Riddle Variations

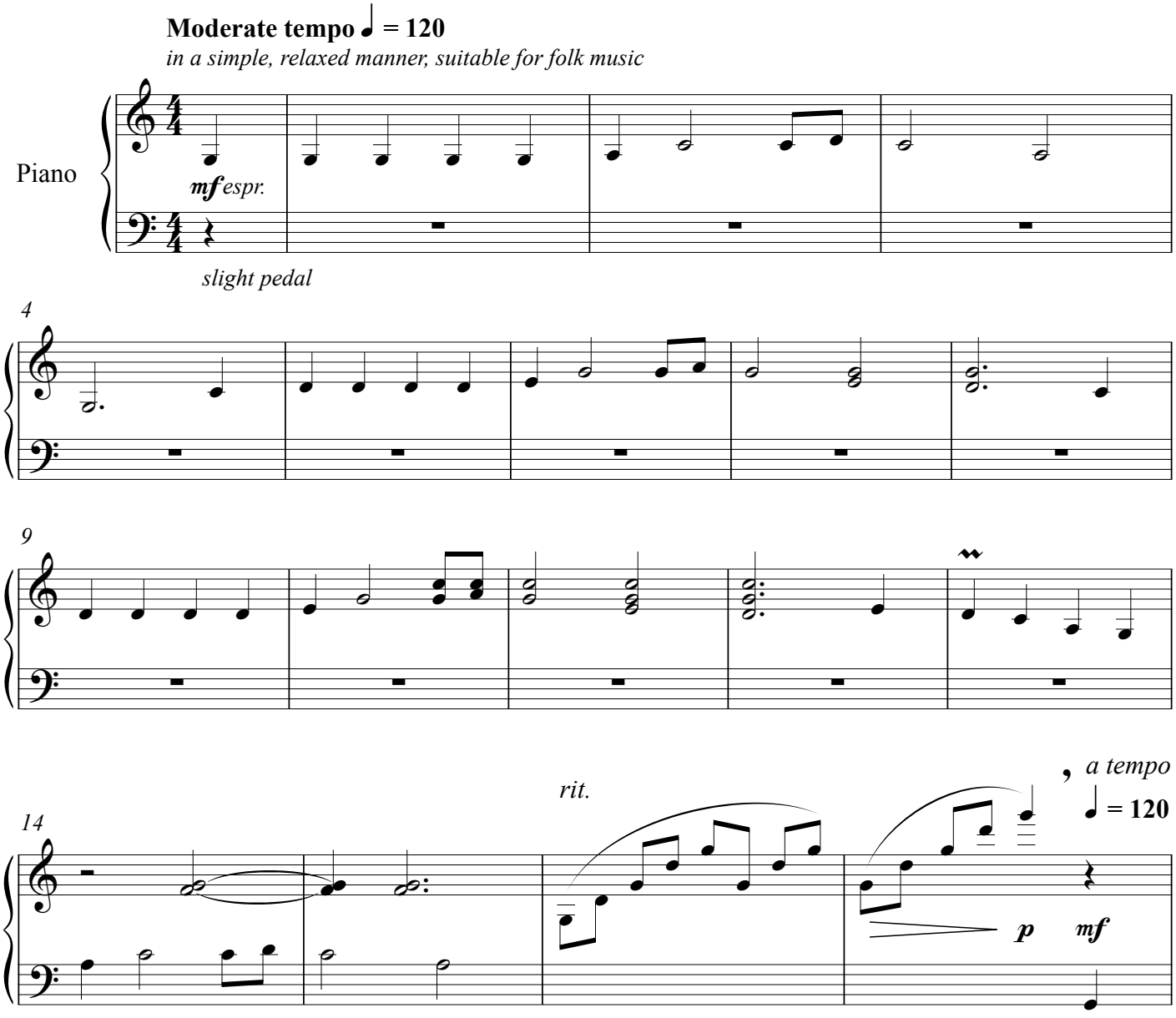
for Piano Solo

Gwyneth Walker

The title for the **Riddle Variations** was inspired, in good humor, by Elgar's **Enigma Variations**. Unlike the Elgar orchestral work (with hidden references to friends and colleagues), this new piano music is not *mysterious* (enigmatic) in message. Instead, it is simply a set of variations on a familiar English-American folk song, **The Riddle Song** ("I gave my love a cherry that has no stone"). This was a favorite childhood melody often sung by the composer and her mother.

The six variations present the tune in various guises – inverted, in the minor mode, as a tango (!) with blues harmonies, and in syncopated rhythms. By the end, the tune is bursting with energy!

The six variations are marked as follows:1. *florid;* (Interlude 1 – *playfully*); 2. *with warmth;* (Interlude 2 – *very playfully*); 3. *tenderly;* 4. *as a tango;* 5. *suddenly peaceful;* 6. *celebratory*



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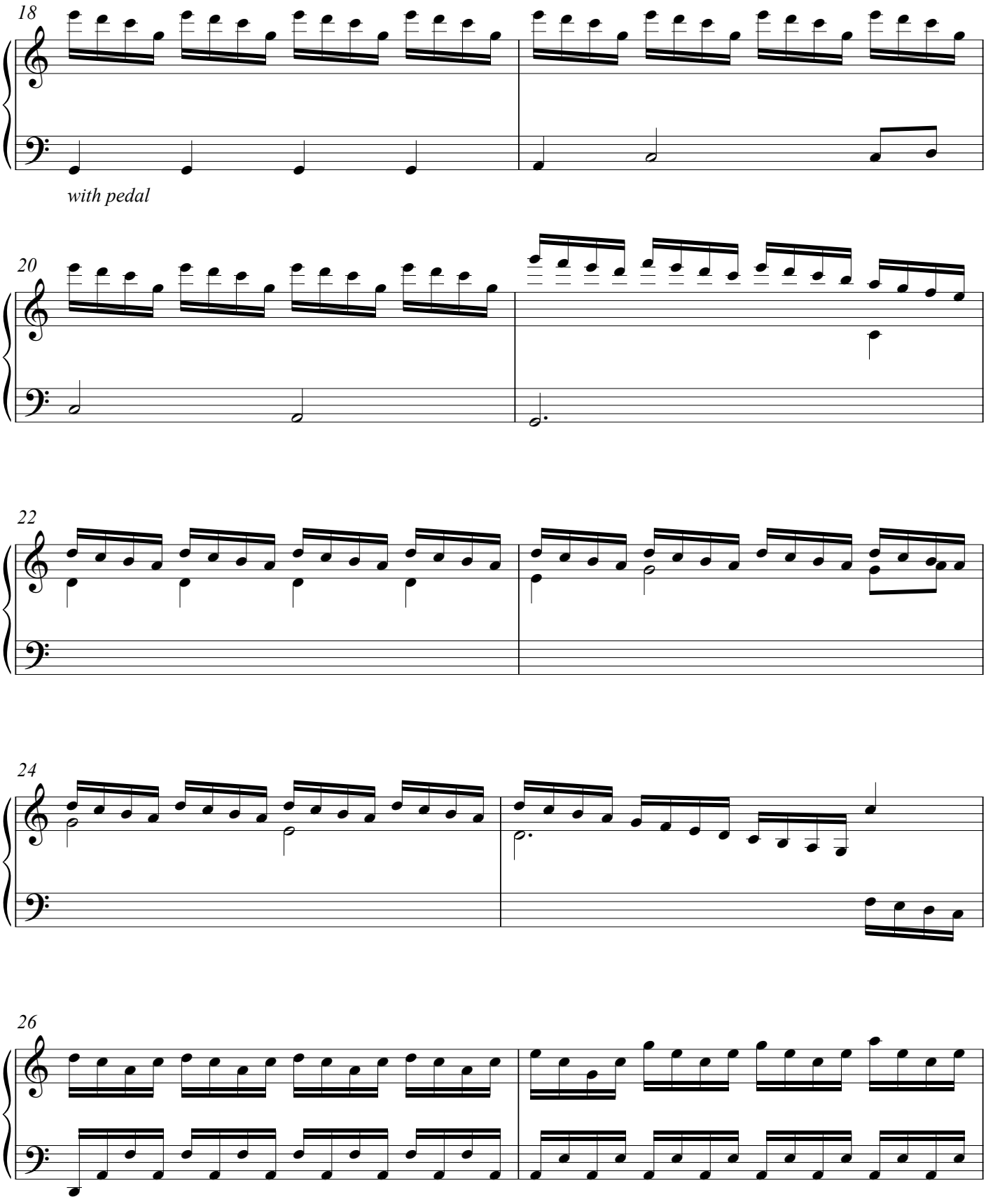
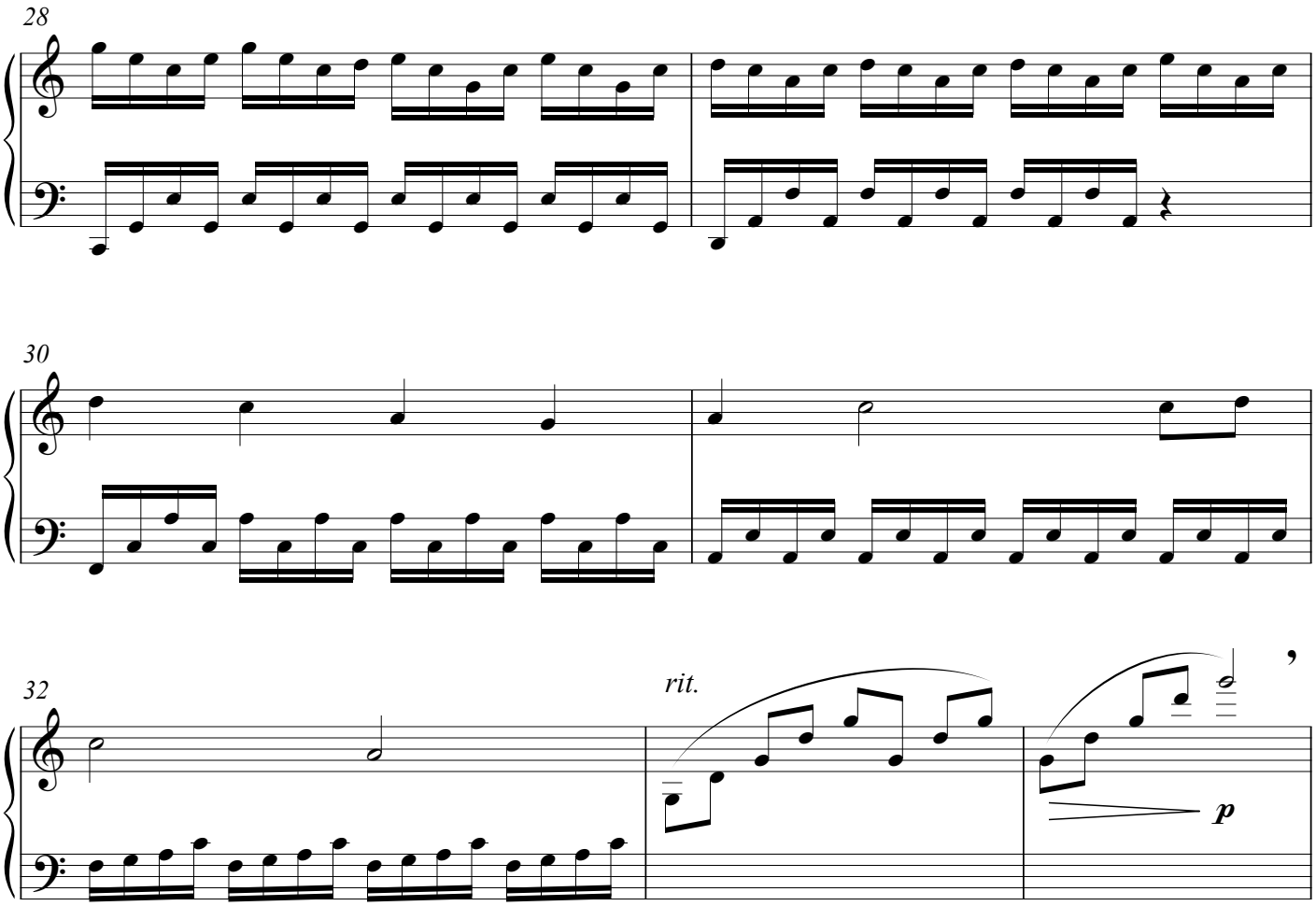
Variation 1 *– florid*




28
30
32
rit.
p

Interlude 1 *– playfully*

35 **Faster** ♩ **= 132**

(*p*)

accel.

Quickly

, *a tempo*

39 ♩ **= 120**

pp *f*

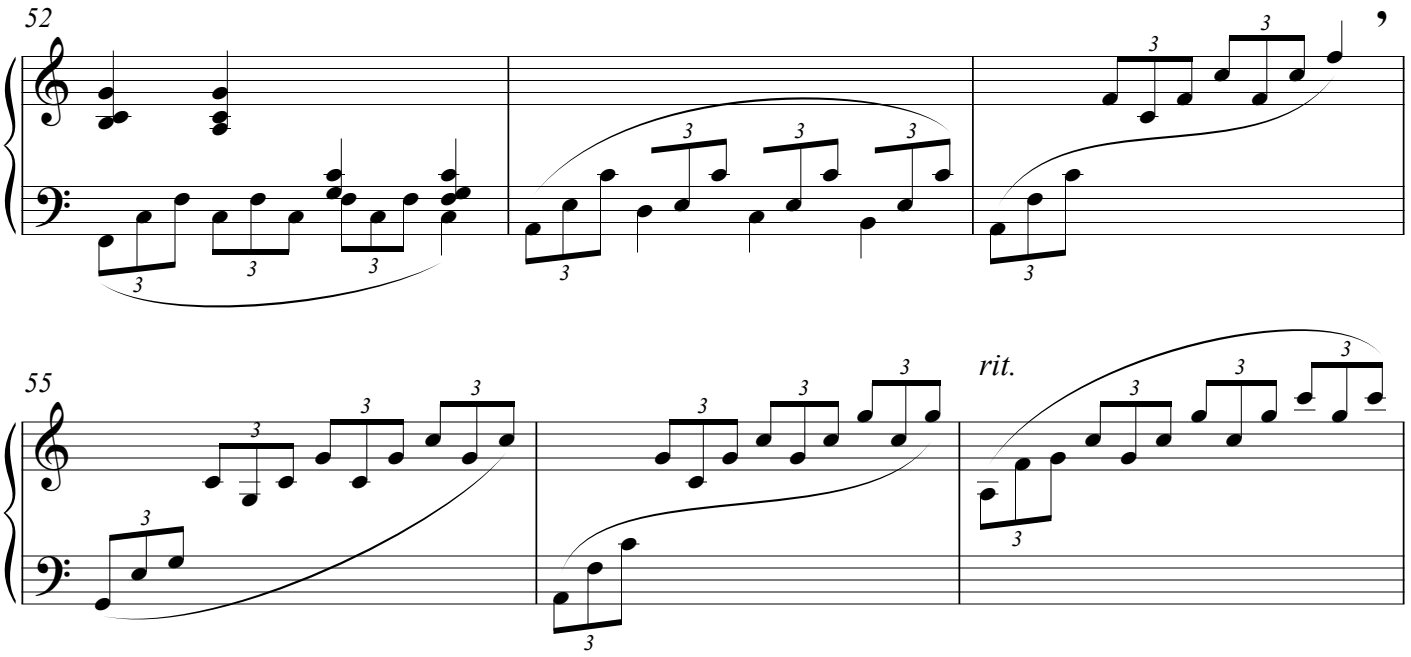
Variation 2 *– with warmth*

43

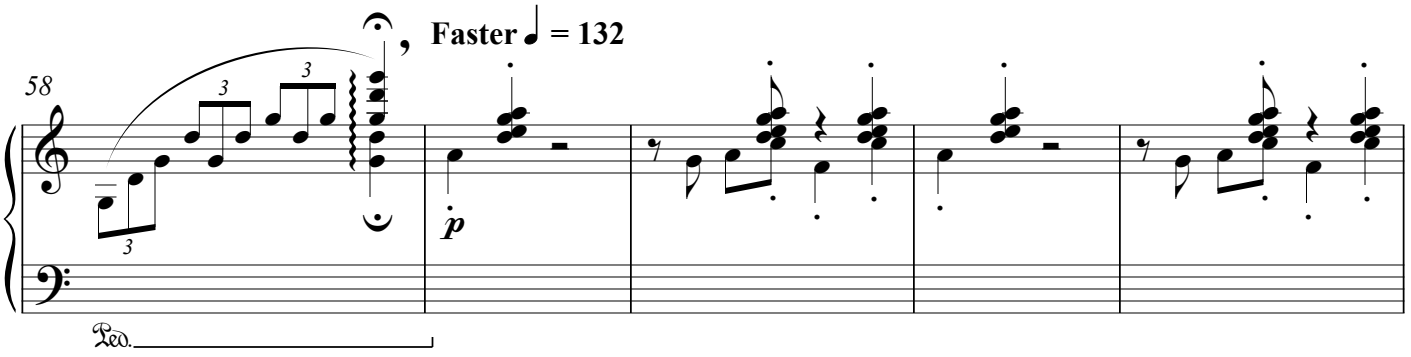
Ped. Ped. *simile*

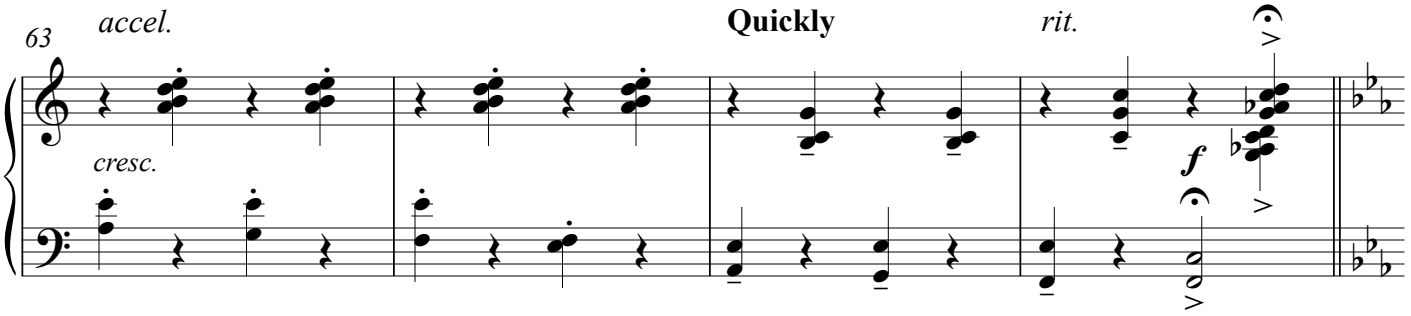
46

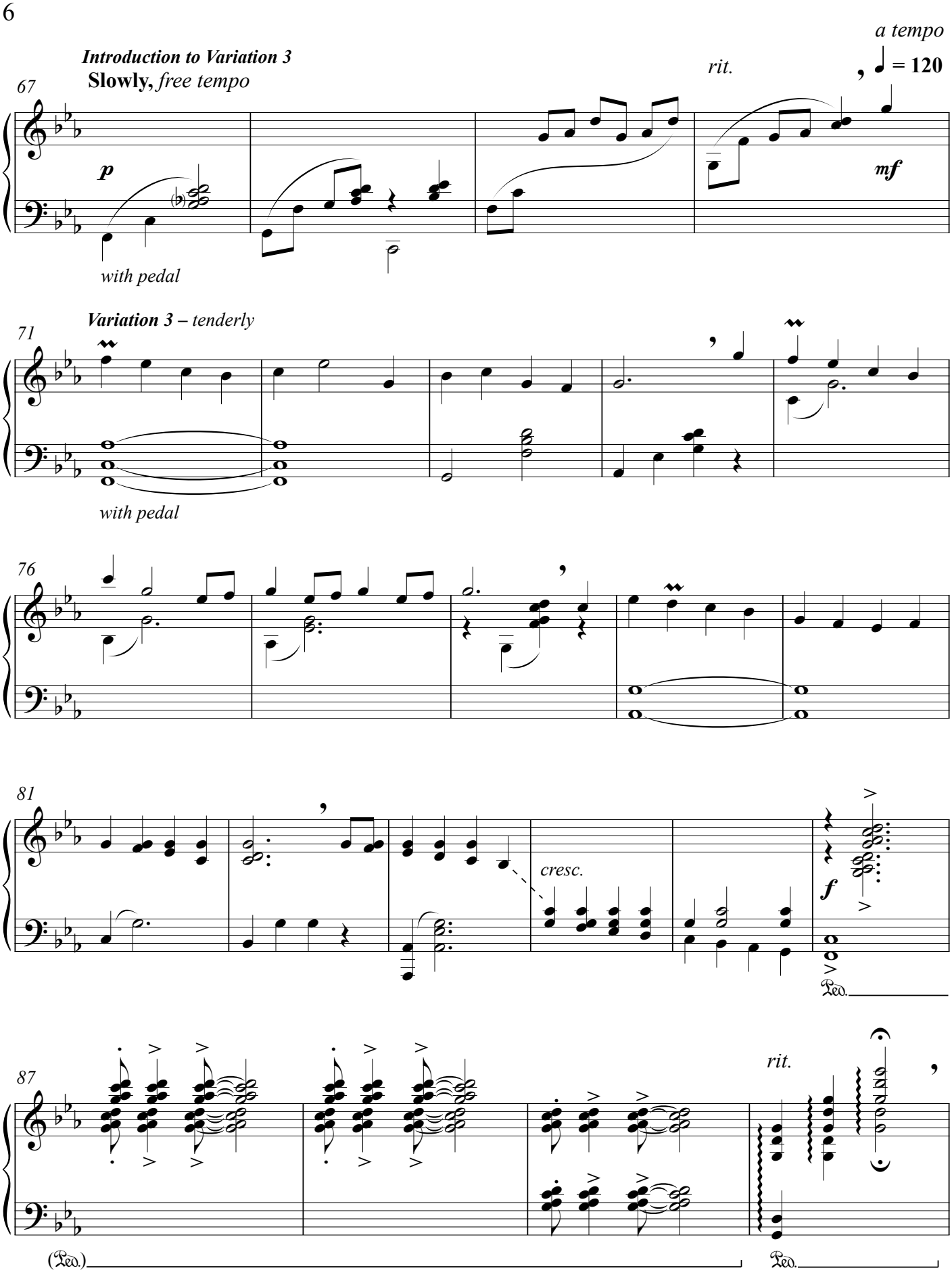
49



Interlude 2 *– very playfully*

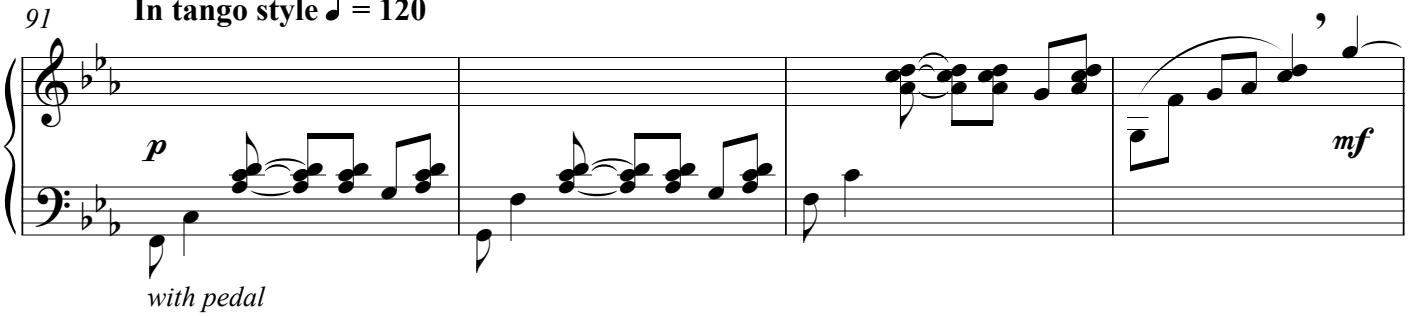





Introduction to Variation 3
Slowly, free tempo
67
p
with pedal
rit.
a tempo
= 120
mf
Variation 3 – tenderly
71
with pedal
76
81
cresc.
f
Ped.
87
rit.
(Ped.)
Ped.

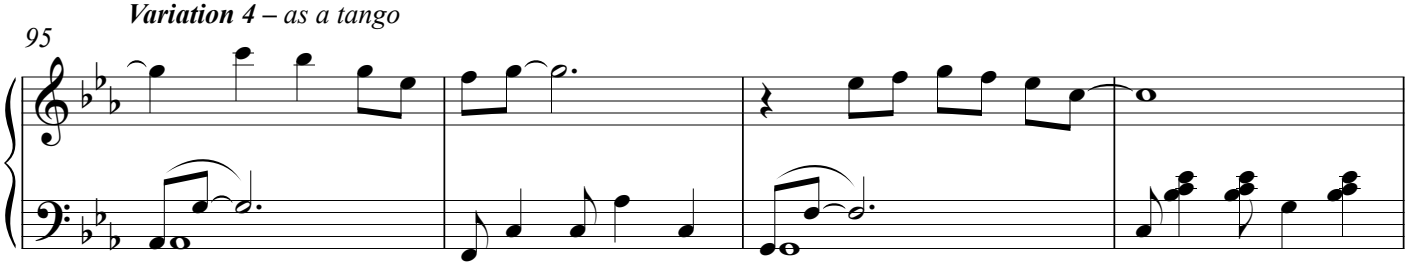
Introduction to Variation 4

91 **In tango style ♩ = 120**



***Variation 4** – as a tango*

95



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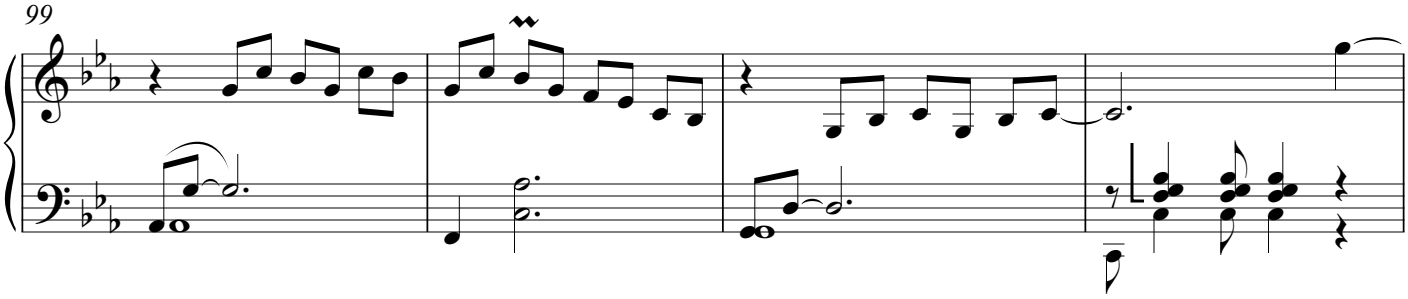
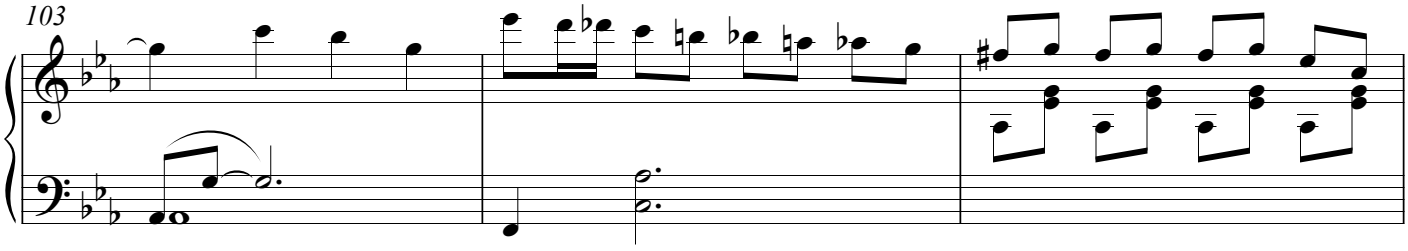


103



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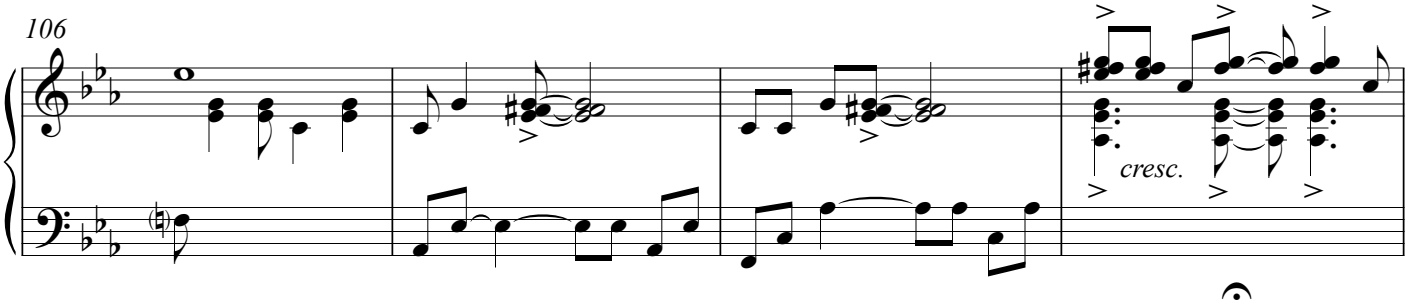

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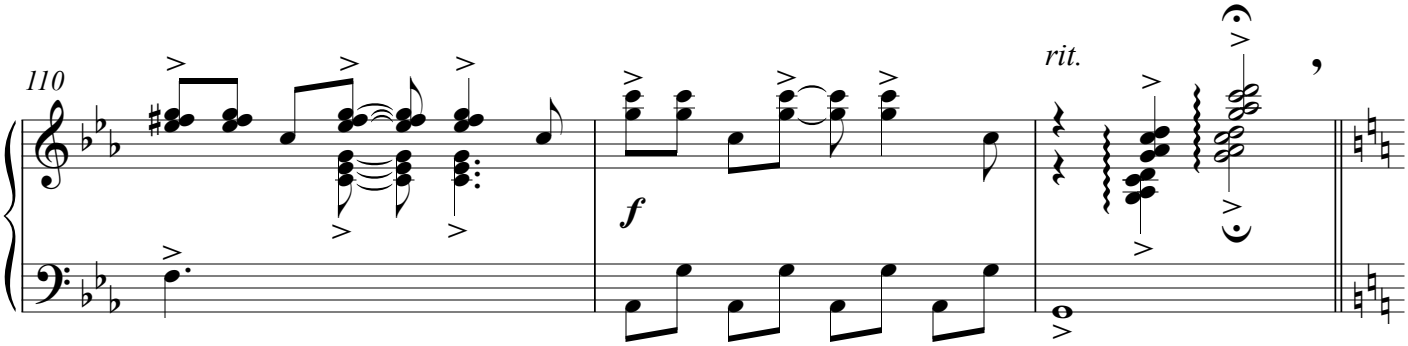


Variation 5 *– suddenly peaceful*

Same tempo ♩ = 120

113

p

with pedal

118

123

rit.

With energy ♩ = 144

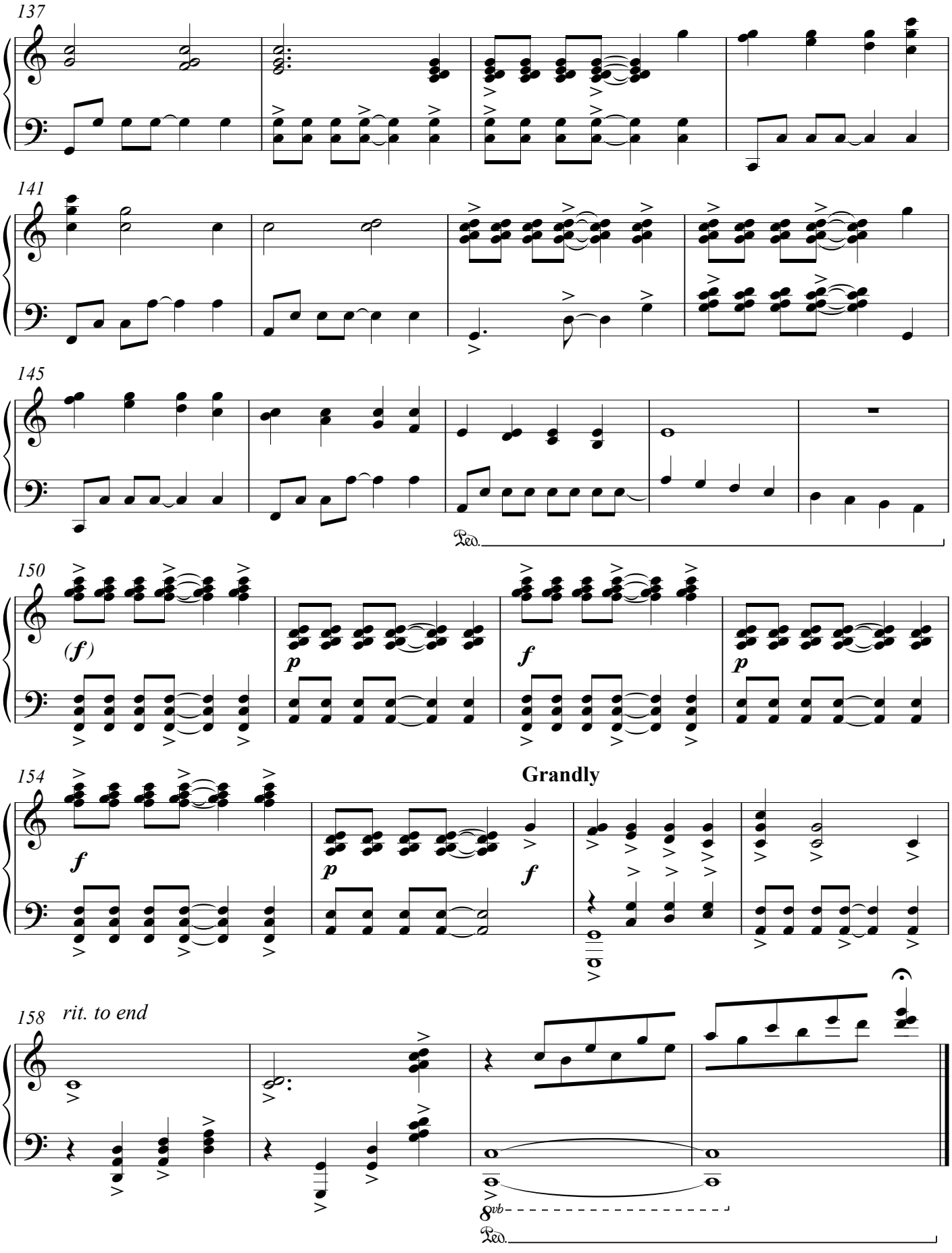
129 *accel.*

cresc.

f

133

Variation 6 *– celebratory*


137
141
145
Ped.
150
(f)
p
f
p
154
Grandly
f
p
f
158
rit. to end
8vb
Ped.