“Birthday Suite”
Suite in d for Keyboard in the Baroque Style

Composed by James McGowan

Dedicated to Céline McGowan on her 76th birthday

incorporating the melody “Good Morning to All,” also known as
“Happy Birthday to You,” composed by Patty Hill and Mildred J. Hill (1893)

Prelude
Fugue
Allemande (Canon)
Courante (Corrente)
Sarabande
Gavotte I
Gavotte II
Gigue

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The **Suite in d** or **"Birthday Suite"** is composed for piano but could be performed on a harpsichord (with an extended range of A1 to G6). Written in the Baroque style, it emulates stylistic practices of J.S. Bach and his contemporaries, in addition to invoking post-Baroque practices by composers such as Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, and others.

The movements model the Baroque Suite's typical sequence of dance forms, which generally follow that of Allemande–Courante–Sarabande–Gigue. Bach would typically include additional dance movements between the Sarabande and Gigue, often in complementary pairs such as this suite's inclusion of two Gavottes with the first Gavotte *da capo*. Suites are usually introduced with a Prelude preceding the Allemande. Because of Bach's extensive writing of Prelude and Fugue pairings—such as the famous "48" in the Well-Tempered Clavier—this suite not only includes a Prelude but also a four-voice Fugue that immediately follows it.

The choice to exclude dynamic indications, pedalling, as well as other interpretive information such as tempo indications, metronome markings, and some articulations, is intentional. Not only does this follow Baroque practice—partly because performance on harpsichord doesn't allow dynamic shading—but it also allows the performer to execute their own sense of expressive interpretation. While it is important to follow the articulations, ornaments, and other indications that are included, the performer should feel free to use a full range of ornamentation, dynamics, logical choices in articulation, and other expressive strategies, particularly in repeated sections.

Composers such as Bach commonly used the Baroque practice of incorporating pre-existing melodies, often hymn tunes, into their contrapuntal writing in Chorale Preludes. While these sacred works were not included in suites, which are secular and more dance-like, this suite combines the two practices. This suite takes the melody of "Happy Birthday"—originally composed as "Good Morning to You" in the 19th century—and uses it as melodic and motivic source material in constructing each of the movements. The melody is most clearly stated in the fugue, in which the embellished melody in its entirety serves as the fugue's subject. The entire melody is also presented in modified form in the Courante (in both minor and relative major keys) and the Gigue (in both original and inverted forms). All the movements prominently feature "Happy Birthday" motivic content in the construction of their main themes and developmental techniques. The Sarabande, however, uses only intervallic motives from the melody in an intentionally more subtle way to support its poignant expressive affect.

As a minor-key composition, it follows the Baroque practice of having each movement in the same key (or parallel major in the second of paired movements; in this case, the Fugue and Gavotte II). While the original melody is often considered trite as a simplistic 8-bar children's tune, it is nevertheless one of the most recognized songs throughout the world. The choice to set this tune in D minor key allows flexibility to also present it in a major key: the relative major key of F and parallel major key of D. Most importantly, this tonal framework imbues the movements with a wide range of expressive potential.

James McGowan, Ottawa Canada. August 1, 2020

Prelude

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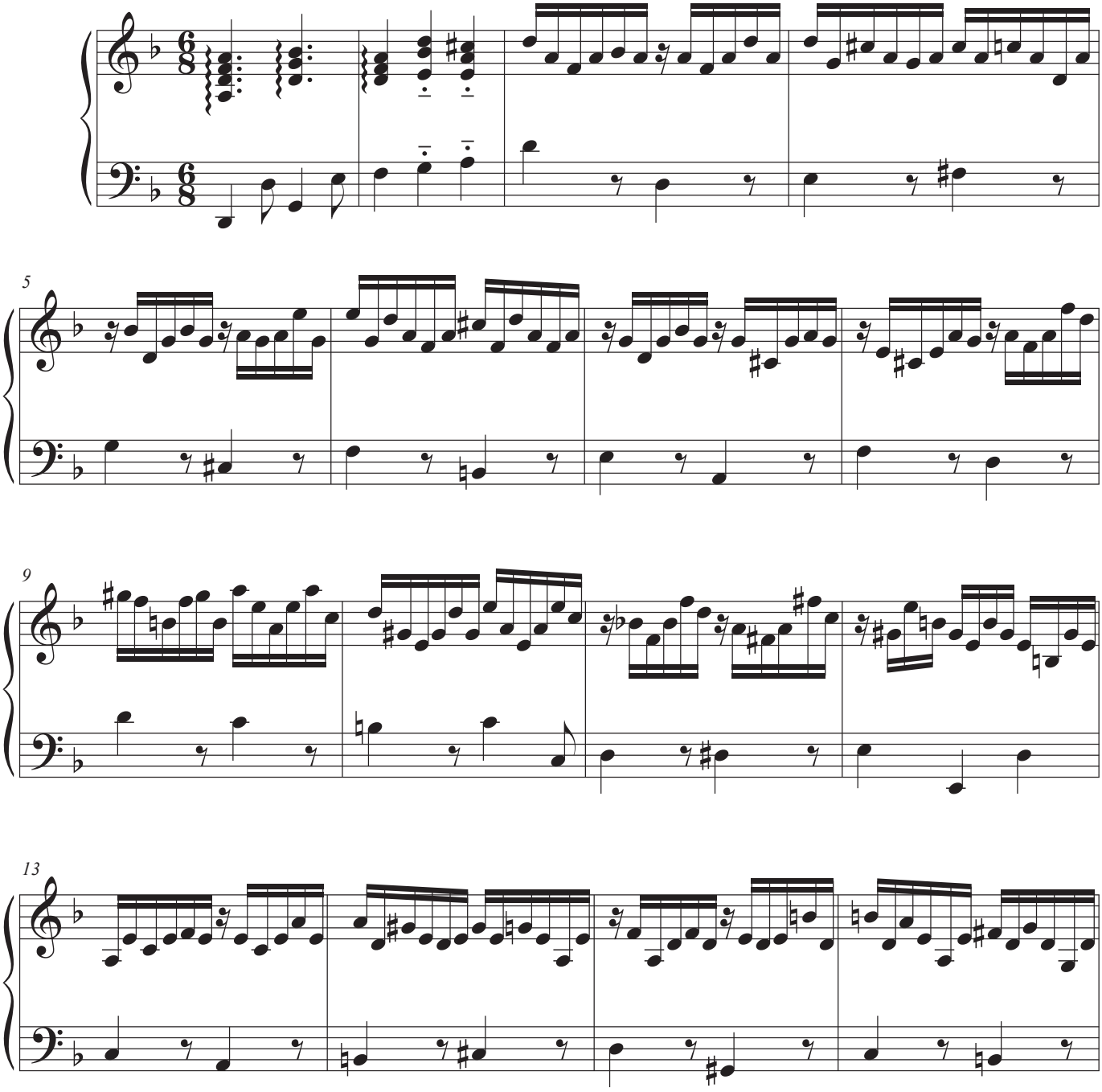
James McGowan

Allegro



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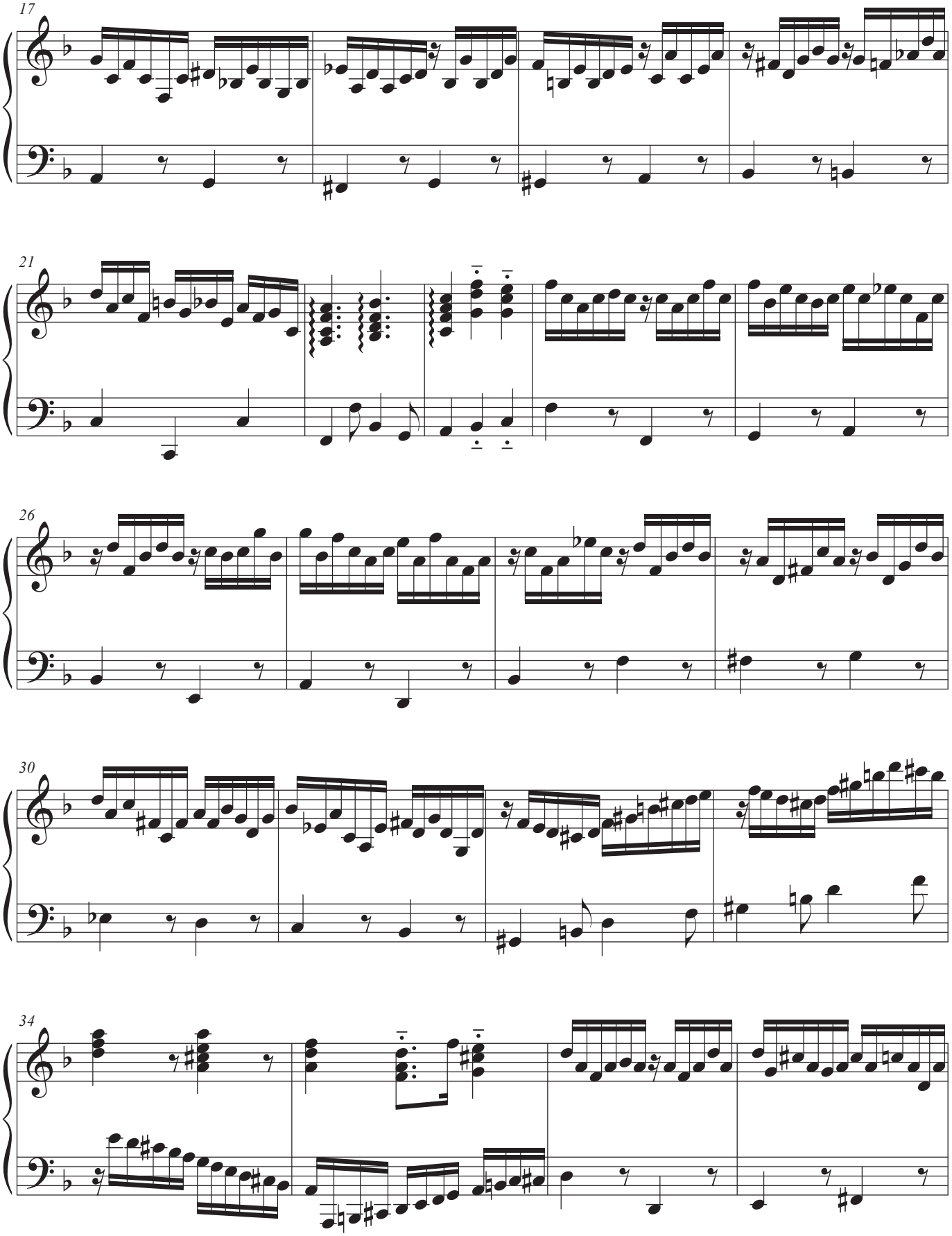
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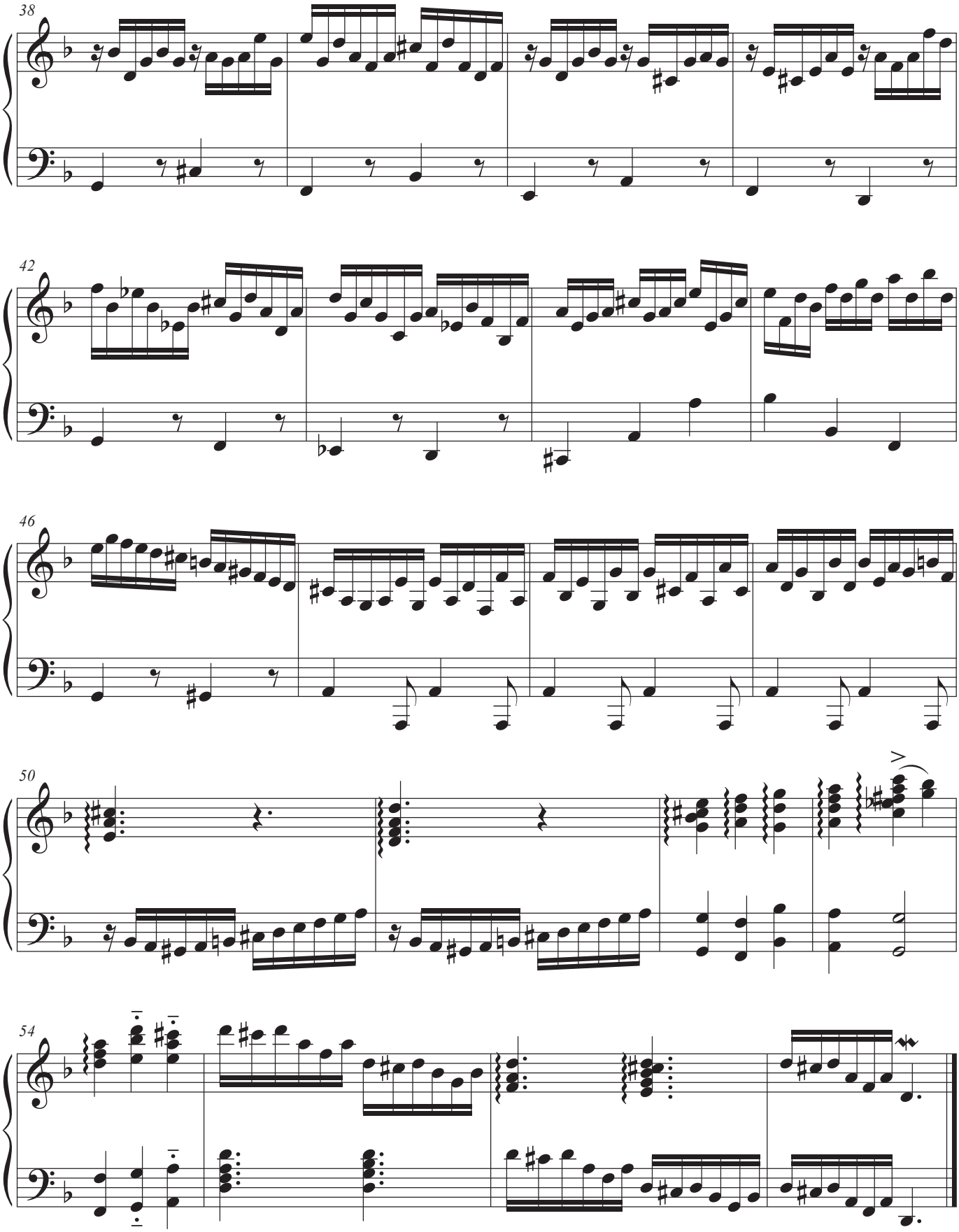
38
42
46
50
54

Fugue

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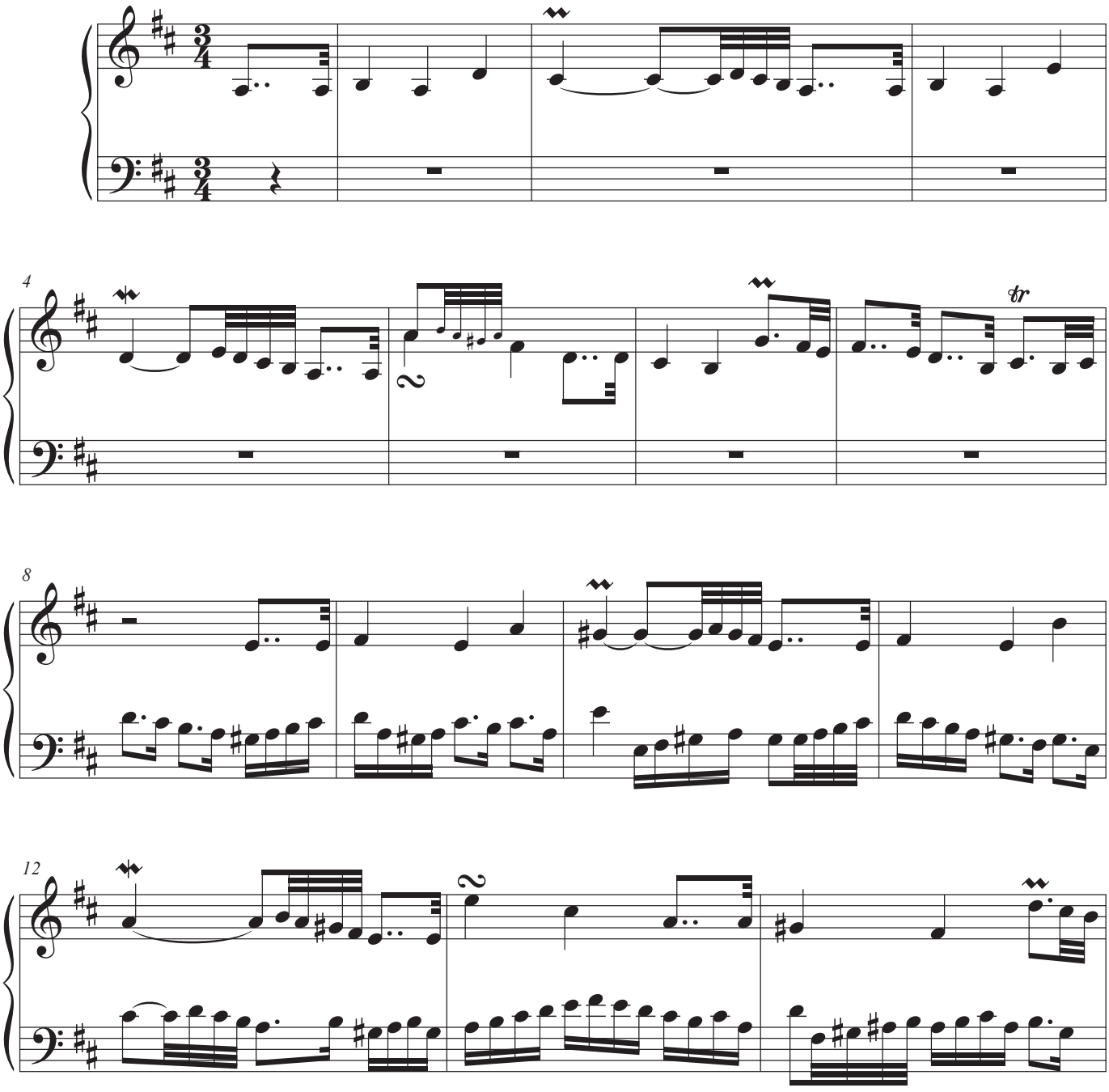
Maestoso



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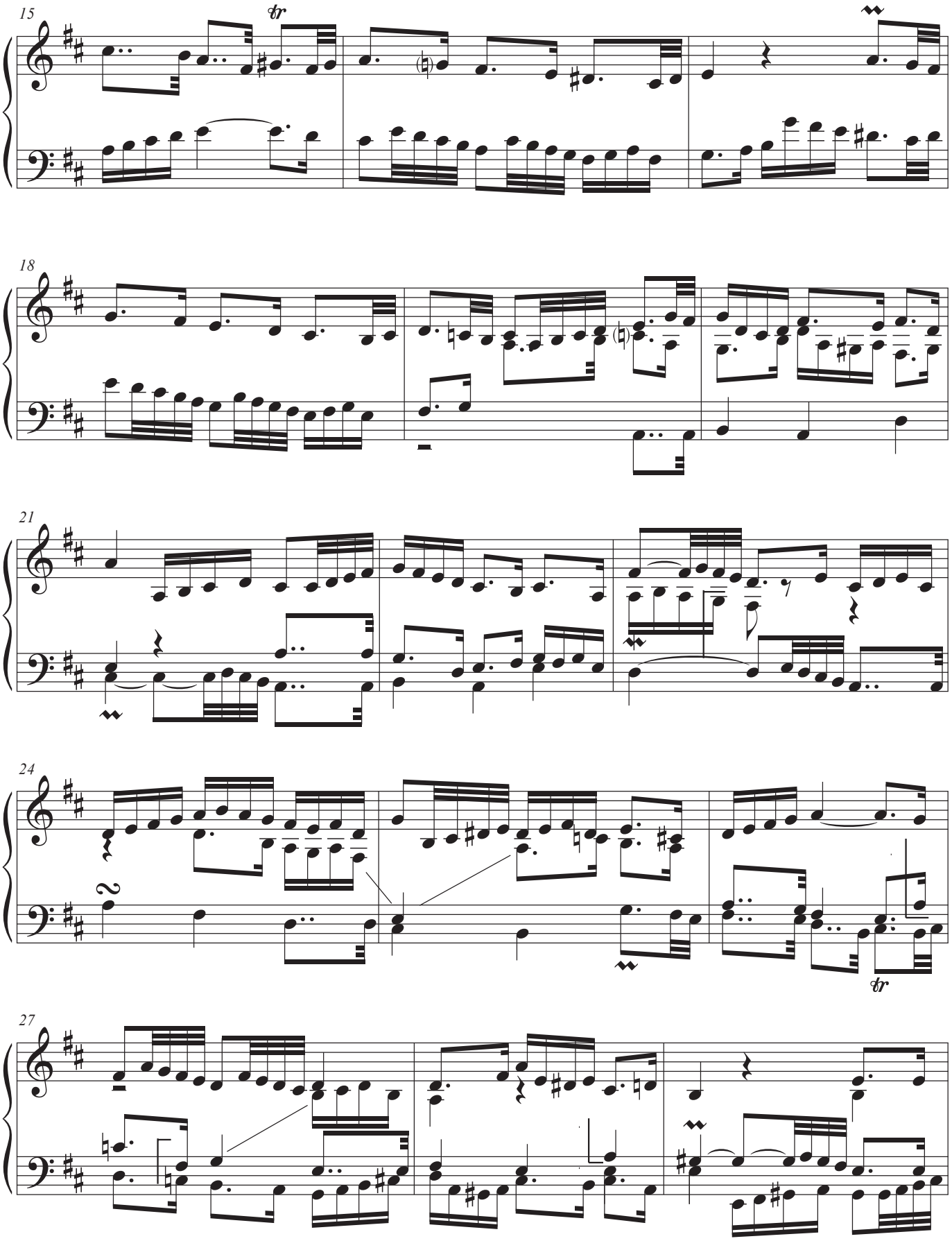
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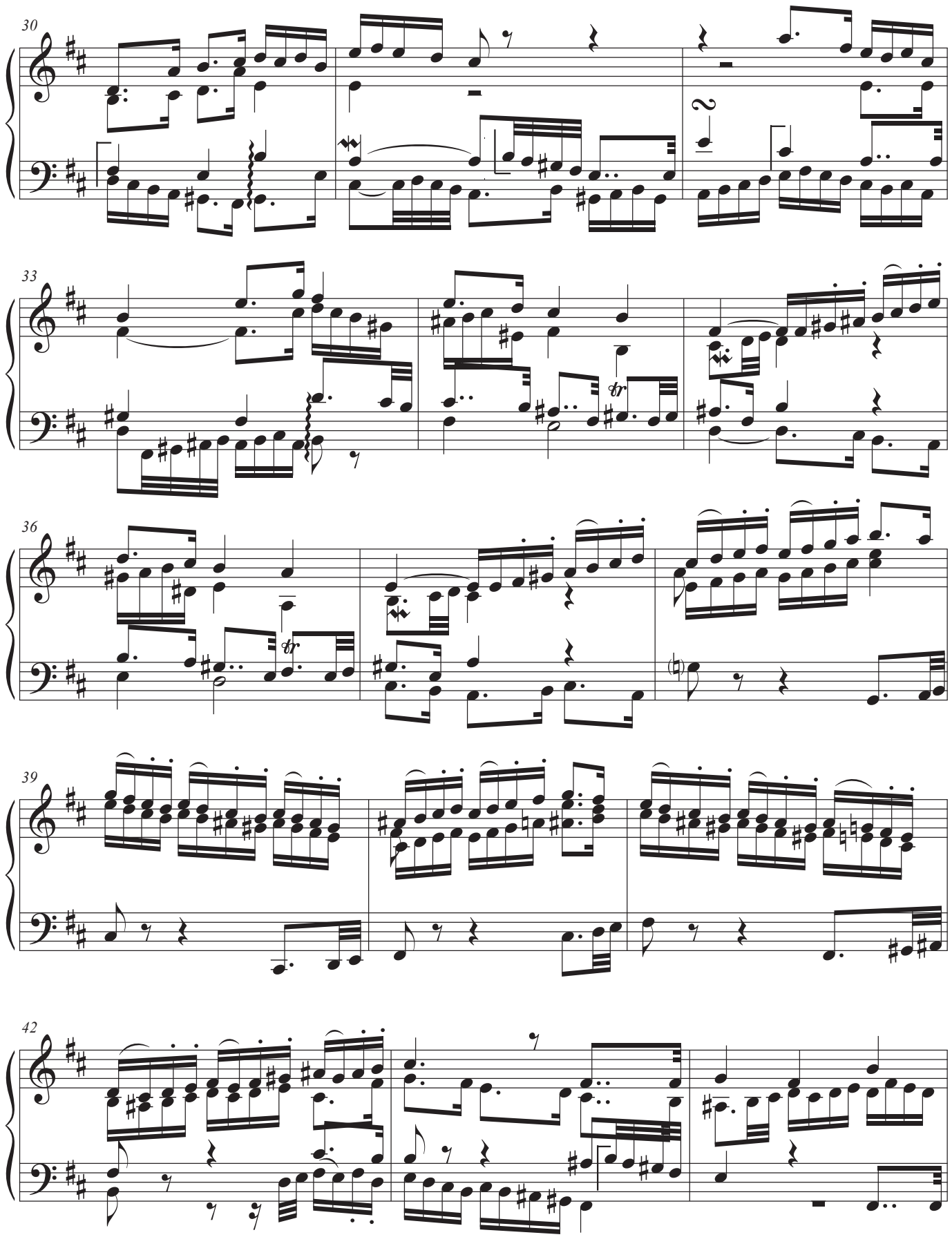
24
27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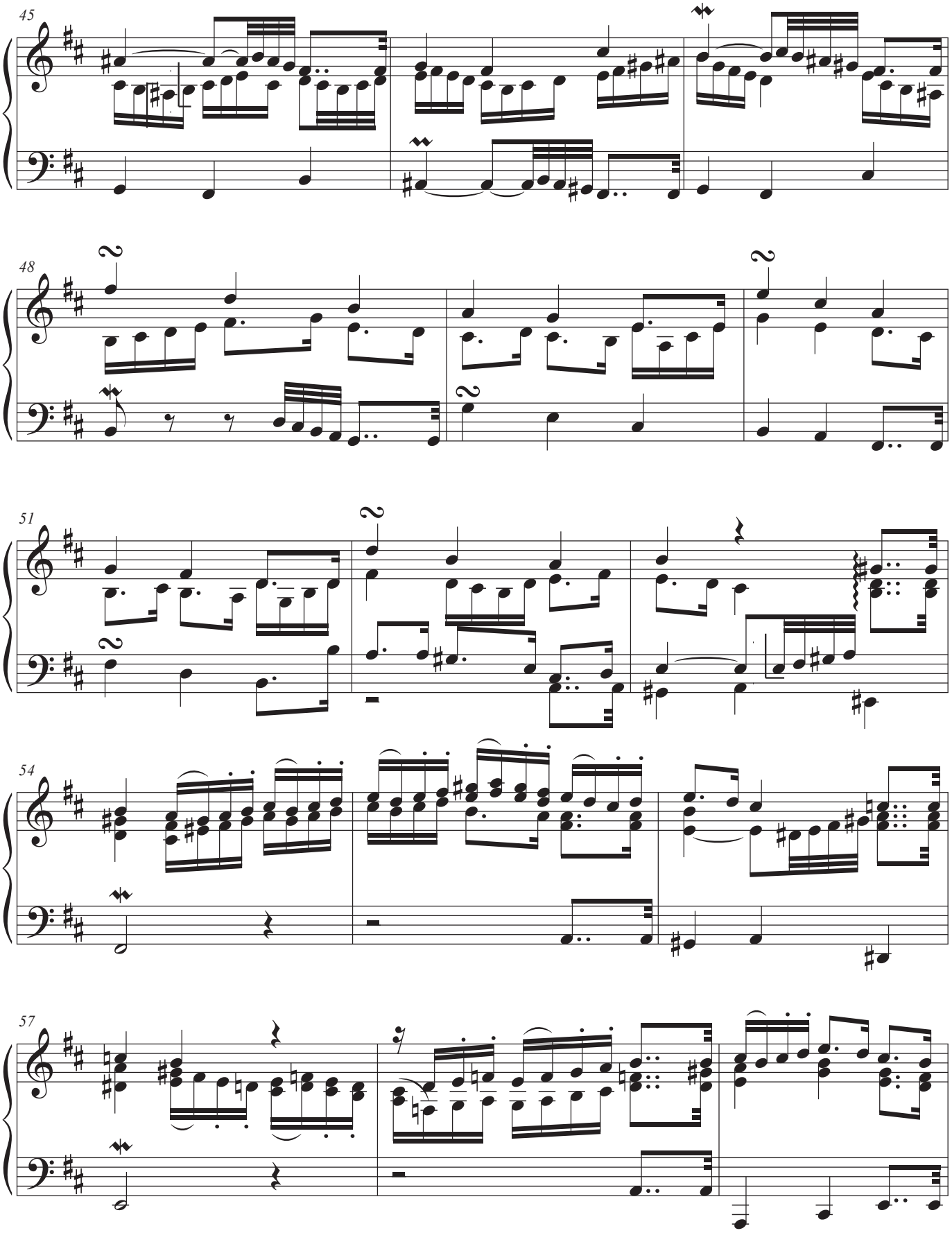
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48
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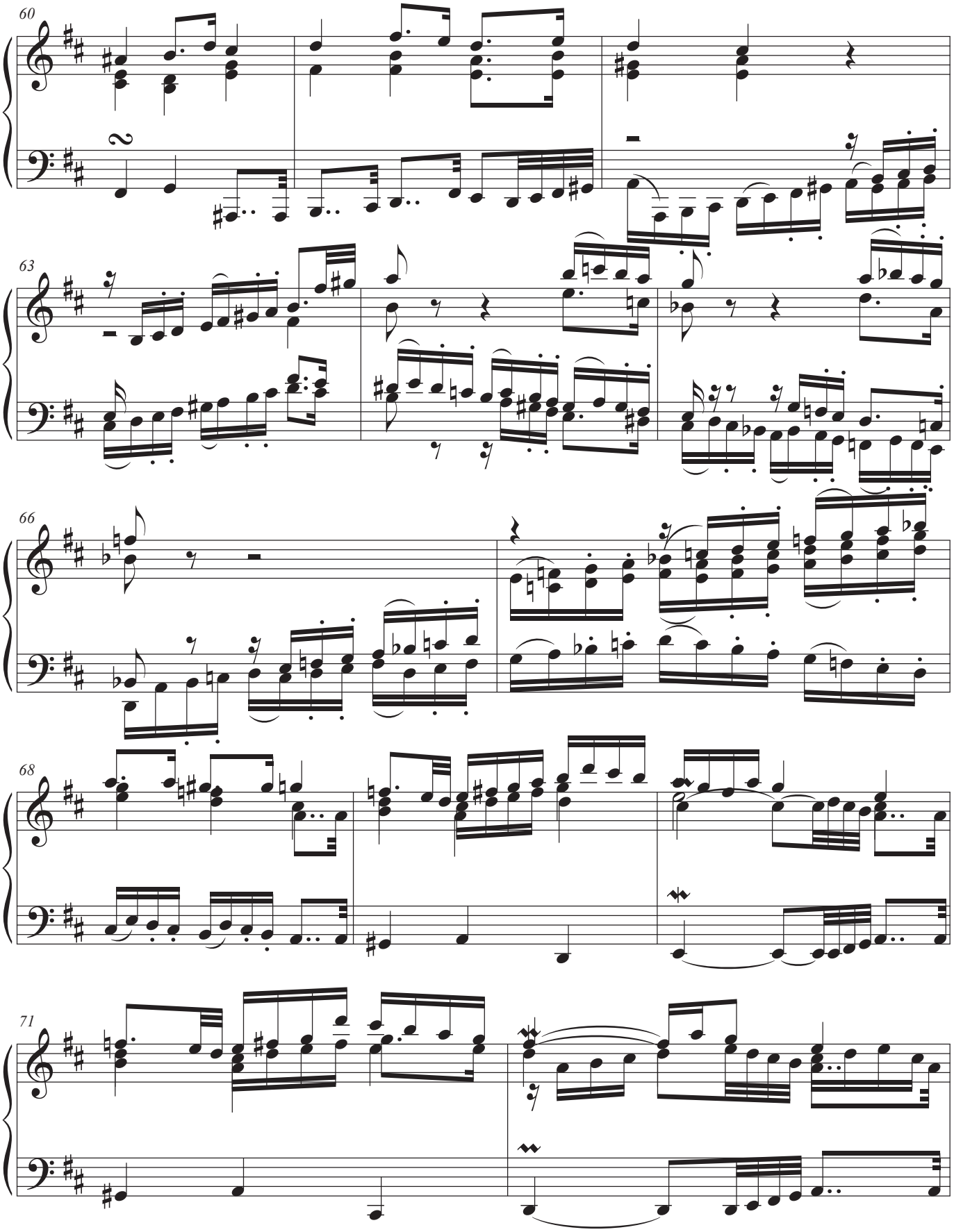
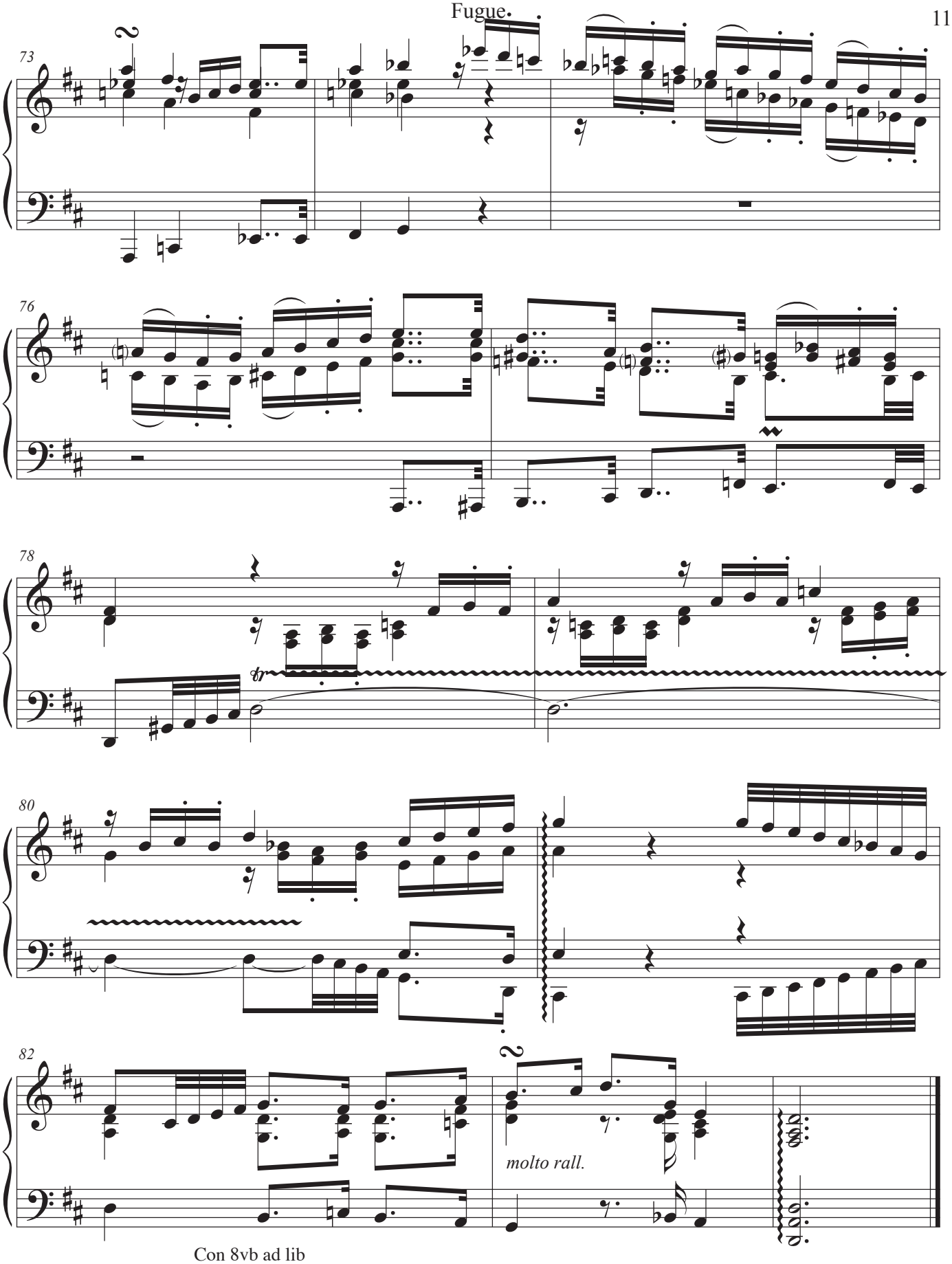
57


60
63
66
68
71


73
76
78
tr
80
82
molto rall.
Con 8vb ad lib

Allemande (Canon)

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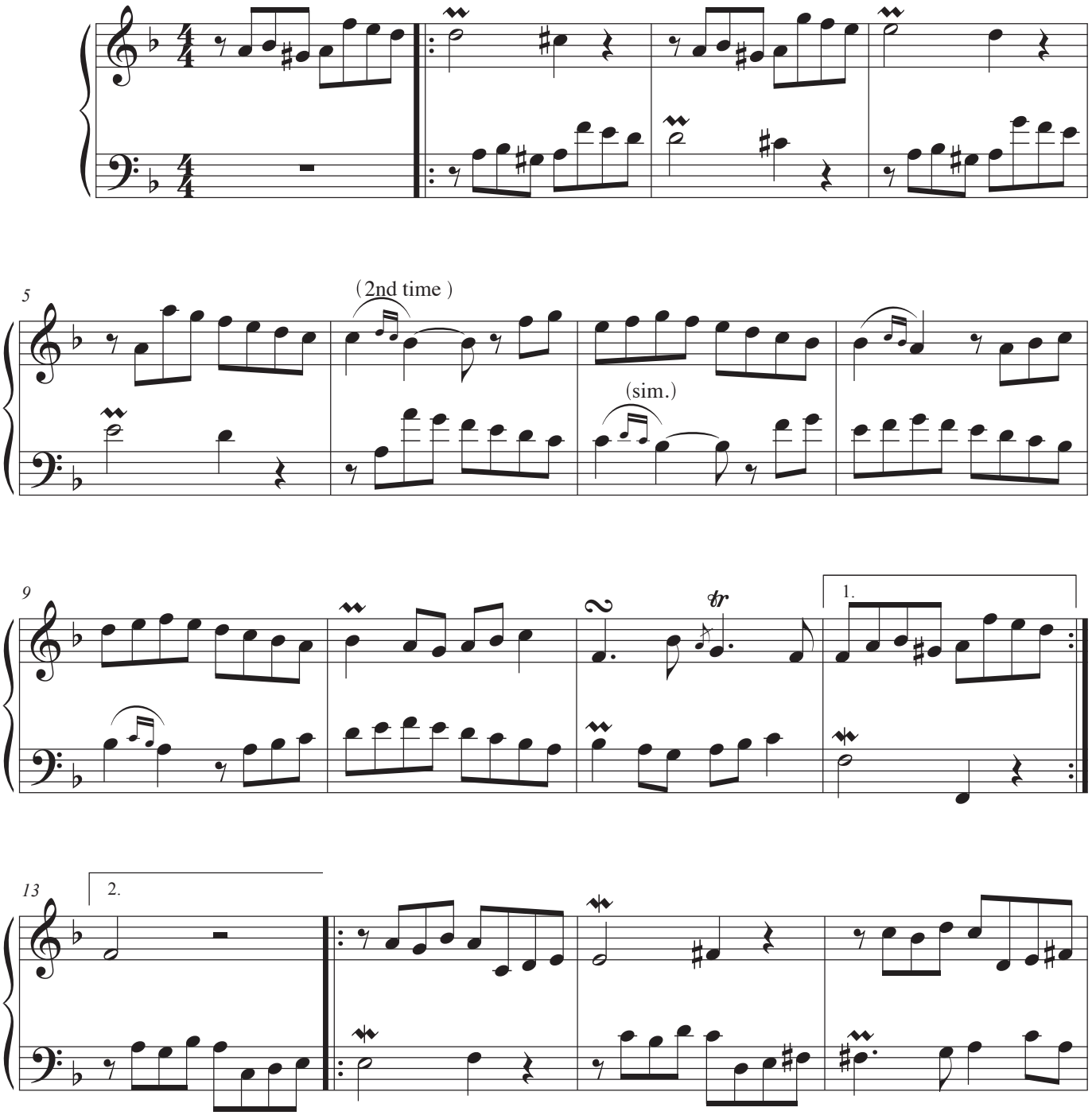
Allegro moderato



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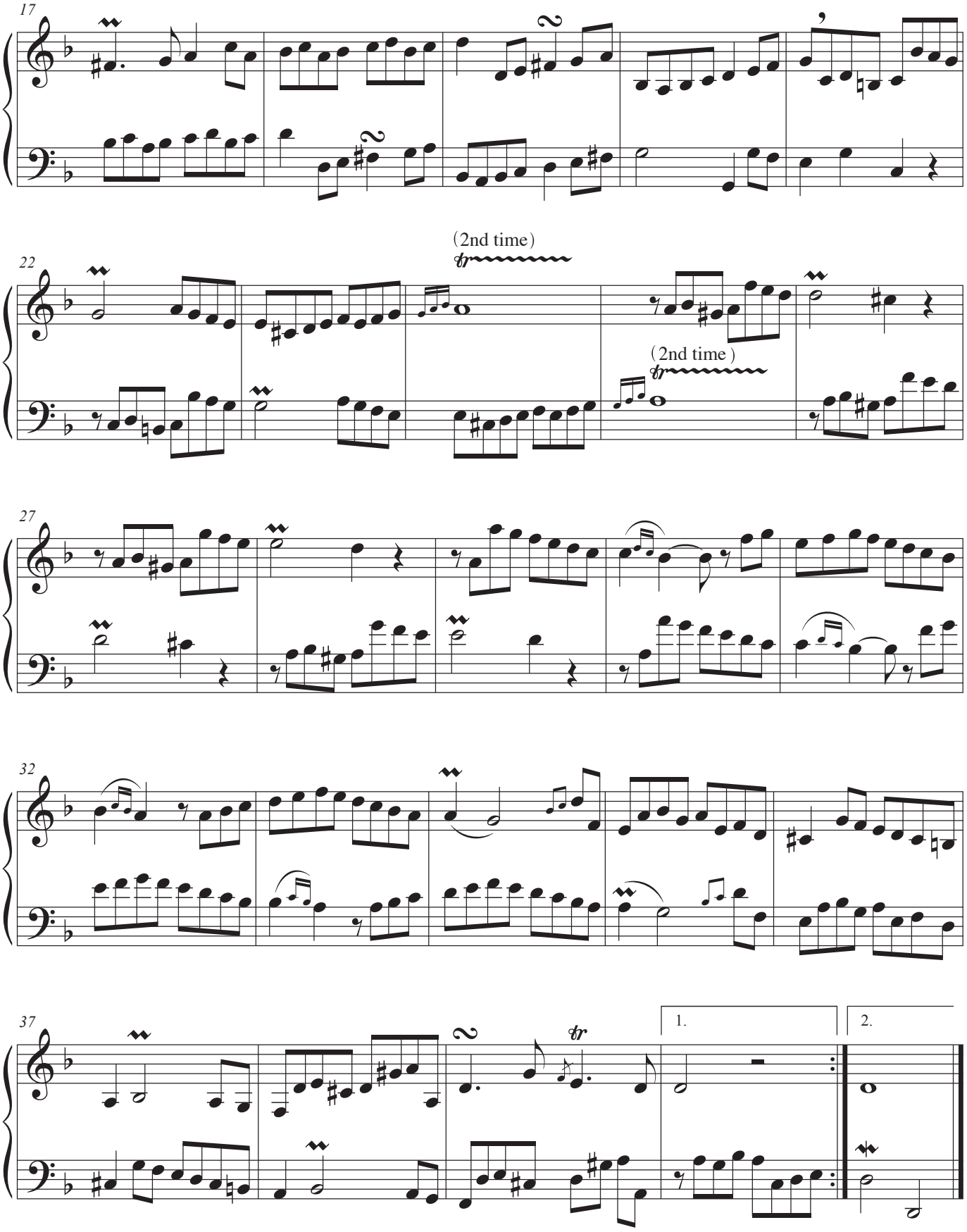
17
22
(2nd time)
(2nd time)
27
32
37
1.
2.

Courante (Corrente)

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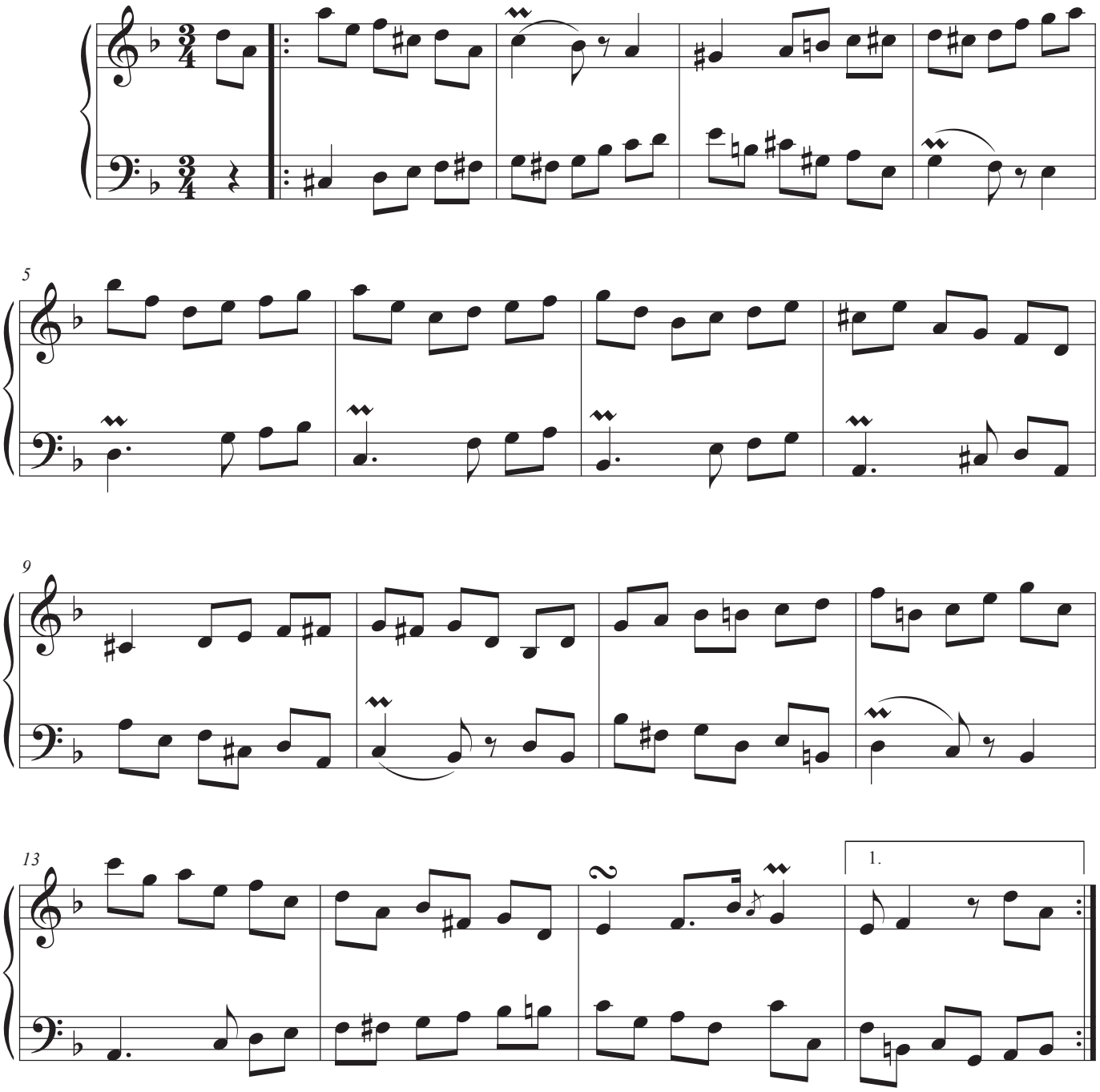
Allegro



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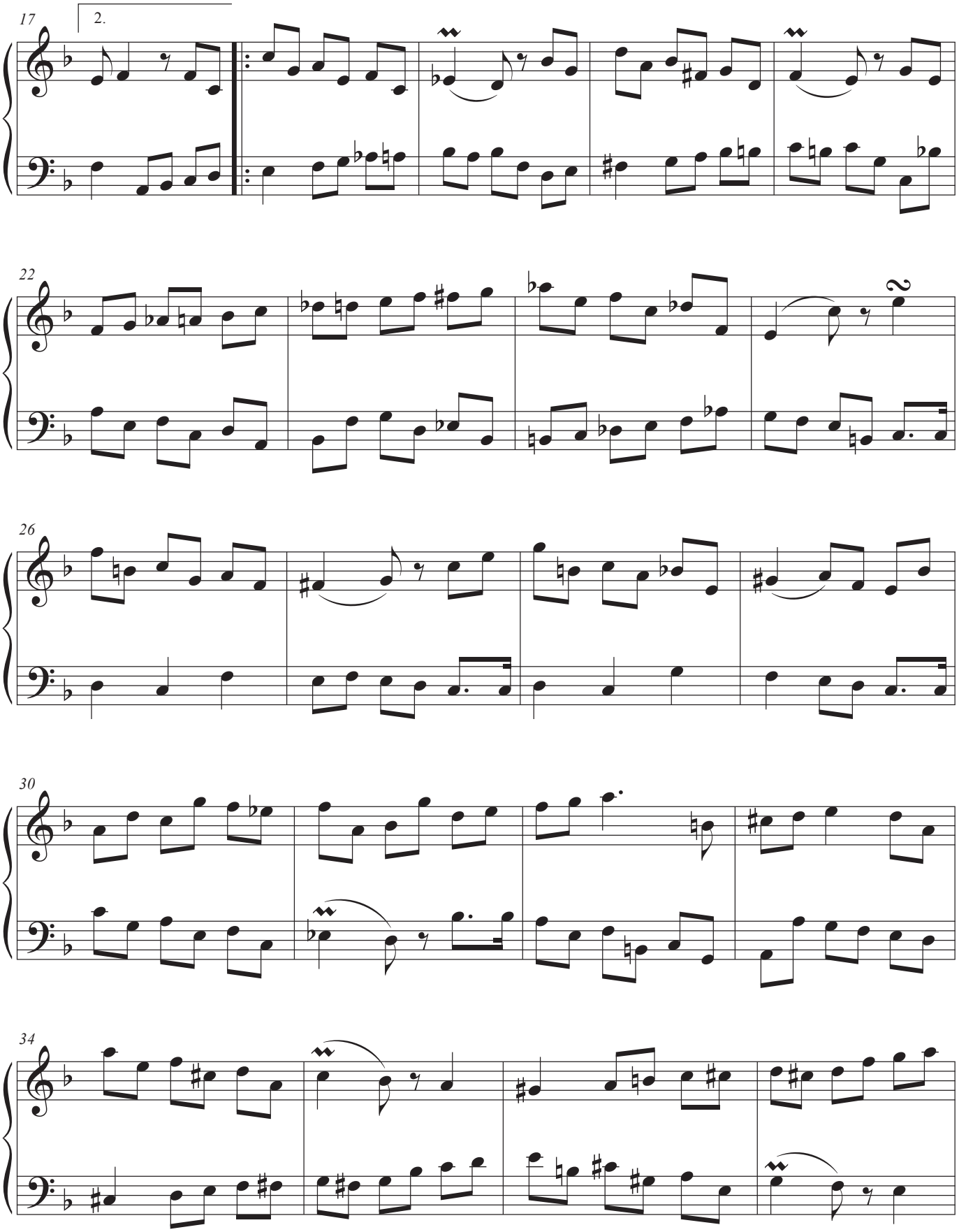
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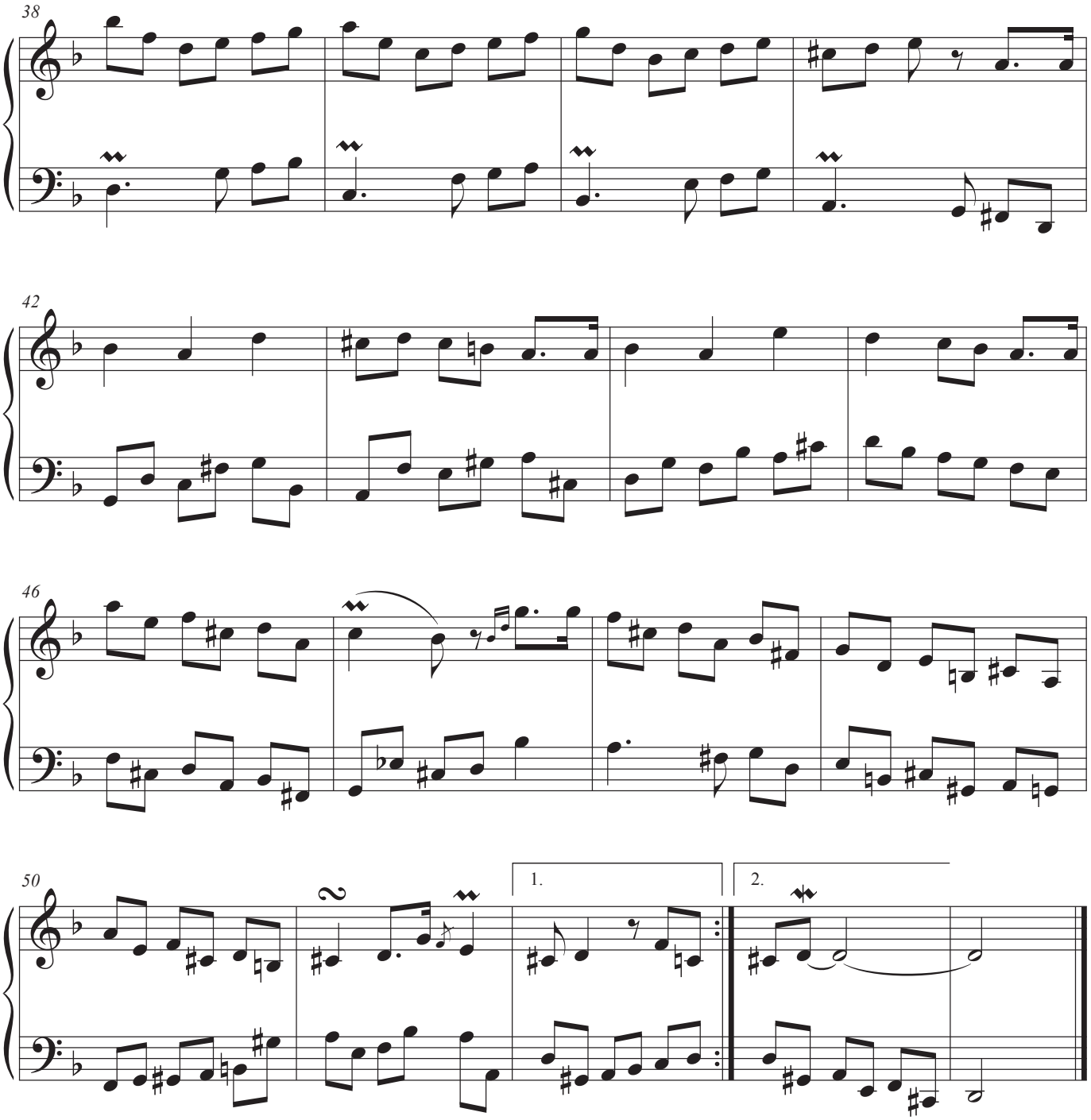
2.
22
26
30
34


38
42
46
50
1.
2.

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Sarabande

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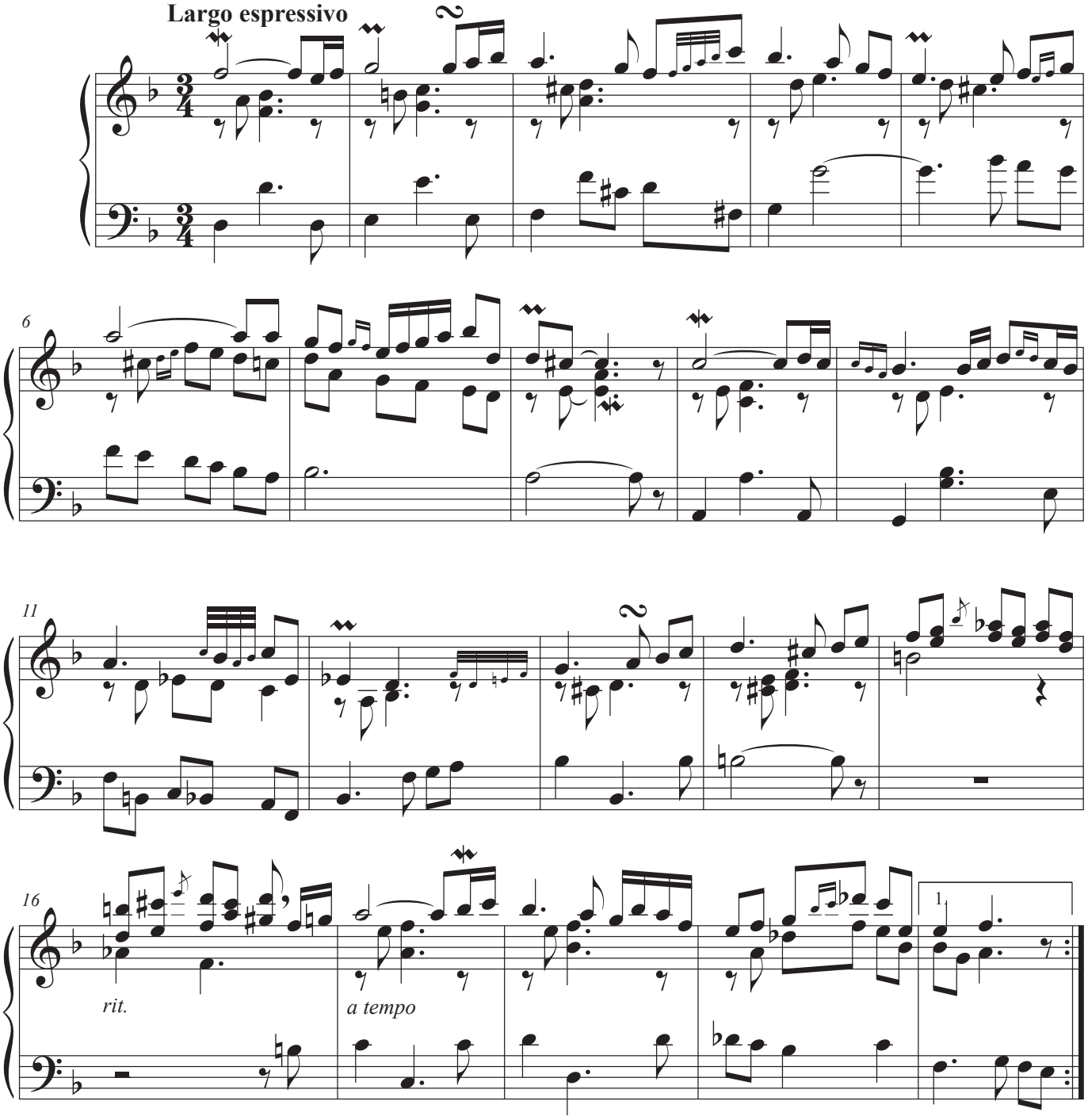

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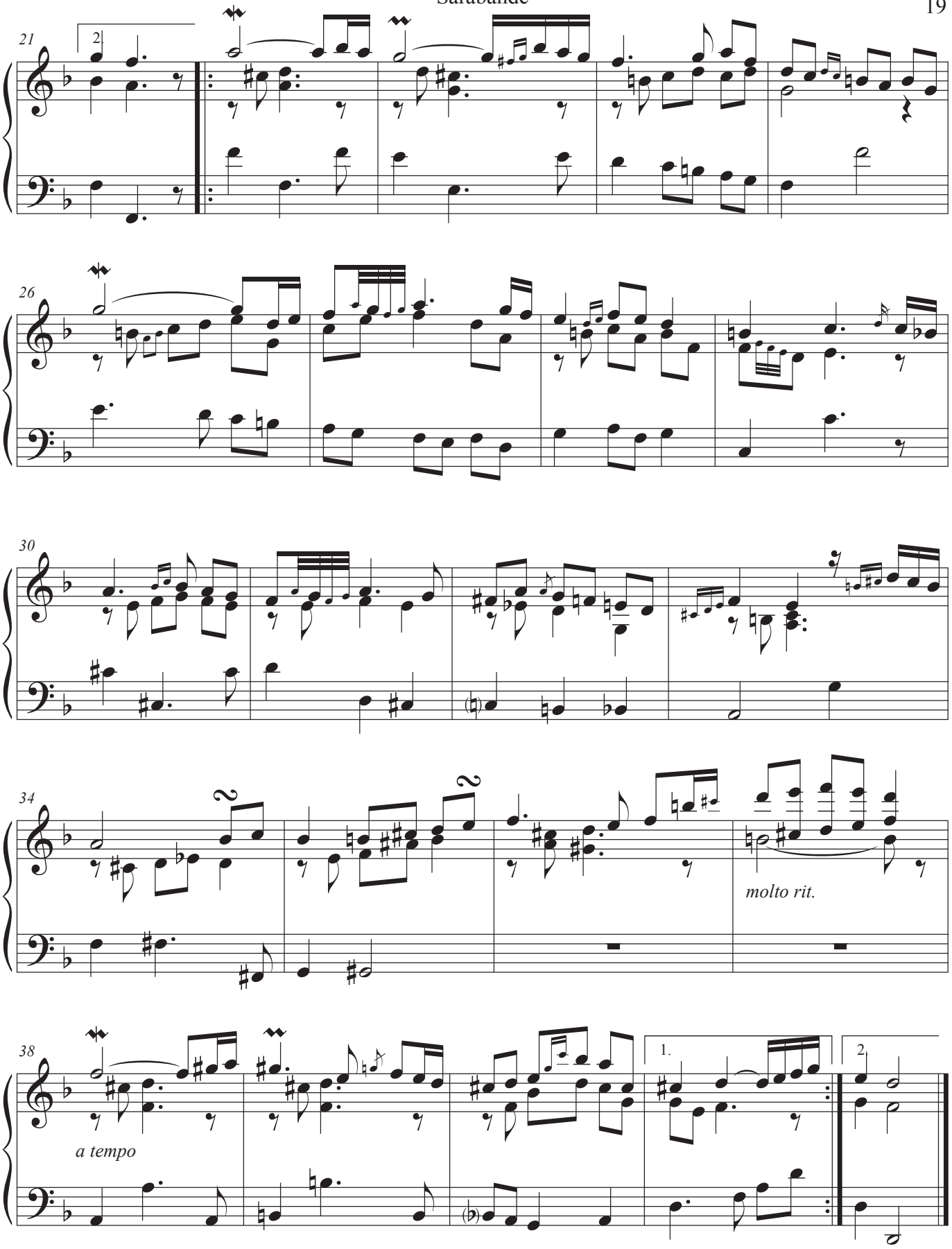
21
2
26
30
34
molto rit.
38
a tempo
1.
2.

Gavotte I

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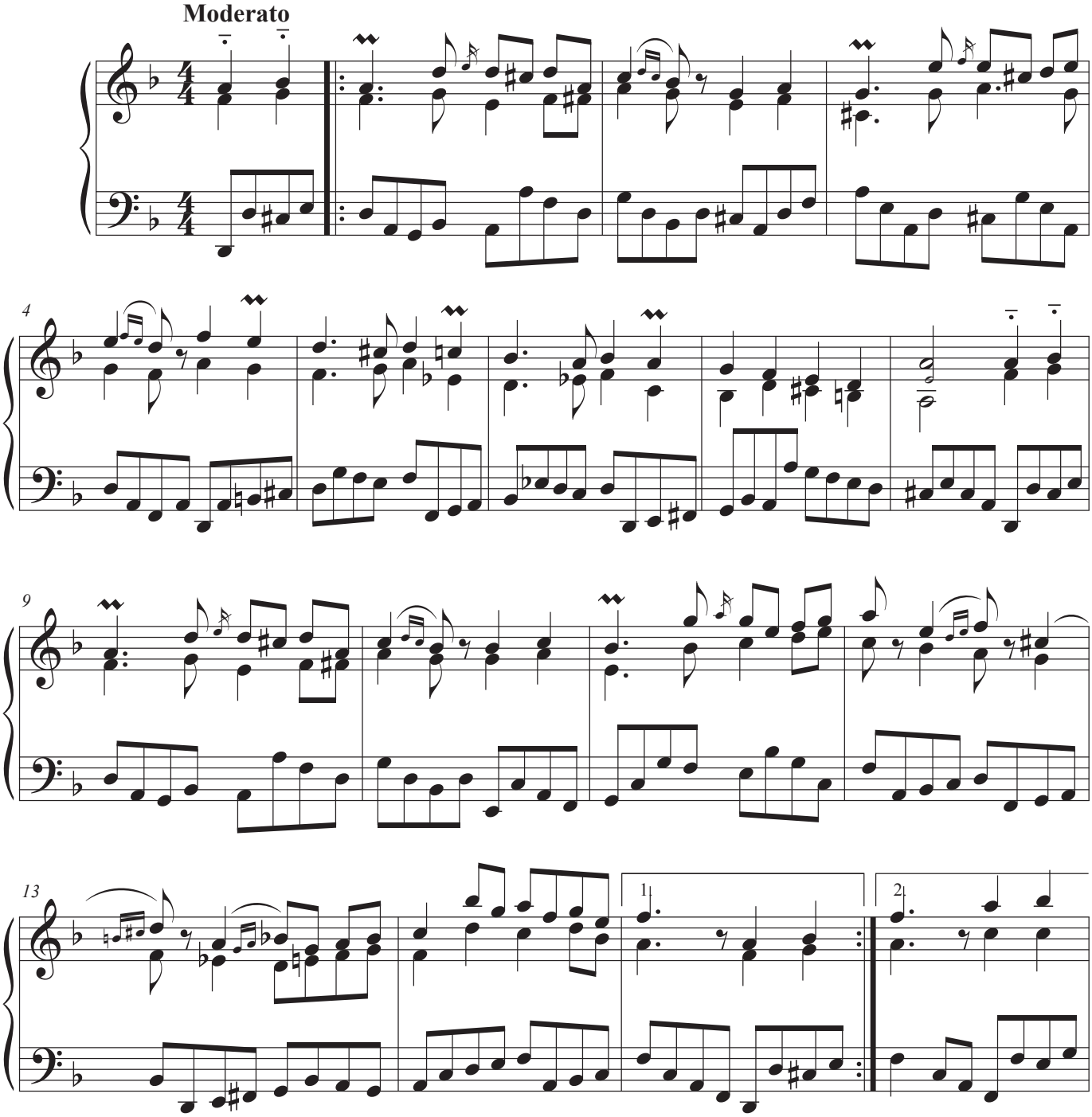

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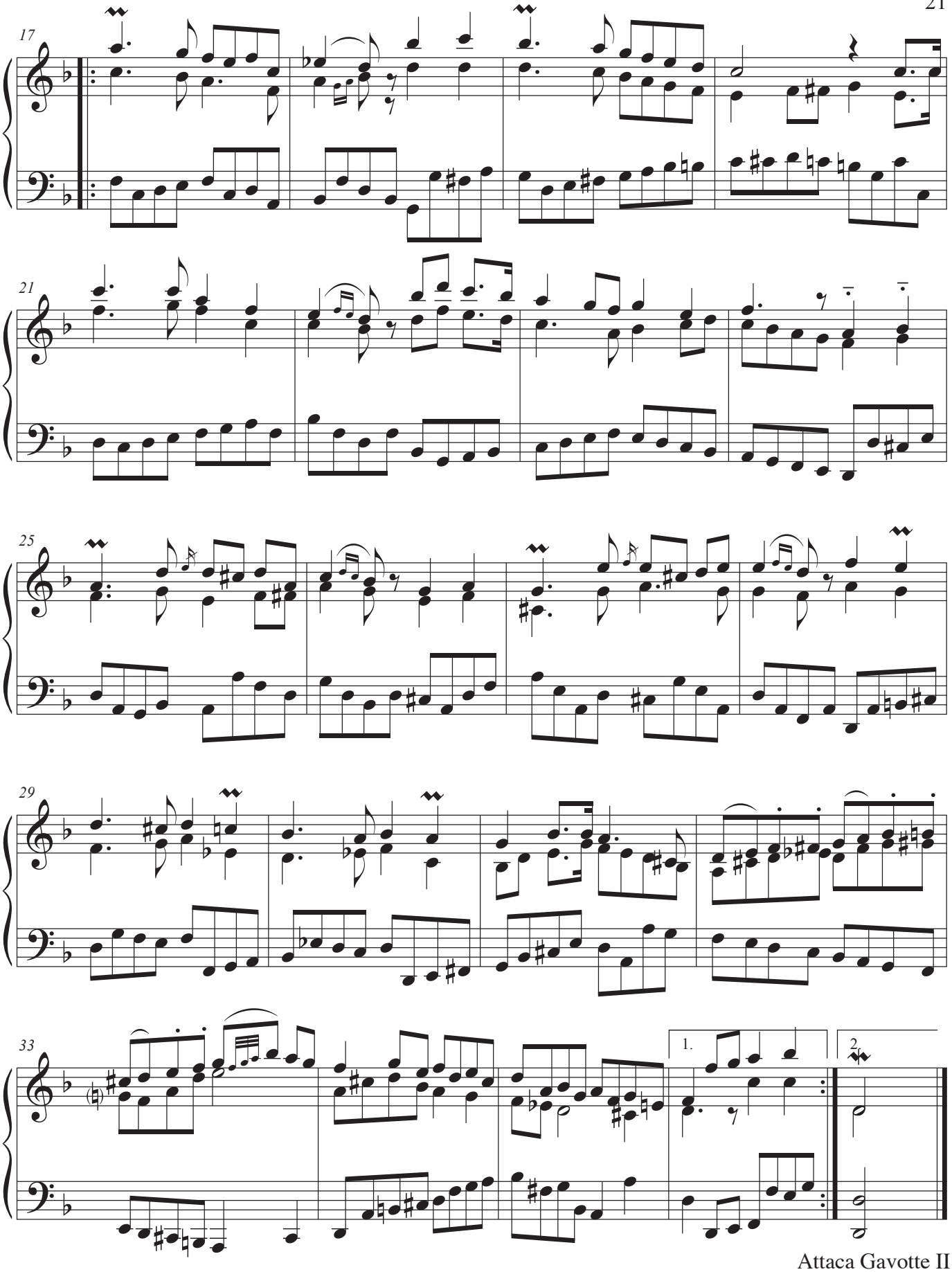

Attaca Gavotte II
No repeats on D.C.
Last time: Fine

Gavotte II

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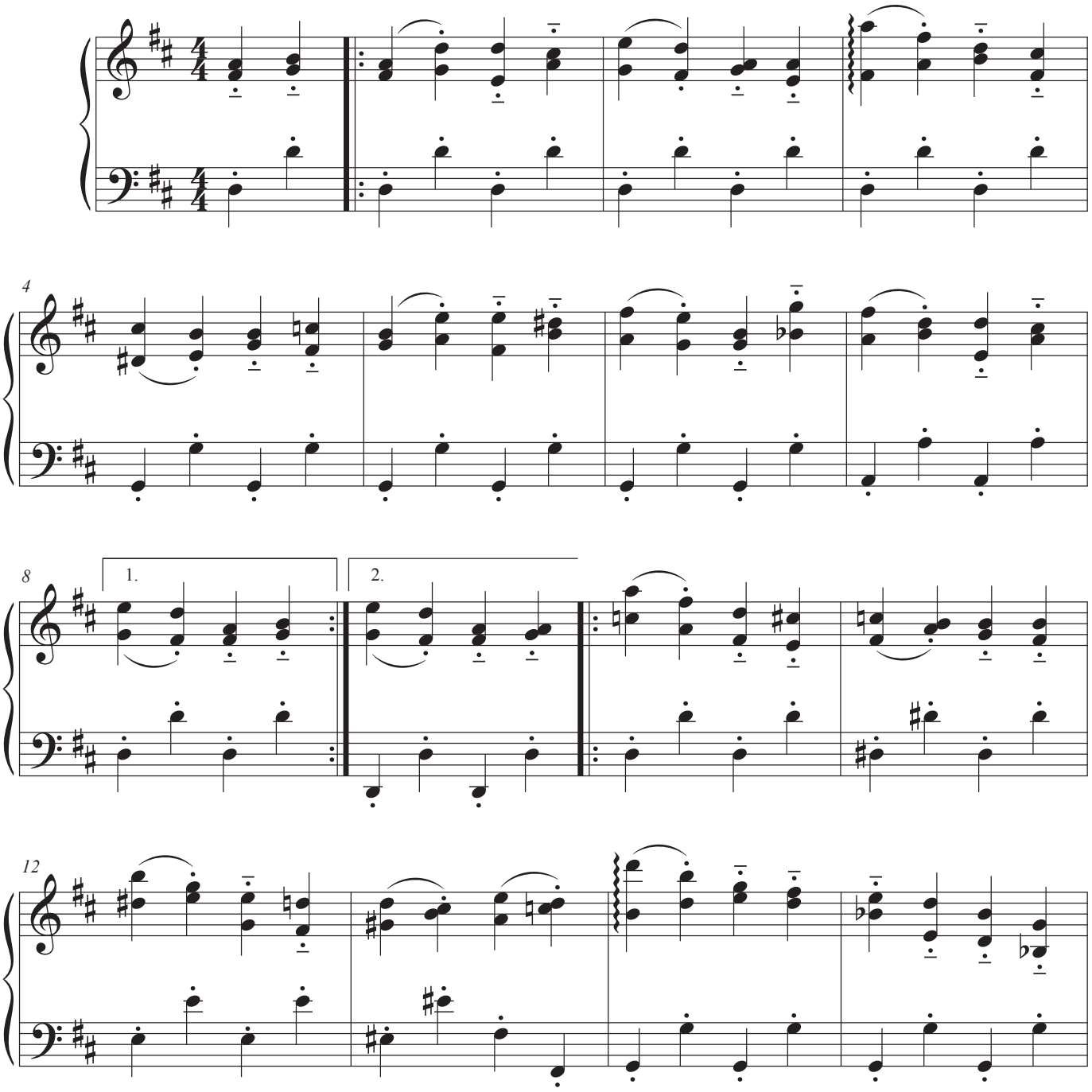
Moderato



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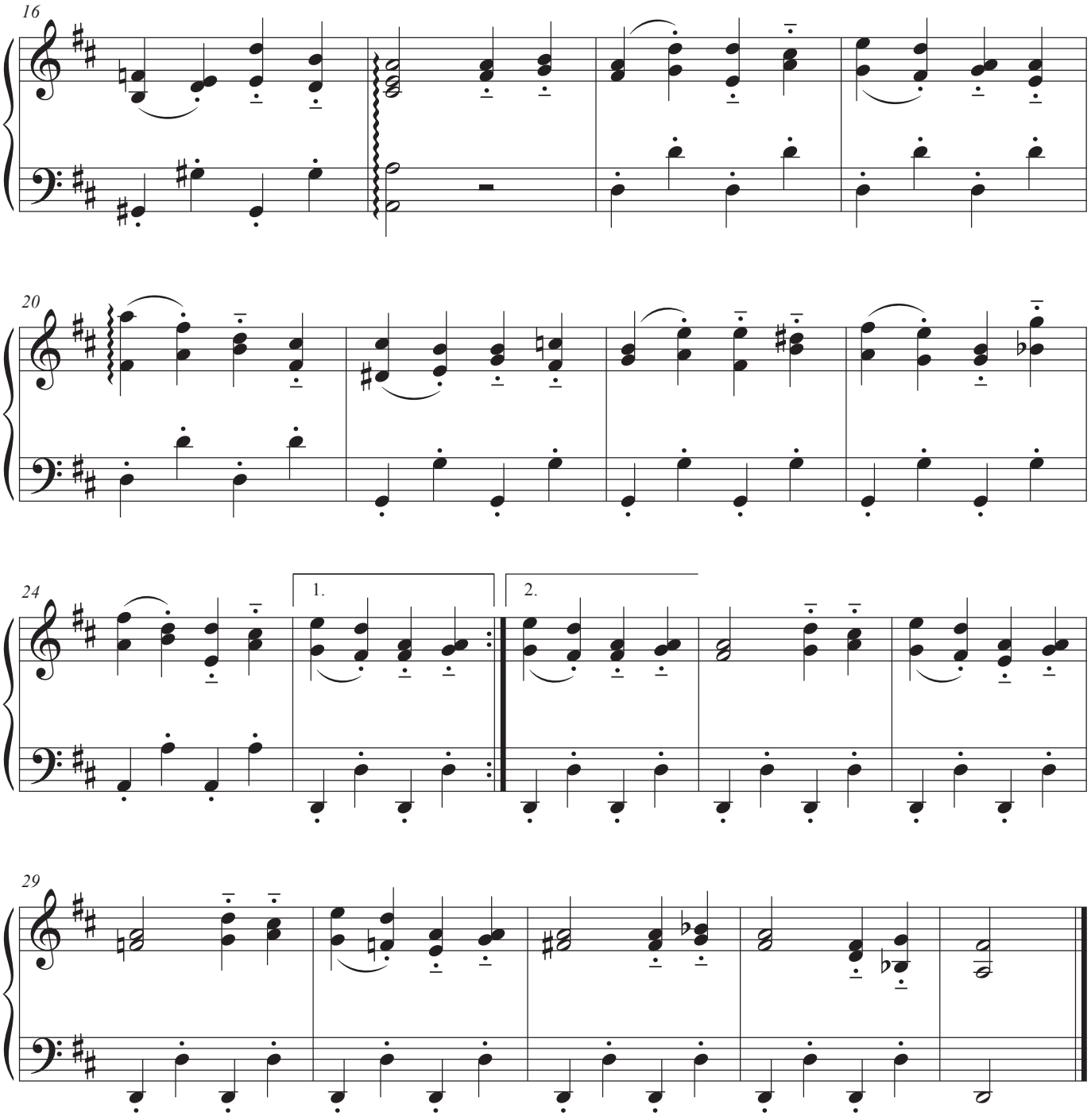

D.C. Gavotte I

Gigue

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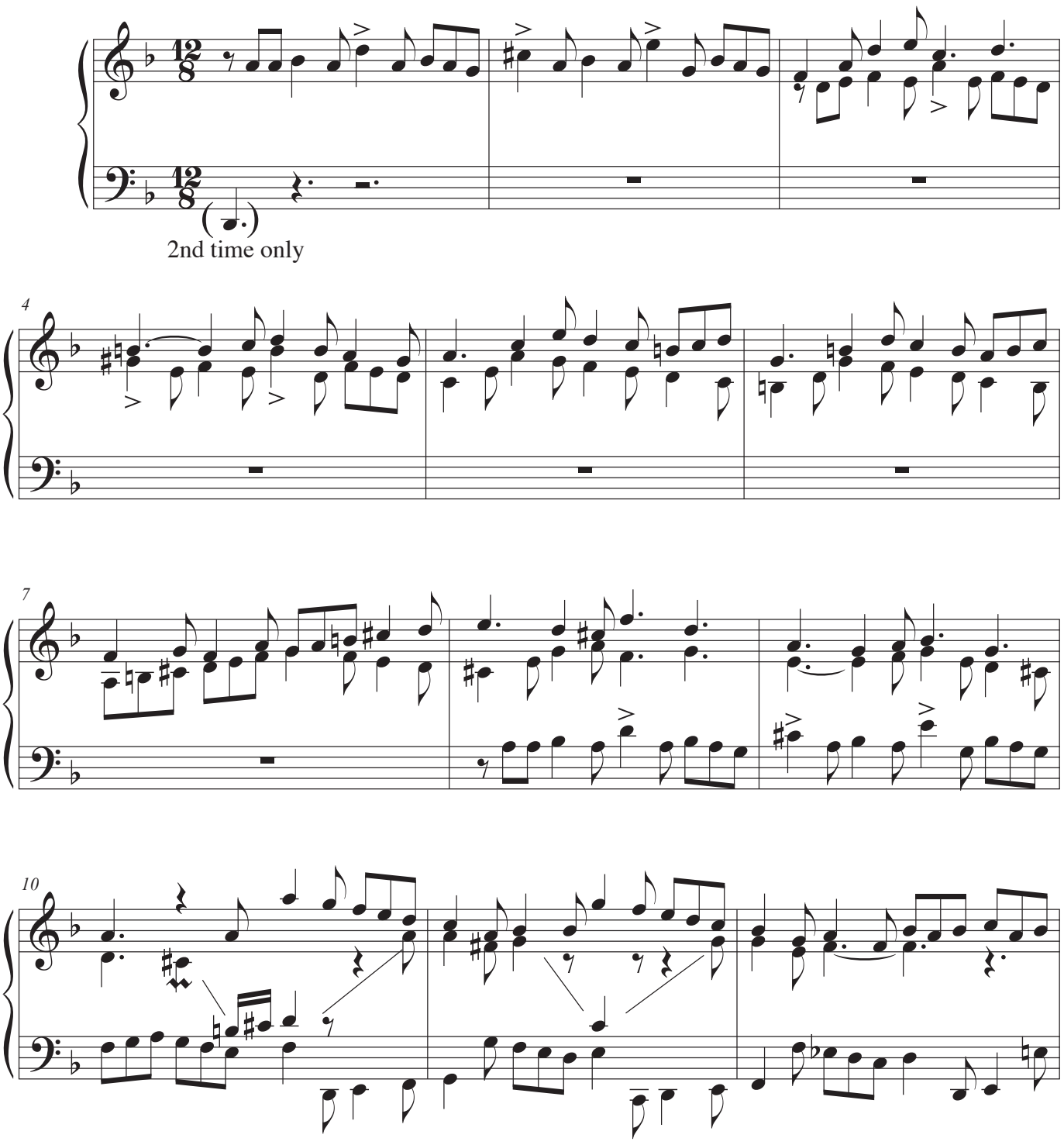
Presto



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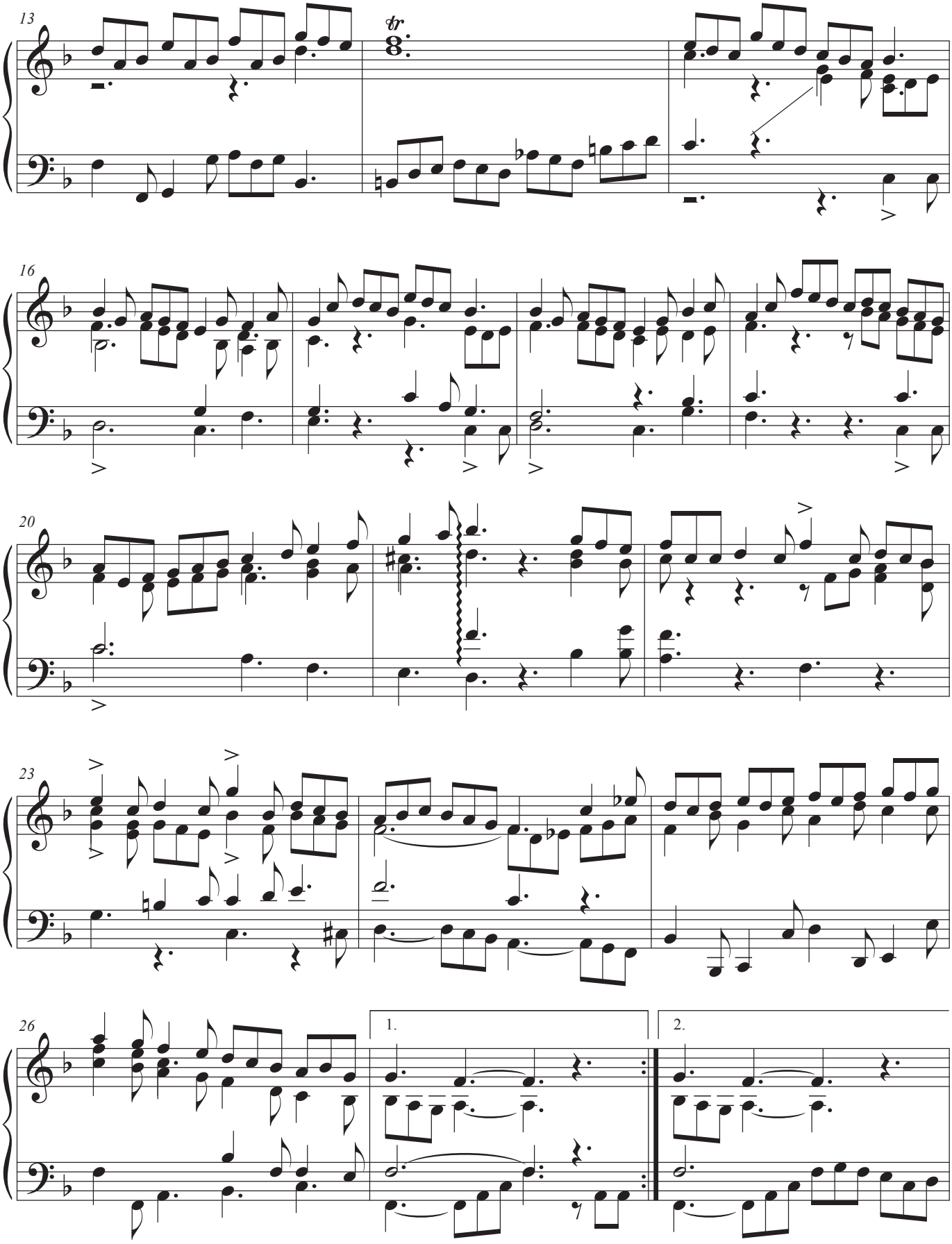
13
tr
16
20
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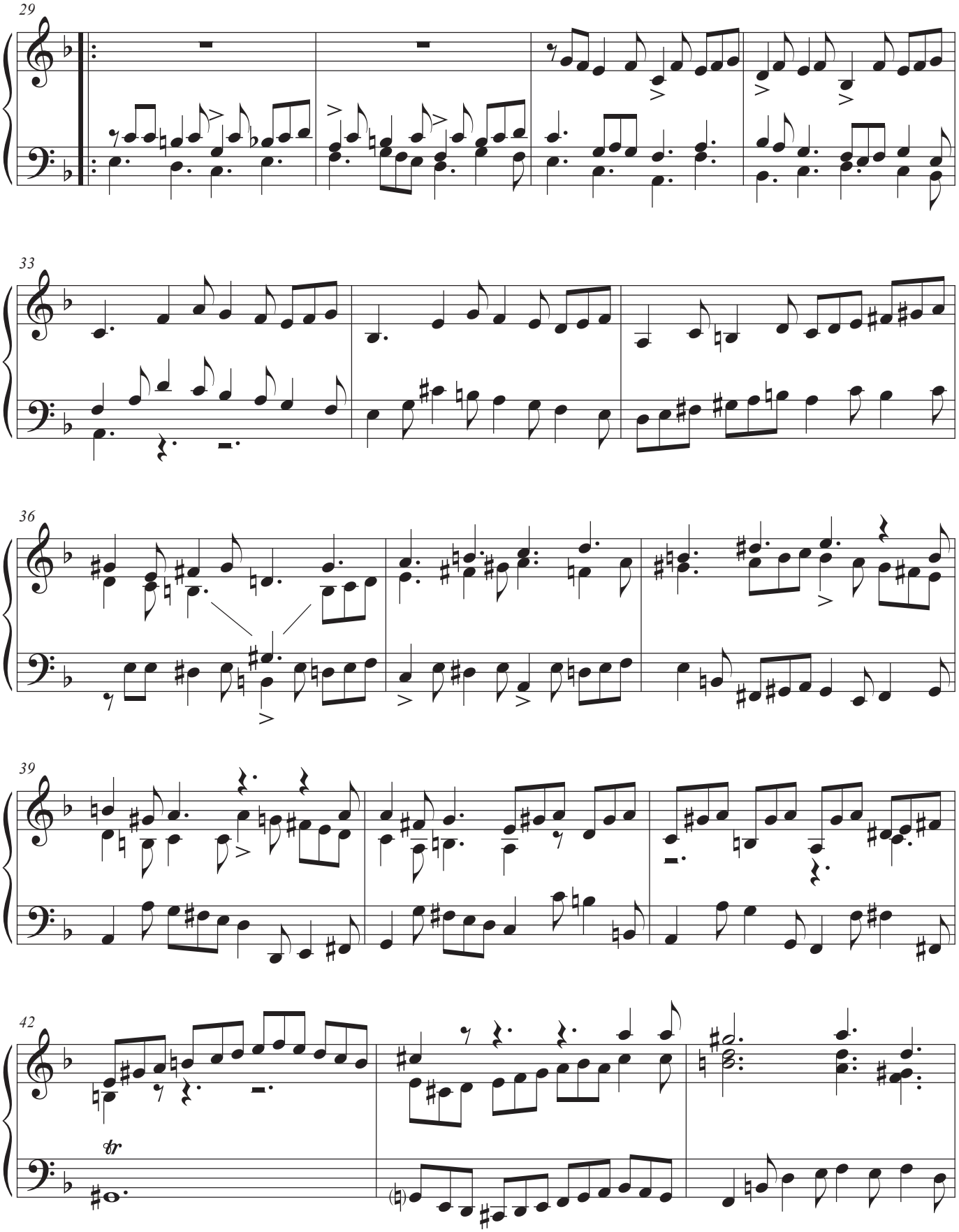
26
1.
2.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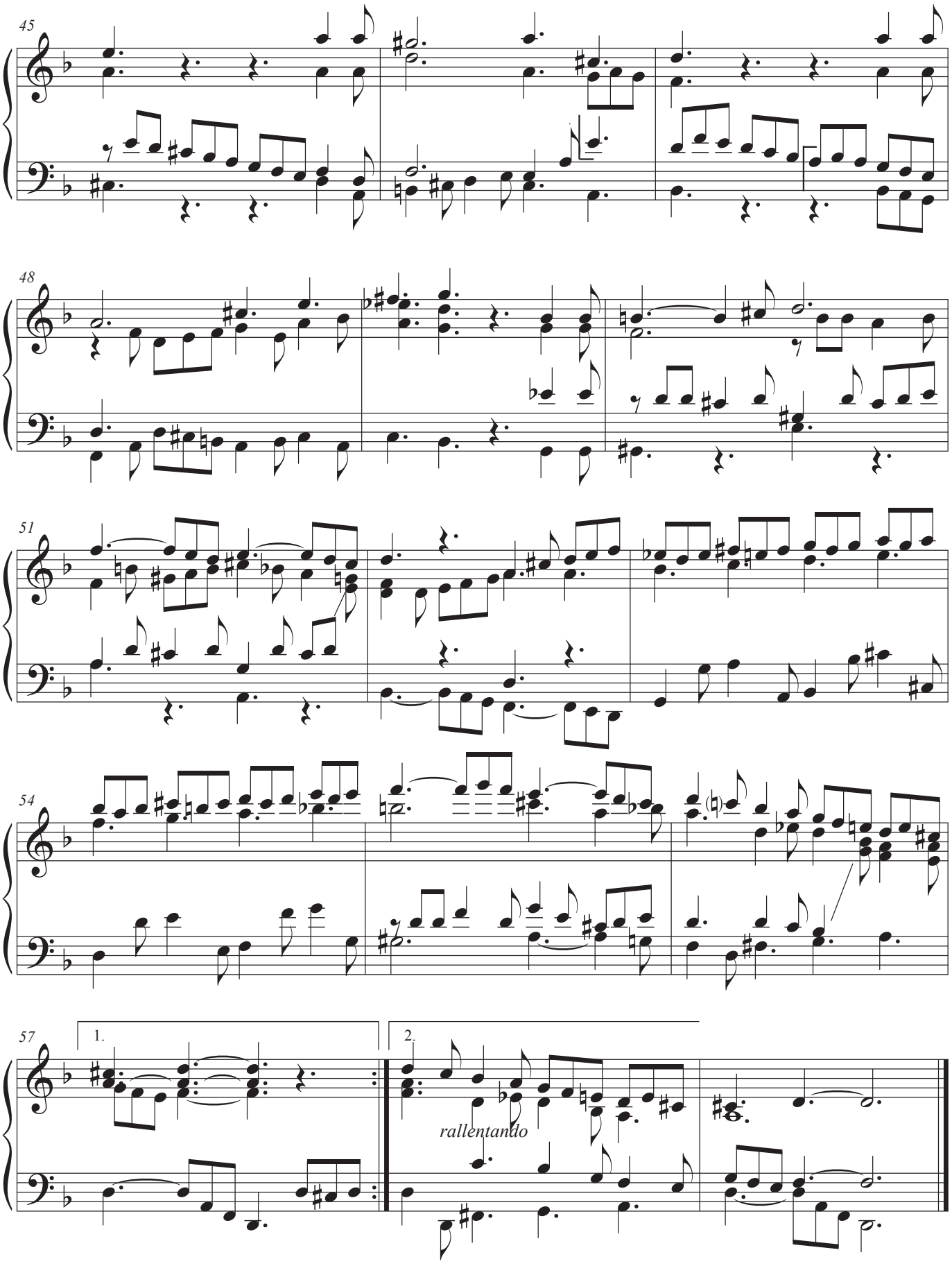
45
48
51
54
57
1.
2.
rallentando