Martin Widmaier

4 bloße Etüden
4 Plain Studies

für Klavier / for piano

Licensed under the
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Preliminary Note

4 bloße Etüden is hard to translate: a pun designating ‘mere’ studies (études which are merely études) but also ‘bare’ studies (études almost bare of elaboration). The purpose of such a ‘plain’ study is to establish an intimate knowledge of, and connection to, a certain technical principle. As this is not possible by threshing straw, a minimum of musical context is given – just enough to draw attention to metre and rhythm, harmony and melody, and, in consequence, to the quality of every single note.

The pieces themselves lack any irony. They deal with issues that are particularly suited for being dealt with in studies; they address these issues in an exhaustive way, carrying out, so to speak, full conjugations; and they form a whole which is more than the sum of its parts: a concise school of virtuosity. Students rendering the complete set beautifully are halfway up Mount Parnassus.

The transparency of the design invites players to strive for expertise in the art of fingering and, at the same time, explore the physiological framework, thus calling to mind both eighteenth-century keyboard treatises and twentieth-century textbooks for pianists. While the musical language remains conventional (a decision rooted in the fact that the layout of the keyboard and the core of the repertoire are tonal), the longing for unity of shape and content seems very contemporary to me.

Please note that the reason for the use of continuation symbols is not to save ink but to make you think.

Martin Widmaier

First version of this publication: 2020
Last update: 7 June 2025

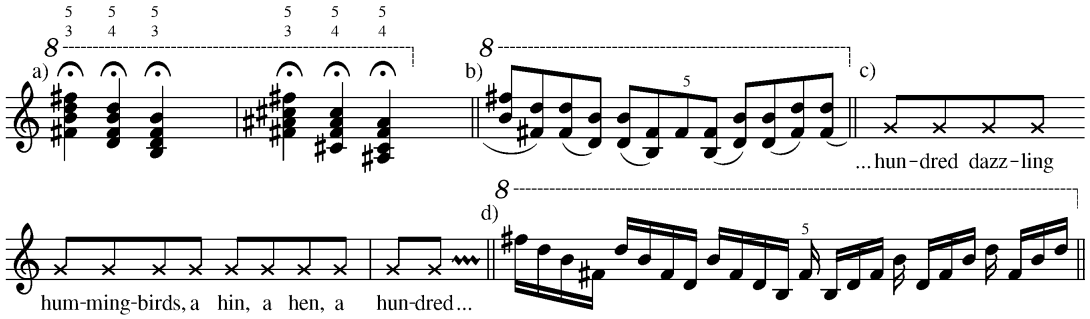
Contents

No. 1 4
No. 2 6
No. 3 10
No. 4 12

Individual Comments

Nos. 1 and 3 address melodic-minor scales (please see my online essay *Scales for Brain Users*). In schoolbooks, melodic minor has two faces: when ascending, the sixth and seventh degrees of the scale are raised; when descending, they are lowered. This is what makes the scale 'melodic'. Since the descending form is identical with natural minor, and natural minor equivalent to its relative major, just the ascending form needs special attention. And since it is wise to know a business forwards and backwards, the ascending form should be practised in the opposite direction, too. As if to confirm this, real-life melodic minor often features raised sixth and seventh degrees of the scale regardless of movement direction – Bach and Beethoven, among others, used this beautiful scale a lot. Both studies are governed by a simple precept: one hand takes hold of a minor triad in root position; the other hand plays the respective melodic-minor scale in its most lucid form.

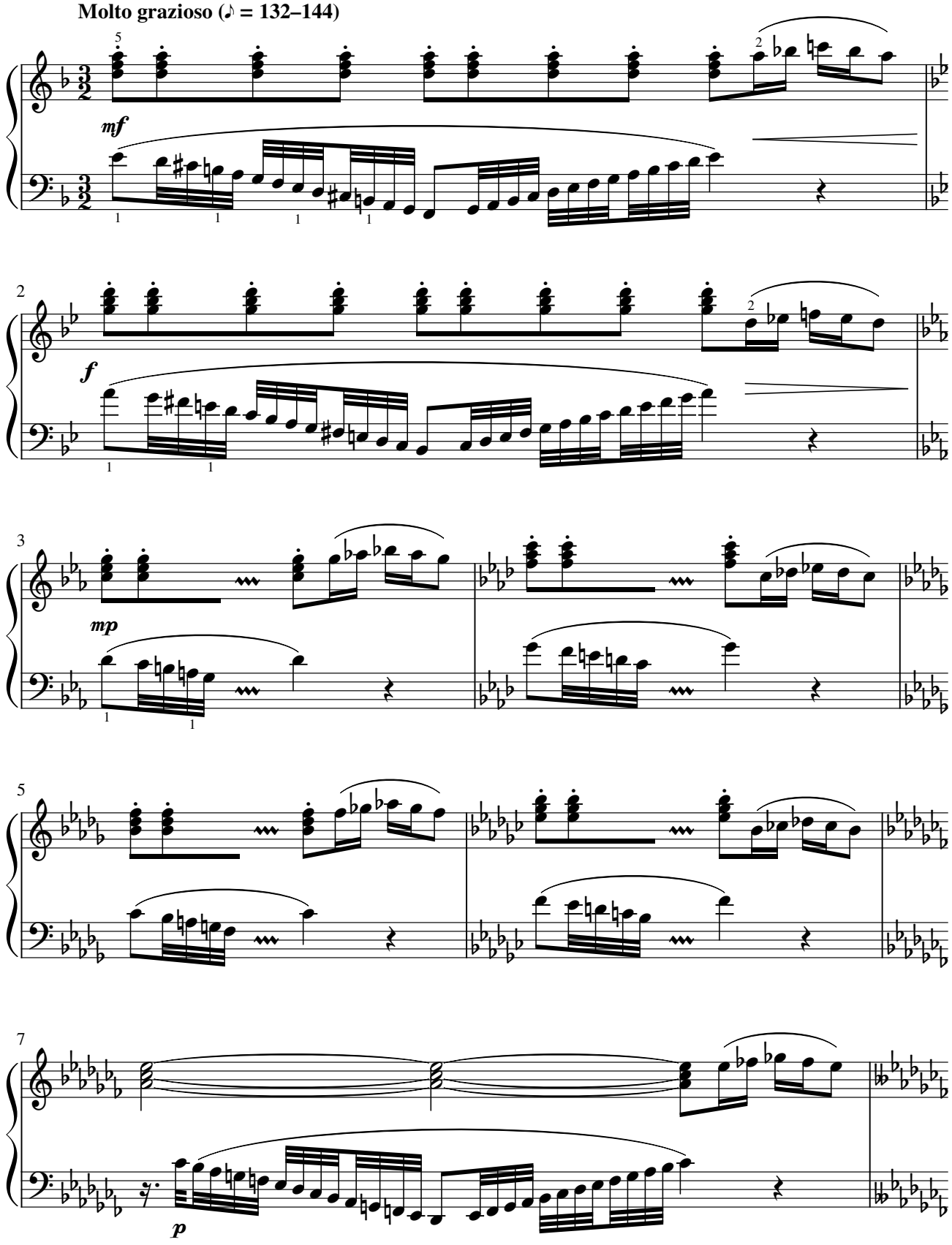
No. 2 deals with broken chords in zigzag mode, and with it with forearm rotation; music-wise, it awakens memories from *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (Franz Schubert) and *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Ennio Morricone). The following, exemplary exercises refer to the right-hand part of bars 17/18:



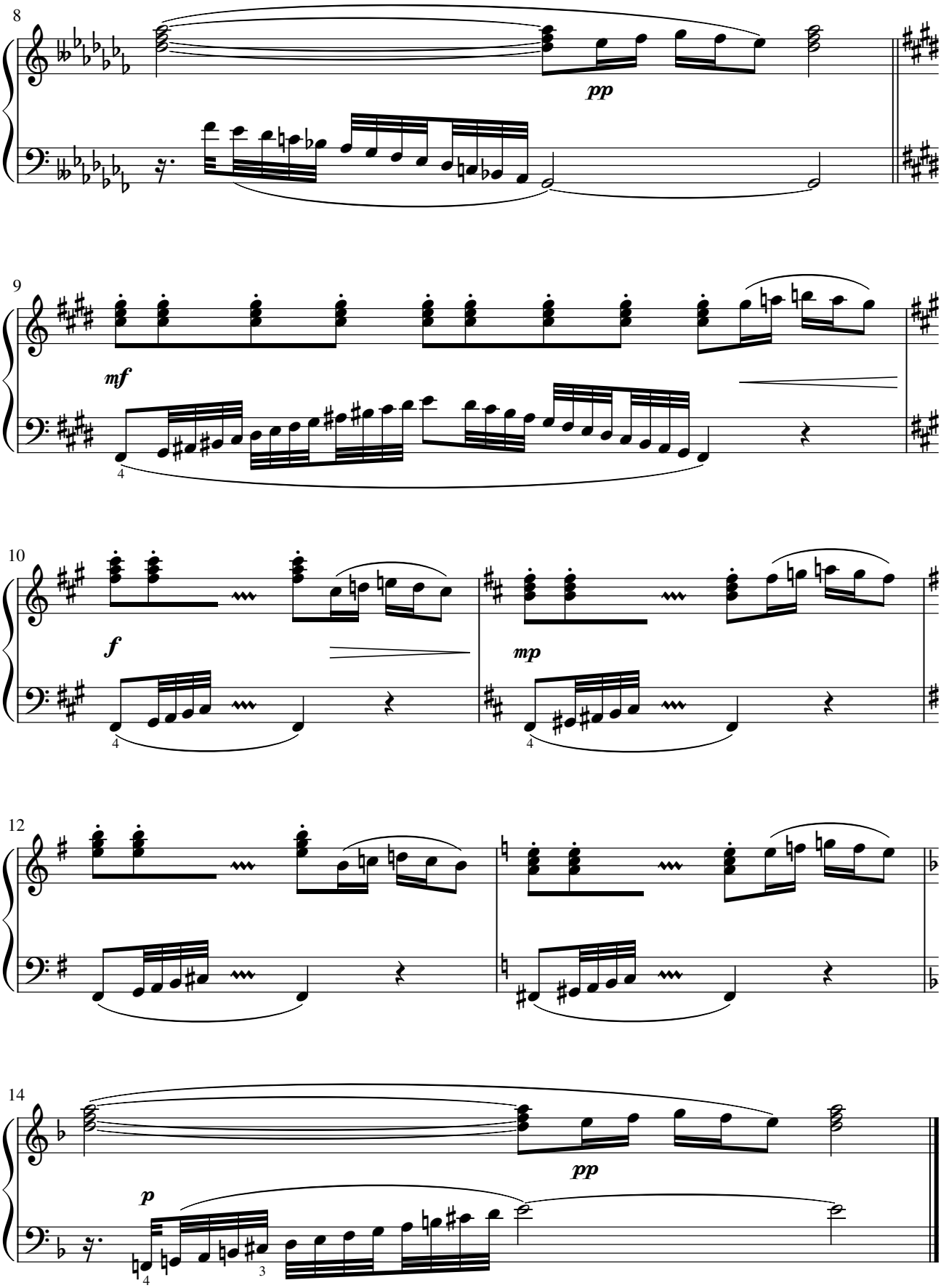
Exercise a) is about the fingering. In octave-framed minor and major triads, the question is '3 or 4'. Have patience while scanning for an answer – as you may be accustomed to an ever-present middle finger, do not go for the solution which 'feels comfortable' but the one which 'looks good'. In exercise b), familiarise yourself with the rear area of the keys wherever reasonable. Exercise c) shows how phrasing can be explored through a simple verse. Exercise d) is just one example of many possible variations.

No. 4 tackles chromatic double-note scales, featuring so-called 'blind' thirds. This study is perfect for developing a good grasp of the issue. In other pieces, practise with 'blind' thirds first and fill up the structure later, either with the 'Moszkowski' index finger (very good in outward direction) or the 'Chopin' thumb (rather good in inward direction).

1

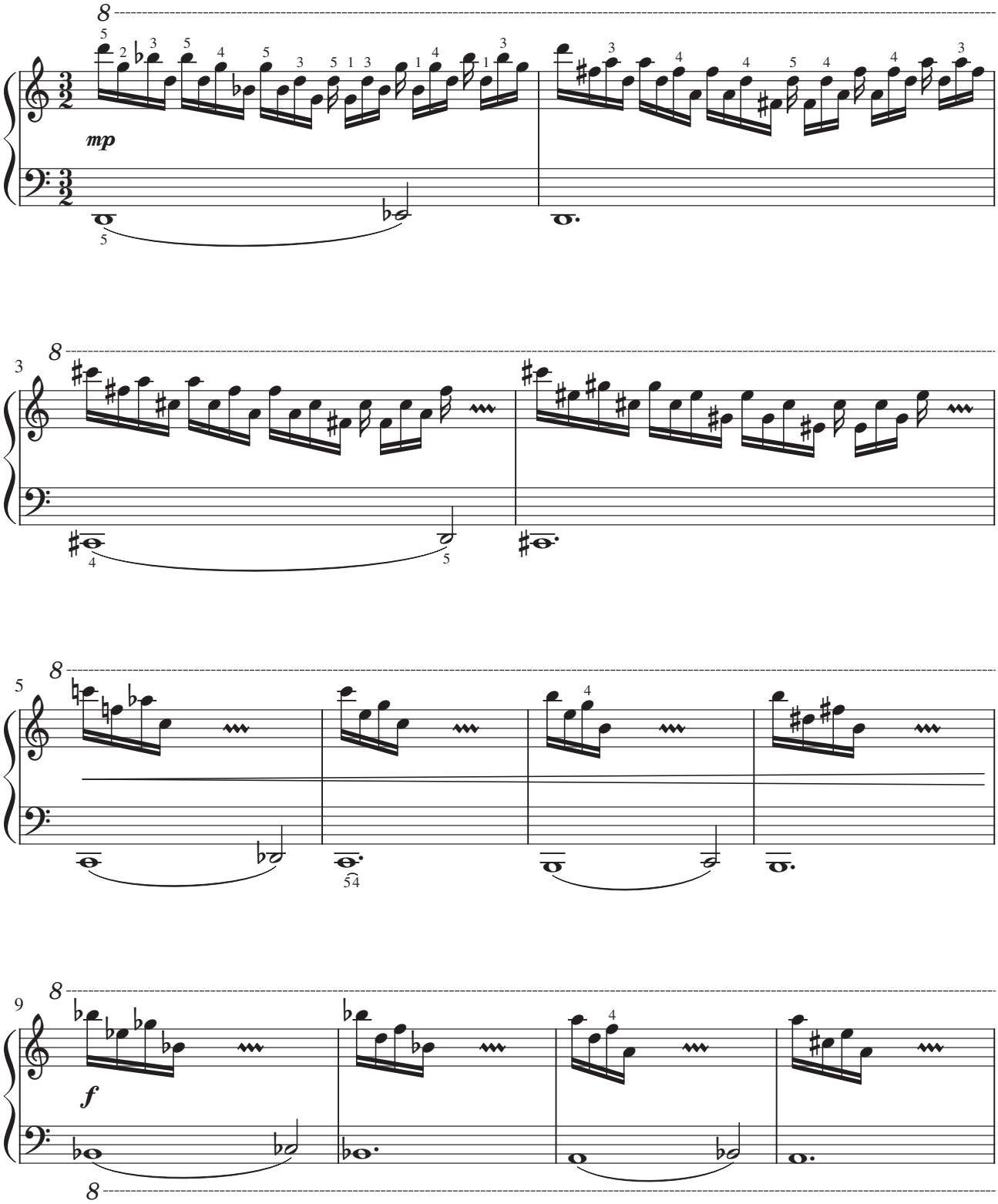


Martin Widmaier, Vienna 2014

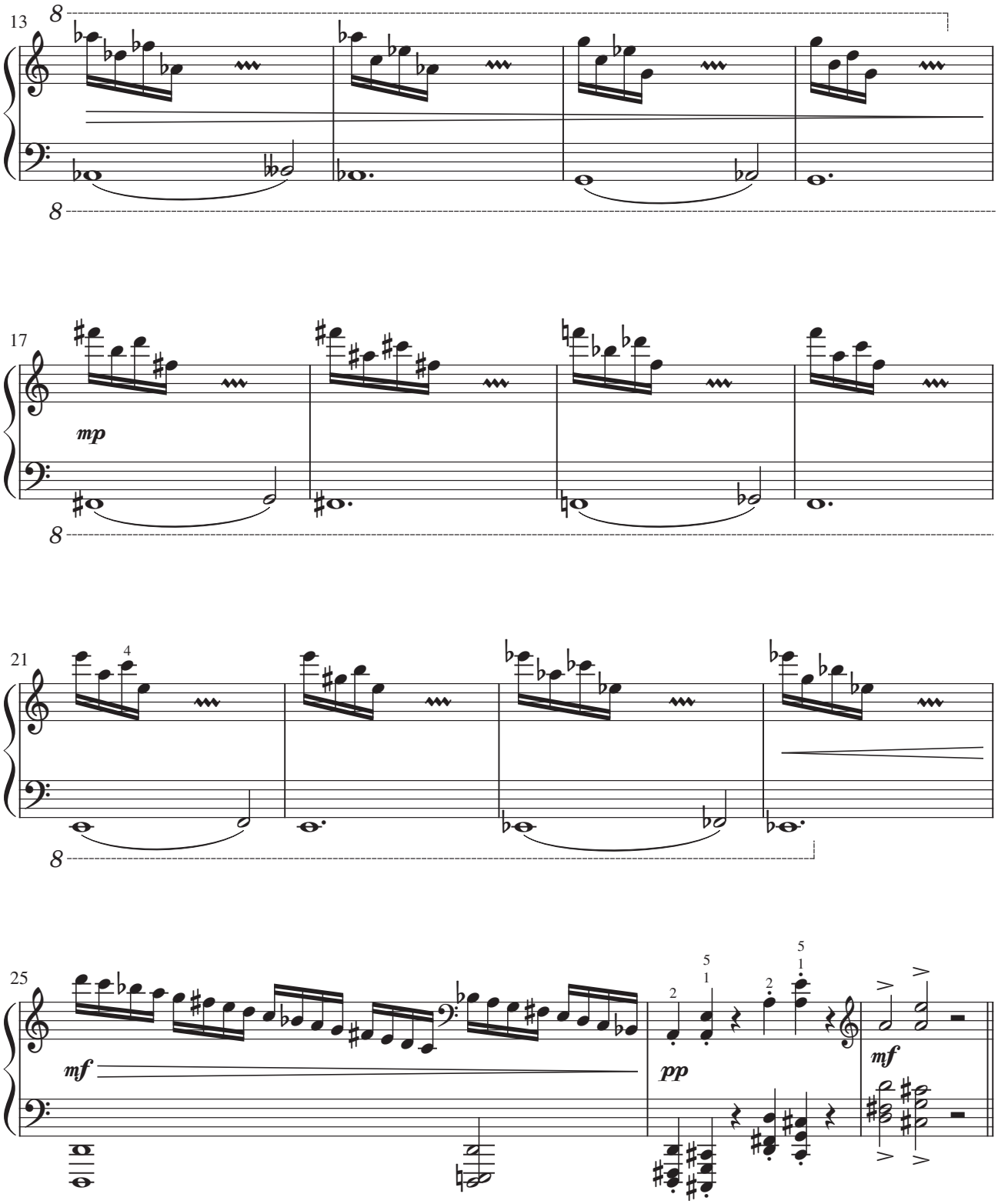


Martin Widmaier, Vienna 2014

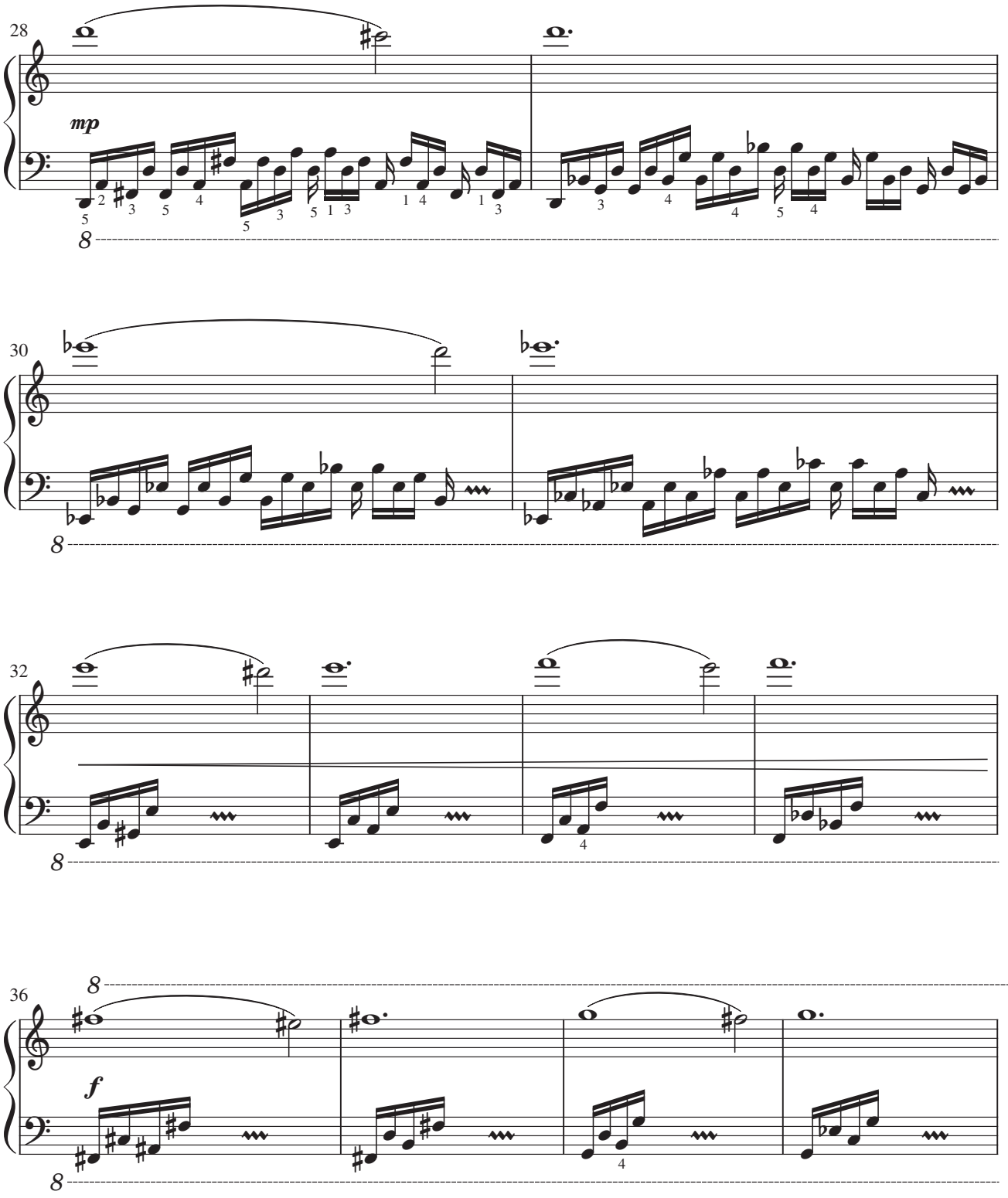
Maintain suspense (♩ = 108–120)



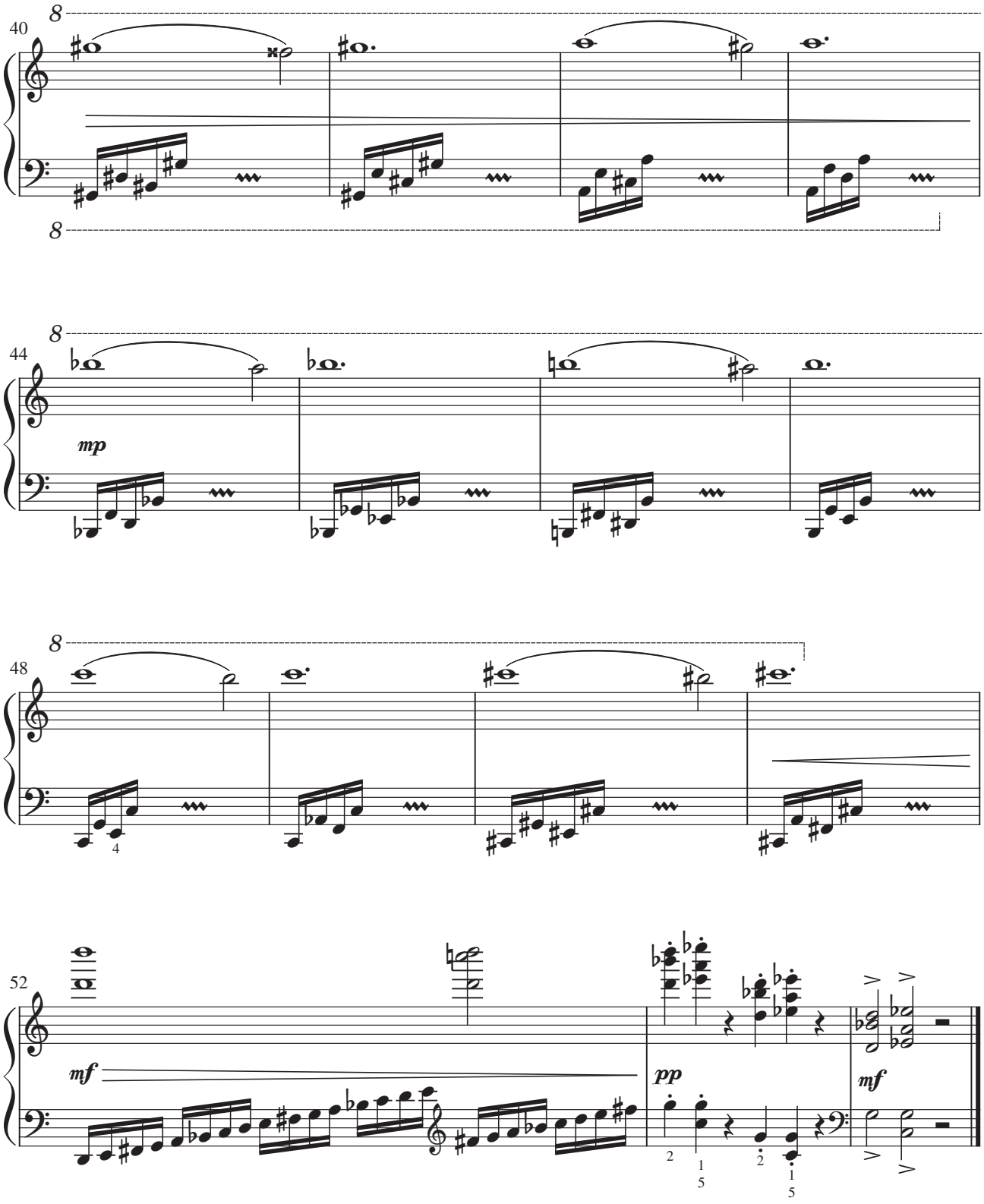
Martin Widmaier, Mainz 2020



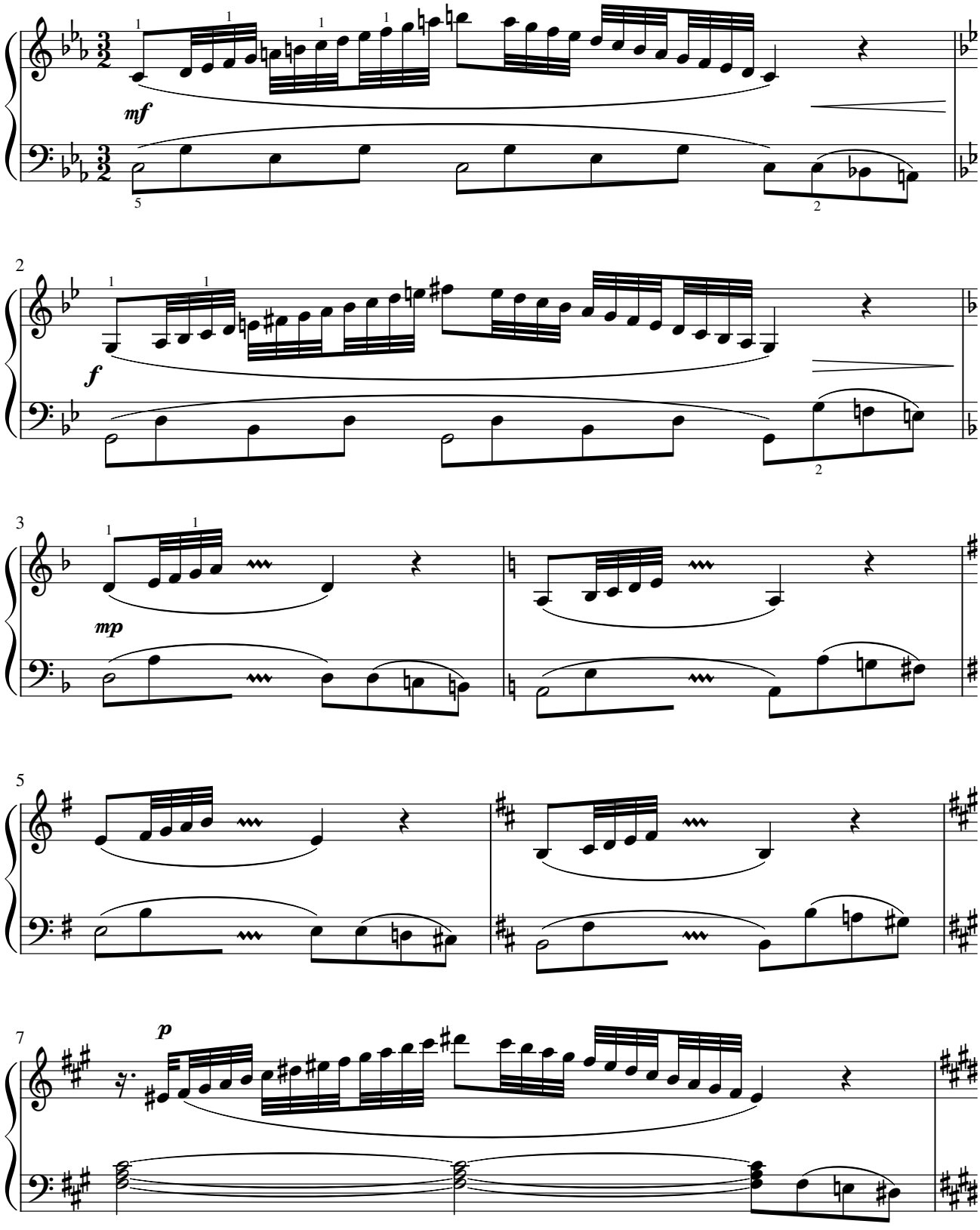
Martin Widmaier, Mainz 2020



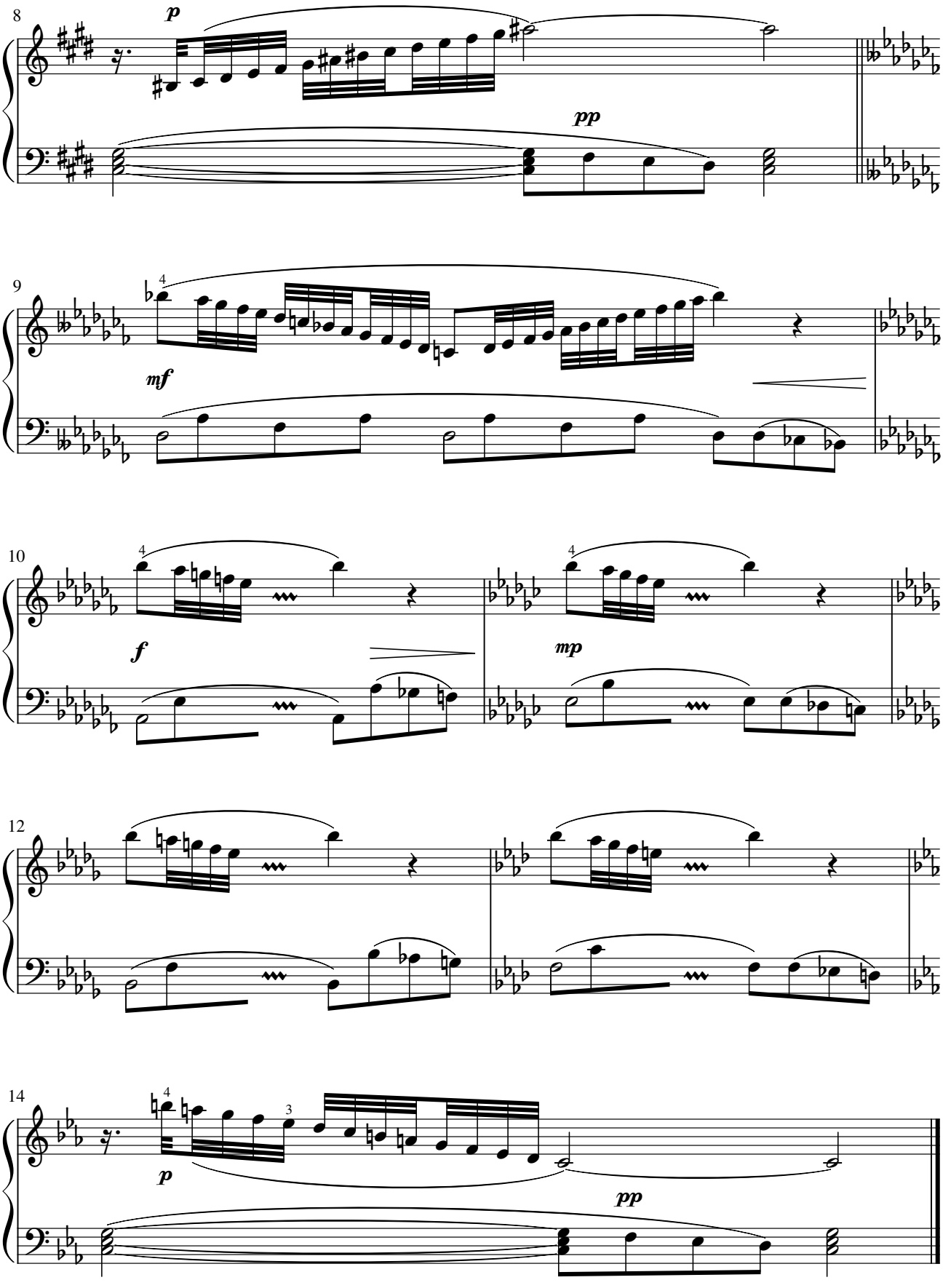
Martin Widmaier, Mainz 2020


40
8
8
44
mp
8
48
4
52
mf
pp
mf

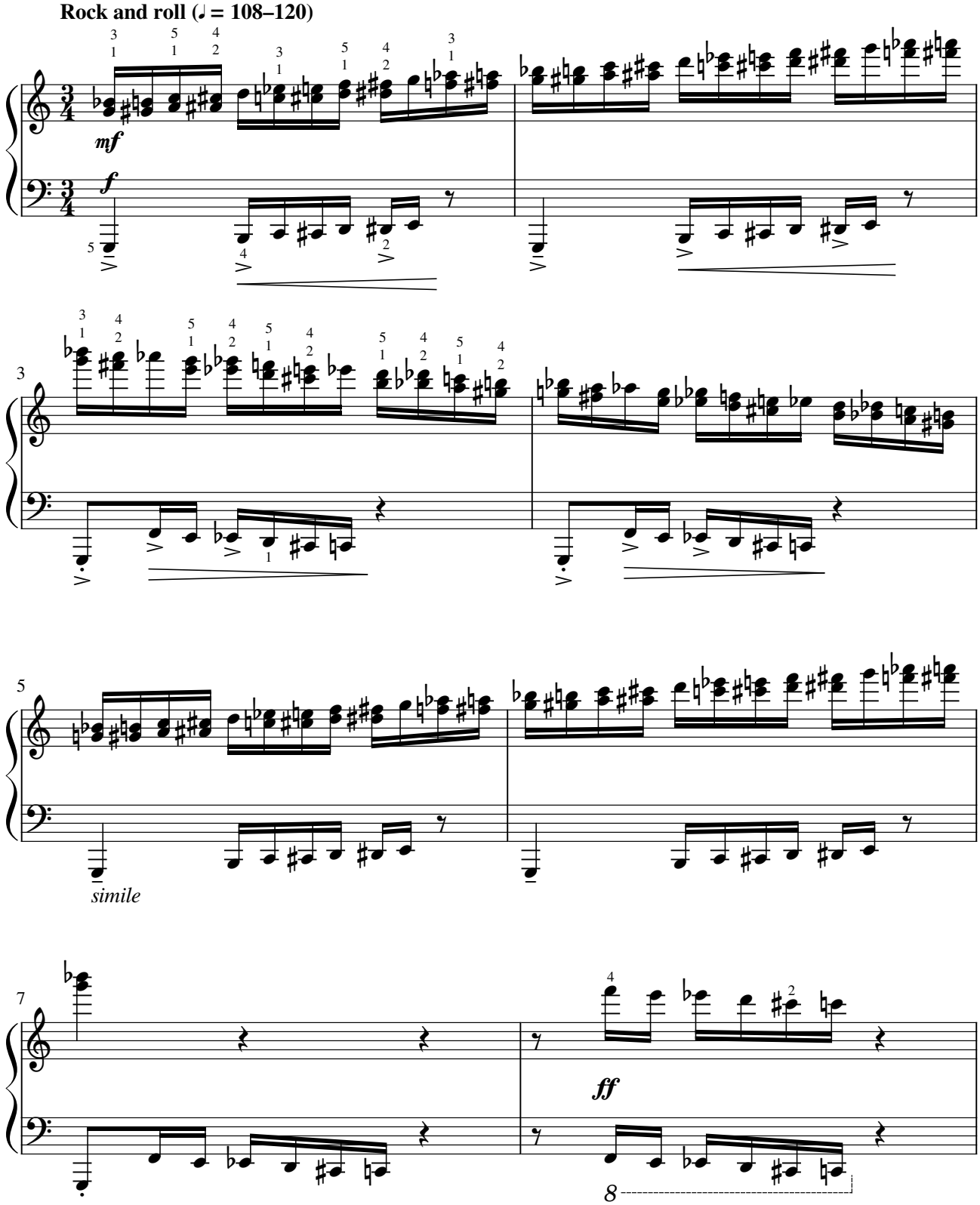
Malinconico (♪ = 132–144)

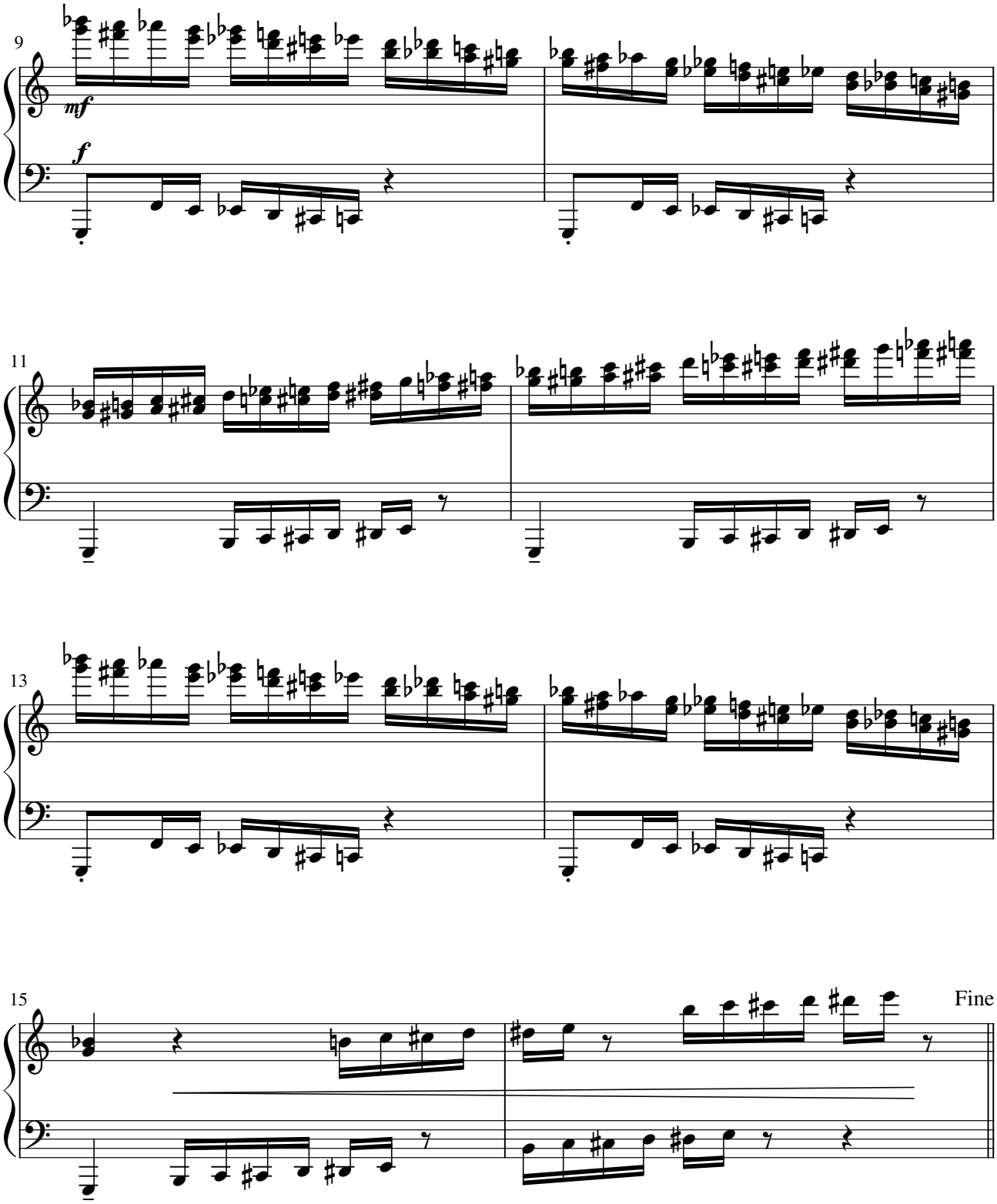


Martin Widmaier, Vienna 2014

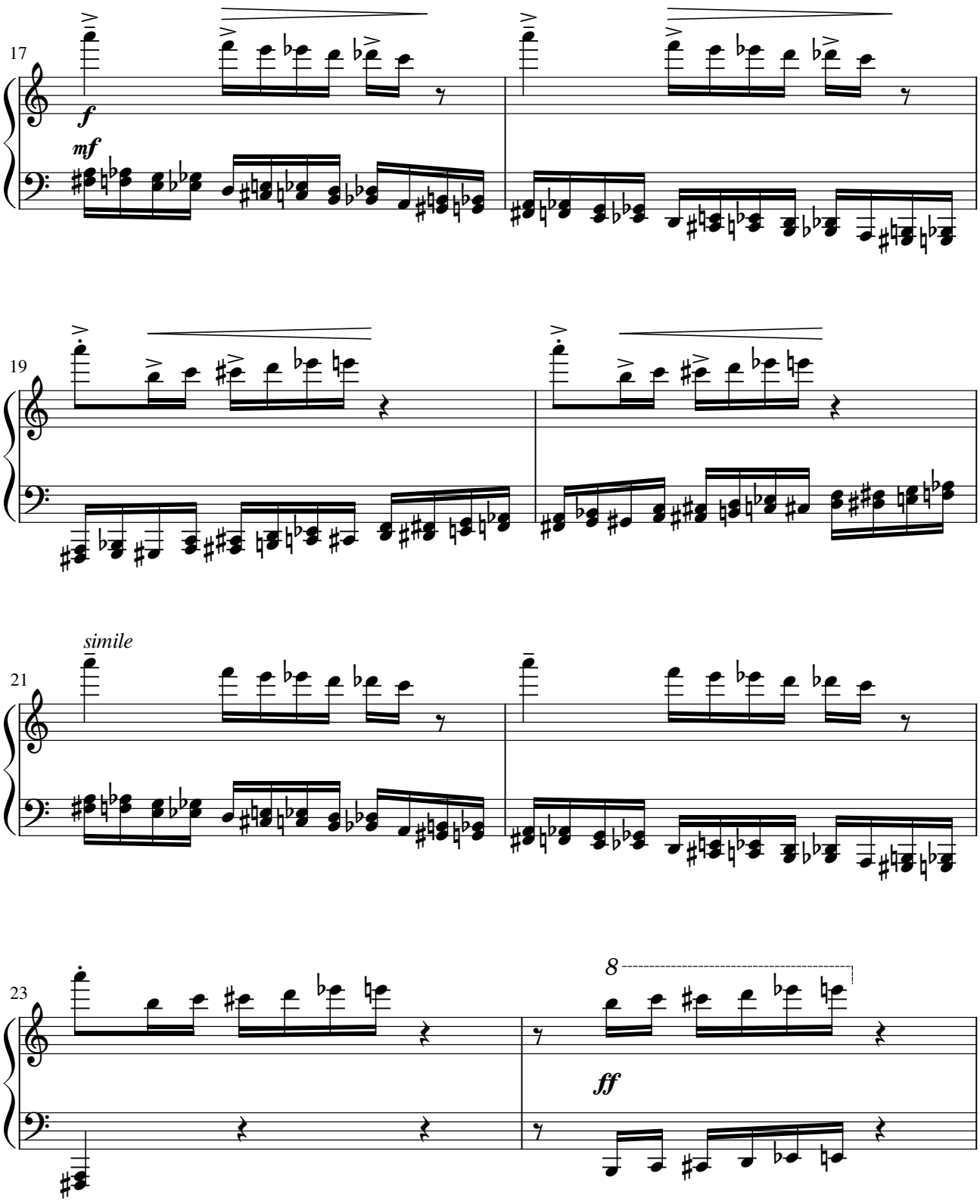


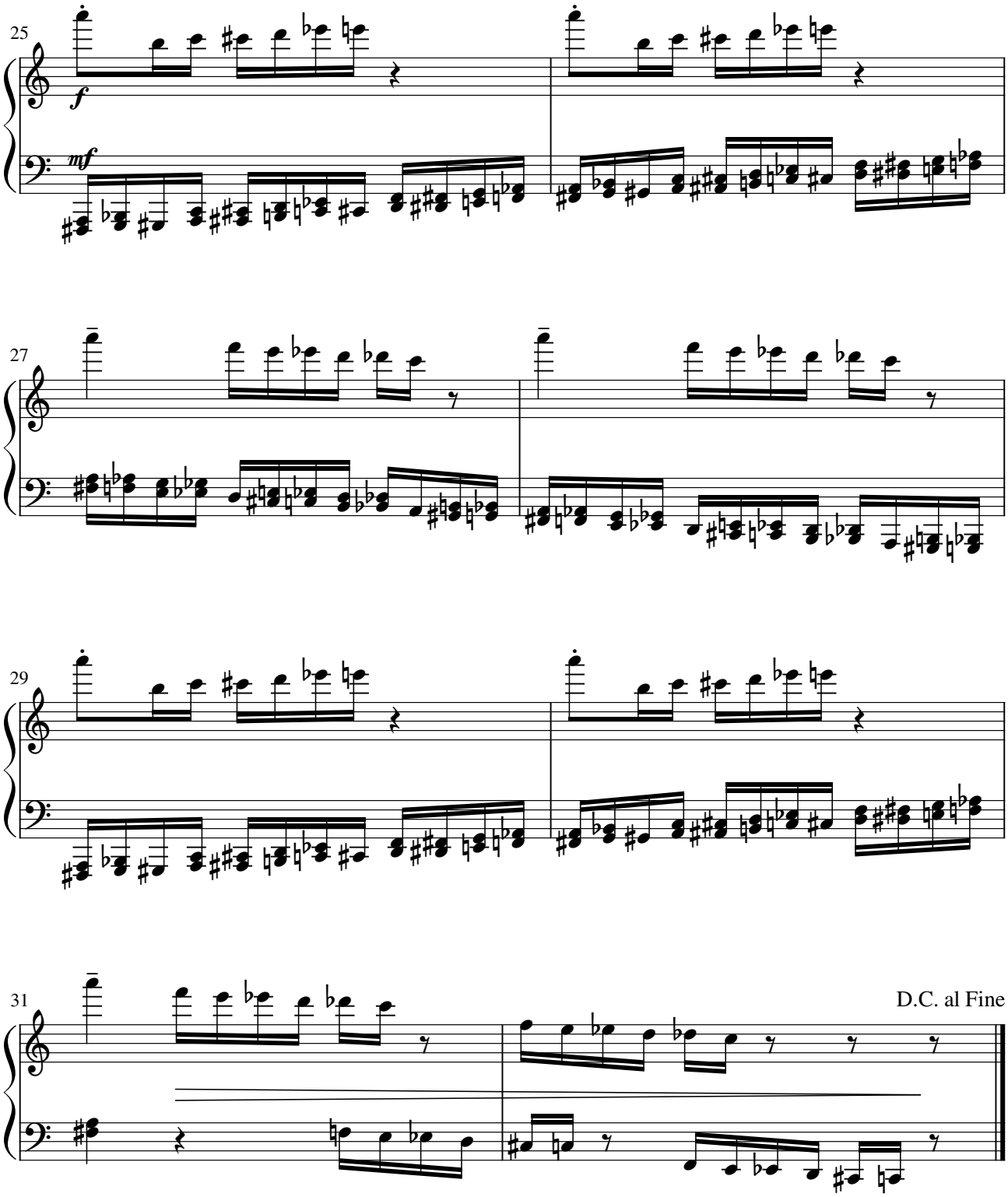
Martin Widmaier, Vienna 2014


Rock and roll (♩ = 108–120)
mf
f
simile
ff



Martin Widmaier, Mainz 2020


17
f
mf
19
simile
21
23
8
ff



Martin Widmaier, Mainz 2020

Offline Publications

Orange Blue: *In Love with a Dream. Songbook*,
with piano arrangements by Burkhard Scheibe and Martin Widmaier, Peer, Hamburg 2001

Martin Widmaier: *Das kleine Land* (2 volumes), Peters, Frankfurt 2005/2006

Martin Widmaier: *24 Eight-Bar Studies after Frédéric Chopin*, Peters, Frankfurt 2012

Claude Debussy: *Préludes for Piano* (2 volumes), edited by Thomas Kabisch,
with fingerings by Martin Widmaier, Bärenreiter, Kassel 2014/2021

Martin Widmaier: *Basic Scales for Piano*, Naresuan University Publishing House, Phitsanulok 2015

Martin Widmaier: *Zur Systemdynamik des Übens*, Schott, Mainz 2016

August Halm: *Klavierübung* 1918/1919, edited by Thomas Kabisch, Linde Großmann
and Martin Widmaier, Ortus, Beeskow 2019

For **Online Publications**, see www.martinwidmaier.de