Implausible Sketches

for piano four hands

by
Kyle Gann
2006/11

Kyle Gann: *Implausible Sketches* for piano, four hands (2006/2011)

1. The Desert's Too-Zen Song
2. Mediating Daydream
3. The Goodbye Fugue
4. Frigid Azure
5. Don't Touch My Pint

I love the two-piano medium. Some of my favorite works are written for it: Busoni's *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, Satie's *Trois Morceau en form de poire*, Ives's quarter-tone pieces, Bartok's and Jonathan Kramer's two-piano Sonatas with percussion, Kevin Volans's *Cicada*, Wallingford Reigger's Variations. My first work for two pianists was an ambitious, difficult, irascible early work: *I'itoi Variations* (1985). I always wanted to write another, better, less virtuosic one that reflected my more mature aesthetic. In summer of 2006 I had the time, and wrote Implausible Sketches. I decided to make it playable for two pianists at one keyboard, to facilitate performance.

A critic had then recently remarked that my music was "a little too Zen" for his taste, and I wanted to write something Zen indeed. The pieces are truly all sketches, rhythmic ideas, a loose grouping of implausible rhythmic etudes. "The Desert's Too-Zen Song" is based on a 61-beat ostinato, interrupted every 103 beats - the kind of large-scale, prime-numbered cross-rhythm I delight in. "The Goodbye Fugue" is the only fugue, loosely speaking, I've ever written; it, too, pauses every 11th measure. "Frigid Azure" struck me as the kind of long, monotonous, despairing ambient piece that the record label Cold Blue specializes in. The title of "Don't Touch My Pint" is a cleaned-up version of an Irish mnemonic for the rhythm four-against-five ("don't f-ing touch my pint again"), which runs throughout the movement. I had always wanted to write an additional slow movement on the rhythm eight-against-nine, but despite much sketching, the piece eluded me for years. Not until 2011 did I hit upon the happy idea, in "Mediating Daydream," of making the harmonic rhythm incommensurate with the eight and nine tempos, which at last made the piece fall together nicely.

I rather thought of the piece as an unorchestrated symphony, and then finally, in 2014, at the suggestion of my friend the composer Robert Carl, I orchestrated it, expanding each movement, and called the result the Implausible Symphony. (My other non-symphony symphony is the choral piece *Transcendental Sonnets* of 2001-2.) Nevertheless, the sketches may be played separately, or in smaller groups, though in that case I'd like them identified as excerpts from *Implausible Sketches*. Despite not being conventionally virtuosic, they are far from easy; difficulties of ensemble and concentration abound. "Don't Touch My Pint" was premiered May 23, 2010, in Belgrade; the entire suite was premiered February 13, 2016, at Illinois Wesleyan, by Nancy Pounds and William West, to whom I am grateful.

Duration: 30 minutes

The Desert's Too-Zen Song

Kyle Gann
2006

Mellow

♩ = 54 *(8ve higher until "loco")*

Piano I

Piano II

p throughout

mf

p

Ped.

5

mf

9

mf

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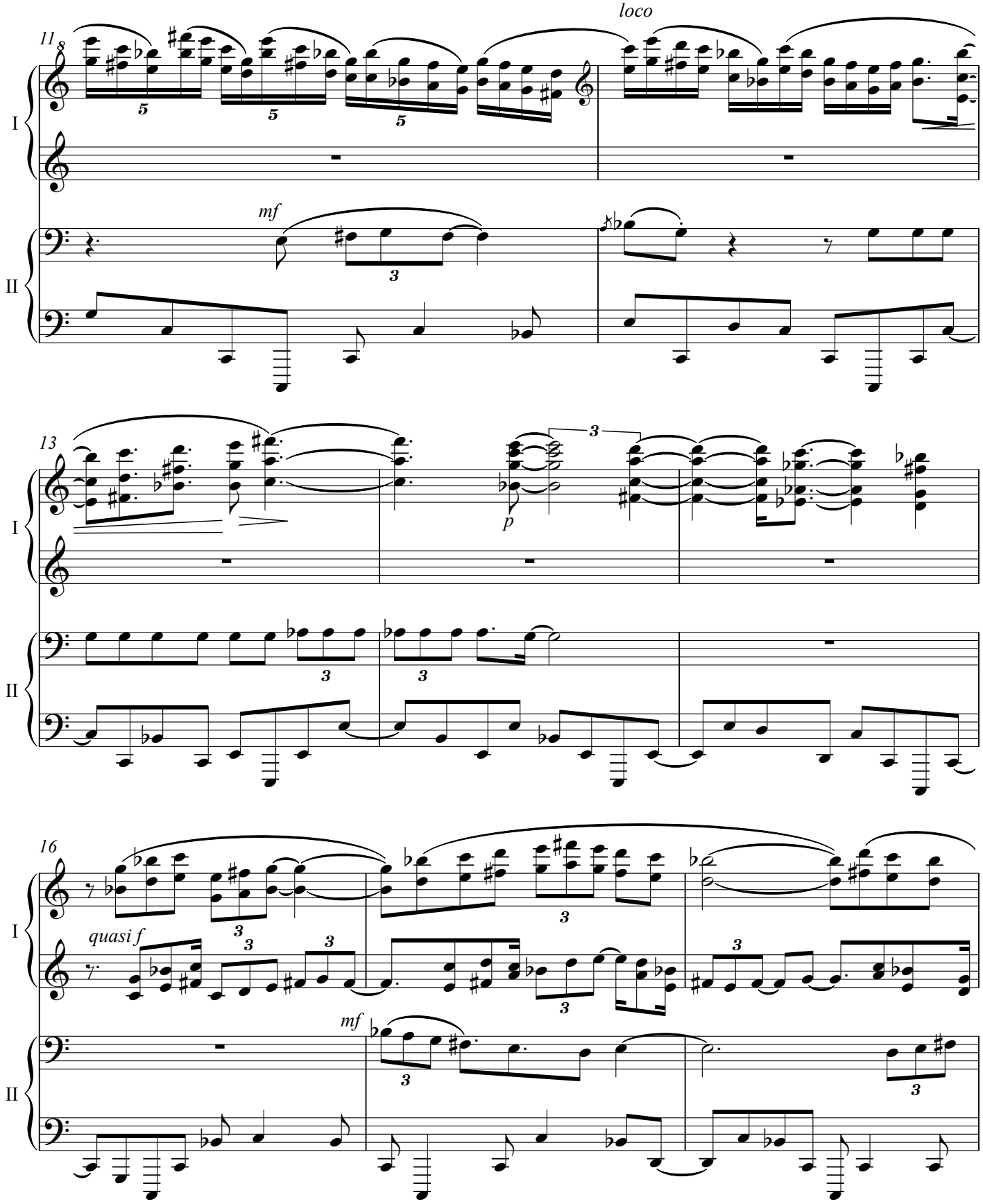
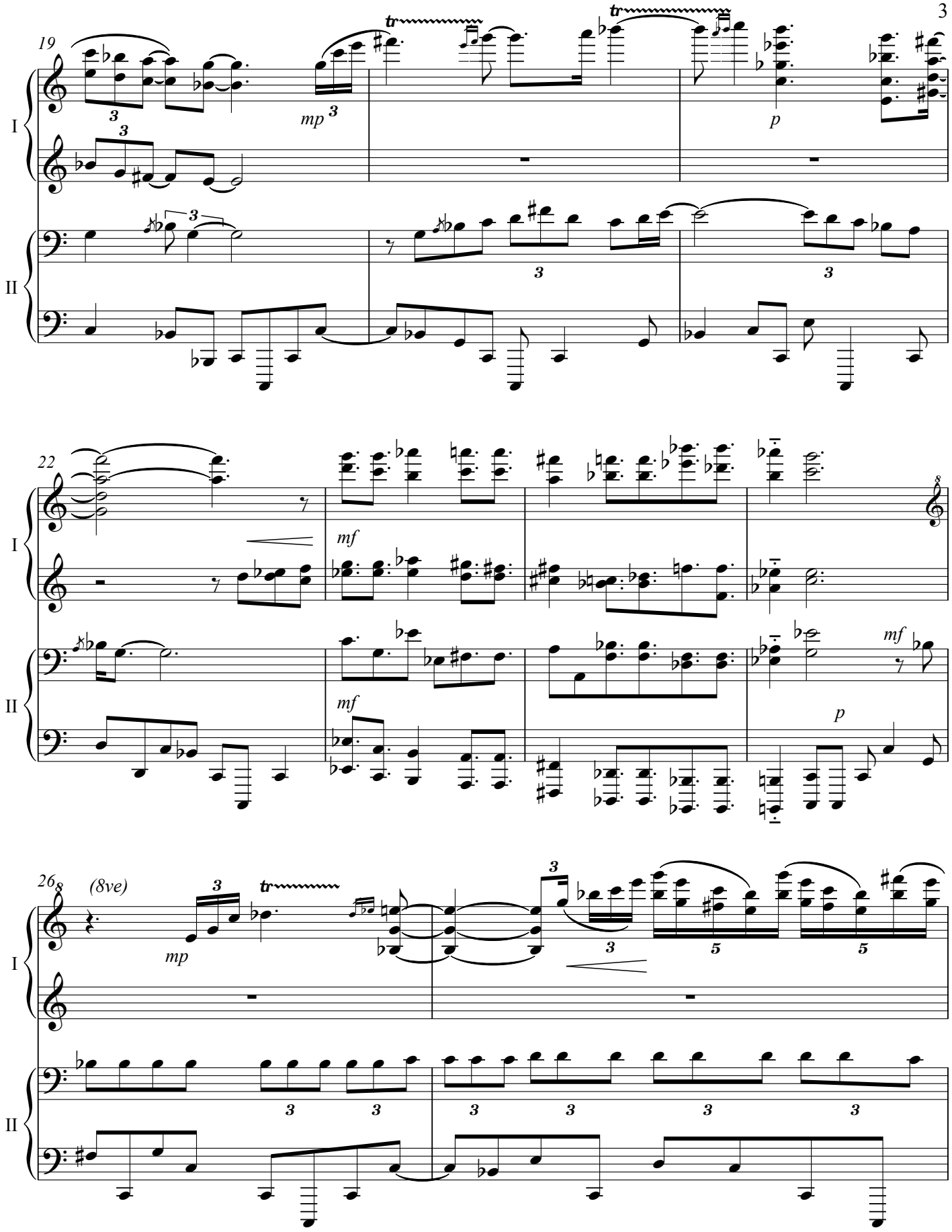

11
loco
I
mf
II
13
p
I
II
16
quasi f
mf
I
II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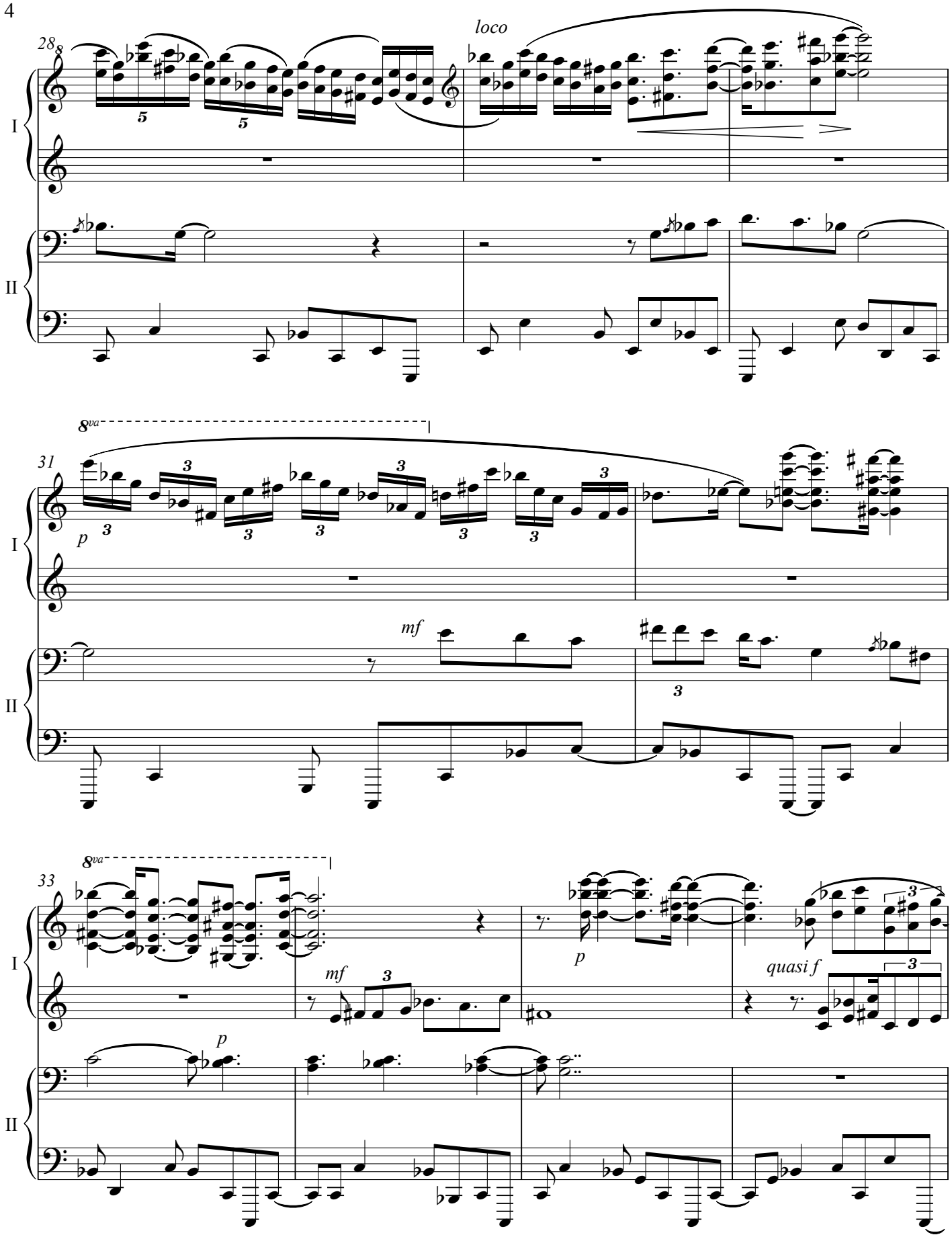
I
II
mp
p
22
mf
mf
mf
p
26
(8ve)
mp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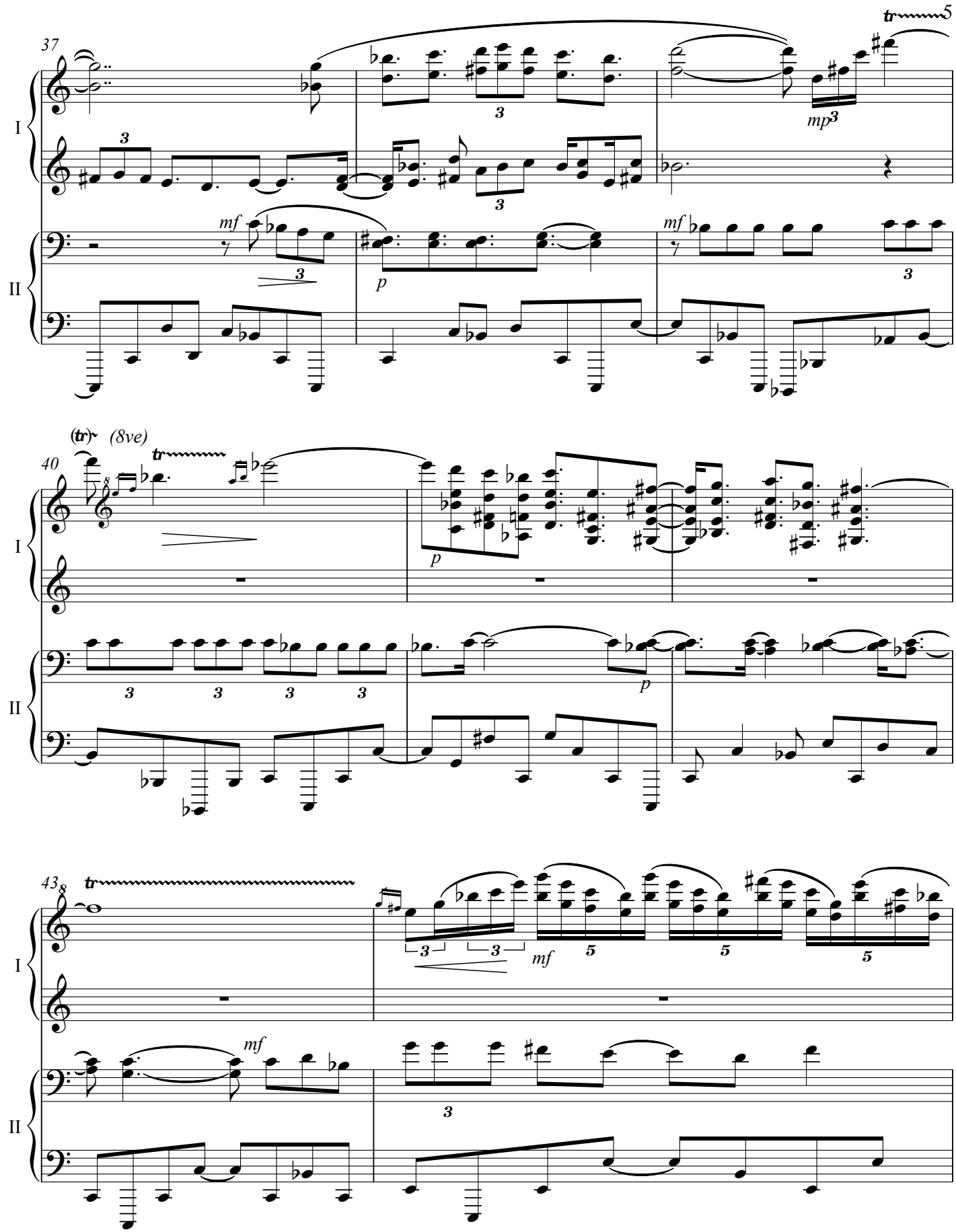
loco
I
II
8va
31
p
mf
8va
33
mf
p
p
quasi f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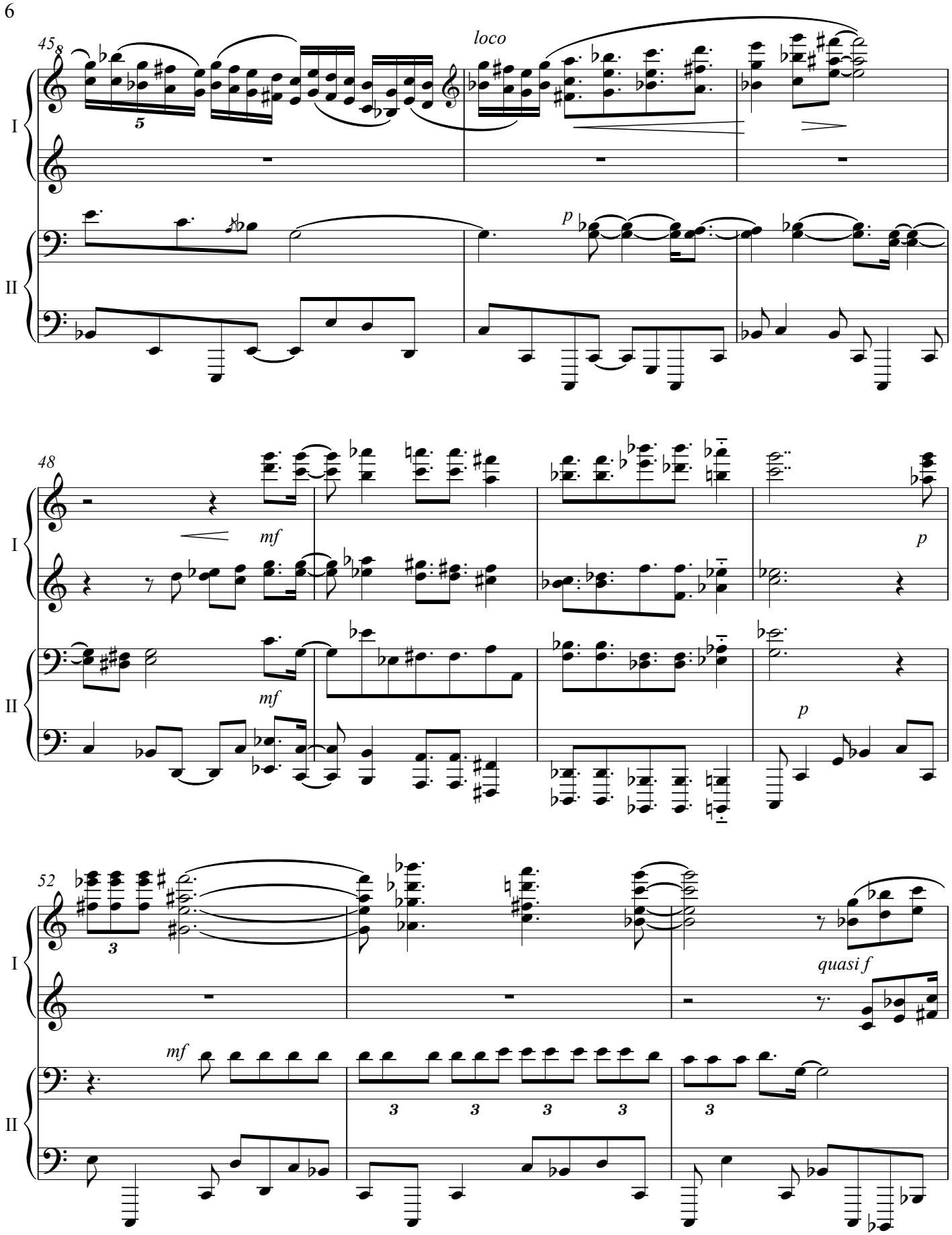
I
II
mf
p
mp
tr
40
(tr)
(8ve)
43
mf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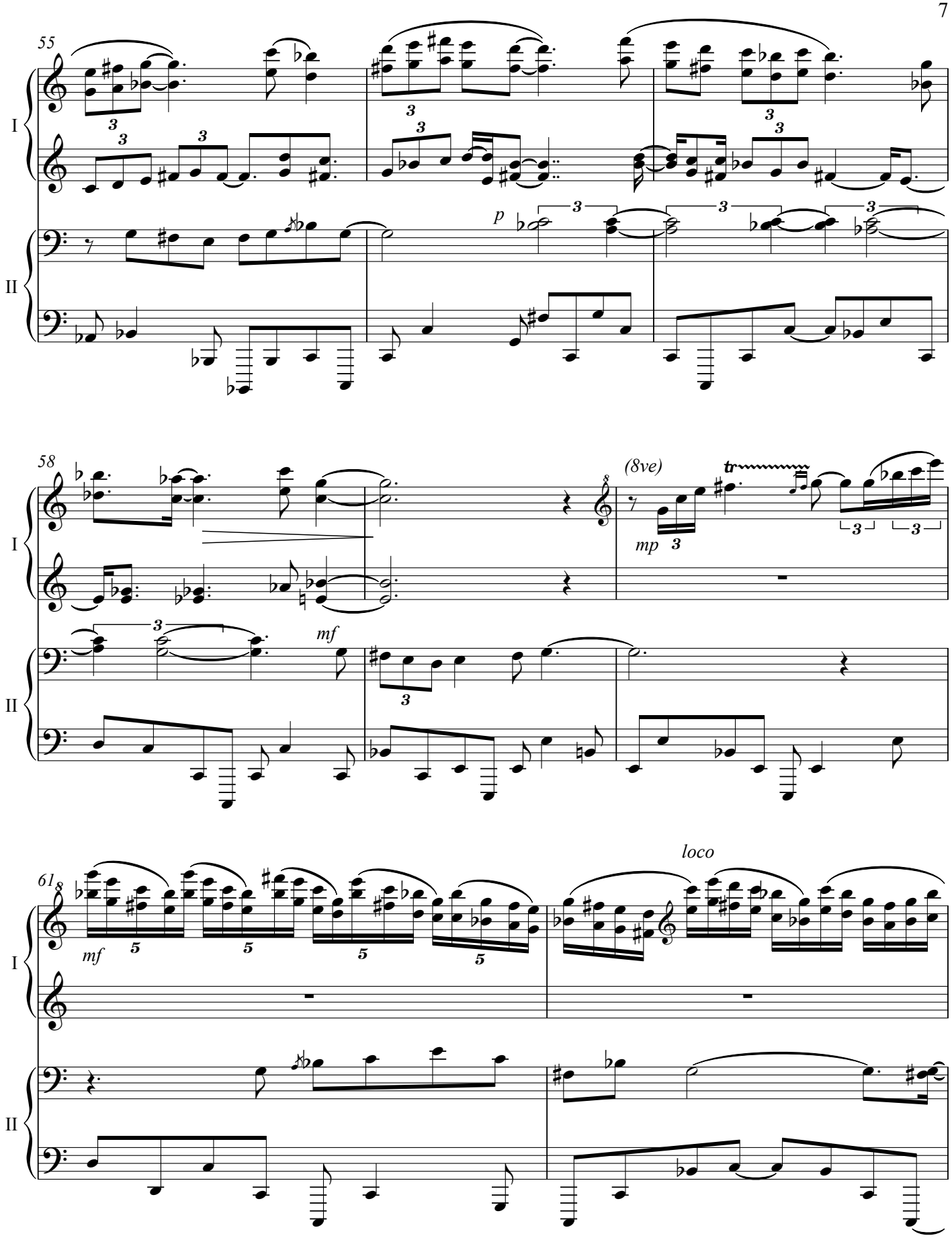
loco
I
II
p
48
mf
mf
p
p
52
quasi f
mf
I
II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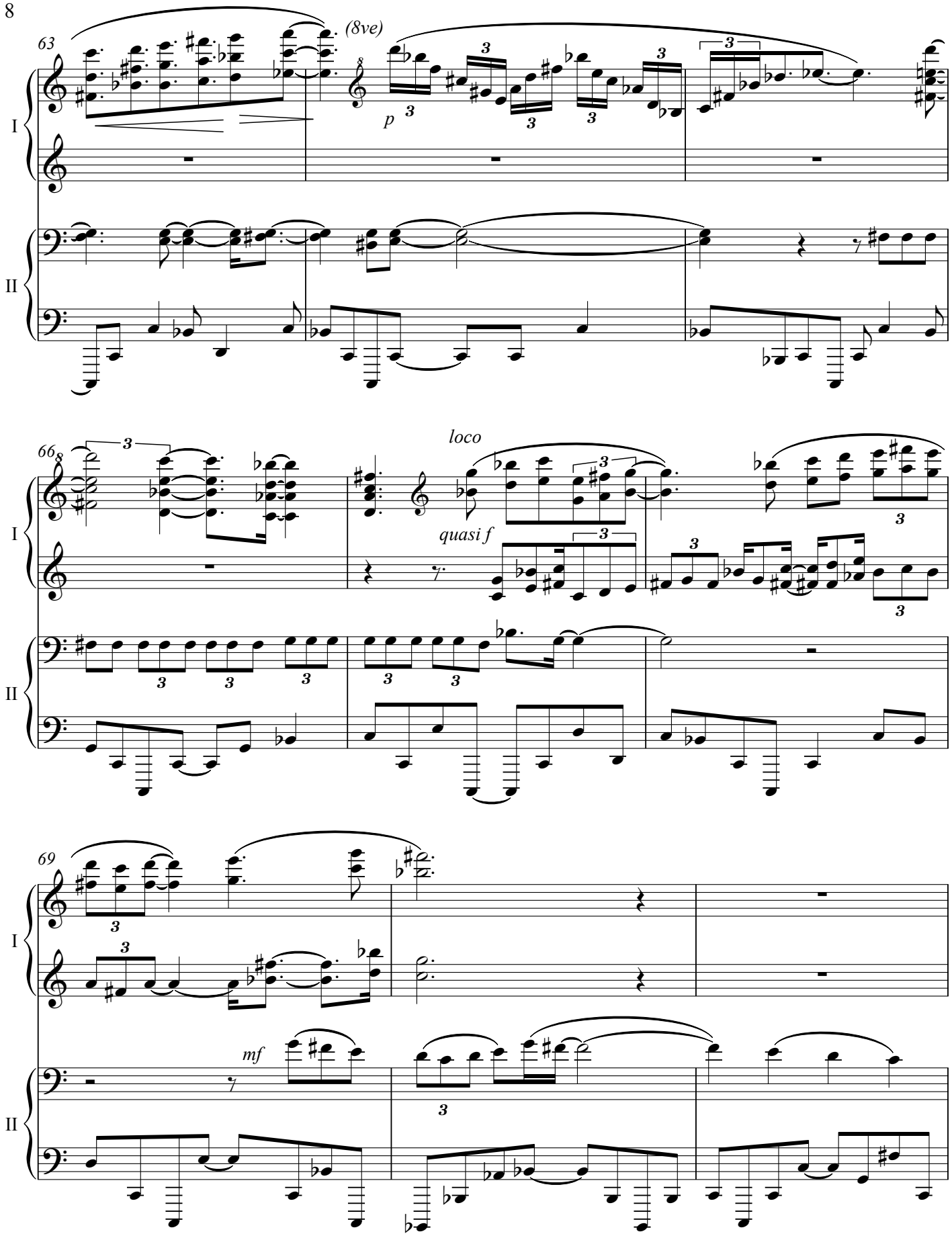
I
II
p
58
(8ve)
mp
mf
61
mf
loco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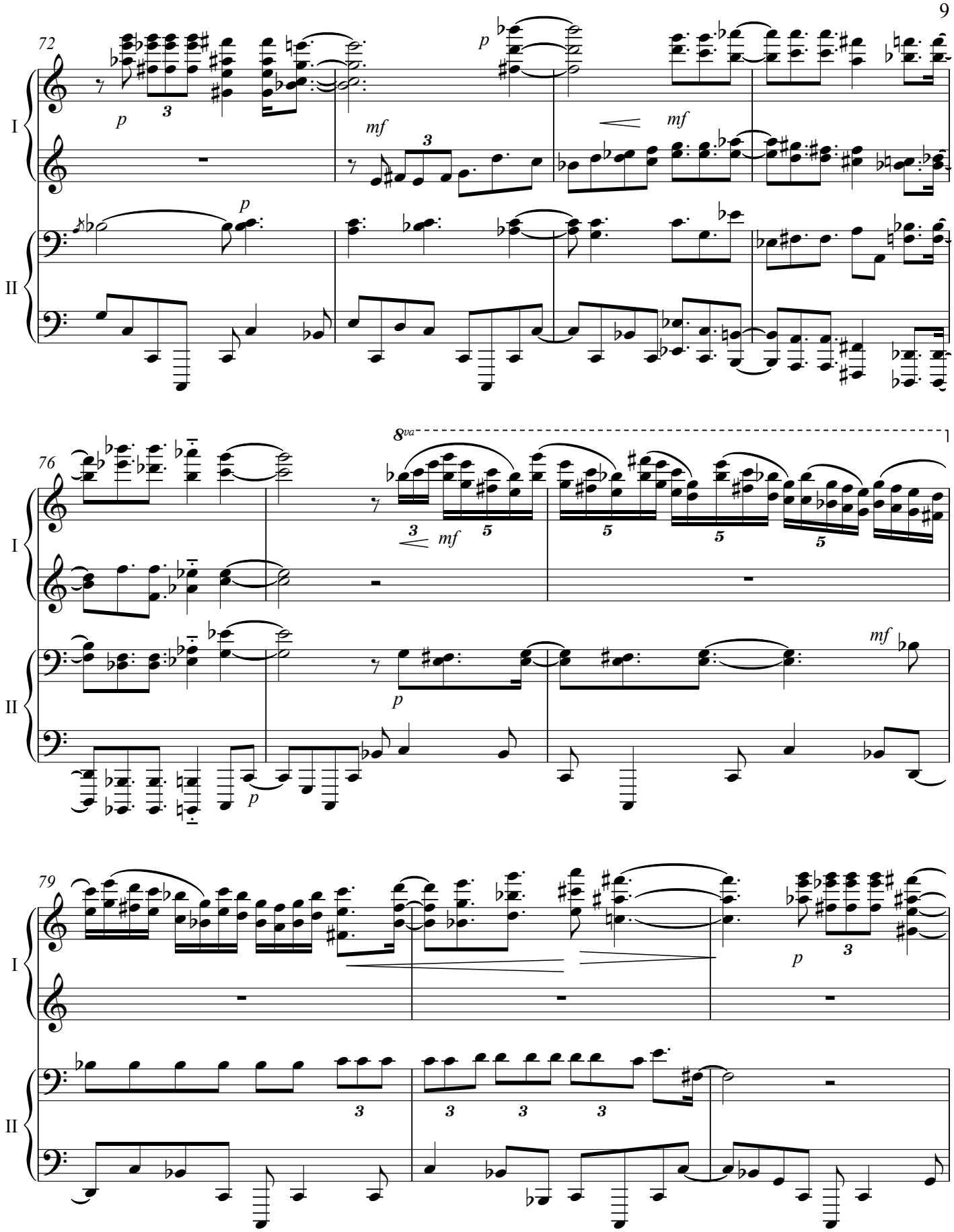
p
I
II
66
loco
quasi f
69
mf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I
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p
mf
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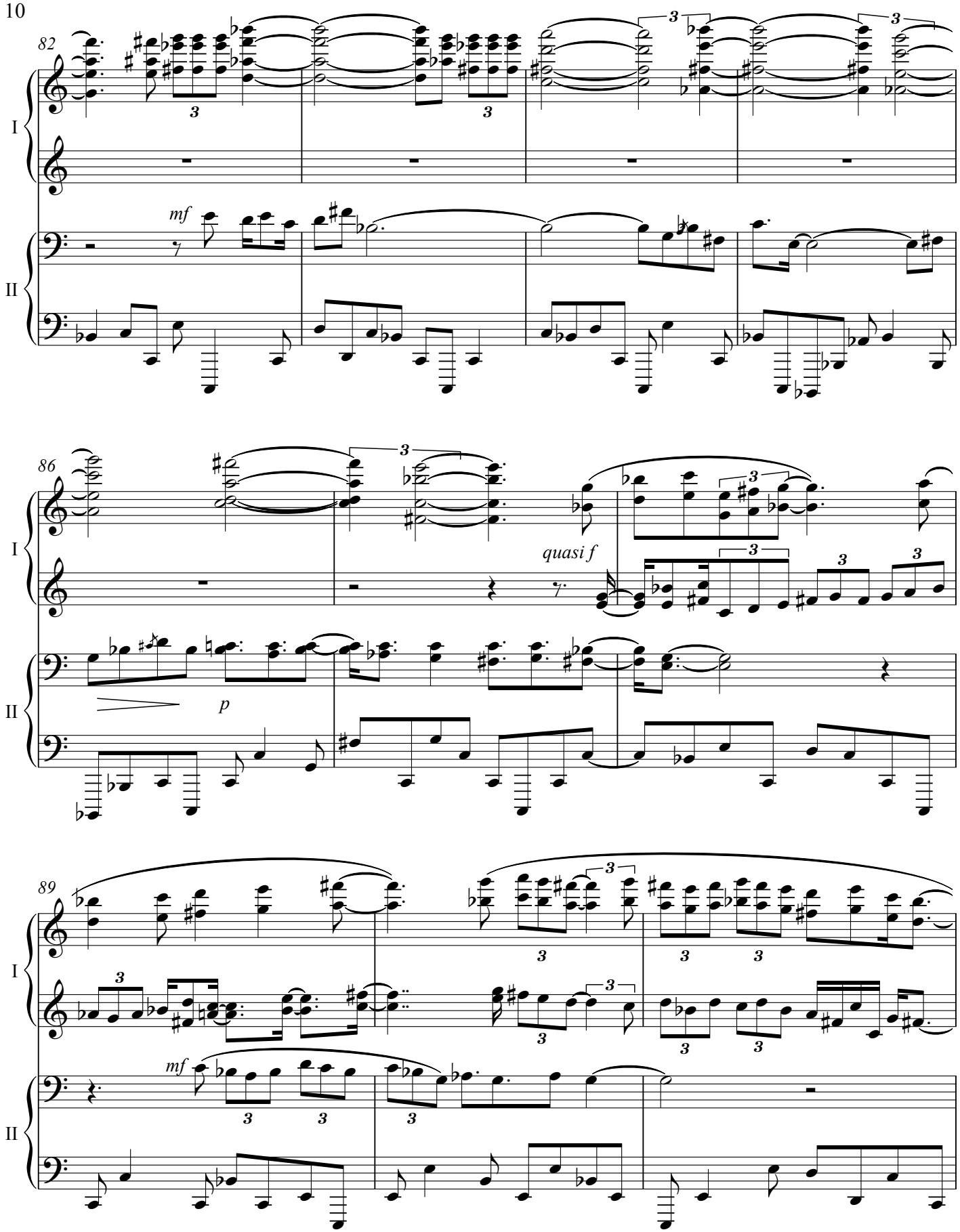
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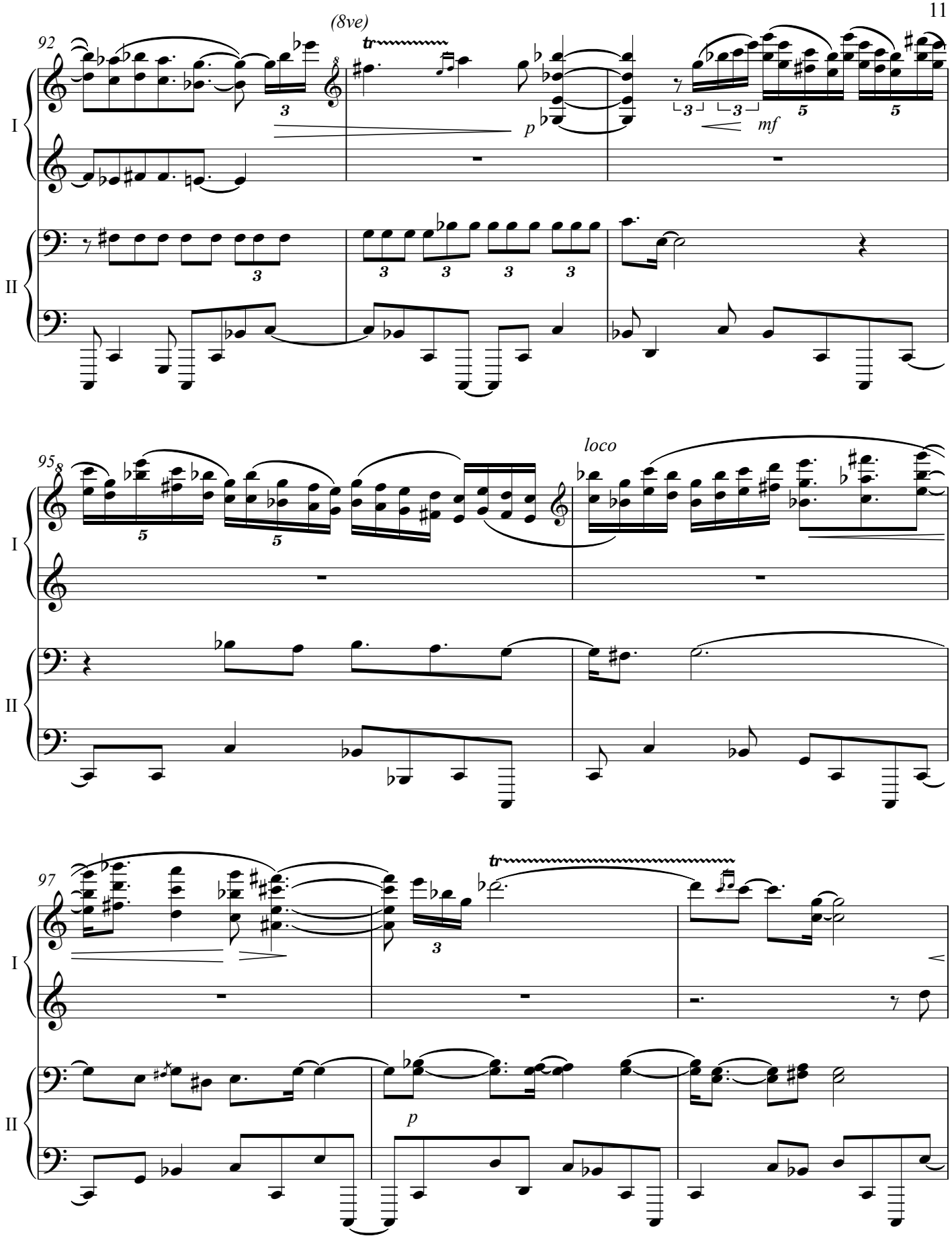
quasi f
p
89
mf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tr
p
mf
I
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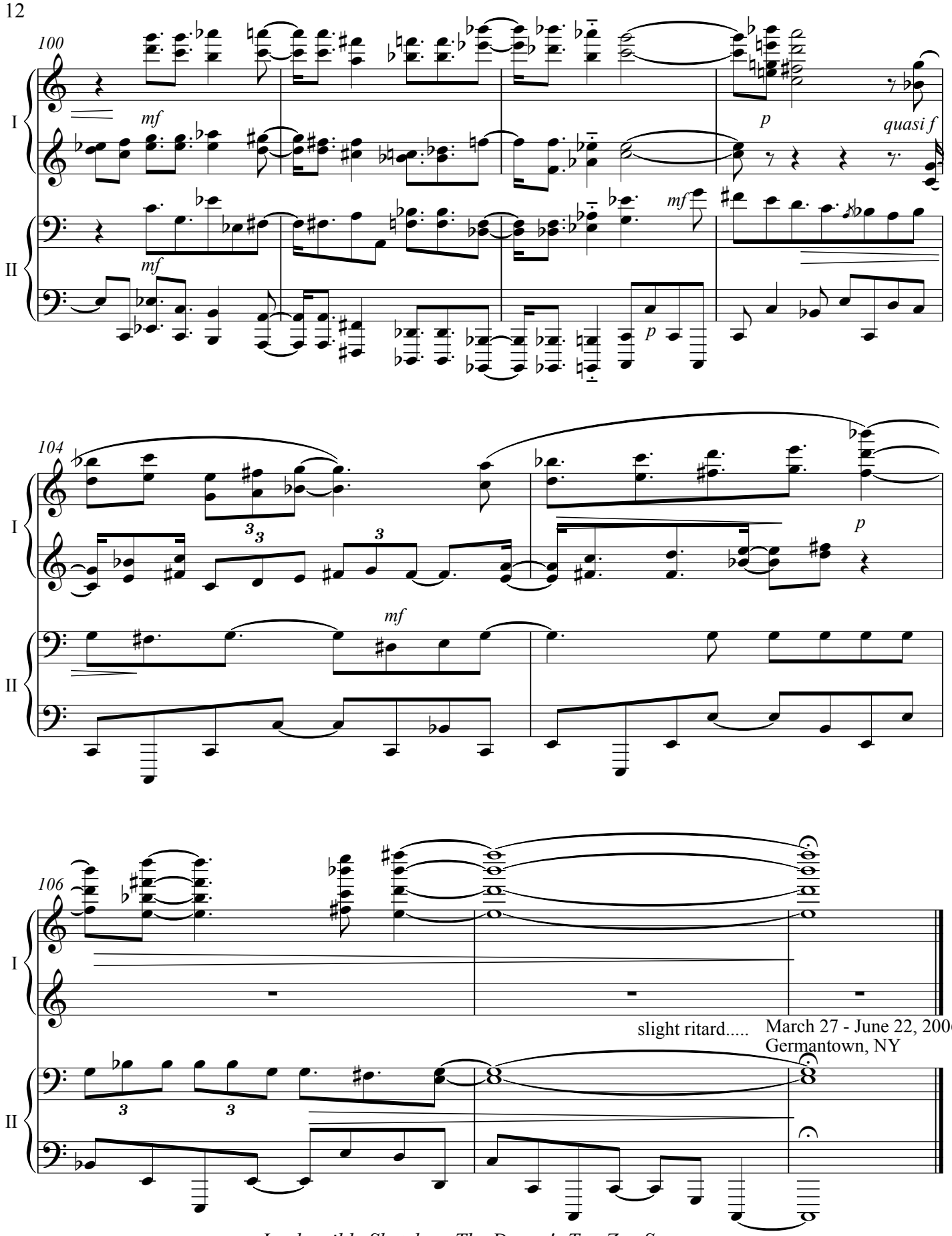
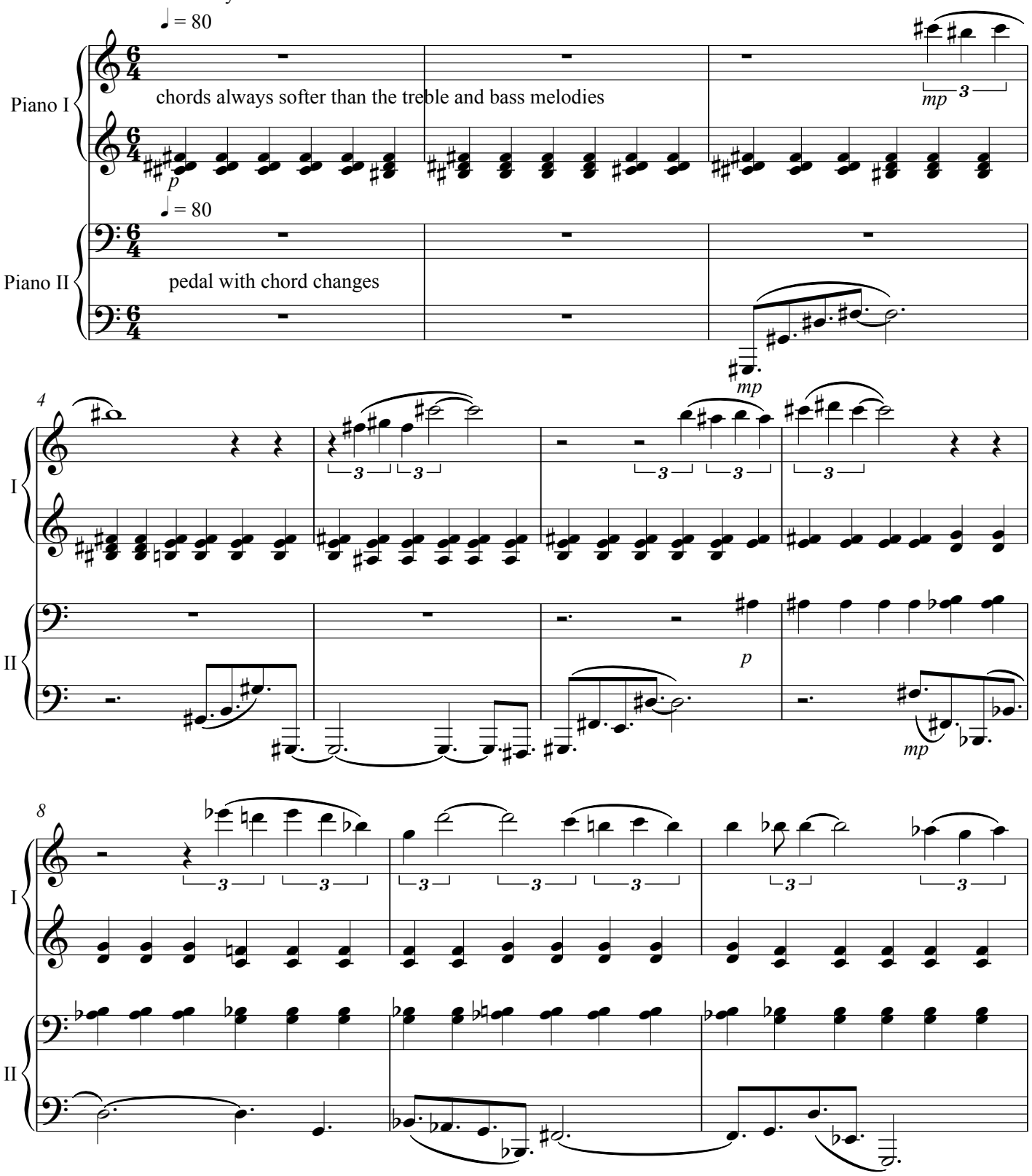
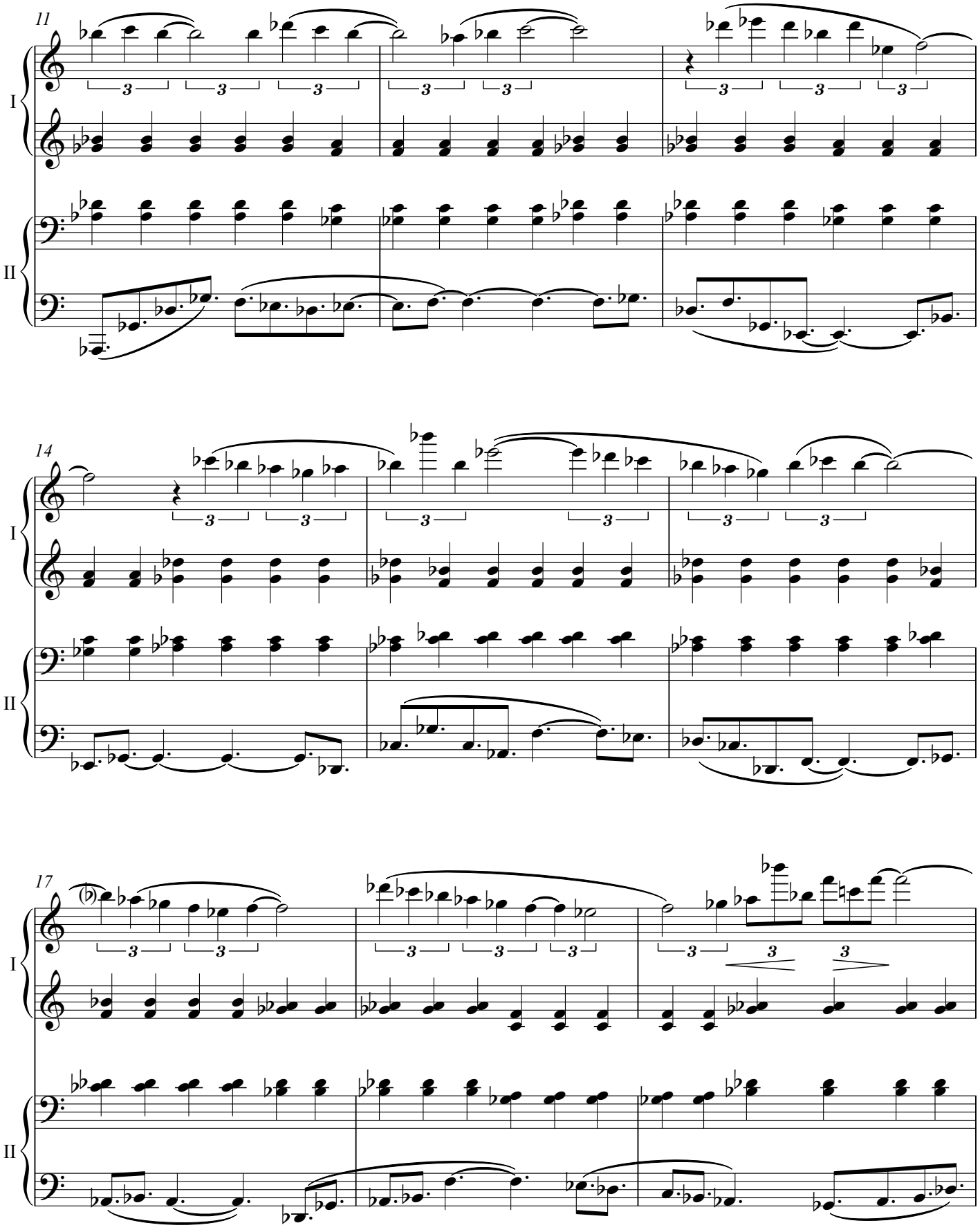
loco
97
tr
p


100
I
mf
p
quasi f
II
mf
mf
p
104
I
3
3
3
p
mf
II
106
I
slight ritard.....
March 27 - June 22, 2006
Germantown, NY
II
3
3

Mediating Daydream

Kyle Gann
2011

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I
II
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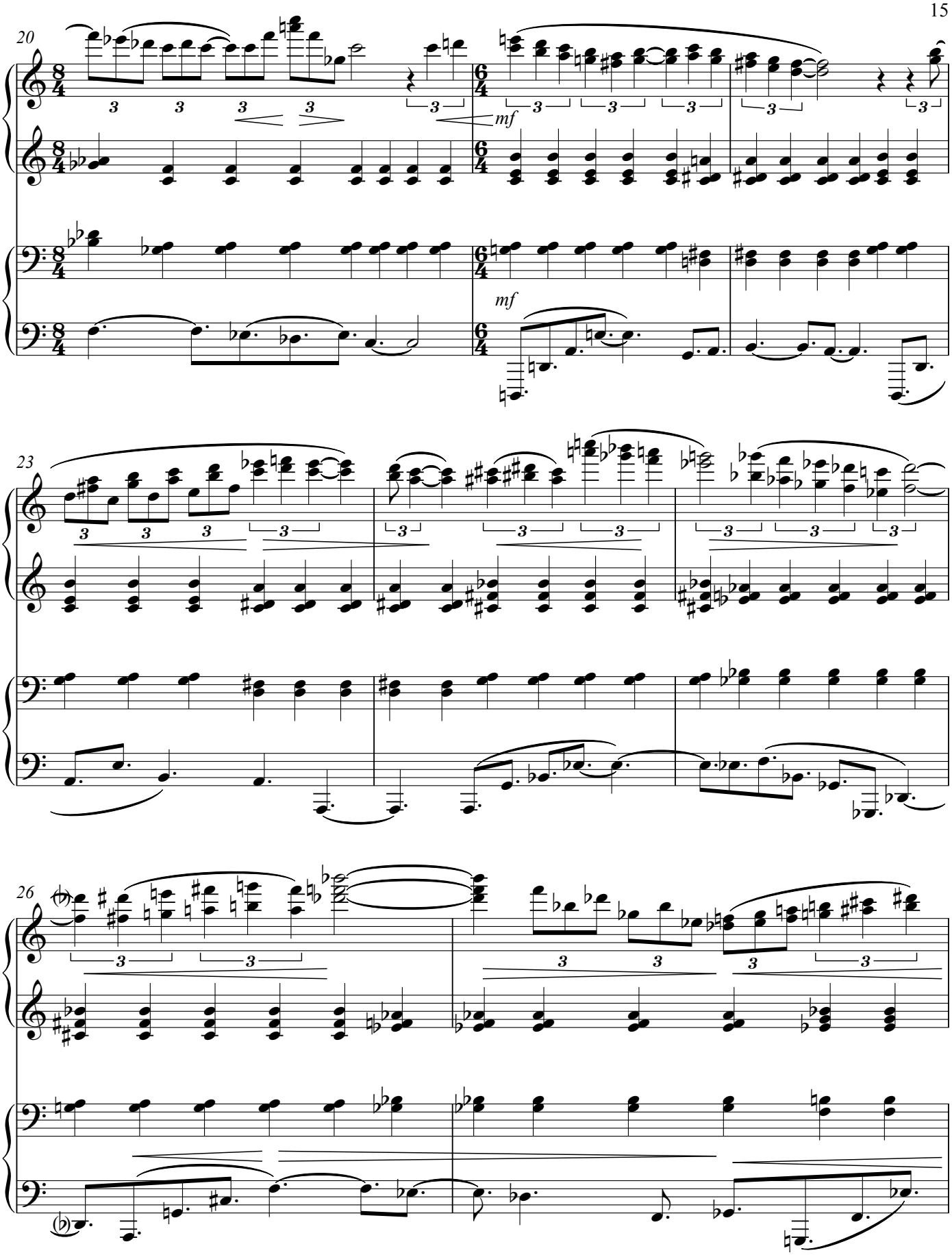
I
II
17
I
II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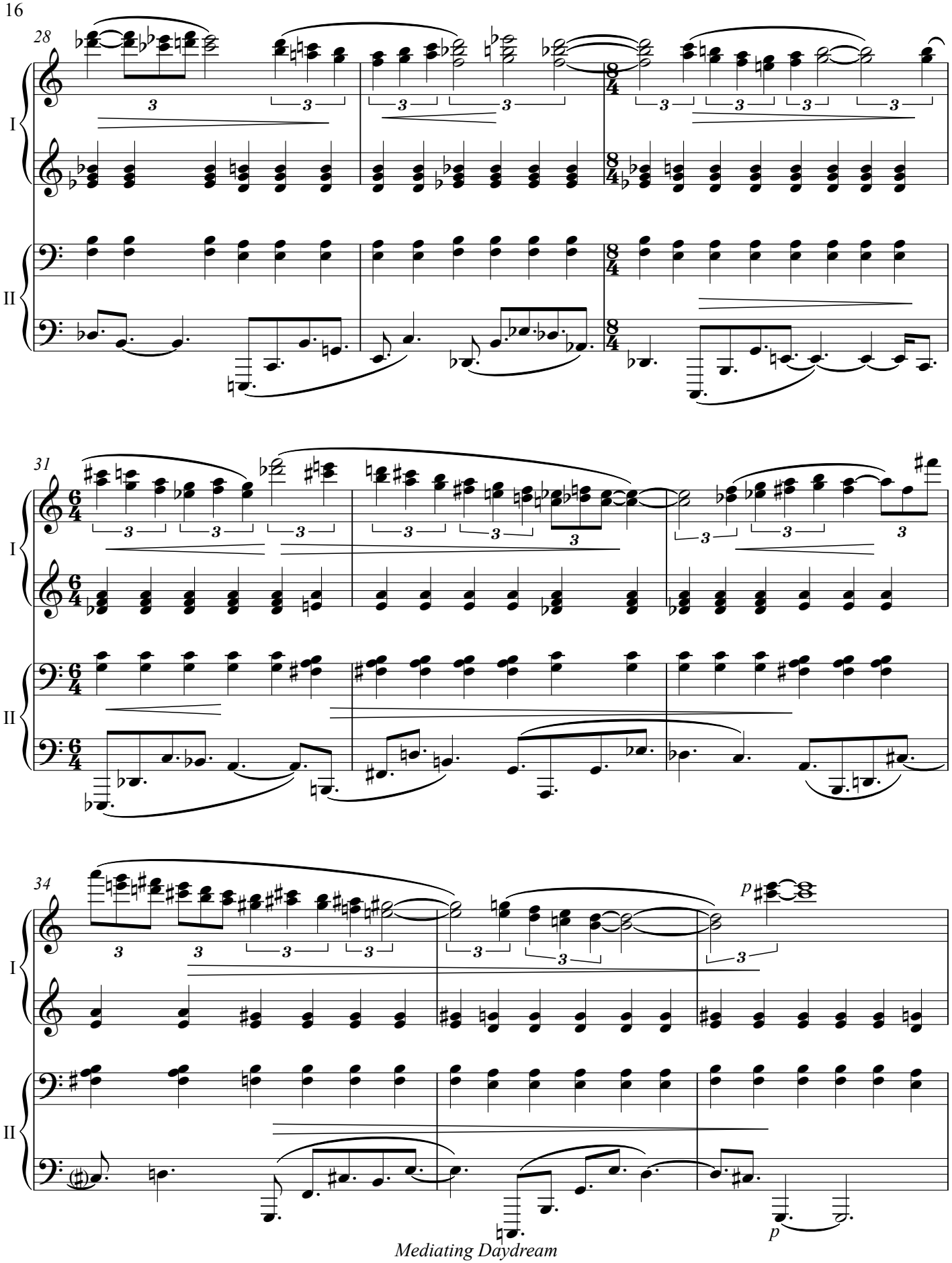
I
II
mf
mf
23
I
II
26
I
II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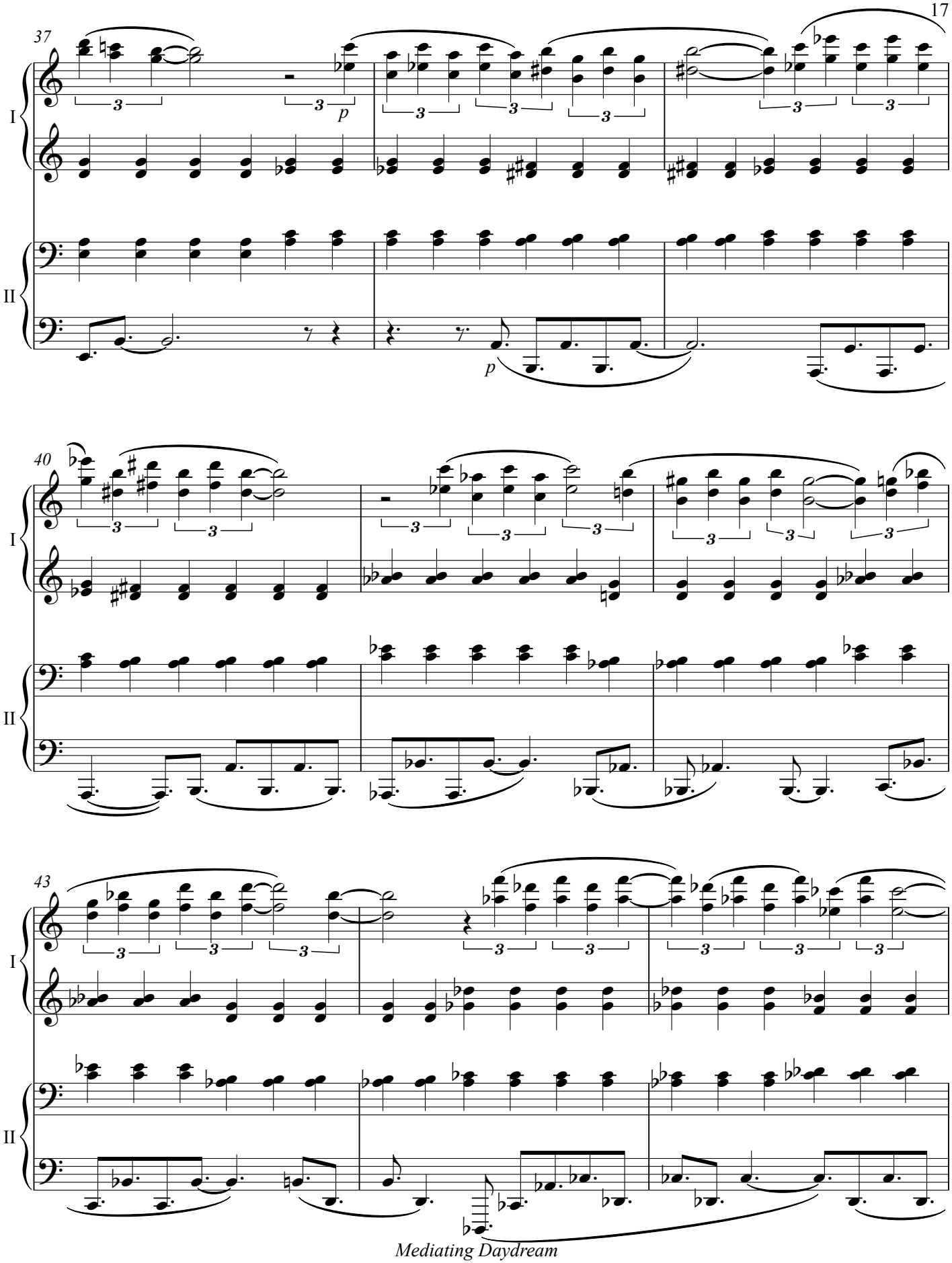
I
II
8/4
31
6/4
34
p
p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I
II
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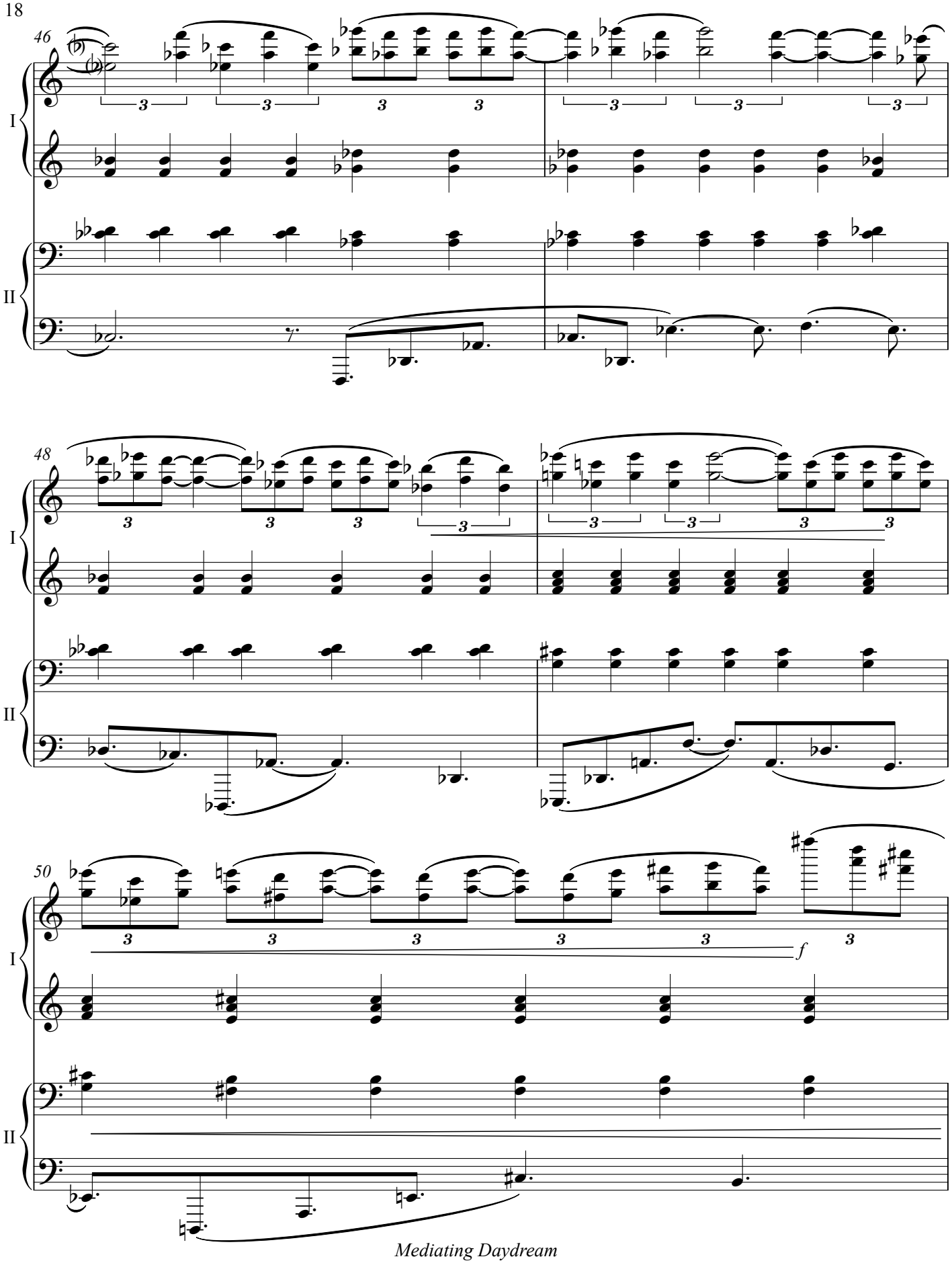
I
II
43
I
II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II
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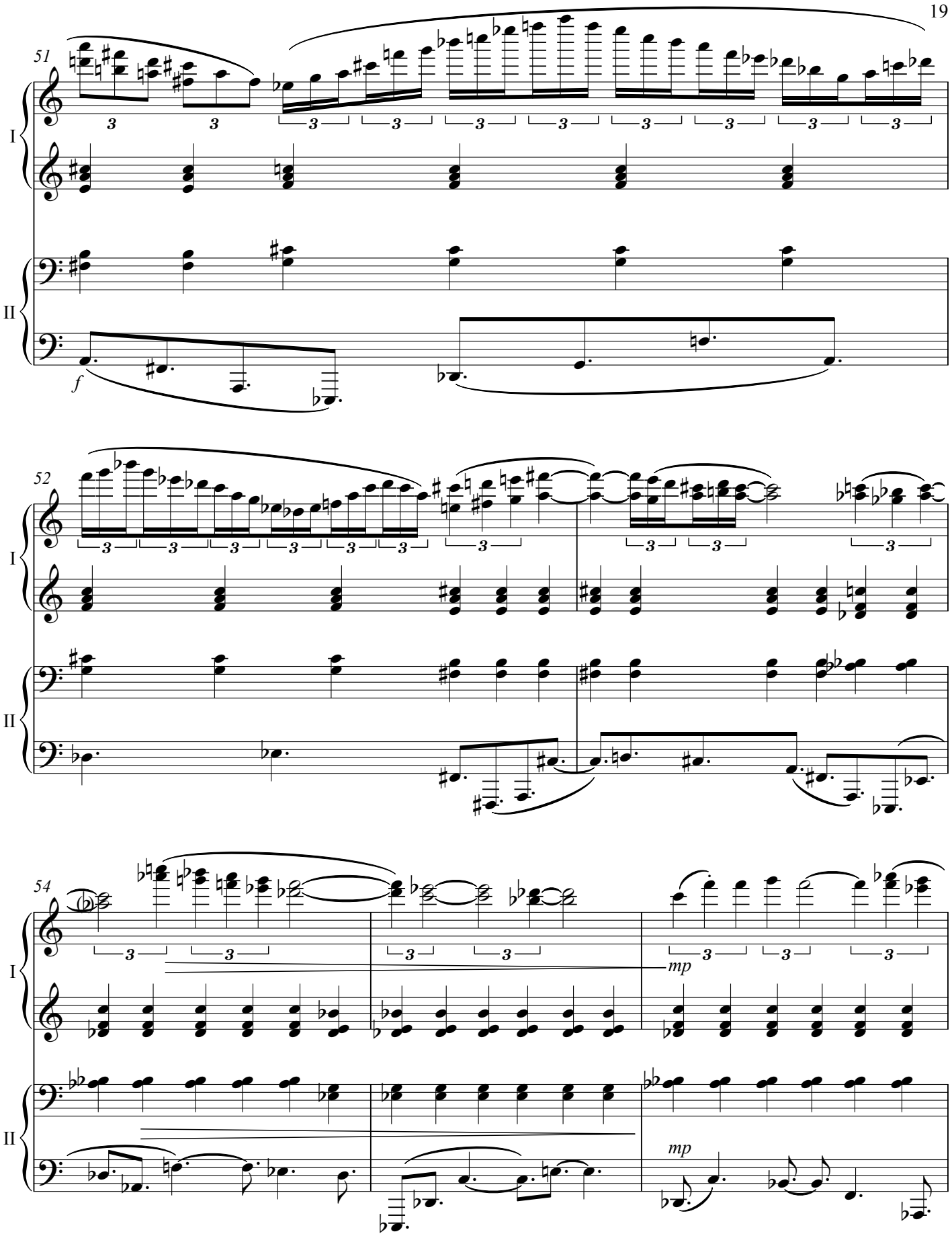
I
II
50
I
II
f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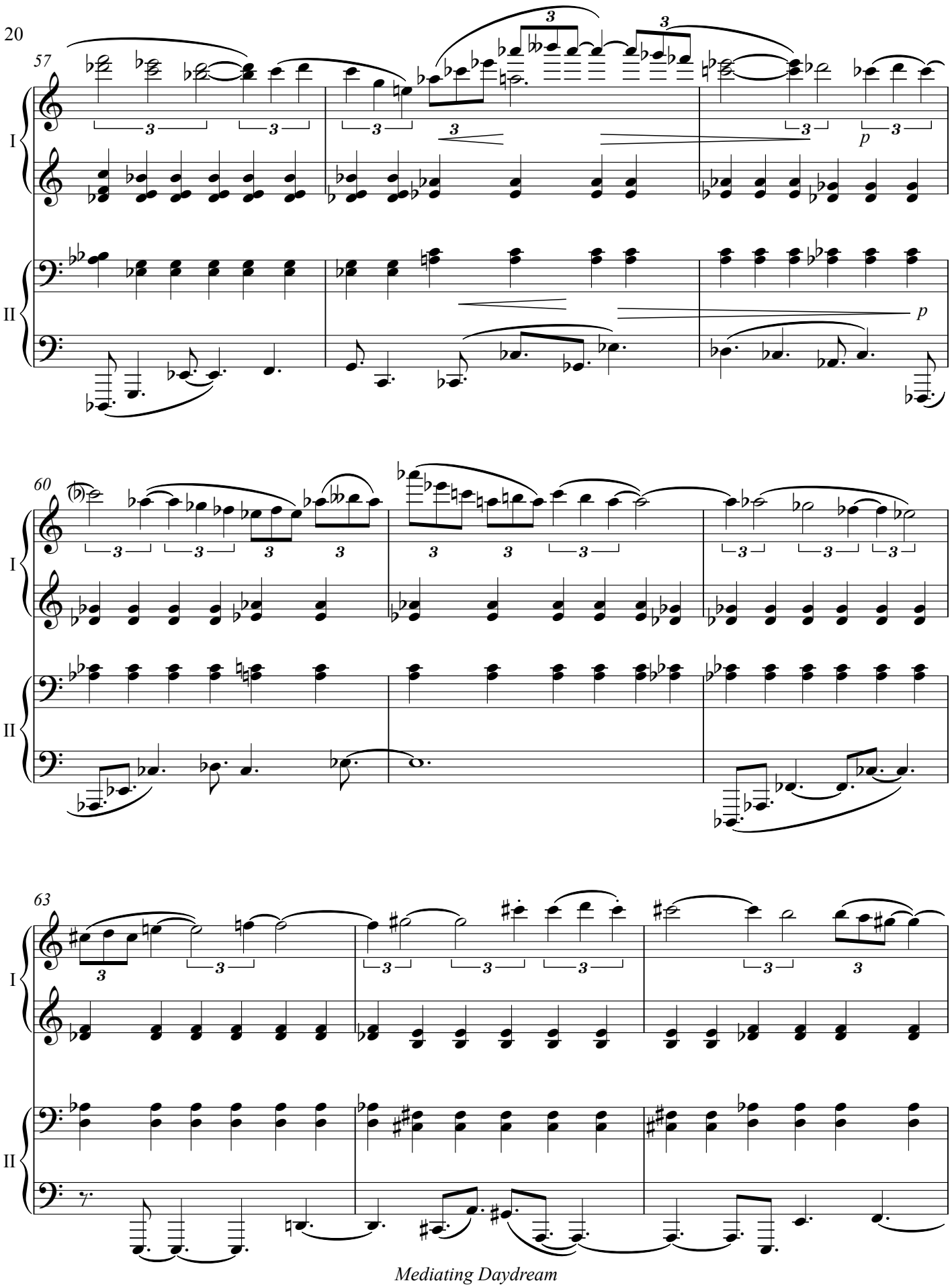
II
54
I
II
mp
mp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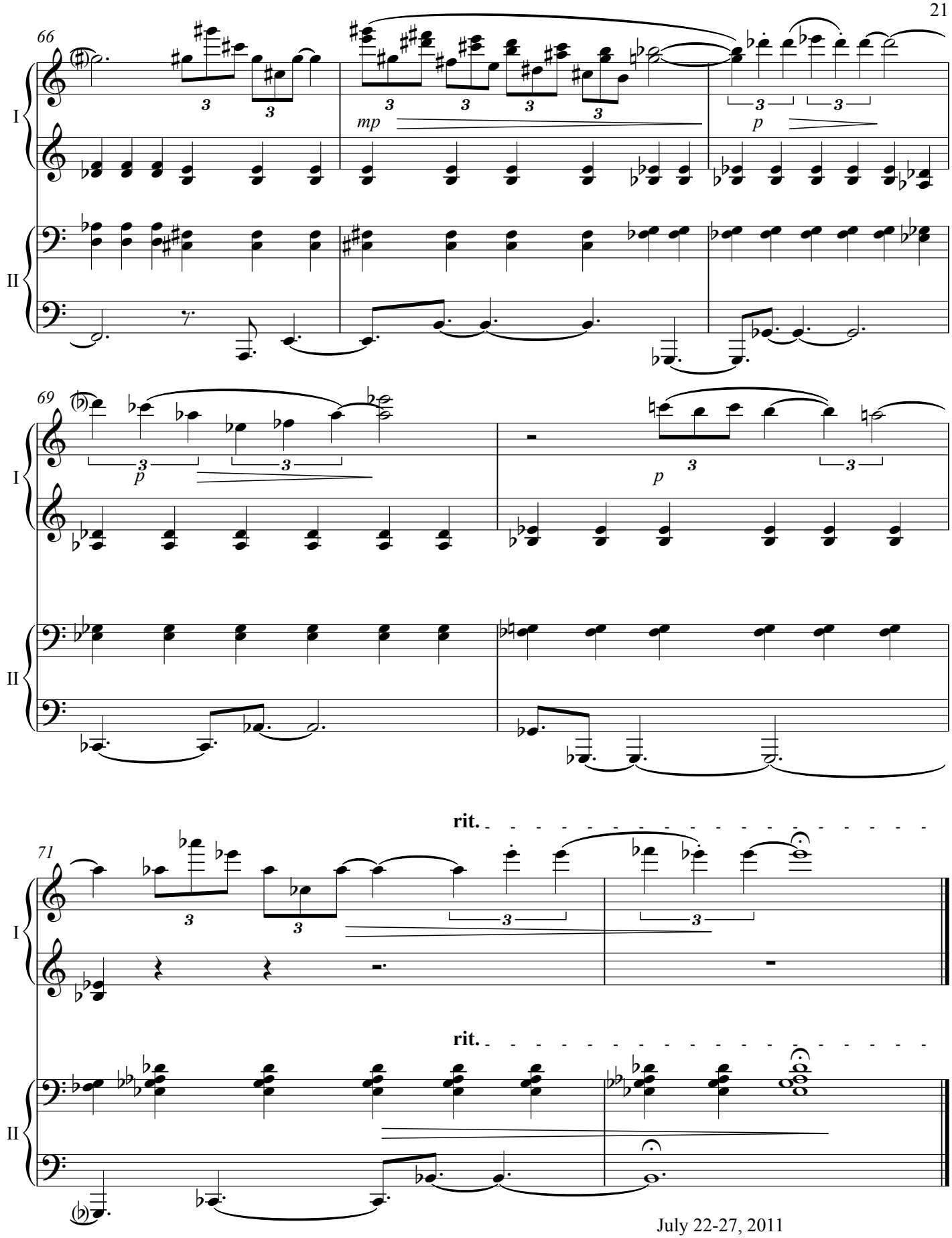
I
II
63
I
II


66
I
II
mp
p
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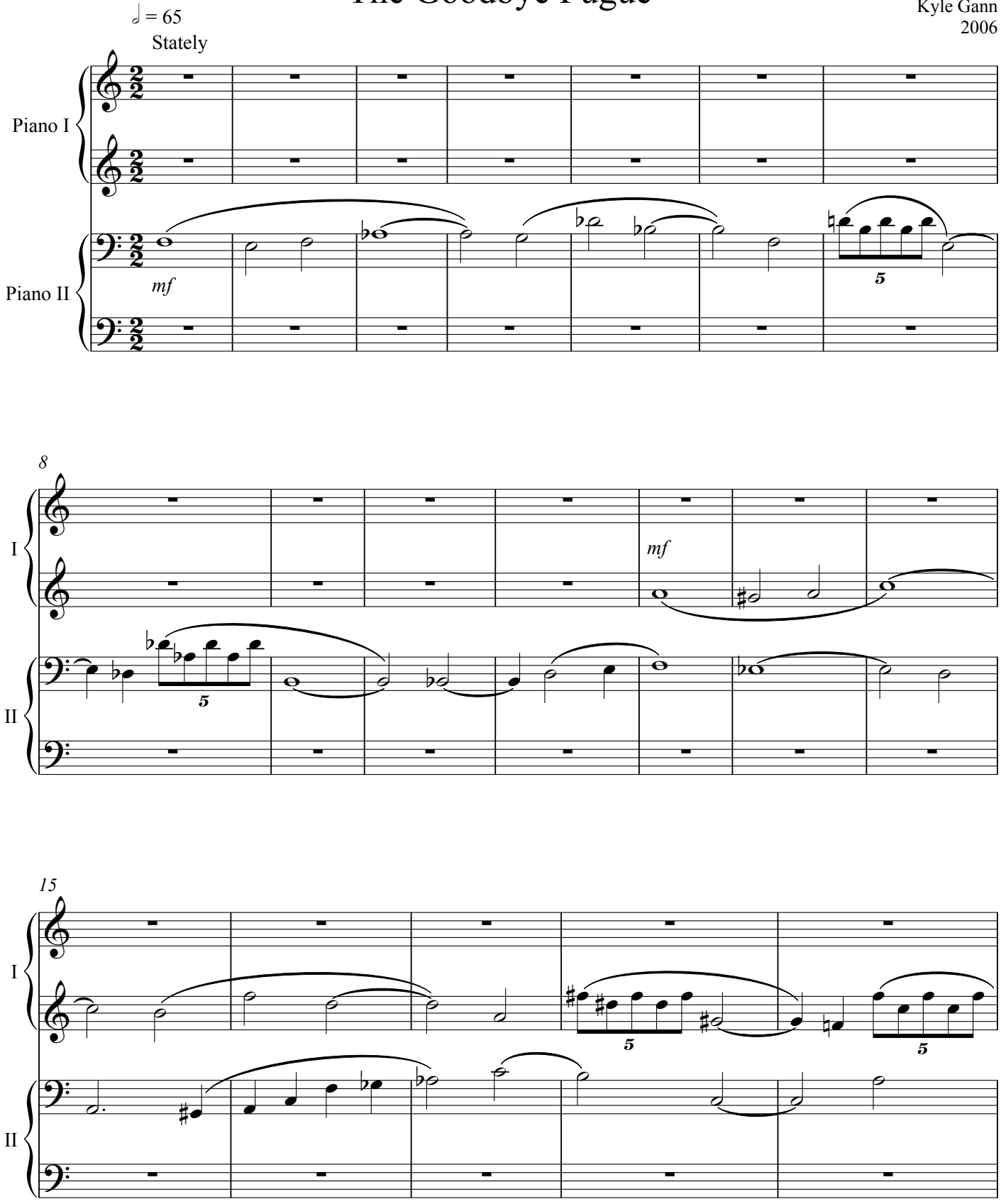
I
II
p
p
71
I
II
rit.
rit.

The Goodbye Fugue

Kyle Gann
2006



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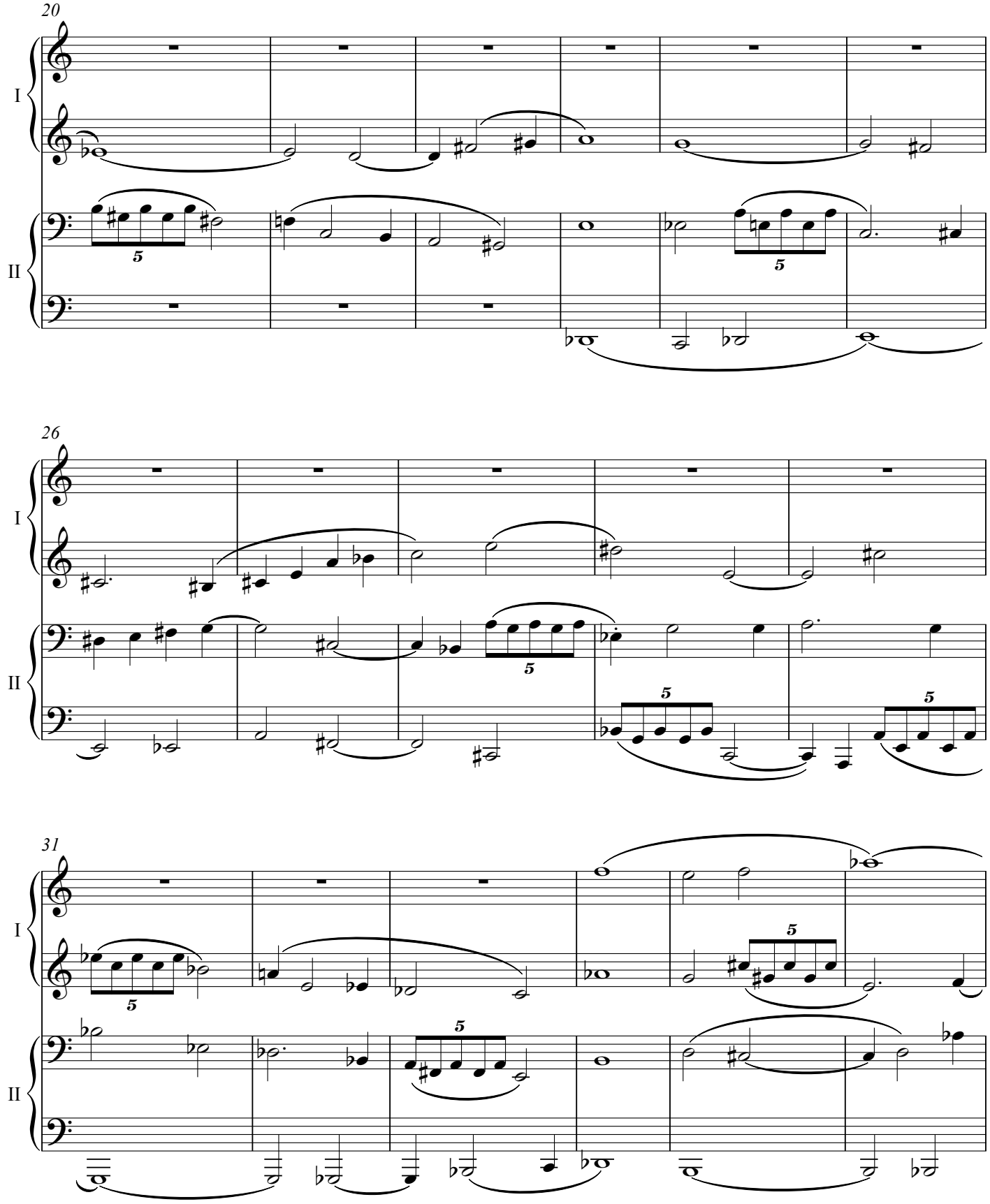
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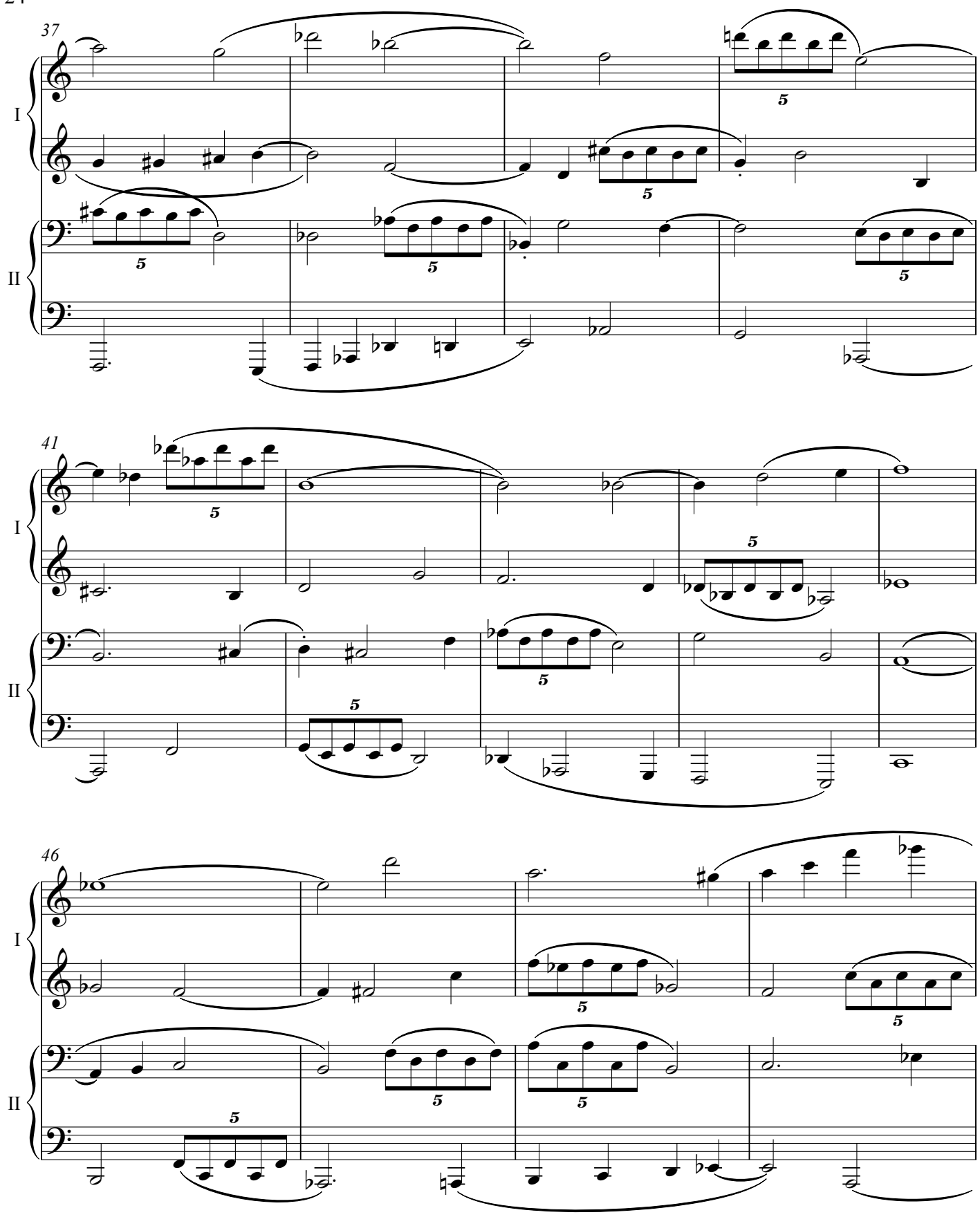
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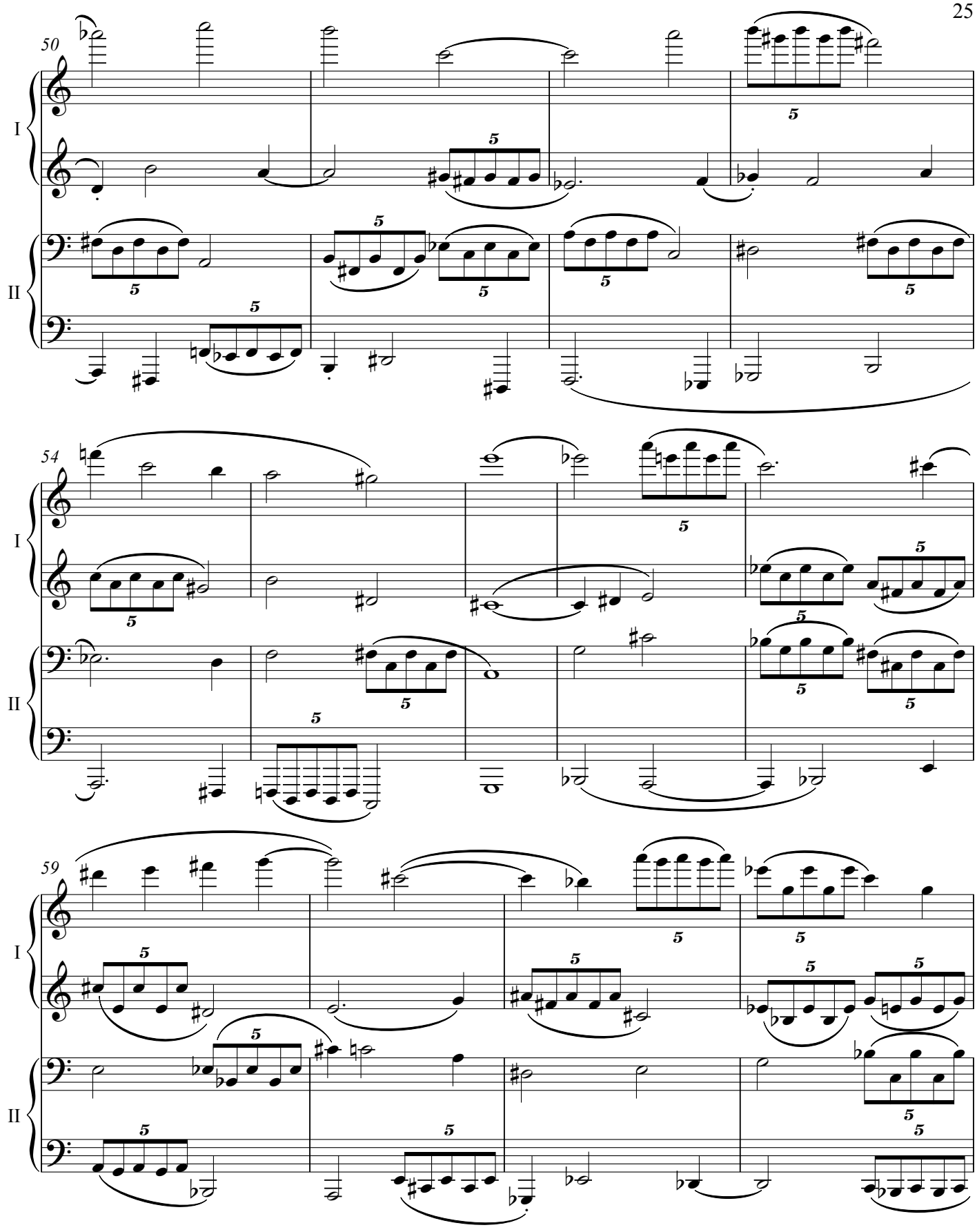
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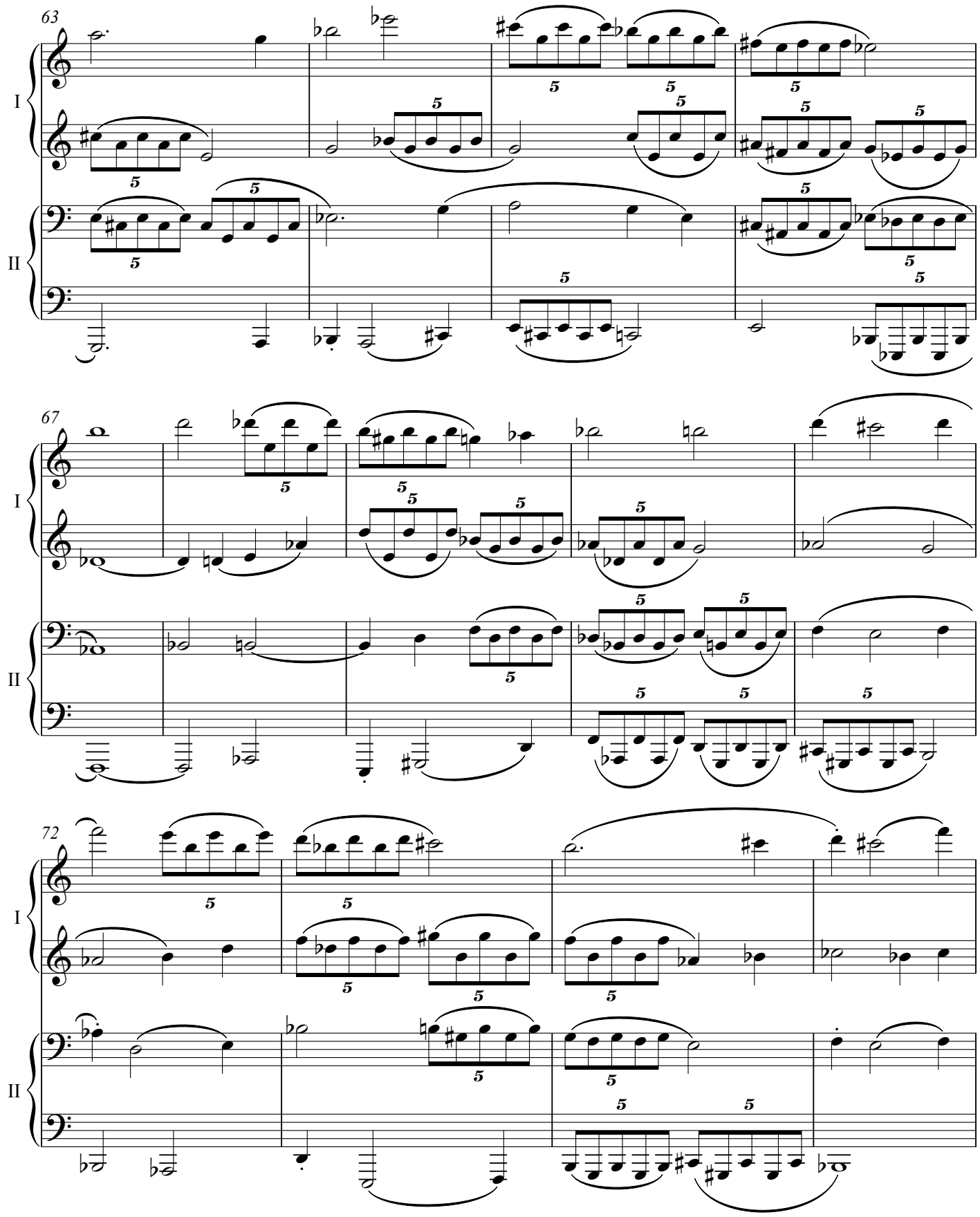
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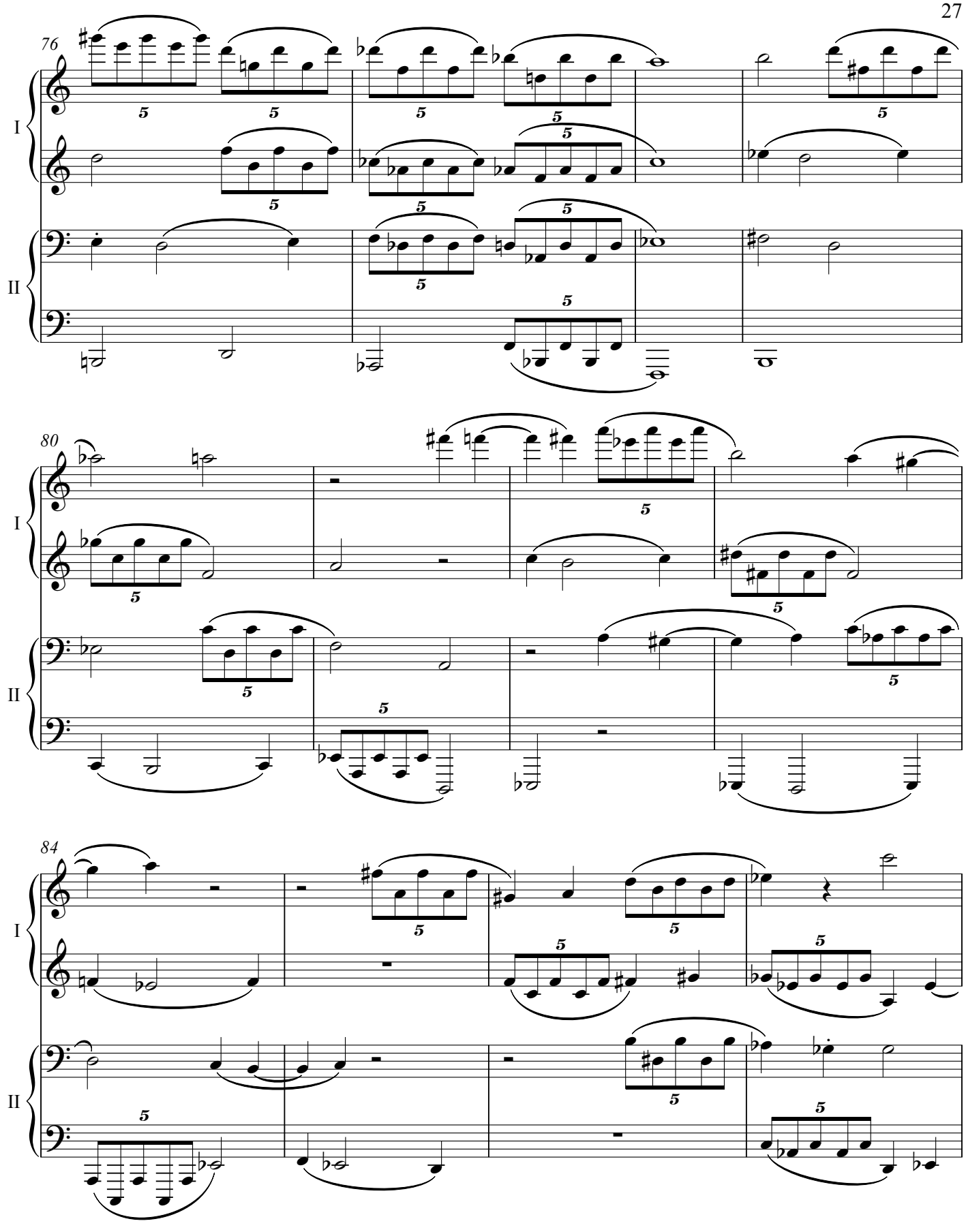
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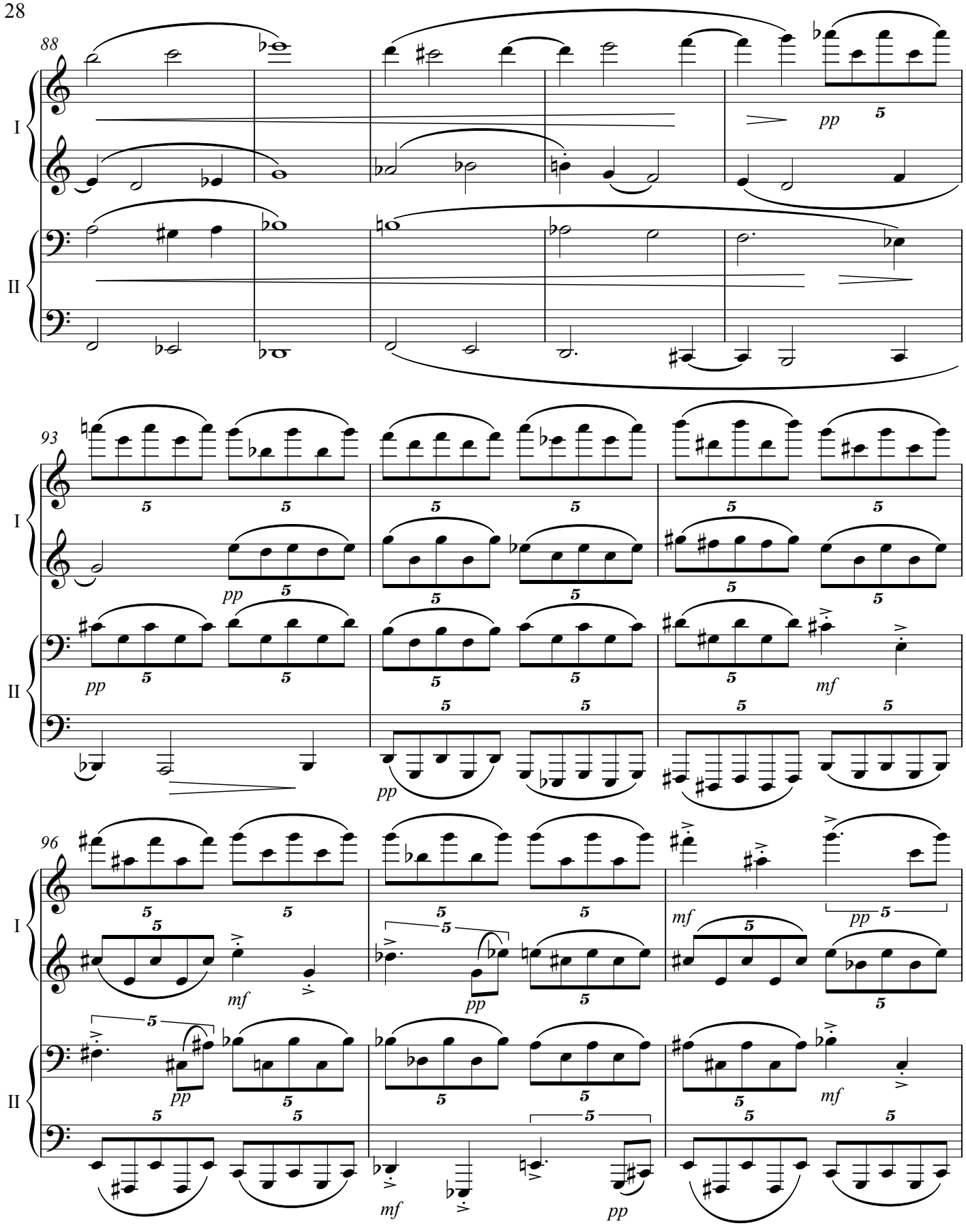
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I
II
pp
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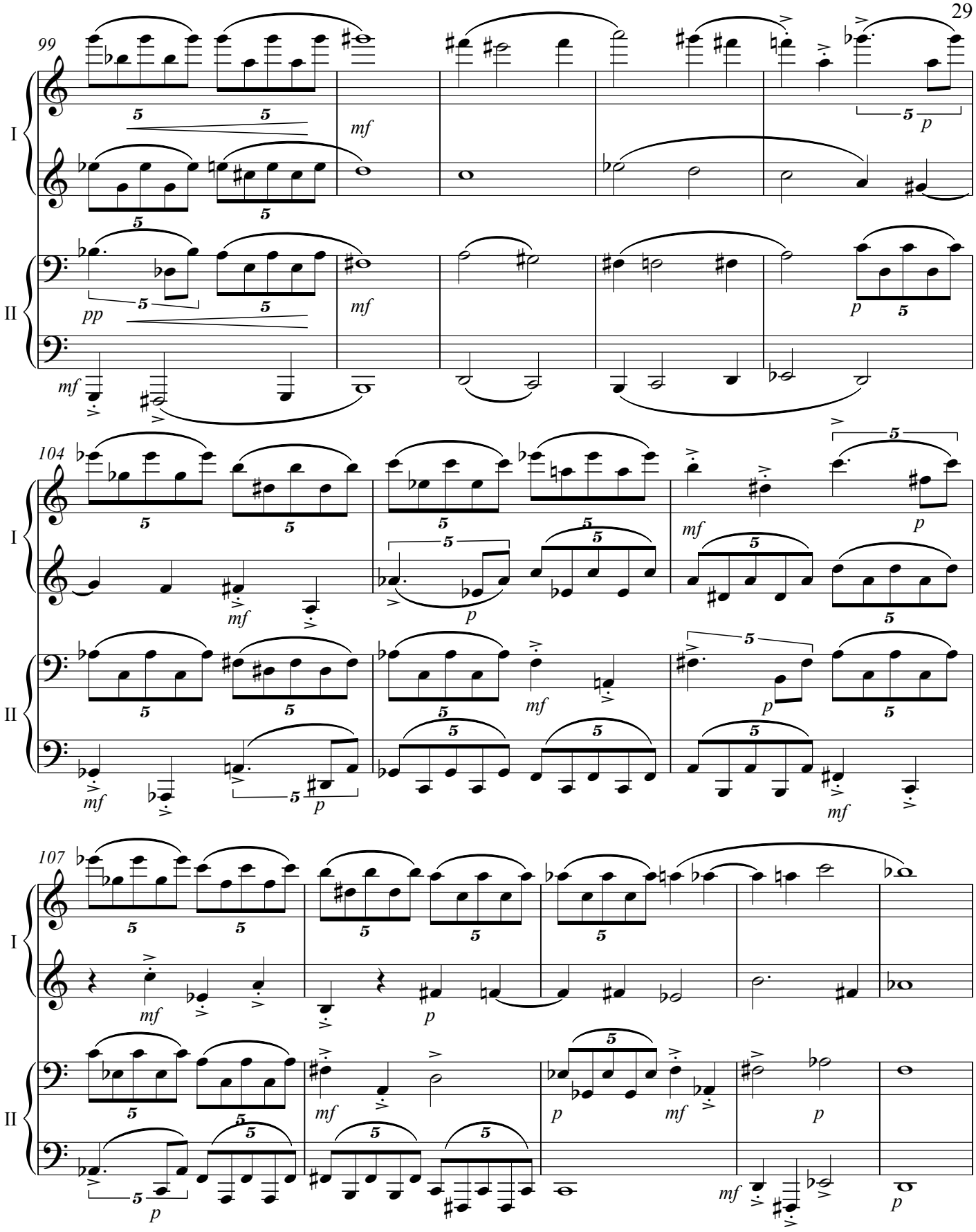
pp
mf
96
mf
pp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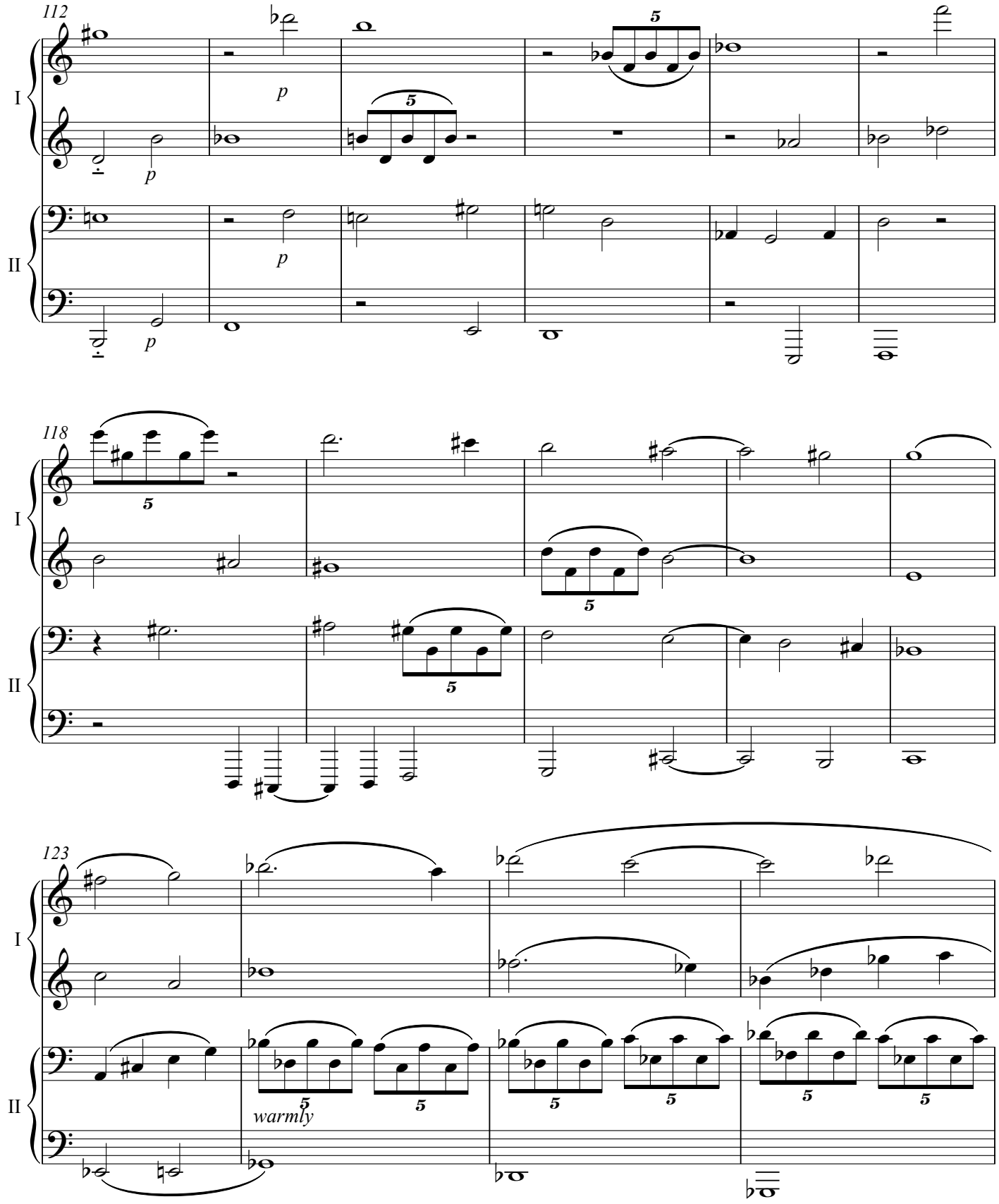
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p
p
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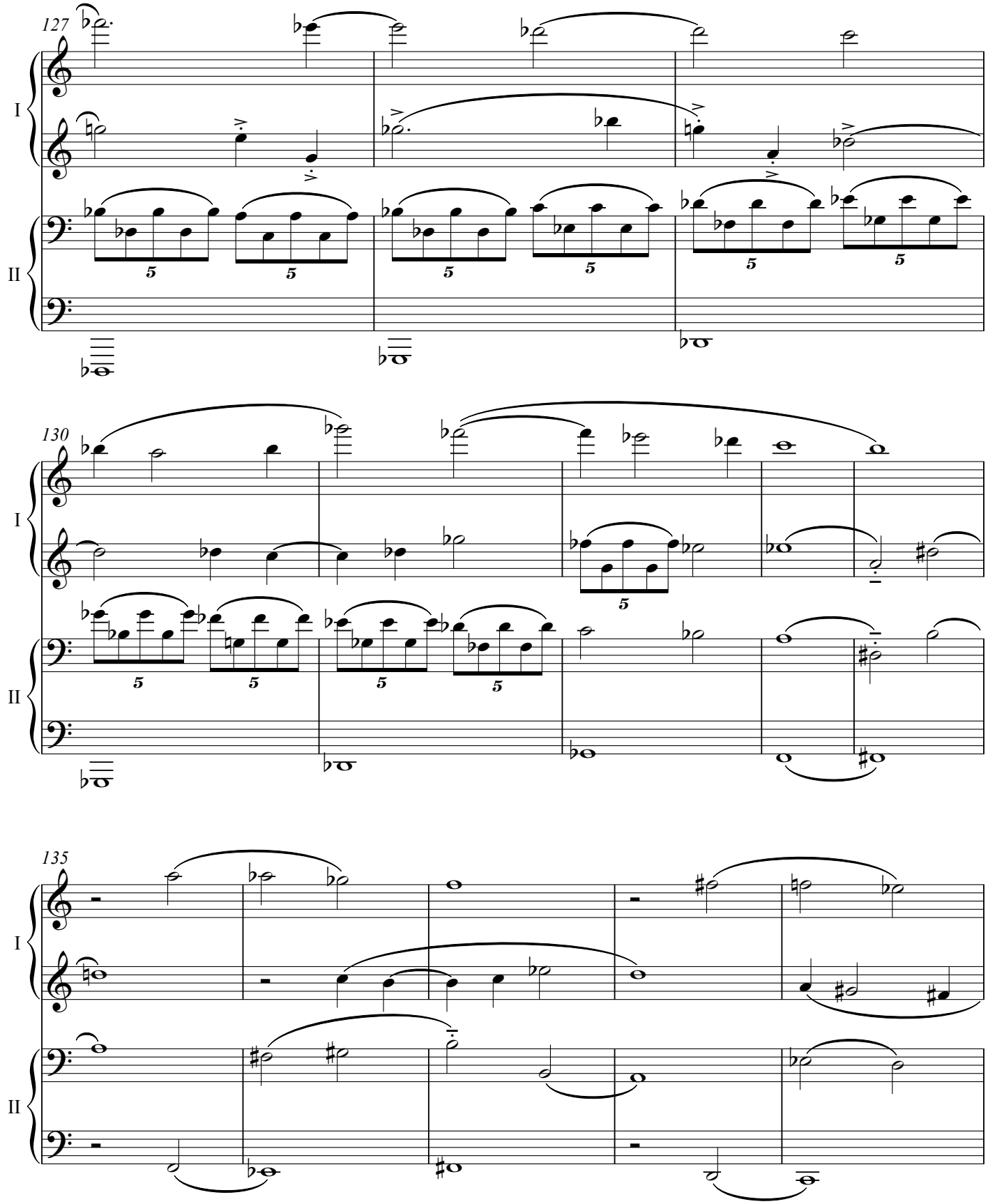
5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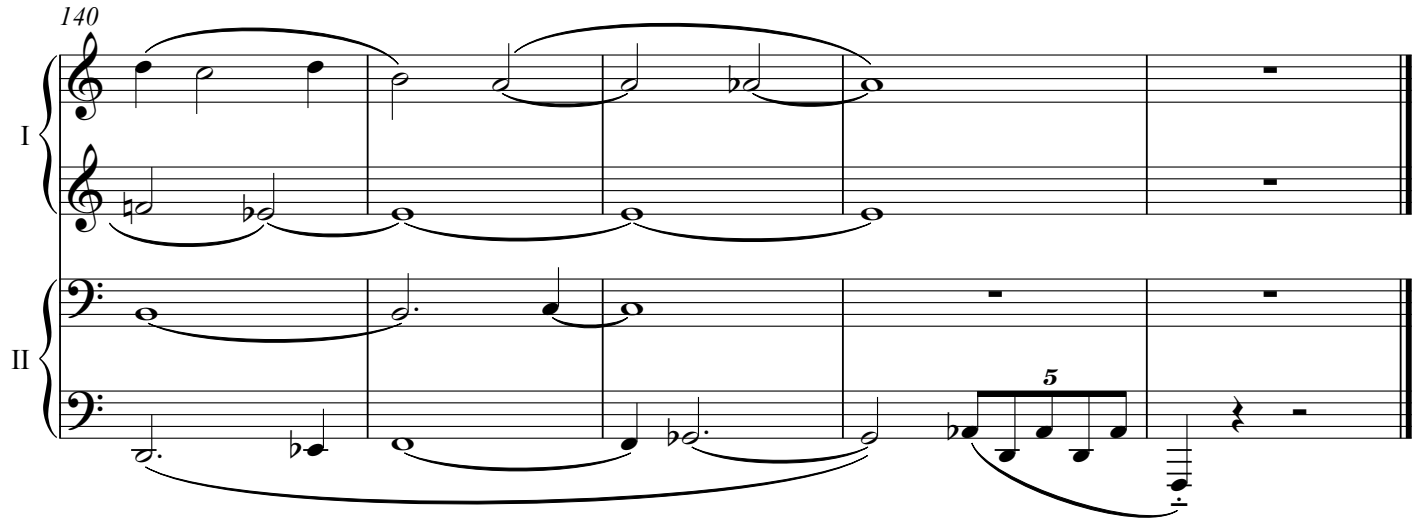
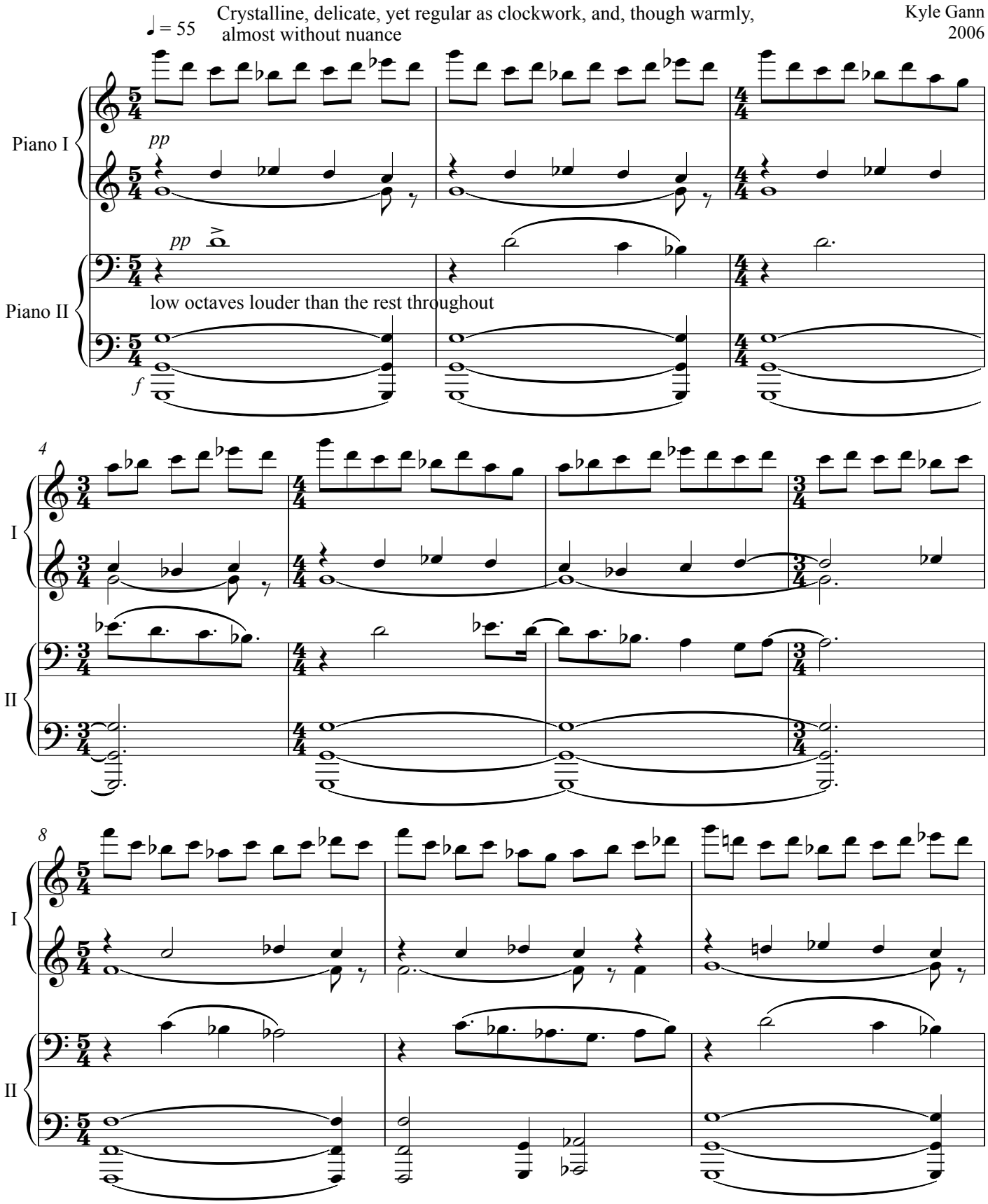


March 18 - April 17, 2006
Revised June 17, 2006
Fairbanks, Alaska /
Germantown, NY

Frigid Azure



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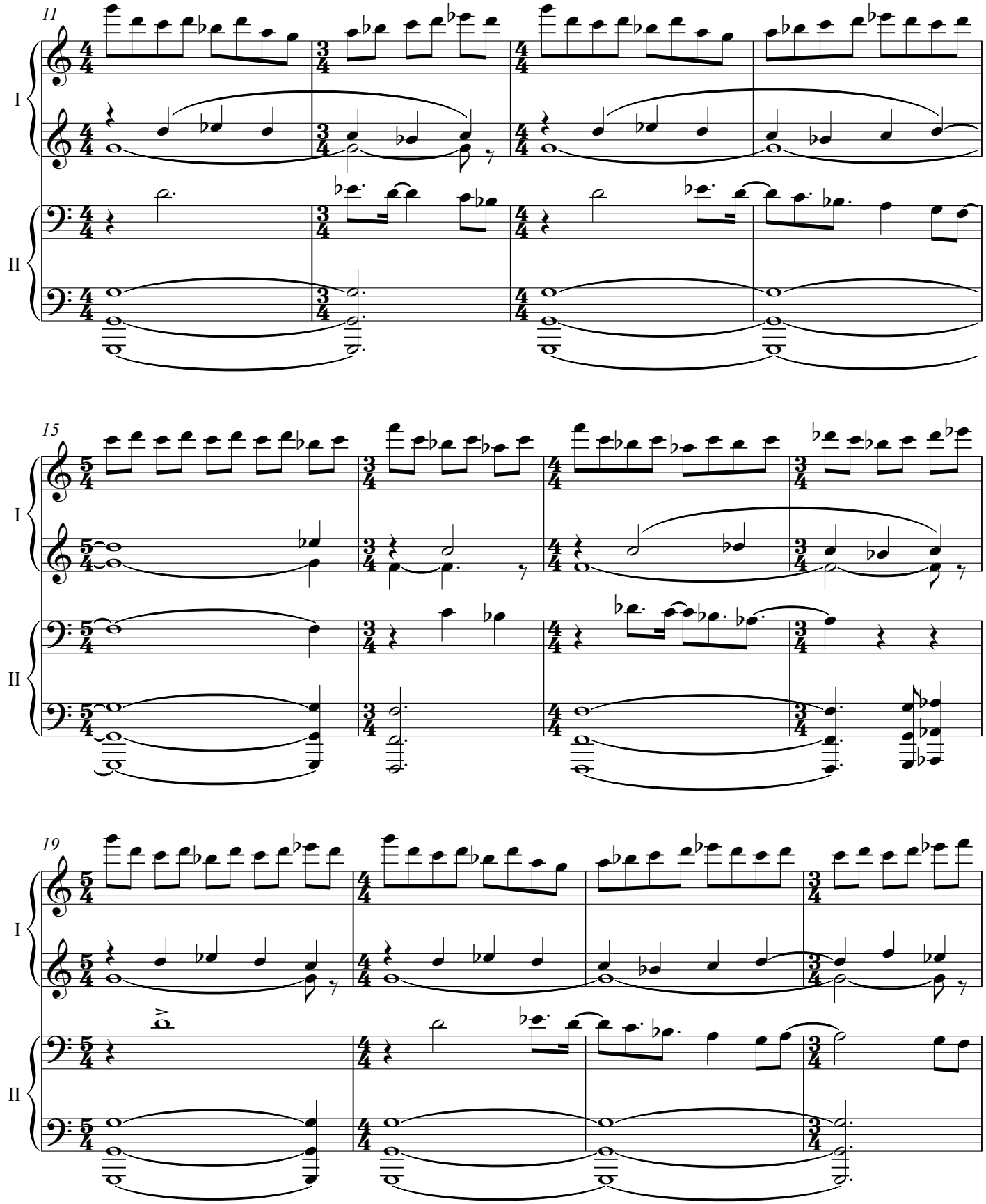
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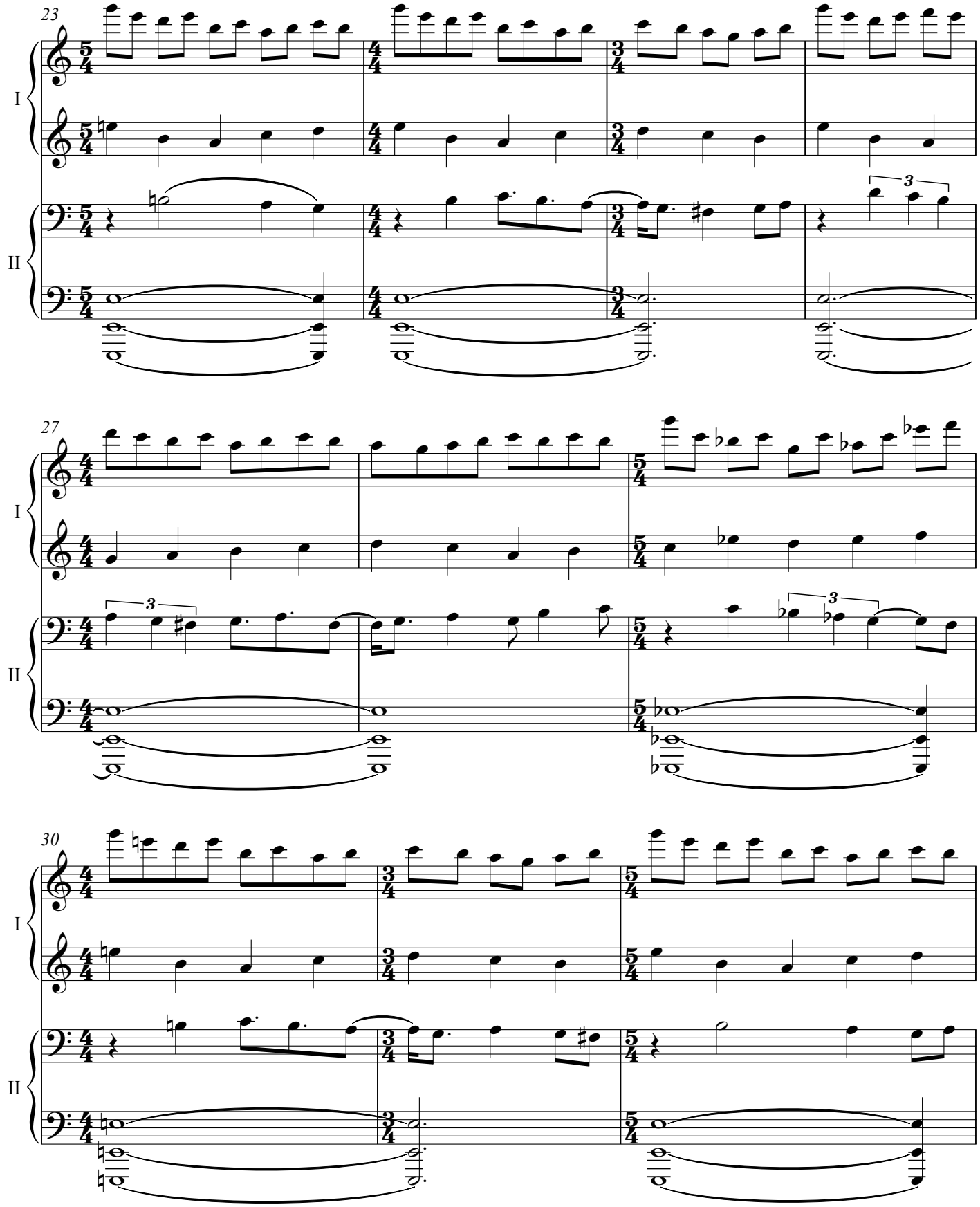
II
19
I
II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I
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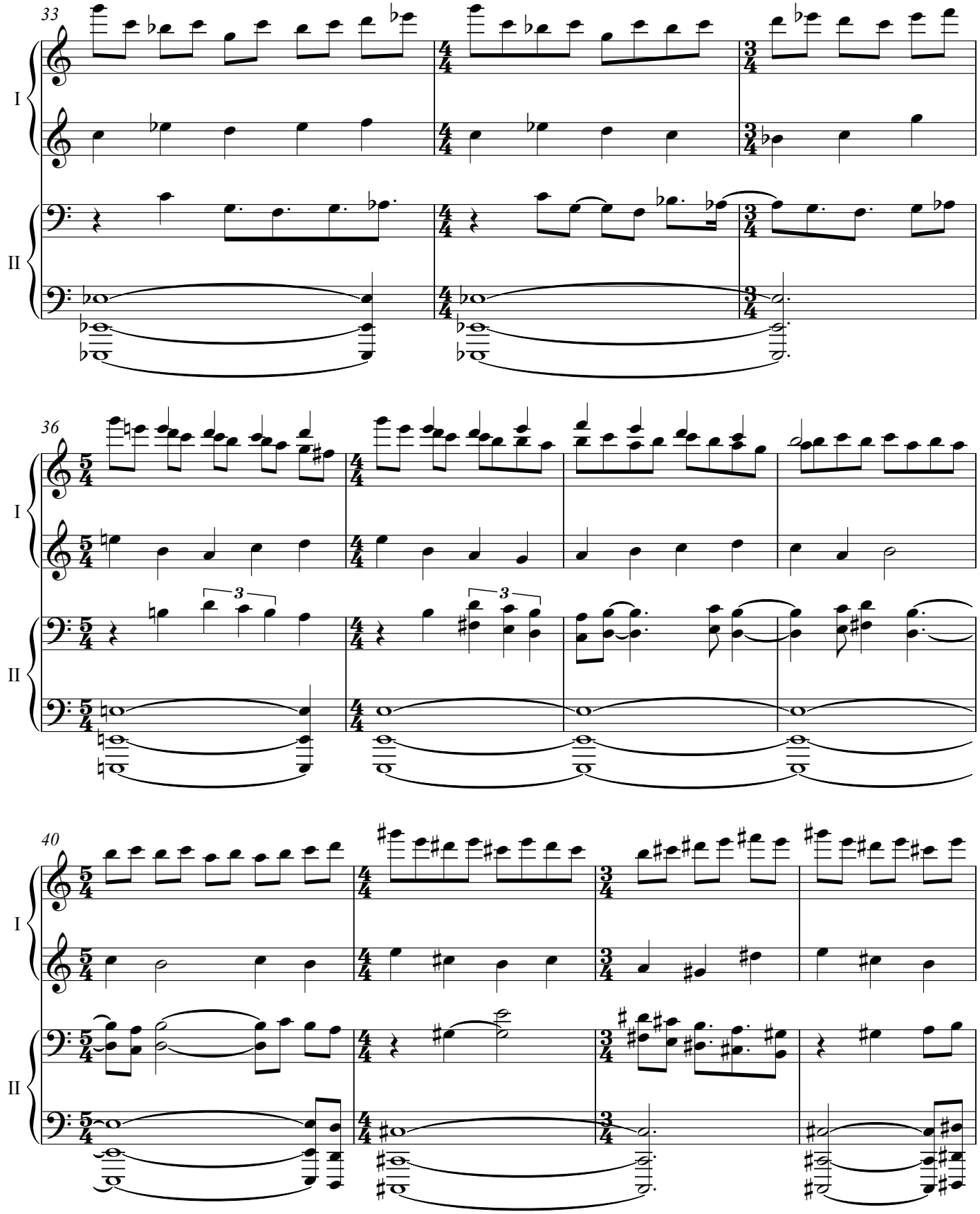
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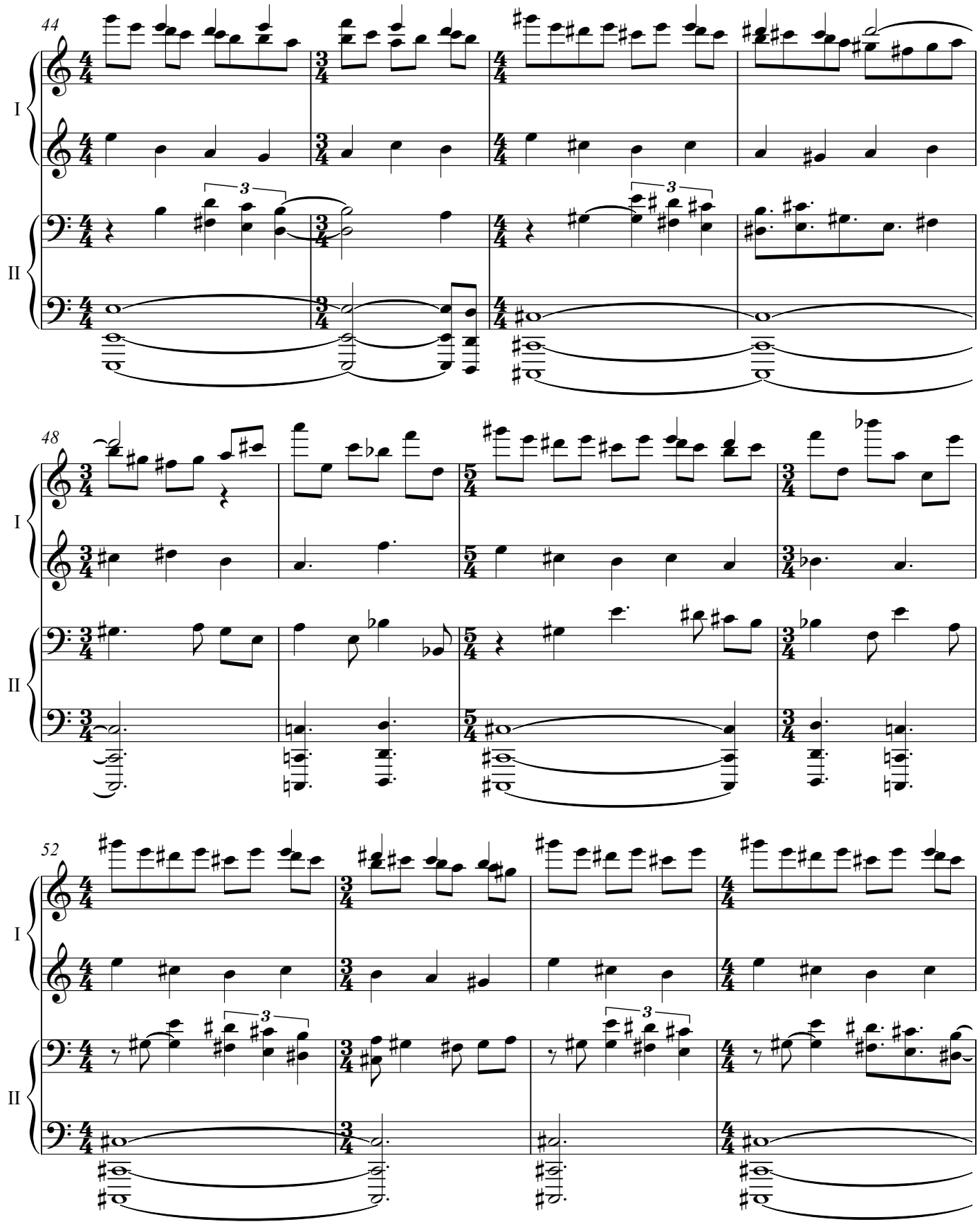
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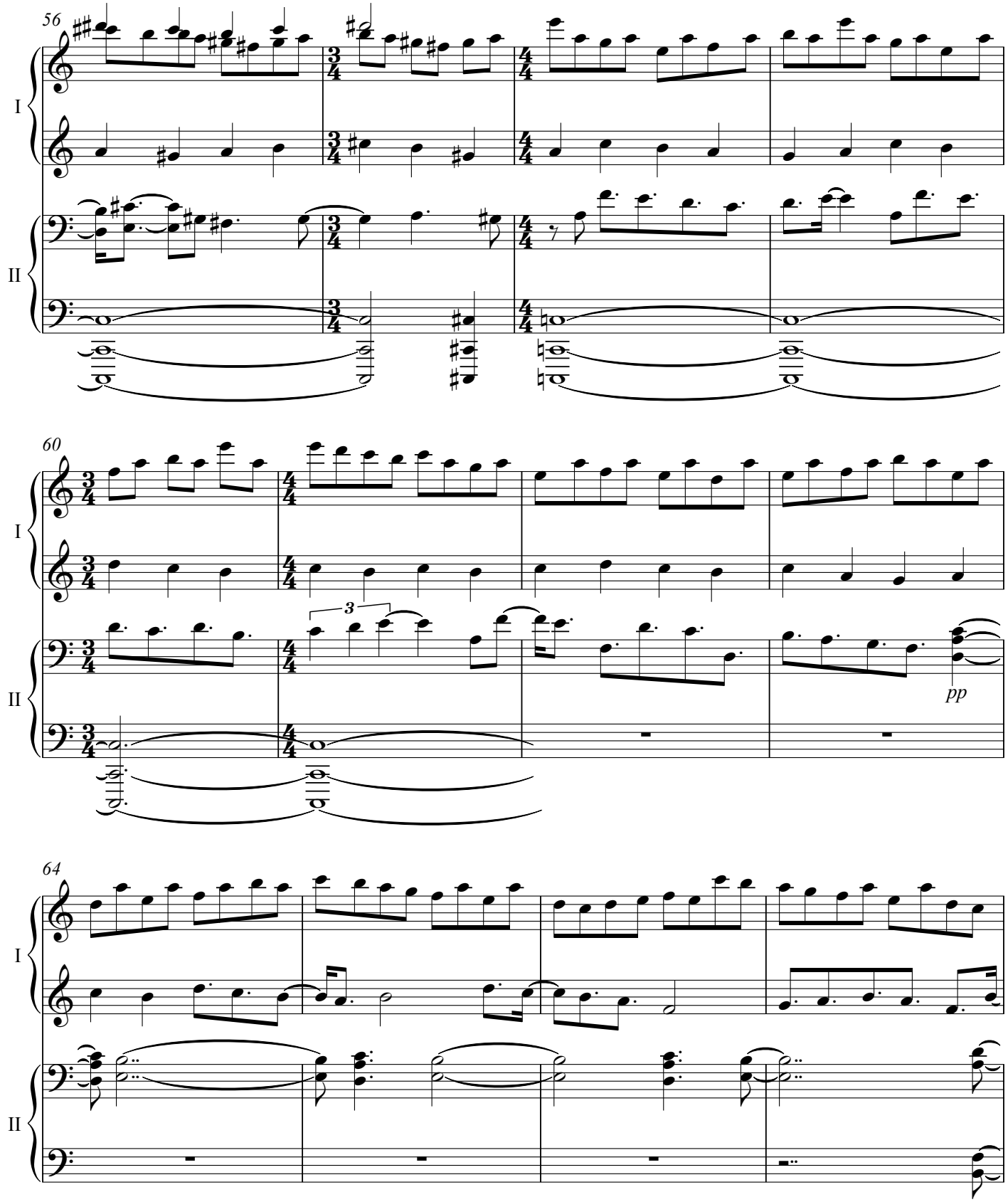
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I
II
60
I
II
3
pp
64
I
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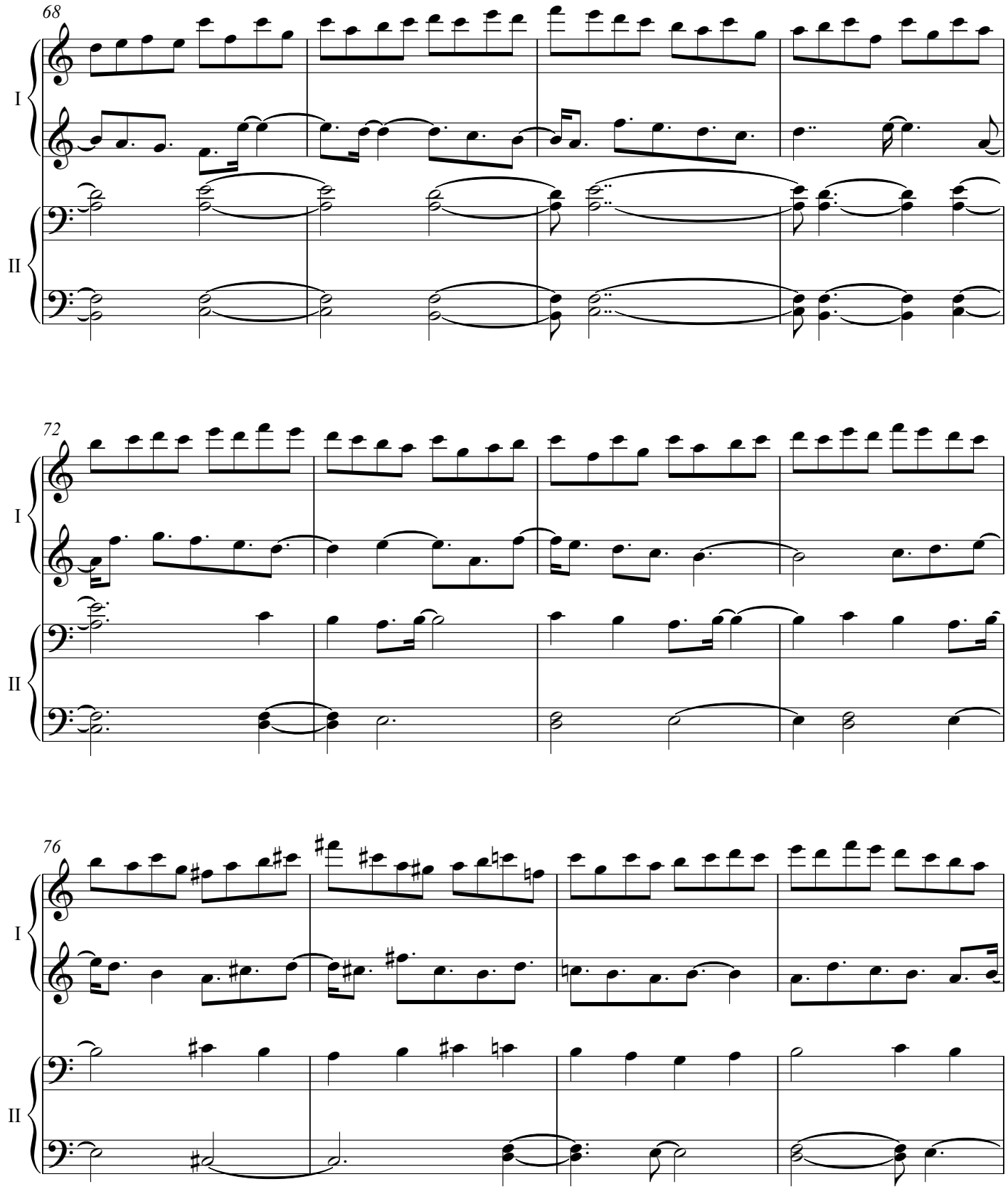
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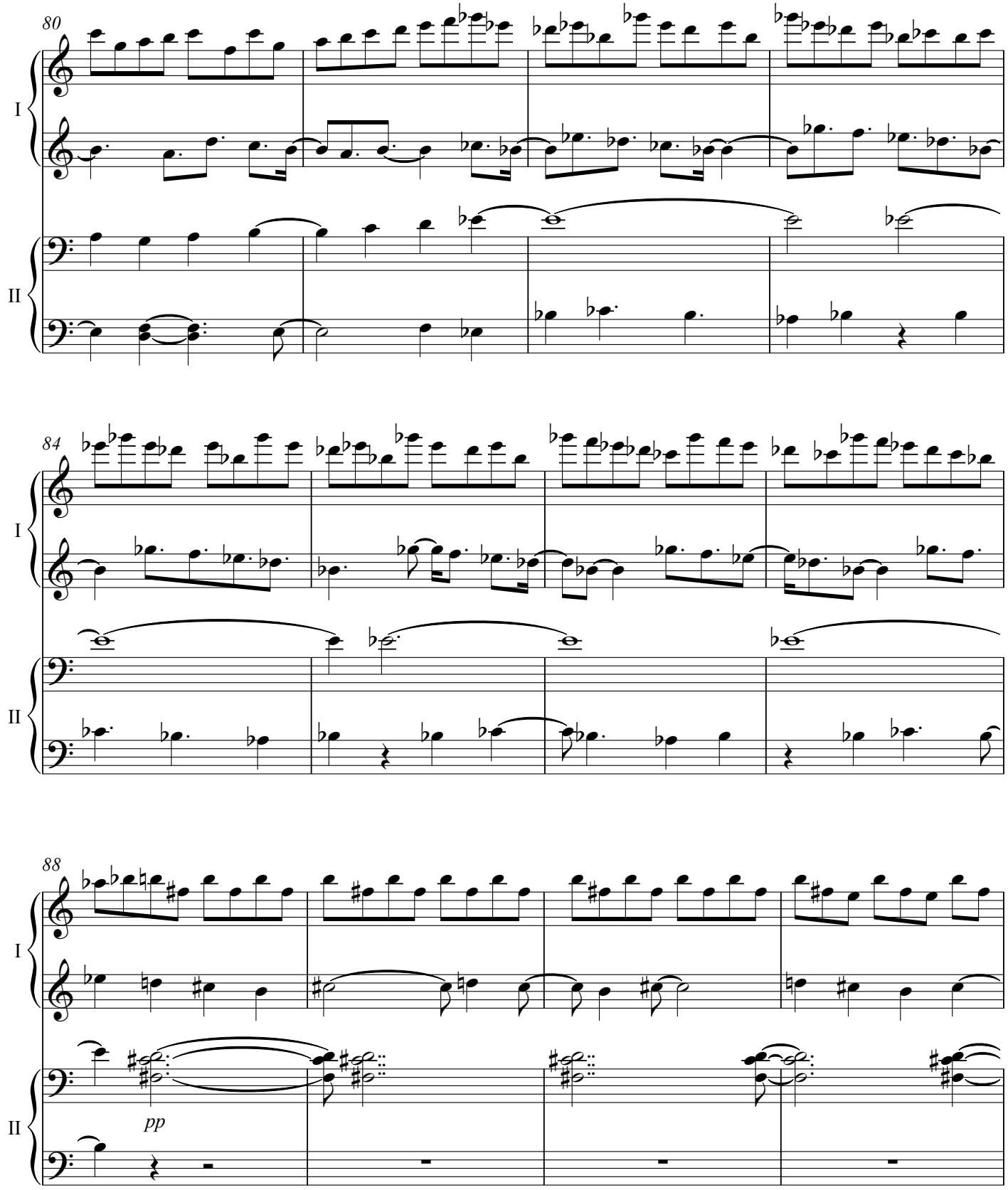
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I
II
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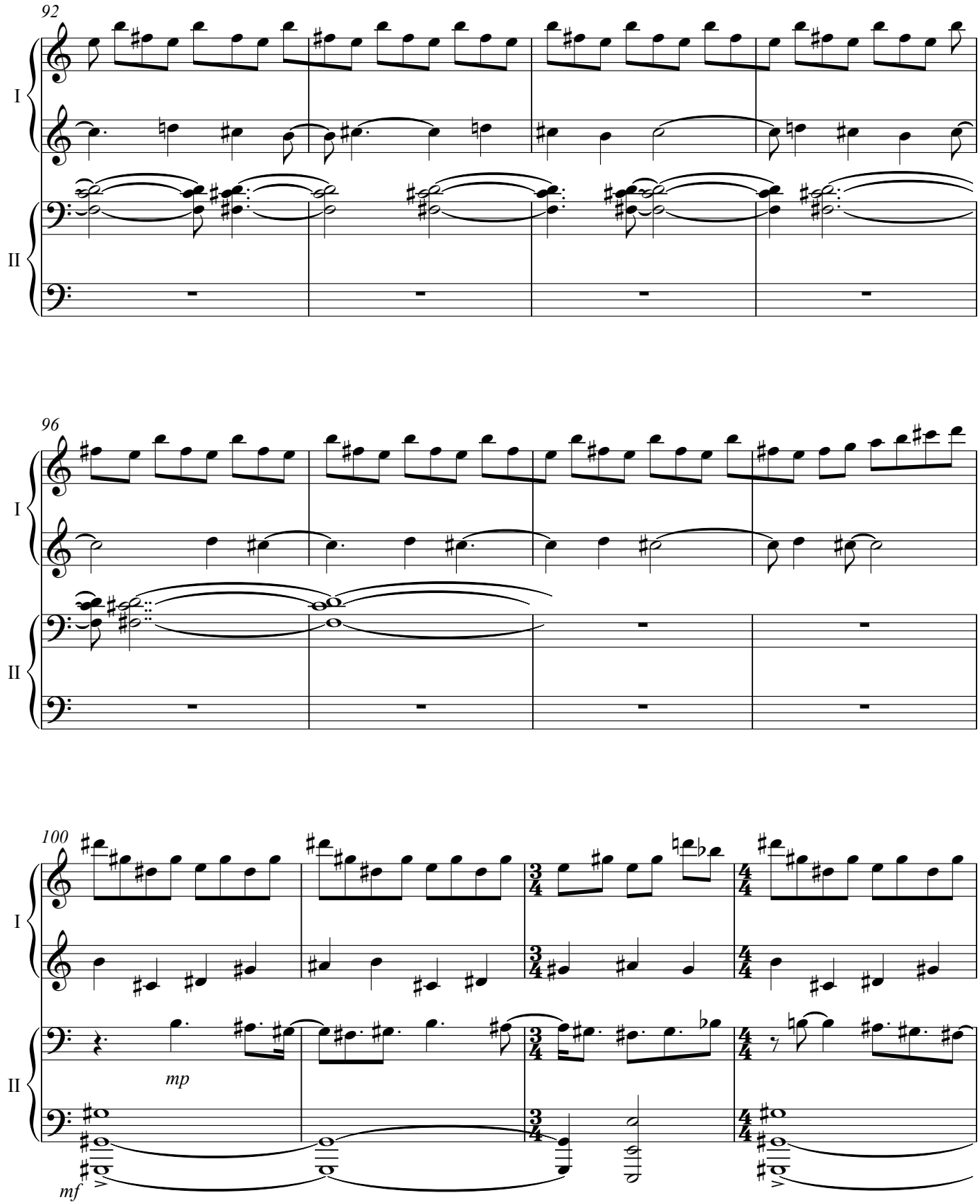
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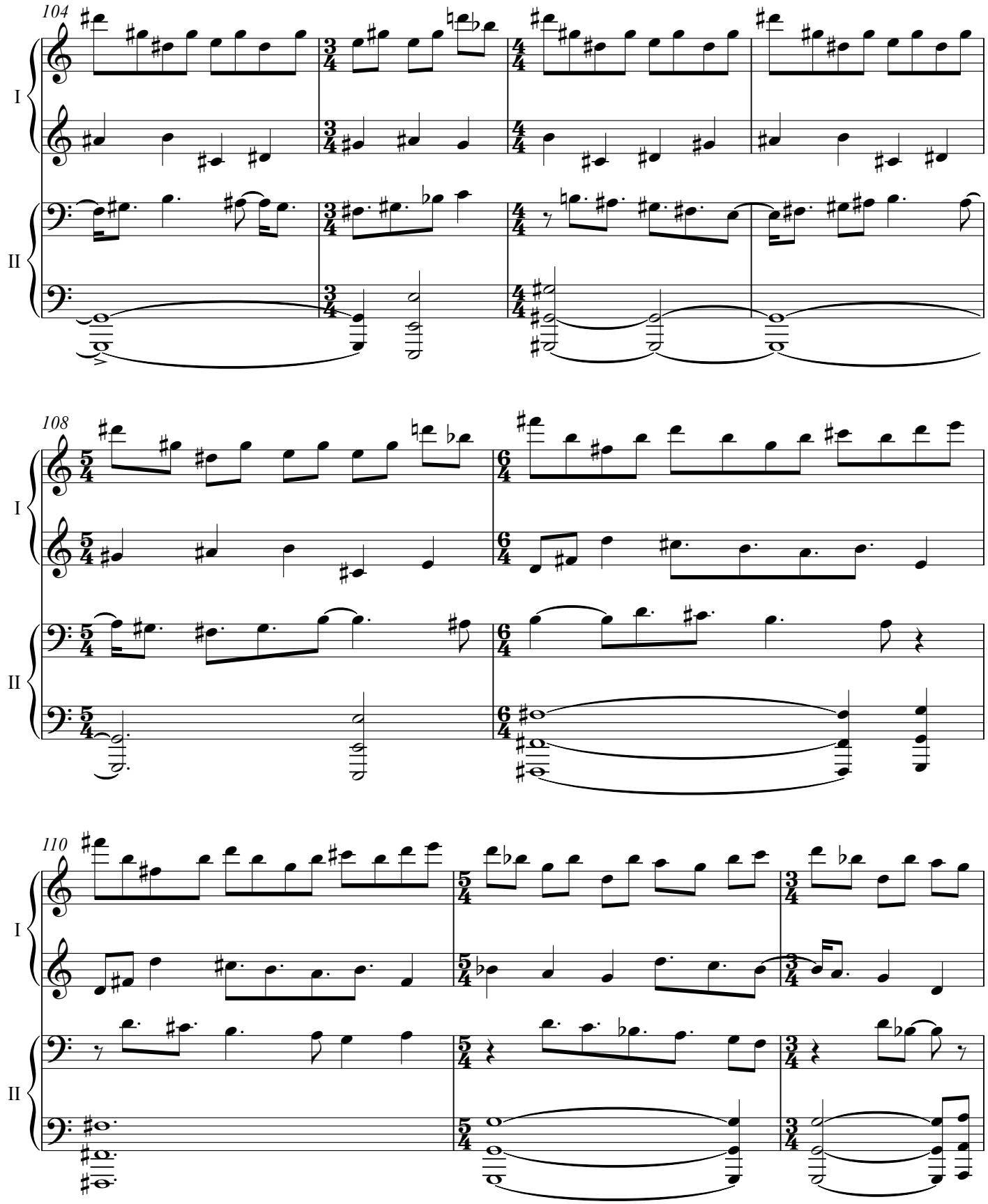
I
II
mp
mf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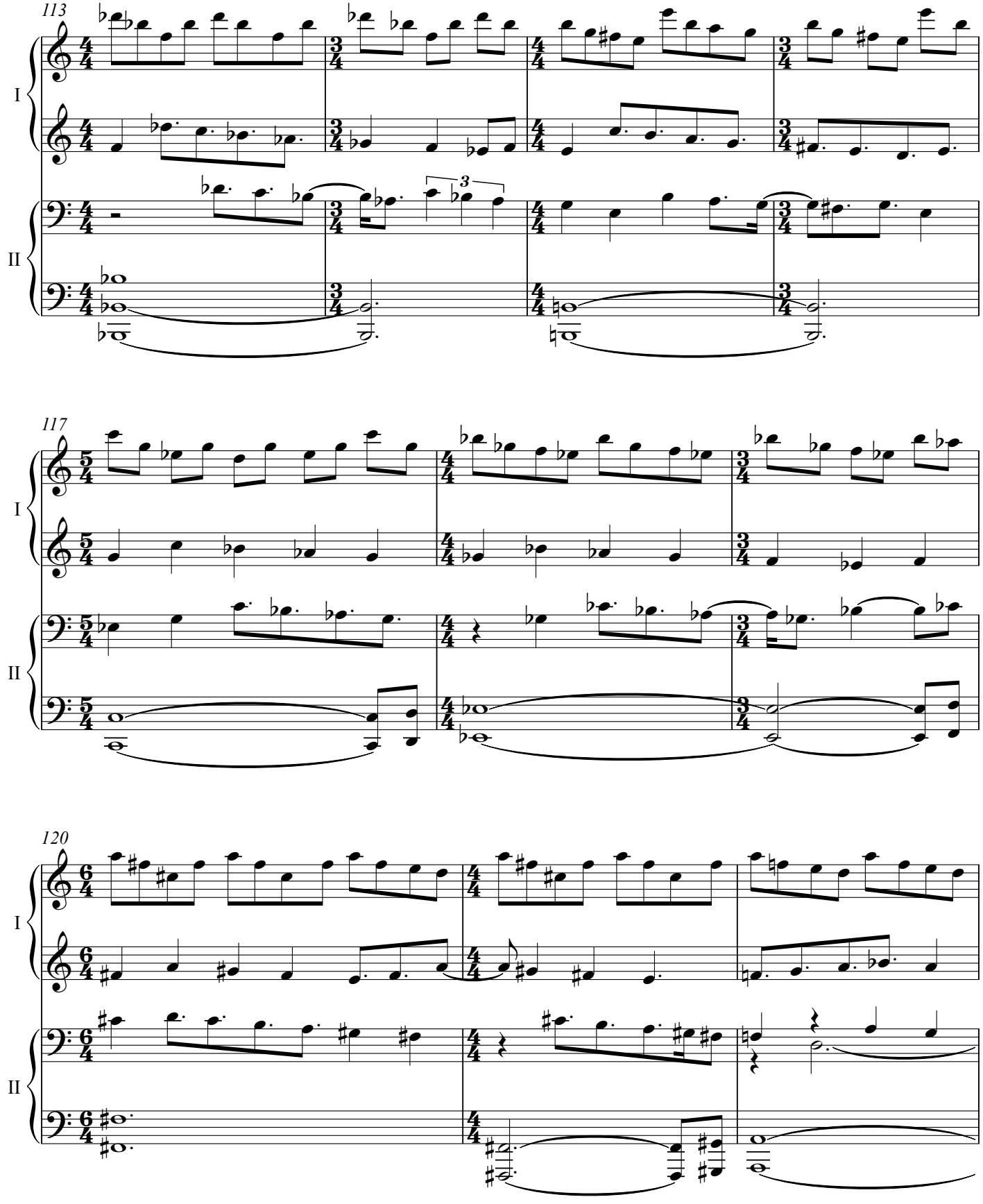
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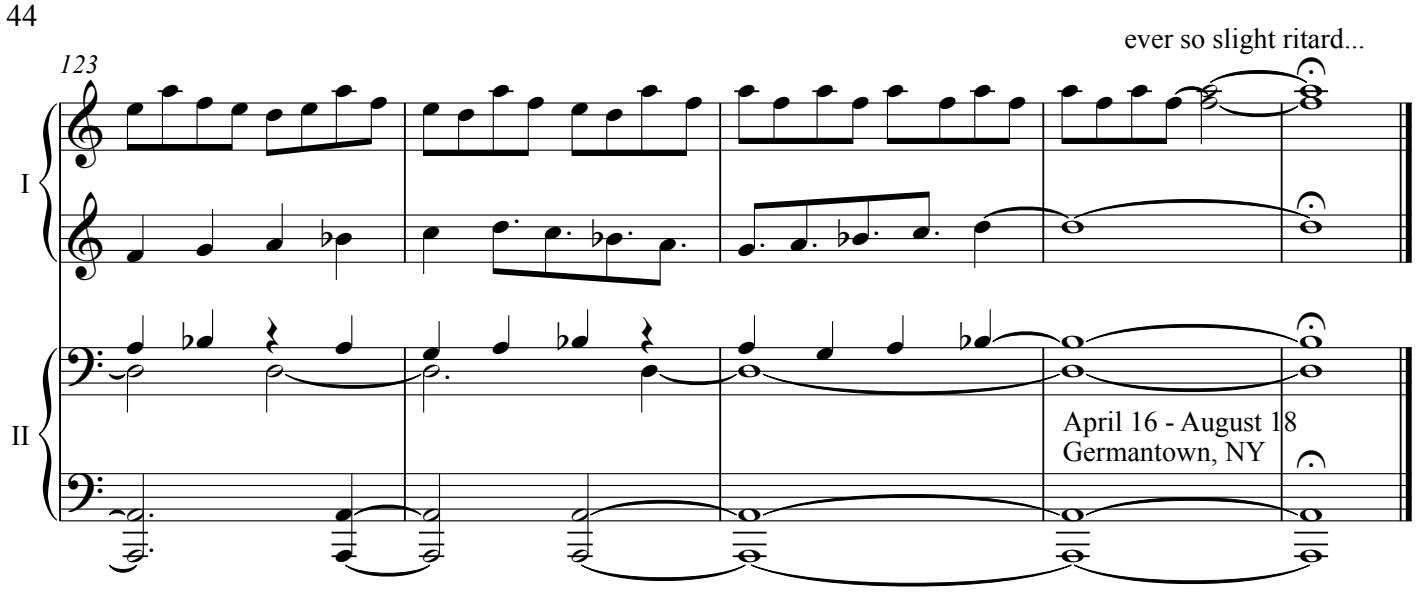
ever so slight ritard...
123
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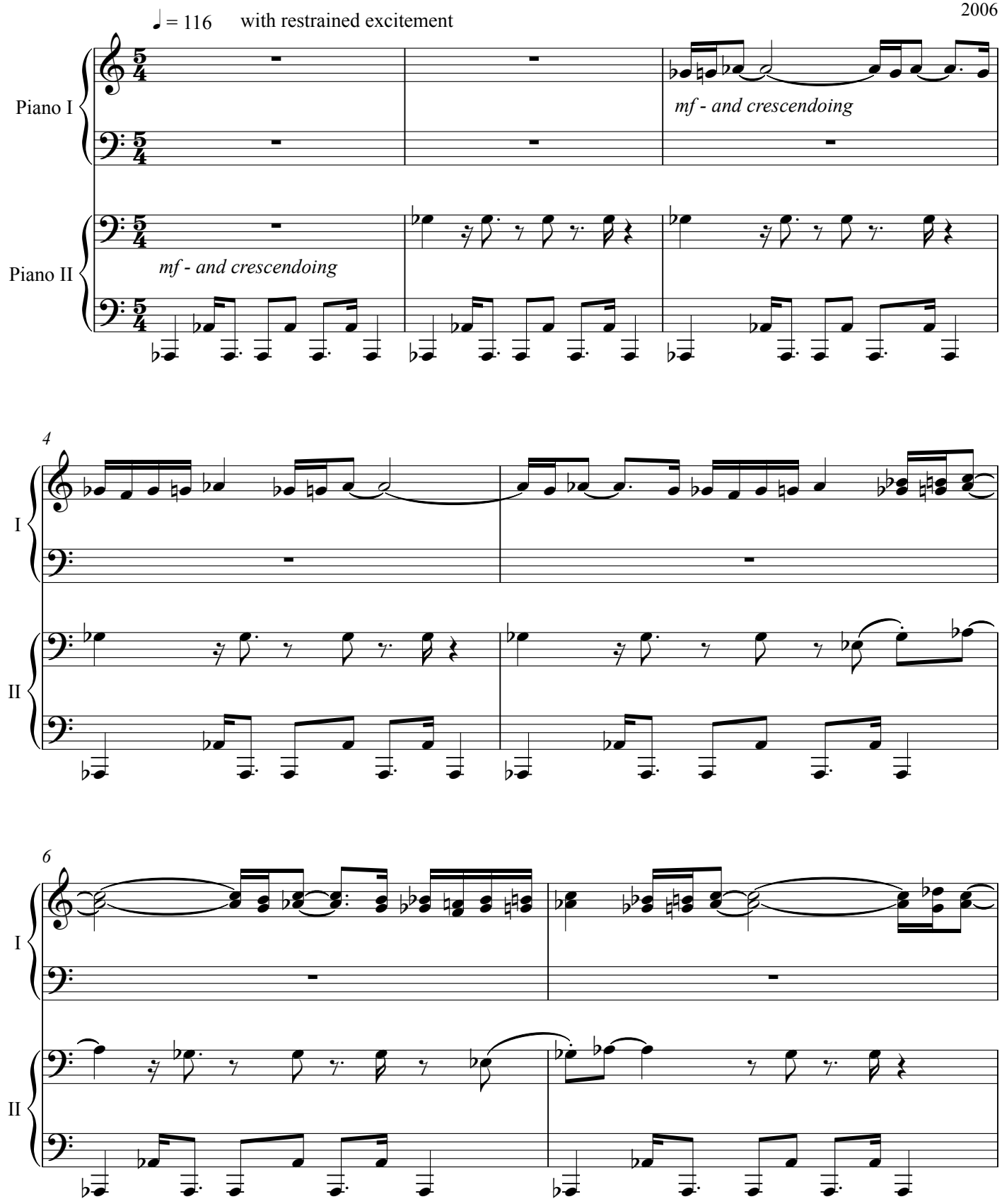
II
April 16 - August 18
Germantown, NY

Don't Touch My Pint

Kyle Gann
2006



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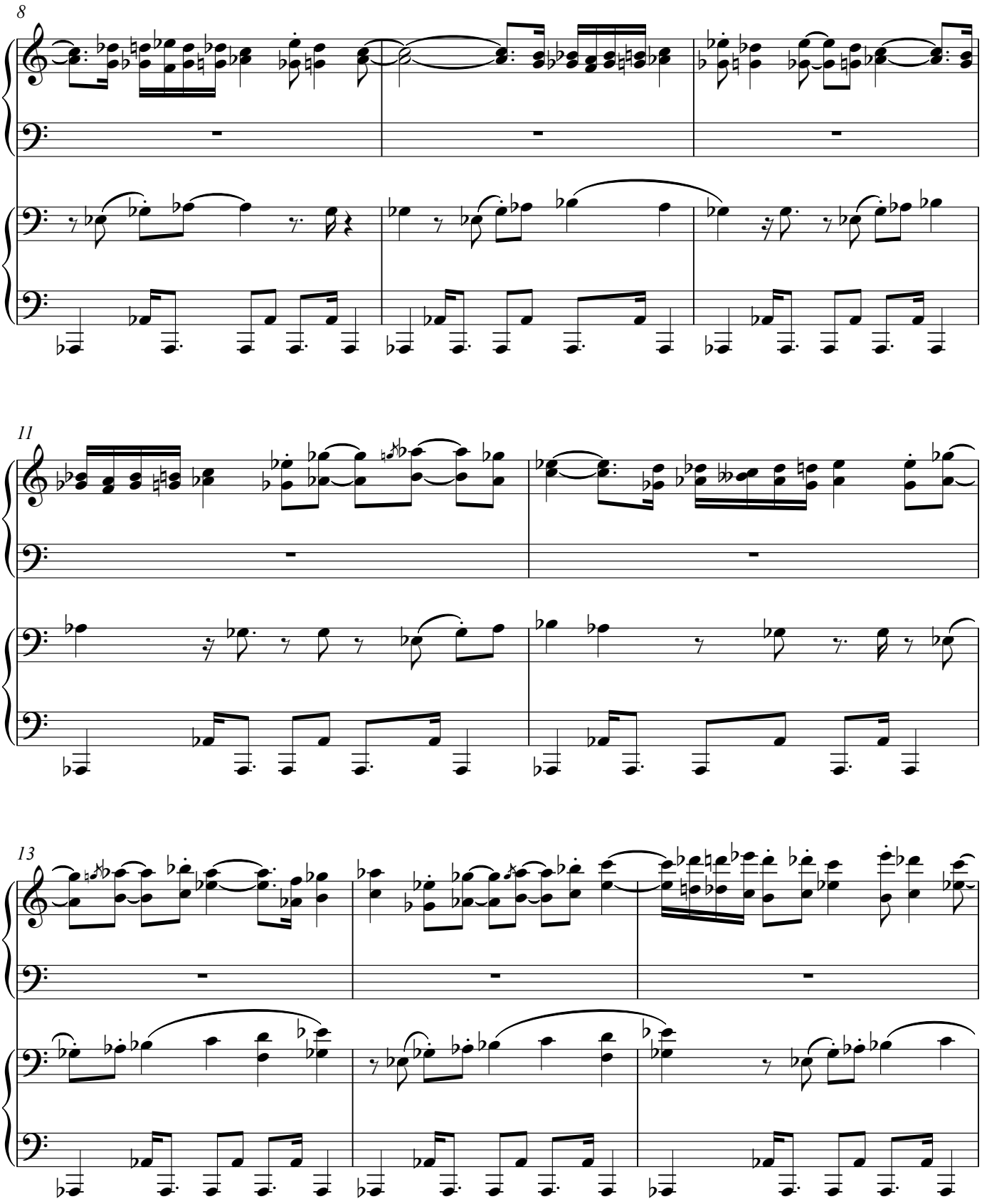
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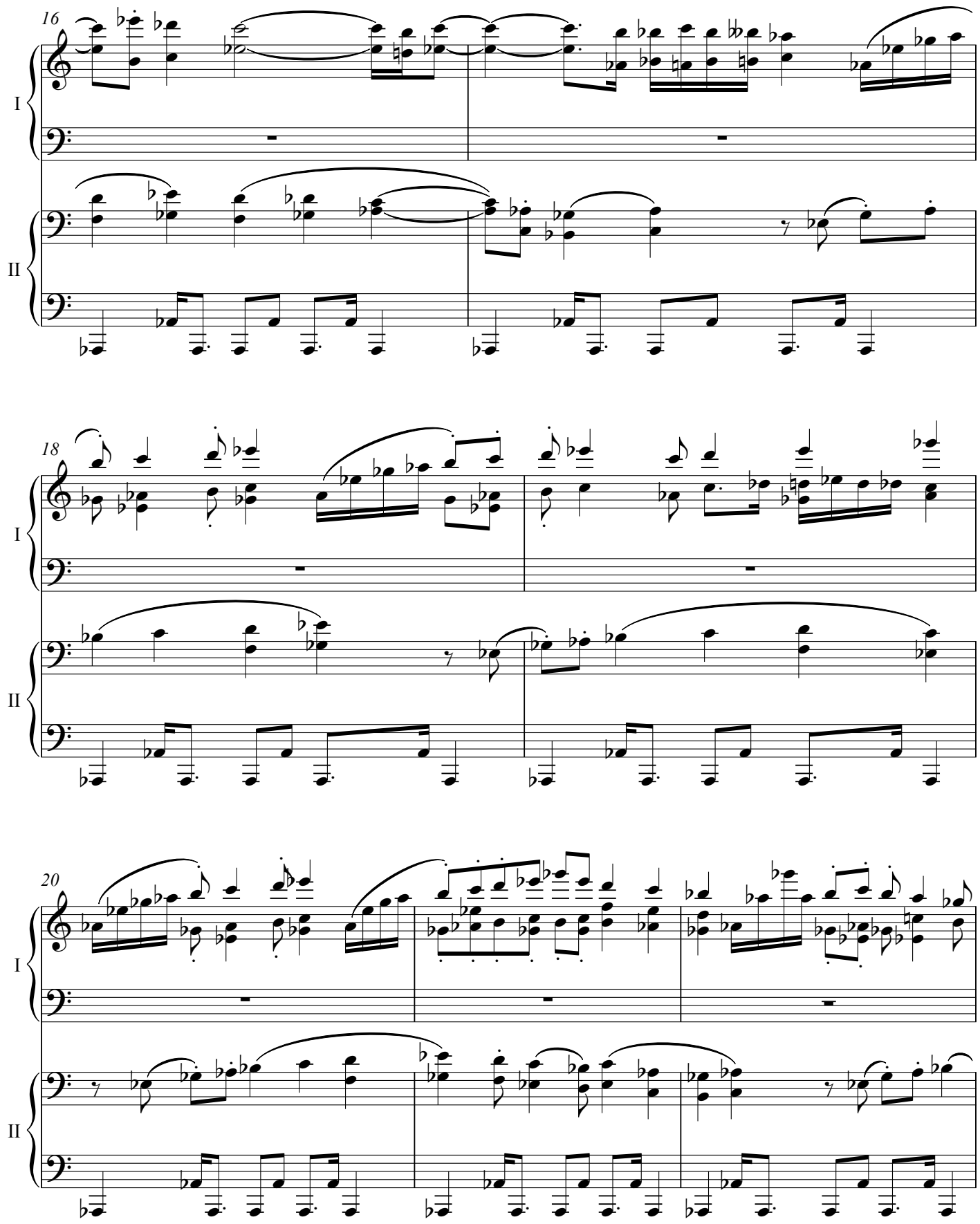
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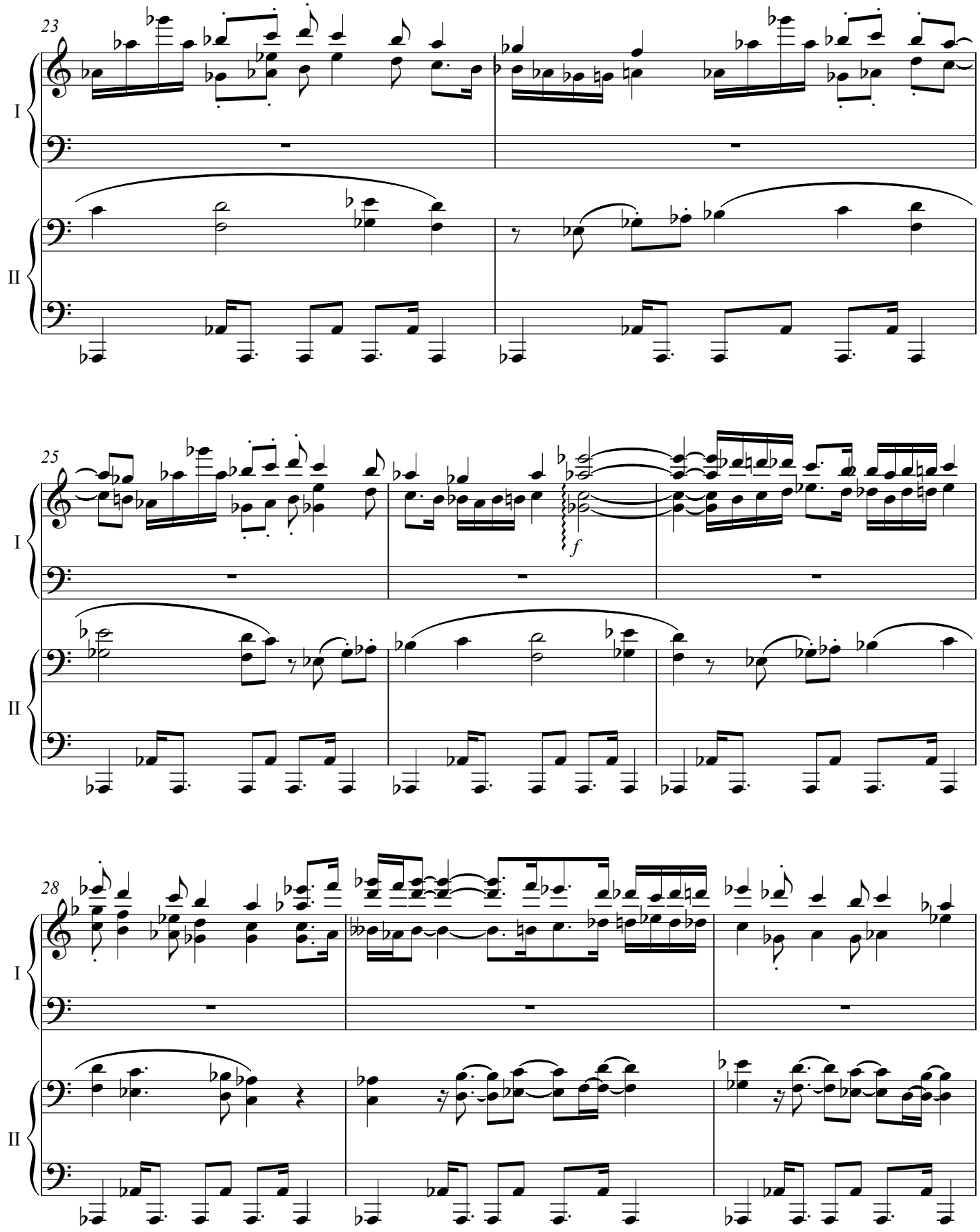
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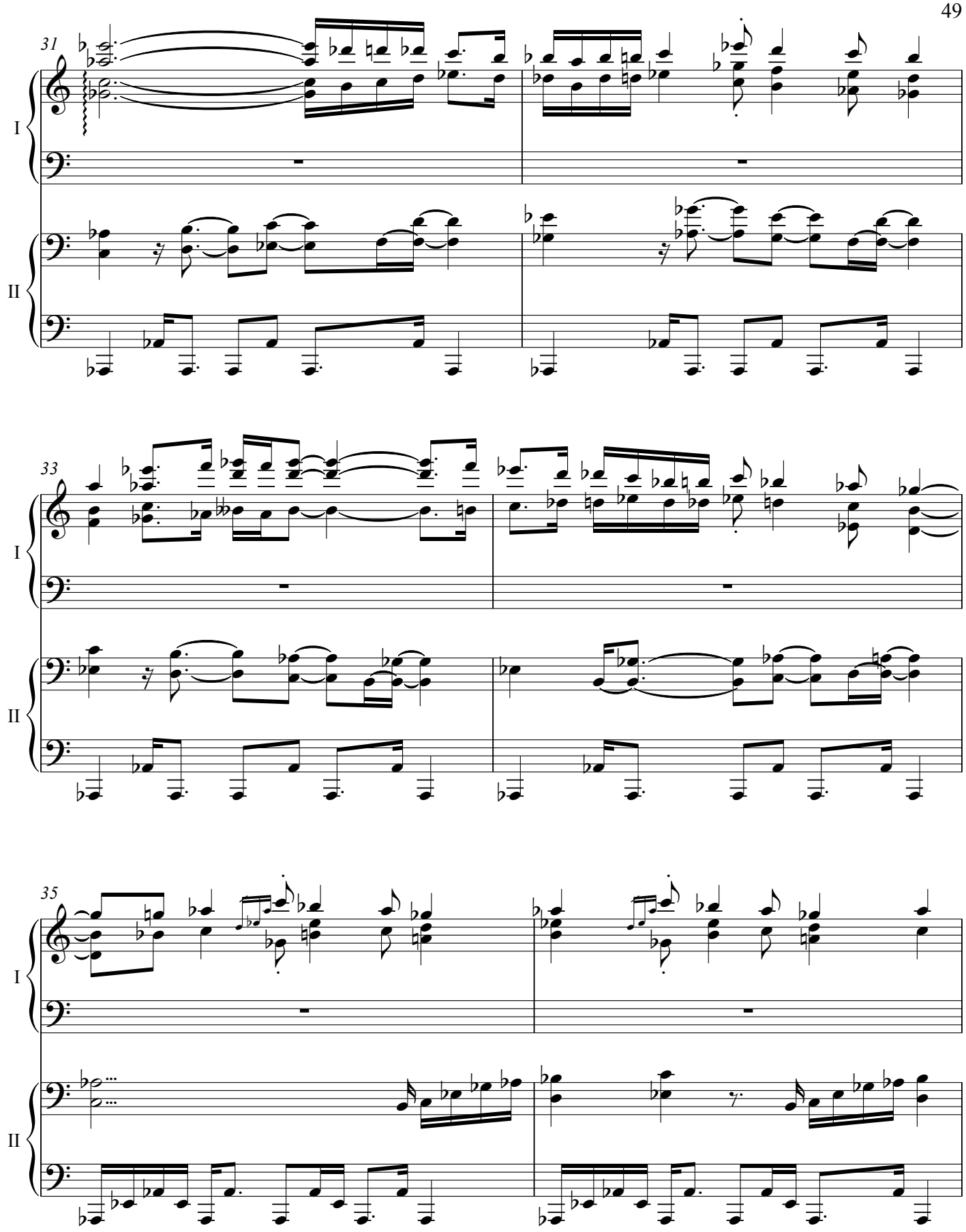
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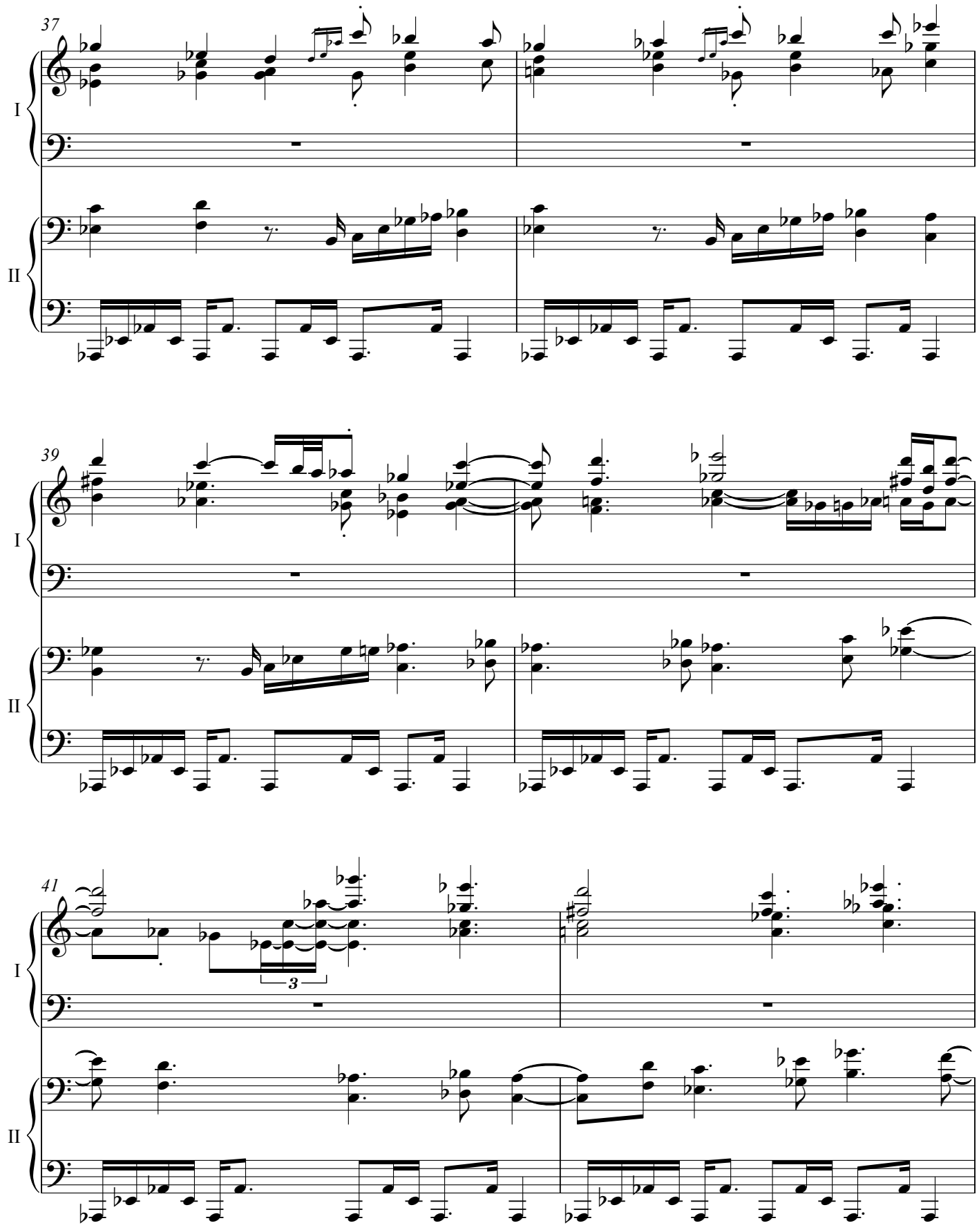
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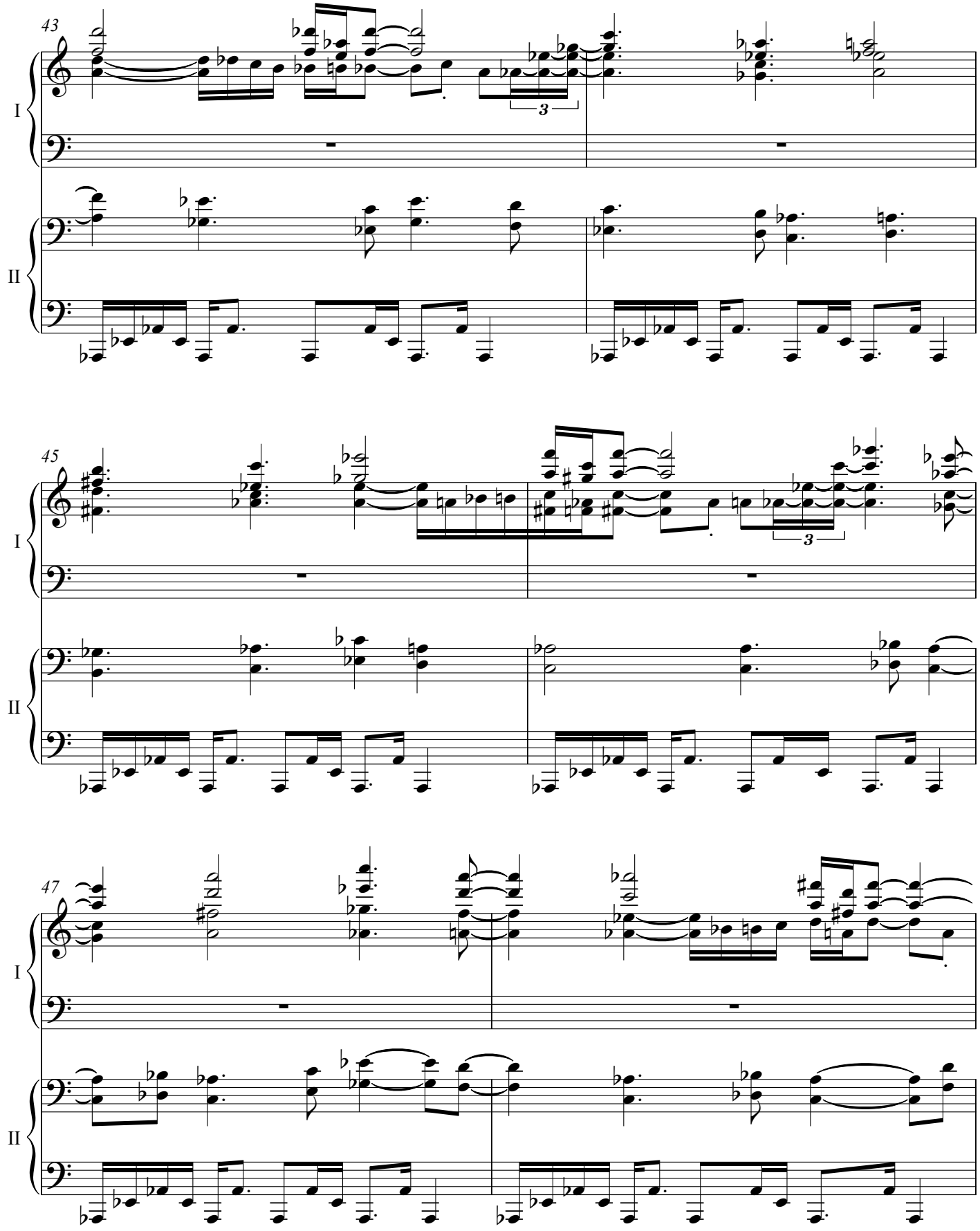
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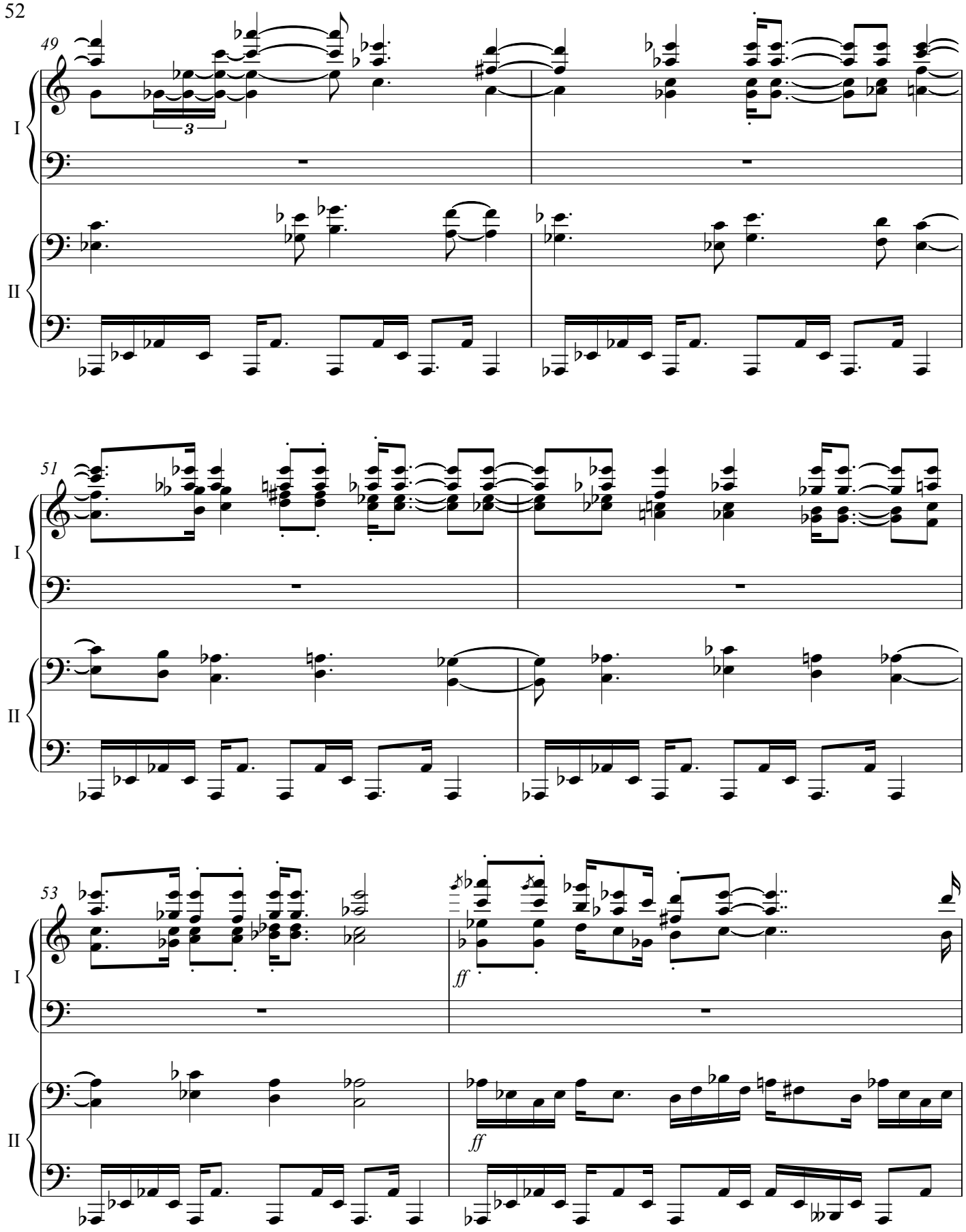
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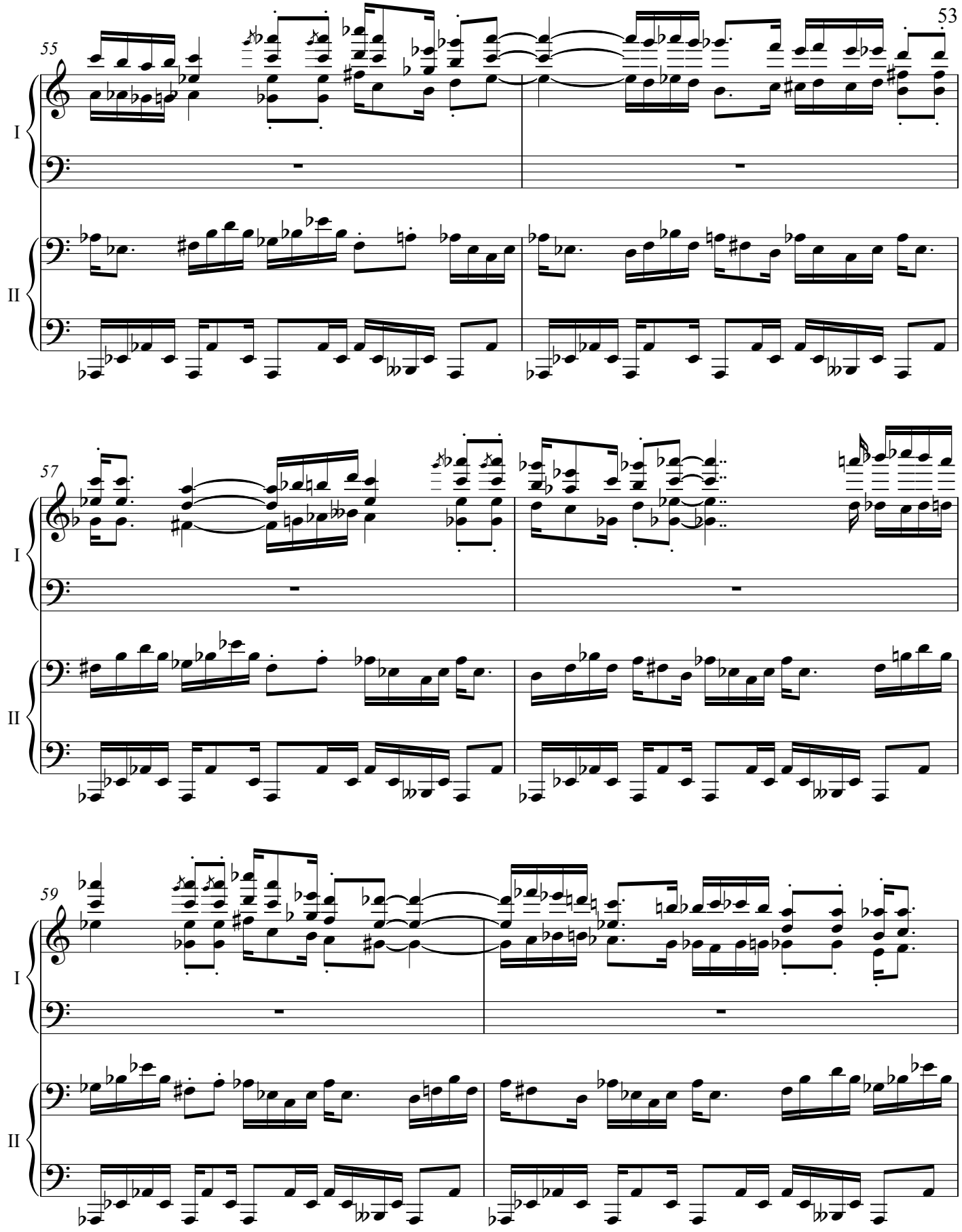
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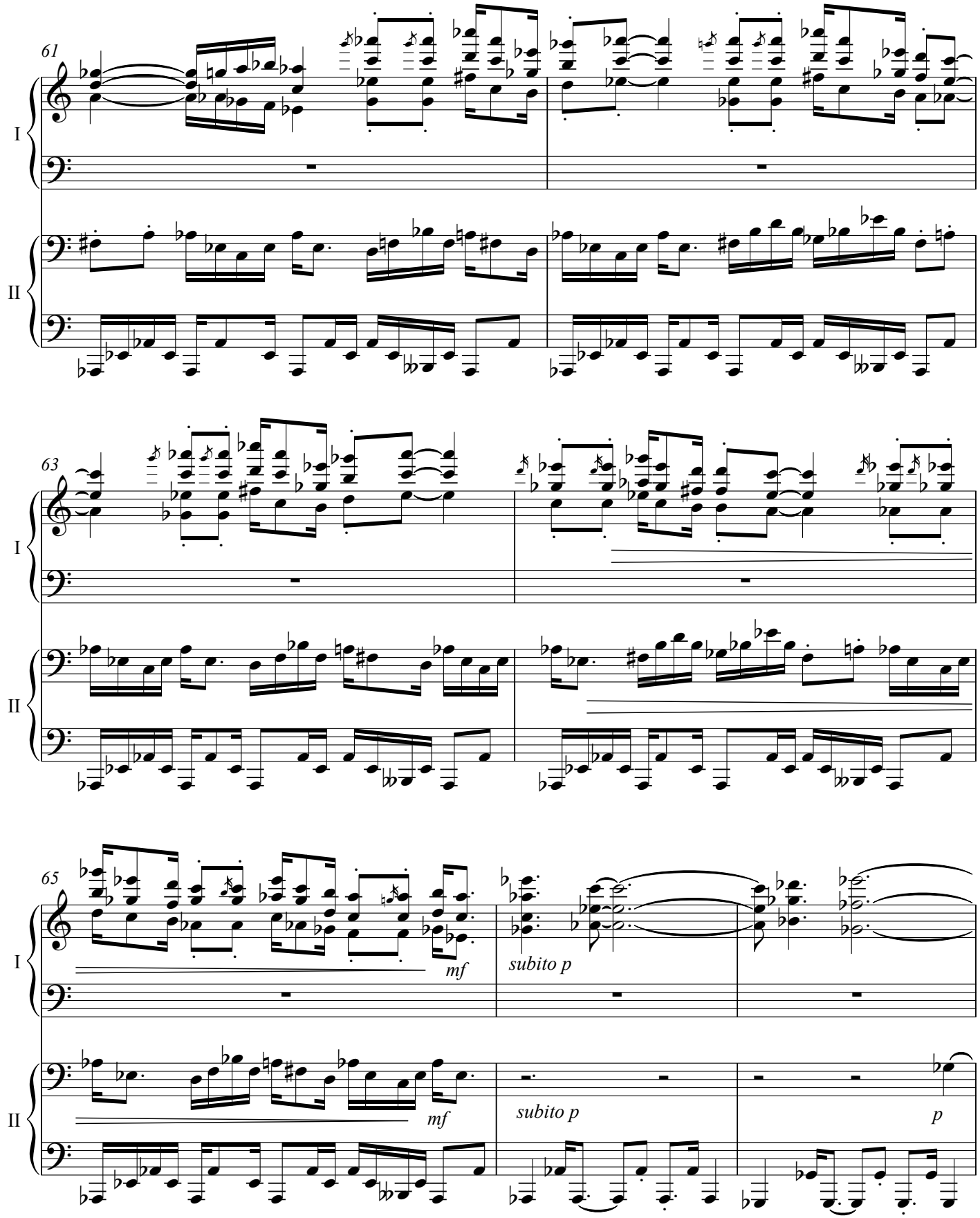
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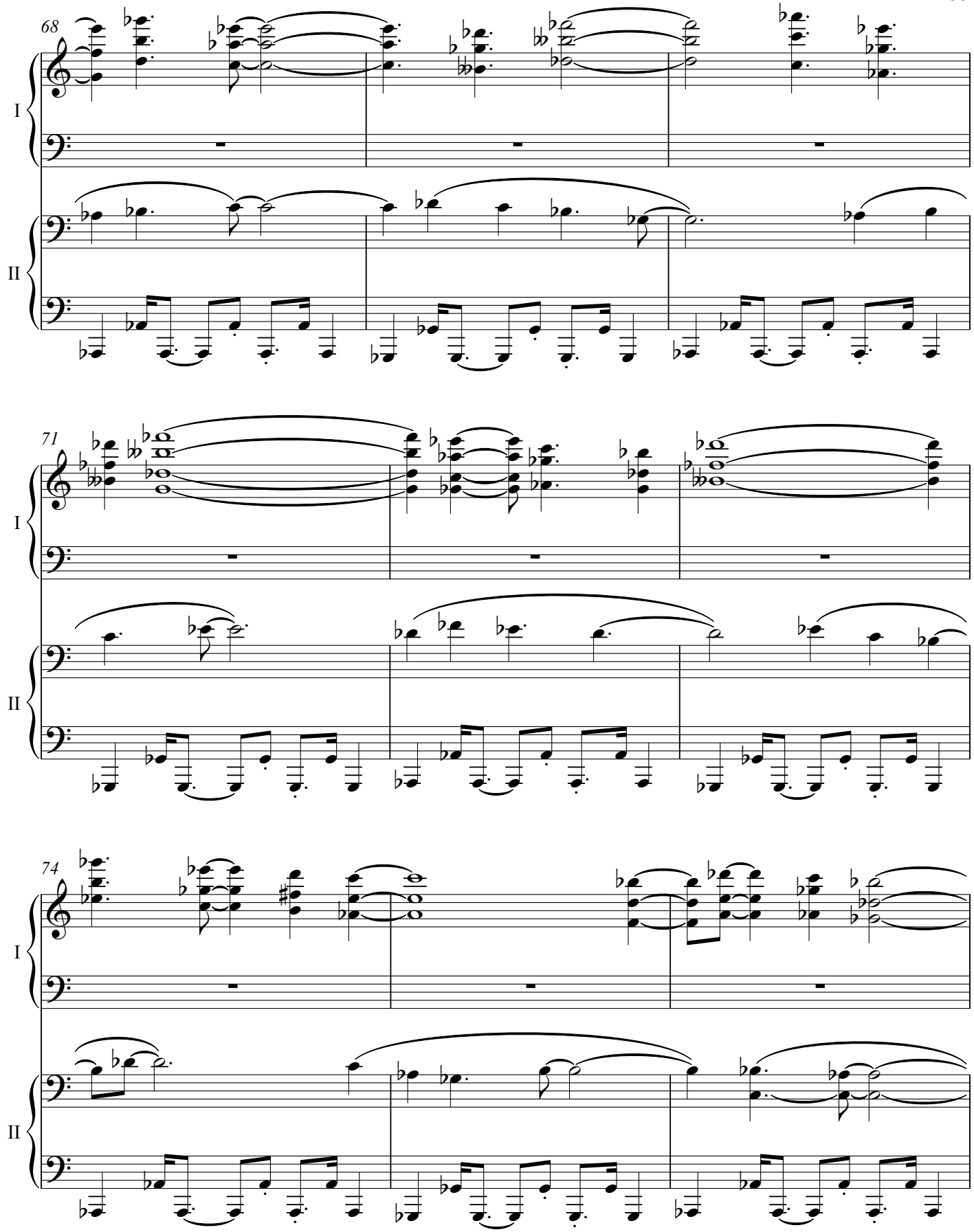
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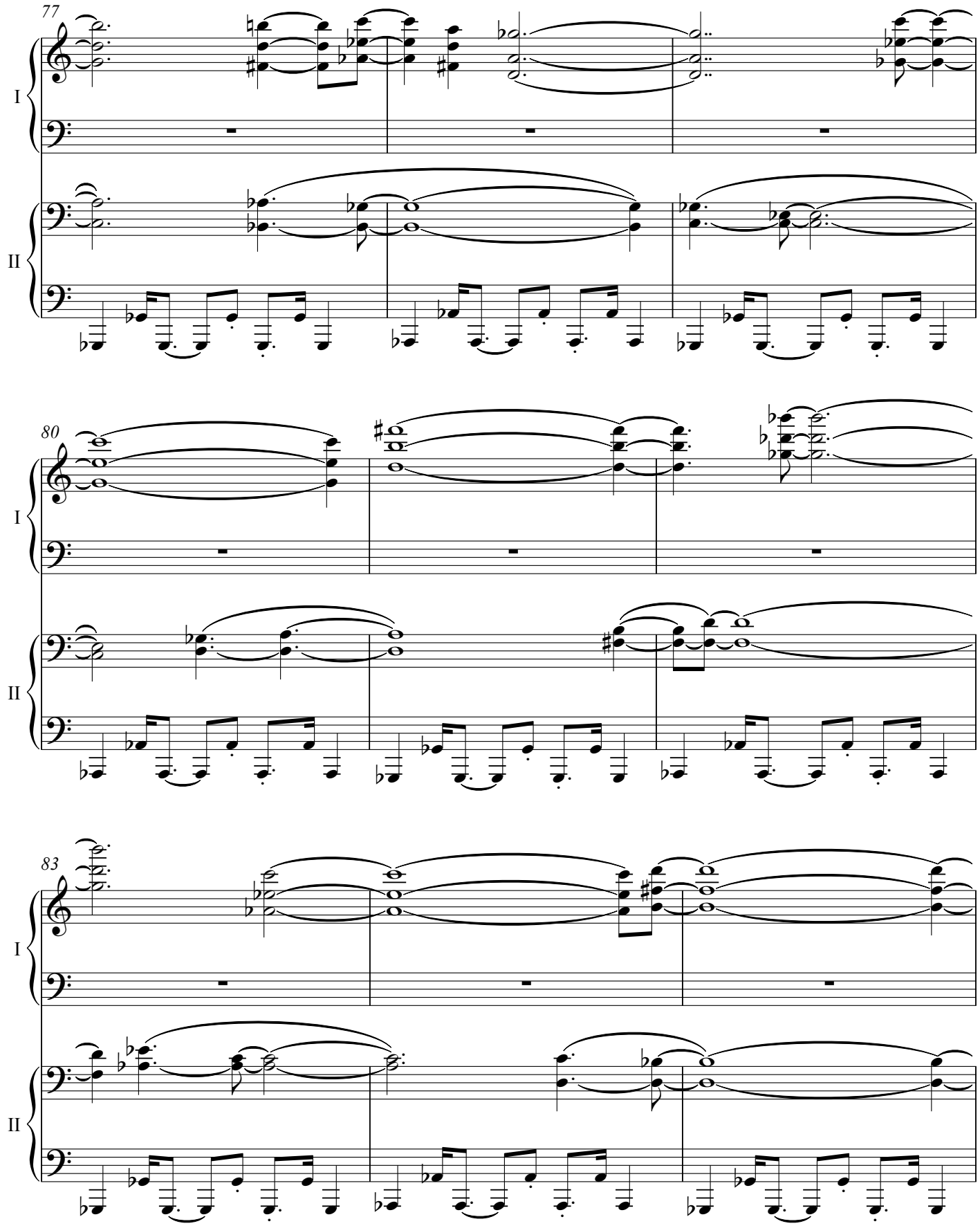
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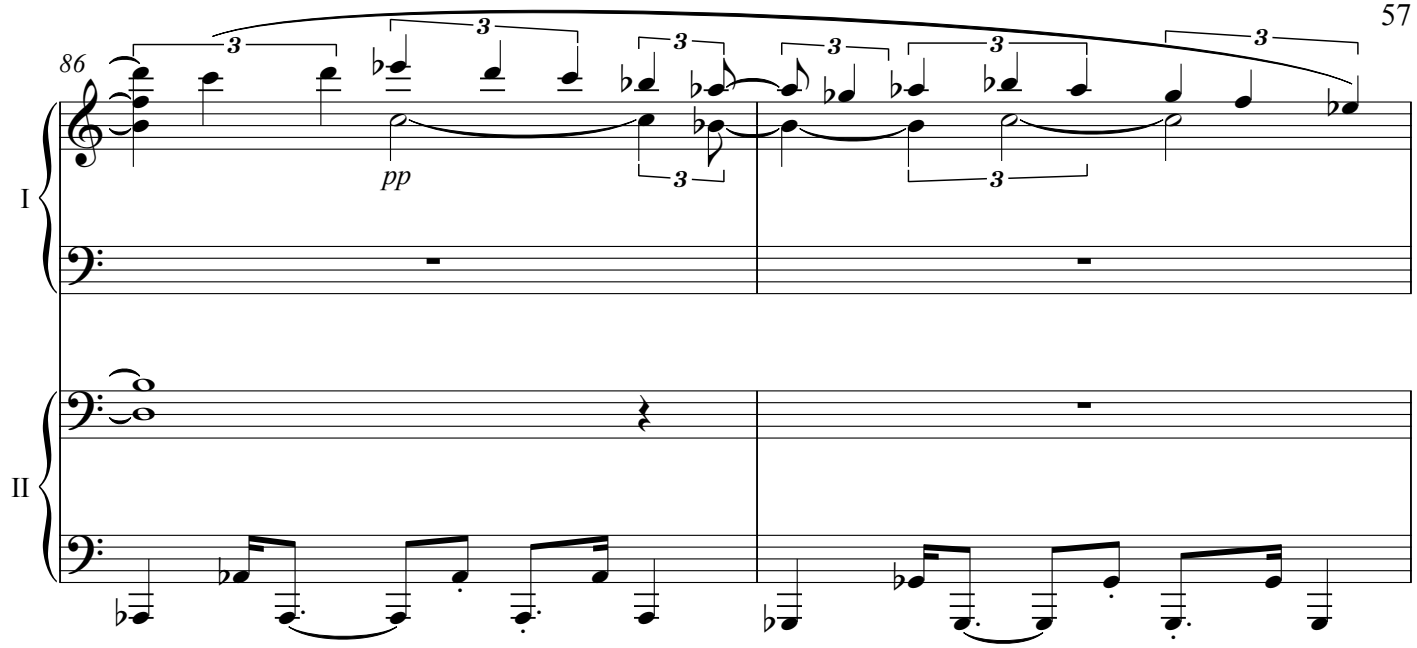

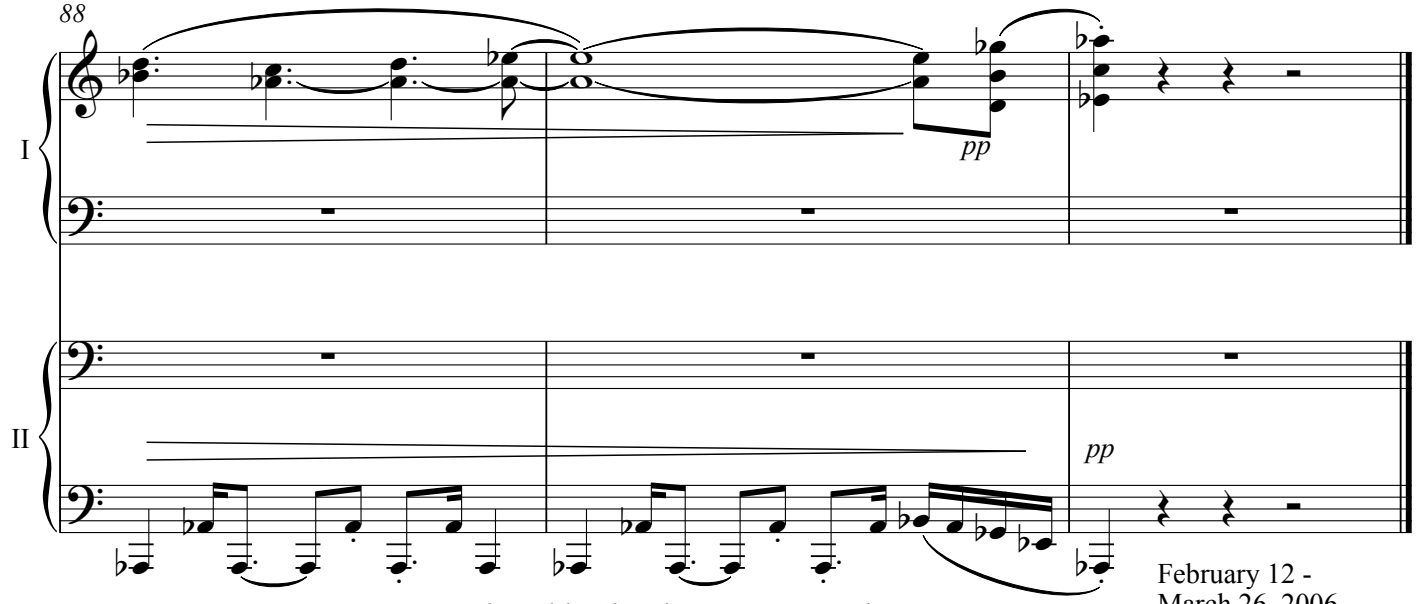

Implausible Sketches: Don't Touch My Pint

February 12 -
March 26, 2006
Germantown, NY /
Fairbanks, AK