OLIVER LEITH

Vicentino, love you
- studies for keyboard
'L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica 2'

for synthesizer with electronics

(2022)

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Commissioned by Zubin Kanga with the support of a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship and Royal Holloway, University of London

The first performance to be given by Zubin Kanga in October 2023,
as part of ‘Cyborg Soloists’

Duration: *c.*13 ½ minutes

Technical Requirements

Vicentino, love you requires a MIDI controller keyboard with capacitive touch-sensitive keys*. The keys are programmed so that the rear half of each key plays a note that is 50 cents sharper than the original pitch of the key, while the front half of each key plays the original 'normal' pitch (similar to the Achicembalo harpsicord created by Nicola Vicentino in 1555).

> ** A capacitive touch-sensitive keyboard can track the location of each finger touching the keyboard. The touch information is transmitted from the keyboard via a dedicated MIDI connection (typically over USB). Ordinary keyboards can be modified to include touch sensitivity by using self-install kits, such as the TouchKeys interface.*

The keyboard has two MIDI outputs – one from the keyboard itself (the 'main keys'), and one from the touch-sensitive keys. Each MIDI output is used to control a separate instrument:

Touch-sensitive Keys
The touch-sensitive keys should be used to control a software synthesizer, running in a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW).

The software synthesizer should emulate the warm brass sound of older synthesizers. Triangle waves with low pass filters are recommended; nothing with too much identity or distinctive contour and shape.

The envelope of the virtual synthesizer should remove any hard attack – around 50-100 milliseconds – and have a release time of around 2 seconds. If this starts to sound too busy or saturated during busier and closer harmonies, it may need to be adjusted to something shorter. It should sound like blowing notes into the air. This may mean the sounding rhythms differ from the notated rhythms.

Main keys
The recommended method is to have the main keys to control another copy of the software instrument outlined above, running on a separate channel within the DAW.

This copy of the software synthesizer should be setup to sound almost identical to the touch-sensitive keys synthesizer (warm brass, soft attack), though a little variation is desirable.

Alternatively, the MIDI from the main keys could be used to control a hardware synthesizer., or the main keys could be part of a hardware synthesizer (adapted with touch-sensitive keys). Both approaches will require extra attention to balance / match the sounds with the software synthesizer.

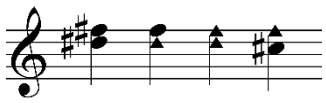
Output
The overall sound should be blurred. This can be achieved with a digital or analogue pitch shifter set to +25c, using a 50/50 combination of dry and wet signal. Alternatively, each synthesizer could be made up of two oscillators tuned 25c apart.

The volume levels of both synthesizers can be balanced within the DAW (if using a hardware synthesizer, its audio output can be routed into the DAW using an audio interface), before going out to speakers.

In Studies II and VII, the sound of the touch-sensitive keys synthesizer is mixed with the sound of the main keys synthesizer (see below). A limiter may be required to moderate the overall output.

Performance Notes

The instruction to play the 'rear half' of the note is shown with triangular noteheads:



1st chord: F♯ 0c / D♯ 0c | 2nd chord: F♯ 0c / D♯ +50c |
3rd chord: F♯ +50c / D♯ +50c | 4th chord F♯ +50c / C♯ 0c

Most of the studies require only the output of the touch-sensitive keys synthesizer. In these cases, the main keys synthesizer should be muted in the mix. In Studies II and IV both synthesizers should have a 50/50 mix.

A pedal or keyboard latch system (or even just a weight) may be useful for some of the sustained notes – e.g. bars 40 & 43 in Study VII.

The overall sound to aim for is like some old thing in a very large empty hall, covered in a cloth; clear what it is, but less defined in detail. Muted, softened, but with a large trail.

Leave space between each movement, a large comma.

The studies can be played separately or as a selection.

Vicentino, love you - studies for keyboard

L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica 2

Output:
Touch-Sensitive Keys only

I
Candle blare

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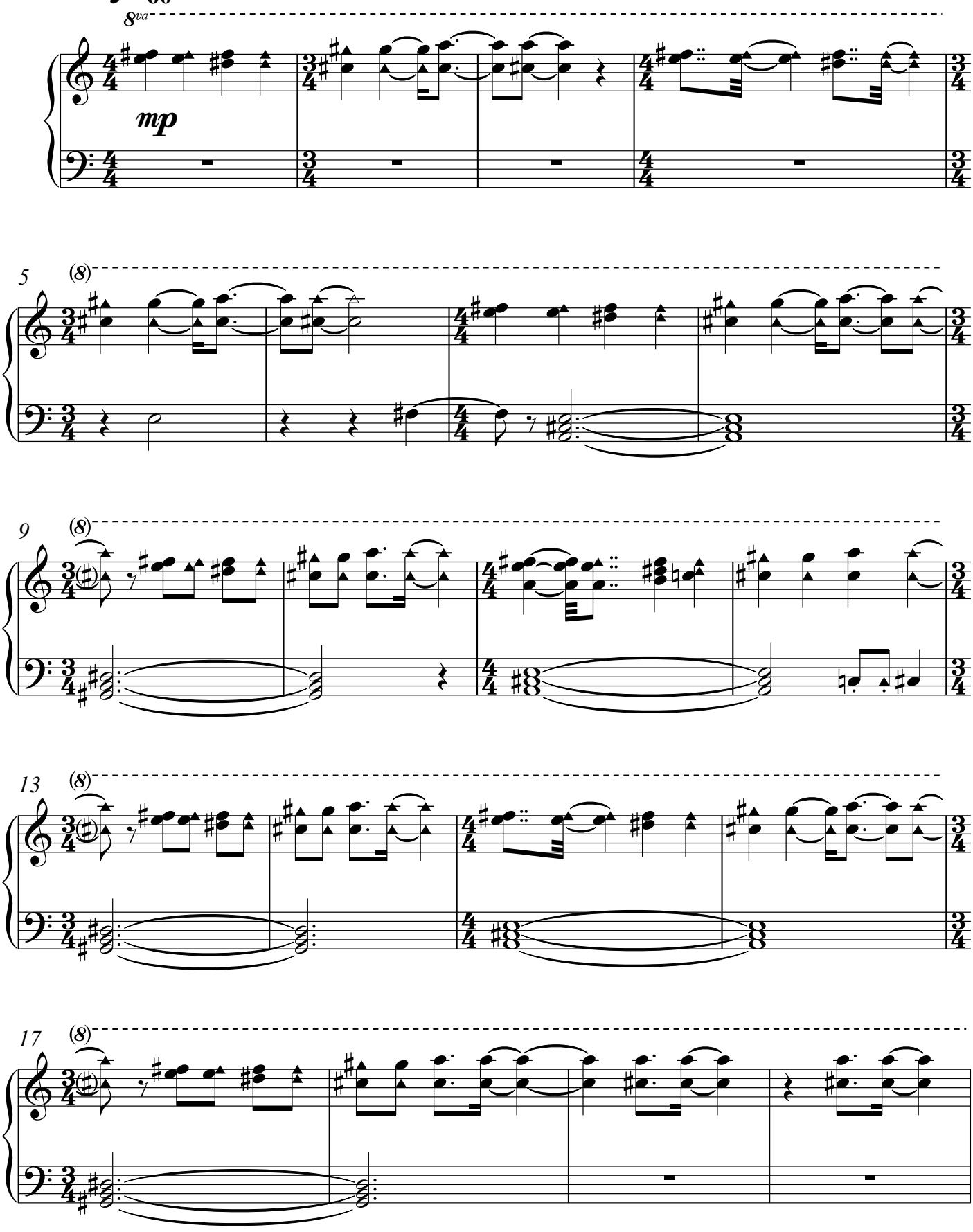
2022



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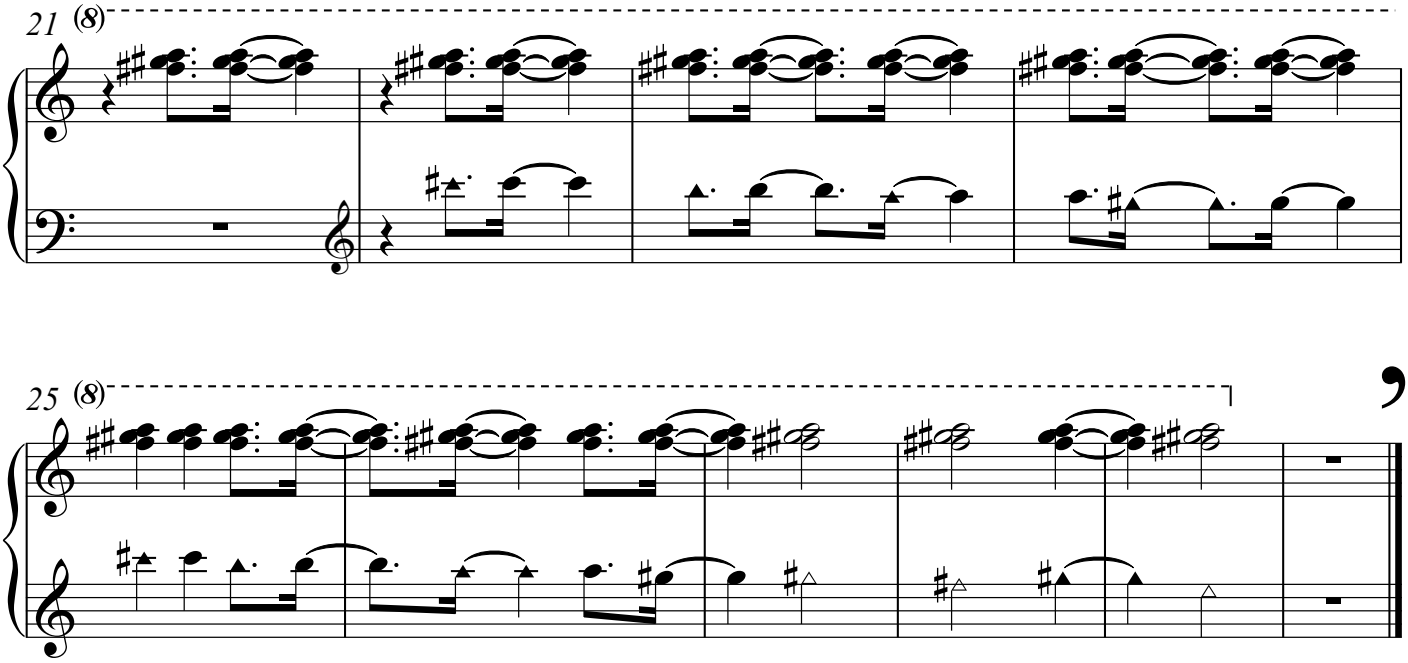
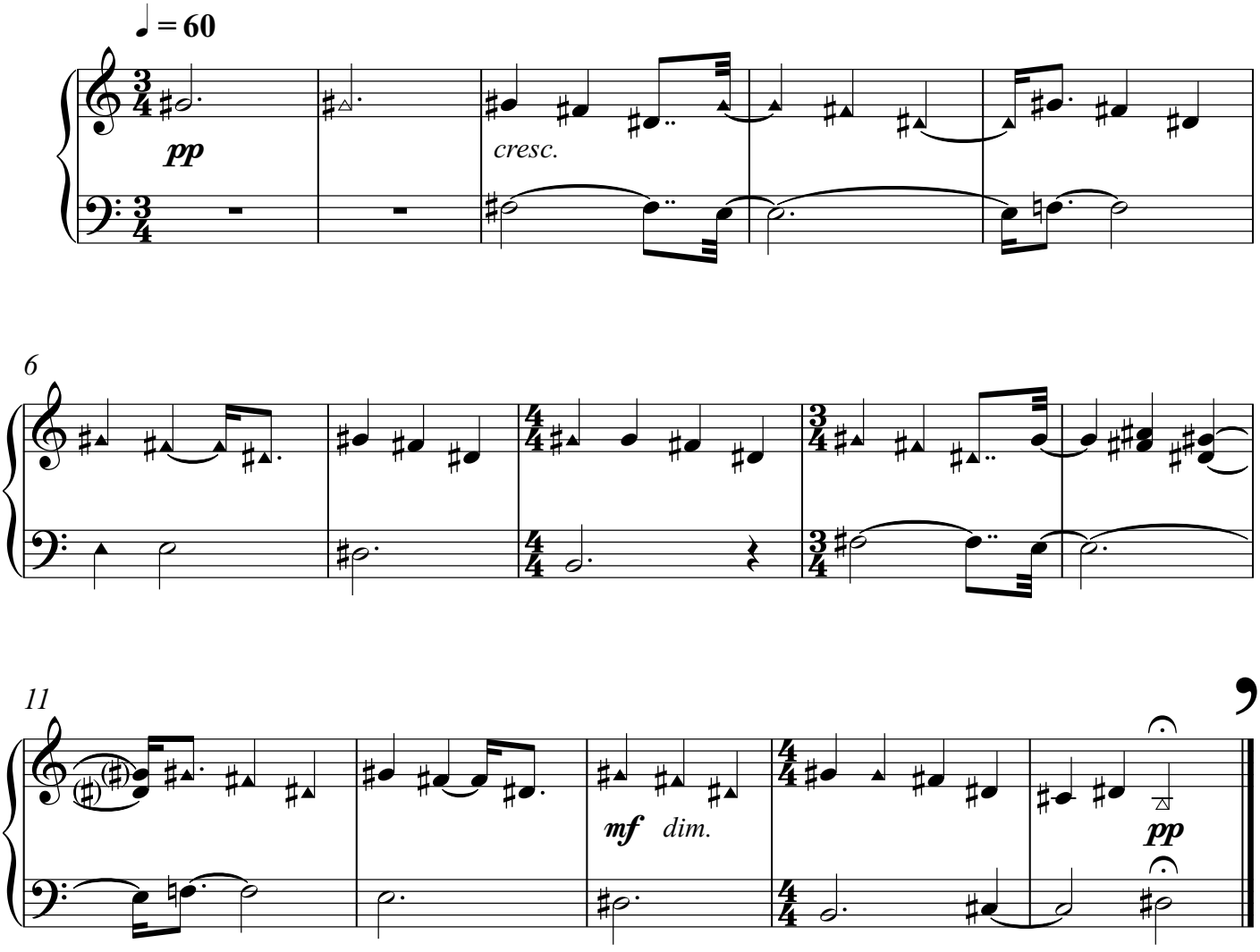
Each iteration of this chord can vary a little in touch
The nature of the instrument will make it a little unruly; it is all good.



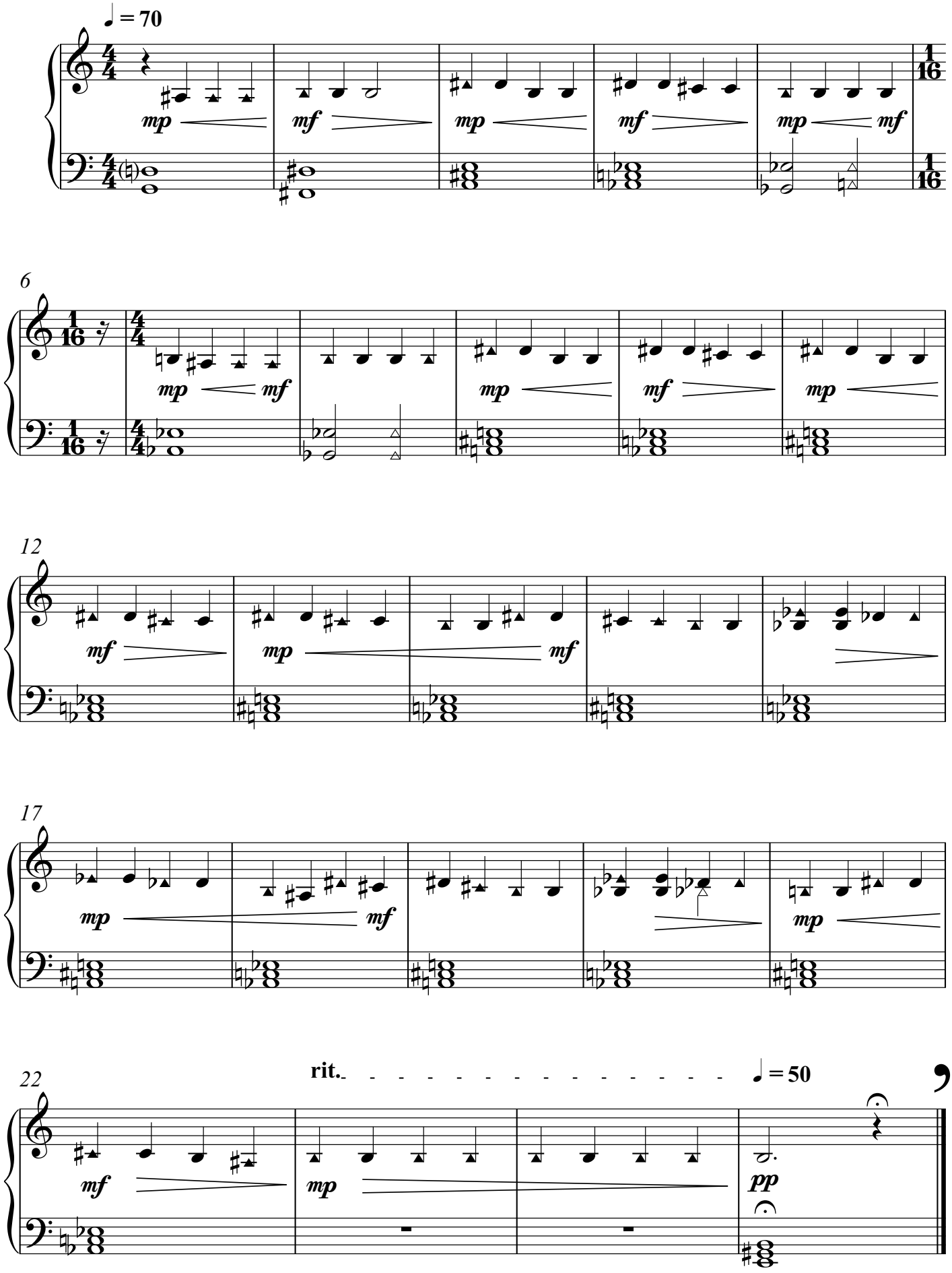
Output:
Touch-sensitive Keys &
Main Keys
(50/50 mix)

II
Stumbler



III
Drag along drag along

Output:
Touch-Sensitive Keys only



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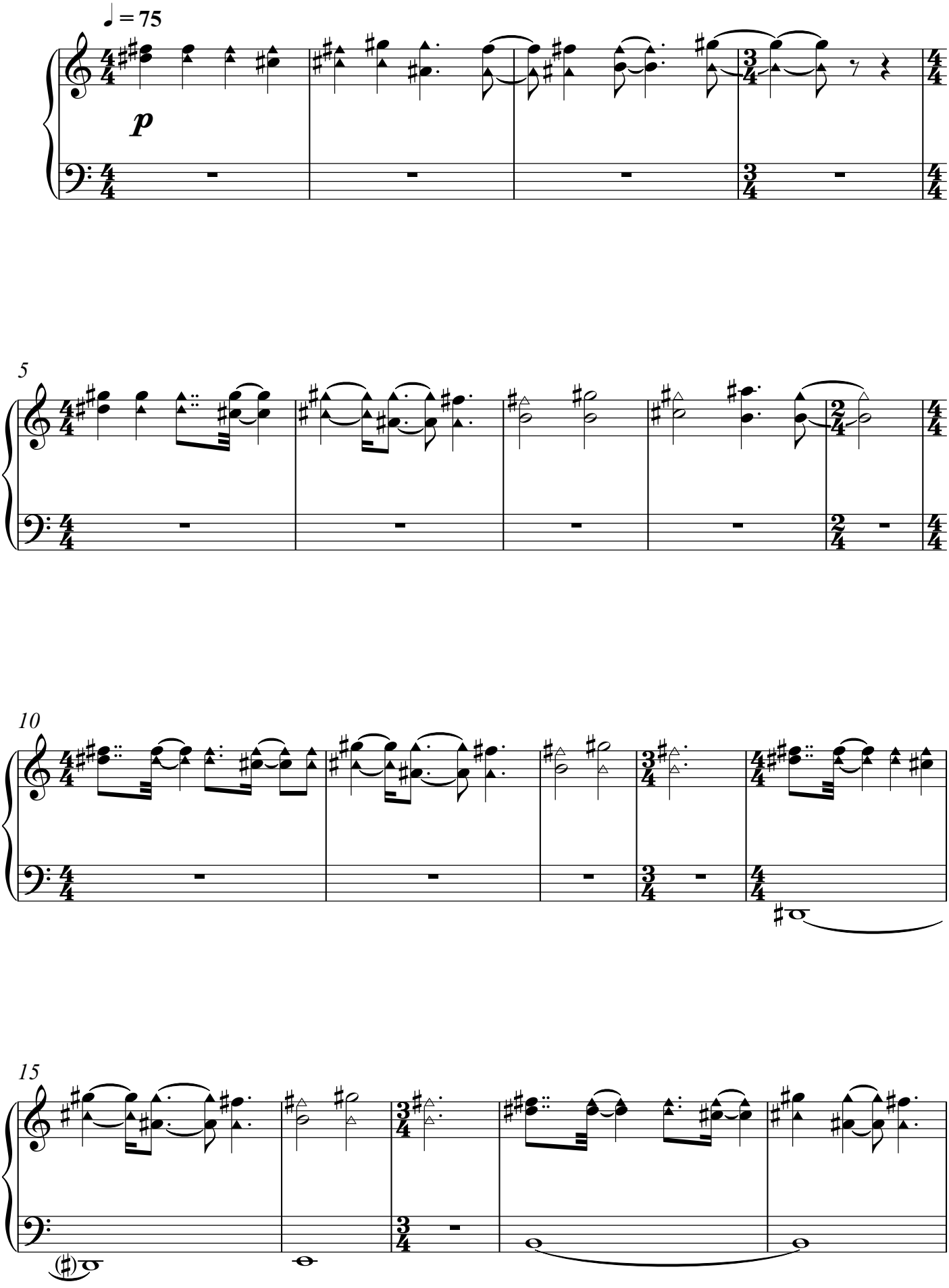
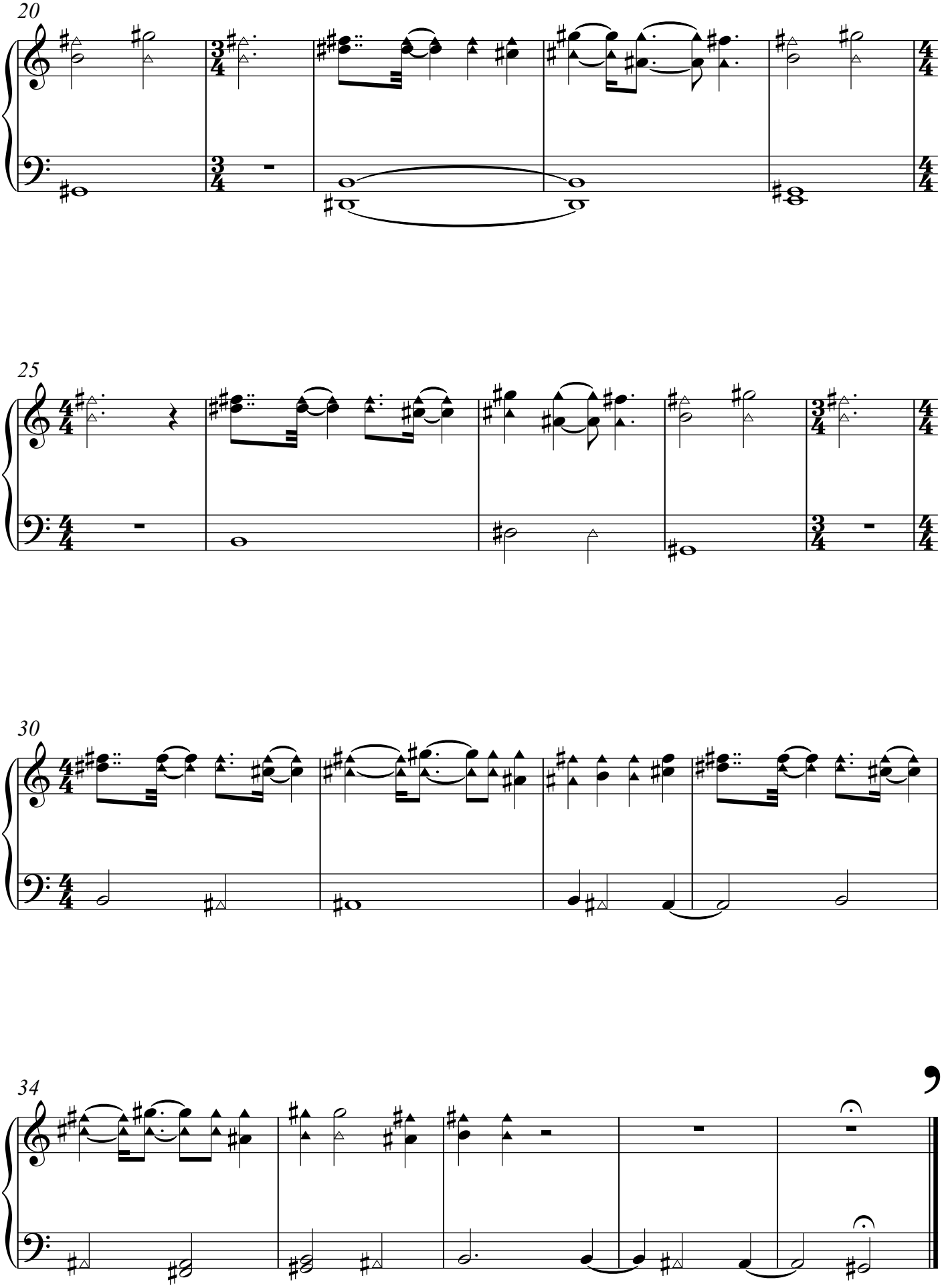
IV
Whistle slivers

Output:
Touch-Sensitive Keys only




20
25
30
34

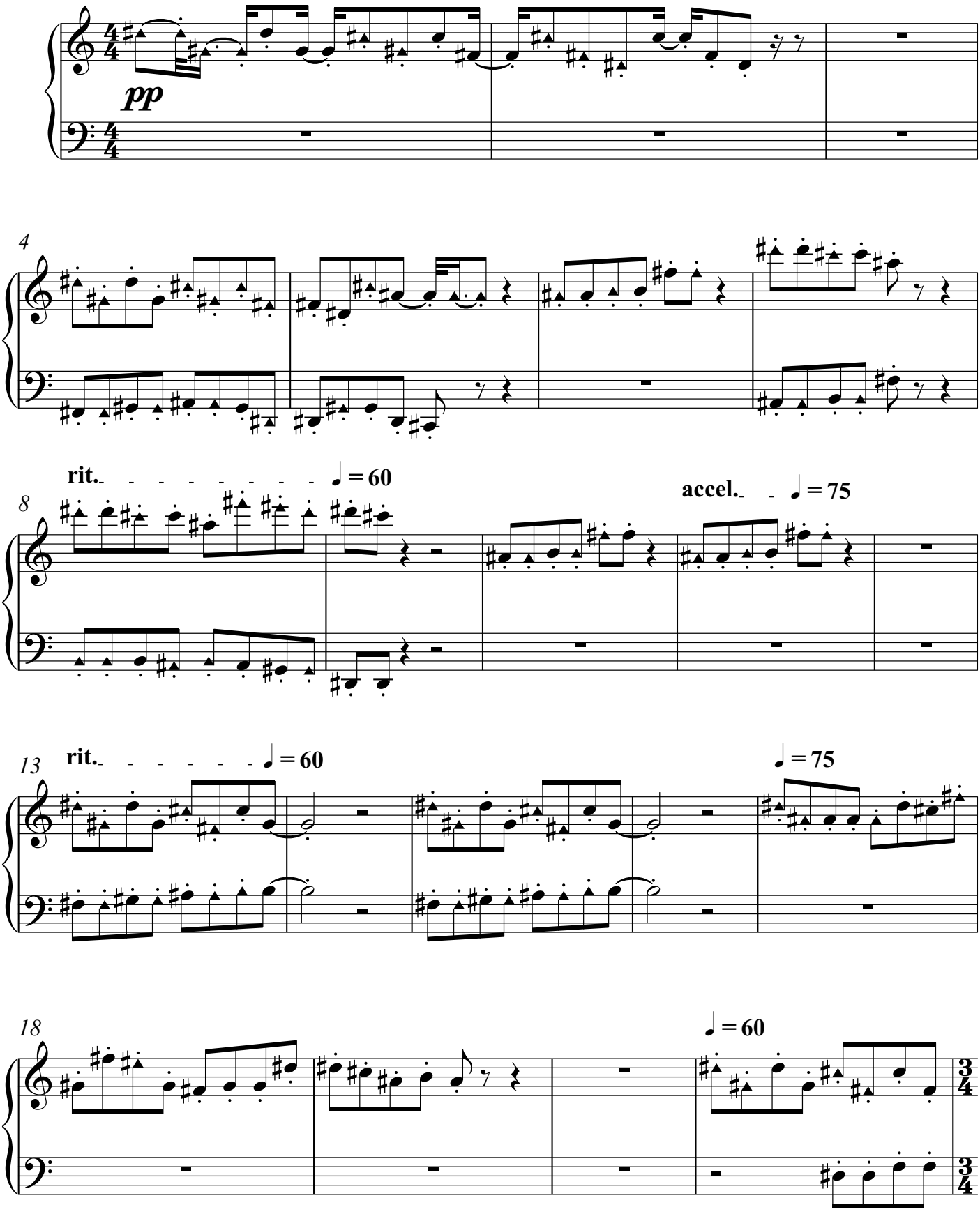
V

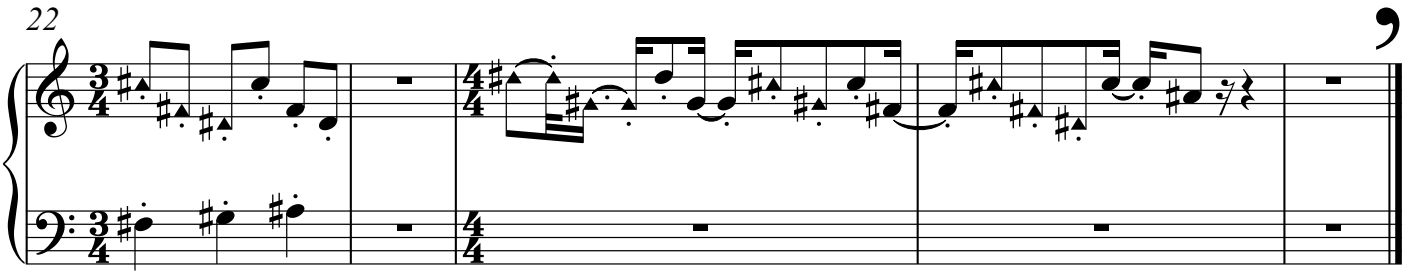
Little flurry

Hold the notes longer and longer through the study
(gradually less staccato until final barline)
This will naturally increase dynamics

Output:
Touch-Sensitive Keys only

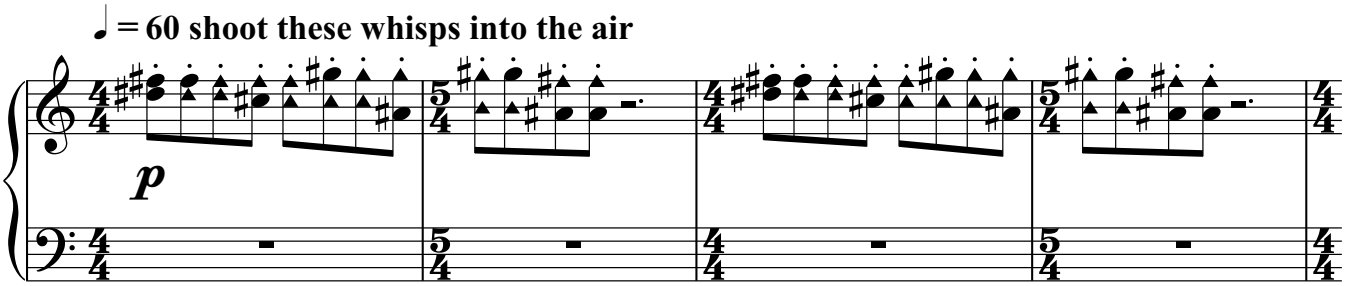
♩ = 75 **Sounding a little like Christmas string lights doing pattern relays**

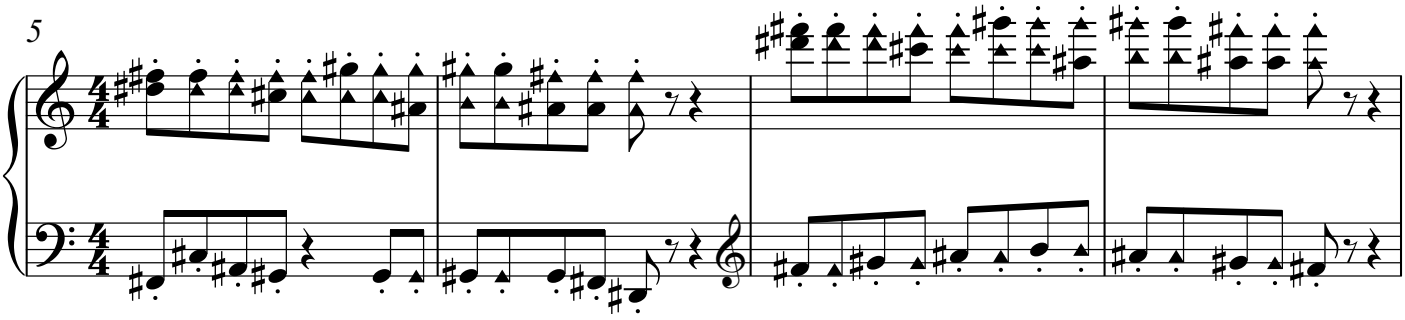


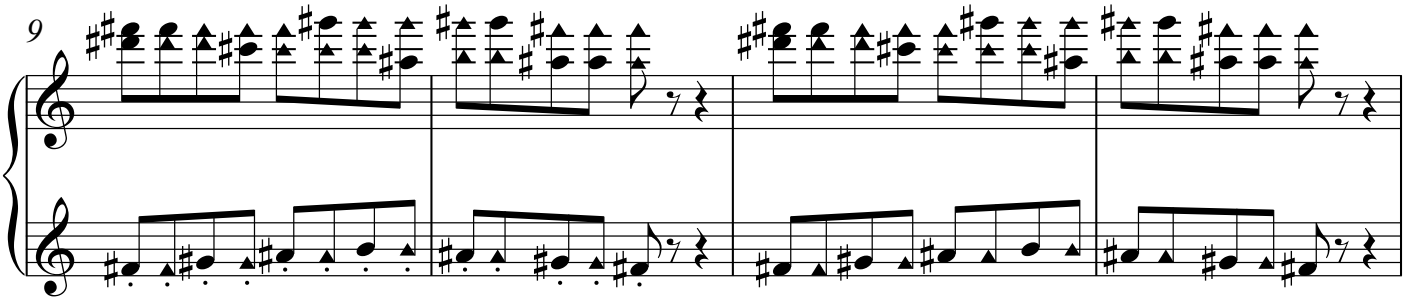


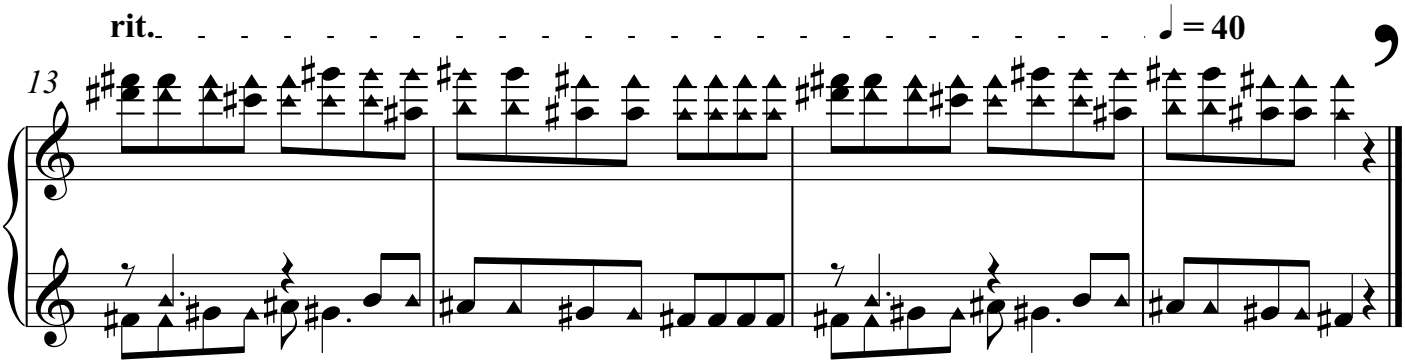
VI
Panpipe bright

Output:
Touch-Sensitive Keys only









Output:
Touch-sensitive Keys &
Main Keys
(50/50 mix)

VII
Caput Wheeze

♩ = 30 Rubato - like you breathe with giants lungs

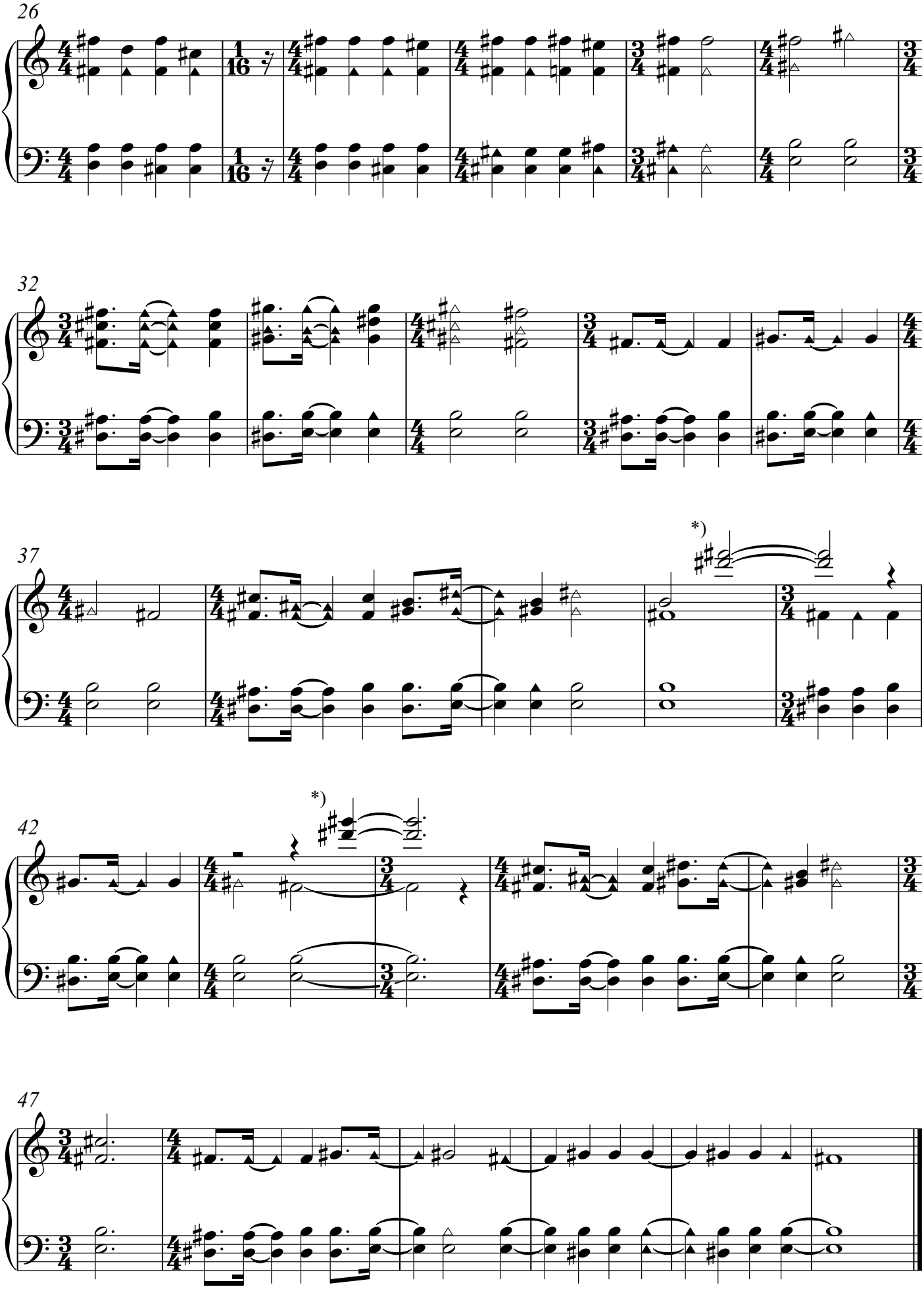
mf

6 ♩ = 40

11

16

21



*) Play by either using a latch/pedal, or a weight to hold these notes