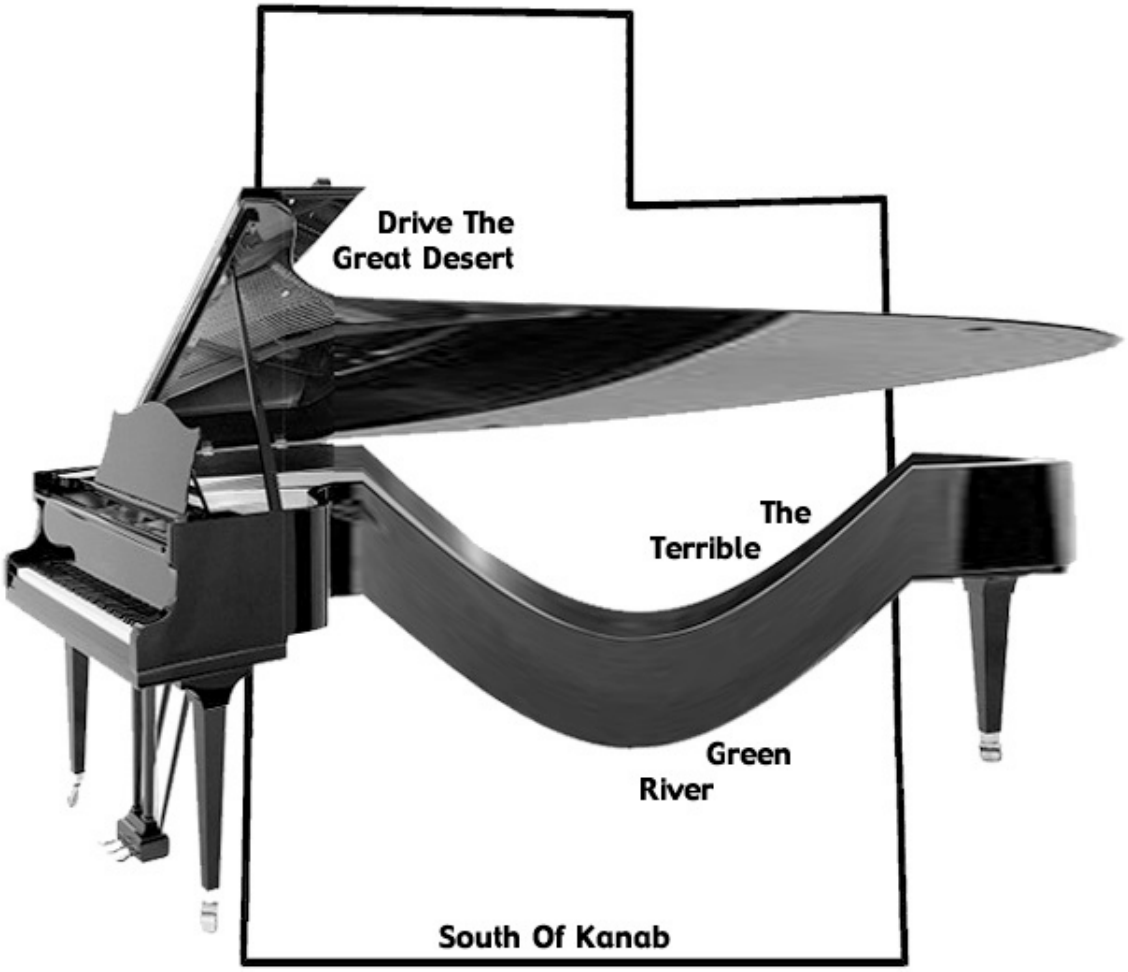
Ken Davies

Landscapes

Inspired by Wallace Stegner's *Mormon Country*

for solo piano



KD 312
kenvad music
www.kendavies.net

Landscapes

Inspired by Wallace Stegner's book *Mormon Country* - performance time c. 10:00

1. Drive The Great Desert (3:10)
2. South of Kanab (3:12)
3. The Terrible Green River (3:21)

Program Notes

One of the most memorably scenic places I have ever been is Utah. So when an occasion came up to write a piano work that specifically had to be based on a literary work, I remembered Utah and also the wonderful collection of stories of Utah by Wallace Stegner that I discovered during my visit to that state. Stegner captures images in striking description (as I attempt to emulate musically) of the Great Desert: "In fast cars...we thumb our noses at the old monster that for years lay across the path of empire. [Yet] that desert is as dry, as hot, as endless as it ever was. Ride across it about noon...watch those hills lift completely off the ground, watch them float on the lifting heat waves. Be thankful for high-compression engines." Of the Kanab area, following a colorful and detailed descriptive travelogue of the geological structures: "Step by step, cliff-line by cliff-line, the terraces break off to the Colorado river. Layers of rock thousands of feet thick have come off as neatly as layers of paint before a scraper." About the Green River he wrote: "Even with all his careful preparations, John Wesley Powell was almost beaten. The river whirled them though rapids, lashed them with twenty-foot waves, shot them through narrow canyons at heart-stopping speed."

Composer Bio

Wisconsin native Ken Davies (www.kendavies.net) has had acoustic and electronic works performed at numerous new music festivals such as the Society of Composers, Electroacoustic Barn Dance, Southeastern Composers League (he is a past president), Electronic Music Midwest, International Trombone Festival, National Association of Composers USA, Christian Fellowship of Art Music Composers, Parma Music Festival, London New Wind Festival (UK), and Sonic Coast (UK). Since 2002, he resides in coastal south Mississippi. Awards include the Mississippi Arts Commission's Performing Arts Fellowship for Composition (twice), the Mississippi Music Teachers' Association's Commissioned Composer Of The Year, and winner of the American Trombone Workshop National Composition Competition. His music studies were at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Yale School of Music, Middle Tennessee State University at Murfreesboro (MA trombone), and the University of Colorado at Boulder (MM composition). A writer and publisher member of ASCAP, his music is published by Kenvad Music.

Landscapes

Inspired by Utah descriptions in Wallace Stegner's *Mormon Country*

Program Notes

1. Drive The Great Desert

"In fast cars...we thumb our noses at the old monster that for years lay across the path of empire. Still, it will not do to thumb our noses too vigorously. That desert is as dry, as hot, as endless as it ever was, and just as dangerous for a man afoot or on horseback. Ride across it about noon and watch the little brown hills across the baking flats. Watch those hills lift completely off the ground, watch them float on the lifting heat waves. Look at the blue sky visible under their uprooted bases, and be thankful for high-compression engines. It is incredible that men should ever have tried to cross that stretch on foot or with wagons. The mind refuses to accept it—but they did."

2. South of Kanab

"But pretend for a moment that you are a bird (you'd have to be to do this) and are flying backward from the Grand Canyon, from the Kaibab Plateau, whose strata...slope gently northward. You'll fly over solid Carboniferous limestone until you pass the Permian buttes in the Kanab Desert near Fredonia or Moccasin Springs. You'll come face to face with the retreating edges of the Jura-Trias at Kanab, fifty or sixty miles by airline from the canyon. That retreating edge forms the Vermilion Cliffs, the southern edge of the High Plateaus. ...Fly ten miles up Kanab Canyon and you come to another tier of cliffs, the White Cliffs. Those are your Cretaceous shales. Rise above those and go fifteen miles more and the Pink Cliffs of the Eocene, capped with basalt, tell you that you are at the top of the ladder. These are the most recent and the least eroded rocks in the region. Then perch and look back.

Step by step, cliff-line by cliff-line, the terraces break off to the Colorado [river]. Layers of rock thousands of feet thick have come off as neatly as layers of paint before a scraper."

3. The Terrible Green River

"Even with all his careful preparations, [John Wesley] Powell was almost beaten. The river whirled them through rapids, lashed them with twenty-foot waves, shot them through narrow canyons at heart-stopping speed.

...But now the Grand comes in, almost as big as the Green, and the united waters rush headlong though Cataract Canyon and Narrrow Canyon. Below those is quiet water again most of the way through Glen Canyon, the walls broken by the chasms of other streams, the Escalante, the San Juan...

And now Marble Canyon, the walls rising higher and higher, the river steepening, and the Little Colorado coming in through a cataclysmic gorge, and from here on is the Grand Canyon."

descriptive quotations from Wallace Stegner's *Mormon Country*
© 1942, 1970 by Wallace Stegner
First Bison Book printing 1981
University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London
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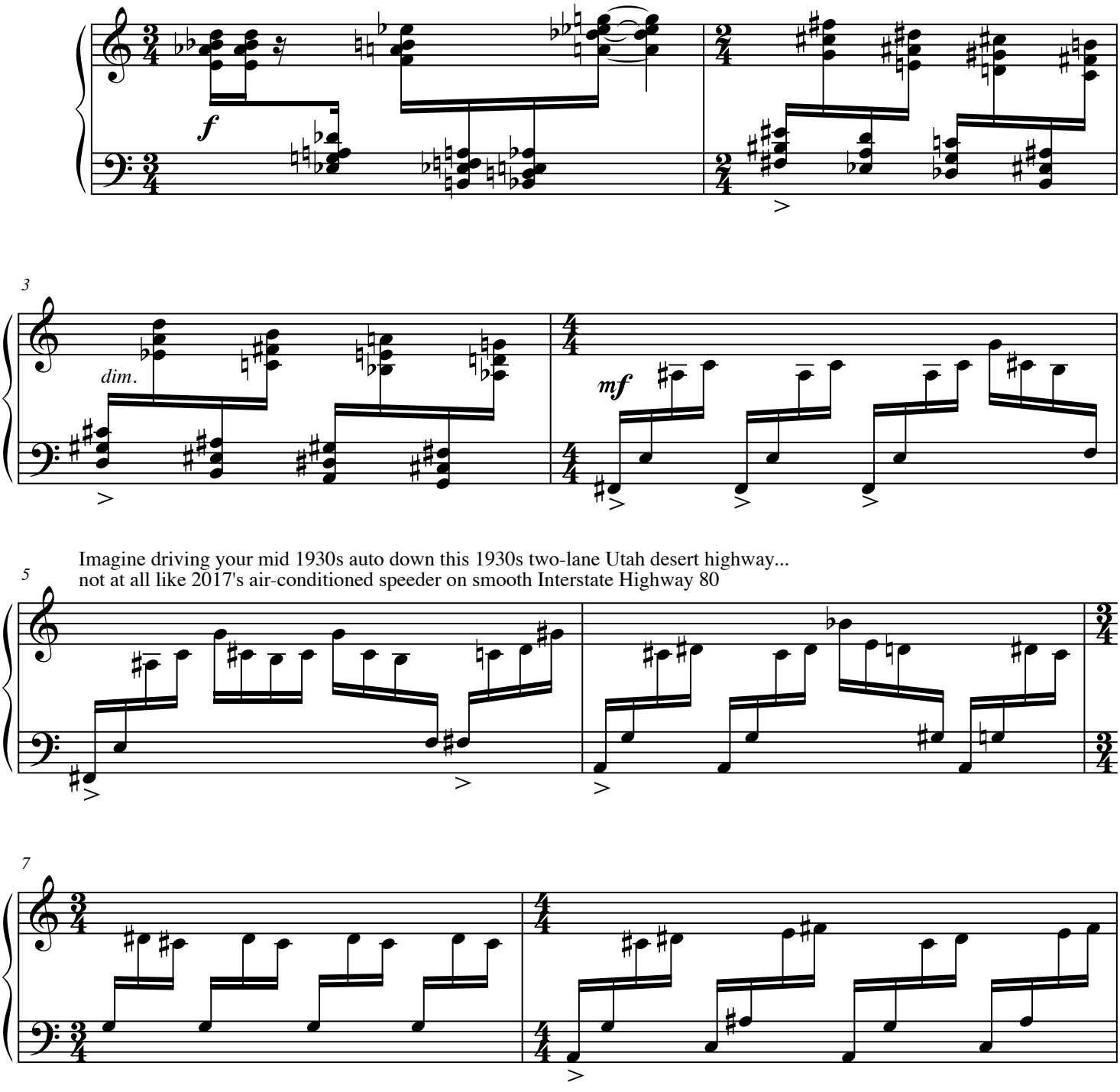
Landscapes

Inspired by Utah descriptions from Wallace Stegner's *Mormon Country*

Performance Time c. 10:00

1. Drive The Great Desert

Moderato agitato (♩ = c. 100) KEN DAVIES



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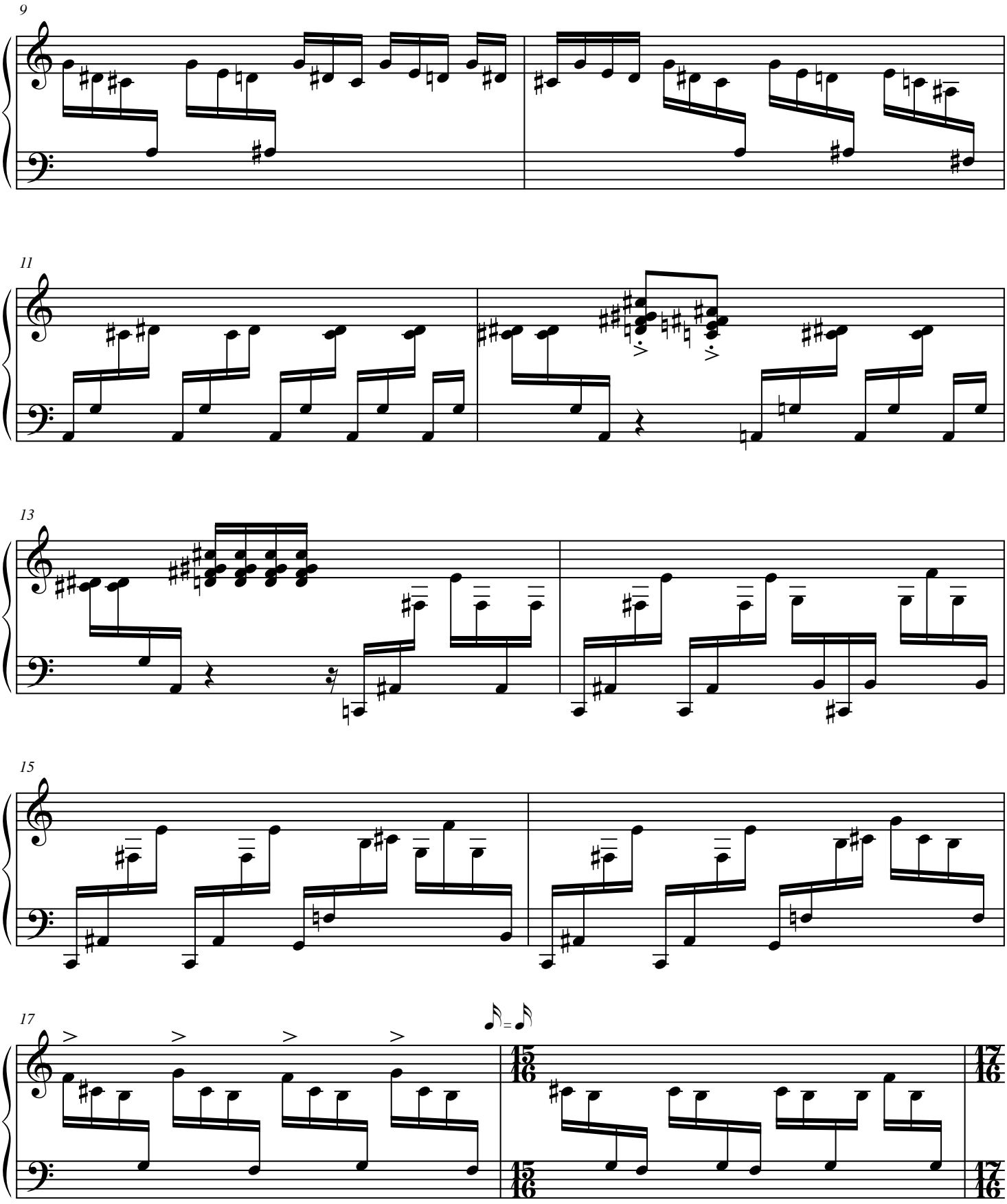
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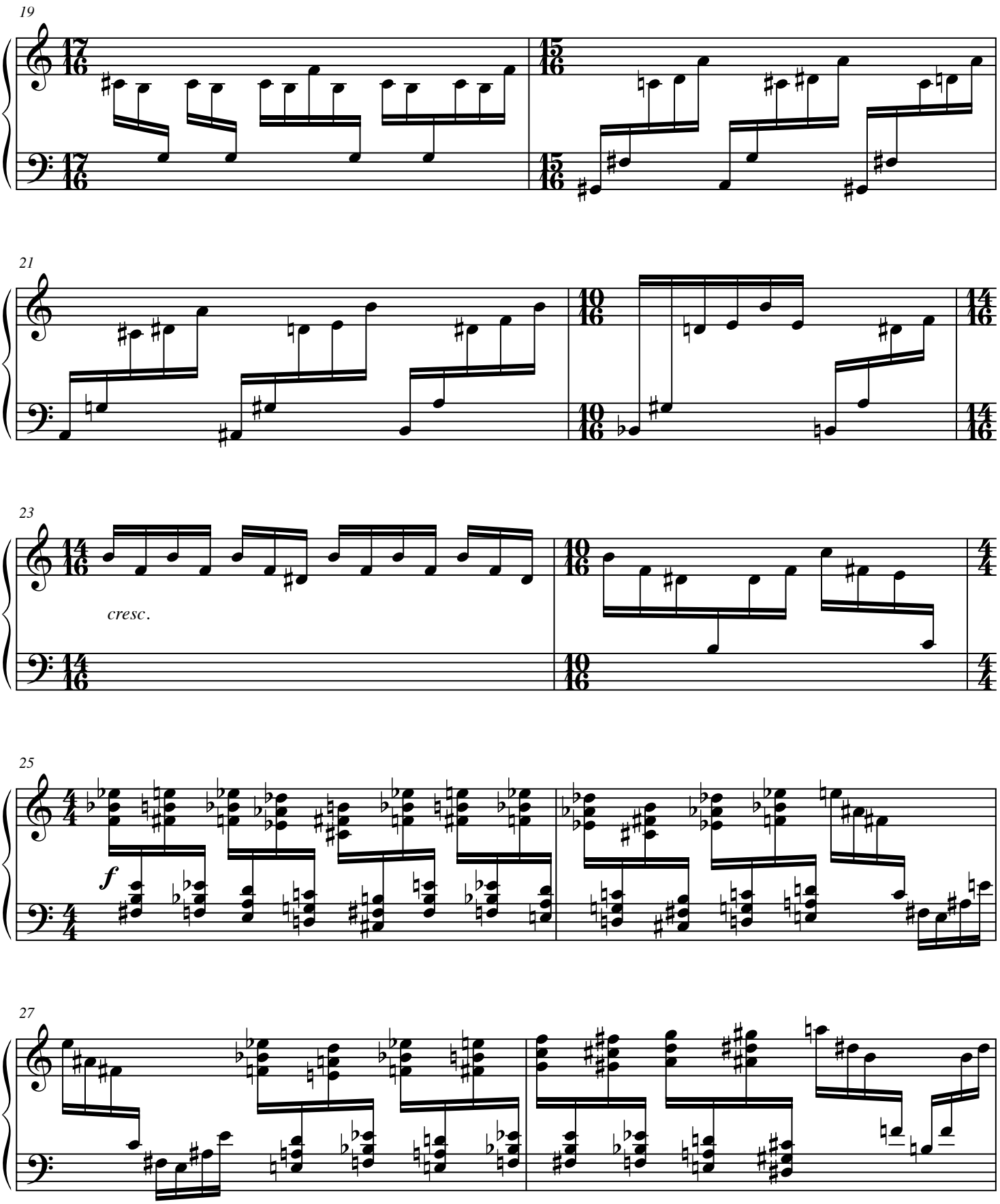

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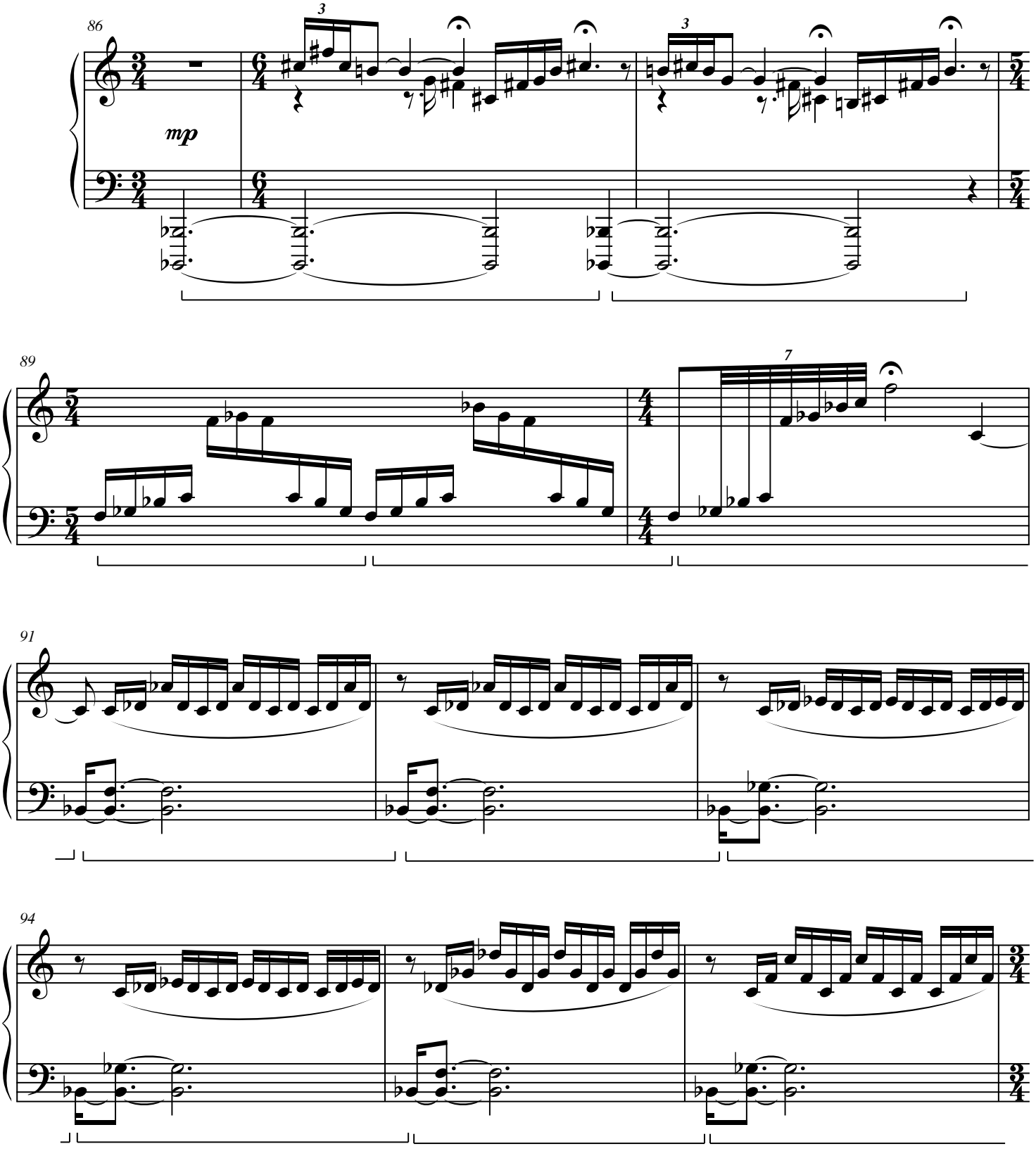
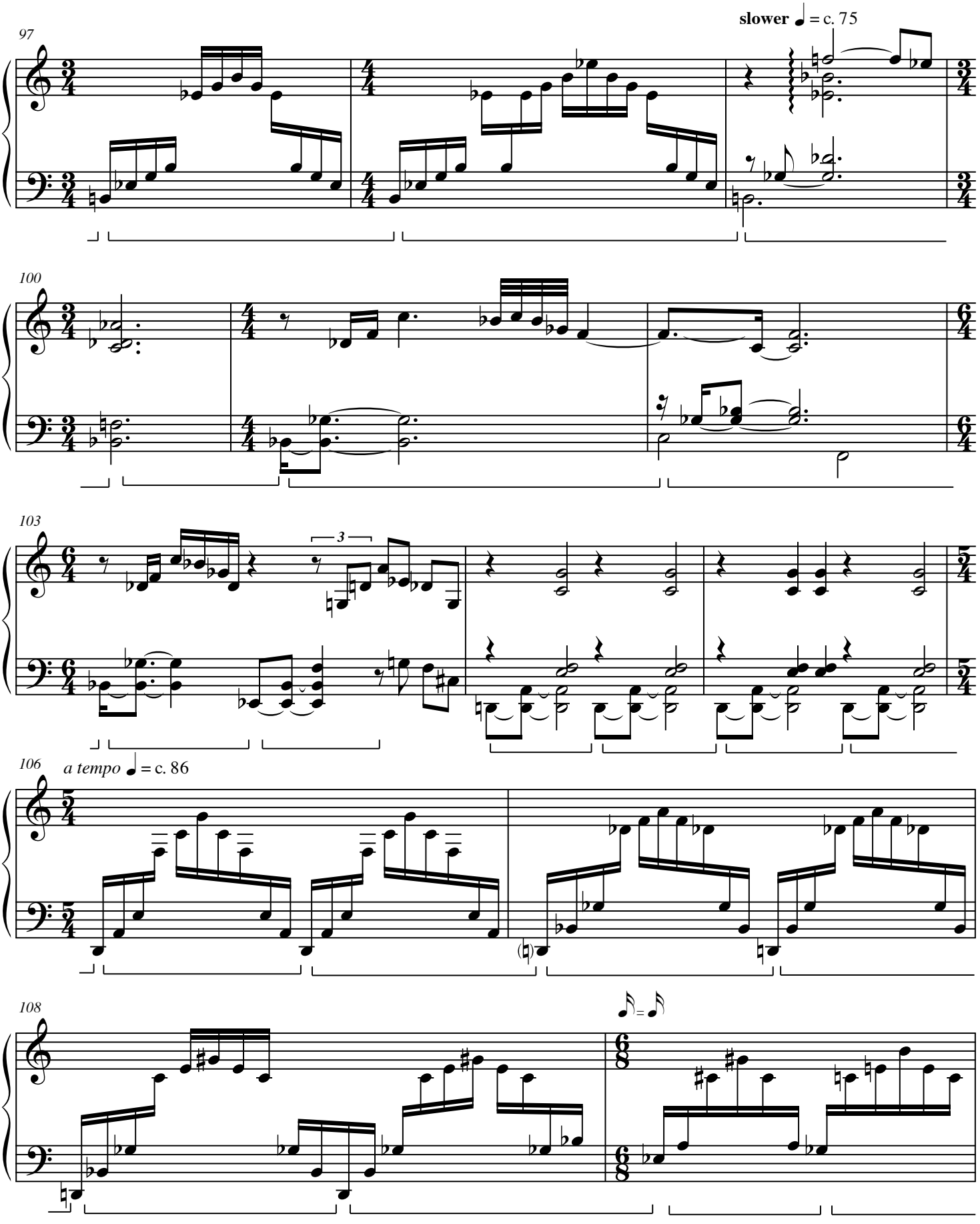
2. South Of Kanab

Duration 3:45

Moderato ♩ = c. 86 **Flowing as if background music for aerial view of beautiful scenery.**





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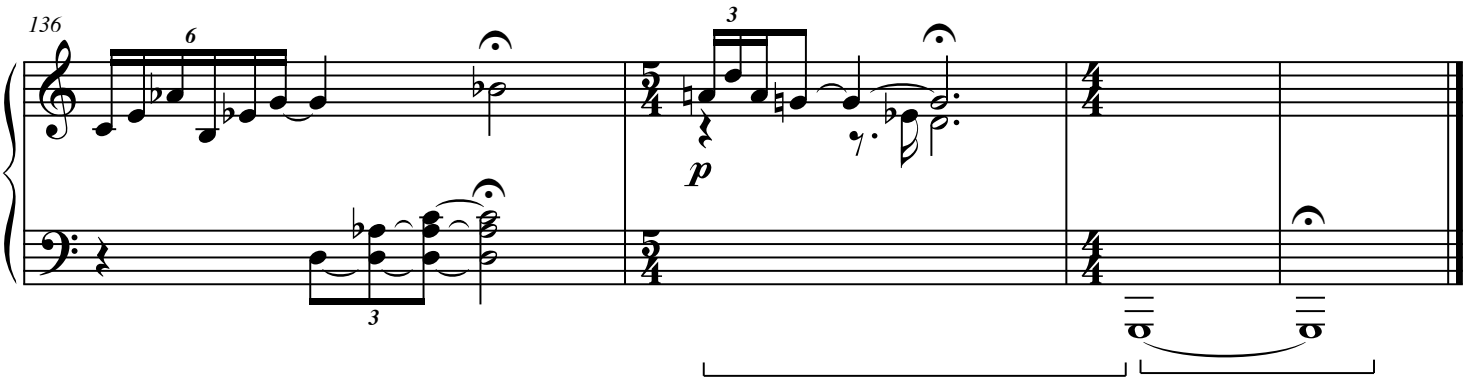

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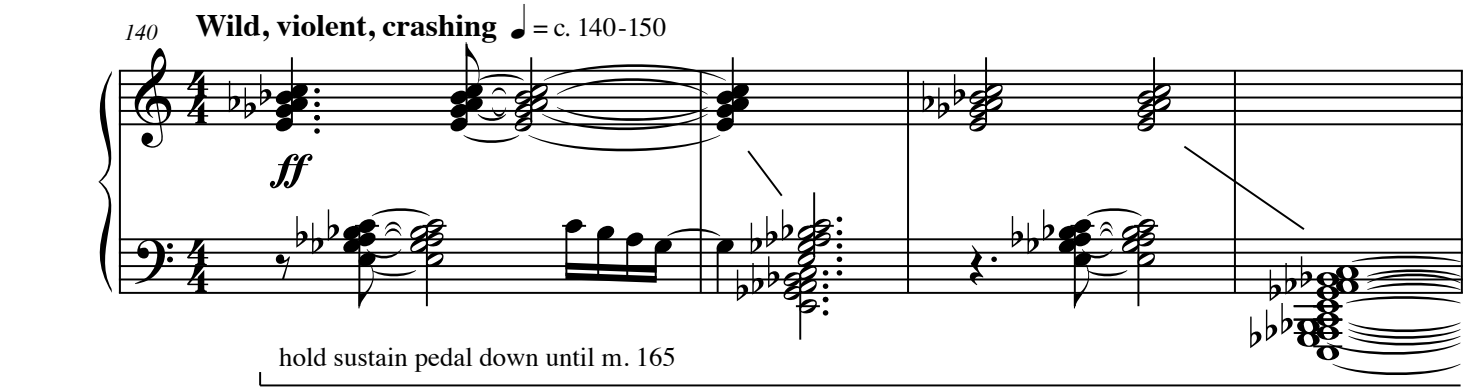

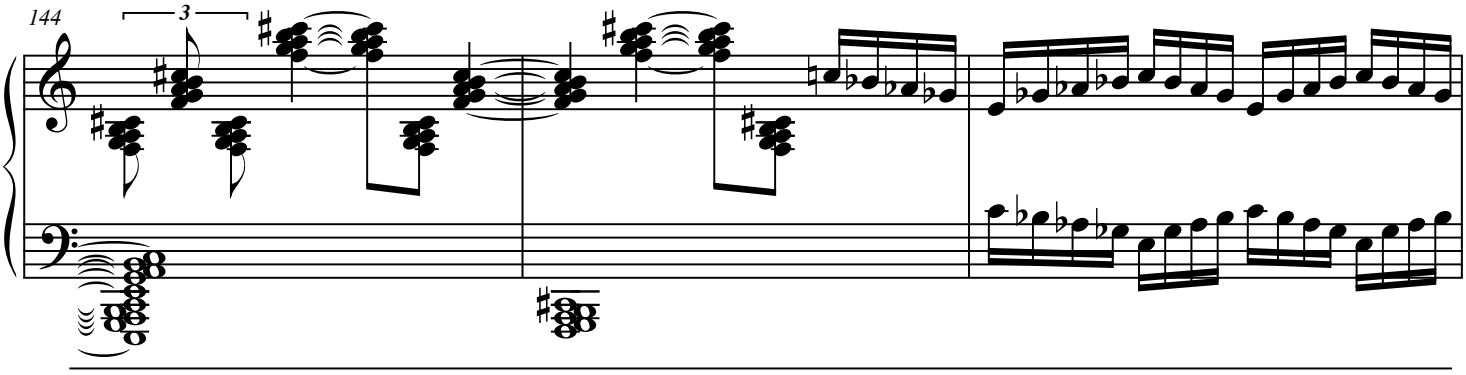

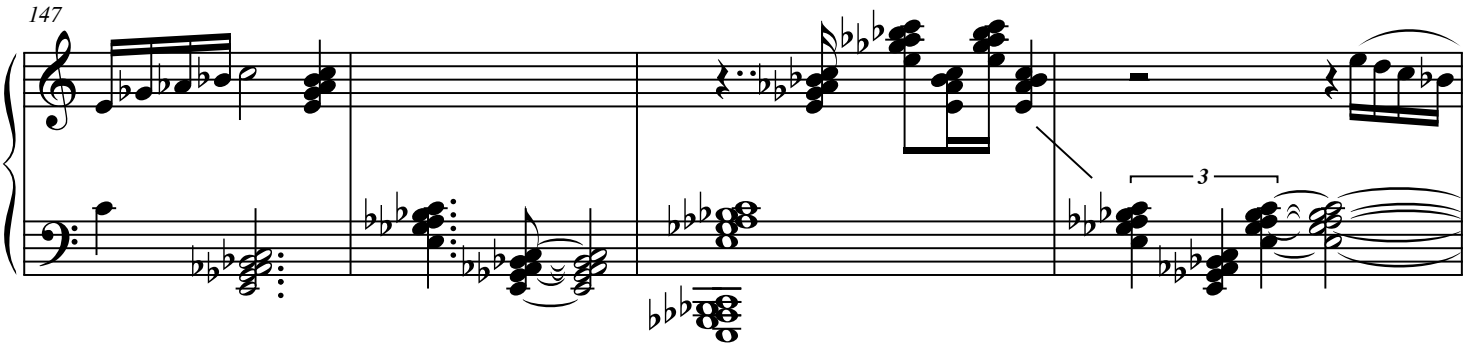

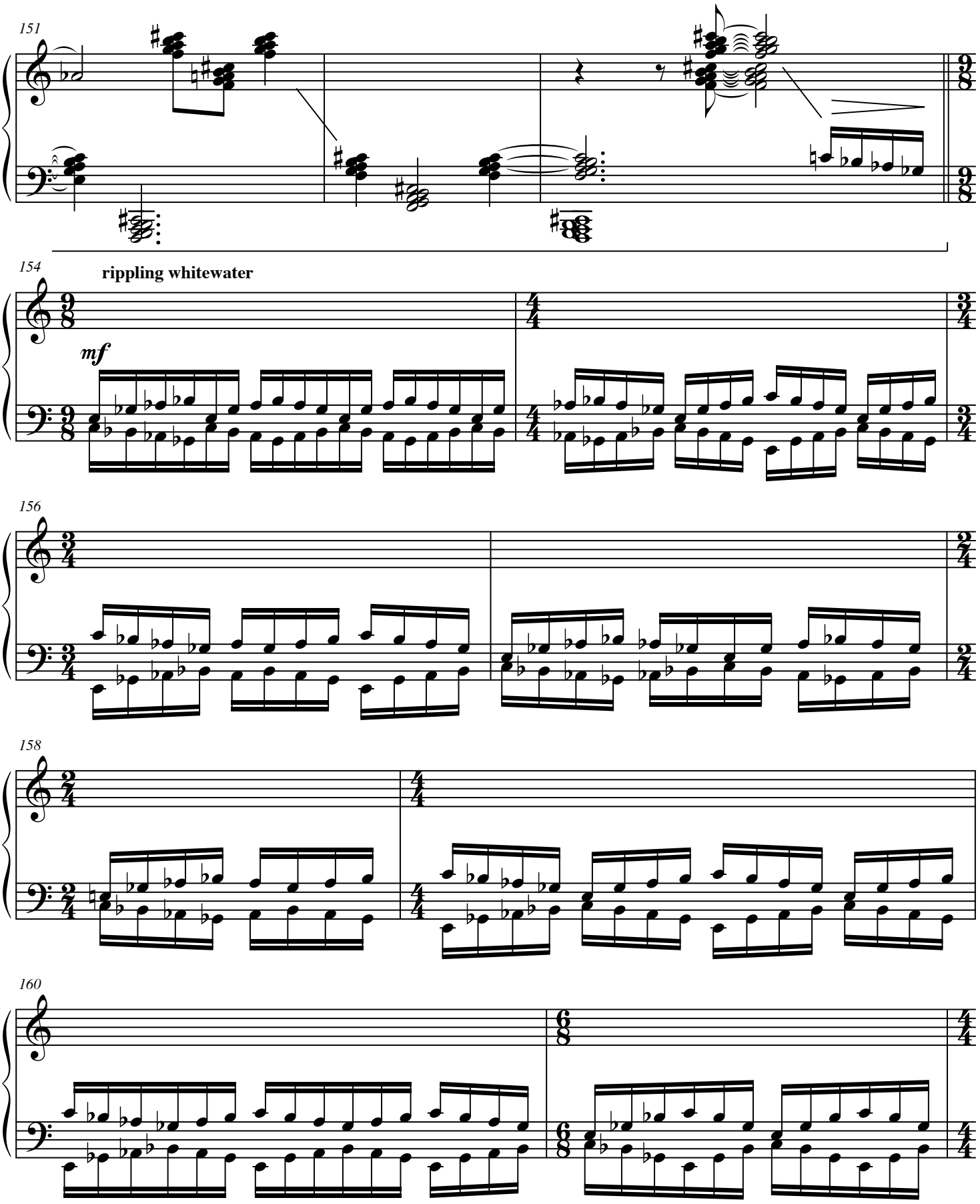
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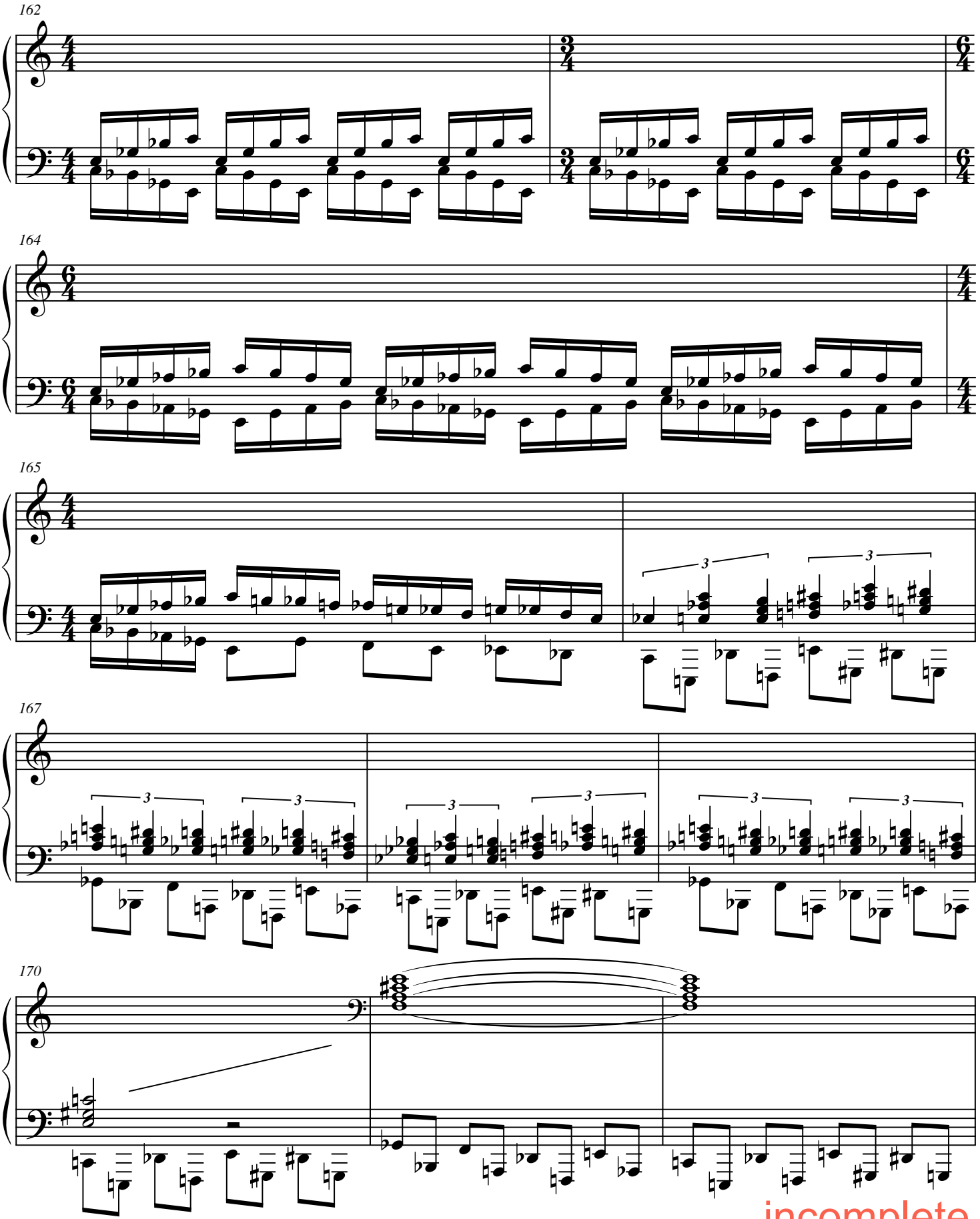

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