A BOOK OF ÉTUDES

KJELL SAMKOPF

A WORKBOOK FOR
VIBRAPHONE AND MARIMBA PLAYERS

PART III

VOLUME 1

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M-H 3599

Contents

18 Études for Solo Marimba

Preface

A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players is a project I have been working on for over 25 years. In the course of this time it has developed into an extensive series consisting of nine volumes aimed first and foremost at university and music academy students. However, the project addresses issues that vibraphone and marimba players will encounter throughout their professional career. Even though these workbooks were written with the classical performer in mind, there is much that is applicable to performers within any genre.

A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players is divided into three parts:

PART I: A Book of Essays
A collection of essays addressing central issues in the process of becoming a performing musician. Relevant to any academy music student, not just percussionists.

PART II: A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players
This part deals with the most important technical aspects of playing the marimba and vibraphone. Since this is such an extensive subject, this part is divided into five volumes:

Book 1: On Playing the Vibraphone and Marimba
Book 2: On Practicing Scales and Chords
Book 3: Basic Instrumental Technique I
Book 4: Basic Instrumental Technique II (tremolo)
Book 5: On Improvisation

PART III: A Book of Études
A collection of 45 études of which 18 are for solo marimba, 18 for solo vibraphone, and 9 that can be played on either instrument. In these 45 études the instrumental techniques discussed in Part II are put into a musical context. The studies comprise a theme and set of variations, in which all 45 movements together make up a unified whole. The total performance time for the 45 études is just over three hours.

The études are divided into three volumes:
Volume 1: 18 études for solo marimba (études 1 – 18)
Volume 2: 18 études for solo vibraphone (études 19 – 36)
Volume 3: 9 études for solo marimba or solo vibraphone (études 37 – 45)

The 18 études of Volume 1 cover all central elements of marimba performance technique, including linear passages, intervals, chords, tremolo, large leaps and polyphony. As well as comprising Part III of **A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players**, **A Book of Études** is also an independent work in its own right. A performance would normally consist of a selection of some of the movements, although the entire work with all 45 movements can be played.

A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players is based on more than 25 years' experience of teaching at college level. Without this experience I would not have been able to write these books. I would therefore like to extend my thanks to all of my students during these years. Without you these books would never have been written.

I would also like to thank the 35 musicians who each took it upon them to learn one or two of the études, who gave the first performance of the work, and who made the first recording of it possible. Your efforts and contribution were vital in clarifying the notation and performance instructions, and in preparing the final version of the études.

A Book of Études could not have been written without financial support. I would like to thank The Composers' Remuneration Fund, TONO, and Arts Council Norway, who, through the various grants they offer, made the composition of this work possible.

Finally I would like to say a special thank you to my wife Caroline Ho-Bich-Tuyen Dang who helped with the design and layout and otherwise assisted me in every way.

Kjell Samkopf
Oslo, 2014

Introduction

Études – studies – are not written first and foremost for an audience, but for a performer; they are the music of musicians. An étude is a piece of music that focuses on a particular theme or has a specific purpose, usually related to a technical issue in performance or composition. Études are intended to help the performer develop their skills, both with regard to motor and muscular control, mental ability and intellectual insight. Thereafter an étude should serve as material for general maintenance throughout a performer's career. An étude demonstrates the possibilities of the instrument, and often pushes boundaries in this respect.

Throughout the history of music many composers such as Clementi, Debussy, Chopin, Bartok, Kreisler, Paganini, Liszt and Ligeti have devoted special attention to the étude. The most famous example is nonetheless Bach's Inventions – intended just as much as an introduction to composition technique as set of studies in keyboard technique.

Composing études is a challenging task. It requires in-depth knowledge of the instrument, and the composer's craftsmanship is of particular importance. Similarly, learning an étude is a challenging task for a musician. A well-written étude requires its performer to bring to balance their intellect, emotions and entire motor apparatus in order to give the best possible performance. A good étude will provide a musician with a musical technical challenge for life. There is always room for improvement.

A Book of Études

A Book of Études consists of 45 études. The pieces do not increase in difficulty (i.e. the collection does not begin with the easiest and end up with the hardest) – each etude addresses a specific technical element such as scales, linear passages, arpeggiated chords and block chords, tremolo, and polyphony.

The études are structured according to the 9 elements of marimba technique. These 9 elements are a way of separating and explaining marimba and vibraphone technique based on musical structure and motor complexity. Different musical structures require different patterns of movement. These can be classified according to which and how many muscle groups are needed in order to execute the various different combinations of strokes. The 9 elements of marimba technique are explained in Book 1 *On Playing the Vibraphone and Marimba*.

The études are organised according to the 9 elements of marimba technique as follows:

Études for:	Element 1 One note	Element 2 Groups of 2 - 5 notes	Element 3 Scales and lines	Element 4 Chords in arpeggio	Element 5 Intervals	Element 6 Chords in block	Element 7 Tremolo	Element 8 Big leaps	Element 9 Polyfony
Marimba	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
	10	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**
Vibraphone	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**	**27**
	28	**29**	**30**	**31**	**32**	**33**	**34**	**35**	**36**
Vibraphone or marimba	**37**	**38**	**39**	**40**	**41**	**42**	**43**	**44**	**45**

Each étude concentrates on one of these elements but contains contrasting passages and other elements in order to create a balanced form. Each étude is a complete piece in its own right.

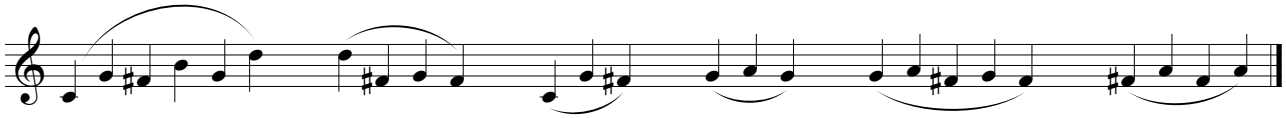
Set of variations

A Book of Études is a set of variations in 45 movements, in which all the movements together make up an entire work. This is not a set of variations in the sense of a theme with ensuing variations, but a work in which all of the movements are based and constructed on a common fundamental material. This material is twofold, consisting of the sentence *Semper idem, sed non eodem modo*, and nine rows of 61 or 37 numbers following the pattern of Marcel Duchamp's *Musical Erratum*.

The sentence *Semper idem, sed non eodem modo* translates as "Always the same, but never in the same manner." Converted into a row of numbers, it looks like this:

S	E	M	P	E	R		I	D	E	M	,		S	E	D		N	O	N		E	O	D	E	M		M	O	D	O
1	5	4	7	5	9		9	4	5	4			1	5	4		5	6	5		5	6	4	5	4		4	6	4	6

Translated into pitches, it becomes:



The idea for Musical Erratum is borrowed from Marcel Duchamp. While working on his most famous project *The Bride stripped bare by her Bachelors, even*, in 1913, Duchamp constructed a technical device that produced random pitches. He imagined that this might be the starting point for a new kind of musical alphabet. The device consisted of 89 numbered balls in a vase. There was a hole in the vase beneath which would pass a model train pulling several trucks; as the trucks passed the opening, balls would fall into the trucks. Because the speed of the train varied, there would fall a different number of balls into each truck. When the vase was empty, Duchamp wrote down the result, converting the numbers to pitches on the designated instrument.

I have used this idea to create one of the two the basic sources of material in *A Book of Études*. I did not use a model train, but instead made a set of 61 cards (corresponding to the number of notes on a five-octave marimba). I placed the cards in a basket and pulled out nine different random sequences of 61 numbers. From these nine rows I derived a new set of nine number rows consisting of 37 numbers (corresponding to the number of notes on a three-octave vibraphone).

This material appears in all the études, in ever-changing variations. The number rows were used to determine fundamental musical parameters such as pitch, note length, dynamics and texture, and other elements including time signature, interval relationships, chords, formal sections, and more. The sentence *Semper idem, sed non eodem modo* is used motivically, thematically and melodically throughout, and is an audible, structural element of nearly all the études.

Performance

Études are something a musician usually works on alone in a practice room, and are not first and foremost intended as concert music. *A Book of Études* can nonetheless be performed on stage.

A usual procedure would be to play an excerpt of the work, selecting a number of études. How many, which ones and in which order is up to the performer. It is however desirable that the work also be performed in its entirety. This can be done with one, two or more performers. When the whole work is performed, the movements can be played in any order.

The total performance time of all 45 études is a little over three hours.

Notation

The notation in *A Book of Études* alternates between precise and open. Some études do not have tempo indications and also lack dynamics. In other études each single stroke is defined with regard to dynamic, attack point and stroke angle.

In general, however, the notation is relatively open and without too much detail. This is in order to give the performer room for choice in interpretation and style of playing, and to inspire performers to come up with their own solutions to particular challenges. Several of the études can be played in a number of different ways, and thereby present a variety of musical and technical challenges.

Where there are no performance instructions, it is left for the performer to decide.

Accidentals

Conventional rules for the use of accidentals apply. This means that an accidental is valid only at the specified octave, and for the duration of the rest of the bar in which it appears. In certain cases natural signs are used to clarify and avoid any possible doubt.

Note lengths

Both the marimba and the vibraphone are percussion instruments where focus is on the attack rather than the cut off of the note. For the marimba the end of the note is given little attention and is usually left to die out naturally. It is not common to dampen notes on the marimba, and at faster tempi it is not practicable. For the vibraphone the situation is somewhat different since the bars reverberate for longer, and all the bars can be dampened simultaneously with the pedal or individually with the mallets.

The extent to which a note is notated with an eighth- or a sixteenth-note is in many cases more an indication of a suggested way of playing the note than it is an exact indication of the note's length. In some cases choice of note-length has been determined by general legibility of the music.

Dynamics

The following 8 dynamic indications are used: ***ppp*** – ***pp*** – ***p*** – ***mp*** – ***mf*** – ***f*** – ***ff*** – ***fff***

ppp and ***fff*** define the outer limits of the dynamic range.

Dynamic signs can be interpreted in two ways. In some cases they are simply an indication of volume: ***ff*** is louder than ***f***, and softer than ***fff***. This is a style of interpretation we rely on when playing serial music. In other instances dynamic signs can also give an indication of musical expression, usually in relation to the Italian meaning of the words the signs represent: *piano* indicates quiet, calm, slow, whereas *forte* is often taken to mean powerful, loud, hard, fast. The context will determine which of these meanings is most appropriate.

Sound – timbre

Choice of mallets and sound/timbre in general is up to the performer.

In certain études the point and angle of attack is specified. The difference in timbre generated by variations in point and angle of attack is, however, dependent on the type of mallet used. Where angle and point of attack are specified it is not the timbre itself that is important, rather that the performer concentrates on an awareness of the resultant timbre. The notation is intended to encourage an extended palette of timbral nuances rather than indicate a specific timbral spectrum.

Accents

We differentiate between percussive accents > ^ ' and pressure accents – .

A percussive accent has a marked attack, the focus is on the attack itself: the start of the note. A pressure accent is softer since the intention is to emphasise the entire duration of the note.

^ is a strong, marked percussive accent normally used in the context of loud dynamics from ***f*** to ***fff***.

> is a distinct, percussive accent and is found throughout the whole dynamic range.

' is a mild, percussive accent. It is derived from the staccato sign (in other contexts it would mean stacatissimo) and indicates a short, accentuated note. It is used mainly within the softer dynamic range.

– is a pressure accent normally used with softer dynamics. It is related to the tenuto sign and indicates a sustained, accentuated note.

In addition to the accent signs above, the following indications for accents are also used: ***sf*** (sforzando), ***fz*** (forzato) and ***sfz*** (sforzato).

sf is a frequently encountered accent (equivalent to >) and is used across the entire dynamic range from ***ppp*** to ***f***.

fz is a stronger accent (equivalent to ^) and is used from ***mf*** to ***f***.

sfz is a very strong accent (equivalent to ^–) and is used from ***mf*** to ***f***.

These accents can be reinforced by adding further ***f***'s: ***sff***, ***sffffz*** etc.

Accent signs and indications apply for the most part to individual notes and only rarely to groups of notes.

Articulation signs

Articulation signs usually refer to groups of notes.

The following articulation signs are used: staccato and tenuto .

Articulation signs can be combined with slurs:

When slurs are combined with articulation signs, such as staccato signs, the result might seem illogical: the notes are apparently to be played legato and staccato at the same time, which is not possible. However, this particular form of notation can be interpreted as an indication that the notes should be separated, while the slur indicates that the notes belong together as a unity.

When a slur is combined with tenuto signs, it might seem like tautology. However, the tenuto signs can be interpreted as stressed accents indicating that the notes should be played legato, with a certain sustained accentuation.

Slurs and articulation signs can be combined in many different ways to indicate different nuances of texture or timbre rather than a specific style of execution.

The deadstroke is a special type of stroke, indicated with a cross above the note ( ).

Notation of tremolo

Tremolo is usually notated with three lines through the stem of the note ( ). This does not give any indication of the speed of the tremolo, which is left up to the performer to decide.

For those instances where the speed of the tremolo is specified (for example in études 1 and 7), the following indications are used:

VS very slow
S slow
M medium
F fast
VF very fast

In passages where all notes are to be played tremolo the indication *roll all notes* is used. This does not usually apply to grace notes, however.

In cases where a mandolin roll is preferred, this is indicated with *mandolin roll*.

It is left to the discretion of the performer to use tremolo on notes where it is not specified, according to musical and interpretational preference.

Tempo indications

For the most part, conventional Italian tempo indications are used. In addition tempo indications of the kind Fast, Very fast, Not too fast etc. are used. In some cases a metronome indication has been suggested in parentheses. For some of the études a specific metronome tempo has been indicated.

Where there is no tempo indication, choice of tempo is up to the performer.

Stroke angle

Stroke angle is indicated with the following three signs:

S small (0° - 25°)
M medium (c. 25° - c. 45°)
L large (c. 45° - c. 65°)

See Book 1 for an explanation of stroke angle.

Attack point

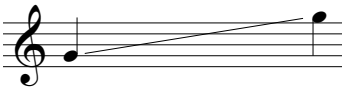
Where attack point is specified, the following three signs are used:

n node
oc off center
c center

See Book 1 for an explanation of attack point.

Glissando

A glissando is notated with a thin line from the starting note to the end note:



Brackets around either the starting note or the end note indicate that the note should not be struck.

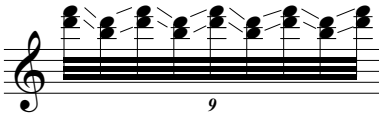
The speed of the glissando is not specified.

Rubbing

Rubbing is used in étude no. 34 for vibraphone. Rubbing is not used in any of the marimba études.

Rubbing is a variant of glissando whereby the mallet heads do not strike the bars, but are drawn lightly across them in a rhythmic back-and-forth motion. See Book 3 for an explanation of this technique.

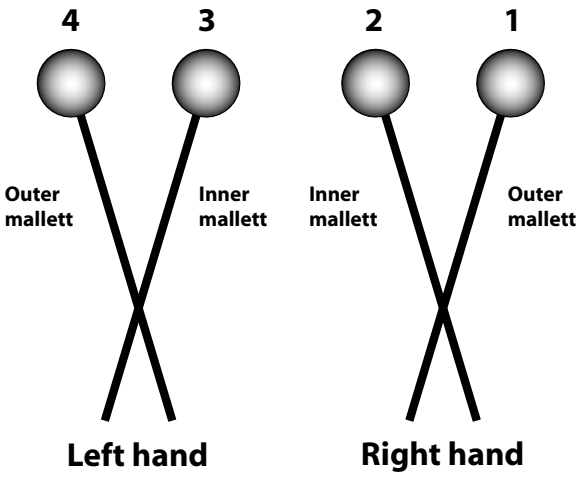
Rubbing is notated by indicating the interval at which the mallet heads should be held, and the pitches which should be rubbed between.



The notation should not be taken too literally, and should be taken as an indication of a textural quality.

Mallet numbering

The following mallet numbering is used:



Left and *Right* are used to indicate left hand and right hand in the music.

Several of the études can be played with either two or four mallets.

Sticking is rarely specified, and is left up to the choice of the performer. Sticking is, however, often indicated in the notation itself. Different kinds of notation are used to clarify musical structure and thematic and motivic material, and to improve legibility. Sticking indications that are suggested in the notation are intended as a guide.

Performimg instructions

Most of the études in this collection were written for a 5-octave marimba with a range from C2 to C7. Most of the études, however, use a smaller range and can be played on an A marimba. It is possible to transpose single notes and phrases up or down an octave in order to adapt the music to an instrument with a smaller range. This is not suggested in the music, but left to the discretion of the performer.

The performer is strongly encouraged to find several different interpretations and ways of playing each étude. By constantly seeking new and different solutions the études will serve as an inexhaustible source of improvement and musical and technical development.

Étude 1

Element 1: One note.
In this étude you are to concentrate on one note at a time and the timbral and technical nuances that arise through changes in dynamics, attack point and stroke angle. Try to execute this as precisely as possible by making audible changes in dynamics, precise attack points, and visible stroke angles. At the same time you should focus on producing a good tone on each bar.

Étude 2

Element 2: Groups of 2 – 5 notes.
This étude is constructed around 16 mallet permutations that are repeated throughout the piece.
It begins with mallet 1 alone, and subsequently expands to include all the mallets. The 16 mallet permutations are 14 – 1 – 15 – 6 – 3 – 8 – 7 – 10 – 16 – 18 – 11 – 23 – 4 – 24 – 5 – 21. You should maintain a stable tempo throughout the etude and try to create good rhythmic drive. No dynamics have been specified and you are encouraged to find a number of alternative suggestions.

Étude 3

Element 3: Scales and linear passages.
This étude consists primarily of stepwise groups of four notes that are played in ascending and descending movements. The étude can be played with two or four mallets. A particular challenge in this piece is to maintain relaxed rapidity in your wrists while your forearms and torso place your wrists in the correct position.

Étude 4

Element 4: Chords in arpeggio.
The notation in this étude is open to a variety of interpretations. Neither tempo nor dynamics are given, and there are no slurs. This étude may be played rubato or in strict rhythm. You are encouraged to come up with various different ways of performing this piece.

Étude 5

Element 5: Intervals.
This étude is a march, and should be played like a march. Choose a suitable march tempo and maintain it throughout the étude. The focus in this piece is on intervals, which are played broken in one hand and together in the other.

Étude 6

Element 6: Chords in block.
This étude consists of chords in close and open position. A recurring feature is ascending and descending inversions of the same chord. Be careful to emphasise the notes of the chords so that the ascending and descending movements are clear.

Étude 7

Element 7: Tremolo.
This étude revolves around the note A at various octaves, and with various different types of tremolo. It is also a study in tone control and nuancing. Where no tempo indications are given, you should try to find a balance between stillness and forward motion. It is vital to establish a sense of stillness and give time to allow the tonal nuances to unfold without the forward motion of the music coming to a halt.

Étude 8

Element 8: Big leaps.
The main challenge in this etude is the big leaps that demand rapid movement across the full range of the instrument. It is therefore a wise investment to spend time finding the most expedient positions in which to stand. The passages with repeated notes require special attention. In order to strike each note in the best way, the repeated note should be played by using both hands. There are several possibilities as to where these changes of hands should take place.

Étude 9

Element 9: Polyphony.
This étude has great variation in tempo, from very slow to extremely fast. The pulse of this piece is constantly shifting – first in a long, gradual accelerando and then in a long and gradual ritardando. The musical material is also in a state of constant change, despite its orderly structure. This makes the étude both a technical and a mental challenge to perform.

Étude 10

Element 1: One note.
Focus is once again on individual notes and the timbral potential of the various octaves. This étude encourages investigation of individual notes that do not have a clear relationship. There are no indications for sound in the music, and you are encouraged to use a variety of different mallets. Bow and fingers may also be used. It is important to maintain a sense of calm throughout the étude, avoiding unnecessary movement in the rests.

Étude 11

Element 2: Groups of 2 – 5 notes.
This is another etude that lacks tempo indications and dynamics. A moderate tempo is recommended, although this étude allows for a number of interpretations. The first part is structured around two mallet permutations: 12 and 14. The last part, from measure 26, alternates between the four permutations 12, 14, 23 and 21. These adhere to a strict order that is repeated throughout the étude. This is a challenging piece due its large compass and clear formal structure.

Étude 12

Element 3: Scales and linear passages.
This étude opens and closes with a simple melodic line that is constantly varied. The melodic line is developed and expanded and culminates in the main theme played in thirds from measure 43.
The notation from measure 23 has been chosen to clarify the different lines and is not necessarily an indication of a preferred sticking.

Étude 13

Element 4: Chords in arpeggio.
This is a meditative étude built up of 61 different chords that move up across the entire range of the instrument. It is important to perform this étude without unnecessary tension. Try to achieve an organic flow in your movements, avoiding any sudden movements. Learning all 61 chords is a mental challenge since they are all different, yet all very similar.

Étude 14

Element 5: Intervals.
This is a demanding étude focusing on playing independent intervals with both hands. The intervals are played both broken and together. In several places there is a large distance between the hands. Be particular about producing a good tone on both notes of the interval. Try also to bring out different character in each hand where they have different tasks.

Étude 15

Element 6: Chords in block.
This étude has a religious character similar to a hymn. Try to maintain a calm atmosphere throughout the piece. Make sure that all the notes of each chord are struck simultaneously. Be particular about the attack point on each bar in order to produce a homogenous sound on every note of each chord. You may emphasise certain notes in order to clarify thematic material. Special attention should be given to chords following septuplet upbeats – it is necessary to adjust the distance between the mallets in both hands to the intervals of the following chord.

Étude 16

Element 7: Tremolo.
This is a subdued chorale. The dynamic sign ***p*** at the start does not mean that the entire étude should be played at a static dynamic level, but that the general atmosphere is careful and tender. You are free to follow the dynamic shape of the melody line, emphasising it dynamically and by varying the intensity and speed of the tremolos. The notation, for example as in measures 21 and 24, has been chosen in order to clarify the different lines, and is not an indication of a preferred sticking.

Étude 17

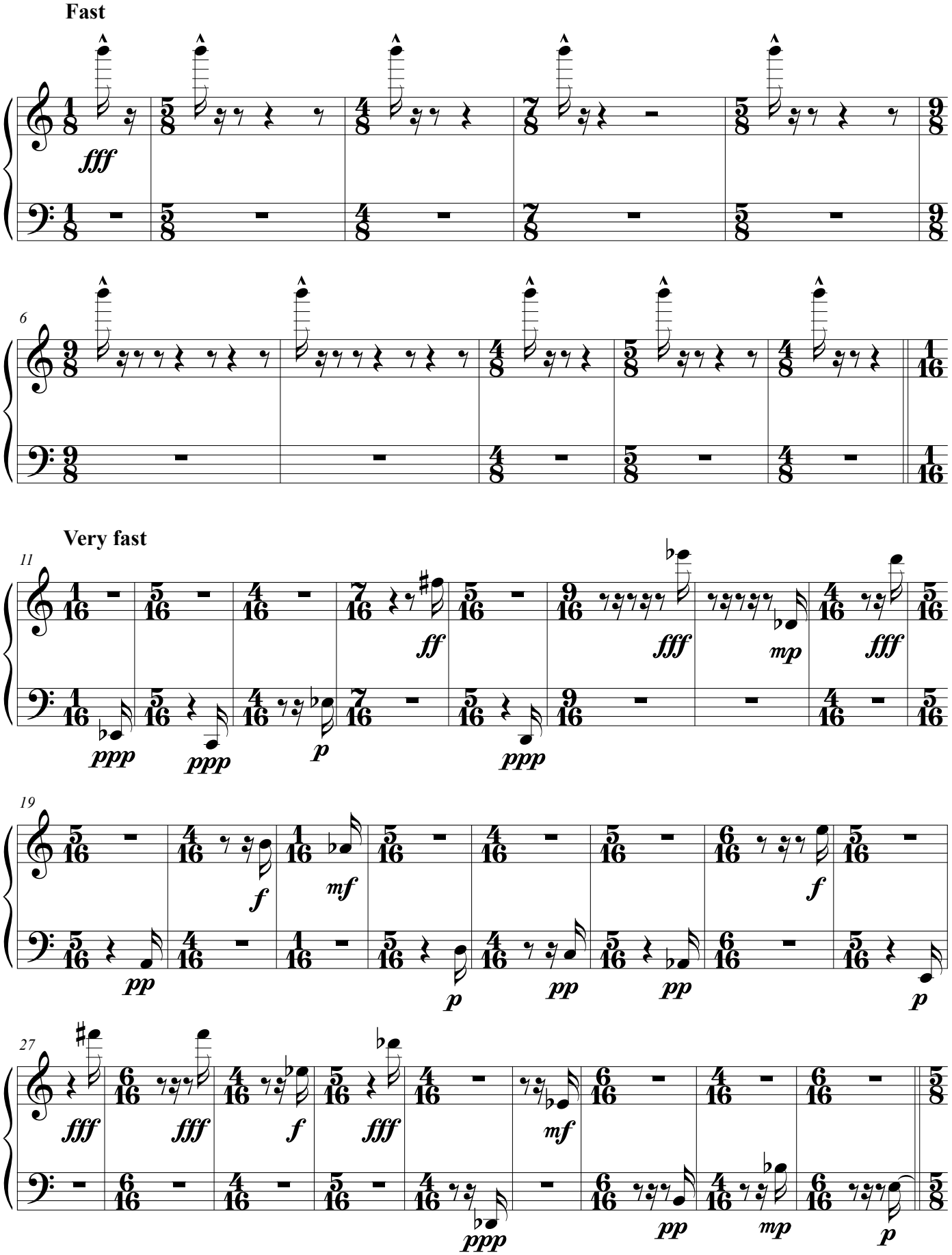
Element 8: Big leaps.
A particular challenge in this étude is to maintain expressivity in the tremolo in the wide leaps, while at the same time emphasising the slurring of the melodic phrases. This is difficult and requires relaxed wrists that are not affected by rapid, big shifts of the body. The glissandi in the free sections do not need to be emphasised, and can be played relatively slowly. The important thing is to create a contrasting movement to the individual notes.

Étude 18

Element 9: Polyphony.
This étude contains passages that demand considerable independence between the two hands, for example when playing a one-hand tremolo in the right hand and broken intervals in the left. This étude is constructed from thematic material that is varied in different ways. In order to make this clearly audible, it is necessary to balance the relationship between the two hands.

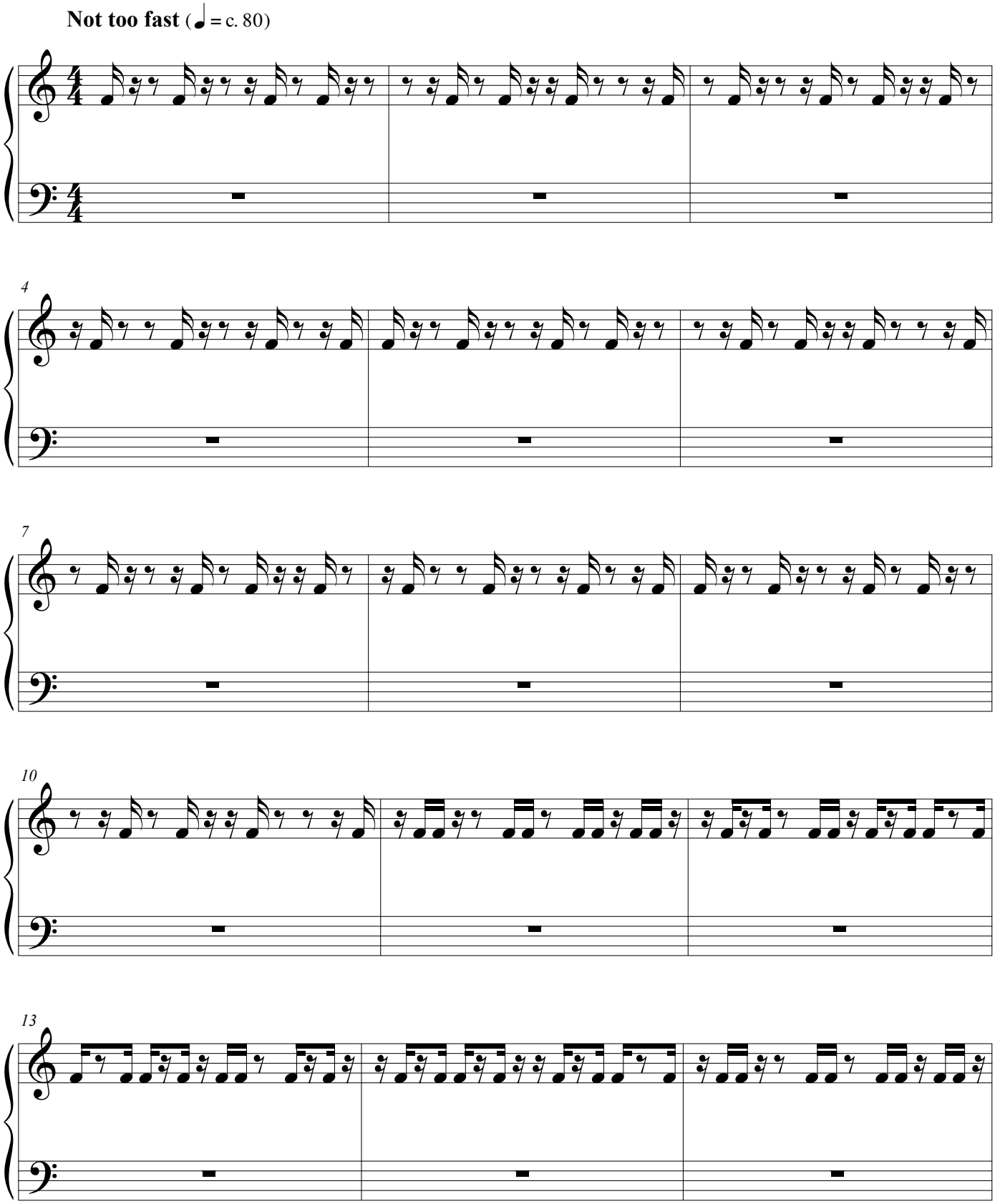
Étude 1

Marimba



Étude 2

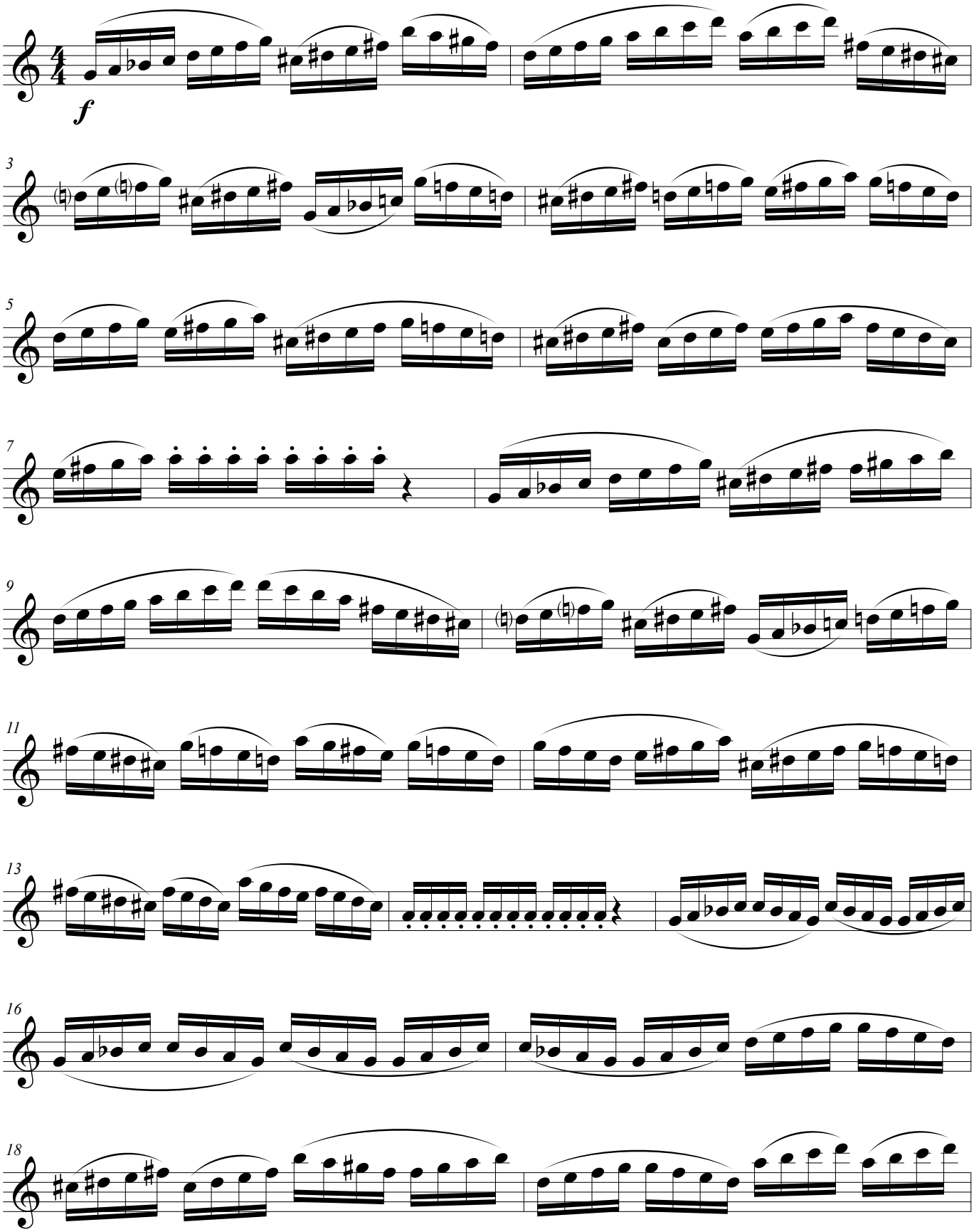
Marimba



Étude 3

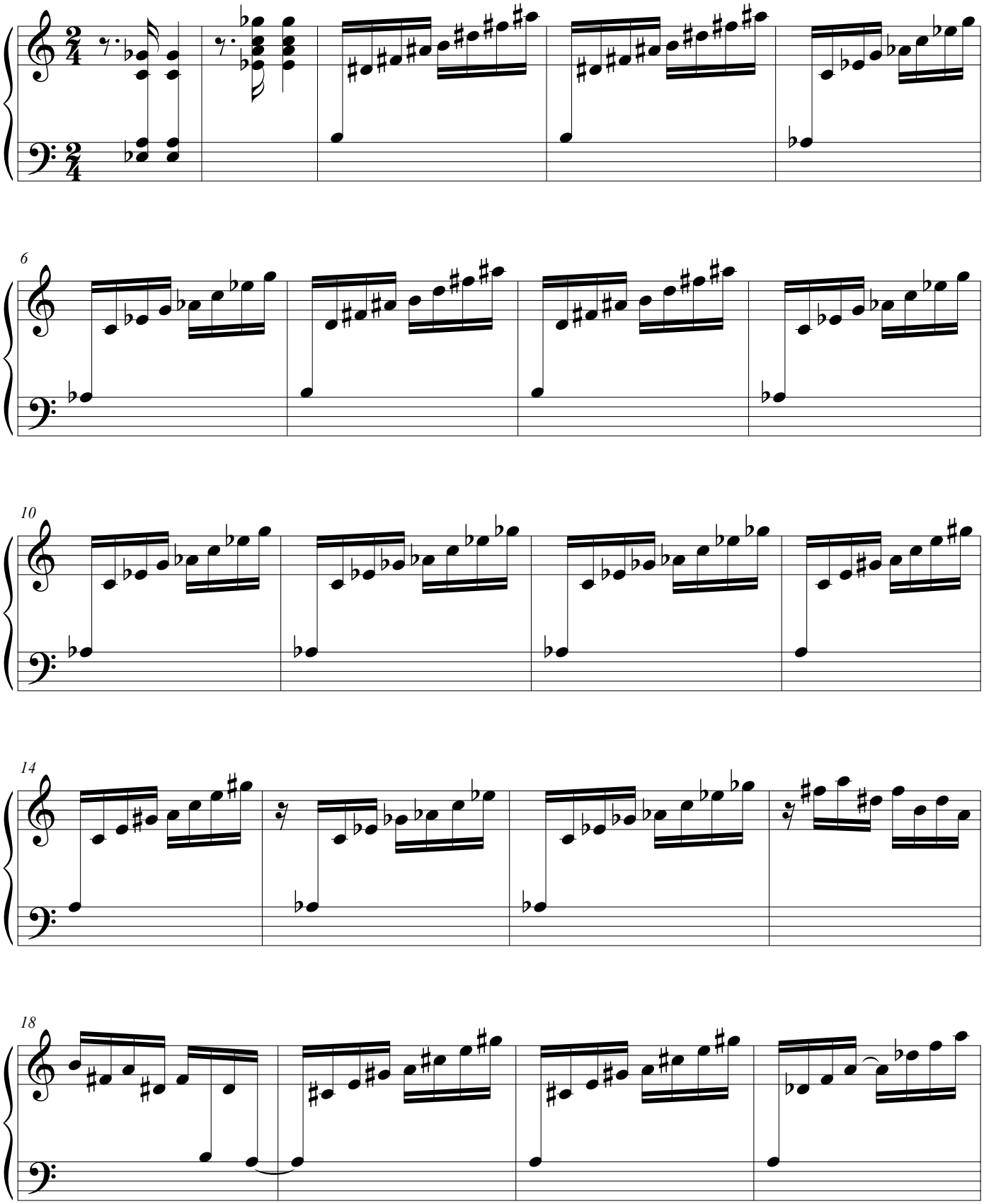
Marimba

Allegro vivace



Étude 4

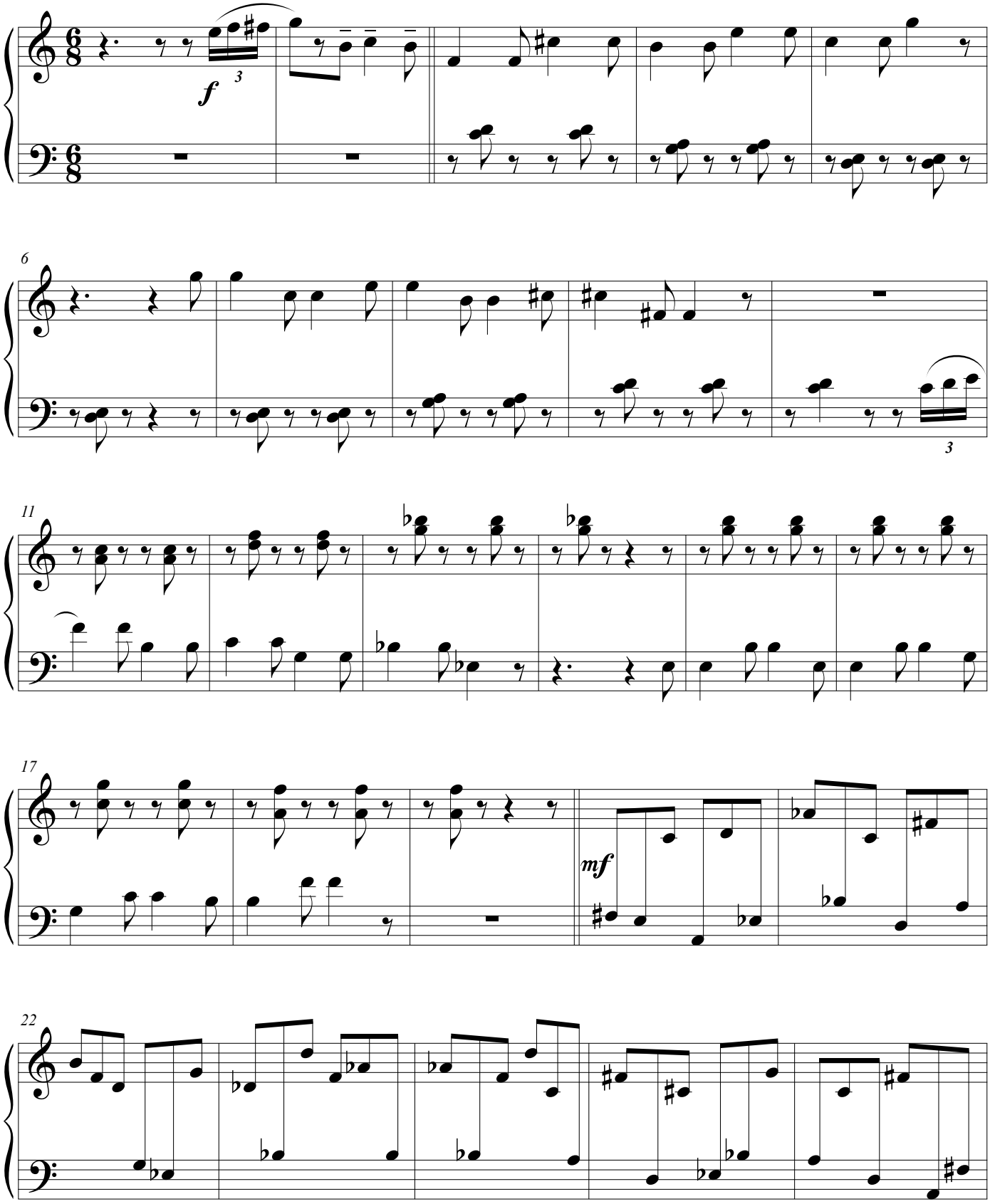
Marimba



Étude 5

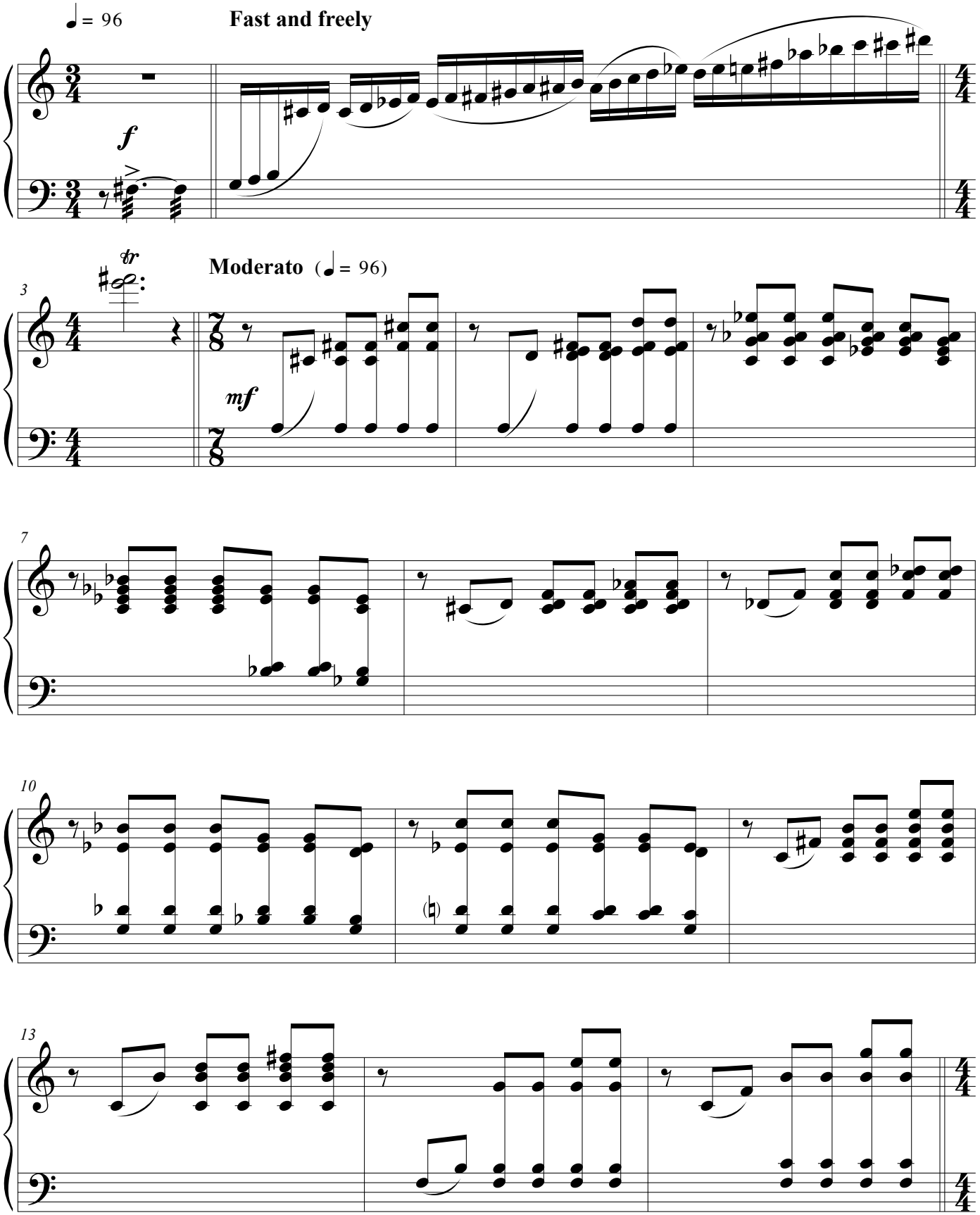
Marimba

Alla marcia



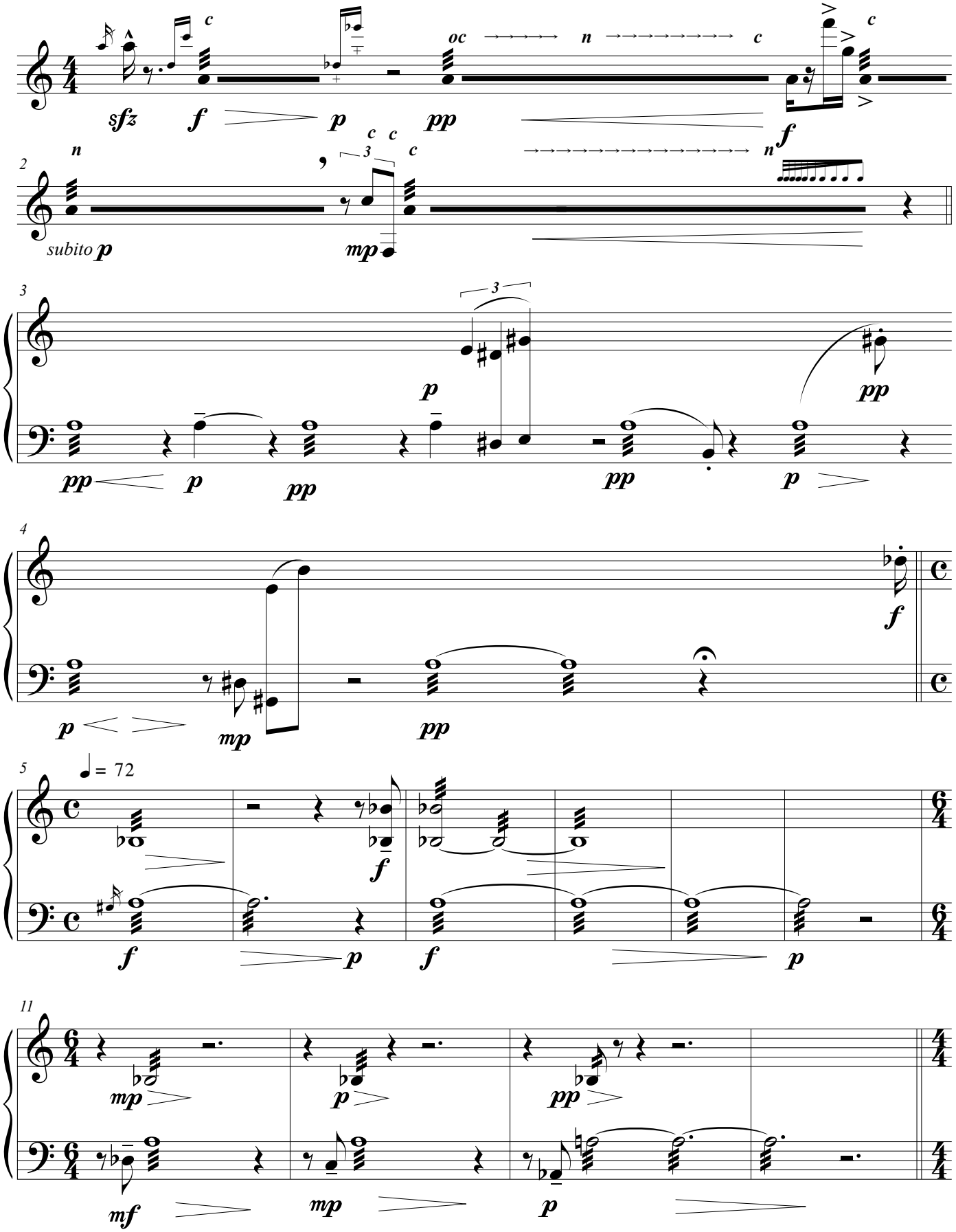
Étude 6

Marimba



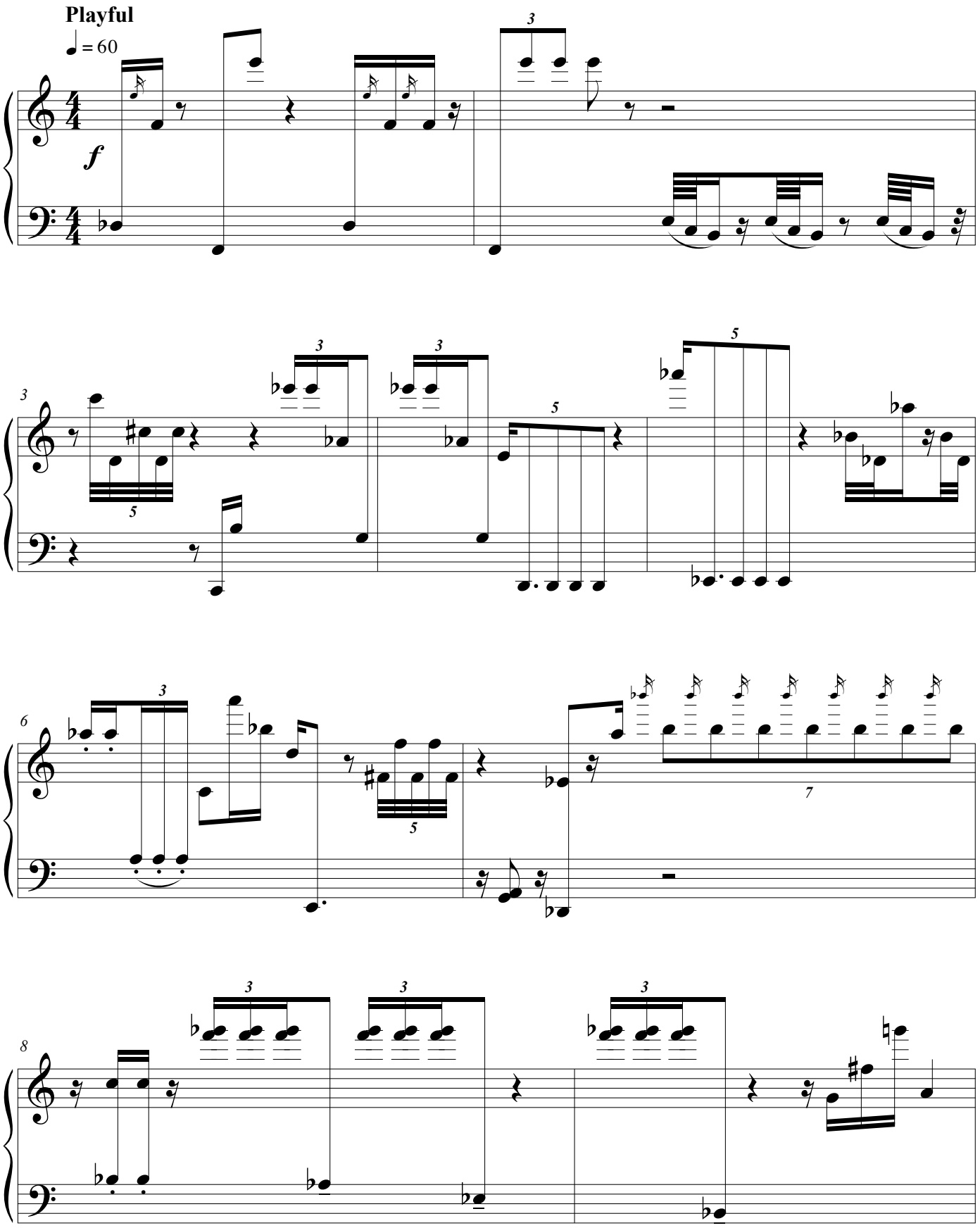
Étude 7

Marimba



Étude 8

Marimba



Étude 9

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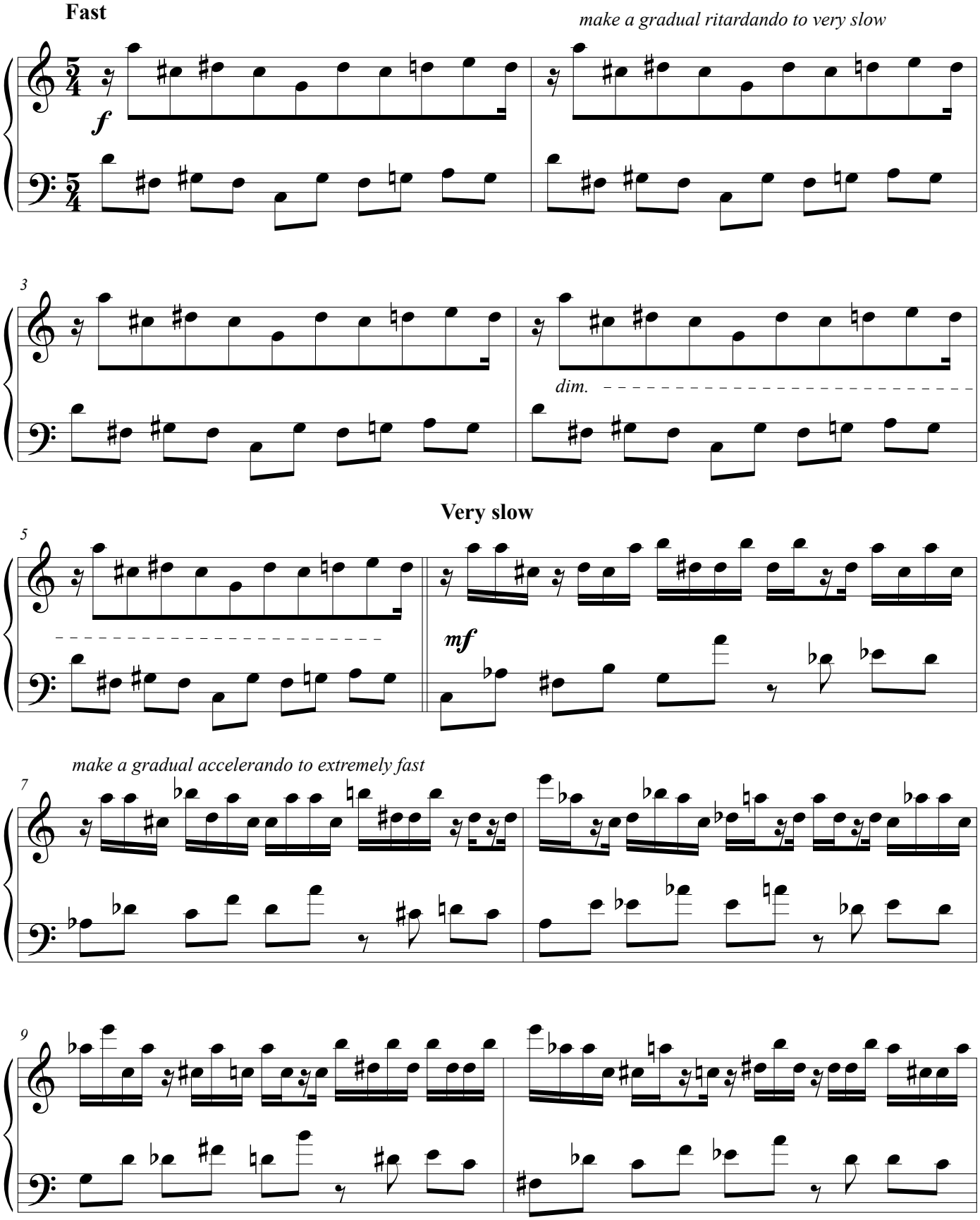

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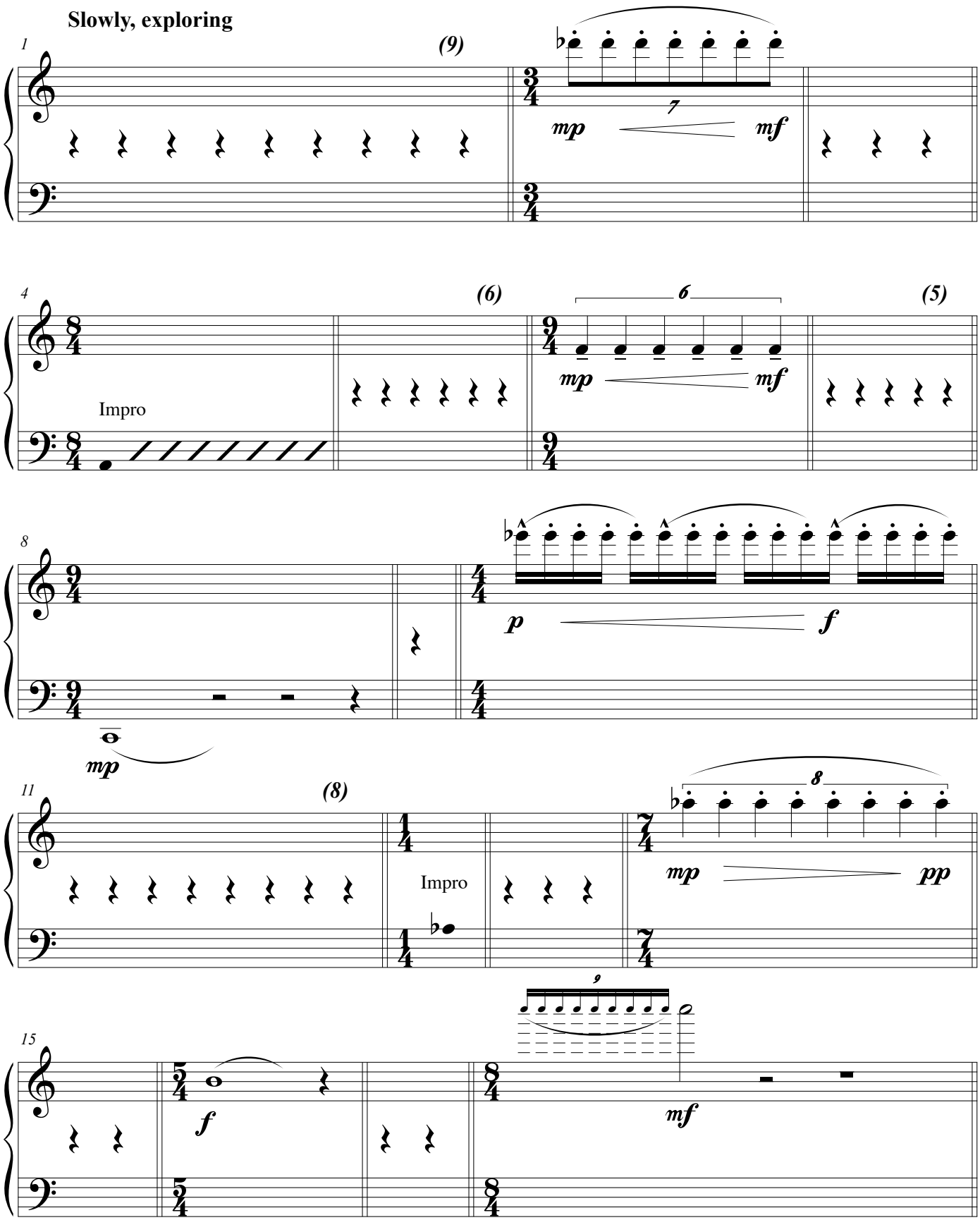

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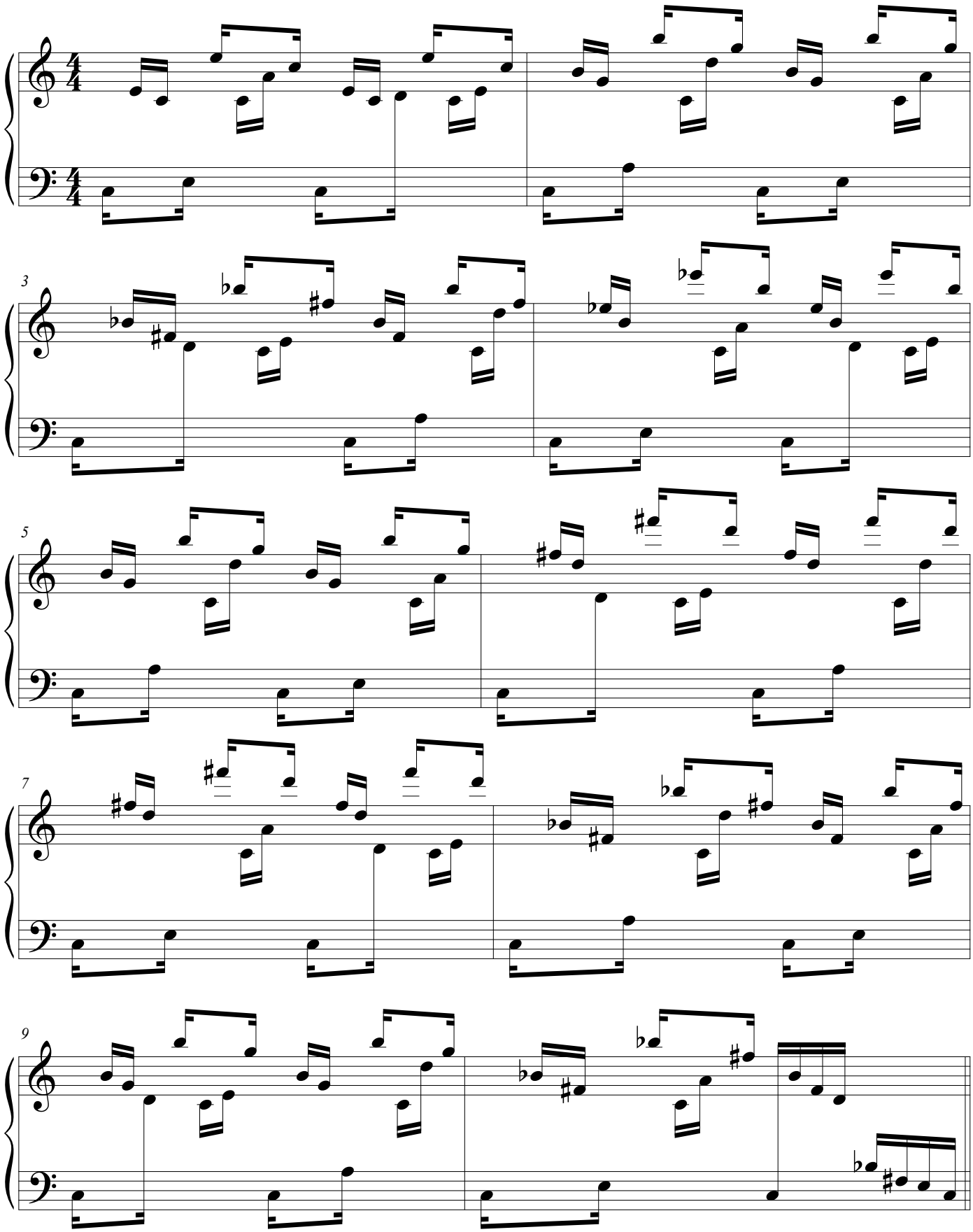

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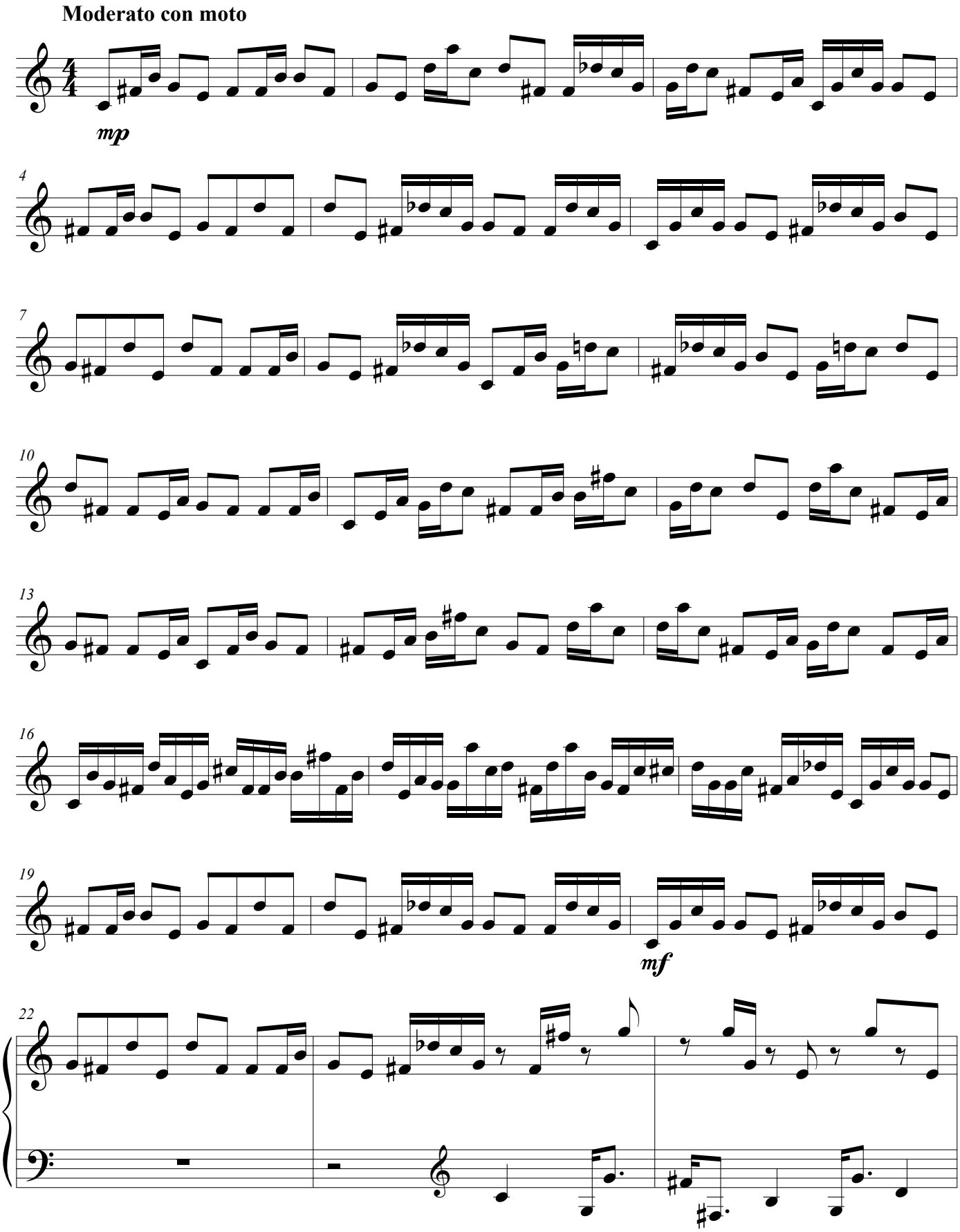

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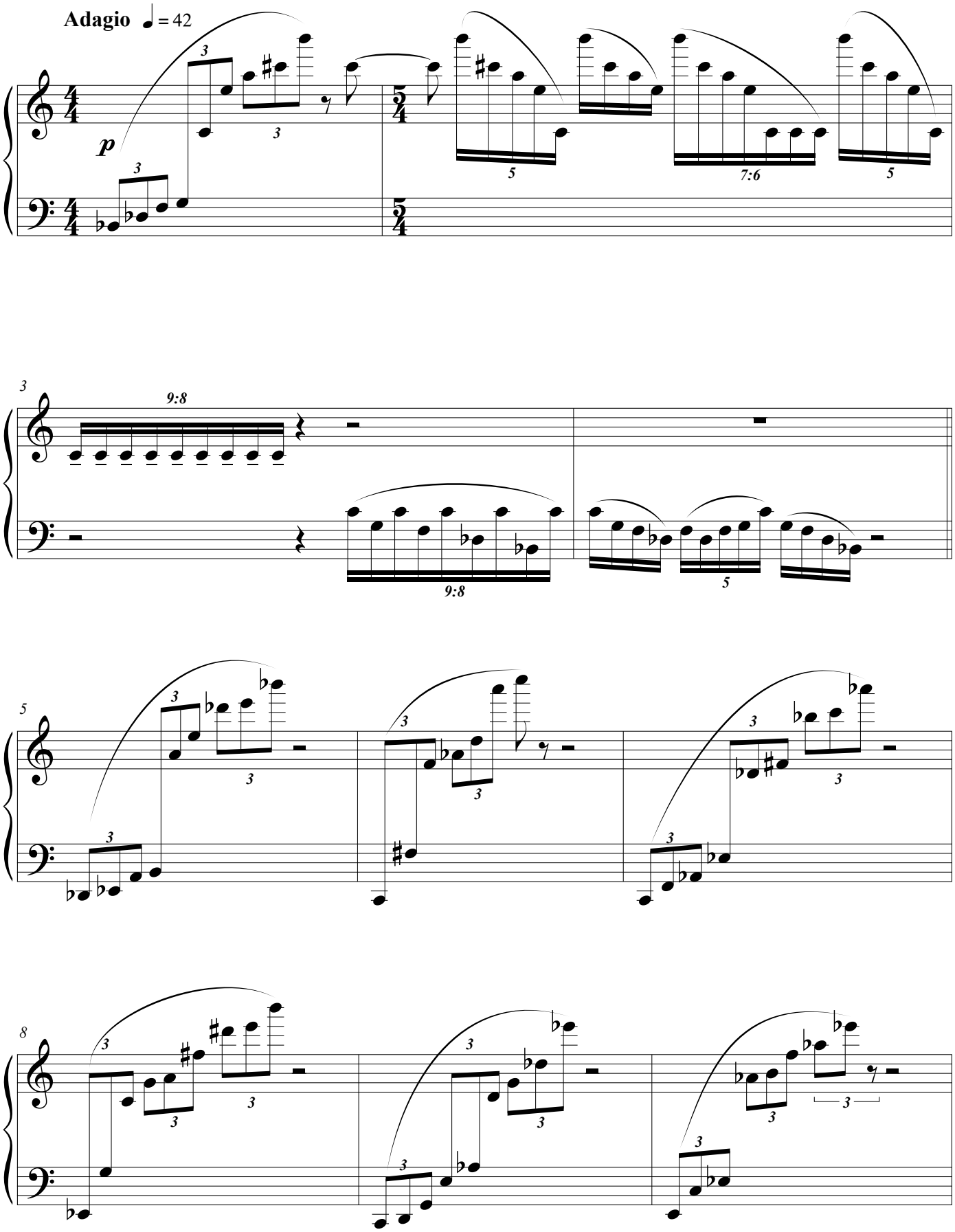

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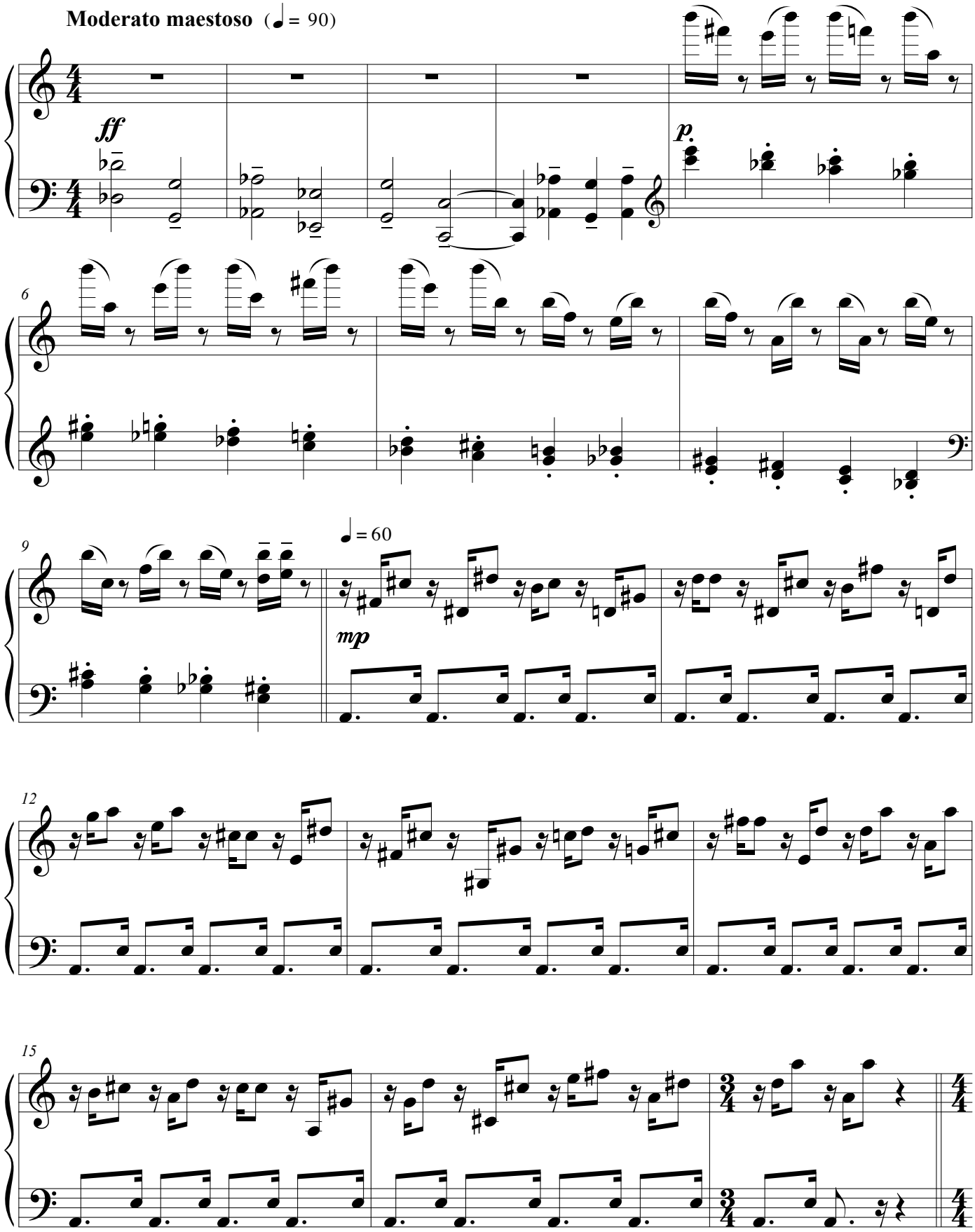

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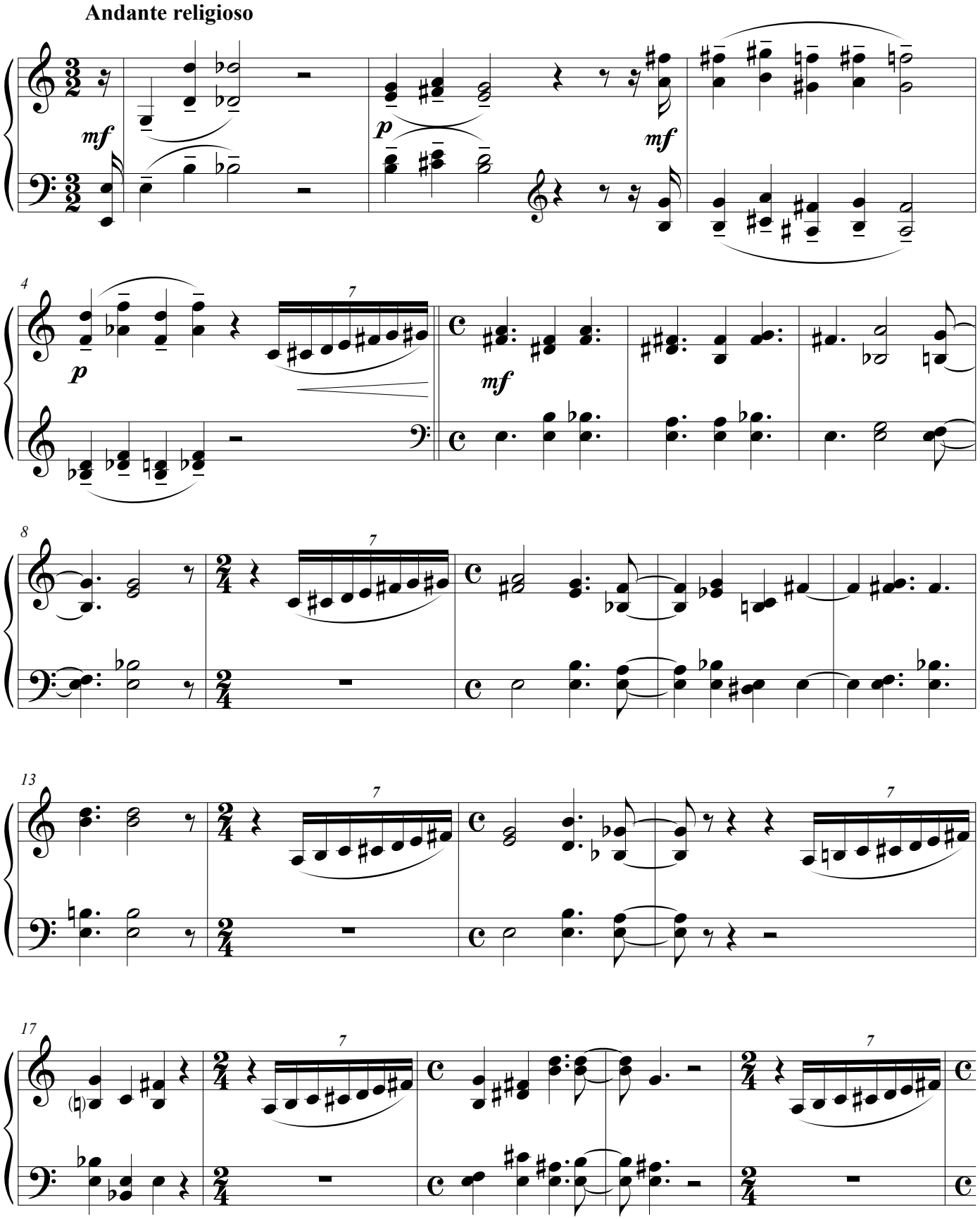

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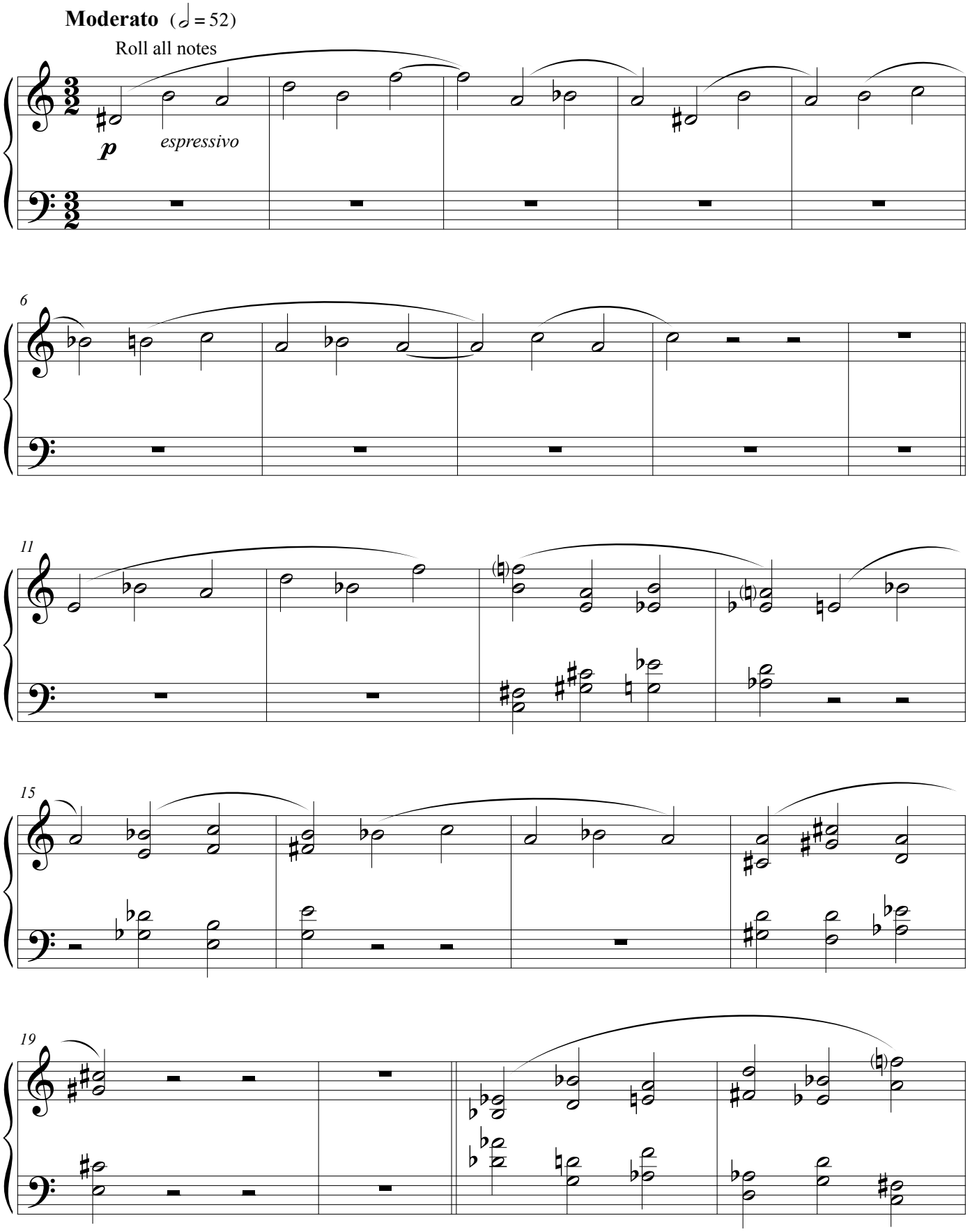

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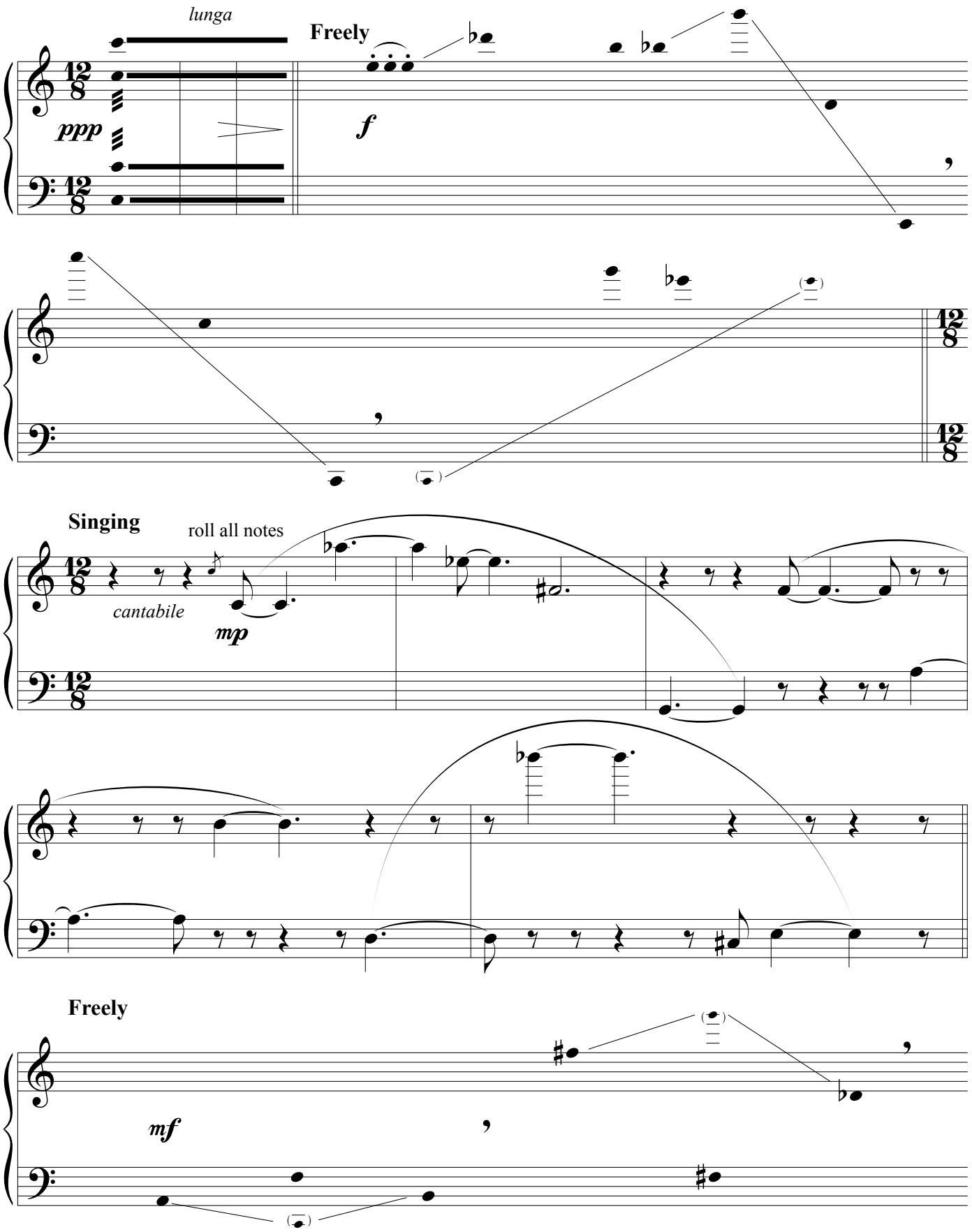

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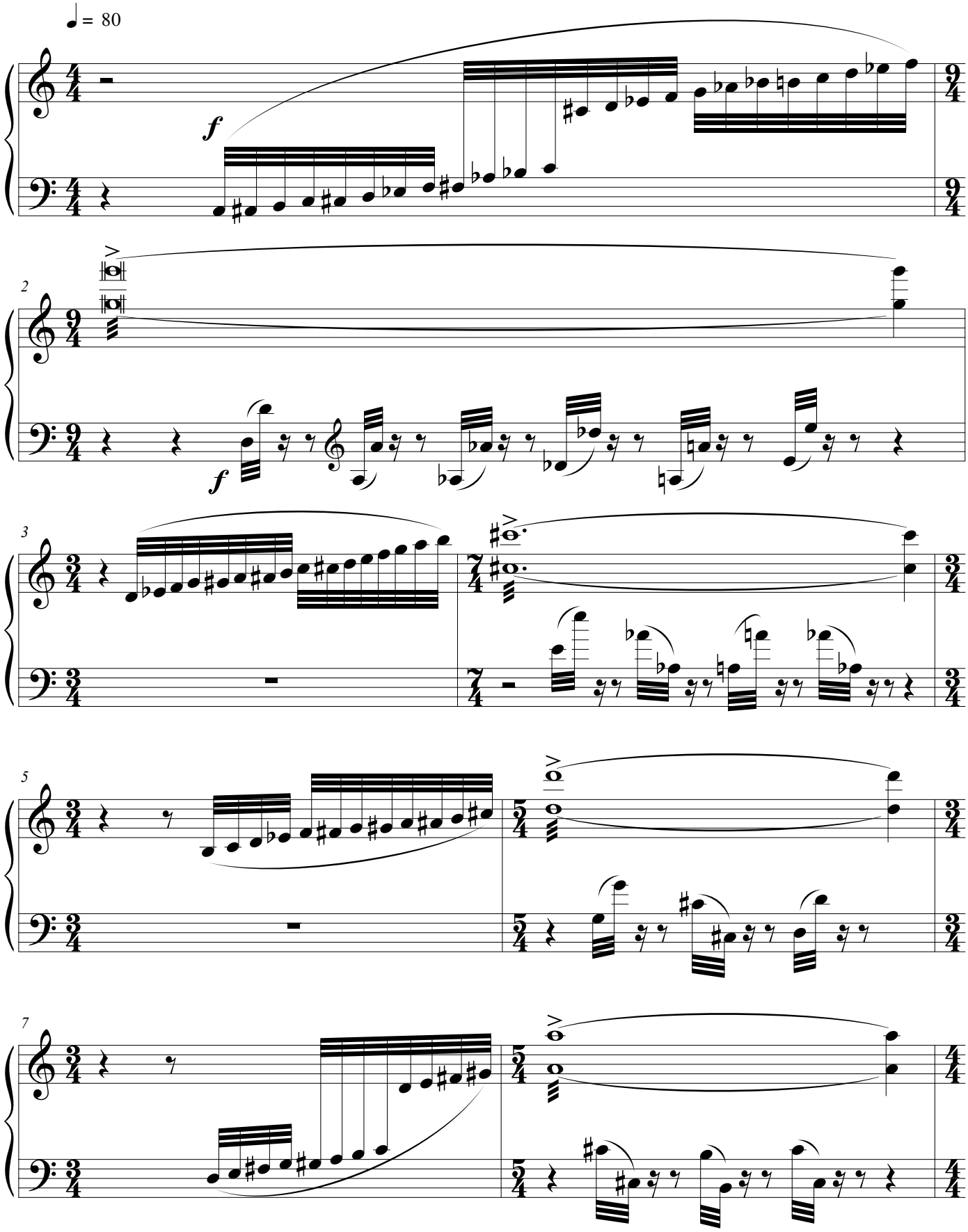

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