MasterClass

HERBIE HANCOCK

Teaches Jazz

ABOUT
HERBIE HANCOCK

Herbert Jeffrey (Herbie) Hancock was born on April 12, 1940 in Chicago, Illinois. He was named after the singer Herb Jeffries. He started playing classical piano at age seven and switched to jazz in his teenage years after being amazed at watching a classmate improvise. Herbie got his first break playing with trumpeter Donald Byrd's band while Byrd's regular pianist was stuck in a blizzard. Herbie then played in Miles Davis' band, which came to be known as the "Second Great Quintet," from 1963 to 1968. Herbie is a composer of multiple crossover hits that transcended the jazz genre, including "Watermelon Man," "Cantaloupe Island," and "Rockit." He is credited with introducing the use of synthesizers into serious jazz playing. Herbie has collaborated with a diverse group of musicians, from jazz greats like Wayne Shorter and Chick Corea, to Joni Mitchell, Christina Aguilera, and Flying Lotus. He has won an Oscar®, 14 Grammys, is a Kennedy Center Honoree, and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. He is a devoted Nichiren Buddhist and Chairman of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz.

THINGS YOU MIGHT NEED

CLASS WORKBOOK

This printable PDF is filled with assignments, sheet music, and places for you to take notes as you go.

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

While we've included a notes page after each chapter, you may want to have a journal, manuscript notebook or blank sheet music nearby for moments of inspiration.

LESSON DISCUSSIONS

Share your works in progress and ask your peers for help and support if you've hit a roadblock.

THE HUB

Continue connecting with your MasterClass peers by using our community features.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Welcome to Herbie Hancock's MasterClass! Use this workbook to follow along with the video lessons and complete the assignments to put Herbie's advice and experience into practice. We have provided sheet music to accompany Herbie's performances and drills. If you're feeling inspired, you can even write your own music using the notes pages.

2.

A HUMAN APPROACH TO MUSIC

"Jazz is the greatest of all human expressions."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Herbie's Epiphany
- Music Is a Story About Life

CHAPTER REVIEW

A lifetime in jazz has led Herbie to a deeply personal definition of the art form. For him, jazz isn't about complex harmonies and intricate rhythms; it's about the simple but often difficult act of communicating one's human experience to others. As he sees it, jazz is an opportunity to share what one has seen, felt, and endured in life through music.

Herbie's greatest creative epiphany came when he stopped seeing himself solely as a jazz musician and embraced all the diverse aspects of his identity. In his case, that meant seeing himself as a father, a husband, a son, a friend, and many other things. More importantly, it meant seeing himself as a human being—just like anyone and everyone else. Thinking about oneself as more than simply a musician is the first step toward making music that connects with the widest possible human audience.

Humans communicate and understand each other through stories. Your music should tell a story that's uniquely your own. That's the key to developing your sound. Try to spend less time and effort focusing on the technical details of your music and more time focusing on what story you're trying to tell. When you're listening or composing, use your ears and your heart (not your rational intellect) to judge whether a piece of music speaks to you.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- If you haven't already, start exploring Herbie's diverse and legendary body of work. Listen to his early solo recordings, which have a classic post-bop sound (*Takin' Off*, *Maiden Voyage*). Explore the Miles Davis Quintet, which rewrote many of jazz's traditional rules about rhythm and harmony (*E.S.P.*, *Nefertiti*, *Filles de Kilimanjaro*). Check out Herbie's pioneering work in funk and fusion with the Headhunters and Mwandishi bands (*Headhunters*, *Sextant*, *Mwandishi*), and see how he's crossed genres and built unexpected musical bridges in his recent recordings (*Possibilities*, *River: The Joni Letters*).

2.

A HUMAN APPROACH TO MUSIC

TAKE IT FURTHER CONT'D

- Herbie played on many records, both as a solo artist and sideman. If you have a favorite recording that's not listed here, make sure to share it with your classmates in The Hub.
- As you're listening to Herbie's music, start to think about the stories his songs are telling. What do you feel when you hear these recordings? What do they tell you about who he is and what he's been through? What aspects of your own story help you connect with Herbie's music?

ASSIGNMENT

- Take a song you love—maybe it's even one of Herbie's—and analyze it as a piece of musical storytelling. Write down everything you hear and think about as you're listening, but don't use musical terminology. Maybe you hear "sadness" or "joy" in the music, or maybe it reminds you of an image, character, or moment in your own life. Write quickly and get all these feelings down without censoring yourself. Chances are this exercise will teach you something about who you are as a musician and the kind of musical stories you want to tell.

2.
NOTES

3.

IMPROVISATION

"Improvisation is what we all do, not just musicians."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Stay Open to Infinite Possibilities
- Don't Judge It, Make It Work
- No Wrong Notes
- Trust Your Ears and Your Heart

CHAPTER REVIEW

If you think about improvisation the way Herbie does—expressing yourself and your given circumstances in the moment, acting and reacting without premeditation—then you start to realize we're all improvising constantly. Conversations are a kind of improvisation. You don't plan and rehearse what you're going to say. Rather, you listen to the people around you and create your responses on the spot.

Learning to play in the moment starts with acknowledging that each musical moment offers you an infinite set of possible directions to take your playing. A silly little melody can turn itself into a gorgeous ballad, and a mistake can become an exciting melodic shift. Playing jazz means learning to see any note, any sound, no matter how strange, as an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of what you're playing. Don't limit yourself by thinking in terms of conventional relationships between chords and scales or "right" notes and "wrong" notes. There are no wrong notes.

Another cornerstone to Herbie's approach (which goes hand in hand with open-mindedness) is experimentation. You don't know what kind of player you are, or what kind of player you could be, until you've tried a vast variety of styles and approaches. Keep your ears open to everything and take risks to find the sounds that really move you.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Miles Davis was one of Herbie's great mentors. Miles was a tireless musical innovator who broke rules, hopped genres, and always challenged himself and his listeners. Take a look at the musical territory he explored in *Birth of the Cool*, which shows the influence of his time playing bebop with Charlie Parker; *Kind of Blue*, a minimalist reaction to bebop's complexity; *Sketches of Spain*, a lush, orchestral recording that mixes jazz and classical music; and *Bitches Brew*, which incorporates elements of funk and rock and roll.

3.

IMPROVISATION

TAKE IT FURTHER CONT'D

- Share some favorite songs and records with your fellow classmates in The Hub.
- Take a look at the sheet music following the notes page to practice some of the musical ideas Herbie introduced in this chapter.

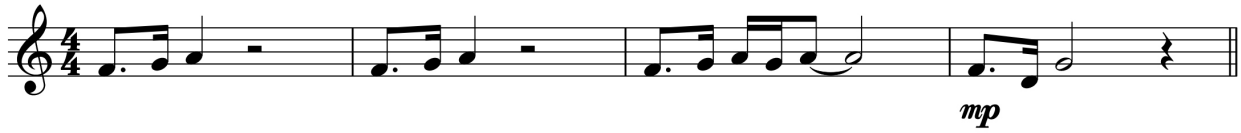
ASSIGNMENT

- Listen to Miles Davis' "So What" from *Kind of Blue*. The structure and melody couldn't be simpler, but Miles and his band are able to find worlds of possibilities in just a few chords. What grabs your attention when you listen? Can you tell when they're playing the "right" notes and "wrong" notes?

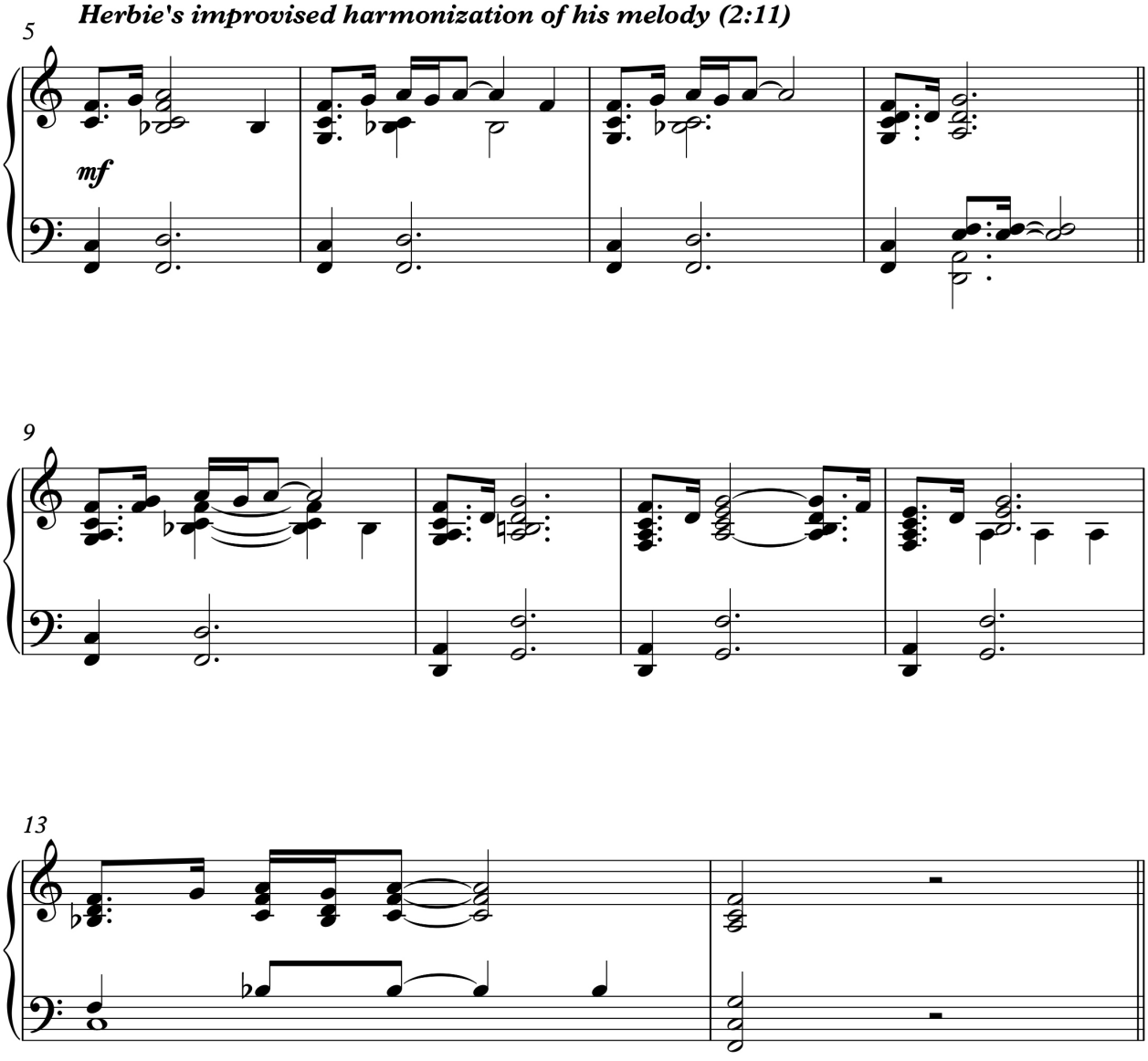
3.
NOTES

Chapter 3
Improvisation

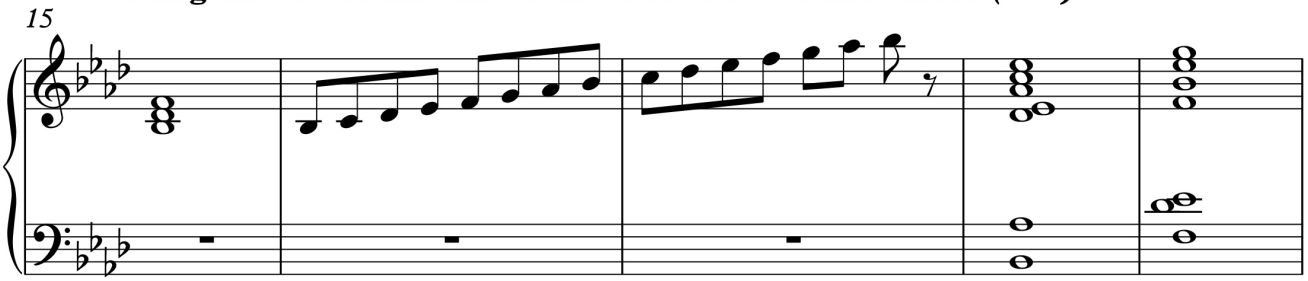
Herbie's example of an improvised melody using repetition and variation (1:35)



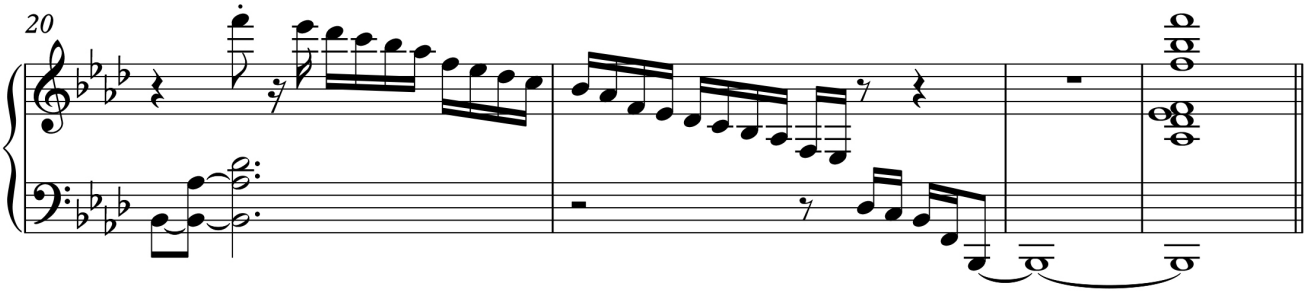
Herbie's improvised harmonization of his melody (2:11)



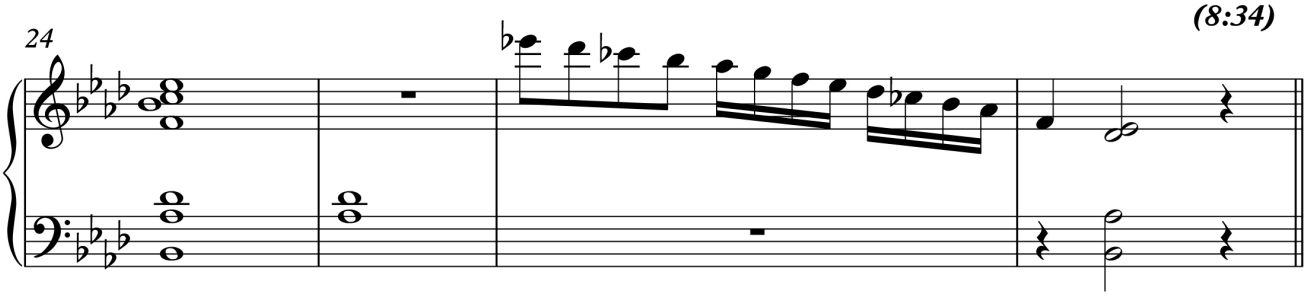
Using the Bb Dorian minor scale to voice a Bb minor chord (7:02)

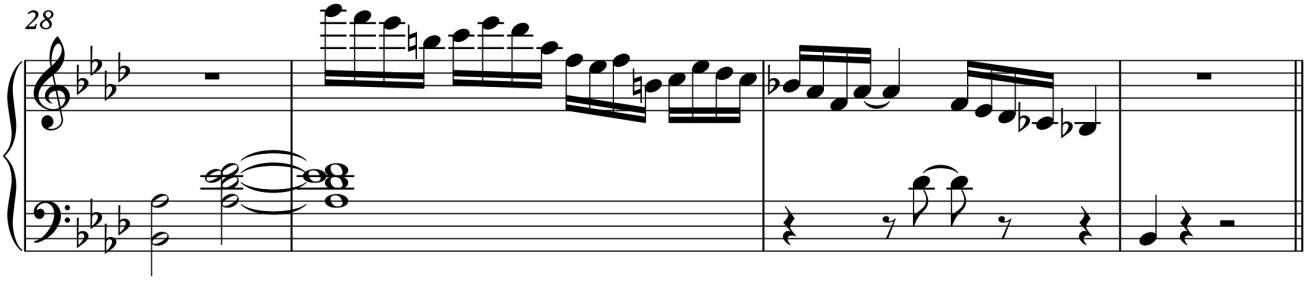


Herbie's Dorian minor line (8:21)

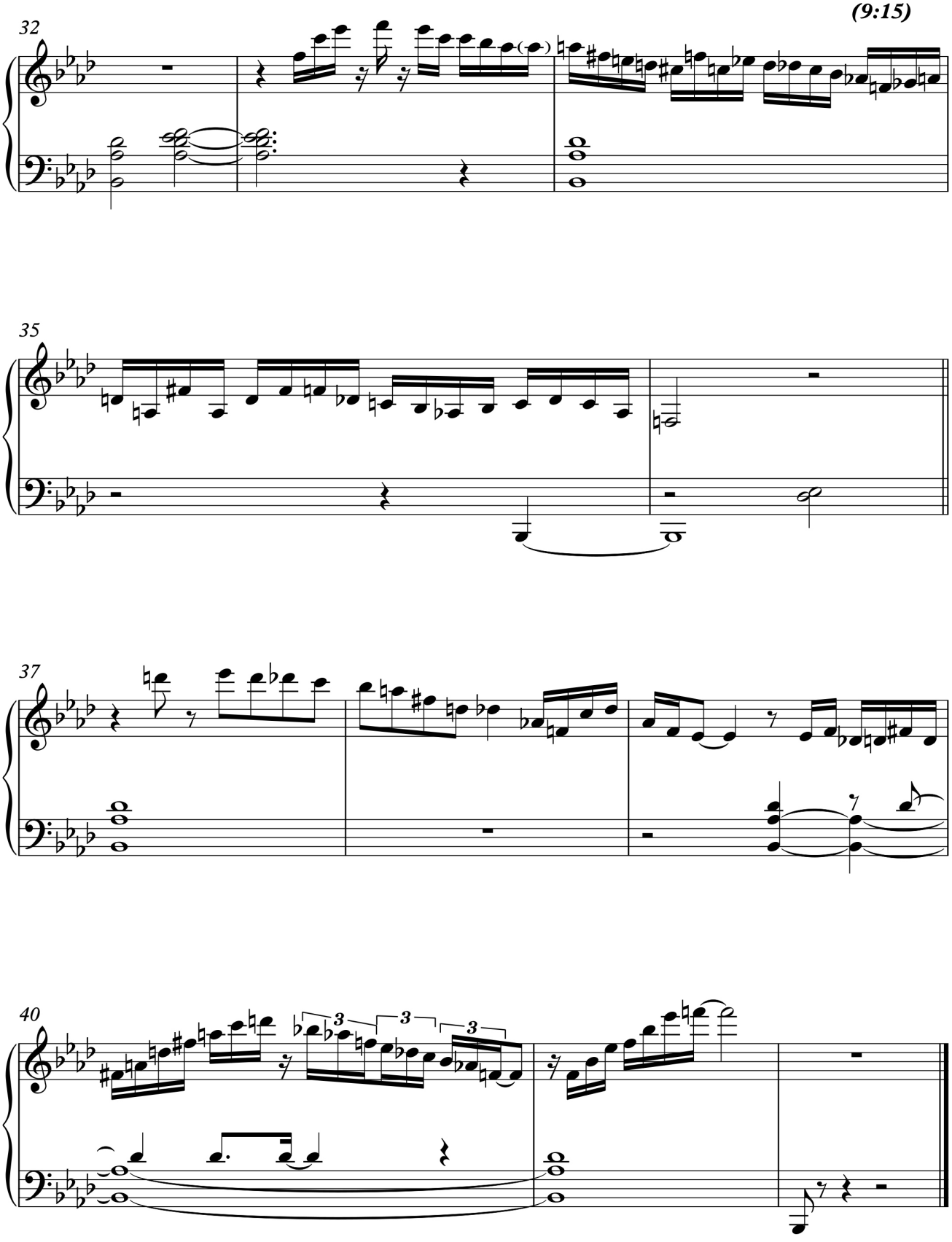


Two musical examples which use a B natural to move outside of the chord scale (8:34)





Two musical examples using a D major triad to move outside of the chord scale (9:15)



4.

LEARNING BY LISTENING

"I started off copying a lot of people."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- My First Jazz Teacher: George Shearing
- Deconstructing George Shearing & Learning to Swing
- Who to Listen to and Copy
- Write It Down

CHAPTER REVIEW

Growing up in Chicago in the '40s and '50s, there weren't jazz classes or teachers Herbie could look to for musical guidance. He had to learn his early lessons about jazz on his own. He did this by listening to records, taking them apart, and trying to copy what he heard. This is still a great way to learn to play jazz. It can teach you about basic ideas common to all jazz playing, and it can also show you the unique approaches and individual styles the greats have brought to the genre.

Next time you're listening to a record and you hear something you like (whether it's a bluesy little riff, like Herbie heard in George Shearing, or a whole solo passage), get your instrument and start trying to pick out what you hear by ear. This exercise also doubles as great ear training. If you start transcribing what you hear into musical notation, your sight reading will also improve by leaps and bounds.

Try to pay attention to more than just the notes. Think about tone, phrasing, dynamics, the subtleties of rhythm—all the elements and choices that transform a set of notes on the page into a unique and personal musical performance.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Explore Herbie's music recommendations. Start with George Shearing's "I'll Remember April." Can you hear the way Shearing swings?

4.

LEARNING BY LISTENING

TAKE IT FURTHER CONT'D

- Listen to John Coltrane play "Chasin' The Trane" live at the Village Vanguard. See if you can follow the blues form throughout the song's solo sections. (You'll learn more about the blues form in the next chapter.)
- Wayne Shorter's *Speak No Evil* is a wonderful album that features Herbie on piano. Check out the ballad "Infant Eyes."
- Listen to Jacob Collier's *In My Room*. You might be inspired to see how much music one person can make by himself.
- If you want to improve your music reading and writing skills, try an app like Music Tutor that can help you through the process.
- Take a look at the sheet music following the notes page to get a closer look at some of the lessons Herbie took away from listening to George Shearing.

ASSIGNMENT

- Start trading riffs with your fellow classmates in The Hub. Pick a passage from one of your favorite records (it doesn't have to be something you've covered in this class) and transcribe it. It can be a three note riff or a long solo.

  Now share it with your classmates and see what they've shared with you. You might find some inspiration for your own playing and composing.

4.
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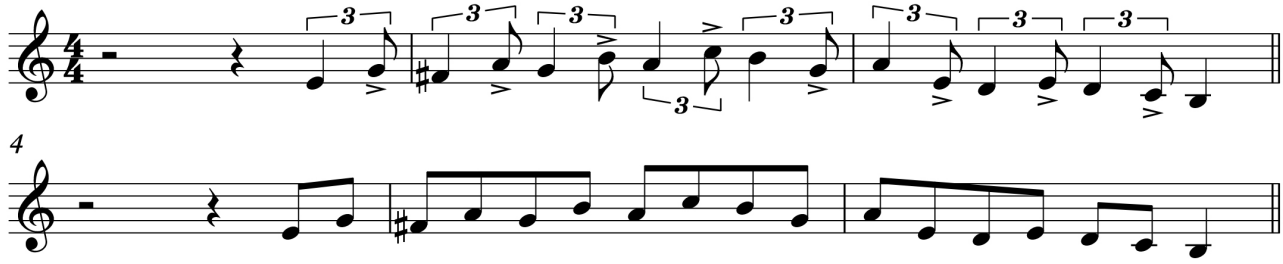
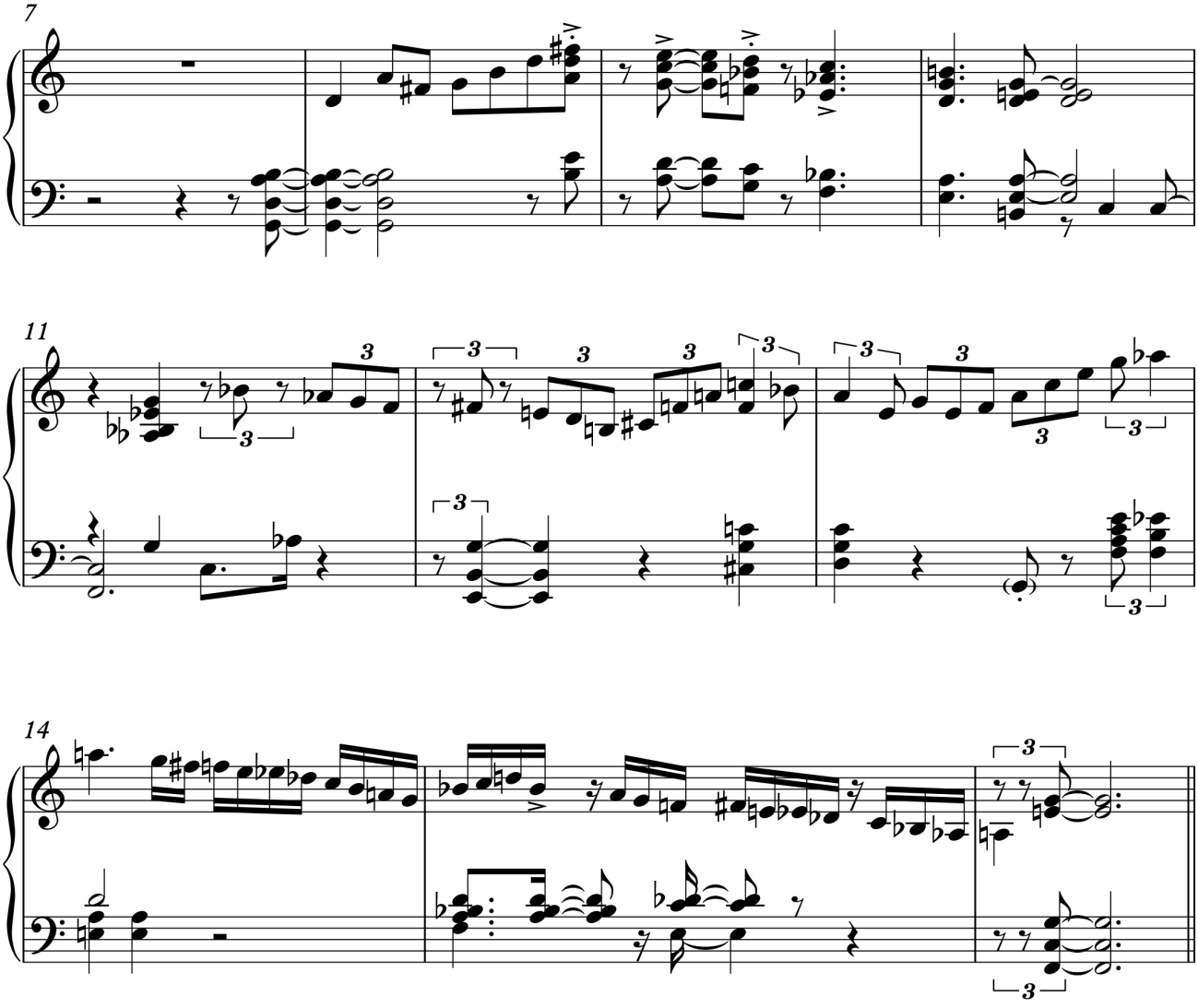
Chapter 4
Learning by Listening

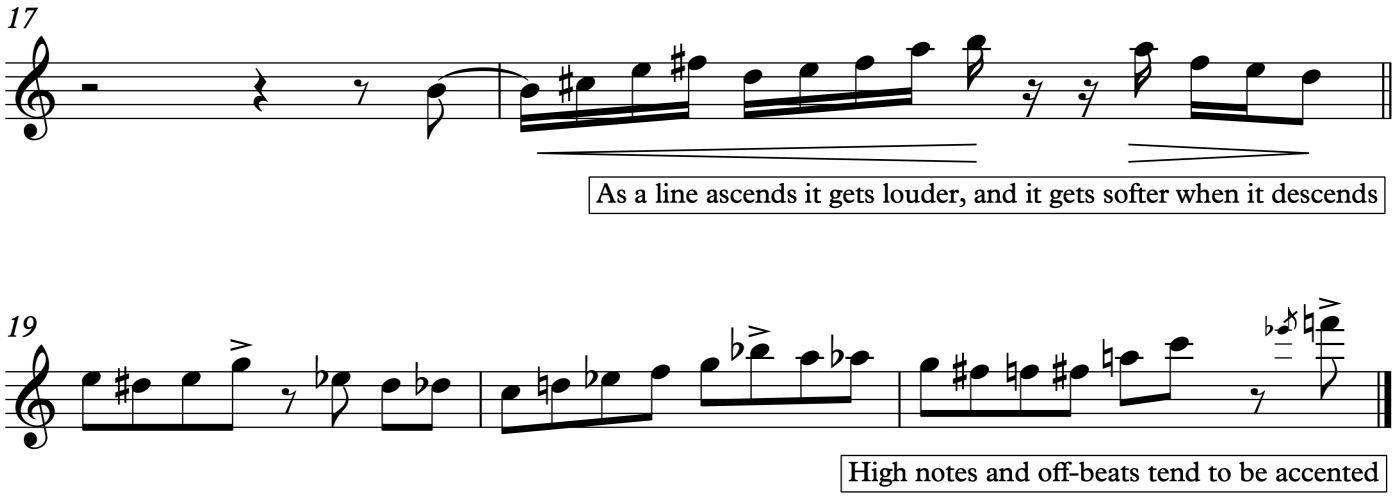
Herbie's triplet-based "swing 8th note" example as played, and as typically notated (5:05)



Herbie's improvised musical phrase demonstrating swing 8th notes (5:10)



Herbie's articulation examples (5:48)



5.

THE TWO BASIC JAZZ FORMS

"In jazz, there are only two formal forms."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Learning Blues Licks
- Blues Players to Draw From
- Improvising Over Rhythm Changes

CHAPTER REVIEW

Much of jazz is about discovering new creative ways to approach simple sets of musical rules. Everybody knows the tune "Autumn Leaves," for instance, and countless musicians have played it over the years, but people keep playing and recording it to give it their own unique sound. The two basic chord progressions which you'll find all over jazz are the "rhythm changes" and the "blues." Learning to play comfortably over these two sets of chord changes in all 12 keys is an important building block in your jazz training.

Herbie's developed his own approaches to these forms over the years. He has funky riffs and small rhythmic patterns he likes to use for playing the blues, and he has his own personal way of voicing the rhythm changes and soloing over them. You can improve your chops with these forms by copying things you like, whether they're from Herbie or other musicians. Over time, your own personal style will start to emerge.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- If you need a refresher on the chord changes for these two forms, the sheet music can be found following the notes page. Work your way up to being able to play both forms in all 12 keys.
- To get an idea of how many different directions you can take the blues form, listen to these two different approaches: John Coltrane's "Equinox" and Thelonious Monk's "Blue Monk." Do you have another favorite blues songs you want to share with your classmates? Do so in The Hub.
- Listen to the song that gave birth to the rhythm changes, George Gershwin's "I've Got Rhythm," and hear what a virtuoso like Charlie Parker does with those simple chords in "Anthropology."
- Dive deeper into bluesy playing by listening to Oscar Peterson, Nat King Cole, Les McCann, Horace Silver, and BB King.

5.

THE TWO BASIC JAZZ FORMS

ASSIGNMENT

- The blues and rhythm changes occur in all different keys, so don't get stuck playing in the keys that feel the best to you. To practice transposing and getting used to the chord changes in different keys, take a blues lick of Herbie's and a passage from his rhythm improv and learn it in all 12 keys.

5.
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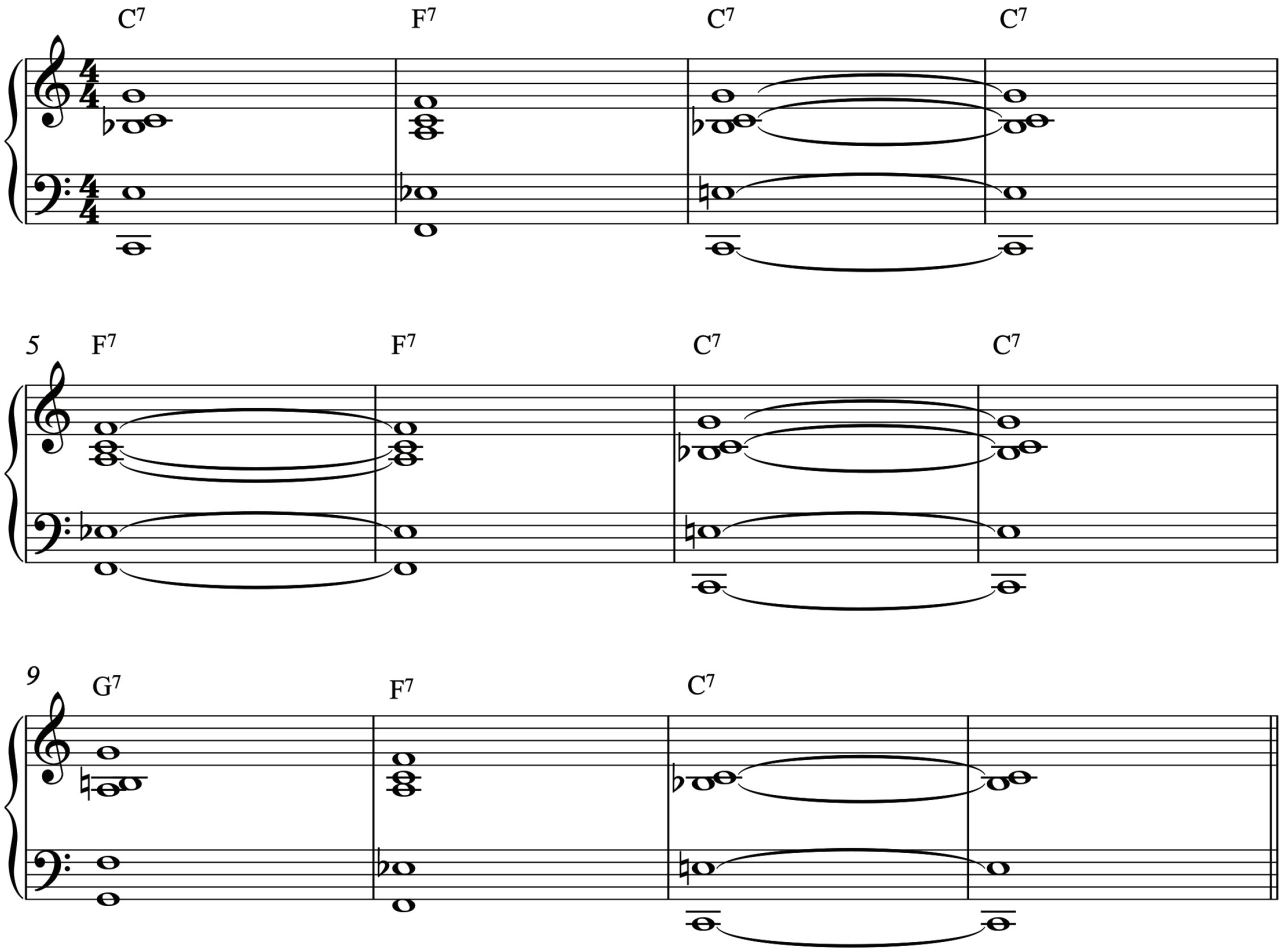
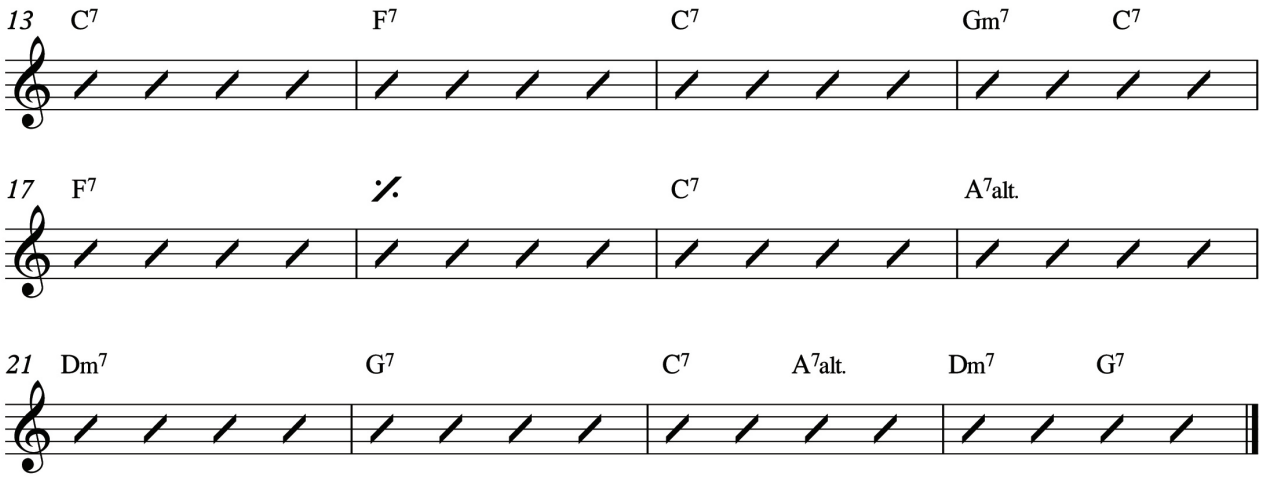
Chapter 5
The Two Basic Jazz Forms

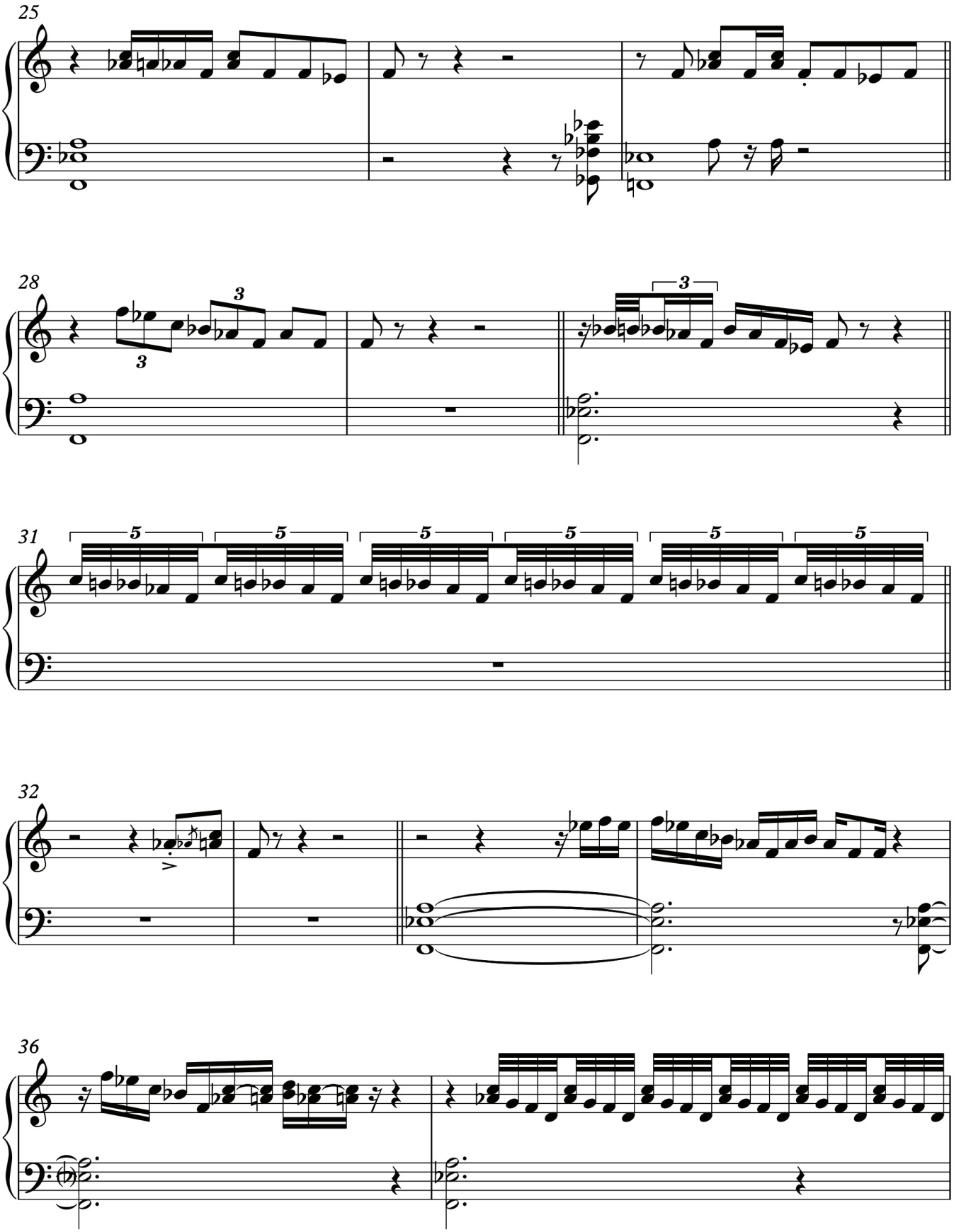
The standard "Blues Form" as demonstrated by Herbie (0:42)

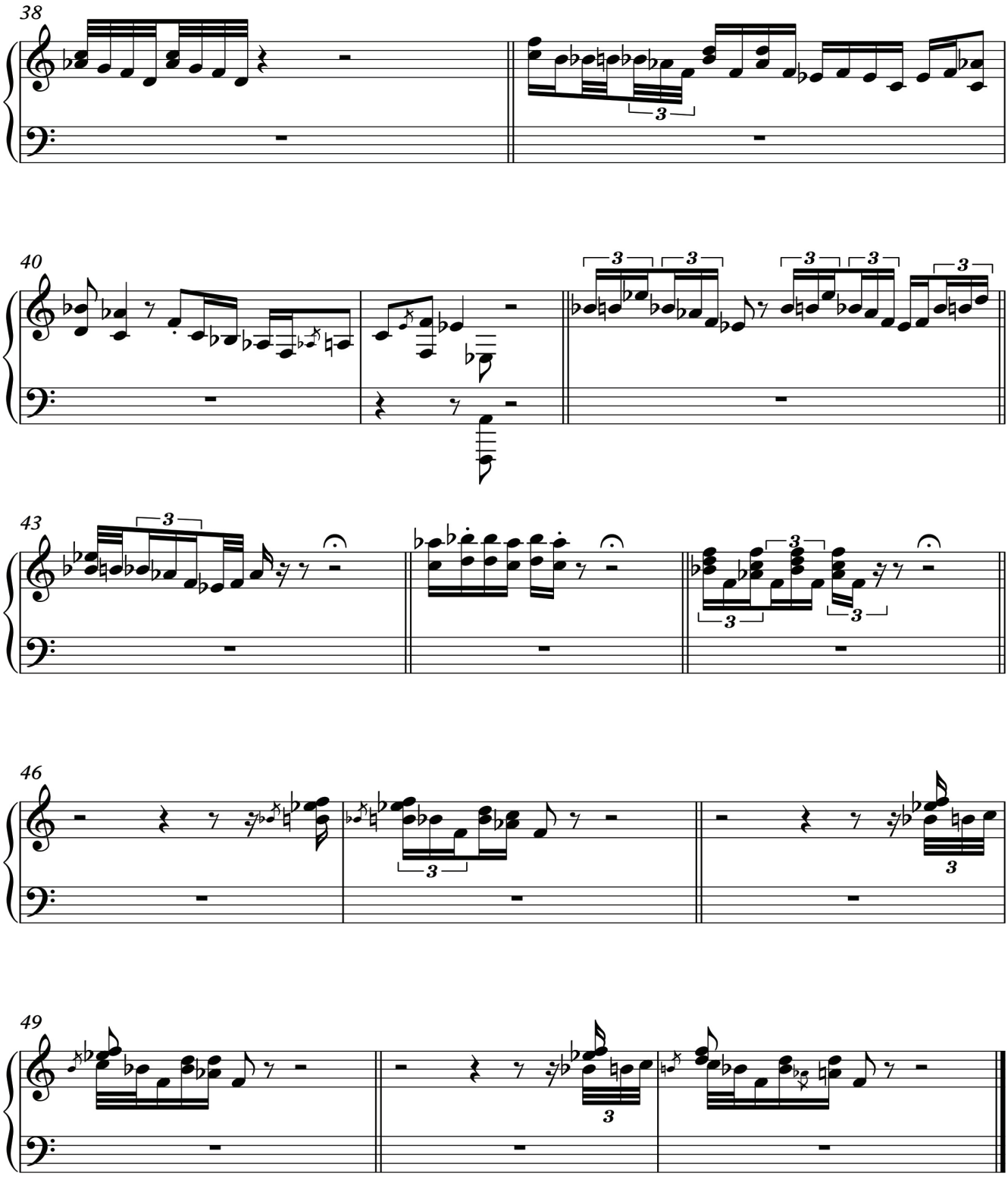


A typical "Jazz Blues" progression may look like this:



Several "Blues" phrases and ideas as demonstrated by Herbie (2:23)

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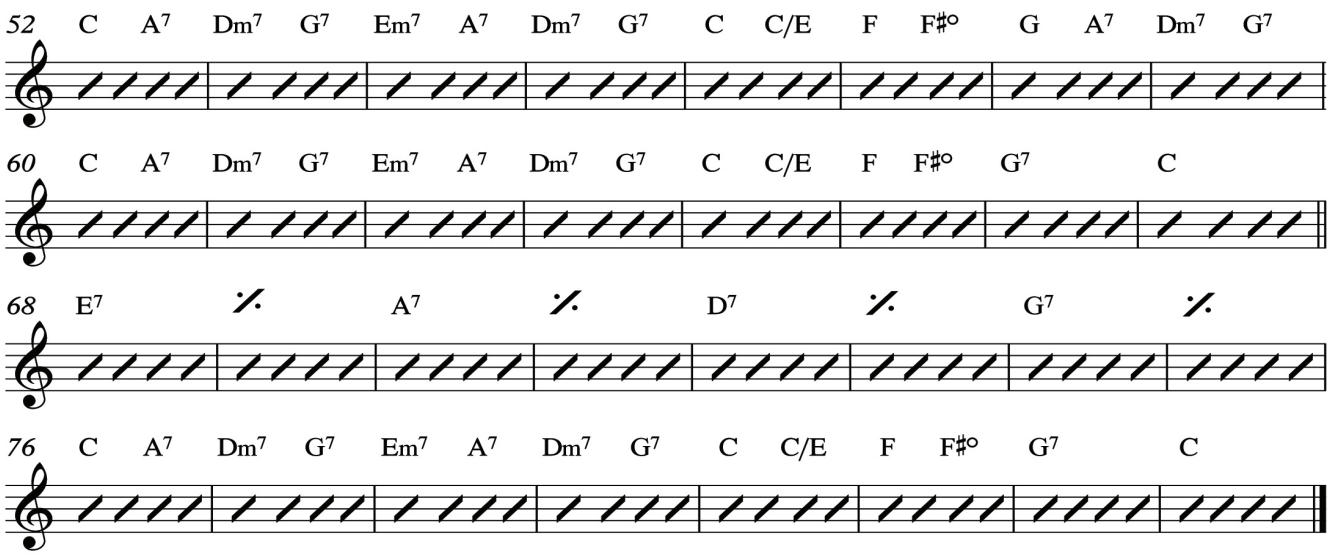
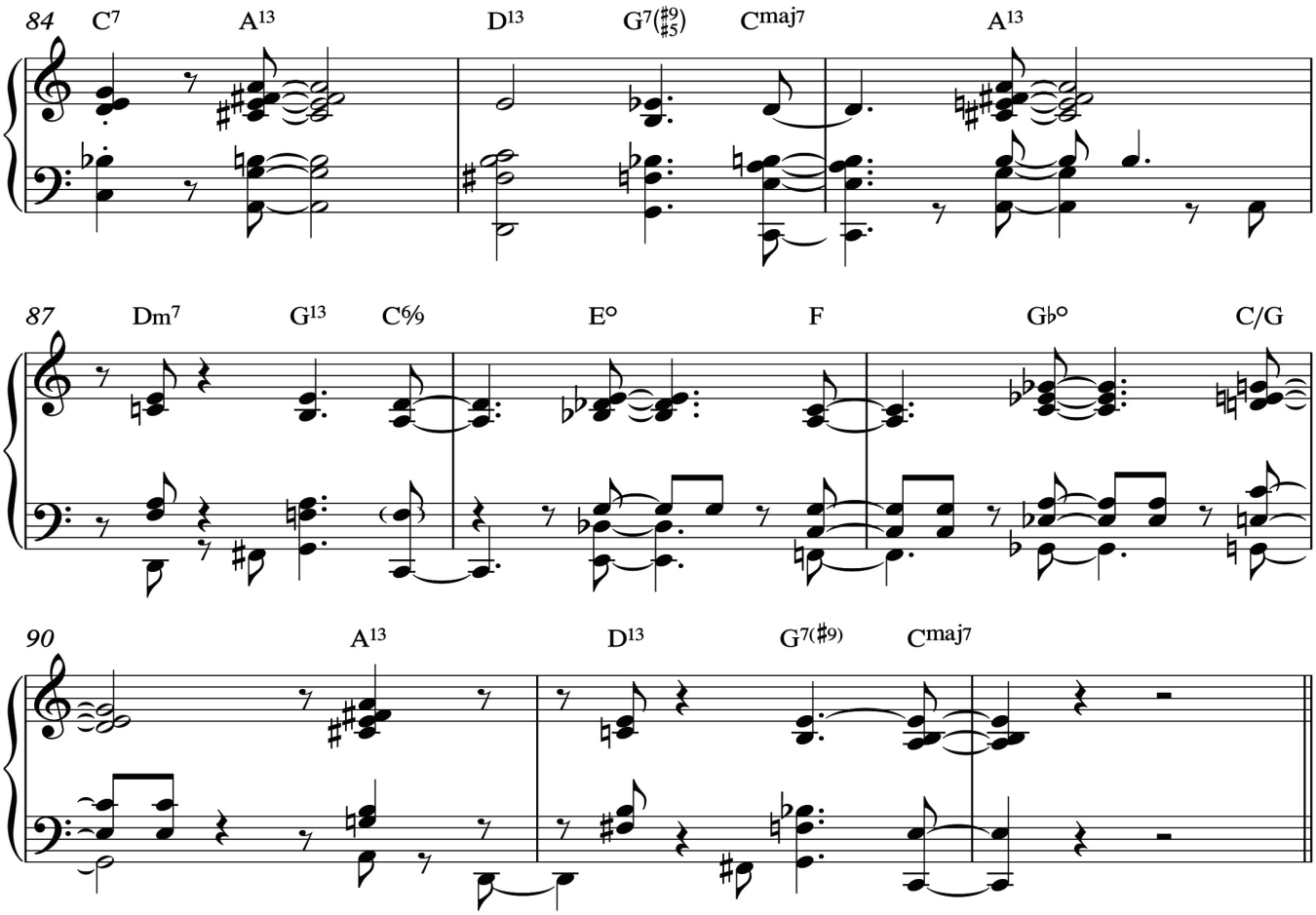
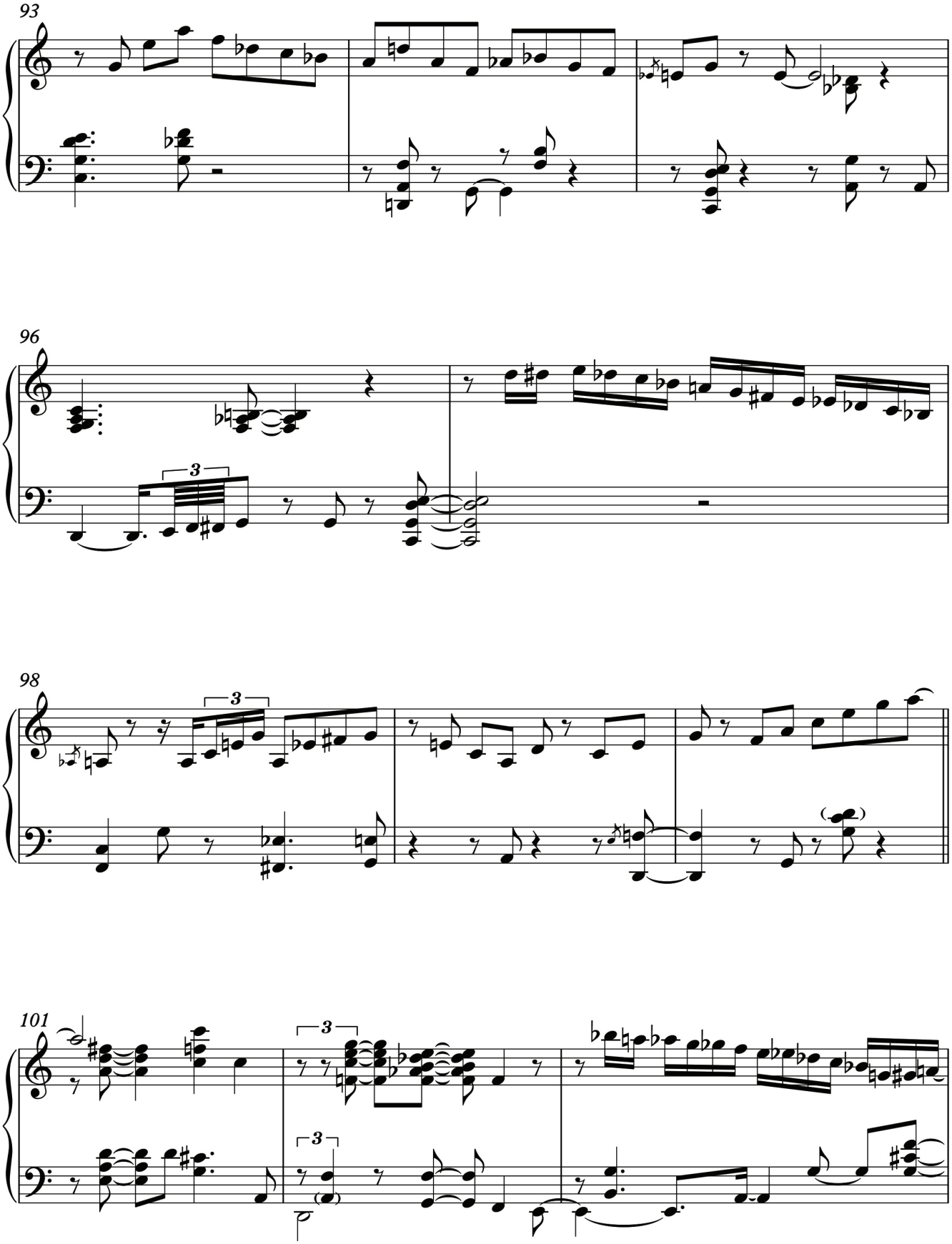
A standard "Rhythm Changes" form:

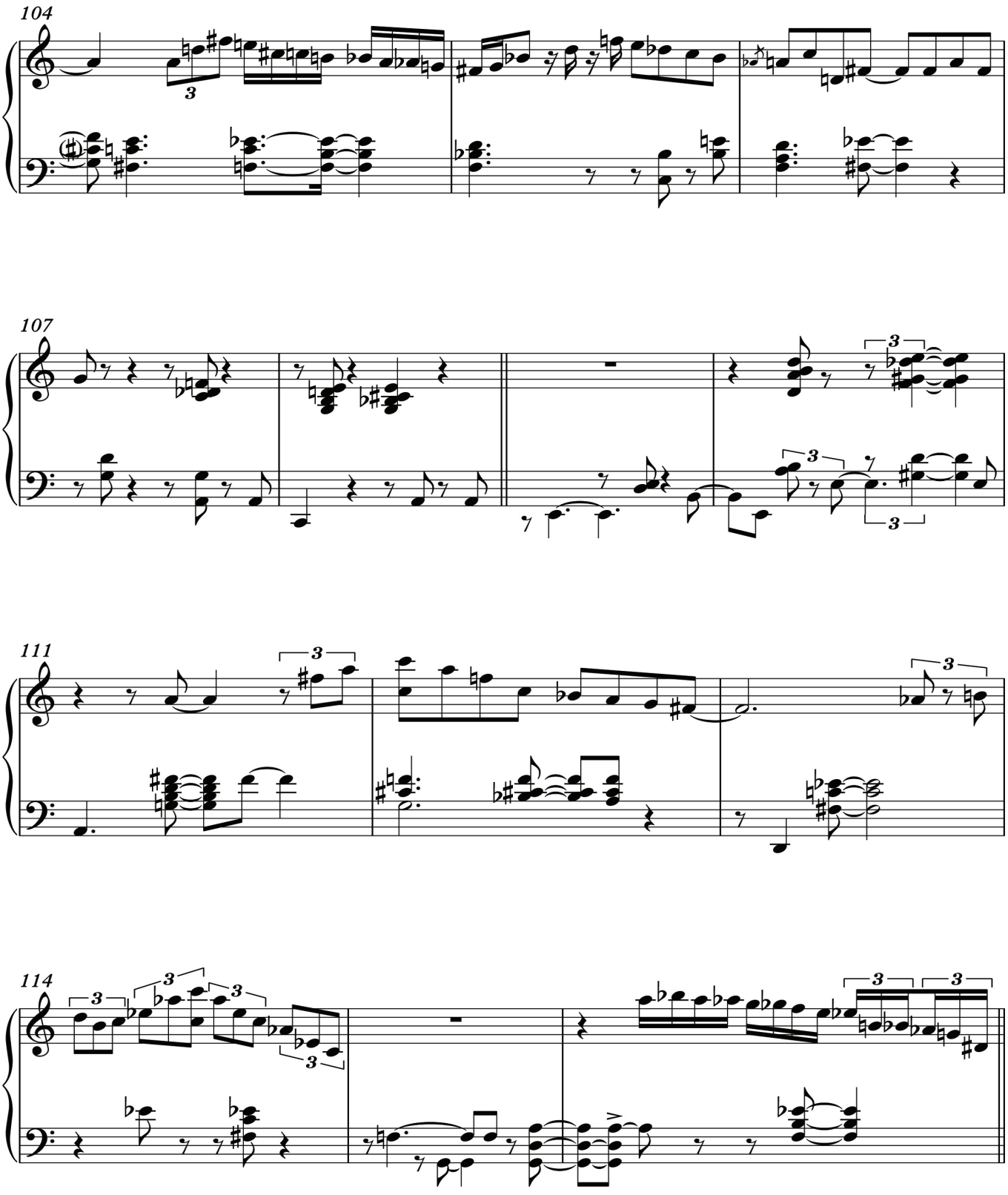


Herbie's comping through an A section of "Rhythm Changes" (1:31)



Herbie's solo piano chorus on "Rhythm Changes" (6:50)

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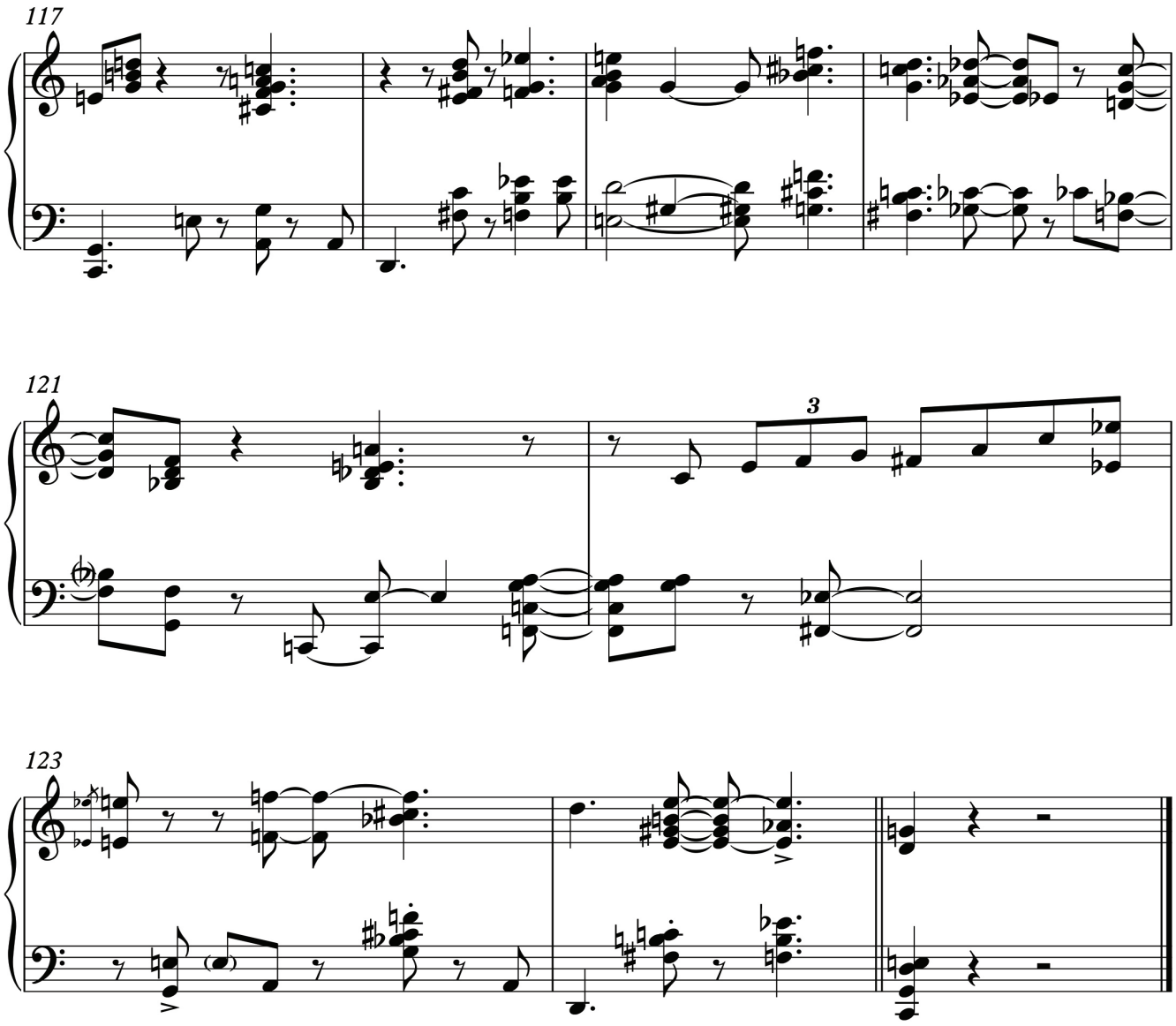
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6.

LISTEN AND LEARN: “OLEO”

TAKE IT FURTHER

- “Oleo” is a famous rhythm changes tune, written by tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins.
- Now find and listen to what other pianists have done with “Oleo”: Herbie and his quartet, Bill Evans, and Keith Jarrett.

6.
NOTES

7.

PIANO BASICS

"Relax and let the fingers do the work."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Getting to Know Your Instrument
- How Much to Practice
- Learn to Read Music
- The Importance of Touch
- Let the Fingers Do the Work

CHAPTER REVIEW

As a classically trained pianist, Herbie has a lot of respect for formal piano technique. He believes in the importance of scales, drills, and lessons, and he thinks learning to read music can be a tremendous advantage. However, you need to balance those structured forms of engagement with a personal and childlike relationship with your instrument. Don't be afraid to spend time just messing around.

When it comes to practice, everyone's philosophy is different. There was a period where Herbie practiced three hours a day, seven days a week. Some players practice considerably less. However you choose to approach it, be careful of your practice becoming a crutch, something you can't play well without. Make sure you find a practice routine that helps you feel creative and spontaneous when you're playing in the moment, not just when you're replaying what you practiced. Get into the feeling of the music, not just the technique.

Pay attention to touch and feeling when you're practicing. That includes dynamics, articulation, and expression, "milking the notes," as Herbie calls it. When you practice your scales, play some quietly, then some loudly, some staccato, and others legato. The more you develop your touch, the more of an emotional impact you'll make with your music.

Remember, playing an instrument is a physical activity, so always try to be aware of your body and protect it from injury. Pay attention to your posture and the movement of your arms, wrists, and fingers. Relax and let the fingers do the work.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Listen to more of Chopin's piano music. Pay attention to the way the pianist's sense of touch brings emotion out of the music.

7.

PIANO BASICS

ASSIGNMENT

- Give yourself a posture lesson. Film yourself while you're practicing (the longer the practice session the better). Look back over your footage and compare yourself to Herbie. Is your posture correct? Are you letting the fingers do the work? Are there certain habits you need to break? Does your technique get worse as you tire? Check back in on yourself a few days later and see if you've improved.

7.
NOTES

8.

PIANO EXERCISES

"It's very boring to do this. What it takes is your determination that you want to progress."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Finger Strength Exercises: Hanon Versus Beringer
- Practice Crossing Your Fingers
- Exercising Your Weaker Fingers
- Exercise Fuels Creativity

CHAPTER REVIEW

Practicing scales and arpeggios can be boring, but it's crucially important to your growth as a musician. Wayne Shorter even thinks playing scales and arpeggios can help fuel creativity. Over the years, Herbie has found a set of exercises that works for him and the type of music he plays. Try Herbie's exercises out for yourself and see how your playing improves:

- When you're strengthening your hands and improving your technique, keep in mind what kind of music you're looking to play. Herbie thinks jazz players should approach scales and exercises with different fingering than what's traditionally recommended for classical students. Herbie follows the Beringer method and uses the "C scale fingering" (starting at the thumb) for all his scale work because it gives him more flexibility when he's improvising.

- The fingers at the outside of the hand (fingers three, four, and five) are every piano player's weakest. It helps to dedicate extra time and attention to making them stronger.

- Herbie's favorite exercises are here in all 12 keys. When you're practicing them, don't just pay attention to how accurately and evenly you're hitting the notes. Pay attention to dynamics and phrasing, too. Watch your posture and your point of attack; are you letting the fingers do the work? Is your wrist staying still?

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Take a look at the drills in the sheet music following the notes page. Work your way up to playing them across all 12 keys. If these exercises help you, you might want to get your own copy of Oscar Beringer's "Daily Technical Studies."

- If you don't already, try practicing with a metronome. It's by far the best way to keep your playing rhythmic and even. If you don't own one, just type the word "metronome" into Google. They've got one waiting for you.

8.

PIANO EXERCISES

ASSIGNMENT

- Make a practice plan. Put together a regimen of strength exercises, harmonic exercises, improvisation, and listening/copying that works for you, and set yourself a reasonable goal for how many times a week you can do it. Now stick to it for a couple weeks and see how much progress you can make.

8.
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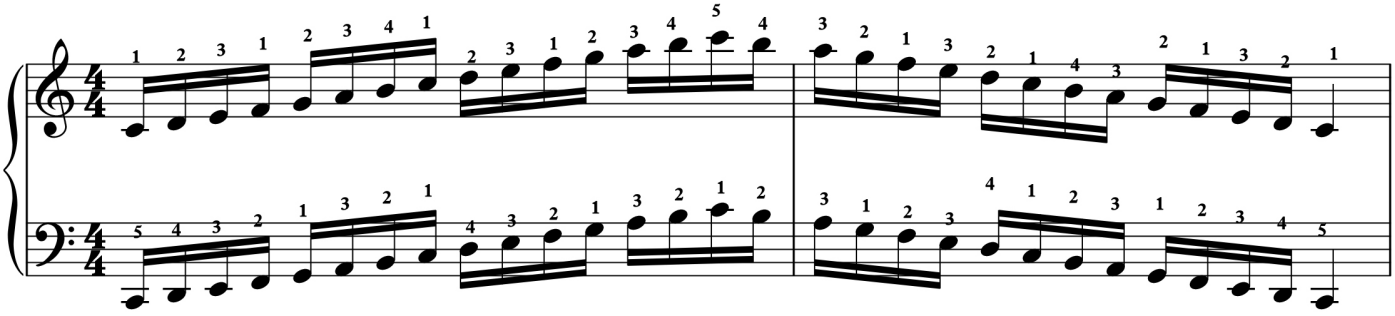
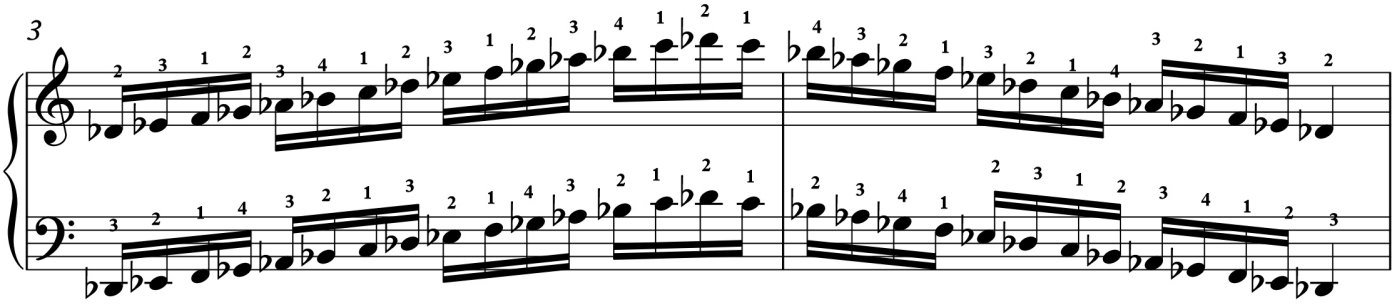
Chapter 8
Piano Exercises

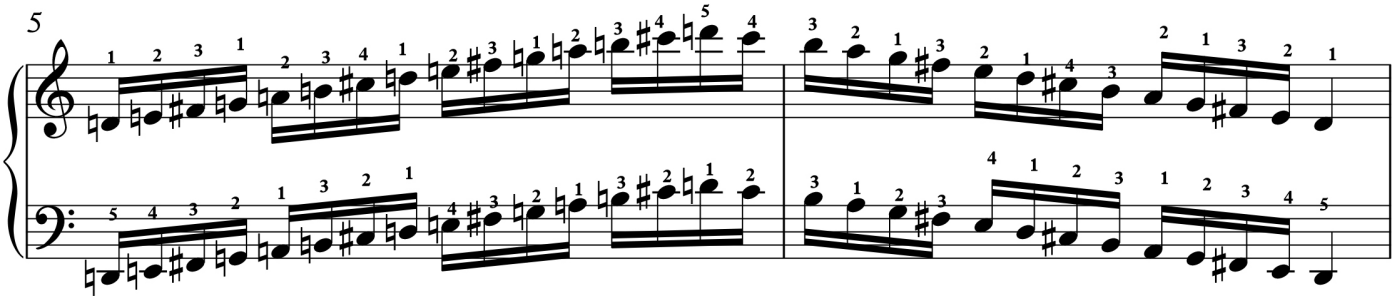
Typical C major scale fingering (0:50)



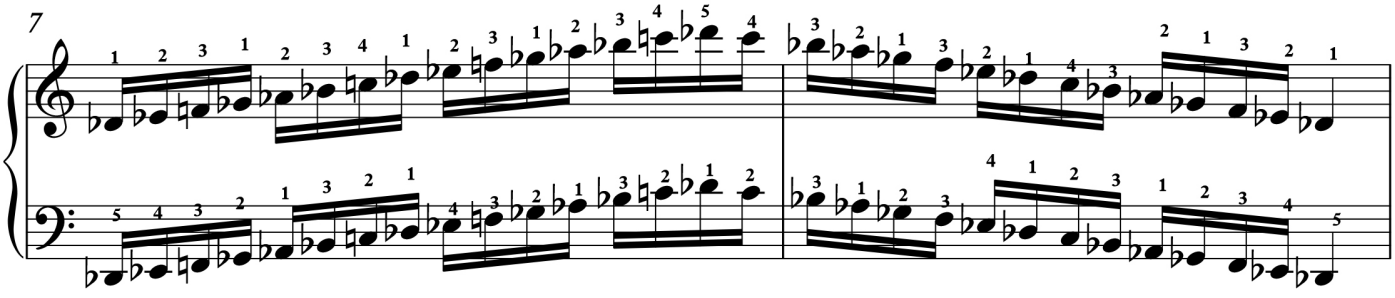
Typical Db major scale fingering (1:54)



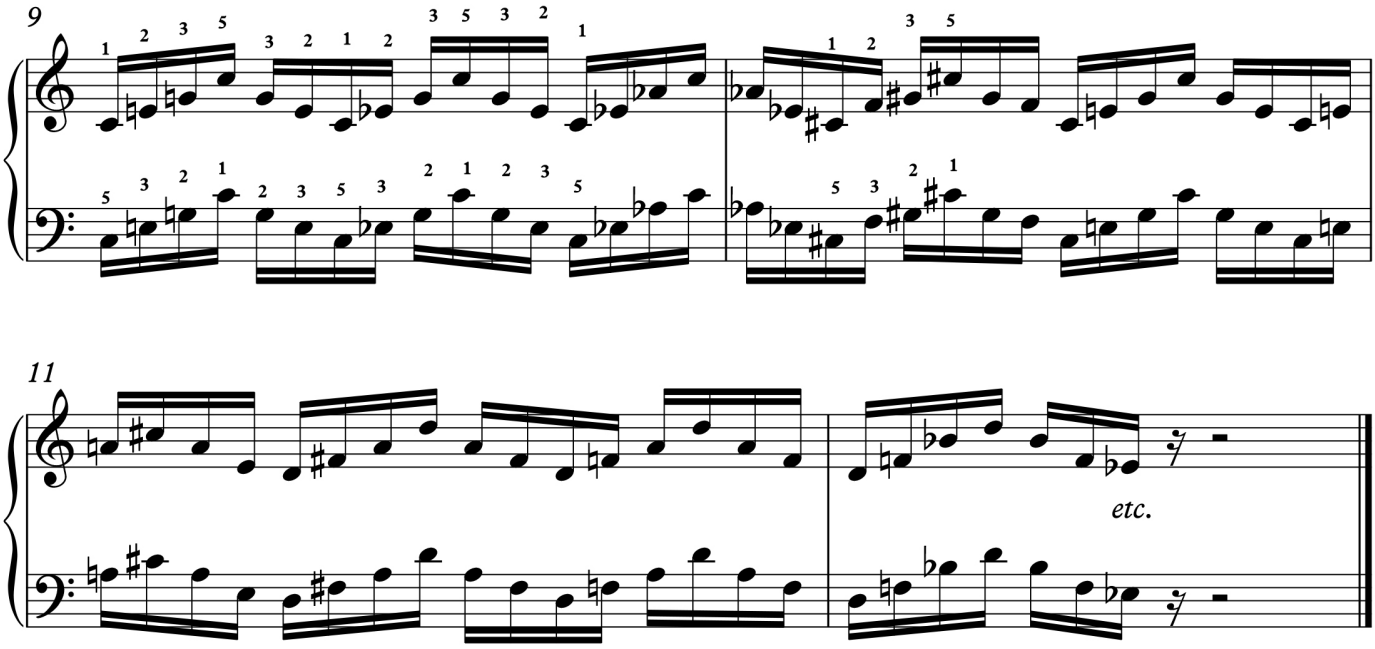
Typical D major scale fingering (2:41)



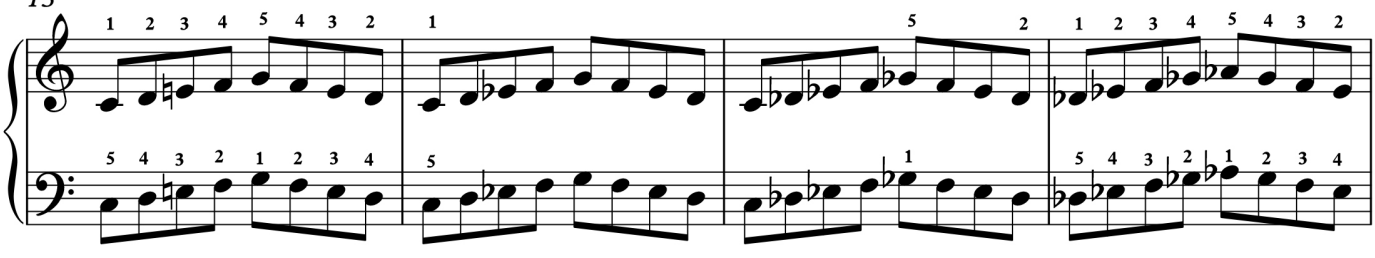
Db major scale using "C major" fingering (4:39)



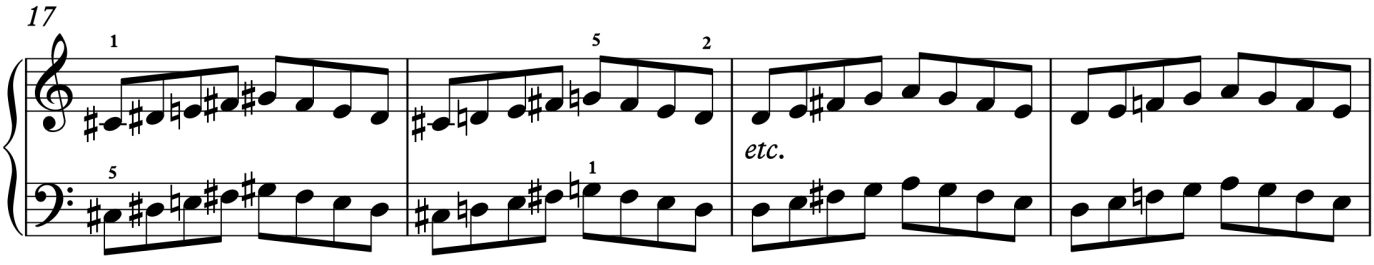
Beringer's chord progression (3:15)

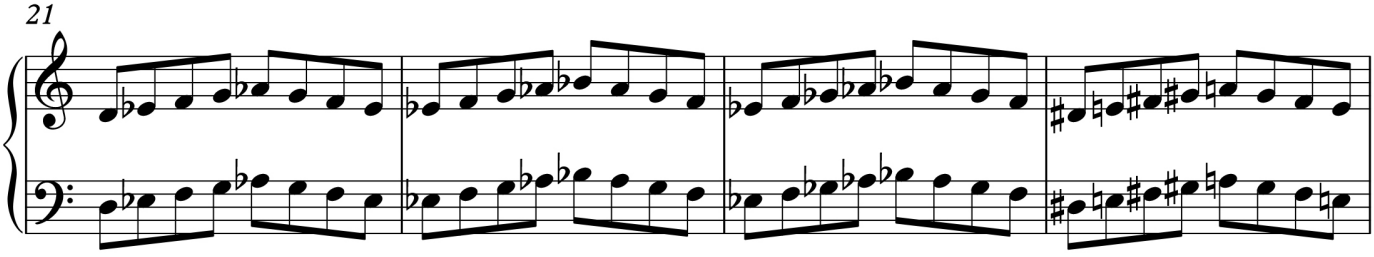


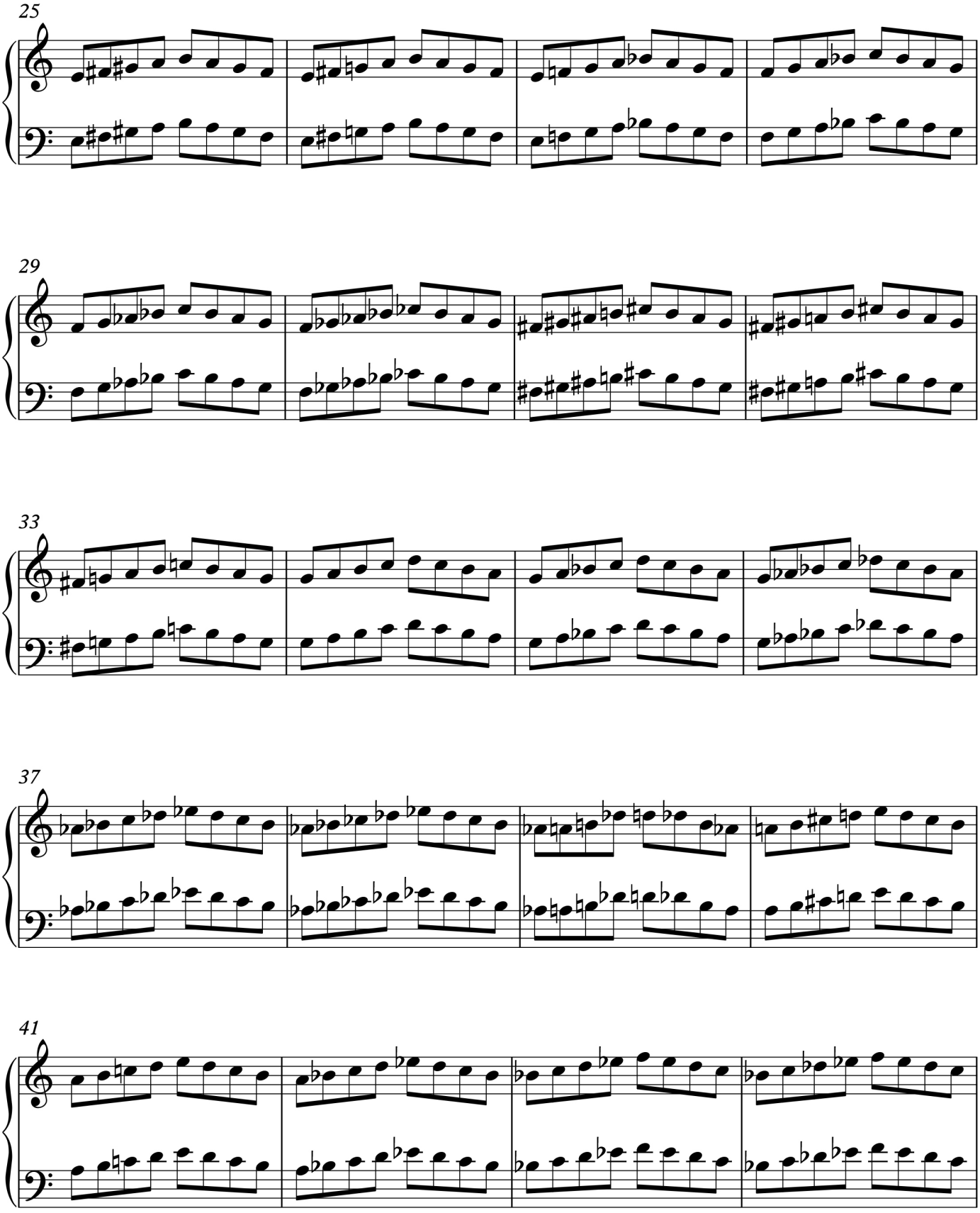
Beringer Ex. 1 (for reference)

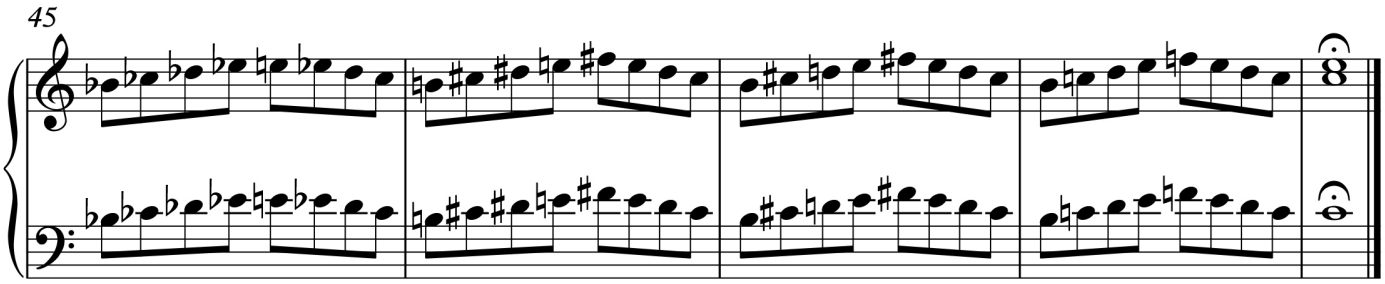


Note: all exercises should be played through all 12 keys chromatically. The first exercise is noted as such.

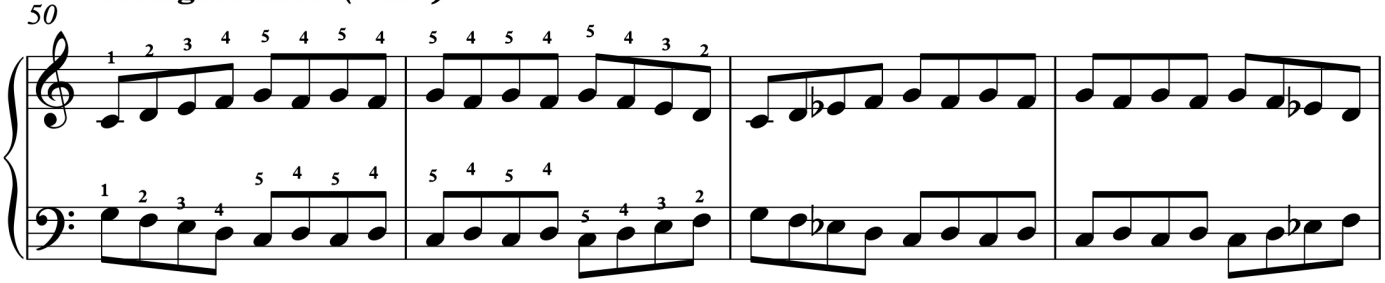


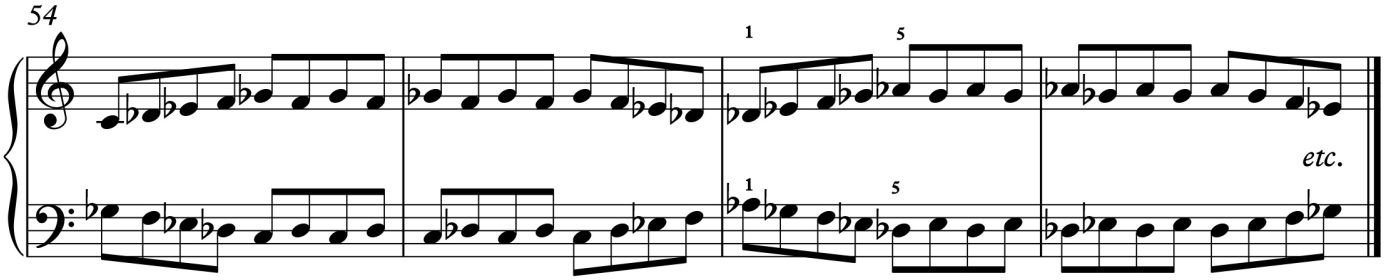



25
29
33
37
41

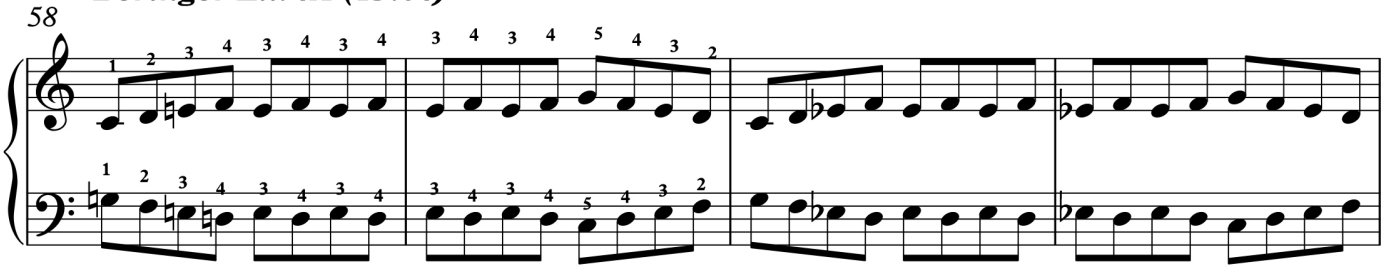


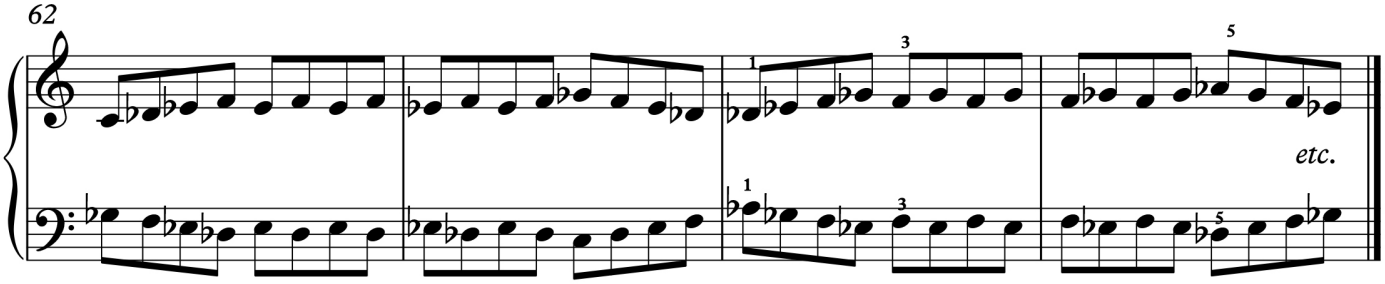
Beringer Ex. 3A (11:37)



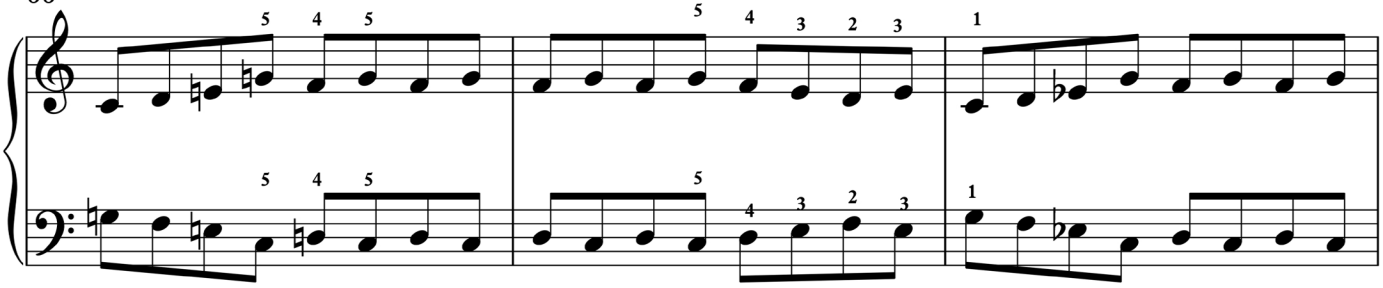


Beringer Ex. 4A (13:04)

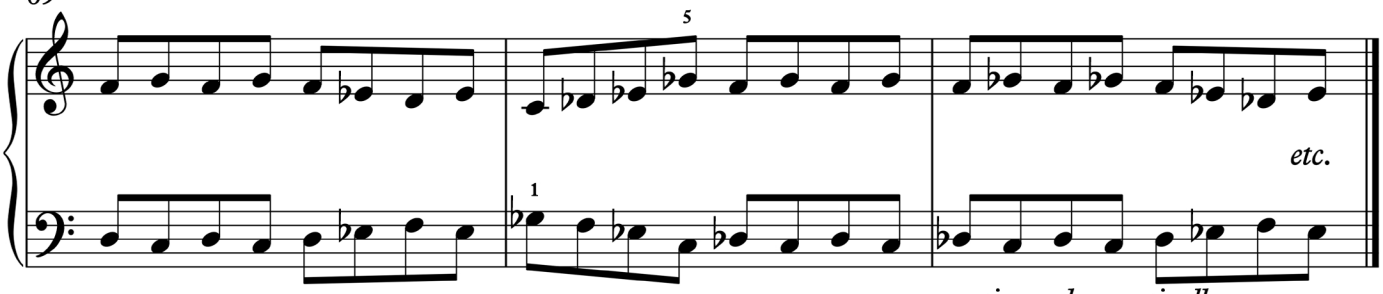




66 ***Beringer Ex. 5A (13:29)***



69



etc.

continue chromatically,
alternating ***f*** *and* ***p*** *every two keys*

9.

IMPROVISING ALONE

"If I'm playing alone, I can do whatever I want."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Solo Piano Case Study: "Maiden Voyage"
- Solo Piano Case Study: "Sonrisa"

CHAPTER REVIEW

Herbie remembers a realization that forever changed the way he approached solo piano playing. It sounds simple, but it opened up worlds of complexity for Herbie: if you're playing alone, you can do whatever you want. Unlike playing with a band, where you usually stick to a certain tempo and a certain key, in solo playing you can change tempos and keys at will. You can mess with the form of the song, repeat parts, and leave parts out. You can add completely unrelated improvised sections. Challenge yourself to see how much you can make someone else's composition your own by playing it alone.

One way Herbie approaches solo playing is to use thematic material from the original song and interpret it in different ways. For instance, he might latch on to a few chords or a section of the main melody and transform it across different keys or over different periods of time.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Search for and listen to Herbie's original recordings of "Maiden Voyage" and "Sonrisa."
- Turn to the sheet music following the notes page to see solo approaches to "Maiden Voyage" and "Sonrisa."

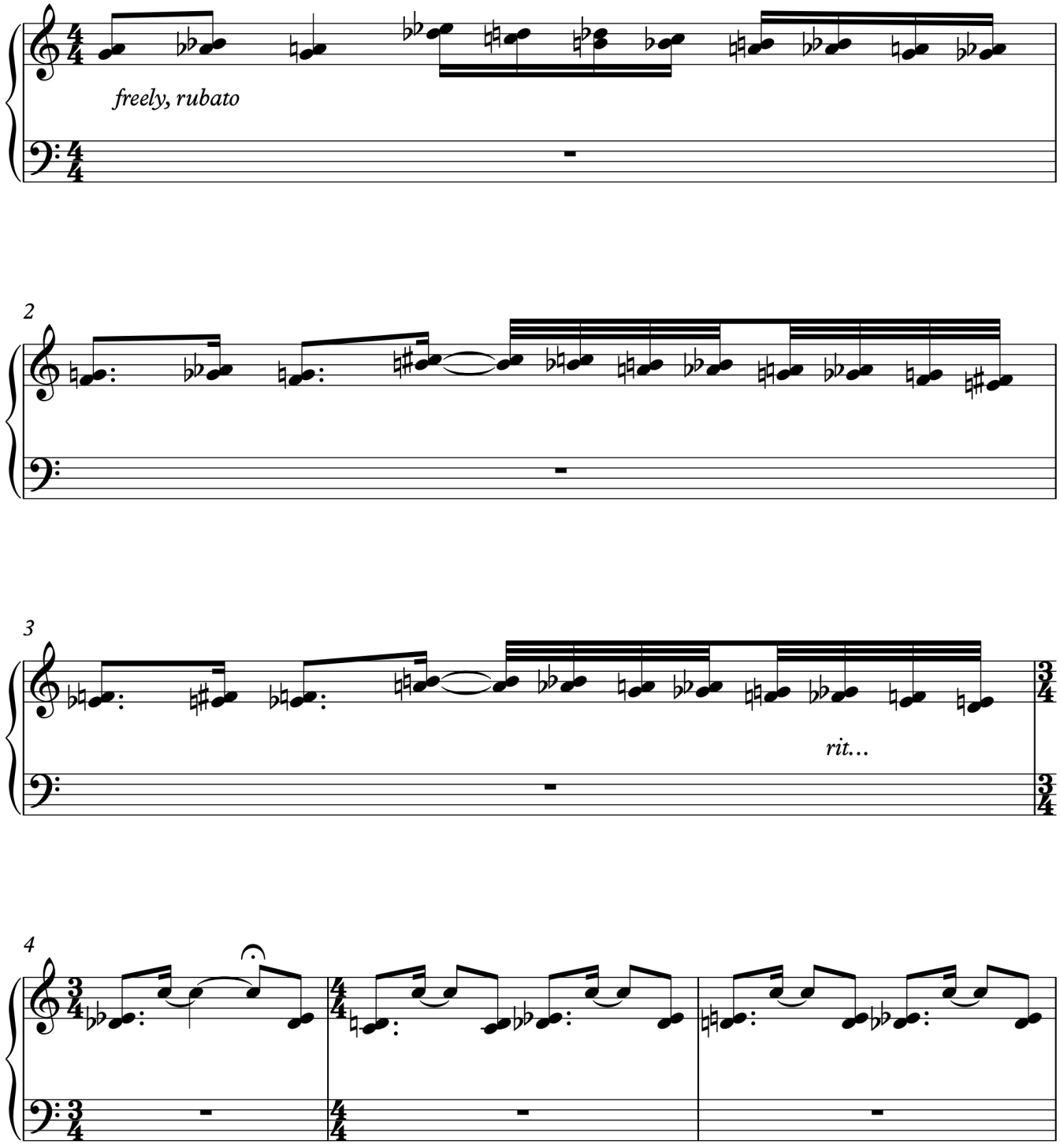
ASSIGNMENT

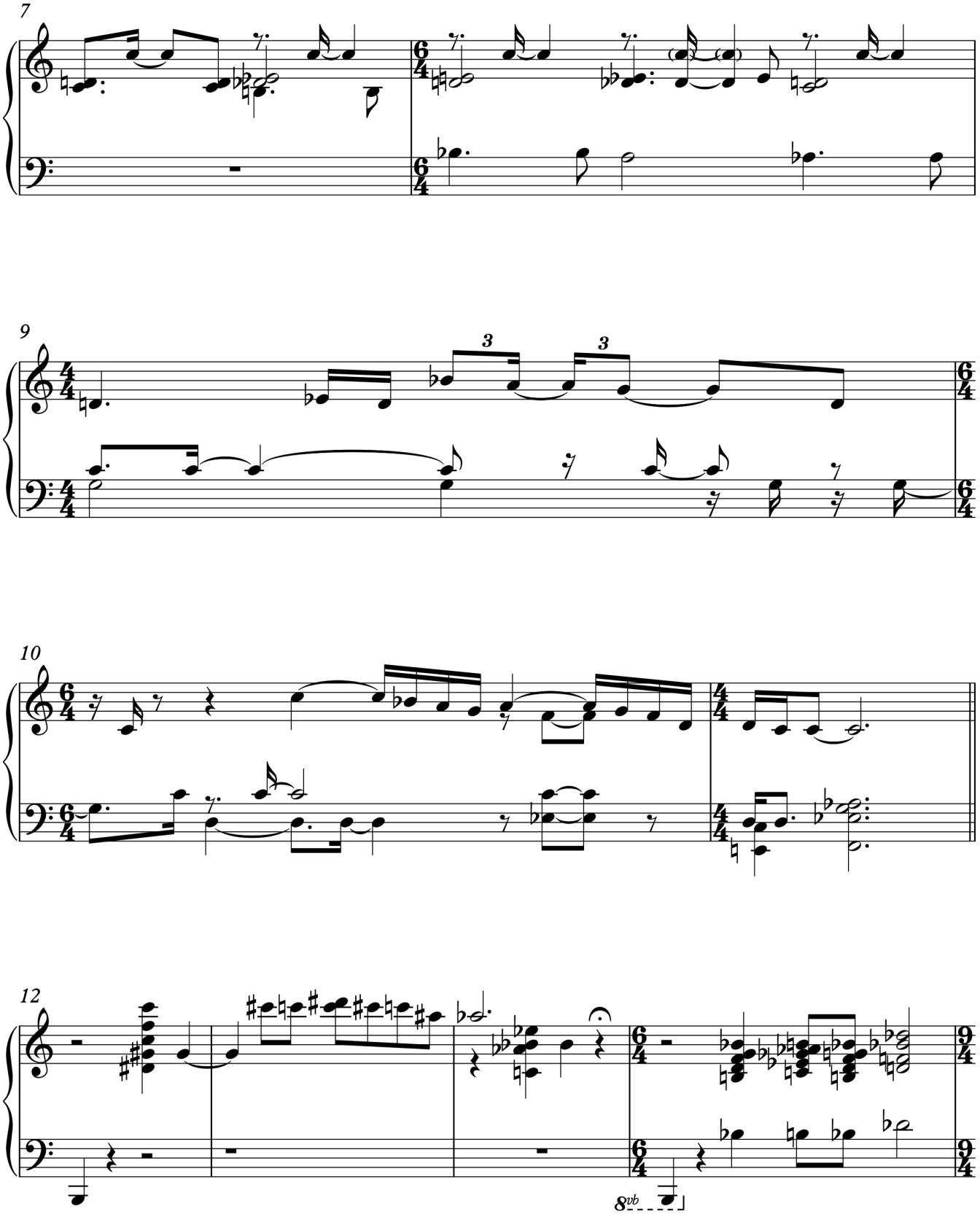
- Take apart Herbie's playing using one of his solo performances and compare the way he approached the song alone to the more structured performance on his original recordings with a band. Use the sheet music transcriptions to help you. Where is he following the form and where is he departing from it? What rules is he breaking? Do you like what it does to the sound?

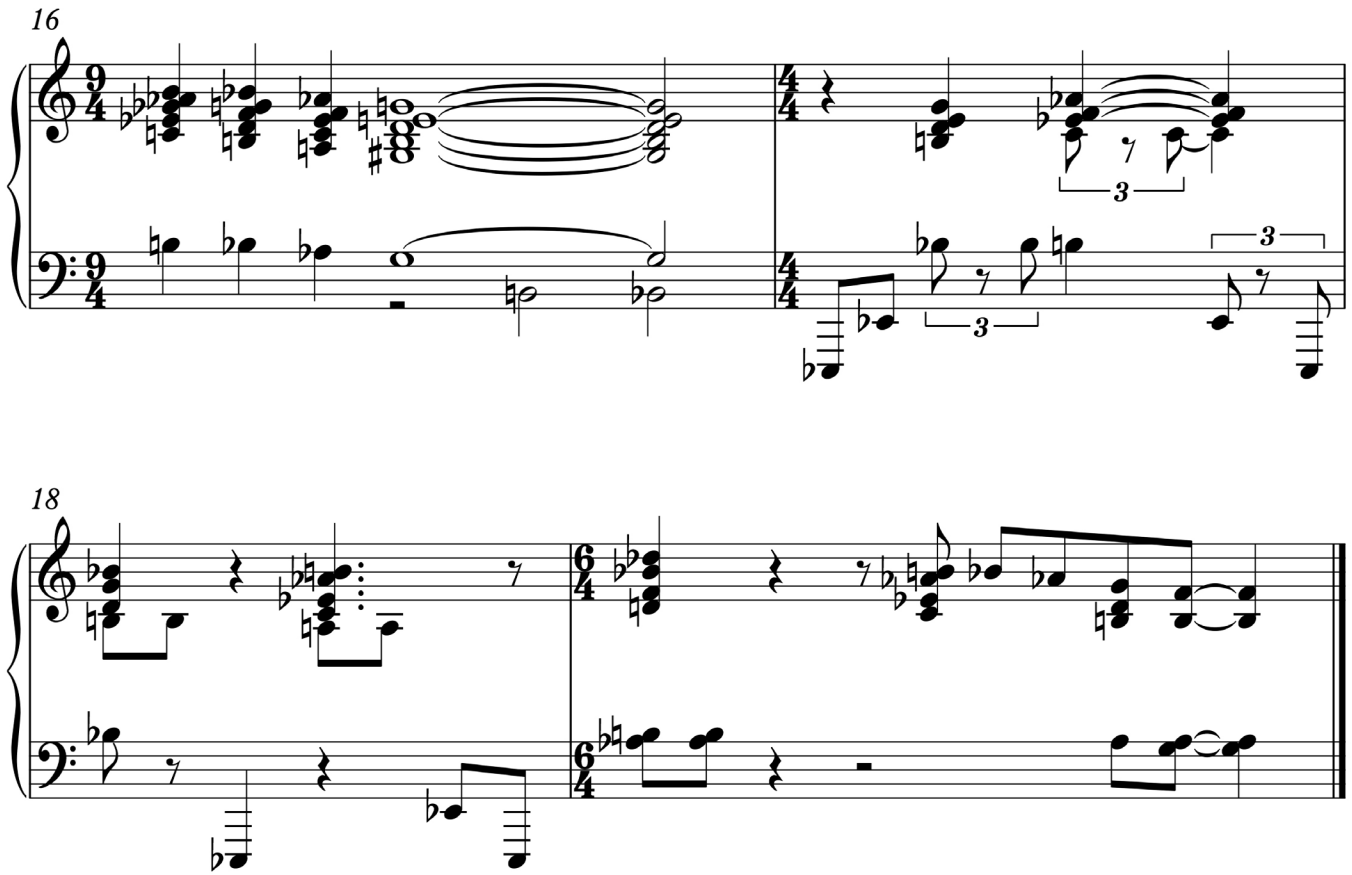
9.
NOTES

Chapter 9
Improvising Alone

Free Improvisation (1:18)

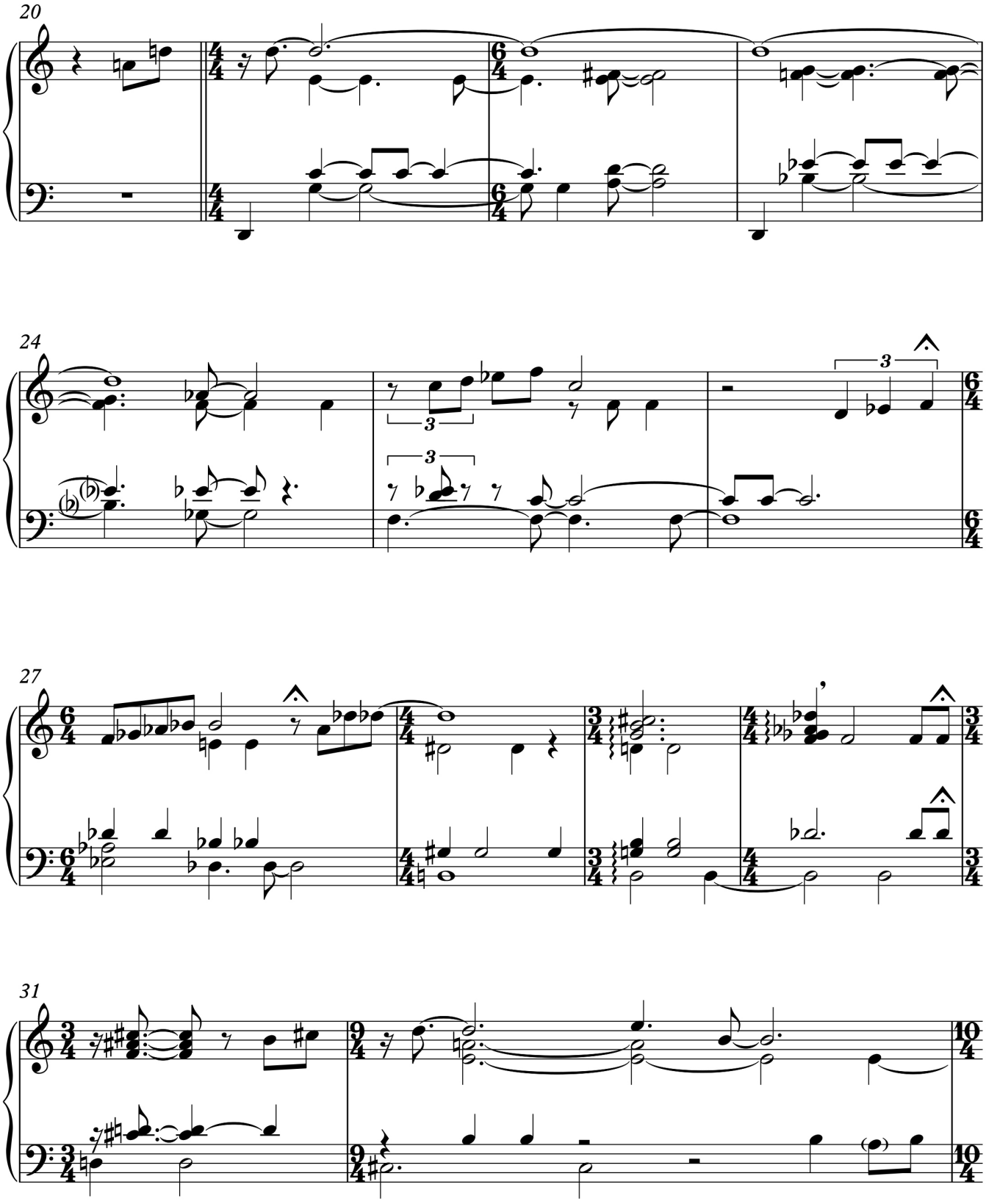


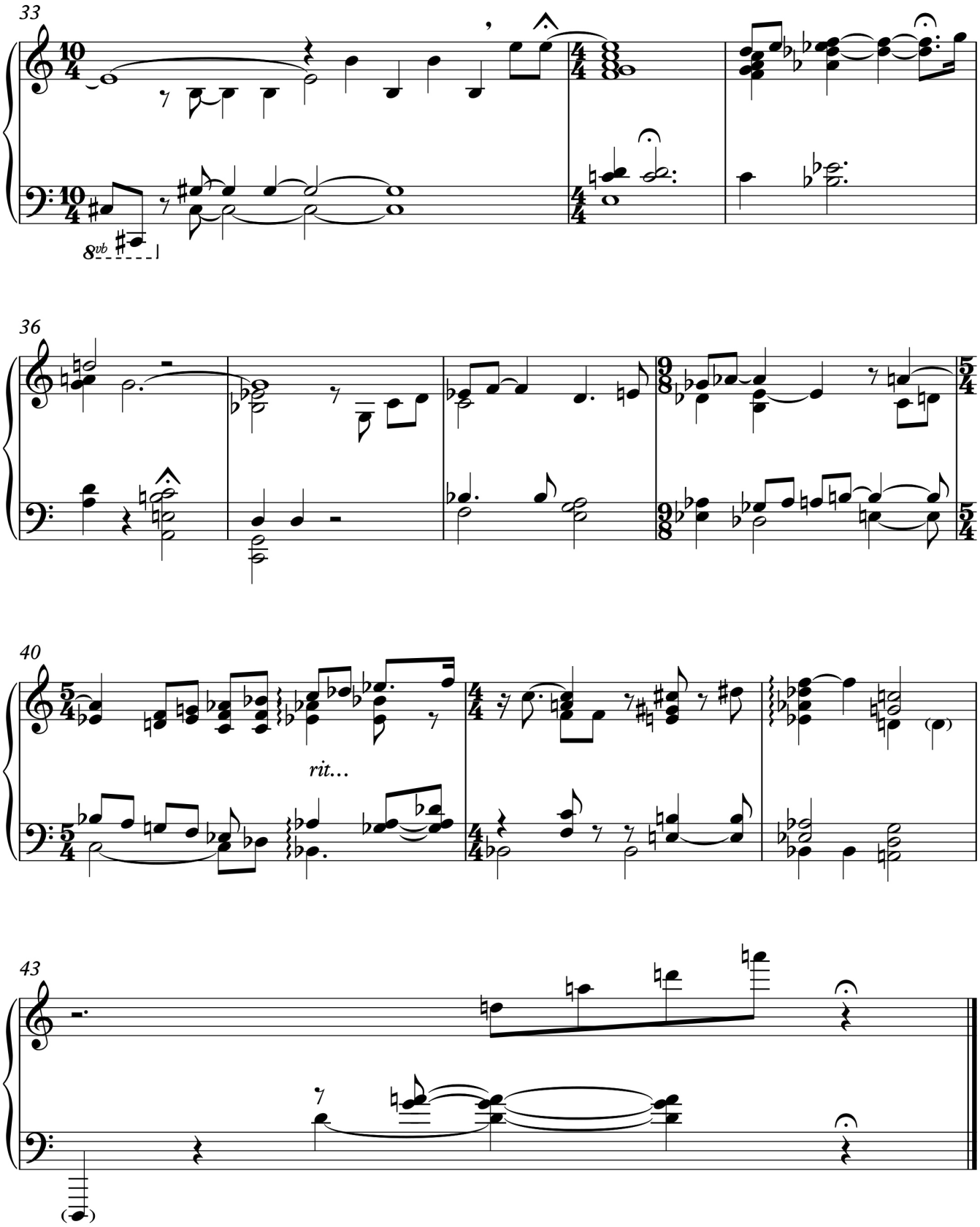

7
9
10
12
8vb


16
3
3
3

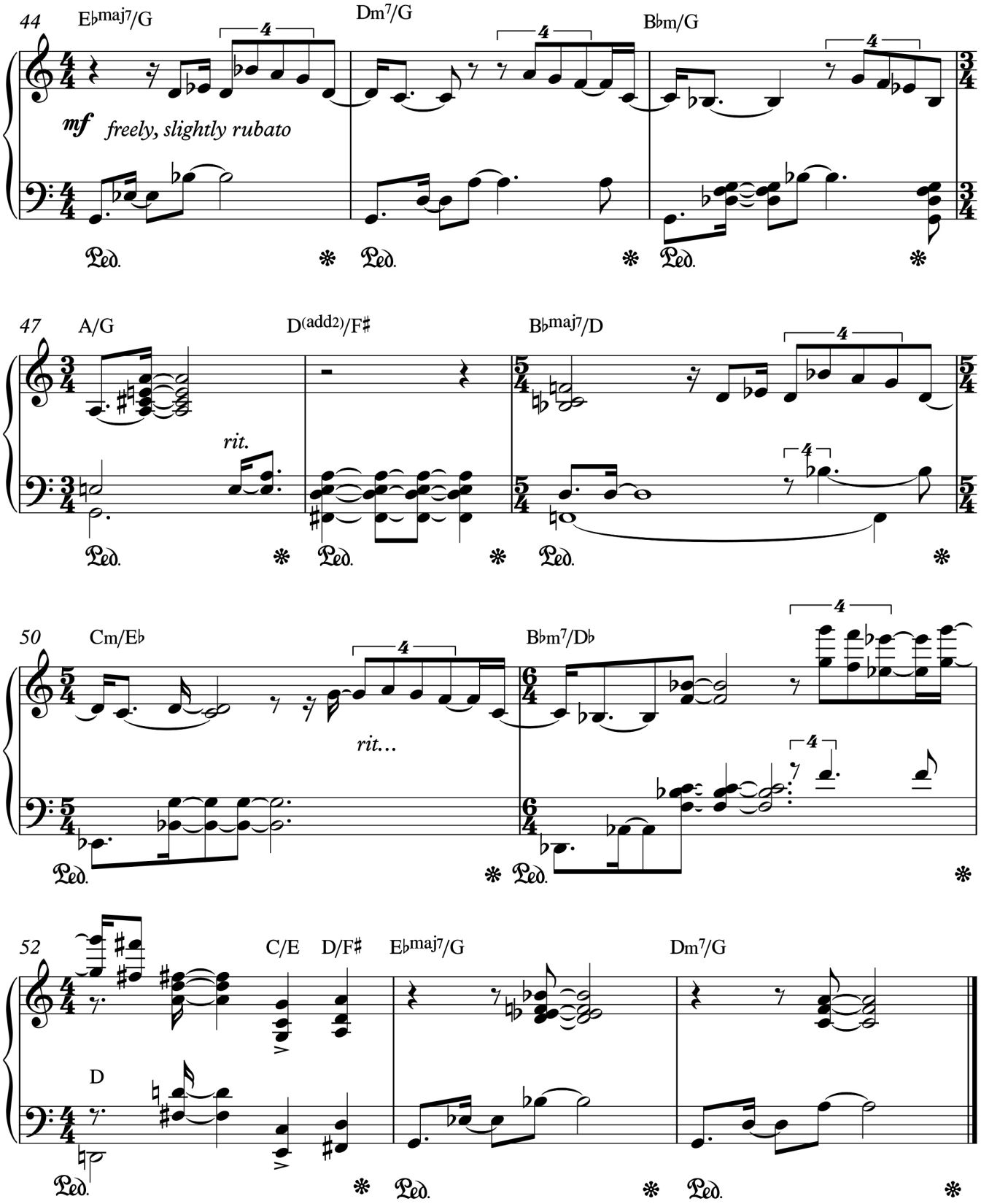
18

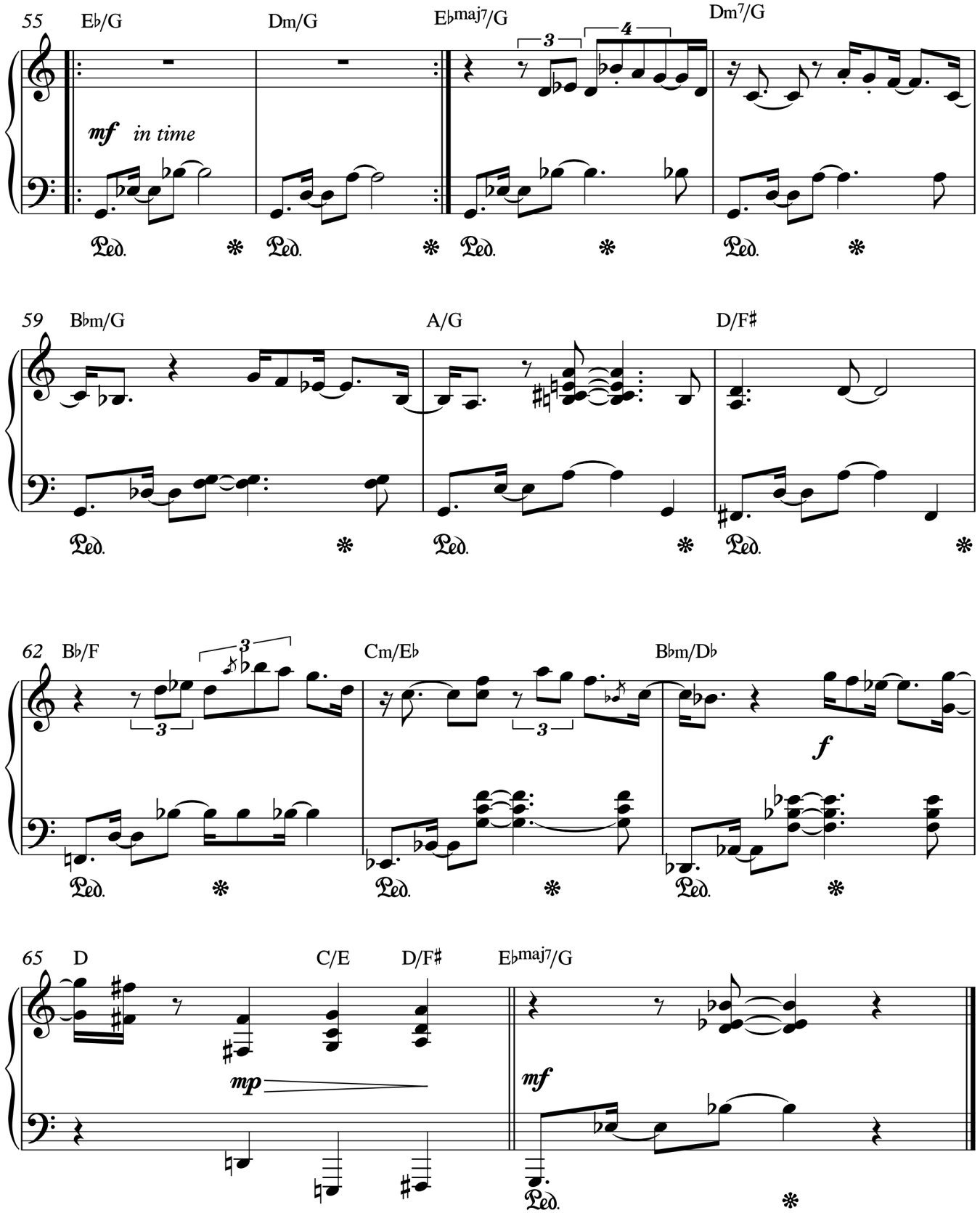
A solo piano approch to "Maiden Voyage" (3:00)



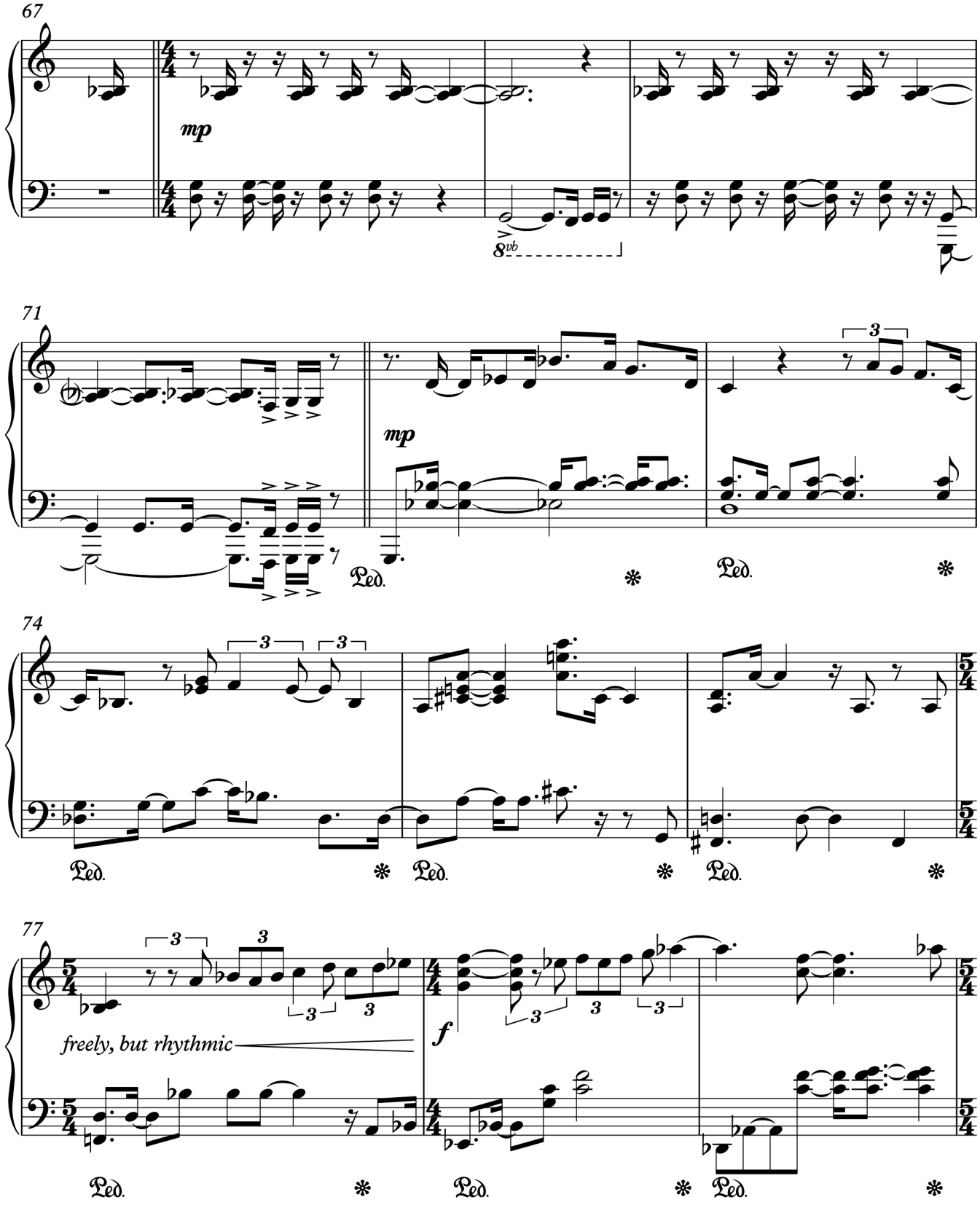

33
8vb
36
40
rit...
43

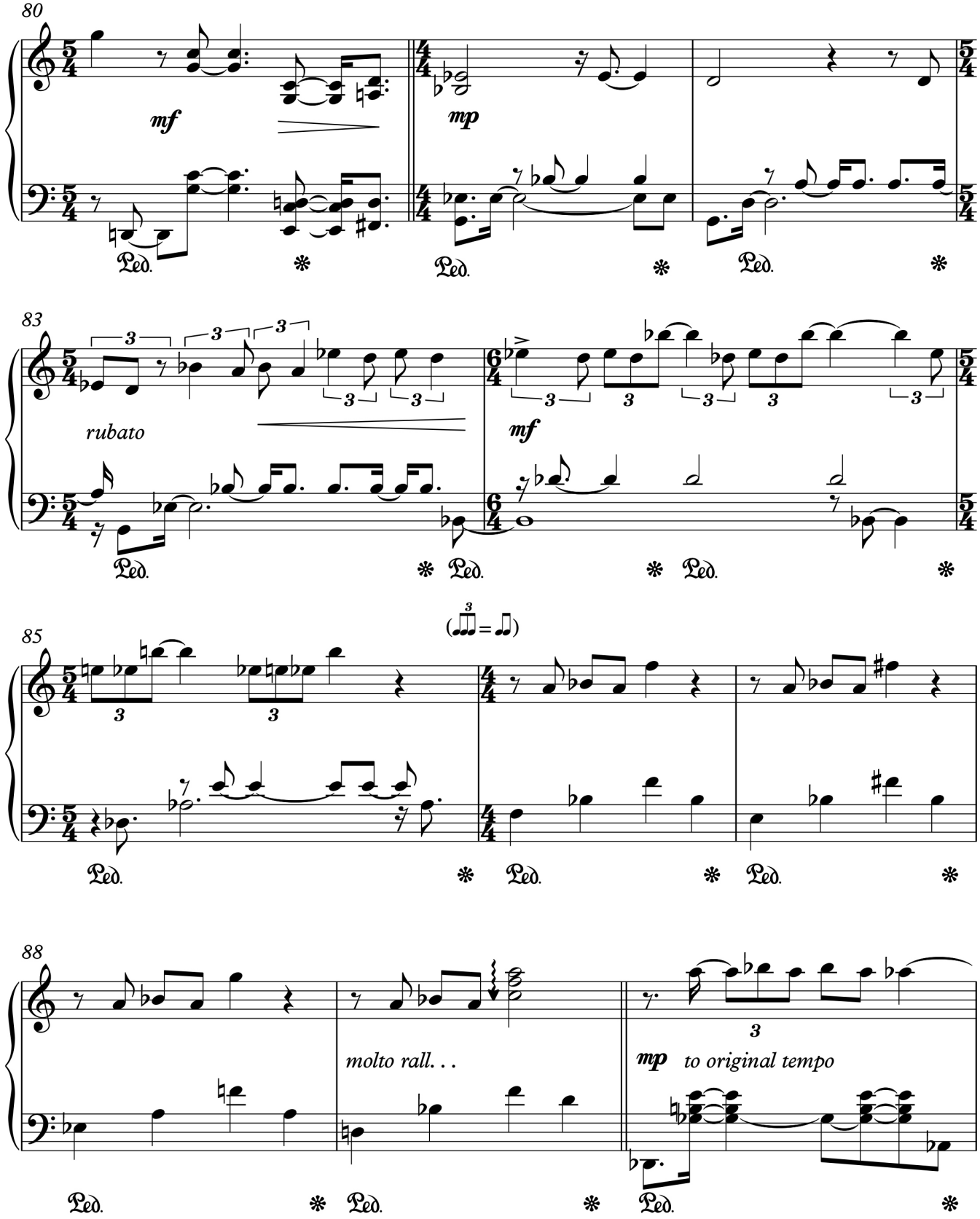
Sonrisa (5:36)

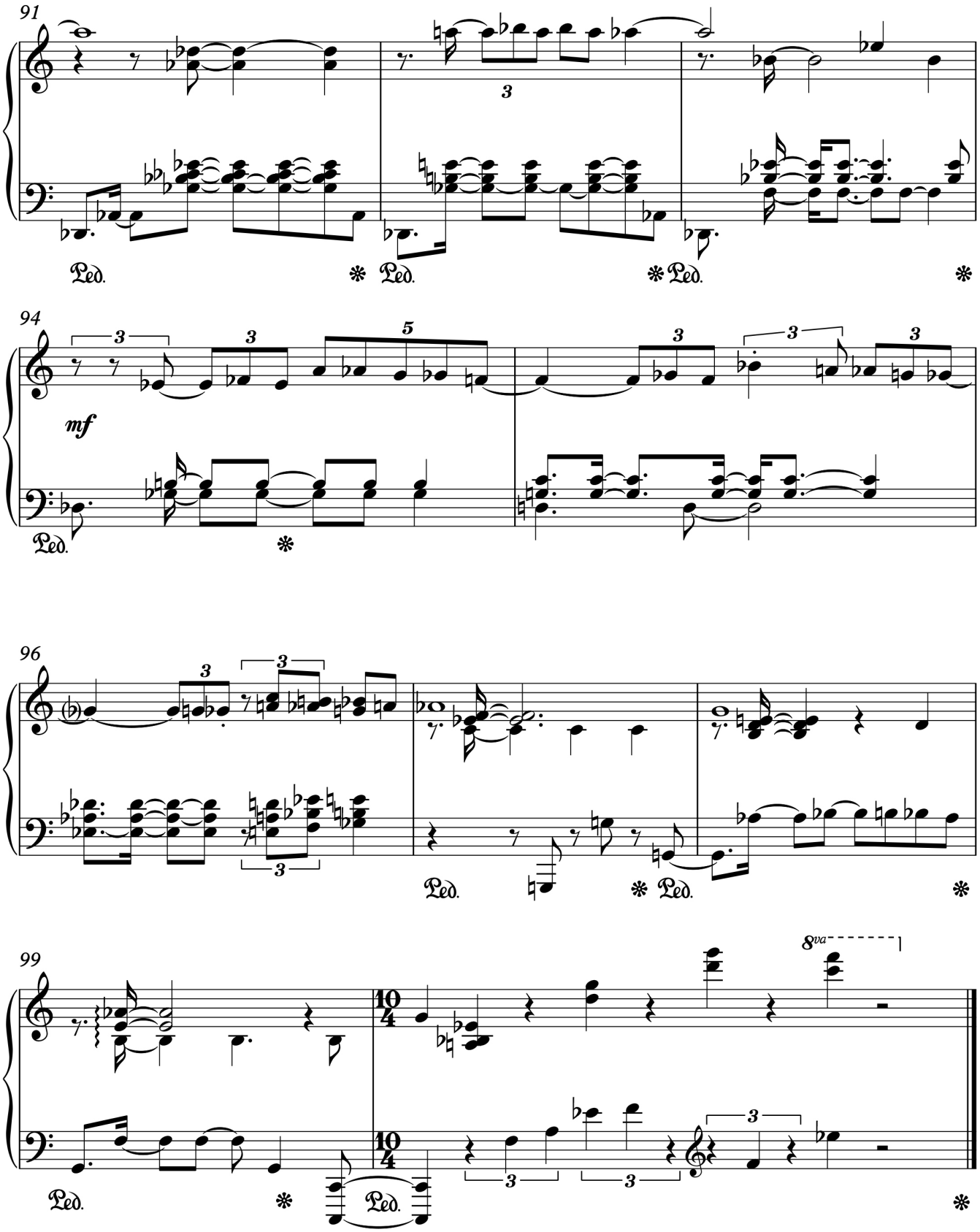

44
E♭maj7/G
Dm7/G
B♭m/G
mf
freely, slightly rubato
Ped.
47
A/G
D(add2)/F♯
B♭maj7/D
rit.
50
Cm/E♭
B♭m7/D♭
rit...
52
C/E
D/F♯
E♭maj7/G
Dm7/G
D


55
E♭/G
Dm/G
E♭maj7/G
Dm7/G
mf in time
Ped.
59
B♭m/G
A/G
D/F♯
62
B♭/F
Cm/E♭
B♭m/D♭
f
65
D
C/E
D/F♯
E♭maj7/G
mp
mf

A solo piano approach to "Sonrisa" (6:56)




80
mf
mp
Ped.
83
rubato
mf
85
(3 =)
88
molto rall. . .
mp to original tempo


91
Ped.
94
mf
Ped.
96
Ped.
99
8va
Ped.

10.

EXPANDED IMPROV TECHNIQUES

"You have to just open your mind up and try things."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Transforming a Theme
- Finding Freedom
- Inspiration Is Everywhere
- Keep Growing Every Day

CHAPTER REVIEW

The process of developing your own sound should lead you to some strange, uncharted places. You'll find there are ways to approach improvisation that have nothing to do with chords, melodies, or the traditional language of jazz.

You might want to explore improvisations that start with no structure at all—just letting the notes come out of your fingers, as Herbie says—and see how you can latch on to themes or ideas that emerge, repeating and transforming them to make compositions on the fly.

You might also want to experiment with freer forms of jazz, like Herbie did during his stint with Eric Dolphy's band. Think about what your instrument can do, not in terms of notes or chords, but in terms of abstract sounds that evoke images or feelings.

Remember learning an instrument is a process; don't rule things out until you've tried them, no matter how crazy, and don't get discouraged. Dedicate yourself to the process and believe you can be better tomorrow than you are today.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Listen to the sounds Herbie made with Eric Dolphy on *The Illinois Concert*. Think about the historical climate of 1963 as Herbie described it. Can you hear struggle in the music?
- Practice Herbie's expanded improv techniques using the sheet music following the notes page.

ASSIGNMENT

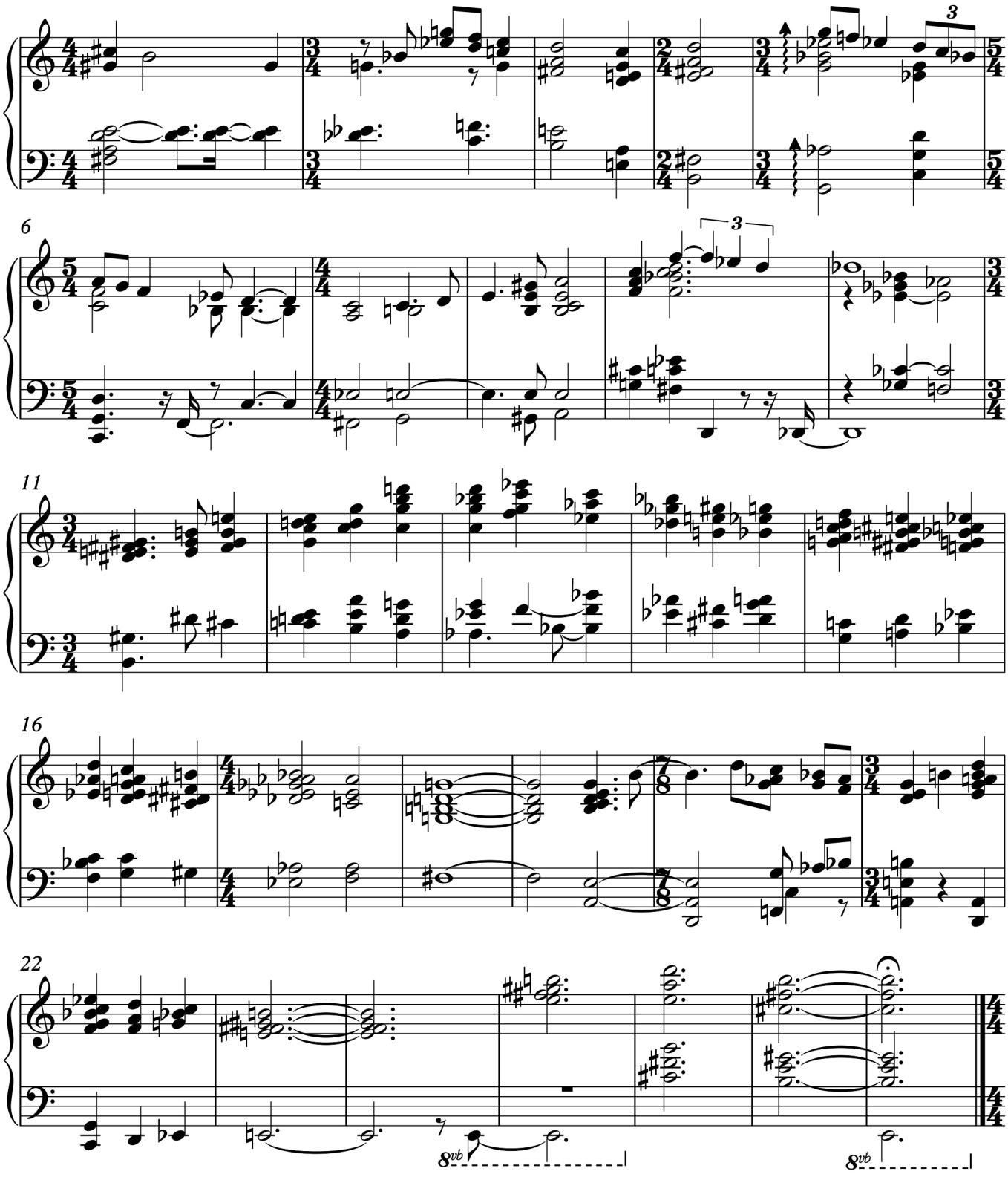
- How you can let images inspire you? Pick a favorite painting or photograph and let it inspire an improvisation. Think about what different aspects of the image you can use to guide your playing: colors, the quality of the lines, the sounds of the world being depicted, your emotions, etc. Share the image and a recording of your piece with fellow students in The Hub.

10.

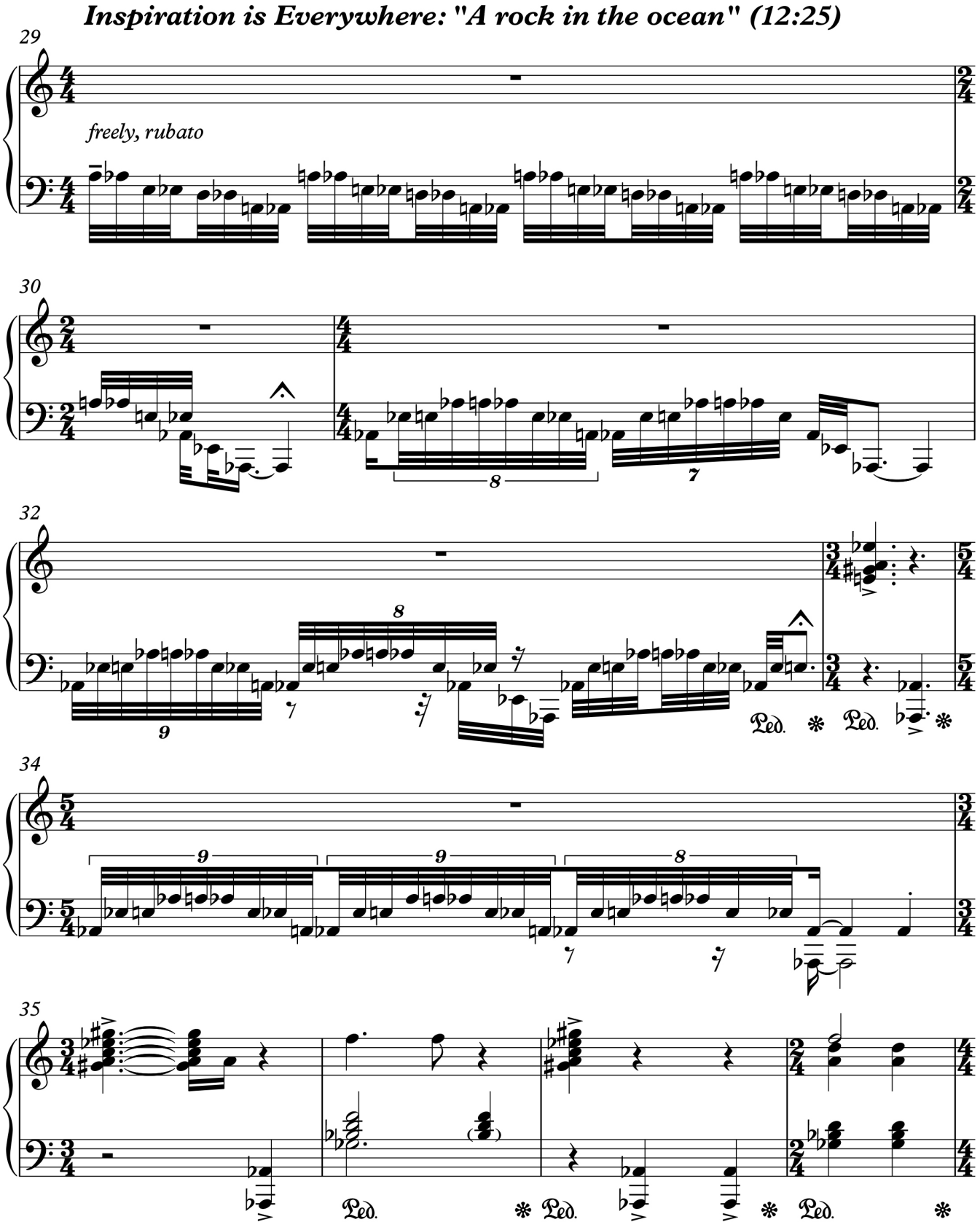
NOTES

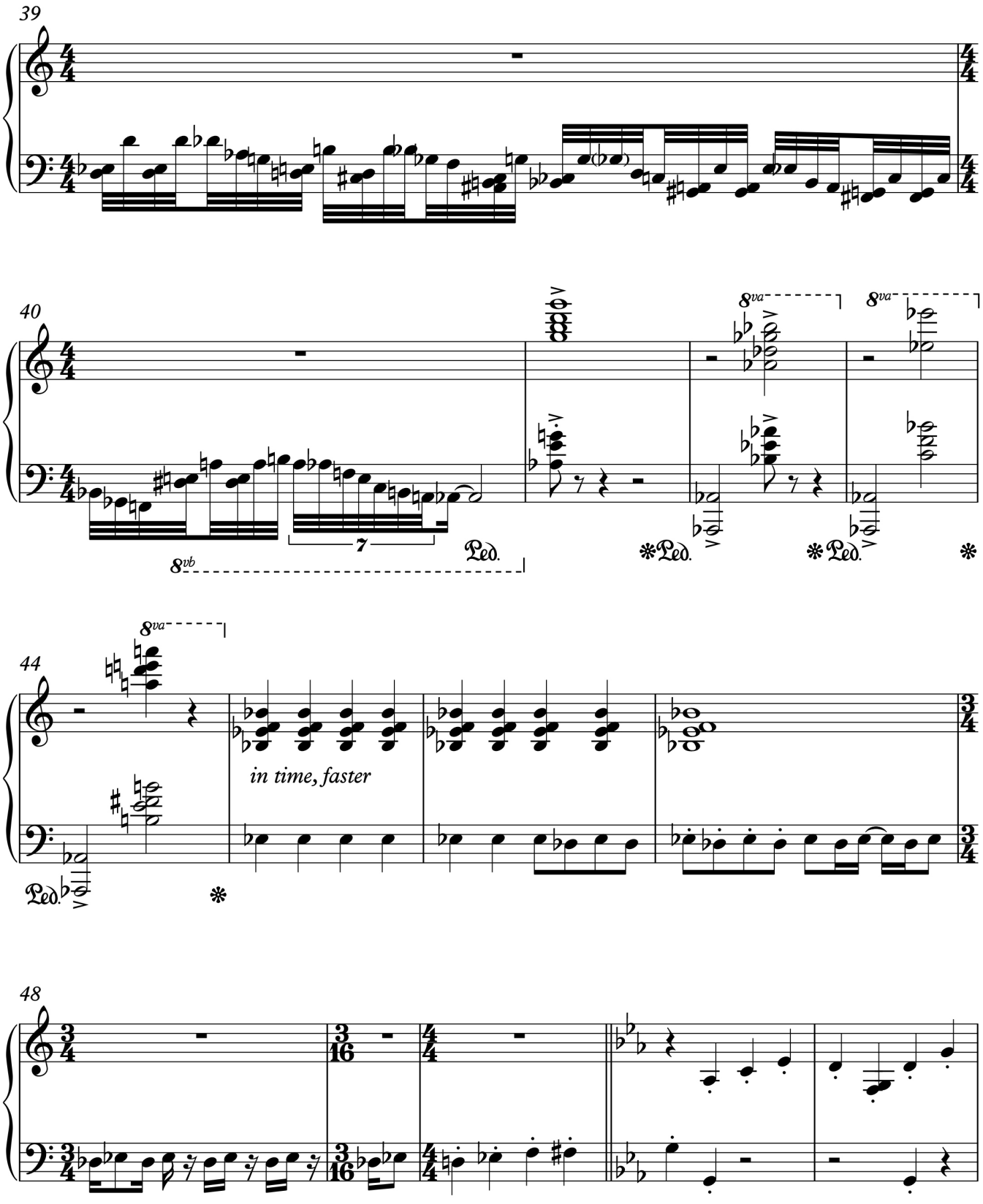
Chapter 10
Expanded Improv Techniques

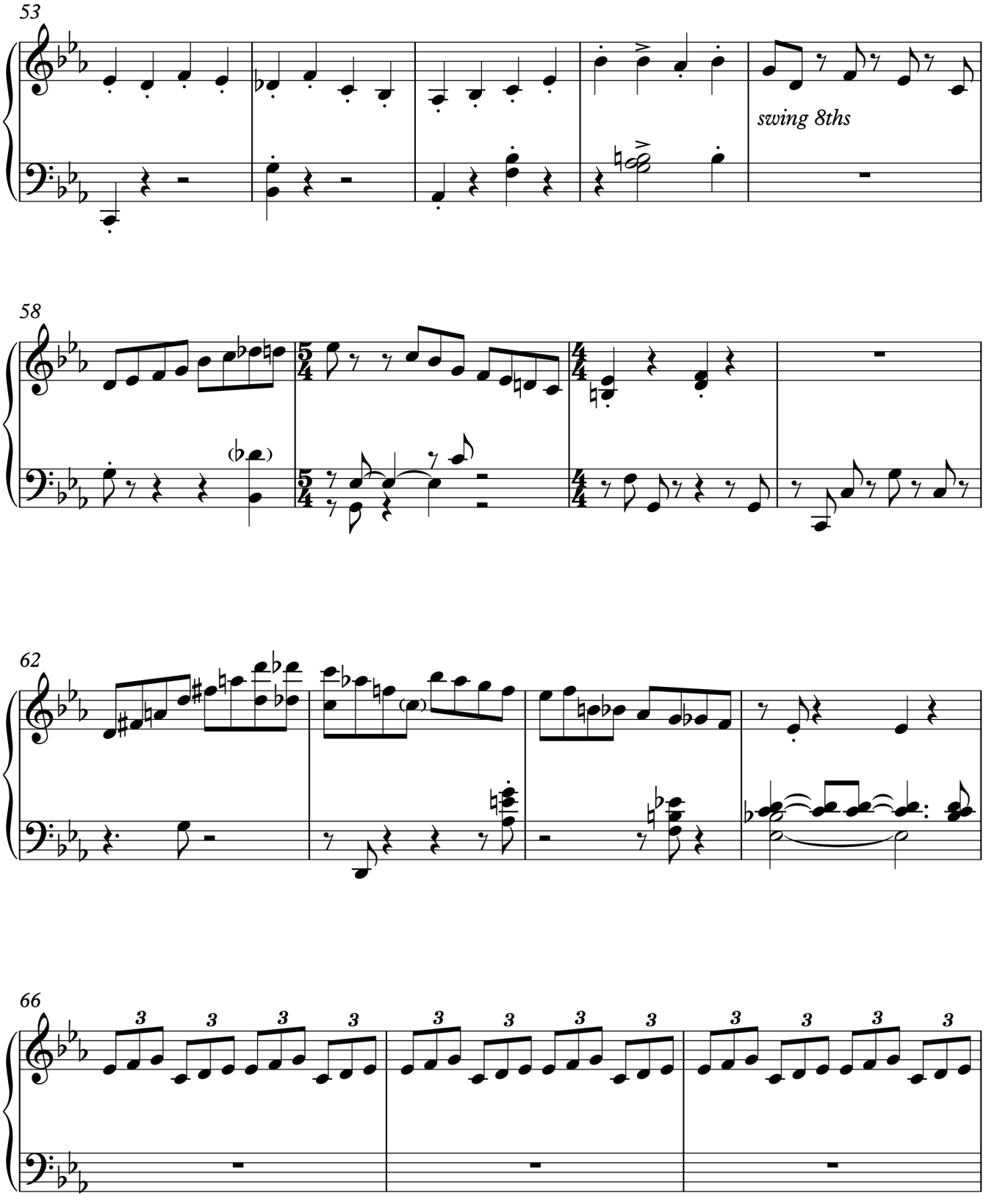
Free Improvisation Example: Developing a Theme

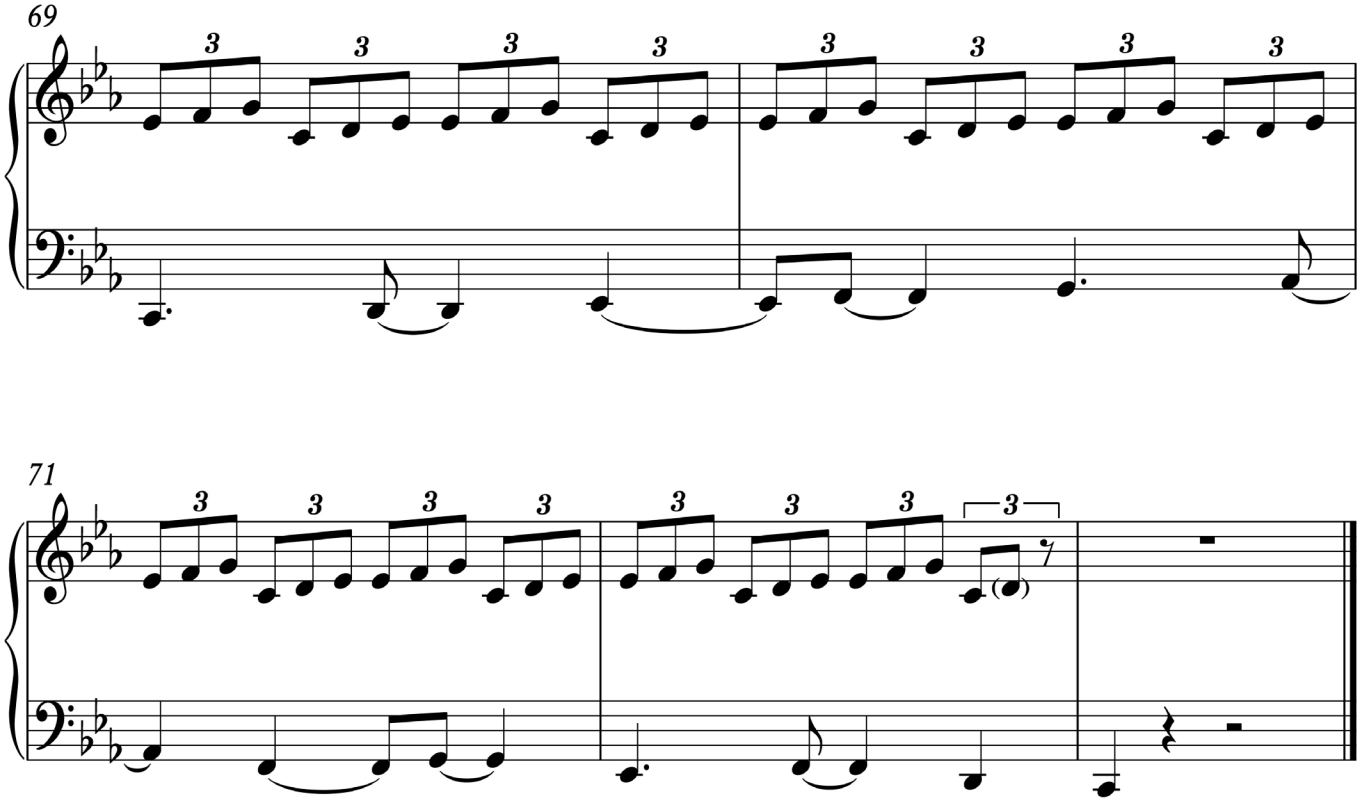


Inspiration is Everywhere: "A rock in the ocean" (12:25)




39
40
8va
8va
8vb
7
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
44
8va
in time, faster
Ped.
48


53
swing 8ths
58
62
66


69
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3

71
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3

11.

JAM SESSION: IMPROVISING TOGETHER

"Stay open to the idea of whatever anybody plays can turn into something useable."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Open Your Ears
- Case Study: Free Group Improvisation

CHAPTER REVIEW

Playing with others can be a great joy and inspiration. The best musical partnerships arise when everyone is listening closely to each other's playing and trusting the instincts and choices of his/her fellow players. If you start with the two basic principles of listening and trust, you can create improvisations out of thin air like Herbie does with Simon and Alex.

When you're playing in groups, focus on how your playing interacts with the playing of the other musicians. Is it adding an interesting contrast? If you don't think there's anything to add, not playing can be a contribution in itself.

When there's no sheet music to work from, it can be helpful to think in terms of images; is there motion or stillness in what you're hearing? Are you playing the sound of the planets moving around one another in space? Don't be afraid to get "out there."

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Listen to some less structured group improvisations, like John Coltrane's "Ascension" and Ornette Coleman's "Free Jazz."
- You should also listen to Herbie doing freer group playing with his Mwandishi band.

ASSIGNMENT

- Practice your listening skills by playing along with the jam session. Pay close attention to what's going on with the synthesizer, sax, and vibes, and think about how you can contribute and add new, perhaps contrasting, musical ideas.

11.

NOTES

12.

COMPOSING

"Composing is about finding something you want to share with others."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Just Start
- Compose With Feeling
- Turning Life Experience Into Music
- There Are Infinite Approaches to Every Song
- Don't Limit Yourself

CHAPTER REVIEW

For Herbie, the songwriting process is about sharing your own life experience with others through music. Honesty is of the utmost importance. This can be a difficult way to work because it's not always easy being honest with others about who you are and where you come from. Try to see your songwriting in terms of the big picture; it should be about more than making money and winning fame. Songwriting should be part of your process of growing as a human being and leading a fulfilling life.

Good songs start with potent feelings. It can help to focus in on a feeling, image, or experience before sitting down with your instrument and starting to write. The next step is to see how you can create musical interpretations of what's inside of you. That's how Herbie wrote his best known song, "Watermelon Man." The funky piano rhythm represented a sound from his childhood: the wheels of the neighborhood watermelon seller's cart.

The process can be intimidating, and everyone, even Herbie, suffers from writer's block. If the blank page daunts you, just put a couple notes down. It doesn't matter if they sound awful—the trick is to get yourself started and let those notes lead you to something better. Eventually a song you can be proud of will start to take shape.

Don't think the composing process ends after you've performed or recorded your songs. Let your compositions keep evolving over time, as you never know where they might take you or who they might reach. Always imagine your songs as having infinite potential and being able to speak to everyone.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Look for and listen to Herbie's original recording of "Watermelon Man." Can you hear the sights and sounds of his childhood in mid-century Chicago? If not, what do you see and feel when you listen?

12.

COMPOSING

TAKE IT FURTHER CONT'D

- Now listen to Mongo Santamaria's reinterpretation of the song. Pay attention to how the song has changed, especially in the rhythm section. What do you see and feel when you hear Mongo Santamaria's version?

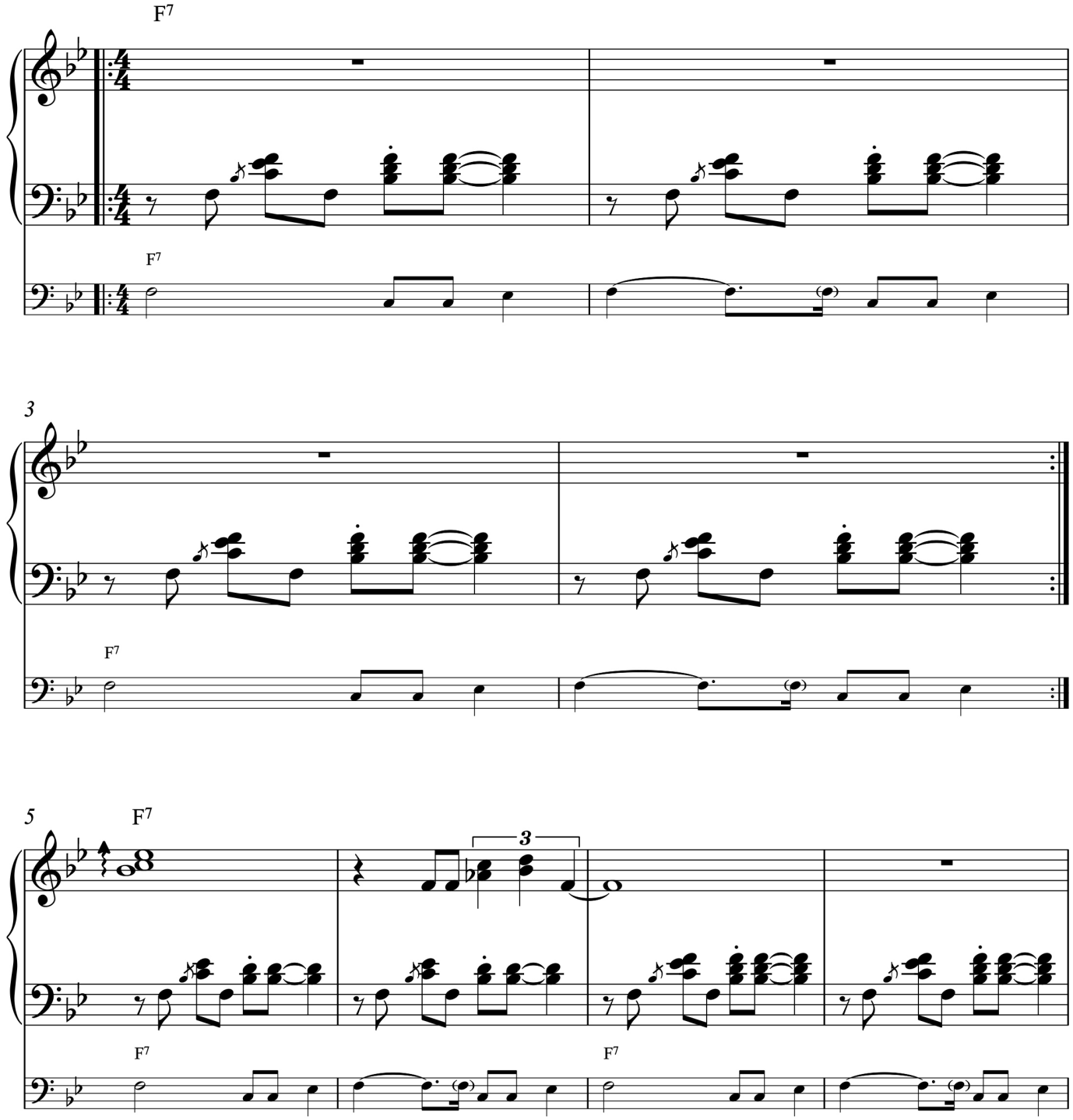
ASSIGNMENT

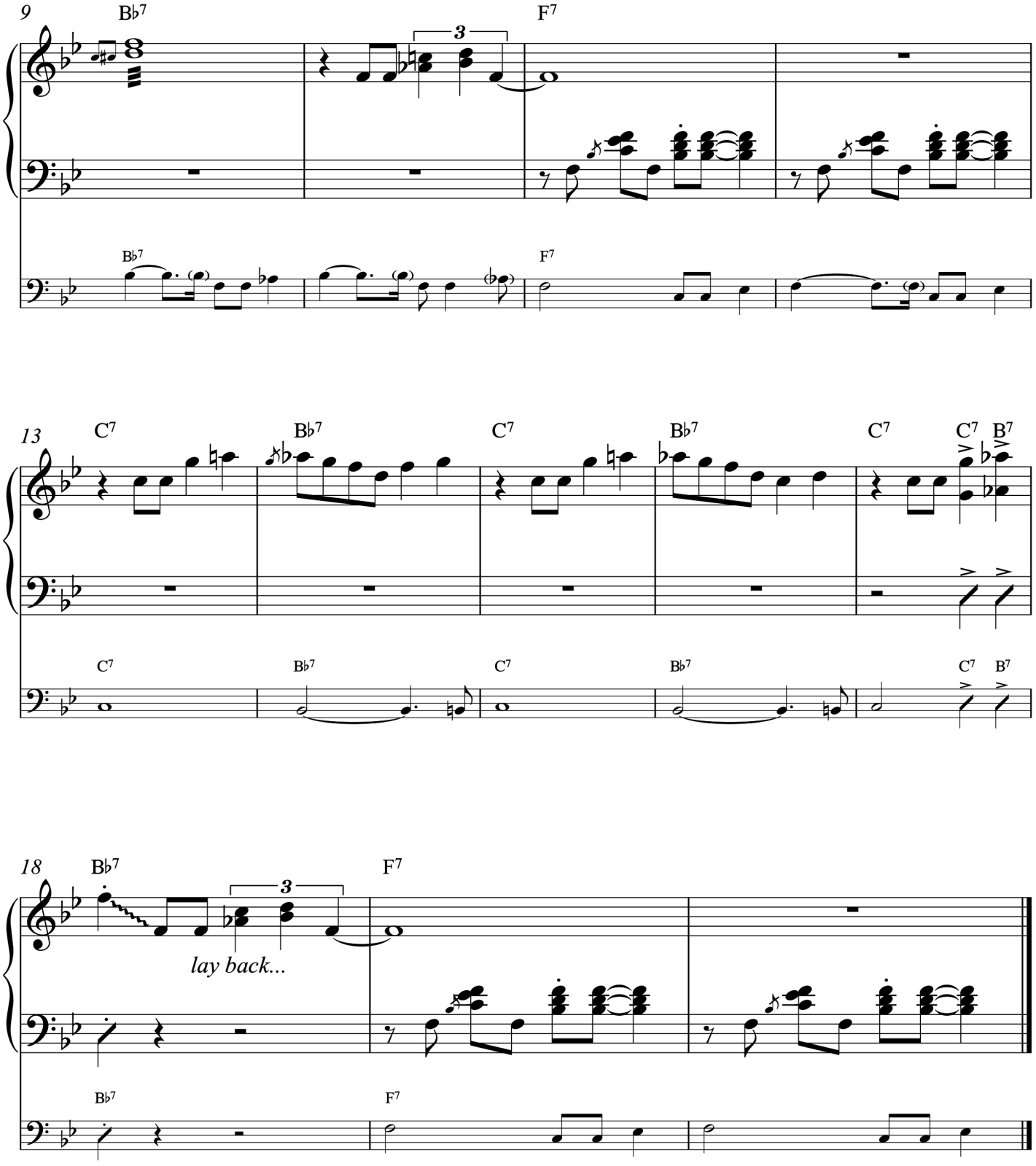
- Open your mind to the process of turning the non-musical into music. Think of five things that are important to you—items, people, memories, anything. Try to write five riffs that evoke them in some way. Maybe one of those riffs will turn into a song one day.

12.

NOTES

Watermelon Man: original version (as played in Chapter 14, in "lead sheet" style)




9
B♭7
F7
3
13
C7
B♭7
C7
B♭7
C7
C7
B7
18
B♭7
F7
3
lay back...

13.

RECOMPOSING, REARRANGING, REINVENTING

"Don't be afraid of doing a new thing. That's what music is all about. It takes daring."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Rewriting on the Fly: Actual Proof
- Keep Your Ears Open
- Make It Funky
- Don't Let Criticism Get in the Way of Your Growth

CHAPTER REVIEW

Try to reimagine songwriting as an ongoing evolutionary process. Keep your mind open to changing your compositions as you change, letting new ideas and sounds catch your ear and inspire you. Music that keeps growing keeps everyone more engaged—your band, your audience, and you. Remember, great music takes daring.

It can help to keep your ears and mind open to different types of music and different styles of playing. Herbie would never have made the jump to funk (and synthesizers and later hip-hop) if he hadn't broadened his musical horizons. The more you hear, the more inspiration you have to draw from. Try not to put any one genre up on a pedestal.

As you grow creatively and reinvent yourself, you can expect criticism. Others are often slower to adapt to your new creative visions than you might like them to be. Don't pay your detractors any attention. It's your duty to keep growing and pushing yourself as an artist. Herbie challenges himself to do something radically different with each new album that he makes. Can you make the same kind of commitment with yourself?

TAKE IT FURTHER

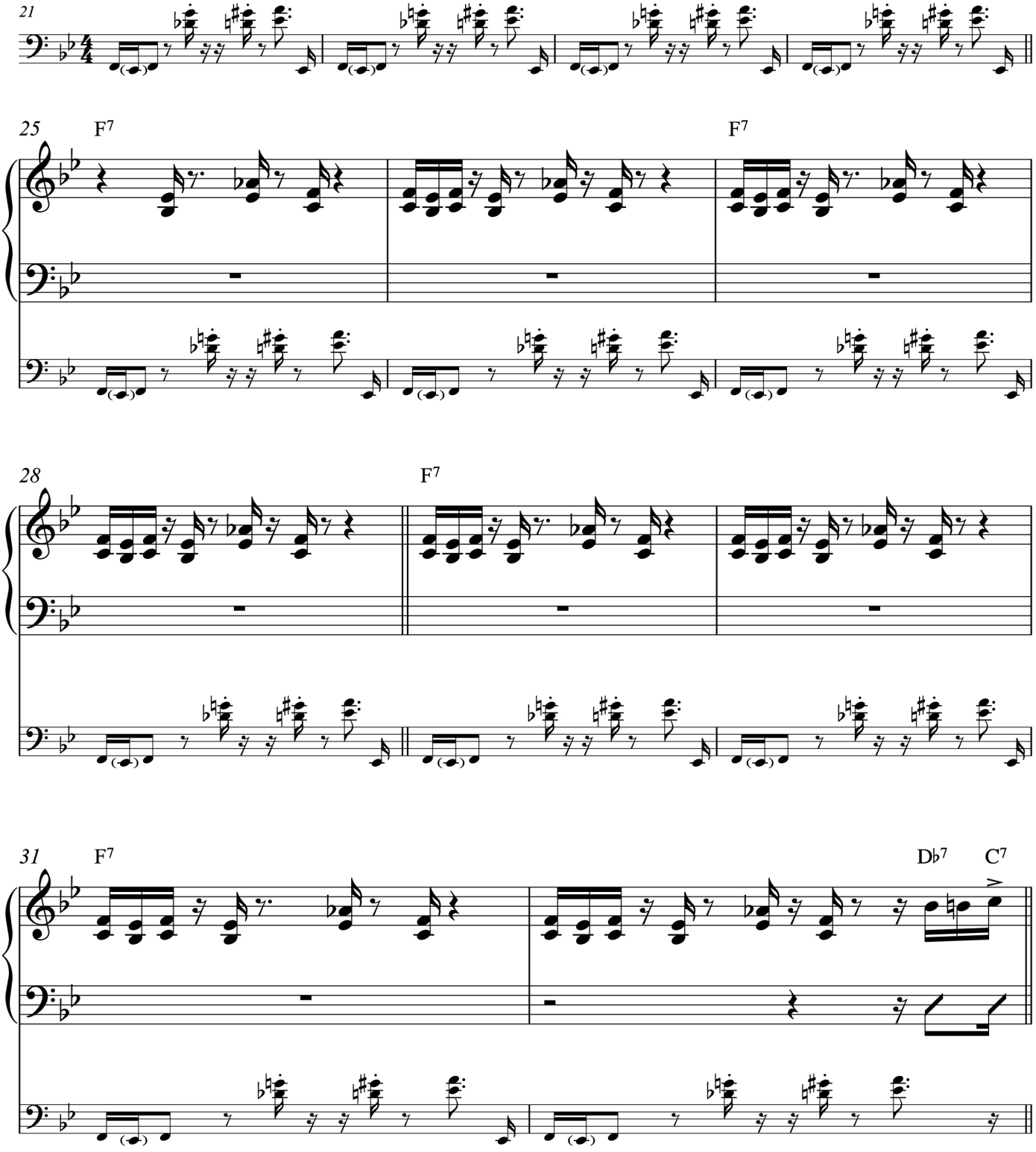
- Listen to the bass line for "Actual Proof" that inspired Herbie to rearrange the song in the recording studio.
- Check out the sheet music for this chapter following the notes page.

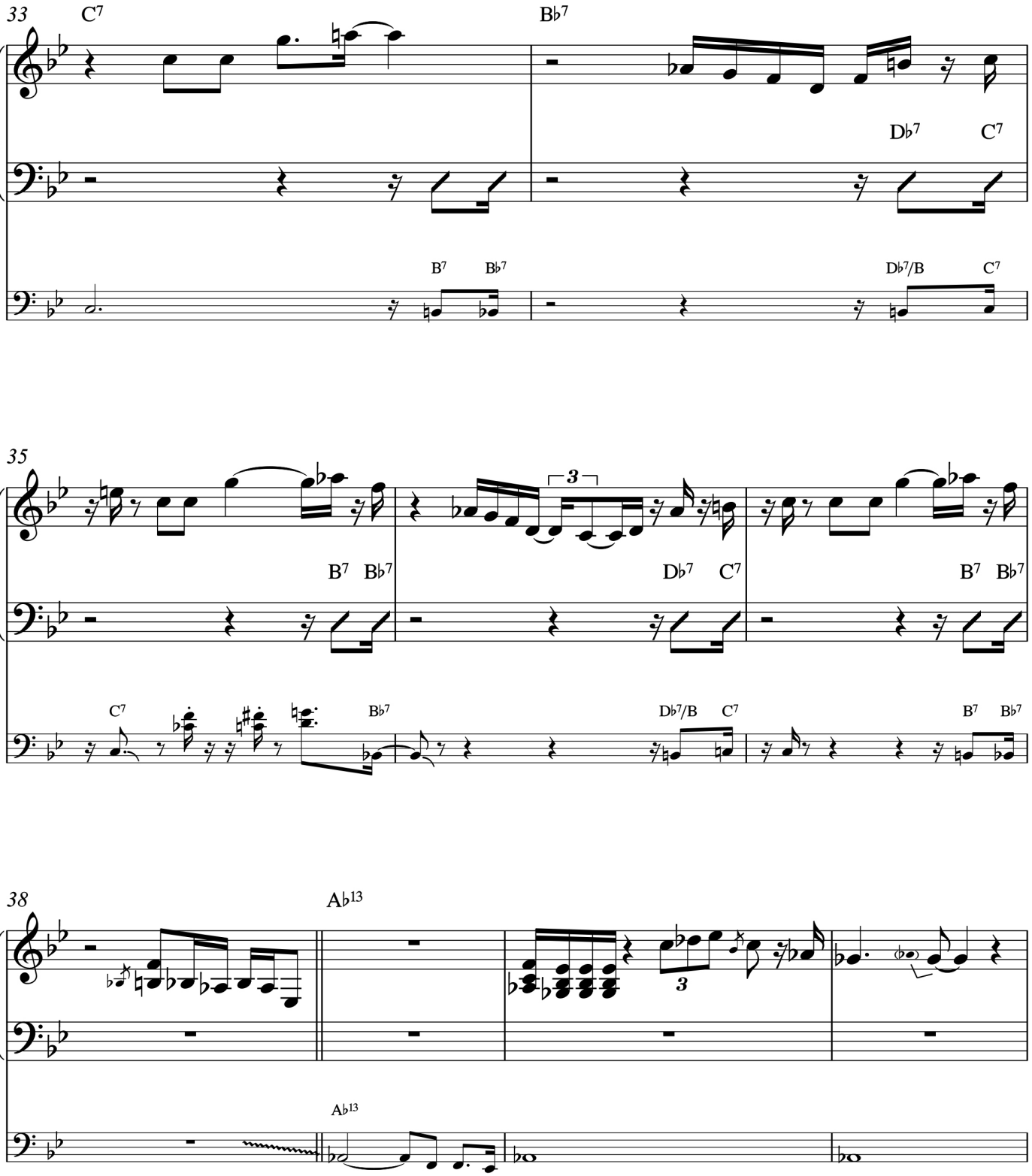
ASSIGNMENT

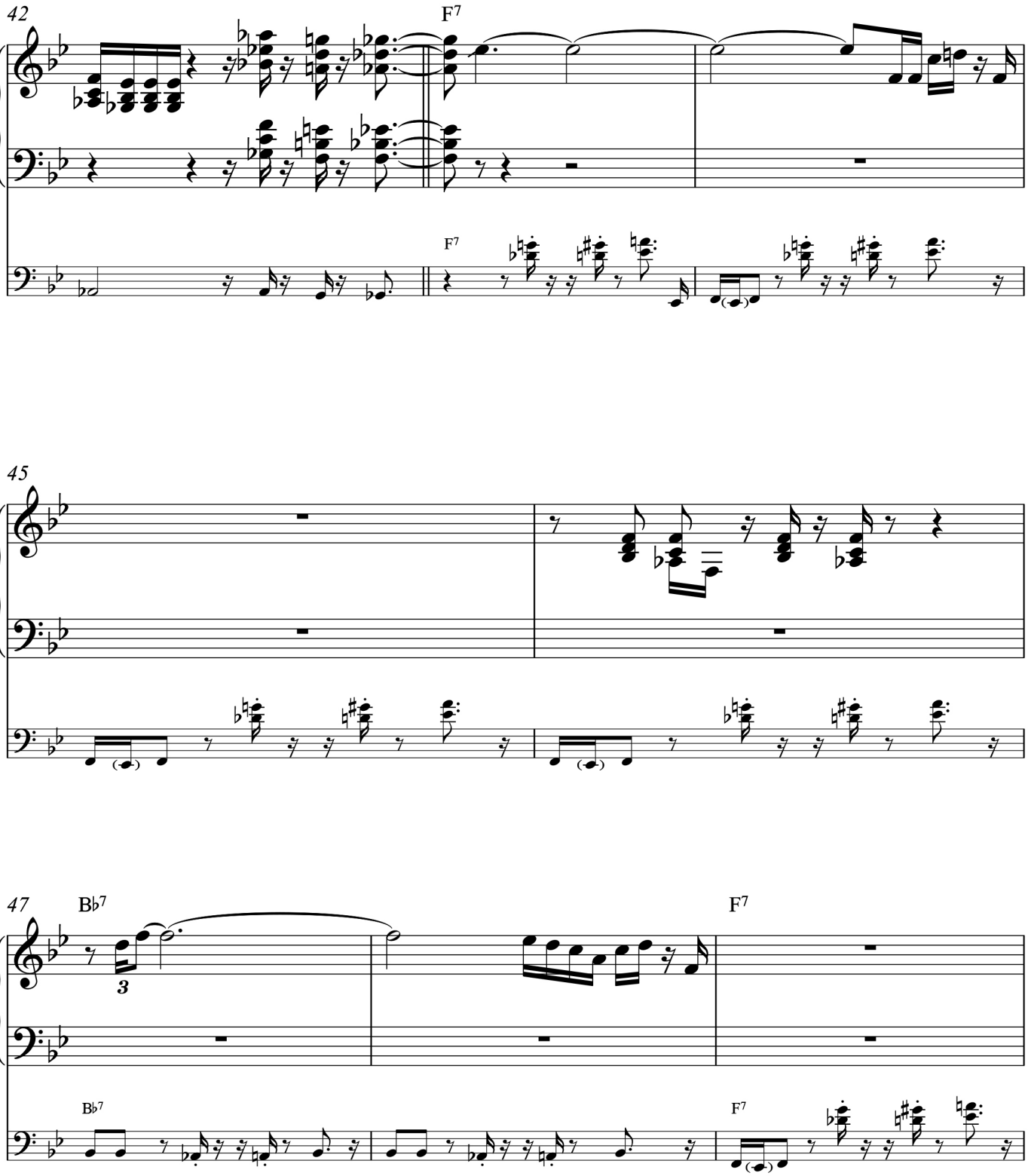
- Try branching out to new genres. Take a song you've composed or someone else's song that you like and try rearranging it in a different genre. Try to surprise yourself by working with sounds and grooves with which you're not normally comfortable.

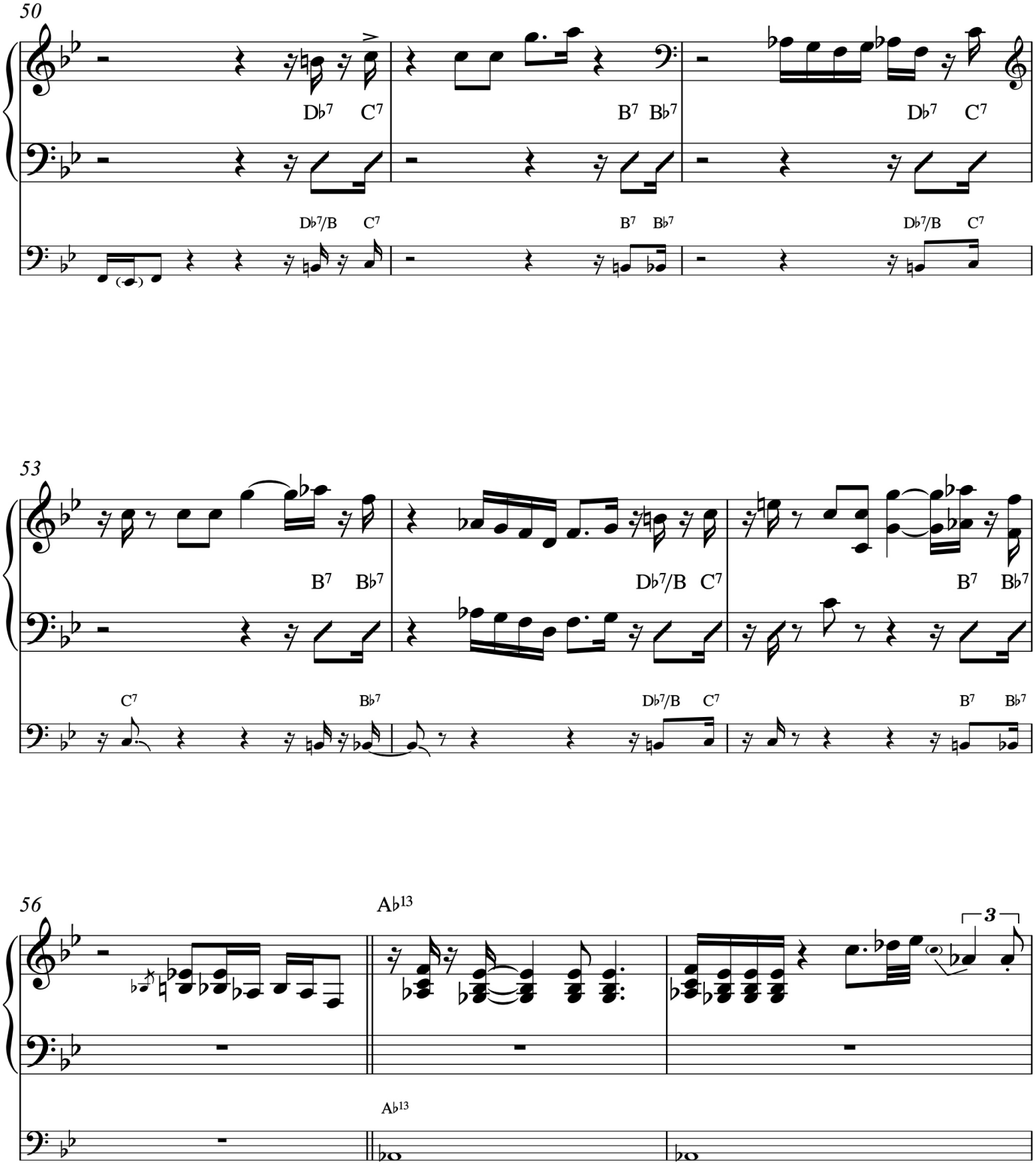
13.
NOTES

Watermelon Man: later version (as played in Chapter 14, in "lead sheet" style)




33
C7
B♭7
D♭7
C7
B7
B♭7
D♭7/B
C7
35
B7
B♭7
D♭7
C7
B7
B♭7
C7
B♭7
D♭7/B
C7
B7
B♭7
38
A♭13
A♭13


42
F7
F7
45
47
B♭7
3
F7
B♭7
F7


50
D♭7 C7
B7 B♭7
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D♭7/B C7
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D♭7/B C7
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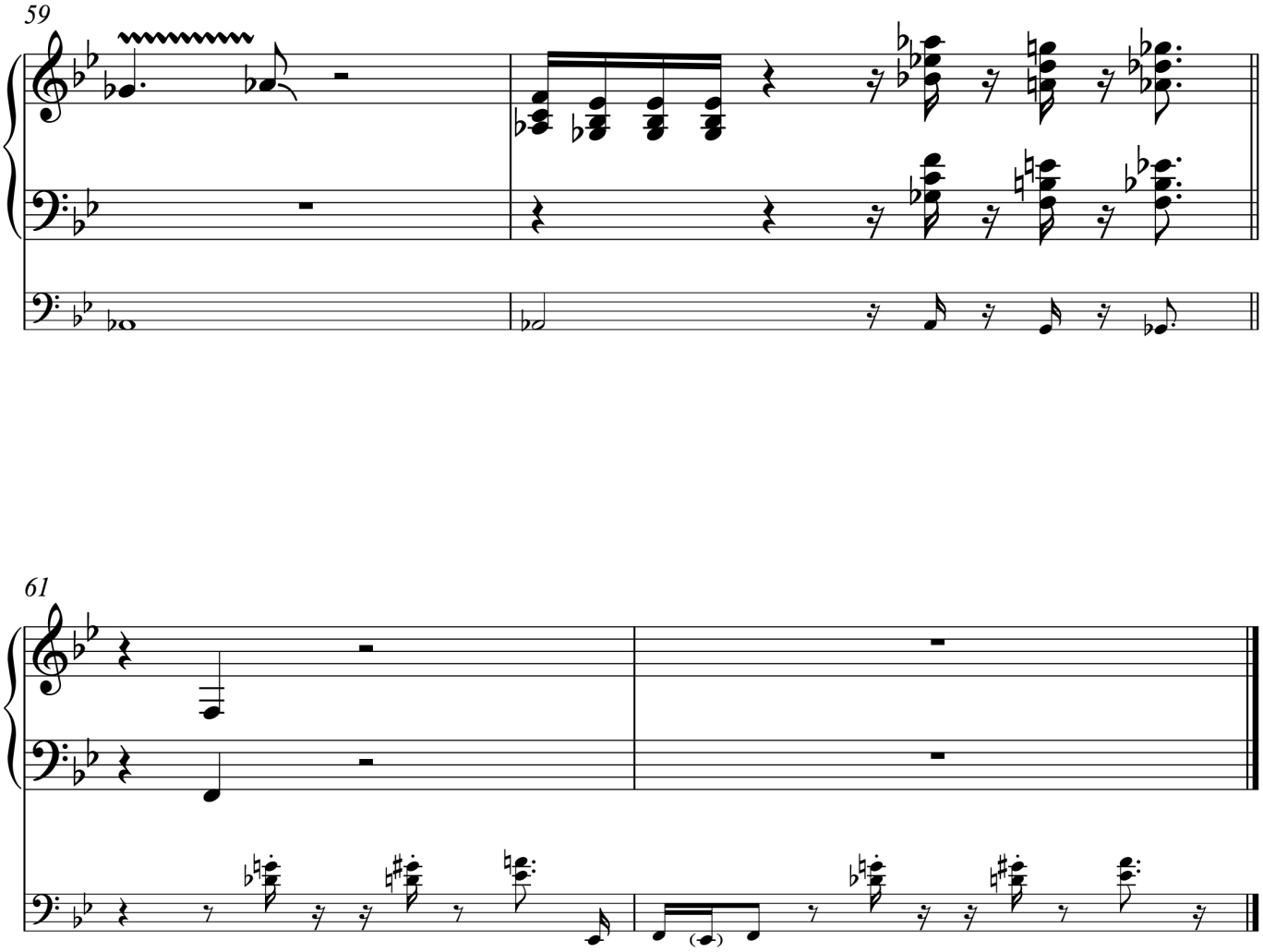
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14.

JAM SESSION: TWO APPROACHES TO "WATERMELON MAN"

CHAPTER REVIEW

Listen to Herbie jamming on two different versions of "Watermelon Man" and see how much flexibility a single song can have in terms of tempo, groove, and instrumentation. Pay attention to the differences in the drum and bass parts between the two versions.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- You can follow along to the two versions of the song using the sheet music from the past two chapters. Use the sheet music after the notes page to start learning some of the licks from Herbie's synthesizer solo.

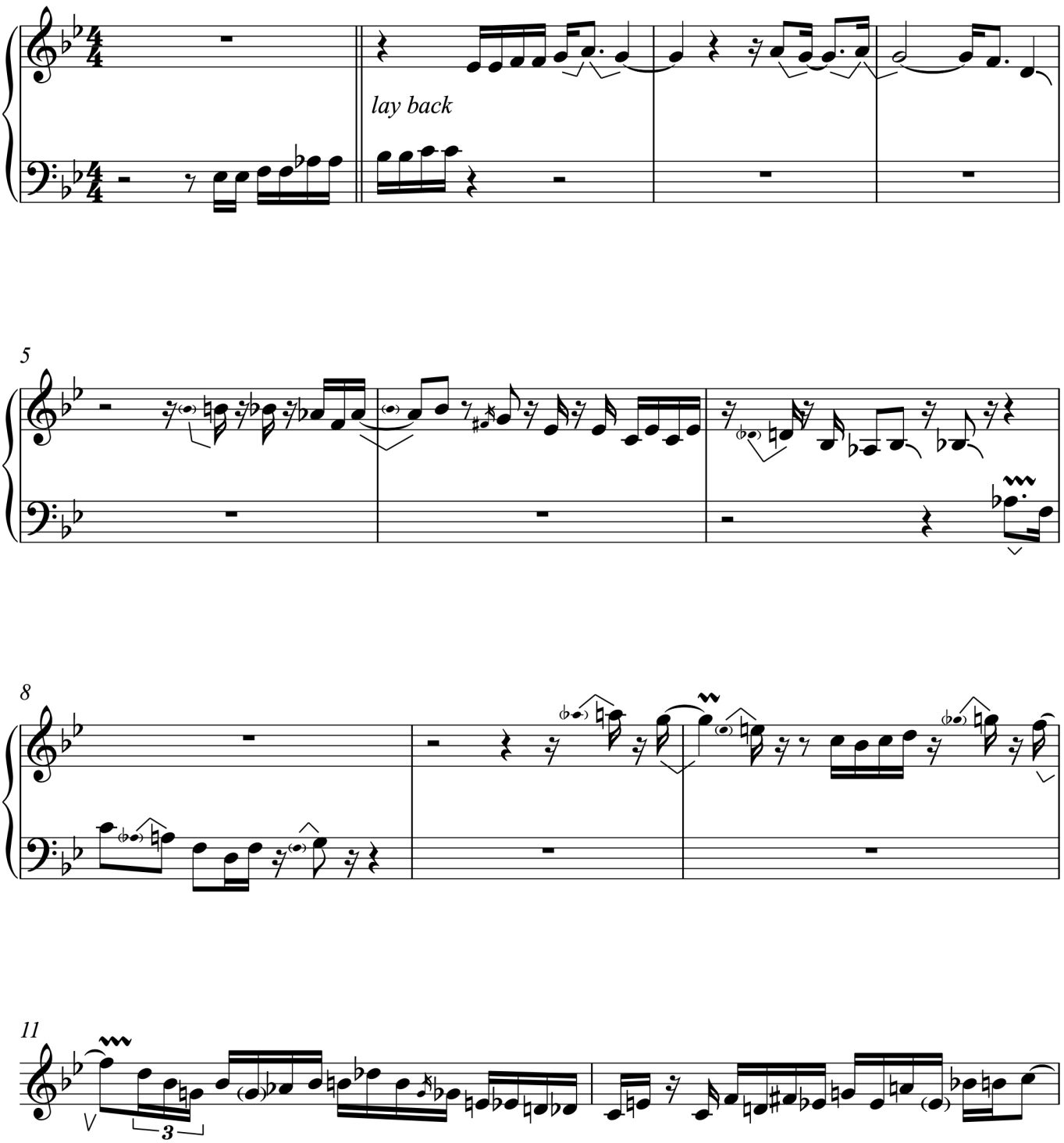
ASSIGNMENT

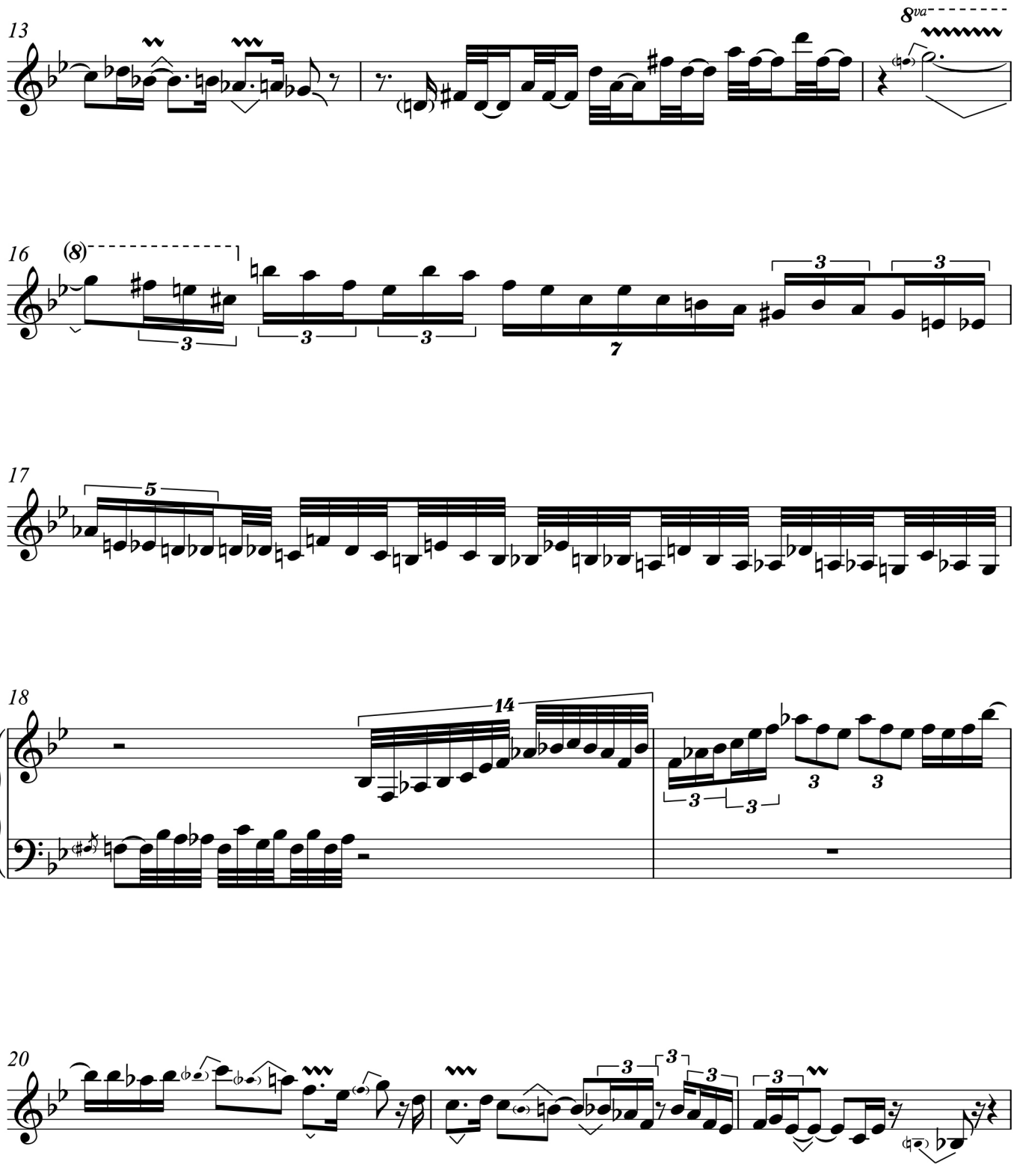
- Herbie has reinvented "Watermelon Man" over and over throughout his career. Now it's your turn. See what new direction you can take Herbie's tune in by changing the groove, melody, and instrumentation. Make a recording or transcribe sheet music and share it with your classmates in The Hub.

14.
NOTES

Chapter 14
Jam Session: Two Approaches to Watermelon Man

Herbie's keyboard solo on "Watermelon Man"

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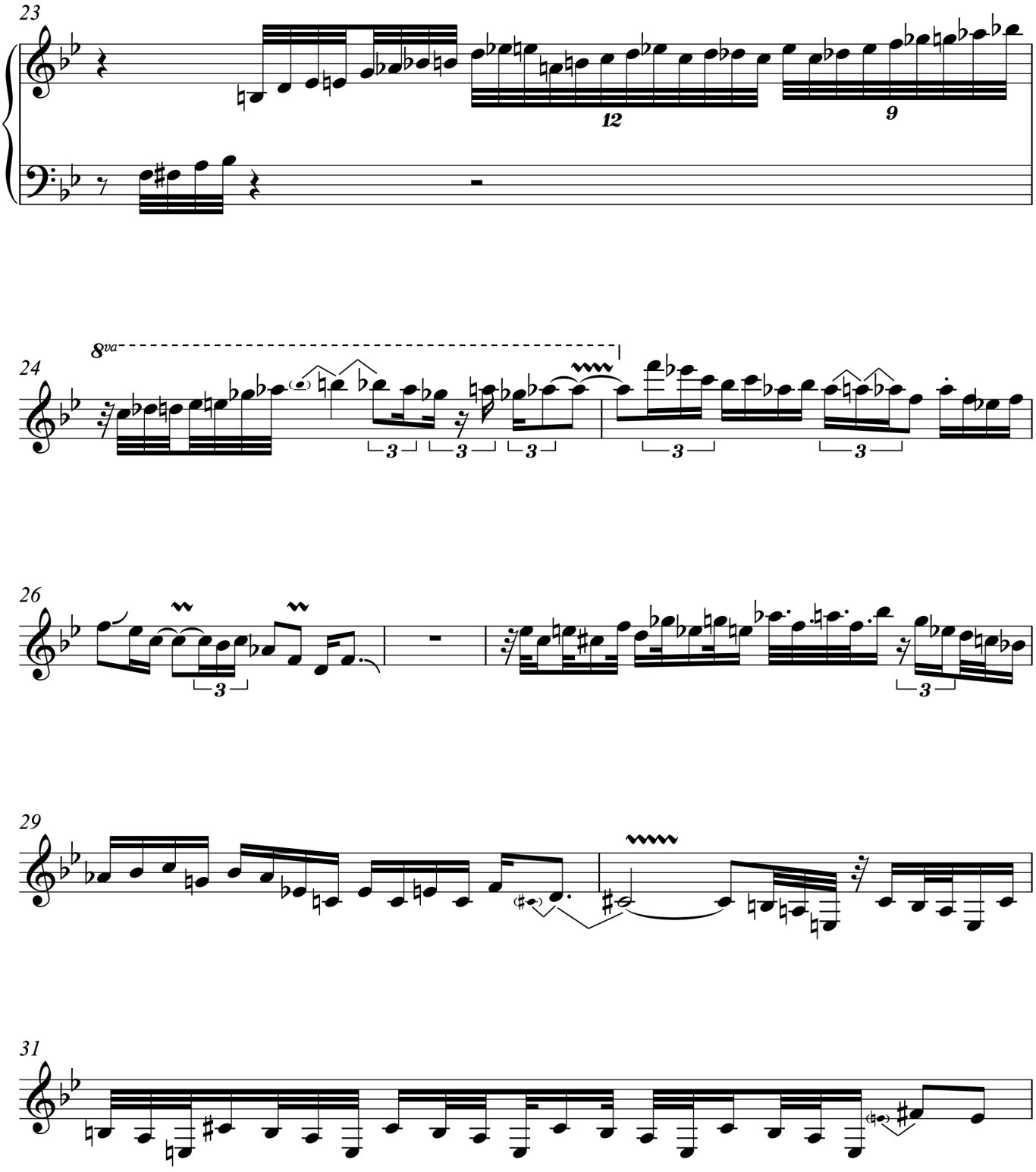
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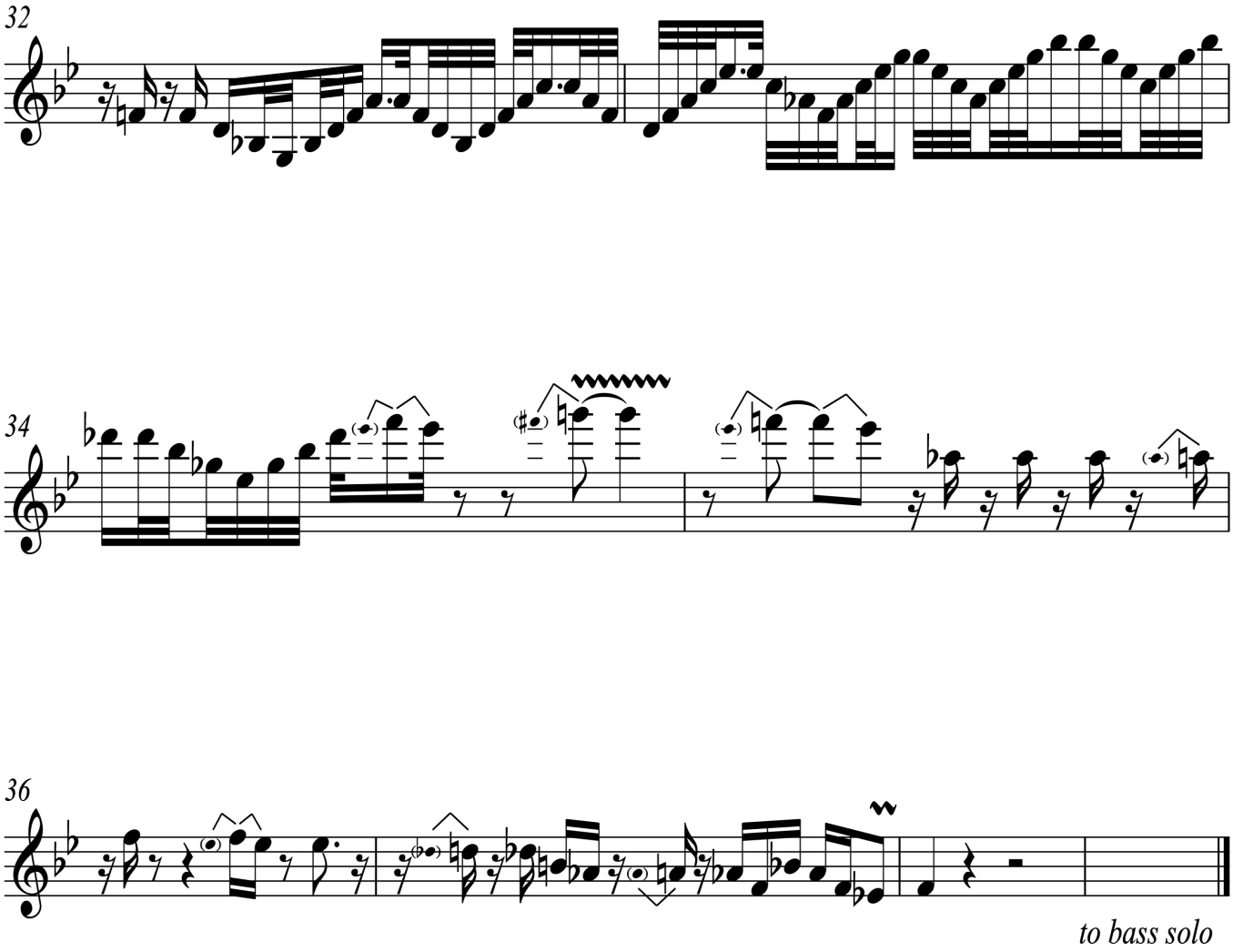
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to bass solo

15.

WORKING AS A COMPOSER

"'Maiden Voyage' was originally for a men's cologne commercial."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Working for Hire
- Writing for Film
- Own Your Own Publishing
- Releasing Your Own Music

CHAPTER REVIEW

Musicians need to keep the lights on just like anyone else, which means they have to stay open to the idea of doing composing work for hire. Just because your music is helping tell someone else's story or advertising someone else's product doesn't mean you should stop working creatively. View every composition you take on as a chance to discover something new and add to your tool box. After all, "Maiden Voyage" was composed as a jingle for a cologne commercial.

Always remember to respect and listen to your collaborators, whether that means the ad agency or the director of a movie you're scoring. Your music might not always be the focal point of what's going on. Try to keep an eye on the big picture and think about the way your music contributes to the larger whole.

Keep an eye out for your own business interests; if you write a piece of music, you should own the publishing. That's one of the first pieces of advice Herbie got in the music industry, and without it, his career and life might've looked very different. Also make sure you look into self-releasing your own music; that's a great way to get your sounds out there and keep total creative and financial control.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Watch one of the movies that Herbie scored: *Blow Up*, *'Round Midnight*, or *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. Pay attention to how the music interacts with the visual and verbal storytelling.

ASSIGNMENT

- Try your hand at scoring to picture. Take the audio tracks away from one of your favorite movie scenes or even from a TV commercial and write a new jingle that fits the images. Try to make it something challenging and creative, but keep the focus on the story you're helping to tell, not on your music. Share your work with your fellow students in The Hub.

15.
NOTES

16.

CHORD VOICINGS

"Make your own discoveries. How I did it was my path. You can do it by using your own ears."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Inverted Voicings for the ii-V-I
- Practicing Inverted Voicings
- Spreading Voicings

CHAPTER REVIEW

One of the building blocks in Herbie's approach to voicing chords is his ability to voice any chord from its first or second inversion. Once you can do that comfortably, you start seeing a whole new set of possibilities that makes moving through chord progressions feel better for the hands and the ears. A good place to start practicing these techniques is on the III-VI-II-V-I progression.

Altering chords can be a matter of taste or of finding what works with a given melody or tune. Try adding notes to your chords from their associated scale and see what kinds of different sounds and textures you get. Keeping voices spread out on your fingers can make strange sounds more pleasing to the ear.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Turn to the sheet music to explore some of Herbie's approaches to voicing chords. See if you can copy his exercise for inverting maj9 chords in all 12 keys.
- Now see if you can transpose his voicings for the III-VI-II-V-I into all 12 keys.

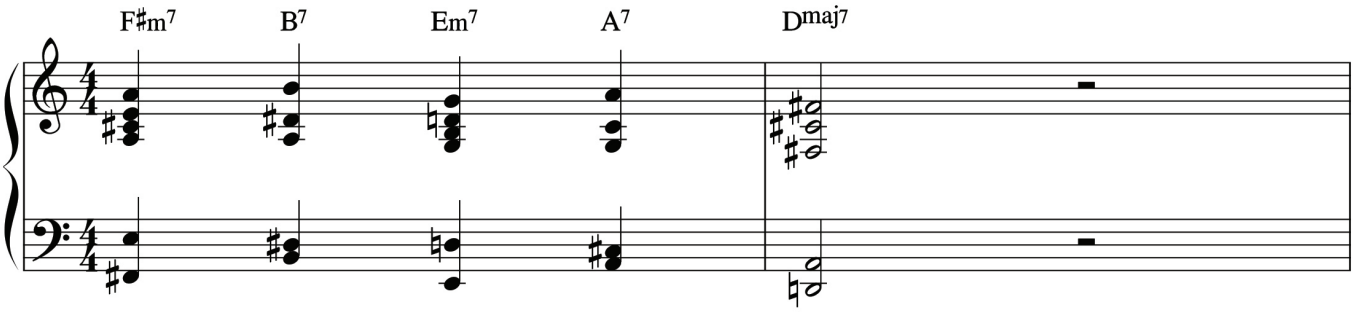
ASSIGNMENT

- Practice improvising over the III-VI-II-V-I progression. How does using Herbie's voicing ideas change the way you might approach your soloing?

16.
NOTES

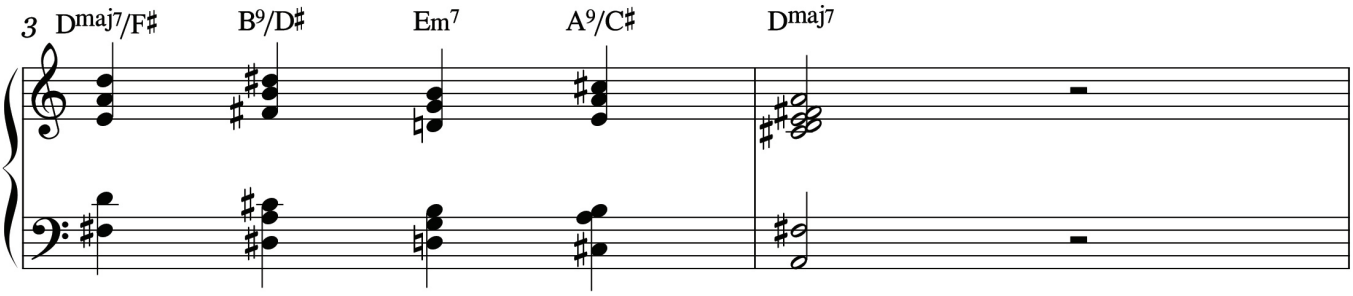
Chapter 16
Exploring Chord Voicings

Herbie's example of a III VI II V I progression (1:25)

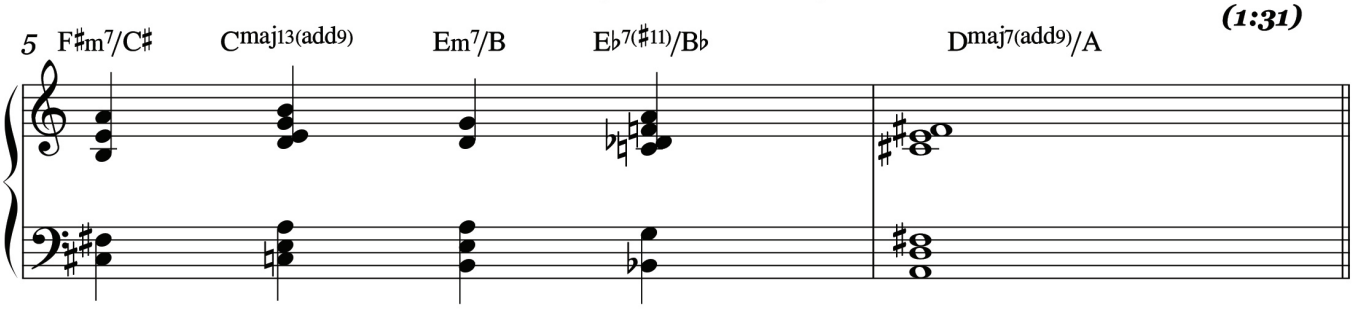


Note: Be sure to practice all of these concepts and examples in all 12 keys

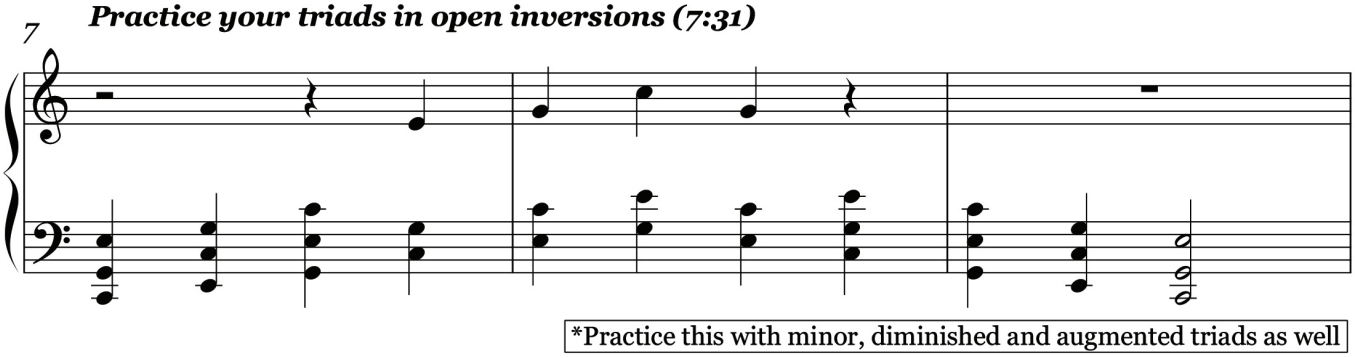
III VI II V I voice-led via inversions (4:23)



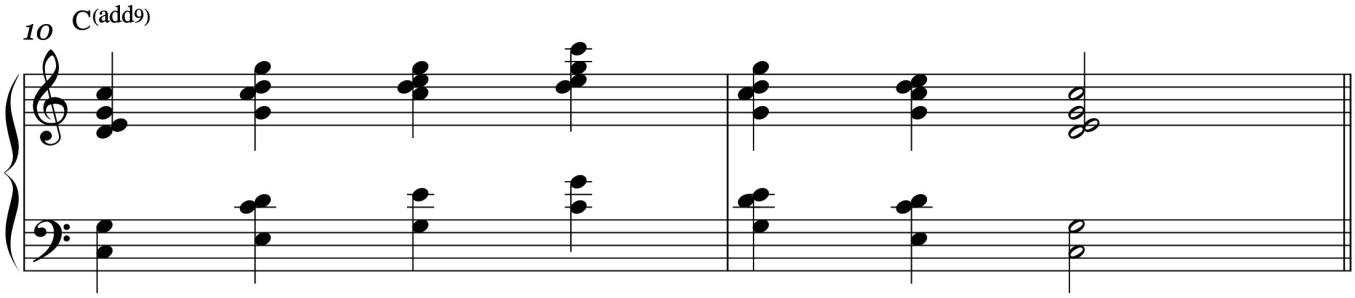
III VI II V I with the bass note moving chromatically via inversions/reharmonization (1:31)



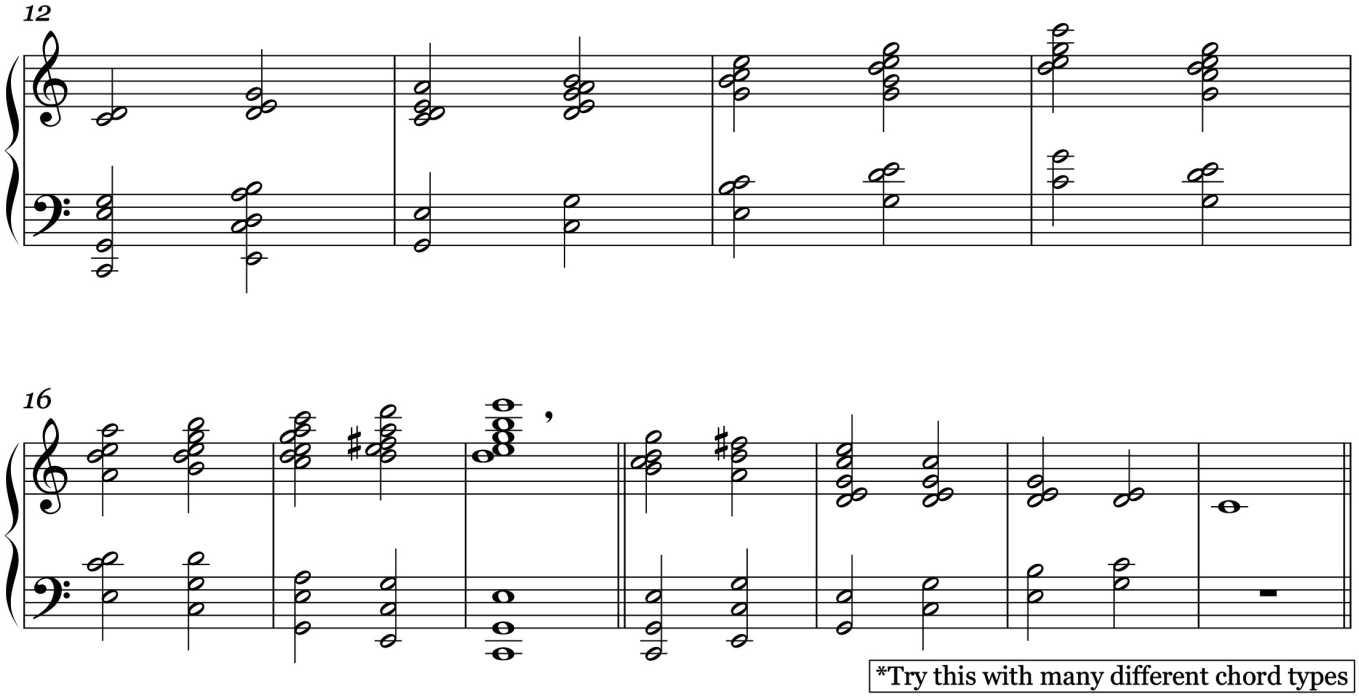
Practice your triads in open inversions (7:31)



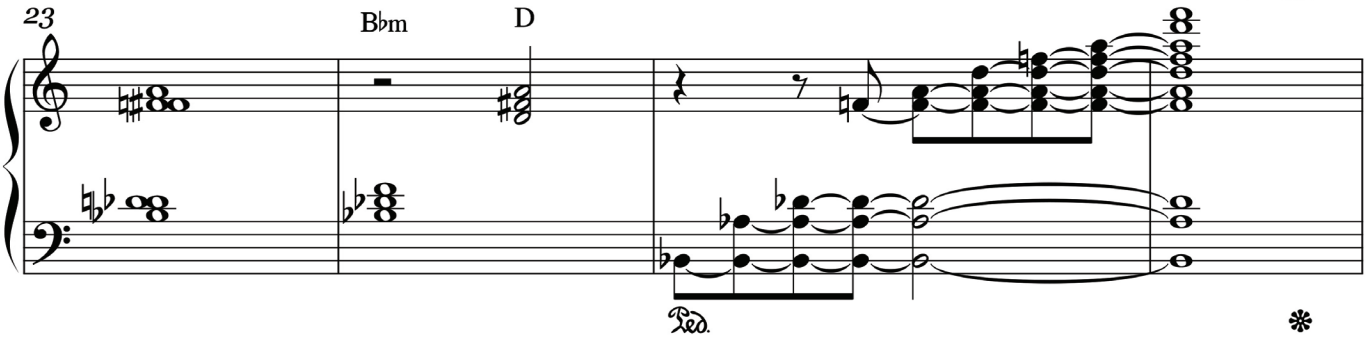
Inverting a specific voicing or sound (6:24)



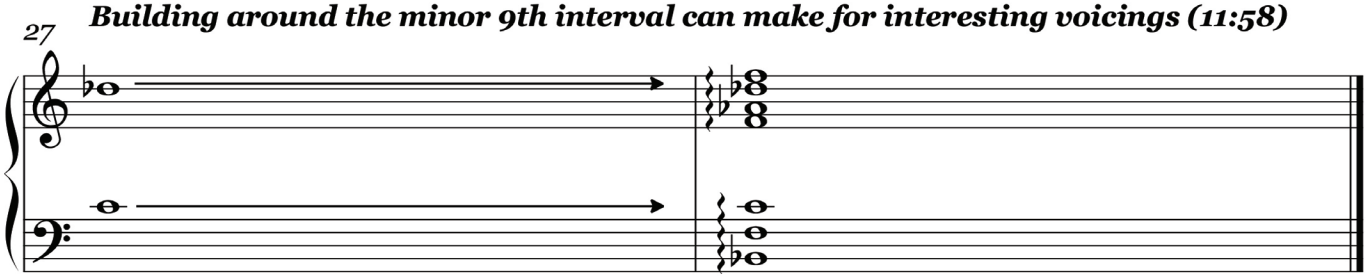
Herbie's examples of Cmaj7 voicings using inversions and contrary motion (8:06)



Spreading out a dense voicing, or a dissonant triad pairing, can soften the dissonance (8:57)



Building around the minor 9th interval can make for interesting voicings (11:58)



17.

CASE STUDY: REHARMONIZING "'ROUND MIDNIGHT"

"I don't know how I stumbled on this...but when I figured it out, I said, 'oh, I like that.'"
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Rethinking a Classic
- The Two Versions
- Breaking Down the Process Chord by Chord

CHAPTER REVIEW

When Herbie was working on the score for the film *'Round Midnight*, he wanted to come up with a fresh interpretation of Thelonious Monk's classic ballad that would challenge the musicians playing in the film, but also stay more or less true to the film's late-fifties setting. The approach he settled on was to reharmonize the piece using chords that you could have heard in the film's time period.

Pay attention: This reharmonization process ends up touching on a number of the lessons Herbie's covered, including inverting voicings, adding alterations to chords, and making discoveries by ear.

ASSIGNMENT

- Try your own reharmonization of "'Round Midnight," even if it's only the first couple bars. Don't feel limited by any harmonic constraints, just find chords that sound good to your ear. Share some of your results via recording or sheet music with your fellow students in The Hub.

17.

NOTES

18.

RAVEL'S CREATIVE HARMONIES

"I learned a lot from Ravel."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Rethinking the V Chord

CHAPTER REVIEW

Herbie has drawn harmonic inspiration from classical composers as well as jazz musicians. The 20th century French composer Maurice Ravel has had a big impact on the way Herbie thinks about voicing chords. You can hear some of Ravel's ideas that stuck with Herbie in this chapter, especially his use of diminished chords and voicings of the V chord that give different textures to the traditional sound of moving from V to I. Watch the way Herbie alters chords and spreads voicings to make these harmonies sound more pleasing to the ear.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Look at the sheet music following the notes page to see examples of how Ravel approached harmonies.

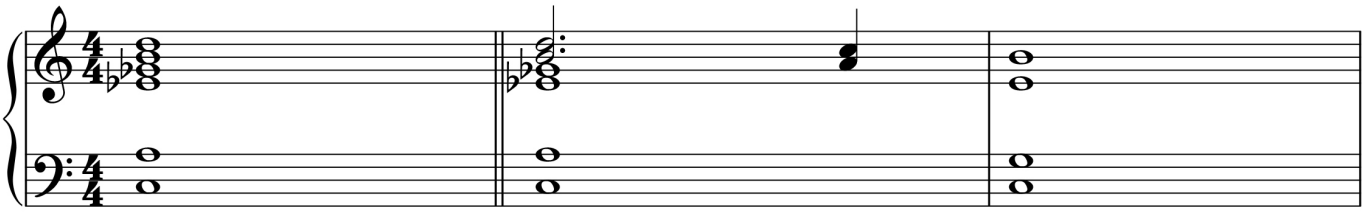
ASSIGNMENT

- Work with the sheet music for Herbie's playing and transpose it to practice playing Ravel's chords across all 12 keys. Next time you see a tune that moves from the V to the I, try using one of Ravel's voicings and see how it changes the sound.

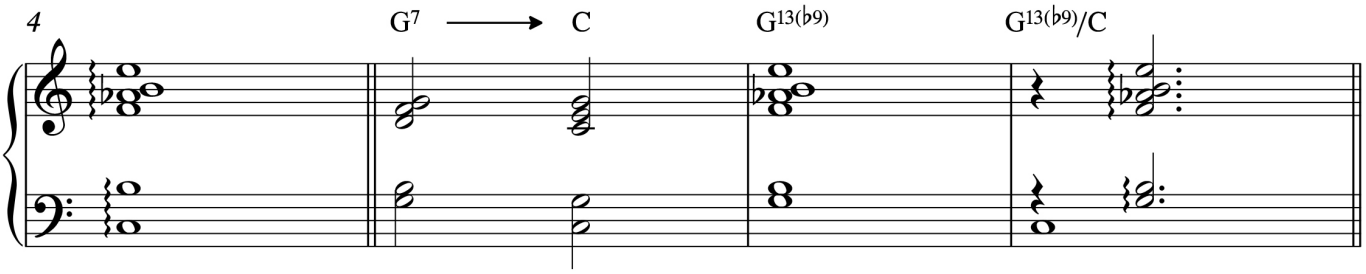
18.
NOTES

Chapter 18
Ravel's Creative Harmonies

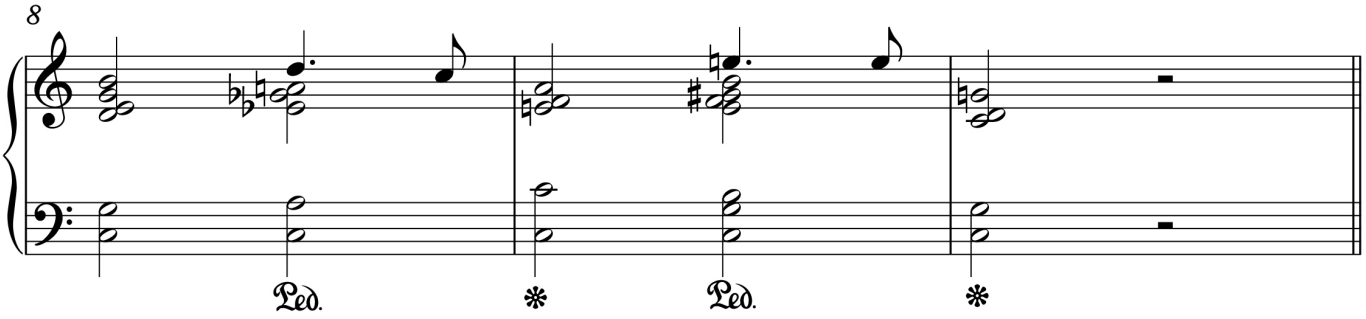
Ravel's diminished major 7 voicing and its resolution (0:47)



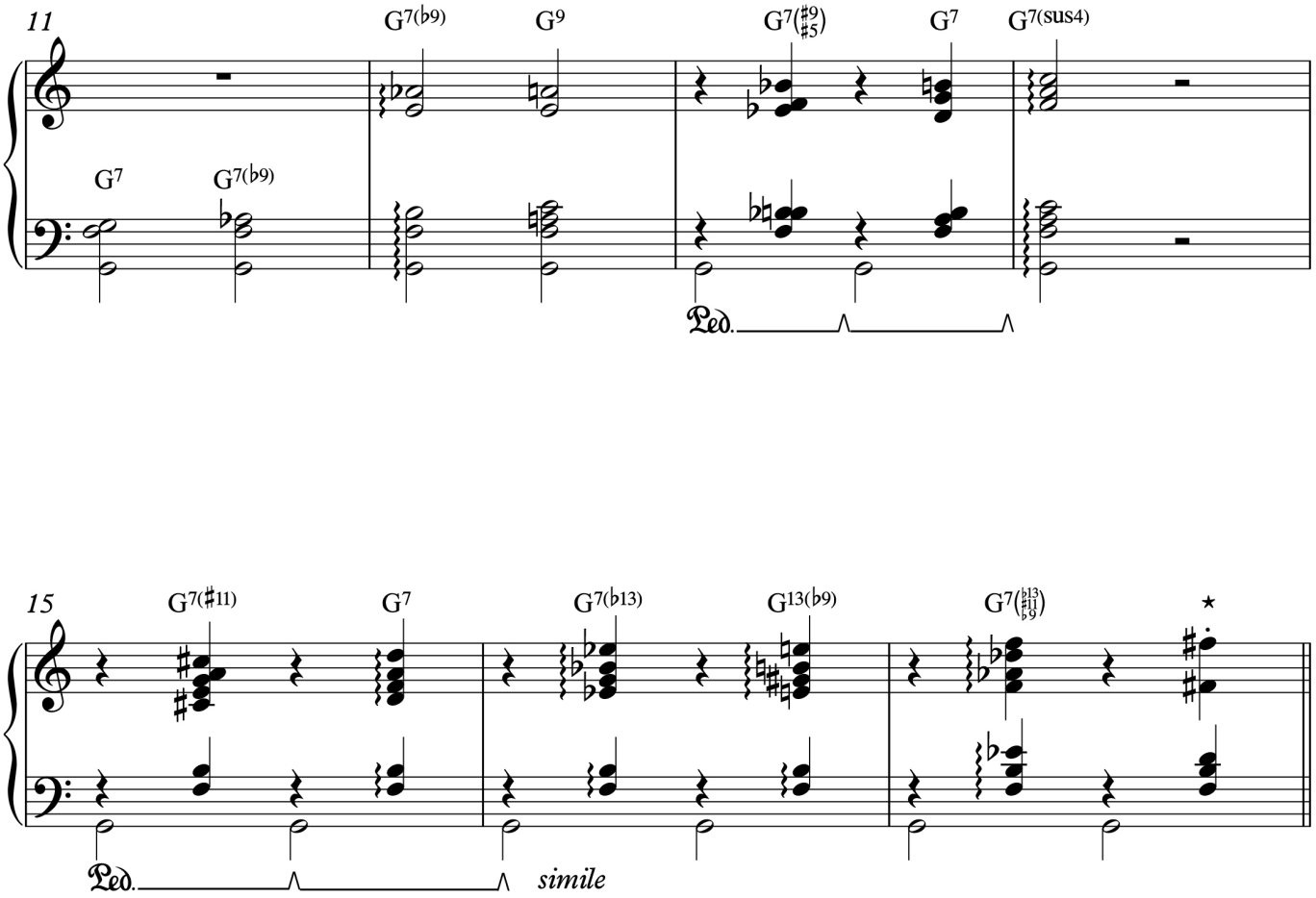
Another voicing from Ravel, and the theory behind it (1:17)



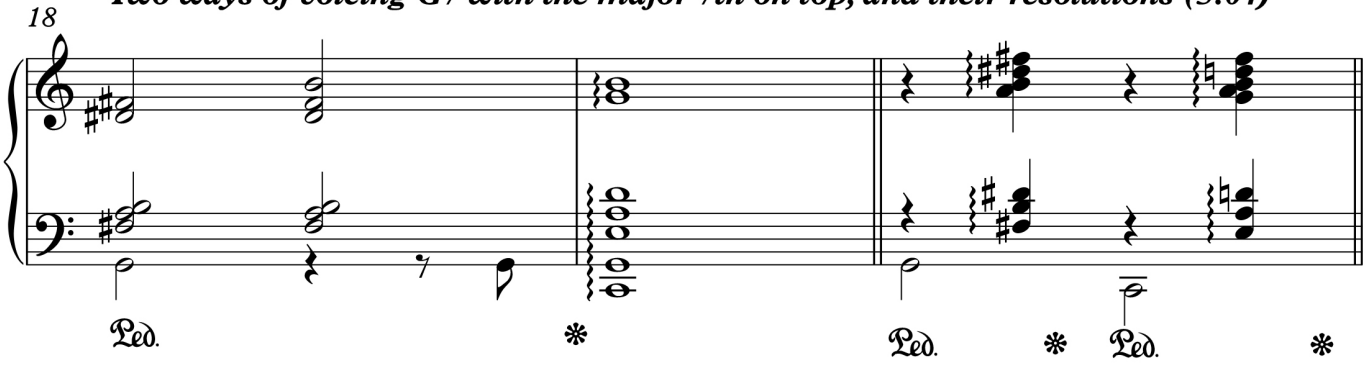
A musical example using both voicings, over a C pedal (2:22)



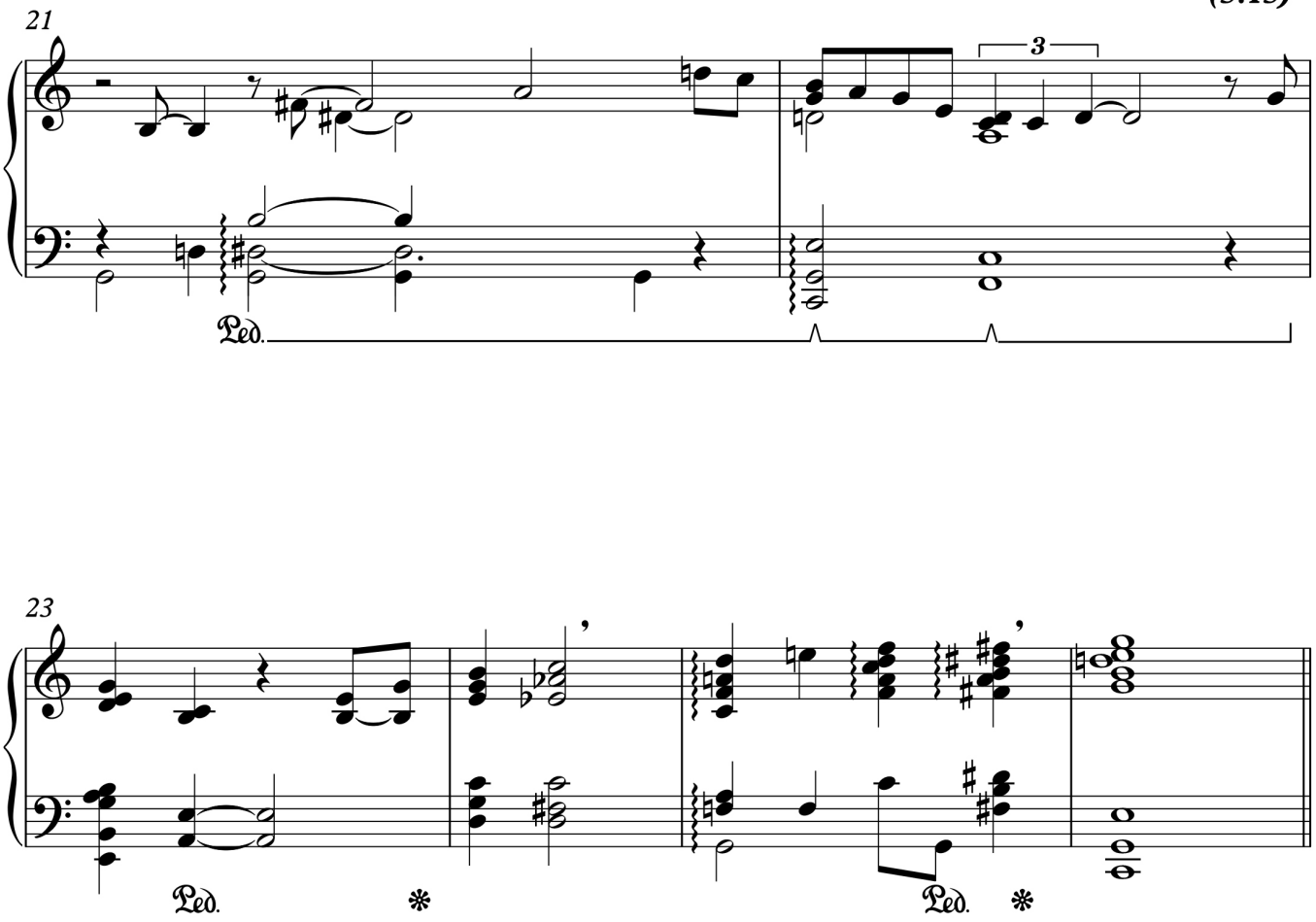
A demonstration of how any pitch can be used as the top voice in a dominant chord (3:49)



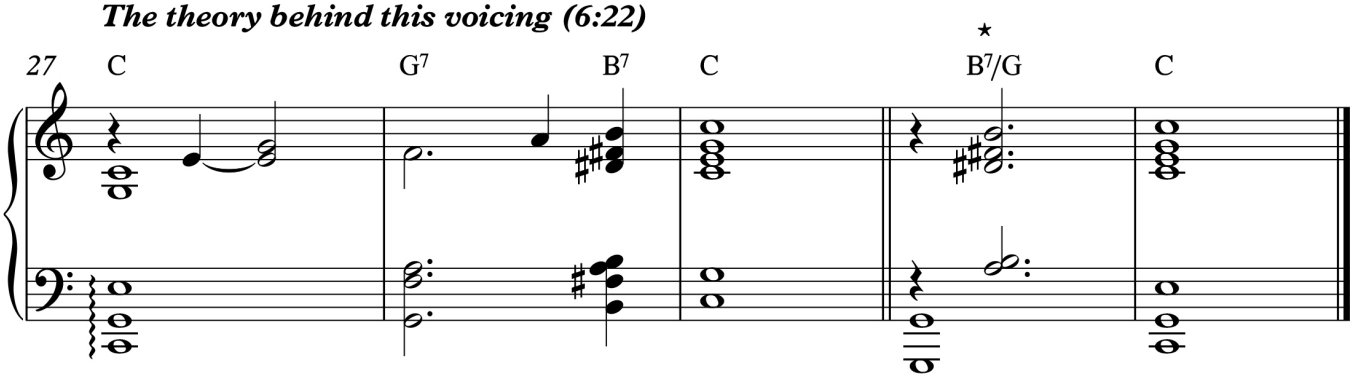
Two ways of voicing G7 with the major 7th on top, and their resolutions (5:04)



Herbie's demonstration of Ravel's use of the major 7th on a V chord, in musical context (5:15)



The theory behind this voicing (6:22)



19.

EXPANDING YOUR HARMONIC HORIZONS

"We jazz players are constantly composing. Harmonization is spontaneous composition."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Don't Play the "Butter Notes"
- Practicing Reharmonization
- Case Study: Reharmonizing "Dolphin Dance"

CHAPTER REVIEW

Getting a deeper understanding of harmony comes from experimentation. It's all about trying out new possibilities until you find things that suit your ears and your musical taste. Herbie learned a lot of his biggest lessons in harmony by listening to records.

One way to start thinking outside the box of traditional harmonic structure is to break some basic rules. Everyone always tells you the third and seventh are the most important notes in a chord, but what happens if you stop playing them? That's what Miles Davis encouraged Herbie to do when he said, "Don't play the 'butter notes.'" Suddenly Herbie found a world of new possibilities using fourths, fifths, sixths, and ninths.

Play around with incorporating notes into your playing that are outside the scale usually associated with a given chord. Eventually you'll find ways to use the chromatic scale over any chord. Reharmonization is the practice of finding a new set of chords that fit with a song's melody. It can be a great way of opening your ears and teaching yourself more about harmony. Try it with any song you like.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Look over the sheet music after the notes page for this chapter and study some of the ways Herbie follows and breaks the "traditional" rules of harmony.
- Listen to Chris Anderson playing the standard "Alone Together." Listen for harmonic ideas you like, write them down, and share them with your classmates in The Hub.
- Listen to Herbie's original recording of "Dolphin Dance."

19.

EXPANDING YOUR HARMONIC HORIZONS

ASSIGNMENT

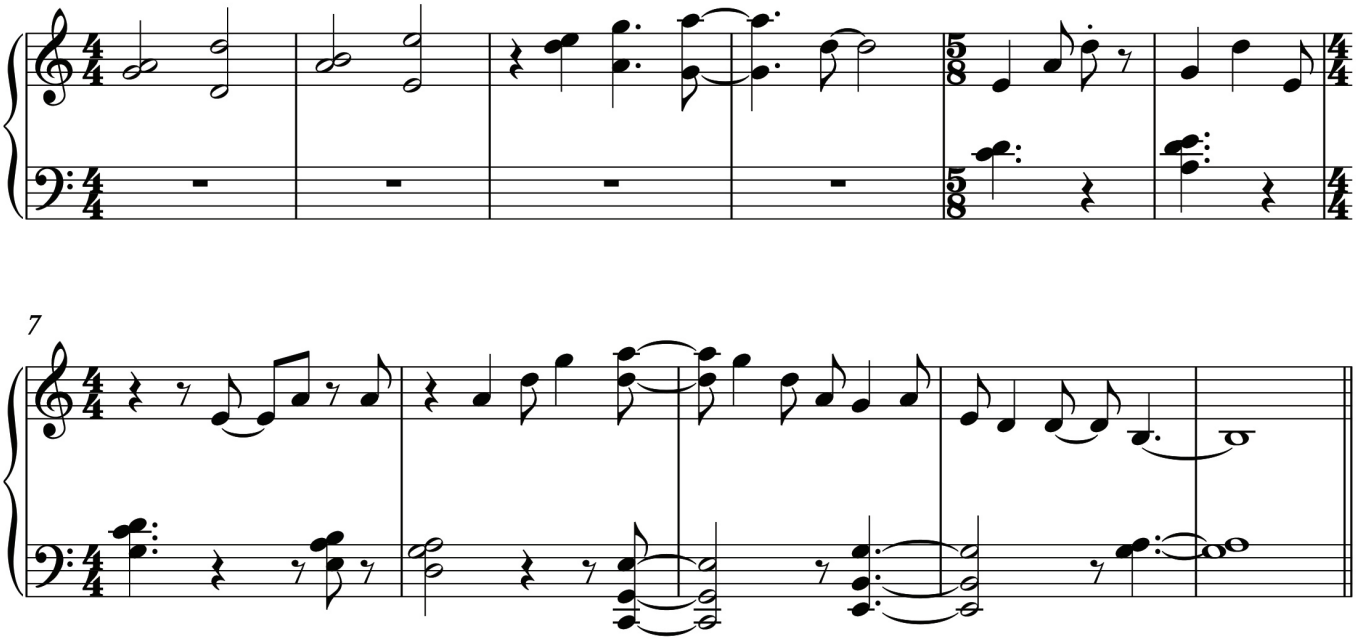
- Spend some time studying the sheet music to see how Herbie reharmonized "Maiden Voyage" and "Dolphin Dance." Can you figure out why certain chord substitutions work? Are there others that could have worked as well? If there are things you like the sound of, see if they work in other tunes.

19.

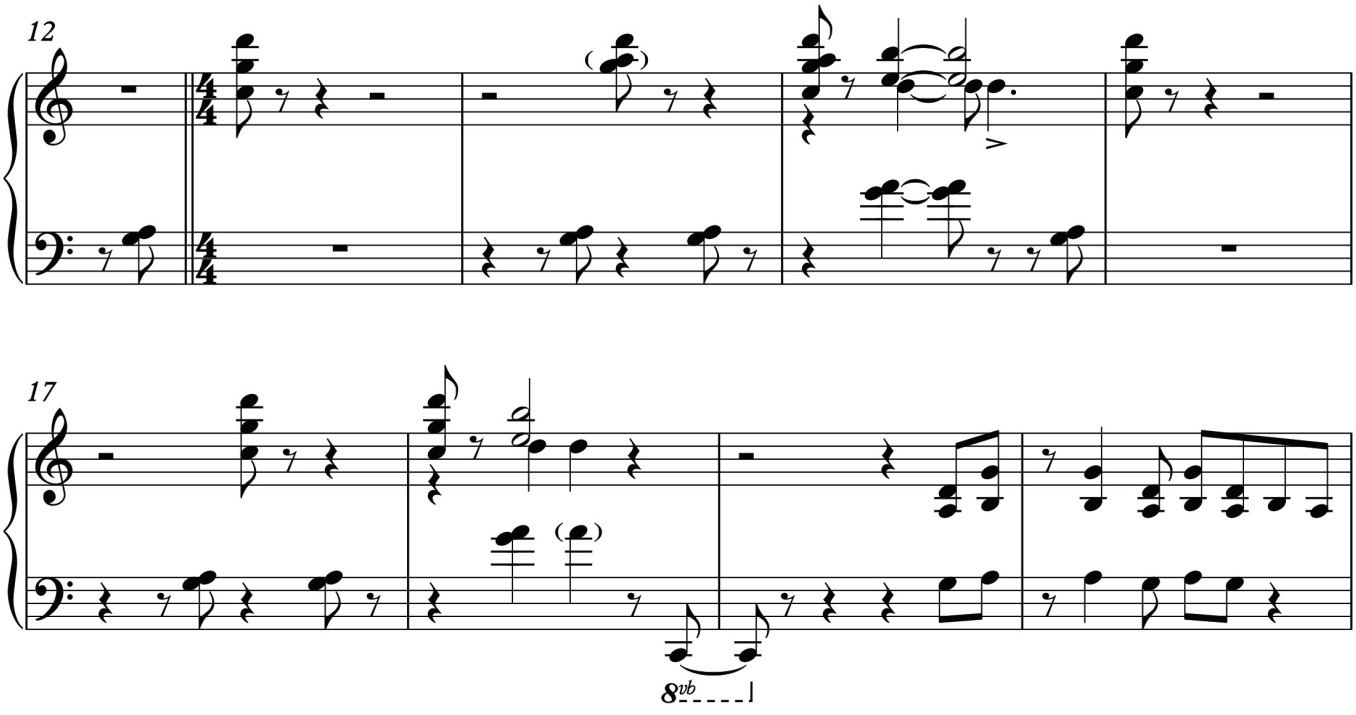
NOTES

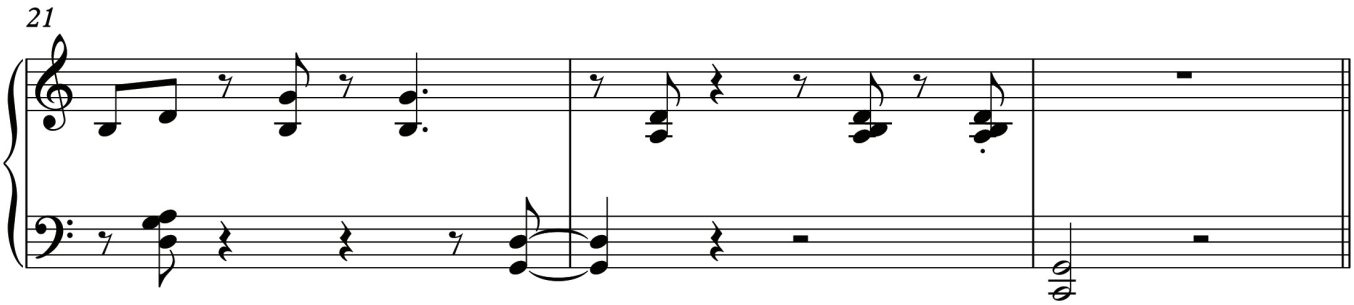
Chapter 19
Expanding Your Harmonic Horizons

Herbie's example of "not playing the butter notes" (avoiding the 3rd and 7th) (5:30)

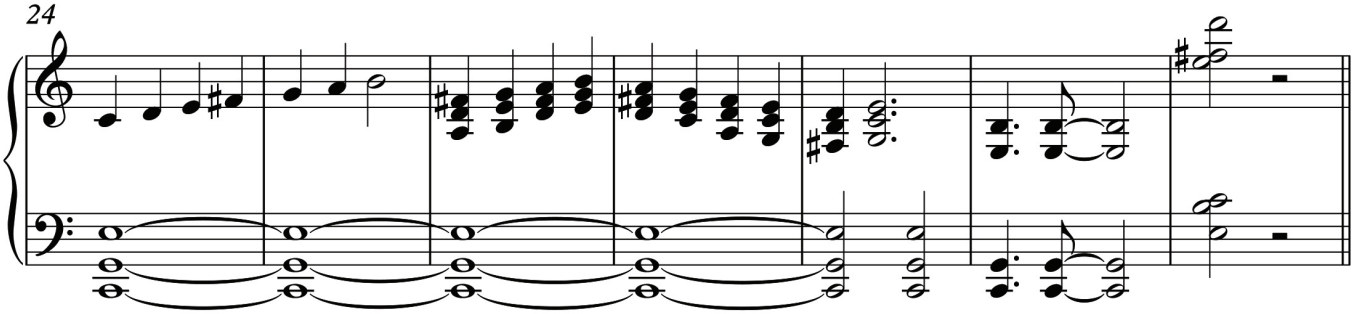


Herbie's second example of the same concept (5:54)

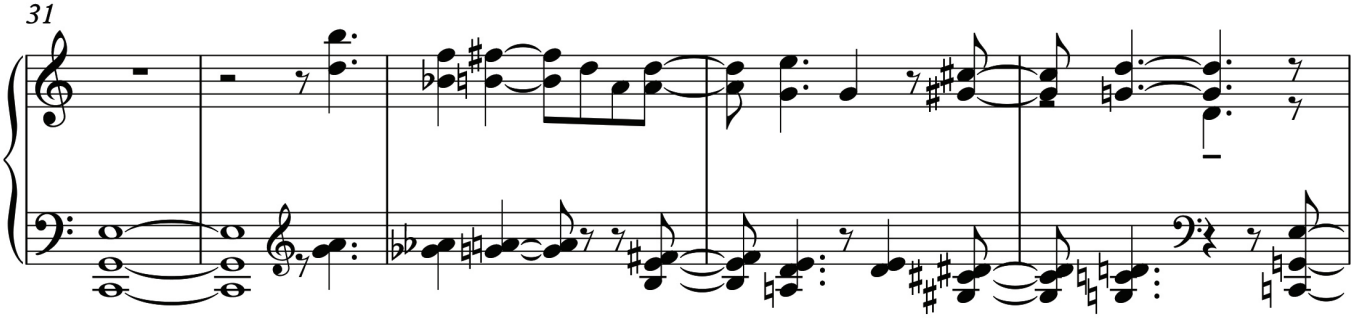


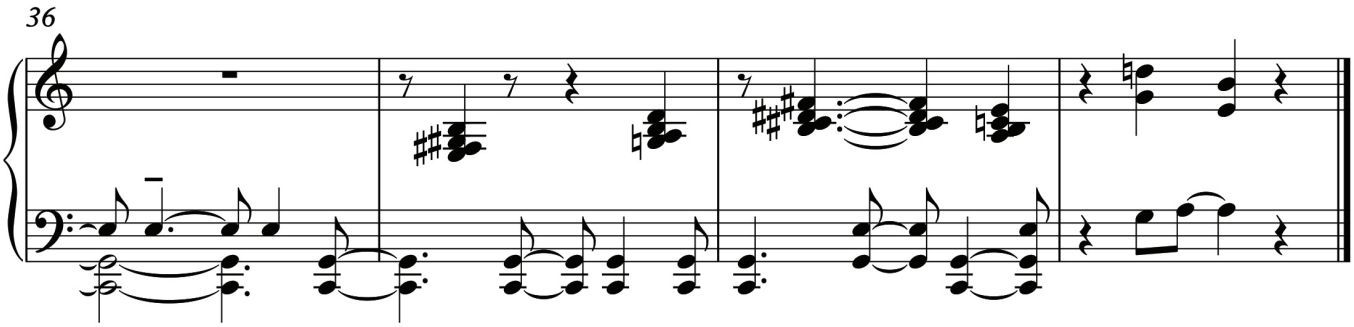


The C lydian scale uses F#, which is consonant over Cmaj7 (6:51)

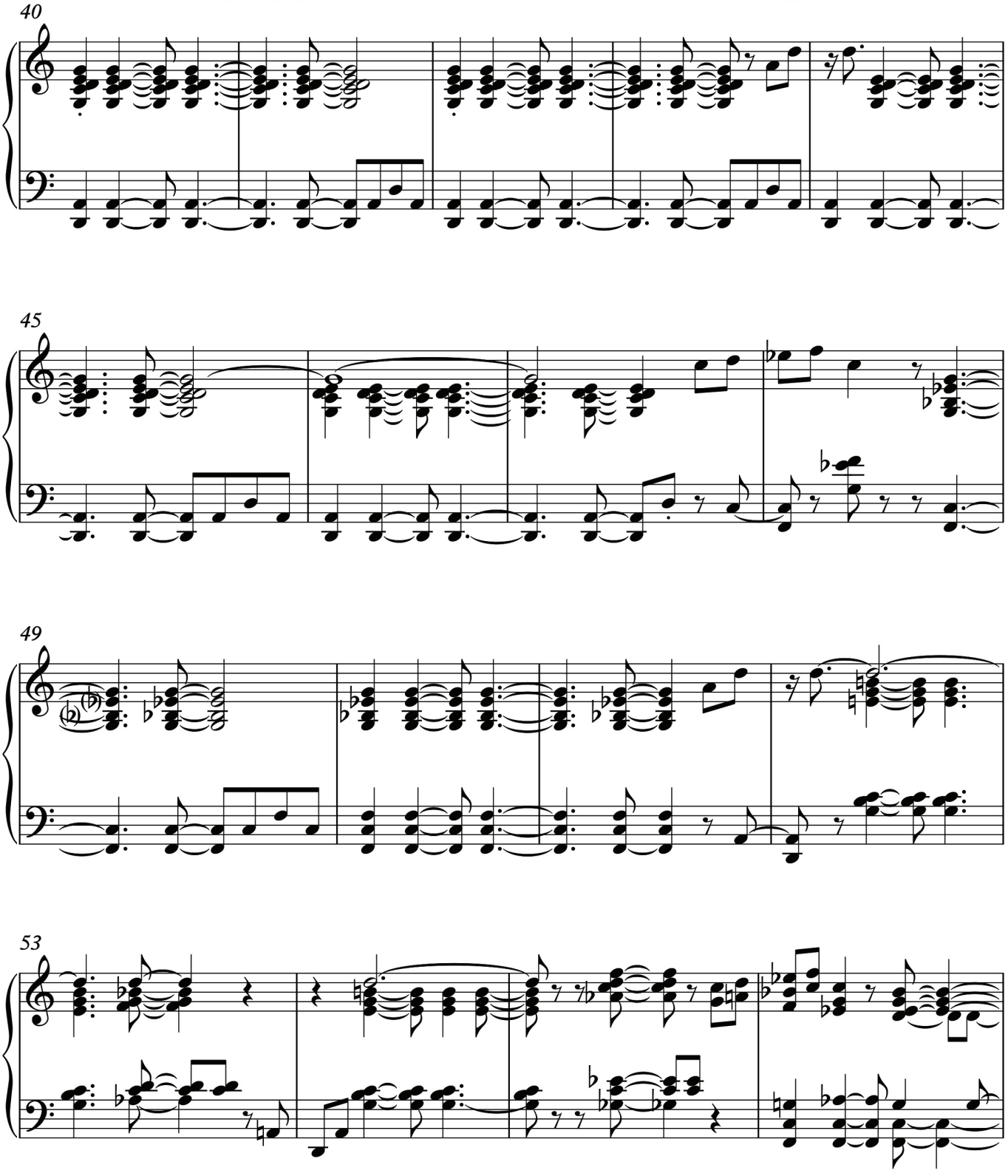


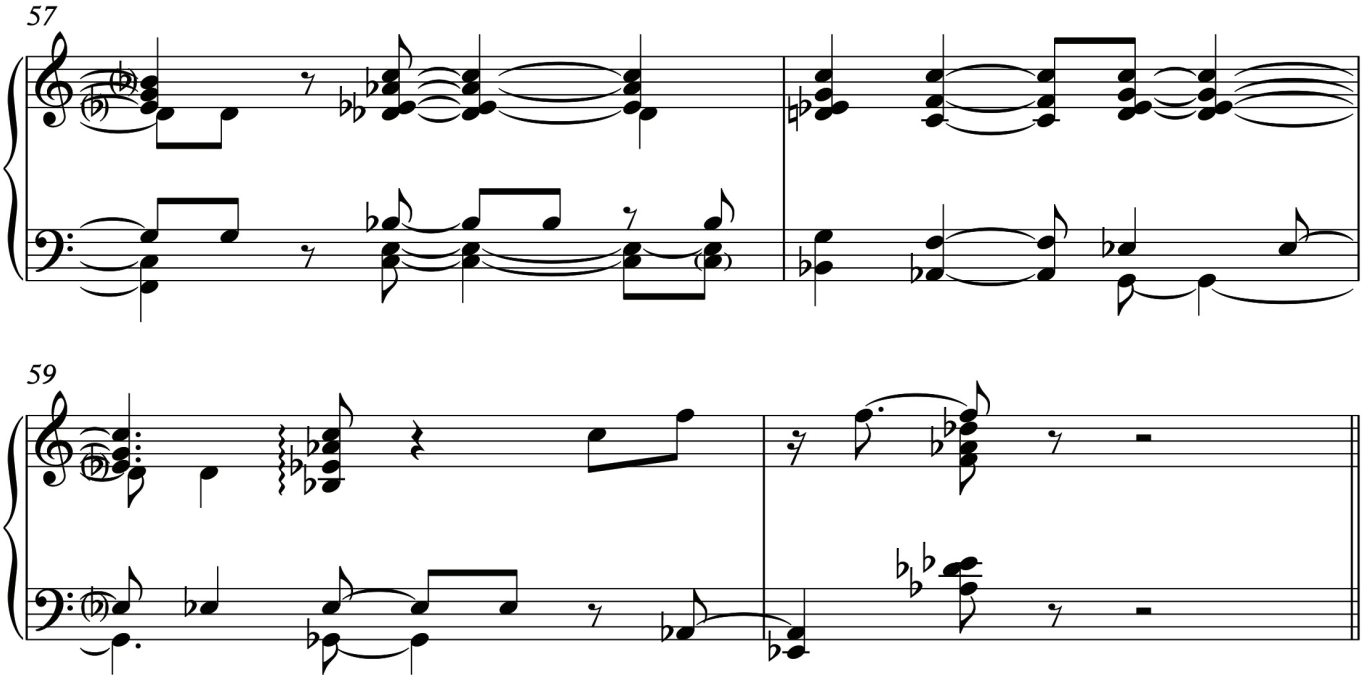
Herbie's example of moving "in and out" of the harmony using chromaticism etc. (7:45)



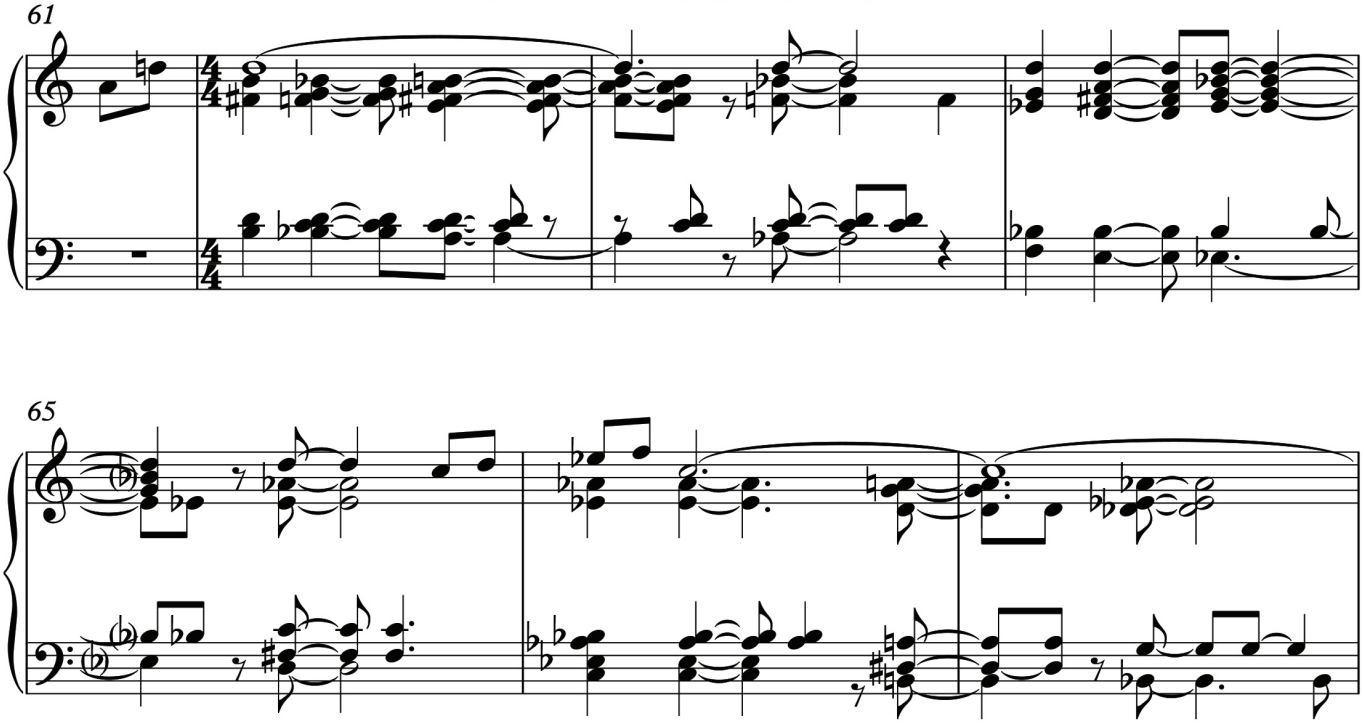


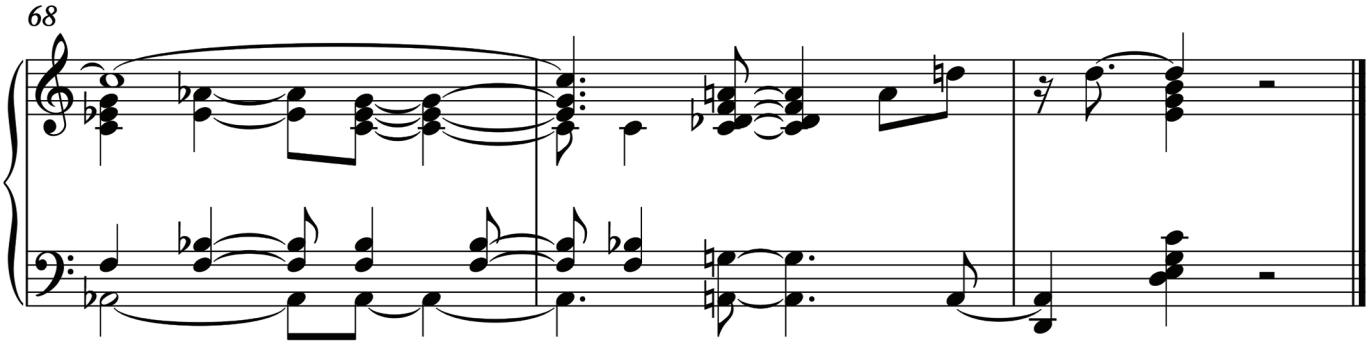
Herbie's example of gradual reharmonization over "Maiden Voyage" (9:46)





Further reharmonization of "Maiden Voyage" (10:54)

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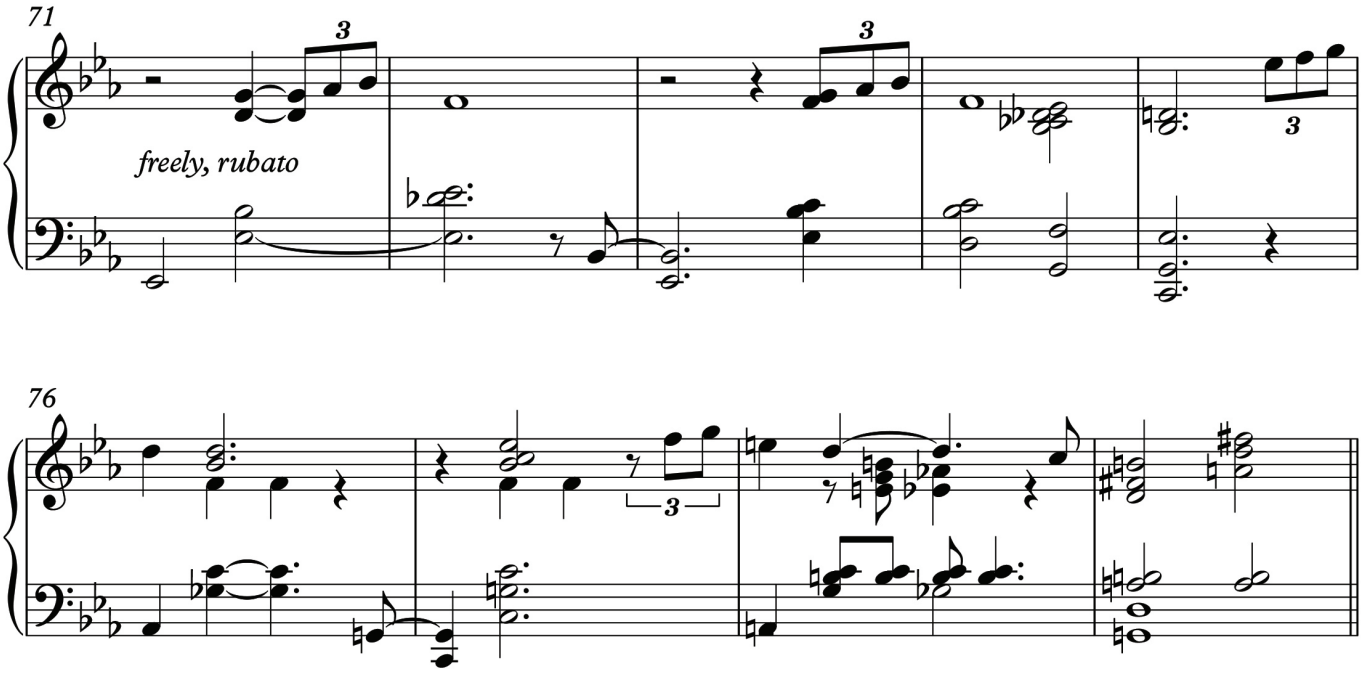
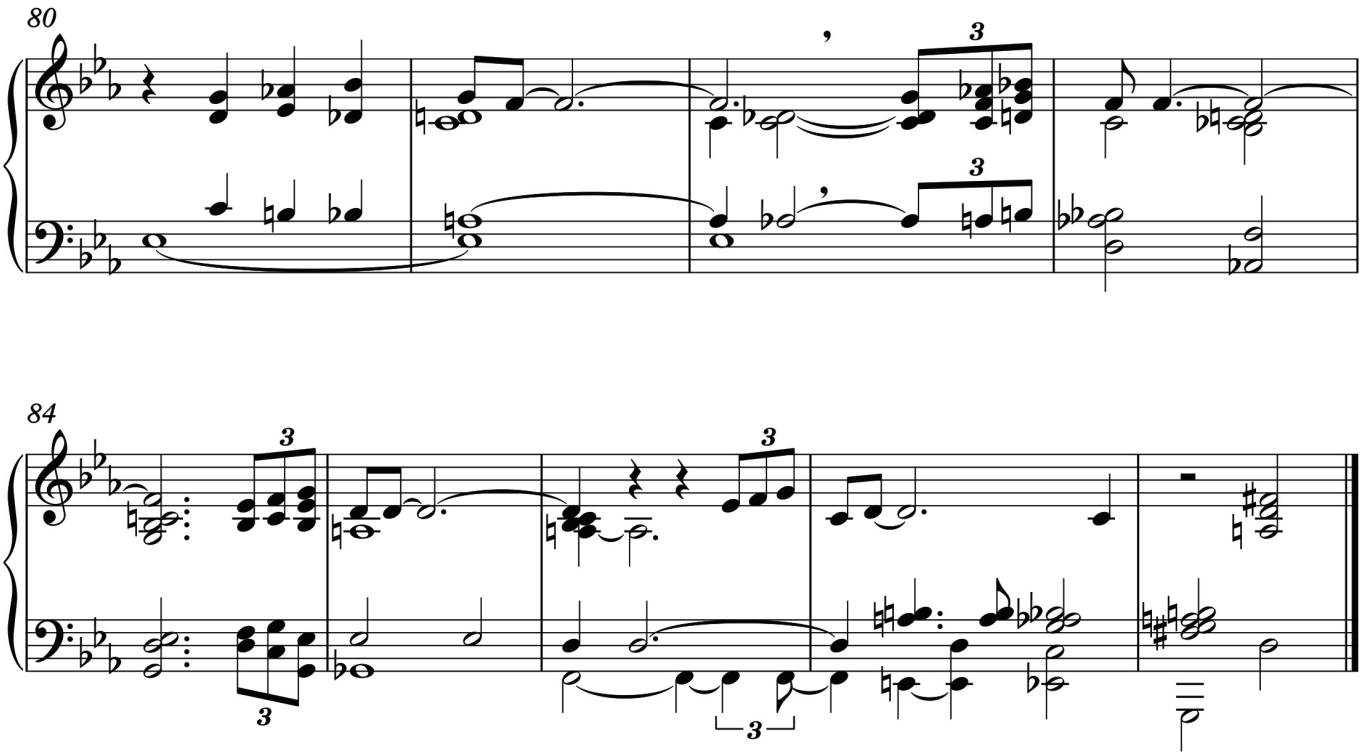
Herbie's example of "Dolphin Dance" as typically played 11:27)



Herbie's reharmonization of "Dolphin Dance" (12:10)



20.

LISTEN AND LEARN: "MAIDEN VOYAGE"

CHAPTER REVIEW

Now you get a chance to learn by playing along with Herbie. Follow along with the sheet music following your notes page in this chapter. You can start by picking out your favorite passages and breaking those down, little by little, or dive right in and learn the piece from beginning to end. Along the way, you'll be experiencing first hand the way Herbie approaches rhythm, harmony, melody, and expression in real time.

TAKE IT FURTHER

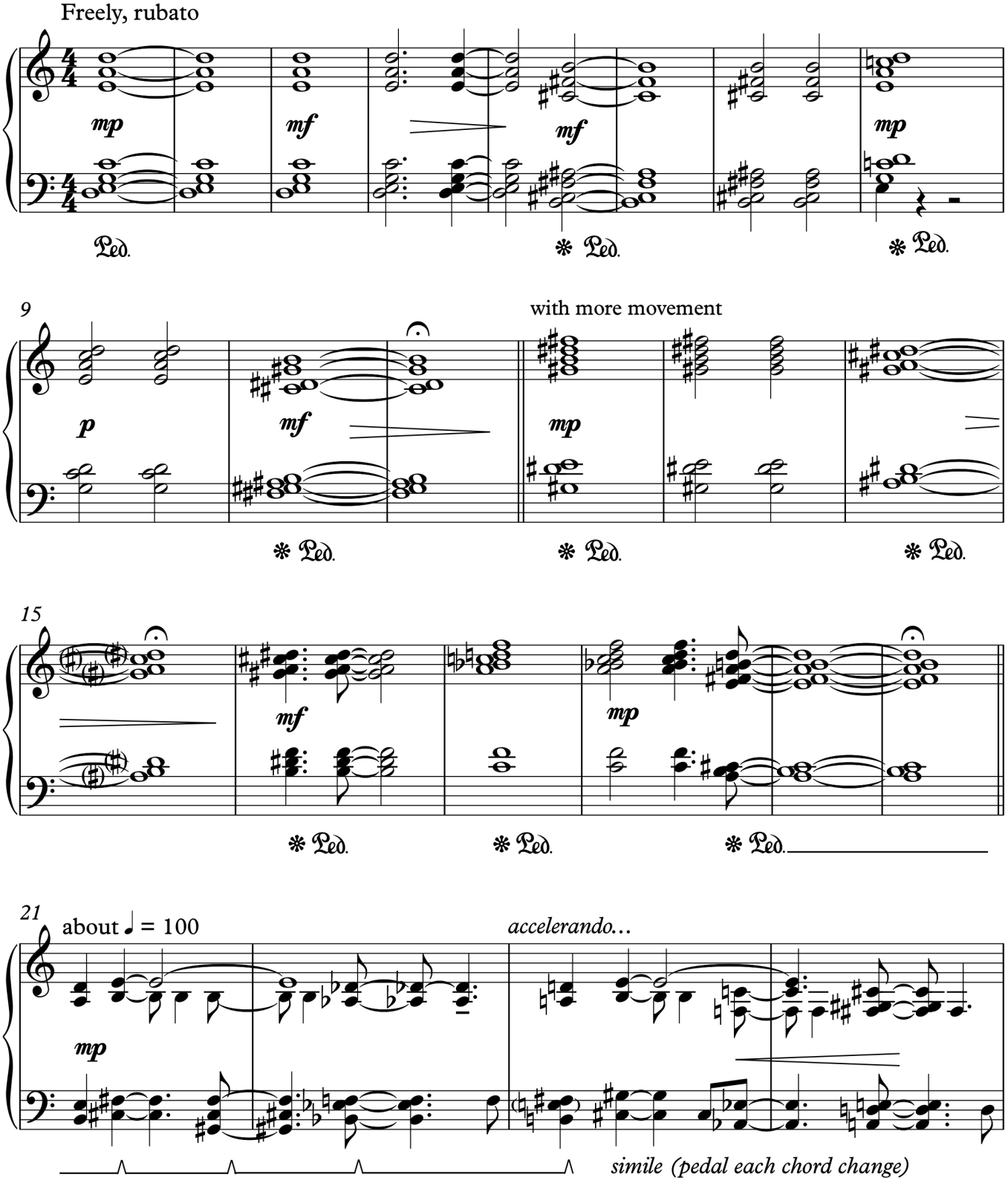
- "Maiden Voyage" is built in large part around sus4 chords. Study the sheet music to see different ways Herbie voices these chords and practice your favorite voicings across all 12 keys.
- Look for other interpretations of "Maiden Voyage." There are plenty out there. Share your favorites with your classmates in The Hub. Listen to contemporary pianist Robert Glasper doing a rendition that combines Herbie's tune with Radiohead's "Everything in its Right Place."

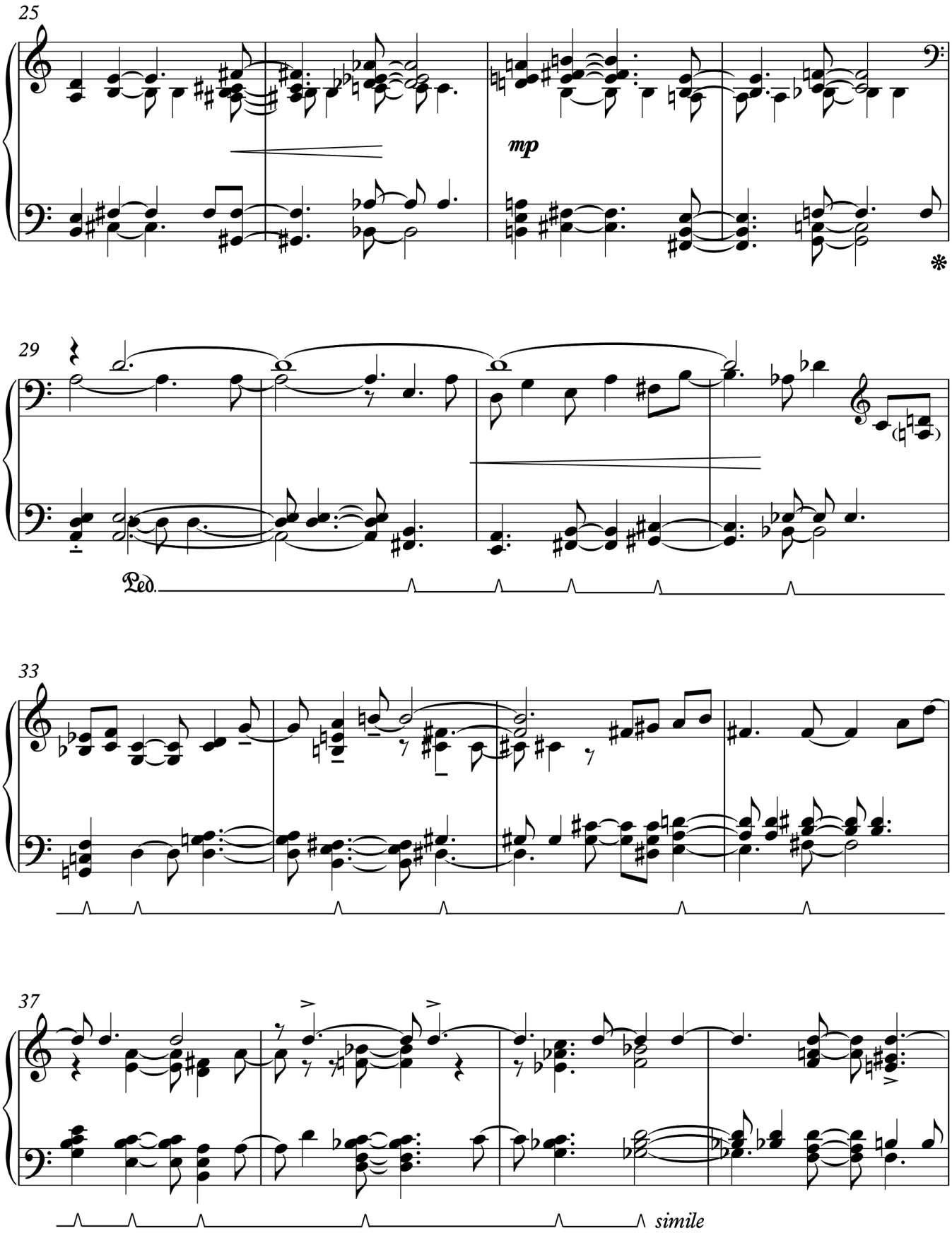
ASSIGNMENT

- Play along with Herbie using the accompanying sheet music.

20.
NOTES

Chapter 20
Listen and Learn: Maiden Voyage

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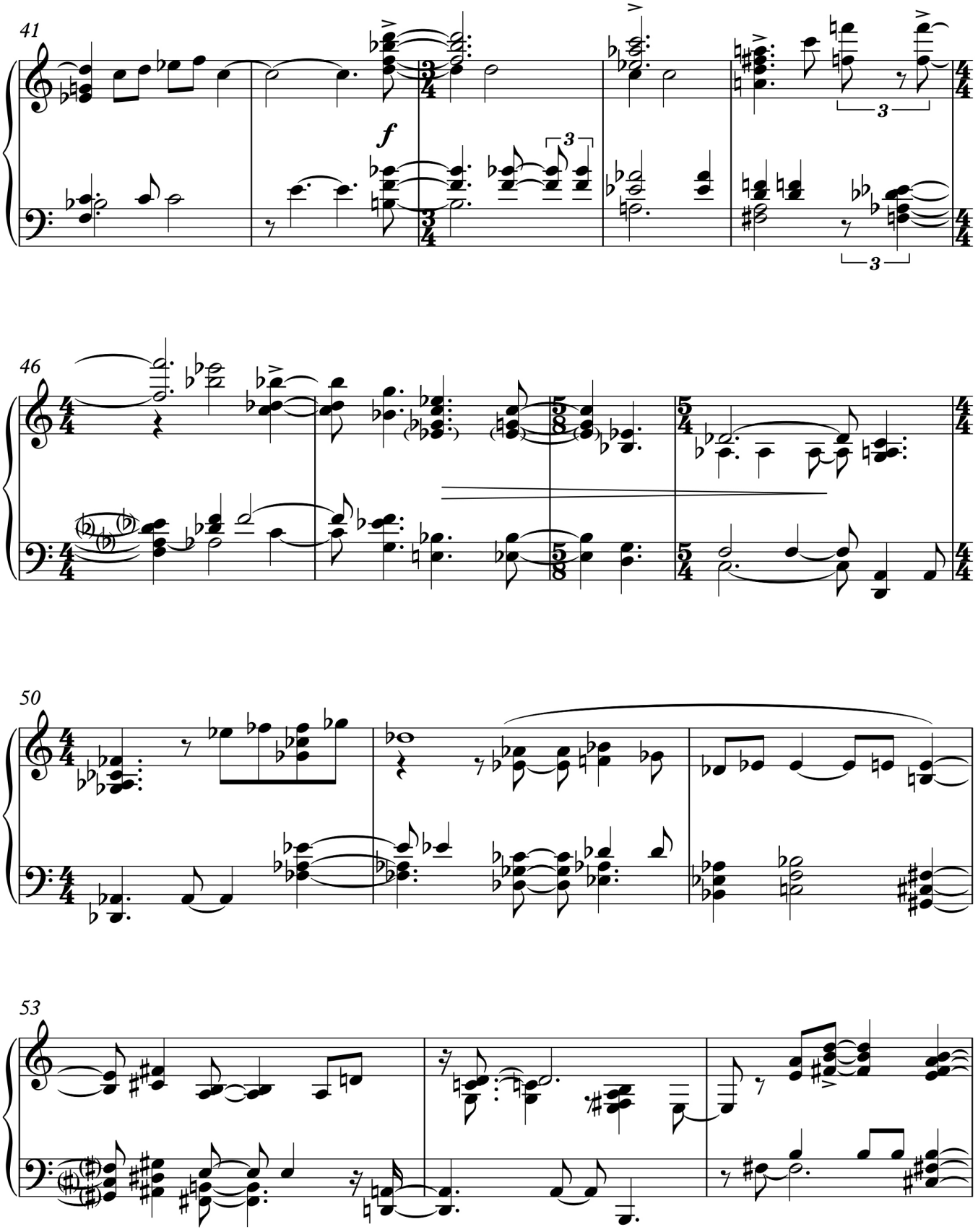
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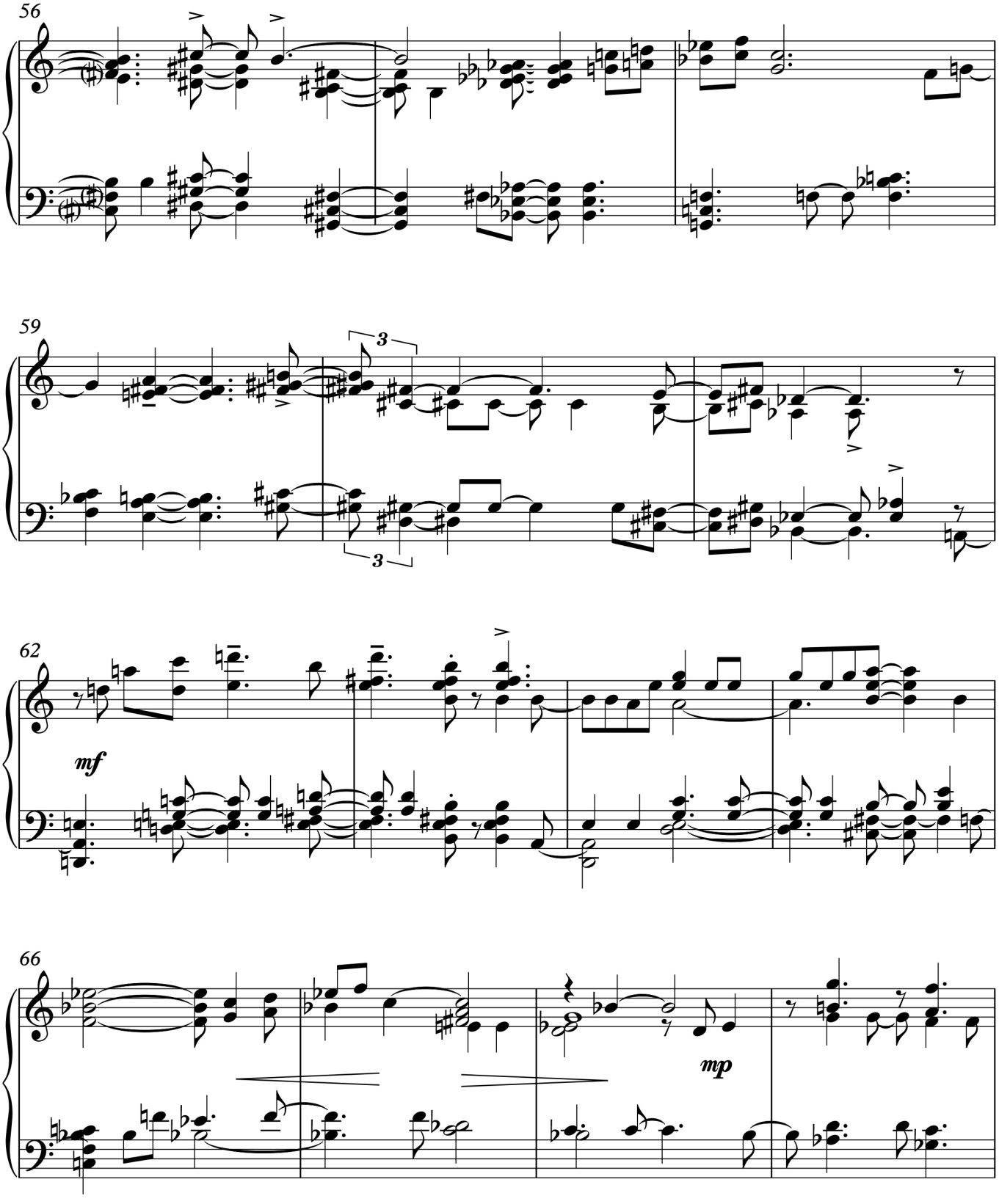
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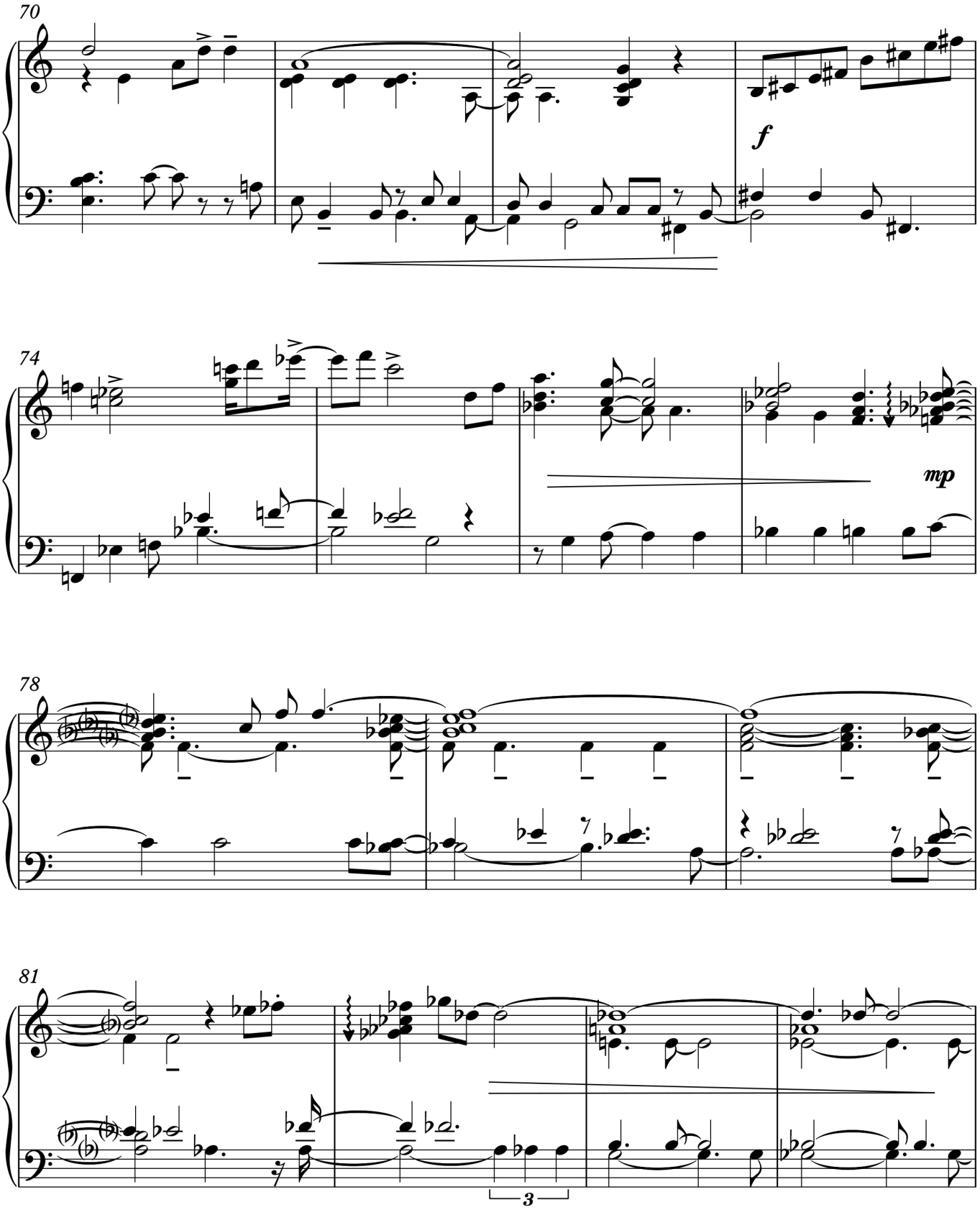
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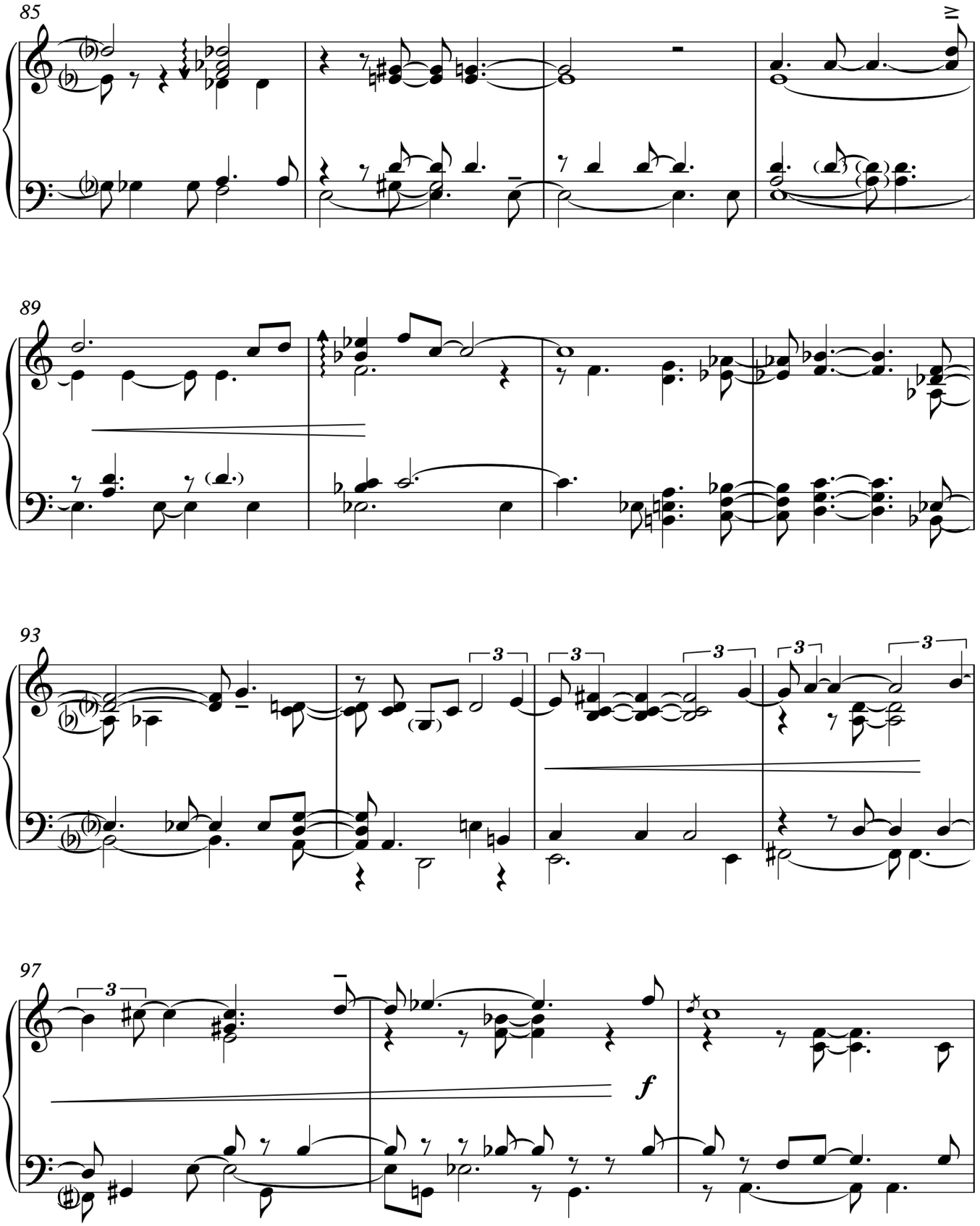
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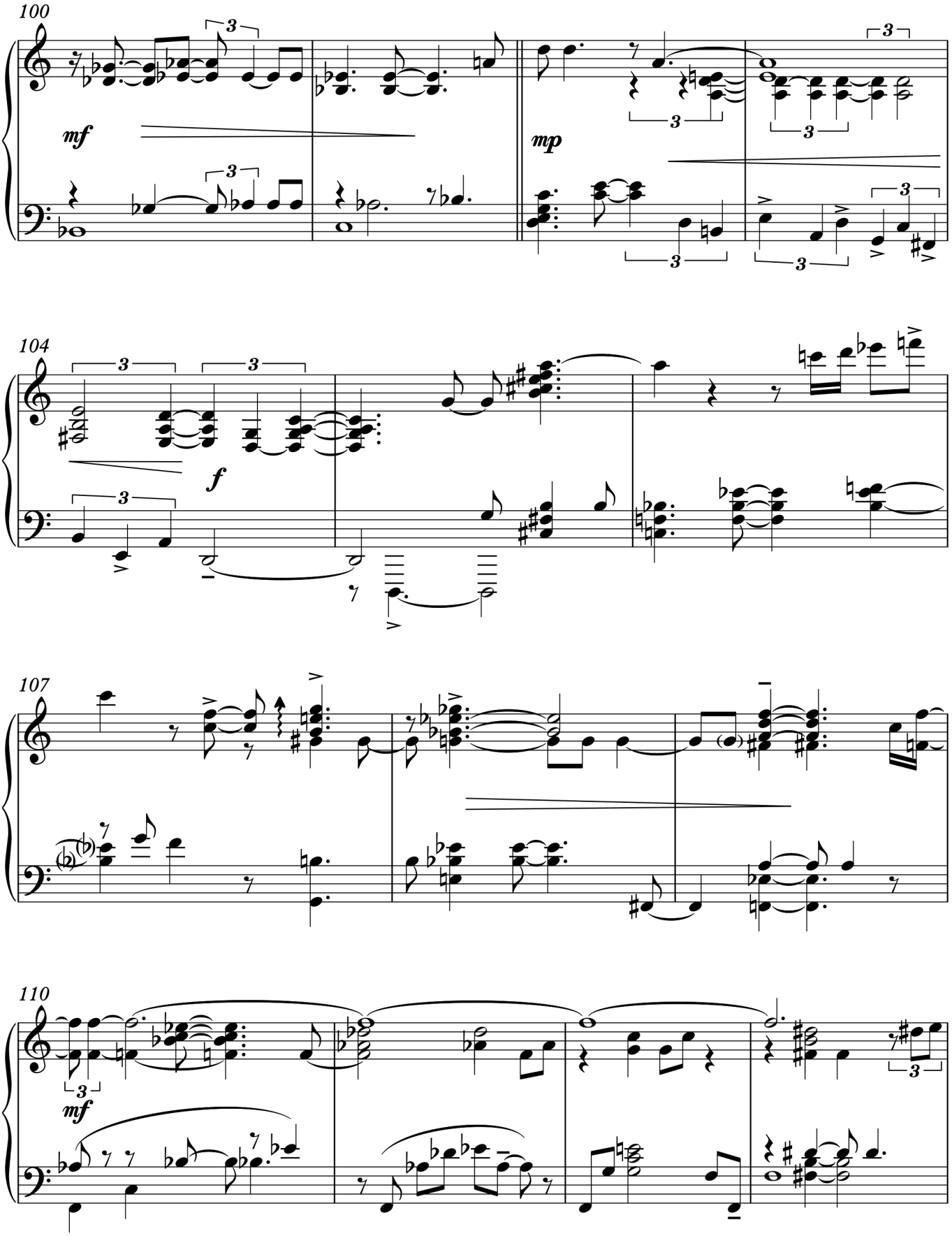
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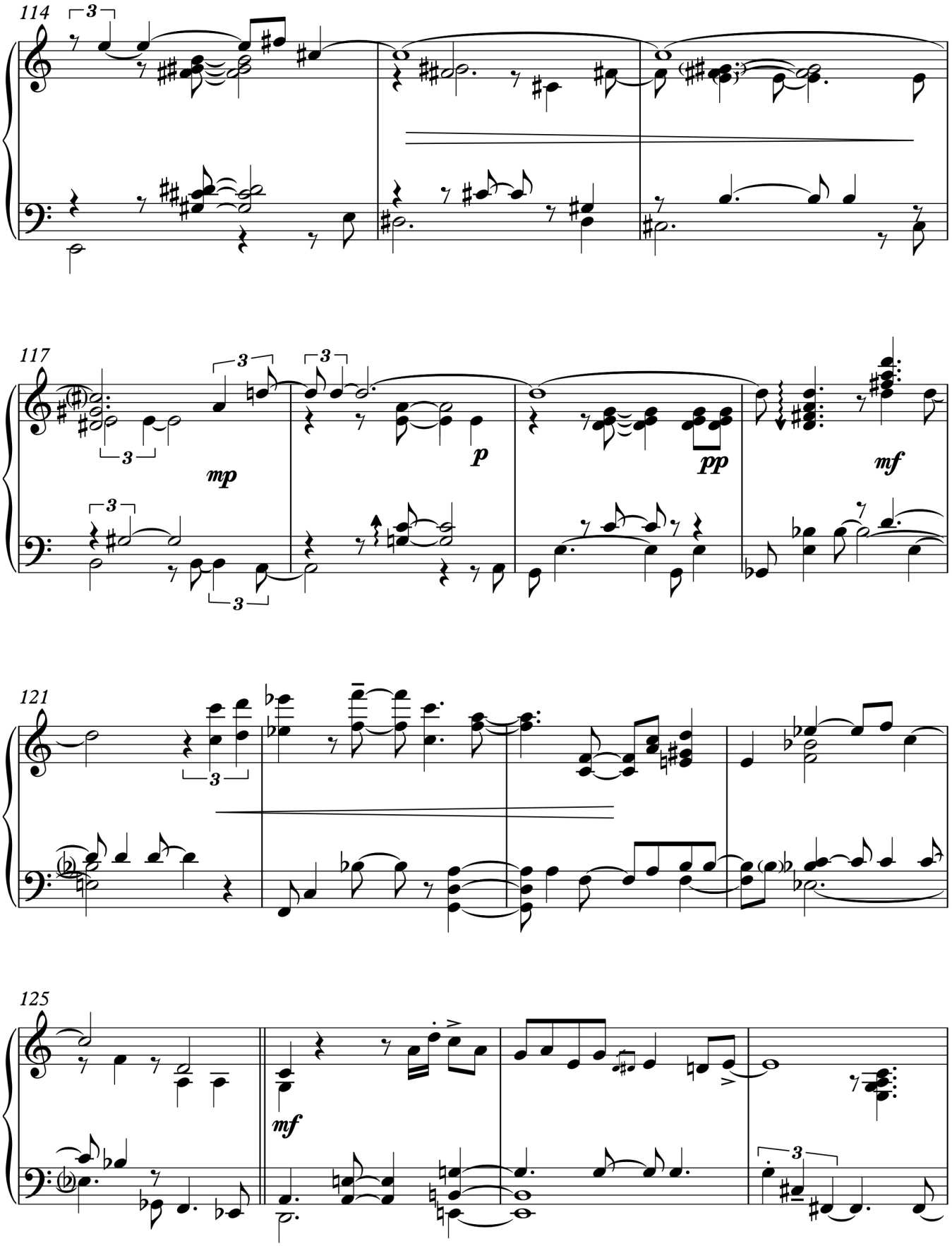
mf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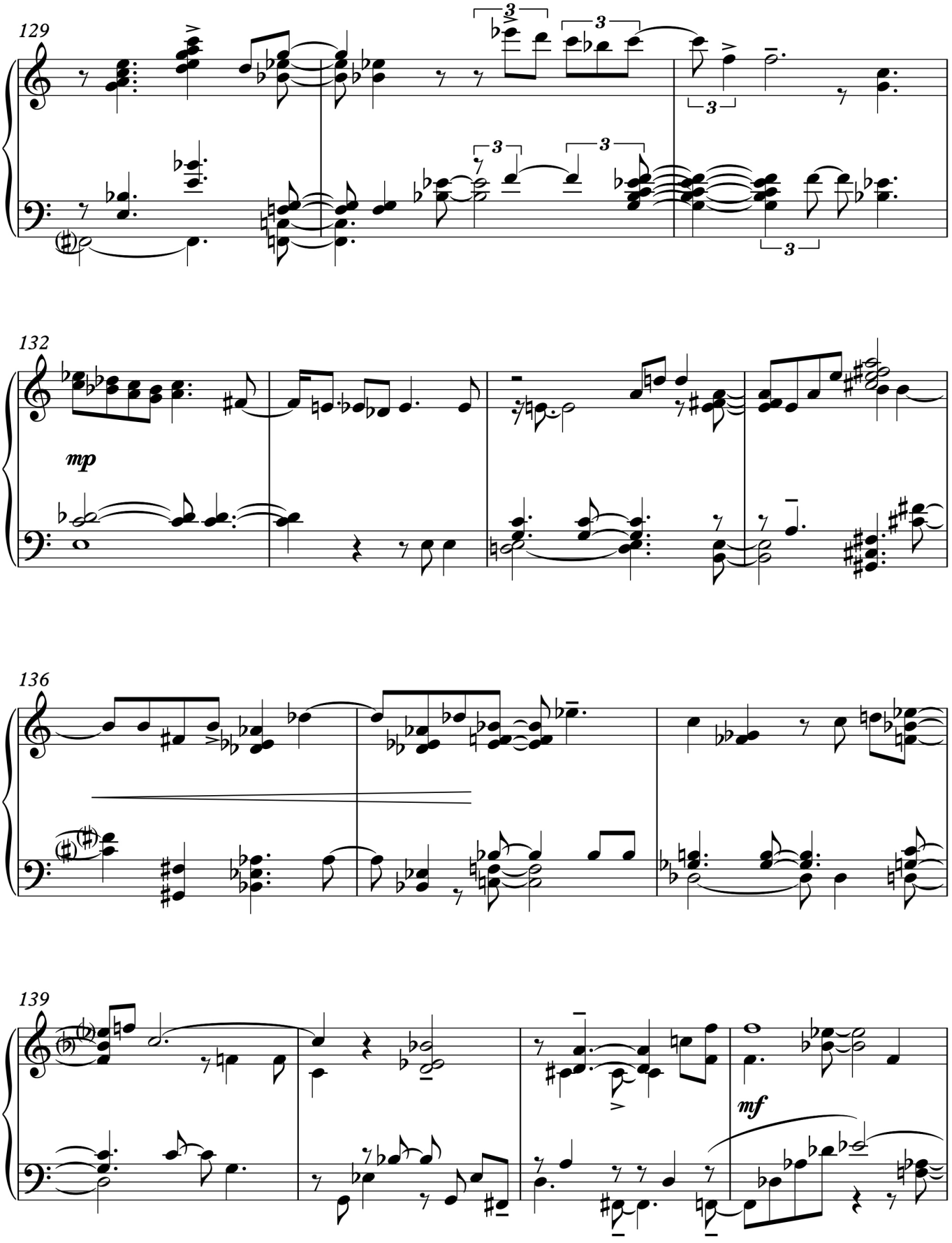
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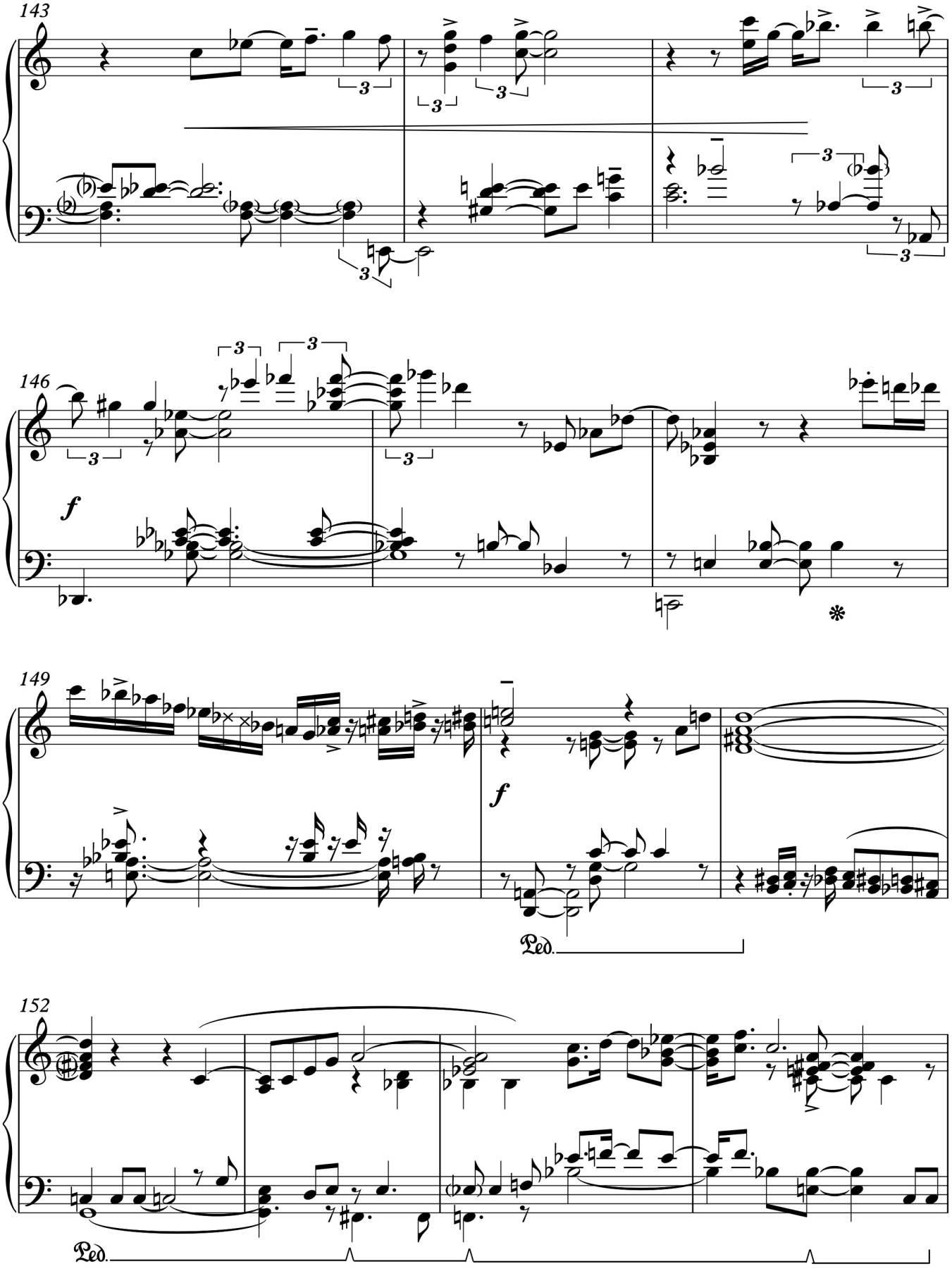
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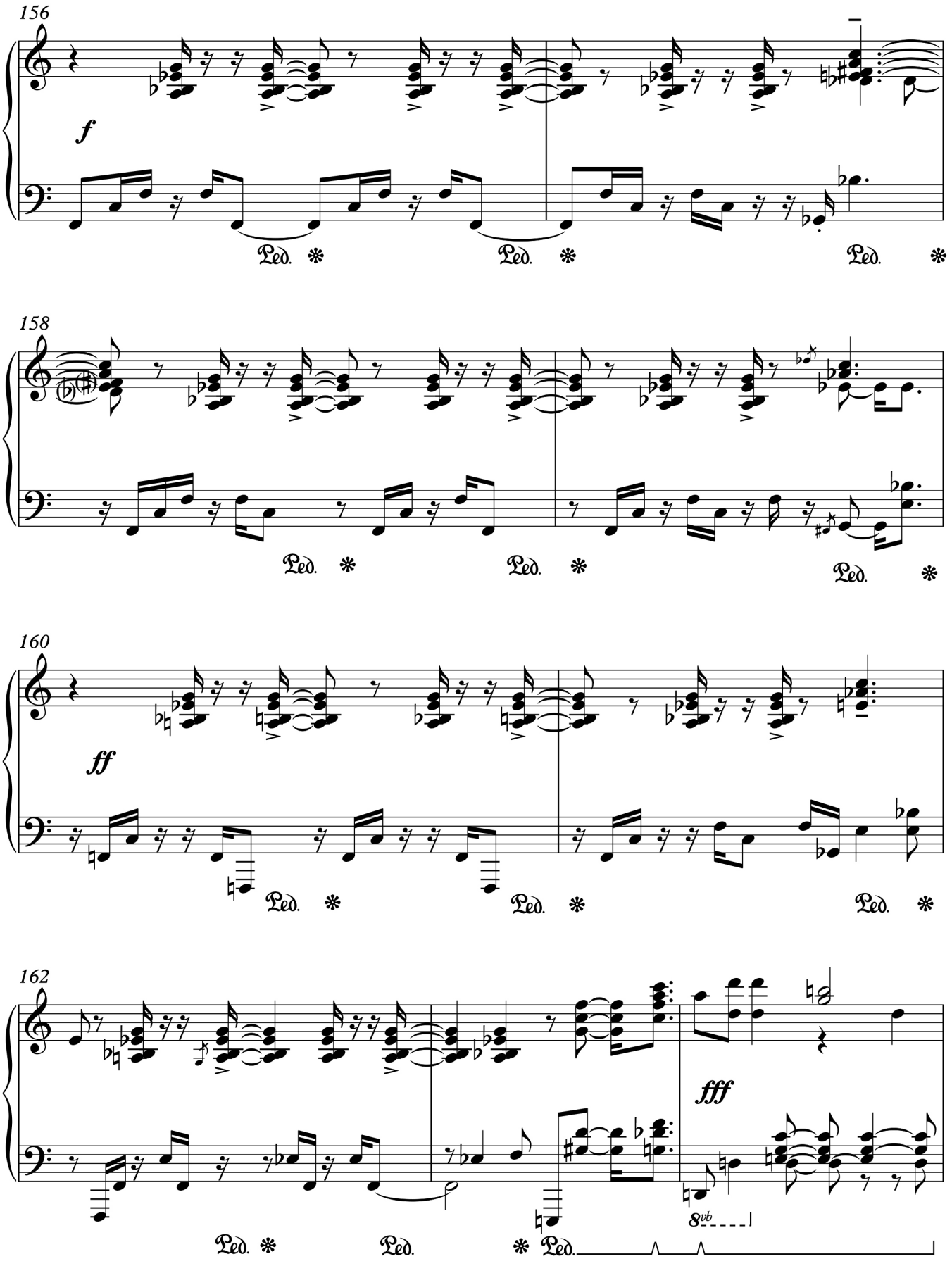
146
f
149
f
Ped.
152
Ped.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f
Ped.
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Ped.
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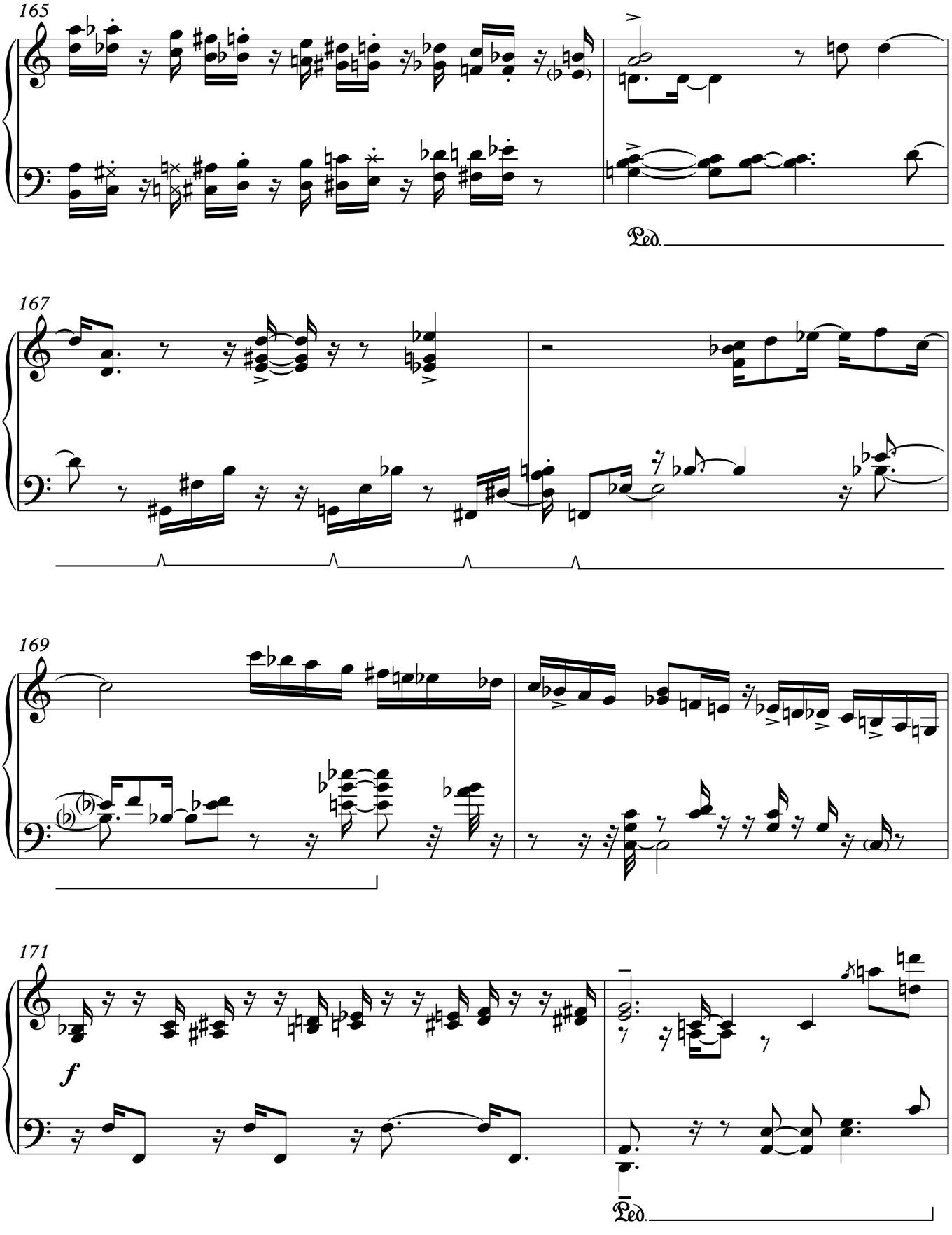
ff
Ped.
162
fff
8vb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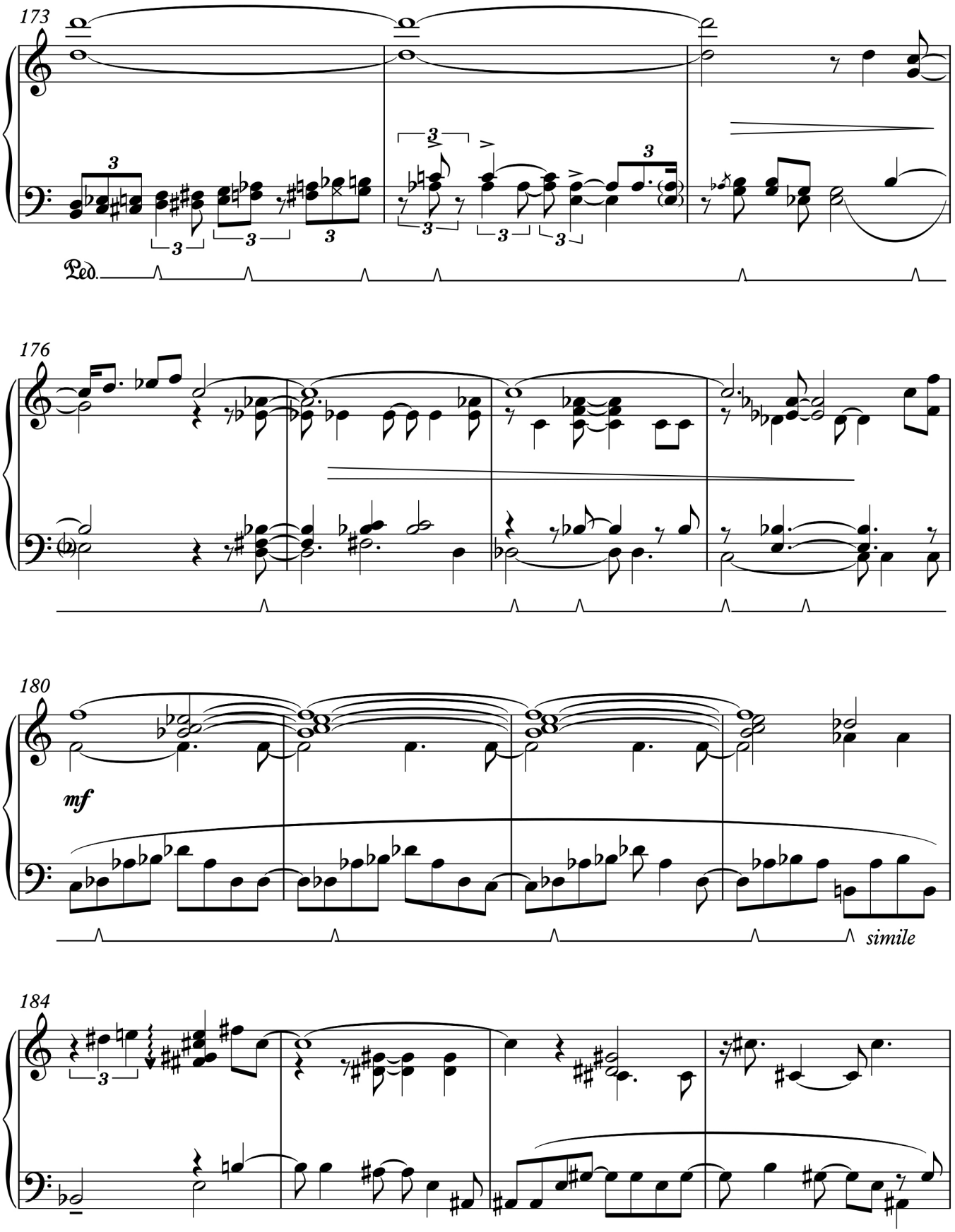
f
Ped.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simile
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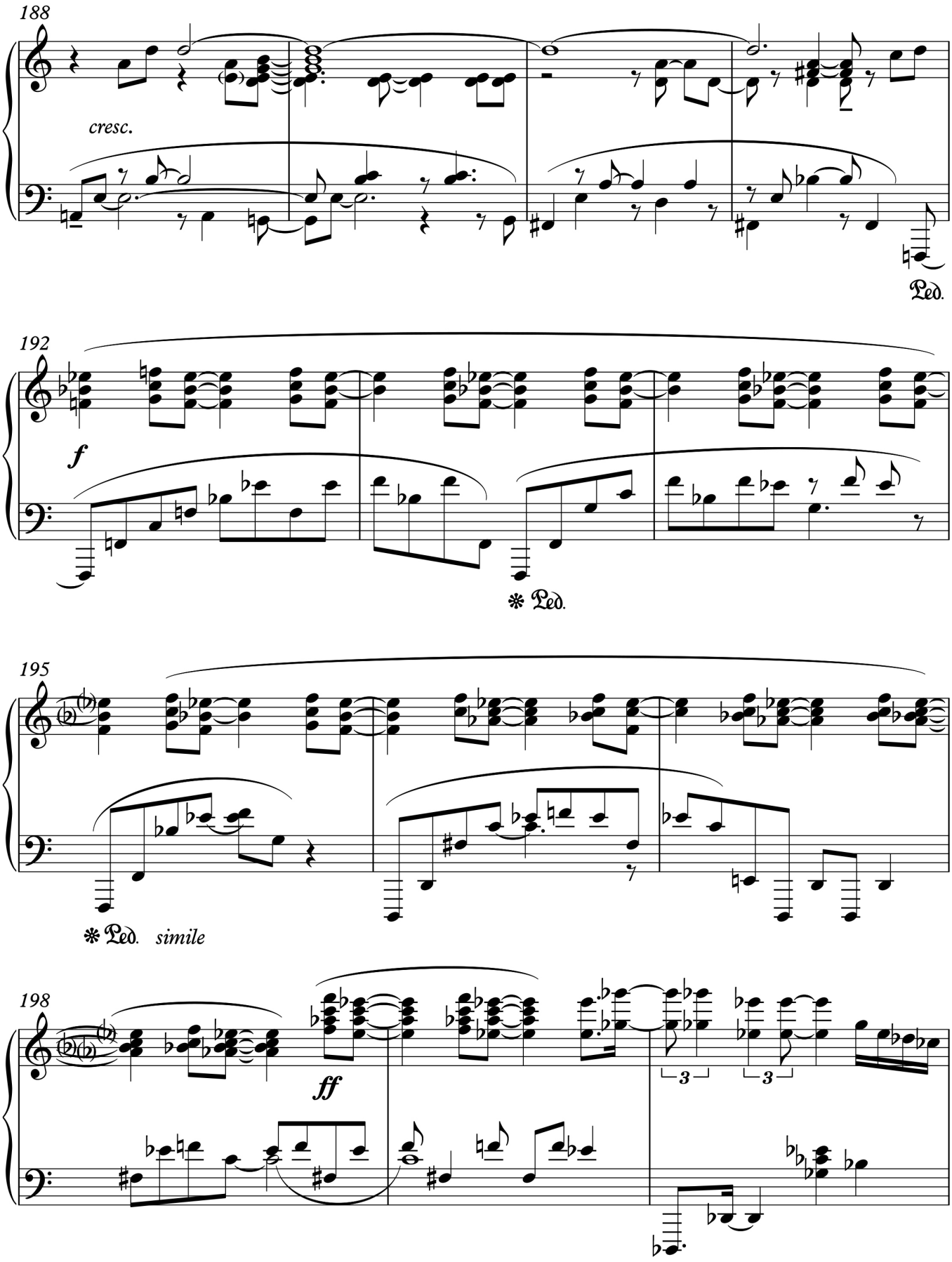
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simile
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ff
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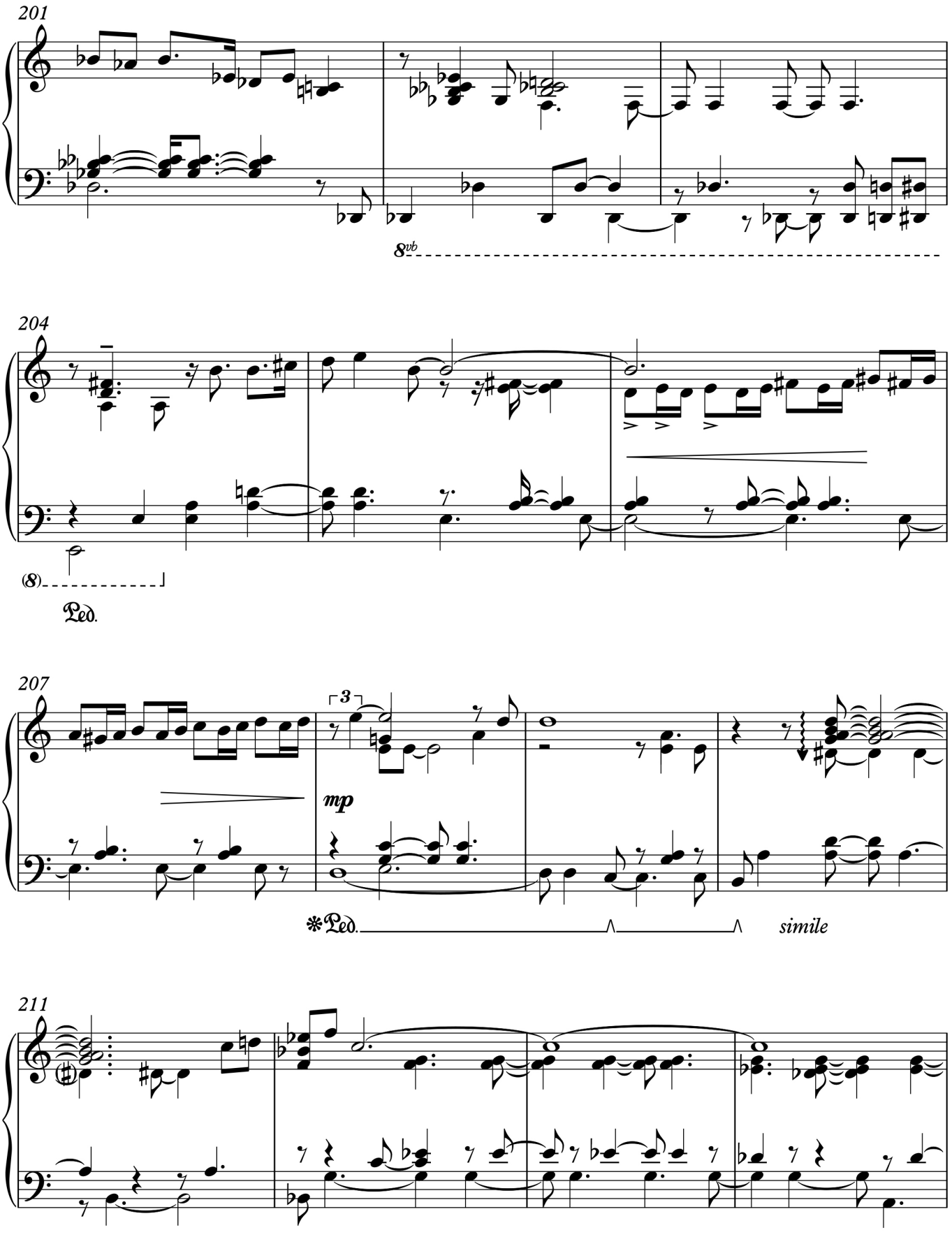
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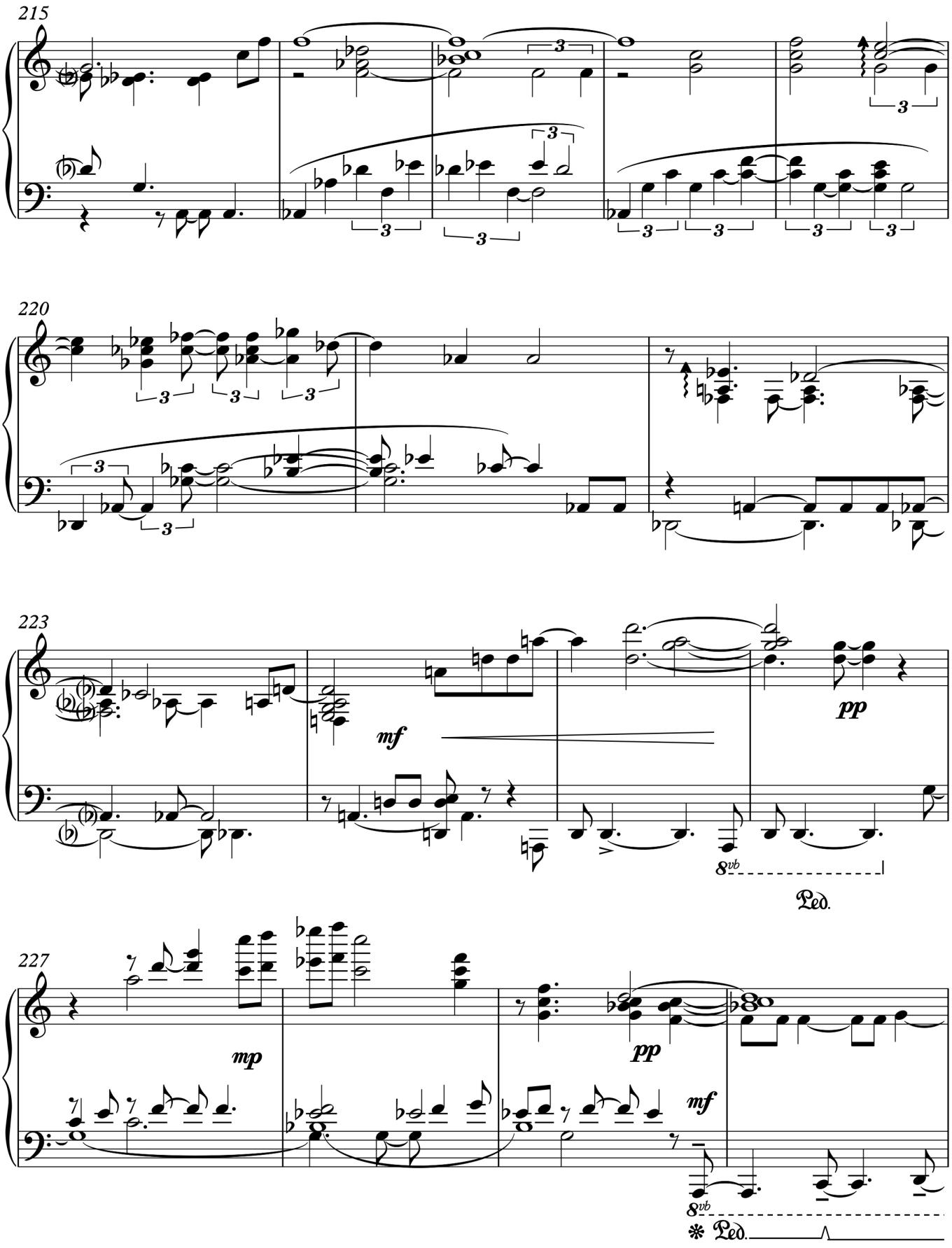
8vb
204
(8)
Ped.
207
3
mp
*Ped.
simile
211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pp
8vb
Ped.
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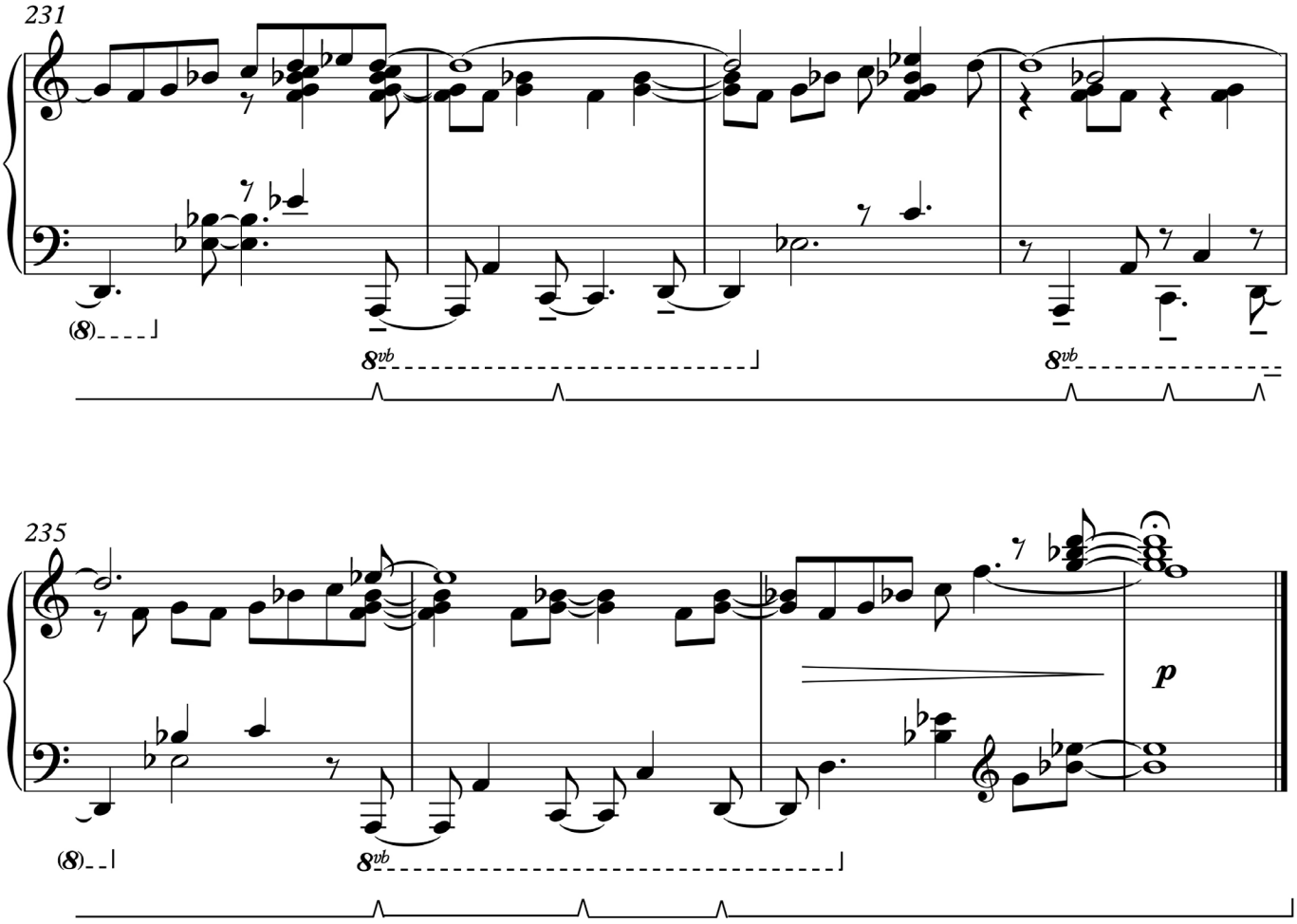
mp
pp
mf
8vb
Ped.


231
8vb
8vb
235
8vb
p

21.

RHYTHMIC MUSICIANSHIP

"It takes a lot of work to play complicated rhythms. It takes rehearsing, over and over and over again."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Finding "the Pocket"
- Donald Byrd's Secret to Speed
- Tony Williams' Innovations
- Case Study: Complex Rhythms in "Actual Proof"

CHAPTER REVIEW

Challenging yourself rhythmically and keeping your ears open for new grooves is a great way to make your compositions and improvisations more creative and engaging. Start paying closer attention to the way some of your favorite jazz players groove. They may be playing just on the back of the beat in what's called "the pocket." Play along and see if you can get the feel of a deep pocket groove.

Donald Byrd gave Herbie great advice about how to play fast; he said the trick is conquering your own mind. Try writing a solo out and practicing it until you get up to the speed you want. Once you've heard yourself playing fast, it becomes much easier to improvise comfortably at fast tempos.

Herbie's sense of rhythm grew by leaps and bounds when he started playing with Tony Williams. Tony had a unique way of approaching the drum kit. He also introduced Herbie to new polyrhythms, i.e. playing two different time signatures on top of each other to create complex grooves. Since then, rhythmic complexity has become one of Herbie's signatures. "Actual Proof" is a great example of a complicated rhythmic song that challenges the listener and player (and takes a lot of practice to play).

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Listen to Oscar Peterson to get a deeper feel for "the pocket."
- Check out Donald Byrd's band with Herbie on piano.
- Use the sheet music following the notes page, to explore the complex rhythms in "Actual Proof."

ASSIGNMENT

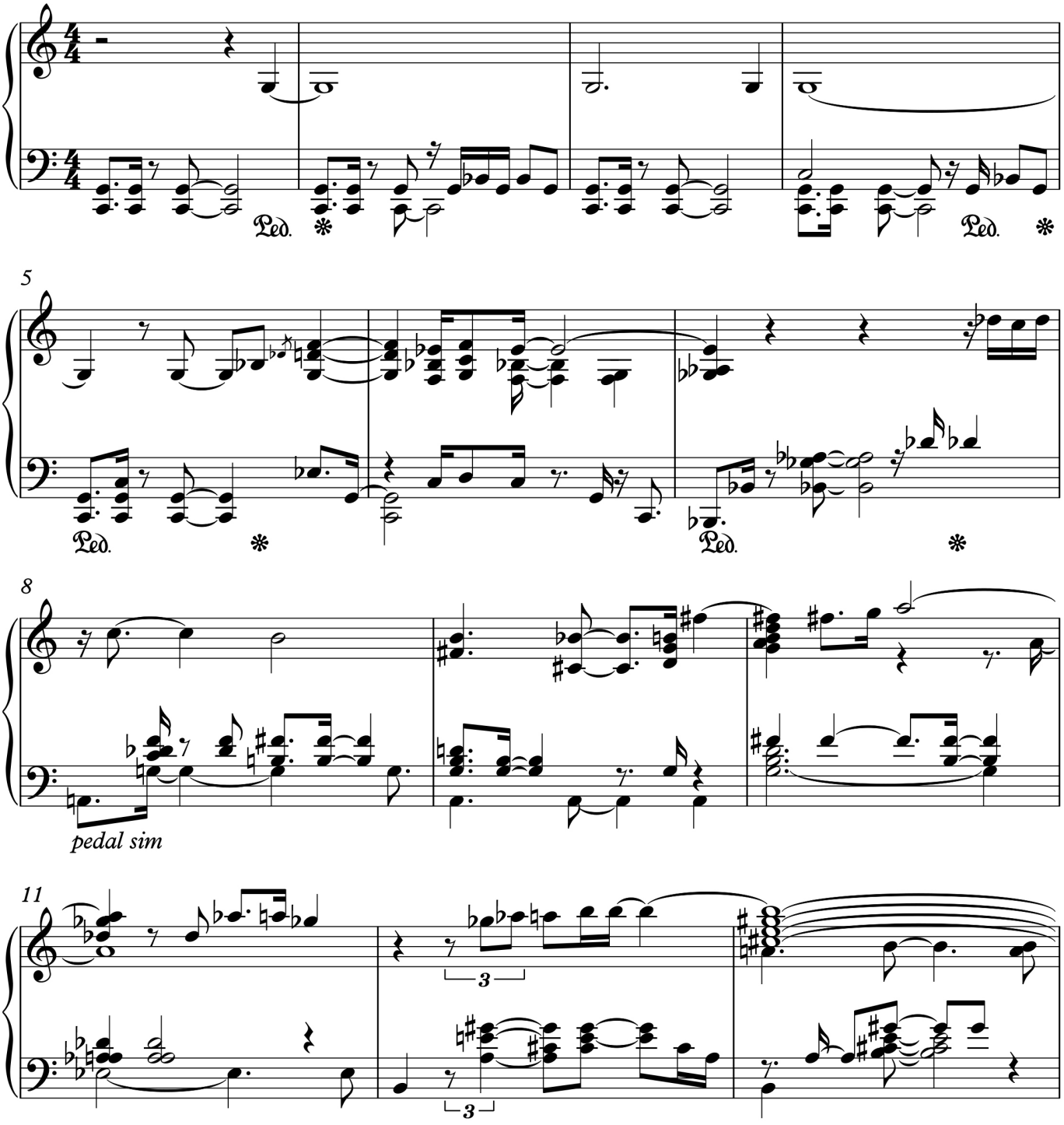
- Listen to a fast recording of "Cherokee" and use the method Herbie learned from Donald Byrd to start trying to play at that tempo. Did it help?

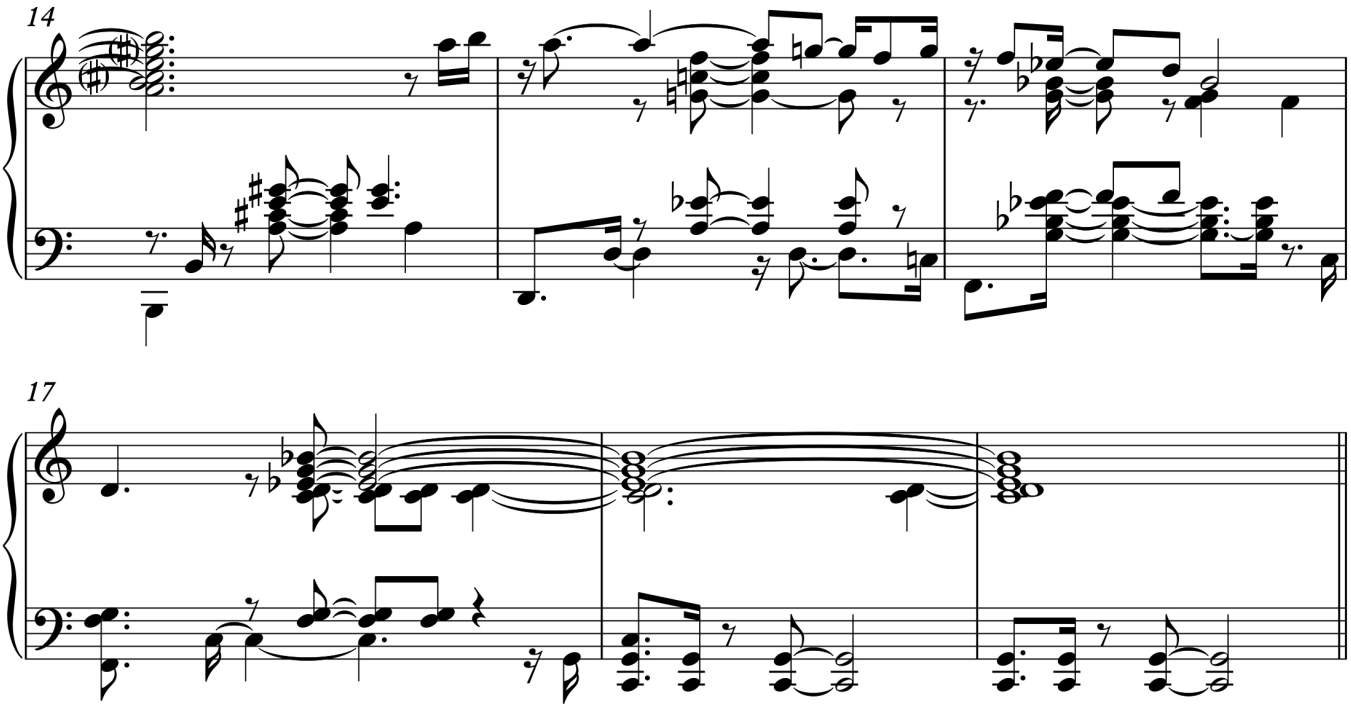
21.

NOTES

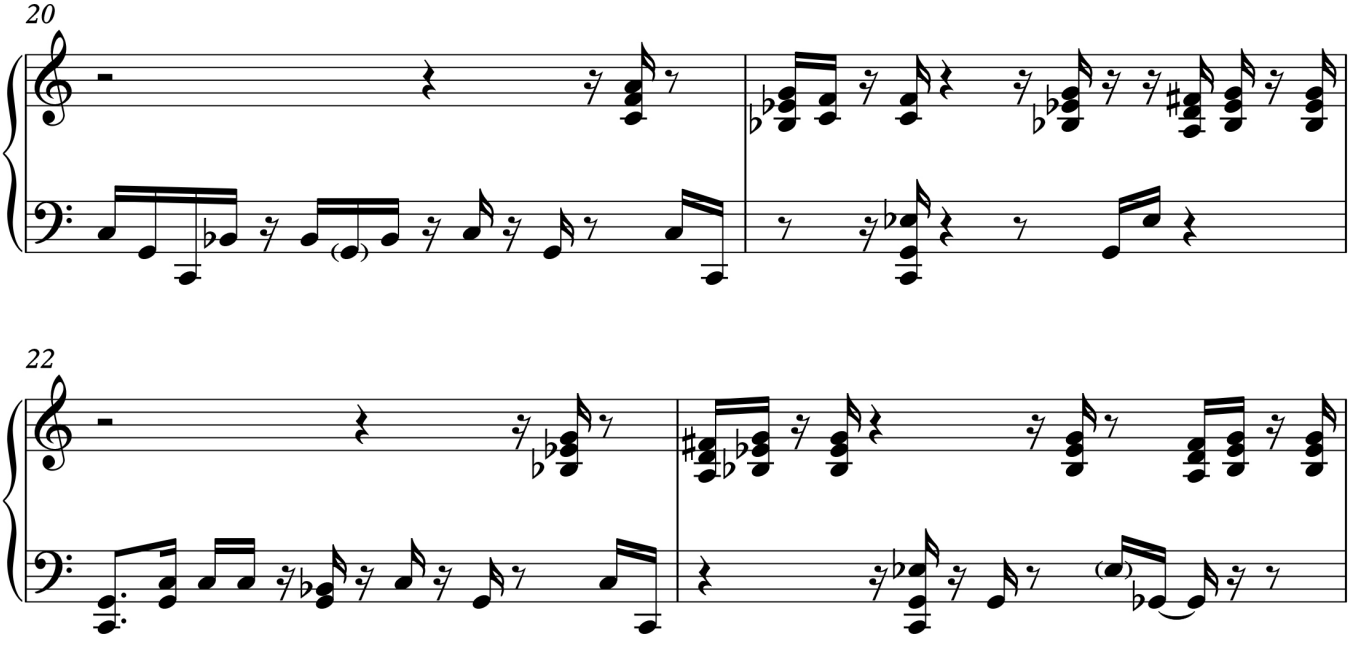
Chapter 21
Rhythmic Musicianship

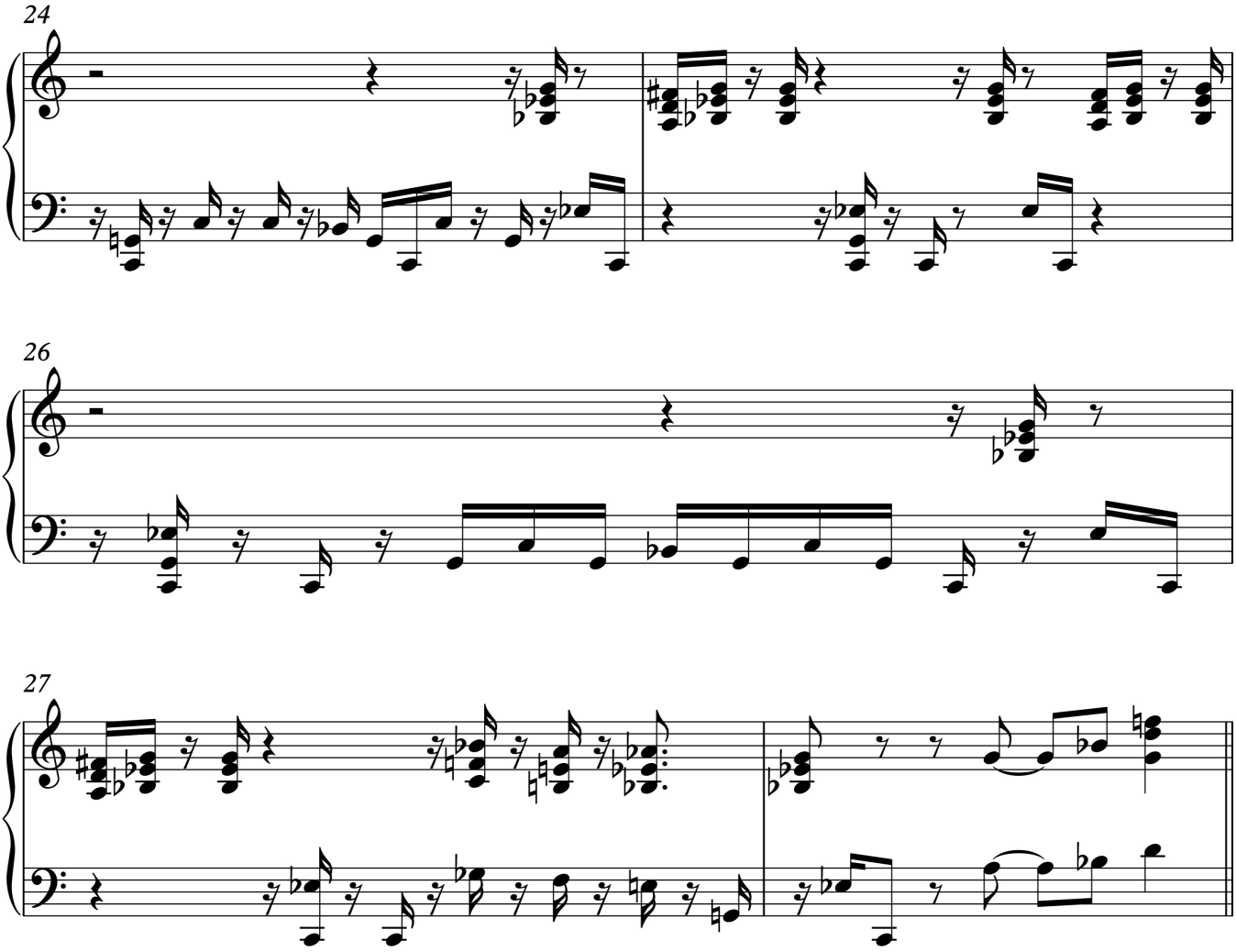
Herbie's example of a rhythmically simplified "Actual Proof" (11:11)





Herbie's example of the intro groove to "Actual Proof" (13:40)

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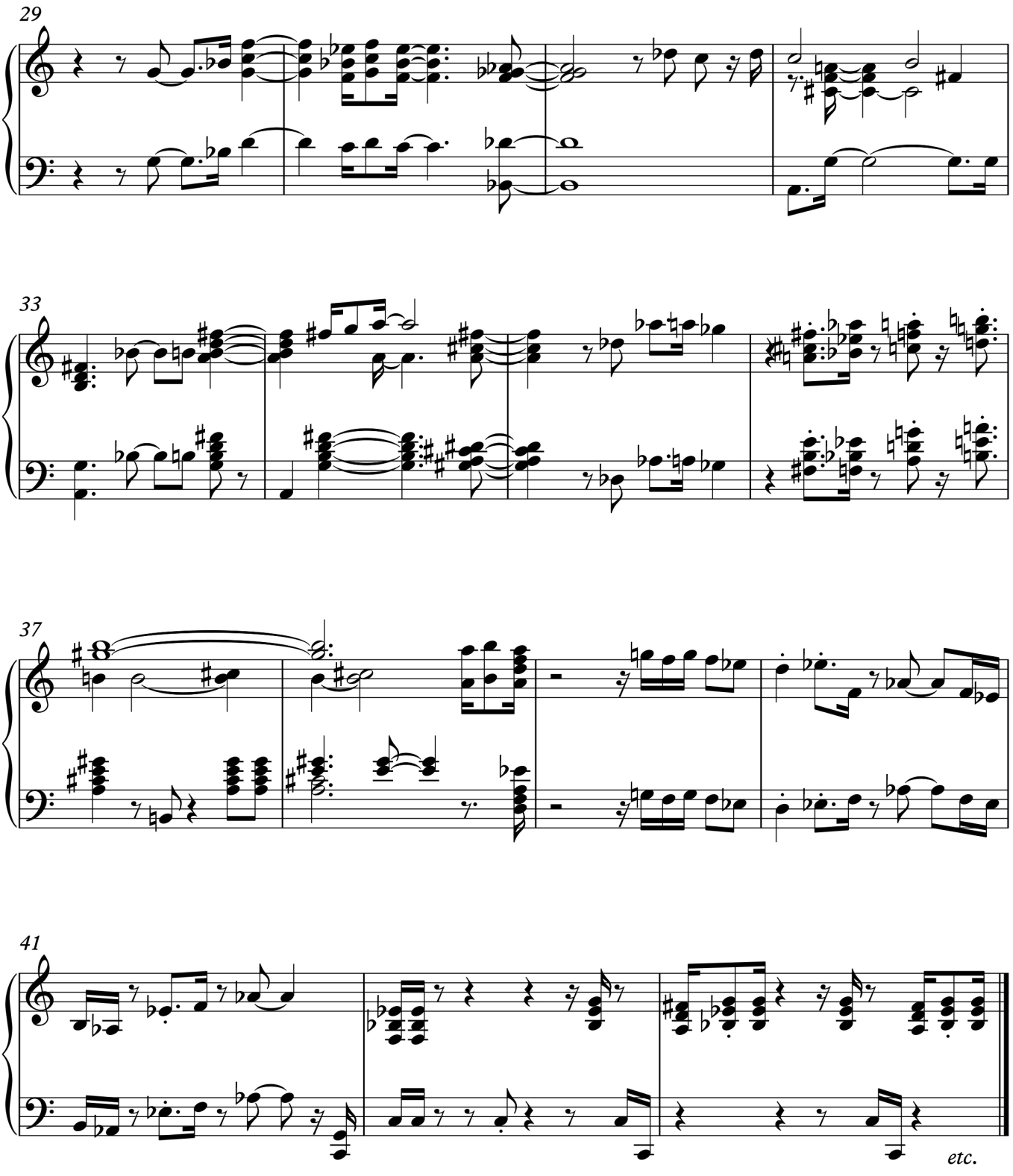
Herbie's solo piano rendition of "Actual Proof" (head only) (14:43)



22.

JAM SESSION: "ACTUAL PROOF"

"Everybody thinks we changed the beat, but we didn't."
—Herbie Hancock

CHAPTER REVIEW

"Actual Proof" employs "displaced rhythms" which means shifting around musical phrases to land before or after where the ear is used to hearing them. This gives the piece an unexpected sound and makes it exciting to listen to and play. Displacement is just one of many tools you can use in your playing to push yourself and your fellow musicians to stay creative.

Improvising over those phrases can be tricky, but it can also unlock surprising inspiration.

TAKE IT FURTHER

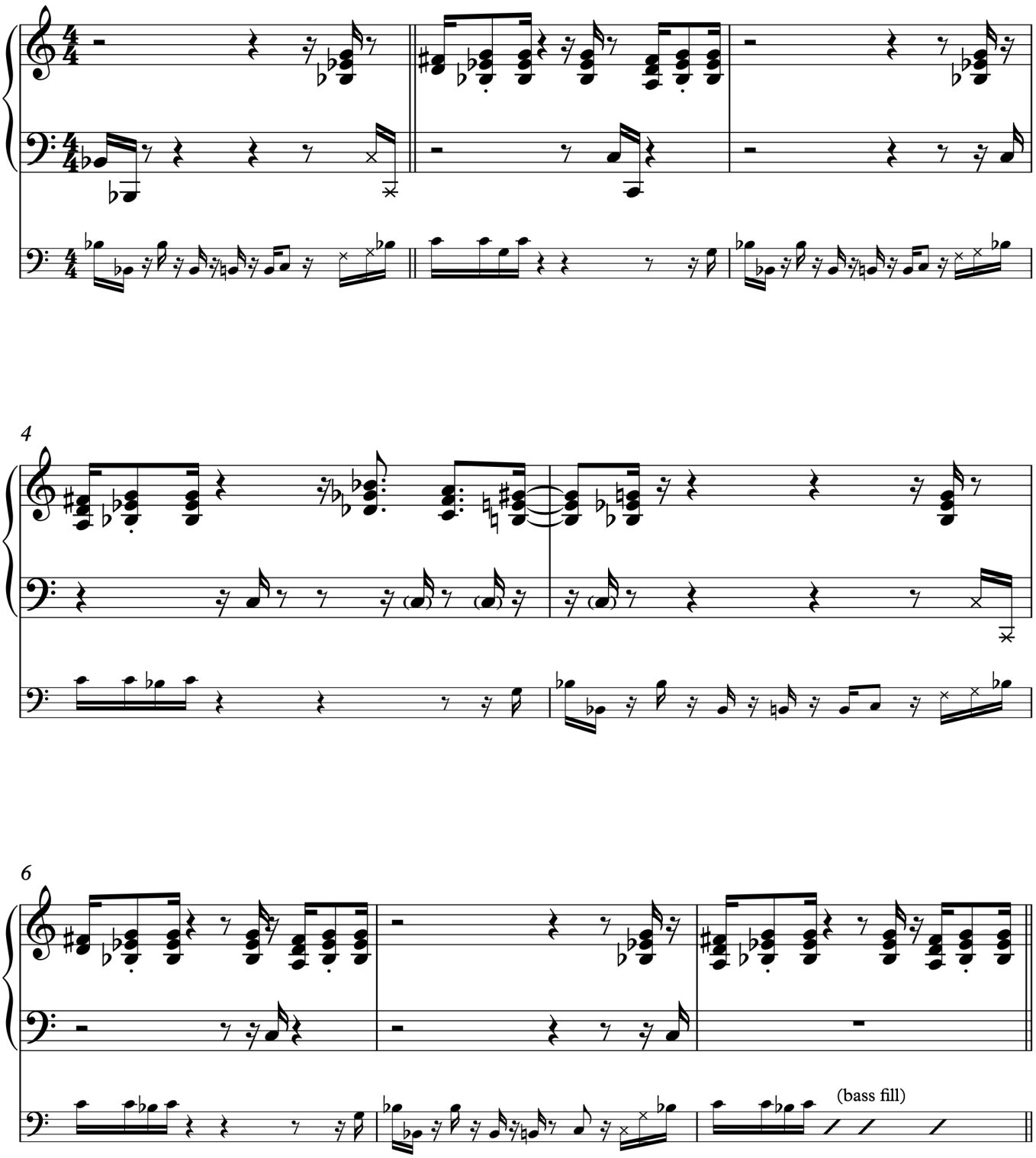
- Take a look at Herbie's synthesizer solo in the sheet music after the notes page. How does he use rhythm to make his playing more exciting?

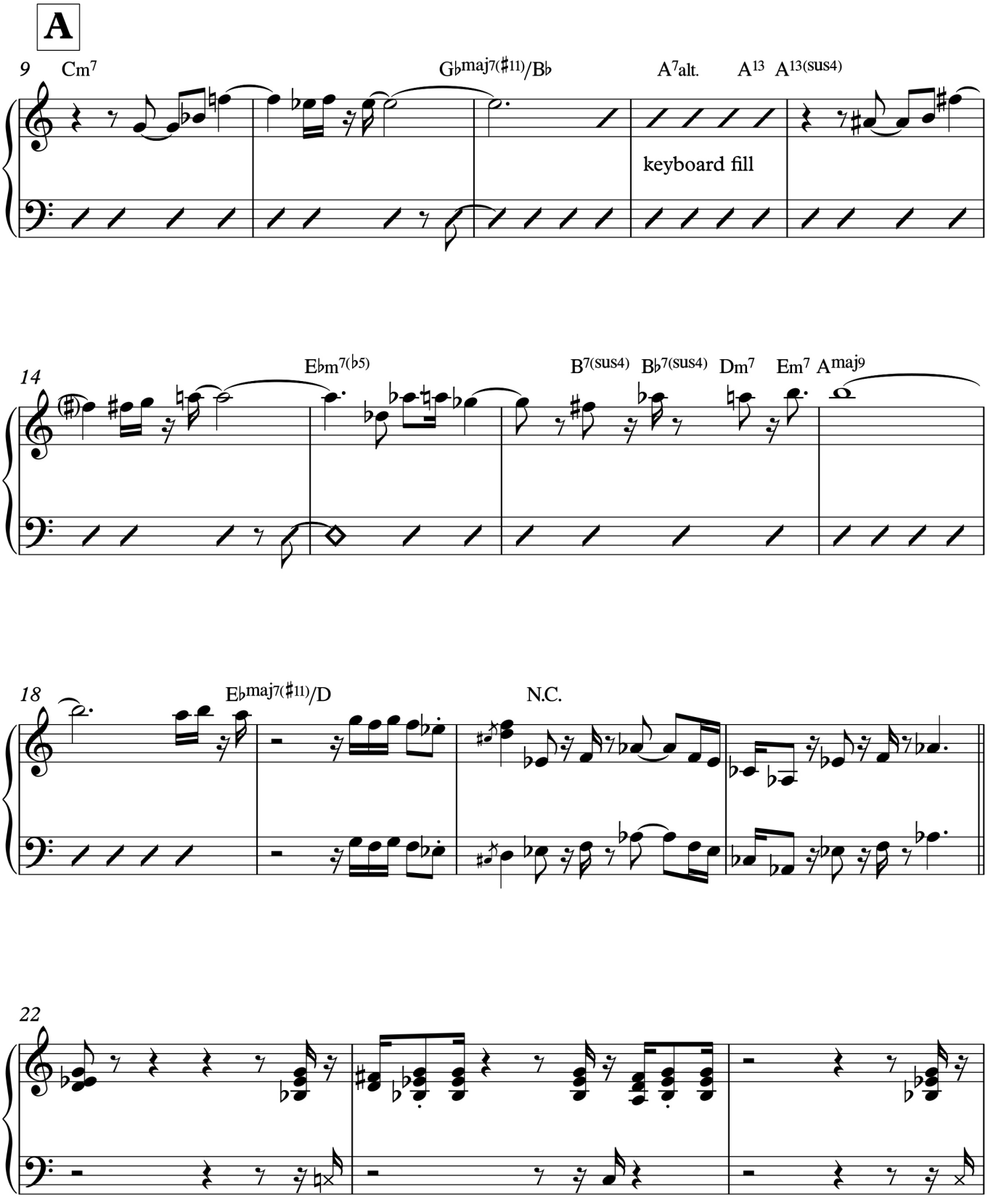
ASSIGNMENT

- Practice playing along to the sheet music of "Actual Proof." Start by using the slower portion with Herbie counting the tempo and work your way up the real speed version. Keep practicing until you get it right.

22.
NOTES

Chapter 22
Jam Session: Actual Proof

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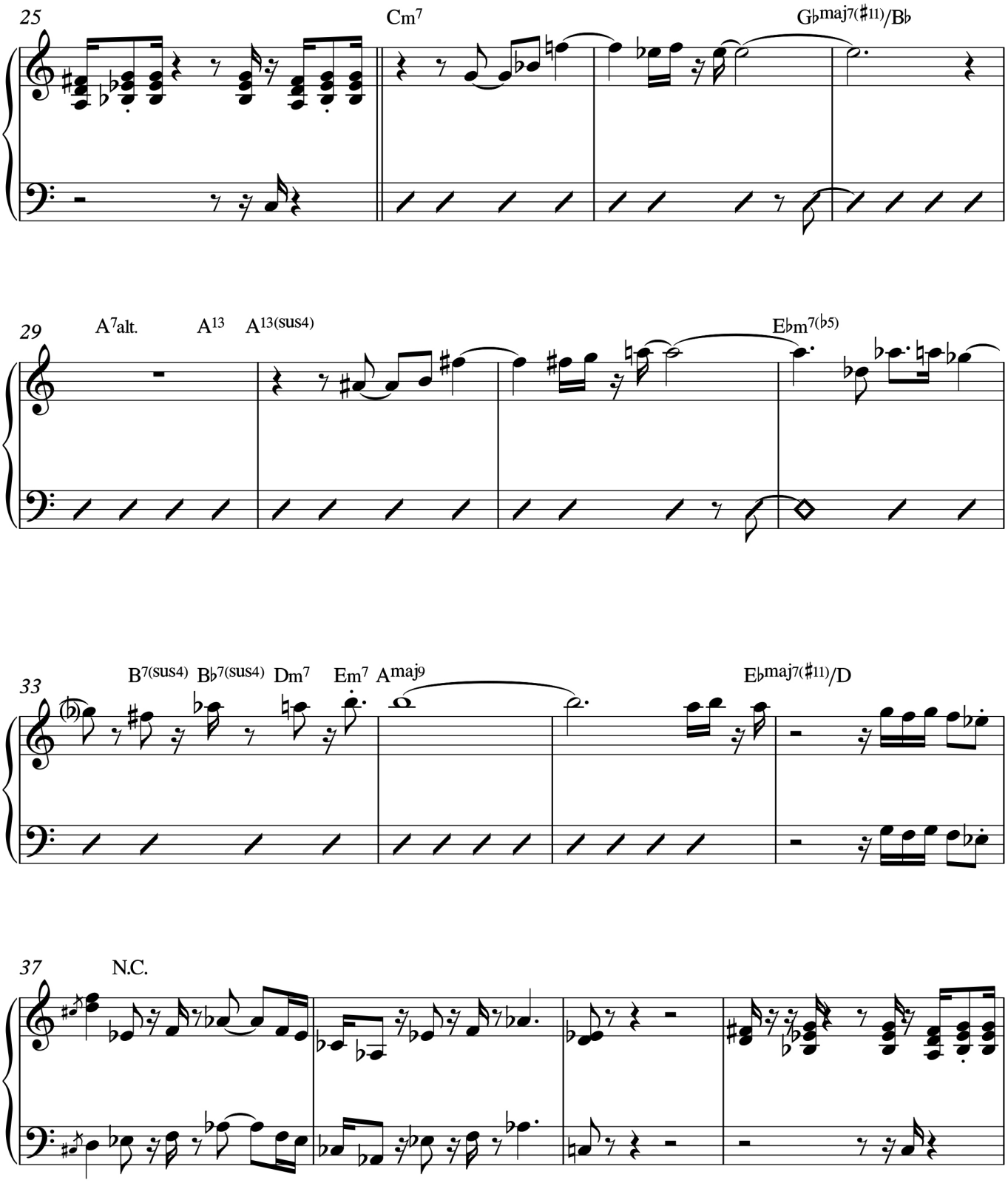
9
Cm7
G♭maj7(♯11)/B♭
A7alt.
A13
A13(sus4)
keyboard fill
14
E♭m7(♭5)
B7(sus4)
B♭7(sus4)
Dm7
Em7
Amaj9
18
E♭maj7(♯11)/D
N.C.
22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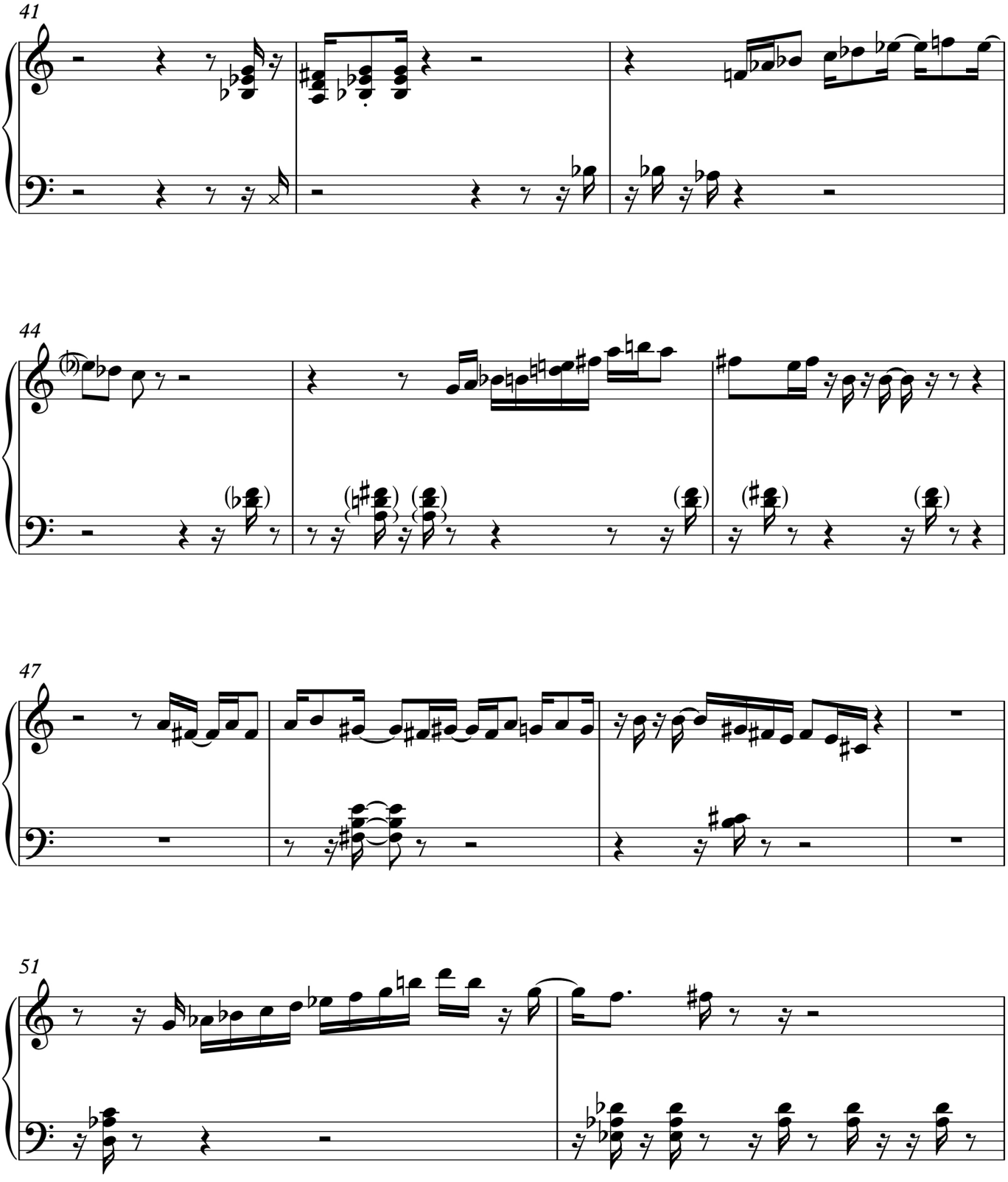
Cm7
G♭maj7(♯11)/B♭
29
A7alt.
A13
A13(sus4)
E♭m7(♭5)
33
B7(sus4)
B♭7(sus4)
Dm7
Em7
Amaj9
E♭maj7(♯11)/D
37
N.C.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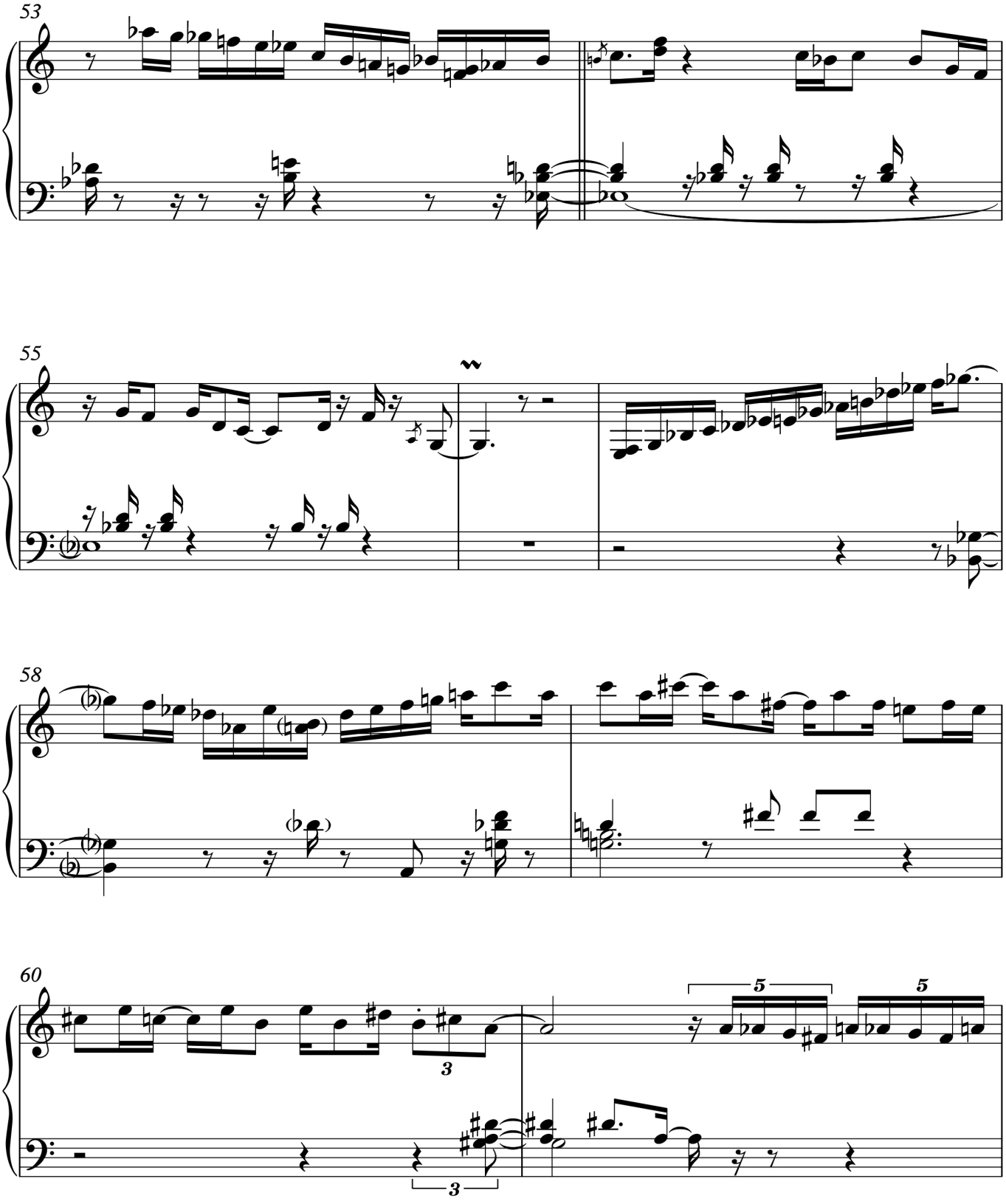
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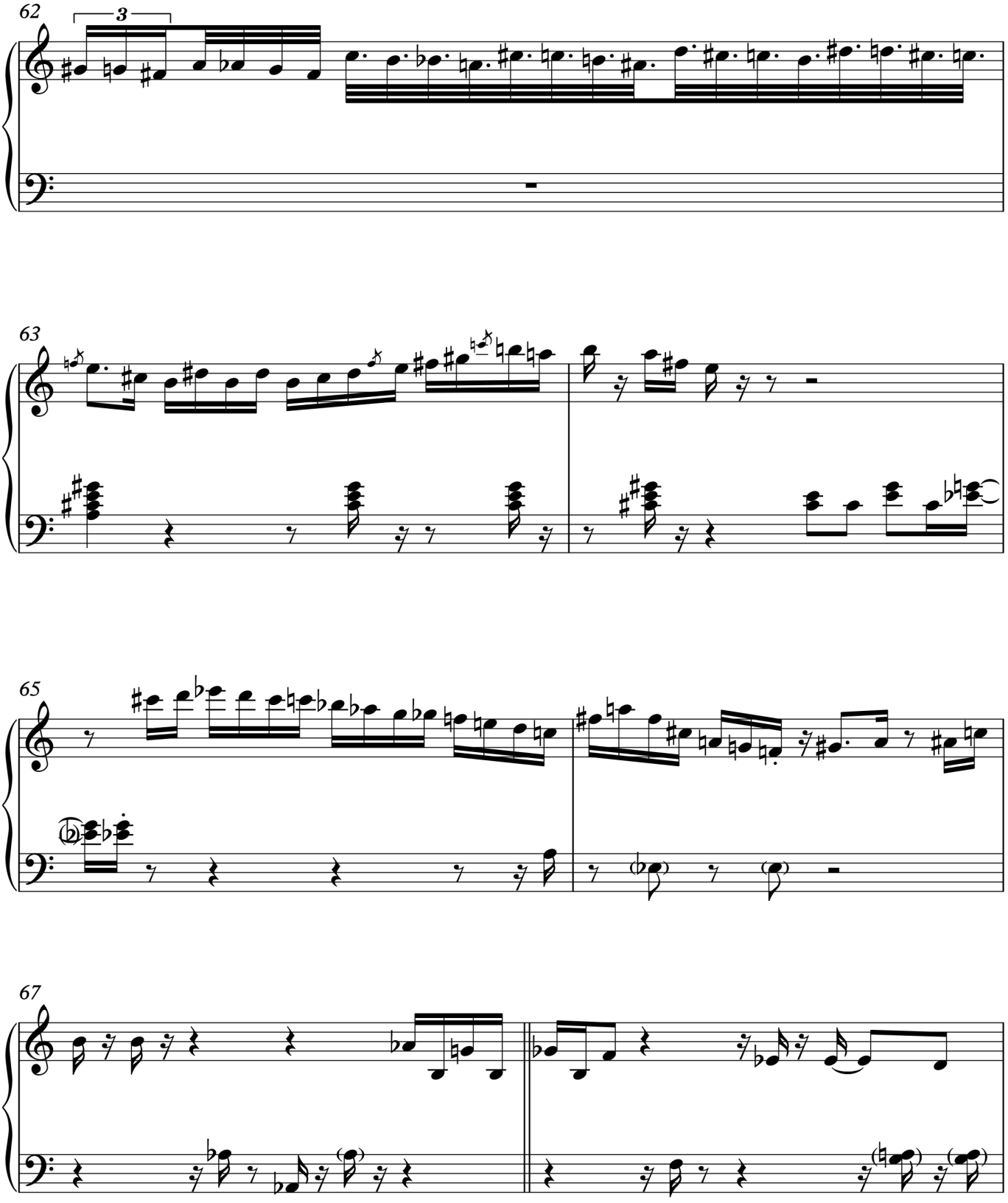
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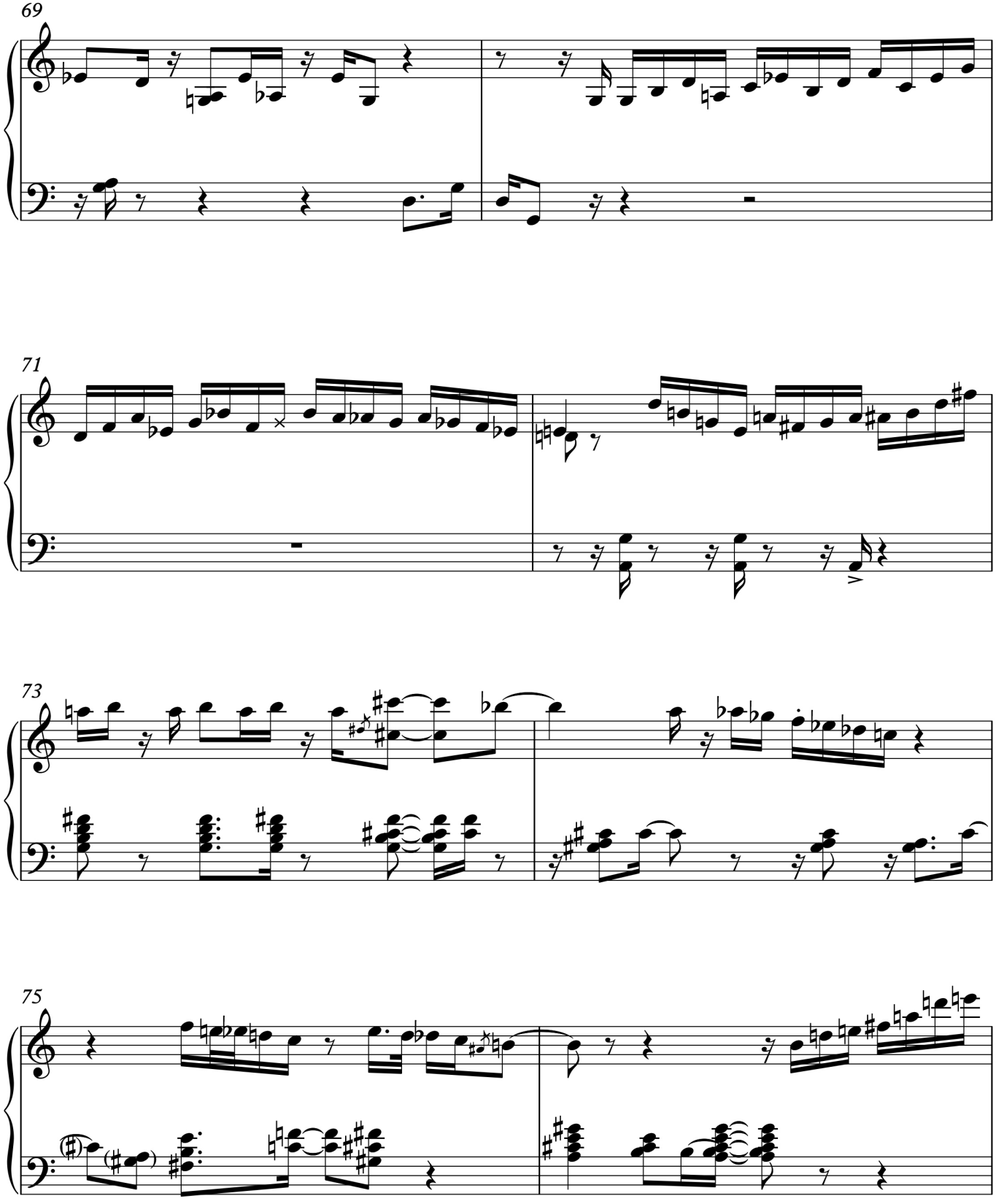
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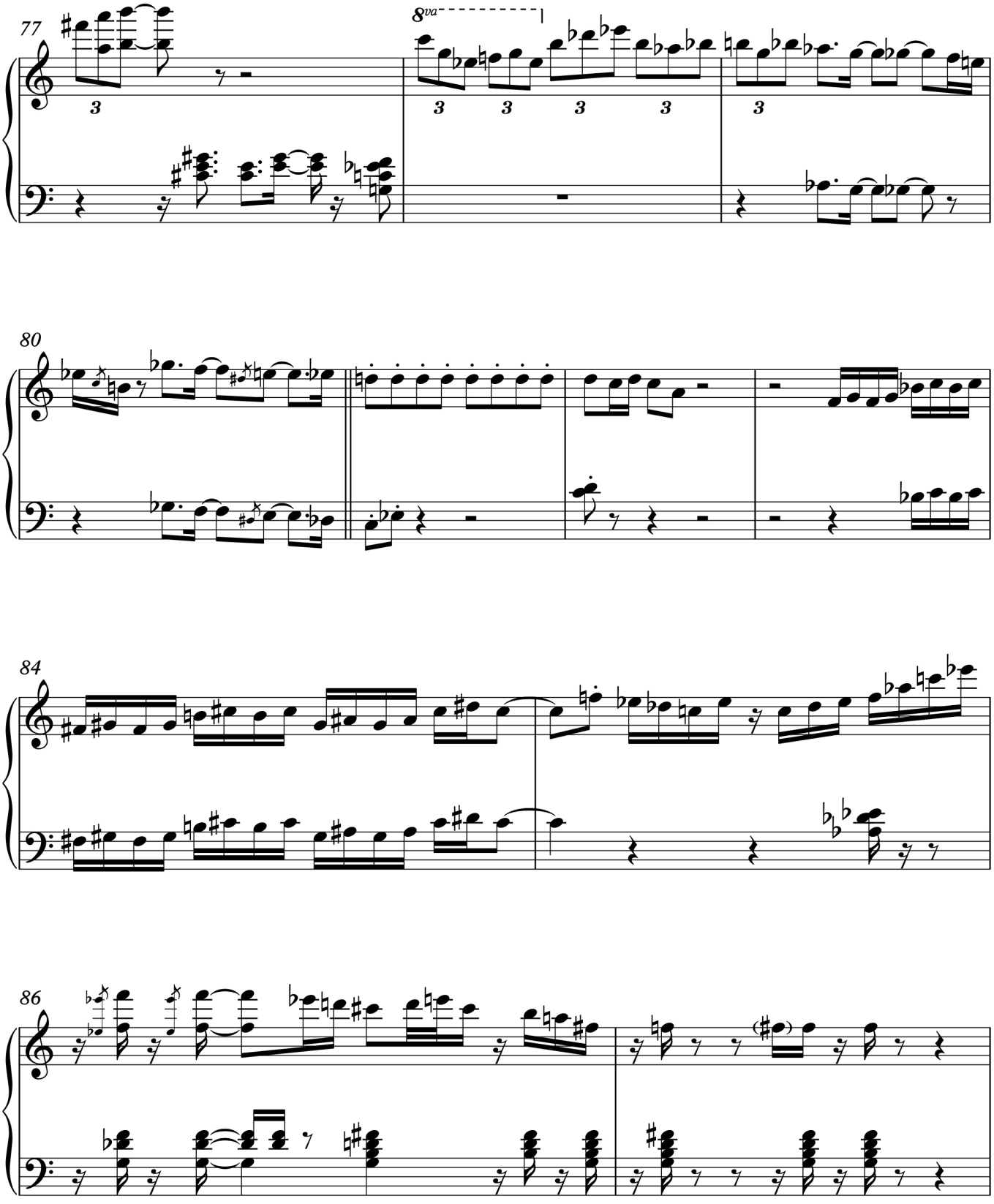
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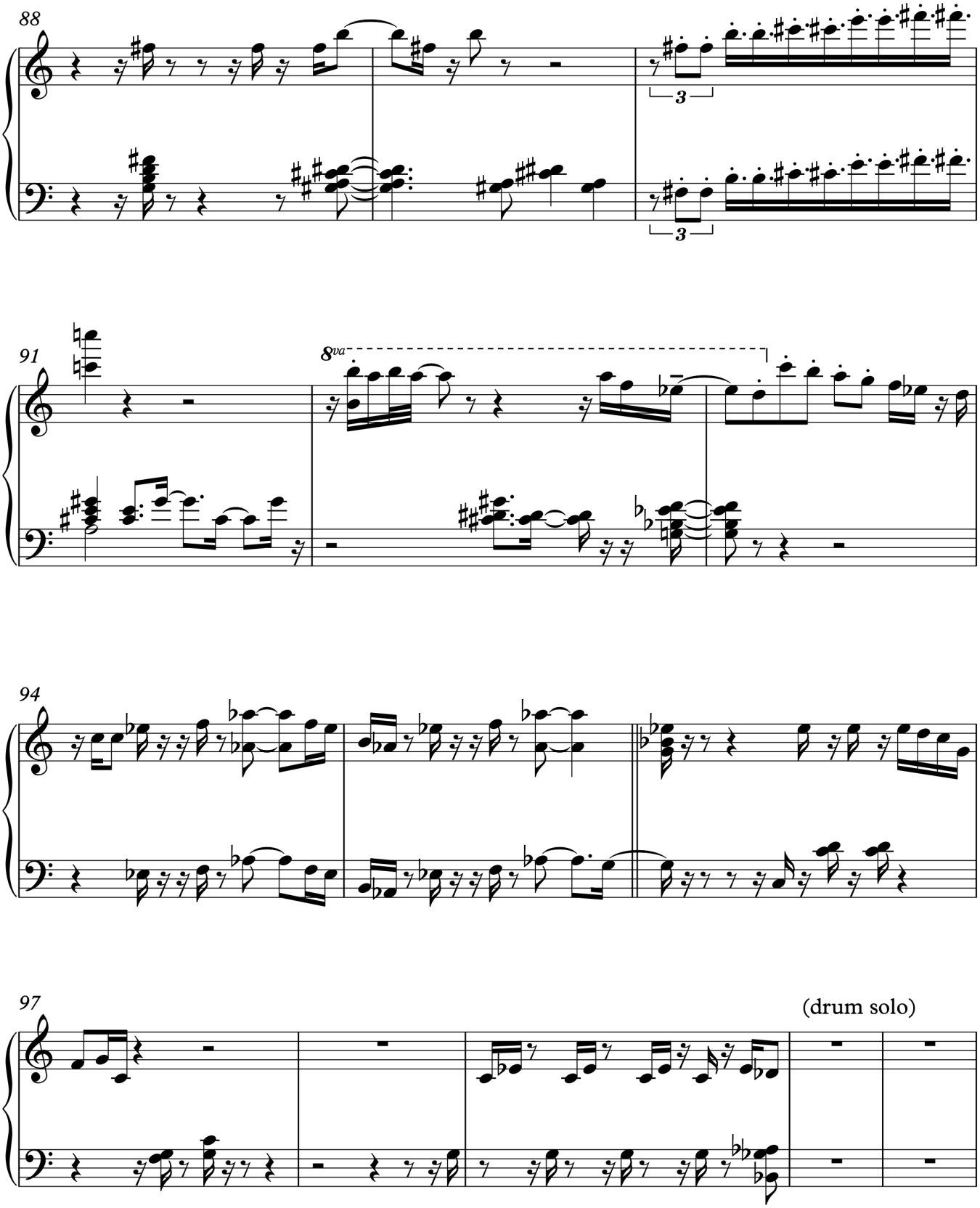
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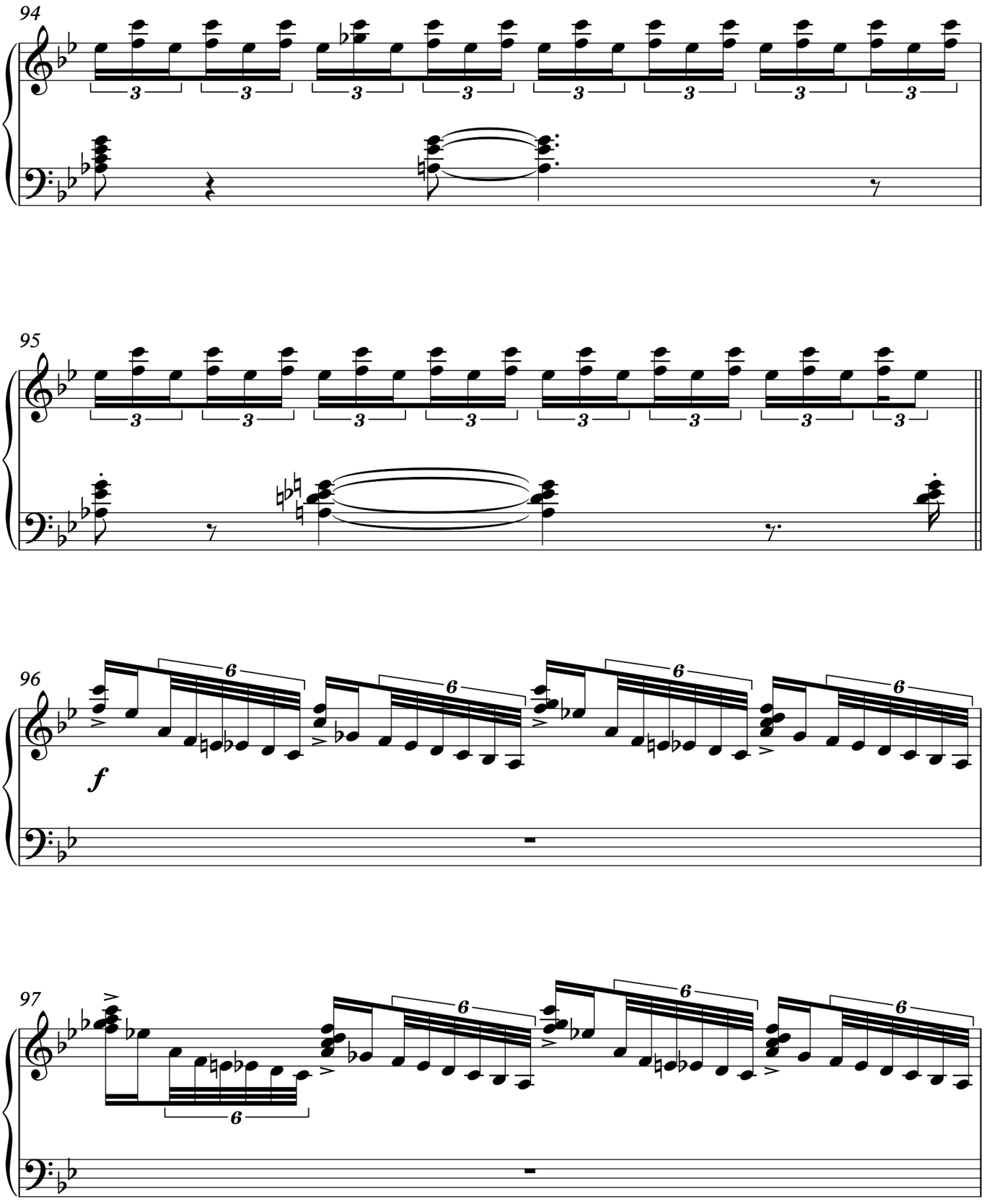
(drum solo)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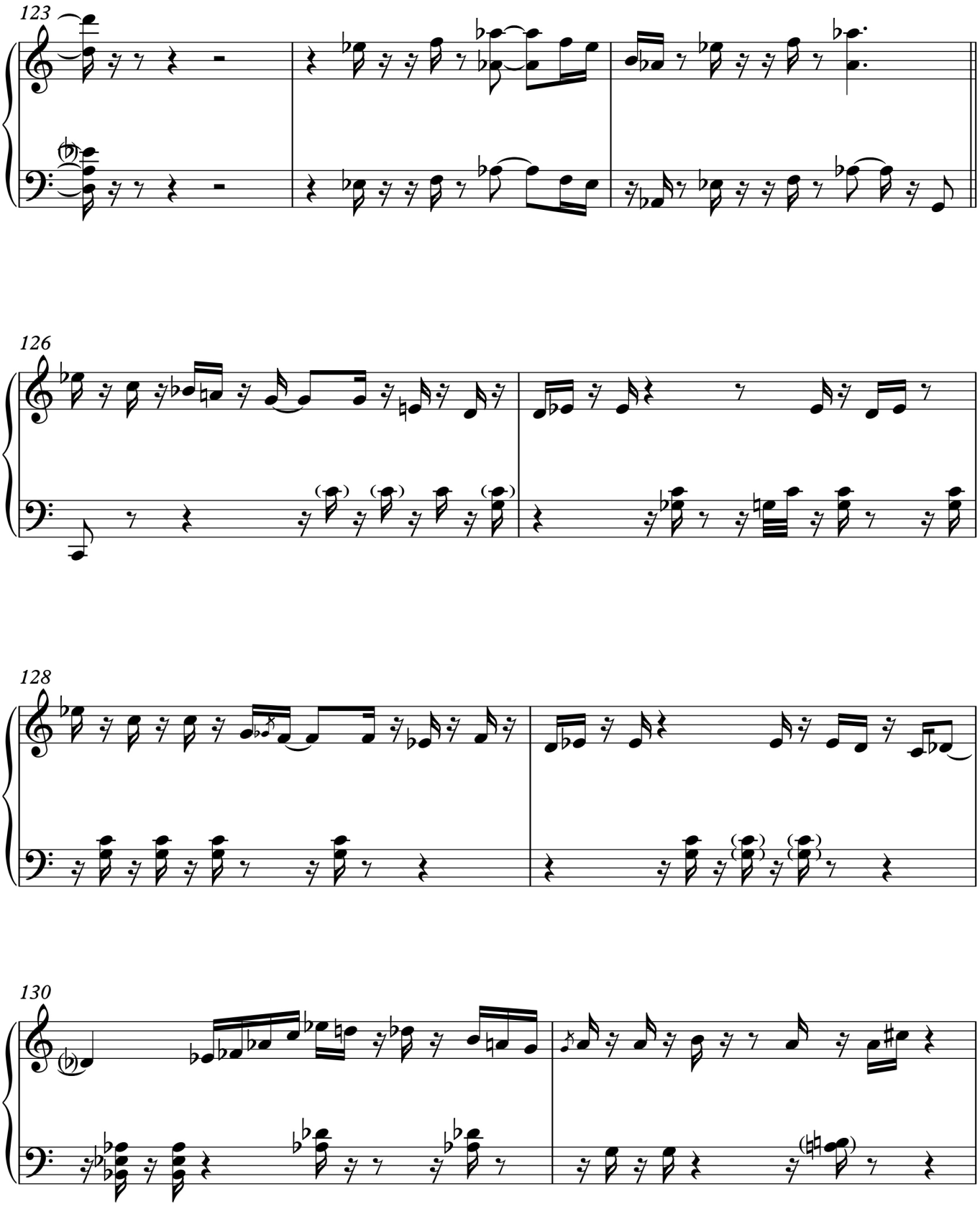
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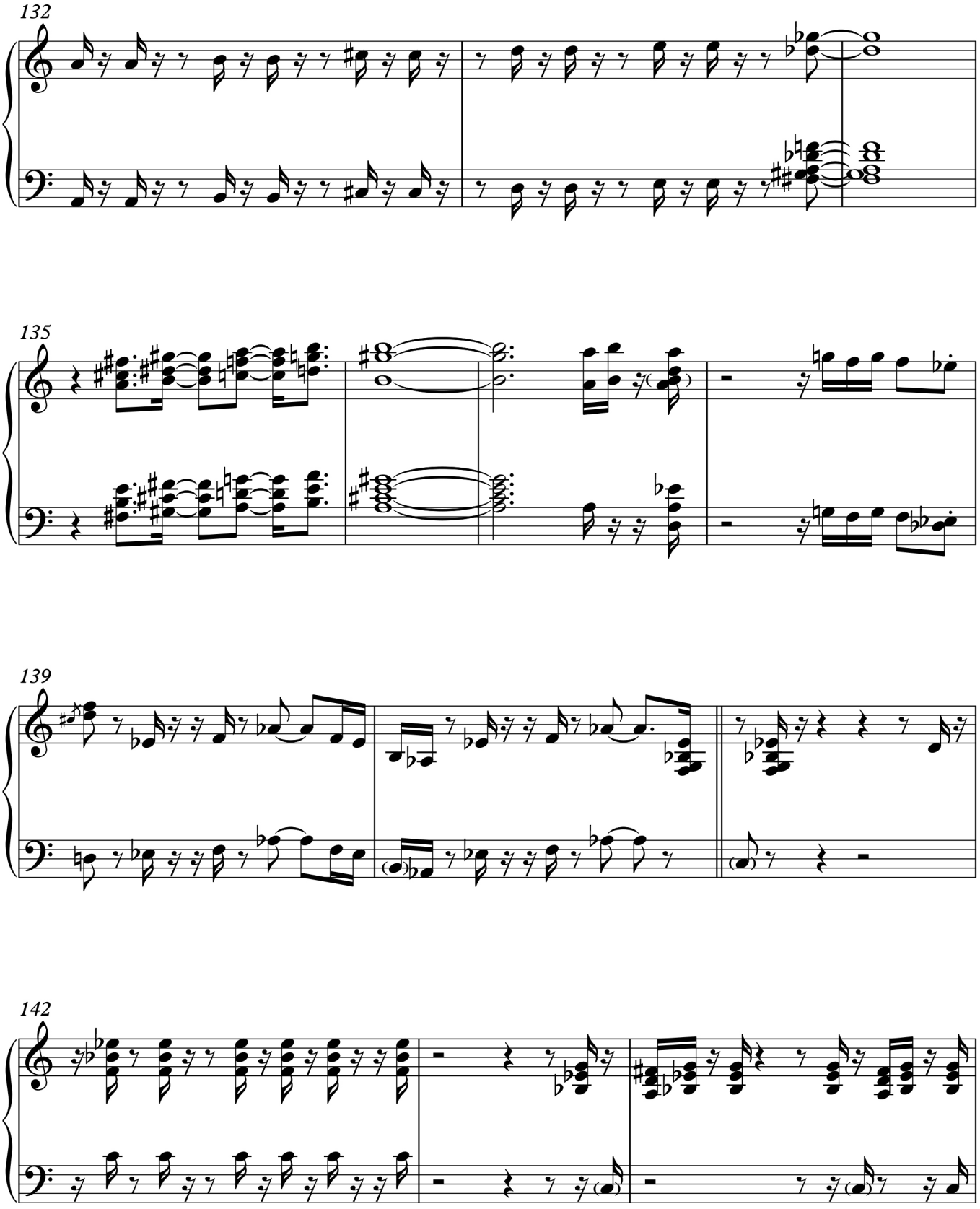
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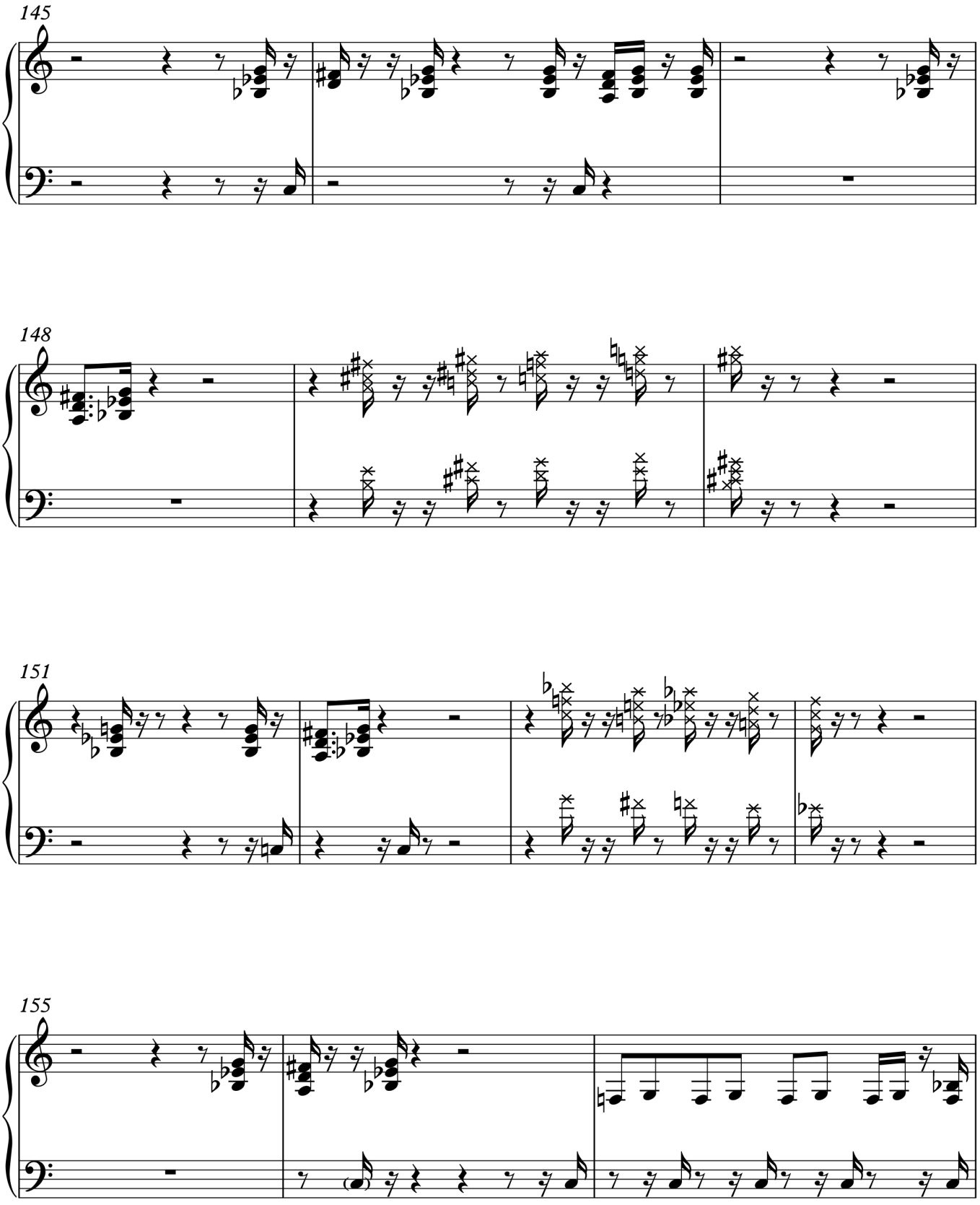
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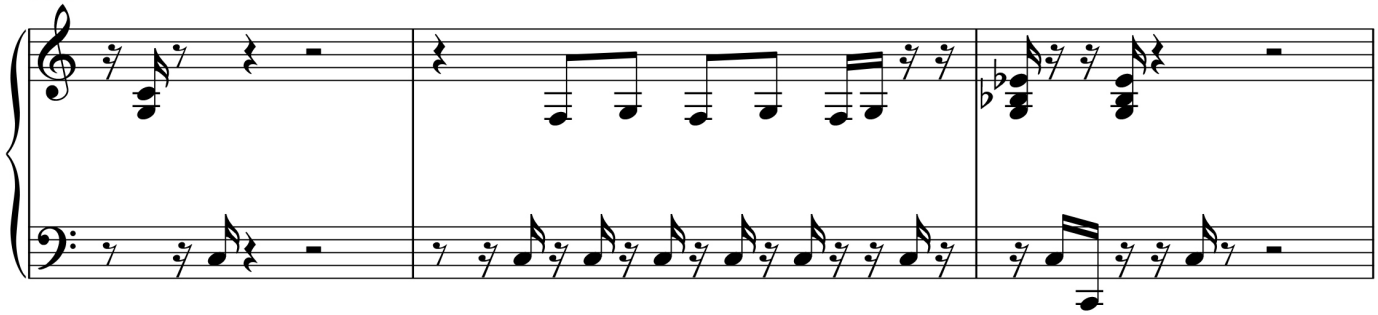

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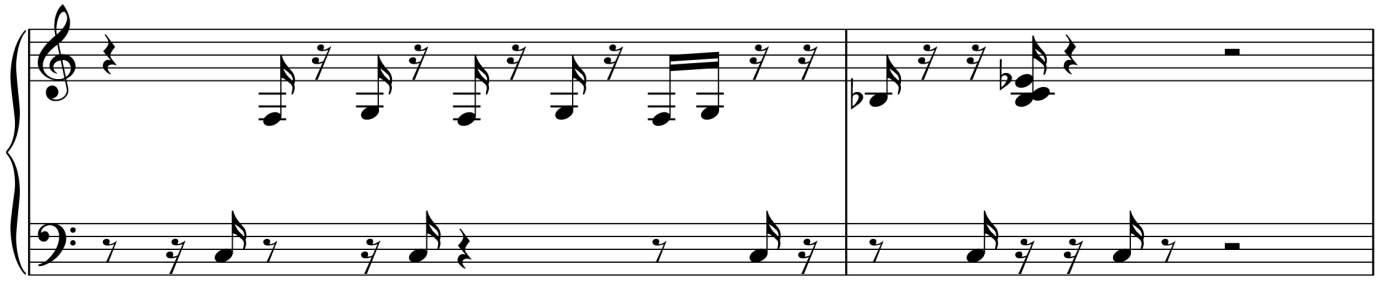

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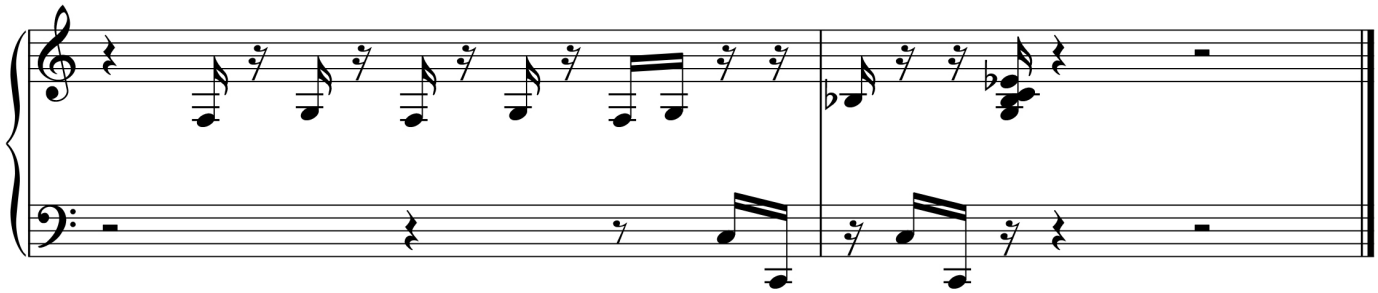


23.

A MUSICAL LIFE

"Your biggest obstacle may be your ego."
—Herbie Hancock

SUBCHAPTERS

- Learn From Your Collaborators
- Always Be Inclusive
- Life Fuels Creativity
- Dealing With Insecurity
- Recognize Your True Self

CHAPTER REVIEW

A musician's life should be about more than being technically proficient; it should be about growing as a human being. Humility, openness, and a commitment to turning everything that happens into creative opportunities can all help you make progress in your music and in your life. It's all about getting over your own ego.

Don't ever stop being a student. No matter how long you've been playing, you can always learn from others. Always listen carefully to what's going on around you and try to suspend your judgement. Instead of criticizing, try to put things to use. A musician's life has a lot more to it than music. You still have to pay the rent, take care of your family, etc. Don't think of those or other uses of your time as separate from your musical growth. It's all fuel for your creativity.

Eventually you'll find a frame of mind where your biggest obstacles and your worst mistakes can all be seen as opportunities. Never give up. The goal is to know your true self and be able to reveal it to others.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Herbie mentioned the discovery of scratching. He was one of the first musicians to use scratching in a major release in his genre-bending hit "Rockit." Expand your knowledge of the technique by searching for videos online.

ASSIGNMENT

- Write your own biography. It shouldn't be your life story as a musician, but rather your life story as a human being. It's okay if it's just a page or two. Reflect on what you've lived through and what's shaped you. Take into account as many different facets of your personality as you can. These are the kinds of big picture human truths you want to keep in mind as you're pursuing your dreams in music.

23.
NOTES

24.

LISTEN AND LEARN: "WATERMELON MAN"

CHAPTER REVIEW

Now you get a chance to learn by playing along with Herbie. Follow along with the sheet music following your notes page for this chapter. You can start by picking out your favorite passages and breaking those down, little by little, or dive right in and learn the piece from beginning to end. Along the way, you'll be experiencing first hand the way Herbie approaches rhythm, harmony, melody, and expression in real time.

TAKE IT FURTHER

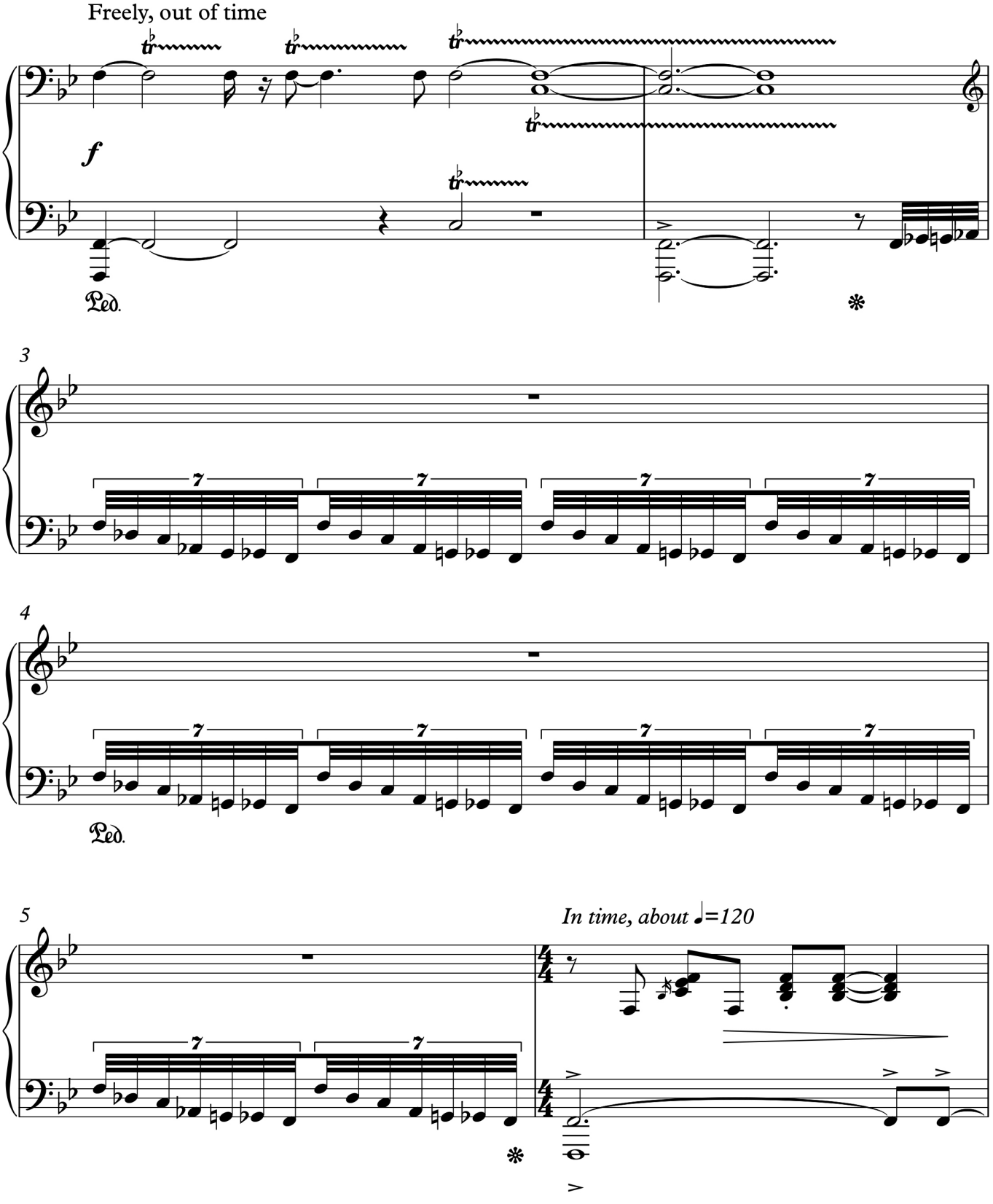
- The changes to "Watermelon Man" are pretty close to 12 bar blues changes. Take a look at the voicings Herbie uses for his seventh chords and practice using them in blues changes across all 12 keys.

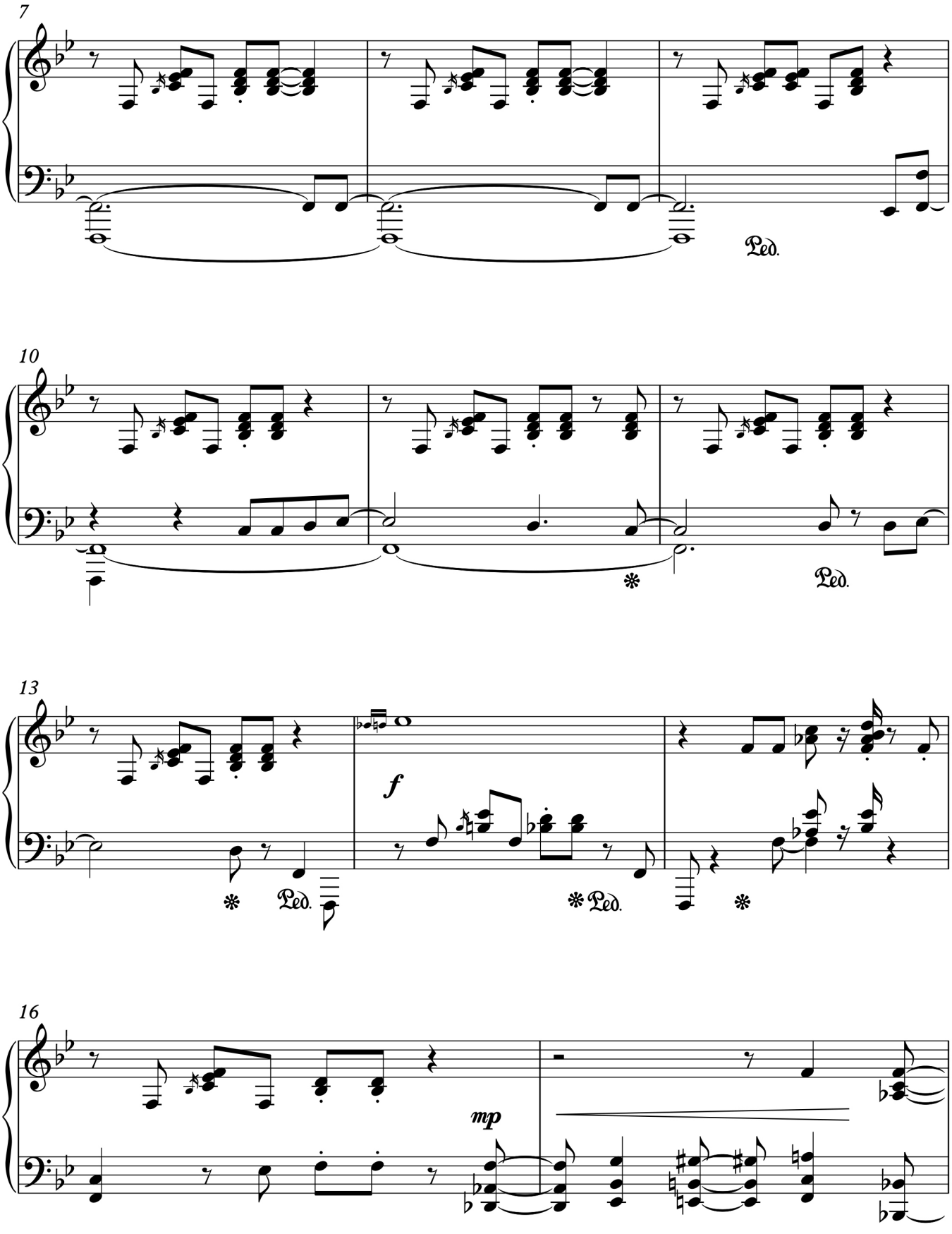
ASSIGNMENT

- Play along. Either try it note for note, or break the song down. Take favorite measures, favorite melody lines, favorite chords voicings. Learn them and see where they lead you.

24.
NOTES

Chapter 24
Listen and Learn: Watermelon Man

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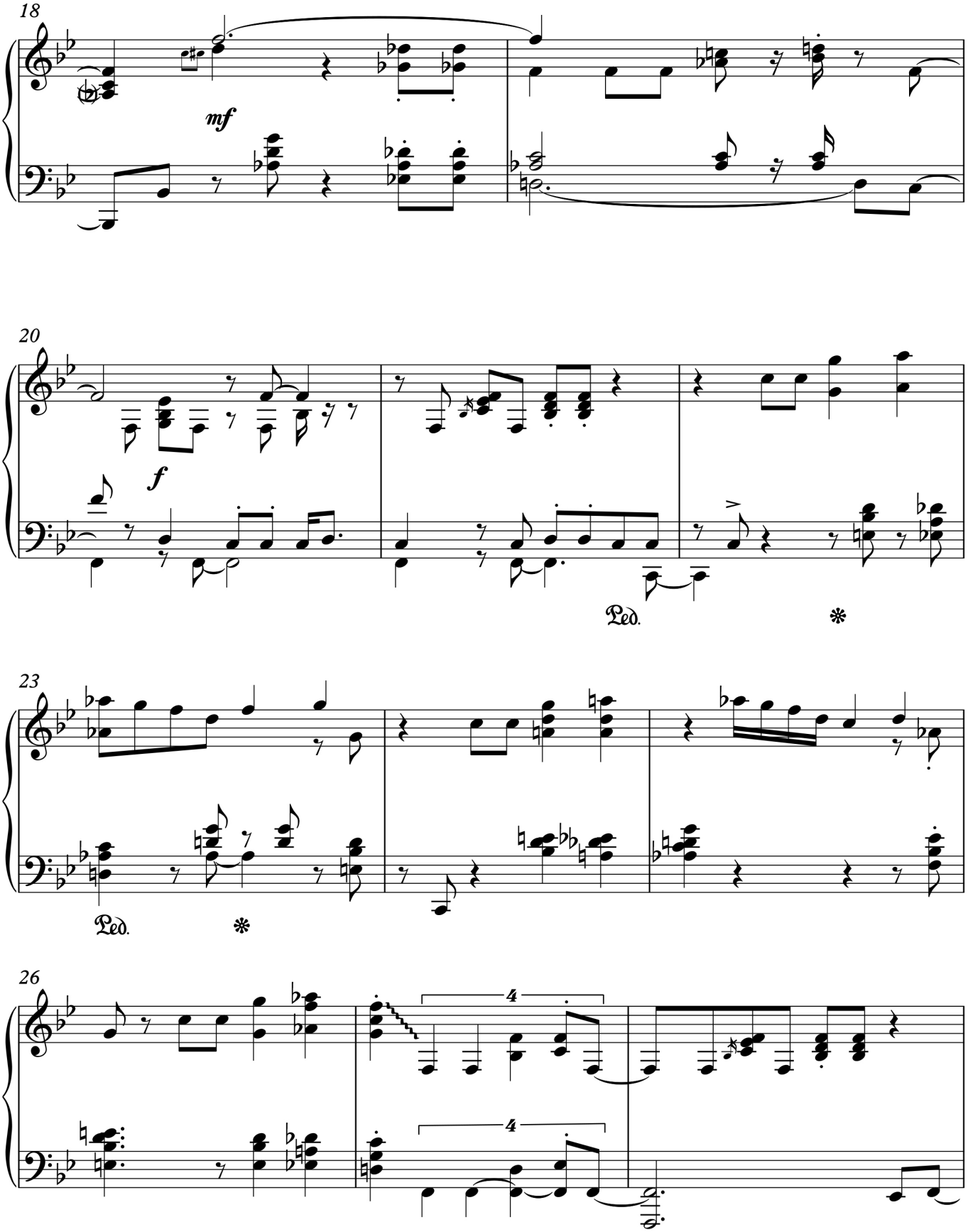
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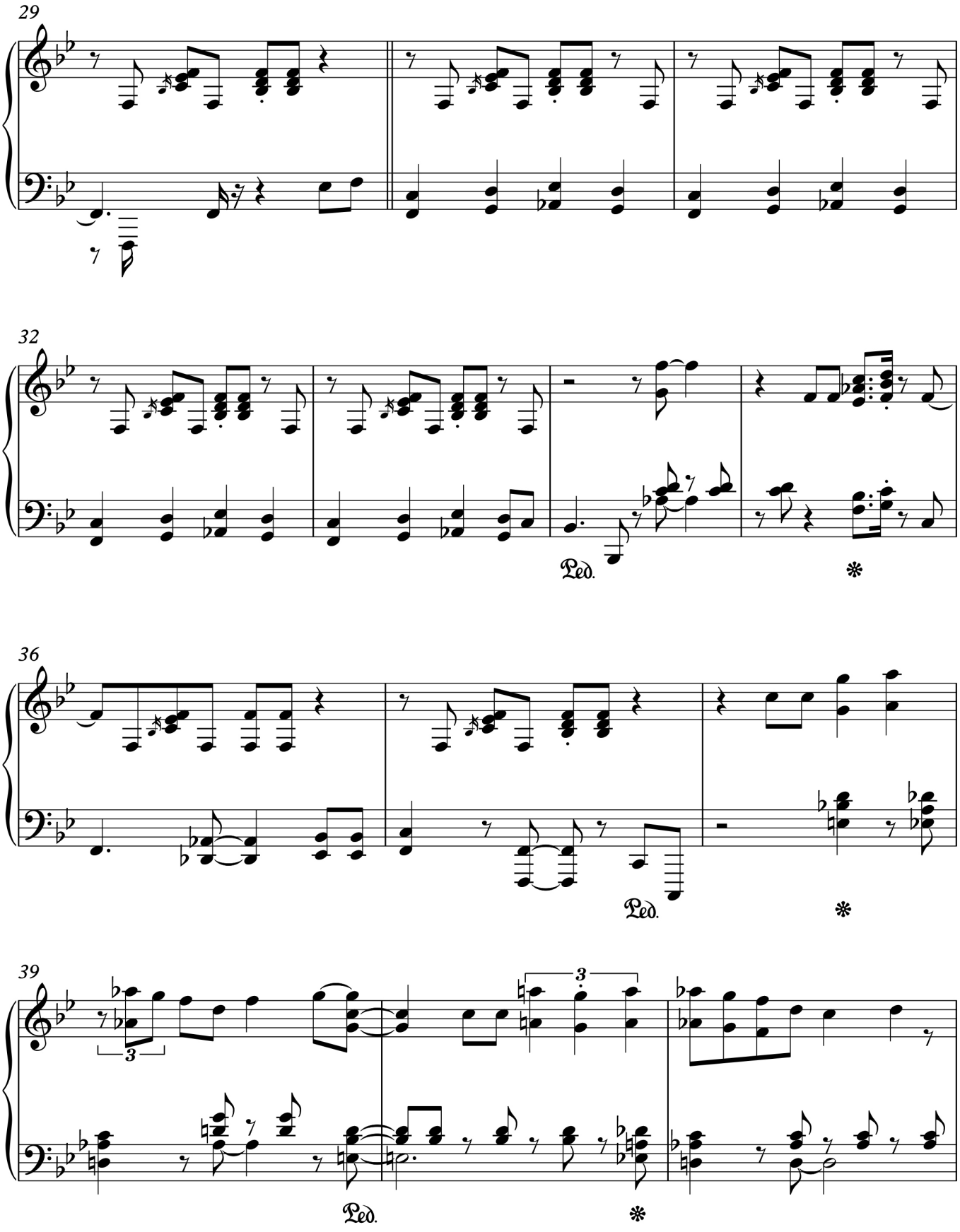
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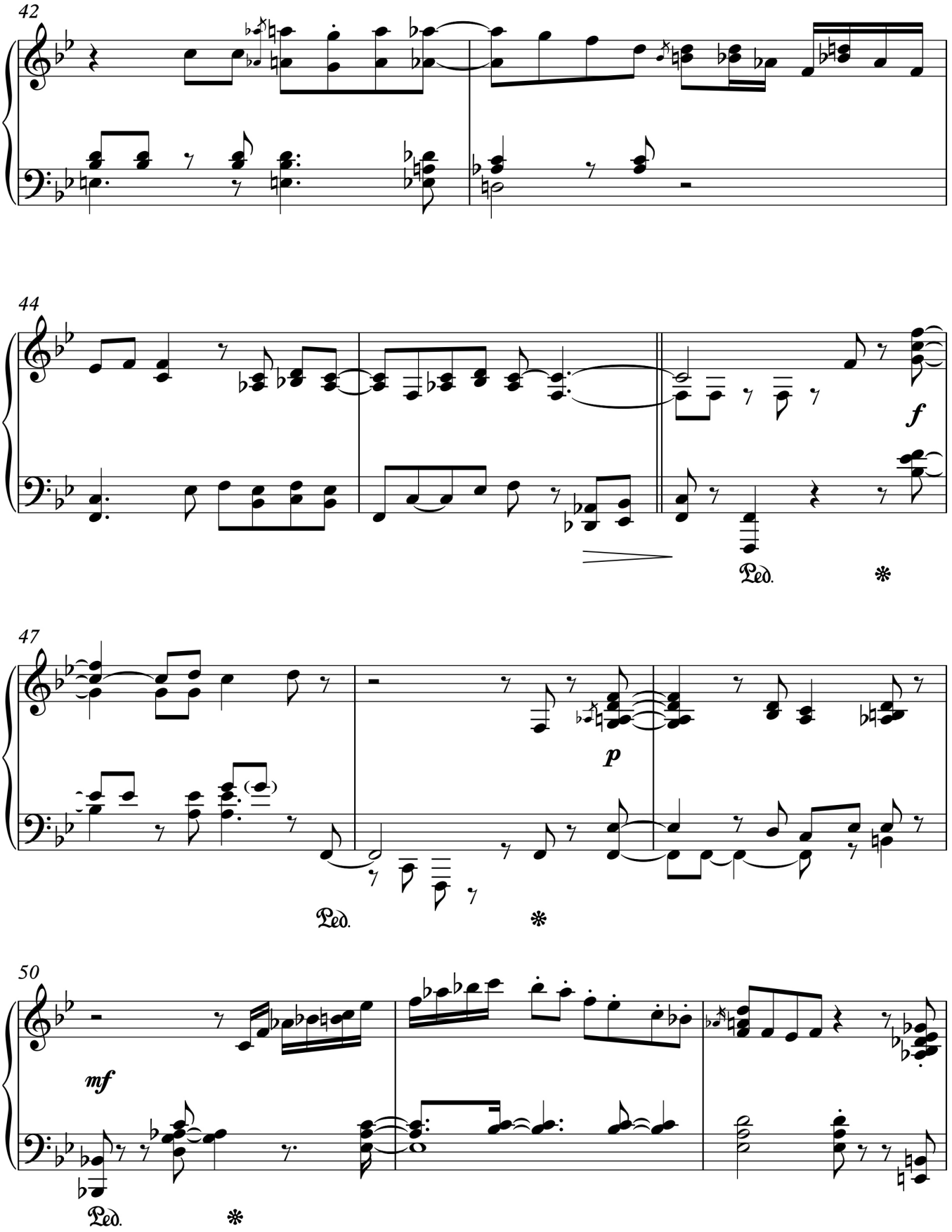
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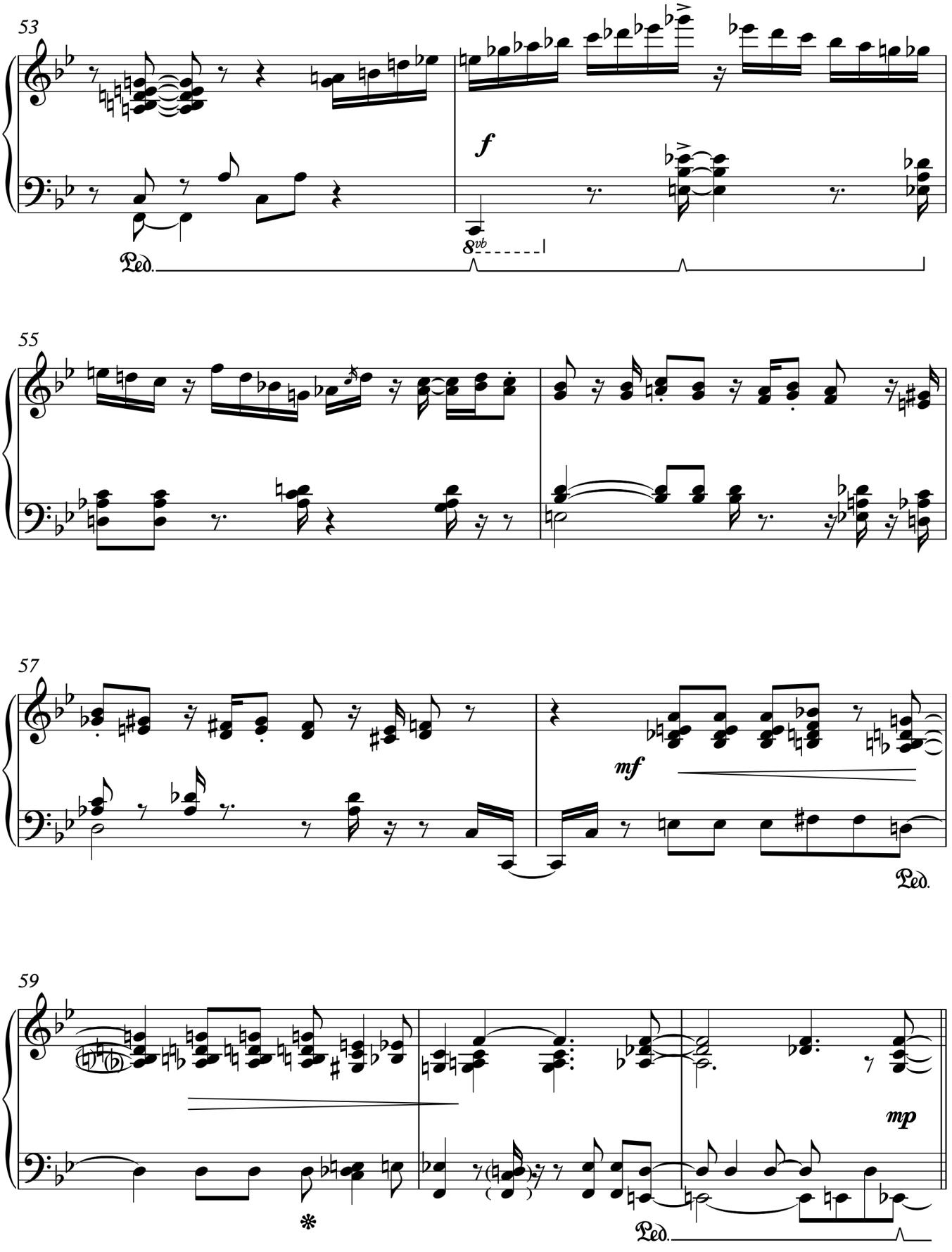
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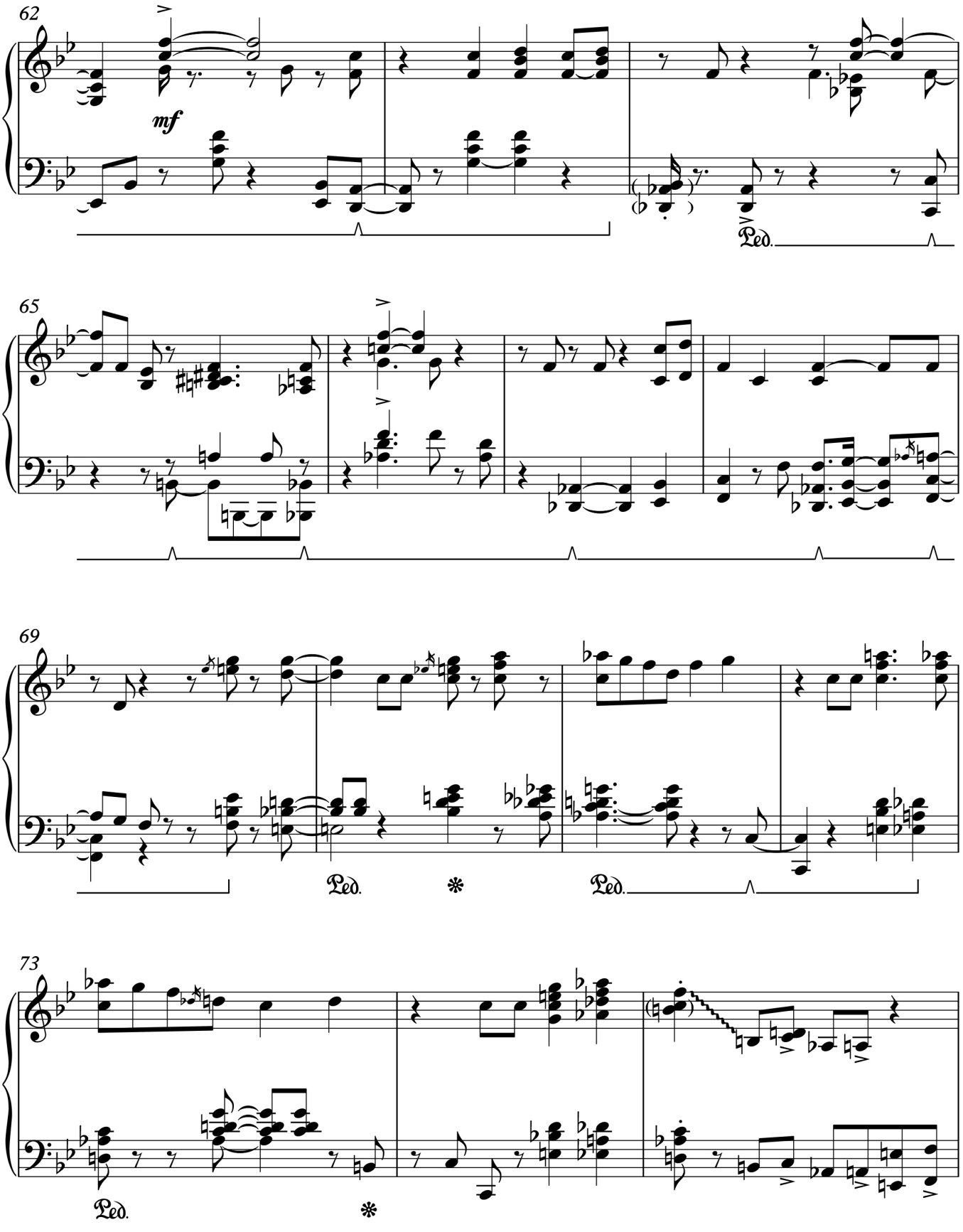
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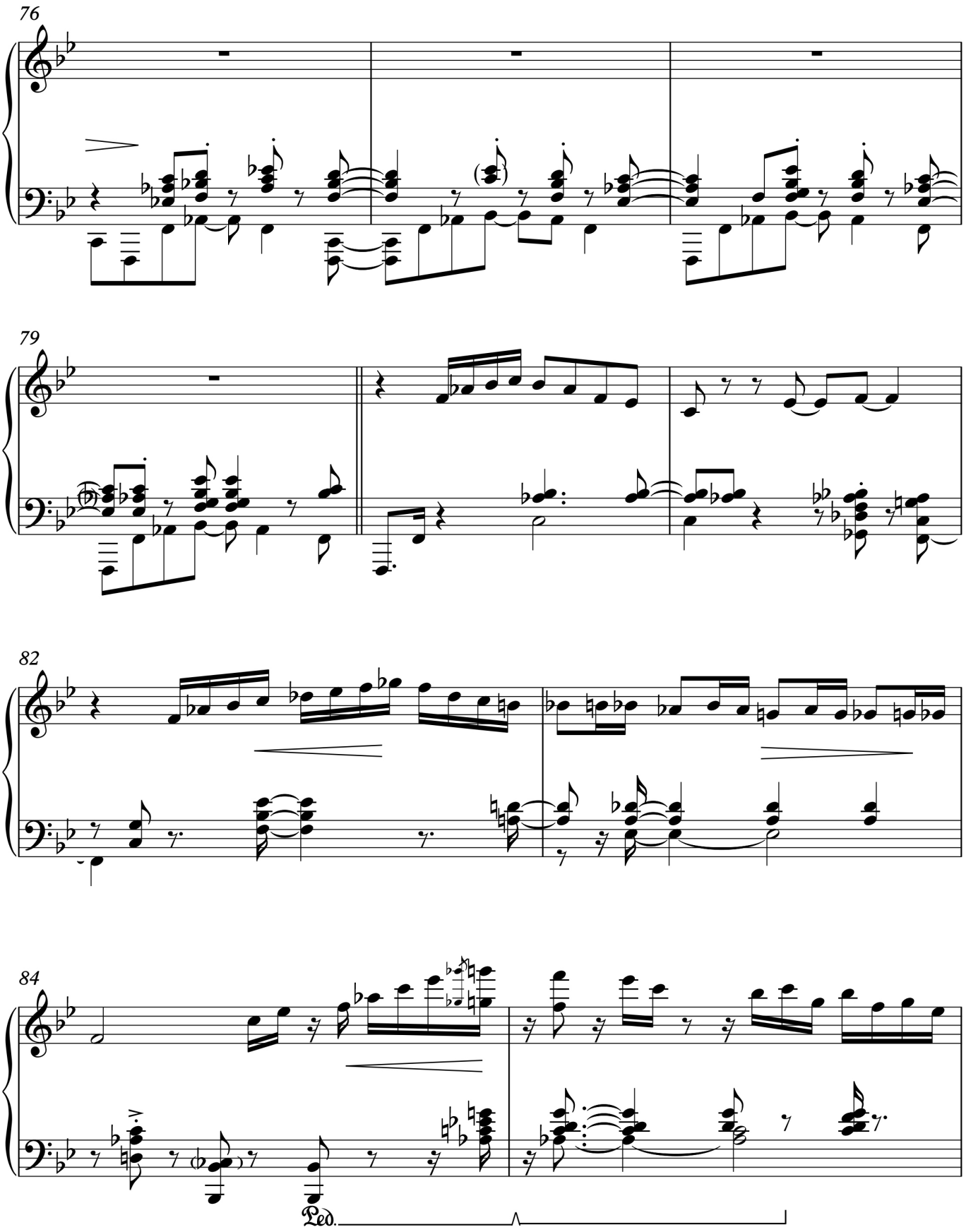
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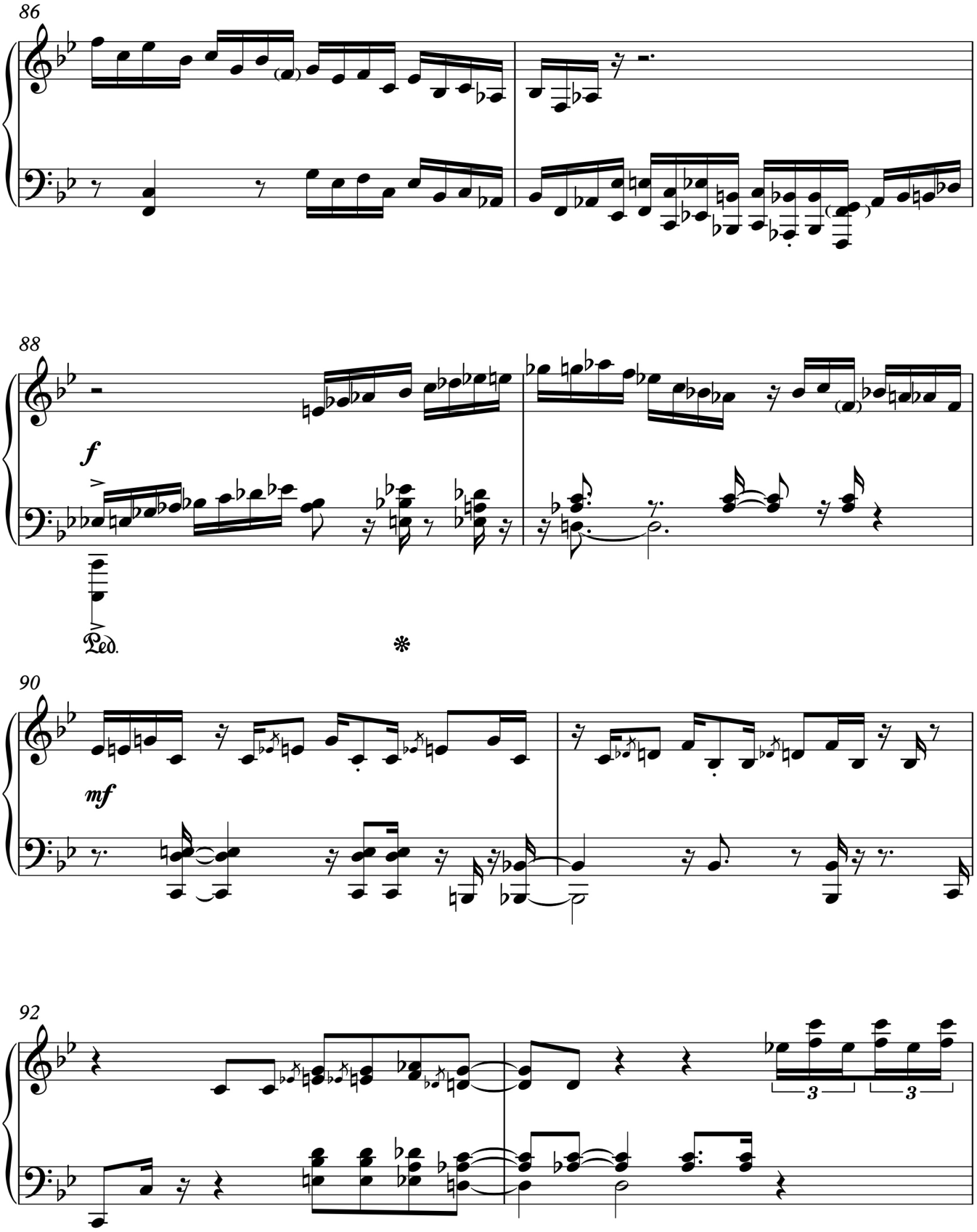
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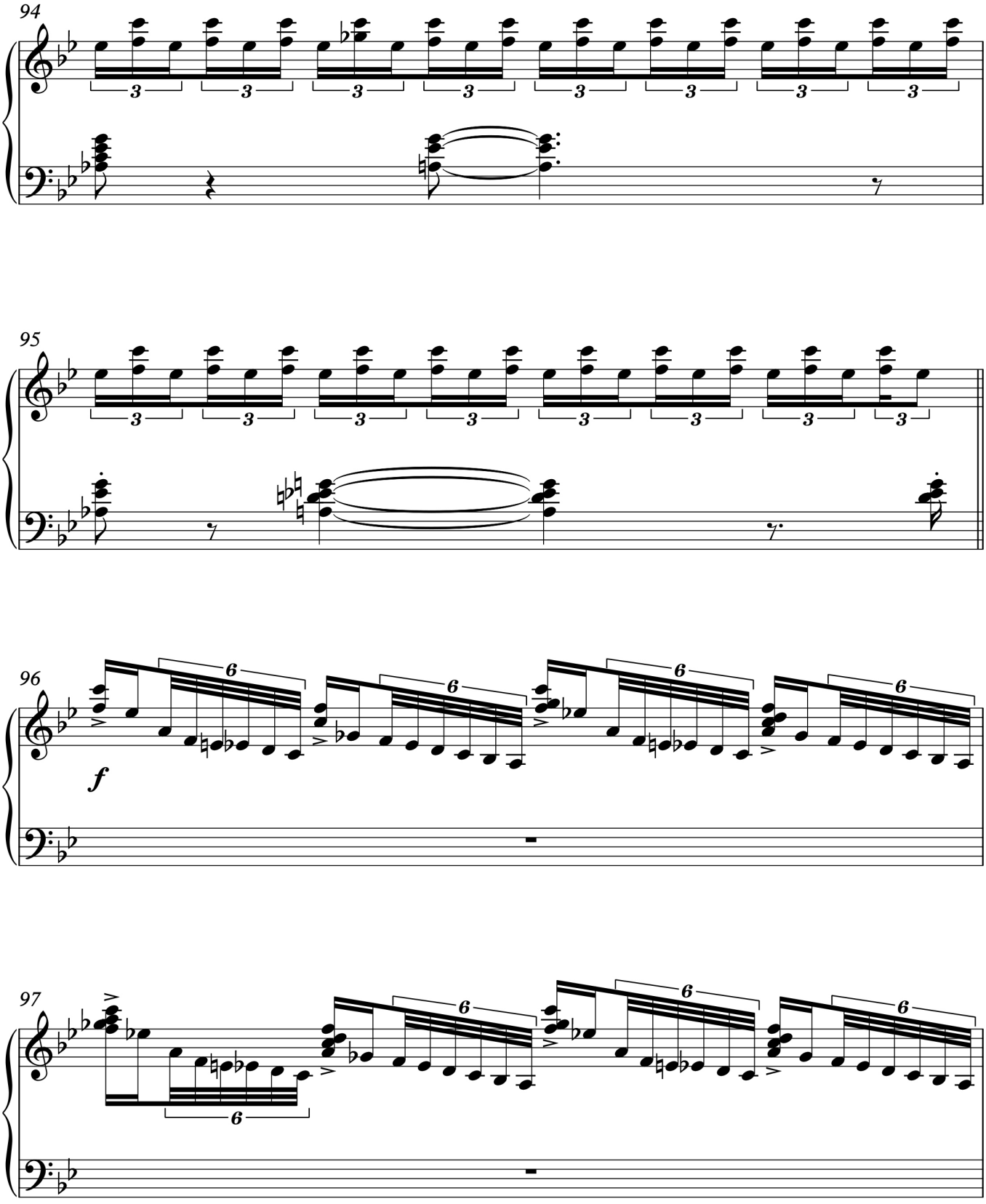
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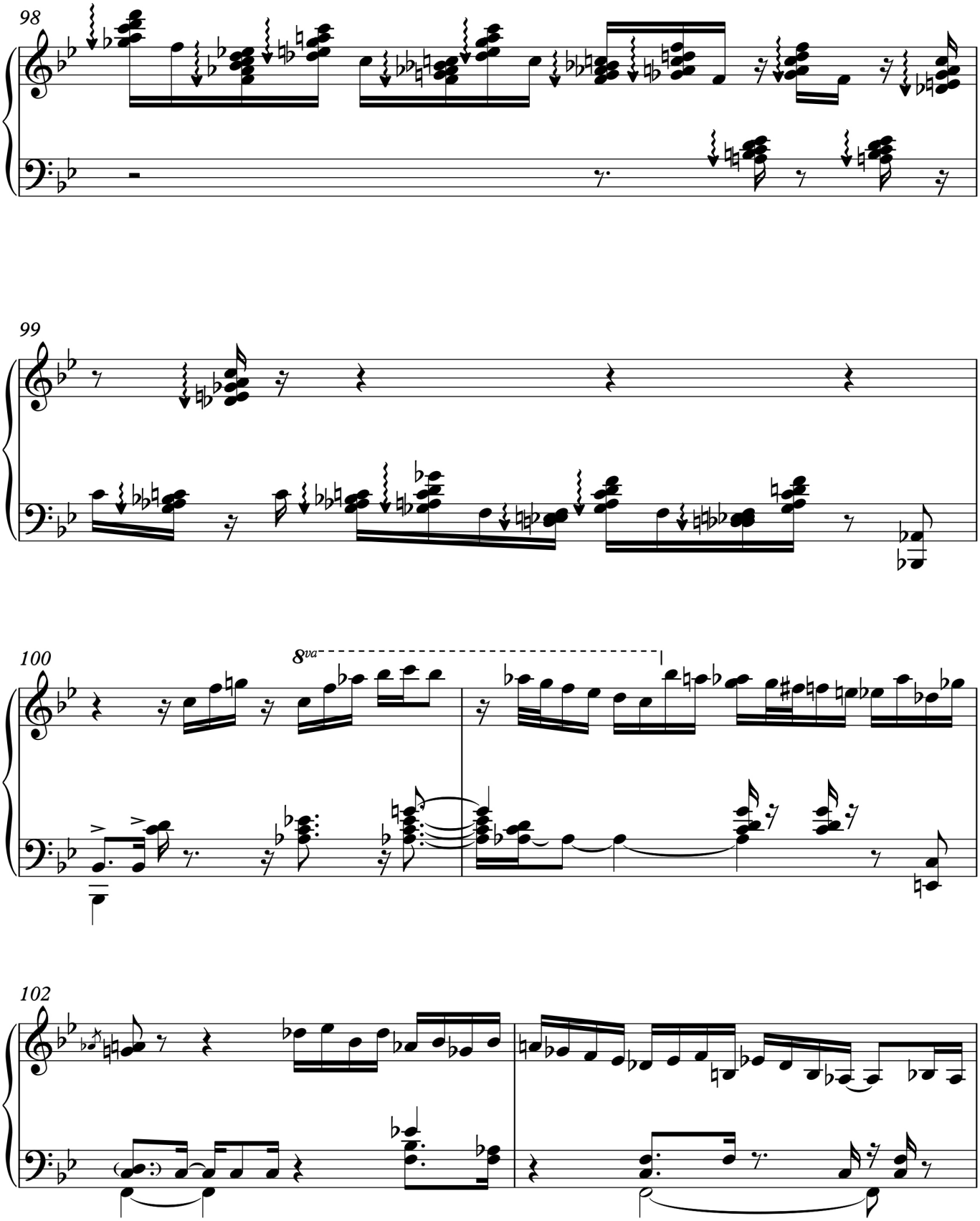
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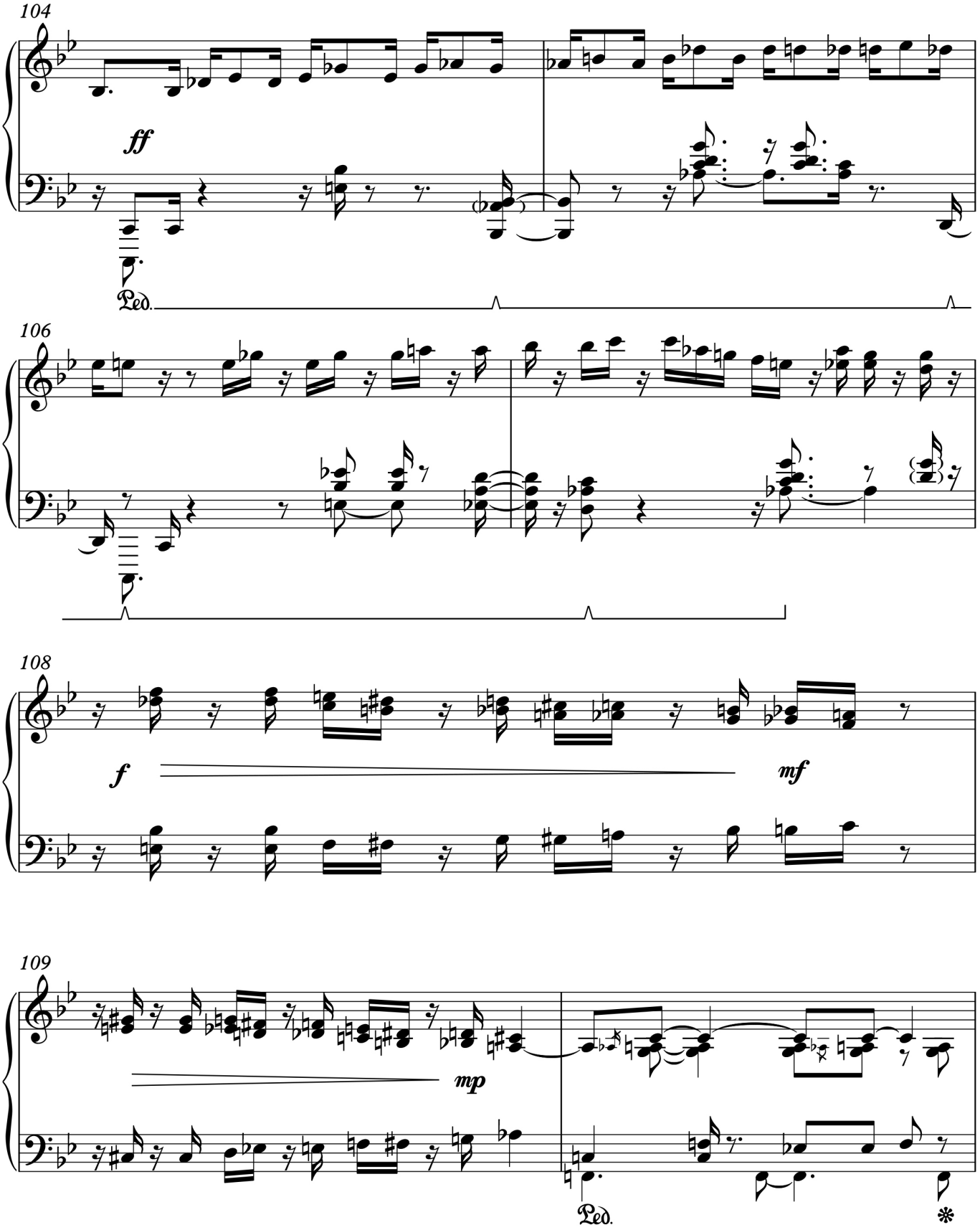
102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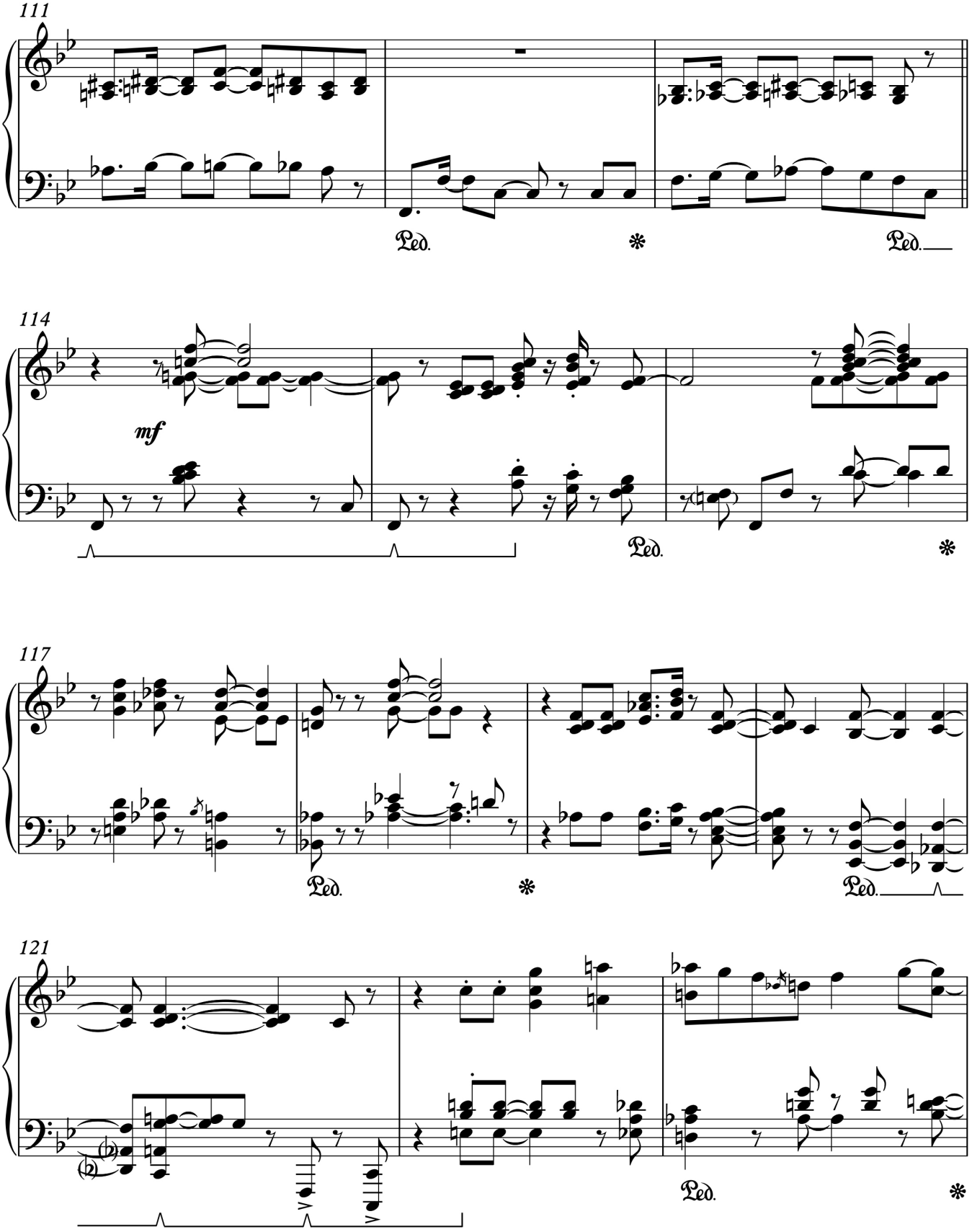
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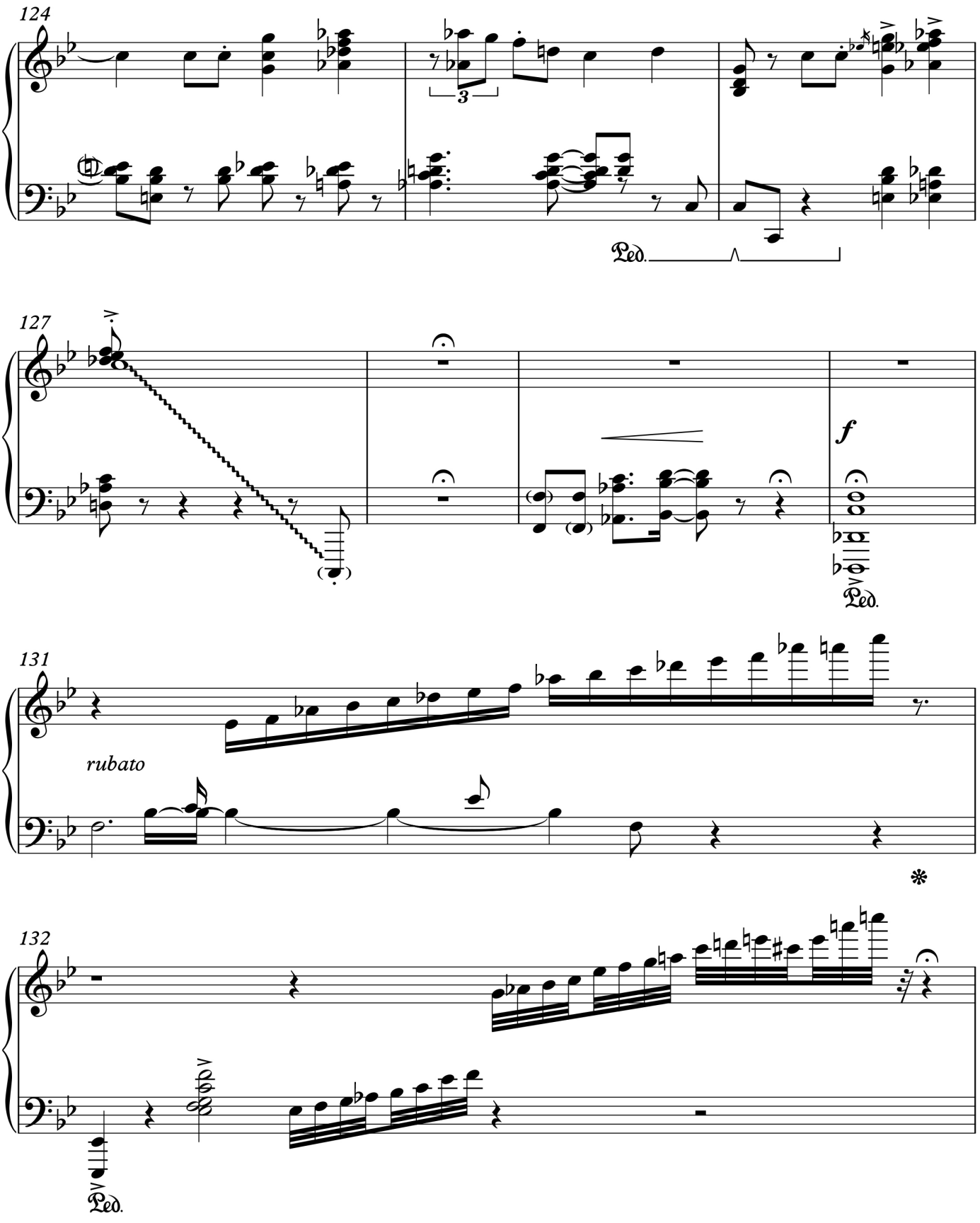
124
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127
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131
rubato
132
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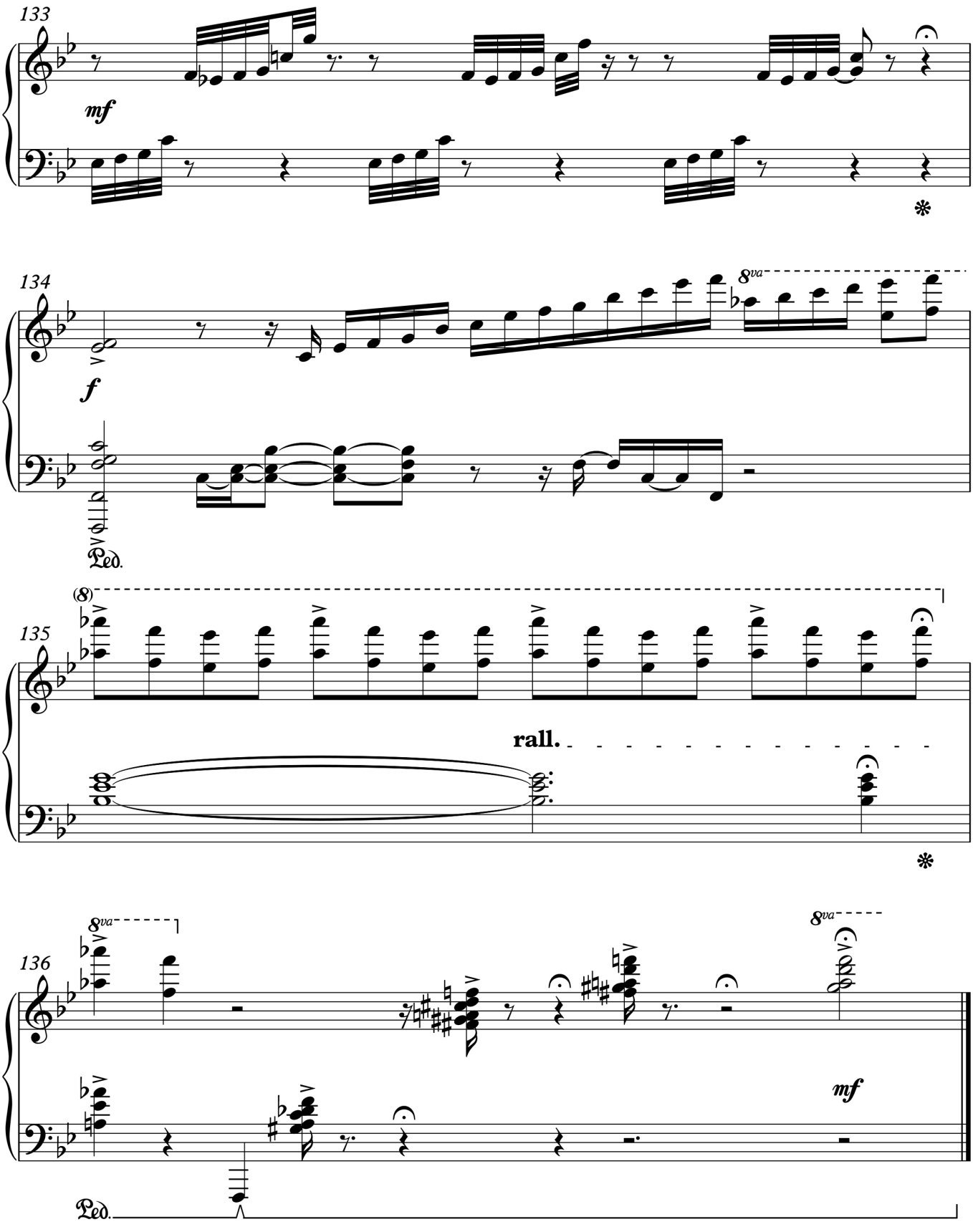
133
mf
134
8va
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Ped.
(8)
135
rall.
136
8va
8va
mf
Ped.

25.

CLOSING

CONGRATULATIONS

You've finished your MasterClass with Herbie Hancock!
In Herbie's own words, this is all about finding your sound. Experiment with the ideas in this class and let them lead you to new ideas. Try things out, keep your ears open, and latch onto what works for you. Your own unique taste will start to take shape, and soon enough that taste will transform itself into a sound that's all your own. Keep playing.

We want to make sure that your experience with Herbie and your peers doesn't end when you finish watching the video chapters. Here are a few ways to stay in touch:

- Join the Herbie Hancock community in The Hub to connect with your peers
- Contribute to the lesson discussions after each video lesson and read what others have to say
- Upload your relevant assignments in The Hub for peer feedback
- Submit an Office Hour question to Herbie

MASTERCLASS