Improve your sight-reading!

New edi

Piano
Level 8

Advance

A progressive, interactive approach to sight-reading

Paul Harris

FABER *ff* MUSIC

Grade 8 Piano

Improve your sight-reading!

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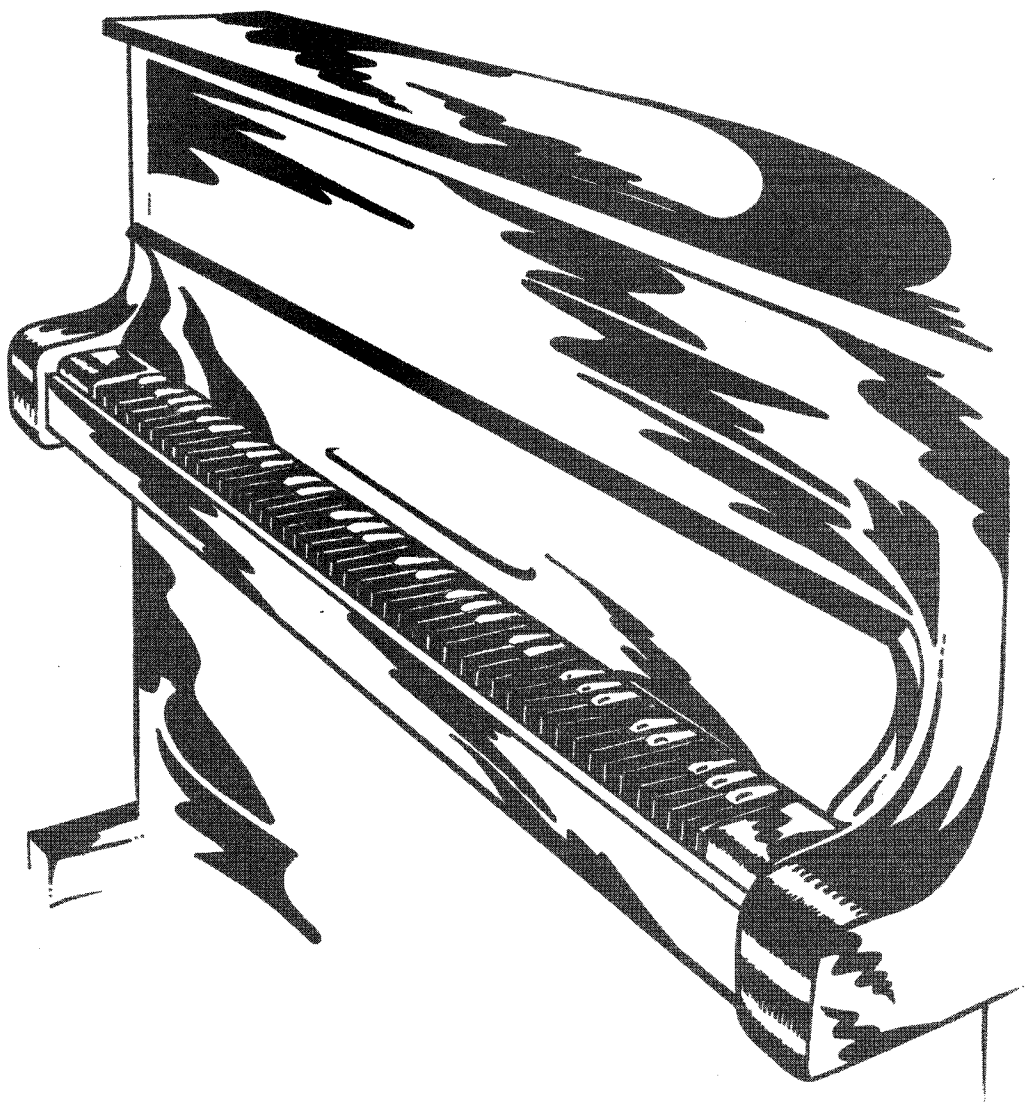


FABER MUSIC

Stage 1

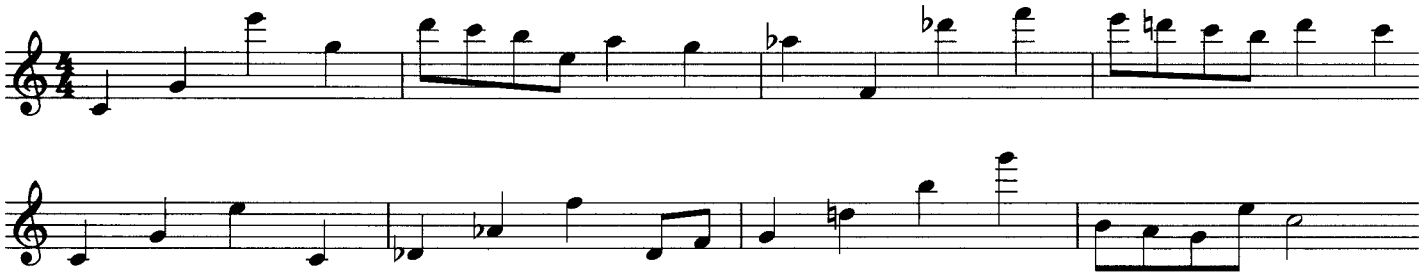
Wide leaps and ledger lines

You will, of course, know how important it is to keep your eyes on the music when sight-reading. This means that you must be strongly aware of the piano keyboard: the location of notes and the distance between them. But that doesn't mean that you're not allowed to glance down briefly at the keyboard to see where you're going! Always look for your destination note.

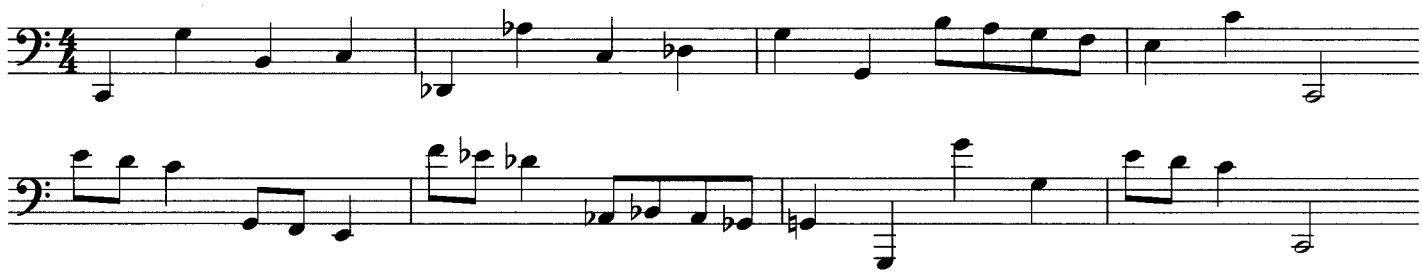
Here are some entertaining exercises to help you become more instinctively aware of where notes are. Close your eyes and find middle C. With your eyes still closed, choose and play other notes (or ask your teacher or a friend to choose them) and see how accurate you are!

Play the following two exercises trying to look at the keyboard as little as possible:

1

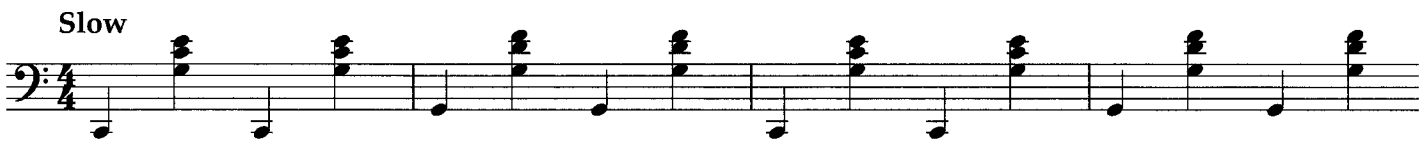


2



Now play the following exercise, first reading the music (again, looking at the keyboard as little as possible), and then try it from memory (with your eyes closed!). Make up a right-hand melody to go with it. Use the pedal.

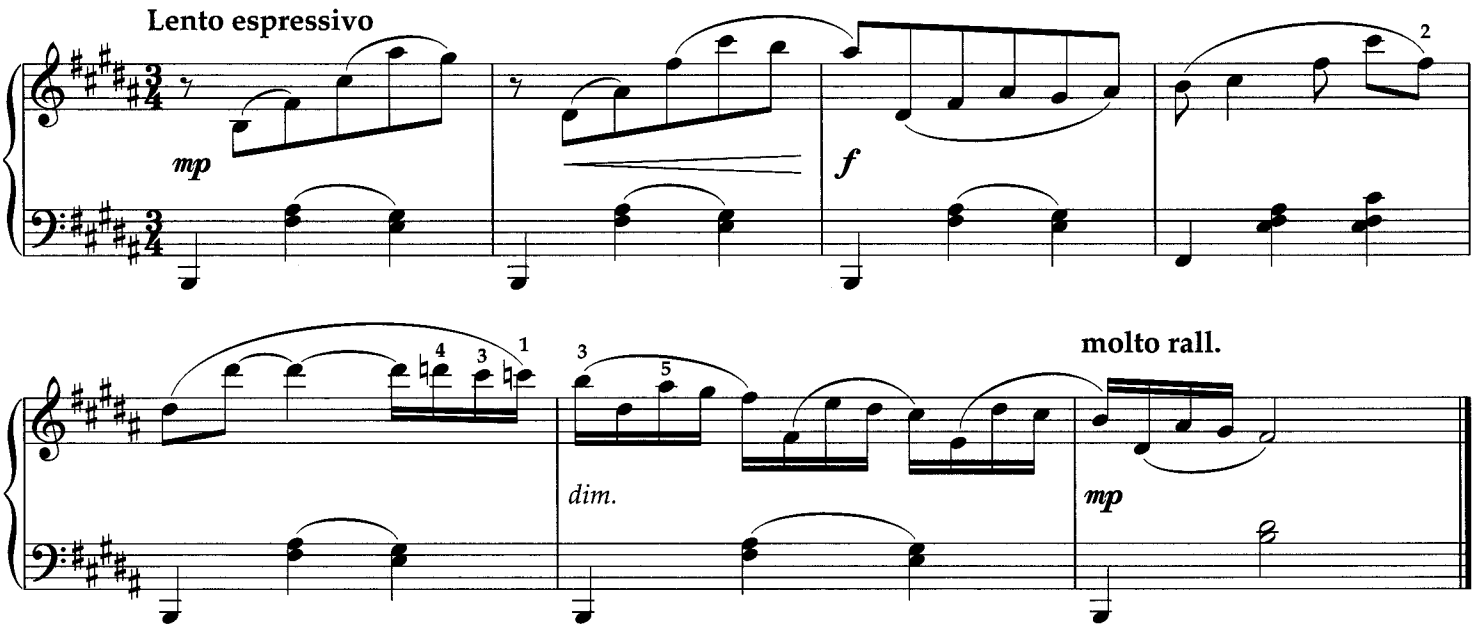
3



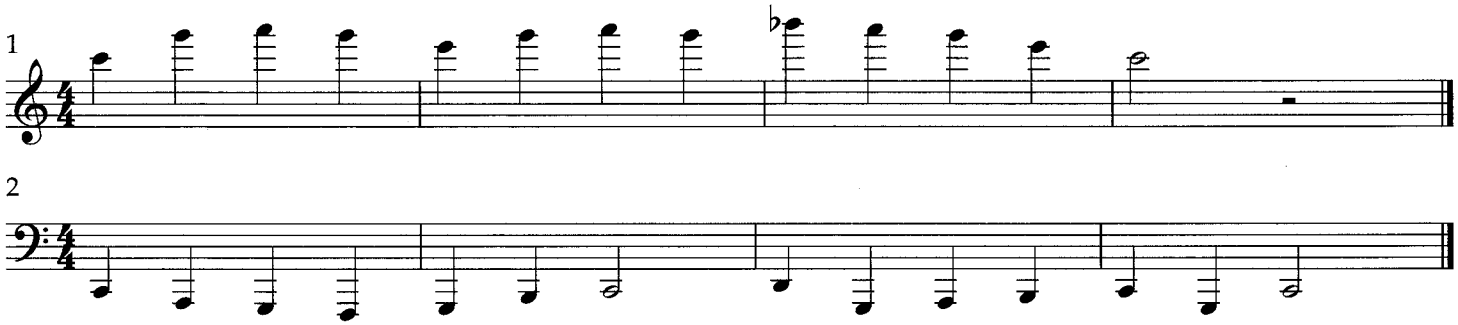
Transpose the exercise into other keys – perhaps one per practice session.

Melodic exercises

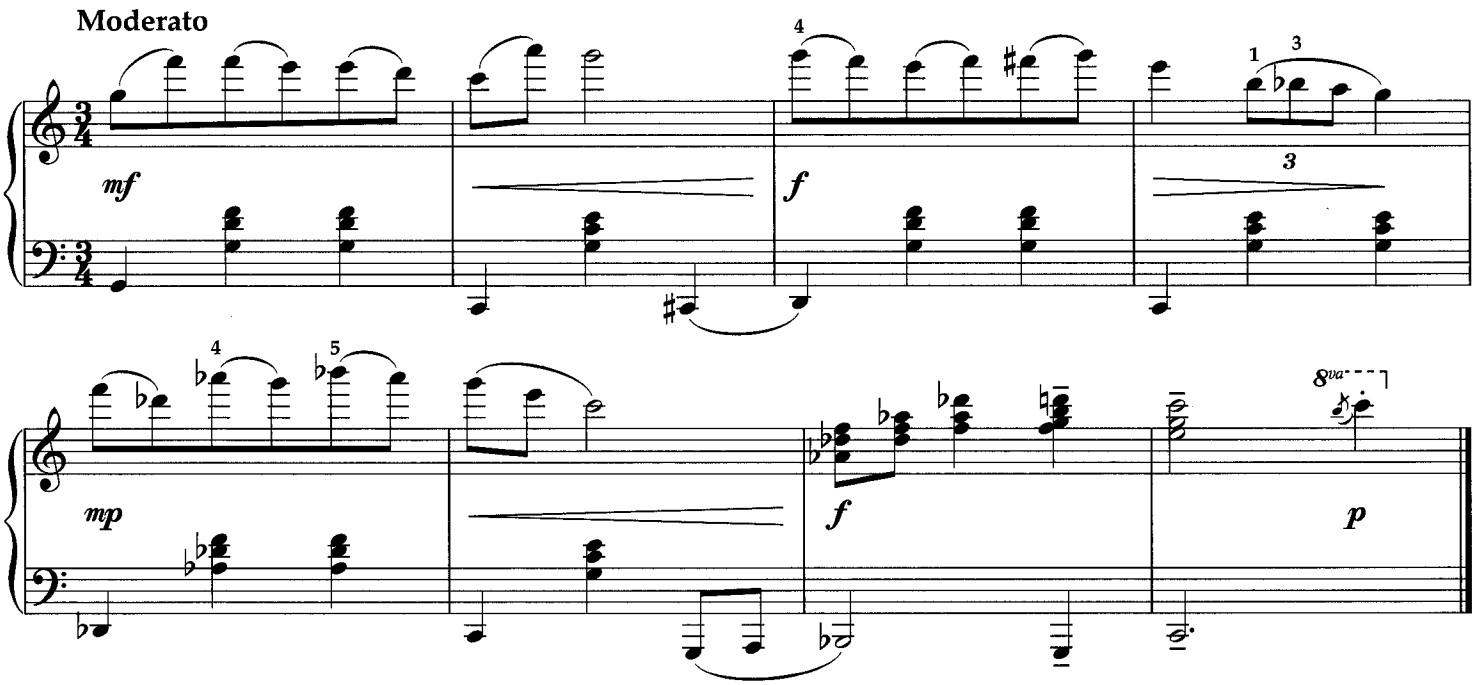
Nocturne



Passages written using the more extreme notes on the piano are often notated an octave above or below the actual pitch with the addition of the '8va' marking. Occasionally these notes are written using ledger lines. The following exercises will help you to become more familiar with such notation:



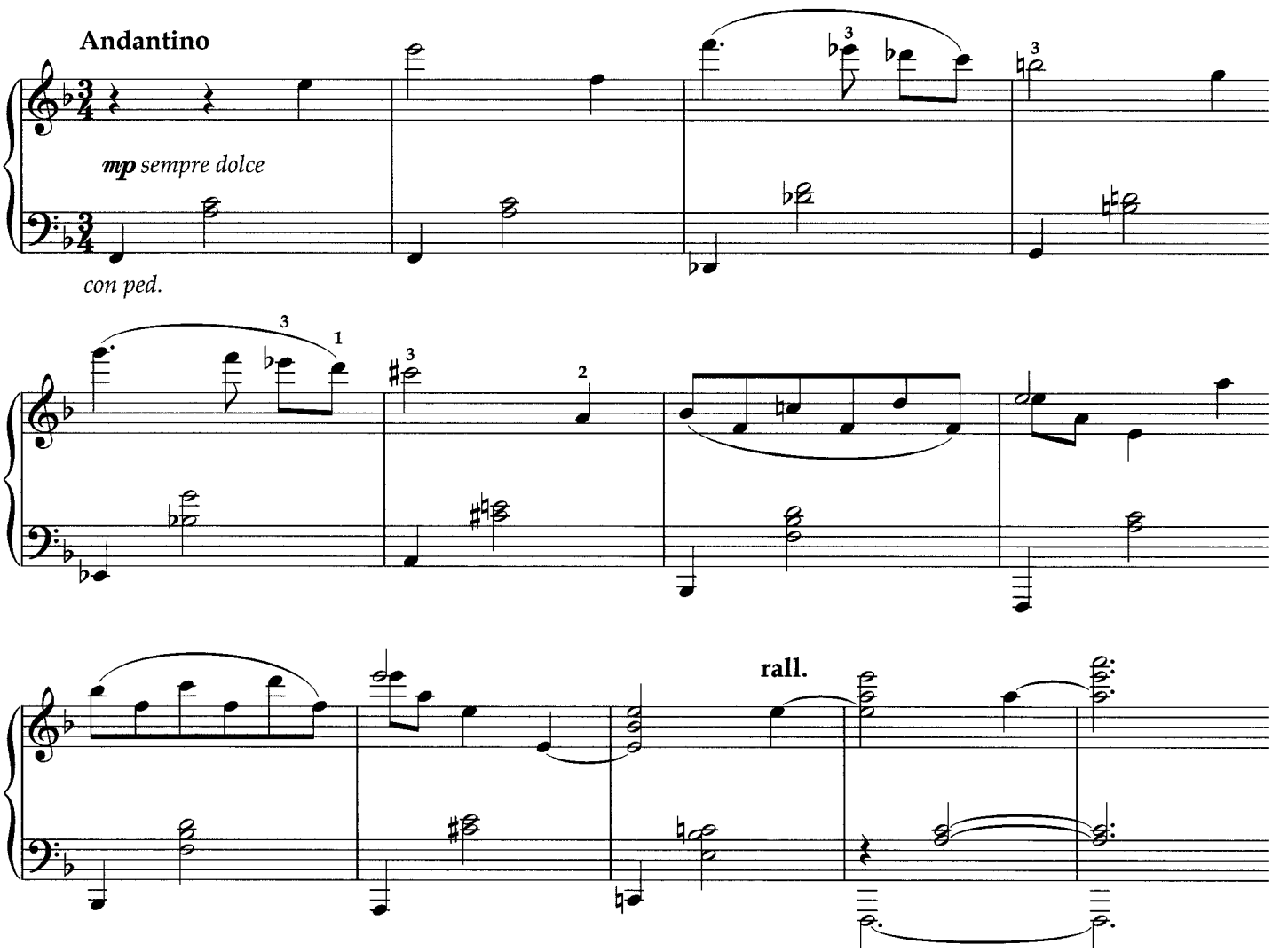
Chanson d'après midi



Prepared piece

1. In which key is this piece? Work out the chords in each bar and mark them lightly in pencil underneath the music.
2. Which interval do the first two notes in the right hand form? And the second two? Does this interval appear again?
3. What character will you try to convey?
4. What are the similarities and differences between bars 7–8 and 9–10?
5. Try to hear the piece in your head.
6. Remember that the composer's dynamic markings are just a 'point of departure': music would look far too cluttered if all the possible markings were included. You will almost certainly wish to add more to give shape, direction and expression to your performance. In this piece, such markings have been deliberately omitted so you can add your own as appropriate.

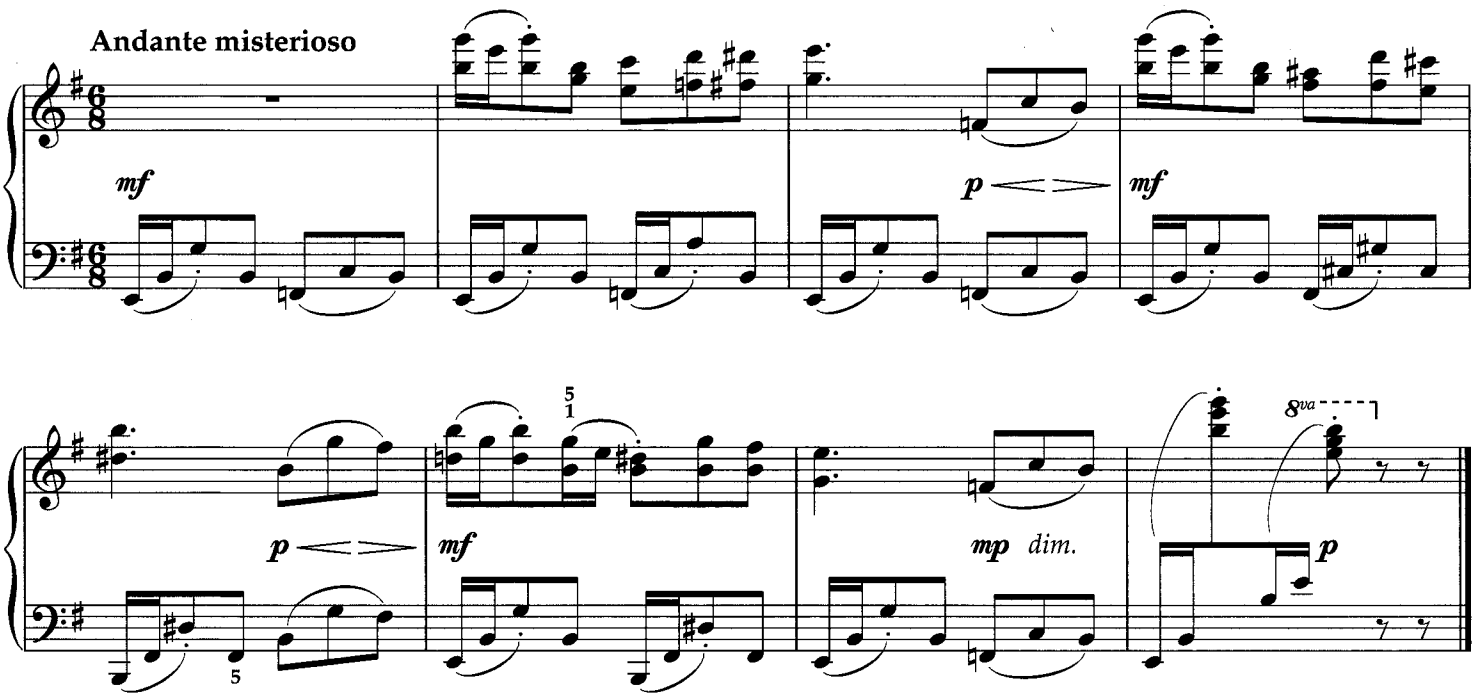
Salut d'amour



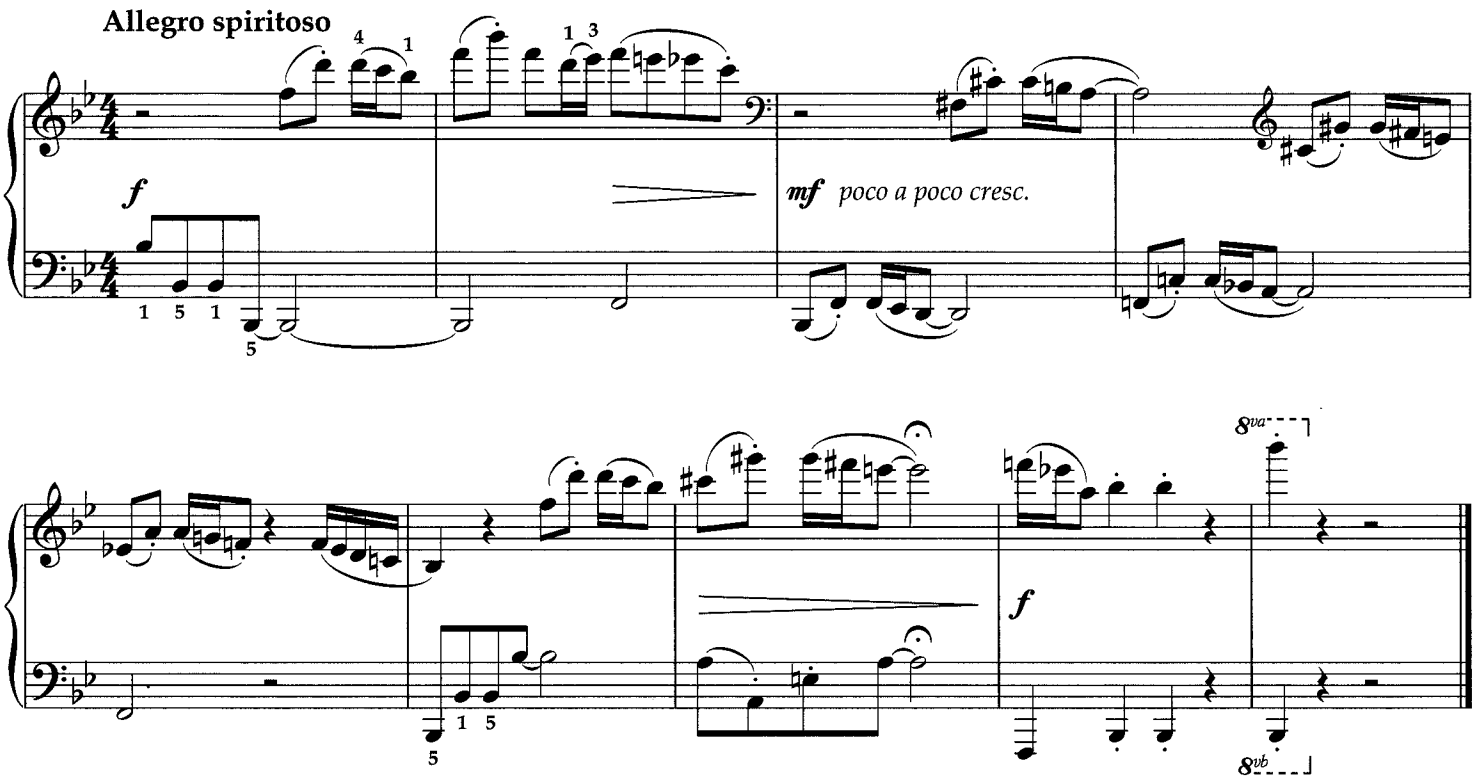
Going solo

Don't forget to prepare these pieces carefully before you play them.

Sugar plum goblin



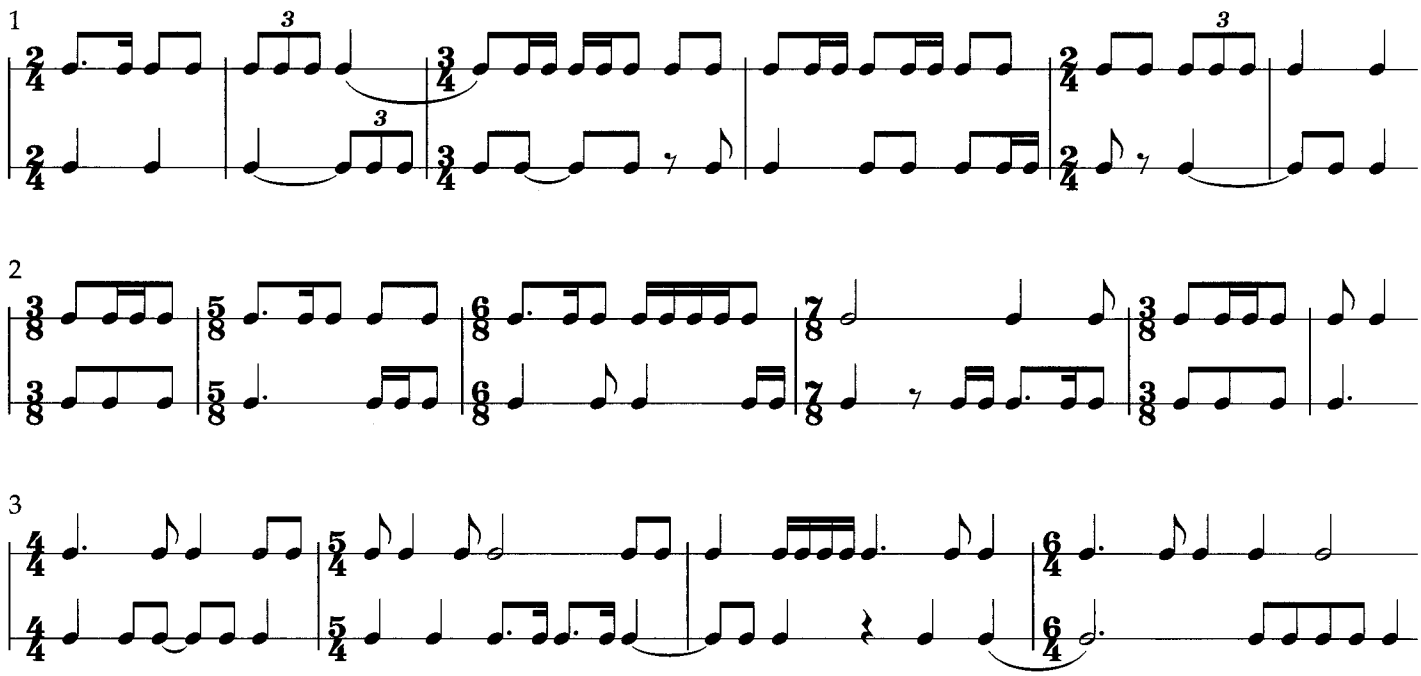
Downtown Chicago



Stage 2

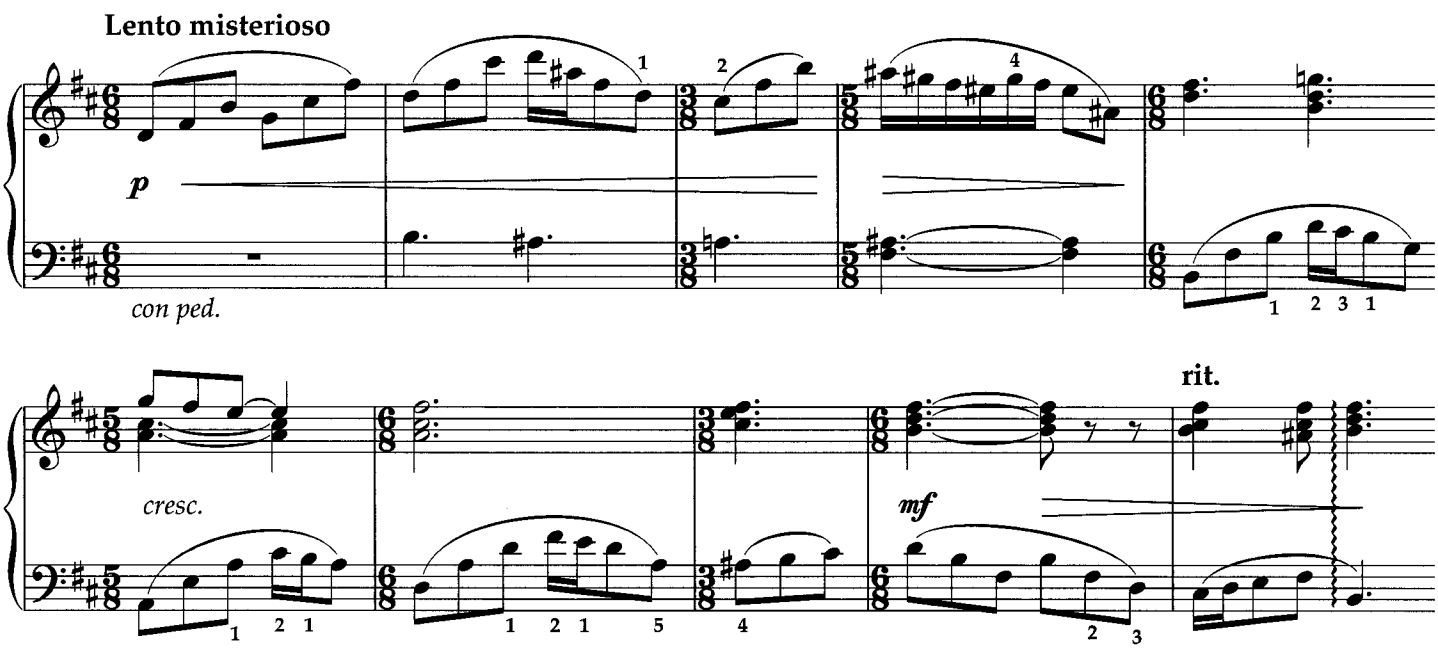
Rhythmic exercises

When the lower number in the time signature remains the same, changing metre shouldn't cause problems. Just make sure that, as usual, you feel the pulse strongly:



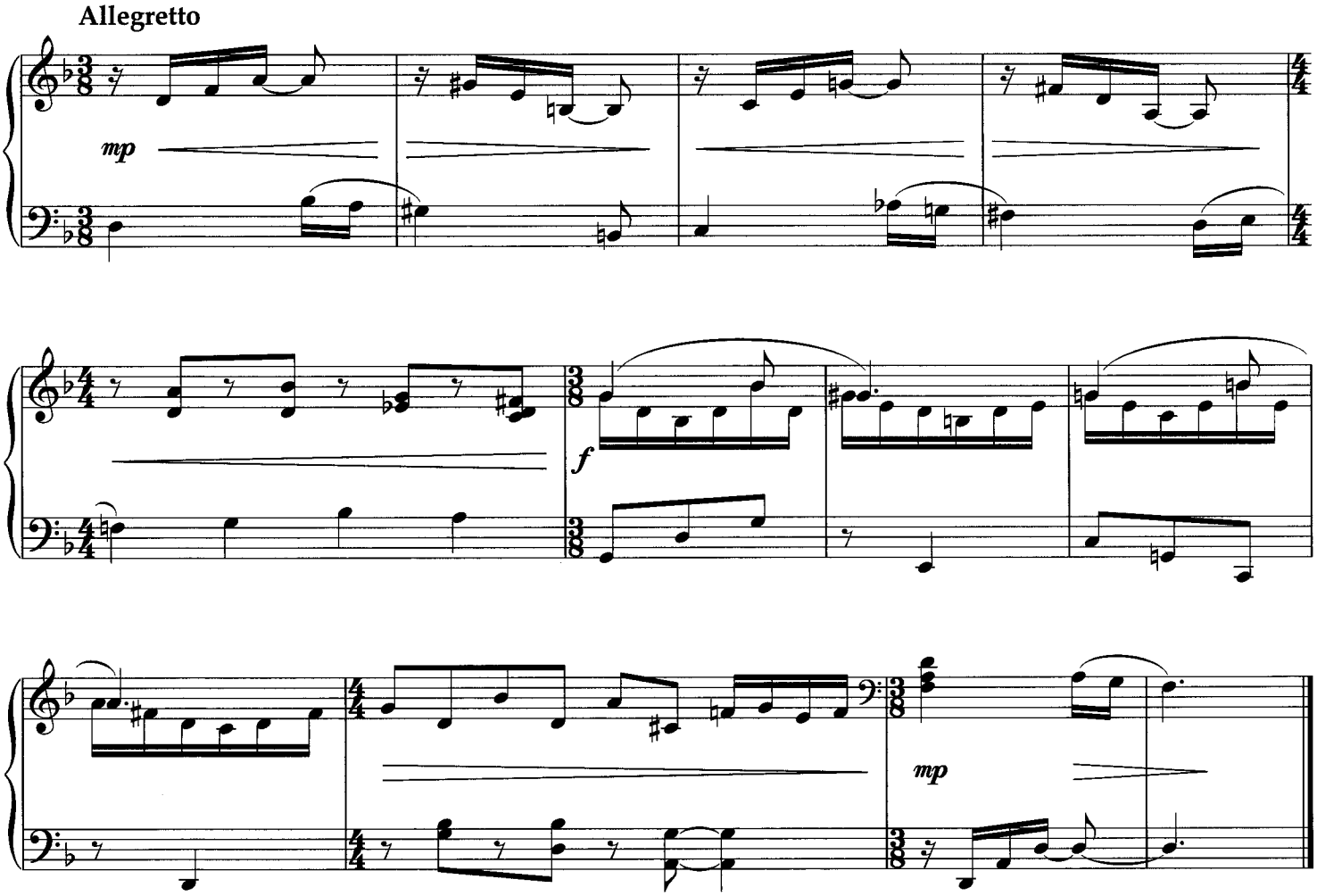
Melodic exercises

Mists in a dark forest

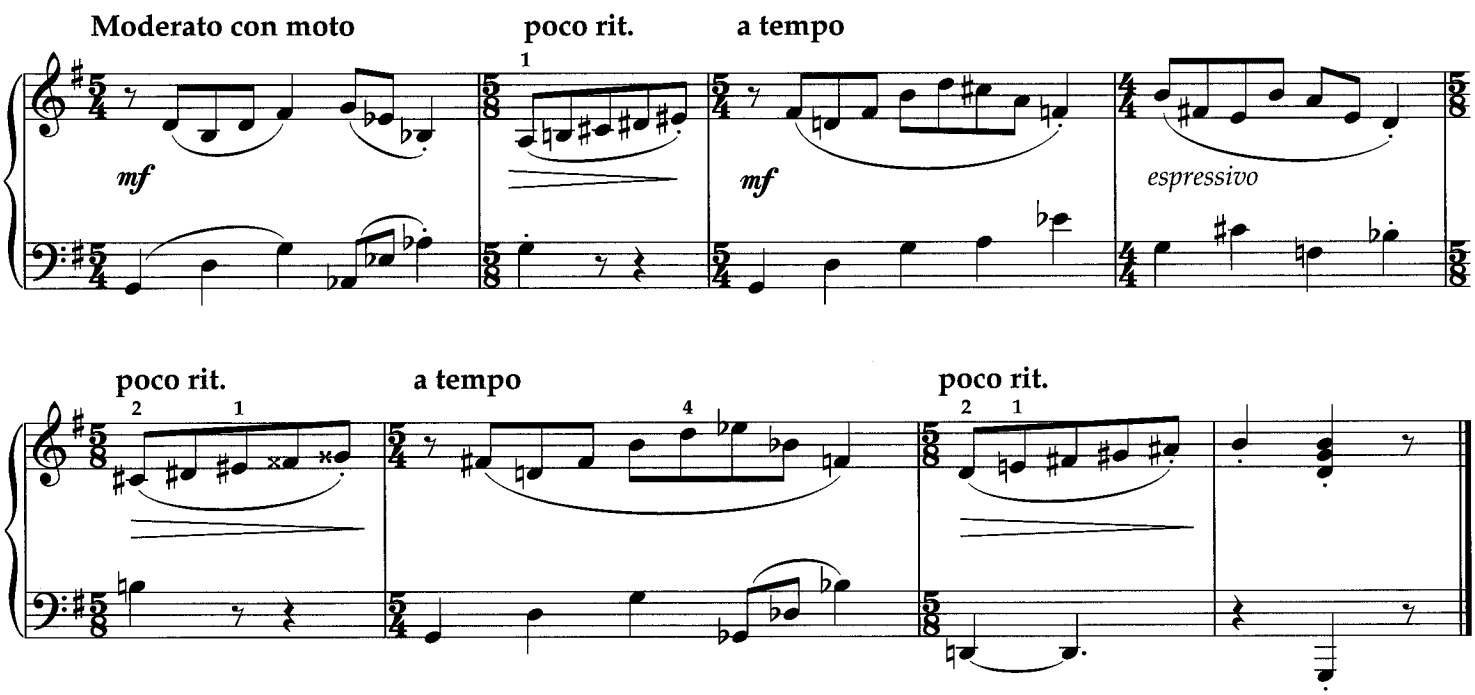


If the lower number of the time signature changes, you will need to feel the *subdivided pulse* as a firm foundation for the rhythm. In the next exercises if you feel a ♪ pulse, understanding the rhythm will present no problems.

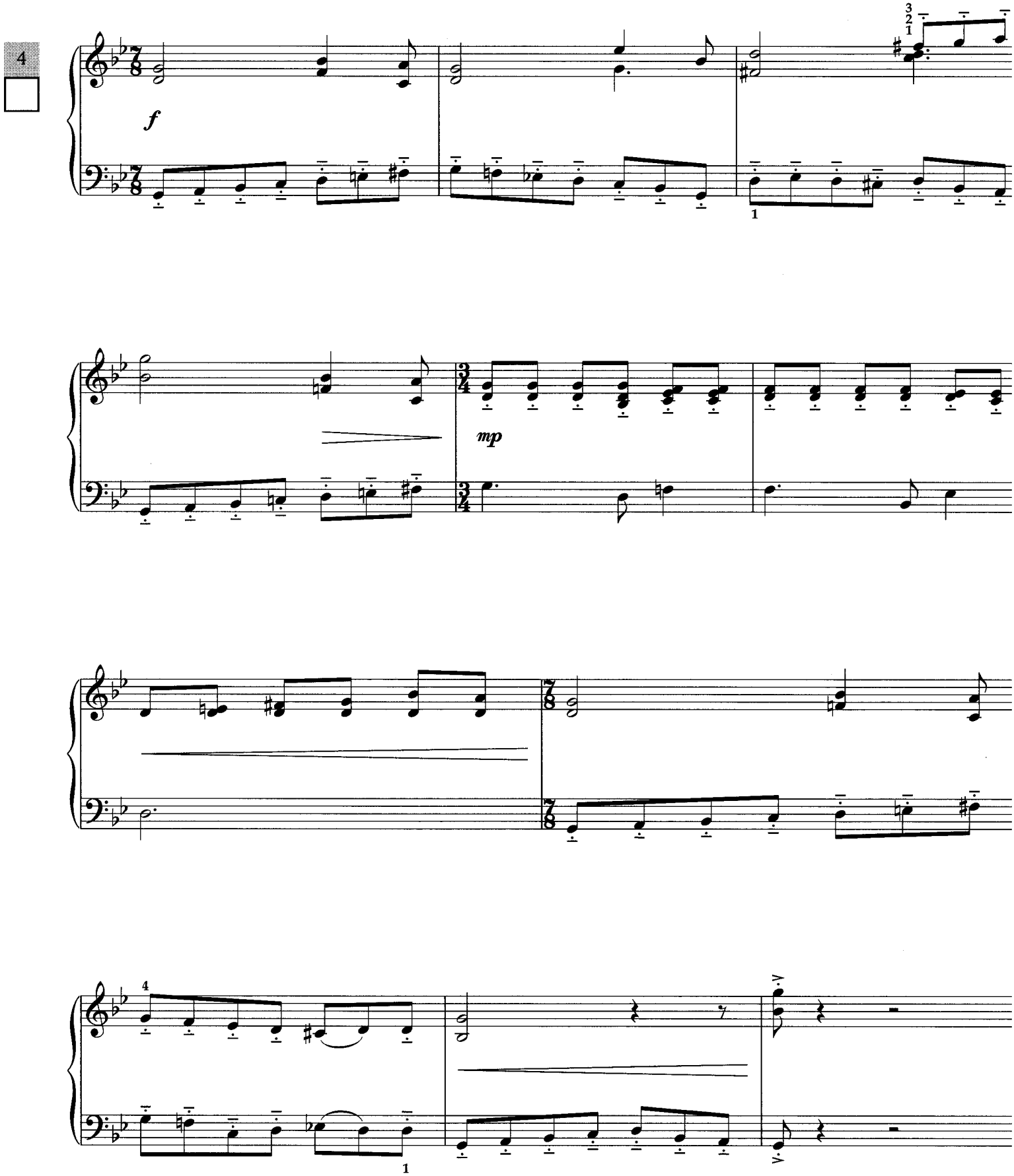
Storm brewing



Siesta



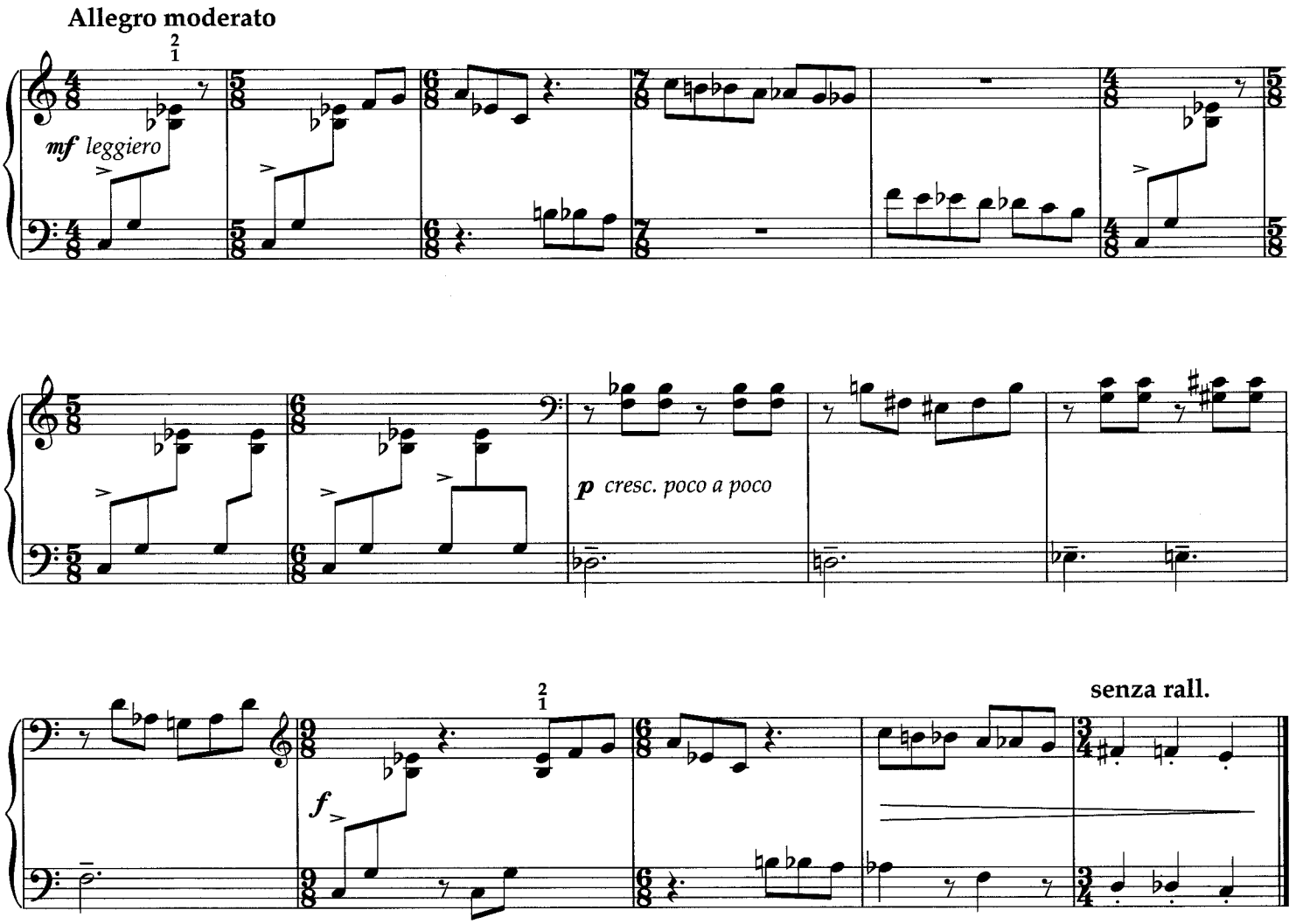
Heptagonal march



Prepared piece

1. How will you count this piece?
2. What is the rhythmic difference between a $\frac{6}{8}$ and a $\frac{3}{4}$ bar?
3. Which scale pattern are bars 4–5 based on?
4. What kind of touch will you use to create your desired effect?
5. Make a mental note of where the right hand changes clef.
6. Try to hear the piece in your head as best you can.

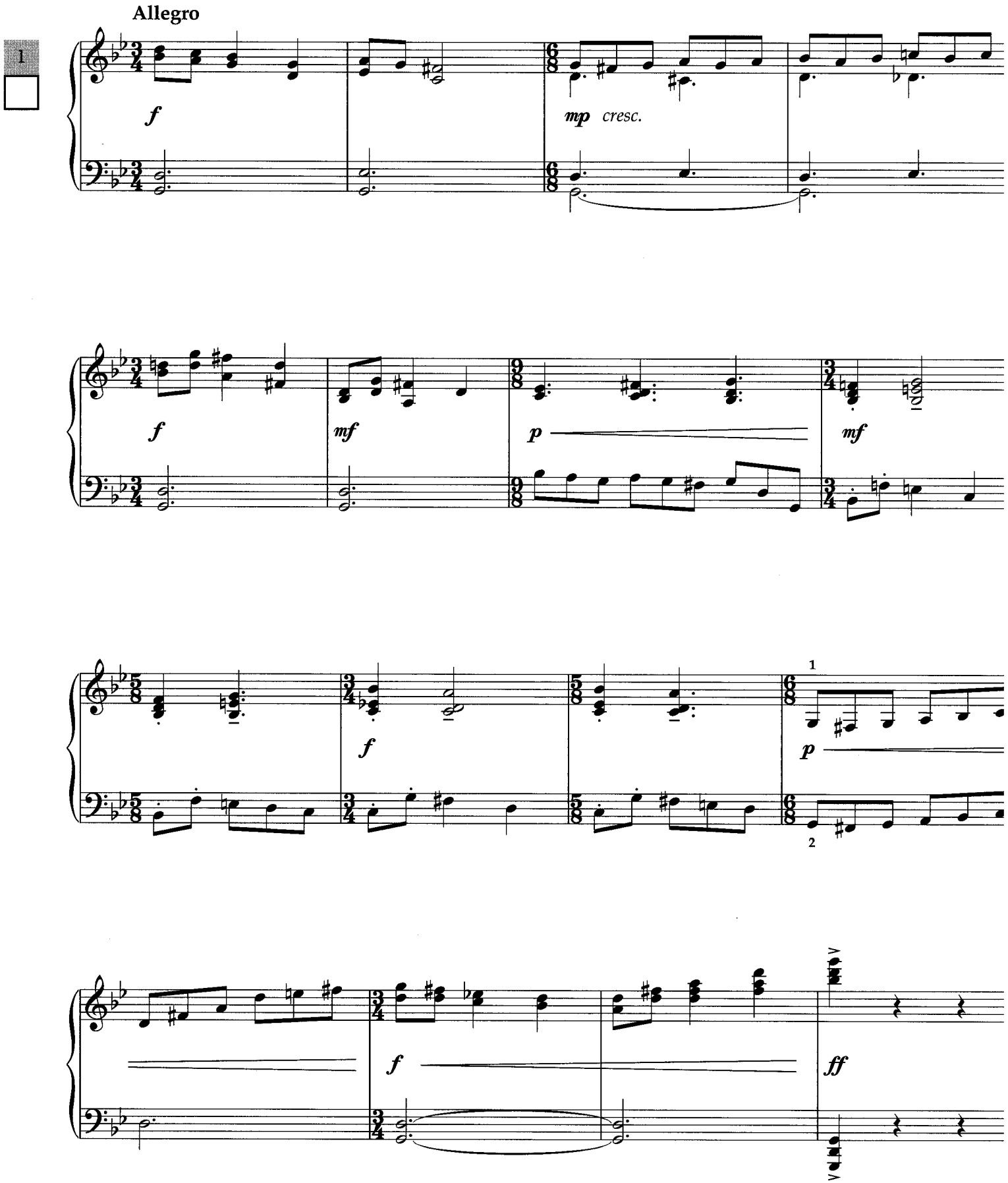
Frantic!



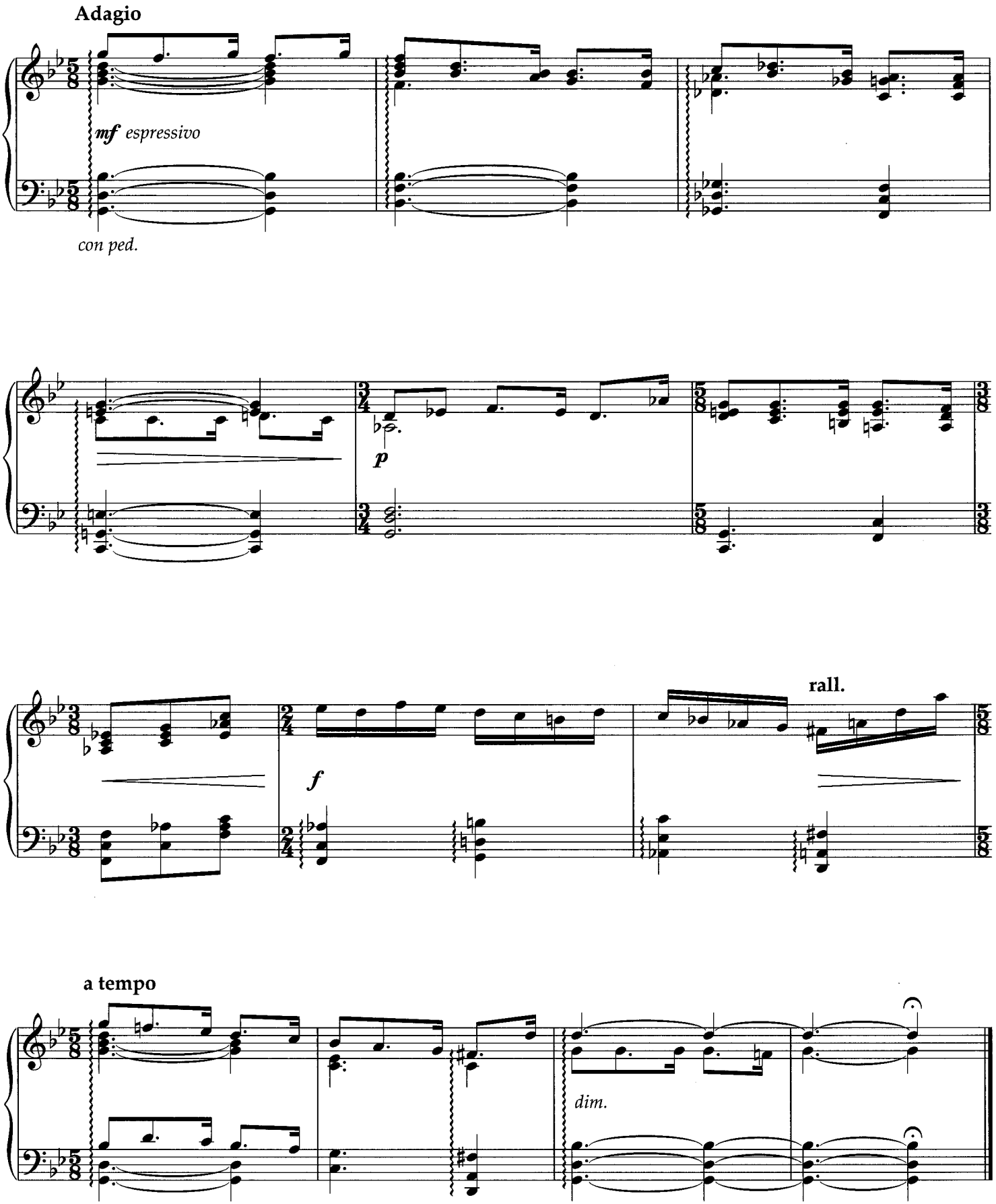
Going solo

Slavonic dance

Allegro

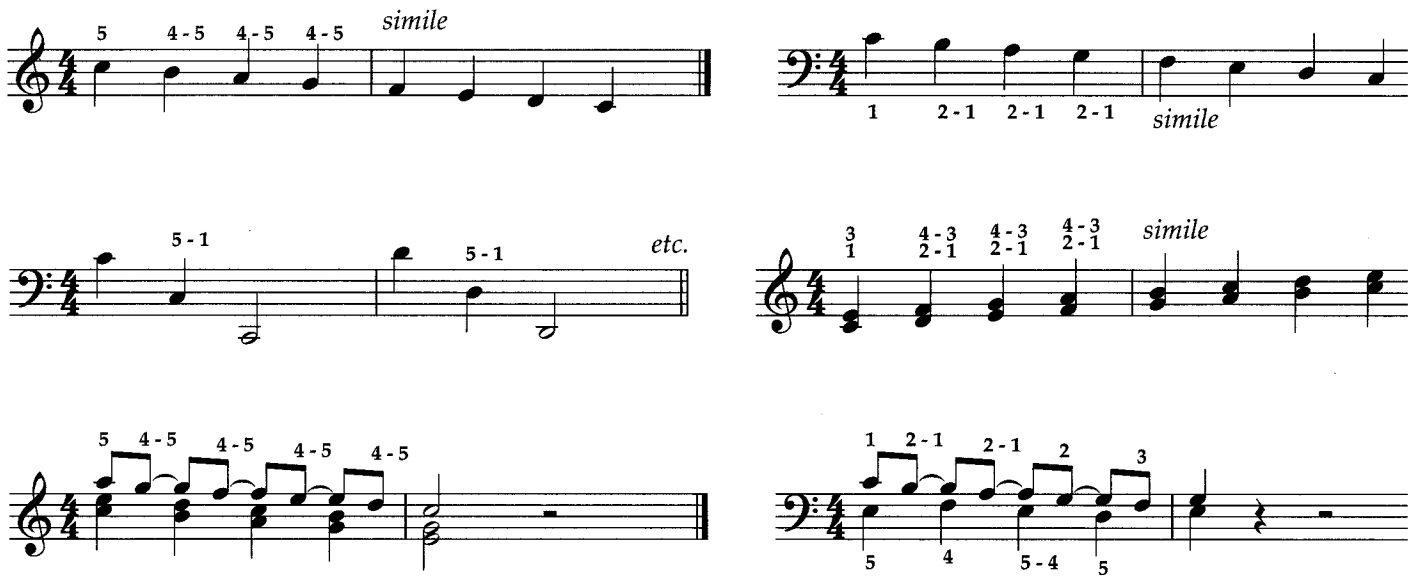


Romanza

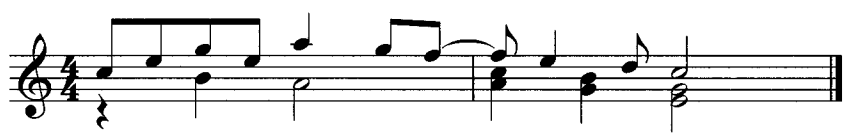


Stage 3

When music is contrapuntal in texture, you may need to change fingers quickly on certain notes; a technique sometimes called *finger substitution.* Practise the following carefully and devise further exercises of your own:

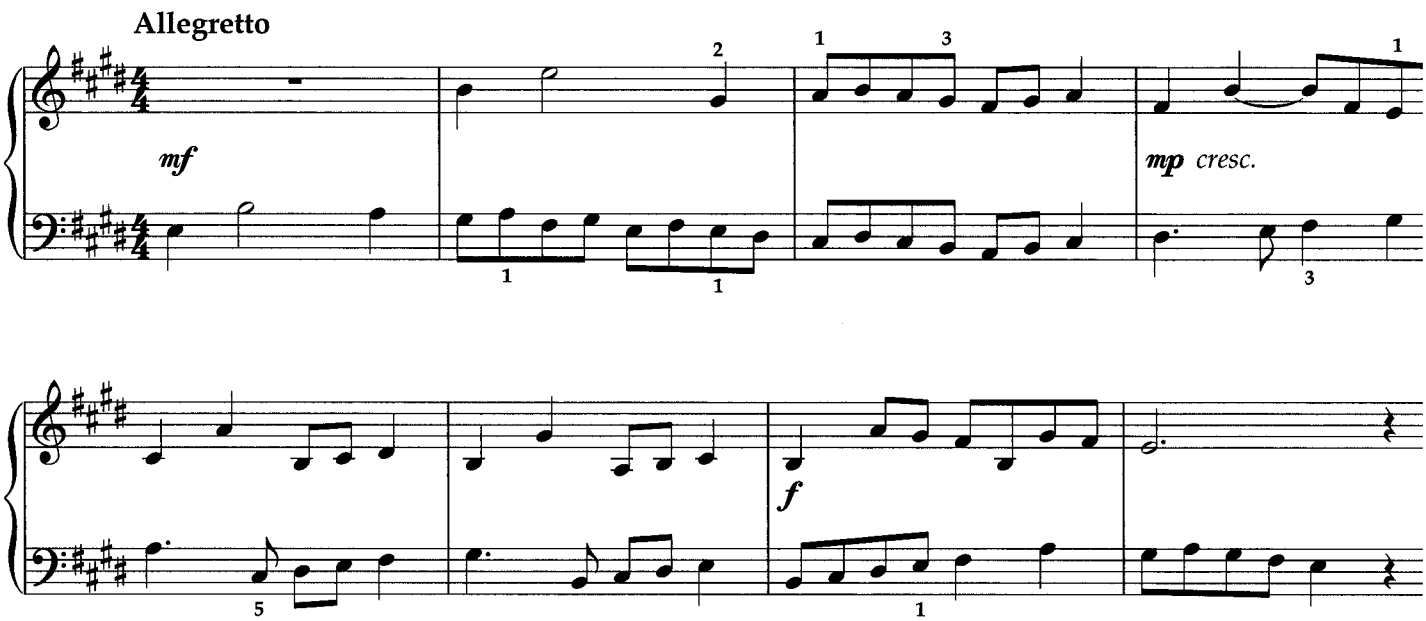


The following requires quite a few substitute fingerings to enable the melody to sound *legato.* Think through the fingerings before you play it:

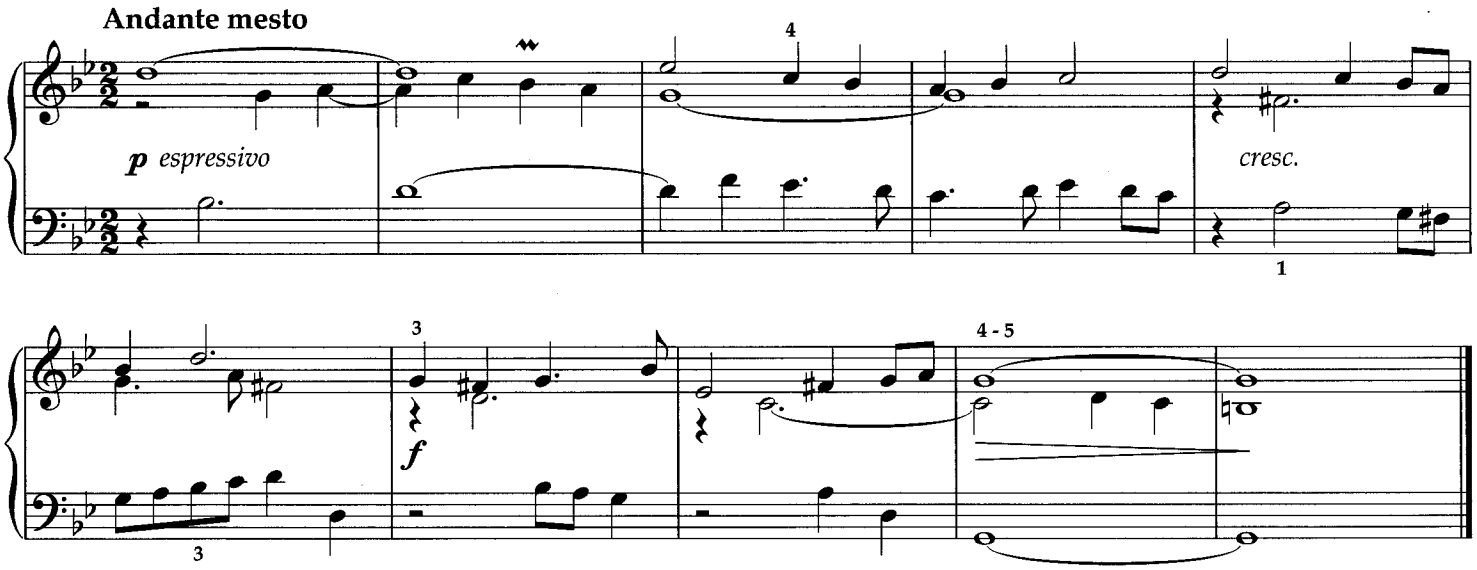


Melodic exercises

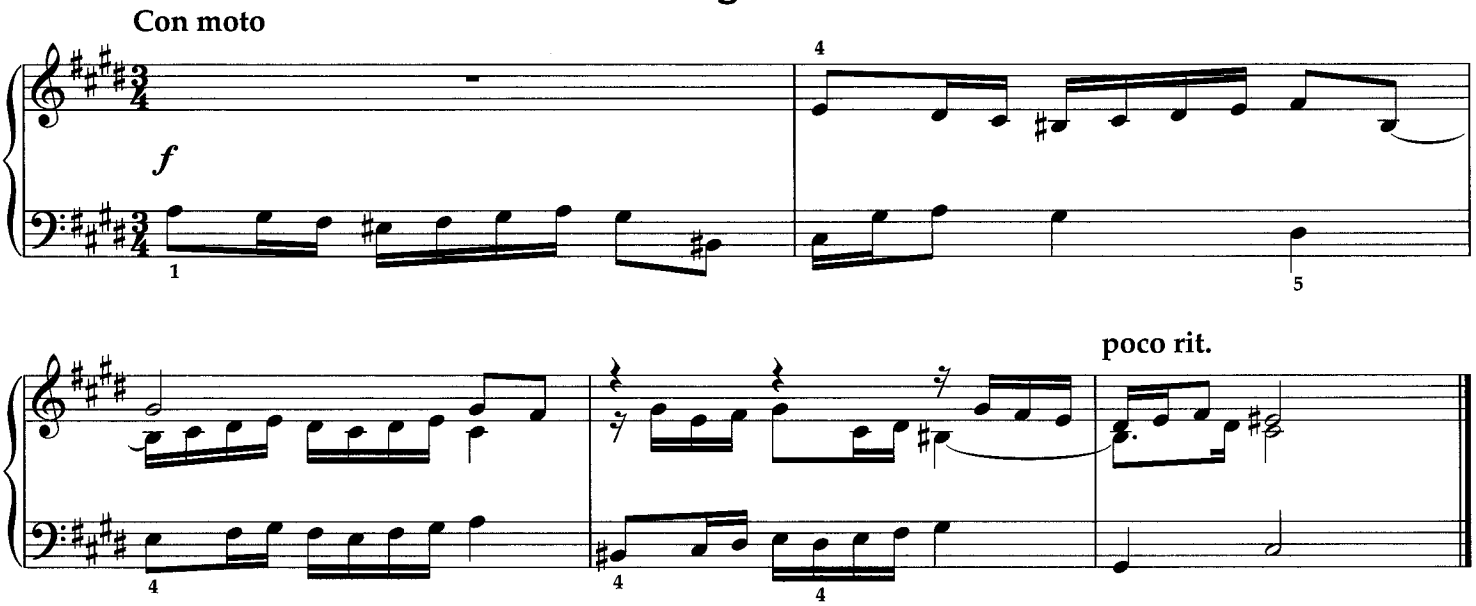
Two-part invention (with apologies to JSB)



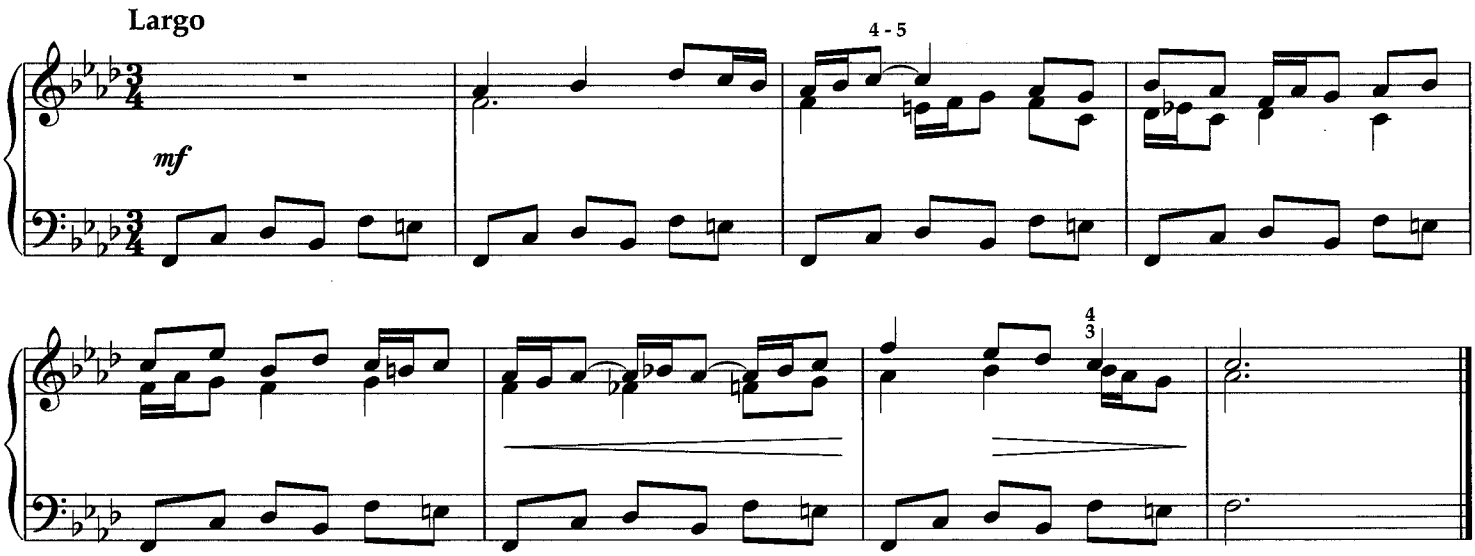
Three-part invention (more apologies)



Fugal



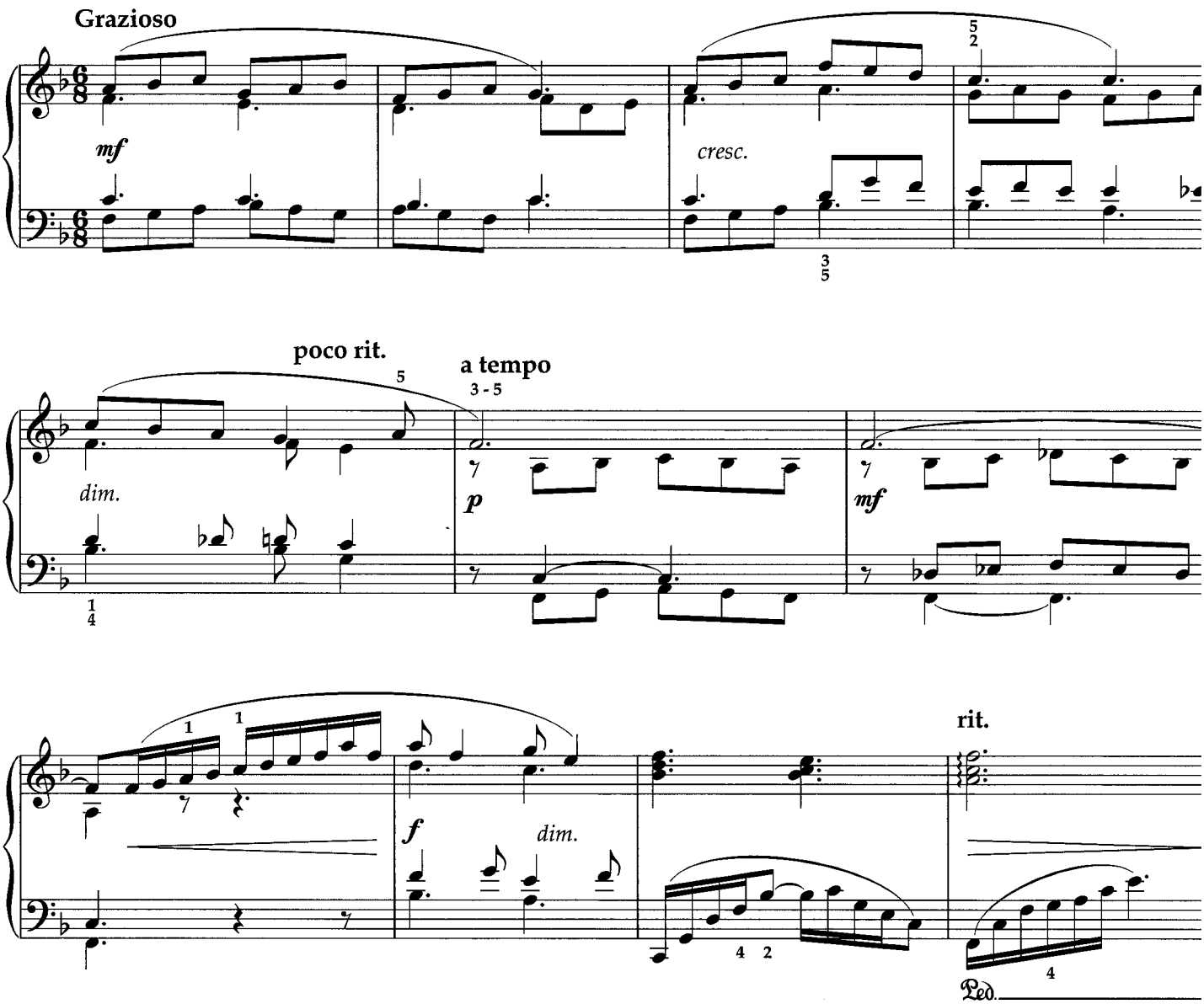
Passacaglia



Prepared piece

1. Have a scan through the whole piece and get a feel for the general shape and mood.
2. Think about the texture and how you will finger the music to bring out the part writing.
3. Where is the climax of the piece?
4. Notice the changes of tempo.
5. In which key is the piece?
6. Hear the piece through in your head as best you can, getting a feel for the fingering.

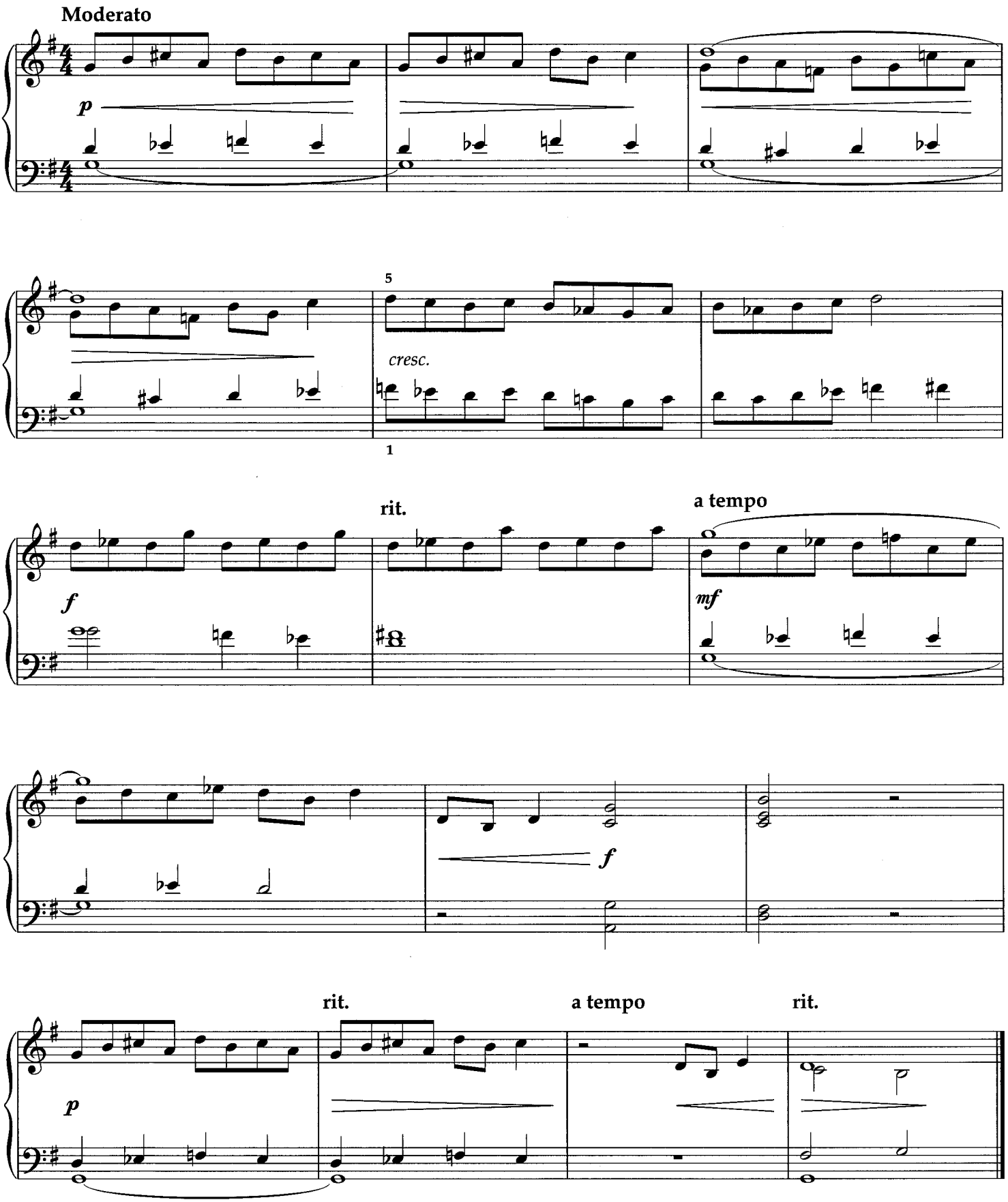
Gathering the willow



Going solo

Don't forget to prepare this piece carefully before you play it.

Gold dust

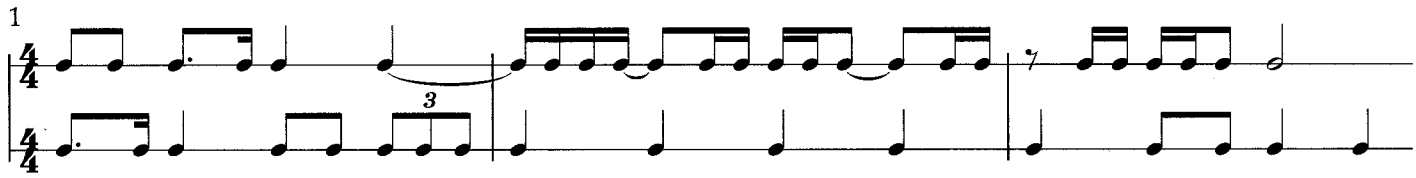


Stage 4

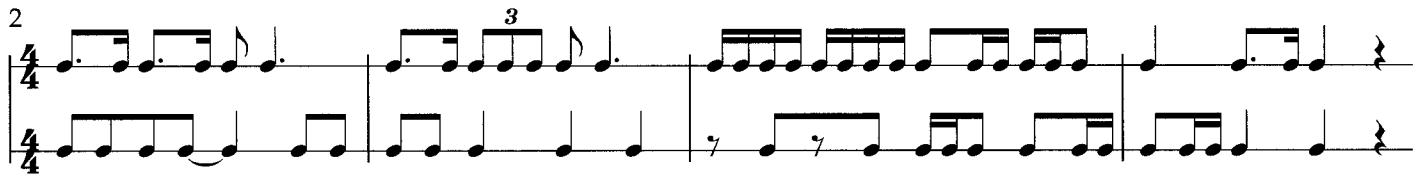
More harmoni and rhythmic patterns in 3/4 and 4/4

Rhythmic exercises

1

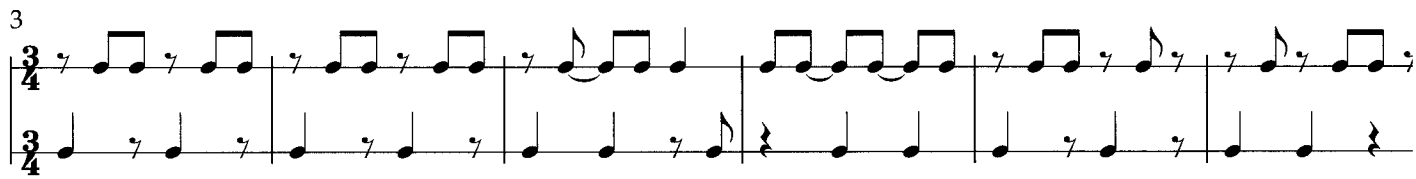


2



Here's a real brain teaser – good luck!

3

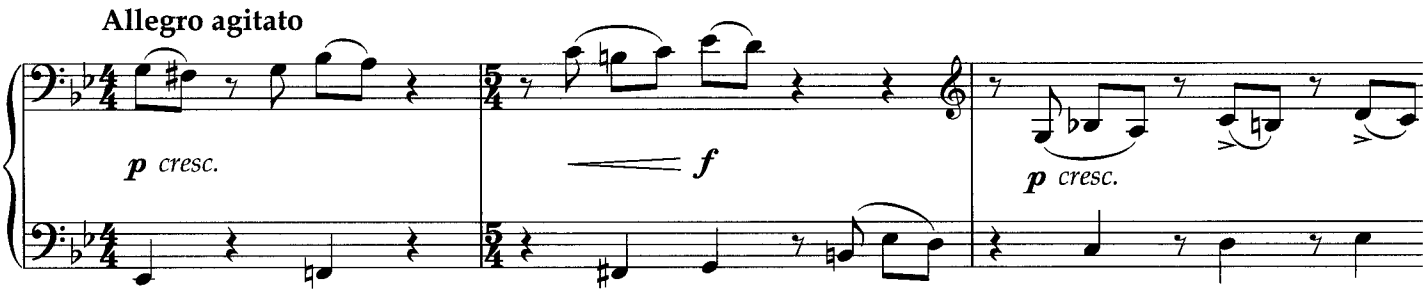


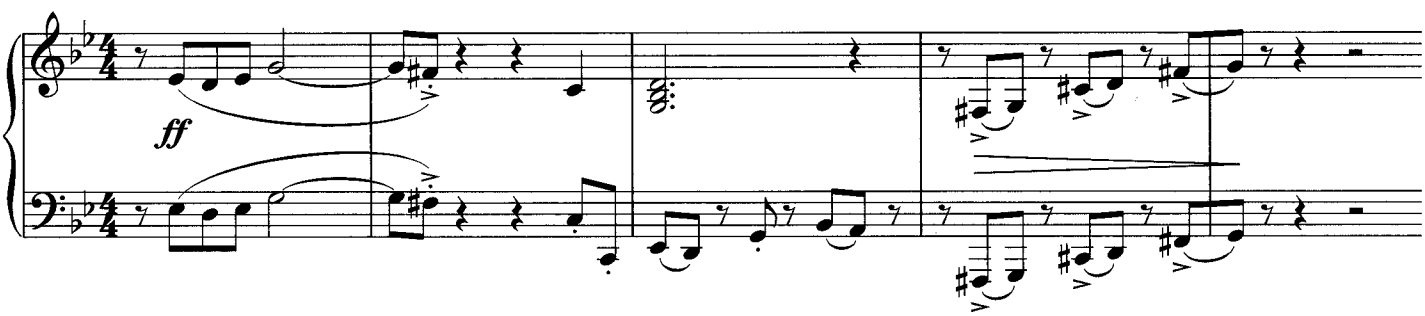
Melodic exercises

Chasing shadows

Allegro agitato

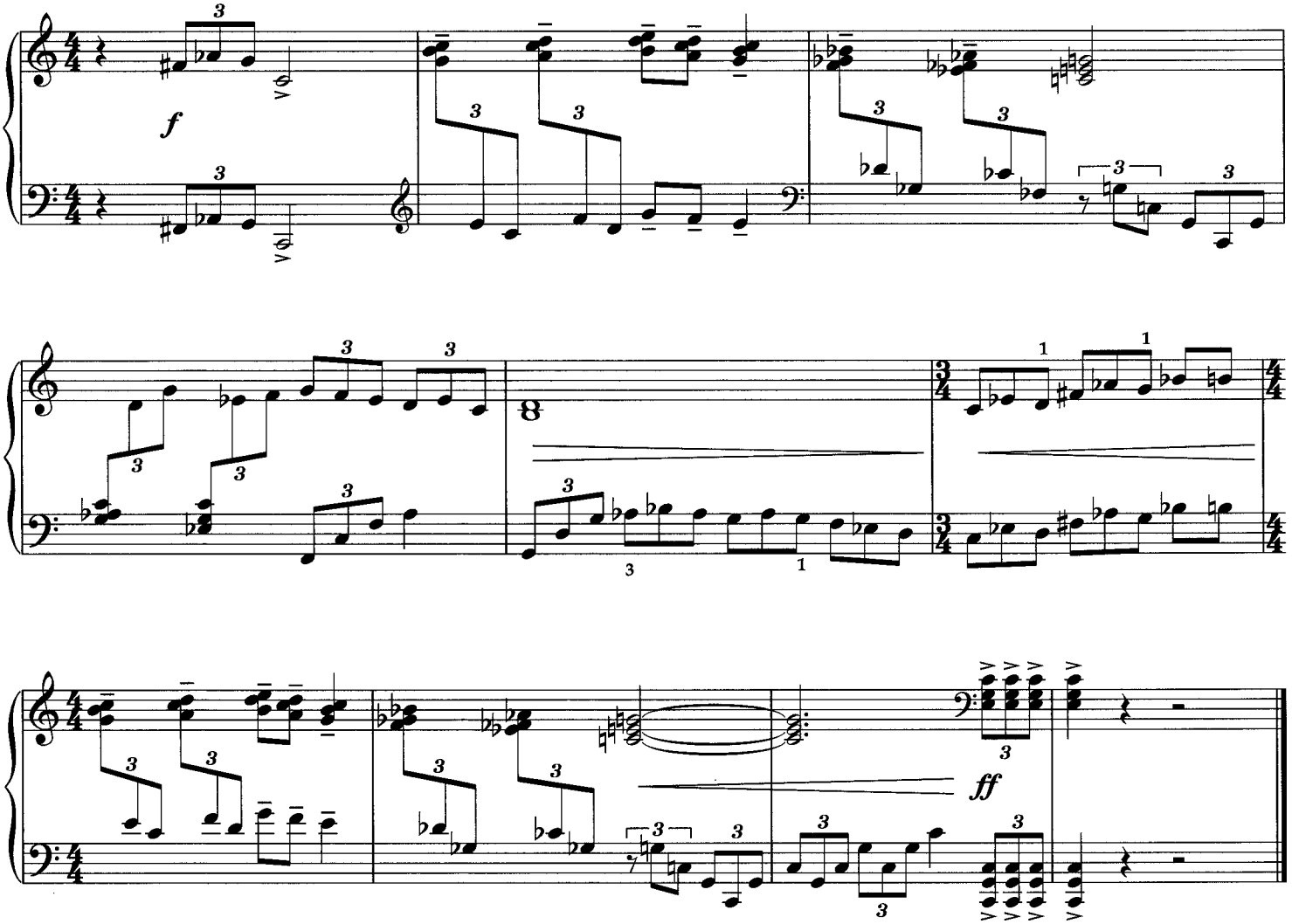
1





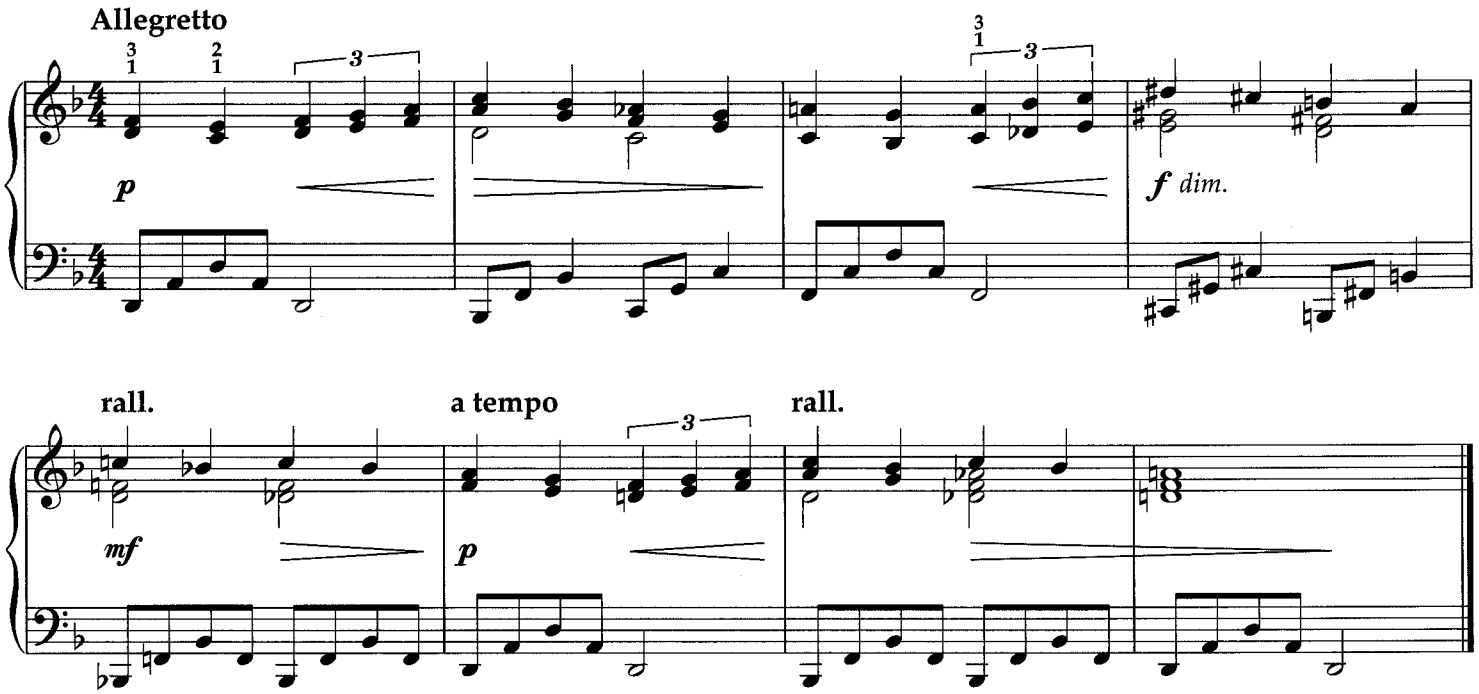
Toccata

Allegro con fuoco



Seascape

Allegretto

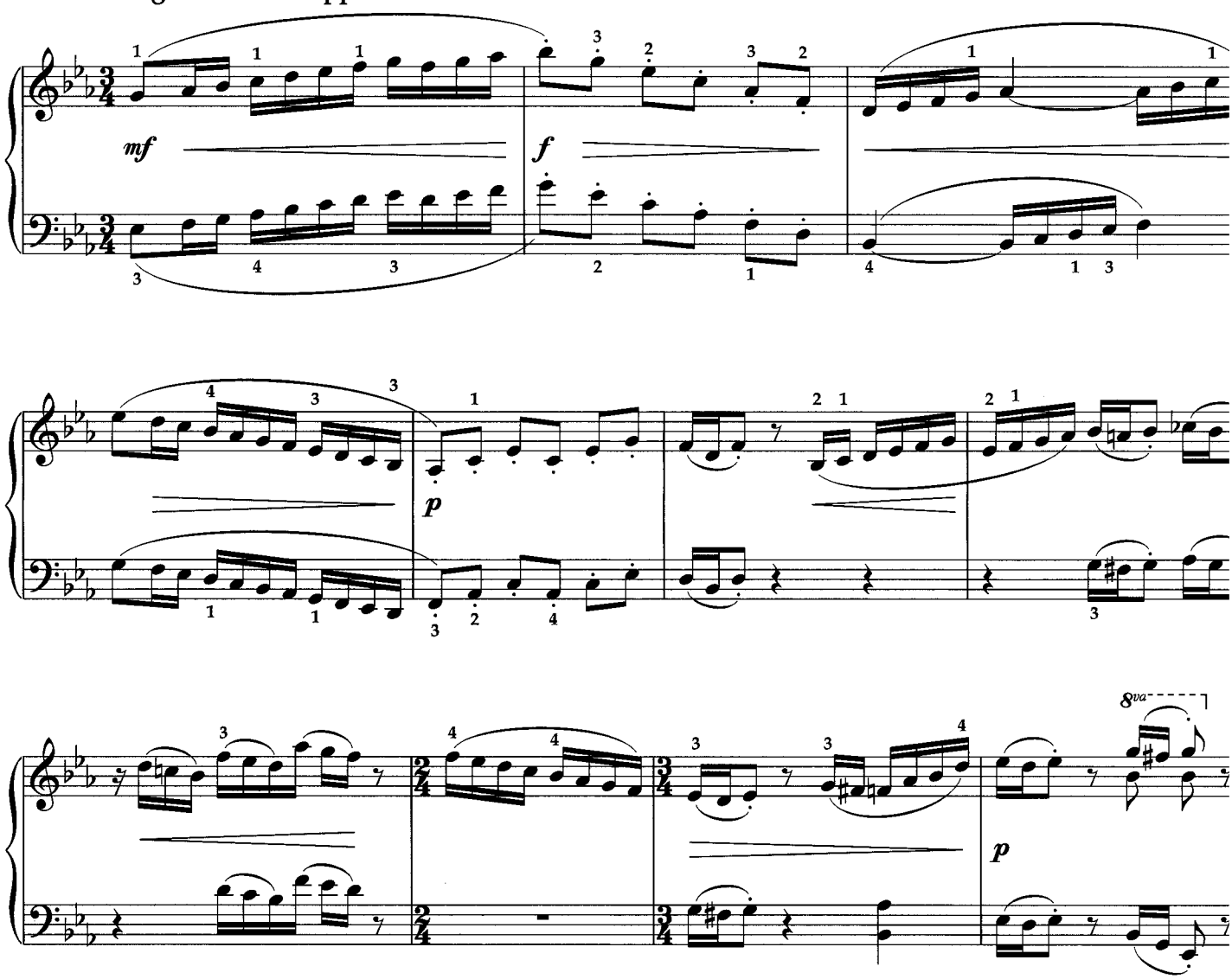


Prepared piece

1. In which key is this piece? Notice the C flats.
2. What is the pattern which forms much of the piece?
3. How do the right and left hand relate in bars 1, 4 and 8?
4. Are there any other patterns?
5. How will you catch the witty character?
6. Try to hear the piece in your head as best you can.

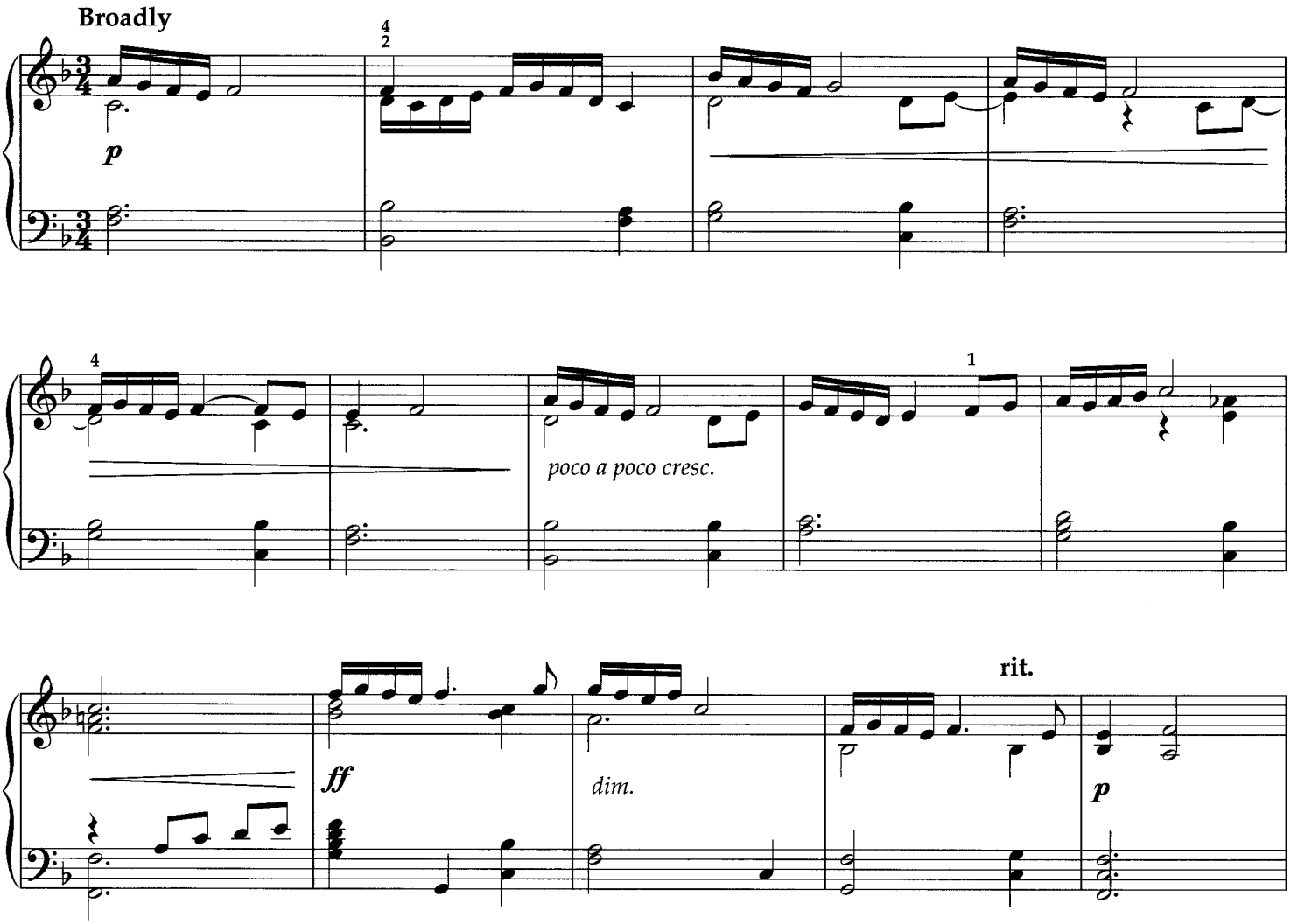
Scaling the heights

Allegro ma non troppo

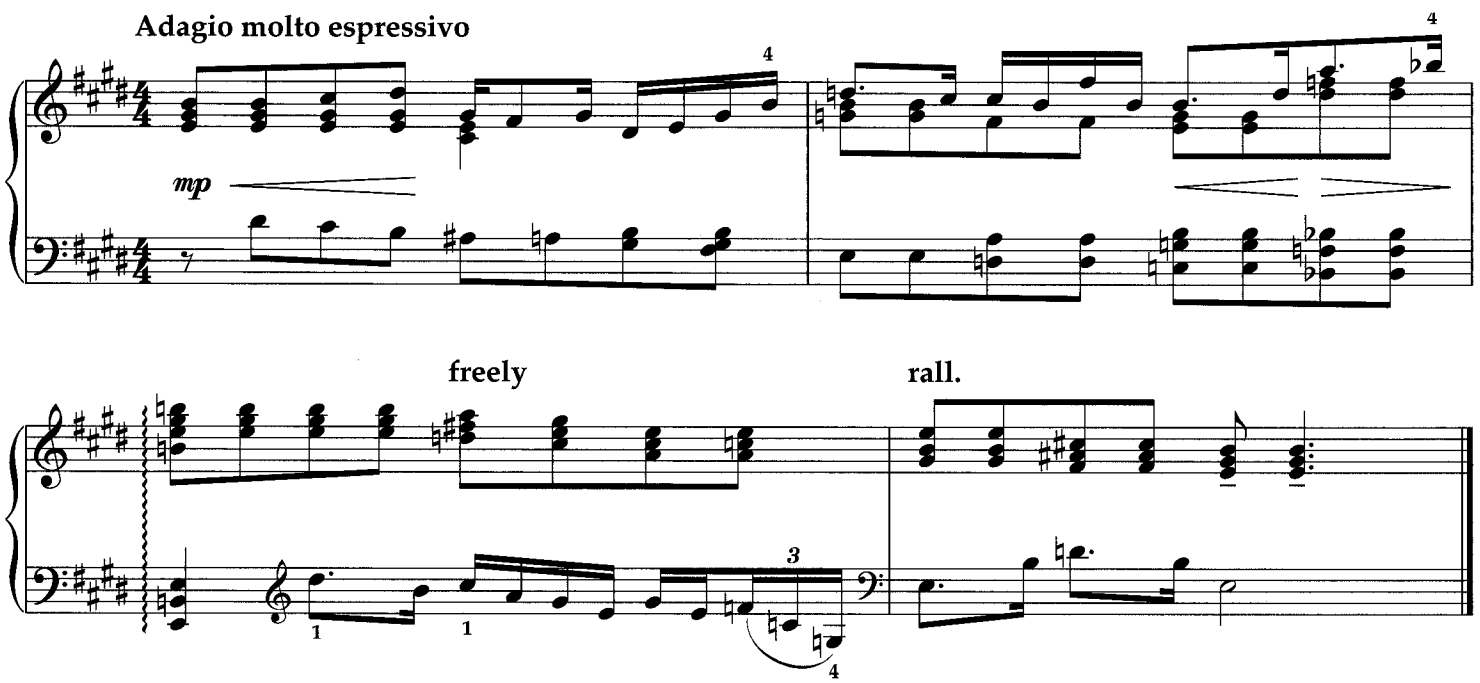


Going solo

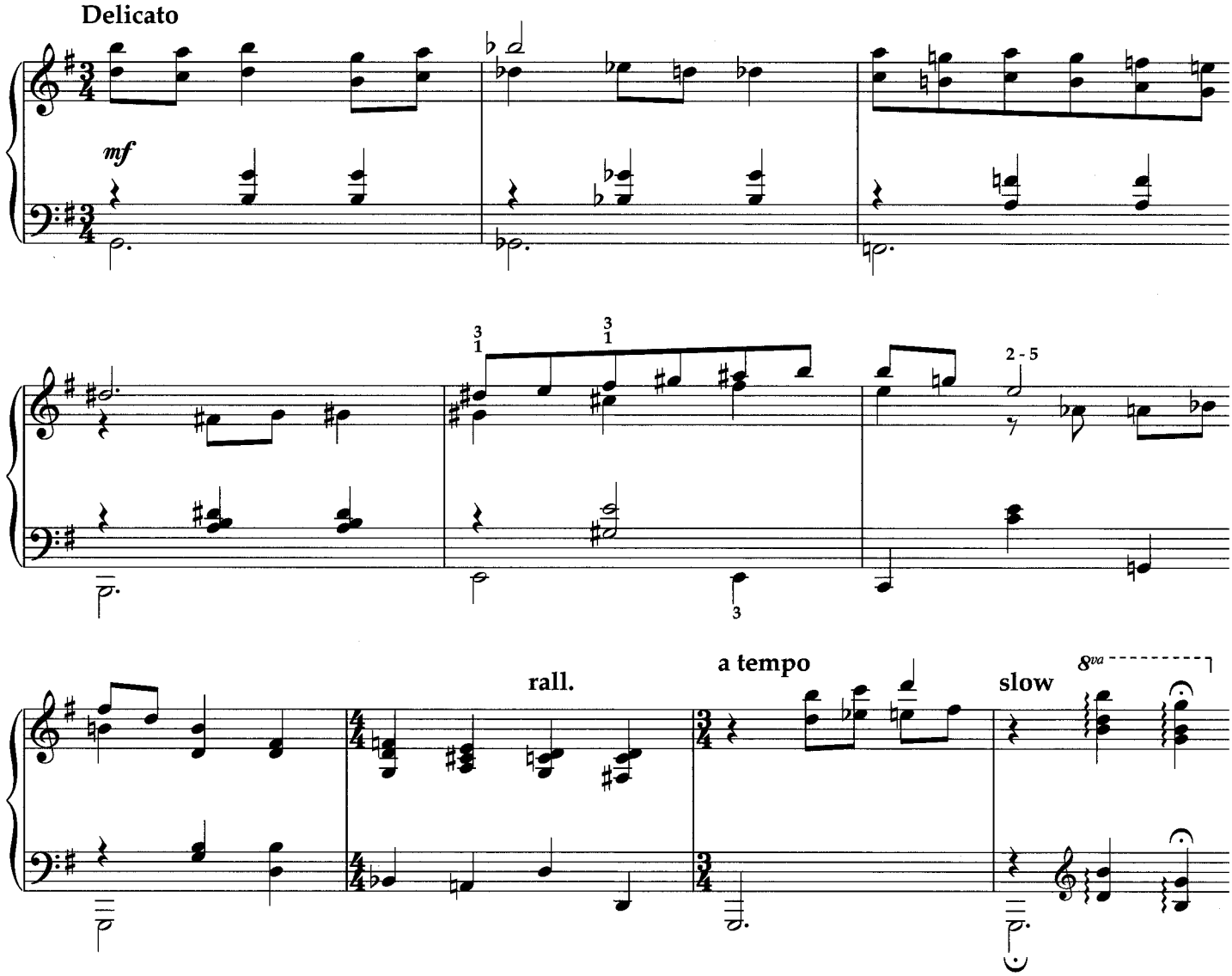
Love story



Serenity



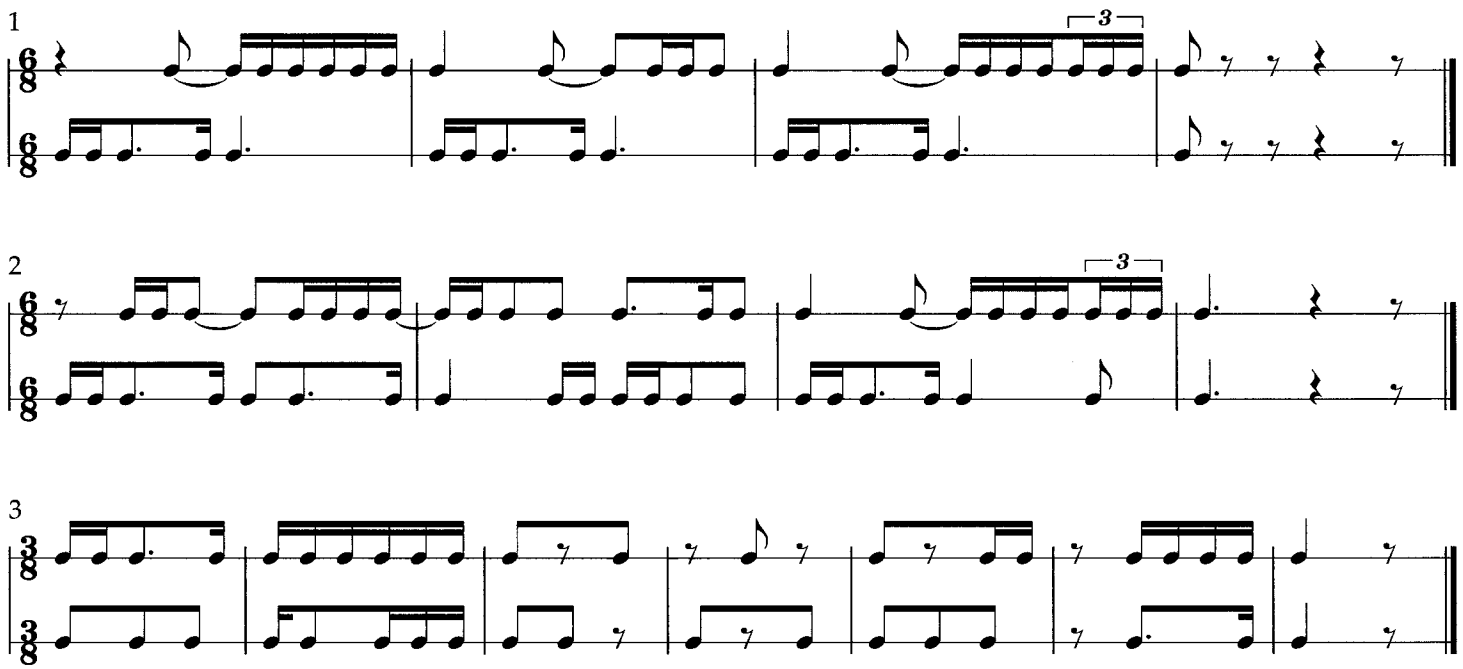
After the ball



Stage 5

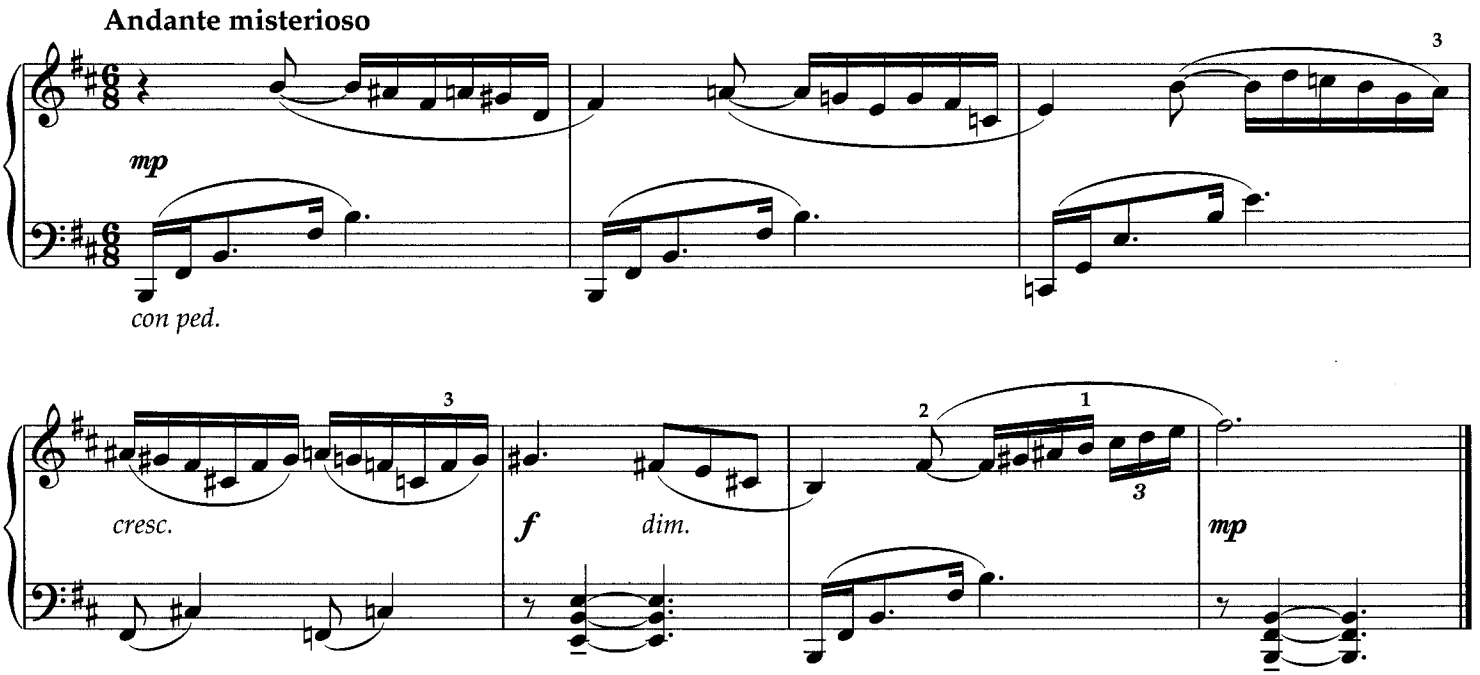
More harmonic and rhythmic patterns in $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$

Rhythmic exercises



Melodic exercises

Last bus to Marrakesh



By a cool mountain stream

2

Espressivo e rubato

p dolce

cresc.

f

mp

rall.

Ped.

Debate

3

Con moto

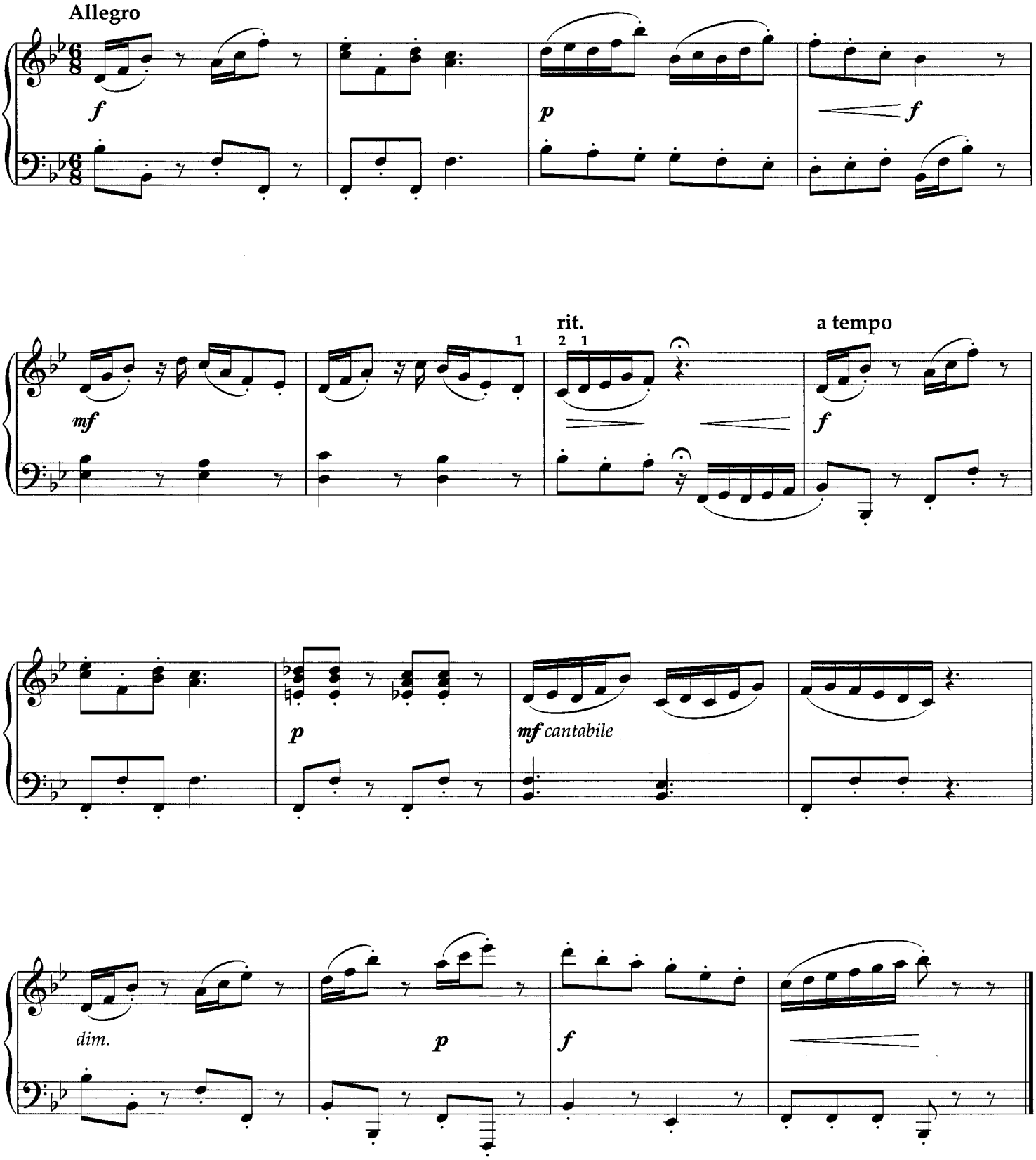
f

p

f

8vb

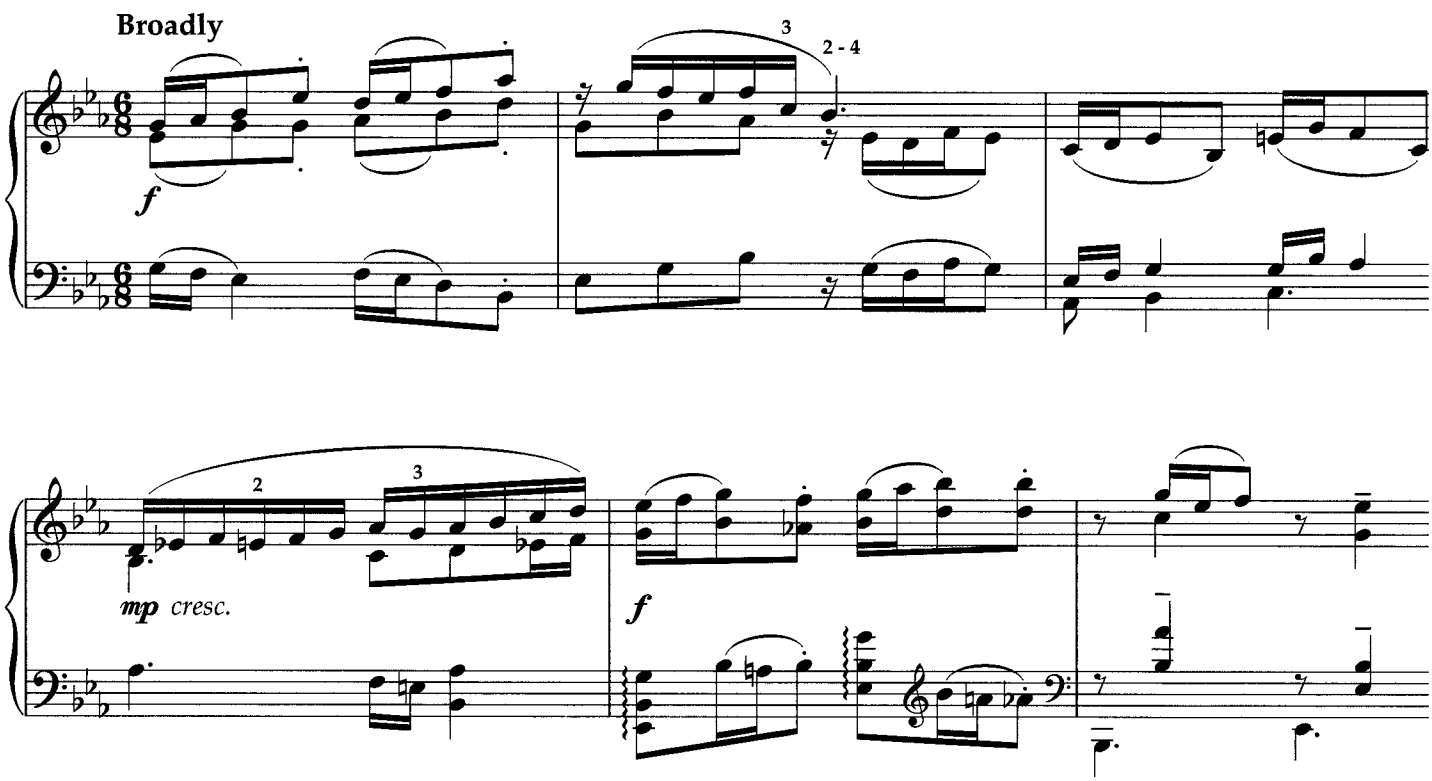
Mr Mozart comes to tea



Prepared piece

1. What is the key? Can you spot any scale and arpeggio patterns? Does the music move through any other keys?
2. Can you see any other repeated patterns?
3. Hear the rhythm in your head.
4. Scan through the whole piece – do you feel you've grasped the musical shape and intentions?
5. How would you describe the character?
6. Try to hear the piece in your head as best you can.

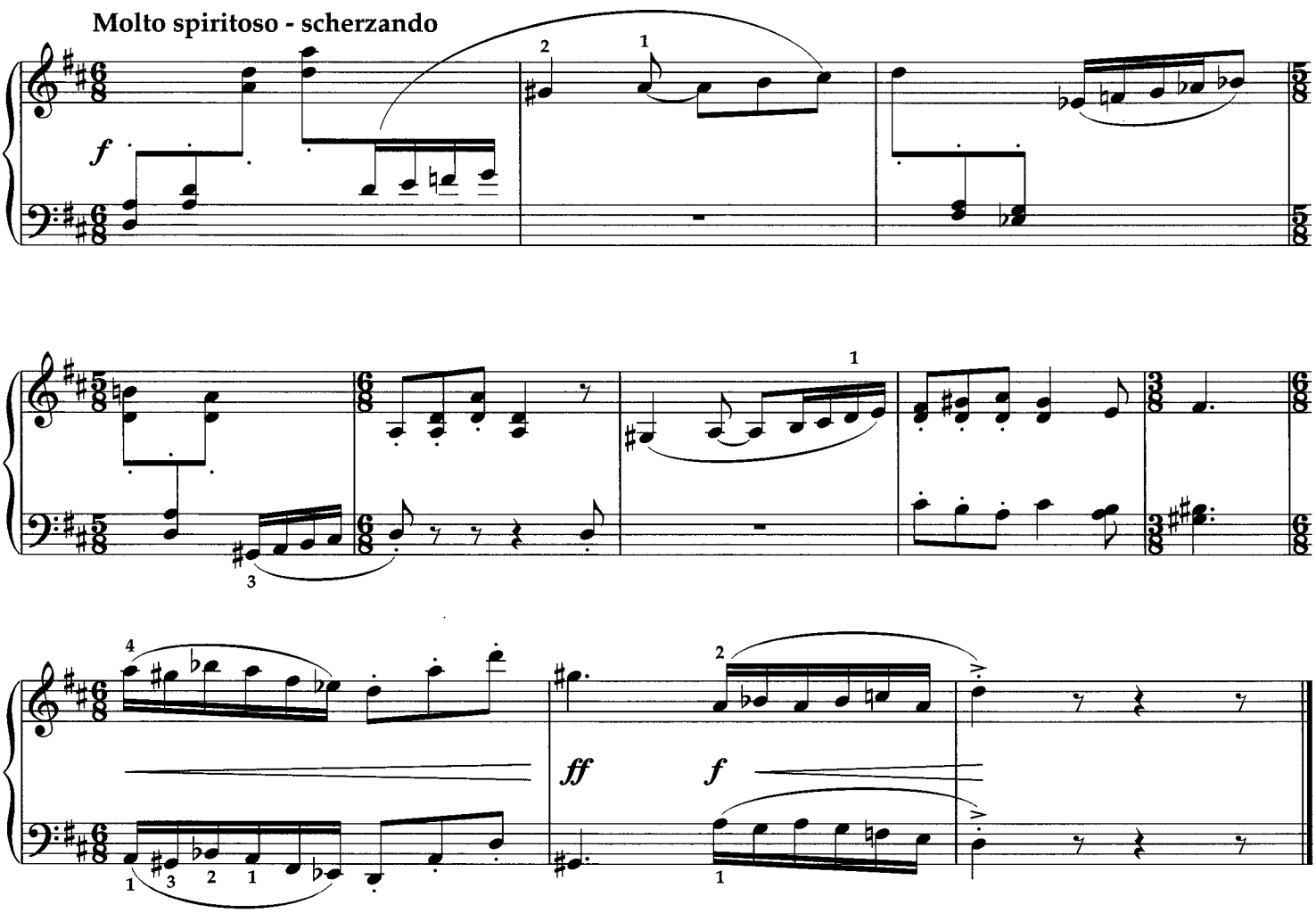
In the Tivoli gardens



Going solo!

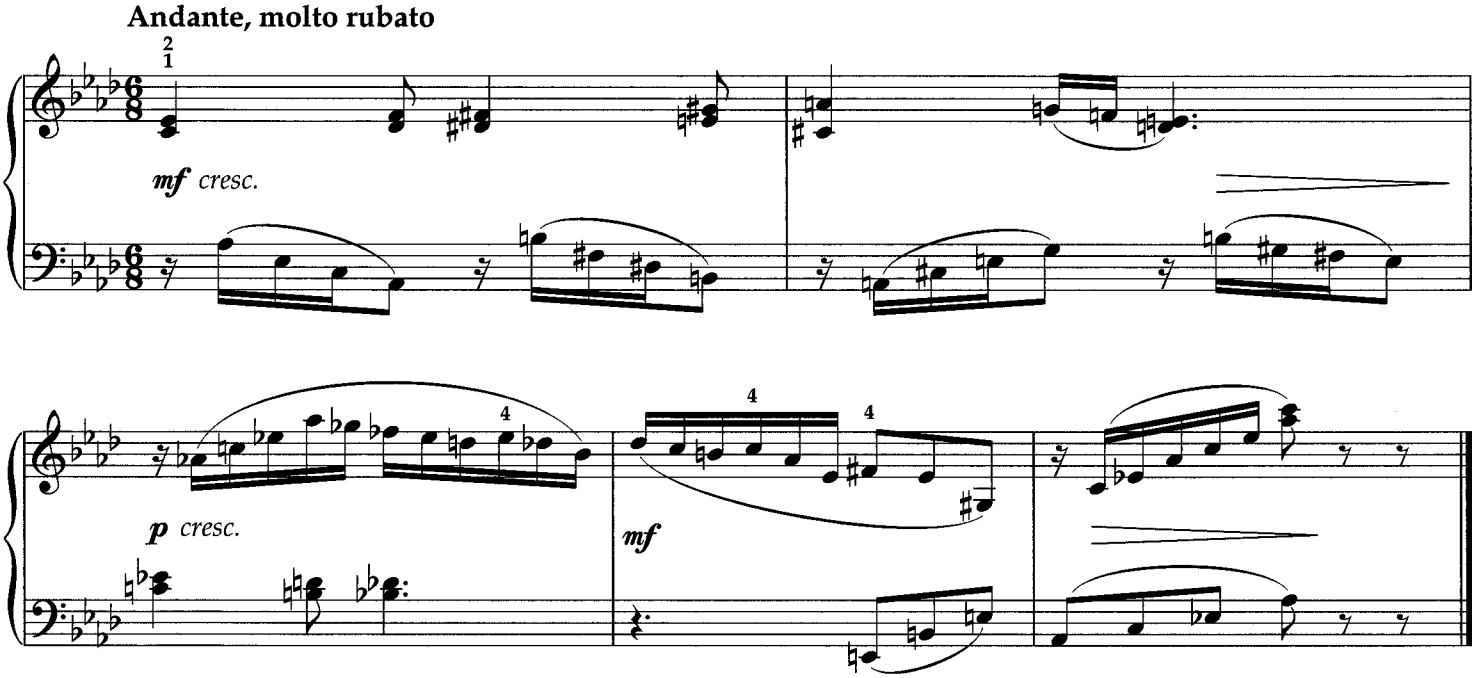
The devil dances

Molto spiritoso - scherzando



Impressionist watercolours

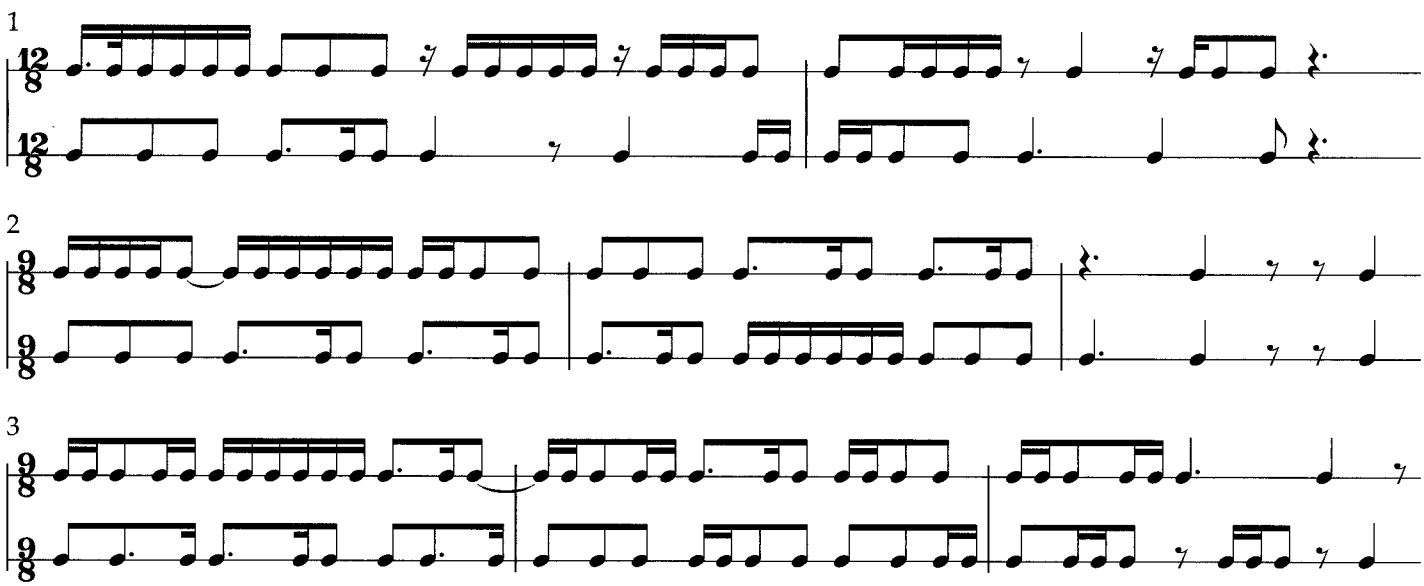
Andante, molto rubato



Stage 6

12/8 and more 9/8

Rhythmic exercises

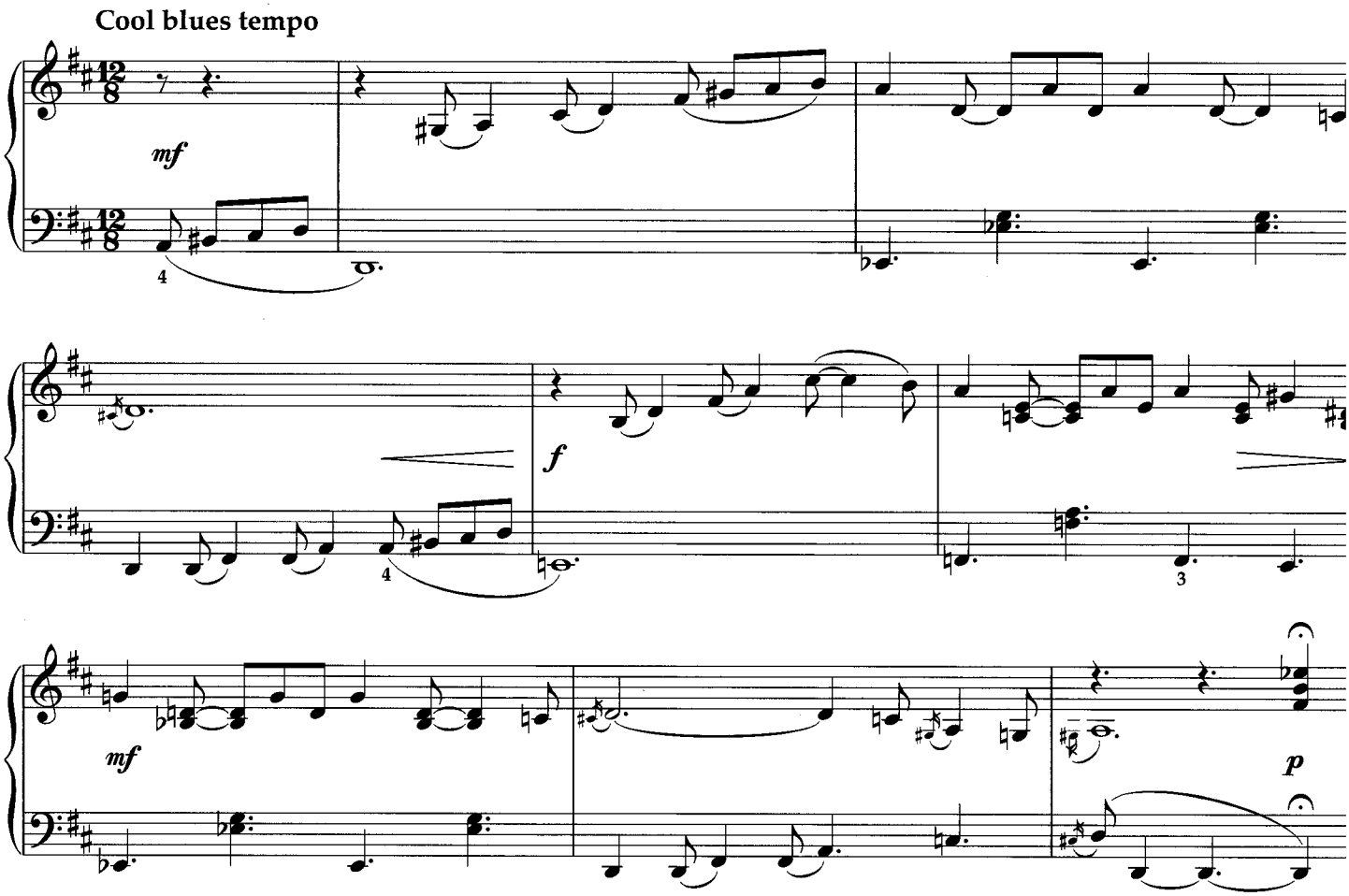


Melodic exercises

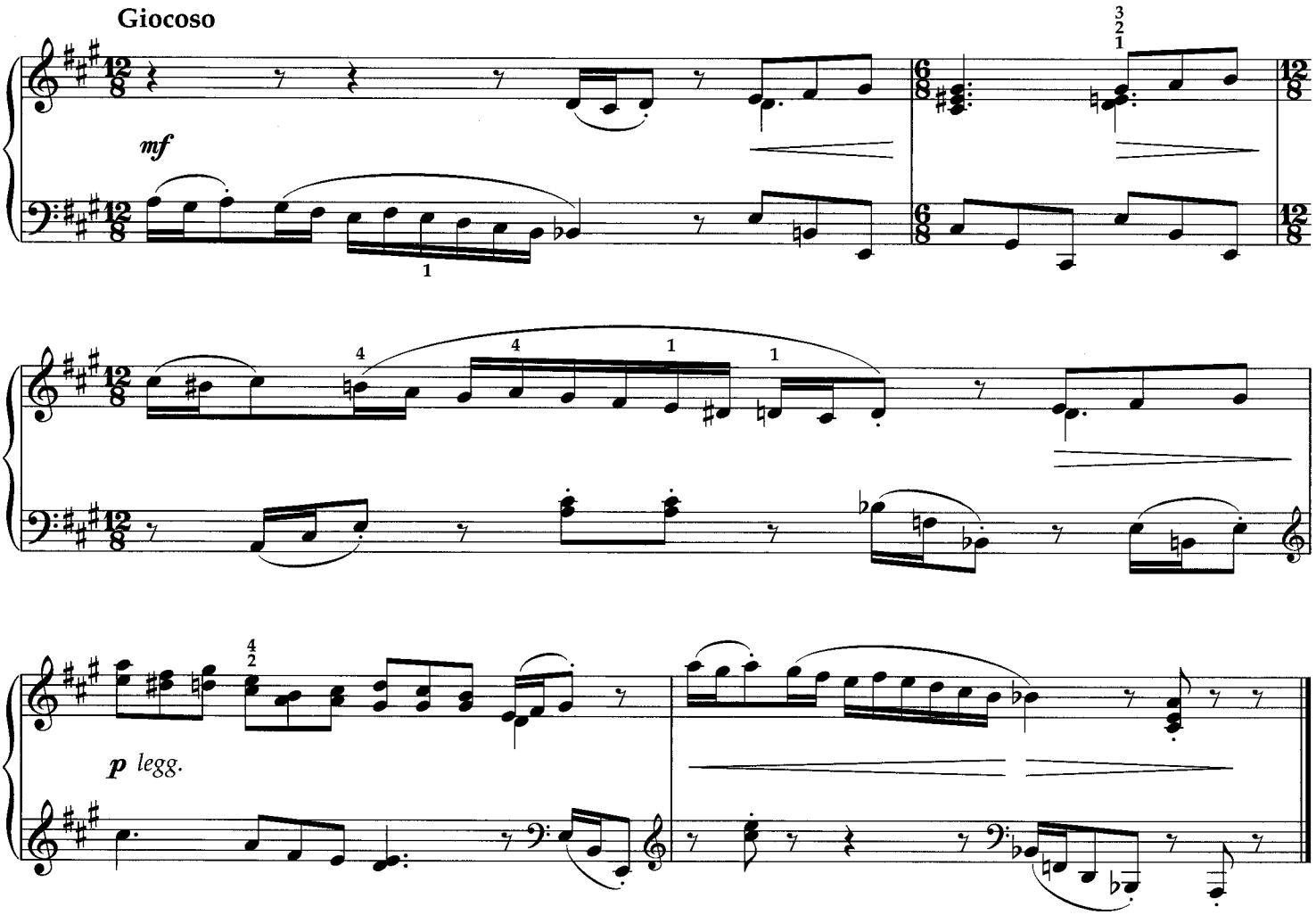
Cool cat blues

Cool blues tempo

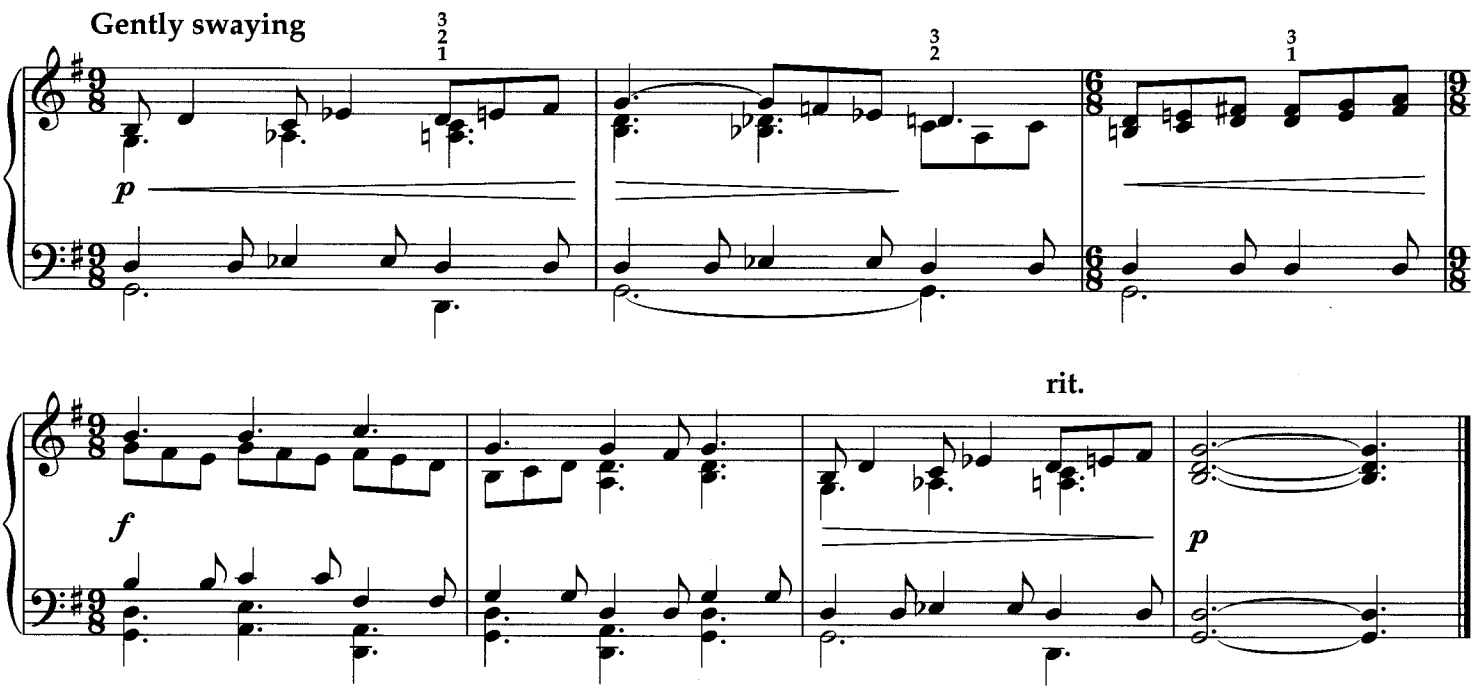
1



Shadow puppets



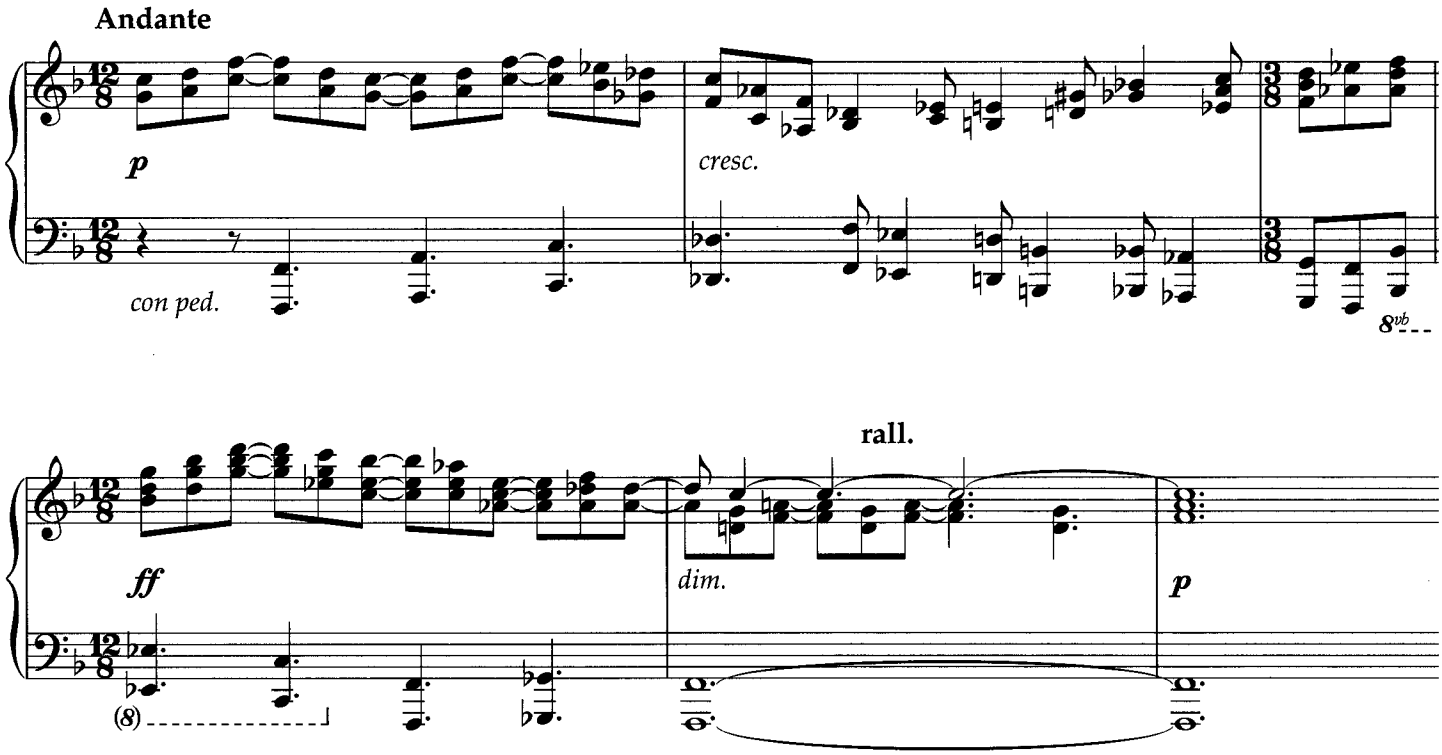
Barcarolle



Prepared piece

1. What is the interval of the right-hand chords in the first bar?
2. Look at the right-hand chords in bar two and describe each (e.g. the first three are based on F minor).
3. Check for accidentals that are carried through the bar.
4. What will you count? Hear the rhythm through in your head.
5. How would you describe the character? What kind of sound will you try to achieve with the bass notes?
6. Hear the piece through in your head as best you can.

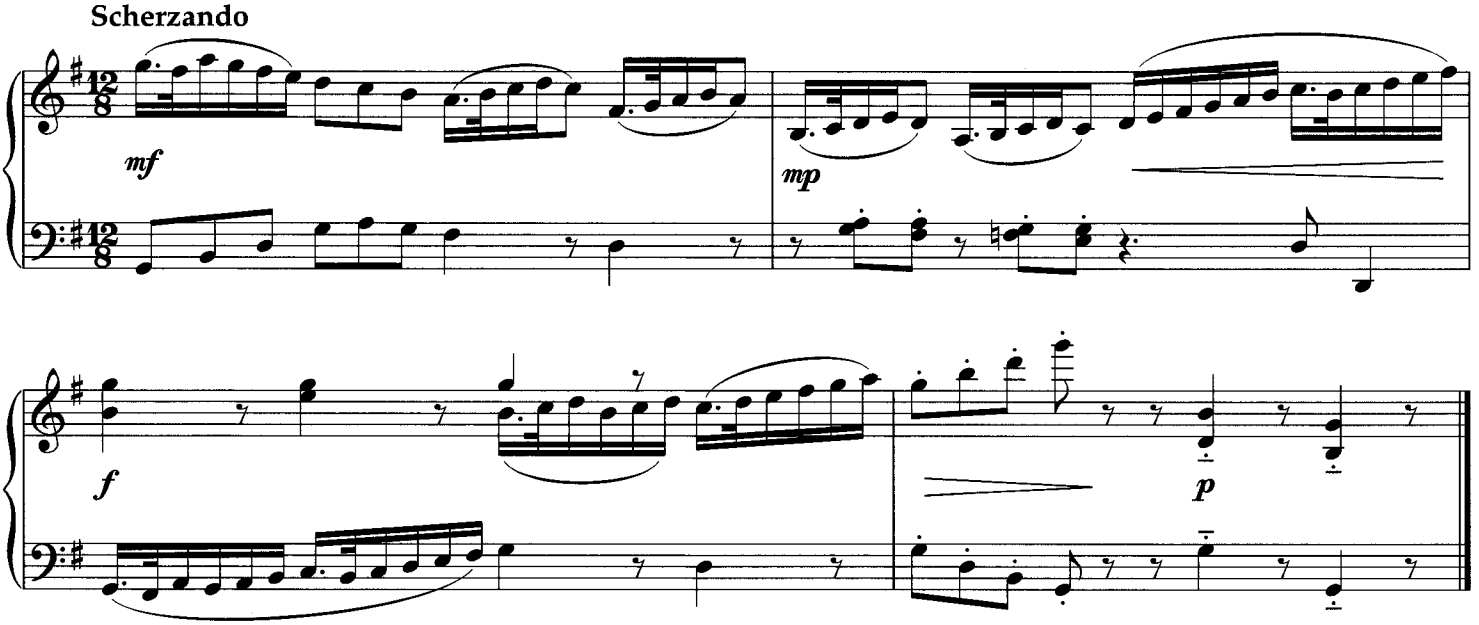
L'église engloutie



Going solo

Cherry picking

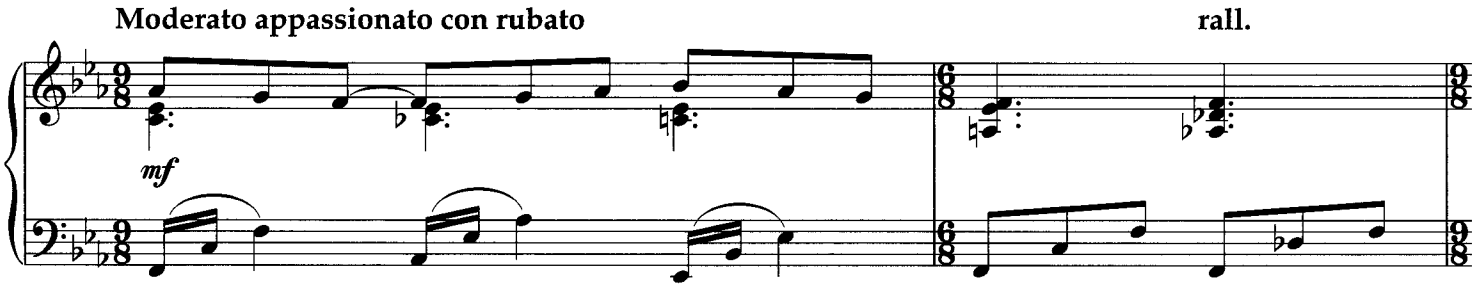
Scherzando



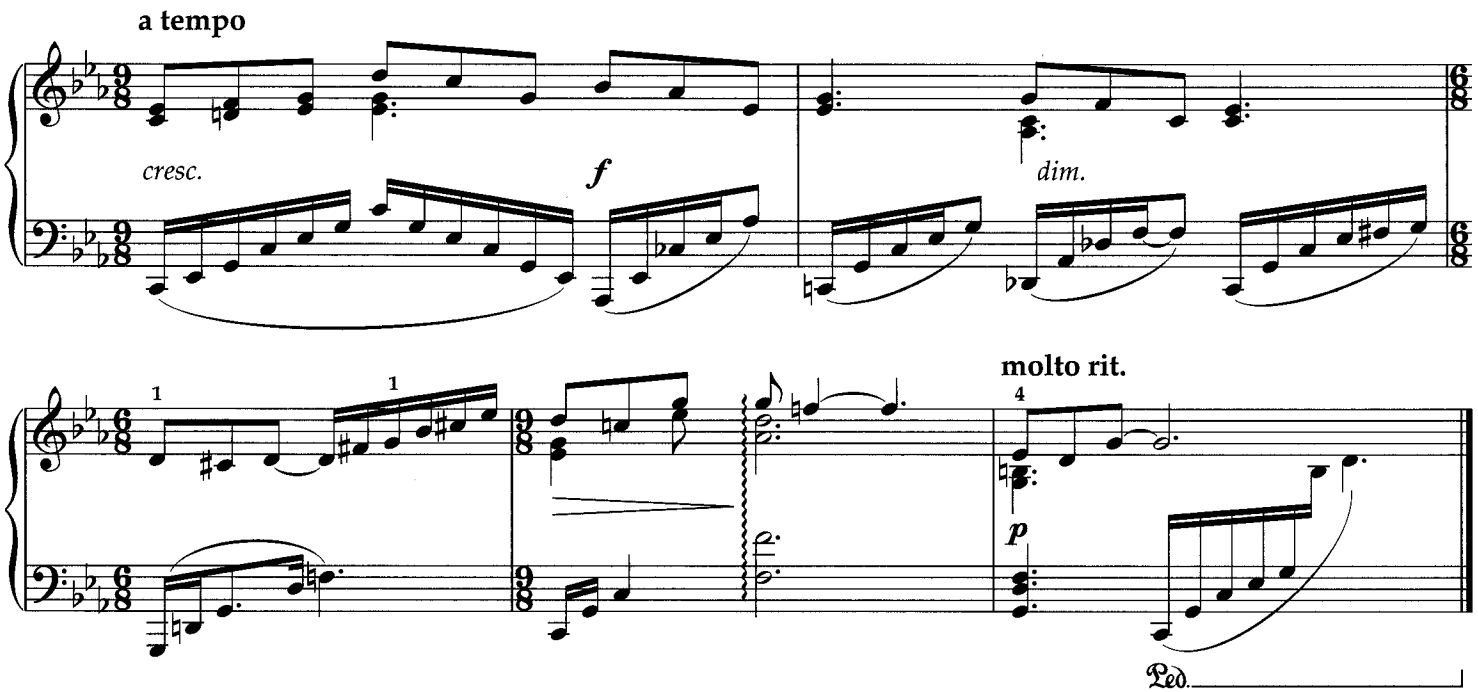
Purple moon

Moderato appassionato con rubato

rall.



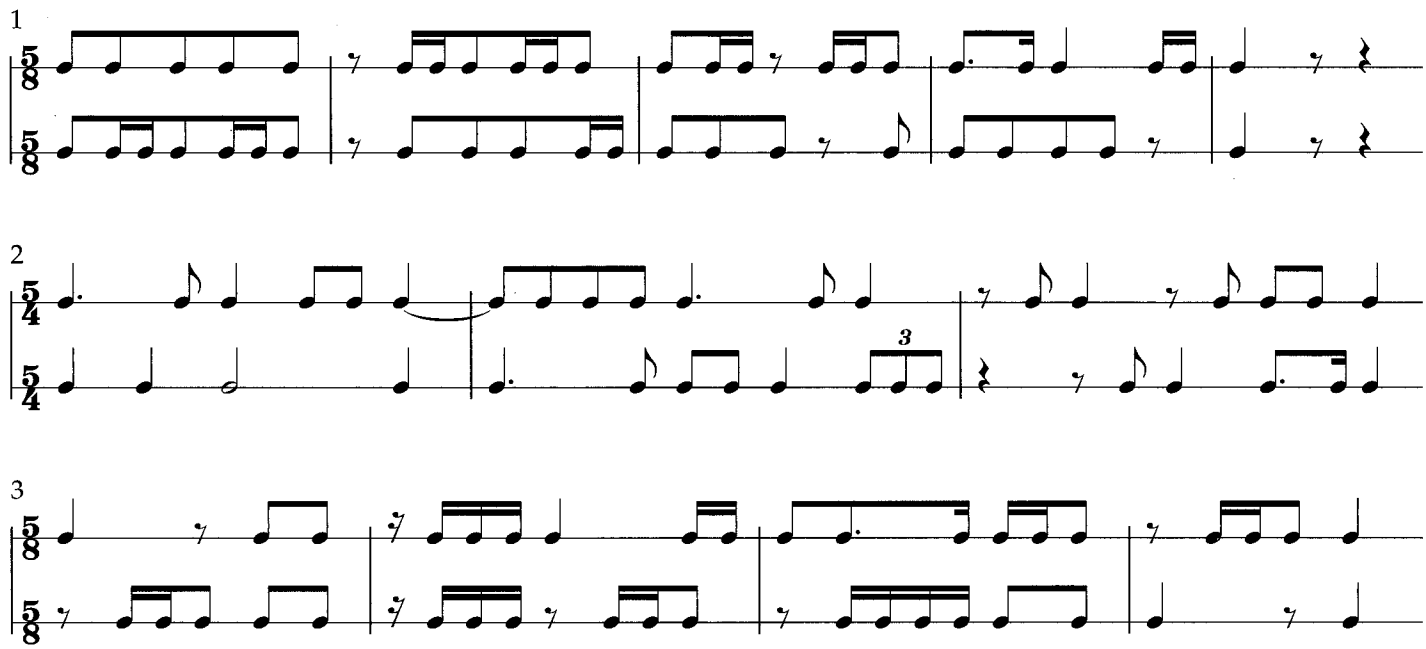
a tempo



Stage 7

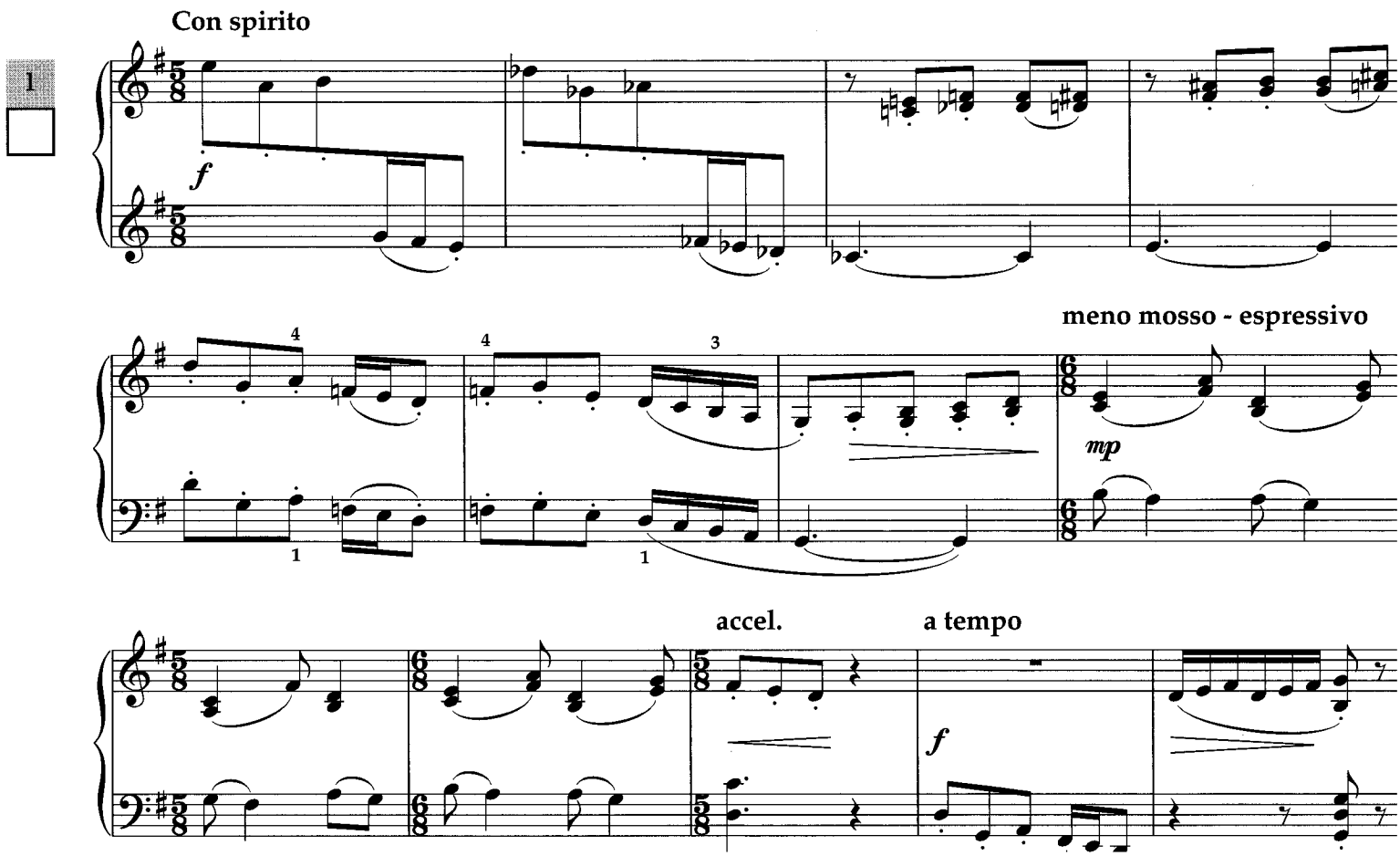
More harmonic and rhythmic patterns in $\frac{5}{8}$ and $\frac{5}{4}$

Rhythmic exercises



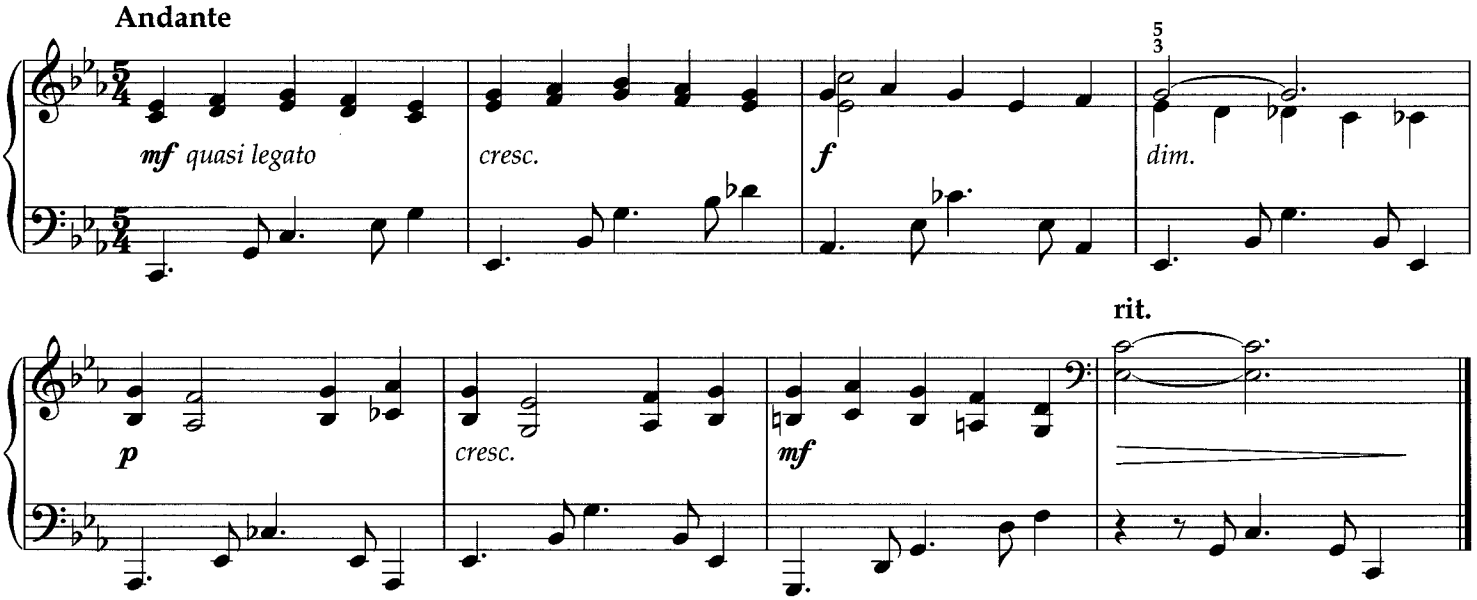
Melodic exercises

Afternoon tea at the Peninsula Hotel, Hong Kong



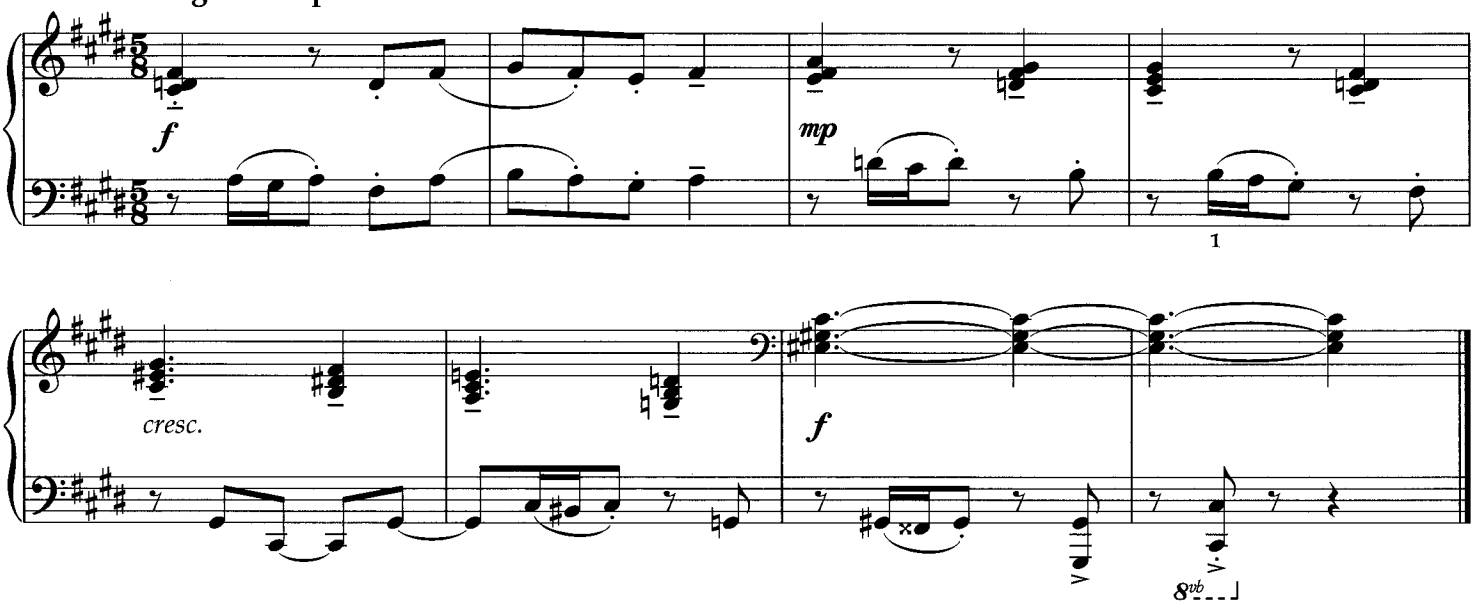
A Russian dacha

Andante



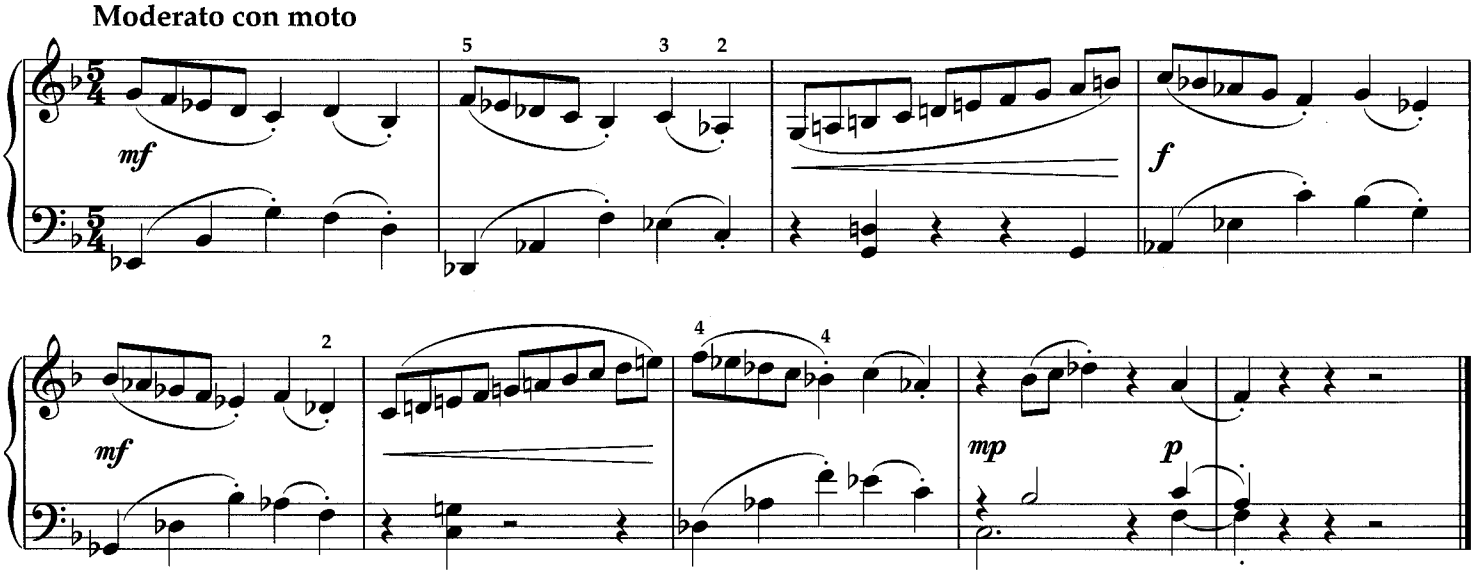
Interstellar

Allegro con spirito



Waterlillies

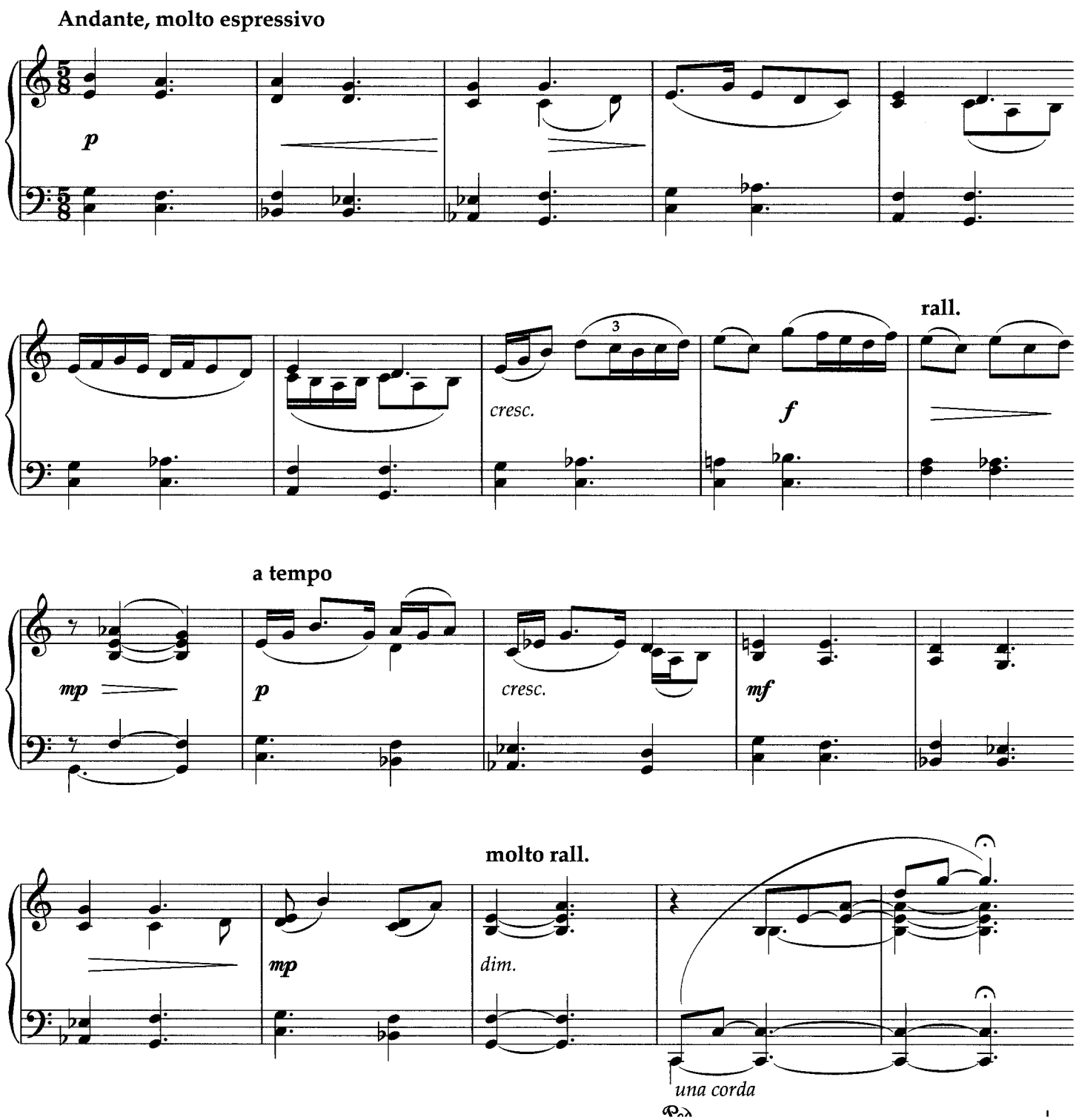
Moderato con moto



Prepared piece

1. In which key is this piece?
2. Does the opening idea return?
3. How will you count this piece?
4. What does *una corda* mean (final two bars)?
5. What is the character? How will you convey it?
6. Try to imagine the music in your head as best you can.

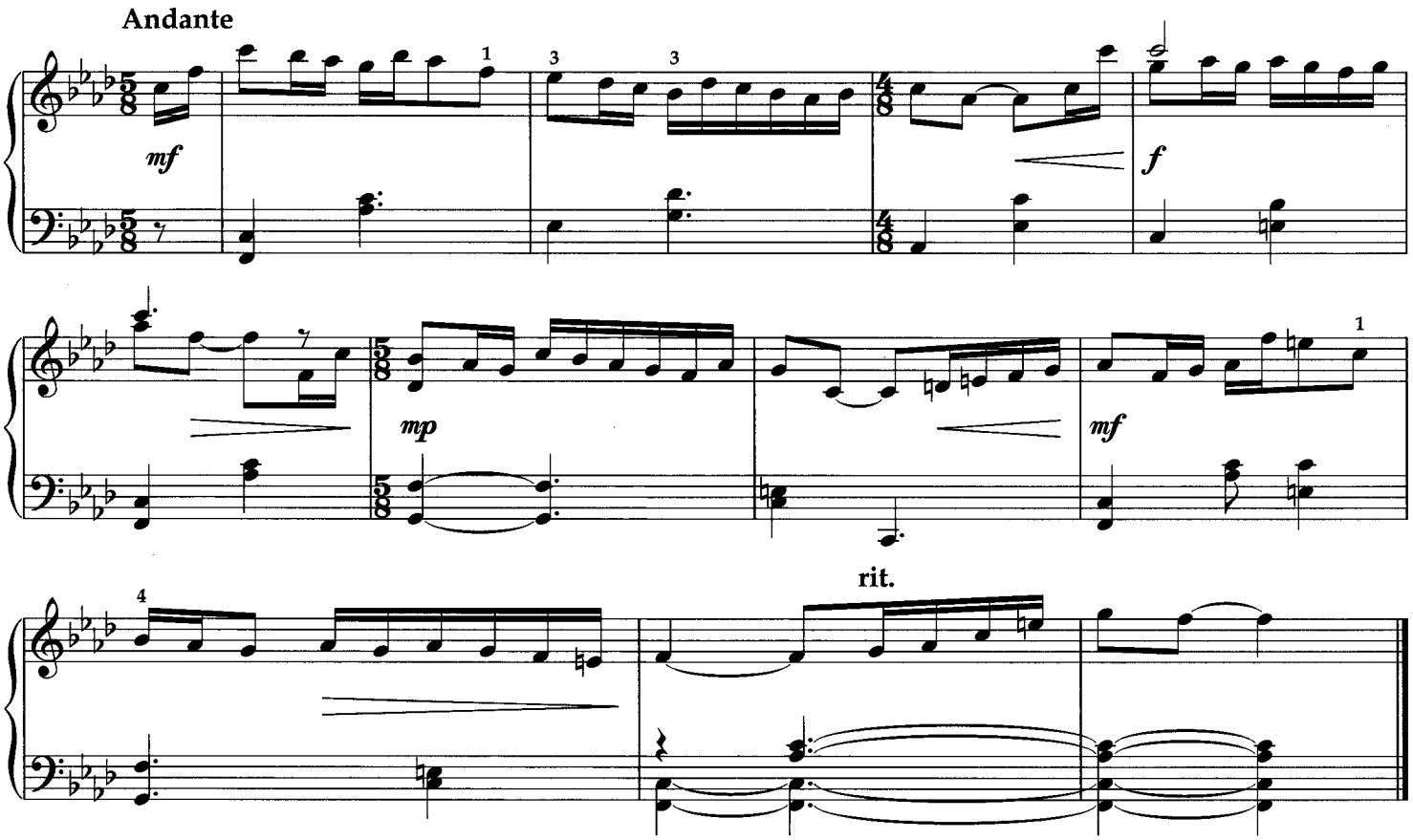
Twilight falls



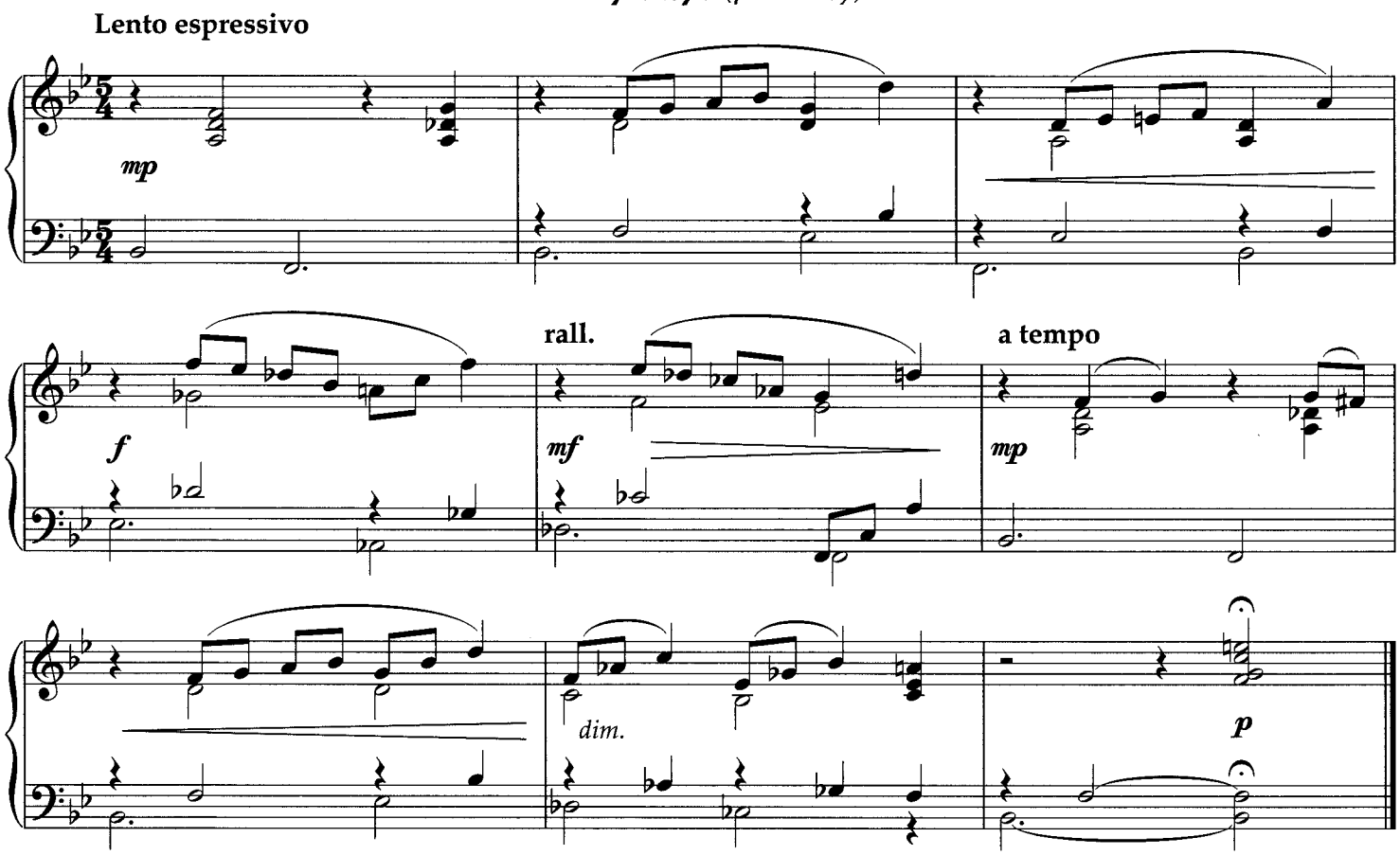
Going solo

Don't forget to prepare each piece carefully before you play it.

The Tsar's palace



Lazy days *(for Lesley)*



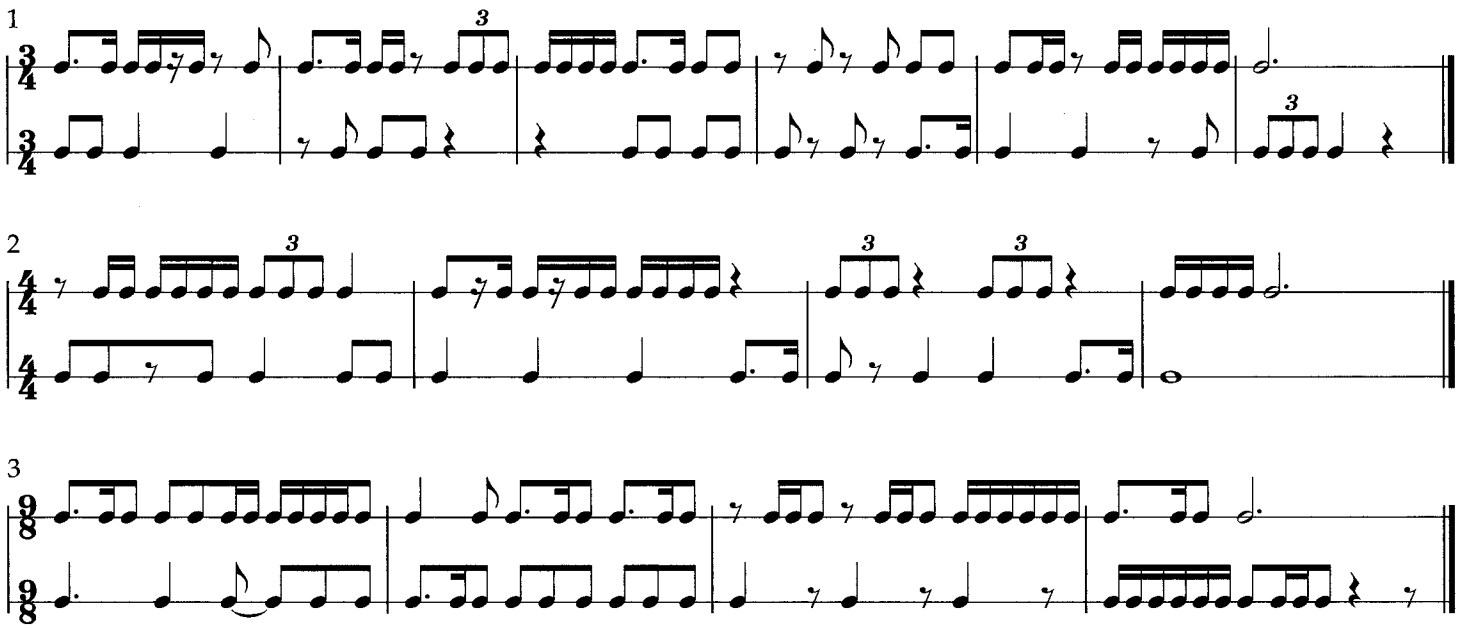
Stage 8

Revision

Here are some reminders of what should be in your mind as you prepare and then give a musical performance when sight-reading:

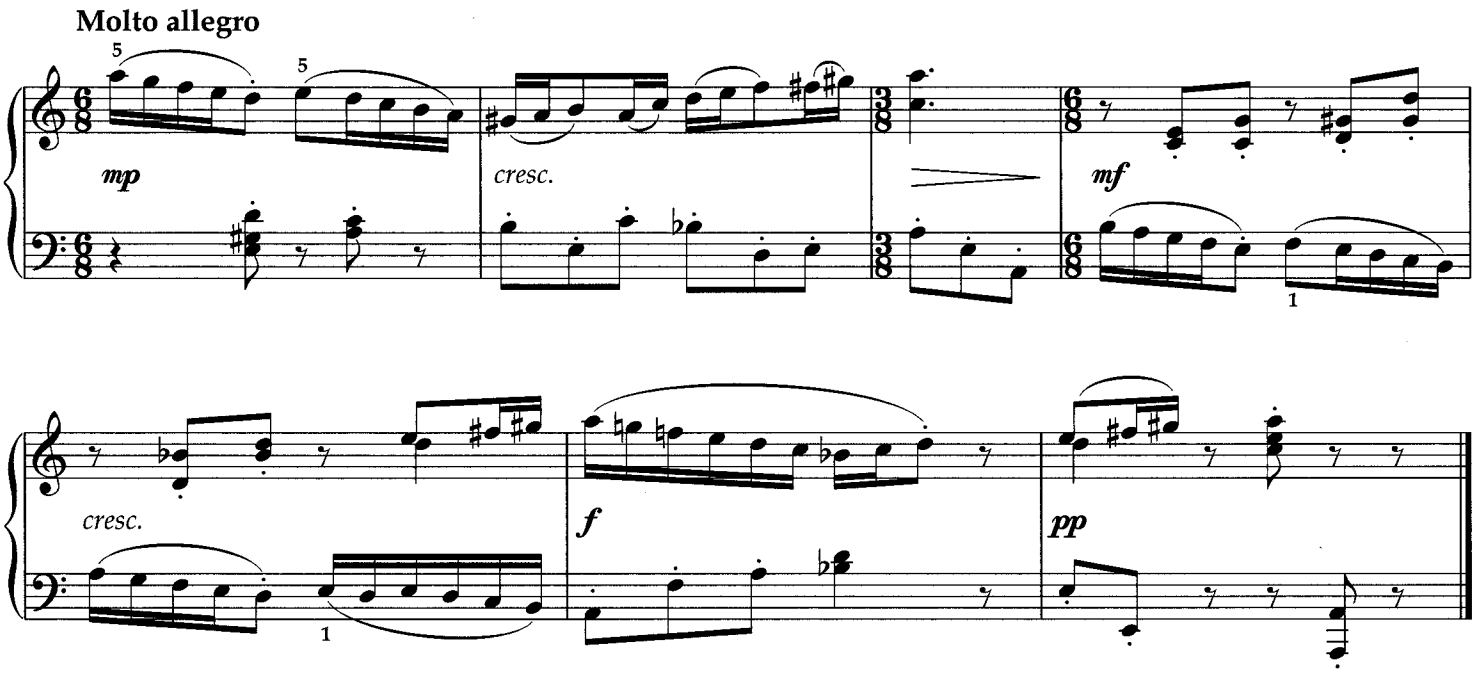
- **Choose a suitable tempo.**
  A lighter touch can help in giving the impression of speed whereas a more sustained quality of sound is appropriate in slower music.
- **Keep the pulse even and steady.**
  If you have been following the instructions throughout these books to count two bars in then you'll have no trouble in establishing a steady pulse. This will also help any musical *rubato* (appropriate in all styles of music) to be more convincing.
- **Give energy to the rhythm.**
  Use occasional (and usually unmarked) accentuation to help drive the music forward.
- **Shape the phrases.**
  Gentle (unmarked) *crescendos* when ascending and *diminuendos* when descending often help to shape phrases. Try to think where each phrase is leading to.
- **Follow dynamics and other markings.**
  These are very important in helping to bring music to life. Add more of your own if you feel they would enhance the character or add more personality to the performance.
- **Use the pedal carefully.**
  Often the pedal is over-used, causing a blurring of detail.
- **Think in the key.**
  In your sight-reading practice always play the scale and arpeggio as part of your preparation.
- **Give musical character to your performance.**
  Just like an actor gets 'in character' before a performance, think about what you want to convey and keep this strongly in mind as you play. Develop your ability to understand what a piece is saying before you begin playing.

Rhythmic exercises



Melodic exercises

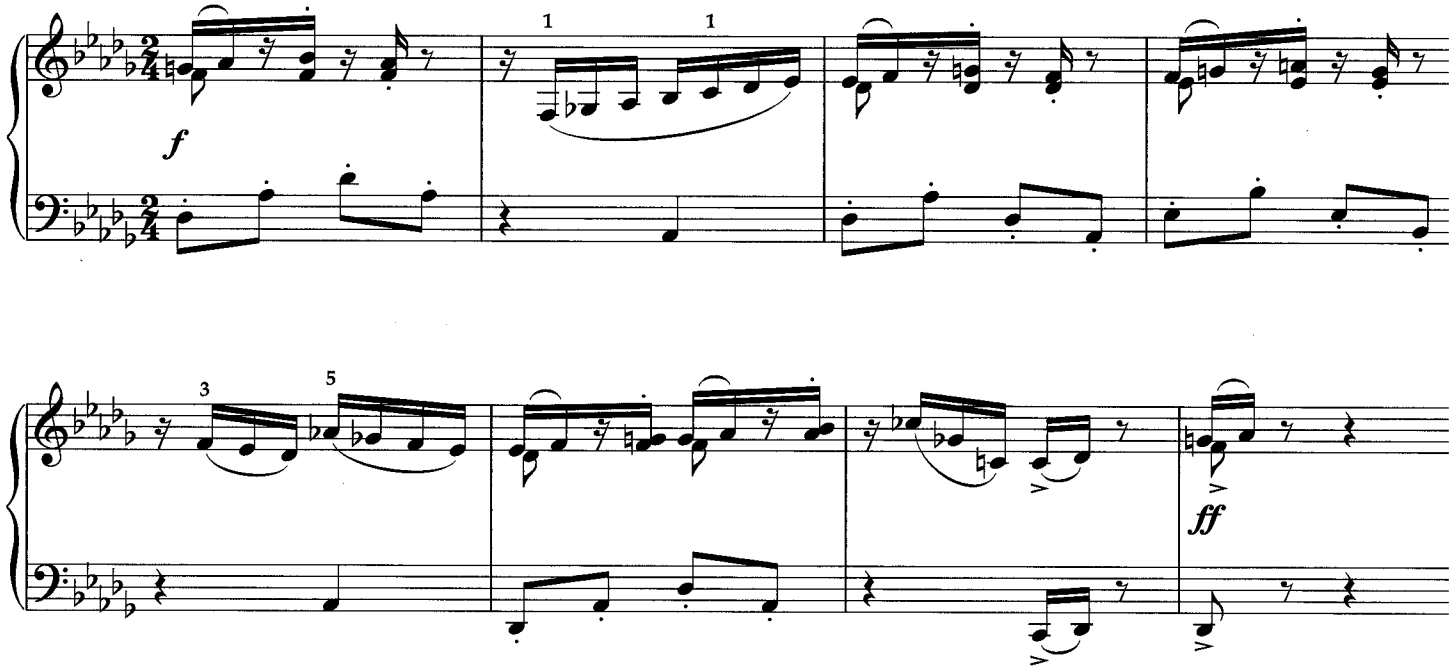
Scherzando



West side

2

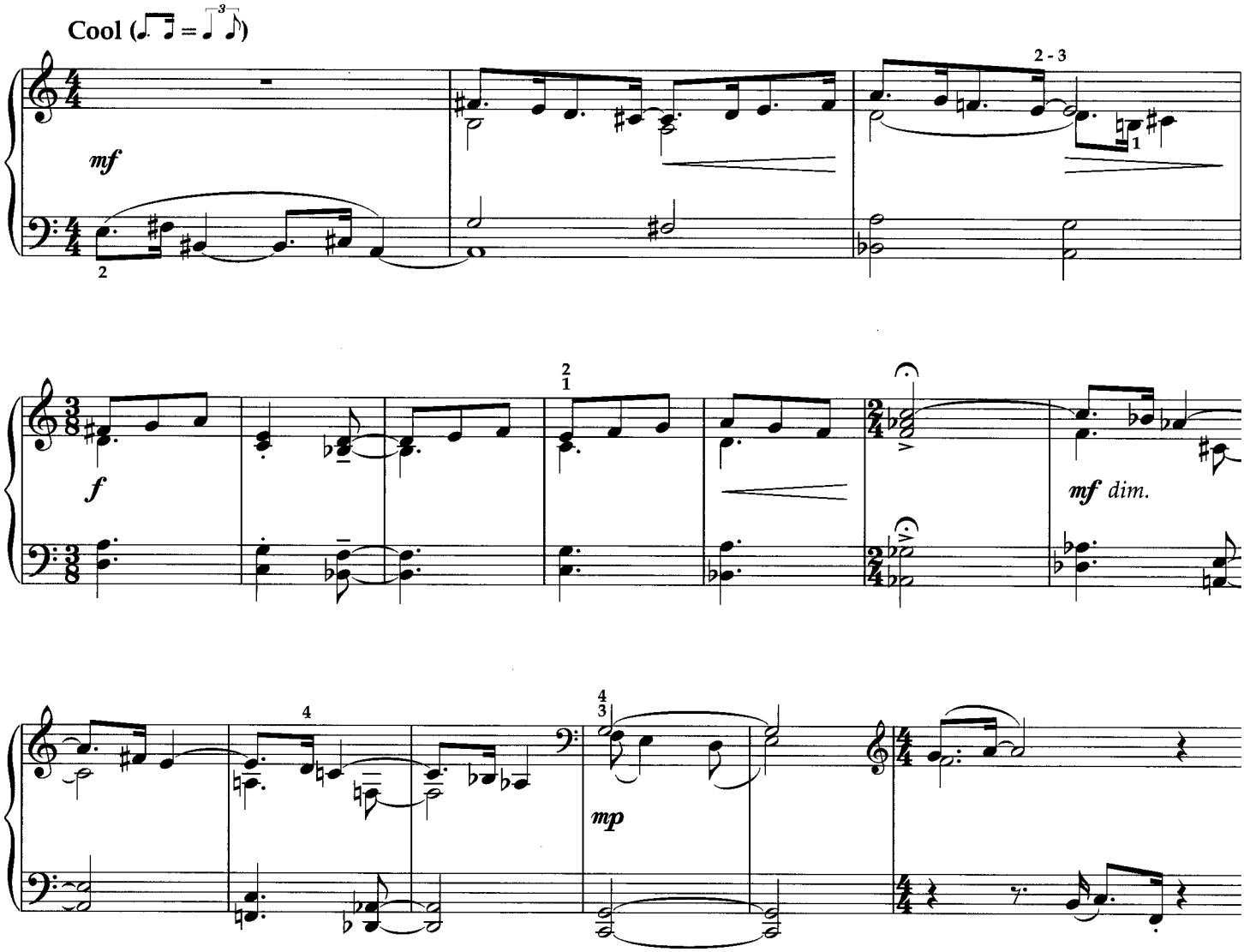
Risoluto



Put out the light

3

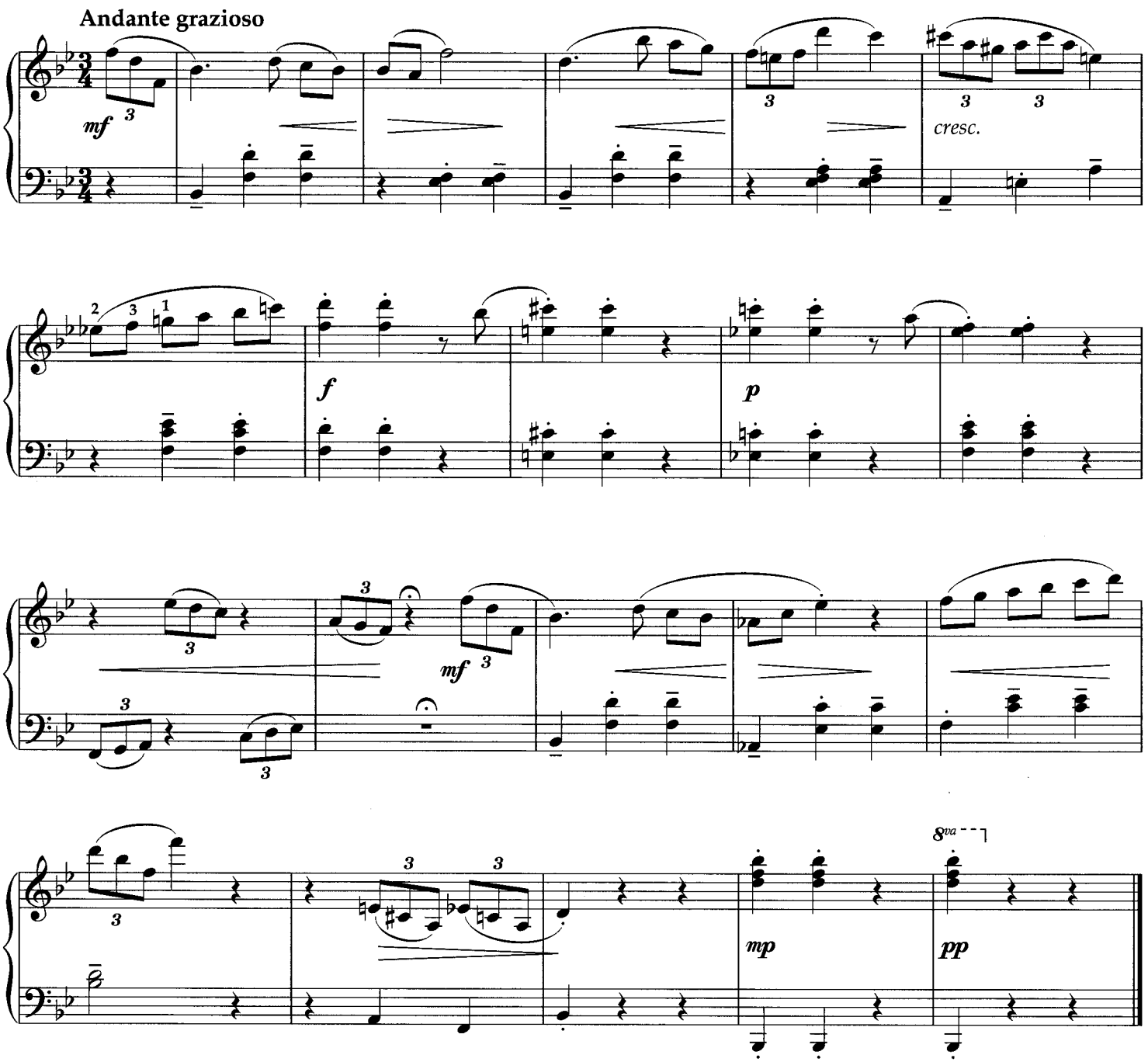
Cool (♩. ♩ = ♩ ♪)



Prepared piece

1. In which key is this piece? Does it slip into other keys?
2. How will you convey the waltz style? Which markings are very important?
3. Does the opening music return?
4. What do you nitce about the notes in bars 7, 8 and 9?
5. Think about the bars that involve leaps.
6. Try to imagine the piece in your head.

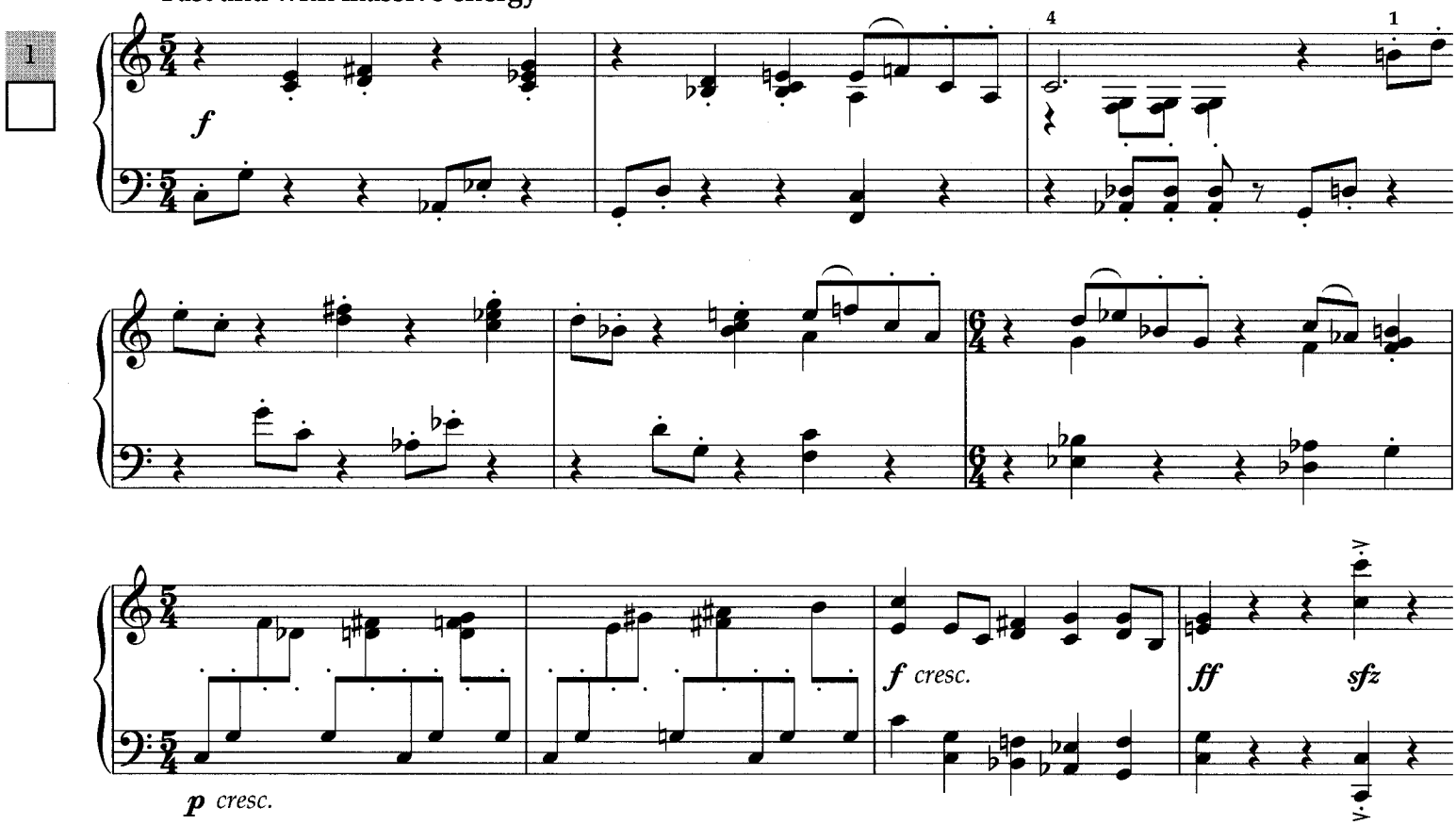
Valse des glaces

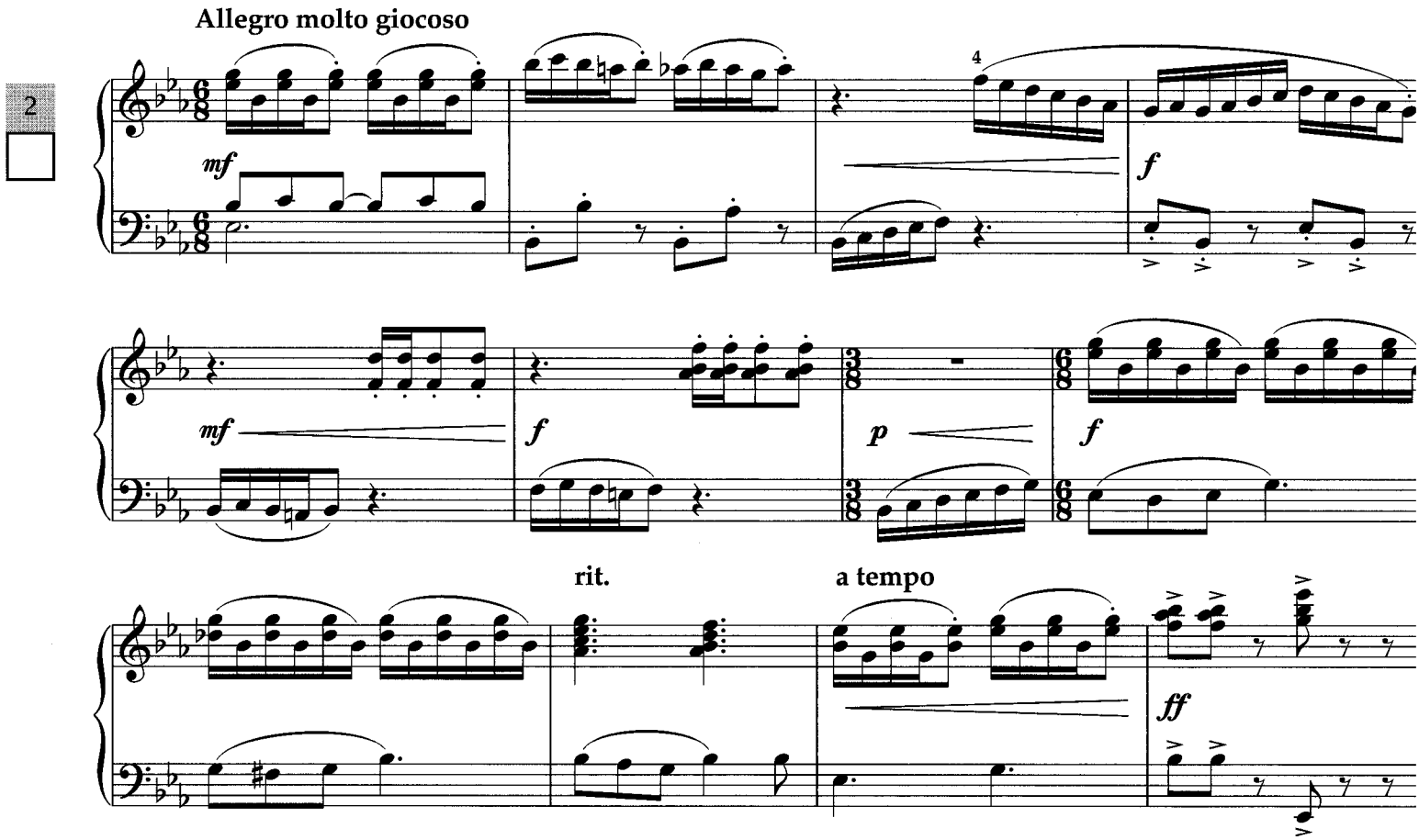


Going solo

Signature tune

Fast and with massive energy



Grand finale

Allegro molto giocoso