Entrance of the Mechanicals for piano four hands, from **Incidental Music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*** op. 73

I wrote this music for use in a repertory company's production here in Manhattan on very short notice (another composer having just dropped out of the fray), in the spring of this year. The stage was small, so there was no possibility for live music. The time was short, so I quickly decided to write all the solos and accompaniments required by the director's script for myself to record (with the help of a friend in the four-hands music).

To afford variety, I chose to represent the three levels of activity on stage with three different keyboards: music for the Athenian nobility uses the aristocratic harpsichord; the world of the fairies and sprites was conjured using different stops on the organ; and the tradesmen Shakespeare called Mechanicals (including Bottom the Weaver) do their work to four-hands accompaniment. (Music for four hands is almost never played as freely as music for a single person to play at the same instrument. What is more, to twentieth-century ears the "mechanical" effect of the pianola tends to be evoked by the fuller sonority of the instrument when played by twice as many hands as usually.)

After preparing variegated albums for harpsichordists and organists to use outside the dramatic theater, I find myself with only one independent number to offer four hands players. The only non-vocal music in that genre were the slapstick entrance music for the Mechanicals in Shakespeare's Act I, and the music which underscores Bottom's acquisition (and later, loss) of his ass's head. (I fell back upon the traditional hee-haw minor ninth for this effect. Later, I used the simple expediency of inverting the minor ninth into haw-hee when Puck takes the Mechanical's head mask off.) In cobbling out a four hands piece for separate performance I inserted a repeat into the Entrance of the Mechanicals music. That became the first panel in a ternary form whose middle section is that ass's head being donned and then doffed. (On stage a good hour comes between these two effects, of course.) The restatement of the entrance music eschews the repeat; that is to say, the Entrance of the Mechanicals music is heard in the same precipitous form as actually underscores this moment in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

I dedicate all the incidental music I wrote with gratitude to my sister Veer, who influenced the eyes of her younger brother at an early age to "veer" towards the Avon.

Victor Frost
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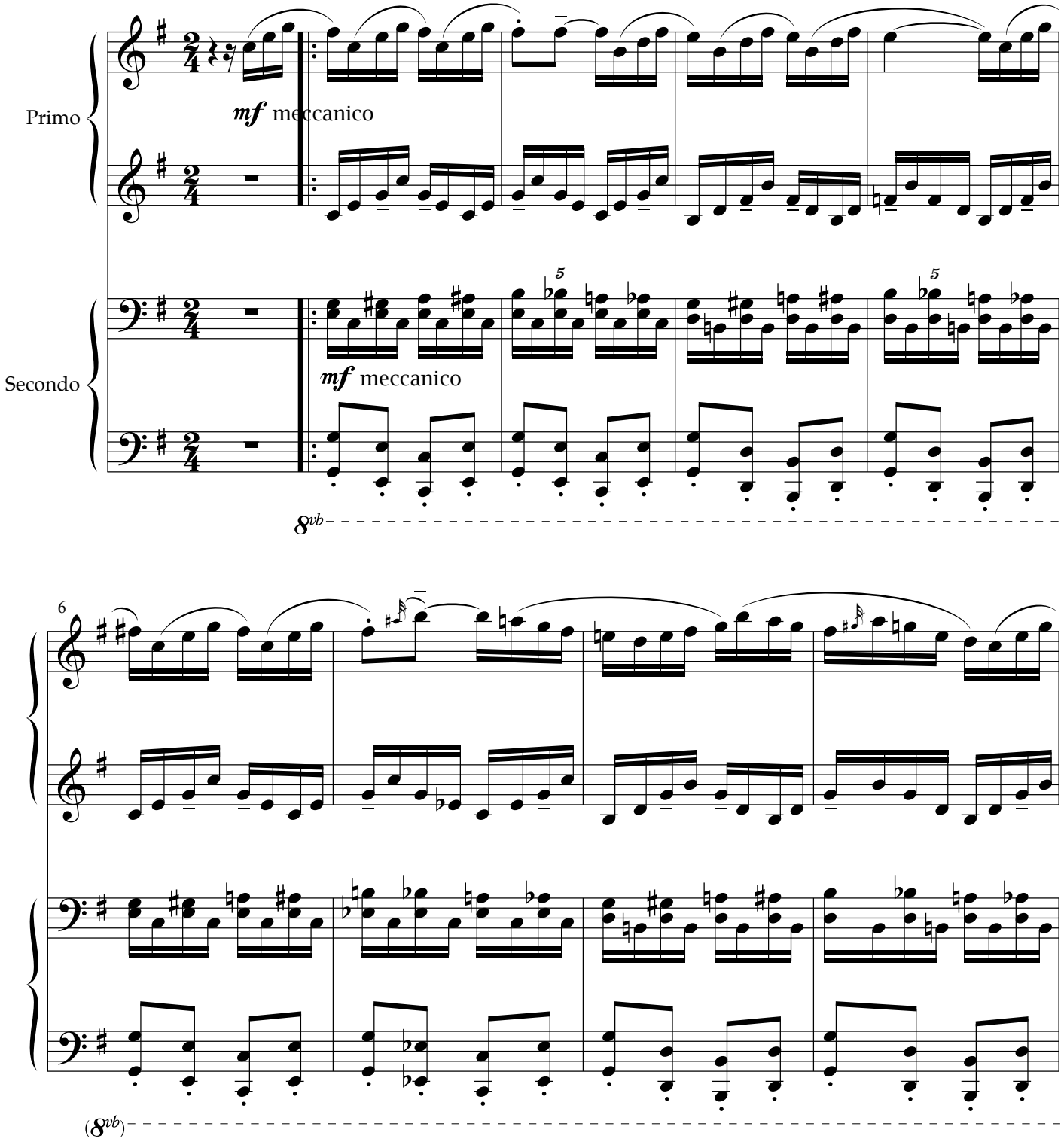
New York City

Entrance of the Mechanicals

for piano four hands, from op. 73

Allegro giocoso ♩ = 87

Victor Frost



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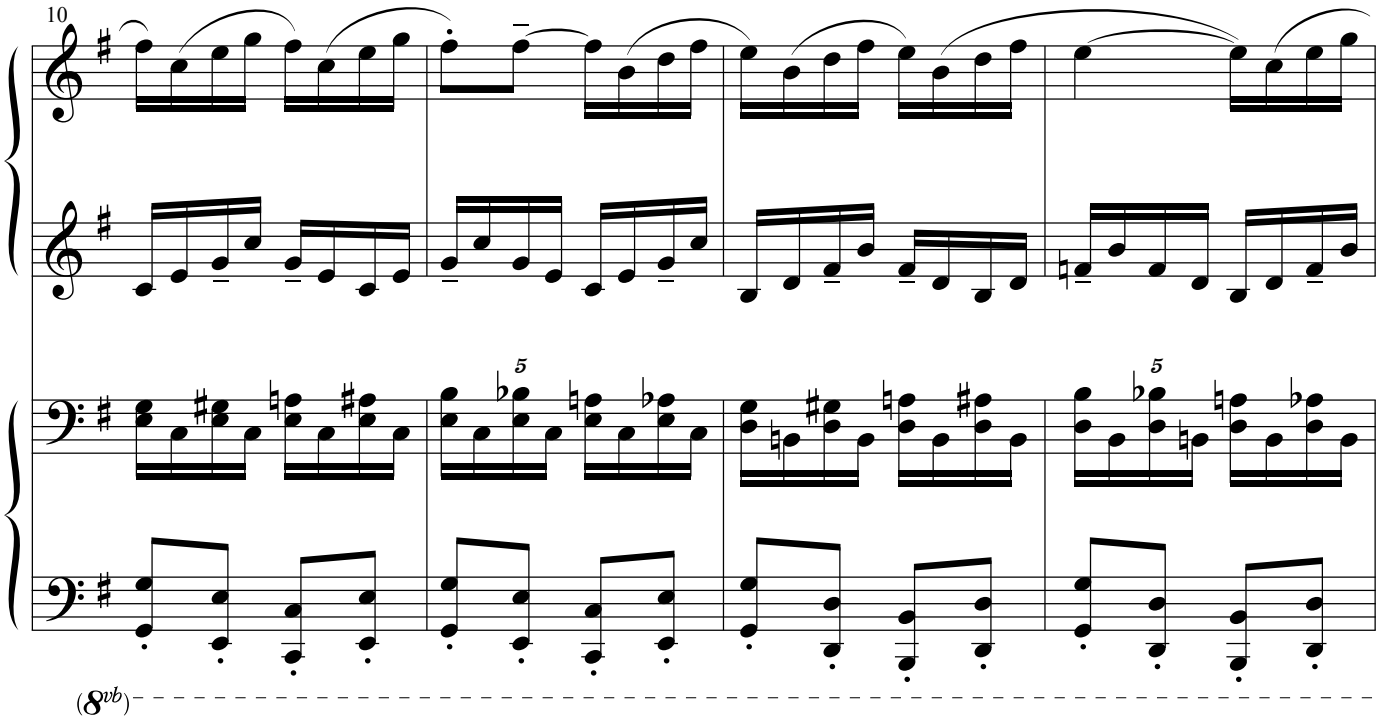
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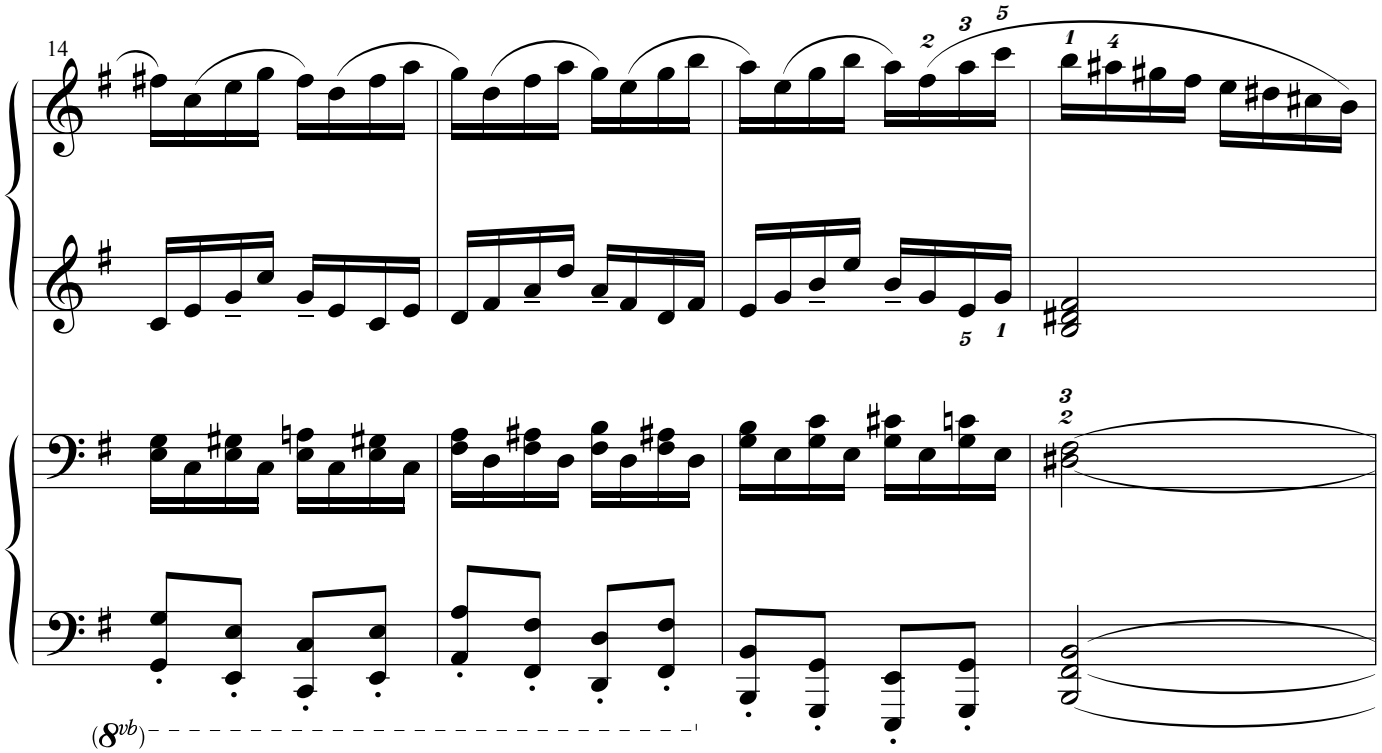
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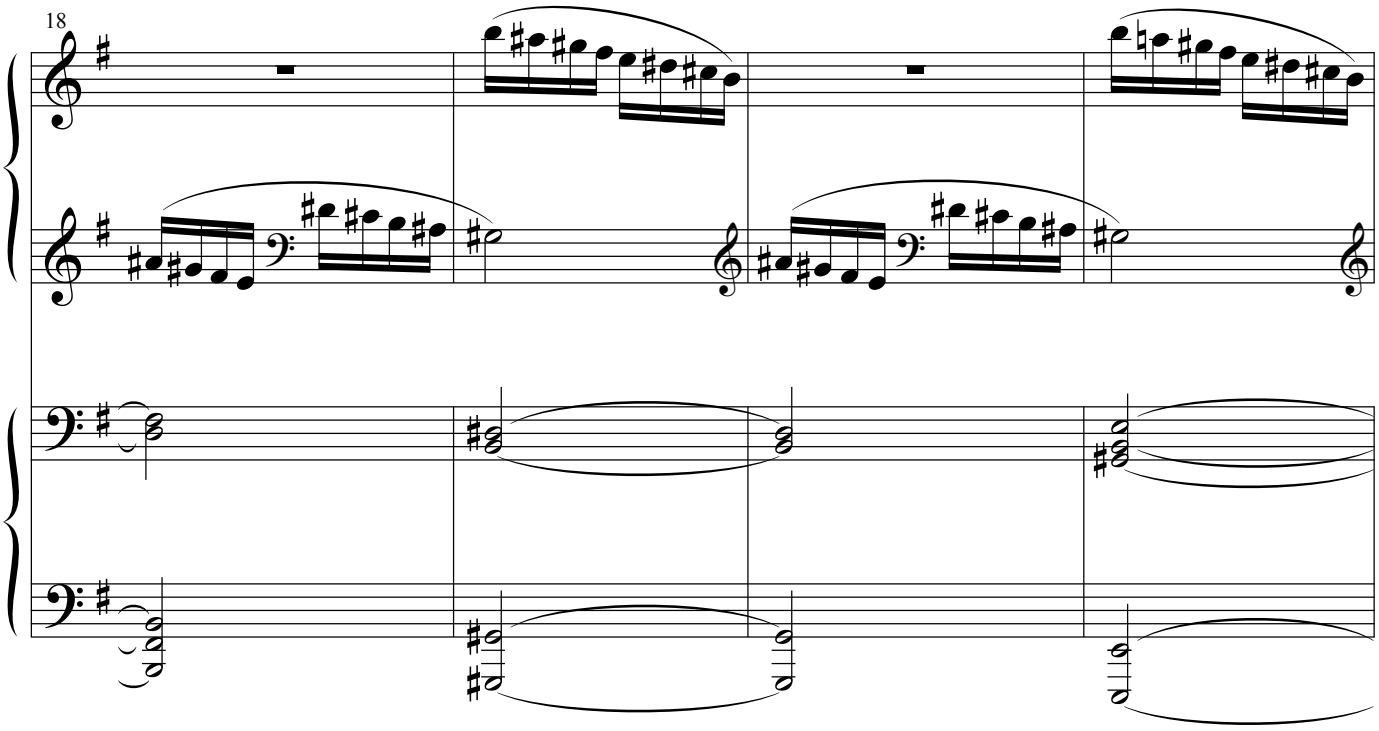
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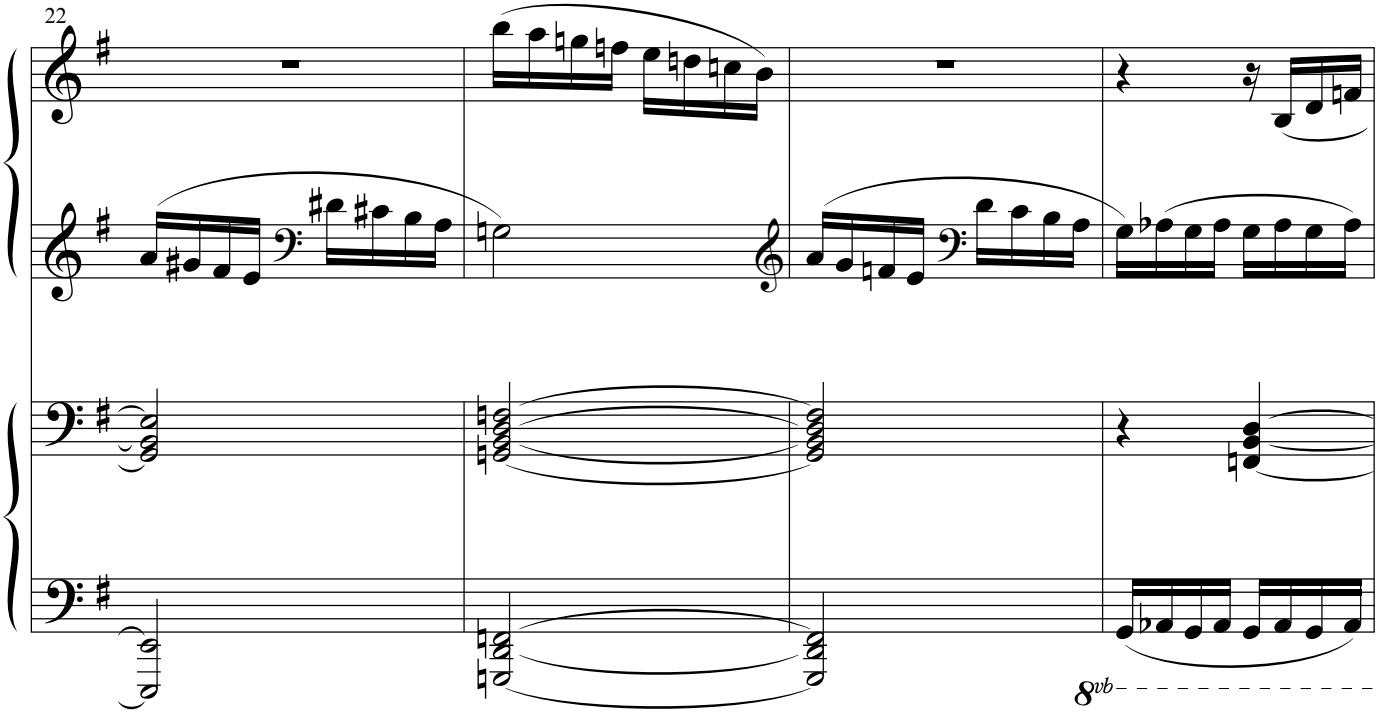
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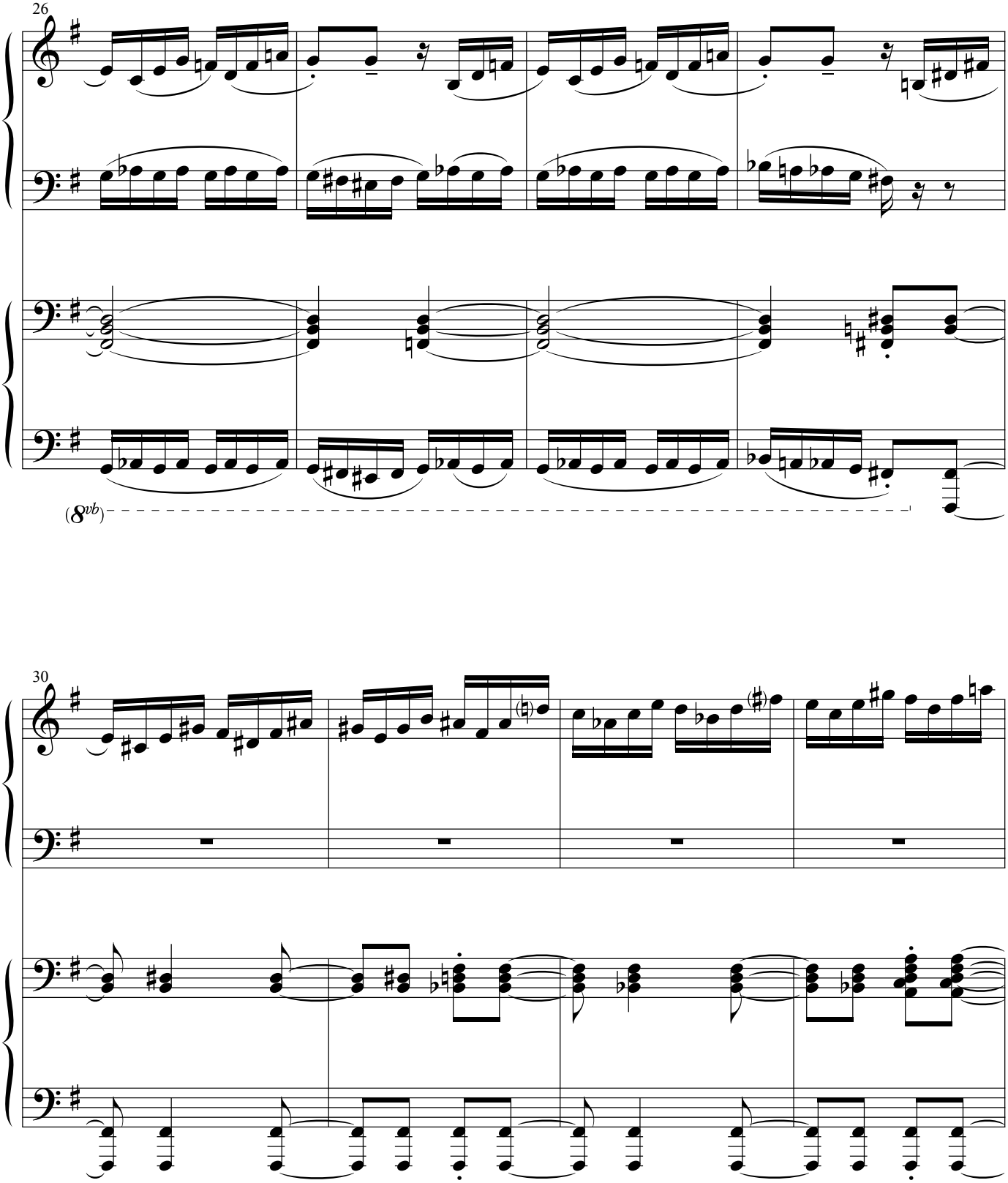
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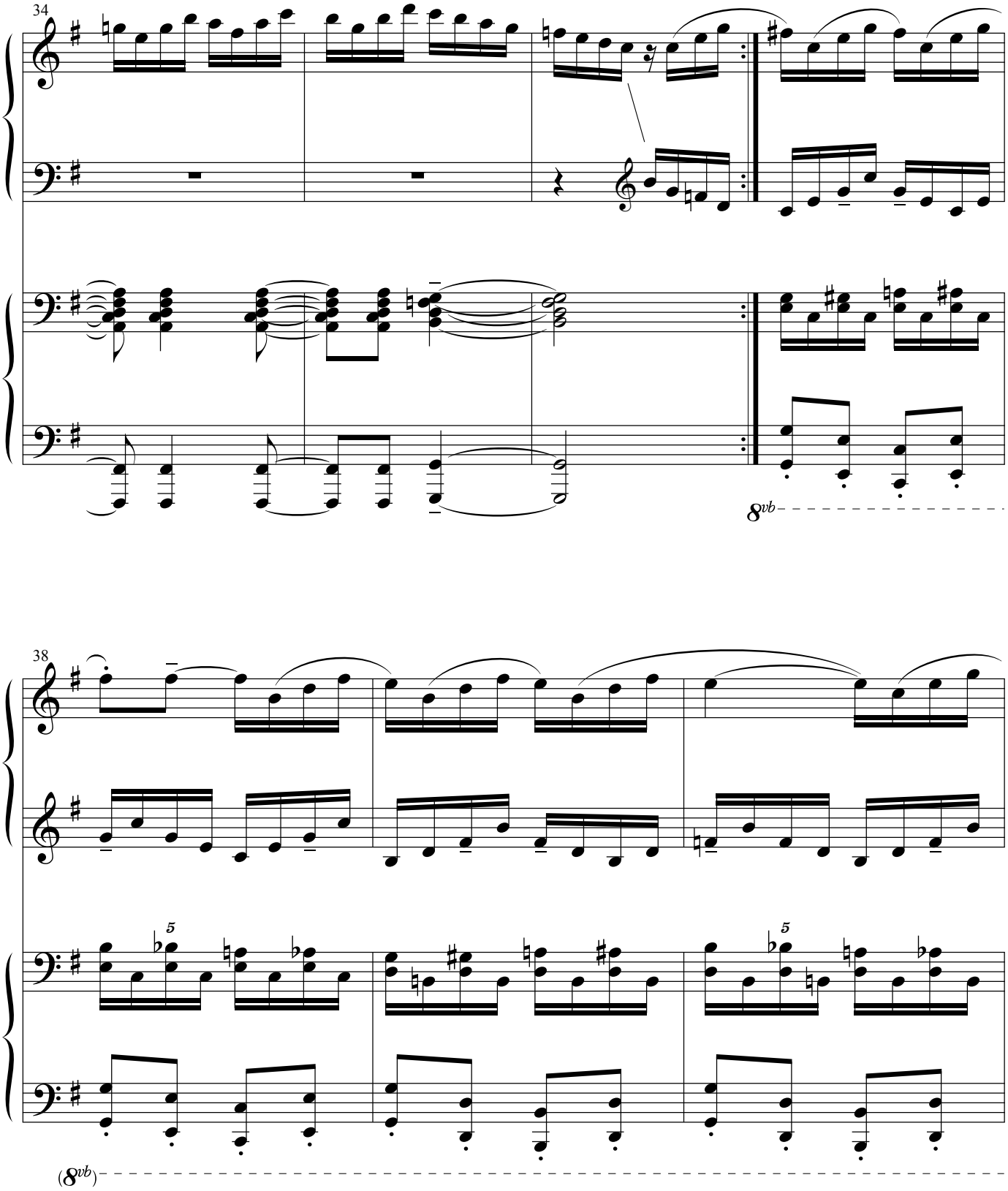
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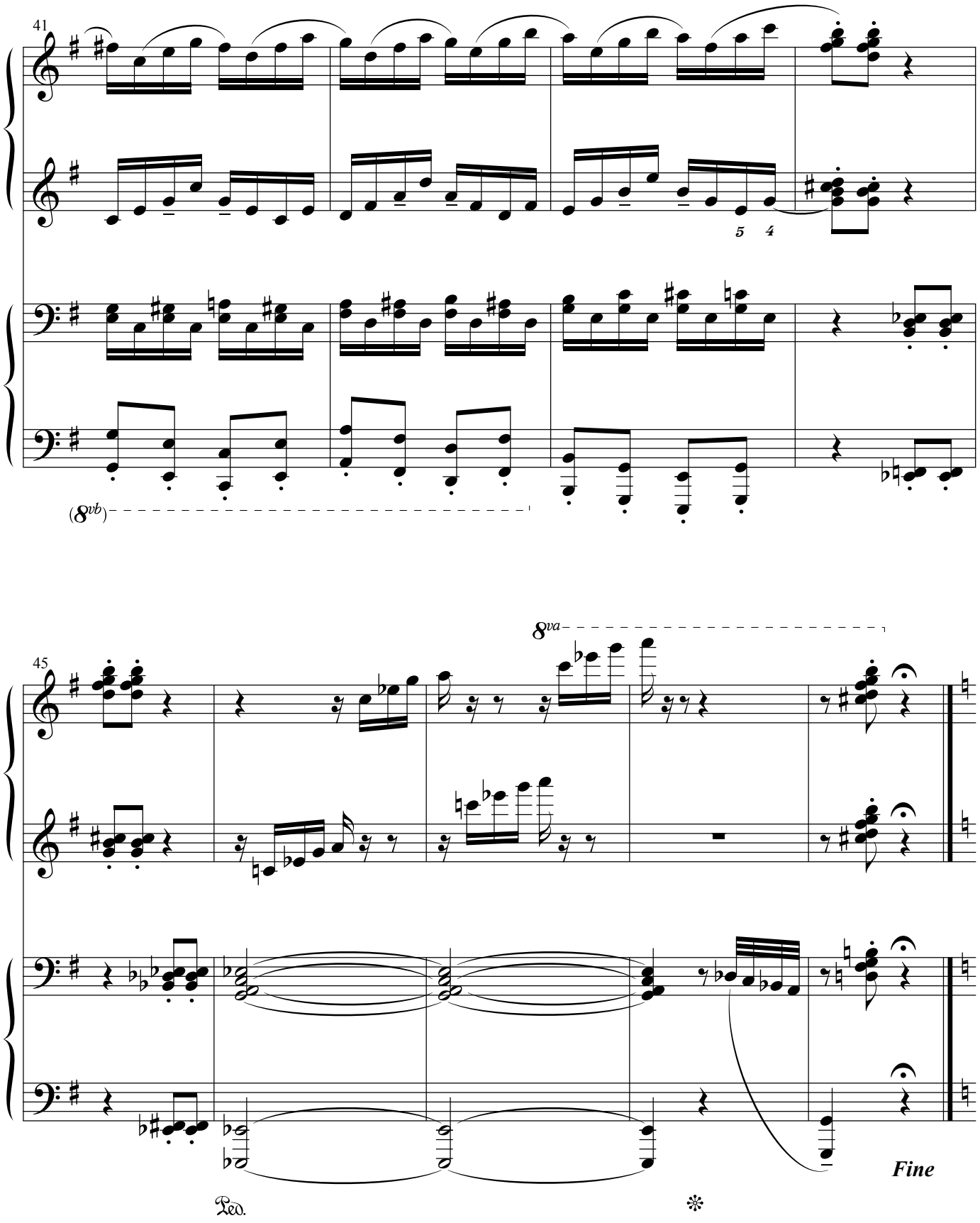
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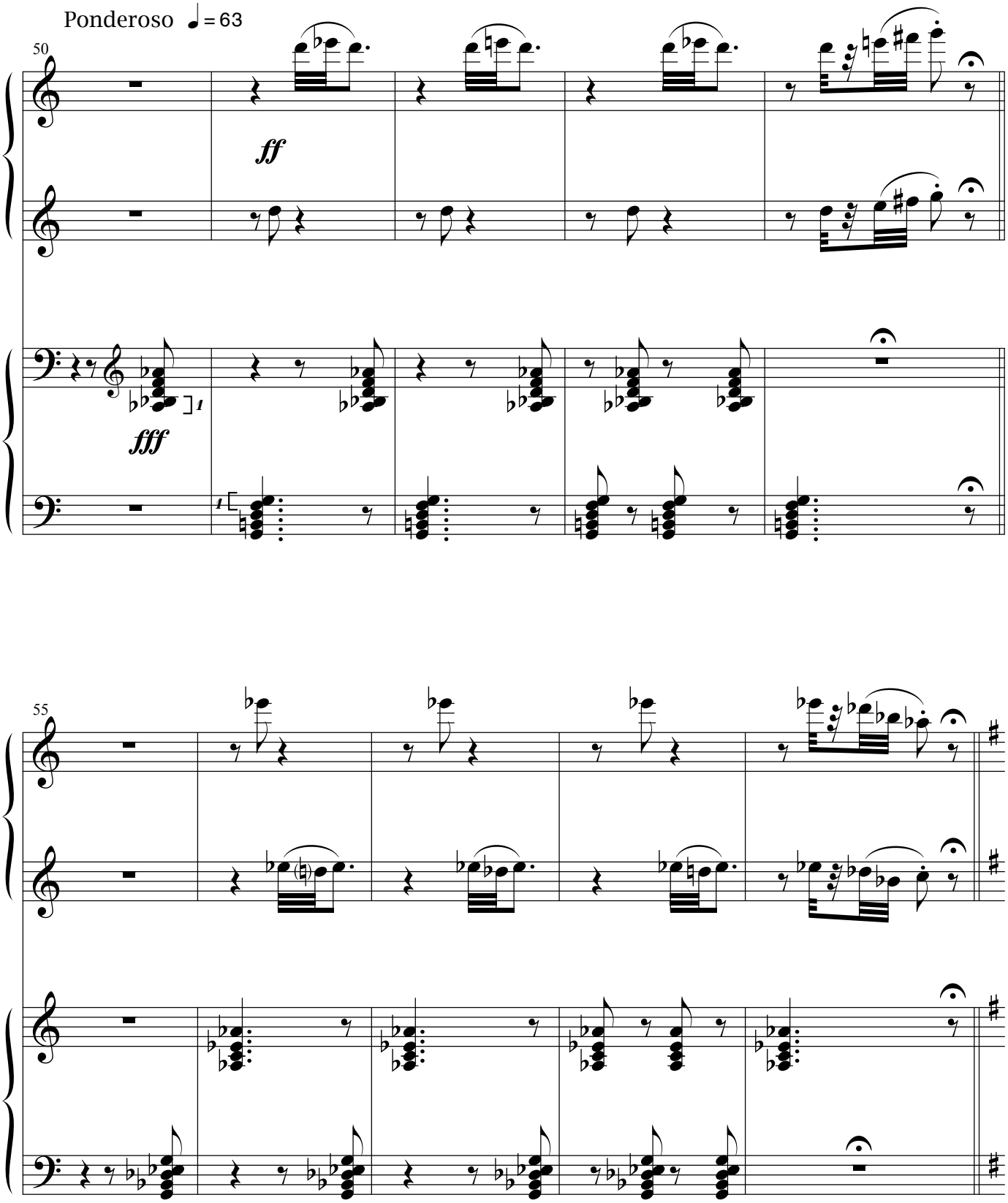
Ponderoso ♩= 63
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D.C. senza replica al Fine