Sarabande Organ Series

David Cameron

Leoni Variations

Variations on a Hebrew melody,
adapted in 1770 by Thomas Olivers
and Meyer Lyon.

A Note to Performers

These variations were written in the autumn of 1970, when I was studying composition privately under the broad-minded and thoughtful tutelage of the late Graham George. Dr. George, who had been one of Hindemith's post-doctoral Fellows at Yale, was then Head of the Music Department, now the School of Music, at Queen's University in Kingston. As a follower of Hindemith, he was deeply interested in the systematic use of dissonant combinations in essentially tonal music. I, as a young musician eager to become a composer, was delighted to learn a twentieth-century technique less mechanical than dodecaphony, and less hardware-dependent than the electronic music of the 60's. Later study with another of Hindemith's post-doctoral Fellows, Harold Blumenfeld of Washington University in St. Louis, helped to broaden my view about some aspects of style, without really changing the non-triadic assumptions which then dominated my compositional world.

It all seems, and is, a long time ago. Instead of addressing an expanding audience for unresolved dissonance, something we all expected in 1970, most composers in the late 1990's are guilty of what seemed then to be a major aesthetic crime: writing in what Graham George called "a mixed idiom". This involved mingling such then-suspect materials as triads and their higher derivatives, with the free but systematic treatment of dissonance. Having defined an idiom, a composer was expected to work within its limitations. Since control of texture and dissonance, and consistency of harmonic content were a primary goal for us post-Hindemithians, it may seem now, at century's end, that art and the science of counterpoint have passed us by.

However, in music as in other human endeavours, evolution happens without our volition, and in defiance of our control. Indeed, evolution comes *through*, not *in spite of*, the work of each generation of musicians. If the search for a convincing lyricisim, and a vigorous counterpoint, has led most of us to include in our resources materials not vastly different from Dvorak's or Gershwin's, this doesn't mean that the exploration of what Tovey called "the lean athletic style of Hindemith" was a blind alley. It taught us economy, and the primacy of line, in a way more dependent upon the ear than was some of the twelve-tone work from the same period. Along with modern jazz, and other "mixed" composers like Britten and Bartòk, it constituted a defence of melody, and of contrapuntal logic and unity, when other musicians were ignoring them in the exploitation of pure texture. And last but not least, it provided a highly appropriate method of composition for those of us (most of us, in 1970) who were excited by the unfolding study of the Baroque, of its forms and its instruments. This neo-Baroque partita shows that influence at work.

I wouldn't write these variations this way now. Indeed, given the changes in our collective musical aesthetic since they were written, I *couldn't* write them this way now. Nevertheless I believe that they are an honest work; unlike many of my other pieces from that period, I don't feel any need to rewrite them. They still seem "to work" for me, and I hope this will be true for others too.

The tune *Leoni* was adapted from a Hebrew melody in 1770, by the Rev. Thomas Olivers and Meyer Lyon, and appeared in *Sacred Harmony* in 1780. The variations were written for an organ voiced articulately on light wind-pressures, but they are intended to be played not dryly, as this may imply to some people, but with passion, a sense of the long line, and no fear of a demonstrative *rubato.*

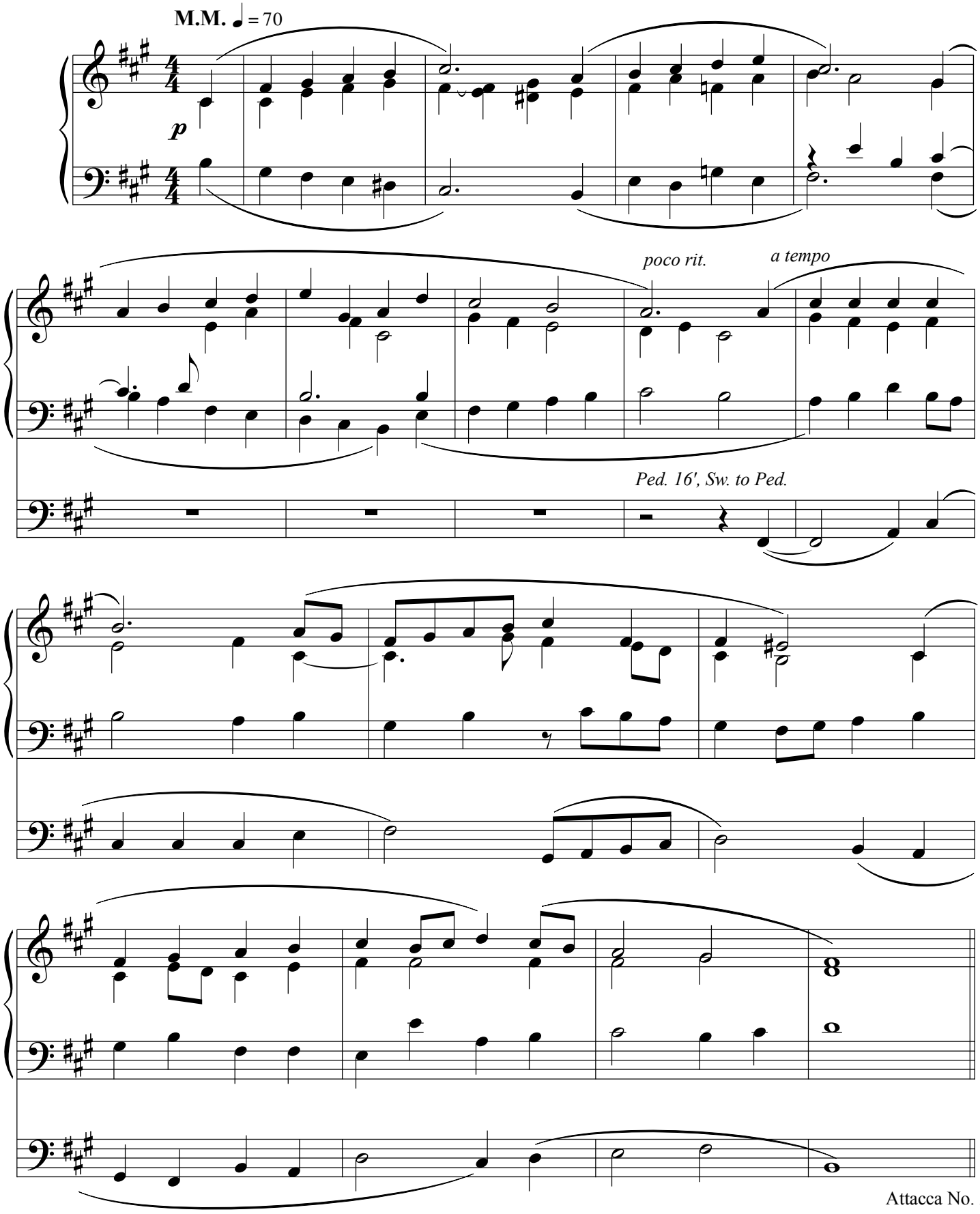
David Cameron,
Kingston, Ontario
1999

Variations on the Hebrew Melody *Leoni*

1. THEME ***Sw. 8′ or 8′8′***

David Cameron

M.M. ♩ = 70



Attacca No. 2

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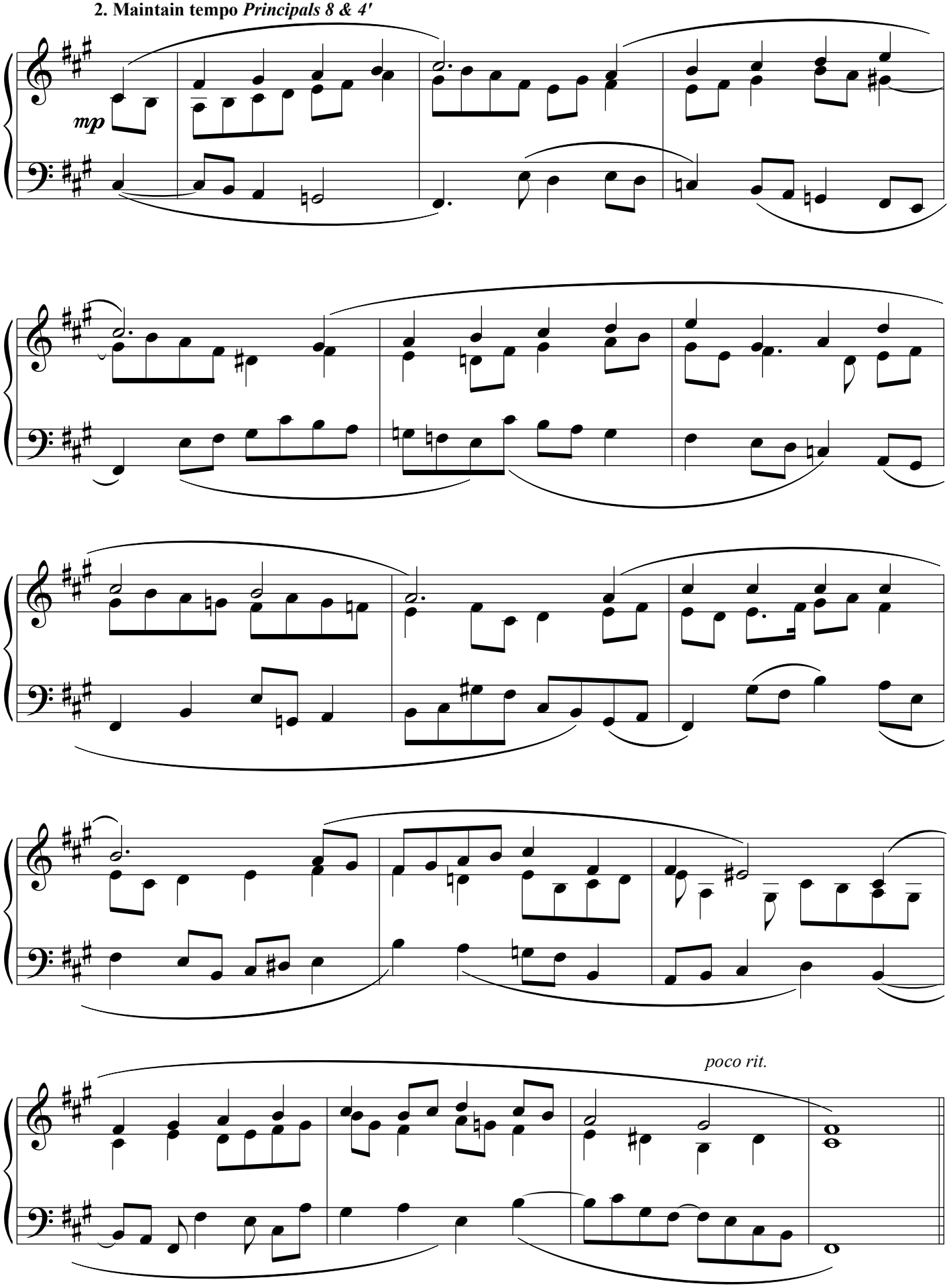
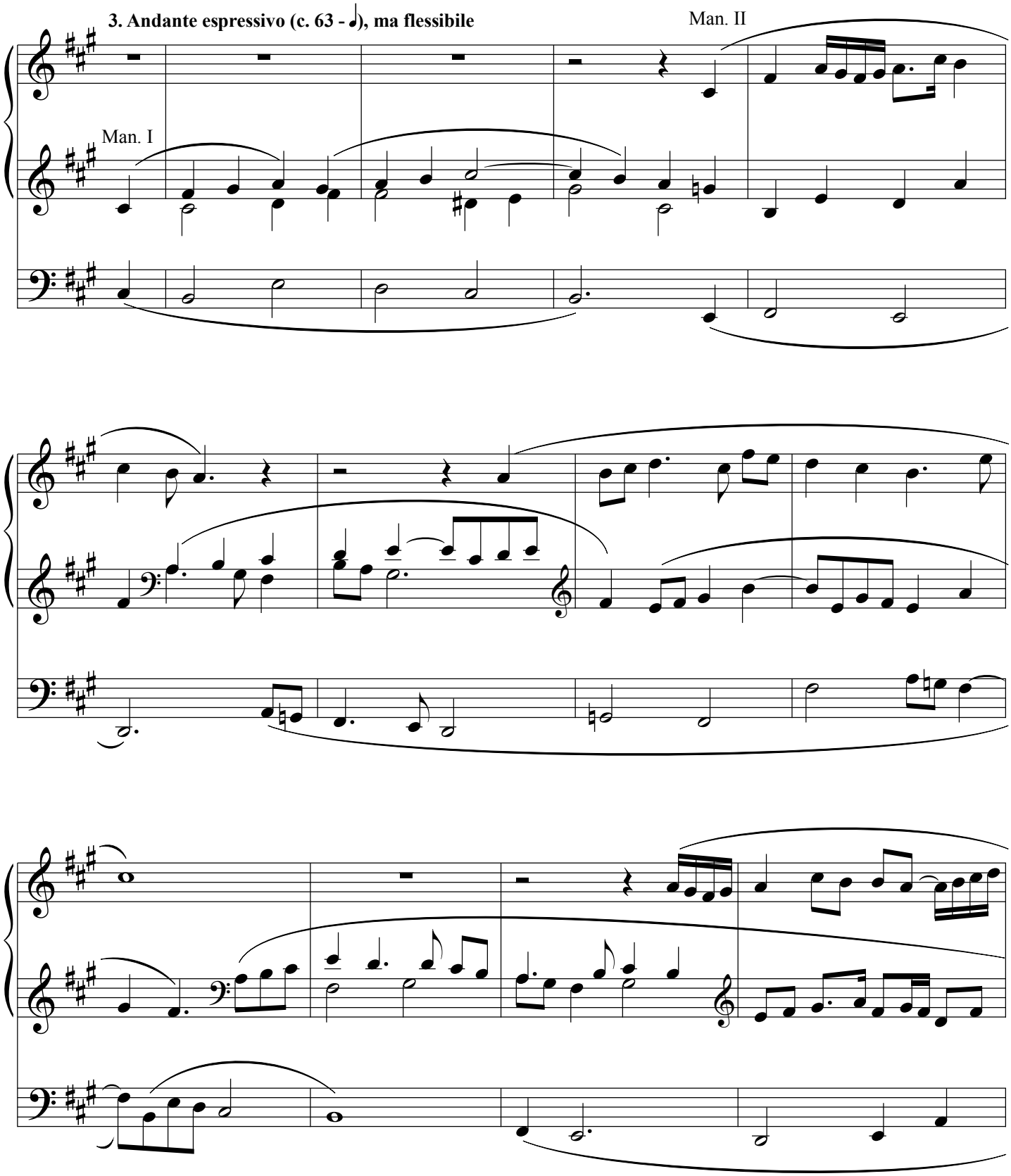
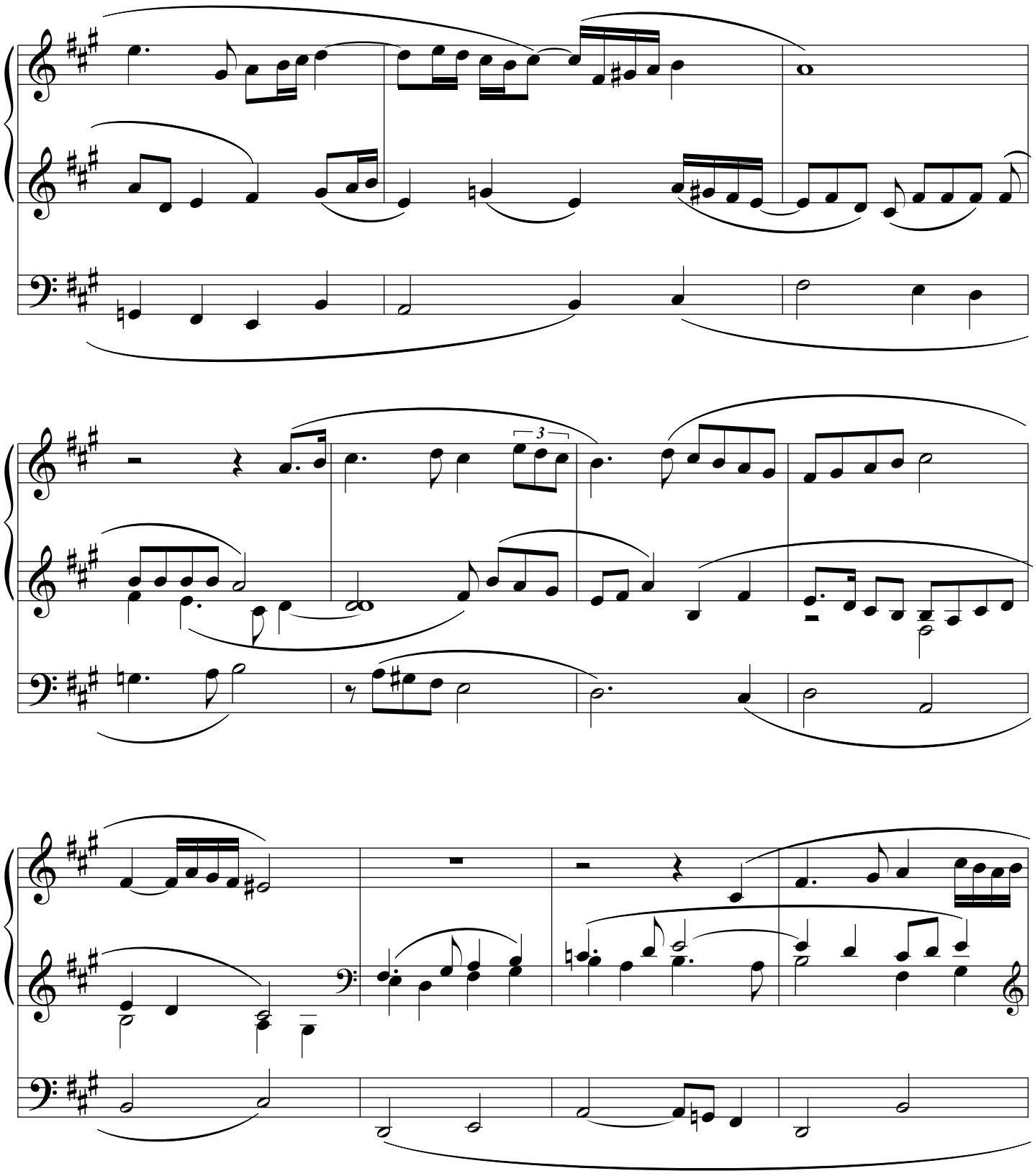
2. Maintain tempo ***Principals 8 & 4'***



Man. I 8′ accompaniment
Man. II Krummhorn or Cornet
Ped. 16′ & 8′

3. Andante espressivo (c. 63 - ♩), ma flessibile

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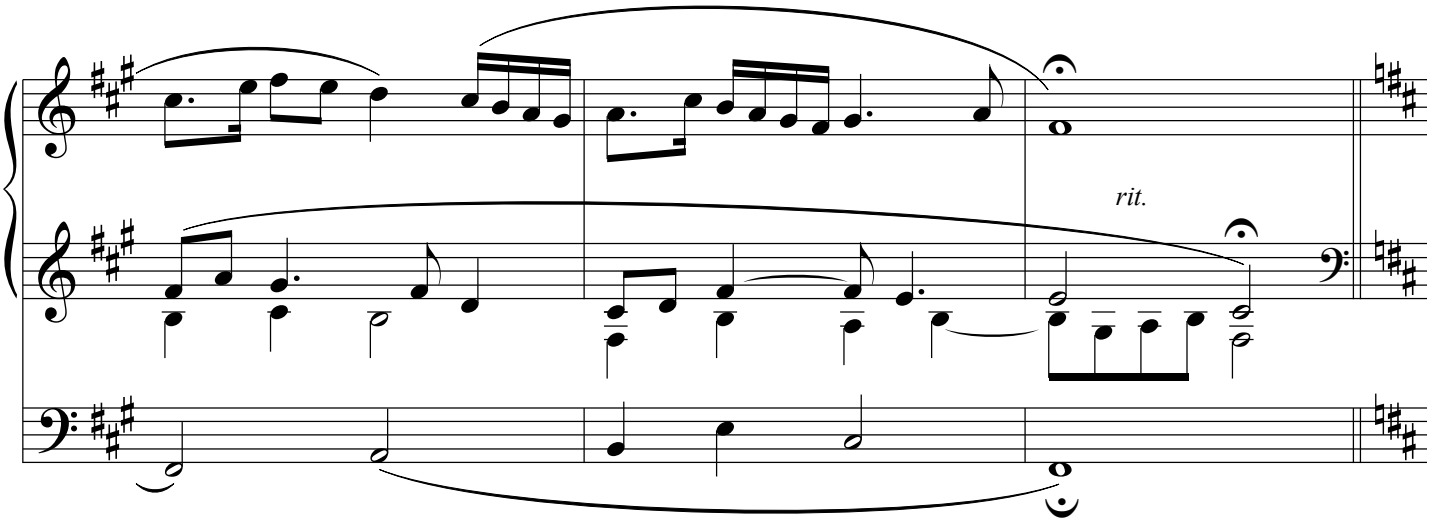
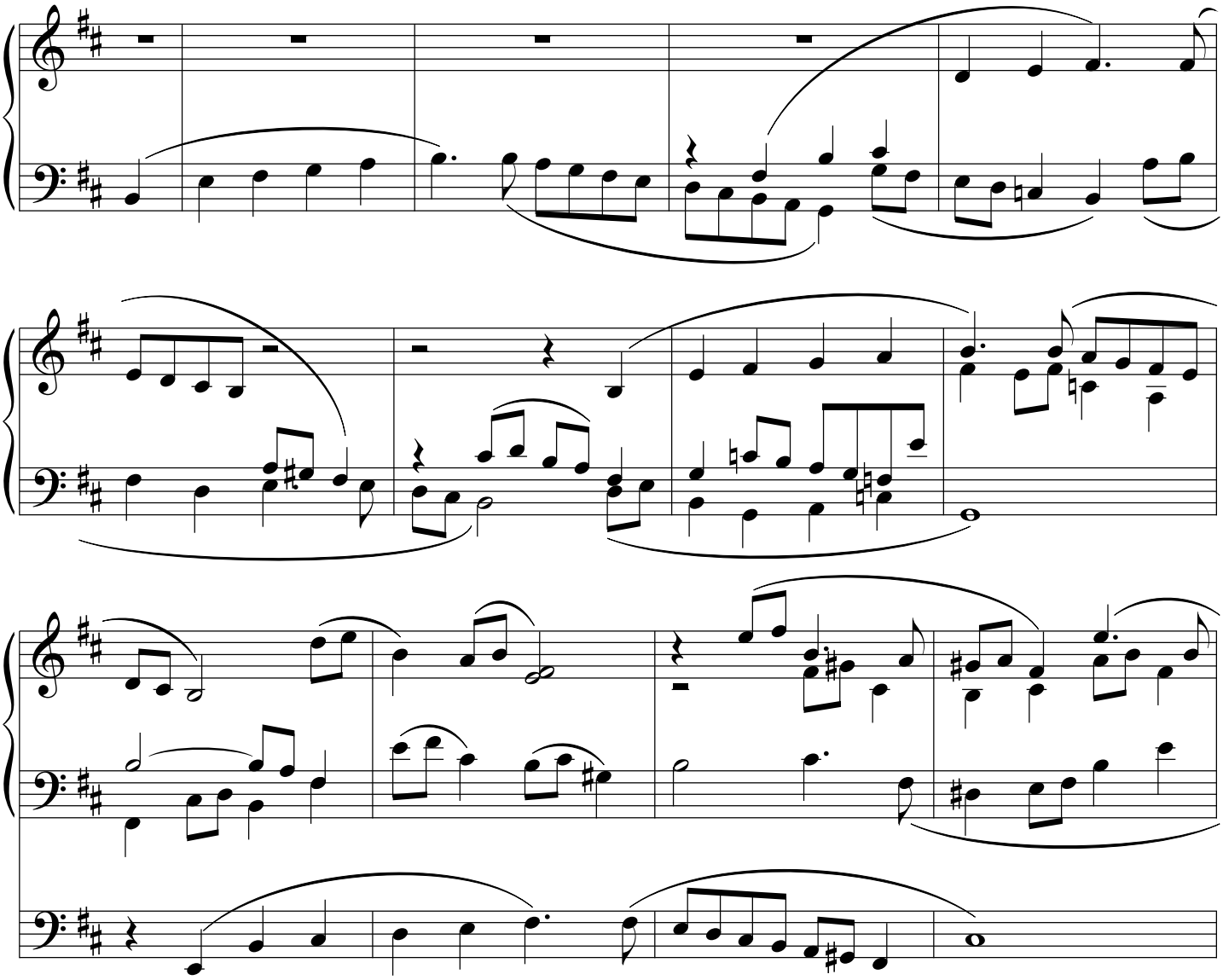
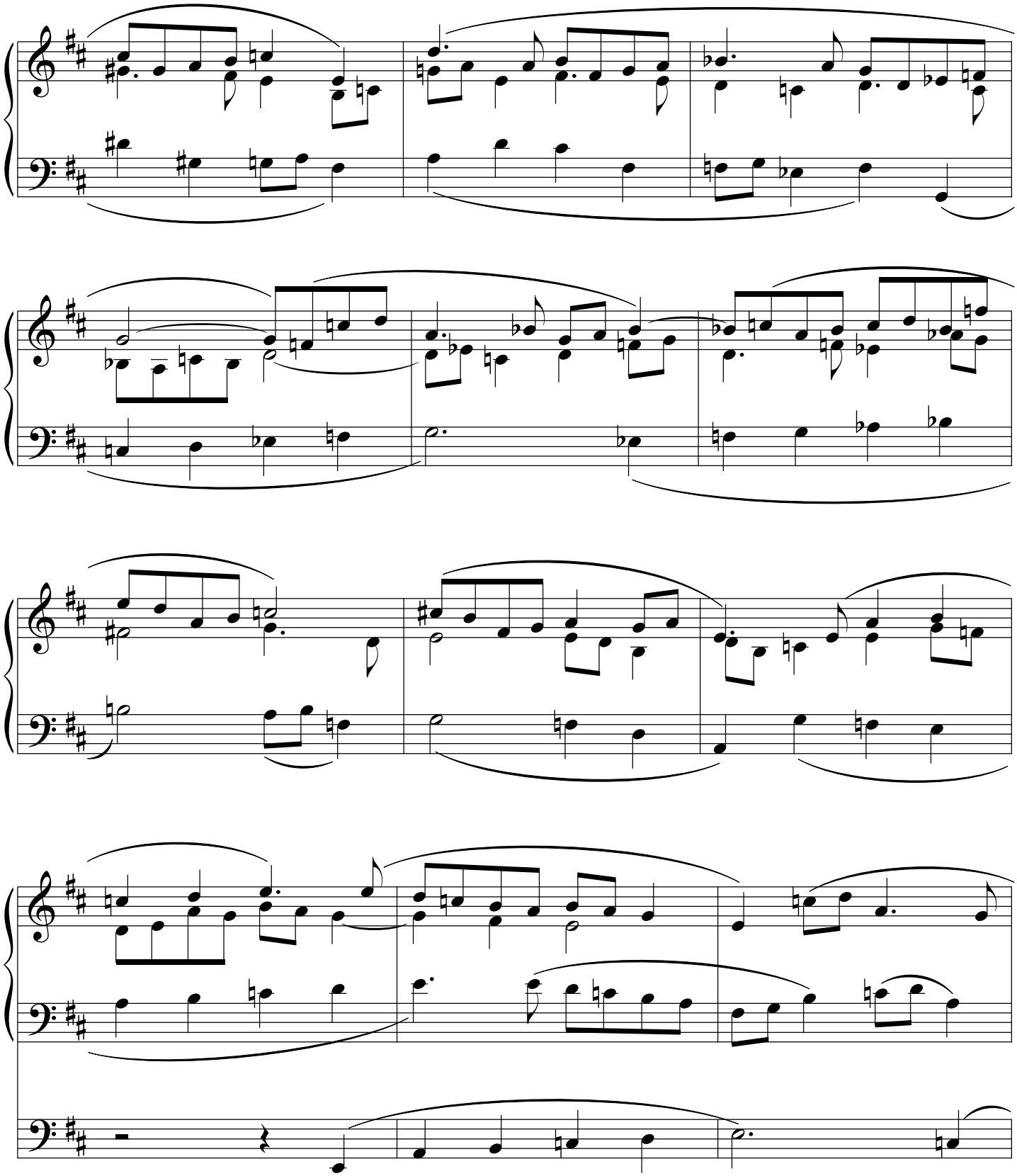
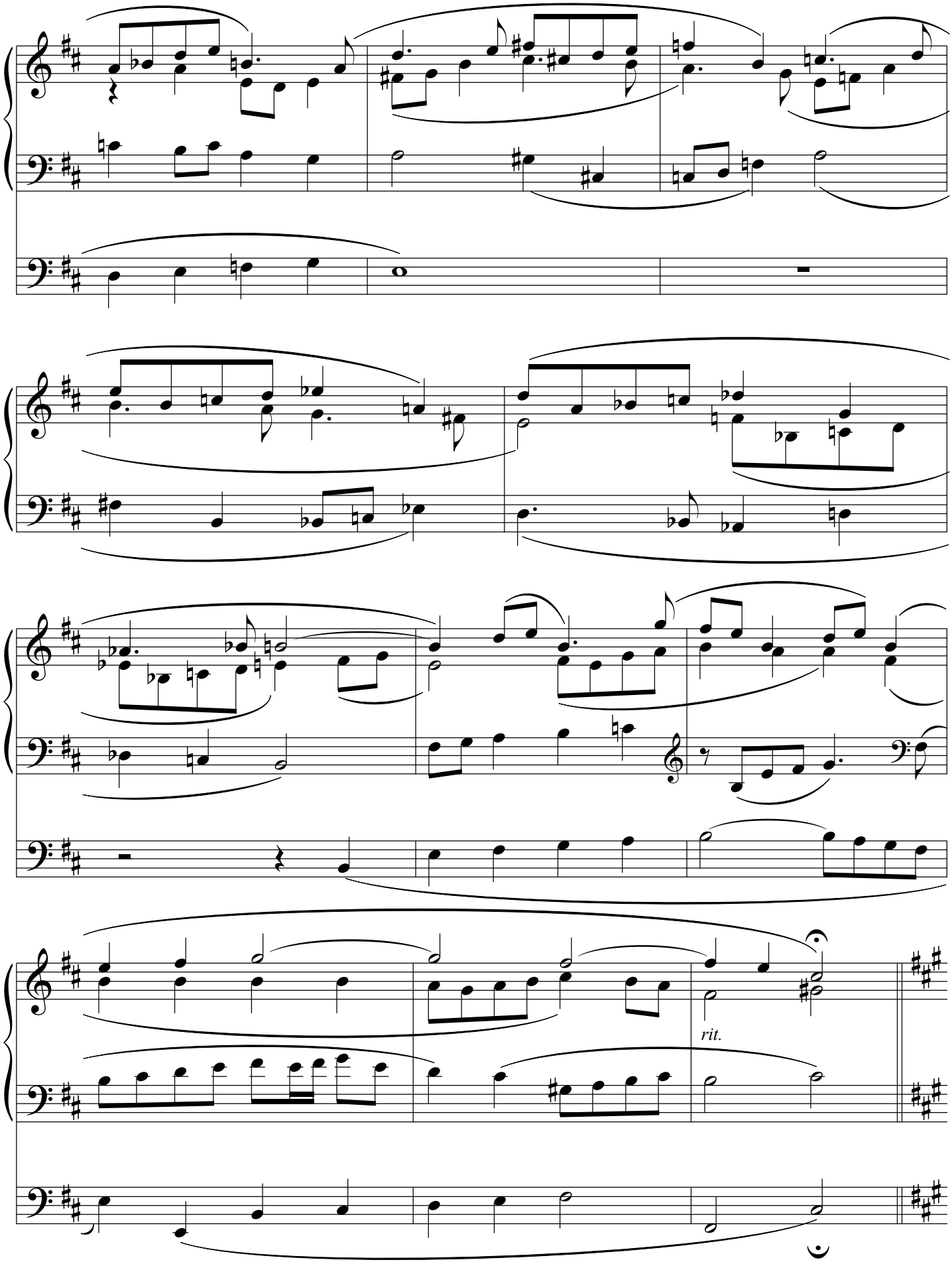


Plena to 2' or Mixture
Great ***f*** *Positiv* ***mf*** *Pedal* ***f***

4. Fugue, Allegro risoluto (c. 84 - ♩)



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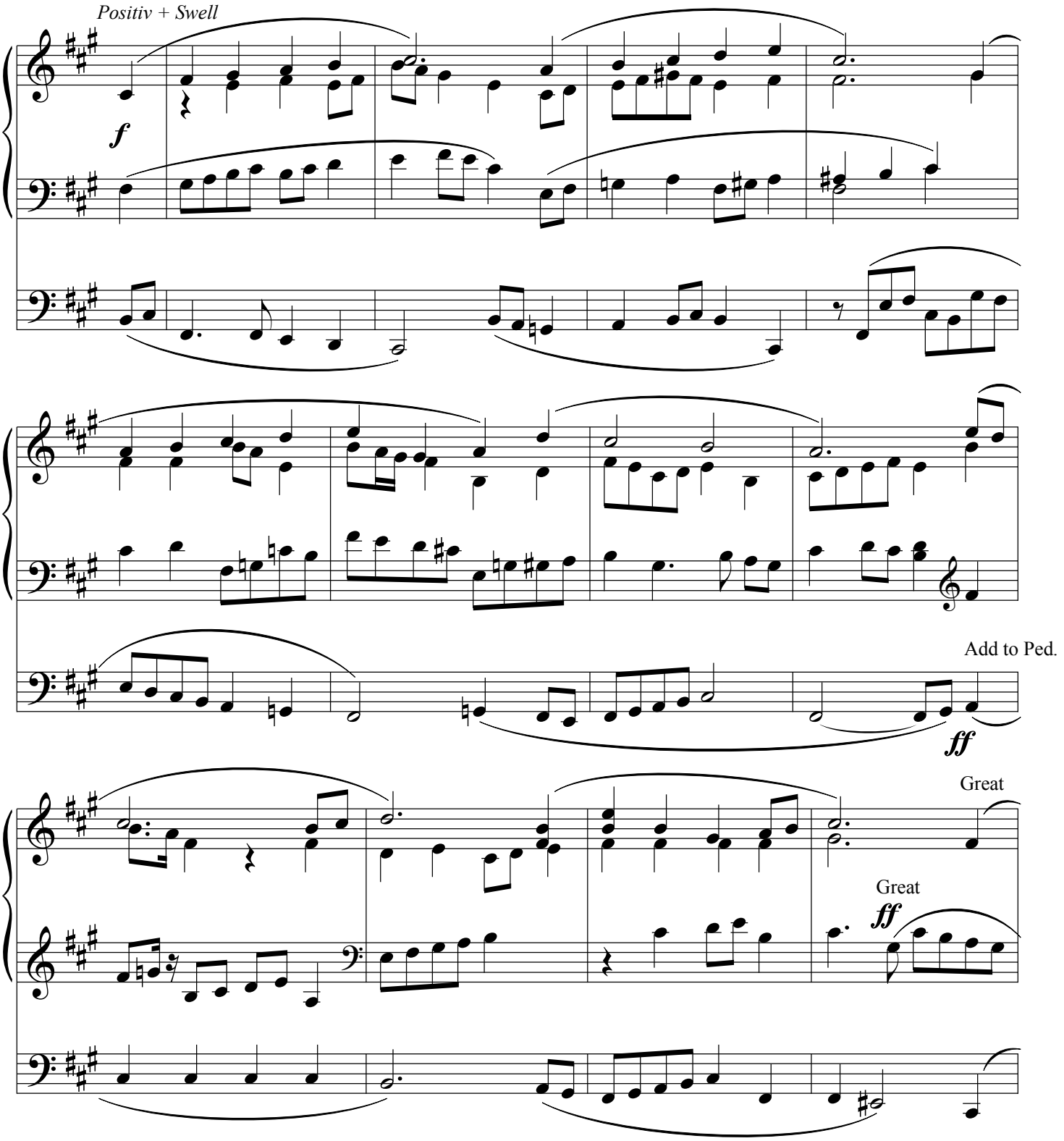
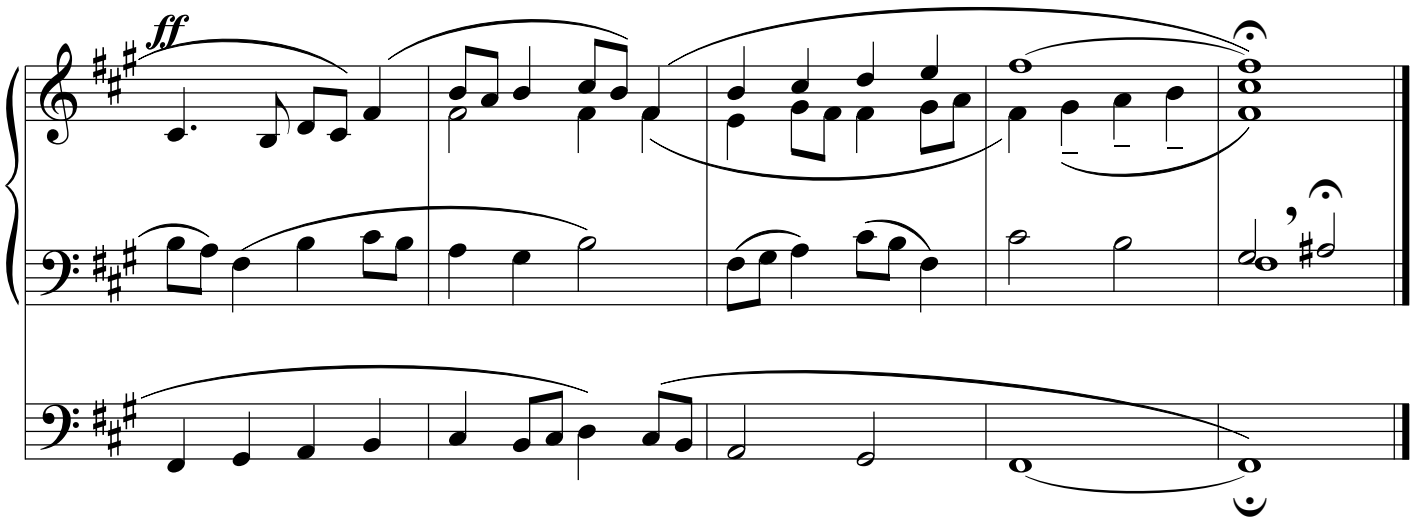
5. Chorale *Reeds and Mixtures in all divisions* M.M. ♩ = c. 80





David Cameron,
Kingston, Ontario
November 1970