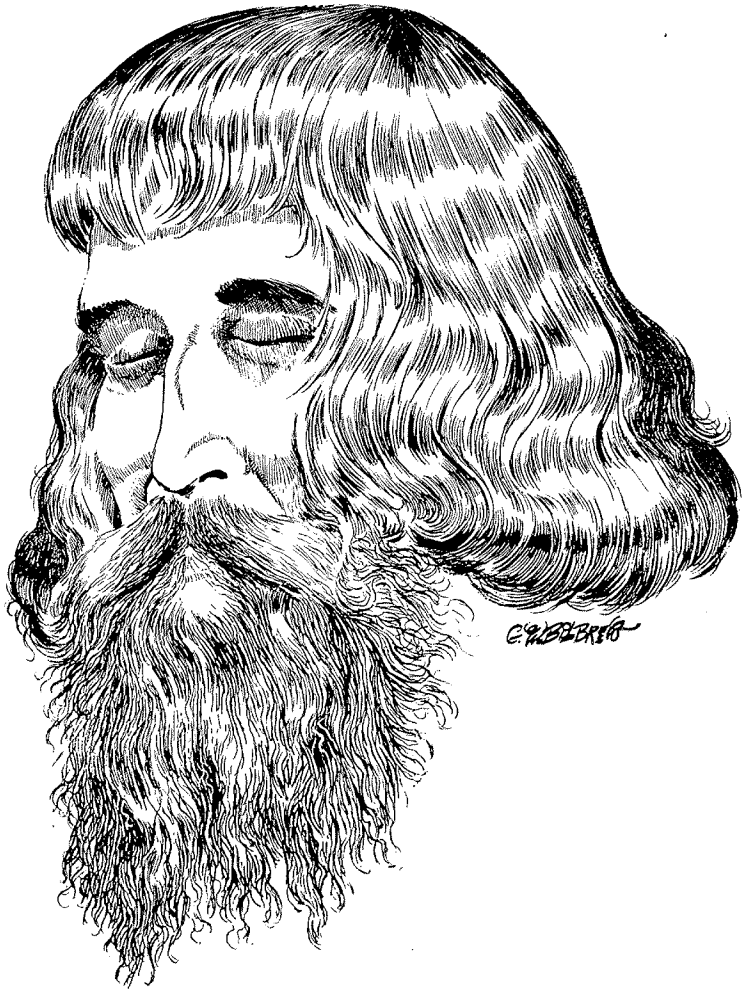
The Art of the Canon

Book 1

by Moondog



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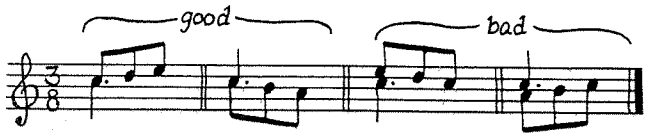
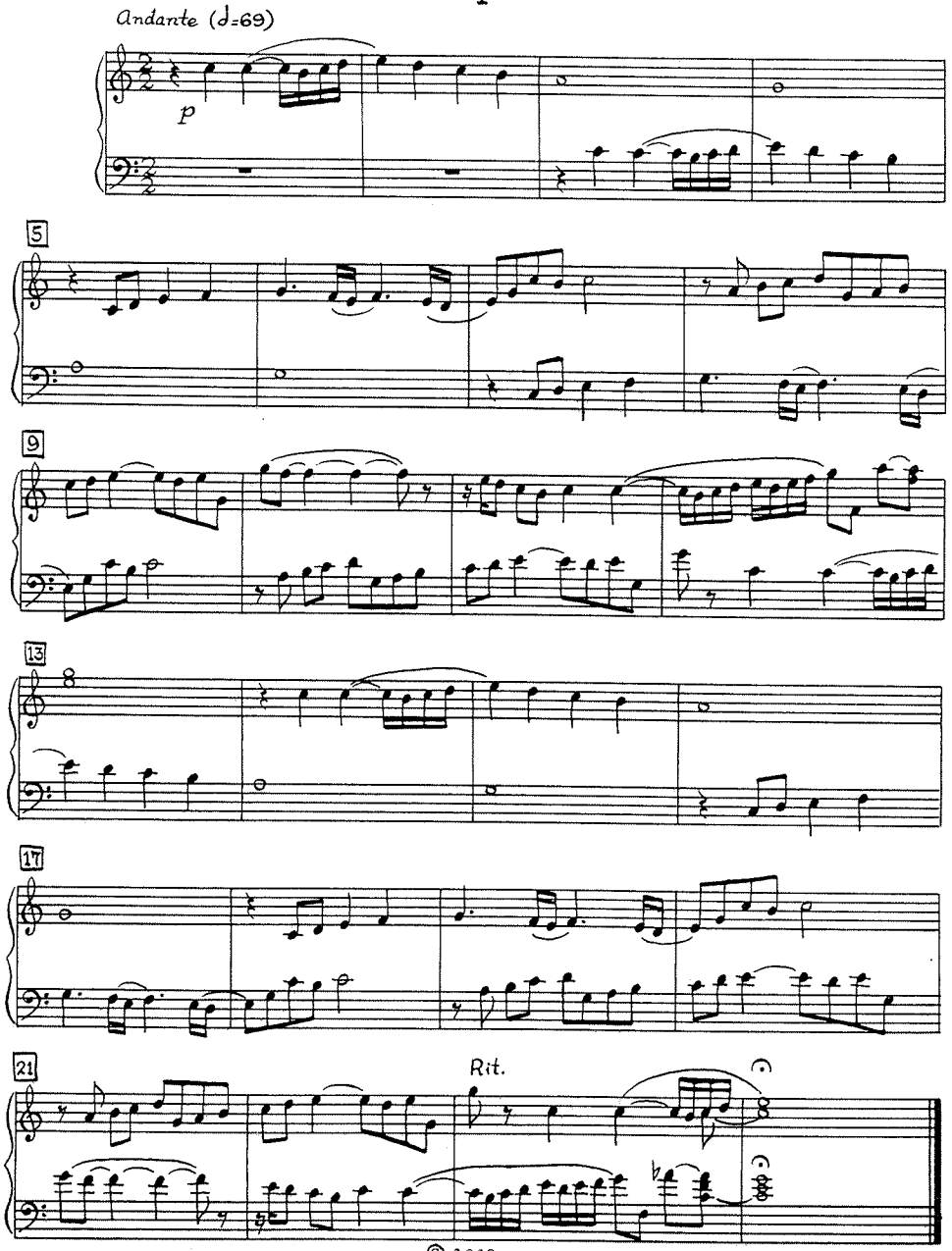
Composer's Note

On February 10, 1962 I was standing on the corner of 53rd and 6th, my favorite spot, when I thought of writing a piece each day for the keyboard, going through all the keys, by way of the chain of perfect fifths, C, a, F, d, etc., ending in C again, making 25 pieces in all, which I hoped I would finish inside of a month. The task took over three months; I finished it on May, 18. On that same February day I fished around for a form in which to cast these pieces. Then I remembered a piece I had once half memorized back in the fall of 1936 in Batesville, Arkansas, the Two-part Invention in c, by J. S. B., and how it had struck me, the way the canon inverted in the middle. So I began work on the first in C, not knowing that my canons were even stricter than the canon which had inspired them, for I bought a recording of the Inventions and became aware, for the first time, that Bach had inverted his canon in the dominant key, whereas I always inverted in the tonic, but he was more preoccupied with modulation than I. These "fantasias," a name given to them by S. B., are Two-part strict canons, even though there are occasional added notes, parts and chordwork. They may be played faster or slower than the metronome indication. They were written with the pianoforte in mind, though many of them should sound well on other keyboard instruments. Numbers 1, 4, 6, 8, 15 and 18 are canons at the octave. Numbers 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23 and 24 are canons at the fifteenth. Numbers 22 and 25 are canons at the twenty-second. They can be played in the order written, or in any order desired. A rule of counterpoint which I always abide by, is that conjunct motion out of a held note is invariably good, but conjunct motion into a held note is invariably bad. See examples below. I believe I am working in the direction of a "canonical sonata" in one movement growing out of the Bach-Beethoven traditions. See numbers 22 and 24. I am now working on Book II. Until such time as Book I is published in full size, it can be ordered from me. $5 for the 11 by 14 inch size. I also write "Symphoniques" for orchestra. Many thanks to my many friends who made the writing, copying and printing possible. N. Y. C. has been my father and mother for 20 years. Book I is a token of my gratitude. June, 1962

JSB
HBH



I



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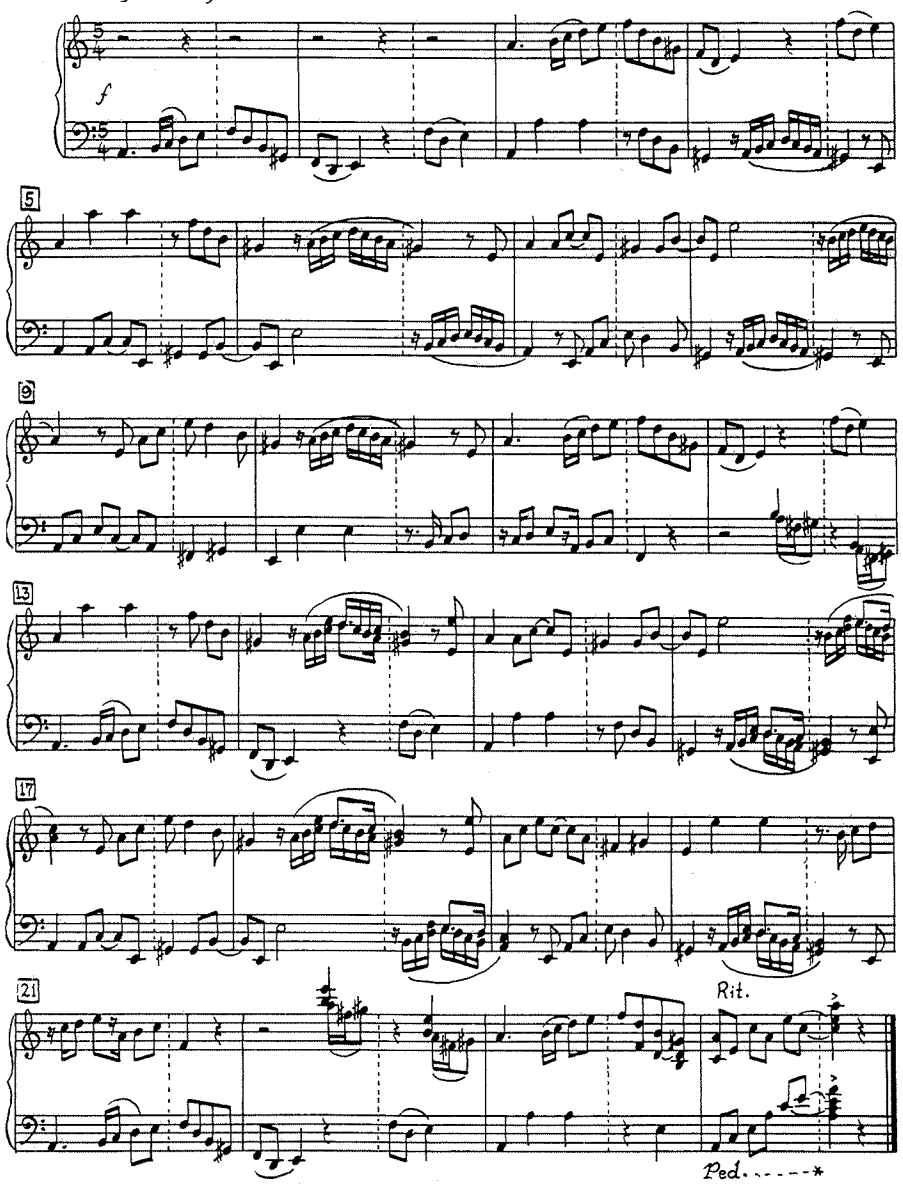
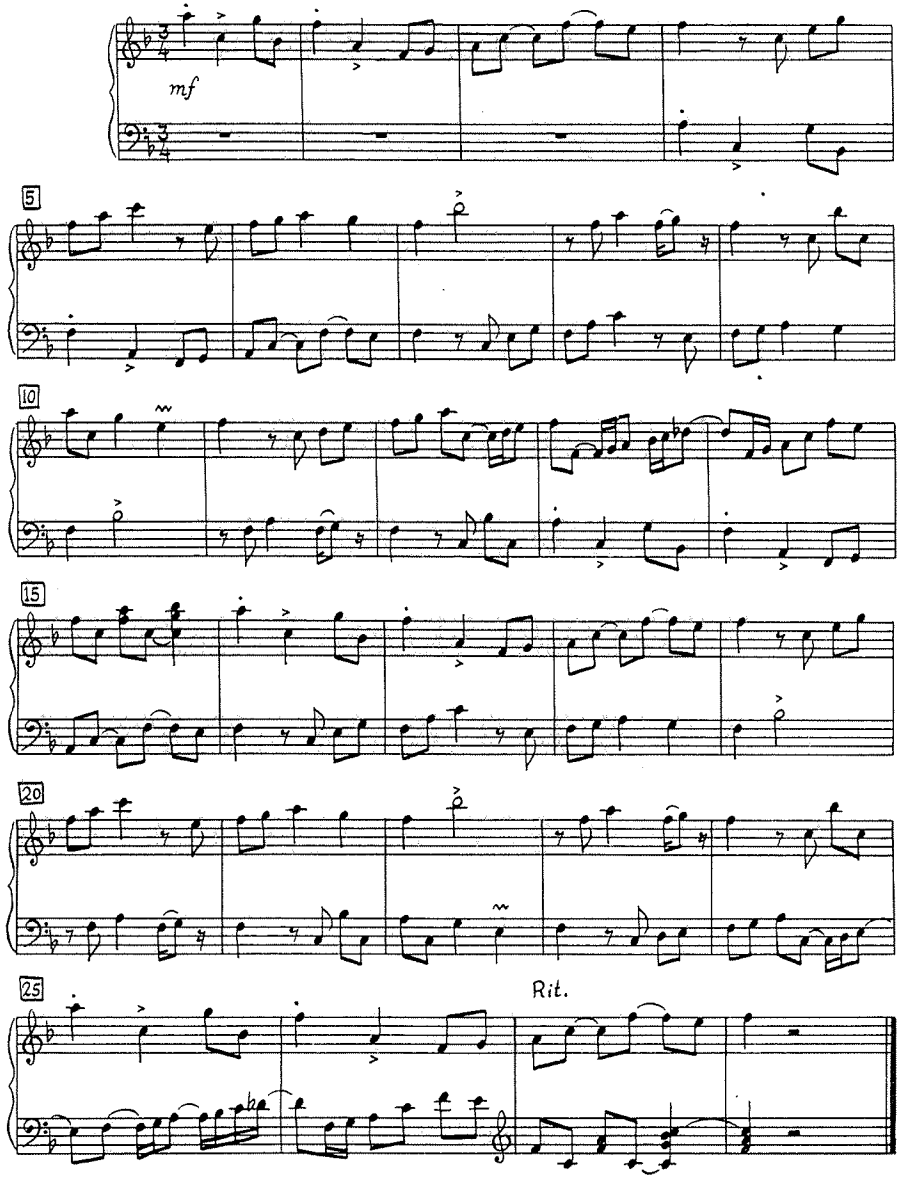
II

Allegro energico (♩=116)

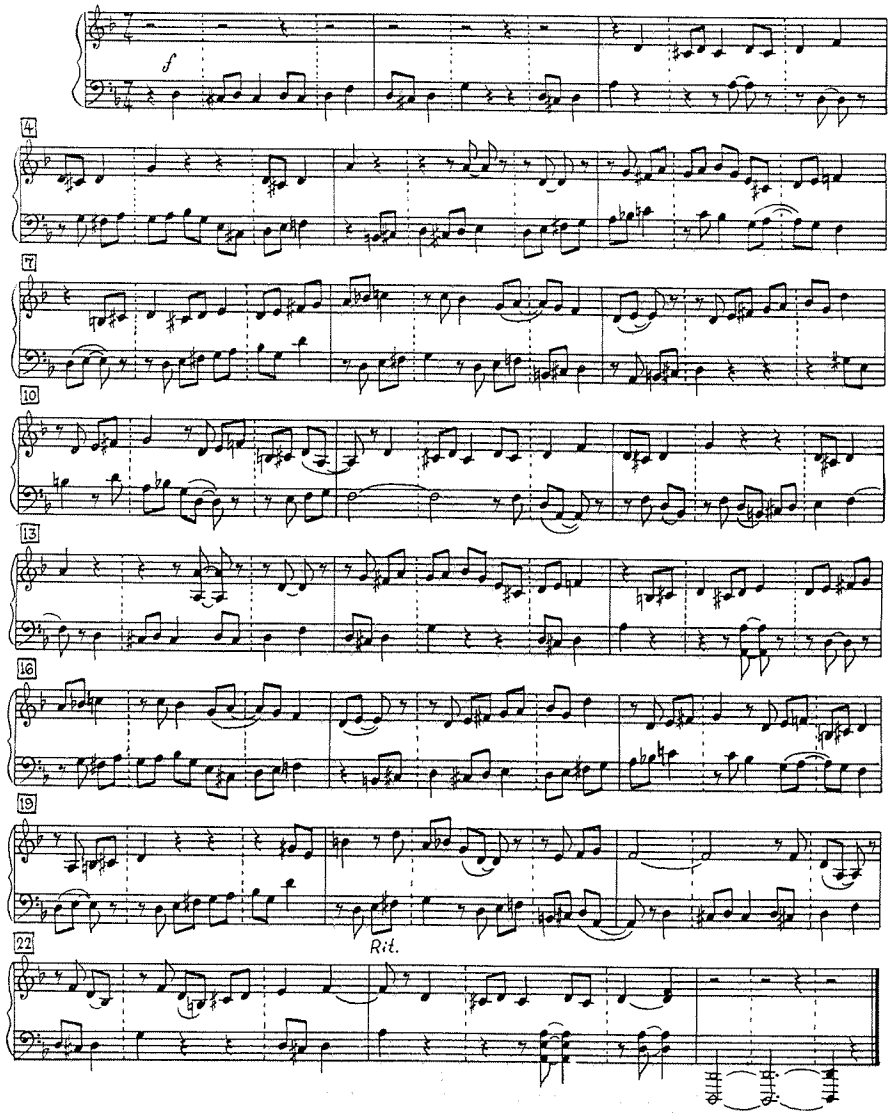


III

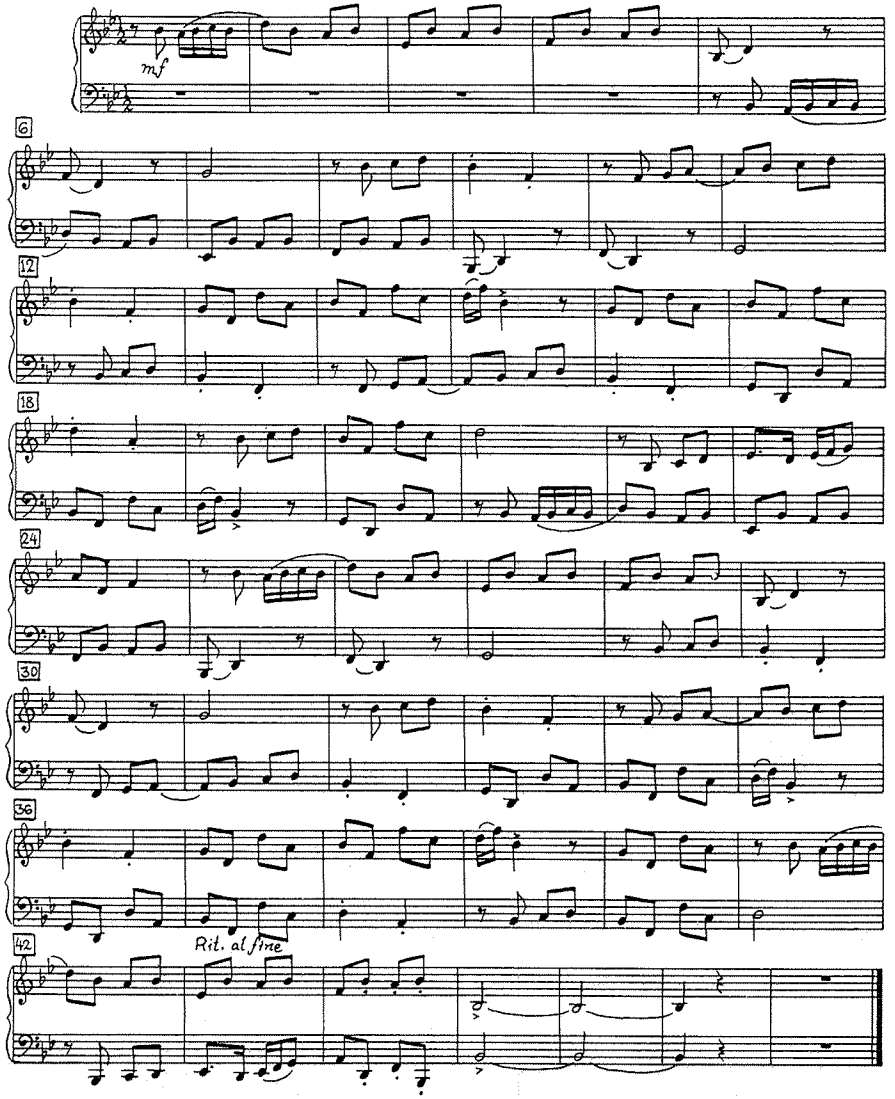
Allegretto (♩=128)



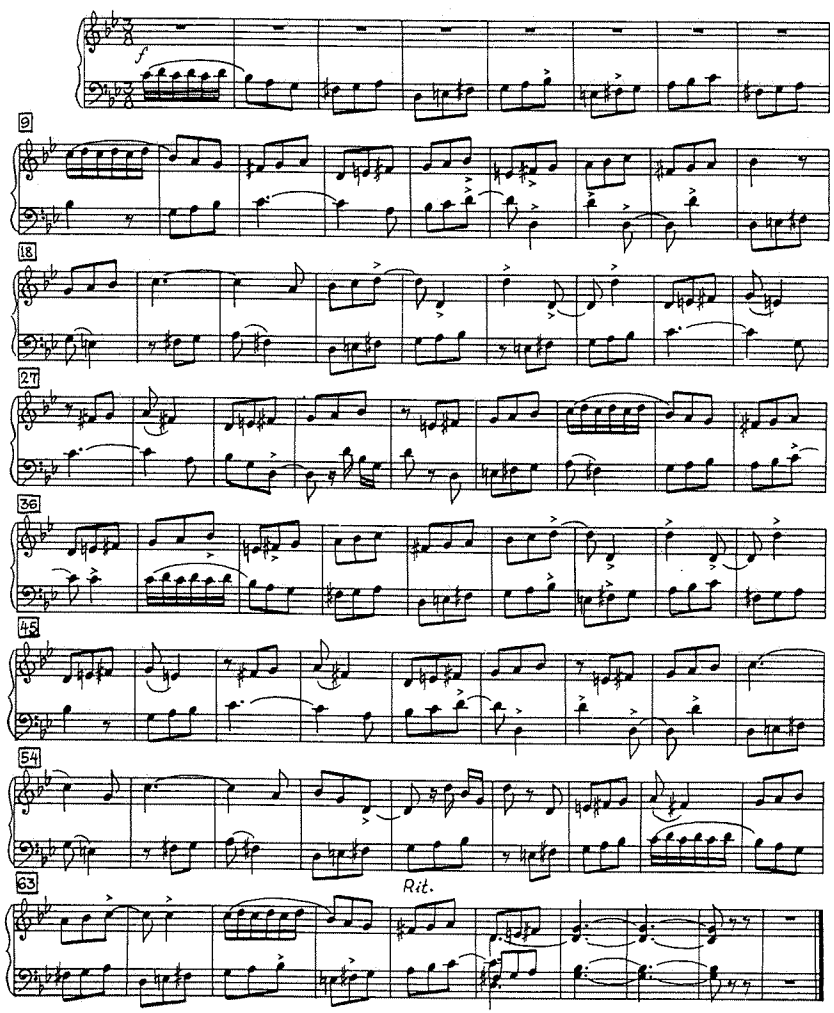
Allegro (♩=200)



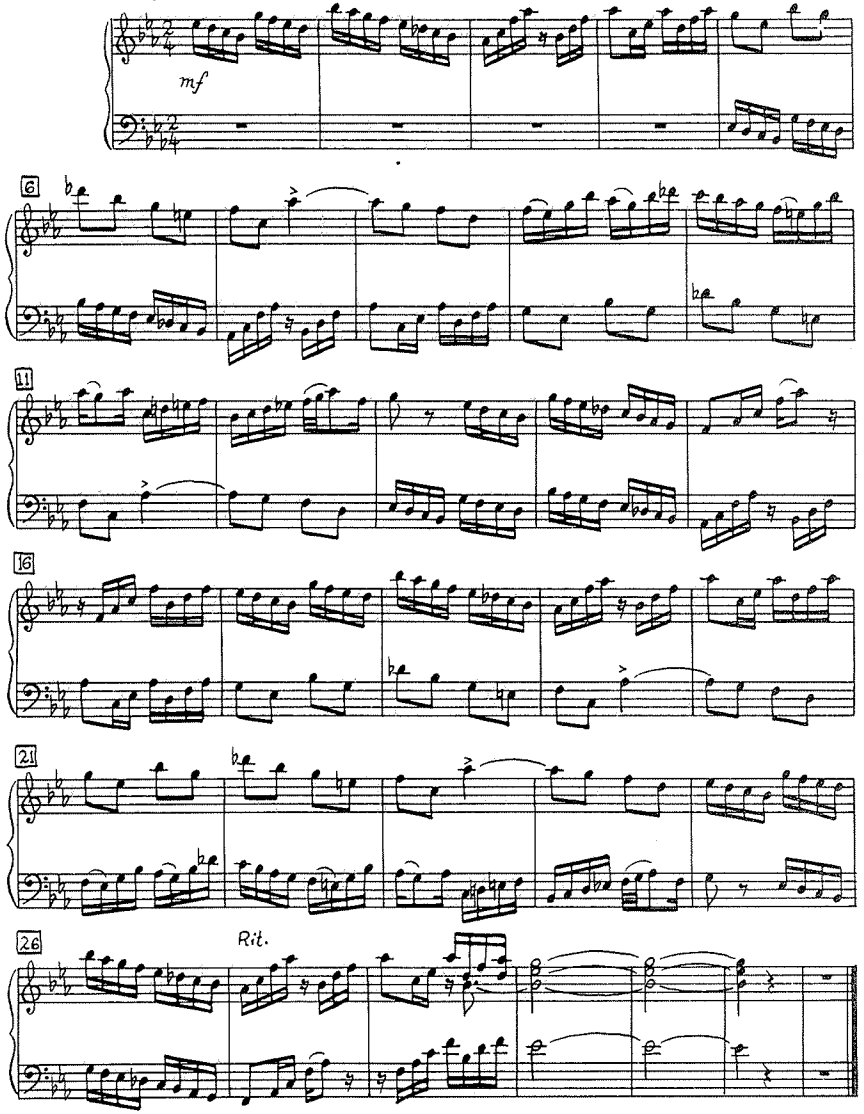
Presto (♩=76)



Vivace (♩.100)

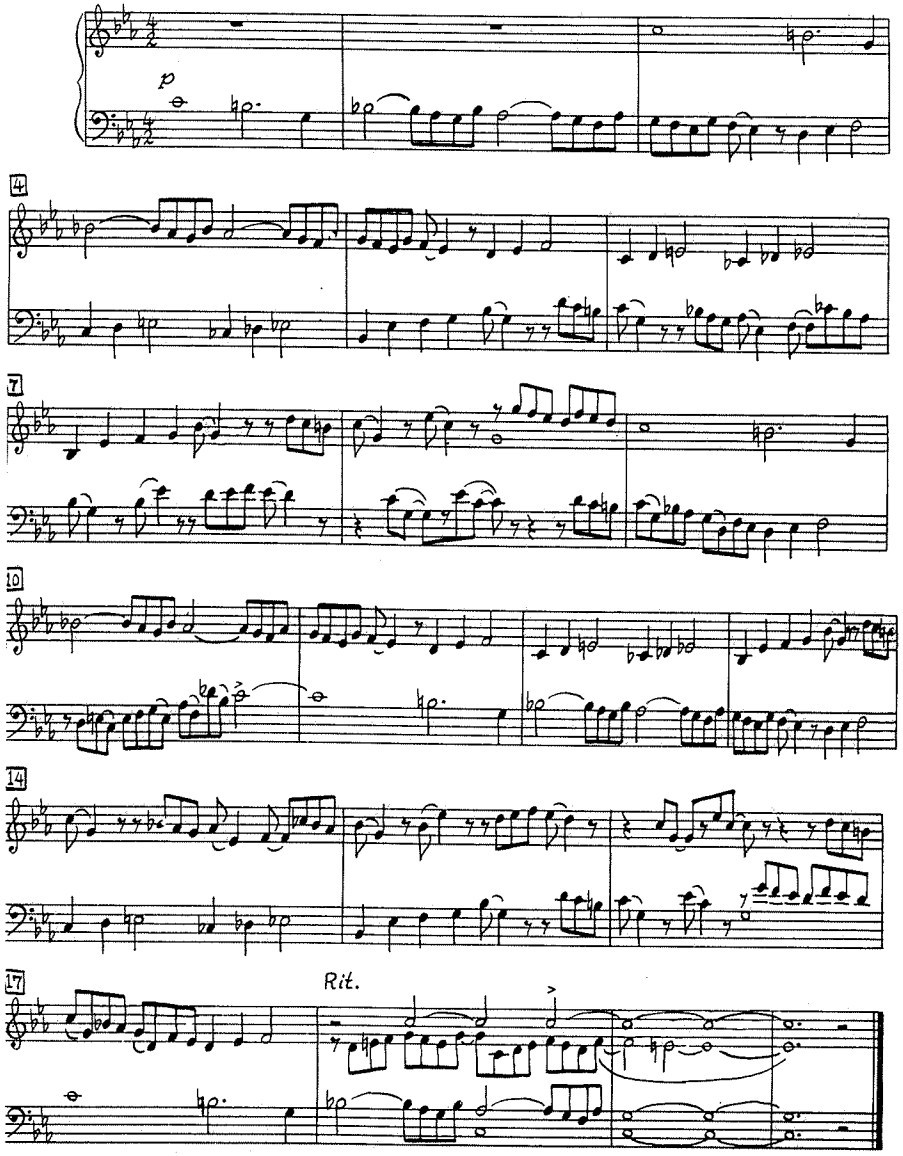


Allegro vivace (♩=112)



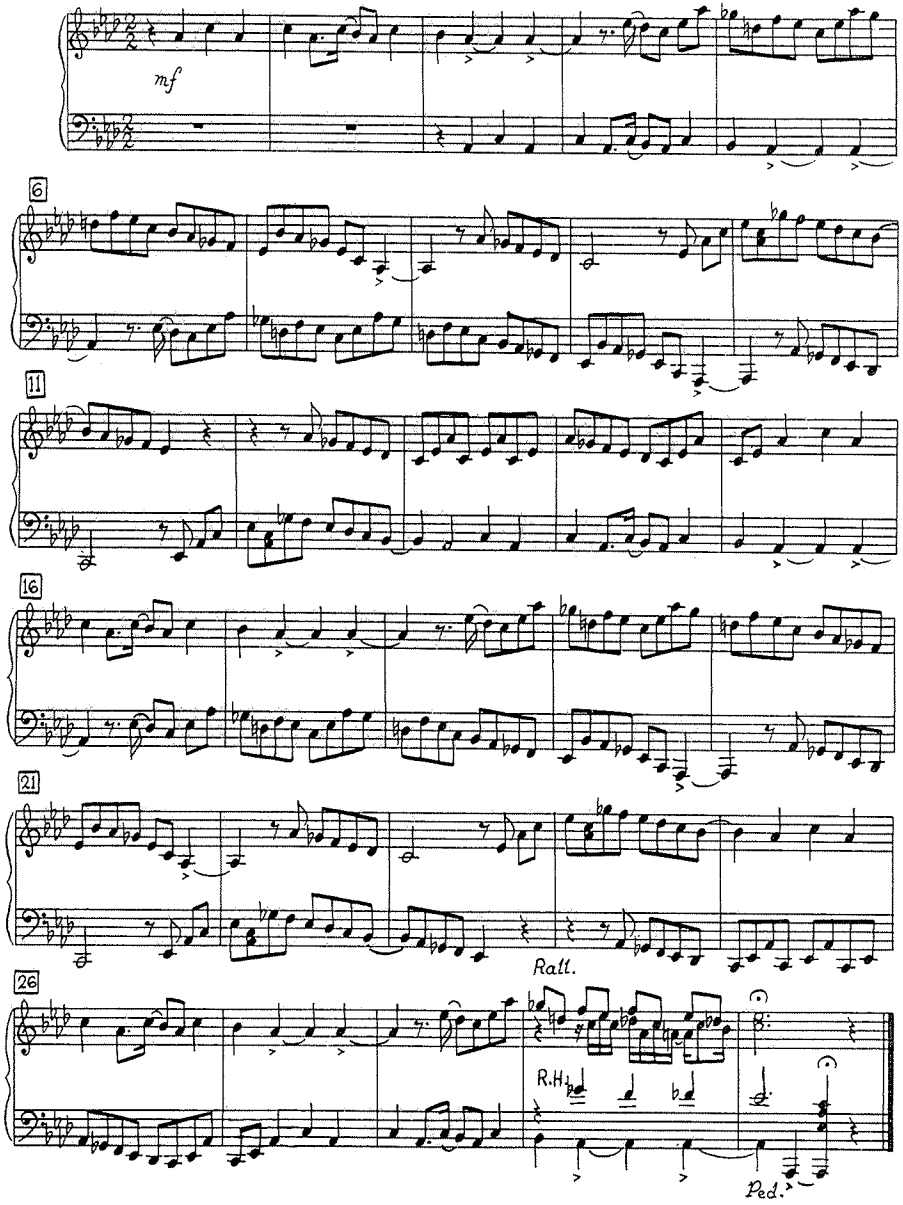
VIII

Grave (♩=66)



IX

Pastorale(♩=72)



X

misterioso (♩=126)

mf

6

11

16

21

Rit.

26

XI

Allegro (♩=144)

p

5

9

14

19

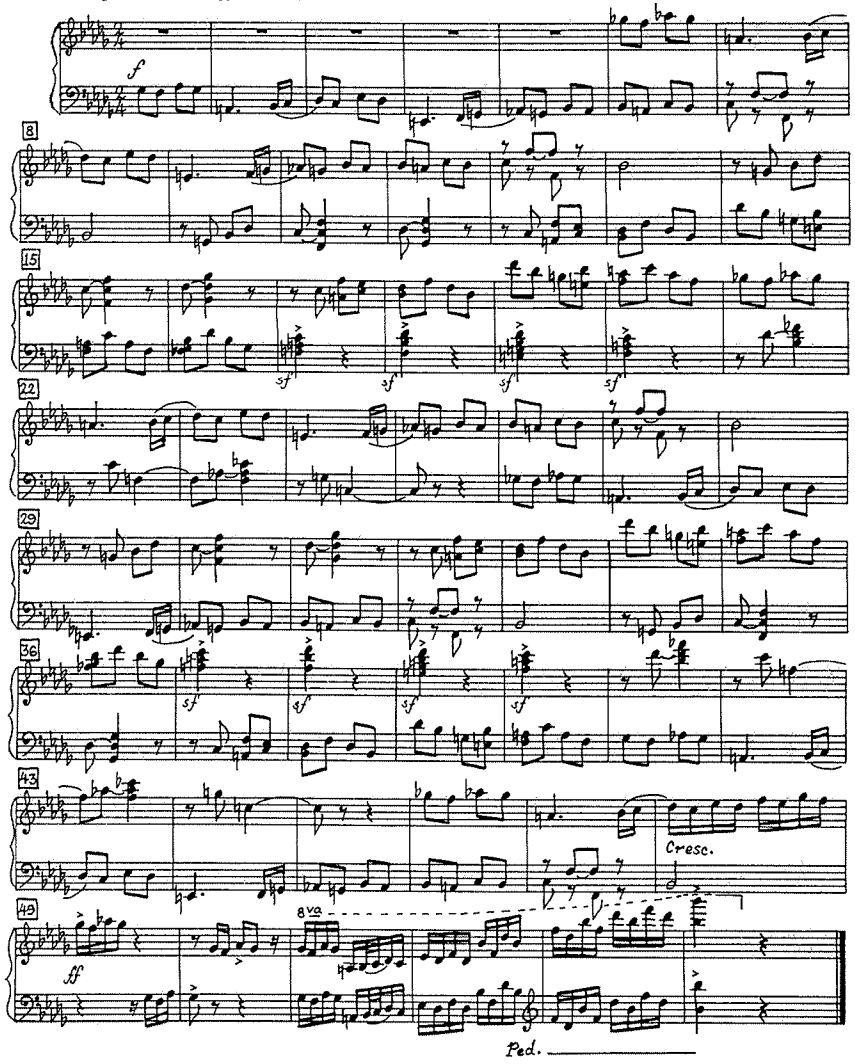
Rit.

24

Ped. - - - - - - -

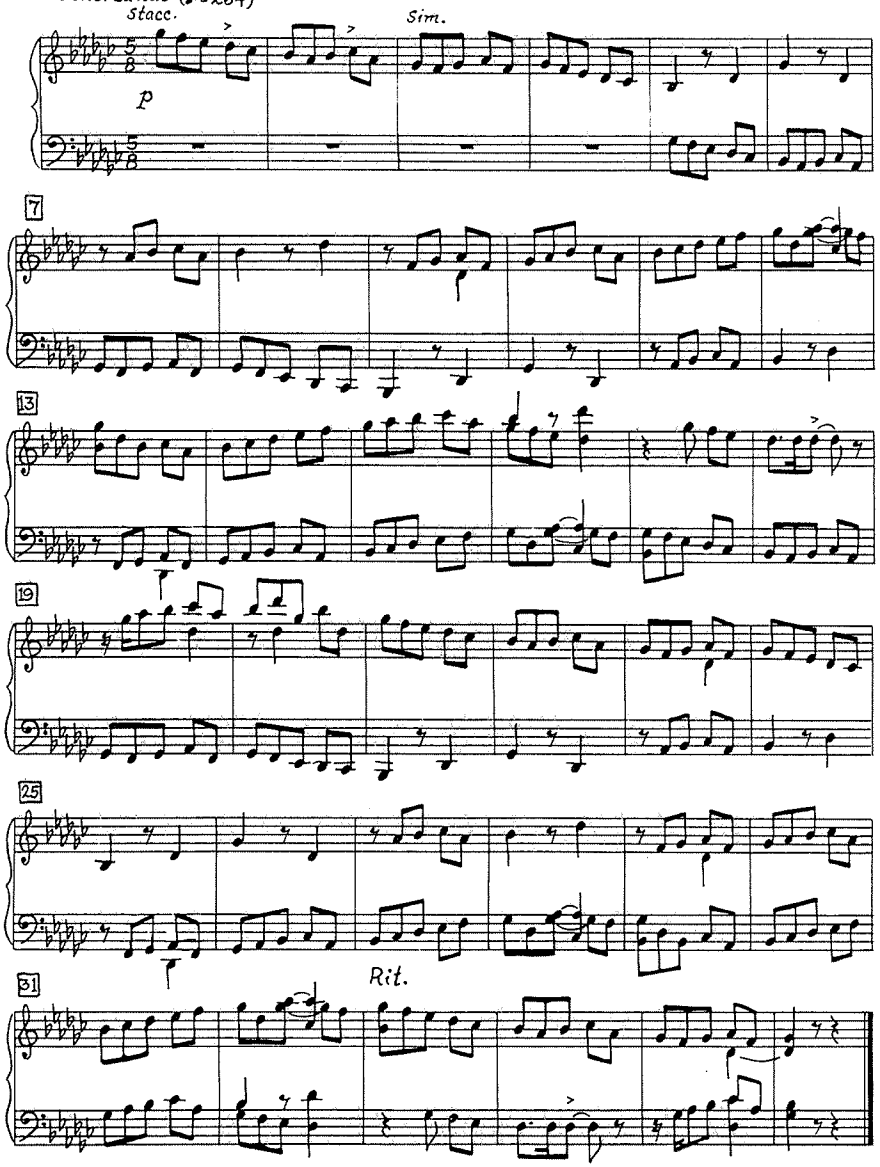
XII

Allegro ma non troppo (♩=116)



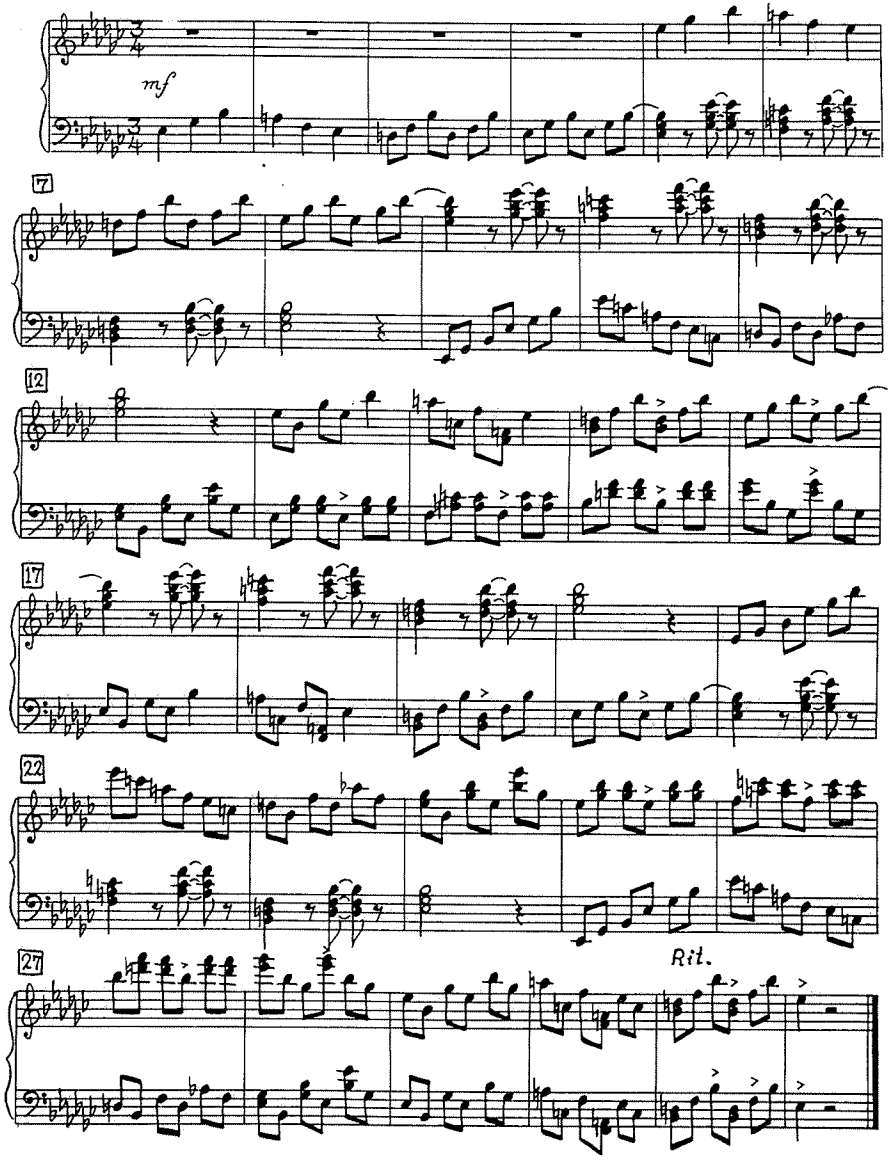
XIII

Scherzando (♪=264)



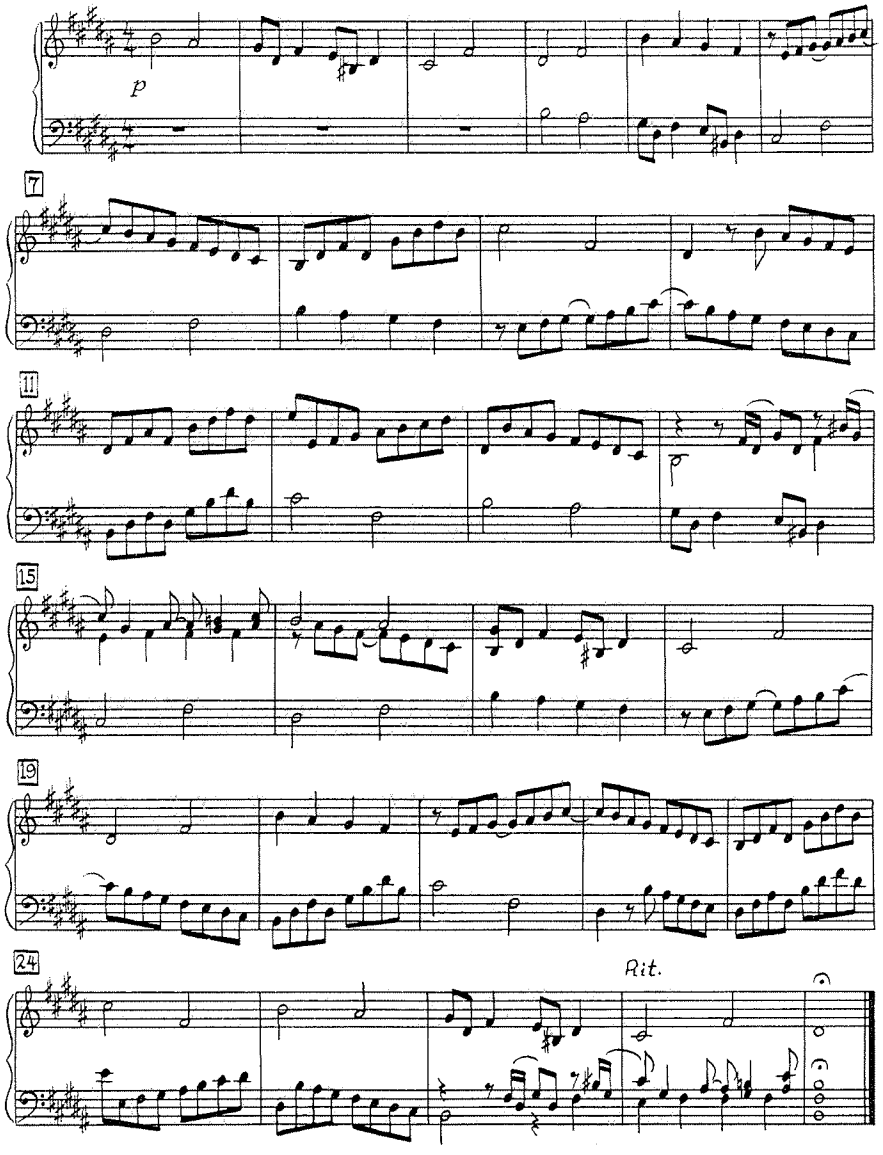
XIV

Moderato (♩=140)

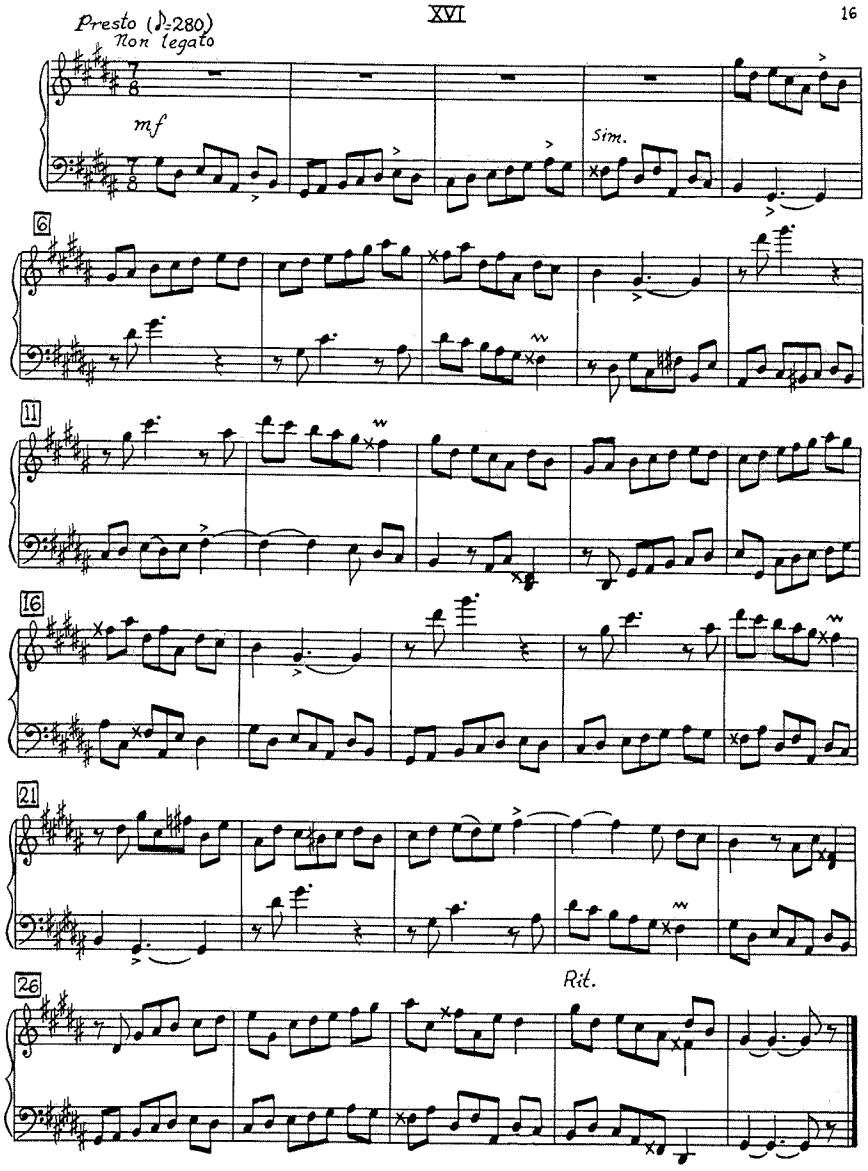


XV

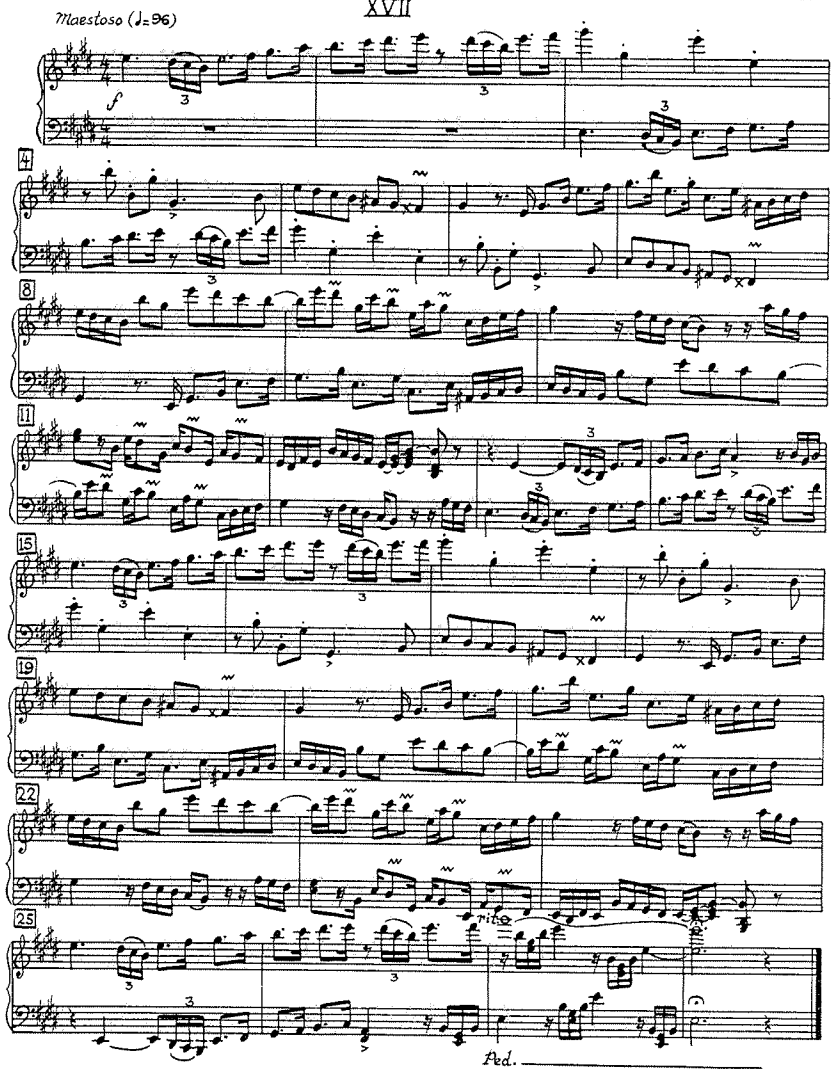
Allegro, ma non troppo (♩=112)



XVI

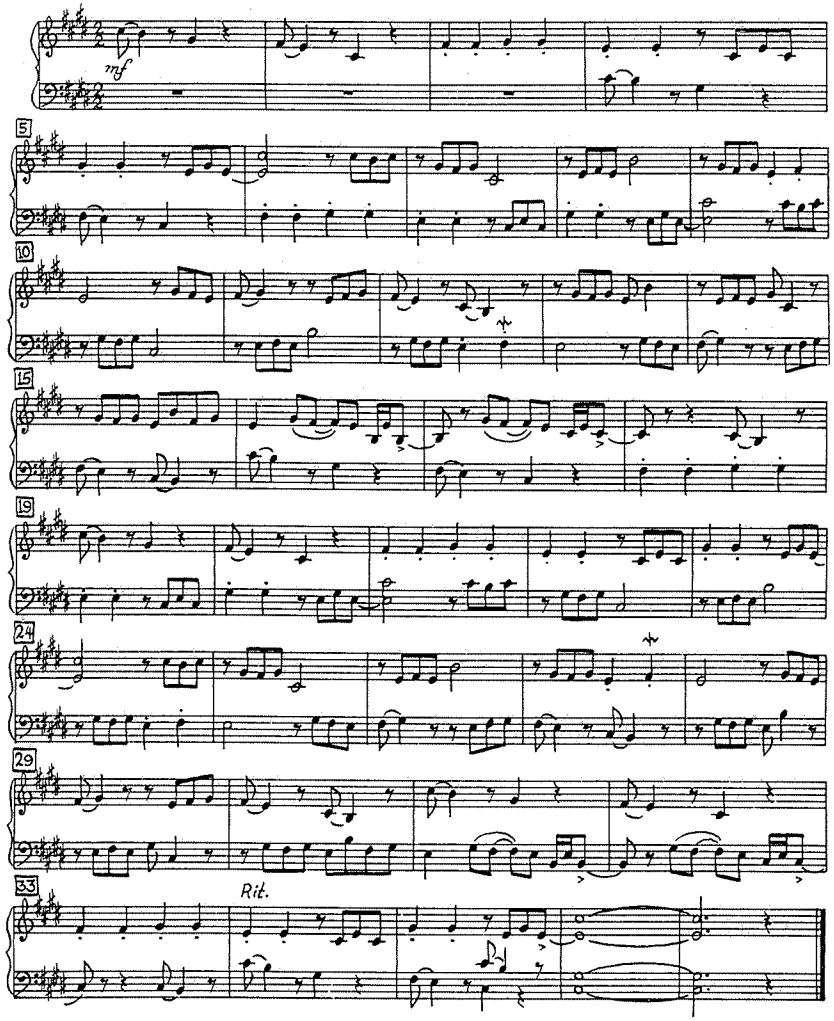

Presto (♪=280)
Non legato
mf
Sim.
6
11
16
21
26
Rit.

XVII


Maestoso (♩=96)
f
4
8
11
15
19
22
25
rit.
Ped.

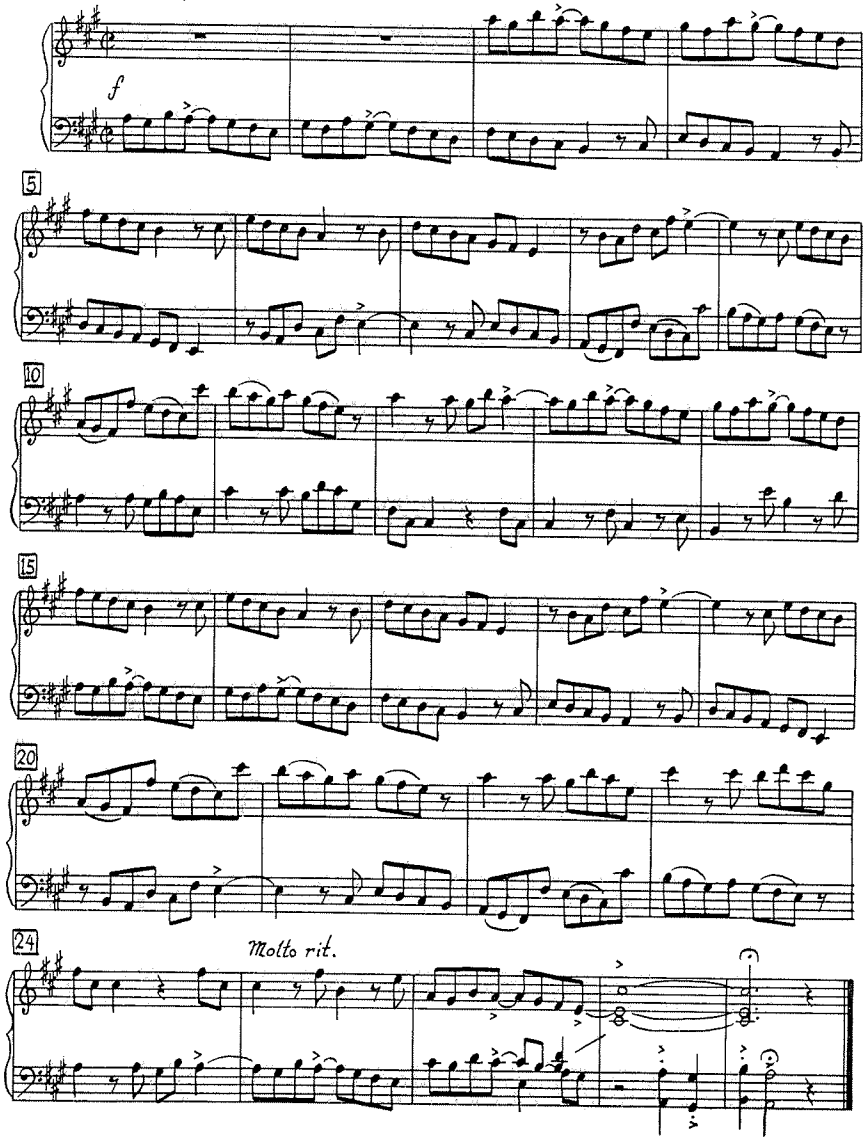
XVIII

Adagietto (d=66)



XIX

Vivace (d=92)



XXII

Appassionato (♩=92)

8va Sempre

f

14

7

10

14

18

22

1oco

Rit.

25

Ped.

XXIII

Andante (♩=80)

p

3

6

8

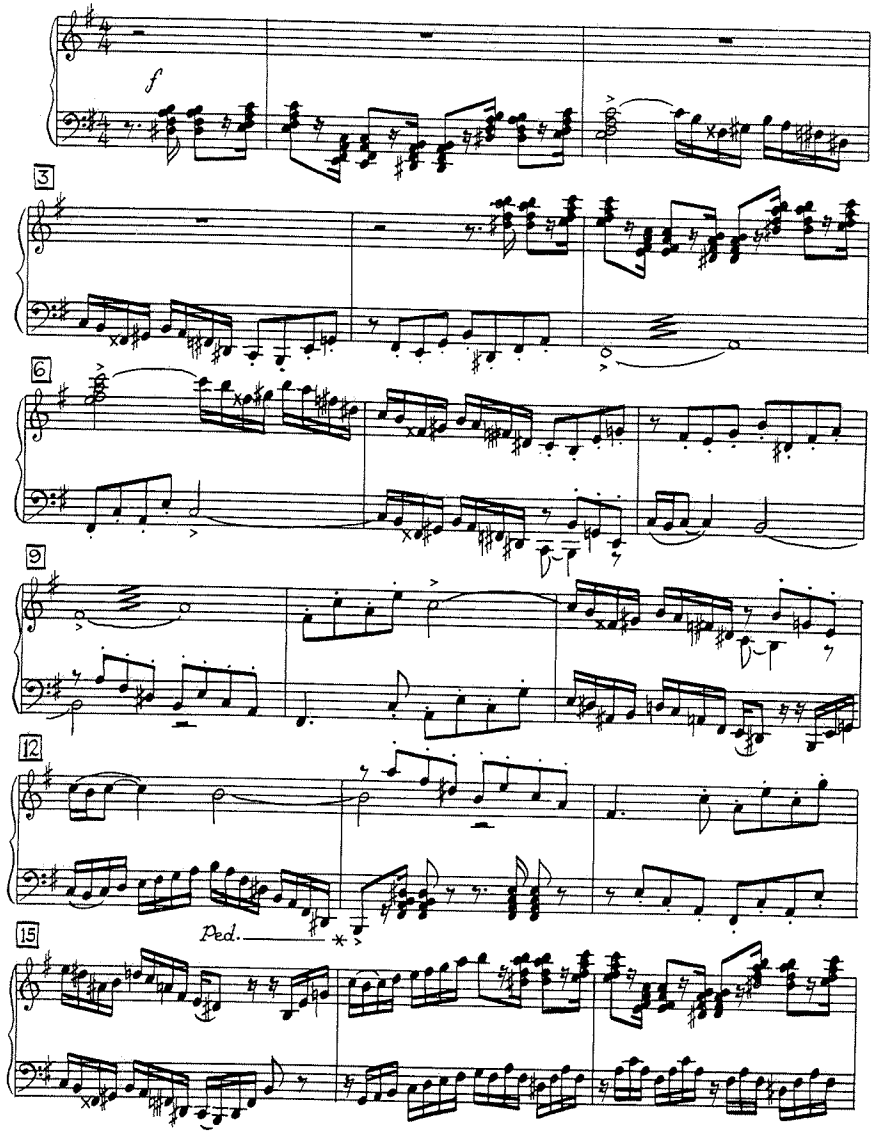
10

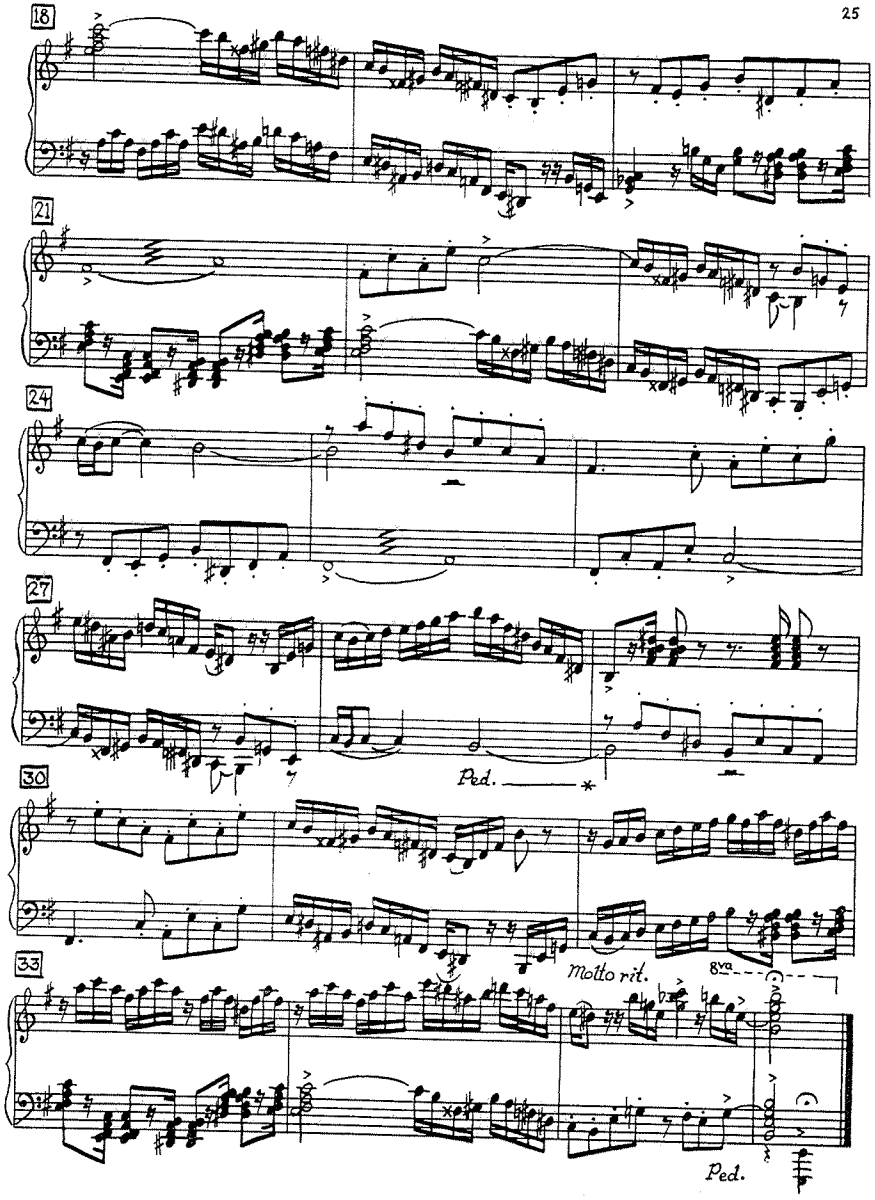
12

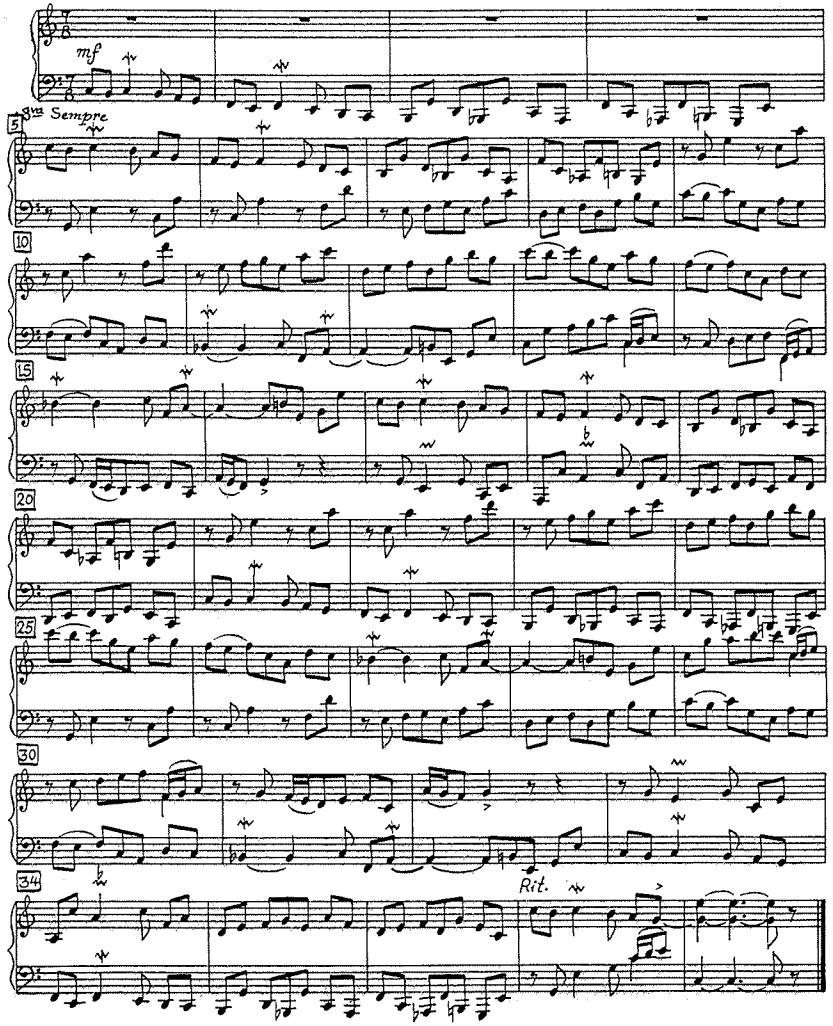
Rit.

XXIV

Grandioso (♩=112)





XXV

Presto (♪=280)