Isomorphic Fantasy

for solo organ

Mark Gotham
2015

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For solo organ (minimum 2 manual and pedals)

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c.6 mins

A Note on the Piece

Isomorphic Fantasy is based on an equivalence between pitch and duration units: scale and rhythmic patterns respectively. The longer the temporal gap between notes, the bigger the pitch gap too (eg. quaver = semi-tone).

The inspiration for this conceit came from an iconic article by Jeff Pressing in which he observes that this kind of isomorphism holds between some of the most widely used scalic and rhythmic patterns. For instance, 2212221 is the pattern for both the diatonic scale, and a commonly used rhythmic / metrical pattern. Whether or not these connections are historically or culturally meaningful, I found the structural idea compelling.

The resulting piece is rich in mixed metres which may seem to evoke the traditional music of the Balkan regions, while the 'hocketting' exchange between voices is more redolent of an early-Renaissance compositional practice. After a short introduction, a rising isomorphic scalic pattern is gradually set up. The section gathers momentum, working through different rotations of the pattern. The final section of the piece works in broadly the same way, though with descending scales, a slightly different treatment, and incorporating chords and other elements that have occurred during the piece. A contrasting middle section explores the same isomorphic principles but in a free, expressive, contrapuntal context.

This piece exists in alternative versions for organ duet (two players), and mixed ensemble.

A Note to the Performer

- Manual distributions and dynamics have been set out with a two-manual set up in mind – the minimum number required by this piece. Naturally, greater numbers of manuals will present better solutions. Relatedly, I have not specified exact registrations, but merely dynamic gradation, and places where a timbral alternation is desirable (eg. in the central section). Hairpins have been included for where a swell box is available.
- The division of beats in mixed metres is specified at the first instance. The beat pattern remains in effect until specified to the contrary. For instance, bars 10–23 consistently alternate a 3,2 5/8 with a 3,2,2 7/8. This pattern changes in bar 25, and a new pattern is established in bars 26–7.
- Tenuto articulations are generally used to emphasise these metrical implications, especially where the voices are in conflict (such as for the 223 against 332 in bar 39).
- An alternative layout for the hardest passage (bb. 67–80) is provided as an appendix.

To my friend and 'metre mentor', Justin London
First performance: John Butt, King's College Chapel, Cambridge, 10.10.2015

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for organ solo

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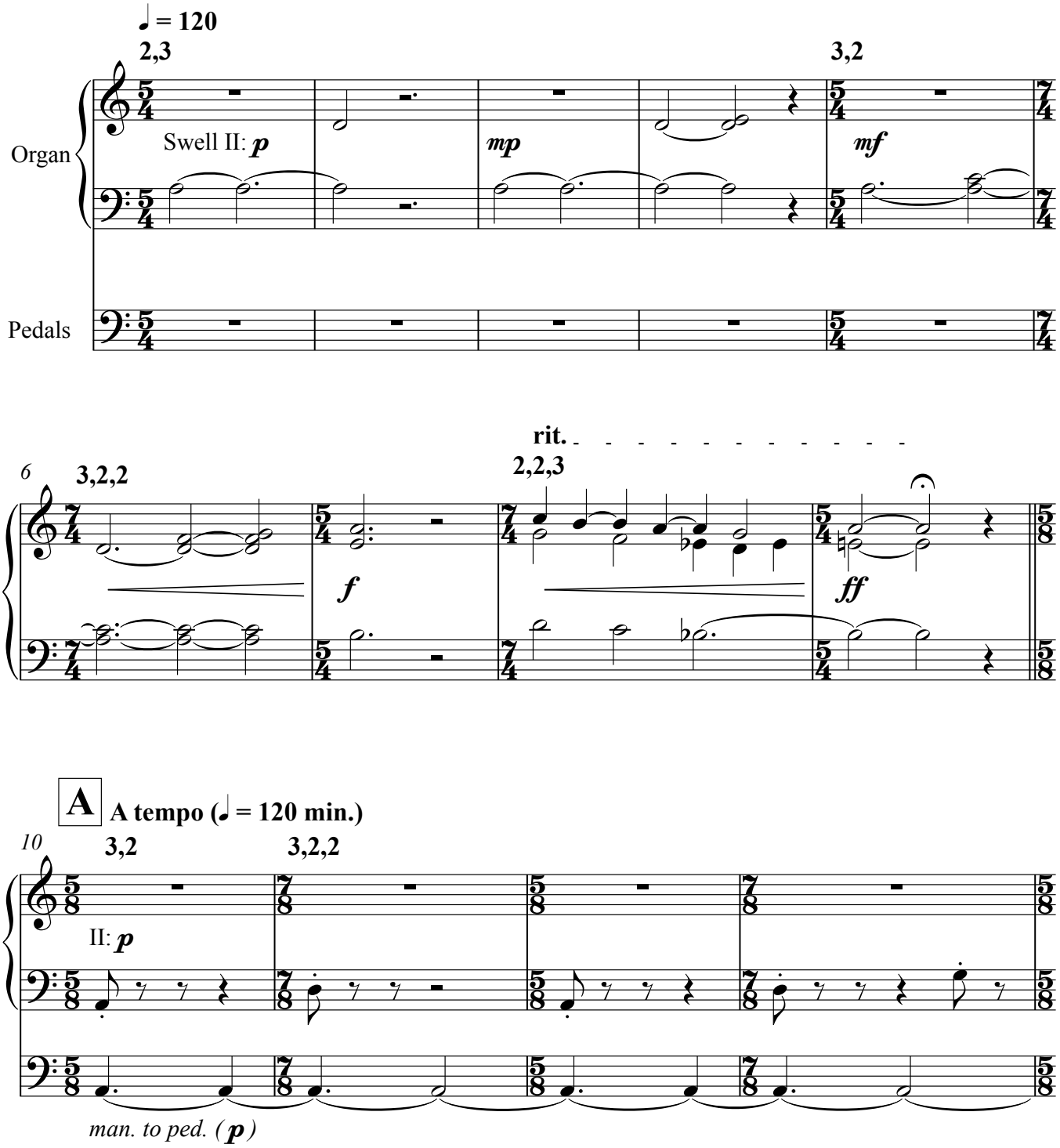

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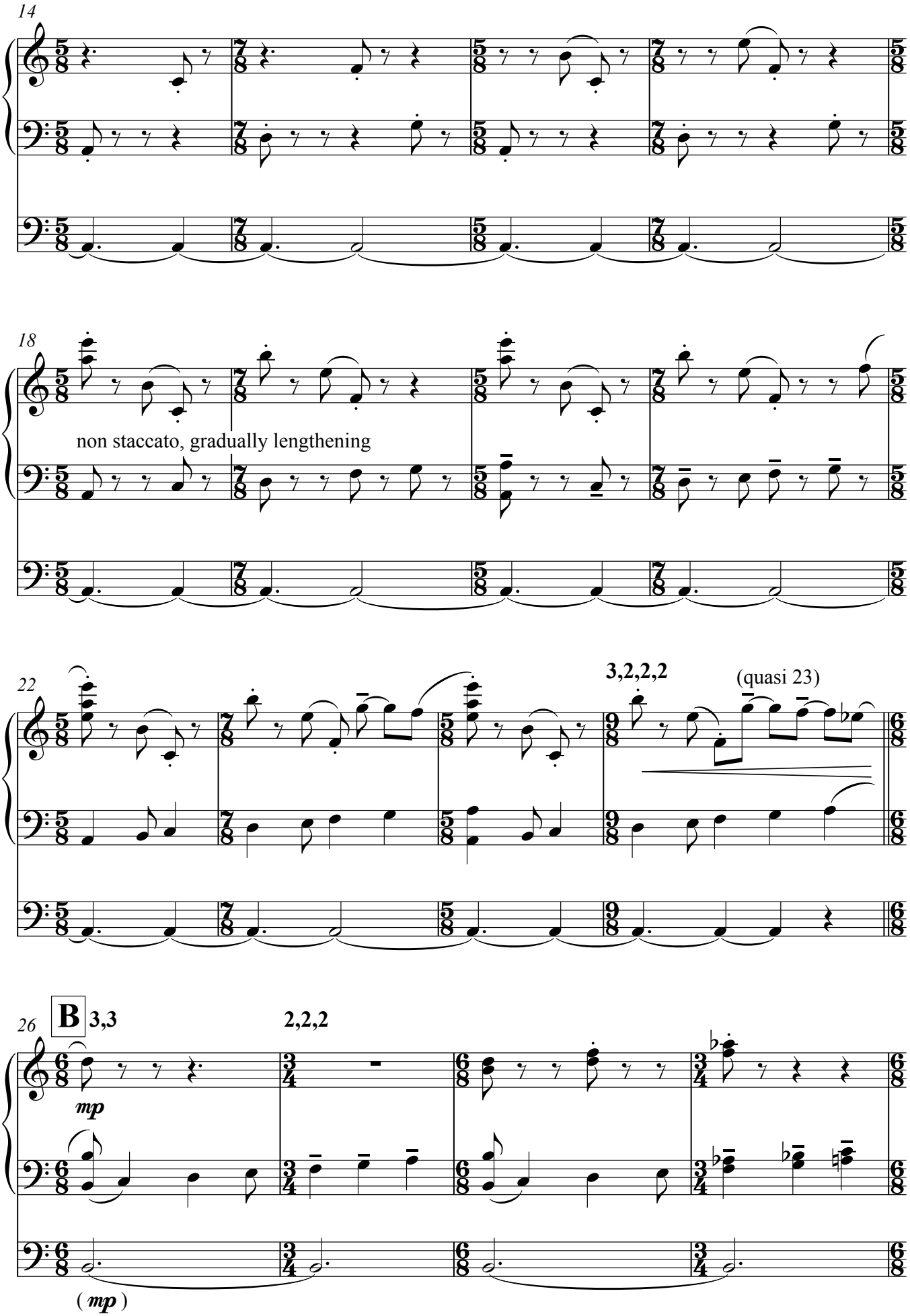
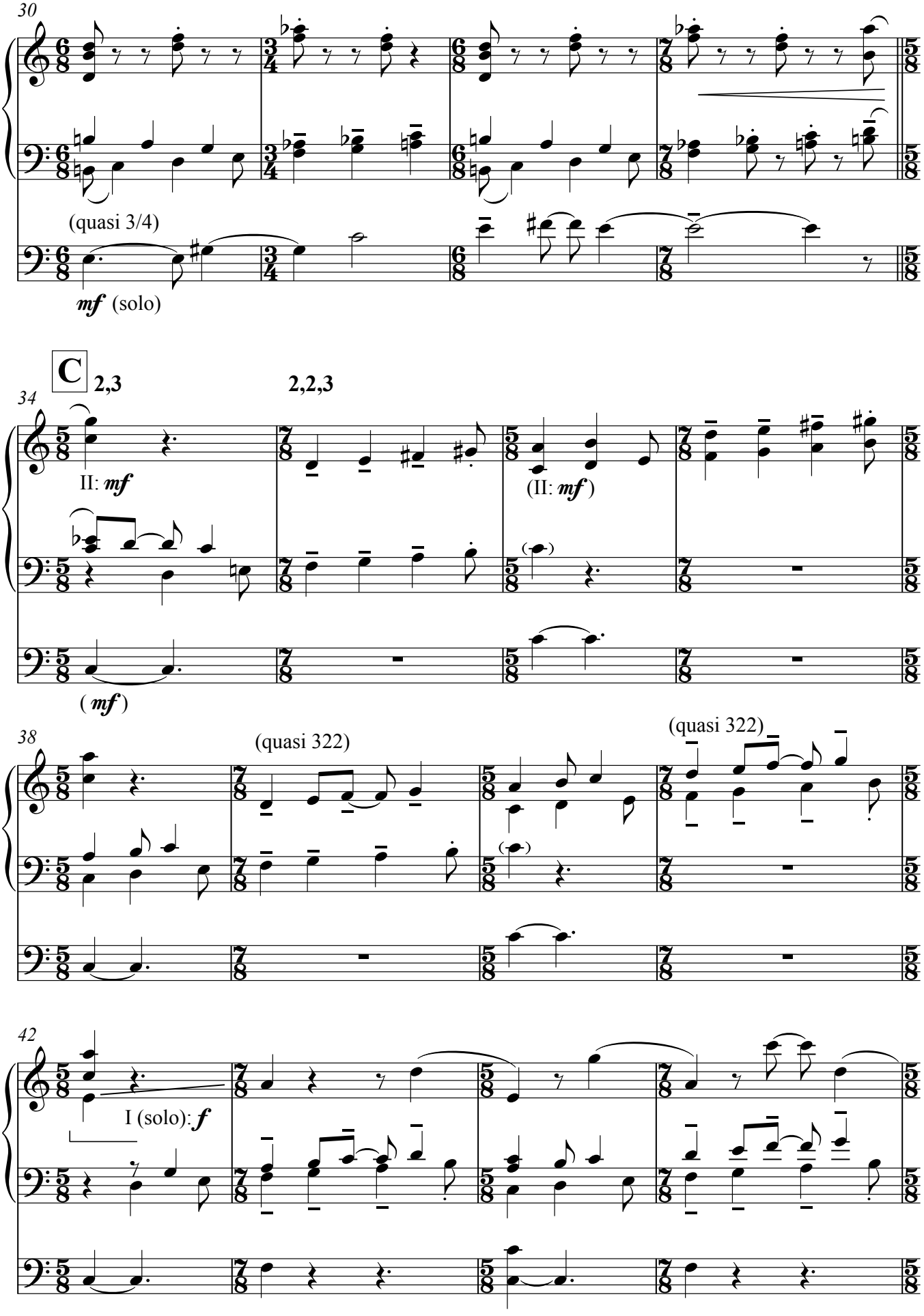
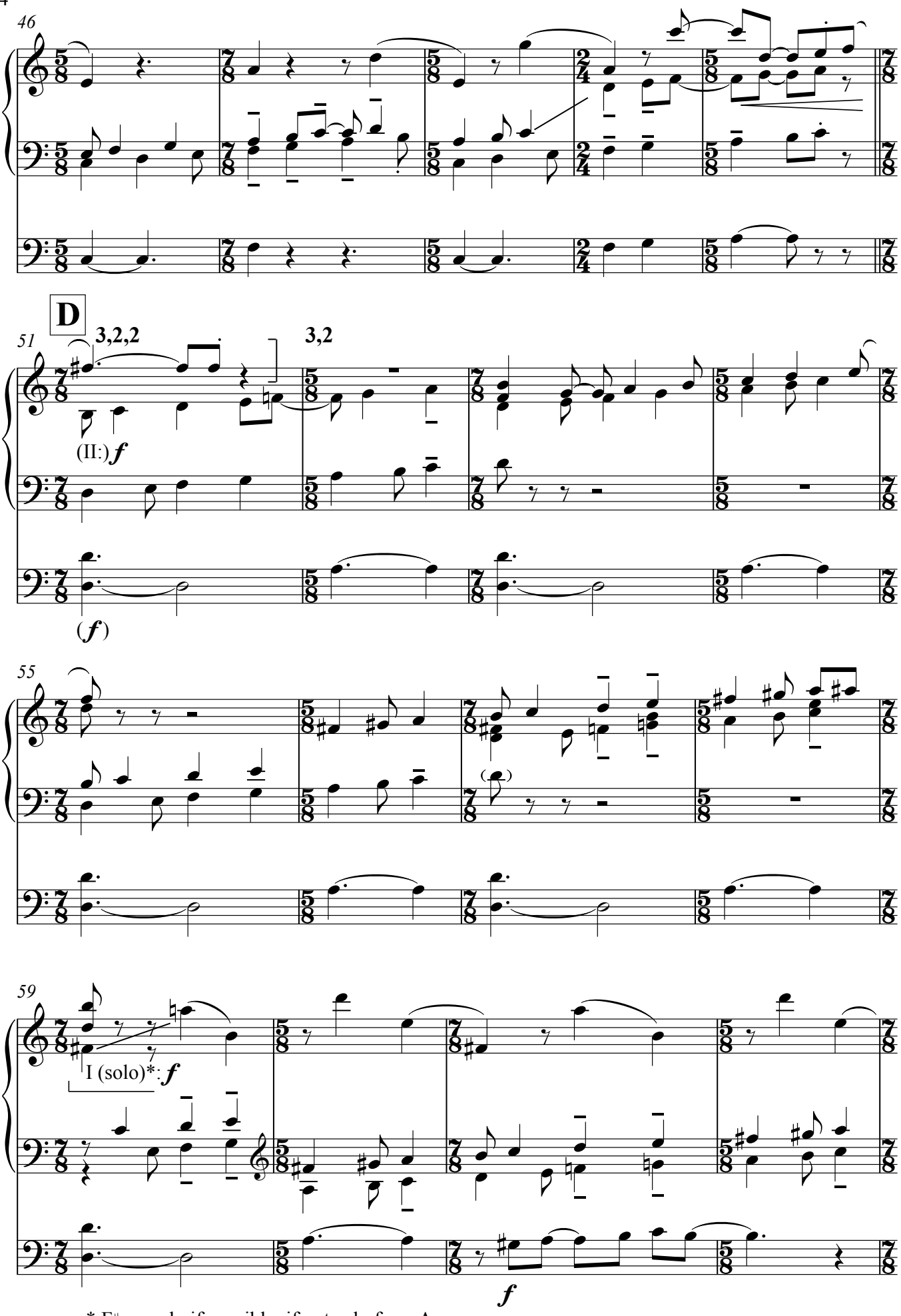

14
18
non staccato, gradually lengthening
22
3,2,2,2
(quasi 23)
26
B
3,3
2,2,2
mp
(mp)


30
(quasi 3/4)
mf (solo)
C
2,3
2,2,3
34
II: mf
(II: mf)
(mf)
38
(quasi 322)
(quasi 322)
42
I (solo): f



* F♯ on solo if possible; if not solo from A.

63

I: ***ff***

E 3,2

67

3,2,2

I: ***ff***

(II: ***f***)

(II: ***f***)

(II: ***f***)

I*: ***ff***

(***f***)

B,F,E on I; D on II if possible.

72

poco marc.

II: (***f***)

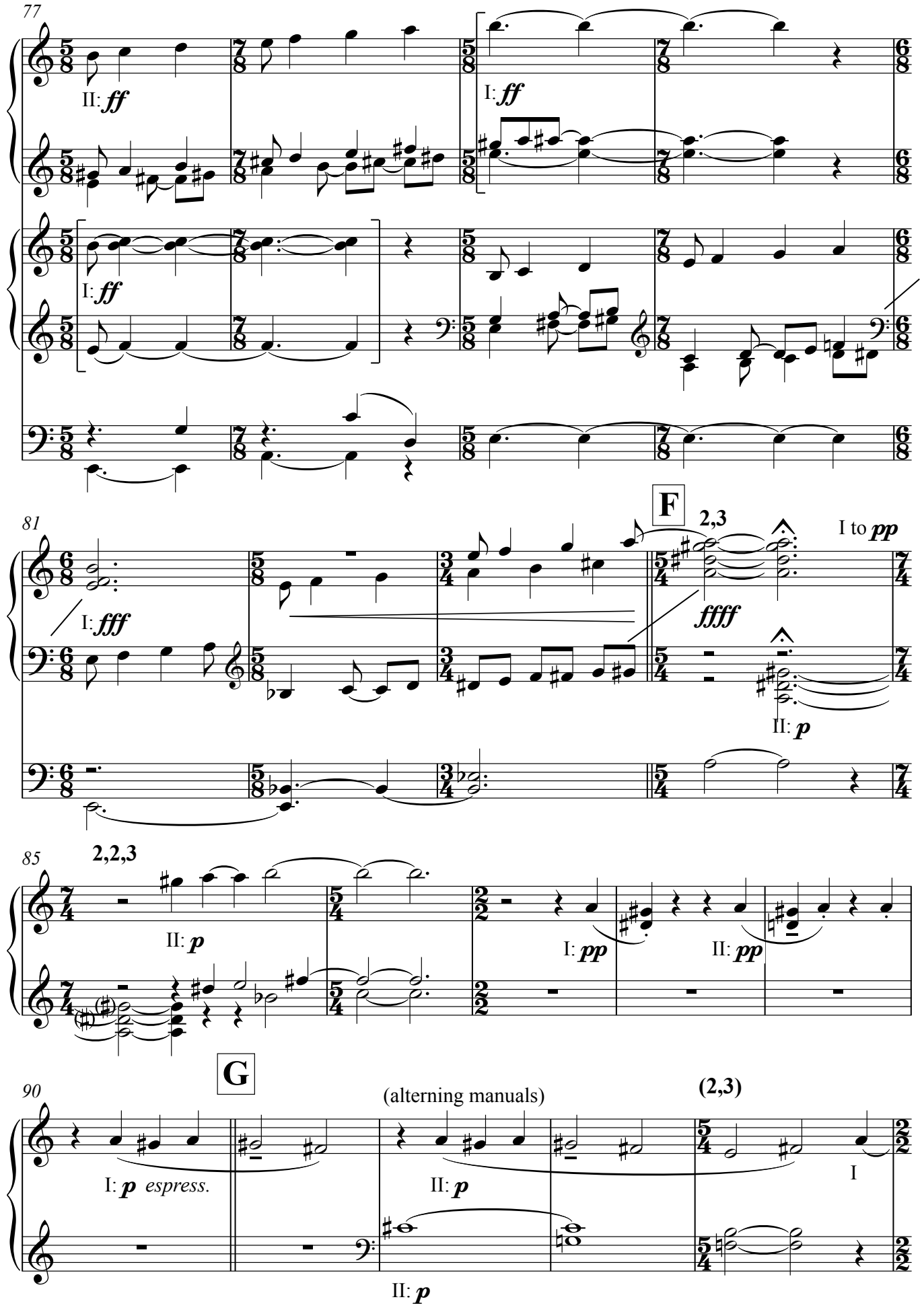
I: ***ff***

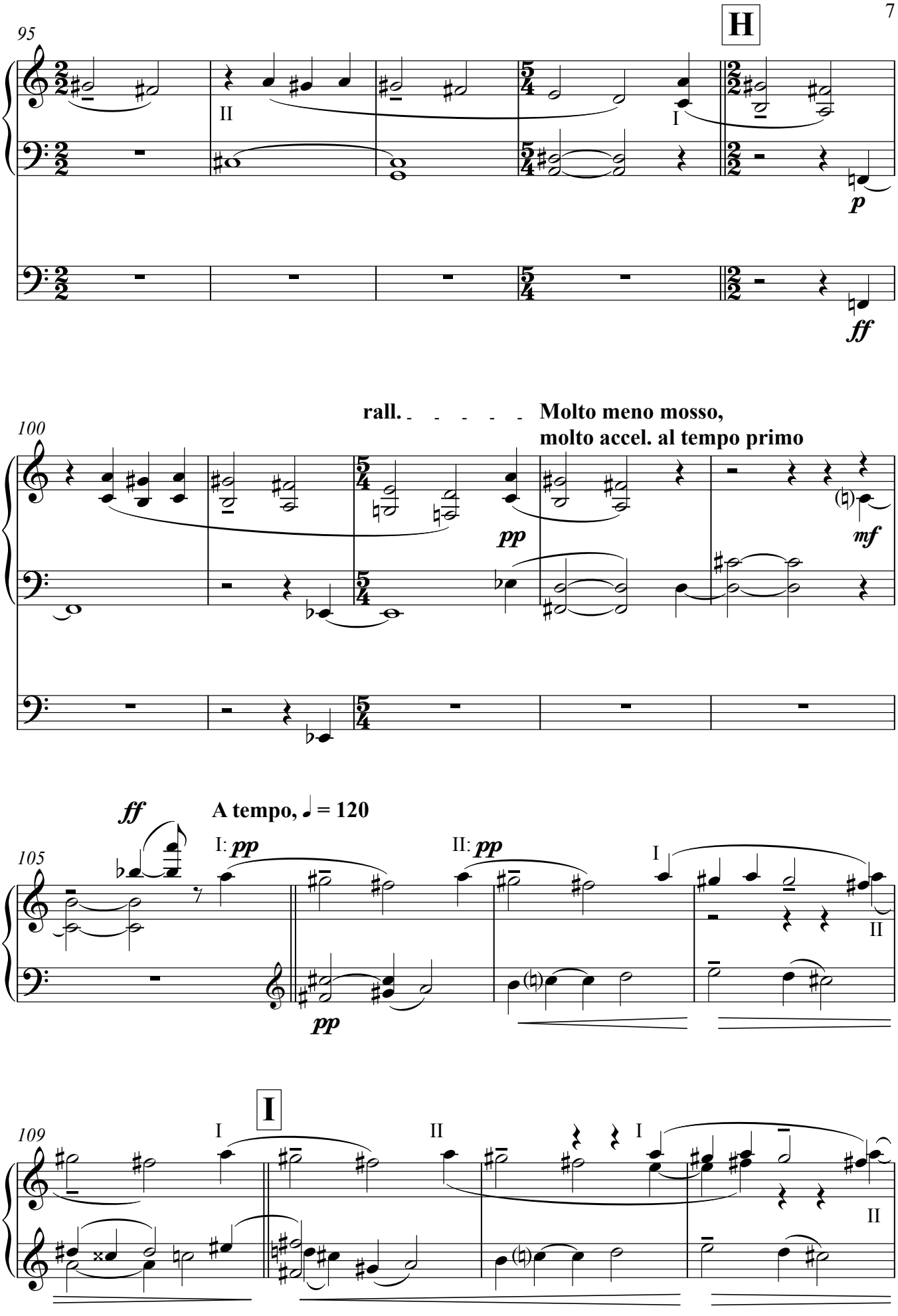
LH

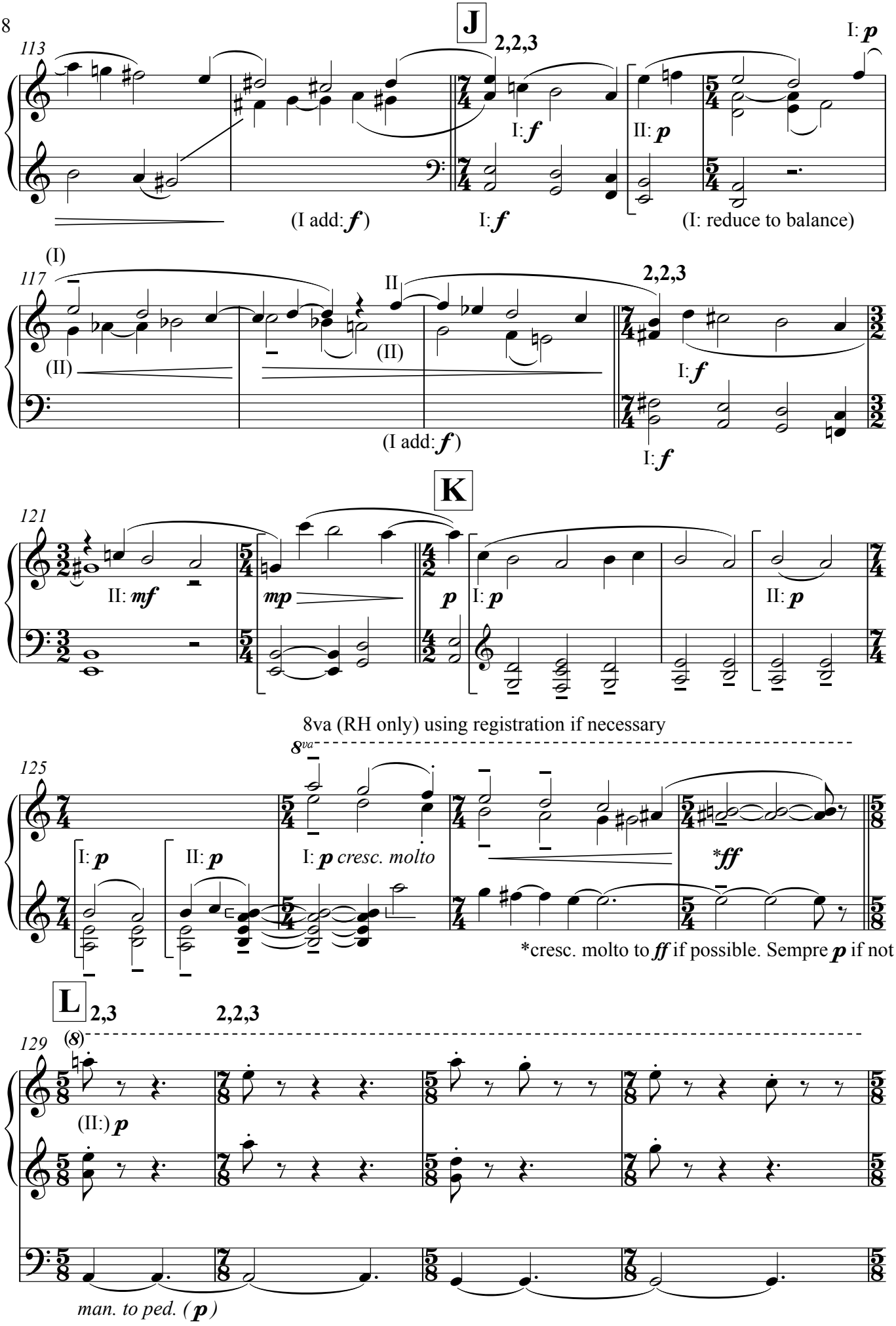
I: ***ff***

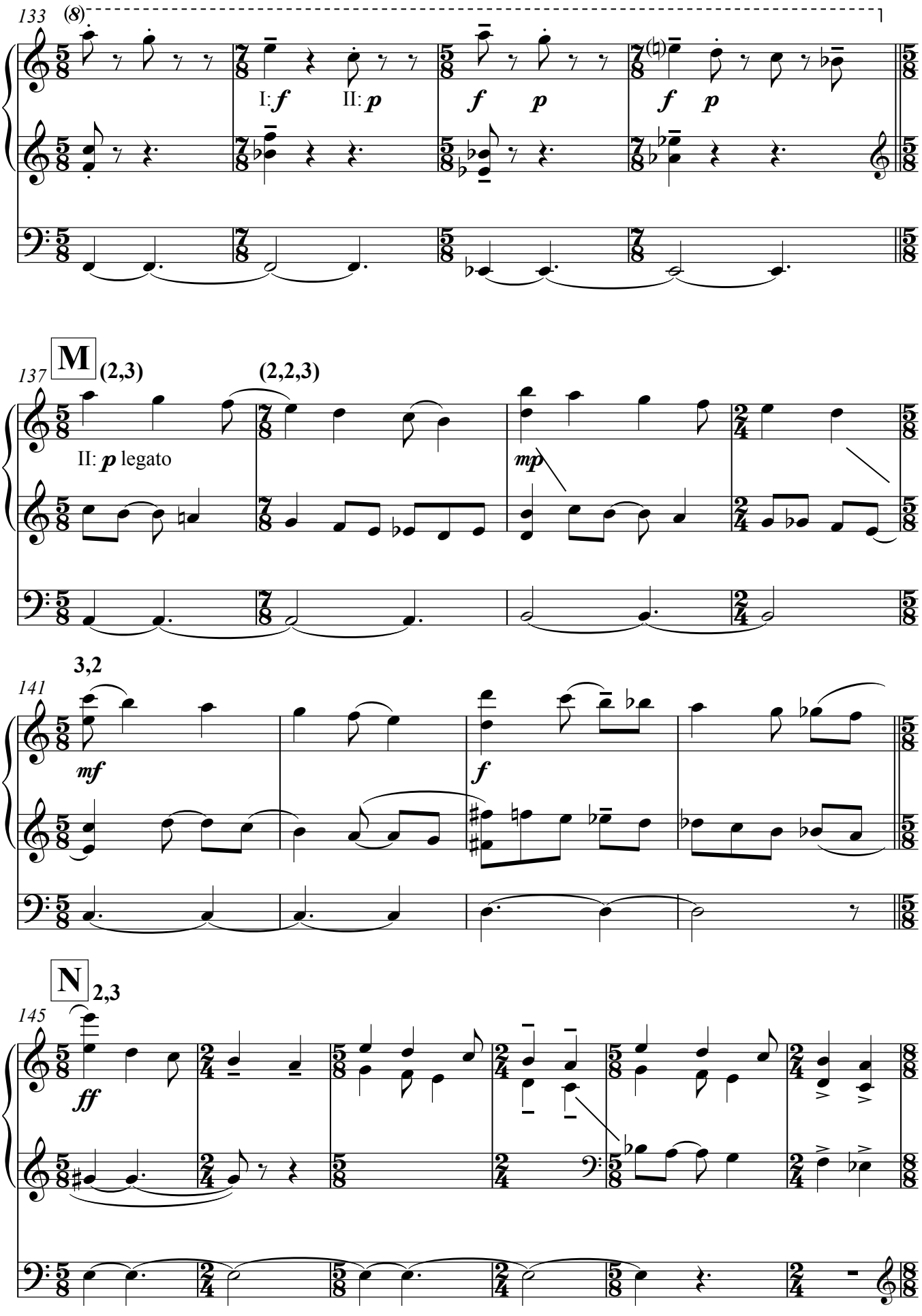
II: ***ff***

* See appendix for an alternative layout of bars 67 to 76.


77
II: ff
I: ff
I: ff
81
F
2,3
I to pp
I: fff
ffff
II: p
85
2,2,3
II: p
I: pp
II: pp
90
G
(alternating manuals)
(2,3)
I: p espress.
II: p
I
II: p


H
95
II
I
p
ff
rall.
Molto meno mosso,
molto accel. al tempo primo
100
pp
mf
ff
A tempo, ♩ = 120
105
I: pp
II: pp
I
II
pp
I
109
I
II
I
II


J
113
2,2,3
I: p
I: f
II: p
(I add: f)
I: f
(I: reduce to balance)
(I)
117
II
2,2,3
(II)
(II)
I: f
(I add: f)
I: f
K
121
II: mf
mp
p
I: p
II: p
8va (RH only) using registration if necessary
8va
125
I: p
II: p
I: p cresc. molto
*ff
*cresc. molto to ff if possible. Sempre p if not
L
2,3
2,2,3
129
(8)
(II:) p
man. to ped. (p)


133
(8)
I: f
II: p
f
p
f
p
M
137
(2,3)
(2,2,3)
II: p legato
mp
3,2
141
mf
f
N
2,3
145
ff

151 **O** **2,3,3** **3,2,2**

I: ***p*** ***mp*** ***mf***

2' only (or manual - top of RH)

p ***mp*** ***mf***

rit. **poco molto**

154

f ***ff***

f

P **A tempo (♩ = 120), accel. al fine**

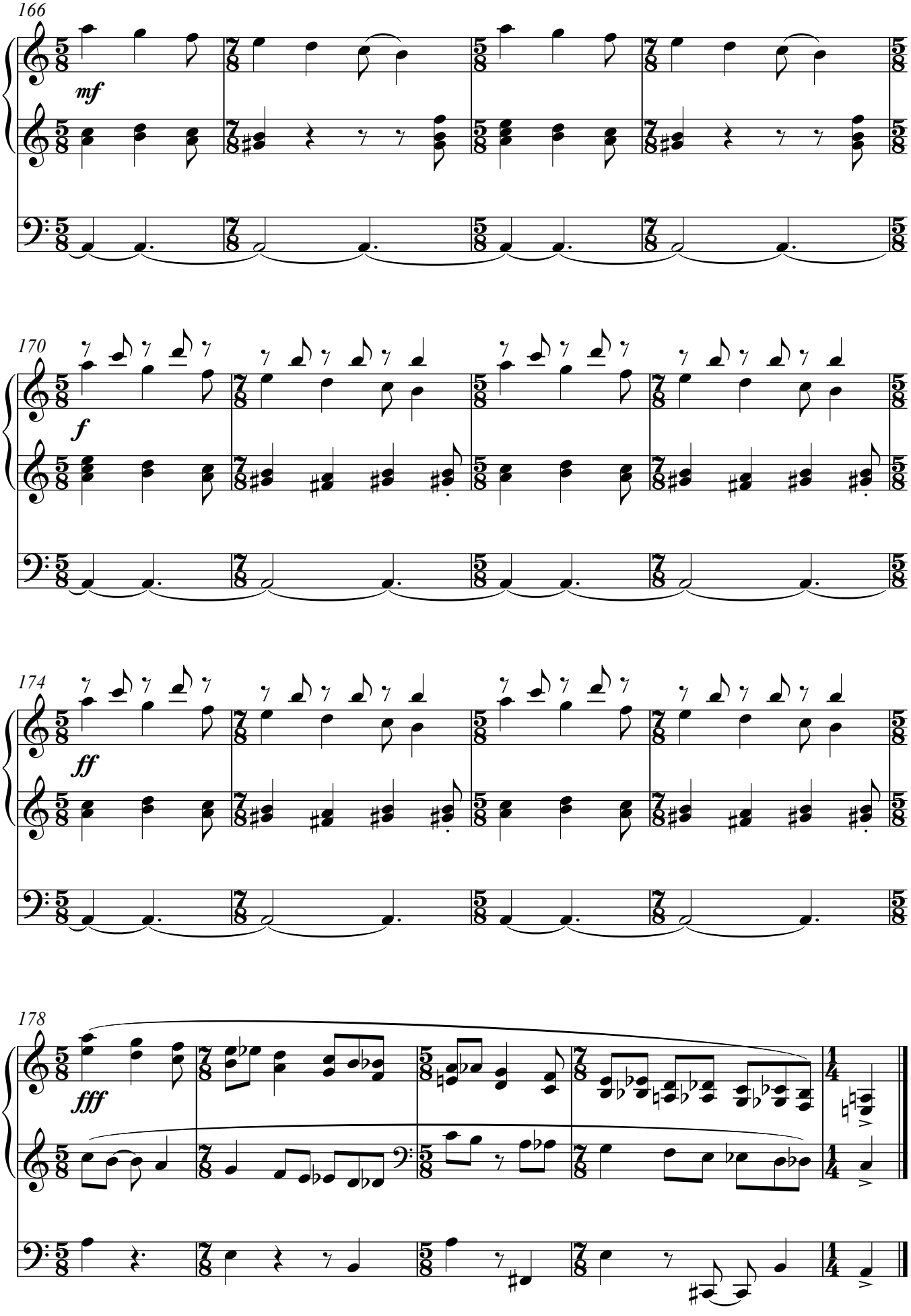
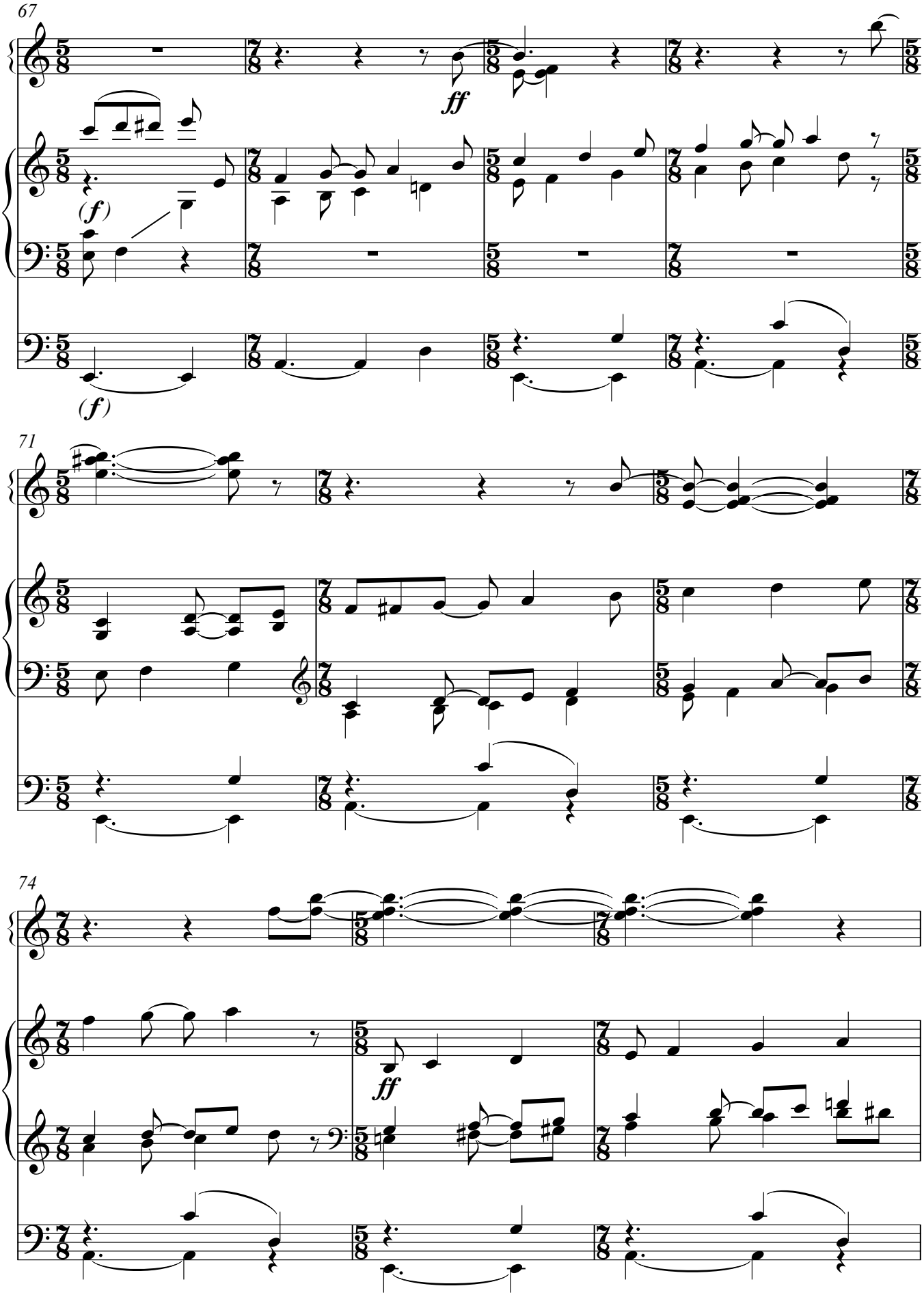
158 **2,3** **2,2,3**

p

man. to ped. (***p***)

162

mp


166
mf
170
f
174
ff
178
fff

Appendix: Alternative notation for bb.67-76 (p.5)