Machaut Tunes

Realizations for Piano Solo of Five Chansons by Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300-1377)

Quant je sui mis (Virelai # 13)
Sanz cuer-Dame-Amis (Ballade #17)
Se je soupir (Virelai # 36)
Je sui aussi (Ballade # 20)
Douce Dame (Virelai # 4)

Don Freund

Freundworks Publishing

Prologue from the Realizer

Since I don't know of any similar piano realizations of 14th century music, I assume it must seem a rather odd thing to do. So perhaps I should explain why I did this, and why I did this the way I did this.

I did this primarily because I have fallen in love with this music, and I want as many musicians and listeners as possible to come in contact with Machaut's music. I believe (from what little I have observed of 14th century performance practice) that the musical ideas of this period are less particularly designed for the sound of one performing medium or class of performing media than the music of later periods. That is, one can argue that it makes more sense to play Machaut's music (for which the instrumentation does not seem to have been standardized) on the piano than to play, for example, Bach's music on the piano. I also submit that if Bach's music were not studied and performed on the piano, there would be a far lesser appreciation of his music, and pianists and piano music listeners would be deprived of one of the treasures of their existence. As a pianist, I want to perform Machaut's music, and I believe pianists as instrumentalists can articulate and communicate the ideas of this music as well as any other instrumentalist, although I look for the day when saxophonists and clarinetists and synthesists will consider playing some Machaut tunes to be one of the great joys of their lives. Not to mention singers. I don't think we can consider ourselves a civilized society until every generic voice recital contains a few 14th &15th century songs.

The above is, I hope, a solid justification for pianists to perform Machaut. However, writing down these realizations, particularly in the way I've done them, is a bit tenuous and demands some explanation with a hint of apology. Ideally, all pianists should do what I did: listen to a lot of performances of this music by reputable early music ensembles (or even disreputable ones), pick out your favorite tunes, read and analyze the music as transcribed by Friedrich Ludwig or Leo Schrade, and then construct your own performance practice. I am uncomfortable with providing these realizations as an "easy-way-out" alternative to this do-it-yourself process; on the other hand, I'm afraid many pianists have less time to be adventuresome, creative, and research oriented than we might wish, and I can hope these possible solutions to Machaut piano realization might open a few doors.

I played these pieces in recital for years with no intention of notating these realizations. In realizing them on the piano, I decided to let loose, and use the colors and technical resources available to me as a pianist to capture with as strong a flavor as possible the beauty and individual character of this music. This includes extreme ranges, varied doublings, accompaniment figurations, even a (delightfully, I hope) vulgar glissando at the end of *"Douce Dame"*. Some decisions had to be made about the application of unnotated chromaticism (musica ficta). Generally, I emphasized the tonal chromaticism of the individual voices (as suggested by non-diatonic primary and secondary leading tones), which creates not only some tangy vertical sonorities but also some beautifully expressive harmonic phrase shapes. (If Machaut didn't consciously design the pungent and incredibly functional harmonies of *"Je sui aussi"* he must have been the luckiest composer the world has known.) In any event, I'm no musicologist, and much of these realizations is probably based on bad taste and garbled information. Nonetheless, in spite of this or, more accurately, because of this, I've determined that it only makes sense to include some interpretive suggestions in order to clarify the character of my realizations, abandoning any pretense of editorial restraint.

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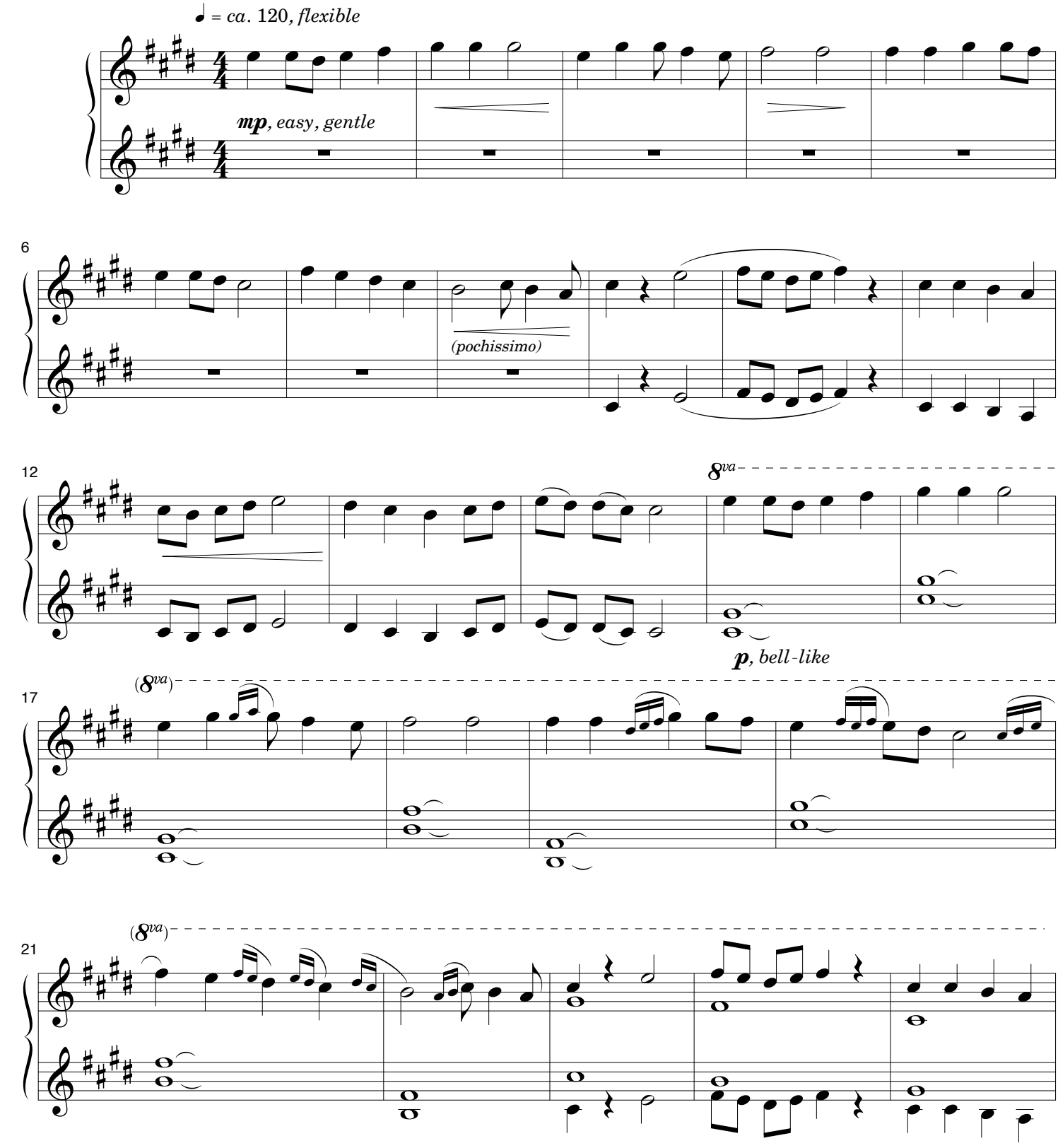
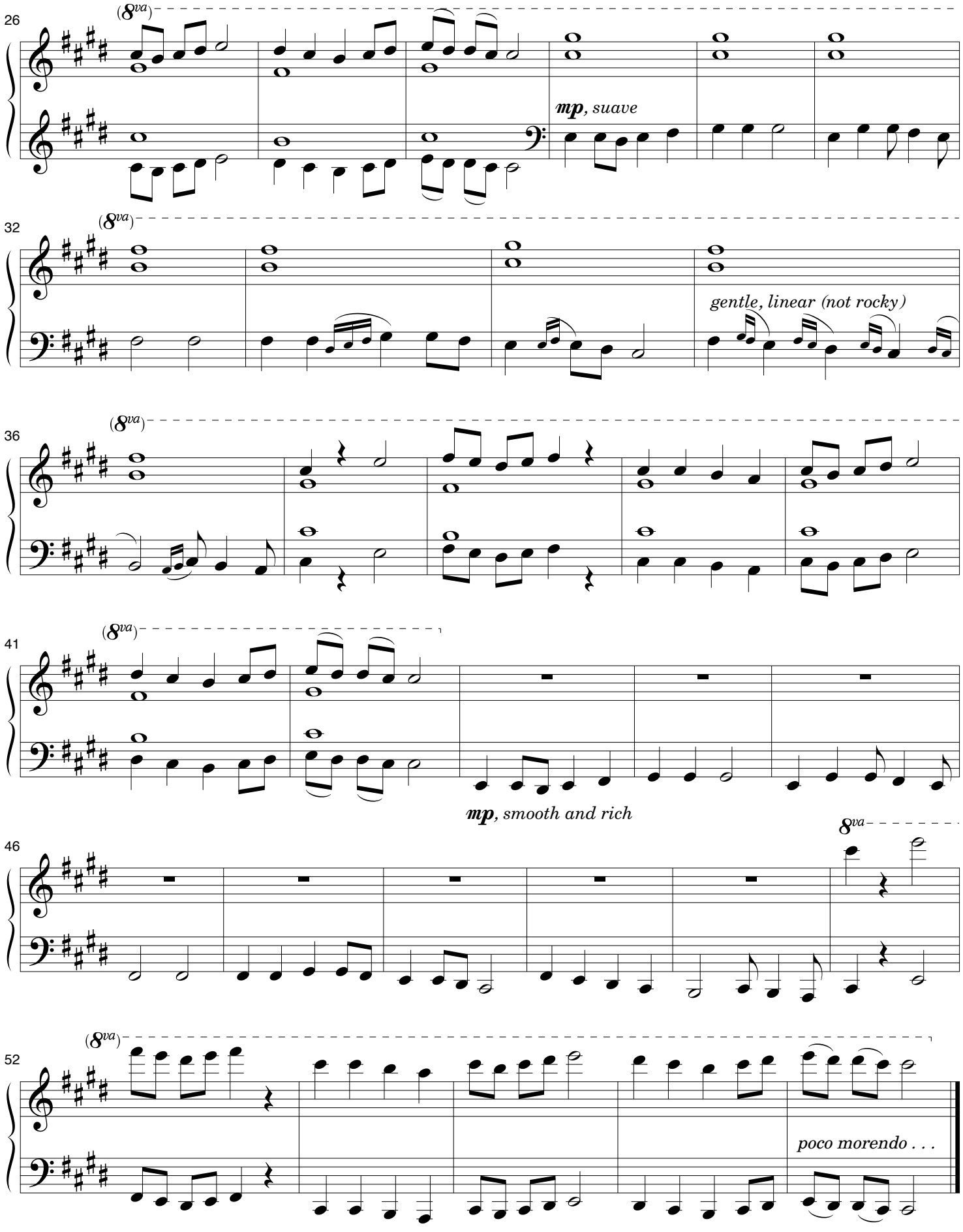
Machaut Tunes

Guilluame de Machaut (ca.1300-1377)
realized for piano by Don Freund
(1982)

1. Quant je sui mis (Virelai # 13)

Soft, sweet, gentle, beguiling, exquisite. Simple and direct.
With great sensitivity to tone color and linear detail.

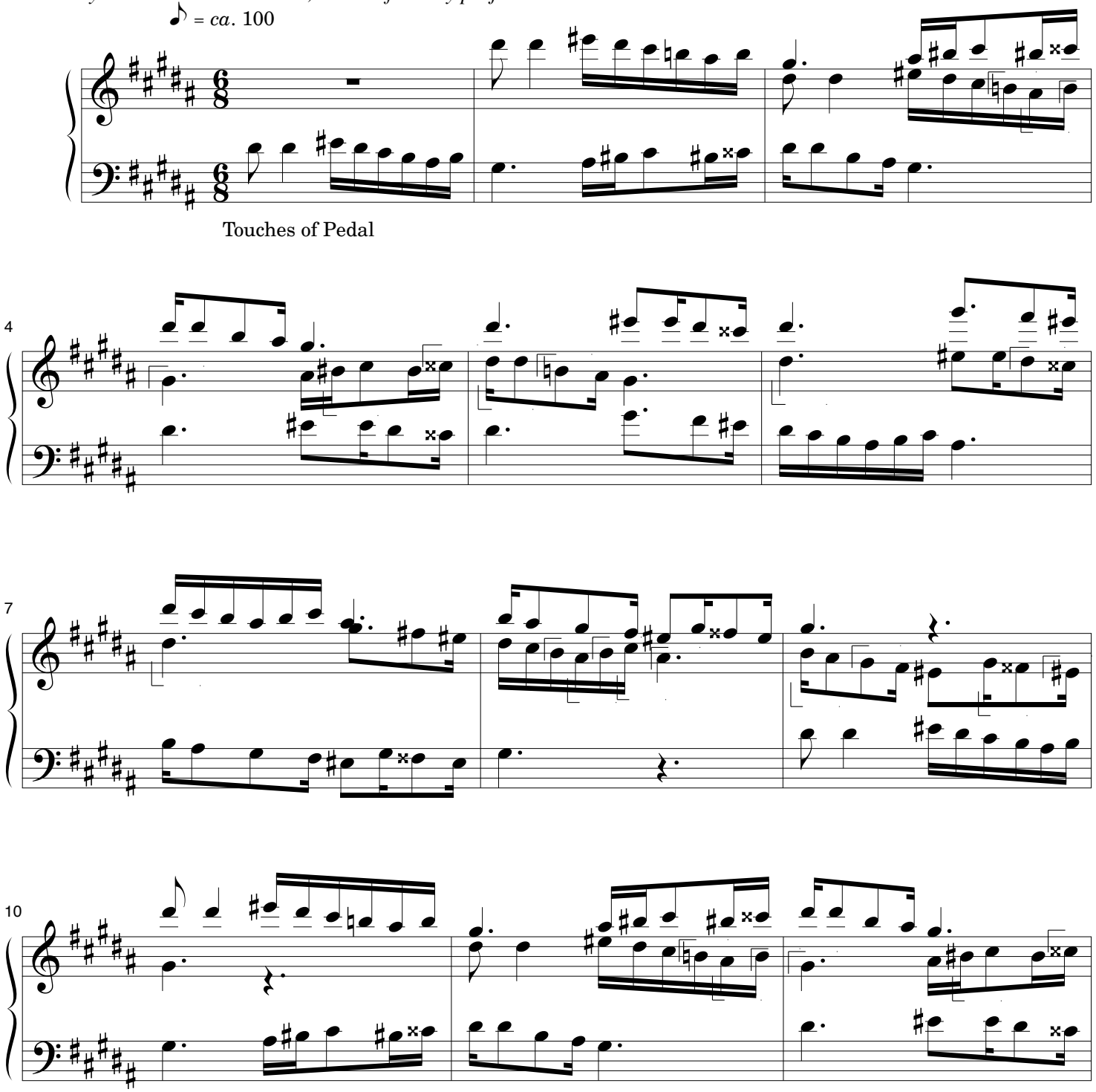


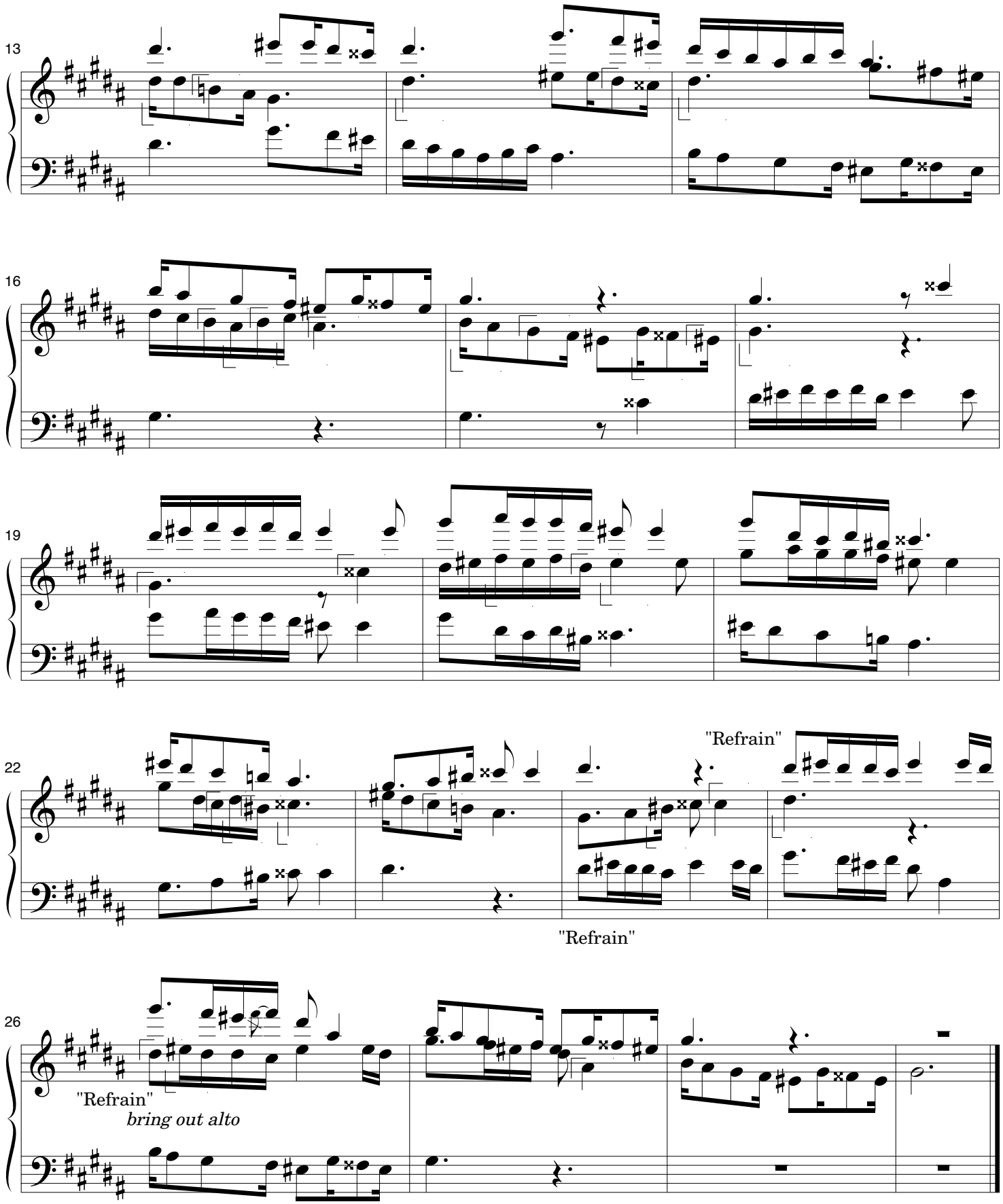

26
(8va)
mp, suave
32
(8va)
gentle, linear (not rocky)
36
(8va)
41
(8va)
mp, smooth and rich
46
8va
52
(8va)
poco morendo . . .

2.Sanz cuer-Dame-Amis (Ballade #17)

Make each voice as enchantingly lyrical as possible.
Dynamic level: not intense, but comfortably projected.

♪ = *ca.* 100




13
16
19
22
"Refrain"
"Refrain"
26
"Refrain"
bring out alto

3. Se je soupir (Virelai # 36)

Jaunty, rhythmic, deft, rustic

♩ = 176

***mf**, with contained boisterousness*
(like a racket duo)

10

8vb

20

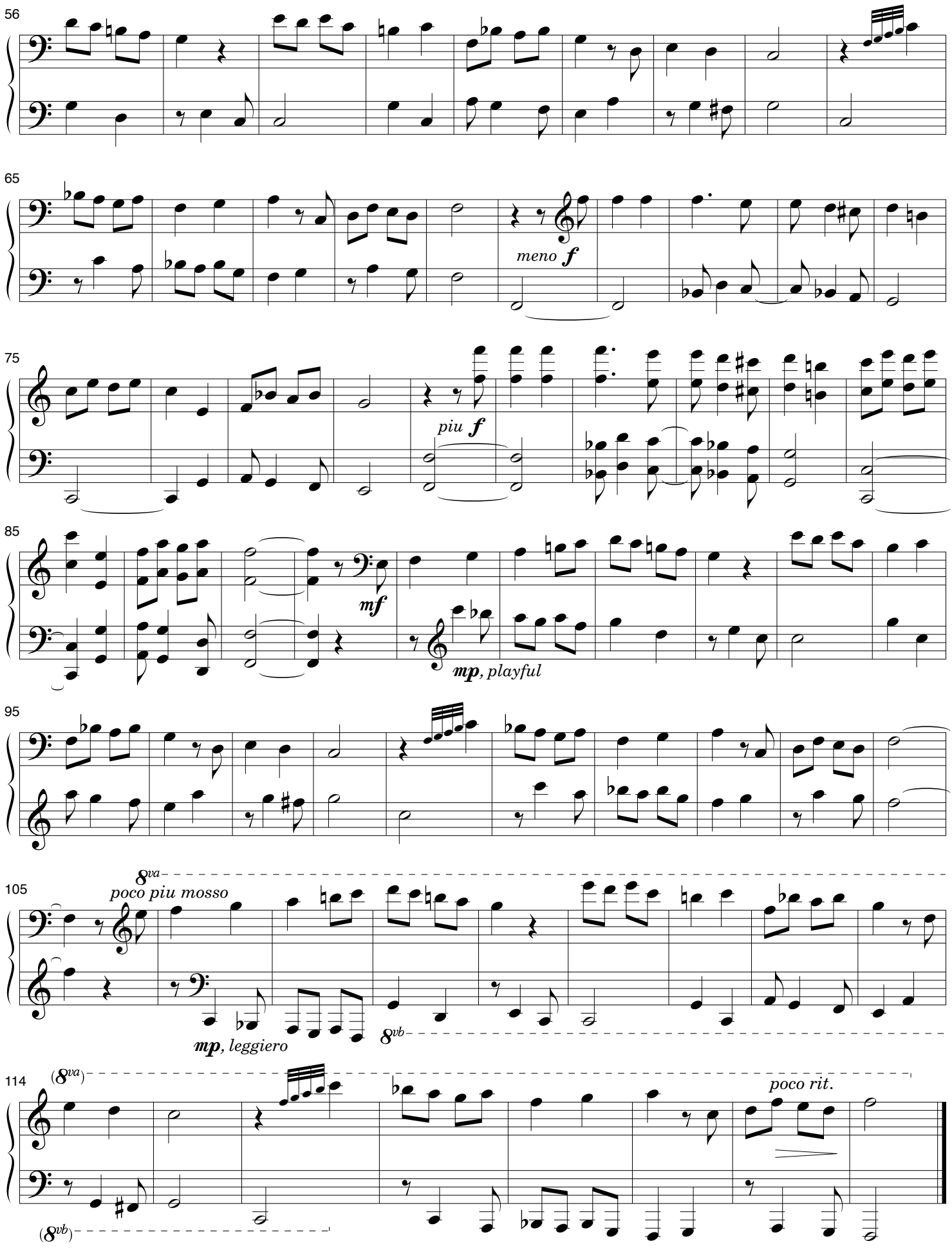
(8vb)

(loco)

29

38

47


56
65
meno f
75
piu f
85
mf
mp, playful
95
105
8va
poco piu mosso
mp, leggiero
8vb
114
(8va)
poco rit.
(8vb)

4. Je sui aussi (Ballade # 20)

Almost chaste, with an inner sensuousness and warmth

♩ = *ca*. 80

poco forte (the melody projected clear and unencumbered)

Accompanying voices delicate but expressive;
with a sense of forward motion in the ♪'s

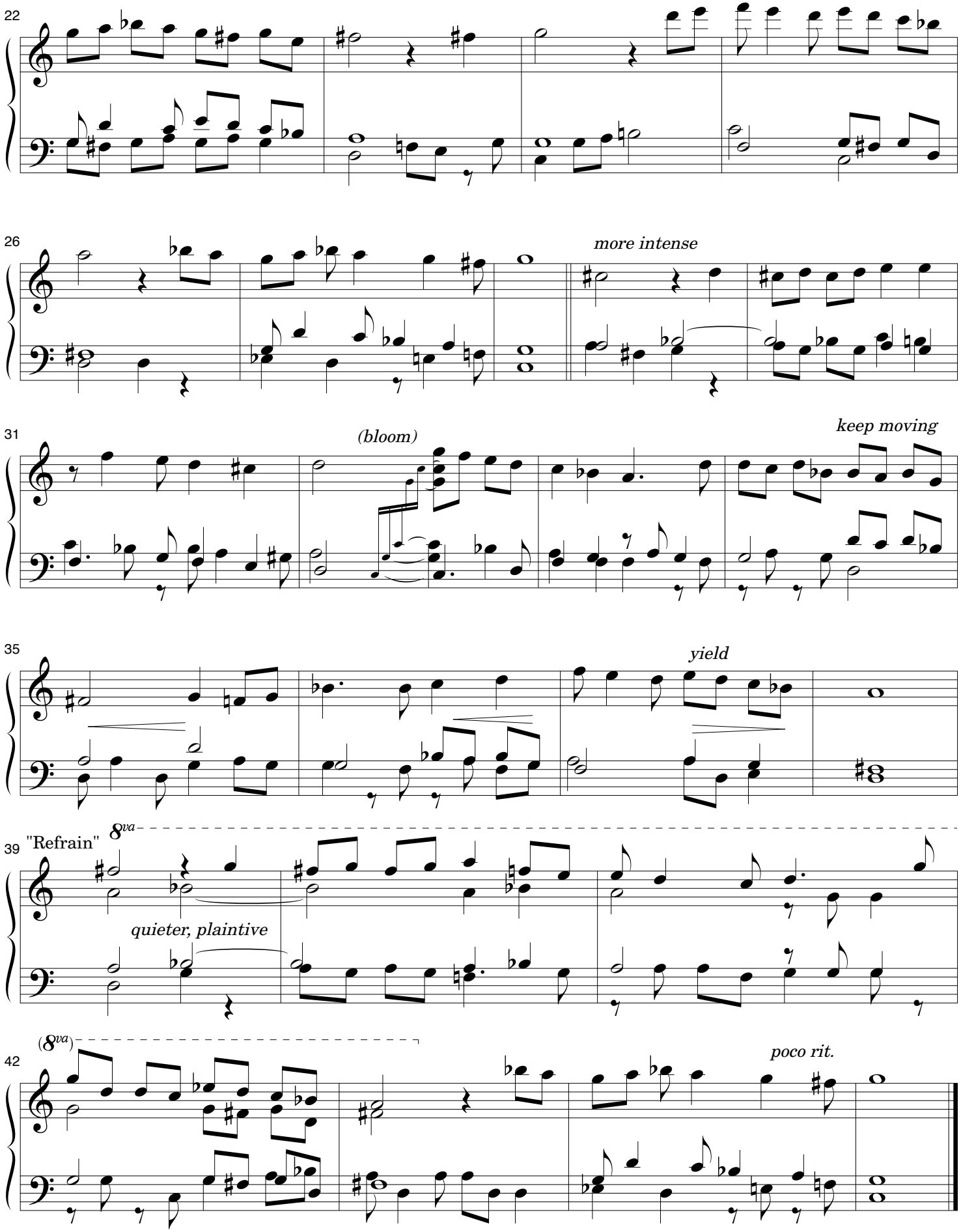
5

9

14

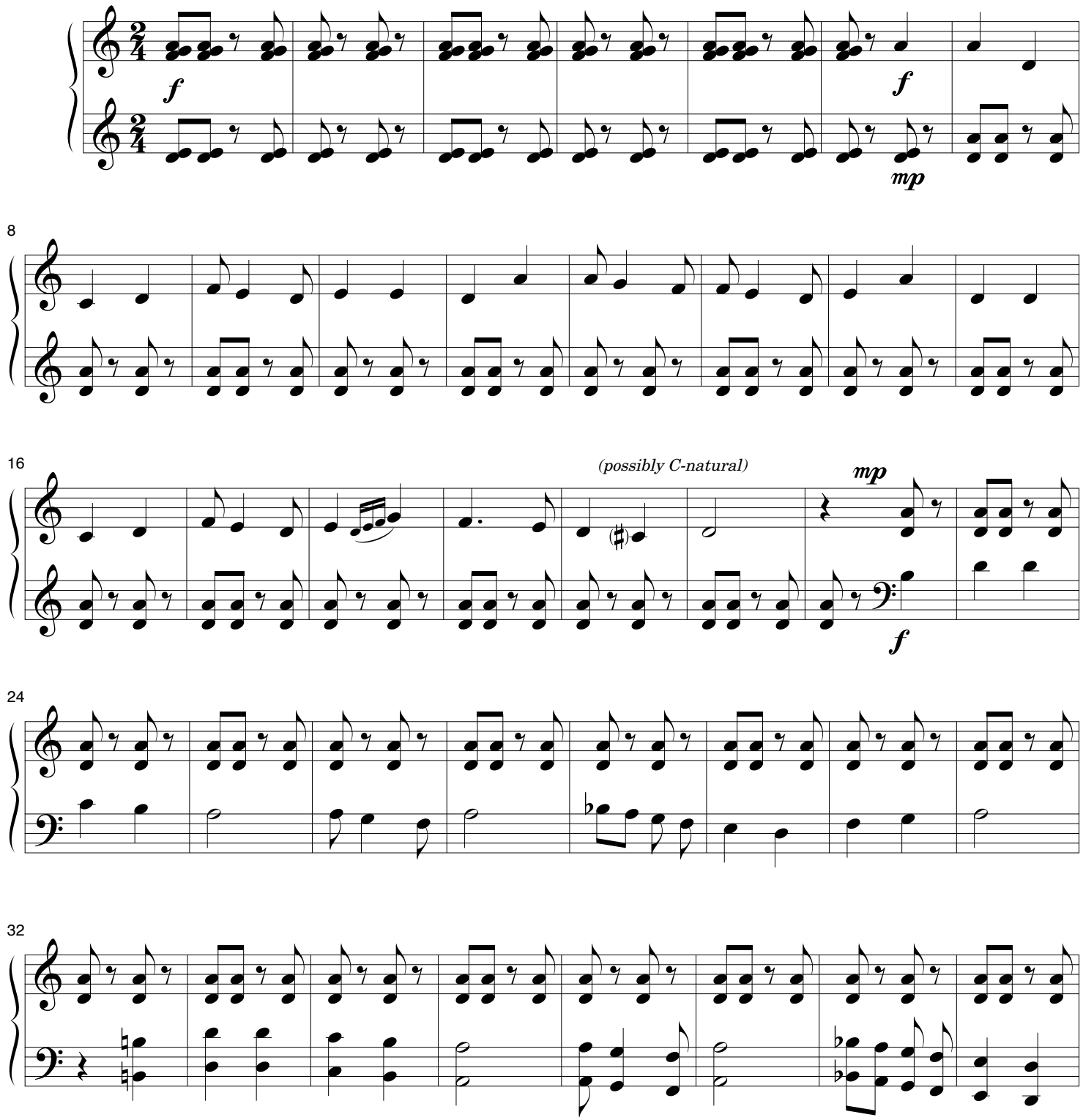
With a little more Pedal
for a "distanced" quality

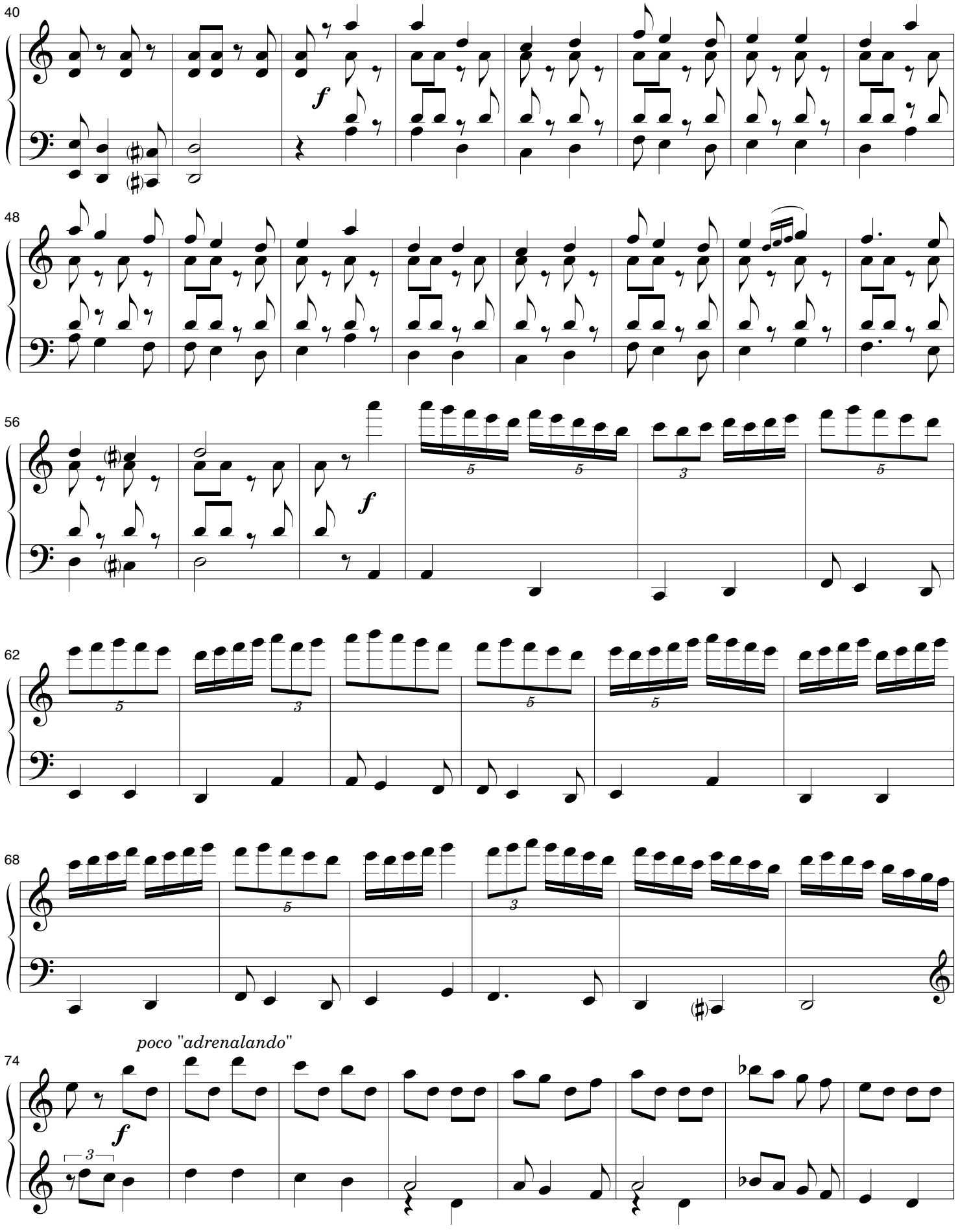
18

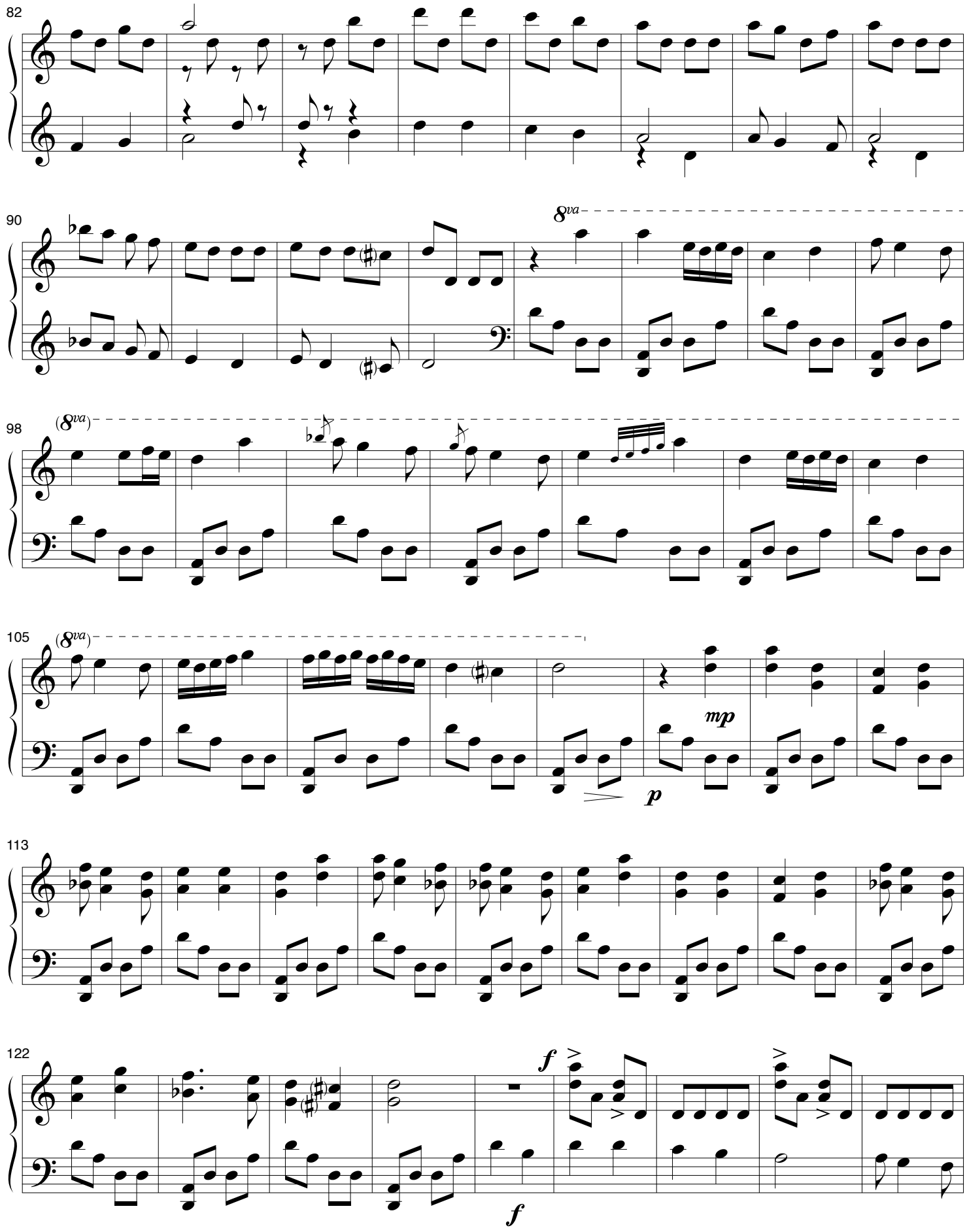

22
26
more intense
31
(bloom)
keep moving
35
yield
39
"Refrain"
8va
quieter, plaintive
(8va)
42
poco rit.

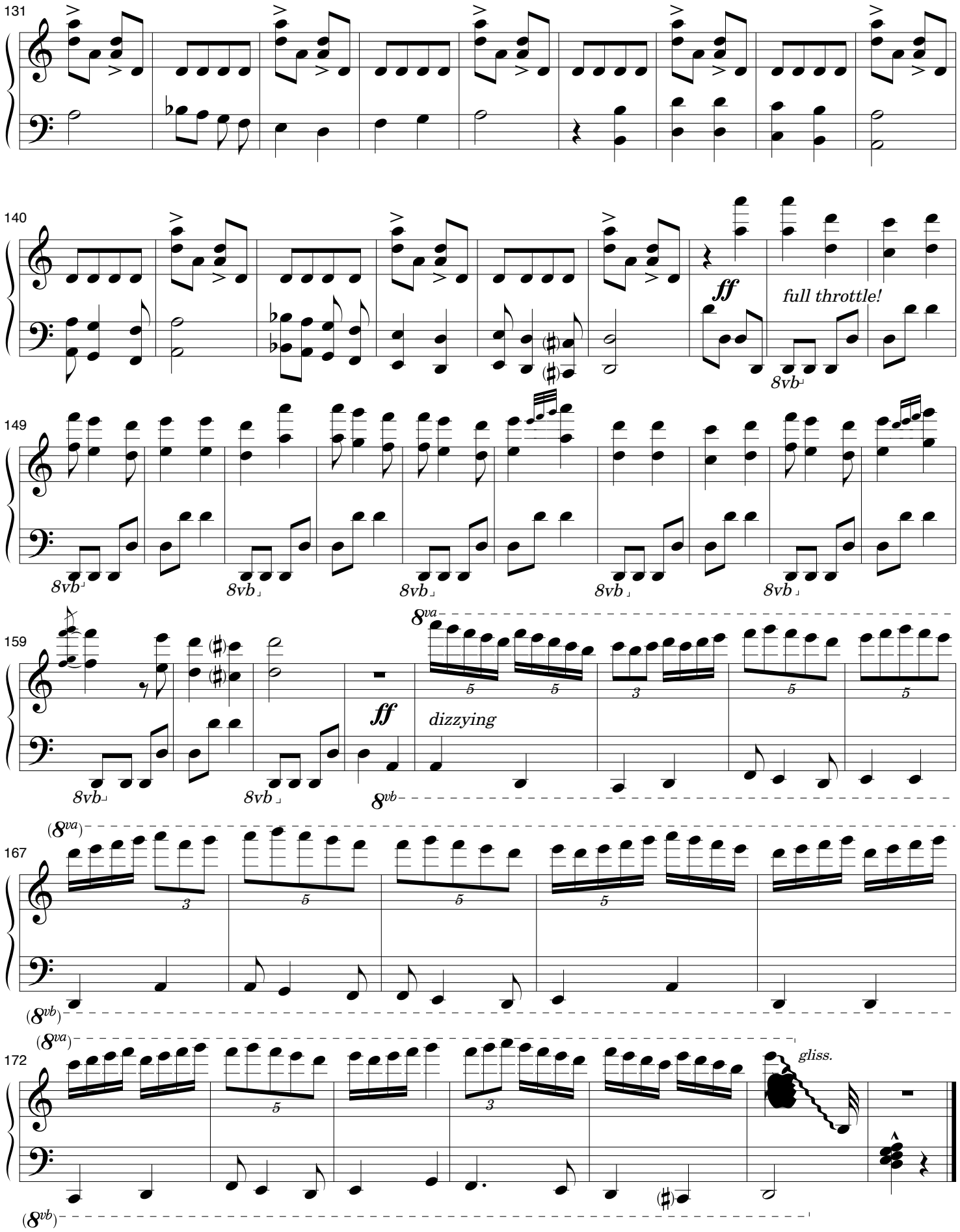
5. Douce Dame (Virelai # 4)

Fast and impetuous (𝅗𝅥 = 100)




40
f
48
56
f
5
5
3
5
62
5
3
5
5
68
5
3
74
poco "adrenalando"
f
3


82
90
8va
98
(8va)
105
(8va)
mp
p
113
122
f
f


131
140
ff
full throttle!
8vb
149
8vb
159
ff
dizzying
8va
8vb
(8va)
167
(8vb)
(8va)
172
gliss.
(8vb)