Three Preludes for Piano

Beginnings
Life-Stream
Finality
by

Ruth B. Gatrell

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When teaching a series of classes for Composers Guild, radio and TV commercial expert Vinnie Troth contended that any musical idea could be effectively portrayed in one minute or less. As the classes evolved, students were led to consider that even the concept of life itself can be reduced to the role of the Three Fates of mythology. The First Fate, Clotho, spins the thread. The Second, Lachesis, keeps the thread going (and Vinnie's word to the wise was, "Don't rock the boat!"). The Third Fate, Atropos, cuts the thread.

The assignment for the conclusion of the classes was the challenge for each composer to create a one minute composition portraying the musical idea represented by each Fate and her role.

In mythology, Clotho's spinning the thread is the beginning of each mortal life. In the first *Prelude*, titled *Beginnings*, the beginning of life, mentally compared to the sprouting seed in the warm, brown earth which pushes its brave seed leaf upward to break through the ground into the light, warmth and freedom of our wonderful world, where it can grow and expand into its true potential, starts with the opening single note of the *Prelude*, which grows with the addition of other notes of harmony and melody, until it expands into the haunting strains of *Beginnings*.

As keeping the thread of life going is the role of mythology's Second Fate, Lachesis, the second *Prelude*, titled *Life-Stream*, depicts the ebb and flow of life's journey as the headwaters of a crystal mountain stream rushing through life's exciting canyons, sometimes beset by swirling eddies, as it grows into the rushing torrent of a river, racing past the ever changing heights and depths of its shoreline as it sweeps unalterably towards the sea.

In the annals of mythology the precious thread of life is cut by the Third Fate, Atropos. Accordingly, the third *Prelude*, titled *Finality*, represents the abrupt, absolute, unalterable end of life, and the deep sense of loss and longing that follows.

Each *Prelude* was originally one minute long. After the classes were over, I could no longer ignore the deep emotions and poignant image of mythology's dread departure of the lost soul for it's ultimate crossing of the River Styx, that came with the thoughts of an untimely death--a life cut short at its prime and the void that follows. So *Finality* now goes beyond the one minute time frame.

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Beginnings

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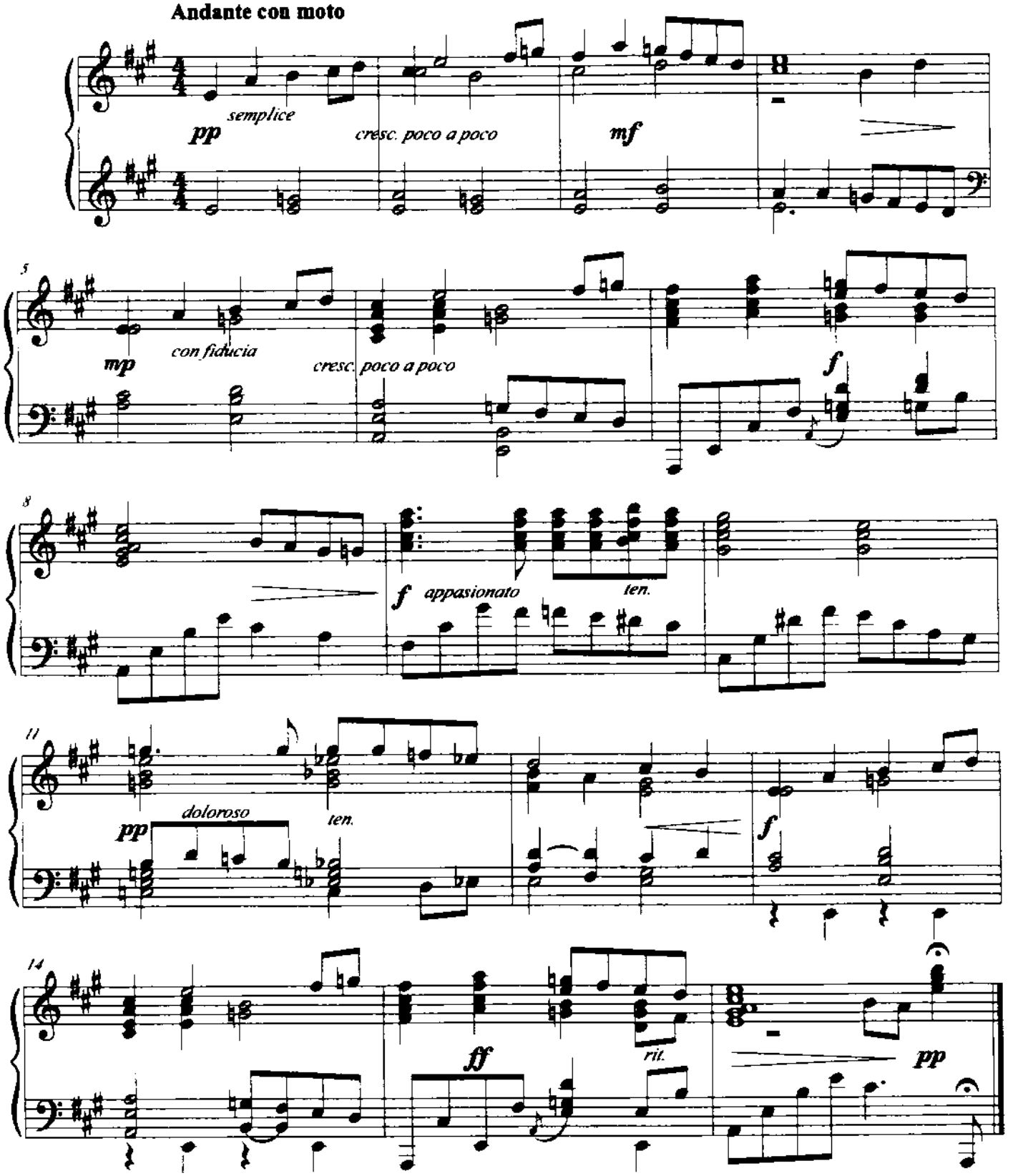

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Life-Stream

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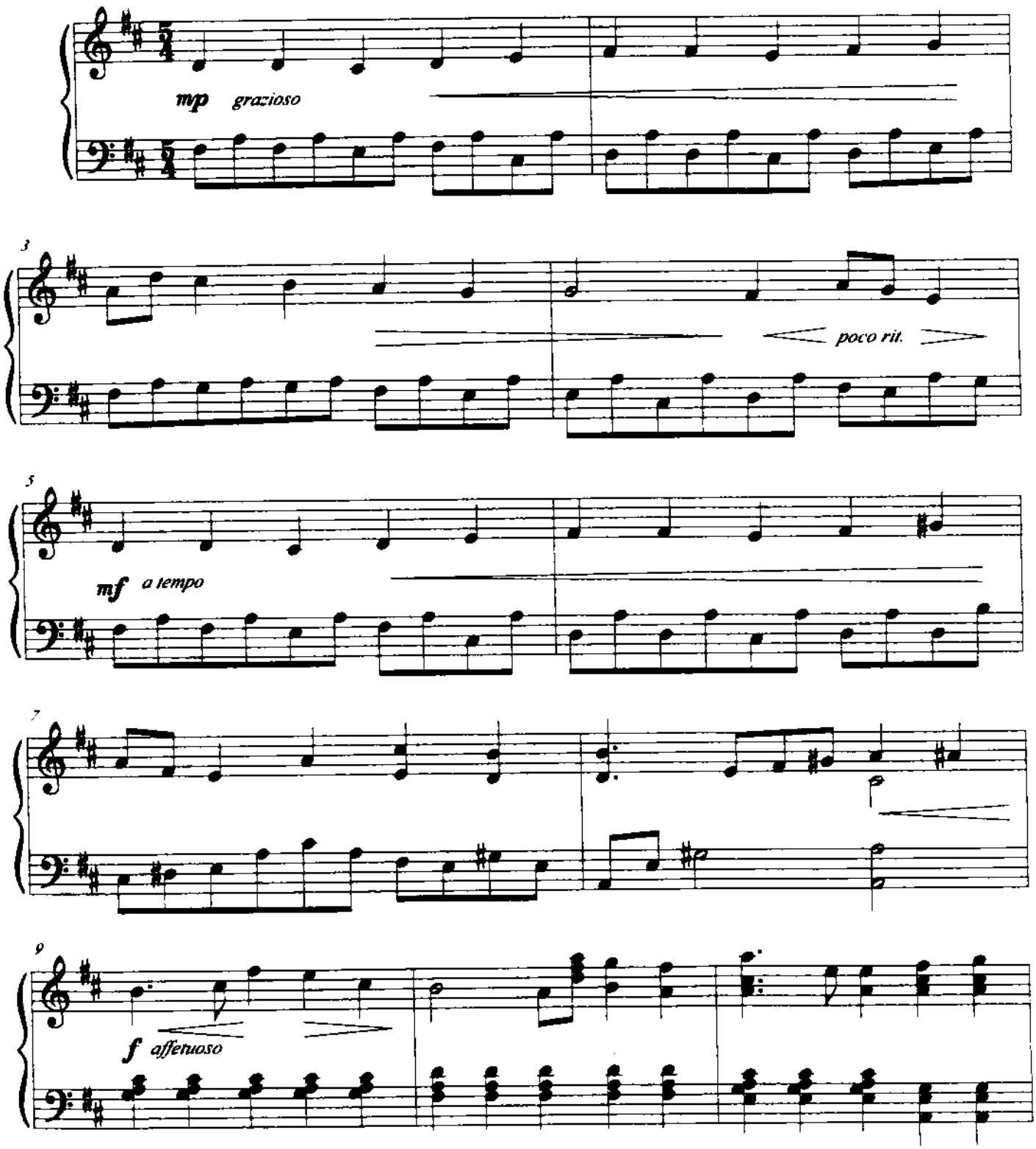
Allegro moderato



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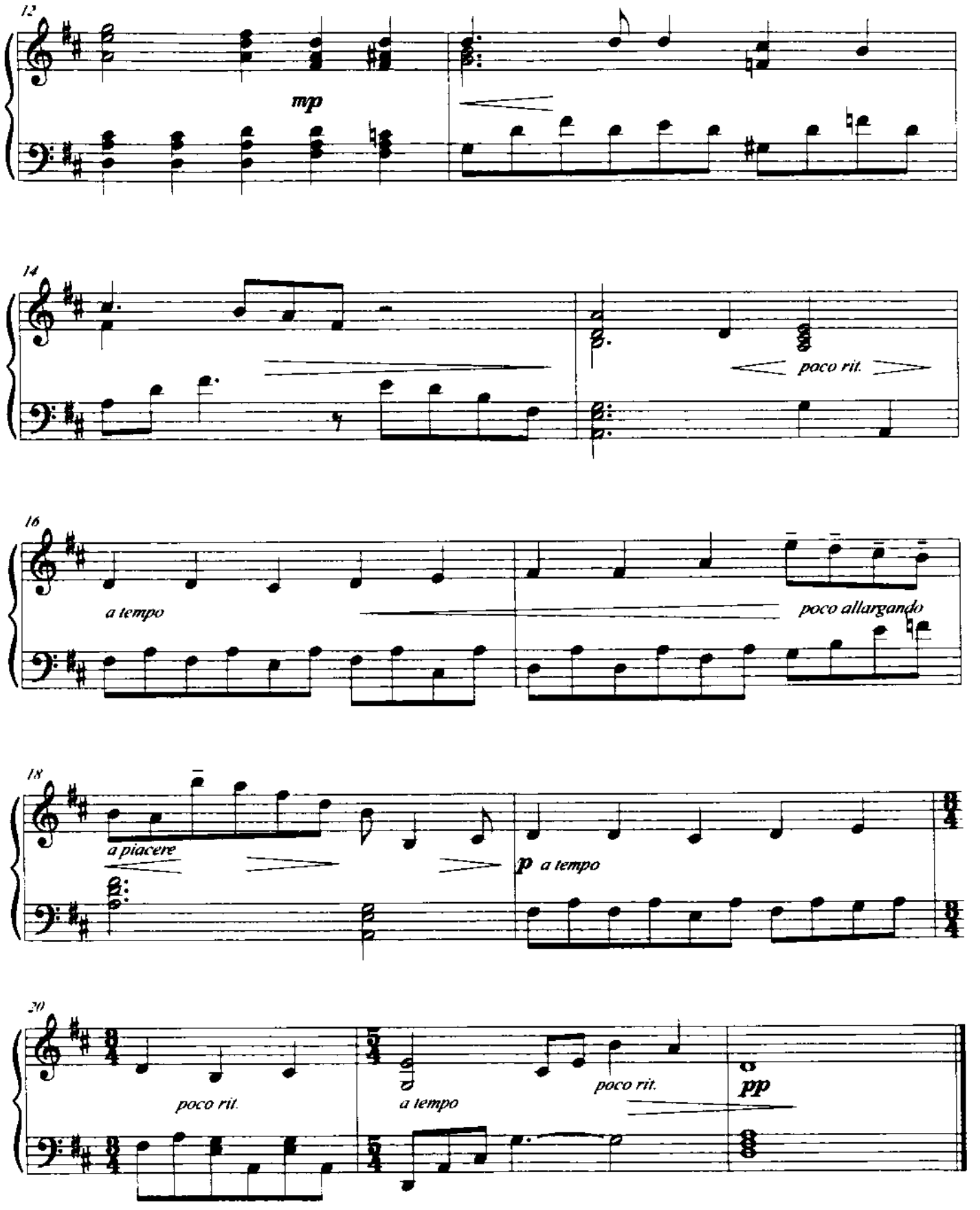
12
mp
14
poco rit.
16
a tempo
poco allargando
18
a piacere
p a tempo
20
poco rit.
a tempo
poco rit.
pp

Finality

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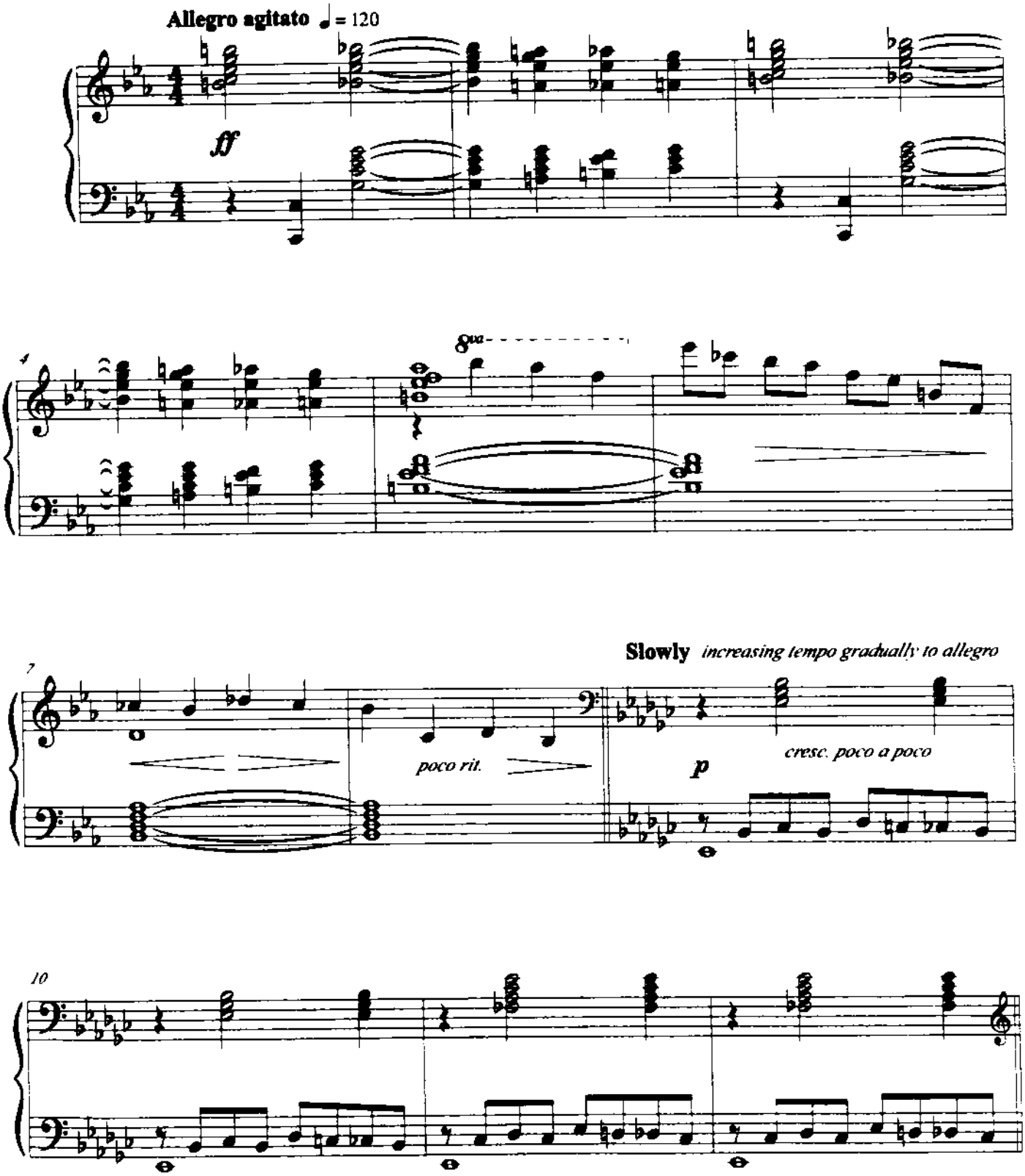

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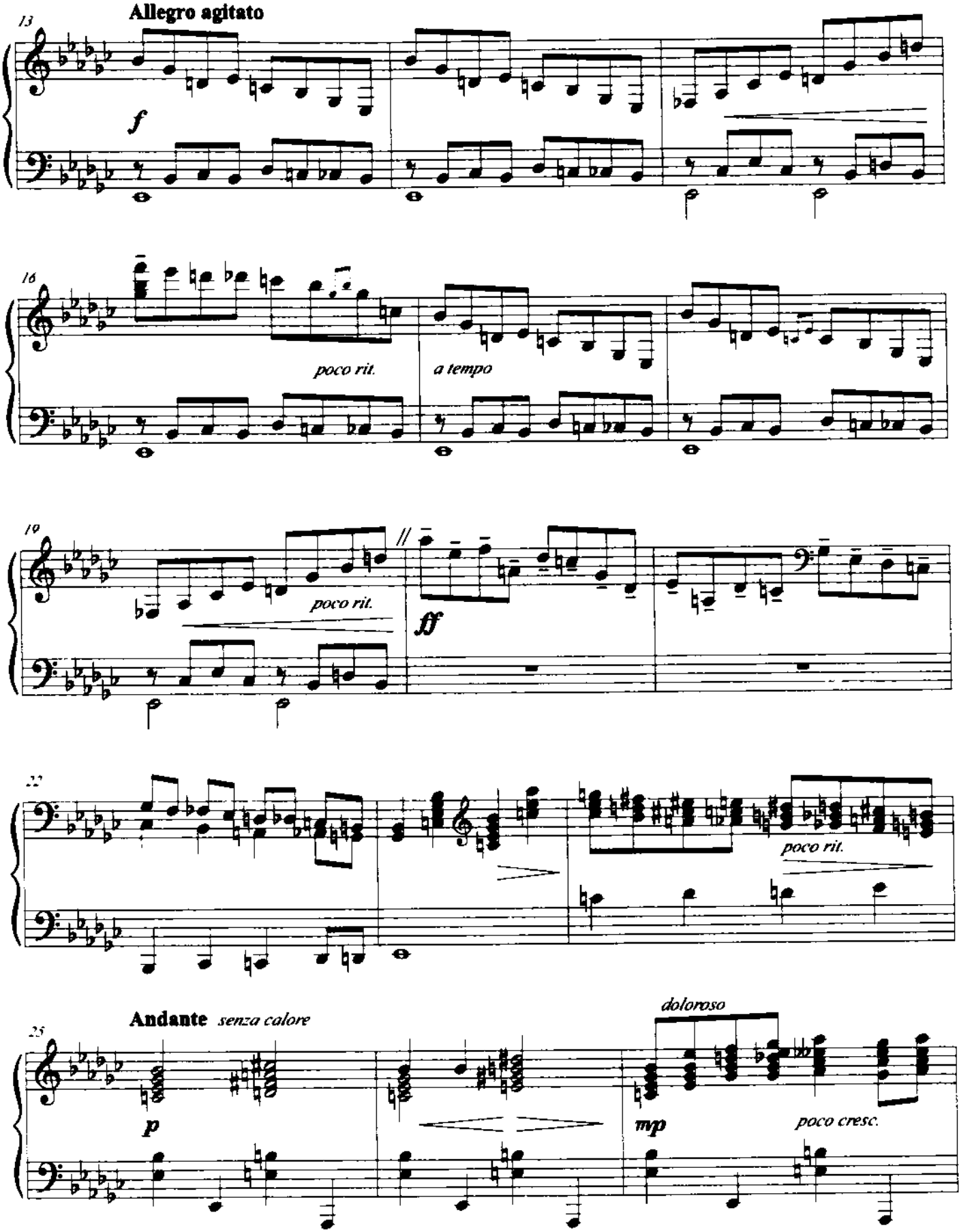
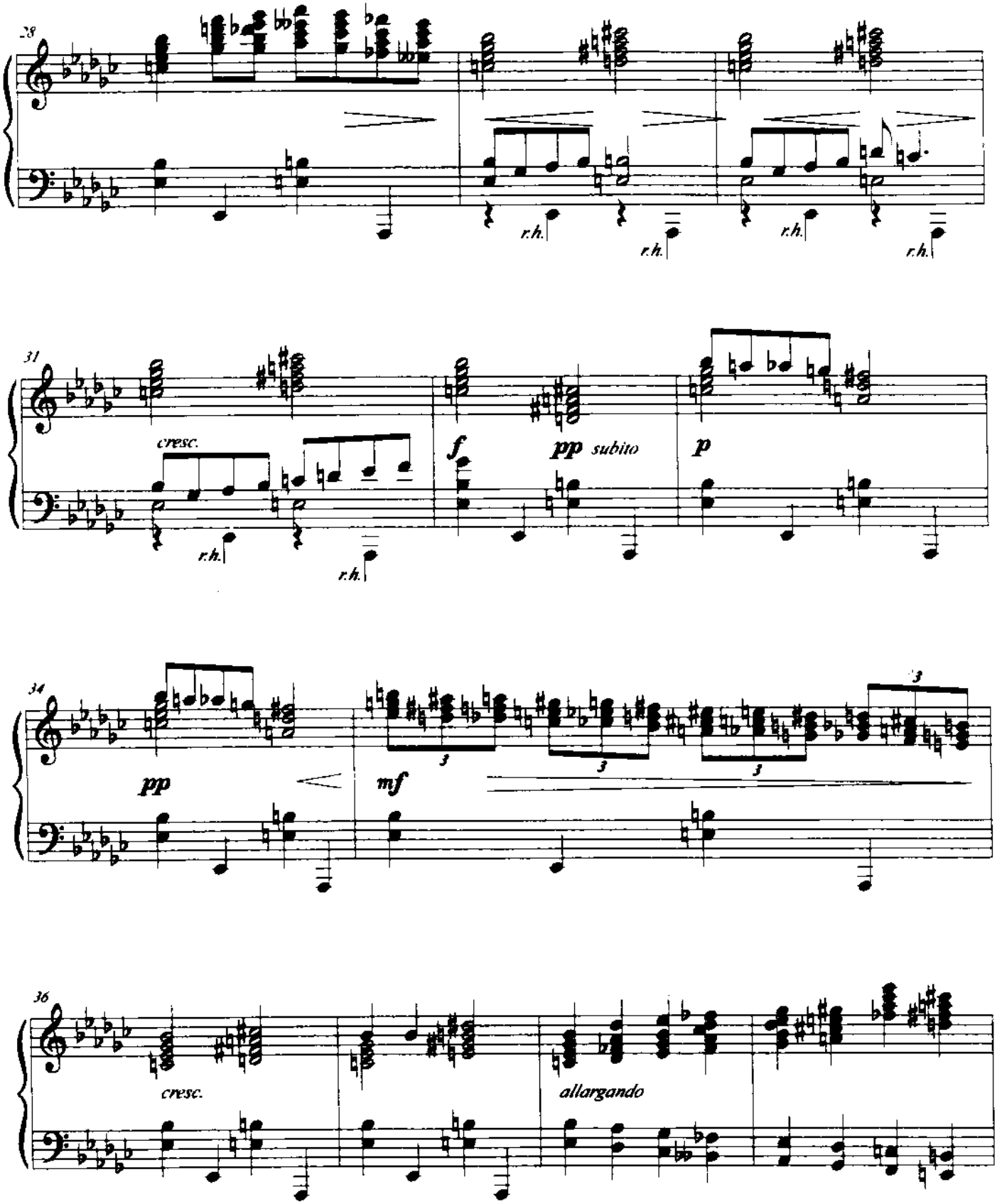
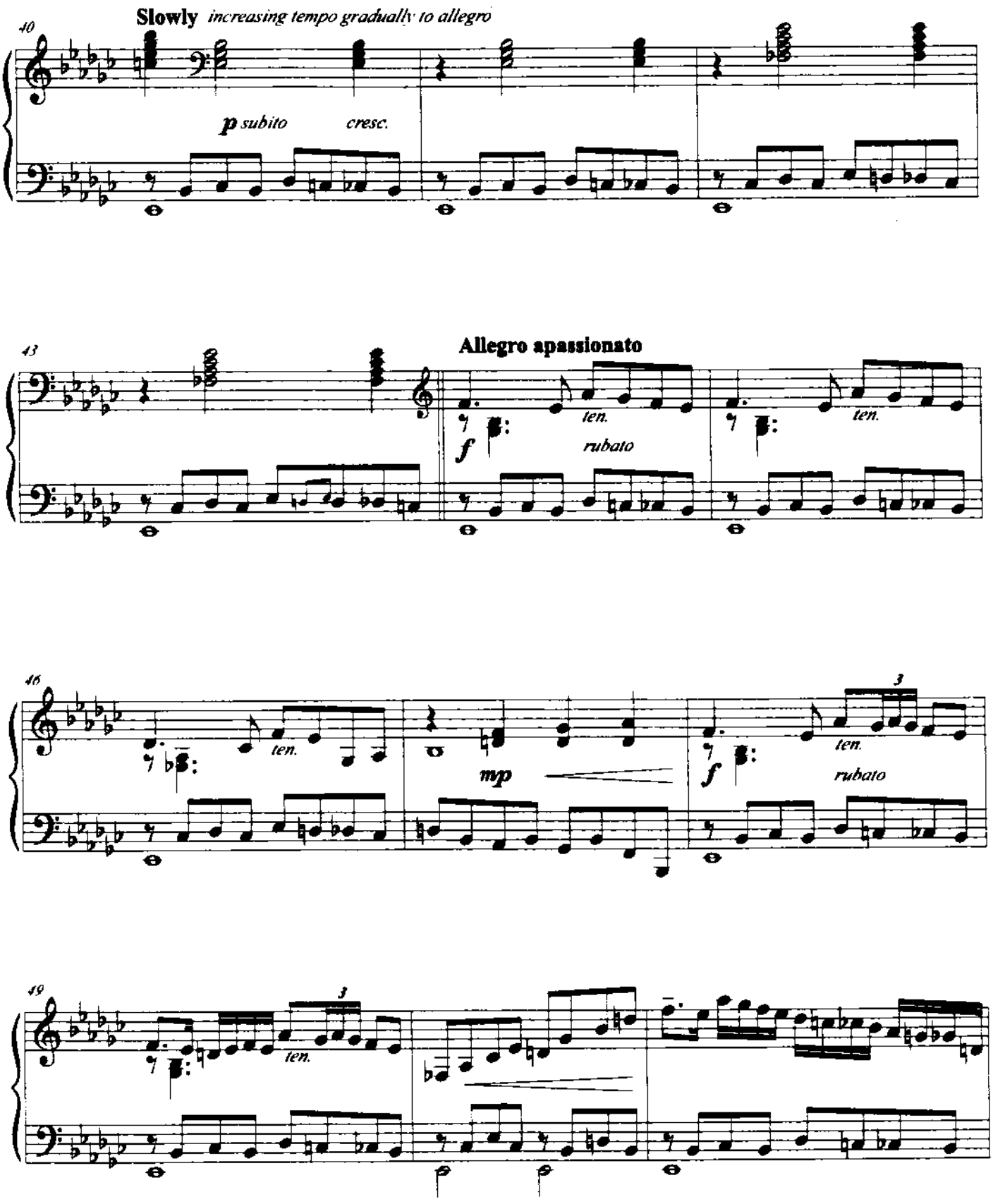
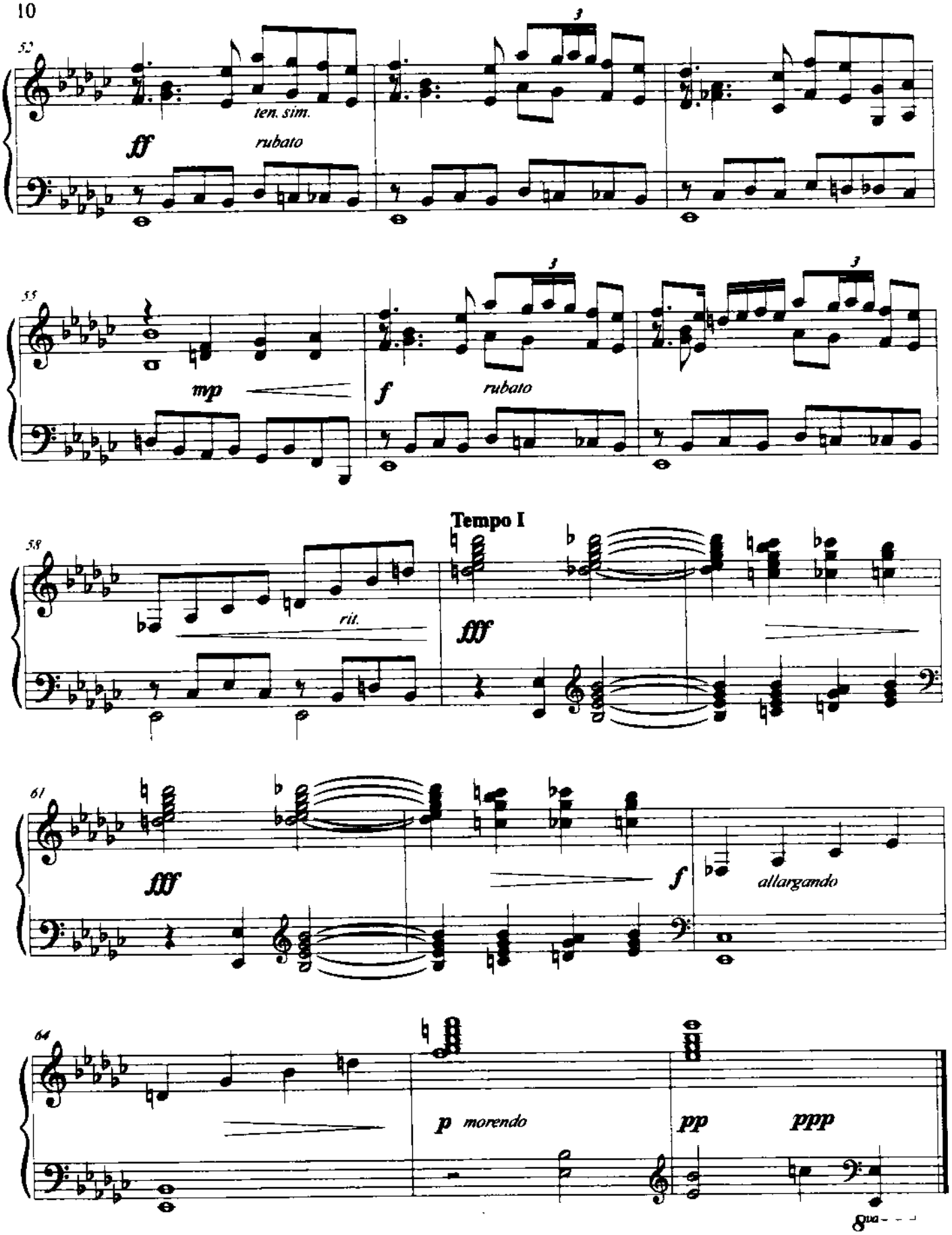

13
Allegro agitato
f
16
poco rit.
a tempo
19
poco rit.
ff
22
poco rit.
25
Andante senza calore
p
doloroso
mp
poco cresc.


28
r.h.
r.h.
r.h.
r.h.
31
cresc.
r.h.
r.h.
f
pp subito
p
34
pp
mf
3
3
3
3
36
cresc.
allargando


40
Slowly increasing tempo gradually to allegro
p subito cresc.
43
Allegro apassionato
f
ten.
rubato
46
mp
3
49


52
ten. sim.
ff
rubato
3
55
mp
f
rubato
3
3
58
rit.
Tempo I
fff
61
fff
f
allargando
64
p
morendo
pp
ppp
8va