Armin Loos

THREE PIECES FOR HORN AND PIANO

edited by

William Purvis

and

Robert Pollock

Armin Loos was born in Darmstadt in 1904 and died in 1971. A small folder prepared by his widow after his death begins with the following statement:

The facts below can only indicate some of the outward circumstances in the life of Armin Loos; perhaps define his milieu and give his place in time. That is all.

He showed a unique talent for music very early in life, and soon went far beyond the conventional music lessons given him. At twelve years of age he made himself familiar with the piano works of most of the old and new masters by sight-reading their music, and also learned to read opera and orchestra scores. At one time he took lessons with composer Carl Buettner with whom he studied counterpoint, harmony, and form. In this area to, with characteristic intellectual and musical probing, and his own great musical talent, he went beyond his instruction to compose piano scores of his own. This he did very competently at the age of fourteen.

Despite a strong desire to continue with his music, his father made plans for him to prepare for a career in banking and, as a result, all of his college training was directed toward that end. Thus, he received a degree in jurisprudence from the University of Dresden, and subsequently pursued this subject at the Universities of Berlin and Geneva, where, without a doubt, the courses he took in music history, German and French literature were more sympathetic to him.

After a year's travel in Europe, Armin came to the United States in 1928 to complete his bank training before returning to Dresden to enter his father's bank. He never went back to Germany, however, having once made the momentous decision to marry and remain in New York City. But the Depression soon shattered his plans to earn a living in the field of music. Nonetheless, those years in New York were spent studying his craft, composing, and working constantly to master the 12-tone system, a most difficult discipline, especially since he was entirely self-taught.

It was at this time in his life in New York that his "Elegy in Five Voices" won second prize in the 1938 Federal Music Project Competition, in which first prize went to William Schuman and third prize to David Diamond, [fourth to John Vincent, fifth to Elliott Carter]. "Elegy" was performed in concert and on radio by the Madrigal Singers and later by the Festival Chorus of the Westminster Choir School in Princeton, New Jersey.

In 1940, Armin's sense of duty took him to New Britain, Connecticut, where he was associated in a small family business for twenty-two years. Even so, after his day's work, his nights and most of his spare time were devoted to composing. As he said many times, "I can't sleep unless I work on my music."

He had to retire from business in 1962 following his first major heart attack and so was then able to devote full time to his music.

It was in the last years of his life that his illness imposed an increasing sense of urgency that reached into everything he did. He always had wide intellectual interests but now more than ever he came to be ever more concerned with the "human condition," and it was this inner probing that added a new dimension to him as an individual and as an artist. At last he had the "know-how" in the truest sense, and could and did consumate it in the content and style of the music he created...

If Armin Loos were asked to give a summary of his life, he would have answered, "My music is my life."

Elizabeth Loos

Armin Loos was one of the first composers in America to adapt the 12-tone method. His body of unjustly neglected works includes twelve orchestral compositions; four string quartets; two violin sonatas; other chamber music with strings; these three pieces for horn and piano; two wind quintets; eleven piano pieces; some vocal music; as well as many unfinished manuscripts and sketches. A recording of his Sonata No. 2 (written 1971) is available on CP^2 112. Upon her death in 1993, Mrs. Loos bequeathed to Musical Observations, Inc. all of the copyrights in and to the music of Armin Loos.

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THREE PIECES FOR HORN AND PIANO

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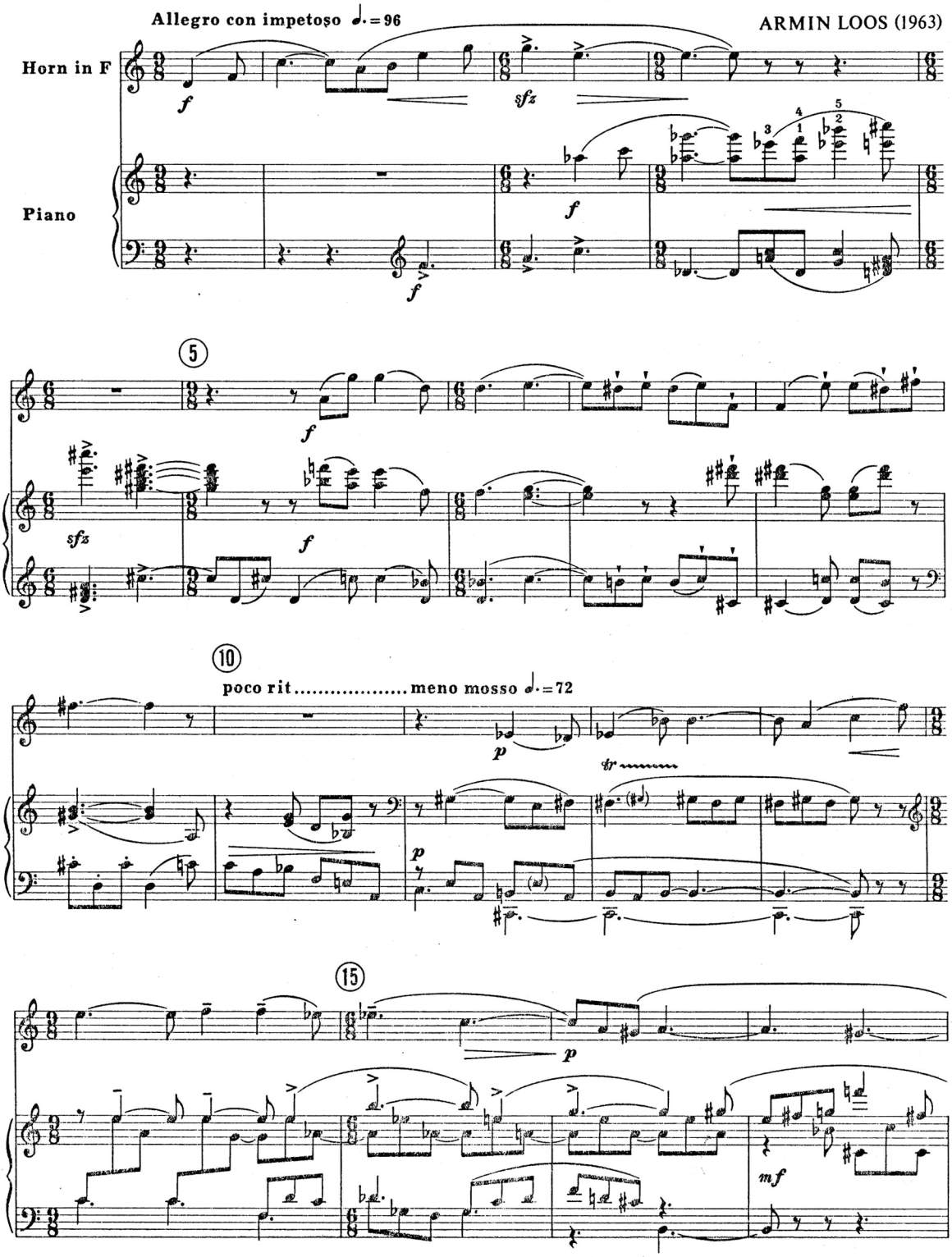

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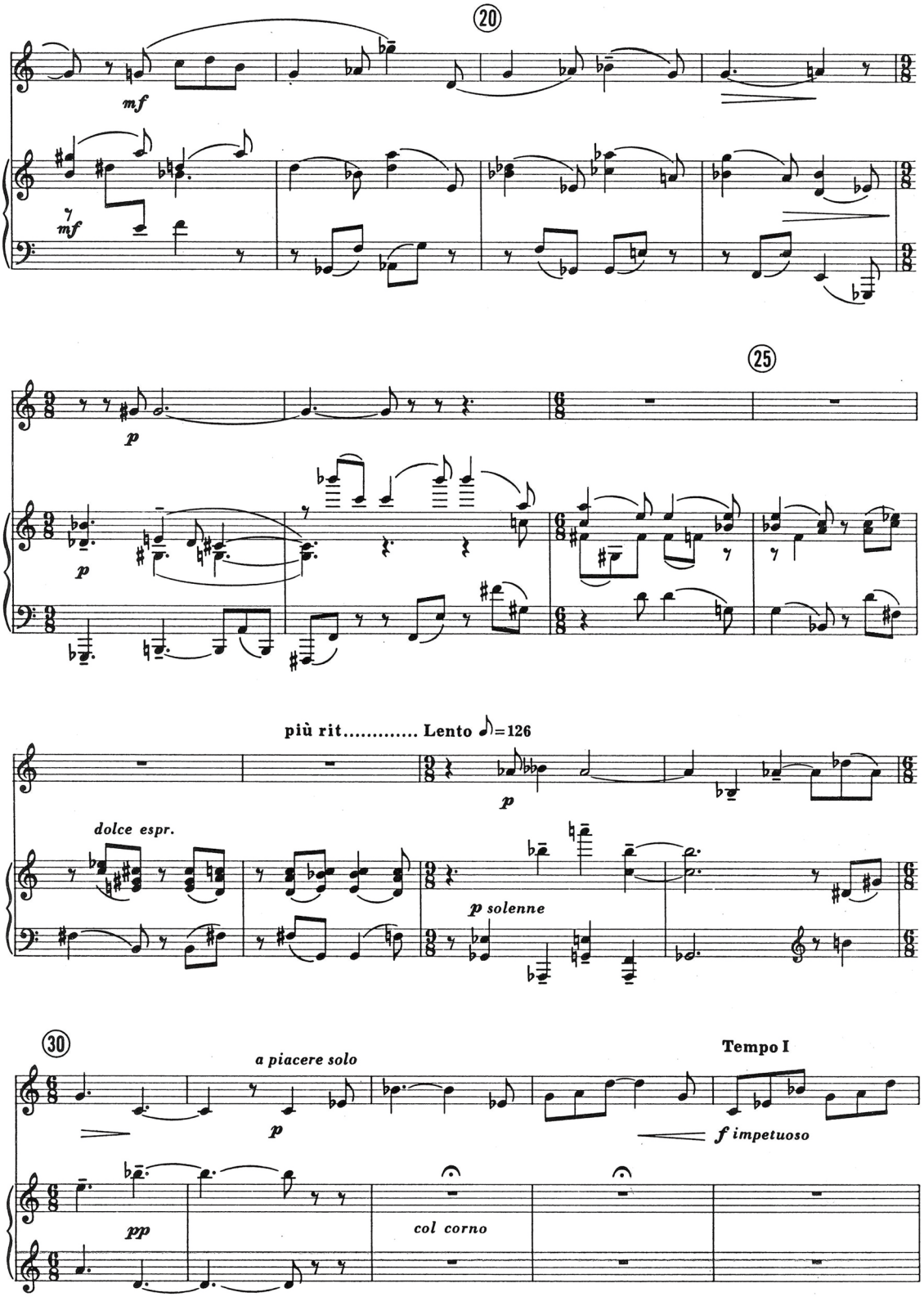

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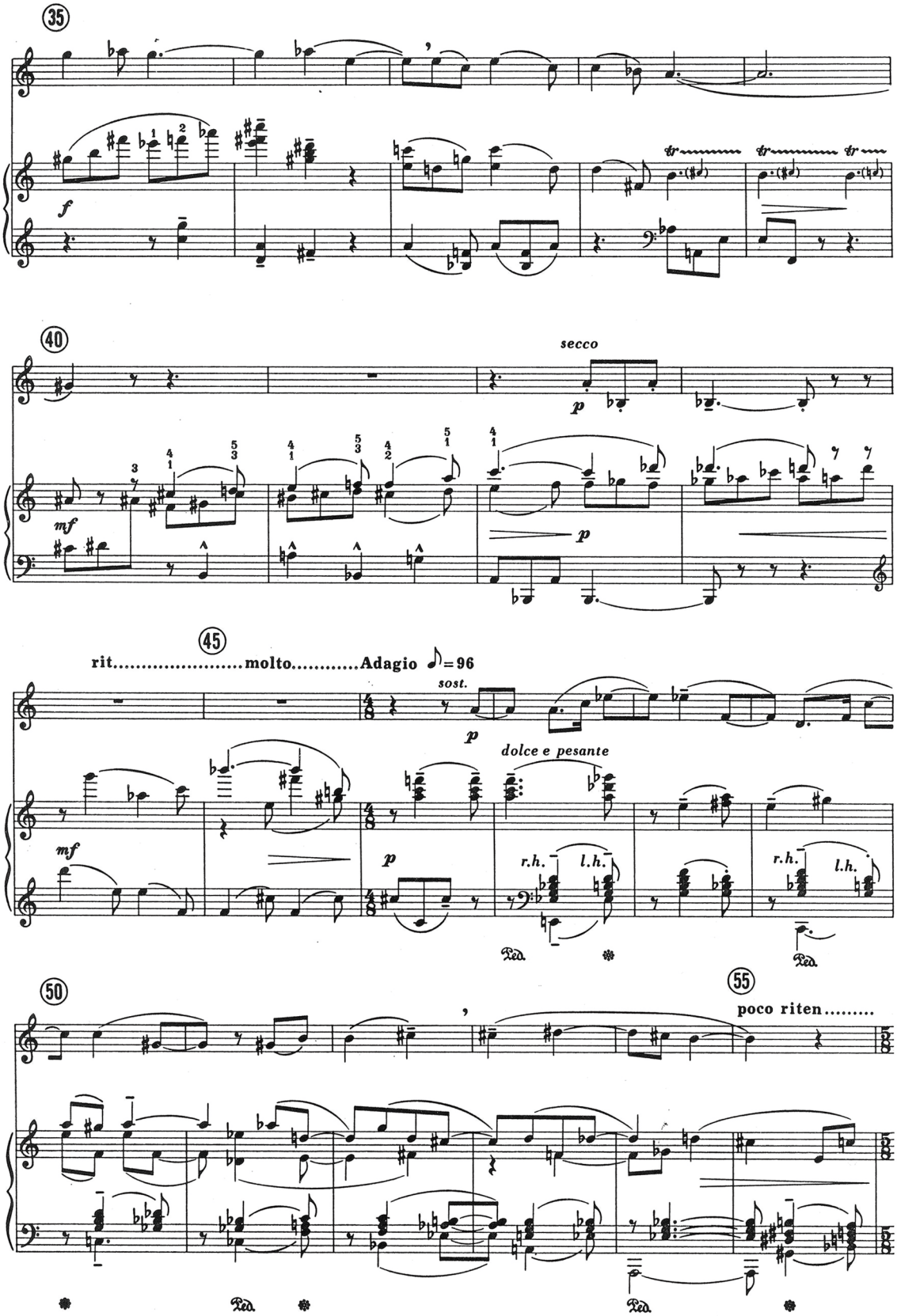

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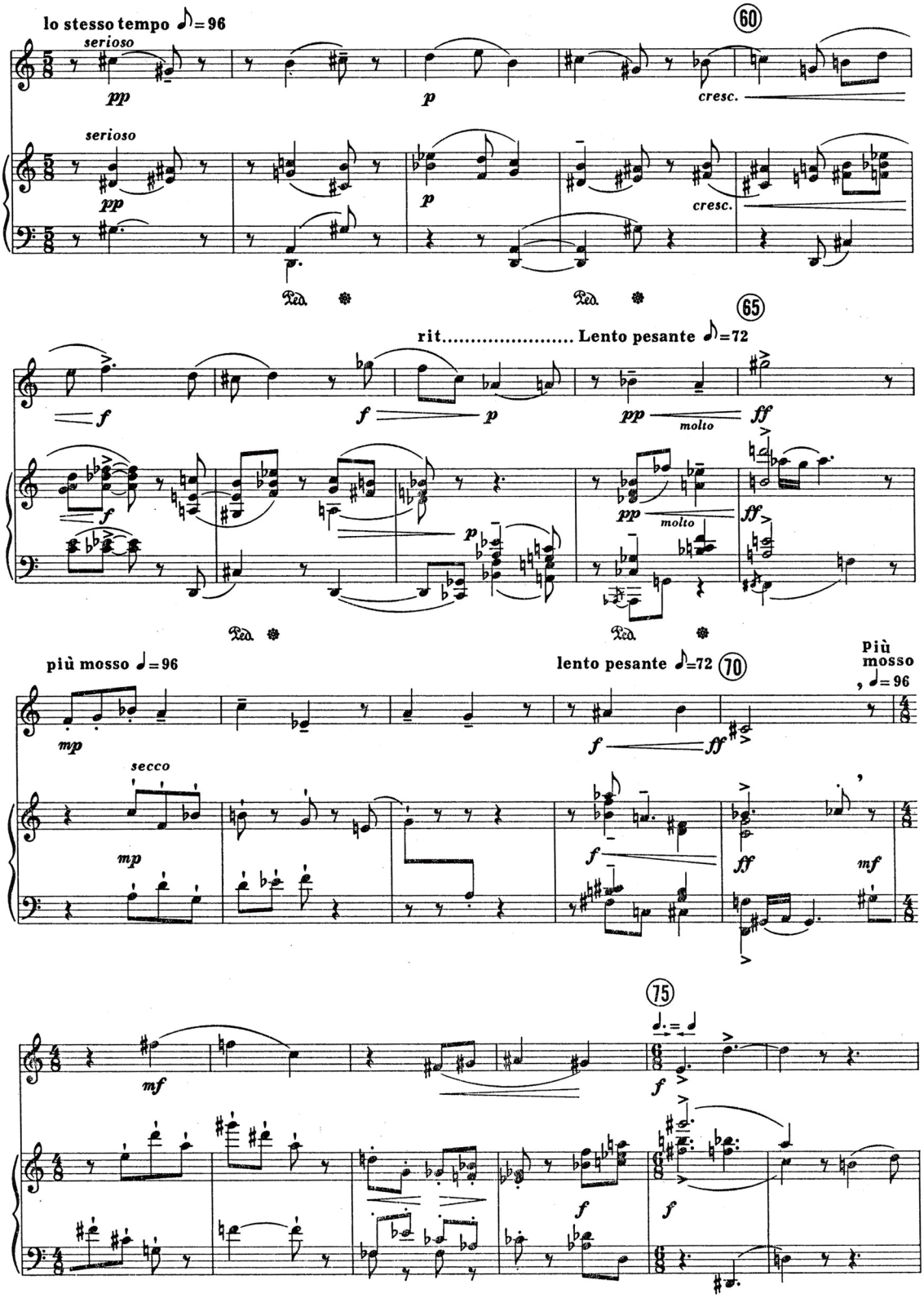

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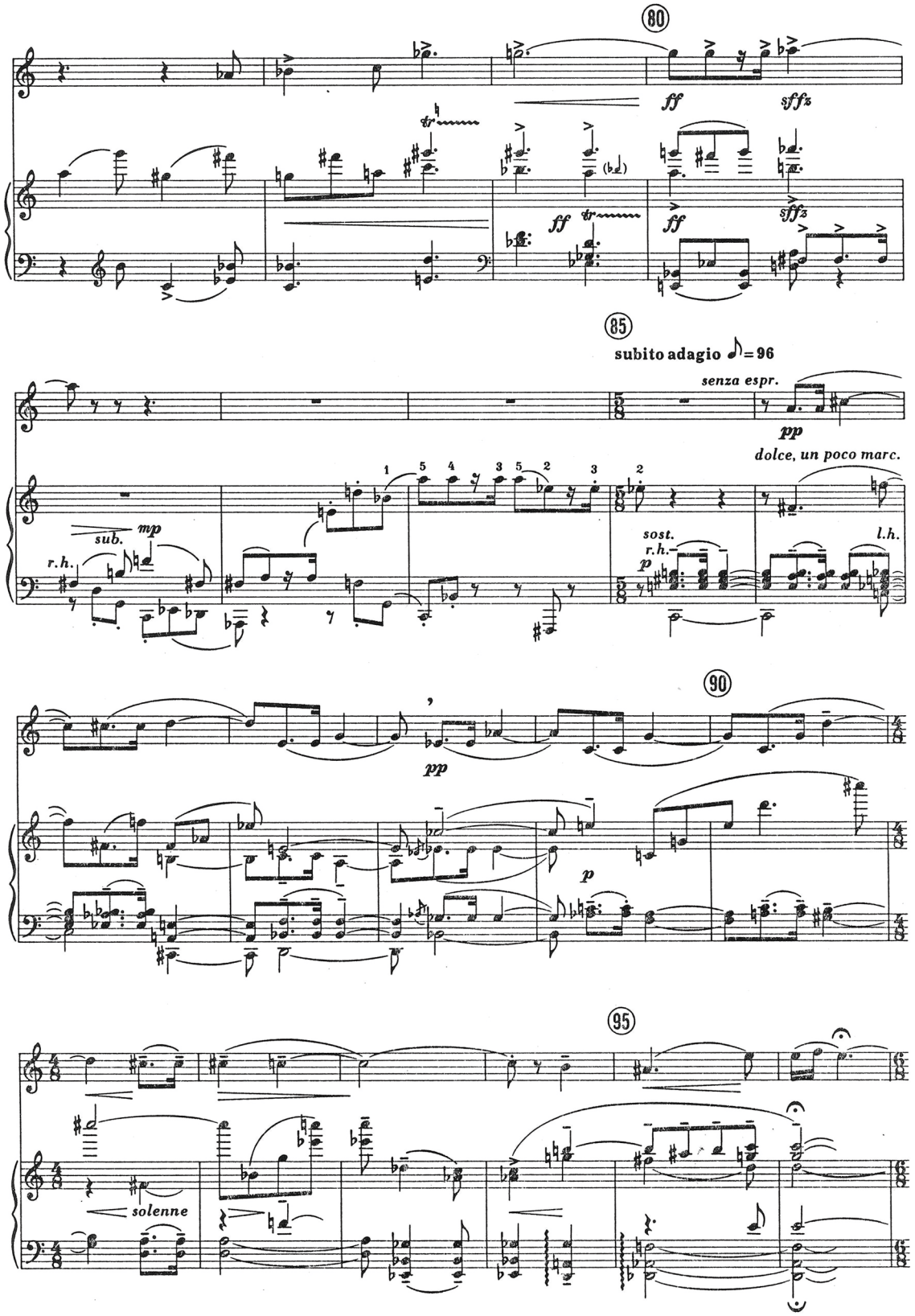

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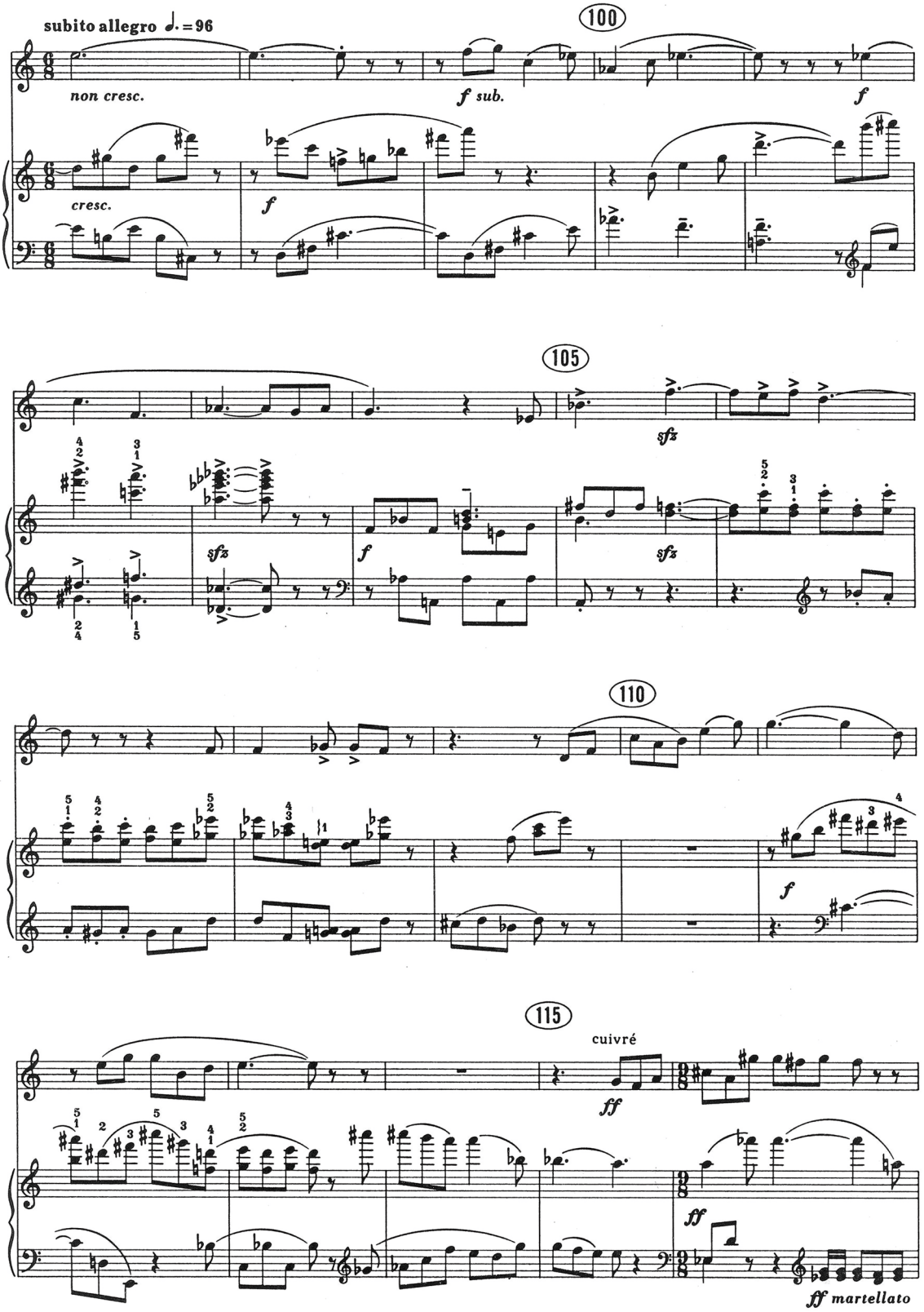

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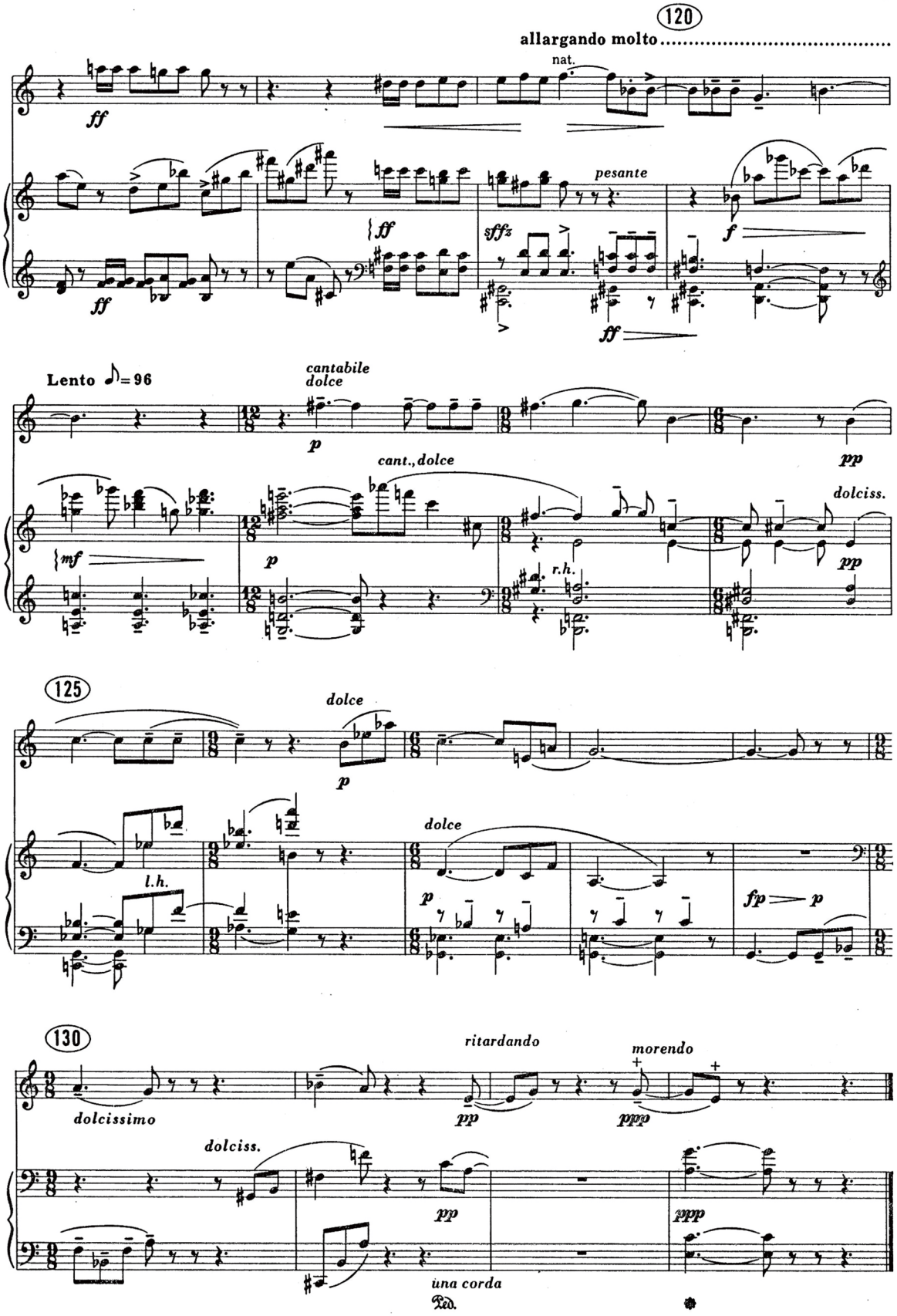

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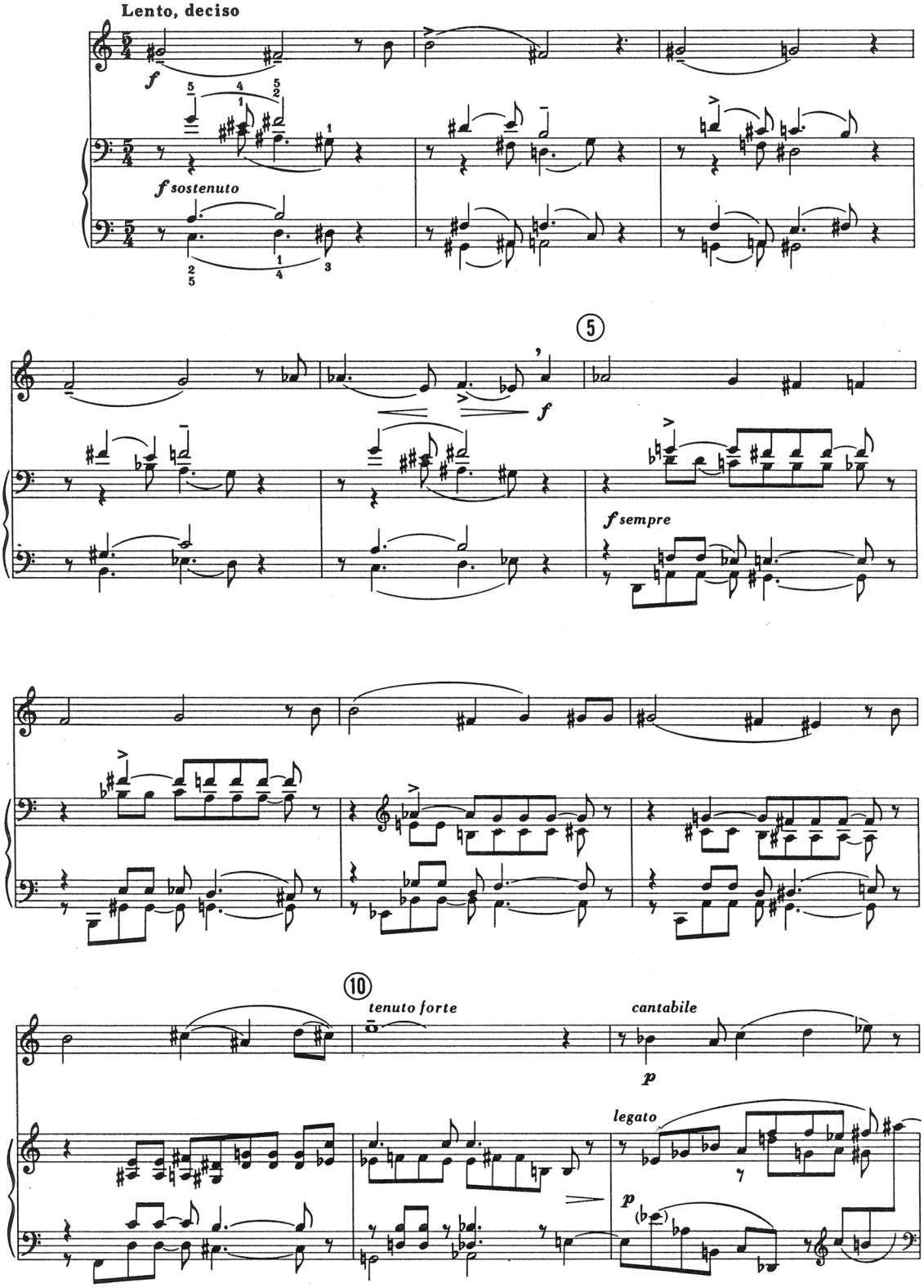

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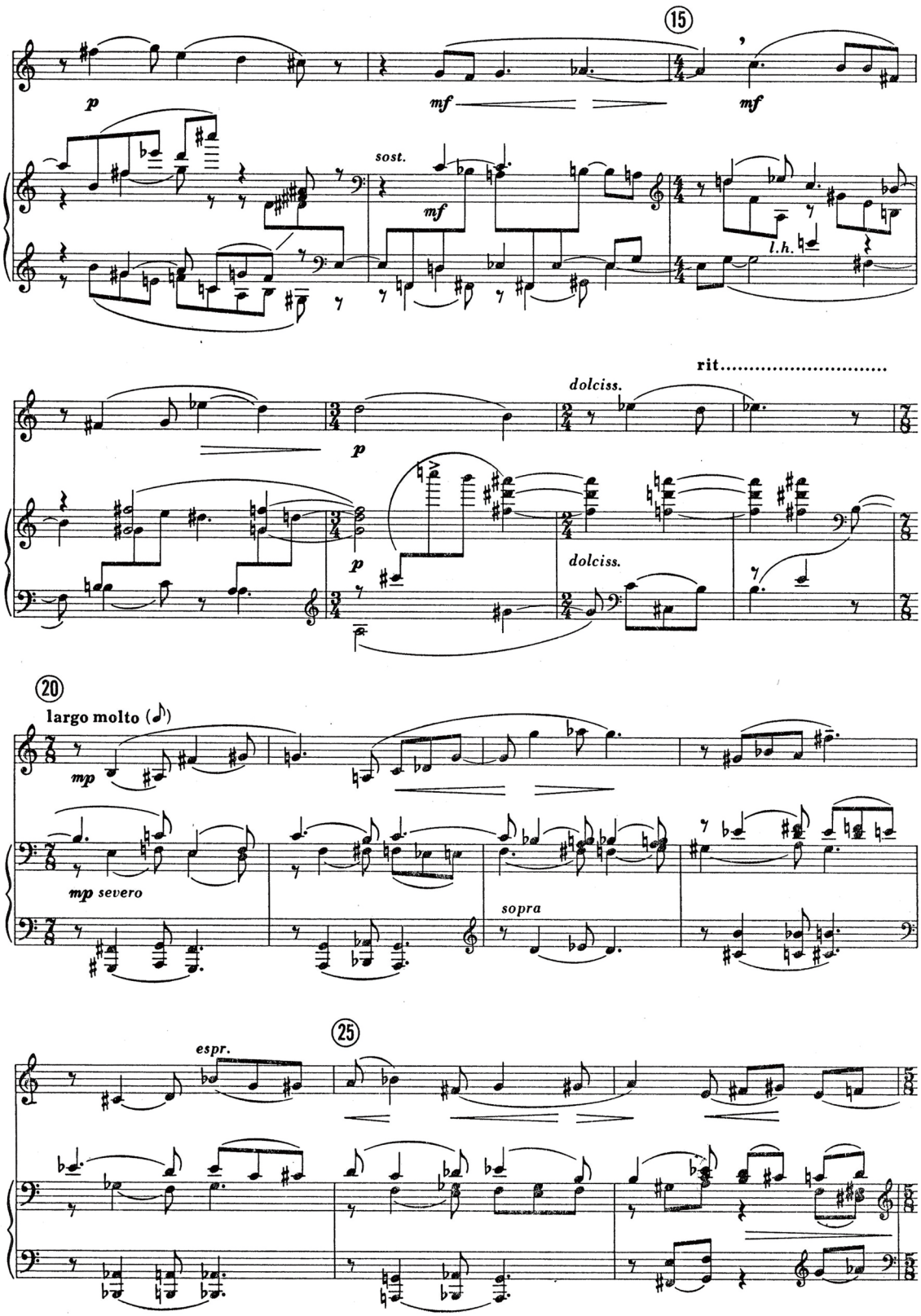

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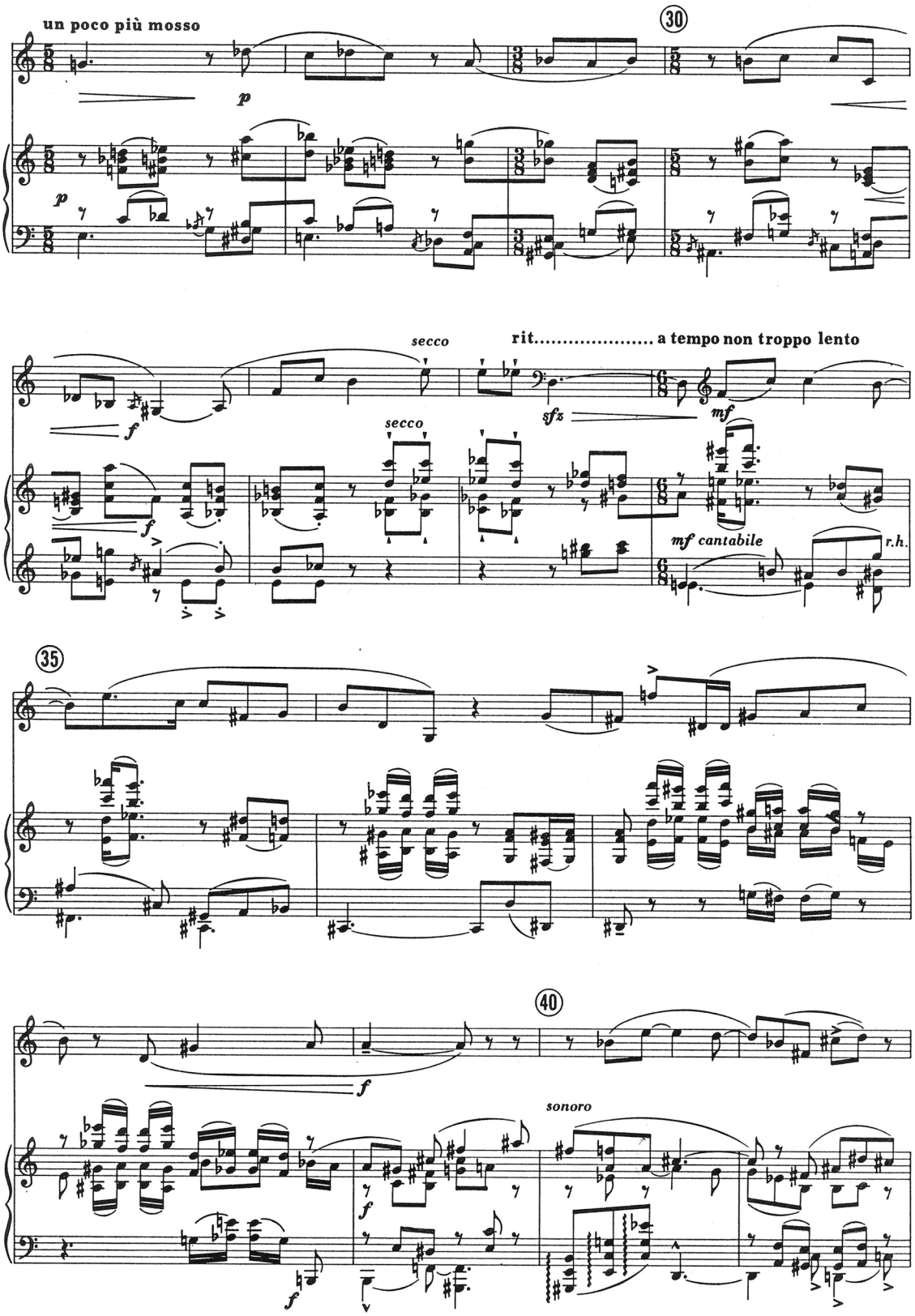

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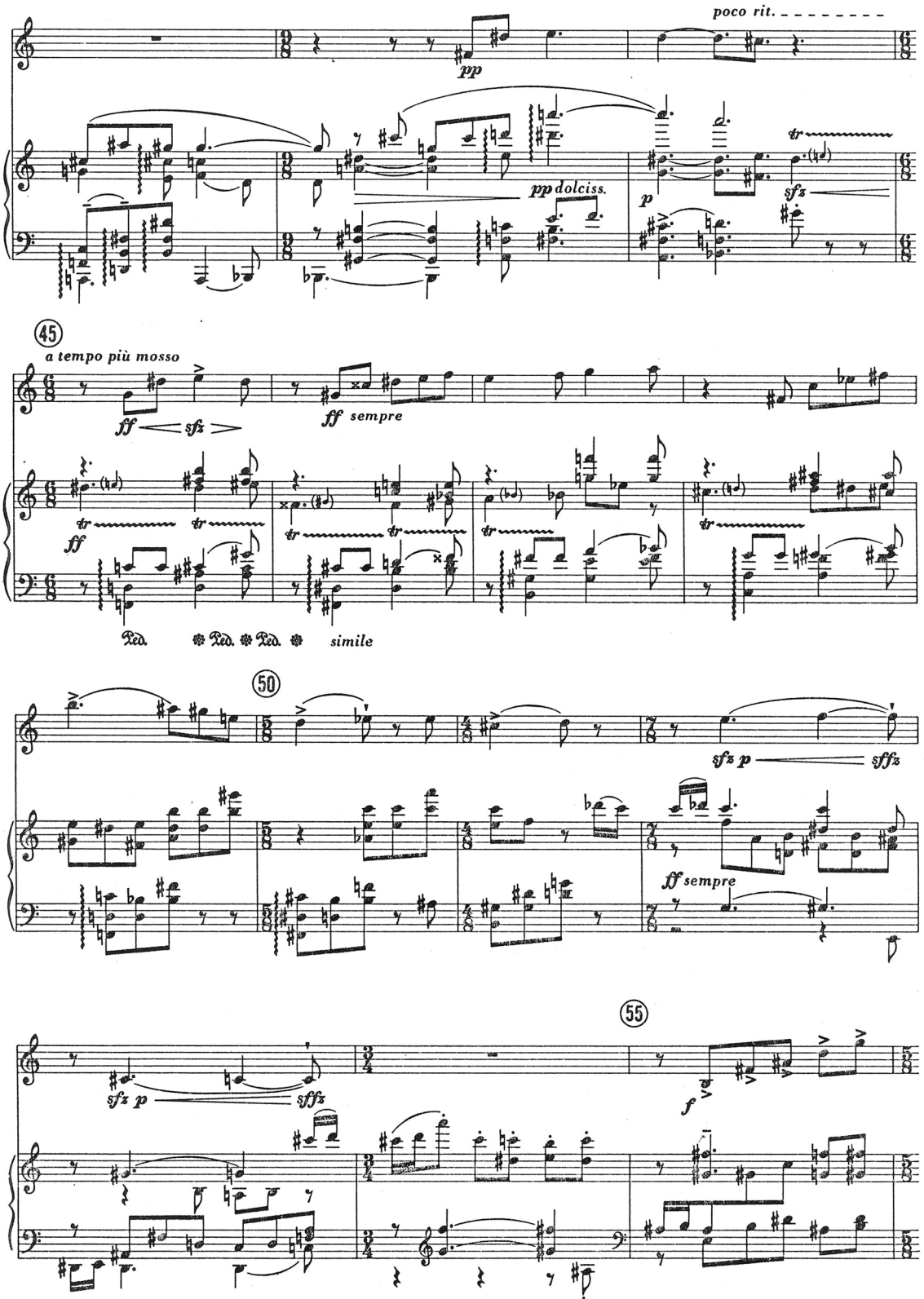

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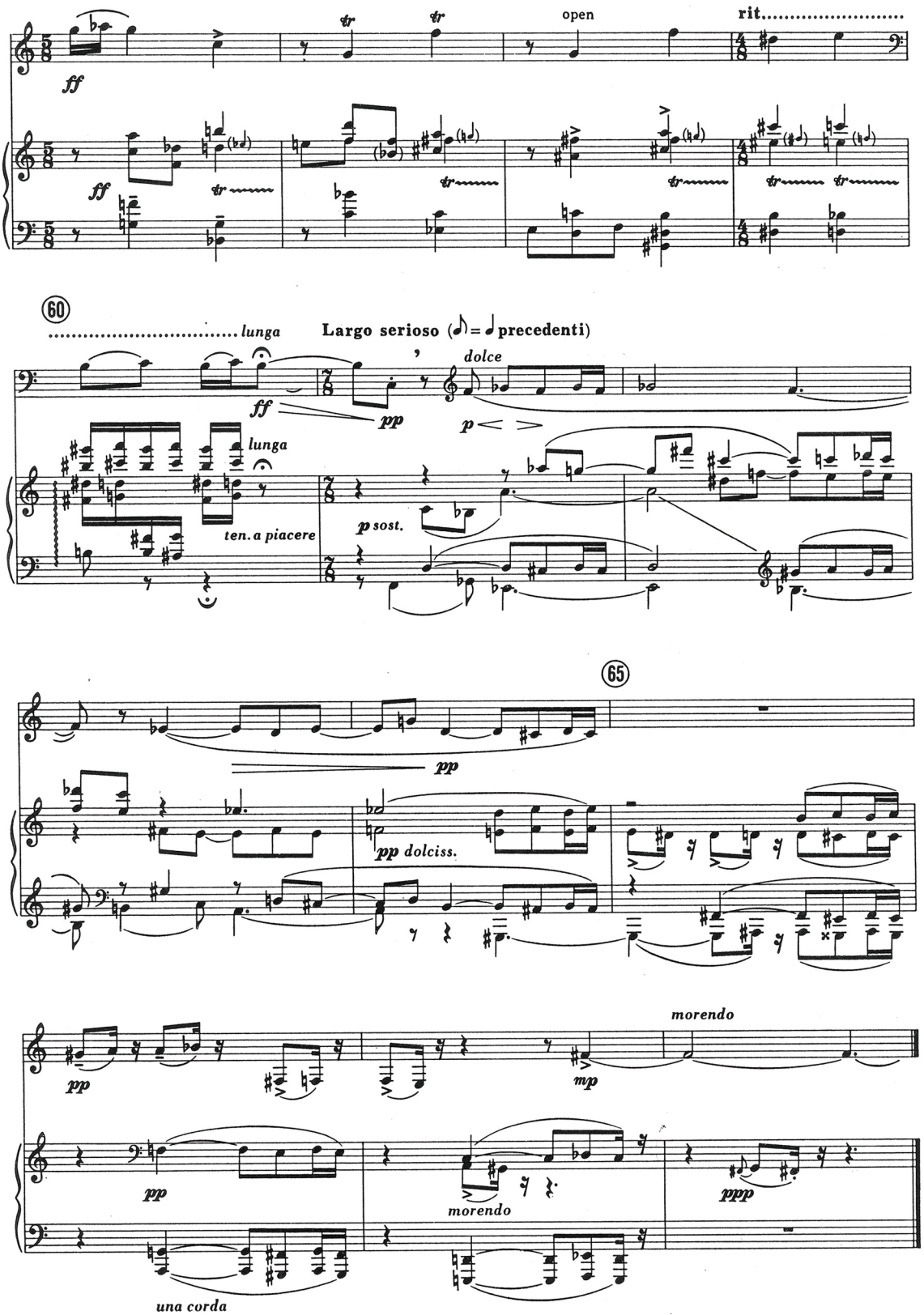

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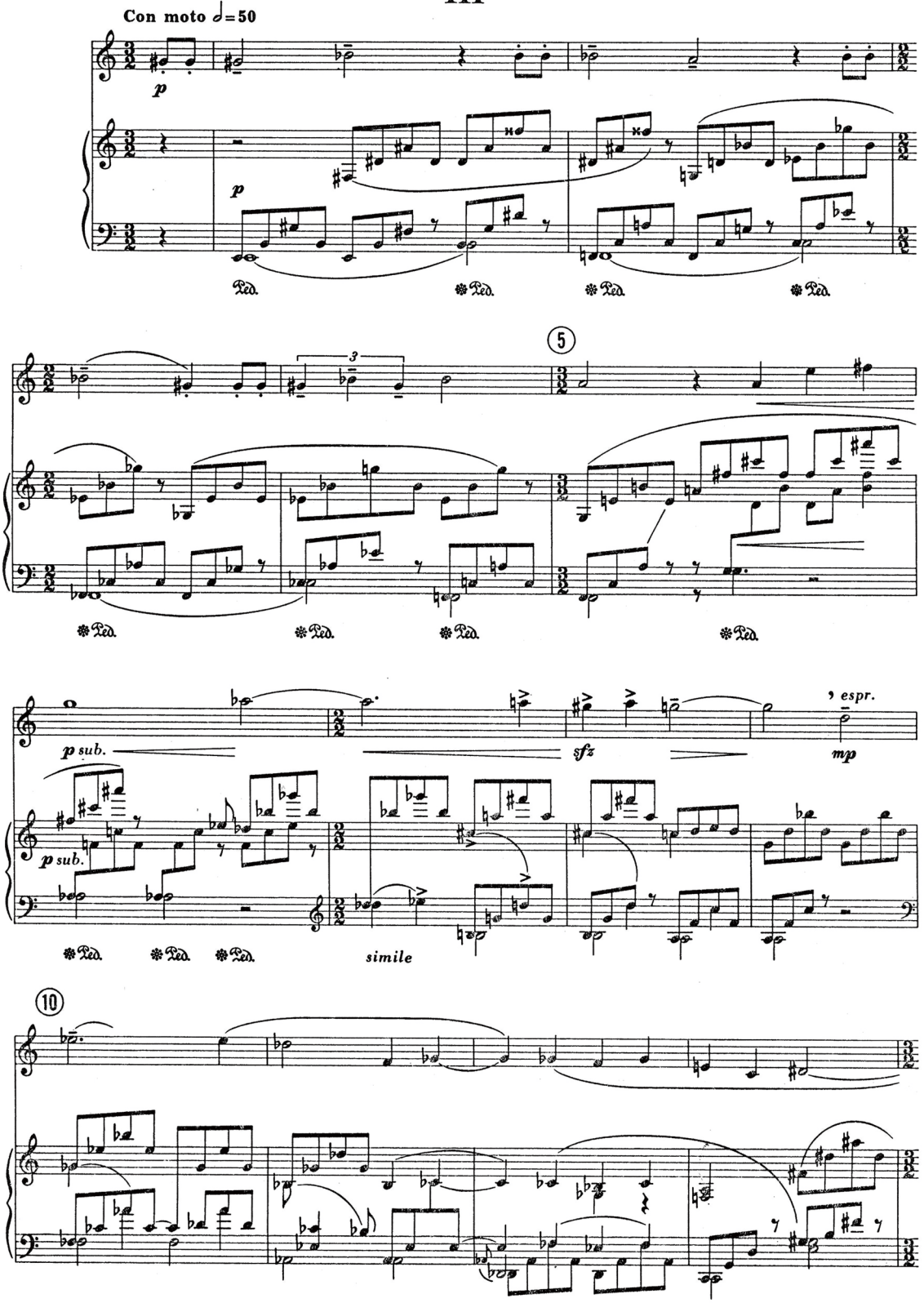

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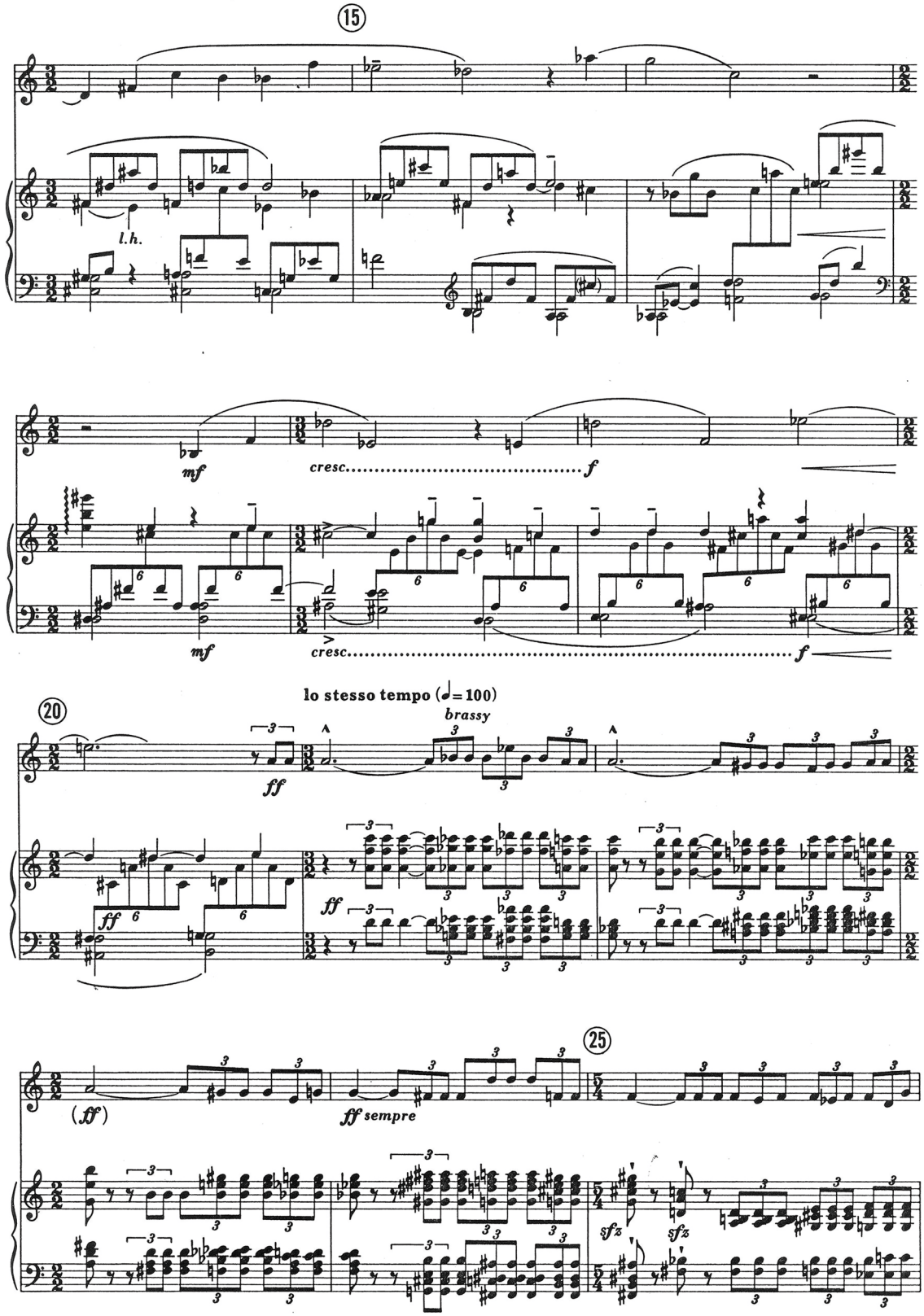

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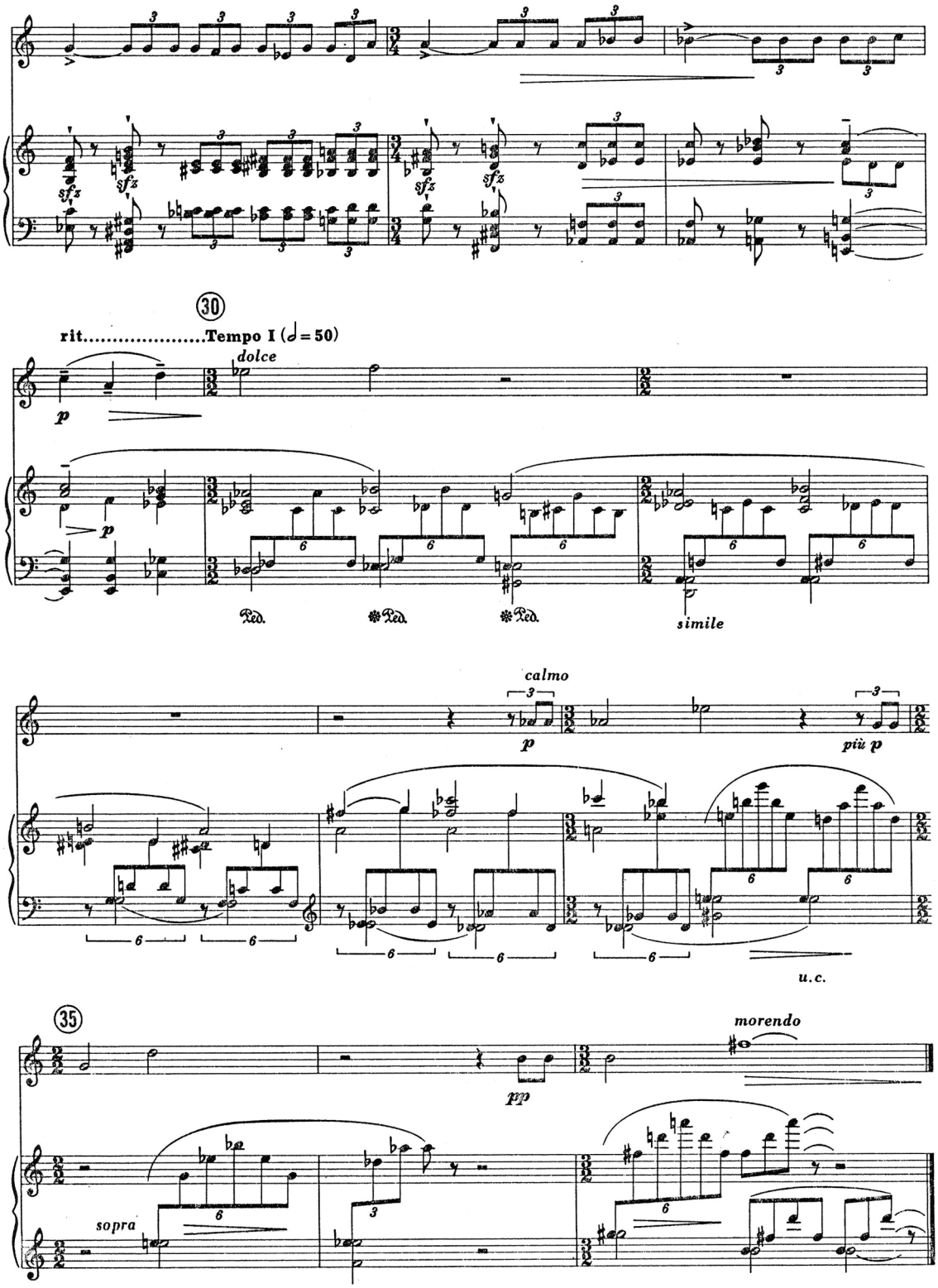

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