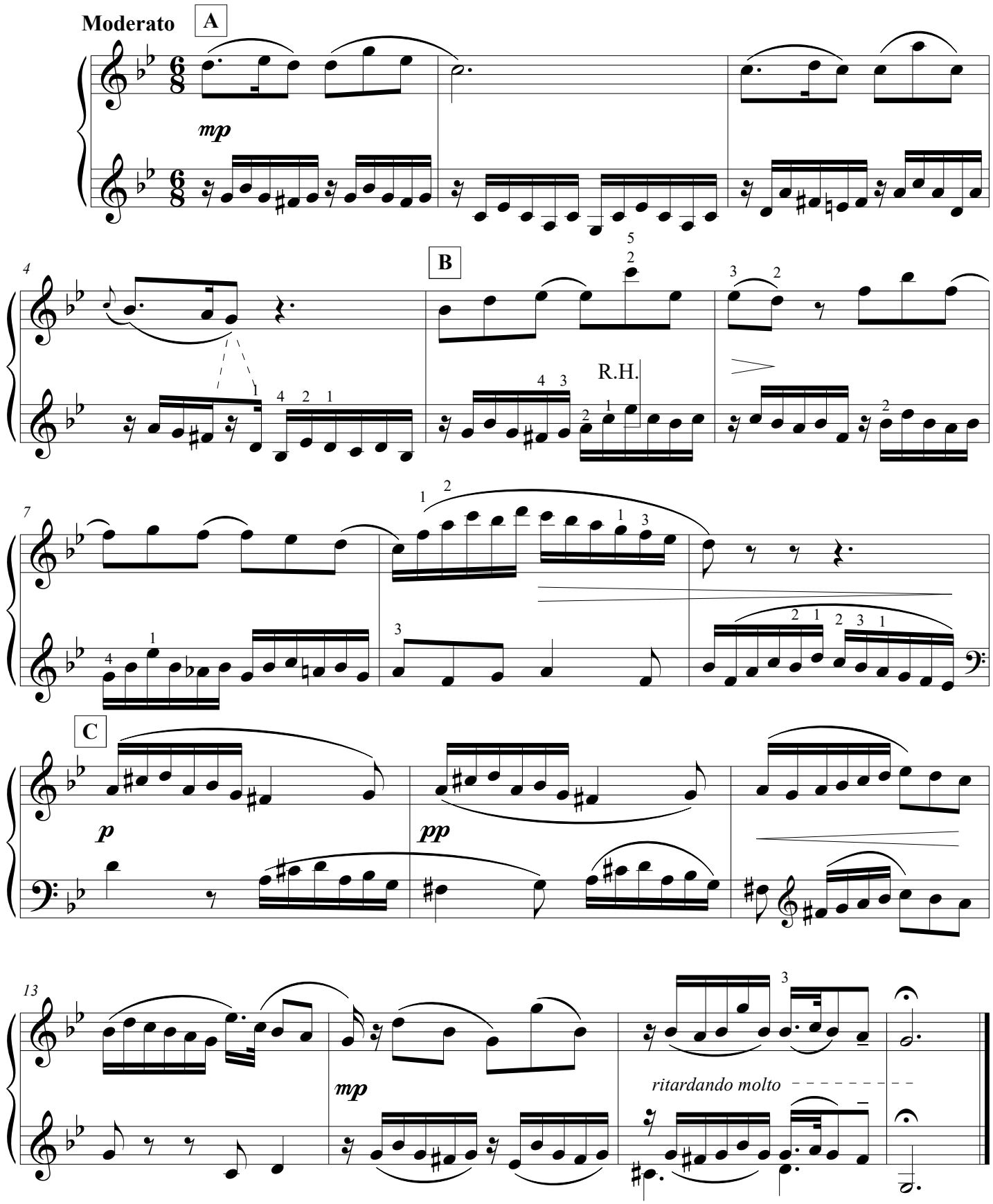
Siciliano from Flute Sonata #2



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

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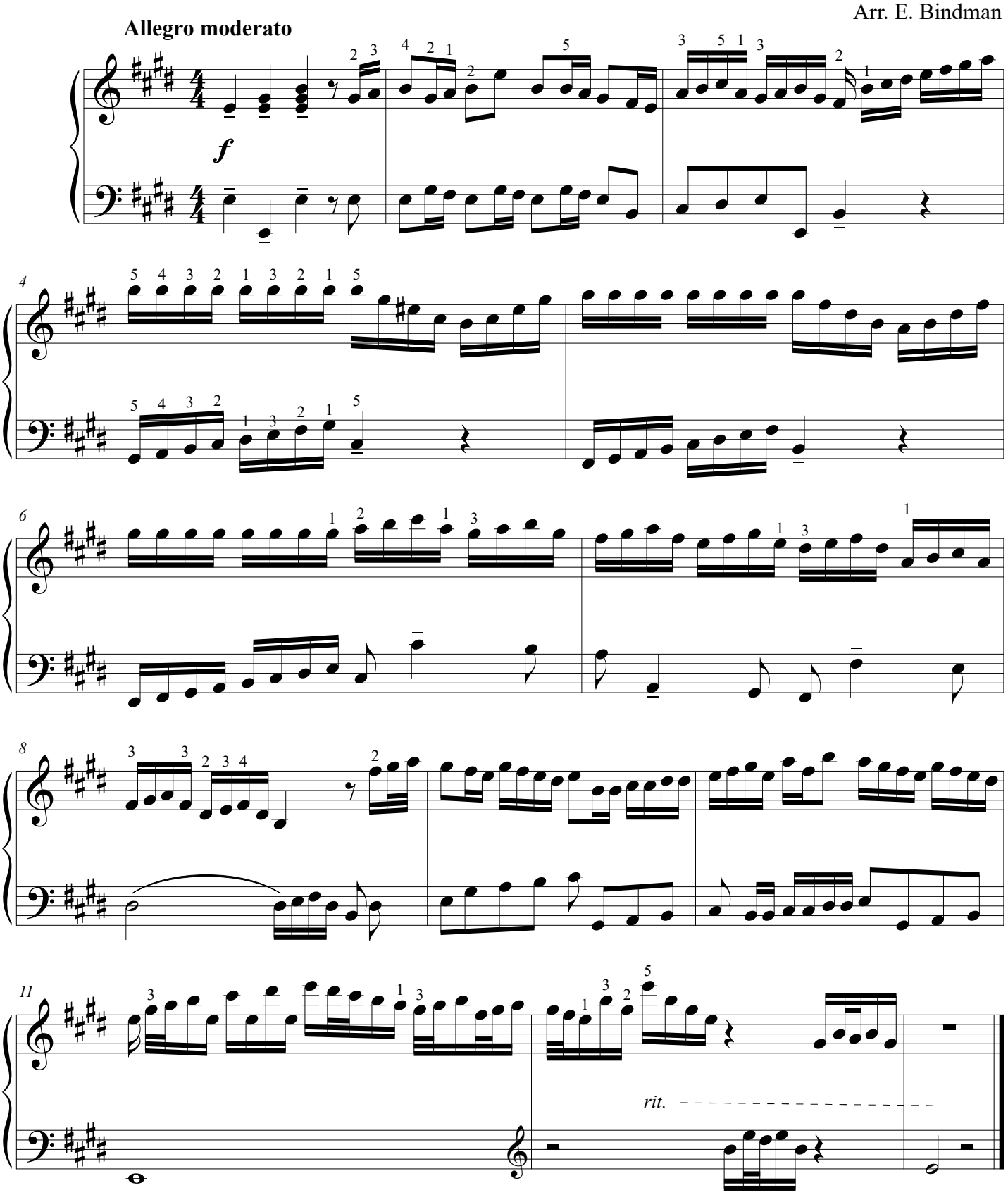
Allegro from Violin Concerto #2

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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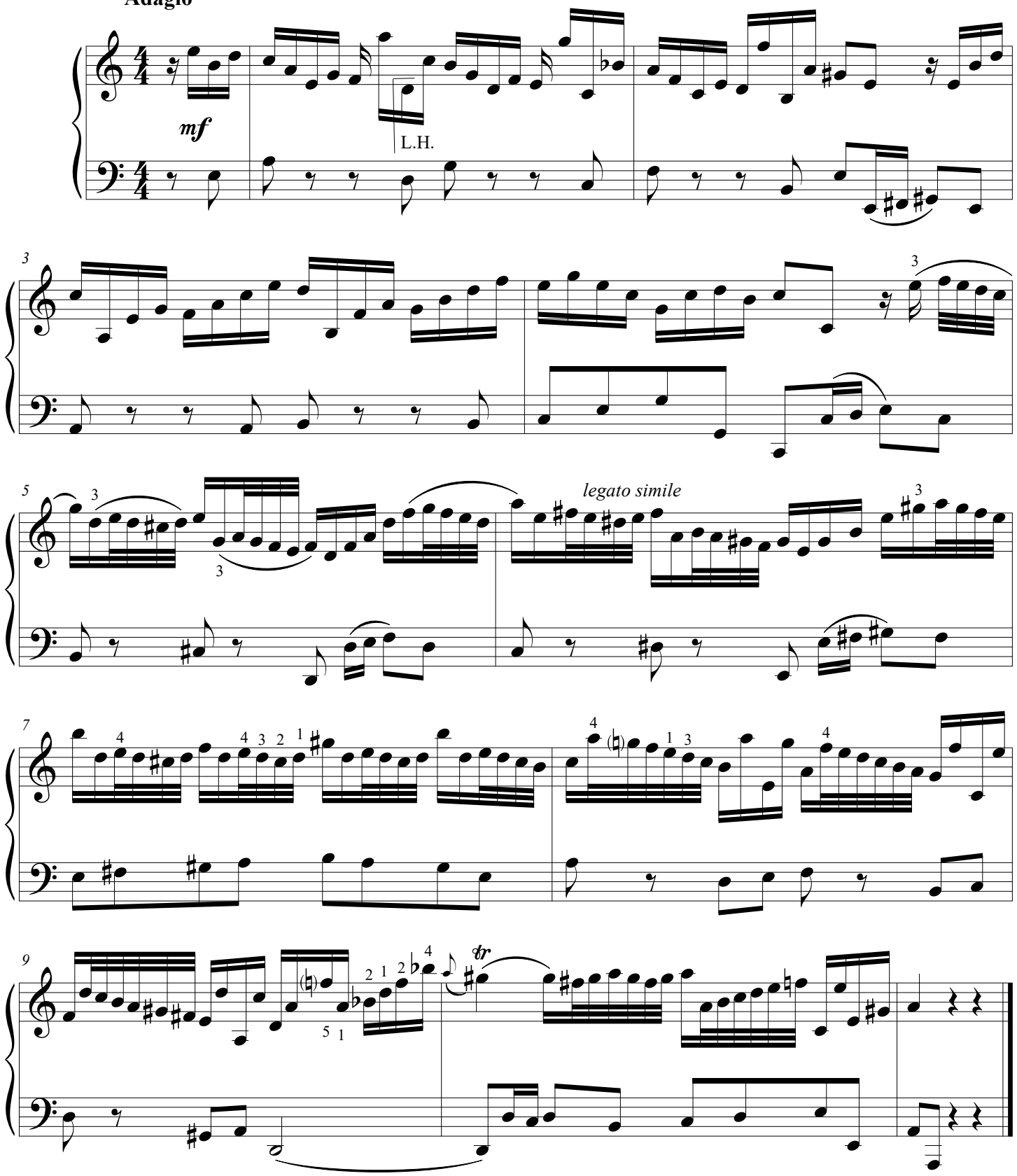
Cello Solo from Cantata BWV 41

J.S. Bach

Arr. E. Bindman

Adagio



Bach starts his patterns from the 2nd 16th note of each beat here, so separate the phrases accordingly. The wide melodic leaps, challenging on any instrument, should be navigated slowly, with relaxed wrists/elbows/shoulders.

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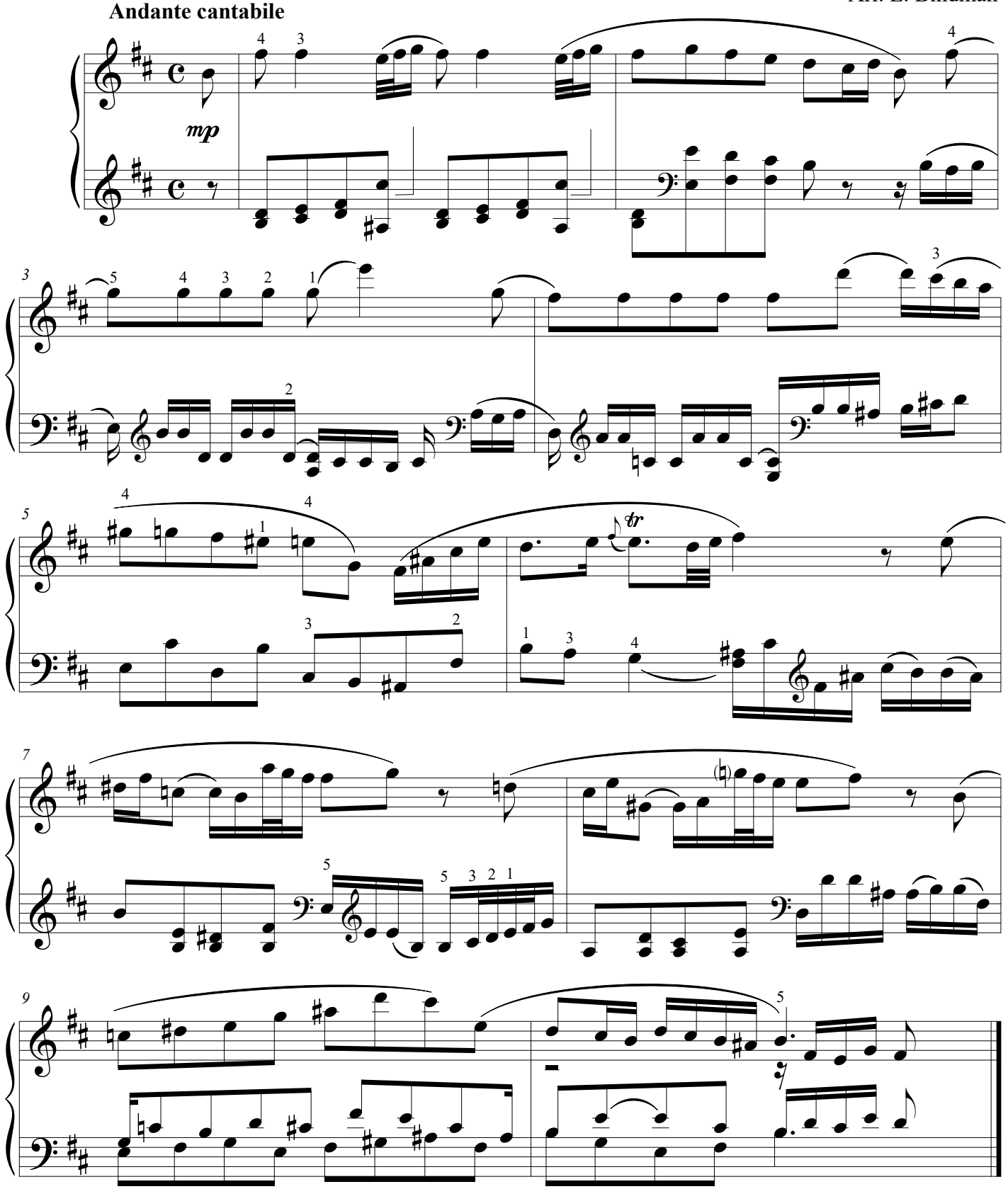
Andante from Flute Sonata in B minor

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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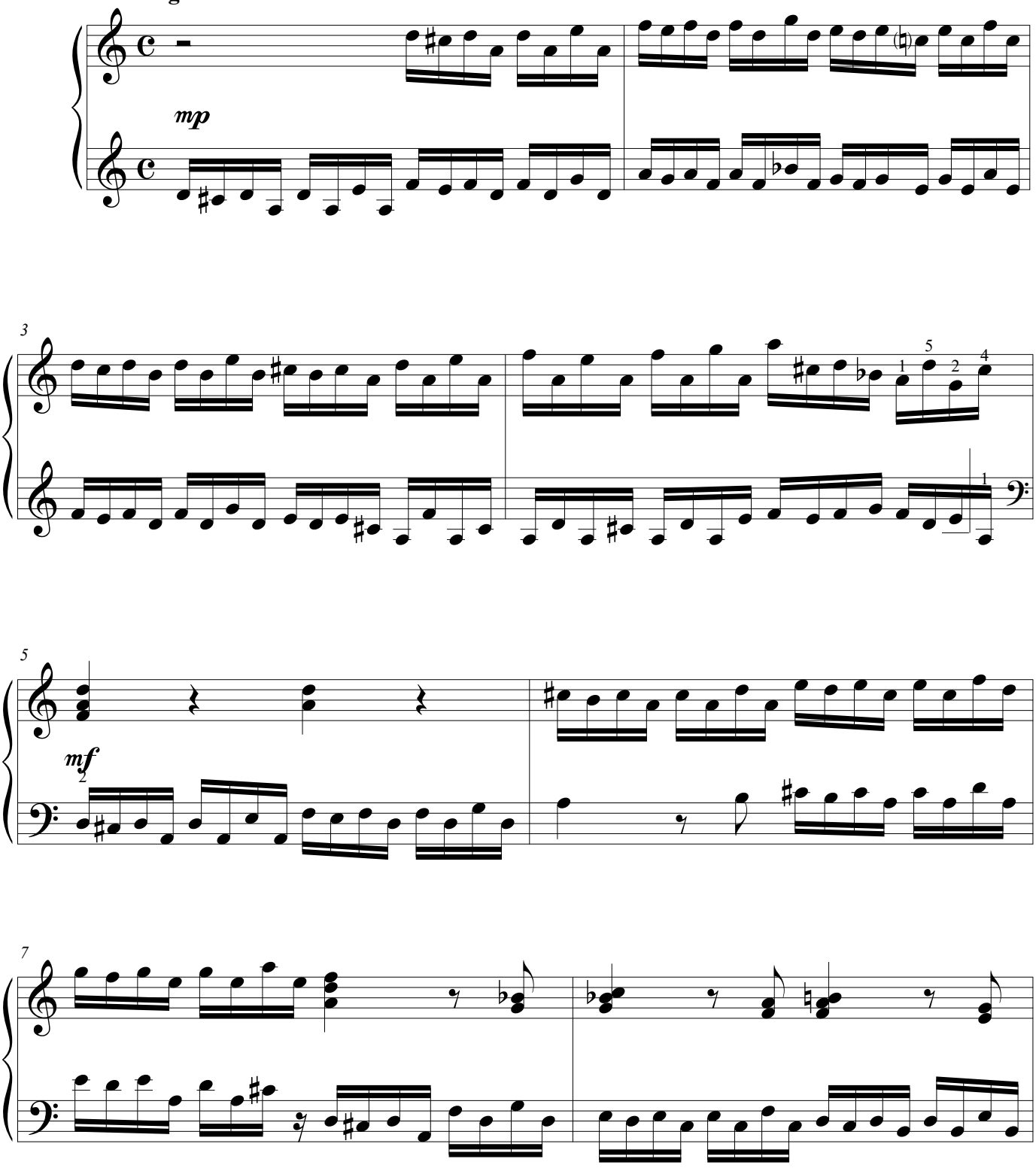
Organ Toccata in D Minor

J.S. Bach
Arr. E. Bindman

Allegro moderato



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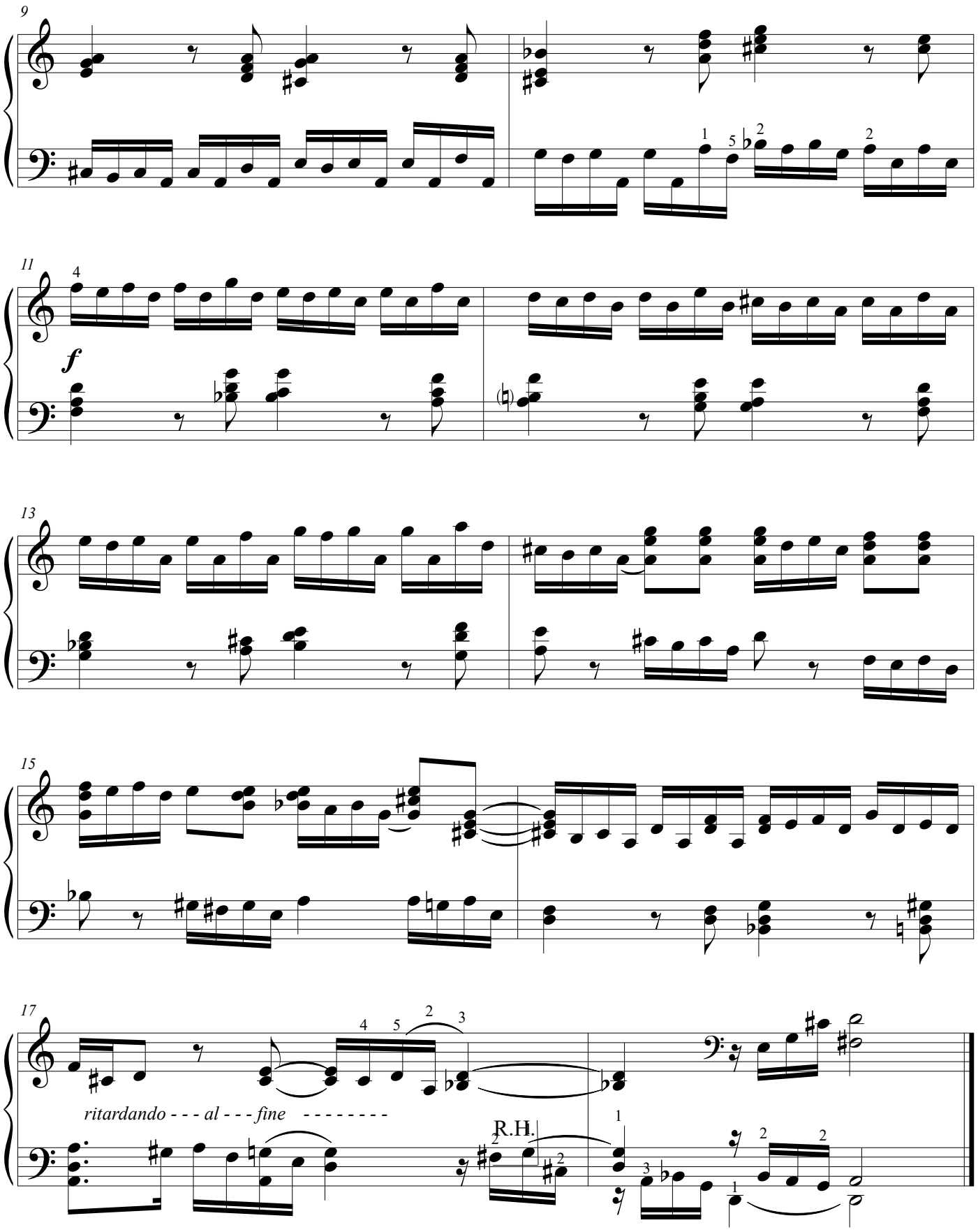

This isn't the famous organ Toccata in the key of D minor but I think it's a more dramatic one.

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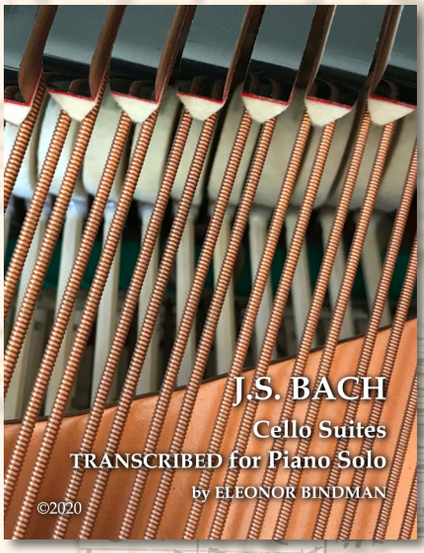

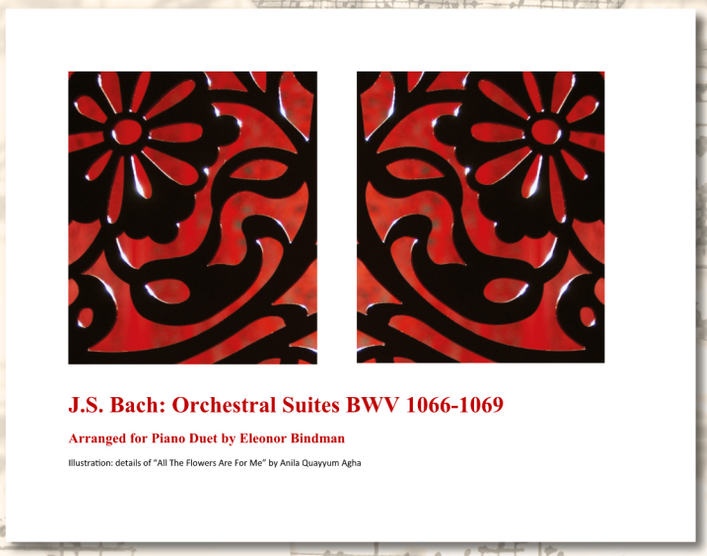

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