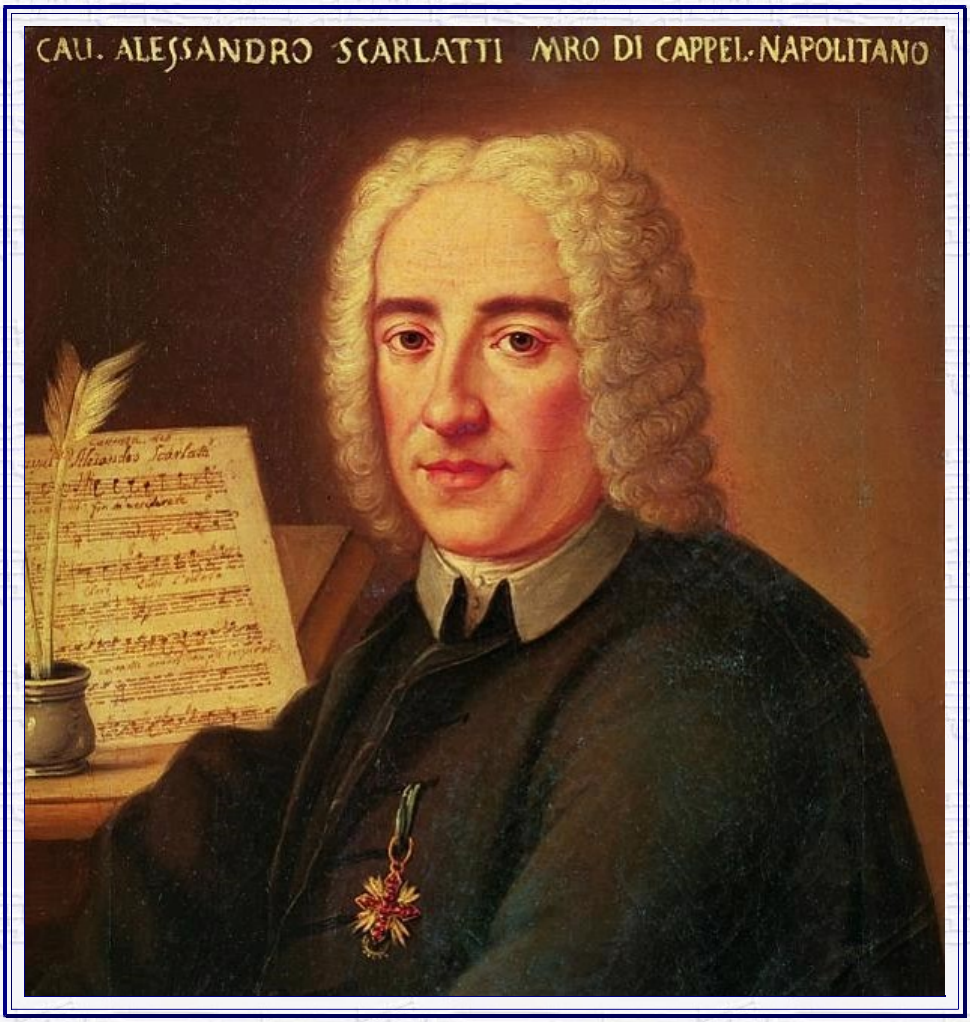
# Domenico Scarlatti

(1685 -1757)

## 55 Selected Sonatas

# BAROQUE COMPOSERS AND MUSICIANS




## Alessandro Scarlatti

Sicilian-born in 1660, Alessandro Scarlatti was trained in Rome. He married in 1678 and later that year was appointed Maestro di Cappella of San Giacomo degli Incurabili. His first large-scale oratorio-operatic works were performed there the following year when he was only 19. His patrons from the outset were of the highest rank, among them the exiled Queen Christina of Sweden who made him her *Maestro di Cappella*, Cardinal Pamphili, and the musically indefatigable Cardinal Ottoboni and, in Florence, Prince Ferdinando de Medici.

In 1684 at the age of 24 Scarlatti moved to Naples, where he was appointed Maestro di Cappella at the vice-regal court of Naples, at the same time as his brother Francesco was made First Violinist. It was alleged that they owed their appointments to the intrigues of one of their sisters with two court officials, who were dismissed.

For the next two decades over half the new operas given at Naples were by Scarlatti, producing over 40 works, which were first performed at the Viceregal Palazzo Reale and then at the public theatre of S. Bartolomeo, where Scarlatti was employed as the director along with nine singers, five instrumentalists and a copyist. In contrast to contemporary five-act Venetian operas, which continued to rely upon mythological characters and stage machinery, Scarlatti's shorter three-act 'Drammi per Musica' centered on the characterization of kings and confidants, lovers and servants. *Il Pirro e Demetrio* (1694) and *La caduta de' Decemviri* (1697) were particularly successful.

From 1695 his operas and 'musical dramas' incorporated three-movement sinfonias which soon became standard for all Italian operas. Indeed, the Italian opera overture, or sinfonia, contained most of the elements of the pre-classical and classical symphonies, and the symphony (or sinfonia), designed for concert performance, may be traced back to the Italian opera overture (or sinfonia) of Alessandro Scarlatti. It was in these overtures and last operas that he also began experimenting with orchestral (instrumental) color in the modern sense.

While resident in Naples Scarlatti occasionally returned to Rome to supervise carnival performances of new operas, contributions to pasticci and cantatas at the Palazzo Doria Pamphili and the Villa Medicea (at nearby Pratolino), as well as oratorios at Ss. Crocifisso, the Palazzo Apostolico and the Collegio Clementino. Astonishingly, he also produced at least ten serenatas, nine oratorios and sixty-five cantatas for Naples.

By 1700 the War of the Spanish Succession was beginning to undermine the privileged status of the Neapolitan nobility, rendering Scarlatti's position insecure. In 1702 he left with his family for Florence, where he hoped to find employment for himself and his son Domenico with Prince Ferdinando de' Medici. When these hopes failed, he moved back to Rome at the end of 1703, seeking a quieter life, as assistant Maestro di Cappella at S Maria Maggiore (the public theaters had been closed by papal decree since 1700, so operas were performed only occasionally and in private). In this capacity he was required to compose motets and Masses in both strict (Papal) and concertato styles, according to the occasion. To augment his income he renewed his connections with the cardinals and formed new ones with Marquis Ruspoli, concentrating now on oratorios, celebratory serenatas and cantatas.

In 1706 he was elected, along with Pasquini and Corelli, to the Accademia dell'Arcadia, where he must have met Handel in 1707. From 1702 until 1708 he sent Prince Ferdinando de' Medici quantities of oratorios and church music and four operas which the prince had performed at Siena, Livorno and Florence. Scarlatti also composed and directed two five-act tragedies for the 1707 Venetian Carnival. Upon his return to Rome he was made *Maestro di Cappella* at S. Maria Maggiore, but the salary was so meager that he was ultimately forced to return to his posts in Naples in 1709.

During the next decade he produced 11 operas employing greater instrumental resources, of which Il Tigrane (1715) was his Neapolitan masterpiece. His 'commedia in musica', *Il trionfo dell'onore* (1718), was also very successful.

He maintained his connections in Rome, returning there in 1718 to oversee his opera *Telemaco* at the Teatro Capranica, in 1719 *Marco Attilio Regolo,* and finally in 1721 for *La Griselda* (his last opera). He produced a lavish *Messa di S Cecilia* for soloists, chorus and strings, performed there in October 1720.

Meanwhile Scarlatti ventured into orchestral writing, expanding the Sinfonia concept with his twelve *Sinfonie di concerto grosso*.

The *"Six Concertos in seven parts for two Violins and Violoncello Obligate with two Violins more a Tenor and Thorough Bass, Compos'd by Sigr Alexander Scarlatti"*, as they were first called, were published in London under the above title by Benjamin Cooke in 1740. Of these six Concerti, numbers 1, 2, 4, and 5 were composed so that they could also be performed as string quartets. Scarlatti called them specifically *Sonate a quattro,* and as such they represent some of the earliest forms of chamber music in this genre.

The fact that these Six Concertos were published some fifteen years after the composer's death was quite unusual for that time; it may be suggested that Benjamin Cooke was "cashing in" on the popularity of the Scarlatti name. Thomas Roseingrave had published in London the first edition of Alessandro's son Domenico's Essercizzi per gravicembalo a couple of years before, and Domenico's work was also being popularized in London by Thomas Kelway and Thomas Arne. That Domenico's popularity continued is witnessed by the publication in 1743 by Charles Avison of his twelve Concerto Grosso arrangements of Domenico's harpsichord sonatas.

Alessandro's last years were spent in Naples, teaching (Hasse was his pupil from 1722), composing cantatas (which ultimately numbered over 600, mostly for soprano and continuo), a Serenata and a set of Sonatas for Flute and Strings, probably composed for Quantz, who visited him in late 1724 or early 1725. Quantz describes the visit thus:

"*I heard Scarlatti play on the harpsichord, which he knew how to play in a learned style although he did not possess as much finesse as his son. After this he accompanied me in a solo. I had the good fortune to win his favor, in fact so much so that he composed a few flute solos for me."*

This comment would almost prove to be an epitaph, for Alessandro Scarlatti died on October 24, 1725.

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Domenico Scarlatti

Giuseppe Domenico Scarlatti was born in Naples on October 26th, 1685. The high rank of his godparents is proof of the esteem in which his father, Alessandro Scarlatti, was held as *maestro di cappella*. Domenico's musical gifts developed with an almost prodigious rapidity. At the age of sixteen he became a musician at the chapel royal, and two years later father and son left Naples and settled in Rome, where Domenico became the pupil of the most eminent musicians in Italy. The originality of Bernardo Pasquini"s inventions and his skill in elaborating them, and Francesco Gasparini's solid science and intense vitality united to form the basis on which Domenico developed his own genius. His association with Corelli (Gasparini being a pupil of Corelli) also contributed to the evolution of his adolescent genius and soon Domenico Scarlatti became famous in his country principally as a harpsichordist.

He served for five years (1714-19) as *maestro di cappella* at the Cappella Giulia in the Vatican. He composed at least one oratorio (1709) and more than a dozen operas for his father's Neapolitan theatre, San Bartolomeo (1703-4), the Roman *Palazzo Zuccari* (1710-14), and *Teatro Capranica* (1715, 1718).

His patrons in Rome included the exiled Polish queen Maria Casimira (1709-14) and the Portuguese ambassador to the Vatican, the Marquis de Fontes (from 1714), who in 1720 was to succeed in winning Scarlatti for the patriarchal chapel in Lisbon (his serenata, *Applause genetliaco*, was performed at the Portuguese Embassy in 1714 and his *Contesa delle stagioni* at the Lisbon royal chapel in 1720).

Scarlatti was also a familiar figure at the weekly meetings of the *Accademie Poetico-Musicali* hosted by the indefatigable music-lover and entertainer Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, at which the finest musicians in Rome met and performed chamber music. There Scarlatti met Handel, who had been born in the same year as Scarlatti. At the time of their meeting, in 1708, they were both twenty-three, and were prevailed upon to compete together at the instigation and under the refereeship of Ottoboni; they were adjudged equal on the harpsichord, but Handel was considered the winner on the organ. Thenceforward they held each other in that mutual respect

which forms the surest basis for a life friendship. Through Ottoboni, Scarlatti also met Thomas Roseingrave who became his enthusiastic champion and, back in London, published the first edition of Scarlatti's *Essercizi per gravicembalo* (1738-9) from which, in turn, the Newcastle-born English composer Charles Avison drew material from at least 29 Scarlatti sonatas to produce a set of 12 concertos in 1744. Joseph Kelway and Thomas Arne also helped to popularize Scarlatti's music in England.

Attracted by the unknown, Scarlatti abandoned the post of maestro di cappella at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Natural curiosity and the fascination of distant countries induced him to undertake a voyage to London, where his opera Narciso met with only a moderate success. From London Scarlatti went to Lisbon (1720-28). As a harpsichordist at the royal court he was entrusted with the musical education of the princesses. The death of his father recalled him to Naples in 1725, but he did not long remain in his native town. His old pupil, the Portuguese princess, who had married Ferdinand VI, invited him to the Spanish court. Scarlatti accepted and in 1733 after a period in Seville (from 1729-33) he went to Madrid, where he lived until his death.

With the thorough musical grounding he brought with him from Italy, and his own brilliance on the harpsichord, Scarlatti immersed himself in the folk tunes and dance rhythms of Spain, with their distinctive Moorish (Arabic) and later gypsy influences. He composed more than 500 harpsichord sonatas, unique in their total originality, and the use of the *acciaccatura*, the 'simultaneous mordent', the 'vamp' (usually at the beginning of the second half of a sonata). The "folk" element is constantly present throughout these works.

In addition, Scarlatti also composed at least 17 separate sinfonias and a harpsichord concerto. He exerted a major influence on such Portuguese and Spanish contemporaries as Carlos de Seixas and Antonio Soler.

Scarlatti returned to Italy on three occasions. In 1724 in Rome he met Quantz and Farinelli, who himself joined the Spanish court in 1737. In 1725 he returned at the death of his father in Naples - where he met Hasse. And in 1728 he returned to Rome, where he met and married his first wife by whom he had five children (she died in 1739, and by 1742 he was married again, to a Spanish woman, by whom he had four more children). In 1738, sponsored by King John V of Portugal, he passed secret trials to become a Knight of the Order of Santiago, and about 1740 Velasco painted the portrait which heads this page, and for which he wore the full regalia of the Order. He died in Madrid on July 23, 1757.

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Scarlatti: (7) Domenico Scarlatti

## (7) (Giuseppe) Domenico Scarlatti

(*b* Naples, 26 Oct 1685; *d* Madrid, 23 July 1757 ). Composer and harpsichordist, sixth child of (1) Alessandro Scarlatti and Antonia Anzaloni. He never used his first Christian name (which could have led to confusion with his nephew Giuseppe): his name is always given in Italy as Domenico (or the familiar Mimo) Scarlatti, and in Portugal and Spain as Domingo Escarlate (Escarlati or Escarlatti).

## 1. Life.

### (i) Apprenticeship.

There is no specific information on Domenico Scarlatti's introduction to music. In so large a family of musicians, his uncle Francesco and brother Pietro, if not his father, would soon have noticed and nurtured his special gifts; biographers have speculated that he finished his musical education under Gaetano Greco or Bernardo Pasquini. Burney states that while Alessandro was living in Naples he entrusted Domenico to Francesco Gasparini in Rome (*BurneyH*, ii, 635), but Kirkpatrick suggests that Burney's chronology is confused and attributes greater importance to Domenico's contact with Gasparini in Venice between 1705 and 1709, when he was more experienced. In any case, the young man's precocious talent had already blossomed: when he was only 15 his father had arranged for his appointment as organist and composer of the Cappella Reale in Naples, with a special additional payment for the post of *clavicembalista di camera*, suggesting that Domenico's particular talent was already evident. When in 1702 Alessandro went to Florence, he chose to take his son, intending that this would seal Domenico's relationship with Ferdinando de' Medici. At the end of the period of leave allowed by the Spanish viceroy, Alessandro sent Domenico back to Naples alone, but if he had meant him to take over the position he himself had relinquished, then he miscalculated, as Domenico had insufficient experience and the opera season for which he was responsible was not a success.

### (ii) The young eagle.

A letter from Alessandro to Ferdinando de' Medici, dated 30 May 1705, is informative and gives a fair picture of the subordinate position in which this authoritarian father continued to keep his son: ‘I have forcibly removed him from Naples where, though there was room for his talent, his talent was not for such a place. I am removing him also from Rome, because Rome has no shelter for music, which lives here as a beggar’. The rest of the letter contains a straightforward assessment of Domenico's talent: ‘an eagle whose wings are grown; he must not remain idle in the nest, and I must not hinder his flight’. The young man was sent to Venice, ‘escorted only by his own ability’, and his father wrote that, in his judgment, ‘he has advanced much since he shared with me the honour of serving Your Highness personally, three years ago’. There is a clear indication of Alessandro's hopes for a position in Florence when he writes: ‘He goes, like a wayfarer, to meet every opportunity that may present itself for him to become known, and which is awaited in vain in Rome today’. The *granprincipe* (heir to the grand duke) replied that Domenico had ‘truly such a wealth of talent and spirit as to be able to secure his fortune anywhere, but especially in Venice,

where ability meets with every esteem and favour', and confined himself to recommending Domenico to a Venetian patrician.

It is surprising that so few traces have survived of Domenico's activities in Venice; all that remains are two unsupported anecdotes, one of which ties in with another eloquent account of his remarkable skill on the harpsichord. Handel's biographer Mainwaring refers to a competition promoted by Cardinal Ottoboni to compare Scarlatti's keyboard skills with those of Handel, who had recently arrived in Rome: Scarlatti recognized his rival's superior ability on the organ, while listeners were divided on the outcome of the harpsichord competition. The two musicians were on excellent terms and long continued to demonstrate mutual esteem – in his biography, Mainwaring attributed to Handel a fine picture of Scarlatti the man ('besides his great talents as an artist, he had the sweetest temper, and the genteelest behaviour'). Mainwaring also recounts a meeting between the two young composers in Venice, during Carnival: '[Handel] was discovered there at a Masquerade, while he was playing on a harpsichord in his visor. Scarlatti happened to be there, and affirmed that it could be no one but the famous Saxon, or the devil'. This anecdote anticipates a series of similar legends about Paganini, Liszt and other virtuosos reputed to have entered into a pact with the devil; it was not just one but a thousand devils that Roseingrave later evoked when he told Burney about his first encounter with Scarlatti, to describe the effect on him of the astounding virtuosity displayed by the severe-looking young man who followed him at the harpsichord.

In 1707 Scarlatti witnessed his father's failure in Venice; this may have raised doubts as to the wisdom of his father's self-promotional strategy. As far as is known, there was no immediate reaction, and the son dutifully kept to his father's way of working; but Alessandro's plans allowed no room for Domenico to develop his vocation for the harpsichord, which had already been so clearly demonstrated.

## (iii) High professionalism.

A comparison of the early sources suggests that Domenico Scarlatti's career was less static than his biographers have painted, particularly in the years before he took on his most important positions in Rome: *maestro di cappella* to Maria Casimira, the exiled former Queen of Poland, and assistant and then later successor to the head of the Cappella Giulia. Alessandro's plan of detachment from his son's career had failed in Naples but in Rome it was successful beyond expectation; the Queen of Poland – Alessandro had described himself as in her service when in 1708 he composed *Il trionfo della fede* – employed Domenico as her *maestro di cappella*, after giving him the oratorio *La conversione di Clodoveo* and the pastoral *La Silvia* to compose, both to librettos by C.S. Capece, a member of the Arcadian Academy who served as her secretary. This marked the beginning of a close collaboration, guaranteeing that the operas, which Maria Casimira had staged in a small theatre in a room in her palace, and the serenatas, performed in

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dimensions which would otherwise have made it impossible to create operatic marvels of the kind that audiences were accustomed to see in the stagecraft of the great theatres. Even if there were considerable differences of style and quality between his father's supposed models and Scarlatti's known work (as Boyd has pointed out), the duties of *maestro di cappella* to an exiled queen meant that Alessandro's experiences under Christina of Sweden were repeated, with rather more consistent application.

When, on 19 November 1713, Paolo Lorenzani, director of the Cappella Giulia at S Pietro, died, he was succeeded by his assistant Tommaso Baj, and Scarlatti was appointed to Baj's post and when, on 22 December 1714, Baj died, Scarlatti took his place as *maestro di cappella*. This guaranteed income came at a fortunate moment, as financial ruin had obliged Maria Casimira to leave Rome and take refuge in France. Scarlatti's early, Neapolitan works may include sacred music, and he had composed sacred pieces for the Basilica Liberiana when his father was its *maestro*; this new, important post led him to intensify his work in this direction. The original *Stabat mater* for ten voices is usually assigned to this period and is recognized as his most significant contribution to sacred polyphony.

The direction of the Cappella Giulia imposed heavy demands on Scarlatti but did not exhaust his capacity for work. June 1714 saw the beginnings of his relationship with the Marquis de Fontes, the Portuguese ambassador, for whom he composed an *Applauso genetliaco* in celebration of the birth of one of the Portuguese infantes. This first connection with a Portuguese patron led, five

years later, to Scarlatti's move to Lisbon. At the same time Scarlatti did not neglect opera: when he lost his position with the Queen of Poland, he continued to have his operas staged at the Teatro Capranica, where his father's last operas were being staged at just the same time.

Alessandro's declaration that he would not impede 'the eagle's flight' is consistent with a strange document from 1717 in which he conceded, apparently with some reluctance, his son's independence from paternal authority. Clearly, important changes were pending: on 3 September 1719 an entry in the Vatican *Diario* declares that 'as Sig. Scarlatti *maestro di cappella* in St Peter's has departed for England, Sig. Ottavio Pitoni, formerly at St John Lateran, is appointed *maestro*'. It has never been established whether he did in fact intend to travel to London, or indeed whether he actually went; Francesco Scarlatti had been there since April of that year, and it should be noted that both Handel and Roseingrave were active there. On 30 May 1720 *Narciso*, a new version of *Amor d'un'ombra e gelosia d'un'aura*, modified and conducted by Roseingrave, was performed in London; had Scarlatti been there, he would surely have been involved in the performance.

## (iv) Lisbon.

While a visit to England remains a vague possibility, Scarlatti knew when he left Rome that London would not be his final destination. It is now known, from documents discovered and published by Gerhard Doderer, that he was impatiently awaited in Portugal, where João V had appointed him *mestre* of the royal chapel. He arrived in Lisbon on 29 November 1719 to a great welcome: not content with having 'demonstrated his skill' to the sovereigns several times, he sang at court accompanied by the queen herself. Lisbon promised only a more lucrative continuation of the Roman routine, although there were no regular performances of opera; but fulfilling work as a teacher awaited the new *mestre de capela* and after various notices of his successful early appearances Scarlatti was asked to take charge of the completion of the musical education of João's brother Don Antonio.

In Lisbon, Scarlatti was impressed with the talent of Carlos Seixas, whom Don Antonio had suggested as a pupil. Portuguese legend holds that Scarlatti recognized the young man, then 16, as his superior; however improbable that may be, it is likely that it was Seixas who set him on a new path, the combination of elements of art and folk music. Meanwhile, another royal pupil was showing exceptional musical talent: Maria Barbara, who later, as Queen of Spain, was an indulgent and generous protectress and patron of Scarlatti, was beginning to 'surprise the amazed intelligence of the most excellent Professors with her Mastery of Singing, Playing and Composition'. Now, besides having to compose sacred works or revive ones already given in Rome, Scarlatti had the extra pleasure of composing harpsichord pieces in the service of Maria Barbara and Don Alfonso. This raises the issue of the chronology of the sonatas, and it may be appropriate here to bring into question the widely accepted rejection of Kirkpatrick's 'approximately chronological' theories. When Scarlatti arrived in Lisbon he had more than sacred music in his baggage: in addition there were almost certainly some 50 keyboard pieces that had been written or sketched before he left Italy. There was no opera in Lisbon, but there were performances of sacred works and serenatas (some composed by Astorga) for celebrations of royal birthdays or namedays. A notice in the *Gazeta di Lisboa* in 1722 and a Vatican document attribute the title of 'Abbate' to Scarlatti; this was apparently in connection with an ecclesiastical benefice and has no further historical significance.

The accounts studied by Doderer make no reference to Scarlatti's presence in Lisbon between the end of December 1719 and 24 June 1720; and on 16 April 1720 a musician called Dominicus Scarlatti is listed as present in Palermo at a meeting of the Unione dei musici di S Cecilia. This may simply be another musician of the same name; but the complex relationship between Scarlatti and Emanuele d'Astorga, another Sicilian composer of cantatas and serenatas who was soon to move to Lisbon, suggests otherwise. Astorga held important civic posts in Palermo and may have encouraged Scarlatti to visit the land of his forebears. 'Dominicus' was at another meeting of the Unione in Palermo on 9 December 1722. The two dates are not incompatible with records of Scarlatti's presence in Lisbon (as shown by Doderer), and other contemporary accounts (by Quantz and Hasse) confirm his presence in Rome and Naples in 1724 and 1725 in spite of his obligations as *mestre* of the Portuguese royal chapel. Further, he returned to Italy at the end of January 1727 (as a document discovered by Doderer shows):

Sig. Domenico Scarlatti M.ro di Cappella of his Majesty the King left here for Rome, to restore his health with the benefit of that air, since he has not been able to recover from his indispositions, his Majesty having provided him with 1000 scudi for the journey, for the esteem in which he holds his

qualities.

This discovery confirms the notice of a reimbursement of the costs of a journey cited by Walther on the basis of a reference in no.122 of the *Hallische Zeitungen*, no longer traceable. It has been suggested (by Clark, after Walker) that Scarlatti was continuously on the move between 1719 and 1728.

It is uncertain whether Scarlatti returned to Lisbon after being cured; but he was almost certainly present at the performance of the *Festeggio armonico* that he composed in celebration of the betrothal of his pupil Maria Barbara to Ferdinando, the Spanish infante, on 11 January 1728. The wedding itself took place a year later, on 19 January 1729, in a pavilion specially built on the Rive Caya to allow both João V and Philip V to attend without setting foot on foreign soil; it is not certain that Scarlatti attended this second celebration, but he had been in Rome on 15 May 1728 when he married the 16-year-old Maria Catalina Gentili. Possibly he returned to Portugal soon after that; the dedication to João of his *Essercizi* indicates that it was by his royal command that Scarlatti was allowed to follow his pupil to her new country.

## (v) Spain.

The systematic moves of the Spanish court round the principal cities of the kingdom have been detailed by Kirkpatrick and, following the various stages of this itinerary, Clark has tried to isolate the folk elements in some of the sonatas that reflect the ‘tunes sung by the carriers, muleteers, and common people’ to which Scarlatti, a southern Italian, must have been susceptible. The curtailment of his duties, now that he was no longer *mestre de capela* to the Portuguese court, sparked a profound change in his activities: happy to be freed from that routine, he now became involved in the highly cultivated, private entertainments that Ferdinando and Maria Barbara held in their apartments, sheltered from the jealousy and resentment of Elisabetta Farnese, Philip V's second wife. One of those taking part in these entertainments was Farinelli, risking losing the favour of the queen who had brought him to Spain and had succeeded, through the great singer's virtuosity, in her intention of rousing Philip V from his lethargy and depression. Farinelli's presence may have been the stimulus for the cantatas which Boyd assigns to Scarlatti's maturity.

Shortly after moving to Spain, Scarlatti had returned at least once to Lisbon; a manuscript diary indicates that the ‘musician Scarlatti’ was accompanied by ‘his lovely wife and two children’ and that he continued to receive his large salary. The ‘Abbate Scarlatti’ image was vanquished, and the term ‘musico’ less than ever implied ‘castrato’: in 19 months of marriage the ‘hermosa’ Catalina had given her mature husband two children. She had six altogether, and died on 6 May 1739; after a brief period as a widower Scarlatti married Anastasia Ximenes, a young woman from Cádiz who between 1743 and 1749 gave birth to a further four children, giving Domenico parity with his father's progeny. If this represents rivalry with the ghost of Alessandro, on a musical level the younger Scarlatti's prolific output of sonatas corresponded in number and quality to the older composer's cantatas.

In 1738, the publication of a collection of 30 *Essercizi* brought Domenico Scarlatti's sonatas a Europe-wide circulation. A token of gratitude to João V, who had appointed him a Knight of the Order of Santiago, the volume is prefaced by a conventionally eulogistic dedication: the contrast between the laudatory hyperbole and the subsequent note to the reader is striking:

Do not expect, whether you are an amateur or a professional, to find any profound intention in these compositions, but rather an ingenious jesting with art by means of which you may attain freedom in harpsichord playing. It was not self-interest or ambition which led me to publish them, but obedience. Perhaps they may please you, in which case I may more willingly obey further commands to gratify you in a simpler and more varied style.

The publication, given official standing by its dedication to the king, had been preceded by preparatory work in Paris which led to later issues. In London, Roseingrave, seeing his role as Scarlatti's *alter ego* in jeopardy, immediately printed a pirate edition which added to the *Essercizi* 12 pieces which apparently dated from the period when he had met the composer in Italy. Avison took the unusual course of complementing some of the pieces from Roseingrave's collection with others also by Scarlatti, apparently in his possession, in orchestral versions as 12 concertos. Even if all the evidence suggests that the *Essercizi* turned out to ‘please’, the promised publications ‘in a simpler and more varied style’ never appeared; none of the subsequent publication ventures seems to have been guided by the composer.

In 1746, when the death of Philip V saw Ferdinando and Maria Barbara accede to the throne, Farinelli's influence led them to find a place for opera, which could count on the personal connections of the darling of the opera stage as well as powerful support from Vienna of

Metastasio, who was an intimate friend of Farinelli's. Scarlatti, however, was not invited to return to opera composition and the last part of his life seems to have been spent on the immense task of overseeing the compilation of the double series of manuscripts in which form his collected sonatas have come down to us. In the volumes copied between 1752 and 1757 the use of the number 30, on an almost systematic basis (repeating the formula of the *Essercizi*), suggests the existence of some planned publishing scheme, abandoned on the deaths of the composer and his royal patrons. One charming legend has this work as the happy consequence of Scarlatti's known weakness for gambling: the queen and Farinelli (who told Burney that he helped his friend in similar predicaments) are supposed to have offered the money to pay off the composer's debts in exchange for written copies of the sonatas which Scarlatti had largely improvised in the princely apartments. The survival of the treasure that has come down to us in the royal manuscripts, inherited by Farinelli on Maria Barbara's death, would thus be due to another, special act of ‘obedience’.

The impression of Scarlatti's final years is of a contrast between a striking show of vitality which saw him continue to father children up to the (for the period) advanced age of 64, and a creative mood of introspection which produced the final polished versions of the sonatas that constitute his legacy. It is tempting to imagine that it might have been Antonio Soler (a monk in the Escorial and a pupil of Scarlatti's in precisely the years 1752–7) who compiled the volumes and assisted the composer. The single autograph letter which has survived, written to the Duke of Huescar in 1752, matches this twilight mood: as well as complaints about ‘theatrical composers’ who knew nothing of counterpoint yet received such praise, the letter courteously contrasts Scarlatti's health, which prevents him from leaving his house, with that of his noble addressee, ‘great, strong and magnanimous, and full of health’, betraying a poignant serenity in keeping with the impression of an elderly composer weighing up a lifetime's experience. This sense of detachment from the world also has a suitably religious aspect, and there is a beautiful manuscript from 1754 (copied out with extreme care to make the calligraphy match that of models from the past) of a *Missa quattuor vocum* which shows Scarlatti adhering scrupulously to the old style neglected by the opera composers. If 1754 is the year of its composition, the significance of this attractive piece is as a proud demonstration of a specific skill, and any contradiction with the almost contemporary *Salve regina* for soprano, strings and continuo, which beautifully sums up the synthesis of contrapuntal learning and melodic and harmonic practice at the basis of Scarlatti's technique, is only apparent. Almost all the manuscript sources of the piece describe it as ‘the last work of Dom.co Scarlatti made in Madrid shortly before his death’, but other ‘swansongs’, covering most of the century, from Pergolesi to Mozart, may have suggested such a legend, which nevertheless is stylistically plausible. The indication on a manuscript of the last series of pieces in the collection similarly reads: ‘last sonatas for harpsichord by D. Scarlatti composed in 1756 and 1757, the year in which he died’.

In his penultimate year, Scarlatti had received a visit from Dr L'Augier, a friendly Viennese doctor who travelled to hear the ‘national melody in all parts of the world with philosophical ears’; Burney took down his testimony, which the doctor considered ‘a living history of modern music’. Scarlatti gave a warm welcome to his guest, who was better placed than anyone to appreciate the introduction into the sonatas of ‘many passages … in which he imitated the melody of tunes sung by carriers, muleteers, and common people’. The ‘sweetest temper’ and ‘genteelest behaviour’ which Handel attributed to his colleague characterize the recorded conversations, even when the arguments grew heated. Scarlatti was outspoken in his criticism of the ‘cembalo music’ by certain contemporary composers as not uniquely appropriate to the harpsichord. His insistence in defending his own artistic work, which he knew was open to criticism, is significant:

Scarlatti frequently told M. L'Augier, that he was sensible he had broke through all the rules of composition in his lessons; but asked if his deviations from these rules offended the ear? and, upon being answered in the negative, he said, that he thought there was scarce any other rule, worth the attention of a man of genius, than that of not displeasing the only sense of which music is the object.

The contradiction with the reprimand for ‘modern theatrical composers’ is only apparent: similar arguments should be related to the sort of superiority complex that had led Alessandro Scarlatti to compose ‘inhuman’ music which he deliberately made inaccessible to ‘any Professor’. For all the differences in their human approaches, both father and son agreed with Horace that ‘Non cuivis homini contigit adire Corinthum’ – ‘not everyone deserves to get into Corinth’.

**Roberto Pagano**

## 2. Instrumental works.

Any discussion of Domenico Scarlatti's instrumental output must focus on his keyboard sonatas: not only because of the pre-eminence of the *Essercizi* and sonatas in his work but because even in their most developed form these pieces relate to a single stylistic model, identified by Ralph Kirkpatrick as the *basso continuo*. The practice of improvising an accompaniment on a bass line was a stock-in-trade of every professional musician; in the case of Scarlatti, a keyboard player of astounding virtuosity and immense creativity, the habit of condensing, of translating contrapuntal implications into harmonic structures, meant that routine formulas were gradually left behind.

Such a statement cannot be justified without reference to the principal manuscript sources which, with the *Essercizi*, have preserved the corpus of Scarlatti's work for posterity. This is a double sequence of volumes which Farinelli inherited from the Queen of Spain, in the compilation of which the composer must have been involved during his final years. Two volumes, bound like the 13 to be described below, were compiled in 1742 and 1749. The Spanish and Portuguese coats of arms, stamped on the cover of the binding of these collections and the subsequent ones (now in ***I-Vnm***) indicate that they were intended for Queen Maria Barbara in person.

### (i) Venice 1742.

The volume dated 1742, which probably contains only sonatas composed before Scarlatti moved to Portugal, arranges the material in no discernible order but immediately establishes the formal model, used in every separate piece, which Scarlatti continued to follow almost invariably: this, broadly, is a binary structure with repeats, typically linked to the dance suite. The volume opens with 15 pieces stylistically fairly close to the *Essercizi*; then a Fuga is followed by some less sophisticated, and less quintessentially Scarlattian sonatas. These include genuine remnants from some suites: a Gavota, a Capriccio, a Gigha and Scarlatti's only known set of variations. There are also what are clearly transcriptions of polyphonic motets (κ69, 87), of 'Italian concertos' (κ37) or reminiscences of his father's toccata style (κ67, 72). The influence of violin style looms large, something which the composer apparently assimilated during his Venice years; these are among those keyboard pieces inspired by other existing instrumental (or vocal) styles, which led Bukofzer to speak of 'transfer'. The most developed of them see the introduction of procedures (crossed hands, acrobatic leaps) that Scarlatti used fairly systematically in his mature harpsichord music. It would be inappropriate to refer simply to 'transfer' in the case of the numerous sonatas in more than one movement presented as 'melody and bass' which can be, and were intended to be, performed by more than one instrument. In this case the texts retain unmistakable violin references.

The contradiction inherent in the titling of the volume which promises exclusively 'Sonate per cembalo' is only apparent: performance on harpsichord alone is still possible, as is demonstrated by other sonatas (the Capriccio κ63 and particularly the Gavota κ64) created in the spirit of *basso continuo* but then overloaded by the overt notation of chords – very different from Scarlatti's later ideas, as a mature composer, when he arrived at a characteristic keyboard style. Curiously, the volume contains five of the *Essercizi* although these pieces had been available in printed form for four years.

### (ii) Pairwise arrangement.

Some of the sonatas in this volume follow the archaic scheme whereby the principal piece is followed by a short minuet; it is possible to see here the germ of a conception that later underwent considerable development in the internal organization of the subsequent collections, beginning with that of 1749. Here the Sonata κ100 displays an odd structure: at the end of an Allegro, which has all the characteristics of an independent Scarlatti sonata, the indication 'volti subito' introduces an Allegrissimo with identical characteristics: these would be two distinct sonatas were it not that the composer demonstrated unambiguously his intention to group them together, instructing the copyist to give the pairing a single number (3) within the volume. Kirkpatrick gave each piece a separate number in his catalogue (κ99 and 100), justifying his decision by the separate appearance of the sonatas in other sources. This explicit pairing anticipates the principle later adopted, Kirkpatrick's 'pairwise arrangement', whereby most of the sonatas subsequently copied were grouped into 192 pairs and four groups of three. Contrasting or complementary elements lie behind the groupings: often a cantabile or demonstrably rhythmic sonata is followed by a brilliant one, and the major mode may follow the minor (always with the same tonic). Even when, in

subsequent volumes, some pairs seem to be formed from the juxtaposition of stylistically dissimilar elements, the overall intention to group the pieces – which the copyist cannot have conceived and carried out without the composer's consent – holds true. It seems that Scarlatti was influenced by the contemporary circulation of harpsichord sonatas in two or three movements – those by Alberti, for instance, with which he was certainly familiar. The new volume shows an emphasis on virtuosity and justifies Kirkpatrick's term 'flamboyant' to describe the style of these sonatas.

## (iii) Venice: 'Los trece libros'.

Between 1752 and 1757 a single amanuensis assembled, from sketches or originals that are now lost, no fewer than 28 beautifully copied volumes. This was the period during which a monk in the Escorial was a pupil of Scarlatti's; Soler's references to copying the composer's work and to the 'trece libros de clavicordio' add strength to the hypothesis that he himself was the copyist (the more likely in that one of his biographers praises Soler's diligence and tirelessness, attributes essential to carrying out so demanding a task). These 13 volumes, with the two previous, unnumbered ones, make, together with a copy of the *Essercizi*, the corpus of the Venetian manuscripts; the fact that they were intended for Maria Barbara implies that their internal organization is definitive.

The reference to Maria Barbara and Ferdinando prompts the suggestion that the prevalence of undemanding sonatas in the first two volumes is explained by their having been written for teaching purposes at the highest level. The third and fourth present a splendid assortment of sonatas whose perfect balance between musical sophistication and virtuoso demands reveals Scarlatti's stylistic maturity. Here more than ever is that 'ingenious jesting with art' to which Scarlatti referred in the preface to his *Essercizi*: a game in which the inspired composer and his excellent pupil are equal partners. The following three volumes may reveal a step backwards in terms of quality, a return to more elementary dimensions and educational concerns, hinting at the arrival of a less gifted pupil (perhaps Ferdinando). The eighth volume heralds what Kirkpatrick called 'the final glorious period'. Given the recourse to sonatas which clear stylistic considerations indicate were composed earlier but were deemed suitable for the creation of groups of two or three, the evident maturity of the final collections does not necessarily support the theory that the sequence in the manuscripts follows the chronology of their composition: the most striking novelties concern the enlarged keyboard (increasing with each new volume, up to the five octaves and a tone of K485, copied in 1756), but the previous versions of some sonatas, in secondary sources, reveal that some originally designed for instruments with a more limited range were inserted, in versions adapted in the light of new possibilities.

## (iv) Parma.

The other series of 15 volumes (***I-PAp***) duplicates 444 sonatas in the Venetian manuscripts and provides further pieces not in those collections (including the group of 12 exceptionally beautiful sonatas which come at the end of a secondary manuscript source, with the description 'Last Sonatas for Cembalo by D. Domenico Scarlatti, composed in the year 1756 and 1757, in which he died'). The elimination of the melody and bass sonatas and of pieces judged too close to the archaic practice of ambiguous instrumentation shows that some filtering had been carried out on the contents of the 1742 and 1749 volumes; the omission of the last sonatas is motivated by the desire not to compromise the standard 30 pieces per volume, which makes the *trece libros* a perfect sequel to the *Essercizi*.

## (v) The 'clavicordio'.

Both the Venice and Parma manuscripts specify a 'cembalo', and every Spanish reference to a 'clavicordio' generates confusion, given the ambiguity of this term, which could indicate equally the clavichord proper or the harpsichord ('clavicordio de plumas'), or even Cristofori's instrument ('clavicordio de piano'). Since the surviving evidence links Scarlatti's miraculous playing to the harpsichord, not to the clavichord nor the Florentine 'arpicembalo che fa il piano e il forte', it is appropriate to consider Scarlatti's keyboard music as written principally for the harpsichord. When he specifically intended the organ (K287 and 288), the manuscript is absolutely clear about the type of instrument ('da camera', with two manuals, 'Flautato' and 'Trombone'), and the pieces abandon the customary binary structure. There are other keyboard instruments on which the sonatas can be played, so reflecting the variety of choices characteristic of a much more casual approach than fanatics of historical performance would allow. The clavichord, which was fairly

commonly found throughout Spain, can render the cantabile qualities of some Adagios effectively but robs almost all the Allegros of their vivacity. Scarlatti was familiar with the ‘clavicordio de piano’ and in Florence as early as 1702 and 1705 had been able to try out the prototypes that Bartolomeo Cristofori built for Ferdinando de' Medici; he certainly played the other model, which the Tuscan prince had presented to Cardinal Ottoboni. Don Antonio of Braganza, the uncle of Maria Barbara and a pupil of Scarlatti in Lisbon, had travelled in Italy in 1714 and was the dedicatee of the *12 Sonate da cimbalo di piano e forte detto volgarmente di martelletti* by Ludovico Giustini, the first sonatas published specifically for the instrument. Three ‘Clavicordios de piano, echos en Florencia’ appear in the queen's inventory of instruments (the fact that two of them had been transformed into harpsichords has given rise to a variety of theories). For all its limited volume, Cristofori's instrument met and overcame the lack of colour in the harpsichord of which Maria Barbara had complained. In any case, it is known that Scarlatti used hammer-action instruments in Portugal and Spain, and this must be taken into account. It is going too far to transform the greatest harpsichordist in history into ‘the piano's greatest advocate’ (D. Sutherland, ***EMc***, xxiii (1995), 243–56); and all the more so since the discovery of a detailed inventory of Farinelli's instruments has brought to light one that sensationally prefigures the Grand Pleyel beloved of Wanda Landowska. This was probably the famous ‘Cembalo expresso’ (‘expressivo’?) for which Scarlatti wrote the pair of sonatas κ356 and 357, written on four staves and included in the Parma but not the Venice collections.

The inventory attached to Farinelli's will clarifies which and how many ‘various devices’ were capable of forming ‘different series of sounds’ on an instrument which Giovenale Sacchi, his biographer, described in vague terms. The document confirms that the harpsichord was ‘invented by the maker of this will’, indicates that it was built in Madrid by Don Diego Fernández and provides details of enormous interest: ‘it plays the pianos and fortes with a quill’, is ‘an eight-foot instrument’ and uses ‘three types of string, of copper, steel and gut, which play together, separately and mixed, according to the attached plan of its various registers’. All this would be extraordinary enough if it did not also have, hidden in the feet of the legs that support the instrument at each end of the keyboard, springs to engage the registers with ten stops to a pedal so that they can be operated separately or together, with ‘movable lead knobs’ used to engage one or two registers while the feet are operating the others. The registers are: (1) 4′ [*ottavina*], full register; (2) Archlute, full register; (3) Left hand harp, half register with gut strings; (4) Left hand 4′, half register; (5) Archlute and 4′, full register; (6) Harp and harpsichord, full register; (7) Harpsichord sounding as flute, full register; (8) Right hand, 4′, half register; (9) Right hand, harp, half register with gut strings; and (10) Harp, full register with gut strings. Sacchi relates that:

By chance the queen, in talking with Farinelli, mentioned that she would like to have a harpsichord with more various tones [*voci*], and asked him if he had ever seen such a one. He replied that he had not. But then, leaving the queen without saying anything further, he consulted Fernández, whose talent he knew, and after they had designed the work together and executed it, he arranged for it to be found as a surprise by the queen in her apartments.

This revolutionary instrument was thus the product of a passing dissatisfaction on the part of Maria Barbara and the inspiration of a hugely talented courtier and a great craftsman. If this is the harpsichord finally made ‘expressive’ by its variety of registers, the devoted Scarlatti would hardly have missed the opportunity to celebrate its invention with a pair of pieces such as these; but the fact that a four-staff layout thereafter disappears from the sources shows that the composer returned to composing and organizing his work for his own harpsichord, one with an ever larger range but solidly anchored to the standard sound. It was up to the imagination and skill of the performer to reflect, in strictly idiomatic terms, allusions, ranging from the obvious ones to the guitar and certain fanfares that he imaginatively idealized, but also draw together musical references to Christmas melodies that, as a child, Scarlatti had heard Neapolitan bagpipers play. So, while Cristofori's and Fernández's instruments remain legitimate and interesting options, Scarlatti's sound world is firmly rooted in the instrument on which the young virtuoso had called up the thousand devils which so astounded Roseingrave, and which now allowed the aging *maestro* to interpret the songs of Iberian muleteers and carriers in the variety of approaches that give the sonatas their exceptional vitality.

The part played by melody in Scarlatti's keyboard interests is marginal, given the prevalence of harmonic and rhythmic ideas in his harpsichord music. The internal structure of the sonatas is a confirmation of what is almost disavowal of melody, paradoxical for a Neapolitan but enormously significant for a composer for whom the harpsichord held no secrets. It is misleading to focus on the role of thematic elements when analysing the sonatas: Scarlatti's approach is based rather on following the conventional harmonic span of each binary piece. This was implicit in Kirkpatrick's shift of interest towards the variety of accessory elements in the sonatas, in which he proposed a distinction between the ‘closed sonata (in which both halves begin with the same thematic material)’ and the ‘open sonata (in which the thematic material that opens the first half is not used to open the second)’. It is significant that his principal new idea was a form of abstraction, linked more closely with tonal polarity than with the pedantic enumeration of ‘themes’; this was the ‘crux’, which Kirkpatrick defined as ‘the meeting point in each half of the thematic material which is stated in parallel fashion at the ends of both halves with the establishment of the closing tonality’. The

unconventional aspect invoked by Scarlatti in his conversations with L'Augier should not be ascribed solely to the surprising effects scattered like spices in the texture of the sonatas but also to the fact that so many openings, seemingly promising thematic development, give way immediately to as many ‘original and happy freaks’, based principally on lively rhythmic ambiguities and harmonic manipulations (including those acciaccaturas for which von Bülow implied a Shakespearean reference when he invoked ‘a madness not without method’). There was in Scarlatti a sort of manic obsession which can be linked to the Christian parable of the talents. As L'Augier told Burney:

He used to say, that the music of Alberti, and of several other modern composers, did not, in the execution, want a harpsichord, as it might be equally well, or perhaps, better expressed by any other instrument; but, as nature had given him ten fingers, and, as his instrument had employment for them all, he saw no reason why he should not use them.

There is an implicit criticism here of transcriptions of music not idiomatically suited to the harpsichord's capabilities. In 1756 the compilation of the manuscripts was almost complete, and Scarlatti could look with a certain detachment at the ‘transfers’ of his youth, even if possibly some instrumental transcriptions of vocal music in the pathetic style and elegantly decorated (κ208, for example) escaped his censure. Now song and melody were reserved for voices, and the composition of his gentle *Salve regina* in the same year confirms such a decision. When the harpsichord reclaims its melodic rights it comes in the incipits of some of the mature sonatas (κ544, 546), but the charm lasts only a few bars: soon harmonic dialectic takes over and fingerwork fills the space left empty by Alberti and his imitators.

**Roberto Pagano**

## 3. Vocal works.

Scarlatti's first opportunity to engage in opera came with the appointment of his uncle, Nicola Barbapiccola, as impresario of the Teatro S Bartolomeo, Naples, for the 1703–4 season, when the young composer was called upon to provide three operas, one of them an extensive revision of Pollarolo's *Irene*. His main contribution to the genre, however, was made with the seven operas he composed for Queen Maria Casimira in Rome between 1710 and 1714, of which two survive complete in their original form and a third in the version produced (as *Narciso*) in London in 1720. Too often dismissed as pale imitations of his father's operas, they show several quite original traits coupled with a keen dramatic sense. In ensembles, for instance, the individual lines are often distributed in an easy, conversational style, and the prescribed da capo is sometimes jettisoned in the interests of natural expression. In the arias it is not uncommon for a character's indecision or conflicting emotions to be conveyed through frequent changes of tempo and dynamics (and sometimes of instrumentation). Some arias are designated *alla francese*, and in others the voice is doubled throughout at the unison or octave with no other accompaniment – a Venetian trait rarely, if ever, to be found in Alessandro Scarlatti's works. The satirical farce *La Dirindina*, intended as intermezzos for one of the two public operas that Domenico wrote for Rome, is also unlike anything ever attempted by the elder Scarlatti.

Scarlatti seems not to have been employed as an opera composer after leaving Rome in 1719, although he evidently continued to take an interest in the genre and occupied his own box at Farinelli's productions for the Spanish court. His interest in vocal composition did not, however, come to an end with his appointment as music-master to Princess Maria Barbara in Lisbon. Of the several serenatas he composed for the Portuguese court (and before that for his Italian patrons), only two survive, both incomplete, but *Contesa delle stagioni* especially, written to celebrate the birthday of Queen Marianna on 7 September 1720, contains some of his finest, and grandest, writing for voices and instruments.

The chamber cantata, of which just over 50 fully authenticated examples by Scarlatti survive, was another genre which he cultivated with considerable success. Those he wrote in Italy (most of them probably in Rome) are mainly accomplished, though conventional, examples of the type of solo cantata in which his father had excelled. Of more interest are two manuscripts (in ***A-Wn*** and ***GB-Lbl***) containing in all 18 cantatas dating almost certainly from Scarlatti's Iberian years; some at least may have been sung by Farinelli at the Spanish court. They show Scarlatti adopting many of the features – predominantly major keys, a slow rate of harmonic change, numerous written ornaments (particularly the slide) and Lombardic rhythms – associated with operas by such

composers as Conforto, Hasse and Jommelli that were performed at the court.

It is difficult to arrive at even an approximate chronology for Scarlatti's church music. Only a single work, the expressive *Salve regina* for soprano, strings and continuo composed during the composer's last year, is dated in the sources, but this is quite probably for private devotions rather than a church composition. Most, if not all, of the other sacred pieces were presumably written during those periods between 1708 and 1728 when Scarlatti was employed as a church musician. Among the earliest, perhaps, are four works that have remained in the archive of S Maria Maggiore ever since Scarlatti wrote them in 1708–9. The antiphon *Cibavit nos Dominus*, possibly intended for the feast of Corpus Christi in 1708, is one of Scarlatti's most successful *stile antico* pieces; other works in this style include a four-part mass which may have been Scarlatti's contribution to the re-stocking of the royal palace library in Madrid after the fire of 1734. Also among the S Maria Maggiore works is a mass, *La stella*, notable for its stylistic dichotomy; the Credo and subsequent sections again exemplify the *stile antico*, while the Kyrie and Gloria employ a kind of *stile misto* that Scarlatti was to use to even greater effect in the best-known of all his sacred works, the *Stabat mater* for ten voices and continuo.

It should occasion no surprise that Scarlatti's vocal music shows little of the harmonic daring and few of the ‘happy freaks’ that characterize his mature harpsichord sonatas. The keyboard music of this period – Scarlatti's perhaps more than most – sprang directly from the composer's fingers in the act of improvising. Vocal composition, on the other hand, was essentially a considered art, subject to the demands of a text and governed by the rules and traditions of ‘good composition’. The apparent gulf between Scarlatti's vocal and keyboard styles can be observed also in the music of other composers such as Byrd and Frescobaldi.

**Malcolm Boyd**

# 4. Reception.

Scarlatti's sonatas were circulated irregularly and only in part during their composer's lifetime. In England, Roseingrave and others laid the foundations for what Newton later described as the ‘English Cult of Domenico Scarlatti’, a phenomenon that developed after the *Essercizi*, Roseingrave's response and Avison's transcriptions had been published, and music which had had a halo of myth and which later in the century was performed and valued by Kelway, Worgan and Clementi, and imitated by Arne, Avison, William Jackson and others, began to be disseminated. But the earliest publishing ventures with Scarlatti's sonatas were in Paris, and it was there that the *Essercizi* were reprinted, together with other sonatas, one of which (κ95) is unique to Boivin's edition. Apart from these indisputable signs of interest, there is no information as to how the French public reacted to Scarlatti, but it must have come as a shock to open a volume of *Pièces choisies pour le clavecin ou l'orgue* and discover music so different from that by Dandrieu, Dornel, Daquin or Corrette, to which keyboard players of the generation after Couperin and Rameau were accustomed.




Title page of Scarlattis XLII Suites de pieces pour le clavecin
Rowe Music Library, King's College, Cambridge

Although it has been said that there was no Italian Scarlatti cult, Abbé Santini was able to acquire copies of hundreds of the sonatas and introduce famous pianists to them, including Cramer and Liszt; these musicians took great pleasure in reading old music direct from manuscript at the home of the Roman collector – ‘especially pieces by Domenico Scarlatti, whose “Cat's Fugue”, such an original and unusual masterpiece, was always one of the favourite pieces of that select and intelligent band of listeners’. As a result, some knowledge of Scarlatti's music and his style spread through the Italian musical world, of which evidence can be found in references made by such musicians as Rossini and Verdi.

In the first decades of the new century, it was Vienna that saw ventures destined to bring about a

fuller knowledge of Scarlatti's work. The collection of the diplomat Joseph DuBeine included about 100 Scarlatti sonatas, distributed in various volumes which on his death in 1814 were auctioned and acquired by Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven's pupil *par excellence*. Between 1803 and 1807 eight volumes of sonatas were printed, partly from DuBeine's collection. Clementi, a leading figure in the 'English Cult of Domenico Scarlatti', was regularly in Vienna at that period in his capacity as music dealer; he seems to have been responsible for inventing the story of the 'Cat's Fugue' (κ30), according to which the unusual theme came from a kitten's random steps up the keyboard. It was also in Vienna, in 1839, that the publisher Haslinger and his pupil Czerny completed the publication of as many as 200 sonatas.

In Germany, knowledge of Scarlatti's music may have been encouraged more by the circulation of foreign publications than by that of the *VI Sonate per il cembalo solo* published by Haffner about 1753. Did Bach know Scarlatti's music? Assumptions that two pieces by Bach were derived from Scarlatti models were ruled out by Kirkpatrick, but it has been suggested that the Goldberg Variations 30 in number, are a response to the 30 *Essercizi*; Bach may well have encountered the publication or one of its reprints (it is worth remembering that the term *Clavier-Übung*, used by several composers before Bach, is the equivalent of *Essercizi per il gravicembalo*). Other German musicians demonstrated their admiration for Scarlatti: Quantz, who met him in Rome in 1724, had been amazed by the perfection of his playing, and Hasse remembered for Burney, half a century later, 'a wonderful hand, as well as fecundity of invention', when he heard him in Naples, on a visit to his elderly father. Scarlatti found no favour with two important exponents of German Romanticism: Mendelssohn took offence at an observation by Rossini after hearing one of his *Charakteristische Stücke*: 'Ça sent la sonate de Scarlatti!' Schumann repeated a remark by a 'brilliant composer' (Mendelssohn?) that compared with the most gifted German composers Scarlatti was 'like a dwarf among the giants'. There is nationalism in the opposite direction in a letter from Verdi to Ricordi (November 1864): after bemoaning the exclusion of 'the so-called Cat's Fugue' from the Scarlatti items in an anthology of old music: 'with so strange a subject a German would have created chaos, but an Italian made something as clear as the sun'. Hans von Bülow prepared an edition of 18 sonatas, but in comparing Scarlatti with Bach ruled that he was 'not a genius but a talent of great significance'; he illustrates the reasons that led him to eliminate the acciaccaturas, which he thought created cacophony on the piano and offended the eye and ear (precisely the freedoms of which Scarlatti boasted to L'Augier), and he also retouched many 'harmonic errors'. Nevertheless, von Bülow paradoxically recognized Scarlatti's role as a precursor of Beethoven, since with him 'humour and irony set foot for the first time in the realm of sound'. Brahms collected Scarlatti manuscripts and studied the sonatas in depth: some passages in the Second Piano Concerto seem to be influenced by the demanding κ299, and the quotation of κ273 as the incipit of the song *Unüberwindlich* is a clear act of homage.

As for the Iberian peninsula, the manuscripts studied by Boyd and Doderer make it clear that the sonatas were not used exclusively by the composer's royal pupils; the existence of Spanish copies which assign to the organ pieces far from the austere idiom normally connected with the instrument reveals an unusual and unexpected circulation of the composer's legacy.

A decisive step in bringing about a proper knowledge of Scarlatti's work was taken at the beginning of the 20th century with the publication by Ricordi of all the sonatas then known (545 of the 555 pieces later catalogued by Kirkpatrick). This was done by Alessandro Longo, who took account of the Venetian sources, some of the early editions and certain of the Viennese manuscripts, but not the parallel series of manuscripts now in Parma (whose existence was unknown) nor a pair of important volumes in England. Longo's work is certainly dated; its principal defects derive from insufficient knowledge of stylistic issues and matters of instrumental technique and performing practice. Further, he followed his own whims in regrouping the pieces into arbitrary 'suites' according to key. The credit for re-establishing certain characteristics of the texts goes to Walter Gerstenberg, who in 1933 carried out a rigorous comparison of the principal sources, although he neglected to give sufficient emphasis to the grouping into twos and threes, which his own scrupulous cataloguing had brought to light. Ralph Kirkpatrick's study (1953) was the fruit of ten years of careful research, added to the practical experience of an illustrious harpsichordist. Thanks to Kirkpatrick, Scarlatti ceased to be an eccentric, late product of the Baroque need for 'marvels' and his music received the kind of critical attention which would see Schumann's unjust verdict set aside. A new chronological ordering, realized through a regrouping of the sonatas by genre, was proposed by Giorgio Pestelli (1967), whose contribution had considerable value in establishing an appropriate historic and stylistic context for Scarlatti. From 1970 the writings of Joel Sheveloff have enlivened the critical debate with interventions of remarkable polemical force and exemplary attention to detail, with a perceptive interpretation of the sources. The most telling contribution using Spanish sources has come from Malcolm Boyd, who has also provided a

determined, well-documented re-evaluation of the composer's vocal music. Gerhard Doderer's contributions are concerned primarily with the documentation of biographical data regarding Scarlatti's time in Portugal, and also information on the instruments Scarlatti favoured.

The critical editions of the sonatas which Kirkpatrick hoped for are now a reality. Kenneth Gilbert was responsible for completing the first (Paris, 1971–84), with a concise, balanced preface that focussed on the interpretation of the sources. 1978 saw the beginning of a new Ricordi critical edition, under Emilia Fadini, characterized by a more accurate graphical reflection of the sources and a critical system based on detailed comparisons. The Venetian manuscripts are accessible to scholars in a facsimile edition (1985), as are the *Essercizi* (1967, 1977).

**Roberto Pagano**

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**Malcolm Boyd**

See also from *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*: DIRINDINA; NARCISO; and TETIDE IN SCIRO.

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# Bernhard's Pedagogical Notes

| Category | K Number | Key | Tempo | Grade | Approximate Length | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Easy | 32 | D minor | Aria | 3 | 2:25 | This is a real gem. Only 24 bars long, technically unchallenging (grade 3), and yet one of the most beautiful sonatas. Slow paced and exuding tranquillity, this reflective piece is the best of the four. (It has actually been recorded by Ingrid Sodergren for Harmonia Mundi, by Maria Tipo for Vox Box and Michae Levin for Naxos. This should just give you an idea of the musical depth of this piece, since when have you heard of pianists recording grade 3 pieces?) |
| Lyrical | 32 | D minor | Aria | 3 | 2:25 | Lyrical sonata much easier than it sounds. Slow and melancholic. Good as a study in colouring and tone control. Although just one page long it requires some musical maturity to be truly effective. |
| Easy | 34 | | | 3 | | A slow thoughtful piece, only 28 bars long |
| Easy | 40 | | | 3 | | A nice minuet only a page long (24 bars) – amongst the easiest of Scarlatti pieces |
| Easy | 431 | G major | | 3 | | A delightful “baroque prelude” style piece with a fast right hand in arpeggio triplet figurations while the left hand provides a melody in minims and crochets. Although this should be played fast, it is still effective if use a slower tempo. Just 16 bars. |
| Lyrical | 25 | F# minor | Allegro | 5 | 3:55 | A not too fast, beautiful two voice invention that moves in a relentless way with one of the most beautiful motifs of all sonatas. Crossing hands. Broken chords figuration in both hands. Harmonically adventurous and mood setting. A masterpiece. |
| Lyrical | 54 | A minor | Allegro | 5 | 4:45 | This another of my favourite sonatas. After a typical plaintive start in A minor, it suddenly displays a most romantic theme. Very unusual sonata. Hands crossing, thirds and sixths. |
| Virtuoso | 63 | G major | Allegro | 5 | 2:00 | Also known as Capriccio, this is celebratory, joyful and uplifting music that is much easier to play than it sounds. An all time favourite. Wide skips, echo effects, but fits the hand surprisingly well. |
| Virtuoso | 67 | F# minor | Allegro | 5 | 1:30 | Toccatta like, this is a fast, dazzling sonata ideal for an encore. One of my favourites. |
| Intermediate | 70 | Bb major | Allegro | 5 | 2:10 | A two voice invention (with a third voice intruding on the last two bars of the first part), this is excellent for finger and hand independence. |
| Virtuoso | 70 | Bb major | Allegro | 5 | 2:10 | A two voice invention (with a third voice intruding on the last two bars of the first part), this is excellent for finger and hand independence. |
| Lyrical | 203 | E minor | _3/8_ | 5 | 4:50 | Beautiful sonata with most of the figurations on one hand at a time. An insistent and catchy motif keeps bringing the sonata together. Unusual syncopations. Requires a sizeable hand span and accurate skips in some of the figurations. |
| Intermediate | 208 | A major | Andante | 5 | 3:40 | Lyrical sonata, with a hauntingly beautiful melody and compelling harmonic progressions. Tranquil and luminous, this is a masterpiece. |
| Virtuoso | 342 | A major | Allegro | 5 | 2:05 | Dazzling and fast, this “baroque prelude” style sonata has most of its impressive finger work in the right hand. Excellent for finger control and co-ordination, it is actually much easier than it sounds. Great fun to play. |
| Virtuoso | 405 | A major | Allegro | 5 | 3:55 | Based on a Spanish Buleria (a kind of Tarantella). Technically undemanding. |
| Virtuoso | 1 | D minor | Allegro | 6 | 2:30 | This two voice invention is one of my favourite sonatas. Fast and delicate with lots of thirds and scale runs on the right hand, but no difficulty at all in the left hand. |
| Virtuoso | 13 | G major | Presto | 6 | 4:20 | Fast and brilliant with a catchy, rhythmical theme on repeated notes. One of my favourites. |
| Virtuoso | 119 | D major | Allegro | 6 | 5:40 | Another sonata ideally suited to replace some of the common technical studies. Fast repeated notes, broken chords, arpeggios, leaps, crossing hands, scale runs. This unusual, percussive – watch out for the castanet sounds! - sonata has a very catchy, dancing motif. One of my favourites. |
| Virtuoso | 125 | G major | Vivo | 6 | 2:30 | This non-stop sonata will not allow you to catch your breath! Great fun to play and an excellent virtuosistic piece to end a recital on a high note. If you are looking for a Czerny alternative look no further: it is a study for the left hand plus repeated notes, broken thirds, sixths and octaves. Also good practice for quick adjustments. |
| Lyrical | 132 | C major | Cantabile | 6 | 7:25 | A slow (well, sort of) A lyrical sonata with beautiful lush harmonies, haunting dissonances and arpeggios that are suddenly interrupted by a heart wrenching delicate melody based on repeated notes. One of my all time favourites. |
| Intermediate | 146 | G major | Allegretto | 6 | 3:10 | A nice little menuet full of humour and light. Although it sounds dazzling and virtuosic it is much easier than it sounds. Main difficulty are the fast alternating hands. |
| Virtuoso | 146 | G major | Allegretto | 6 | 3:10 | A nice little menuet full of humour and light. Although it sounds dazzling and virtuosic it is much easier than it sounds. Main difficulty are the fast alternating hands. |
| Intermediate | 198 | E minor | Allegro | 6 | 2:50 | A masterpiece. Dramatic and powerful, this 2 voice invention (with a third voice intruding on 4 bars near the start of the second part) is still effective at a slower tempo. One of my favourites. |
| Intermediate | 239 | F minor | Allegro | 6 | 3:20 | An excellent “dance” piece full of Spanish rhythms. |
| Virtuoso | 386 | F minor | | 6 | 2:30 | Another sonata full of brilliance, with fast scales and compelling harmonic progressions. |
| Intermediate | 481 | F minor | Andante | 6 | 6:20 | Introspective, delicate and lyrical this could be an ideal choice for opening a recital. And if you need a study in phrasing and legato this sonata is for you! |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intermediate | 511 | D major | Allegro | 6 | 2:40 | A masterpiece. This is a 2 voice invention with the figurations equally distributed between the hands. Urgent and dramatic it will still be effective at a slower tempo. Technical problems are minimal. |
| Virtuoso | 511 | D major | Allegro | 6 | 2:40 | A masterpiece. This is a 2 voice invention with the figurations equally distributed between the hands. Urgent and dramatic it will still be effective at a slower tempo. Technical problems are minimal. |
| Virtuoso | 39 | A major | Allegro | 7 | 2:55 | Fast and furious, full of nervous energy. Excellent for waking up the audience! Figurations are shared equally by both hands. Excellent Czerny replacement and superior warm up piece. Equally effective at a slower tempo. |
| Virtuoso | 46 | E major | Presto | 7 | 4:15 | Another of my favourites, this sonata “makes my heart soar like a hawk” as the Cheyenne Indian would say. One of the most catchy motifs amongst all sonatas that makes one wish to dance, this is amazing music. |
| Lyrical | 52 | D minor | Andante | 7 | 5:25 | Wonderful sonata, lyrical and devotional, uplifting and tranquil. Written (mostly) in 3-voice counterpoint. Another masterpiece. |
| Lyrical | 69 | F minor | Moderato | 7 | 5:20 | My top favourite amongst the slow, lyrical sonatas, this is a hauntingly beautiful piece with a complex poliphonic texture. A masterpiece. |
| Lyrical | 87 | B minor | Andante | 7 | 4:35 | Intensely lyrical work of great musical depth. Couterpoint in three and four parts. Said to be Horowitz favourite Scarlatti sonata |
| Virtuoso | 98 | E minor | Alegrissimo | 7 | 3:30 | Wonderful study in rhythm with unexpected developments, suspensions and syncopations. |
| Virtuoso | 123 | Eb major | Allegro | 7 | 4:20 | Joyful and uplifting. |
| Virtuoso | 135 | E major | Allegro | 7 | 4:05 | Dazzling finger work alternating with slow episodes in 4-voice counterpoint. Catchy and uplifting. |
| Lyrical | 197 | B minor | Andante | 7 | 5:15 | Sonata in a lyric, cantabile style, moderately flowing. Expansive, sonorous qualities. |
| Lyrical | 27 | B minor | Allegro | 8 | 3:35 | This is my all time favourite Scarlatti sonata. A masterpiece. Surprisingly romantic, could very well have been composed by someone like Schubert. Very untypical Scarlatti. Achingly beautiful melody. Arpeggio figurations and lots of crossing hands. |
| Advanced | 141 | D minor | Allegro | 8 | 3:50 | A masterpiece. A fast toccata with lots of repeated notes over long stretches. Beautiful romantic melody after the repeated notes. Broken chords and skips. Excellent as a study replacement. |
| Virtuoso | 427 | G major | Presto | 8 | 2:20 | Wonderfully exhilarating sonata, both to play and to listen to. The tempo direction (“as fast as possible”) gives you an idea of what to expect. A really electric and uplifting work requiring pianism of the utmost degree. Has a recurring motif that is incredibly joyful and catchy. One of my favourites |
| Advanced | 466 | F minor | Andante | 8 | 5:40 | A masterpiece. Beautiful, slow lyrical sonata. As it is often the case with the lyrical sonatas, this one elicits tranquillity and peacefulness rather than melancholy and grief. Excellent for developing rhythm awareness of triplets versus quavers. It also has 3 against 2. |
| Advanced | 517 | D minor | Prestissimo | 8 | 3:00 | Another fast and furious sonata that can easily replace any technical study. With a typical baroque figuration shared by both hands, this one is ideal for scales, broken chords and close position passage work, and excellent for finger independence and dexterity. Intense, urgent and relentless. |
| Virtuoso | 24 | A major | Allegro | 8+ | 4:55 | Virtuoso piece alternating relatively calm sections with dazzling scale runs. |
| Virtuoso | 141 | D minor | Allegro | 8+ | 3:30 | A masterpiece. A fast toccata with lots of repeated notes over long stretches. Broken chords and skips. Virtuosic with dissonant guitar strumming in the left hand and lots of cross hands. Excellent as a study replacement. |

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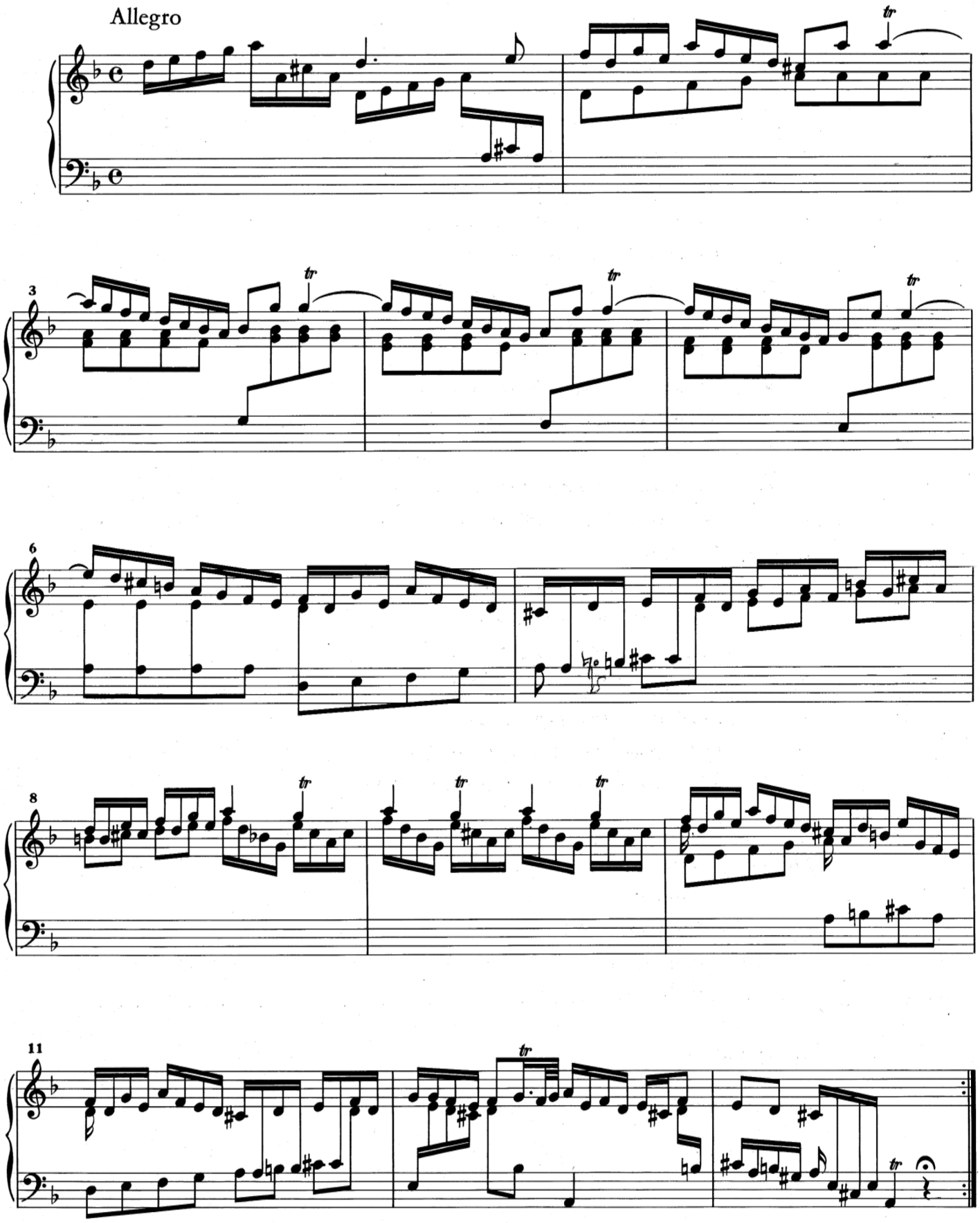


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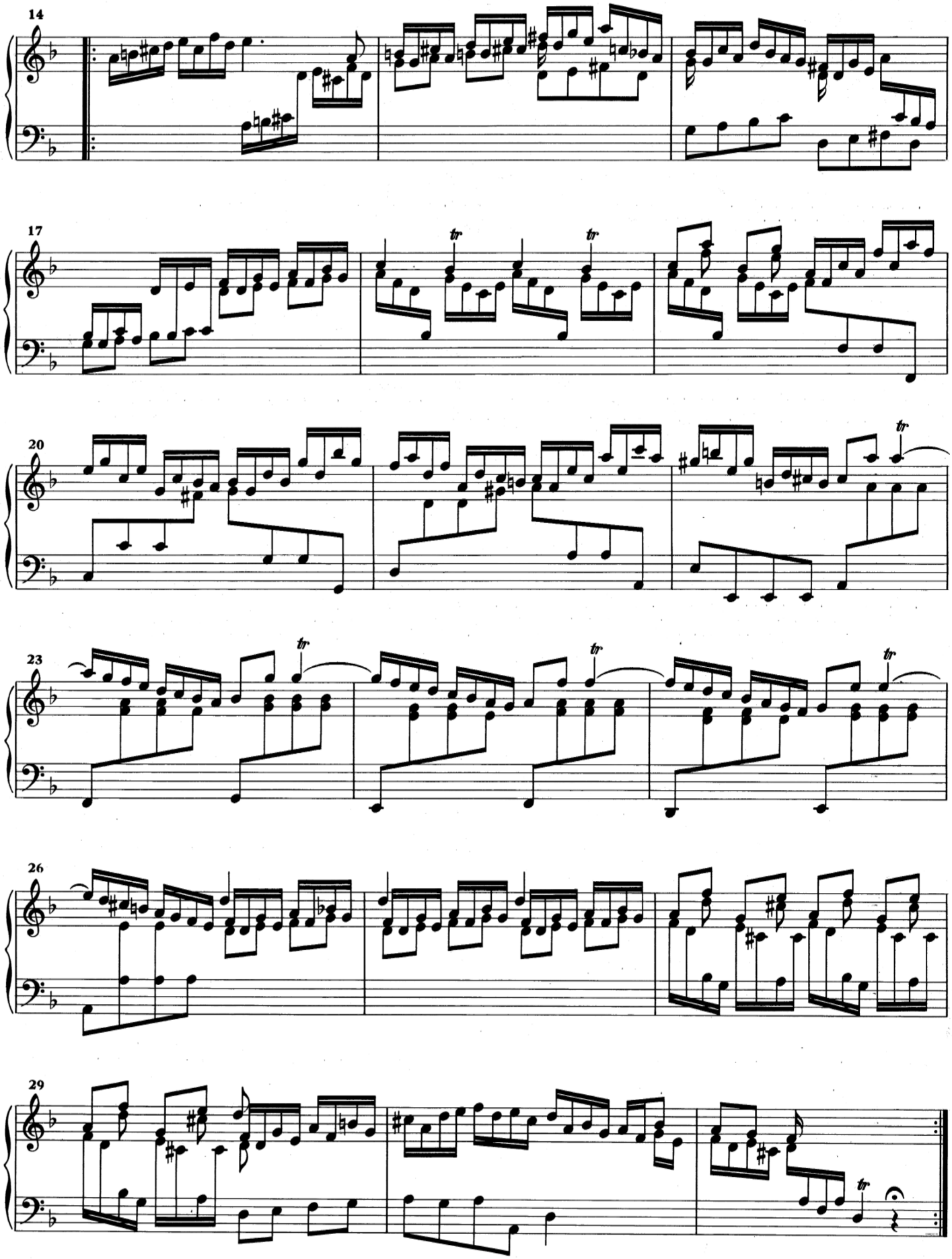
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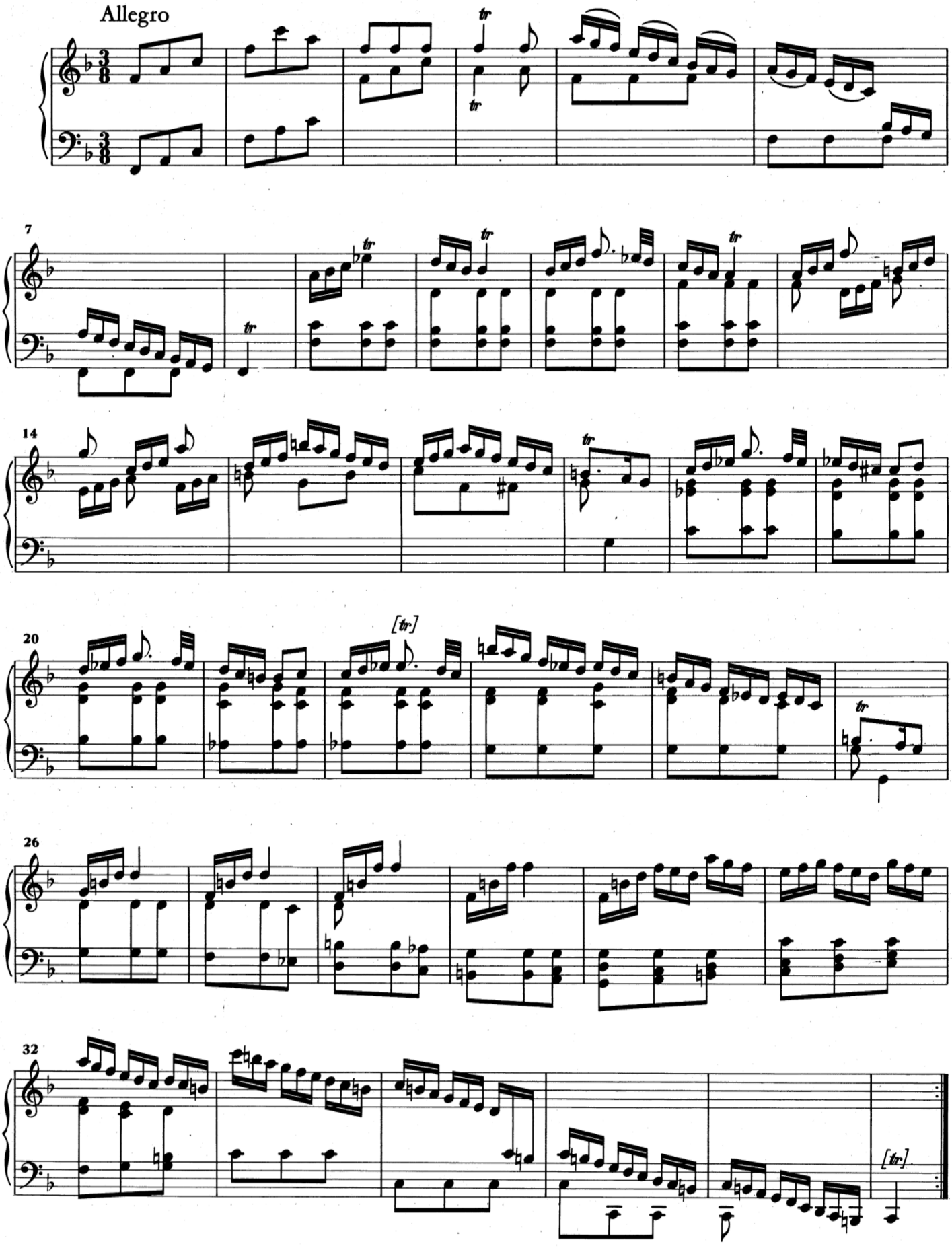

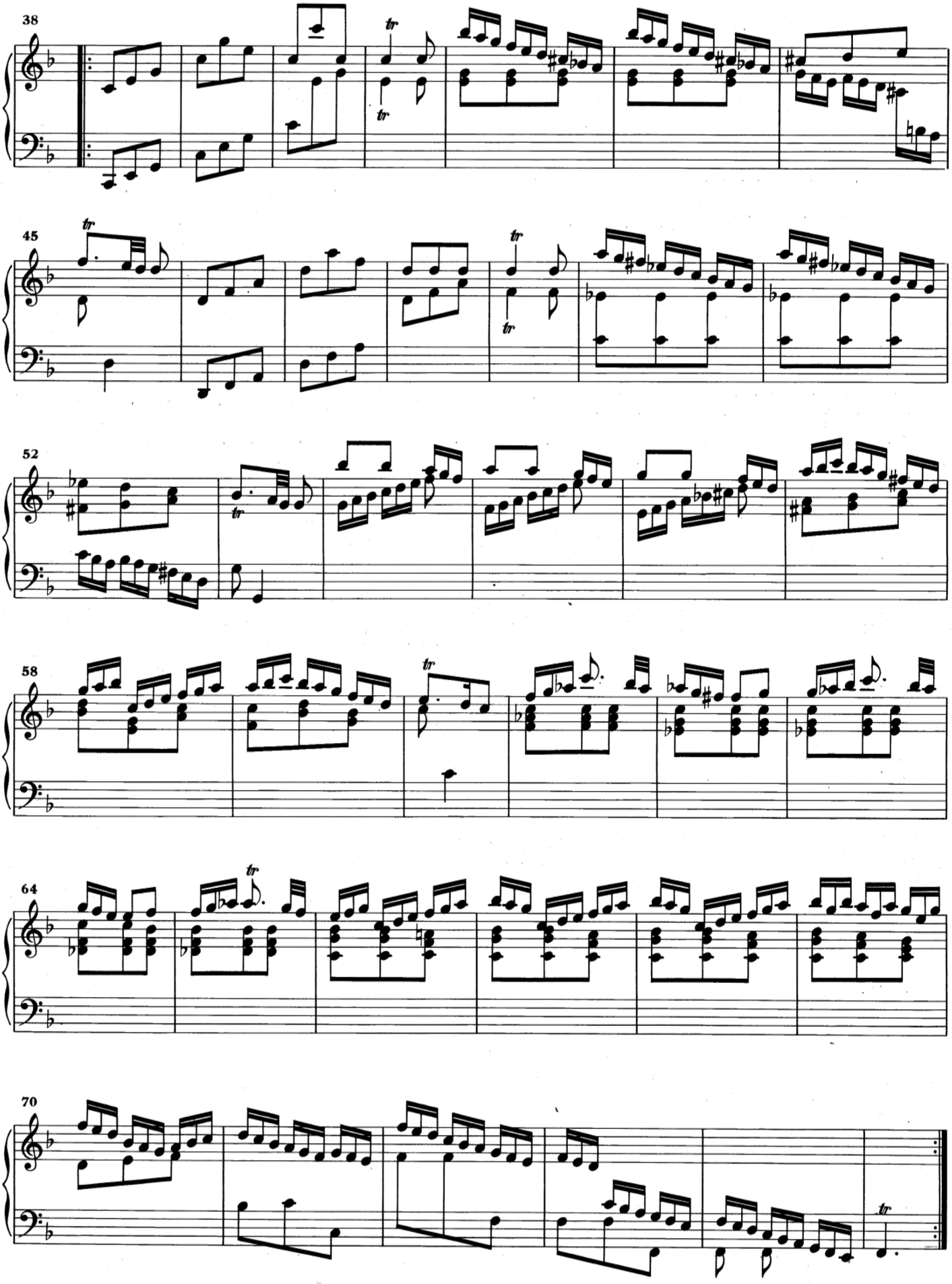
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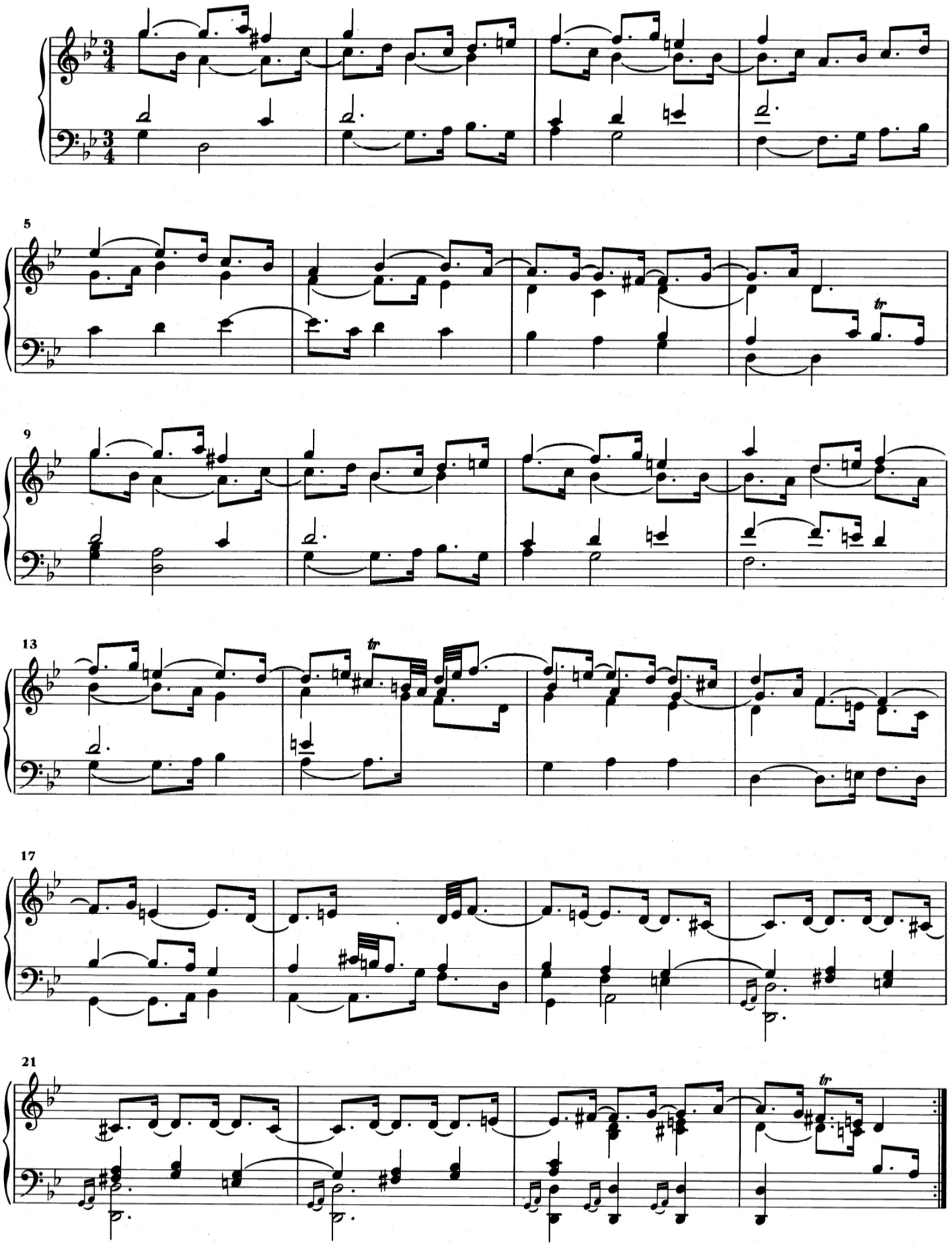

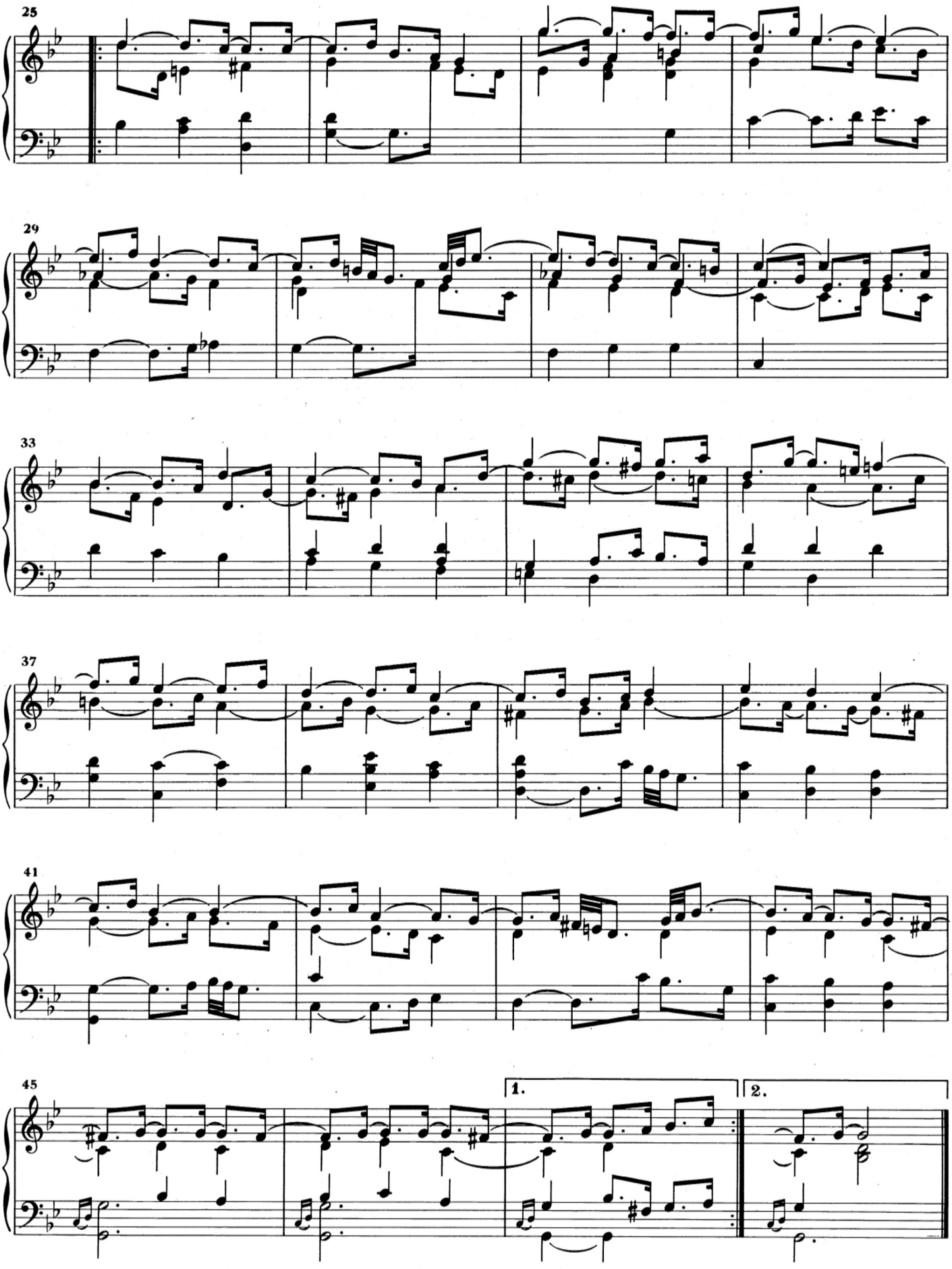
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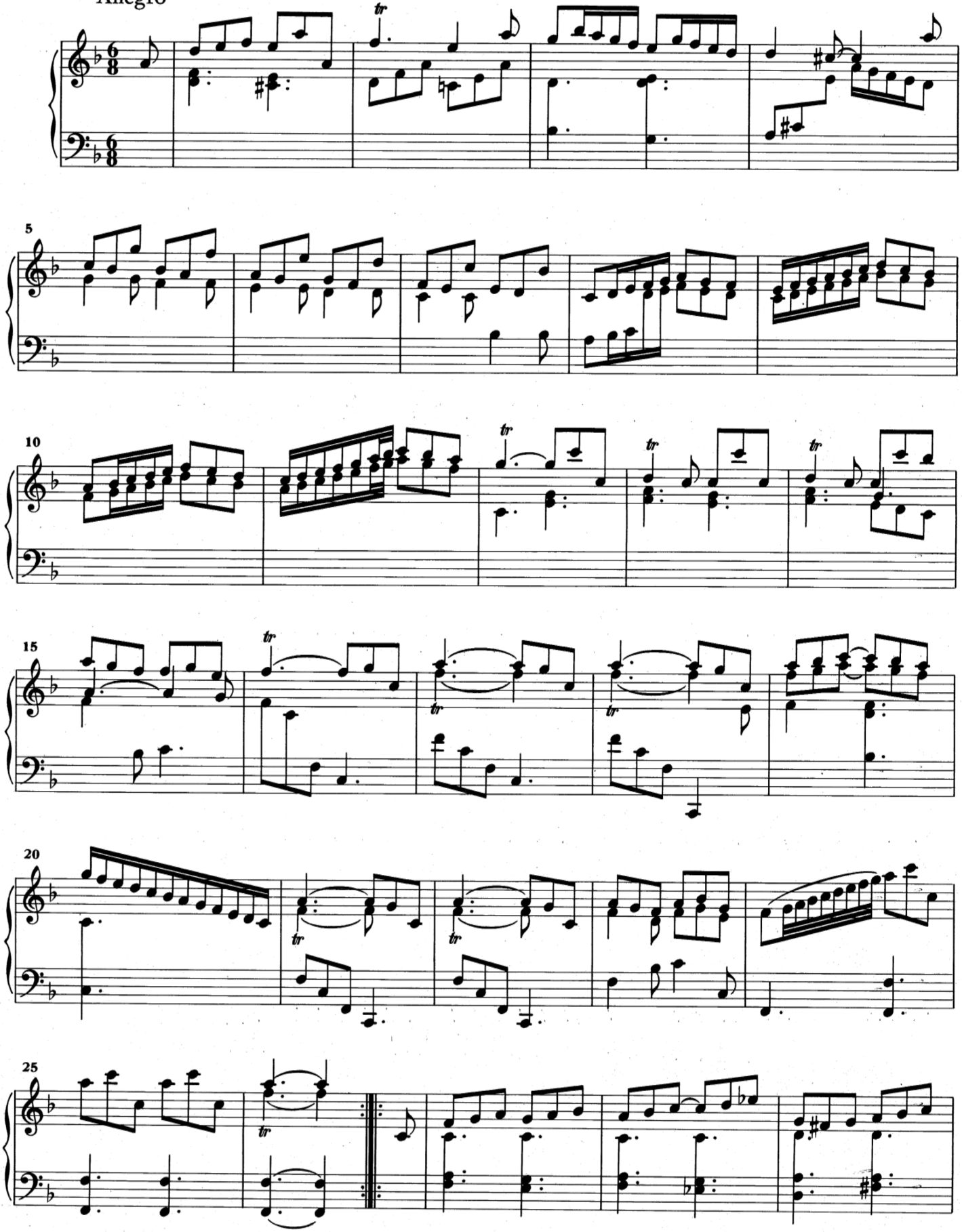

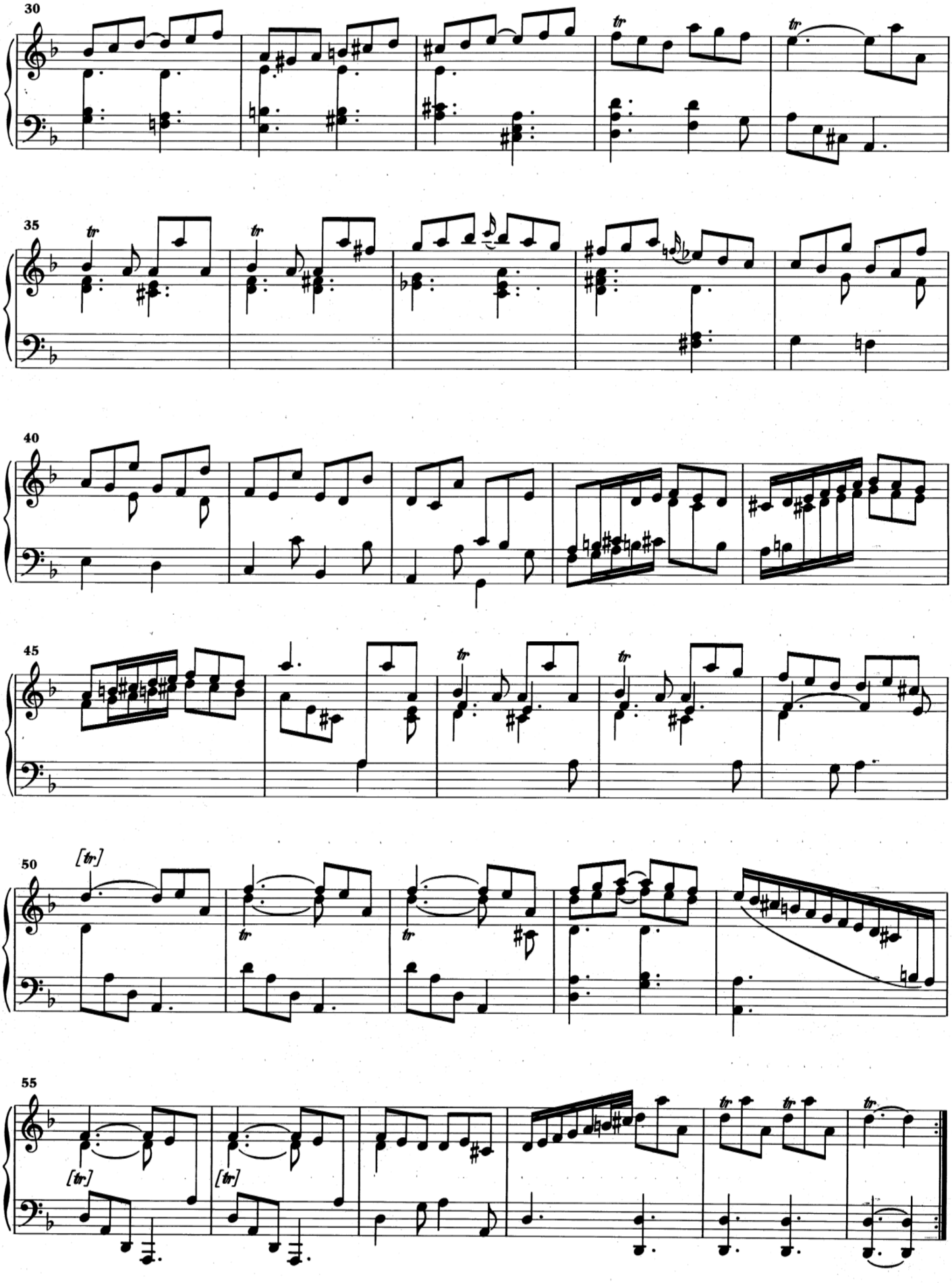
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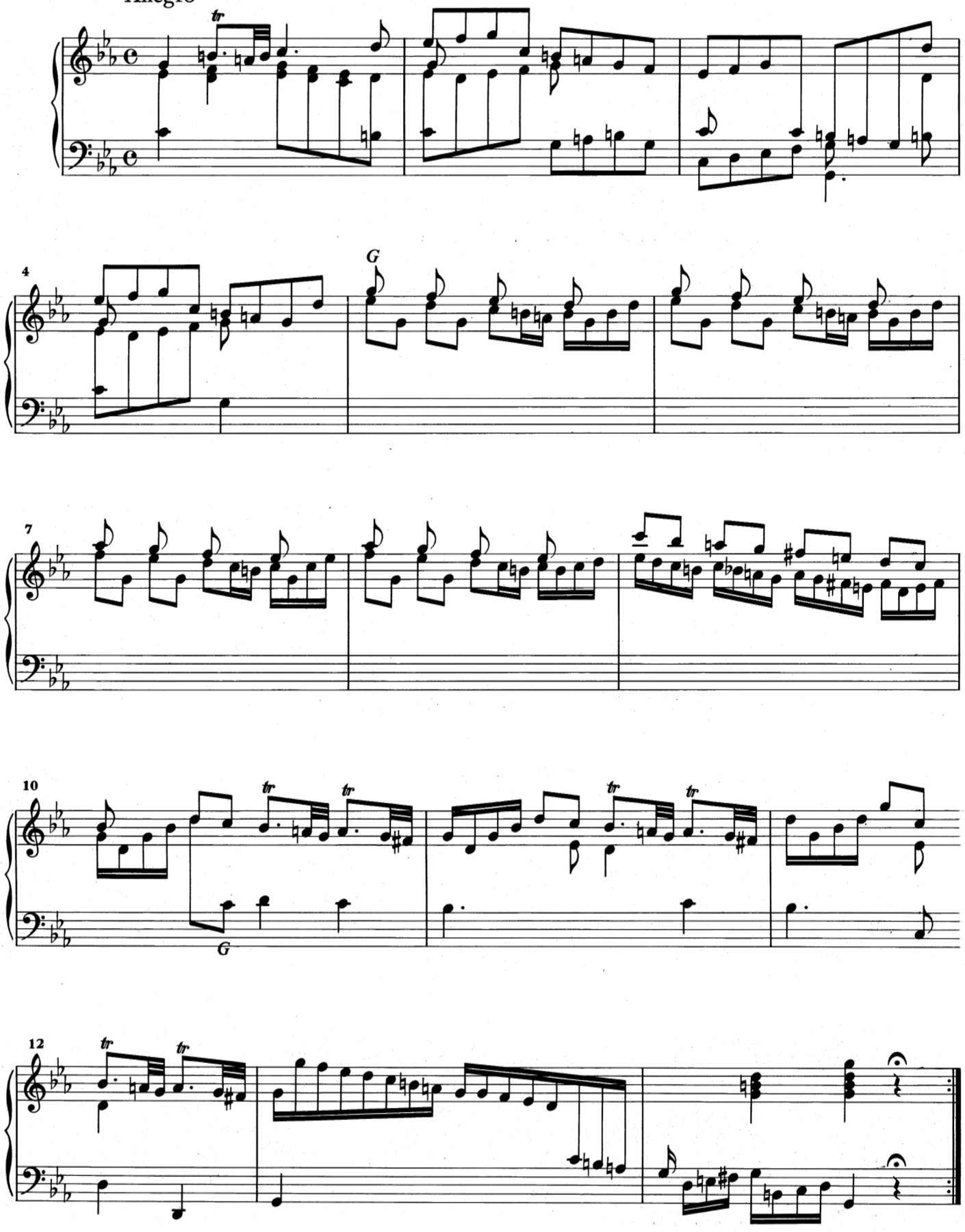

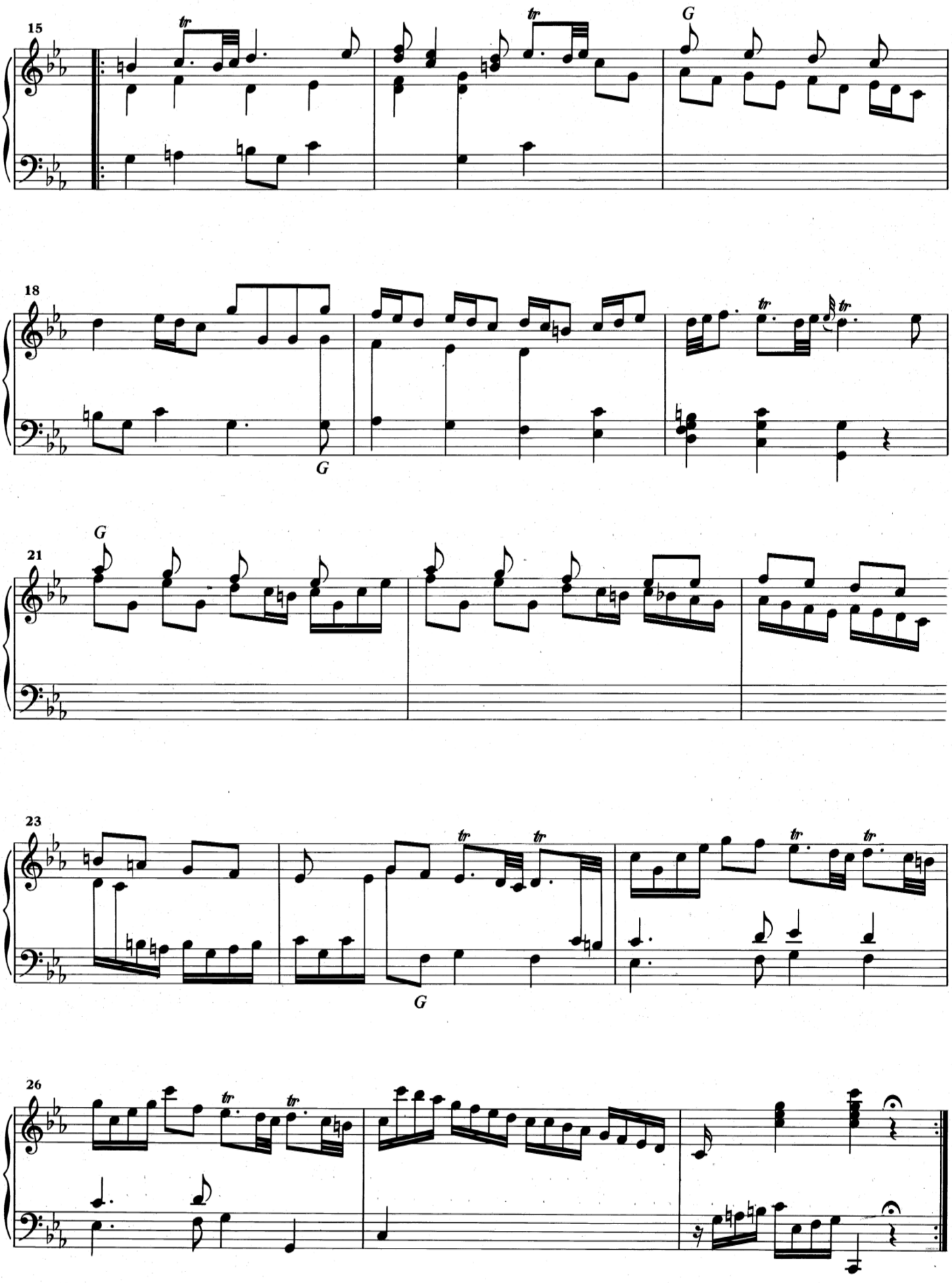
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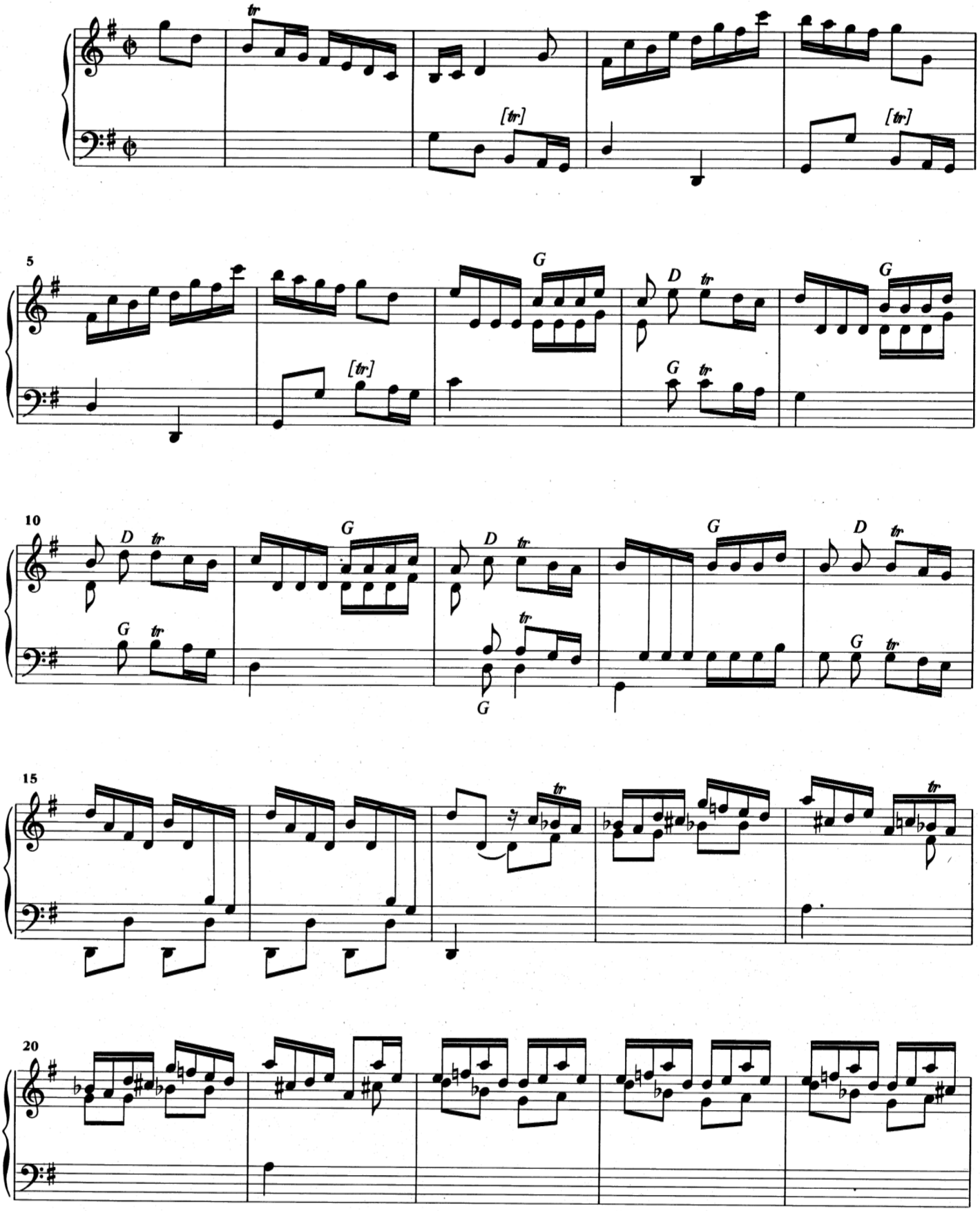
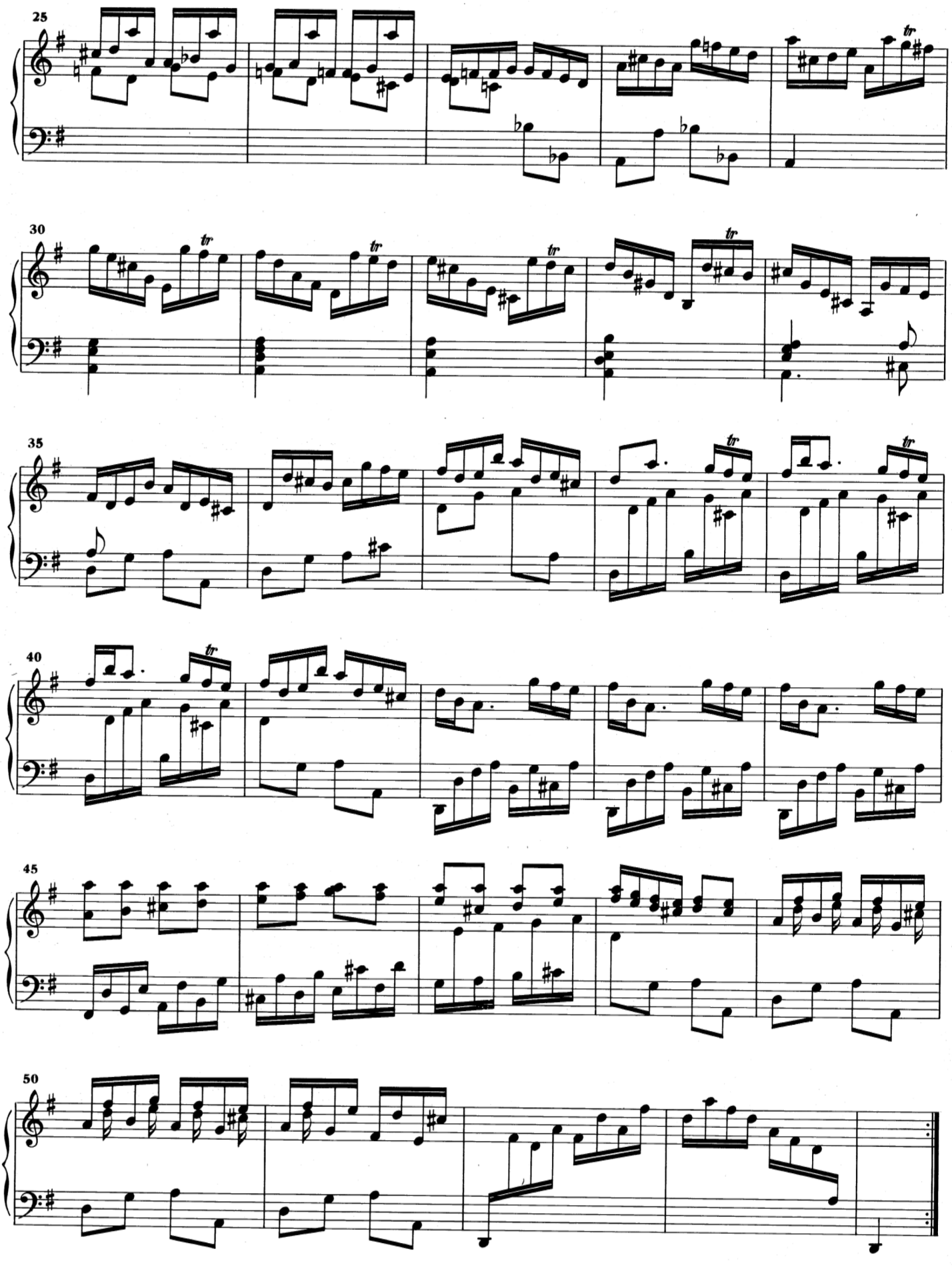
tr

# K. 13

Presto

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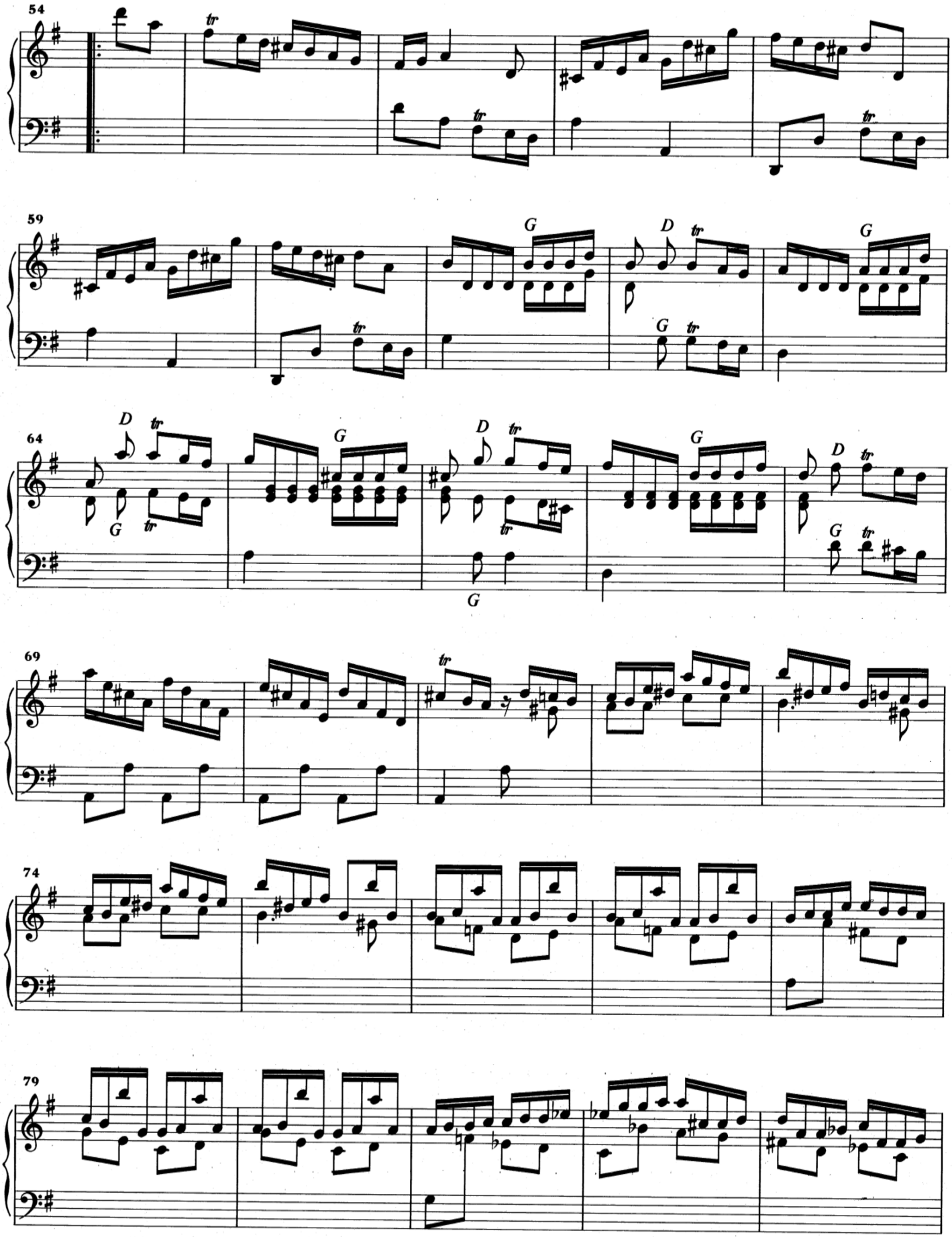
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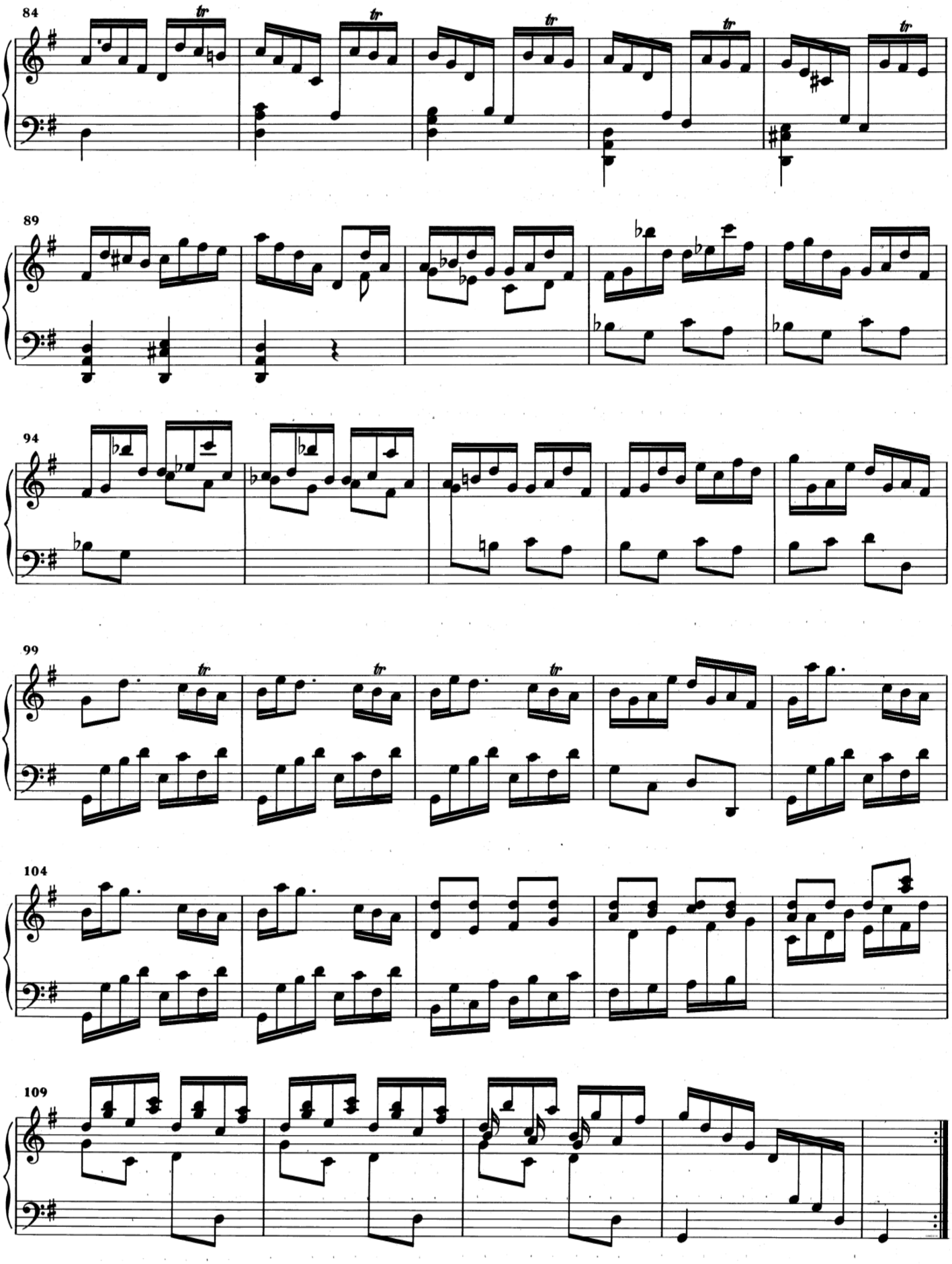
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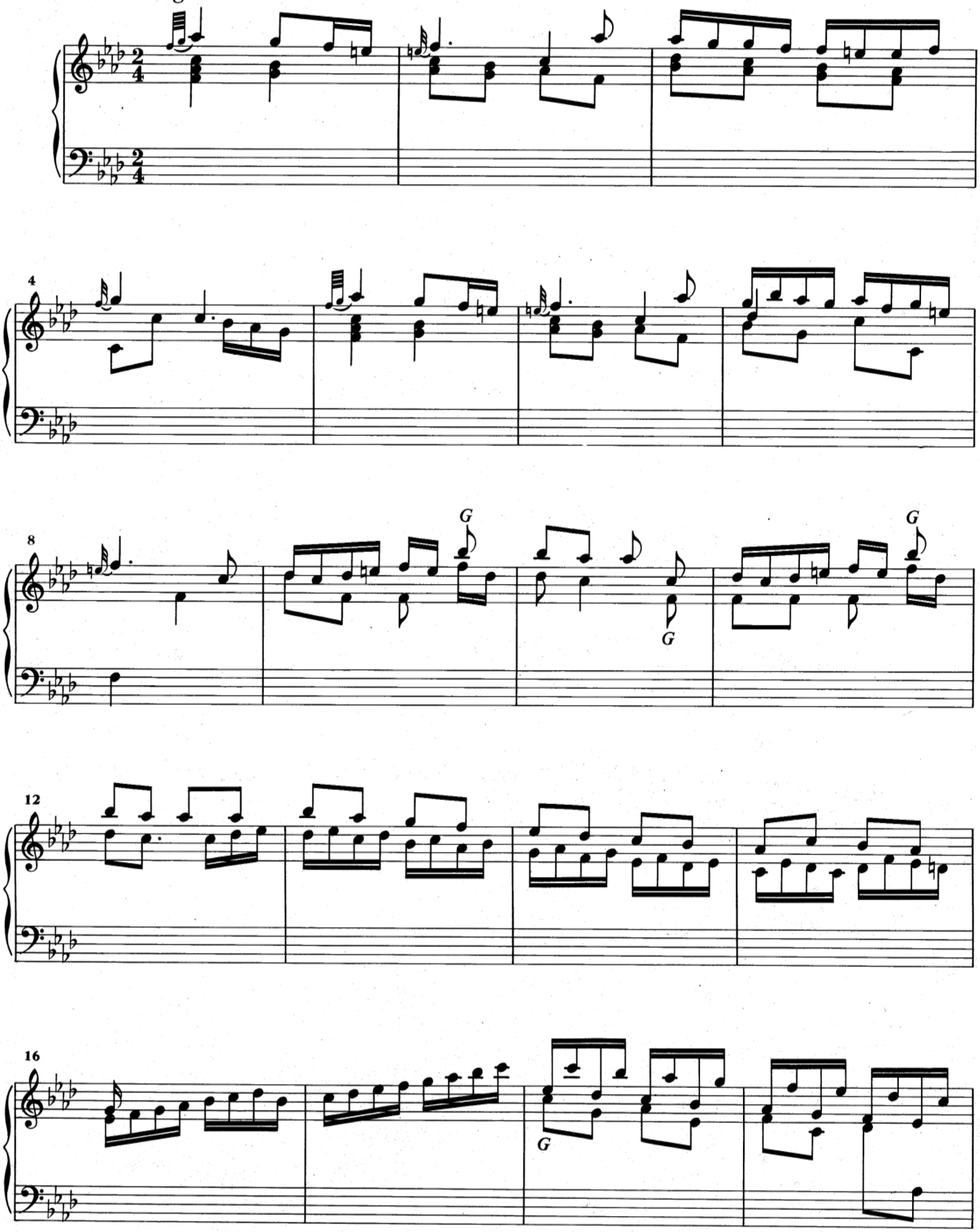

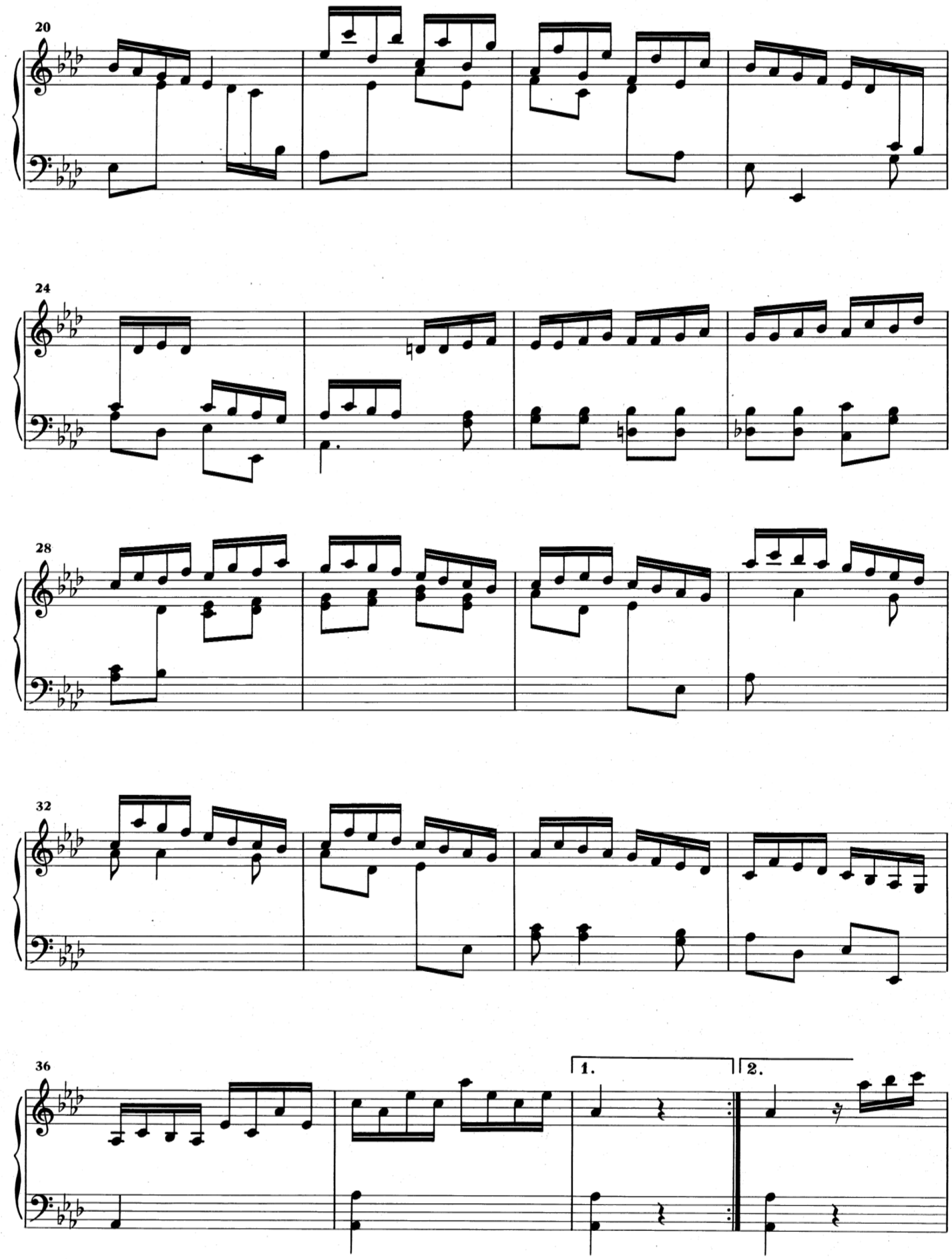
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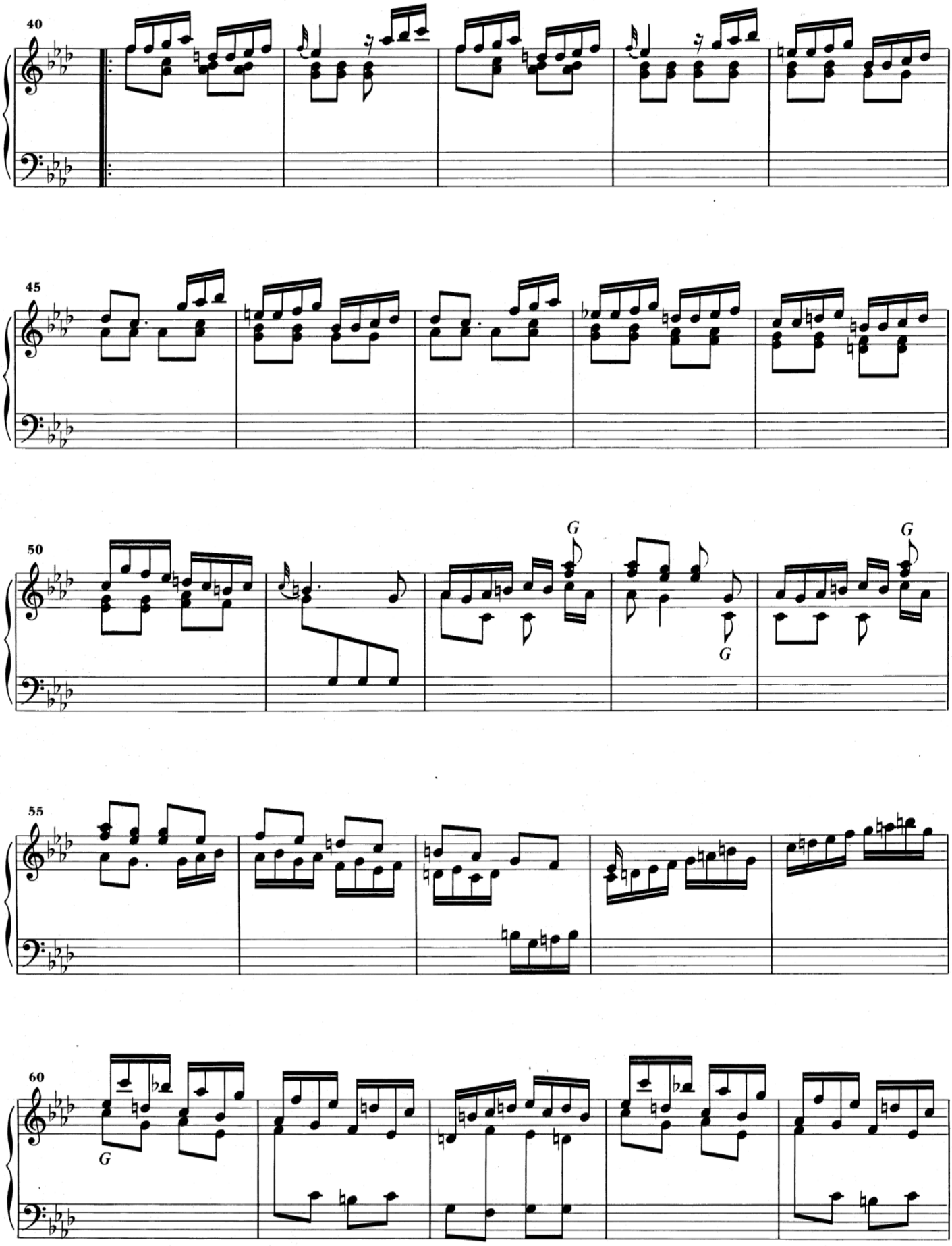
1.
2.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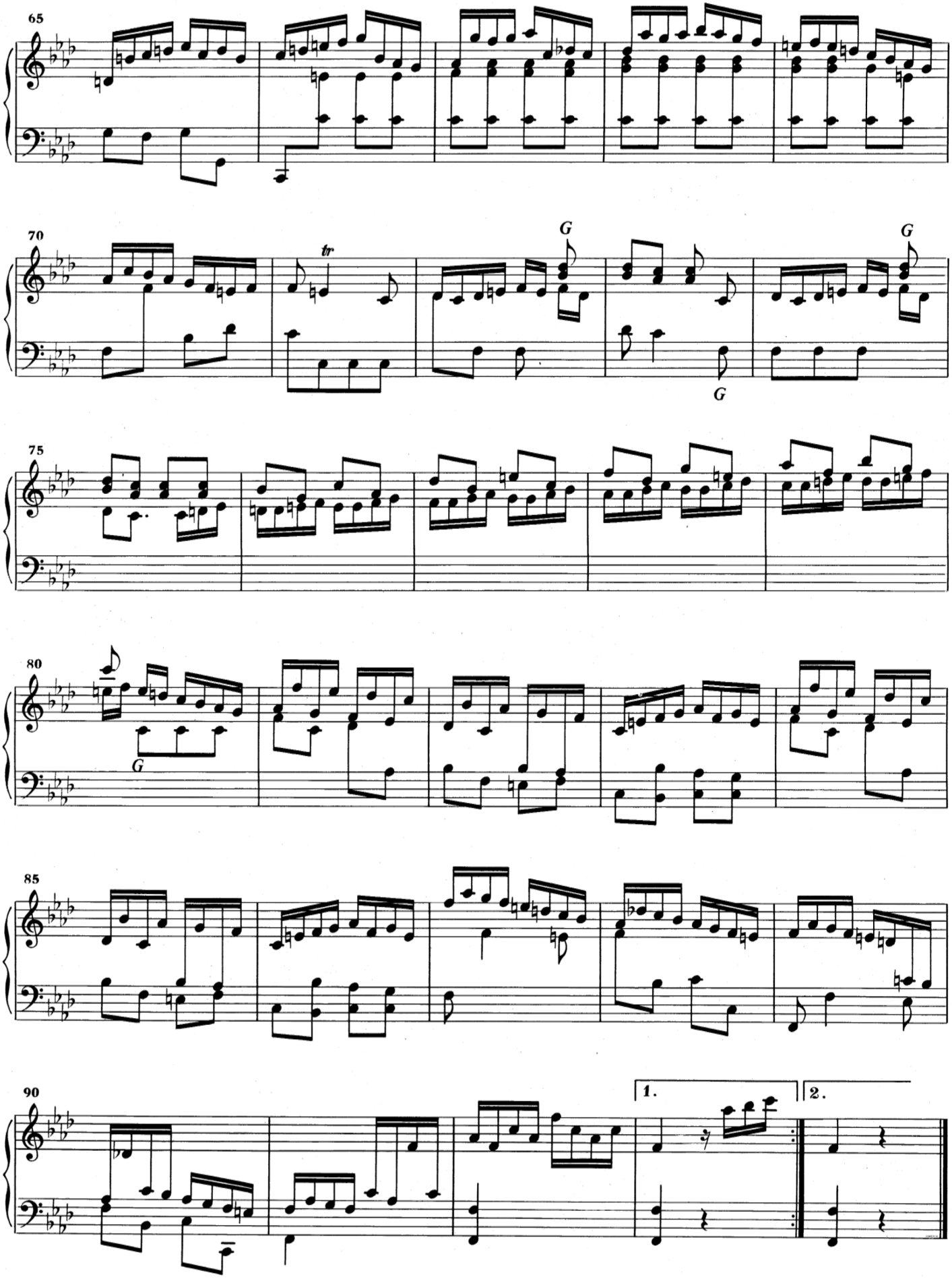
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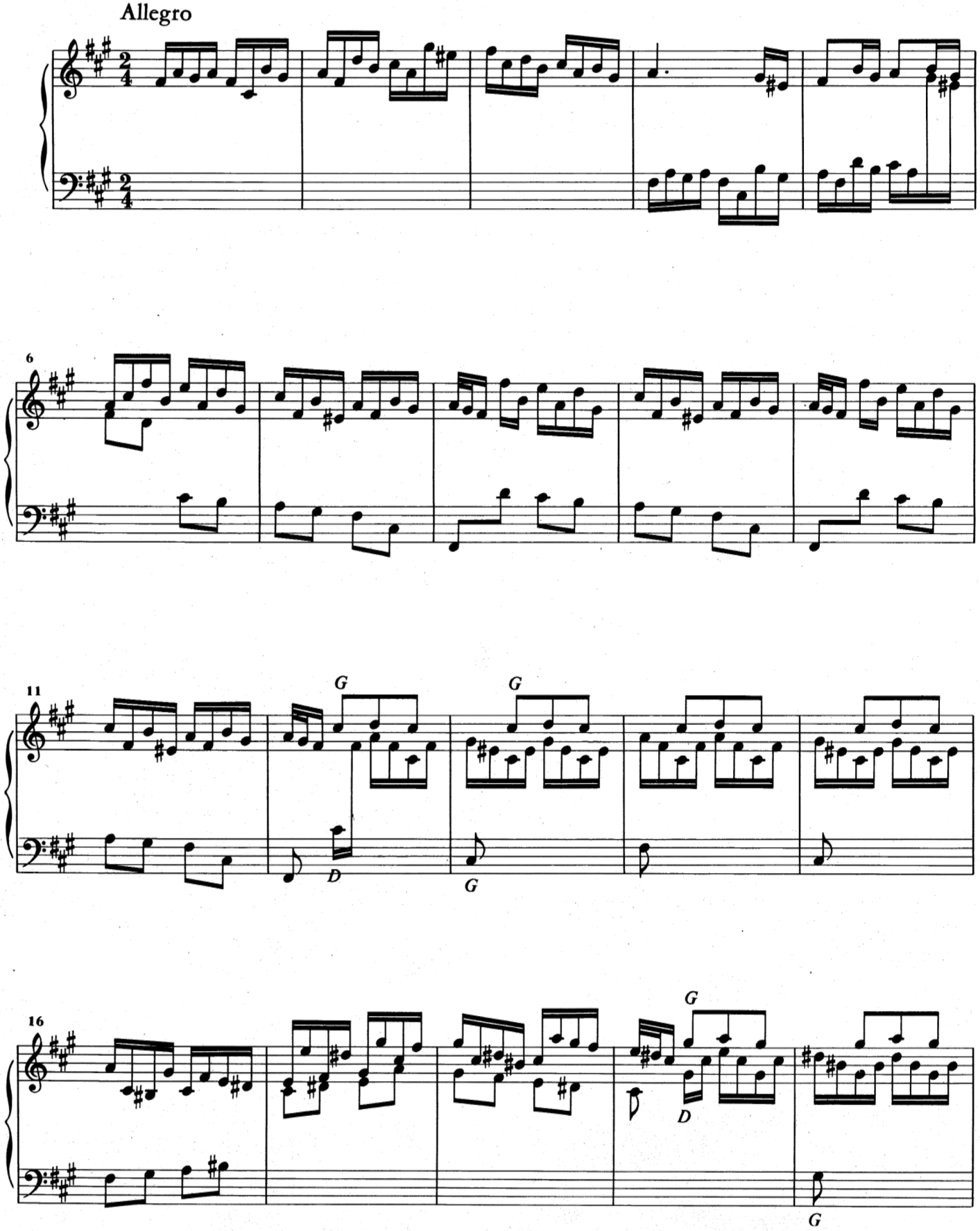
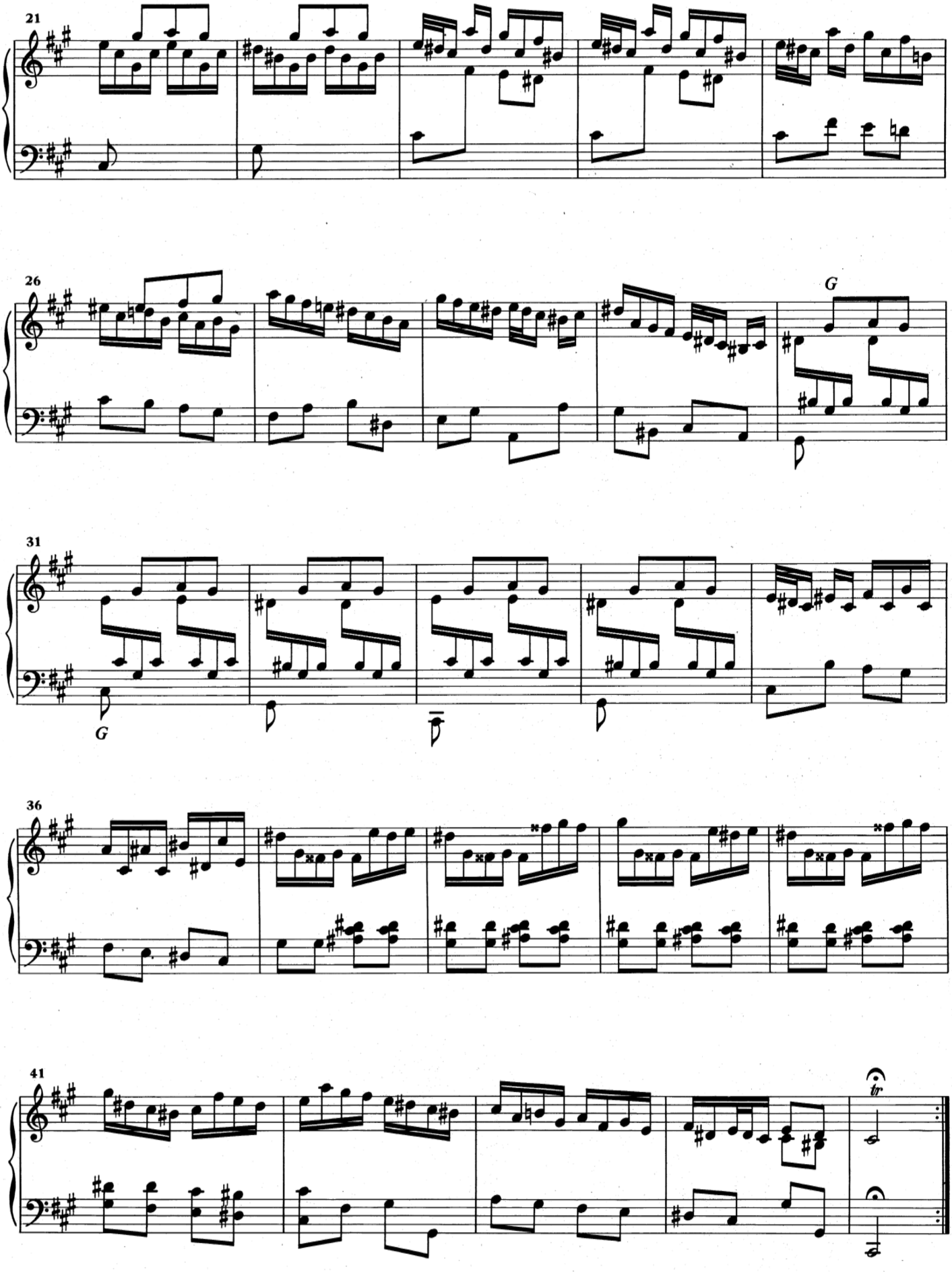
2.

# K. 25

Allegro

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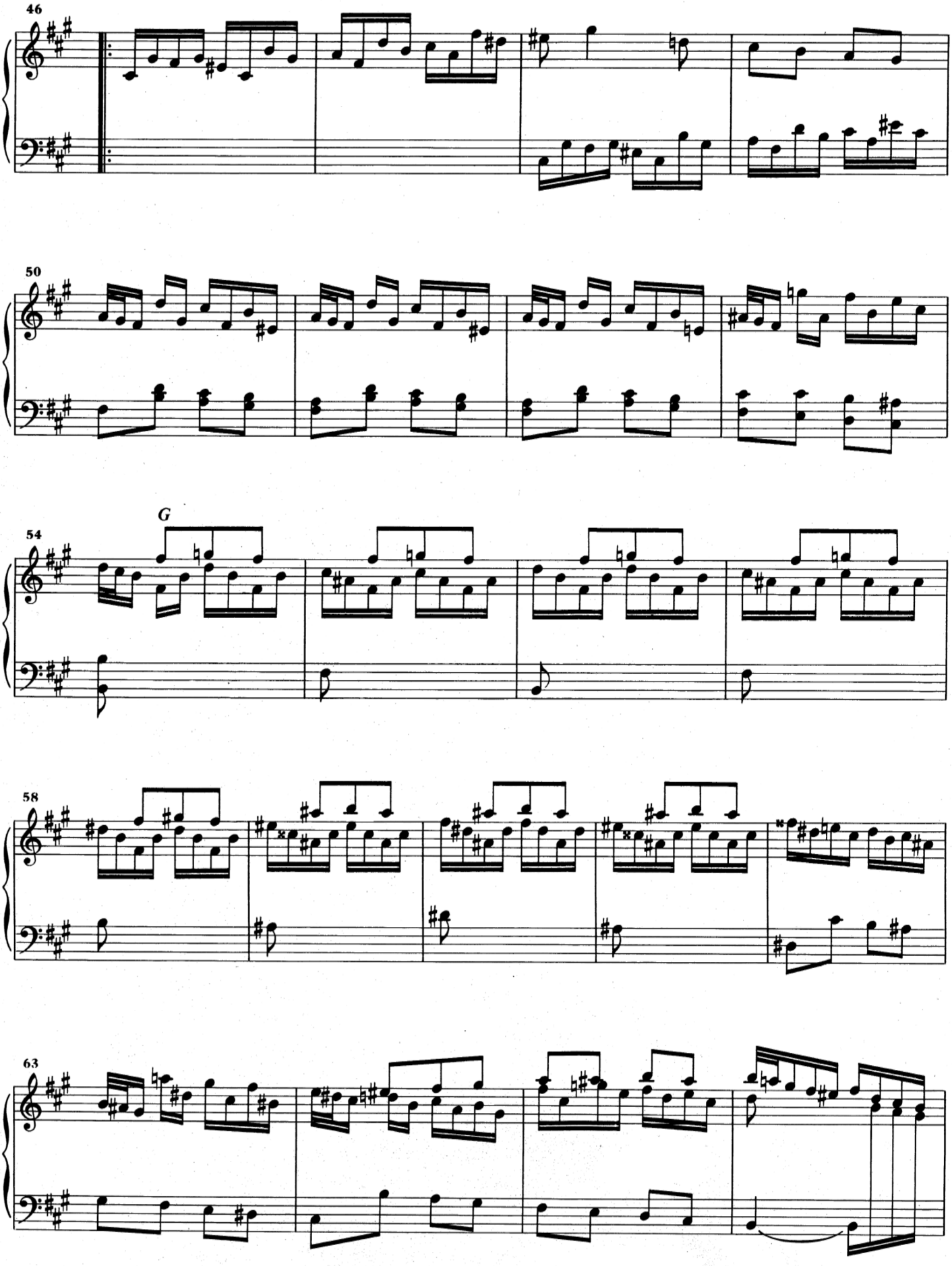
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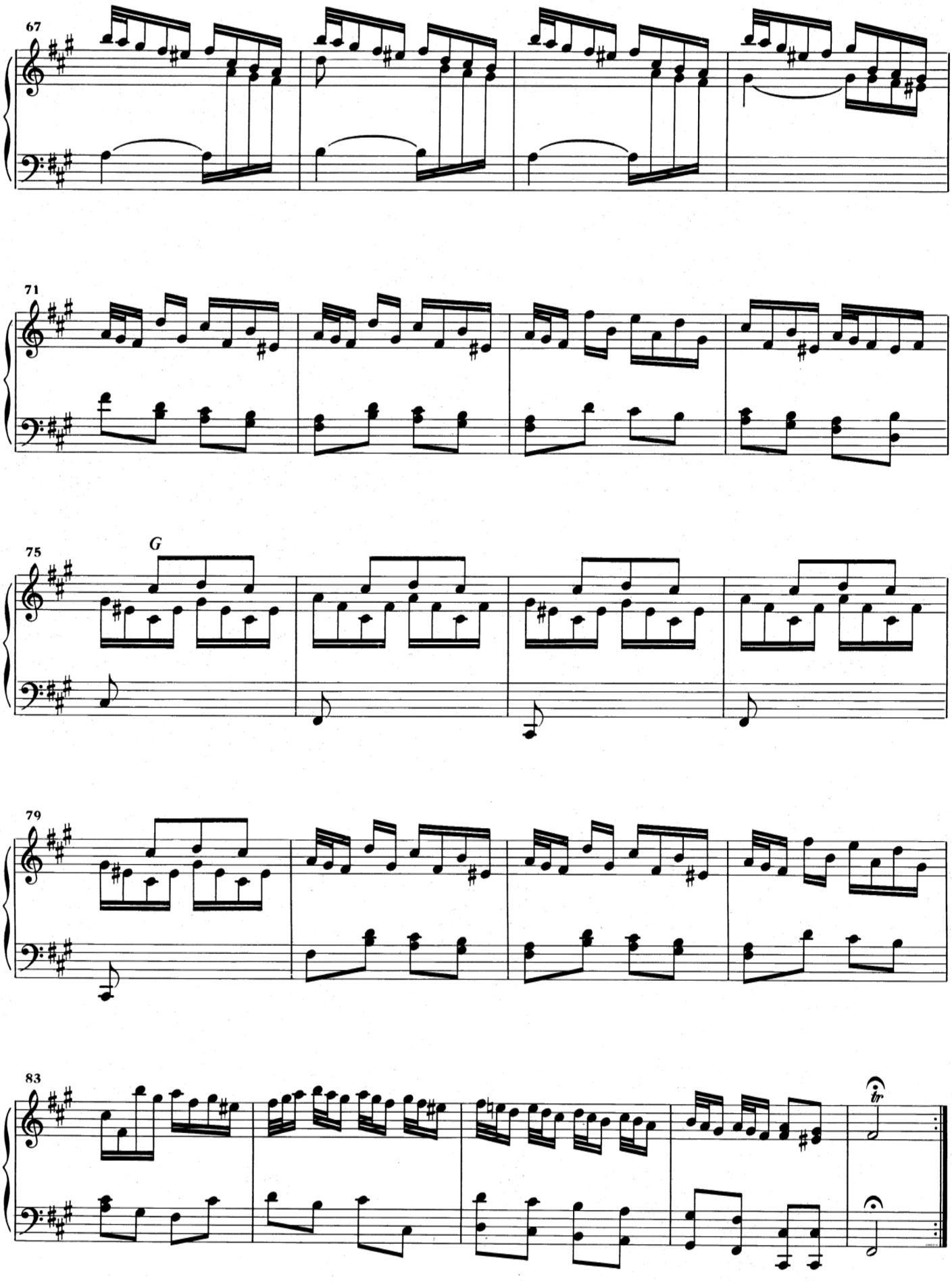
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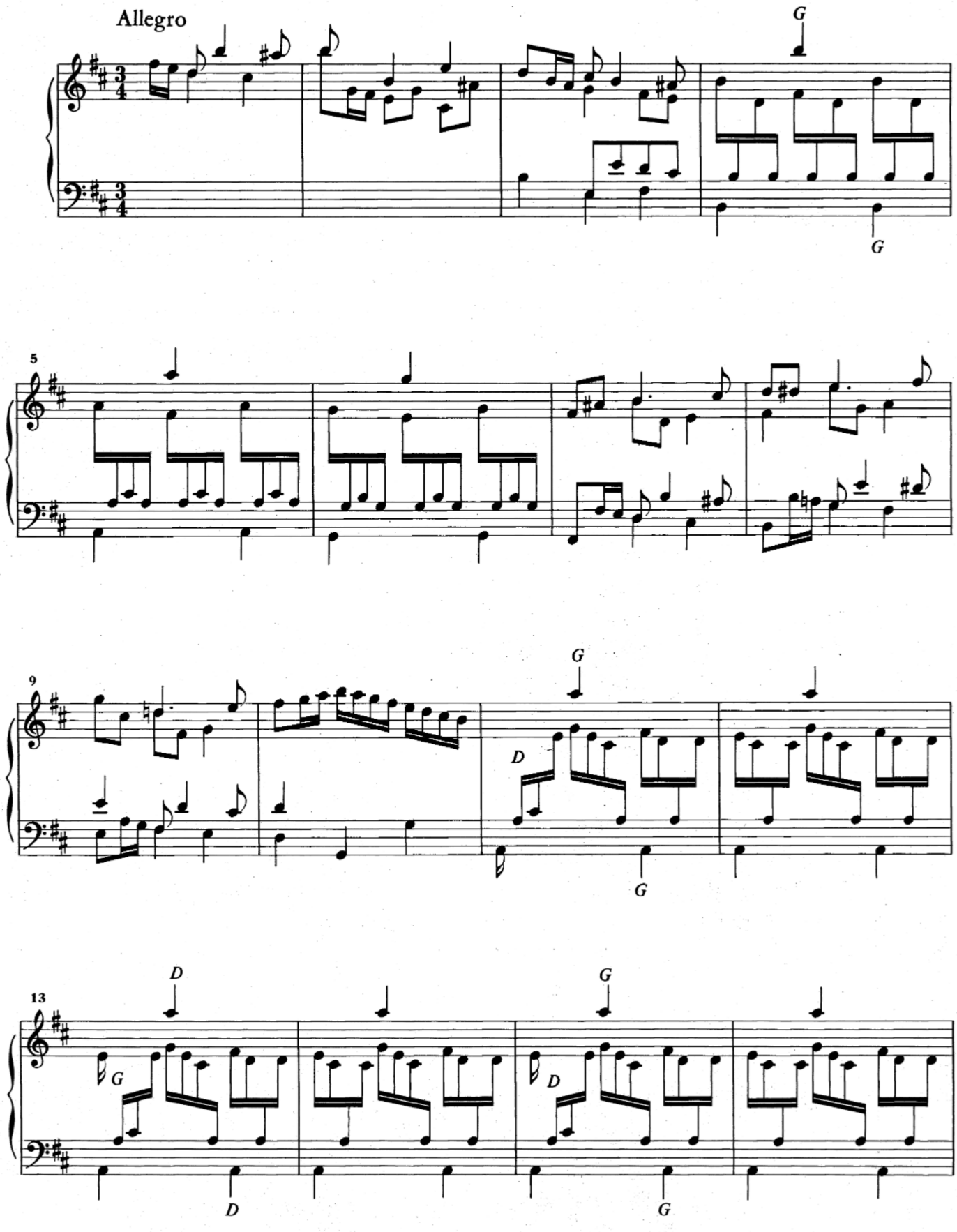
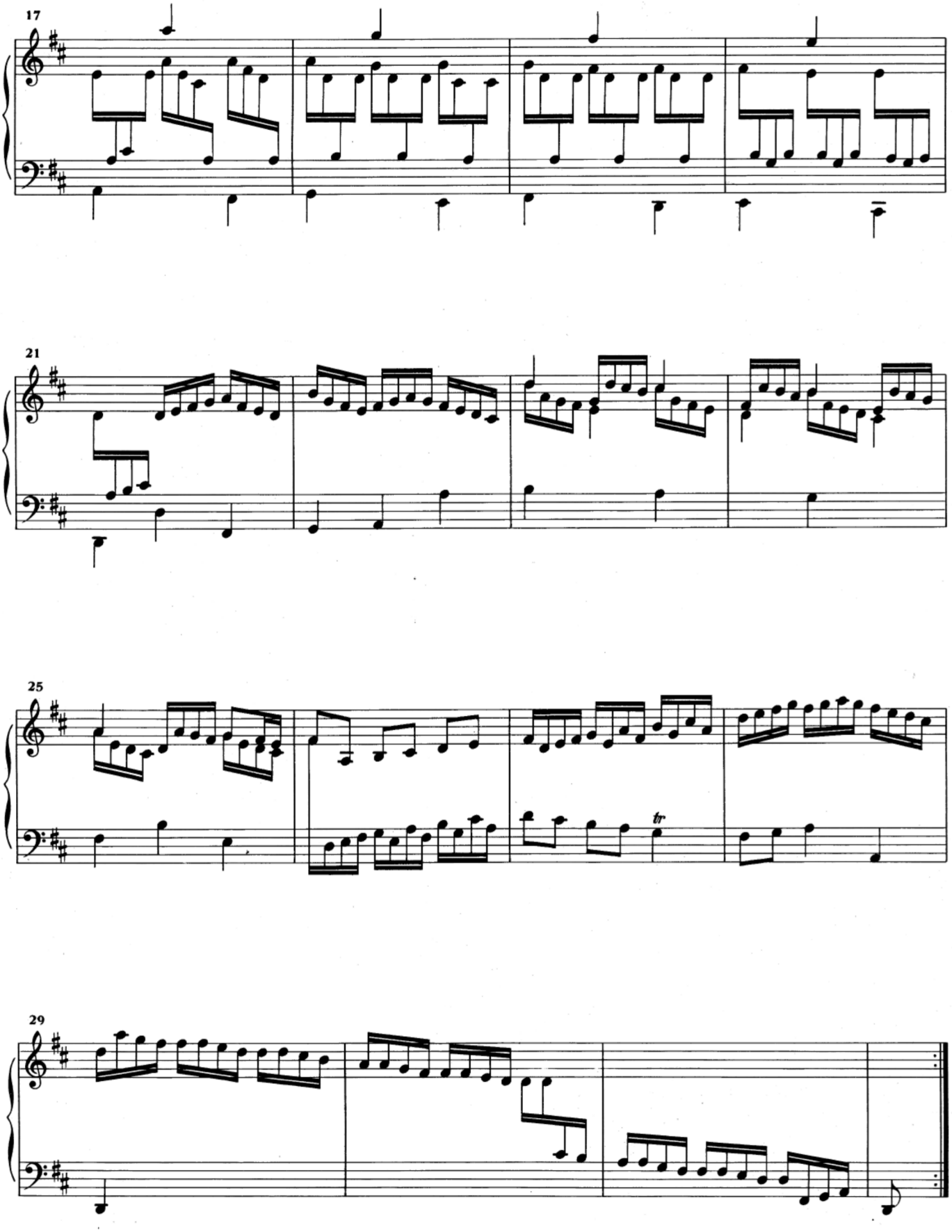
# K. 27

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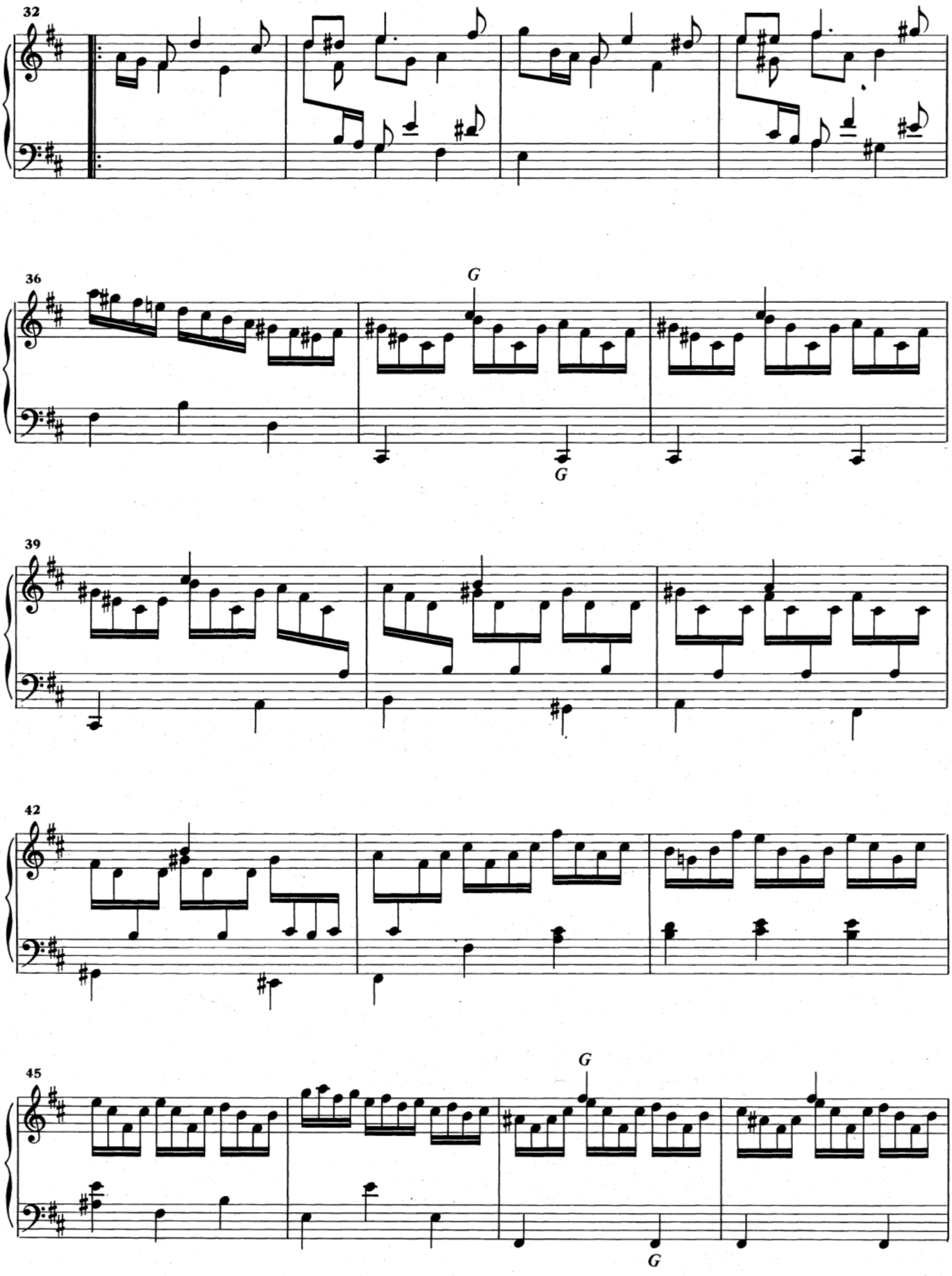
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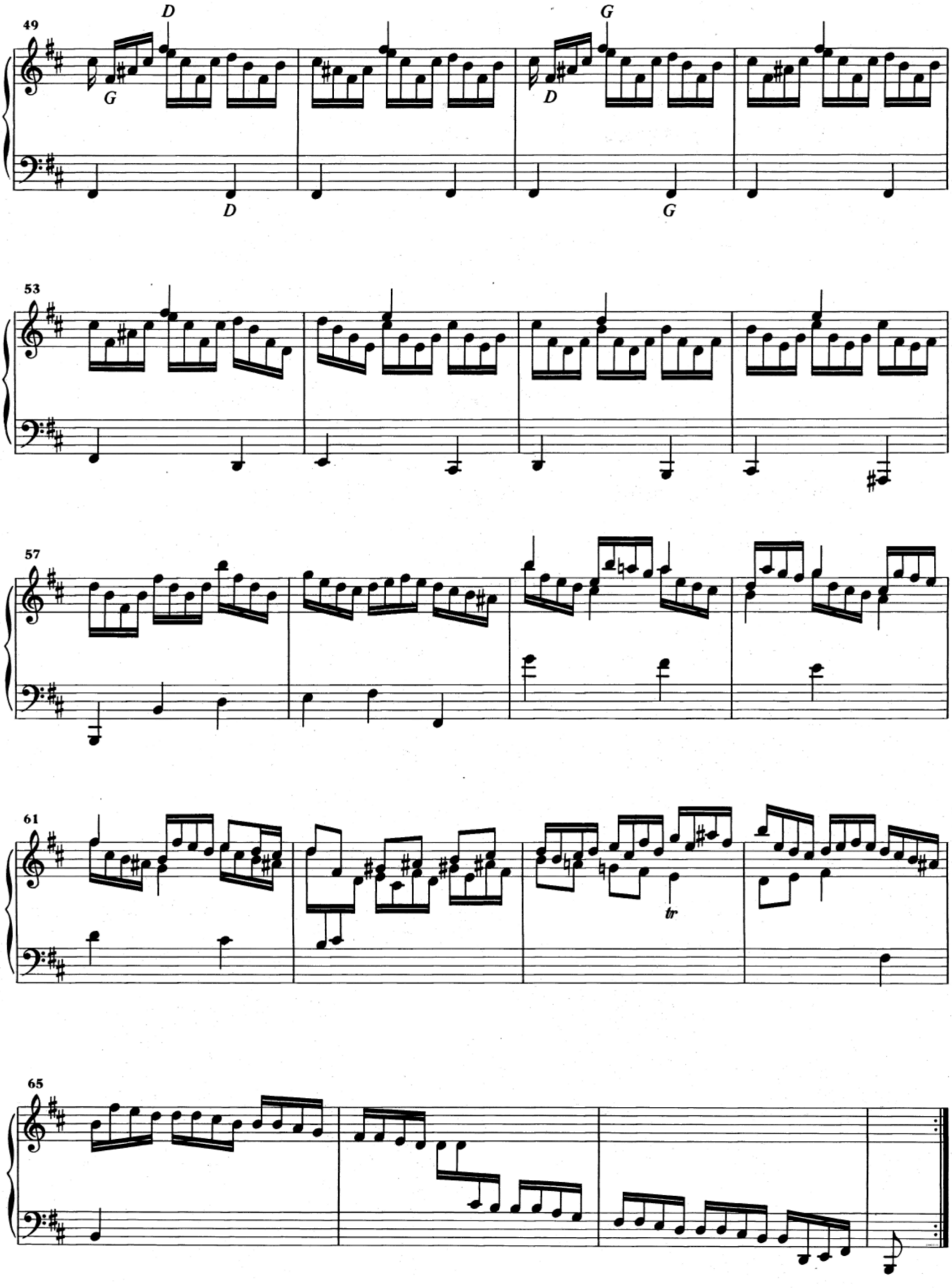
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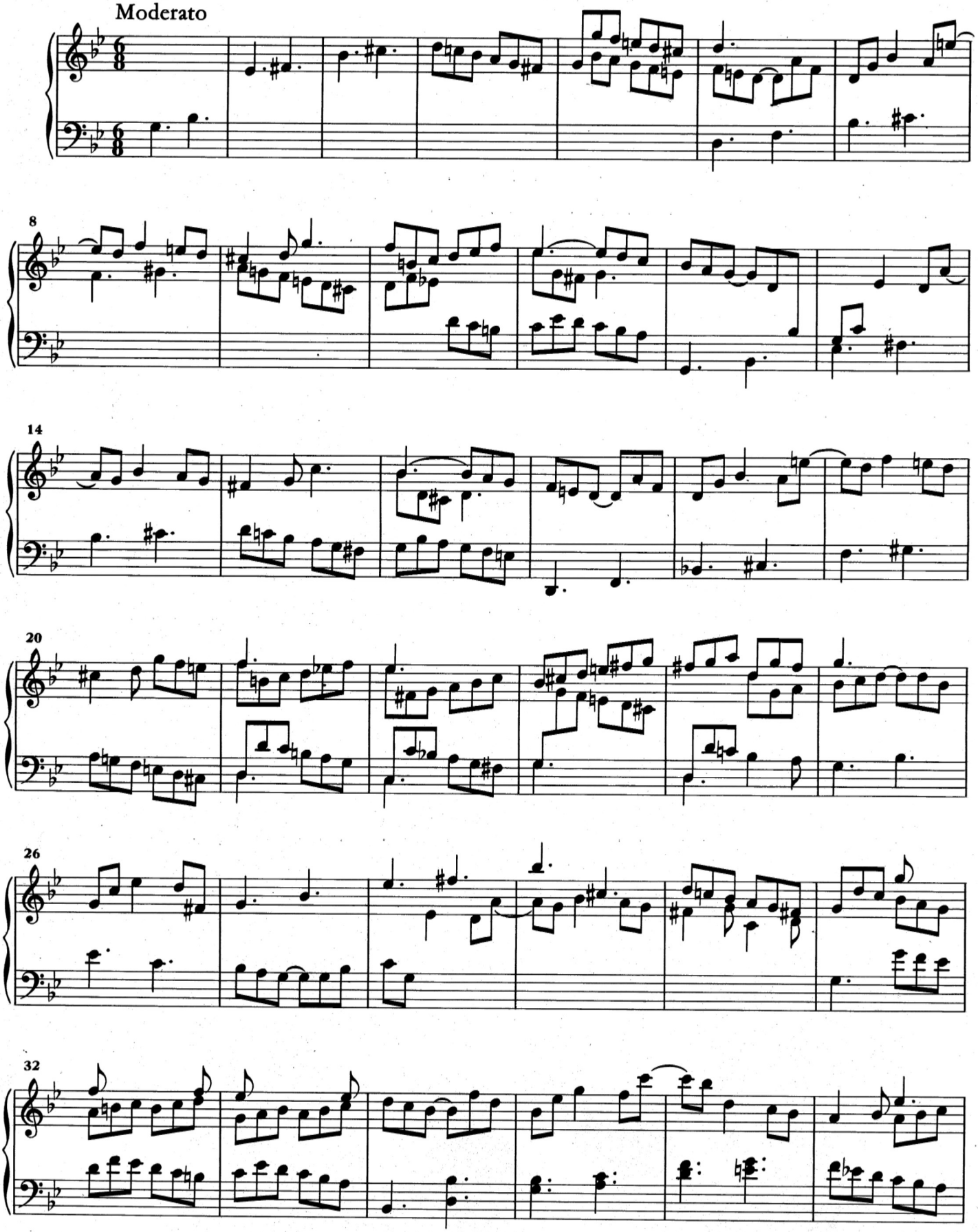
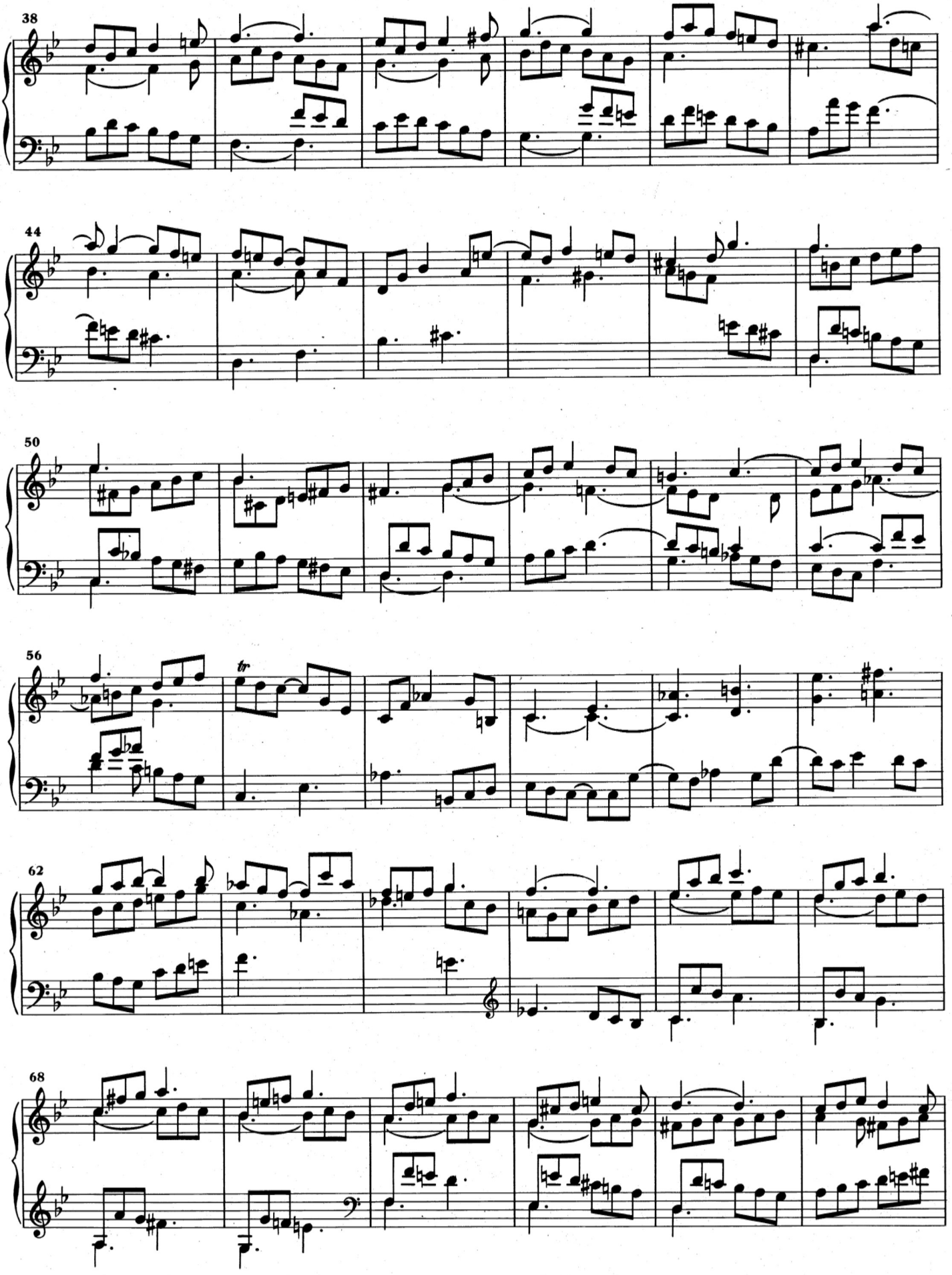
65

# K. 30

FUGA
Moderato

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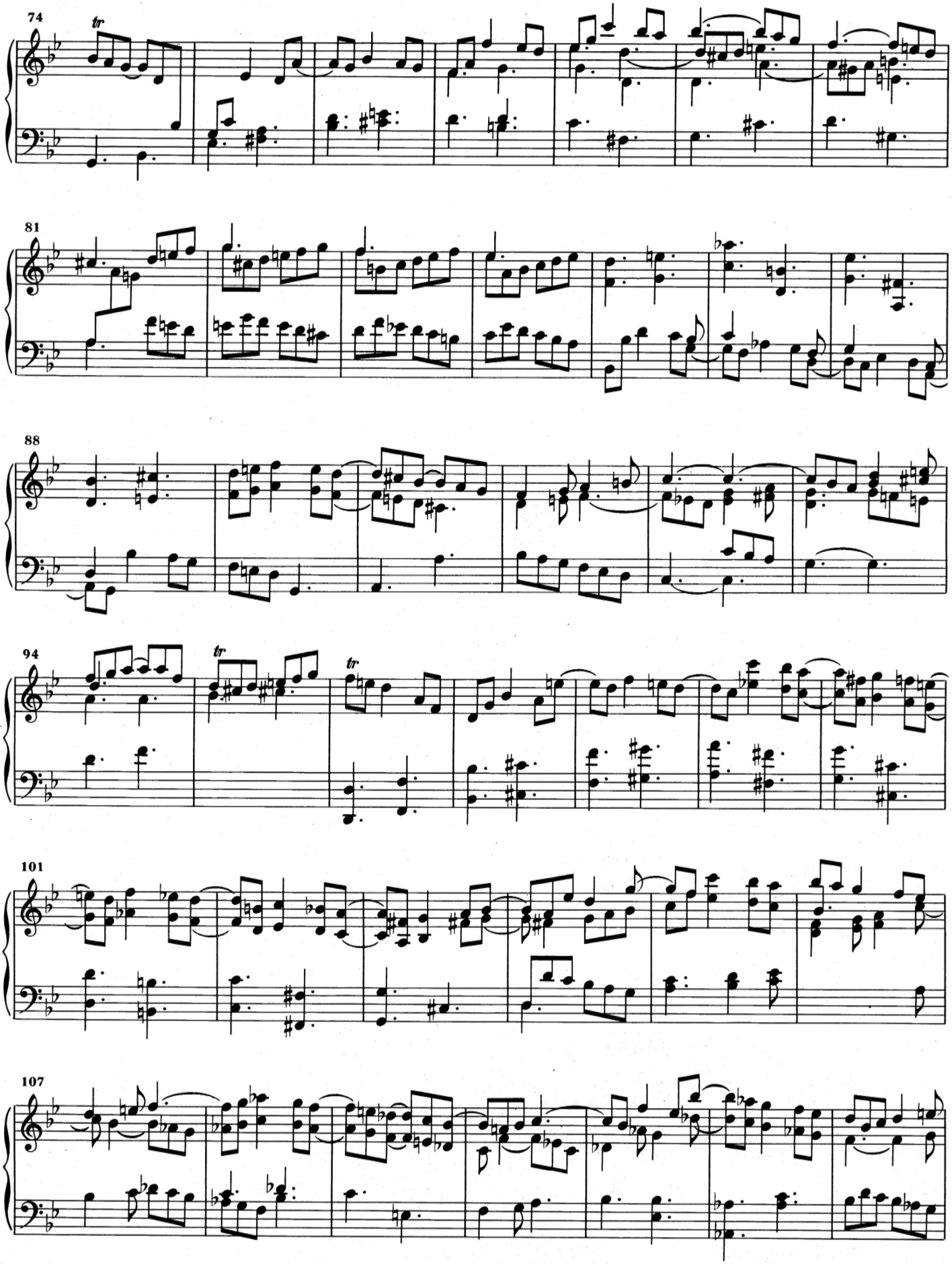
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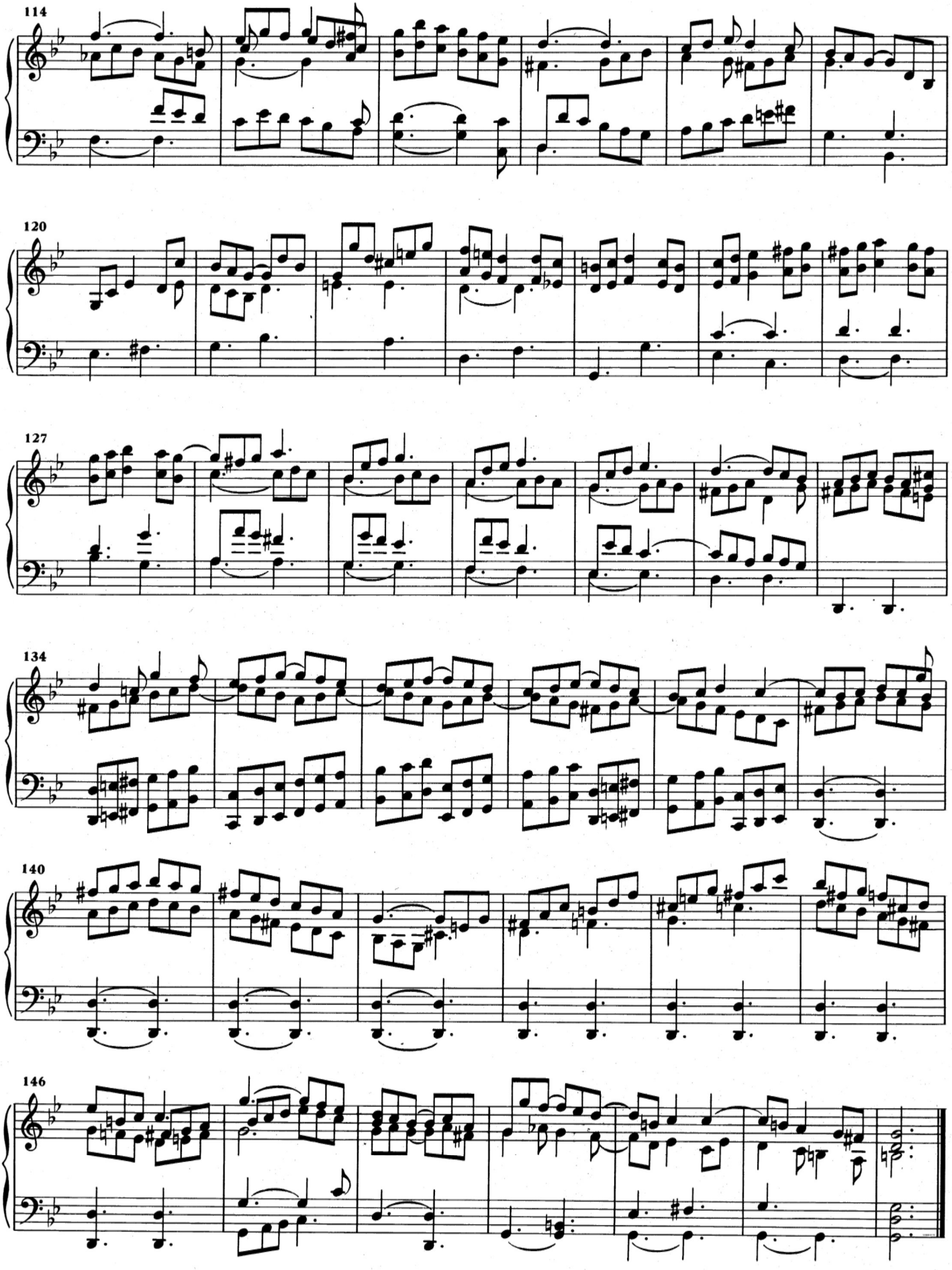
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# K. 32

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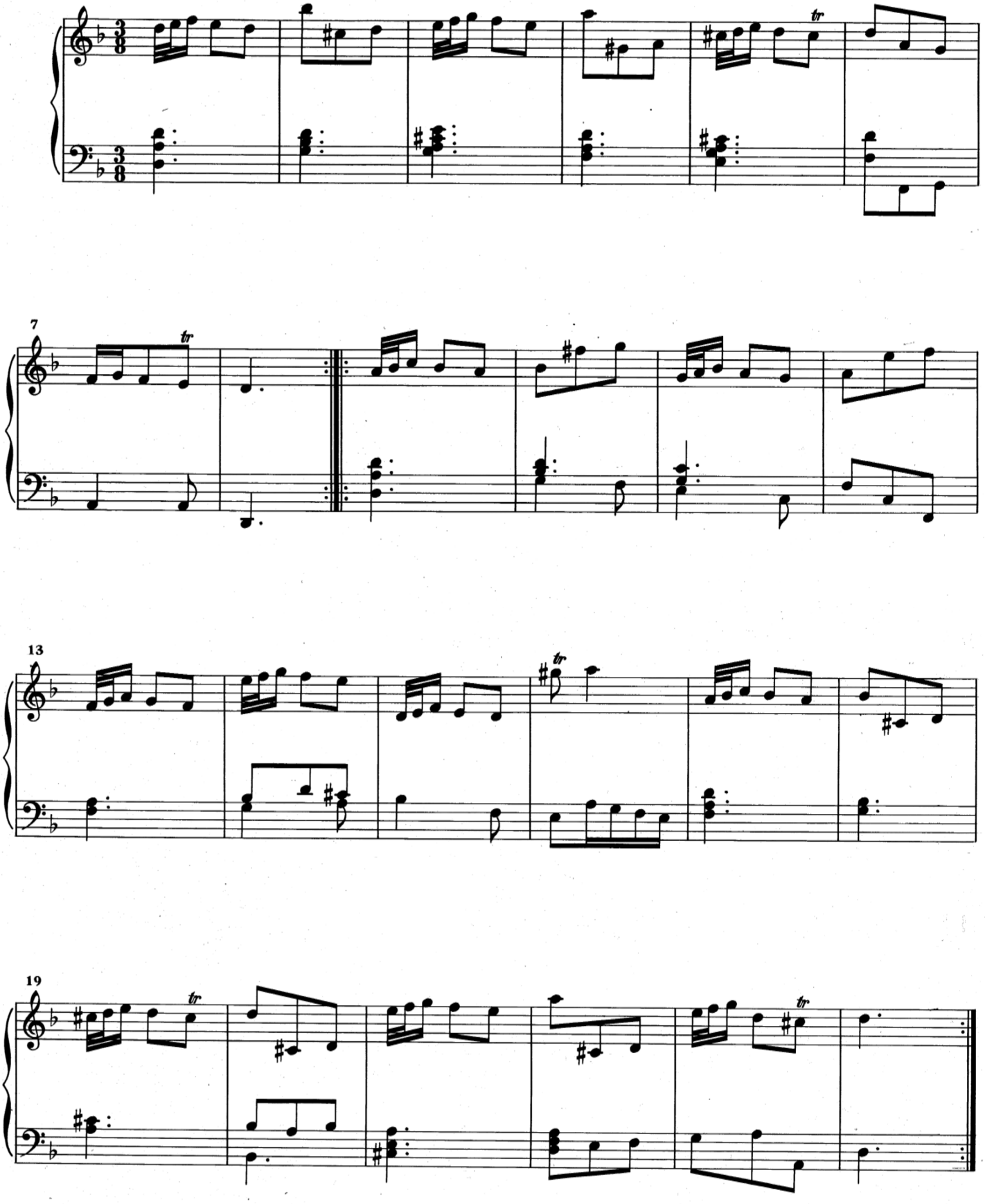

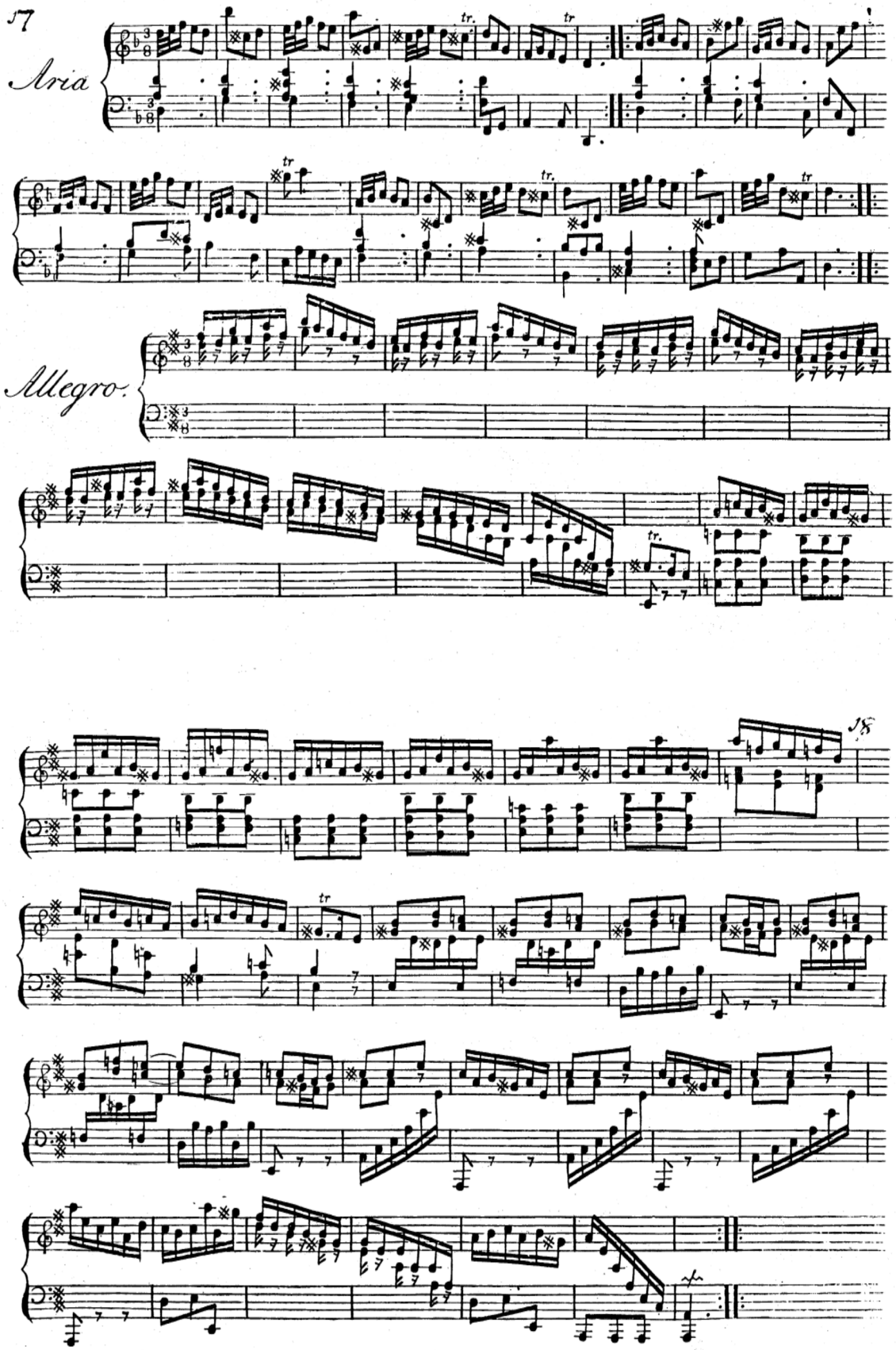
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Aria
Allegro.
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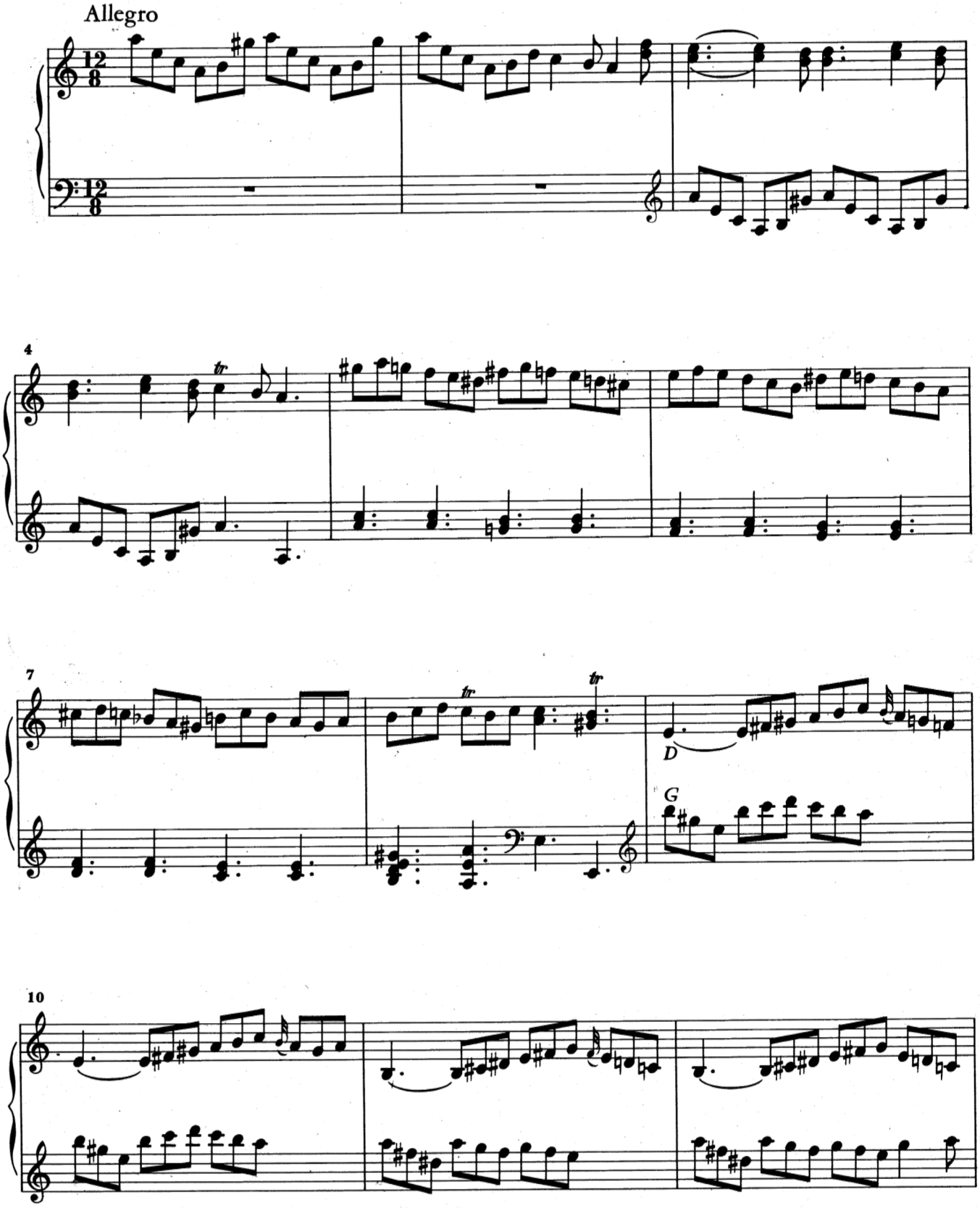
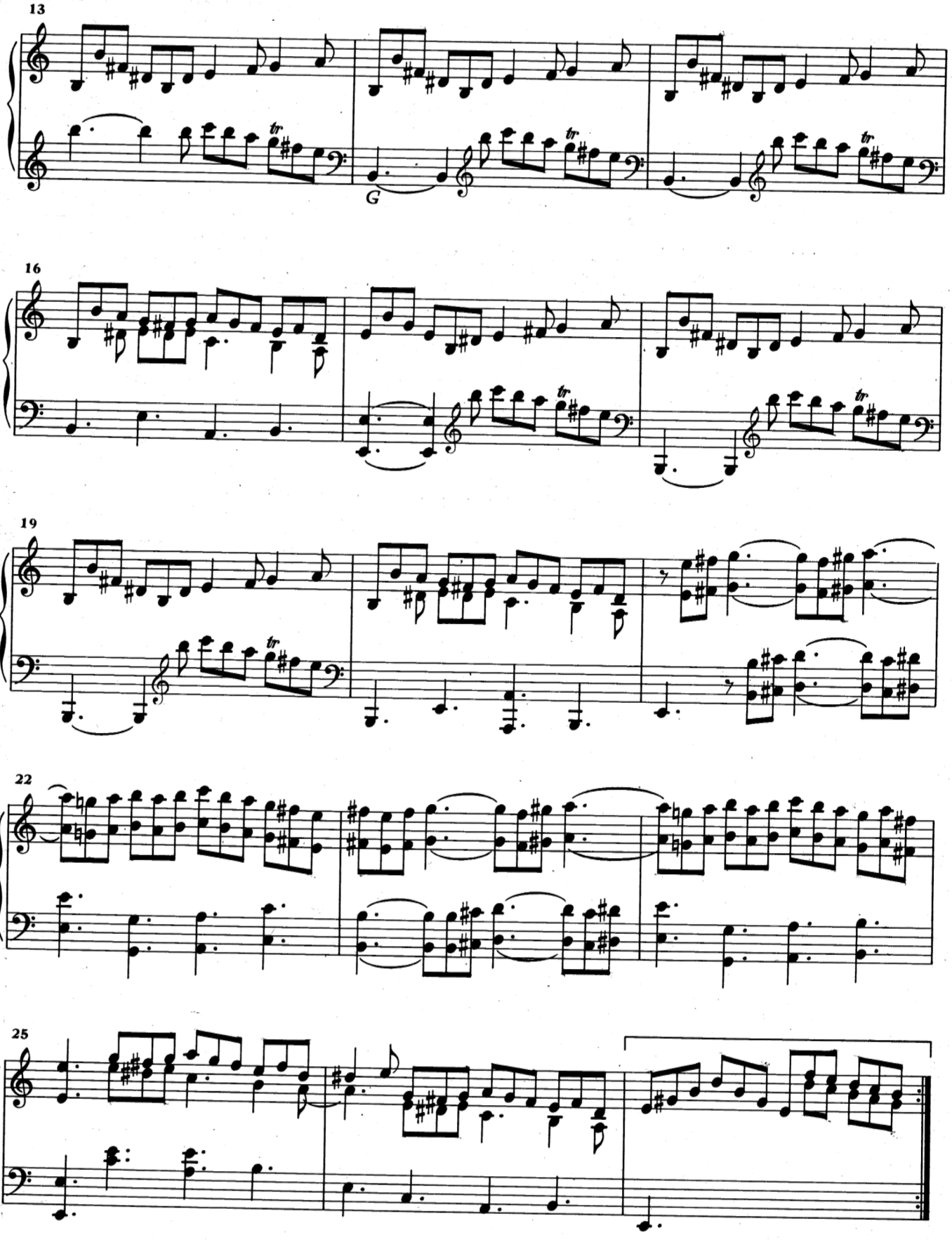
# K. 54

Allegro

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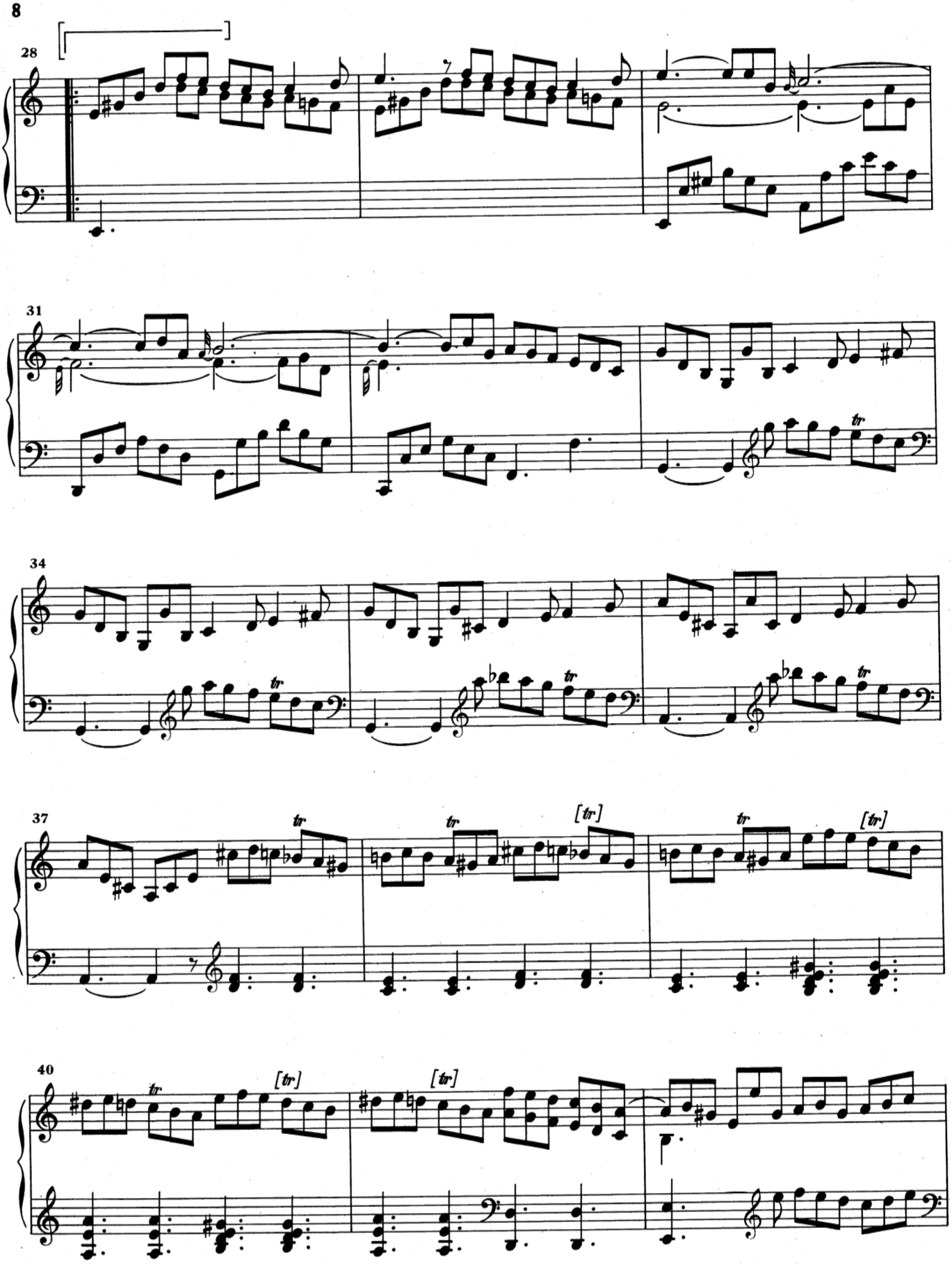
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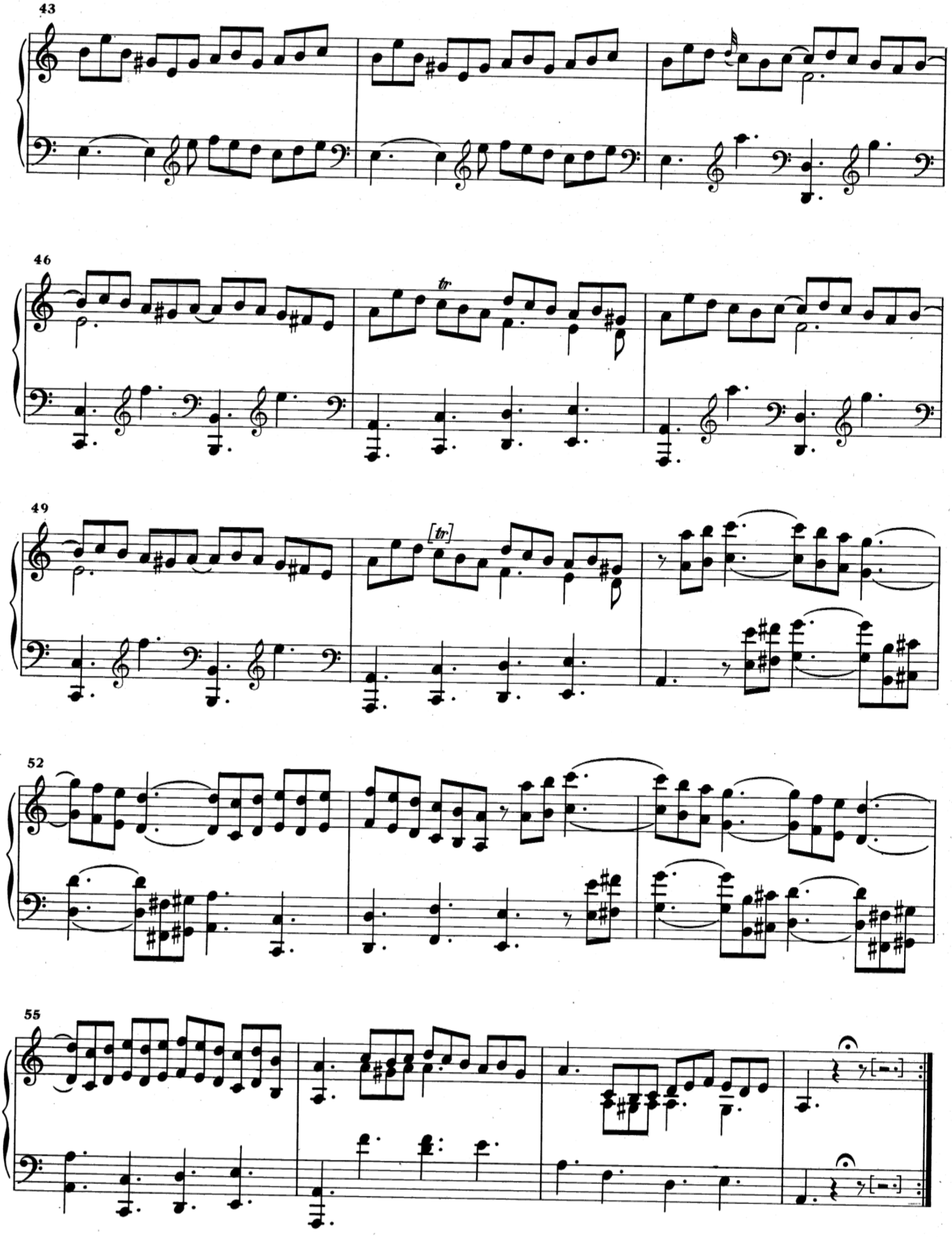
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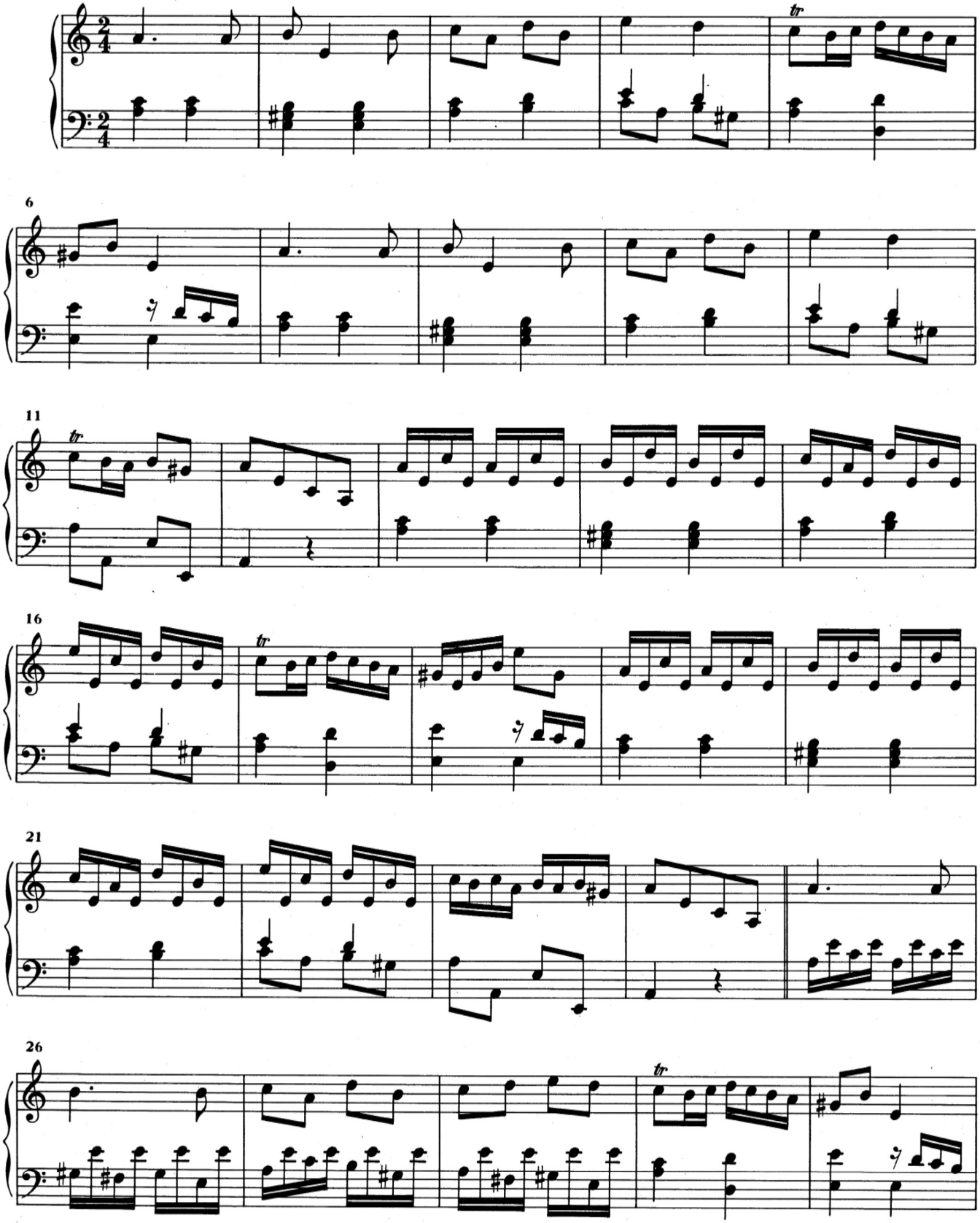

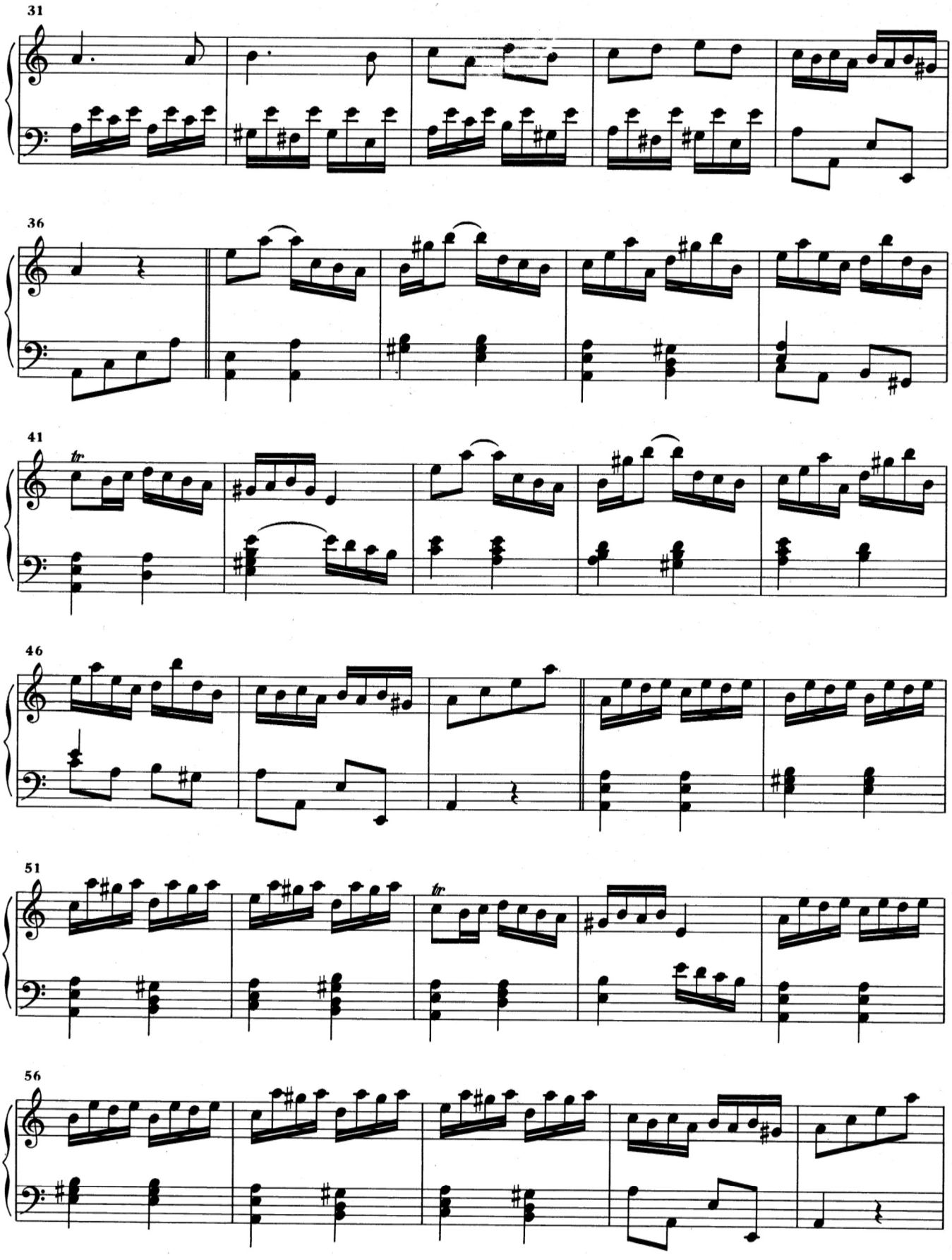
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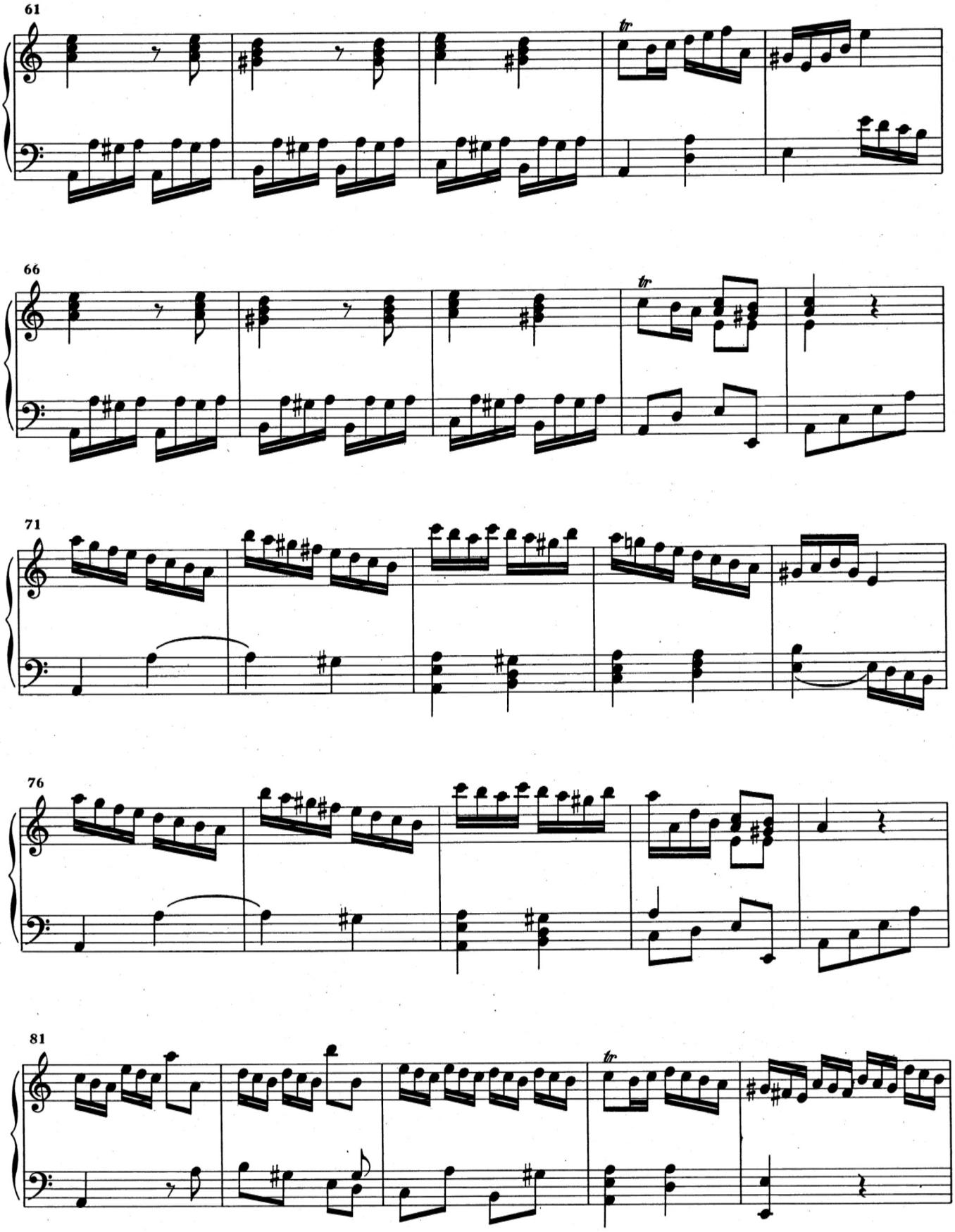
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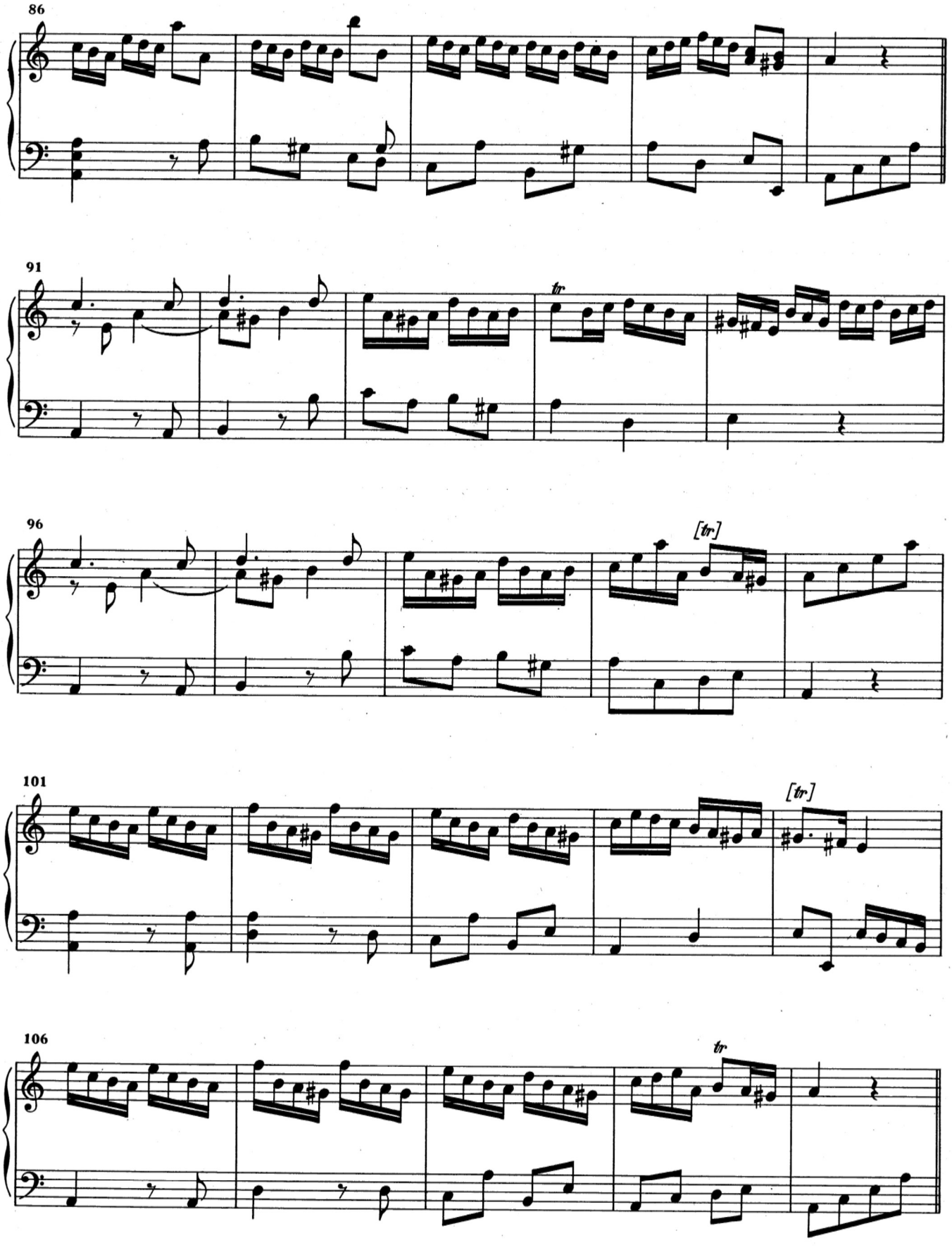
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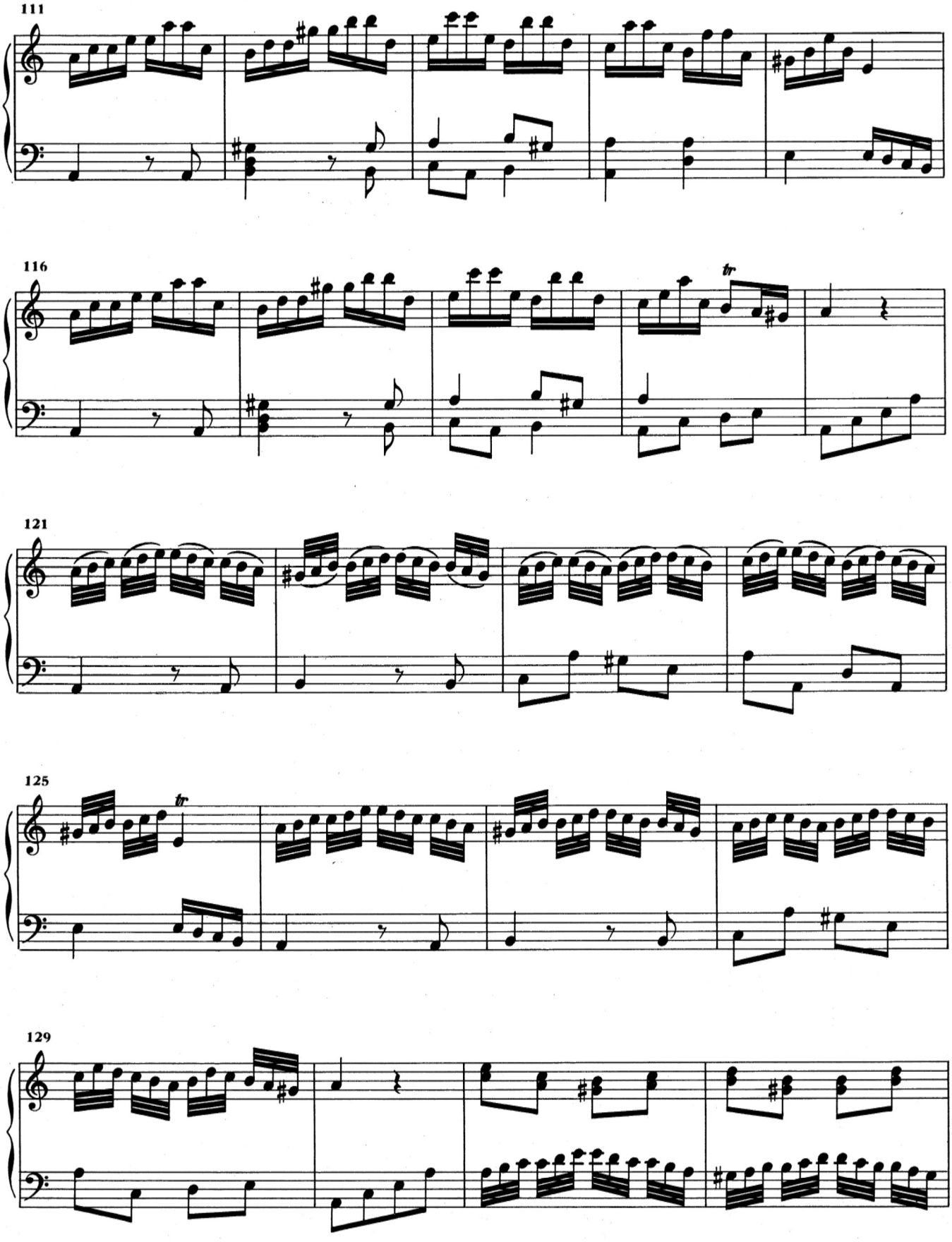
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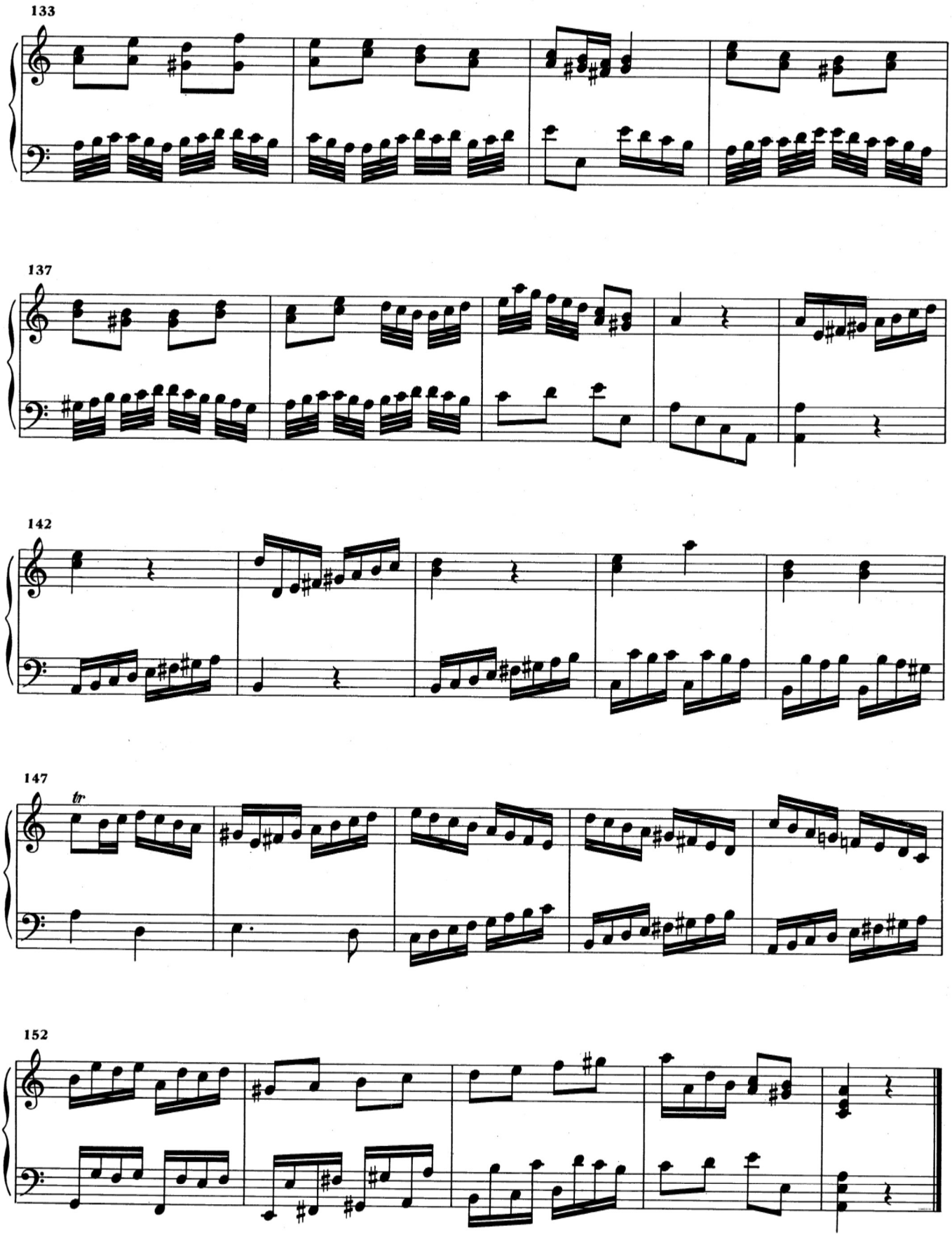
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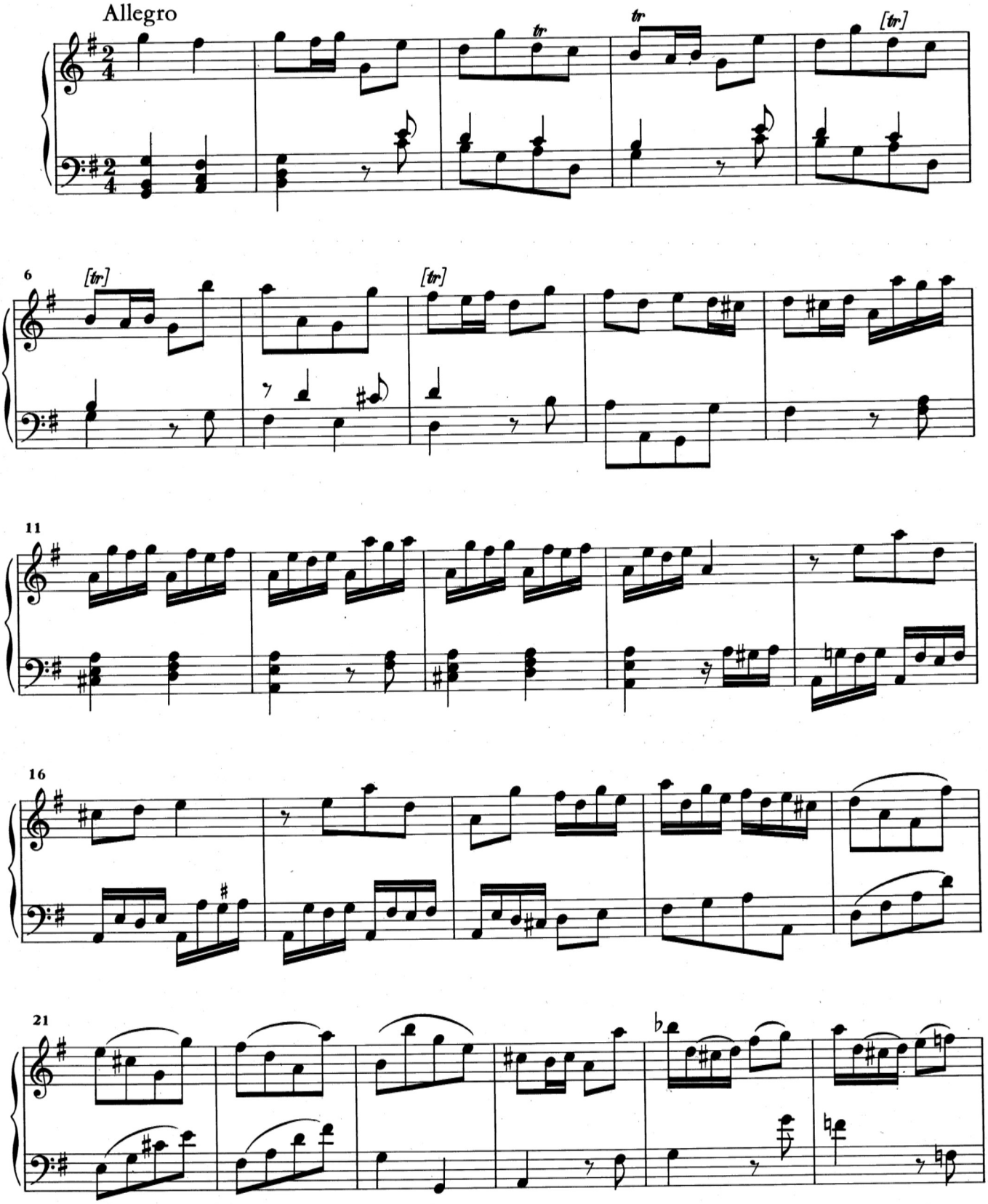
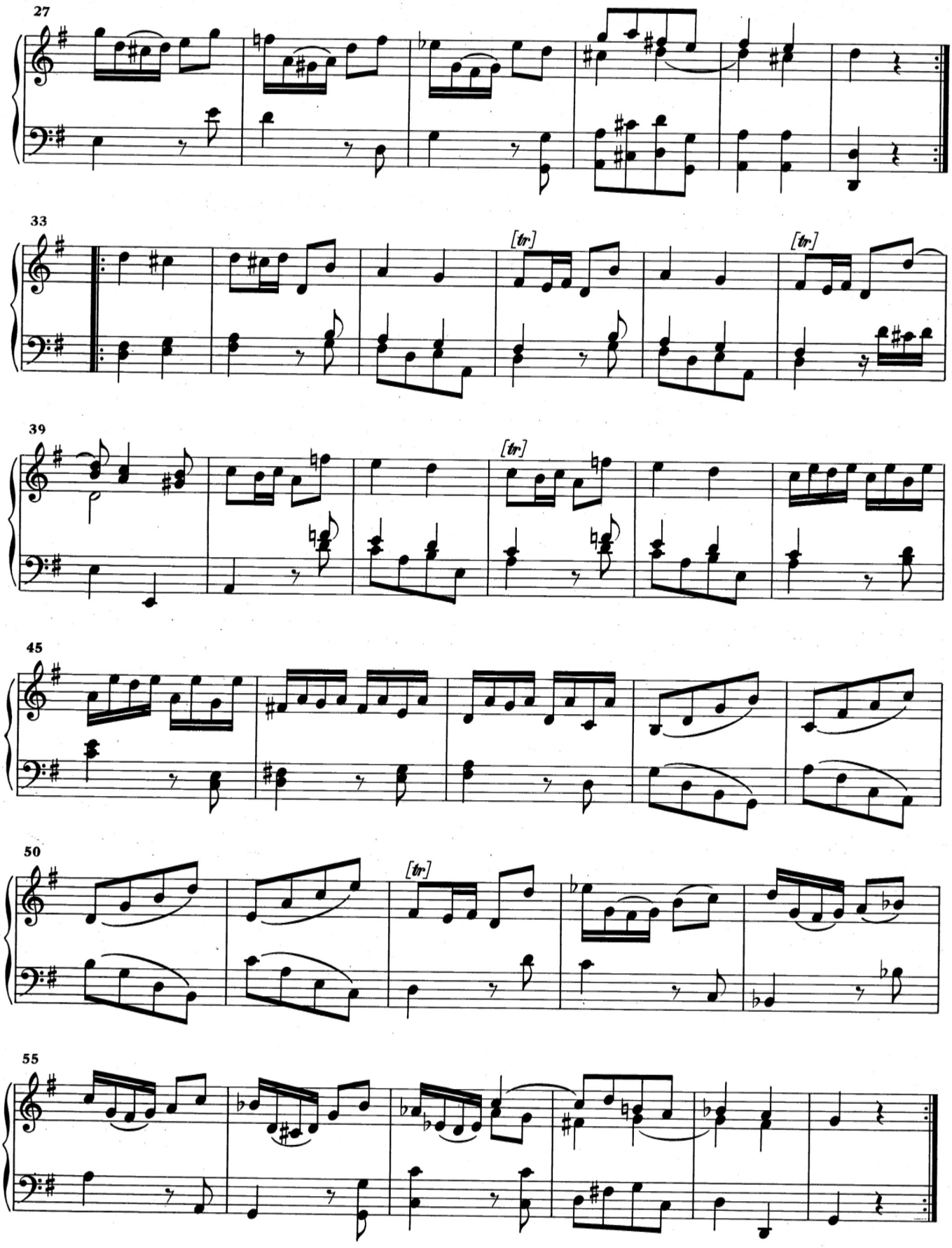
# K. 63

CAPRICCIO
Allegro

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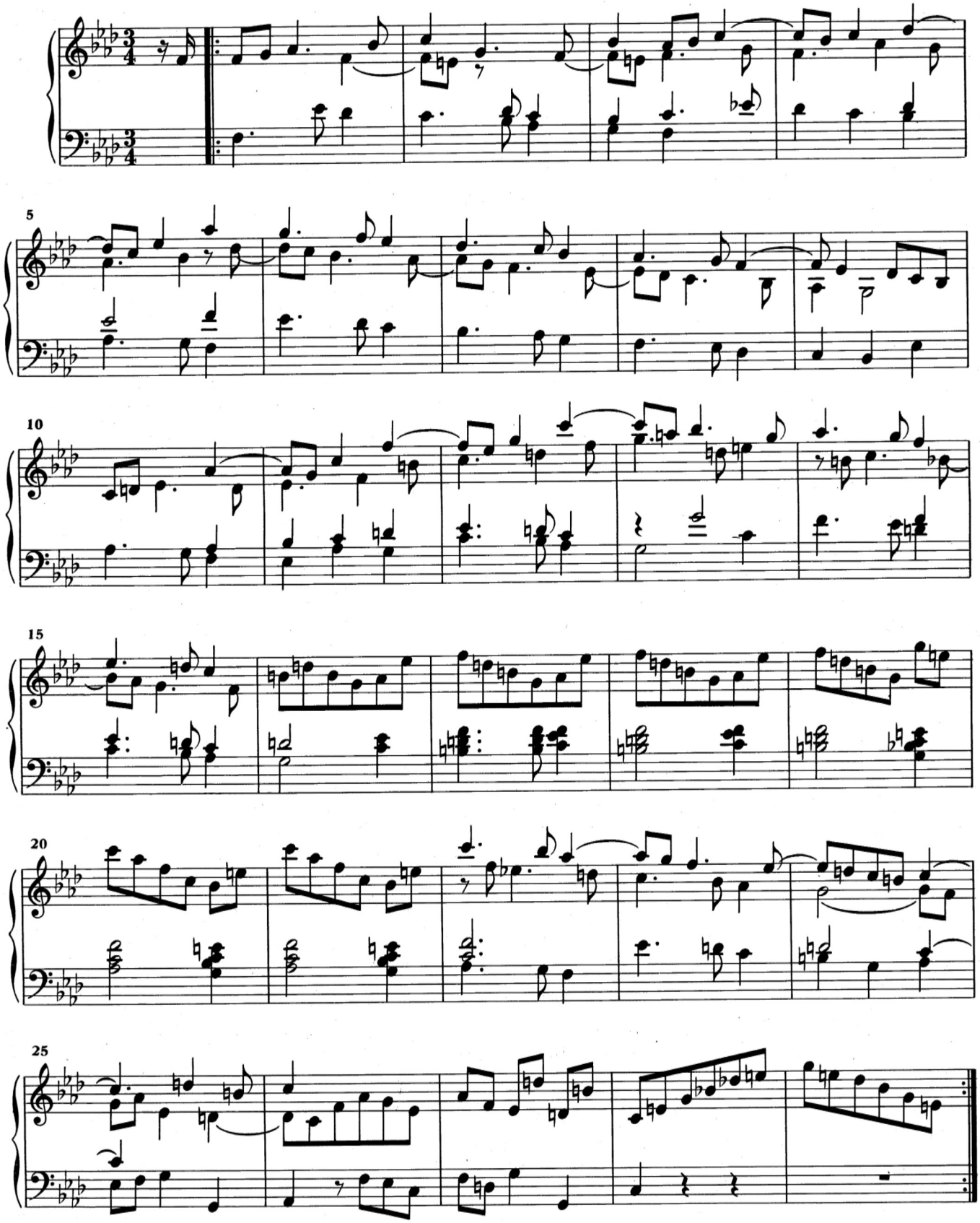
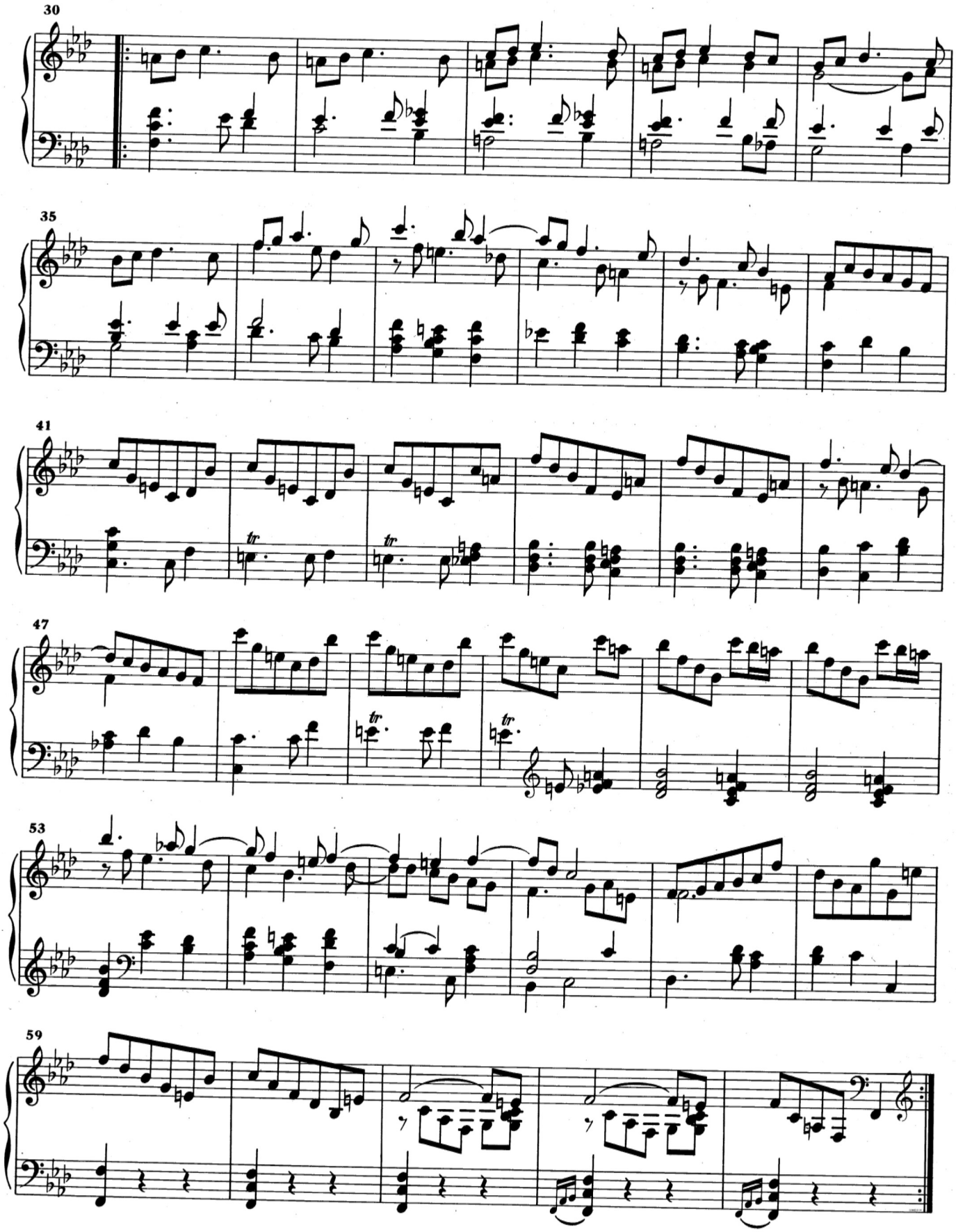
# K. 69

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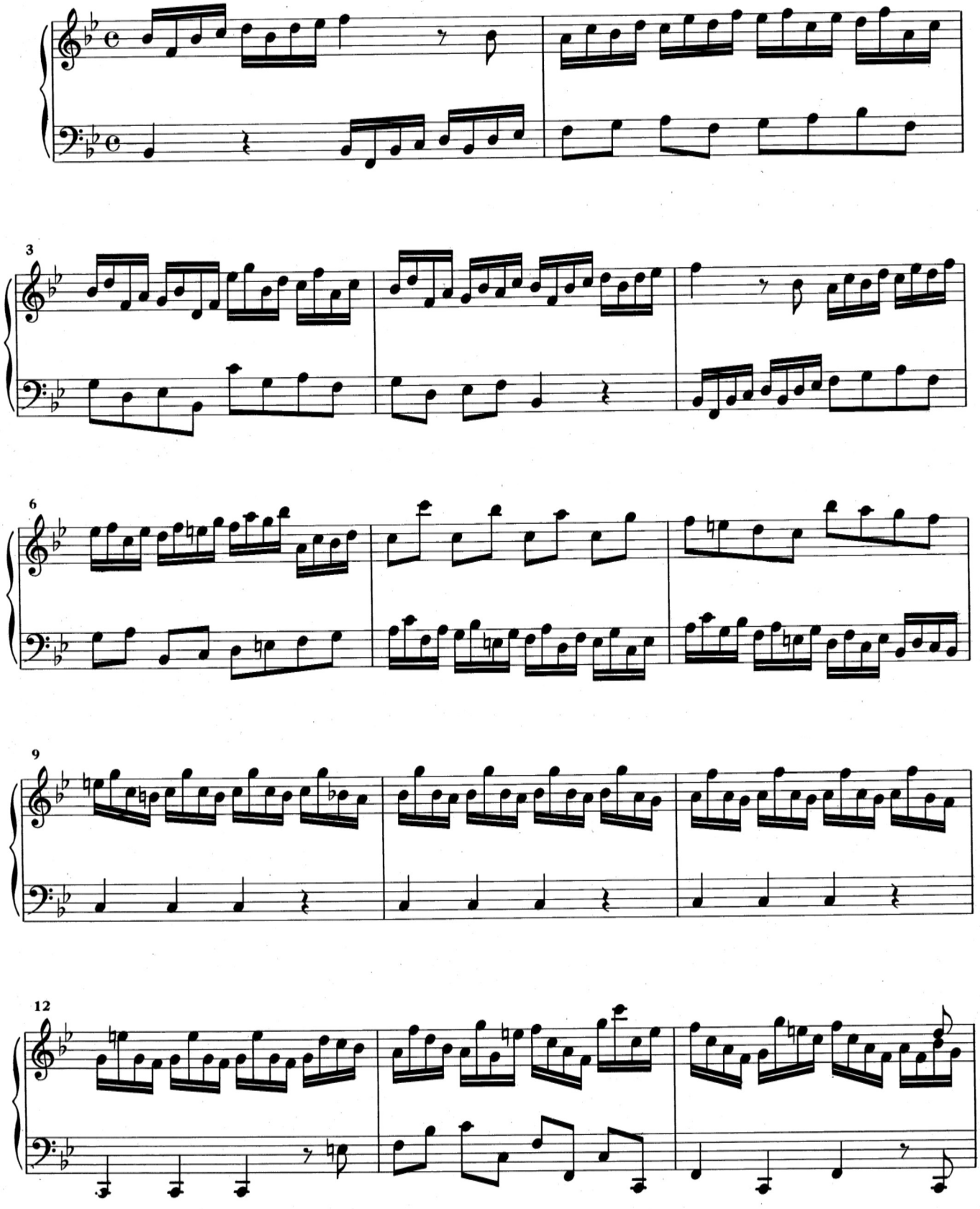

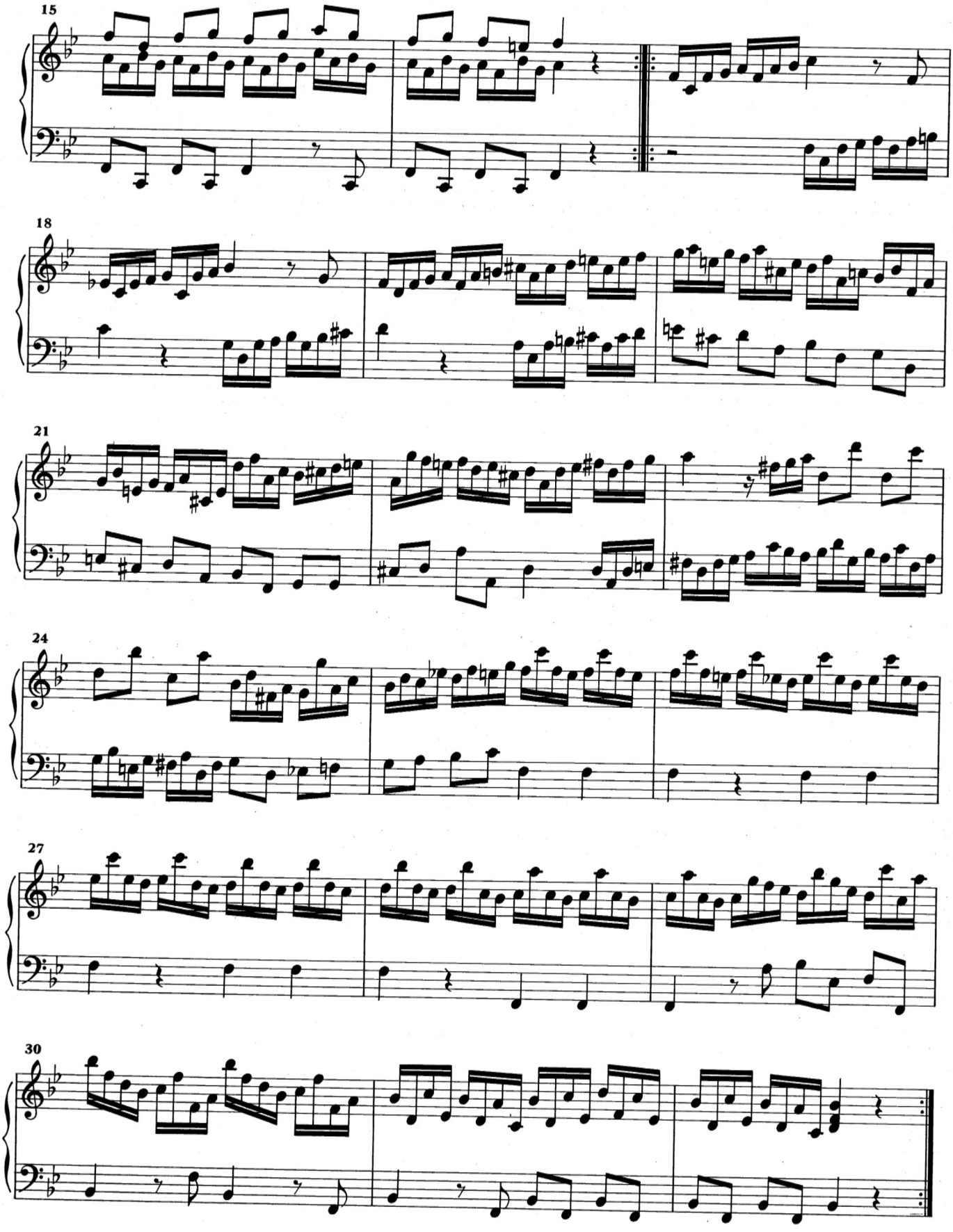
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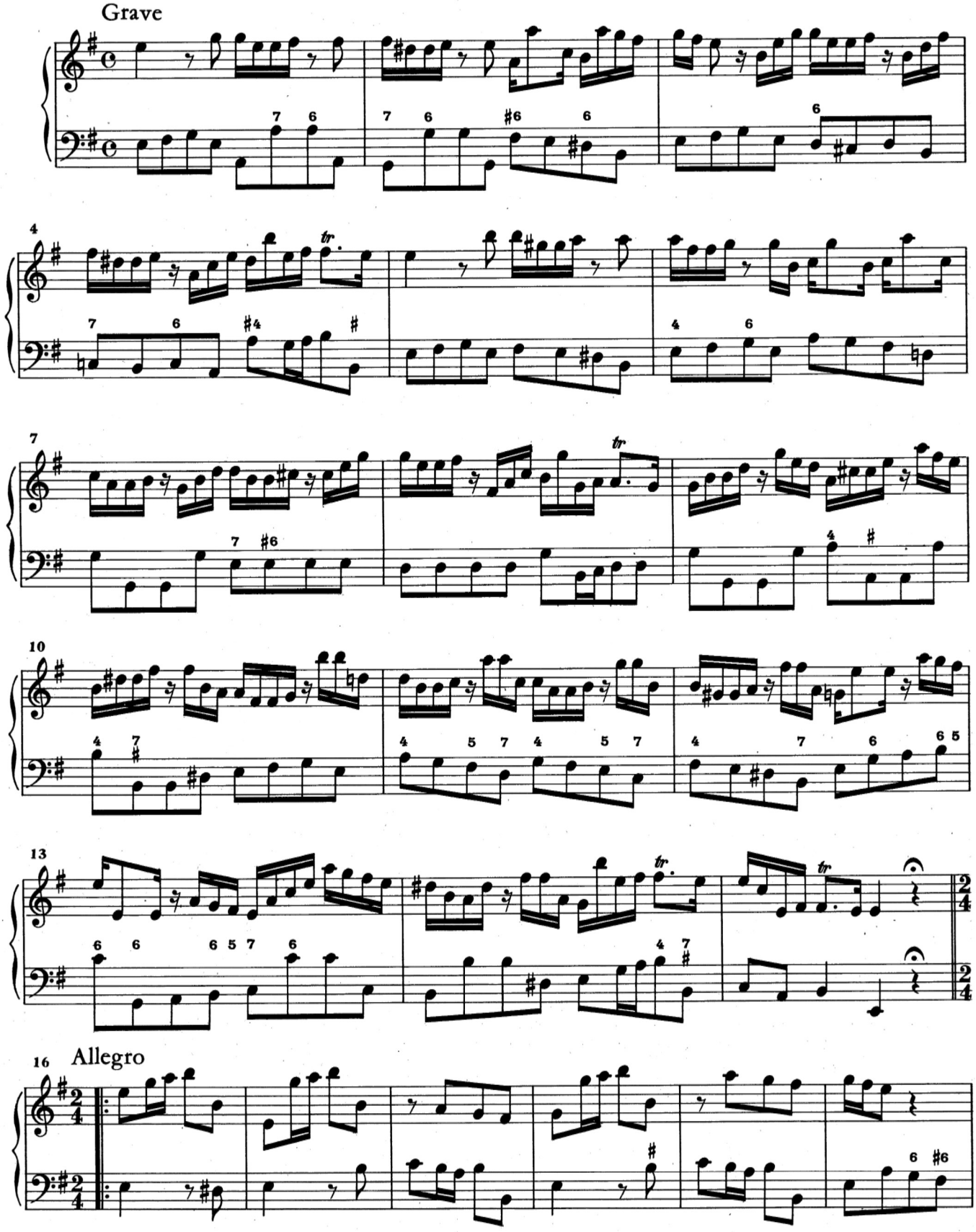

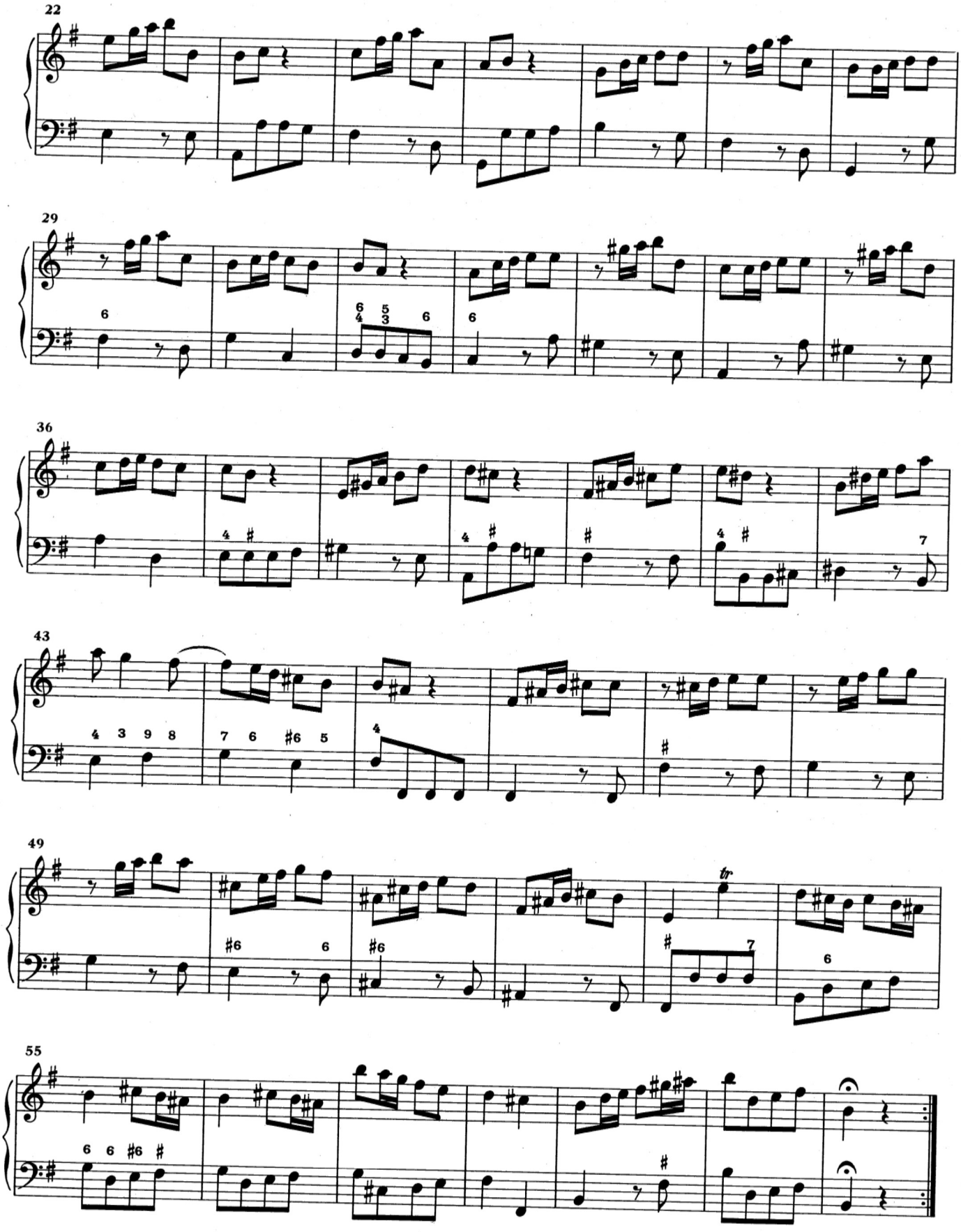
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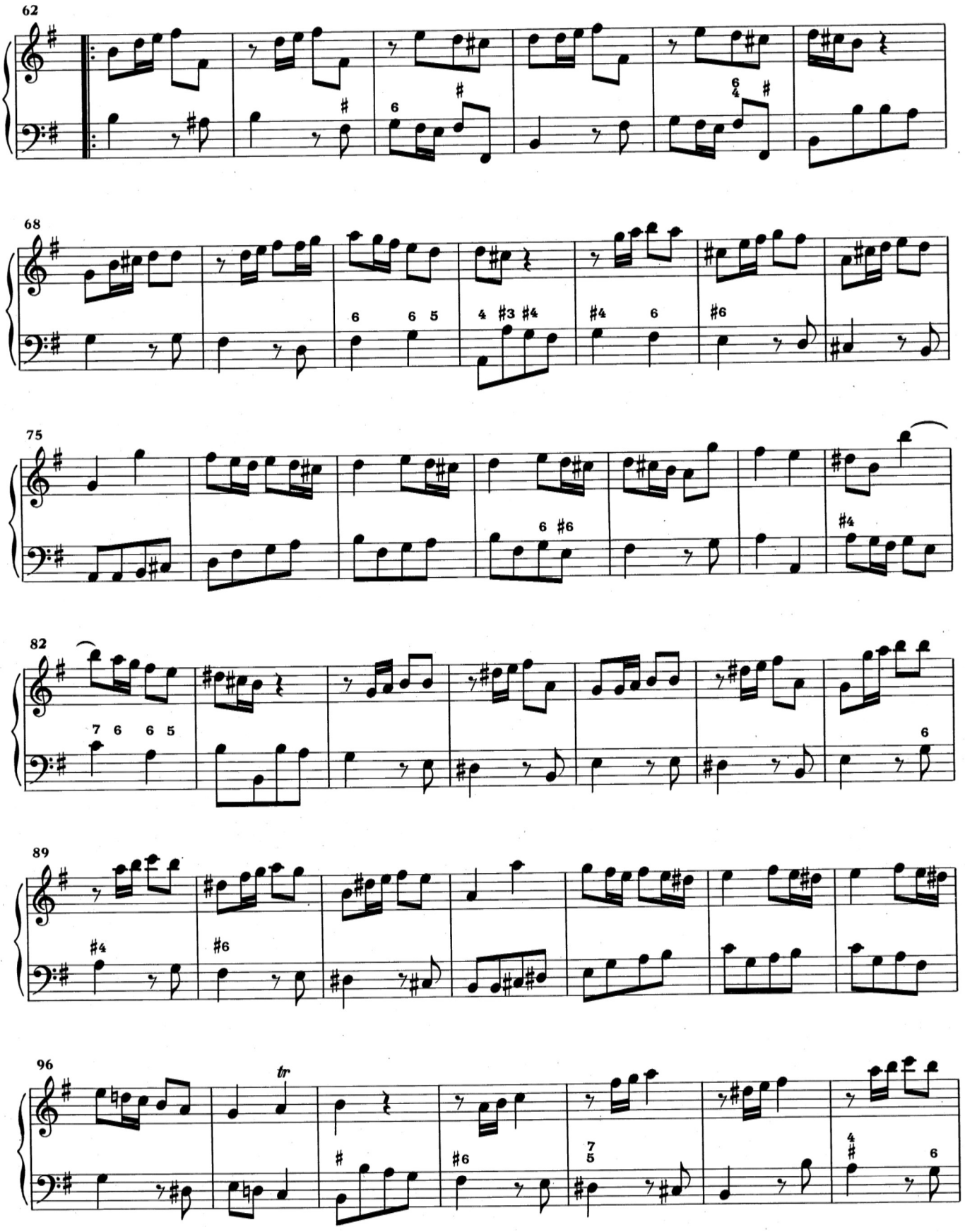
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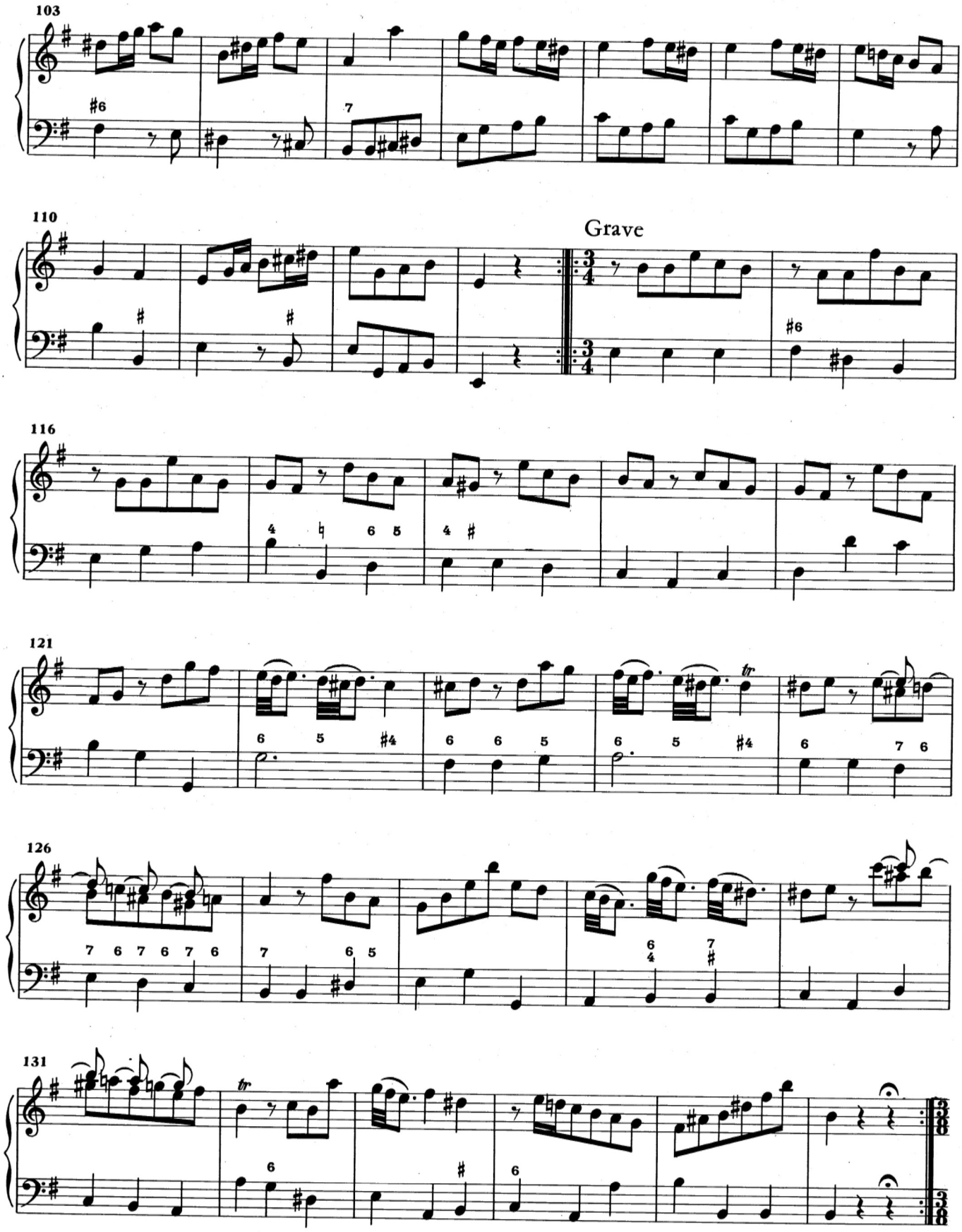
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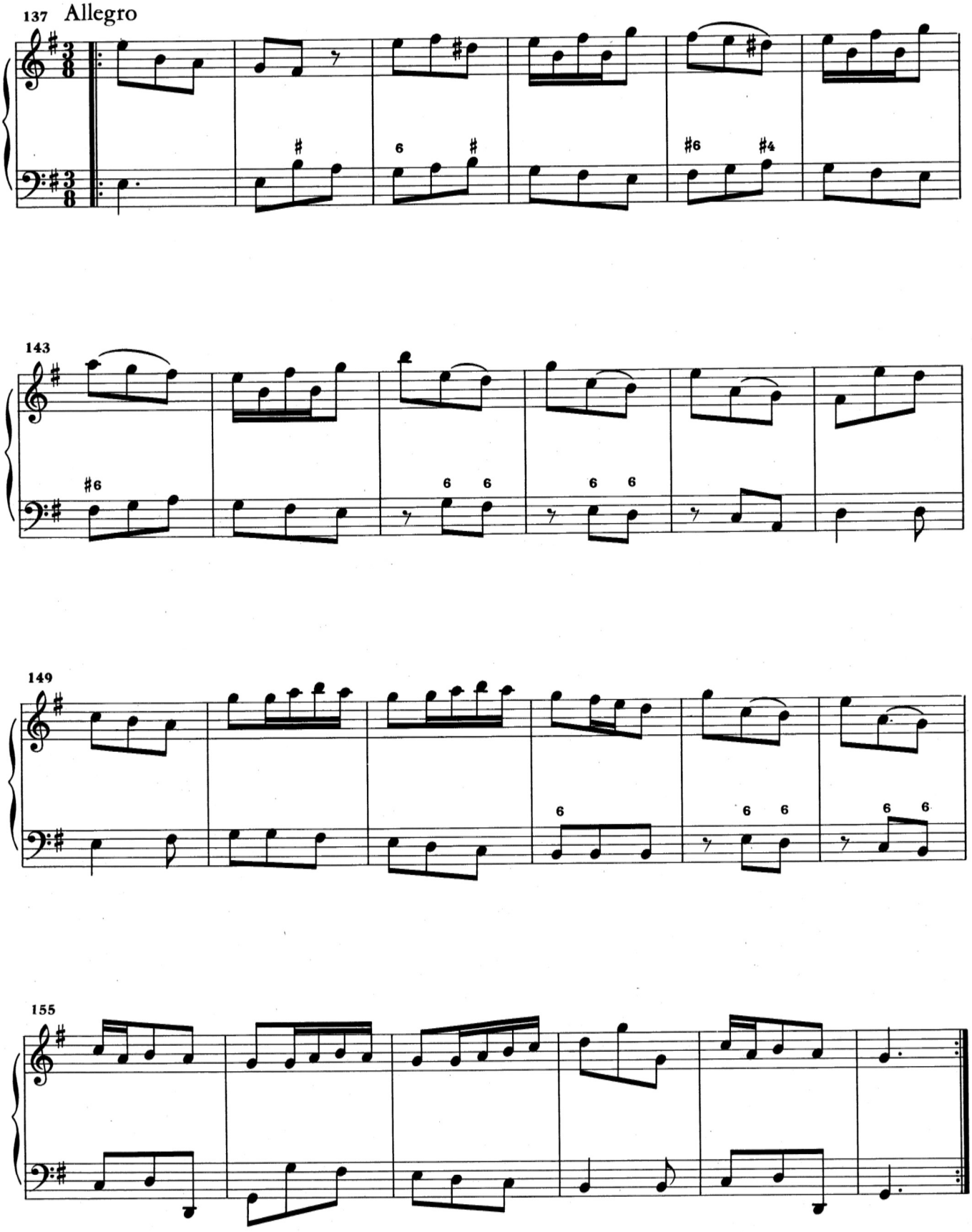
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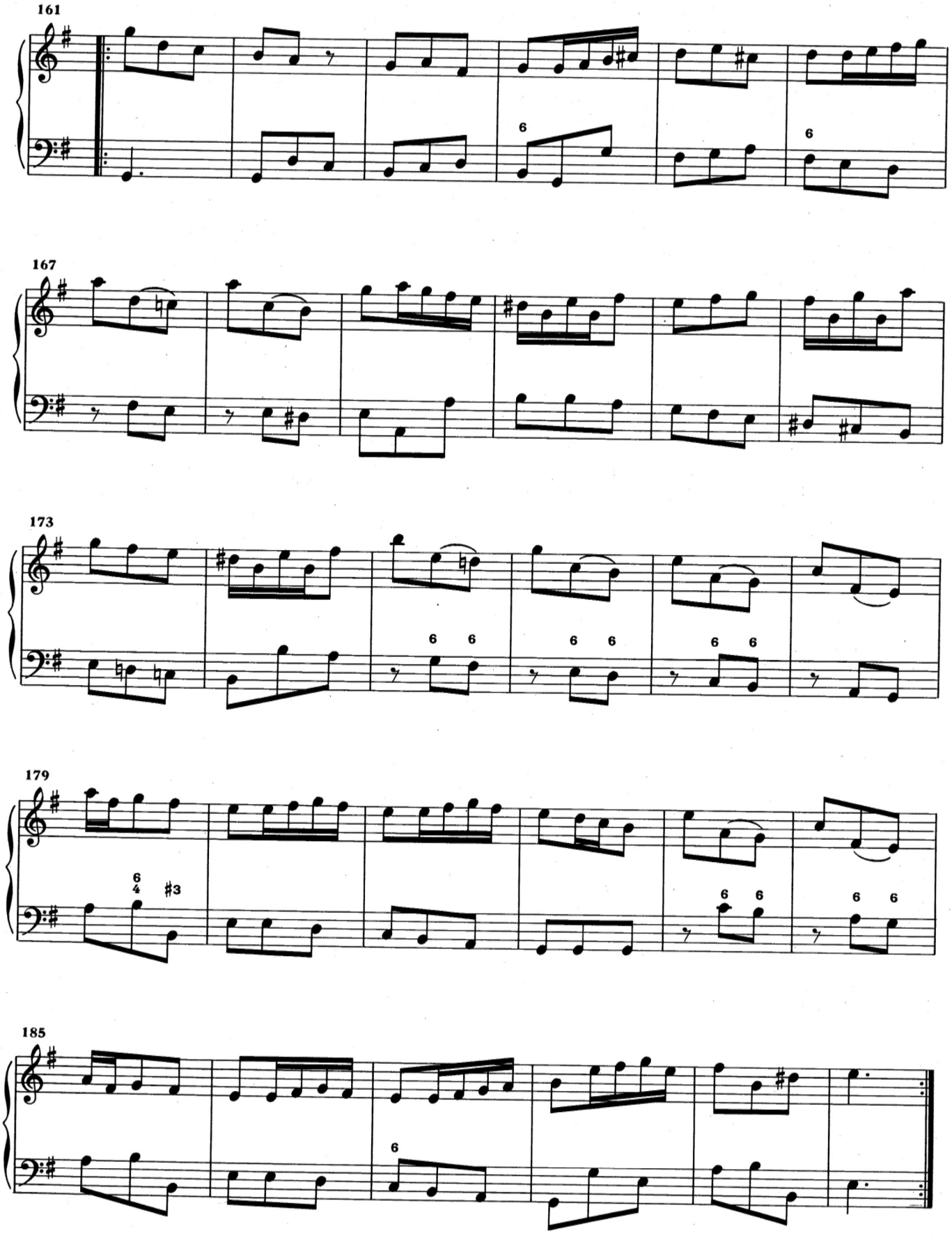
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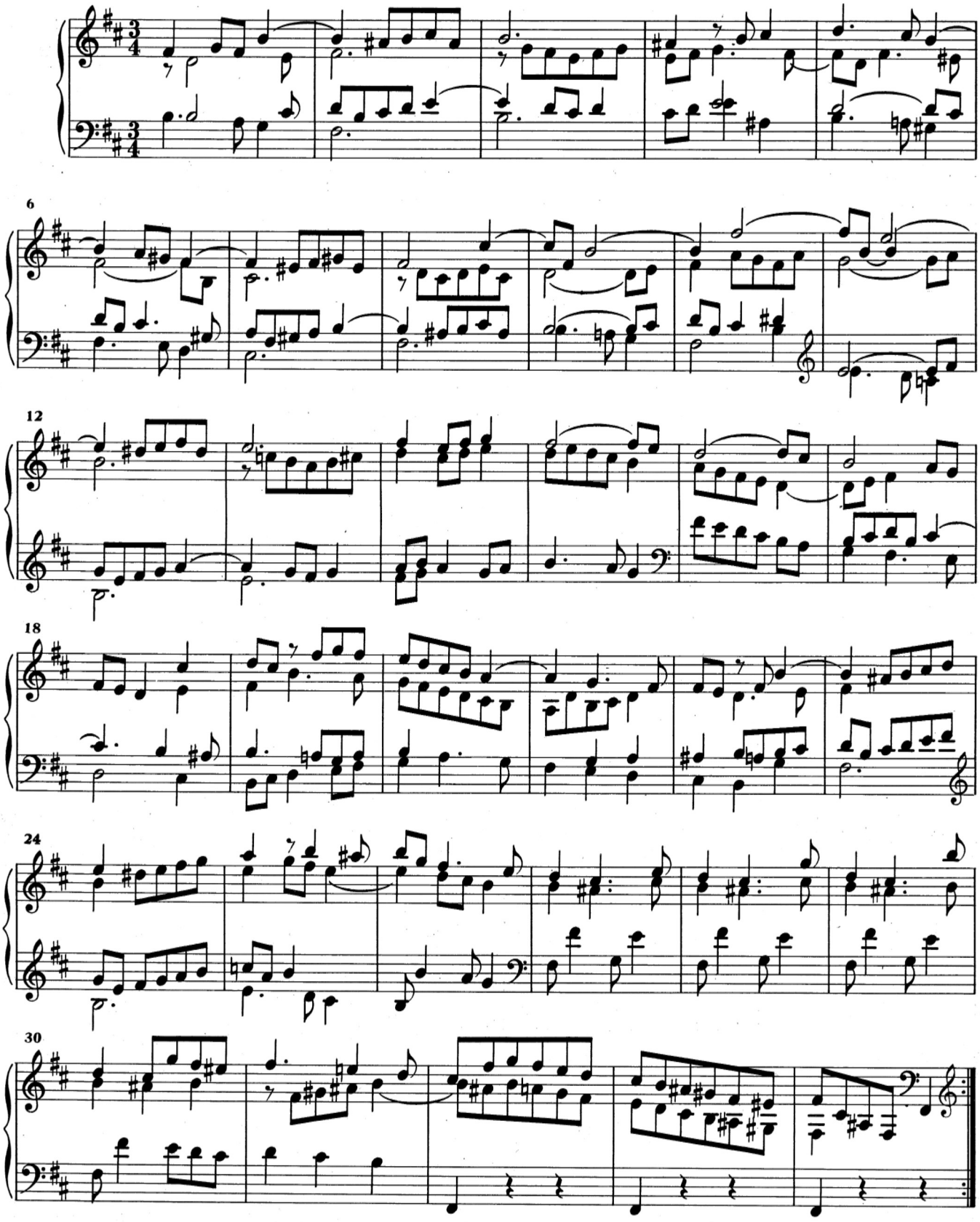

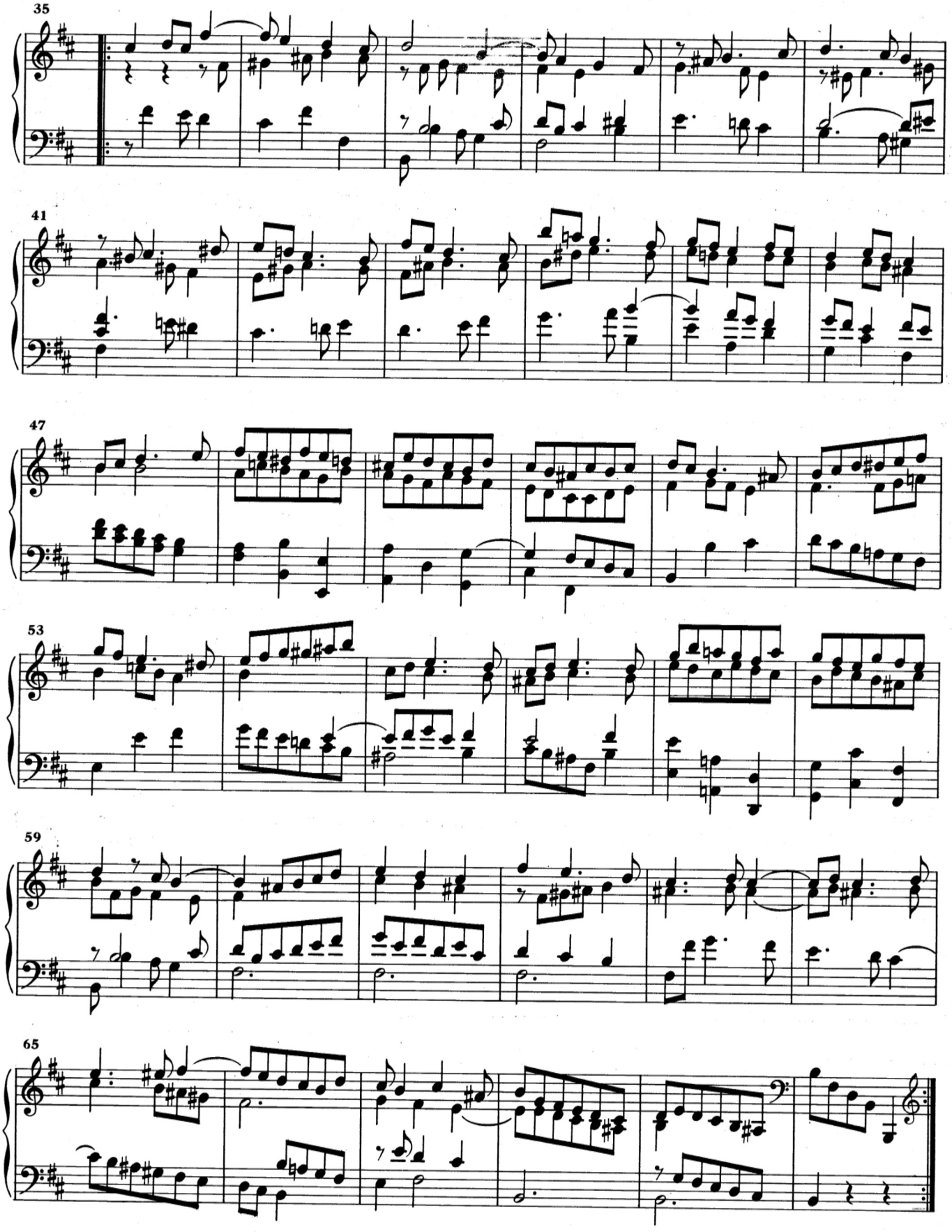
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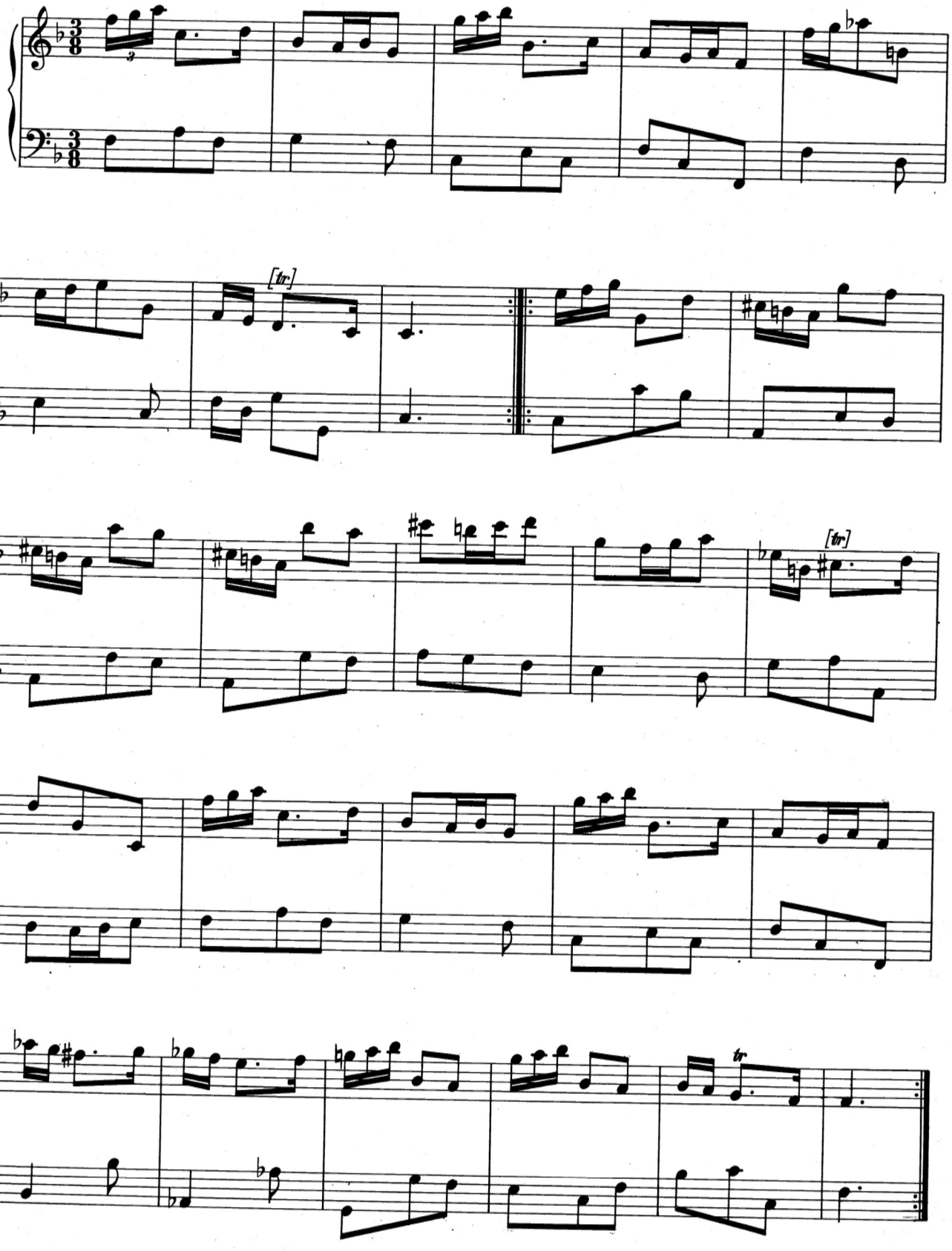
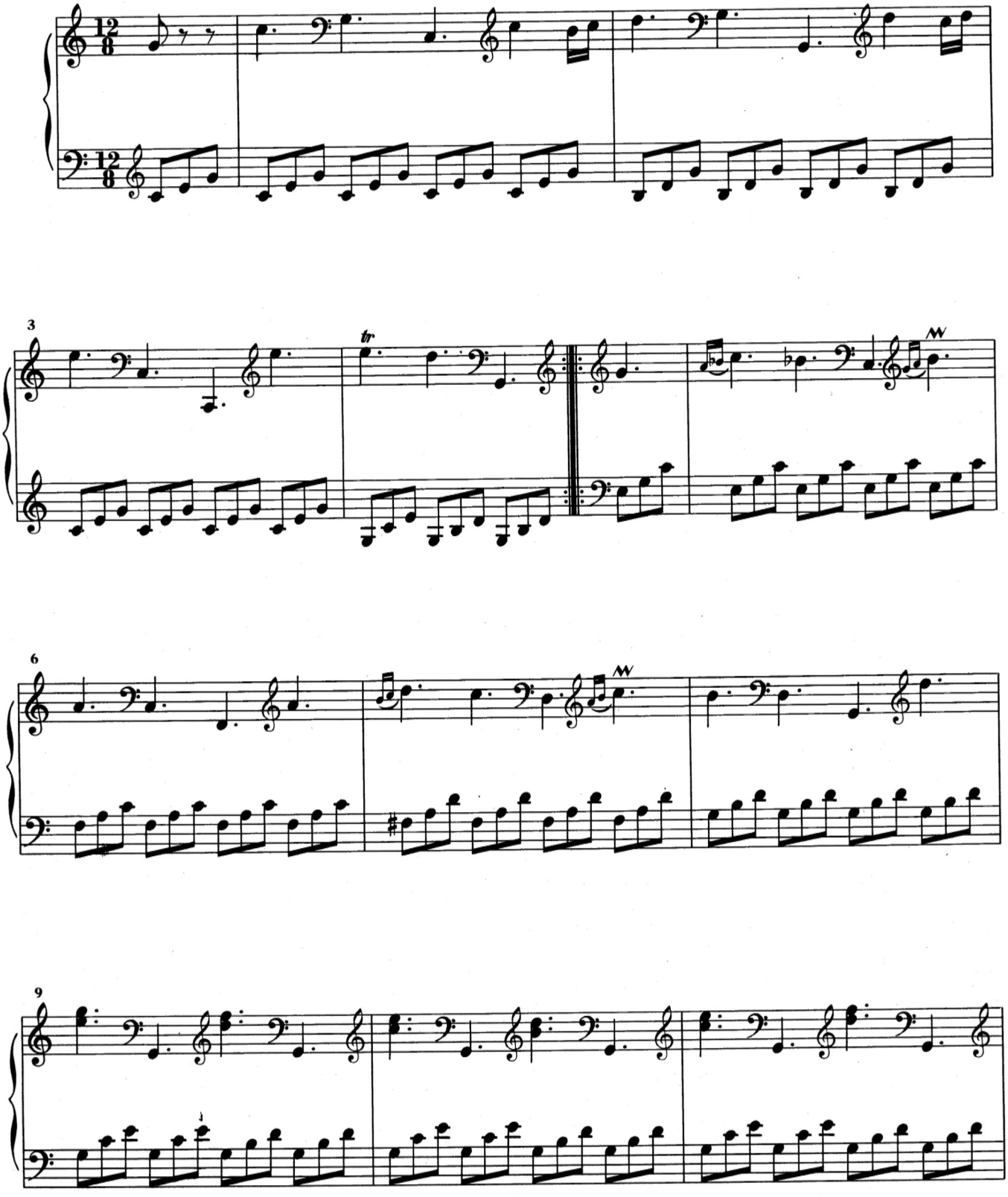
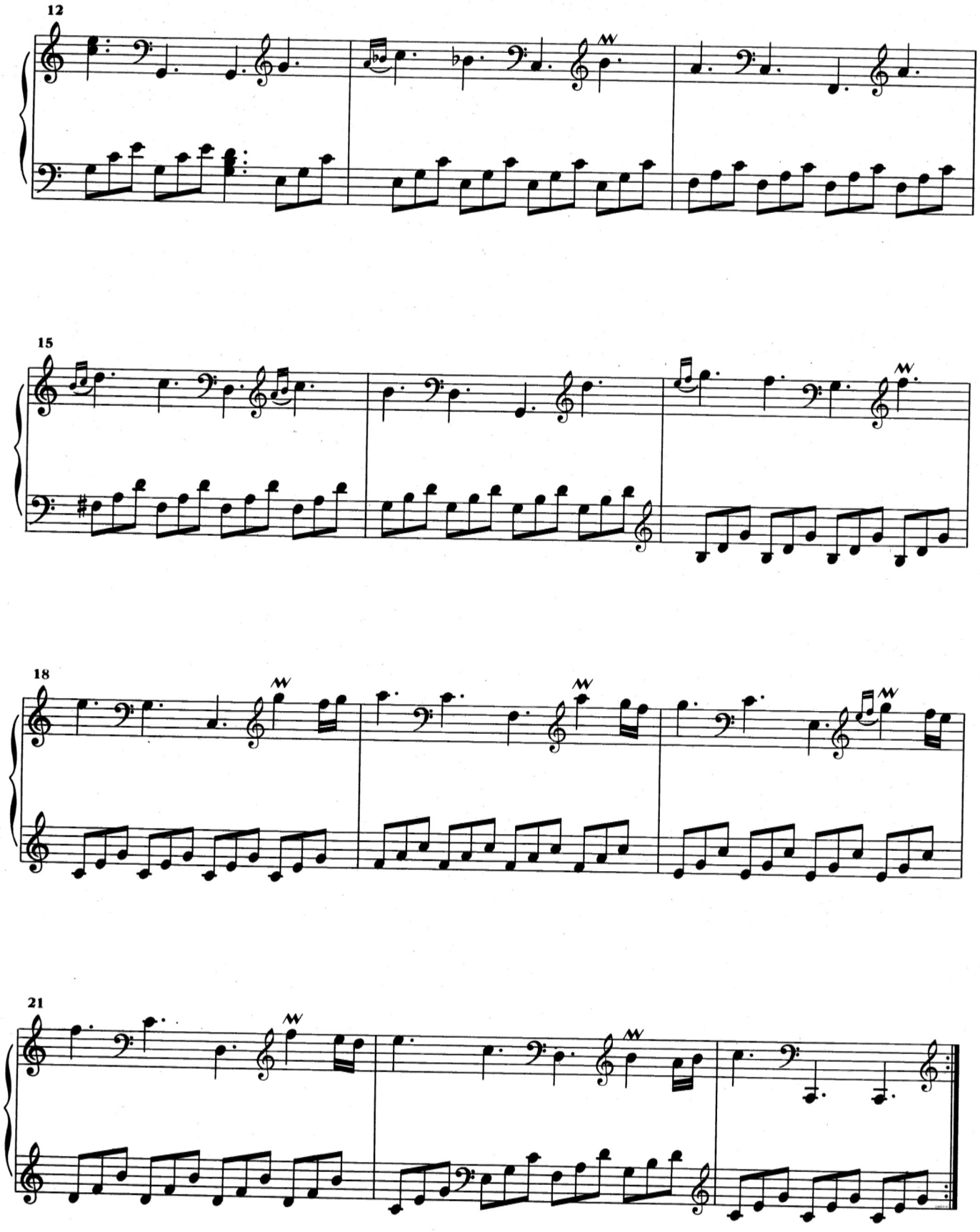
# K. 94

Minuet



# K. 95

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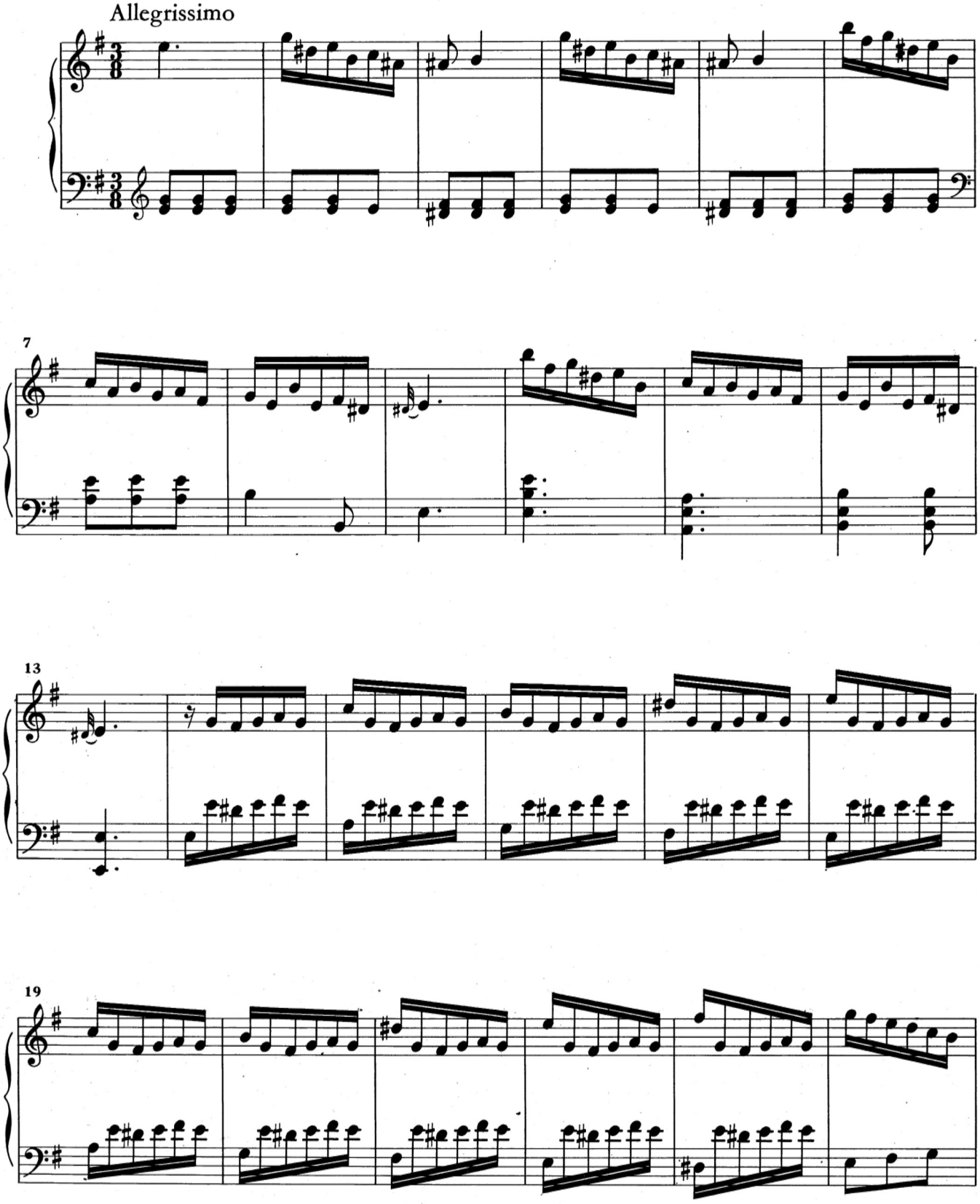
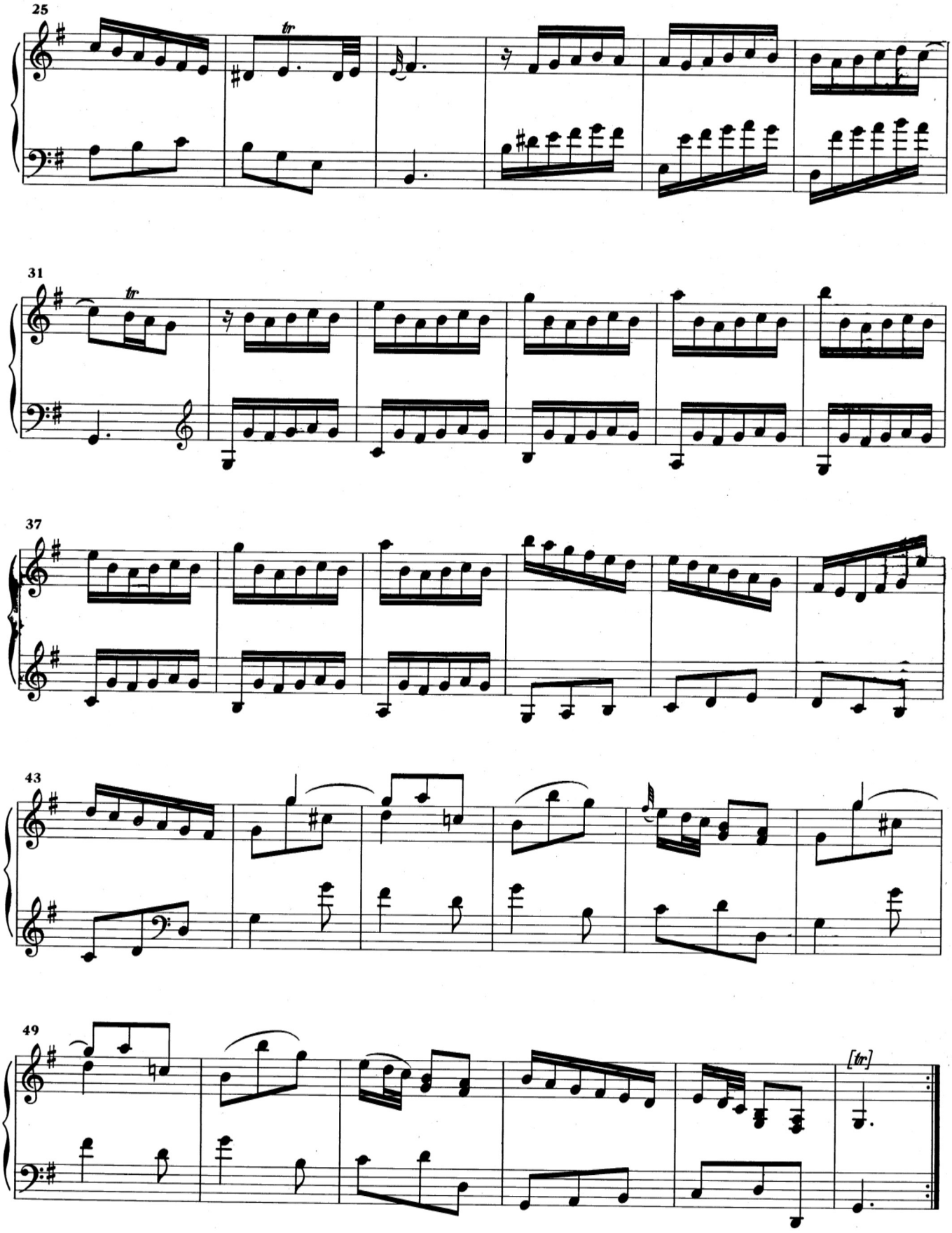
21

# K. 98

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49
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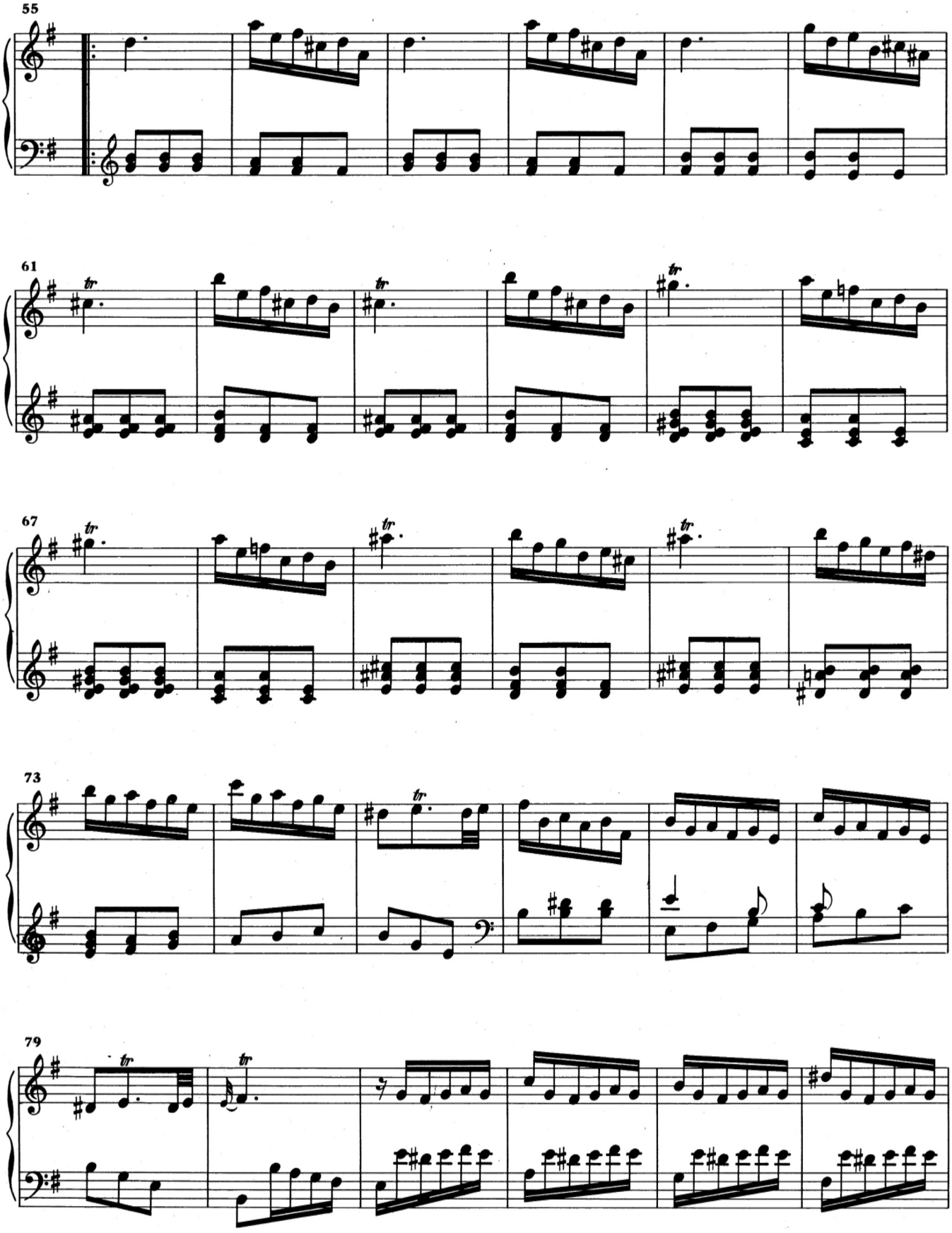
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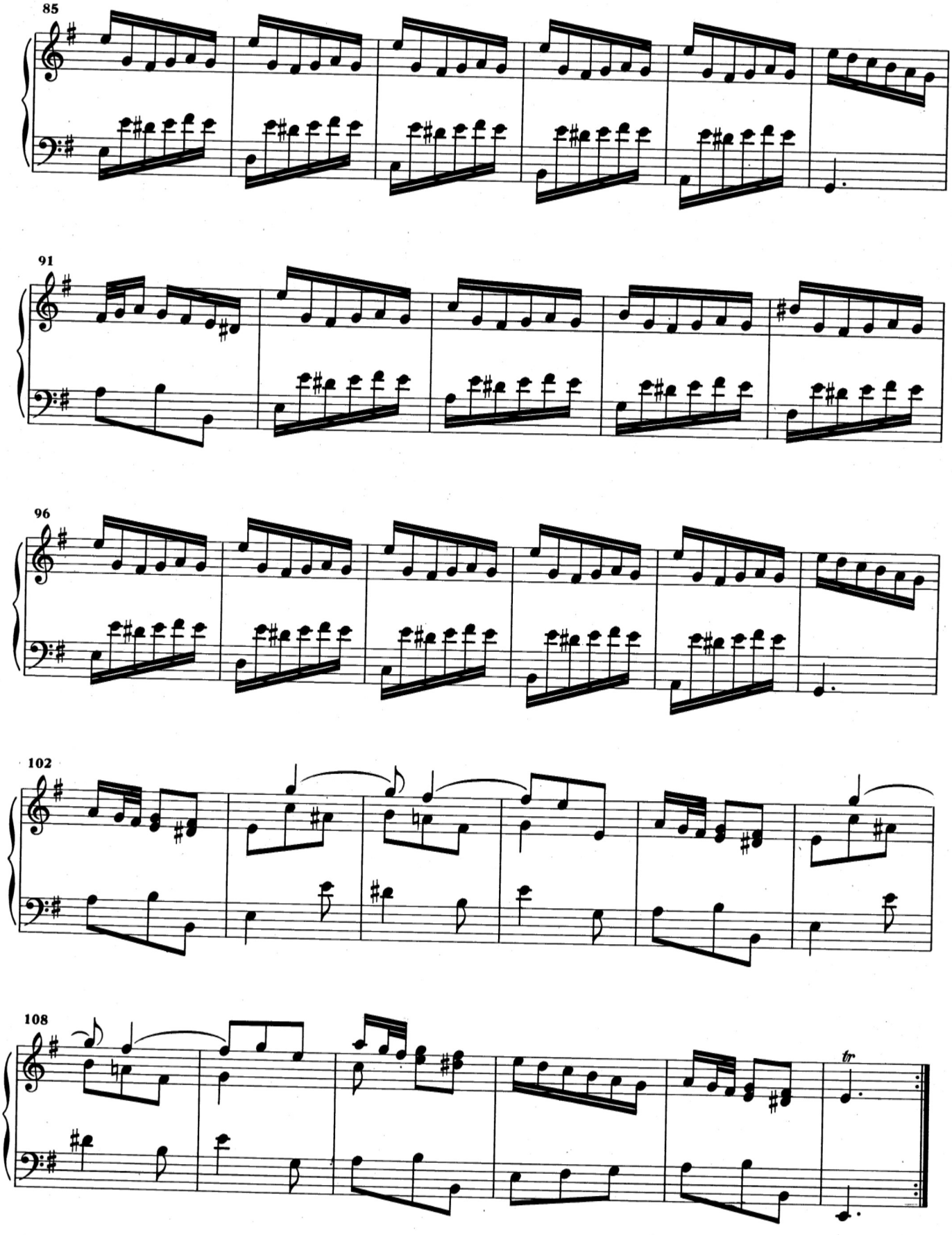
79


85
91
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102
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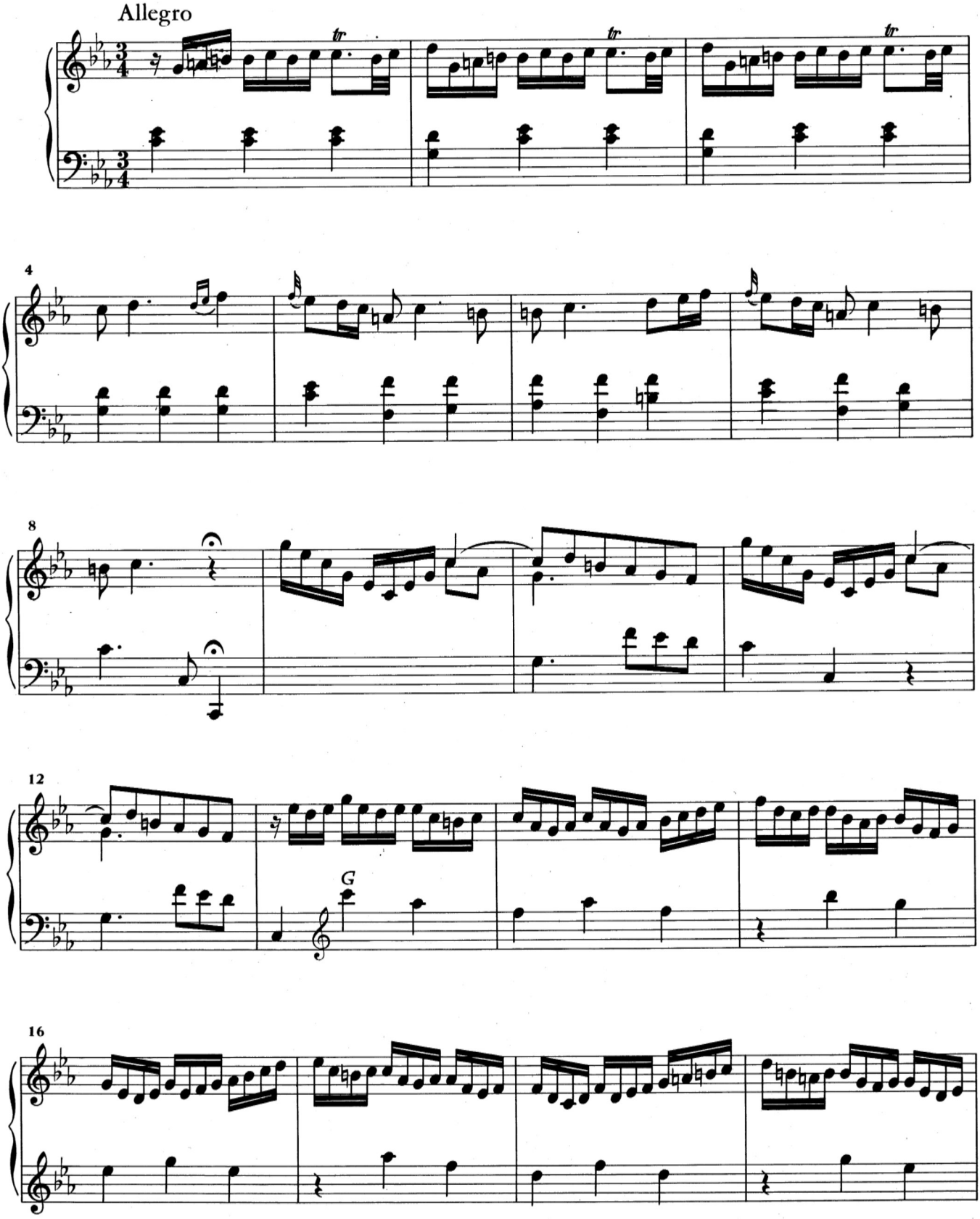
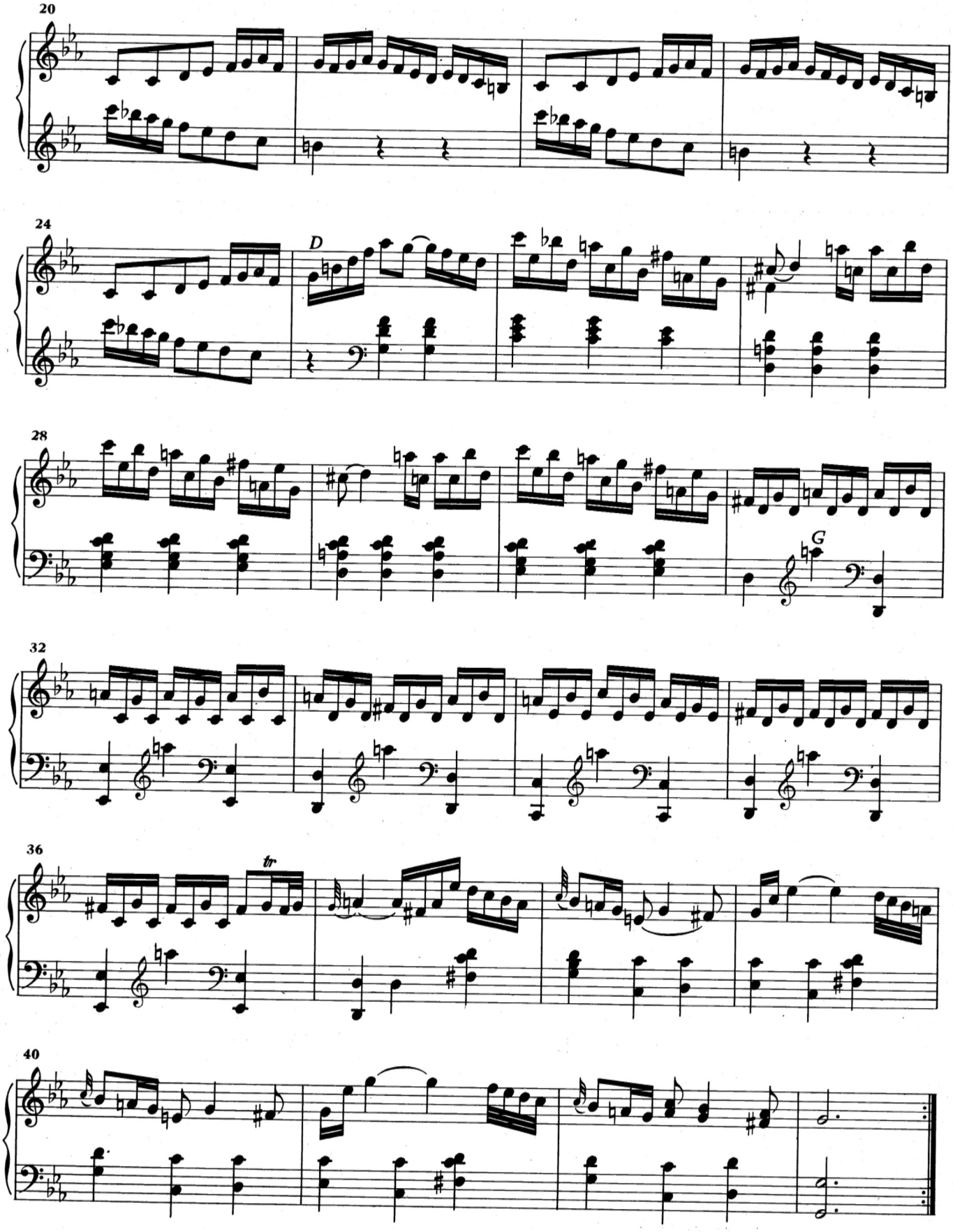
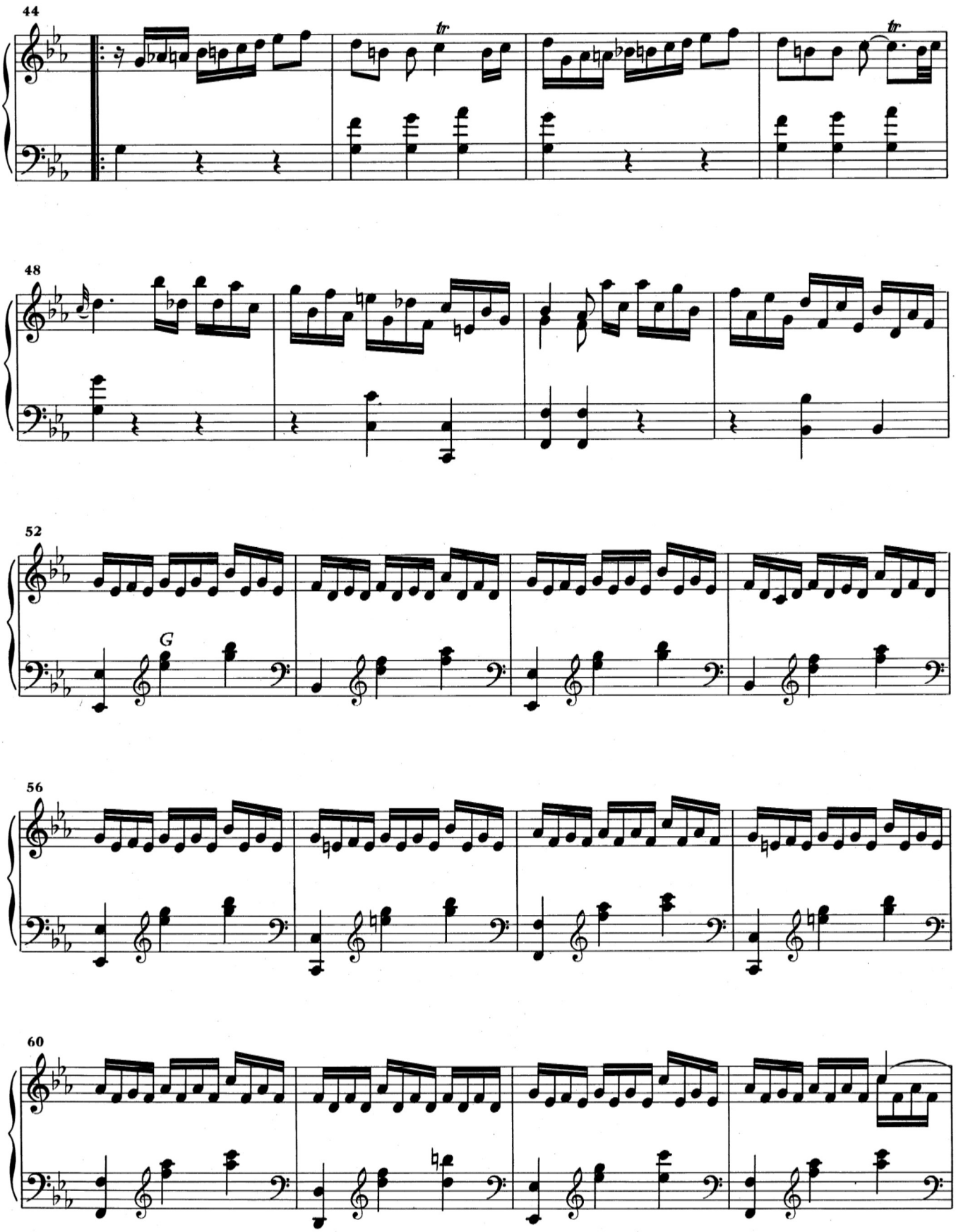
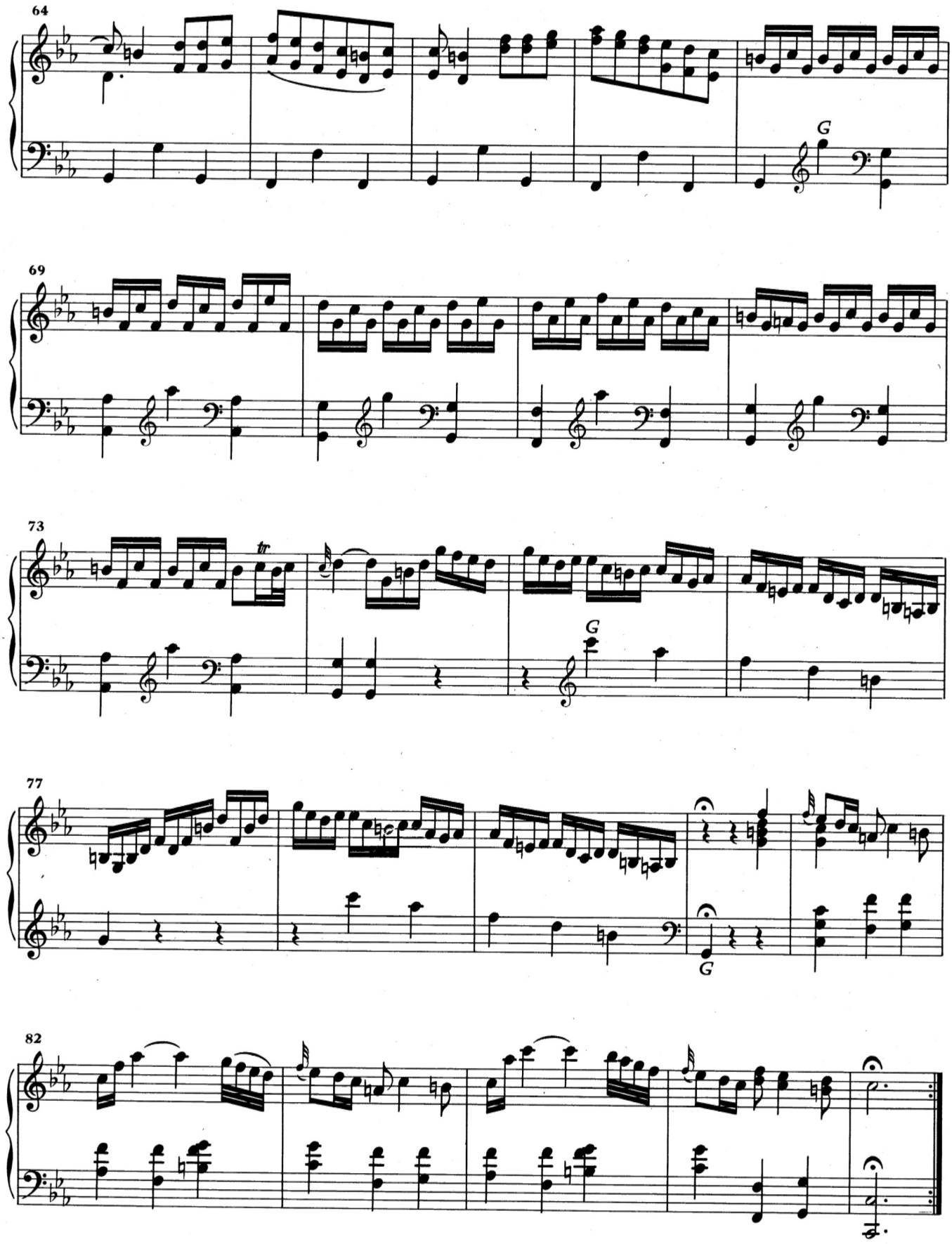
# K. 99

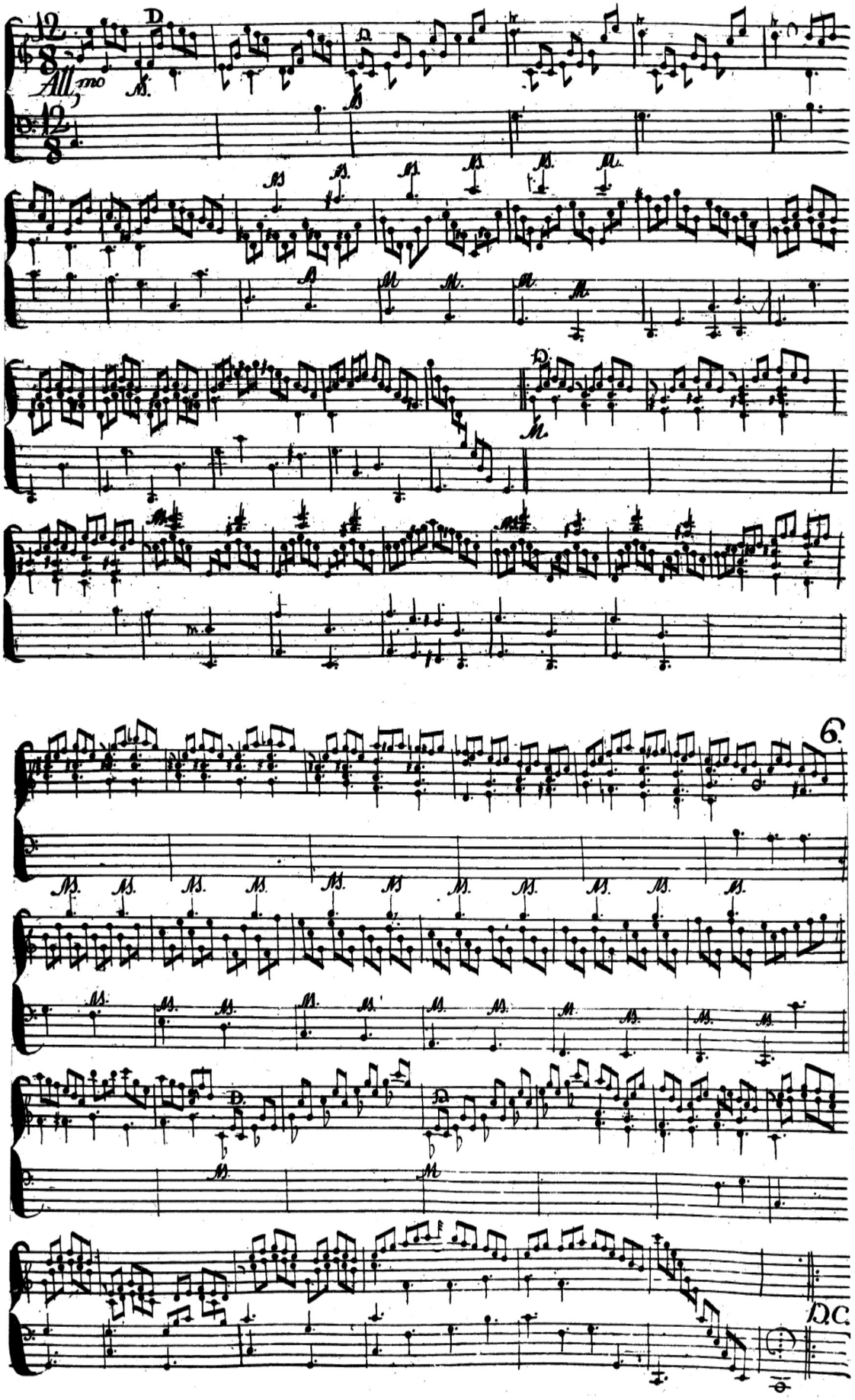



20
24
D
28
G
32
36
tr
40


44
tr
tr
48
52
G
56
60



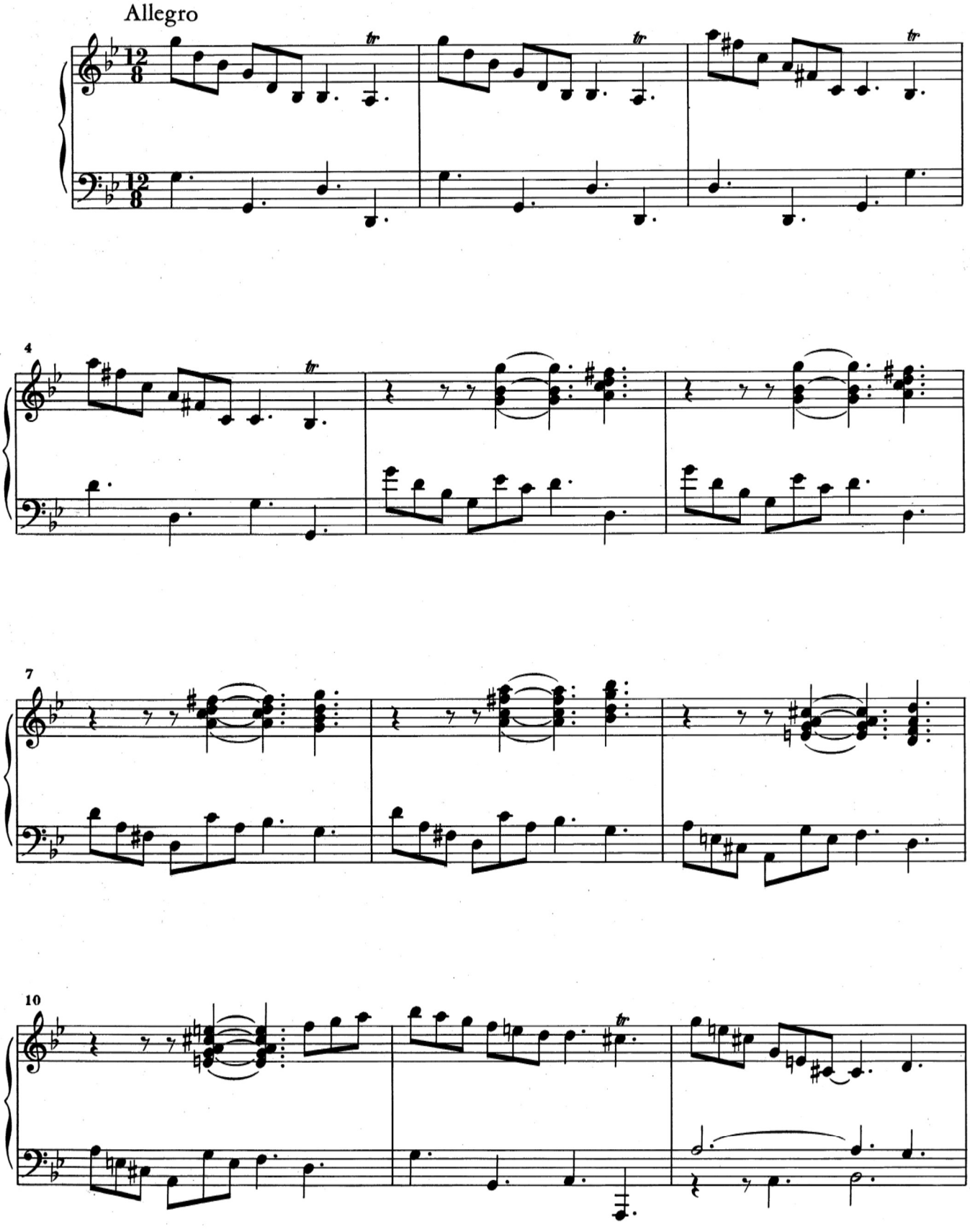

*Venise:* Volti subito

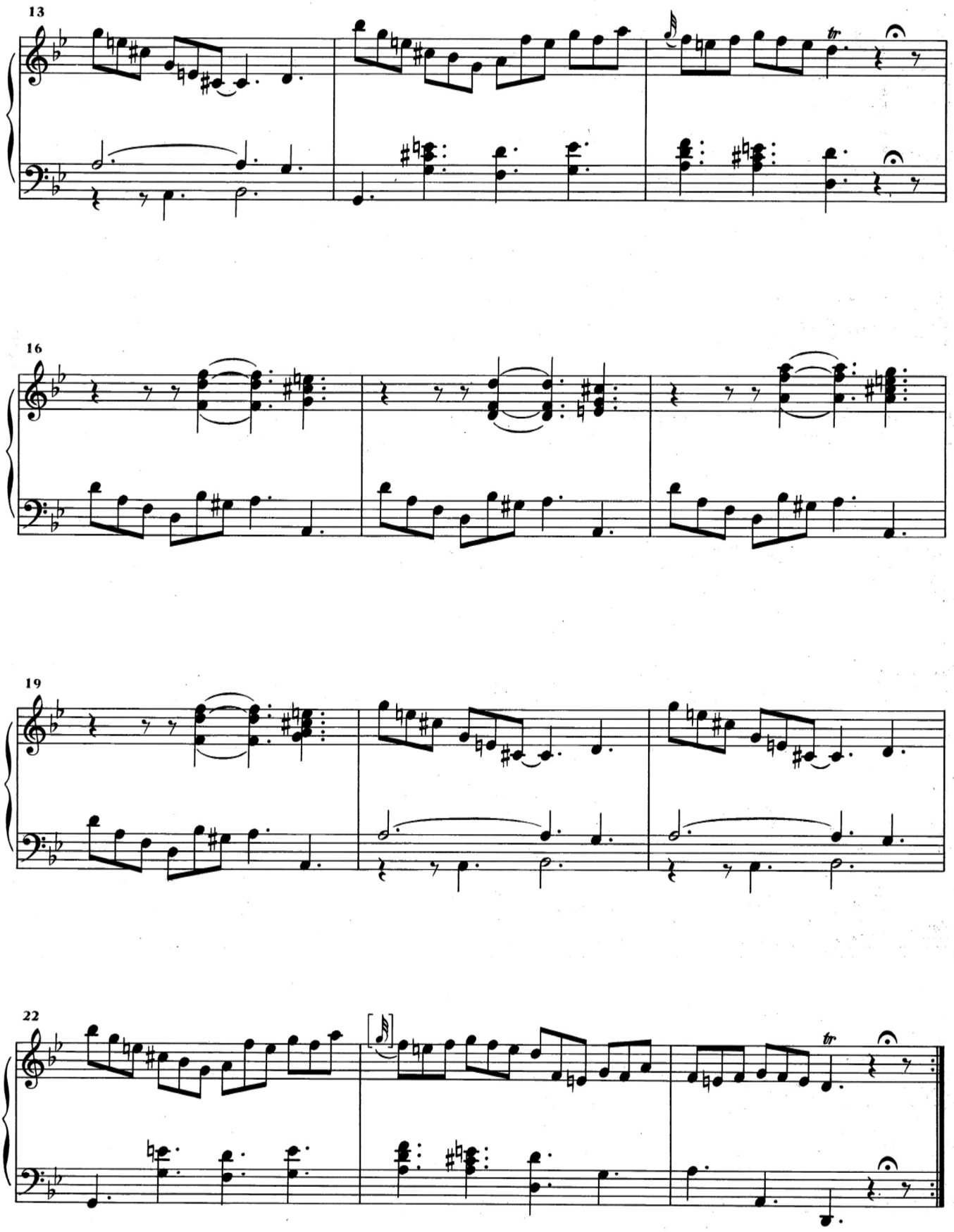



VENISE XV 2 B (SONATE K. 100)

# K. 111

Allegro

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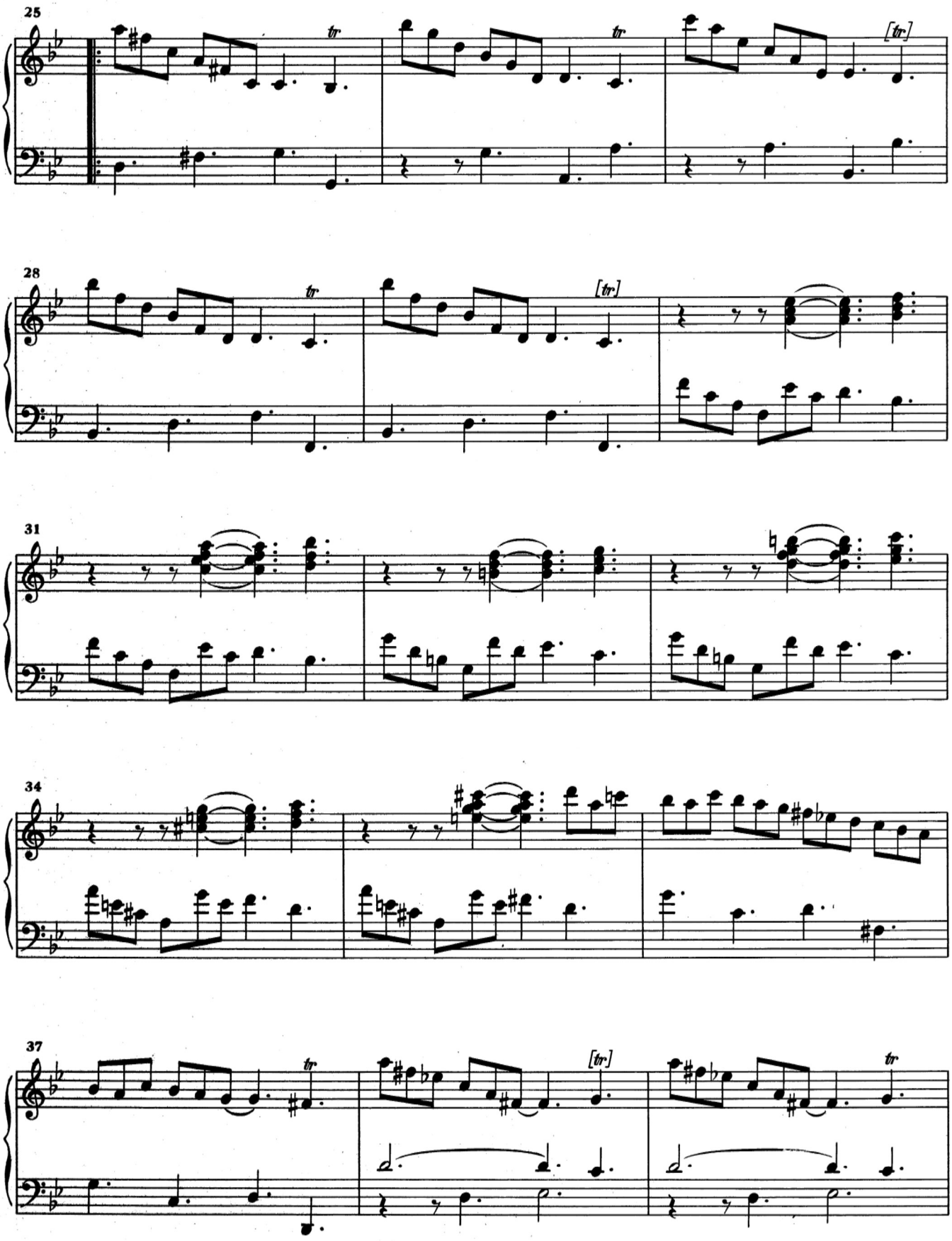
16
19
22


25
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28
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[tr]
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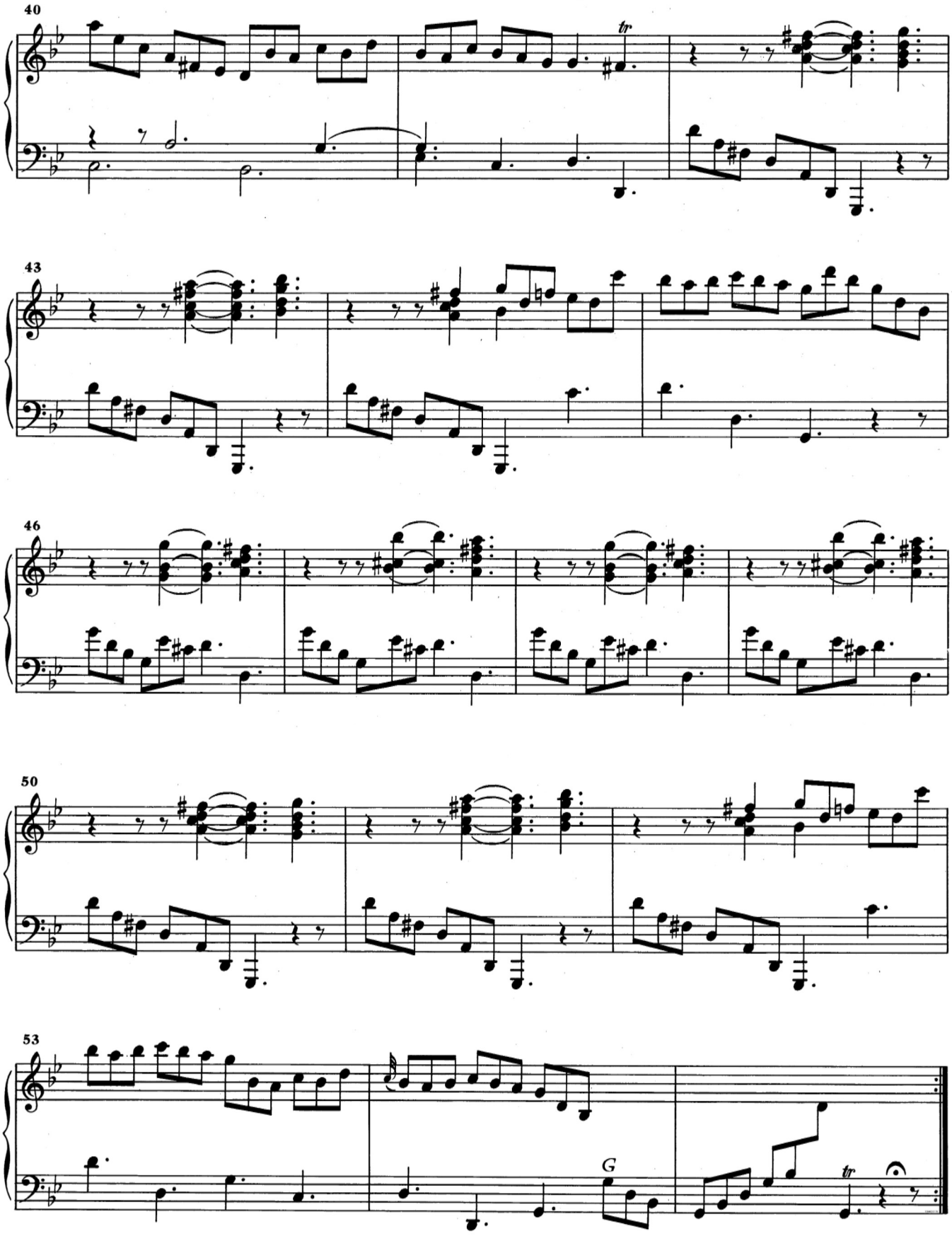
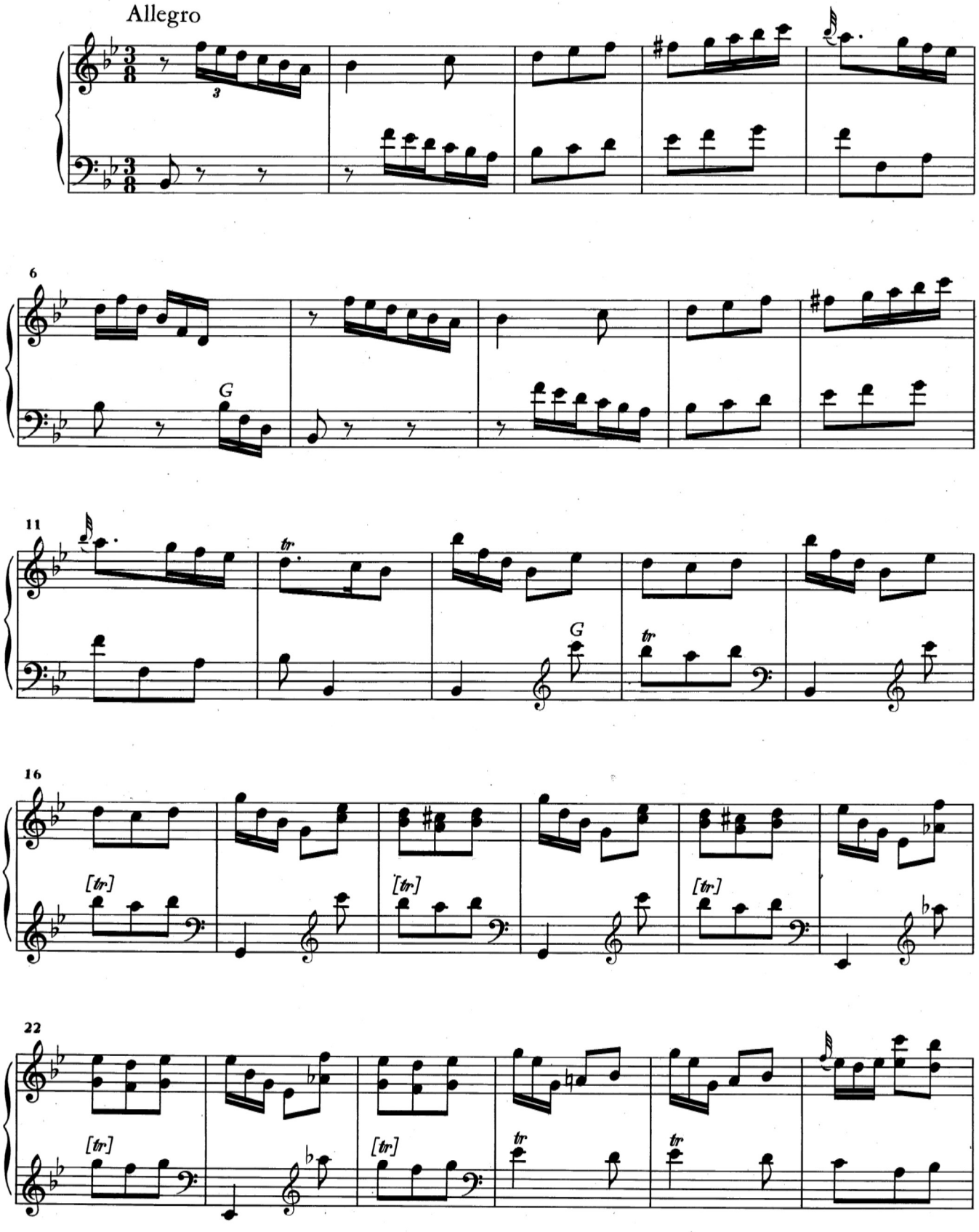
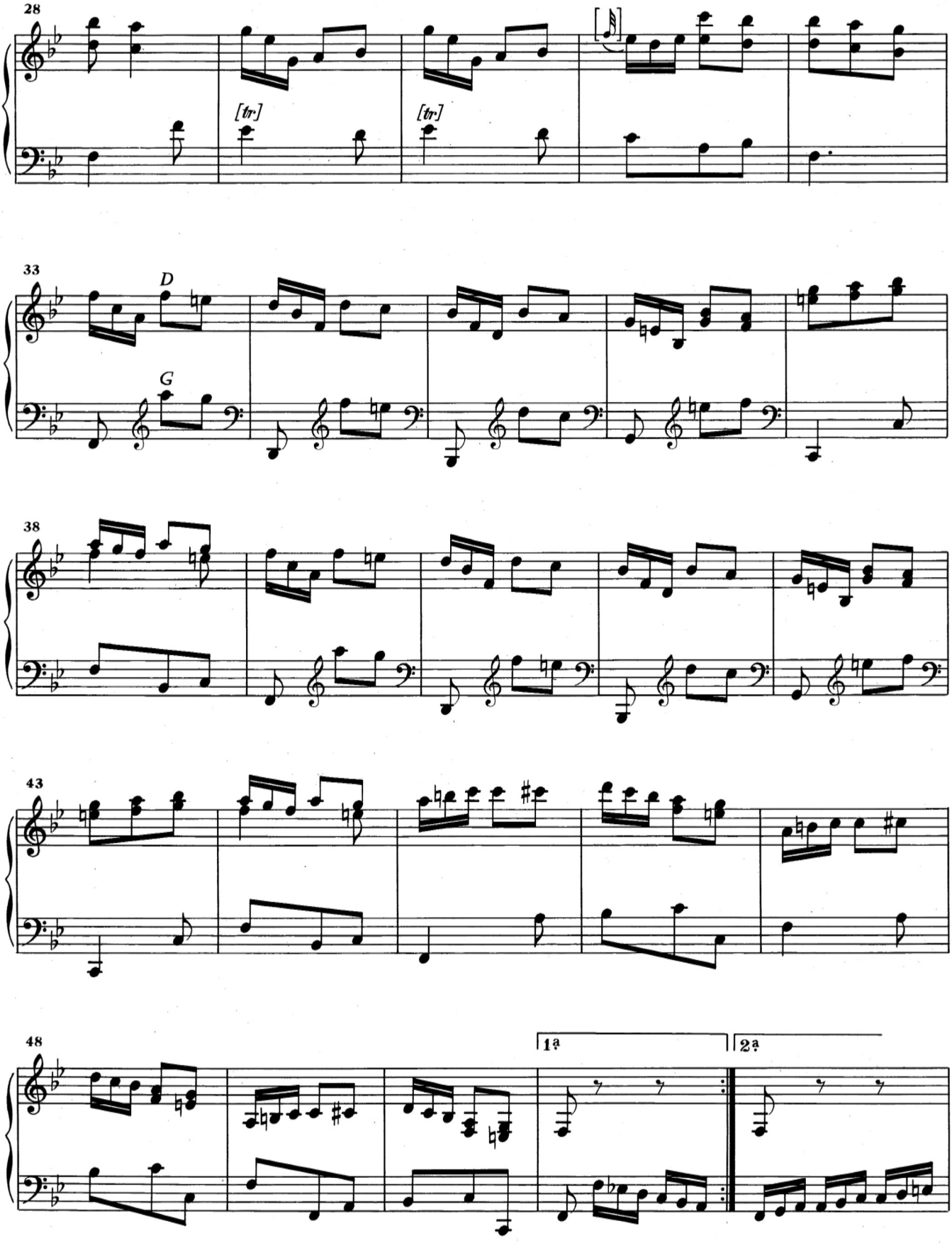
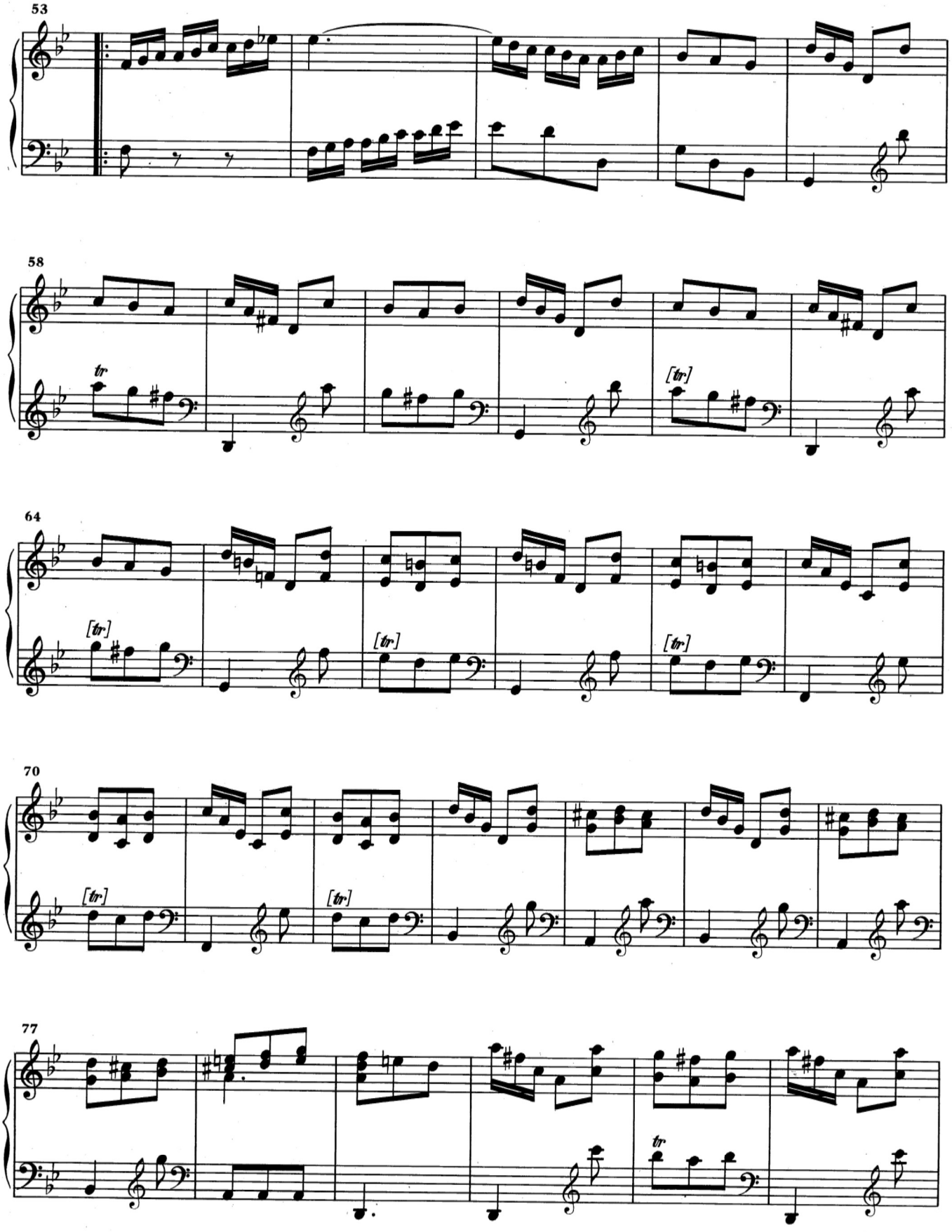
34
37
tr
[tr]
tr


40
tr
43
46
50
53
G
tr

# K. 112




28
[tr]
[tr]
33
D
G
38
43
48
1ª
2ª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58
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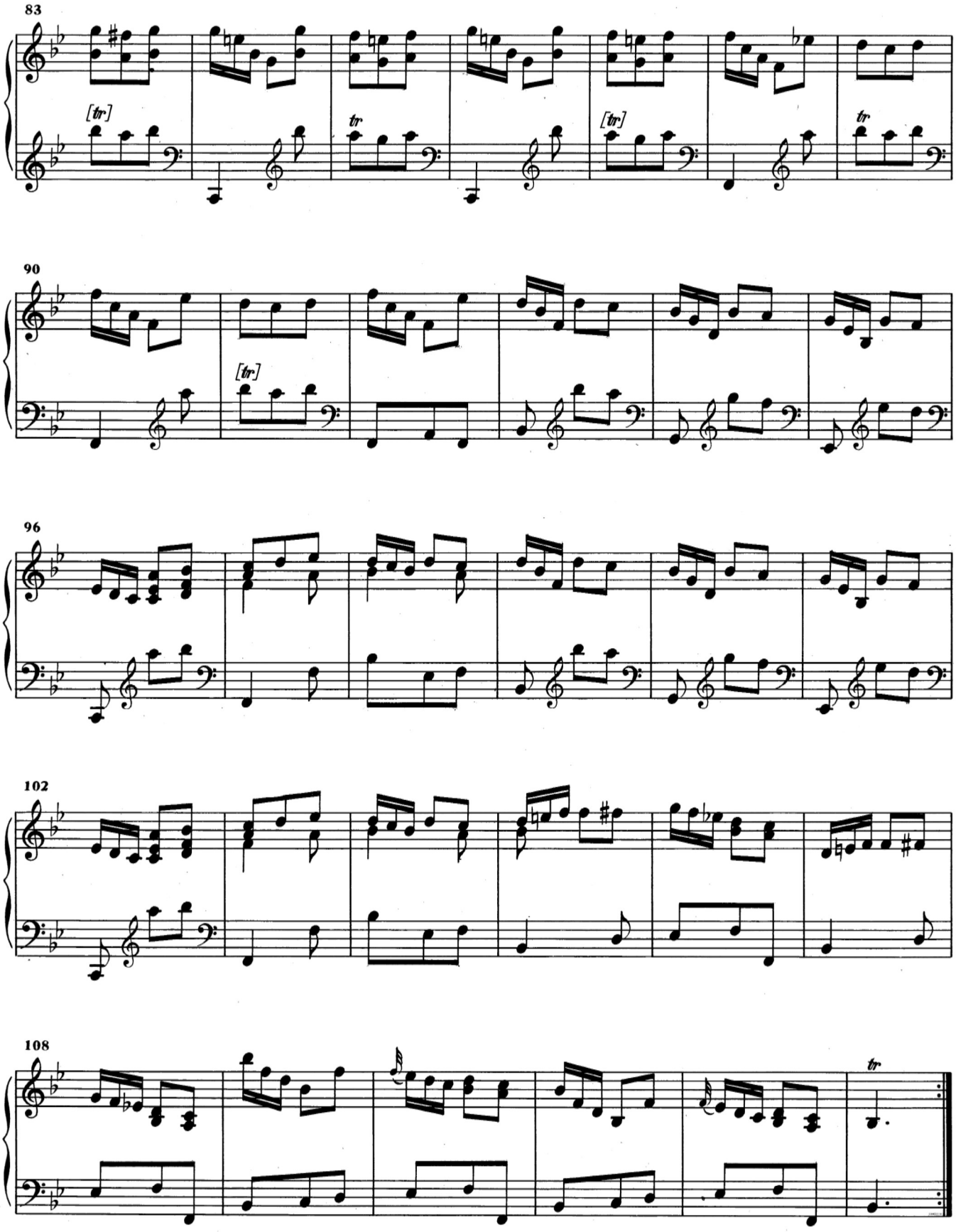
[tr]
[tr]
70
[tr]
[tr]
77
tr


83
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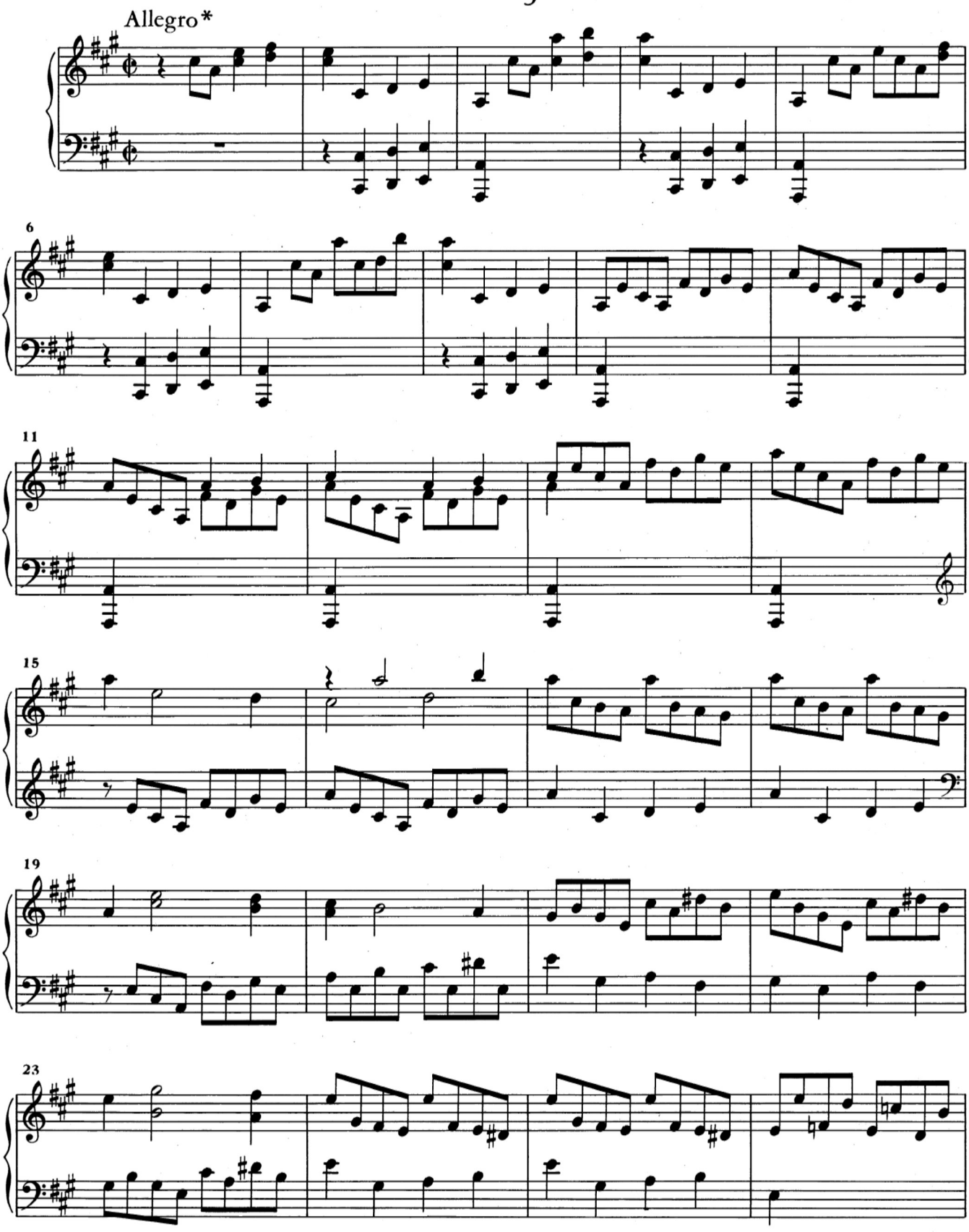
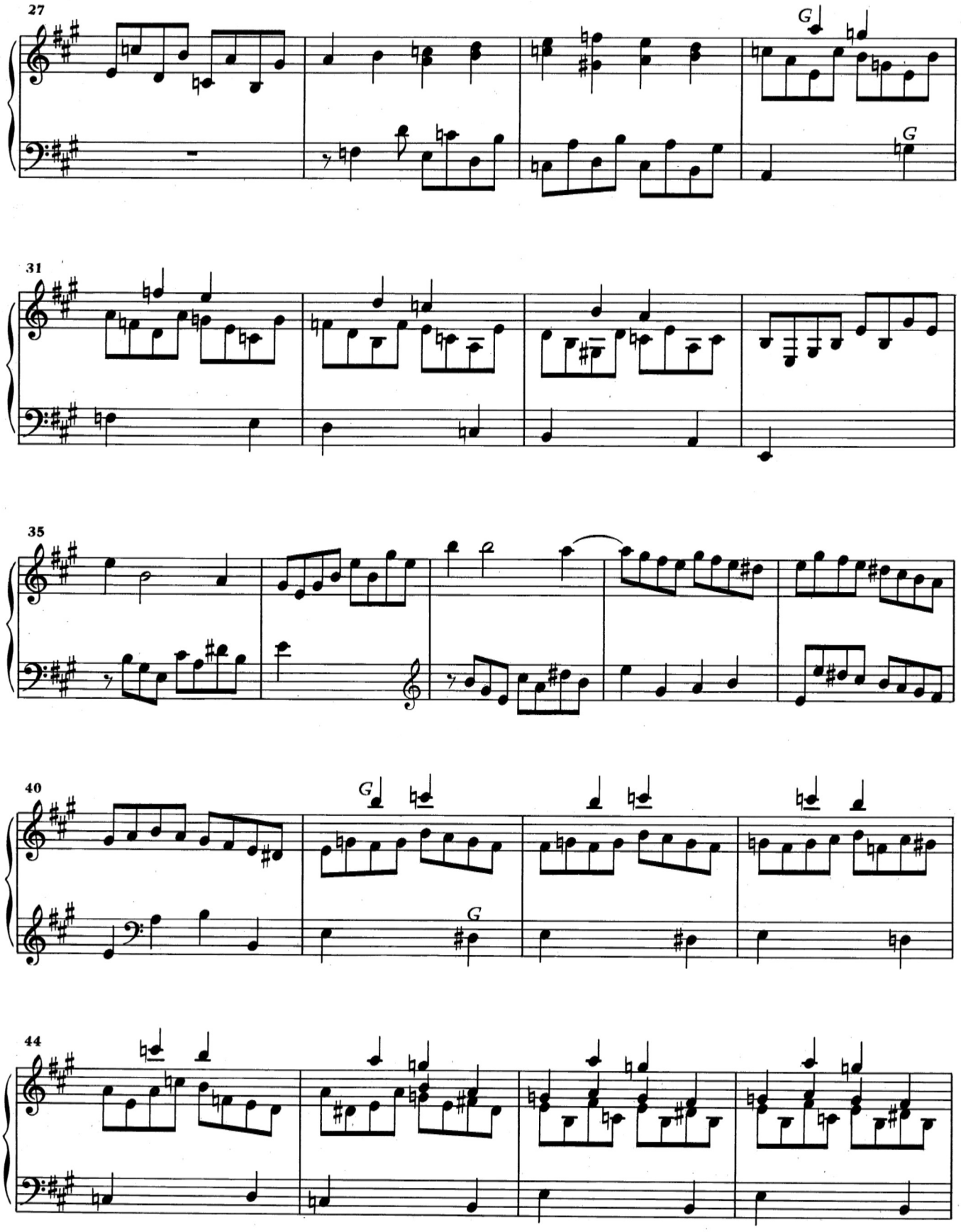
tr
[tr]
tr
90
[tr]
96
102
108
tr

# K. 113




* *Parme:* Vivo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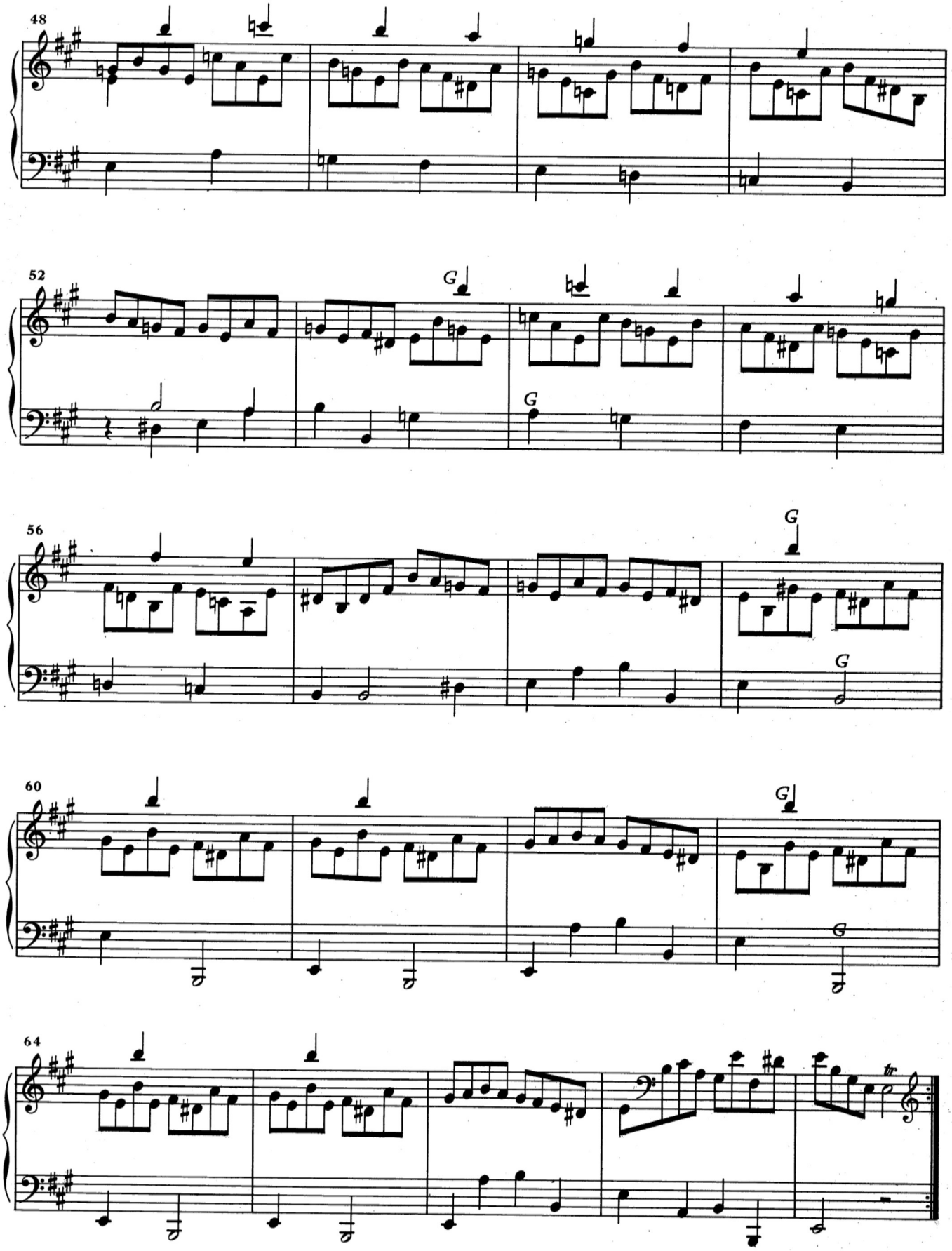
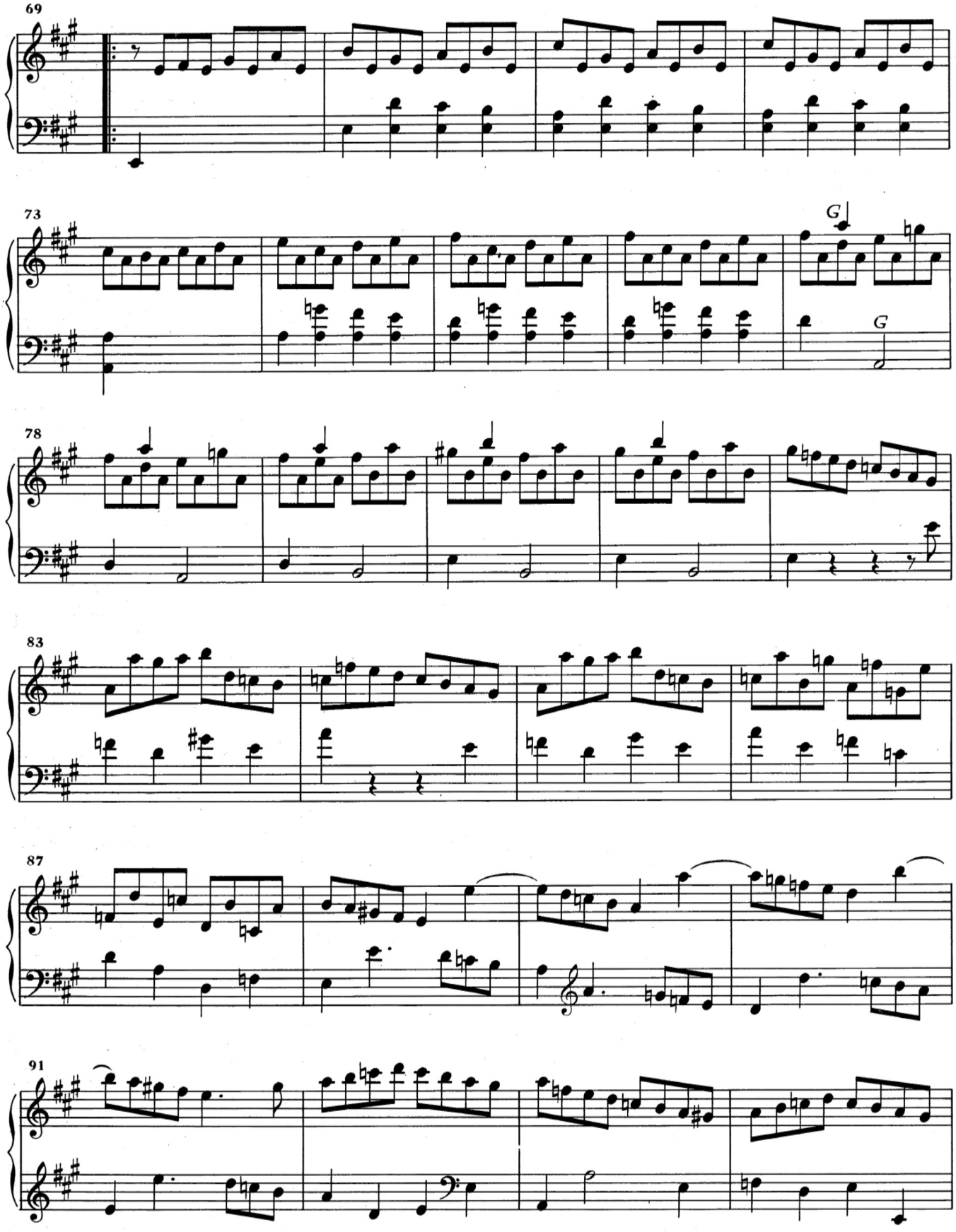
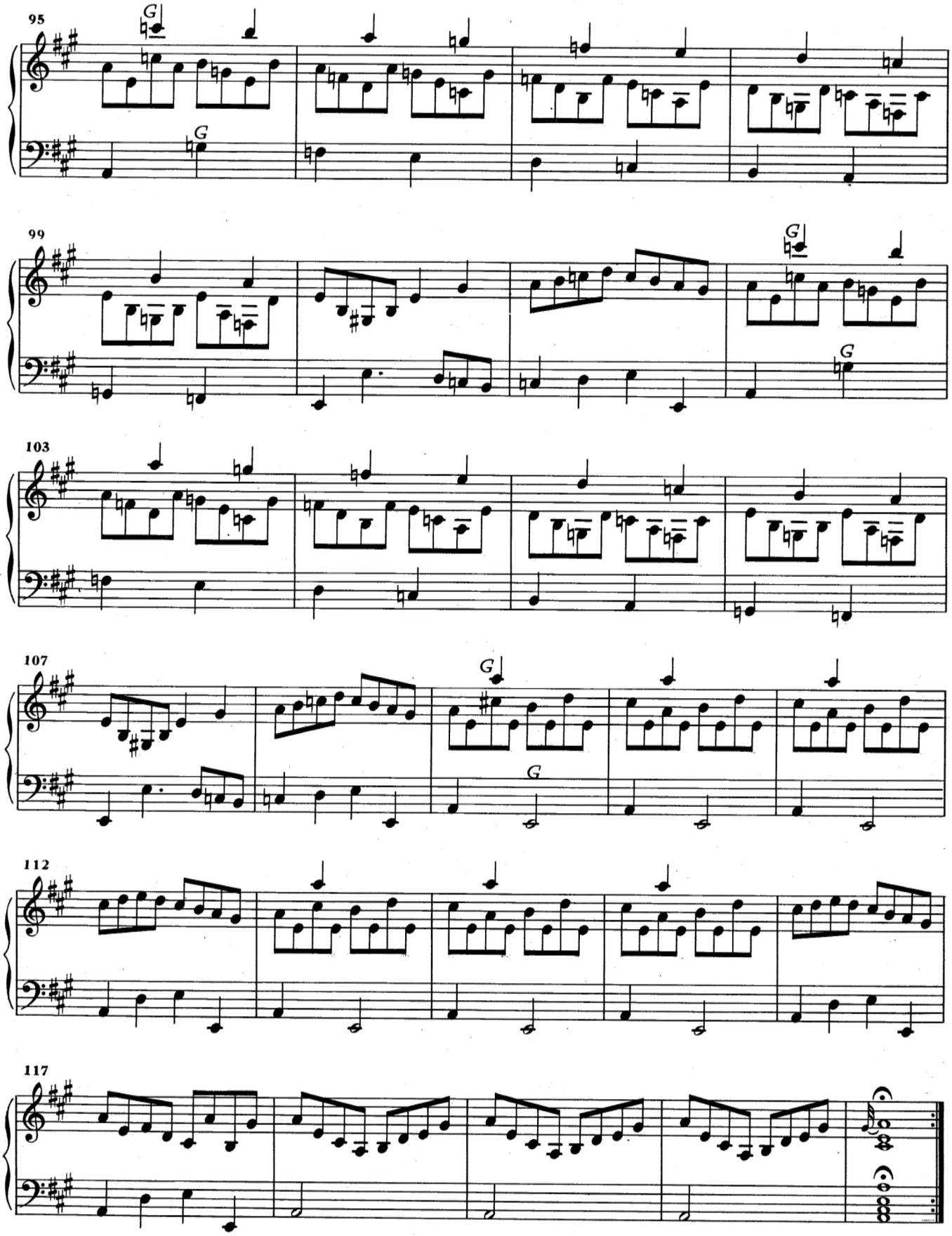
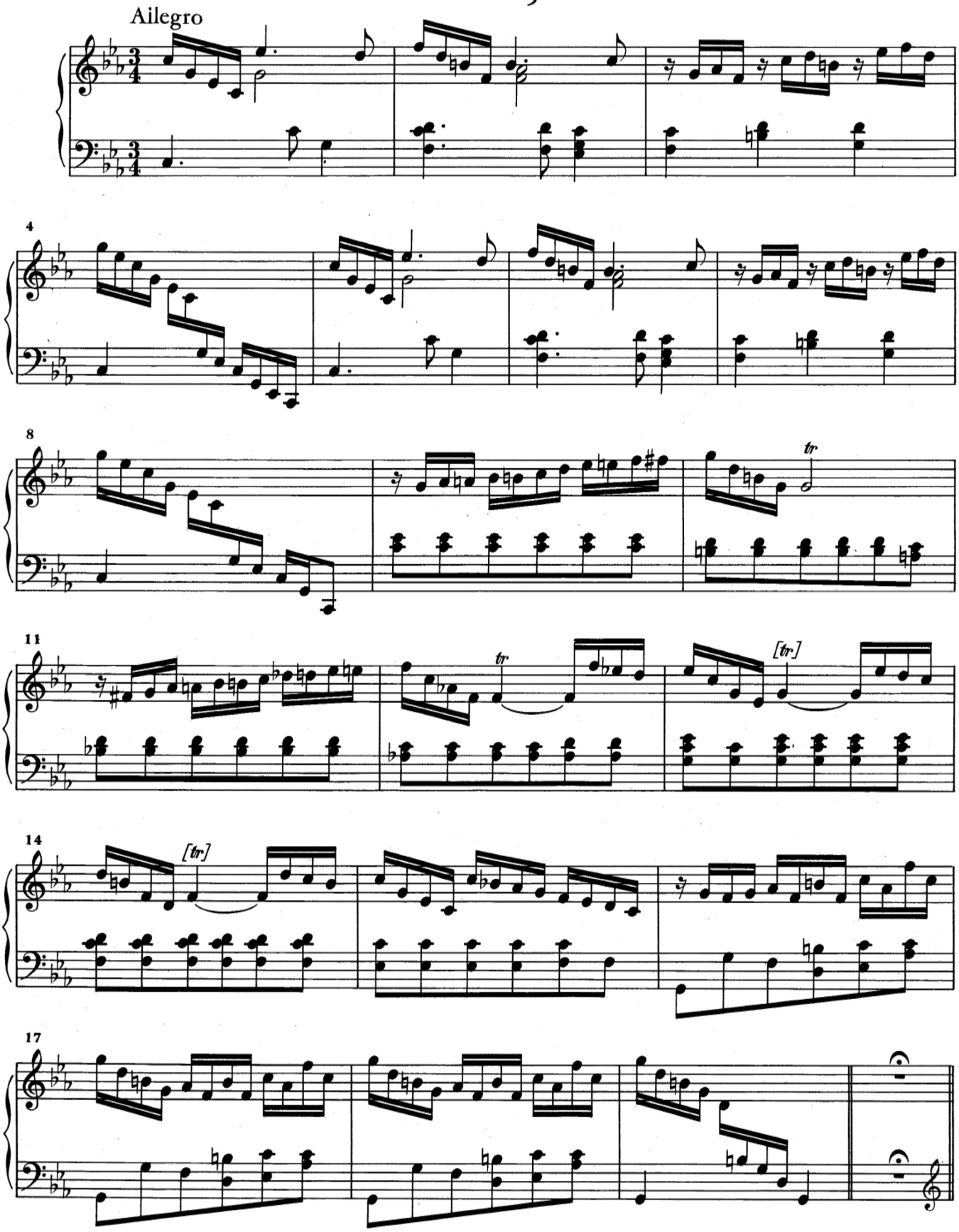
G
G
31
35
40
G
G
44

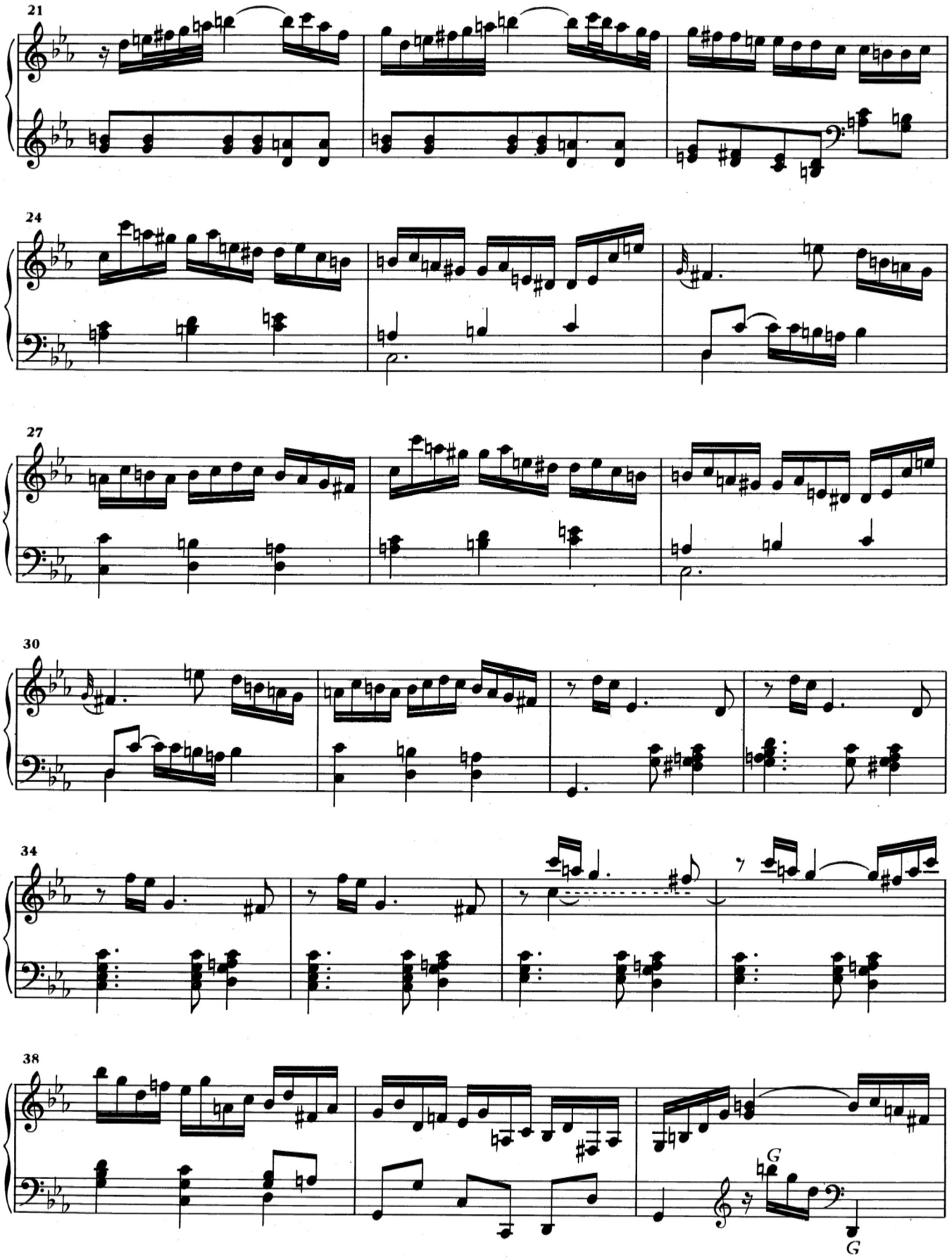

48
52
G
G
56
G
G
60
G
G
64
tr

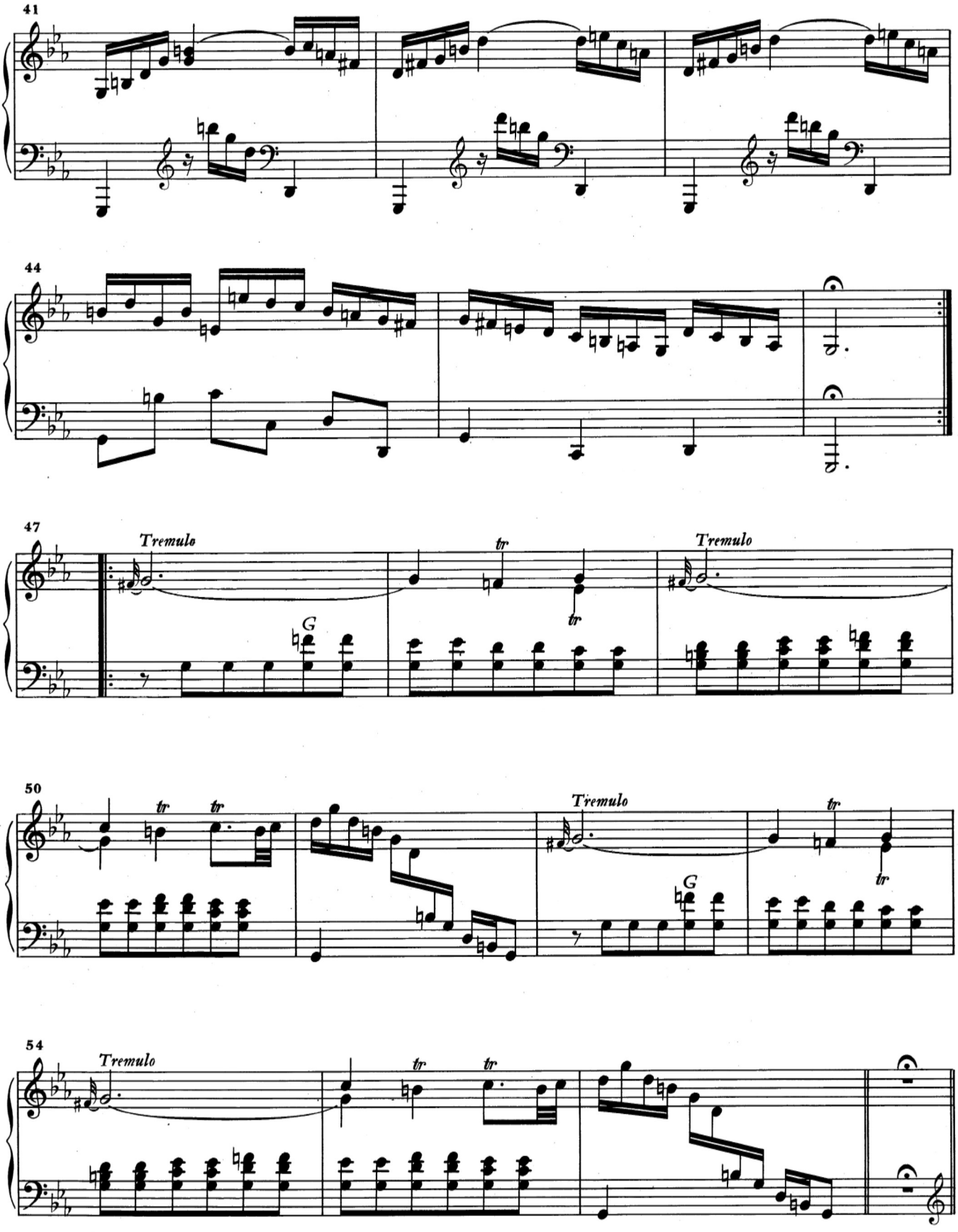

69
73
G
G
78
83
87
91

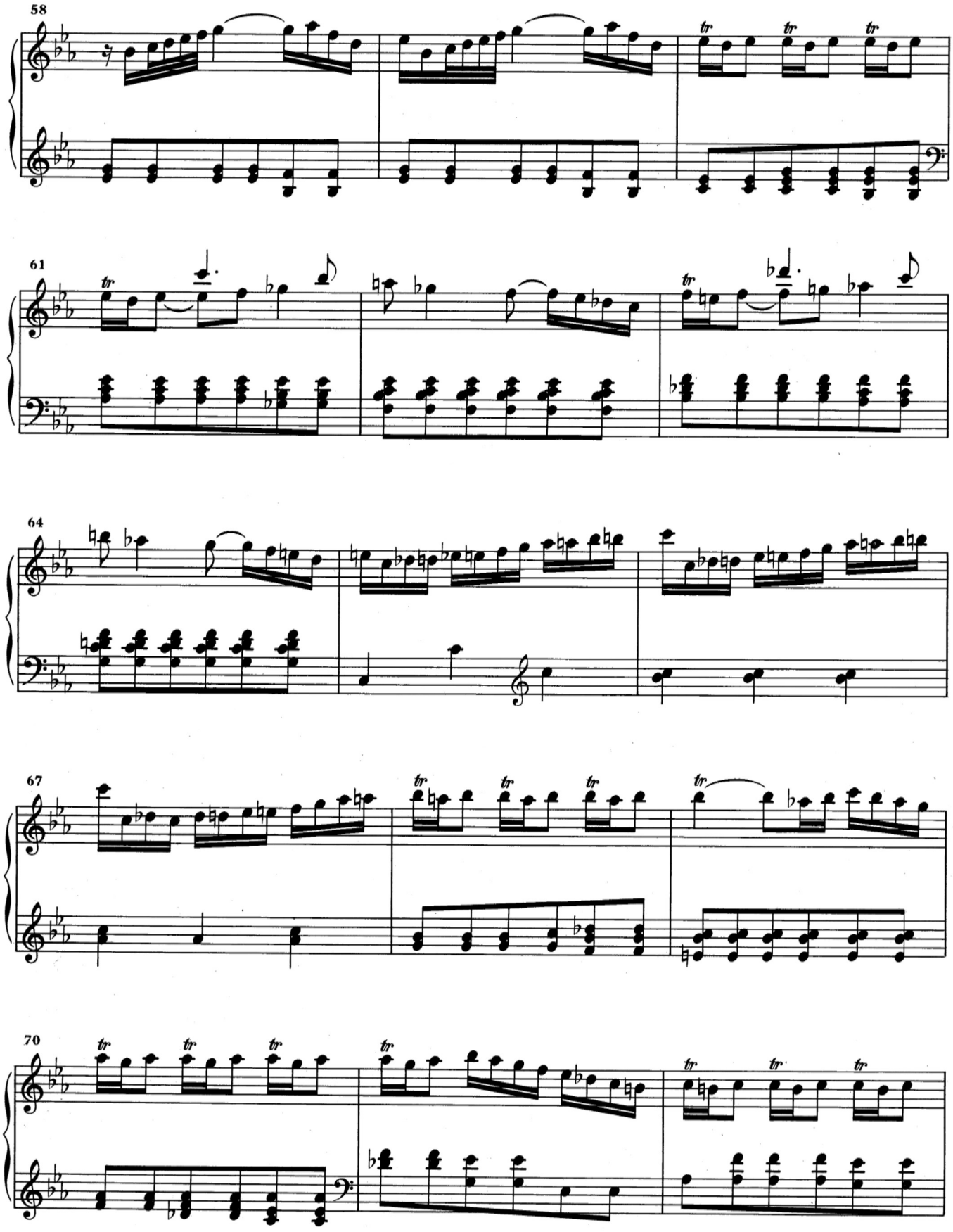

95
G
G
99
G
G
103
107
G
G
112
117

# K. 115




21
24
27
30
34
38
G
G


41
44
47
Tremulo
tr
G
Tremulo
50
tr
tr
Tremulo
tr
G
54
Tremulo
tr
tr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67
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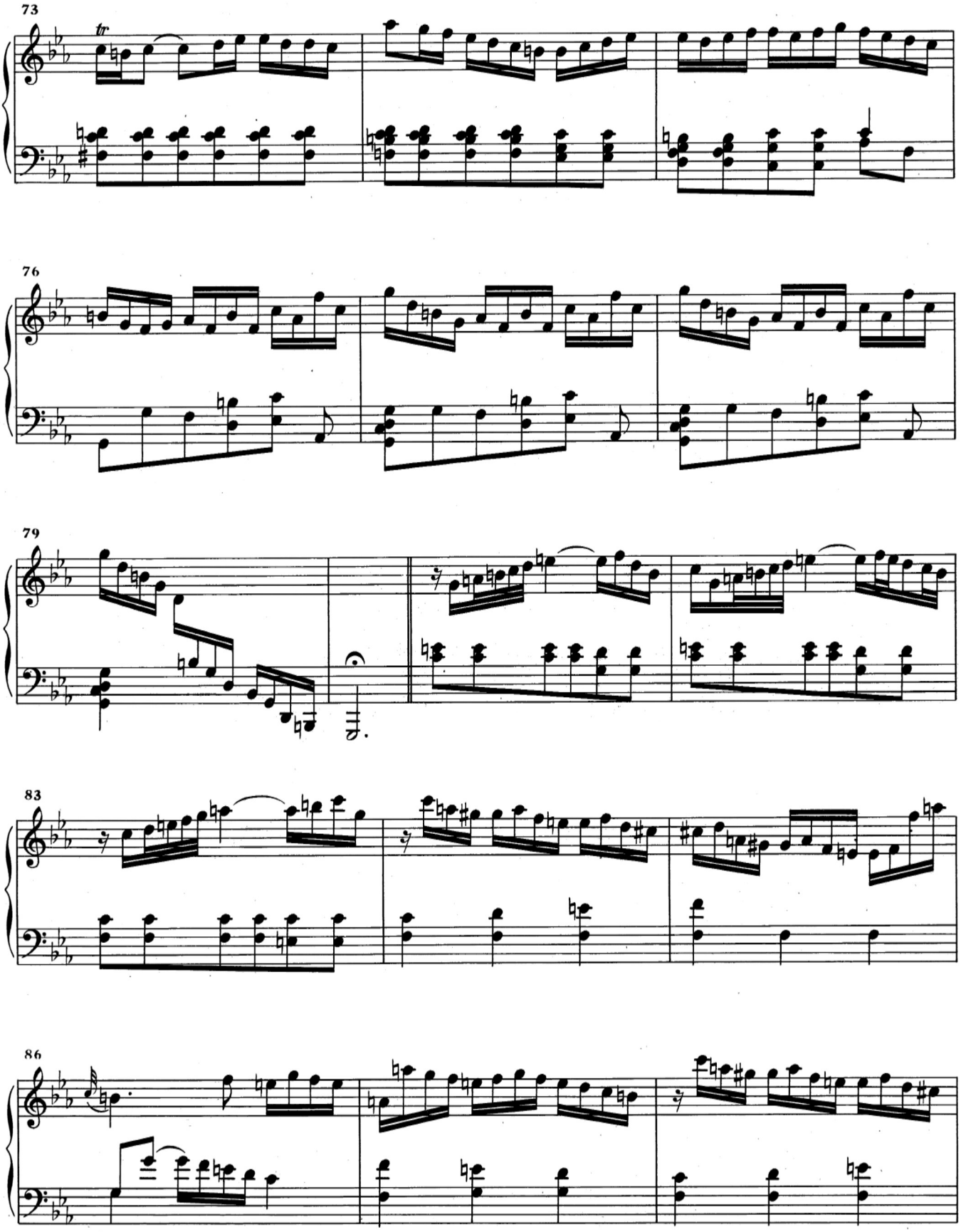
73
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76
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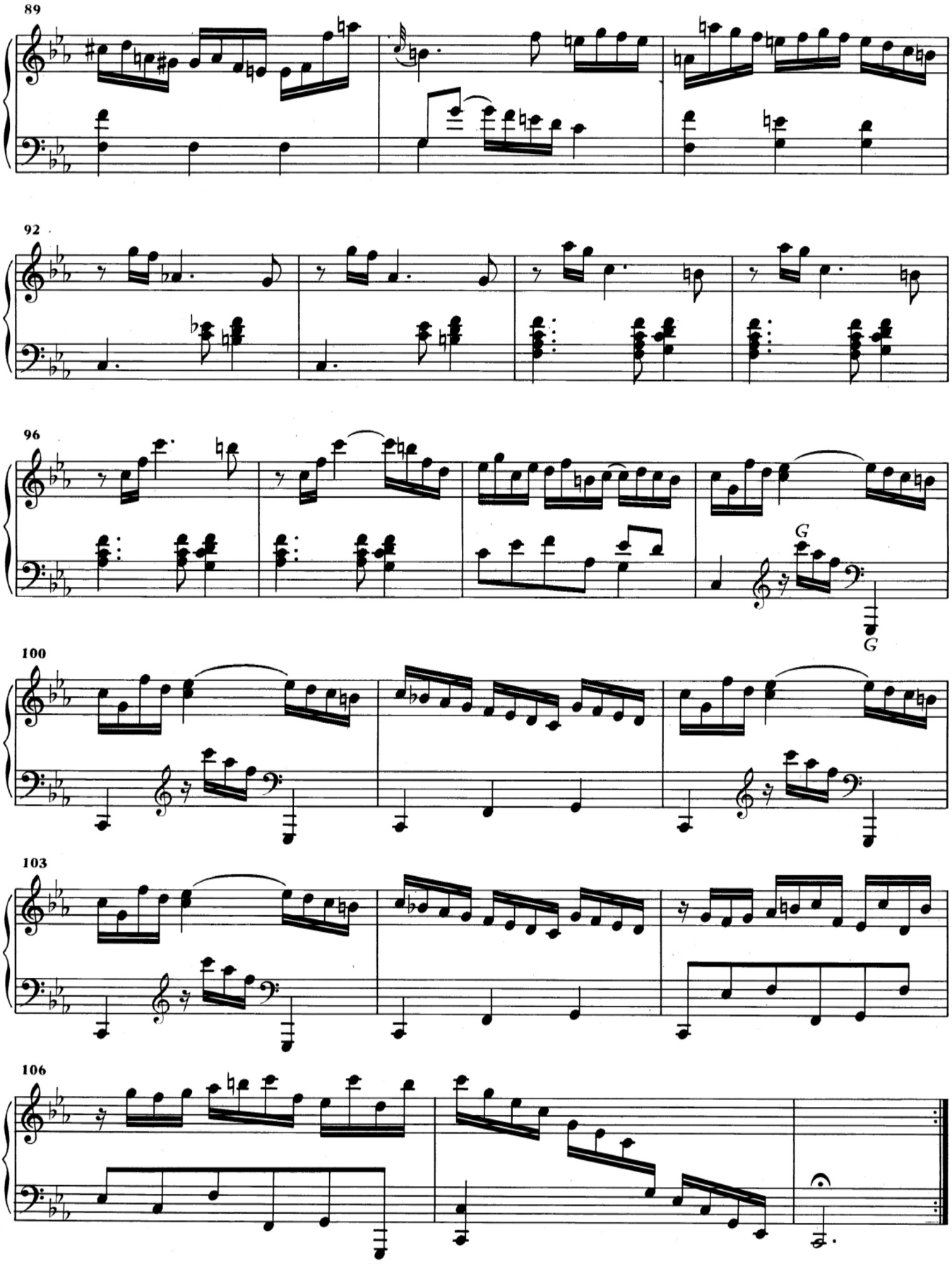
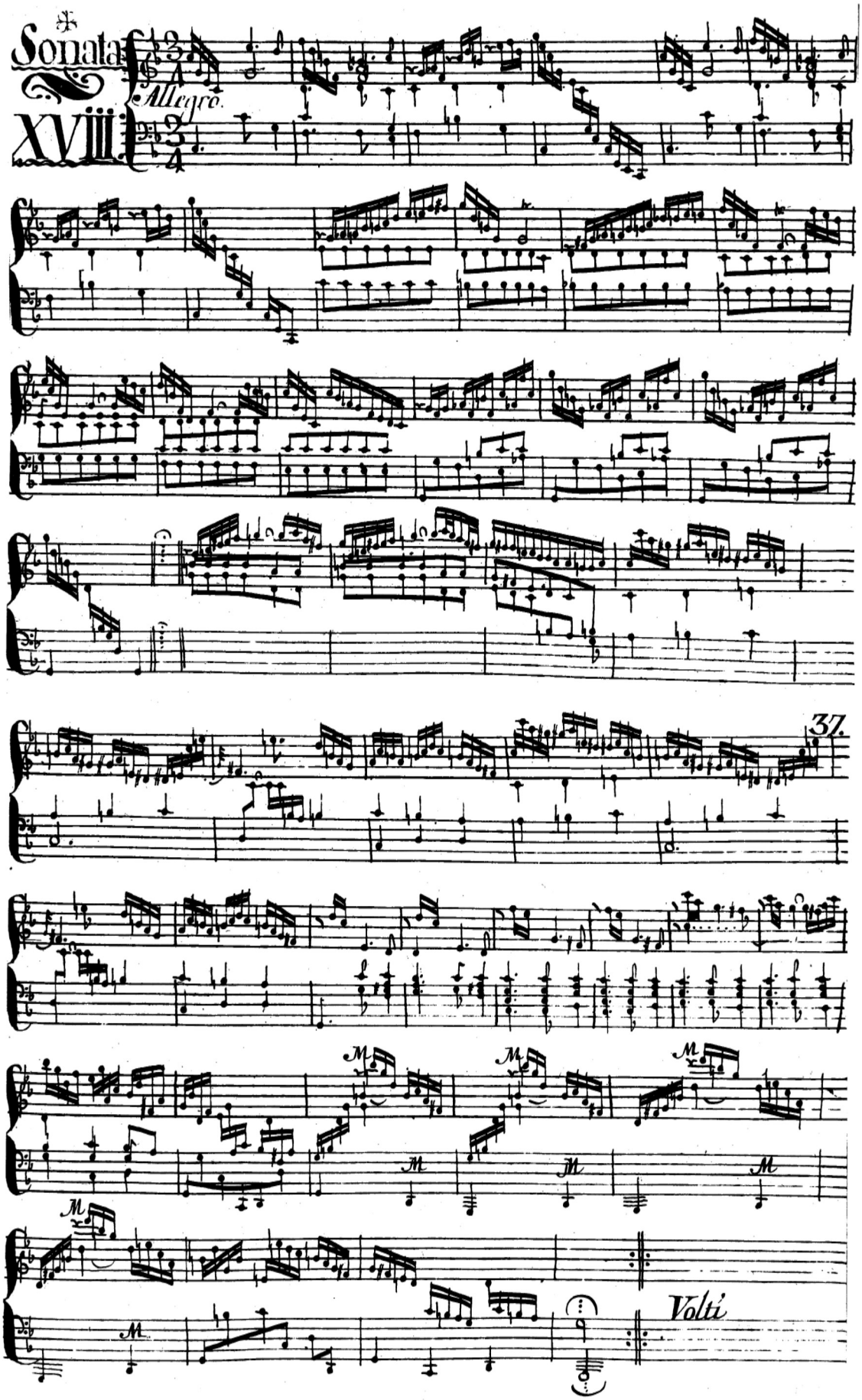
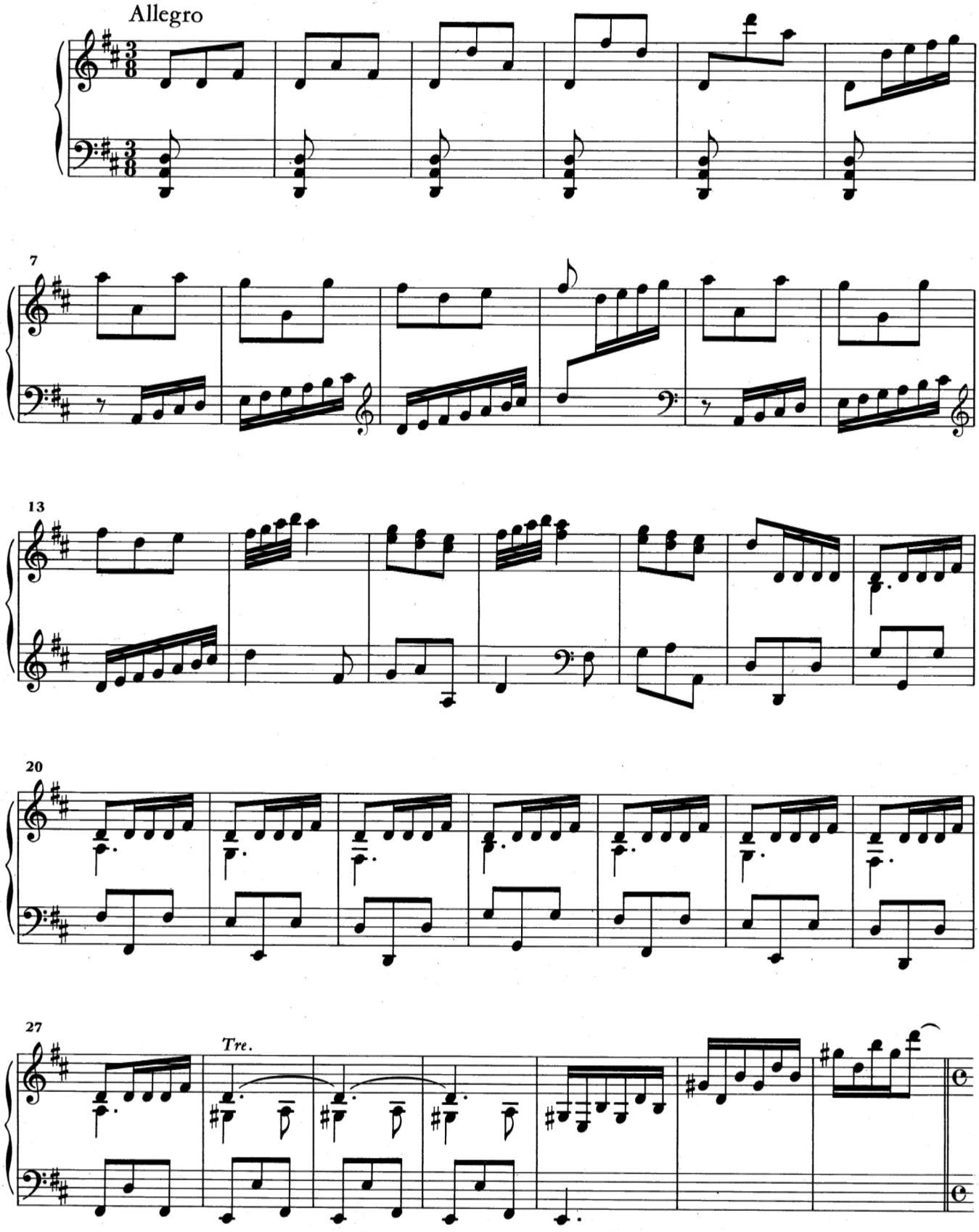
83
86


89
92
96
G
G
100
103
106



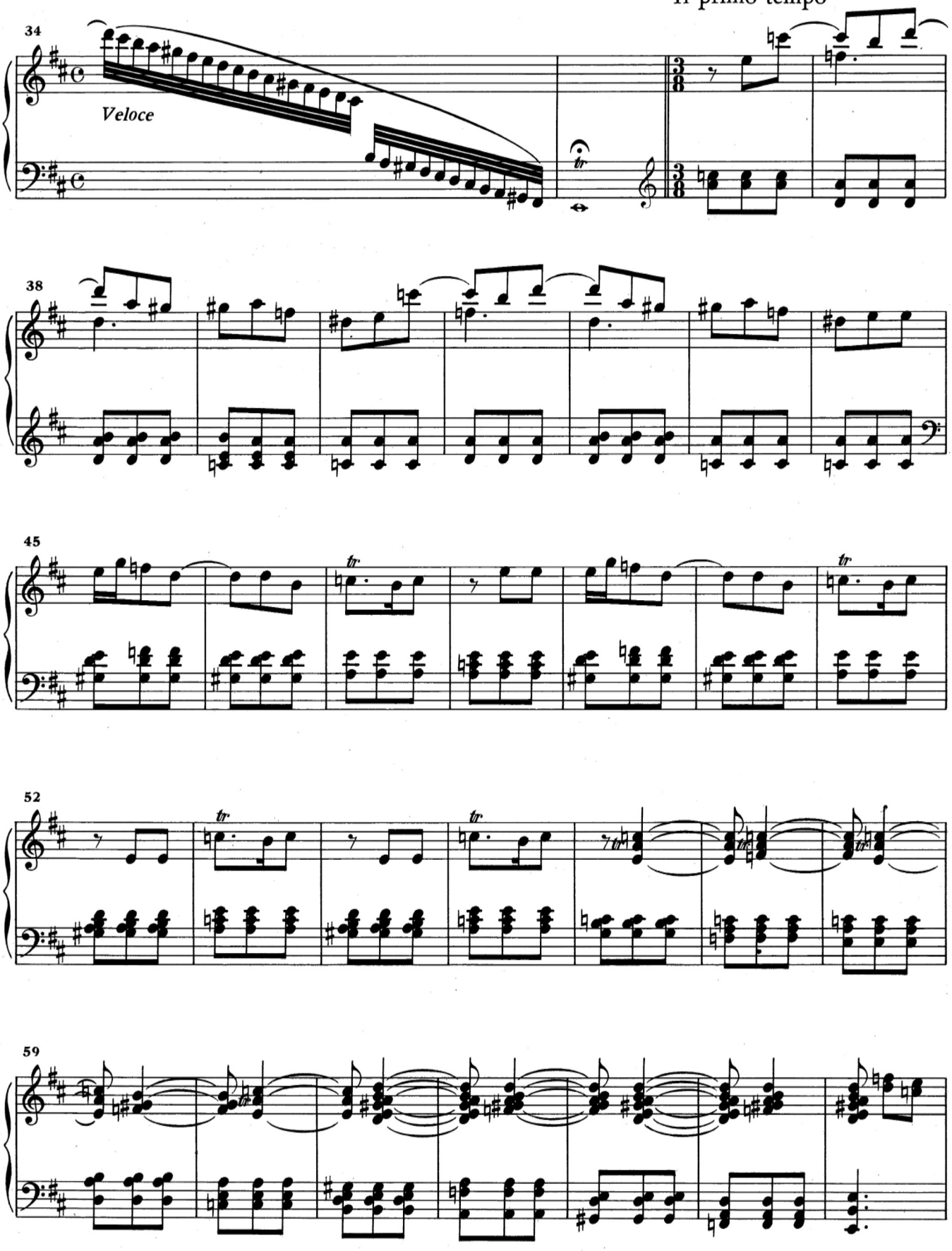

VENISE XV 18 (SONATE K. 115)

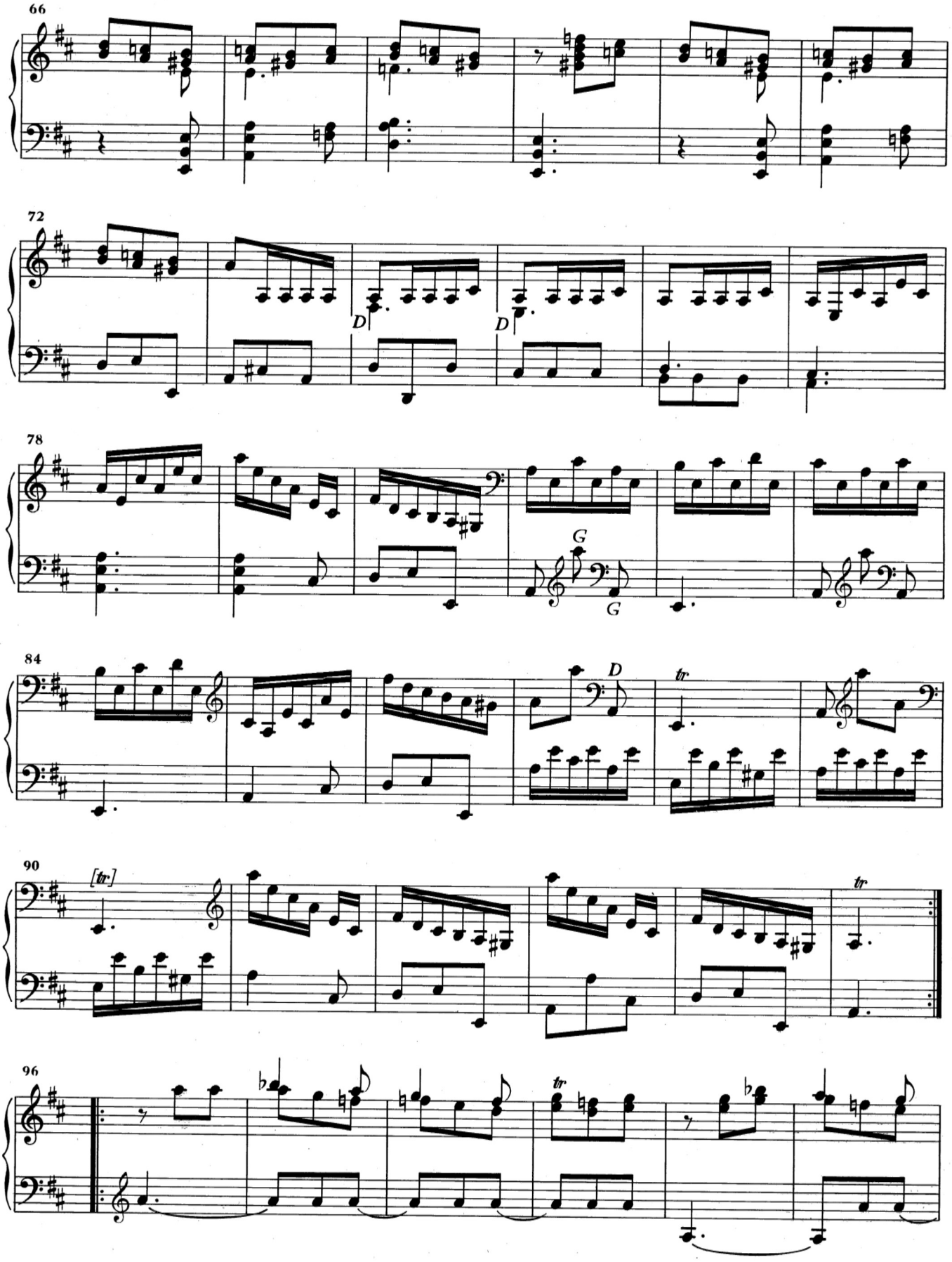
# K. 119

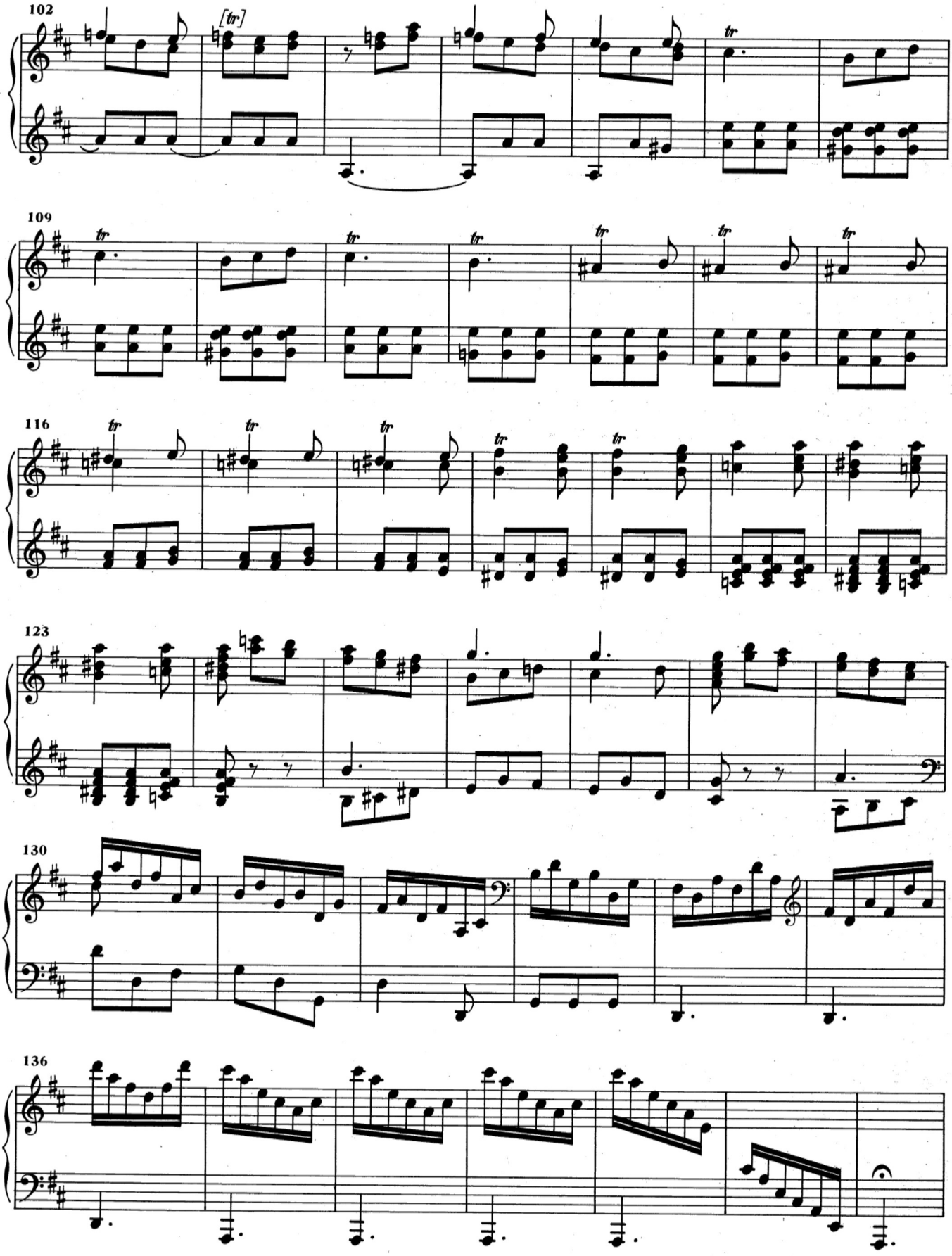


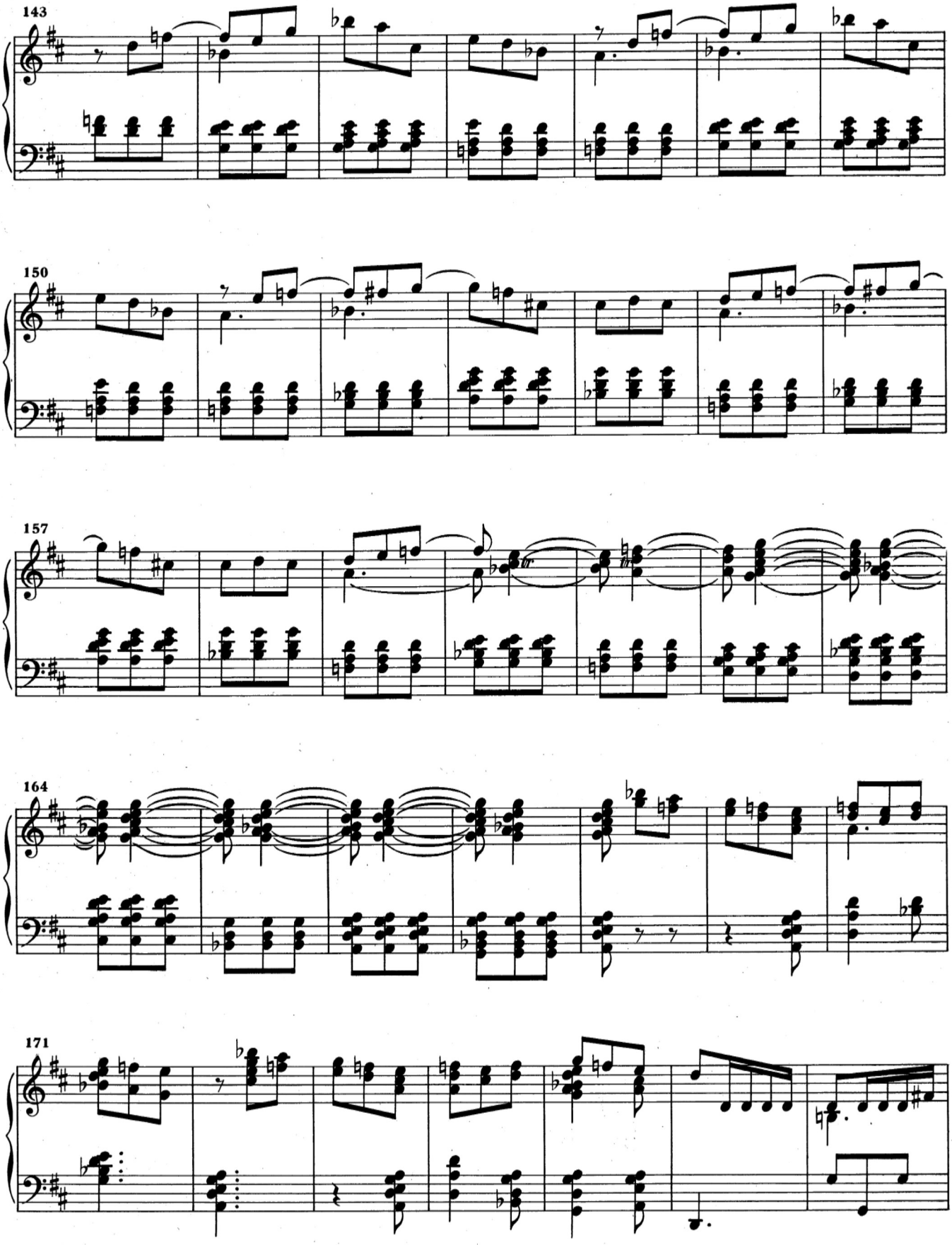

*Dans Parme, Münster et Vienne, cette sonate est précédée de la sonate K. 120.*

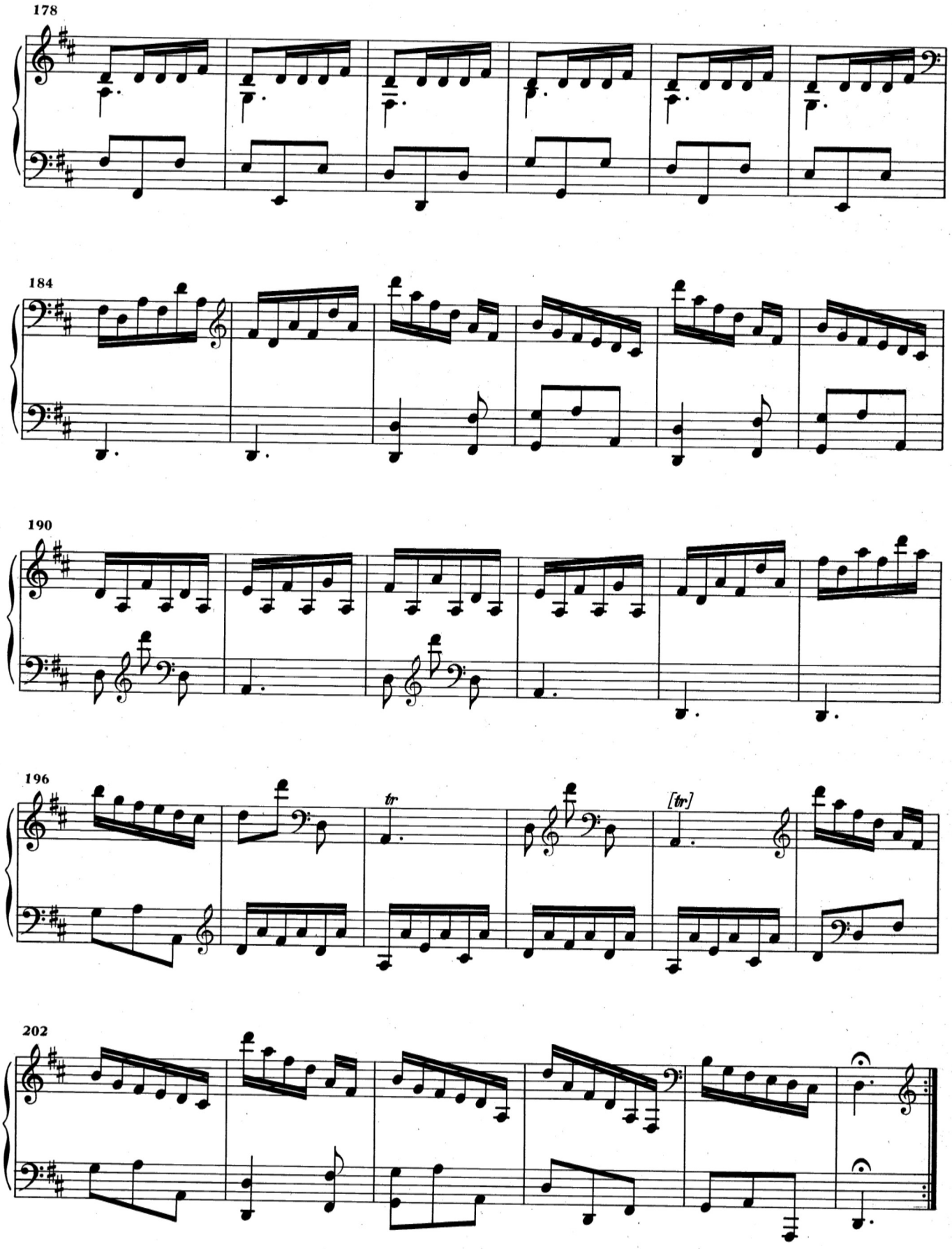
Il primo tempo



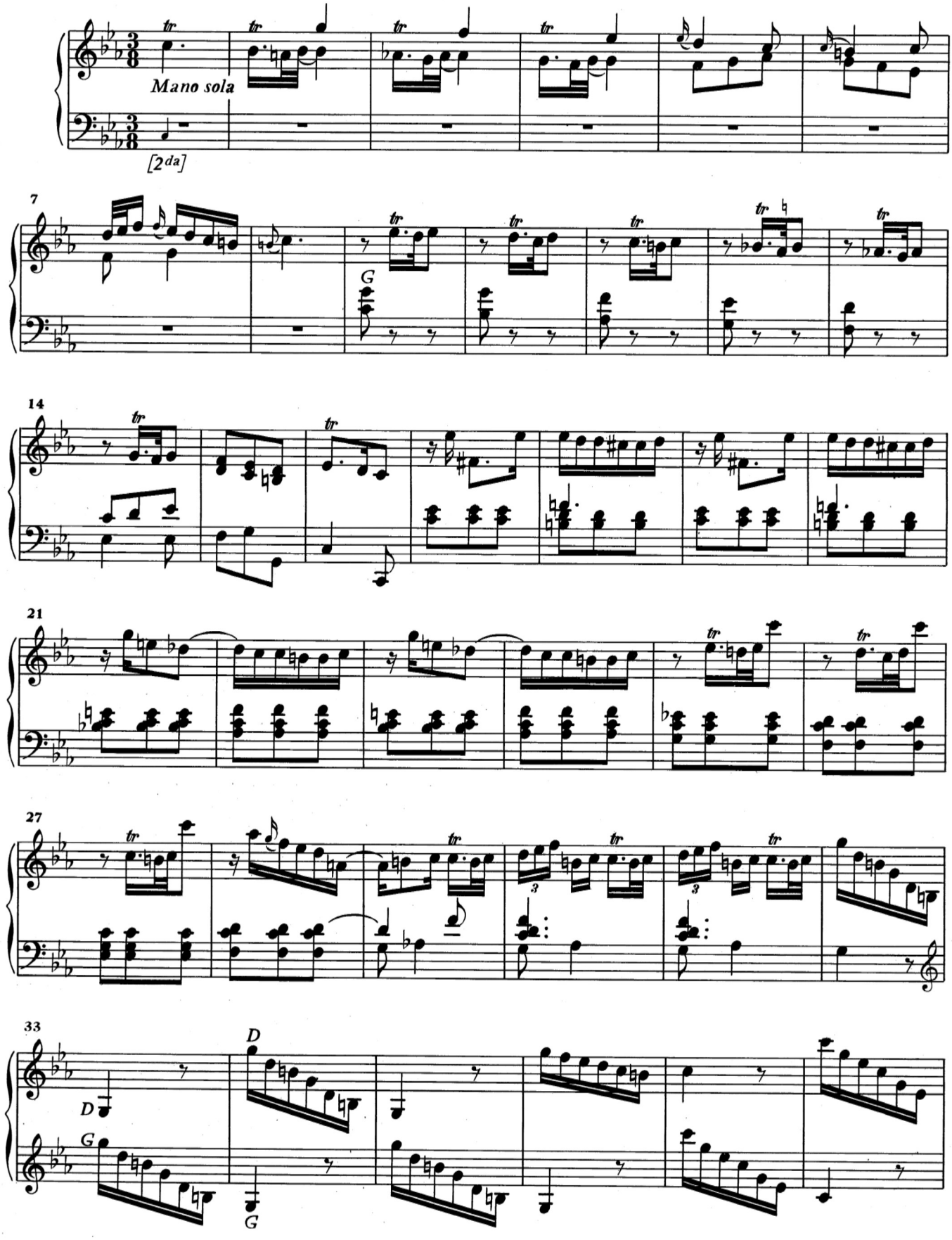

66
72
D
D
78
G
G
84
D
tr
90
[tr]
tr
96
tr

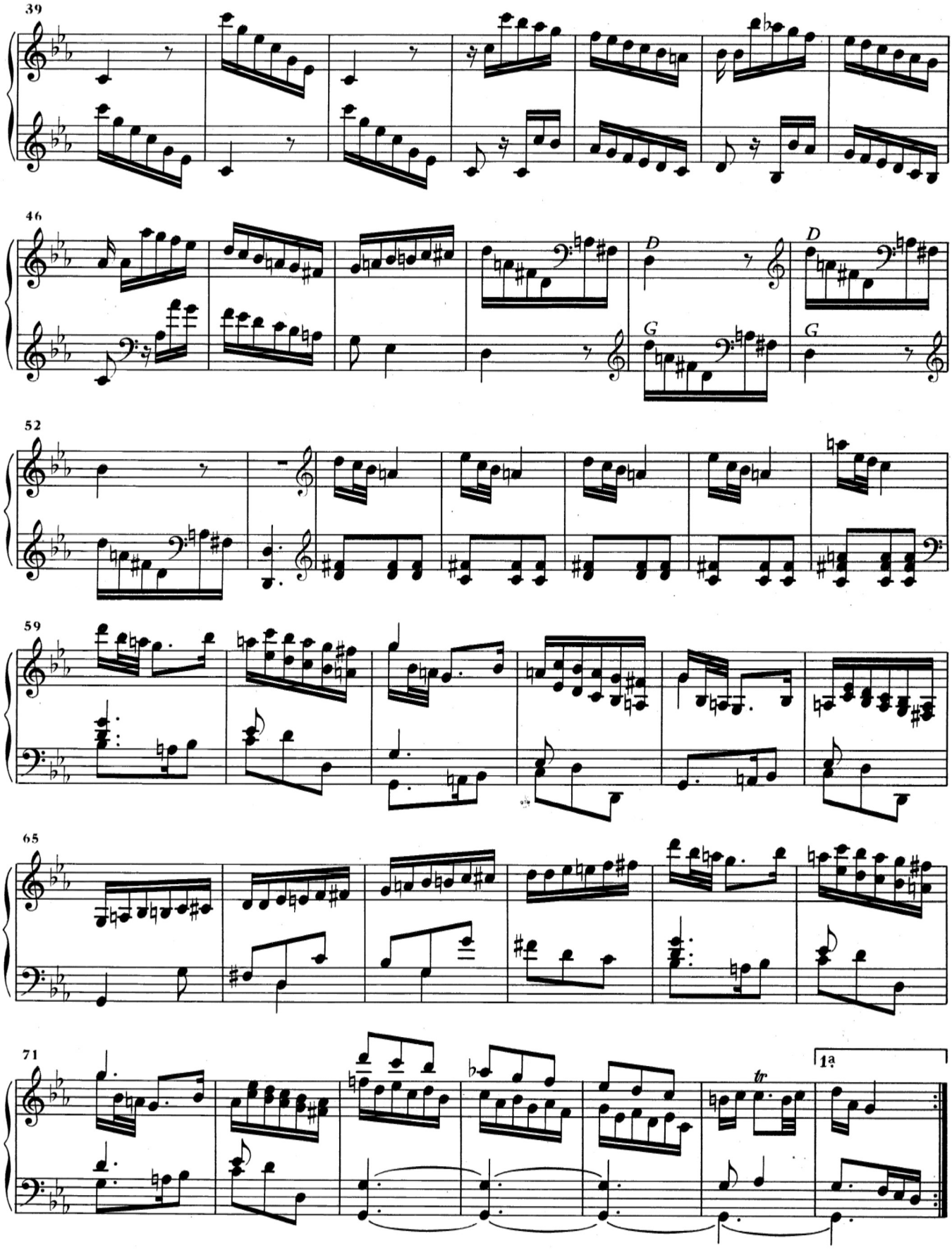

102
[tr]
109
116
123
130
136

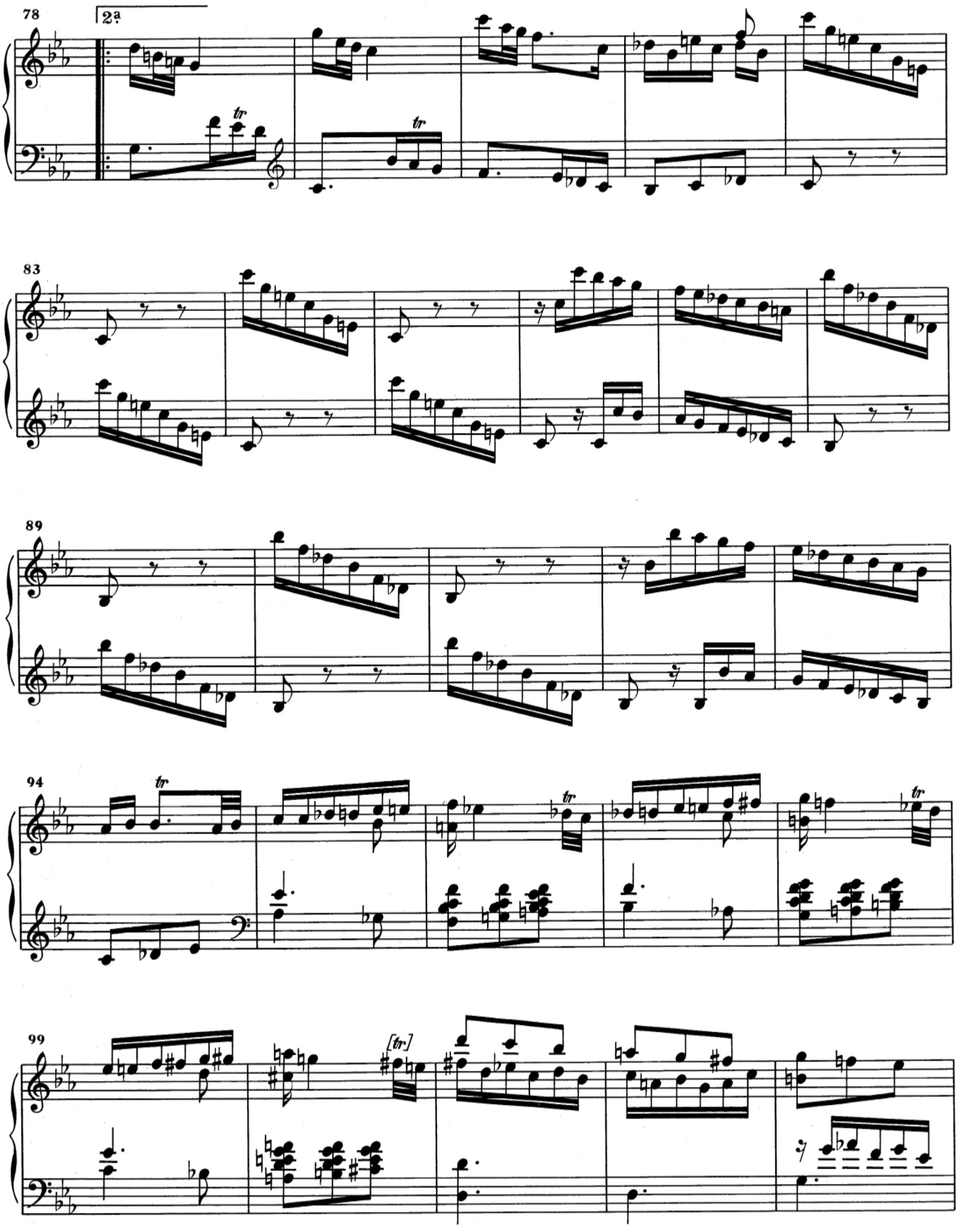

143
150
157
164
171

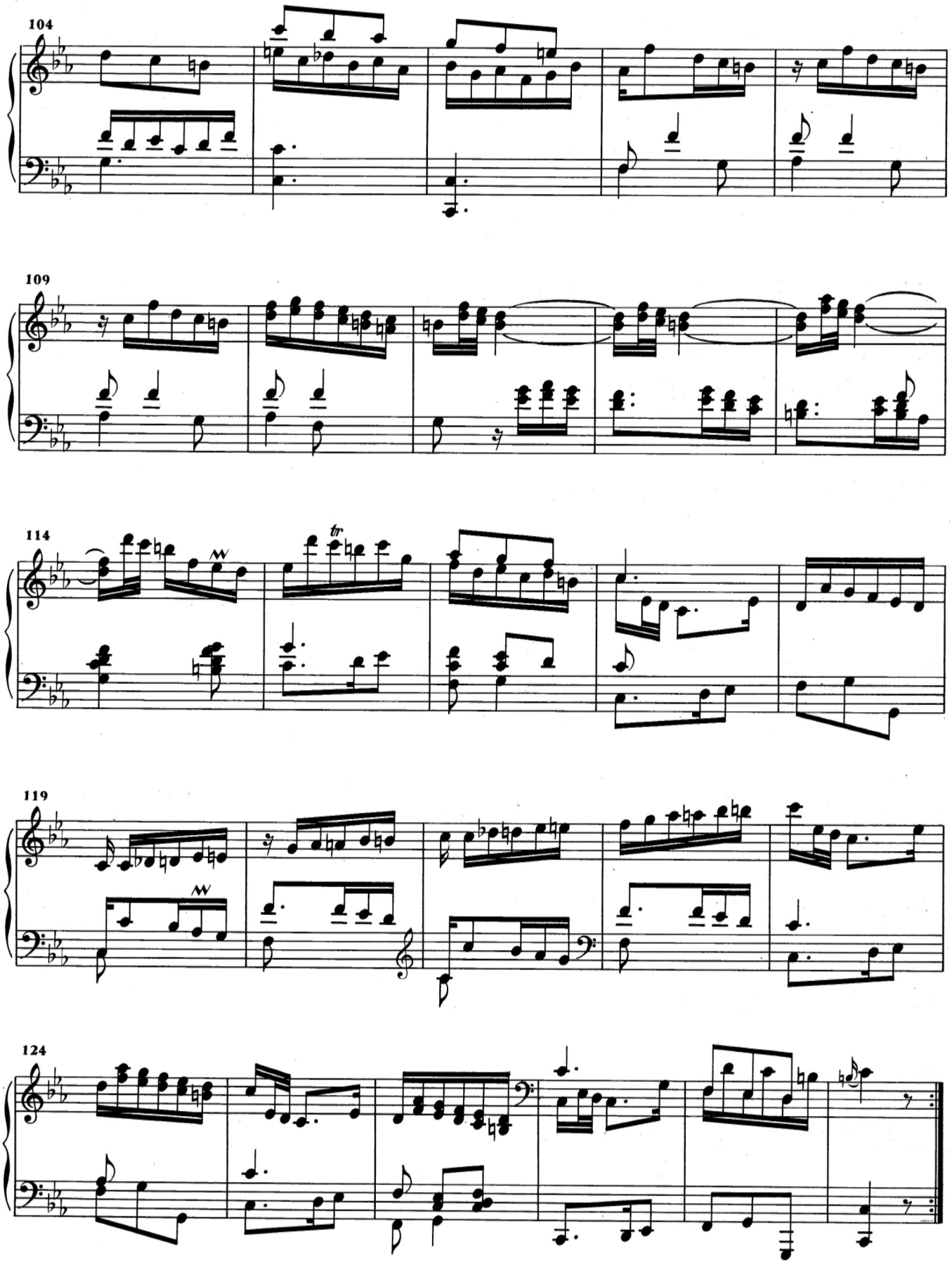

178
184
190
196
tr
[tr]
202

# K. 126



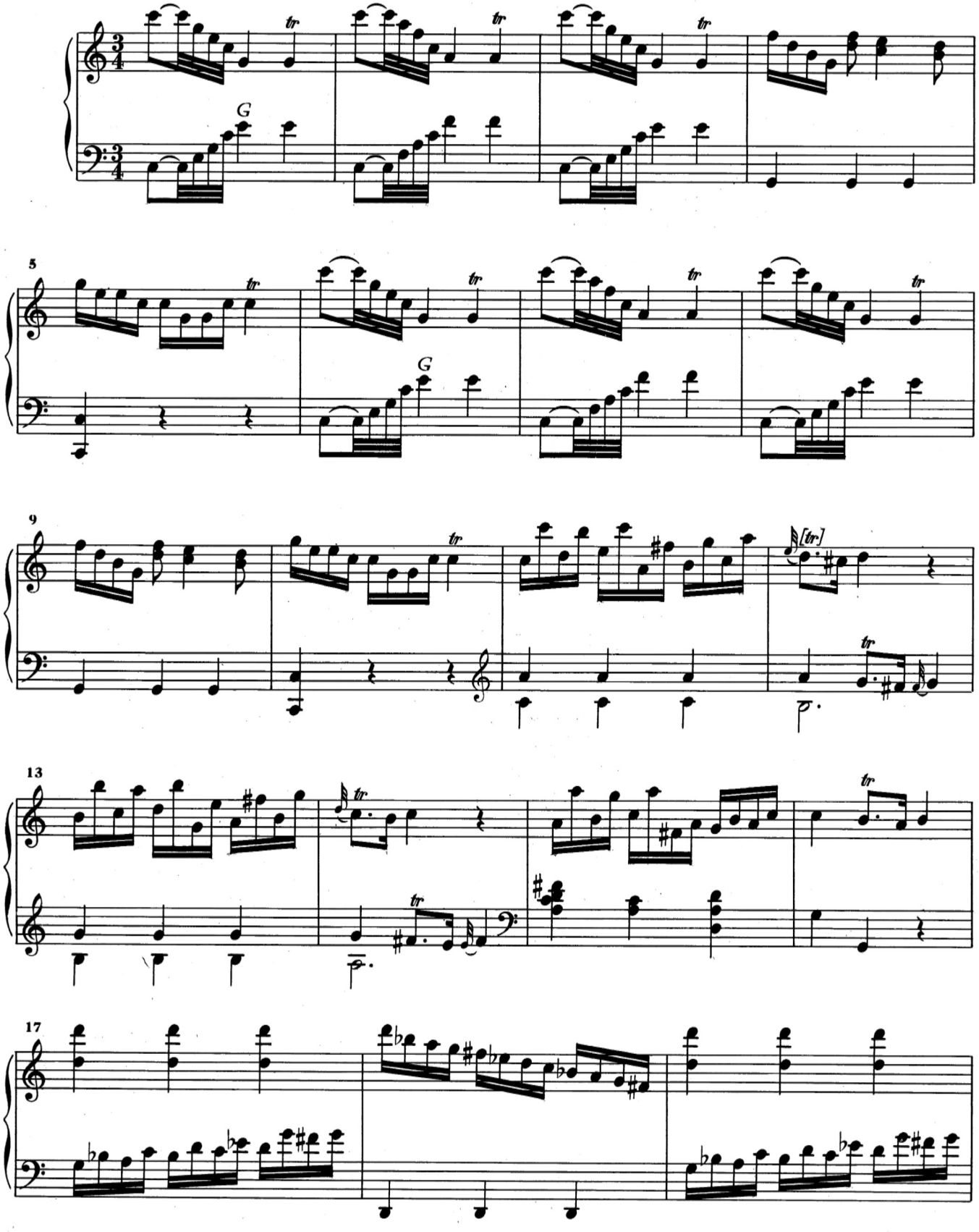

39
46
D
D
G
G
52
59
65
71
tr
1ª


78
2ª
tr
tr
83
89
94
tr
tr
tr
99
[tr]

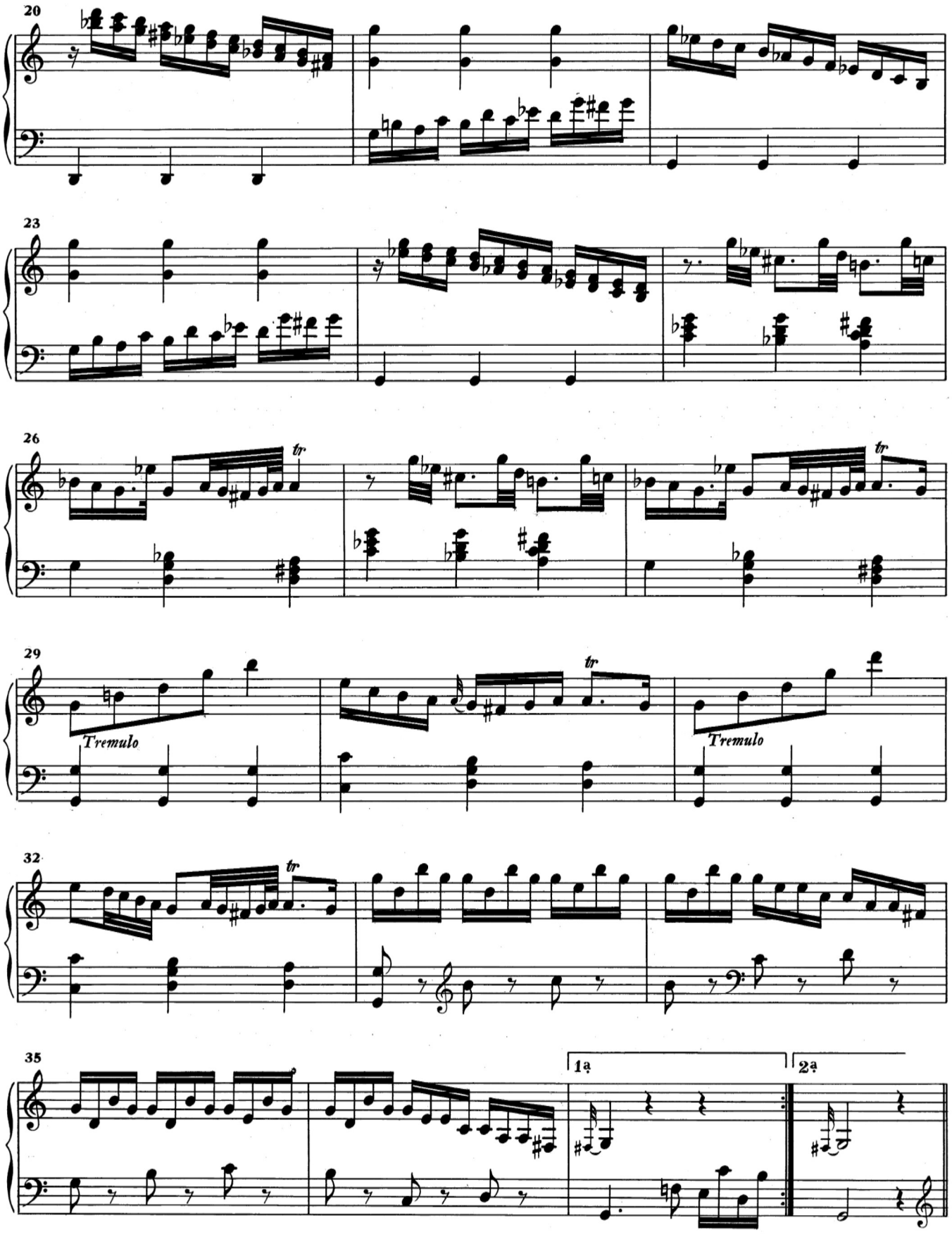

104
109
114
tr
119
124

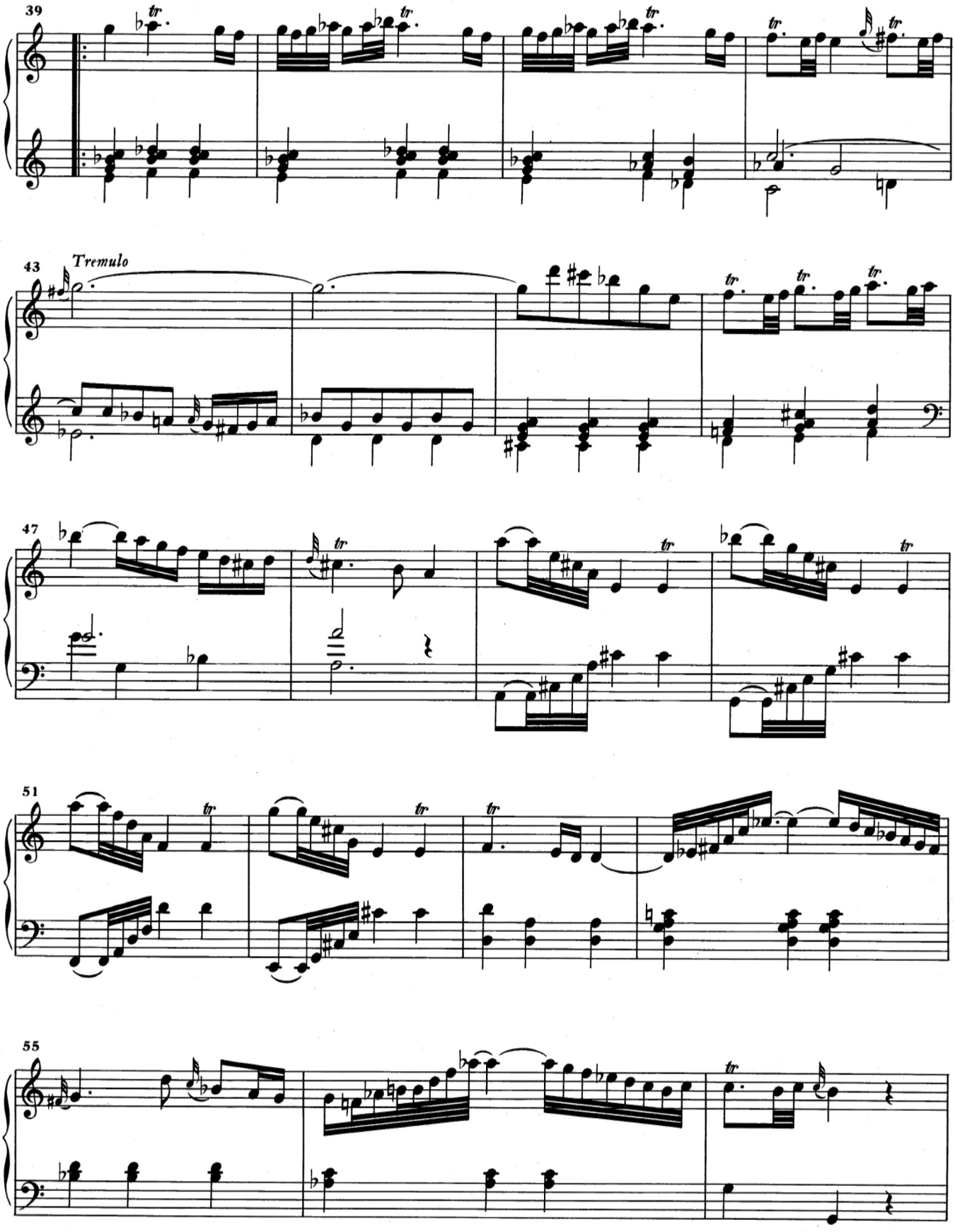
# K. 132

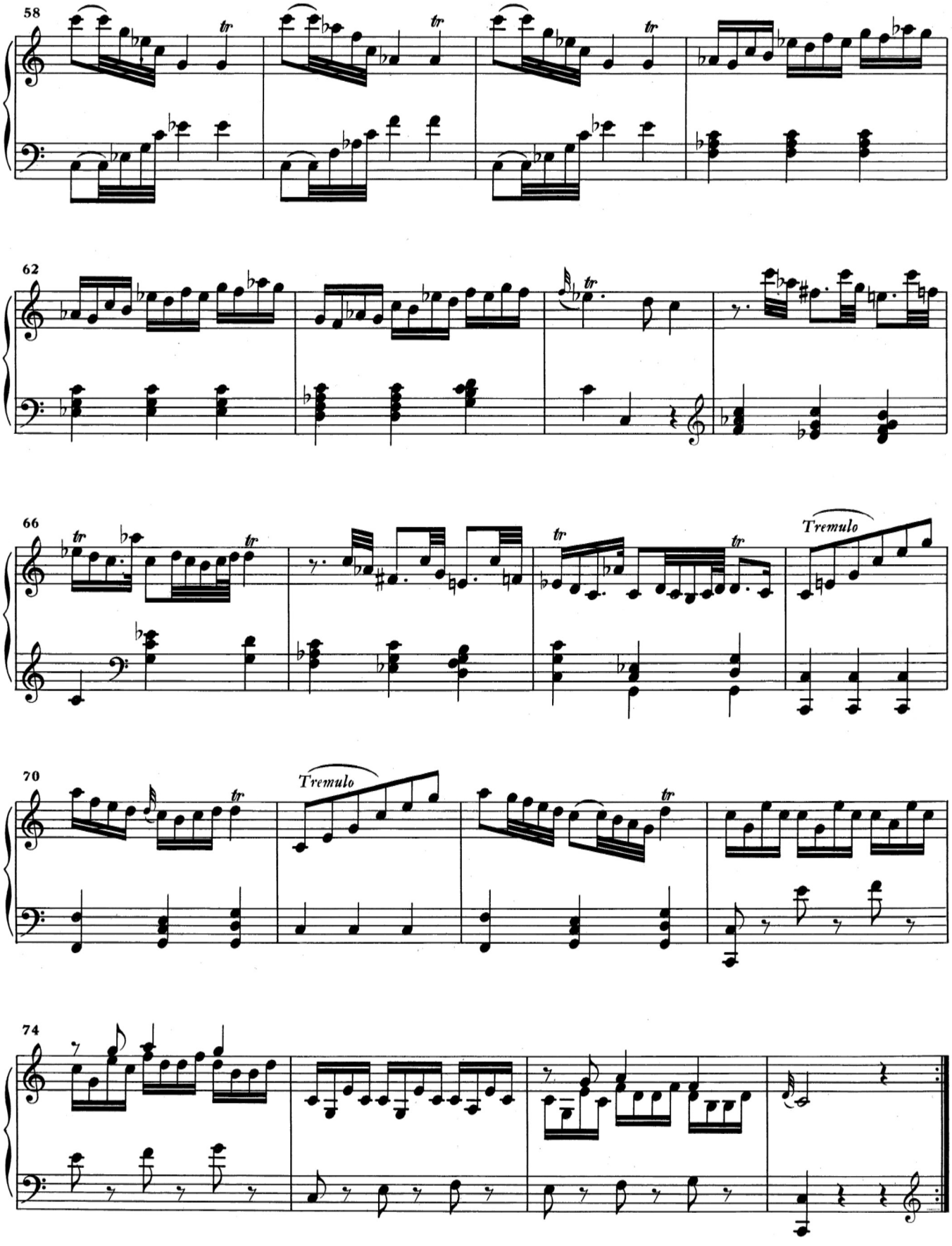
Cantabile *



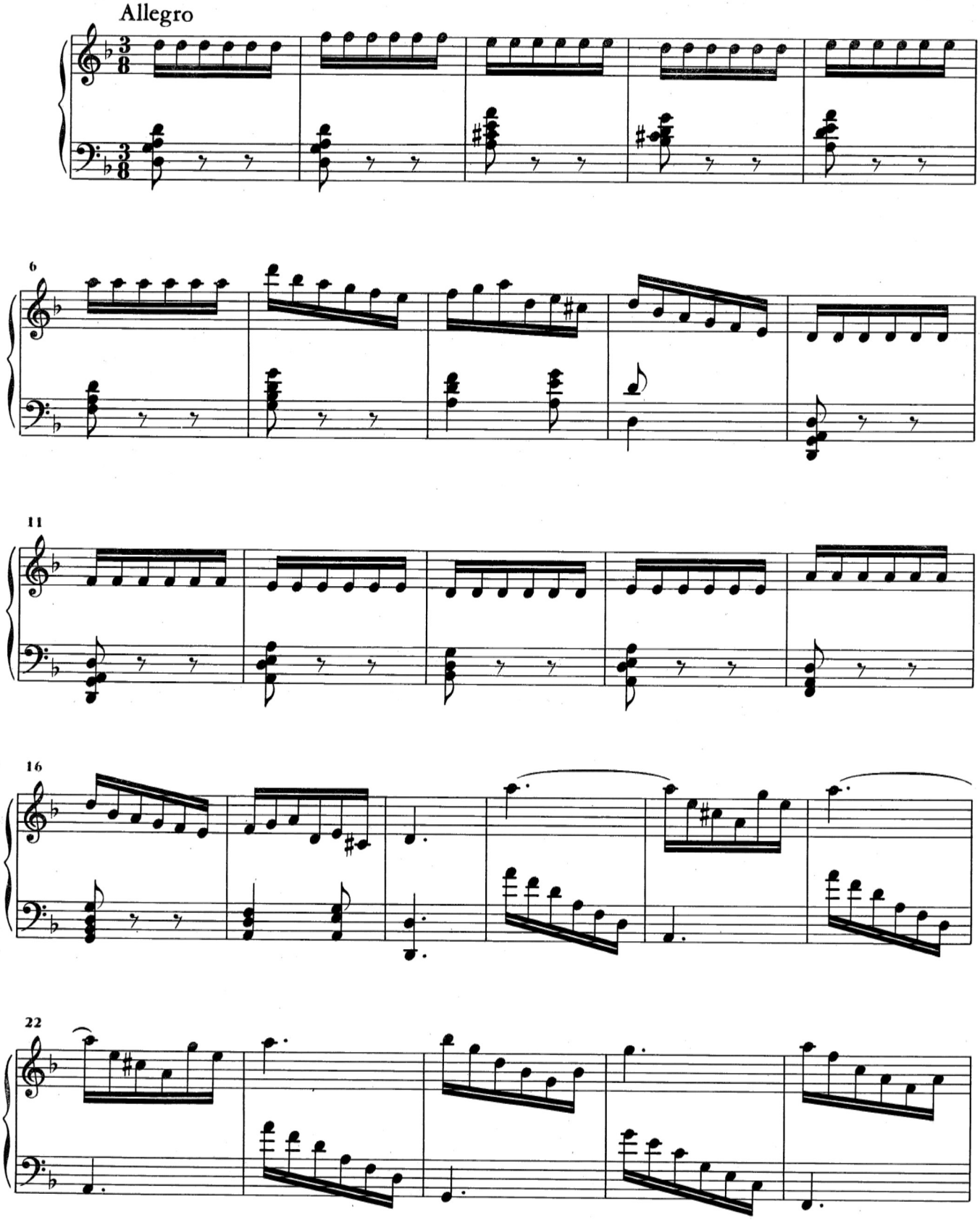
* *Parme:* Andante

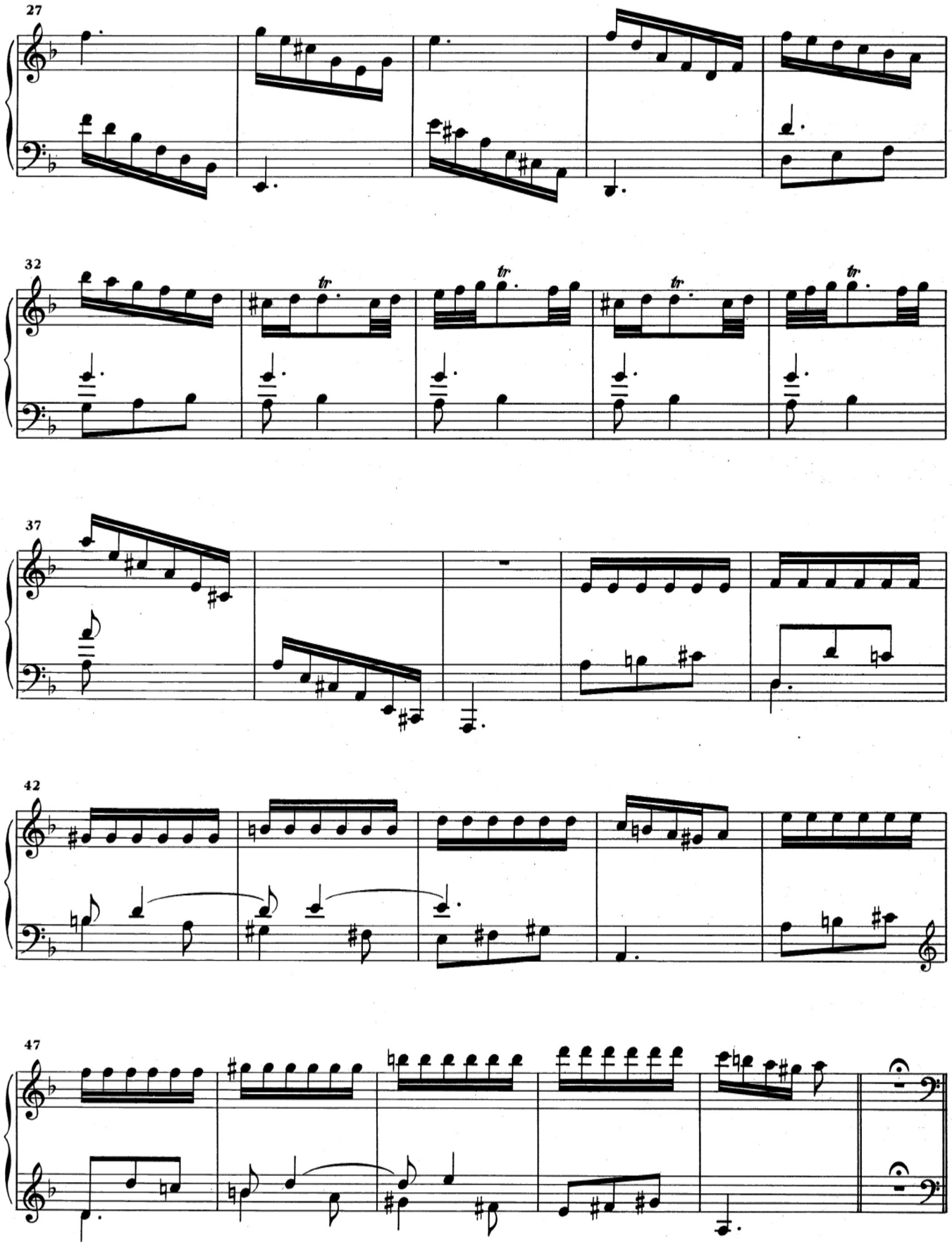

20
23
26
tr
29
Tremulo
tr
Tremulo
32
tr
35
1ª
2ª

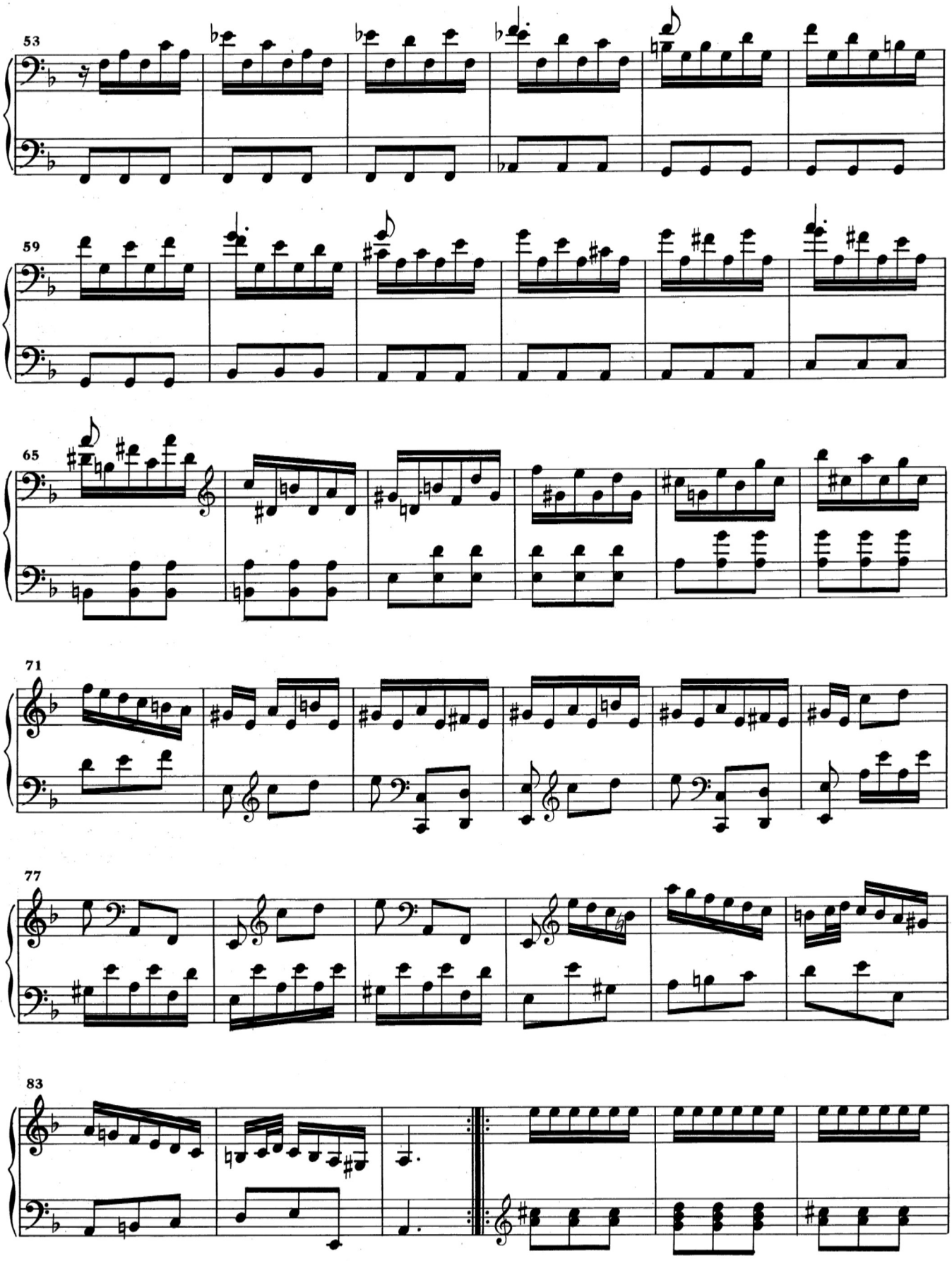

39
43
Tremulo
47
51
55

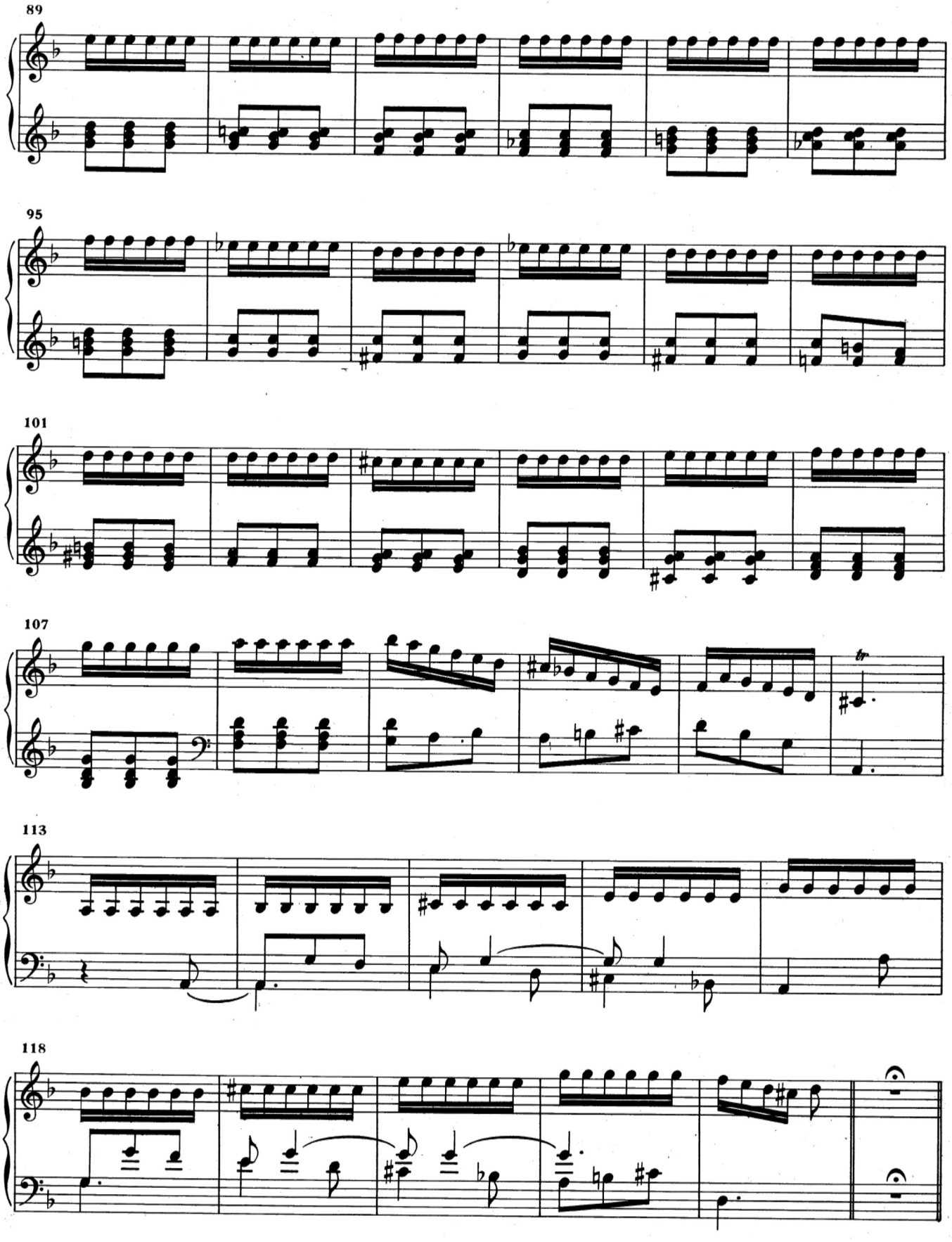

58
62
66
Tremulo
70
Tremulo
74

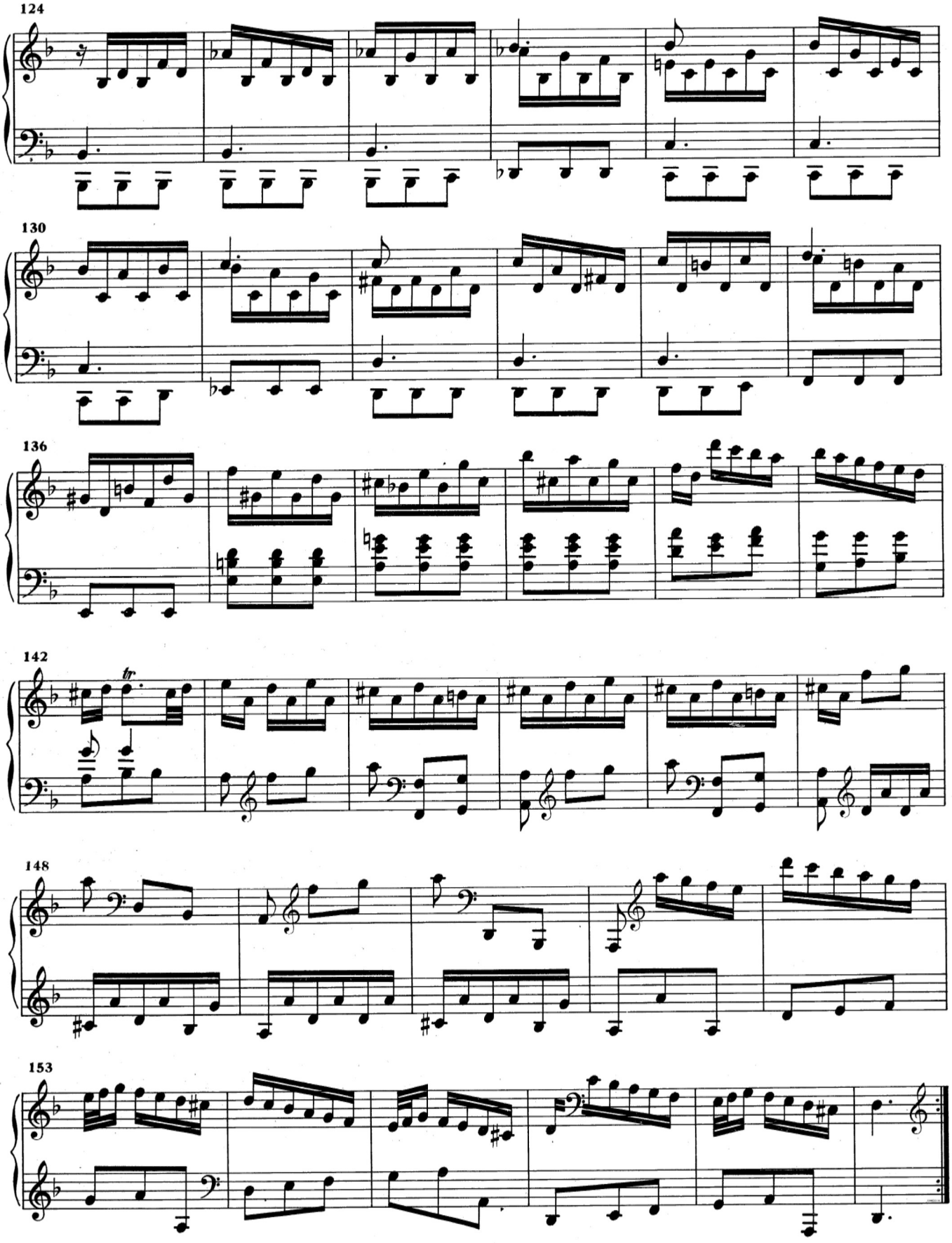
# K. 141

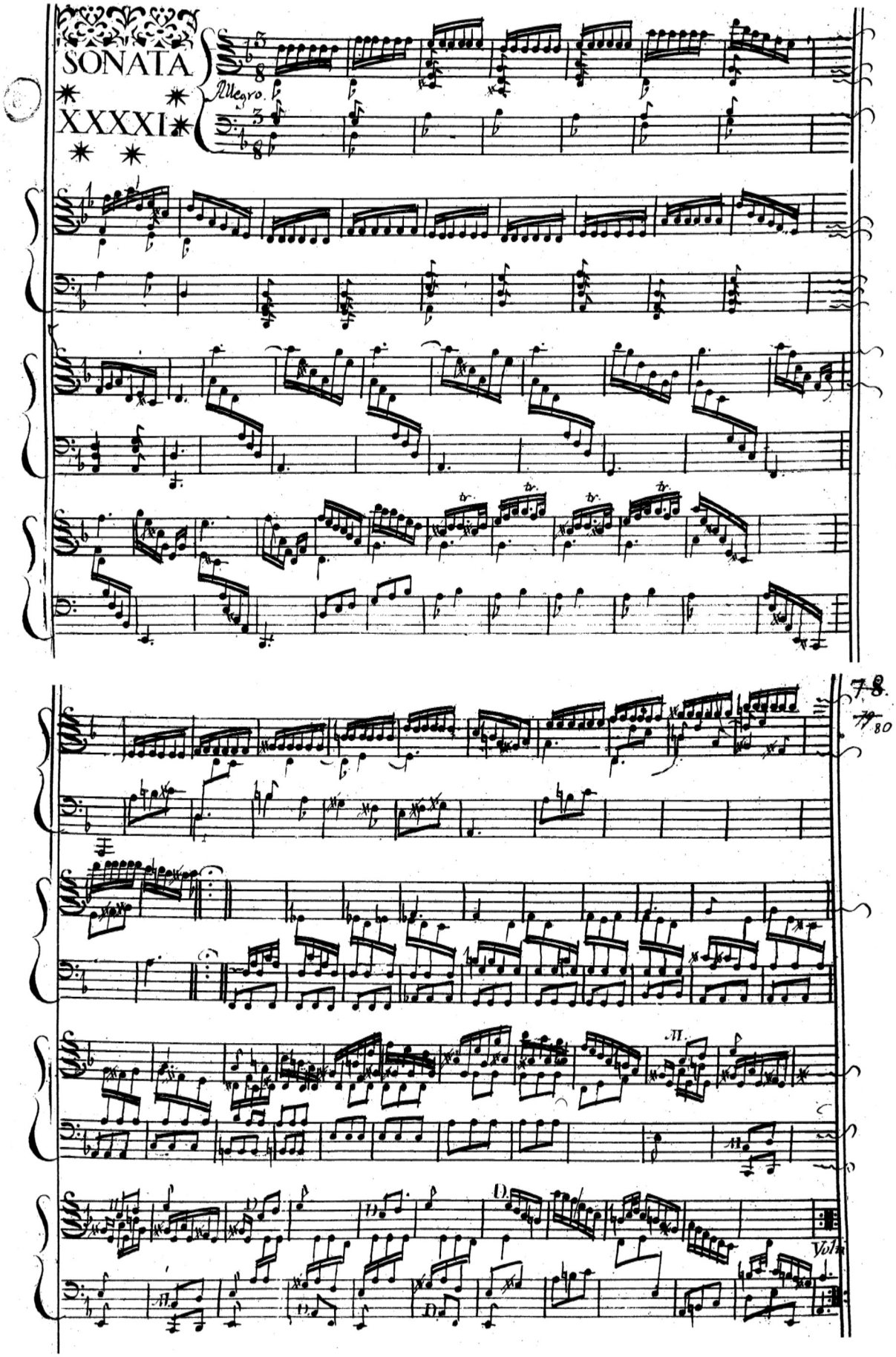



27
32
tr
tr
tr
tr
37
42
47


53
59
65
71
77
83

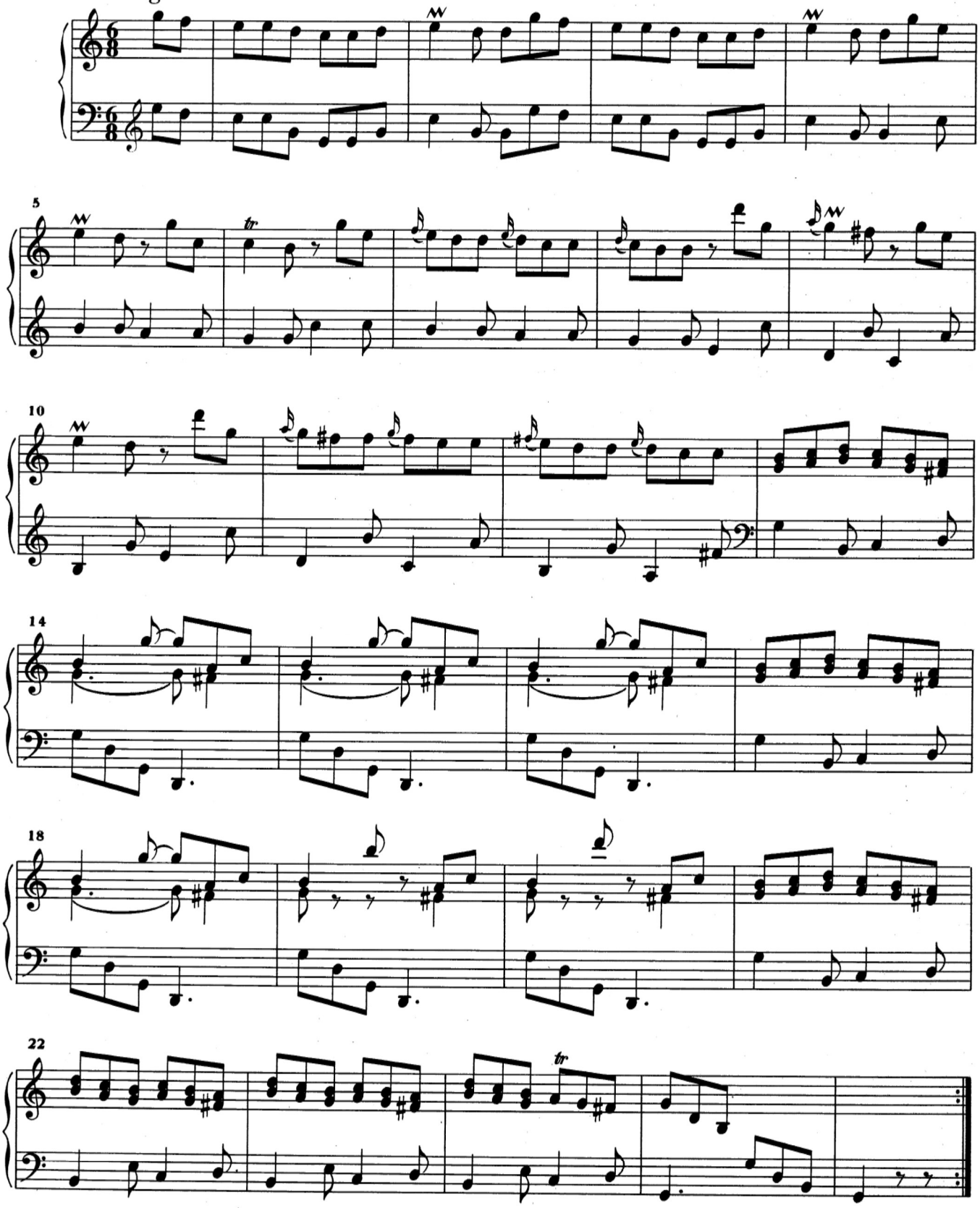

89
95
101
107
113
118

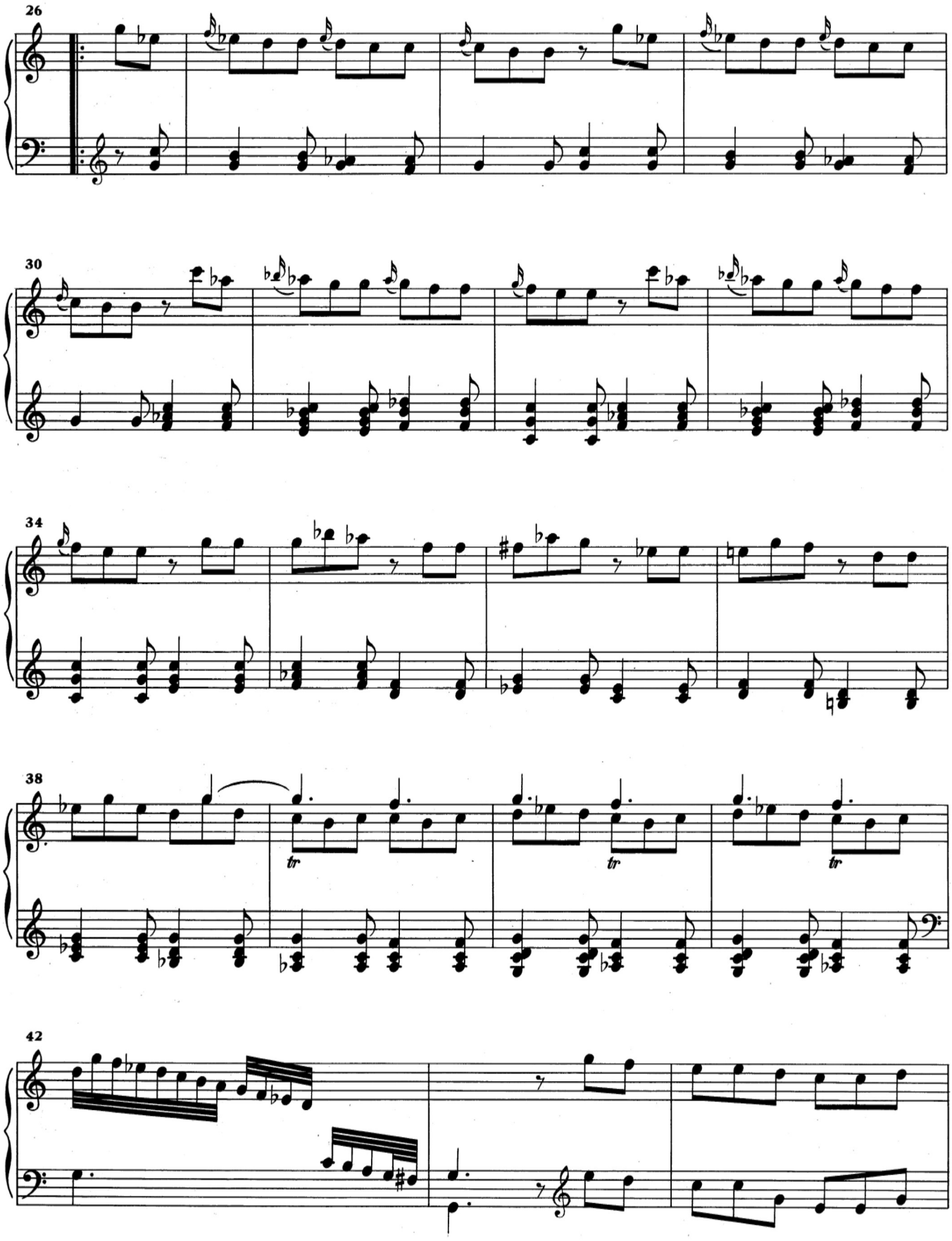

124
130
136
142
tr
148
153

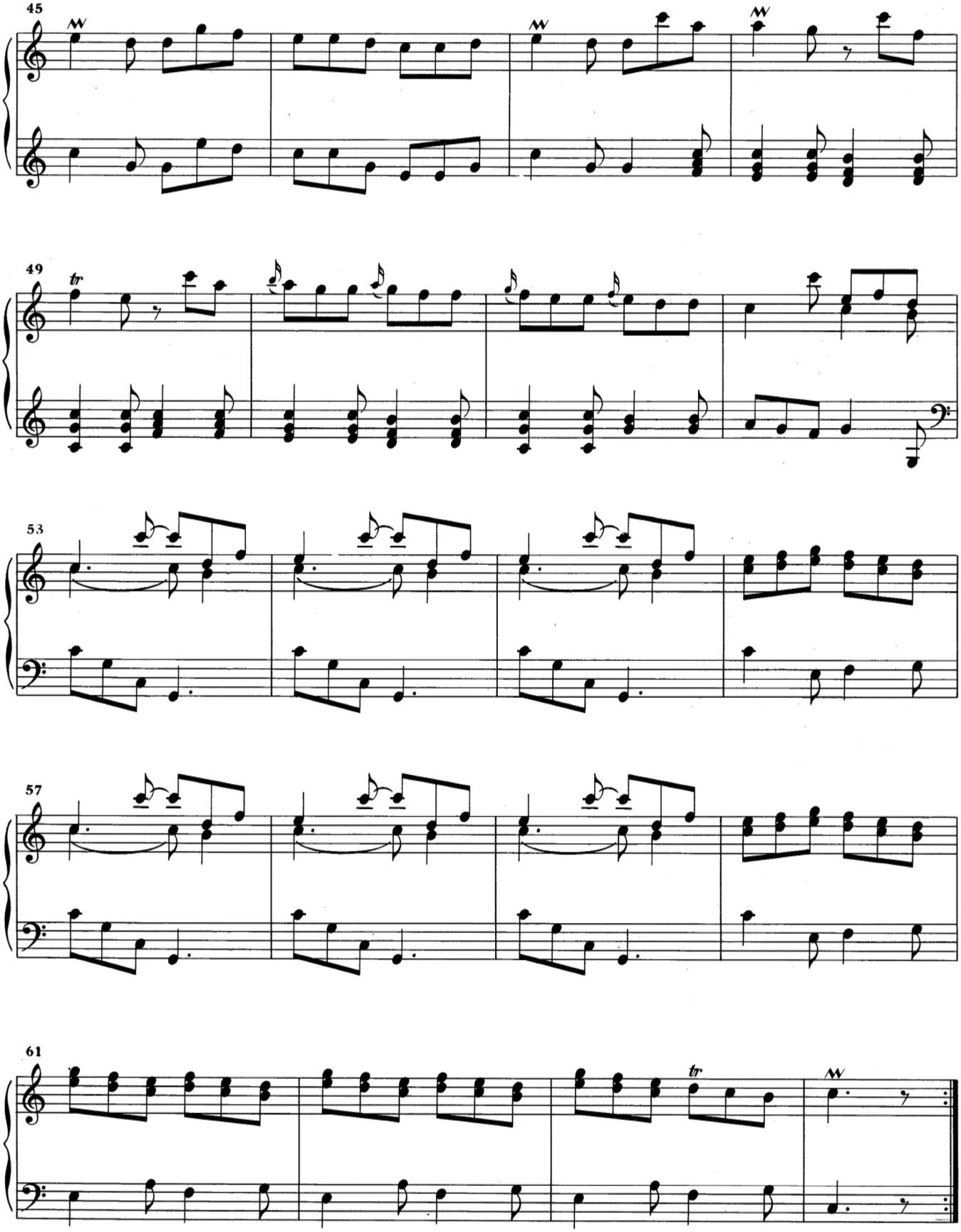

SONATA
XXXXI
Allegro.
Vol:

# K. 159

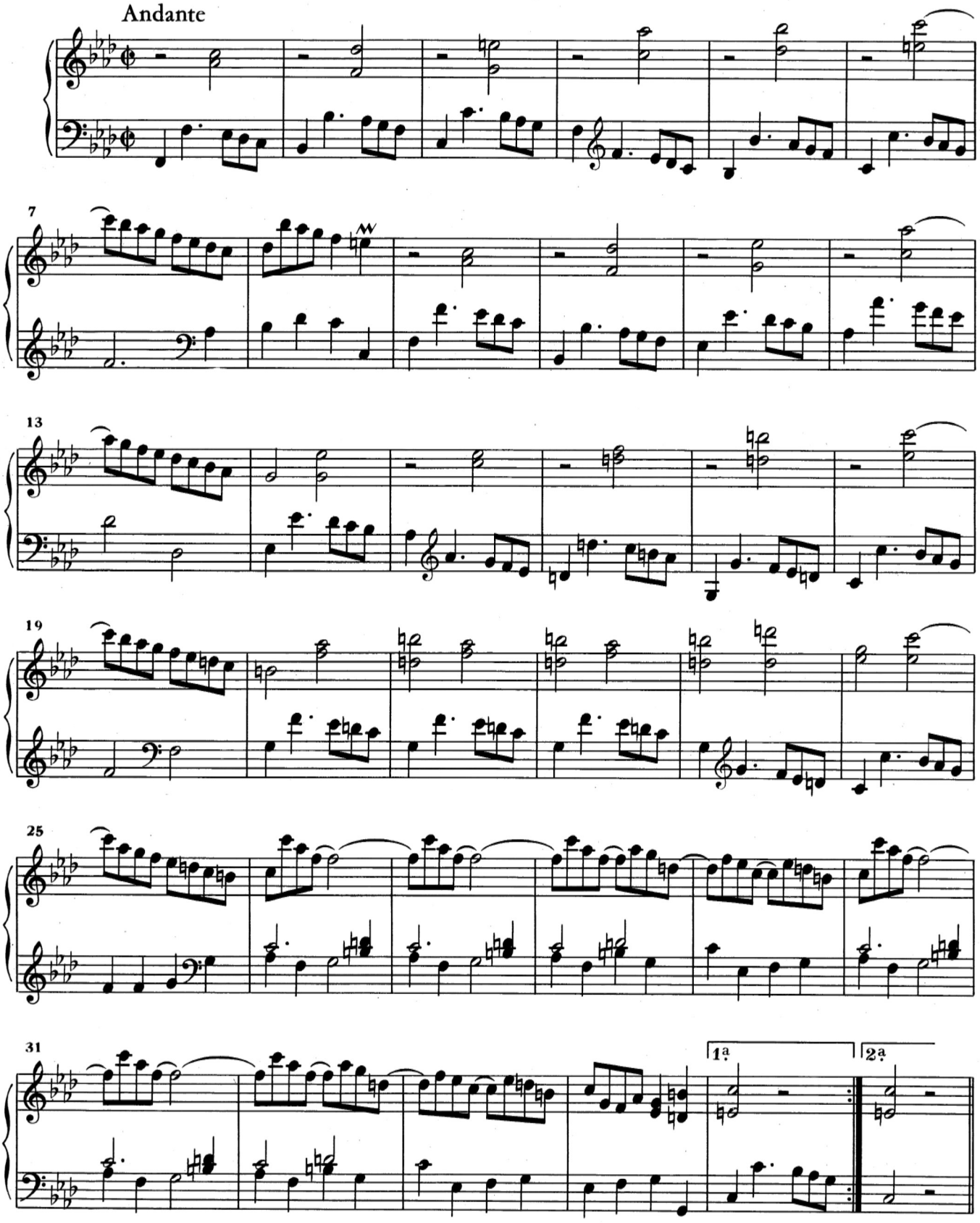
Allegro

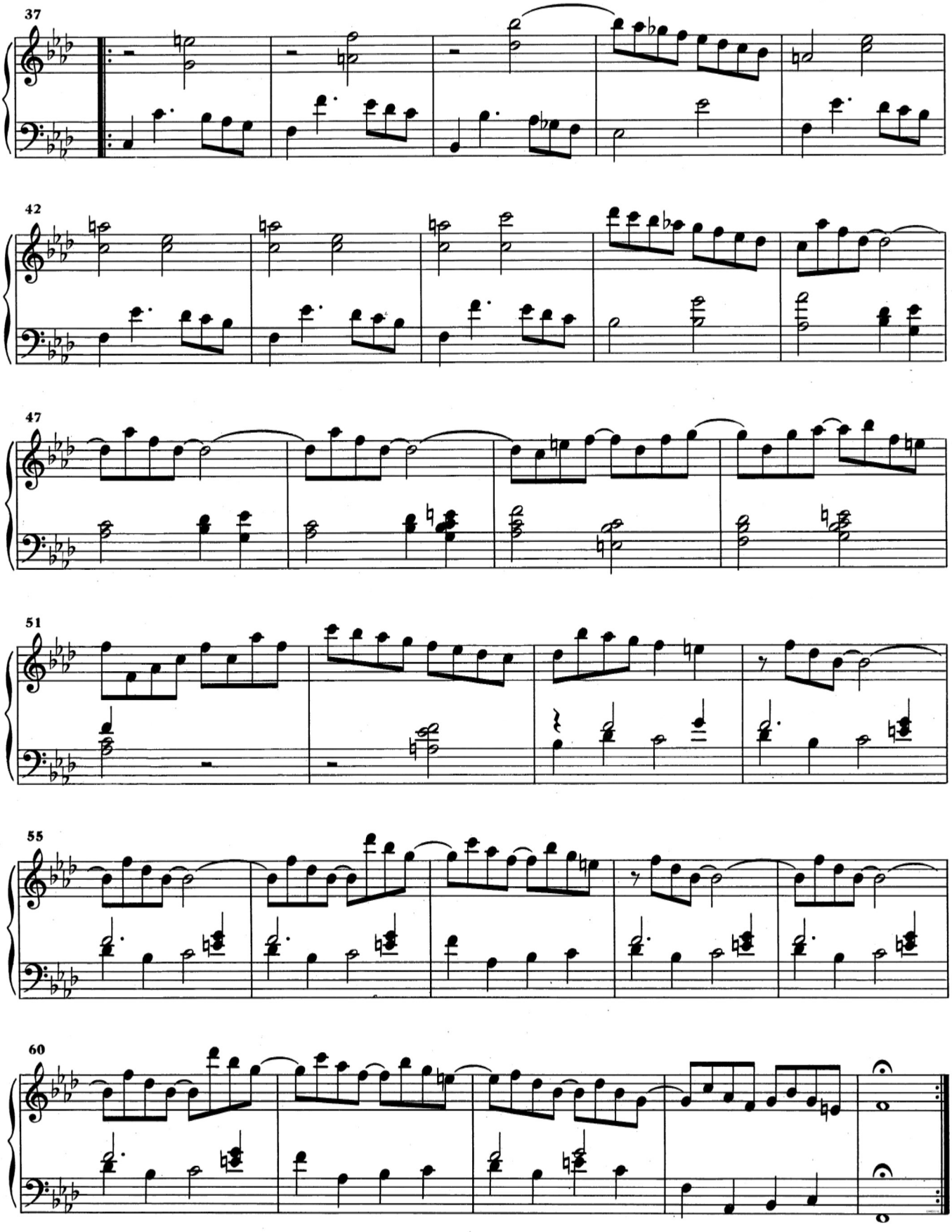



26
30
34
38
tr
tr
tr
42


45
49
tr
53
57
61
tr

# K. 185




37
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47
51
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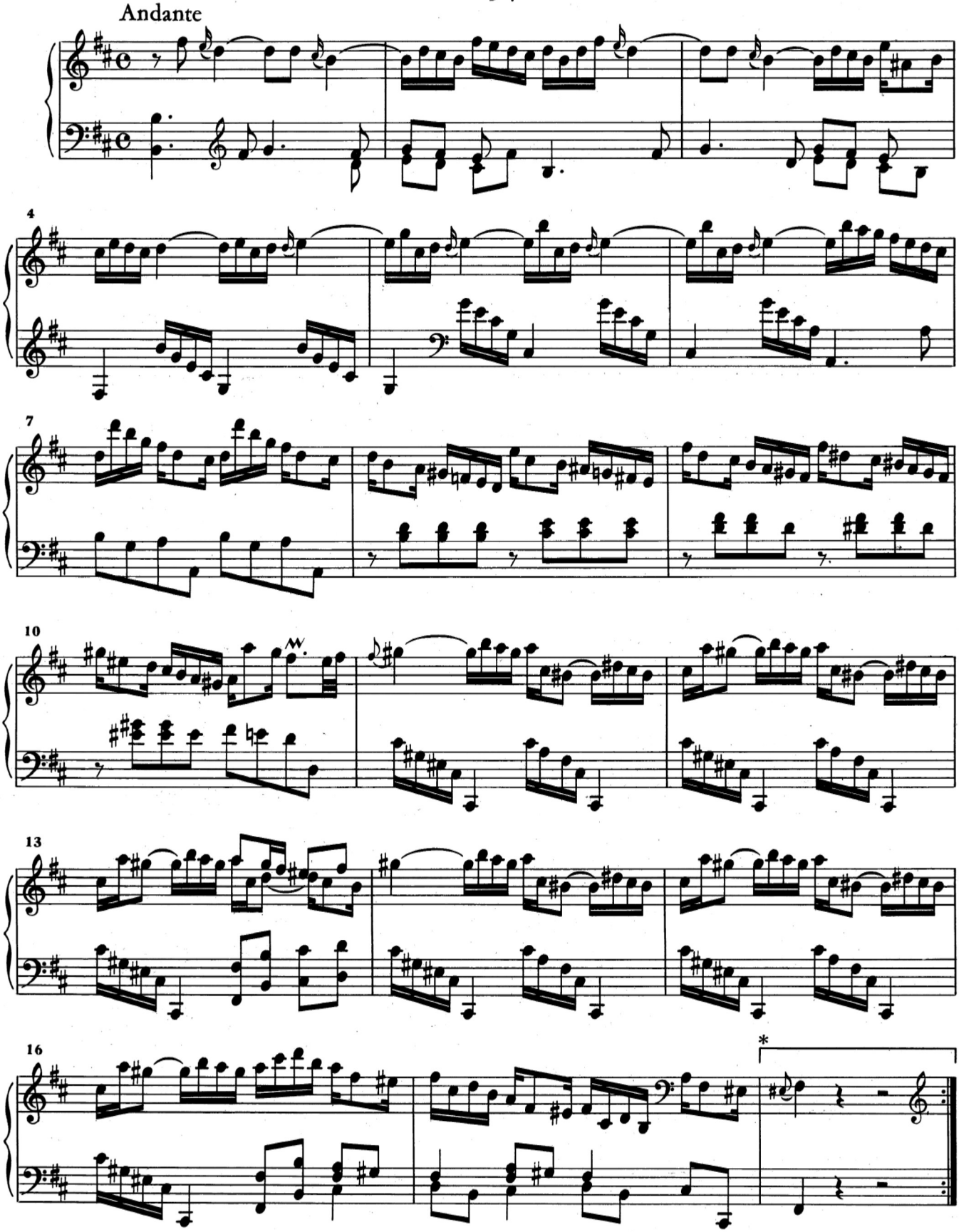
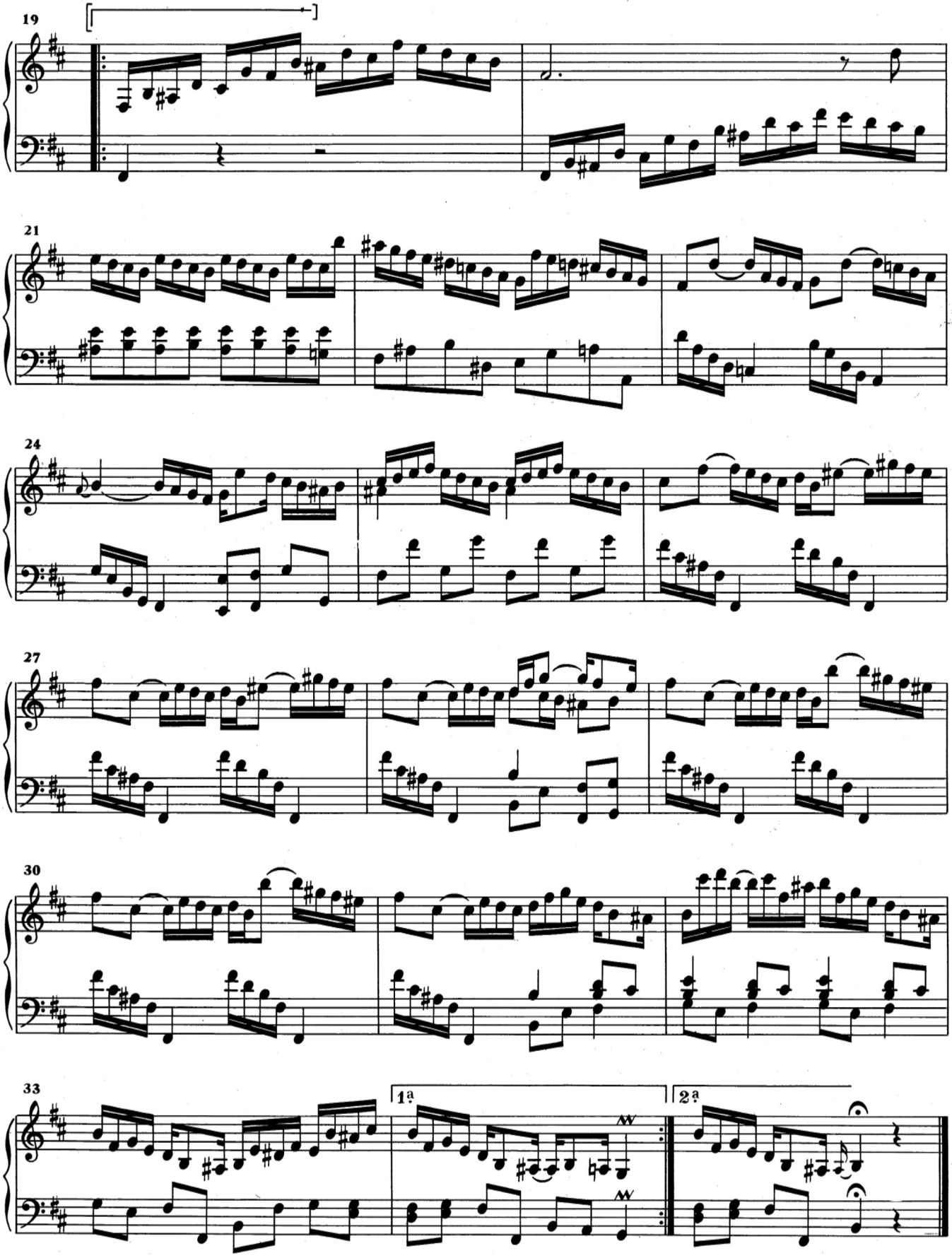
60

# K. 197

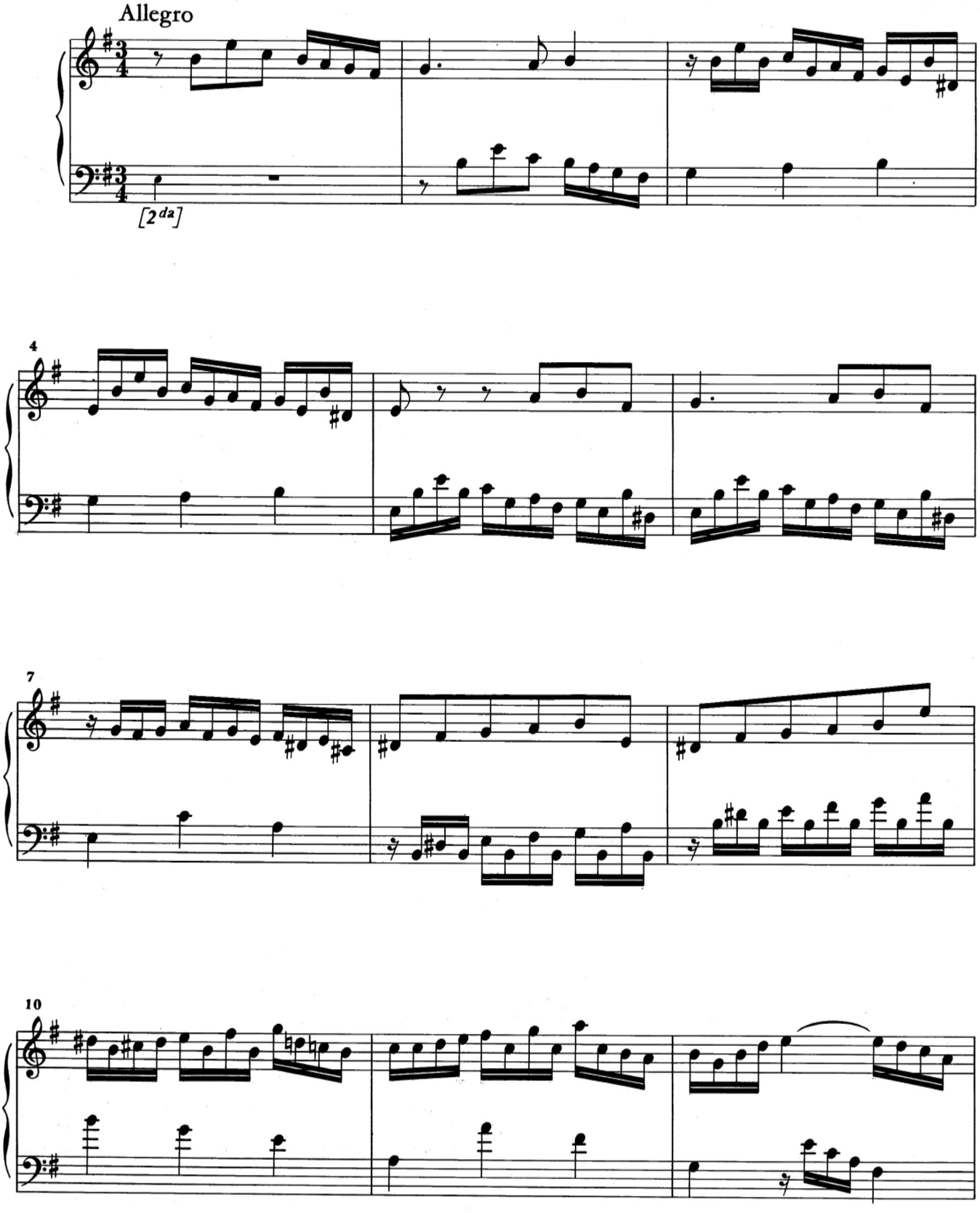
Andante

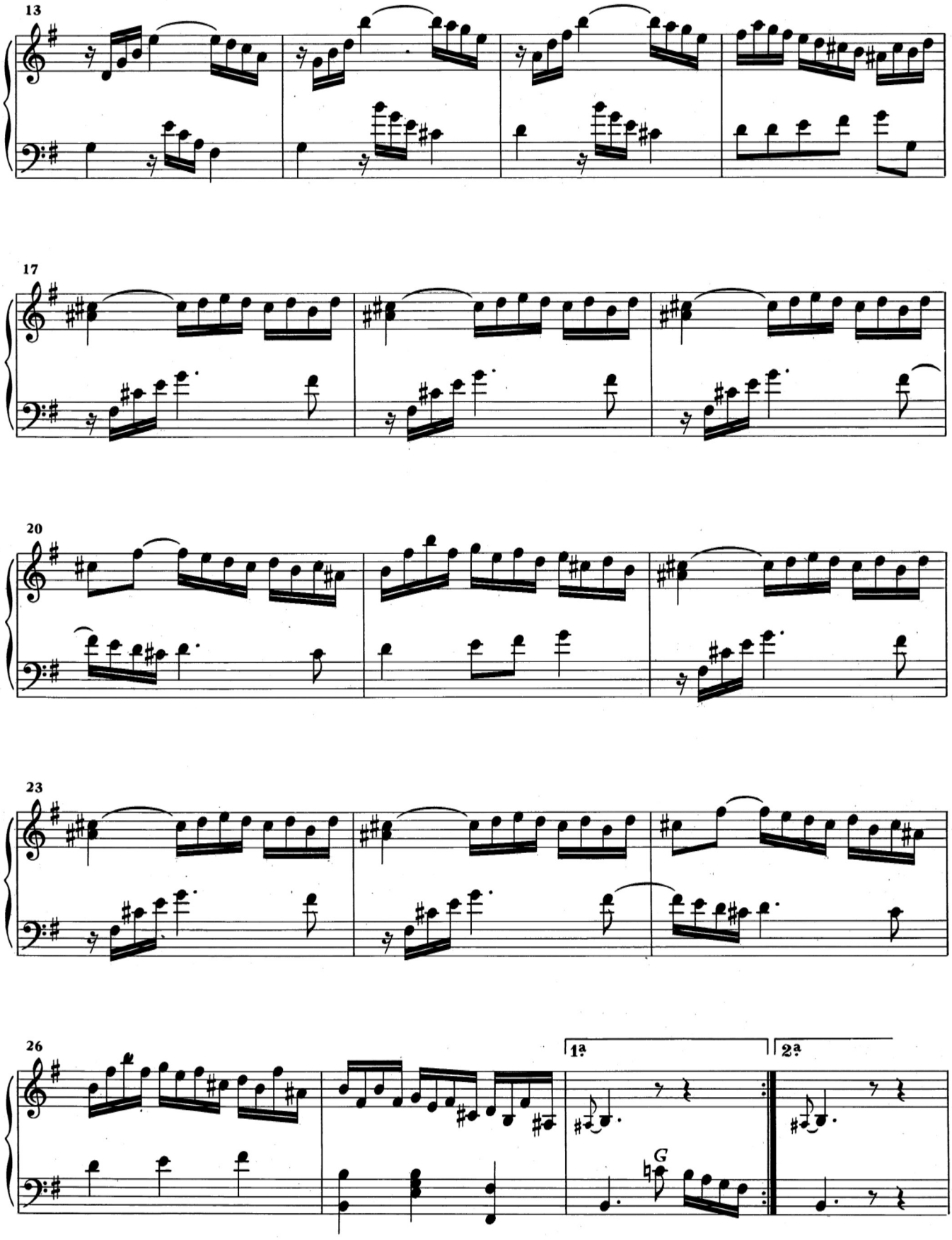


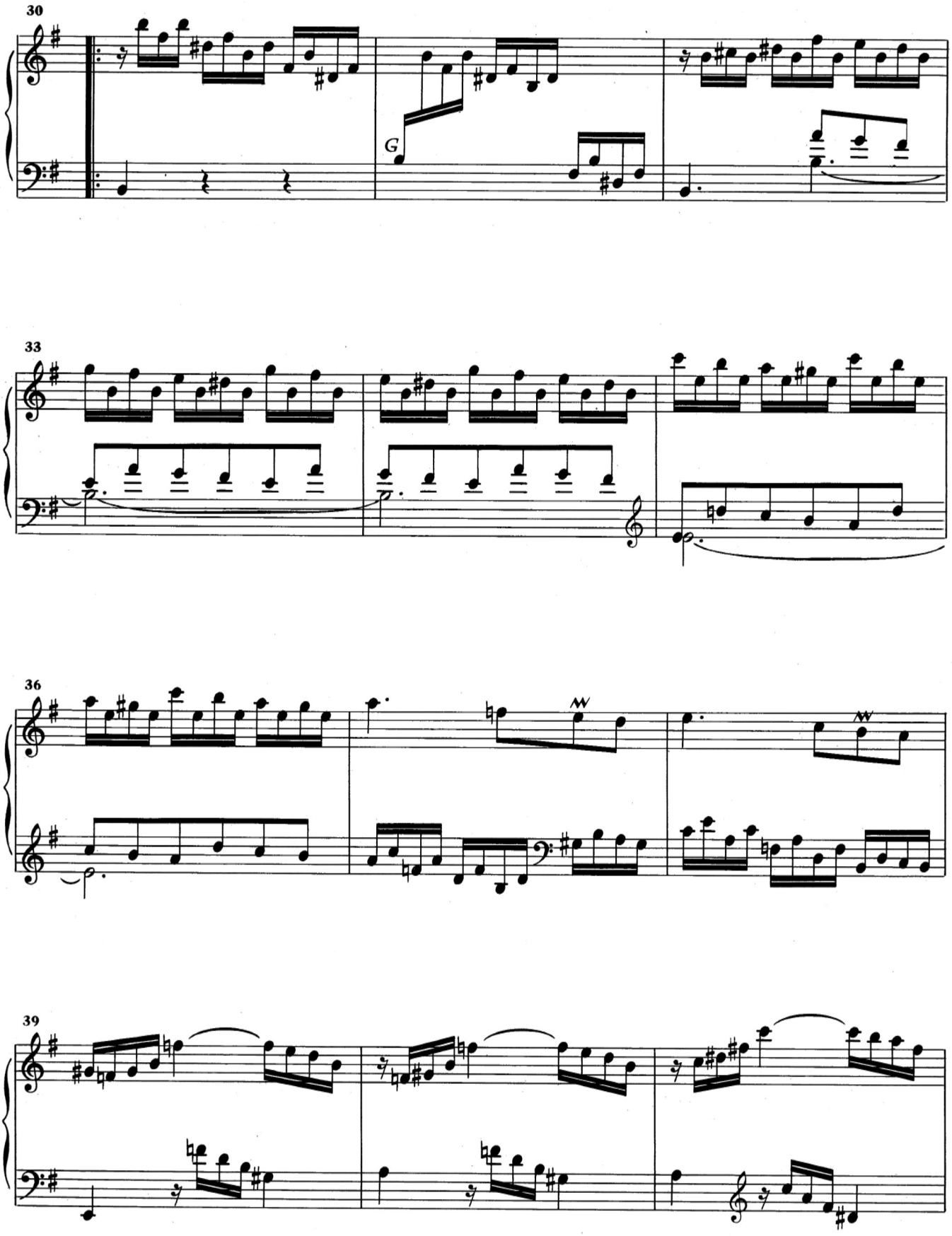
* *Dans Parme seulement.*


19
21
24
27
30
33
1ª
2ª

# K. 198




13
17
20
23
26
1ª
2ª
G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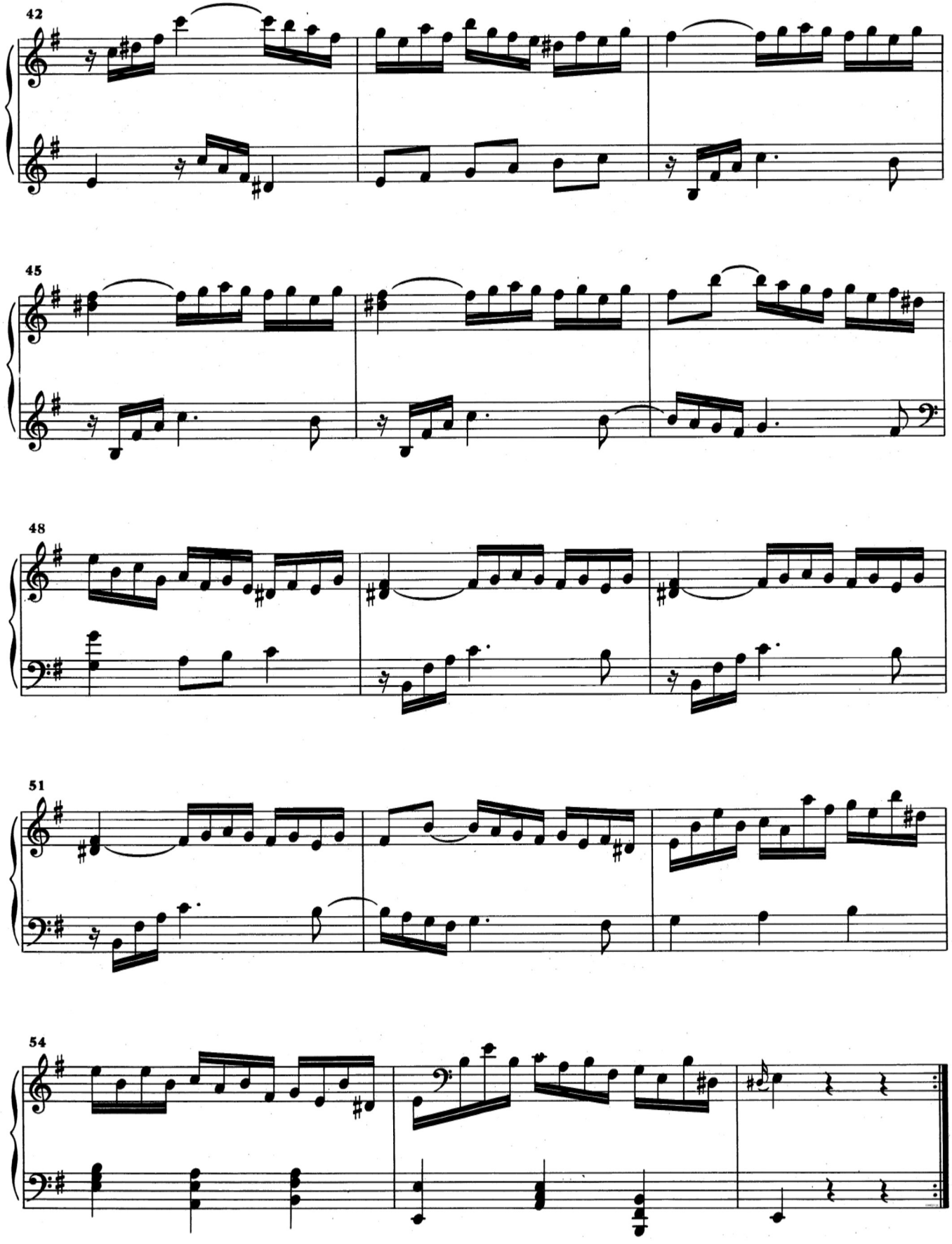
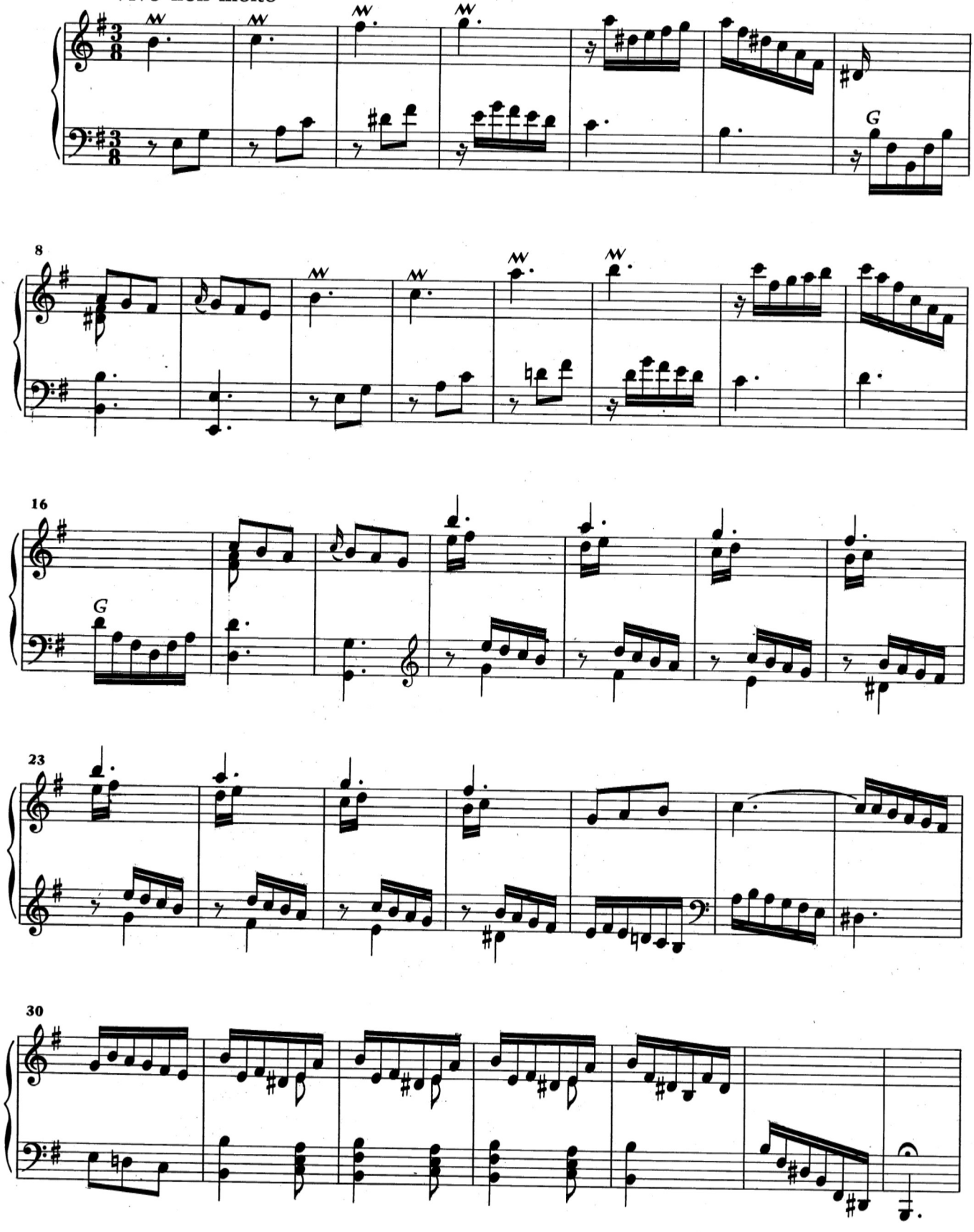
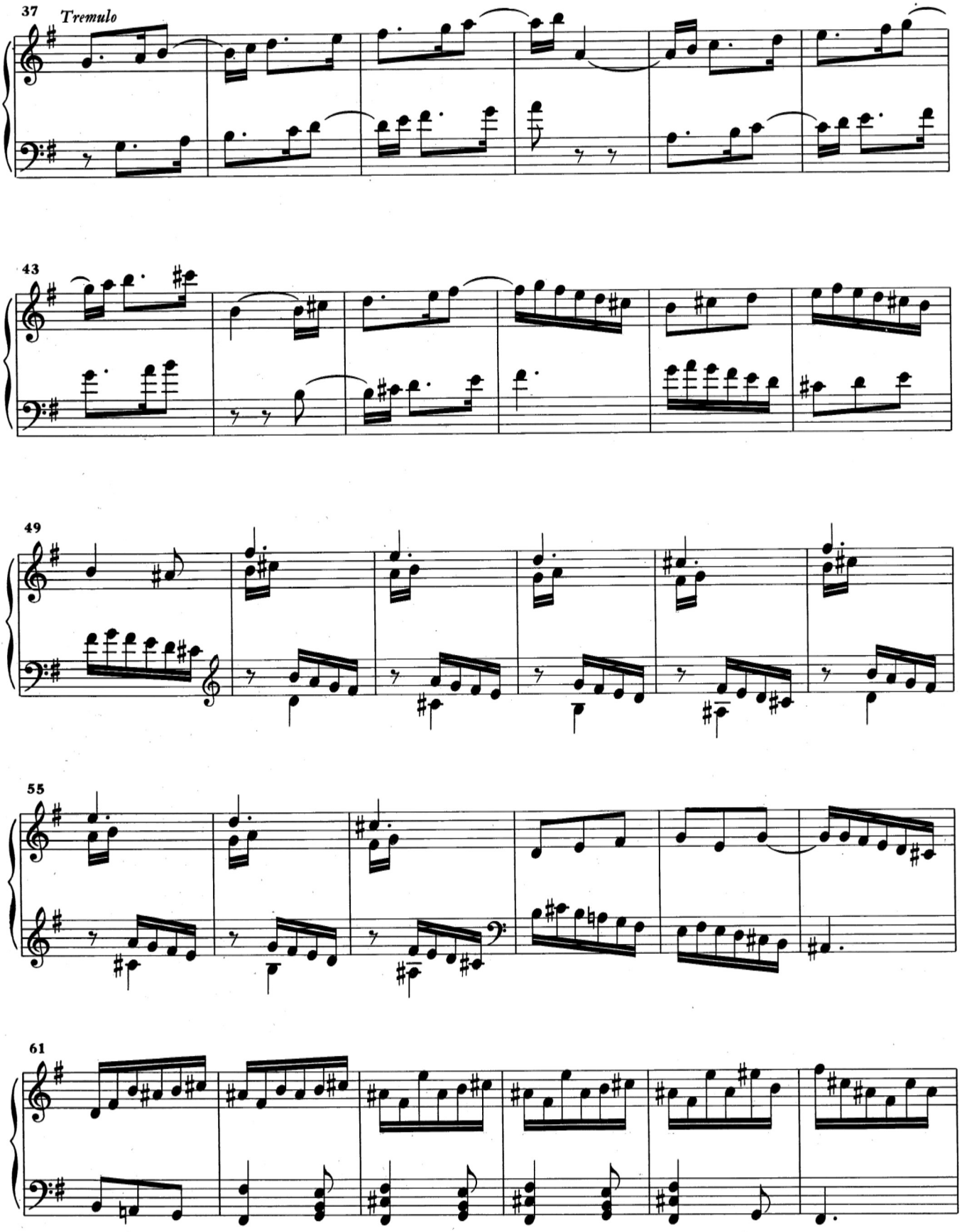
G
33
36
39

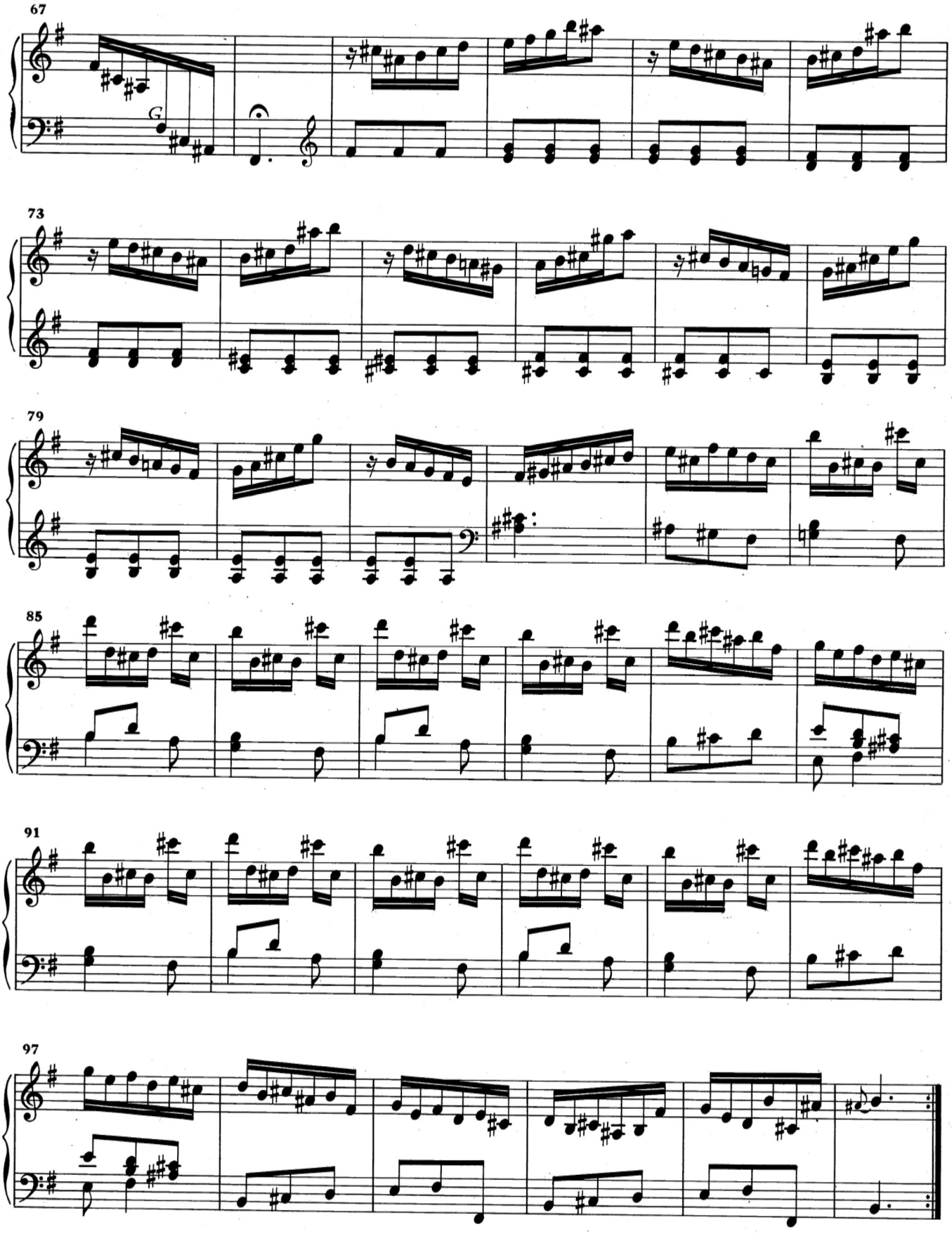

42
45
48
51
54

# K. 203

Vivo non molto




37
Tremulo
43
49
55
61


67
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79
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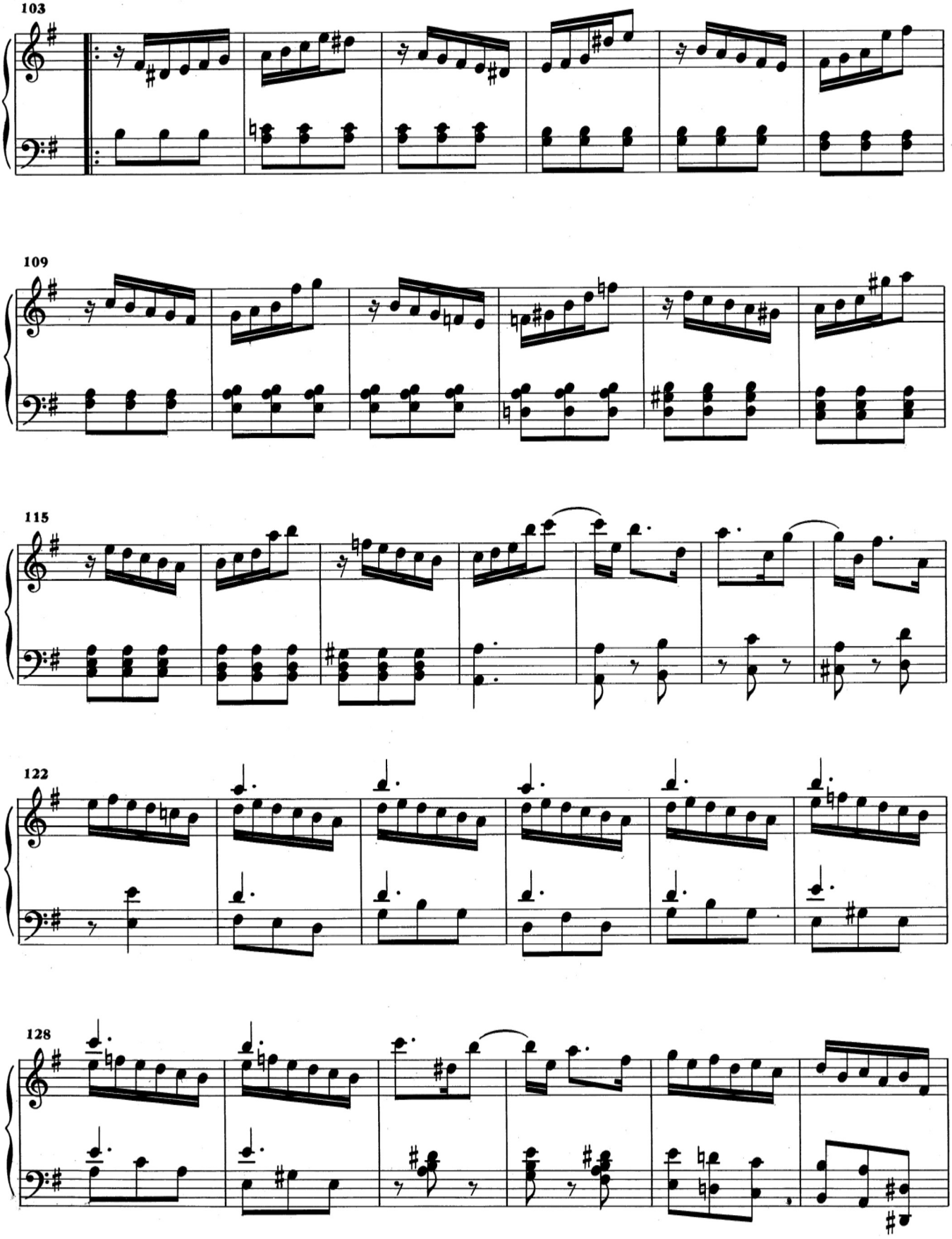
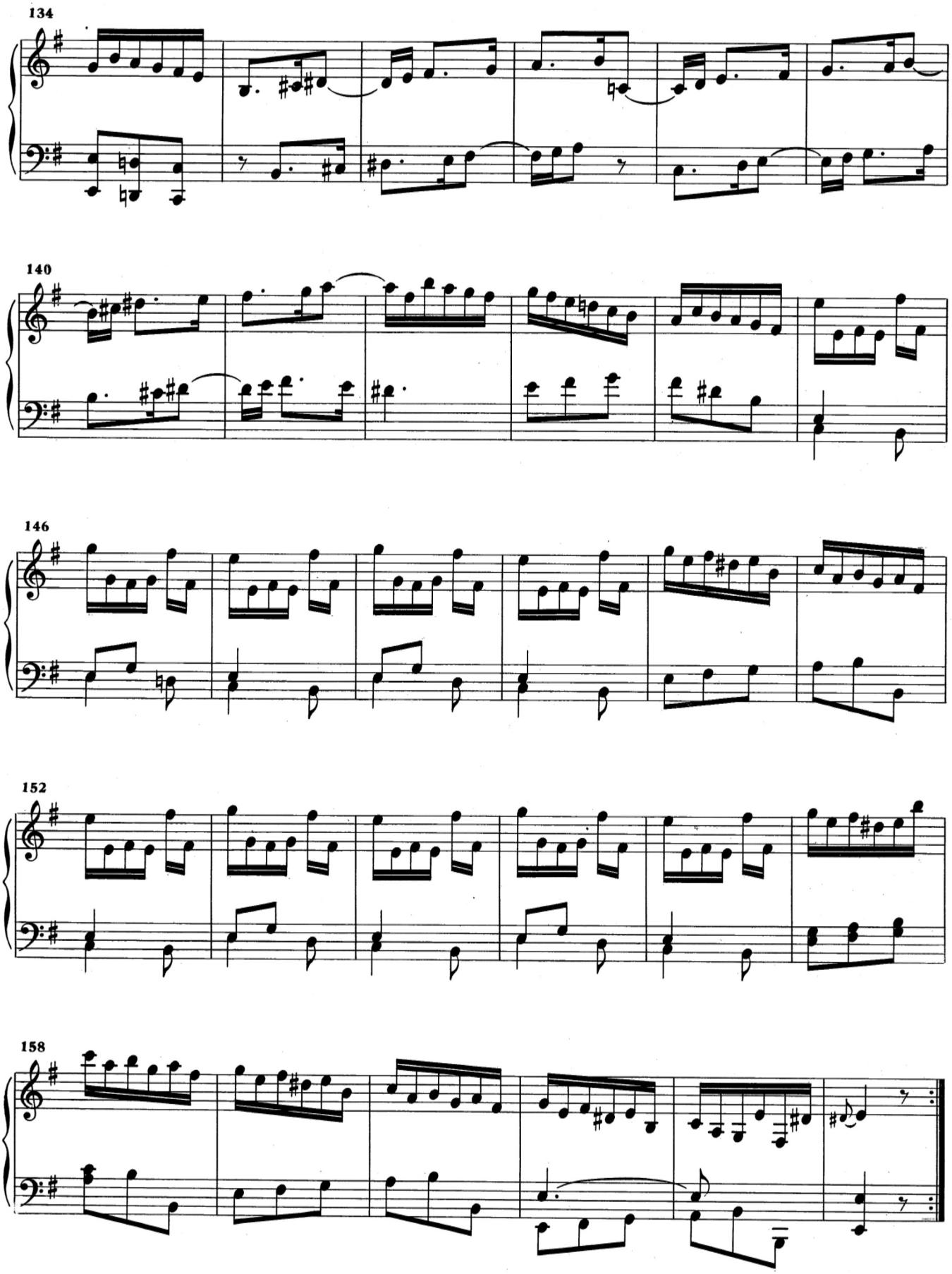
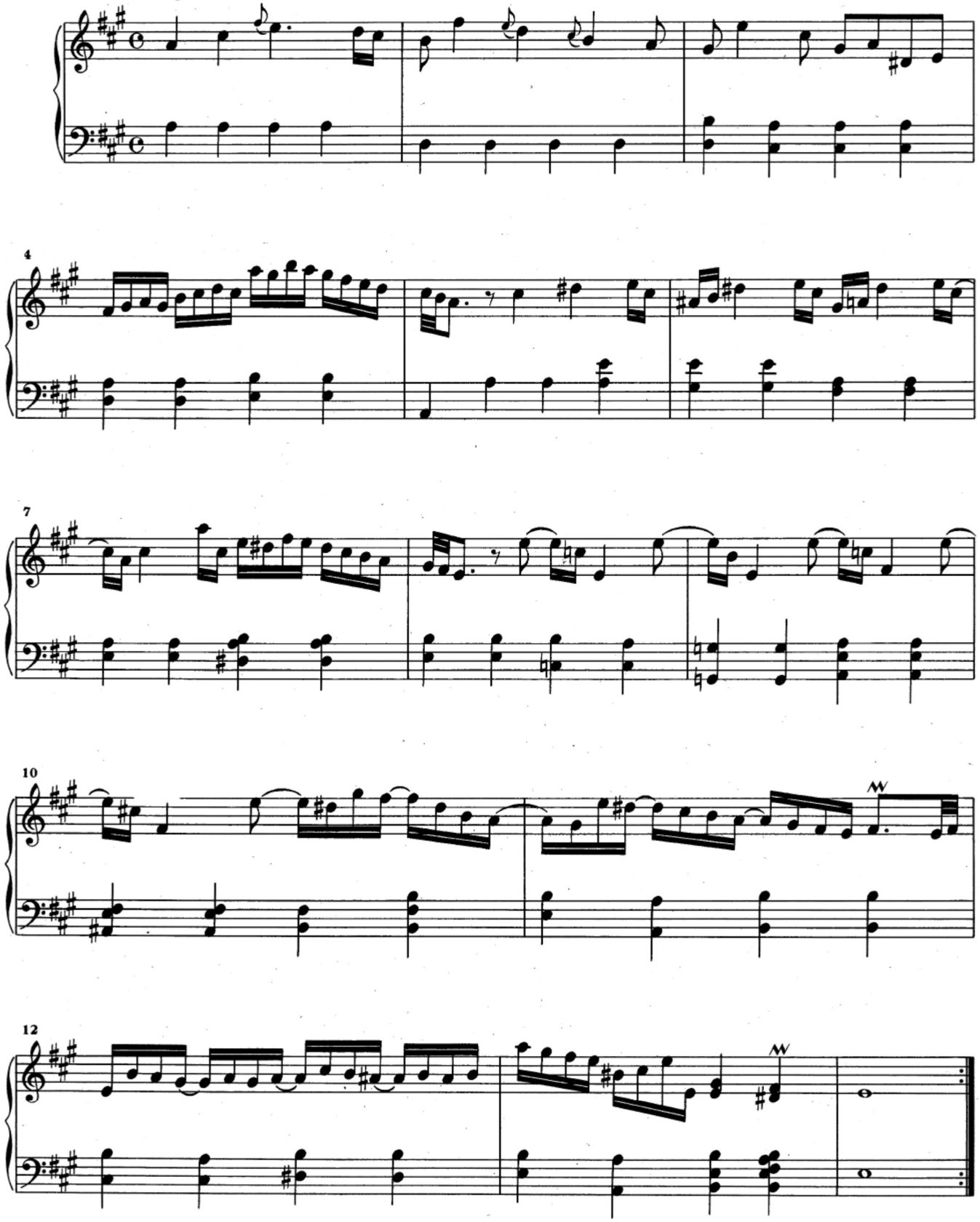
91
97

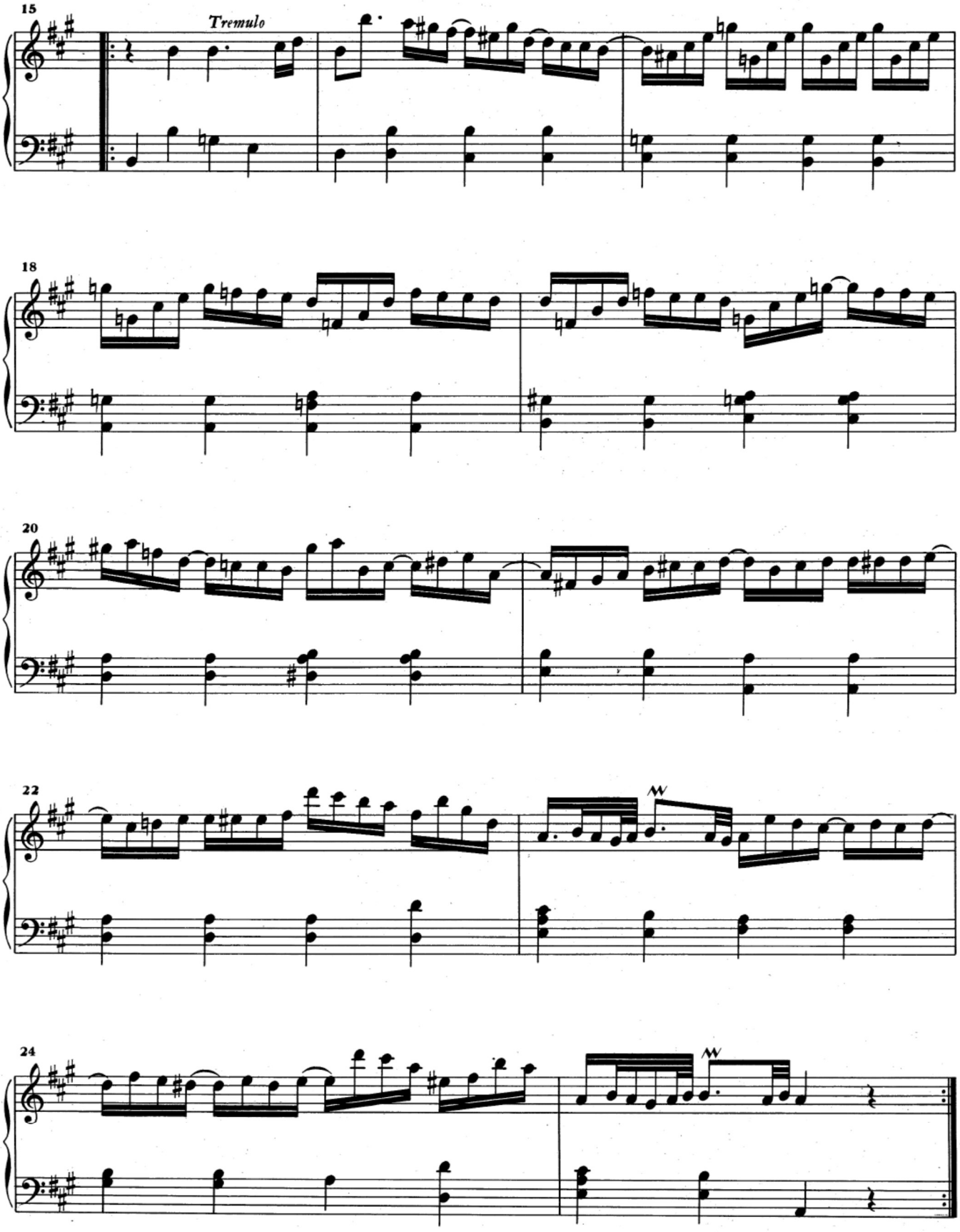

103
109
115
122
128


134
140
146
152
158

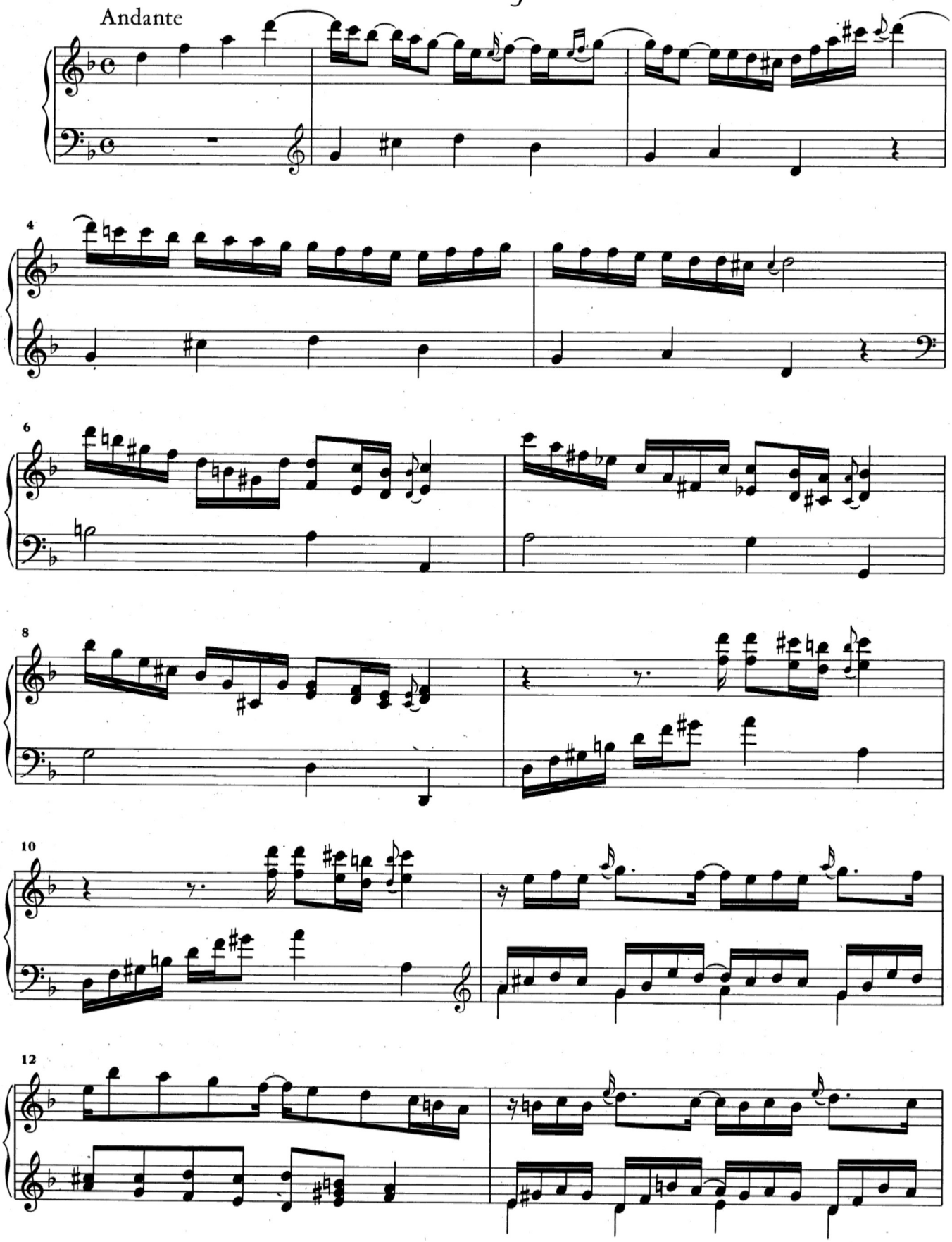
# K. 208

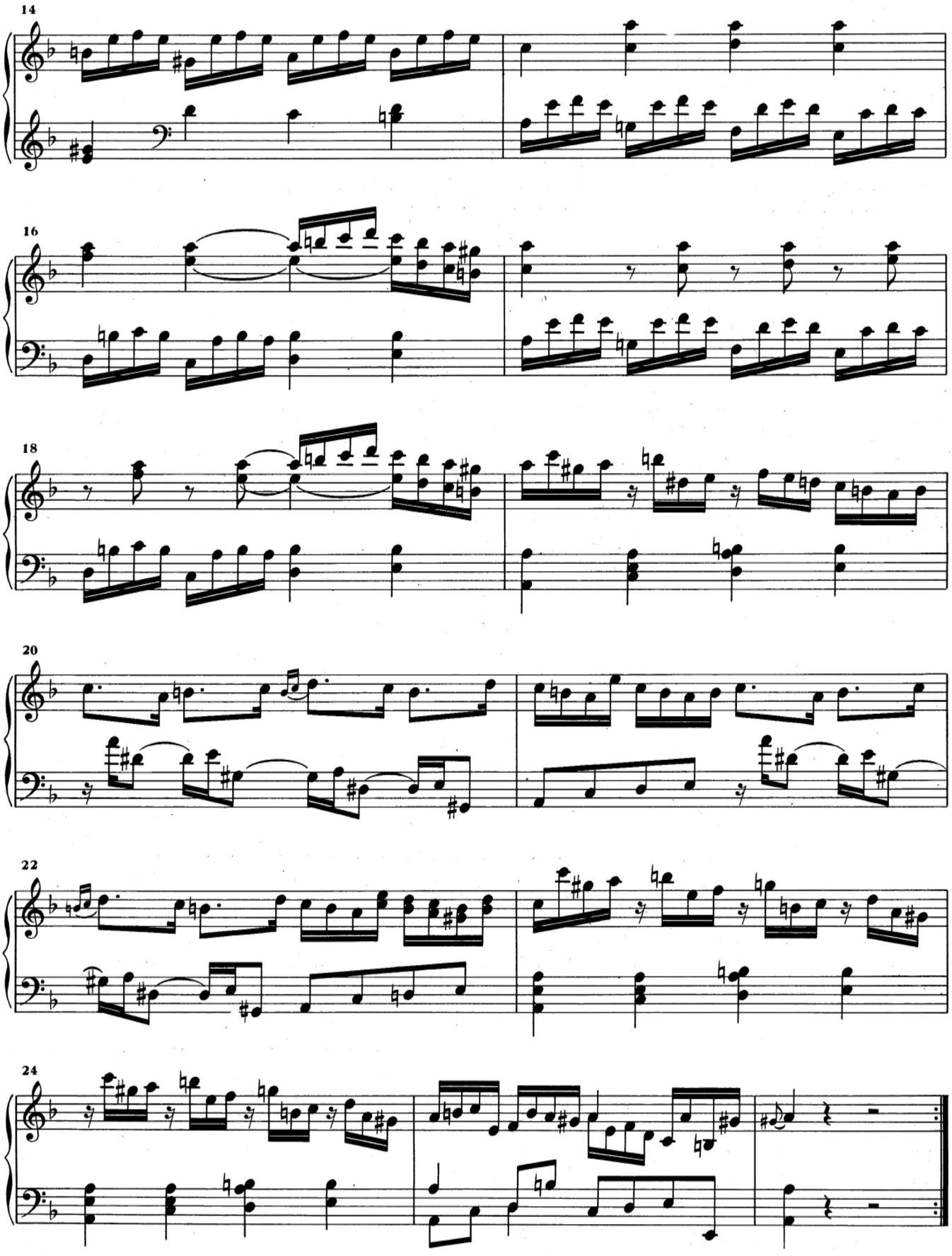
Adagio e cantabile




15
Tremulo
18
20
22
24

# K. 213

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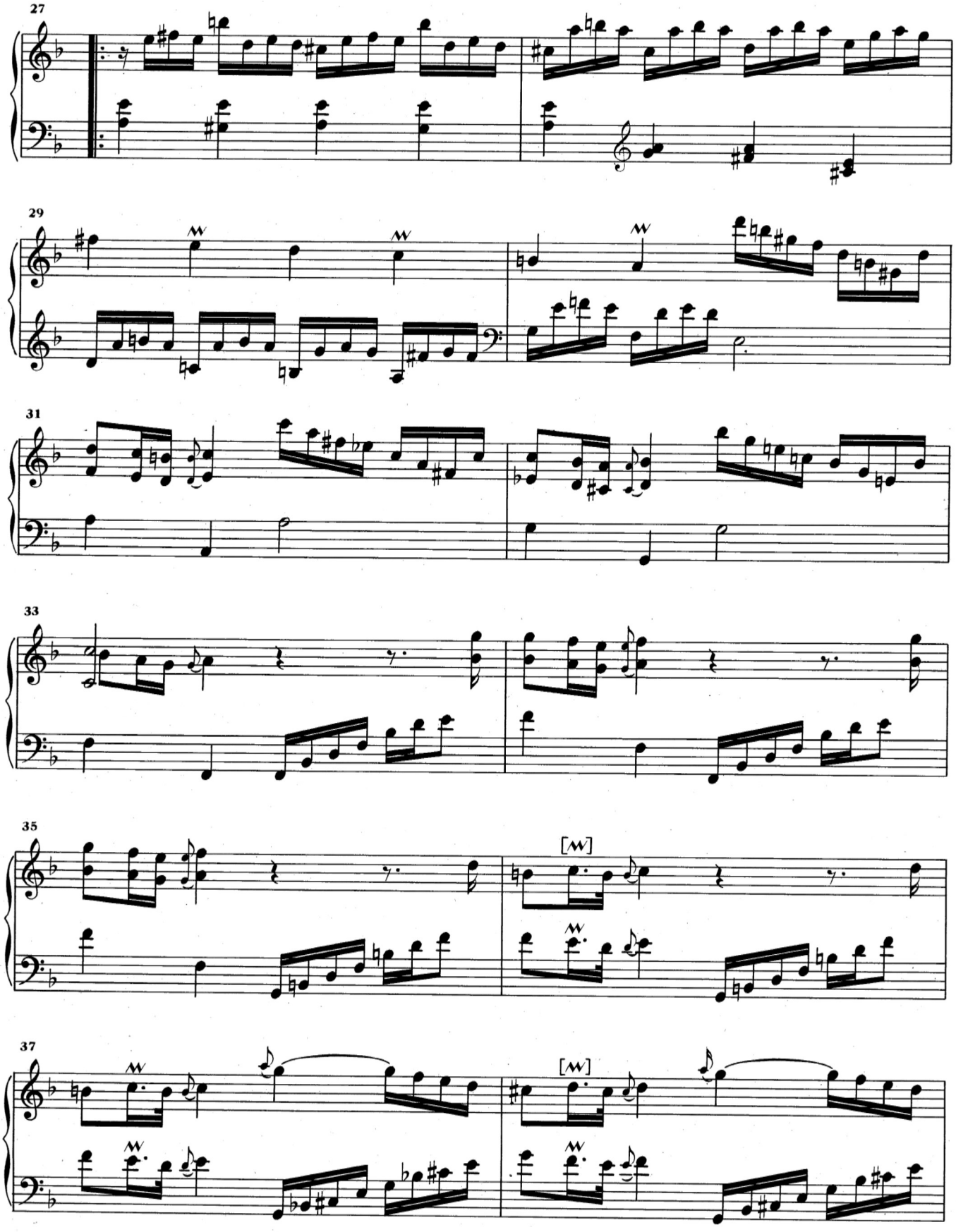
22
24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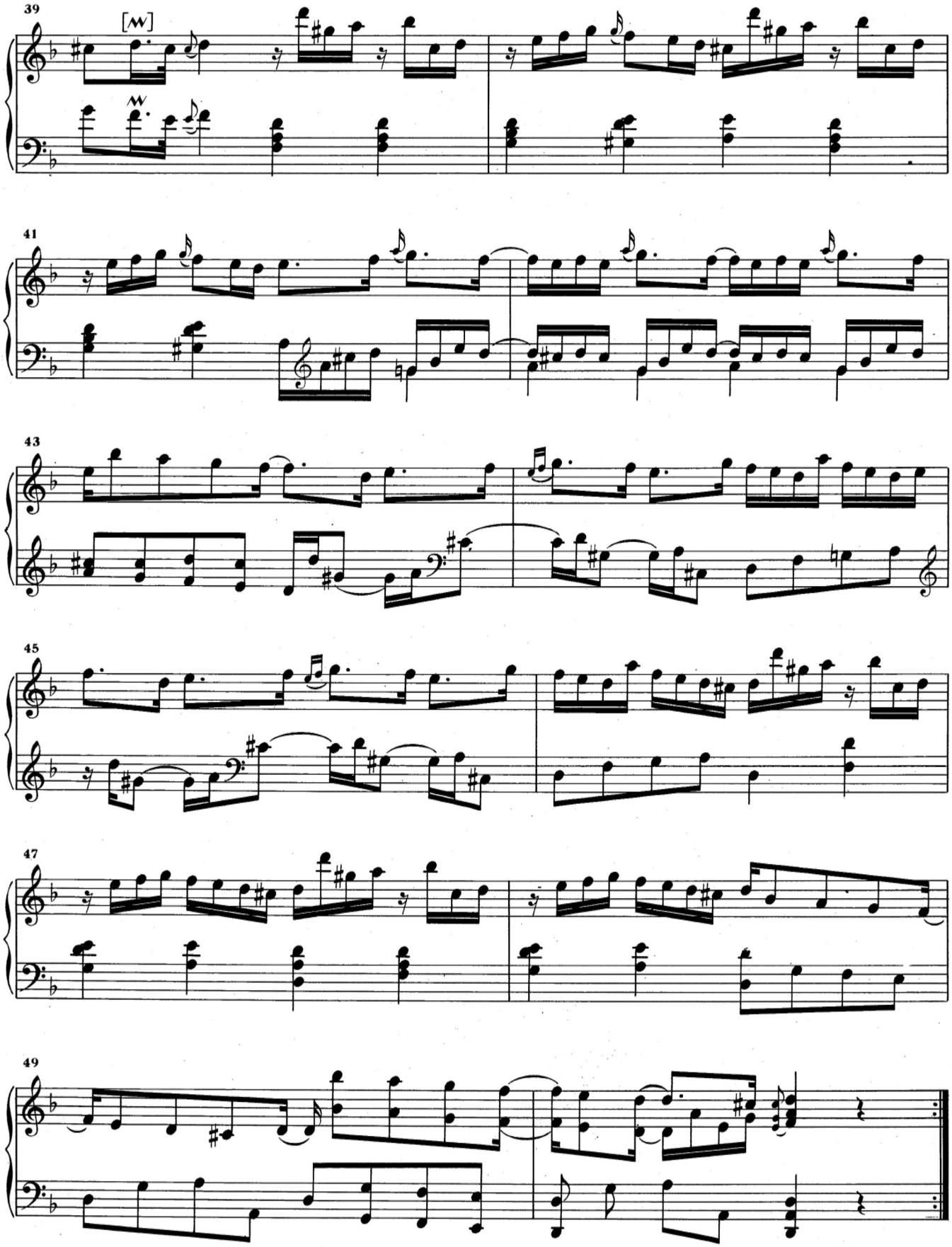
29
31
33
35
[M]
37
[M]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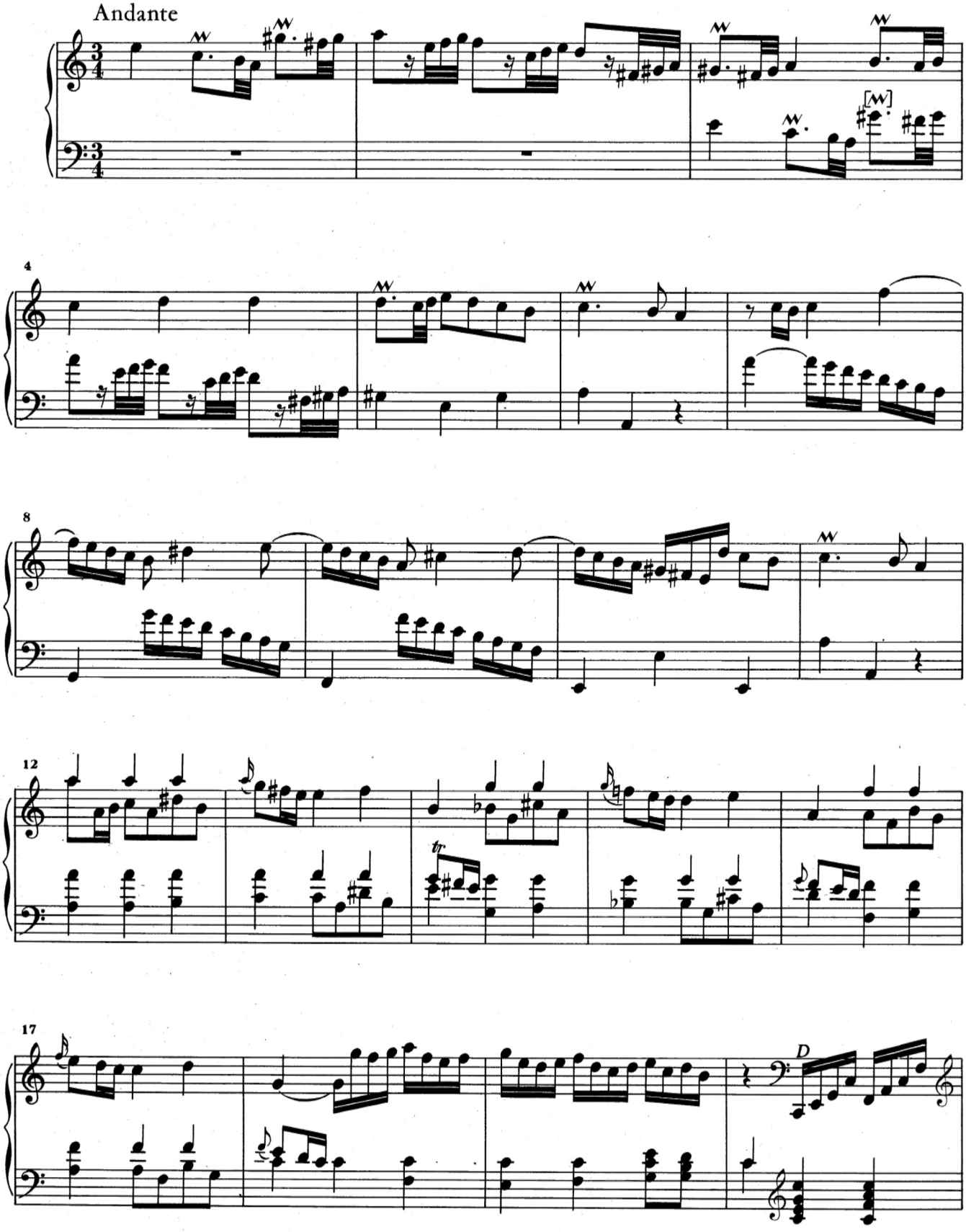
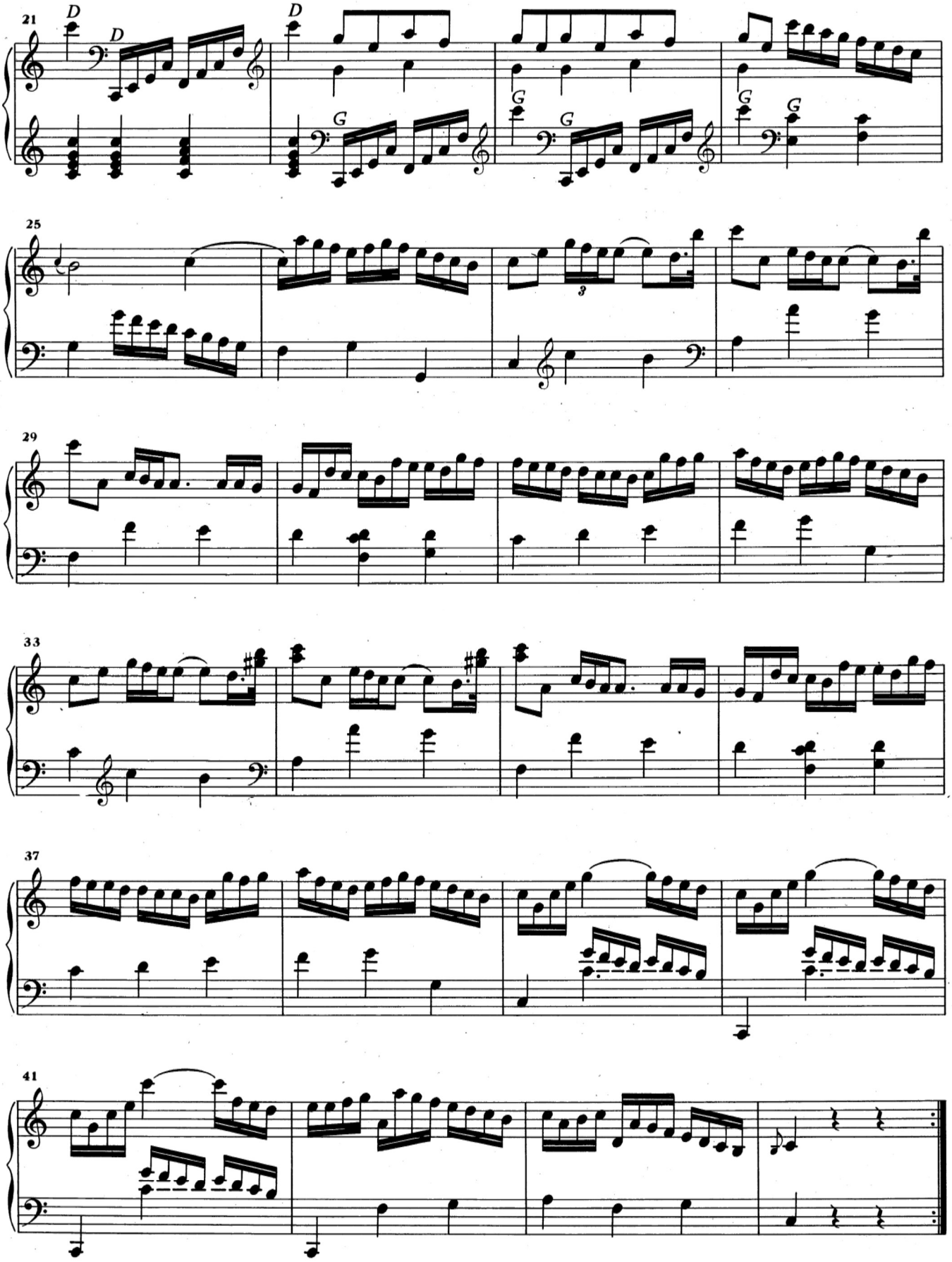
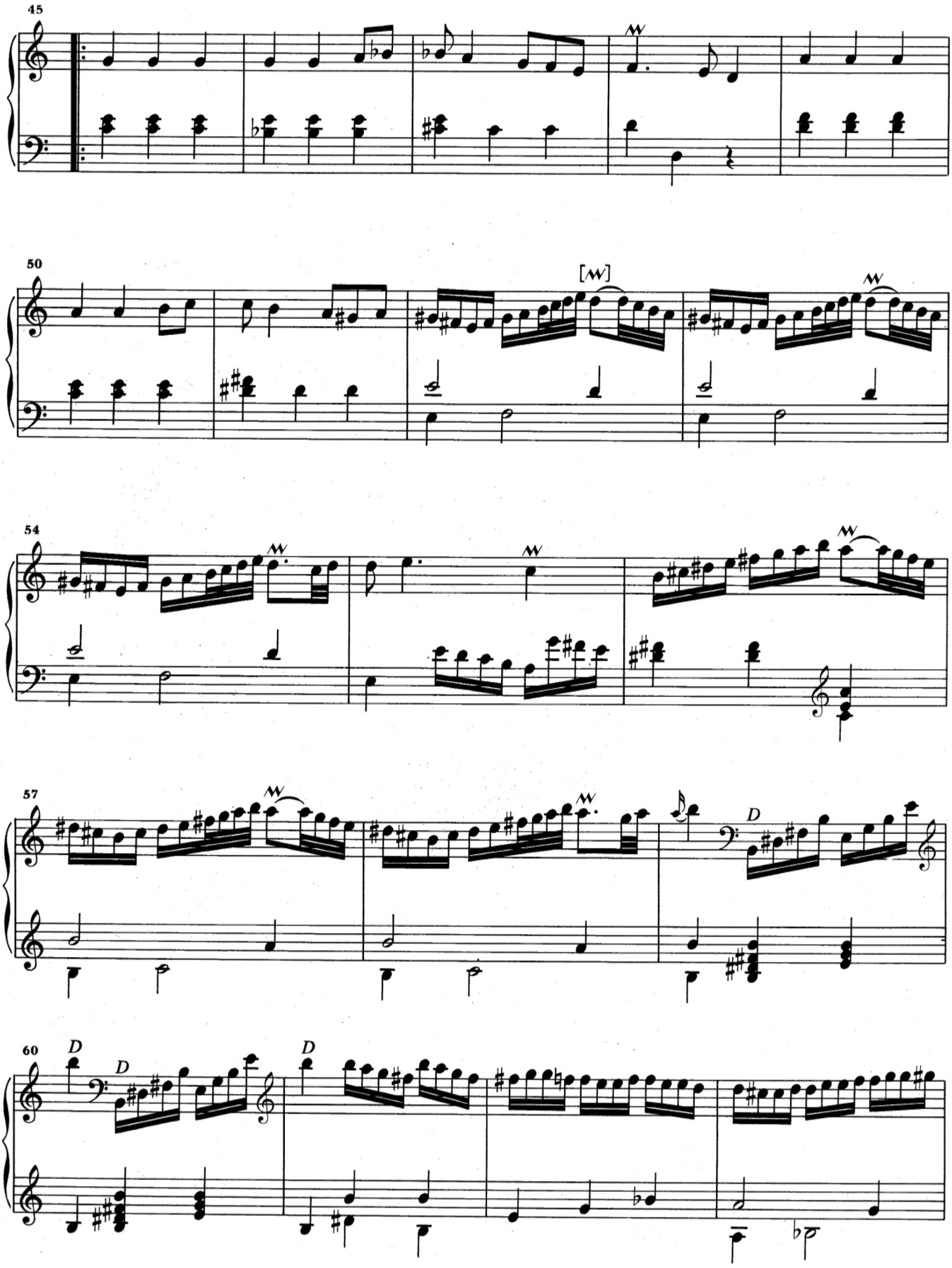
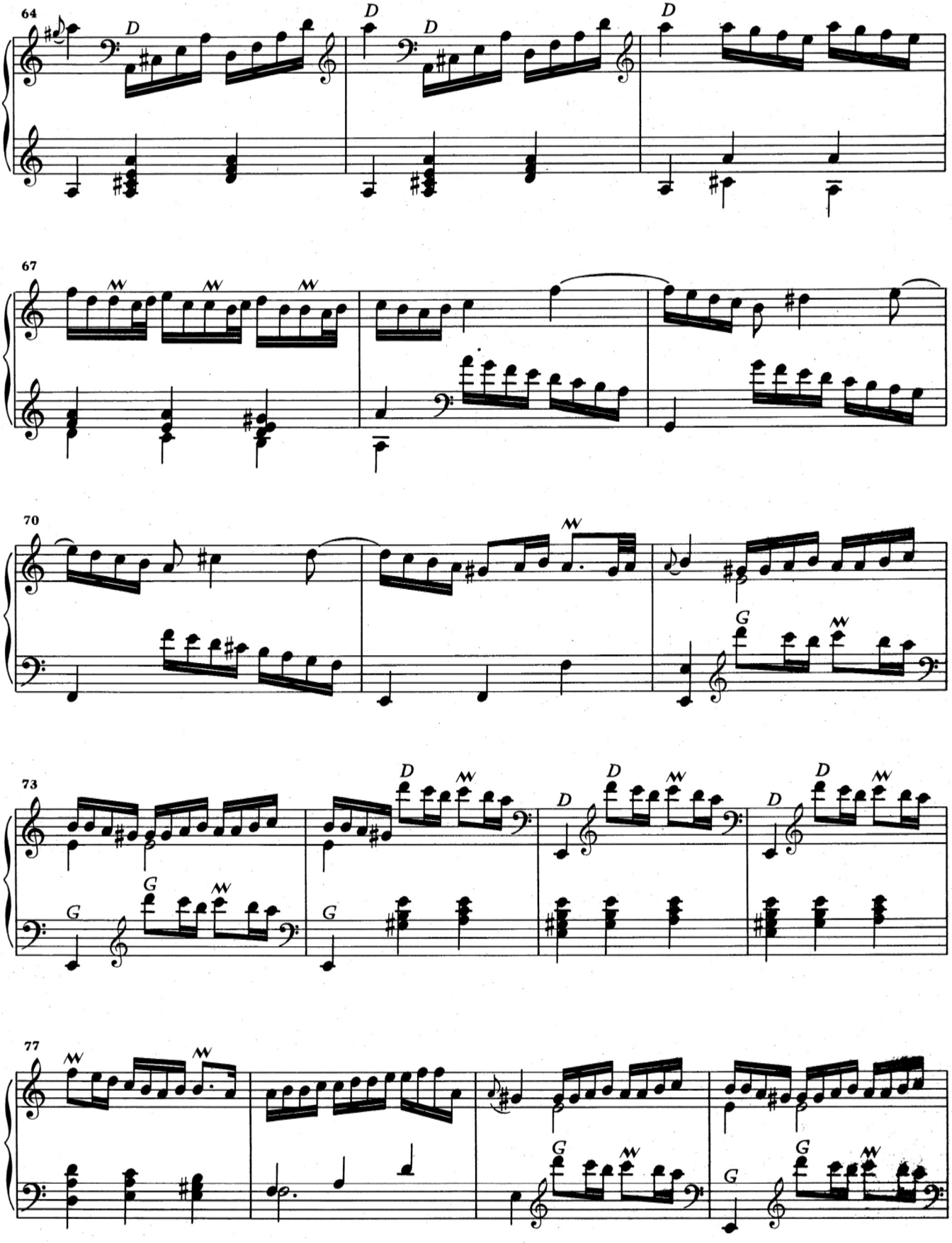
47
49

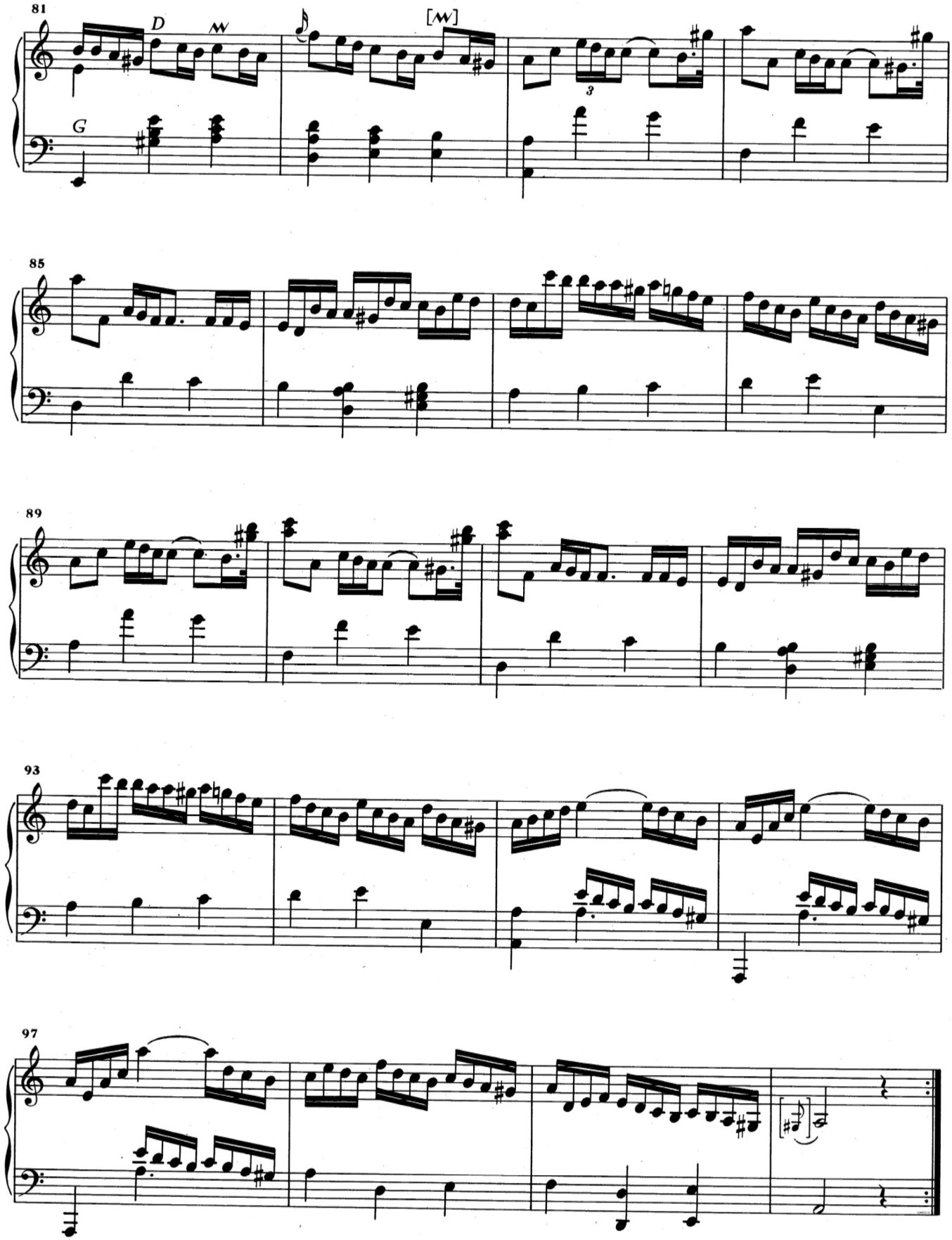
# K. 217

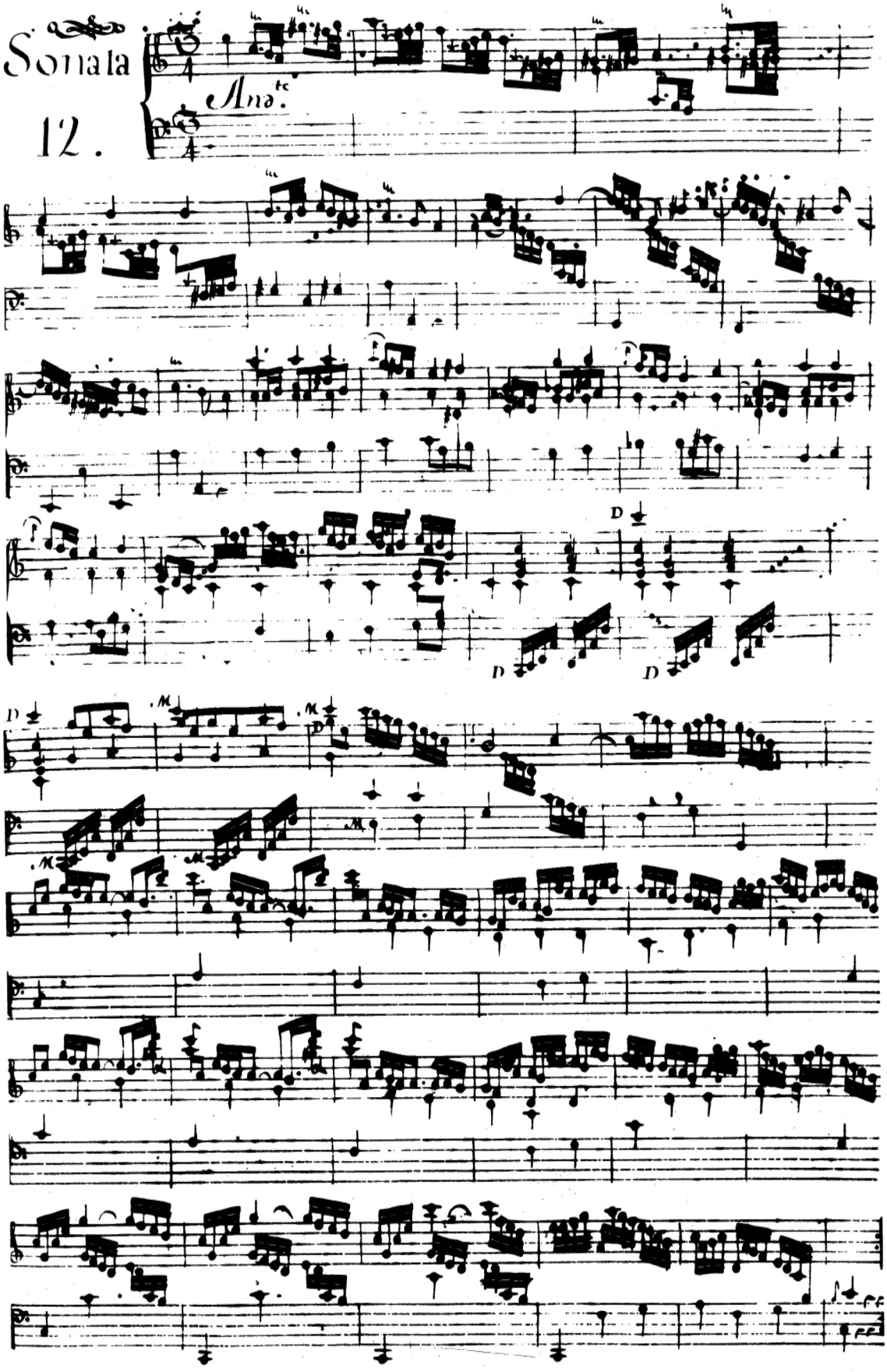



21
D
D
D
G
G
G
25
3
29
33
37
41


45
50
[M]
54
57
D
60
D
D
D


64
D
D
D
67
70
G
73
D
G
77
G

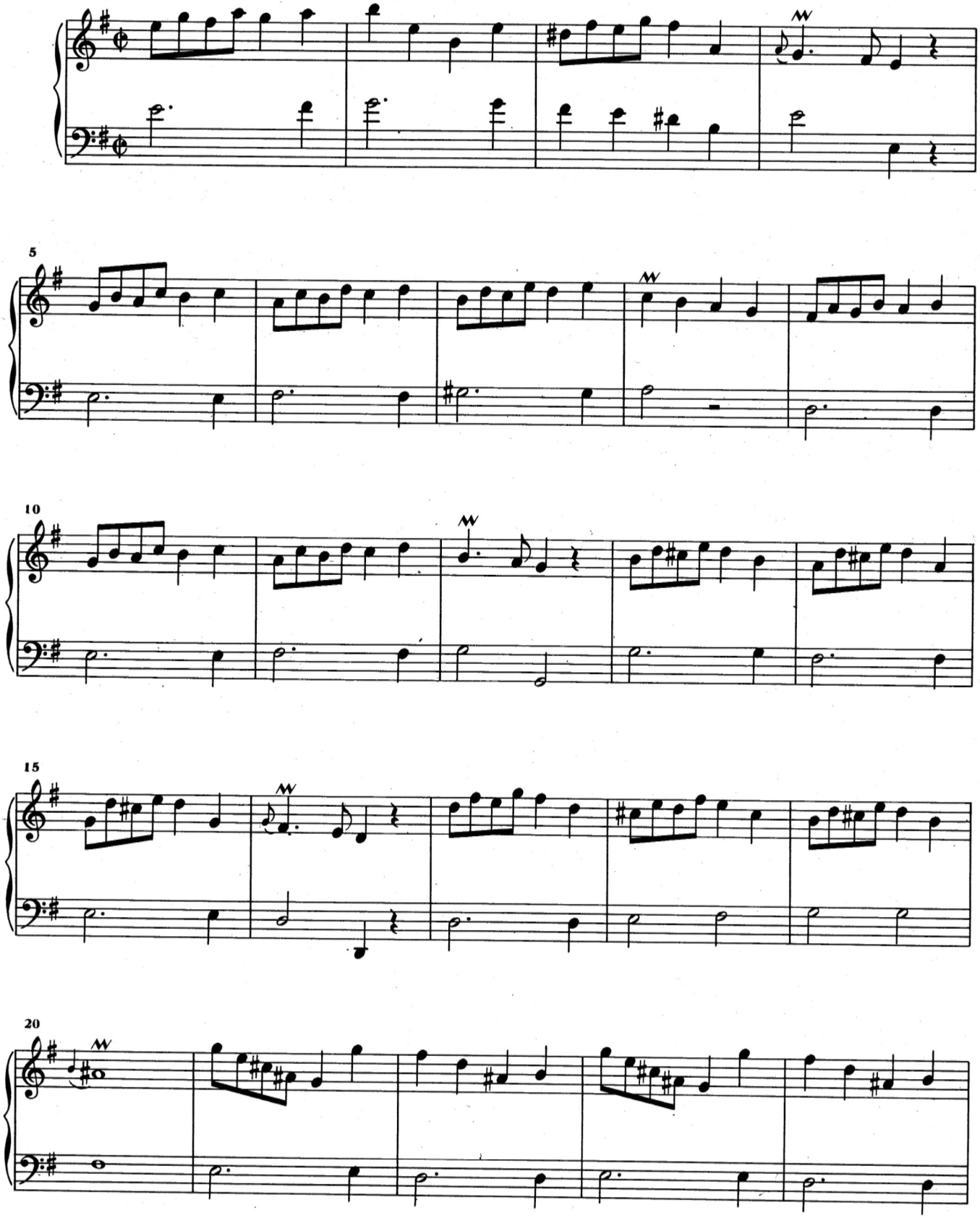

81
D
[M]
G
3
85
89
93
97

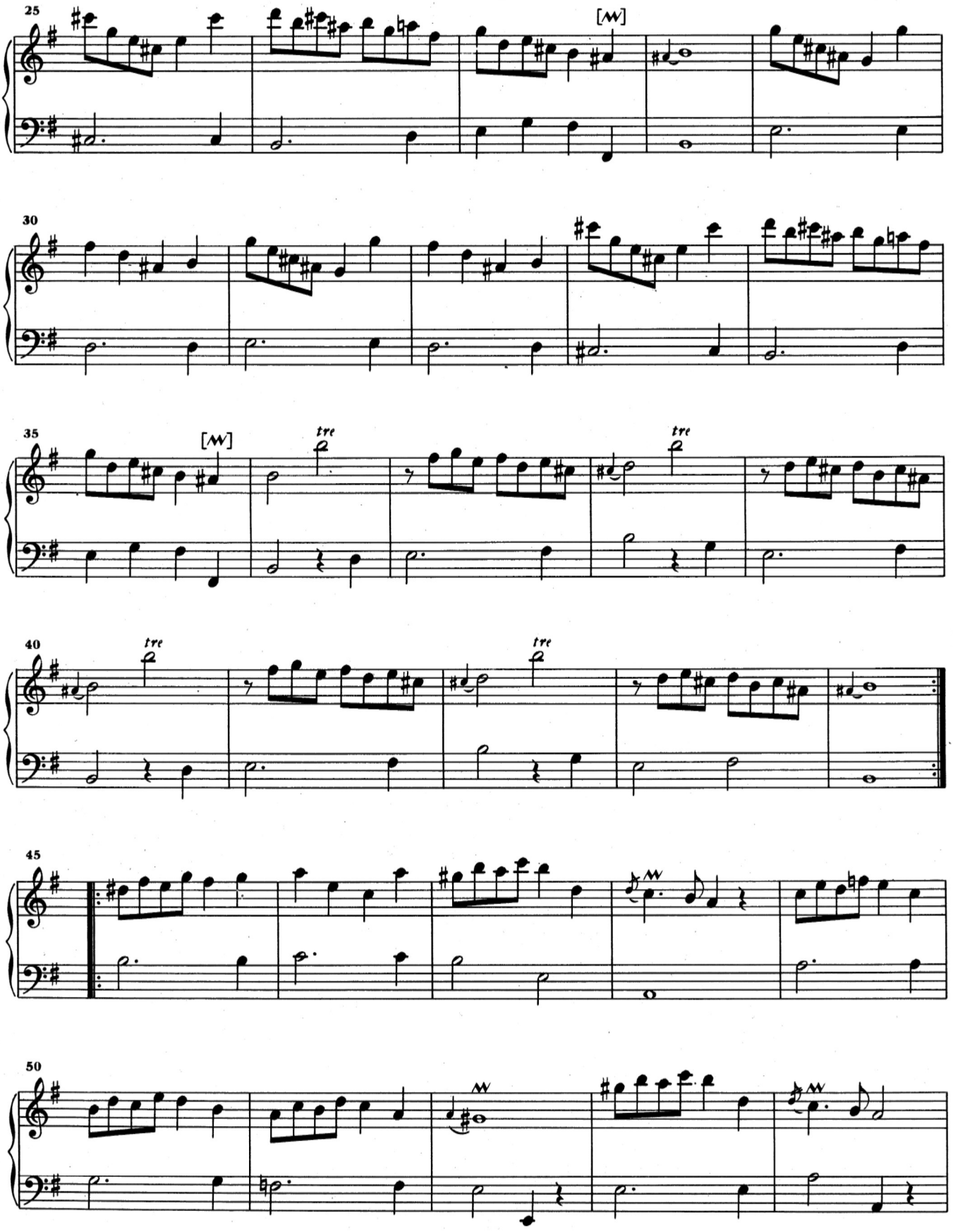


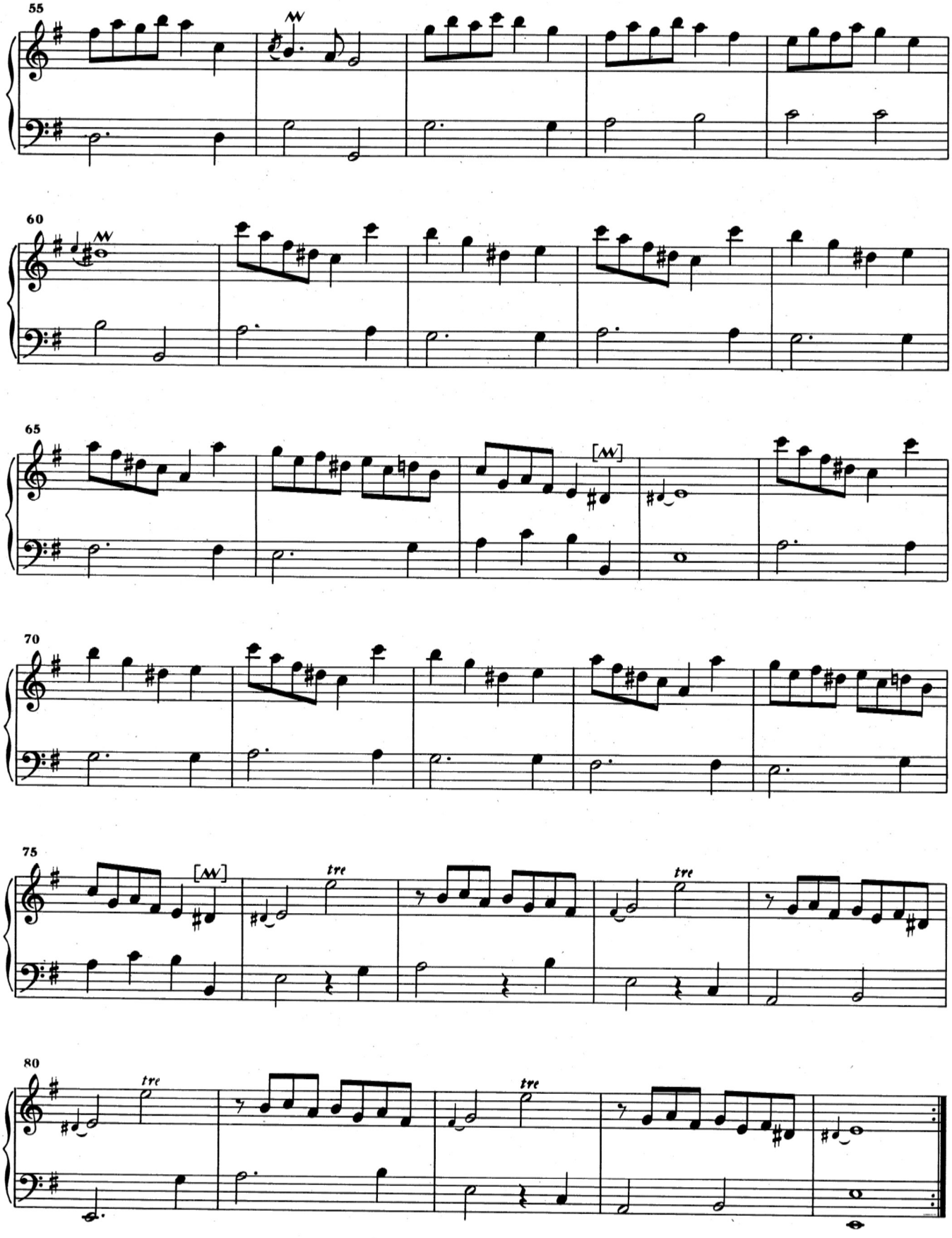

VENISE III 12 (SONATE K. 217)

# K. 291

Andante

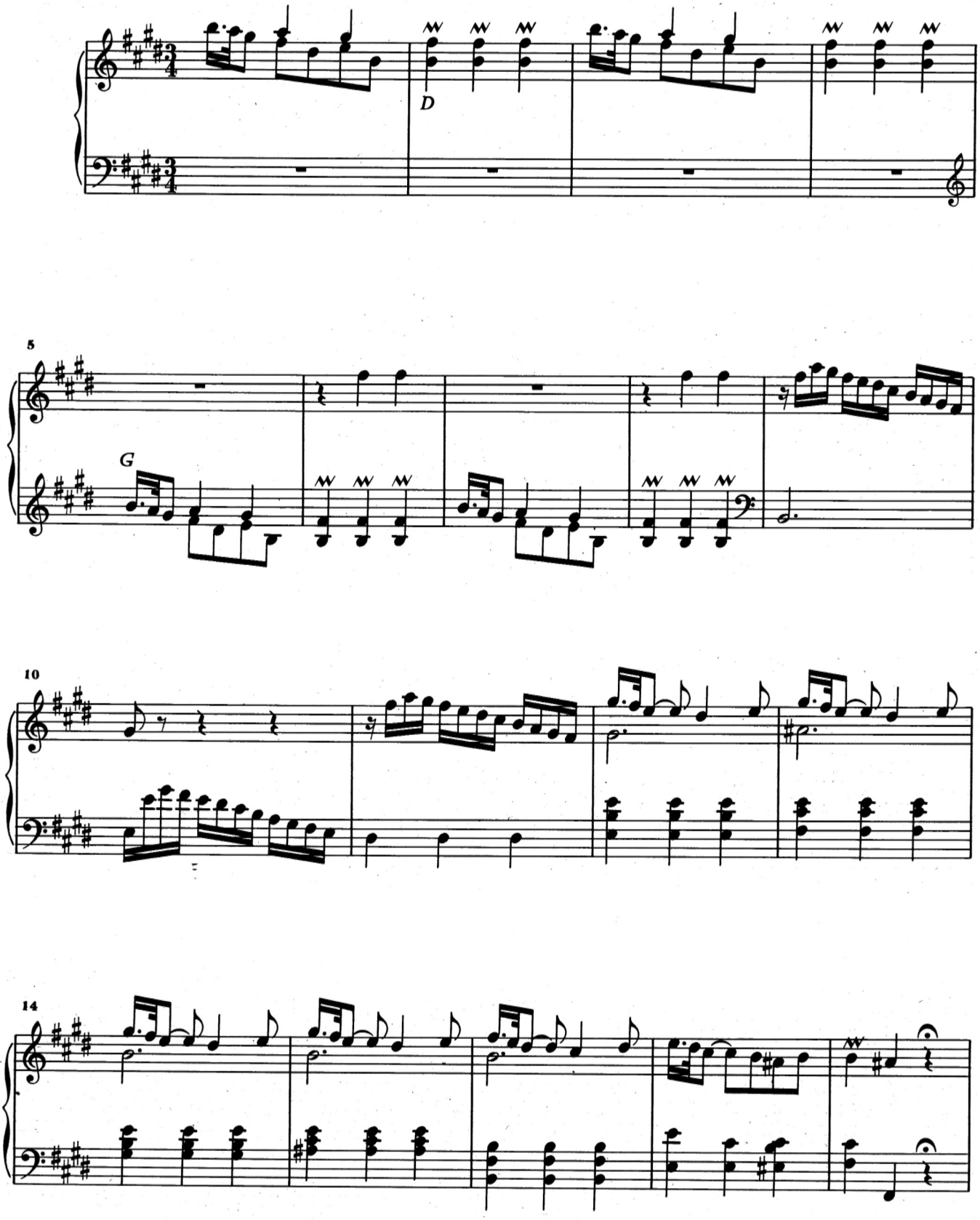


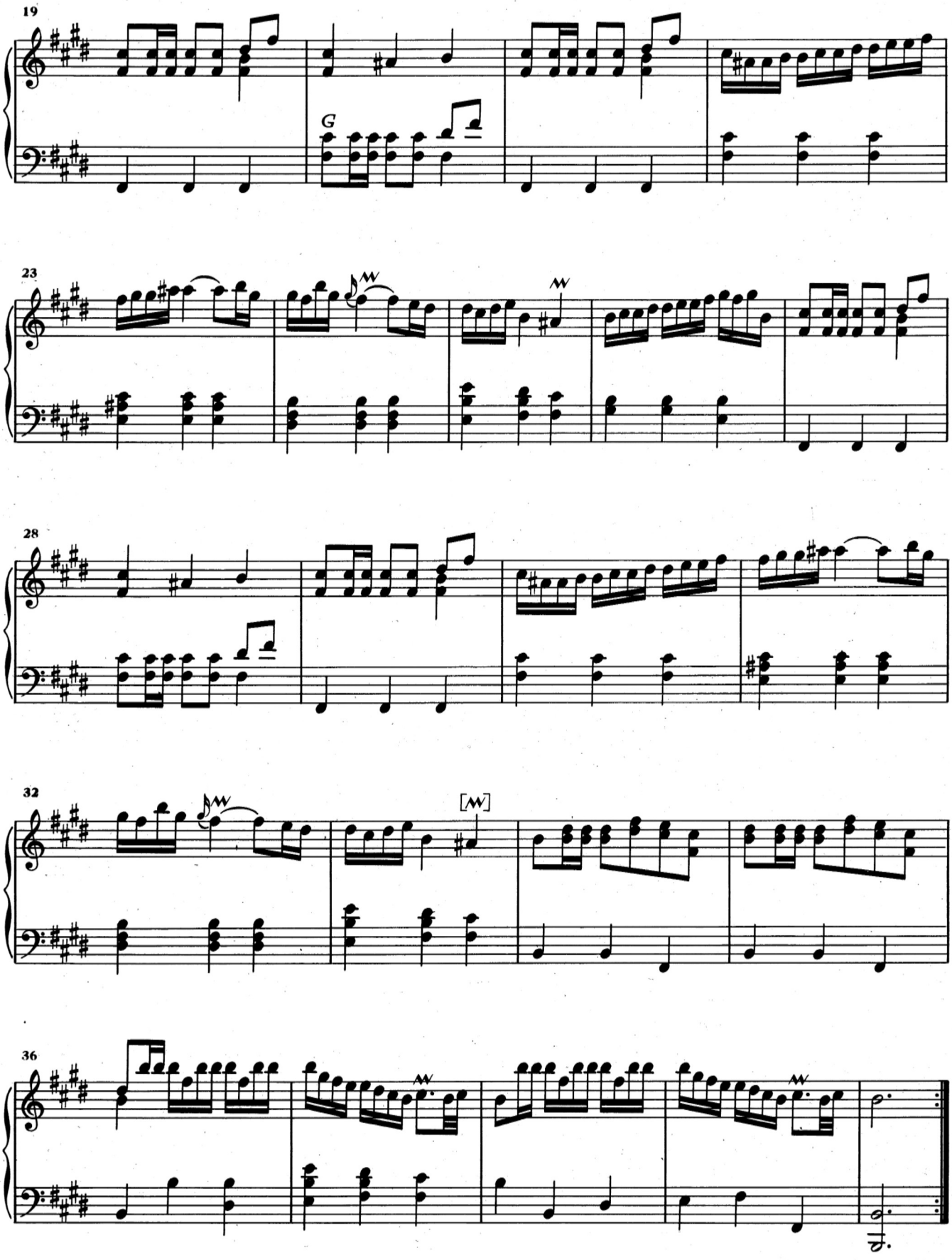

25
[M]
30
35
[M]
tre
tre
40
tre
tre
45
50
M
M


55
60
65
70
75
80
tre
tre
tre
tre

# K. 380

Andante commodo

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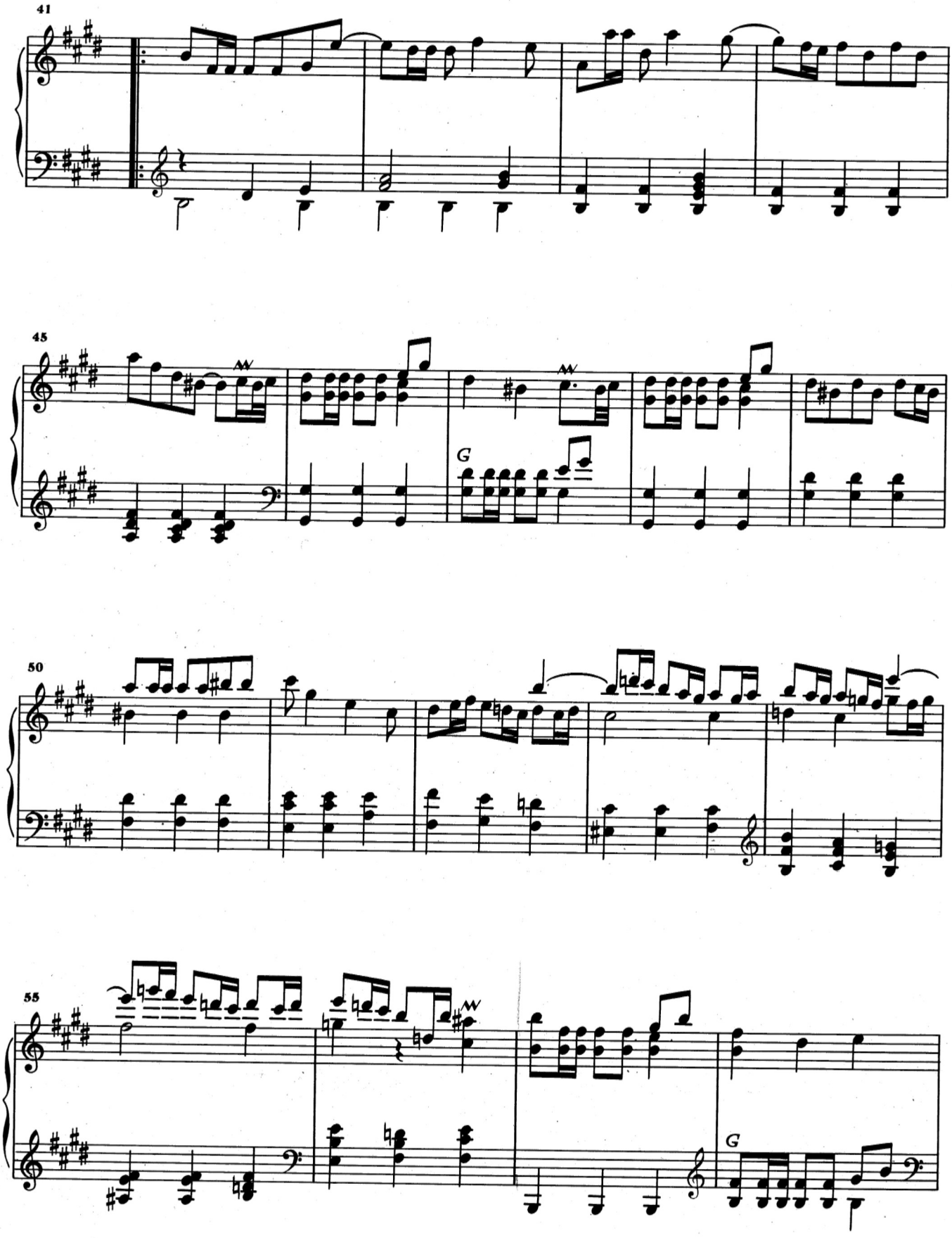
G
23
28
32
36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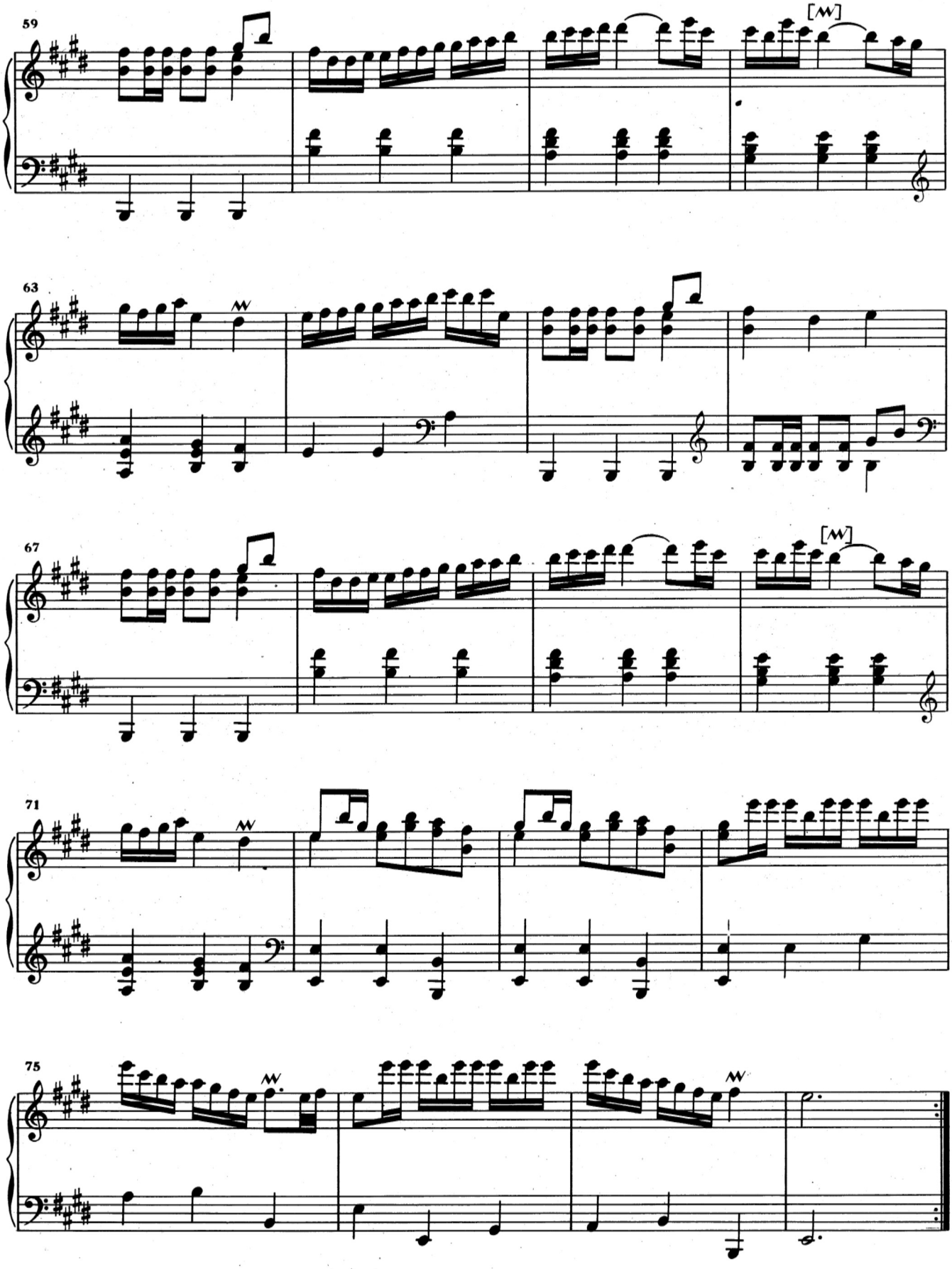
45
G
50
55
G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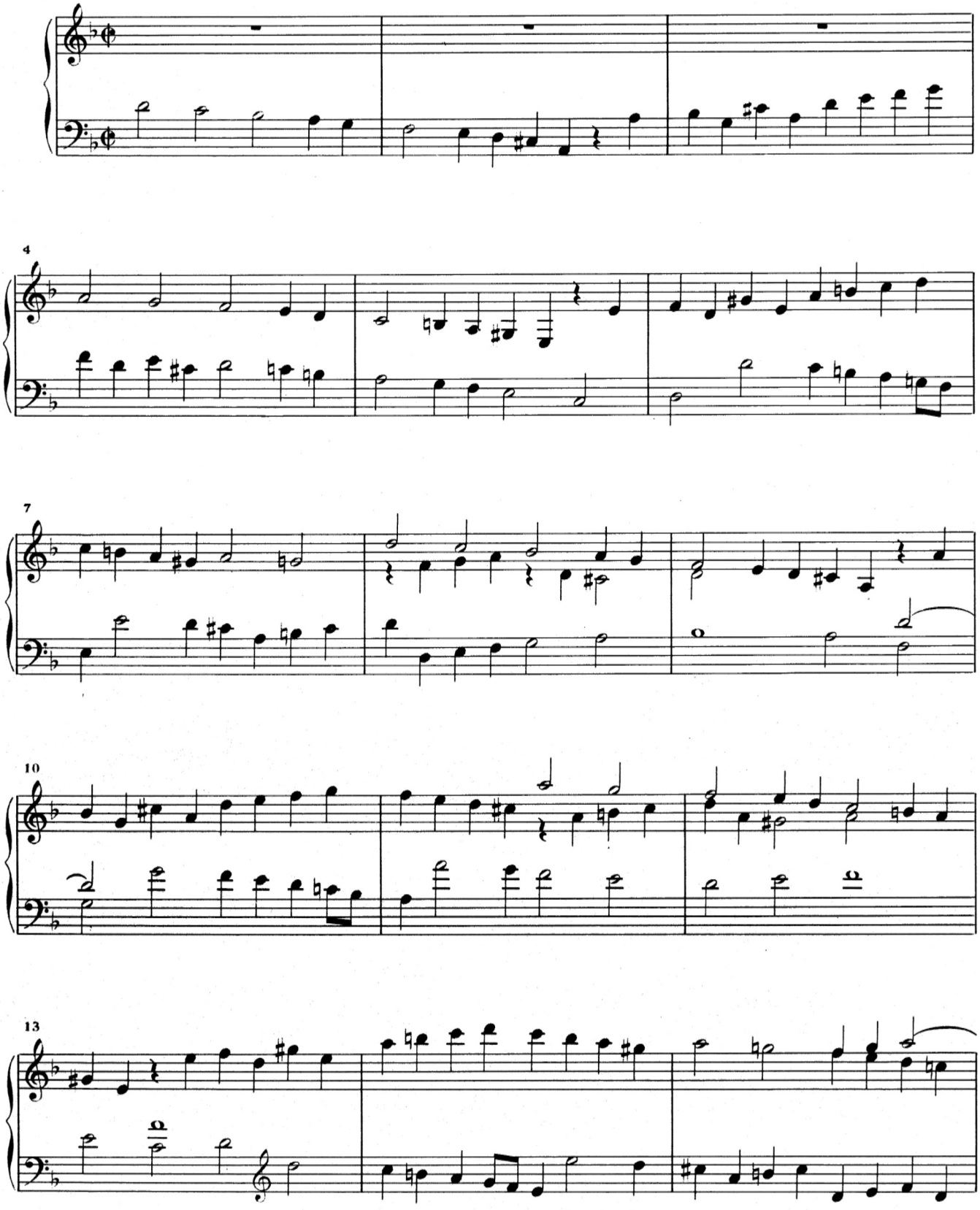
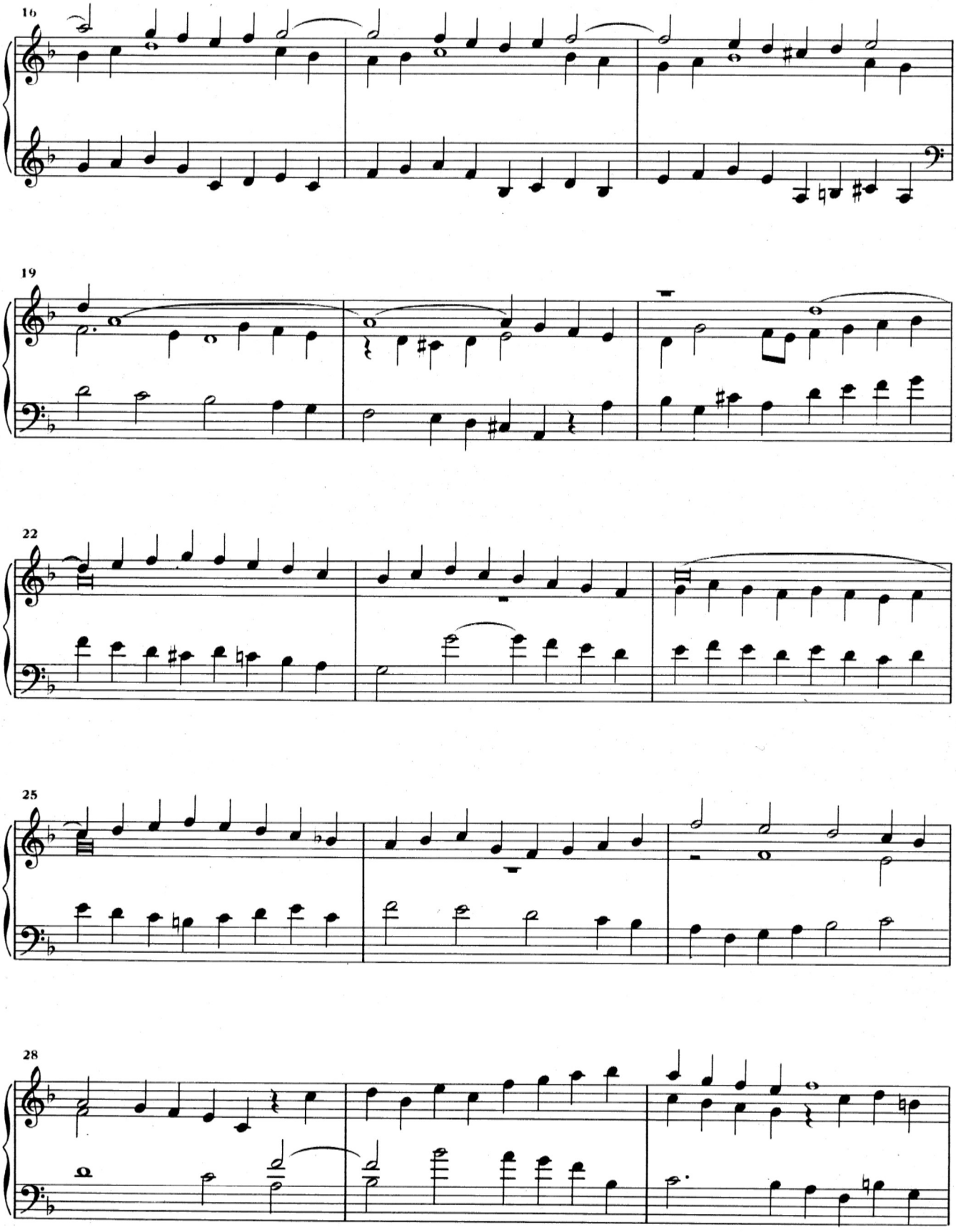
[M]
63
67
[M]
71
75

# K. 417

Fuga. Allegro moderato

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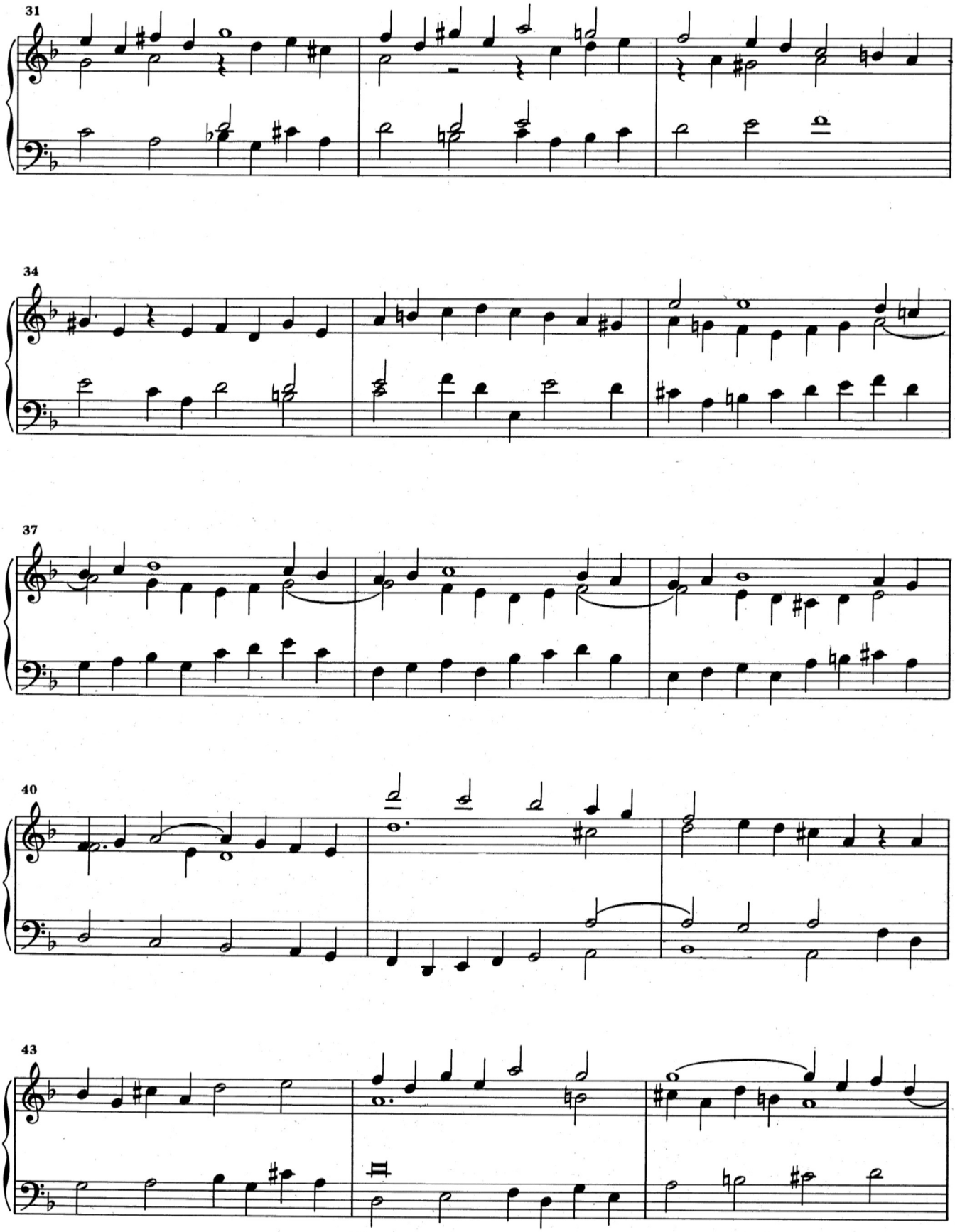
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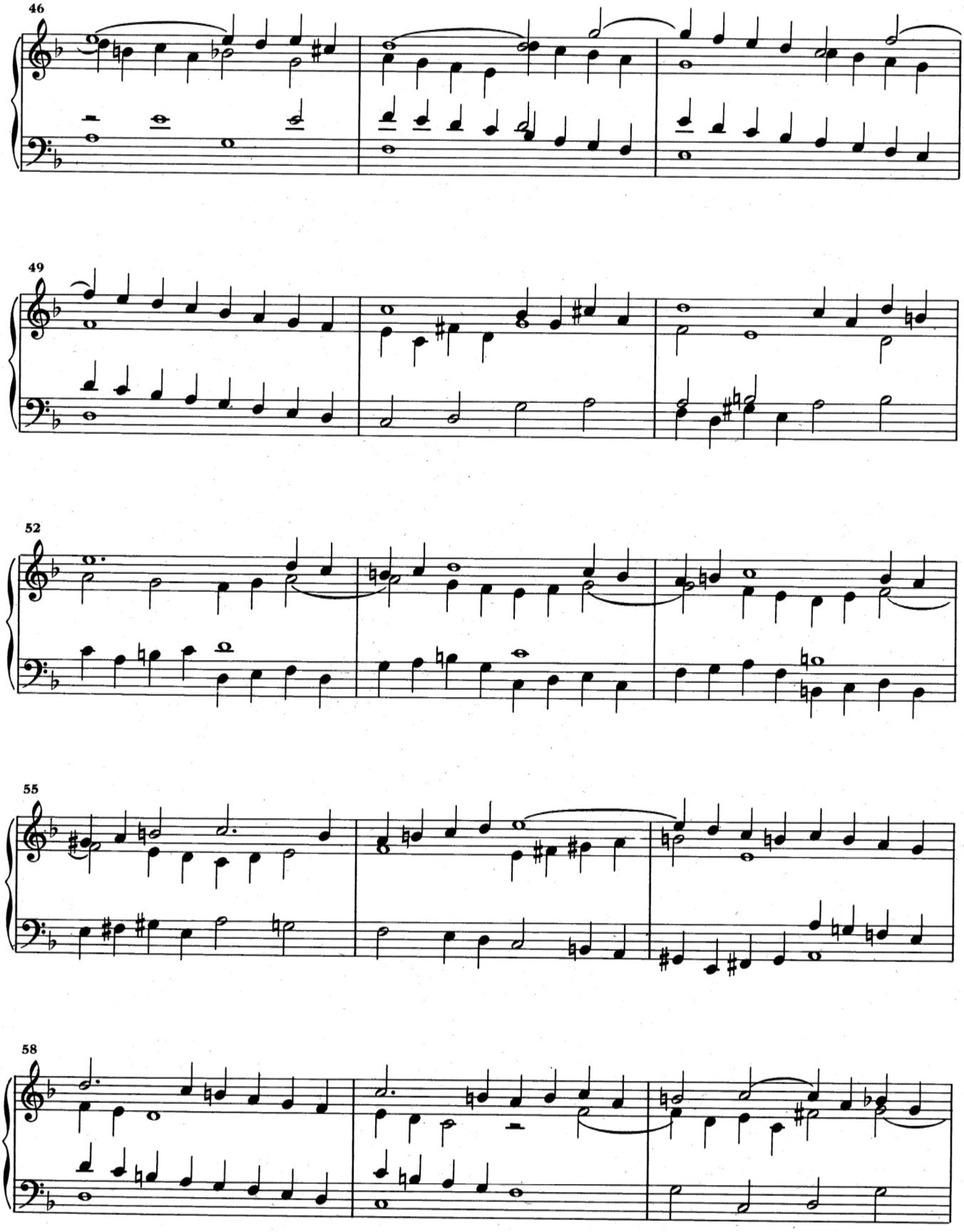
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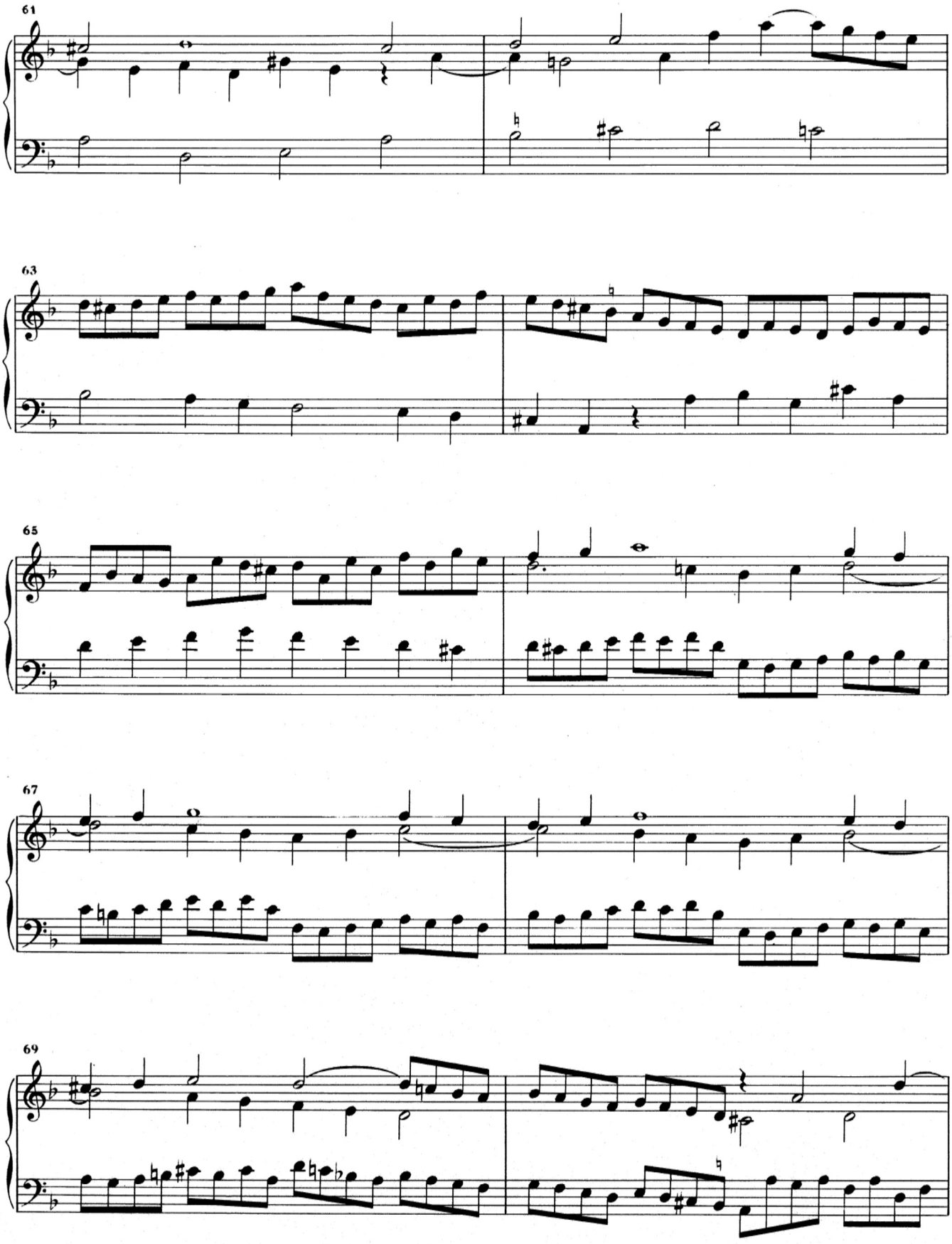
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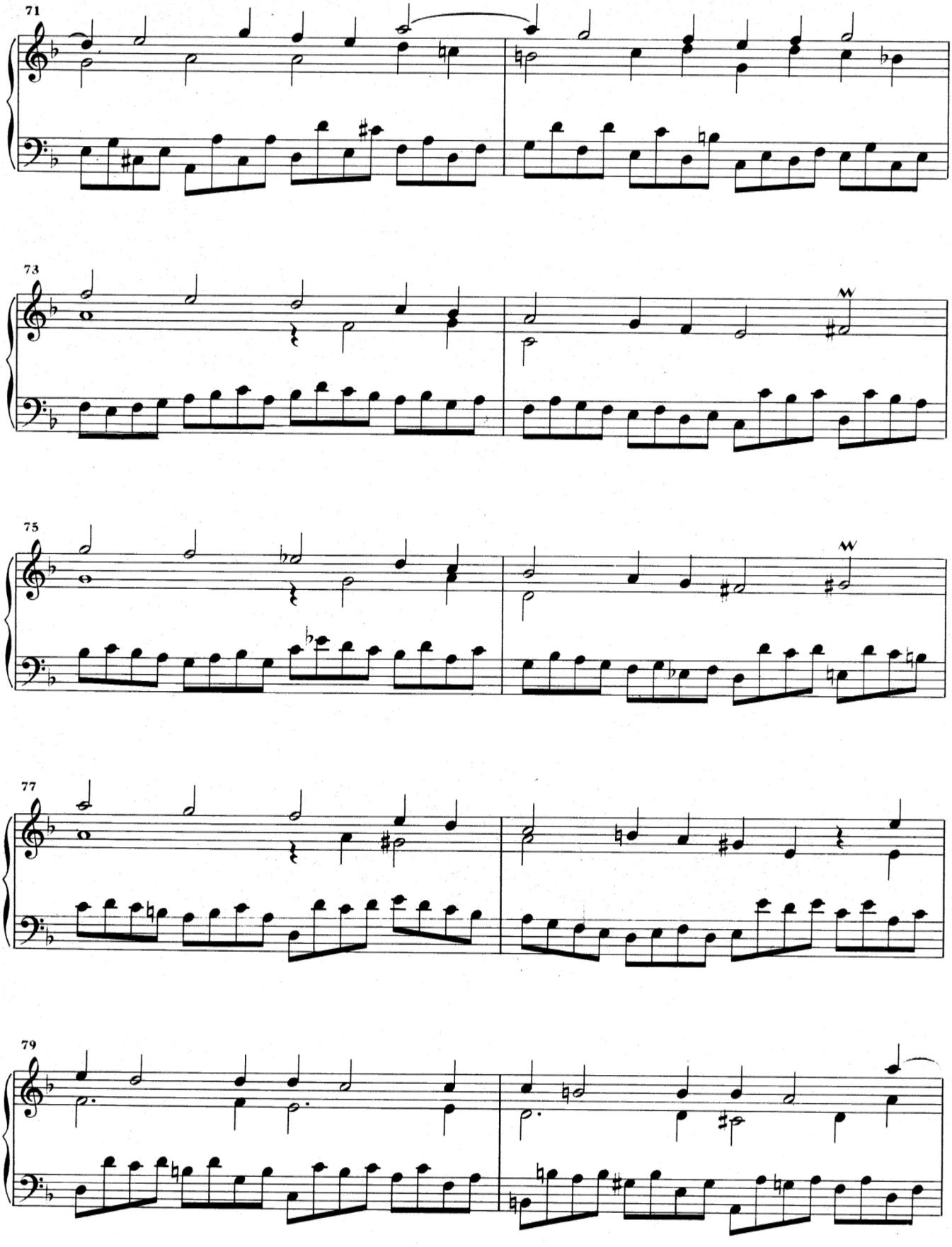
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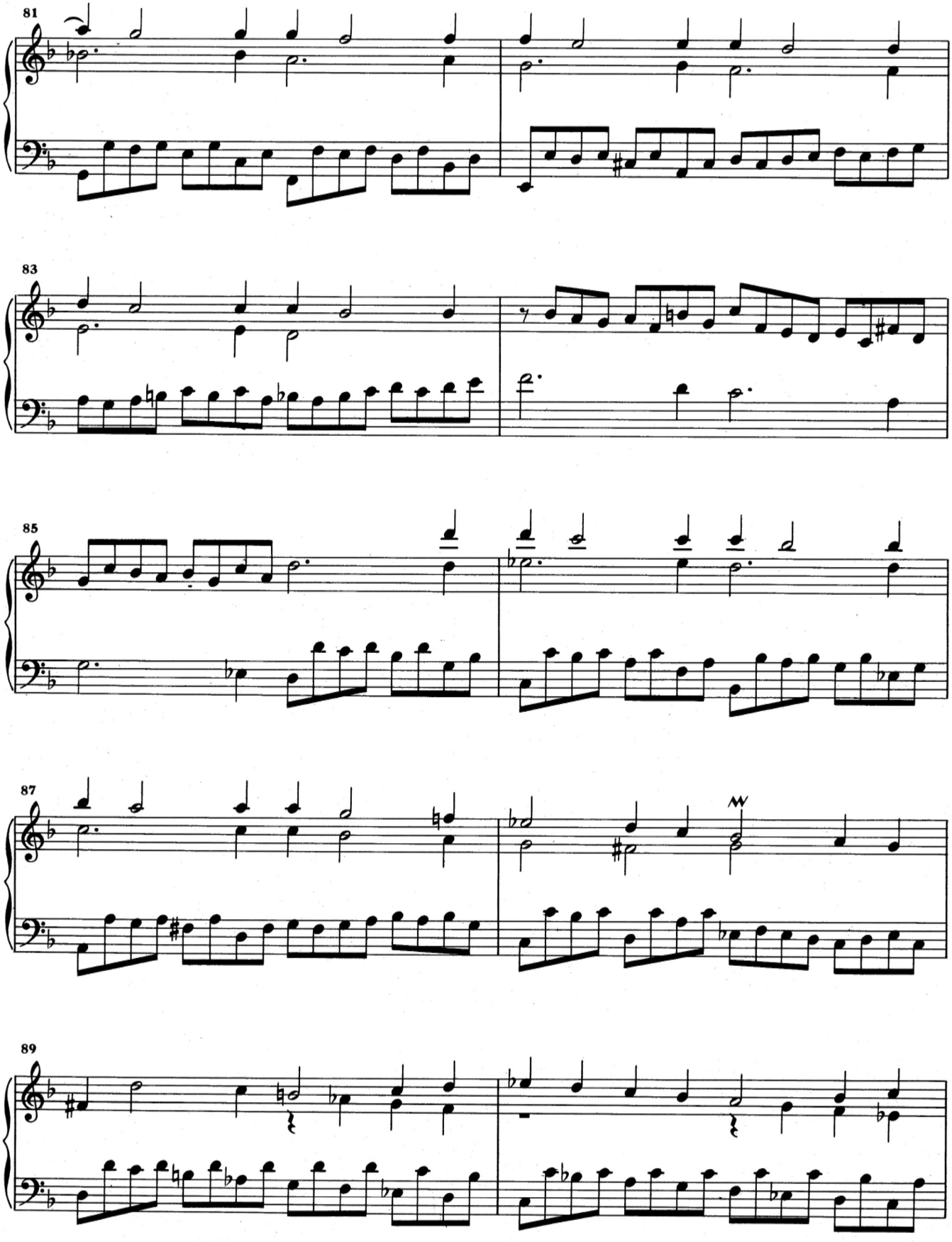
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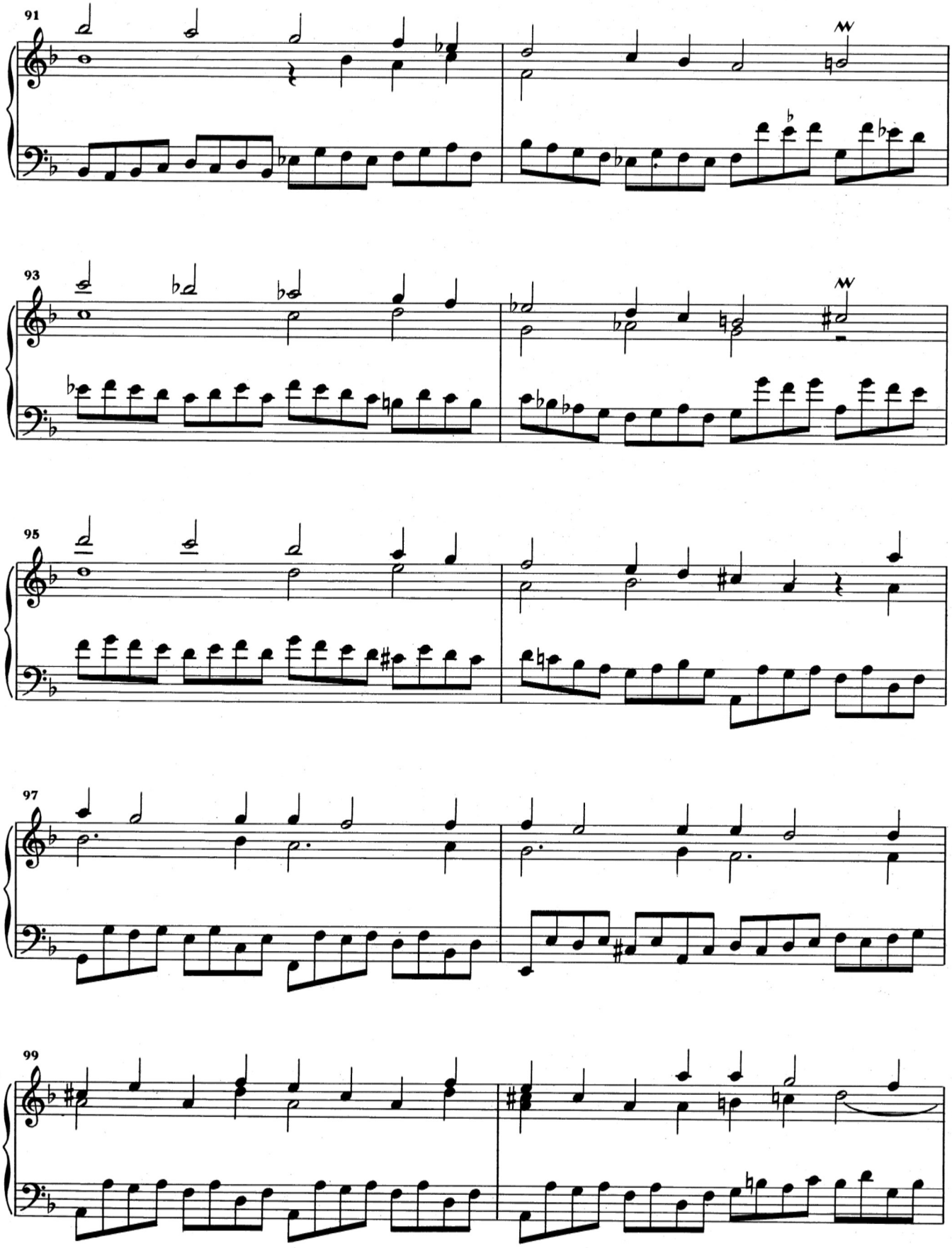
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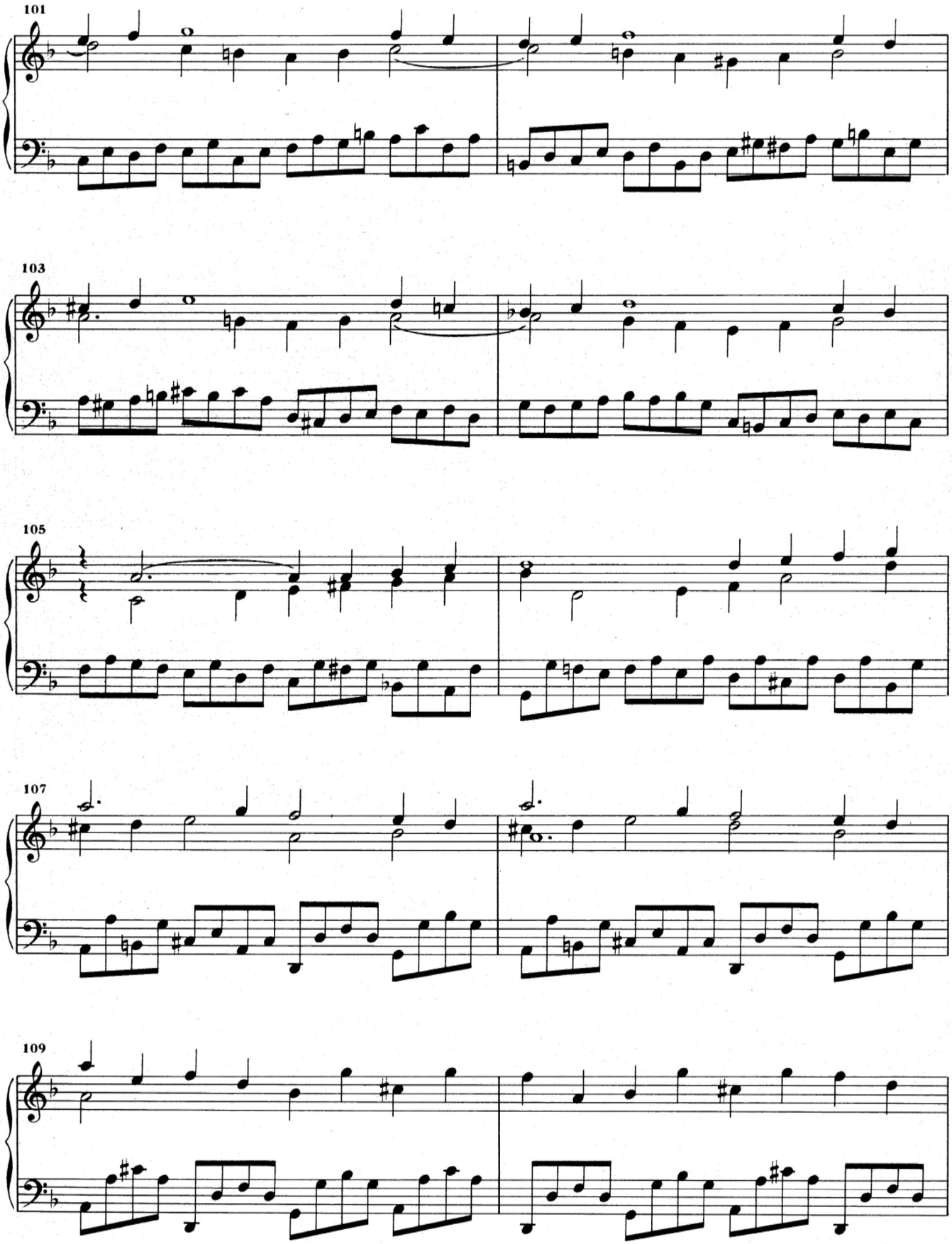
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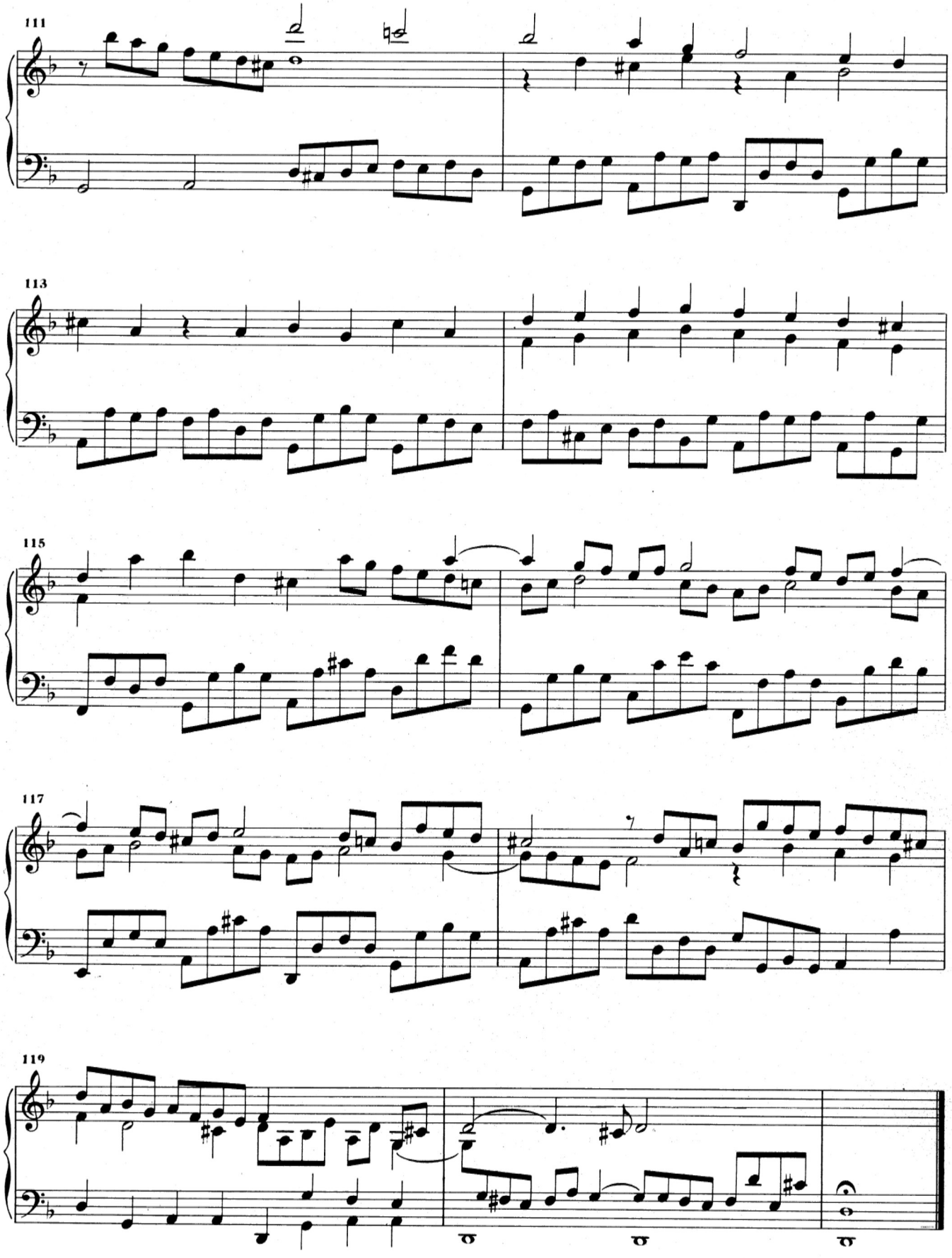
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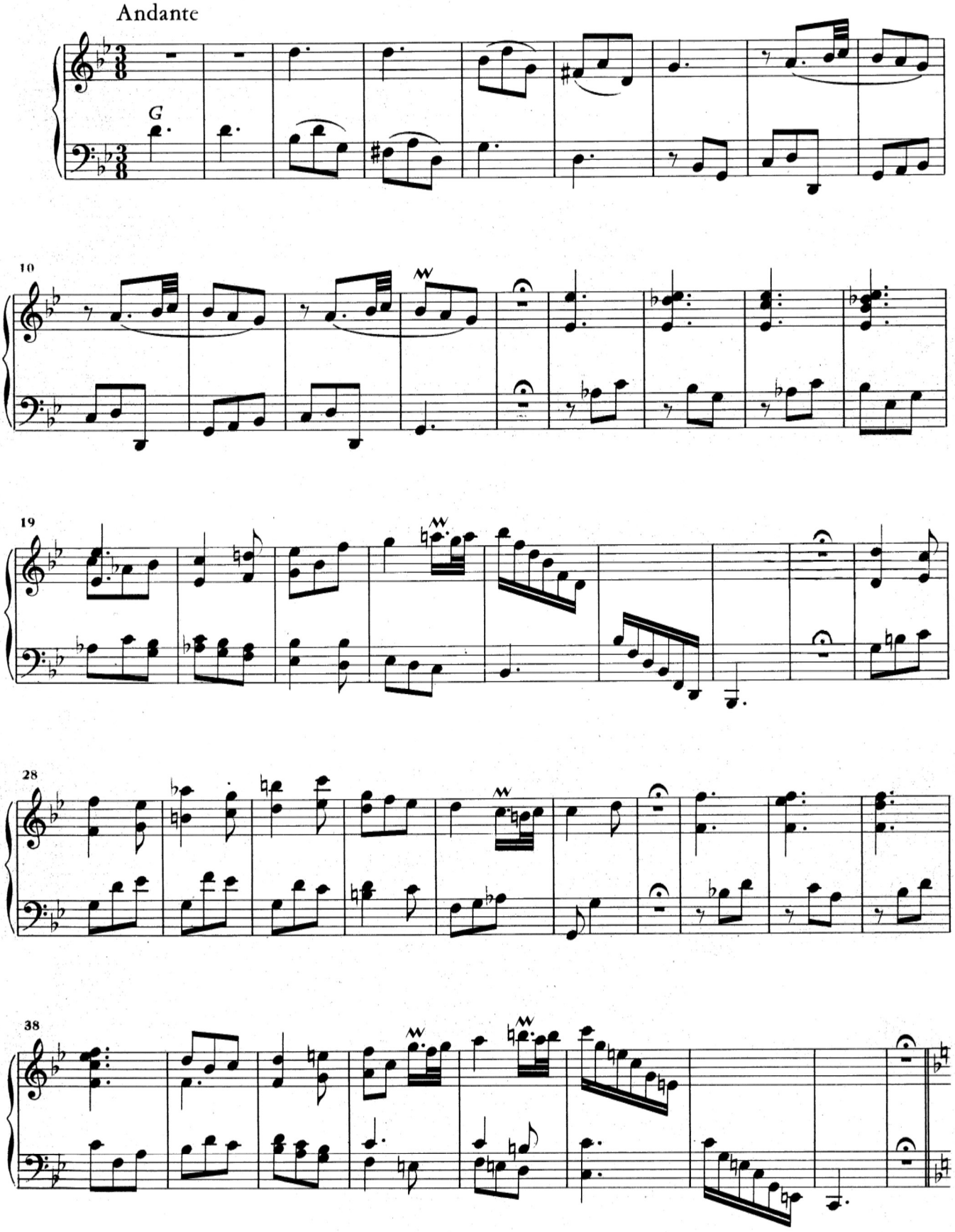
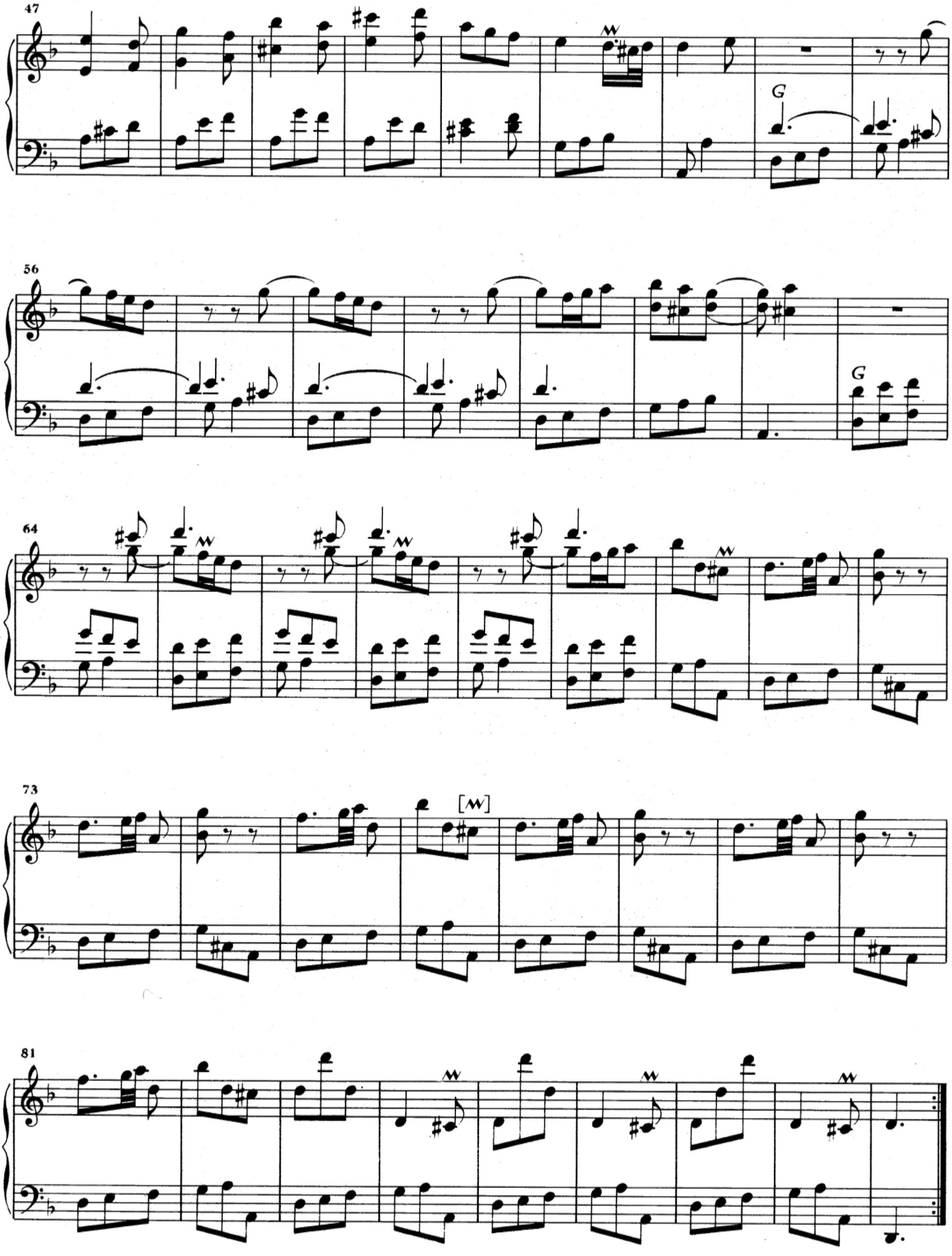
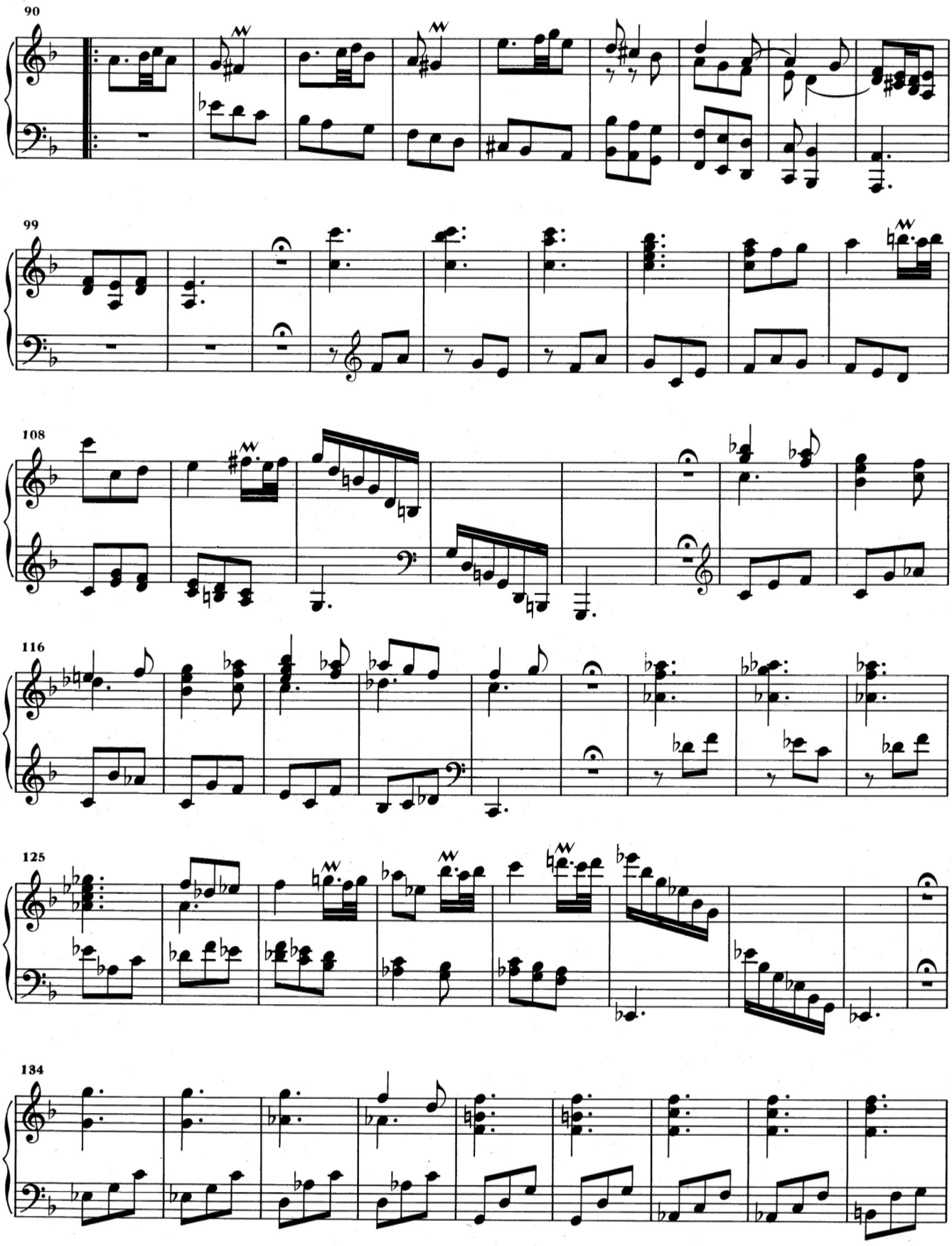
# K. 426




47
G
56
G
64
73
[W]
81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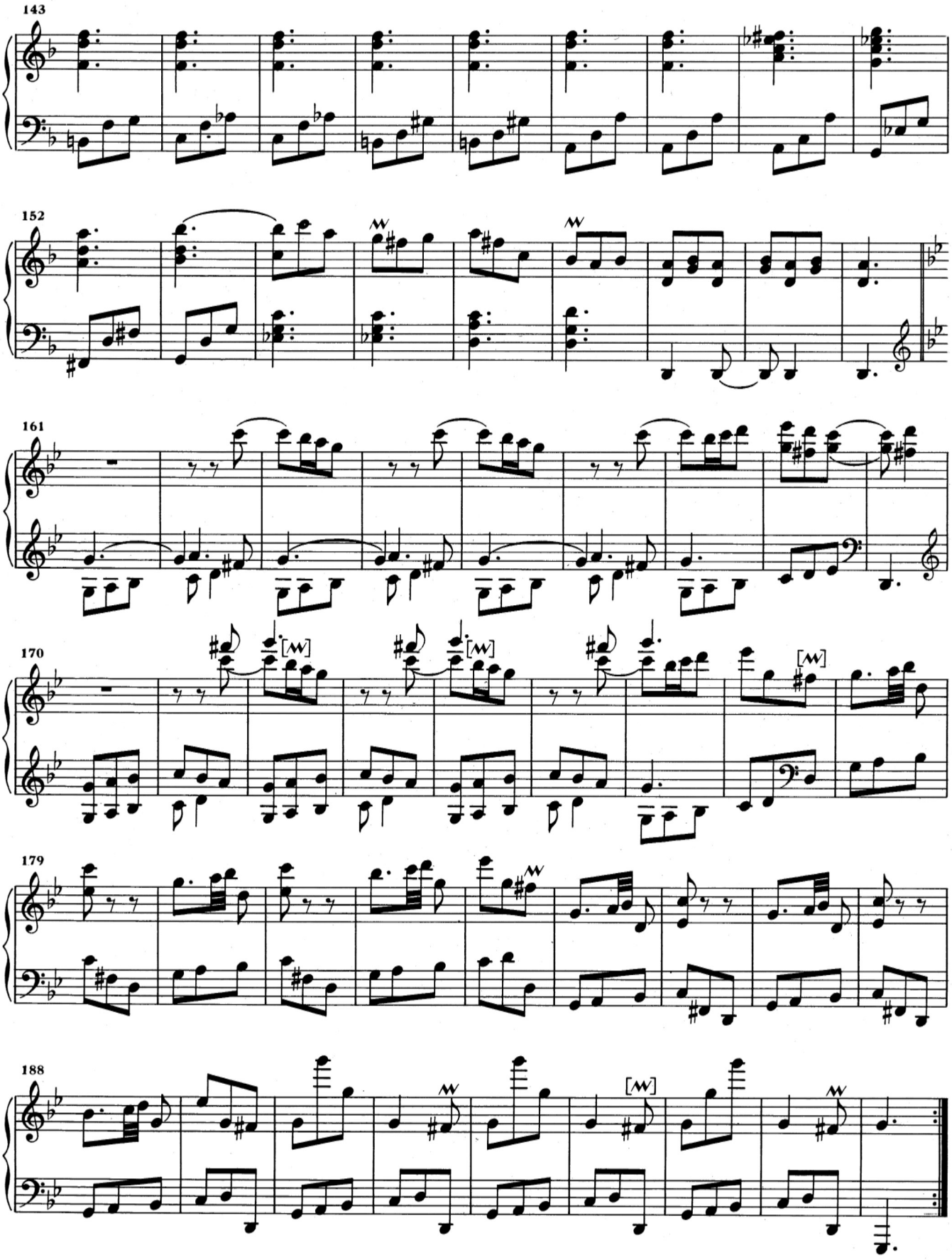
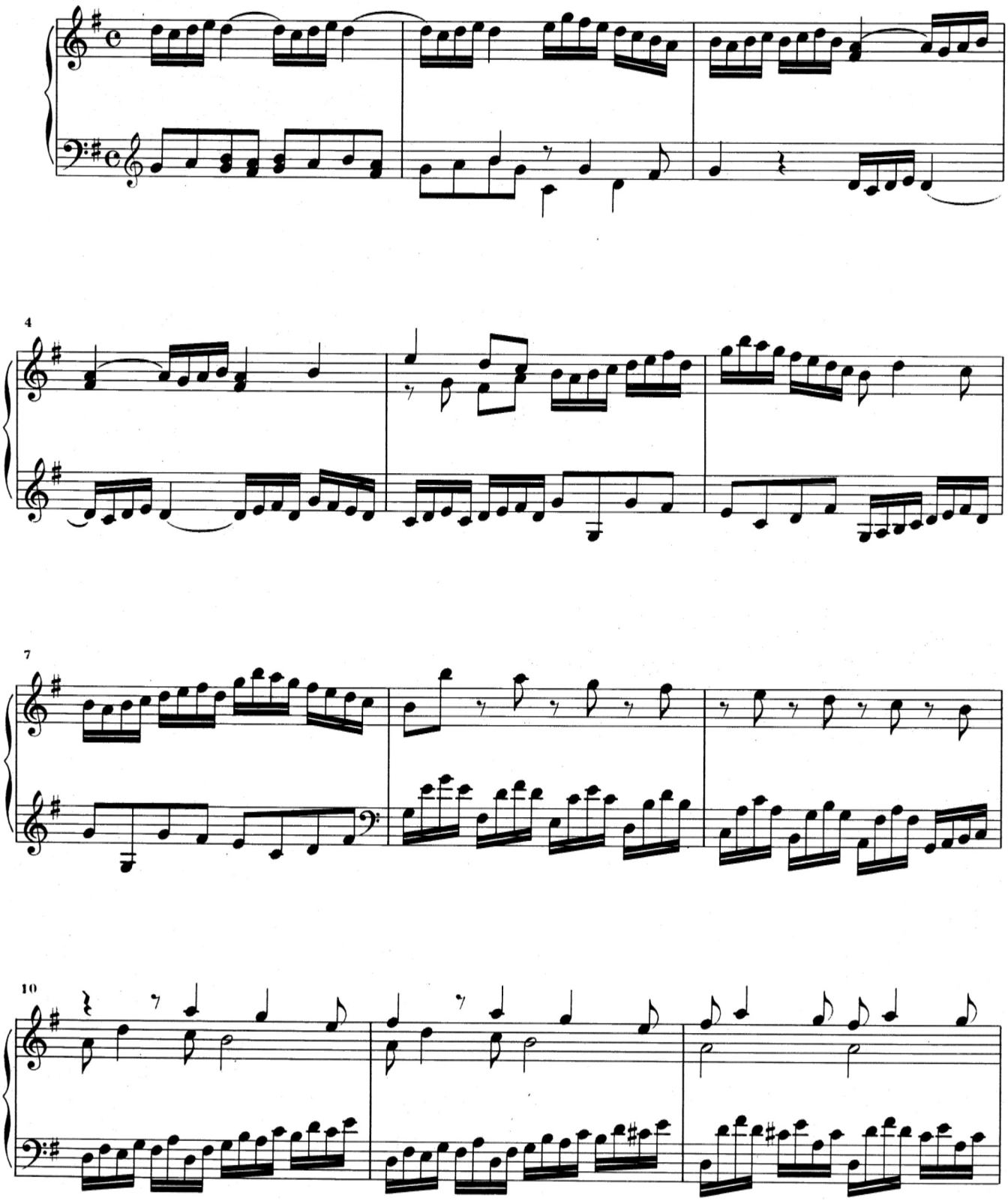
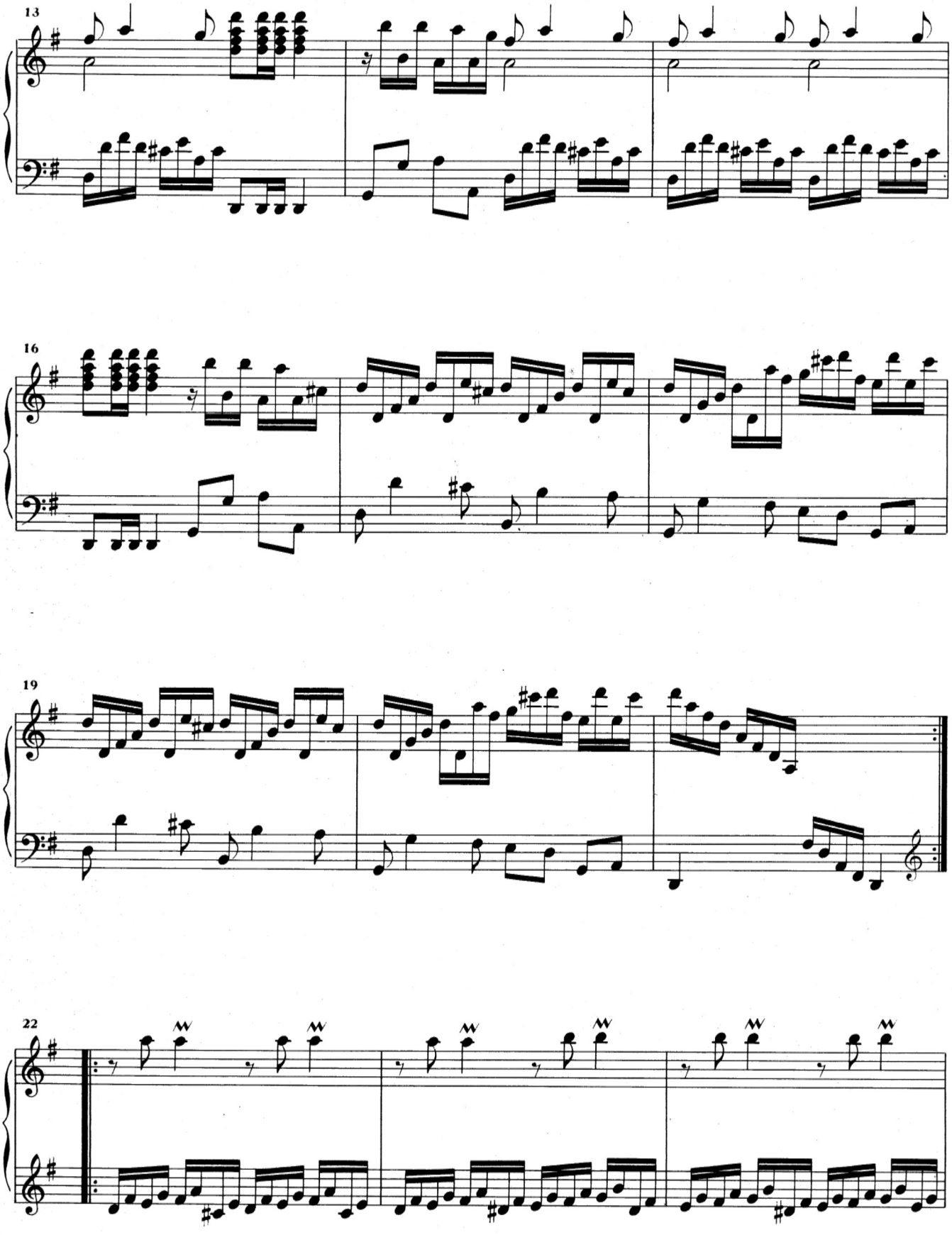
99
108
116
125
134


143
152
161
170
179
188

# K. 427

Presto, quanto sia possibile

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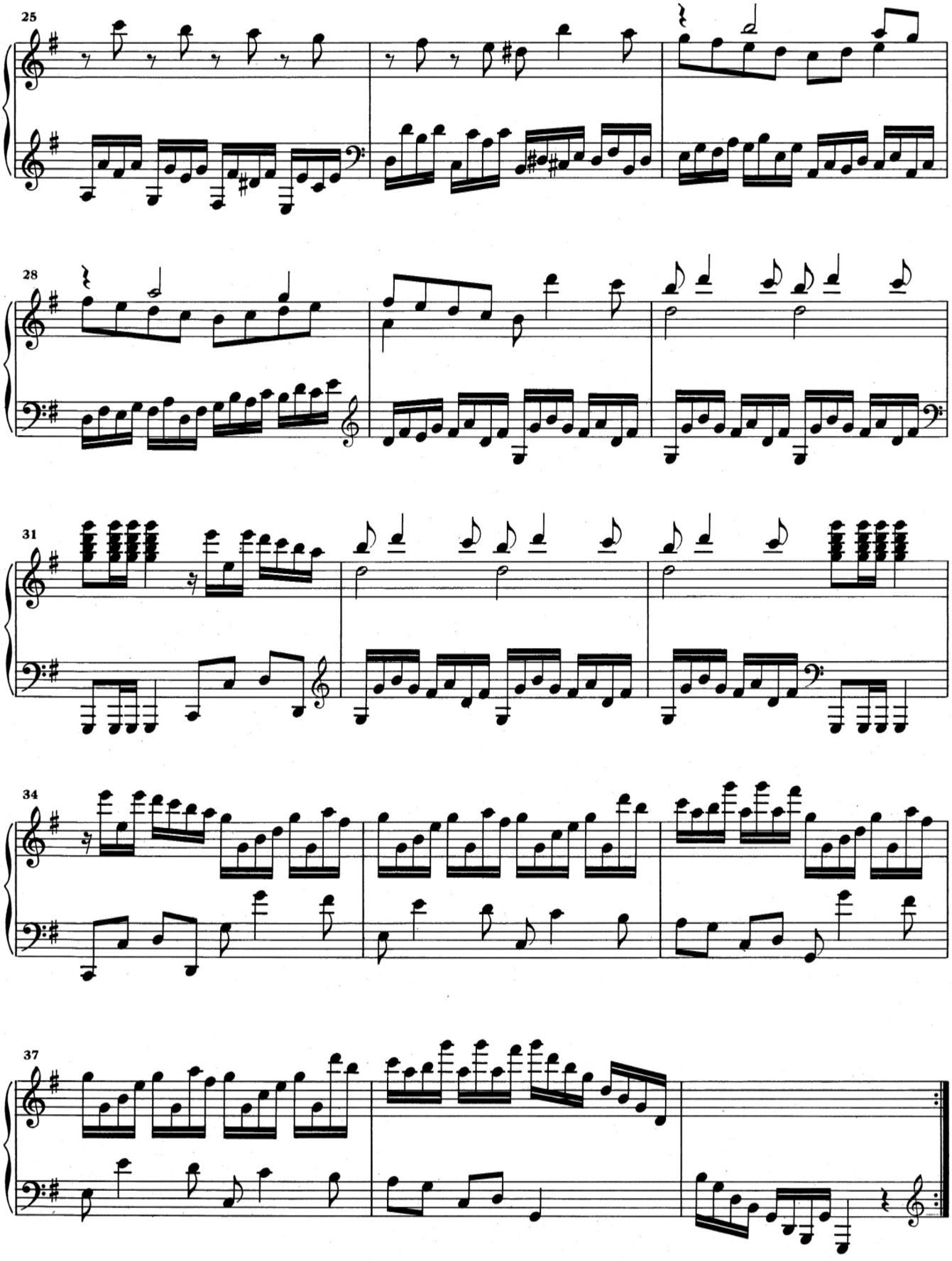
19
22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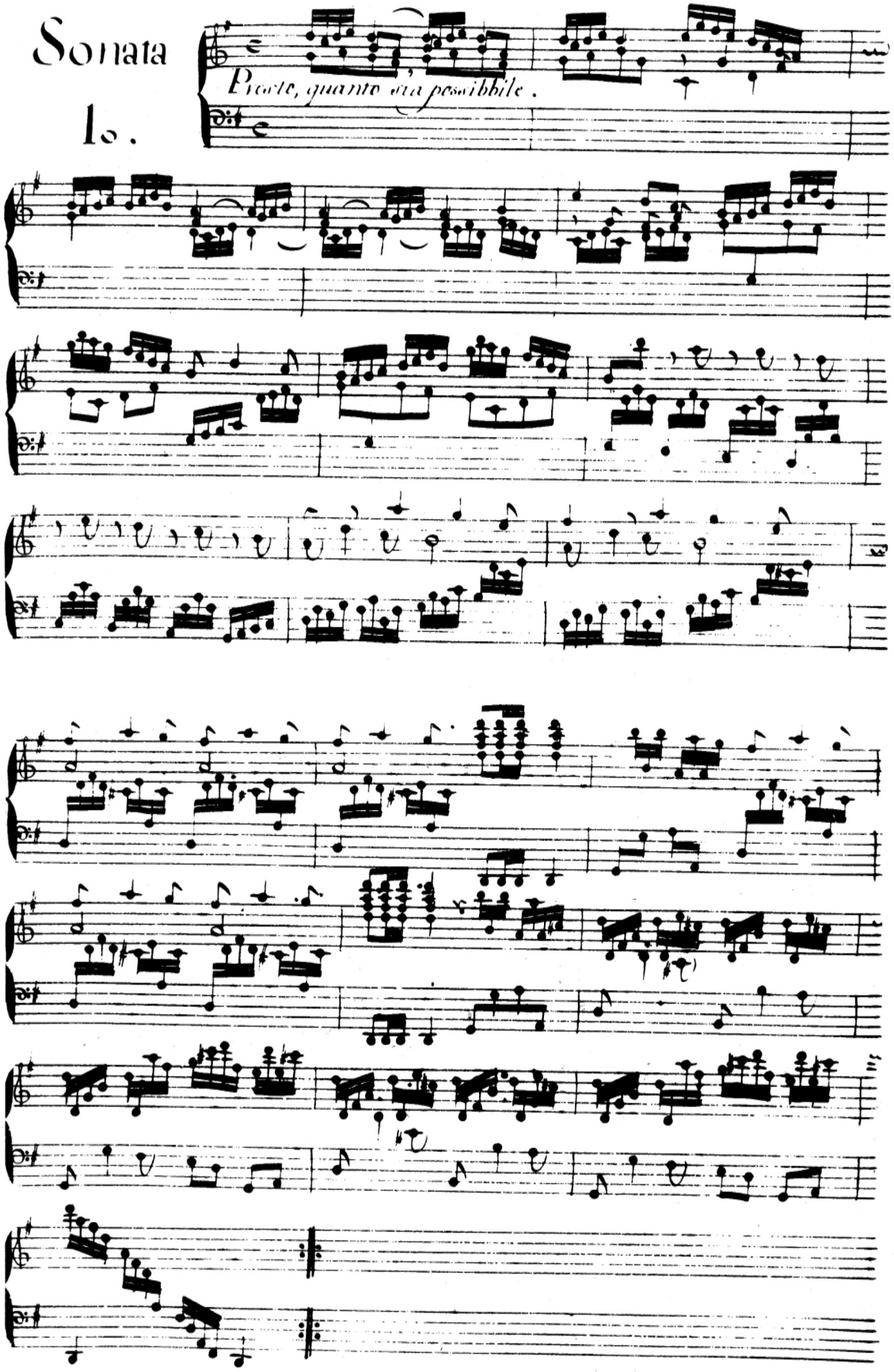
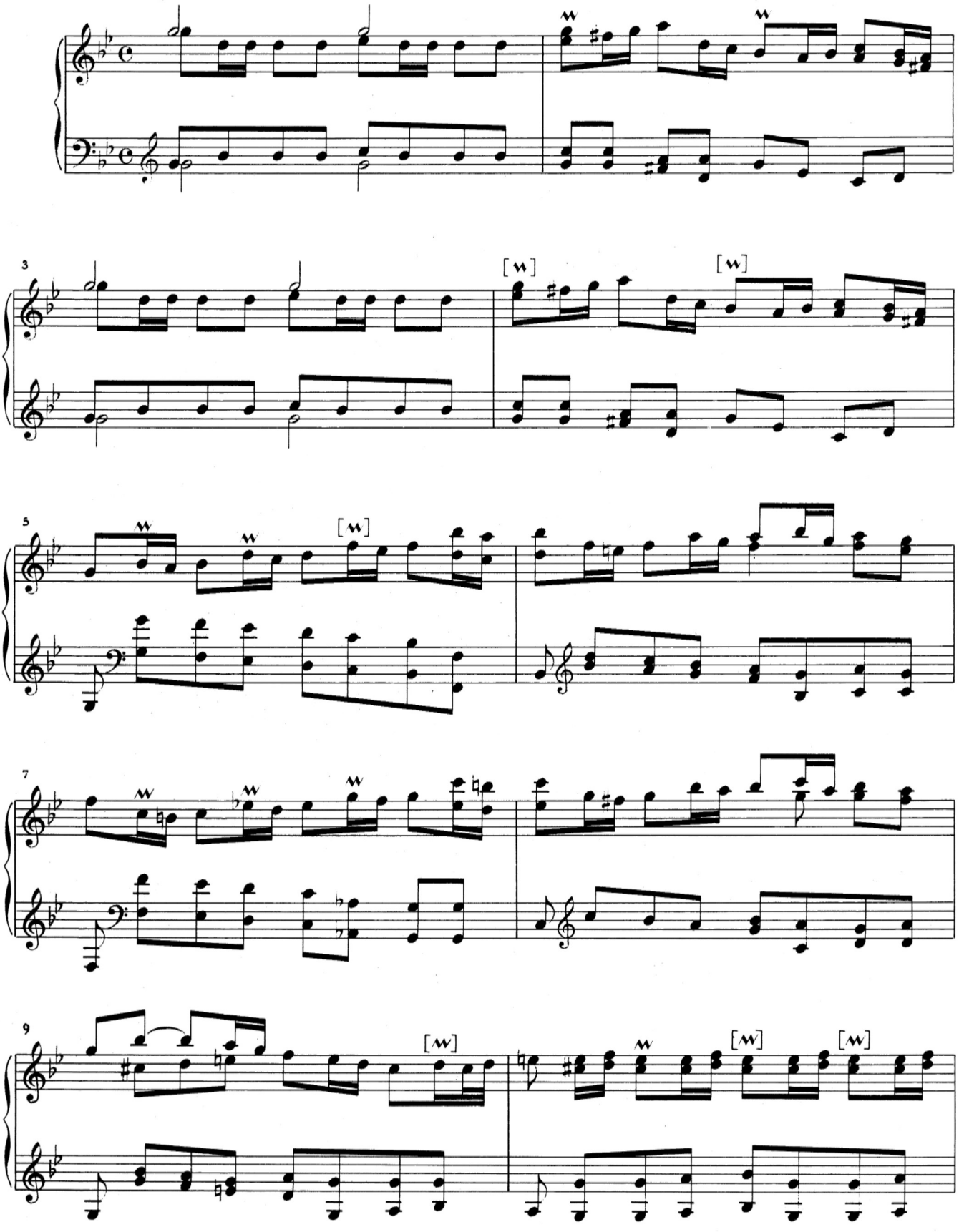
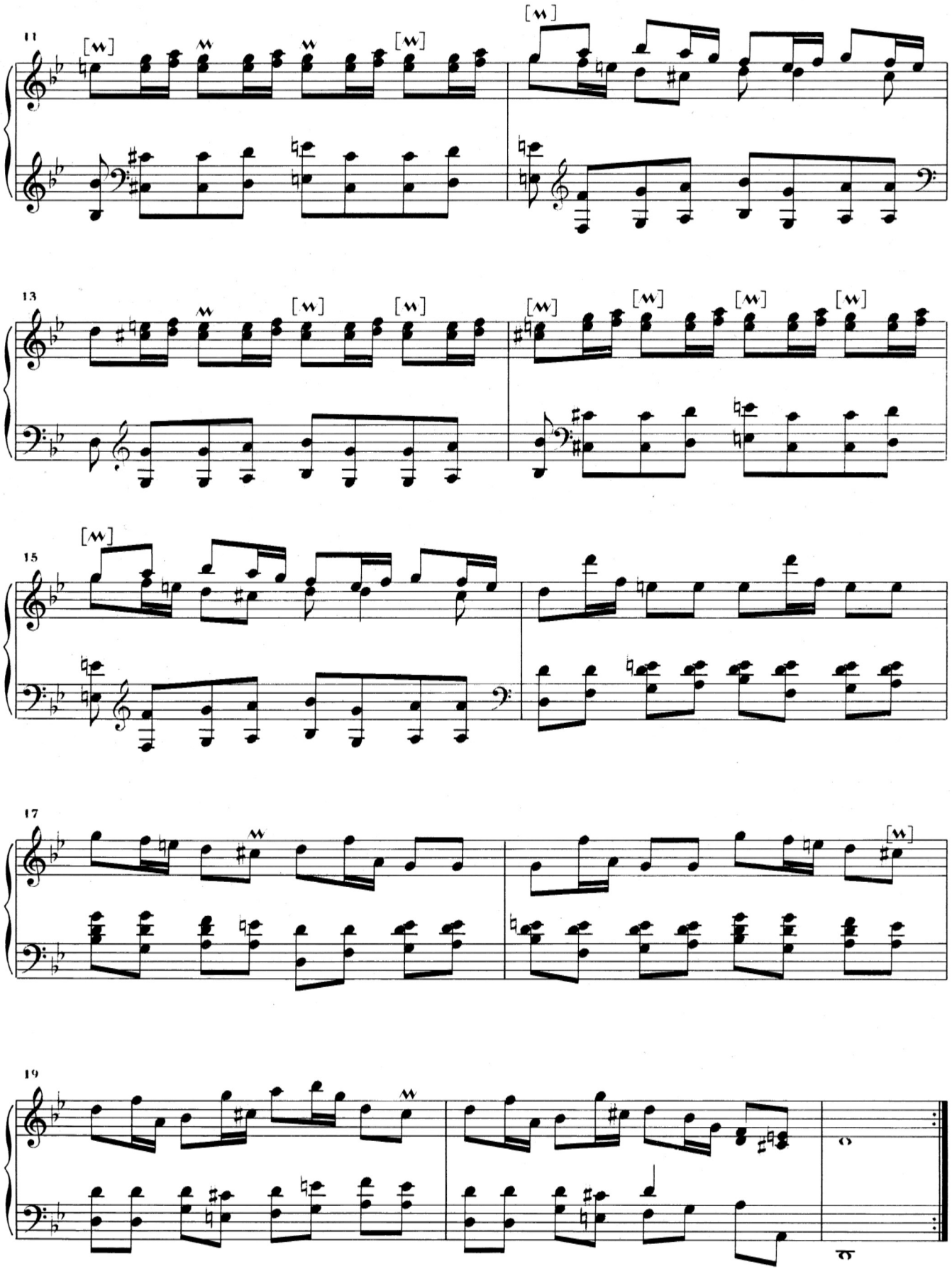
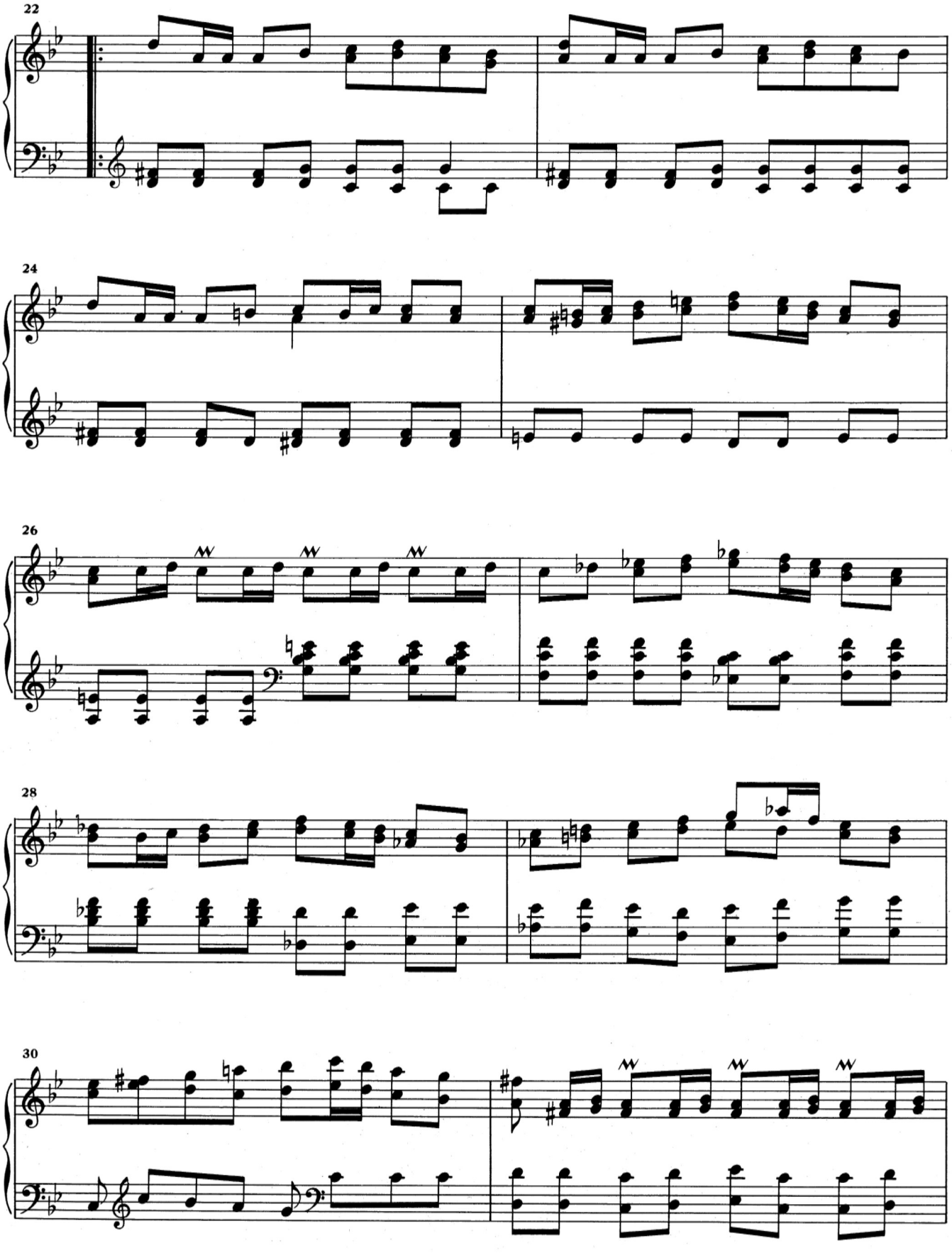

Sonata
1o.
Presto, quanto sia possibile.

# K. 450

Allegrissimo



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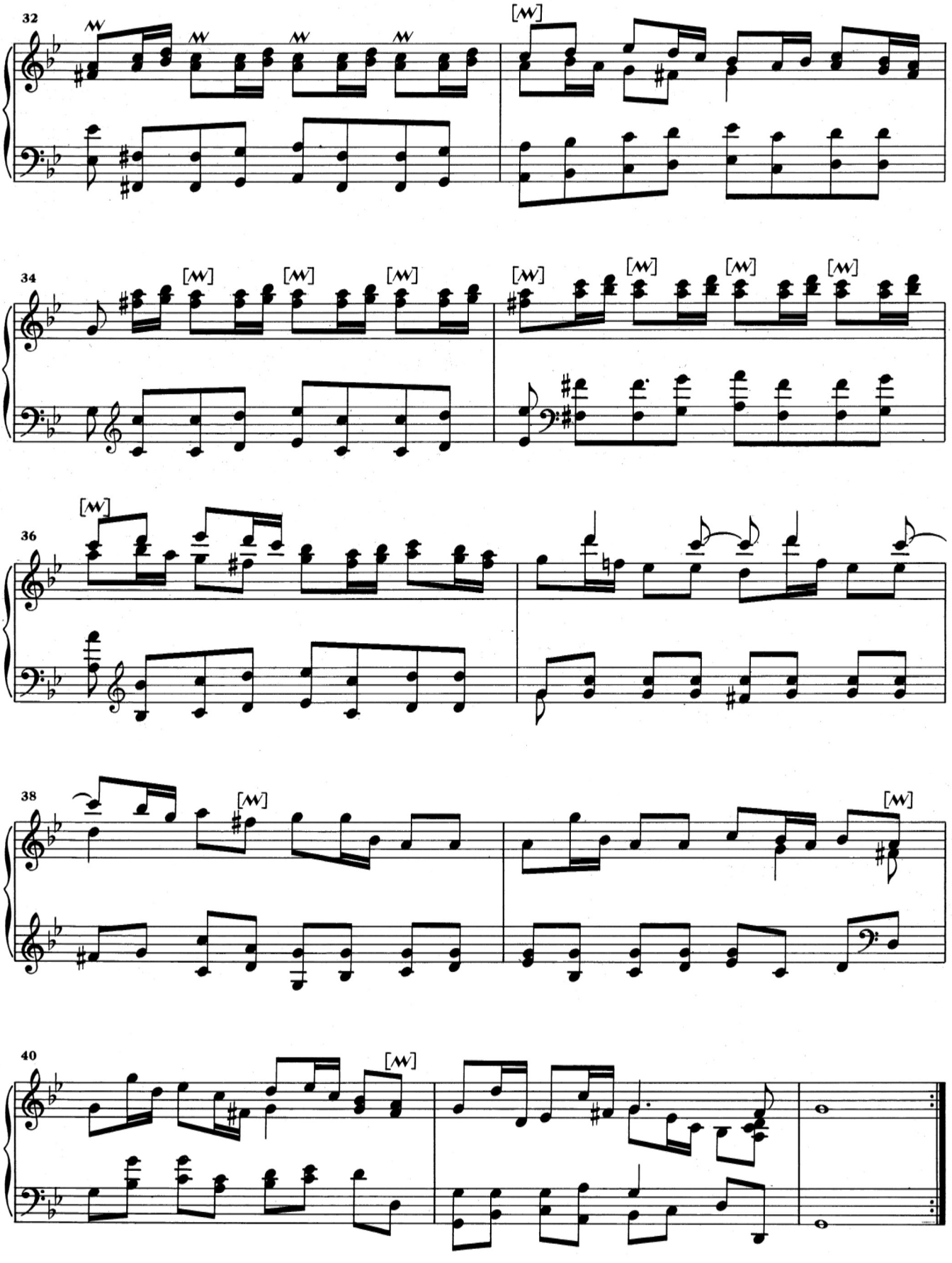
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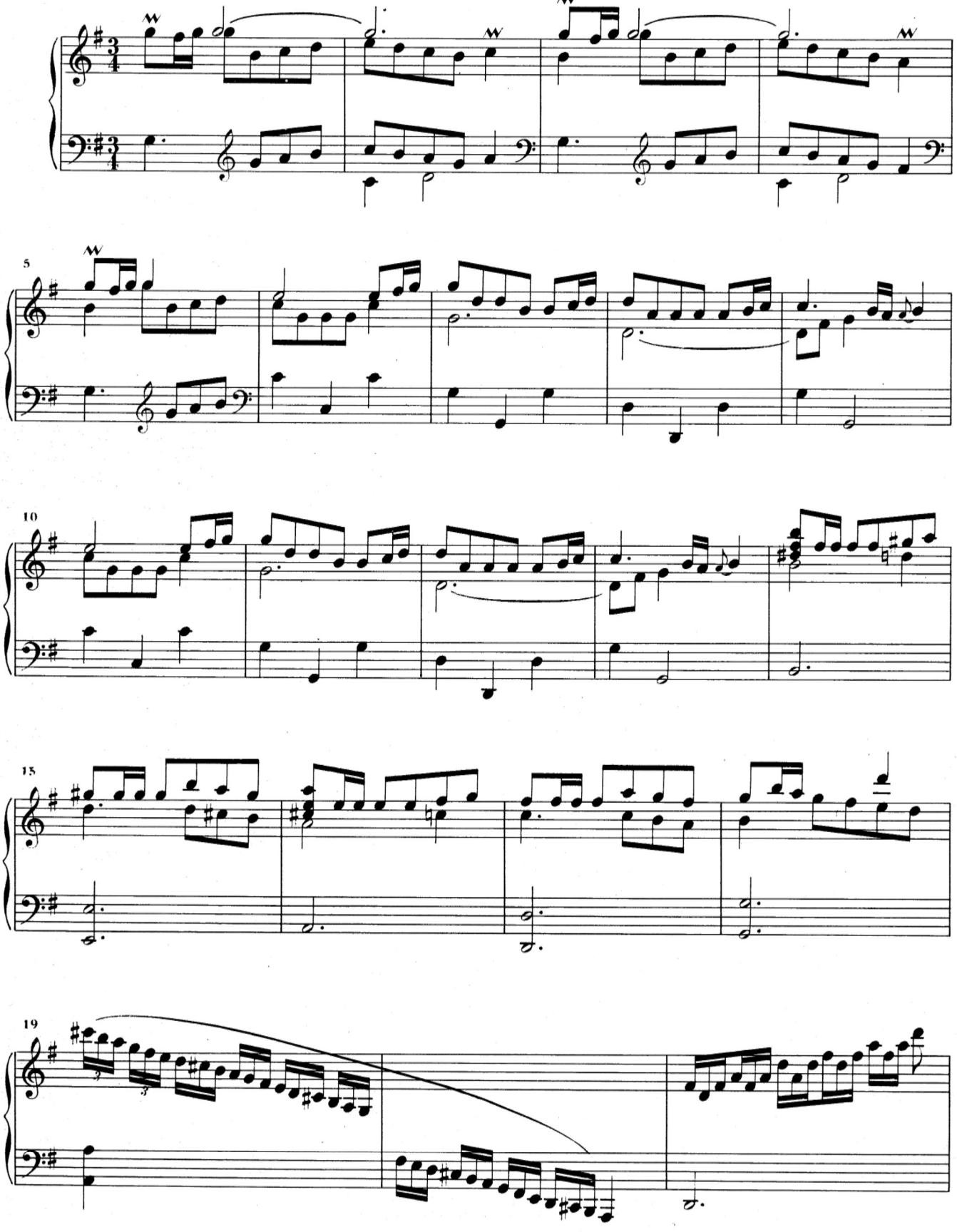
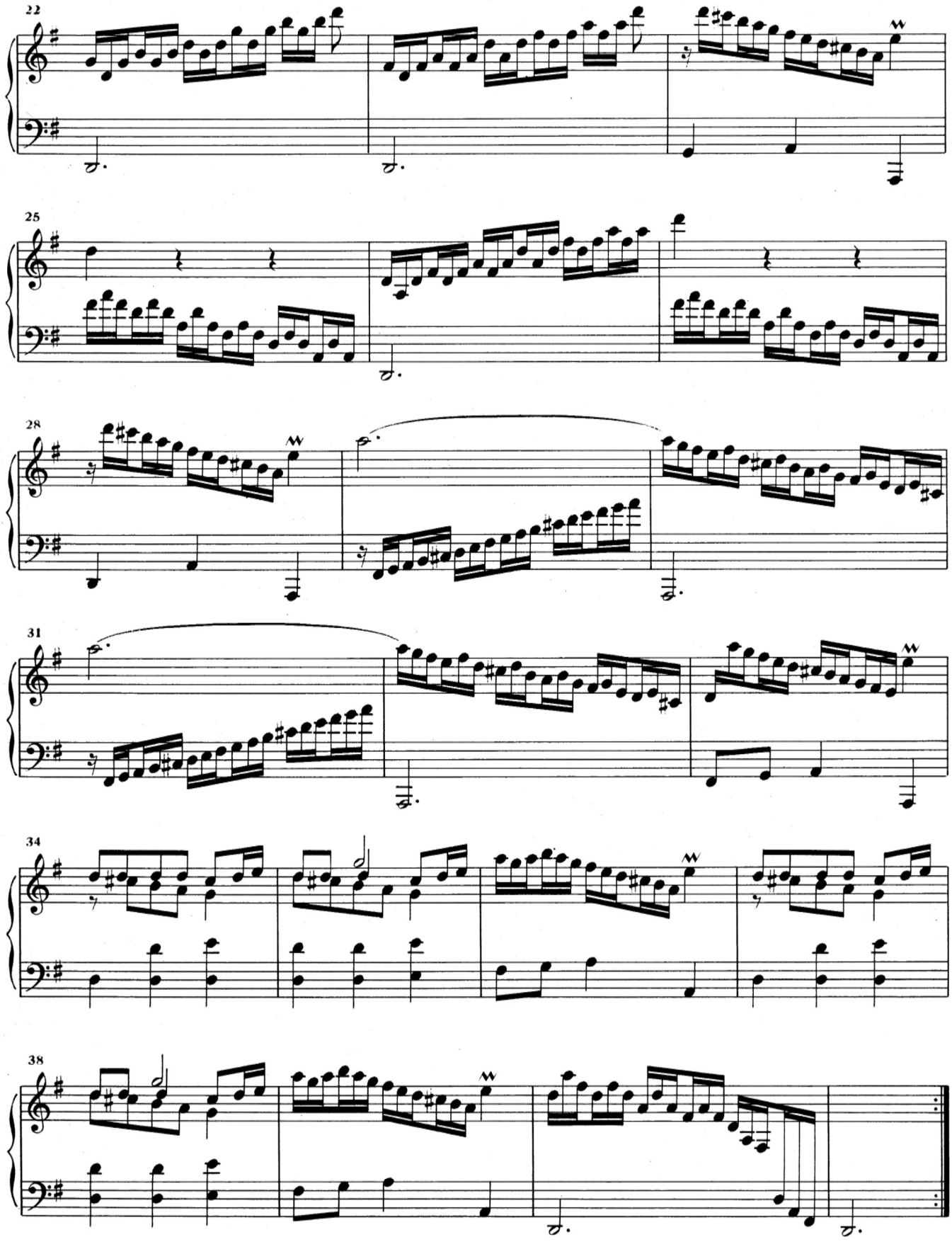
# K. 454

Andante spiritoso

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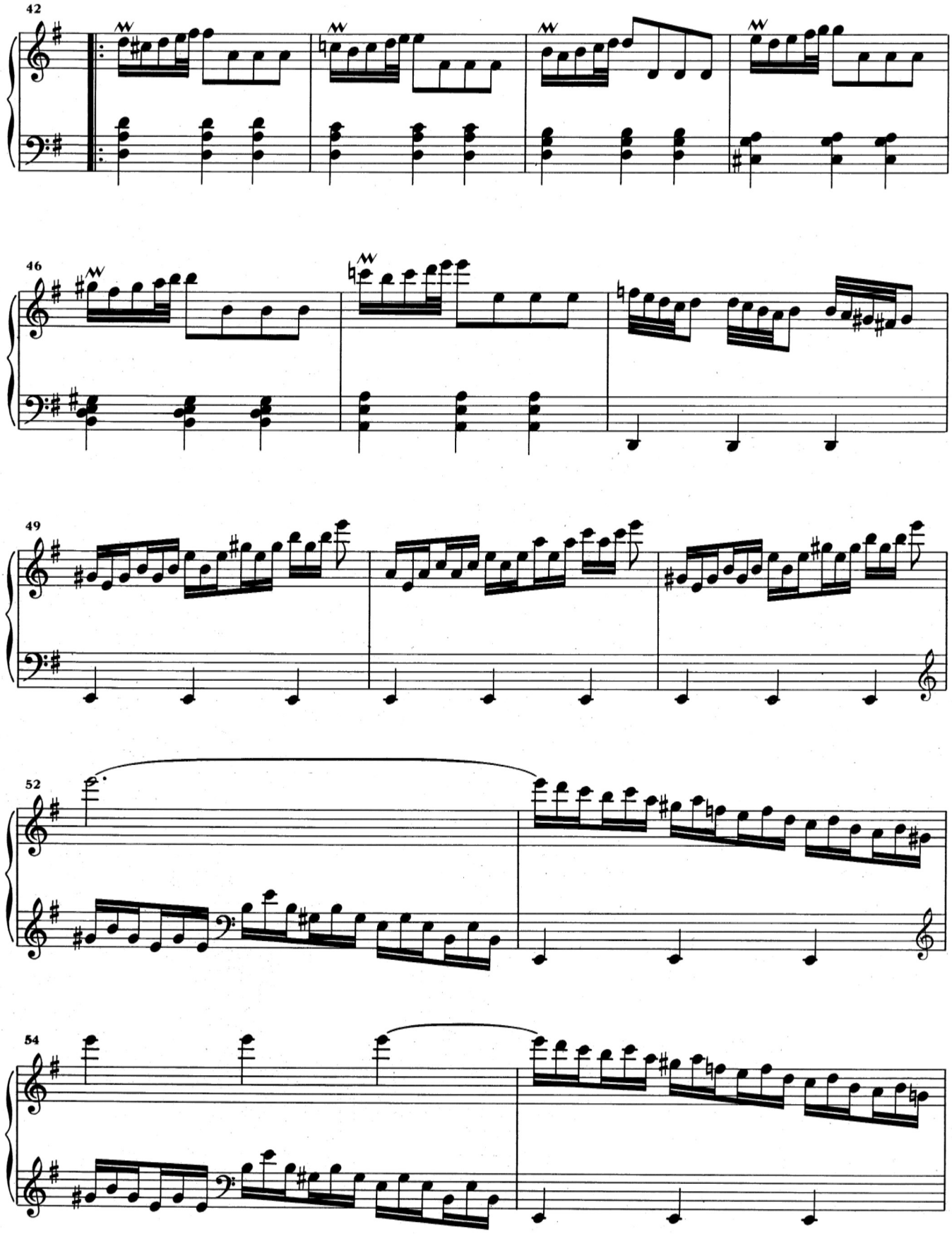
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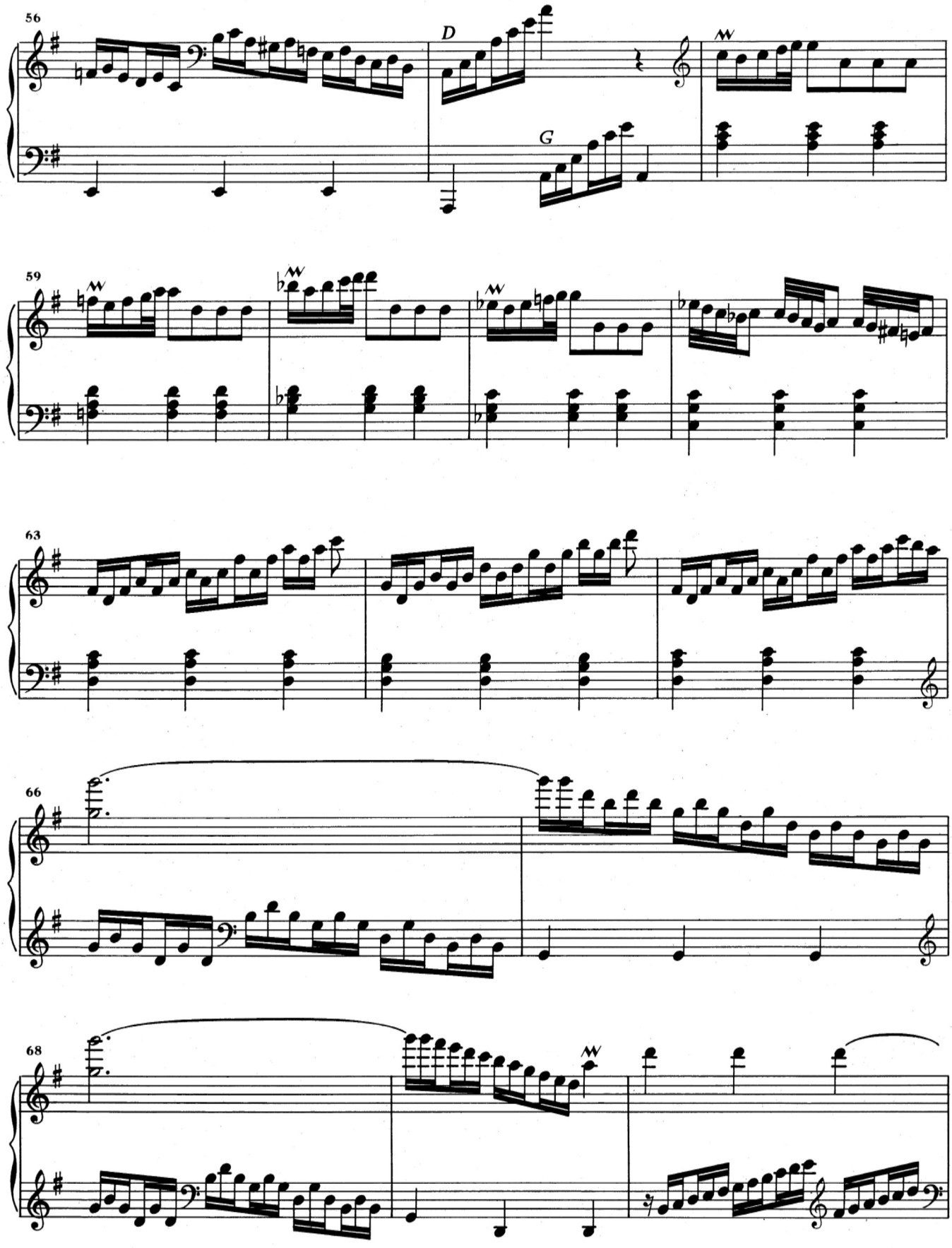
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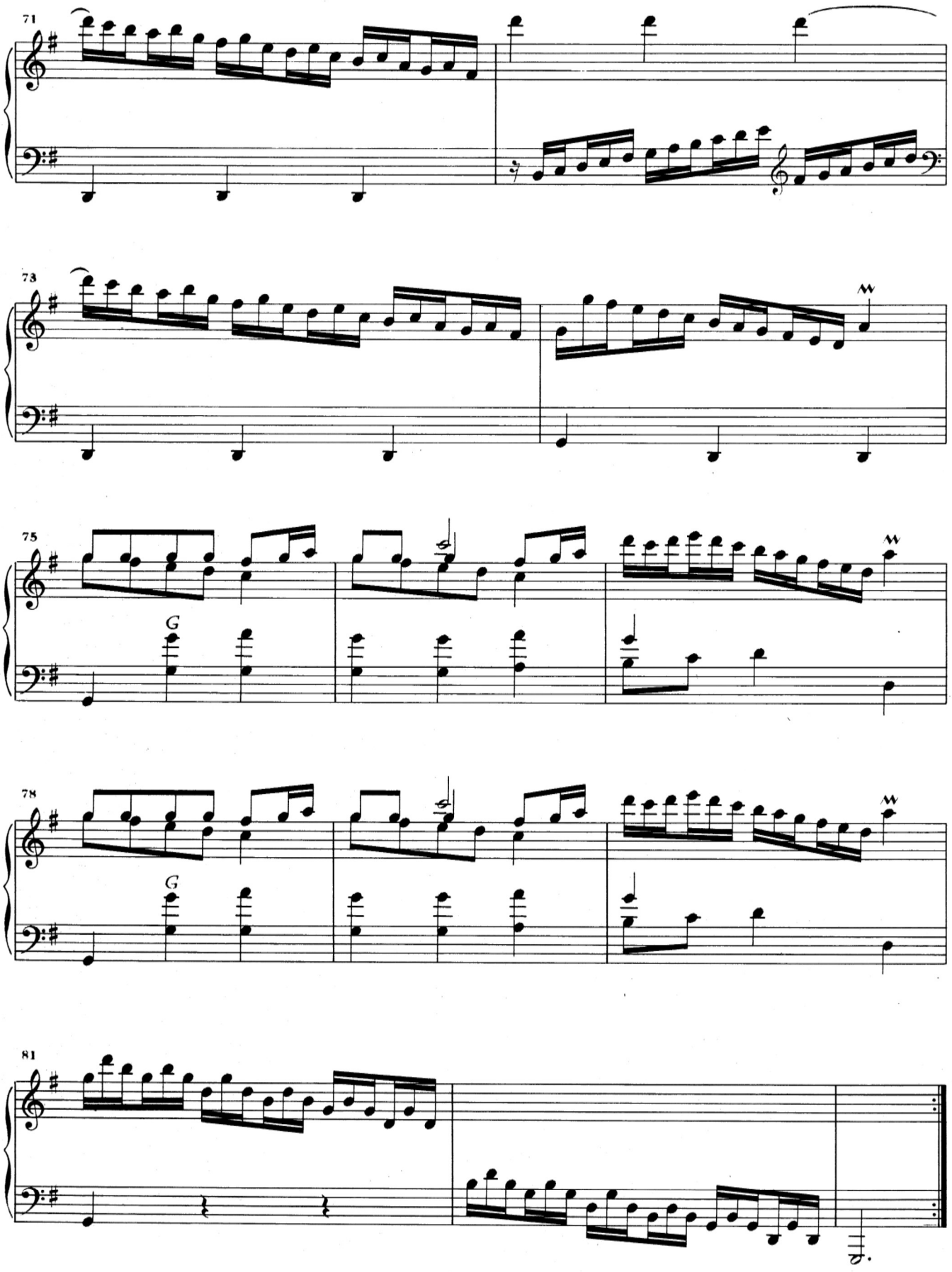
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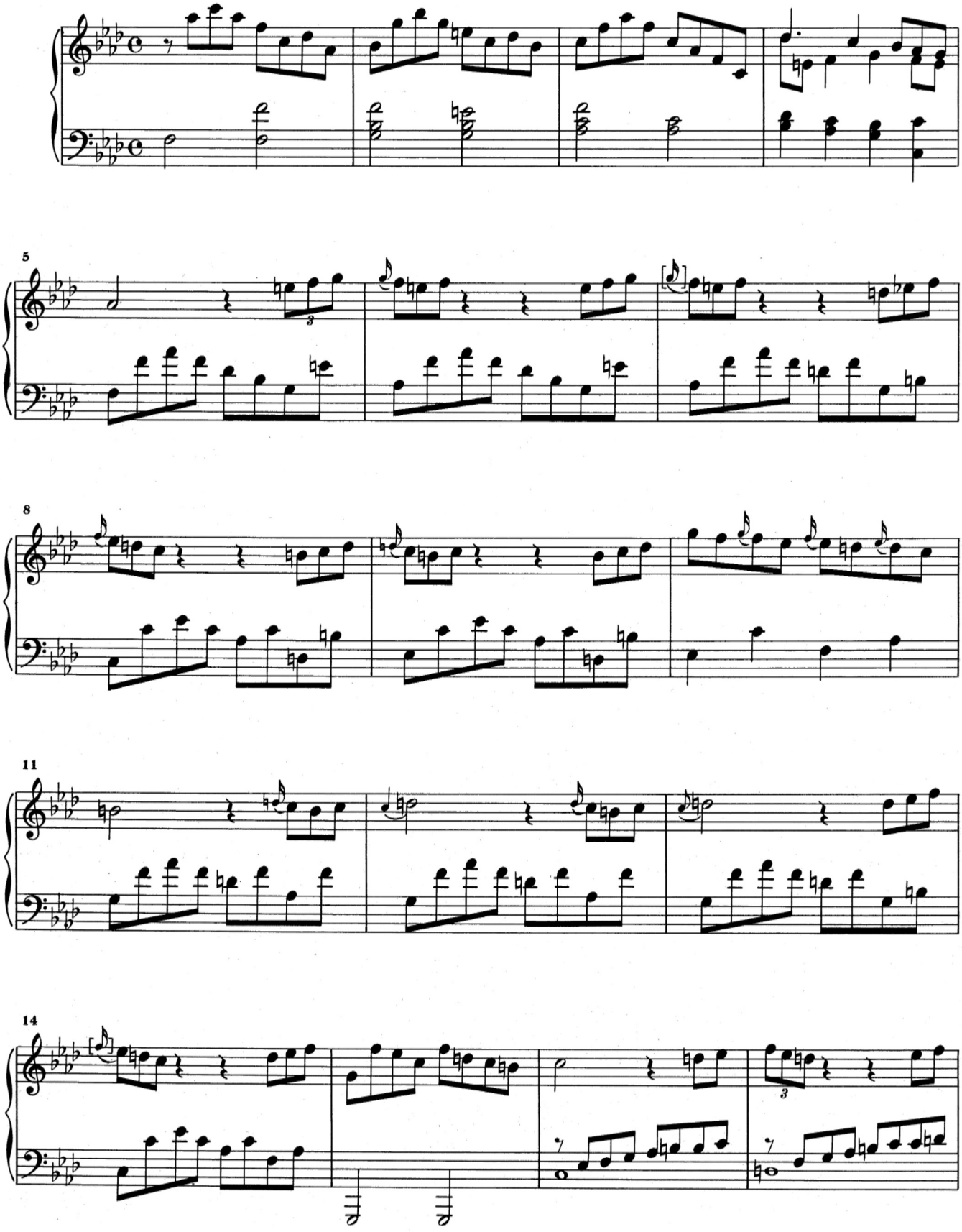
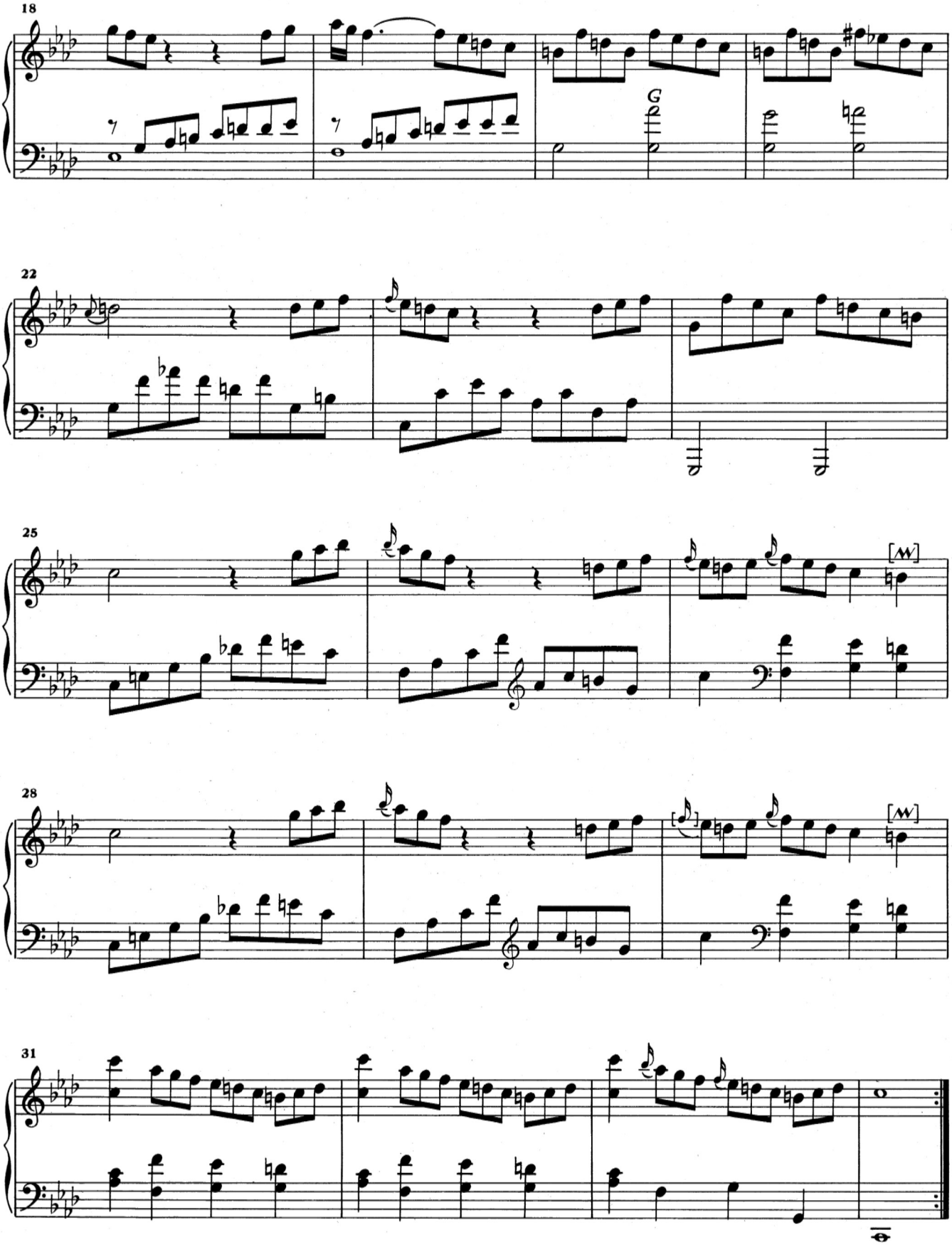
# K. 466

Andante moderato

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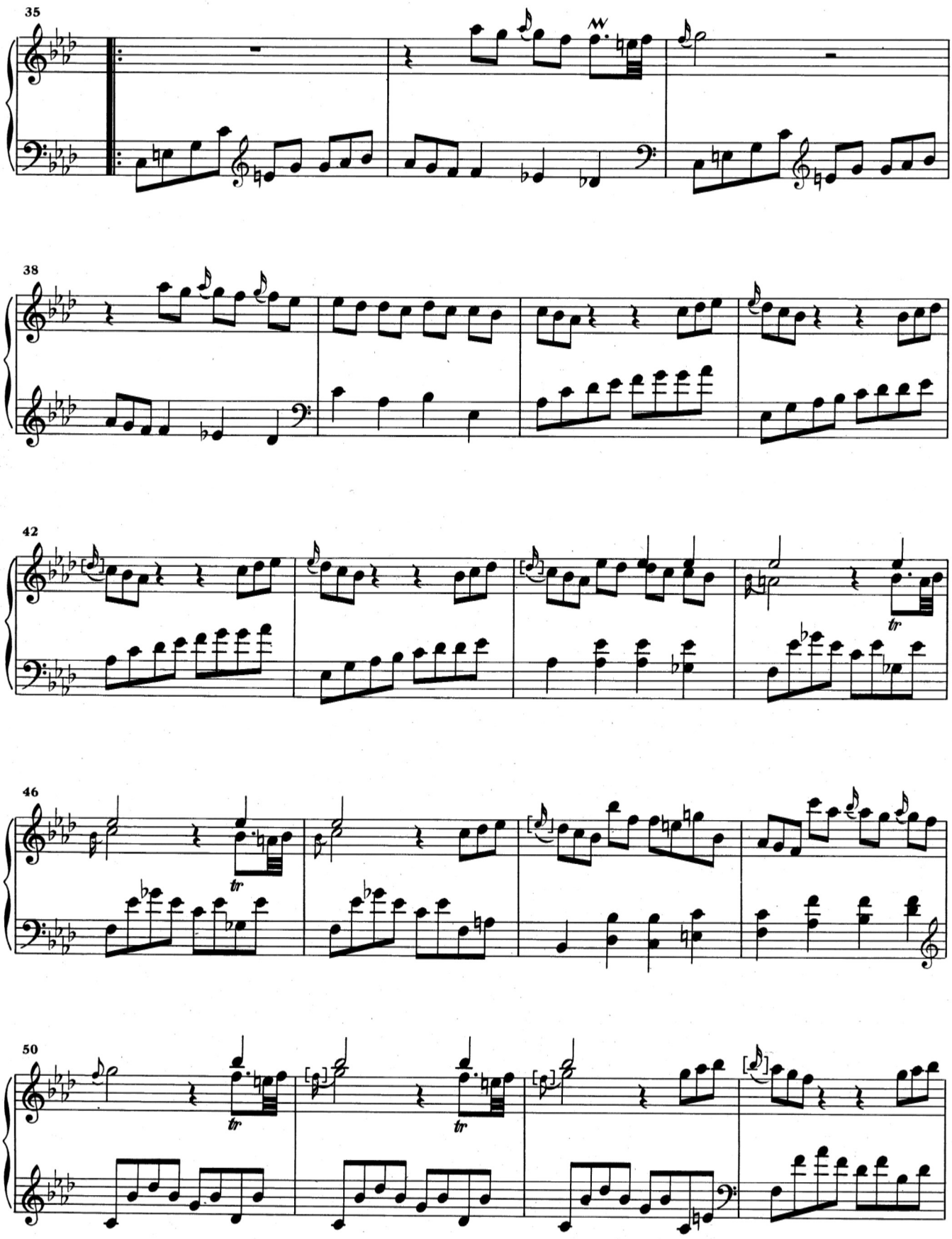
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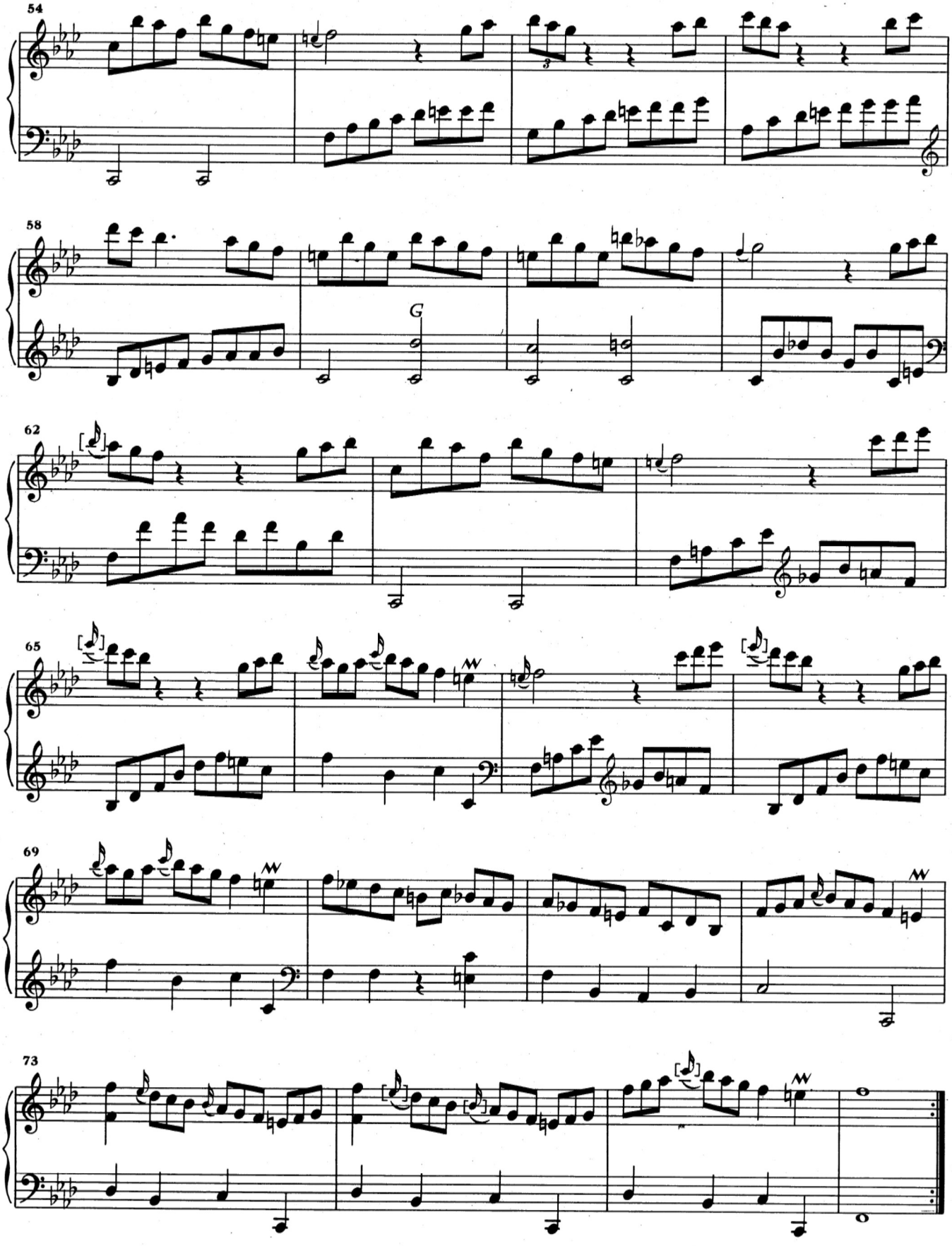
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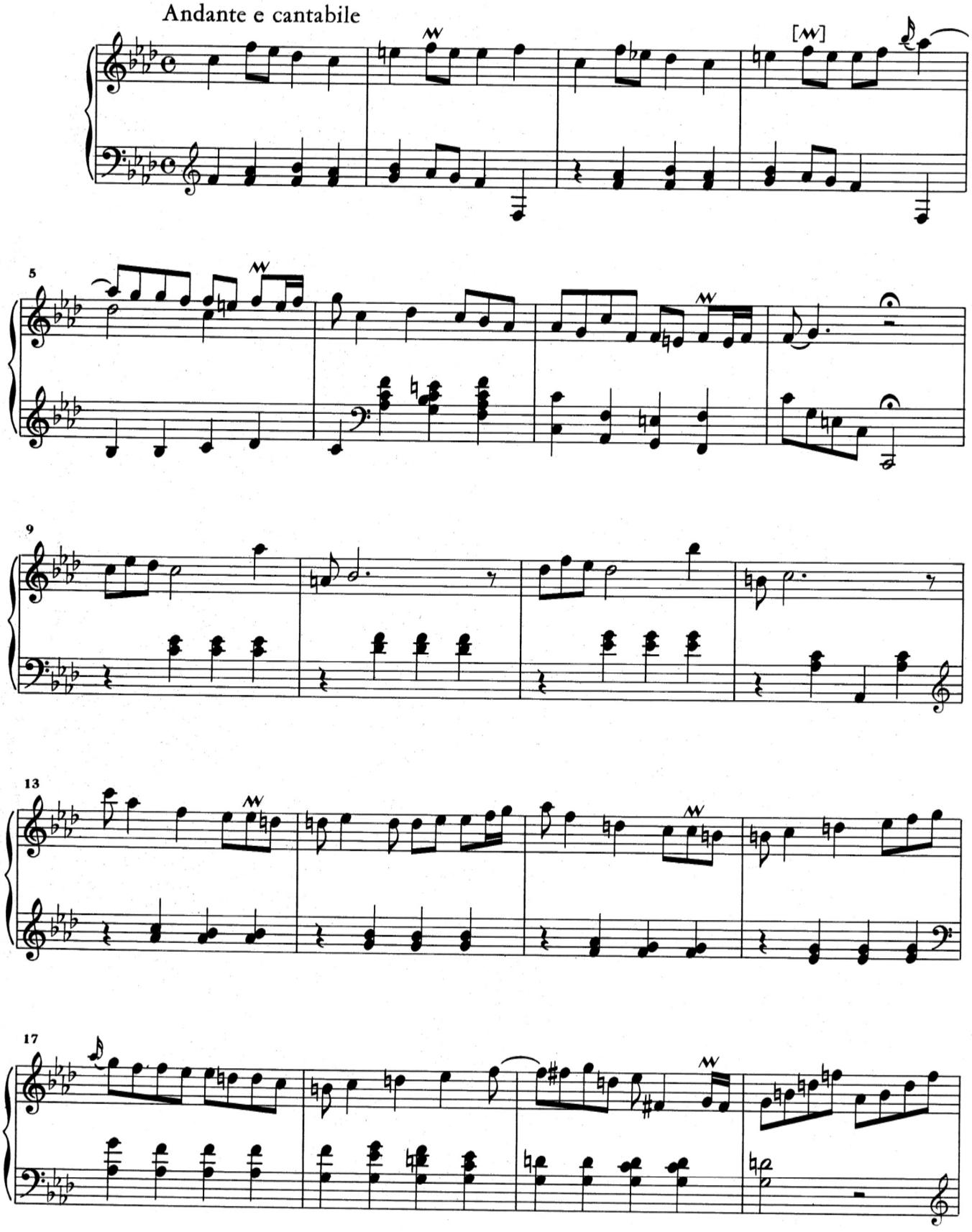
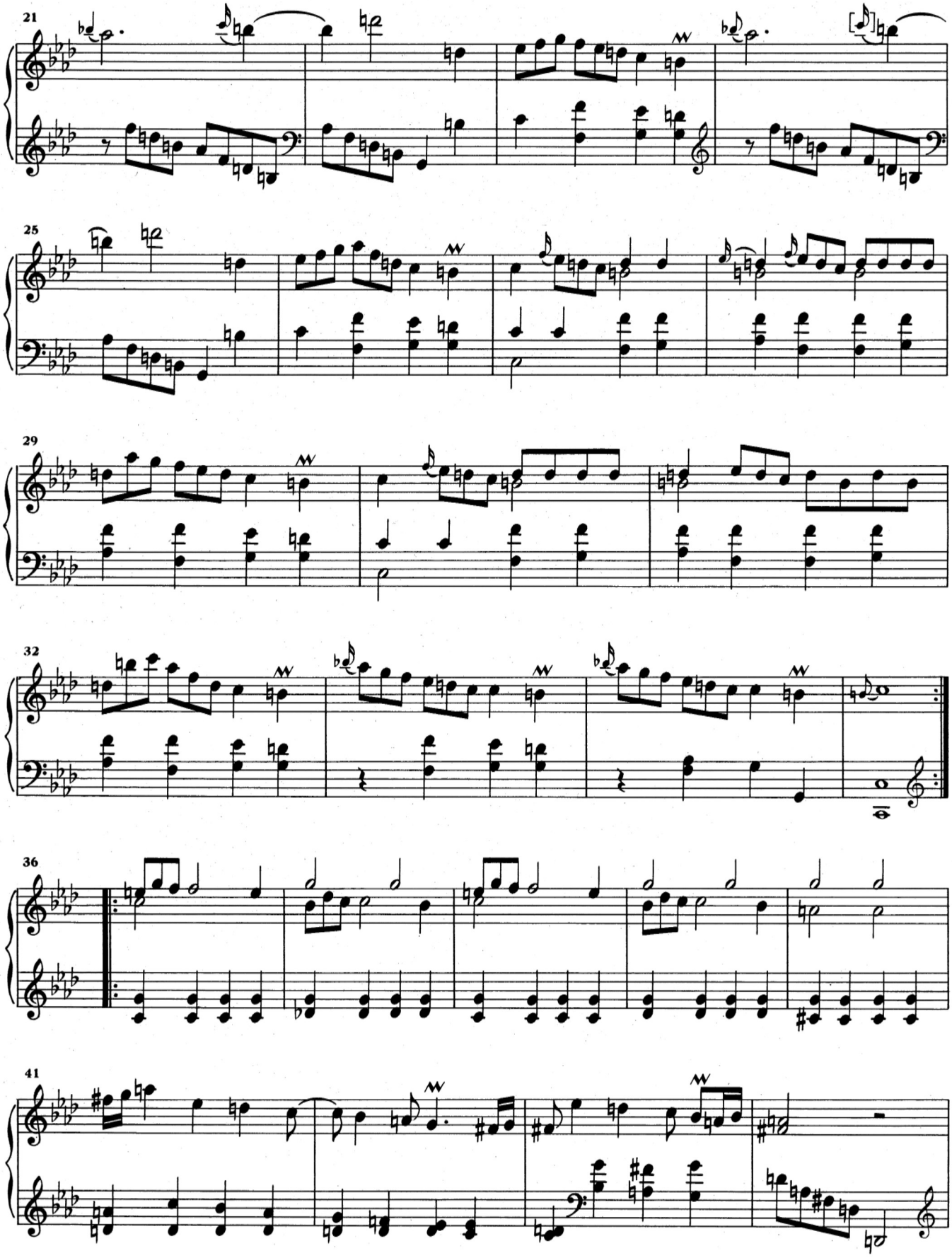
# K. 481

Andante e cantabile

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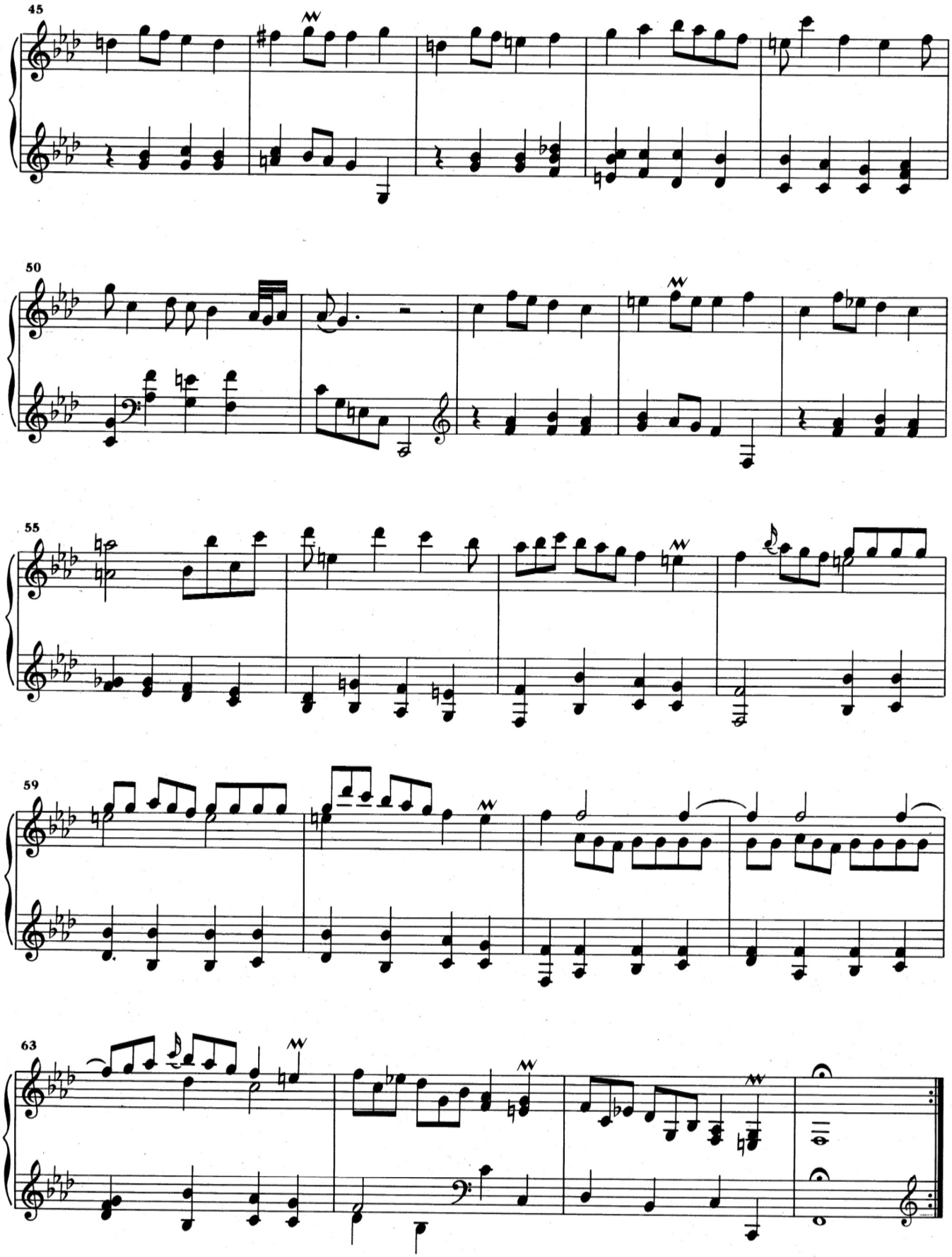
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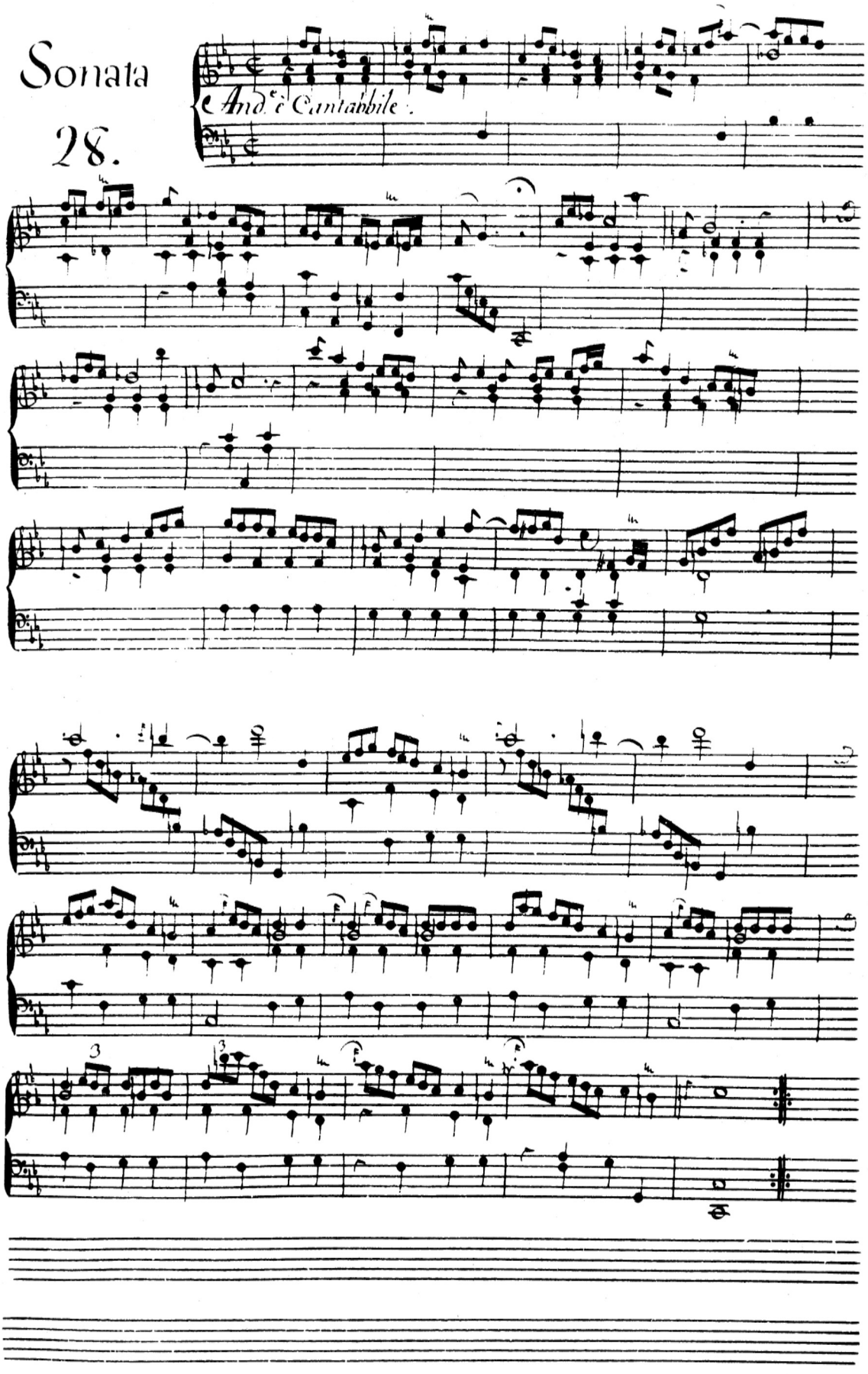
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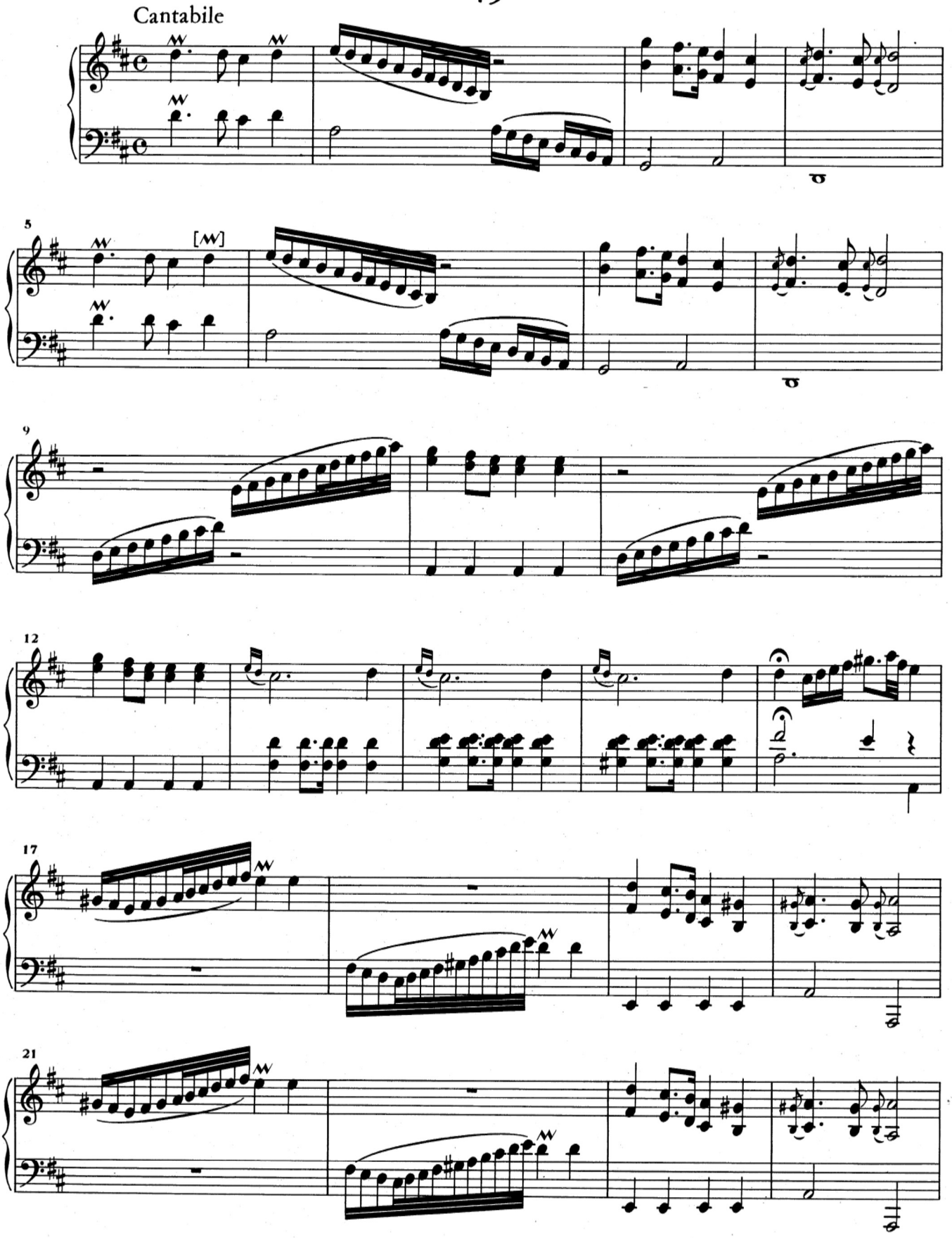
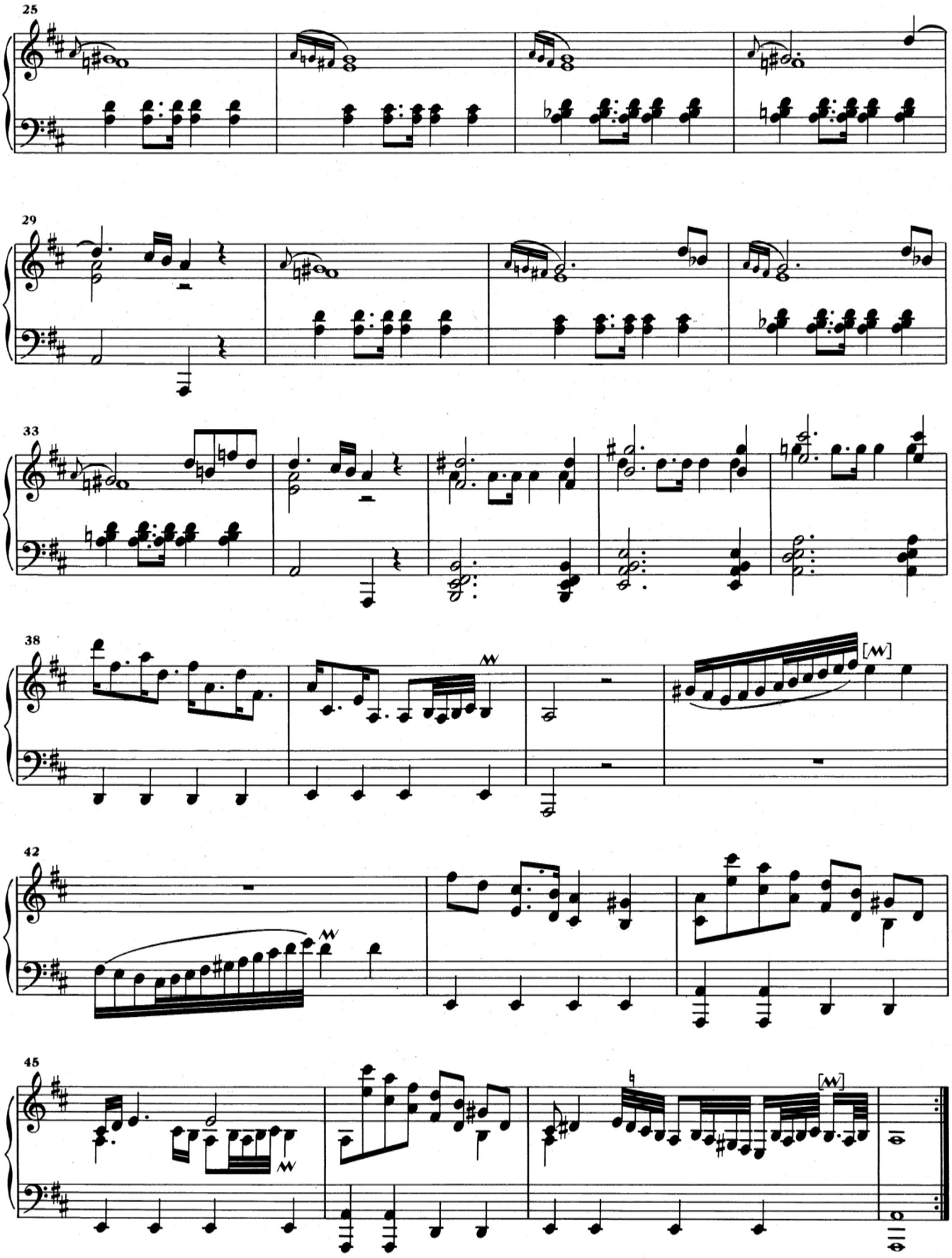
And.e Cantabile.

# K. 490

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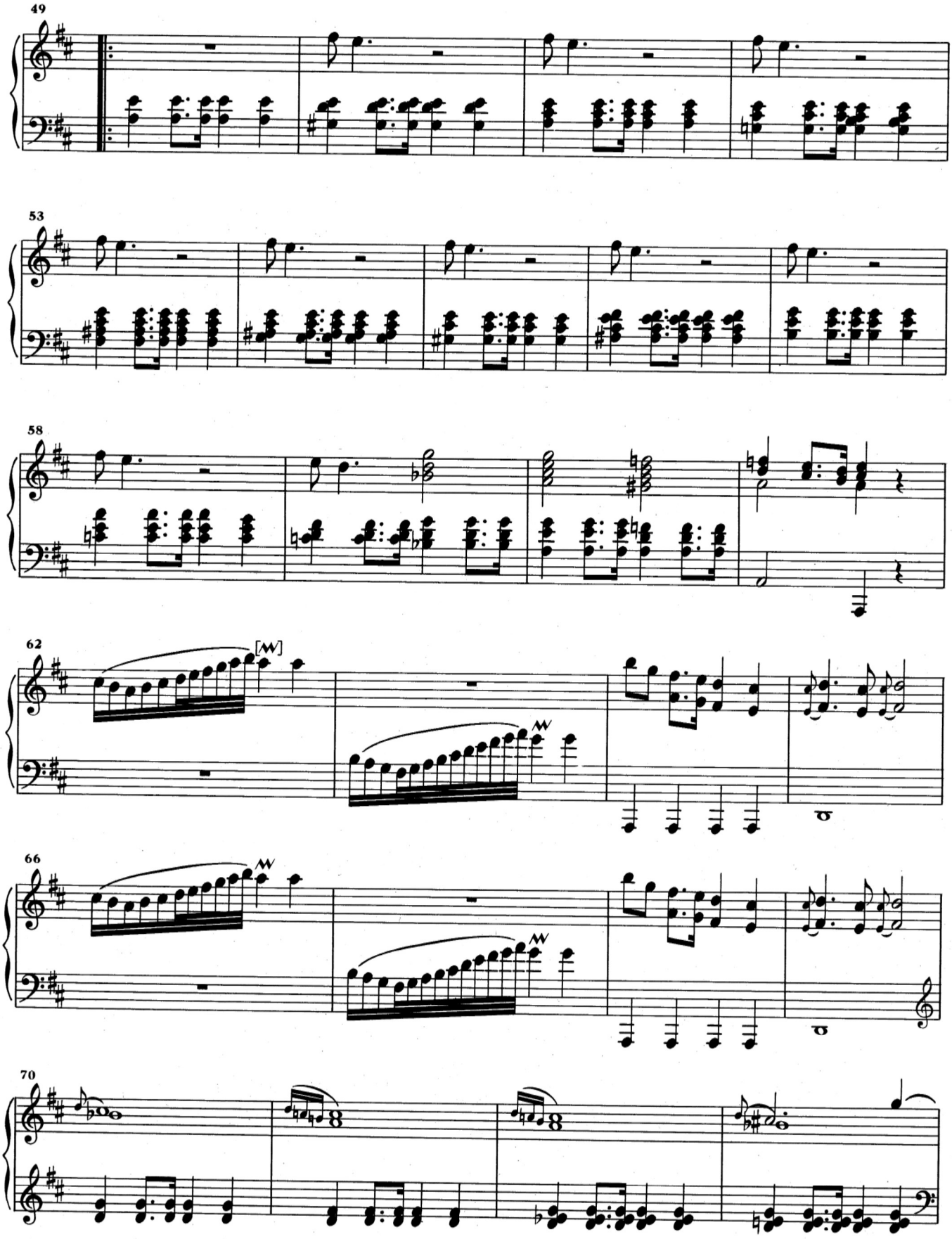
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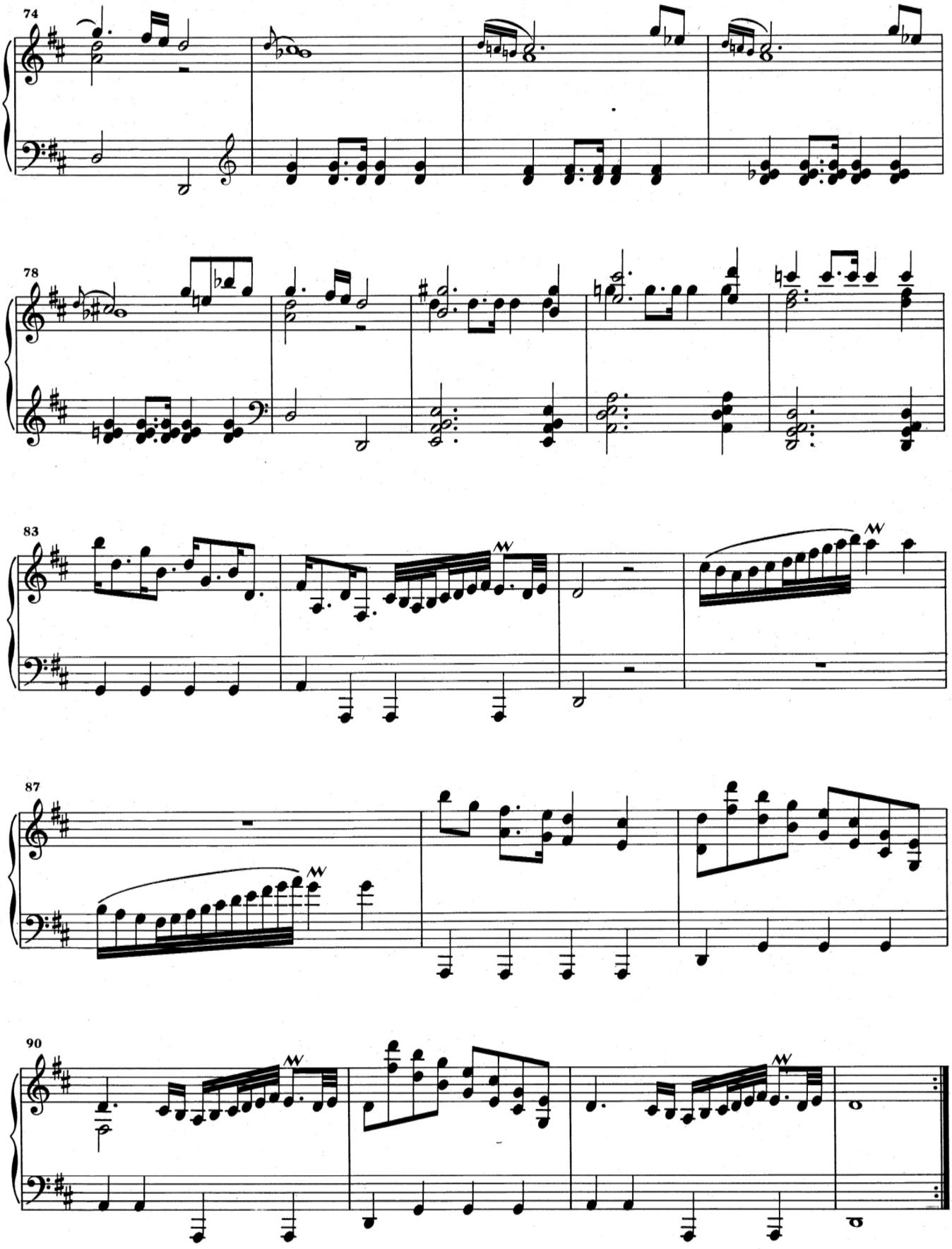
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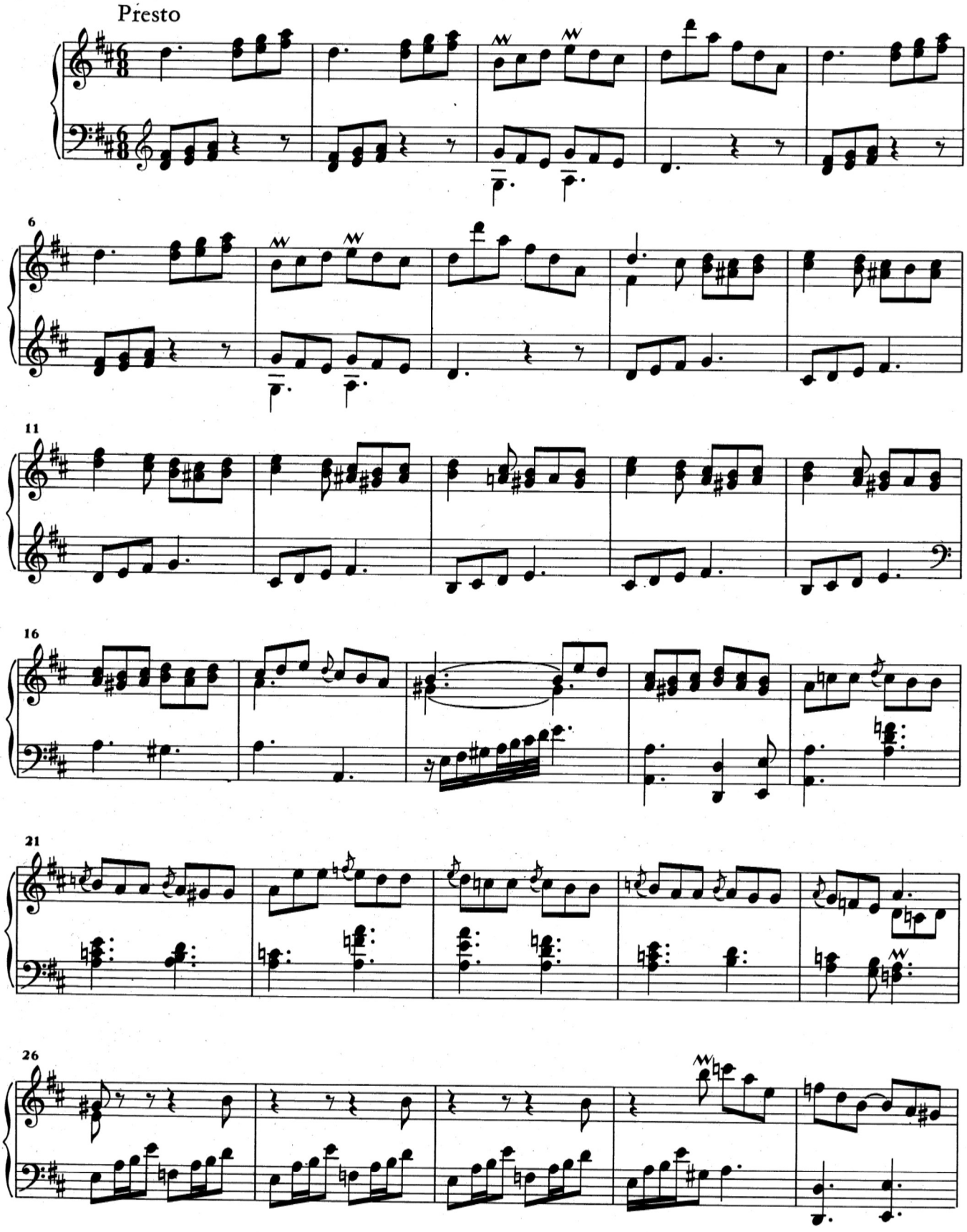
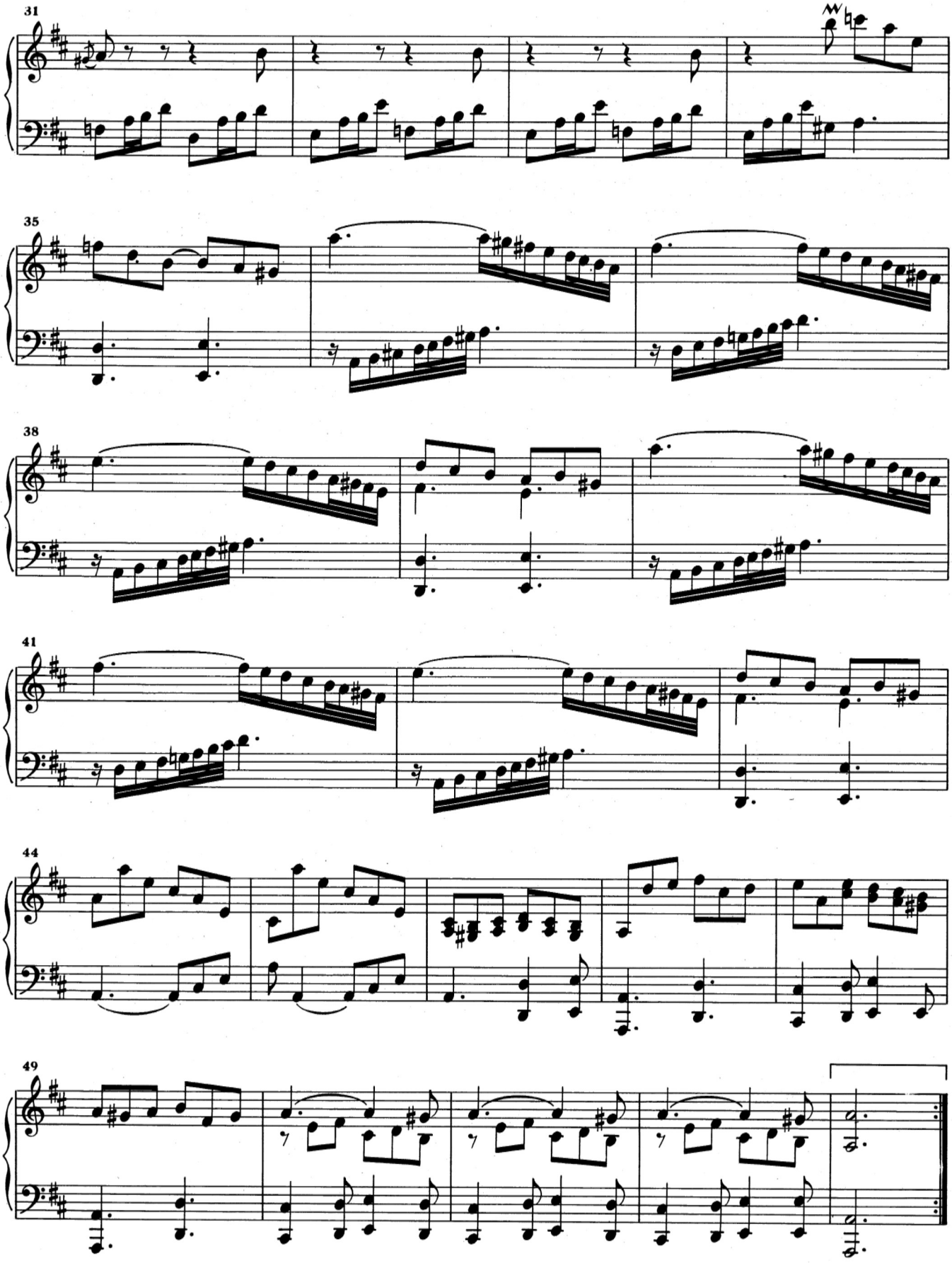
# K. 492

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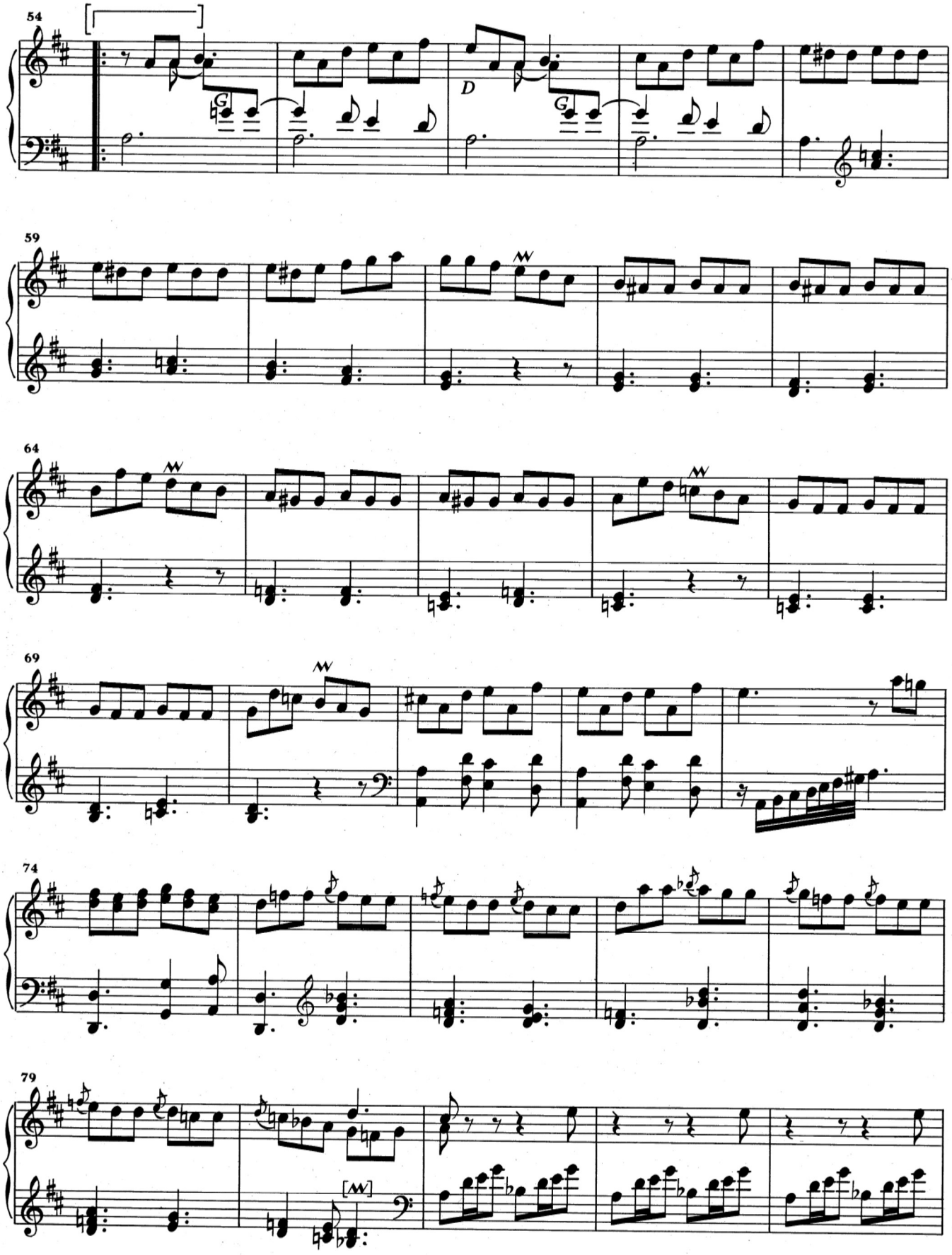
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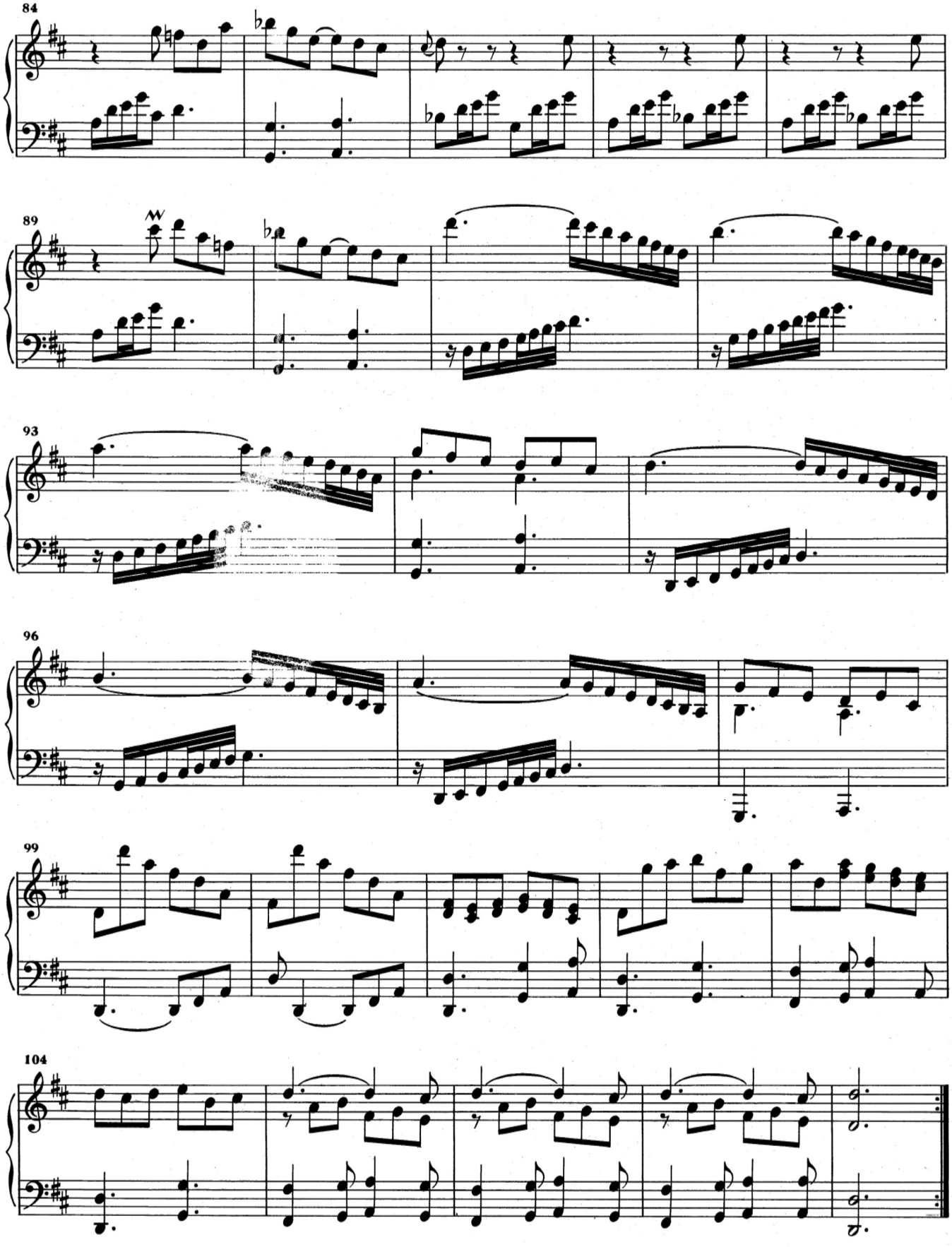
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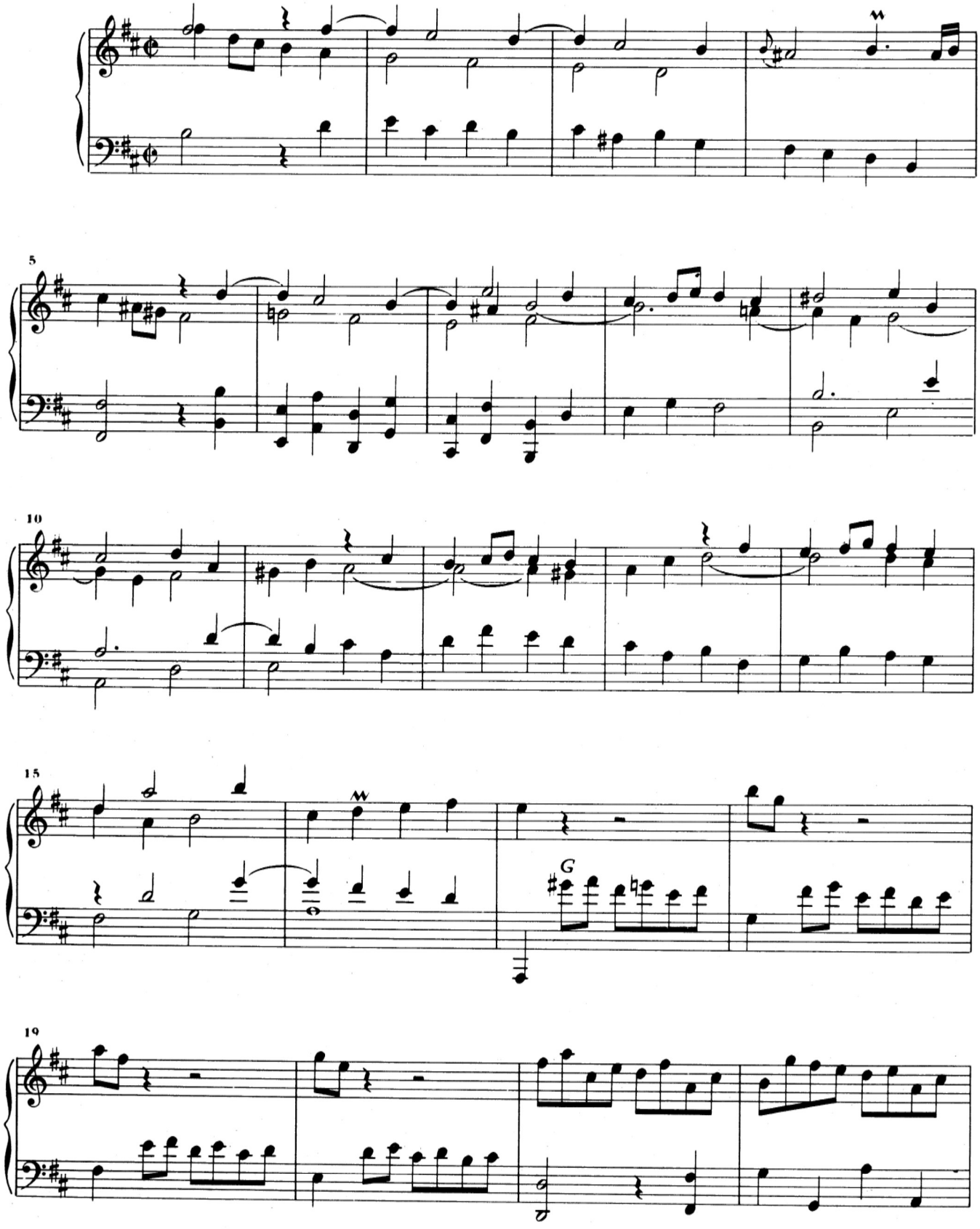
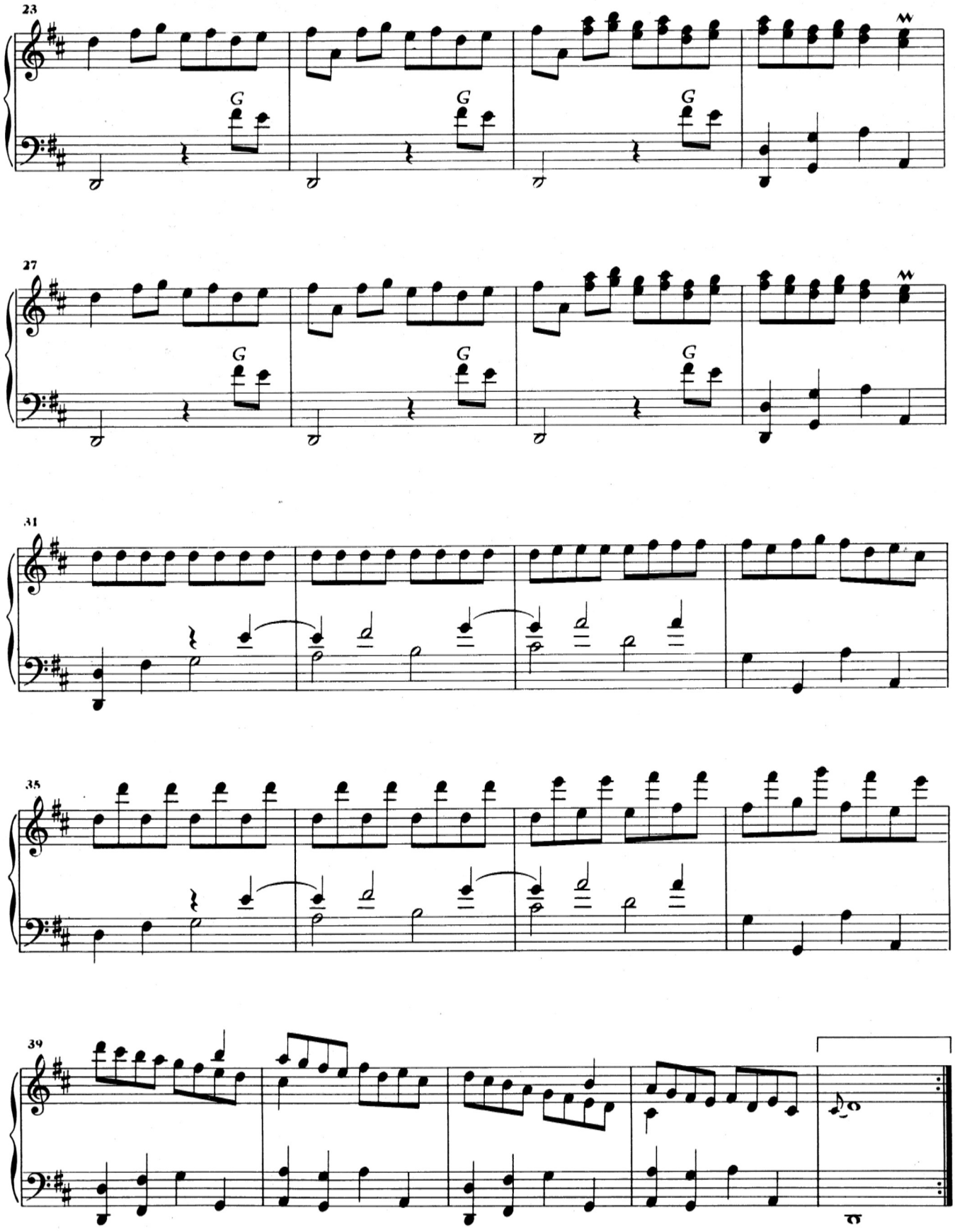
# K. 497

Allegro

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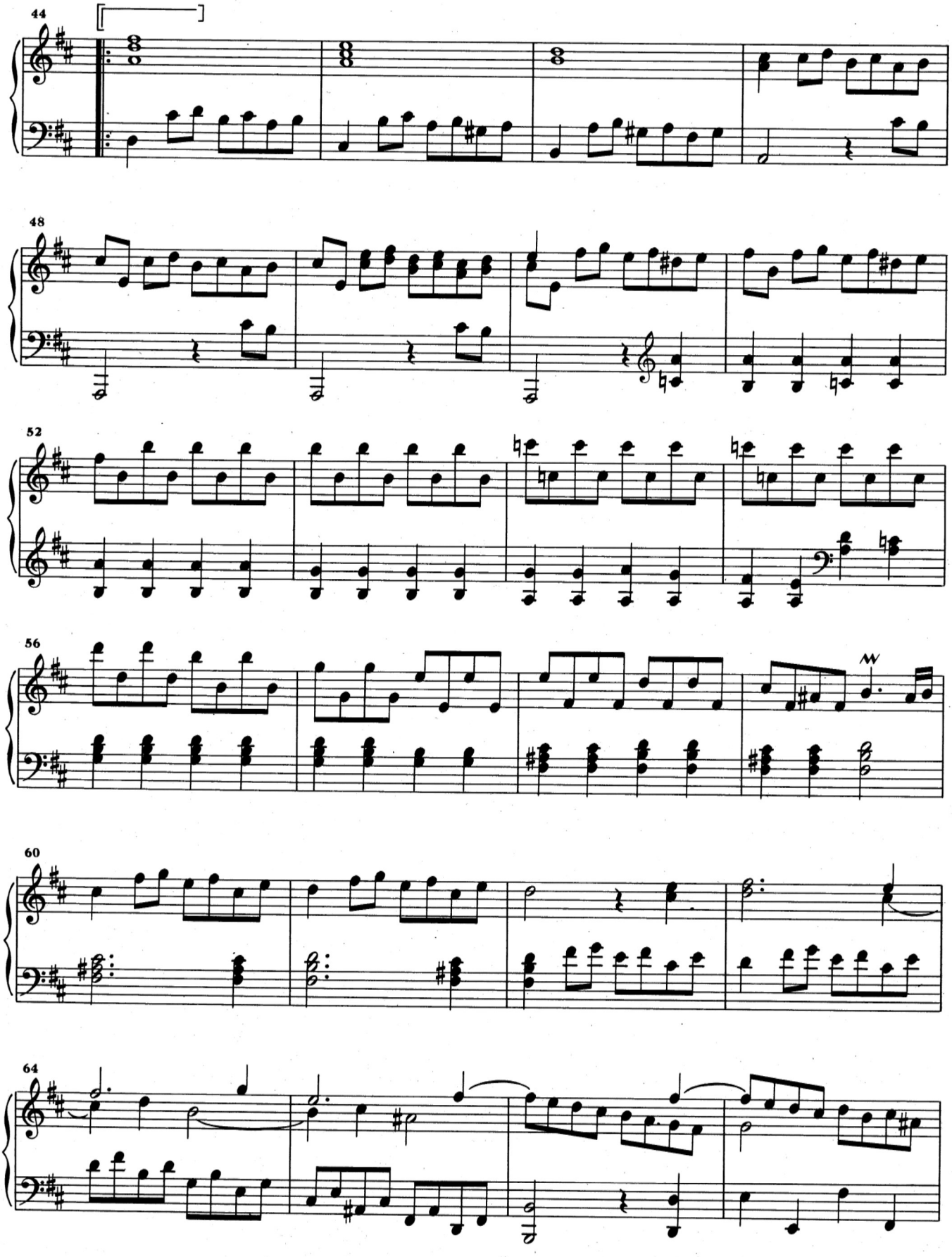
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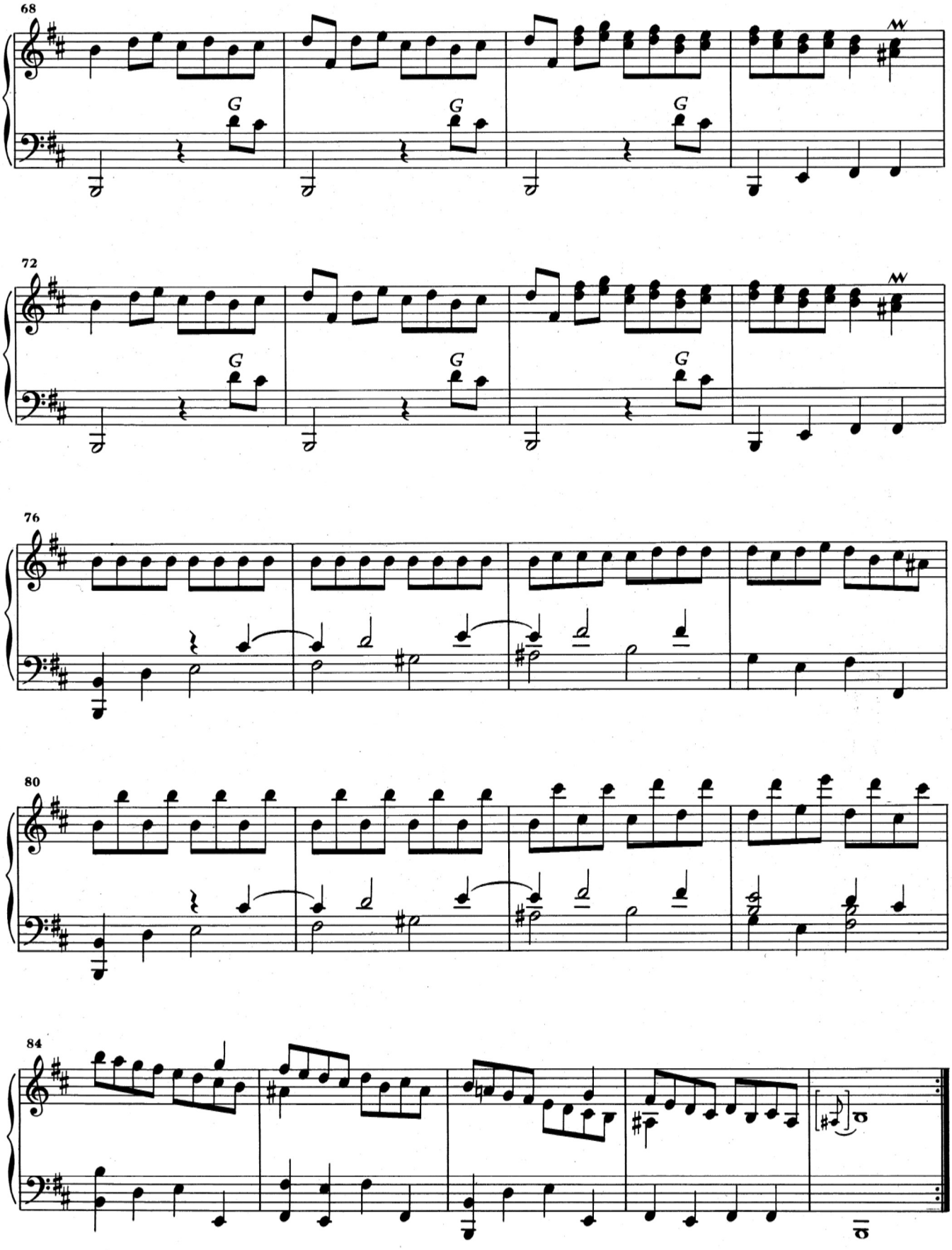
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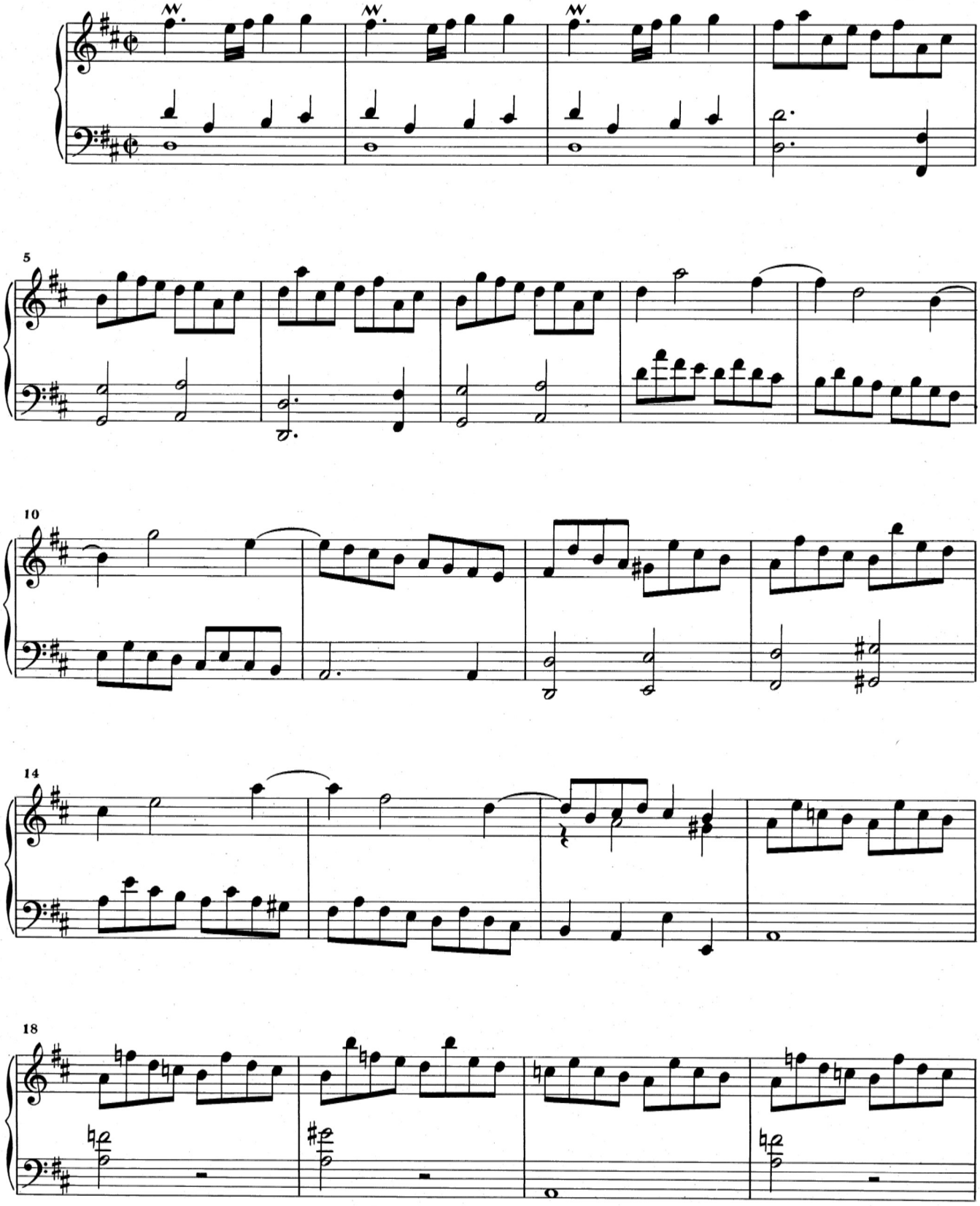
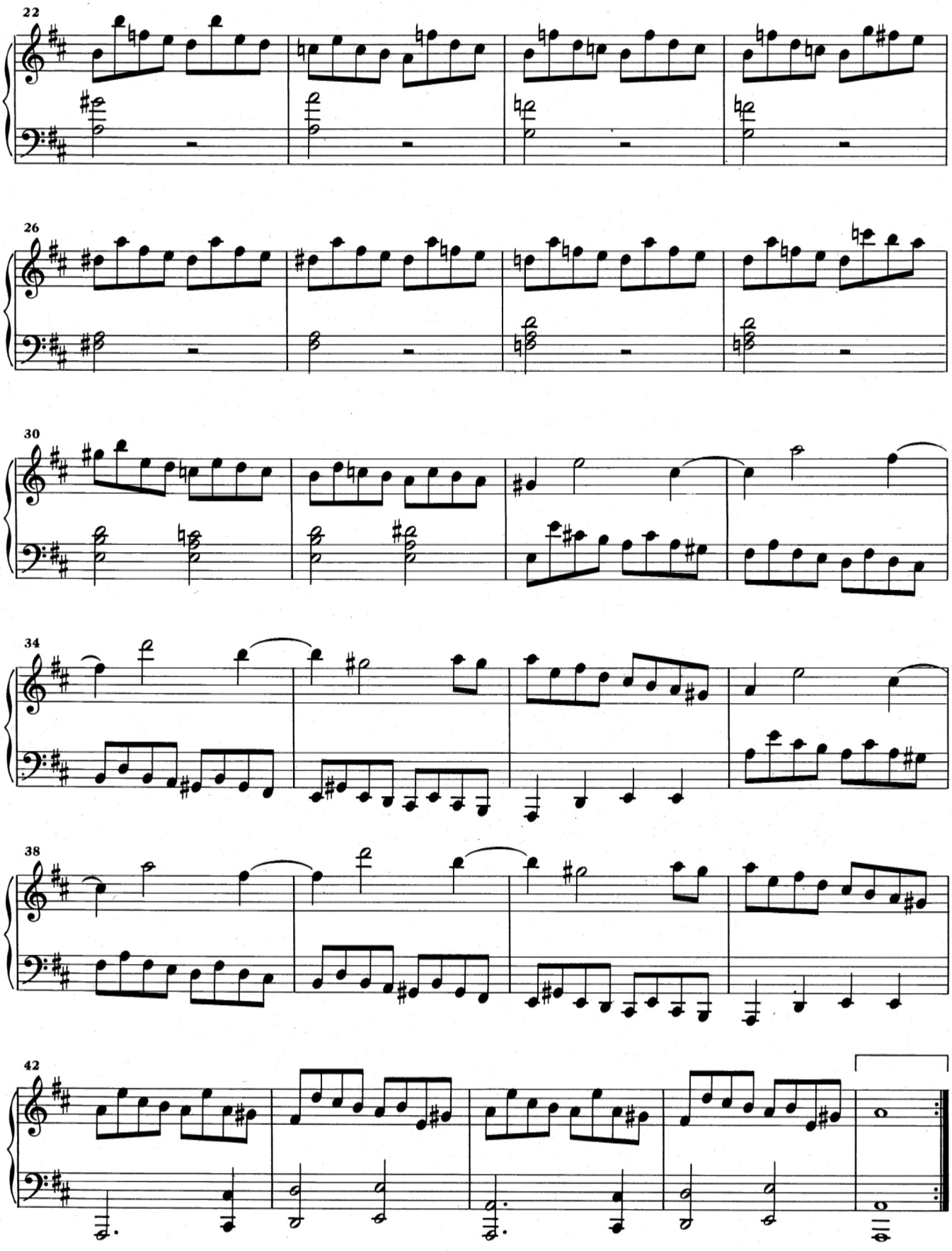
# K. 511

Allegro

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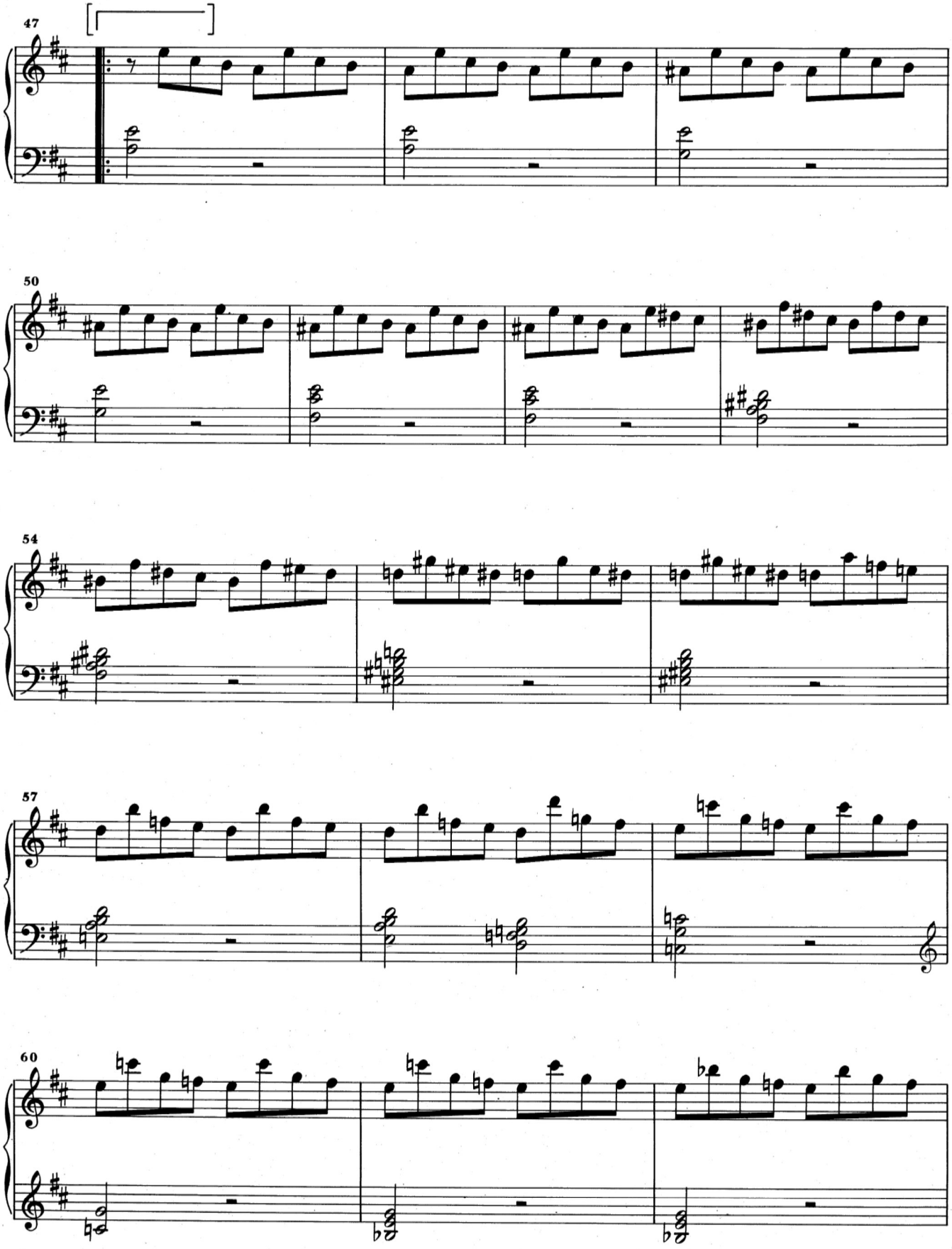
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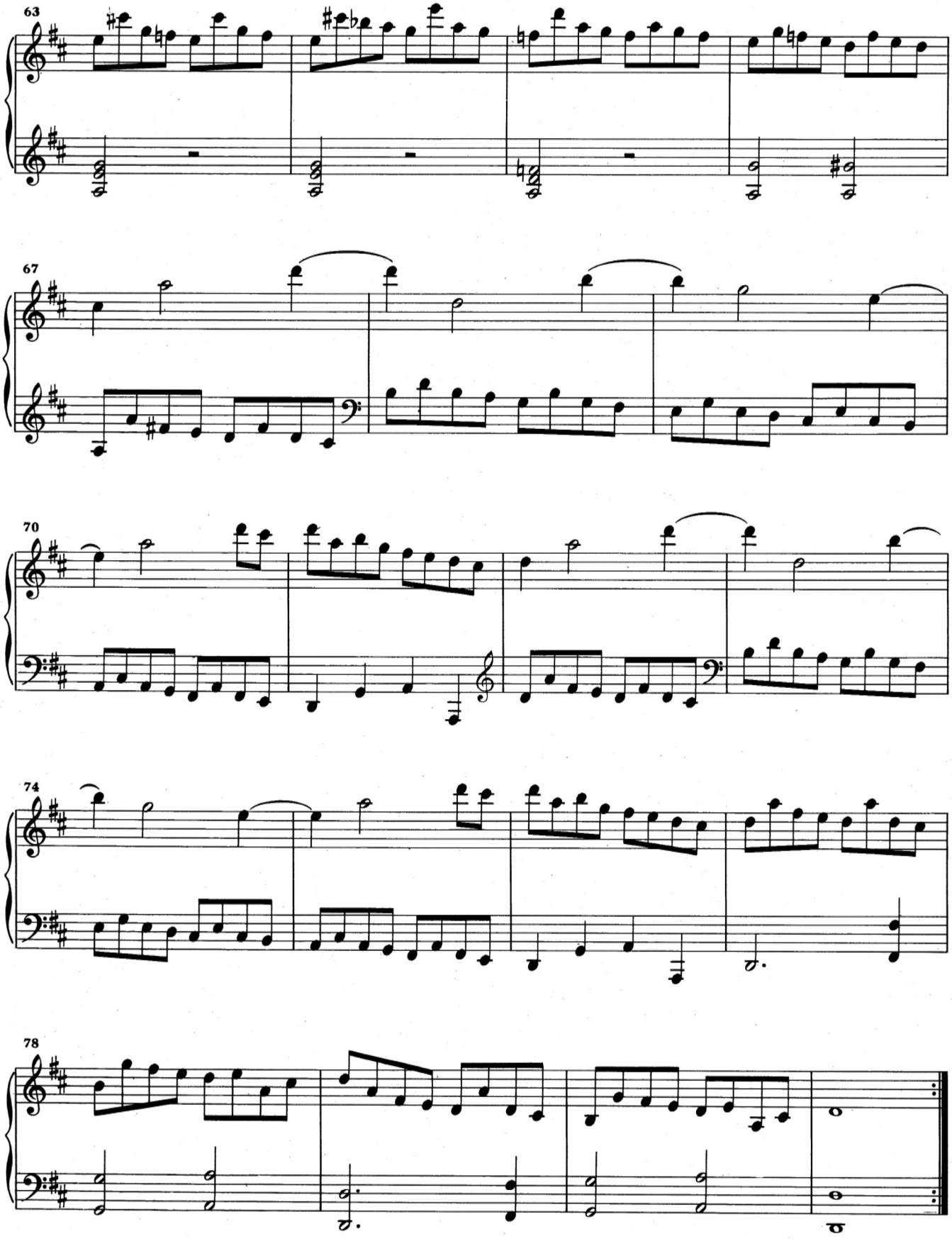
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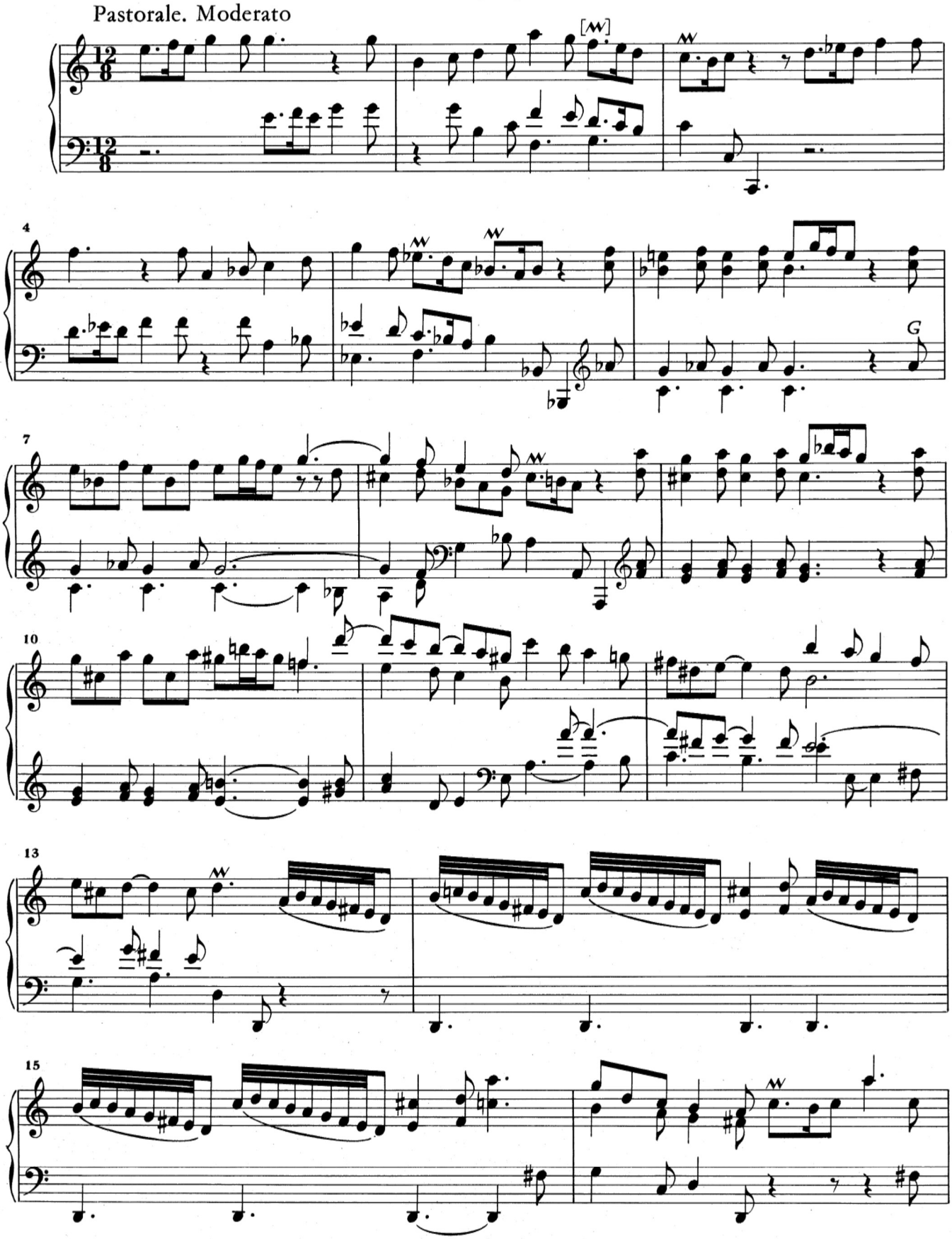
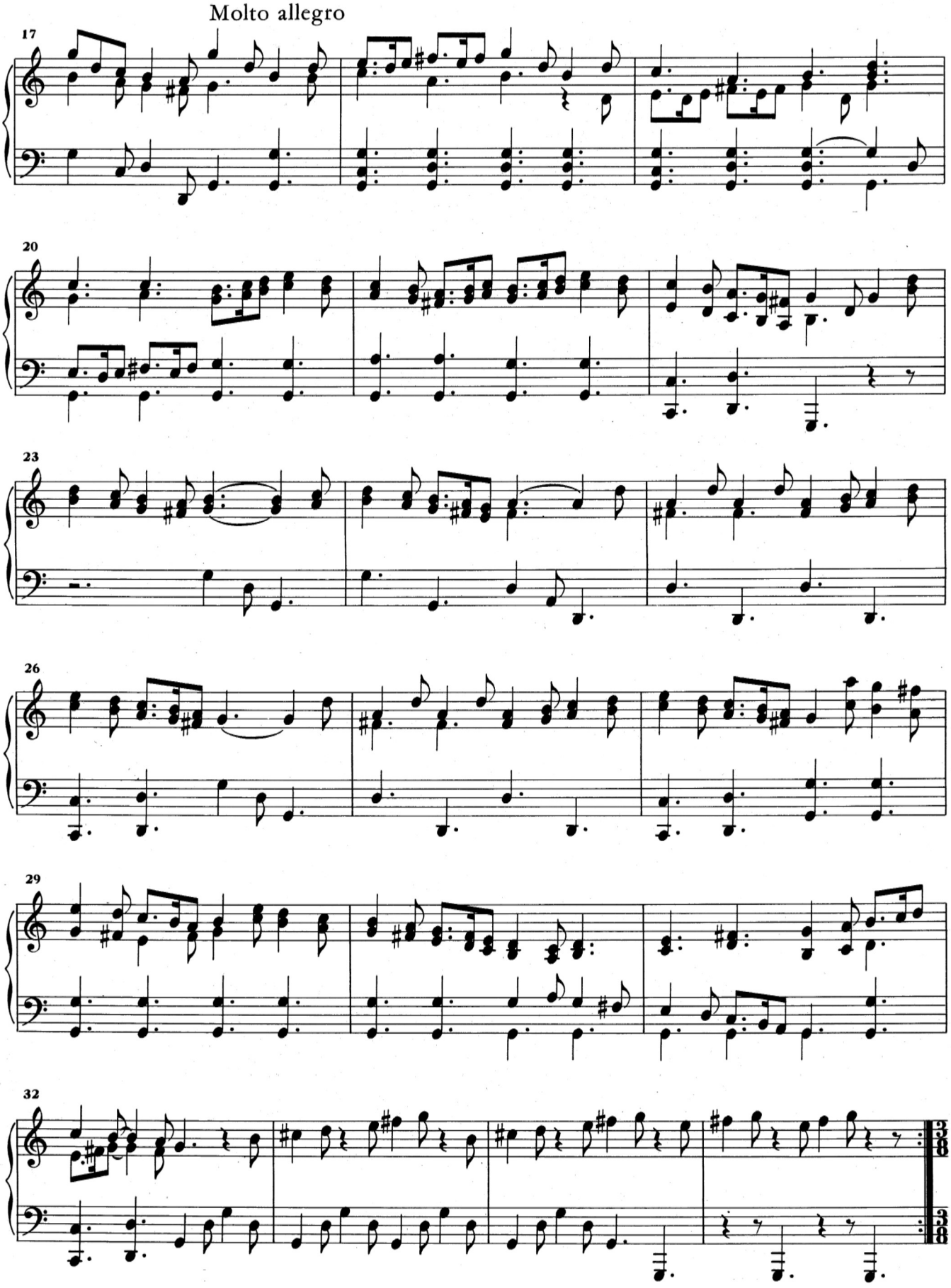
# K. 513

Pastorale. Moderato

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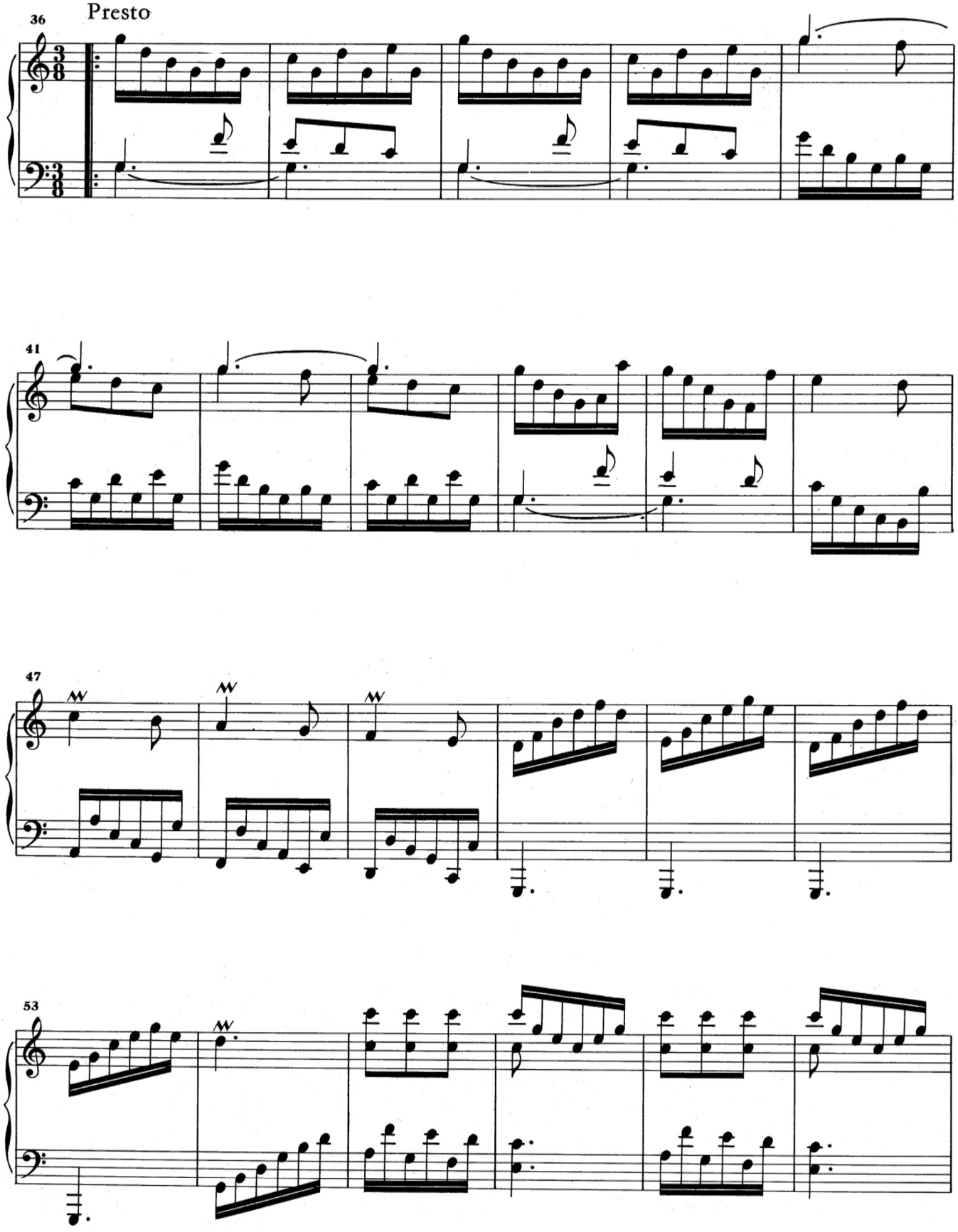
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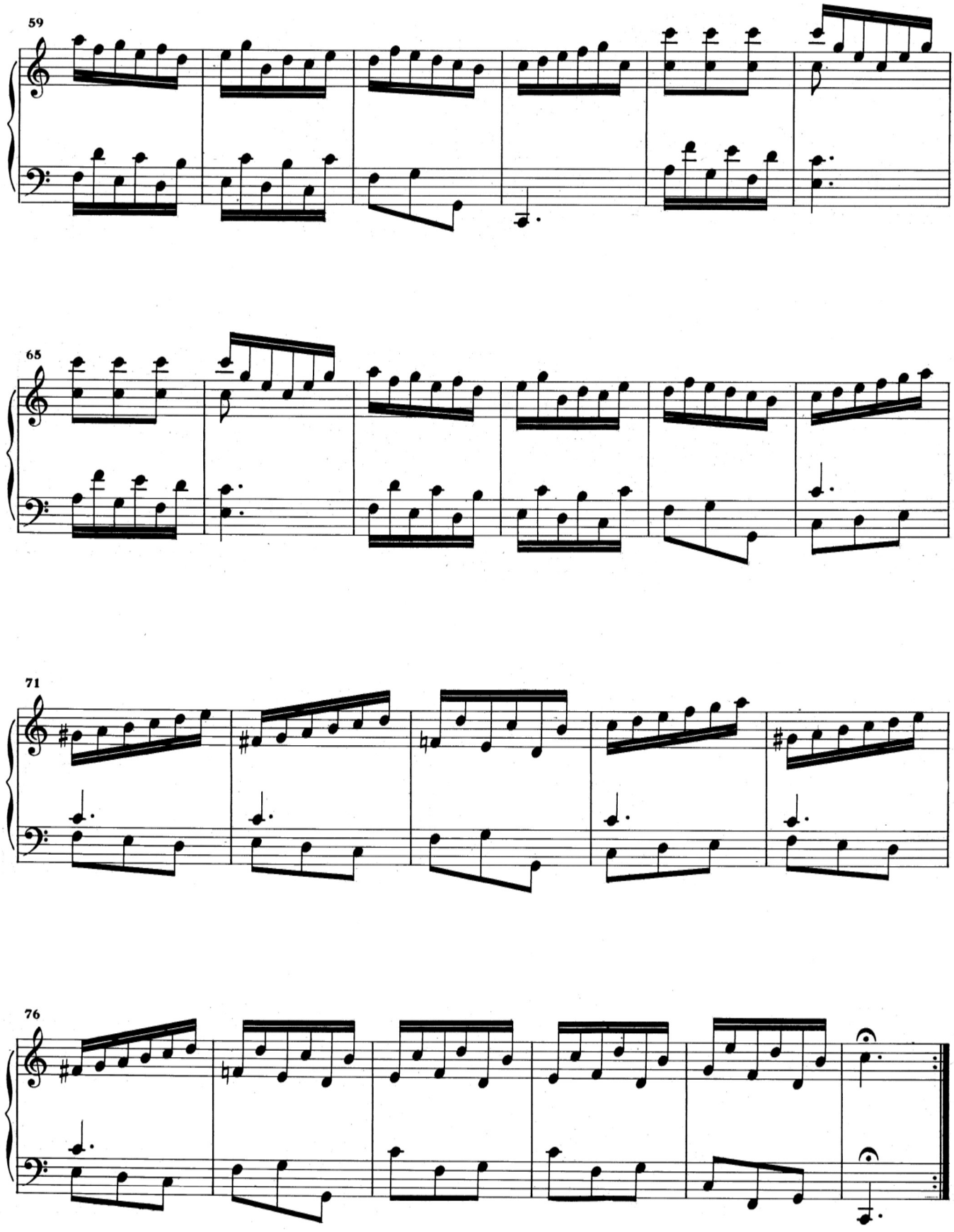
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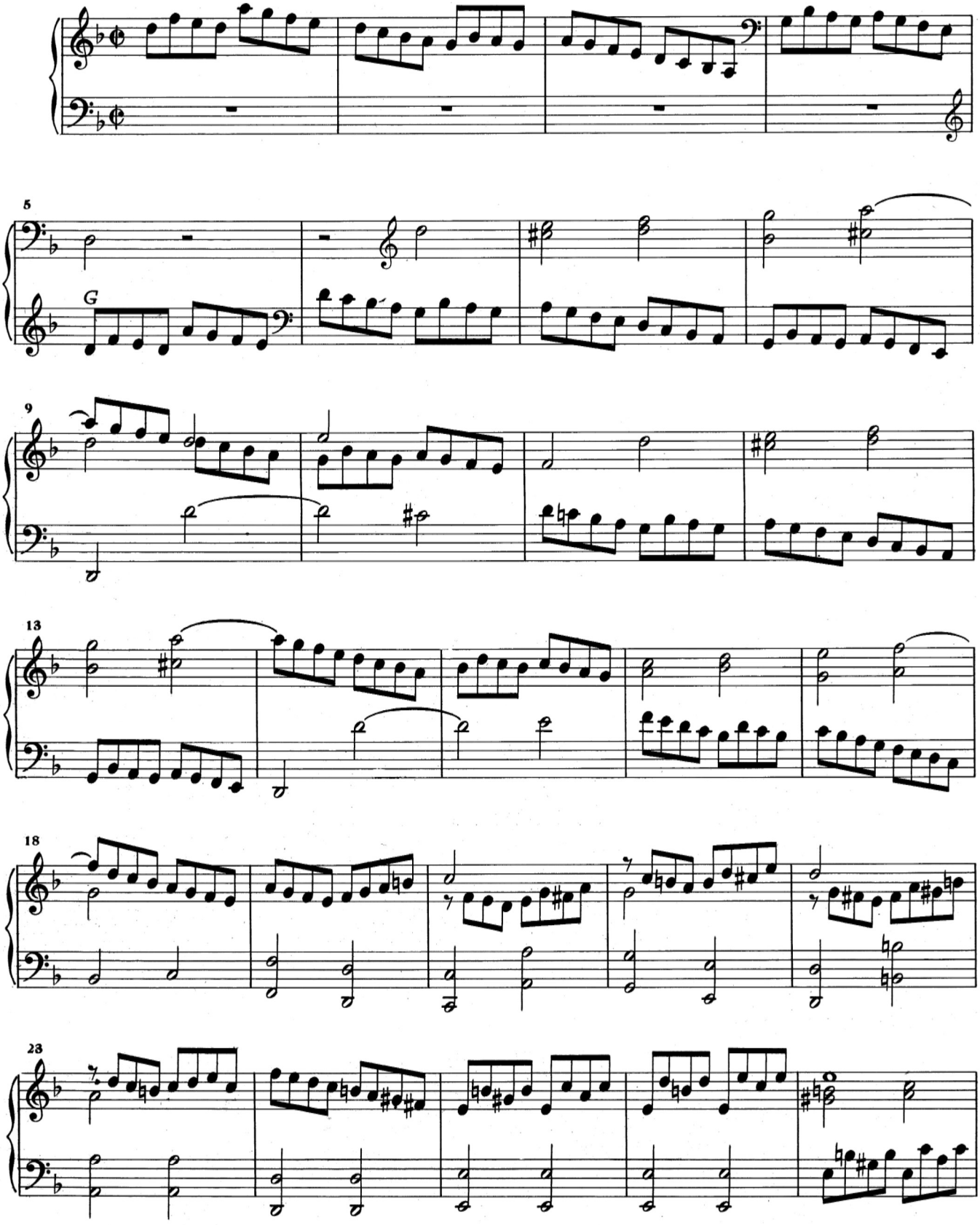
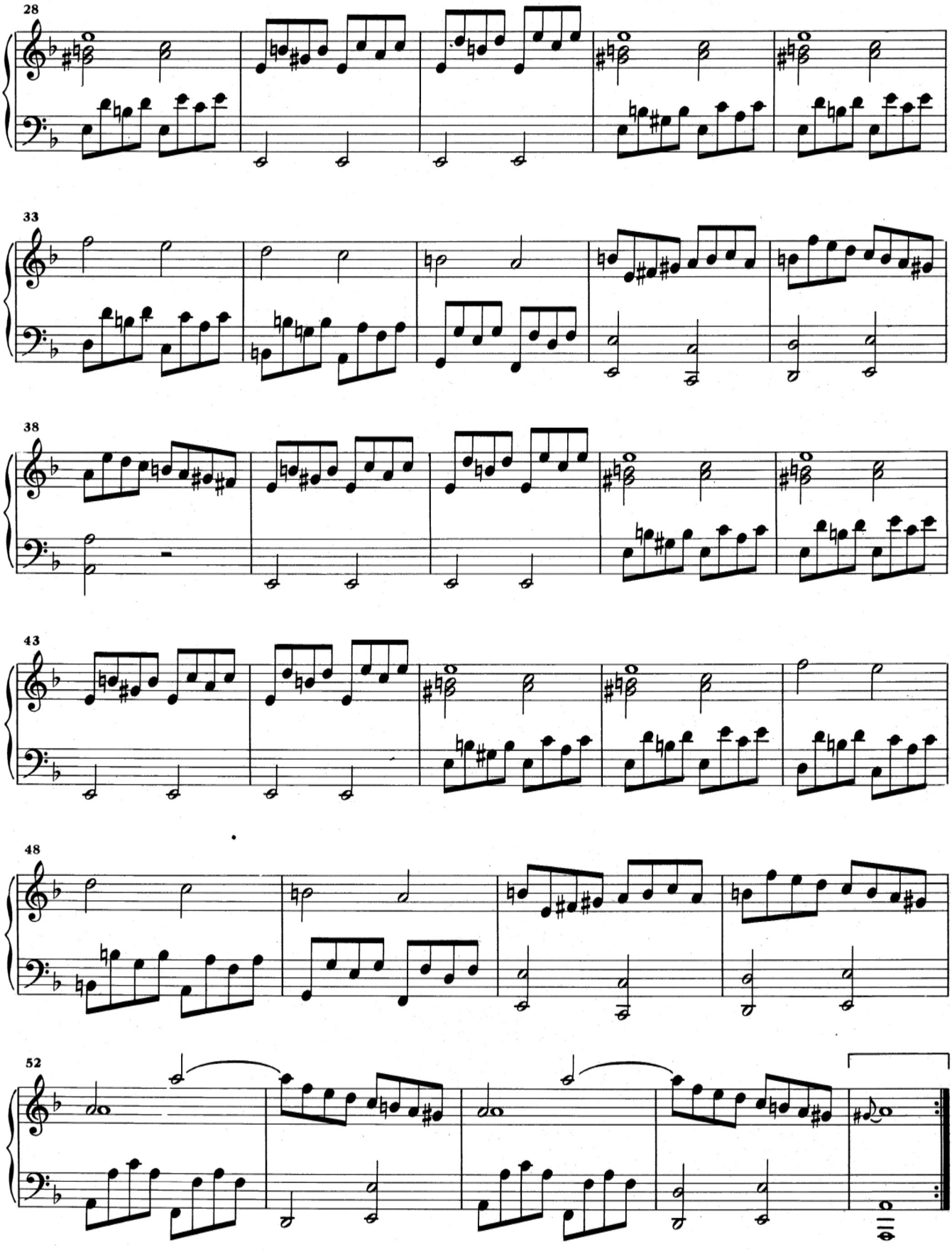
# K. 517

Prestissimo

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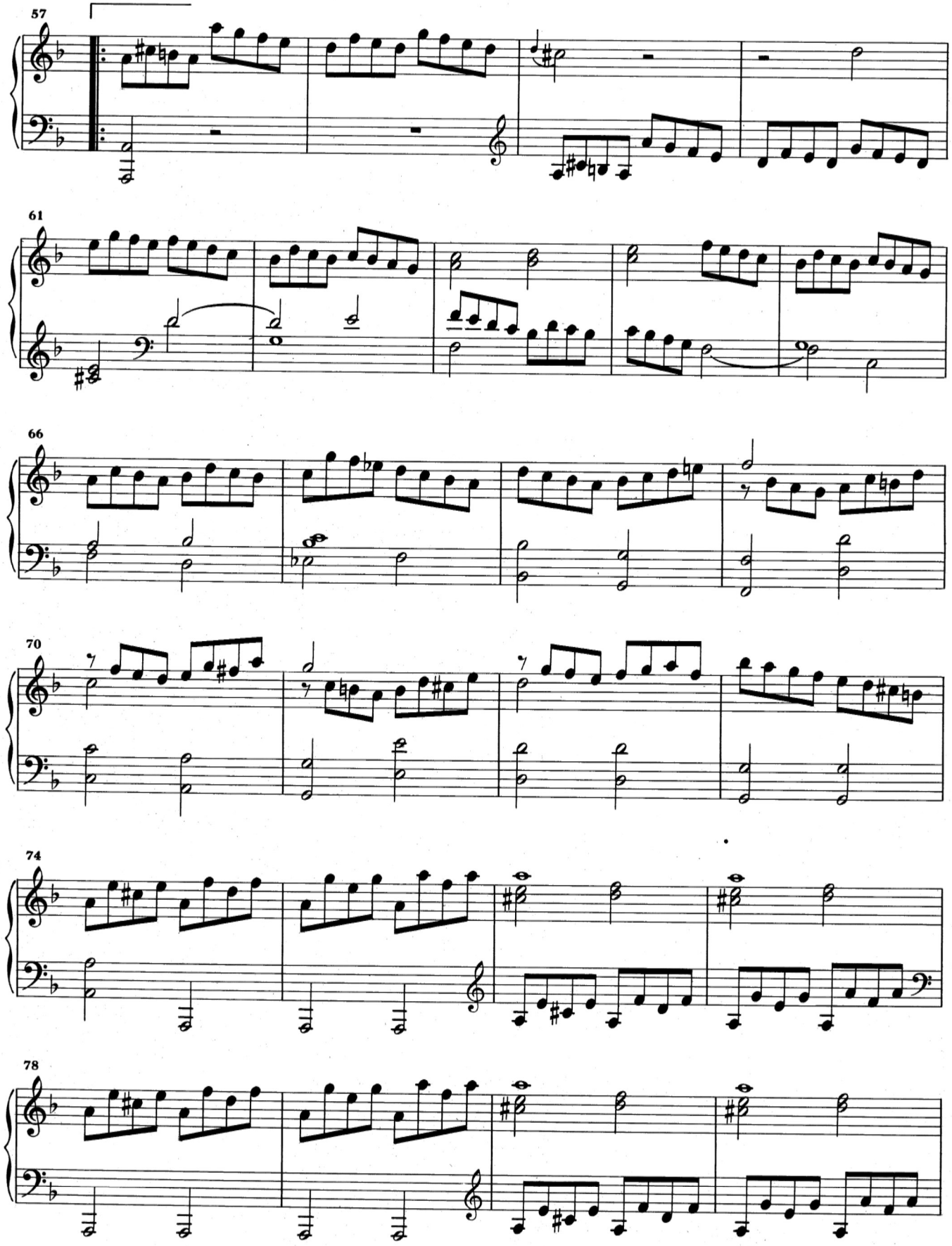
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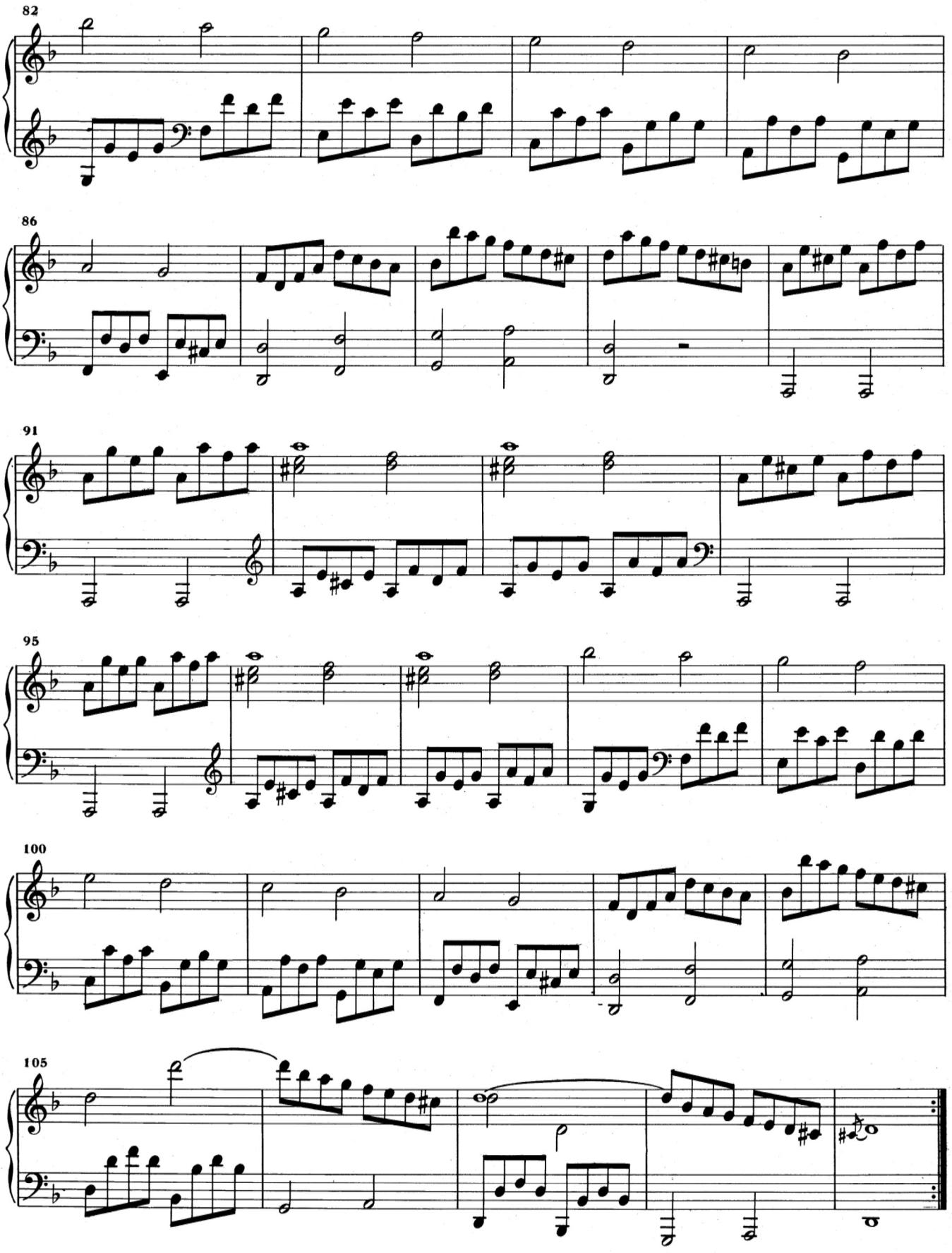
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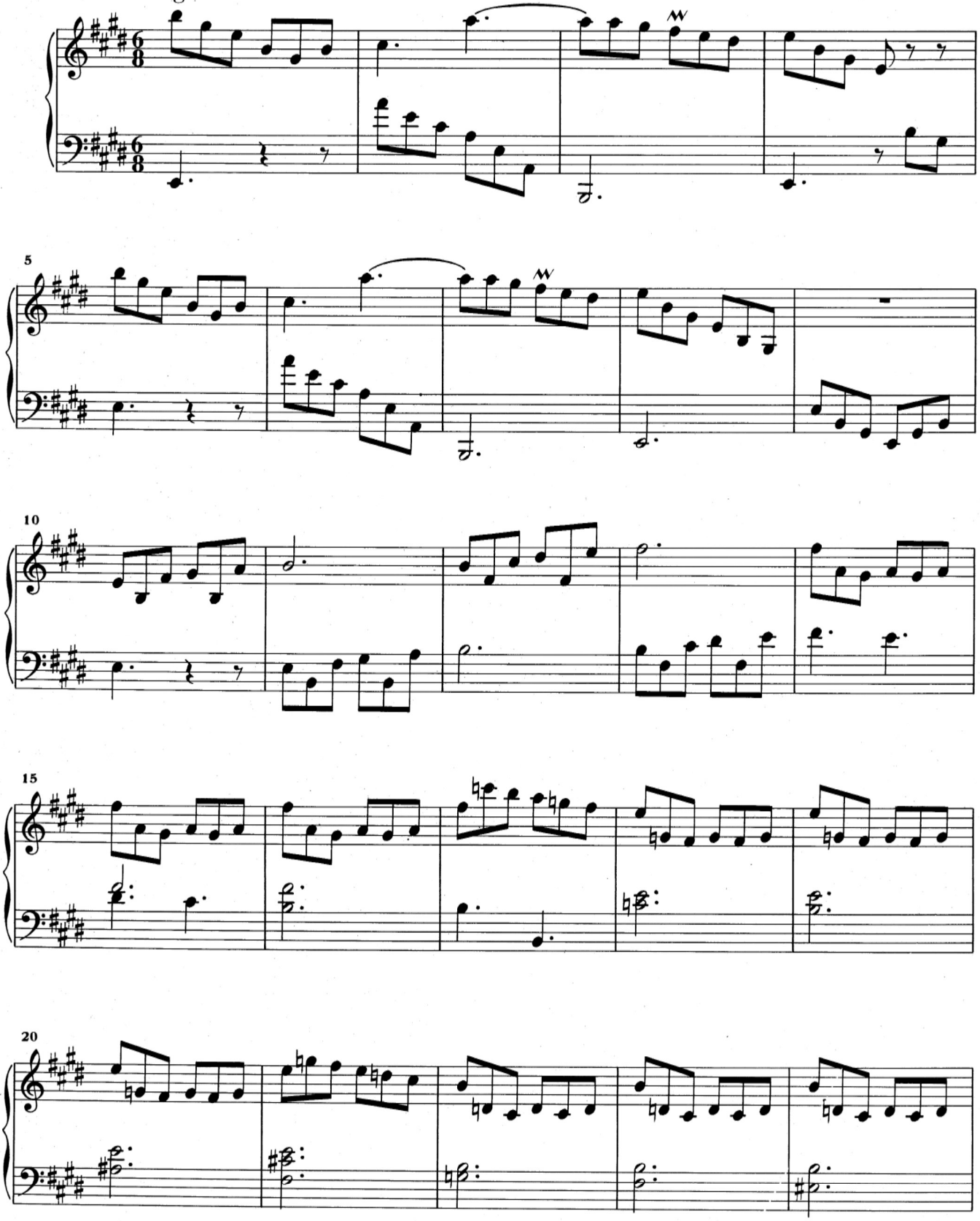
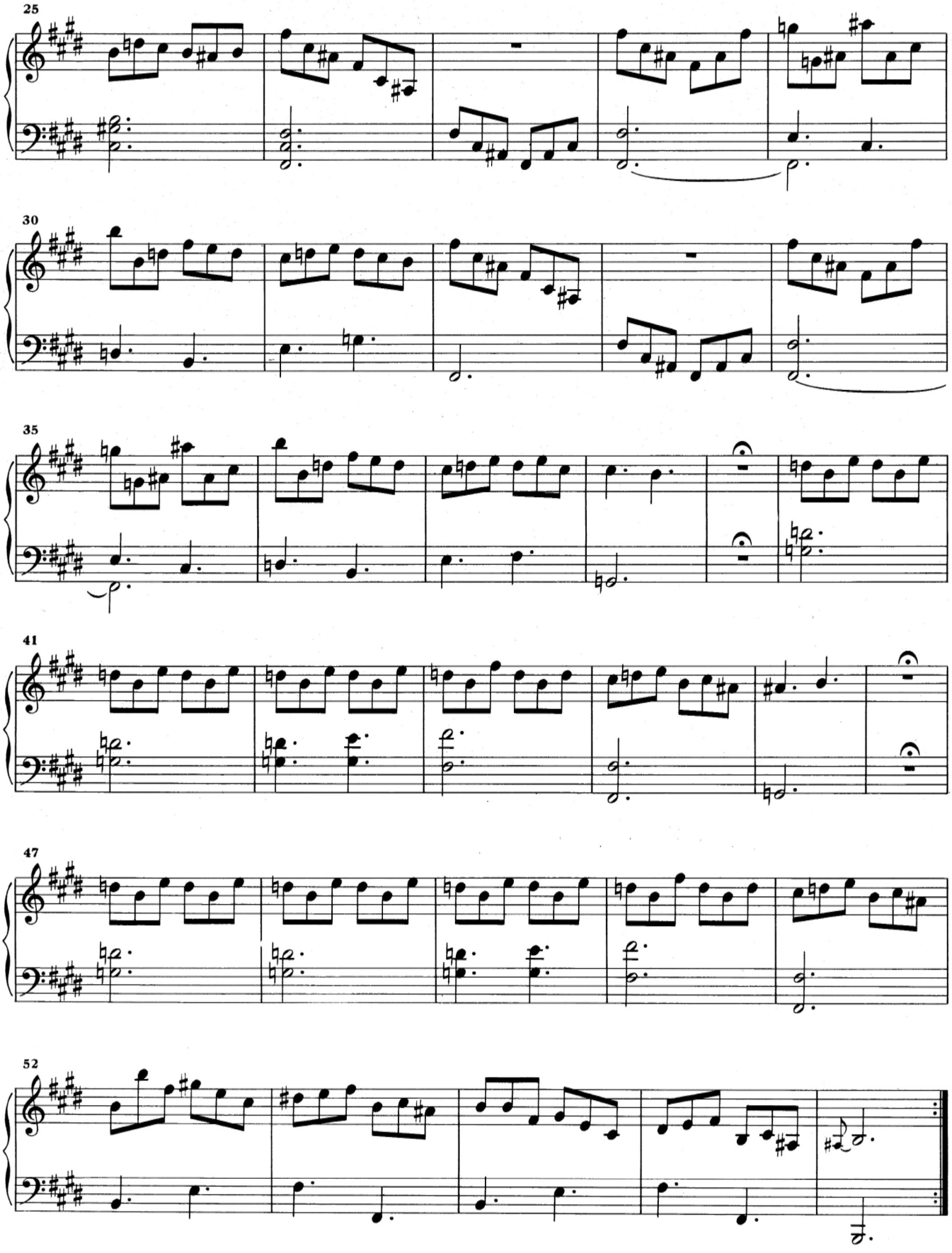
# K. 531

Allegro

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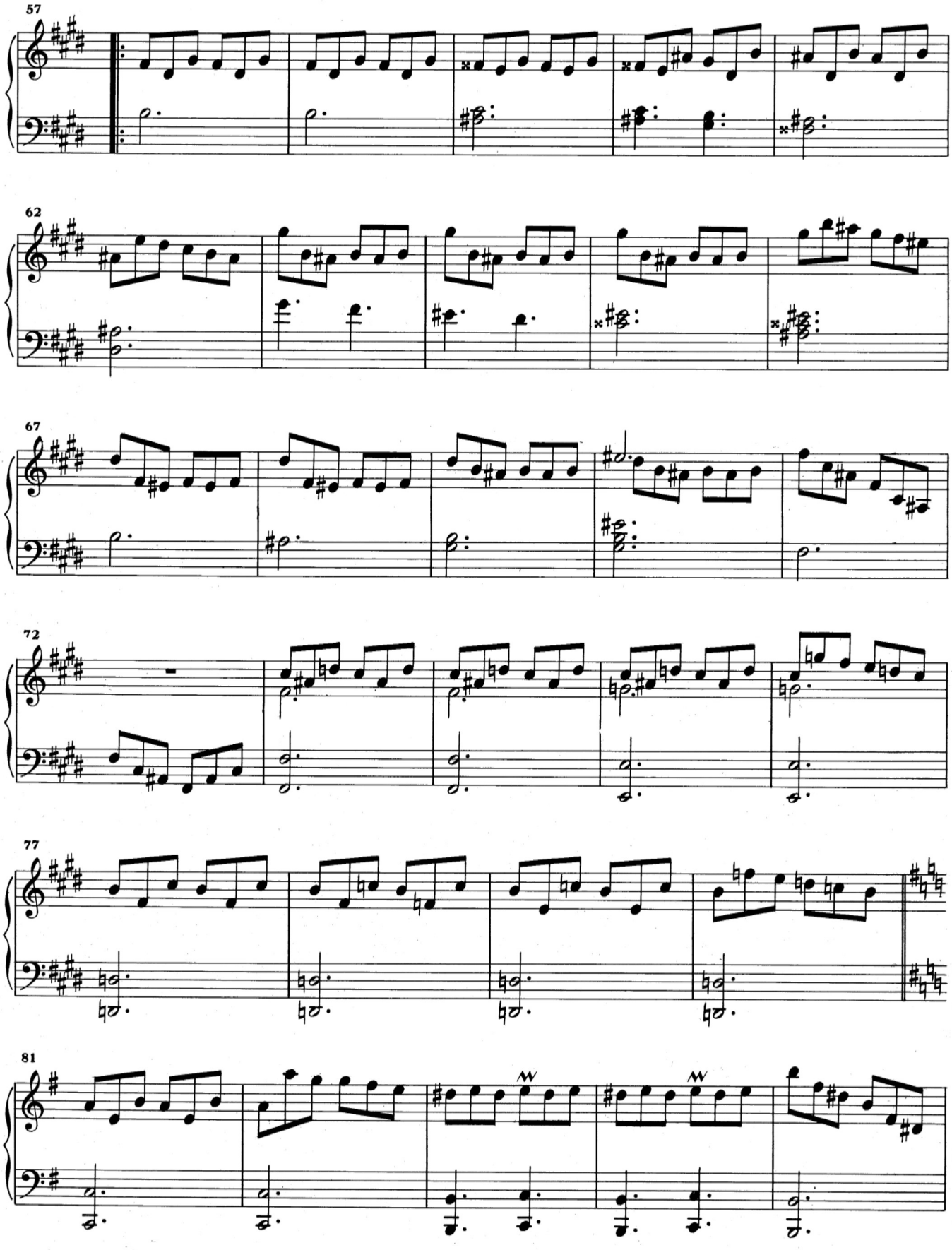
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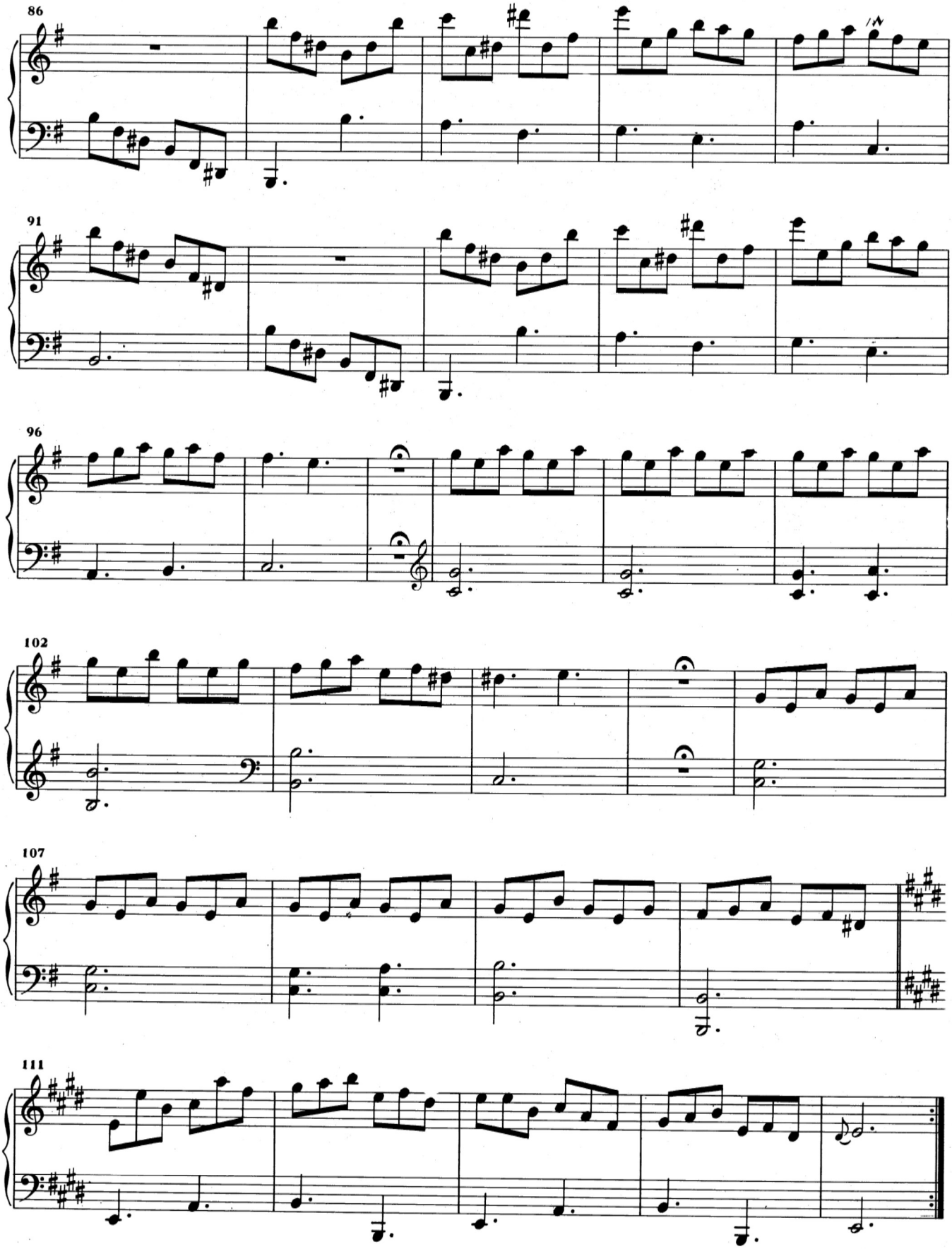
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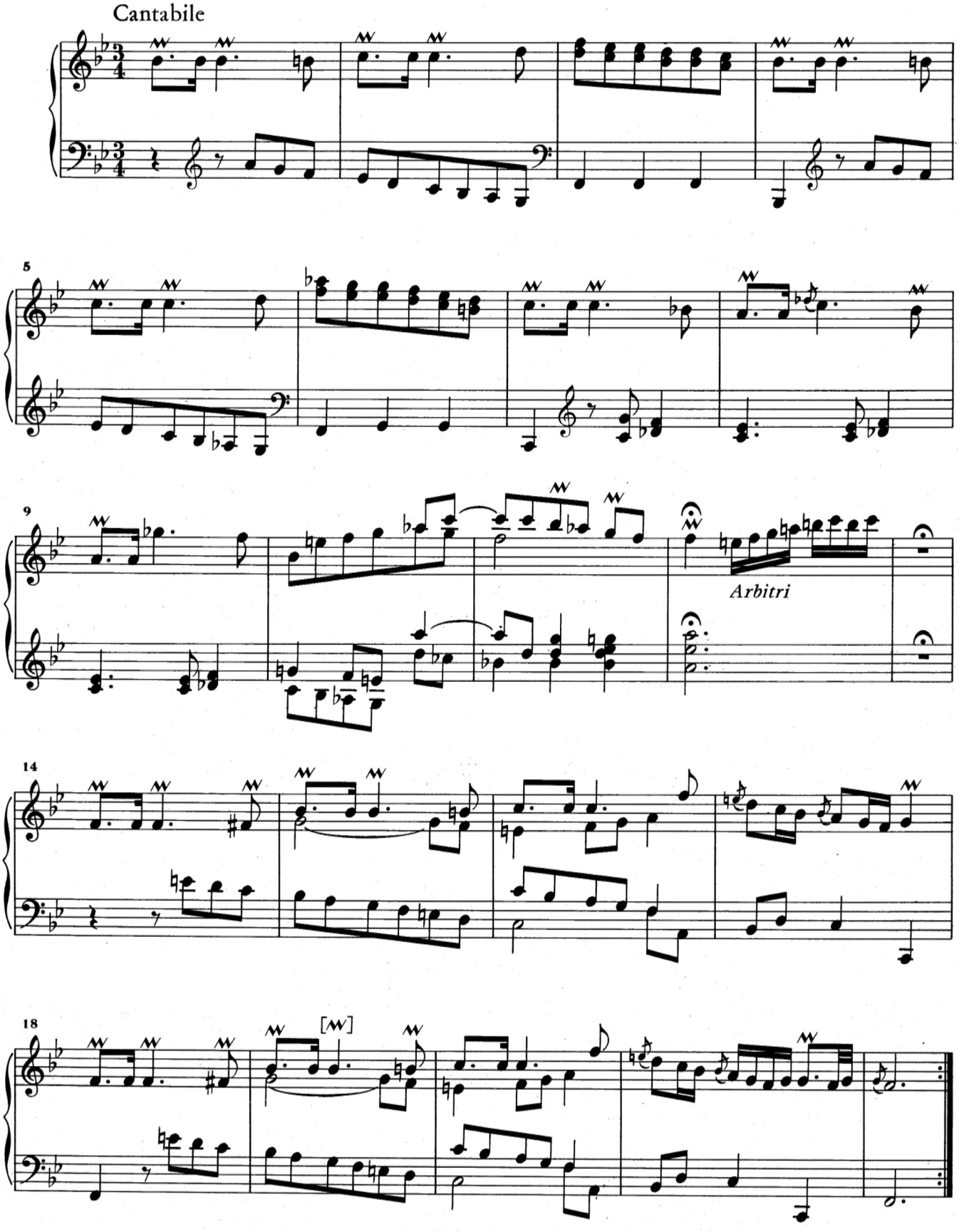
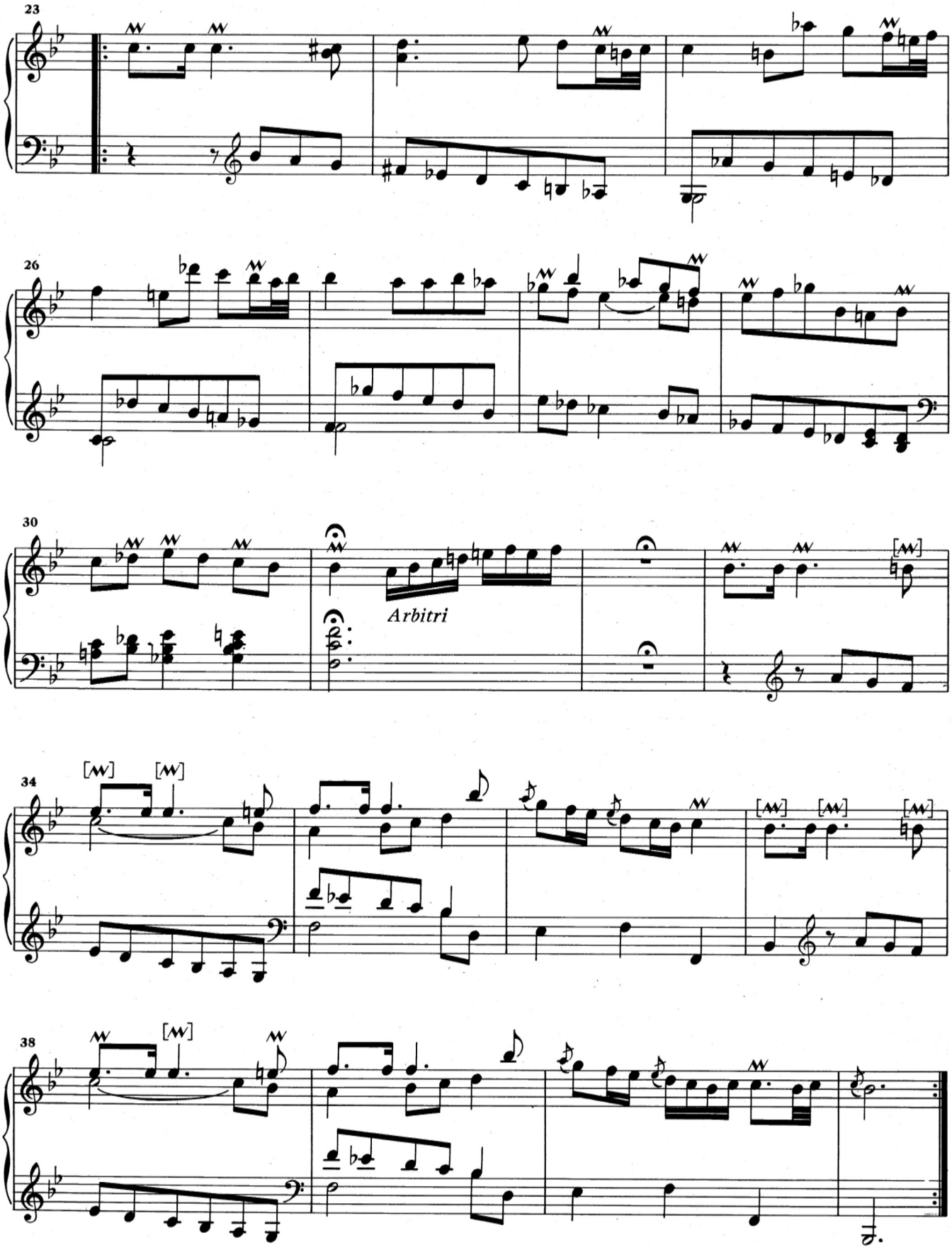
# K. 544

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