IAN KEITH HARRIS

TASMANIAN ANTS

Musette (Oboe) & Harpsichord (Piano/Electric Piano)

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AI SI 023

Ian Keith Harris

(1935-)

Australian composer, arranger, oboist, music educator, critic and eclectic musician, Ian Harris, was born in Melbourne in 1935, living there for the first 26 years of his life. He started the piano at the age of five and three years later was playing cornet in his school band. He took up the violin shortly after this, playing for several years, but relinquished it when he became his school pianist at thirteen. The oboe came next, and in 1953, he began his Bachelor of Music degree at Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music taking piano as chief study and oboe as second. National Service in the Army intervened and, this time, Ian Harris played the trombone in the University Regiment. The same year, he changed to oboe as his chief study. The trombone did not impress Jiři Tancibudek, his professor! This time, the piano was his second study and composition (Arthur Nickson) crept in too.

Not surprisingly he was soon in demand as a free-lance orchestral musician, arranger and copyist, working in a very eclectic mix of musical spheres from arranging for Eartha Kitt (television and various theatrical shows), to playing in opera, ballet, chamber music and symphony orchestras. He was a founding member of the *Glendenian Trio*, (flute, oboe, bassoon), which gave regular broadcasts over several years. The trio was another area in which his skills at arrangement were frequently employed.

Ian Harris moved to Hobart, Tasmania, in 1961 (Tasmanian Orchestra), was seconded to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (cor anglais) for several months, returned to Tasmania only to be seconded again, this time to the Victorian Symphony Orchestra (oboe).

Back again in Tasmania, his next move was to Wellington, New Zealand (1965-1974) to join NZBCSO (the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation Symphony Orchestra) as Principal Cor anglais. During this time, in which he yo-yoed across Australasia, Harris tutored at the universities of Tasmania, Melbourne, and the Victoria University of Wellington. It was at the latter that he completed his degree in composition (with David Farquhar) in 1969. He was to return yet again to Tasmania at the end of 1974.

However, this time, he embraced a new career as a music educator with his move. His wealth of instrumental and orchestral experience was invaluable to his students. He also conducted the Tasmanian Junior Youth Orchestra for several years.

Harris was a dedicated member of policy committees, especially in Education and the Arts. A great listener to music and musicians, he served as music critic for *The Mercury,* Hobart's daily newspaper, for several years.

His *oeuvre* consists mainly of chamber music, much of which has been performed and broadcast: *Microsymphony for Cor anglais Quartet* (cor anglais, string trio), *Oboe Quartet* (oboe, string trio), *Essay for Bassoon and Strings*, *Sonata for Viola and Piano*, amongst many other pieces and numerous arrangements for broadcasts and concerts.

His sense of fun has shown in many of his compositions including, *A Piece with Strawberry Jam*, *The Little Dog's Day* (Rupert Brooke), *'Paw de trois'- Three Dances for Canines* (for Woodwind Quintet, with movements dedicated to his dogs by name), *The Whitebait Fishers* –

> *"**A sort of Donizetti-like spoof for harpsichord, string quartet and small choir, for which the producer of the hour-long national radio show penned the libretto for this, a special anniversary broadcast of the programme.**"*

Harris orchestrated songs for symphony concerts, including a version of *The Last Rose of Summer* for Rita Streich (1920-1987). He also wrote, directed and even performed in advertising jingles, playing celesta, oboe, cor anglais or whatever was required.

Ian Harris moved back to Sydney definitively in 2000 and has since devoted himself to composition and a considerable *entourage* of cats (10) and dogs (5). He is a keen gardener and chef and a passionate enthusiast of the oboe d'amore. A close friend of Jennifer Paull, he has written many works for her.

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Tasmanian Ants

Musette (Oboe) & Harpsichord (Piano/Electric Piano)

AI SI 023

This work was written for Jennifer Paull (during the summer of 2006) and dedicated to her. She asked me to compose a set of miniatures for the smallest member of the oboe family, the musette. The project evoked reminiscences of ant families in Tasmania.

There are several small black ants, which I have collectively named ***Black Sugar Ants***. These seem to emerge in vast numbers whenever there is anything edible about. They 'farm' aphids and scale insects for the honeydew, which the sapsuckers produce. Extremely fastidious and house-proud, 'nature's gardeners' are essential for the well being of soil and habitat. They are always busy, and 'on the go'. The music portrays this characteristic.

Red Soldier Ants are about twelve millimetres long and aggressive. They tend to advance by 'column of route' with a habit of darting off to the side in scouting parties to raid other insects they discover in their path. Armed with a painful sting, they do not hesitate to use their weapon in great numbers. The music is a little satirical with a miniature dissonant bugle call and accompaniment clusters.

Bull Ants are from 15 to18 millimetres long and steel blue. They can jump up to a metre if provoked, latch on with their mandibles (large and curved like bulls' horns), and curl their abdomens to administer repeated and extremely painful stings. They seem to follow one around. There are two 'jumps' in their miniature.

The ***Inchman***, an iridescent, steely specimen about 25 to 30 millimetres in length, has a frequently lethal sting resulting in several deaths in Tasmania annually. Each ant appears to be solitary following at some distance from its predecessor. It moves in a determined manner, often at great speed. The jumping varieties are collectively known as 'Jack Jumpers'. There is only one 'jump' in the music of this miniature – at its abrupt end!

Argentine Ants are small, numerous, and tend to be brown. They came into Tasmania uninvited and are very efficient in food sourcing, invading dwellings, forest and farmland. They are represented by a whimsical tango in which motifs from all the other sections scurry through. This is followed by a frenzied ***Coda***.

The work is to be played as a single piece without a break; each section *segue*. Ideally the accompanying instrument should harpsichord, which adds to the insect-like character. It can also be played on piano or electric piano.

Ian Keith Harris
2006

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Other works by Ian Keith Harris can be found listed at

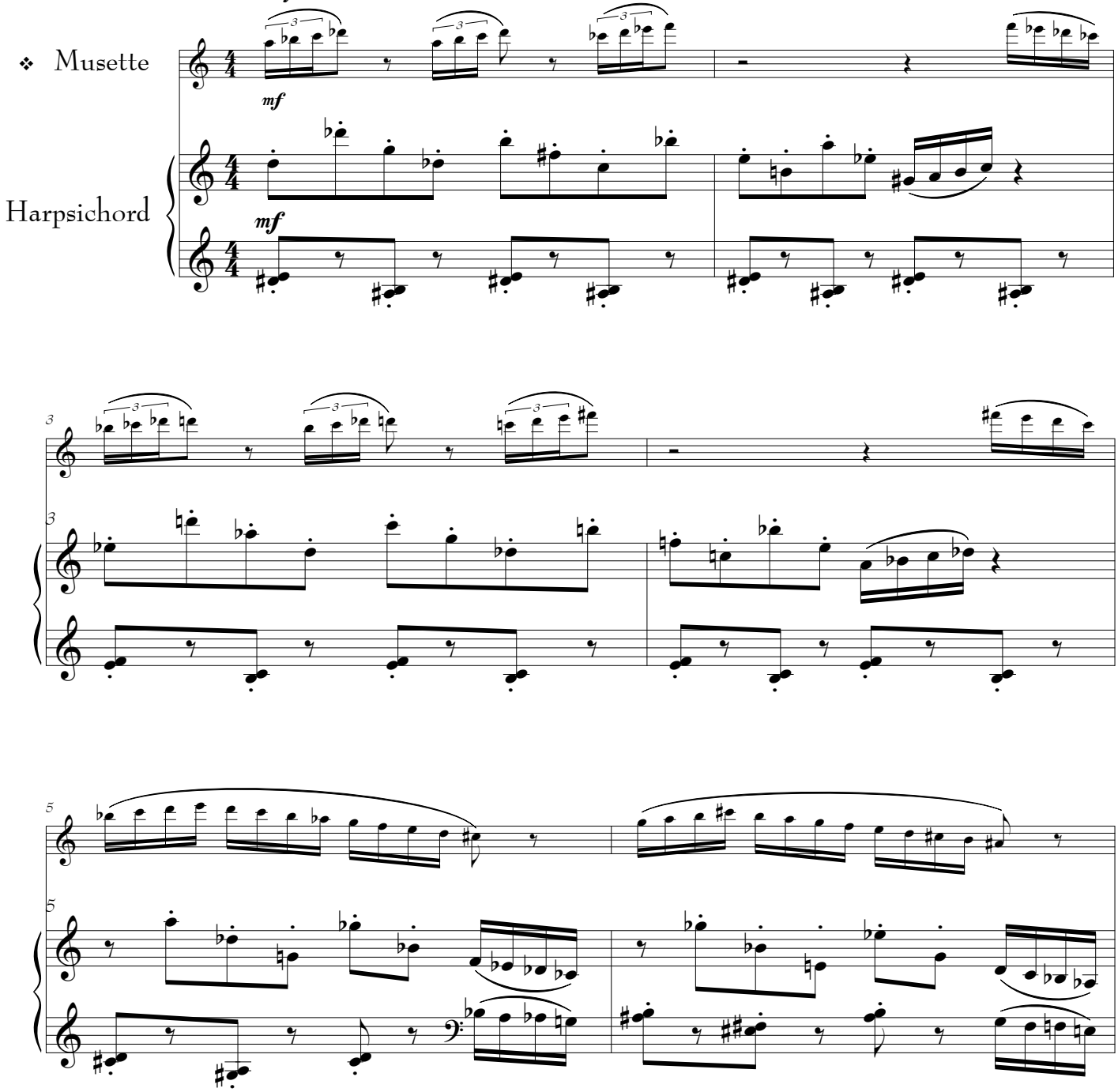
www.amoris.com

for Jennifer Paull

TASMANIAN ANTS

Ian Keith Harris
(1935 -)

Black Sugar Ants
busily



❖ In Concert Pitch

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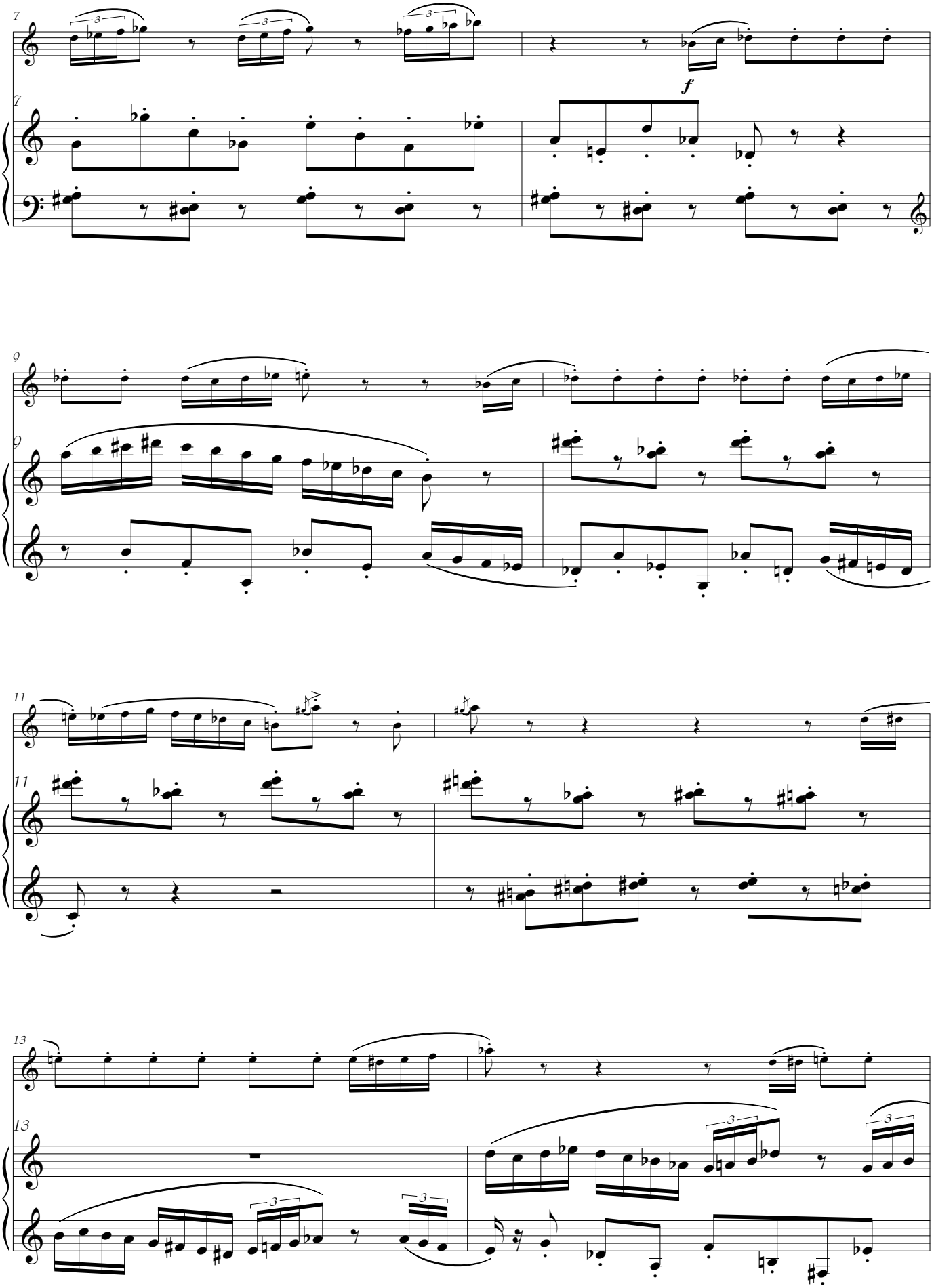
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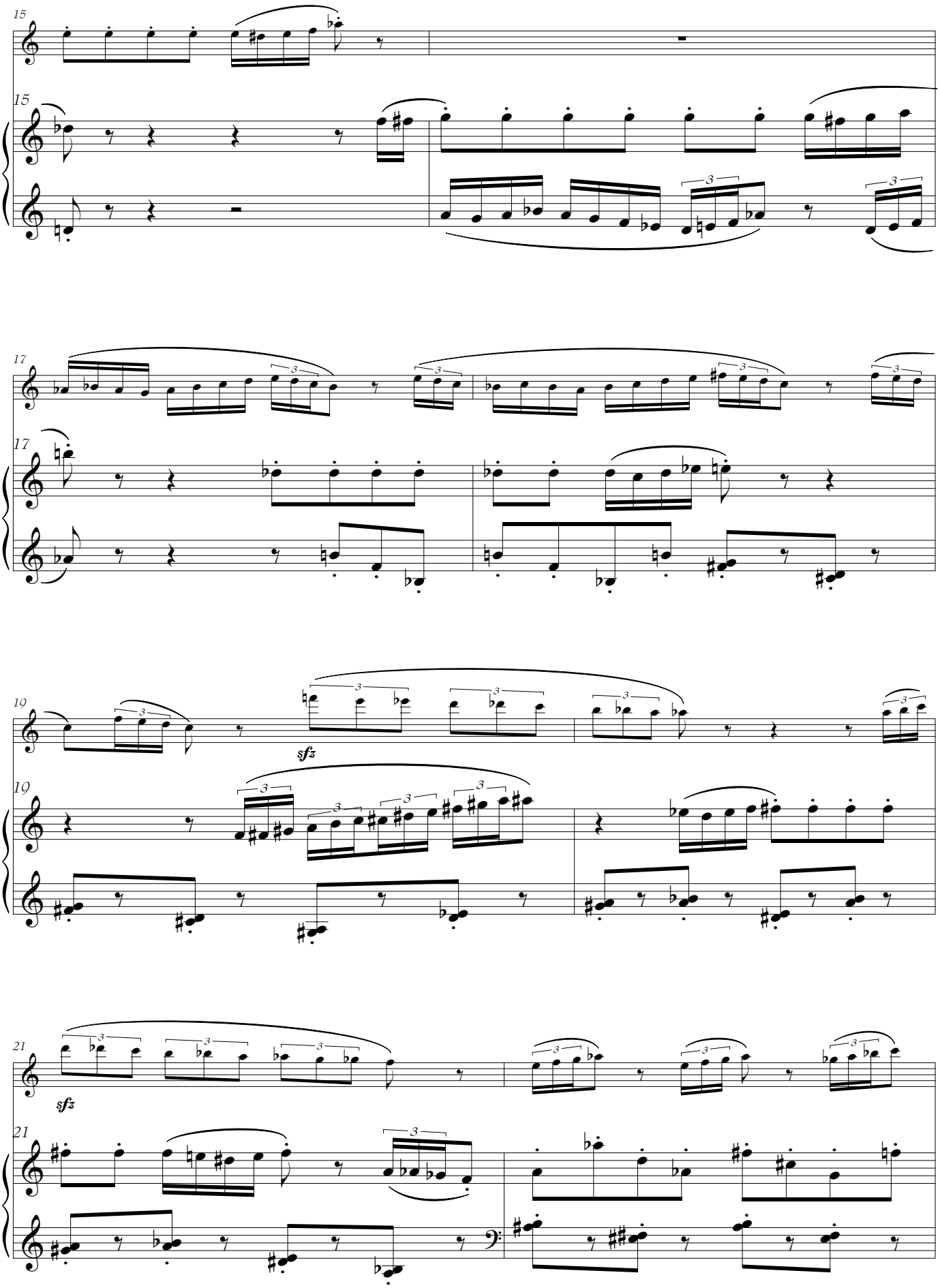
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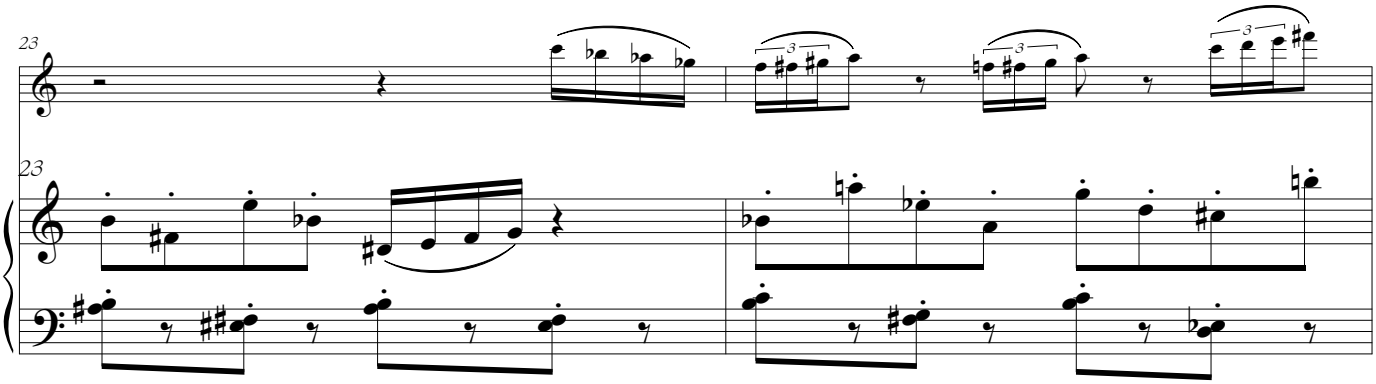
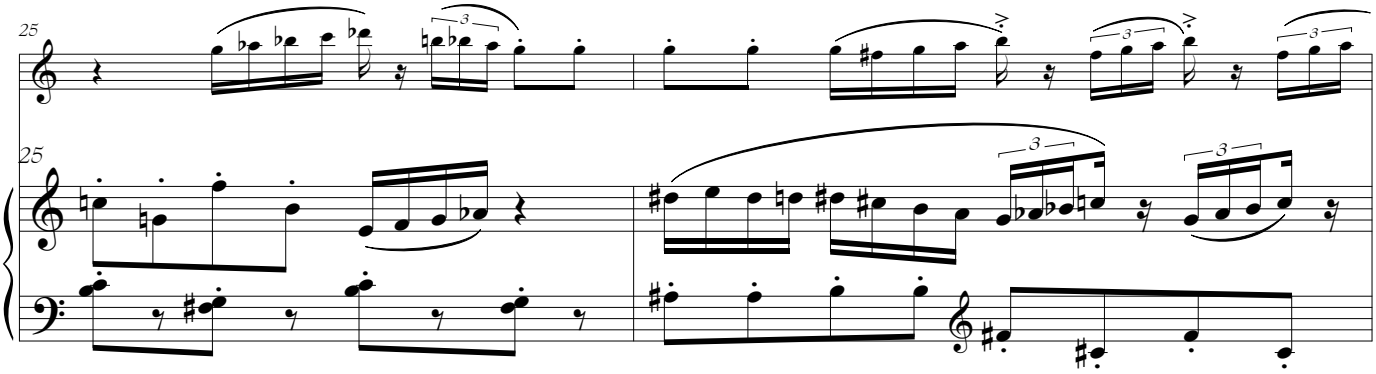
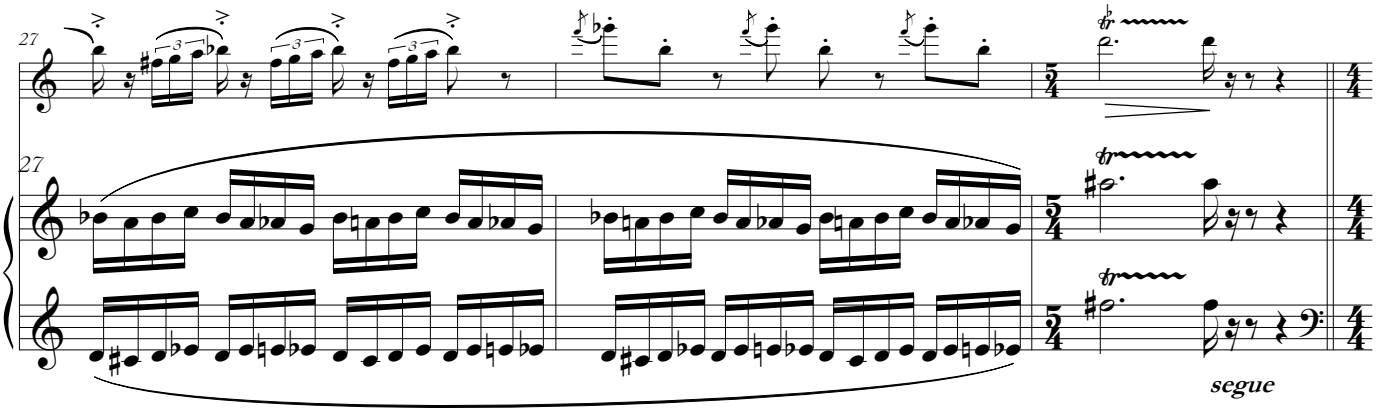
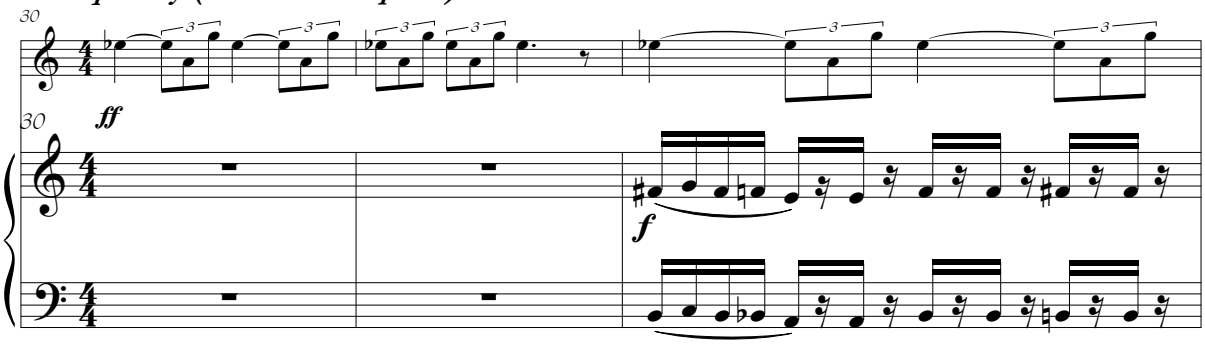


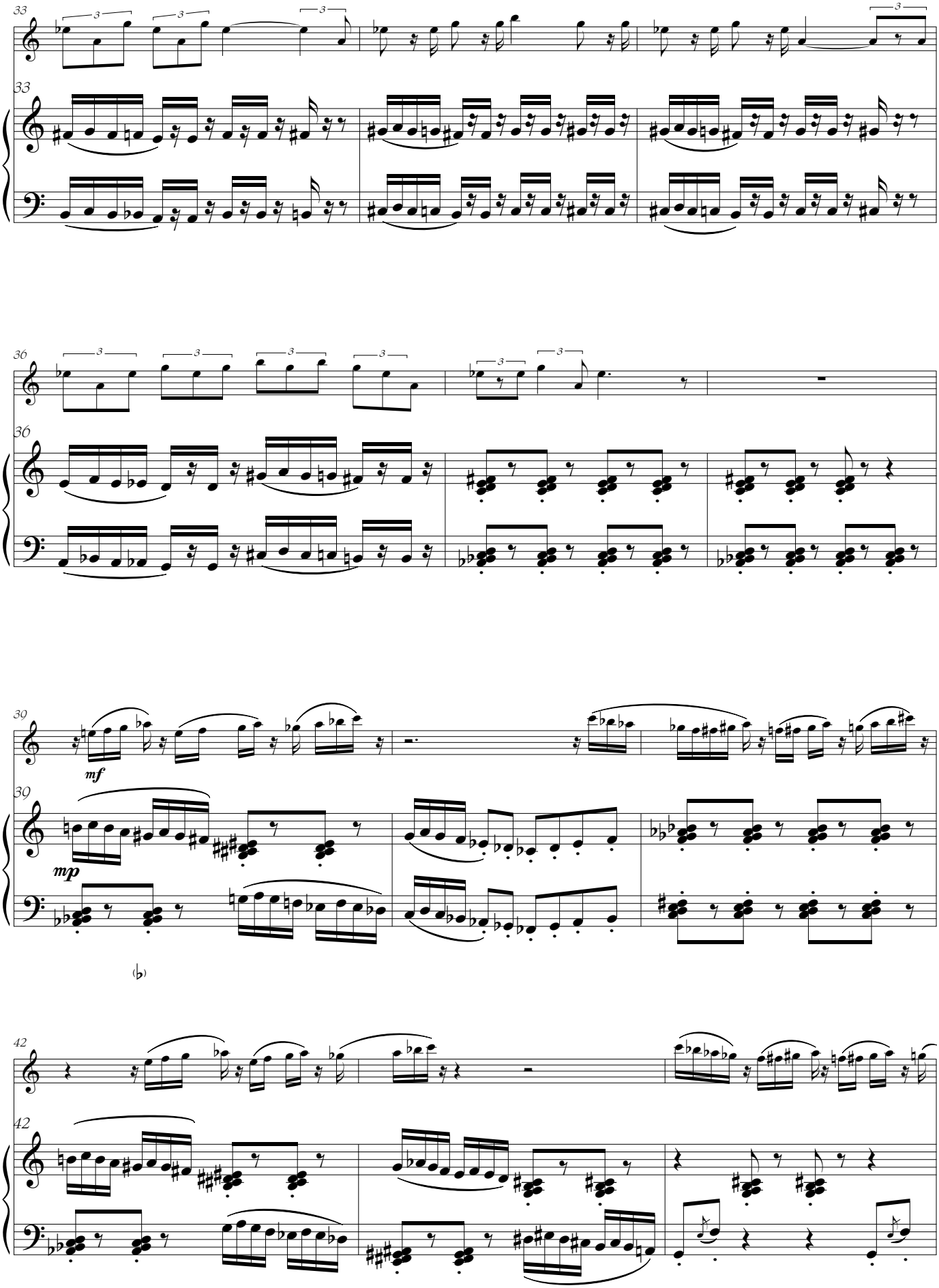




Red Soldier Ants

quickly (at the same speed)

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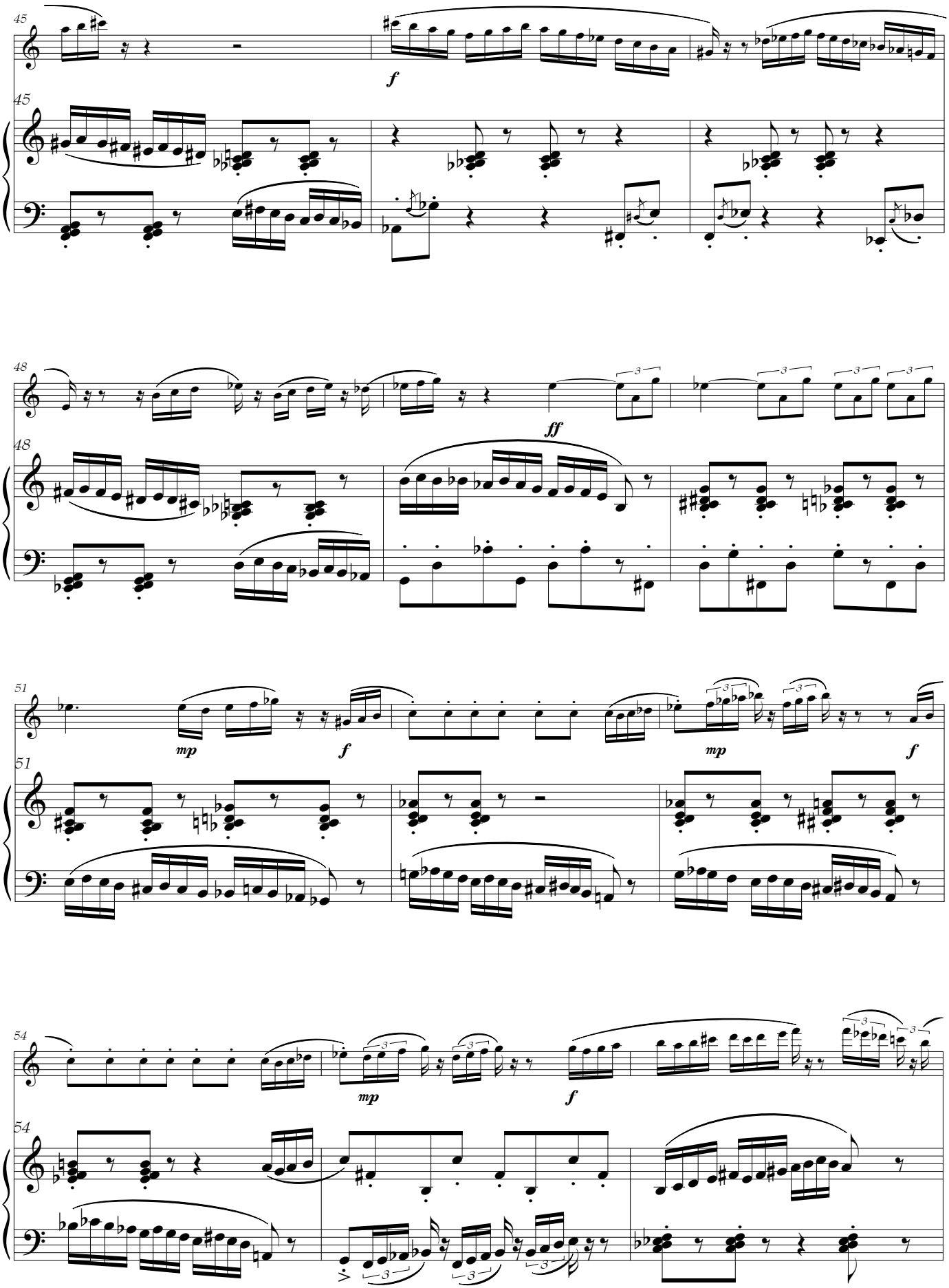
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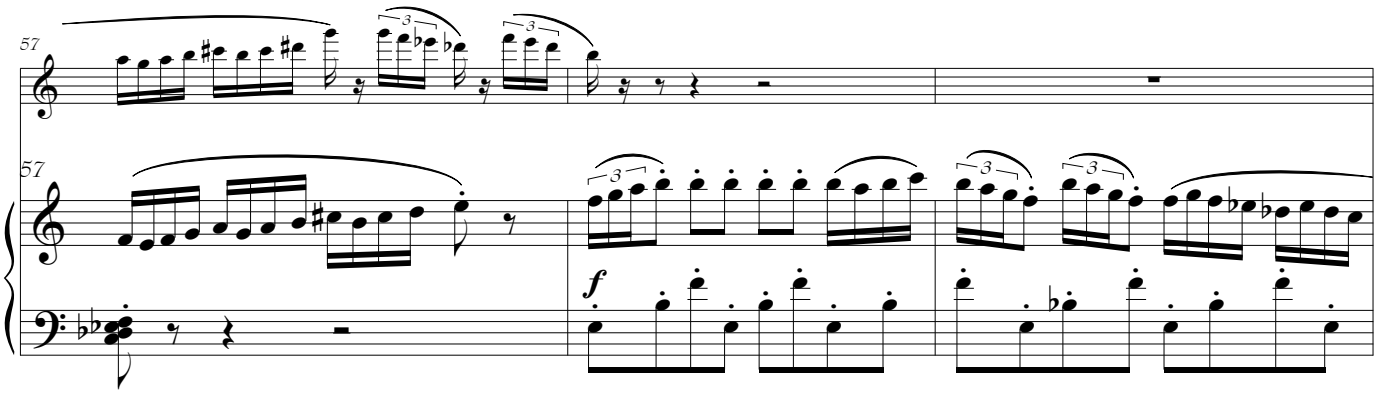
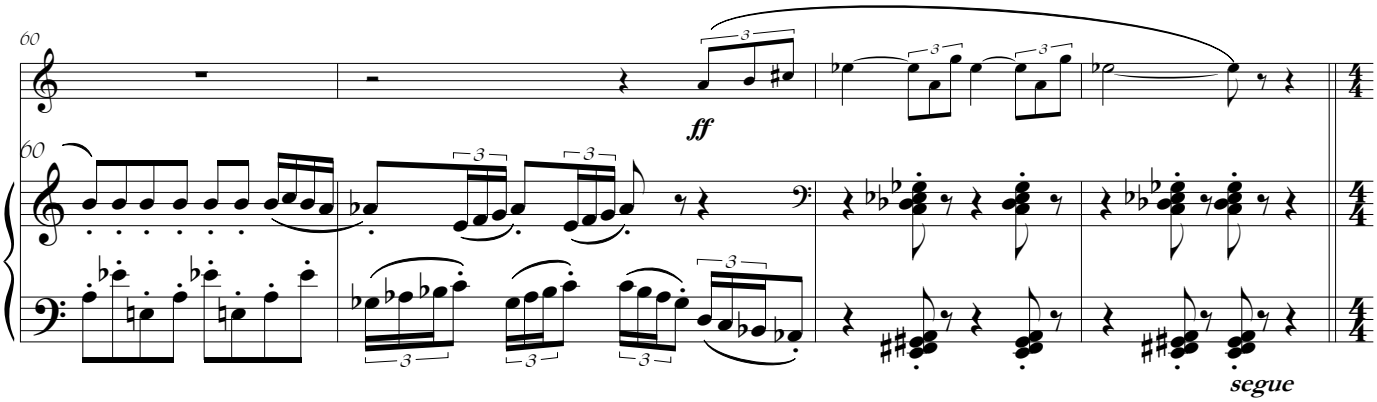
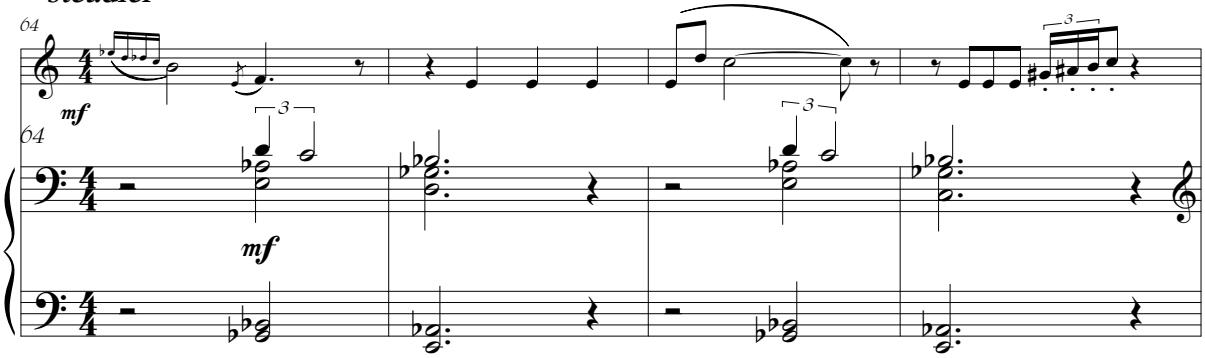
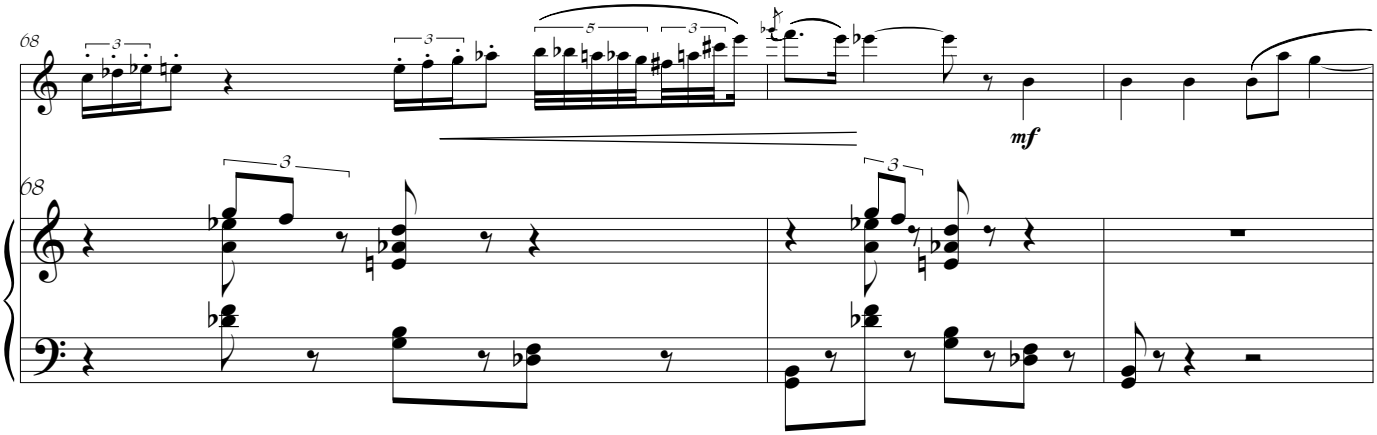
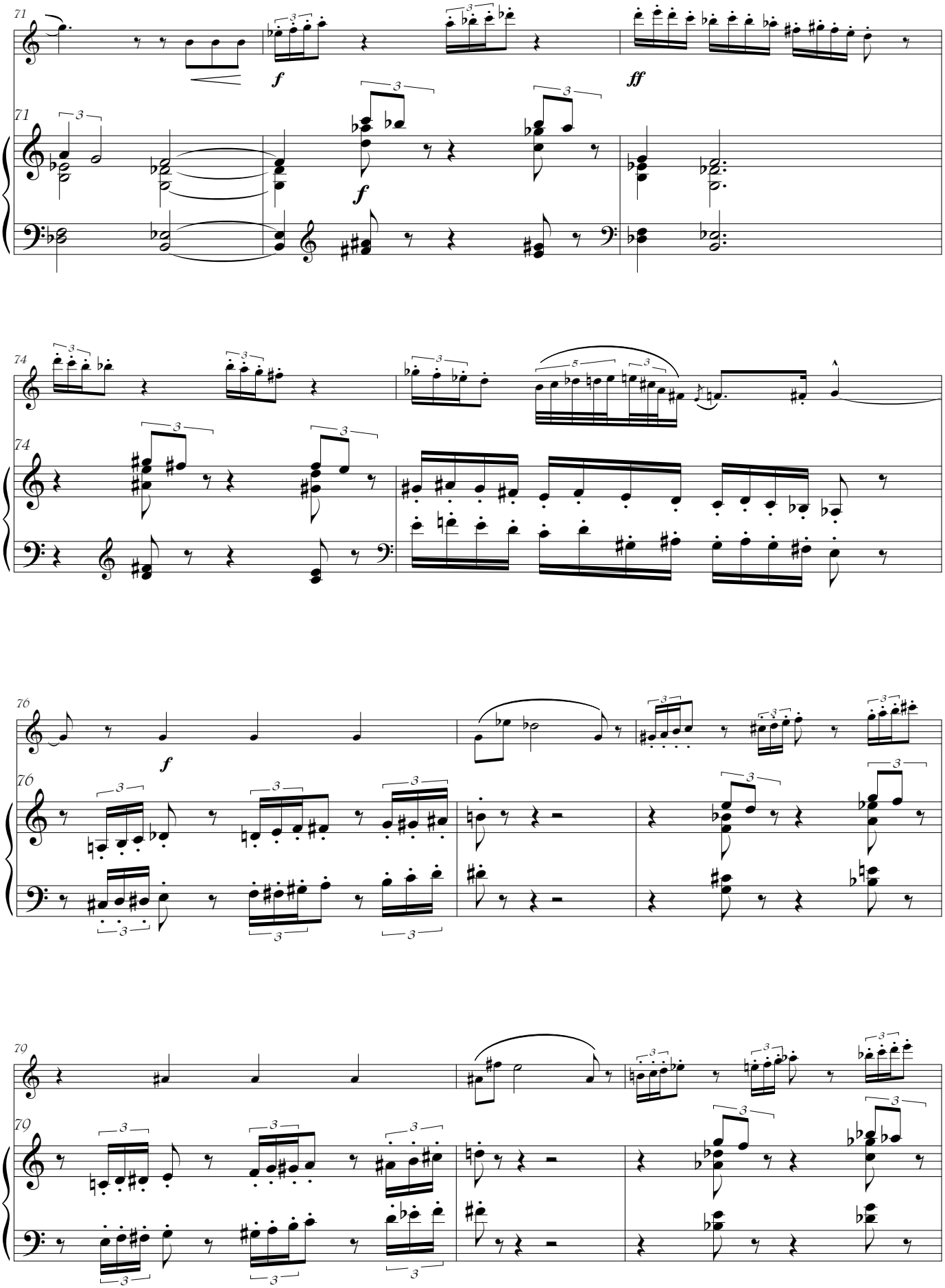




Bull Ants
steadier



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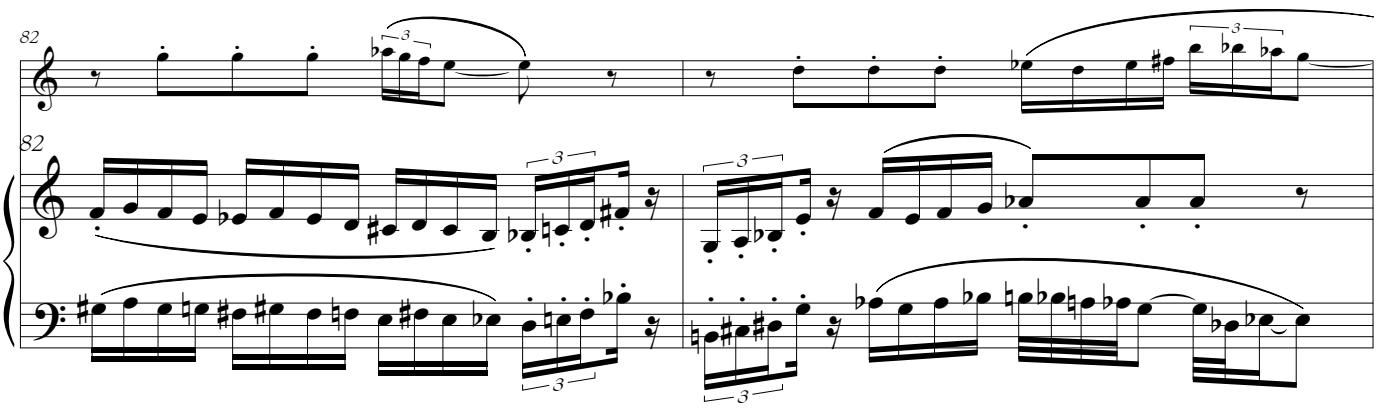
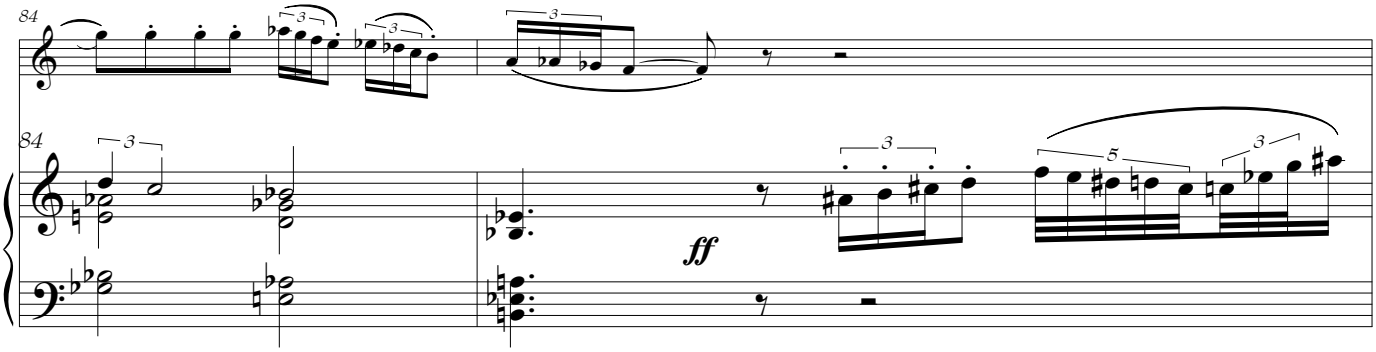
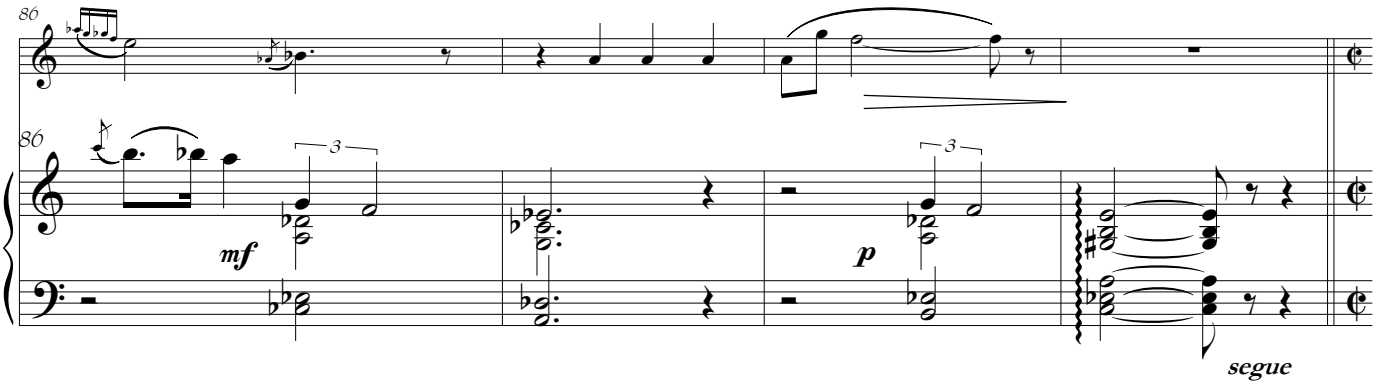
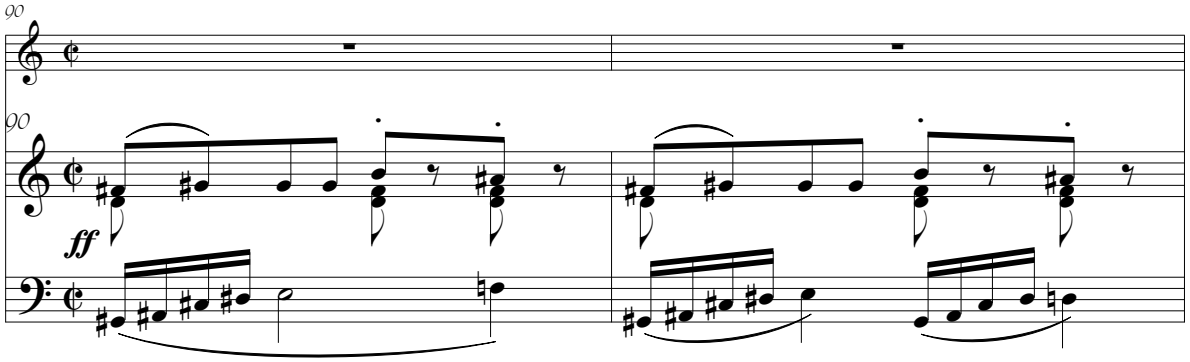
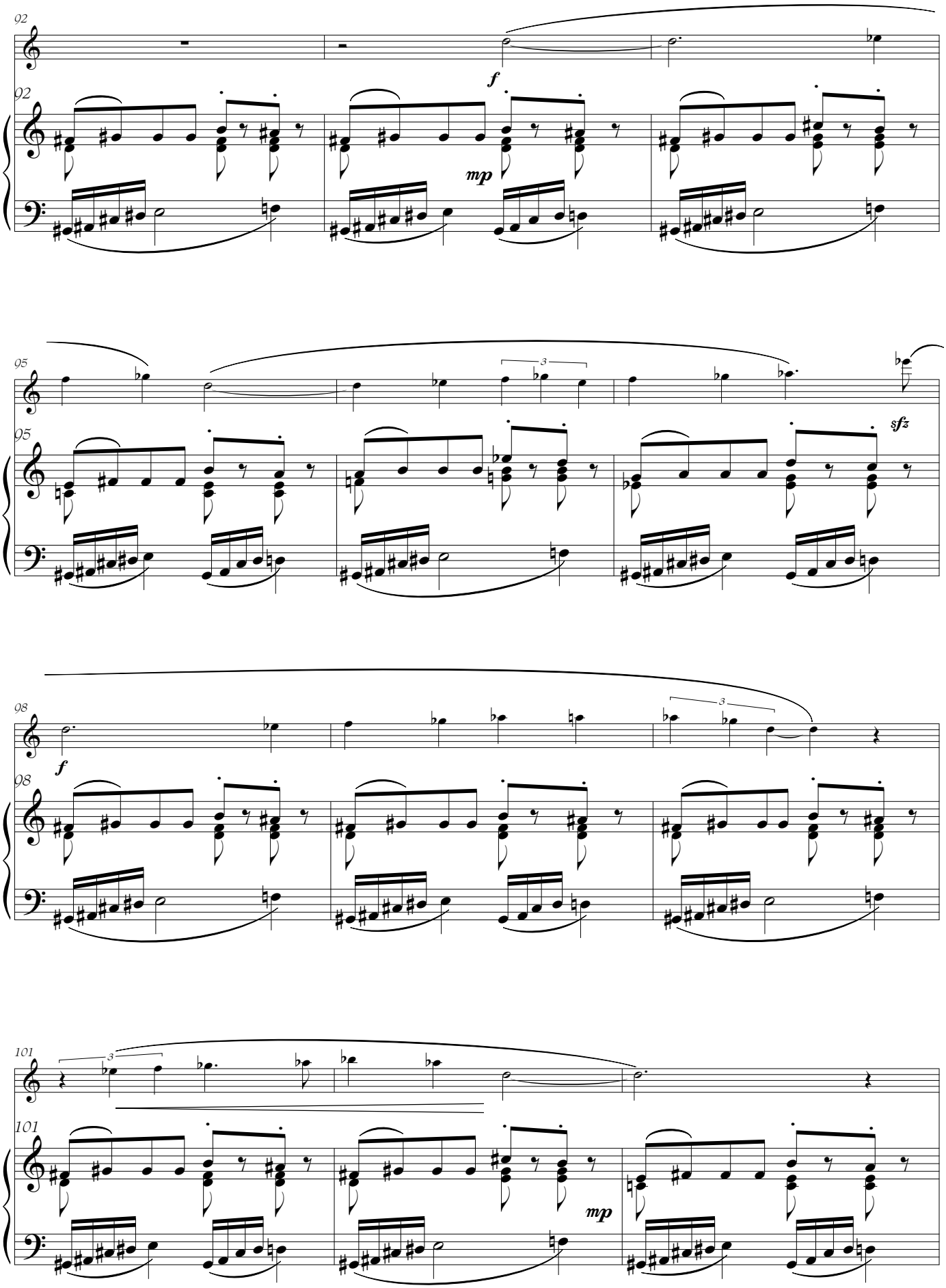






The Inchman
purposefully

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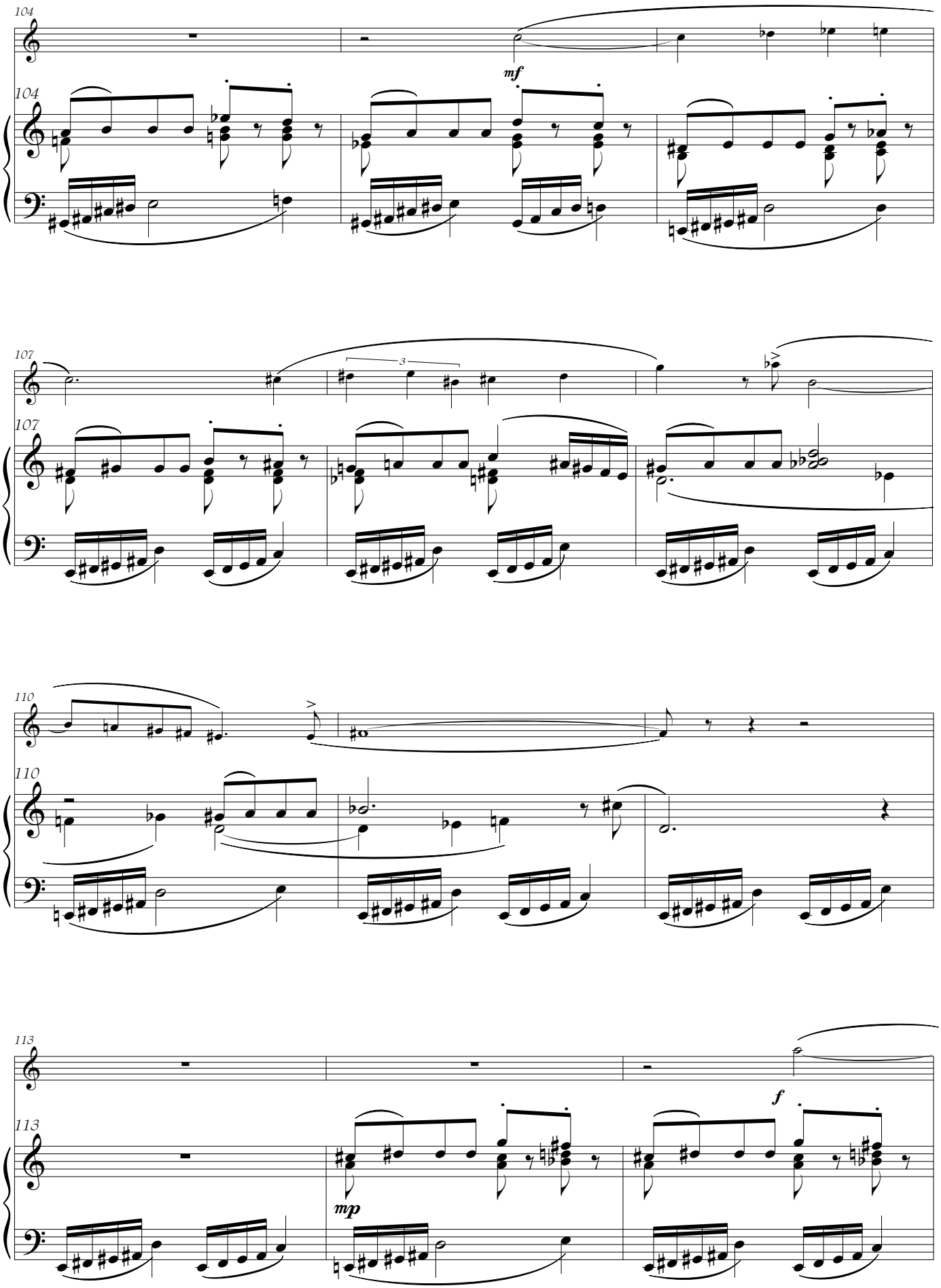
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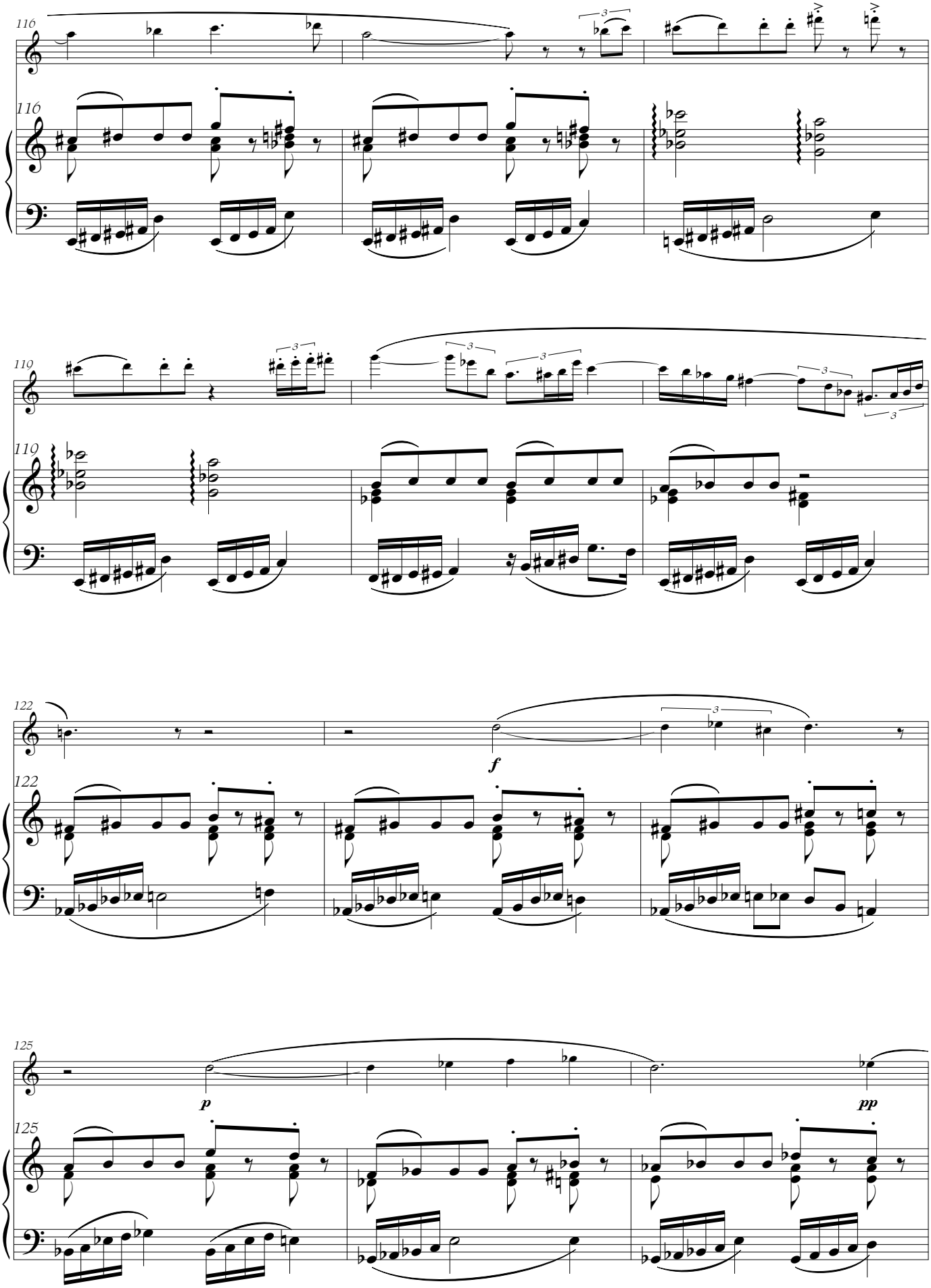
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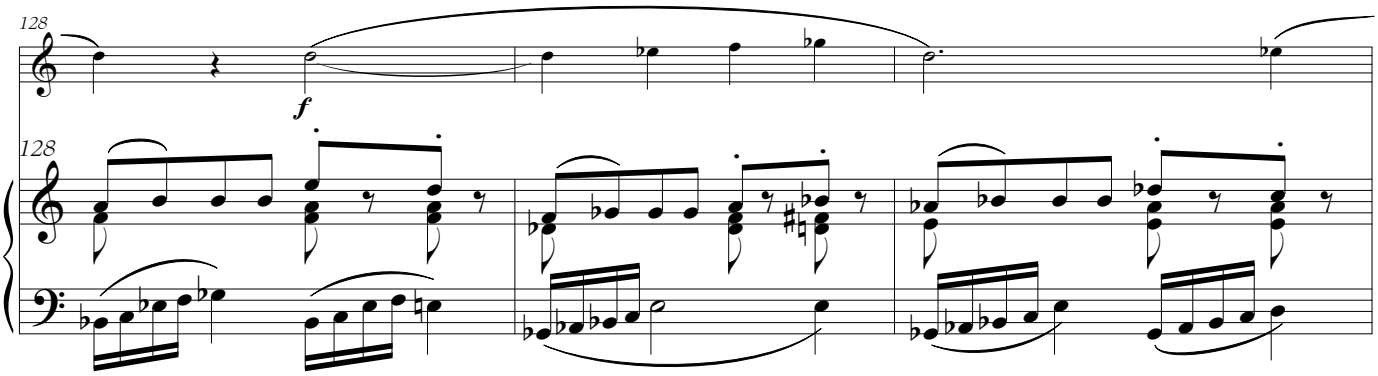
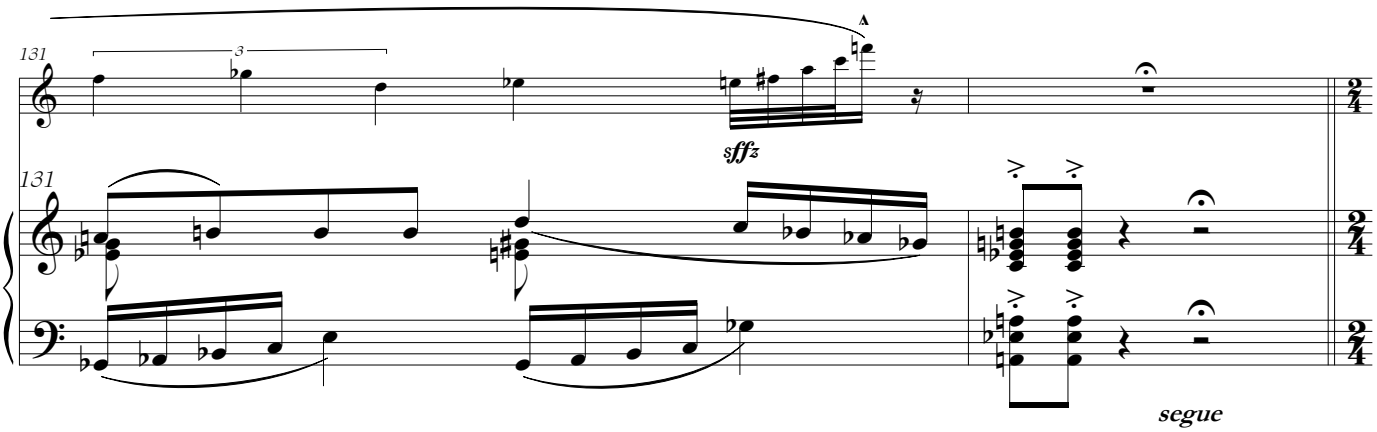
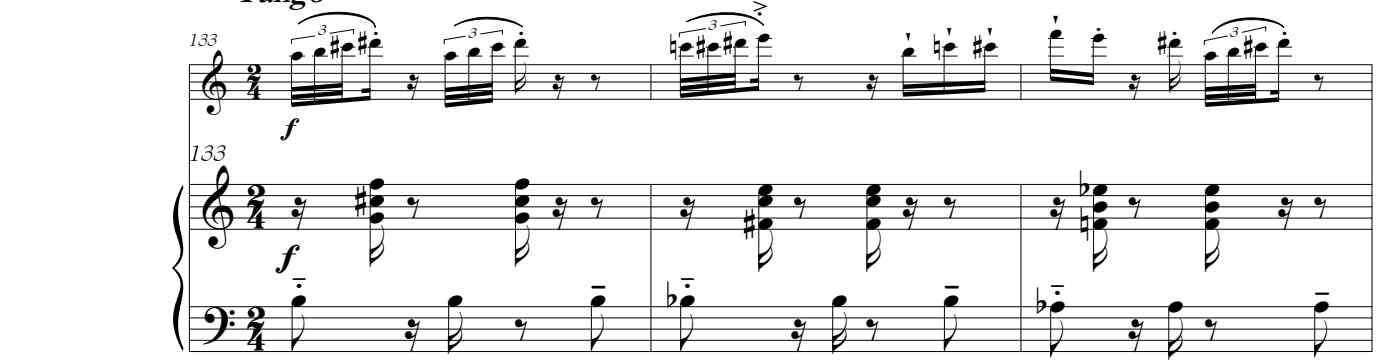
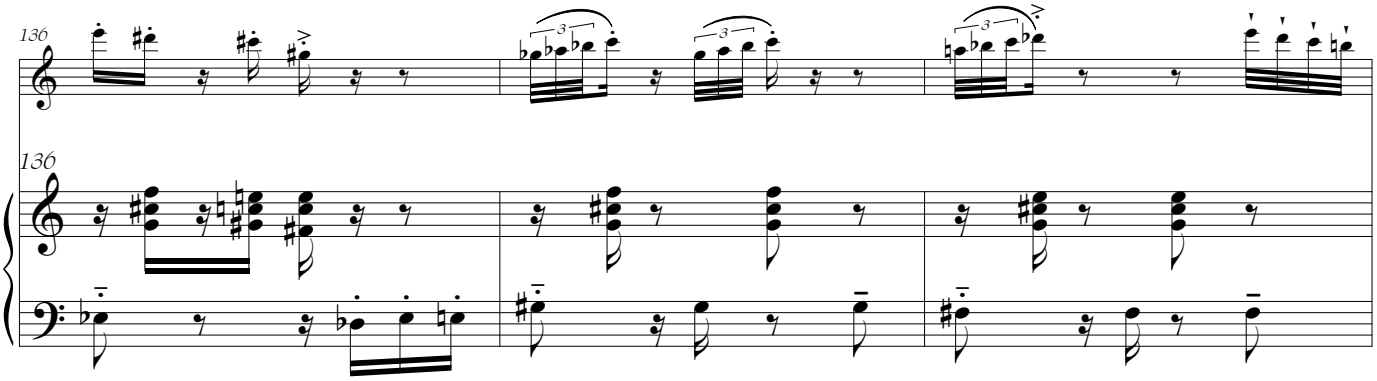


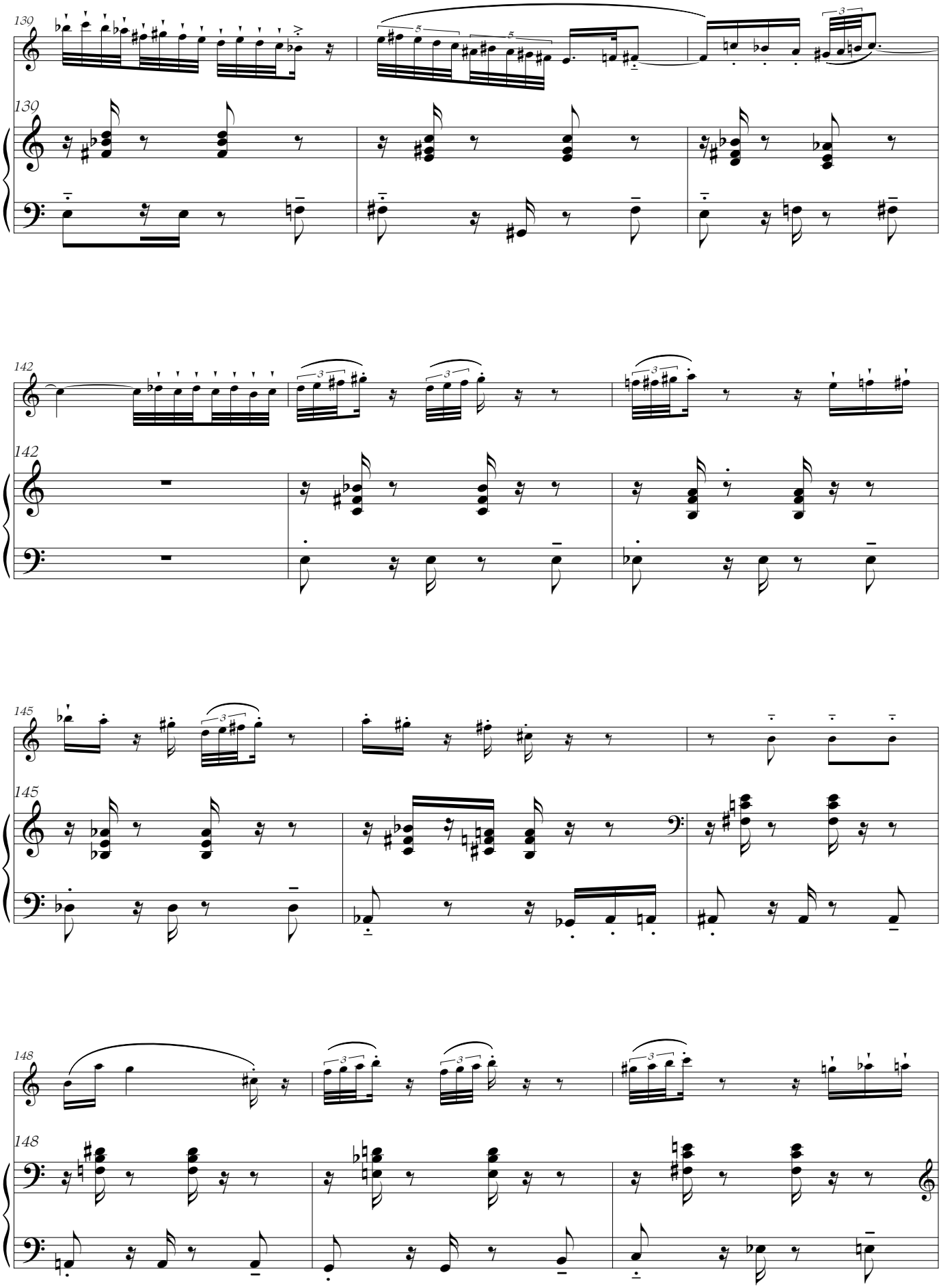


Argentine Ants

Tango



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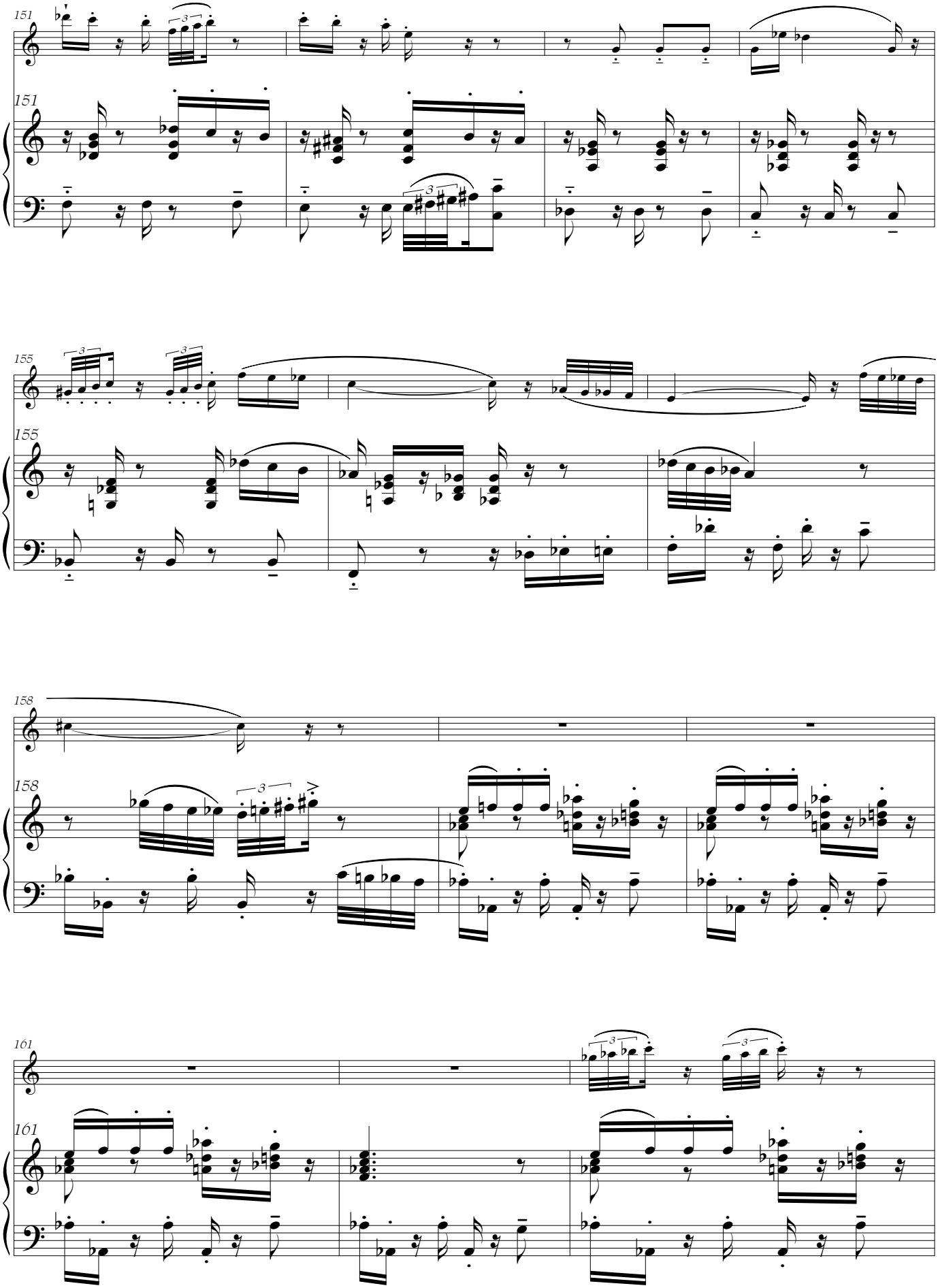
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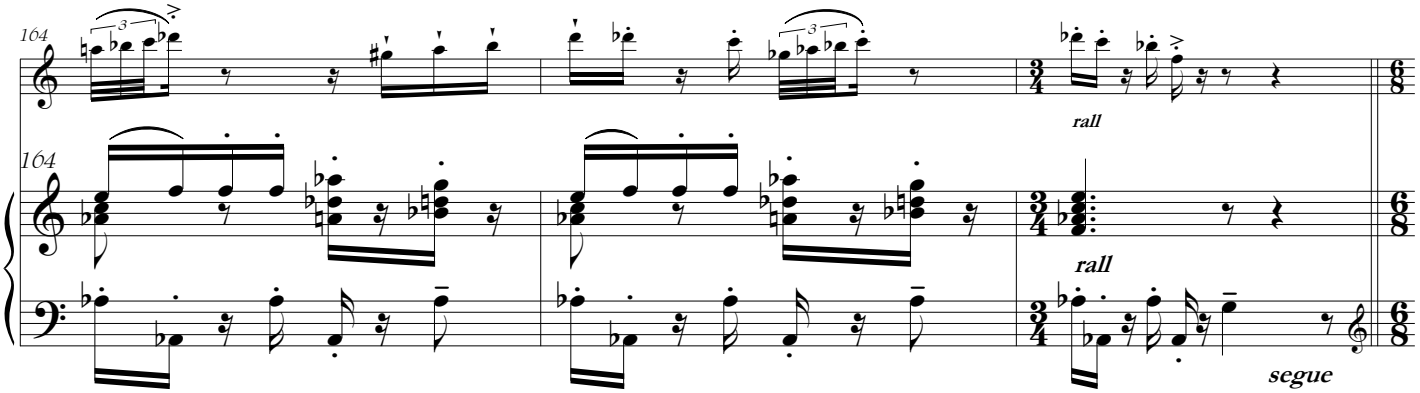

Coda

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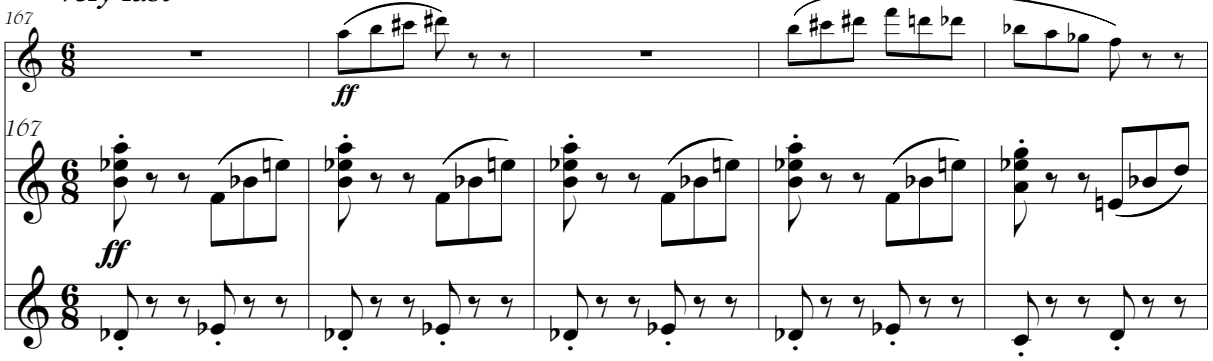

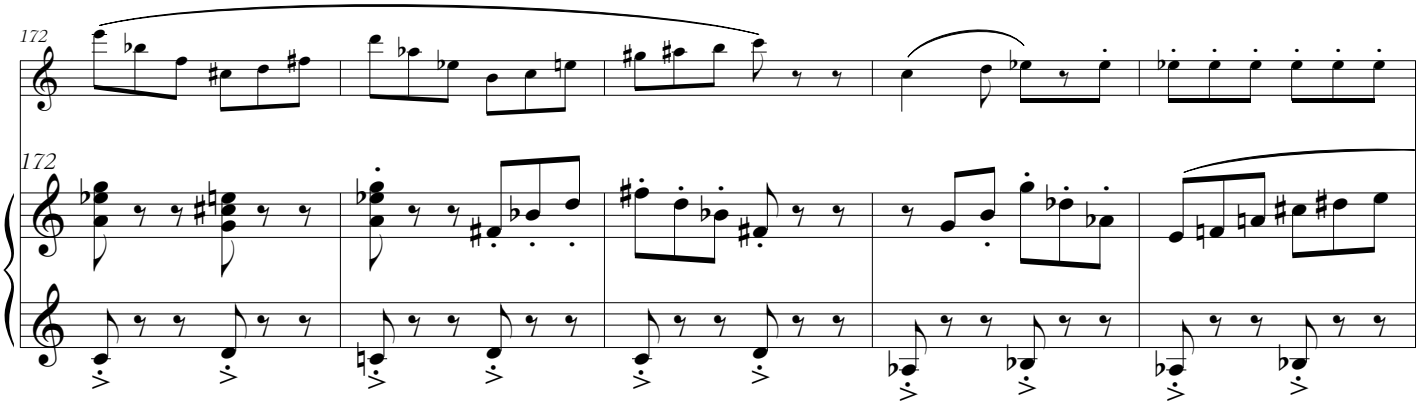

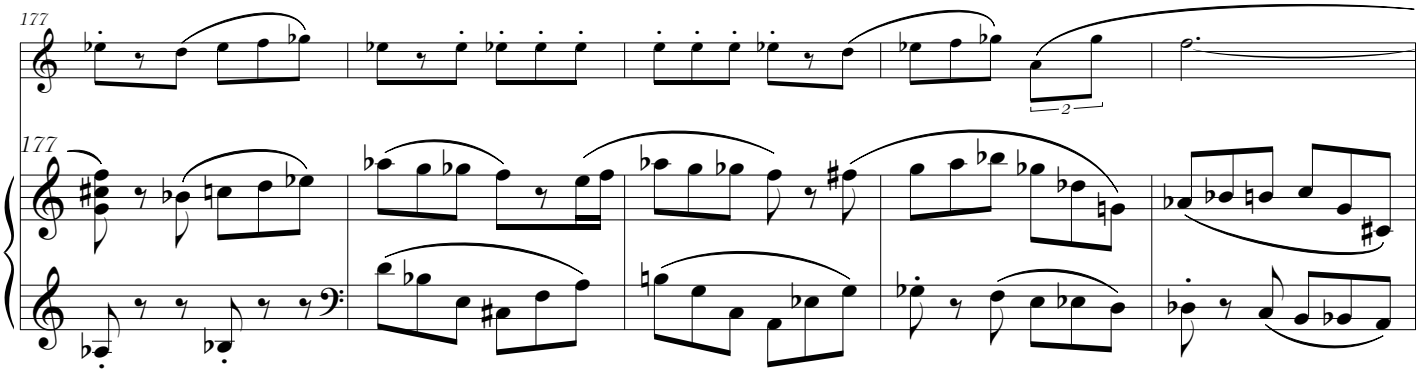

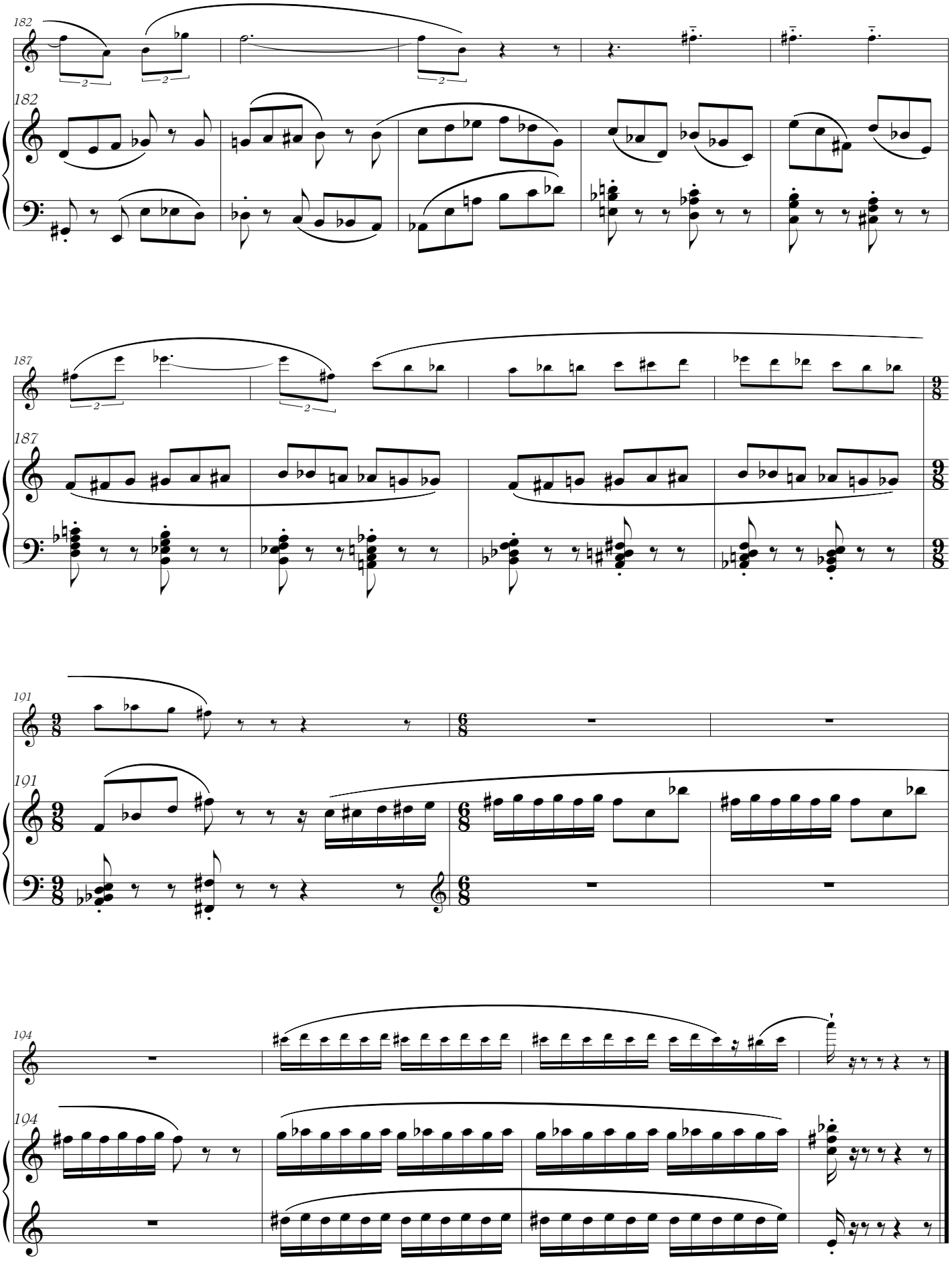
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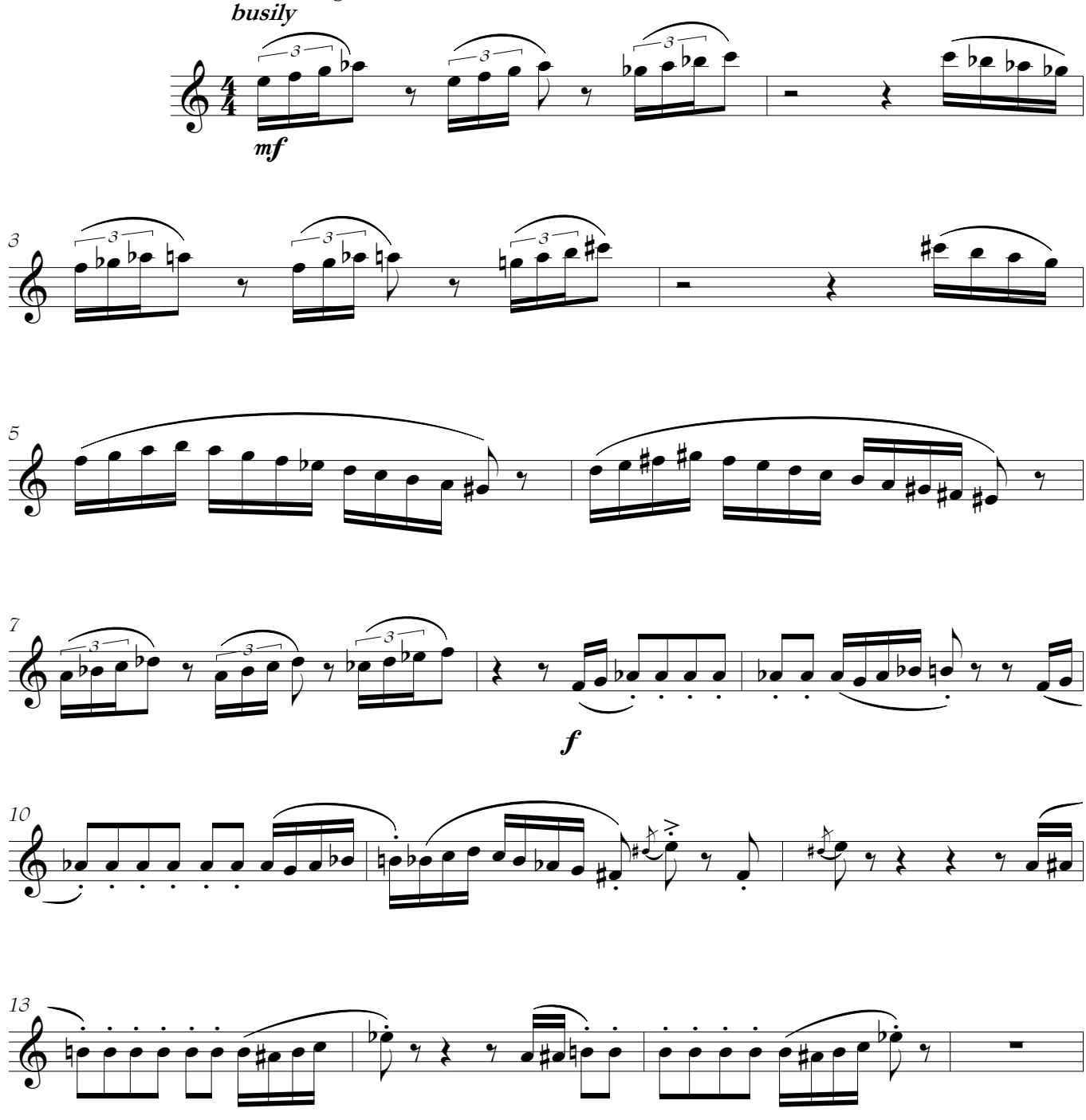
TASMANIAN ANTS

Musette in F

Ian Keith Harris
(1935 -)

Black Sugar Ants
busily



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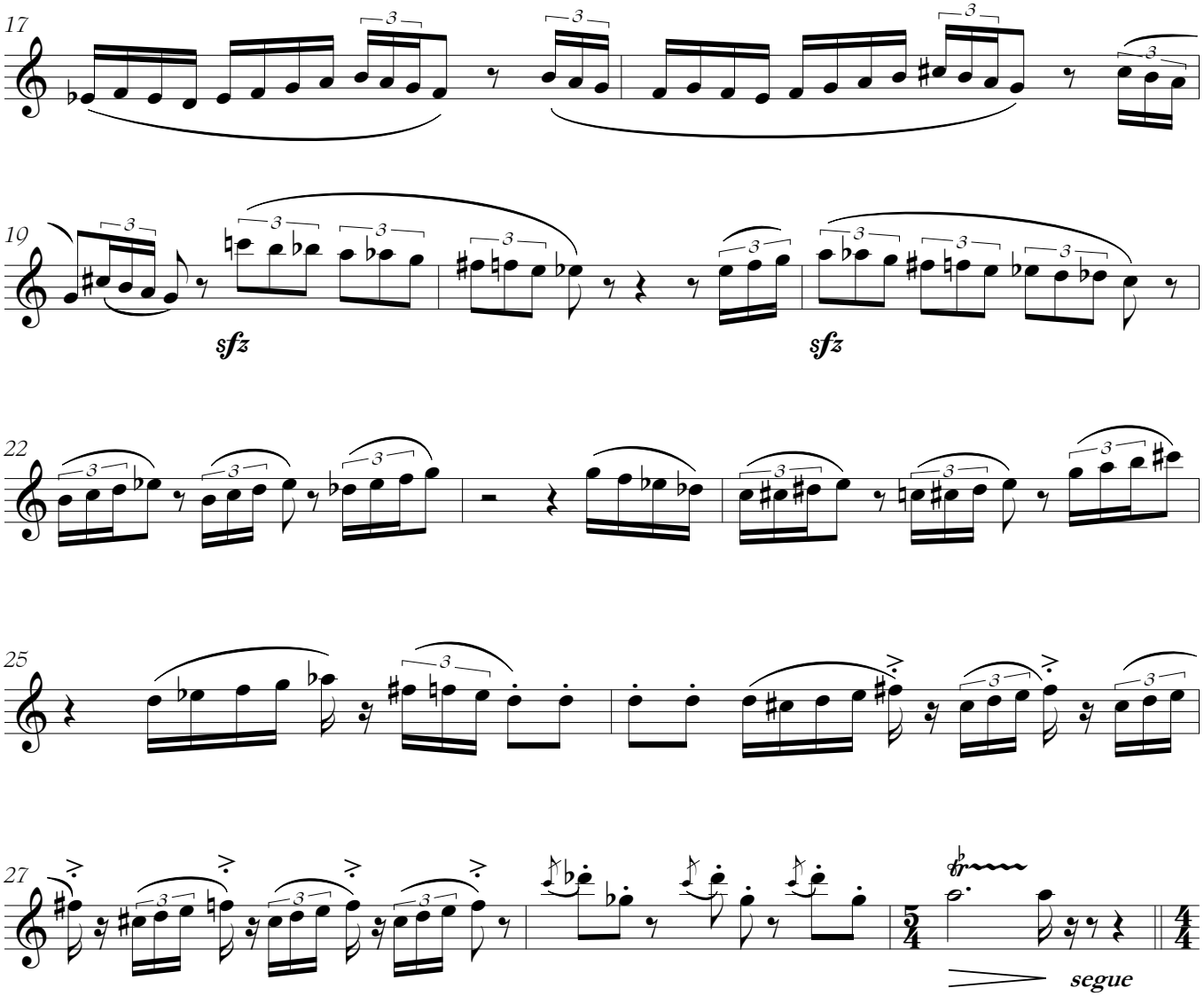
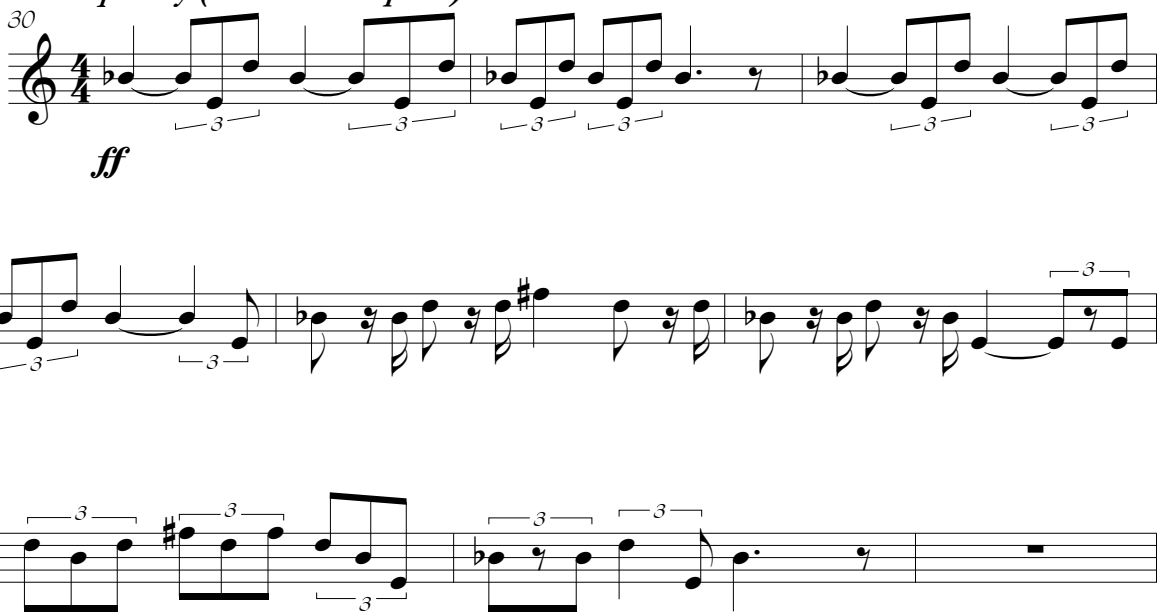
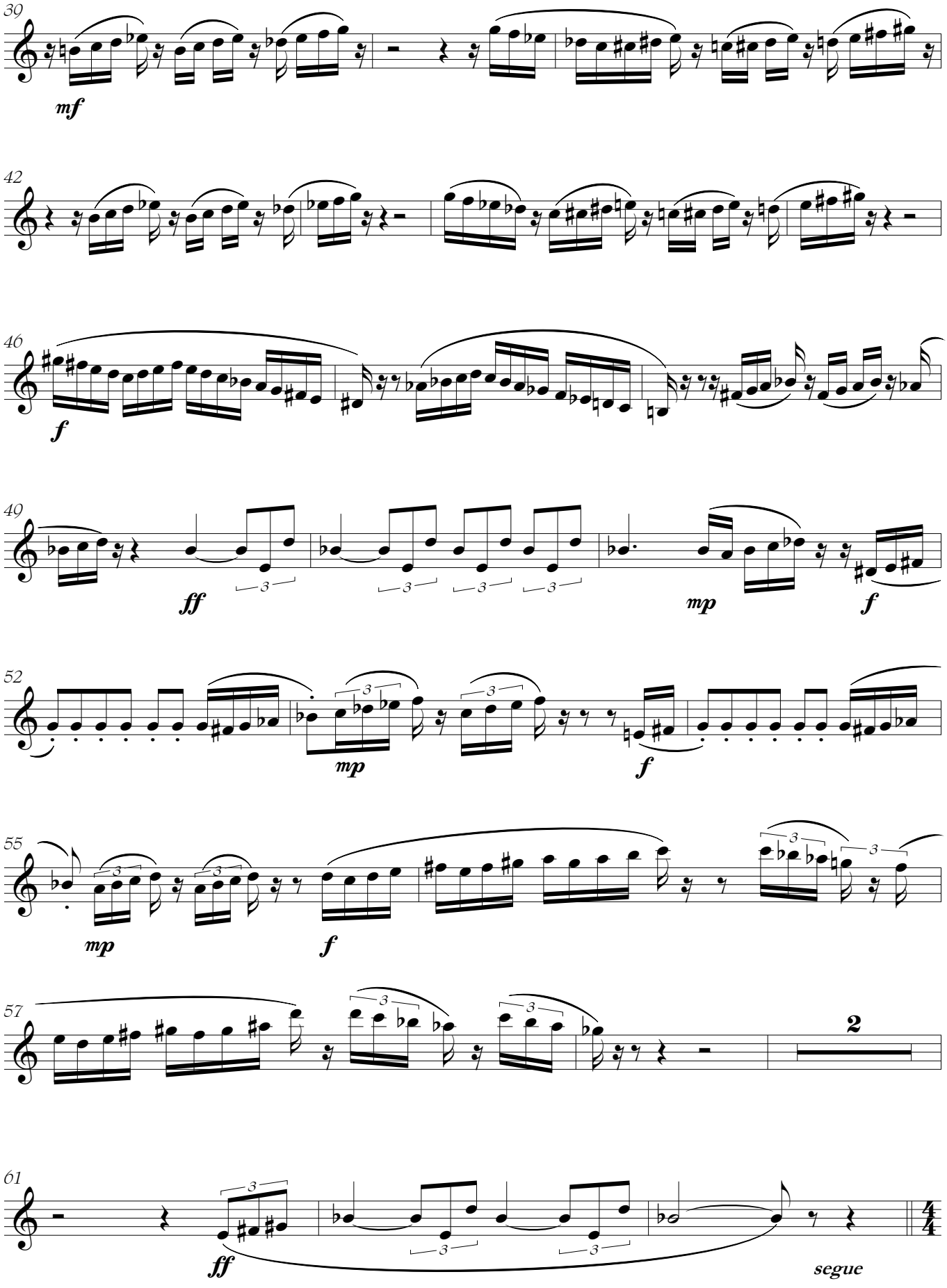


Red Soldier Ants

quickly (at the same speed)

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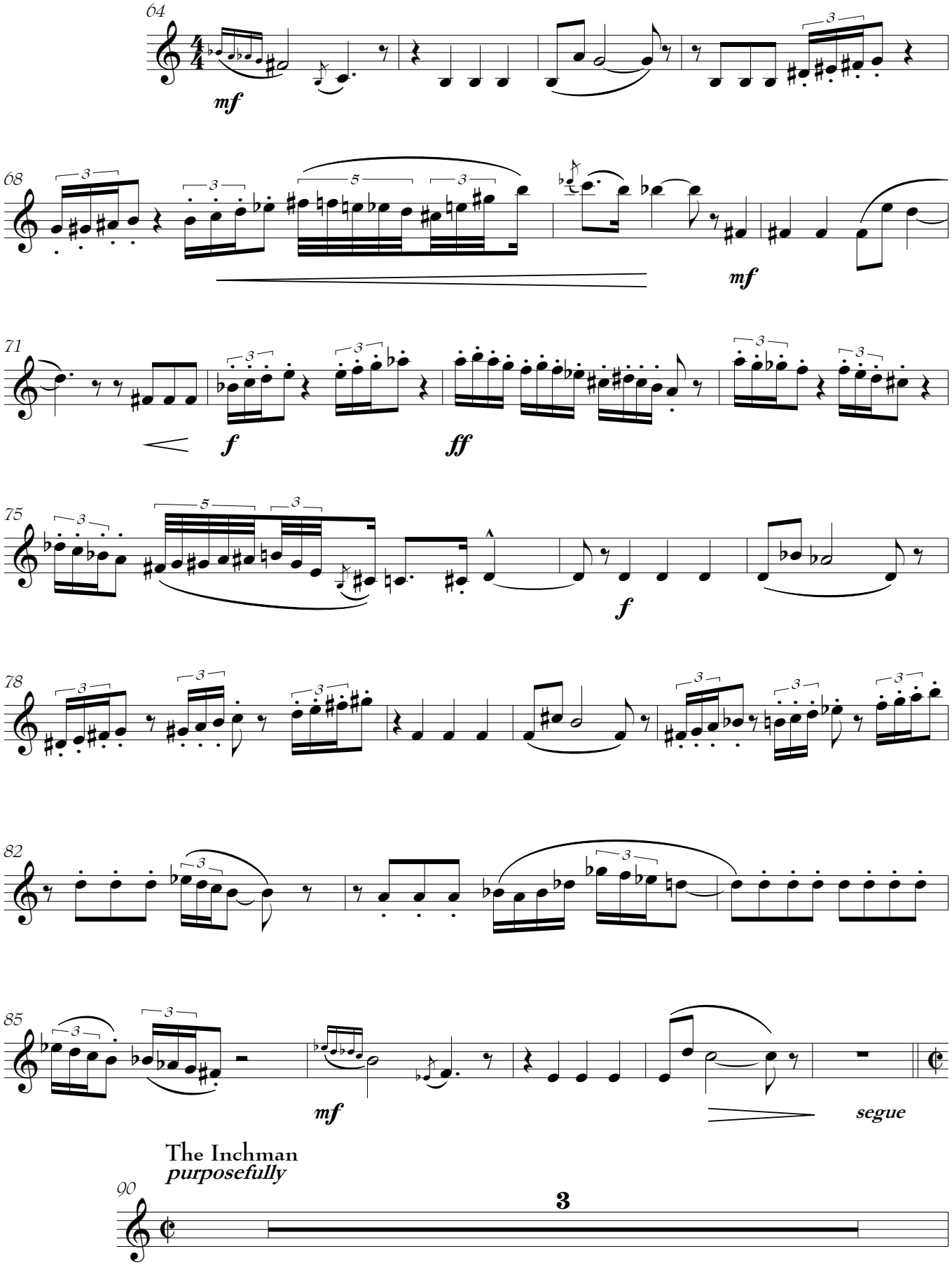
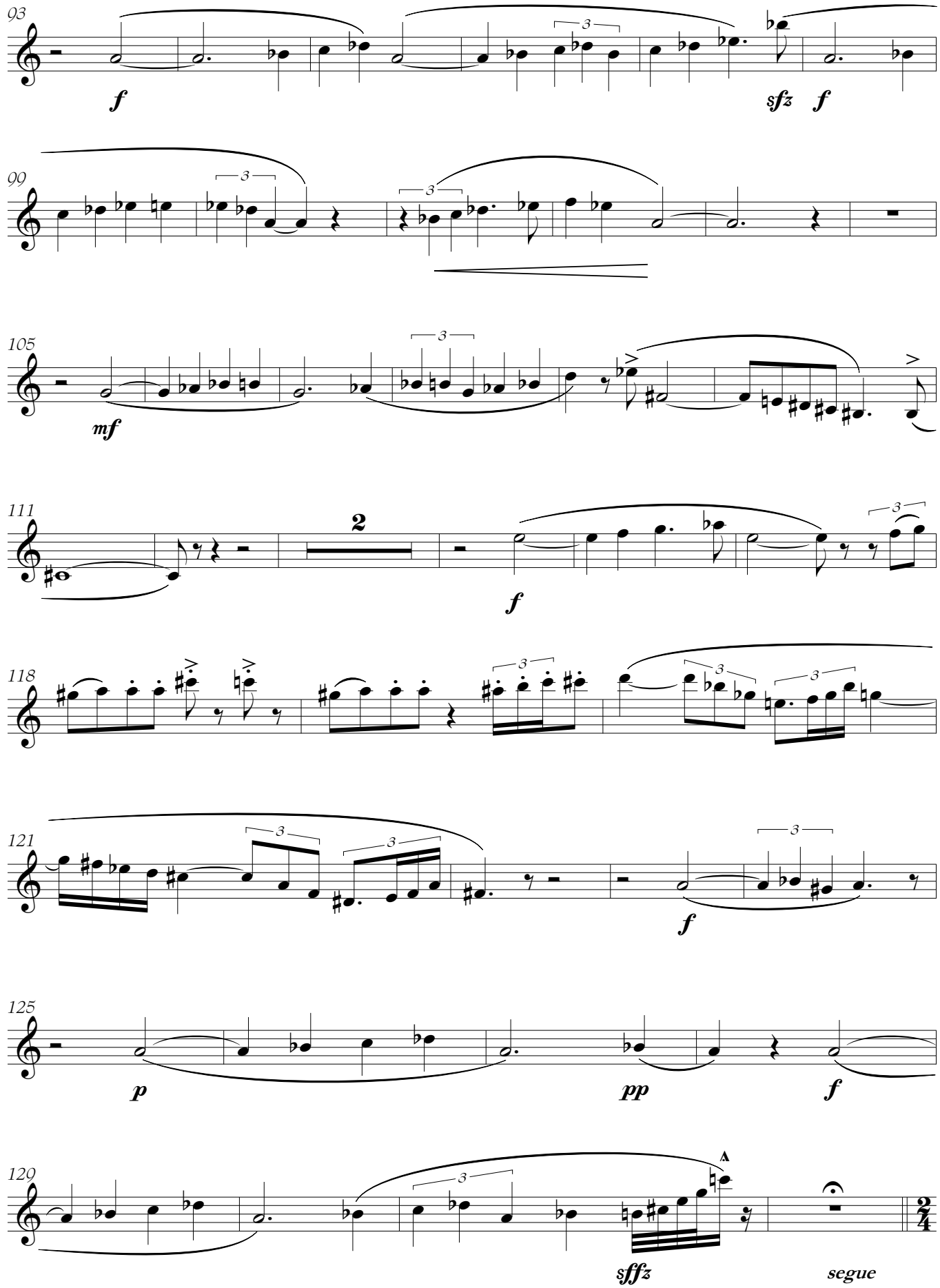
Bull Ants
steadier



The Inchman
purposefully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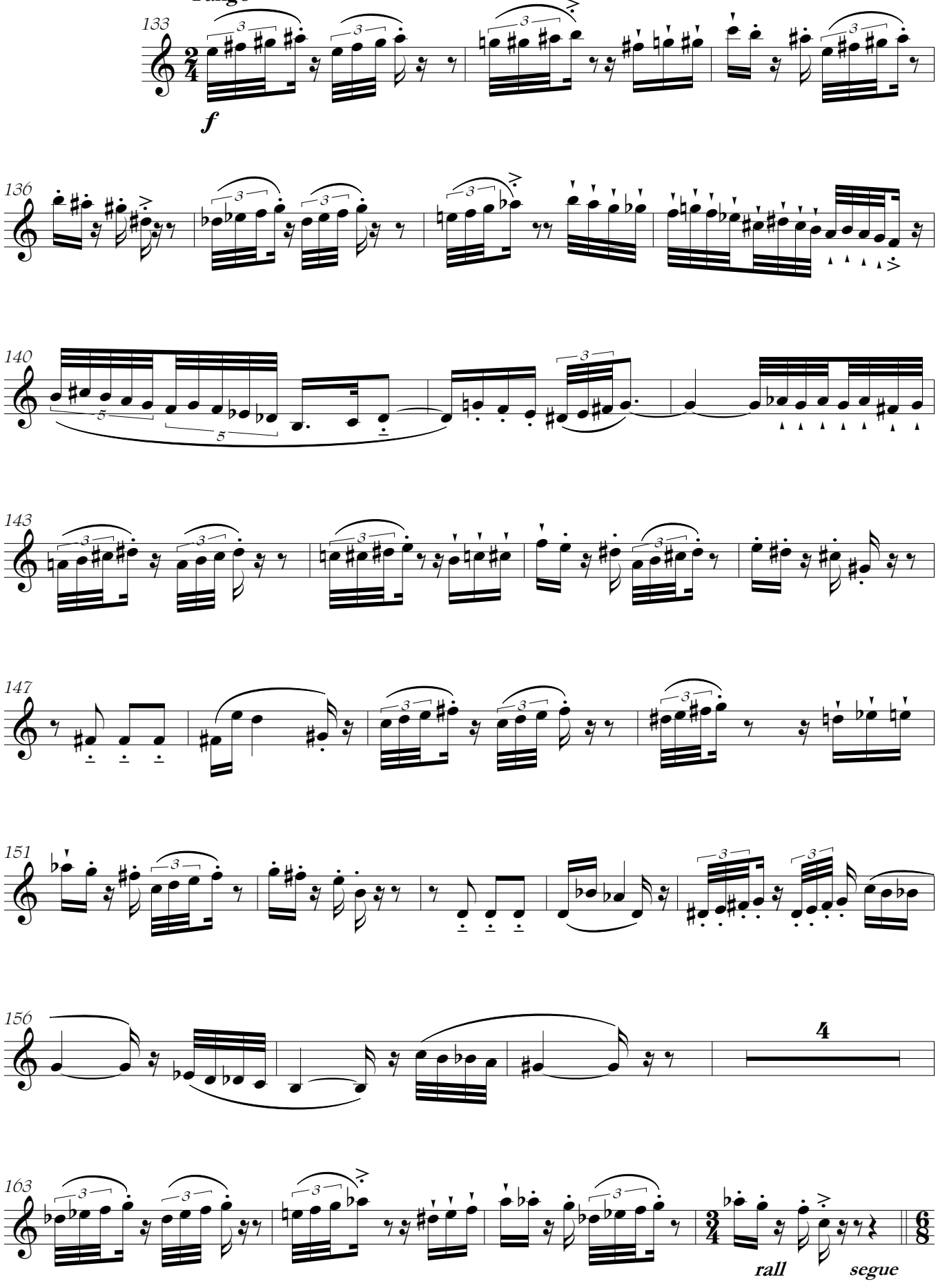
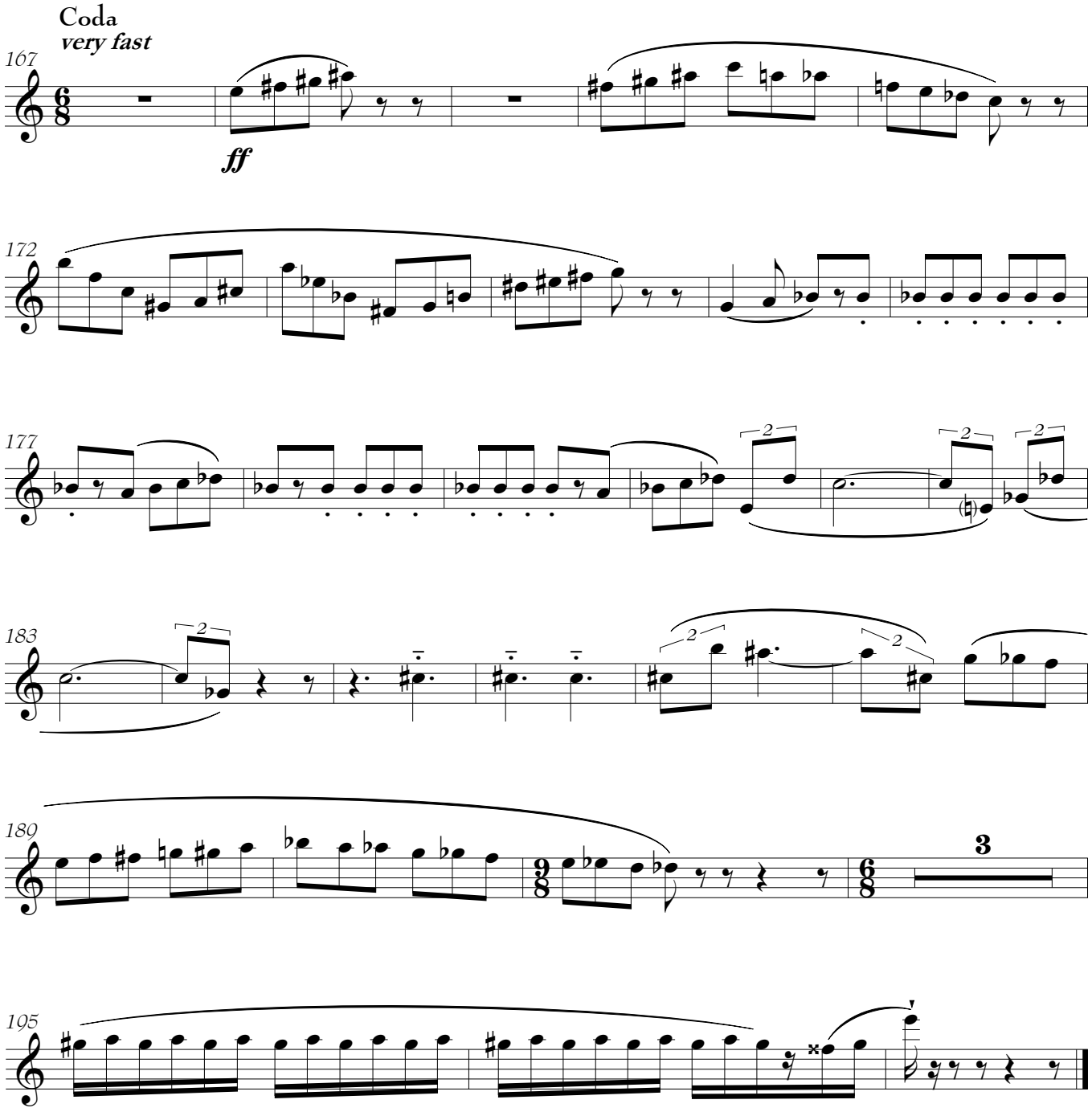
Argentine Ants

Tango




Coda
very fast
167
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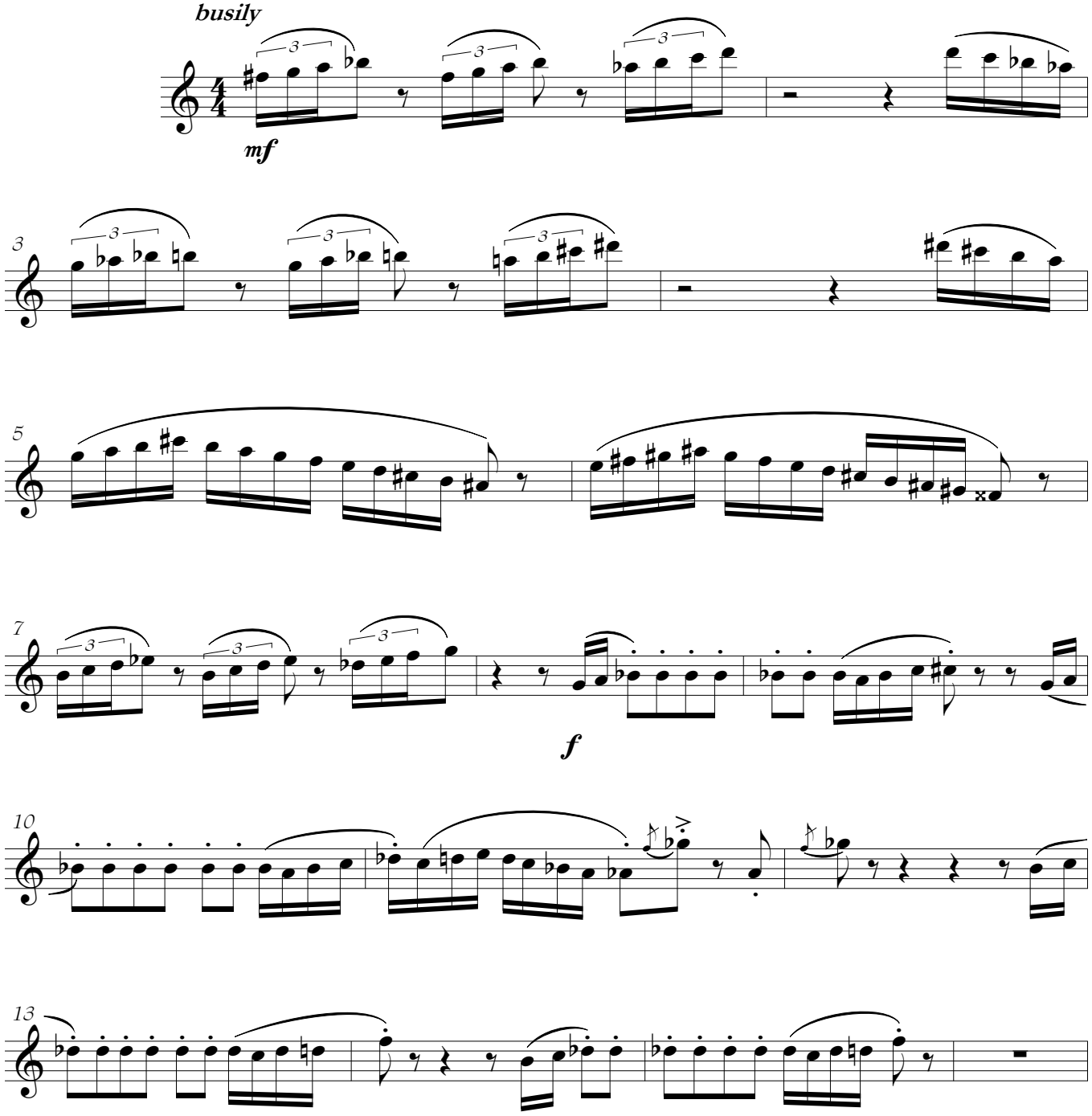
TASMANIAN ANTS

Musette in E♭

Ian Keith Harris
(1935 -)

Black Sugar Ants
busily



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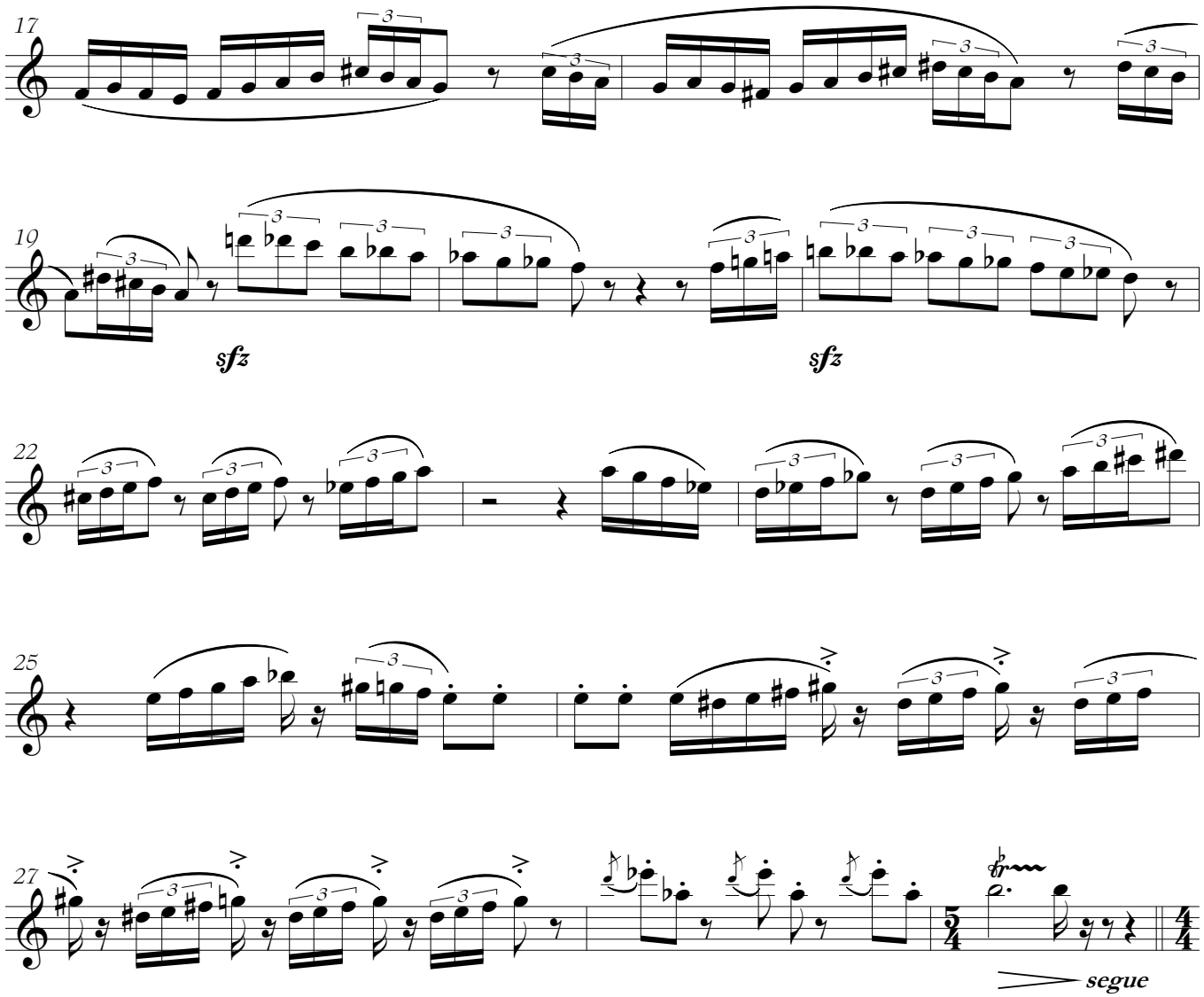
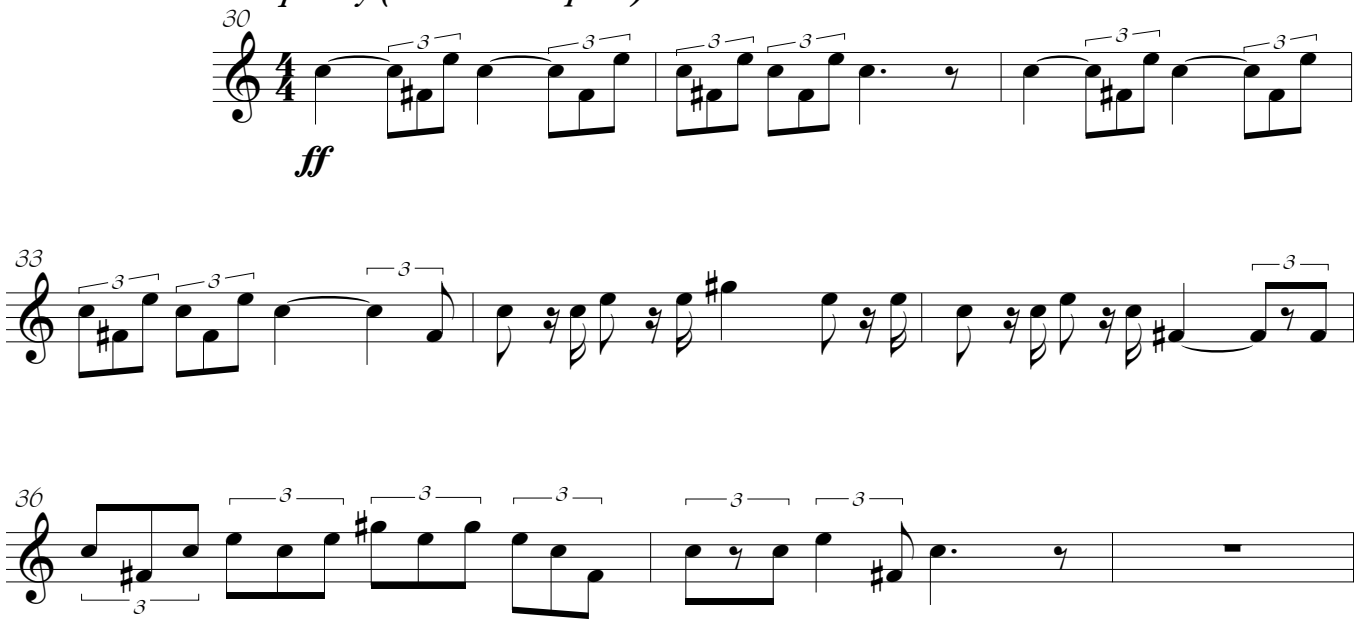
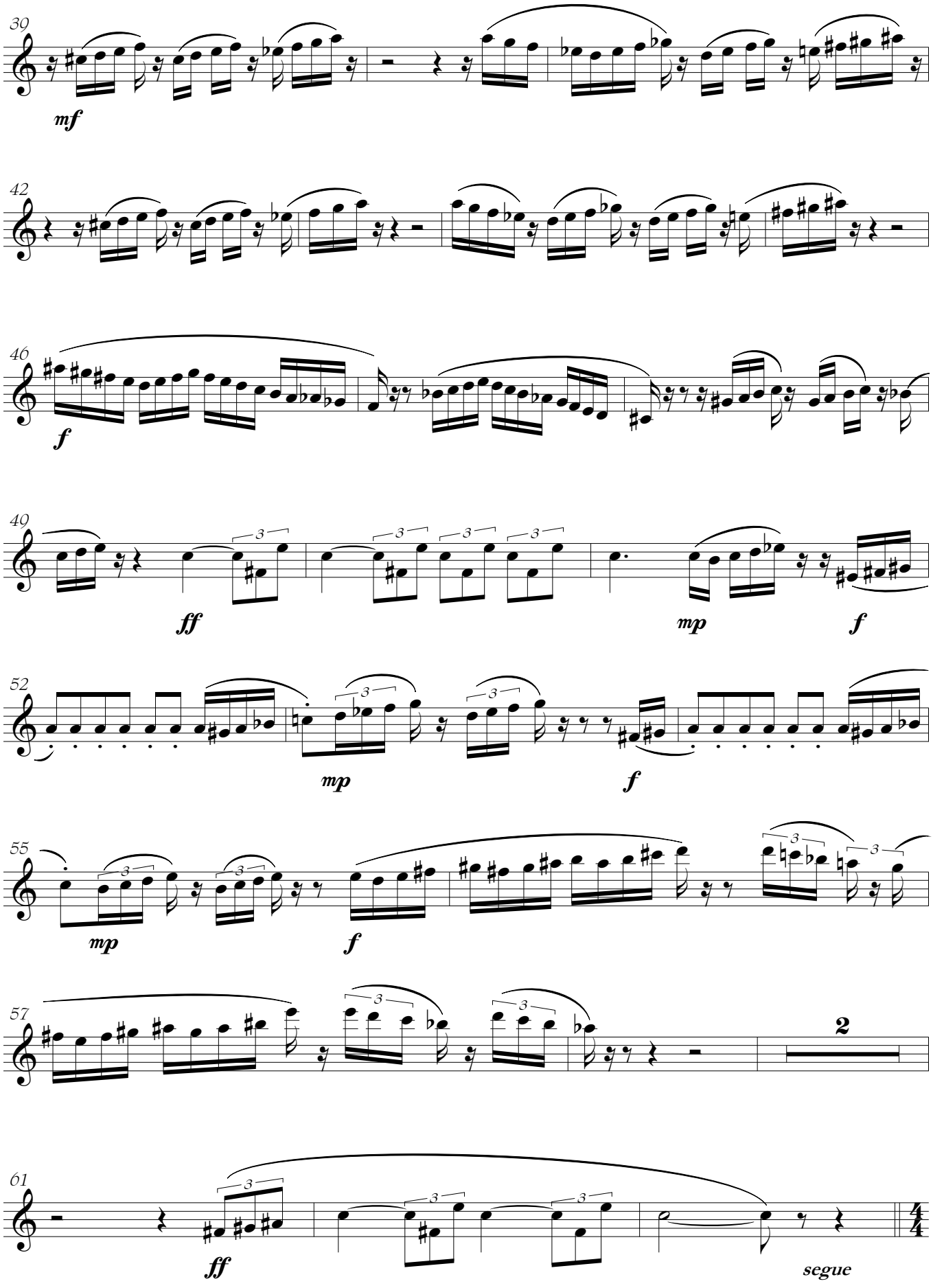


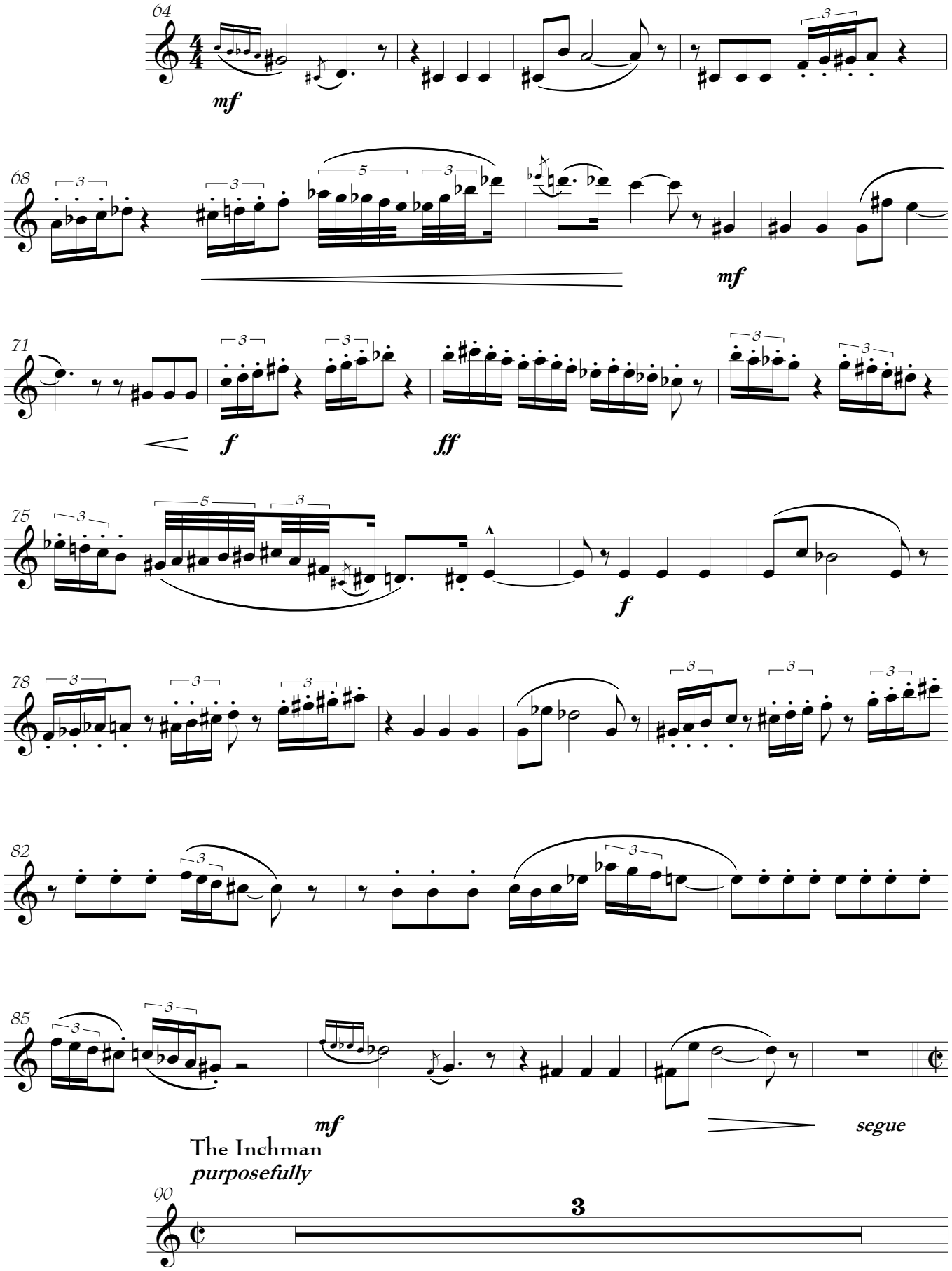
Red Soldier Ants

quickly (at the same speed)

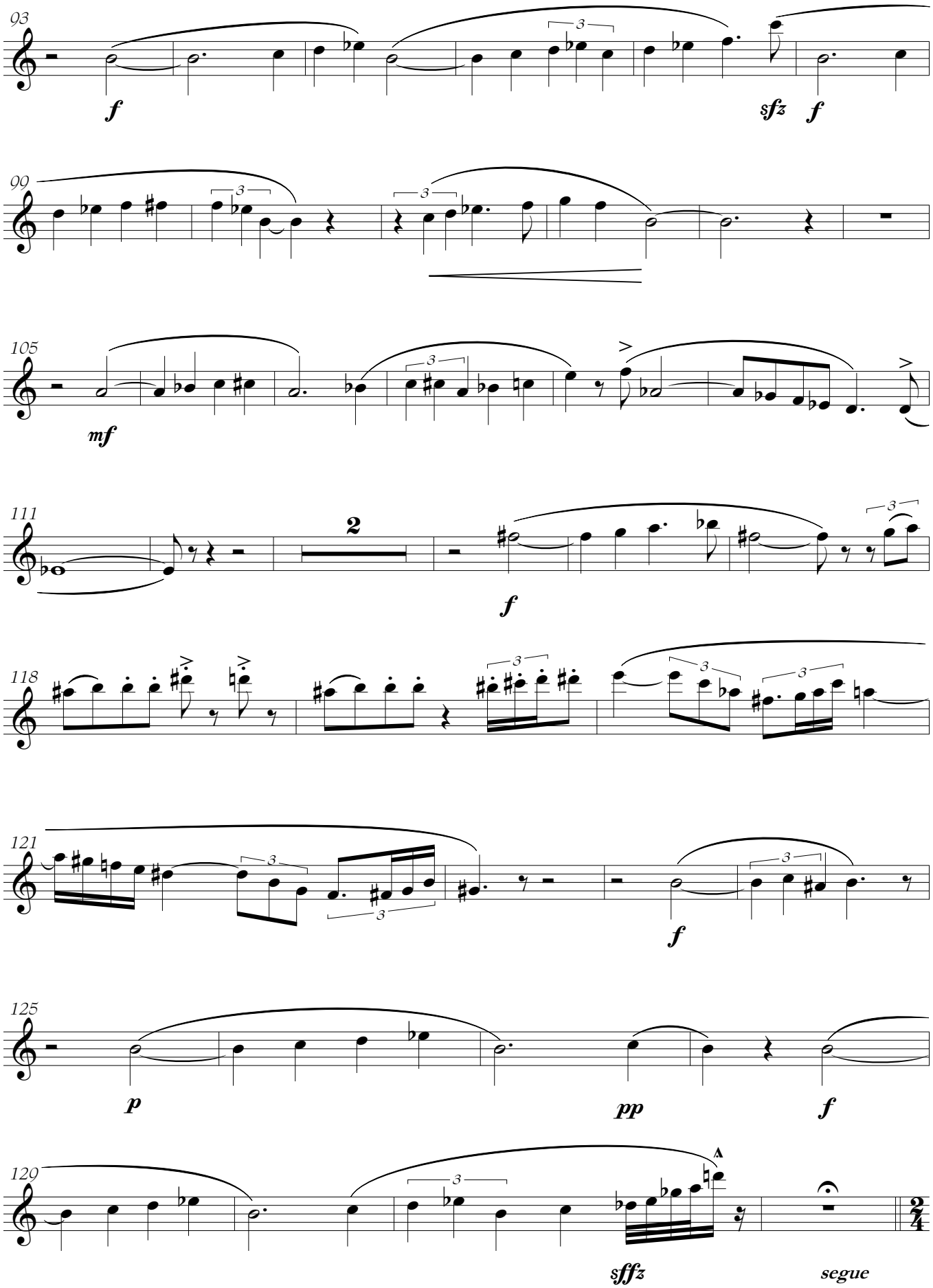



30
mf
42
46
f
49
ff
mp
f
52
mp
f
55
mp
f
57
2
61
ff
segue

Bull Ants
steadier



The Inchman
purposefully


93
f
sfz
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118
121
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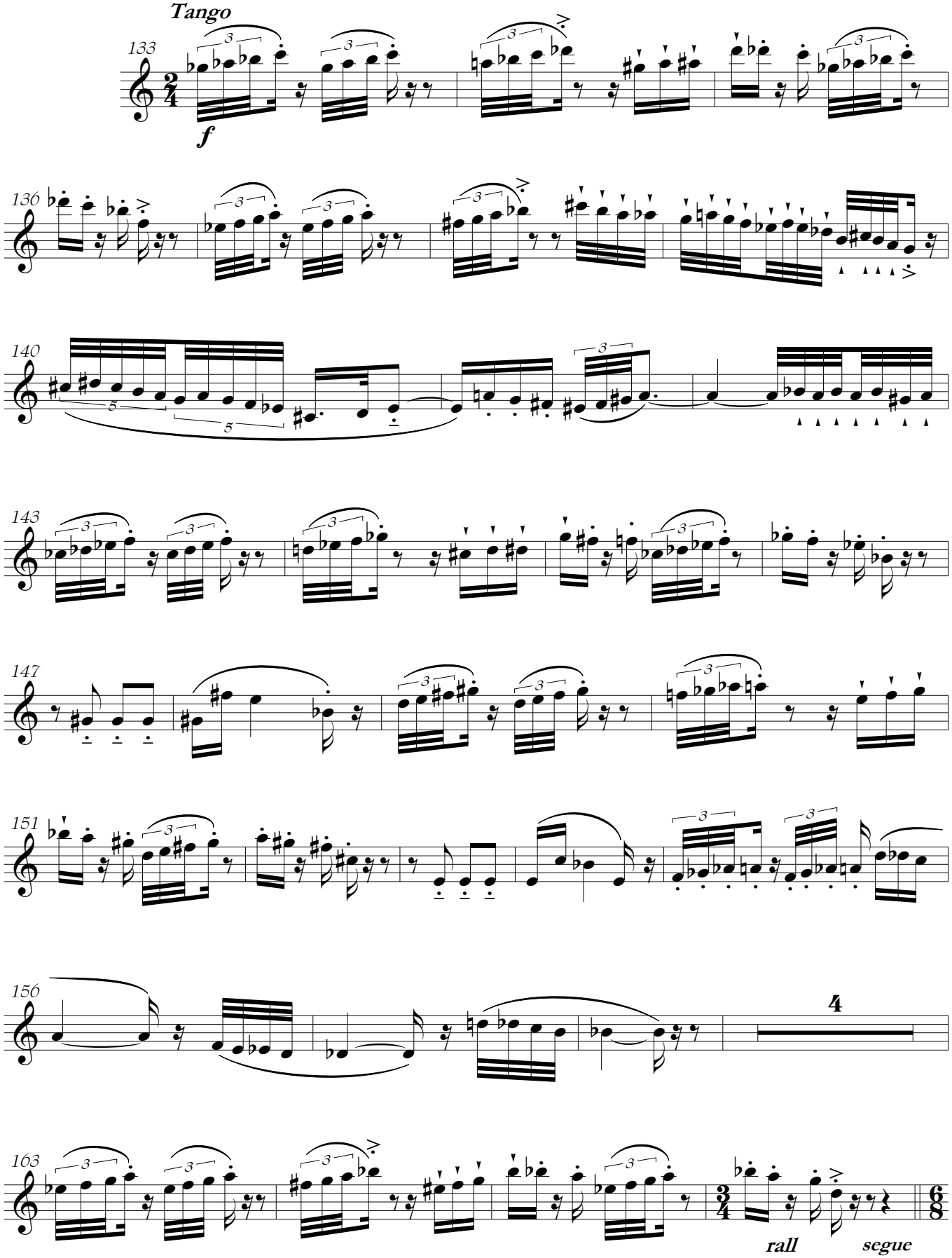
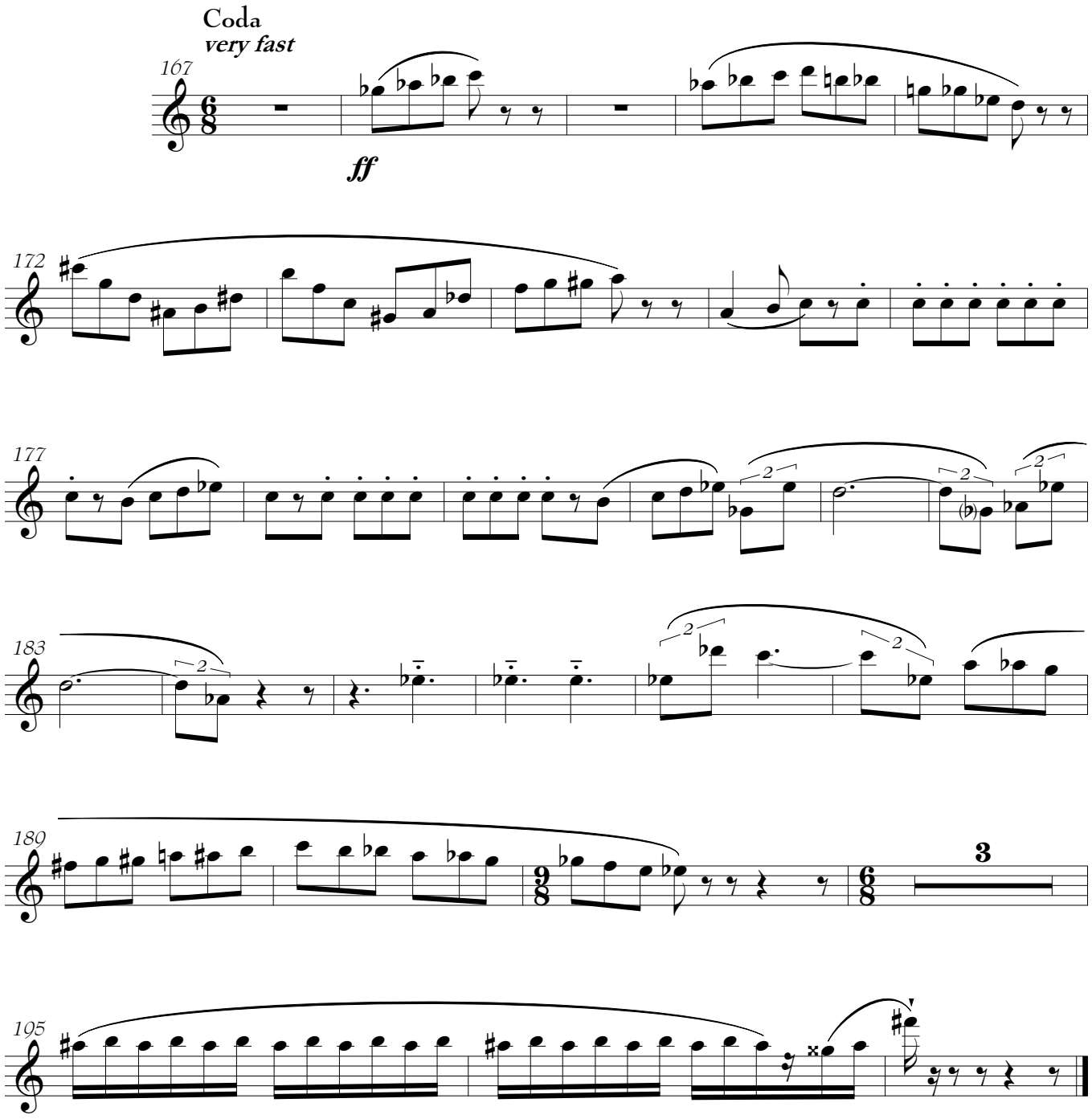
129
sffz
segue

Argentine Ants

Tango

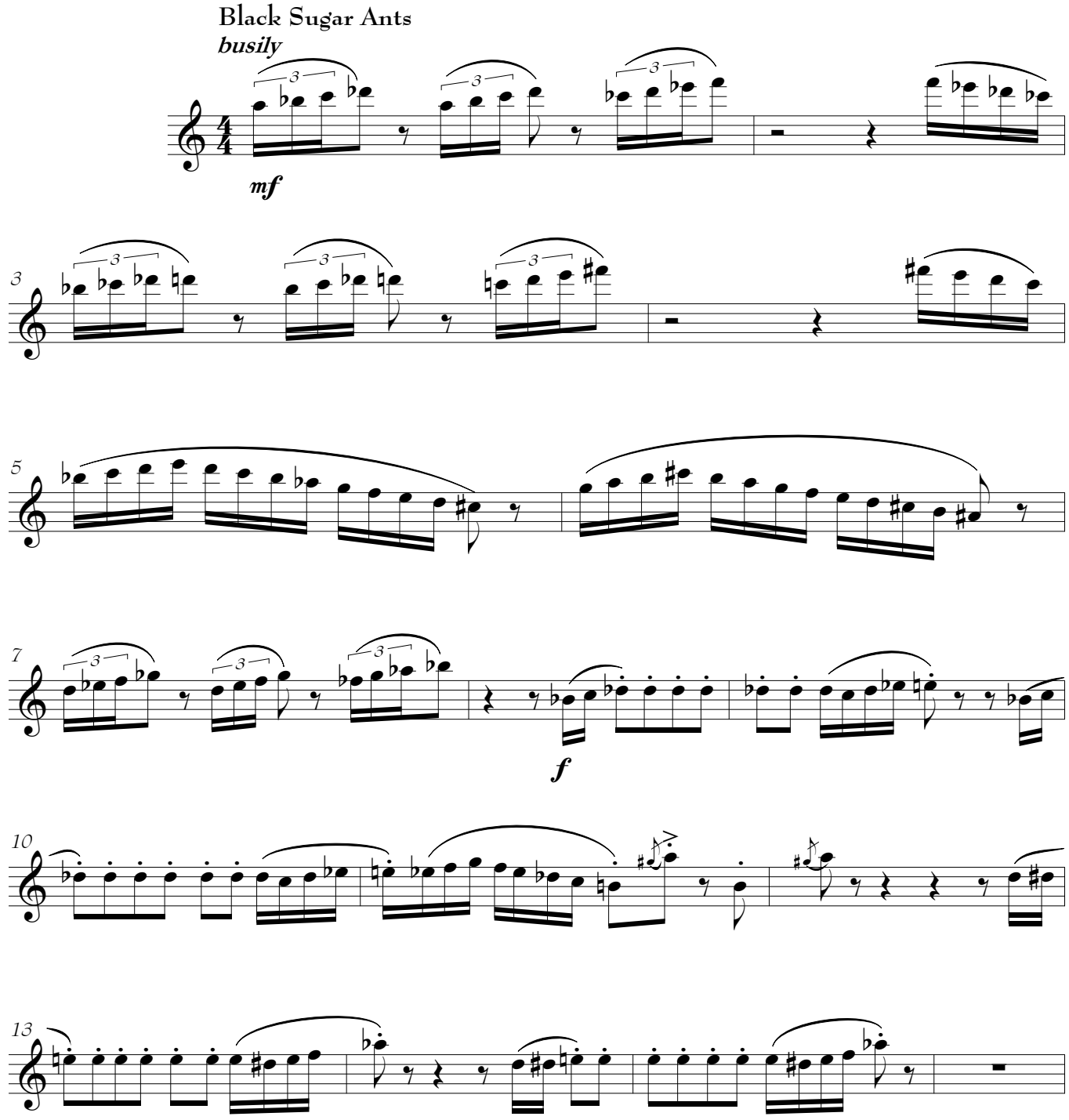



Coda
very fast
167
ff
172
177
183
189
195

TASMANIAN ANTS

Oboe

Ian Keith Harris
(1935 -)



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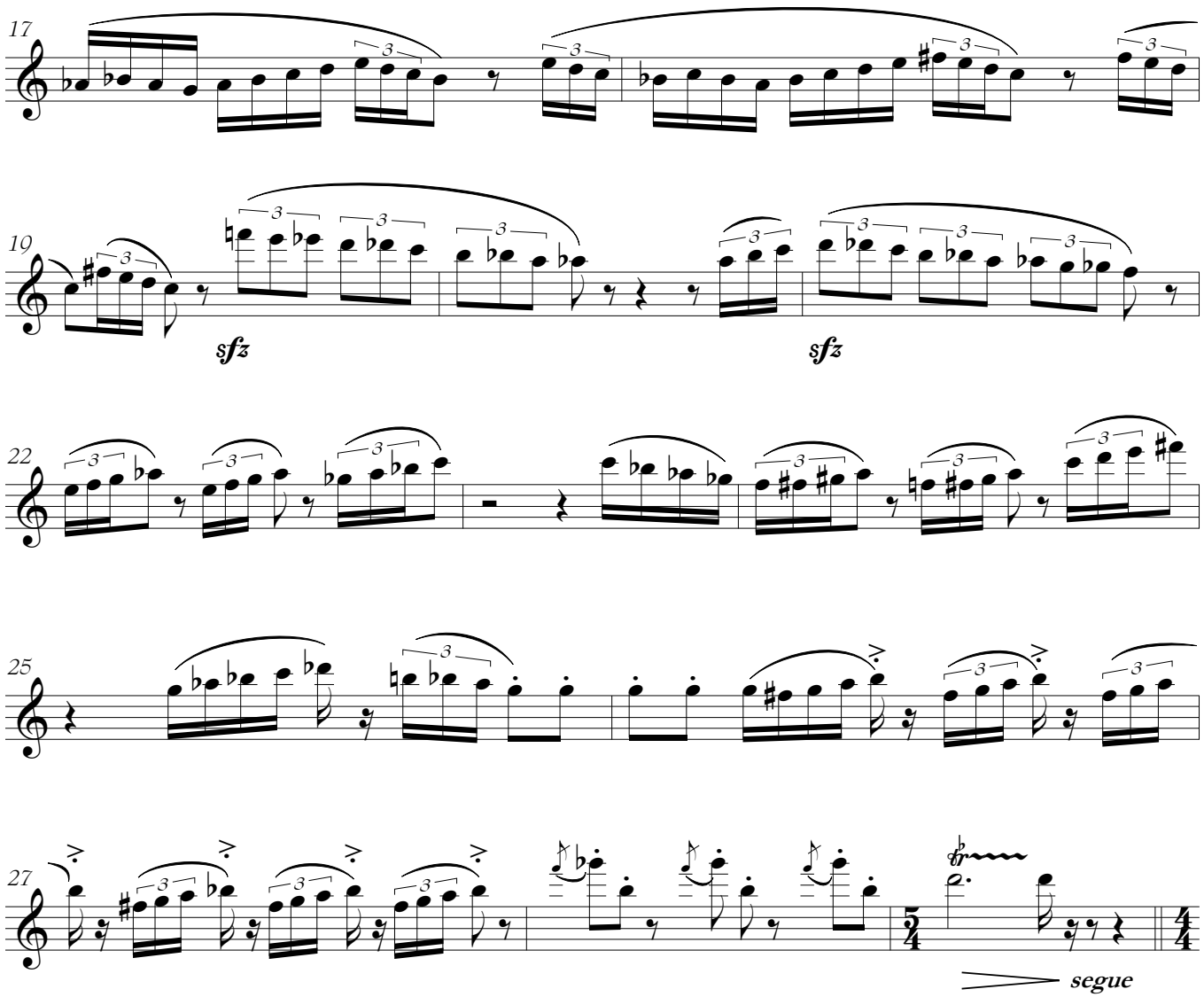
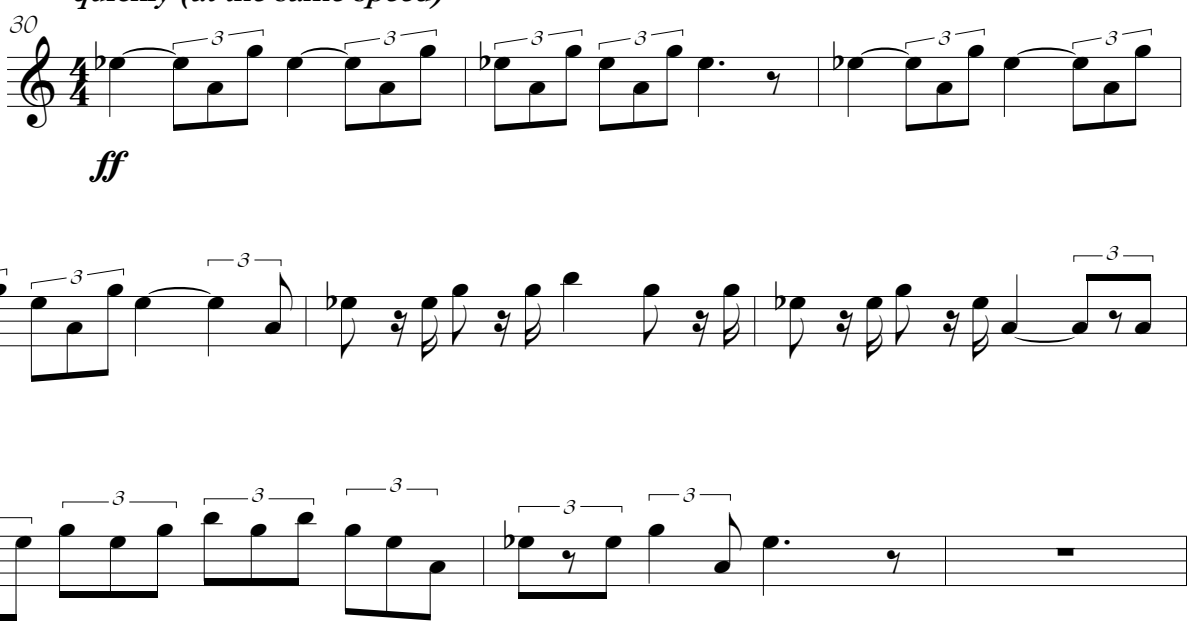
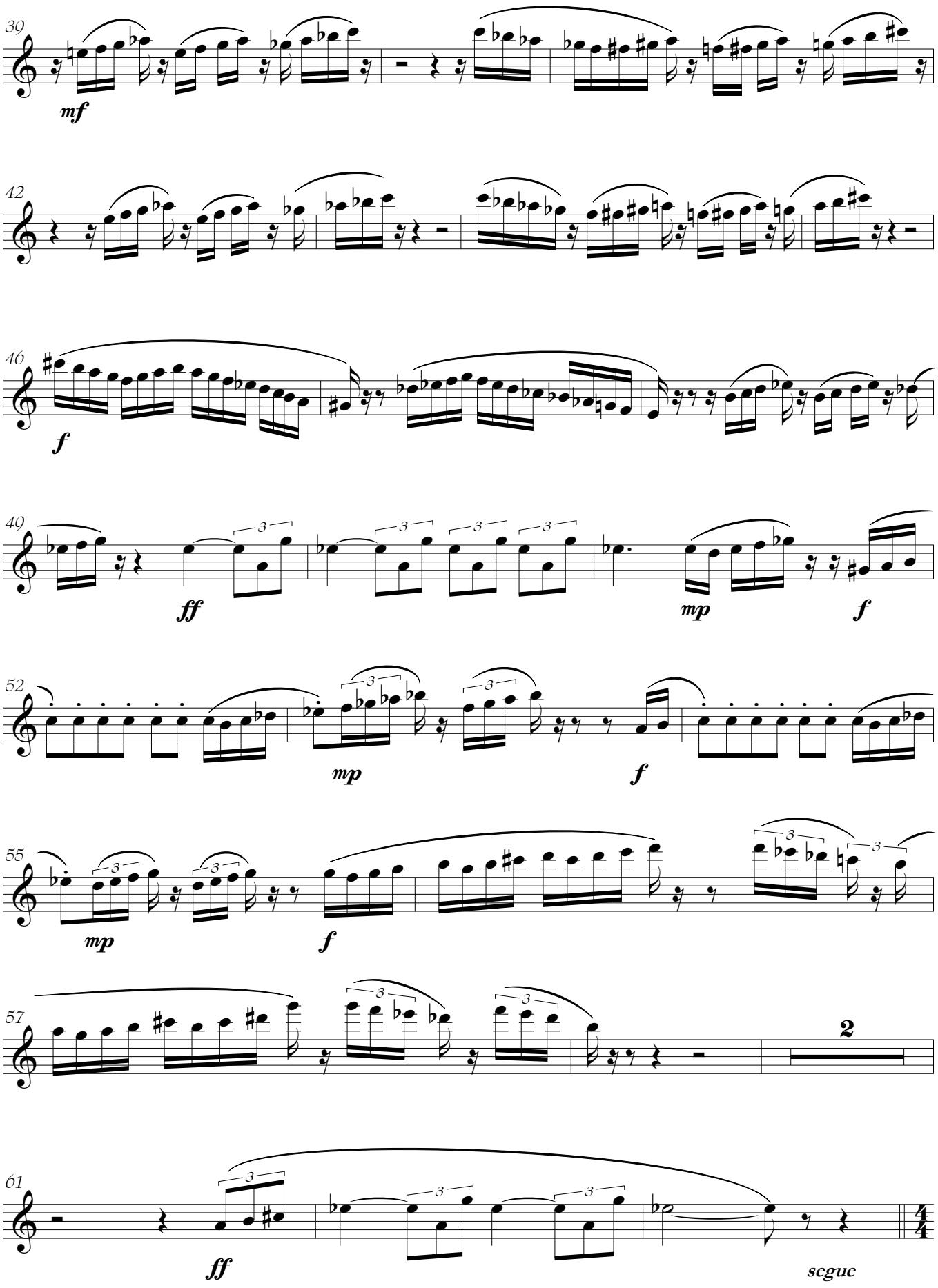


Red Soldier Ants
quickly (at the same speed)

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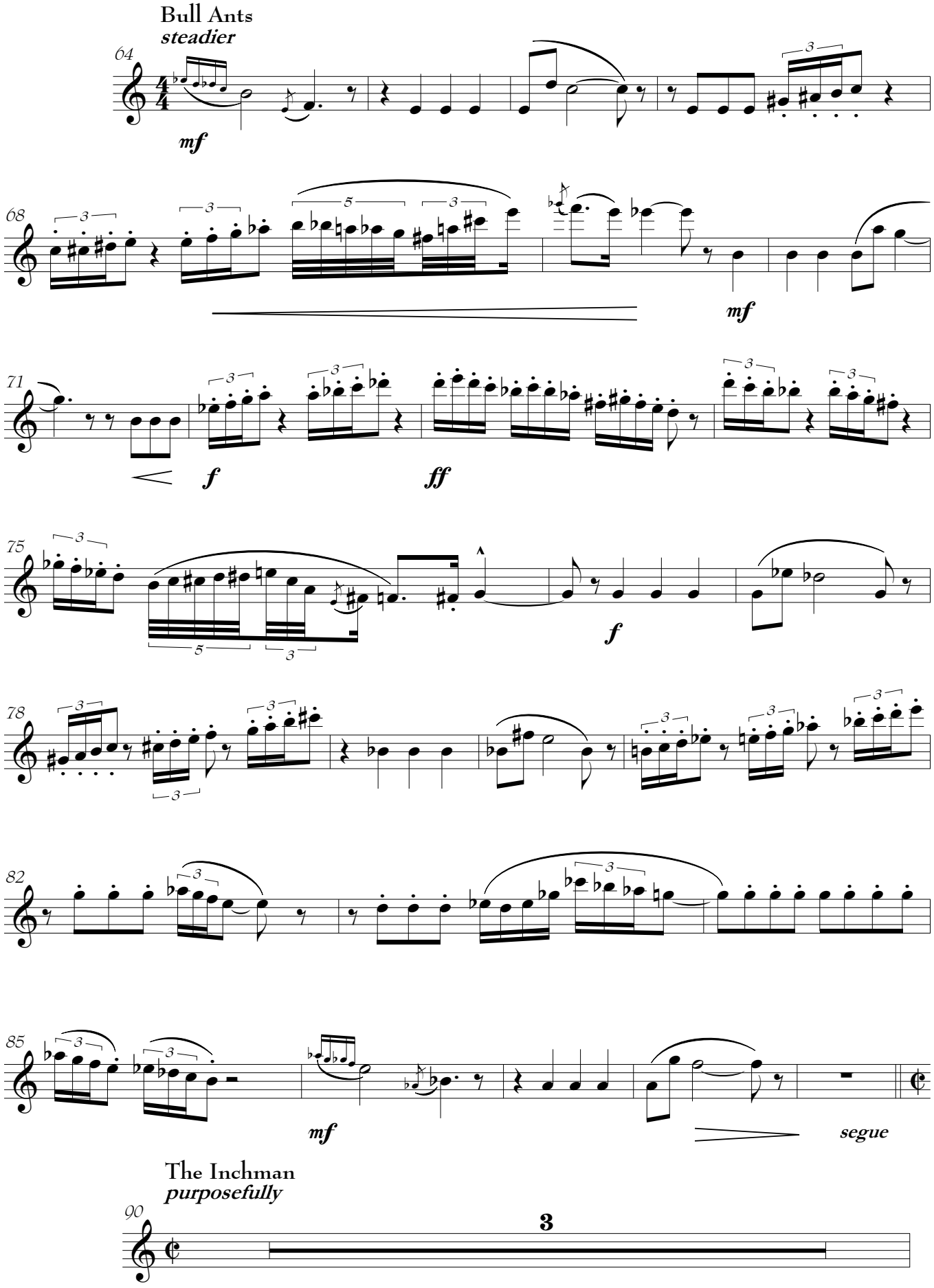
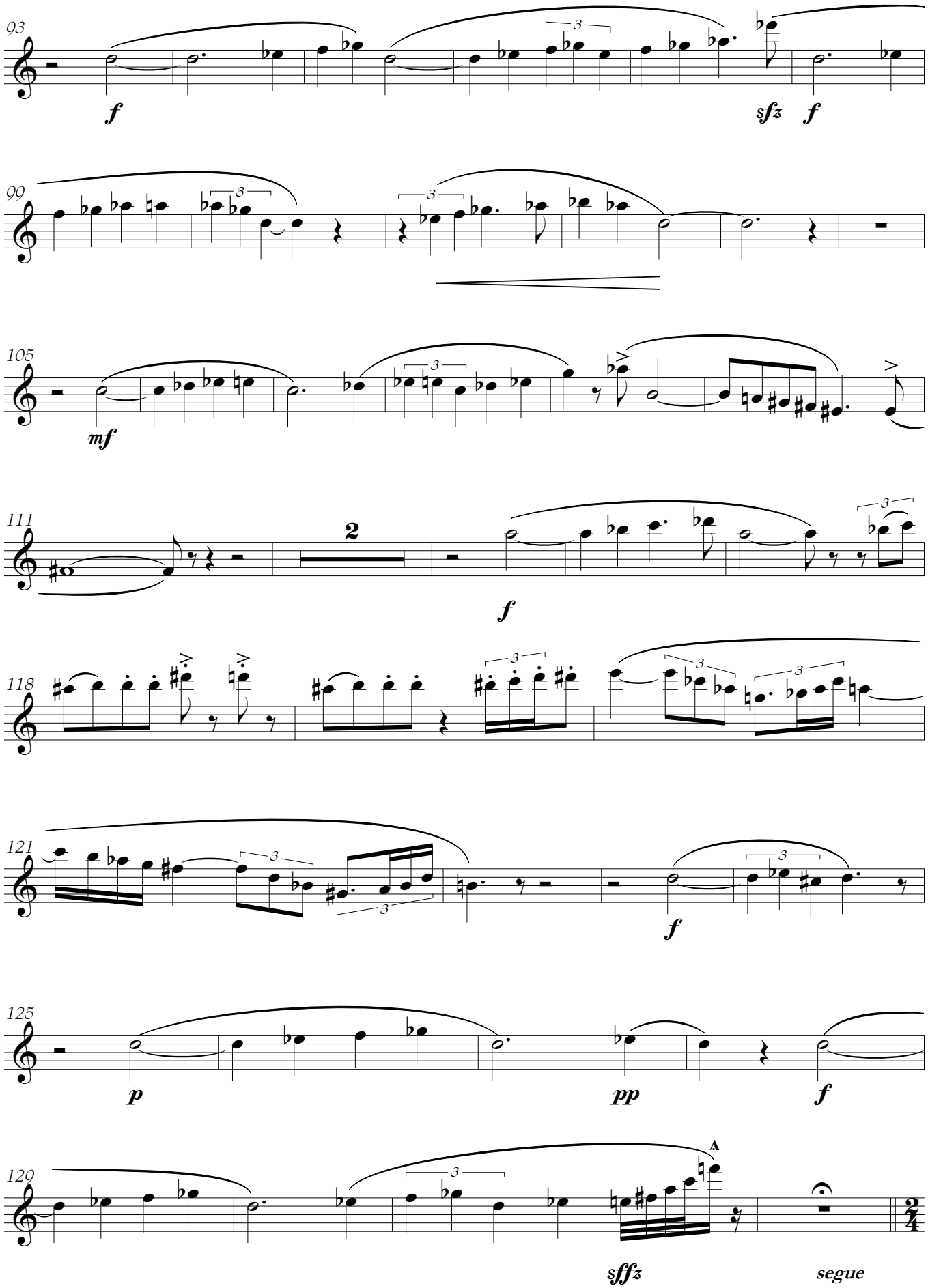

Bull Ants
steadier
64
mf
68
mf
71
f
ff
75
f
78
82
85
mf
segue
The Inchman
purposefully
90
3


93
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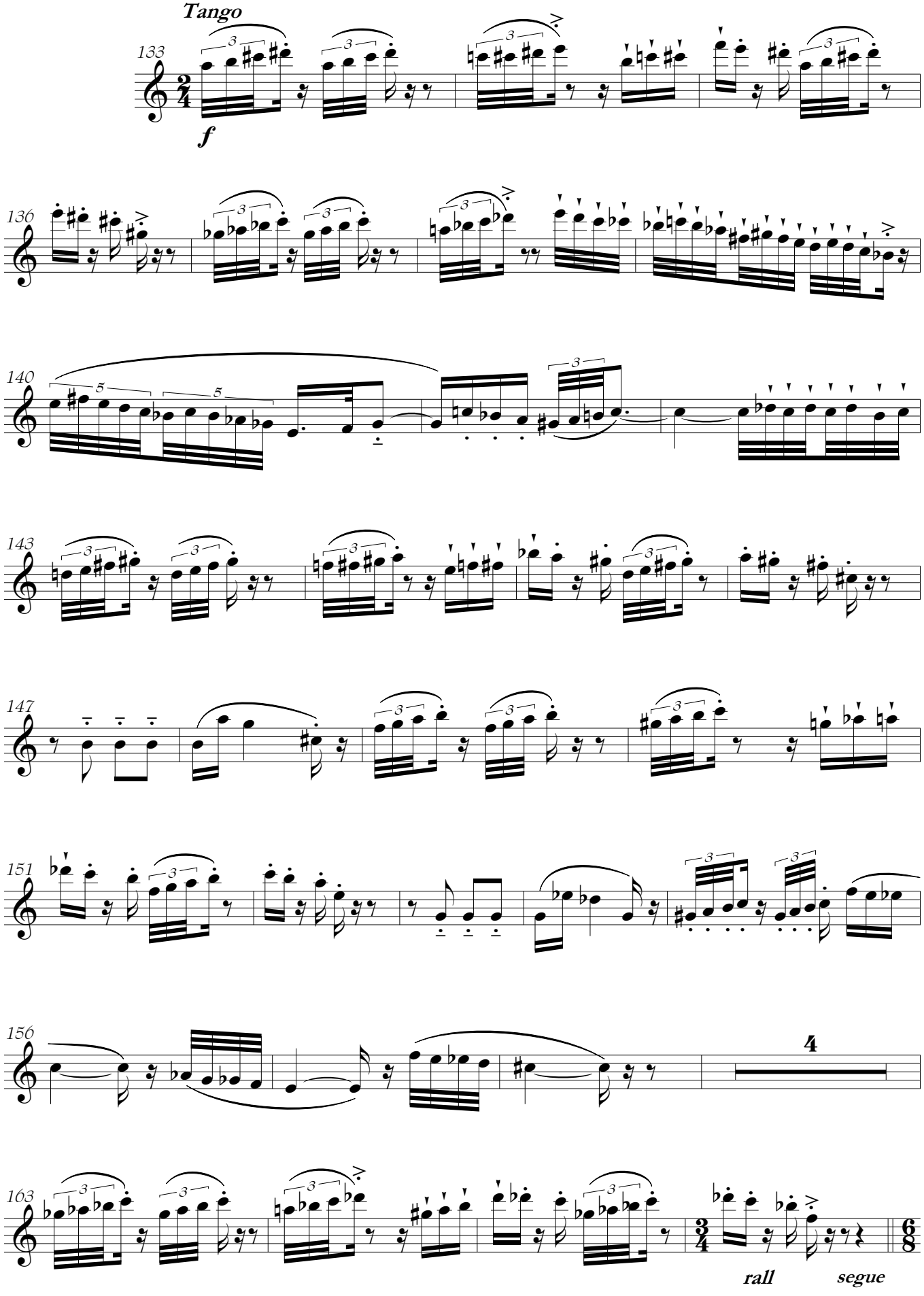
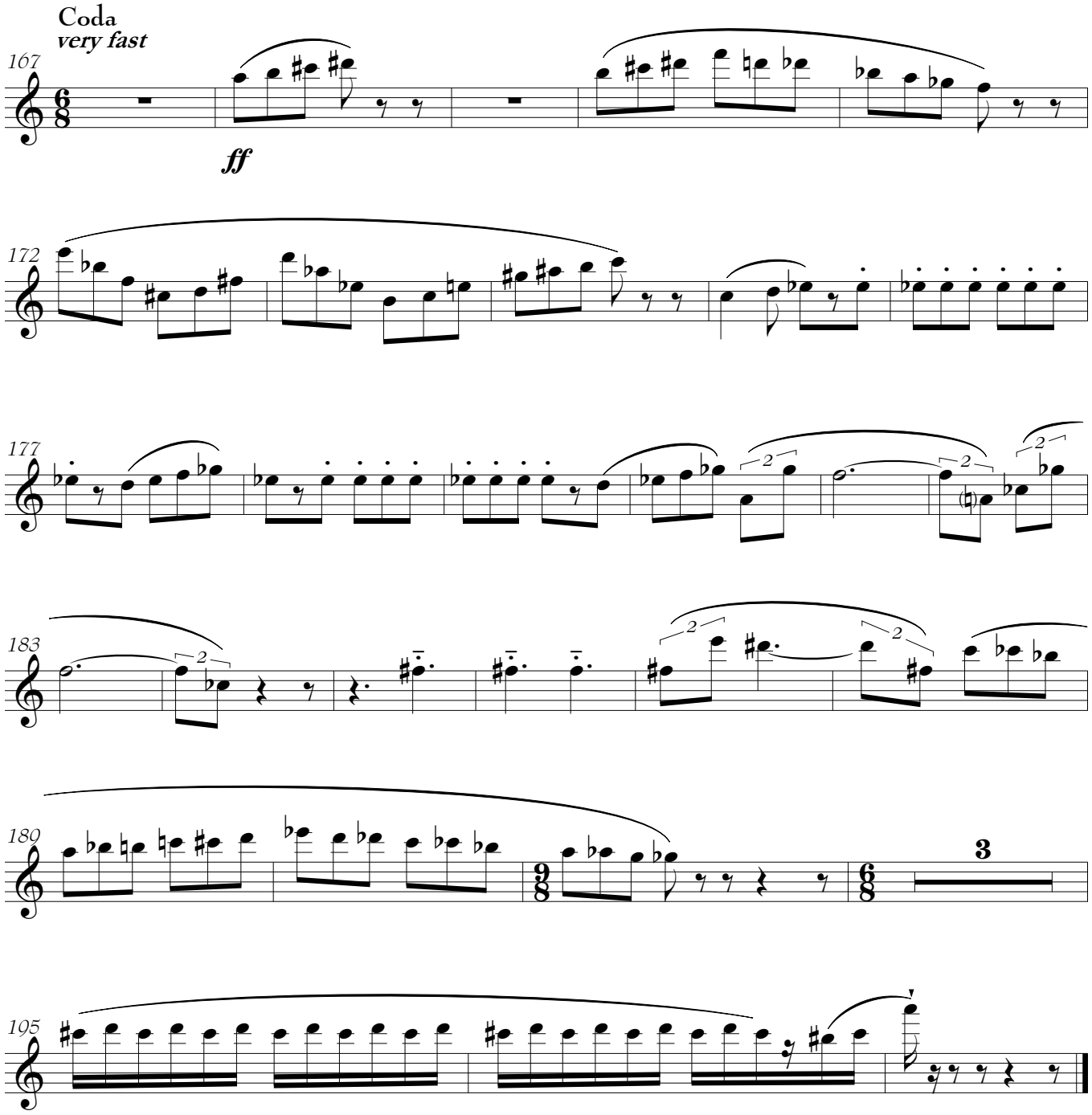
Argentine Ants

Tango




Coda
very fast
167
ff
172
177
183
180
3
105