THE CARMEN VARIATIONS OF VLADIMIR HOROWITZ

The Variations on themes from Bizet's "Carmen" thread their way like an ongoing counterpoint throughout the career of Vladimir Horowitz, since at least four distinct versions were recorded over a span of more than forty years. He recorded the work for the first time for the Welte Company as a piano roll circa 1927 (roll No. 4120) and again a year later for Duo-Art (roll No. 7250-4); this version was later transferred to the Ampico system (roll No. 40083), and shortly thereafter, in April of 1928, he recorded it (via microphone) for the Victor Company (RCA No. 1327). A later version was recorded in 1947, released as RCA 12-0427. Twenty years later, in 1968, yet another, expanded, version was recorded for CBS as part of a television broadcast and was released as Columbia MS-7106. Horowitz recitals from the late 1970's presented a yet later version, with minor modifications, a performance of which many listeners were able to hear and watch as part of the televised White House Concert of 1978. Not so well-known, but the most elaborate version of all, was the one test-recorded by RCA in 1957, but never released, which is believed to be approximated by the present edition.

Attempts by fascinated pianists to reconstruct the recorded versions on paper are probably legion; several notated versions have had an underground circulation for years: a version transcribed note-for-note from the Duo Art/Ampico roll was jointly made about a year ago by Caine Alder and the undersigned, with the assistance of a prior anonymous version, which, while it contained many errors, yet provided a starting point from which to work. A version of the 1968 TV broadcast was done by L. Edson Jeffery, and a transcript of the White House Concert version by N. Fukuda as revised by Masato Kagawa has seen light of day. Except for the piano-roll version, all the rest have suffered from the not-unexpected difficulties arising from the attempt to determine by ear alone what notes Horowitz played, certainly no mean feat. The present version is the only one which can lay some claim to having come direct from the composer, even though it contains some doubtful passages.

The written-out 1957 version of the *Carmen Variations* has a curious and somewhat clouded provenance, but a close examination of it will, we are sure, persuade most that it is indeed authentic. Rumor has it that for the 1957 test recording, RCA's engineers insisted on having a copy of the score for purposes of editing, and although Horowitz was reluctant to provide it for fear that someone might have it copied (and not surprisingly, his fears proved to be well-founded!), thankfully he did make it available, probably prepared by a professional copyist, and it was evidently then proof-read and corrected on Horowitz' instructions. The copy from which the present edition derives was in the possession of the late Sheldon Shkolnik, who coincidentally was Horowitz' stand-in for pre-broadcast rehearsals of the 1968 CBS television broadcast.

That copy, which we will henceforth refer to as the manuscript, contains a great many passages which are guaranteed to provide instant frustration for anyone attempting to prepare a complete, legible, performable copy. Starting with the apparently professionally prepared fair copy, a number of corrections have been pasted over earlier passages or portions of measures, usually made in the same hand as the fair copy, but occasionally in a lightly penciled-in (and different) hand, presumably that of Horowitz himself or

possibly that of the record producer marking divergences of the recording from the manuscript. Many expression or tempo indications have been added in the same manner. On occasion portions have been crossed out, or blanked out, without any correction being written in, leaving several lacunae in the score, which also has its share of missing accidentals. In a work which contains so much chromatic harmony this can create real problems in deciding what ought to be "corrected" and what left alone. In the following notes, we have documented all such instances, specifying what actually was contained in the manuscript (where it could be deciphered) and indicating the source of the material used to fill in the several blanks encountered. The test recording undoubtedly reflects some divergences from the manuscript, since as the other recordings demonstrate, the piece was continually undergoing modification.

Only two pedal indications were shown (in measures 37 and 41), and almost no phrasing indications were given, measures 145 and 147 being the most important exceptions.

Portland, Oregon, November 1991 Jon Skinner

QUESTIONABLE PASSAGES OR ERRORS IN 1957 "CARMEN"

M. 31 The octave E in mid-measure in the left hand is shown an octave higher in the ms., which also omits the natural sign on the left hand's final chord.

M. 35 We have restored the tie on the G's in mid-measure, which appears to have been blanked out in the ms.

M. 37 The ms. contains a penciled-in tempo marking which appears to be *poco più vivace*, although the final word is not entirely legible, and frankly seems inappropriate in a passage which is by no means *vivace* in the first place. It does seem that a more rapid tempo is desirable at this point, however.

M. 44 The ms. omits the natural signs on the F naturals in the right hand.

M. 50 The flat sign on the left hand's third chord is omitted in the ms.

M. 56 Immediately following this measure in the ms. there was another crossed-out measure, which consisted of three beats repeated by the first two beats of measure 57. This extra measure presumably was eliminated because Mr. Horowitz felt it was too repetitive.

M. 64 The original ms. showed a penciled-in C natural below the E in the right hand in mid-measure, which fits quite well, but there were several other penciled-in notes which could not be accommodated harmonically to the existing notes, and so are omitted here. It is possible they represented a form of shorthand suggestion for changes which were never implemented.

M. 67 The right hand's F♯ and G were not in the original ms., but were penciled in as corrections.

M. 69 The ms omits the natural sign on the low F natural in the left hand's final chord.

M. 75 The ms. omits the sharp sign on the left hand's first C♯ 16th note.

M. 76 The ms. omits the sharp sign on the left hand's C♯ in the third triplet group.

M. 79 The ms. omits the natural sign on the B in the fifth 16th-note pair in the right hand.

M. 83 The ms. omits the natural sign on the E in the seventh 16th-note pair in the right hand.

M. 85 The third pair of grace notes was shown in the ms. one octave higher than shown here.

M. 91 The ms. omits the natural sign on the C in the right hand's final chord.

M. 93 The ms. omits the natural sign on the final 8th-note C in the right hand.

M. 94 The ms. omits the natural sign on the final 8th-note C in the right hand.

M. 99 The initial octave C in the left hand is shown an octave higher in the ms.

M. 104 The ms. omits the flat sign on the upper A-flat in the left hand's third chord.

M. 105 The ms. pencils in two 16th notes under the left hand's final eighth note: A-flat followed by G-flat. They have been omitted here.

M. 123 The ms. omits the natural sign on the F in the left hand's final 8th-note chord.

M. 130 The ms. omits the flat sign on the left hand's penultimate chord.

M. 135 The ms. omits the natural sign on the F's in the right hand's third as well as penultimate chords.

M. 136 The ms. fails to show the natural sign on the F's in left hand's series of chords.

M. 137 The ms. omits the natural sign on the F in the right hand's antepenultimate chord.

M. 159 The ms. omits the natural sign on the A in the right hand's ninth 16th-note pair.

M. 160 The ms. omits the natural sign on the A in the right hand's fifth 16th-note pair

M. 166 The right hand's penultimate chord is blanked out in the ms. We have filled in the corresponding (transposed) chord from measure 170.

M. 182 The ms. omits the natural sign on the left hand's 16th-note G, presumably because the sharp sign on the initial chord was not noted.

M. 186 The final three 16th notes were blanked out in the ms., with no replacement notes filled in. We have inserted the (transposed) corresponding notes from measure 188.

M. 190 The left hand's chords on the second and third beats were blanked out in the ms. We have substituted the corresponding chords (as transposed) from measure 194.

M. 191 The left hand's chords on the second and third beats were blanked out in the ms. We have substituted those (as transposed) from measure 195.

M. 196 The ms. omits the natural sign on the right hand's final 8th-note E.

M. 201 The ms. omits the natural signs on the right hand's sixth and ninth 16th notes (C and D).

M. 215 The first two chords in both hands are preceded in the ms. by two crossed-out measures, and are themselves pasted over some previous notes. Unfortunately, the associated accidentals are almost totally obliterated by the darkening of the aging cellophane tape used, which is interpreted by the copy machine as nearly black. The noteheads are correctly placed, but the accidentals shown are admittedly the editor's best guess. The only two such accidentals which are unmistakably correct are the two naturals in the right hand in the second chord. Further speculation is hereby invited!

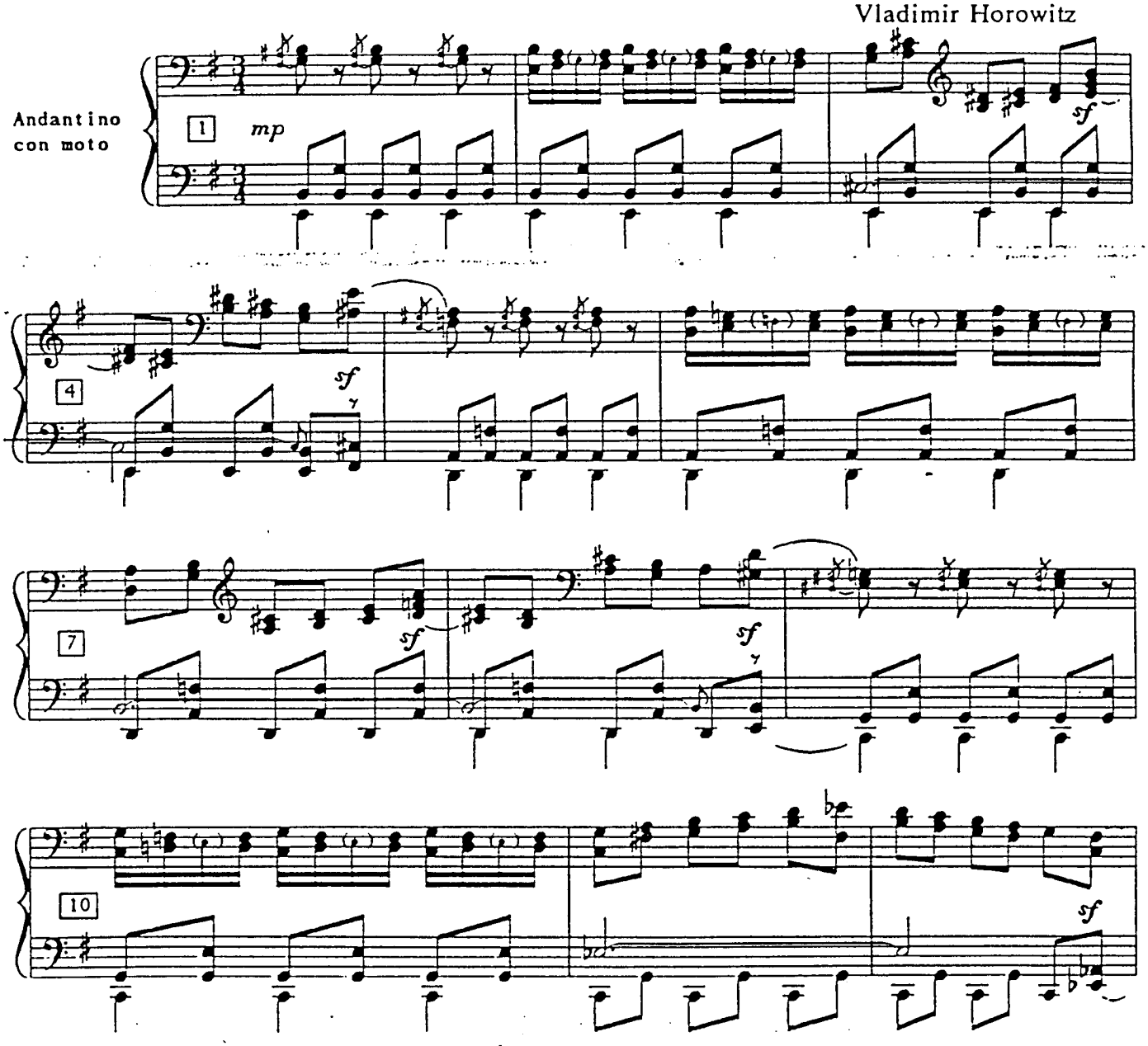
M. 219 The ms. omits the sharp sign on the C in the right hand's first 16th-note chord.

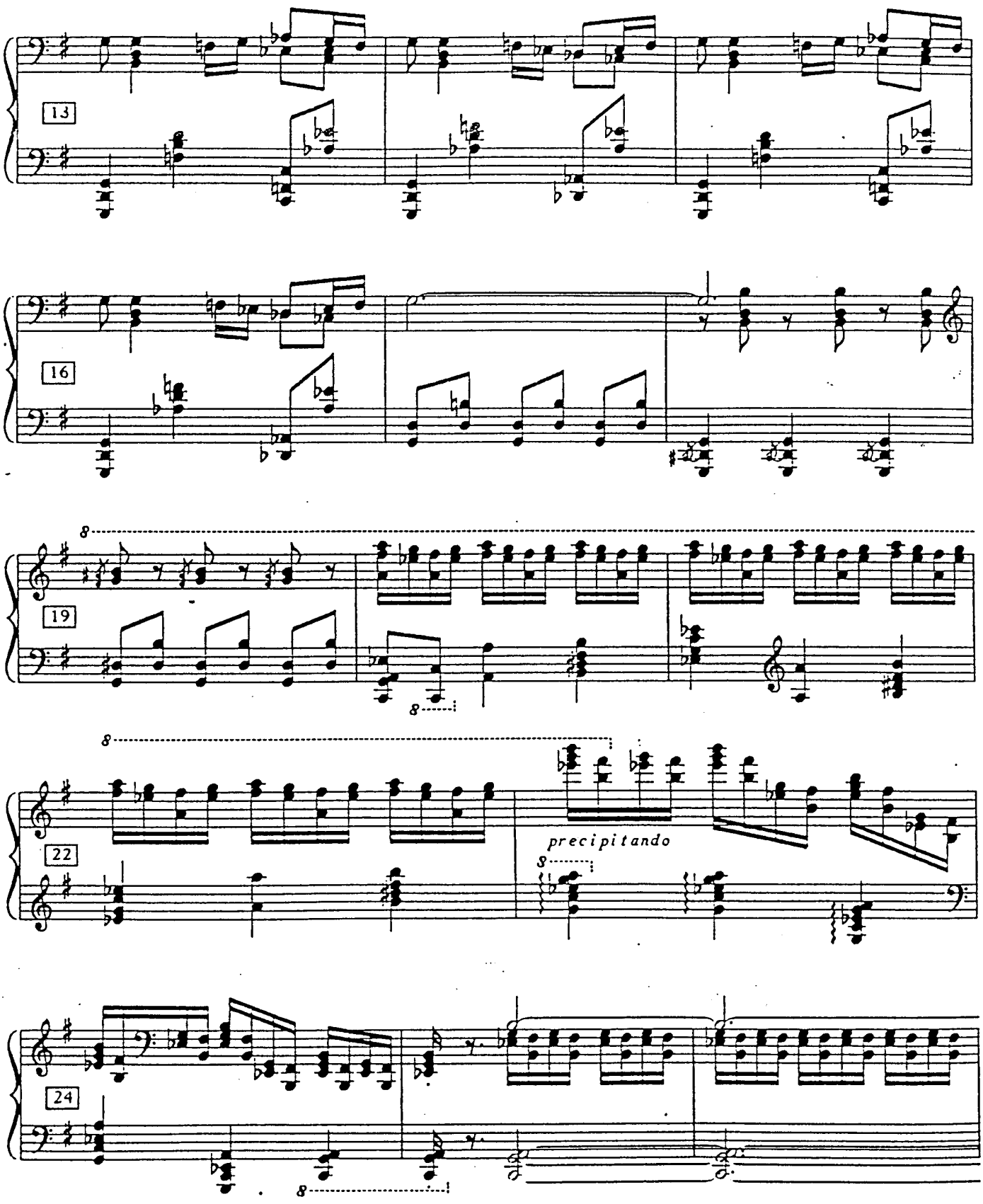
M. 226-7 Beginning with the second pair of chords in the right hand in measure 226, alternating pairs of chords are corrected in pencil to appear an octave higher than here, which may have been an experimental variant.

VARIATIONS ON THEMES FROM BIZET'S "CARMEN"

(1957)

Vladimir Horowitz

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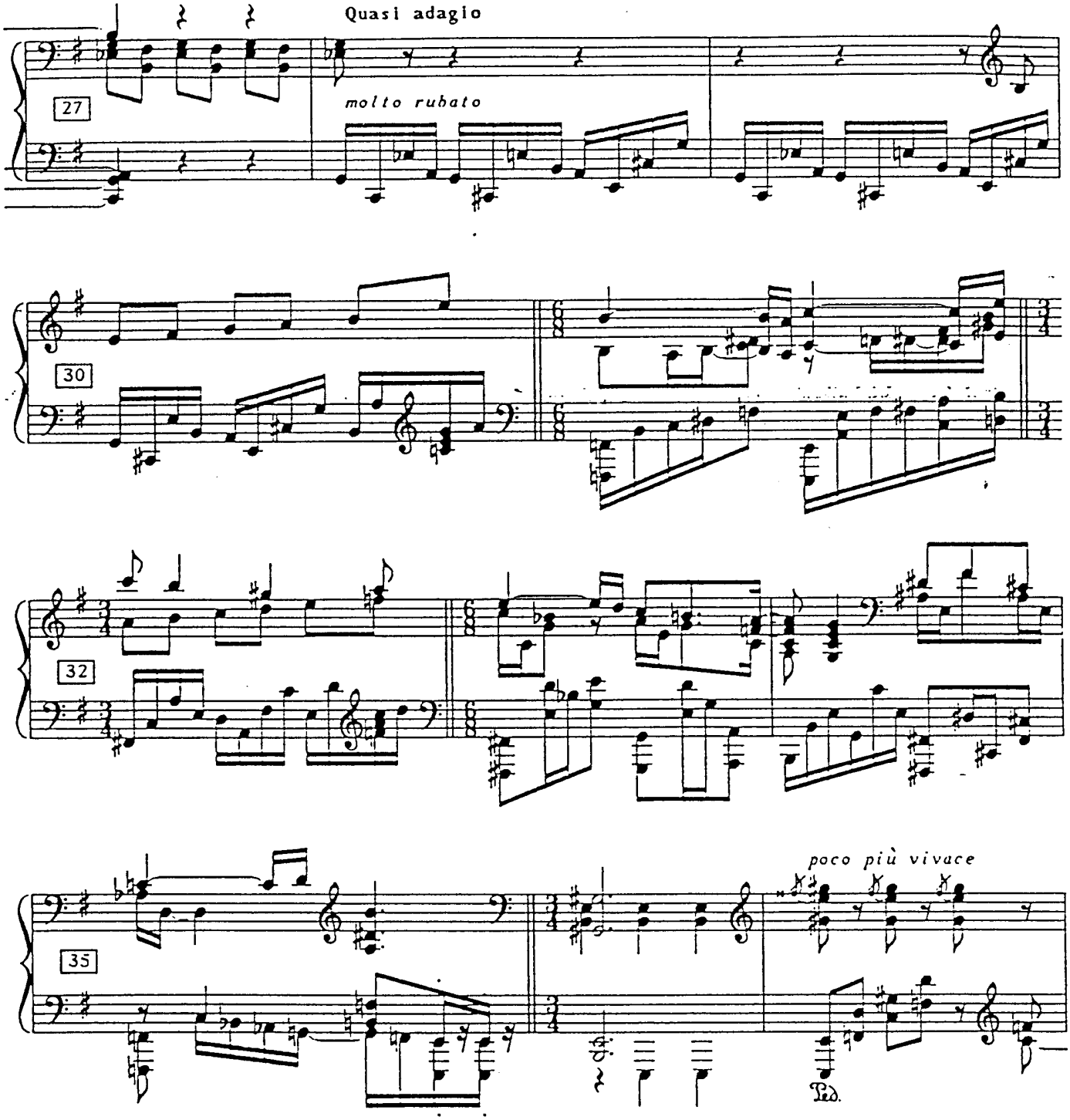
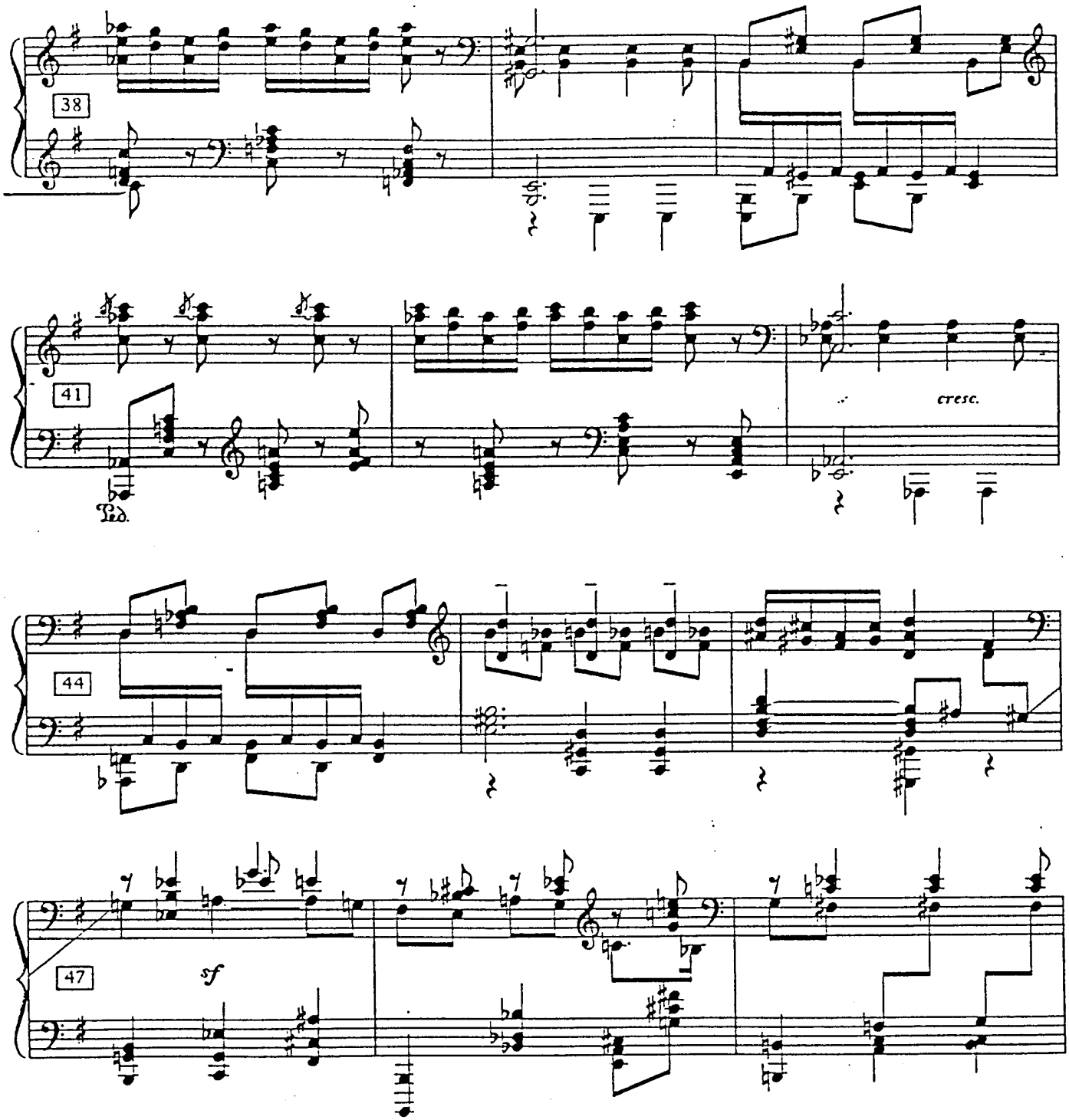
16
19
22
precipitando
24


Quasi adagio
molto rubato
27
30
32
35
poco più vivace
Ped.


38
41
Ped.
cresc.
44
47
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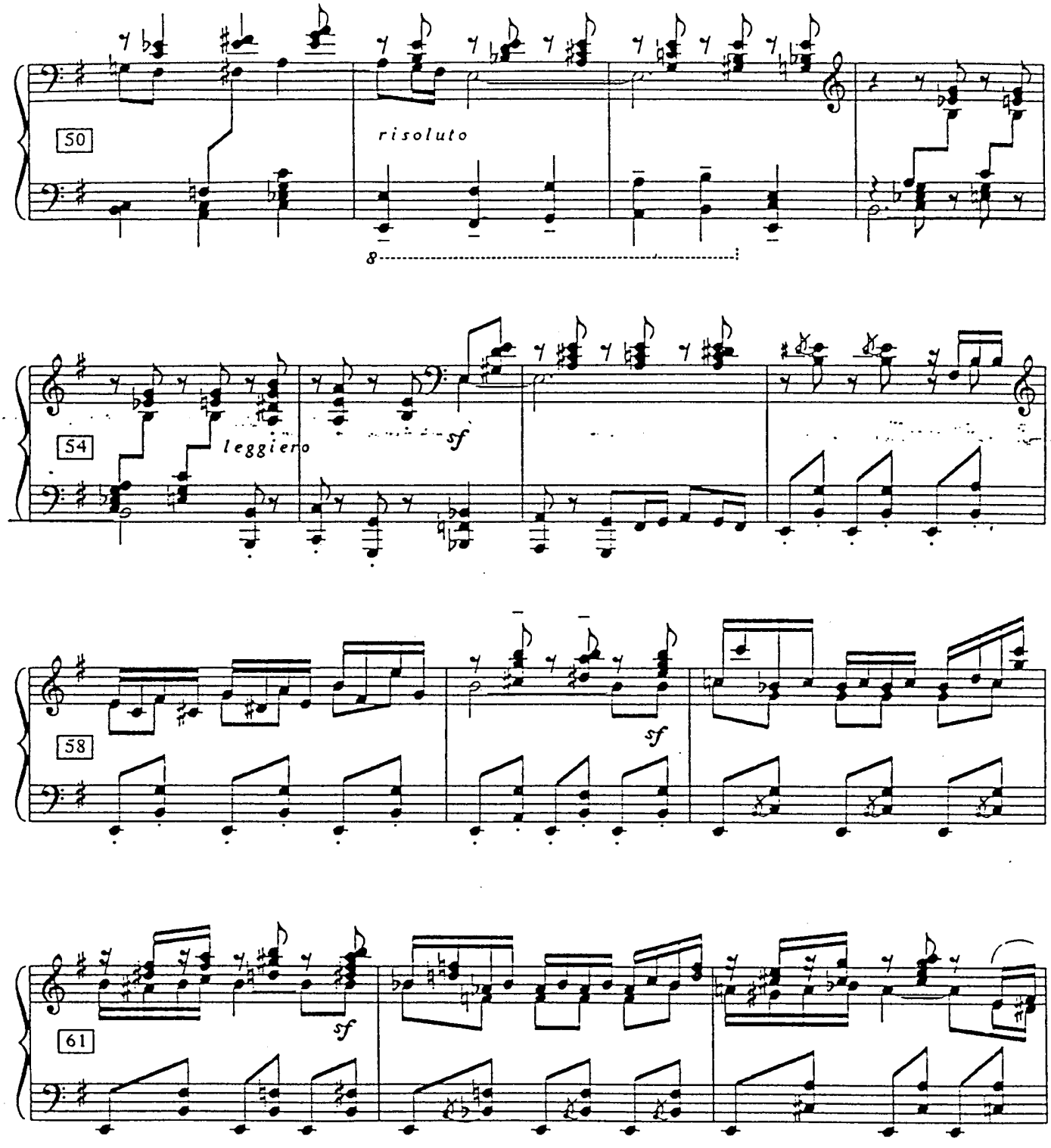
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risoluto
8
54
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58
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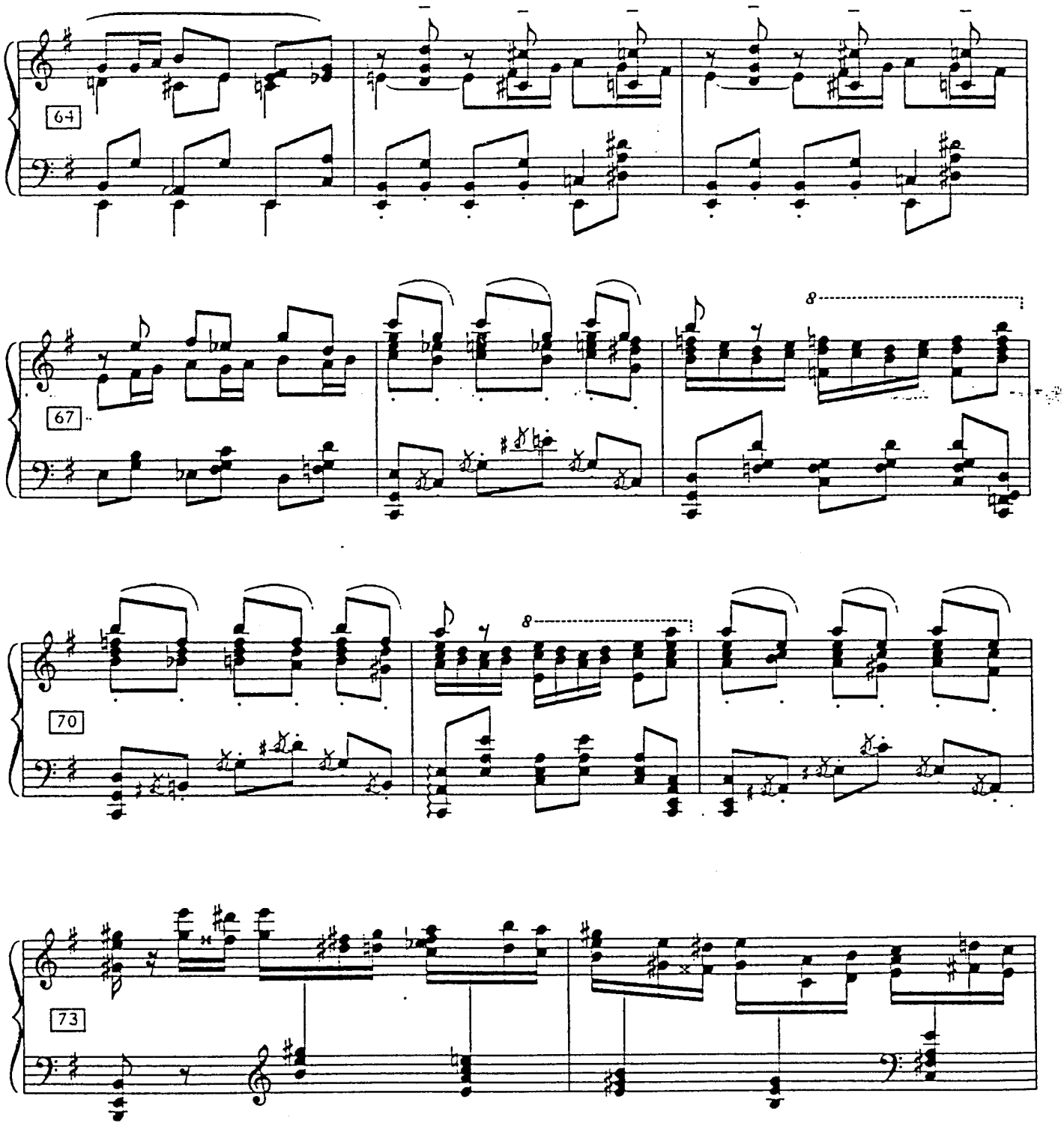
61
sf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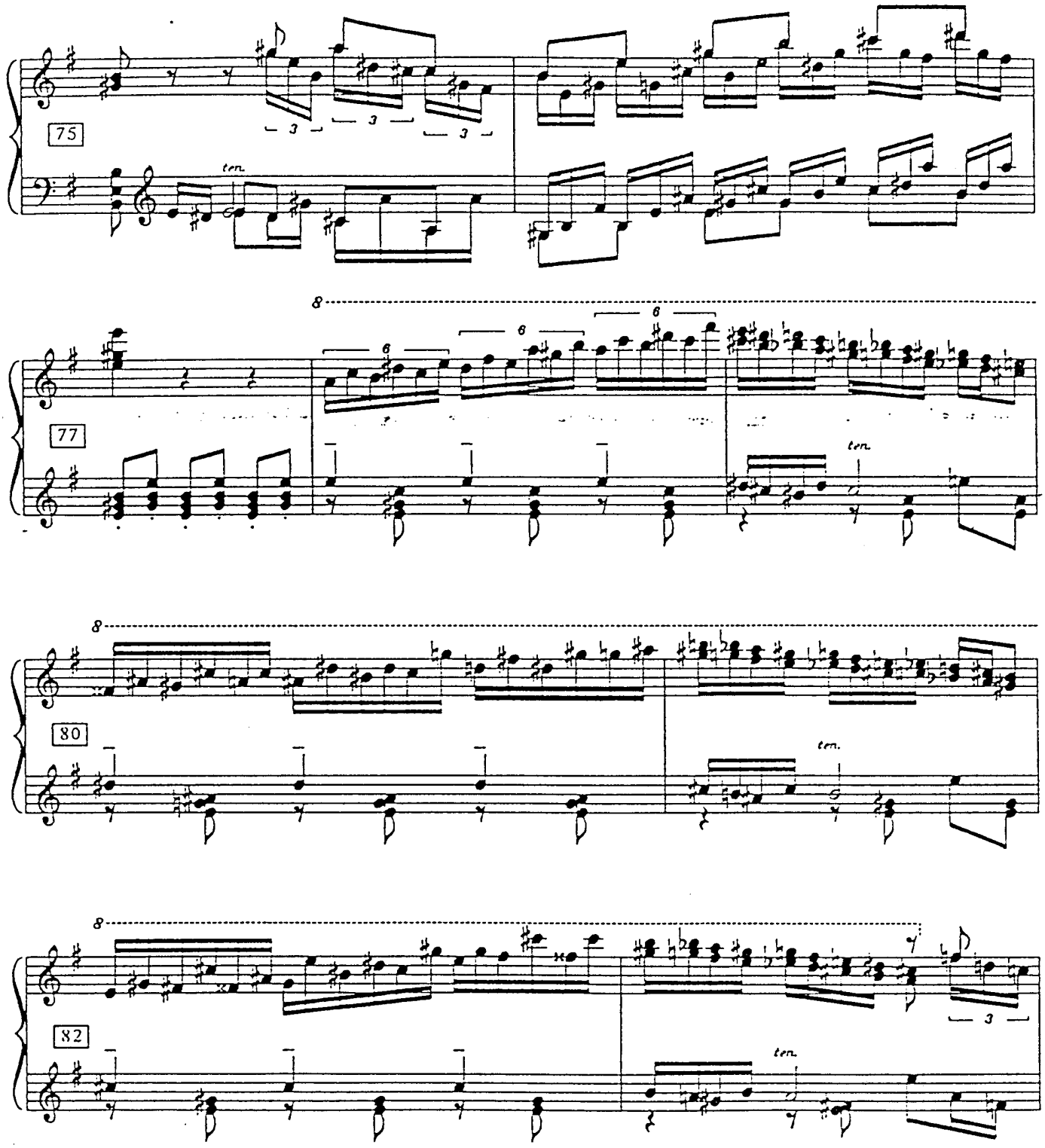
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ten.
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6
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80
ten.
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82
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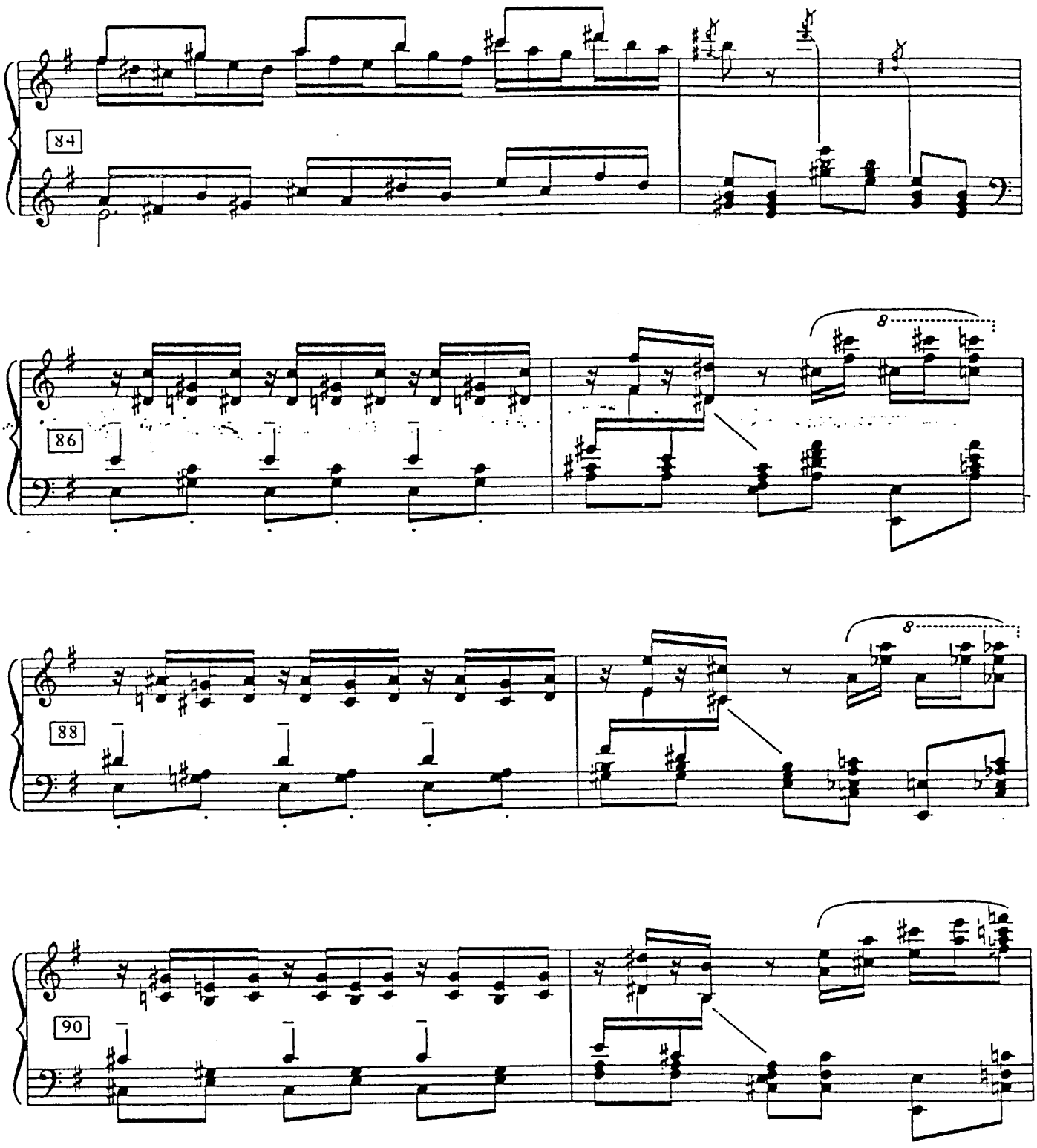
ten.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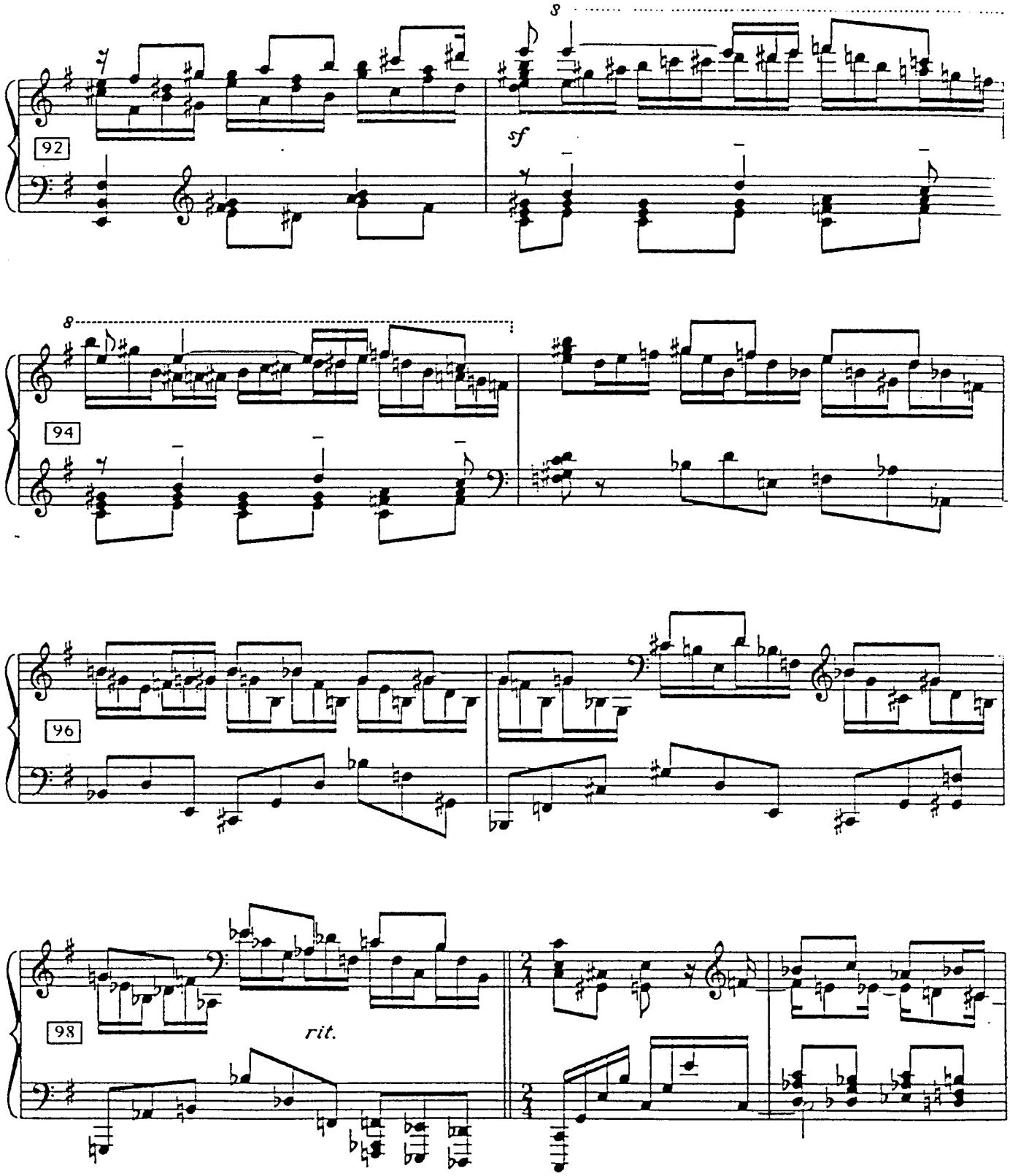
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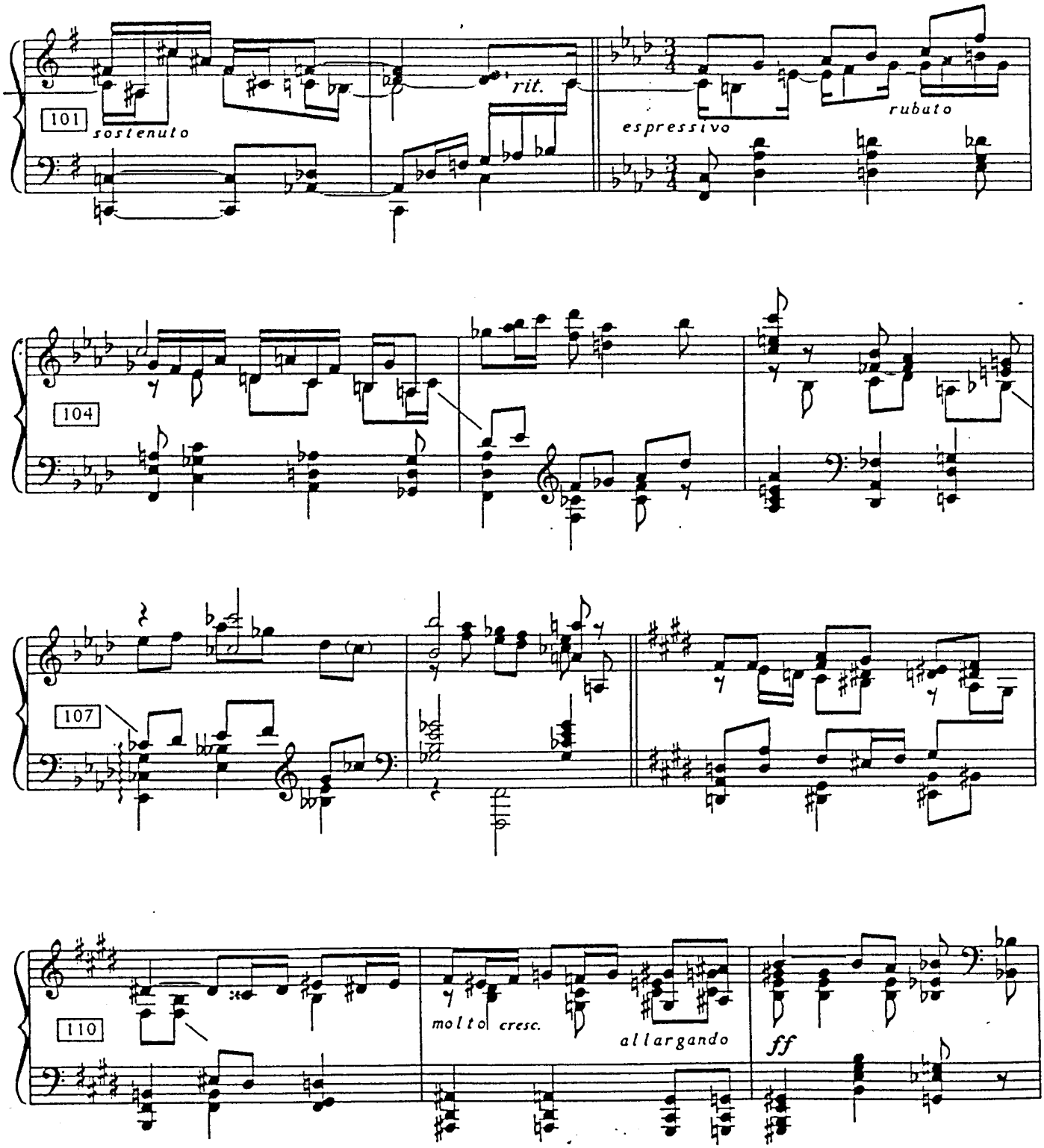
94
96
98
rit.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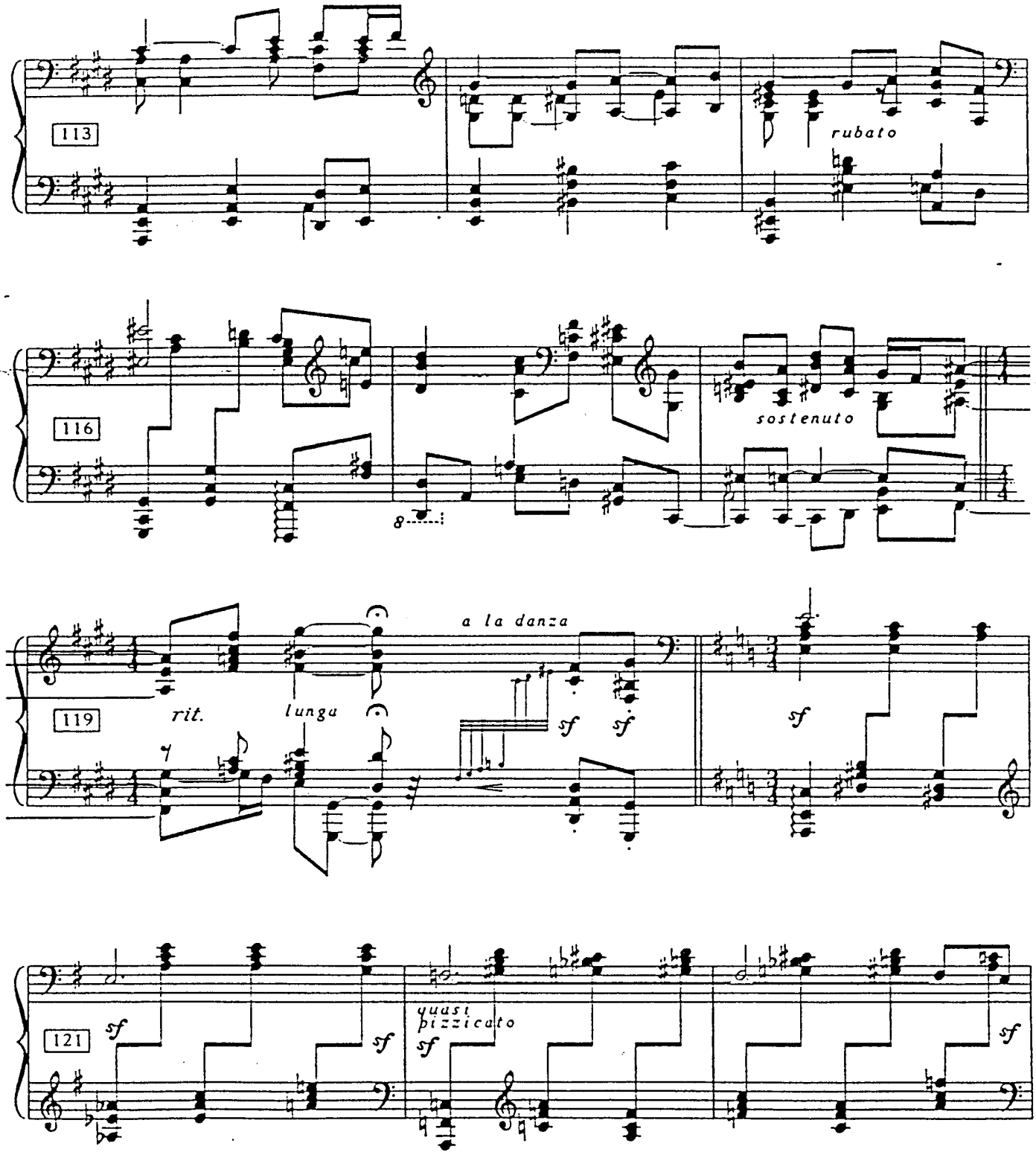
sostenuto
rit.
espressivo
rubato
104
107
110
molto cresc.
allargando
ff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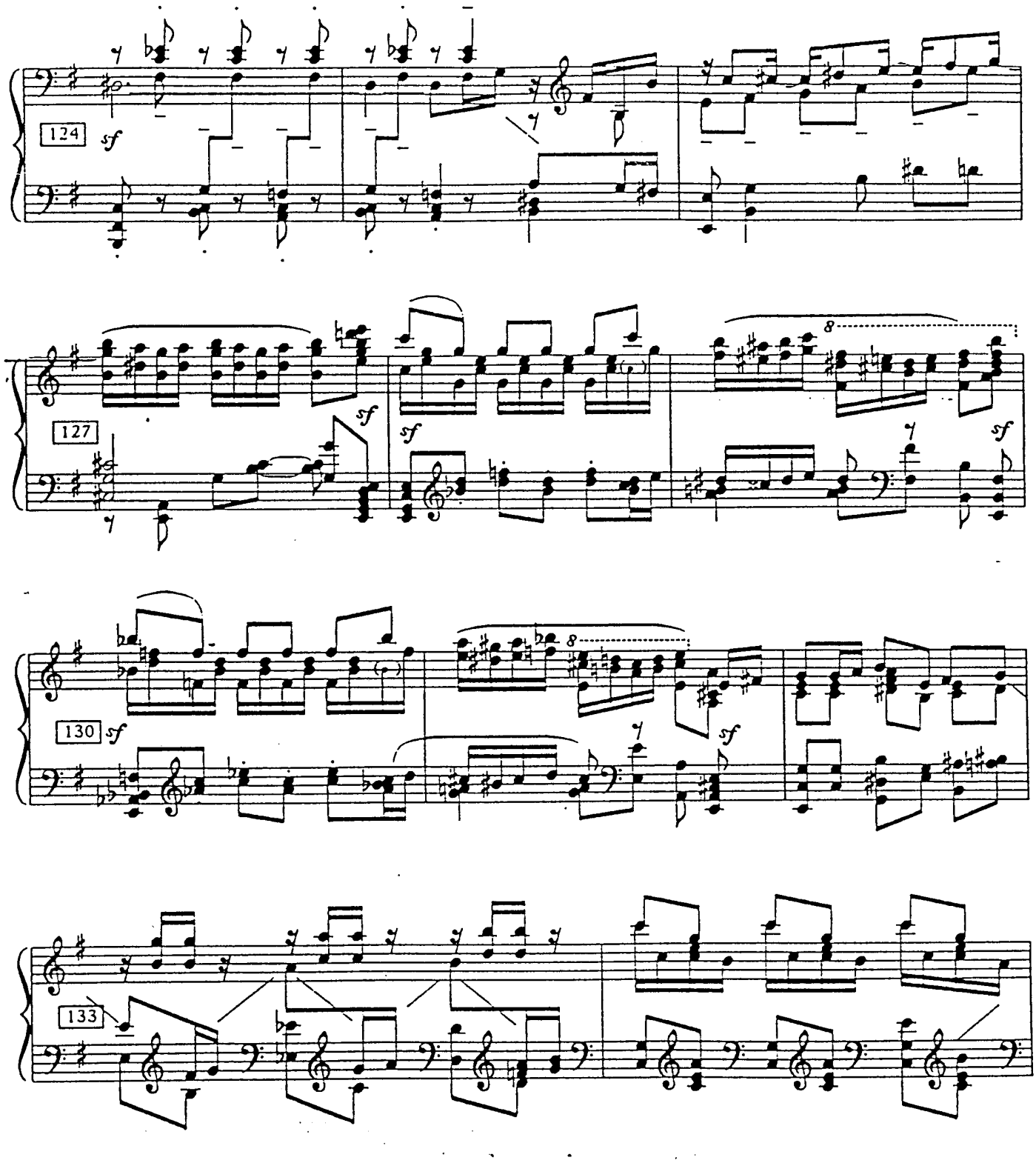
rubato
116
sostenuto
8
119
rit.
lunga
a la danza
sf
sf
sf
7
121
sf
sf
sf
quasi pizzicato
sf
sf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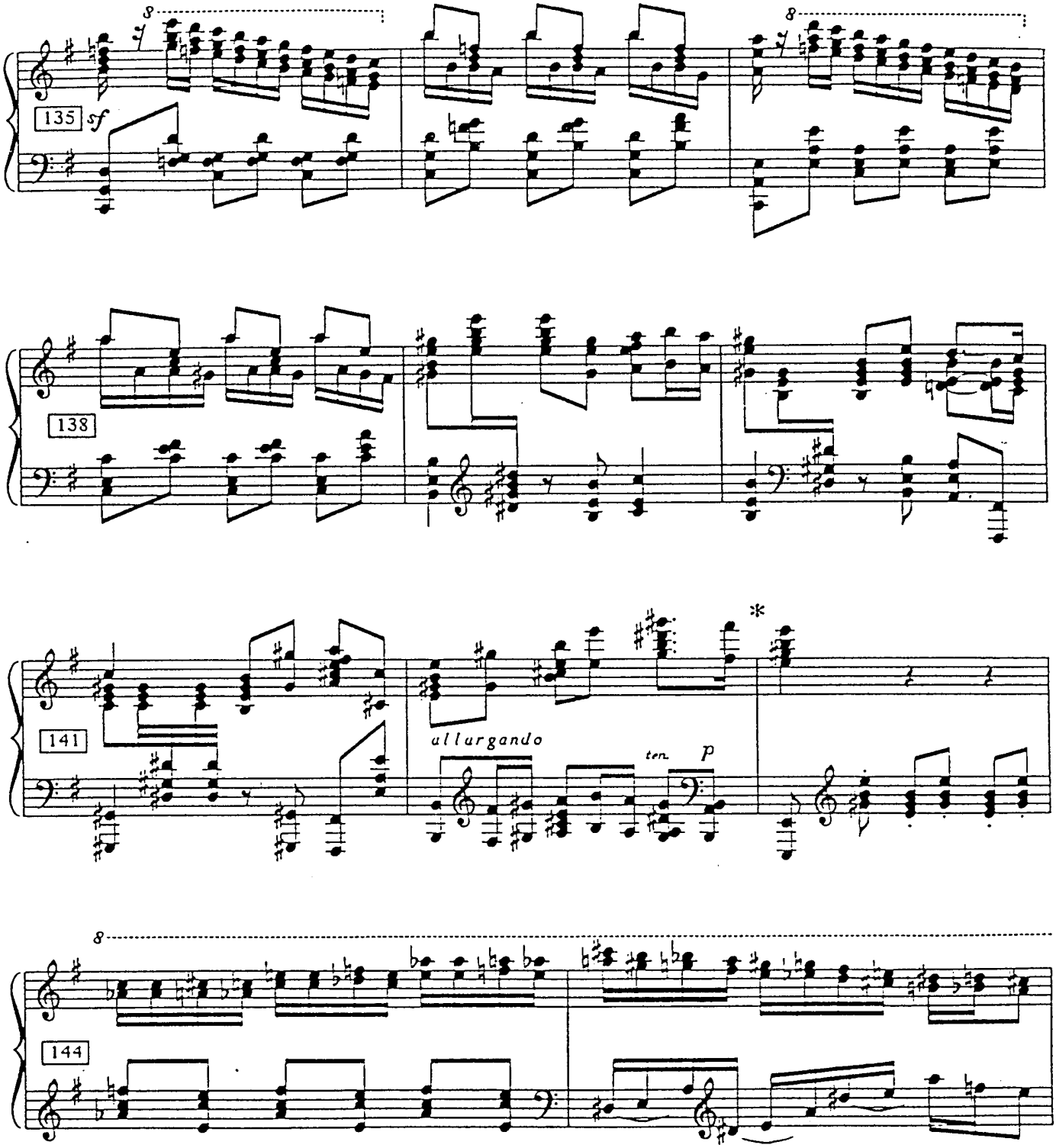
133



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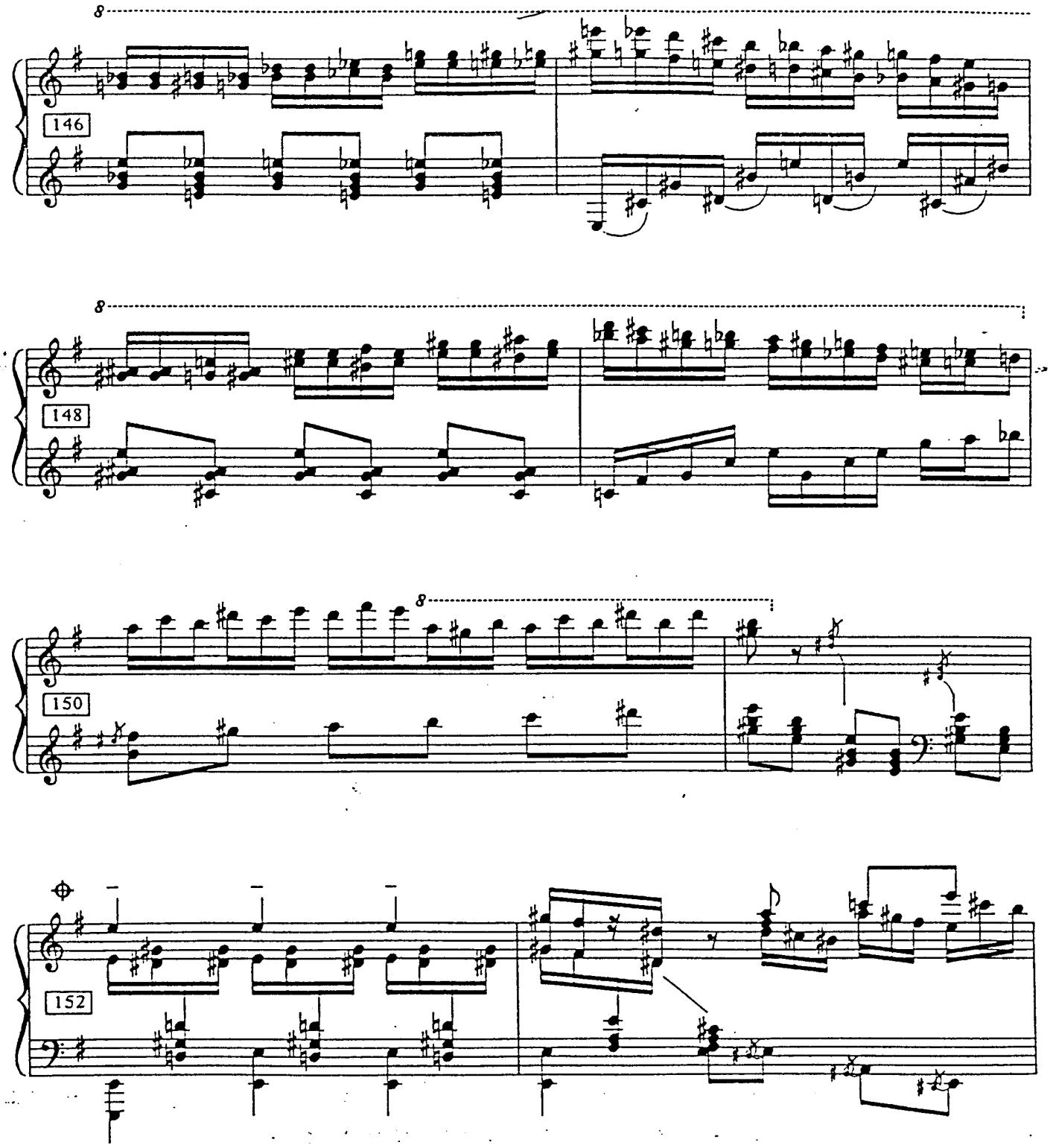
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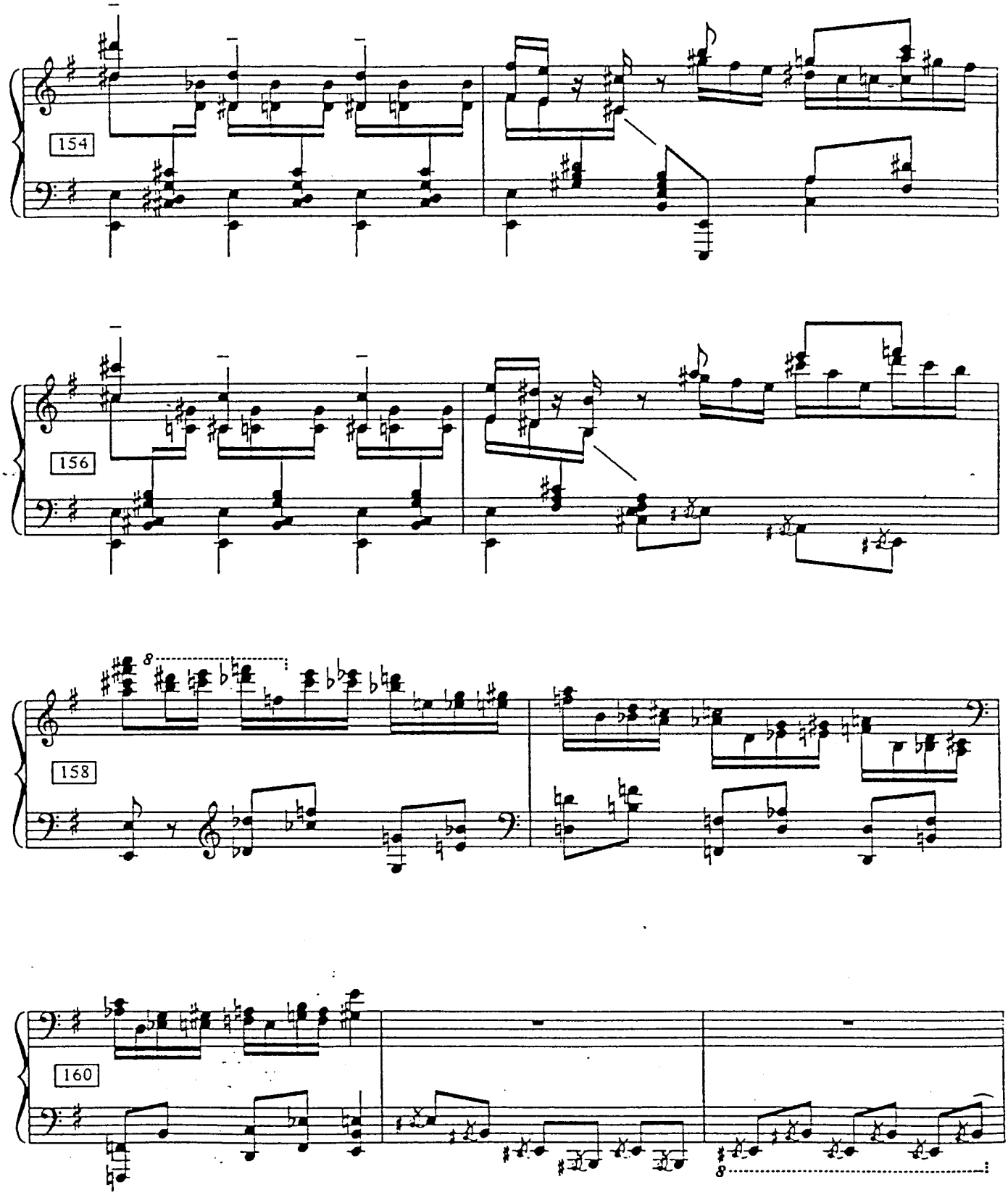
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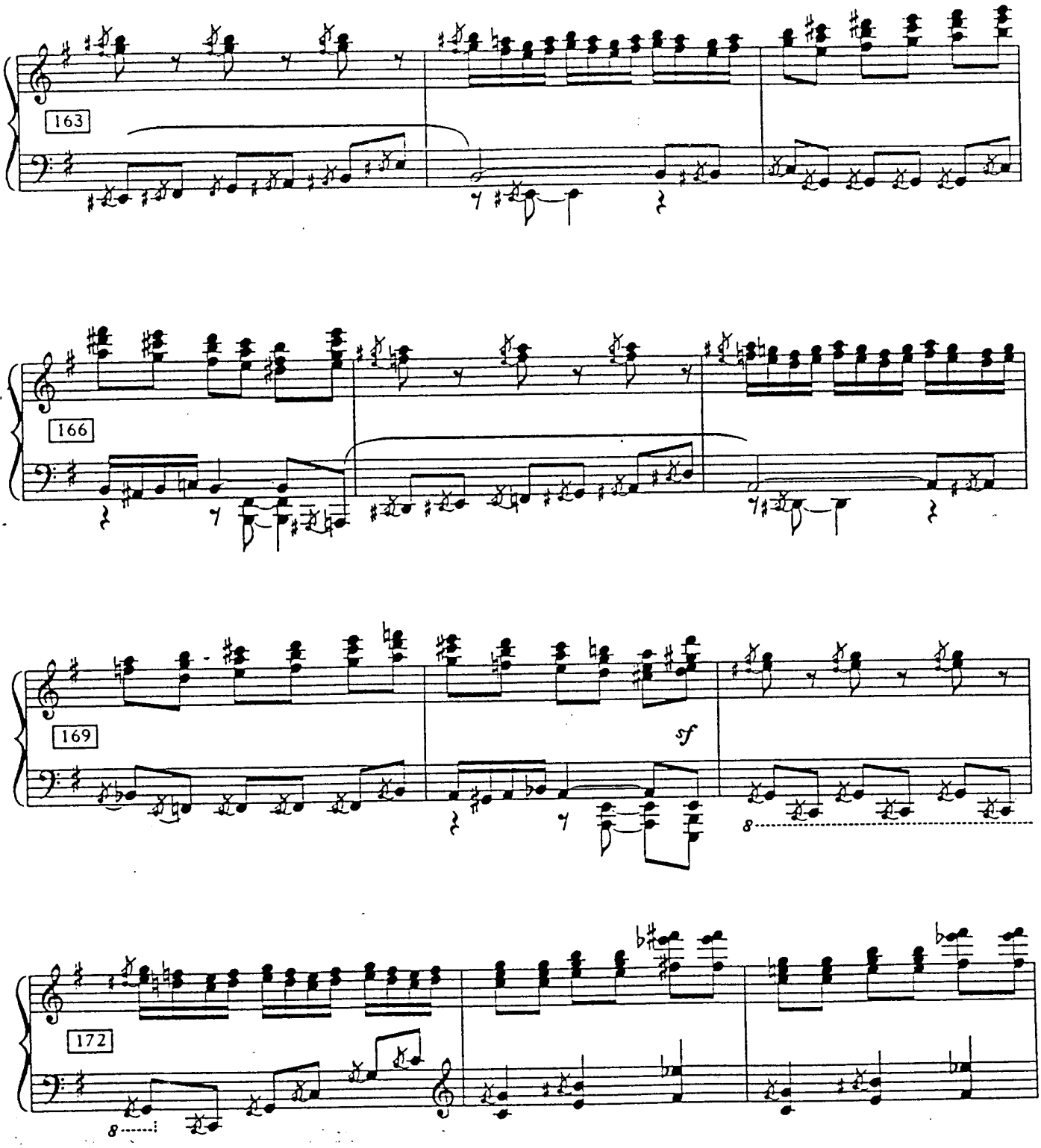
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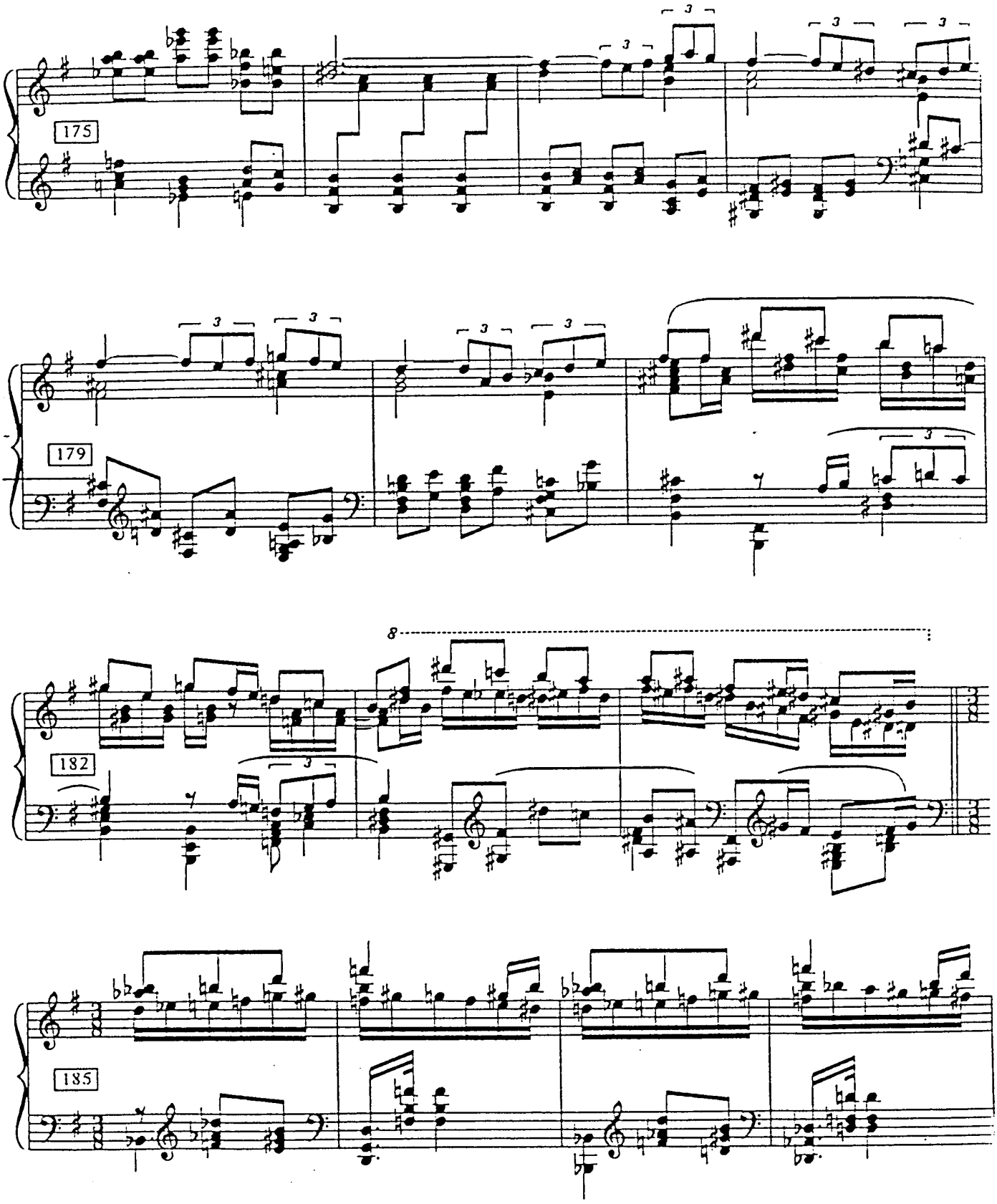
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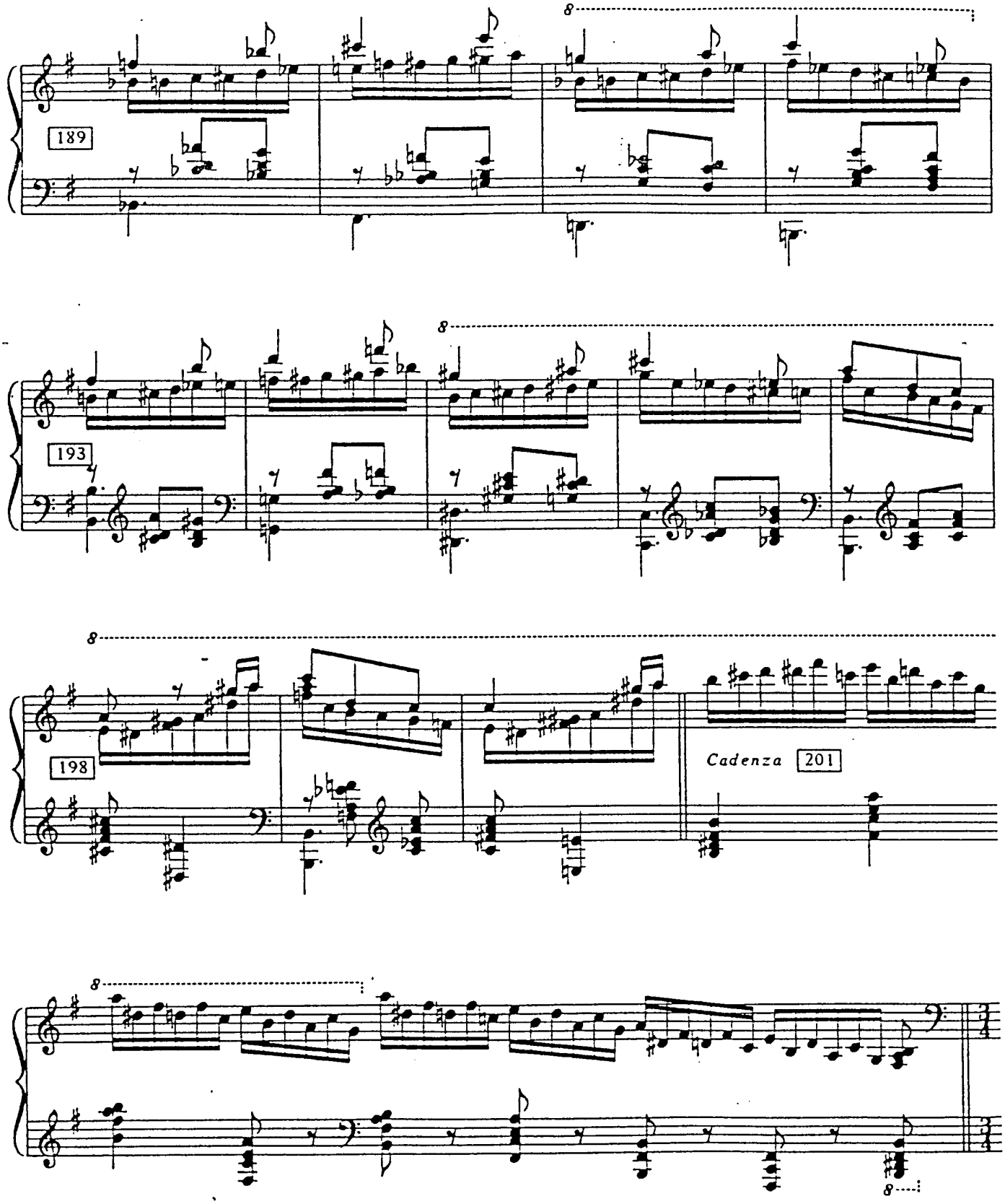
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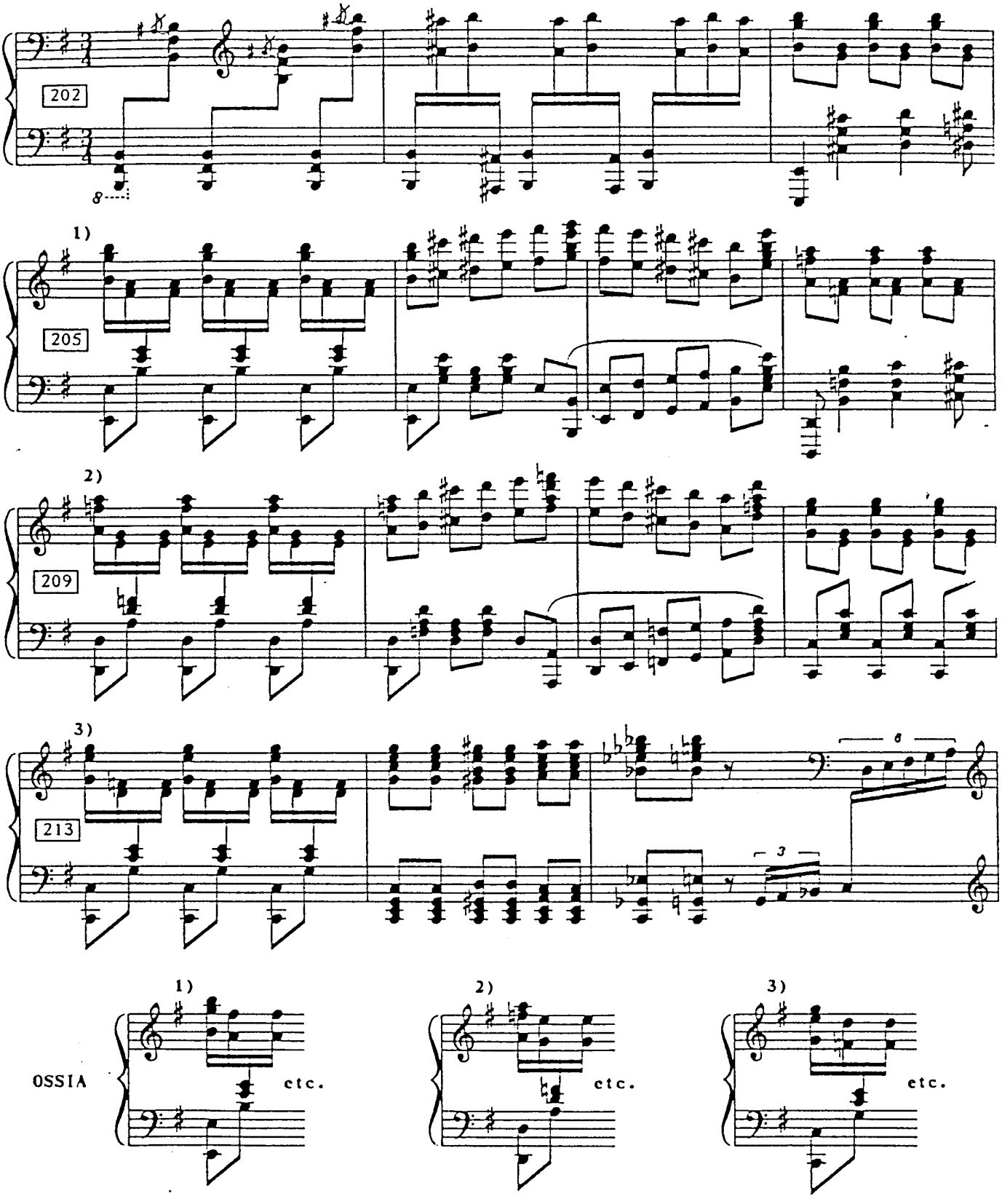
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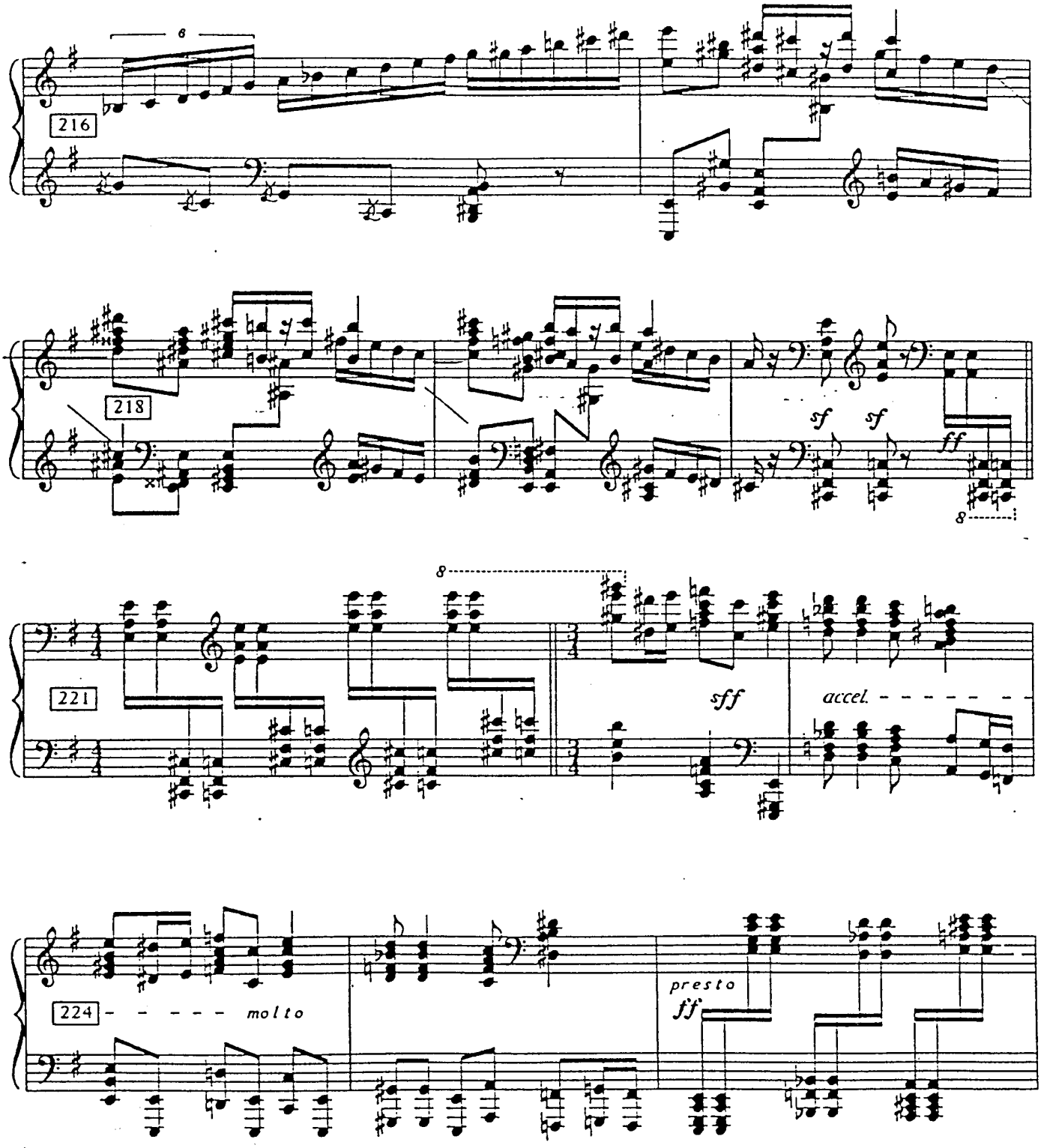
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accel.
224
molto
presto
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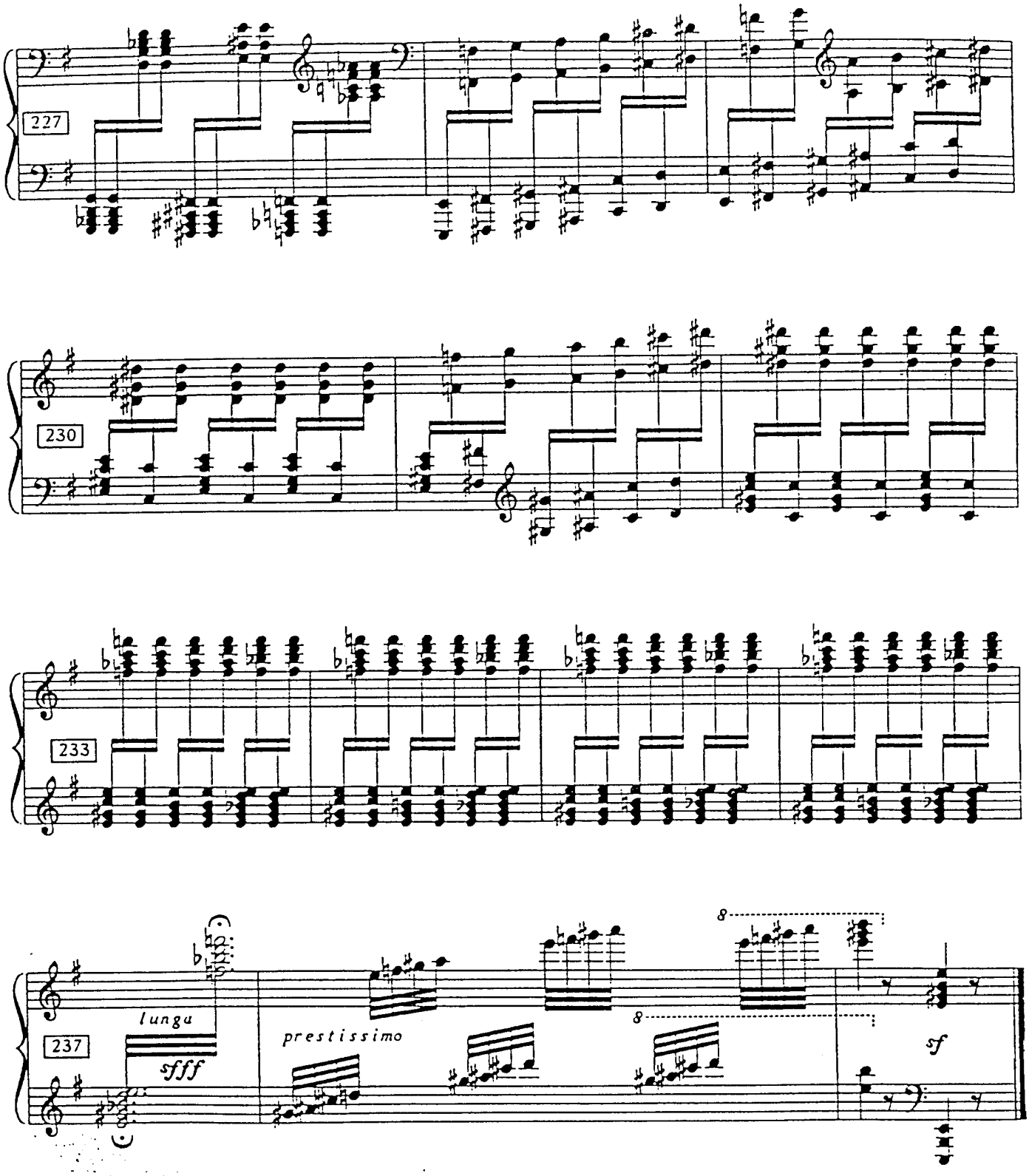
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8
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