Foreword

About the Painting

English painter John William Waterhouse (1849–1917) worked in *Pre-Raphaelite style*, an artistic movement popular in the mid to late 19th century that emphasized bold colors, fine details, and compositional complexity. Although known for this style, elements of the Impressionist movement also influenced Waterhouse's work, particularly the use of color to generate atmosphere and mood. His oil paintings predominately portray the myths and legends of ancient Greek mythology or English Arthurian tales. He frequently painted women, often on large canvases, capturing their beauty and innocence but also turning them, through careful attention to facial expression and posture, into emotionally distracted central figures. Waterhouse continued producing Pre-Raphaelite paintings long after the style had fallen out of vogue; however, more than a century later, several major art galleries display his work, allowing appreciative new audiences to find his expressive canvases.

In 1892, Waterhouse completed *Circe Invidiosa*, the second of three depictions of Circe, the mythological Greek goddess of magic and sorcery. (See front cover.) The other two Circe paintings by Waterhouse are *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* (1891) and *The Sorceress* (ca. 1911). The episode portrayed in *Circe Invidiosa* captures the moment when Circe, tormented by envy for the attentions of the seagod Glaucus, poisons the water where her rival Scylla bathes. (*Invidiosa* is the Latin word for envious.) The tainted water transforms the beautiful Scylla into a hideous creature. The depiction of Circe as a youthful beauty, quietly controlled and focused, contrasts with the frenetic motion of her hair whirled by the rising vapors of the newly born monster below her feet. Waterhouse uses a vivid green in the stream of water flowing from the bowl-like cup in Circe's hands. It creates a lush foil to the deep blue gown of the powerful sorceress.

About the Music

Waterhouse's *Circe Invidiosa*, with its underlying structure but dramatic emotion, easily lends itself to musical reinterpretation.

Circe Invidiosa: Sonata No. 1 is a one-movement sonata written in sonata-allegro form, although it does not adhere to the tonic-dominant harmonic relationships found in traditional sonatas. Instead, the harmonic framework of the piece uses *mediant relationships*, ascending or descending progressions by 3rds, to support its contrasting themes. These types of harmonic relationships are abundant in the works of late Romantic and Impressionist composers, who were contemporaries of Waterhouse. An example of this harmonic movement by 3rds can be found in the opening of the sonata when, at measure 6, the A-flat major harmony (the tonic) shifts to an E dominant chord (a chord a 3rd below the tonic). In contrast to the use of mediant relationships, dominant harmonies only occasionally influence the large scale, structural harmonic progressions. Most notably, in measures 182–186, the dominant, in a *marcato* flourish, leads to the arrival of the A-flat major recapitulation at measure 187. Later, the subdominant becomes the climactic focus of the composition when it appears before the coda in alternation with the tonic (mm. 281–314), anchoring the entire piece with a powerful, *deciso* (resolute) sentiment.

Rhythm plays a central role in this sonata. The unstable pulse throughout the piece, created by constantly changing meters, produces a toccata-like effect reminiscent of the maniacal Circe depicted by Waterhouse—highly controlled yet driven by passion. Melodically, two themes are clearly presented in the sonata's exposition. The opening first theme is characterized by rapid, arpeggiated flourishes and a texture that requires the performer to play with interlocked hands. Two-hand arpeggios moving swiftly up the keyboard depict the swirling waters of Scylla's pool. The tender *Andante con moto* second theme, beginning at measure 50, is marked by increasingly sinister-sounding chromaticism. These two themes are manipulated in the development, which begins softly at measure 109. Throughout the piece, short motives combine with intricate rhythms and sonorities to convey the introspection, internal conflict, and passion within Waterhouse's *Circe Invidiosa*. This tension gradually unwinds as the piece nears its conclusion; however, the peaceful character lasts only momentarily. The coda (mm. 330–345), a sequence of descending gestures marked *cresc. e accel. poco a poco*, represents the pouring of potion from Circe's cup down to the *feroce* (ferocious) transformation at her feet.

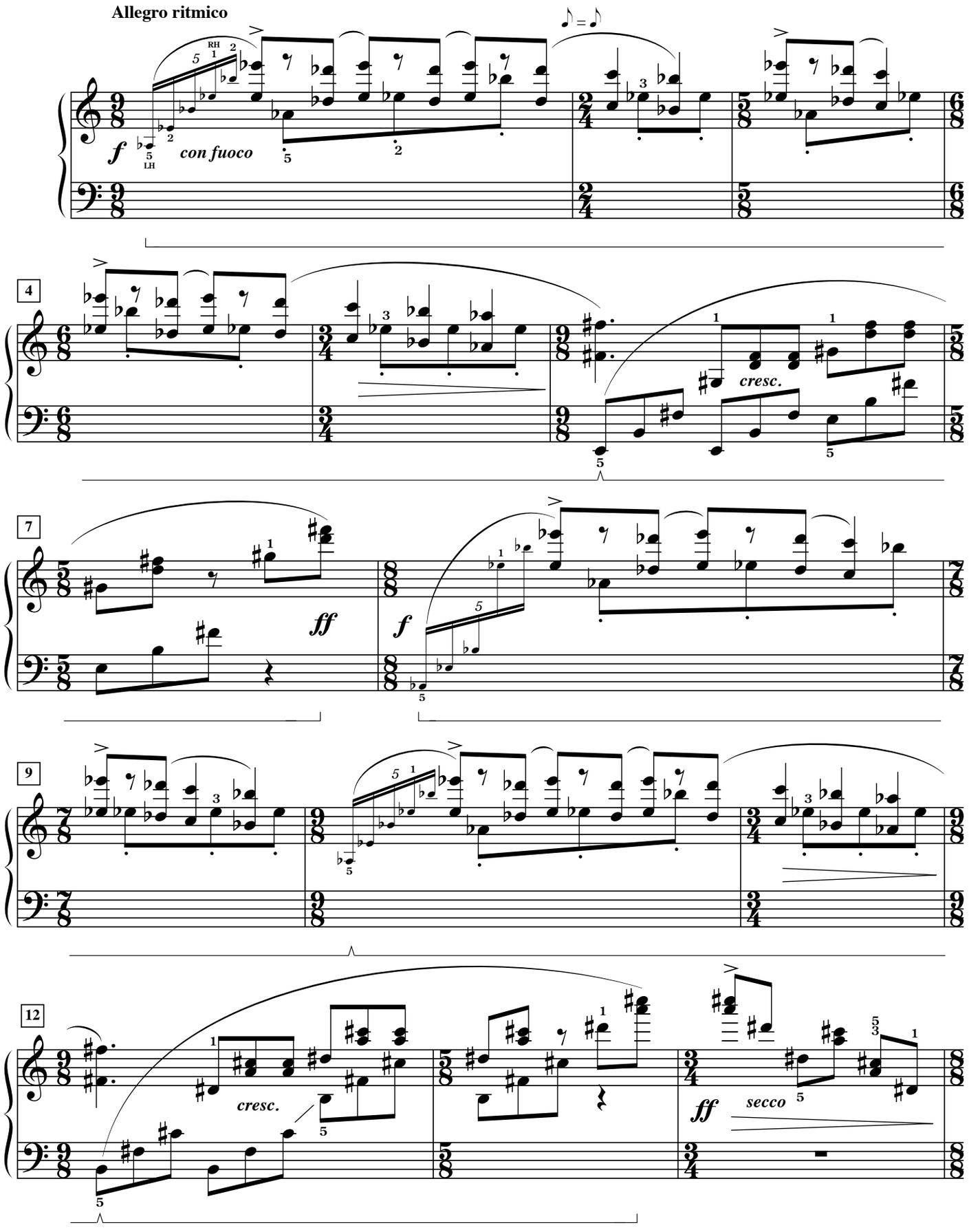
– Tom Gerou

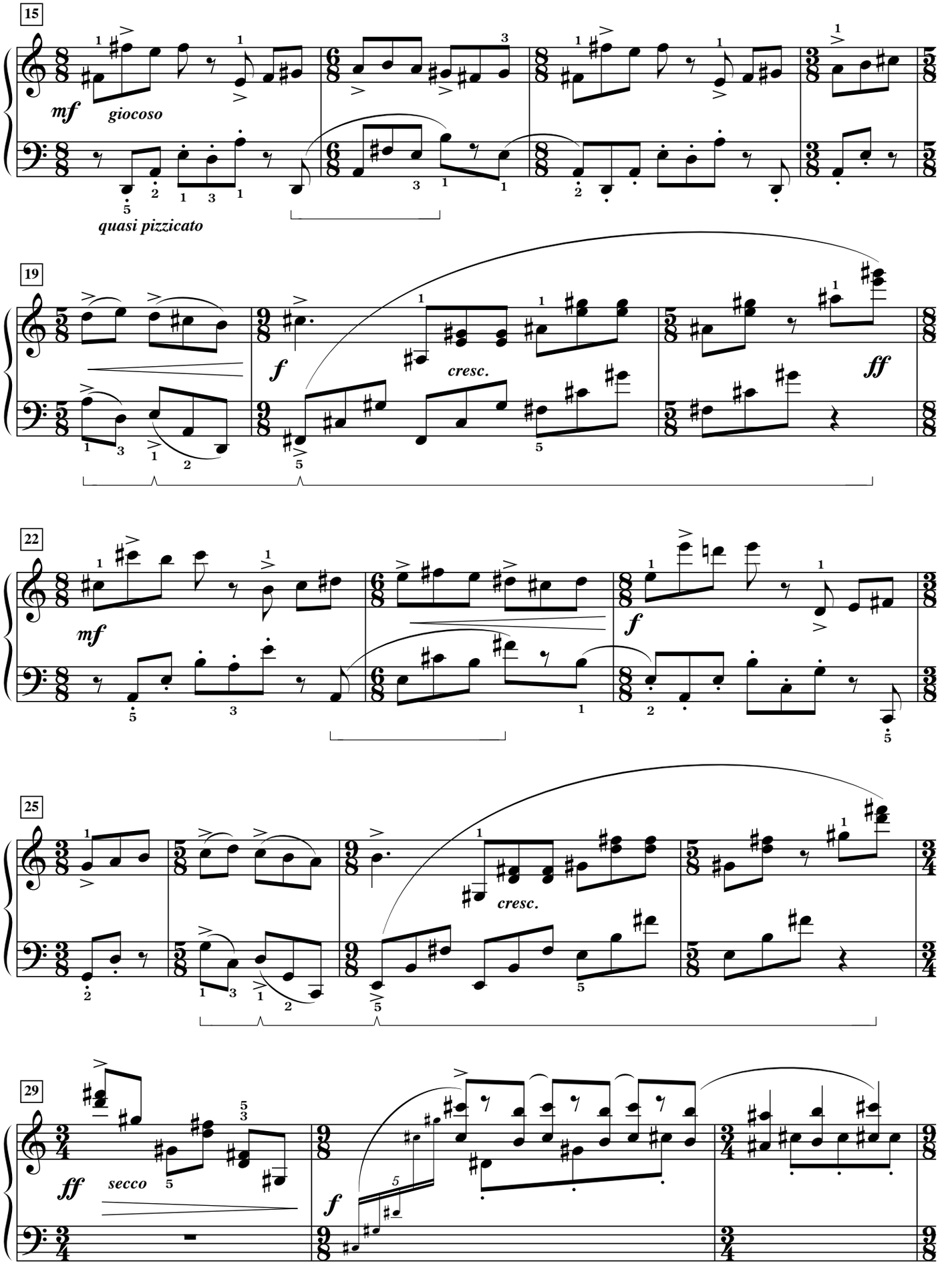
This work was jointly commissioned by Music Teachers National Association and North Dakota Music Teachers Association in 2014

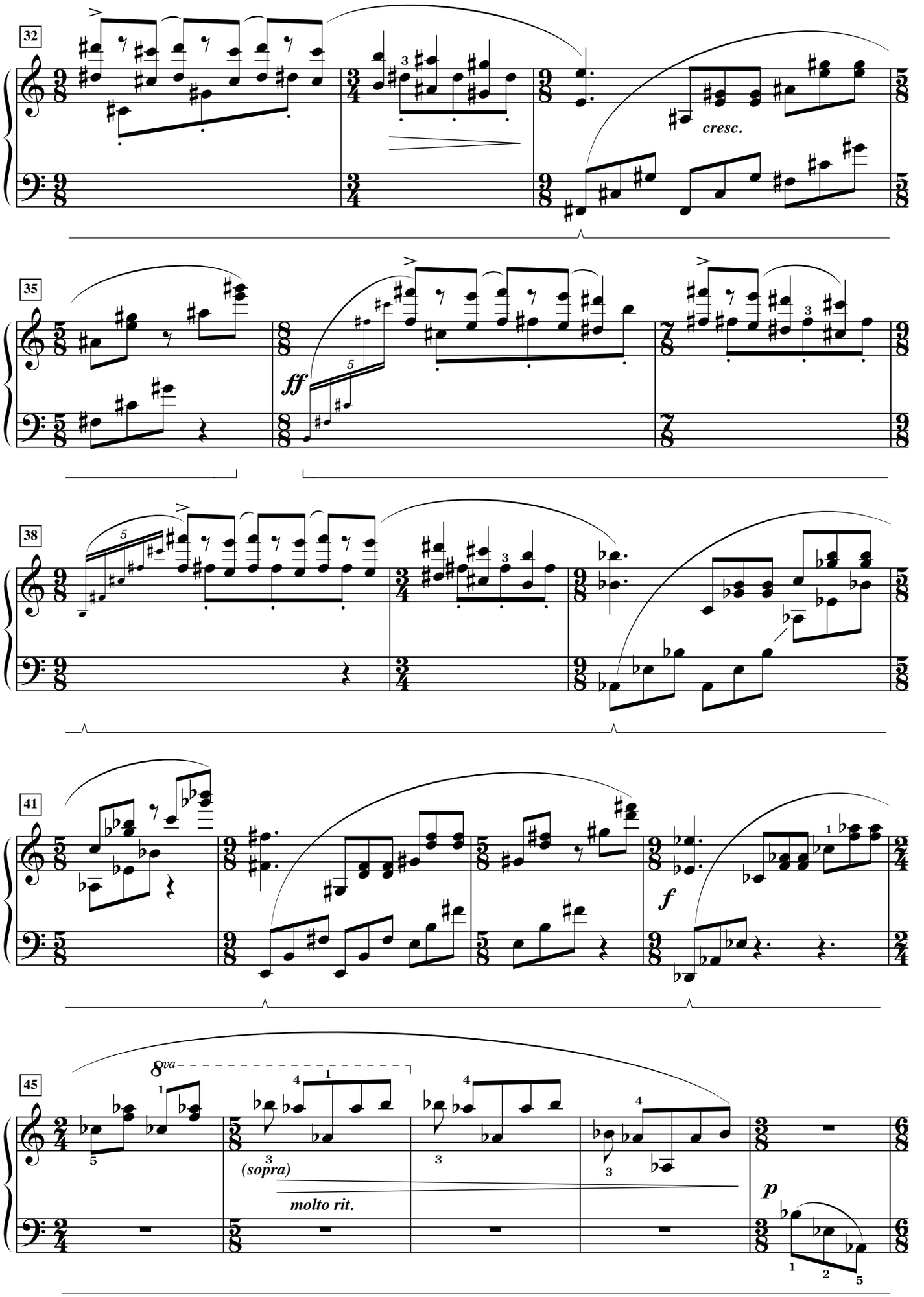
Circe Invidiosa

Sonata No. 1 for the Piano

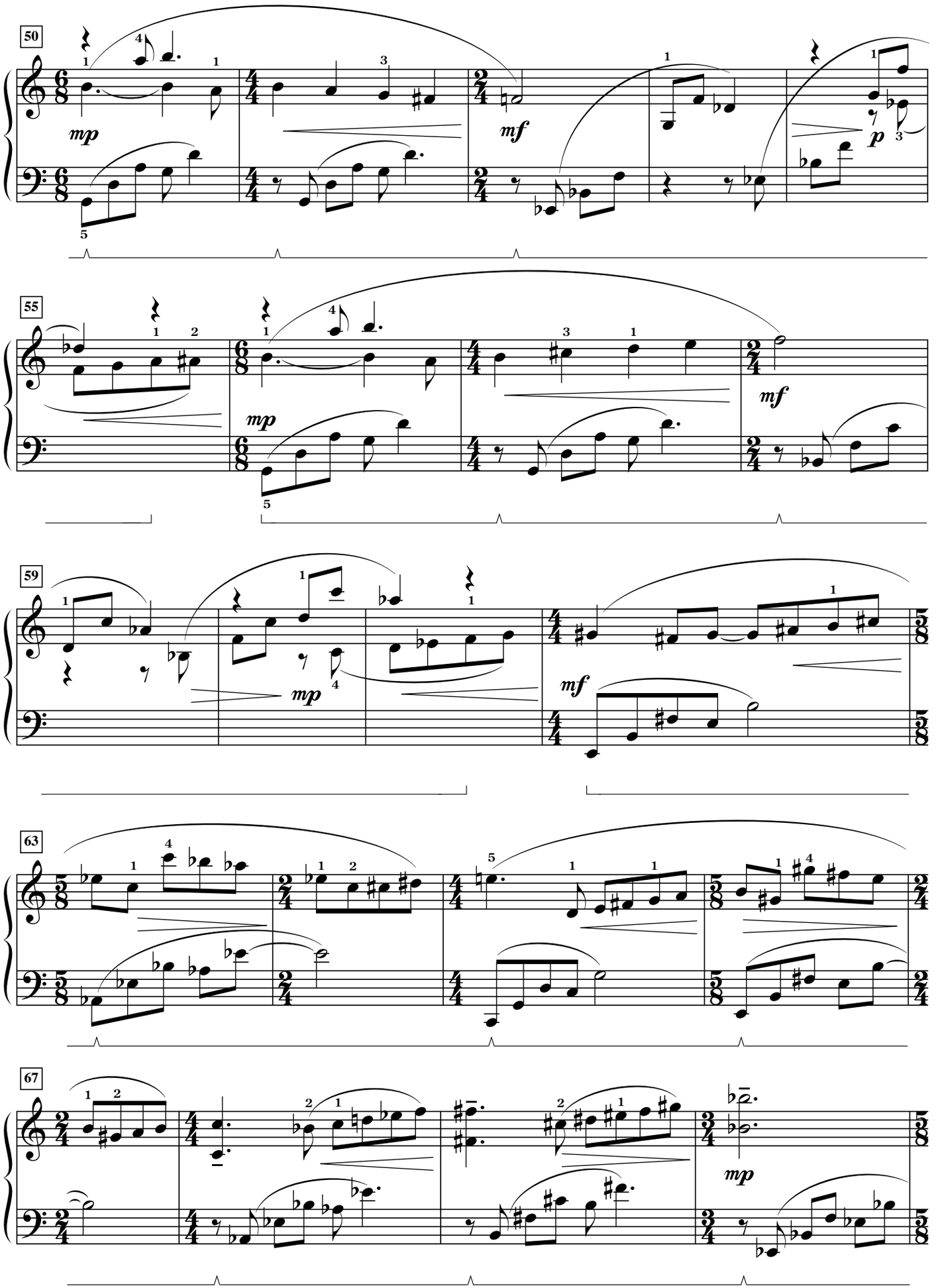
Tom Gerou

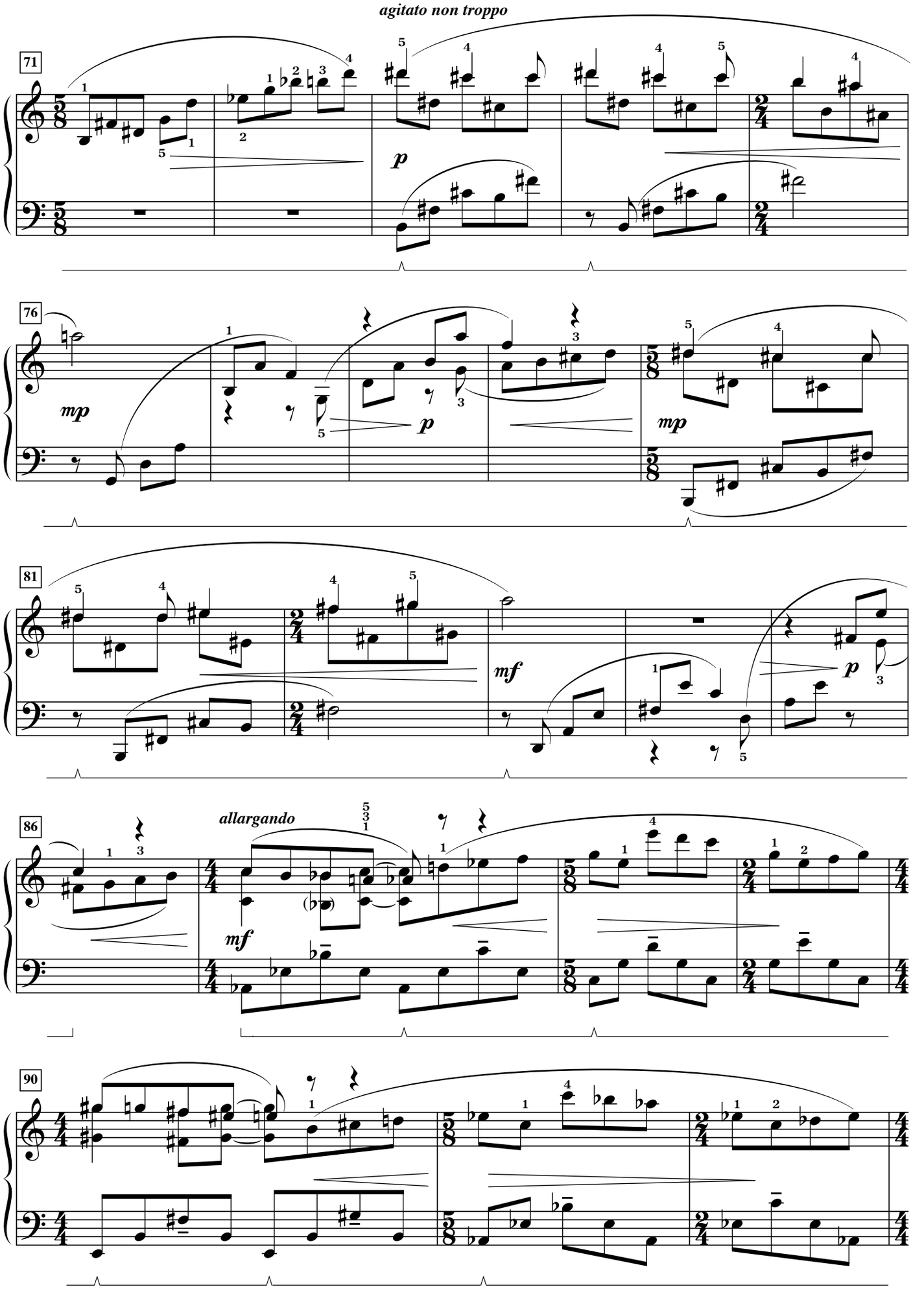


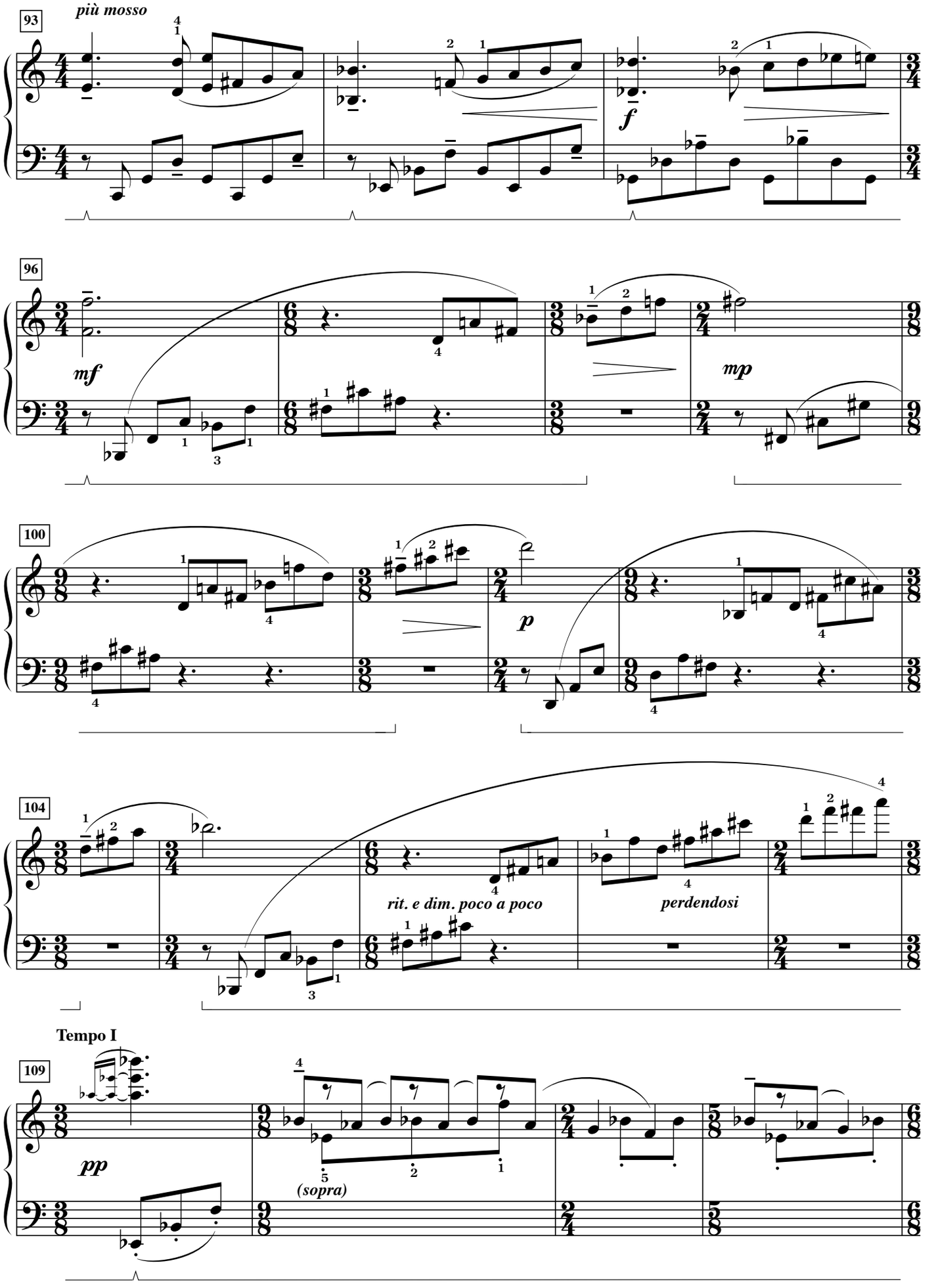

15
mf
giocoso
quasi pizzicato
19
f
cresc.
ff
22
mf
f
25
cresc.
29
ff
secco
f


32
cresc.
35
ff
38
41
f
45
8va
(sopra)
molto rit.
p

Andante con moto




agitato non troppo
71
p
76
mp
p
mp
81
mf
p
86
allargando
mf
90


93
più mosso
f
96
mf
mp
100
p
104
rit. e dim. poco a poco
perdendosi
Tempo I
109
pp
(sopra)