# Piano Compositions

*Mathieu Daniël Polak*

**2008 - 2024**

**Boys will be Boys**

**Etude Juive**

**Etude Modeste**

**Kol Nidrei**

**Cancion de Cuna**

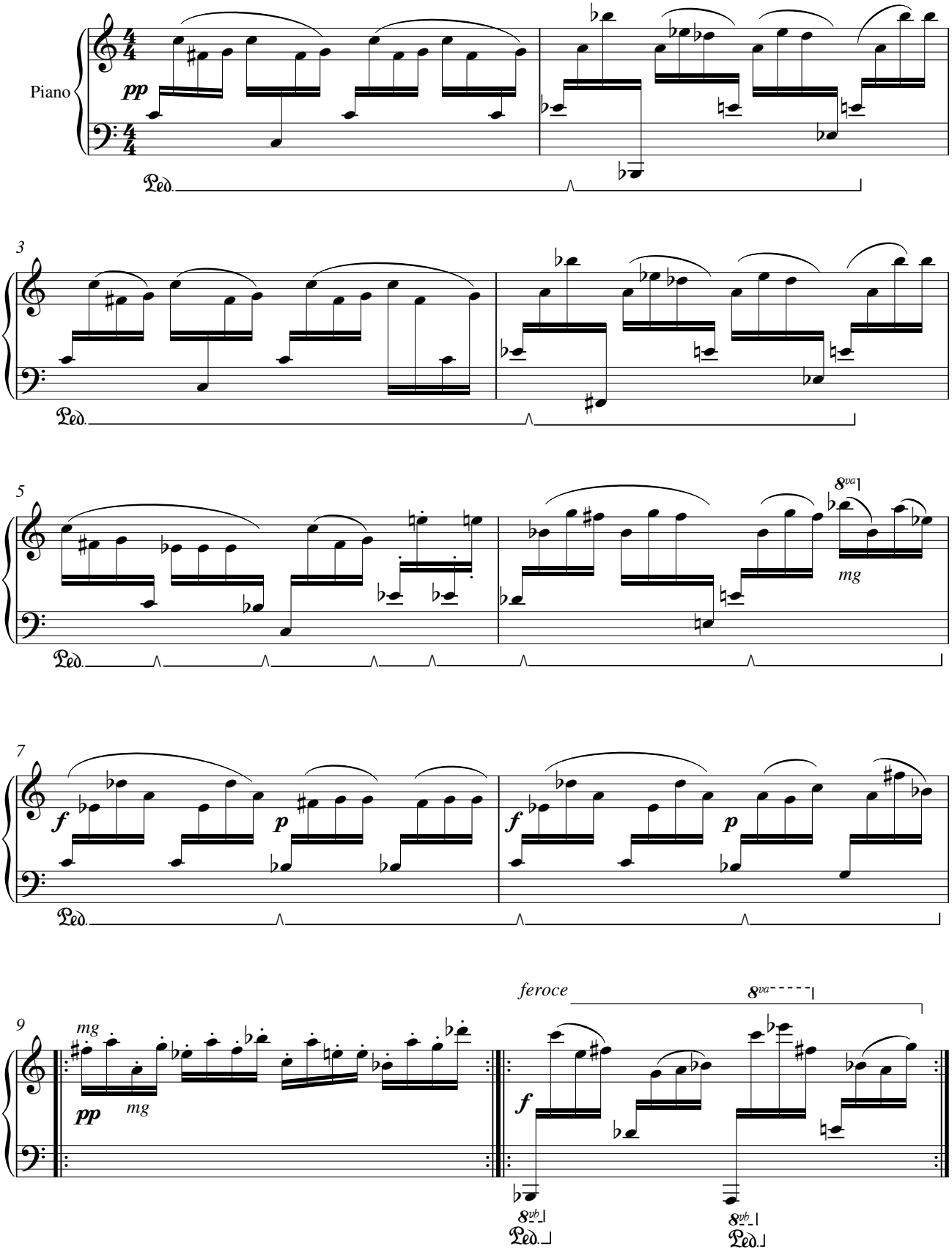
**Sefirot**

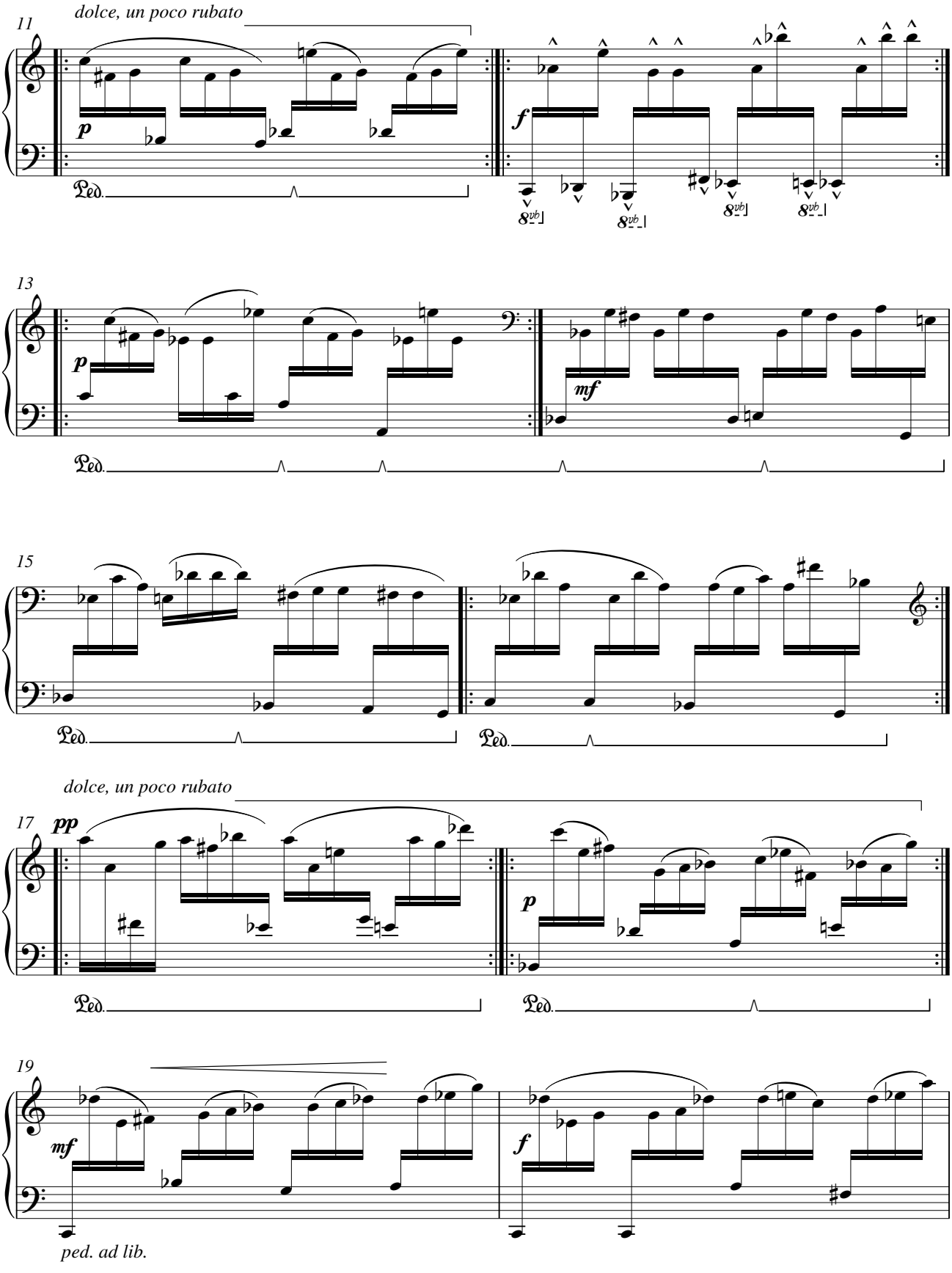
# Boys will be Boys

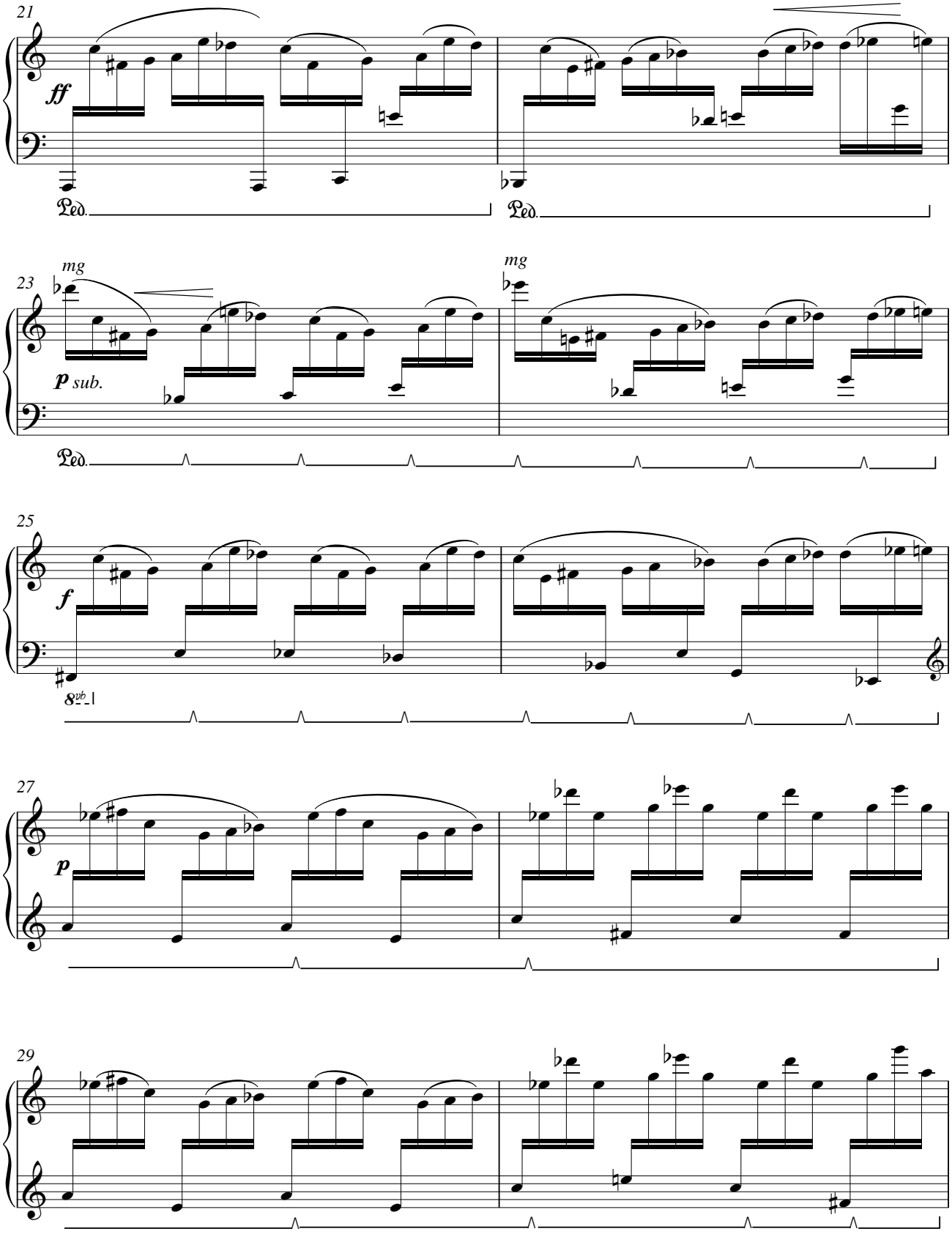
Mathieu Daniël Polak

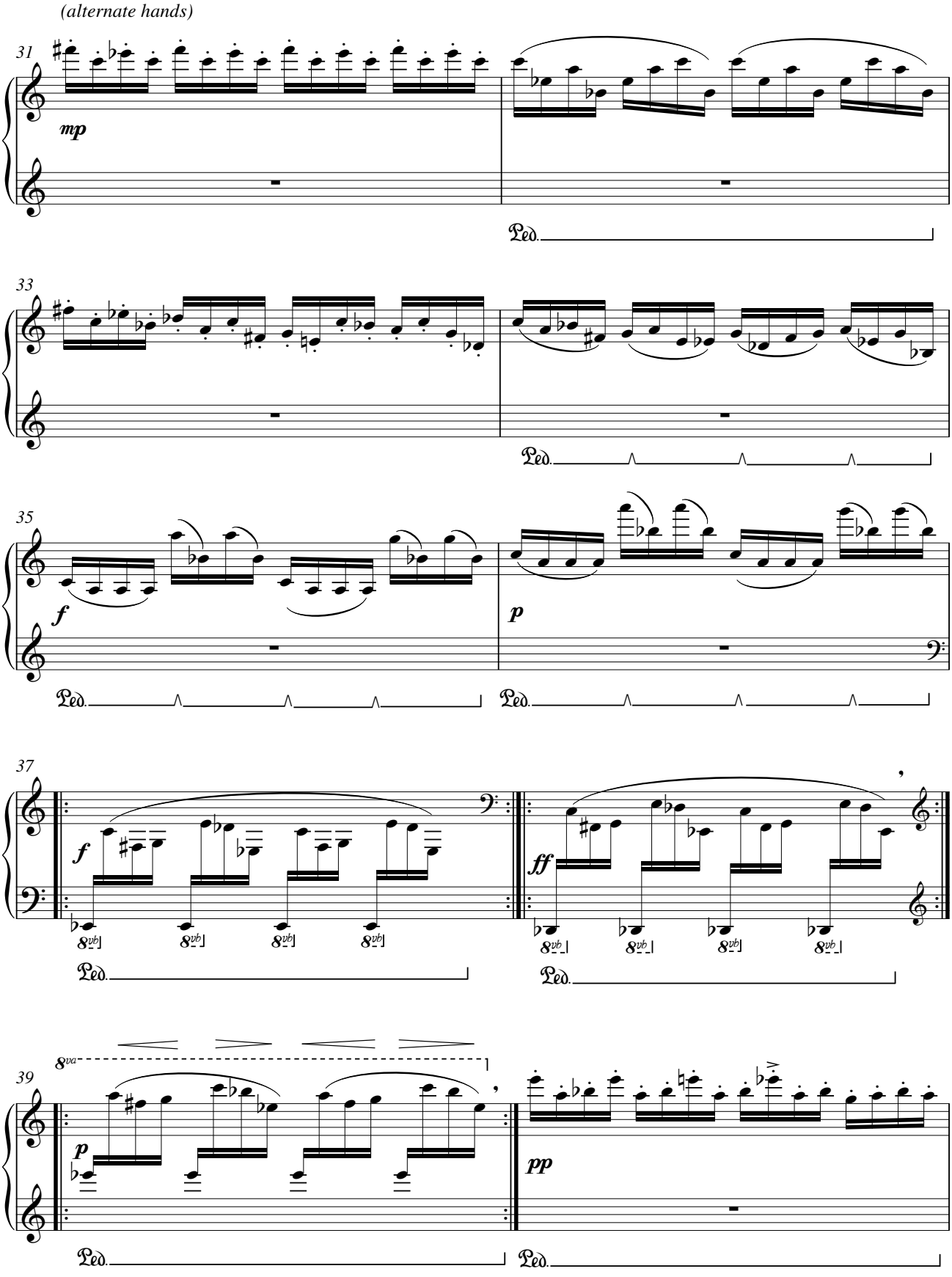
**Animoso,** ♩ = 106

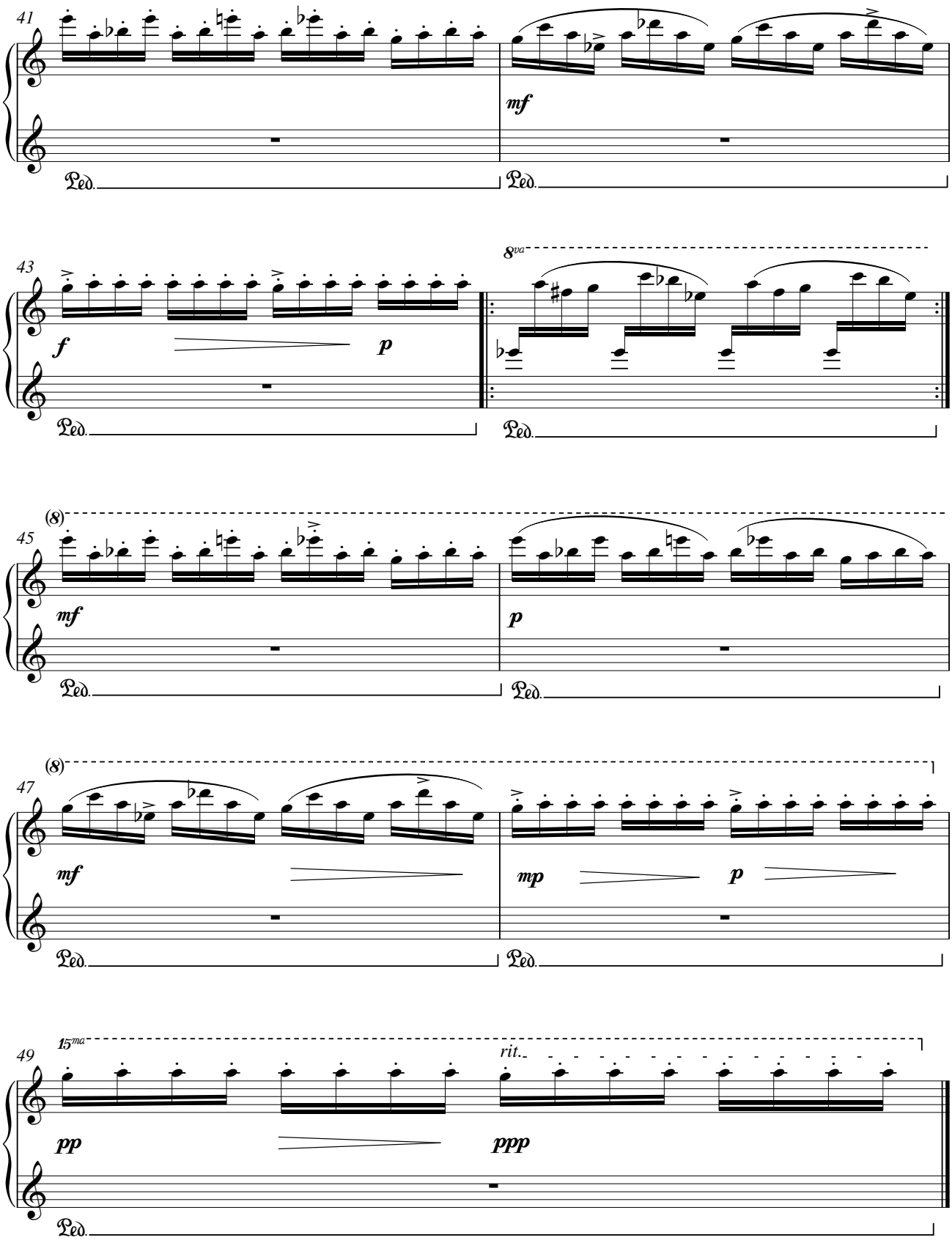
Piano




11
dolce, un poco rubato
p
f
Ped.
8vb
13
p
mf
15
17
dolce, un poco rubato
pp
p
19
mf
f
ped. ad lib.


21
ff
Ped.
Ped.
23
mg
p sub.
mg
Ped.
25
f
8vb
27
p
29


(alternate hands)
31
mp
Ped.
33
Ped.
35
f
p
Ped.
Ped.
37
f
ff
8vb
Ped.
Ped.
39
8va
p
pp
Ped.
Ped.


41
mf
Ped.
43
f
p
8va
45
(8)
mf
p
47
mf
mp
p
49
15ma
rit.
pp
ppp

# Étude Juive

Mathieu Daniël Polak
2019

**Con moto** (♩. = 112)

3+2+2+3

Piano

*mp*

*con pedale*

*f*

*p*

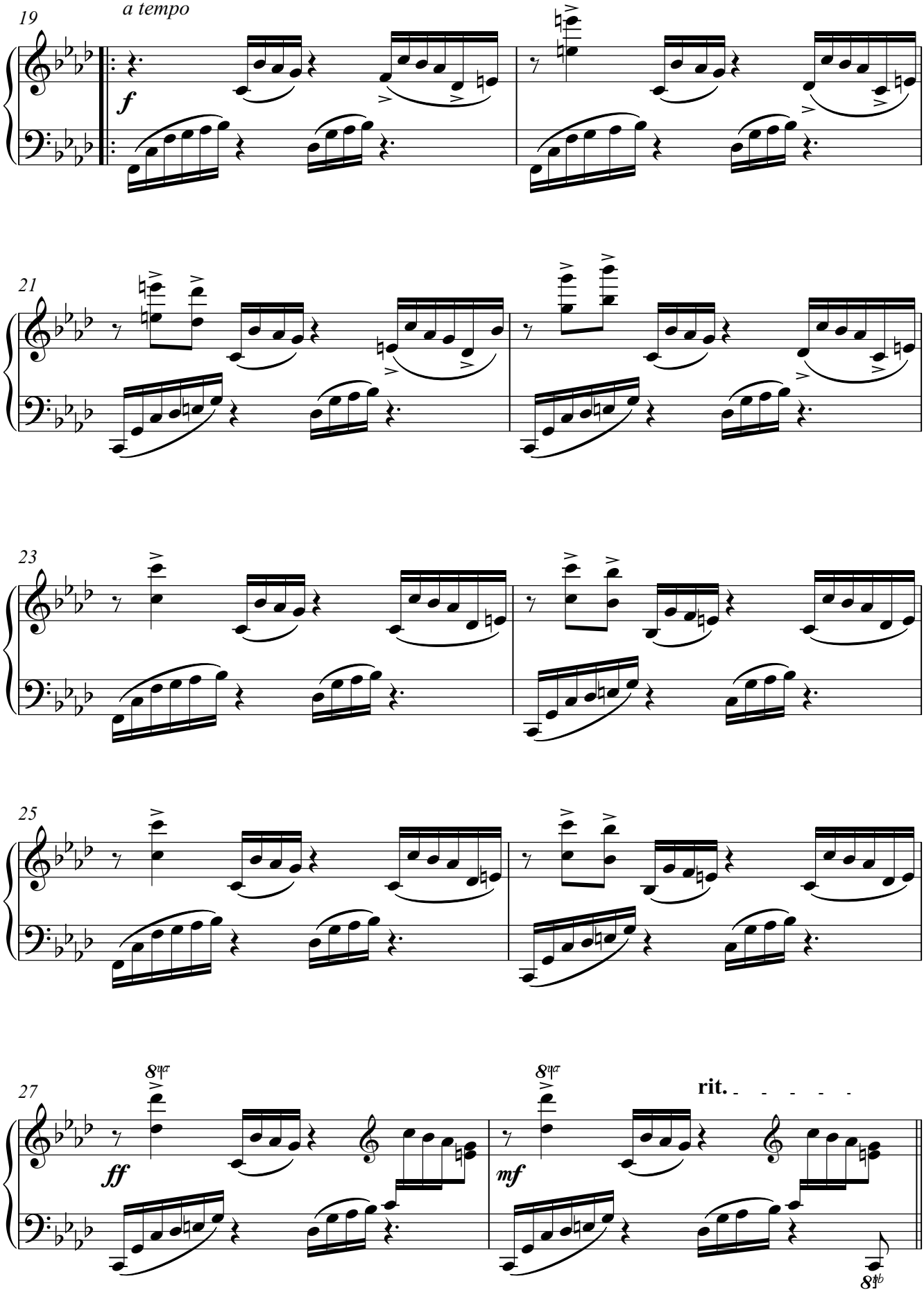
*f*

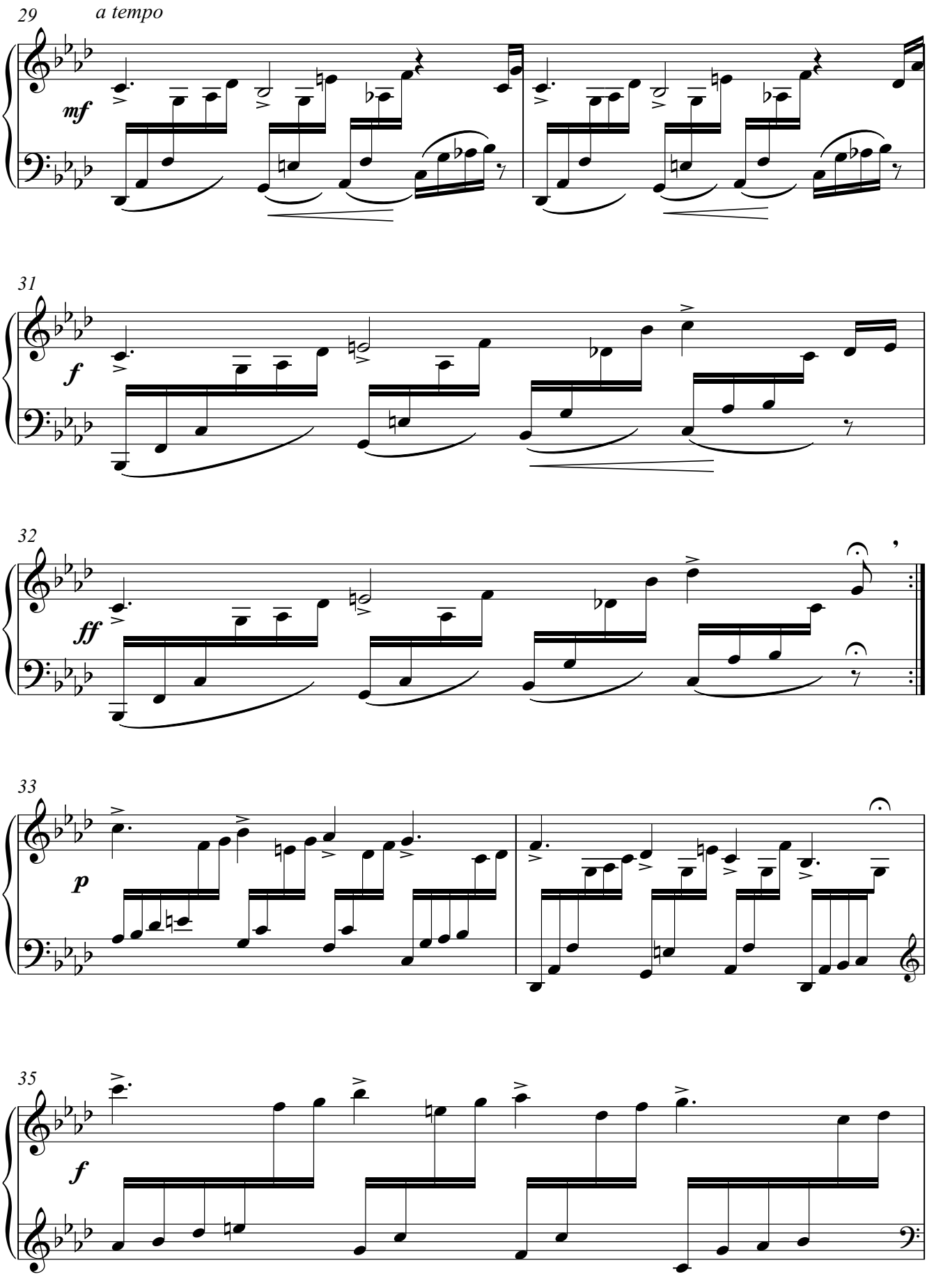
*p*

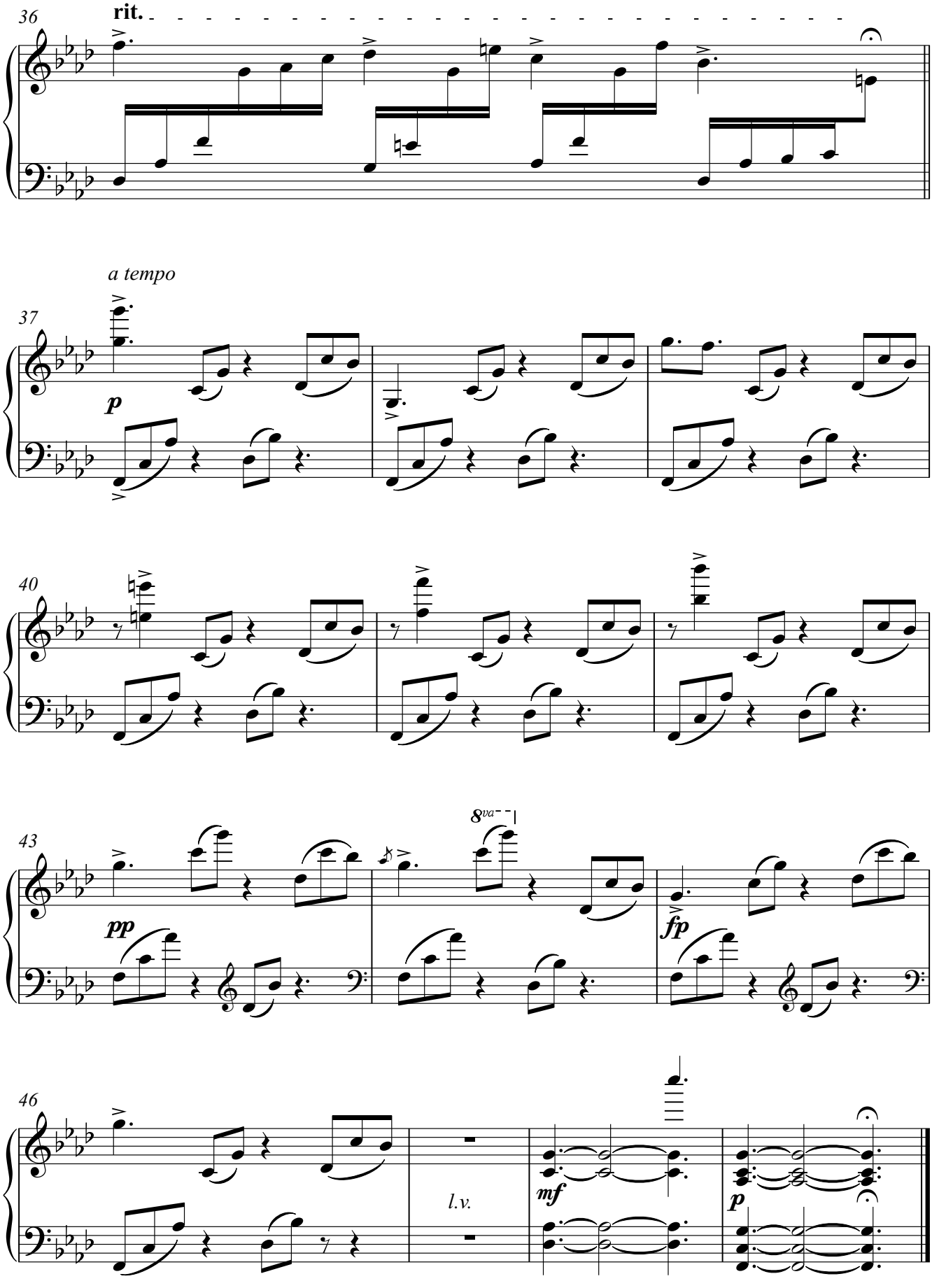
*mf*

*f*

**rit.**


19
a tempo
f
21
23
25
27
ff
8va
mf
rit.

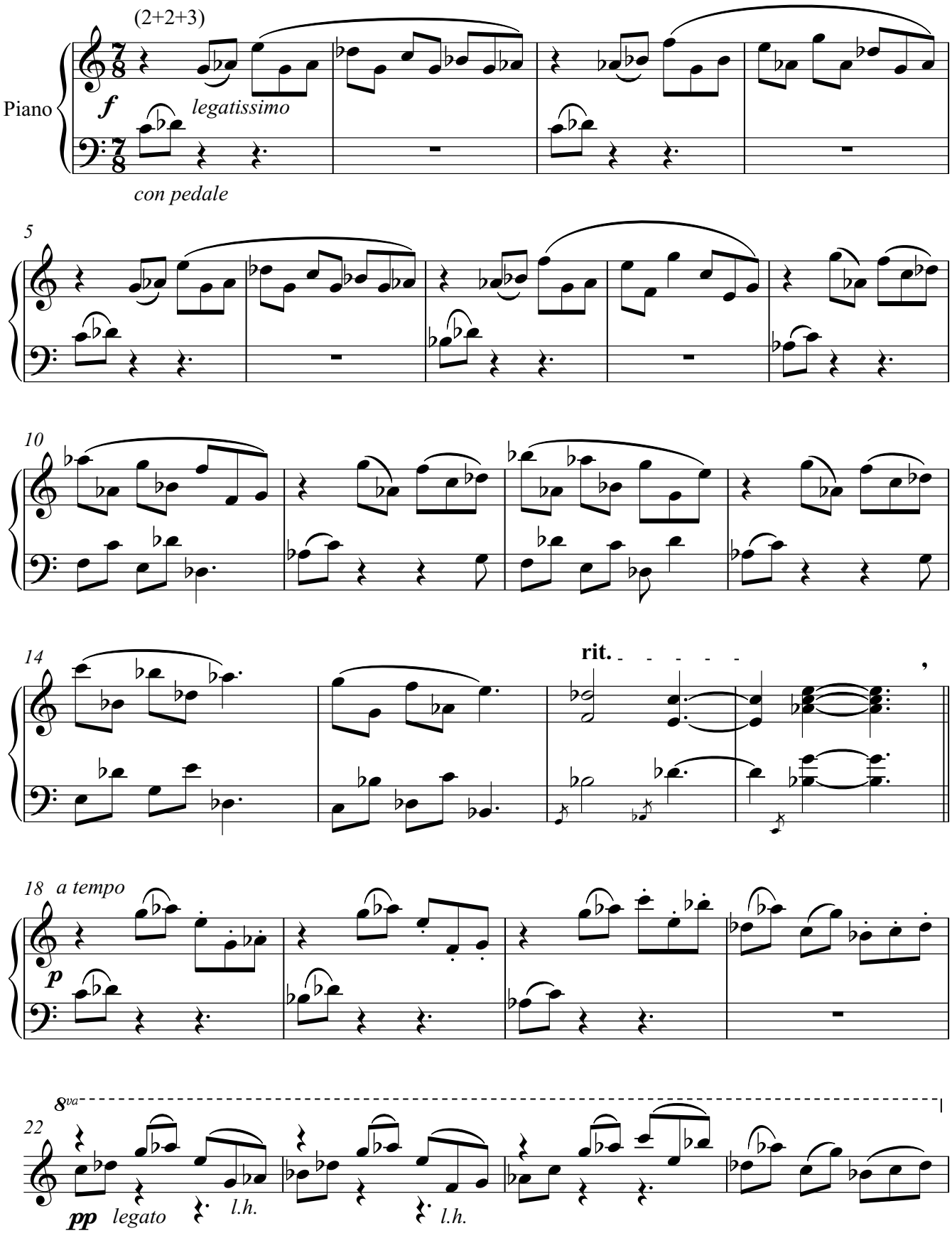

29
a tempo
mf
31
f
32
ff
33
p
35
f

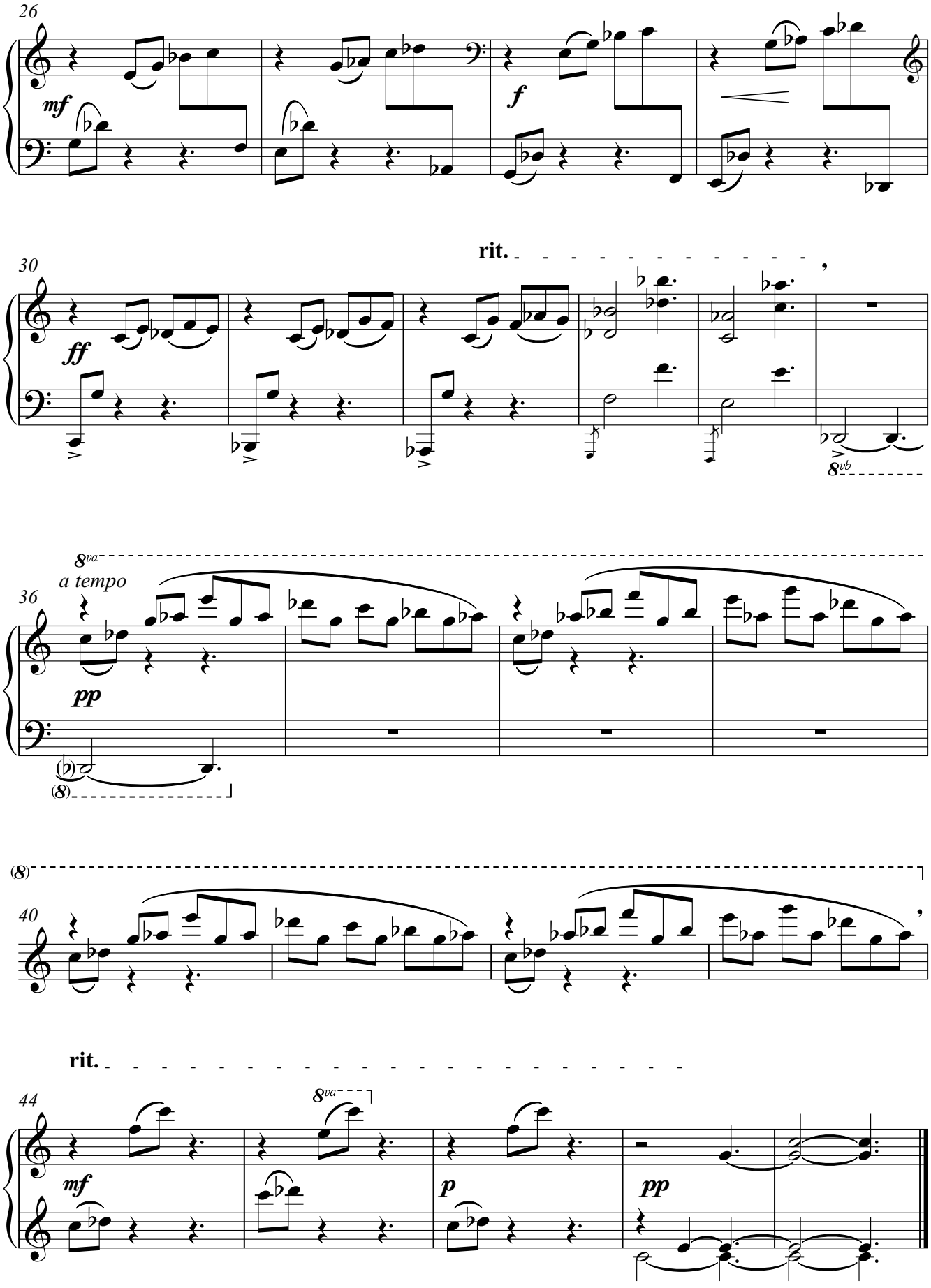

36
rit.
a tempo
37
p
40
43
8va
pp
fp
46
l.v.
mf
p

# Étude Modeste

Mathieu Daniël Polak
2019

**Comodo** ♩ = c. 144



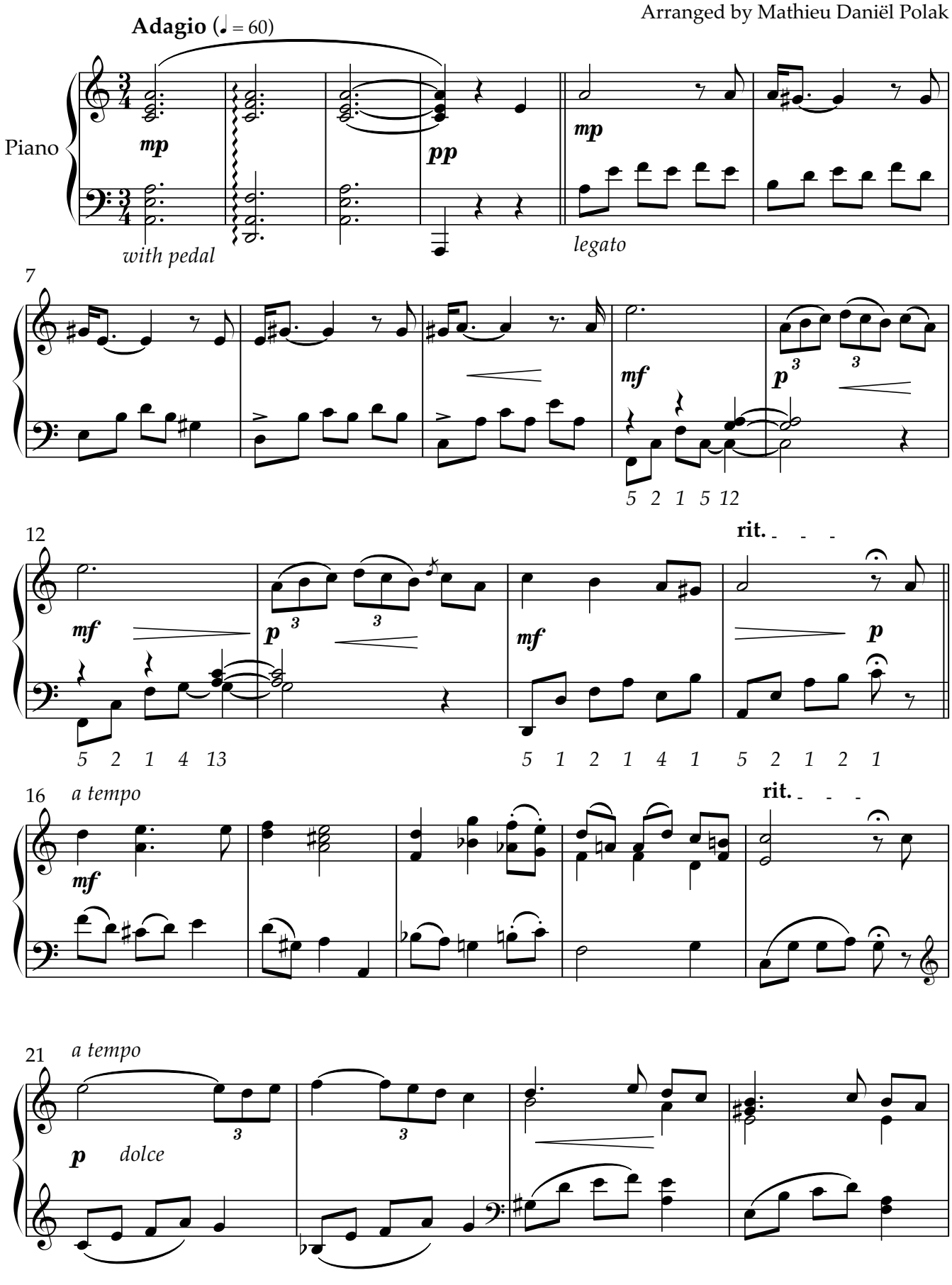

26
mf
f
rit.
30
ff
8vb
8va
a tempo
36
pp
(8)
(8)
40
rit.
44
8va
mf
p
pp

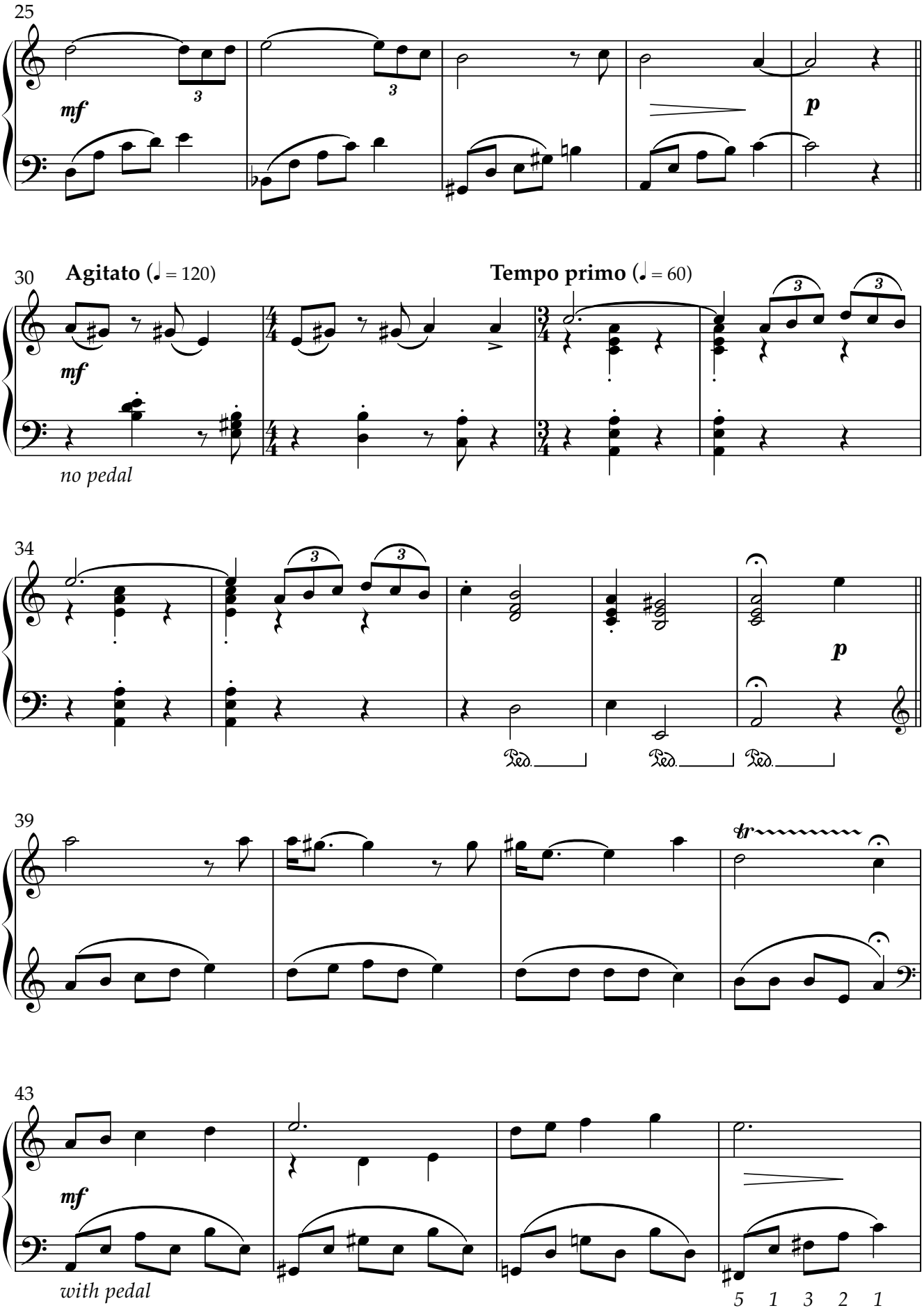
composed for the Kol Nidrei 5781 service of Beit ha Chidush Amsterdam

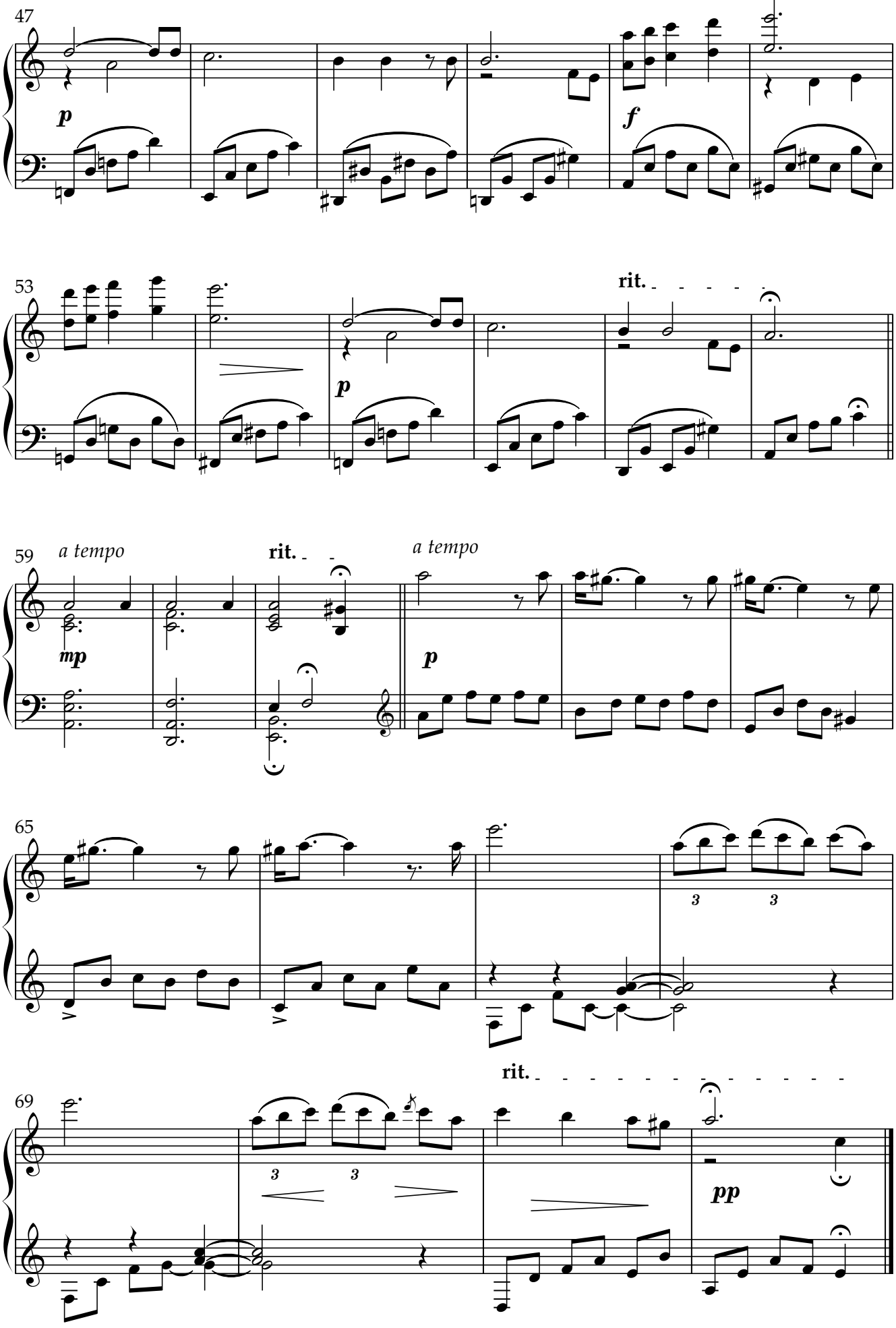
Yom Kipur
Day of Atonement
5781 / 2020

# Kol Nidrei

Hebrew Traditional
Arranged by Mathieu Daniël Polak




25
mf
p
30
Agitato (♩ = 120)
Tempo primo (♩ = 60)
mf
no pedal
34
p
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
39
tr
43
mf
with pedal
5 1 3 2 1

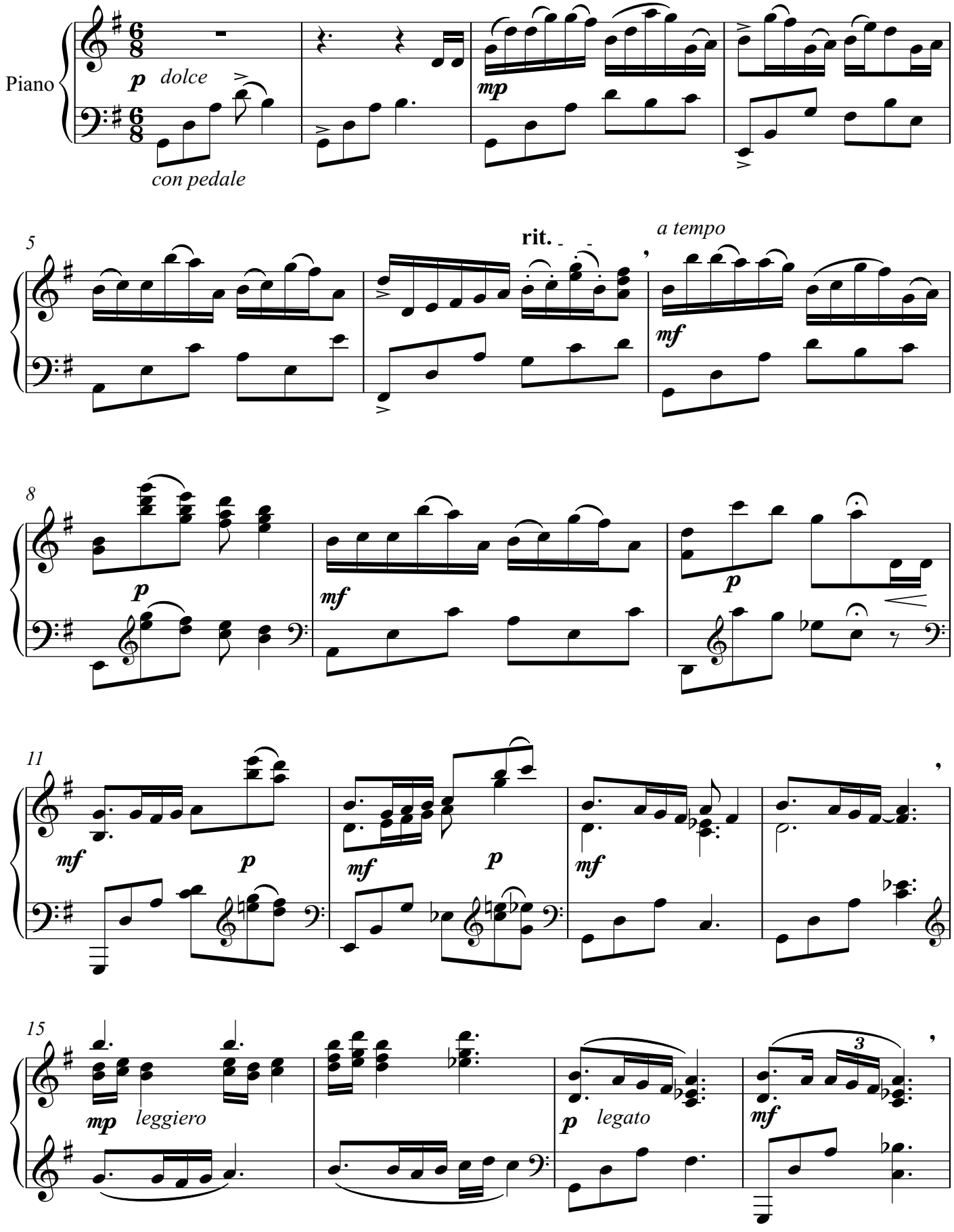

47
p
f
53
rit.
p
59
a tempo
rit.
a tempo
mp
p
65
3
3
69
rit.
3
3
pp

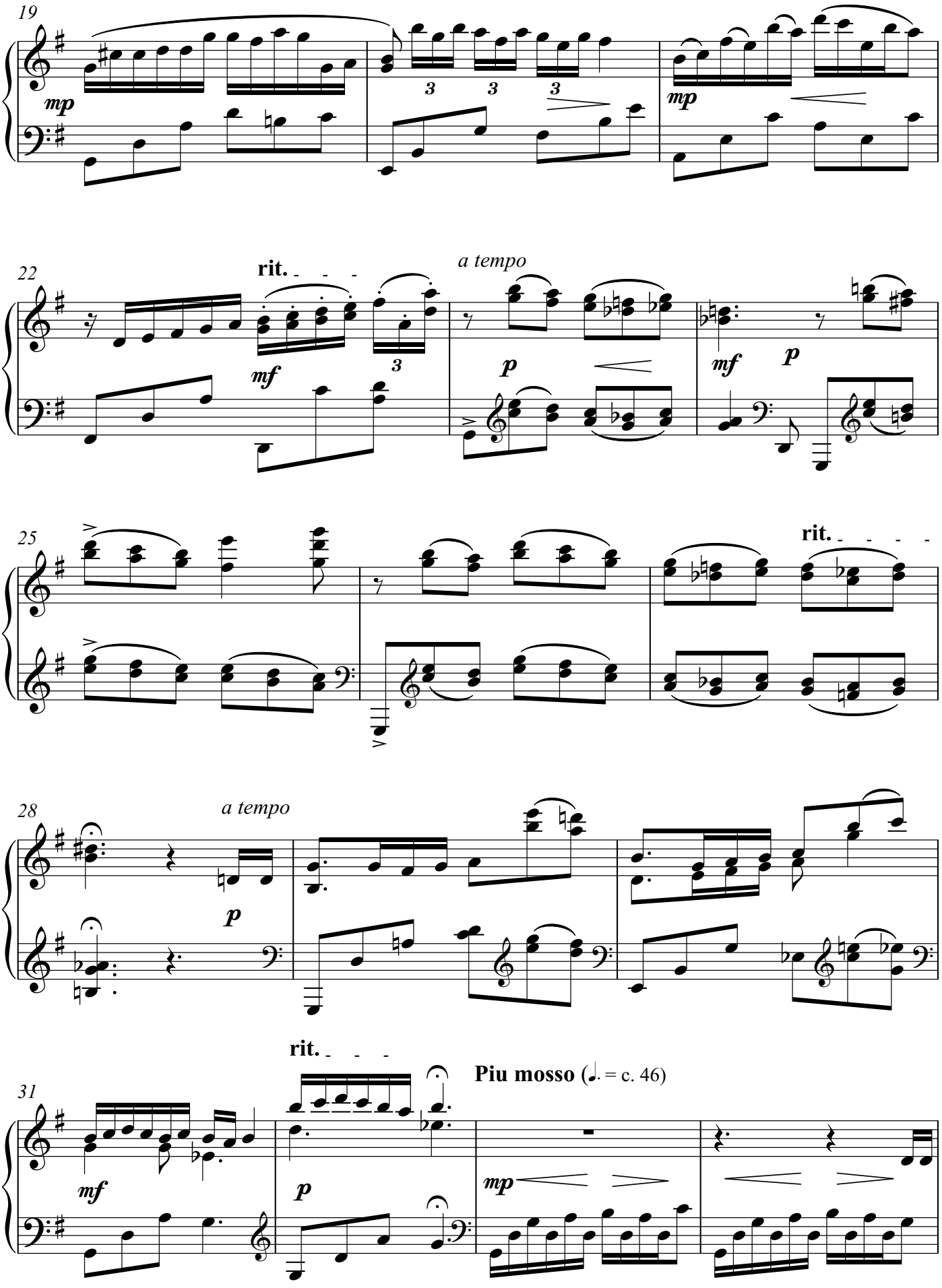
# Canción de Cuna

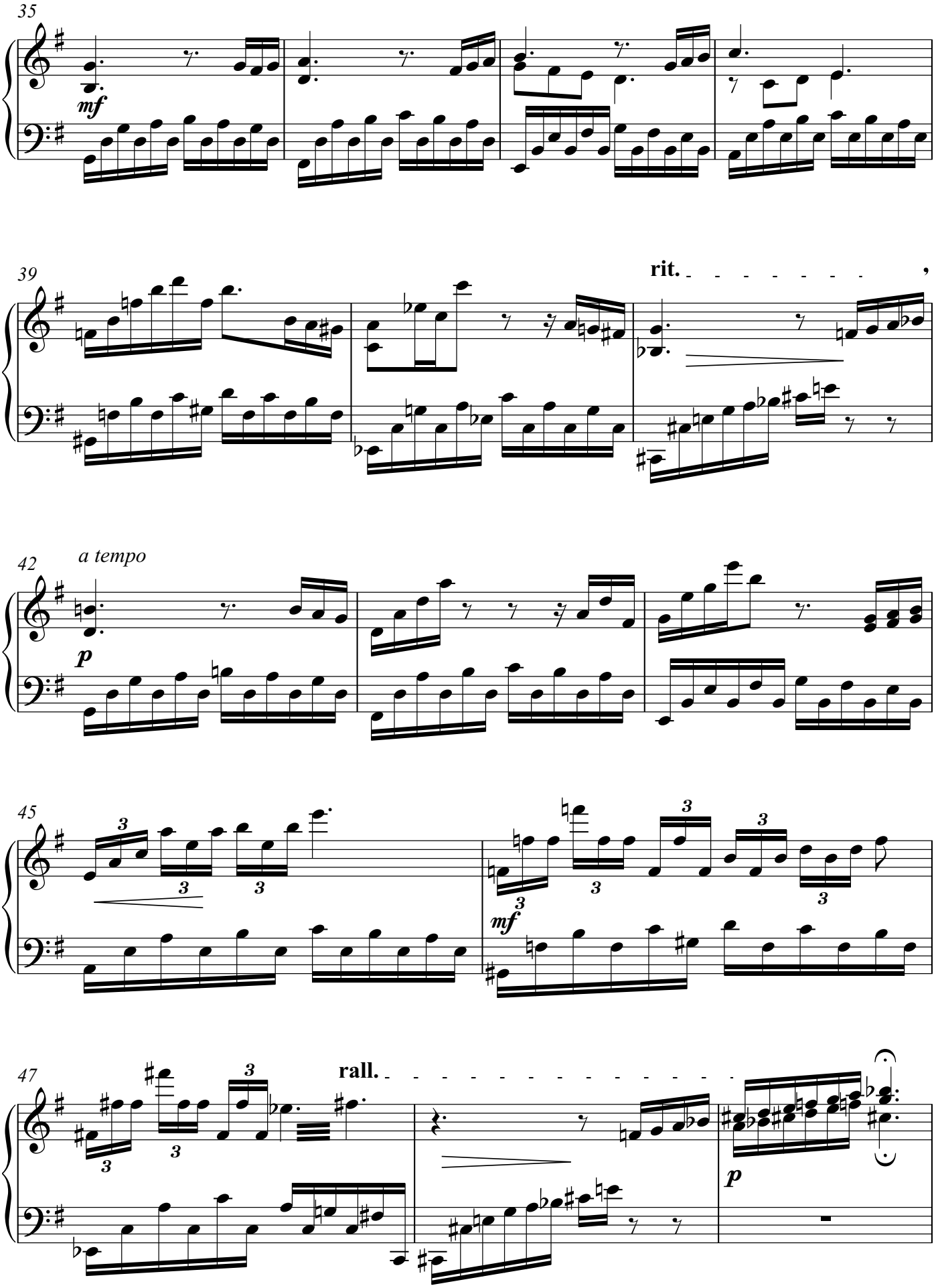
- Las Mañanitas que cantaba el Rey David -

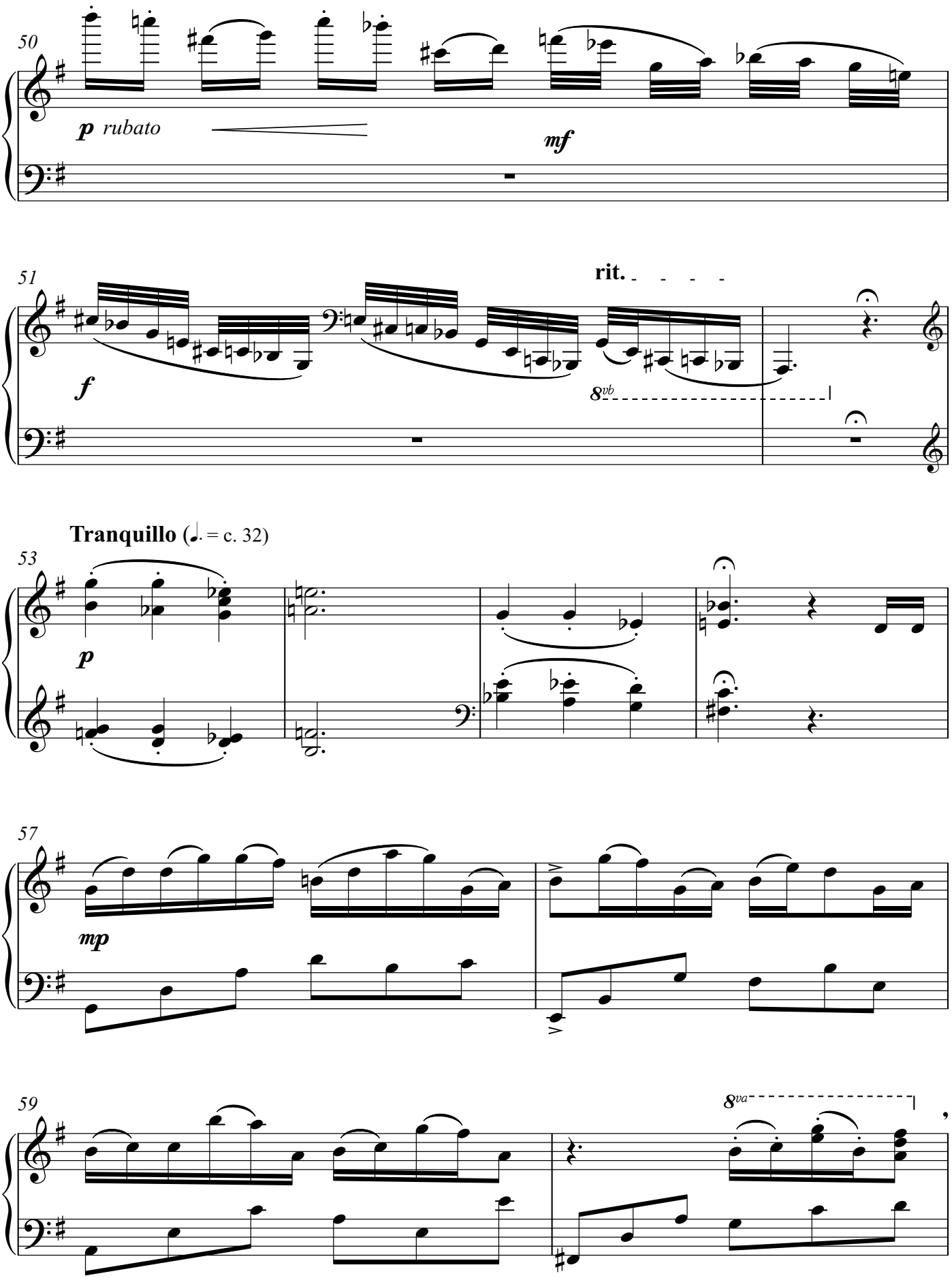
Mathieu Daniël Polak
2019

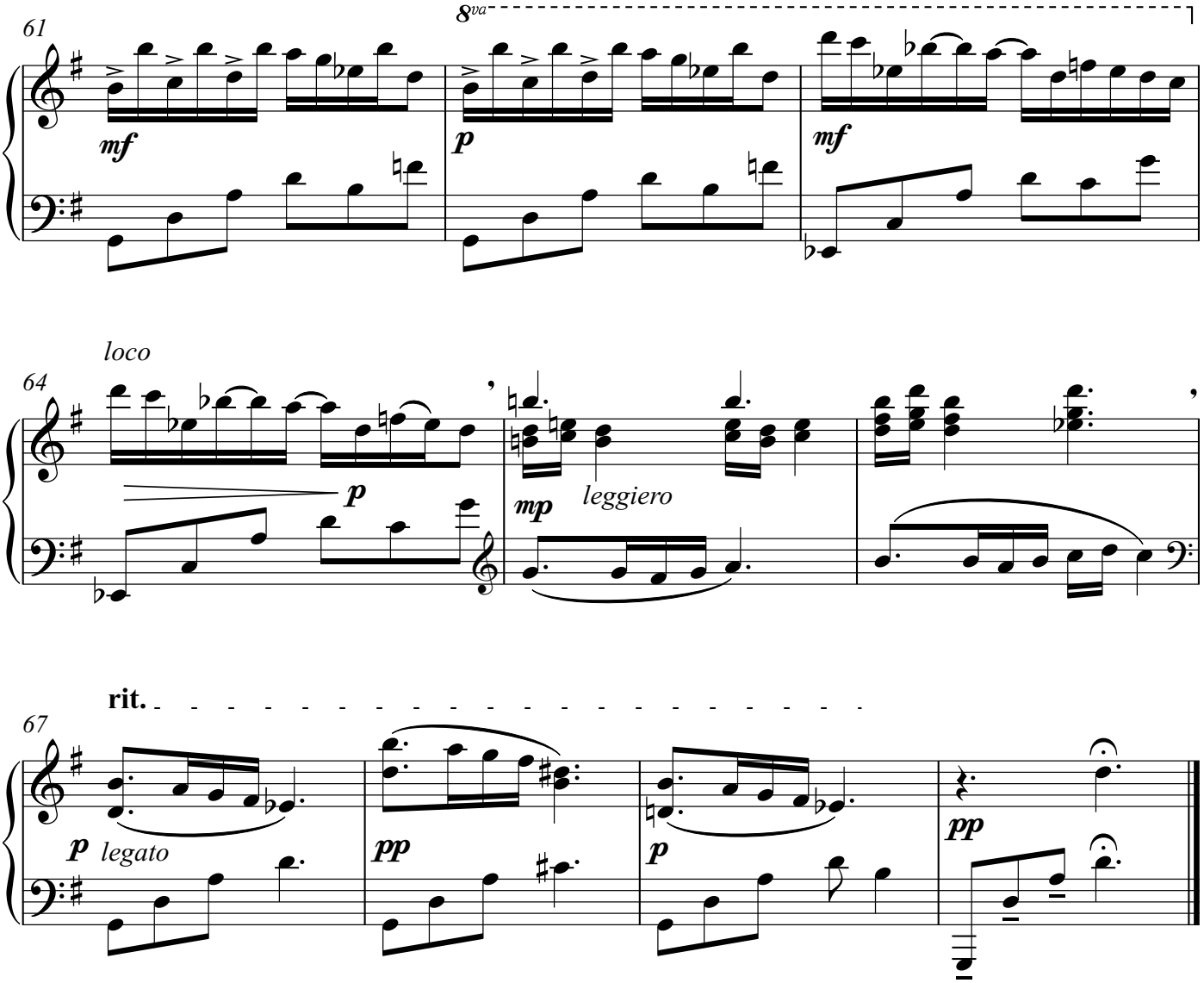
**Tranquillo** (♩. = c. 32)




19
mp
3
3
3
mp
22
rit.
a tempo
mf
3
p
mf
p
25
rit.
28
a tempo
p
rit.
Piu mosso (♩. = c. 46)
31
mf
p
mp


35
mf
39
rit.
42
a tempo
p
45
mf
47
rall.
p

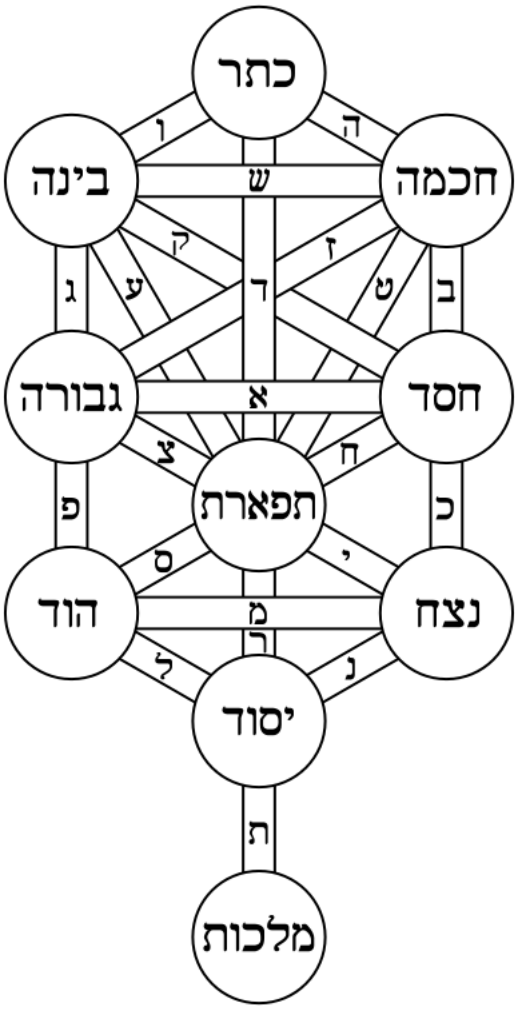

50
p rubato
mf
51
rit.
f
8vb
Tranquillo (♩. = c. 32)
53
p
57
mp
59
8va


61
8va
mf
p
mf
64
loco
p
mp
leggiero
67
rit.
p
legato
pp
p
pp

Morton Feldman Memorial composition competition for piano solo works 2019

# SEFIROT

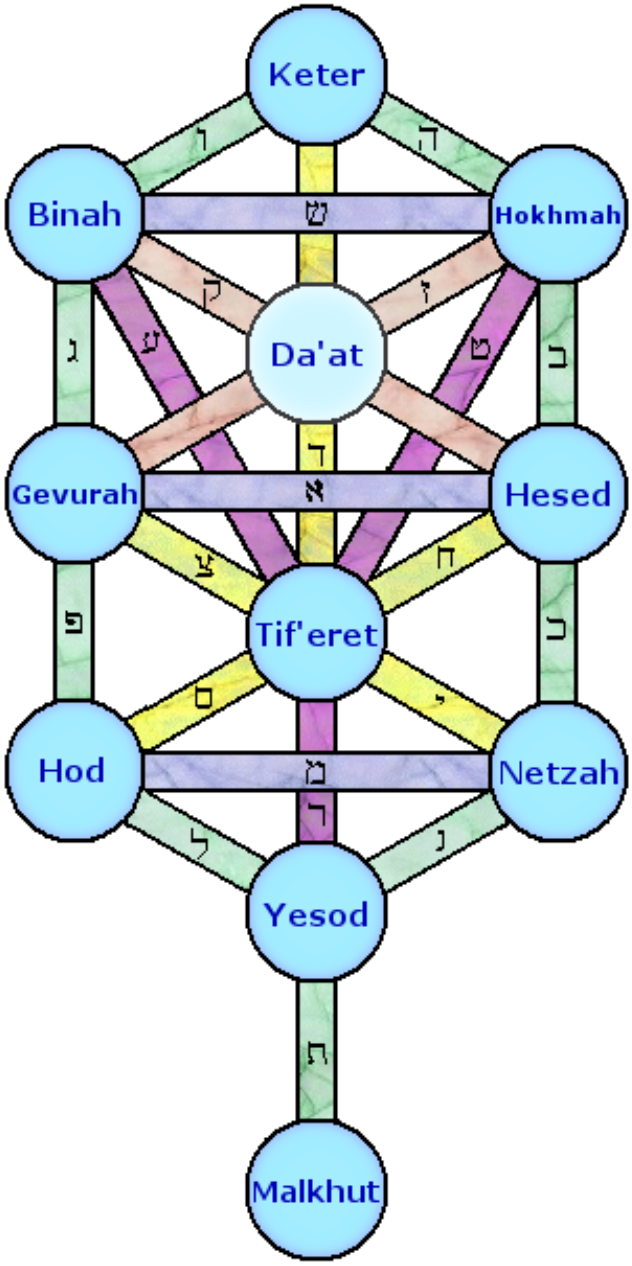
*Composed by Mathieu Daniël Polak*



*The most interesting aspect for me, composing exclusively with patterns, is that there is not one organizational procedure more advantageous than another, perhaps because no one pattern ever takes precedence over the others.*

Morton Feldman
(1926-1987)

# Sefirot


Keter
Binah
Hokhmah
Da'at
Gevurah
Hesed
Tif'eret
Hod
Netzah
Yesod
Malkhut

# Contents

**Preface**
Why do I join the Morton Feldman Memorial composition competition for piano solo works 2019?

**1 Introduction**
Part A: What are Sefirot?
Part B: Numbers connected to Sefirot.
Part C: How to transform the Sefirot into music?

**2 Sefirot, a composition for piano solo**
The composition Sefirot for piano solo consists of four pages.
The notation has graphic elements referring to the Tree of Life (compare with the front page of this booklet).
The pianist is invited to read and play the score creatively yet taking the remarks of the introduction into account.
The score could last between one and ten minutes.

**3 Appendix**
The score of Sefirot is built from four pages. How do you deal with this score? The pianist ought to be creative. He or she should improvise repeating the motives and play them in different orders. The score of four pages could grow into a piece of ten minutes in duration. To give an idea how the score of Sefirot could develop into a grand piano piece, I enclosed an example in the appendix.

**Preface**

At the Composer's site I read about the Morton Feldman Memorial Composition Competition 2019. Besides a composer I am a pianist (and carillon player) so composing a piece for piano seems the logical thing to do.

In a book with examples of contemporary music, I saw a picture of *Intersection 3* by Morton Feldman. The combination of numbers and graphic notation I found attractive.

Because I am interested in numbers, especially Gematria (Hebrew counting system), I decided to join the Morton Feldman competition by composing a piece which contains both numbers and graphic elements.

On YouTube I found several recordings of Feldman pieces. The freedom, wideness and space which comes from indetermination is appealing.

In my composition *Sefirot* for piano solo, some elements are determined namely the height of the notes and the harmony. Other elements like dynamics, rhythm, tempo, pedal use, are aleatoric.

**Introduction Part A: What are Sefirot?**

Sefirot (Hebrew: counting, enumeration) is a key element in the Kabbalah. Sefirot stands for 'the emanations, or illuminations of God's Infinite Light as it manifests in Creations. At the front page of this booklet one finds the Tree of Life which is built from ten Sefirot in Hebrew. At the second page one finds the Sefirot in transliteration.

God reveals Himself Herself through ten sefirot:

1. Kether (Heb. Crown): the first sefirah is described as absolute compassion. The name of God associated with Kether is Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh, the Name through which He revealed Himself to Moses from the burning bush.
2. Chokhmah: (Heb. Wisdom): the first power of conscious intellect within Creation. Wisdom implies the ability to look deeply at some aspects of reality and abstracts its conceptual essence till one succeeds in uncovering its underlying axiomatic truth.
3. Binah (Heb. Understanding): intuitive understanding or contemplation. It is the womb, which gives shape to the Spirit of God. Therefore, Binah is a female emanation.
4. Da'at (Heb. Knowledge): sometimes Da'at is **not looked upon** as a Sefirah. There is no God's Name associated with this Sefirah. One could say Da'at is the empty space where the Creation begins.
5. Chesed (Heb. Mercy): Chesed stands for kindness and love. One could think about the love of God, parents for their children, visiting the sick, giving charity, making peace between people.
6. Gevurah (Heb. Strenght): the judgement and consequences for the deeds man does. There should be a balance between consequences (punishment) and chesed (mercy).
7. Tiferet (Heb. Beauty): this Sefirah is in the middle of the Tree of Life. It stands for the beauty of the Divine Glory and Light. One could say the higher Sefirot shine to the lower Sefirot through Tiferet.

8. Netzach (Heb. Eternity): one could translate Netzach with faith. An example is Moses who led the people to the promised land because of faith that life would become better for the people.
9. Hod (Heb. Glory, Majesty, Splendour): one could say Netzach and Hod are the two feet of the body. While the hands are the main instrument of action, the feet help bring a person to the place where he wishes to execute that action. Jewish prayer could be considered the way of going to the place where action should be taken.
10. Yesod (Heb. Foundation): Yesod is associated with sexual organs. The masculine Yesod collects the vital forces of the Sefirot above and transmits these creative and vital energies into the feminine Malkuth below.
11. Malkuth (Heb. Kingdom): is also called Shechinah, the female emanation of God. In Kabbalah, she is looked upon as the bride of Tiferet. Whereas Tiferet stands for the written Torah, Shechinah stands for the spoken Torah, the interpretations and stories which are told from one generation upon the other.

**Introduction Part B: Numbers connected to Sefirot**

The Hebrew alphabet originally is built from 22 consonants. Later, consonants for the ending of words, the so-called finals, were added. In Hebrew, letters/consonants are also numbers:

| THE 22 HEBREW LETTERS AND THE NUMERICAL VALUES | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| א | ב | ג | ד | ה | ו | ז | ח | ט | י | ך כ |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **20** |
| (a) Alef | B, V Bet | G Gimel | D Dalet | H He | W, V Vav | Z Zayin | H, X Chet | T Tet | J, I, Y Yod | K Kaph |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| ל | ם מ | ן נ | ס | ע | ף פ | ץ צ | ק | ר | ש | ת |
| **30** | **40** | **50** | **60** | **70** | **80** | **90** | **100** | **200** | **300** | **400** |
| L Lamed | M Mem | N Nun | S Samekh | (o) Ayin | P, F Pe | Ts Tsade | K, Q Qoph | R Resh | S, Sh Shin | T Tav |

The word Kether (the first Sefirah) is built from the letters: כֶּתֶר

*The little dots are vowels and are usually not part of the counting system.*

Kether: Kaph (20) – Tav (400) – Resh (200).

The number zero does not exist in Hebrew and could therefore be omitted in my composition system.

Kether: 2 (because zero is omitted) – 4 – 2. With these numbers a music motive could be composed. For example by using these numbers as intervals or for duration of notes.

**List of the sefirot and their numbers:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Kether: כֶּתֶר | 242 |
| Chokhmah: חכמה | 8245 |
| Binah: בינה | 2155 |
| Da'at: not a sefirah so not considered. | |
| Chesed: חֶסֶד | 864 |
| Gevurah: גבורה | 32625 |
| Tiferet: תִּפְאֶרֶת | 48124 |
| Netzach: נצח | 598 |
| Hod: הוד | 564 |
| Yesod: יסוד | 1664 |
| Malkuth: מלכות | 43264 |

**Introduction Part C: How to transform the Sefirot into music?**
My first impulse is to translate the numbers into intervals. So Kether would lead to:
C – D (which is a second) – G (a fourth on D) – A (second on G).

Both the melodical and harmonic motive of Kether would be: C – D – G – A.
Note that three numbers lead to four notes. My suggestion is to take out the first note since it is only the helper. 2 – 4 – 2 would become: D – G – A. The C could be considered the Da'at in the composition, the empty space where Creation begins (see introduction part A).

How is the first note determined? Why do I start with a C as a helper and not with another note? The reason is that the composition will be initially composed on white keys, as if it was composed in the scale of C major.

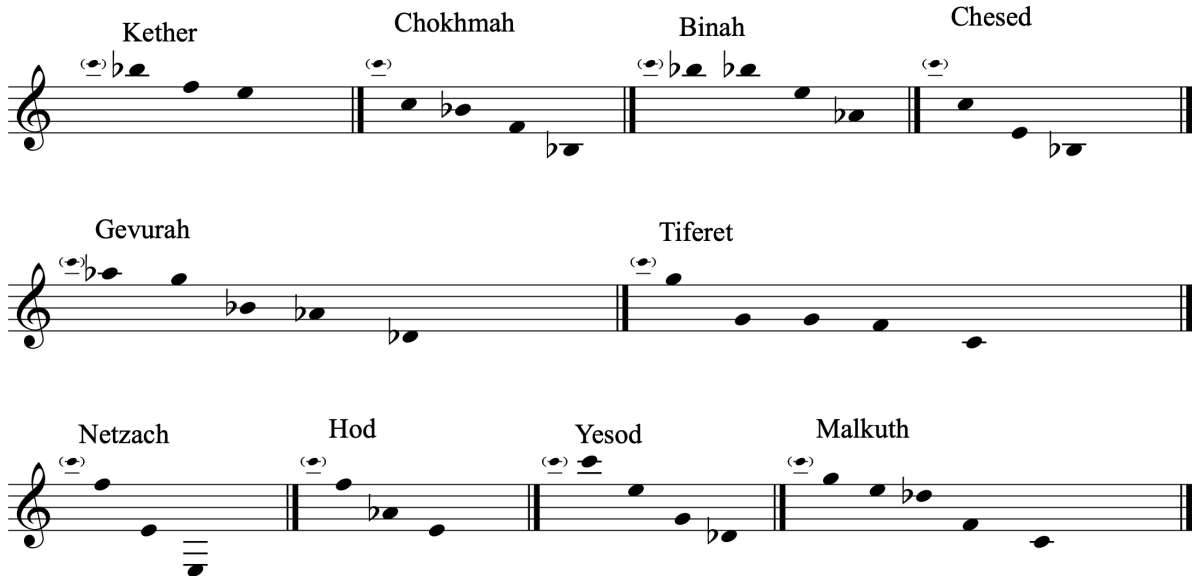
If the piece would be composed on mere white notes, in the end color would be lacking. Therefore, after completing the motives, the composition will be colored by some accidentals. These accidentals will be derived from a Klezmer scale named the Freygish Shtayger. This Freygish Shtayger is better known as the Phrygian dominant scale. This scale occurs in many music cultures like Indian, Middle Eastern, Egypt, Eastern European, Central Asian and Flamenco. Therefore, the idiom of Sefirot will be recognizable to many people of many cultures. I have chosen this scale because of the Jewish connotation.

The Freygish / Phrygian dominant scale on C:
**C** – **D**b – **E** – **F** – **G** – **A**b – **B**b – **C**.

I composed two sets of Sefirot. The first set is descending and the second ascending. The descending set stands for the emanations of God, His Voice that created the world in seven days. His light shines from up to down. His rain falls from the sky on the earth. The ascending set stands for human creations and their duty to repair the broken world. In the ideal world descending & ascending would be mingled, cooperate, would be One.

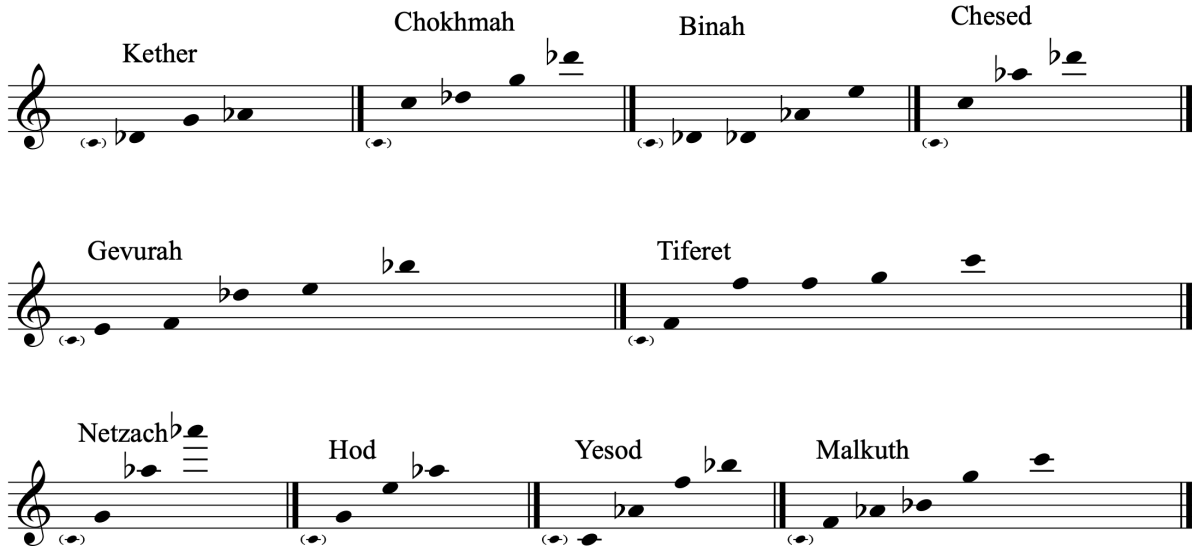
# The 10 Sefirot in the Freygish (Phrygian Dominant) Scale

Descending




# The 10 Sefirot in the Freygish (Phrygian Dominant) Scale

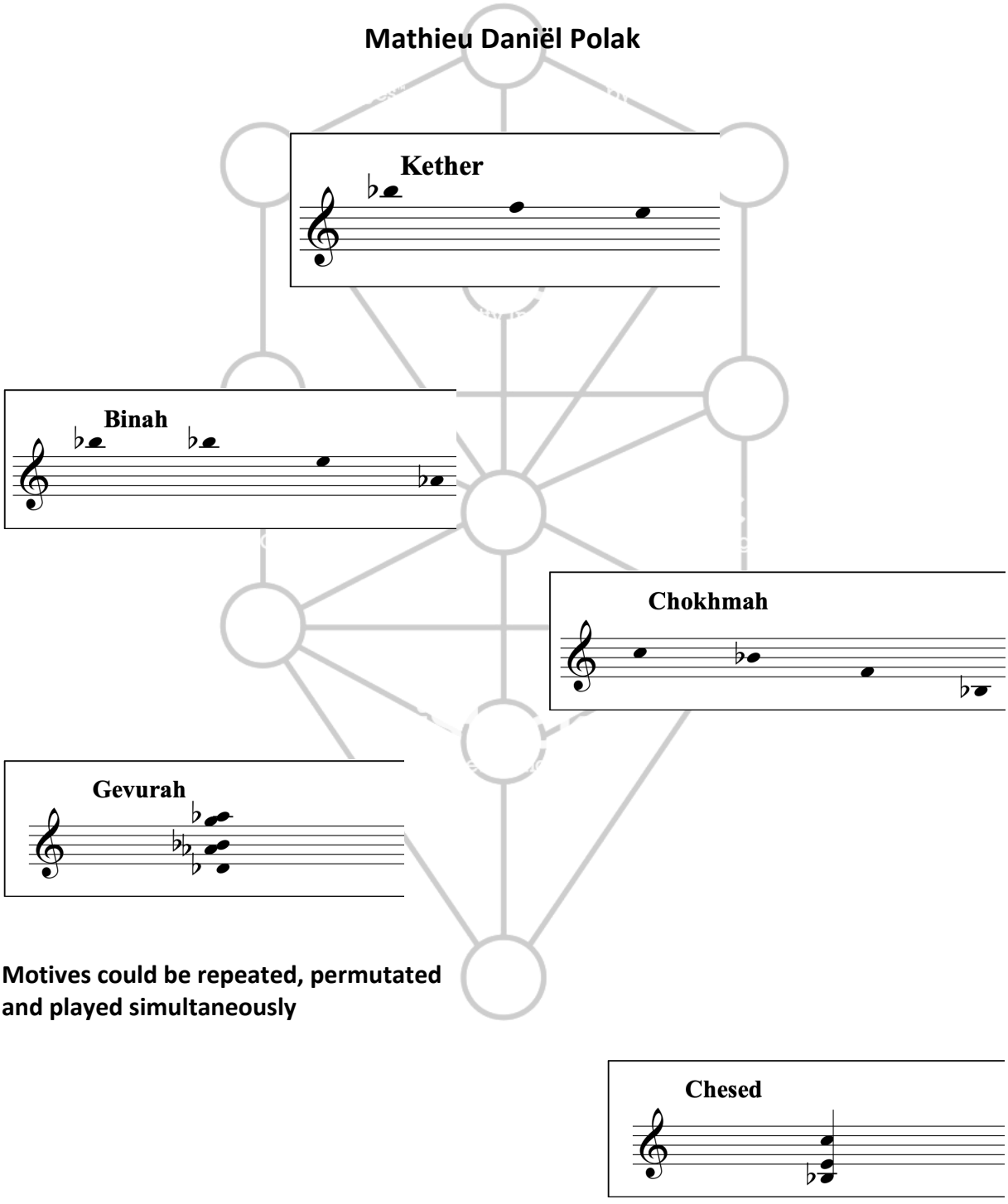
Ascending



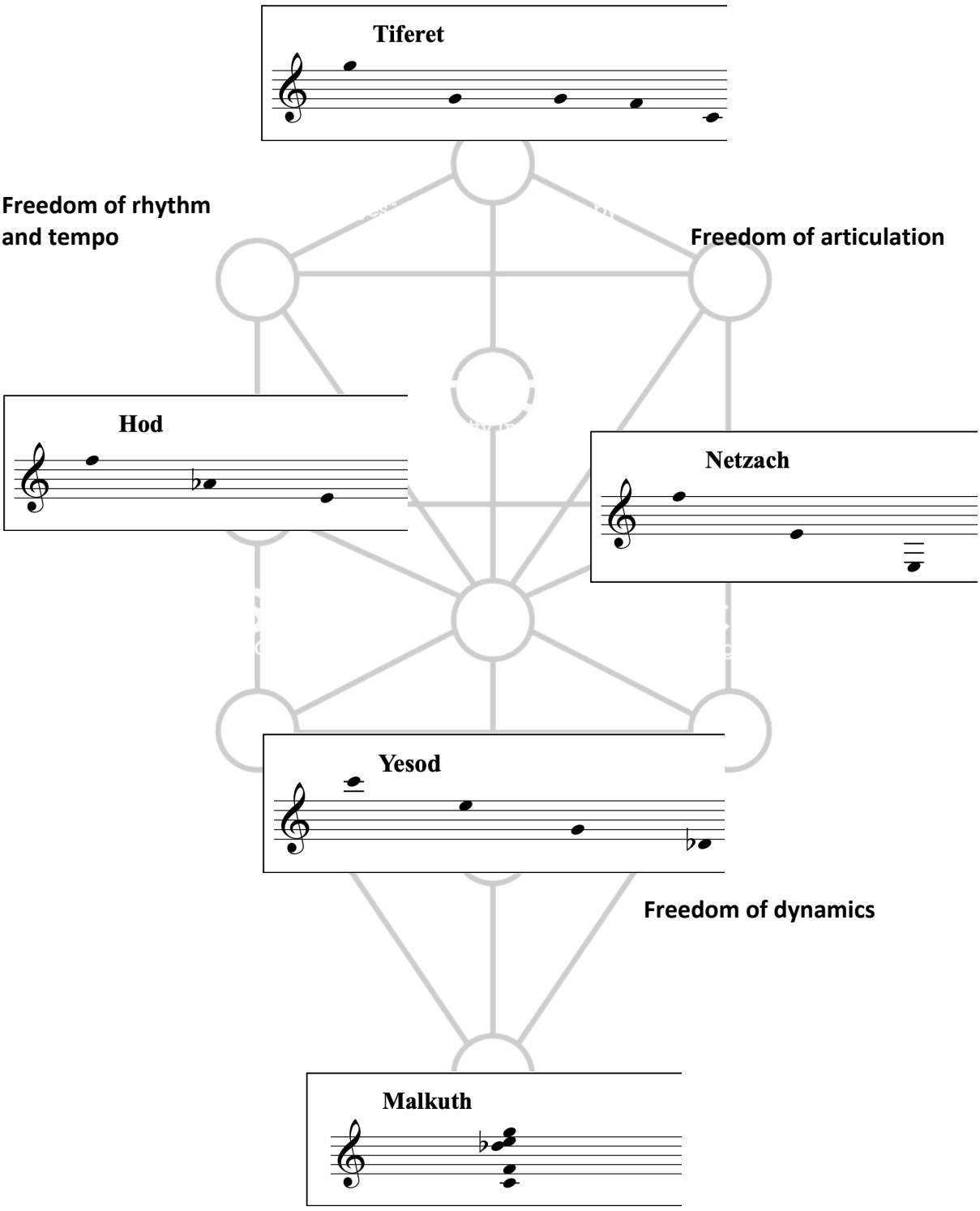
# Sefirot

*Composition for the Morton Feldman Memorial Composition Competition 2019*

**Mathieu Daniël Polak**




**Motives could be repeated, permutated and played simultaneously**

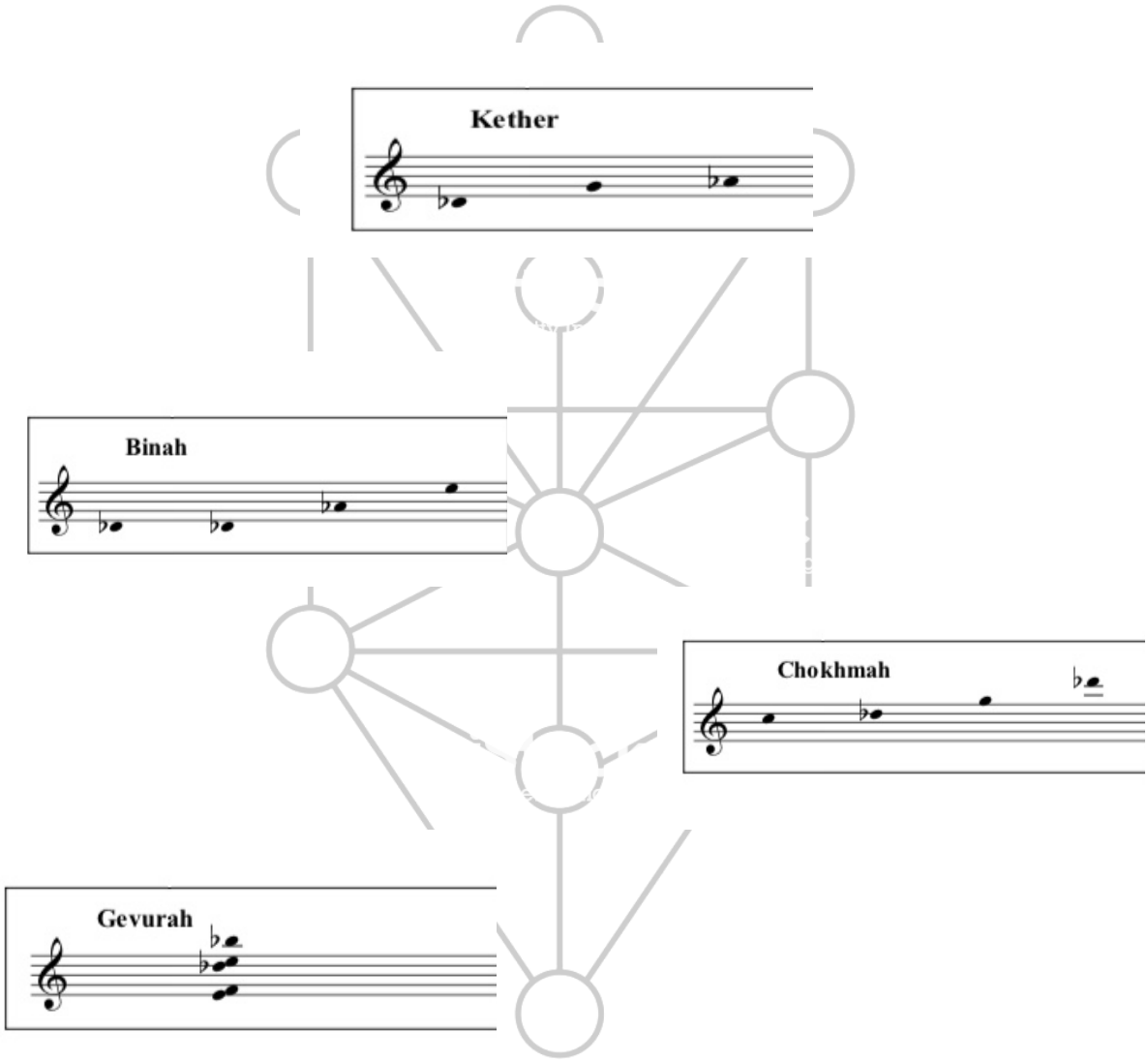

Tiferet
Freedom of rhythm and tempo
Freedom of articulation
Hod
Netzach
Yesod
Freedom of dynamics
Malkuth
Freedom of pedal use

**June, 2019**

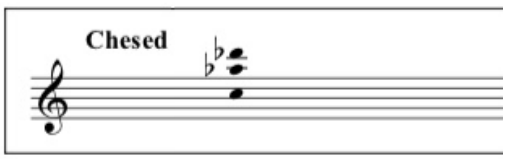
# Sefirot

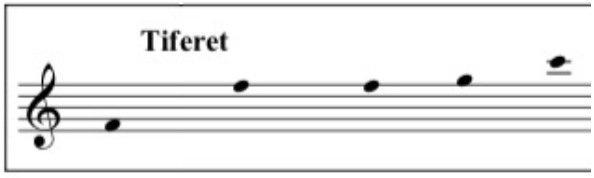
*Composition for the Morton Feldman Memorial Composition Competition 2019*

**Mathieu Daniël Polak**



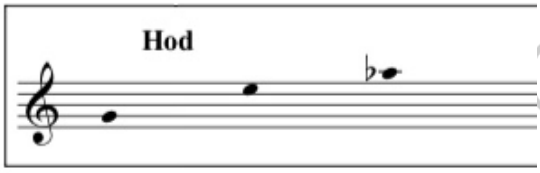

**Motives could be repeated, permutated and played simultaneously**

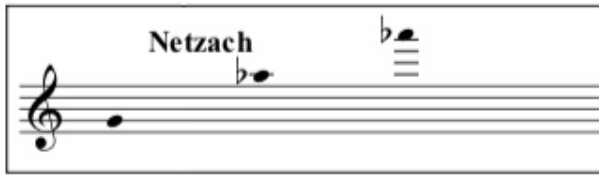




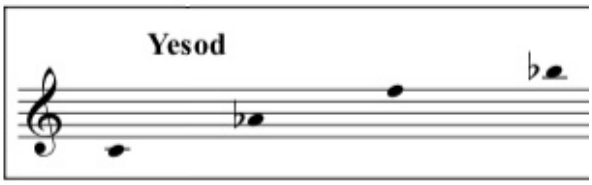

**Freedom of rhythm and tempo**

**Freedom of articulation**

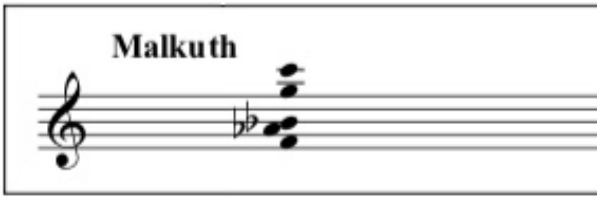



**Freedom of dynamics**




**Freedom of pedal use**



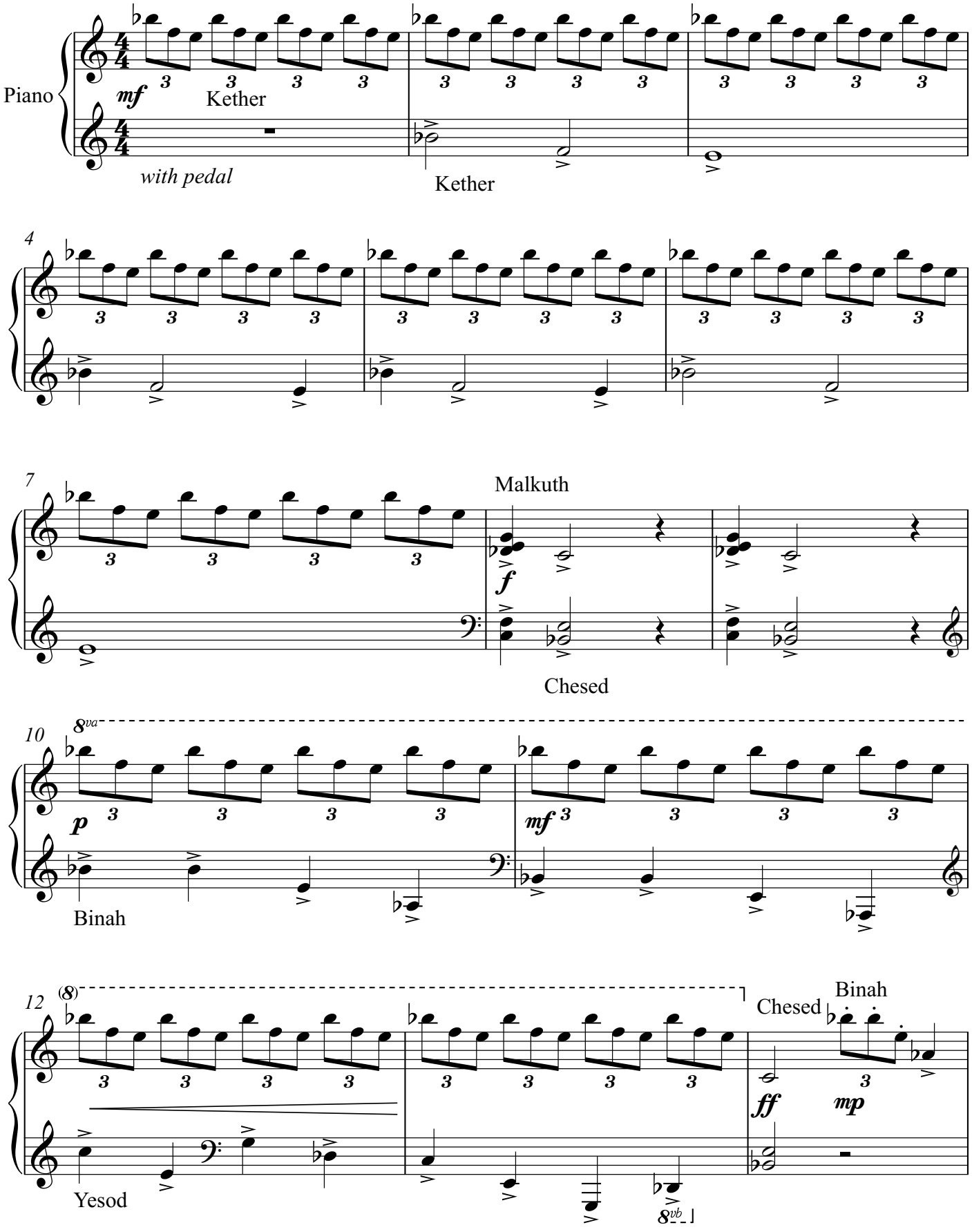

**June, 2019**

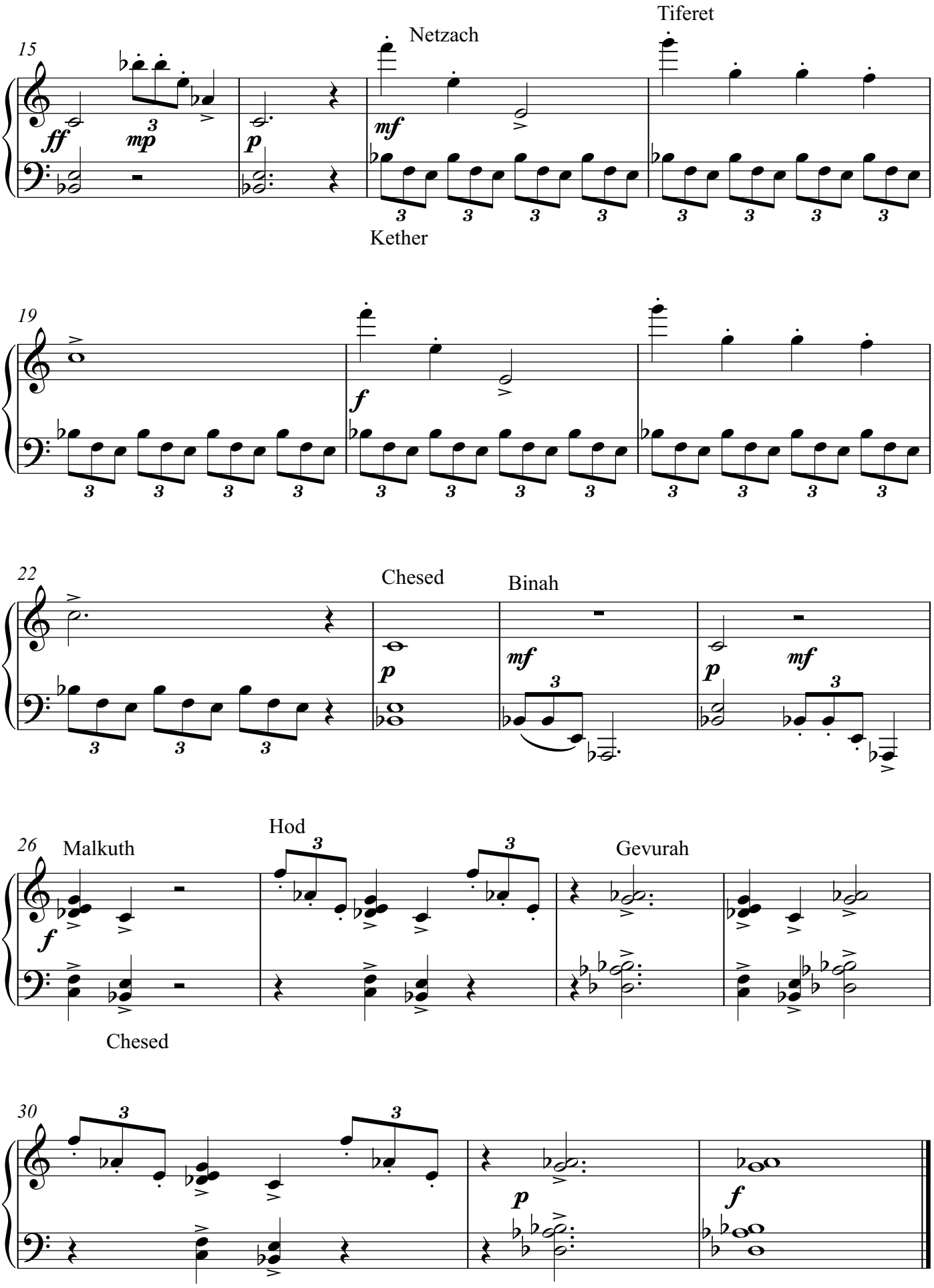
# Appendix Part A: descending motives

Example of a Sefirot piece

Mathieu Daniël Polak
2019

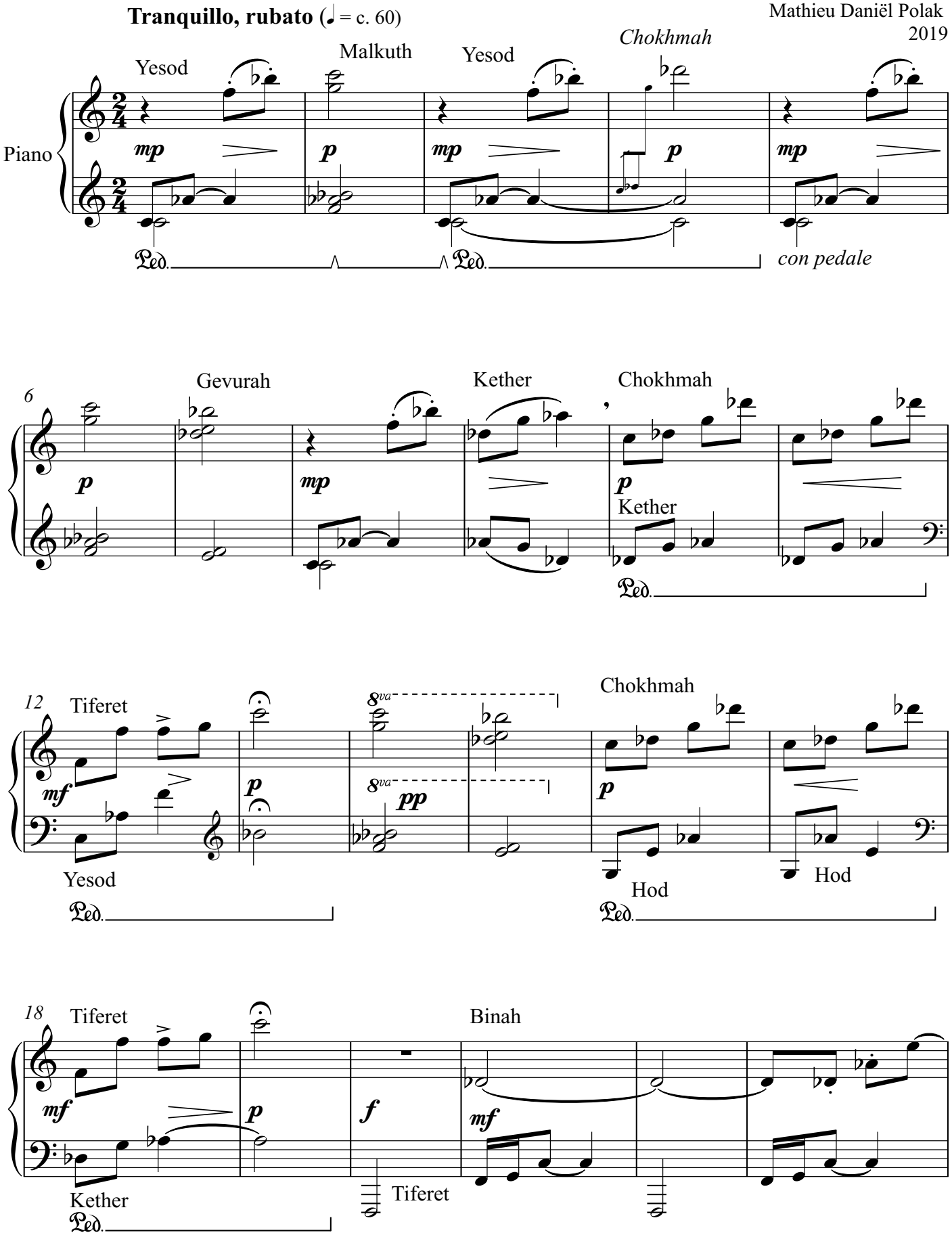
**Con spirito** (♩ = c. 120)

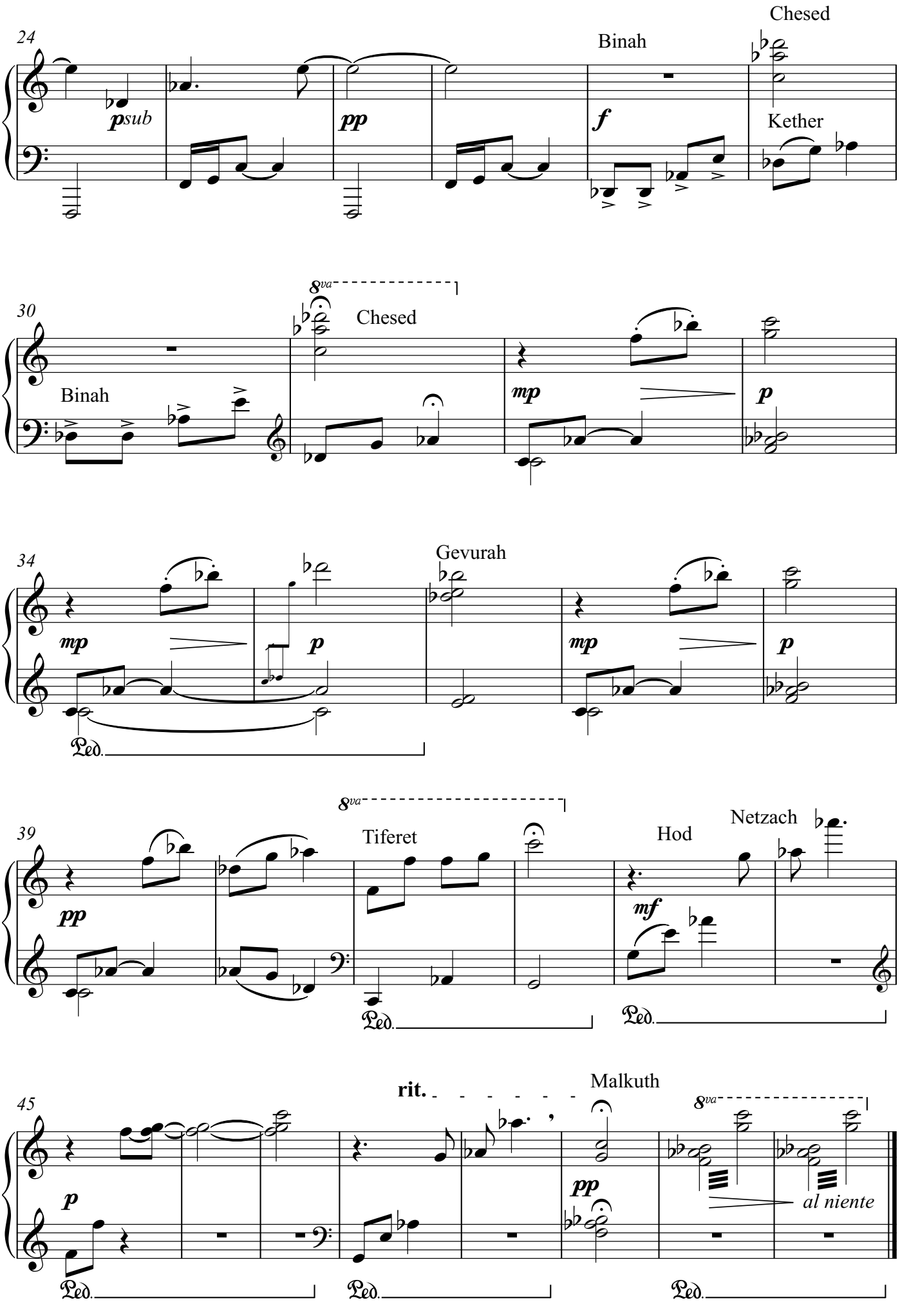



15
Netzach
Tiferet
Kether
19
22
Chesed
Binah
26
Malkuth
Hod
Gevurah
Chesed
30

# Appendix Part B: Ascending Motives

Example of a Sefirot piece

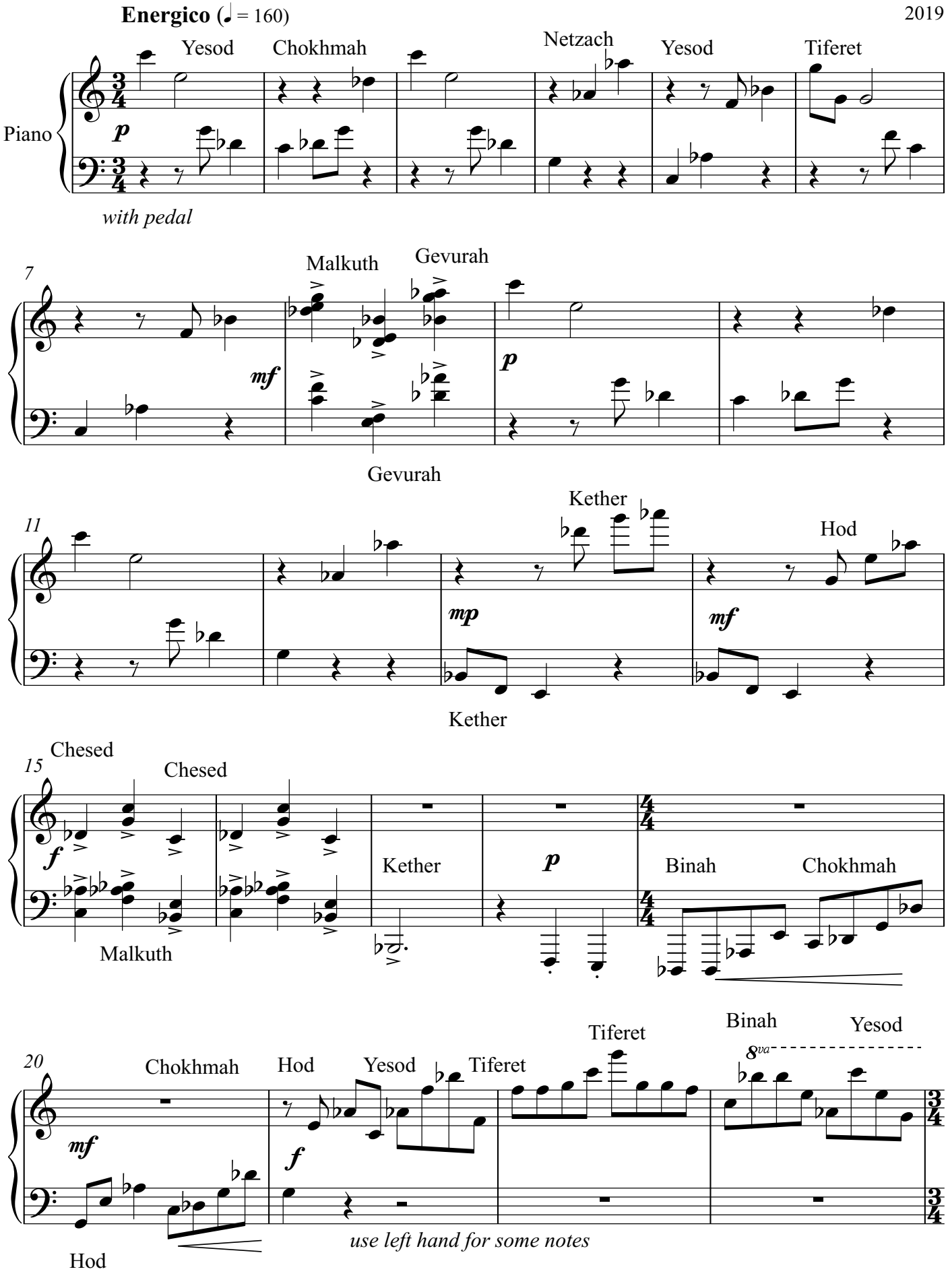


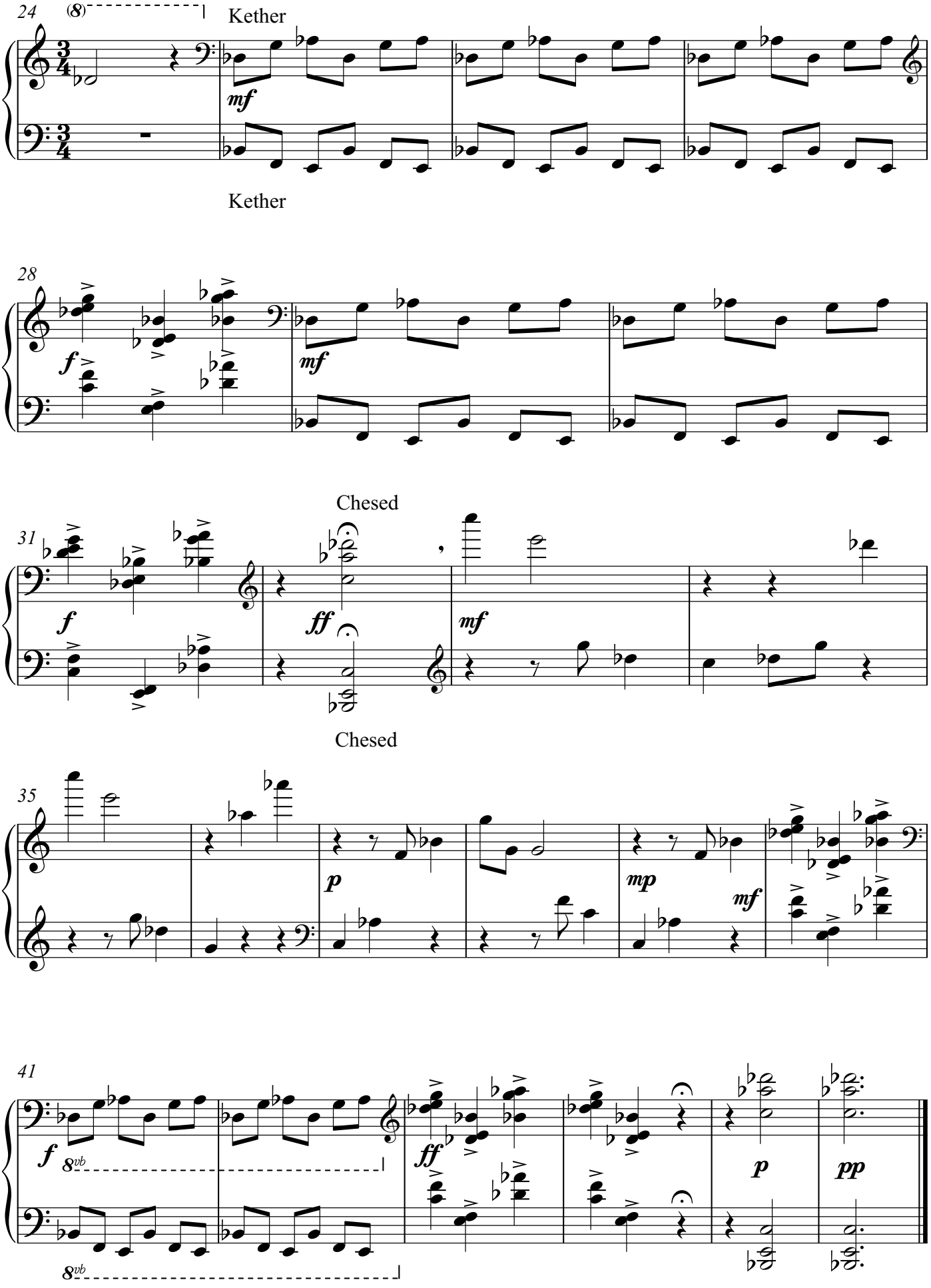

Chesed
24
Binah
Kether
psub
pp
f
8va
30
Chesed
Binah
mp
p
Gevurah
34
mp
p
Ped.
8va
39
Tiferet
Hod
Netzach
pp
mf
Ped.
Malkuth
rit.
45
8va
p
pp
al niente
Ped.

# Appendix Part C: descending & ascending motives

Example of a Sefirot piece

Mathieu Daniël Polak
2019




24
(8)
Kether
mf
Kether
28
f
mf
Chesed
31
f
ff
mf
Chesed
35
p
mp
mf
41
f
8vb
ff
p
pp
8vb