Organ album: the solos from Incidental Music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* op. 73

It was on very short notice that I composed these numbers for use in a repertory company's production here in Manhattan (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 vocal accompaniments required by the director's script for myself to record, the only exception being a horn alarum which Shakespeare asks for specifically.

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 do their work to four-hands accompaniment which a friend helped me to record. Let me mention that in this production there were two acts instead of Shakespeare's five, and thus my entr'acte (based on Bottom's Wooselcock Song) occurs between Scenes 1 and 2 of the original third act. Before intermission I had already used the Wooselcock melody to underscore the scene where Bottom is carried away by Titania's fairies to her secret bower. But during intermission (which is to say, overnight) the mode of the melody has changed from minor to major! The entr'acte à la Weber could thus be characterized as happy morning after music, Bottom's initial fear now transmuted into a robust joie de vivre.

At one point in the fourth act, Shakespeare asks for a dance. I happened to compose a minuet. At a rehearsal for the initial production, the choreographer asked how long the number ran, and I quickly averred "exactly a minute." A clever fairy dubbed this the "Minute Minuet" without missing a beat, and it has been so called ever since! A sideline about this work's genesis might be interesting. I happened to be riding on a bus in D (!) one day during the feverish period of composition. Three people got on and their "beeps" came in quick enough succession that I heard them melodically. The person in the middle must have had a special pass or something, because the device gave back an "A" when that person paid, as opposed to the "D's" we heard when the other two persons paid. The net: D–A–D. These notes followed by H–D are the musical letters in the name of my dear friend, the composer and organist David Hurd, and I had long had the intention of using those notes in a musical work. All it took was this involuntary stimulus, and I was off and running. By the way, the minuet is not in D, as one might expect: the three notes I heard on the bus turned out to be part of a V7 of a V7 of a V7 of a V7, leading ultimately to B-flat!

I knew when I undertook this project that most of the music would take place in the fairy world or directly under its influence (which is why Hermia's nightmare was written for organ, for example). Fortunately, the organ has a more varied tonal palette than the stringed keyboards I also wrote music for, so its continual presence on the soundtrack never seems to cloy. My first impulse when culling this suite was to rearrange things to bring variants of motives closer to their sources, give everything a big ending and all that. But I have discovered that just

playing through the variegated organ material in dramatic order is the most satisfying experience for me, paralleling as it does the unfolding of Shakespeare's bittersweet comedy.

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.

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New York City

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The reader is in a position to see the retrograde of the Magic Flower Music being used to portray its antidote later in the score. Similarly, the variant of the Pastorale which closes this set can be checked against the number of the same name with which the use of the organ commenced in my incidental music. The first eight mm. of Music N are identical to the music Titania and her train enter to earlier in the play at Music E. (The latter evolves into a vocal number, which is why it is not included here.) Music J is Bottom's Wooselcock Song. I take the dashes in both verses of Shakespeare's text as indicating interruptions, implying that there would be more text if not for Bottom's easy distractibility. The r.h. melody in the present Music K is identical to the one sung in Wooselcock up until the half cadence in m.8, on the note B. The song, however, never moves beyond this point, in accordance with those dashes. (The Larghetto section with which Music K closes better recalls the tempo, mood, and characteristic harmony of Bottom's interrupted song, incidentally.) When I made the initial recording, I was aware of how fulfilling it would be for the listener to move on to Music K's m.9. Alas! that impact is needs mitigated if the number is heard outside the dramatic theater.

I include an adaptation of the non-organ components of Music Q in case anyone wants to perform this number entire. It can be left out of the present suite, the rest of whose numbers are bona fide organ solos, but then so could any other number included in the set. If you do play it on the organ, in any context, the jazzy variant in smaller notes (intended for harpsichord) should represent as great a contrast as you can manage. (This effect is supported by the change of manuals stipulated in the adapted score at this point.)

If you are recording the numbers for use in the theater, of course only the full-sized notes of Music Q should be put on tape. You might be asked, as I was, to record the horn solo at the end of Q (the last six mm.) on the organ. Now, I have adapted it here as a pedal solo, but that was presupposing the execution of the full number on the king of instruments. In terms of the requested recording: I used fanfare-like 8' and 4' reeds with a Tierce, playing the six mm. on a manual. I omitted of course the perfunctory lower voice I had

given to the left foot, subsisting as it does solely within the arrangement of the complete number for organ. (I made the alarum part of the Music Q cue, incidentally, because dramatically it follows hard upon the keyboards components.) You would also be responsible for recording the accompaniments to the big vocal numbers: Music E, and Music U, with which the incidental music concludes.

It is unlikely that many of you with church jobs are attached to denominations that invoke pagan deities. If you play anything here in a house of worship, the titles I include can give way to just the tempo markings (but I even had to suppress one of those once: Presto baccanale!). Feel free to make up any title you like. (Jehoshaphat's Evening Prayer, Abednego's Morning Meditation....)

As to registration, the norm is to play on a single manual, with coupled pedal. Exceptions to that are noted in the score. I sometimes play the two Pastorales on two manuals as well. This is also the only piece in my œuvre in which I have ever used the tremulant. In writing for pedal I always assumed there would be a 16' foundation, even when double pedal is being employed.

Organ album

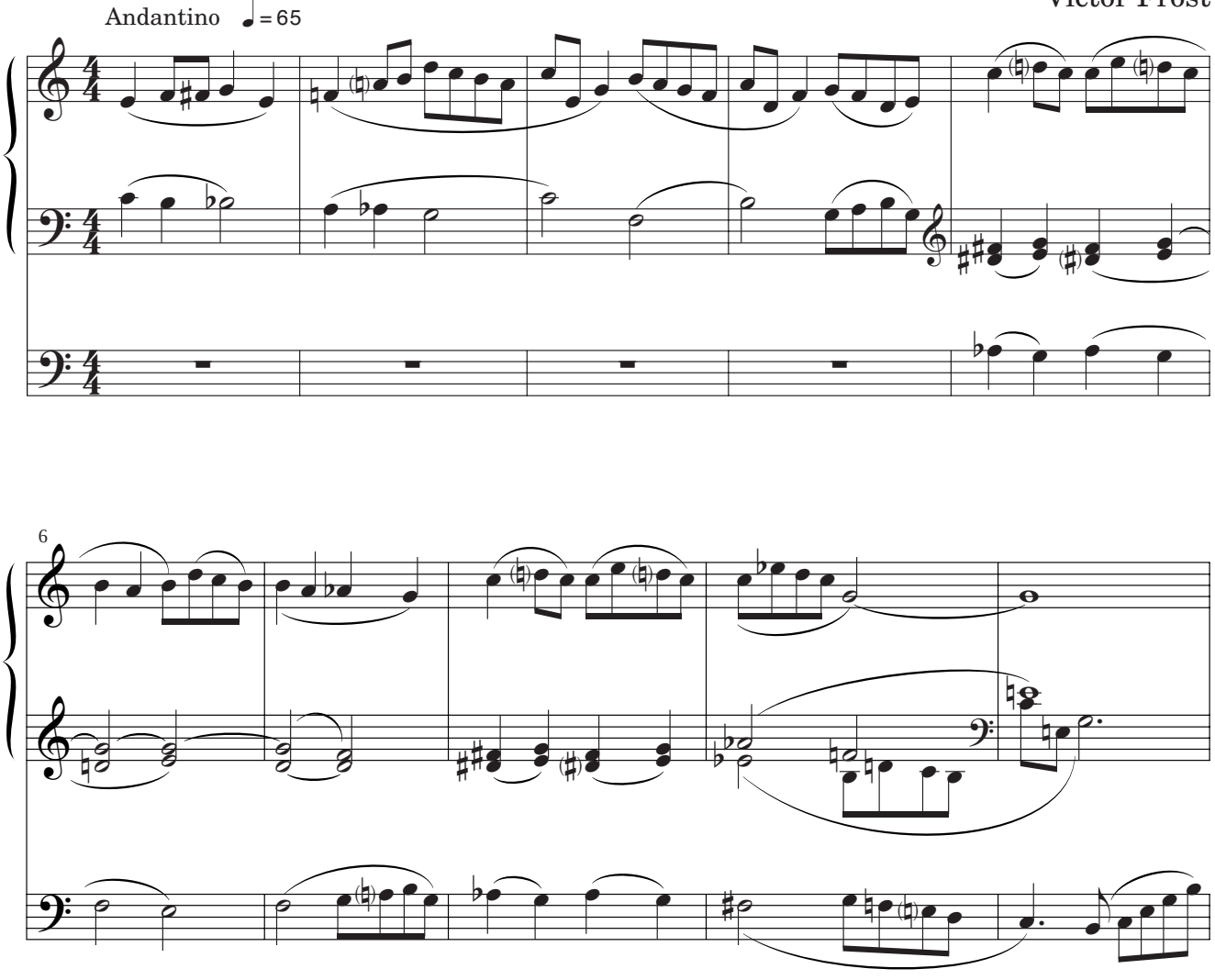
the solos from

Incidental Music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

op. 73

1. Pastorale *(Music C)*

Victor Frost



N.B.: The letters (such as C or Q) are provided only for players who are involved in recording (or performing) this music for use in the dramatic theater. Their designation (in parentheses) should be omitted if *Organ Album* is programmed in a solo recital.

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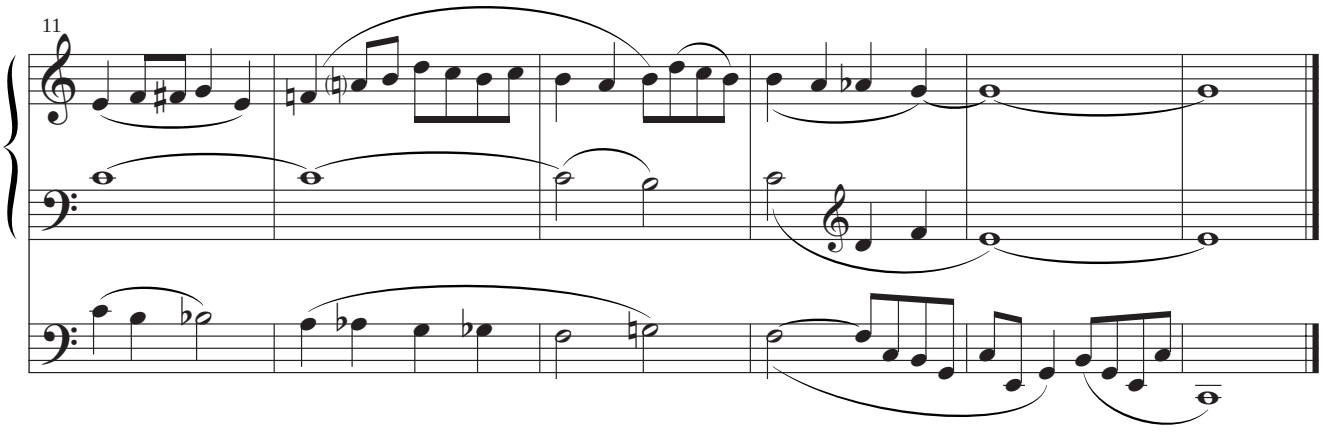
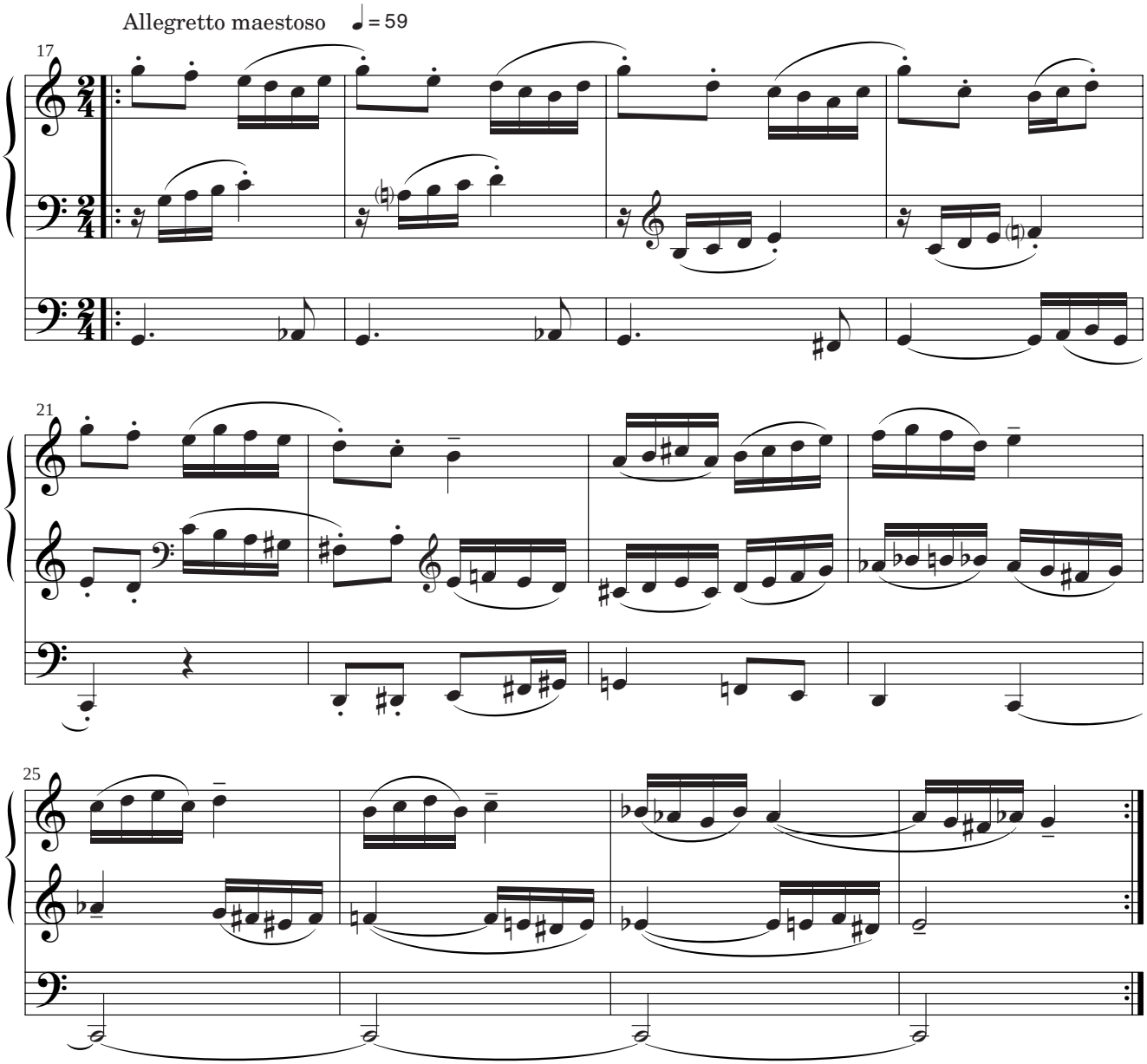
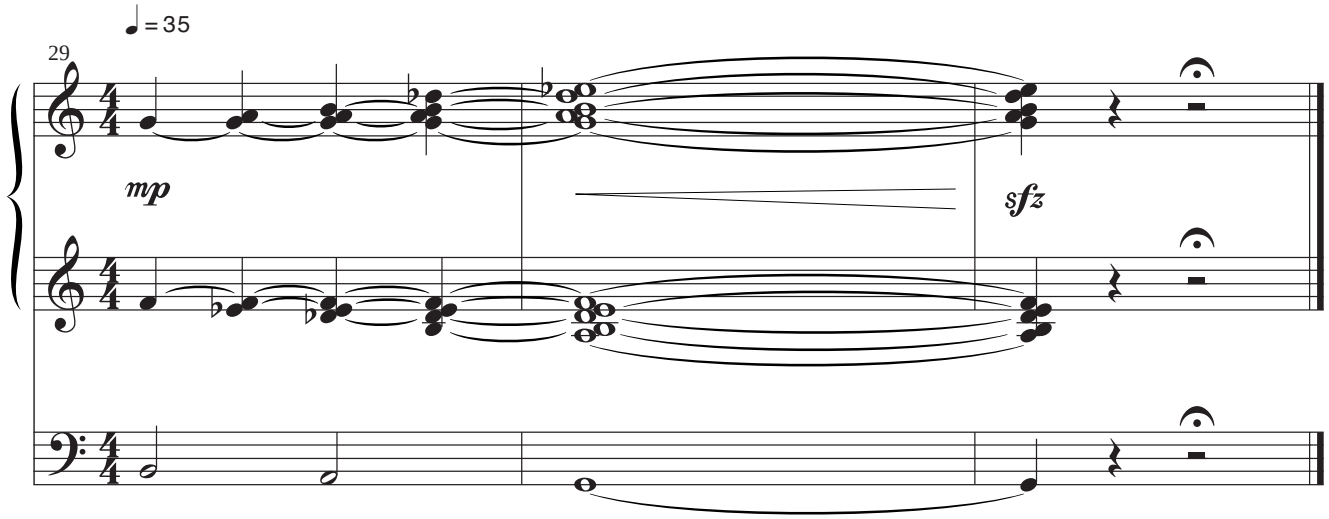


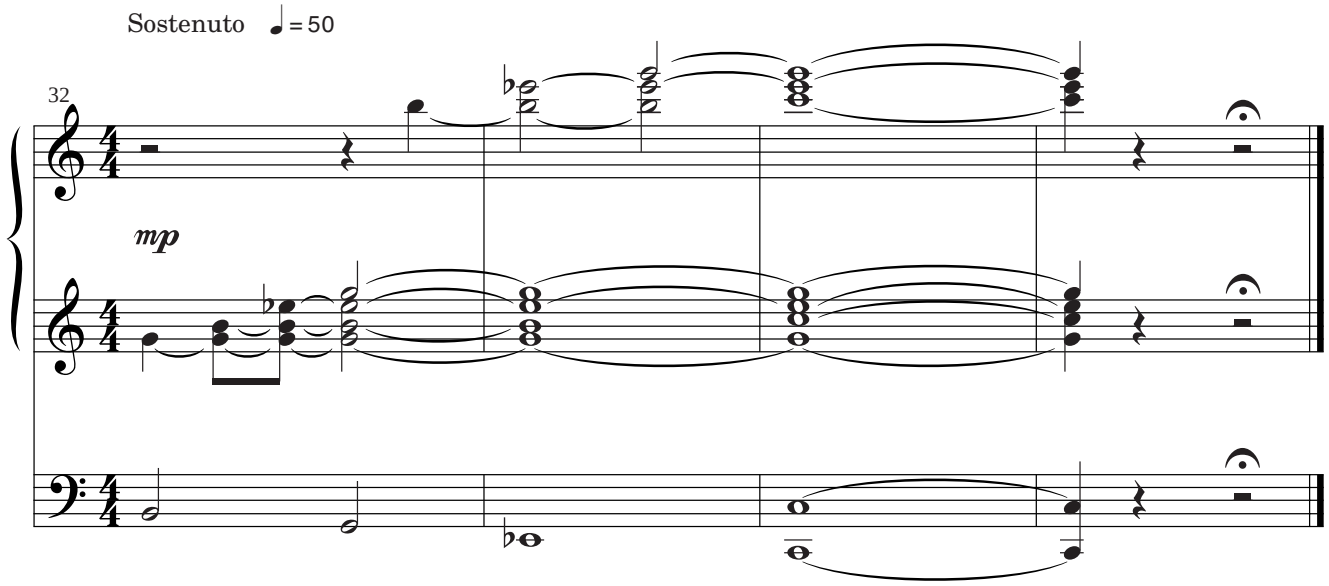
2. First entrance of Oberon, Titania, and their trains *(Music D)*



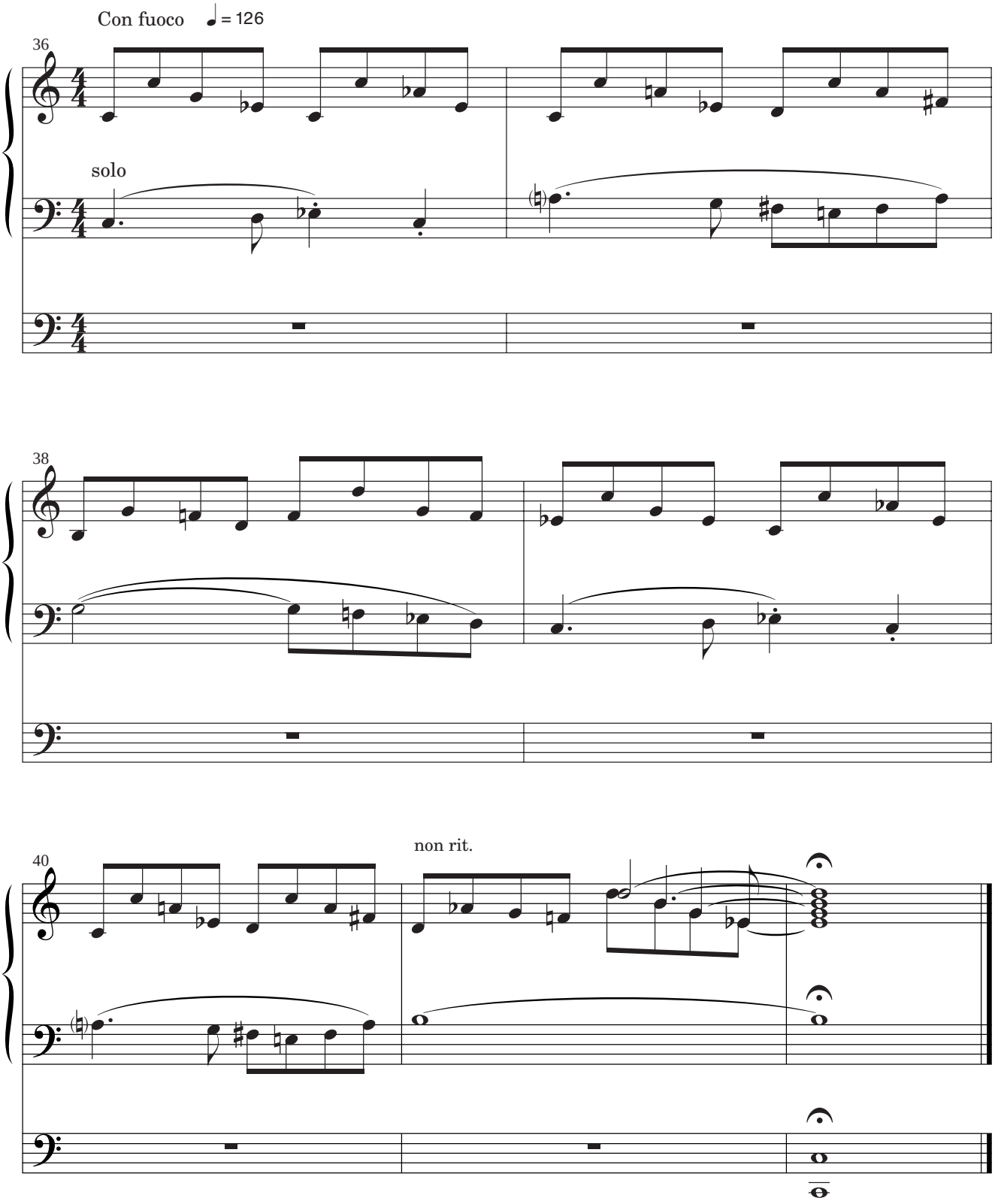
3. Application of magic flower nectar *(Music F)*



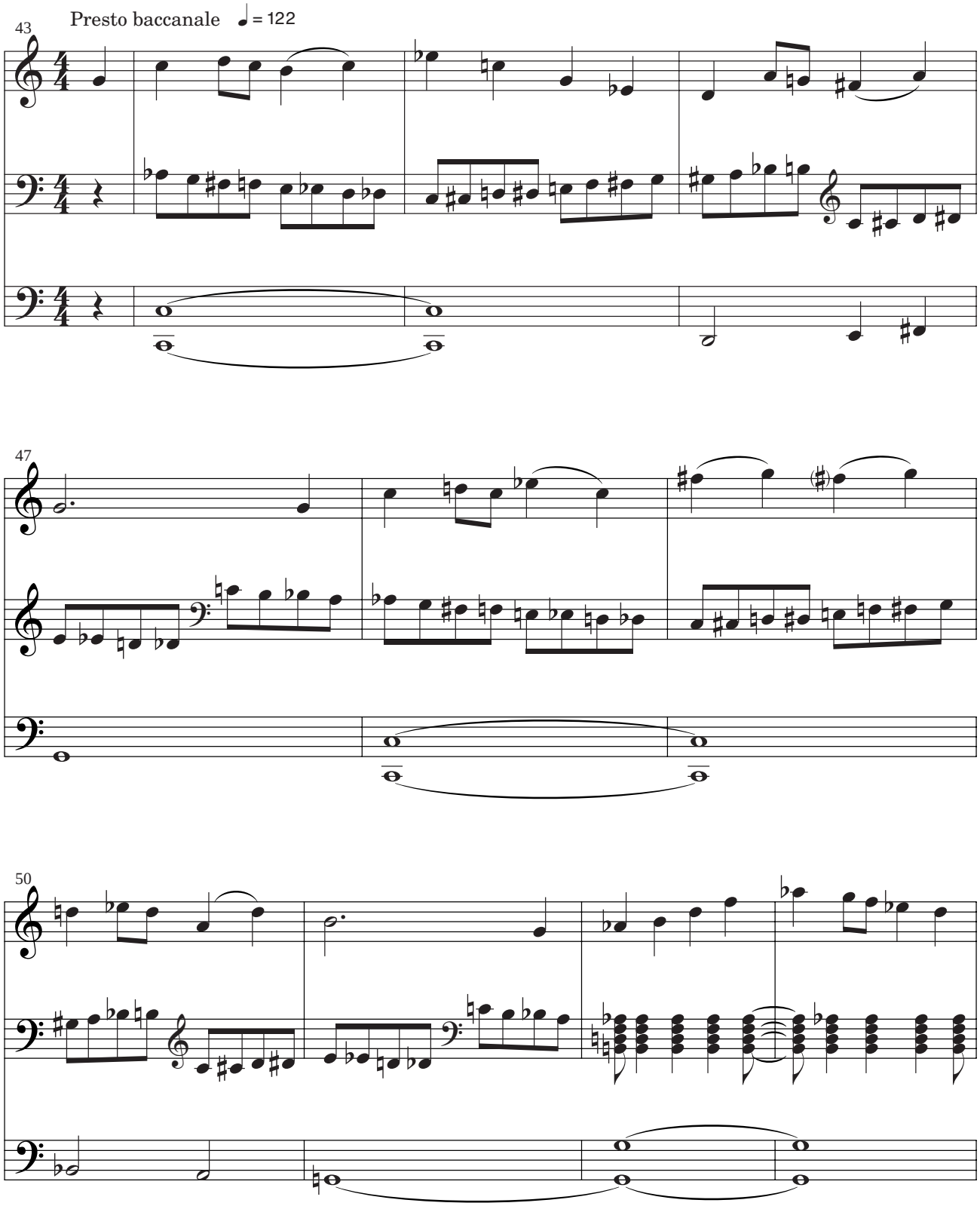
4. Lysander awakes in love *(Music G)*

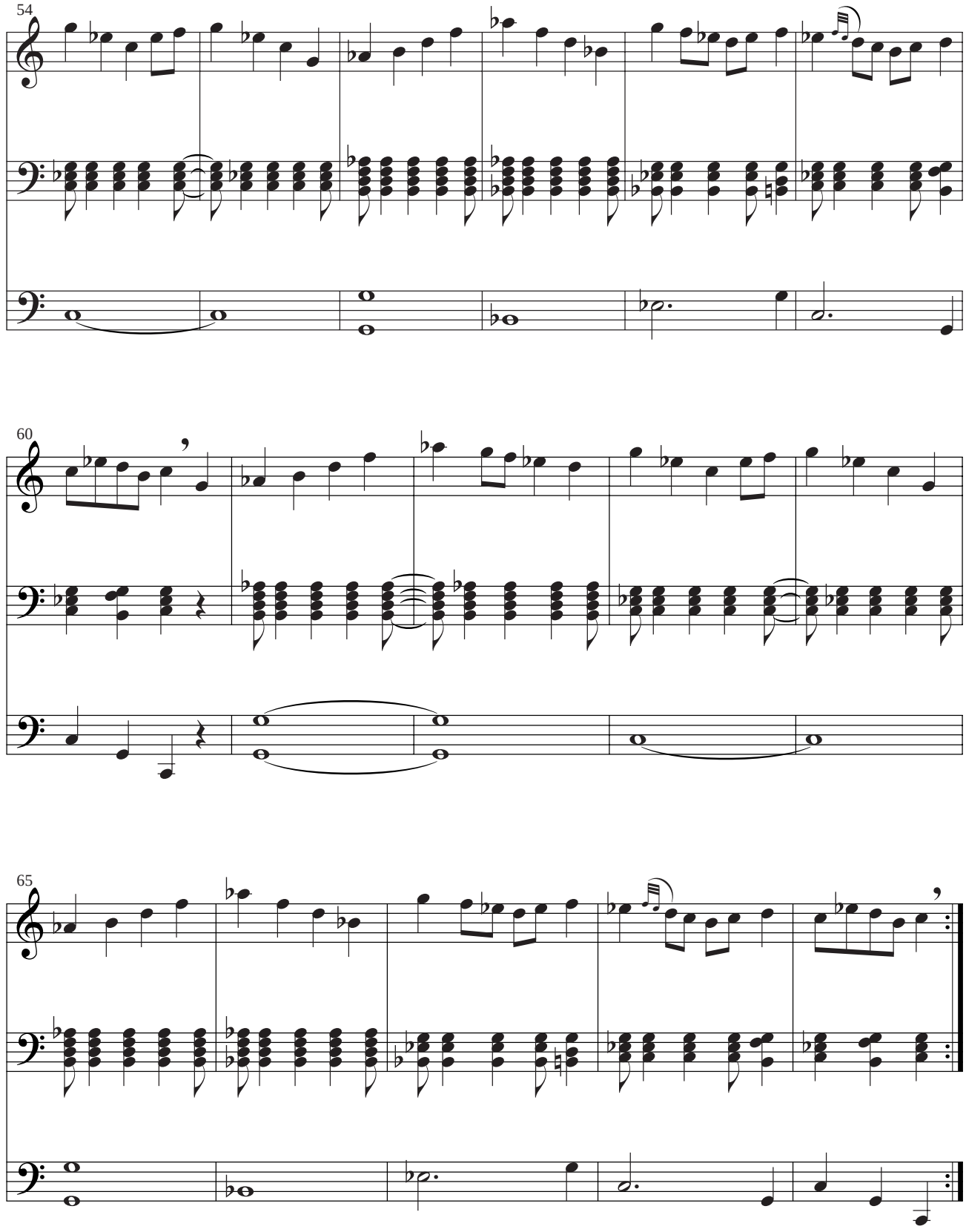


5. Hermia's nightmare *(Music H)*



6. Bottom gets carried away *(Music K)*

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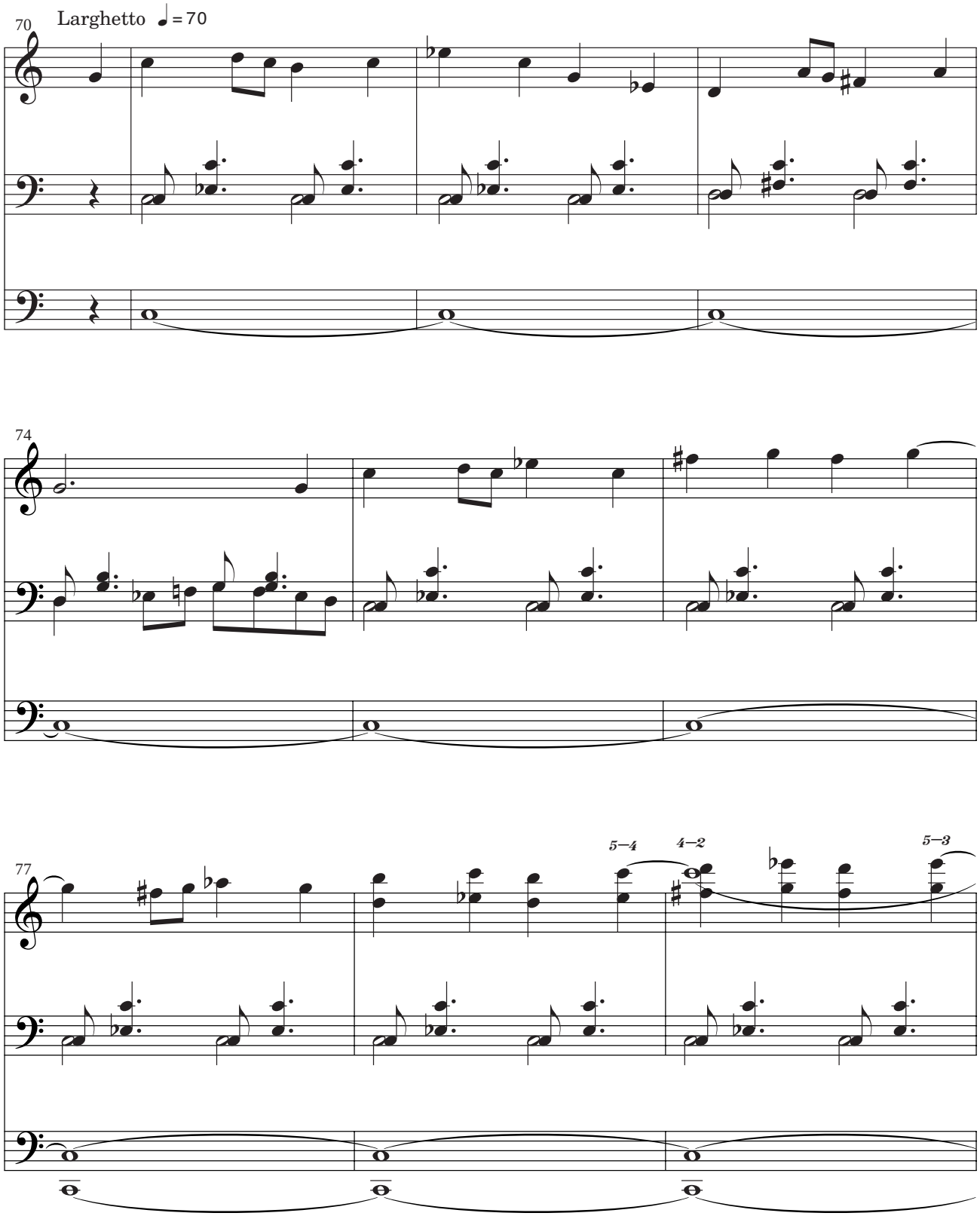
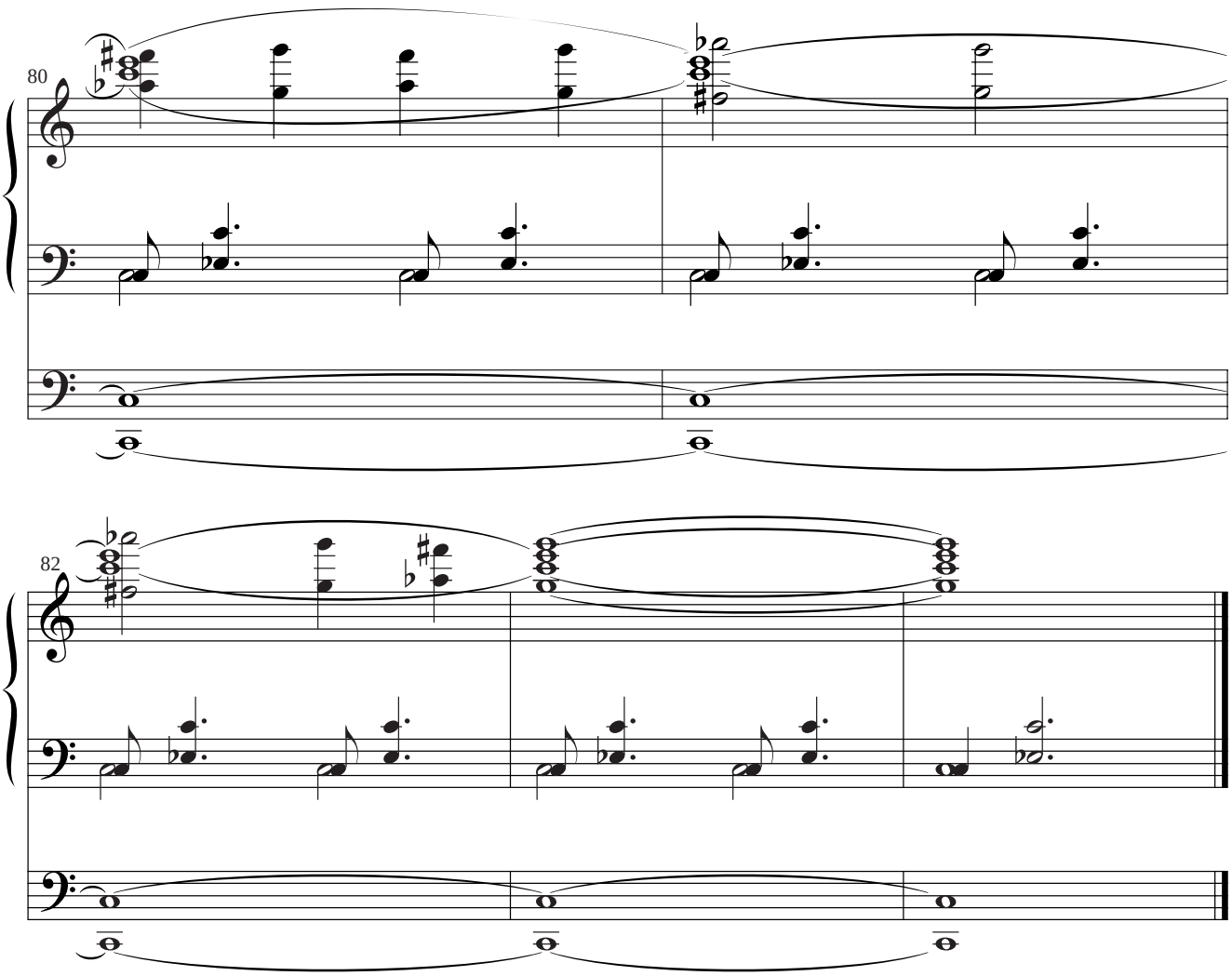
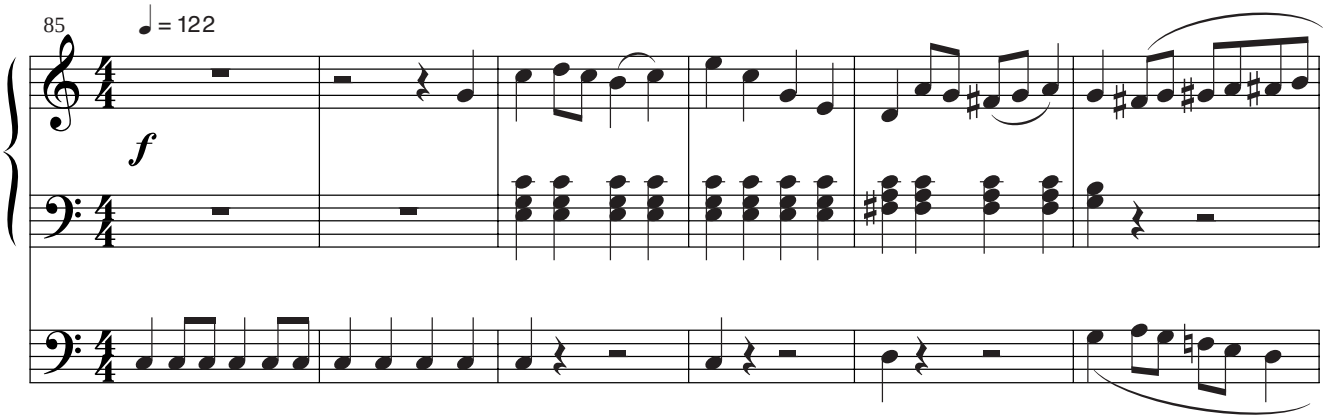
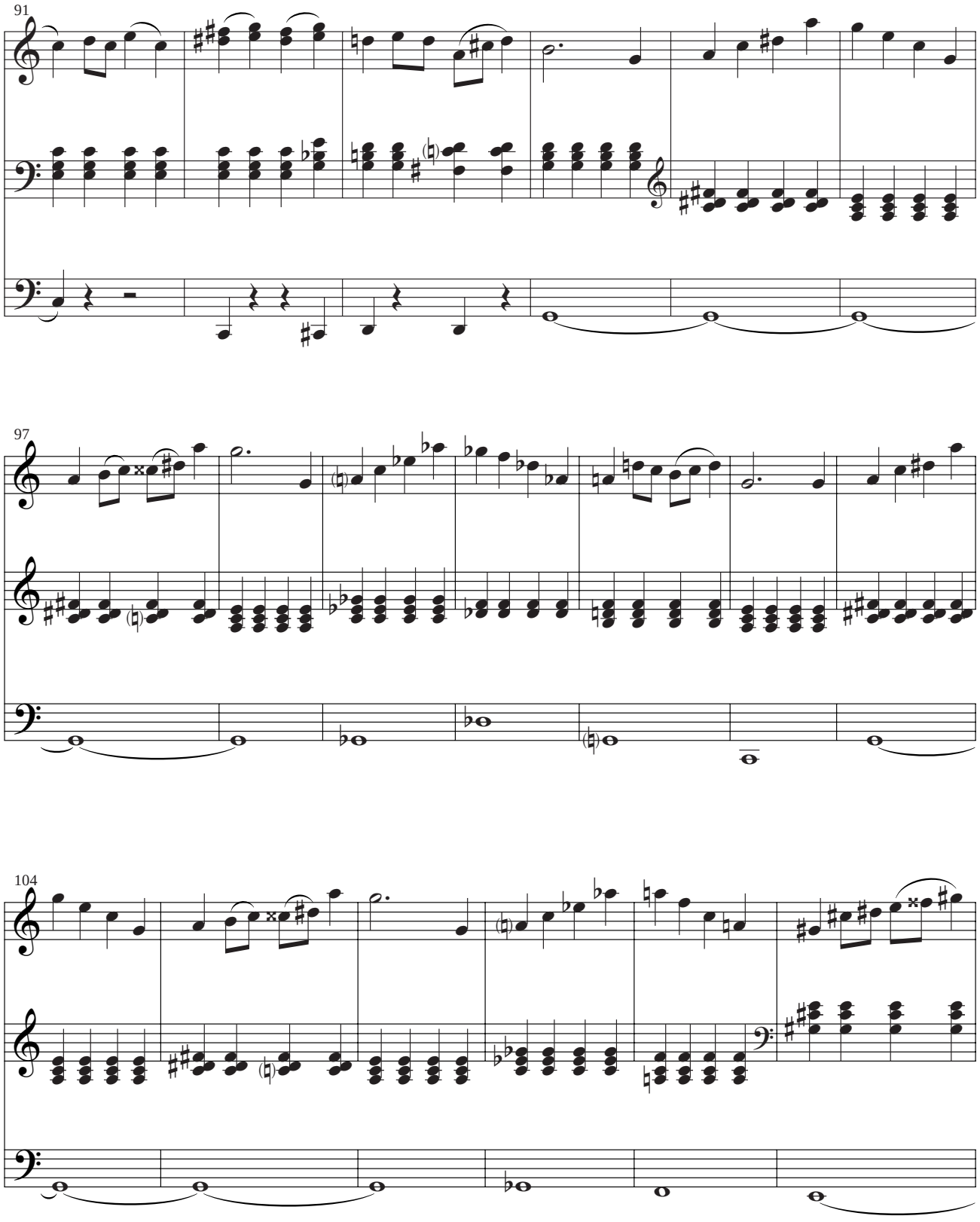
65


70
Larghetto ♩ = 70
74
77
5–4
4–2
5–3



7. Entr'acte *(Music L)*

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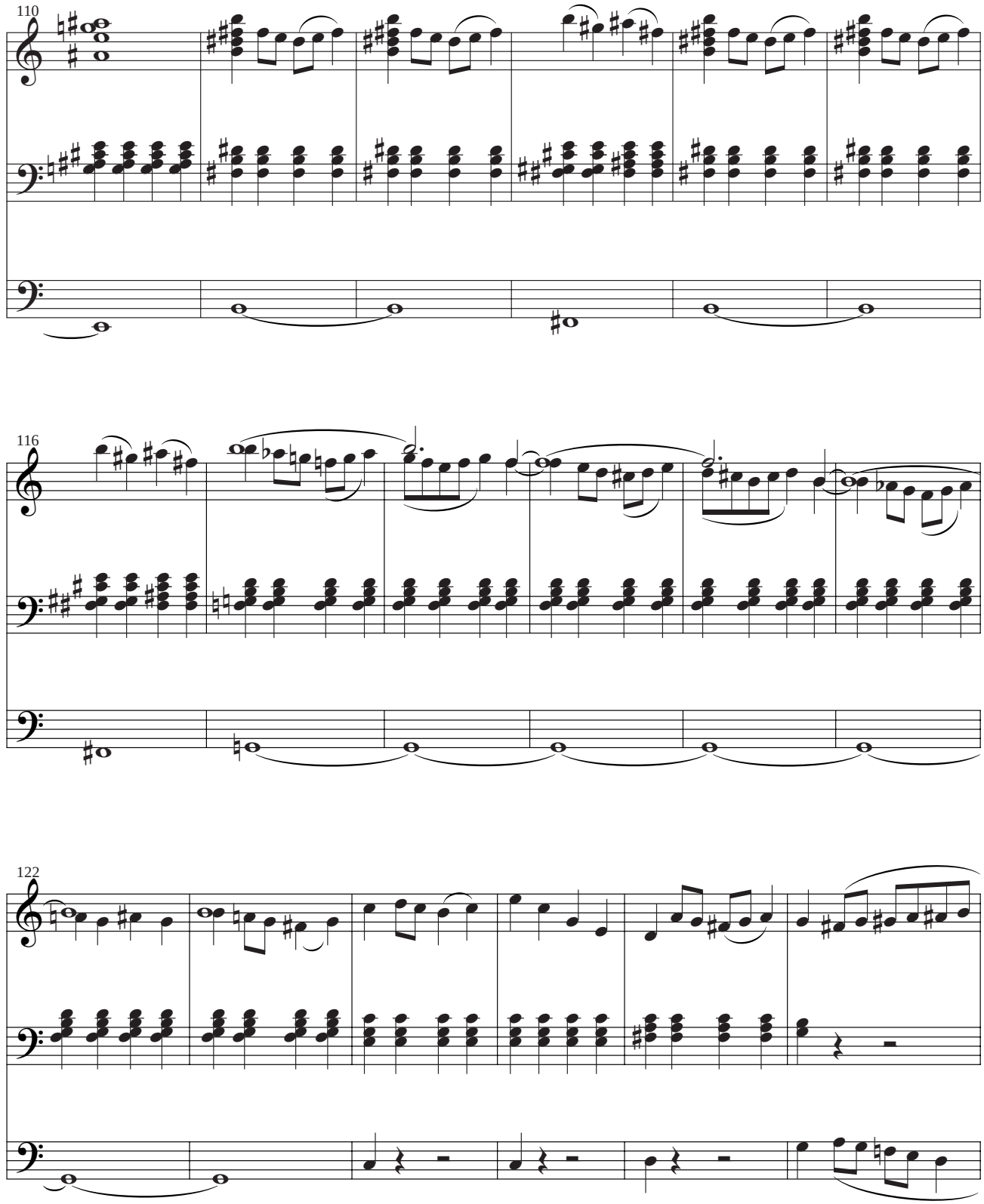
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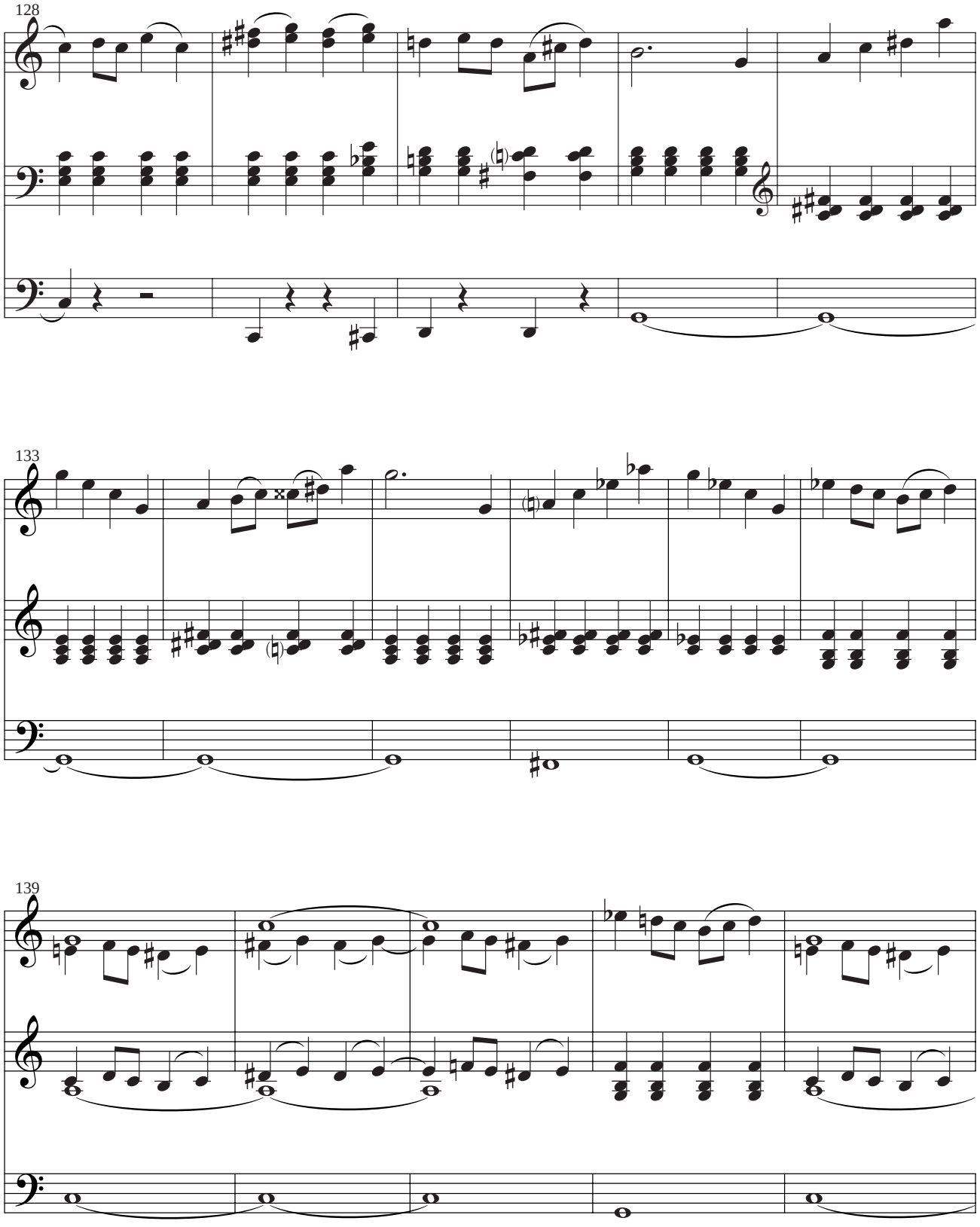
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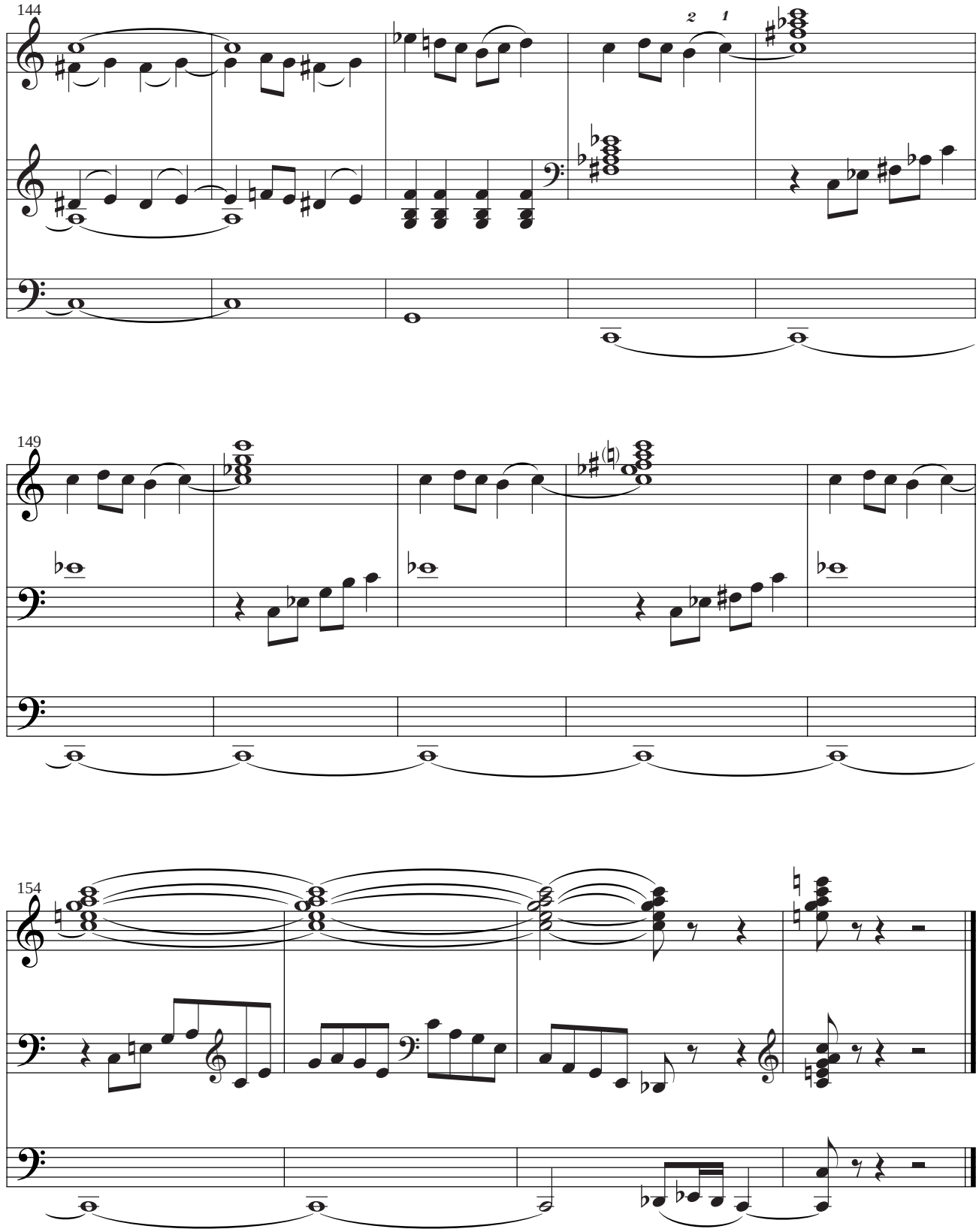
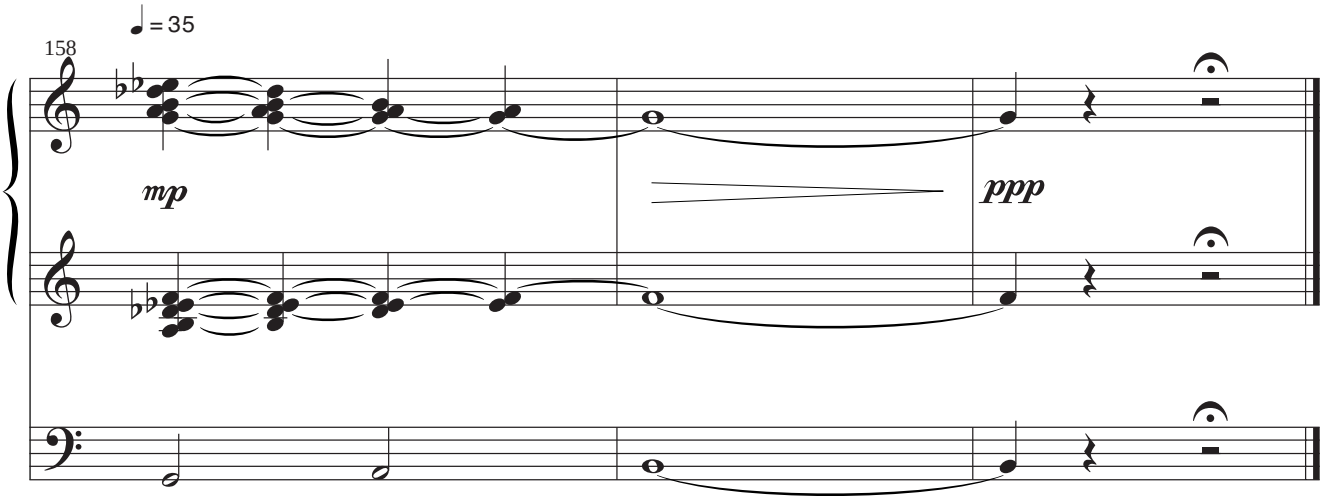
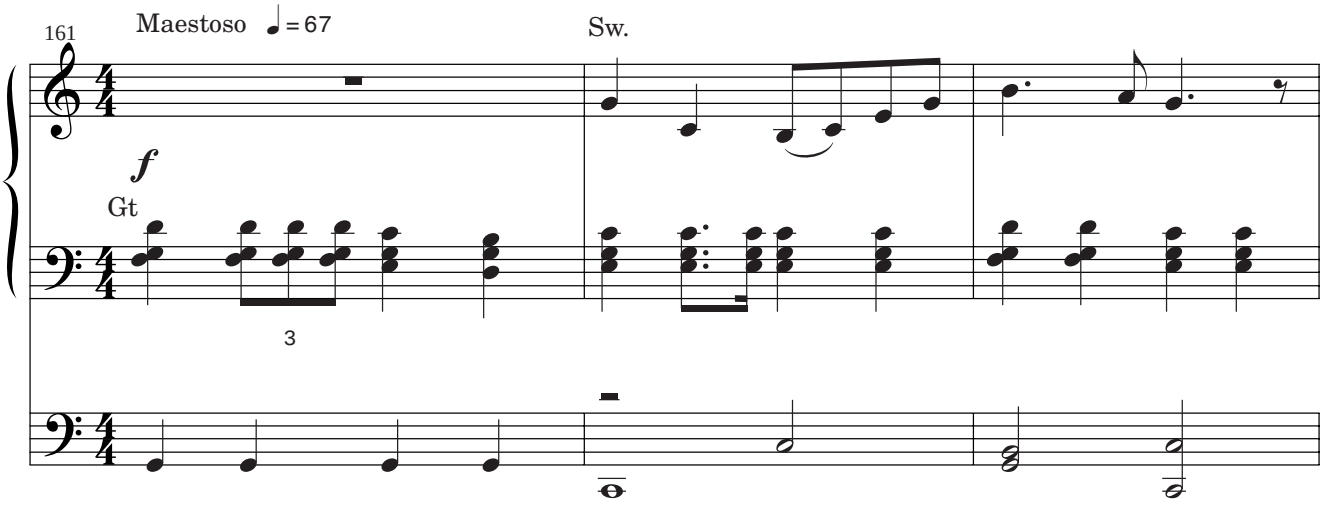
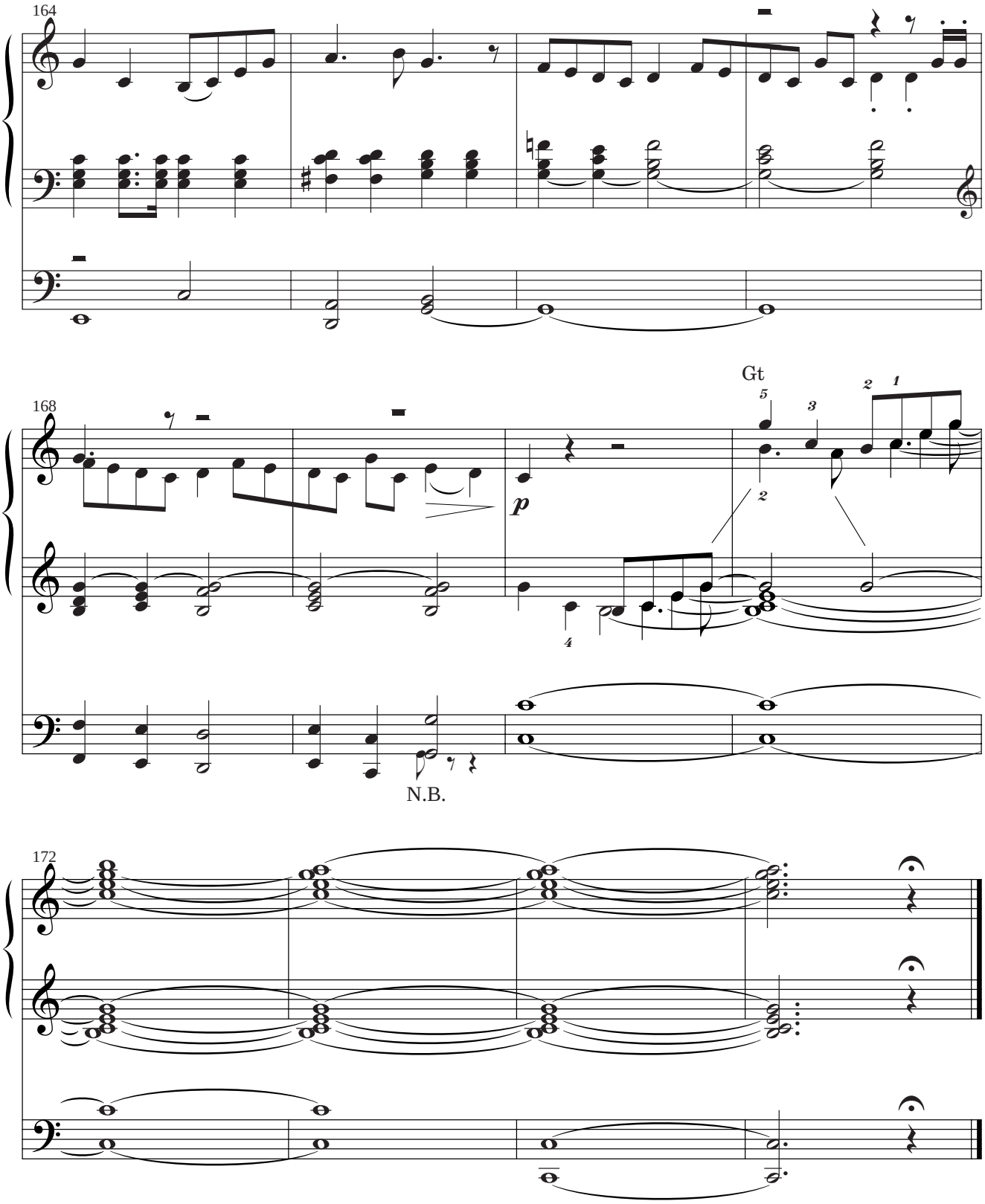

144
2
1
149
154

8. Antidoting of magic flower nectar *(Music M)*



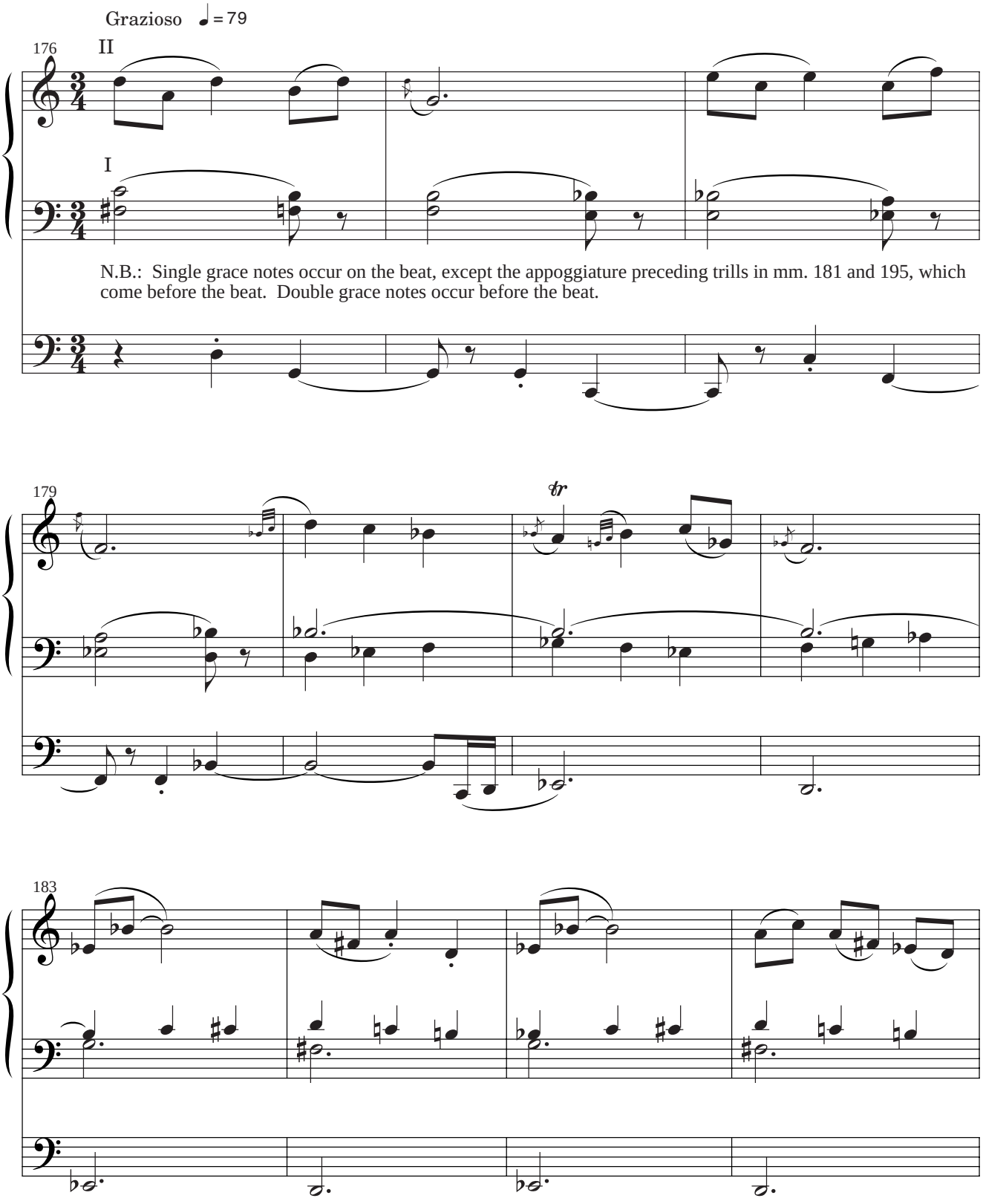
9. Second entrance of Titania and her train *(Music N)*

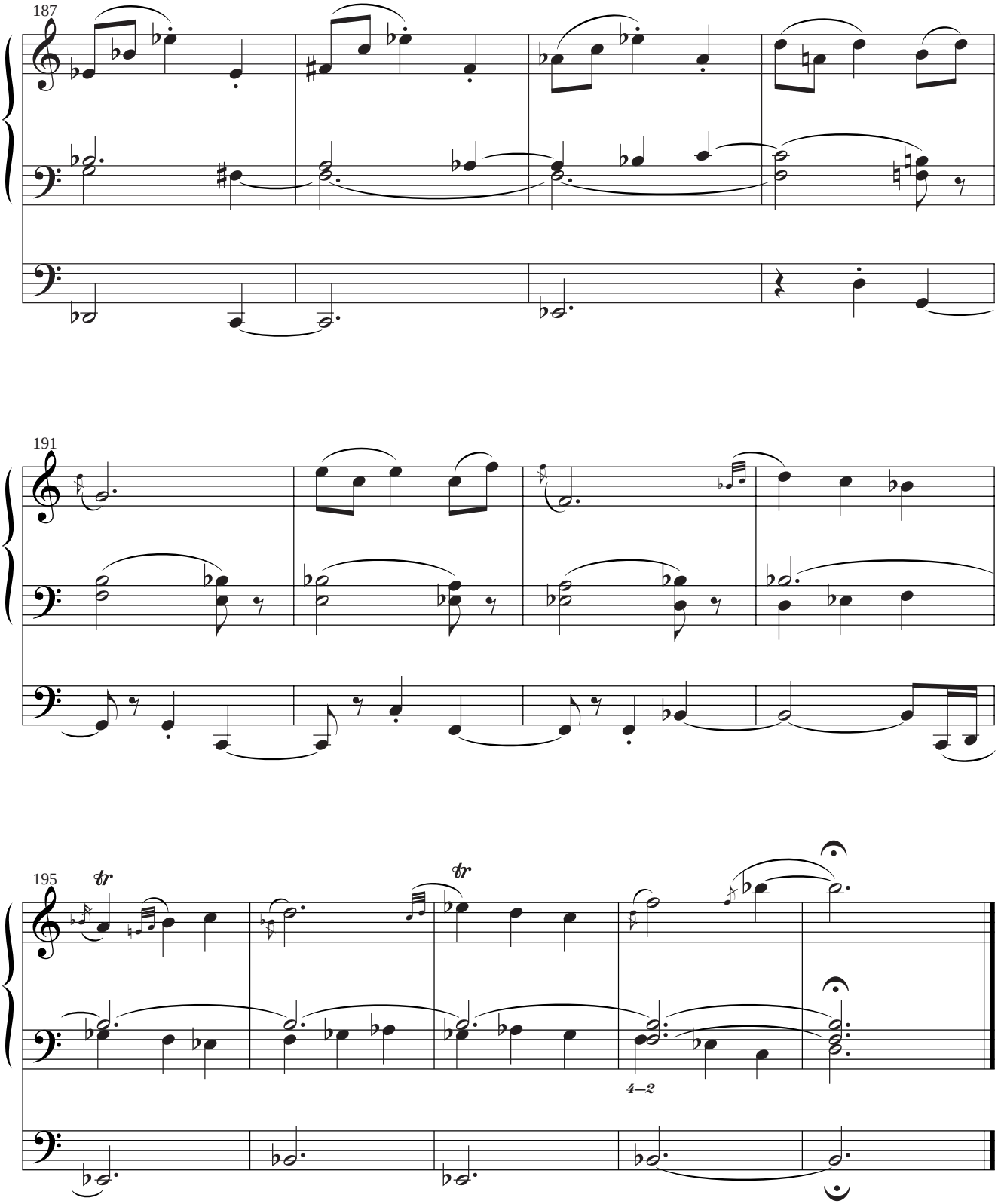




N.B.: On some organs it is possible to hold the upper G for its full length while closing the Swell box. If you cannot do this, free up the left foot to do so, as indicated in the small note and rests.

10. Minuet *(Music P)*




187
191
195
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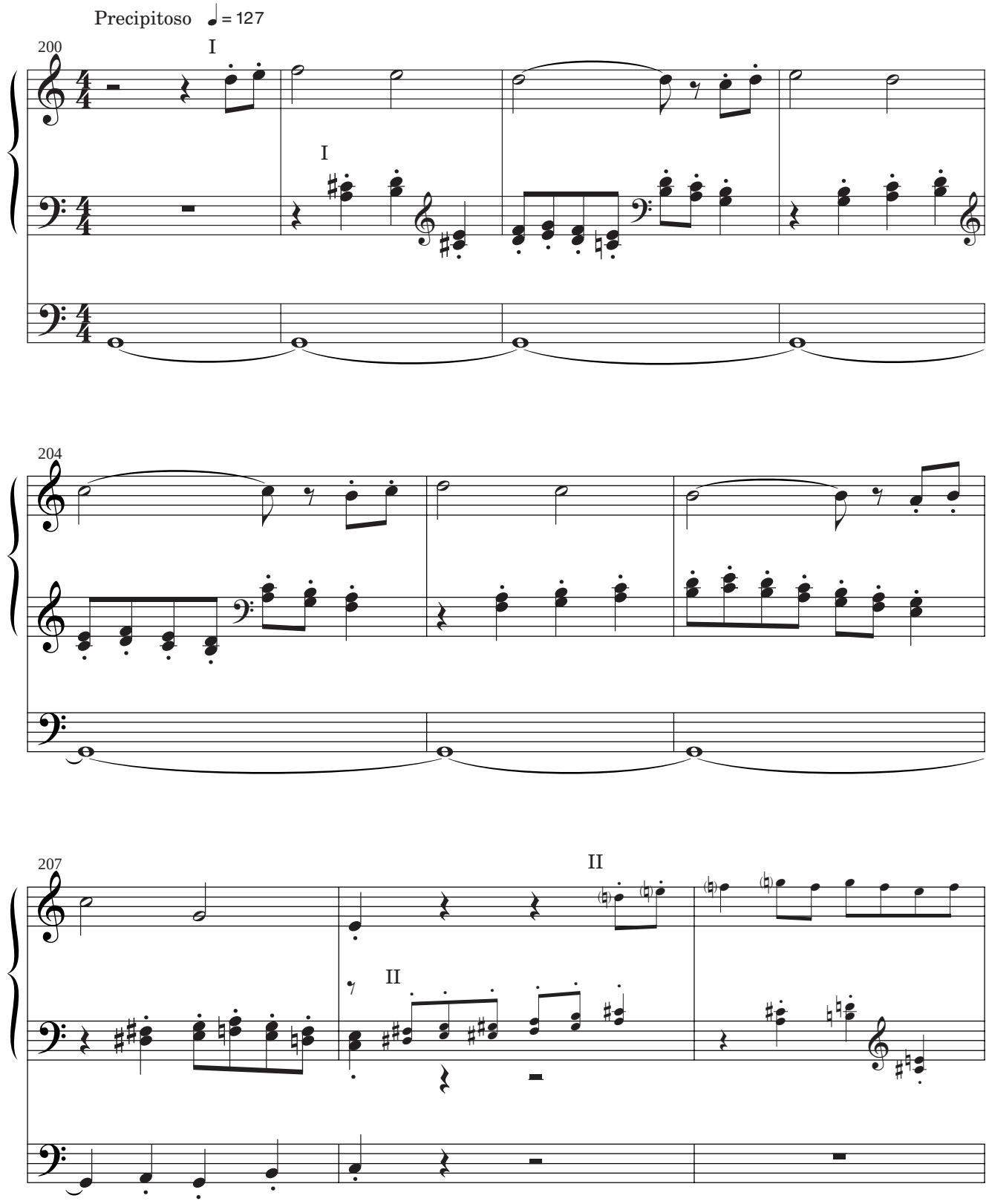
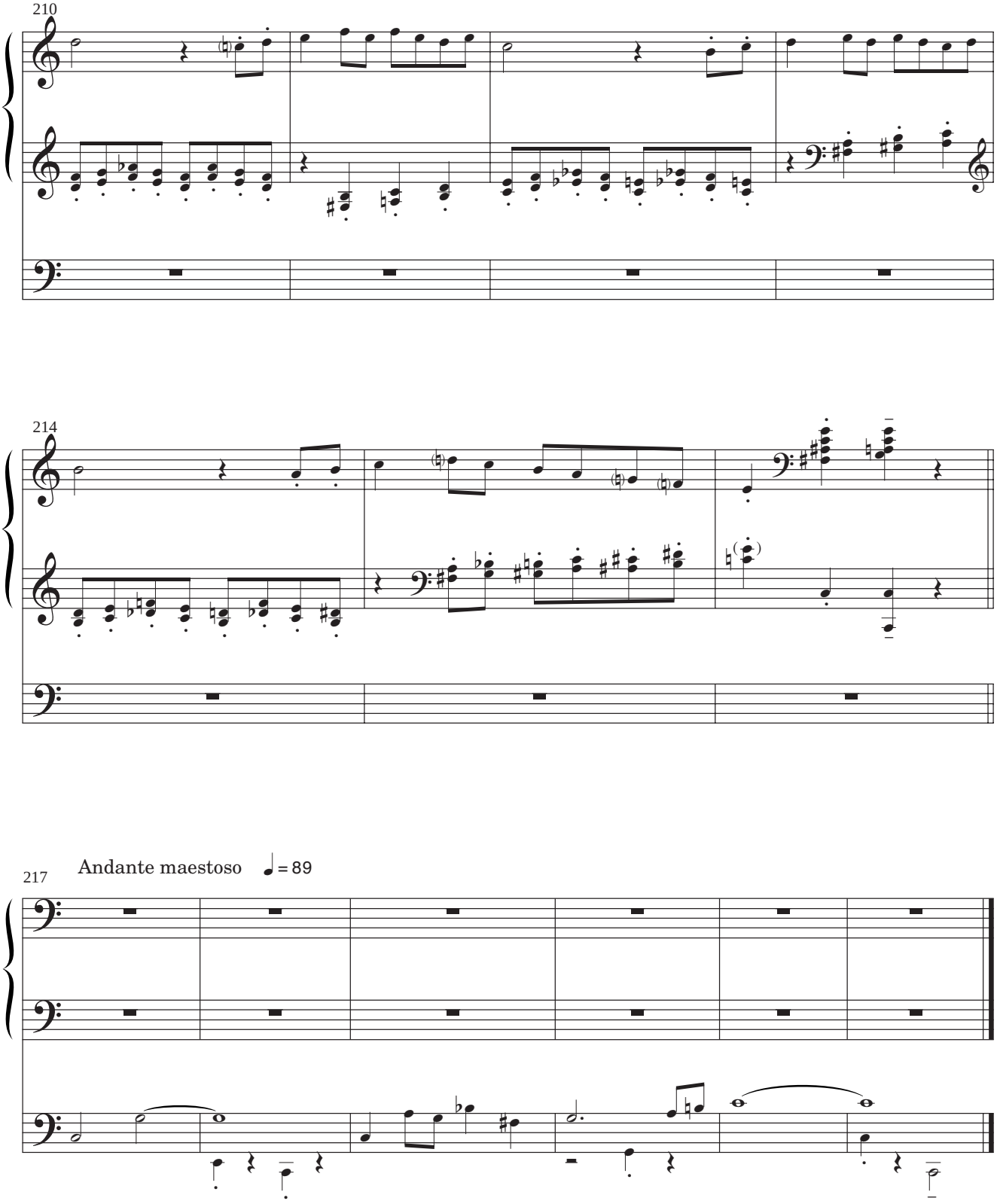
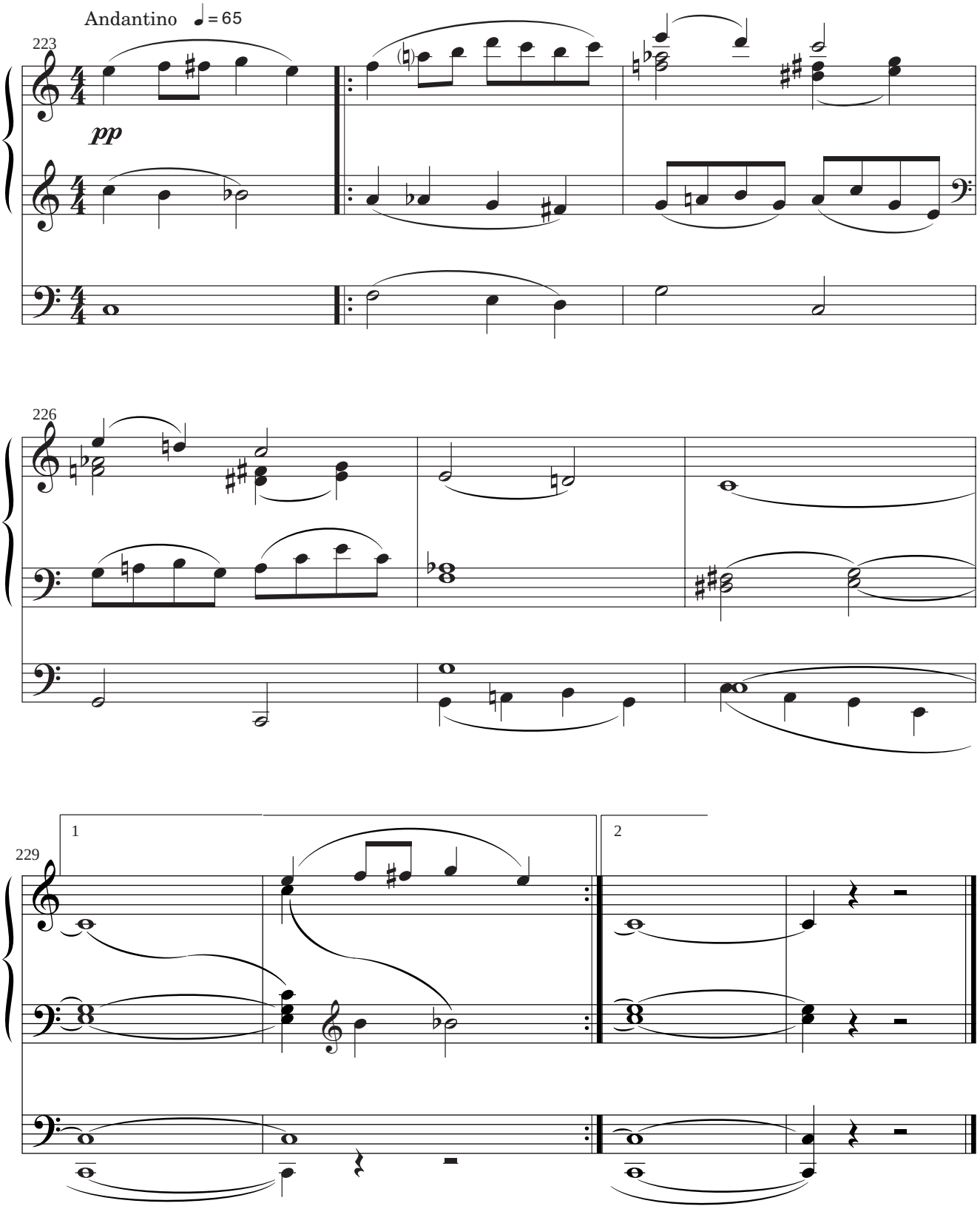
tr
4–2

11. Exeunt immortals, enter Theseus and his train *(Music Q)*




210
214
217
Andante maestoso
= 89

12. Pastorale *(Music R)*