A Chromatic Approach to Teaching the Piano

We were very young then – barely five years old! Our grandmother, who came from a line of pianists who had benefited from teaching by Chopin, got us to play Hanon's Exercises in C# major there and then. It's easy and perfectly possible without any knowledge of theory!

You move your hand slightly onto the keyboard – anchor it there and you think about "a little sunshine" with each degree, whilst articulating the same series of notes (which are "brighter").

So, you've shifted slightly over to the right without leaving the positions with which you're already familiar.

What's more, you're asked to "feel" and "listen" with your fingers.

Indeed, this is simpler when starting out than the B major recommended by the great composer, which also requires one to have a "tonal" ear already.

On the face of it, you just can't go wrong even if it's the first lesson! And one is left with a deep feeling of

enlightenment which is brought about by this alteration.

From experience, I know that this approach is exceedingly effective and feasible at any age and in any circumstances – tonal rationalisation can come at a later stage during musical training studies.

The only thing was that, despite the fact that I'd always utilised this method, this little "game," I still lacked something essential: how could this excellent system be combined with "musical spelling" in general without it seeming artificial and like an afterthought? To put it in a nutshell, how can one achieve those "moon" beams of flats without breaking down the original structure?

I had to start from scratch. In fact, from the first lesson it is necessary to establish double spelling (which was totally untheorised at that stage) as a reflex. We know that a certain black key will carry two names alternately, "C#" or "D♭."

This doesn't pose a problem for a child. We may venture a comparison. A child him or herself has both a surname and a first name. With an adult, one can simply explain the role of the two aforementioned accidentals, without yet linking them with any spelling necessity,

but specifying their double essential value.

At the same time, I have always been fascinated by the connection between technical musical education and its crucial foundation. This is the hand's natural "prehensile" grounding which was the subject of a research paper by me. Could we not rely more overtly on the "pinch" – that solid "thumb-index finger" architecture, so stable and instinctive, which underpins every action of daily life – and only gradually increase involvement of the other fingers of the tiny infantile or adult hand whose fingers are scarcely independent of one another. They will only be used little by little, and in that way acquire their requisite autonomy.

The concomitant advantage is that one gets into the habit of keeping the hand grouped together which is extremely important for keyboard playing. It is the condition, *sine qua non*, for attaining the level of relaxation required for playing the piano.

On reading the first few pages of my Method, you will see that I only make use of the thumb. Do we risk getting a "heavy thumb"? No! I ask for absolute control immediately. Recommended exercises range from "forte deciso" to "triple piano" and pass through every nuance in

between. You'll get used to controlling your thumb straightaway!

Whilst the young beginner is using his or her thumb in this way, one is in the best place for positioning the hand along with the whole arm (wrist, elbow, shoulder, etc.) and the body.

This is while the pupil continues to use both positions – the white and black keys alternately without making a connection between either of them. I merely ask for them to be juxtaposed by lifting the hand when one passes from one to the other (which introduces regular phrasing into playing).

For this reason, switching over to alternating between the thumb and index finger comes quite naturally as we carry on working at our "C# alias D♭" and our "D# alias E♭," using the reflexes already acquired from that unconscious but ever so useful "pinch" which is part of our everyday life.

This is where a second reality enters. This is the requirement to play either in unison (which is excellent for 'equalising' the fingers, in this case the thumb by the index finger), or to practise the same fingering with two hands in inversely symmetrical formulæ, which is more directly physiological. In my presentation, I balance and combine both.

At the same time, it remains crucial to occupy the entire keyboard as soon as possible so that the body can position itself calmly, square on.

This also sets up a broad, central breathing range, which is conducive to relaxation and effective mobilisation of the envisaged gestural dynamic. Lastly, the invitation remains for limitless exploration at a kinaesthetic level with a good dose of curiosity and wonder; something which will have a significant impact on artistic and performing potential!

That's why octaving is recommended early on. For example, this includes "discovering" the same "C" in every register which will subsequently be elicited note by note independently, so that the pupil acquires a "taste for adventure" when faced with the complete reality of his or her instrument.

One does not play without "listening." This consists firstly of hearing an extremely precise "mental sound" very clearly – the one we are aiming for – and then, while we're at it, capturing the physical resonance which follows the action. The fact that the fingers "listen" literally can become the magic formula for young pupils, like the objective (usually never attempted before) of the self-taught adult.

Metre is the first concept we establish. Without it, no music would be possible! In the same way that no realm of organistic creation could develop and persist without the complex metre (binary and ternary concomitantly) which underpins it. This is not to mention our computer clocks!

Musically speaking, the said metre is dependent on the mensuration (on origin, genre, form and style – not to mention trends and eras). That is why classical accentuations of four-four time are highlighted at the beginning of the collection (utilised primarily because it has resonance with ears which are used to hearing "modern music").

From the beginning, the student is asked not only to "keep the beat" but also "mensurate" everything which is played. This is a requirement which is collectively kinaesthetic (think of dance); conceptual (we count); aesthetic (no harmonious construction without a founding Number; a regulator Invariant); and cultural (we note considerable variations from one cultural heritage to another).

It's easy to go from four-four time to two-four time, and then, following on from this, in the most natural manner possible, learn about three-four time and ternarity.

One should bear in mind that although binary metre, which fits in with voluntary motricity overall, is the easiest to grasp straightaway, unconscious motricity (including the beating of the heart) remains a ternary phenomenon overall. It is an experience with which the body is familiar.

“Seeing” the pulsation or beat is of valuable assistance to begin with. You can count as you look at it or have a friend count or beat time. You can identify the onbeats and find the offbeats straightaway. You can artistically bounce back from one rhythmic emphasis to the next. You can use the said emphases to articulate your melodic-harmonic-rhythmic playing.

Everything which has been stated above is valid for adults and for self-teaching in general too, beyond the world of musical academia. Here, the fundamentals of interpretative thought are underscored; visually highlighted, making it possible to develop and combine them simultaneously and consciously from the time a person takes their first steps in this field.

Playing an instrument mobilises the entirety of both hemispheres of the brain, controlling not only the hand but also the whole body; the ear and constant, significant synaesthesia; a complete array

of emotions ranging up to emotions and "moods" and "states of being" turned into reality by contemplation and meditation; whilst intellect remains a powerful tool. It is the only one capable of underpinning all the intuitions we create, depending on our choices as a performer.

This shows how important it is "to learn an instrument"– in this case the piano. We relax; we get into action efficiently; we breathe intentionally; we are filled with wonder. We feel as much from inwards to outwards as vice versa. We count, we reckon, we calculate, we theorise, we speculate, we foresee – we create!

This takes us well beyond the meaning of the word!

Therefore, may it be that any suggested "exercise" kindles "intelligence" on every plane. Let there be no meaningless practising or playing like an automaton, but instead constant encouragement to make atmospheres as varied as possible, to express the most complex of feelings and emotions in various musical languages.

So, may this Method open the way to the indispensable field of Art!

It's in this regard that I suggest a little experiment which I like to share with youngsters. Eyes, ears and a mouth are drawn on each nail. In this way, one lives

through one's fingers. You see with them; listen with them, taste with them, and you have a broad sensory experience with them…

In view of the fact that the suggested approach is chromatic from the outset, an immense generic diversity presents itself immediately. It has no limitations other than those imposed by technical abilities, which will improve as one goes along.

In this instance, we put forward as many traditional, popular and serious musical styles as contemporary perspectives. This includes some avenues leading to modern music which are not overly represented. It is crucial to leave a door open for people to have access to the most complex and elaborate languages, whichever stylistic perspective is being considered, whilst encouraging people to play as wide a variety of styles as possible. This is true "general musical knowledge" and whatever choices are made later on, it comprises a solid reference base to which one can always refer.

Finally, may this Method be "joy," modelled after "Cosmic Joy." It is this sentiment which gives life to Art, at the same time as Creative Love.

As Beethoven proclaimed, "Effort turns spontaneously into pleasure; hard work into joy!"

And so great is the appeal of feeling oneself “grow” in a totally new way both in soul and consciousness upon achieving each stage, that every tension completely melts away.

Consequently, may my work be that “prop” to which one attaches a hardy perennial plant! And which will feed off its own Destiny!

Colette Mourey

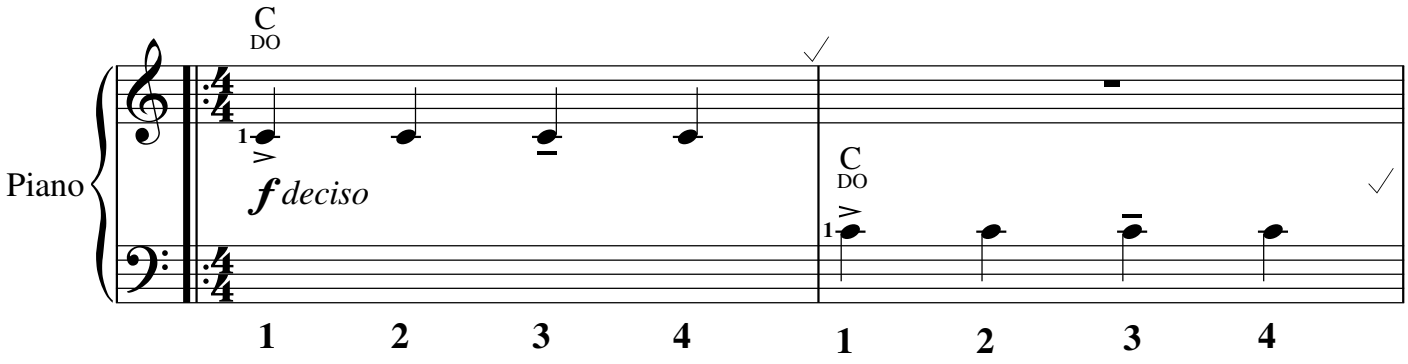
A Chromatic Approach to Teaching the Piano

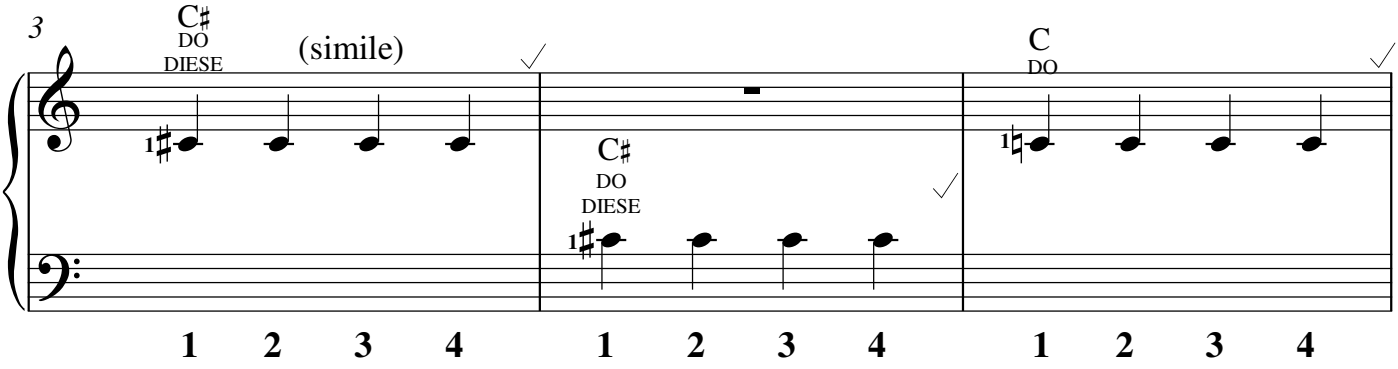
Colette Mourey

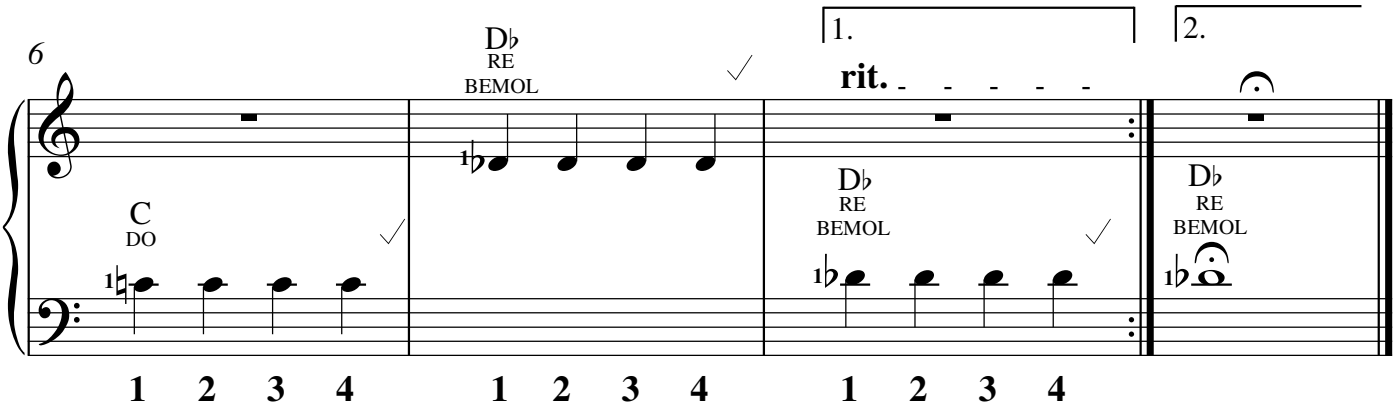
D♭
ré bémol
C♯
do dièse

1
Dialogue

Moderato ♩ = 100







D♭
ré bémol
C♯
do dièse

2
Résonances

Tranquillo ♩ = 100

C
DO

p *dolce*

C
DO

1 2 3 4

3 (simile)

C♯
DO
DIESE

C♯
DO
DIESE

C
DO

6

D♭
RE
BEMOL

1.
rit.

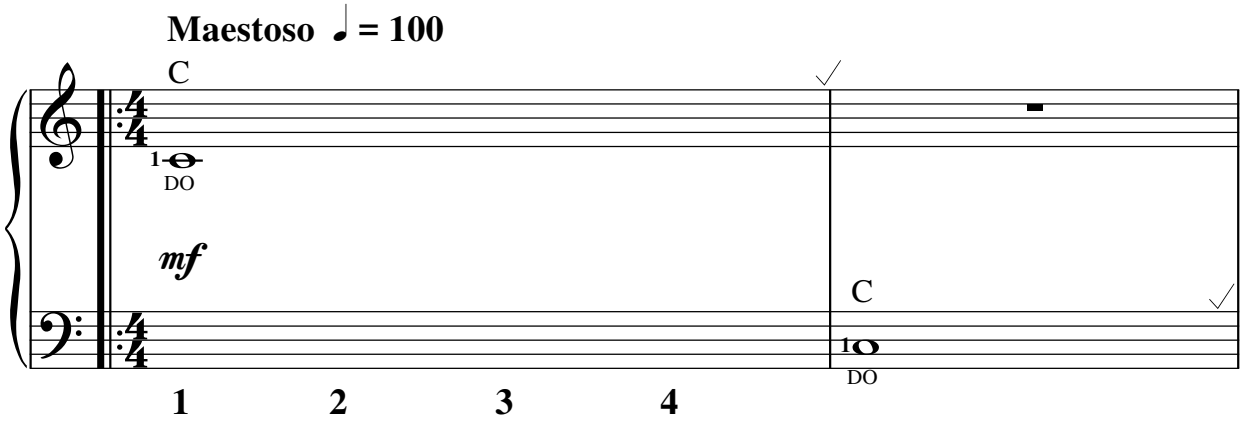
2.

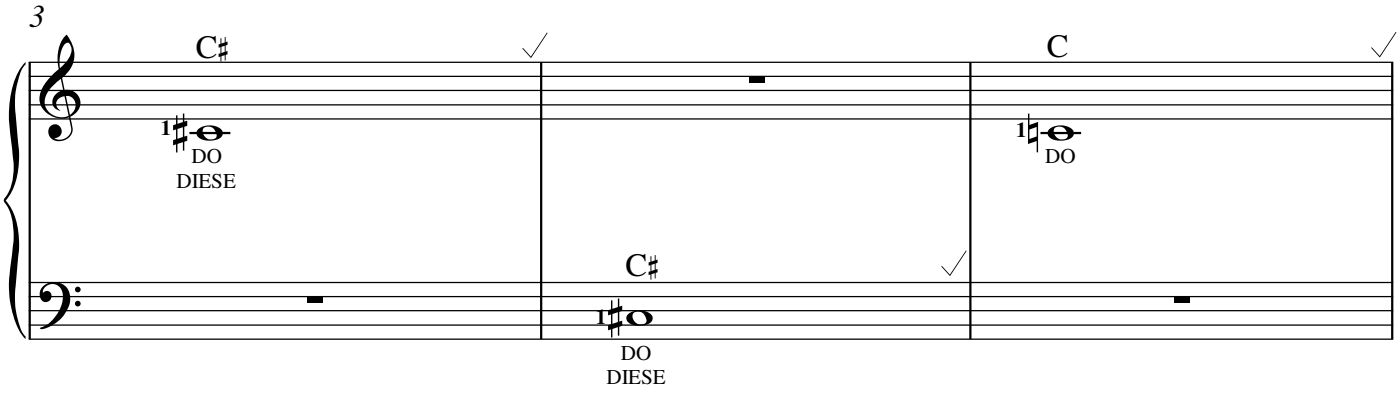
C
DO

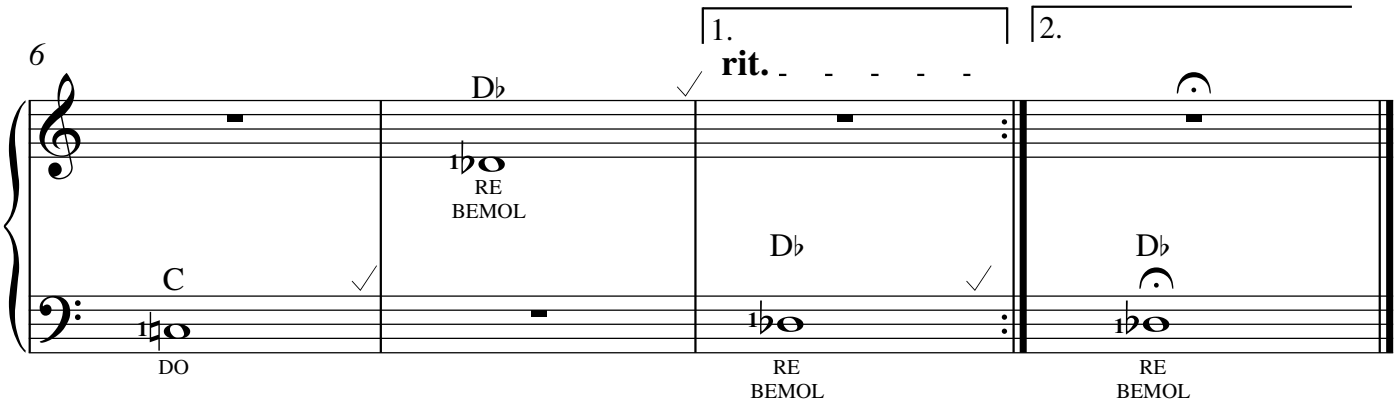
D♭
RE
BEMOL

D♭
RE
BEMOL

3
Le Désert

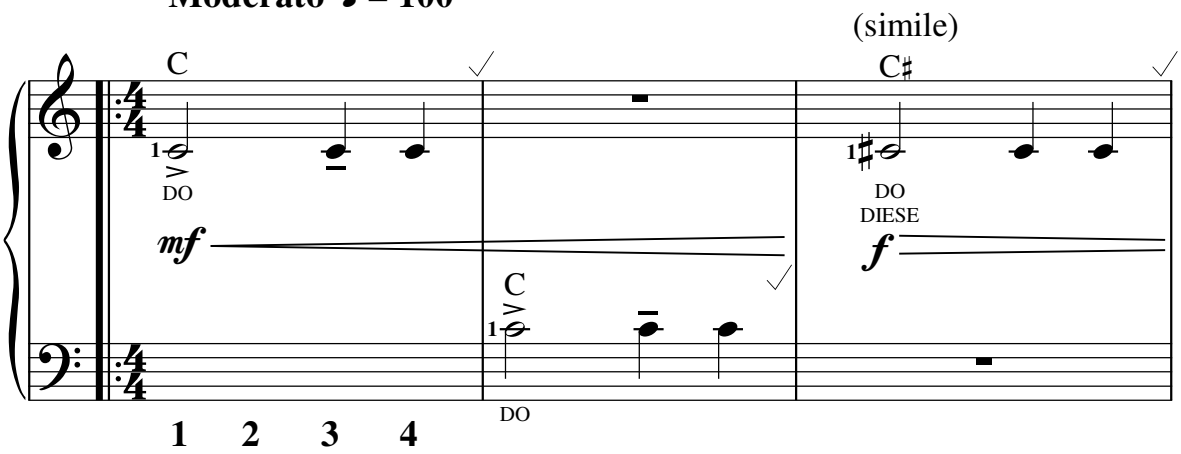

Maestoso ♩ = 100
C
1
DO
mf
C
1
DO
1 2 3 4

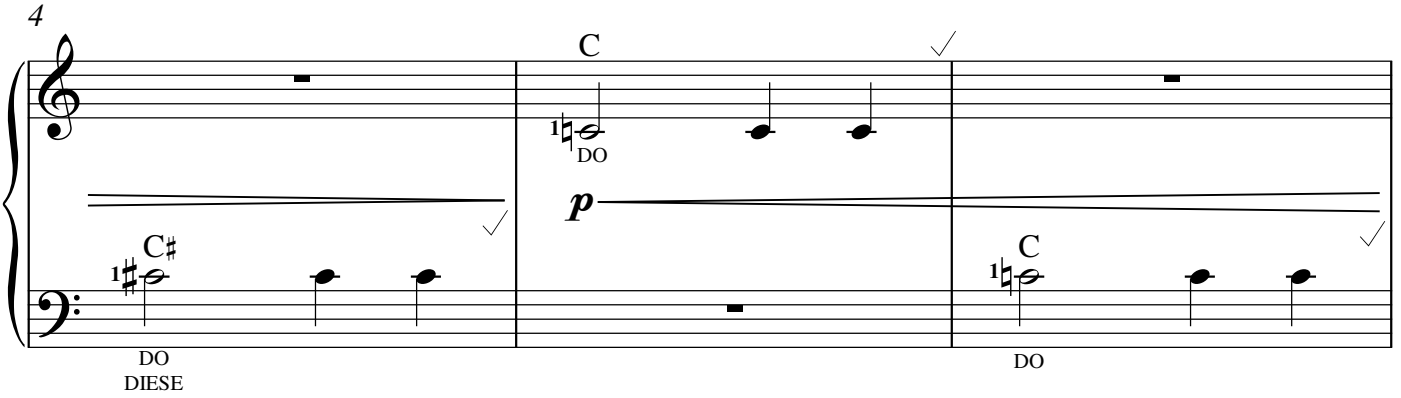

3
C♯
1
DO
DIESE
C♯
1
DO
DIESE
C
1
DO

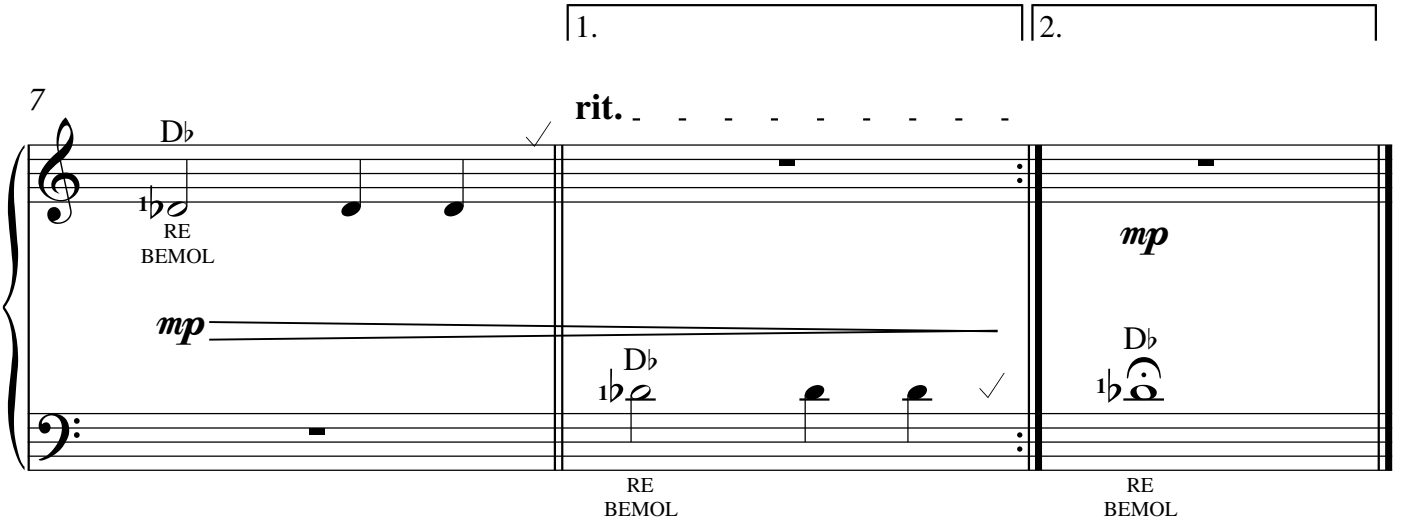

6
C
1
DO
D♭
1
RE
BEMOL
1.
rit.
D♭
1
RE
BEMOL
2.
D♭
1
RE
BEMOL

4
Au Trot

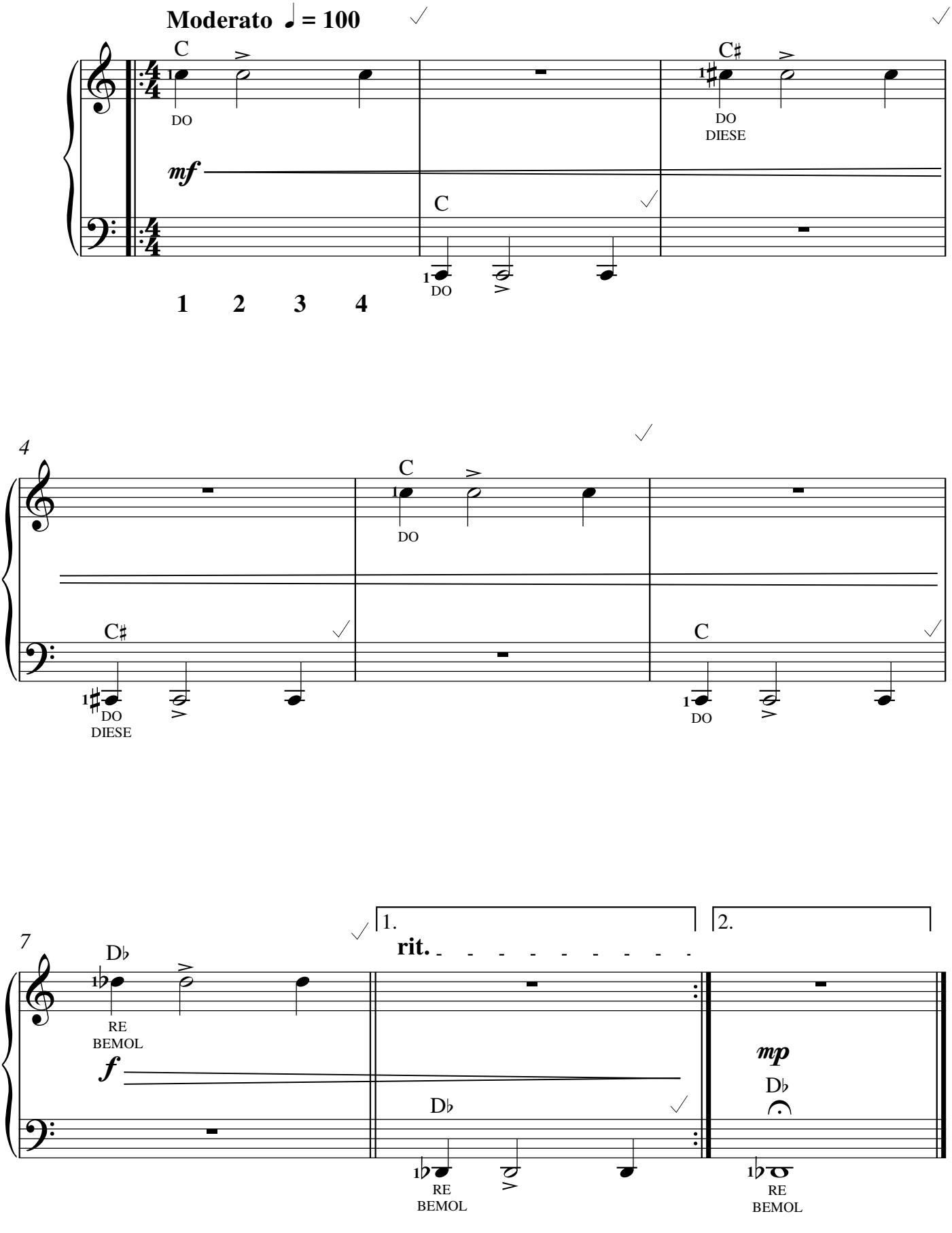
Moderato ♩ = 100



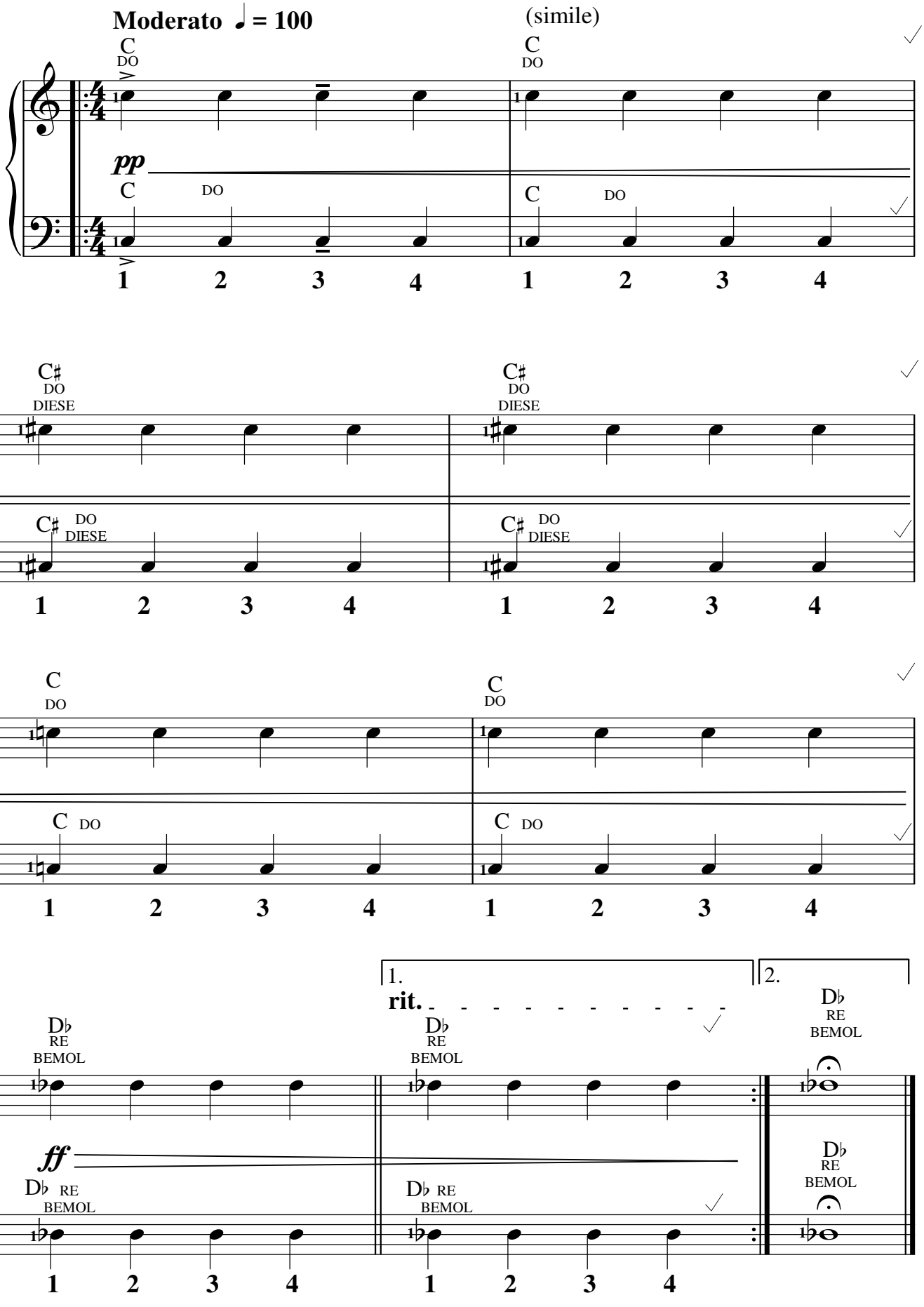




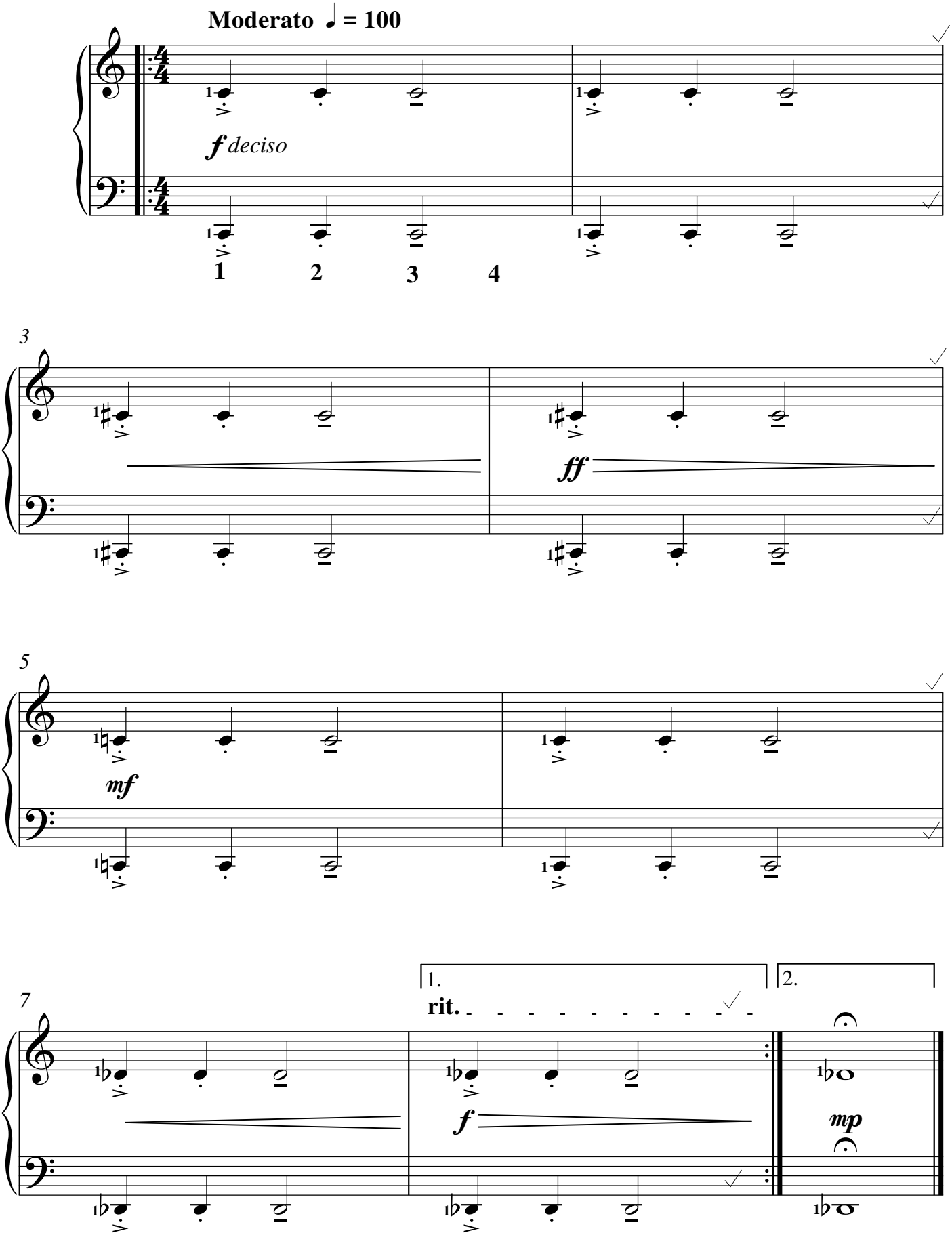
5
Blues


Moderato ♩ = 100
C
DO
C♯
DO
DIESE
mf
C
DO
1 2 3 4
4
C
DO
C♯
DO
DIESE
C
DO
7
1.
2.
rit.
D♭
RE
BEMOL
f
D♭
RE
BEMOL
mp
D♭
RE
BEMOL

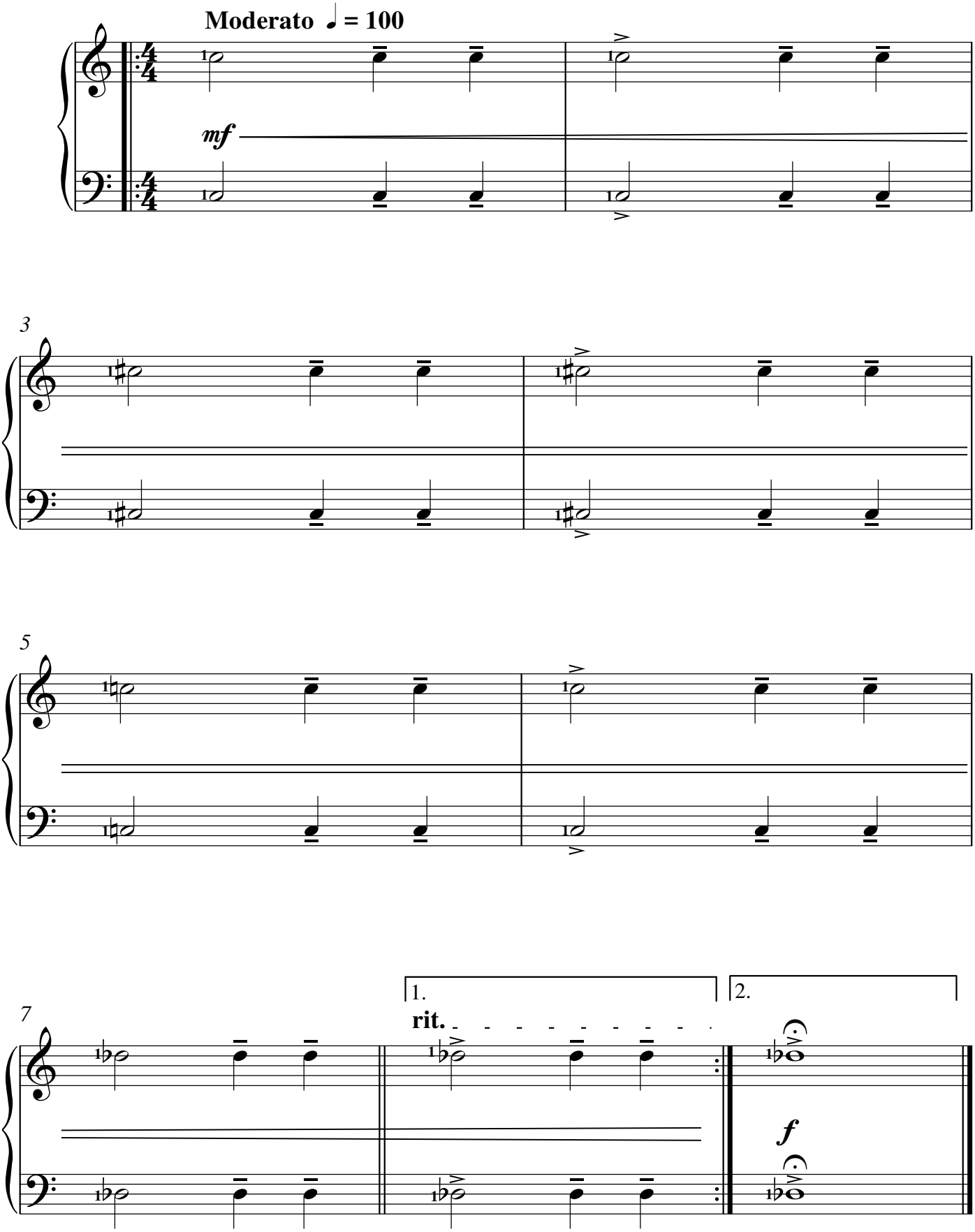
6
Ensemble


Moderato ♩ = 100
(simile)
C
DO
pp
1 2 3 4
3
C♯
DO
DIESE
5
7
1.
2.
rit.
D♭
RE
BEMOL
ff

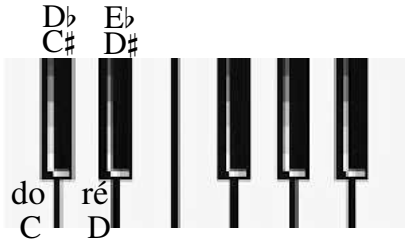
7
Loup y'es-tu ?



8
Dansons la Capucine !



9
Murmures



Moderato ♩ = 100

C D C D C D C D

p *agitato*

3 C♯ D♯ C♯ D♯ C♯ D♯ C♯ D♯

5 C D C D C D C D

mp

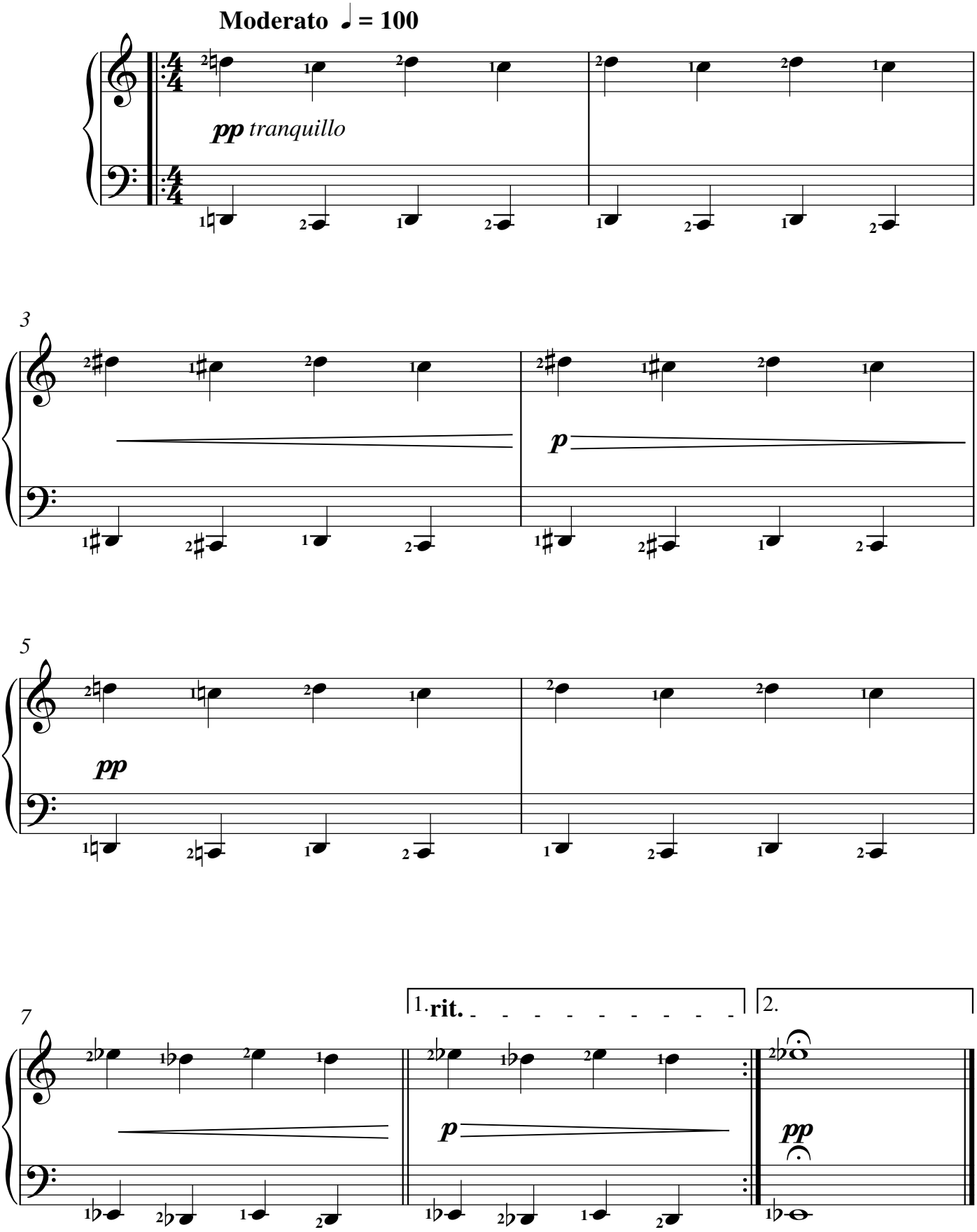
1. 2.

rit.

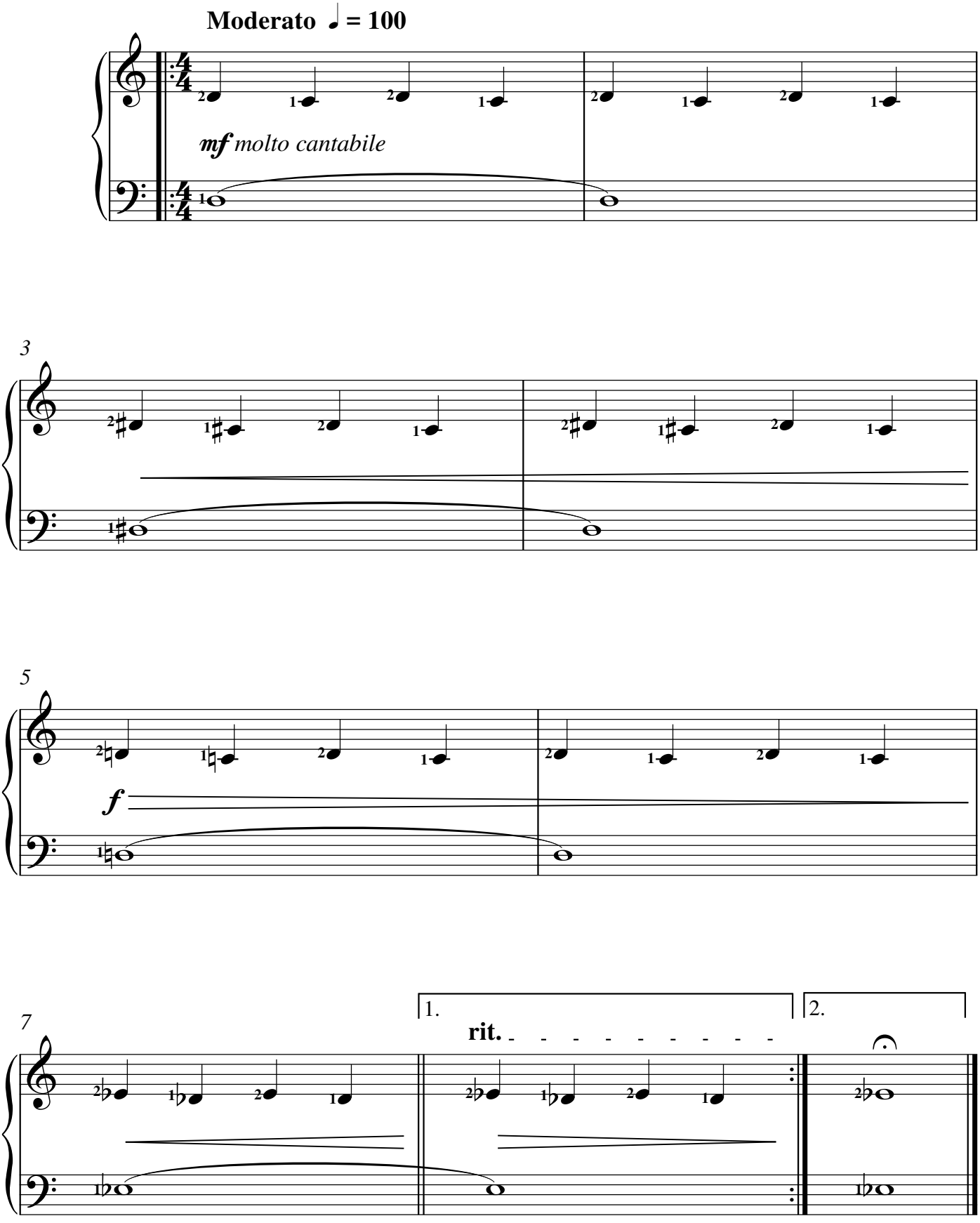
7 D♭ E♭ D♭ E♭ D♭ E♭ D♭

pp ***p*** ***pp***

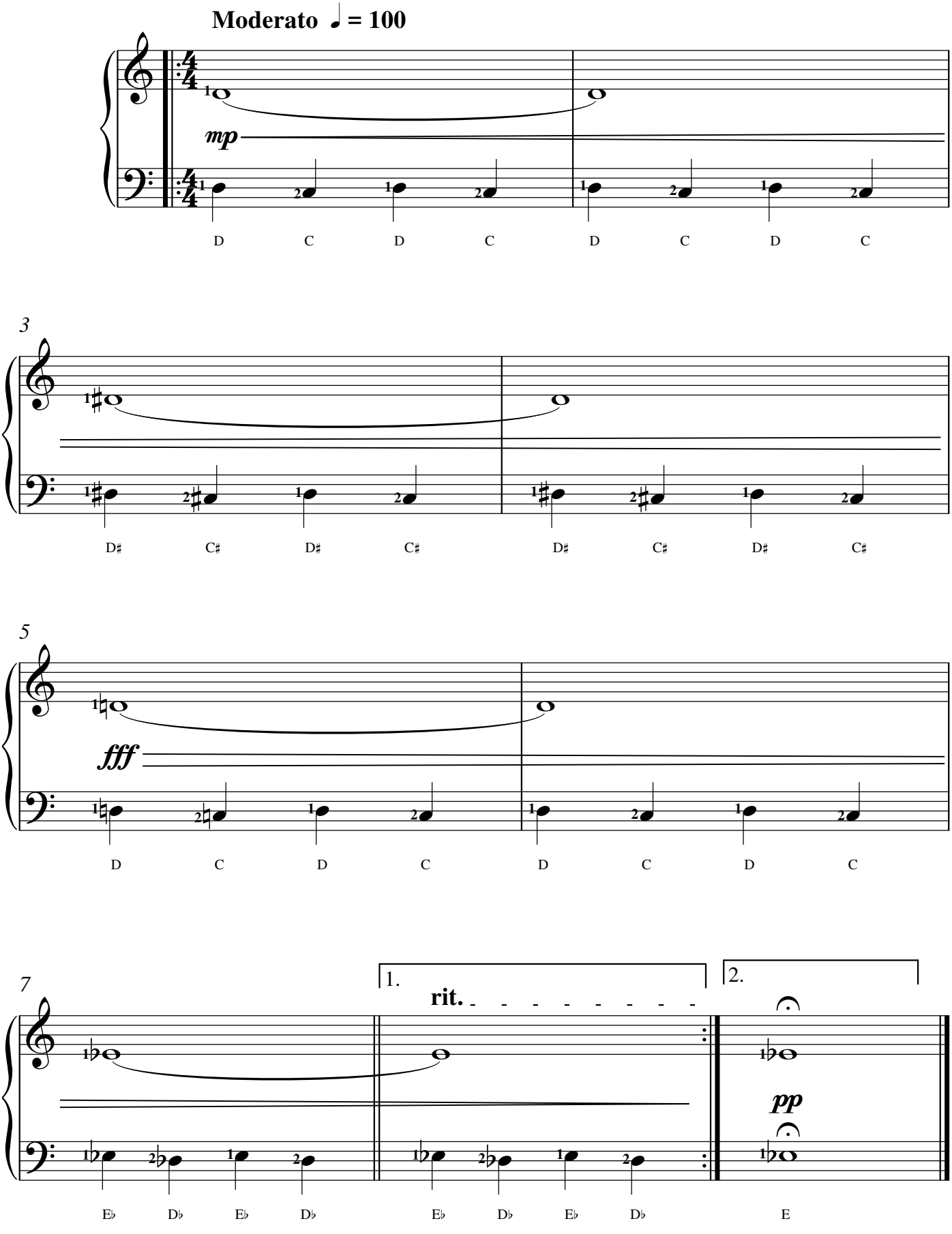
10
Lueurs d'Étoiles

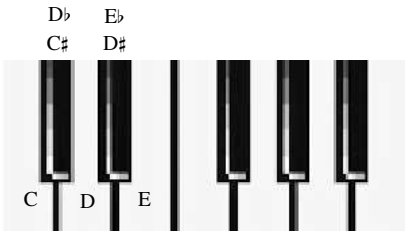


11
Au Chant de la Terre



12
Au Chant des Océans





13
Monts et Vallées

Moderato ♩ = 100

C D E D C D E♭ D

mp dolce ***p*** ***mp***

4

p ***mf***

7

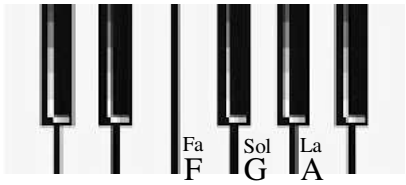
f ritmico

rit.

10

14

Bon Anniversaire !



Moderato ♩ **= 100**

F G A

f giocoso

Fa Sol La

Fa Sol La

4

7

La Sol Fa

mp

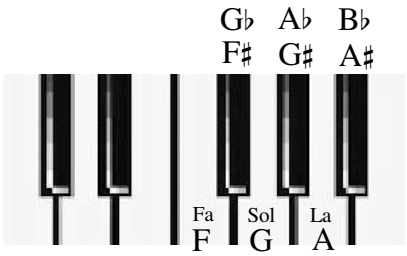
Fa Sol La

rit.

10

La Sol Fa

15
Jour de Fête



Moderato ♩ = 100

F♯ G♯ A♯

Fa♯ Sol♯ La♯

mf

Fa♯ Sol♯ La♯

4

mf *mp* *mf*

7

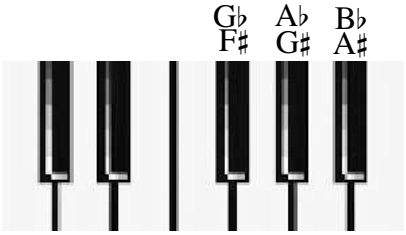
f *mf* *mp* *mp*

10

rit. - - - - - -

ff *f*

16
Tout Joyeux !



Moderato ♩ = 100

G♭ A♭ B♭

Sol♭ La♭ Si♭

mp

Sol♭ La♭ Si♭

4

mf *f*

7

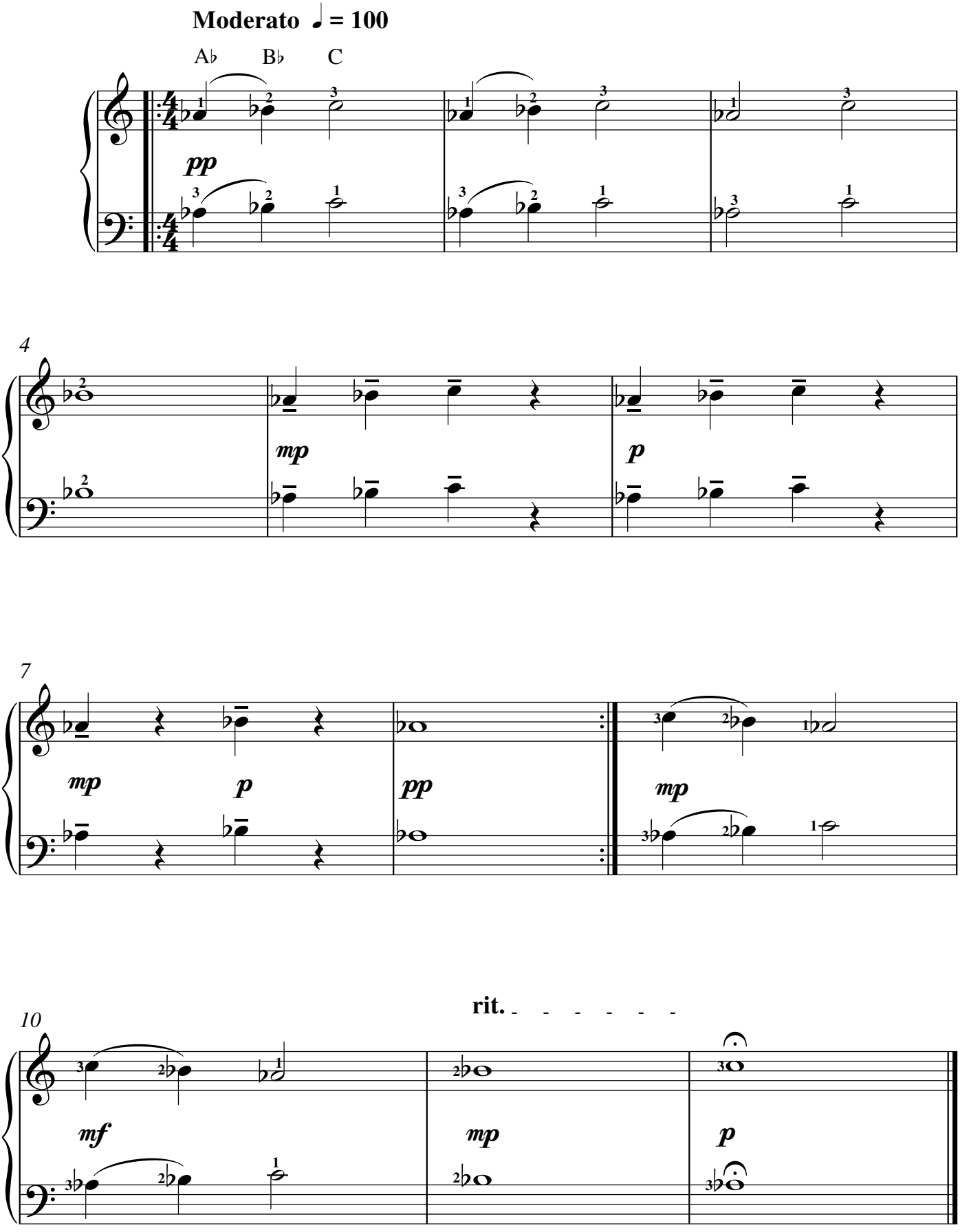
mf *mp* *p*

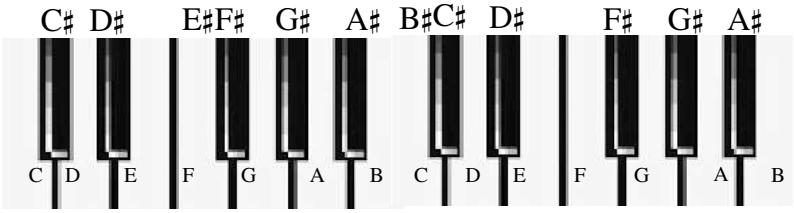
10

rit.

mp *mf* *p*

17
Matin Printanier





18
Le Glacier

Moderato ♩ = 100

mf

4

ff *f*

7

mf *mp* *mf*

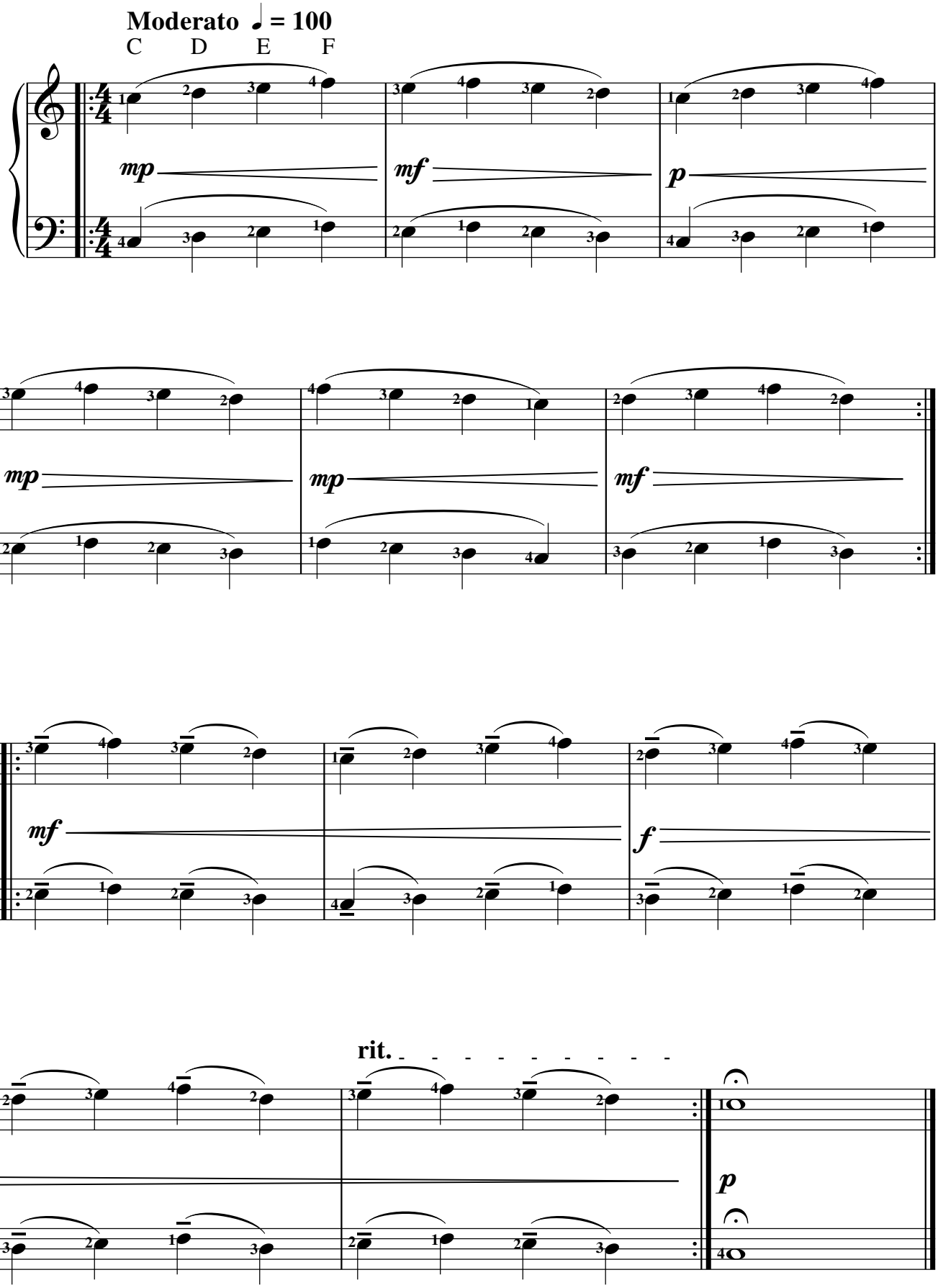
10

rit.

f *ff* *f*

19

Le Monastère

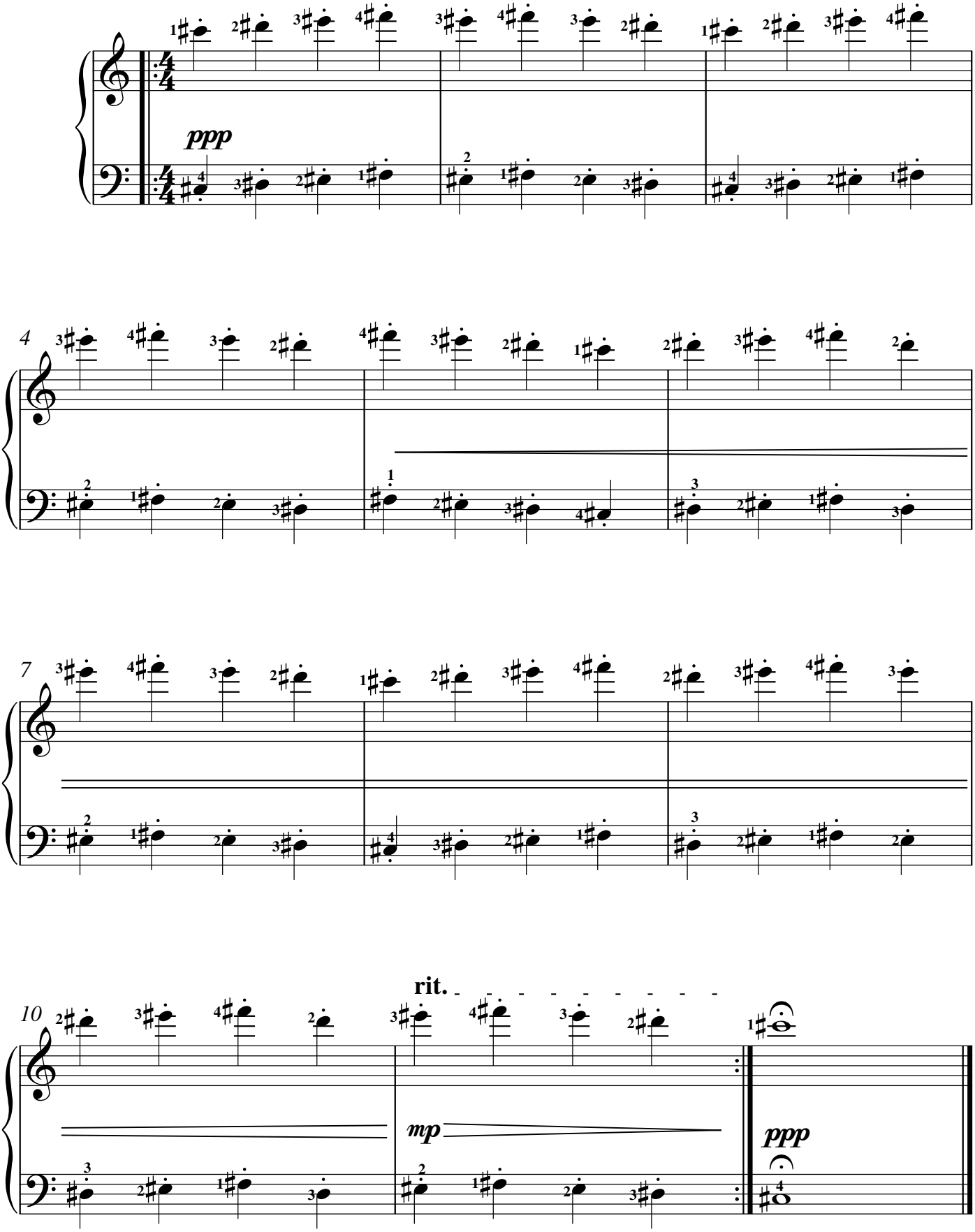


20

Des Cristaux de Givre

Moderato ♩ = 100

C♯ D♯ E♯ F♯

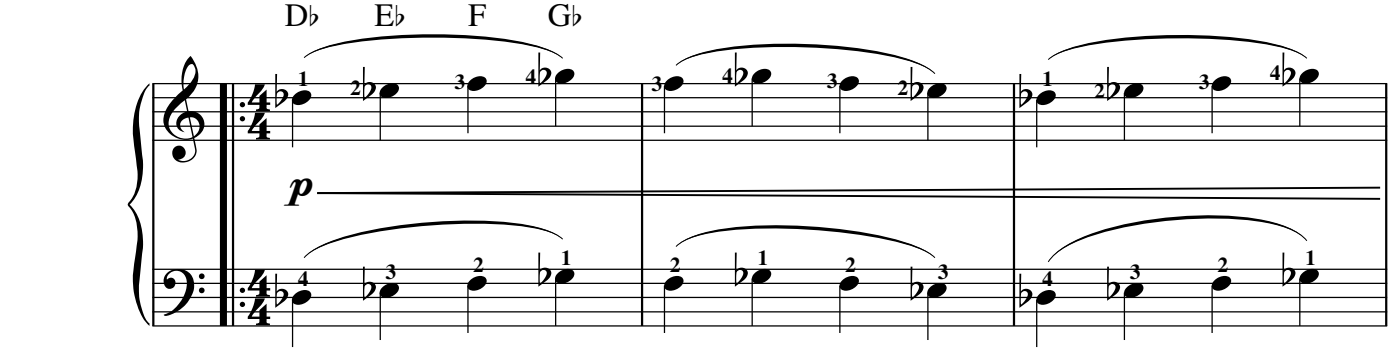


21

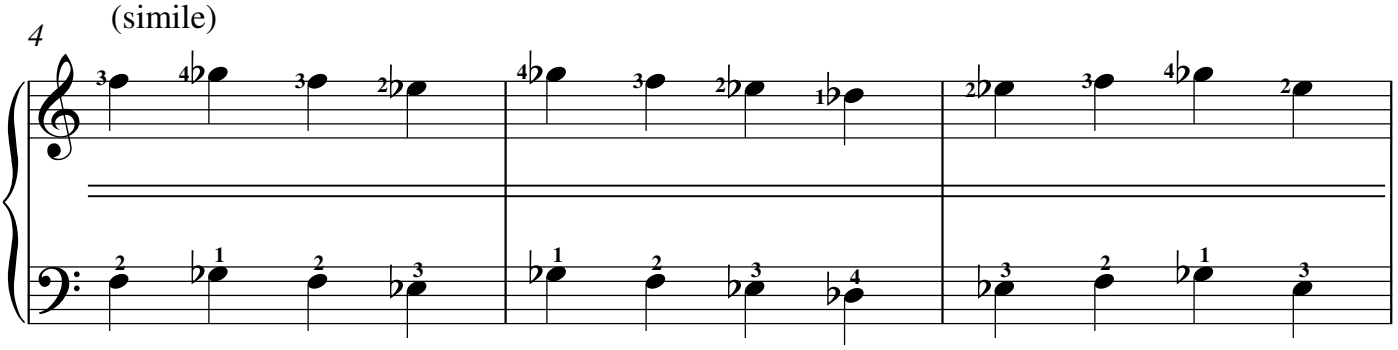
Nuages

Moderato ♩ = 100

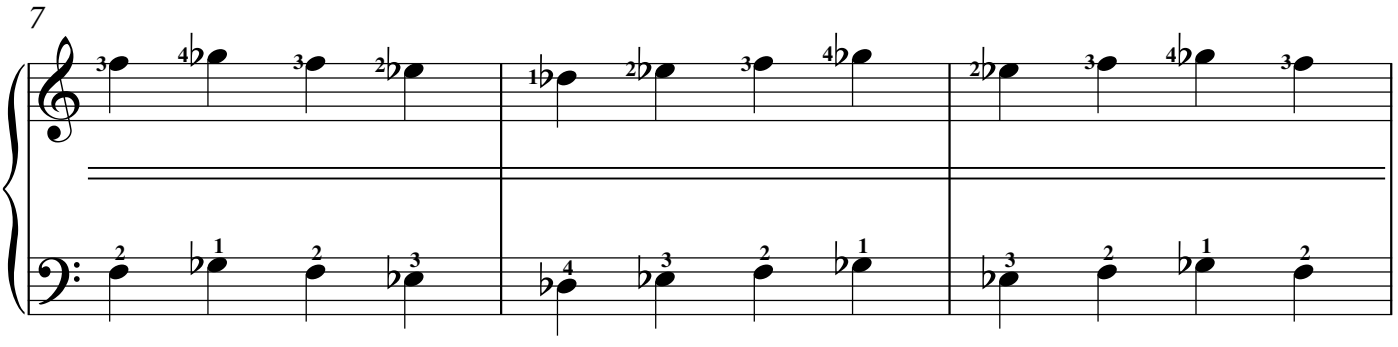
D♭ E♭ F G♭



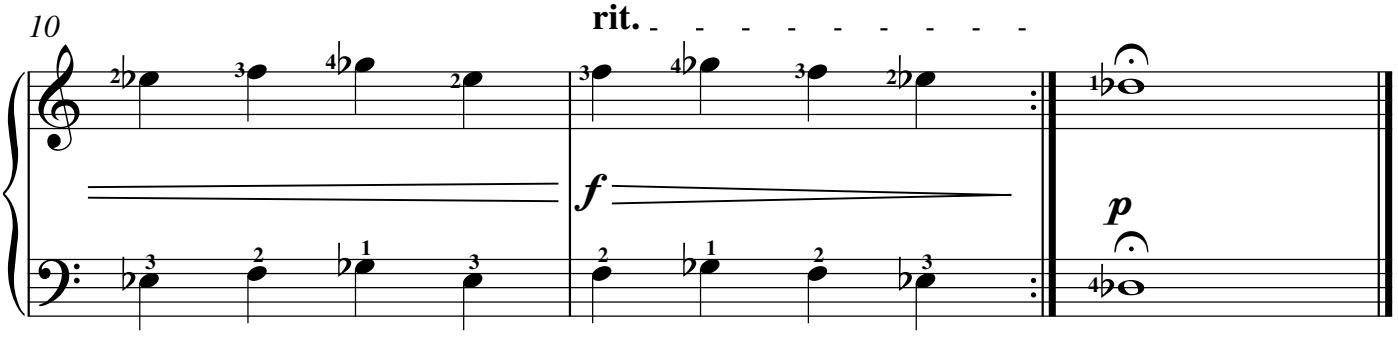
4 (simile)



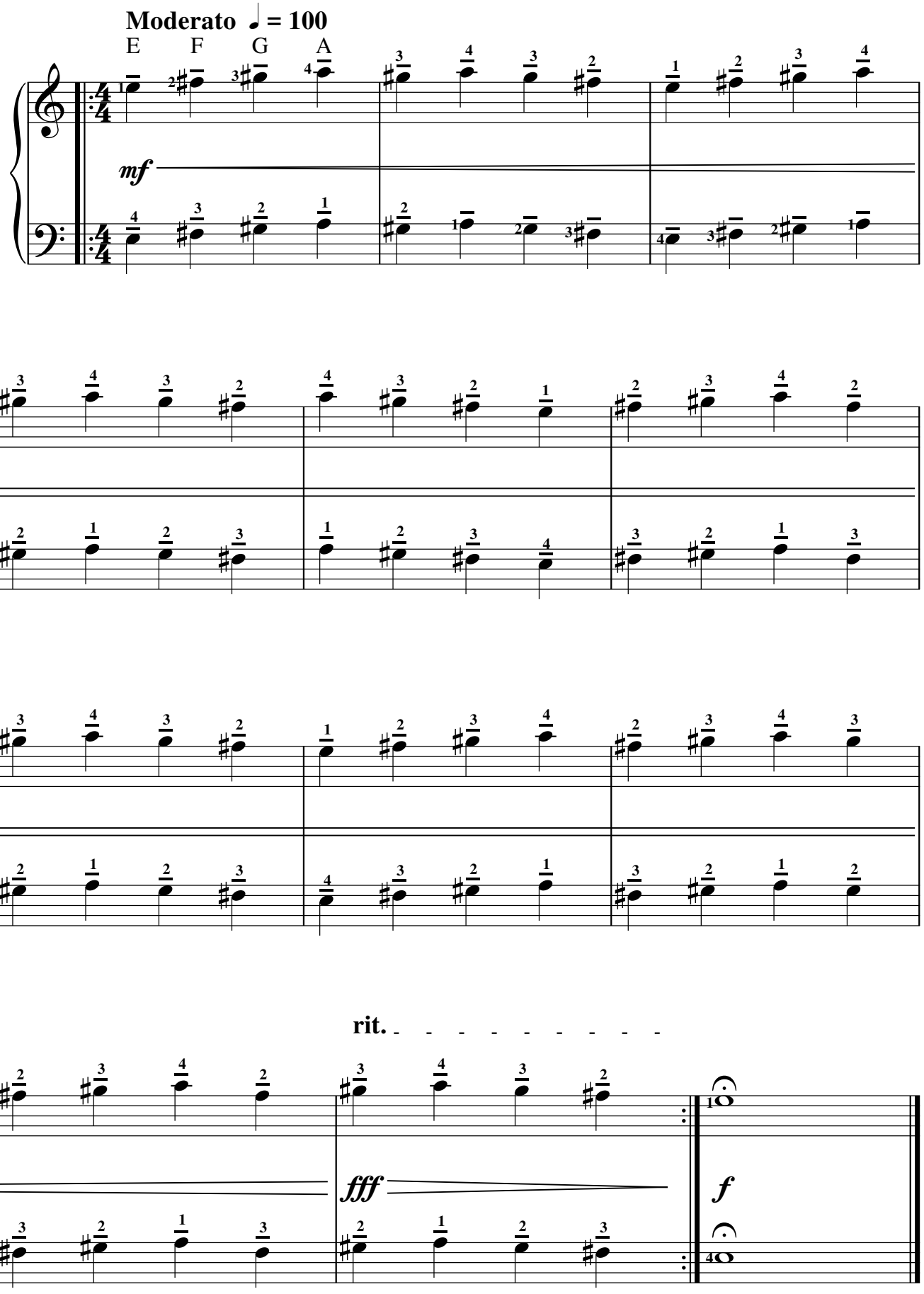
7



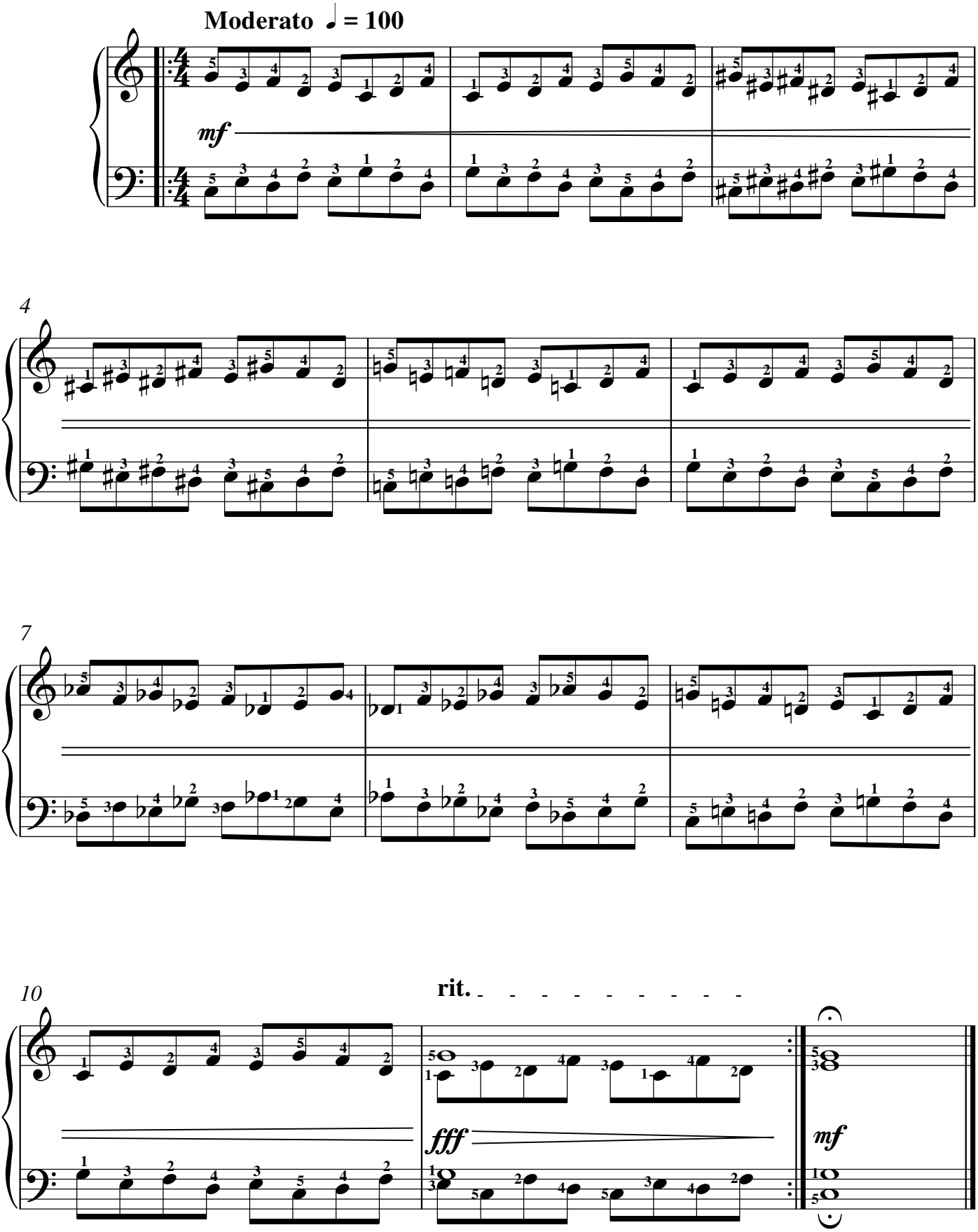
10 **rit.**



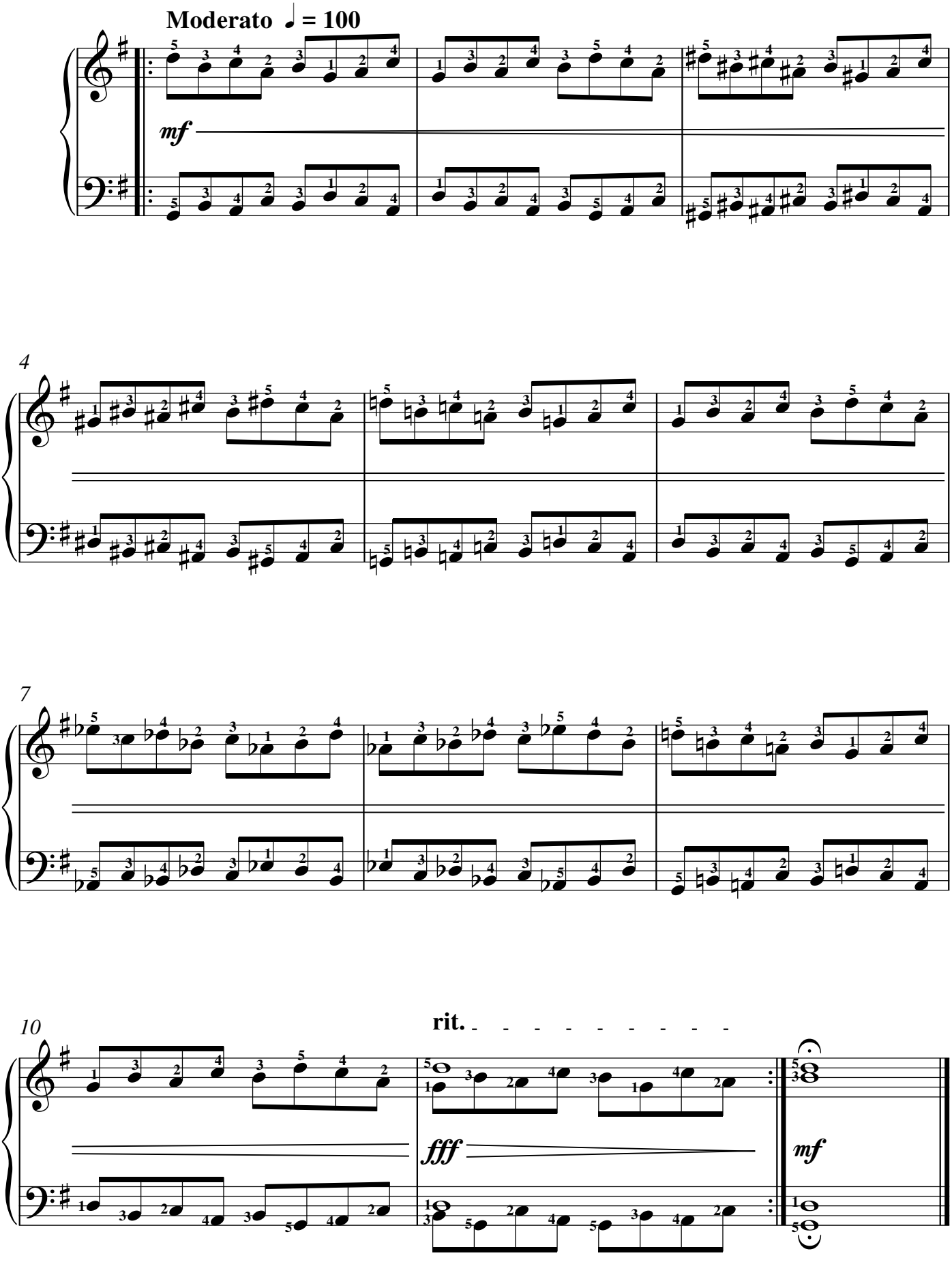
22
Feuilles d'Automes



23
Le Train



24
L'Hélicoptère



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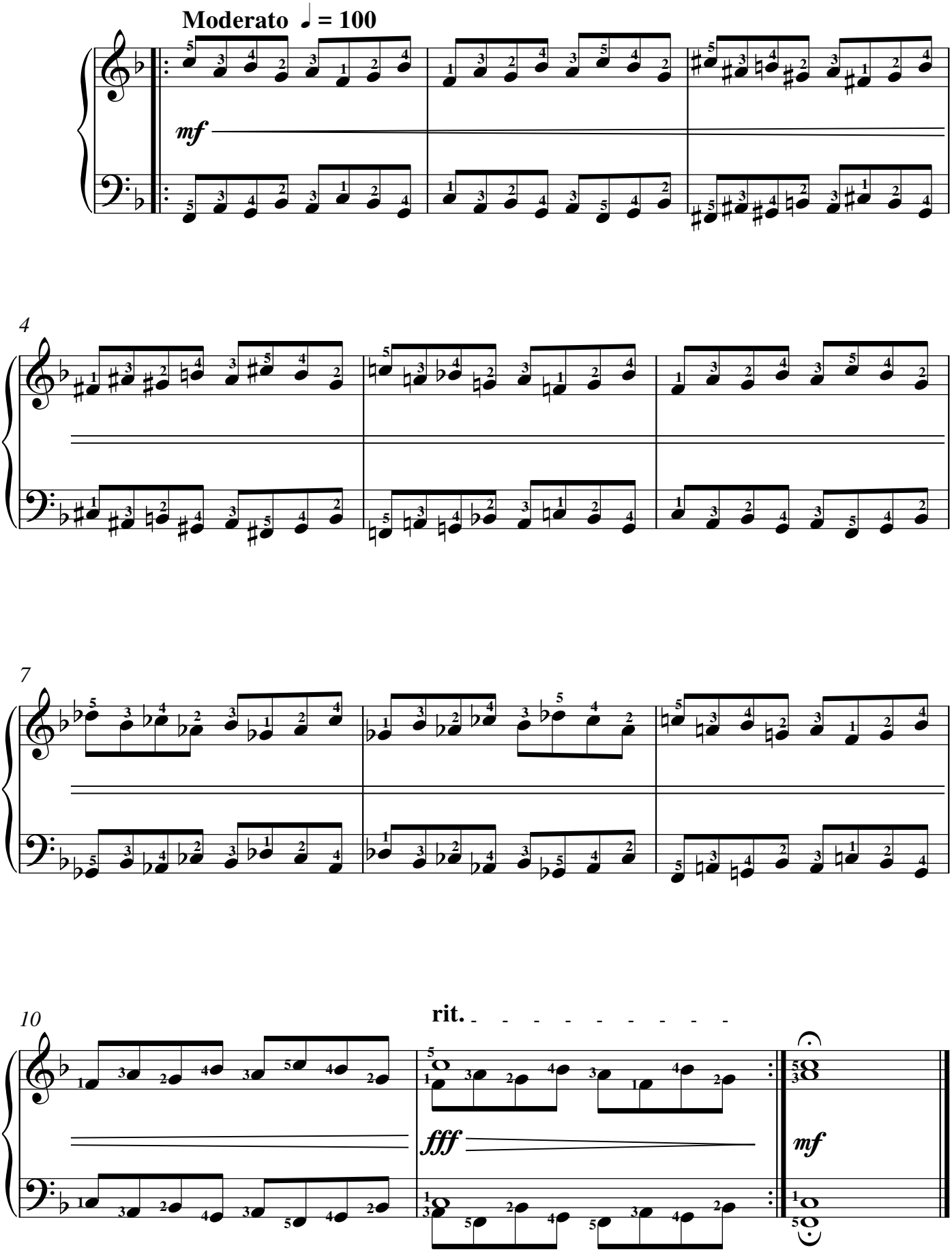
Le Moulin



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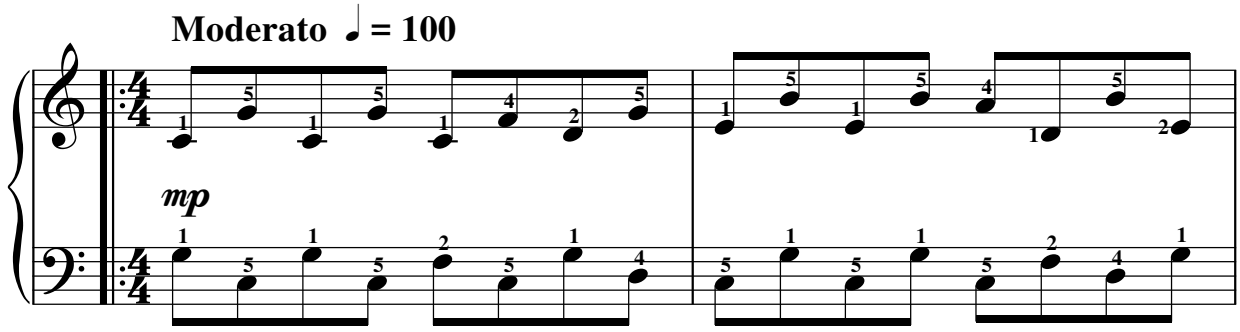
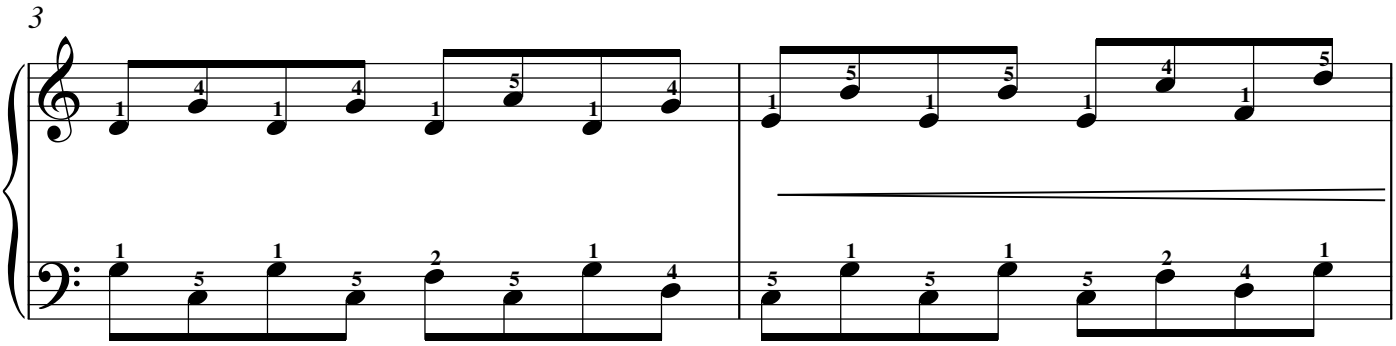
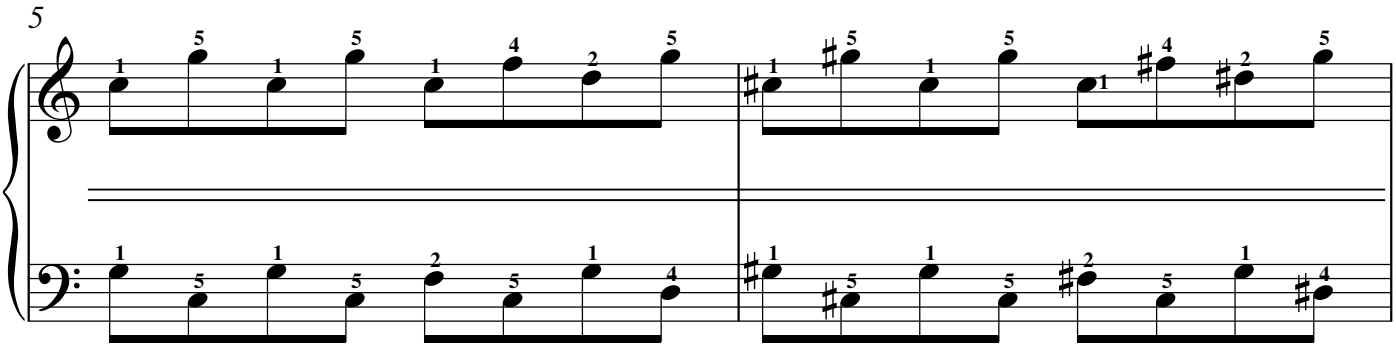
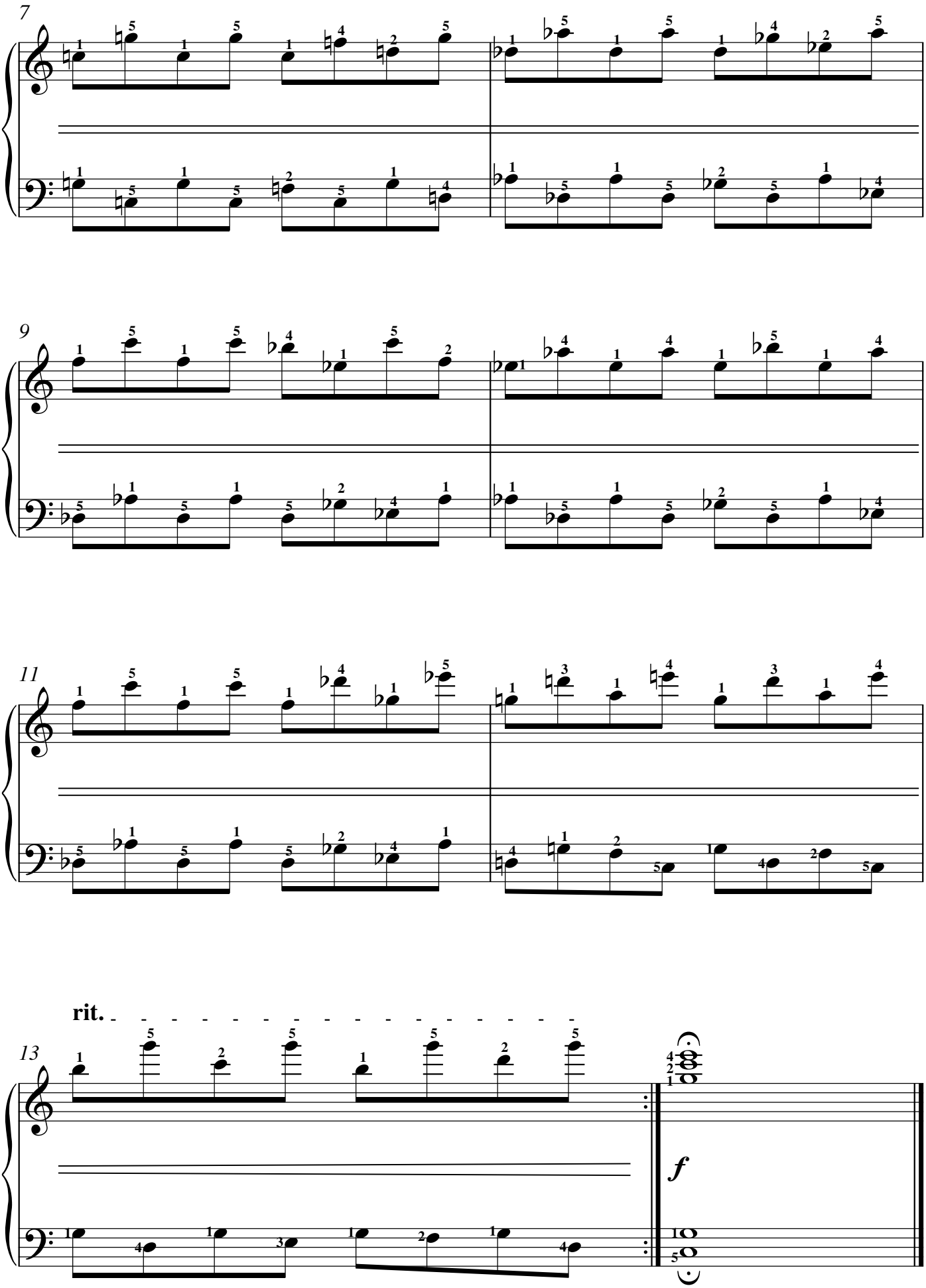
Le Château-Fort





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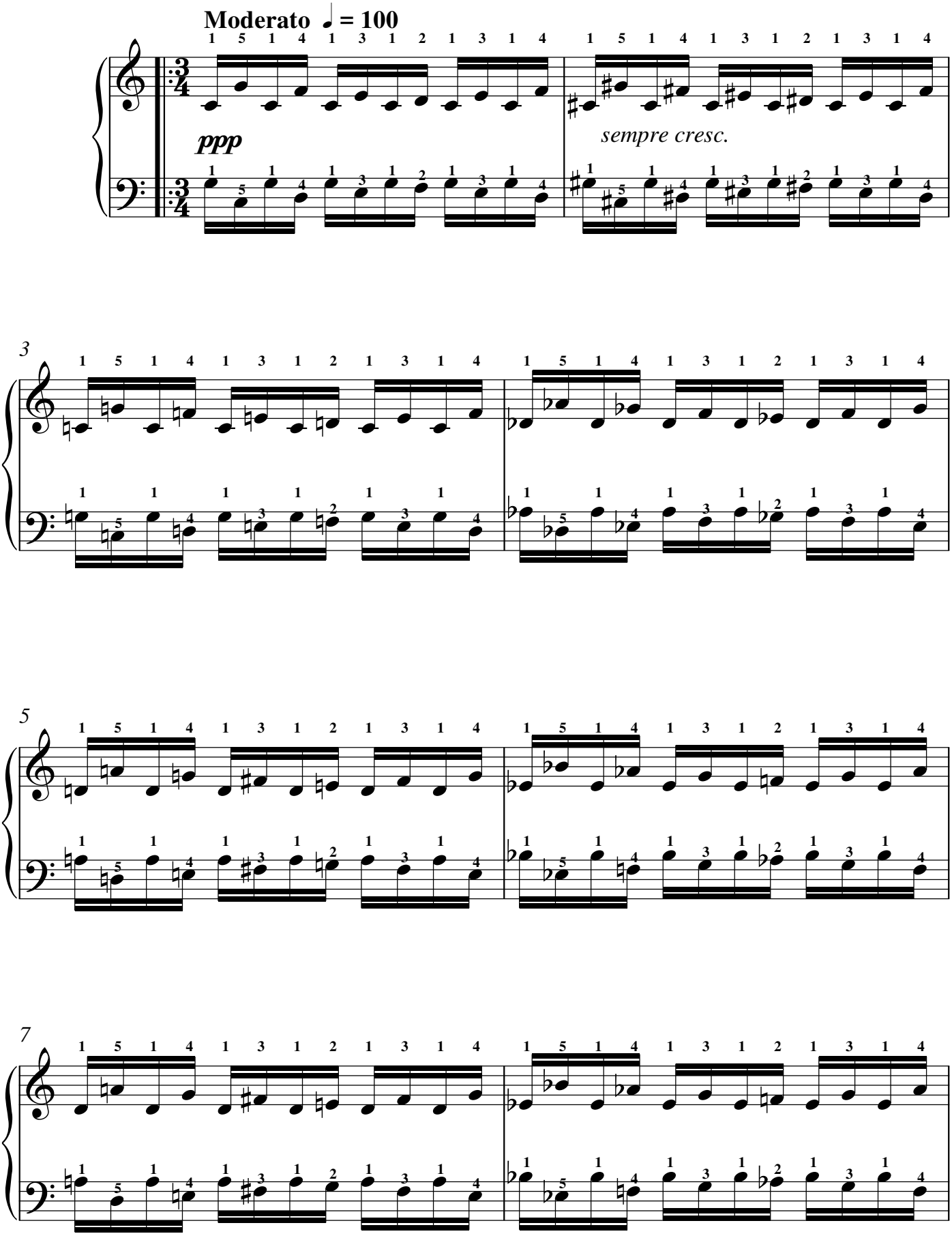
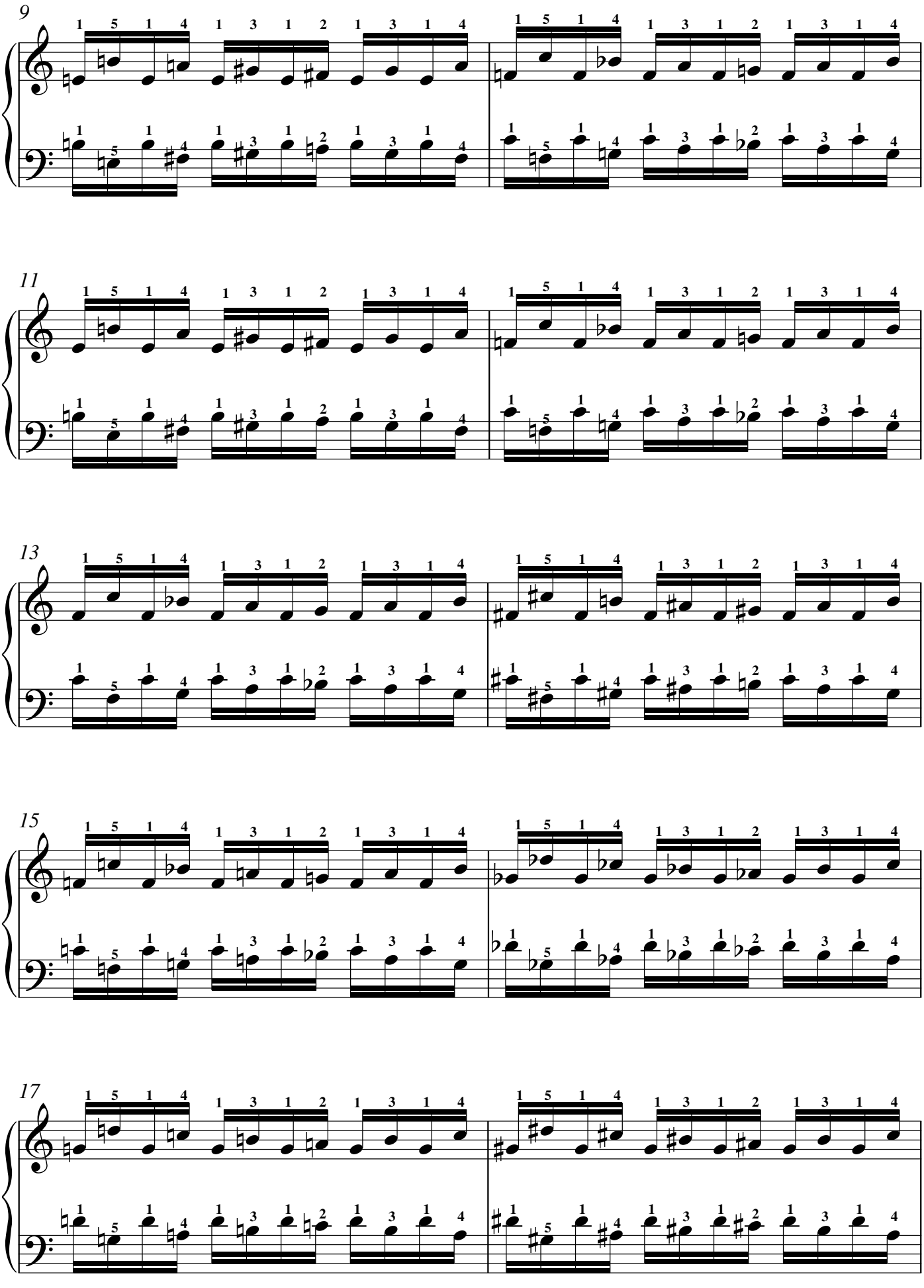
Le Torrent

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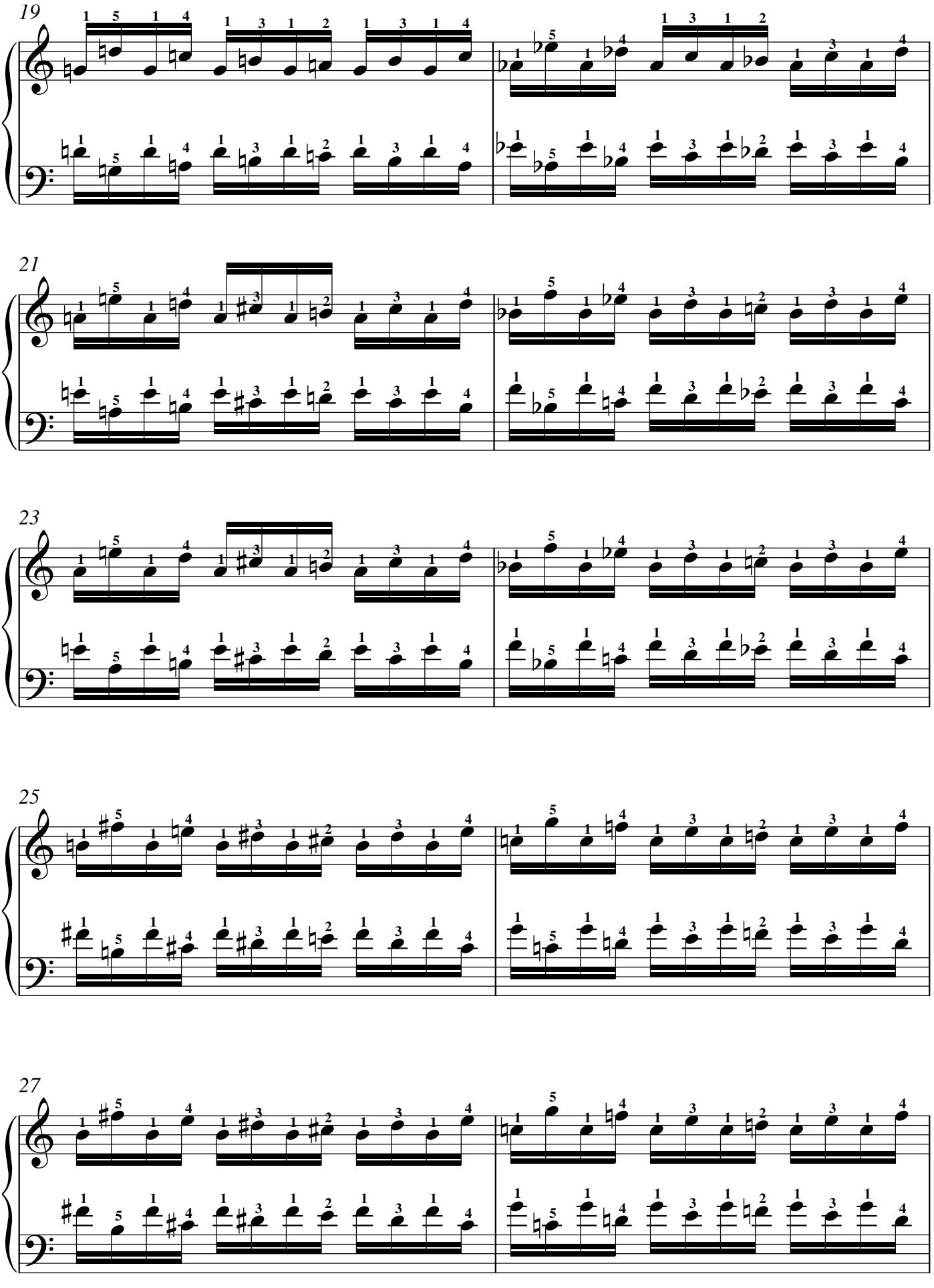
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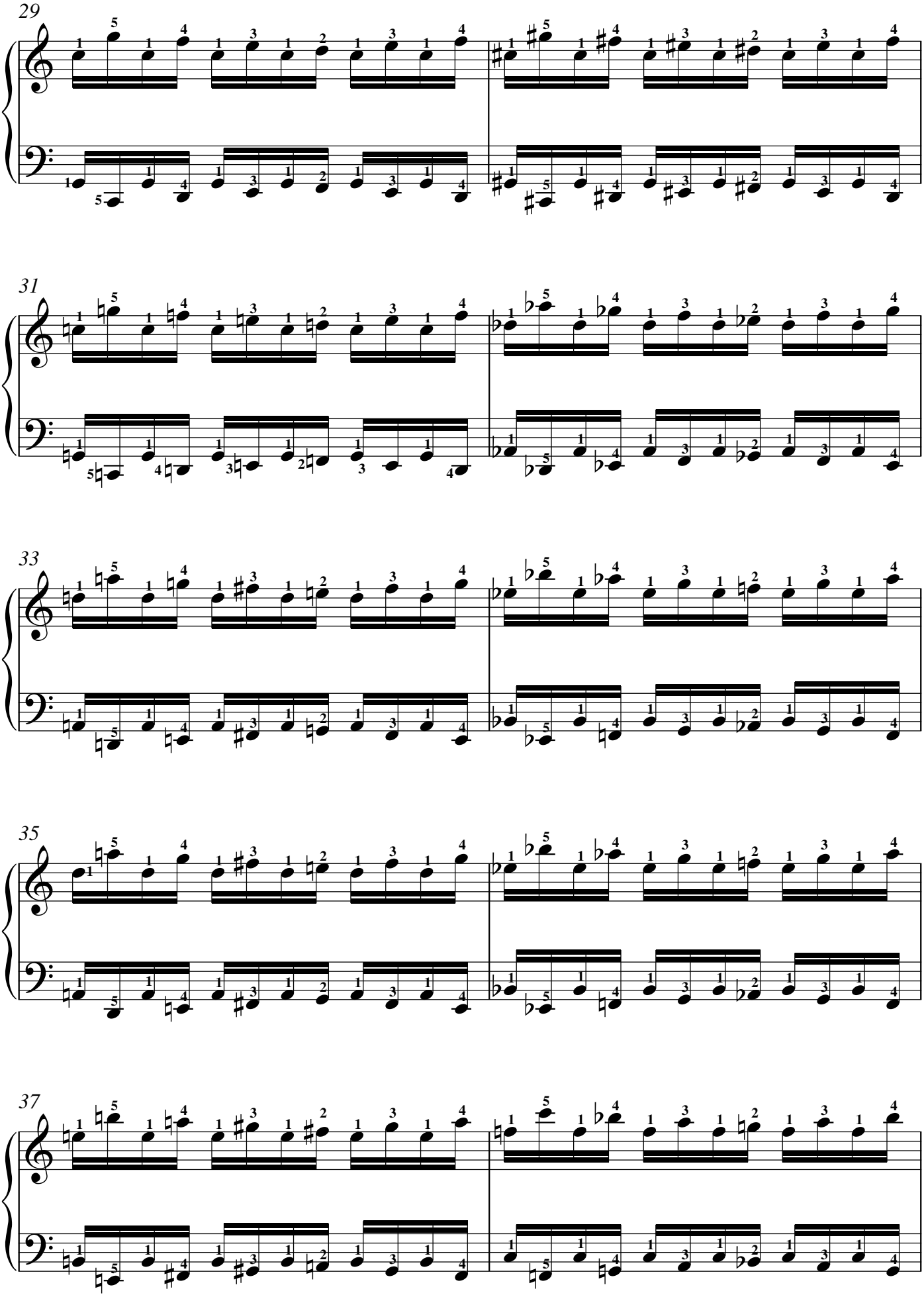
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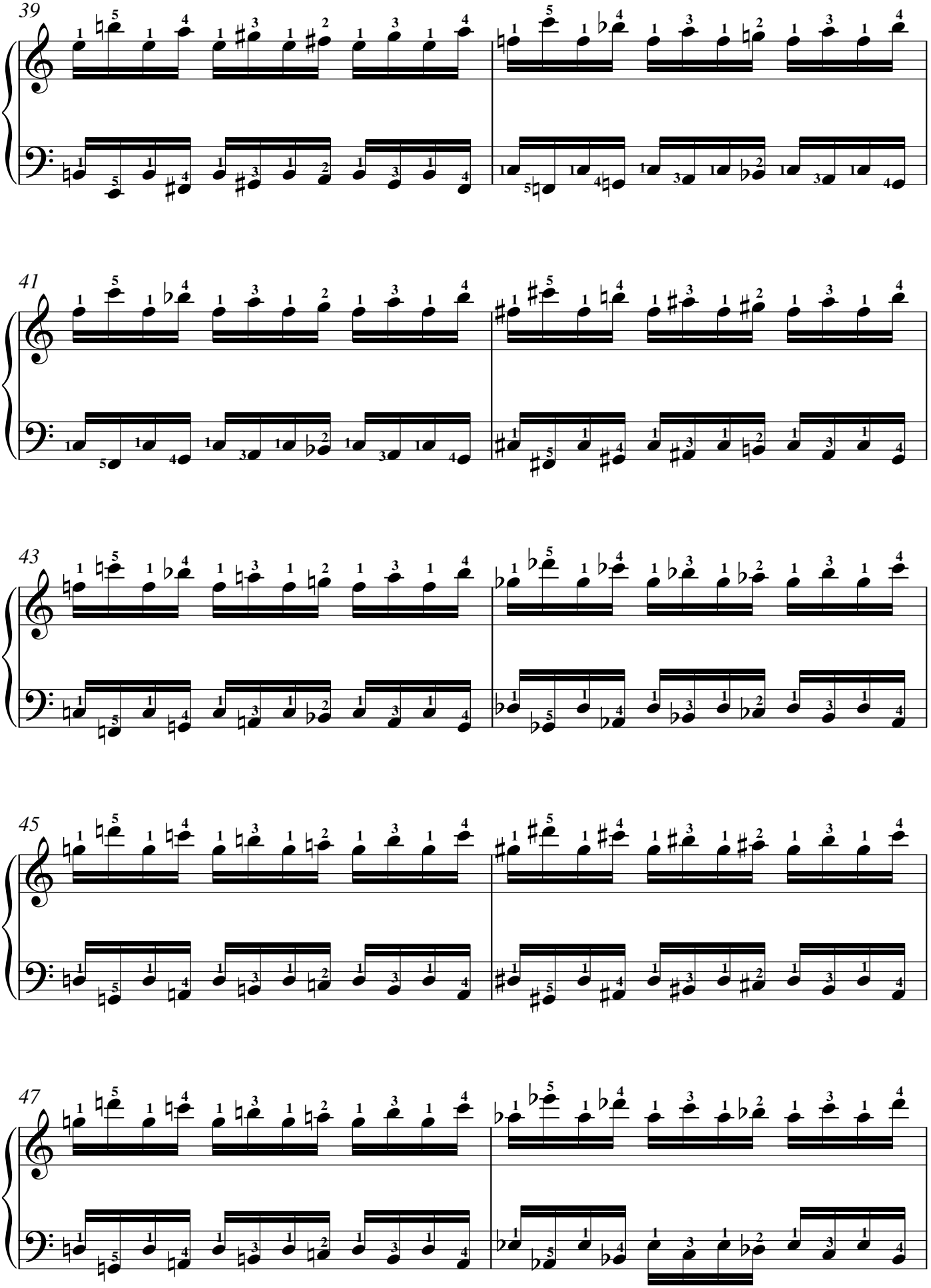
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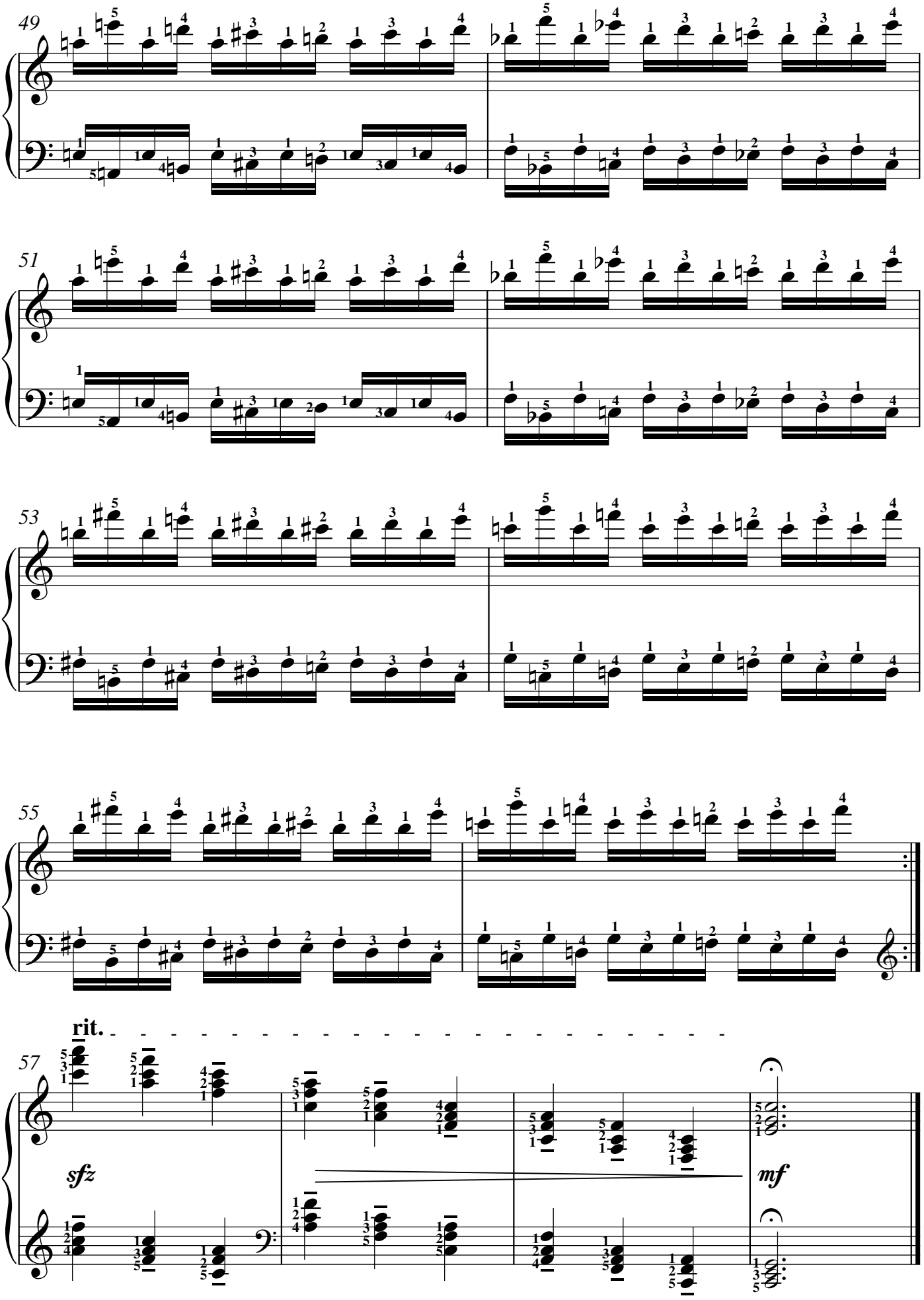
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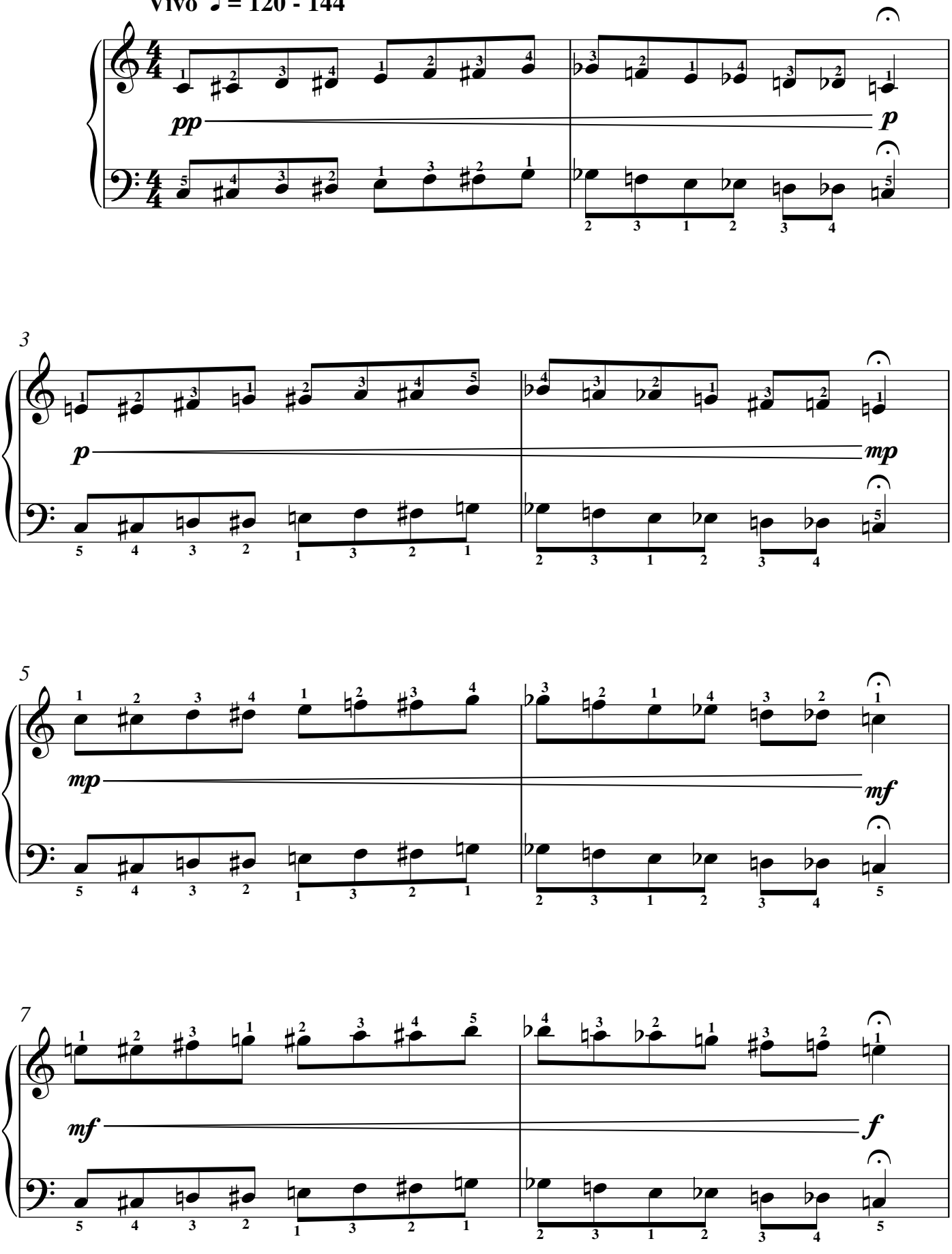
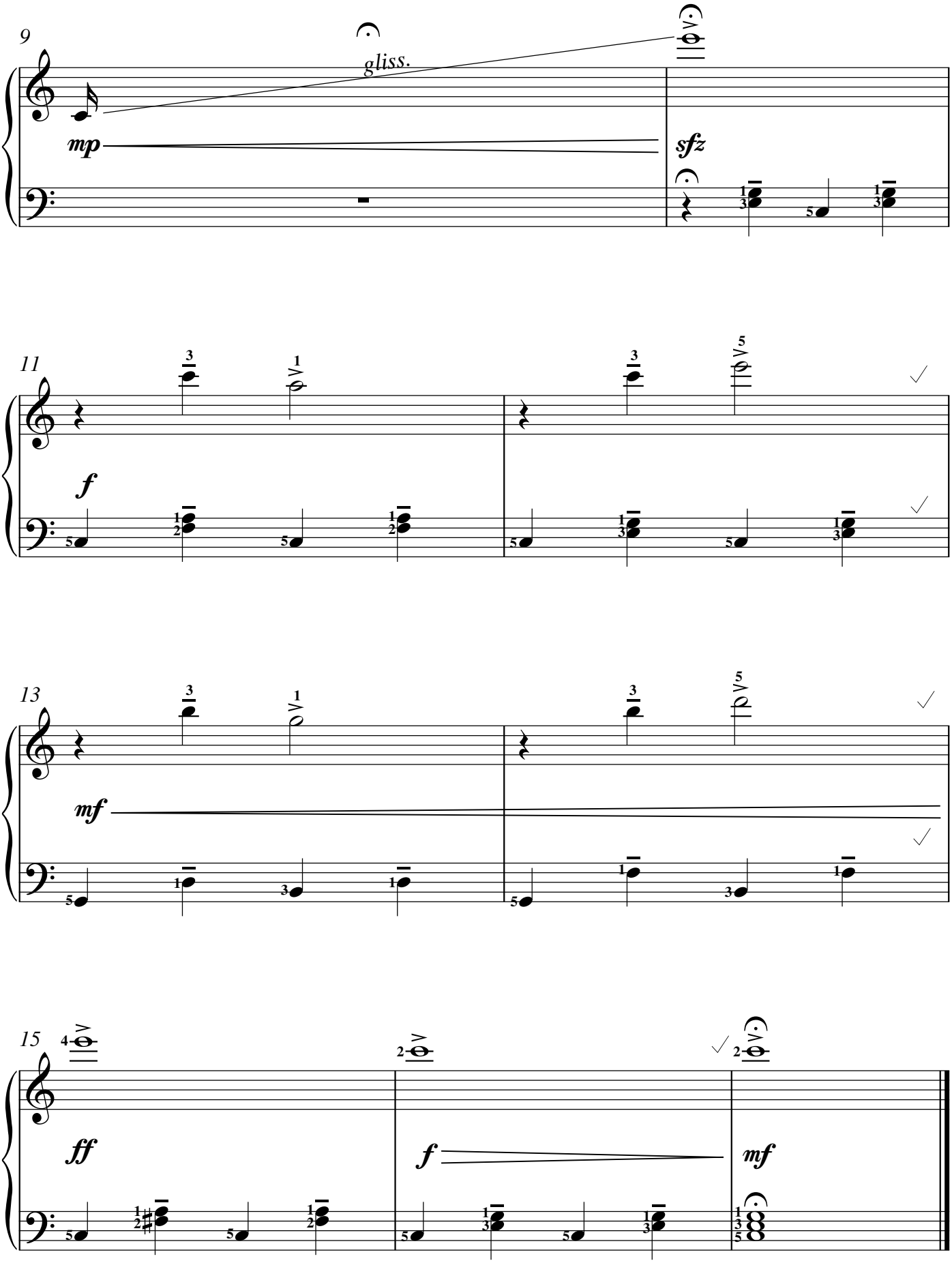
Premier Solo

Vivo ♩ = 120 - 144

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