DANCE CARD

7 Dances for Piano

by

Karen Amrhein

PERUSAL SCORE

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DANCE CARD

Total Timing: 20 Minutes

Dance Card is a set of seven dances for piano. Each dance takes its inspiration and structure from a dance style that either originated in America or immigrated here. Some of my dances cleave fairly closely to the sound and structure, meter and mood of their mother dances. Others travel far from their origins, keeping the essential rhythmic or metrical aspects of the mother dances, but sounding like something else altogether.

Consolation Rag

Dedicated to Bruce Allen Hardy, piano and clarinet teacher, and friend

The ragtime style at its most basic means music with a syncopated (or ragged) tune over a solid, march-like accompaniment, usually in 2/4 meter. Most commonly, the structure of a rag is: AABBACC or AABBCCDD or AABBCCA, with each letter corresponding to an individual 16-measure theme, and each theme divided into 4-measure phrases. Ragtime was most popular from around 1900-1918 and is considered to be the first distinctly American musical genre.

The structure of my *Consolation Rag* is: Introduction-A-B-Intro'-C-D-Intro-A-B-C-Coda, where D is a *canon* and the Coda is a variation on the Introduction. I christened this dance *Consolation Rag* because it was my third, and finally successful, attempt at writing a rag — the previous two efforts (*Splash Rag* and *Hesitation Rag*) failing to be "ragged" enough and ending up far too complex.

A Certain Way to Beguine

Dedicated to Francesca Monroe, a friend

The beguine has its 19th century origins in the melding of *polka* with Dominican folk dance, evolving from a Spanish *bolero* rhythm into a slow and sensual *rumba*, and coming to the United States in the early decades of the 20th century from the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. It found its brief popularity in the mid-1930s and today is remembered in the U.S. only because of Cole Porter's 1935 song *Begin the Beguine*. Indeed, my own efforts at researching the style found little reward beyond the Cole Porter classic.

My beguine (from the French word for flirtation) doesn't stray far from the rhythmic structure and romance (think palm trees swaying in the moonlight) of the beguine model. *A Certain Way to Beguine* consists of a two-measure introduction, an A theme, B theme, four-measure transition based on the introduction, A theme again (this time lengthened to 6/4 time), C theme, and a return to the beginning, A theme, B theme, and conclusion. The characteristic slow-quick-quick rhythm occurs in three layers: melody that alternates between a solid and a syncopated pulse, syncopated middle voice wherein the second-half of each measure finds the rhythmic pulse quickening, and a bass line emphasizing the 4/4 meter while also reinforcing the "quickening" aspect through its dependable half note - quarter note - quarter note rhythm.

Mister Charleston Butler

Dedicated to Charles Butler, a friend and the oldest friend of my husband, Stephen

The Charleston rhythm first became popular with James P. Johnson's 1923 tune of the same name, which in turn took its title from the city in South Carolina. Today, the Charleston epitomizes the era known as the Roaring '20s, with its speakeasies, gangsters, molls, and flappers.

My goal with my own Charleston was to turn up the electricity on the neon dazzle of the jazz age. *Mister Charleston Butler* uses the syncopated Charleston rhythm and adds the bright dissonance of bitonality. The phrases in two simultaneous keys are relieved by phrases in a single key, albeit spiced with jazzy harmonies. My Charleston's overall structure is A-B-A, with the A section further divided into exposition and development sub- sections and the B section itself in a-b-a form.

Lemon Merengue Lullaby

Dedicated to Mario A. Garcia Briseño, a friend

Effectively synthesizing the European *minuet* with the rhythms of Africa, the national dance of the Dominican Republic has two legends explaining its origins. The first holds that the merengue's drag step originated with slaves laboring on sugar plantations, their legs heavy with iron manacles. The second tells of the war hero come home to find his village celebrating his return with a limp-footed dance to honor his wounded leg.

In *Lemon Merengue Lullaby*, the merengue rhythm appears as something of a memory or the hushed sound of a distant celebration, while a gentle lullaby melody is sung. Here, the sound of the merengue has vanished; only its plodding bass drum pulse and tambora and accordion rolls remain as the lilting, almost Schubertian tune beckons the weary dancer to sleep.

Rumba in Fives

As with *Lemon Merengue Lullaby*, my *Rumba in Fives* makes use of a basic African rhythm, while sounding entirely unlike its progenitor, in this case the Cuban rumba. I've varied the clave rhythm of five beats within a pulse of eight (two 4/4 measures with beats on 1, 2b, and 4 in measure one and beats on 2 and 3 in measure two) by creating five rhythmic-melodic units of eighth notes that repeat every two measures (on beats 1, 2b, and 3b, and 2 and 3). Five of these units occur within each section, and there are five sections, for a total of fifty measures. The right-hand melody is varied and developed over the five sections, making *Rumba in Fives* essentially a *passacaglia*.

Mycklorf's Folly (Reel & Semi-Quadrille)

My husband suggested that I write a square dance for the sixth dance in this set, so I did a little research and learned that square dancing is traditionally performed to 18th and 19th century folk music: jigs, reels, country dances, and quadrilles. I thought it would be fun to write a reel that holds pretty strictly to the form without sounding like *The Sailor's Hornpipe* (remember Popeye the Sailor?) and which serves as the basis for a quadrille.

A reel is very similar to a hornpipe, but has more even beats, and typically consists of two sections of eight measures each, with each 4/4 or 2/4 section evenly divided into two question-and-answer phrases. A quadrille is also comprised of eight-measure themes, some in 2/4 time and some in 6/8.

Born in the 1600s, quadrille (meaning both *four* and *square*) began as a military parade for four horsemen. Its popularity was such that two-legged dancers took to it in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The form is quite regimented (no surprise) and rather long-winded:

1. *Le Pantalon* (a pair of trousers) — three themes in 2/4 or 6/8 time arranged in the sequence ABACA
2. *L'été* (summer) — 2/4, ABBA
3. *La Poule* (hen) — 6/8, 2 measure introduction followed by ABACABA
4. Optional: *Trénis* (named for the dance master Trenitz) — 2/4, ABBA
5. *La Pastourelle* (shepherd girl) — 2/4, ABCBA
6. *Finale* — 2/4, 2 measure introduction followed by AABBAA

Adhering strictly to such a structure would have yielded a very long and repetitive dance, so I chose to use half of the form (movements 1, 3, and 5) and entitled each continuous movement *A New Pair of Trousers*, *Happy Hen*, and *The Shepherdess Tries the Trousers*. I also used the ABACA form for *Happy Hen*, rather than the rambling ABACABA structure. Furthermore, the B and C sections of *Happy Hen* and *The Shepherdess Tries the Trousers* are variations on the B and C sections of *A New Pair of Trousers*, while the A sections (the *reel* mentioned above) of the first and last movements are identical and the *Happy Hen* gets her own hen-like A theme. Yee-hah!

Waltz for One

Dedicated to Constance Amrhein (in memory of James Warren Amrhein, her husband of 61 years)

The final dance (an epilogue really) in *Dance Card* is a very slow *Waltz for One*, written in memory of my father- in-law. I haven't much to say about this very American, elegiac waltz — hopefully it will speak for me and be pleasing to the gracious widow of a gentle, generous man.

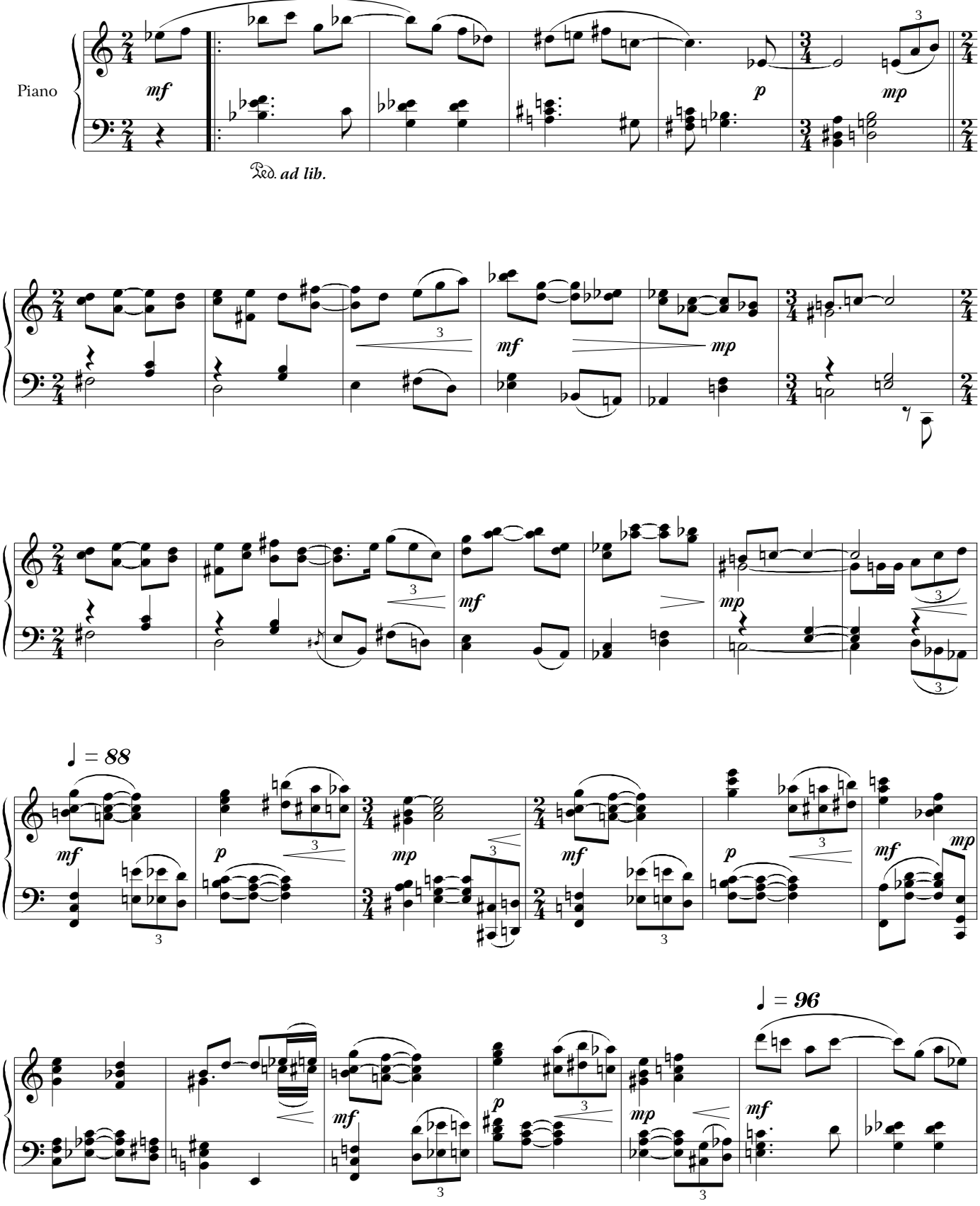
to Bruce Allen Hardy

Consolation Rag

Duration: 3 Minutes

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)

♩ = 96 *(energetic, but with ragtime rubato)*



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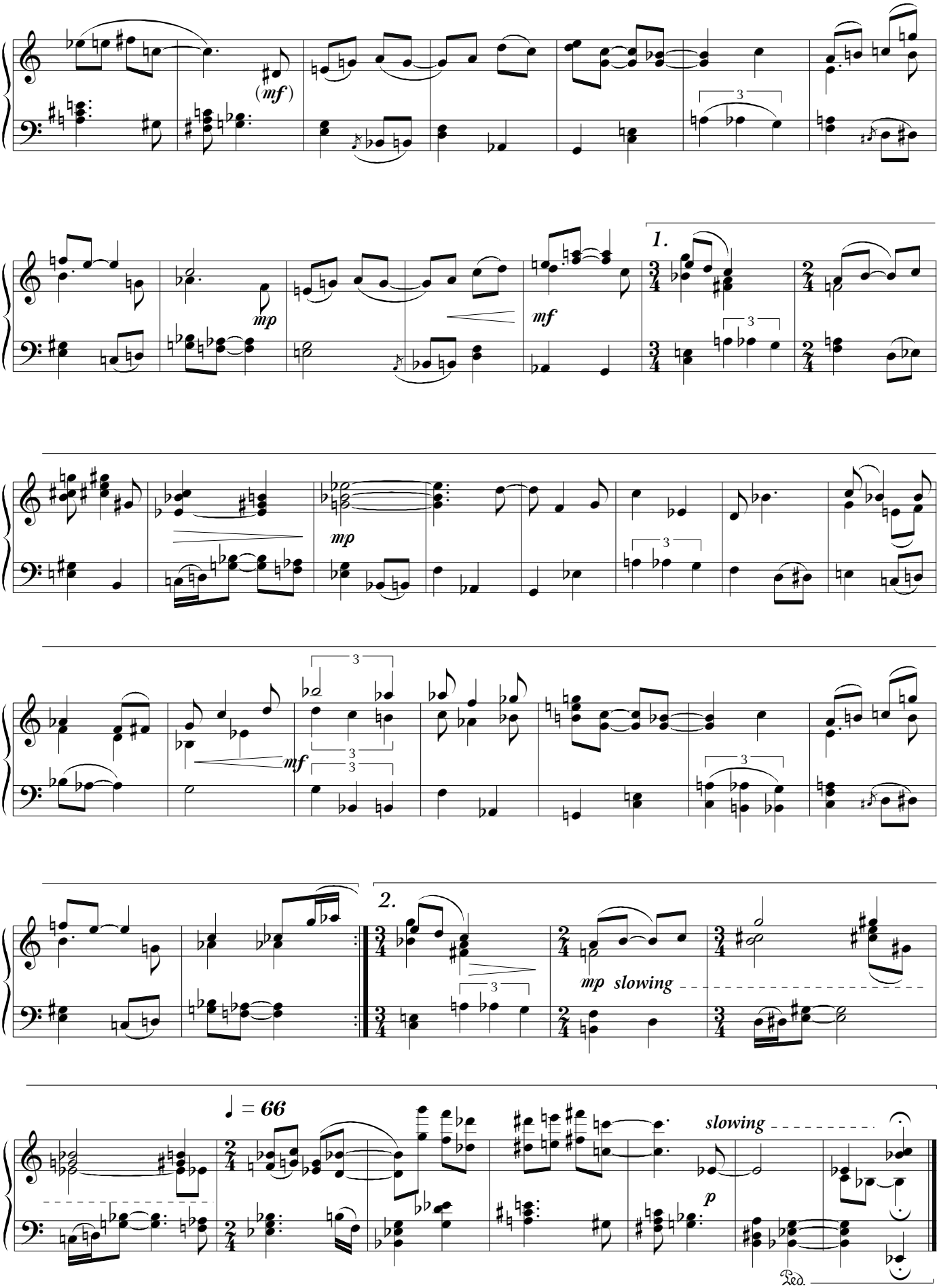
32
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54
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mp slowing
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♩ = 66
slowing
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Ped.

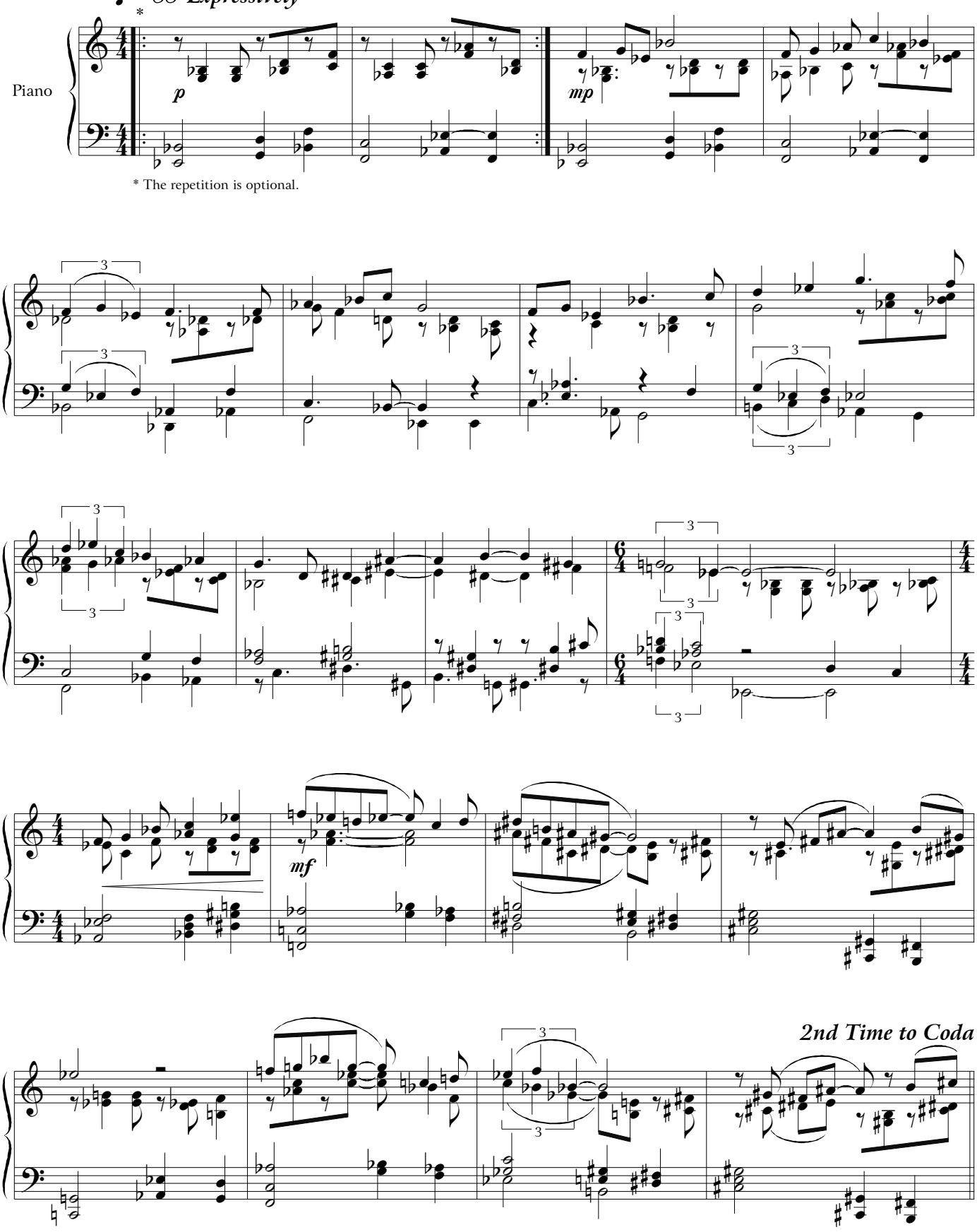
to Francesca Monroe

Duration: 3½ Minutes

A Certain Way to Beguine

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)

♩ = 88 *Expressively*



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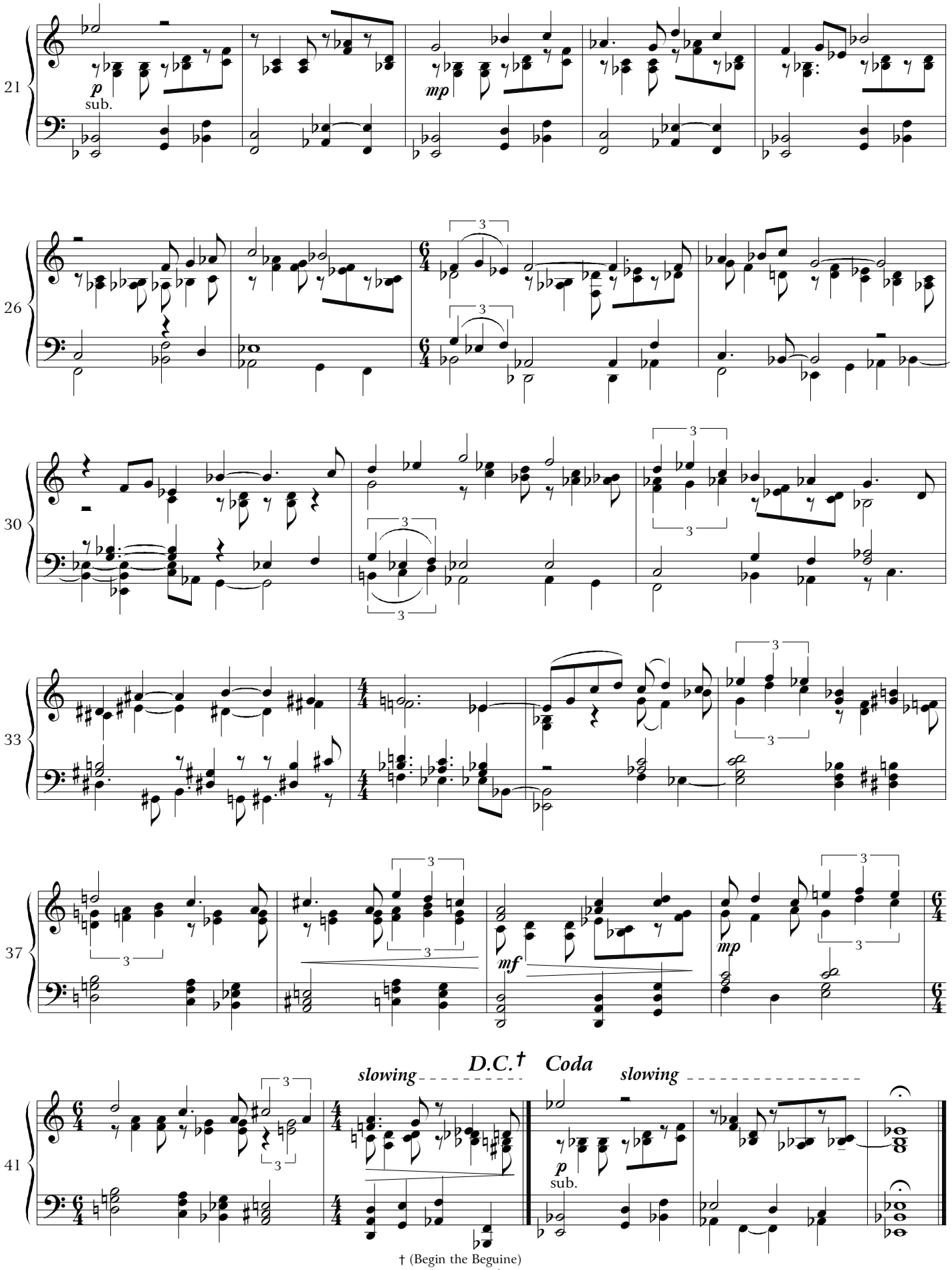

† (Begin the Beguine)

to Charles Adelbert Butler III

Duration: 2¼ Minutes

MISTER CHARLESTON BUTLER

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)

♩ = 192-208

Piano

Play m.6-18 first time only. (On da Capo, after m.5 skip to m.19):

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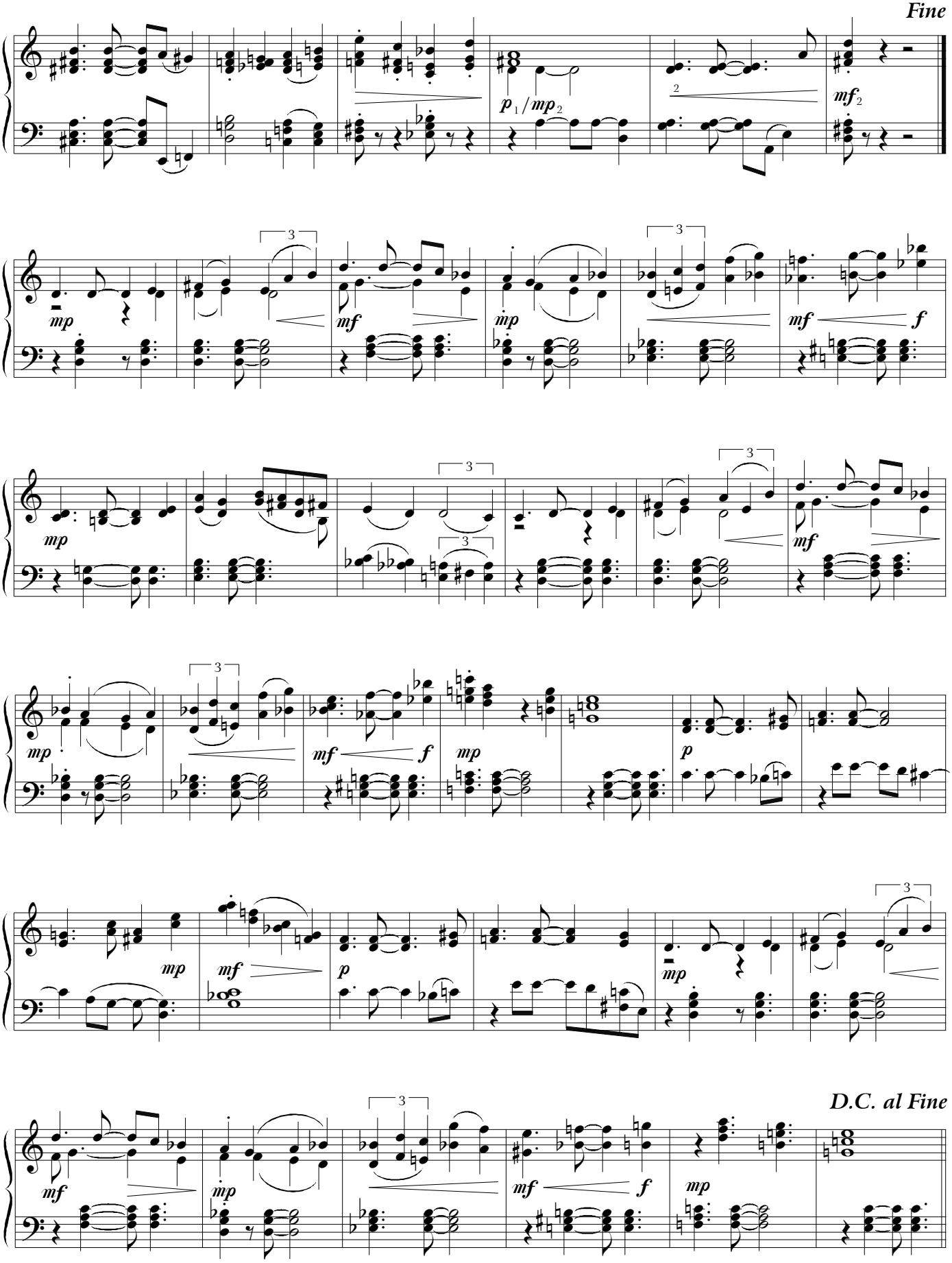
Fine
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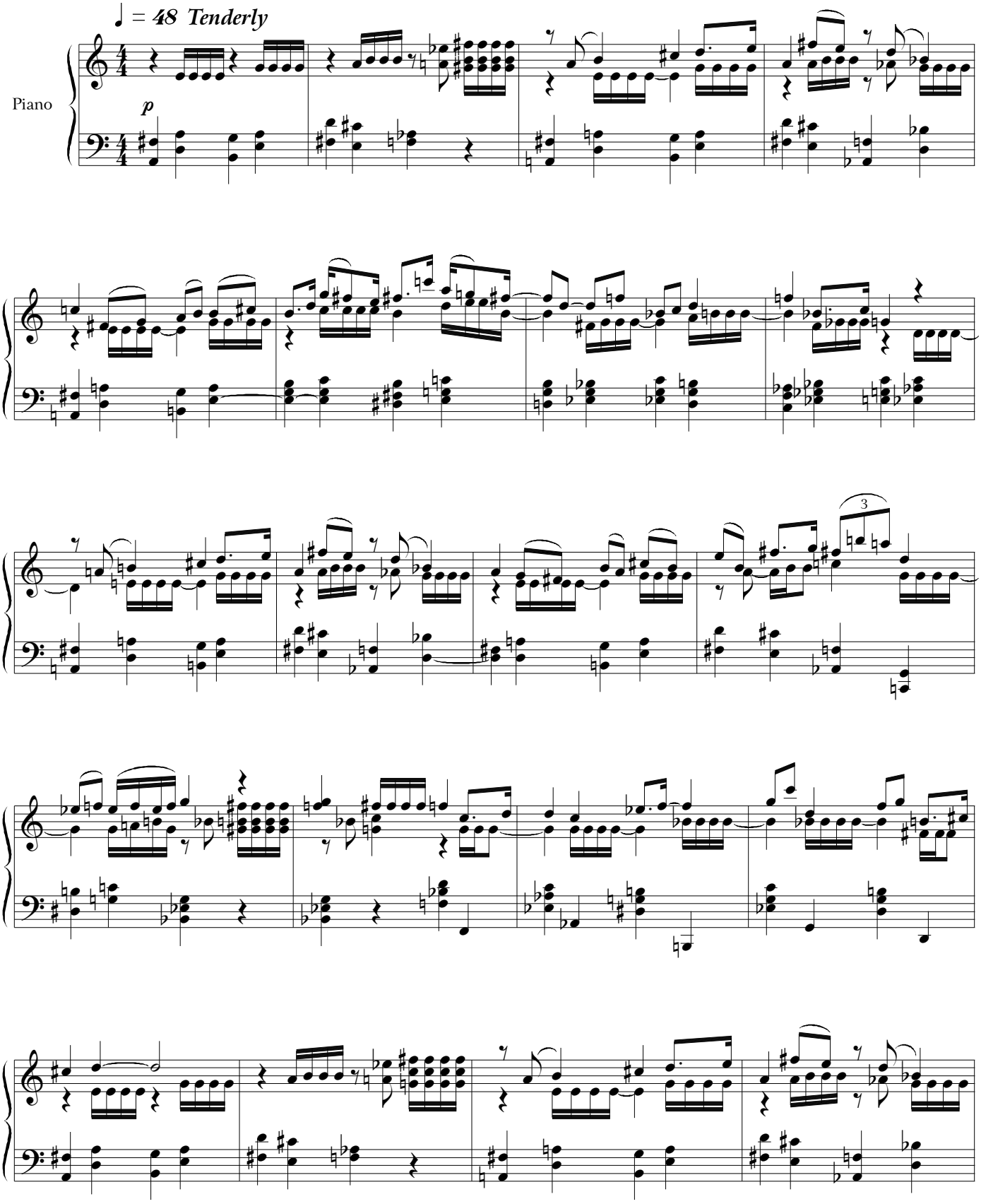
D.C. al Fine

to Mario A. Garcia Briseño

Lemon Merengue Lullaby

Duration: 3½ Minutes

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)



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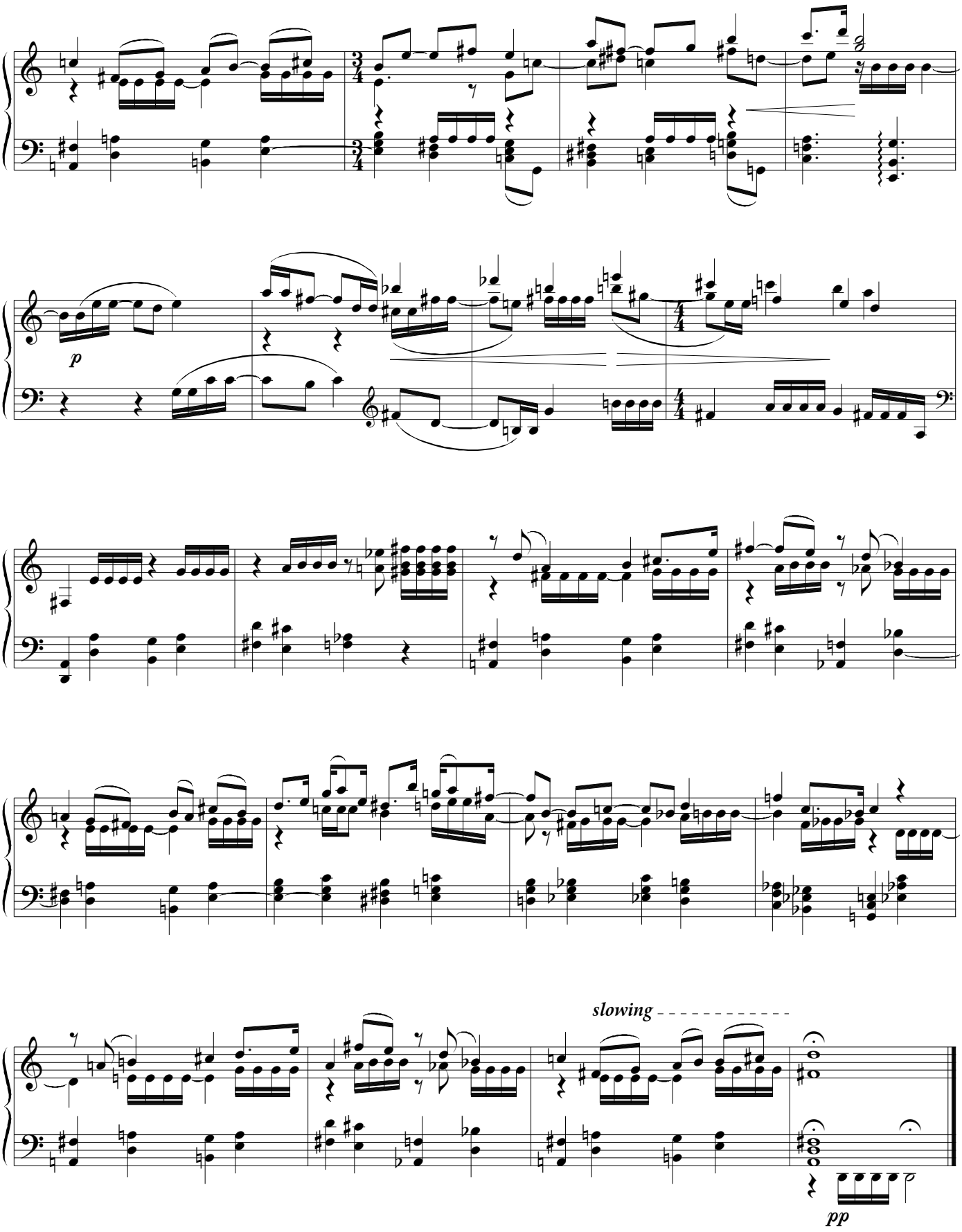
21
25
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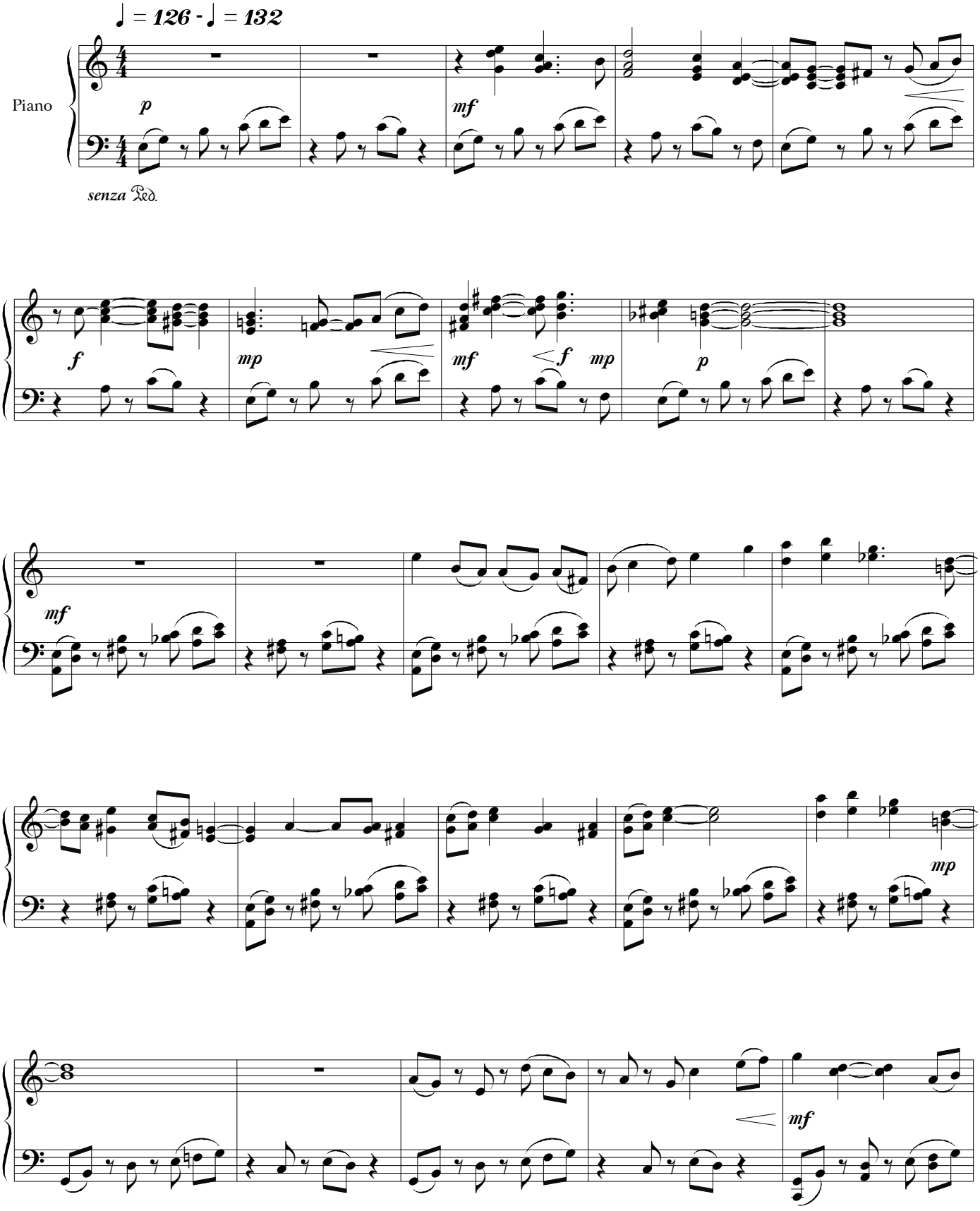
29
33
37
slowing
pp

Duration: 1½ to 1¾ Minutes

Rumba in Fives

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)



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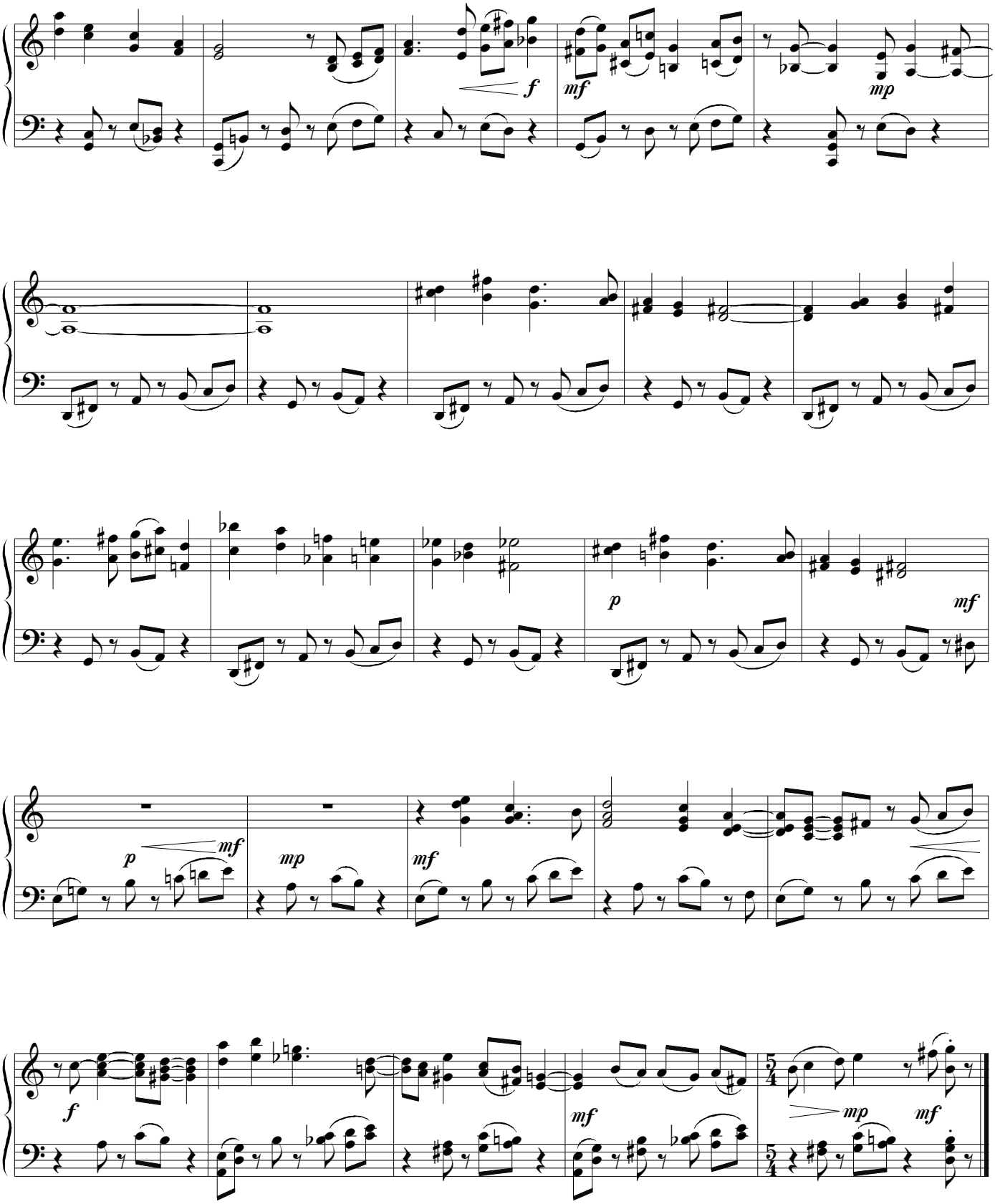
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Mycklorf's Folly

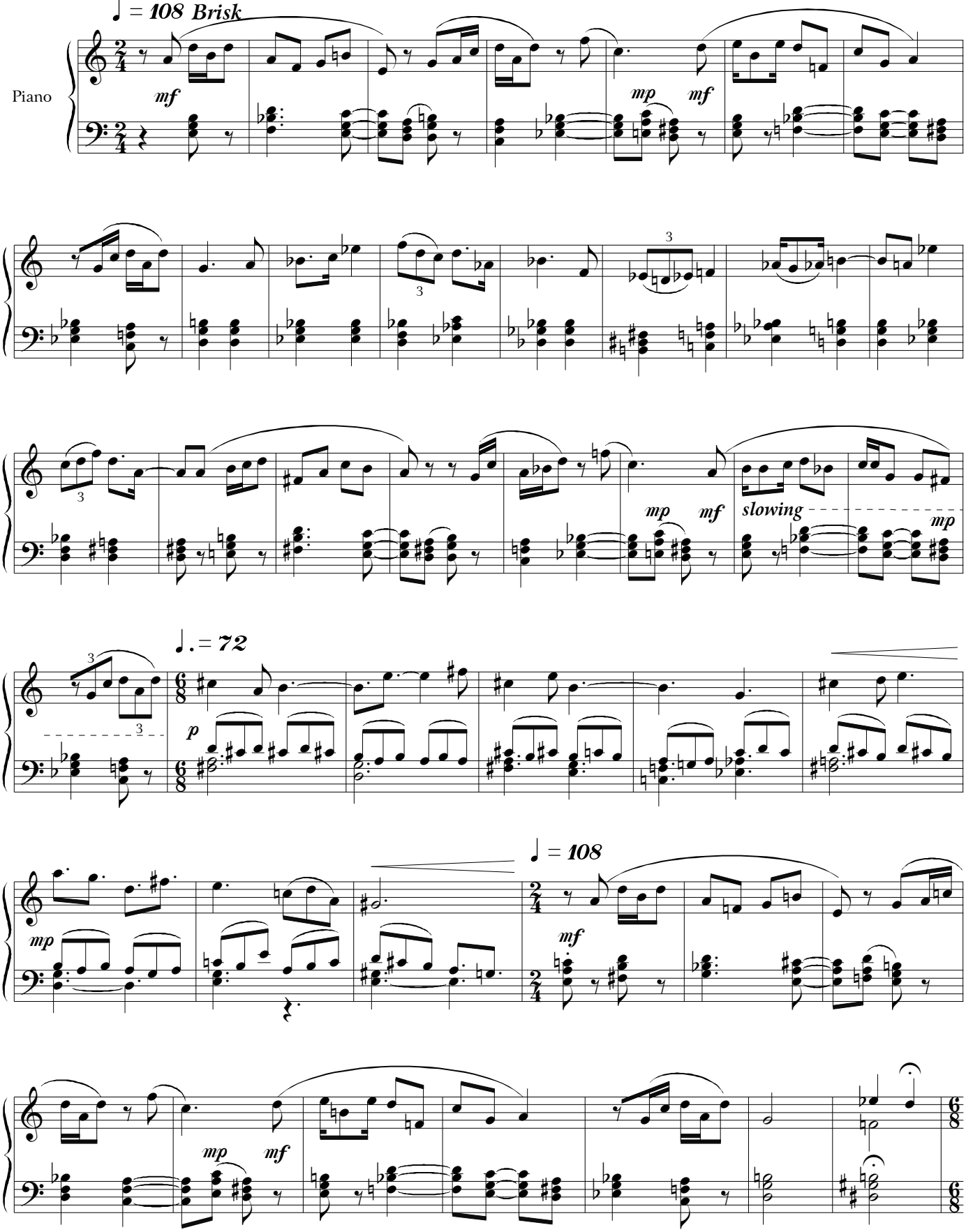
(Reel & Semi-Quadrille)

Duration: 3¼ Minutes

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)

A New Pair of Trousers

♩ = 108 *Brisk*



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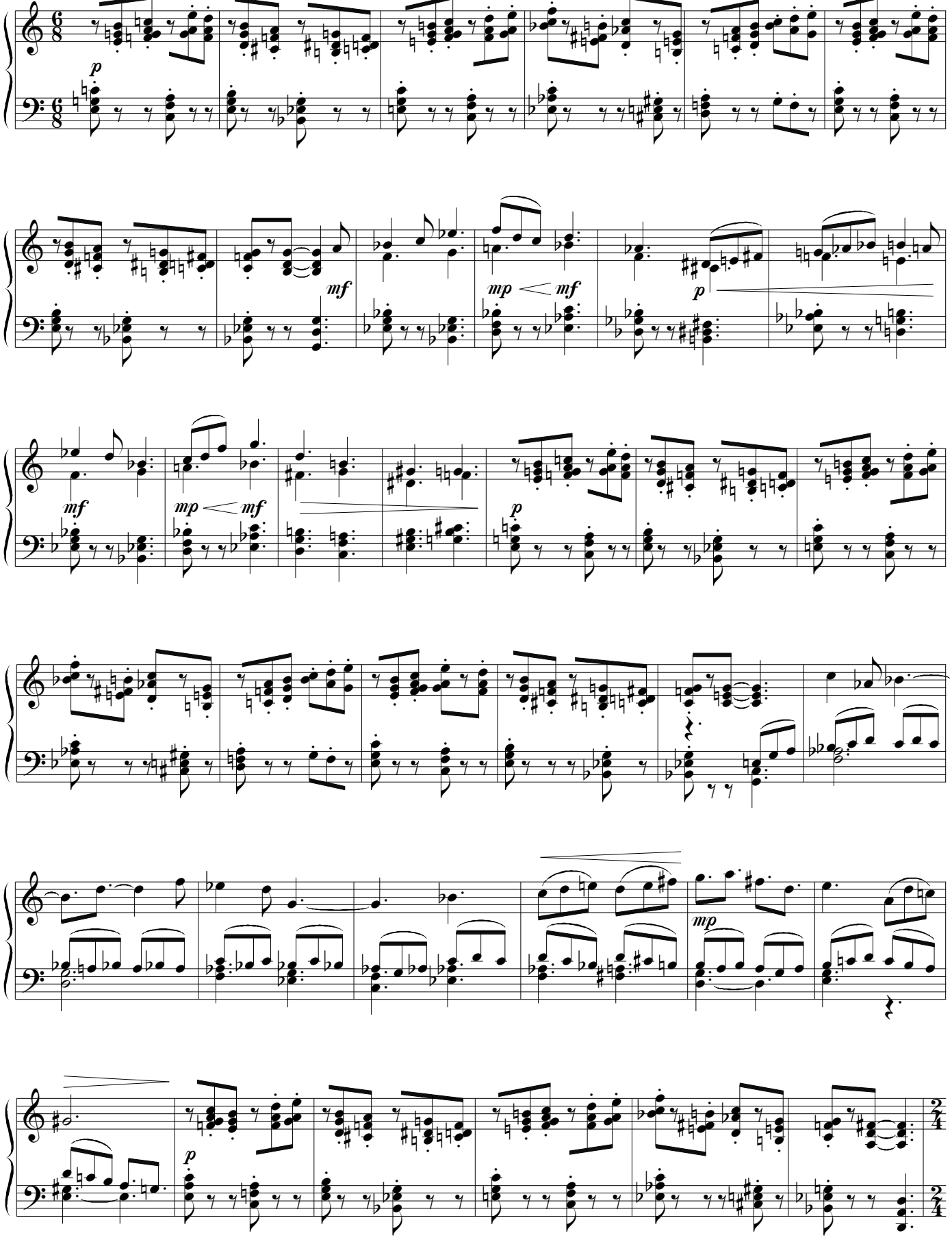
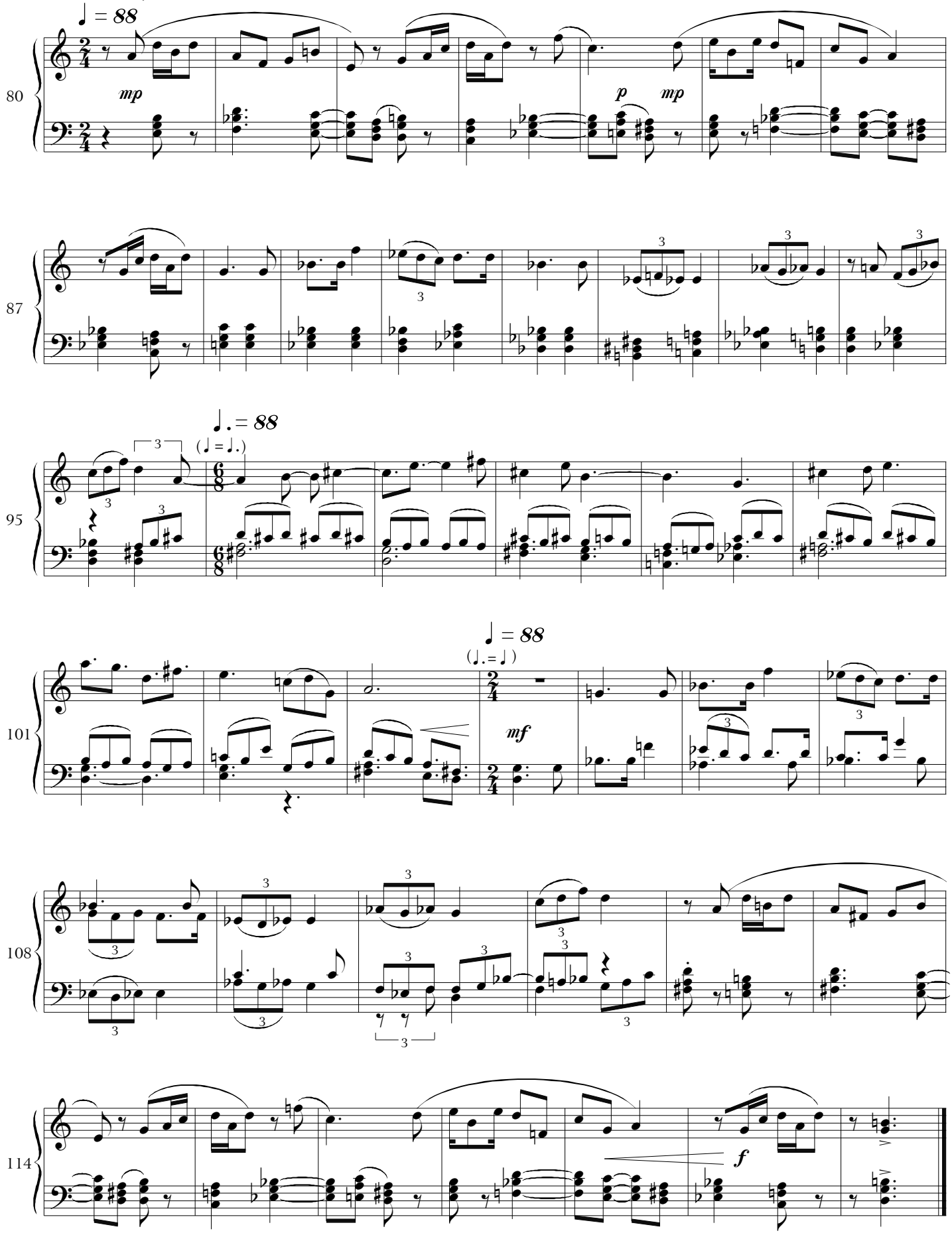
Happy Hen

♩. = 72 with a light touch



The Shepherdess Tries the Trousers



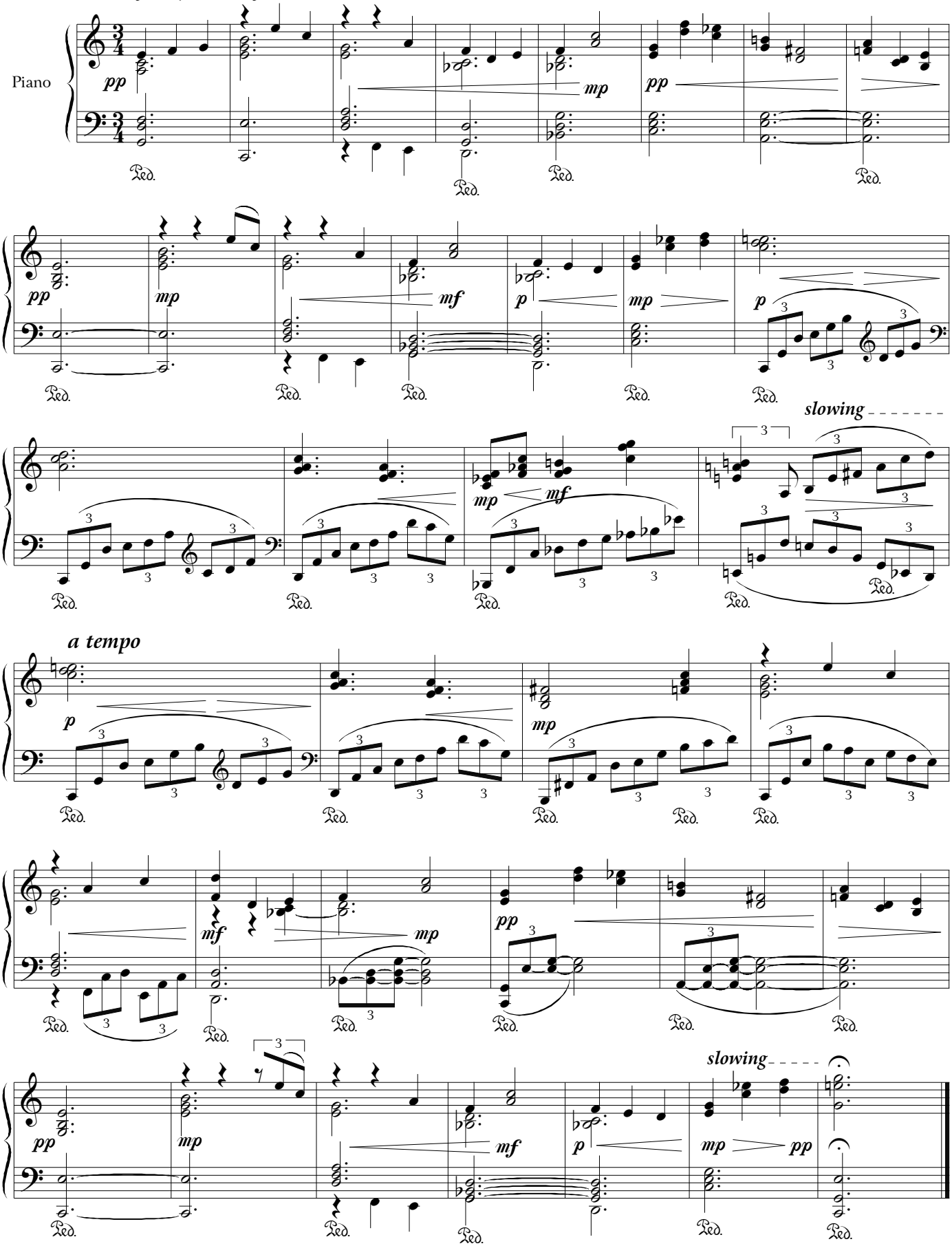
Duration: 2½ Minutes

to Constance Amrhein
in memory of James Warren Amrhein, her husband of sixty-one years

Waltz for One

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)

Very Expressively ♩ = 48 - ♩ = 52



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