Ben Morris

Pandemic Poems and Pieces

for piano

poetry by Maggie Hinchliffe

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Pandemic Poems and Pieces

for piano

Total Duration: ca. 14'00"

Movements:

I. Conventional Lemon
II. How it Looks at 2 AM
III. Snack Time
IV. Outside my Window
V. Masked in the Rocky Mountains
VI. In the Dark at Caribou Ranch
VII. On an Empty Road in the Desert

Program Note

Pandemic Poems and Pieces is a collaboration between pianist/poet Maggie Hinchliffe and composer Ben Morris during the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic. Maggie's poetry depicts various experiences living in quarantine, from ordering groceries online to hiking socially distanced in the desert. Ben's accompanying piano miniatures reflect the spirit and imagery of each of the poems. The poems may be read alongside the pieces during a performance or projected with the music.

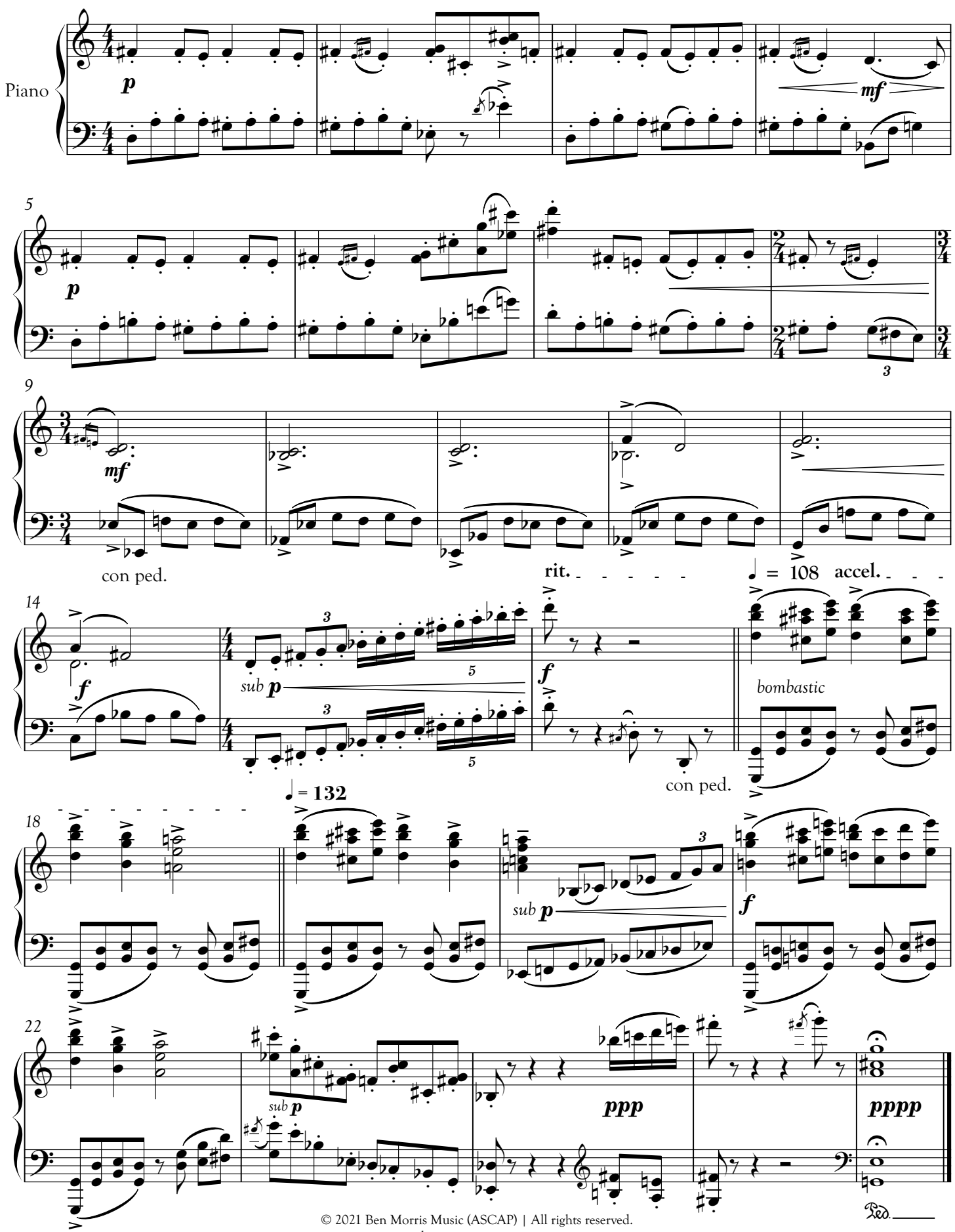
Conventional Lemon

A regular fruit
Sold on Amazon
For seventy-nine
Cents; A socially
Distant citizen.

Pandemic Poems and Pieces

I. Conventional Lemon

Ben Morris



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How it Looks at 2 AM

Addictively illuminated,

Glaring

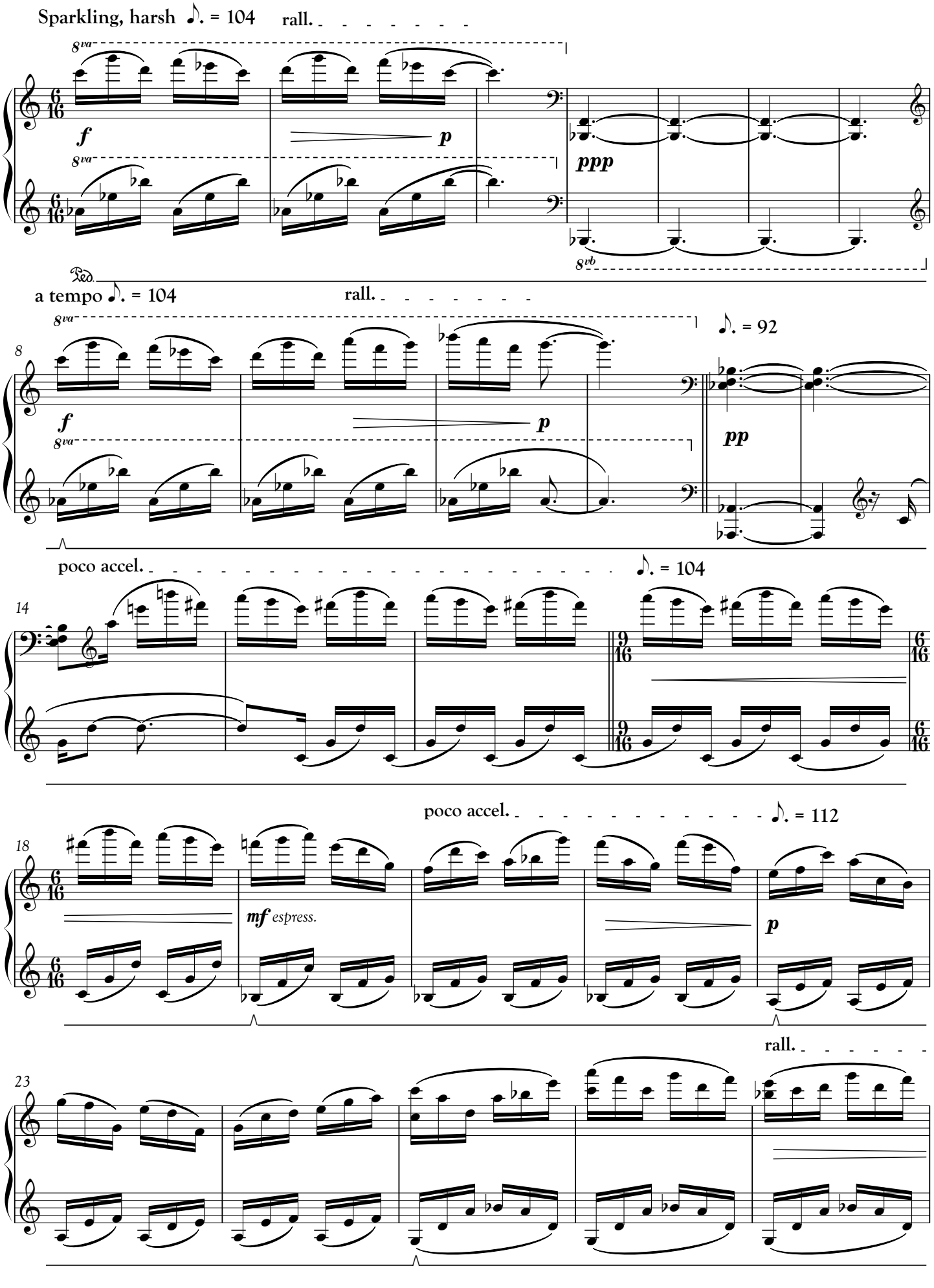
Through the undisturbed blackness

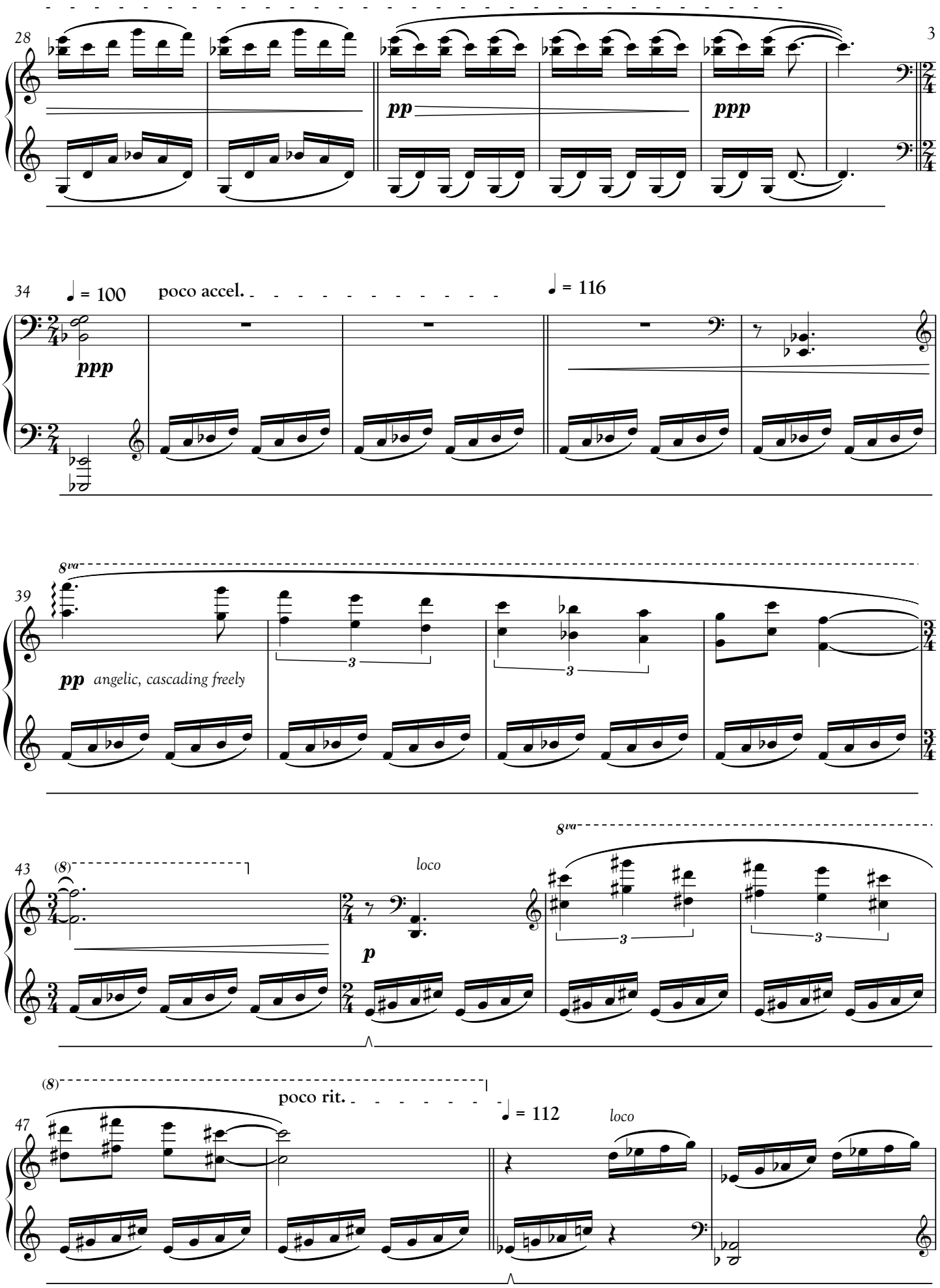
Of softer, distant targets,

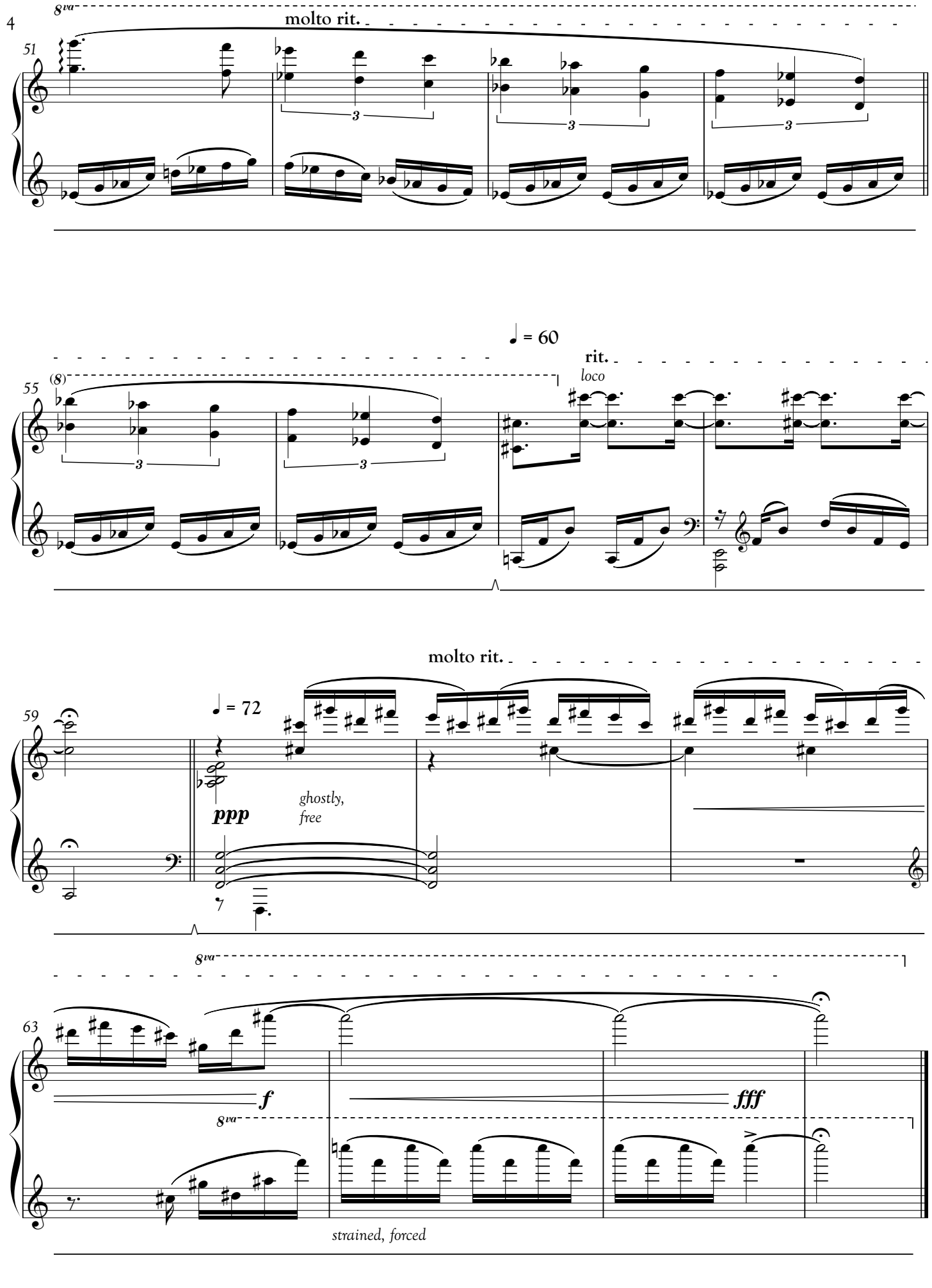
Staring

Like a sure distraction.

II. How it Looks at 2 AM




28
pp
ppp
34
♩ = 100
poco accel.
♩ = 116
ppp
39
8va
pp angelic, cascading freely
3
3
43
(8)
loco
p
8va
3
3
47
(8)
poco rit.
♩ = 112
loco


8va
molto rit.
51
3
3
3
♩ = 60
rit.
55
(8)
loco
3
3
molto rit.
59
♩ = 72
ppp
ghostly,
free
8va
63
f
fff
8va
strained, forced

A List

Mushrooms, carrots, leeks,
A couple frozen veggies
(but we don't care which),

An Irish butter,
Cheddar cheese and another
More exciting cheese.

A Menu

Multi-colored
Roasted carrots with Greek yogurt,
Avocadoes and

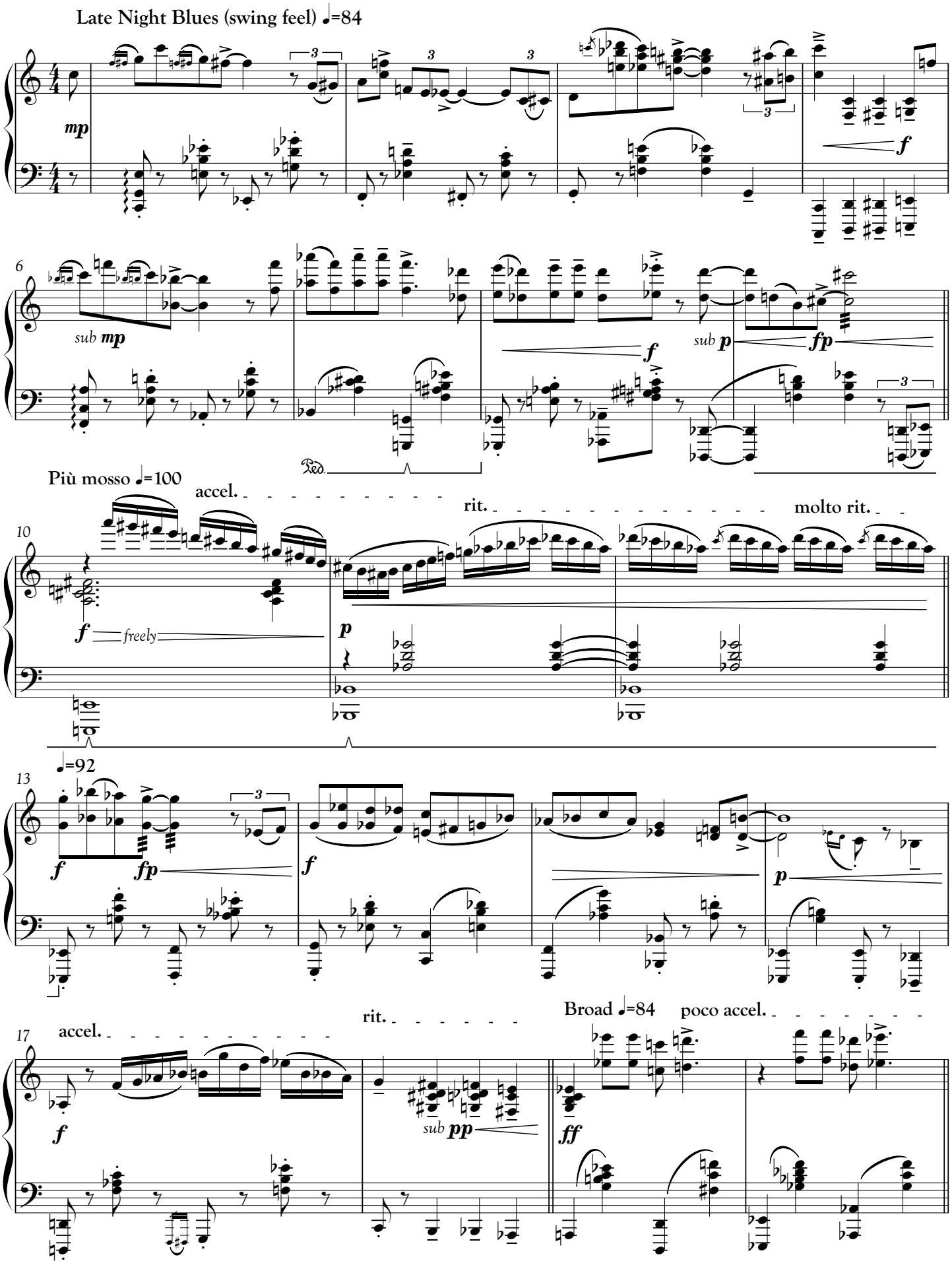
Sesame seeds plus
Buttermilk-marinated
Chicken. (The latter

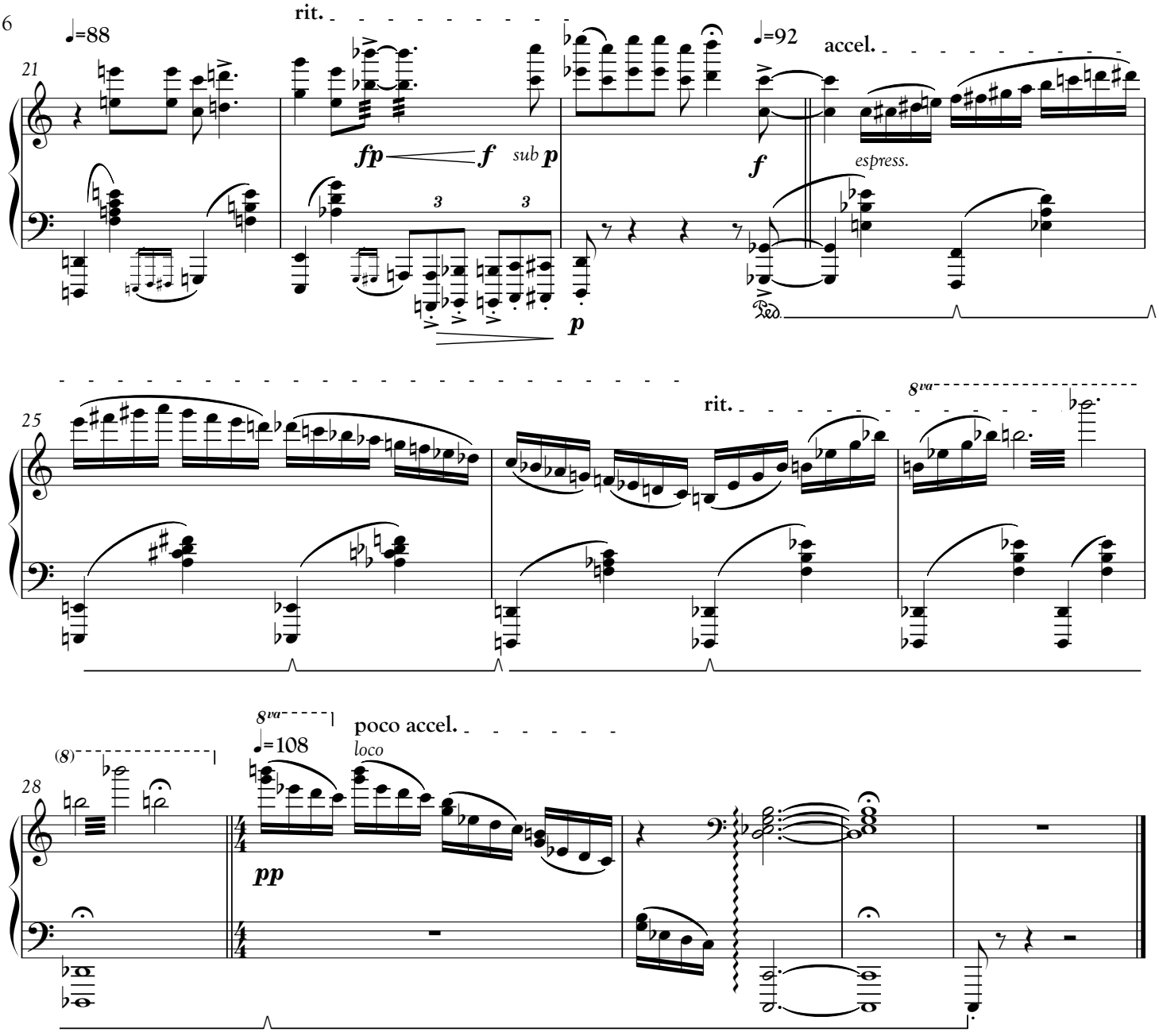
because it's going
To take a full twenty-four
Hours to prepare.)

A Snack

Seventeen chicken
Nuggets, two cheeseburgers
And one order of fries.

III. A List, A Menu, A Snack

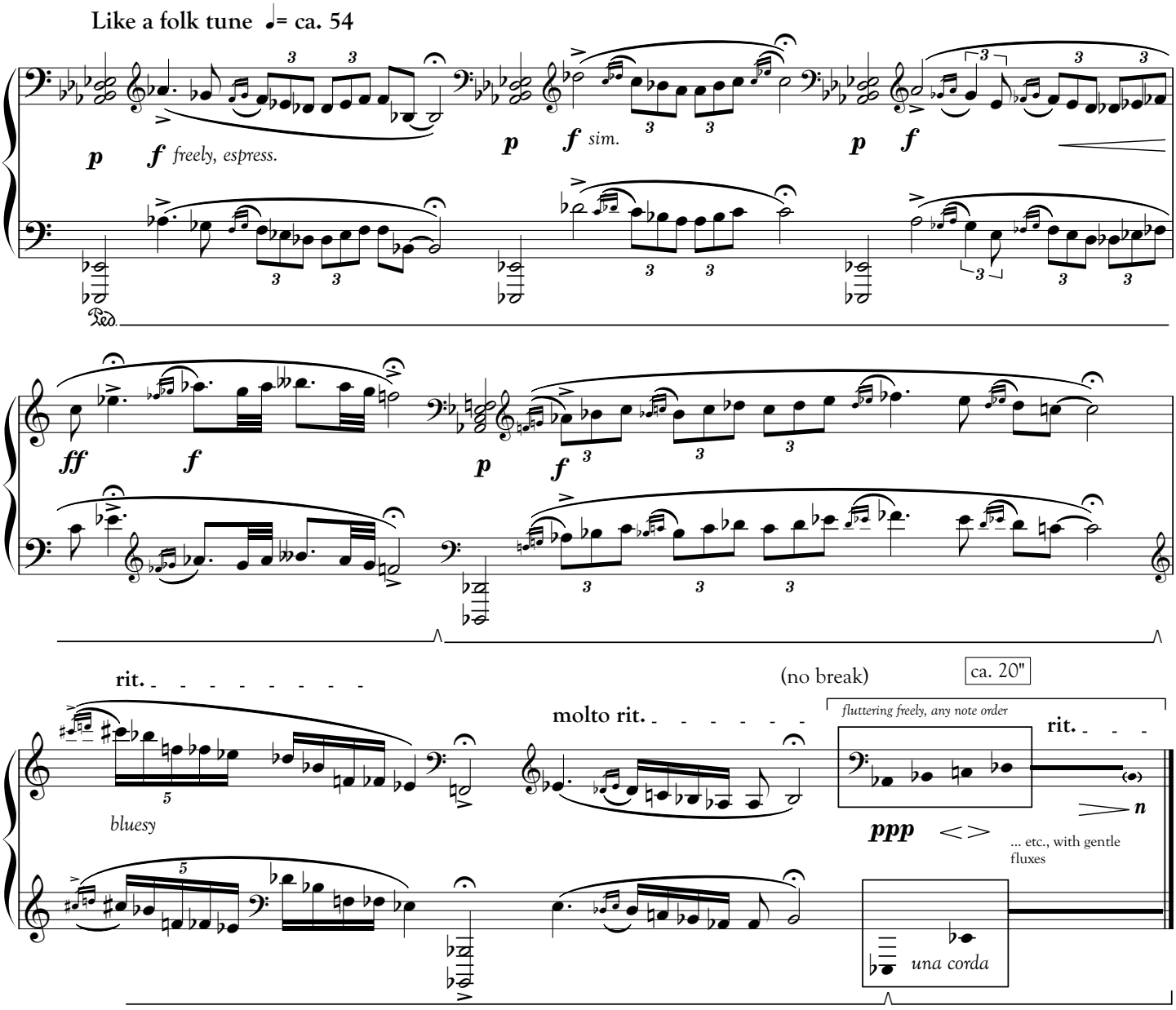



rit.
♩=88
21
fp
f
sub p
p
♩=92
accel.
f
espress.
Ped.
25
rit.
8va
28
(8)
8va
♩=108
poco accel.
loco
pp

News

As I type, sunlight touches my fingers
Through the window,
Reddish from the summer smoke.
I imagine melting into it,
Yellow, orange, shapeless, still,
No more fear or judgment,
No one answerless,
Alone.
An artificial light appears
Asking for attention.
I am looking at it, and the sun
Reflected in its digital clock.
When I finish reading what it says,
I blow my questions on the windowpane.
What is happening to us?
Nobody will answer,
Not even the screen in my hand
Reflecting orange light.

IV. News


Like a folk tune ♩= ca. 54
p
f freely, espress.
p
f sim.
p
f
Ped.
ff
f
p
f
rit.
(no break)
ca. 20"
molto rit.
fluttering freely, any note order
rit.
bluesy
ppp
... etc., with gentle fluxes
una corda

Masked in the Rocky Mountains
Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

On a trail built for wild animals
To wander when the tourists leave,

Sunlight burns through pines like wildfire.
Saturday mornings, I climb alone,

Competing with a pink and nimble sunrise
For elevation. At the summit is a silent pond.

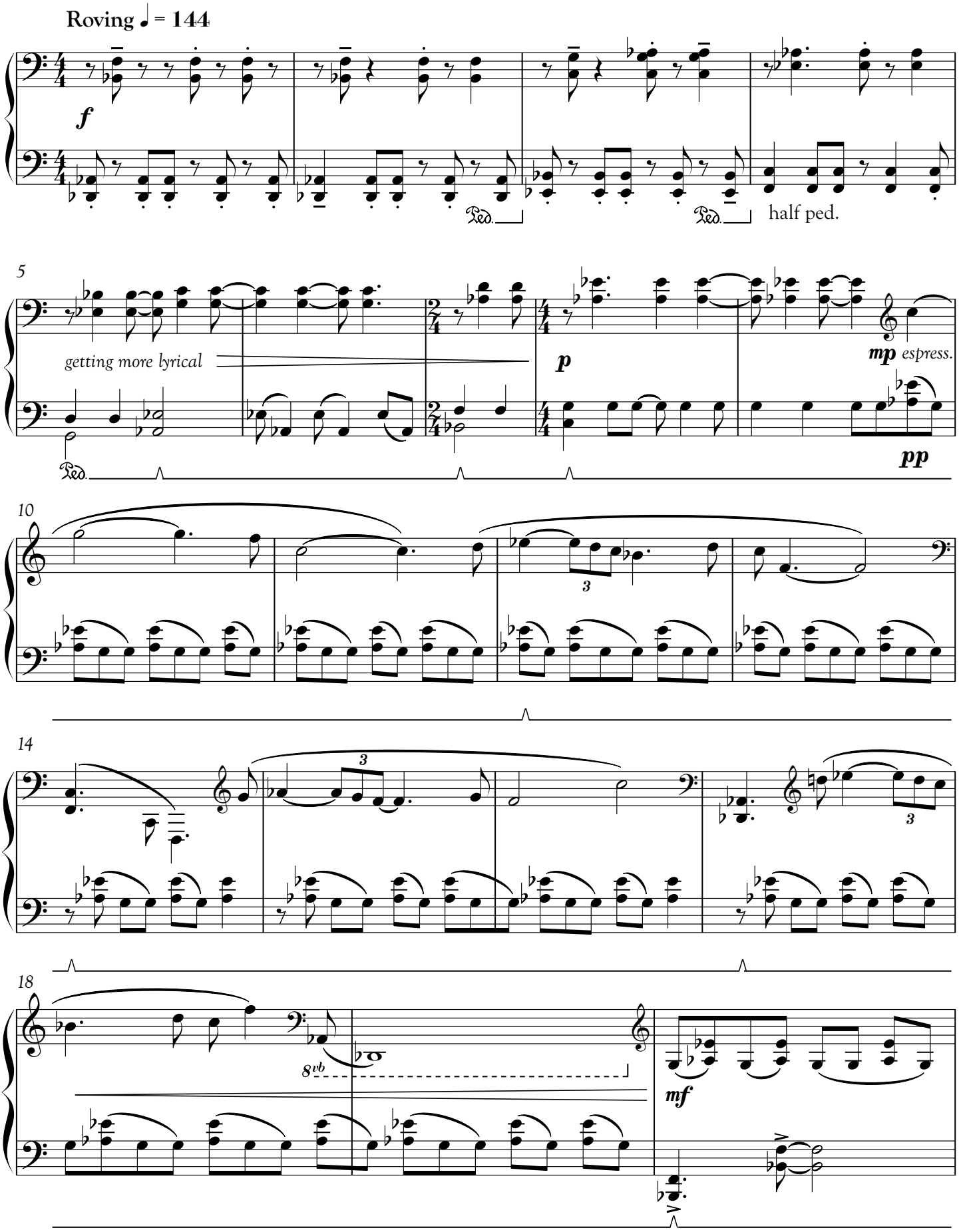
I imagine diving into its turquoise depths,
Submerged where there is no disease or time,

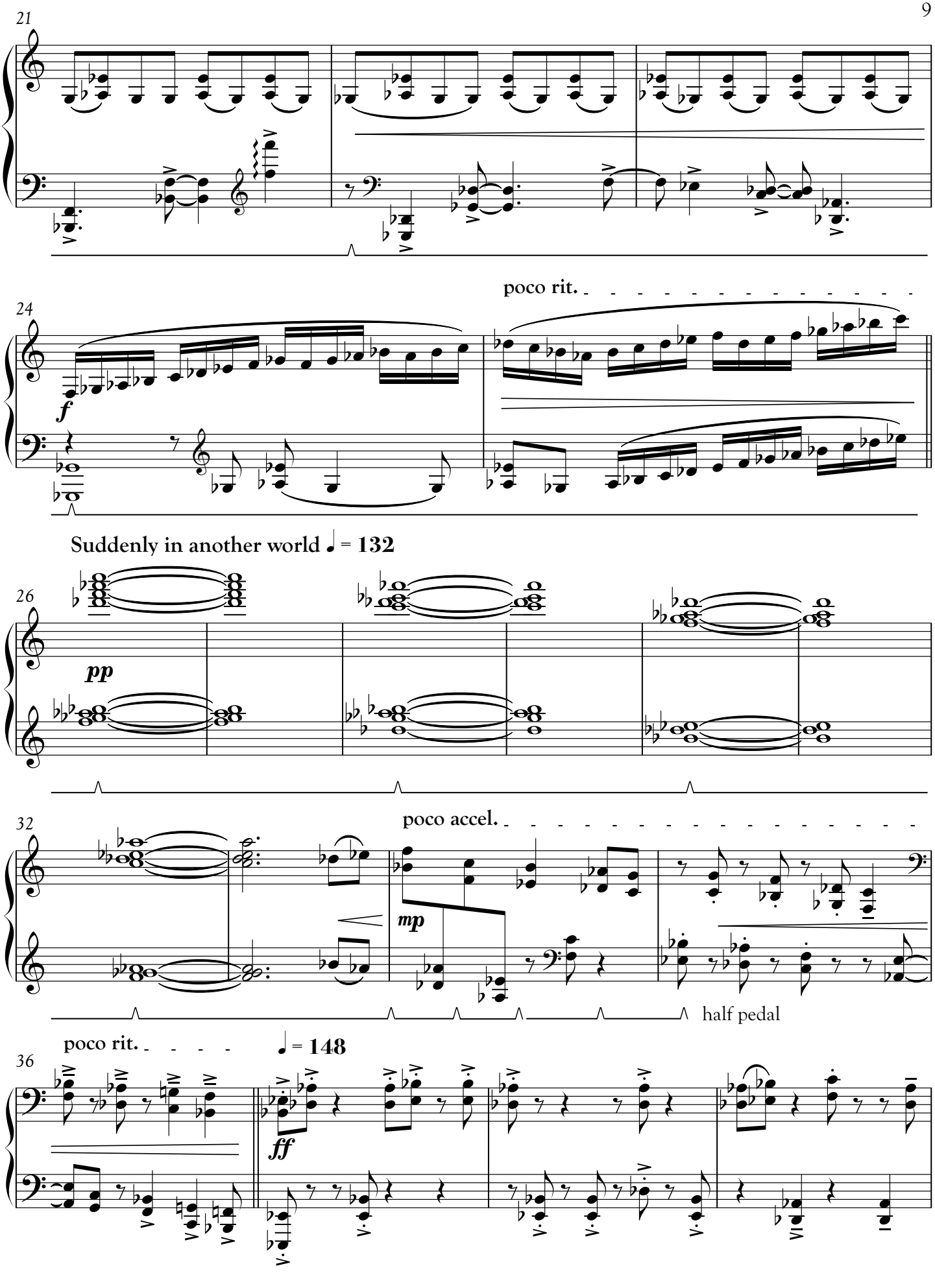
Like a frozen rock that sinks below
Broken pieces of ice and melted winter run-off.

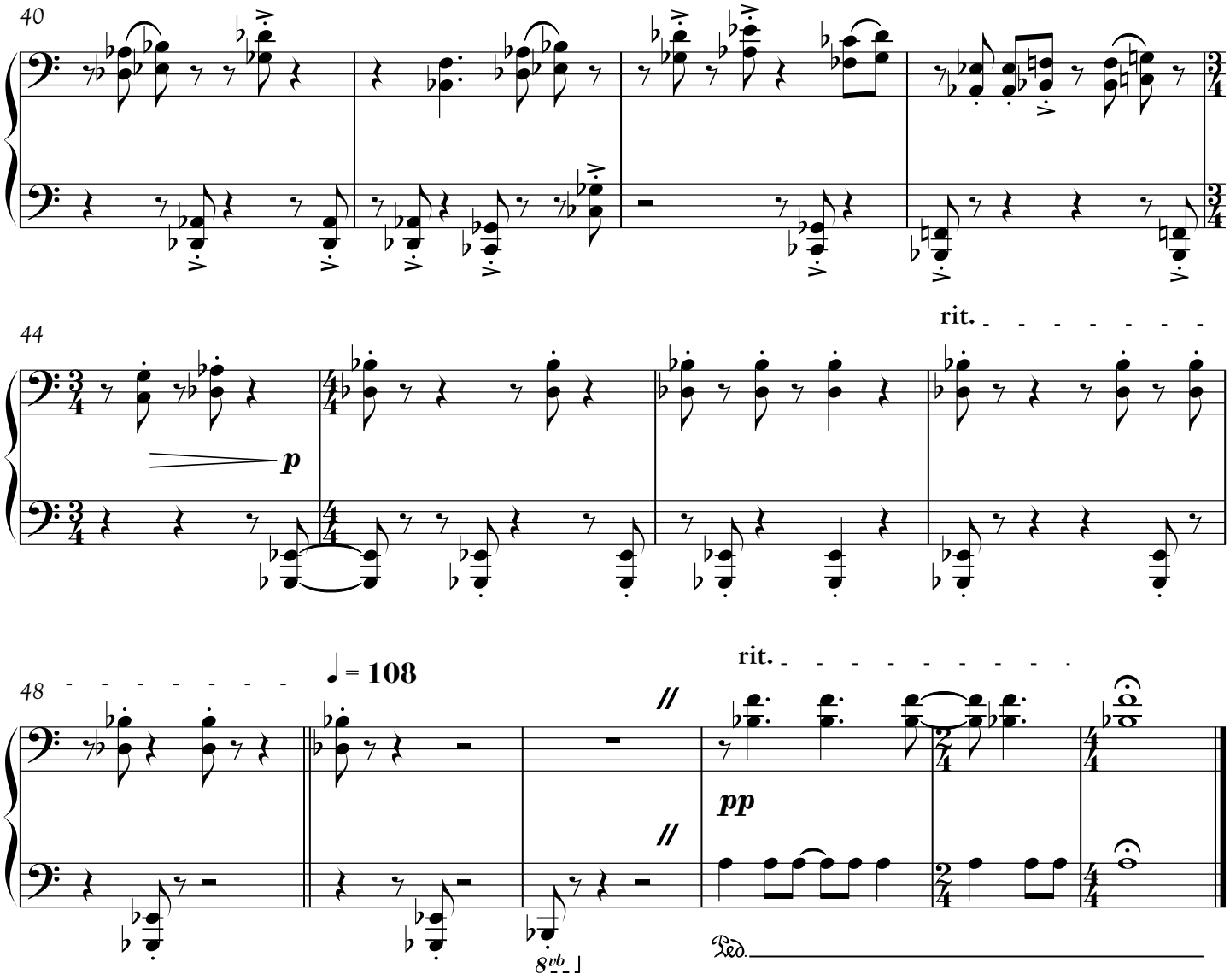
When I am half-way through the descent,
A stranger asks, *how long?* to reach the summit,

As long as you want, I think,
Hidden in the depths of my mandatory mask.

V. Masked in the Rocky Mountains



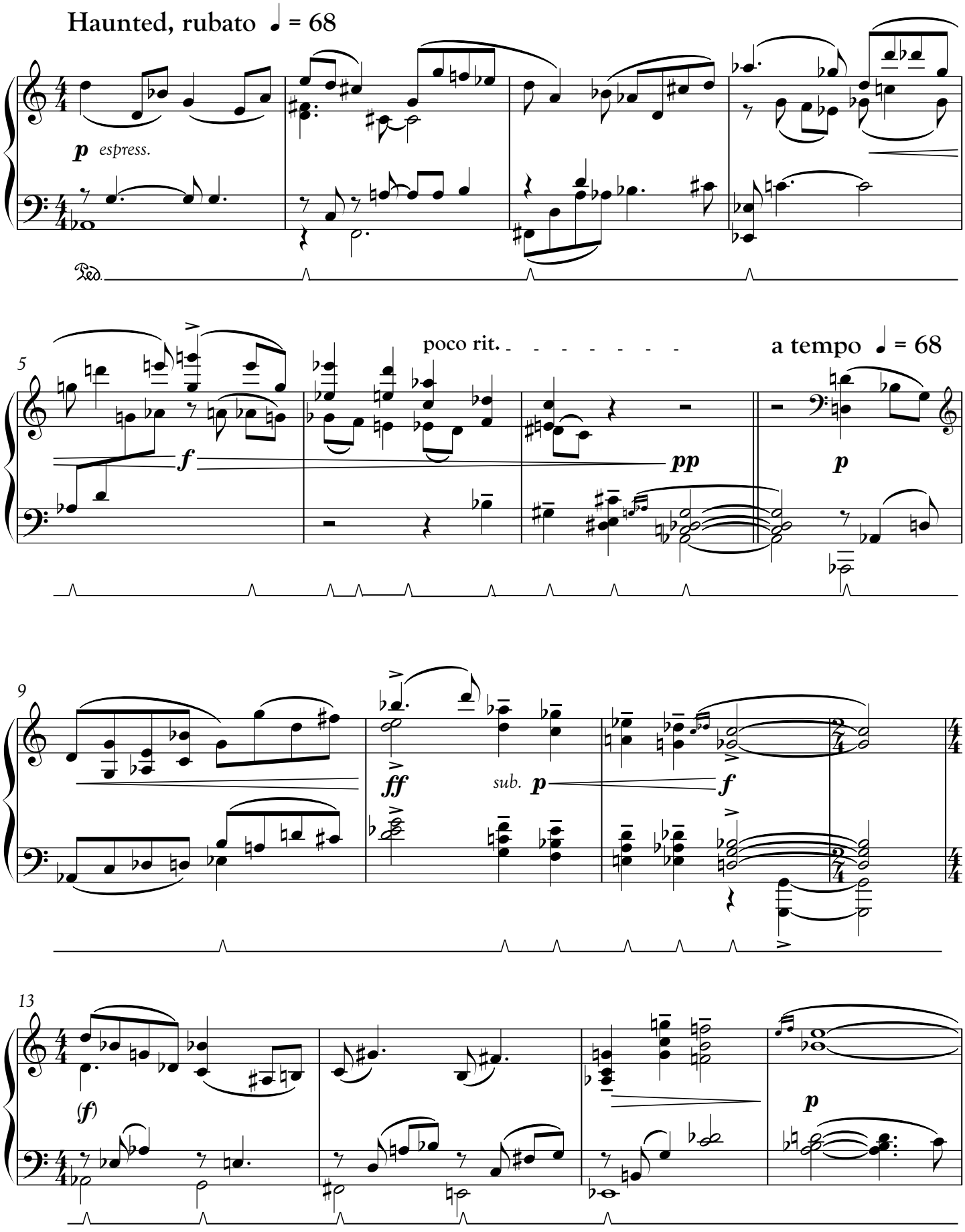

21
poco rit.
24
f
Suddenly in another world ♩ = 132
26
pp
32
poco accel.
mp
half pedal
poco rit.
♩ = 148
36
ff

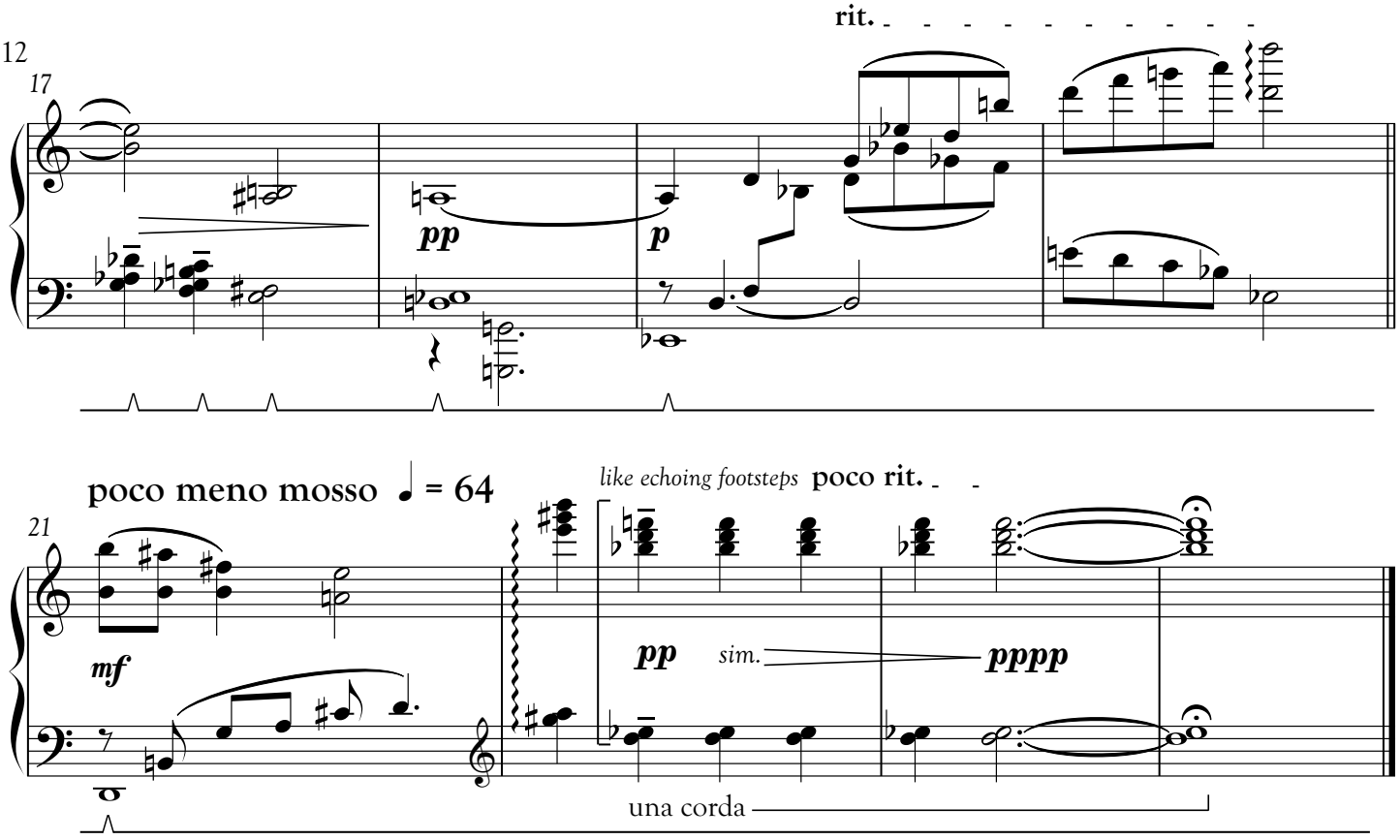

40
44
rit.
p
48
♩ = 108
rit.
pp
8vb
Ped.

In the Dark at Caribou Ranch
Nederland, Colorado

At dusk we see a mining village
Hidden under layers of untouched snow;
Its emptiness lures us to a hillside
Decorated with artifacts and crumbling wood.
As we read about the Switzerland Trail,
Peer into abandoned windows,
And imagine summertime
On this used-to-be vacation land,
A purple sunset stretches widely
Overhead like a horizontal rainbow
Sinking deeper into wintertime.
We pause to watch the melting colors
And listen to the sound of nothing:
The echo of our footsteps in the dark.

VI. In the Dark at Caribou Ranch



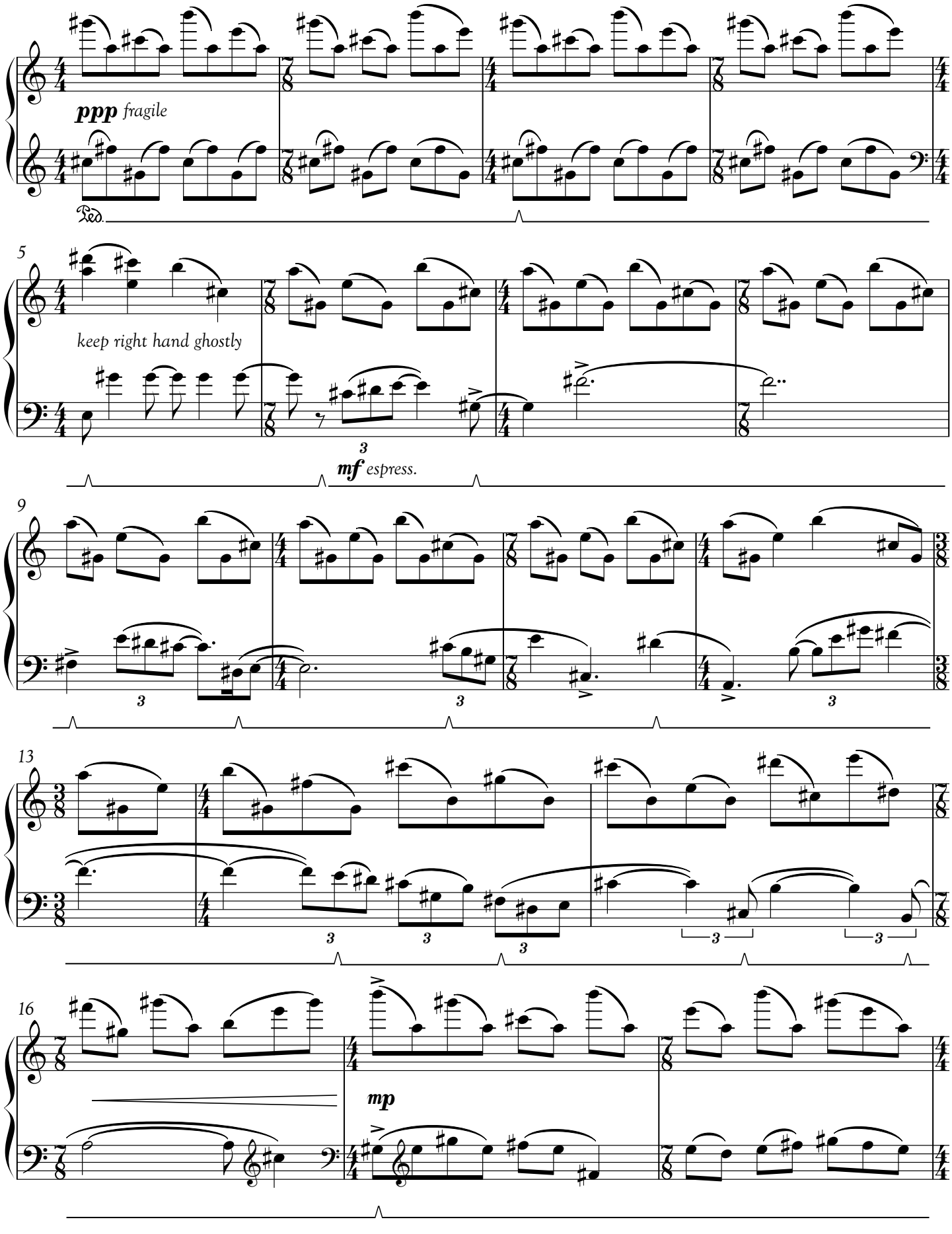

rit.
17
pp
p
poco meno mosso ♩ = 64
like echoing footsteps
poco rit.
21
mf
pp
sim.
pppp
una corda

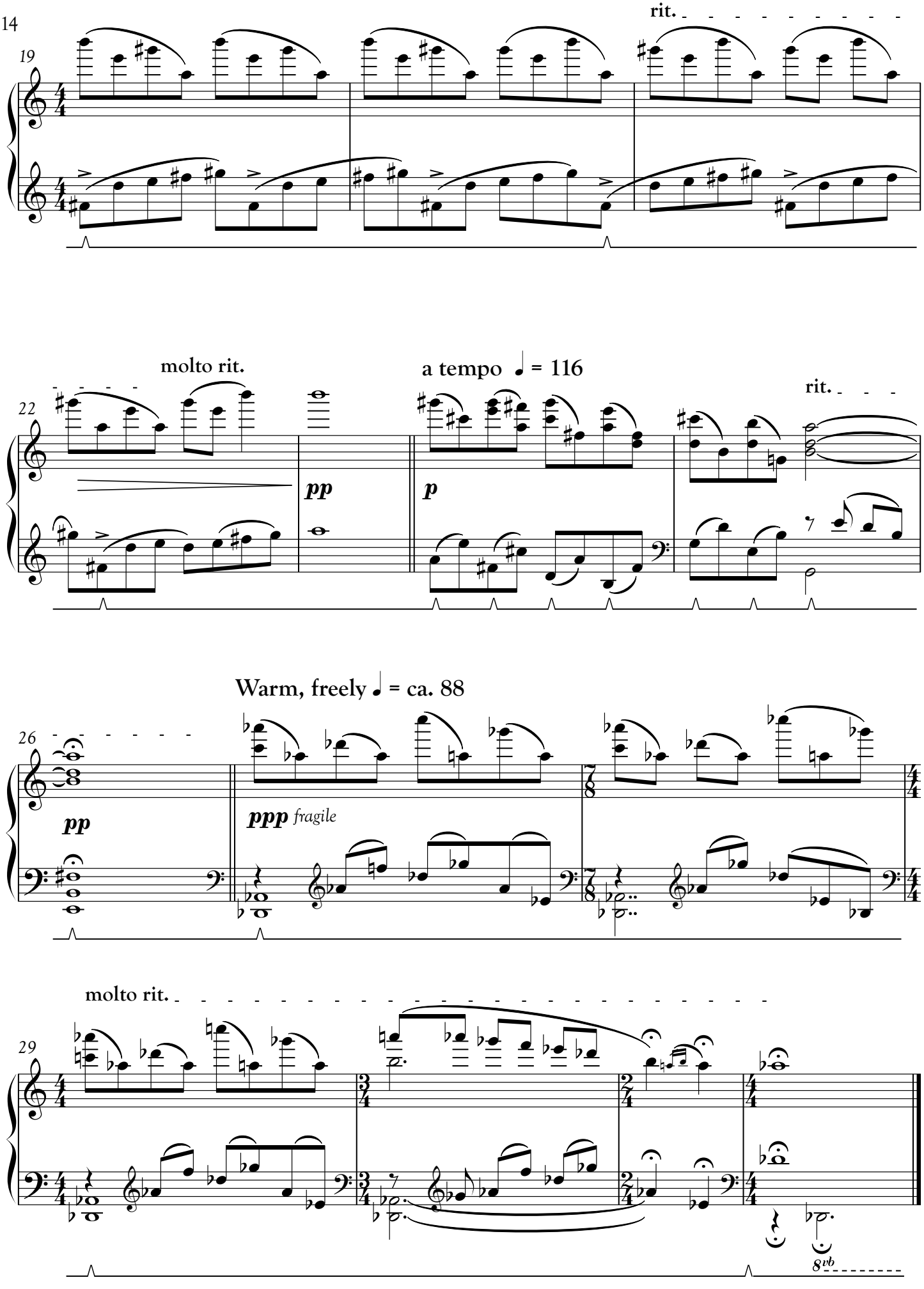
On an Empty Road in the Desert

The wind has nothing left to blow.
Wildflowers, bathing on the hills,
Consume the madly sinking sun.
Hours pass. The wind is gone.
All I see are orange clouds
And wild horses following the road.

VII. On an Empty Road in the Desert

With a tentative sense of hope ♩ = 116




19
rit.
22
molto rit.
pp
a tempo ♩ = 116
p
rit.
26
pp
Warm, freely ♩ = ca. 88
ppp fragile
29
molto rit.
8vb