KESSLER

ETUDE

in E-Flat Minor

OPUS 20, NO. 14

edited by

Ferdinand Gajewski

EDITORIAL NOTE

Unlike the keyboard prelude, which was brought early into the realm of art music, the coming of age of the exercise did not take place until the nineteenth century. The *Études pour le piano-forte*, Op. 20, of Joseph Christoph Kessler (1800-1872) were a major landmark in that transformation.

Kessler's twenty-four studies were brought out in Vienna by Tobias Haslinger in four volumes, each containing six pieces, late in 1827. Volumes I, II, III and IV bear publisher's plate numbers T.H.5051., T.H.5052., T.H.5053. and T.H.5054.

It is on account of their impact in Warsaw upon Fryderyk Chopin, still in his teens, that Kessler's *études* were to prove seminal in the flowering of the genre. The Polish *Wunderkind* embraced the formal and aesthetic paradigm he found in Kessler's Op. 20, sometimes appropriating and elaborating further the musical ideas of his friend. The presence of metronome marks in Chopin's *études*, indeed even the generic title "*étude*," may well derive from Kessler.

Kessler's *études* would eventually be eclipsed in the living repertory by those of his successors. This was not necessarily for the best, The studies of Chopin, Liszt and others are suitable in the main for virtuoso performers. But there are a number of *études* among those composed by Kessler that may be ventured by pianists of less than formidable accomplishment.

Kessler's twenty-four *études* represent a compendium of pianoforte technique as it stood in the early Romantic era. Each is devoted to a single challenge: scales, arpeggi, trills, double notes, octaves. An opening gambit, perhaps repeated, is, after extensive modulatory *Fortspinnung*, recapitulated in the tonic key, and then a coda may round off the whole.

The didactic intent of Kessler's Op. 20 is further underscored by the composer's inclusion of one composition in each key. Major keys, starting with C, proceed *flatwise* through the cycle of fifths, each major piece followed by another in its relative minor. The similarity of this arrangement to that adopted by Chopin in his *Préludes*, Op. 28, is clear. Judging moreover from the sequence of keys in the first half-dozen *études* of Op. 10, Chopin may well have intended, originally, to organize all twenty-four of his studies in major-plus-relative-minor pairs.

Occasional textual errors found in Haslinger's print have been silently corrected. When the composer's intent is unclear, editorial intrusions are identified by square brackets. Curiously perhaps, no fingering at all is offered by Kessler. That shown above is the work of the present editor.

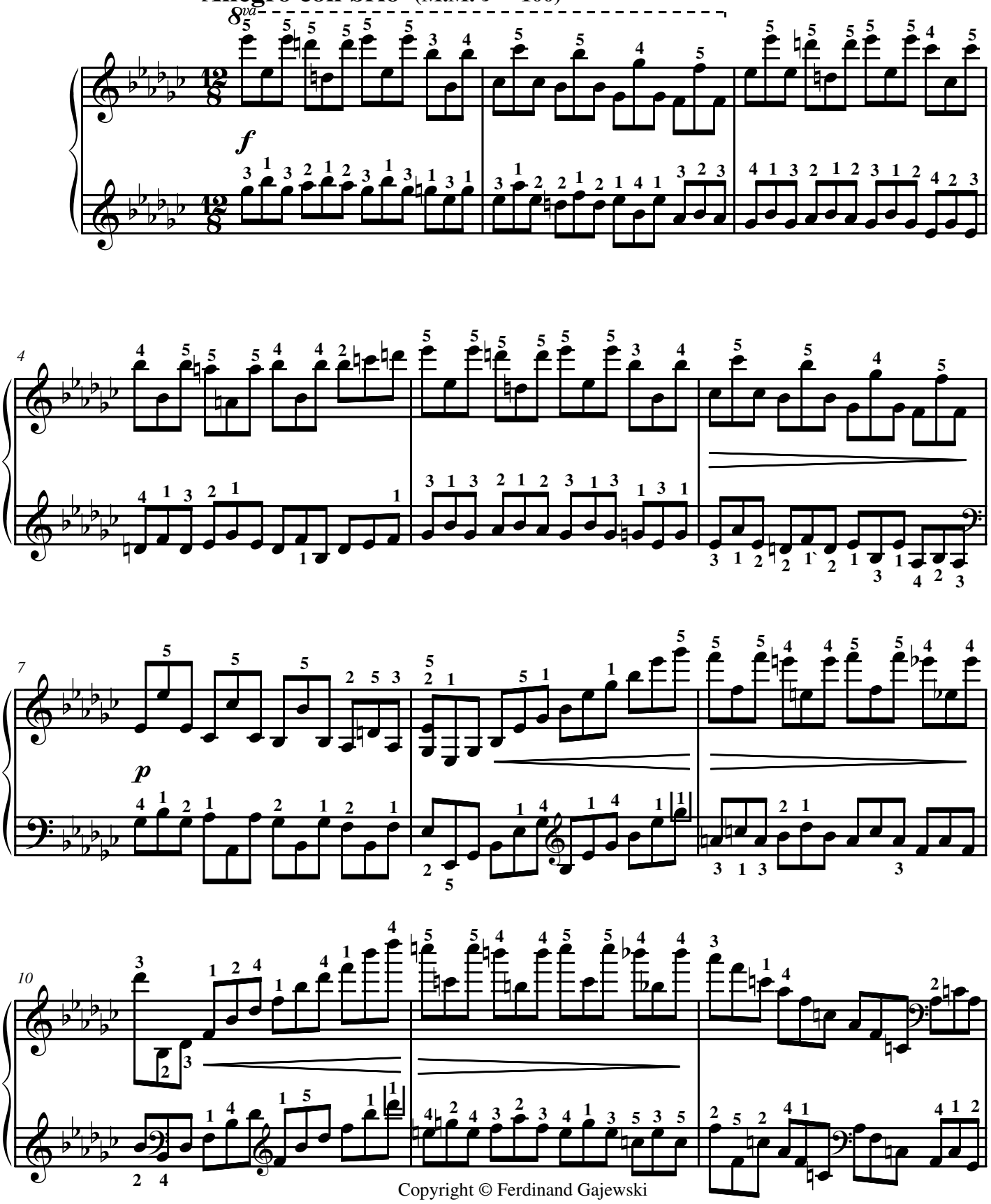
Ferdinand Gajewski
Westfield, New Jersey

Etude

Edited and fingered by Ferdinand Gajewski

Joseph Christoph Kessler
Op. 20, No. 14

Allegro con brio **(M.M. 𝅗𝅥. = 100)**



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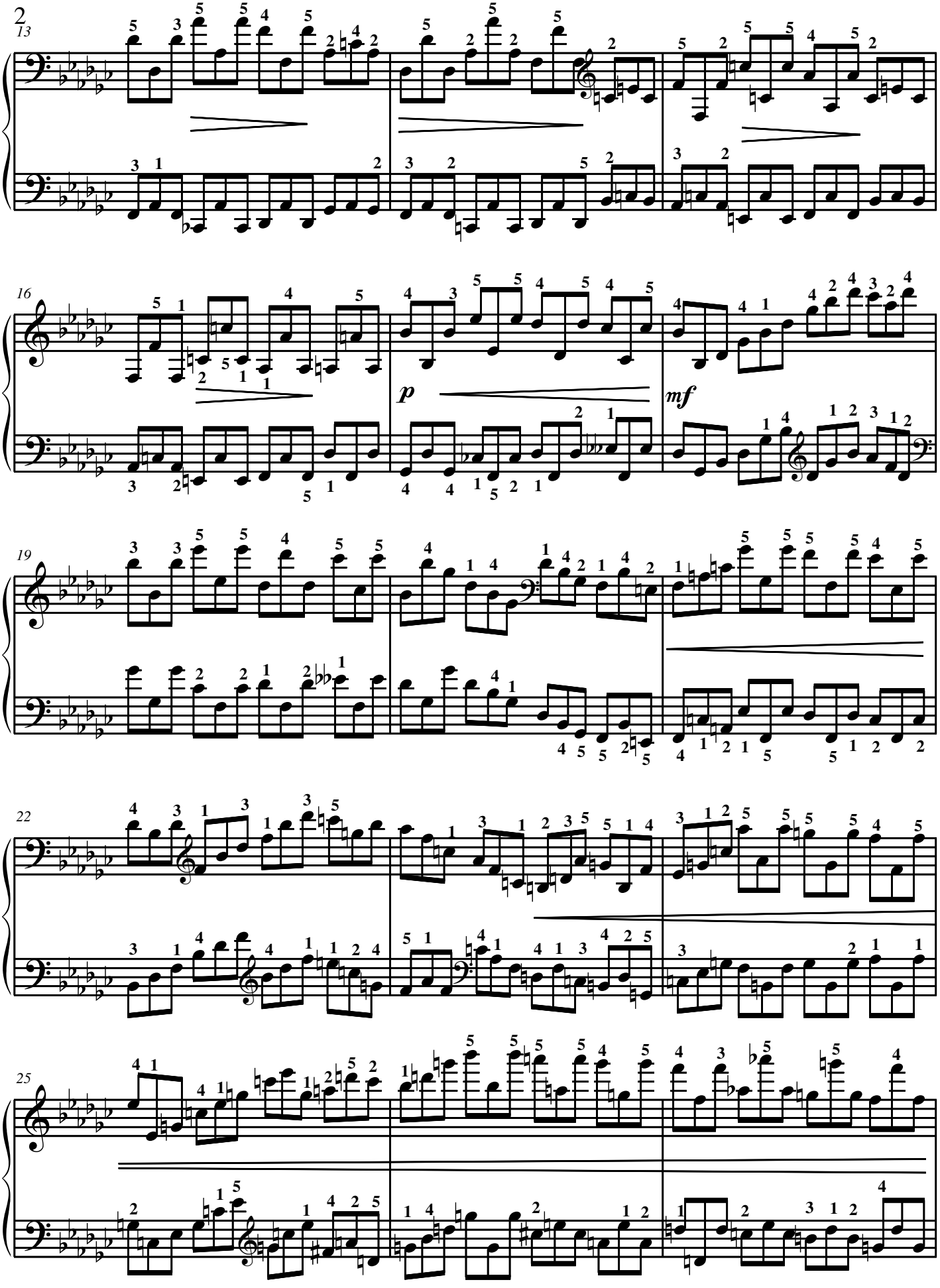
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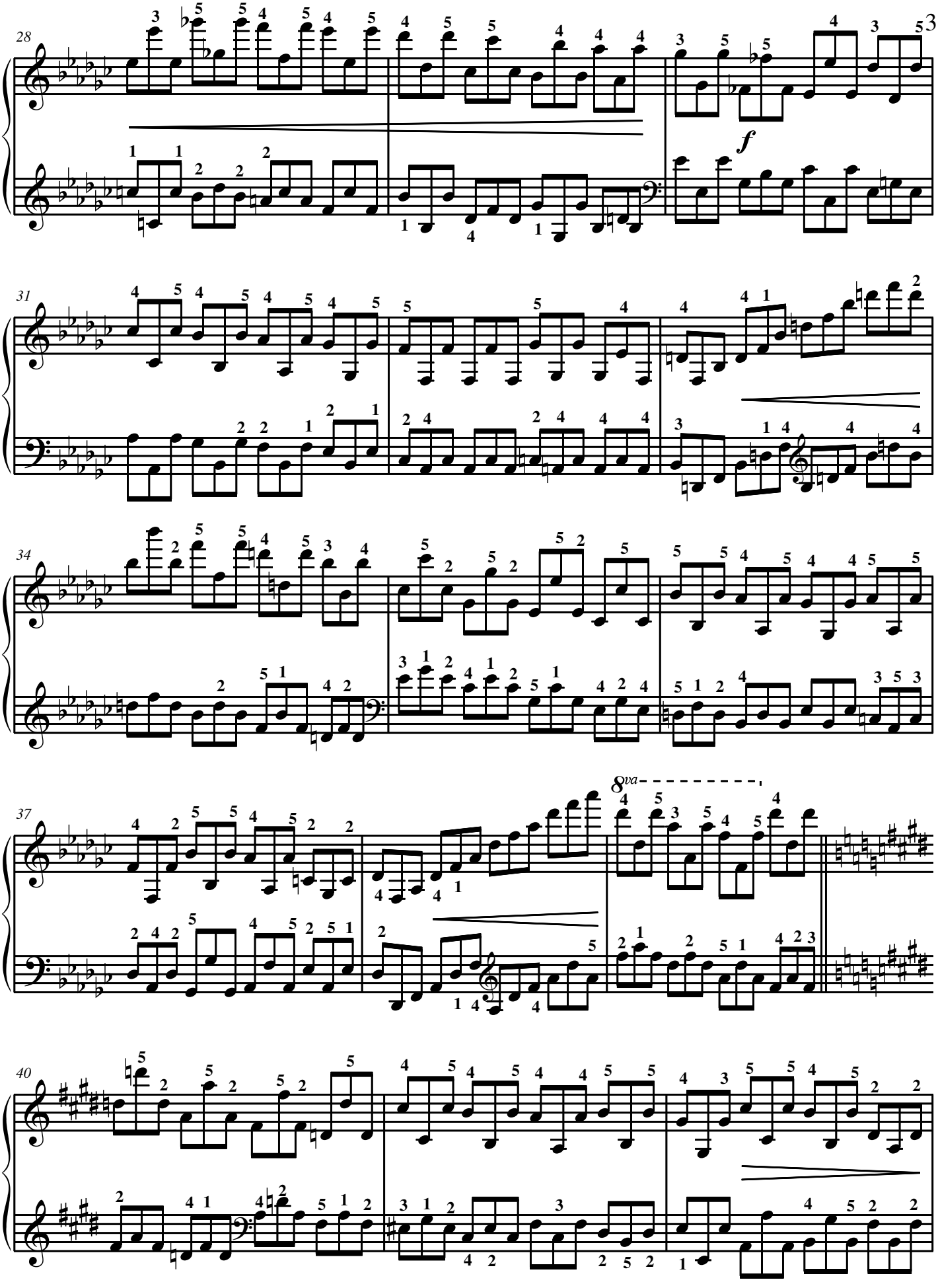
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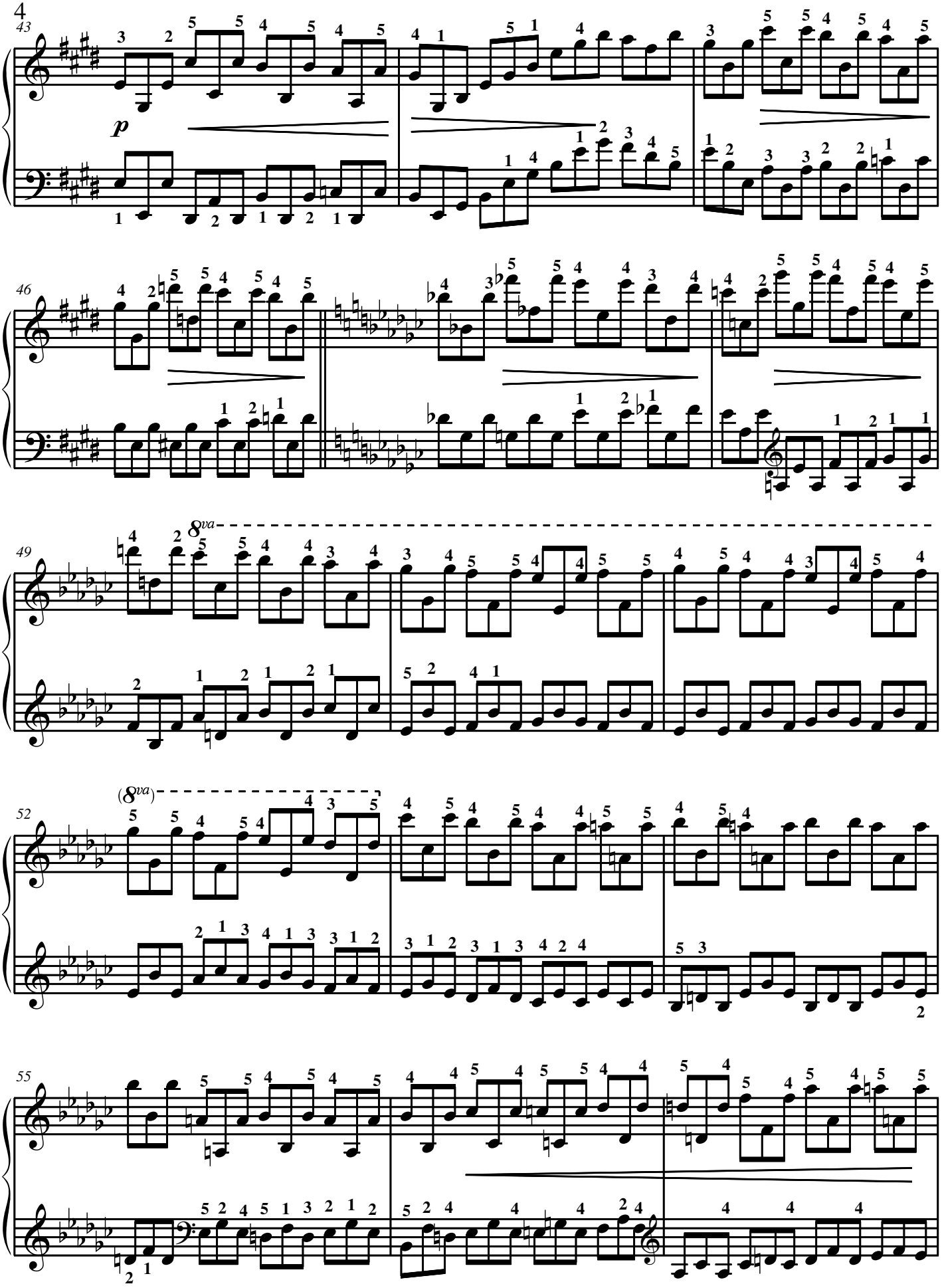
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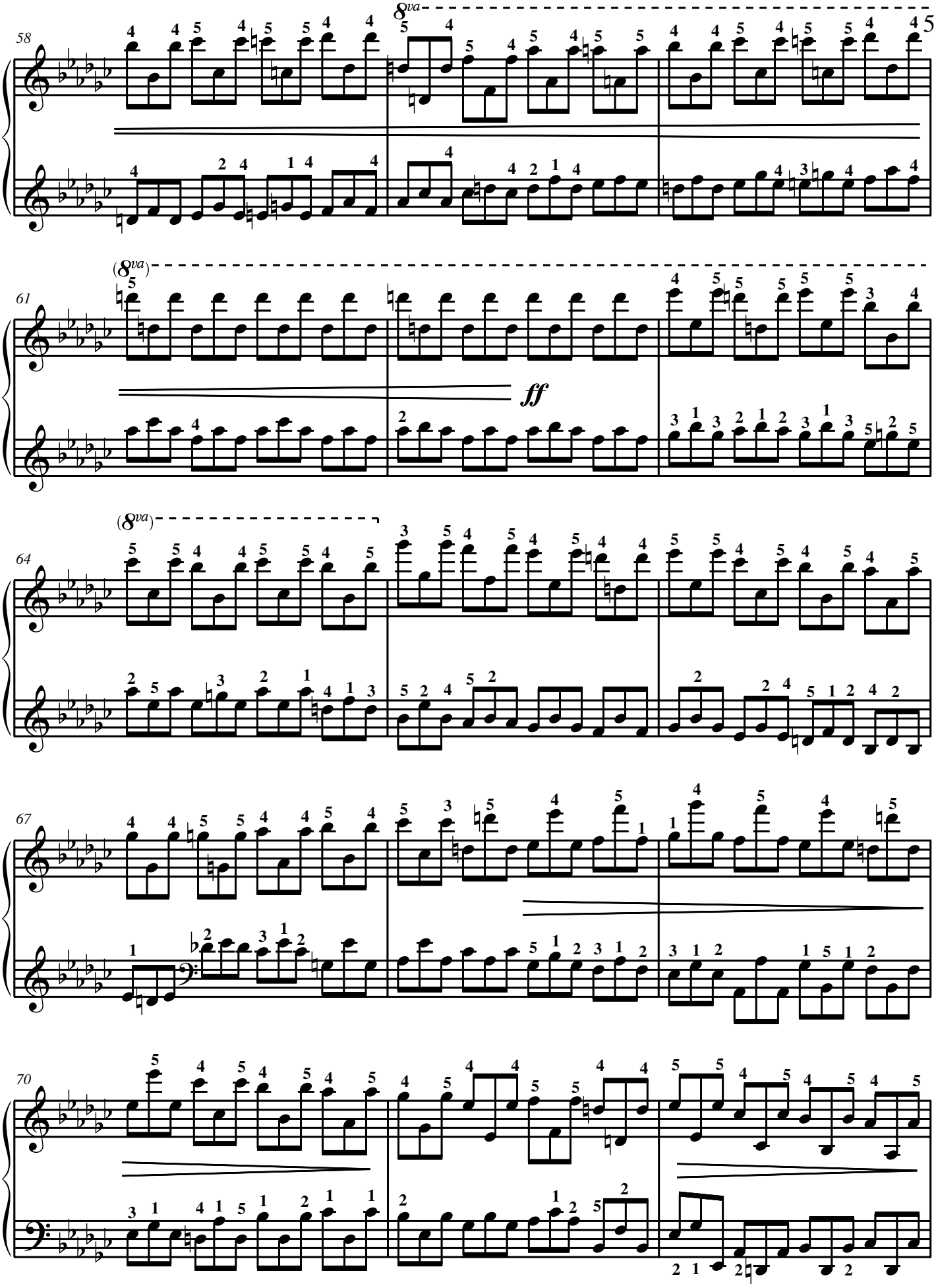
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