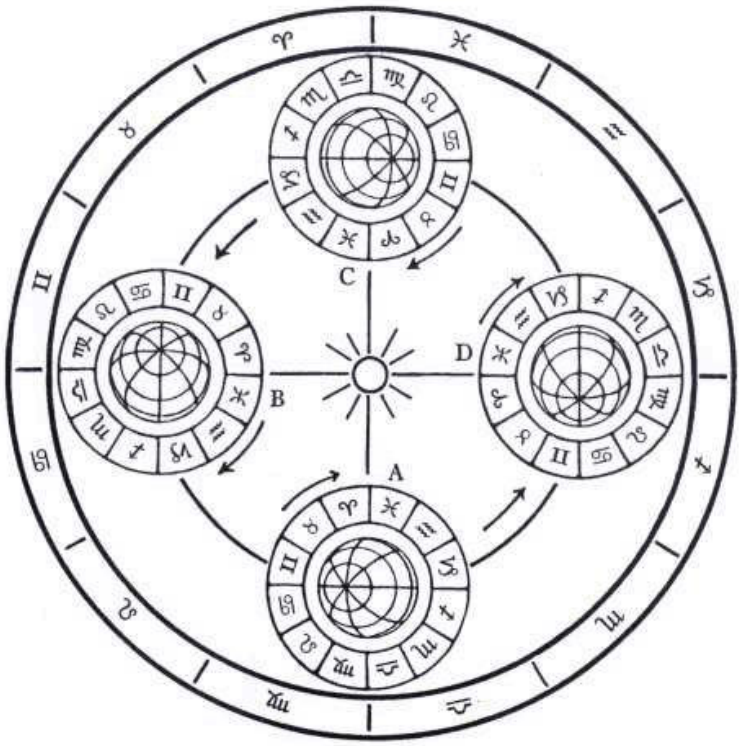
Carlotta Ferrari

Mysterium Mithræ

Luna Perseus Leo Aquarius Hydra Corvus Canis Scorpio Taurus Sol



A collection of organ pieces based on Mithraism

Special thanks to

Peter Clark (Zoroastrianism: an Introduction to an Ancient Faith, Sussex Academic Press, 1998)

Safari Grey (The Astrotheological Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries, Judaism and Christianity, lulu·com, 2012)

David Ulansey (The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World, Oxford University Press, 1989)

2016

The Roman Mithras Cult

The Roman Mithras Cult Enjoying a lifespan of roughly 400 years, the cultic worship of the deity Mithras throughout the Roman Empire may represent the final stage in the evolution of a figure of veneration whose worship reaches back to the Vedic period of Indian religious history. The god Mitra is mentioned a number of times in the Vedic texts and his particular concern seemed to have be loyalty or fidelity and his name denotes "faithfulness to the contract". A deity known as Mithra, displaying similar attributes, can be found in the Iranian (Zoroastrian) tradition, and though his cult seems to be absent from the earliest expression of the religious reform proposed by its prophet, Zarathushtra, the later ("younger Avestan") texts afford him a degree of importance as a deity commanding veneration and worship.

A conflation of the presence (and indeed the name) of Mithra in Iranian religion (and possibly alongside it as a discreet cult), and the bull-slaying episode, part of the creation myth in a later (Pahlavi) Zoroastrian text, the Bundahisen, led Franz Cumont, often lauded as the "father" of modern Mithraic studies, to conclude that the Roman cult was an adaptation of the Iranian, since the tauroctony (bull-slaying) was evidently an essential ingredient in both traditions. Scholarship is still undecided on the provenance of the Roman cult but whereas the Indo-Iranian veneration/worship was not exclusive (ie theoretically open to anyone) the Roman version was far more restrictive, permitting only men, generally of the military and mercantile professions, to be members. However, devotion to Mithras did not preclude adherence to other mystery cults. It would thus not be unusual to see the same faces at a Mithraic liturgy one day and at one honouring Isis the next. An additional problem with Cumont's thesis is that whereas in the Iranian myth sees the bull-slaying episode as a negative act, in Roman Mithraism, it becomes a positive thing since it is a key factor in the creation myth.

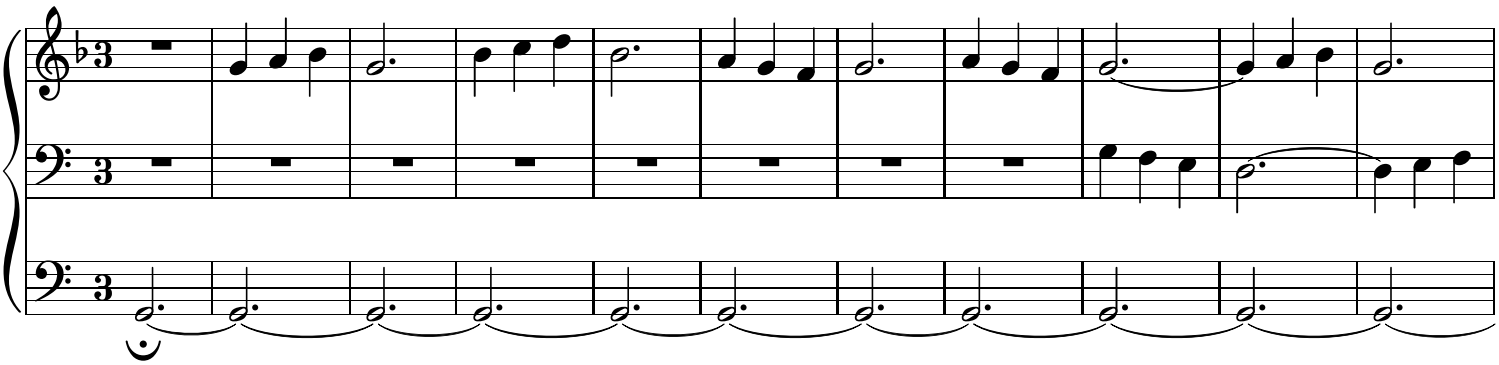
The remains of temples dedicated to Mithras can be found in most parts of the Empire, from Rome to the north of England. It is thought that each "chapter" will have only had a few members since the temples were evidently not very spacious. The Roman Mithras cult was a mystery religion in that it involved the progression through seven grades to attain the highest podition (pater) on the "ladder". It seems that each of these grades involved an ordeal, actual or figurative, and from what we can gather about Mithraic ritual, there was a form of baptism as well as a quasi-eucharistic meal. Some commentators have argued that this indicates a borrowing from Mithraism by fledgling Christianity, though Christian apologists have concluded that the reverse was the case.

Carlotta Ferrari's cycle Mysterium Mithrae focusses on the zodiacal aspect of the religion, which has recently received more attention than previously, and this is due at least in part to the work of David Ulansey on the Mysteries and he argues that Mithraism was in fact an astronomical-astrological enterprise validated and "normalized" by and within socio-religious context, signifying the passing from the age of Taurus to that, eventually, of Aquarius. The tauroctony thus becomes a star chart which maps the progression from one astrological age to the next.

Peter Clark, 2017

Luna

Mistico



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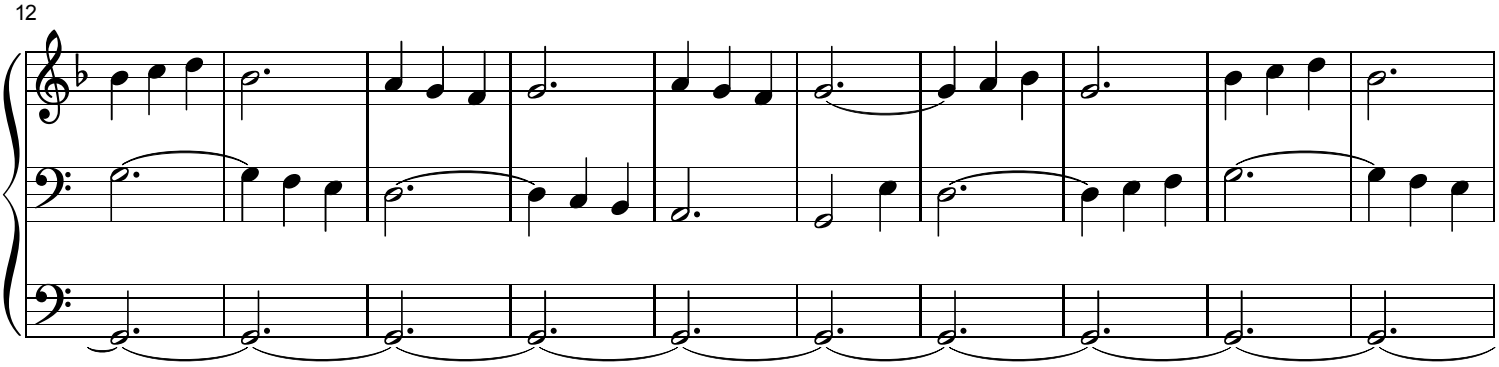

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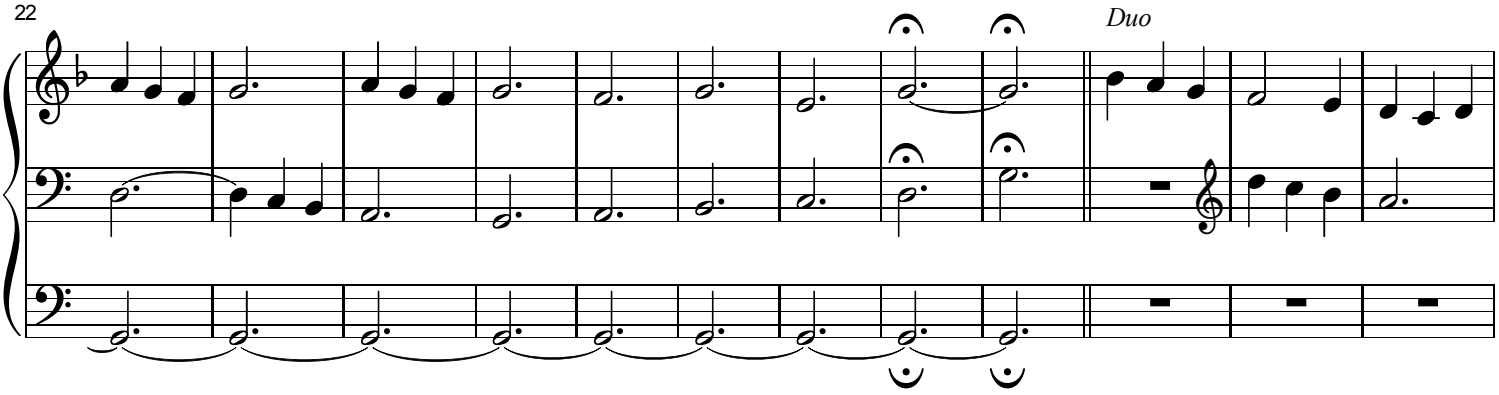
Duo



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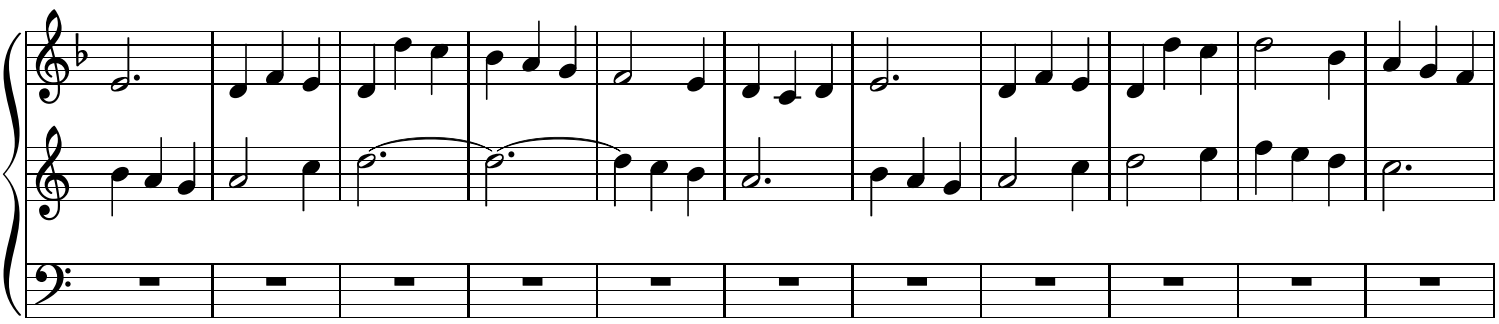

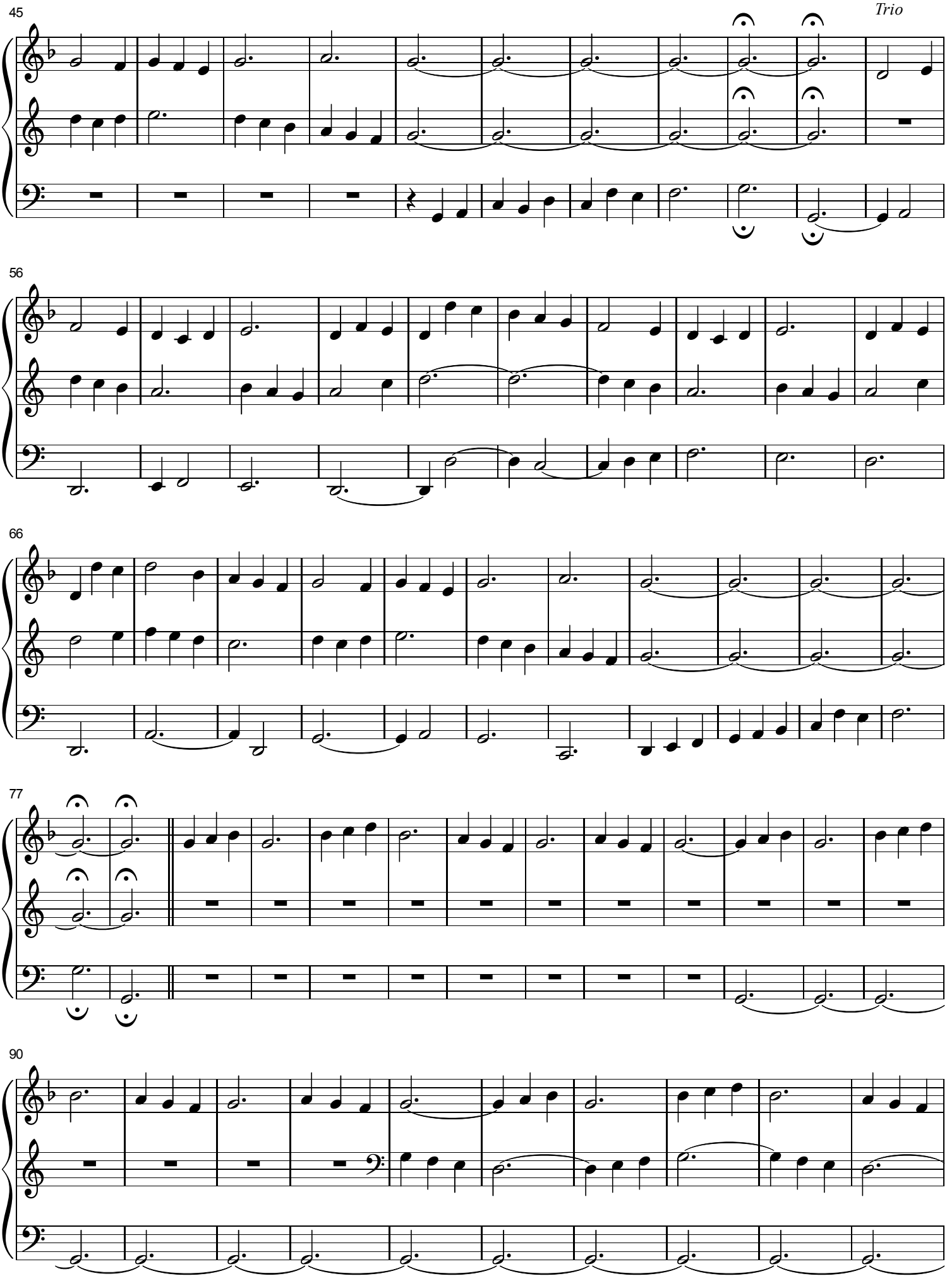
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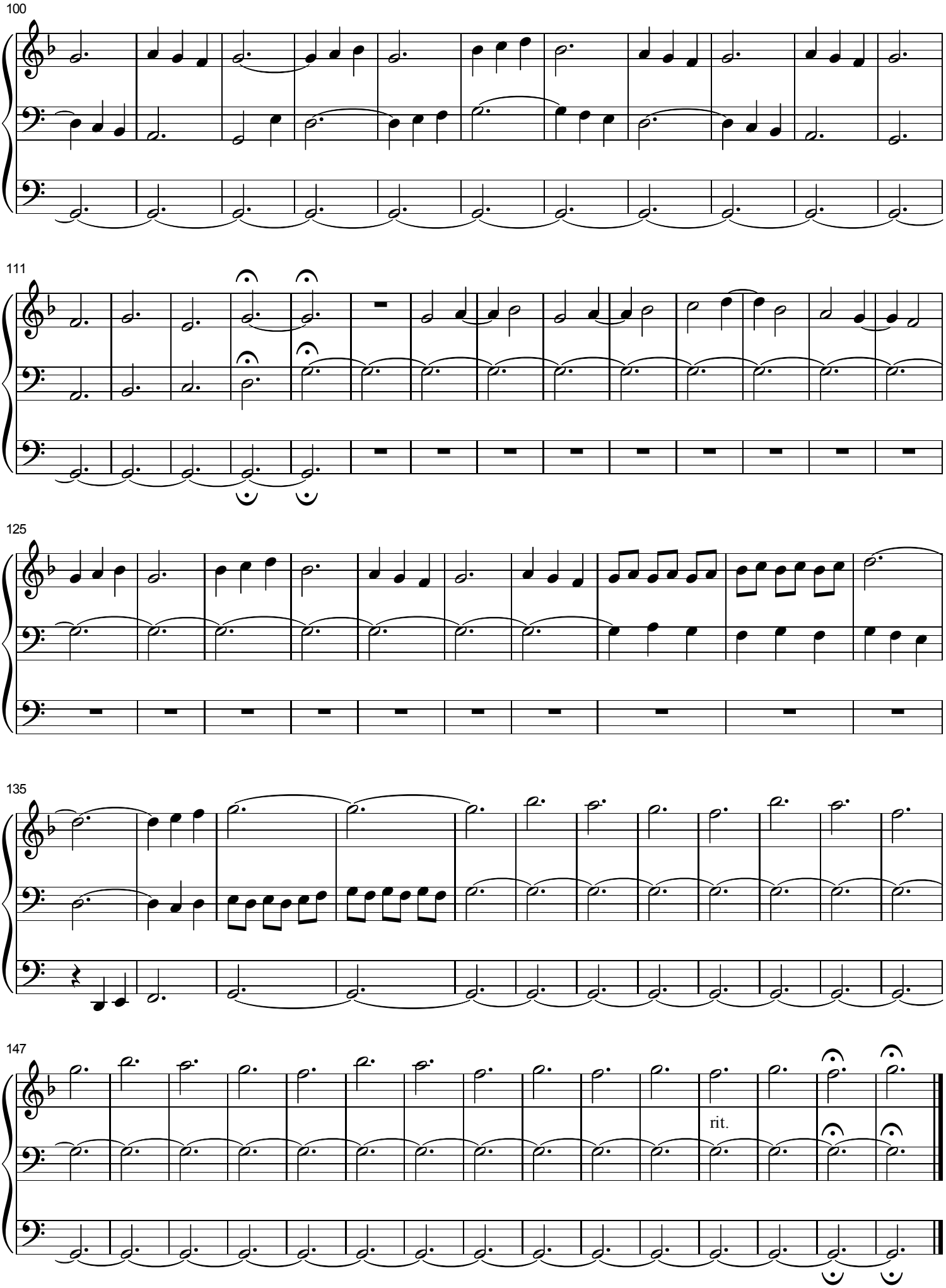
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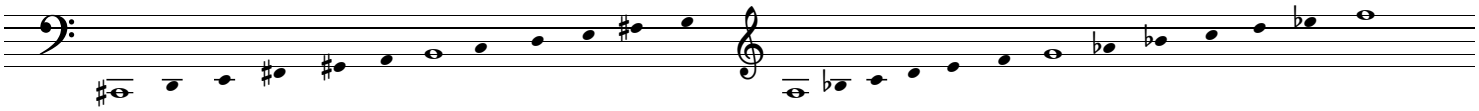
Perseus

Trasposizioni RPS del modo frigio



Solenne

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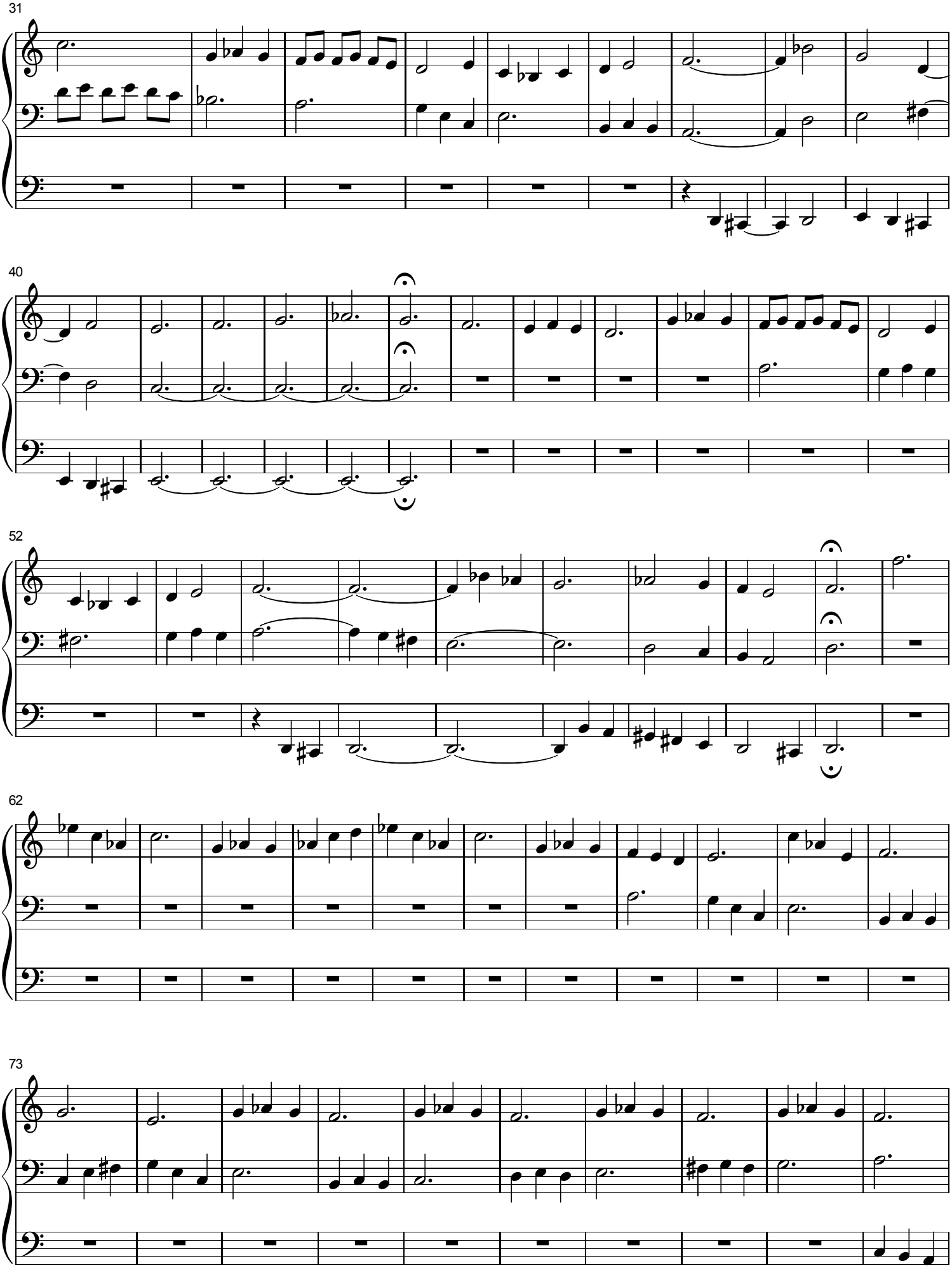
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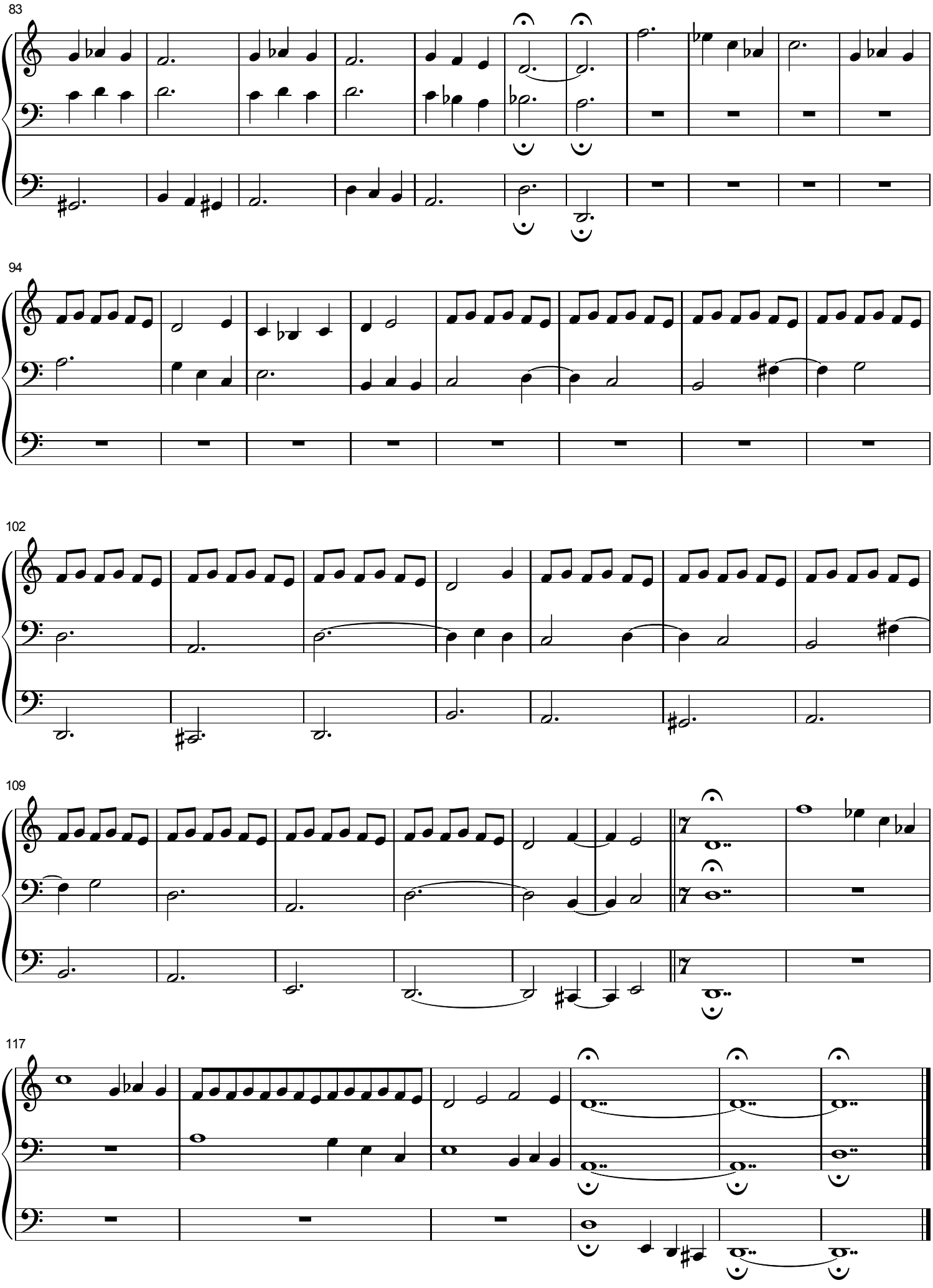
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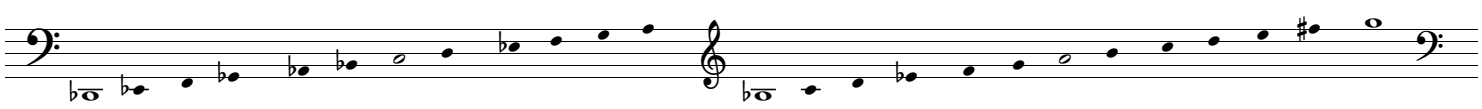
Leo

Trasposizione RPS del supermodo ionico-dorico



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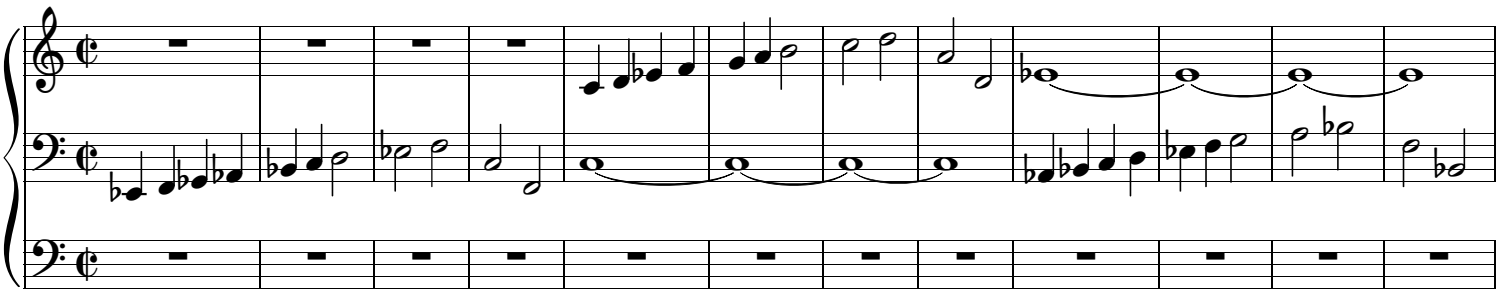

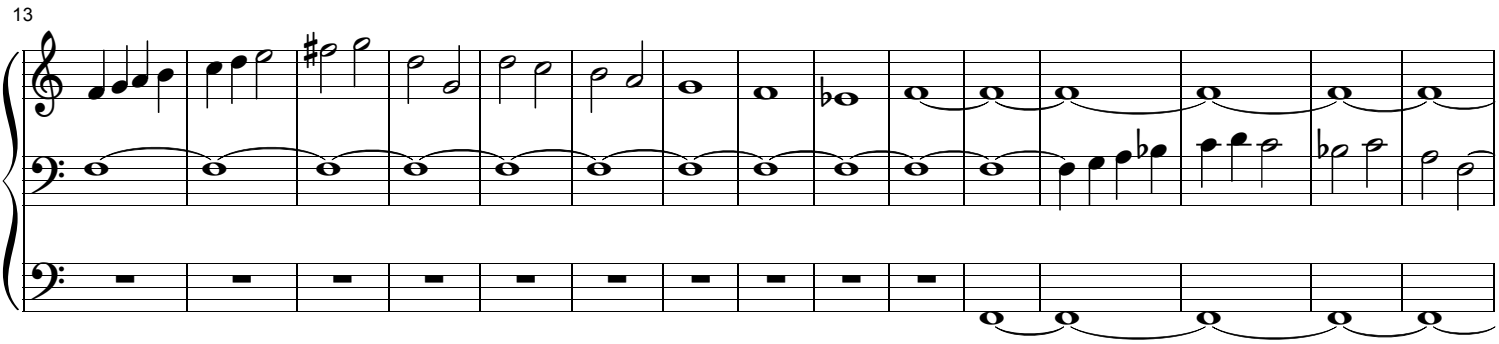

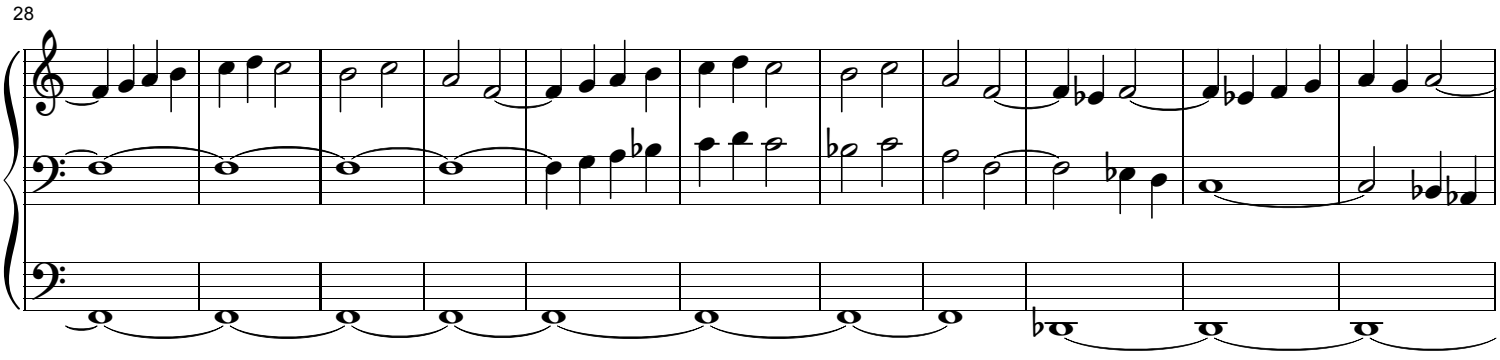

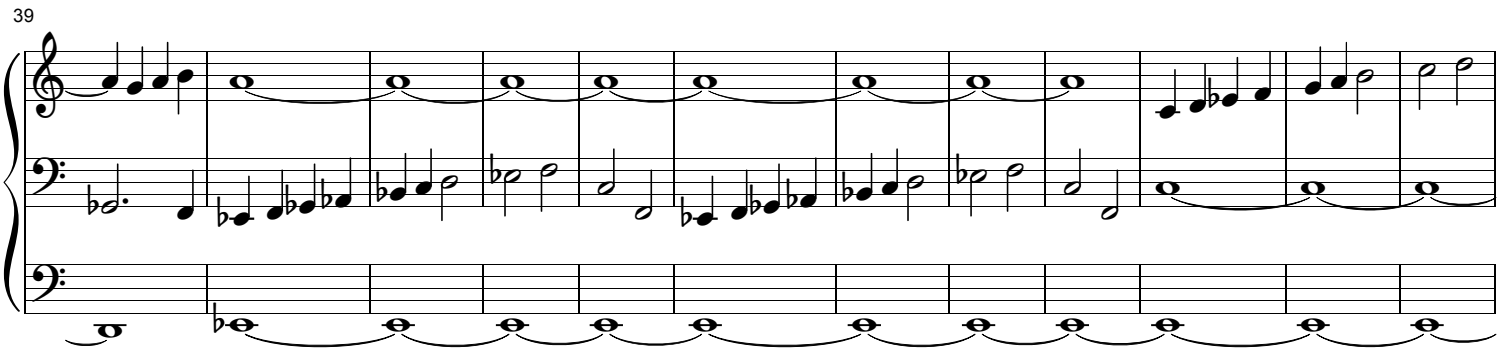

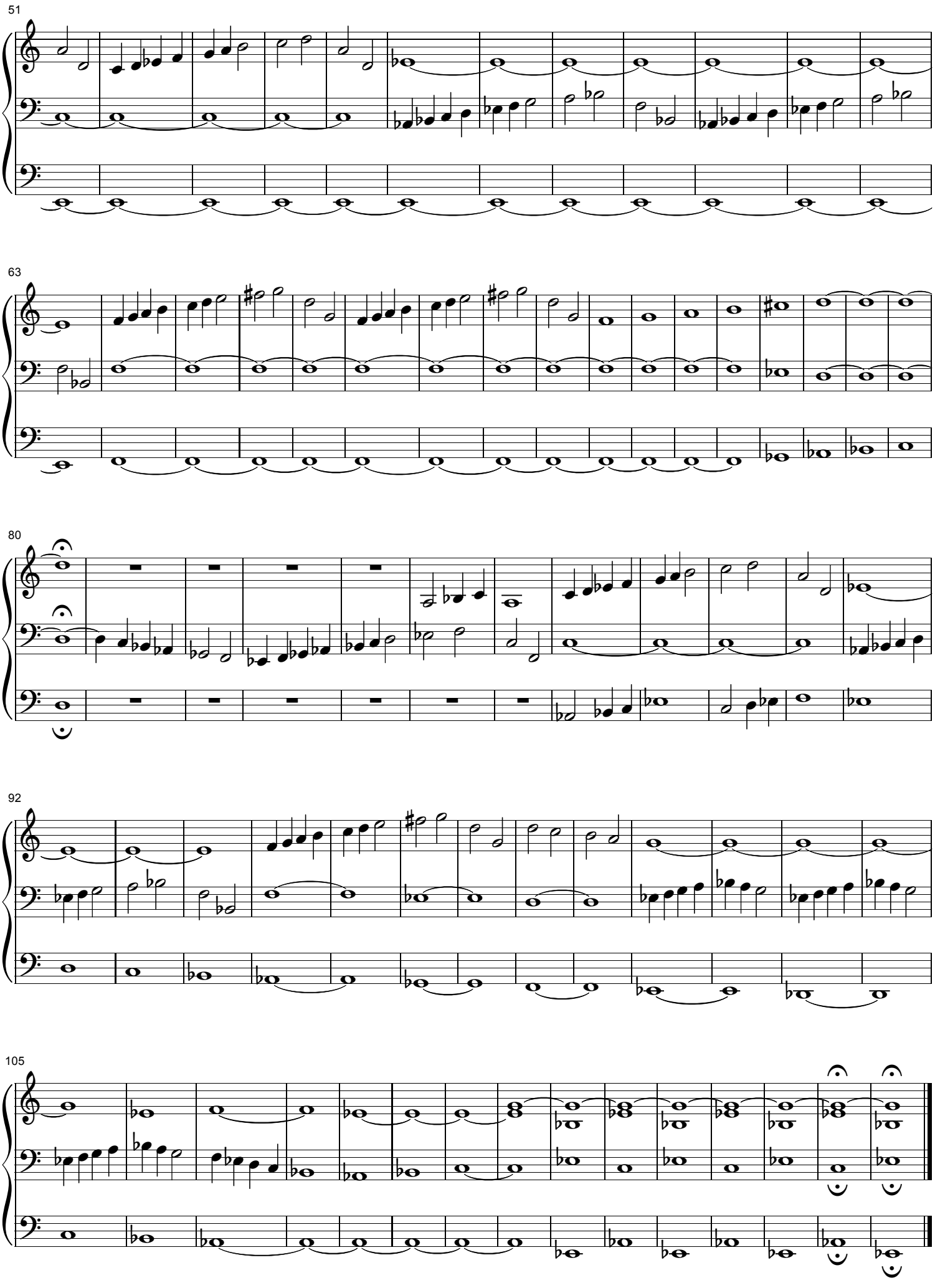
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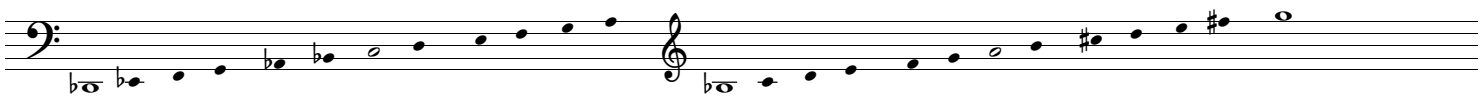
Aquarius

Trasposizione RPS del supermodo lidio-misolidio



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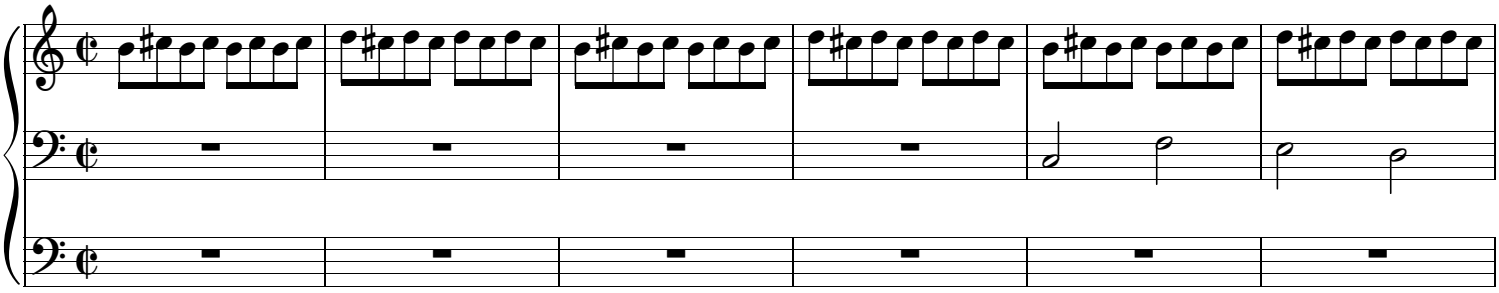

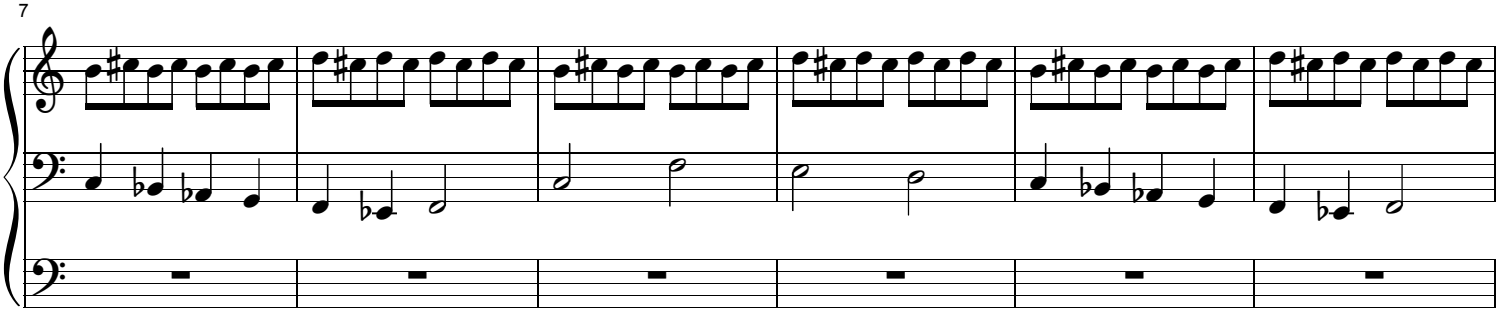

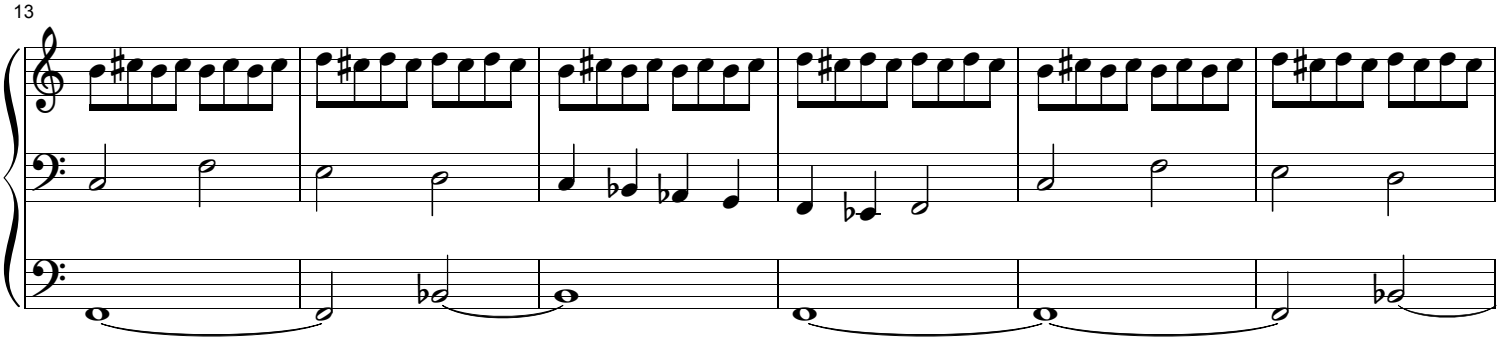

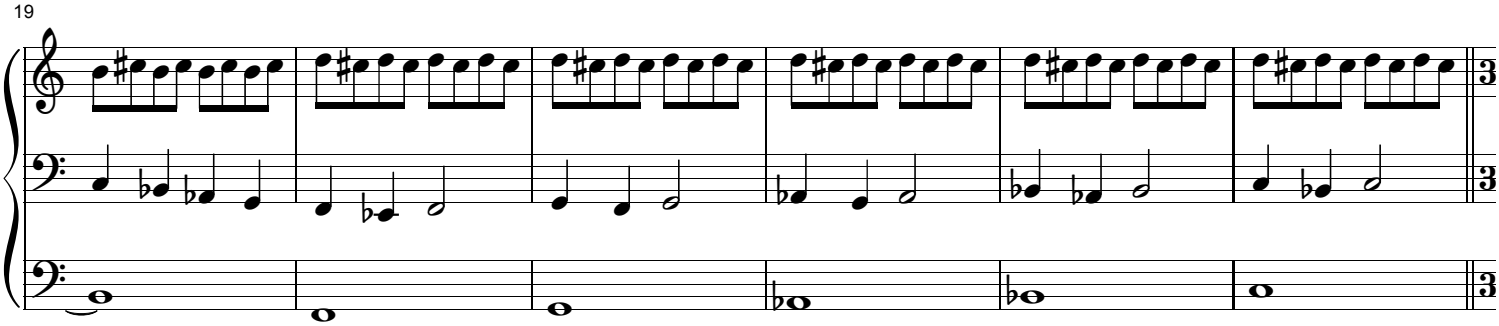

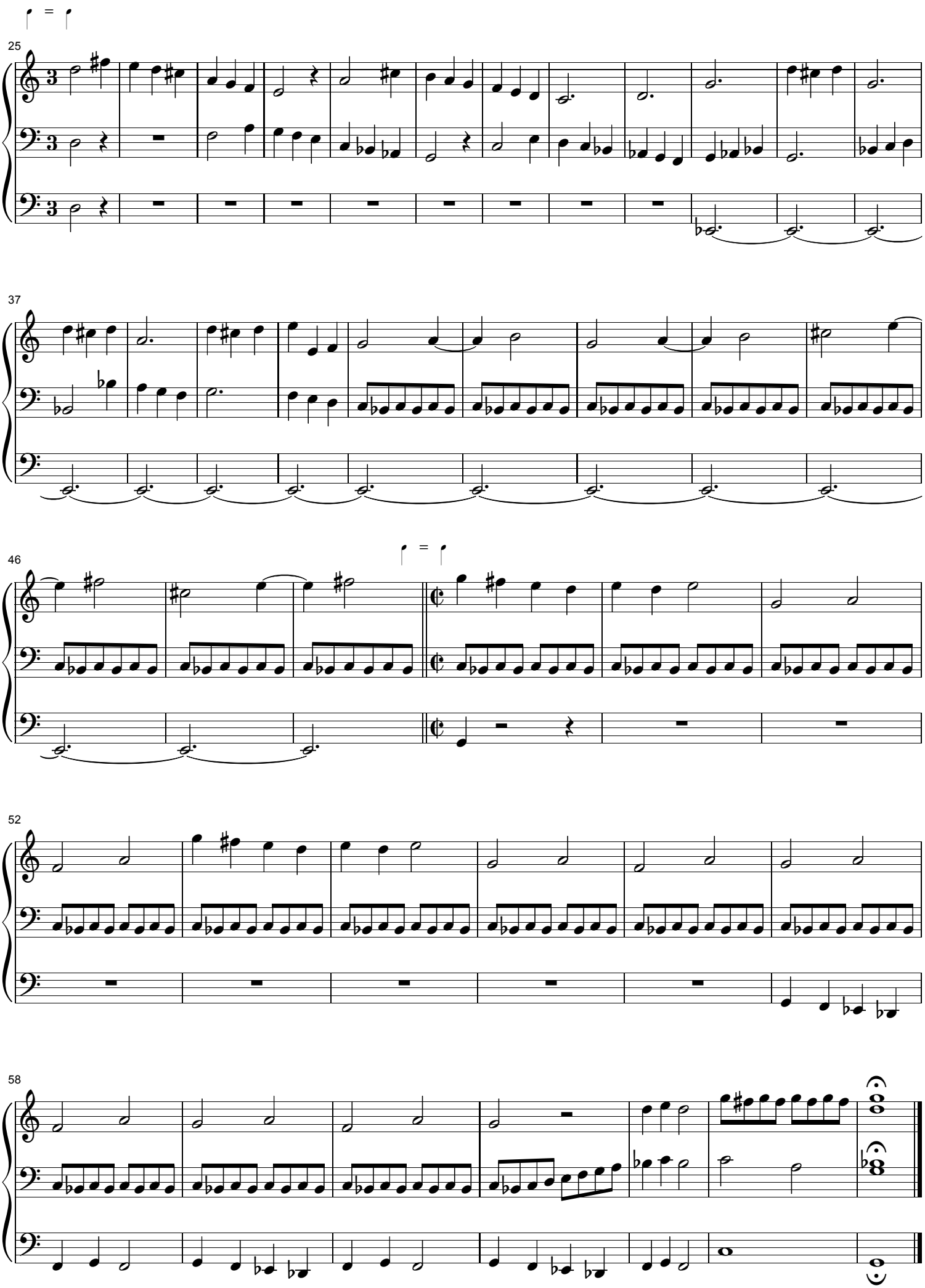
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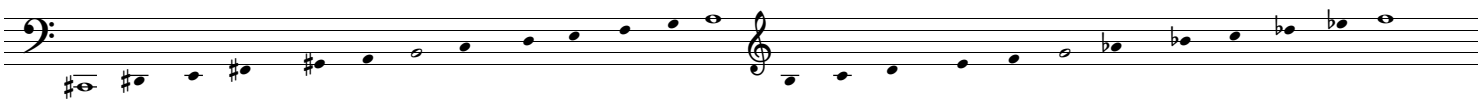
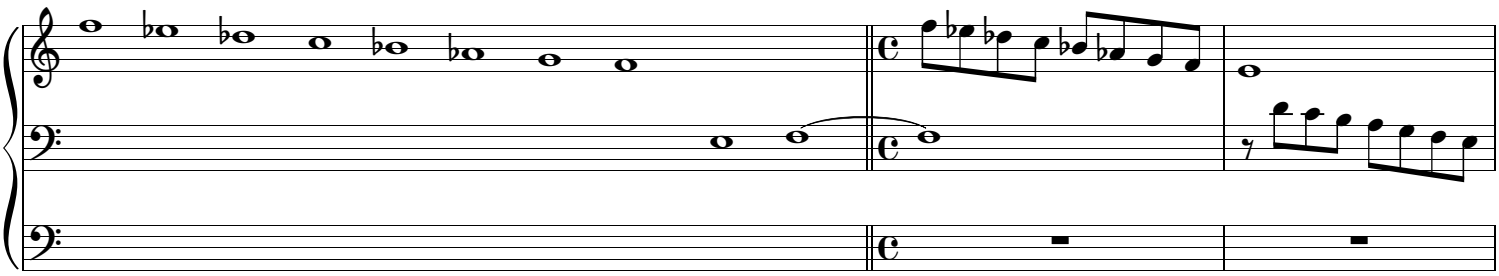
Hydra

Trasposizione RPS del supermodo eolio-locrio



Non misurato

Andante



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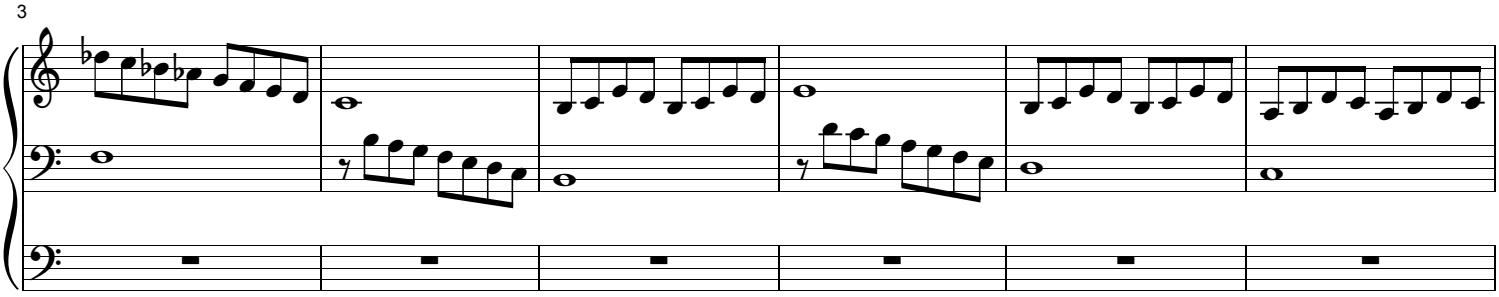

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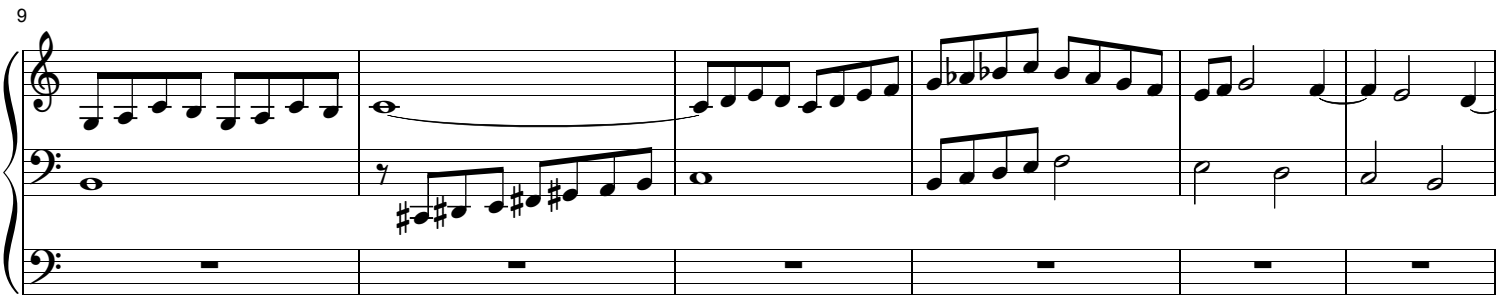

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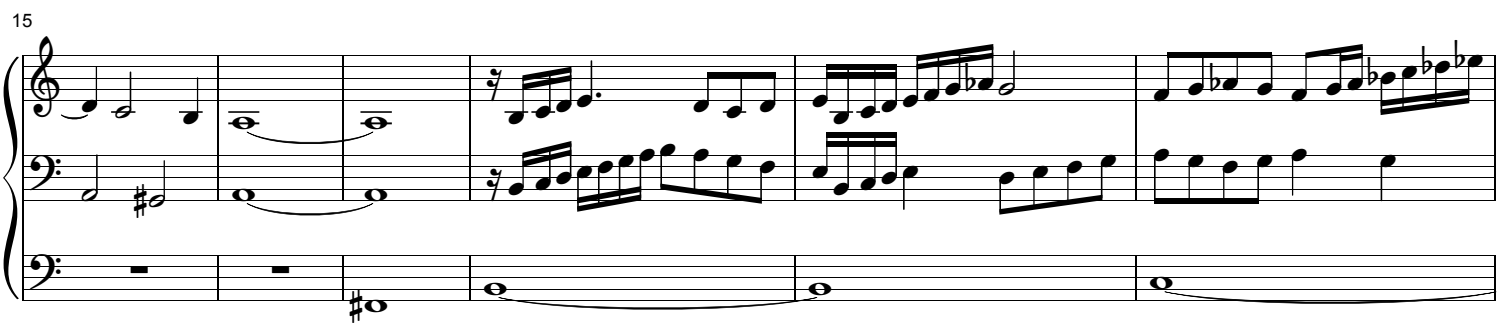

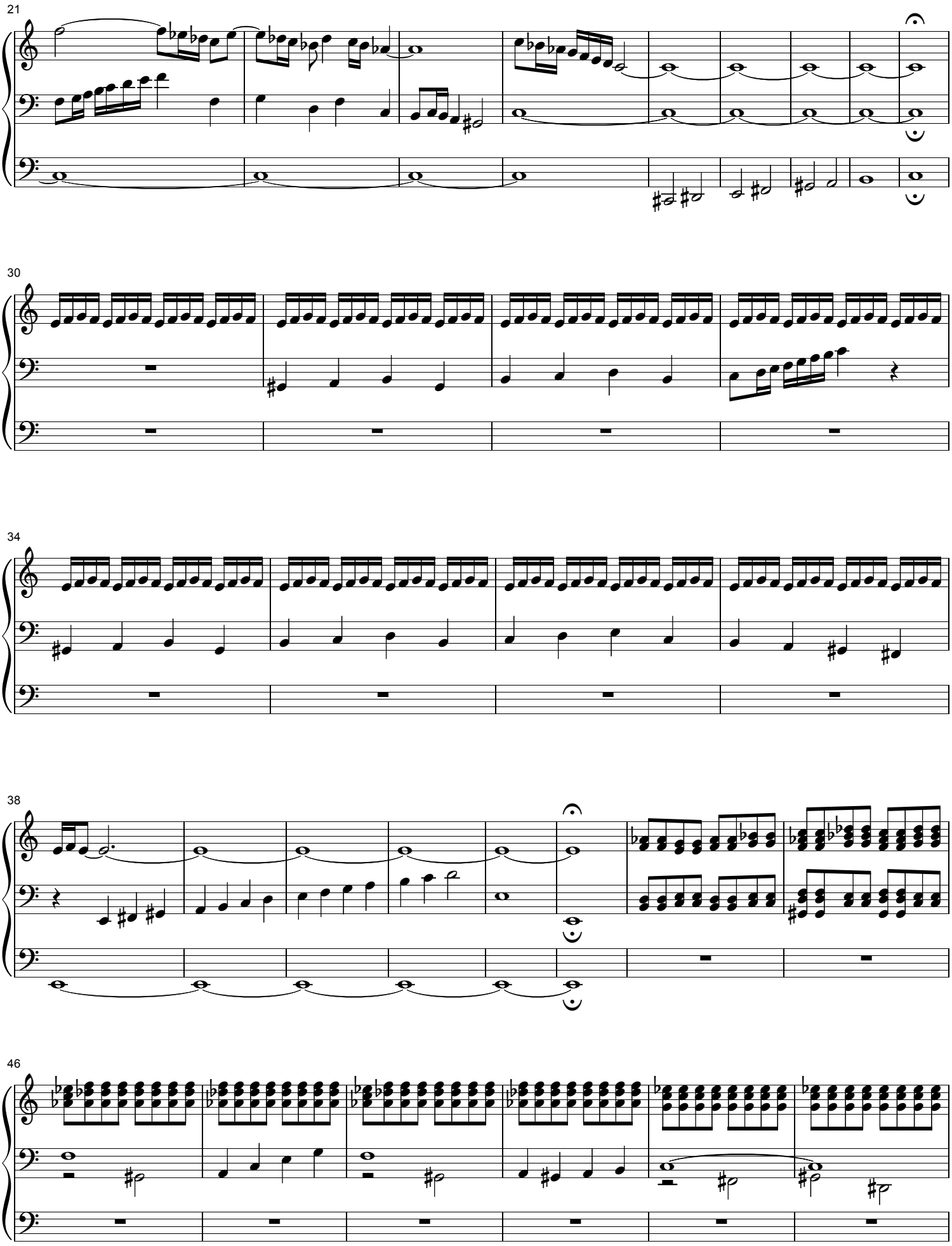
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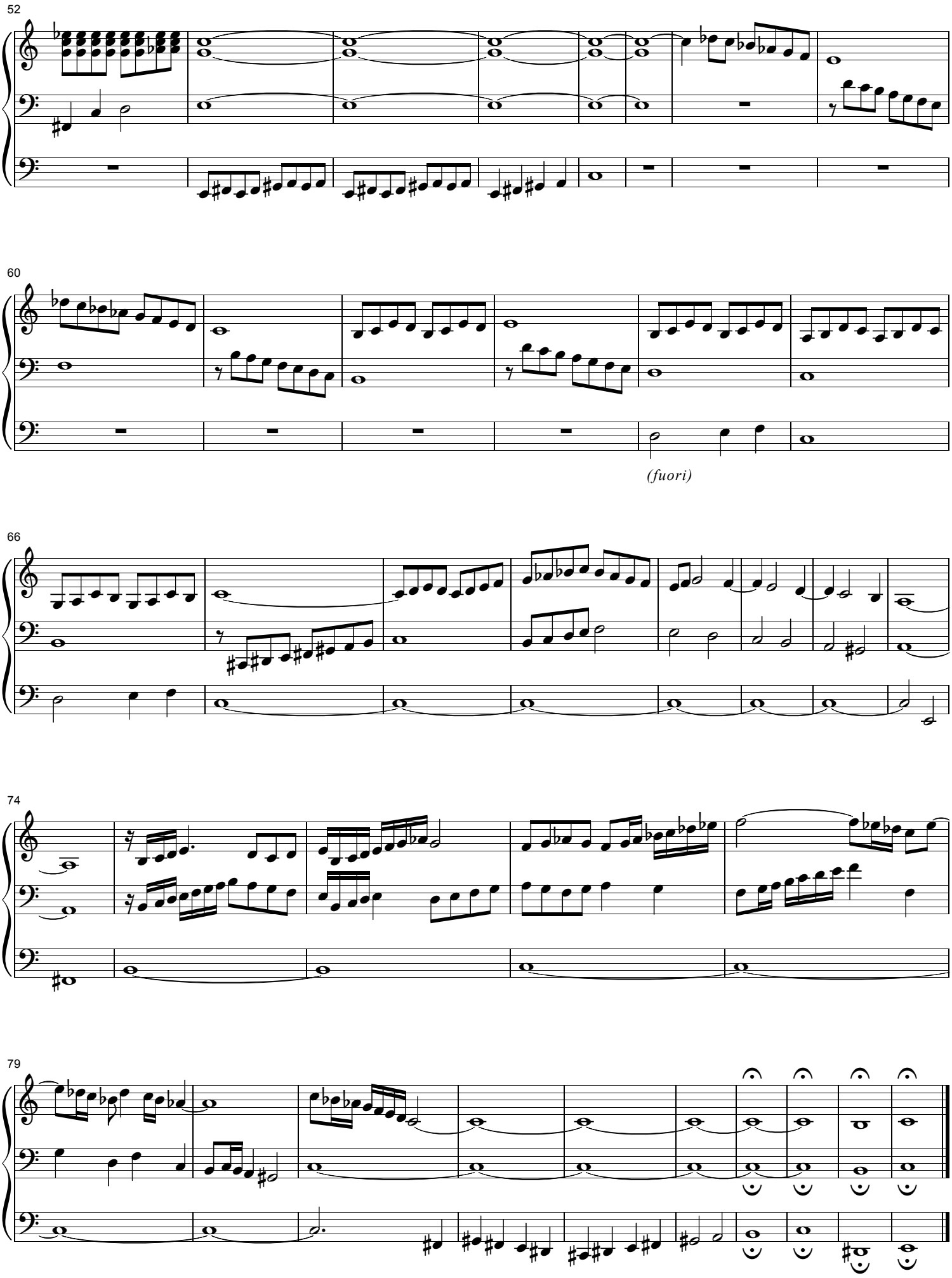
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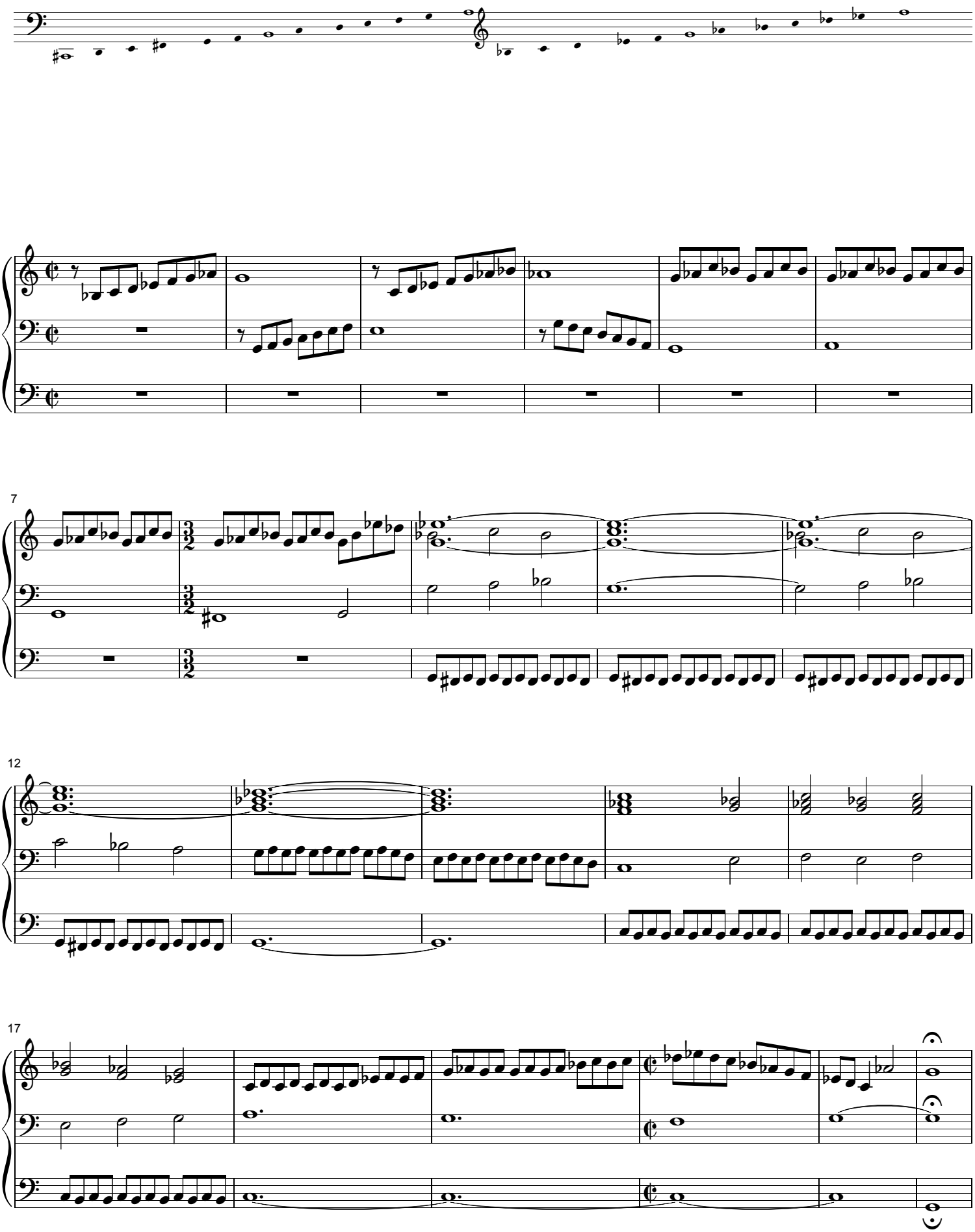
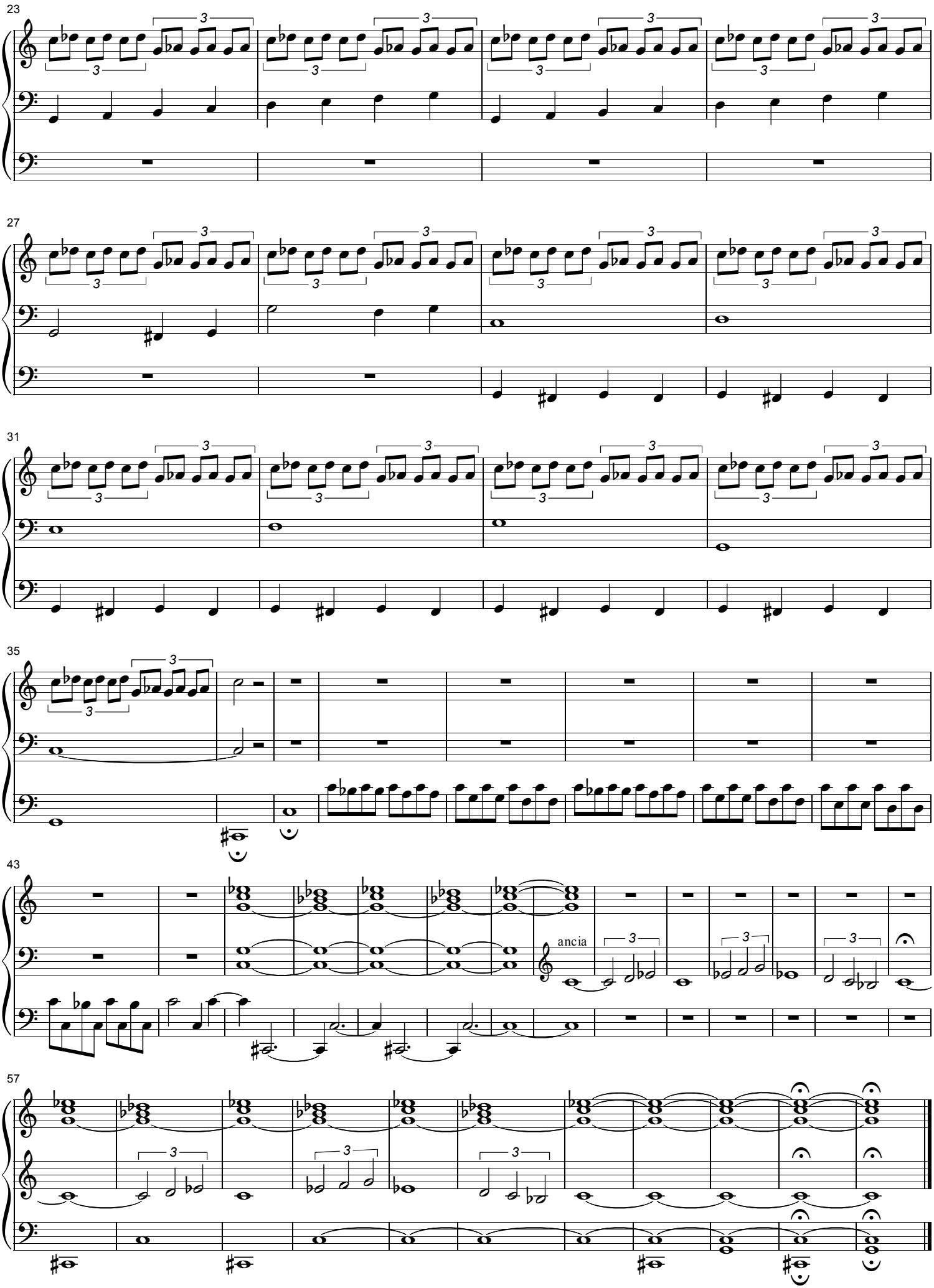
Corvus

Trasposizione RPS del modo locrio

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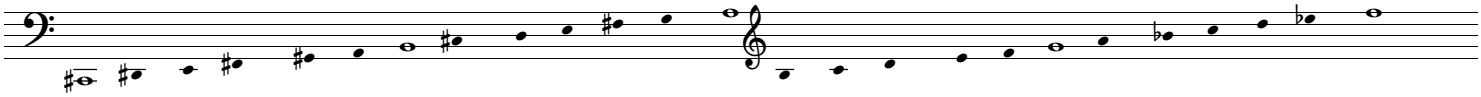
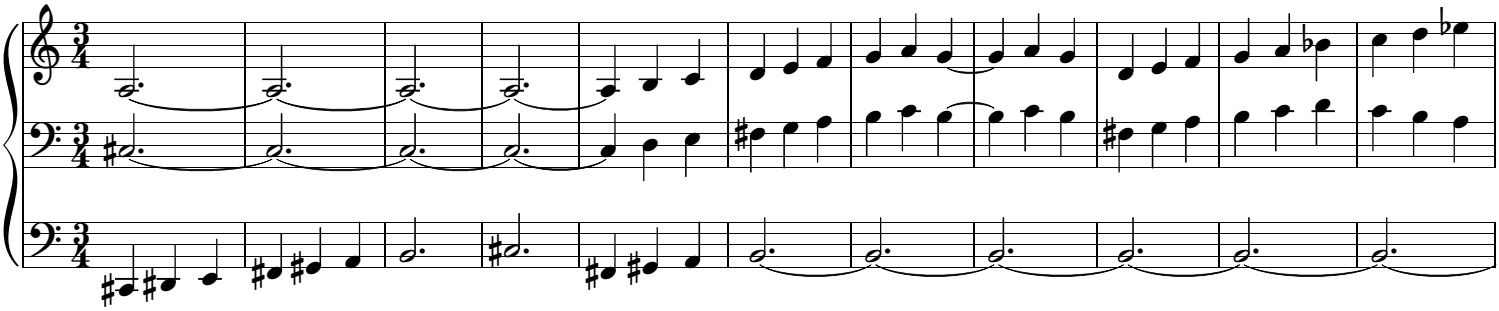
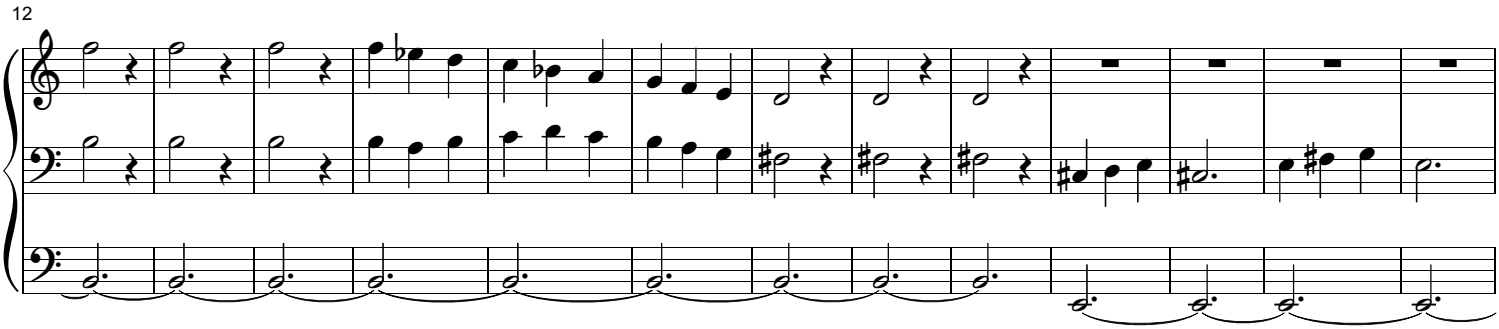
Canis

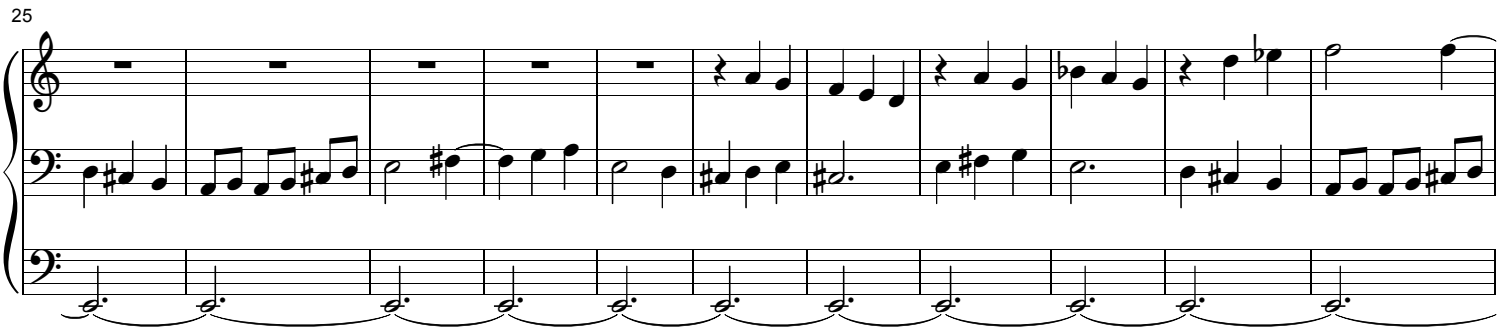
Trasposizione RPS del modo eolio

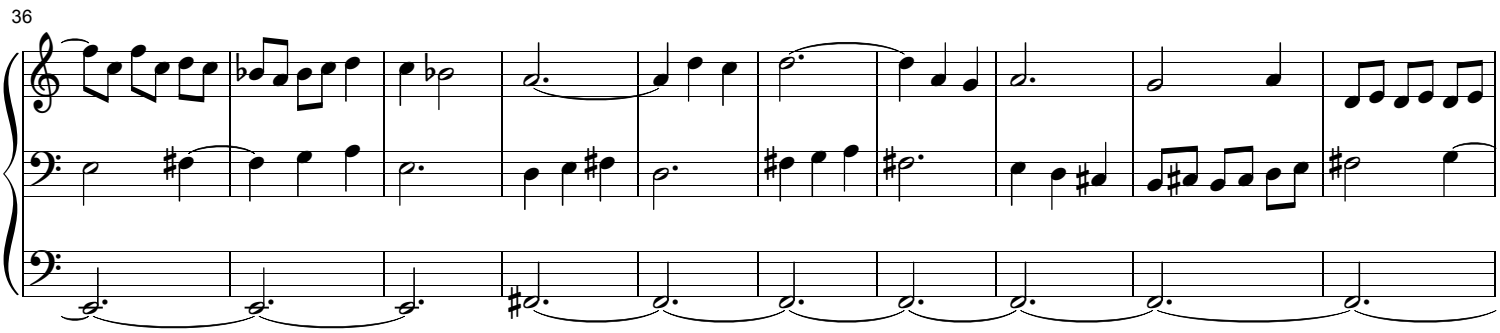


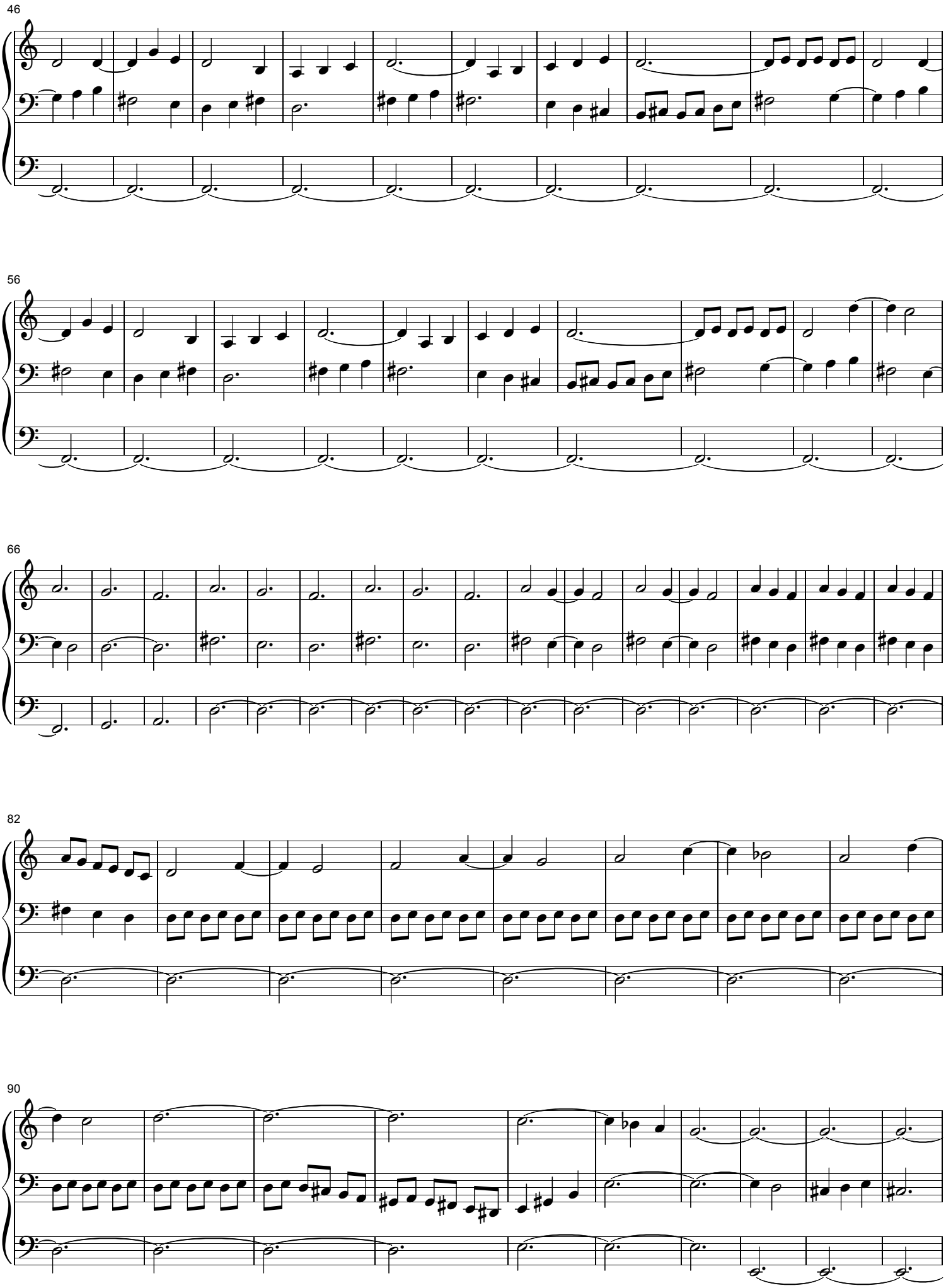
Andante mistico







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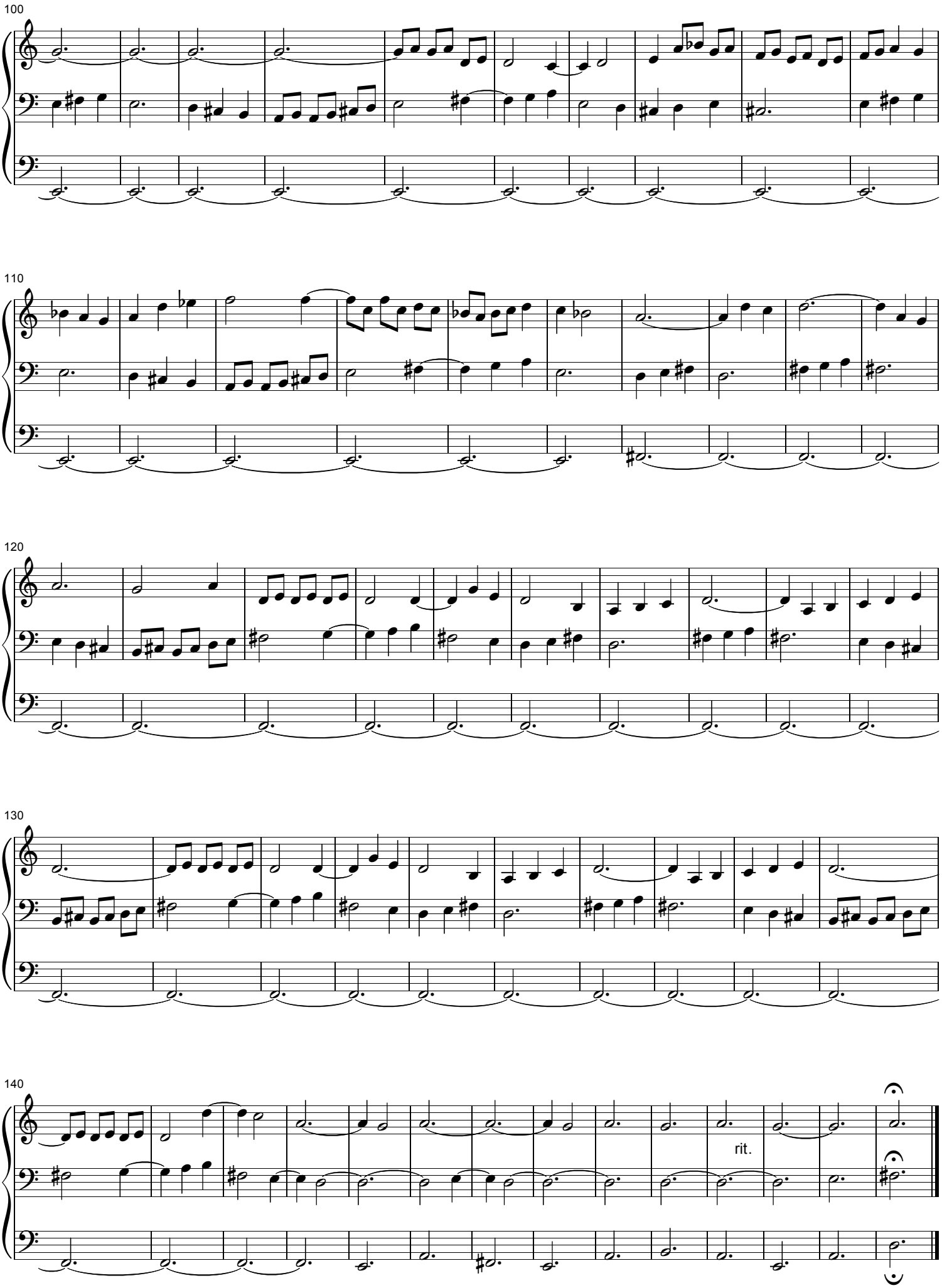
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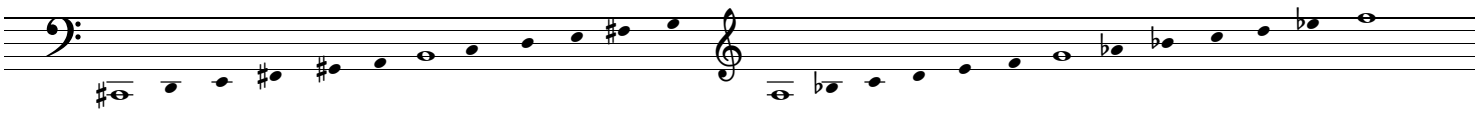
Scorpio

Trasposizioni RPS del modo frigio



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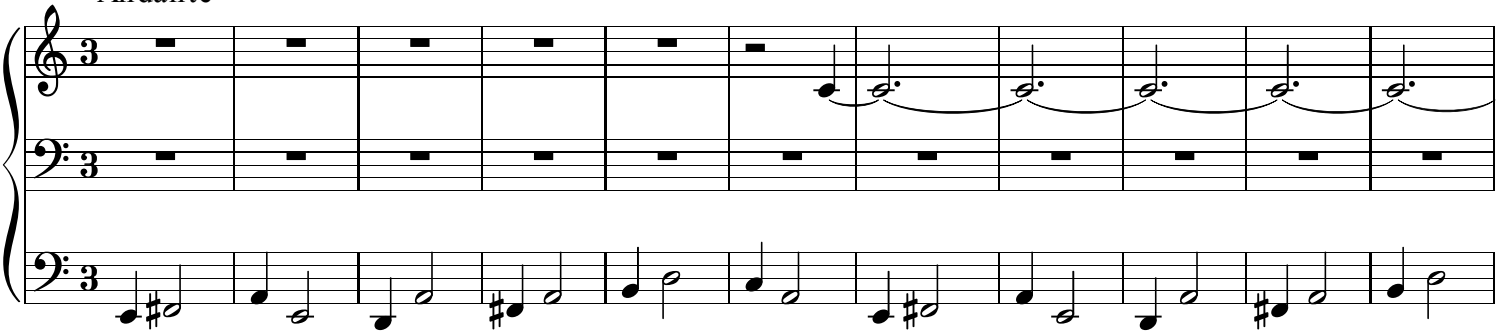

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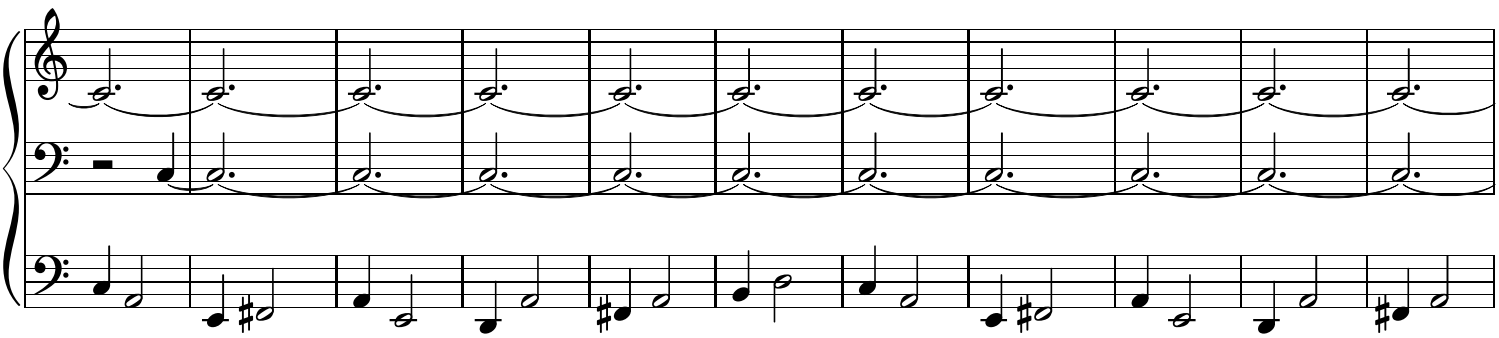

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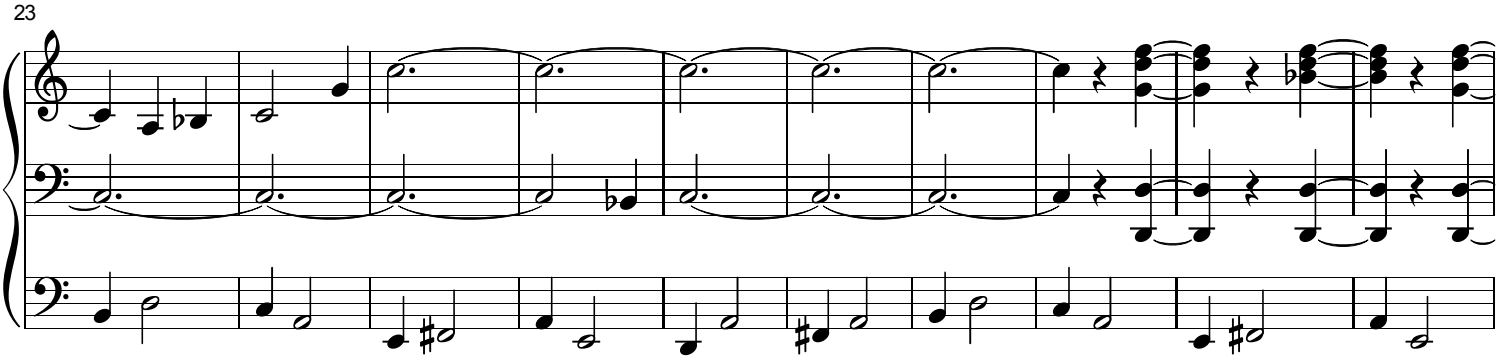

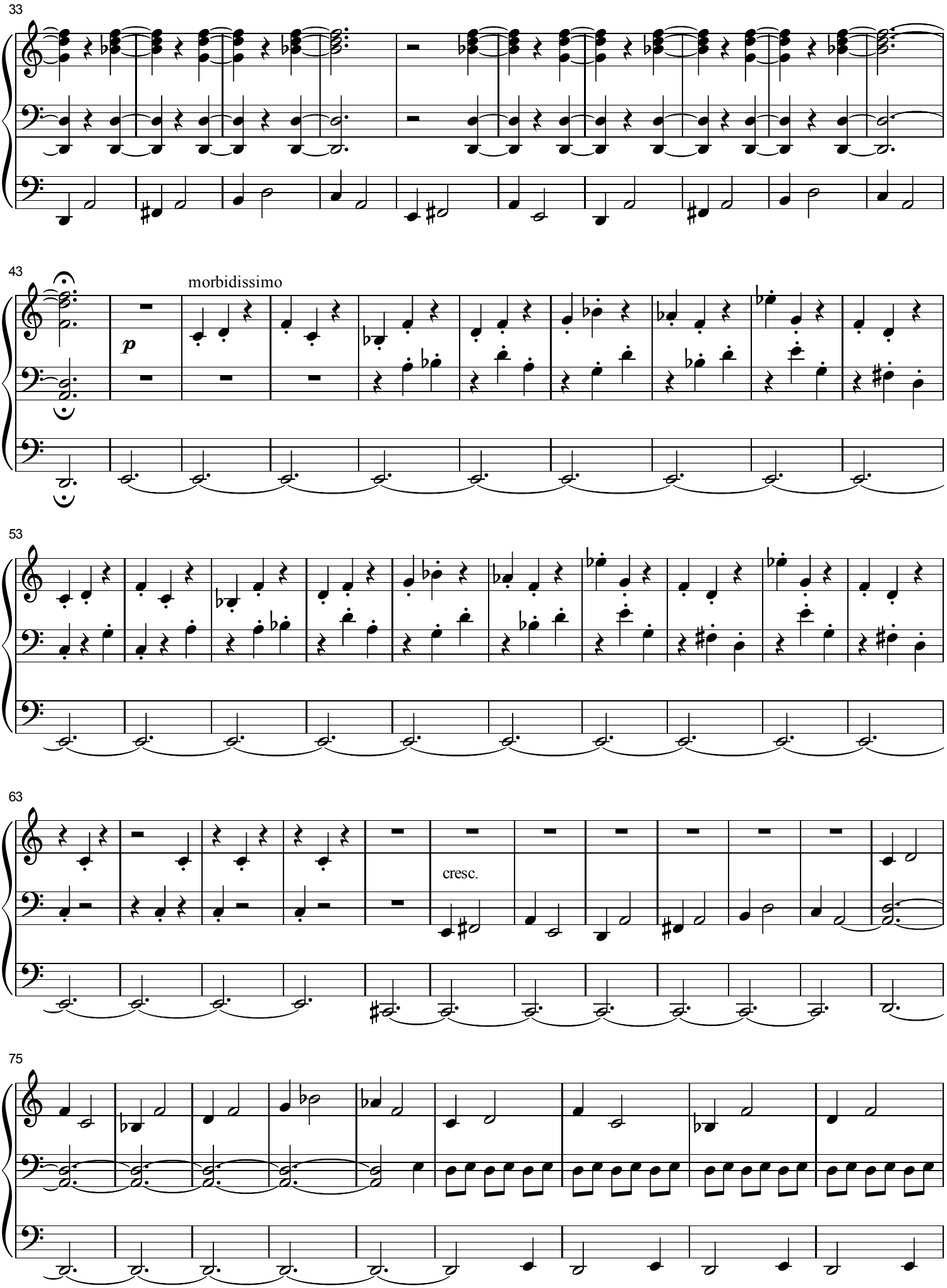
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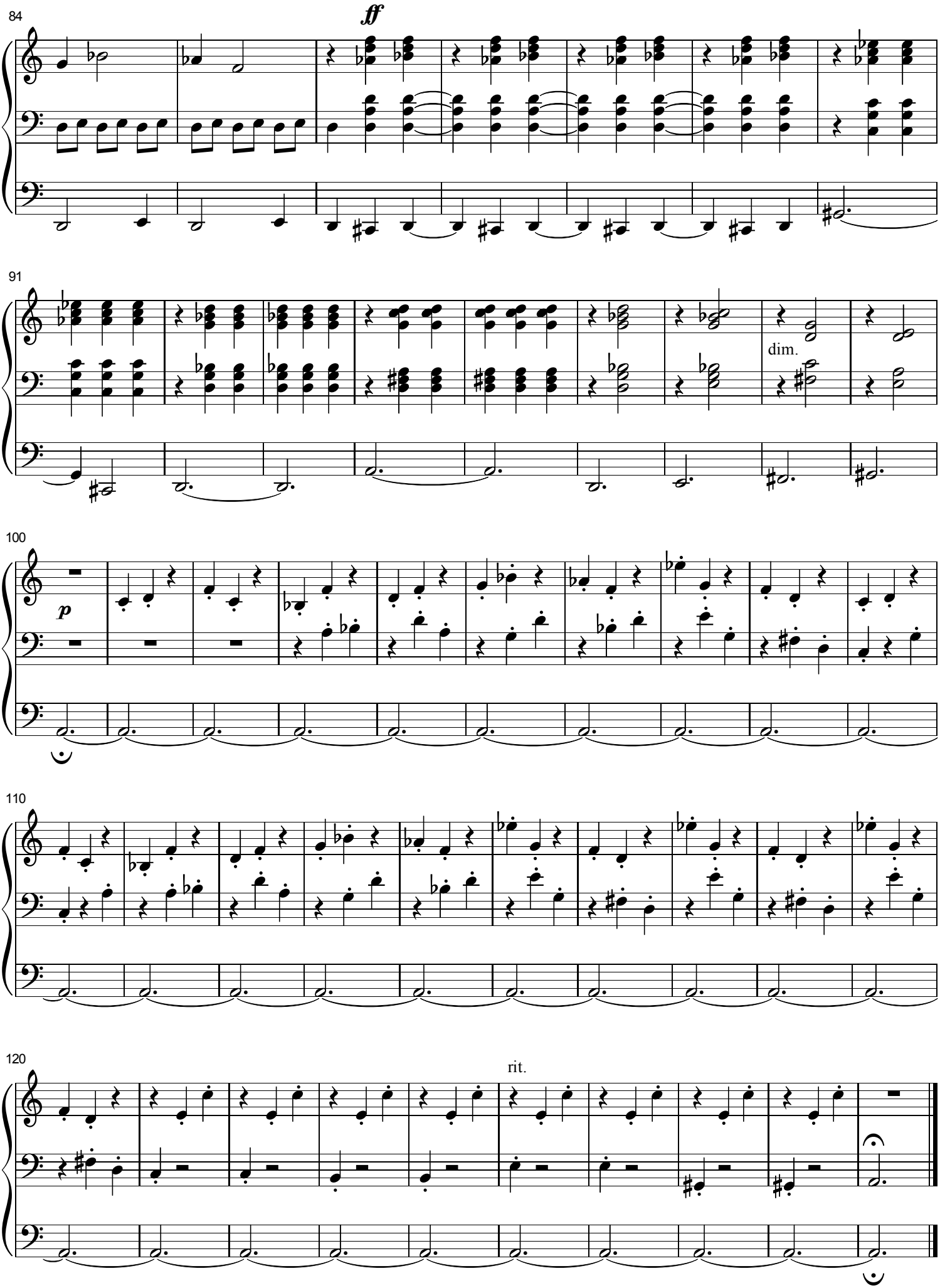
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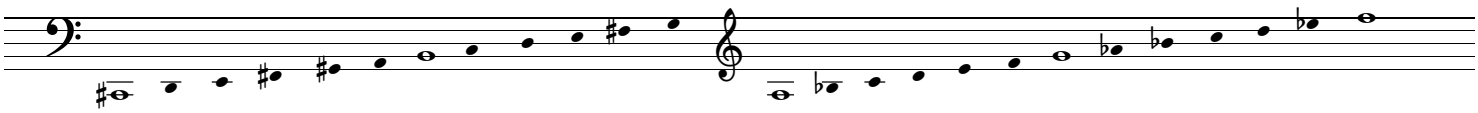
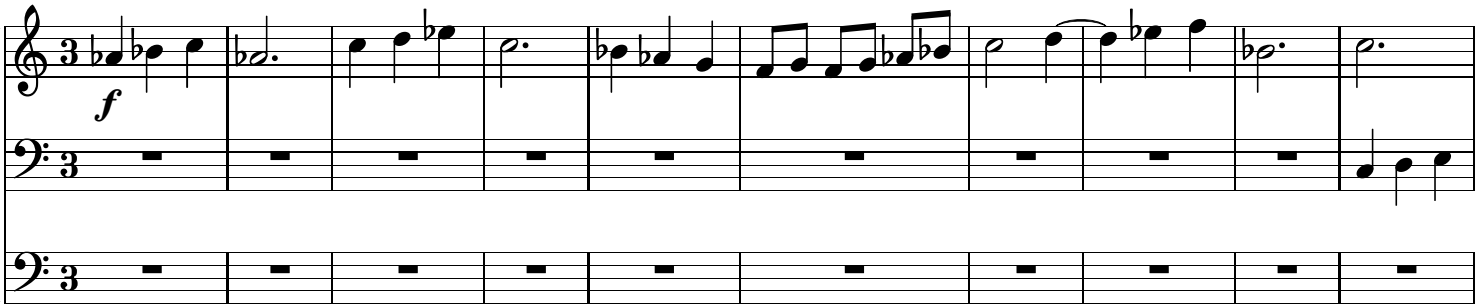
Taurus

Trasposizioni RPS del modo frigio



Solenne



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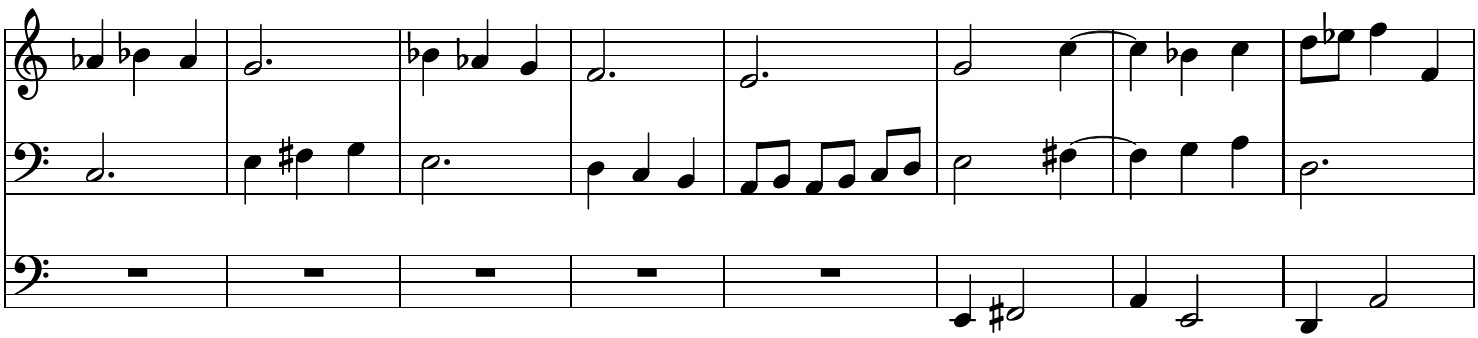

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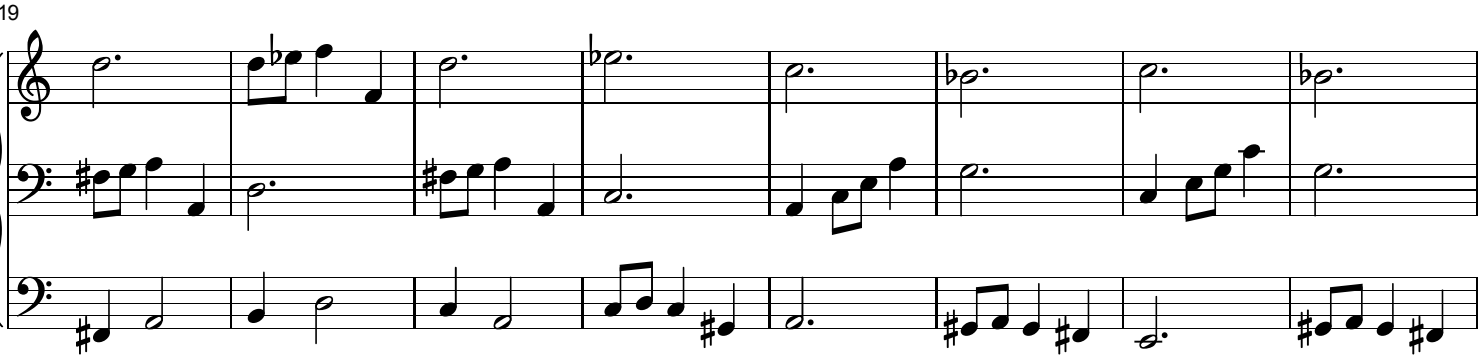
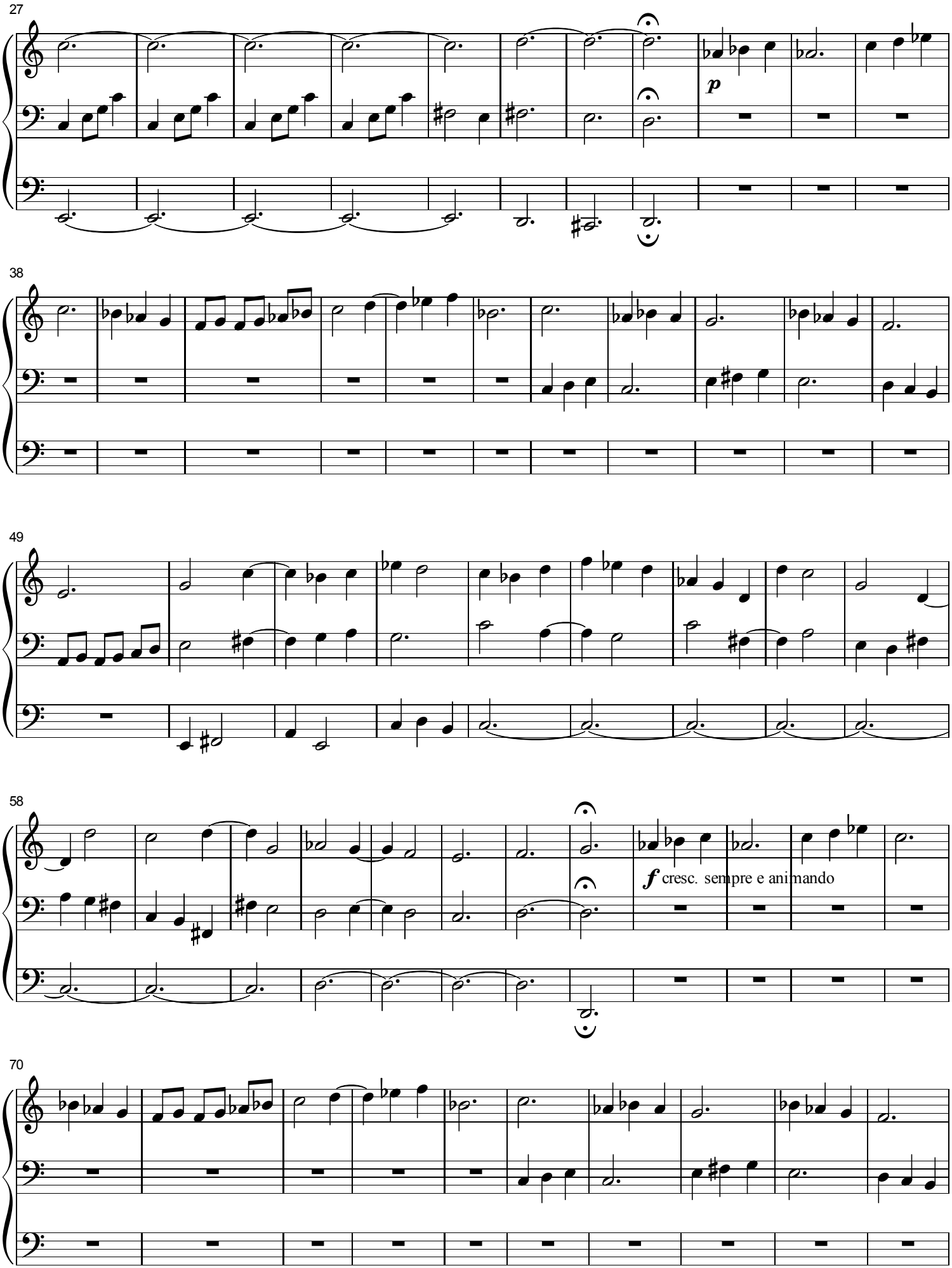
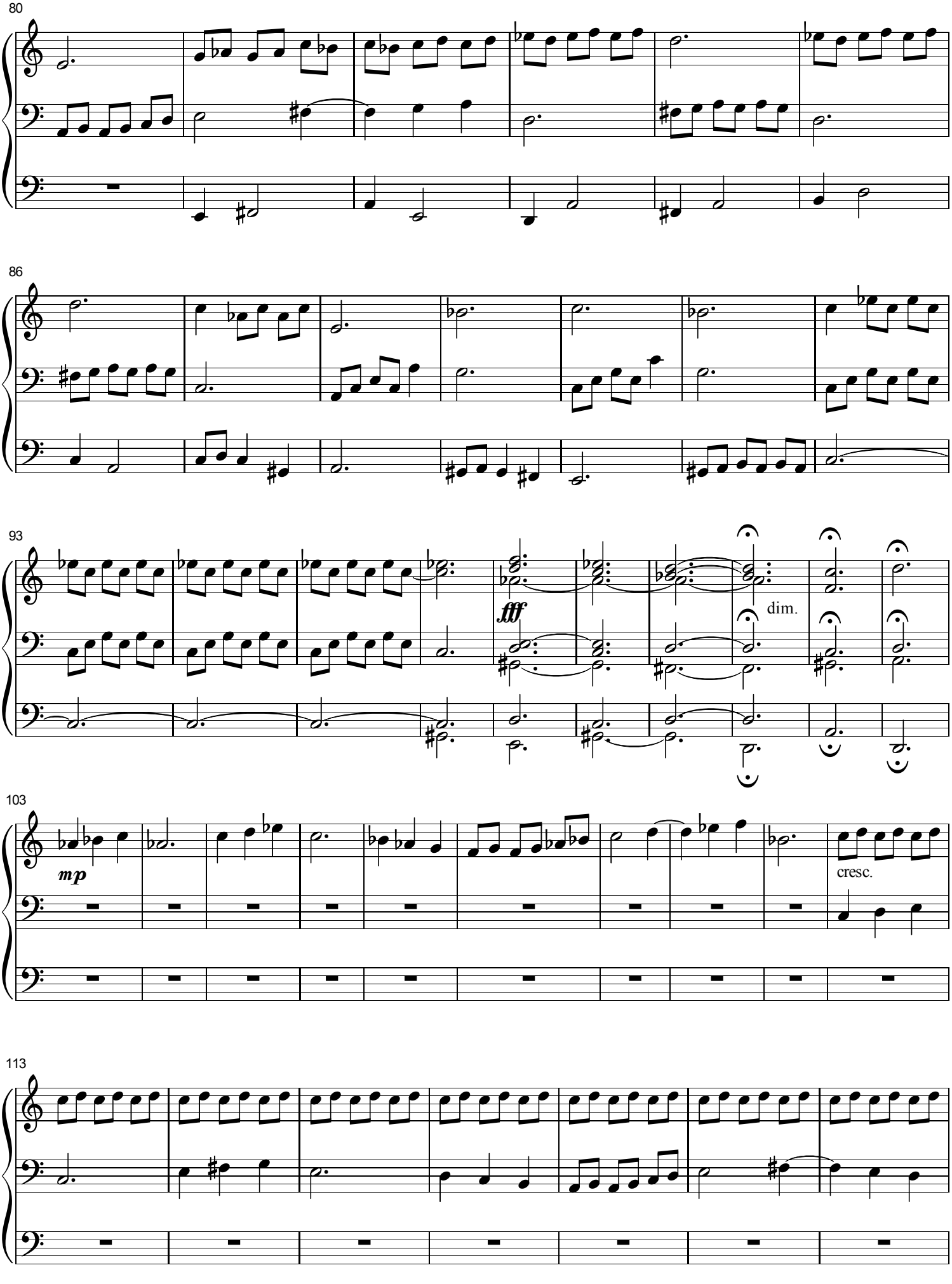
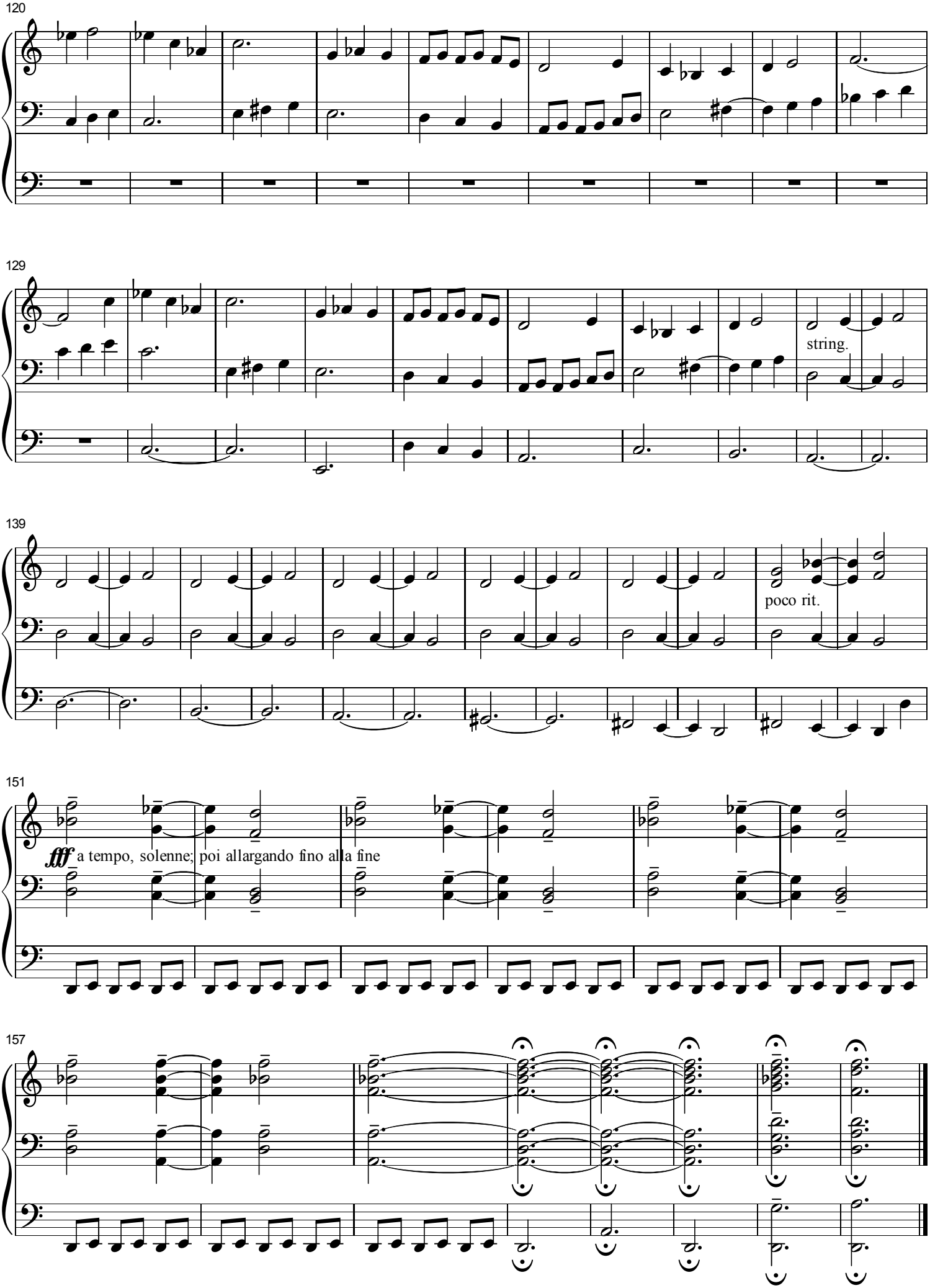


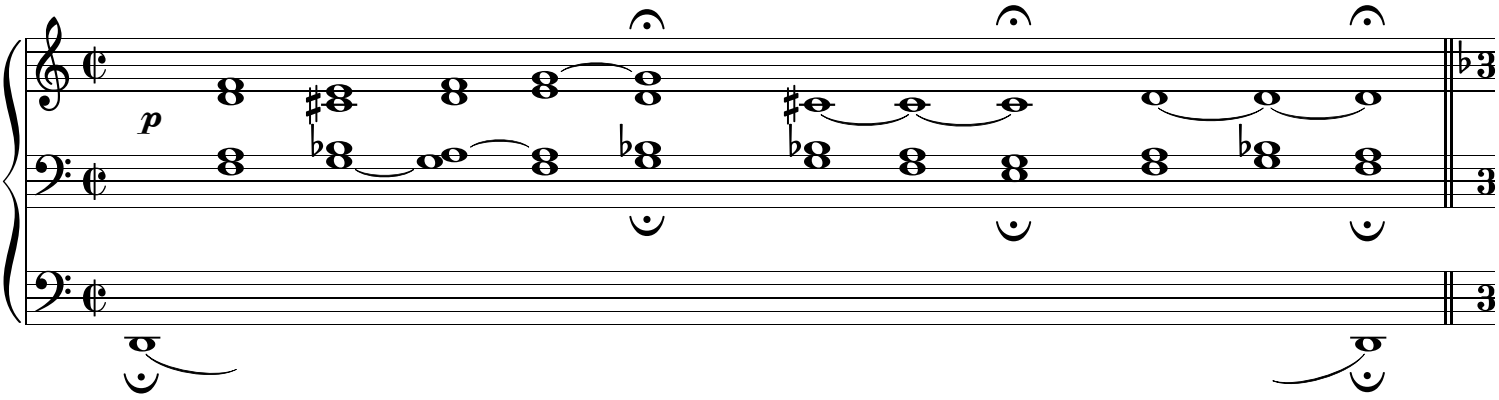

27
p
38
49
58
f cresc. sempre e animando
70


80
86
93
fff
dim.
103
mp
cresc.
113


120
129
string.
139
poco rit.
151
fff a tempo, solenne; poi allargando fino alla fine
157

Sol

Mistico



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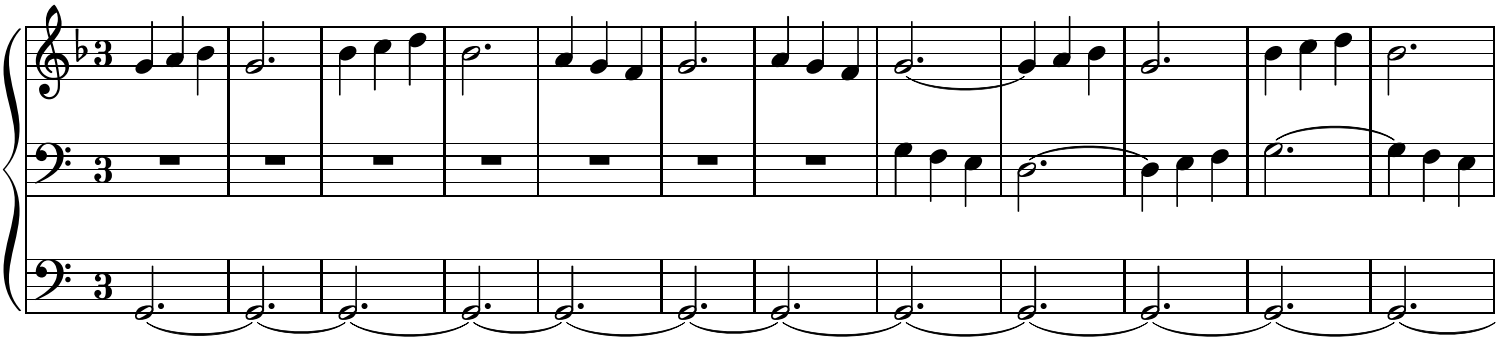

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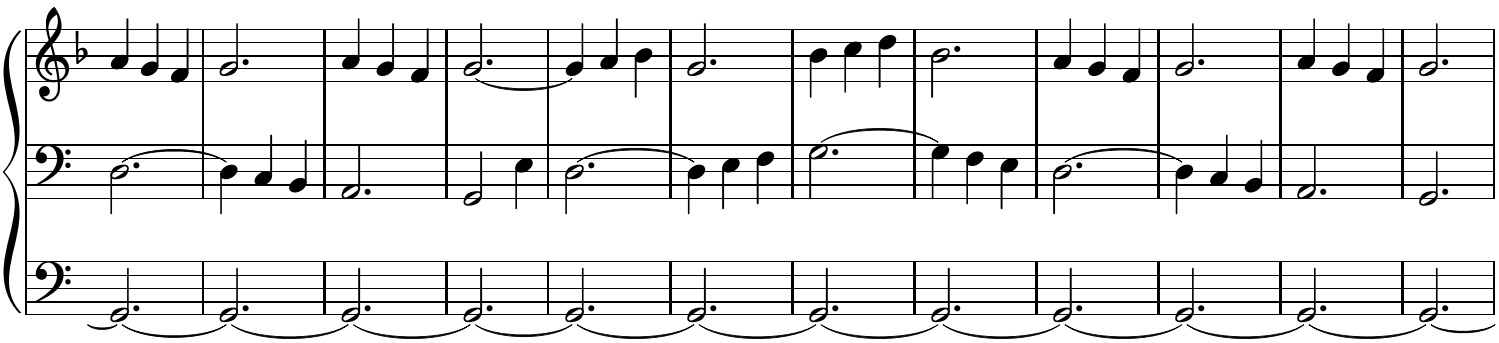

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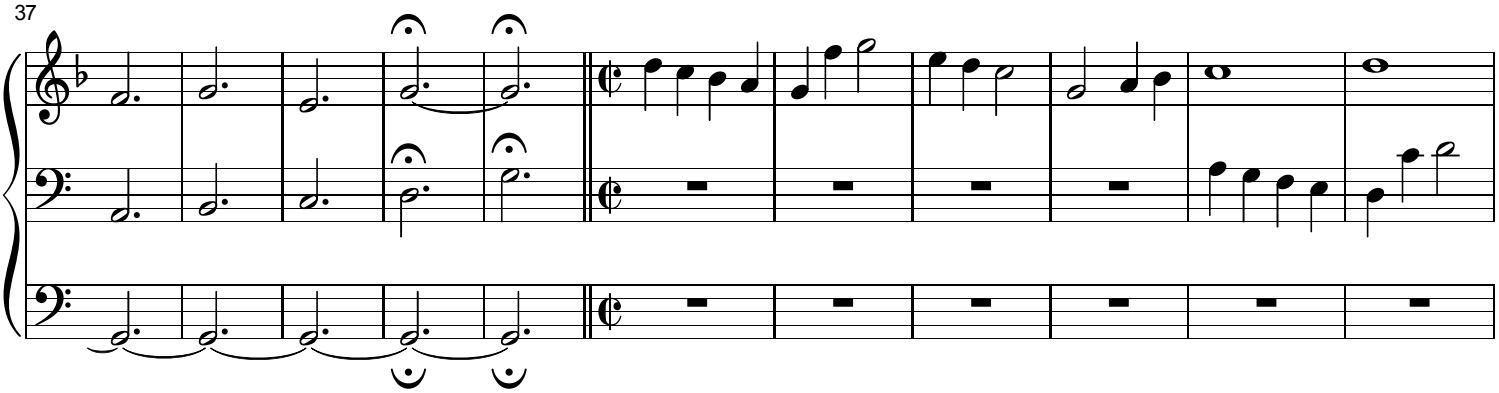
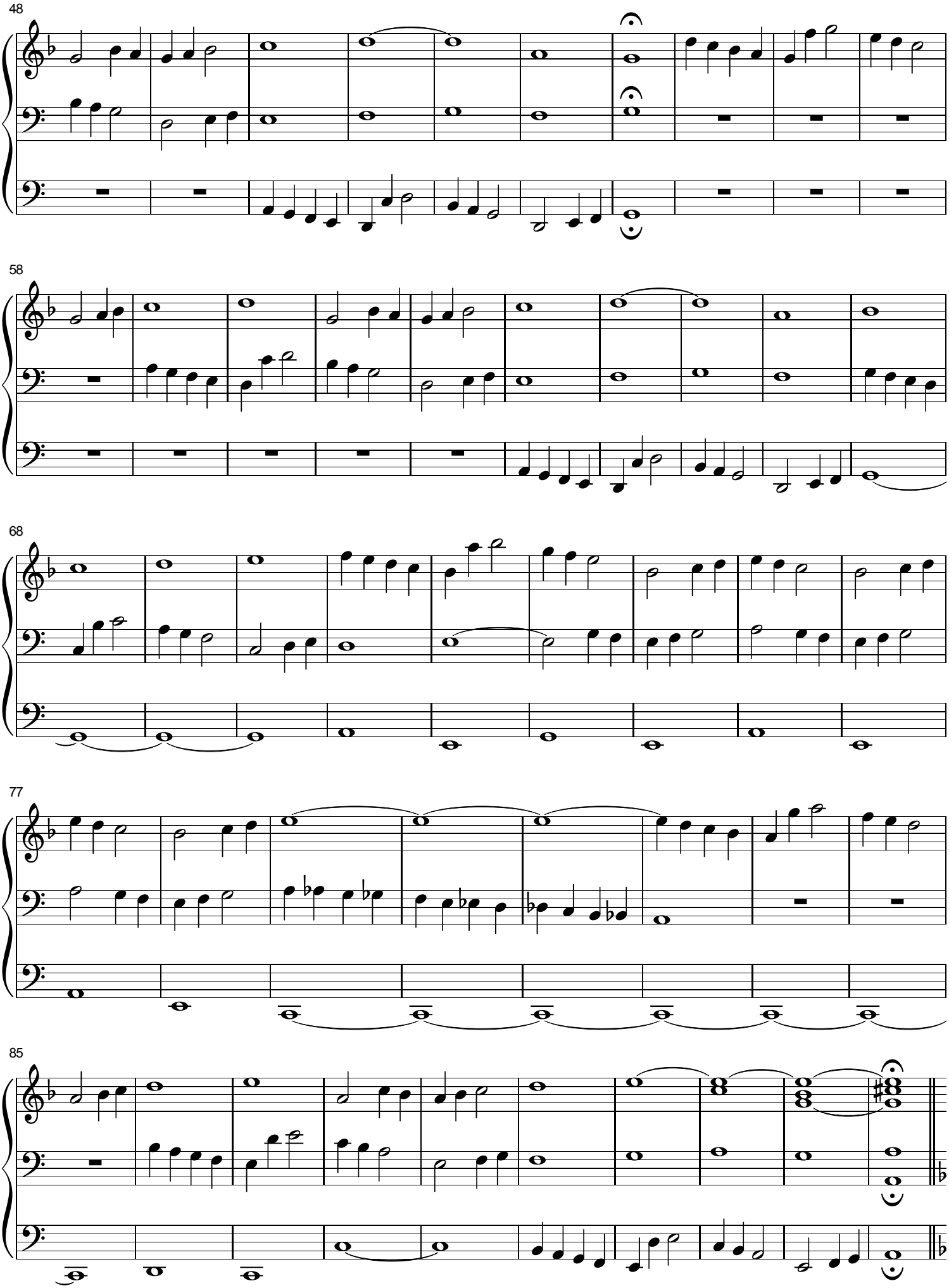
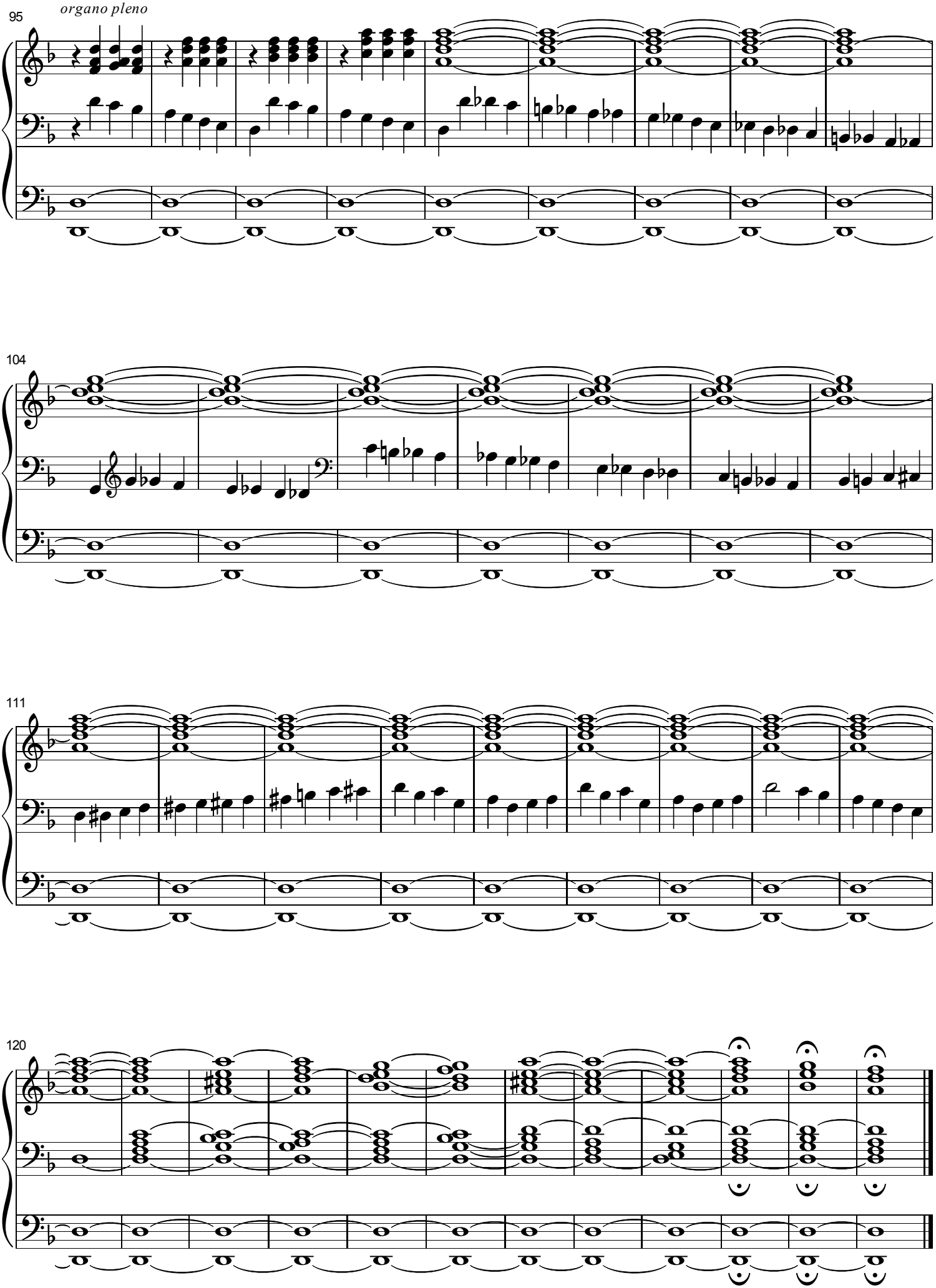



48
58
68
77
85


95
organo pleno
104
111
120