Dream Dance

for Solo Piano

§

©2007

Clark Winslow Ross

Dream Dance (2007)

Clark Winslow Ross

Contact: clark@mun.ca (E-mail) http://www.ClarkRoss.ca

Some composition ideas never develop into much more than a few bars of music, and such was the case for many years with the opening to **Dream Dance**. I believe I started it around 1997, and, try as I might, I could not seem to find anything satisfactory to take it much beyond the 30-second mark, the point where it takes an unexpected (to me, at least) foray into a minimalist feel. I think the basic problem was that I didn't understand why a piece would open the way and then suddenly decide it's a minimalist piece. Where's the logic in that?

In the summer of 2007 I had a sudden attack of stubbornness and decided to get into a Jacobean wrestling match with the opening, intending to finish it no matter what (within reason, of course; I didn't want to end up with a dislocated hip, as Jacob did); it just seemed a shame to waste what seemed to me like a good opening idea for a piece, and I thought I could perhaps turn it into a short-ish (perhaps 3 minutes?) work, and be done with it.

As music often does, I was surprised at how difficult it was to take this in a direction with which I could be satisfied, and I ended up struggling with it for about 5 months until I was finally done. The key in moving forward for me was in accepting that the three changes in mood that occur in the first 30 seconds might actually be a good thing if I were to play with the idea of a stylistic hodgepodge throughout the composition, so that is what I did. There is actually a term for this – "polystylism," which, as the title suggests, refers to the use of multiple styles or techniques of music, and it is associated with the music of Alfred Schnittke and others.

All of which still doesn't explain why it took me another 5-6 months to finish the work, but it may have been because it was a new direction for me, and countless re-writes and edits took place.

A few features that may be of interest:

– There is almost constant 16th-note motion from beginning to end, bringing to mind the invariable motor rhythms found in many baroque fast movements;

– It plays with tonality – I guess you could call it "New Tonality" – in a way that is unorthodox and often quirky. It opens in D major, for example, then suddenly jumps to an ambiguous key that may or may not be F minor (which would be a double-chromatic mediant relationship with D), then quickly moves to Db major for a bar before slipping back into F minor again, all within the first 30 seconds.

– The left hand often has to play in the middle of the right hand's notes; the hands are literally right on top of one another at times, requiring tremendous gymnastic hand choreography on the part of the pianist;

– It is extremely difficult to play, despite the simplicity of the opening;

– I mentioned that it is a stylistic hodgepodge, evoking at various times minimalism, Haydn, Bach, Gershwin, Scott Joplin (at the very end), and maybe others as well.

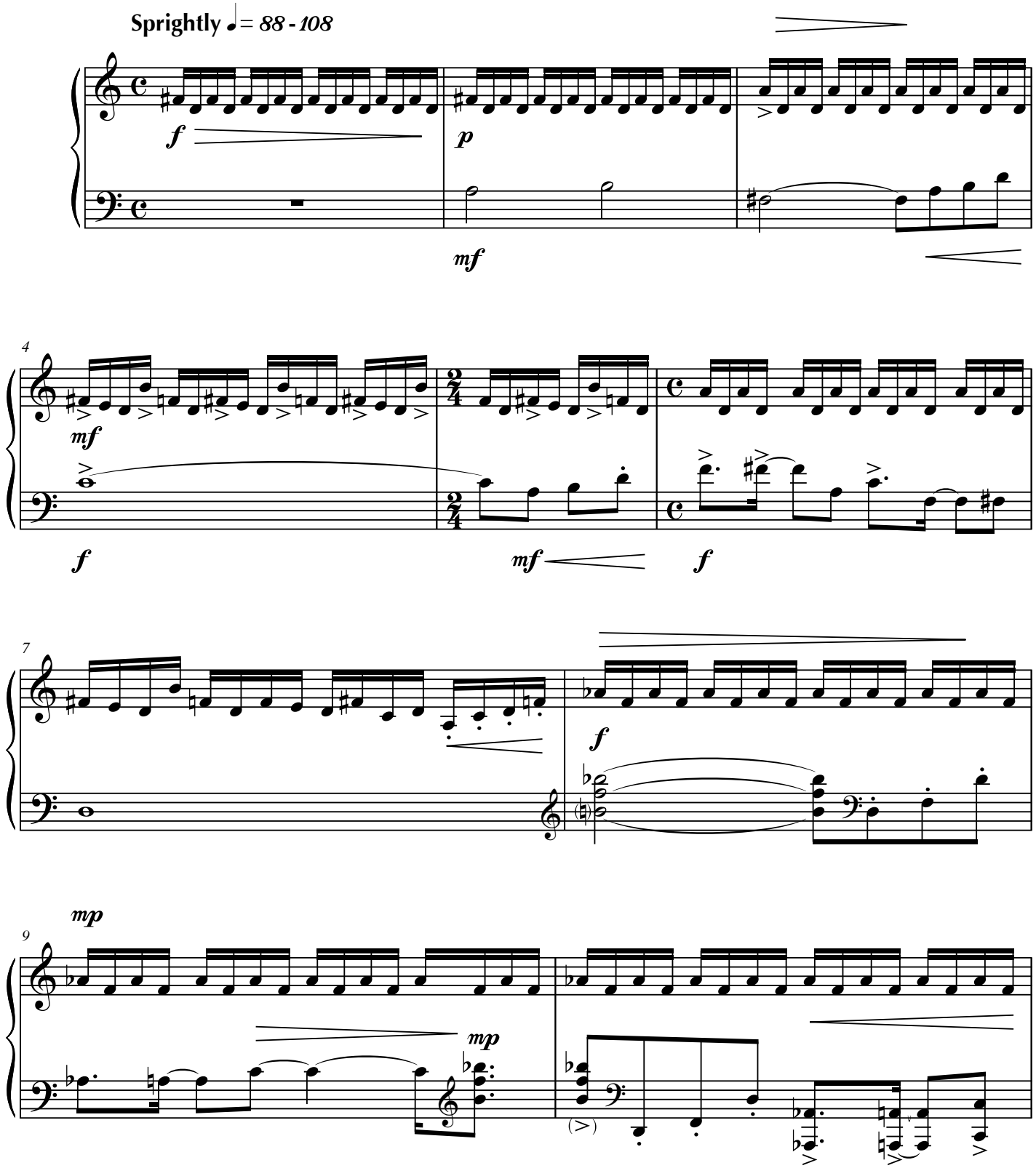
Dream Dance was premiered on February 9, 2008 during the Newfound Music Festival in St. John's, in a flawless performance by my friend and colleague, Kristina Szutor.

Clark Winslow Ross's compositions have been performed in England, Ireland, the United States, and across Canada by some of Canada's finest musicians, ensembles, and orchestras. He was Composer-in-Residence at Ireland's Waterford New Music Week in 2003, and has won Young Composer's Awards in national competitions by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also received over 20 commission grants from various funding agencies, including the Canada Council, the CBC, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council. Clark is the founder and Artistic Director of the Newfound Music Festival, held every February in St. John's, and was a founding member and later President of Continuum, the Toronto-based new-music group. He serves on the national executive of both the Canadian League of Composers and the Canadian Music Centre.

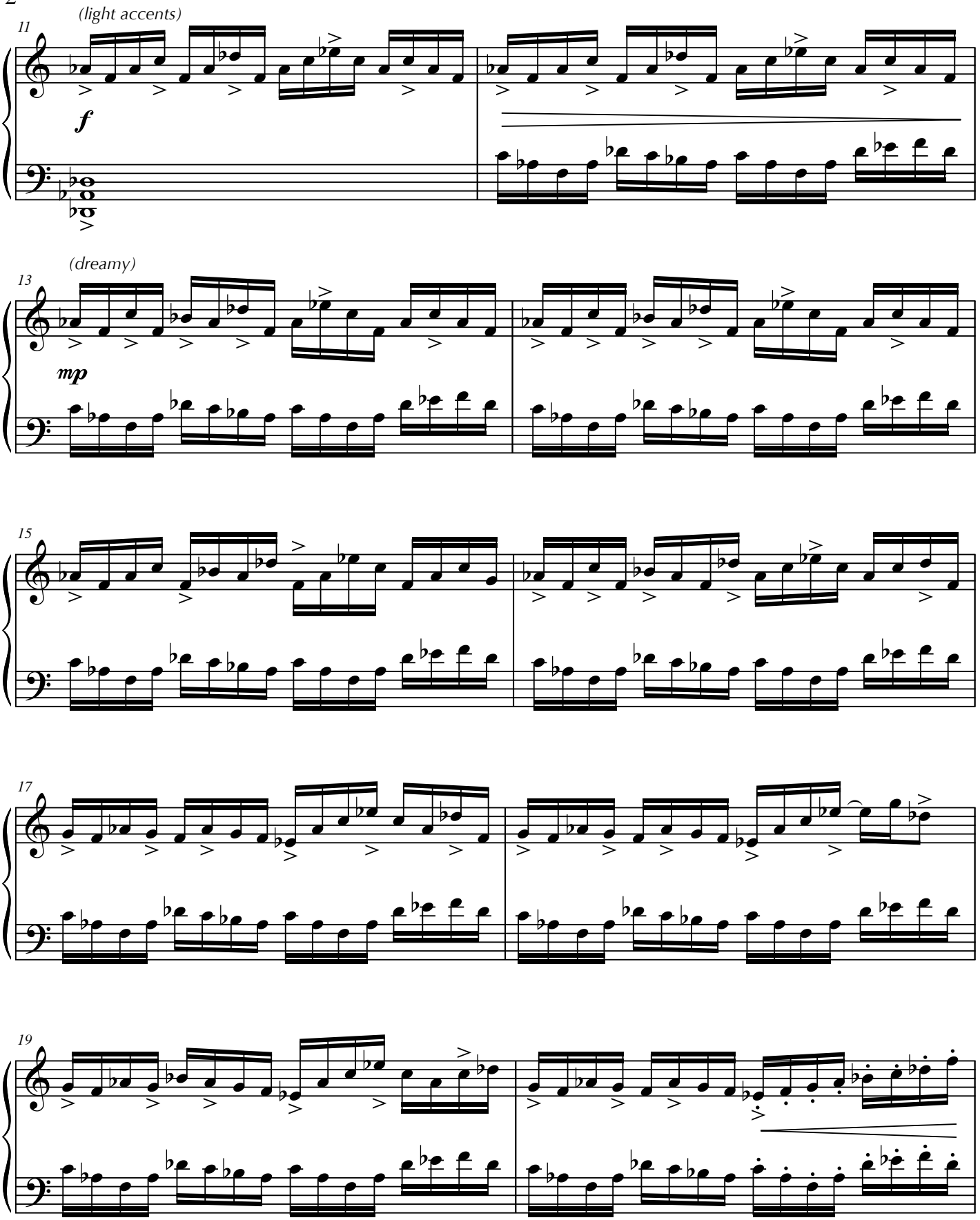
Born in Maracaibo, Venezuela, Clark was raised there and in Caracas (Venezuela), Lima (Peru), Lennoxville (Quebec), New York City, Fort Lee (New Jersey), Brussels (Belgium), and Toronto, where he attended university. Upon receiving a Mus.Doc. (composition) degree from the University of Toronto in 1992, he began working at Memorial University's School of Music, where he is currently an Associate Professor, teaching composition, orchestration, theory, electronic music, and classical guitar. He was awarded Memorial University's President's Award for Outstanding Research (1999) in recognition of his extensive compositional activities. He is married to Dr. Jennifer Porter (professor of Religious Studies, Memorial University), and has three children (Alexander (b. 2004), Andrew (b. 2001), and Julia (b. 1990). His interests outside of family and music include baseball, cats, cooking, ethnic food, reading, writing short stories, and hiking.

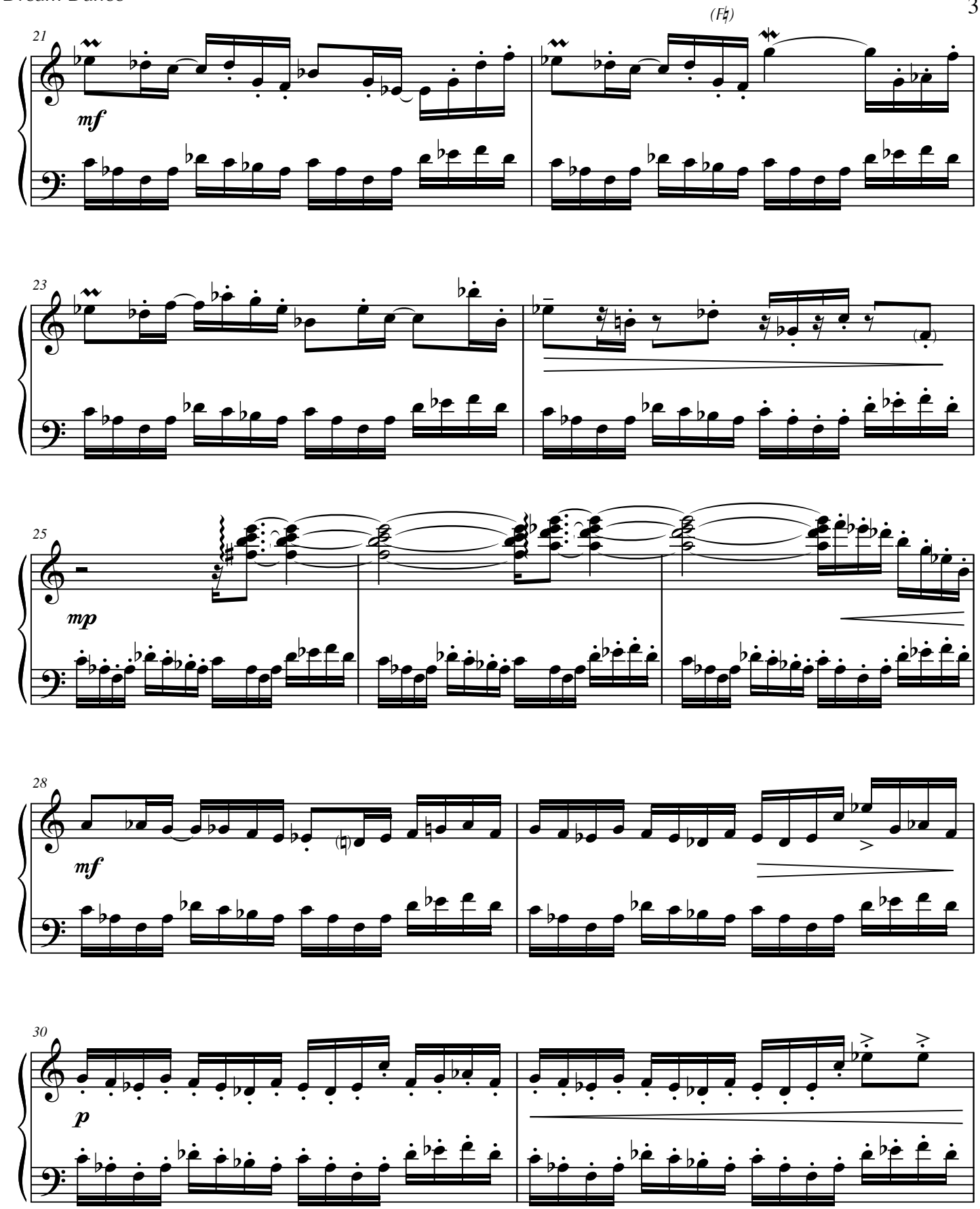
Dream Dance

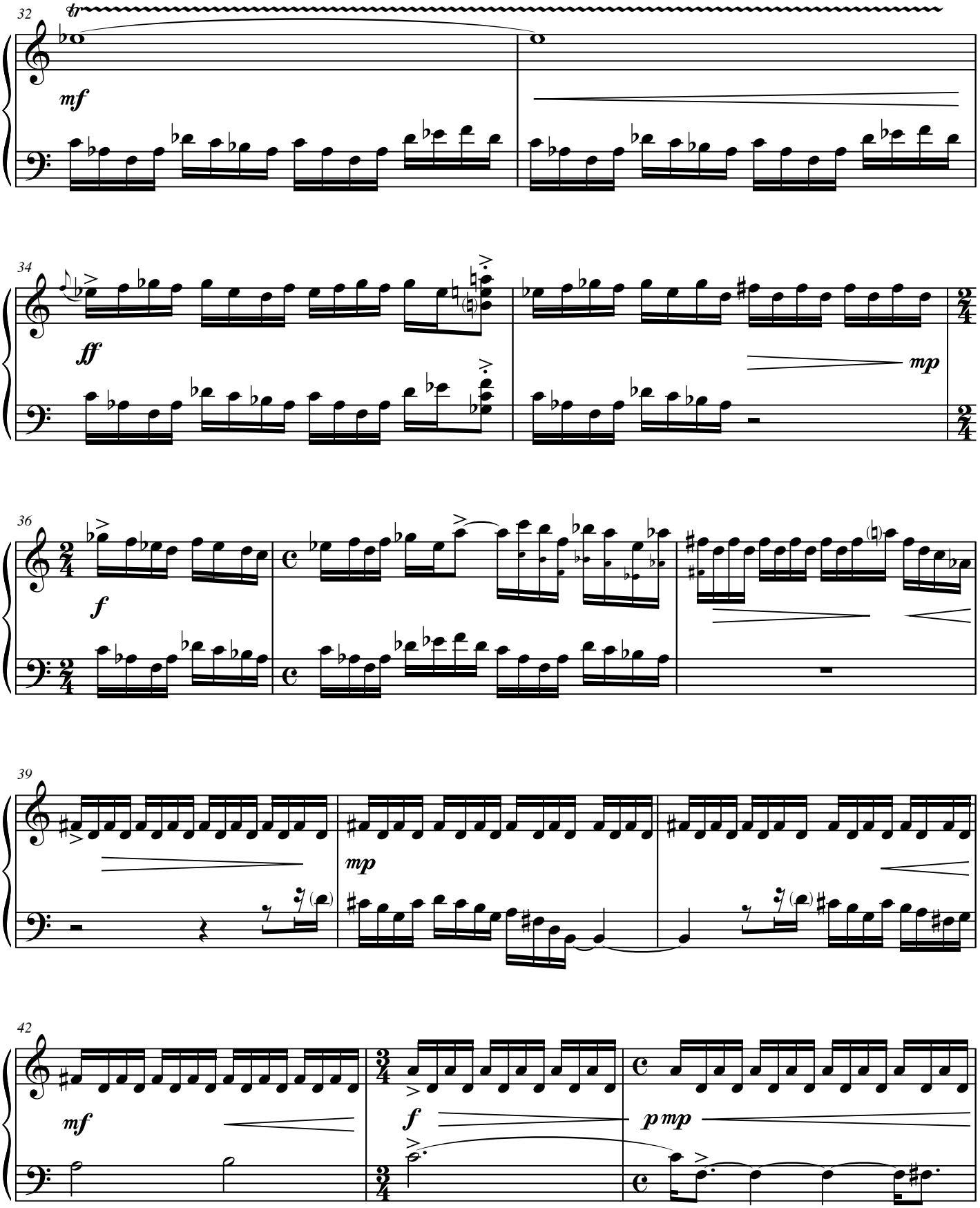
Clark Ross

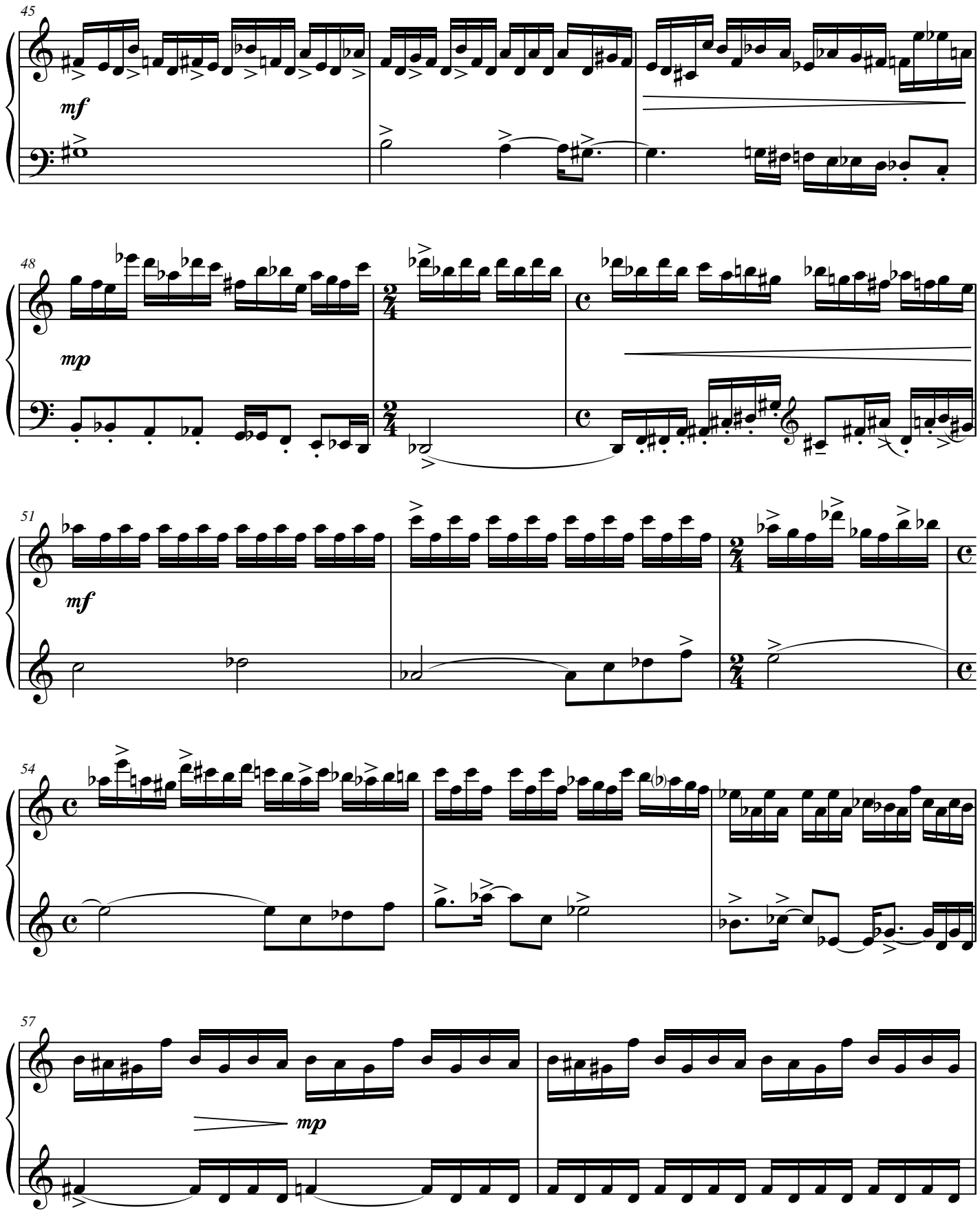


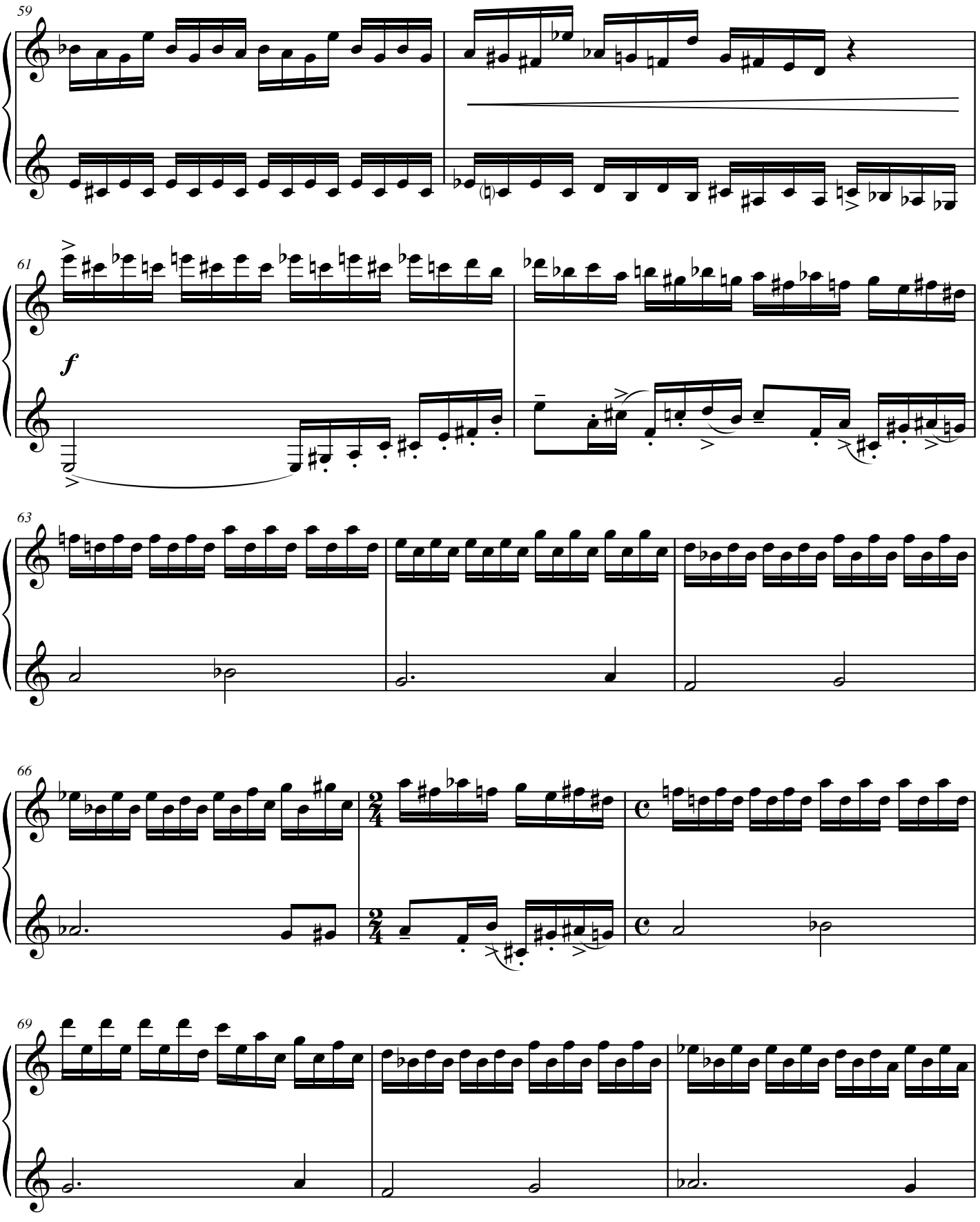
©2007 Clark Winslow Ross

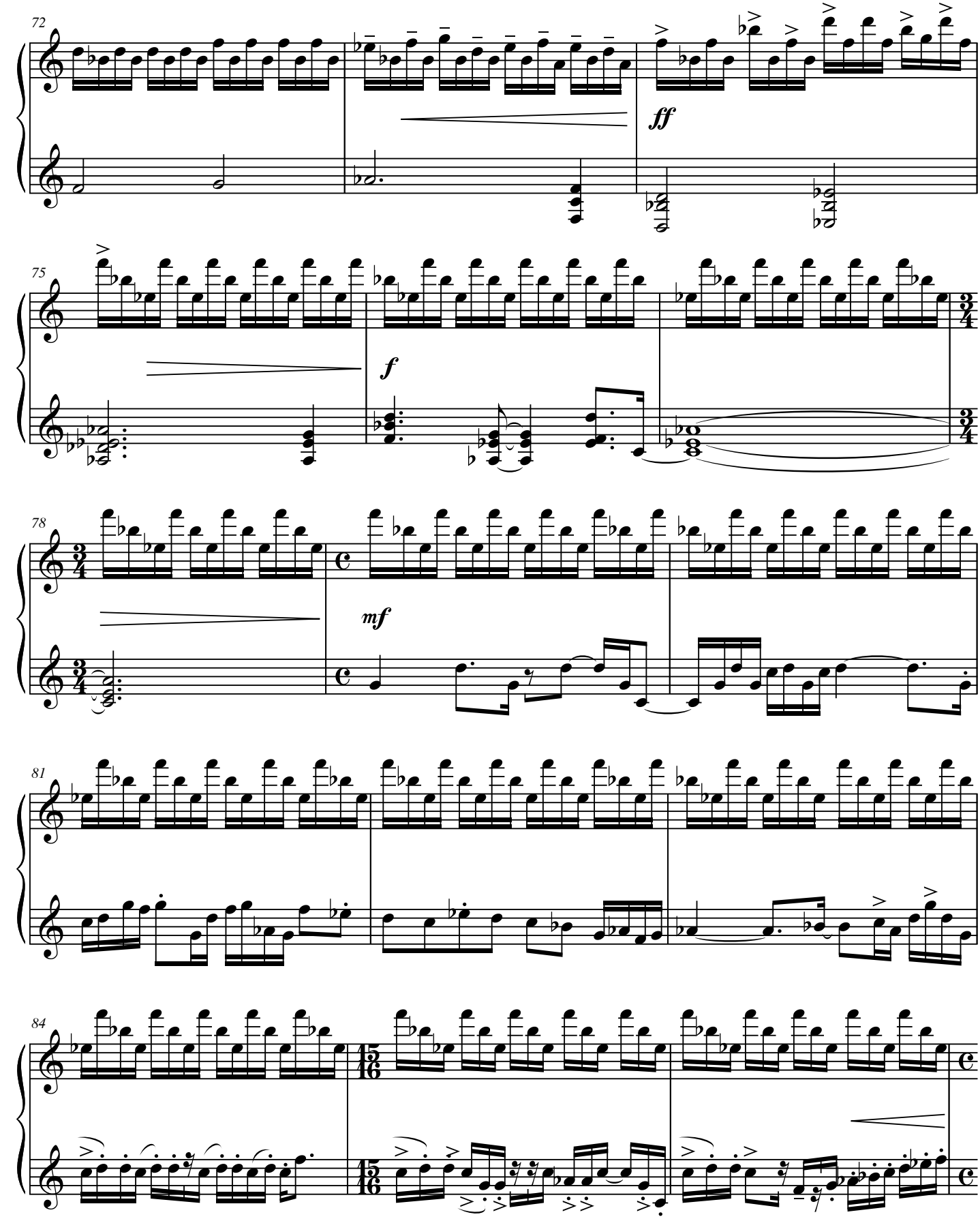

(light accents)
11
f
(dreamy)
13
mp
15
17
19

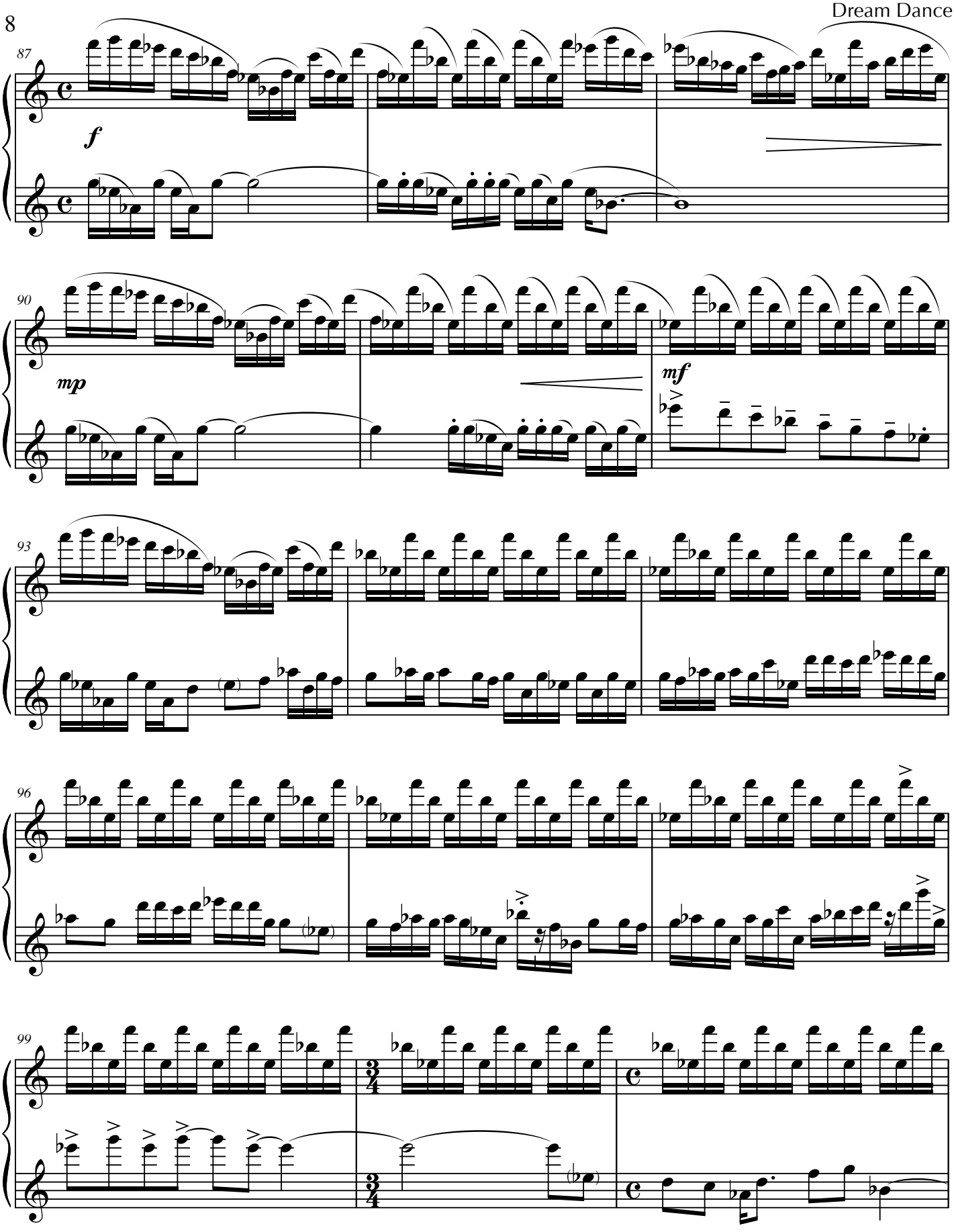

21
(F♮)
mf
23
25
mp
28
mf
30
p

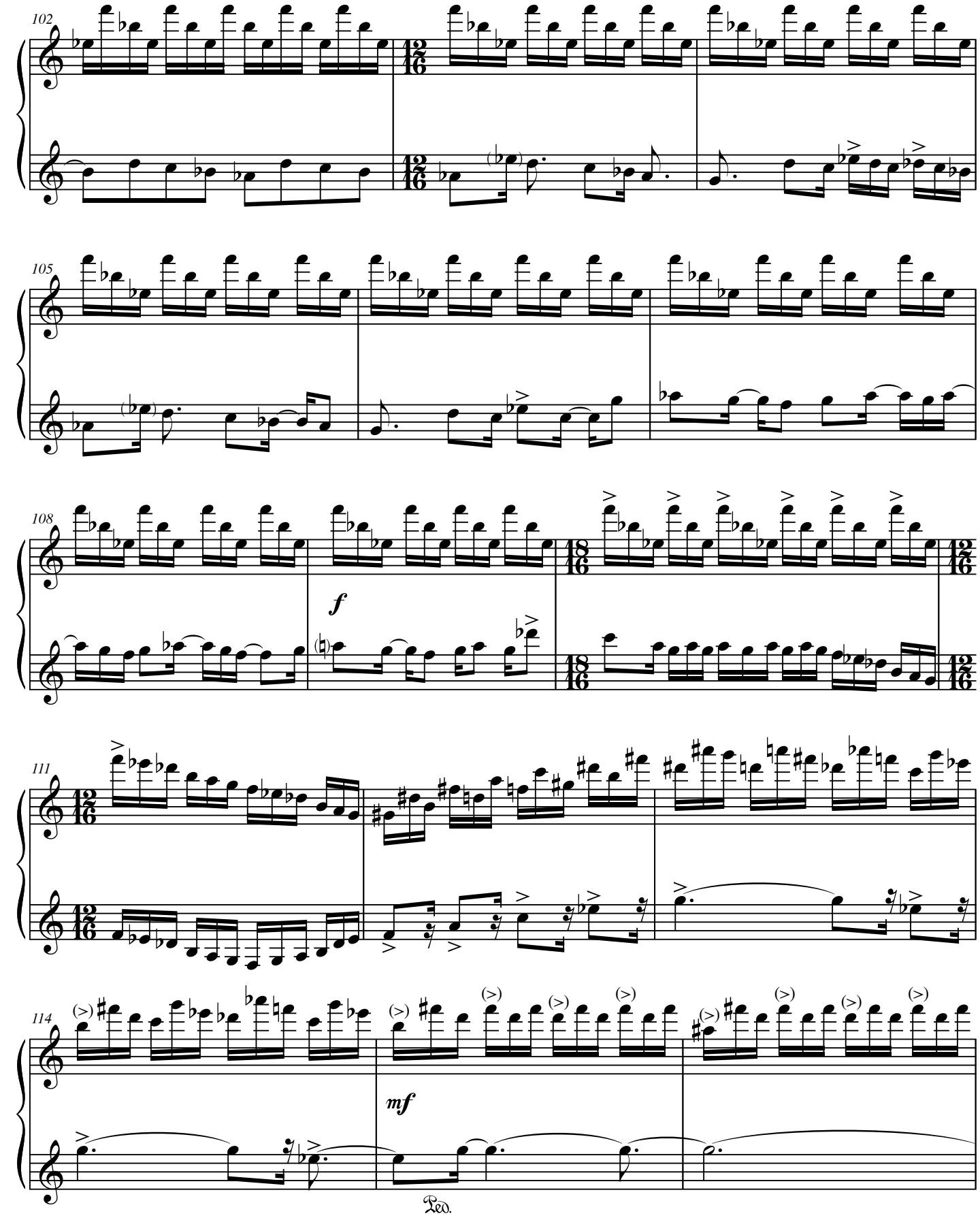

32
tr
mf
34
ff
mp
36
f
39
mp
42
mf
f
p mp

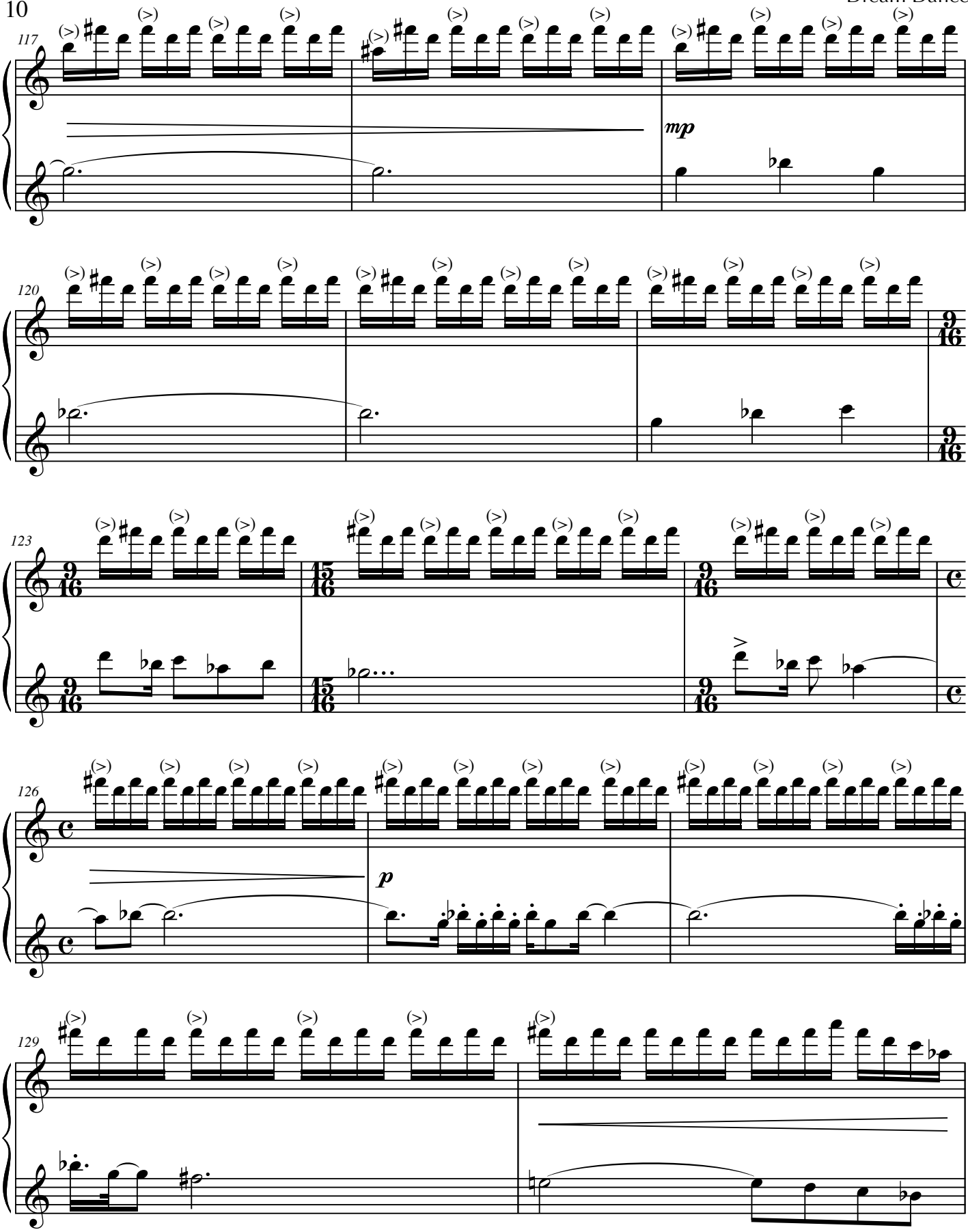

45
mf
48
mp
51
mf
54
57
mp

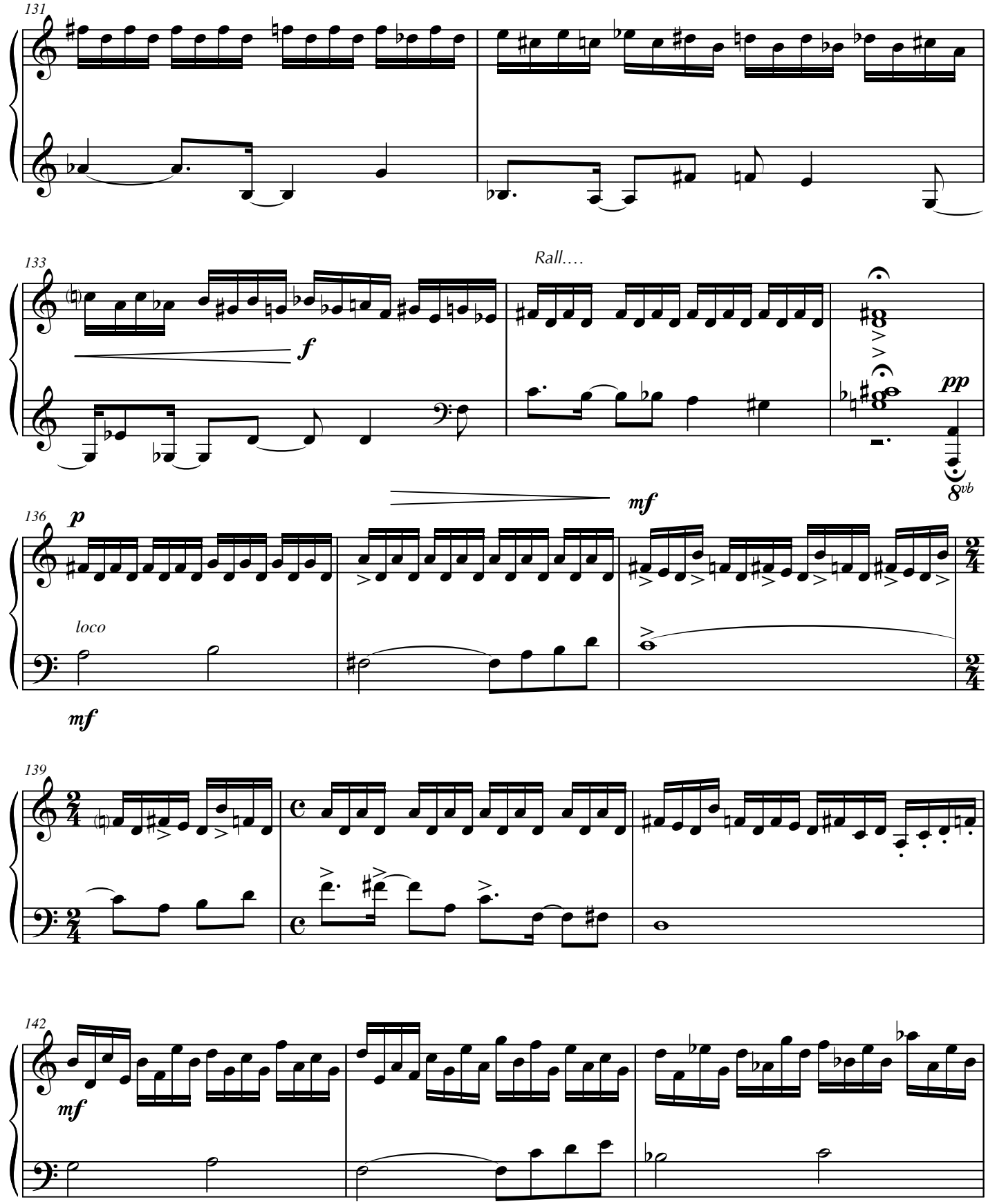

59
61
f
63
66
69

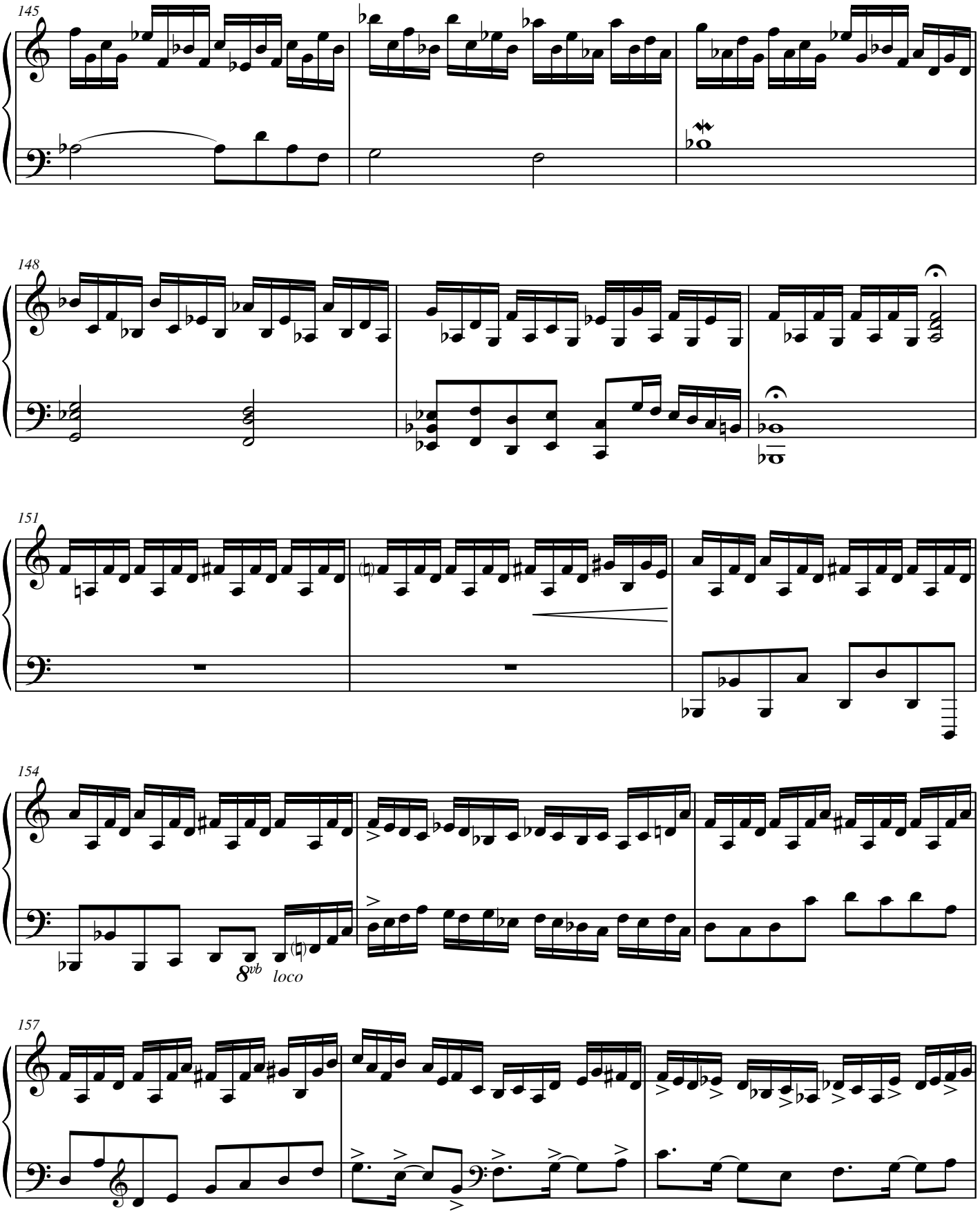

72
ff
75
f
78
mf
81
84

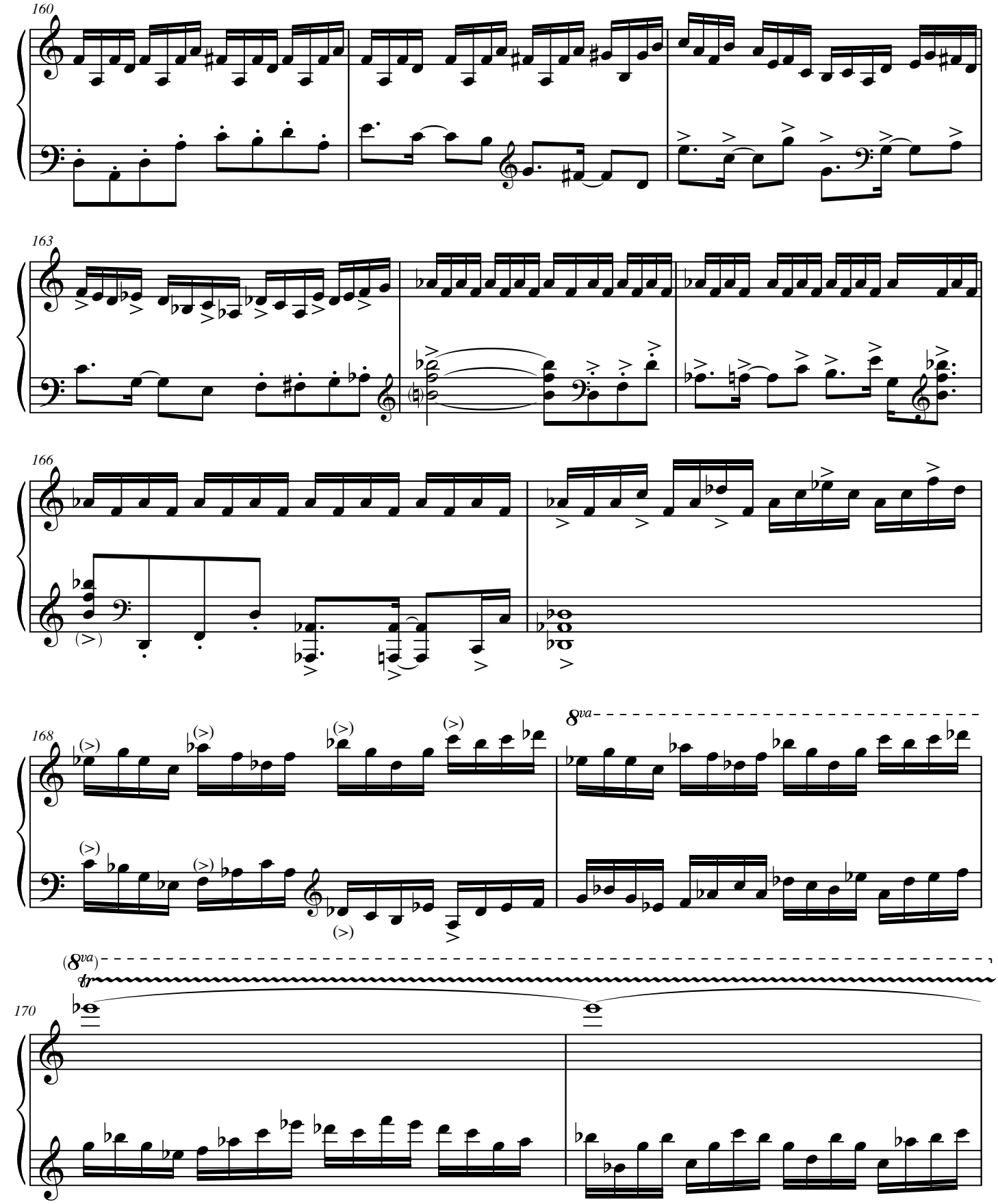

87
f
90
mp
mf
93
96
99

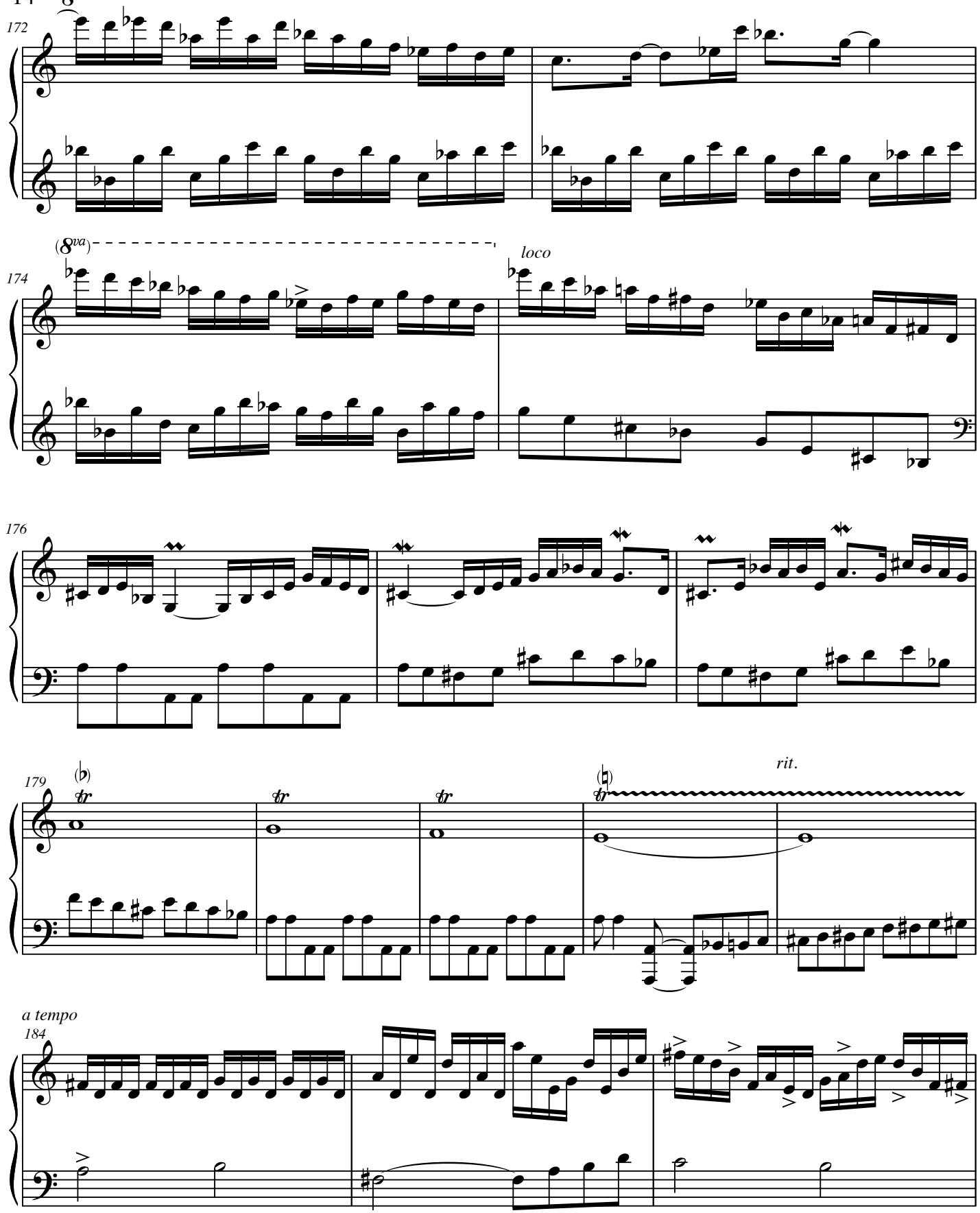

102
105
108
f
111
114
mf
Ped.

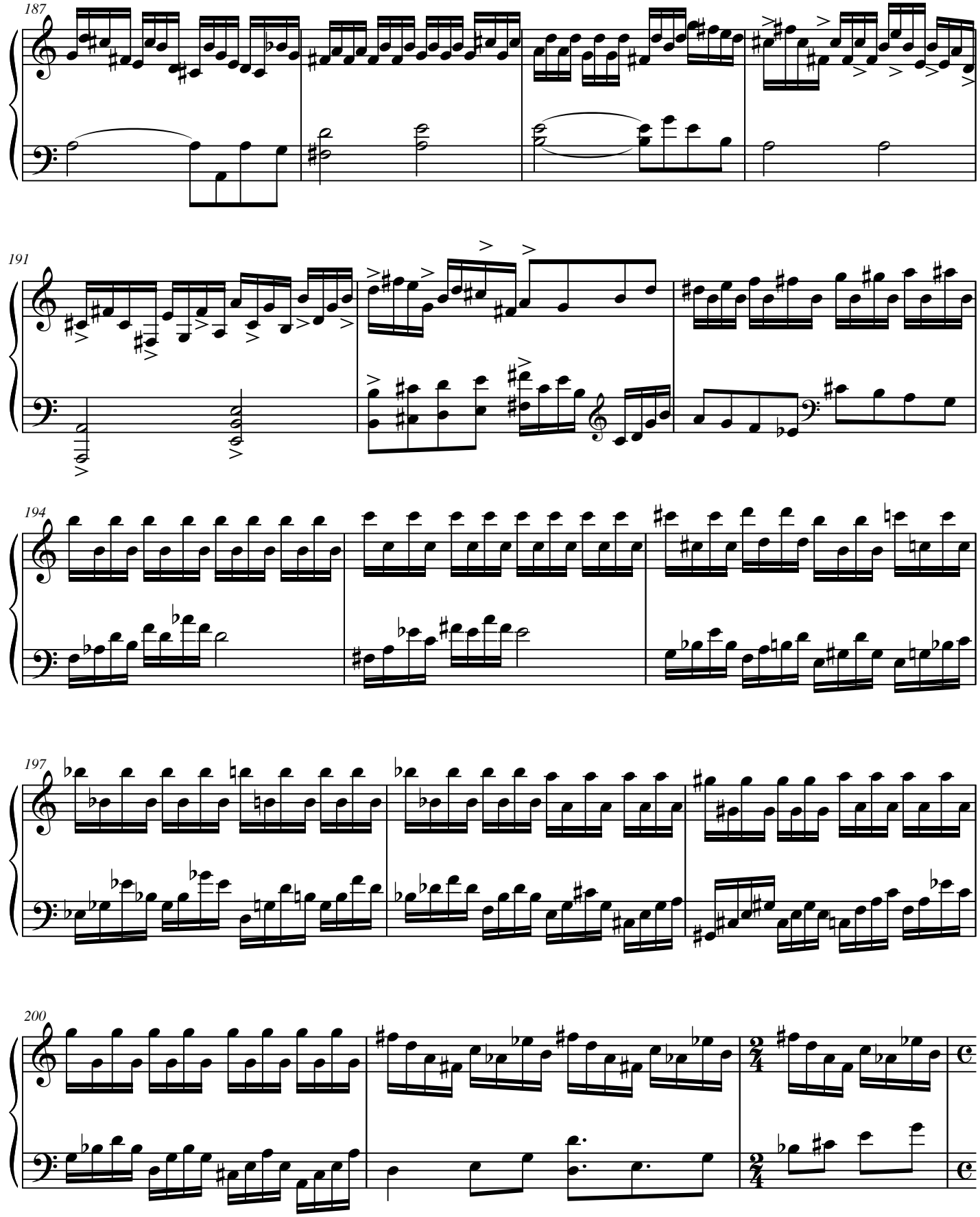

117
mp
120
9/16
123
9/16
15/16
9/16
126
p
129

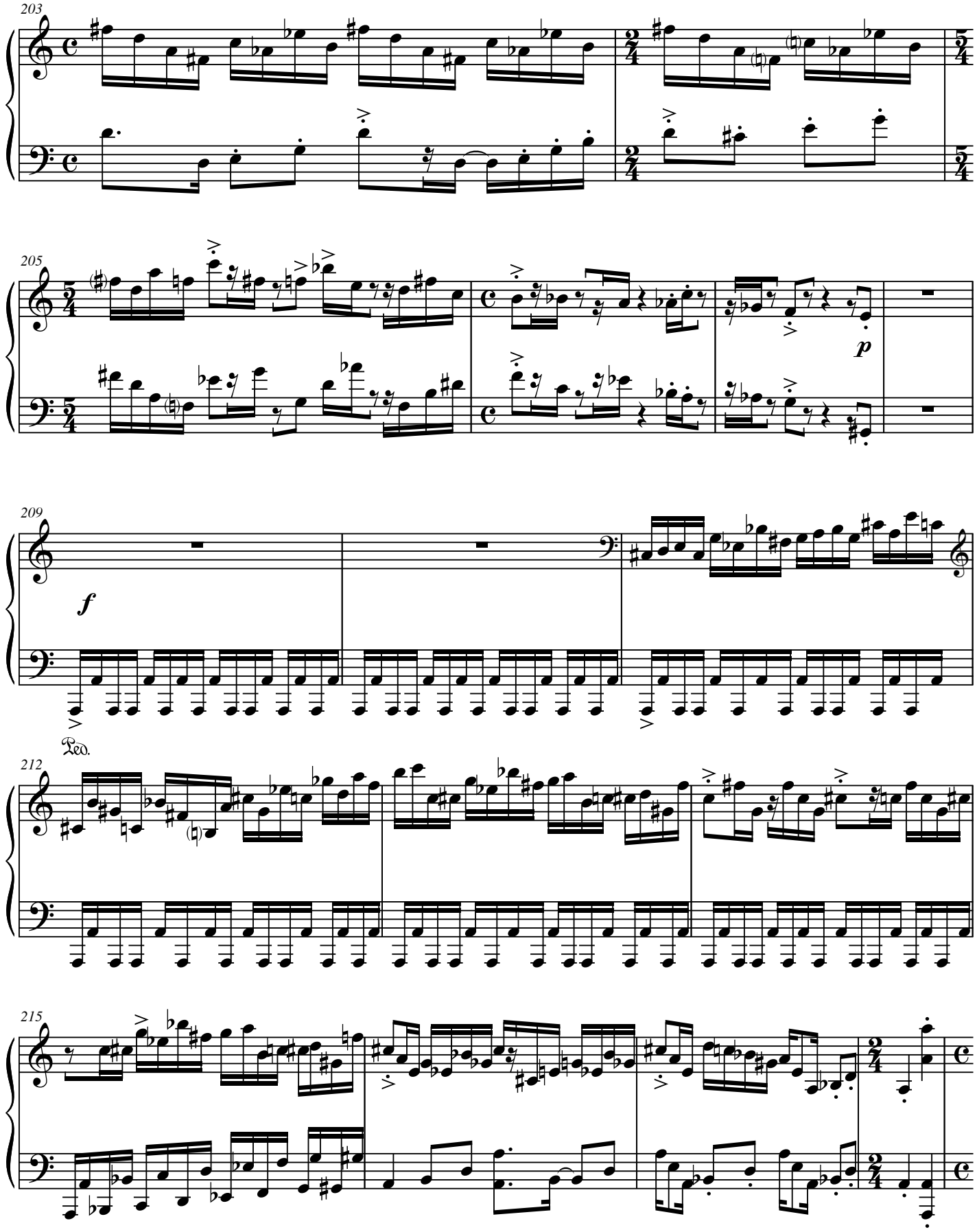

131
133
Rall....
f
pp
8vb
136
p
mf
loco
mf
139
142
mf

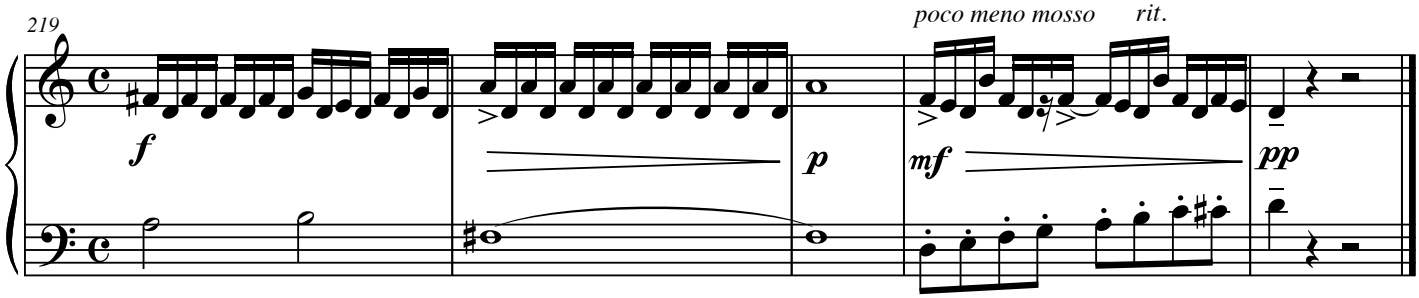

145
148
151
154
8vb
loco
157


160
163
166
168
8va
(8va)
tr
170


8va
172
(8va)
174
loco
176
179
tr
rit.
a tempo
184


187
191
194
197
200


203
205
p
209
f
Ped.
212
215


219
poco meno mosso
rit.
f
p
mf
pp