VARIATIONS ON KIRKEN

by

R. Douglas Helvering

commissioned by James Roman

based on the hymn by Ludvig M. Lindeman

"...on this rock I will build my church..." Matthew 16:18

This text serves as the biblical grounding for the hymn on which this set of variations draws its inspiration. The strong and angular Dorian mode hymn was written in 1840 by Norwegian composer Ludwig Lindeman specifically for the text written by Nikolai Grundtvig in 1837. Norwegian born Carl Doving, who later immigrated to the U.S. and served Lutheran parishes and worked as a missionary, translated the hymn to English in 1909. He would go on to contribute more than 30 English translations (including Kirken) of Scandinavian and German hymns to *The Lutheran Hymnary*, published in 1913.

Grundtvig's text draws on several biblical texts, including Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Peter 2. The hymn is a favorite especially among Scandinavian Christians, second only to Luther's "A Mighty Fortress." The text emphasizes main characteristics of the Christian church: Christ is the foundation/builder (stanza 1); the church is made up of people loved by God, not a building (stanza 2); these people are blessed by a whole life spent worshipping God (stanza 3). It is most liturgically important during Reformation celebrations, church festivals, anniversaries, and ecumenical services.

Contained in this work are variations that highlight some of the possibilities presented by the original hymn.

1. **Chorale** - The audience hears a stanza of the original hymn to gain grounding and reference.

2. **Chorale Fantasia** – The tune is offered in the feet, and with 4' stops sounds between two Bach-inspired imitative contrapuntal voices.

3. **Invention** – The first phrase of the B section of the original hymn is presented in a two part invention in this pedal solo.

4. **Chorale (Rhythmic)** – Informally referred to as the 'drunken chorale', this movement features an asymmetric and changing metrical structure.

5. **Aria** – A flowing accompaniment in the left hand and feet support the melody, which is the strict intervallic inversion of the original Dorian mode hymn. When inverted, the hymn becomes a warm Mixolydian melody. Rhythmic embellishments in the tune mimic song-like ornamentations.

6. **Chorale (Major)** – When transposed to a major key and played slightly slower than normal, the hymn takes on an introspective and soothing character. The movement ends incompletely, leading directly to the next variation.

7. **Marche Funebre** – This French style variation uses doubly-dotted rhythms, single-note ostinatos, repetitive harmonic patterns, and dark sonorities to depict a somber Funeral March.

8. **Toccata** – Finally, the tune returns to the feet with the full power of the organ, accompanied by fast-moving chordal sororities. The entire work concludes with a short fugal style stretto as closing material, culminating in a large and optimistic C major.

The work was commissioned by James Roman for inclusion in his organ repertoire while attending Westminster Choir College of Rider University. It was written during the summer of 2012 and premiered in the spring of 2013.

commissioned by James Roman

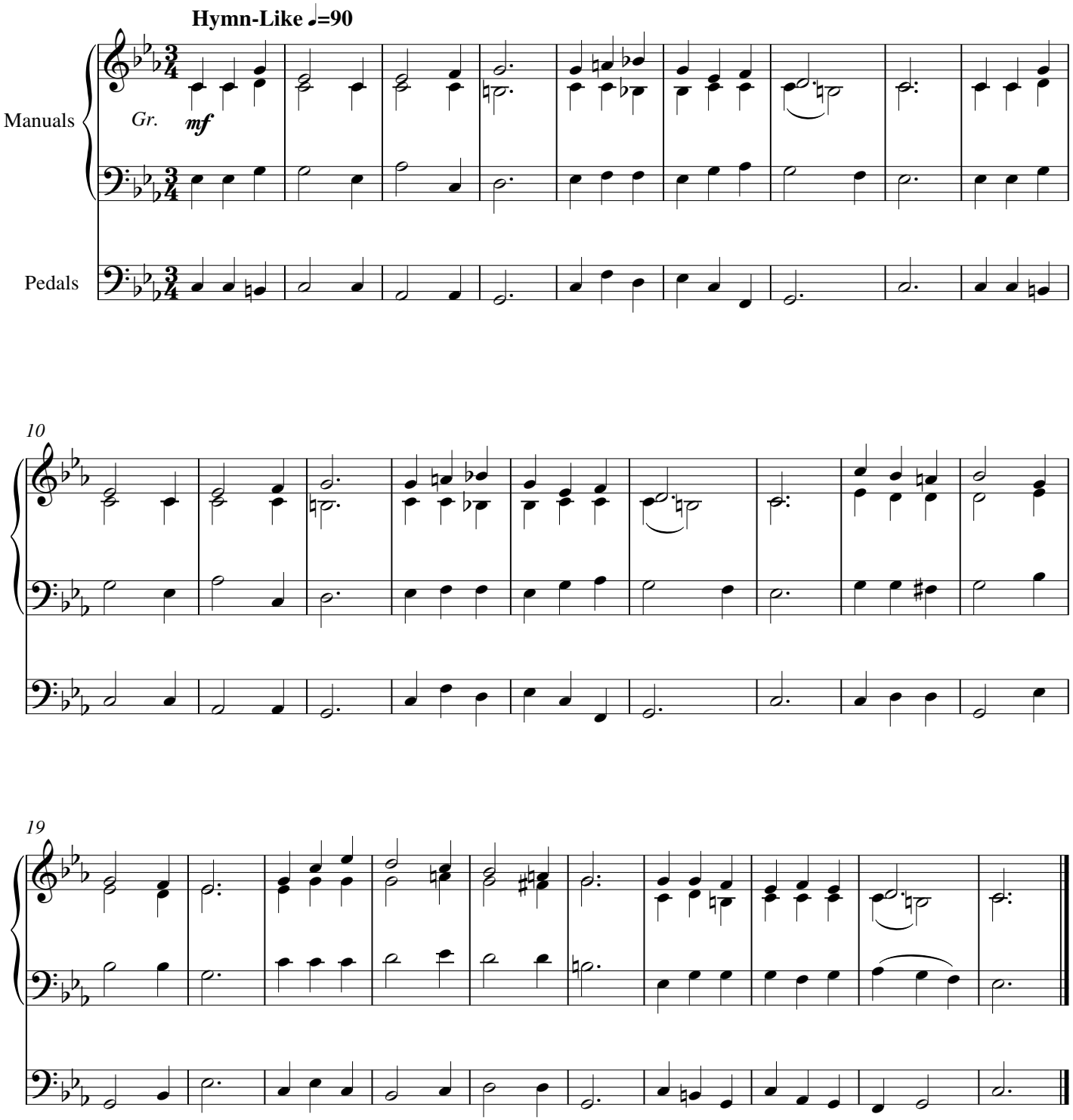
Variations on Kirken

Original Hymn composed by
Ludvig M. Lindeman (1840)

R. Douglas Helvering

GR: plenum

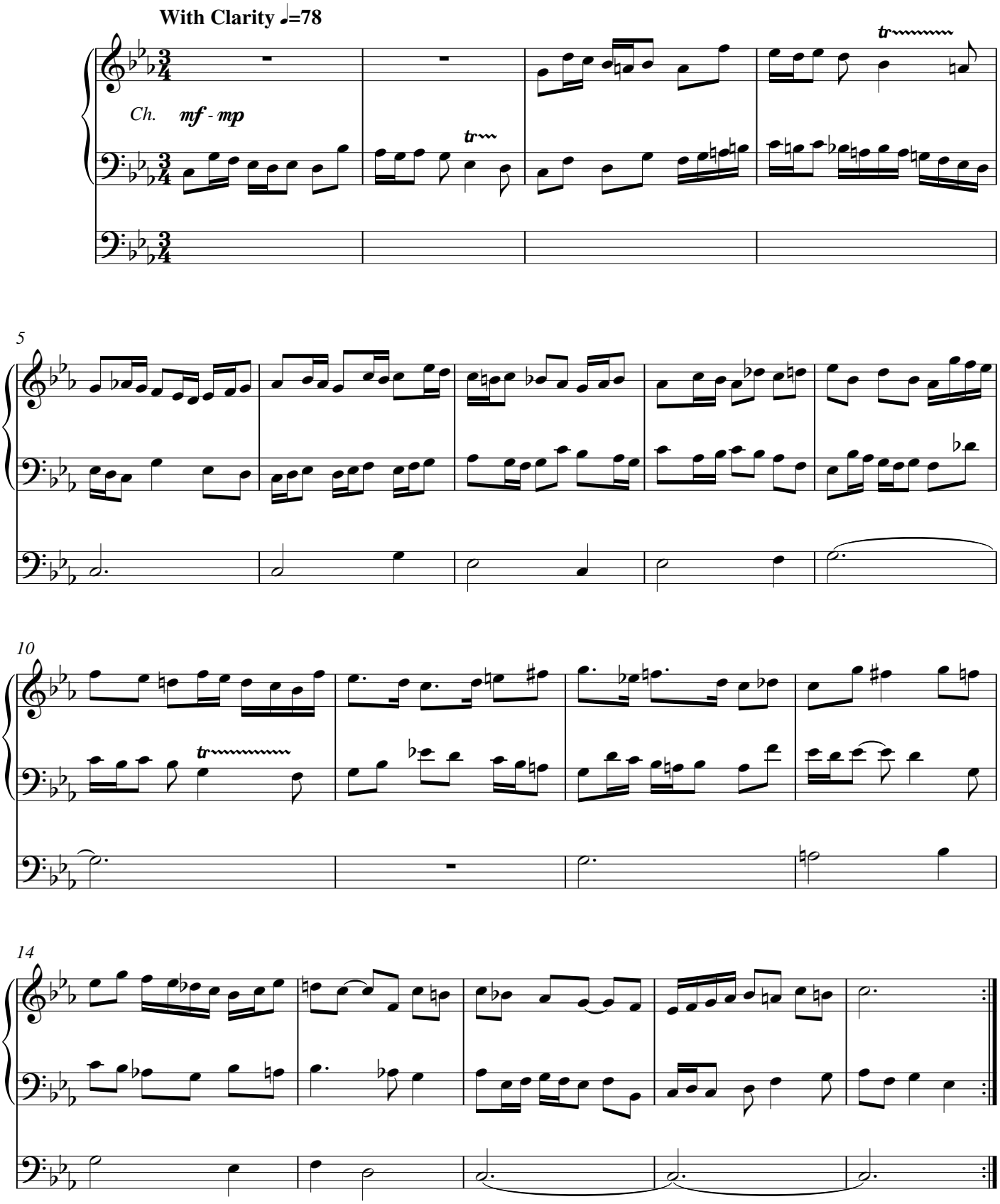
I. Chorale

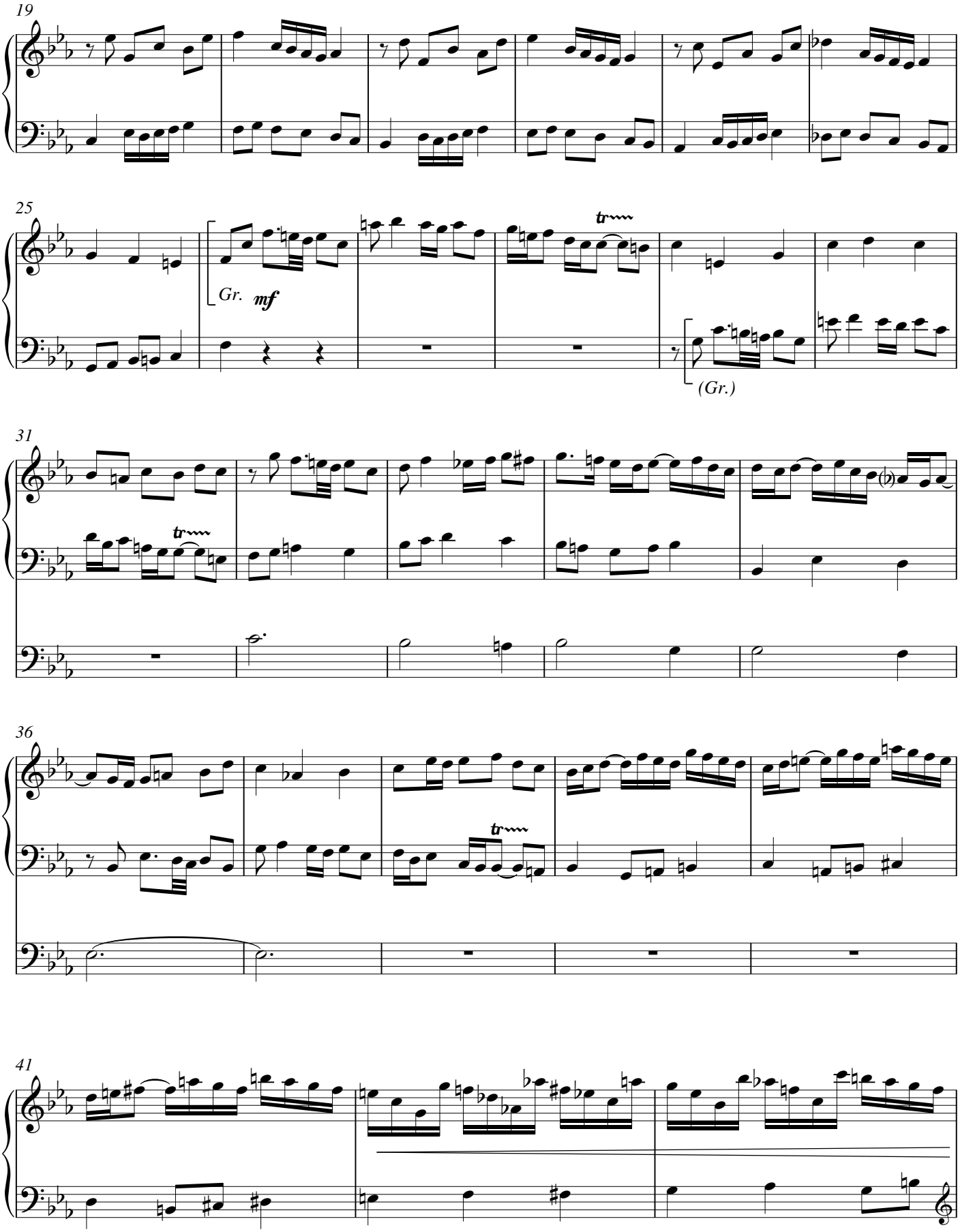


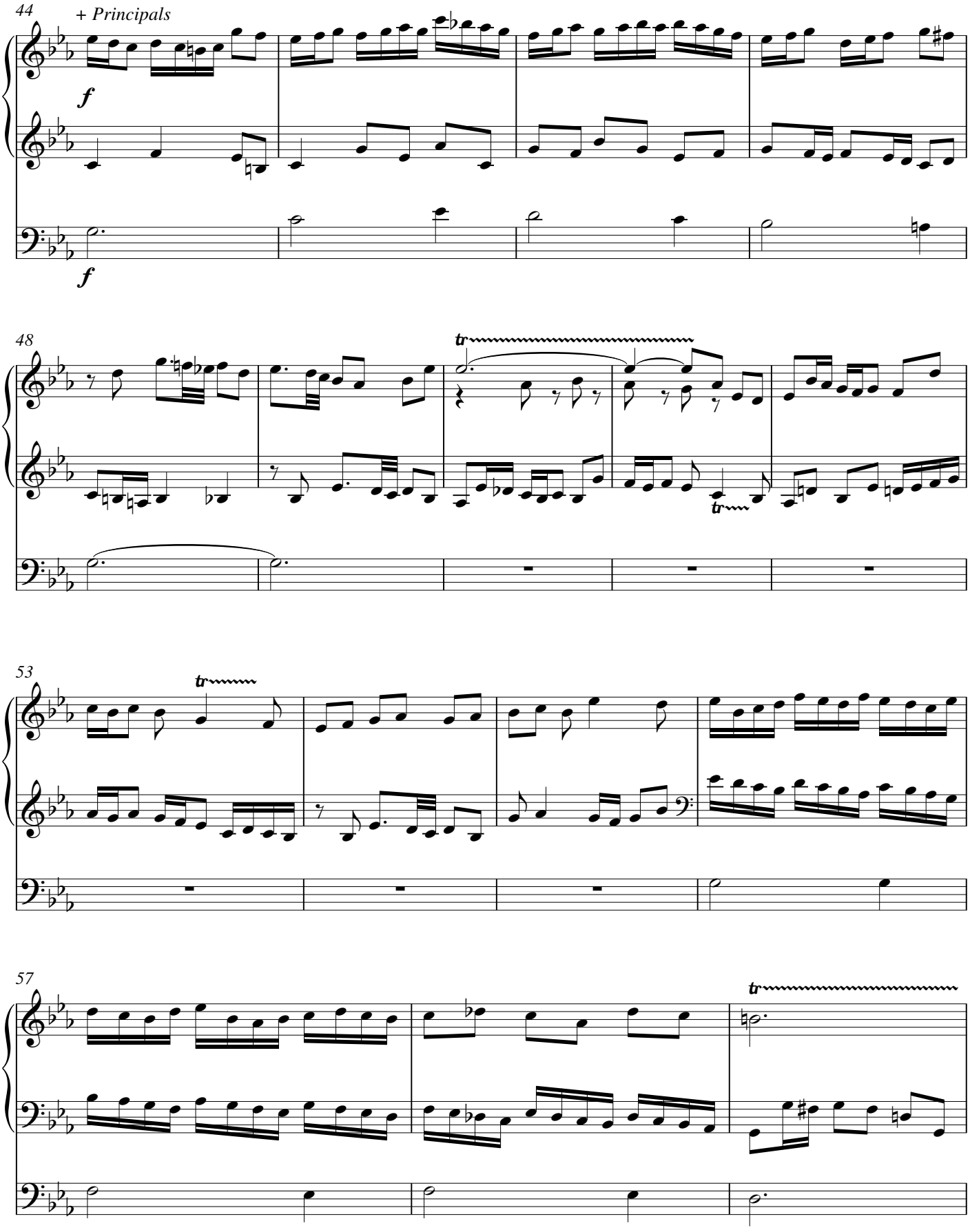
CH: 8', 4' Fonds
GT: 8', 4' Fonds, Ch. to Gt.
PED: 4' solo reed

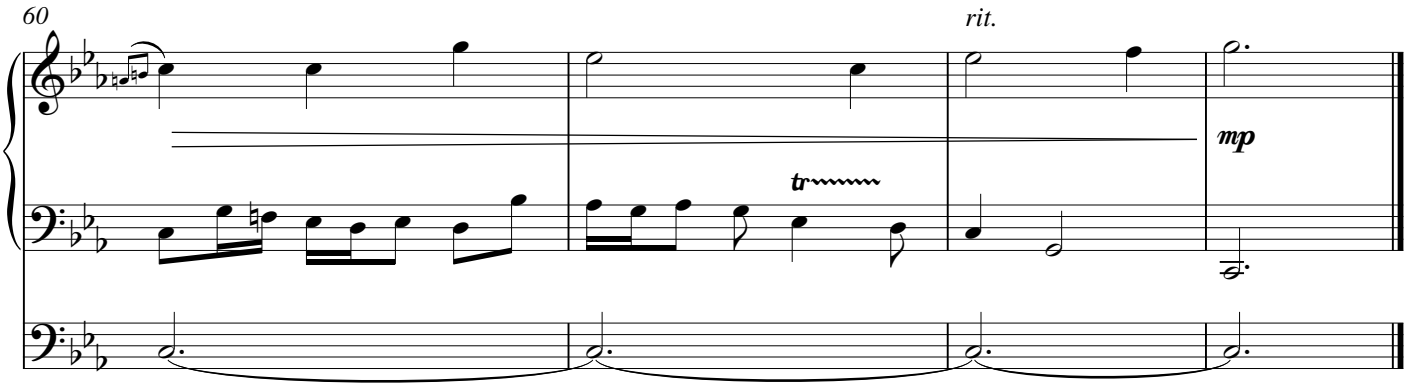
II. Chorale Fantasia

With Clarity ♩=78

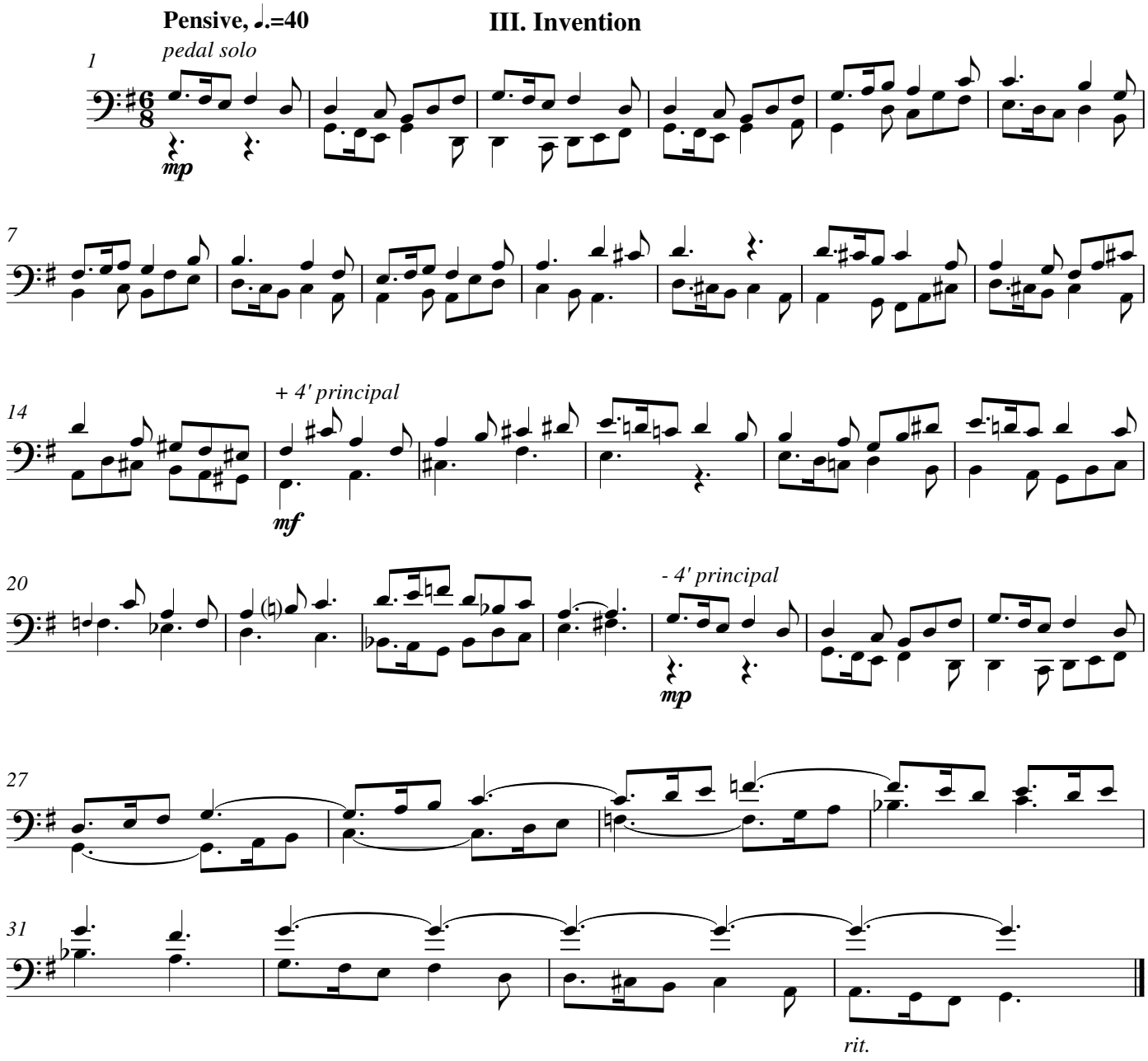



19
25
Gr.
mf
(Gr.)
31
36
41


44
+ Principals
f
f
48
tr
tr
53
tr
57
tr


60
rit.
mp
tr

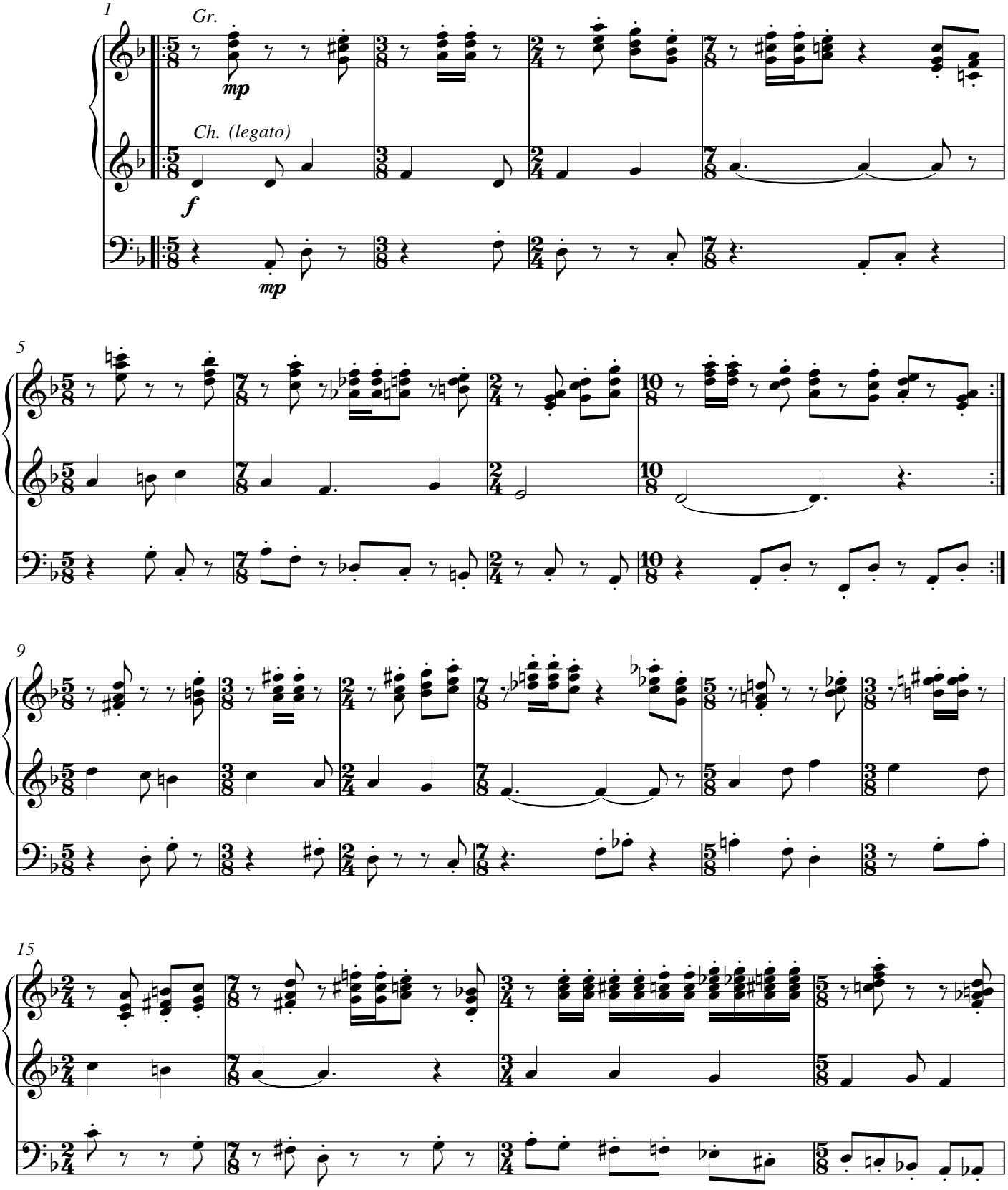
PED: 4' flute


Pensive, ♩.=40
III. Invention
1
pedal solo
mp
7
14
+ 4' principal
mf
20
- 4' principal
mp
27
31
rit.

GR: 4' flute
CH: cornet
PED: soft 16', 8'

IV. Chorale (Rhythmic)

Quirky, ♪=176



19

poco rit.

CH: 4' flute
SW: voix celeste
PED: soft 16', 8'

V. Aria

Fluidly, ♩.=68

Sw.

mp

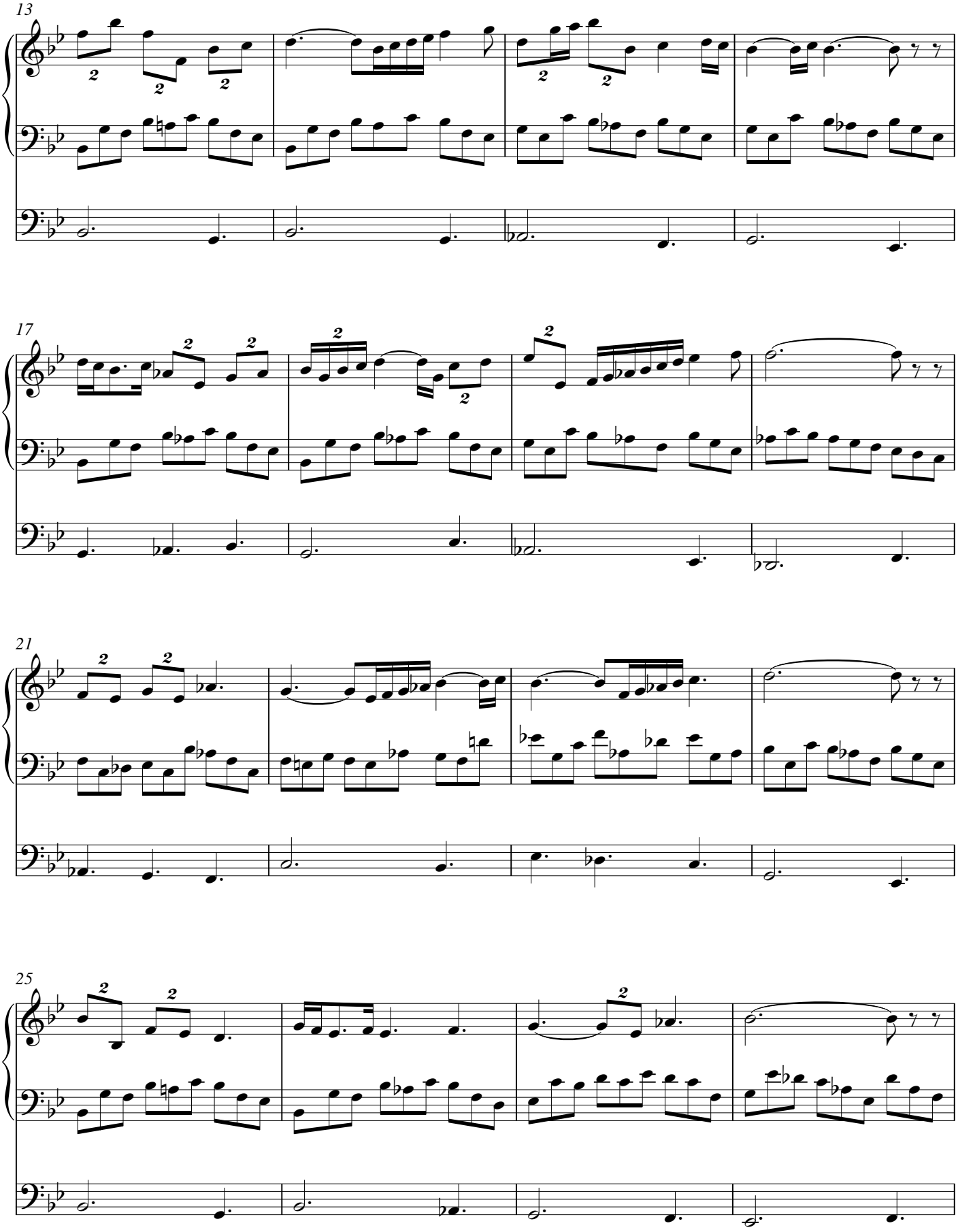
mp

5

Ch.

mf

9


13
17
21
25

29

33

36

rit.

add 32'

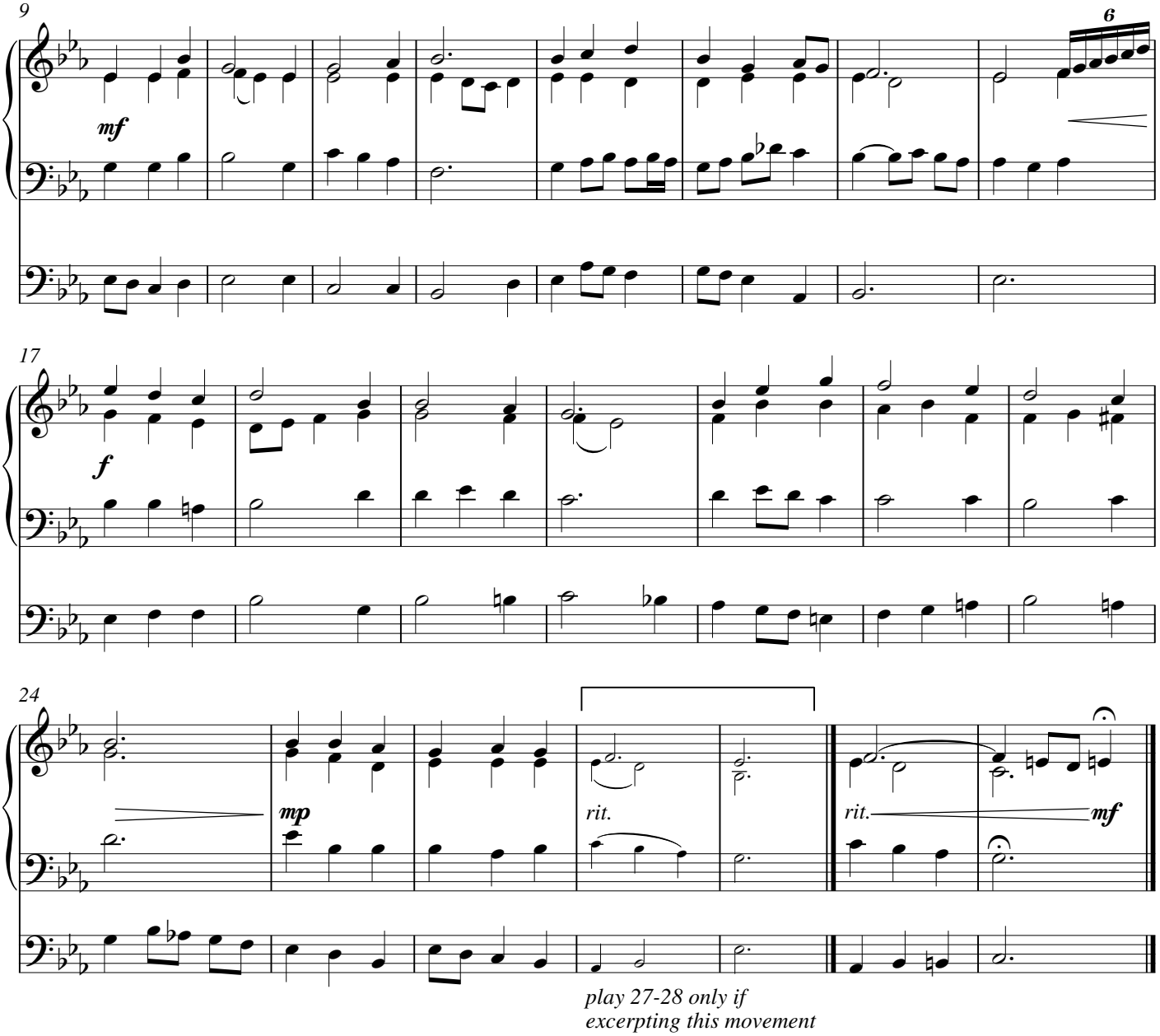
SW or CH: warm principals

VI. Chorale (Major)

With Warmth, ♩=72

1

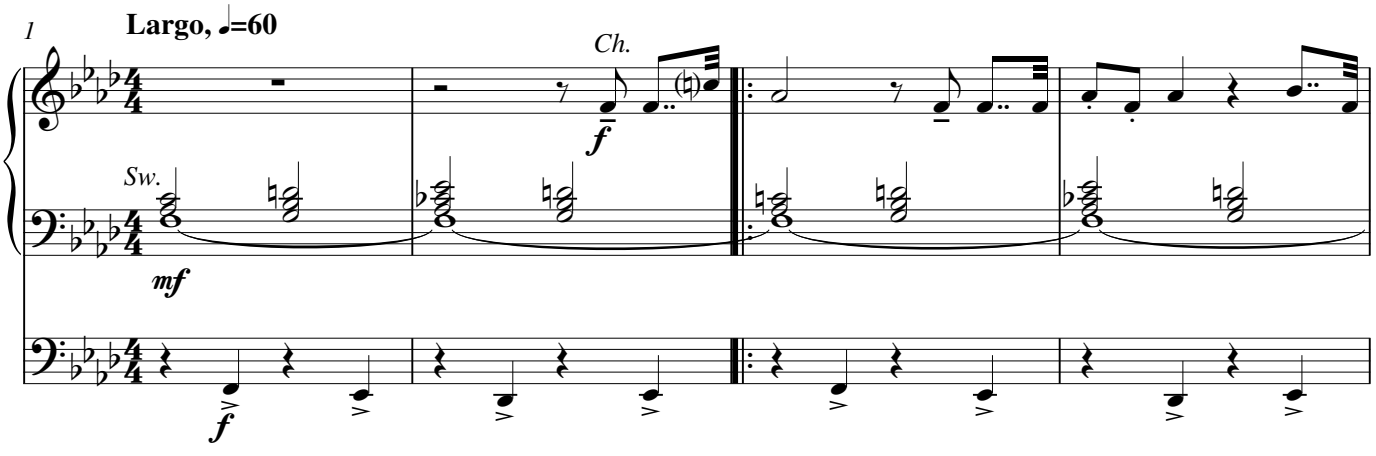
Ch. ***mp***

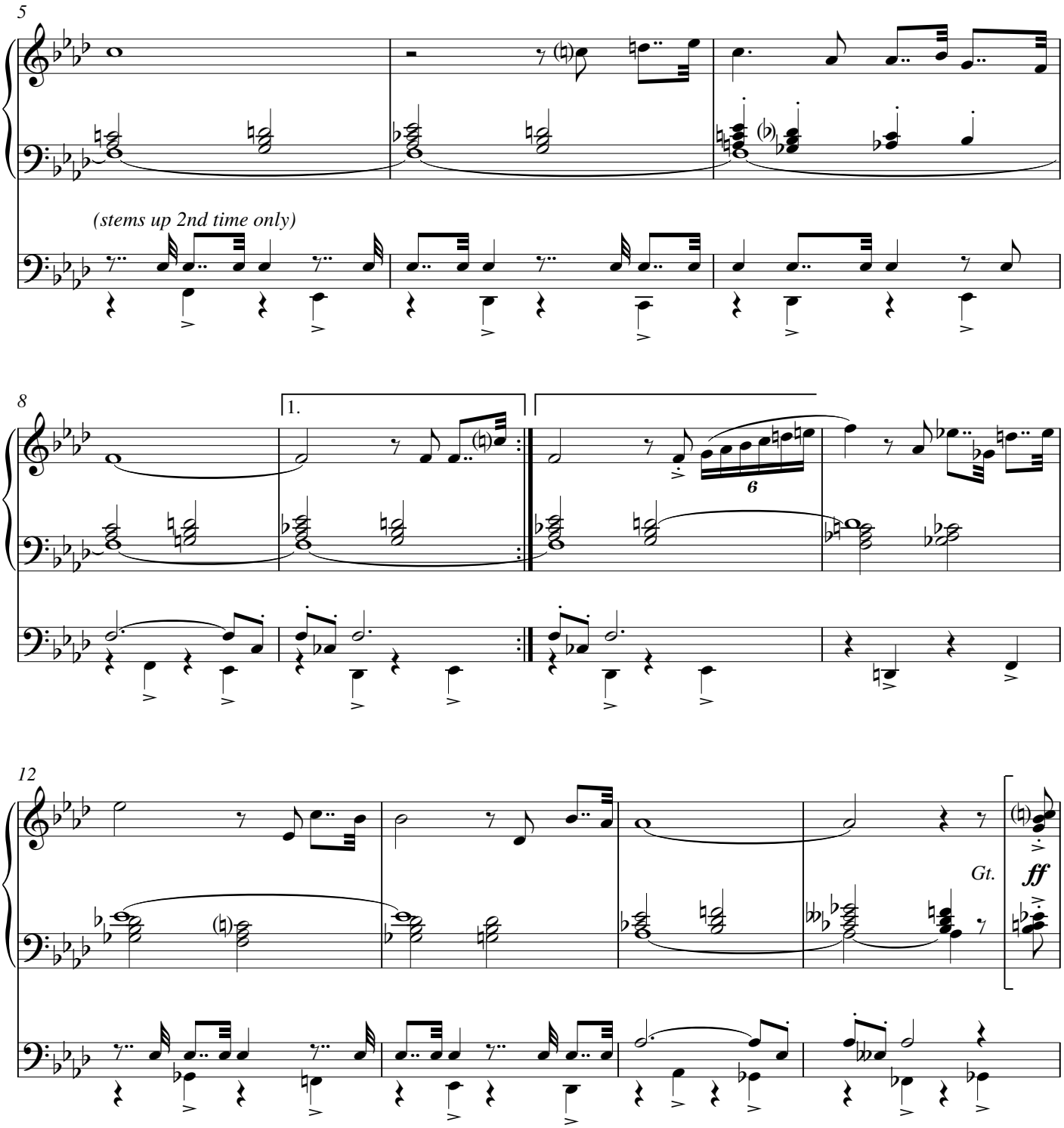


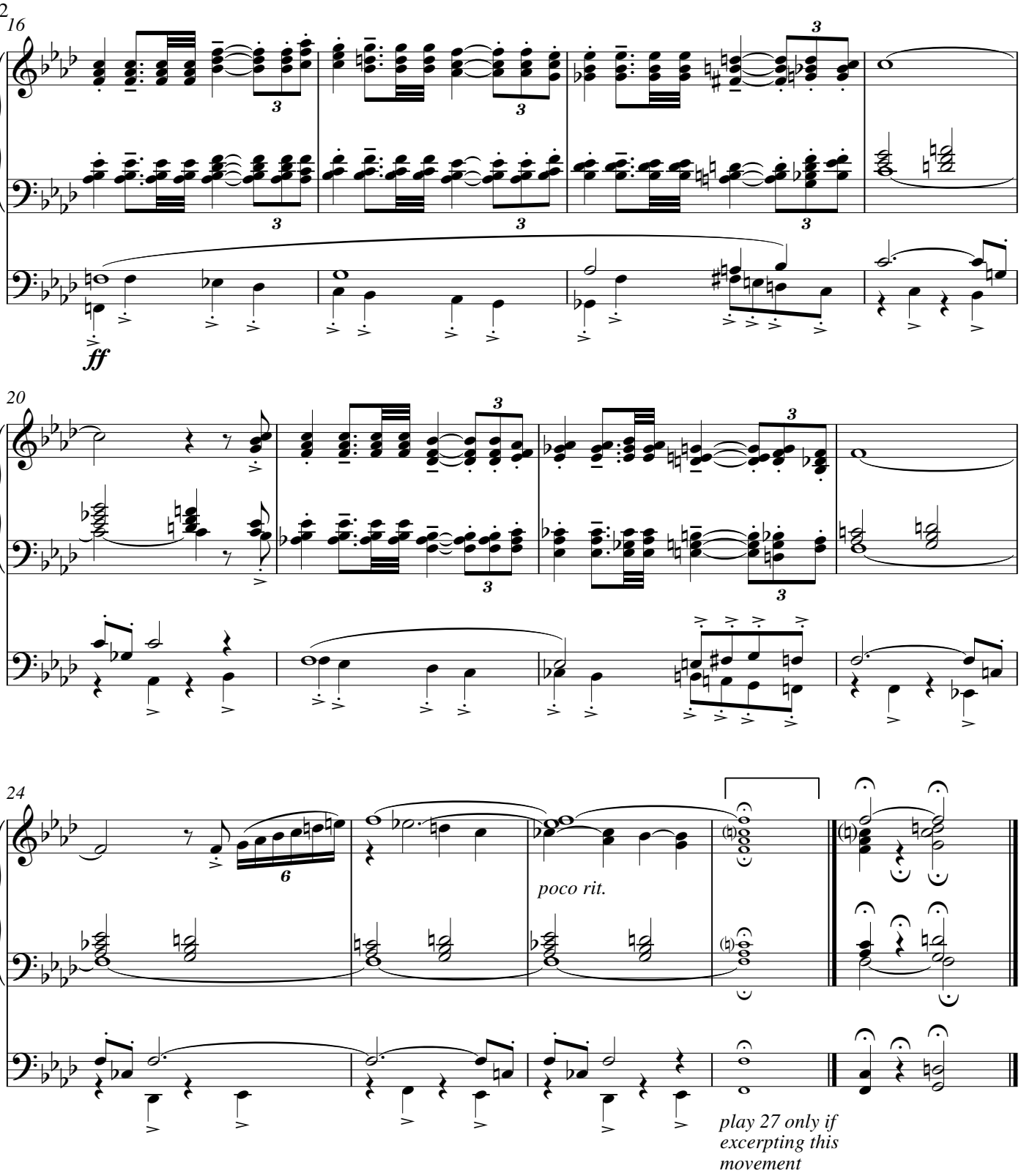
play 27-28 only if excerpting this movement

CH: solo 8' tpt.
GT: 16', 8', 4', 2' fonds., Sw. to Gt.
SW: 8', 4', fonds. + 8' reeds
PED: (32') 16', 8', 4' founds + 8' reeds

VII. Marche Funebre




5
(stems up 2nd time only)
8
1.
6
12
Gt.
ff


16
ff
20
24
poco rit.
play 27 only if excerpting this movement

SW: Full with Mixture and Reeds 8', 4'
GT: Full, Sw. & Ch. to Gt.
CH: Full with Mixture and Reeds 8'
PED: Full with Reeds 16', 8', 4', all mans. to Ped.

VIII. Toccata

1 **Presto, ♩ = 138**

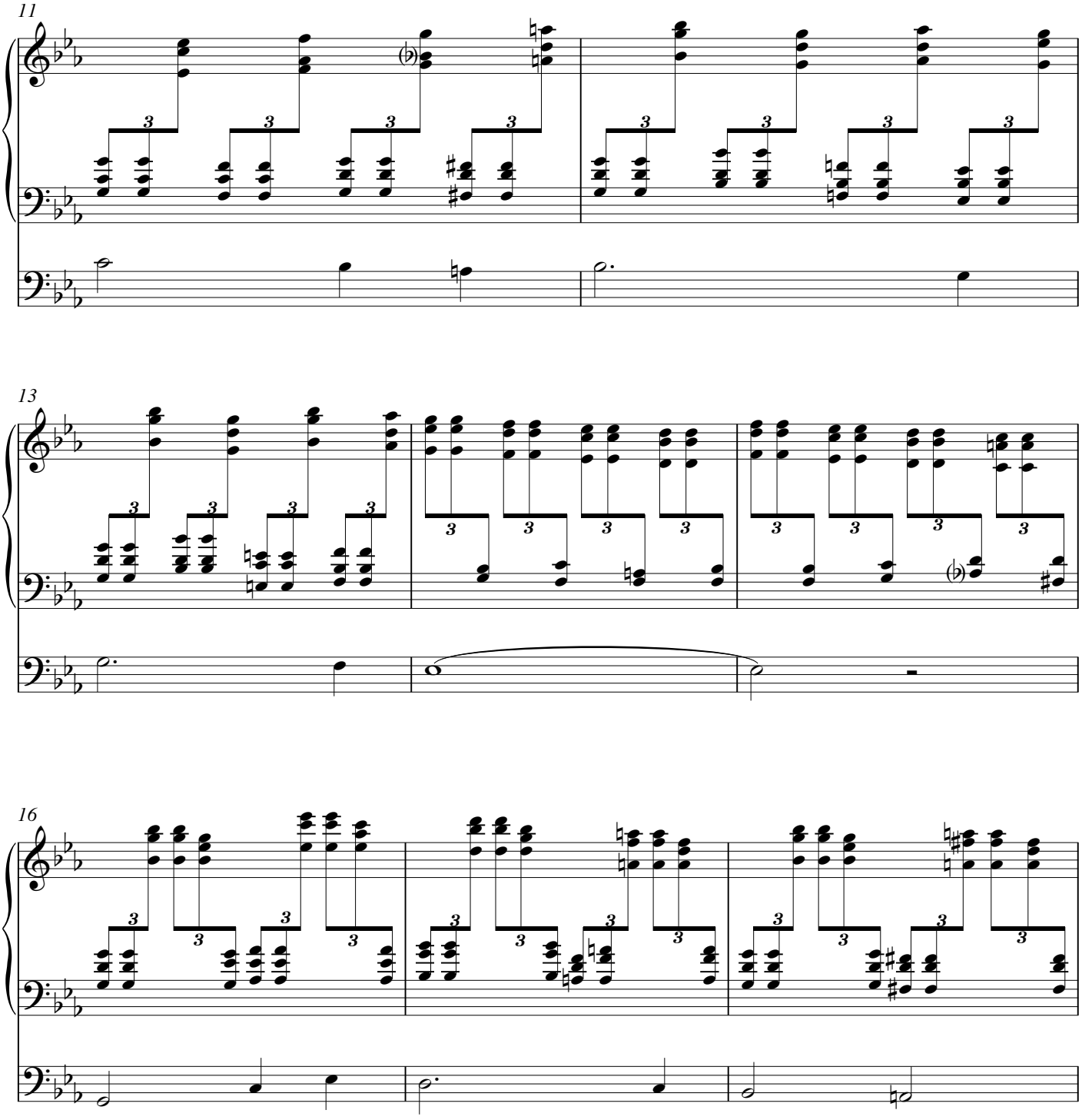
Gt. ***fff***

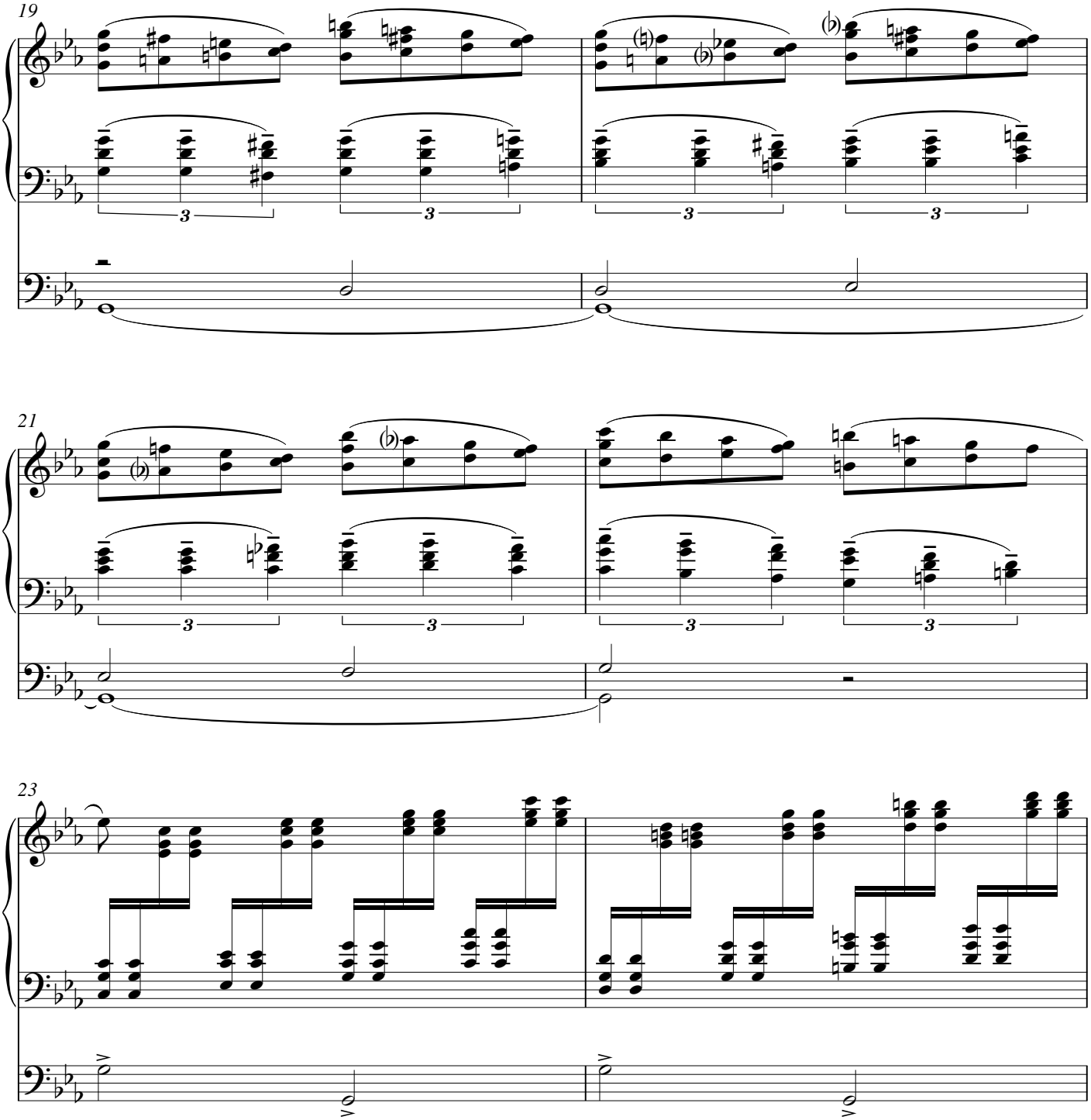
fff *2nd time through, play 8vb*

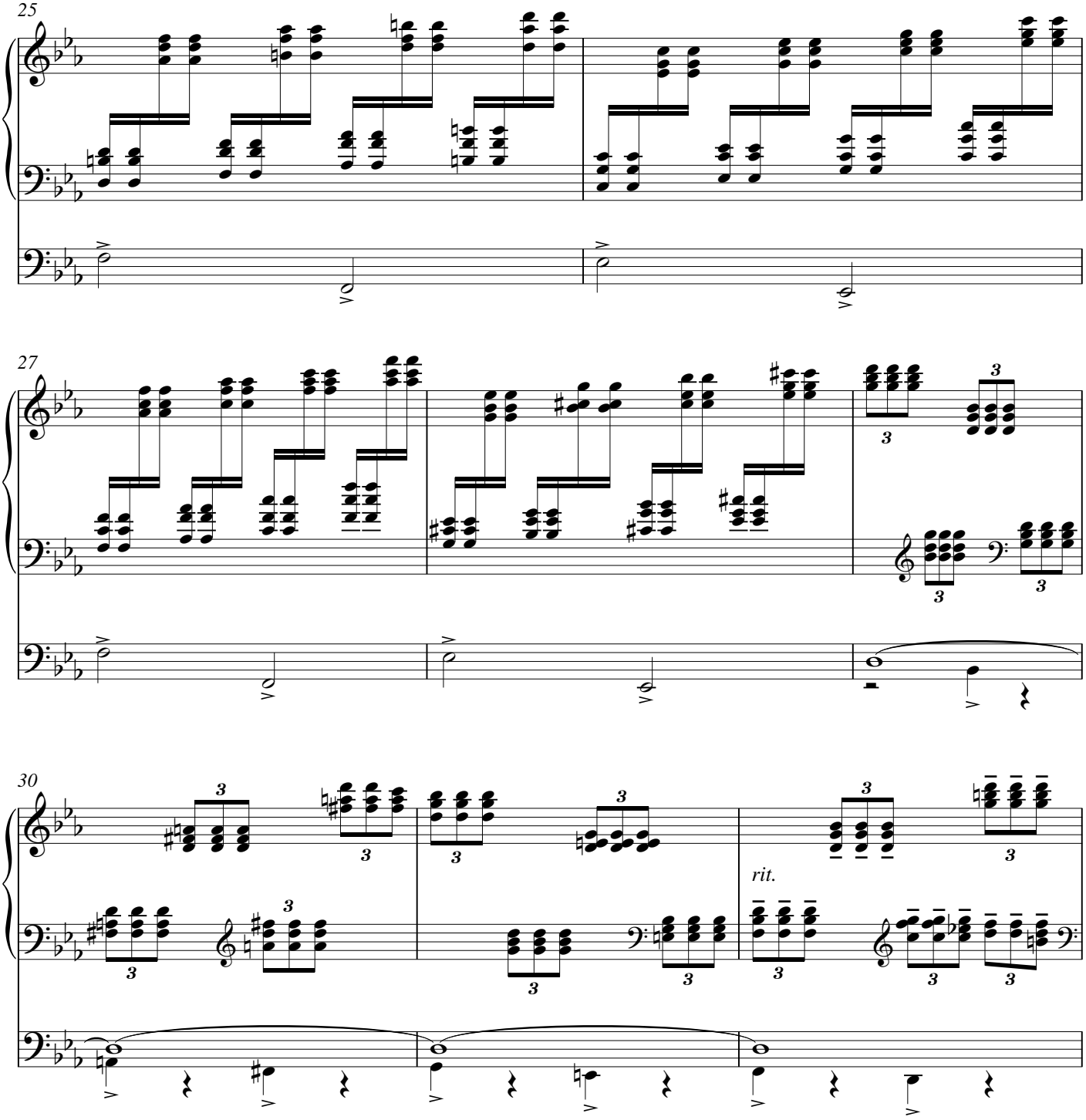
3

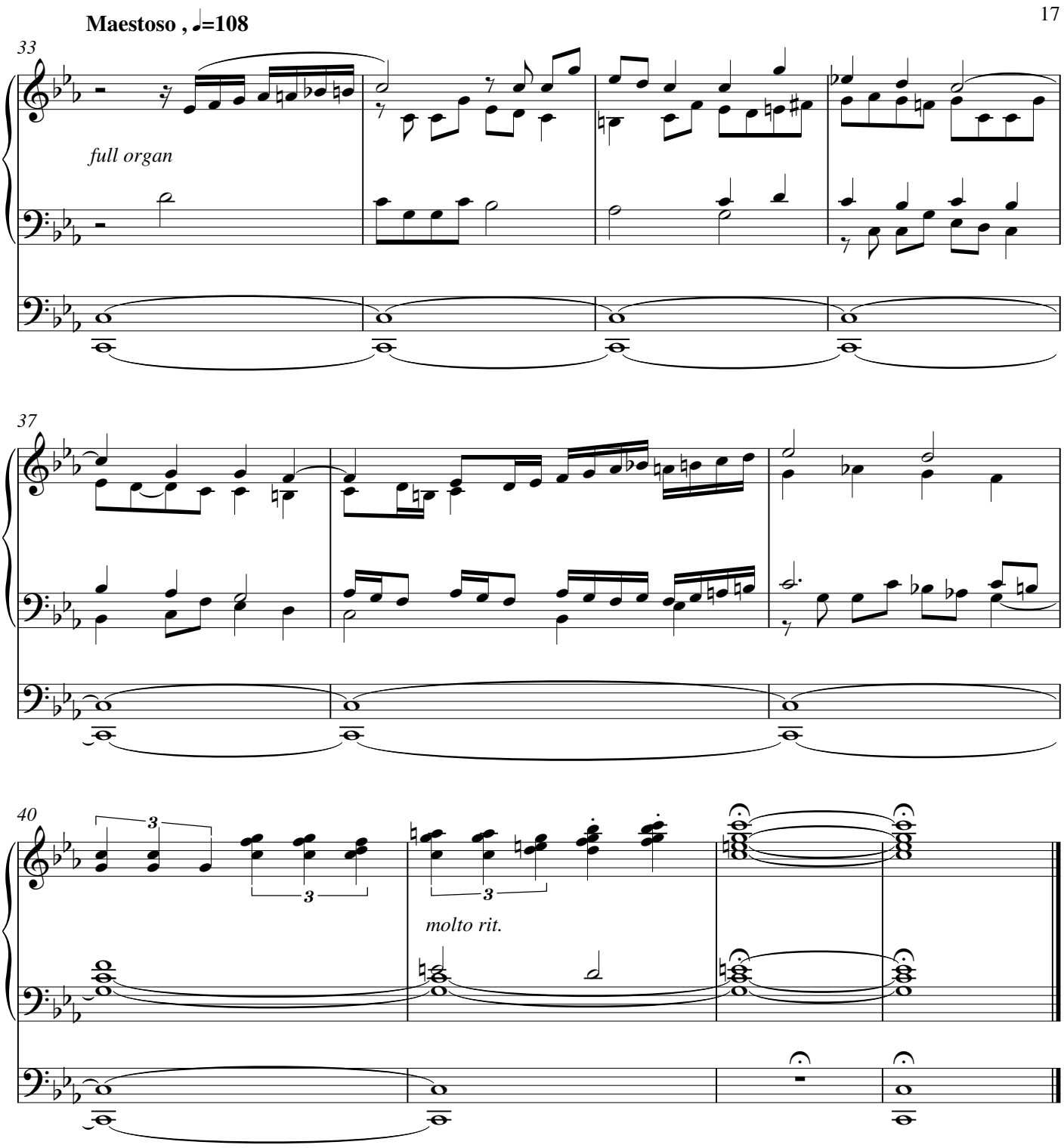
6

8


11
13
16


19
21
23


25
27
30
rit.


Maestoso , ♩=108
33
full organ
37
40
3
3
3
molto rit.