Ignoble Dances

« for flute and piano »

Karim Al-Zand

(2020)

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Ignoble Dances *was commissioned by flutist Matthew Roitstein with the generous support of a consortium of flutists from the United States and abroad. Members of the consortium premiered the work in the 2021 and 2022 seasons, with the first performance by Matthew Roitstein and pianist David Roitstein at the National Flute Association's 2021 convention.*

consortium members

Hilary Abigana, Claudia Anderson, Amanda Blaikie, Leone Buyse, Christopher Chaffee, Michelle Cheramy, Douglas DeVries, Judith Dines, Aralee Dorough, Cobus du Toit, Jill Felber, Brook Ferguson, Steven Finley, Lisa Garner Santa, Marianne Gedigian, Emma Gerstein, Michael Gordon, Nave Graham, Jennifer Grim, Christine Gustafson, Hannah Hammel, Elise Henry, Jill Heyboer, Christina Jennings, Trudy Kane, Jennifer Keeney, Cynthia Kelley, Sherry Kujala, Stephen Kujala, Walfrid Kujala, Kathryn Ladner, Christina Medawar, Norman Menzales, Diana Morgan, Erica Peel, Catherine Ramirez, Leslie Richmond, Matthew Roitstein, Elizabeth Rowe, Rosalina R. Sackstein, Adam Sadberry, Marisela Sager, Julie Scolnik, Christina Smith, Yoobin Son, Nancy Stagnitta, Wendy Stern, Mark Teplitsky, Ebonee Thomas, Caen Thomason-Redus, Linda Toote, James Walker, Viviana Wilson, Heather Yarmel, Natalie Zisman

program note

Ignoble Dances was written in 2020, and its music reflects upon that disconsolate year. The seven short dances draw musical influence from a variety of sources. The title of the first movement, *Antemasque*, refers to a "buffoonish dance" that precedes a masque, a courtly entertainment of the 16th century. Of course, the word has gained another meaning in 2020, one that is equally buffoonish. Here the flute plays an urgent tune over an obstinate bass (*ostinato*). *Dance of Duplicity* presents a wistful slow drag (a ragtime two-step) gradually undermined by repeated interruptions. *Dance of Denial* is based on the Italian *tarantella*, in which those bitten by the tarantula spider dance in a feverish trance until they collapse. *Distanced Dance* is a melancholy solo for flute alone. In *J. B. Dances a Jig in the Gloom*, a surprisingly cheerful flute tune emerges from the piano's somber haze. *Dog Whistle Dance* features the piccolo and the highest register of the piano in strident rhythmic interplay. The set concludes with a *pavan*: a slow, stately Renaissance dance. In 1648, composer Thomas Tomkins wrote a lament in memory of King Charles I, entitled "Sad Pavan for These Distracted Tymes." In my pavan, which draws on the Tomkins, it is the music that is distracted and the times that are sad.

—Karim Al-Zand

1. Antemasque
2. Dance of Duplicity
3. Dance of Denial
4. Distanced Dance
5. J. B. Dances a Jig in the Gloom
6. Dog Whistle Dance
7. Distracted Pavan for These Sad Times

[duration: ca. 16']

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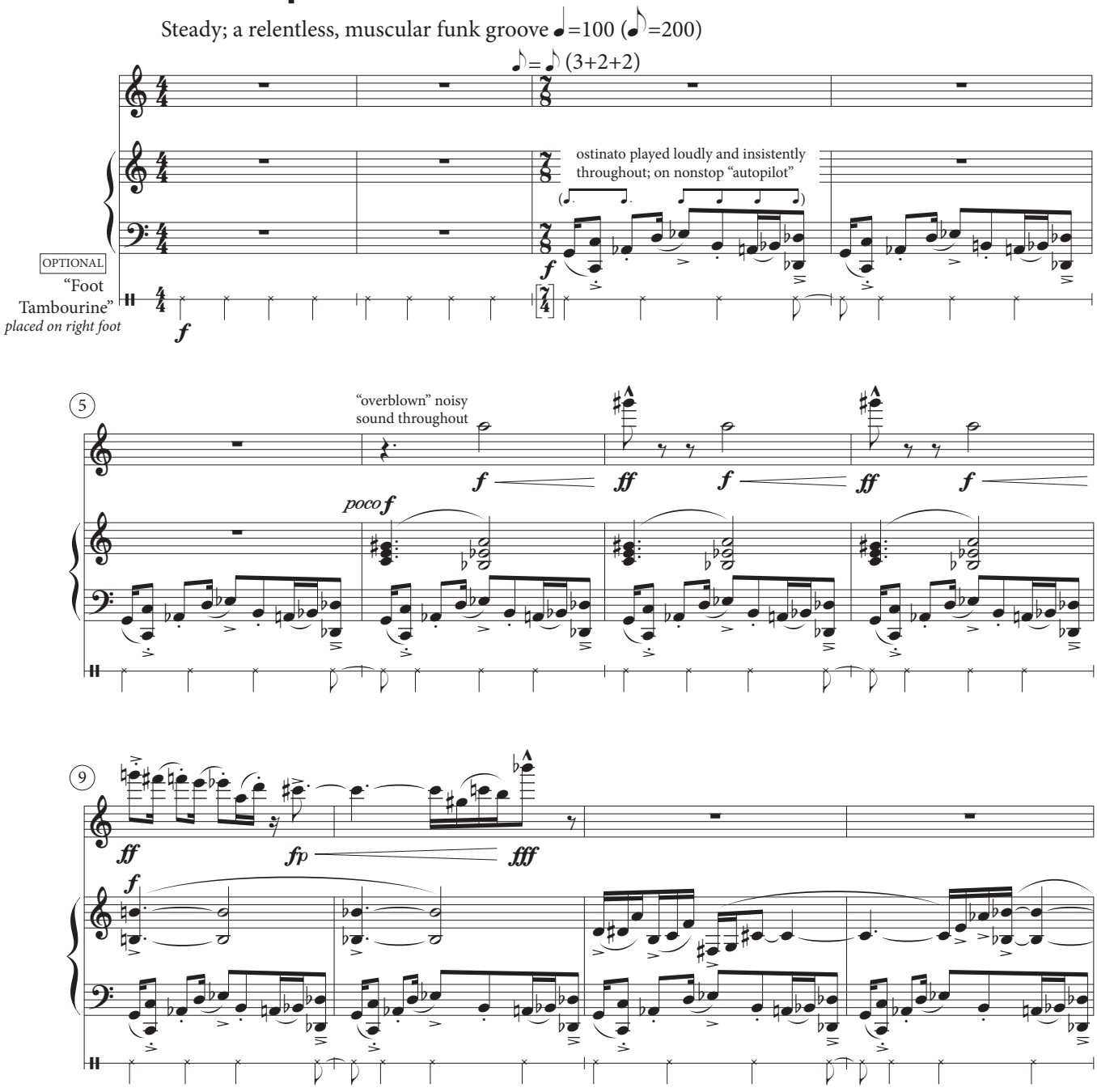
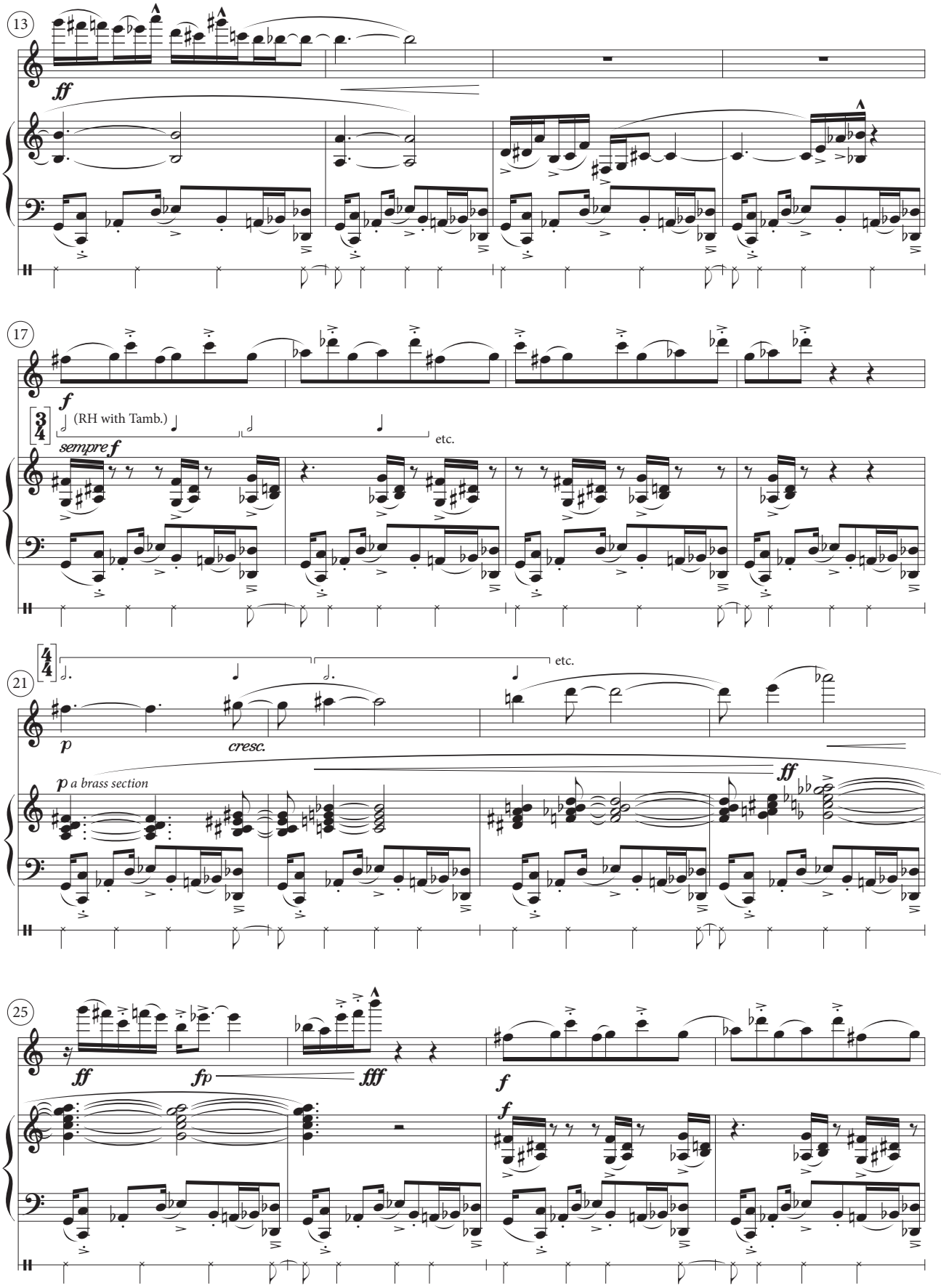
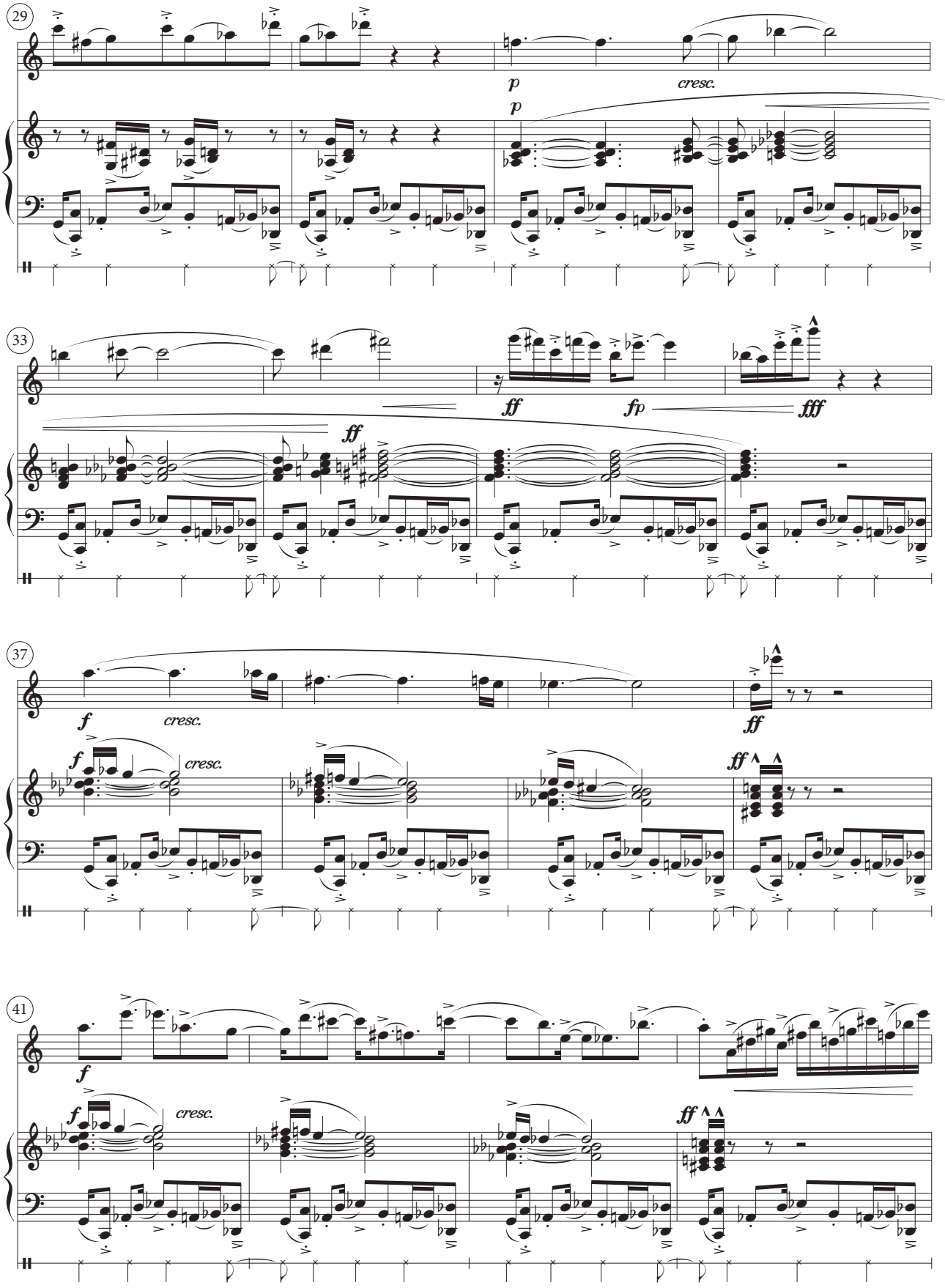
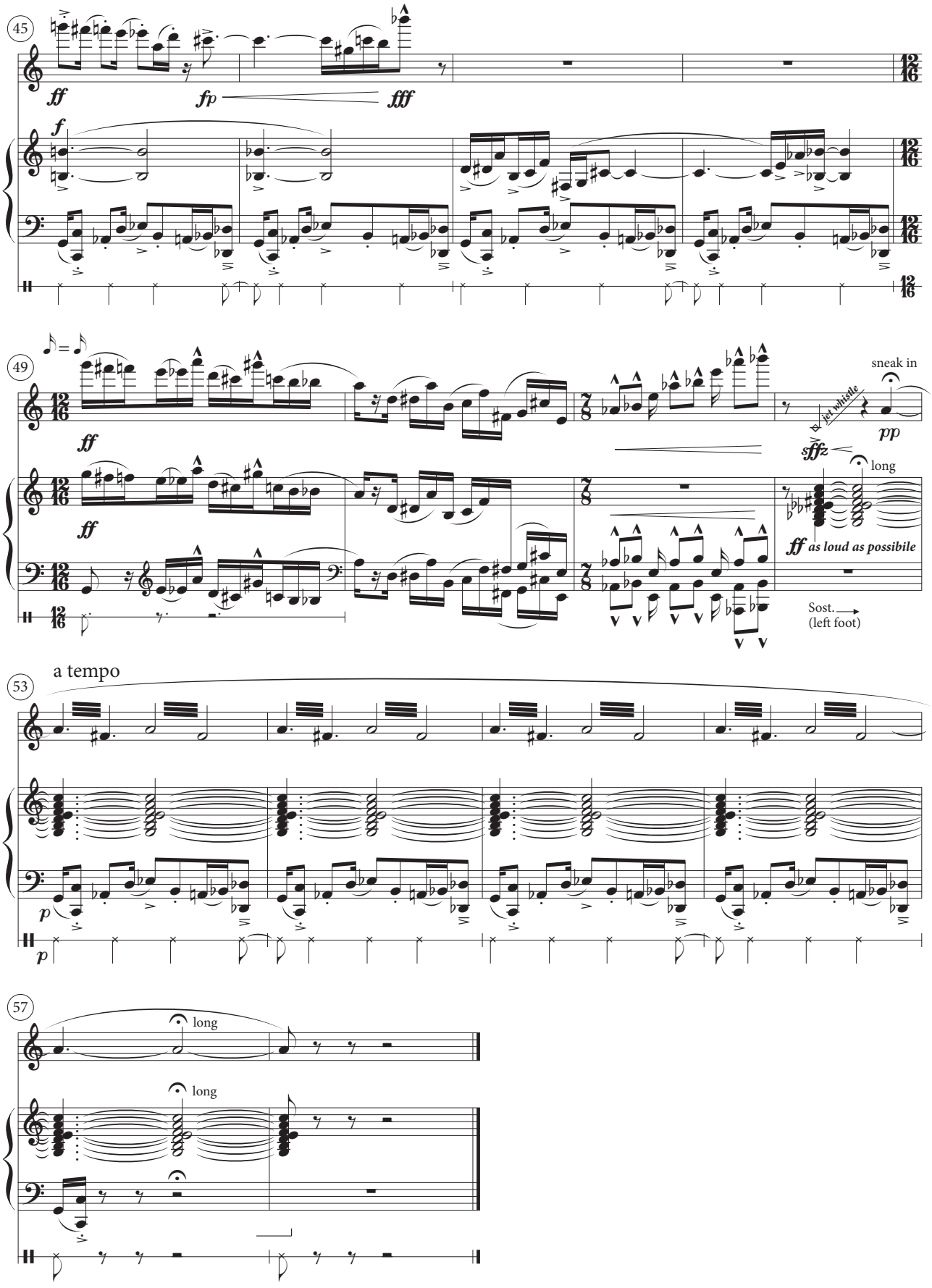
1. Antemasque

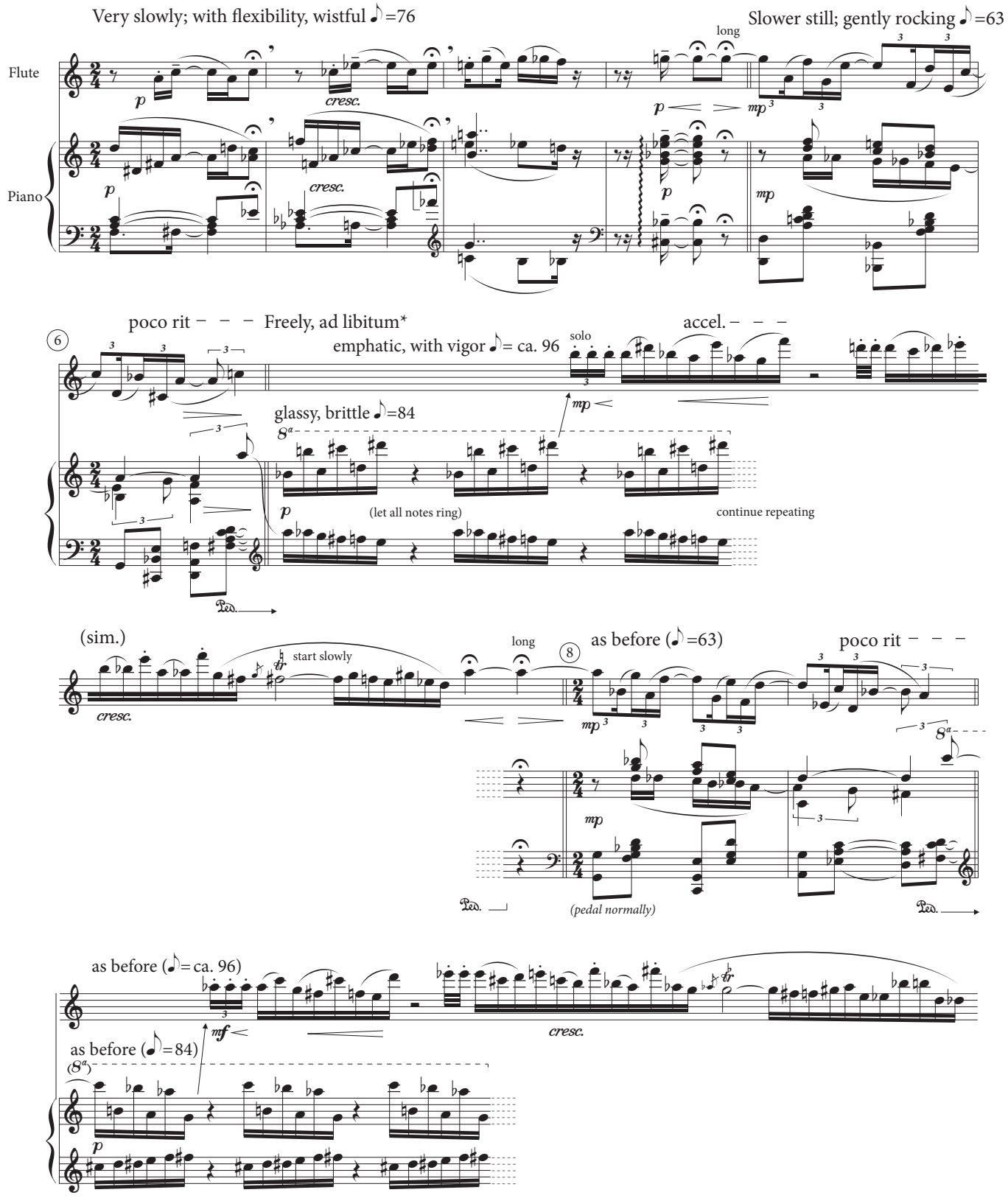



13
ff
17
f
(RH with Tamb.)
etc.
sempre f
21
etc.
p
cresc.
p a brass section
ff
25
ff
fp
fff
f
f

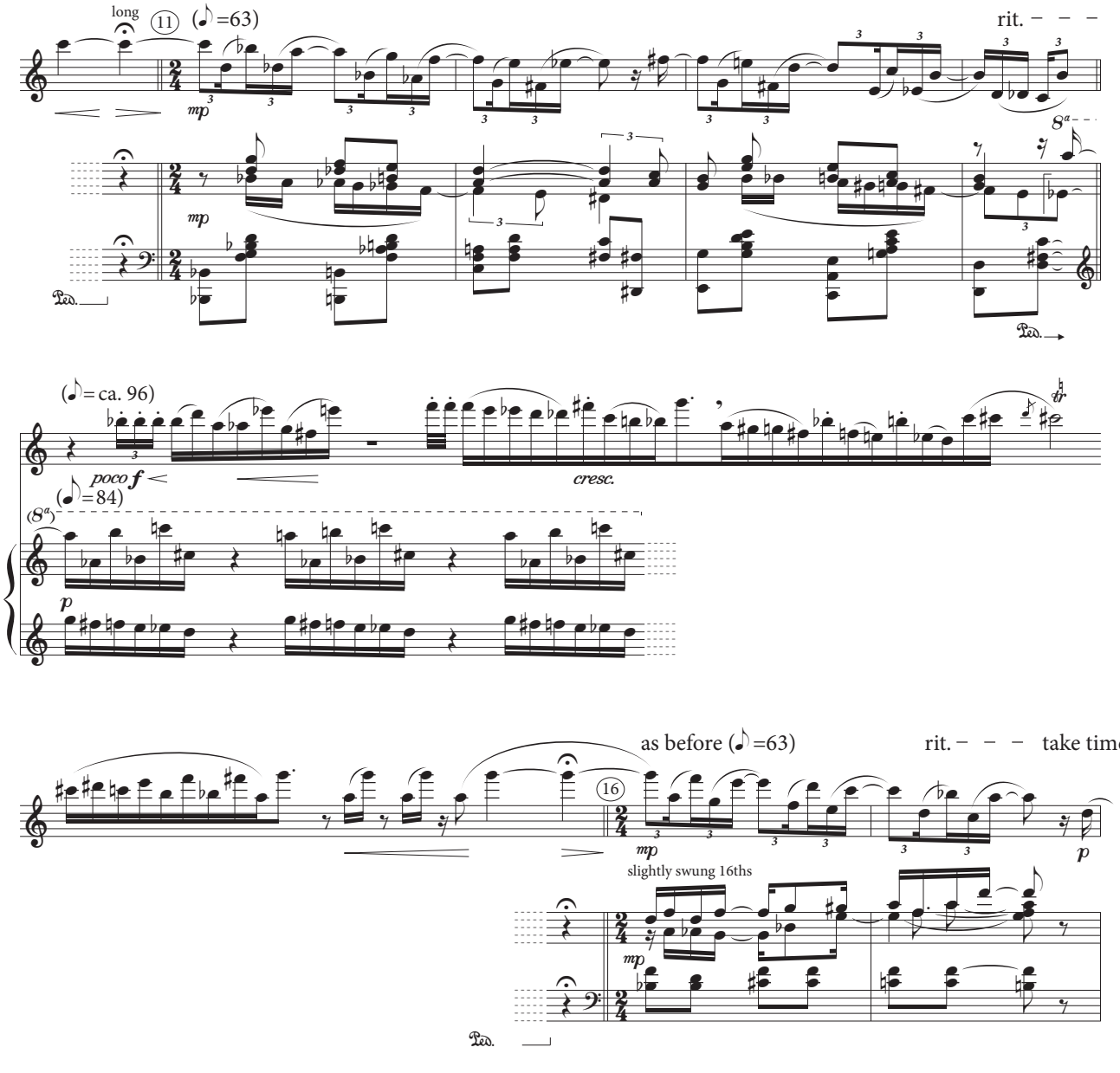

29
p
p
cresc.
33
ff
ff
fp
fff
37
f
cresc.
f
cresc.
ff
ff
41
f
f
cresc.
ff


45
ff
fp
fff
f
49
ff
ff
sneak in
let whistle
pp
sffz
long
ff as loud as possibile
Sost.
(left foot)
a tempo
53
p
p
57
long
long

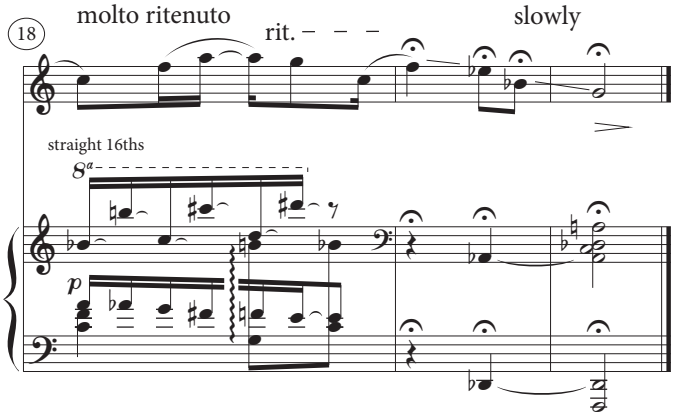
2. Dance of Duplicity (a slow drag)



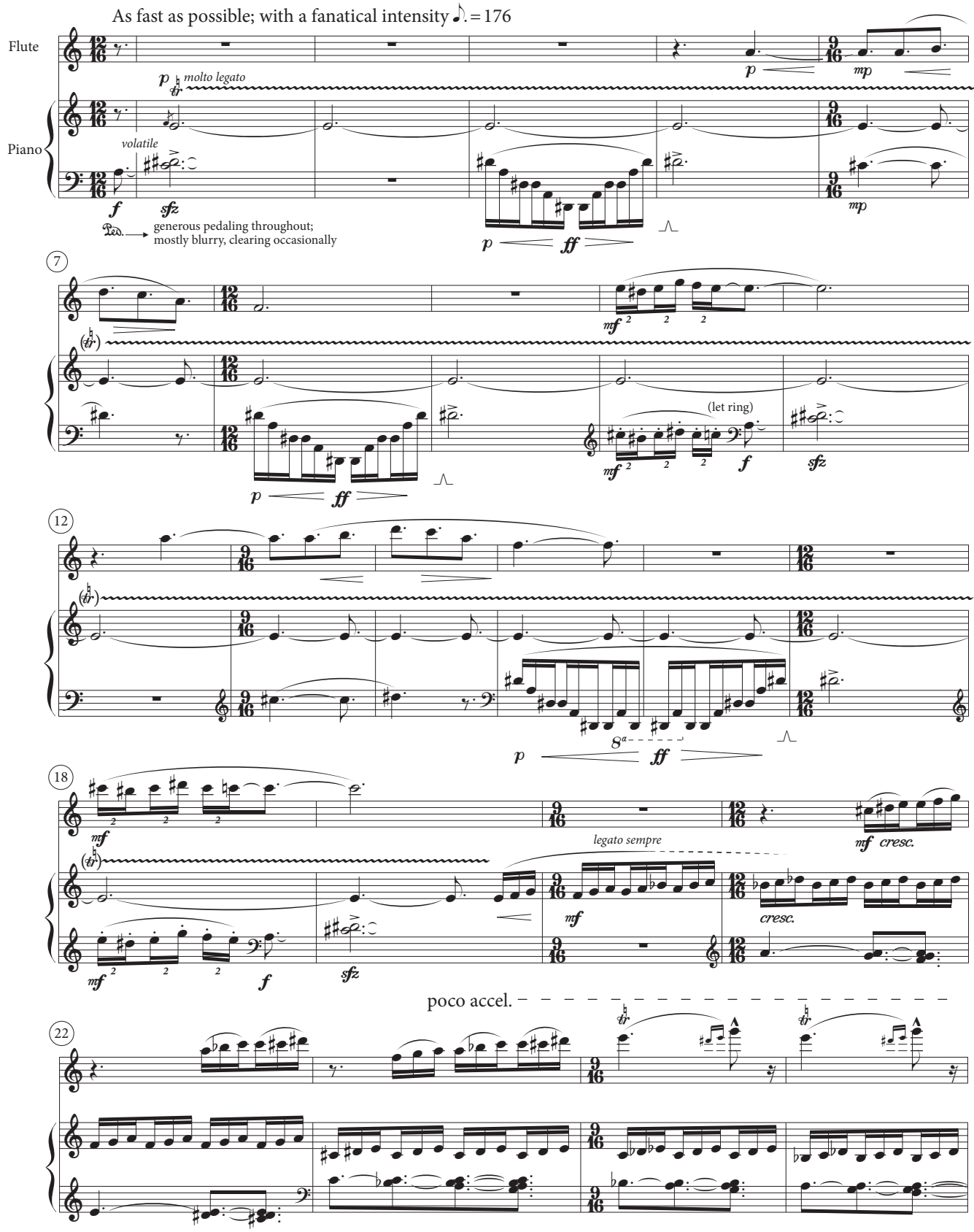
* The two parts are not strictly coordinated, though the flute should begin approximately at the indicated spot. The piano figure continues, repeated strictly in (its own) time, like clock-work, dispassionate; while the flute part is played in a declamatory way, with much rubato and expression. When the flute reaches the fermata, the piano should complete any repetition in progress (if necessary), pause, then release the pedal.

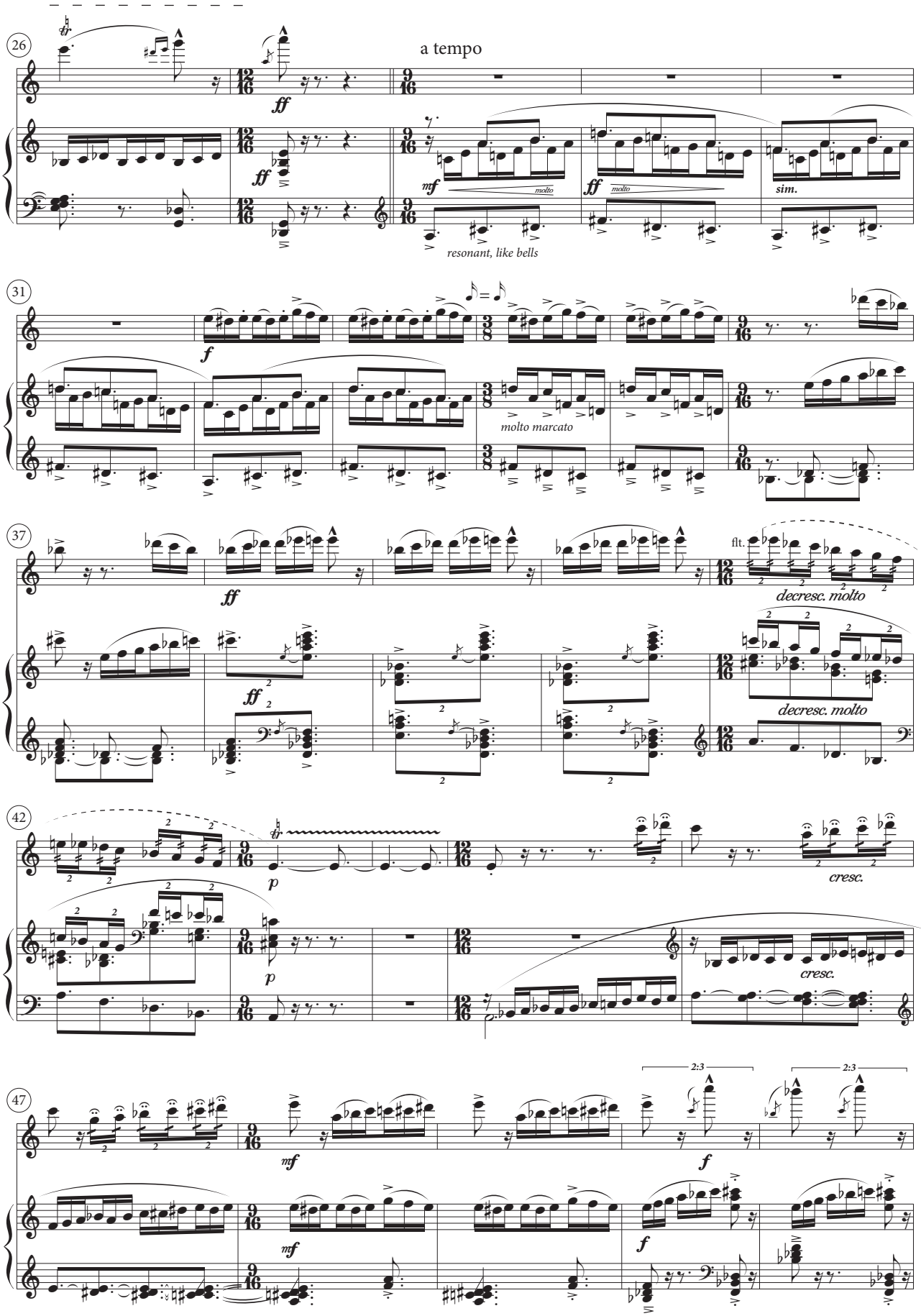

long
11
(♪=63)
rit. – – –
mp
8a
Ped.
(♪= ca. 96)
poco f
cresc.
(♪=84)
(8a)
p

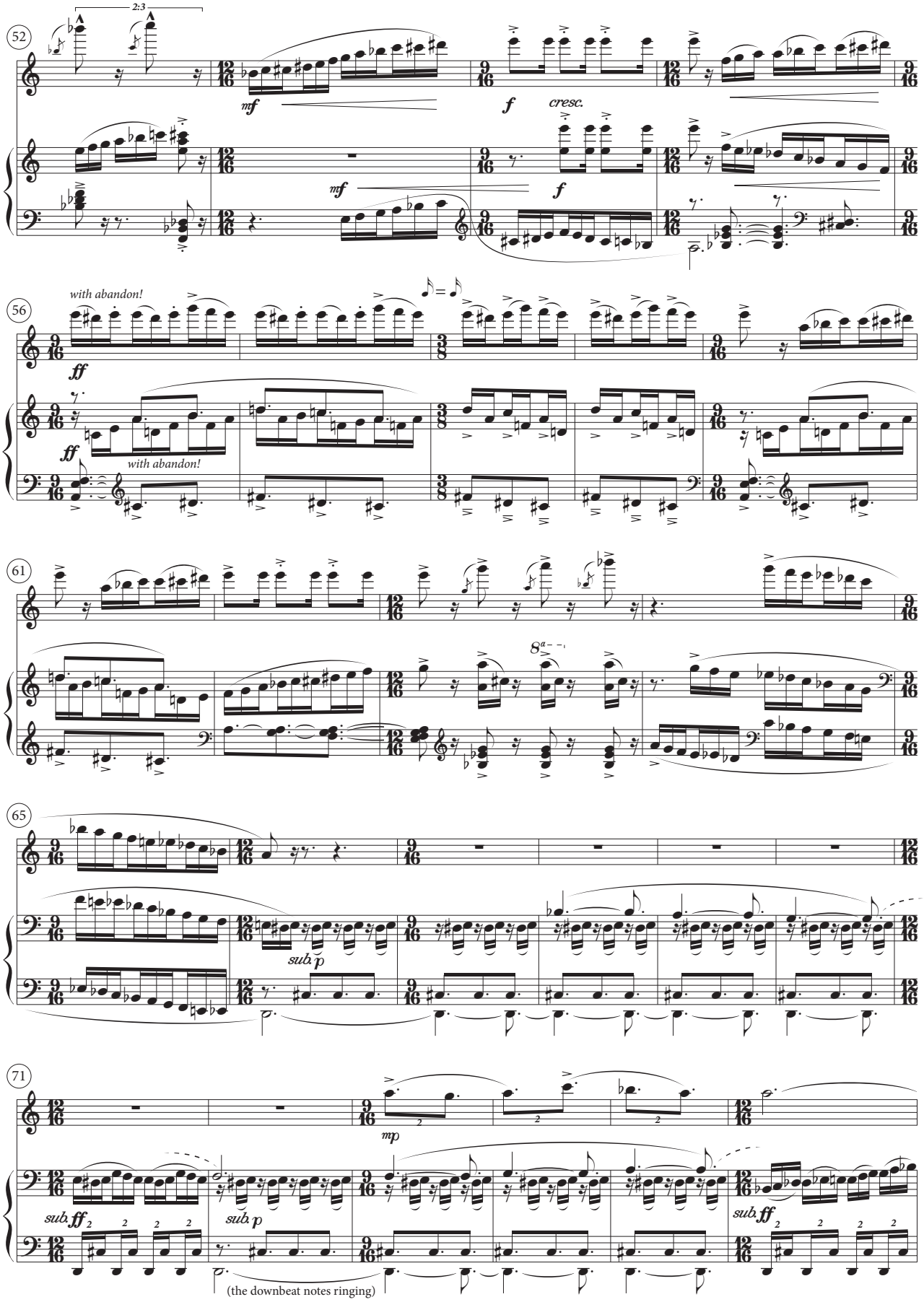
as before (♪=63)
rit. – – – take time
16
mp
p
slightly swung 16ths
Ped.

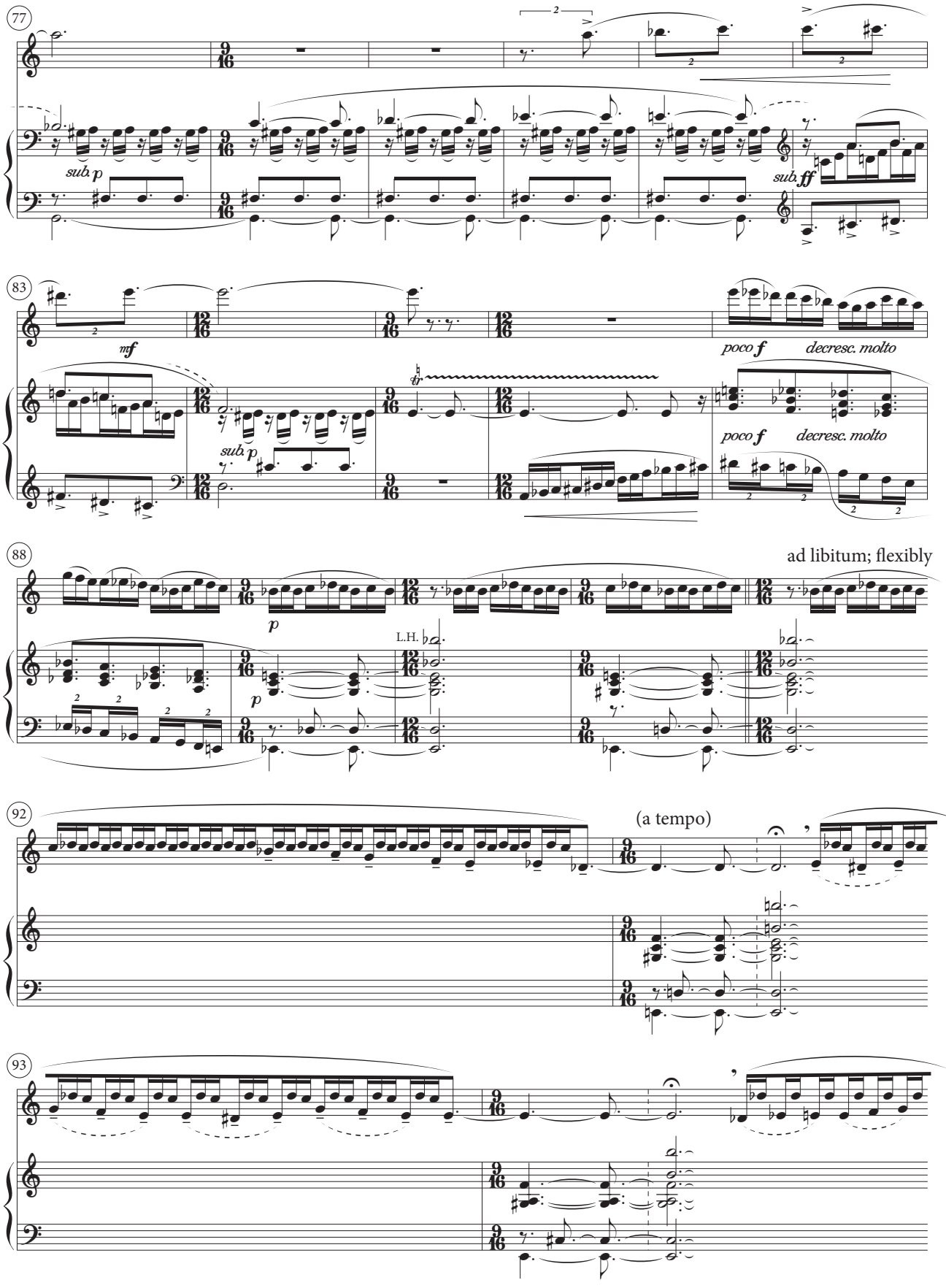

18
molto ritenuto
rit. – – –
slowly
straight 16ths
8a
p

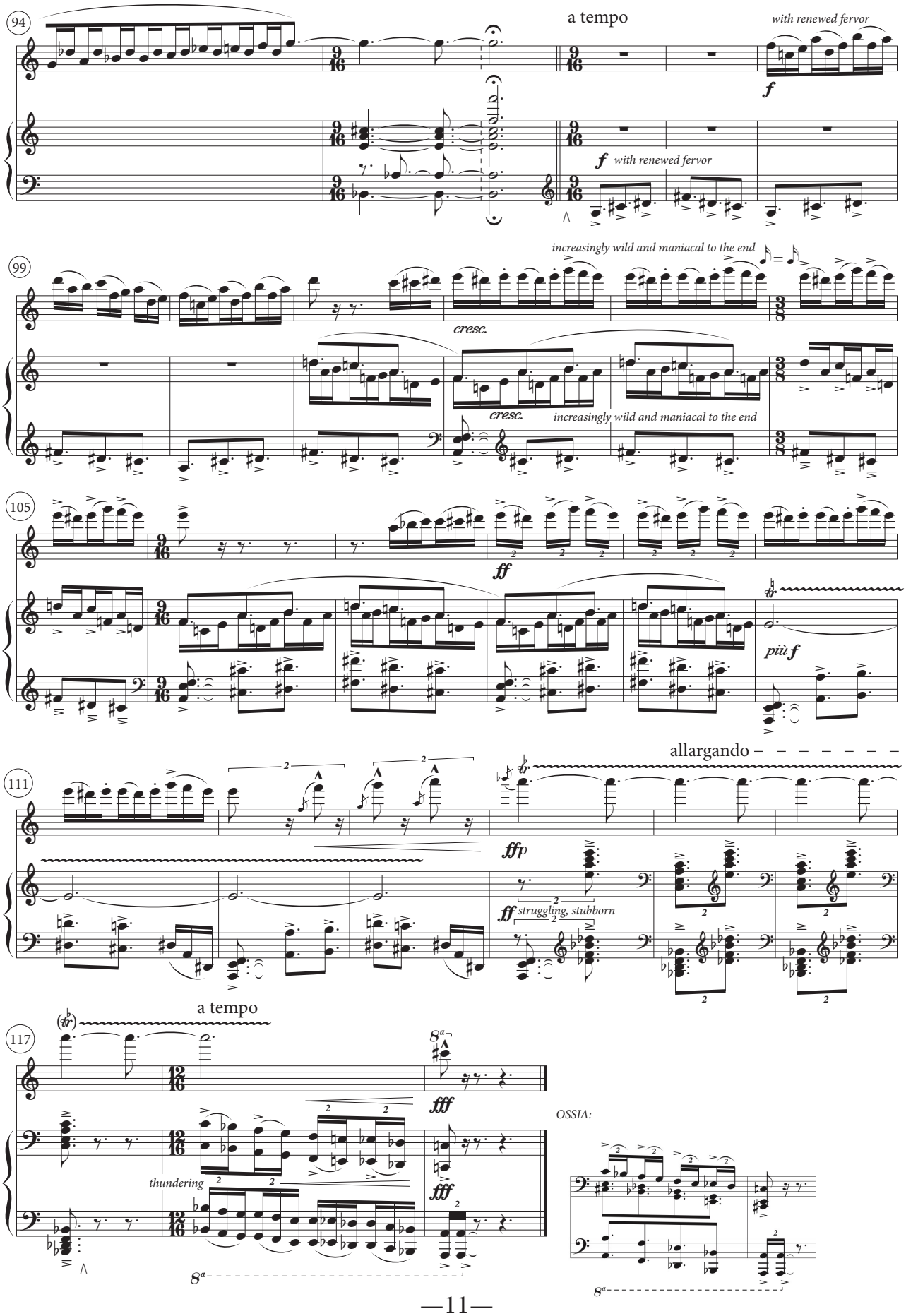
3. Dance of Denial (tarantella)




26
a tempo
ff
mf
molto
sim.
resonant, like bells
31
f
molto marcato
37
ff
flt.
decresc. molto
42
p
cresc.
47
mf
f
2:3

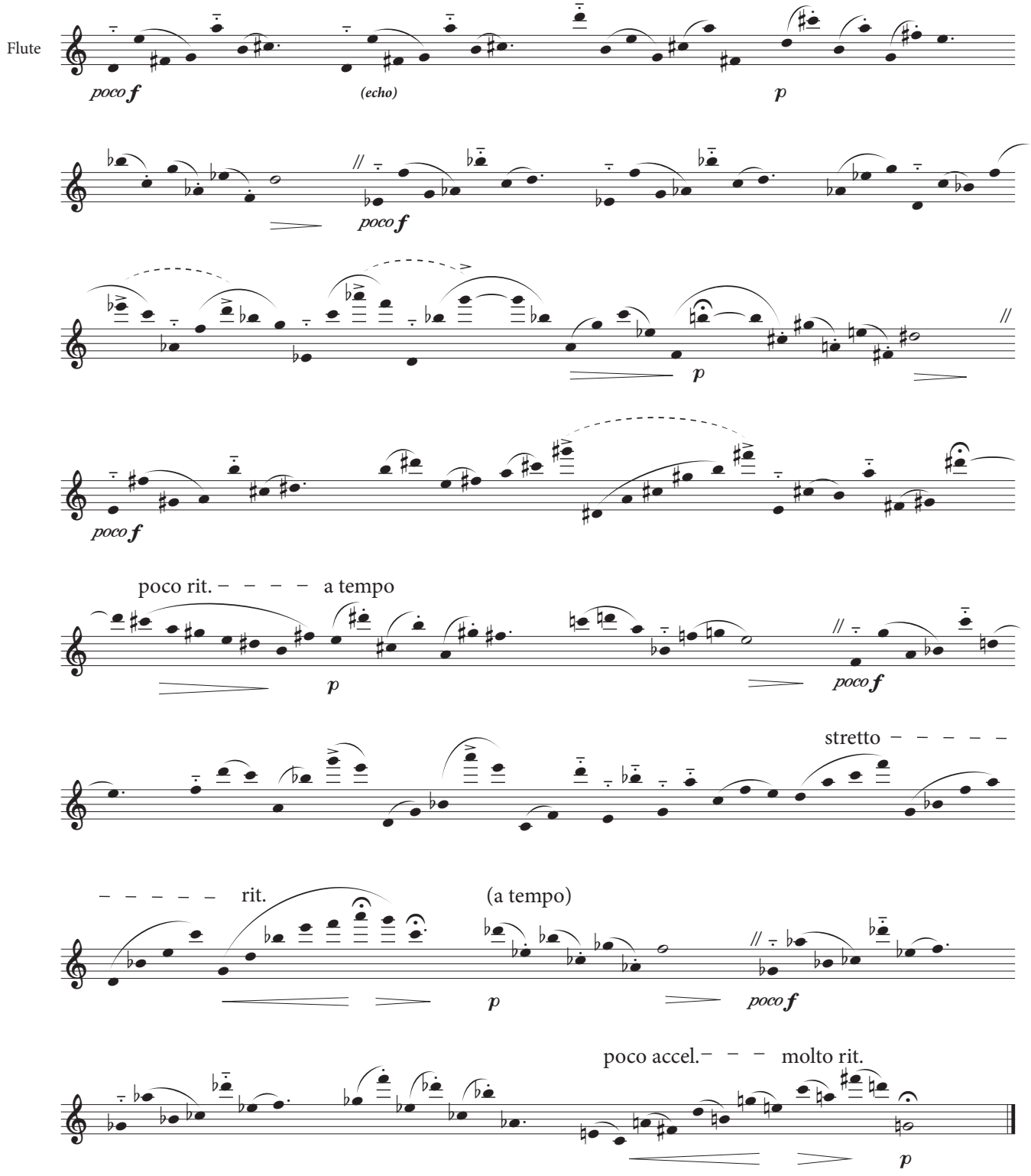

52
2:3
mf
f
cresc.
mf
f
56
with abandon!
ff
ff
with abandon!
61
8a
65
sub. p
71
mp
sub. ff
sub. p
sub. ff
(the downbeat notes ringing)


77
sub. p
sub. ff
83
mf
poco f
decresc. molto
sub. p
poco f
decresc. molto
88
ad libitum; flexibly
p
p
L.H.
92
(a tempo)
93


94
a tempo
with renewed fervor
f
f with renewed fervor
99
increasingly wild and maniacal to the end
cresc.
cresc.
increasingly wild and maniacal to the end
105
ff
più f
allargando
111
ffp
ff struggling, stubborn
a tempo
117
fff
thundering
fff
OSSIA:

4. Distanced Dance (solo)

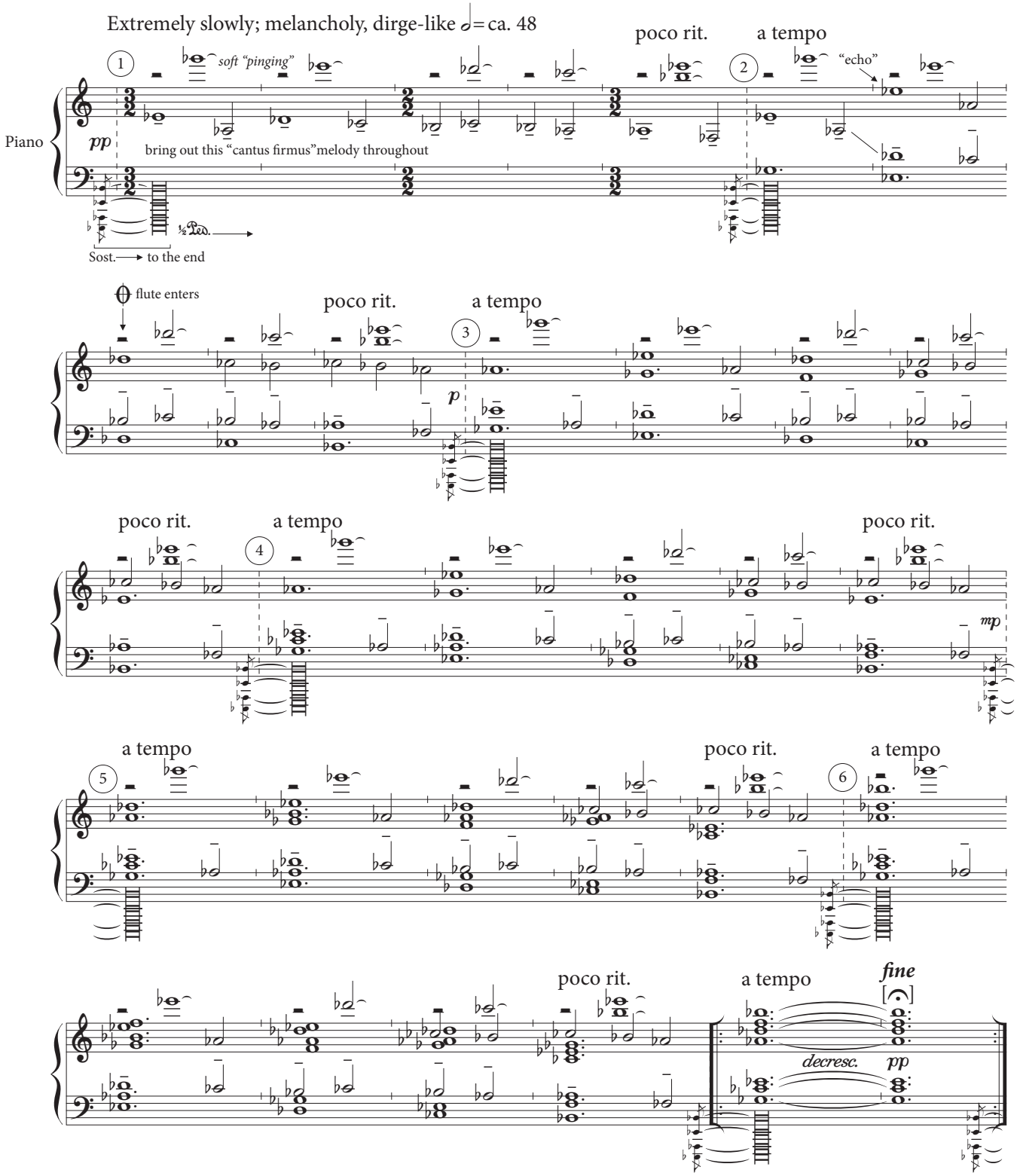
Moderately; contemplative, with much rubato and flexibility (ca. 𝅗𝅥 =152)

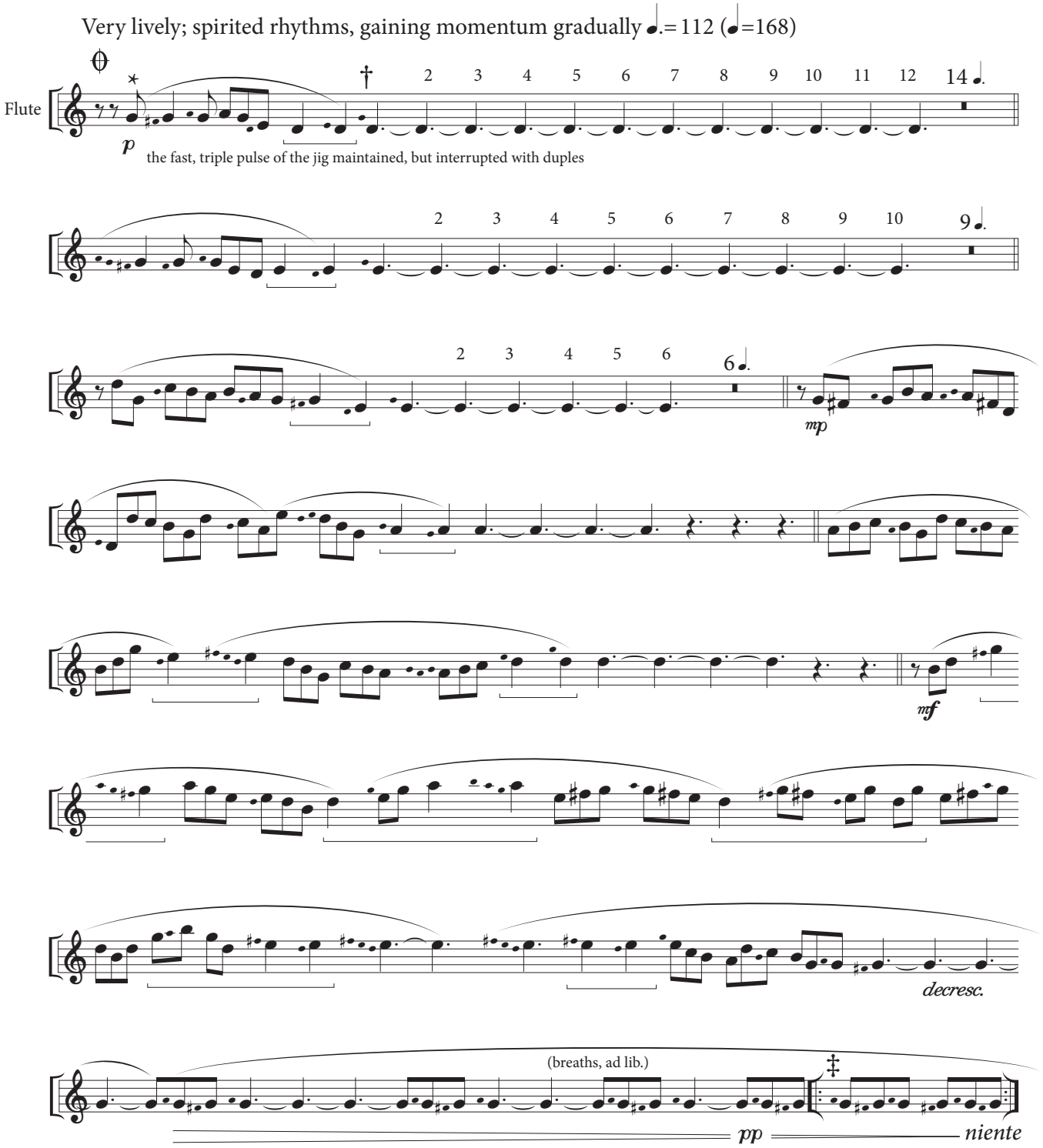


The beamless and stemless notes (𝅗𝅥) are not performed evenly, but rather with a rhythmic push and pull (in the manner of the unmeasured preludes of L. Couperin) that brings out their grouping, phrasing, harmony, and the registral connections between non-adjacent notes. Some of the latter are shown with dotted slurs.

5. J. B. Dances a Jig in the Gloom

The piano and flute play independently, uncoordinated, and in their own tempos. The piano begins; the flute enters at the ϕ sign. Each part ends with a figure that repeats as necessary. Once both parts are repeating, the piano plays its final chord while the flute "murmurs" fade away.



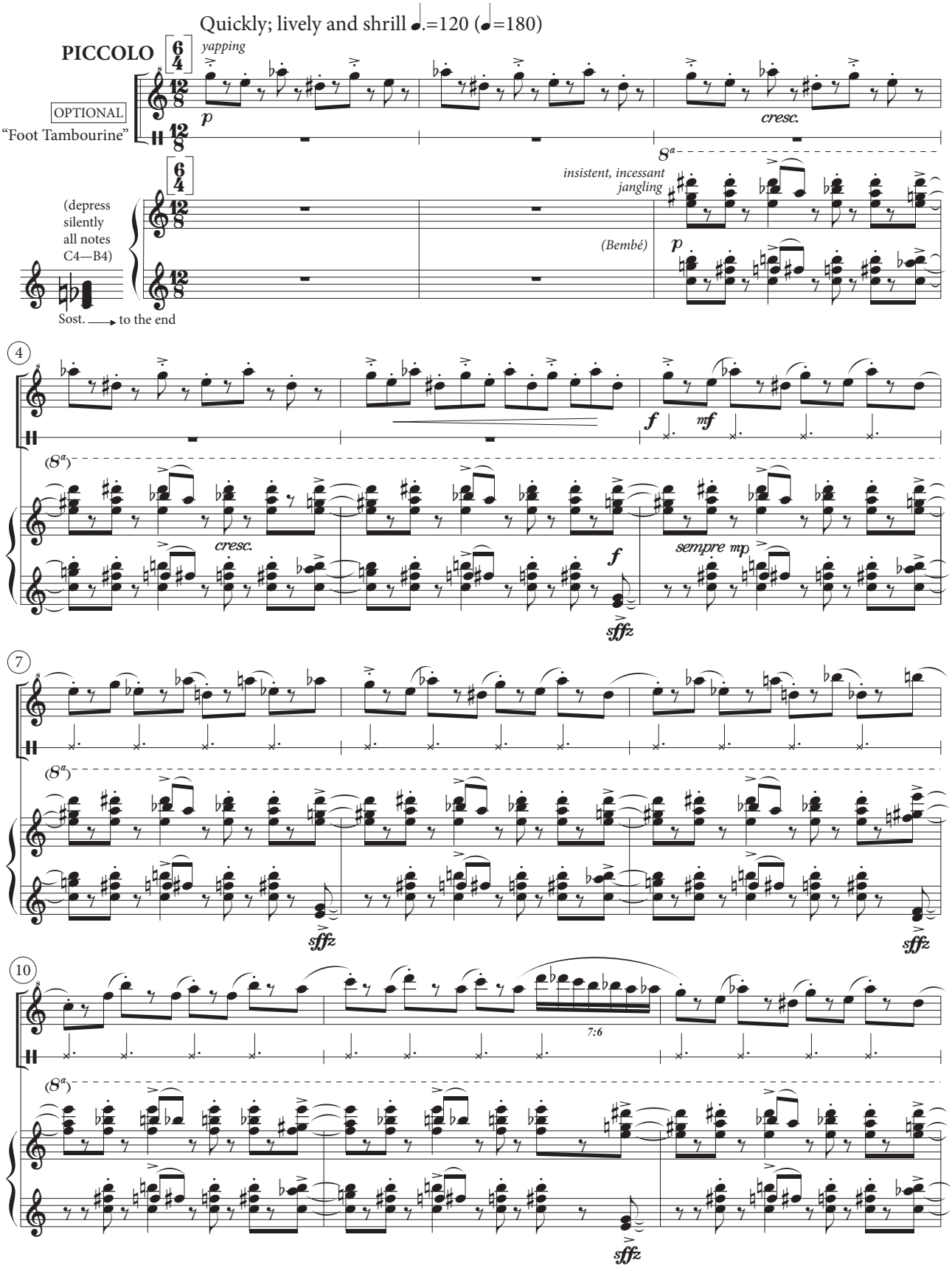


✶ All the "grace" notes should be played in the manner of a traditional (Irish) jig to create rhythmic buoyancy throughout—i.e., very quickly, with almost indeterminate pitch, and articulated with the fingers, rather than the tongue.

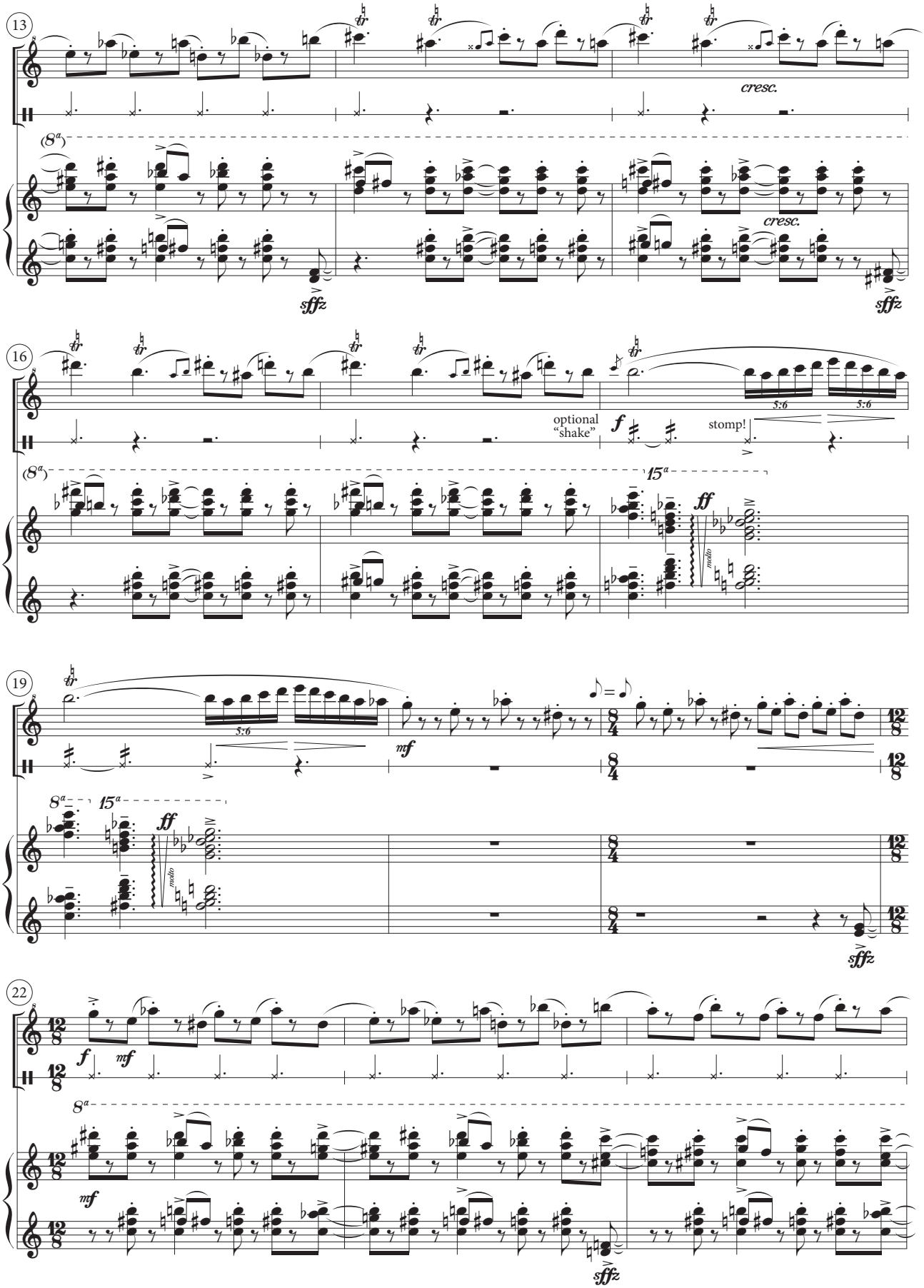
† The long, held notes at the end of each phase should be elaborated with sporadic decorative embellishments *ad libitum*, using quasi folk idioms (e.g., *tap*, *cut*, *roll, cran*)—that align with the (triple time) meter.

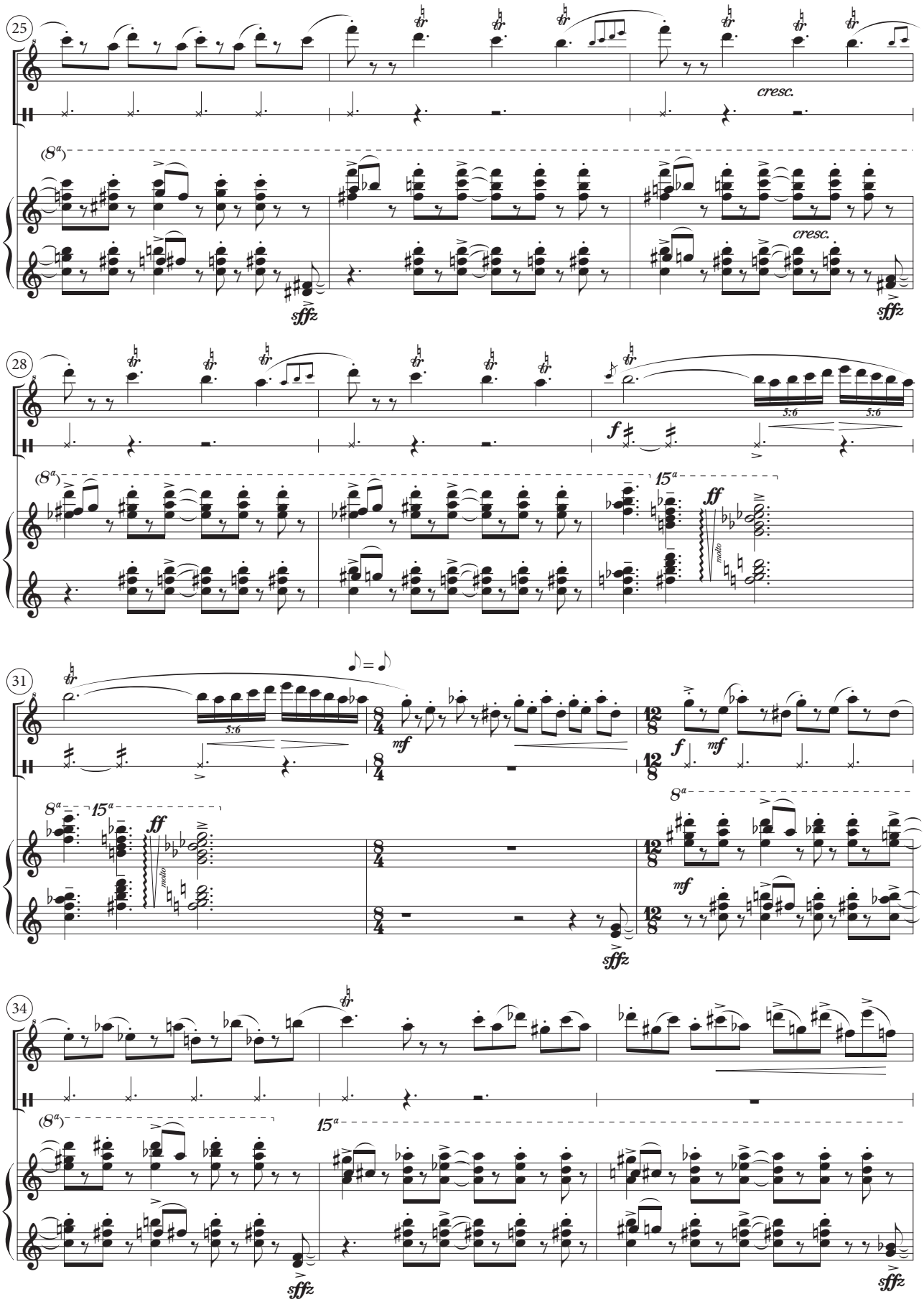
‡ Repeat until the decorative notes become a constant murmuring and decrescendo until they become only key click sounds.

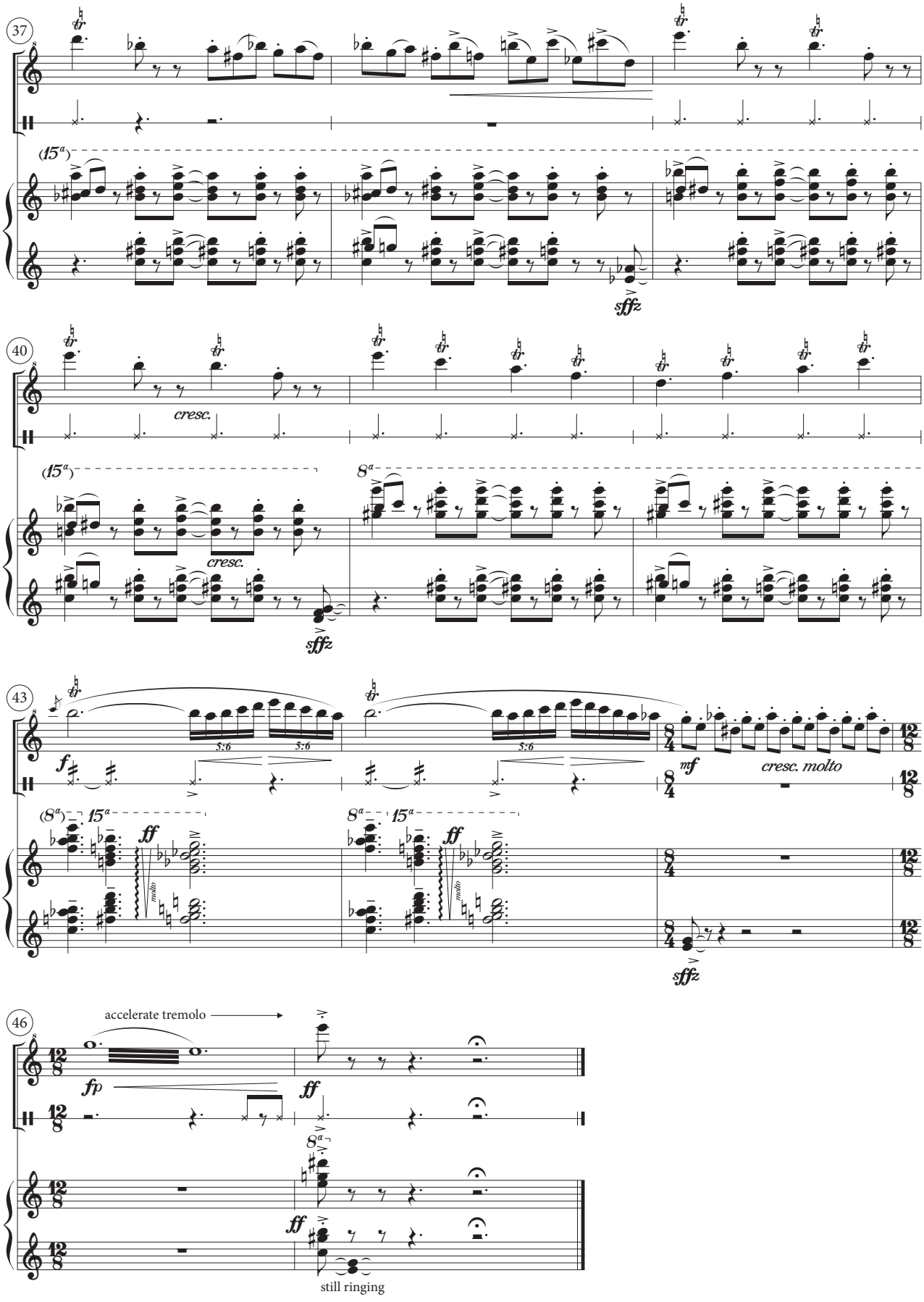
6. Dog Whistle Dance



* The piccolo mostly emphasizing 3s throughout [12/8]; the piano mostly emphasizing 2s [6/4] throughout.


13
cresc.
(8a)
cresc.
sffz
sffz
16
optional "shake"
f
stomp!
5:6
5:6
(8a)
15a
ff
molto
19
5:6
mf
8a
15a
ff
molto
sffz
22
f
mf
8a
mf
sffz

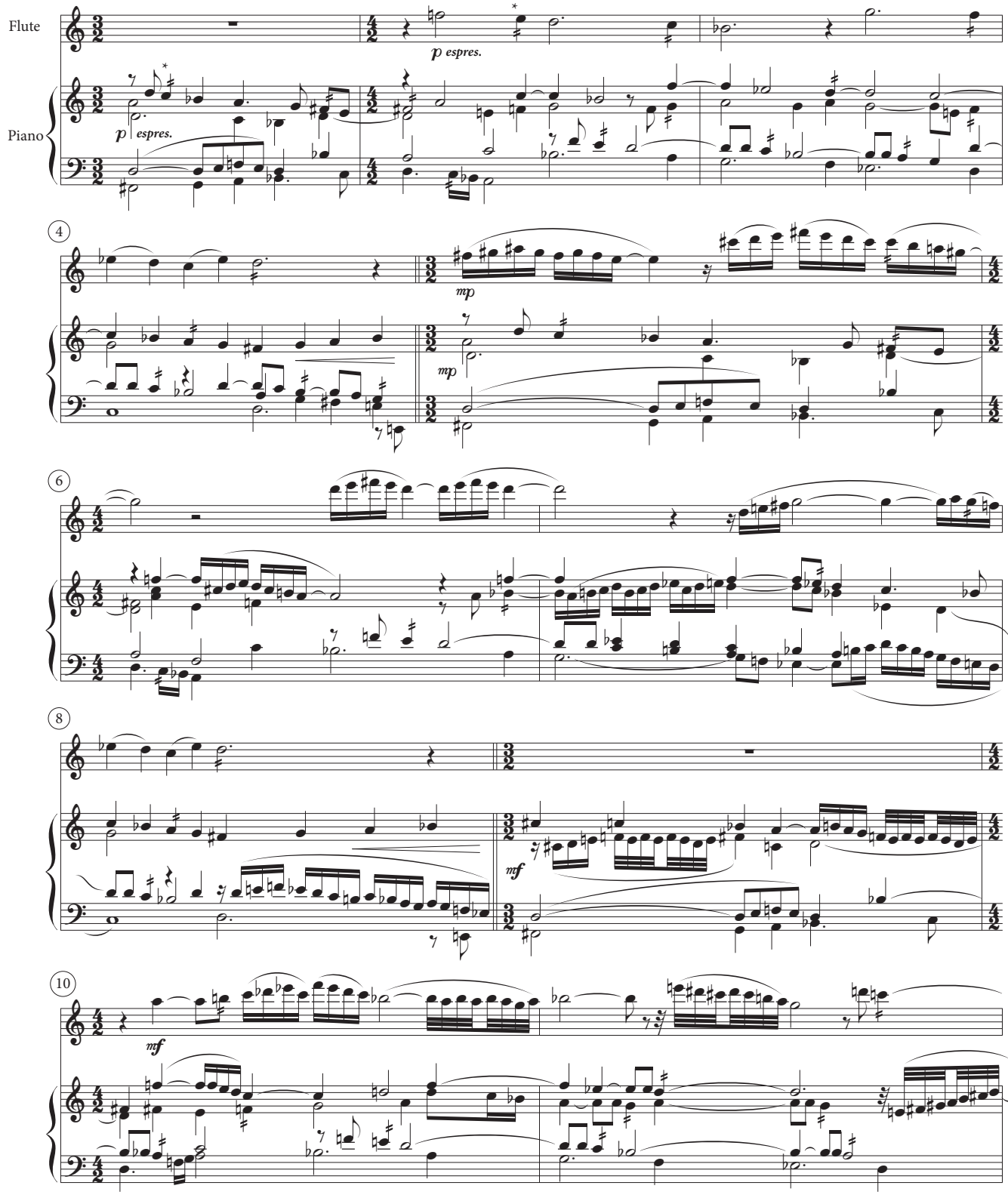

25
cresc.
(8a)
cresc.
sffz
sffz
28
5:6
5:6
f
(8a)
15a
ff
molto
31
5:6
mf
f
mf
8a
15a
ff
molto
8a
mf
sffz
34
(8a)
15a
sffz
sffz


37
(15ª)
sffz
40
cresc.
(15ª)
8ª
cresc.
sffz
43
5:6
5:6
5:6
f
mf
cresc. molto
(8ª)
15ª
ff
molto
8ª
15ª
ff
molto
sffz
46
accelerate tremolo
fp
ff
8ª
ff
still ringing

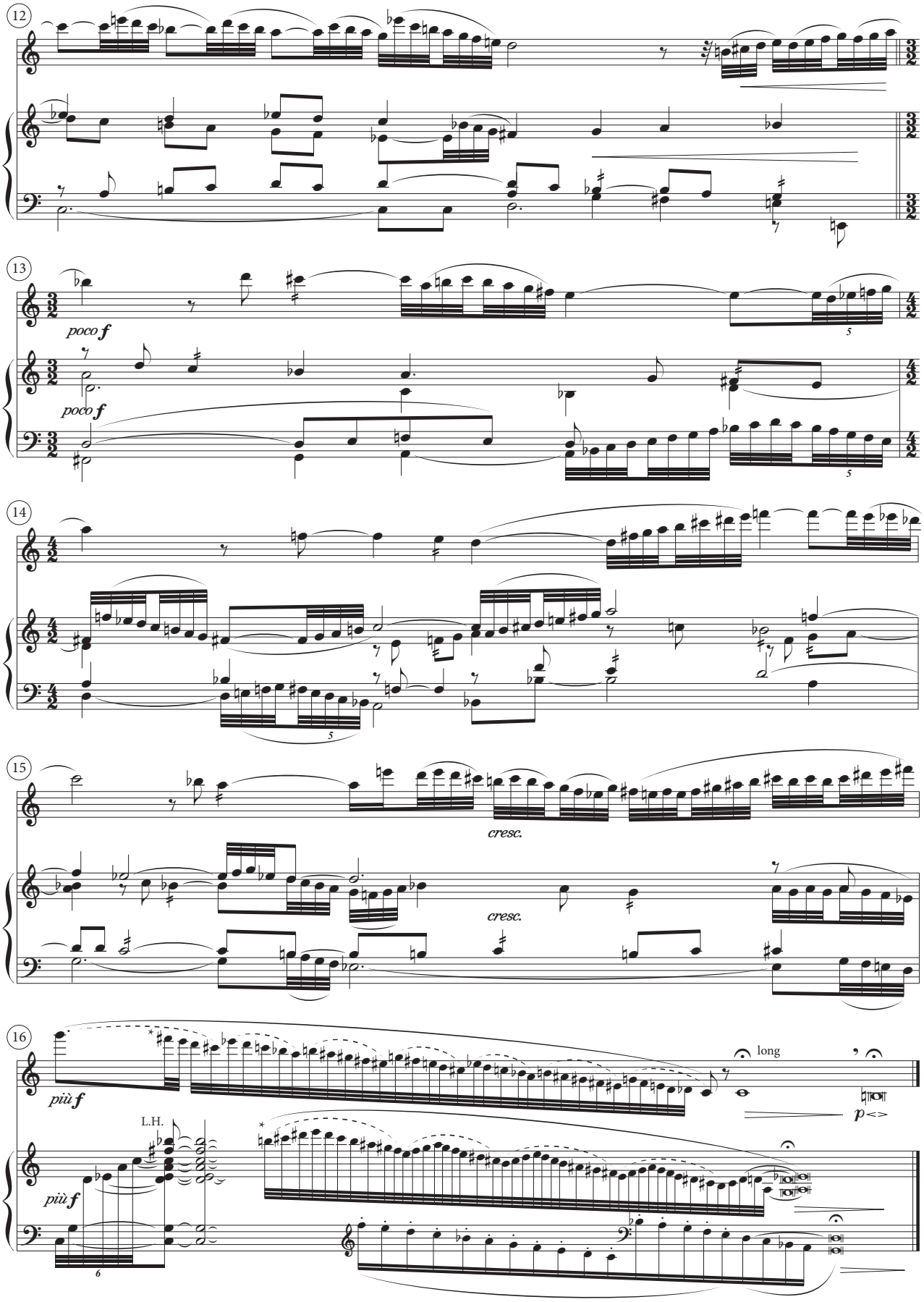
7. A Distracted Pavan for These Sad Times

(after Thomas Tomkins)

Very slowly; stately, but increasingly preoccupied ♩ = ca.56



* When approached from above: or When approached from below: or



* Played very swiftly but with staggered entrances and arrivals, as indicated. The three parts need not be strictly aligned.