Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff
Thomas de Hartmann

Music for the Piano
Œuvres pour piano

Definitive Edition

Volume II
Music of the Sayyids and the Dervishes
Musique des Sayyids et des Derviches

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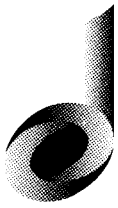

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Preface

The piano music in this definitive four-volume edition was composed by G. I. Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann in Fontainebleau, France, during the 1920's. While the music has only recently been introduced to the general public through a number of recordings, it has been for over sixty years an integral part of the teaching developed by Gurdjieff.

G. I. Gurdjieff

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1877–1949) was born of a Greek father and an Armenian mother in Alexandropol near the border of Russian Armenia and Turkey in the Caucasus, an area where many different ethnic groups had lived together for centuries. His father was one of the local bards known as "Ashokhs" who could improvise on religious or philosophical themes in verse and song and, as Gurdjieff described, would often recite one of the many legends or poems he knew, according to the choice of those present, or would render in song the dialogues between the different characters. Later, discovering the great antiquity of these legends, Gurdjieff began to attribute particular significance to them.

The eldest of six children, Gurdjieff lived as a young boy with his family in Kars (now in Turkey), where he sang in the choir of the Russian Orthodox Church. His quick mind and musical ability attracted the attention of the Cathedral dean, who assumed responsibility for the boy's education. Along with the usual school subjects, Gurdjieff was tutored in religion and medicine.

Despite this training, his many questions about the meaning of man's existence remained unanswered. With a group of companions, he began to search for a body of knowledge which, he suspected, had its roots in ancient traditions and might explain the contradictions he could not resolve. He and the other "Seekers of Truth," as they called themselves, traveled to Egypt, Tibet, Afghanistan, and other countries throughout Central Asia to discover these sources. Such journeys gave him the opportunity to listen to and assimilate the music of many ethnic traditions and ultimately led him to certain temples and monasteries, where he studied special forms of ritual, dance, and music.

After some twenty years of search, Gurdjieff appeared in Europe with a complete teaching that bridged the esoteric knowledge of the East and the scientific methodology of the West. He went to Moscow in 1913, where he gathered around him people interested in studying his ideas. P. D. Ouspensky, author of the most comprehensive book about Gurdjieff's ideas, *In Search of the Miraculous*[1], was part of this group.

In 1916 the young Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann joined Gurdjieff's circle in St. Petersburg. As the turmoil of World War I and the Russian Revolution descended upon them, Gurdjieff left Russia with some of his pupils, including de Hartmann and his wife, traveling to Essentuki and Tiflis in the Caucasus. Joined in Tiflis by the painter Alexander de Salzmann and his wife Jeanne, they continued later to Constantinople and Berlin.

Finally settling in France in 1922 at the Château du Prieuré in Avon near Fontainebleau, Gurdjieff established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, which attracted a large number of people, mainly from England and the United States. Physical and intellectual work and a great variety of exercises, dances and movements were all part of an intense activity in support of Gurdjieff's aim: to offer to those present the means to discover their essential nature and develop its hidden possibilities.

After a near-fatal automobile accident in 1924, Gurdjieff changed the forms in which he conveyed his teaching. In just two years, beginning in 1925, he and de Hartmann composed most of the music in this collection. During this same period, Gurdjieff embarked on his major writing project, *All and Everything*.[2]

Over the years he made several trips to America to visit groups of people studying his ideas, as well as to give lectures and public performances of the movements and sacred dances. He gradually curtailed the activities of the Institute and closed it in 1932. Toward the end of the 1930's he resumed, with renewed intensity, work with his pupils in Paris which continued throughout World War II, the occupation, and afterwards until his death on October 29, 1949.

Thomas de Hartmann

Thomas Alexandrovich de Hartmann (1885–1956) received his musical education in the Russian school. Born in Ukraine to parents of German ancestry on September 21, 1885, de Hartmann was already drawn to the piano by the age of four. When he was nine his mother enrolled him in the academic military school in St. Petersburg. There his talent was soon recognized and he was permitted to spend all his spare time on musical studies.

At the age of eleven he was accepted by Arensky as a pupil in harmony and composition, and by Madame Annette Esipova-Leschetizky for the piano. He later studied counterpoint with Taneiev, and in 1903 received his diploma from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, which at that time was under the direction of Rimsky-Korsakov.

When he was only 21, his full-length ballet, *The Scarlet Flower*, was premiered to great acclaim by the Imperial

[1] P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous,* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1949: London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950.

[2] G. I. Gurdjieff, *All and Everything* (comprising three series): *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson,* New York & London: Viking Arkana, 1992; New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950; *Meetings with Remarkable Men,* New York: Dutton, 1963; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963; *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am,"* New York: Viking Arkana, 1991.

Opera of St. Petersburg with Legat, Pavlova, Karsavina, Fokine and Nijinsky in the cast. Tzar Nicholas II was present and, in recognition of de Hartmann's accomplishment, authorized his release from active military service to the status of reserve officer so that he could devote all his time to music. This enabled him to move to Munich to study conducting with Felix Mottl, a disciple and friend of Richard Wagner.

In Munich between 1908 and 1912, de Hartmann, along with Arnold Schönberg, joined the avant-garde cultural movement launched by Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, whose anthology, *Der Blaue Reiter*, articulated the modernist search before World War I for a common spiritual basis of artistic expression. De Hartmann's article, in that landmark publication, entitled "On Anarchy in Music," proclaimed, "By discovering the new laws, art should . . . lead to an even greater, more conscious freedom – to different, new possibilities."[3] During this period he sketched the music for Kandinsky's experimental stage production, *The Yellow Sound.*

De Hartmann returned to St. Petersburg in 1912 where his career continued to flourish. His musical activities included compositions for orchestra, piano and voice, music for the ballet, a one-act opera, and chamber music.

In 1916, his meeting with Gurdjieff gave a new direction to his life. De Hartmann said:

It was clear to me long before I met Gurdjieff, . . . that to be able to develop in my creative work, something was necessary – something greater or higher that I could not name. Only if I possessed this "something" would I be able to progress further and hope to have any real satisfaction from my own creation . . .[4]

For the next twelve years de Hartmann and his wife worked closely with Gurdjieff. When the Bolshevik revolution broke out, they first followed him to the Caucasus and then to Turkey. Whenever conditions of life permitted, de Hartmann and his wife, an opera singer, continued their own musical activities, teaching and giving concerts. Later, between 1922 and 1929, they lived at Gurdjieff's Institute in France where most of the music in the present volumes was composed.

In 1929, de Hartmann left the Institute and resumed his career, composing sonatas, concertos, ballet music, symphonies, the opera *Esther*, song cycles, and a setting for voice and piano of the final pages of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. During this period he earned his livelihood by writing scores for films.

In the late forties and early fifties Jeanne de Salzmann, who had become Gurdjieff's closest disciple, invited de Hartmann to give recitals of the music he had composed with Gurdjieff, to oversee the publication of a limited five-volume edition, and to compose new pieces for Gurdjieff's movements and sacred dances. From 1951, de Hartmann lived and worked in America until his death on March 26, 1956.

[3] Th. v. Hartmann, "Über Anarchie in der Musik," in *Der Blaue Reiter,* München, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1912, page 94.

[4] Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff,* Definitive Edition, London: Penguin Arkana, 1992, page 5.

The Music

In the course of his search to understand all facets of human nature, Gurdjieff became convinced that the music of different cultures both preserved and revealed essential characteristics of those cultures and also conveyed deeper meanings rooted in their traditions. He possessed an extraordinary capacity for remembering the intricate melodies he heard during the twenty years he spent living and traveling in Central Asia and the Near East. These "recordings" were essential for the work that was to follow.

The music Gurdjieff encountered descends from aural traditions of ancient provenance. As a rule, this music is not written down but relies on the musician's exact knowledge of its characteristic melodic movements. As in most monophonic music, a sense of harmony is implied by the melodic intervals themselves, often underpinned by a drone of the tonic, or with the added fifth. In certain styles one also finds a complex rhythmic interaction between melody and accompaniment. The systems of tuning, varying from region to region, are derived from divisions of the octave that result in intervals unfamiliar to Western ears.

De Hartmann, a musician of European culture, needed time and a special preparation to become sensitive to a musical language so different from his own, and to be able to hear – in the sense of receive – the essence of the music that was being conveyed to him. He described his first musical contact with Gurdjieff:

In the evenings, he came with a guitar and would play, not in a usual manner, but with the tip of the third finger, as if playing a mandolin, slightly rubbing the strings. There were only melodies, rather pianissimo hints of melodies from the years when he collected and studied the ritual movements and dances of different temples in Asia. All this playing was essentially an introduction for me into the new character of the Eastern music which he wished later to dictate to me.[5]

It was around this time (1917) in Essentuki that Gurdjieff began to develop extensively his movements and sacred dances. At first he provided the musical accompaniment himself on the guitar, (under wartime conditions no piano was available), while de Hartmann had to practice the exercises.

In 1919 when Gurdjieff and his pupils went to Tiflis, work on these exercises continued and, with a piano available, de Hartmann was asked to play. De Hartmann wrote:

. . . Gurdjieff gave us the different modes of several nationalities, and not only the modes but also . . . details peculiar to the character of each nationality. These modes served later on for the creation of music for a variety of exercises . . .[6]

It was also in 1919 that Gurdjieff sent de Hartmann and his wife to Erivan, the capital of Armenia, where the de Hartmanns gave concerts of European music and of the works of the Armenian composer Komitas Vardapet. As de Hartmann describes:

[5] *Ibid.*, condensed from pages 43-44.

[6] *Ibid.*, page 141.

Mount Ararat was wrapped in a shroud of mist: an unforgettable sight. To accompany this vision there was authentic Eastern music, played on . . . the tar – a kind of stringed instrument. Through this trip to Erivan, . . . Gurdjieff gave us the opportunity of listening to Eastern music and musicians, so that I could better understand how he wished his own music to be written and interpreted.[7]

For the five years between 1919 and 1924, the collaboration of the two men focused on music for Gurdjieff's movements and sacred dances. In 1925 the full intensity of the composing of the music in this edition began:

I had a very difficult and trying time with this music. Gurdjieff sometimes whistled or played on the piano with one finger a very complicated sort of melody – as are all Eastern melodies, although they seem at first to be monotonous. To grasp this melody, to write it in European notation, required a tour de force.

How it was written down is very interesting in itself. It usually happened in the evening in the big salon of the Château. From my room I usually heard when Gurdjieff began to play and, taking my music paper, I had to rush downstairs. Soon all the people came, and the music dictation was always in front of everybody.

It was not easy to notate. While listening to him play, I had to scribble down at feverish speed the shifts and turns of the melody, sometimes with repetitions of just two notes. But in what rhythm? How to mark the accentuation? Often there was no hint of conventional Western meters; at times the flow of melody . . . could not be interrupted or divided by bar-lines. And the harmony that could support the Eastern tonality of the melody could only gradually be guessed.

Often – to torment me, I think – he would begin to repeat the melody before I had finished my notation, usually with subtle differences and added embellishments which drove me to despair. Of course it must be remembered that this was never just a matter of simple dictation, but equally a personal exercise for me, to grasp the essential character, the very noyau *or kernel of the music.*

After the melody had been written down Gurdjieff would tap on the lid of the piano a rhythm on which to build the bass accompaniment. And then I had to perform at once what had been given, improvising the harmony as I went.[8]

By this method over 300 piano pieces were worked on during those two years.

What is unique in this music is its specific combination of elements: the ethnic melodies, the ritual music of remote temples and monasteries, and the cadences of the Orthodox liturgy so intimately familiar to both men – all these transformed by Gurdjieff through de Hartmann's craftsmanship and absolute dedication. What resulted was sometimes distinctly Eastern, often clearly Western, but almost never typically either one. It is as though many of the specific attributes of the sources were distilled to leave a music largely free of elaborated structure and decorative detail or of characteristic pianism. The force and clarity of its speech emerge from the underlying intention to speak directly to the listener's inmost self.

A close examination of the manuscripts yields a revealing insight: there are very few occurrences of rewriting in any of the various stages of notation. From the first dictation of the melodies, through harmonization and addition of rhythm, until the final manuscript, there is no evidence of basic change in compositional structure. In any process of composing this would be unusual, but in a collaboration it is quite extraordinary. The common understanding of the two men and the accelerated pace of their work together led to a fusion of musical thought – resulting in a creation as if from one mind. They became one composer.

The period of their musical collaboration ended in 1927. The manuscripts remained in various stages of completion: in some cases the melody alone was noted down, while in others the melodic line was partially harmonized and the piece never finished. This edition contains only those pieces that reached their full and final development.

The fair copies produced in the 1920's by de Hartmann in his impeccable calligraphy generally contain few indications of tempo, dynamics, phrasing, or articulation marks. Only in preparing the manuscripts in the early 1950's for a limited private edition did he add such indications, formalize the genres, and establish the sequence of pieces in each volume. Therefore, most of the previously unpublished manuscripts in this edition appear with few performance indications. It is left to the pianist to explore and find in the music itself the key to their interpretation.

Introduction to Volume II

Of all the works in this edition, the pieces from *Music of the Sayyids and the Dervishes* reflect most characteristically the musical idiom of the Middle East. Nevertheless these pieces are intended to evoke the spirit of the Sayyids and dervishes rather than to serve as transcriptions of their music. The Sayyids, whether by blood relation or spiritual lineage, are considered to be direct descendants of the prophet Mohammed and are held in high esteem in the Muslim world. But, so far as we know, they have left no music that can be specifically attributed to them. The music of the dervishes, on the other hand, still exists today and has been preserved, for the most part, in its traditional form. Dervishes belong to different Islamic orders or brotherhoods as varied as those in Christianity in which devotional and spiritual exercises are linked to musical forms defined by tradition. The Mevlevi, for example, best known in the West as the Whirling Dervishes, give an important place to the dance, which, along with the music, opens the way to an ecstatic state.

In composing the music in this volume, Gurdjieff and de Hartmann frequently employed a two-part form indigenous to many regions of the Middle East, including Azerbaijan and the Turkish coast of the Black Sea. The beginning is a *taksim*, a free melodic or rhapsodic

[7] *Ibid.*, page 136.

[8] *Ibid.*, condensed from pages 245-246.

improvisation based on a particular mode, often underpinned by a drone or pedal point, (represented on the piano by a repeated note or *tremolo* in the left hand). The second part is a rhythmic dance. Of course this type of binary form is in essence universal, appearing in a variety of guises, from European opera to Hindustani classical music.

Nos. 3, 7, and 26, for example, illustrate Gurdjieff's and de Hartmann's use of the binary form. The improvisational exposition gradually unfolds the essential features of the melody through the development of short motifs. The tone is more personal in nature than that found in the *Asian Songs and Rhythms*. The second section, based on a dance rhythm, refers directly or indirectly to the motivic material of the first part and often subtly echoes its subjective quality of feeling.

Nos. 28 and 36 are representative of the more energetic dances undoubtedly inspired by the rhythmic spiritual exercises of certain dervish orders. In the interpretation of these pieces, the pianist should bear in mind that for the dervishes, this type of dance is not meant to induce a trance-like frenzy, but, quite to the contrary, provides a specific rhythmic support for control of the breath and an inner spiritual awakening.

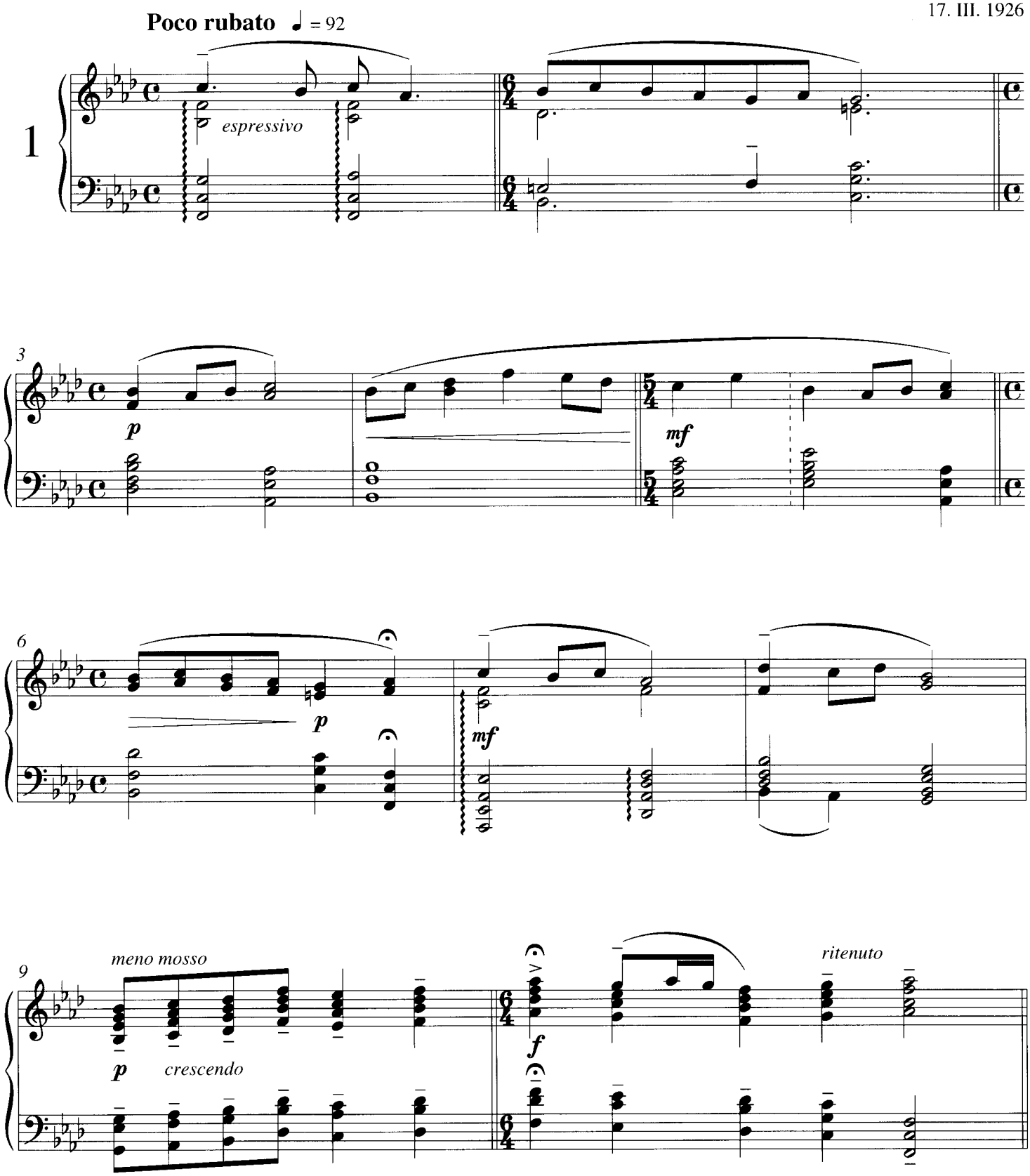
The Editors

First Series

Première série

Sayyid Chant and Dance · Chant et danse (sayyid)

17. III. 1926



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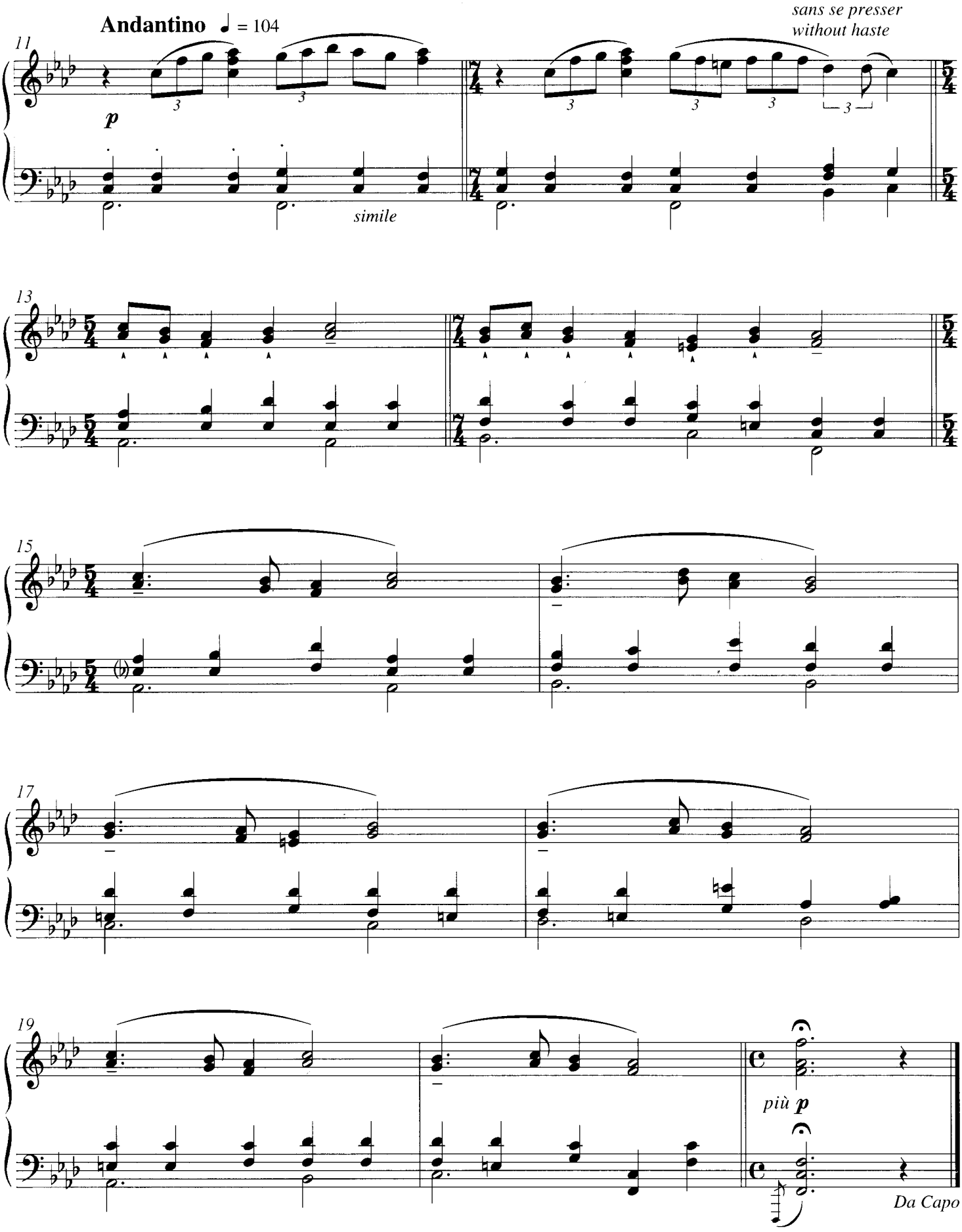
Andantino ♩ = 104
sans se presser
without haste
11
p
simile
13
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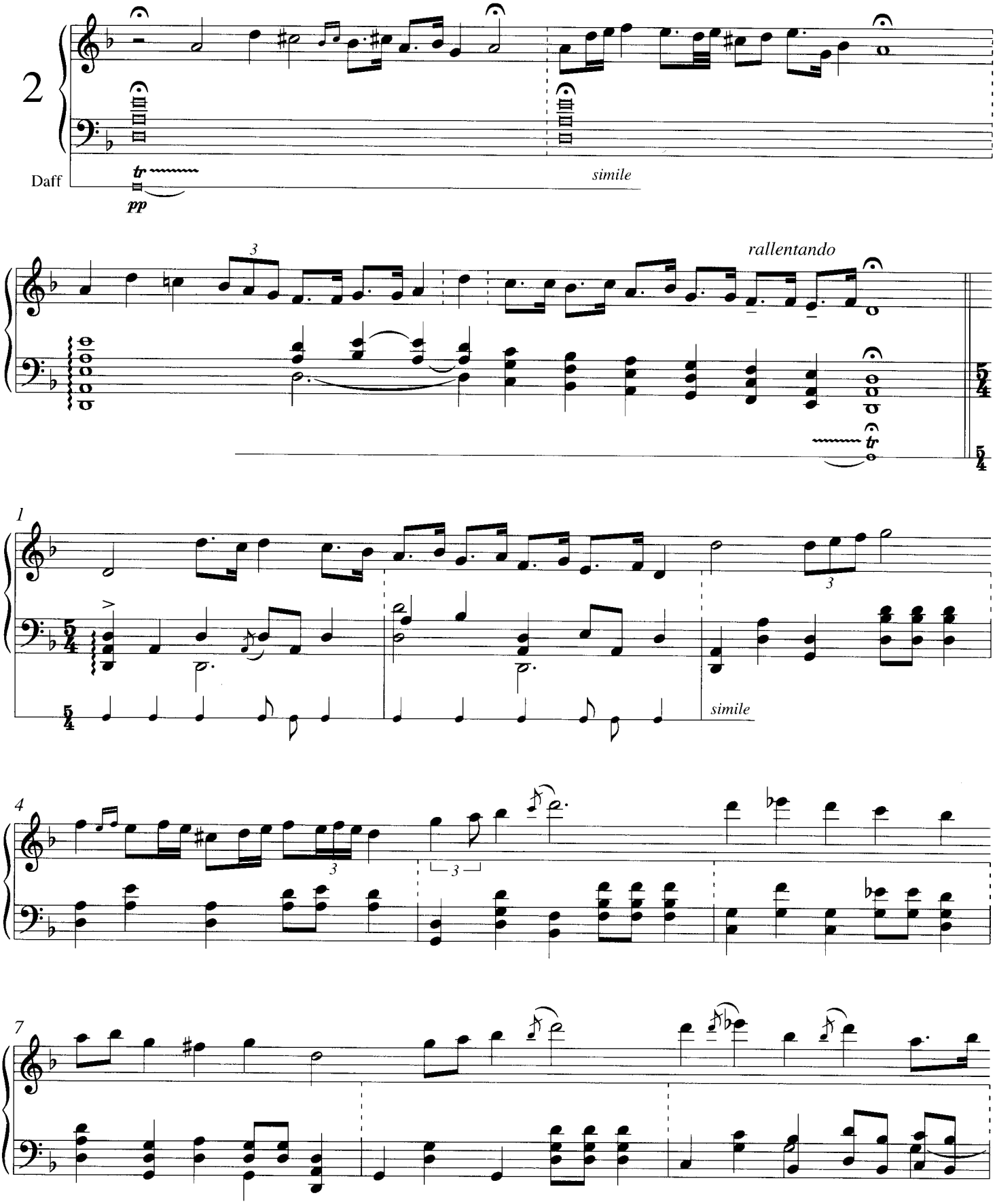
17
19
più p
Da Capo

For Professor Skridlov · Pour le professeur Skridlov

10. X. 1925



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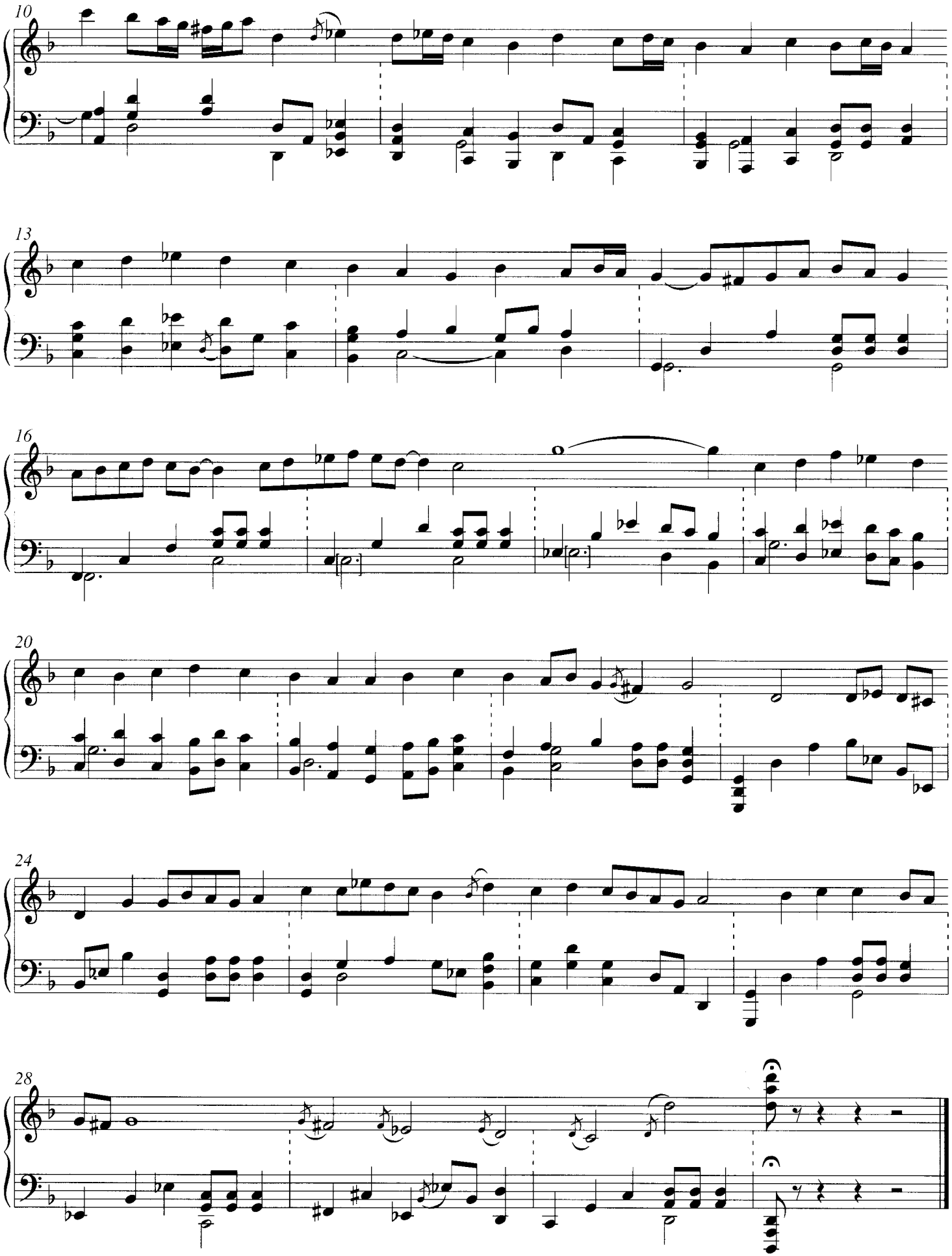
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Sayyid Chant and Dance · Chant et danse (sayyid)

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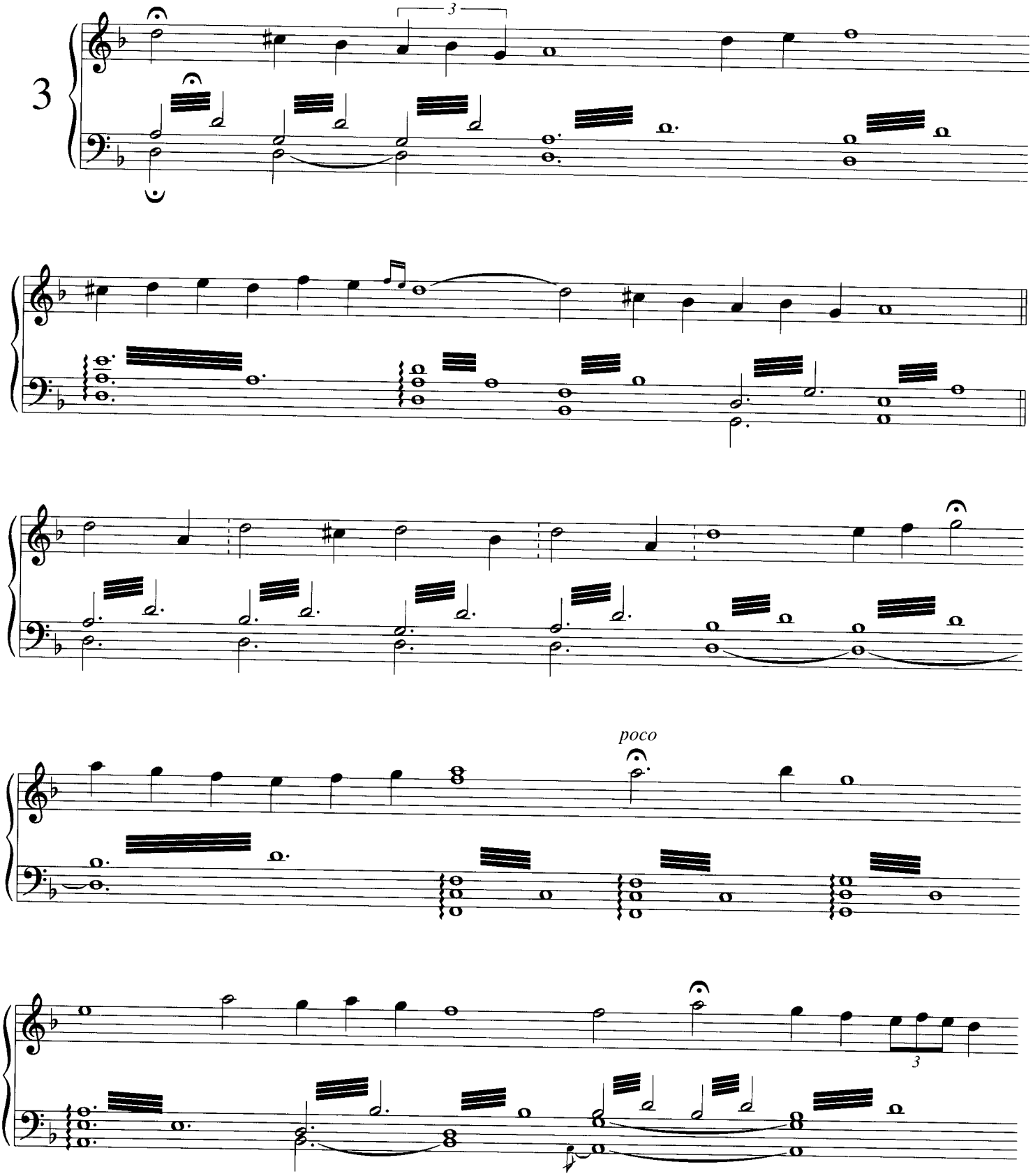

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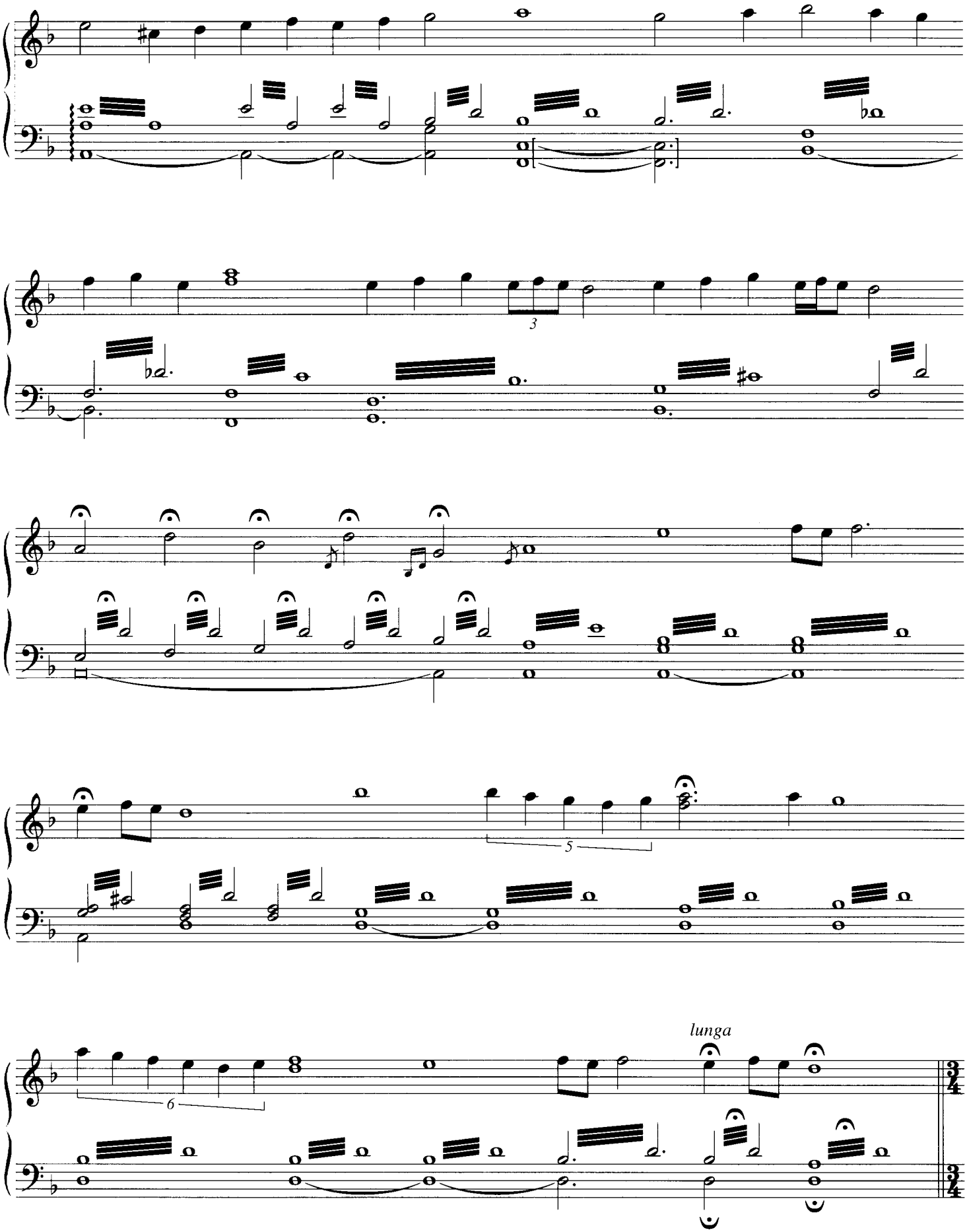
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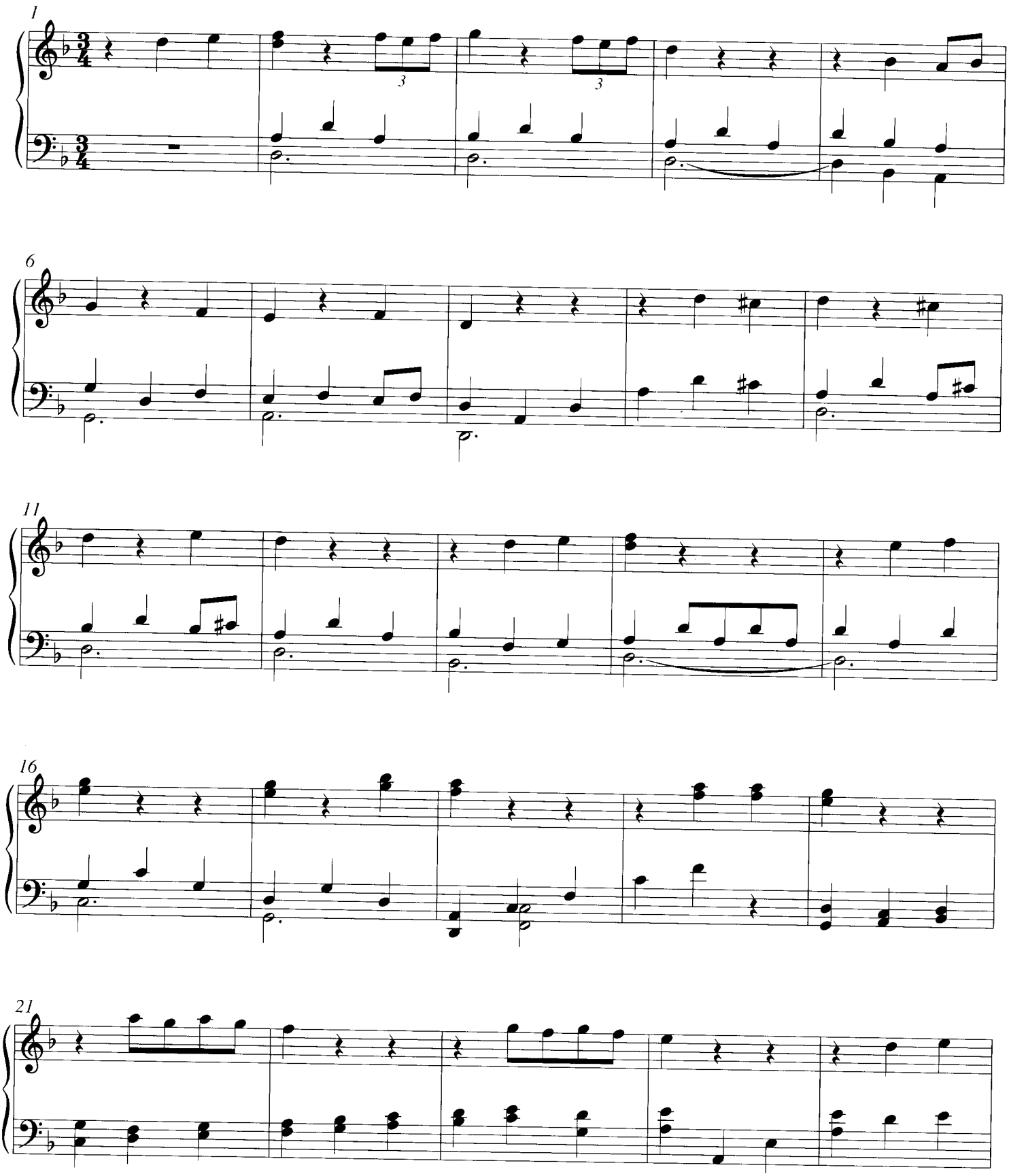
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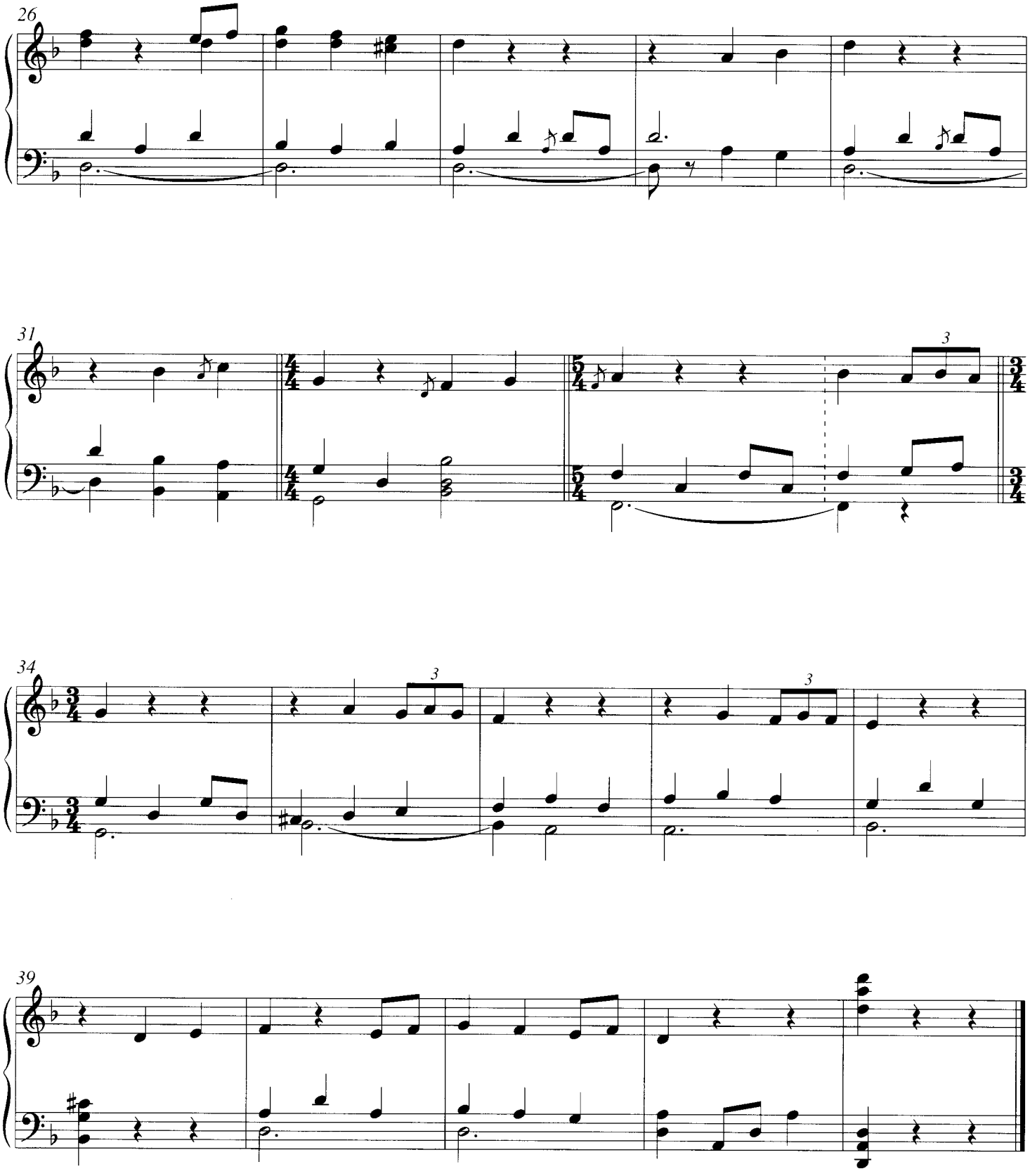
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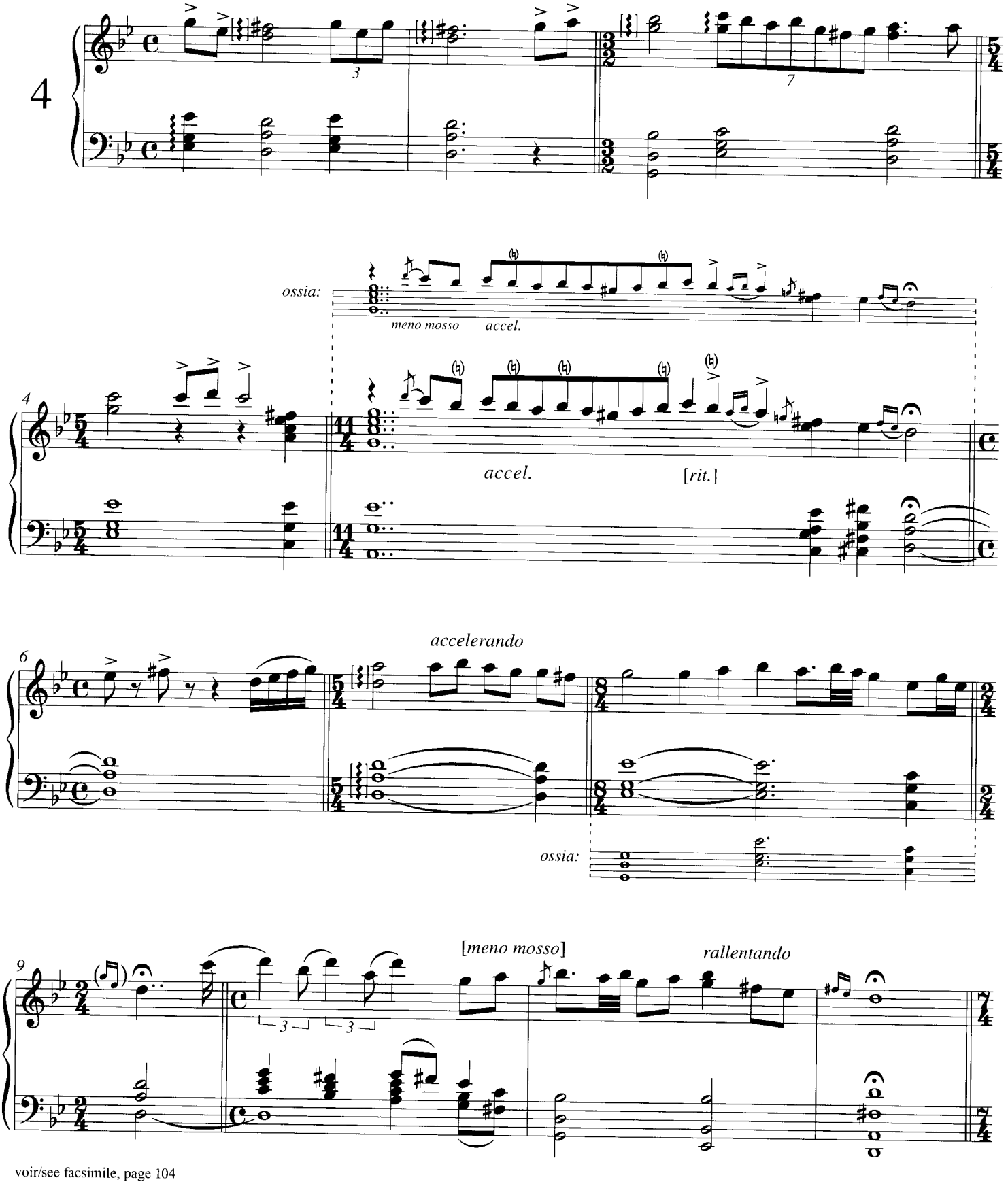
10. IX. 1925



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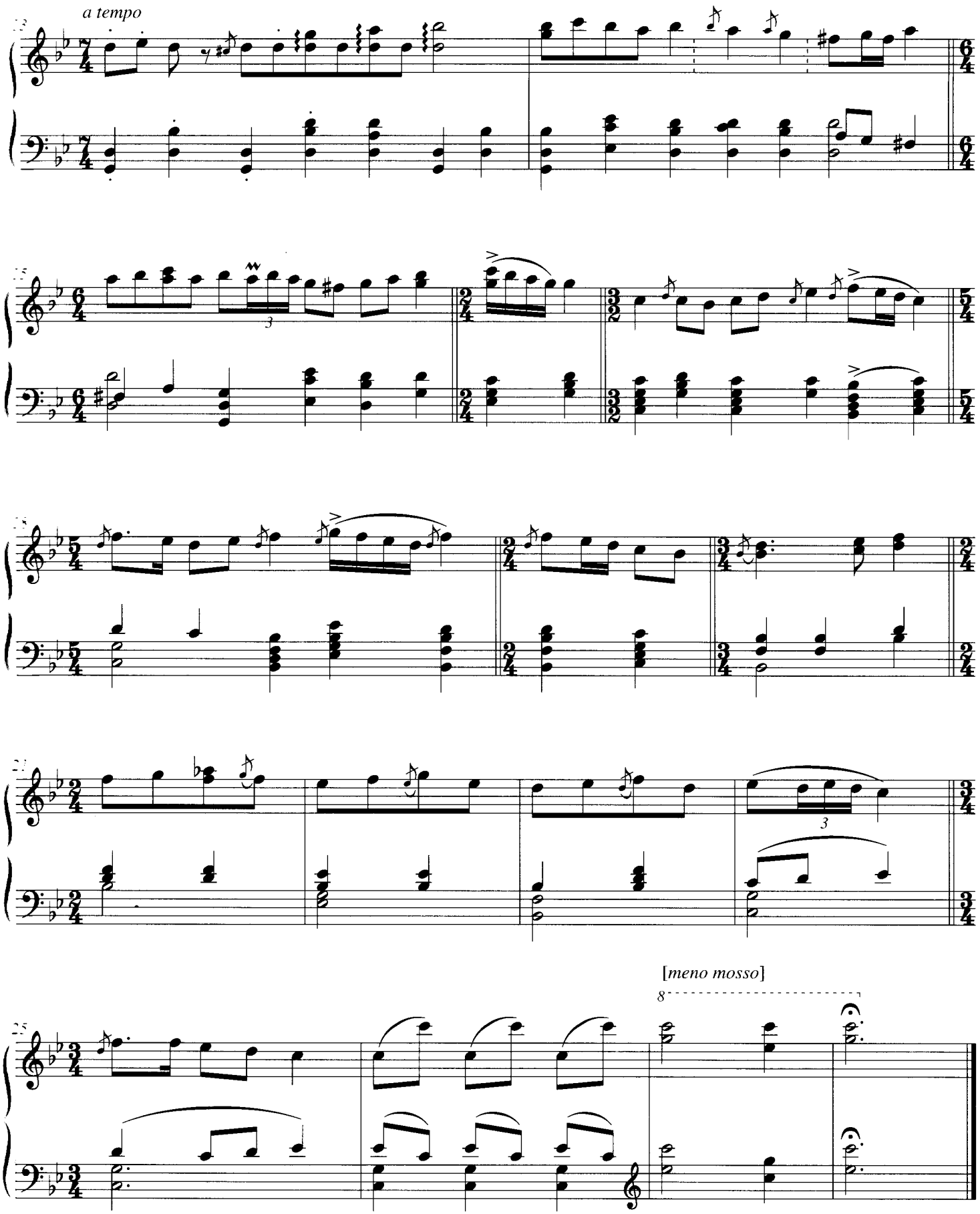
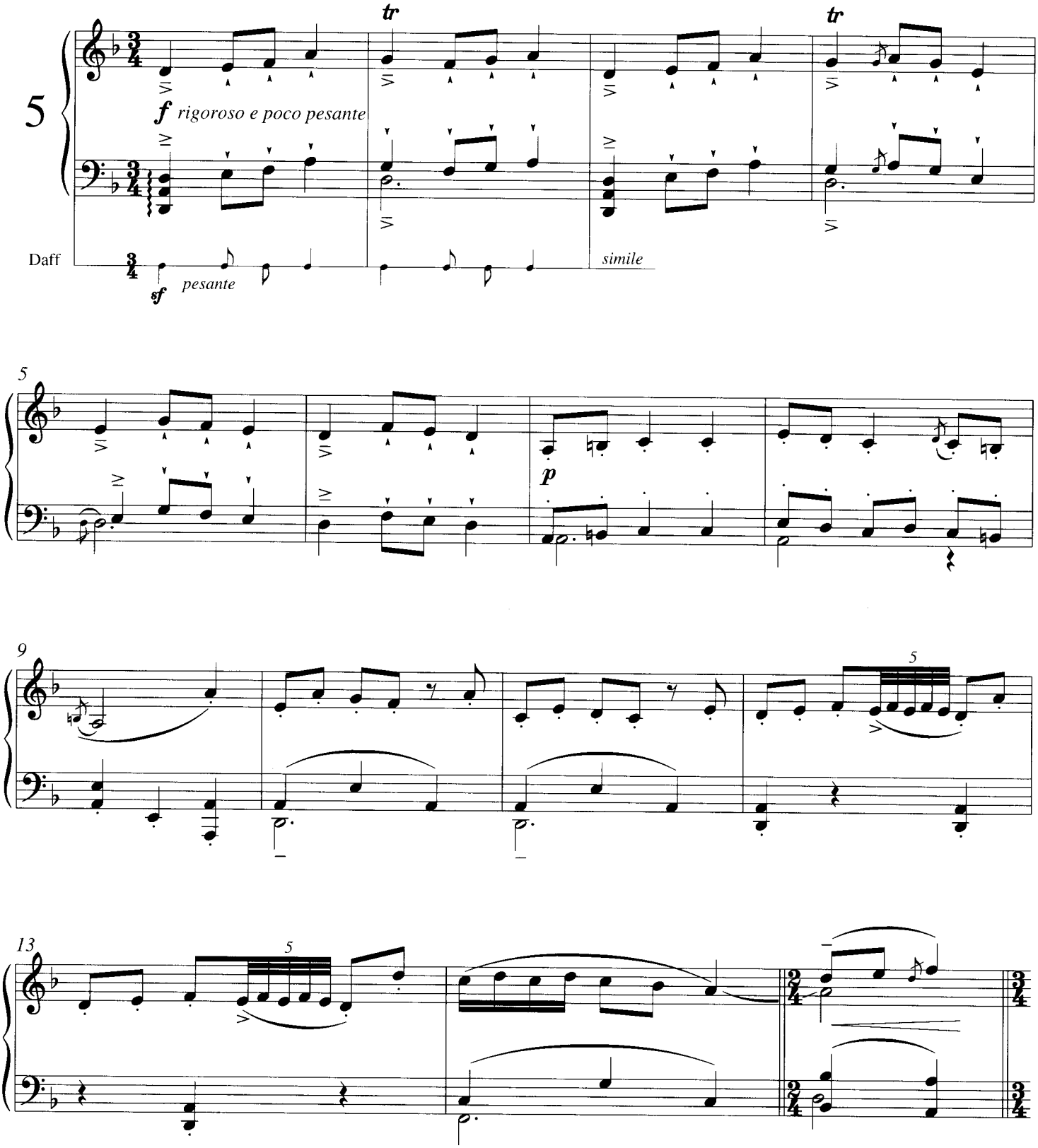

a tempo
[meno mosso]

Dervish Dance · Danse derviche

Allegro ma non troppo ♩ = 132–138

2. VI. 1926



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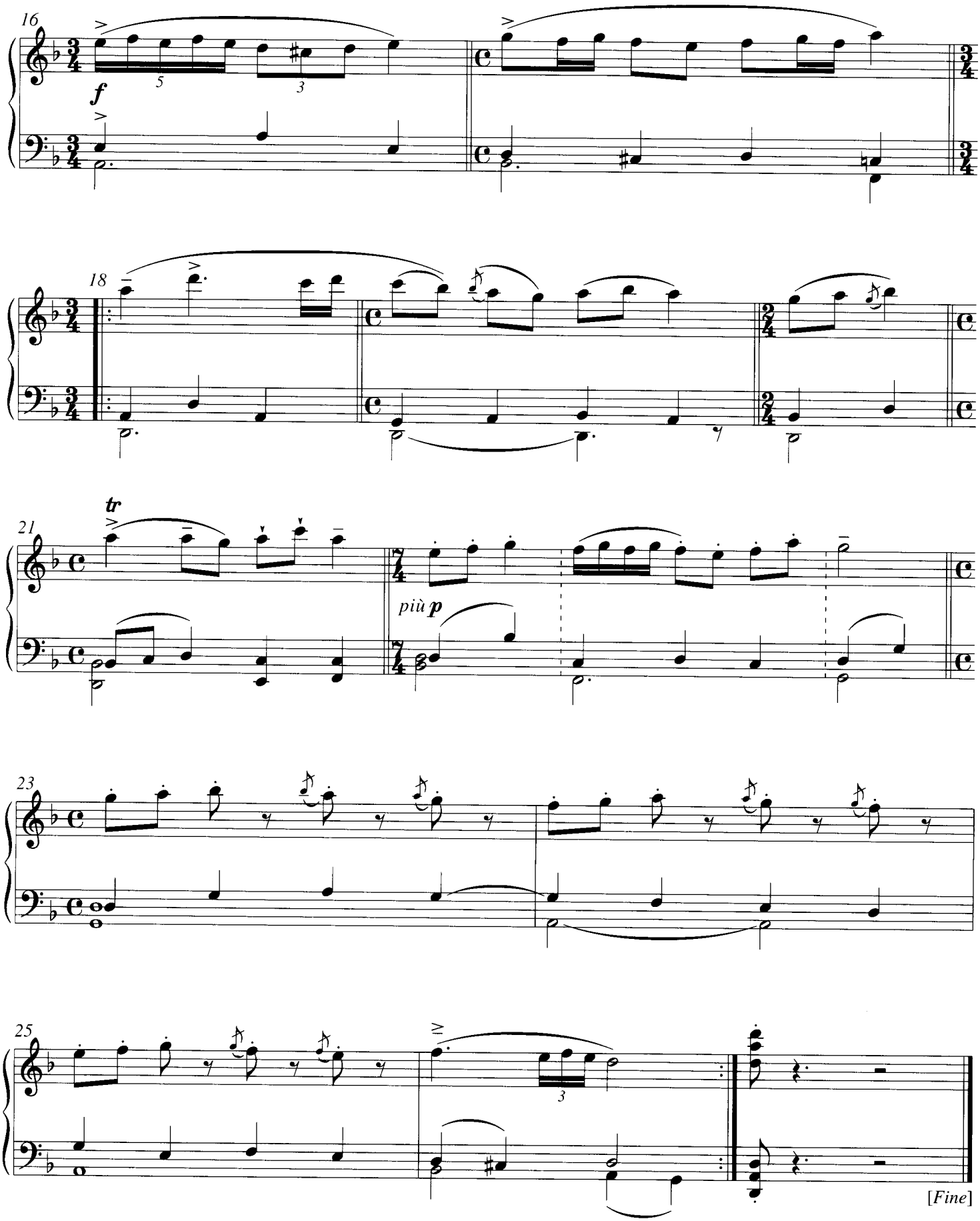
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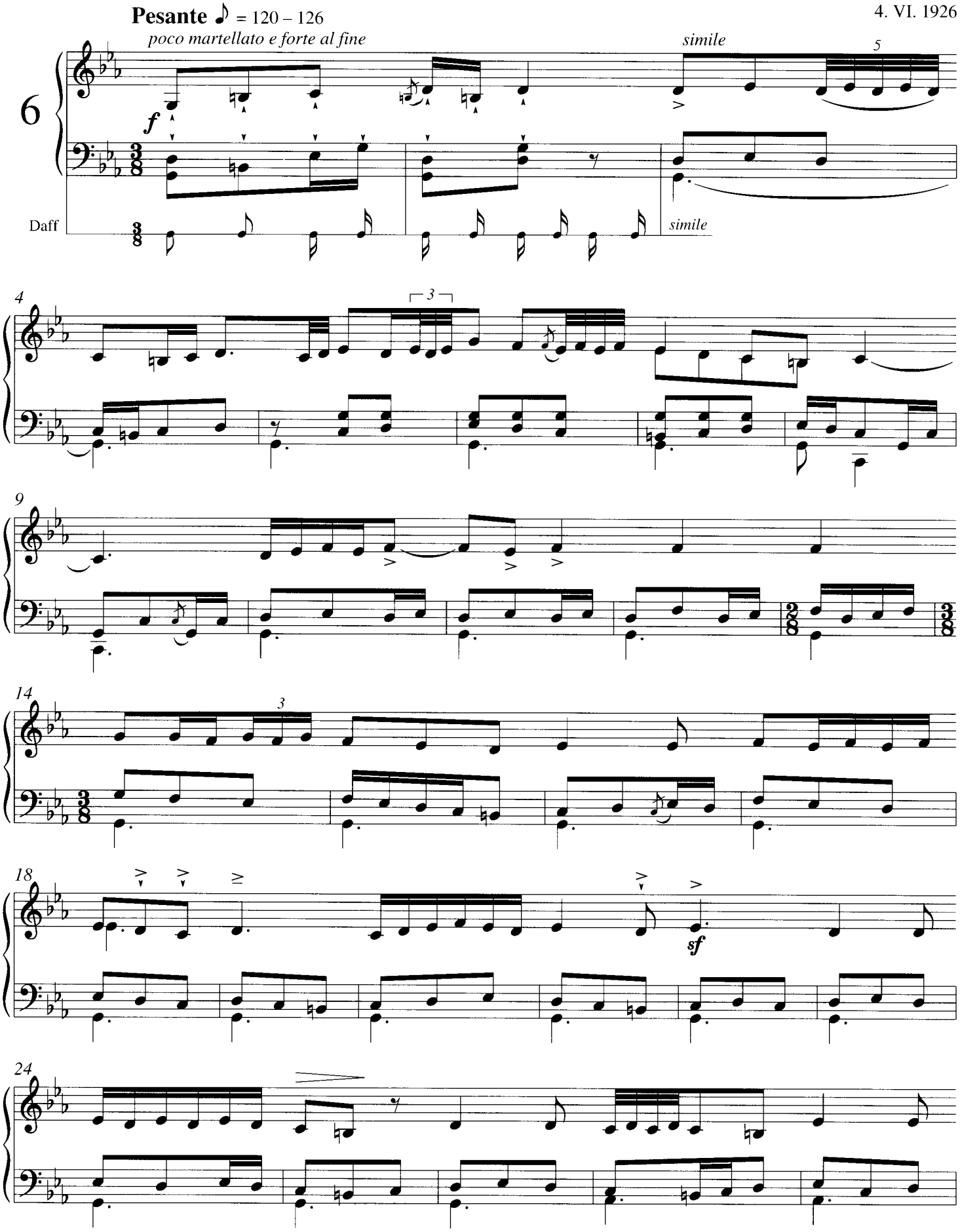
[Fine]

Persian Dervish · Derviche persan

4. VI. 1926



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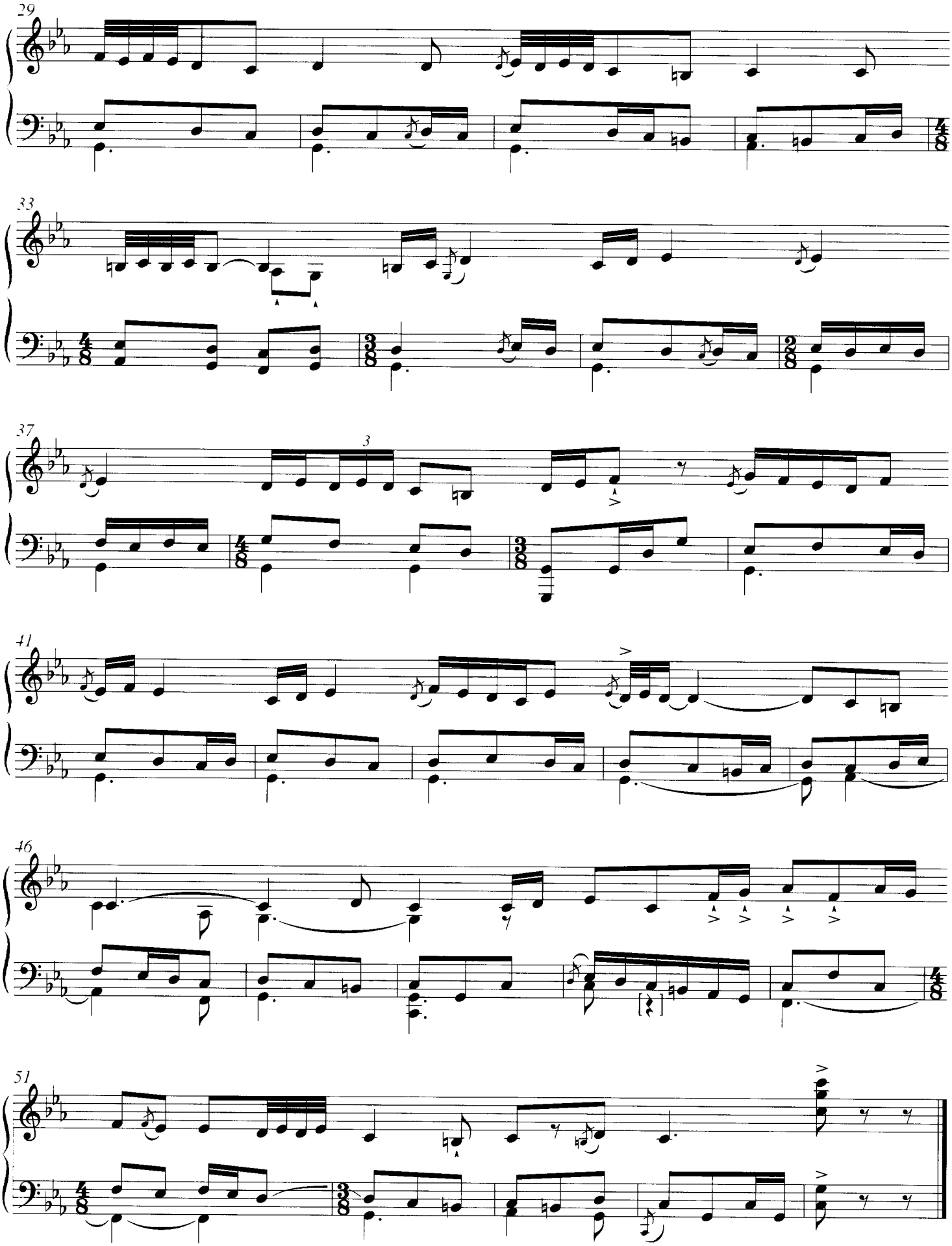

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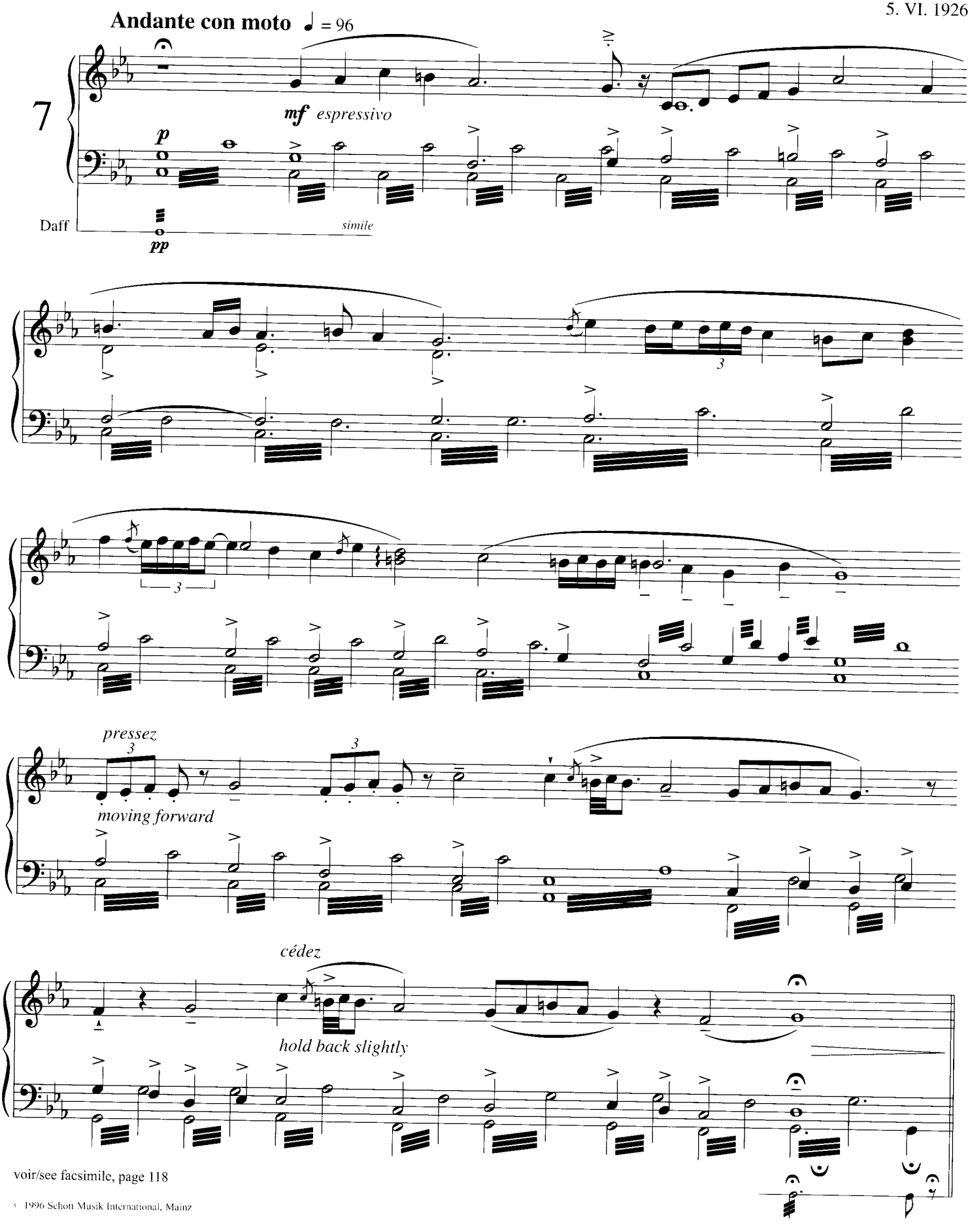
Dervish Chant and Dance · Chant et danse (derviche)

5. VI. 1926



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Allegro con moto ♩ = 138

mf *rigoroso*

rigoroso

simile

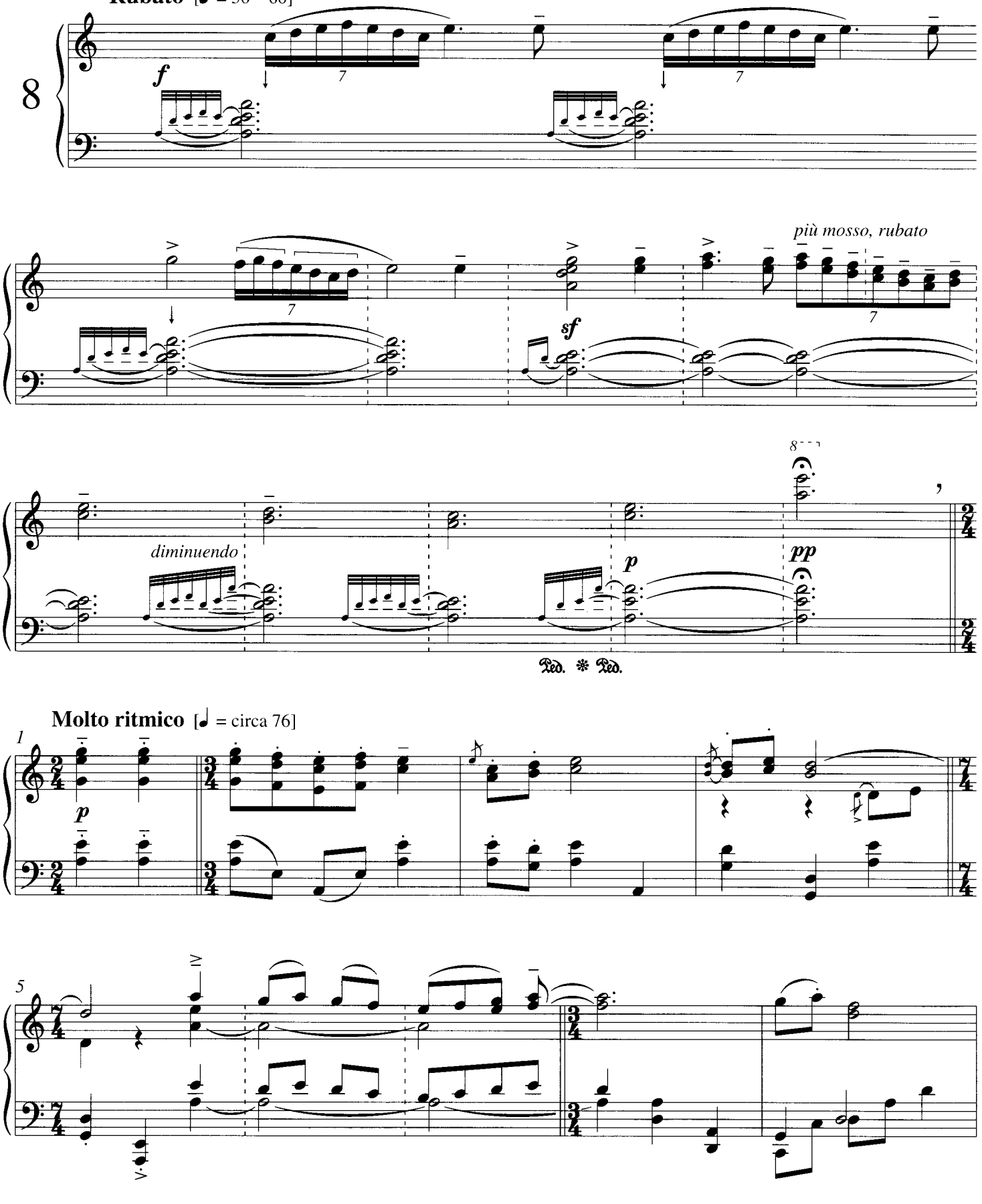
sempre marcato

poco ritardando

Sayyid Chant and Dance · Chant et danse (sayyid)

18. IV. 1927

Rubato [♩ = 50 – 60]



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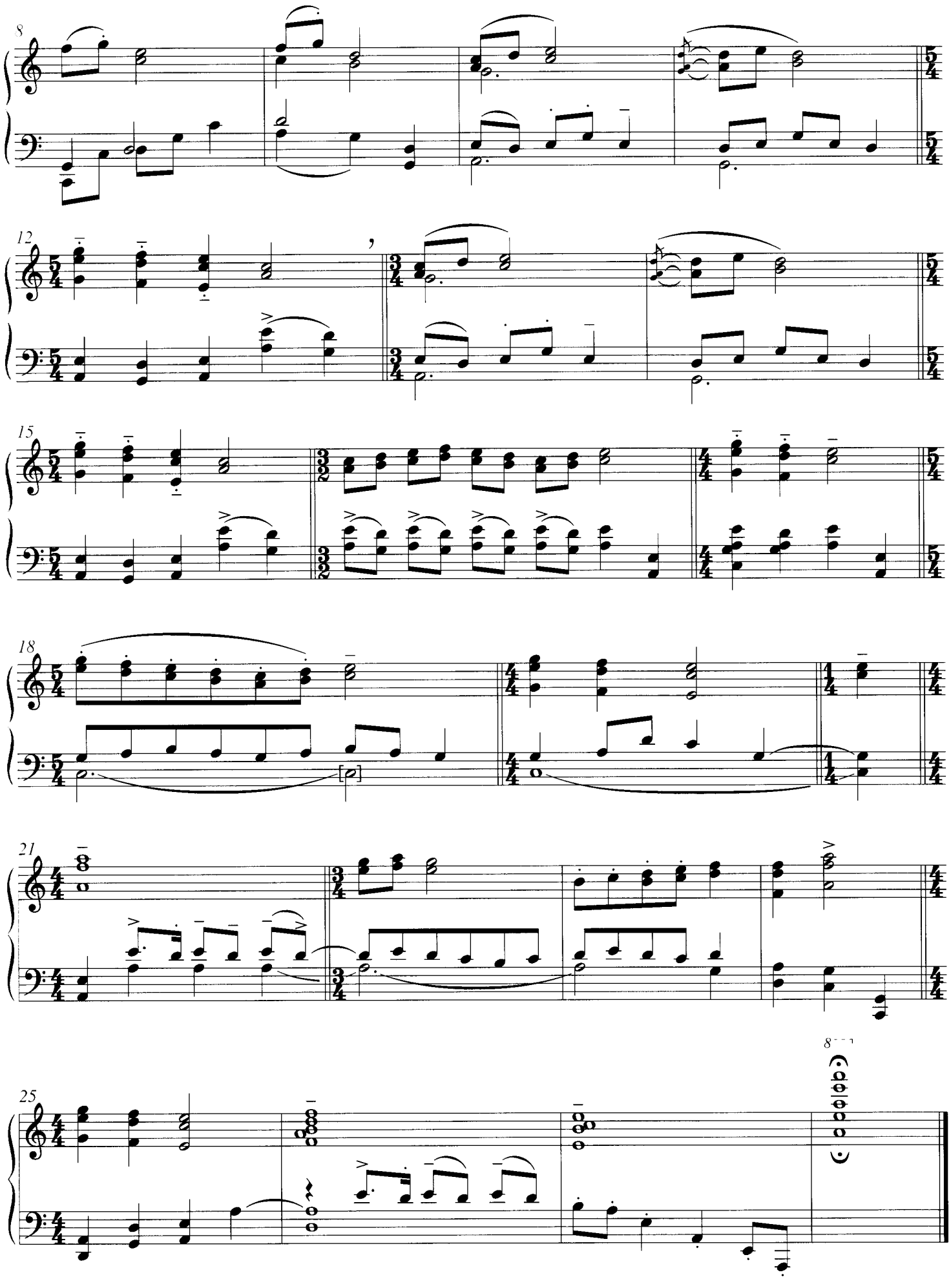
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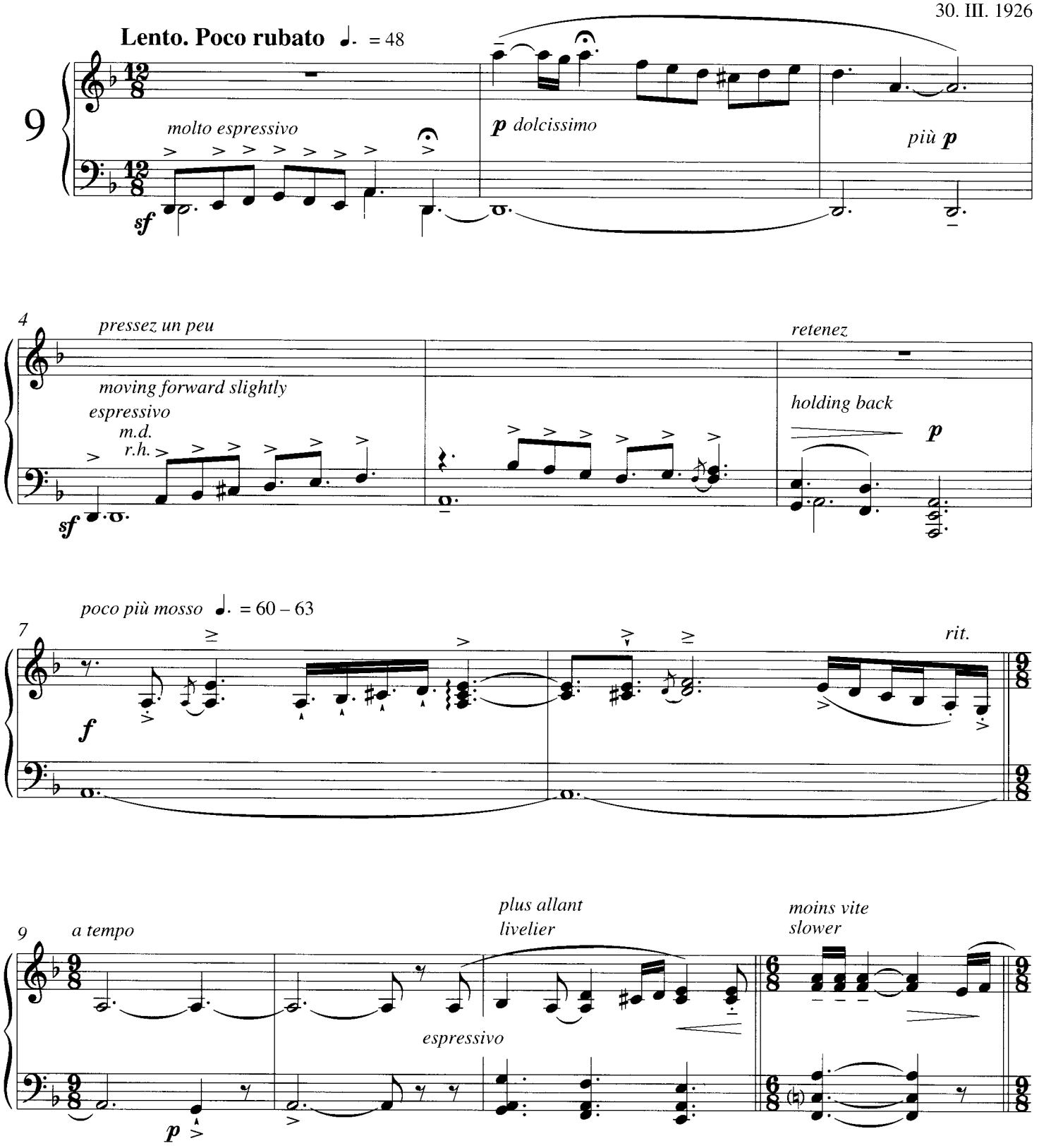
Sayyid Chant and Dance · Chant et danse (sayyid)

30. III. 1926



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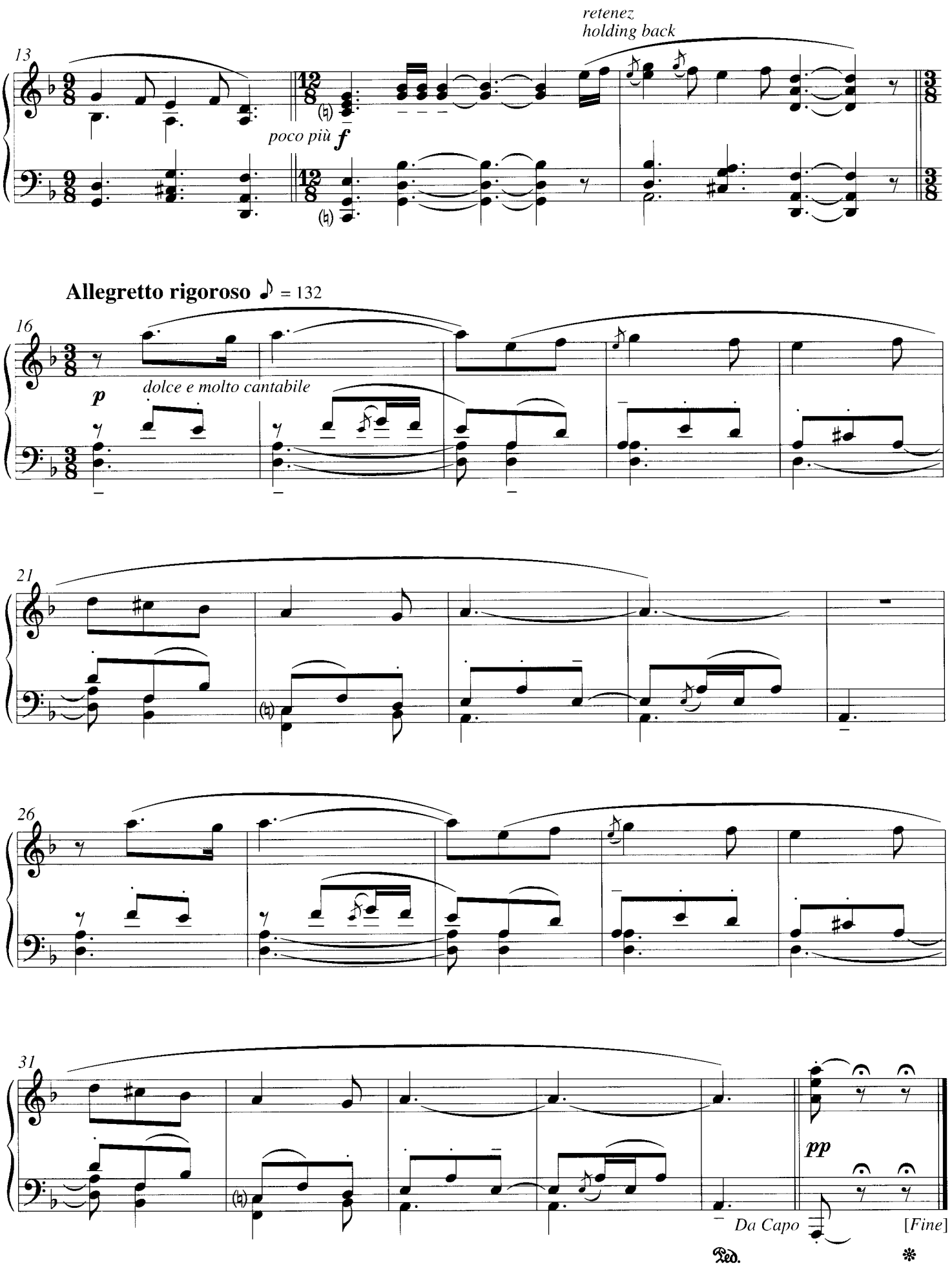
retenez
holding back
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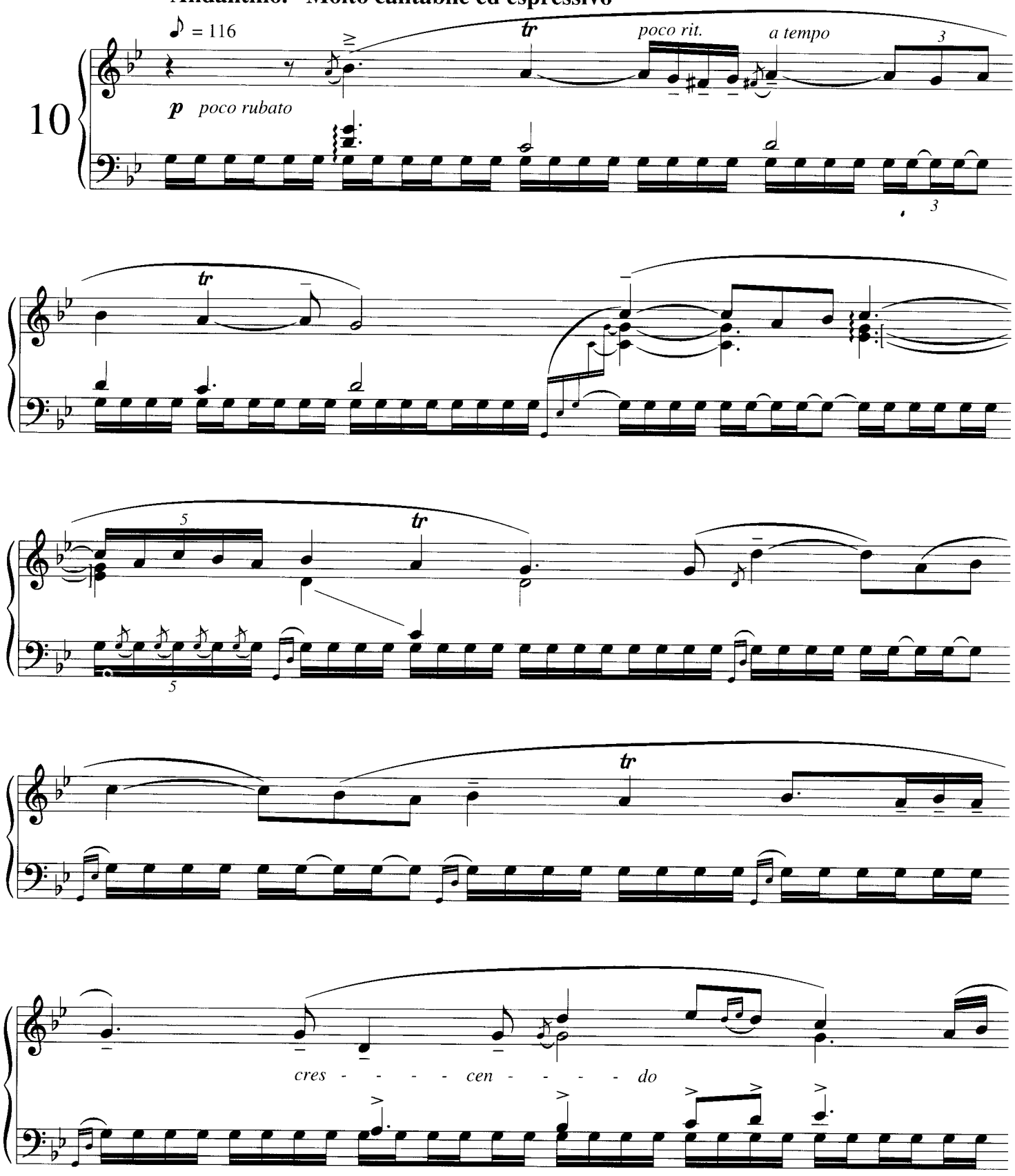
poco più f
Allegretto rigoroso ♪ = 132
16
p
dolce e molto cantabile
21
26
31
pp
Da Capo
[Fine]
Ped.
*

Sayyid Chant and Dance · Chant et danse (sayyid)

Andantino. Molto cantabile ed espressivo 3. IV. 1926



voir/see facsimile, page 44

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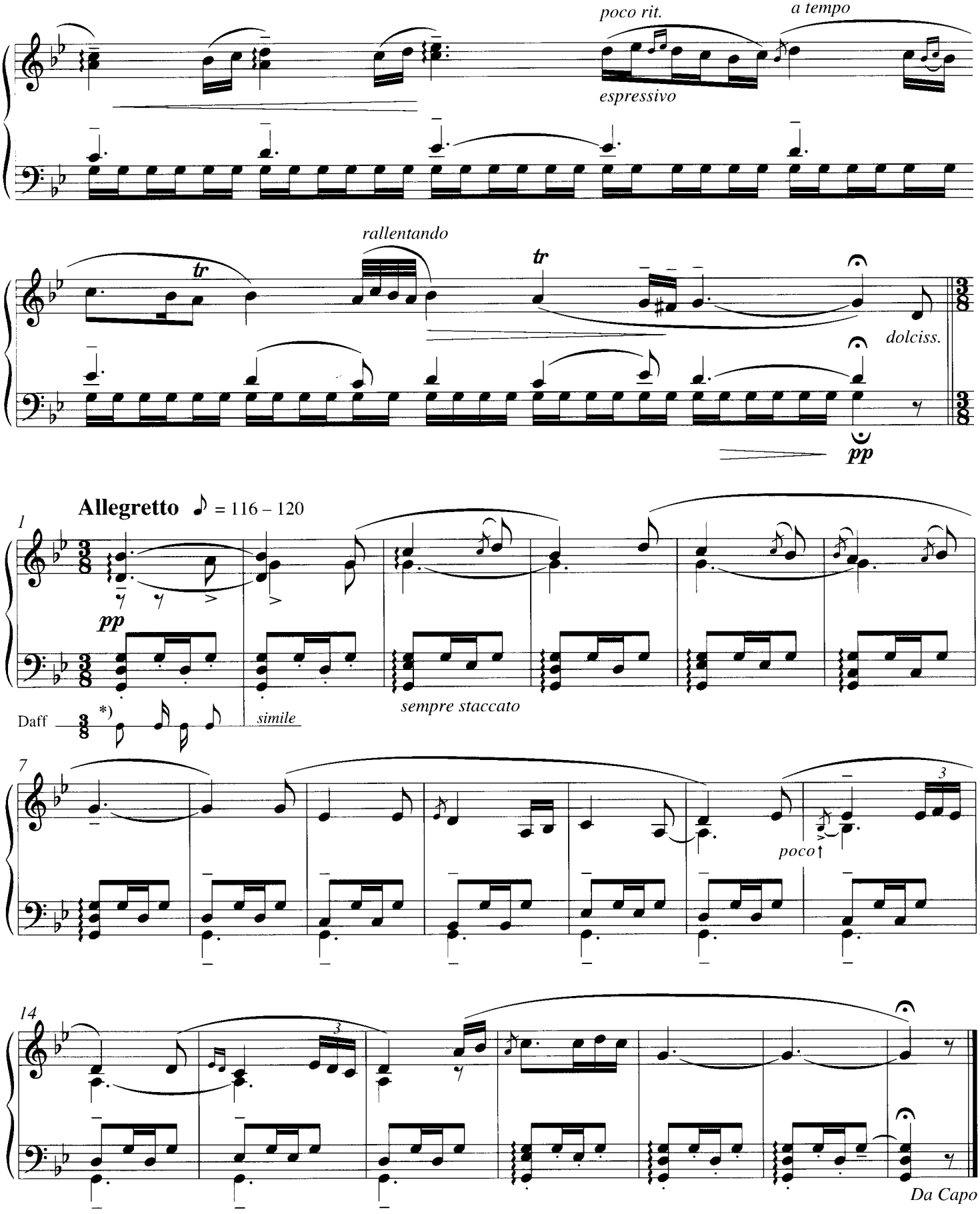
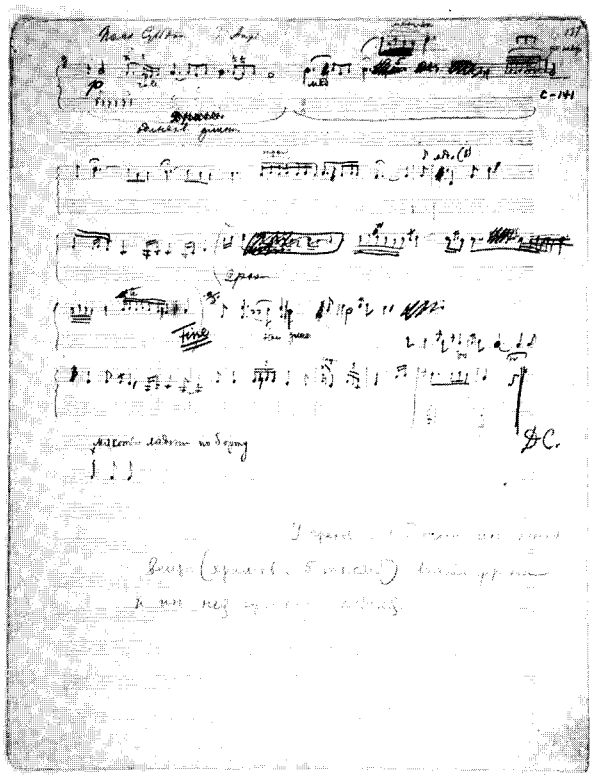
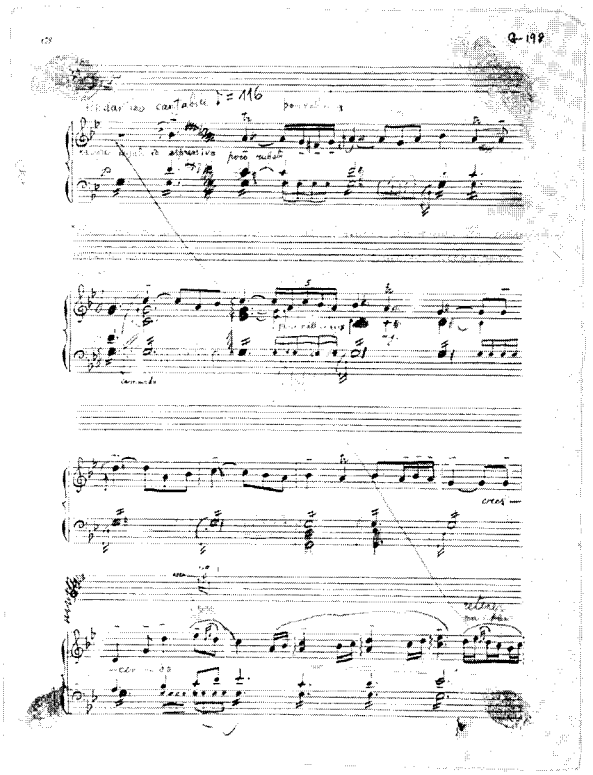
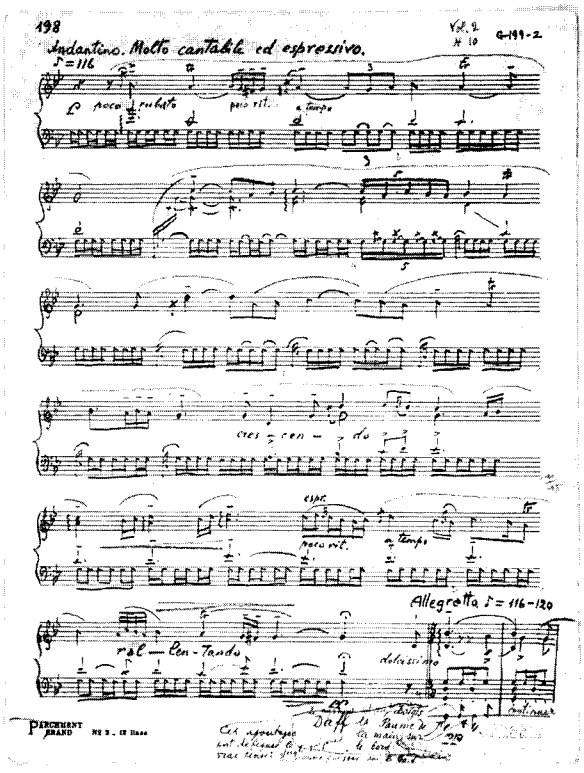
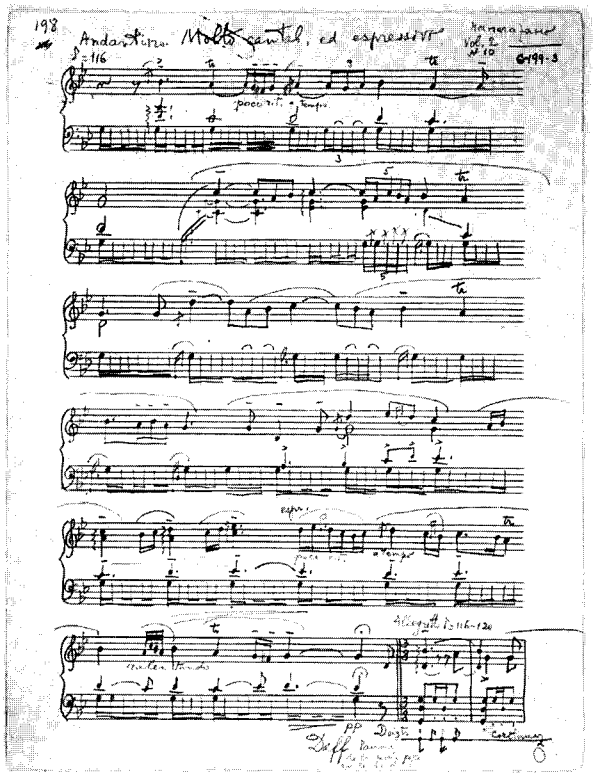


*) **T de H:** Les notes avec les tiges au dessus se frappent avec les doigts sur la peau du *daff*; les notes avec les tiges en dessous se frappent avec la paume sur le bord du *daff*.
The notes with stems up to be played by the fingers on the head of the drum; the notes with stems down by the palm on the rim.



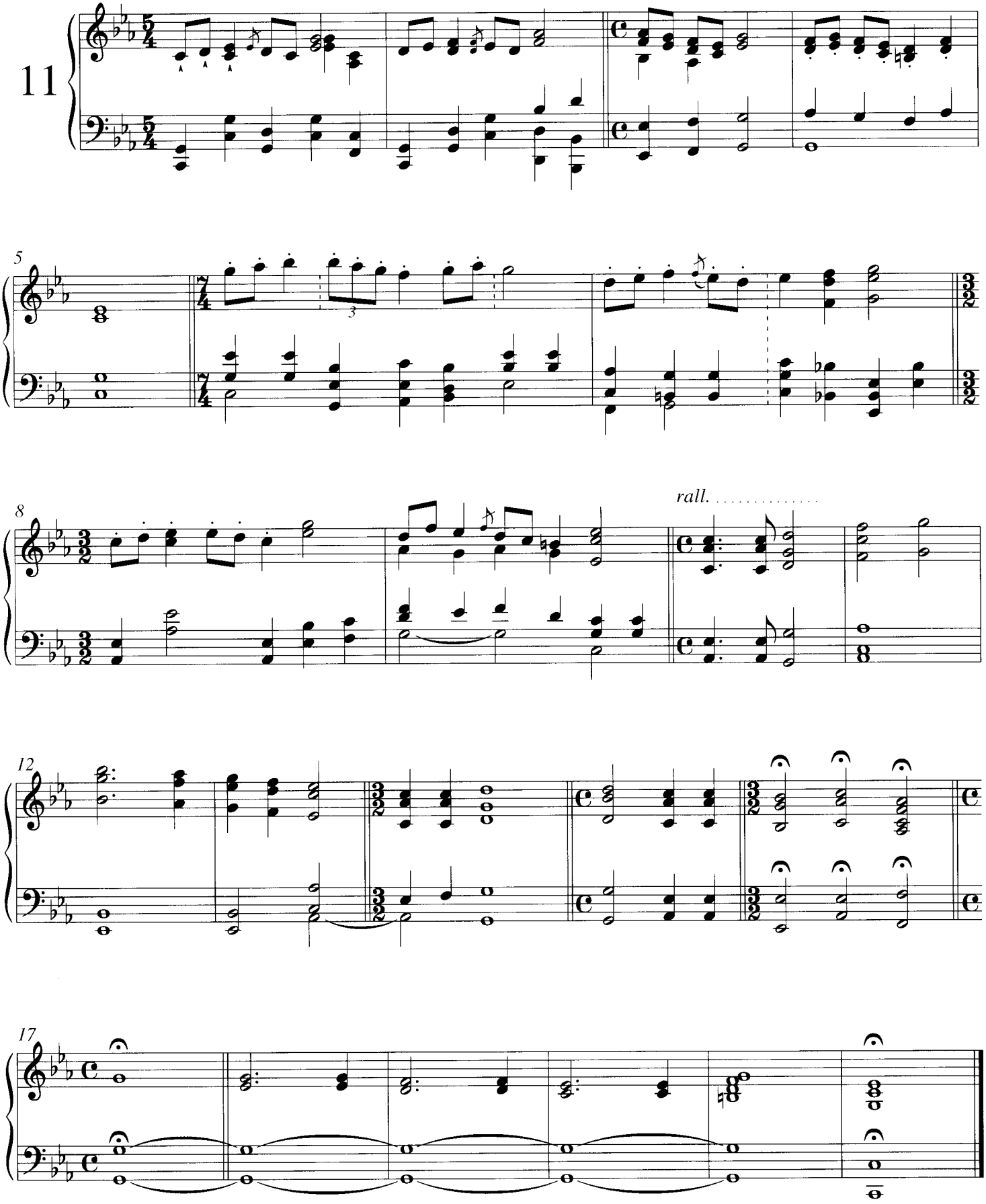






Original melody, two rough drafts, and final manuscript for No. 10 /
Mélodie originale, deux brouillons, et manuscrit final pour N° 10 (page 42)

13. X. 1926



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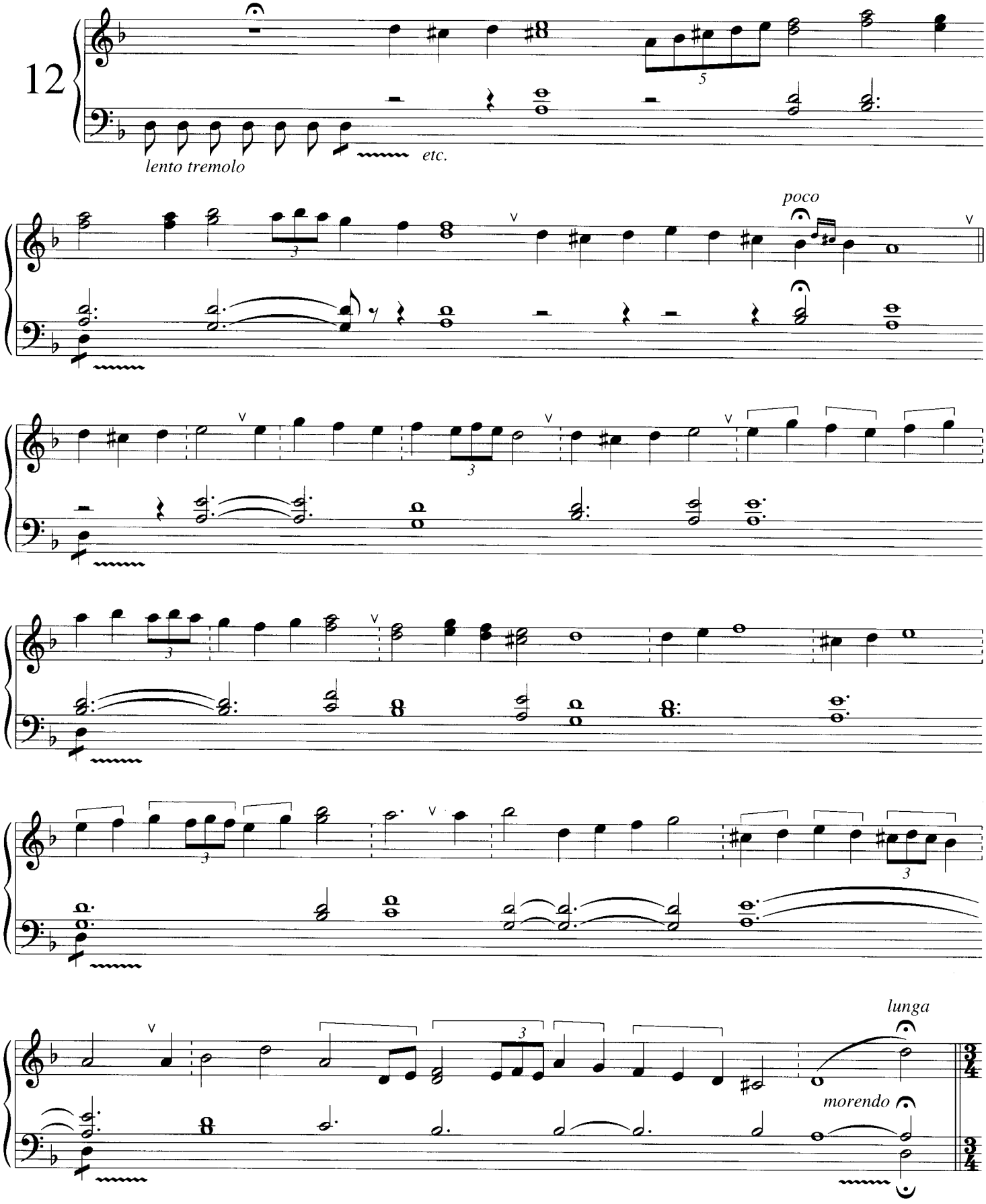
Sayyid Chant and Dance · Chant et danse (sayyid)

Librement [♩ = 106 – 116]

20. II. 1927



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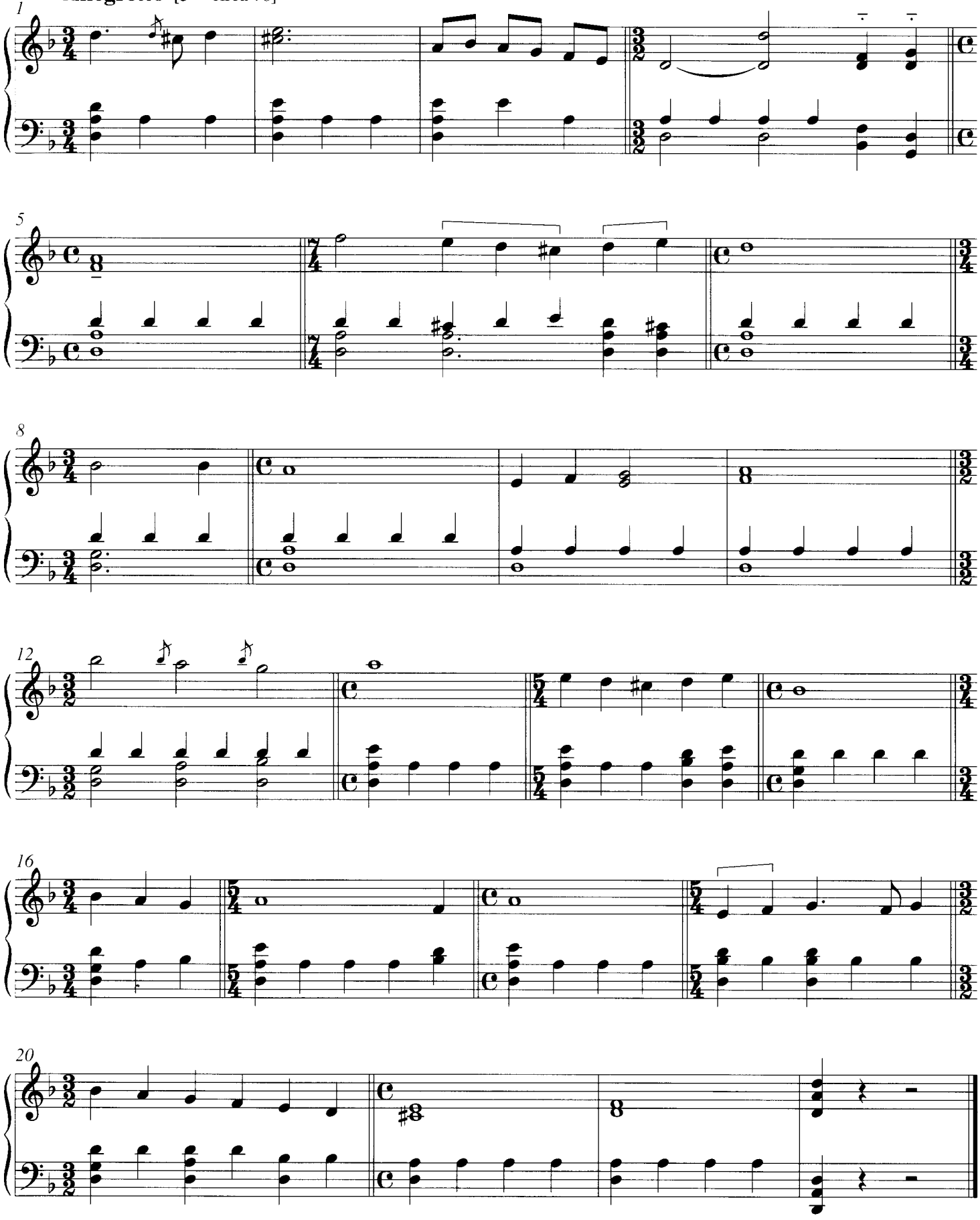
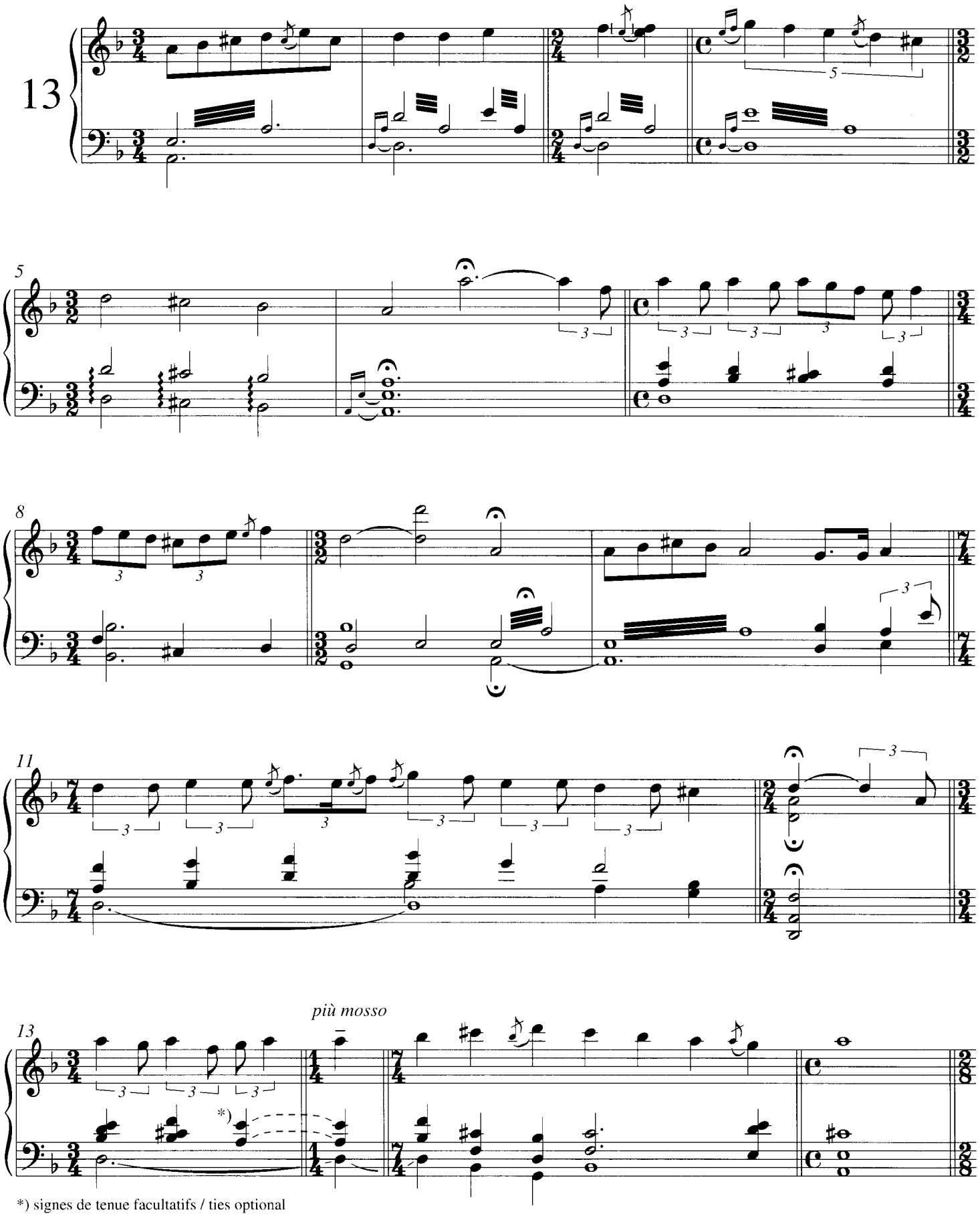
Allegretto [♩ = circa 76]



29. IX. 1925



*) signes de tenue facultatifs / ties optional

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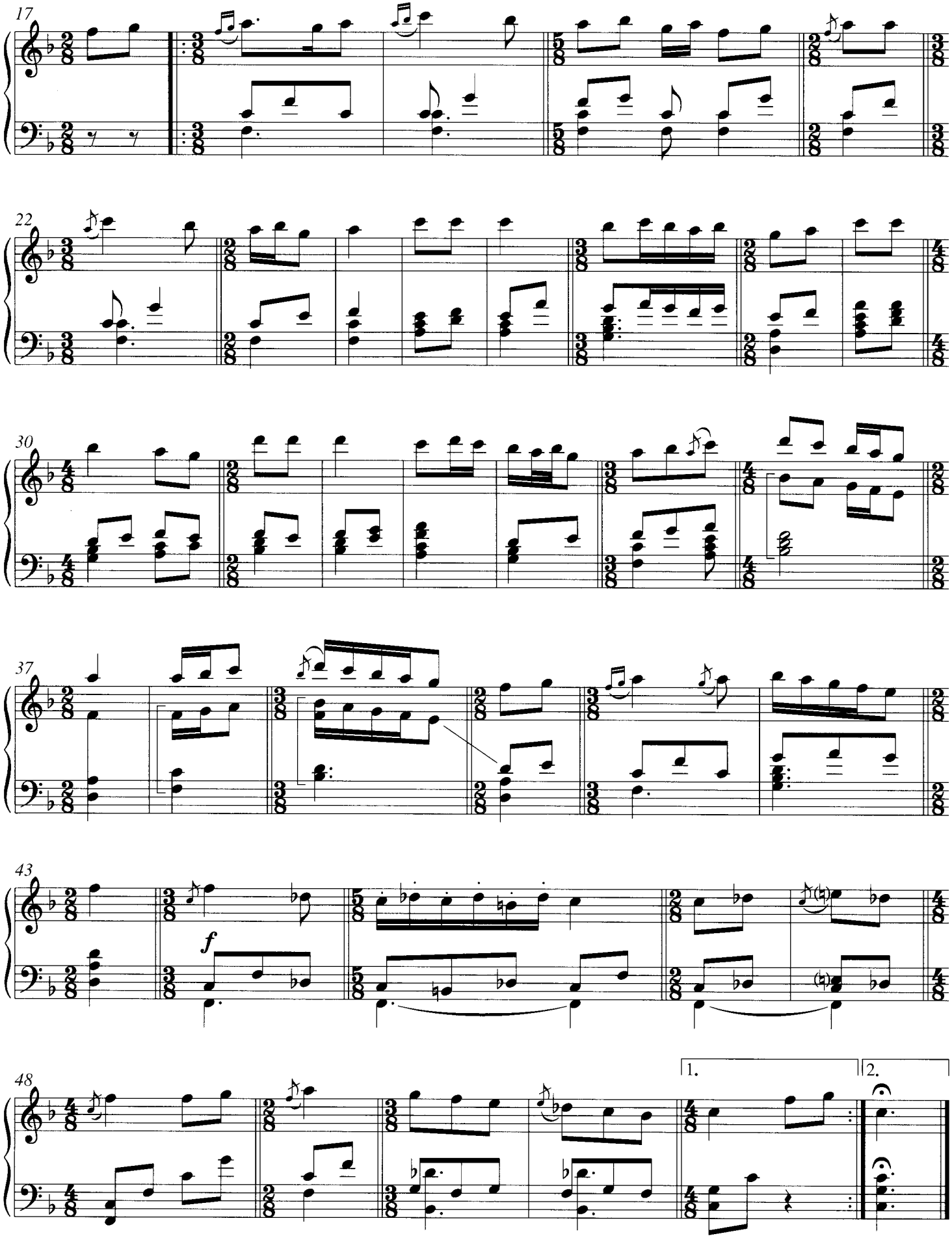
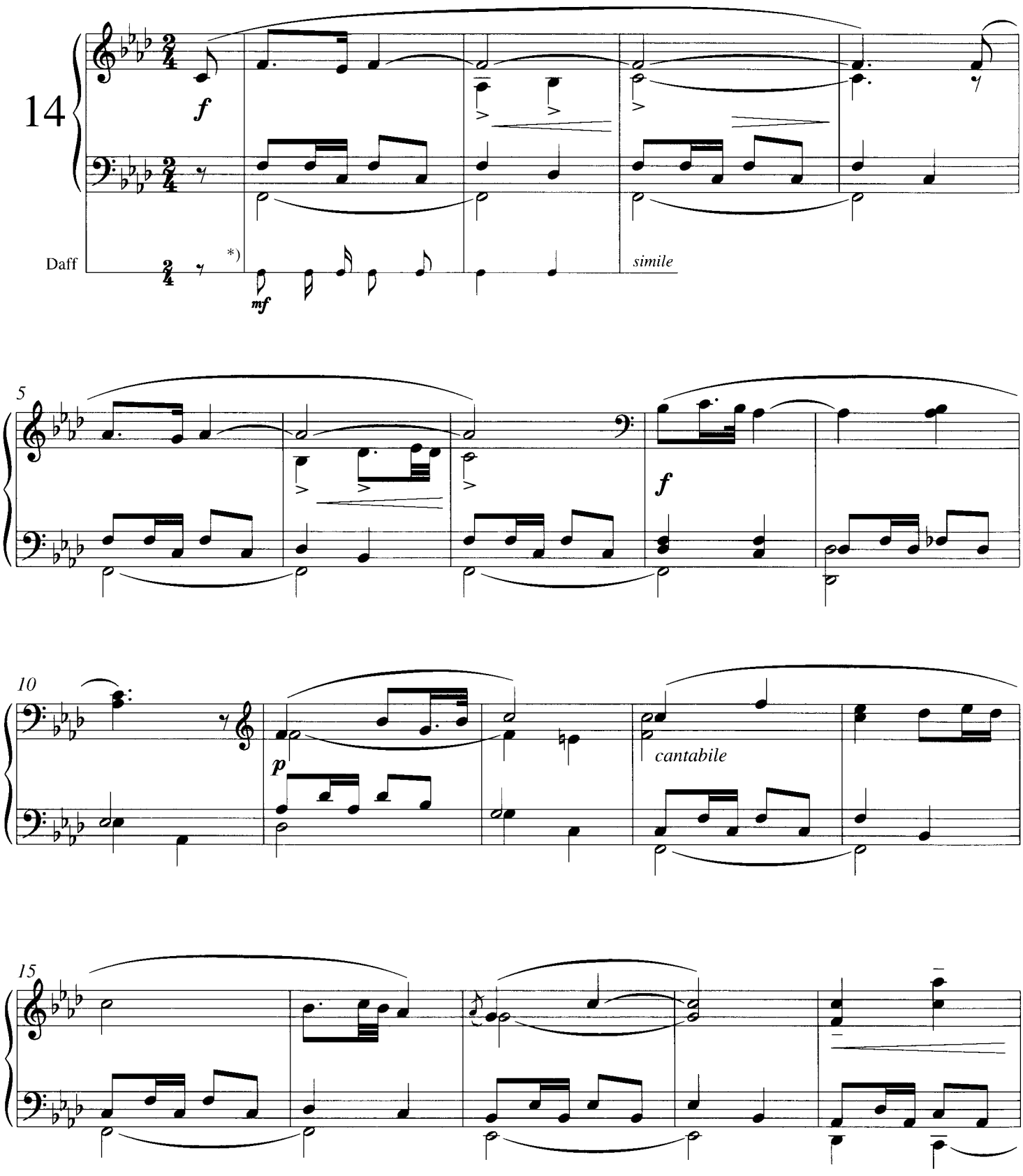

17
22
30
37
43
f
48
1.
2.

Dervish Dance · Danse derviche

Andante con moto. Poco marciale ♩ = 96

23. V. 1926



*) Les tiges en dessous de la ligne, avec la paume; les tiges au dessus de la ligne, avec les doigts.
Play notes with stems down with the palm; notes with stems up, with the fingers.

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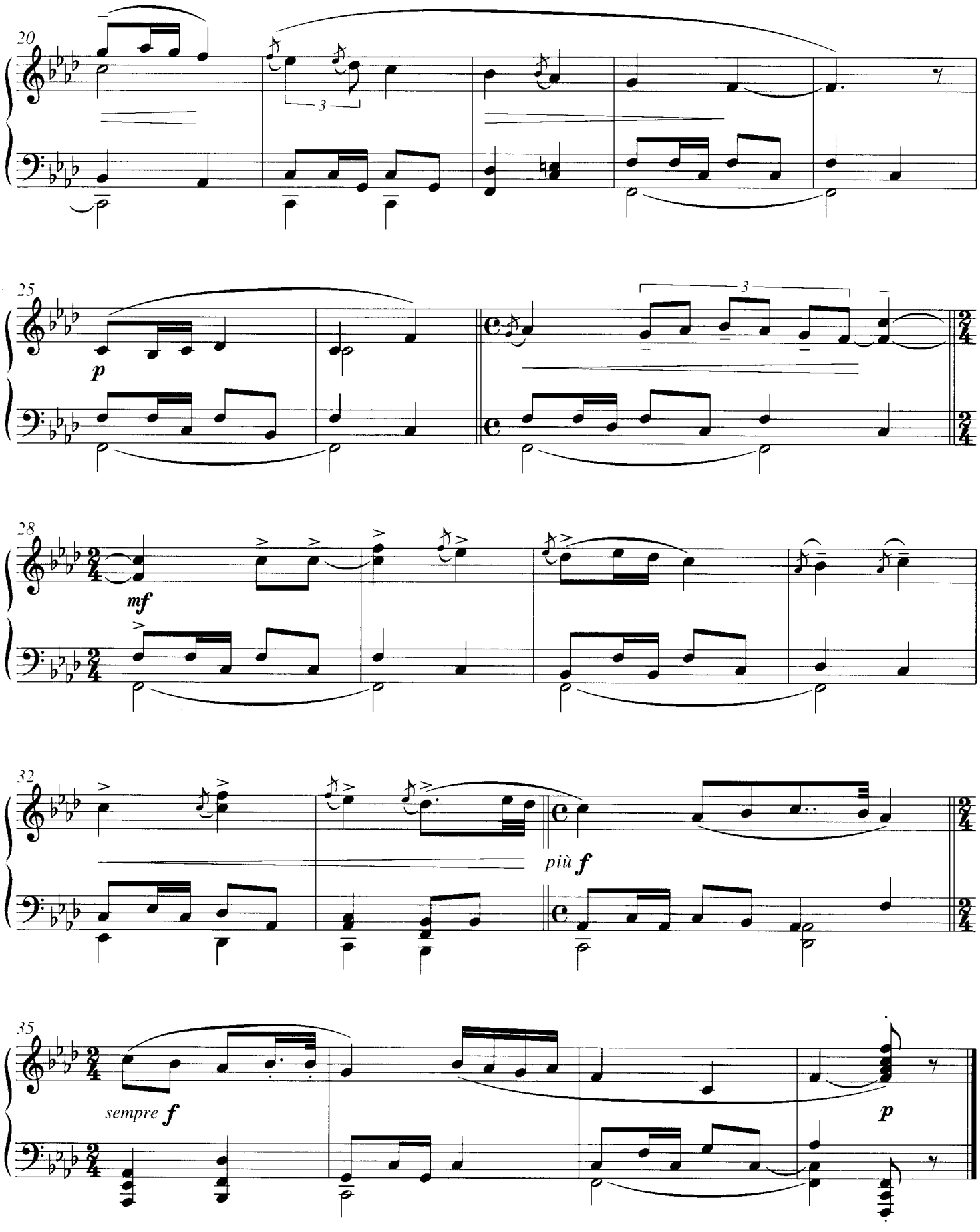
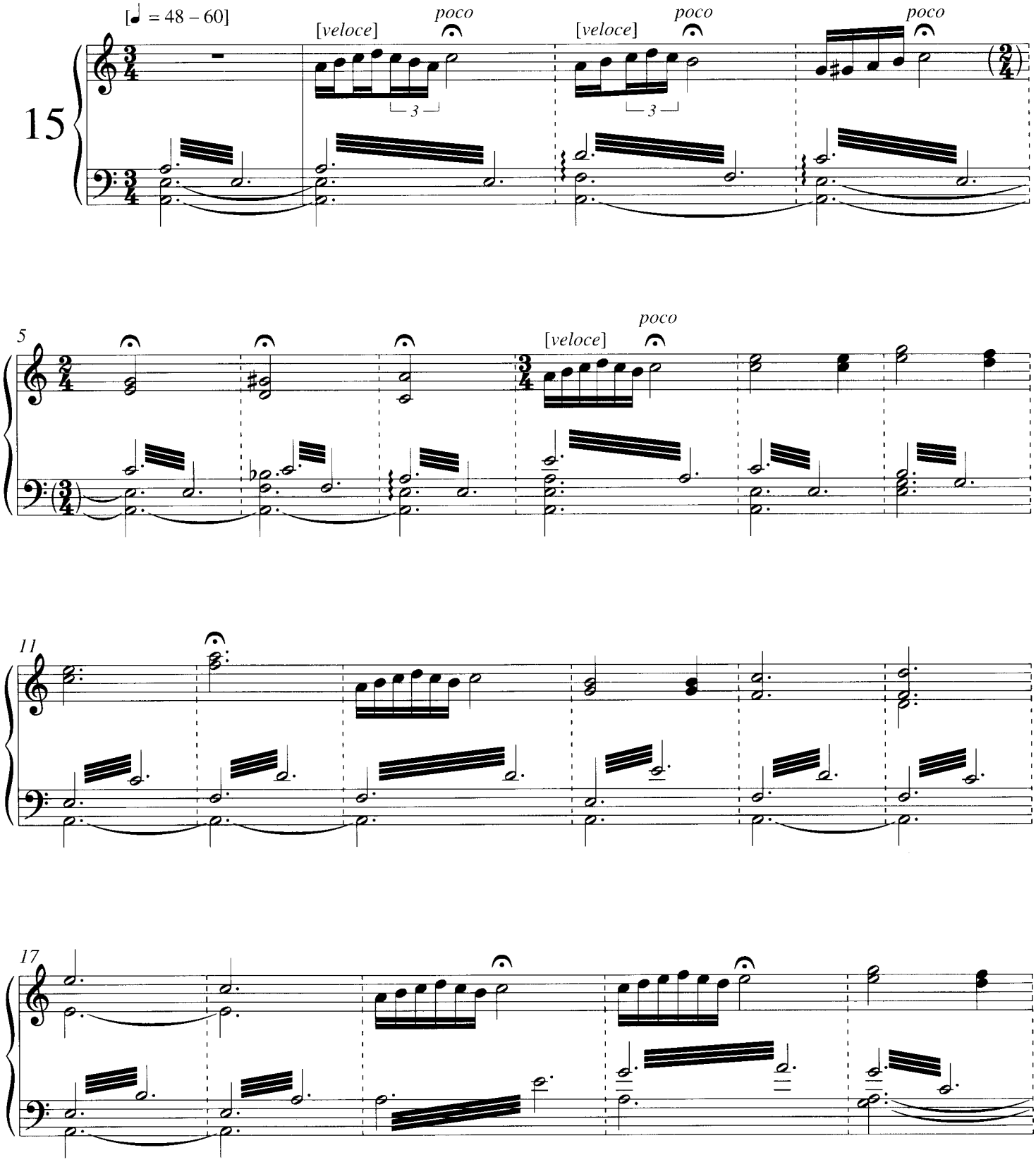

20
3
25
p
3
28
mf
32
più f
35
sempre f
p

Sayyid Chant · Chant sayyid

23. I. 1927



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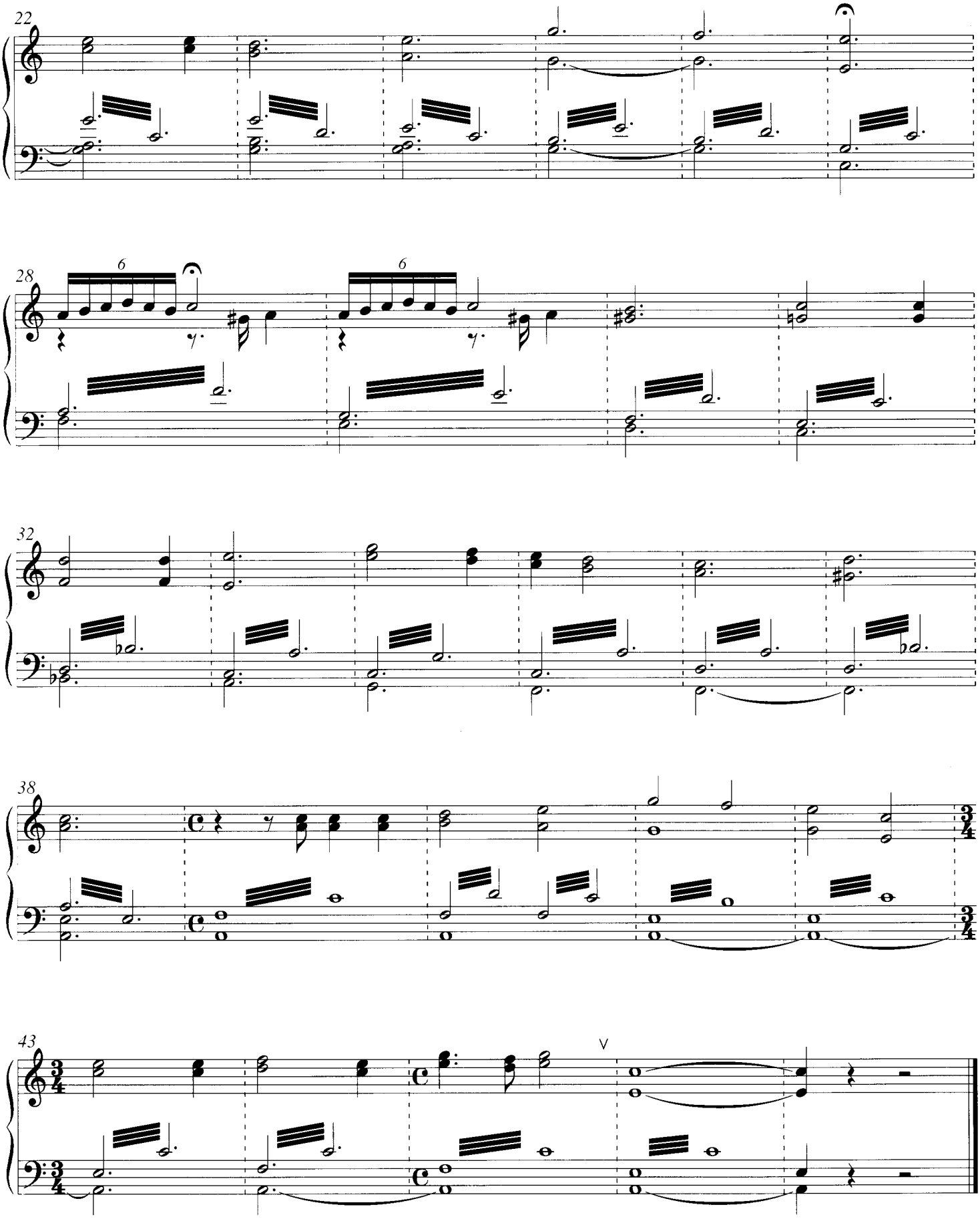
22
28
6
6
32
38
43
V