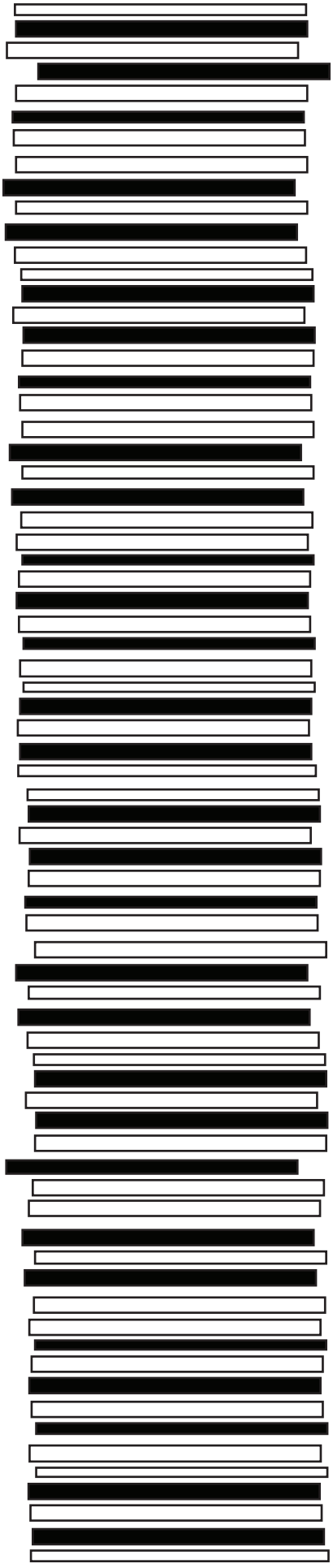
Bacchapithecus

5 short pieces for piano

Dan Dickinson



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approximate duration is 8 or 9 minutes

Program Notes

This composition consists of five short pieces, intended for performance either as a five-movement piece, or as a collection of short compositions for individual performance. The first piece was written for a College Music Society event organized by Dennis Kam which called for 50 pieces, each lasting 50 seconds. My contribution grew out of my own spastic improvisations at the piano, which involve a lot of leaping around, attacking the instrument rhythmically as if I bore it a personal grudge. Although the movement as it emerged is somewhat more respectable than that, it still reminded me of a virtuosic drunken monkey spitefully dancing across the keyboard. With a nod to Charles Mingus's *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, I titled the piece after an imaginary evolutionary dead-end.

Later, I decided to expand the original fifty-second piece, and the end result is the current work. Of the four newer movements, the last one adheres most closely to the spirit of the first. The other three don't really remind much of binge-drinking primates: the second and fourth are slow and contemplative, while the third is a light-hearted dance.

Alternate Program Notes

Several years ago, when I would fall asleep while driving or eating breakfast, an ancient monkey often appeared to me, reeking of cheap wine, complaining about his species' long-ago extinction, and braying various songs. I found him tedious until one day I noticed myself humming his tune during a waking moment. Soon, he asked me (in a tone lacking courtesy, and in language deprived of the grace of good society): Why did I not transcribe his music, which were the songs of an ancient civilization?...or some such nonsense. He kept pestering me, but I had other matters to attend. I must confess: though I found the music catchy, I resisted his overtures largely out of resentment over his pestilent personality. Six months ago his estranged wife called to inform me that he had died of cirrhosis of the liver. In tribute, I offer his melodies for the piano.

Performance Notes from the Composer

These short pieces may be performed either together as a five-movement piece, or separately as short pieces. #2 is the longest of the five, clocking in at around 3 minutes. The other four movements will typically last between 1 and 2 minutes.

Please choose either set of program notes. I leave it to you to gauge the sense of humor of your audience.

Please direct any comments, suggestions, or inquiries to me (the composer) at the address below. I would love to hear from you!

About the Composer

Dan Dickinson is a native of the United States who currently resides in Miami, Florida, where he recently earned a doctorate in composition at the University of Miami. He is active in a number of musical expressions, including chamber music, improvisation, and environmentally-controlled computer music. Dickinson is a founding member and bassist of the experimental improvisation ensemble Fridamusiq. He would like to thank Robert Gower and Dennis Kam for their helpful comments on this composition.

Contact

Dan Dickinson
1416 Zuleta Ave.
Coral Gables, FL 33146
dpdickinson@yahoo.com

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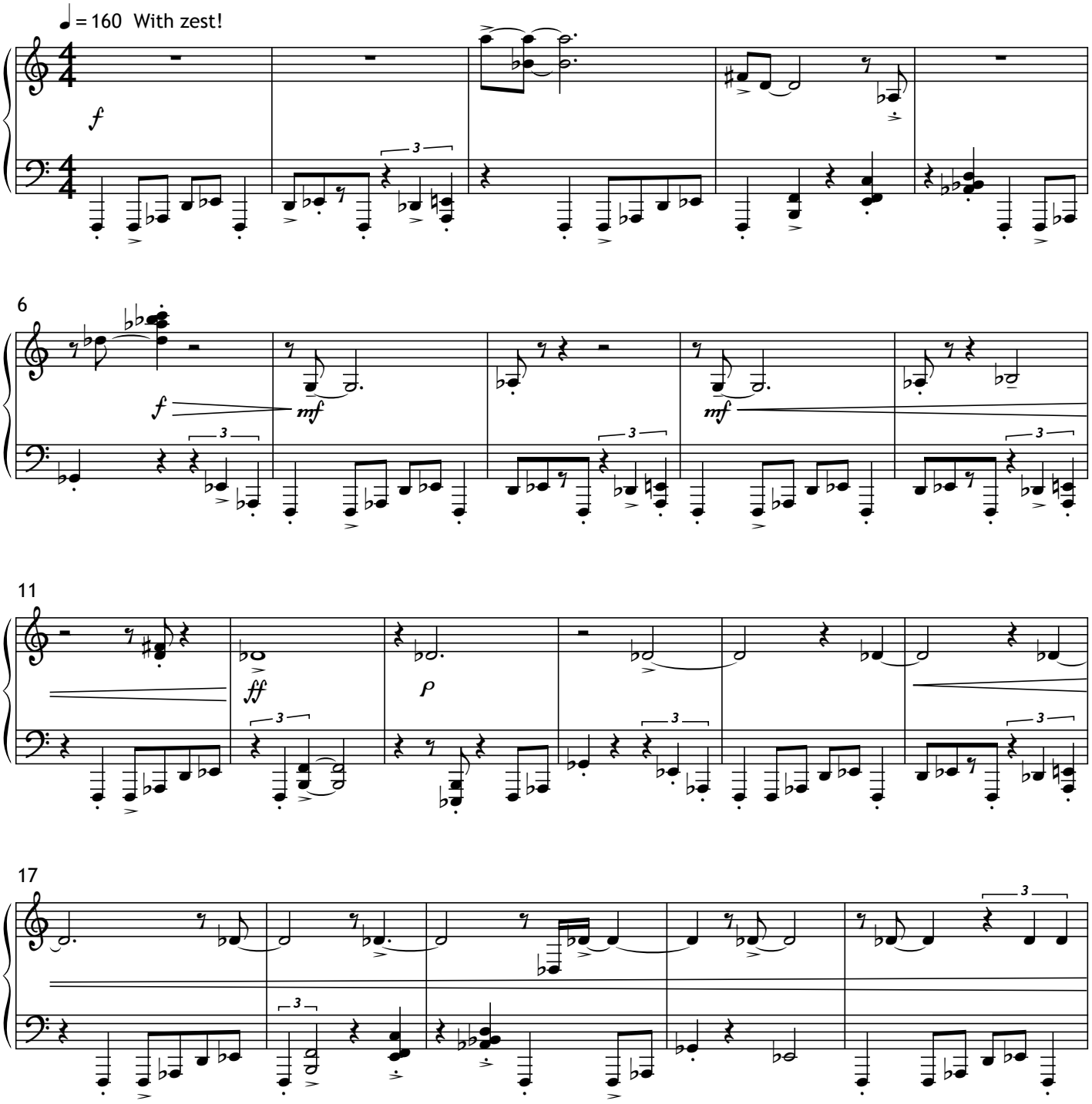
— 1 —



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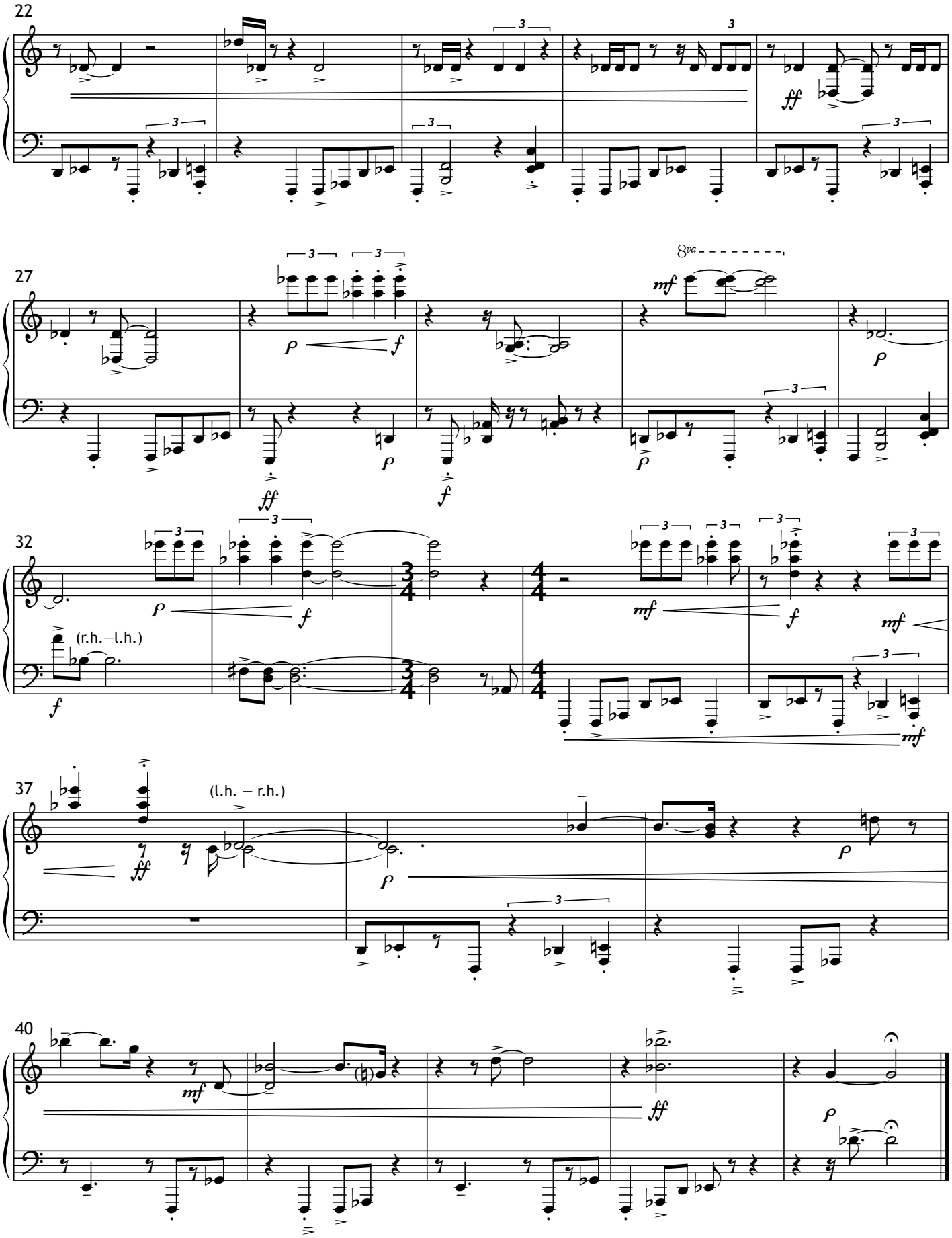
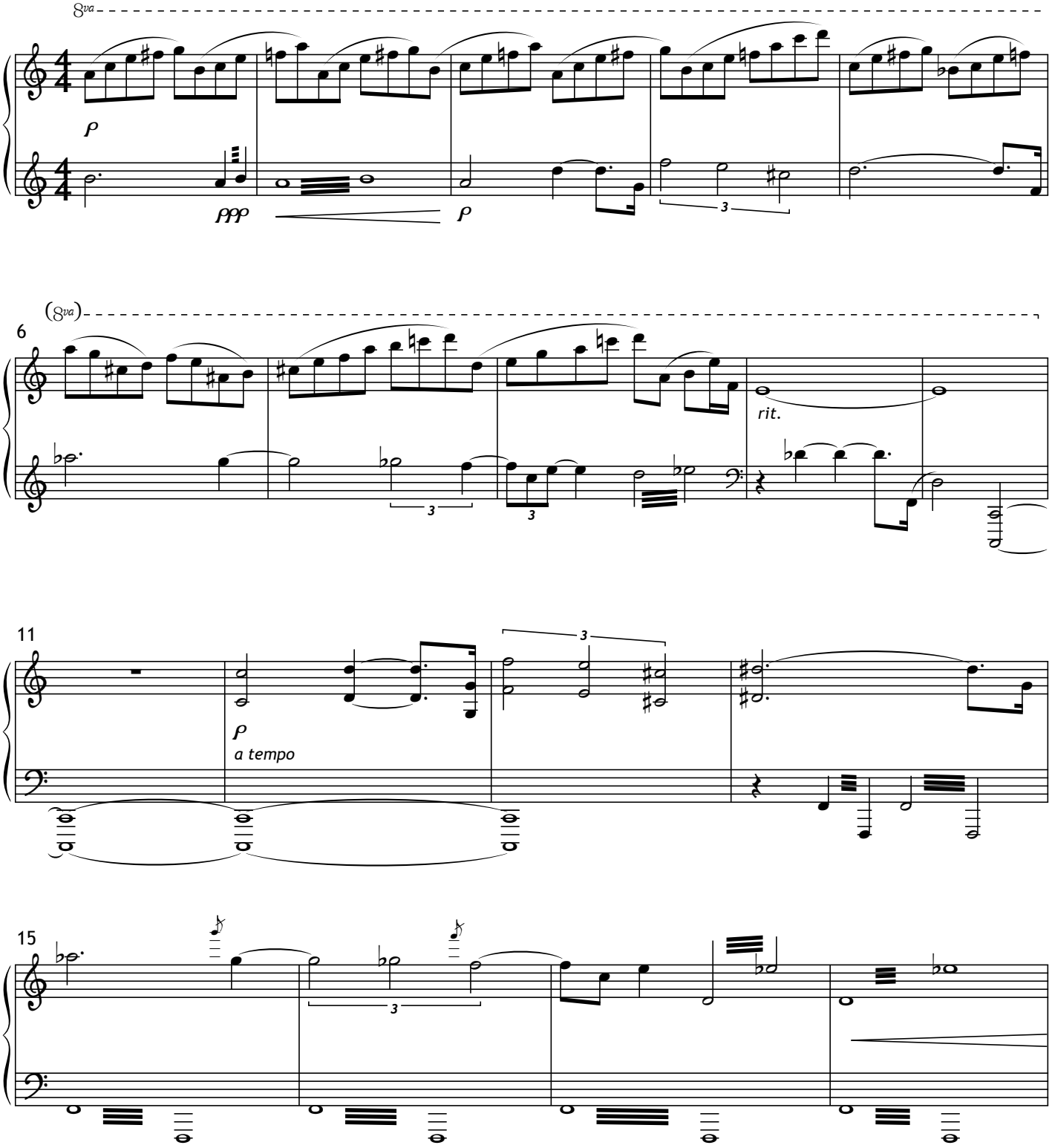
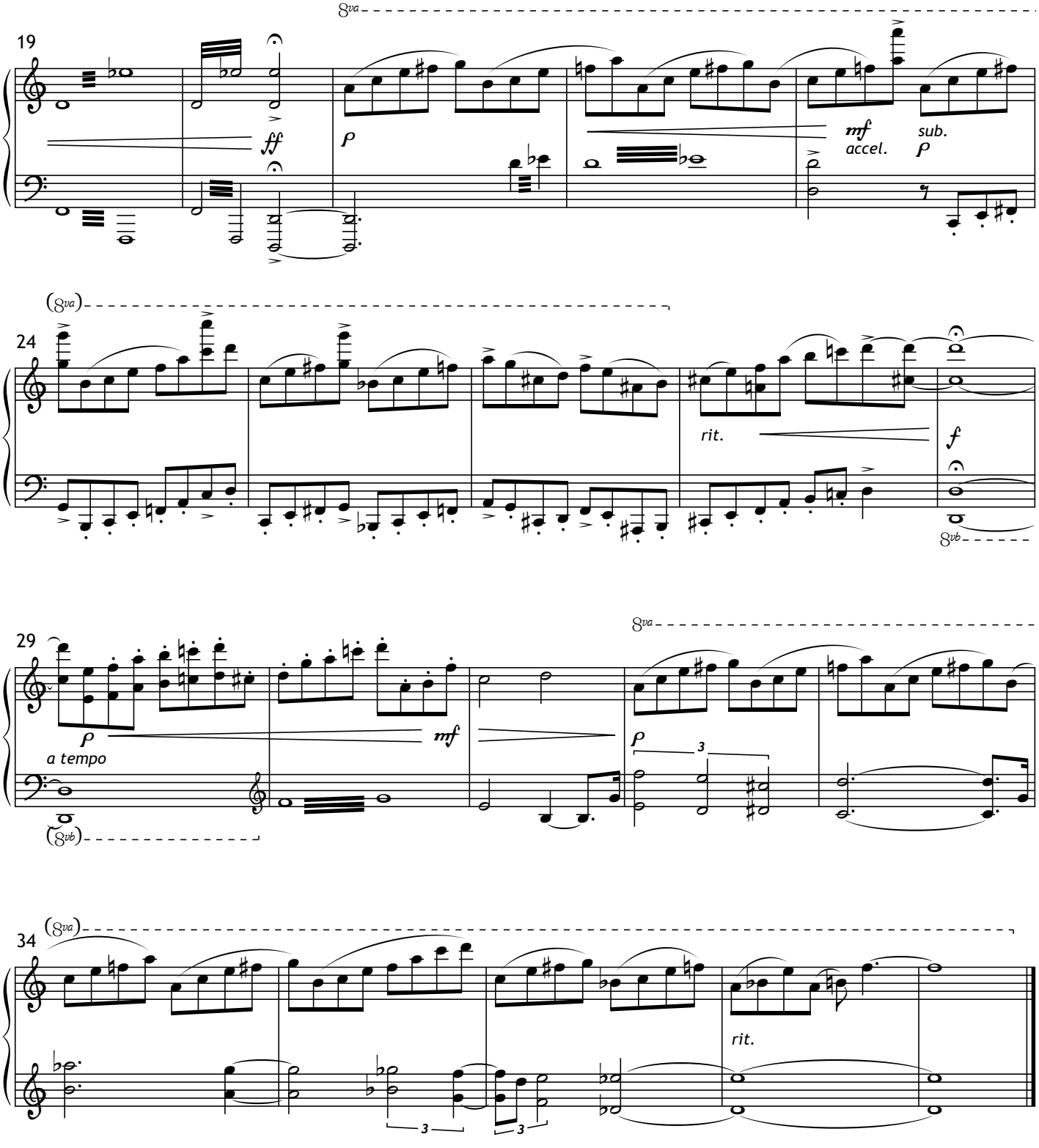
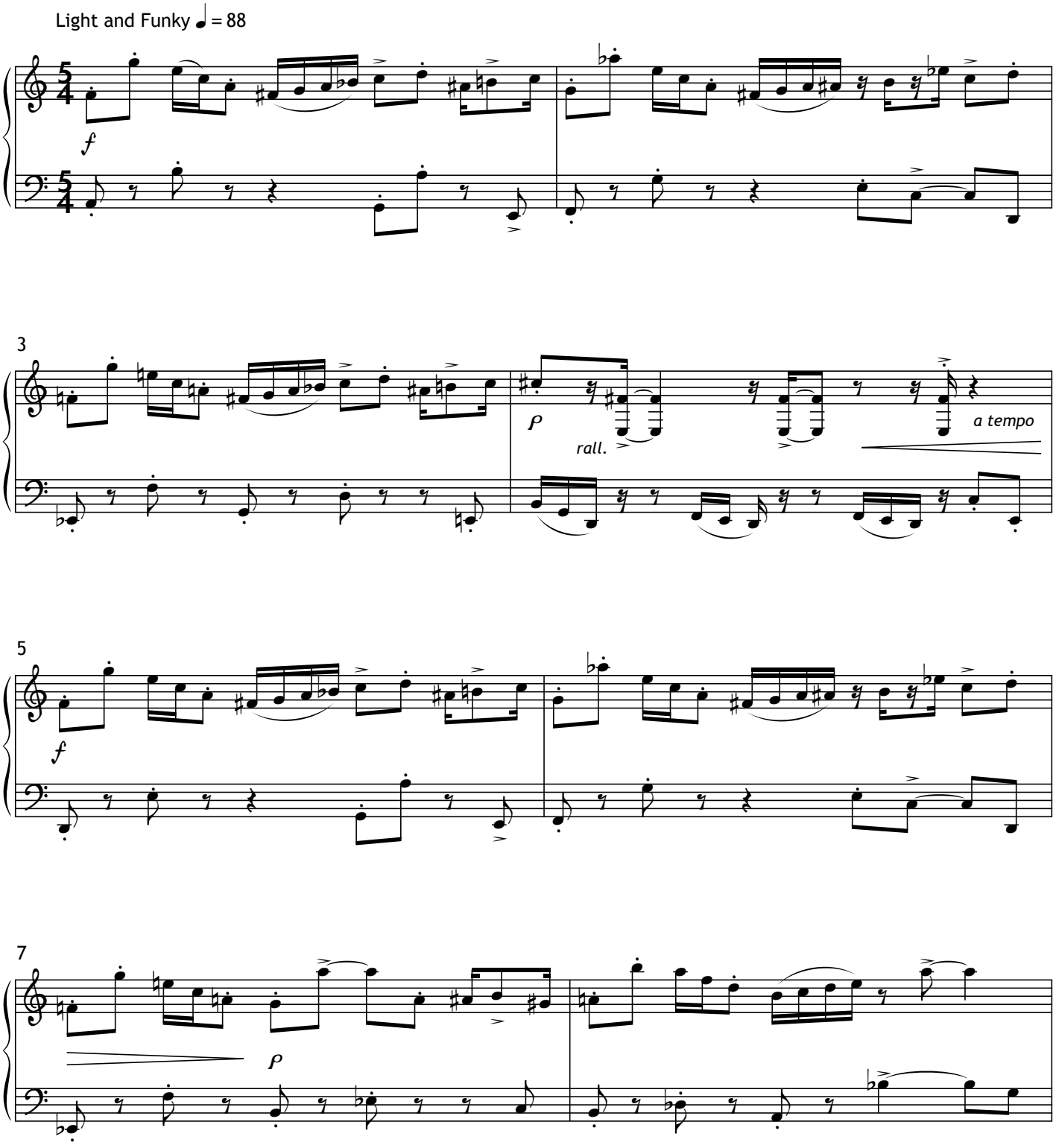
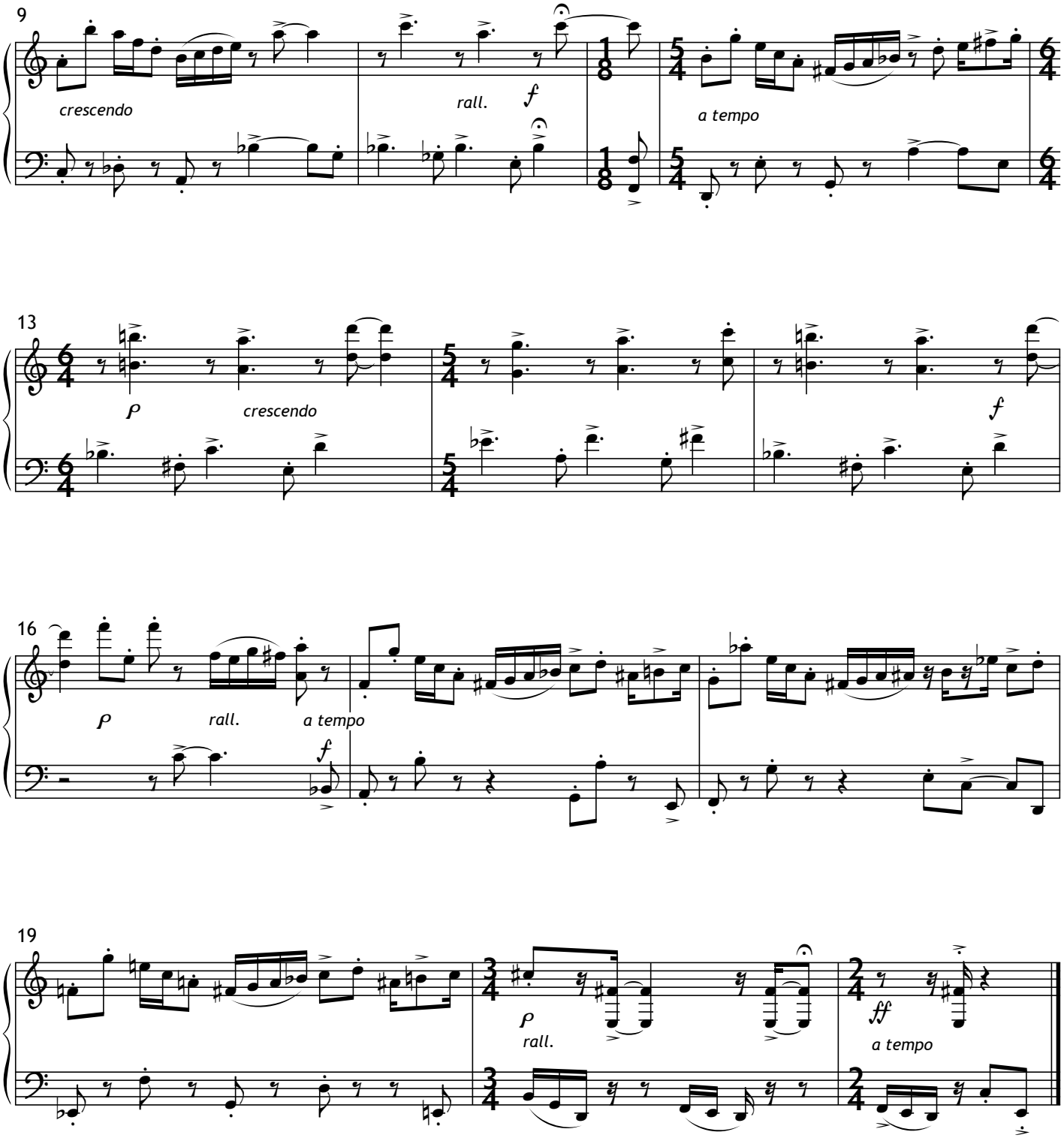

22
27
8va
32
(r.h.–l.h.)
37
(l.h. – r.h.)
40

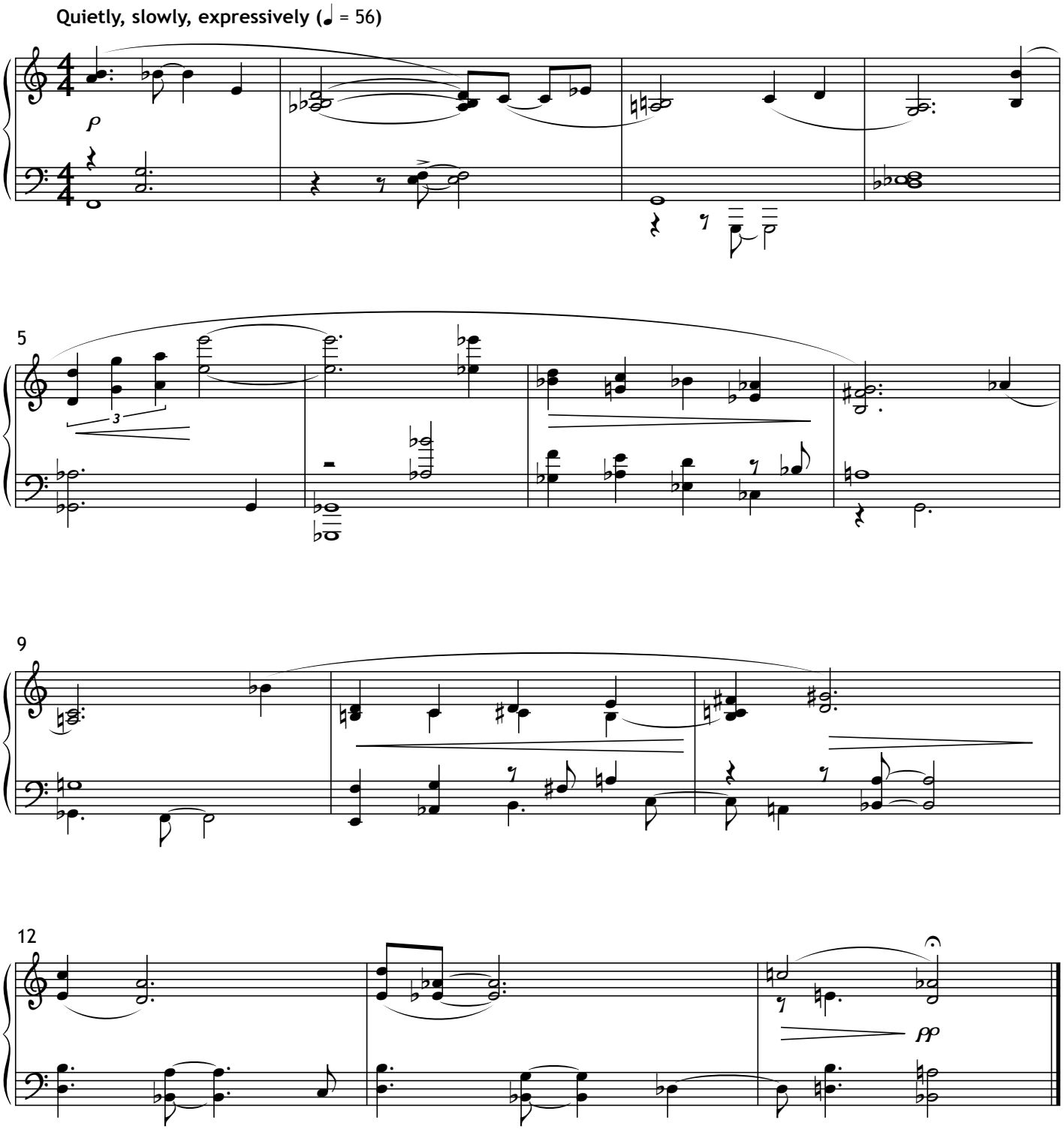
Slowly and expressively ♩ = 56

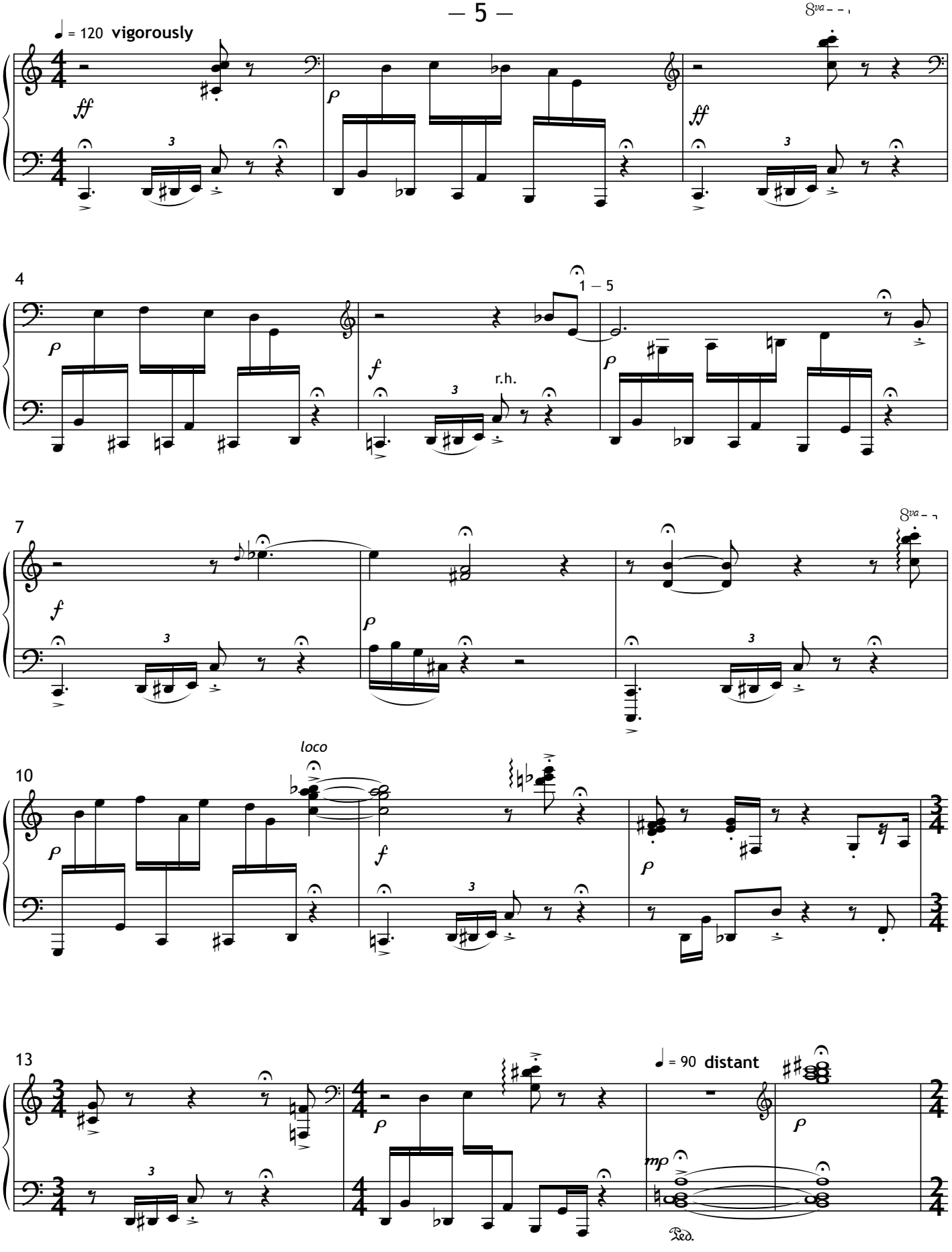


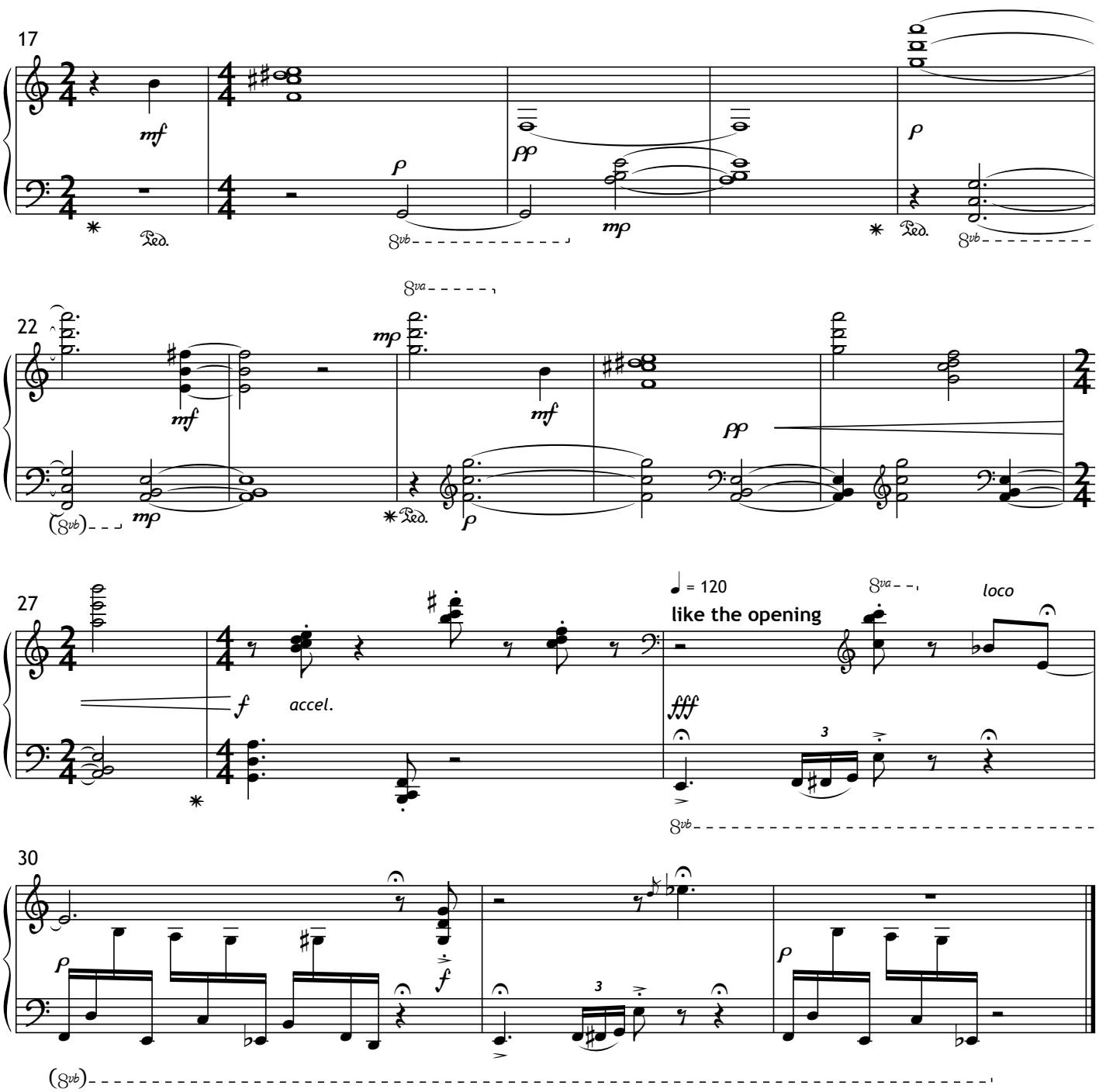

19
8va
ff
p
mf
sub.
accel.
p
24
(8va)
rit.
f
8vb
29
8va
p
mf
a tempo
p
3
(8vb)
34
(8va)
rit.
3
3


Light and Funky ♩ = 88
f
3
p
rall.
a tempo
5
f
7
p


9
crescendo
rall.
f
a tempo
13
p
crescendo
f
16
p
rall.
a tempo
f
19
p
rall.
ff
a tempo


Quietly, slowly, expressively (♩ = 56)
p
5
3
9
12
pp


♩ = 120 vigorously
8va
4
1 — 5
r.h.
7
8va
10
loco
13
♩ = 90 distant
Ped.


17
mf
p
pp
mp
Ped.
8vb
22
mf
mp
8va
pp
(8vb)
27
f
accel.
♩ = 120
like the opening
fff
loco
30
f
(8vb)