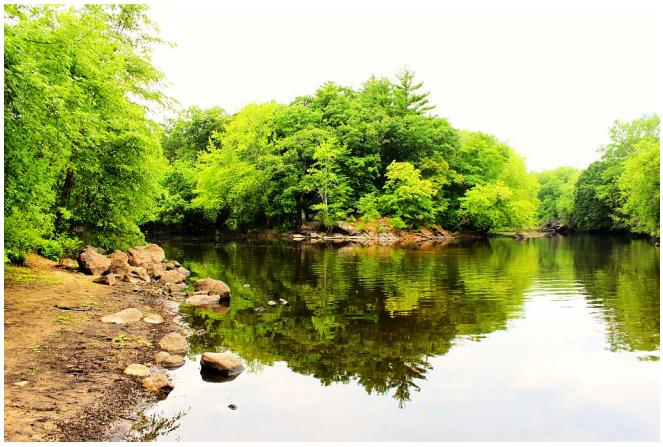
CONCORD

an American cantata of 5 numbers



Organ part

Peter Bird

2012

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Program Notes

This cantata honors a small town in Massachusetts where I grew up among wonderful role models and learned music. More broadly, it honors many places in eastern North America where Europeans came to a relatively peaceful accommodation with the Indians, built a new civilization, and yet eventually learned to honor the one that went before.

As New England history spans almost four centuries, there are giant steps in time between the numbers of this cantata: AD 1636, ~1736, 1775/1837, ~1925, and 2012, respectively. As far as my limited knowledge and skills permit, I have tried to capture the style of the choral music that was current in the period in some part of each number.

Concord: 1*. Musketequid
(*peaceful purchase)

Musketequid ("grass-grown river") is the Indian name for the land that they sold in 1636 to a group of Puritan settlers. One has to wonder if this would have happened, had the Indians not been devastated by two decades of plagues from Europe which few of them were prepared with immunity to resist. Unfortunately, none of their words or songs have come down to us. I take my texts from the inscription on Egg Rock, the historical marker at 32 Lowell Road, Lemuel Shattuck's [1835] *History*, and the *Bay Psalm Book* [Cambridge, 1640; the oldest extant book to be published in British North America].

Concord: 2*. Meetinghouse
(*harmony despite diversity)

One of the less-known stories about Concord is how the somewhat strait-laced founding Puritan congregation of Rev. Peter Bulkeley evolved into the liberal Unitarian Universalist congregation of today. To symbolize this process, I have taken the Puritan favorite *Old Hundredth* (words of William Kethe [1561, after Psalm 100]; music of Loys Bourgeois [1551]) and arranged it as a 4-part canon (in verses 1 & 3) and a celebratory variation (in verse 2), to show that harmony is possible even when many individuals chose to worship in diverse ways.

Concord: 3*. North Bridge
(*not conquered)

The words of Gen. Thomas Gage and Samuel Prescott in 1775 (in counterpoint to popular British tunes of the time) are used to set the stage; then Ralph Waldo Emerson's [1837] poem *Concord Hymn* describes the outcome and its significance.

Concord: 4*. Sleepy Hollow
(*sympathy of mind and spirit)

Three soloists represent Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Louisa May Alcott. They were friends in life, and are buried together on Authors' Ridge on the crest of the esker. This number borrows techniques from Bartok, including polymodal chromaticism: the soloists sing in the Dorian, Mixolydian, and Lydian modes (on a shared tonic of C); alternatively, the listener might hear them as singing in the keys of Bb, F, and G. These authors jointly created the Transcendental movement, which I define as a novel exhortation to enlightened self-determination combined with an old New England faith in Providence (through Nature). The sunny face of Transcendentalism is

emphasized by a refrain which, thanks to polymodalism, includes 6 different major triads, not just the 3 that are found within one key in ordinary diatonic music.

Concord: 5*. Great Meadows
(*the natural order)

Great Meadows is the long swath of wetlands beside the Concord River downstream from Old North Bridge. A corner of it is visible from Authors' Ridge in Sleepy Hollow. It was protected as an undeveloped bird sanctuary by enlightened landowners until it recently became a federal preserve. The chorus and organ describe the scene in slow stanzas decorated with lush borrowed and extended diatonic chords. Twice they are interrupted (a Post-Modern conceit) by piano and soloists who represent day-visitors hiking through. Finally, the chorus imagines a time before European immigration when most of New England was as wild as this.

Performance Notes

The harpsichord makes only a cameo appearance, for 34 short bars in #1. If a harpsichord is not available, this passage can be played on the piano an octave higher (8va) for a similar effect.

While a real organ with chiffy flutes is ideal, I have written the organ parts so that an electronic organ or synthesizer may substitute. There are no pedal passages, and there is no real need for multiple manuals. A swell or dynamic pedal control is useful.

Peter Bird, Los Angeles, 2012

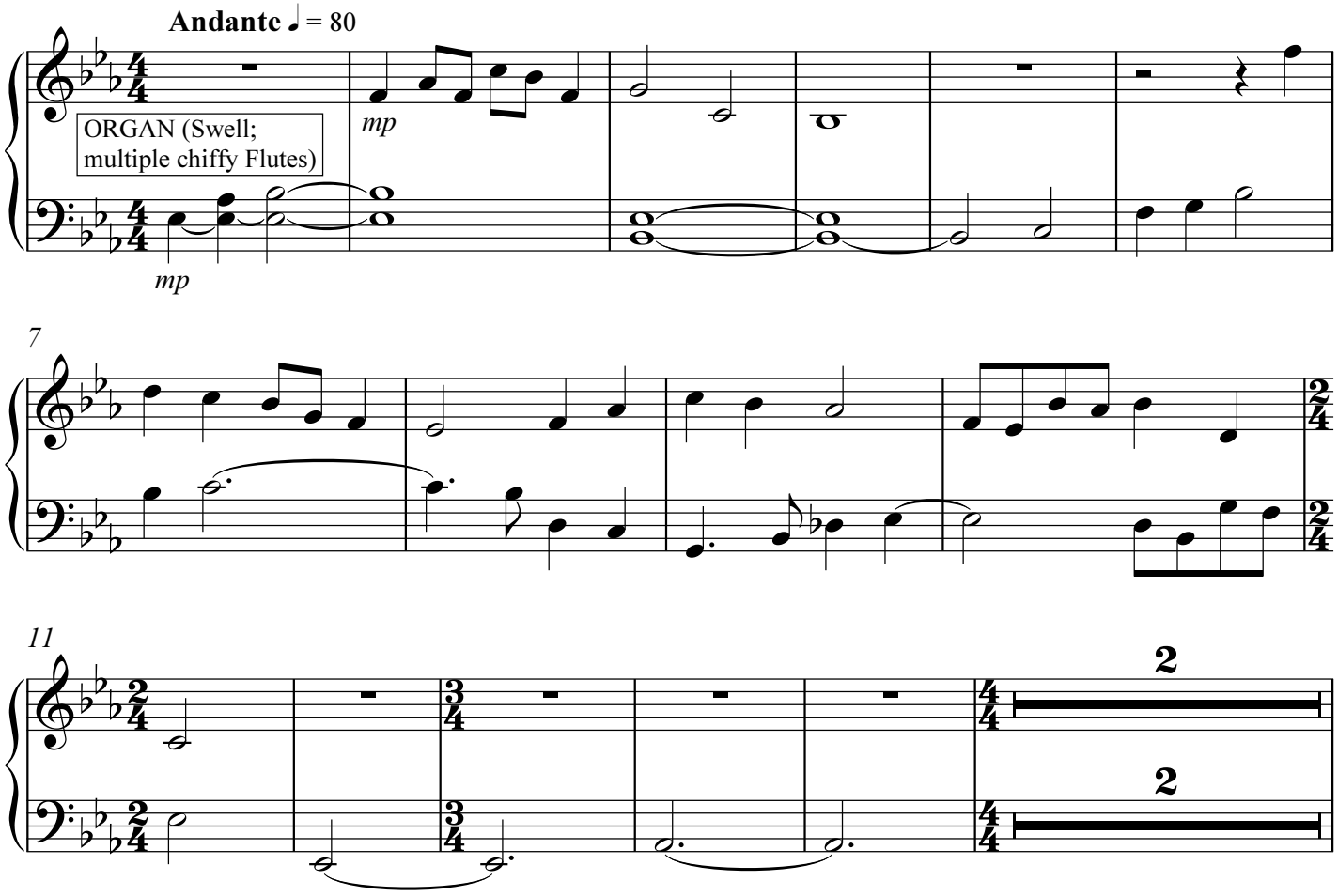
Concord: 1*. Musketequid

(*peaceful purchase)

Organ & Harpsichord /Piano
Harpsichord
Organ

Egg Rock; Lemuel Shattuck (1835); Lowell Road marker; Bay Song Book (1640)

Peter Bird



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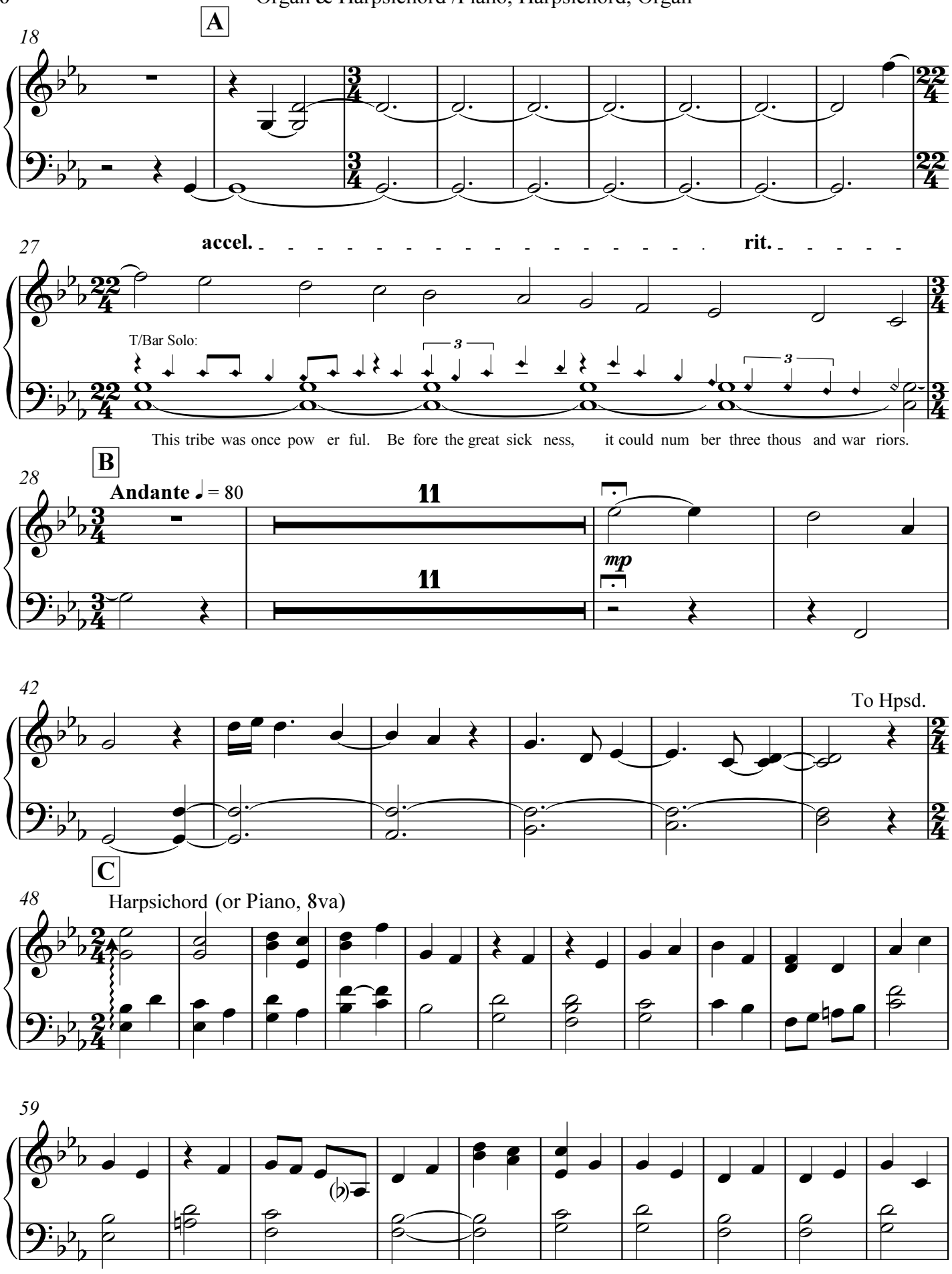
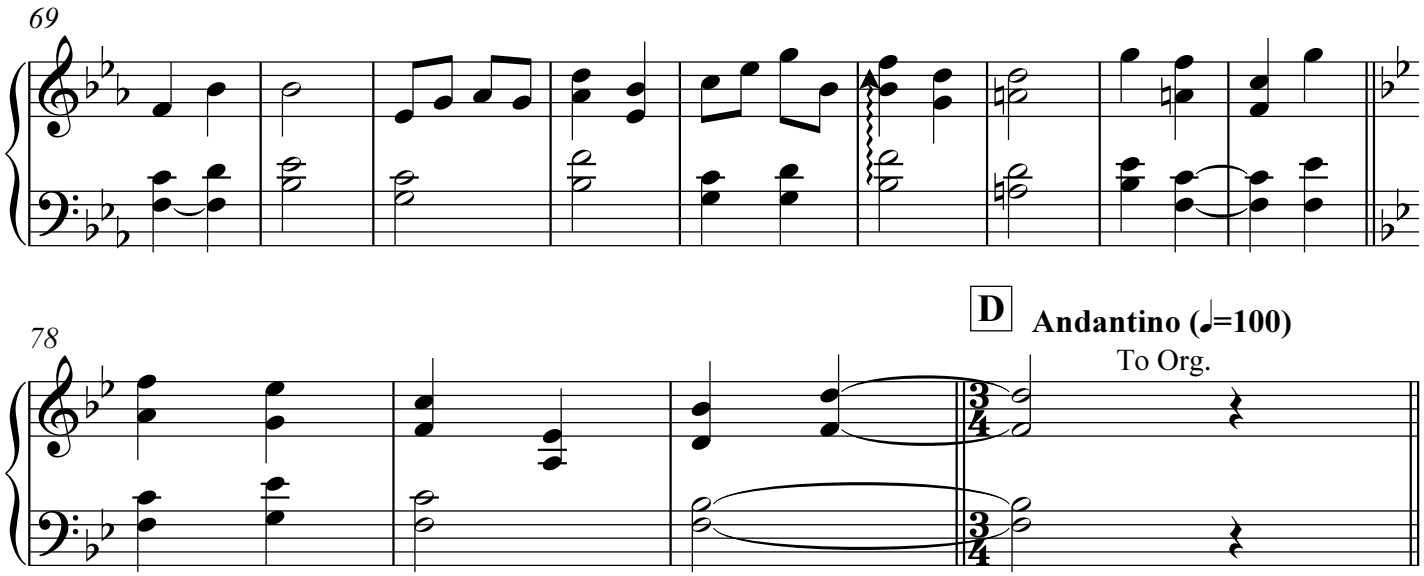
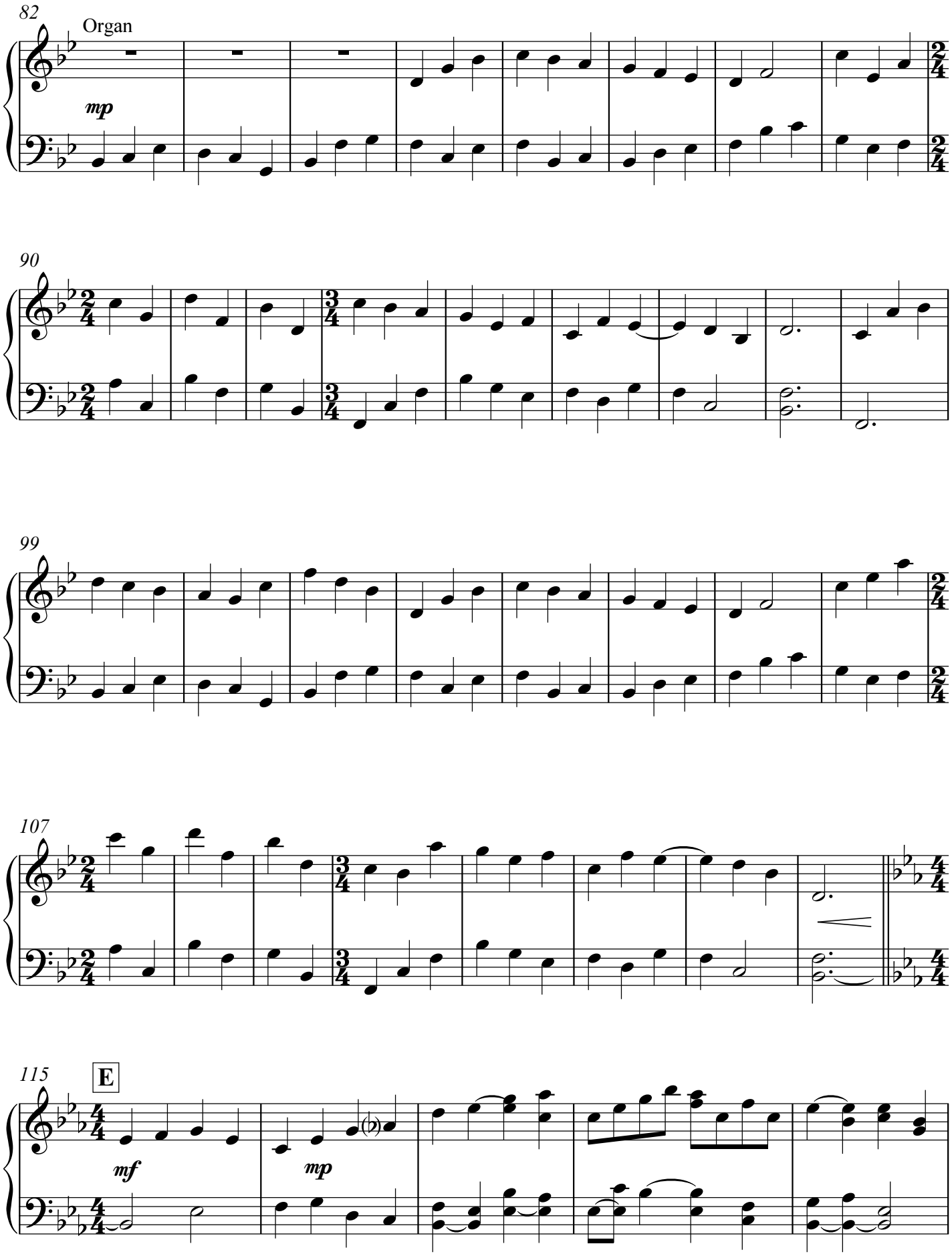
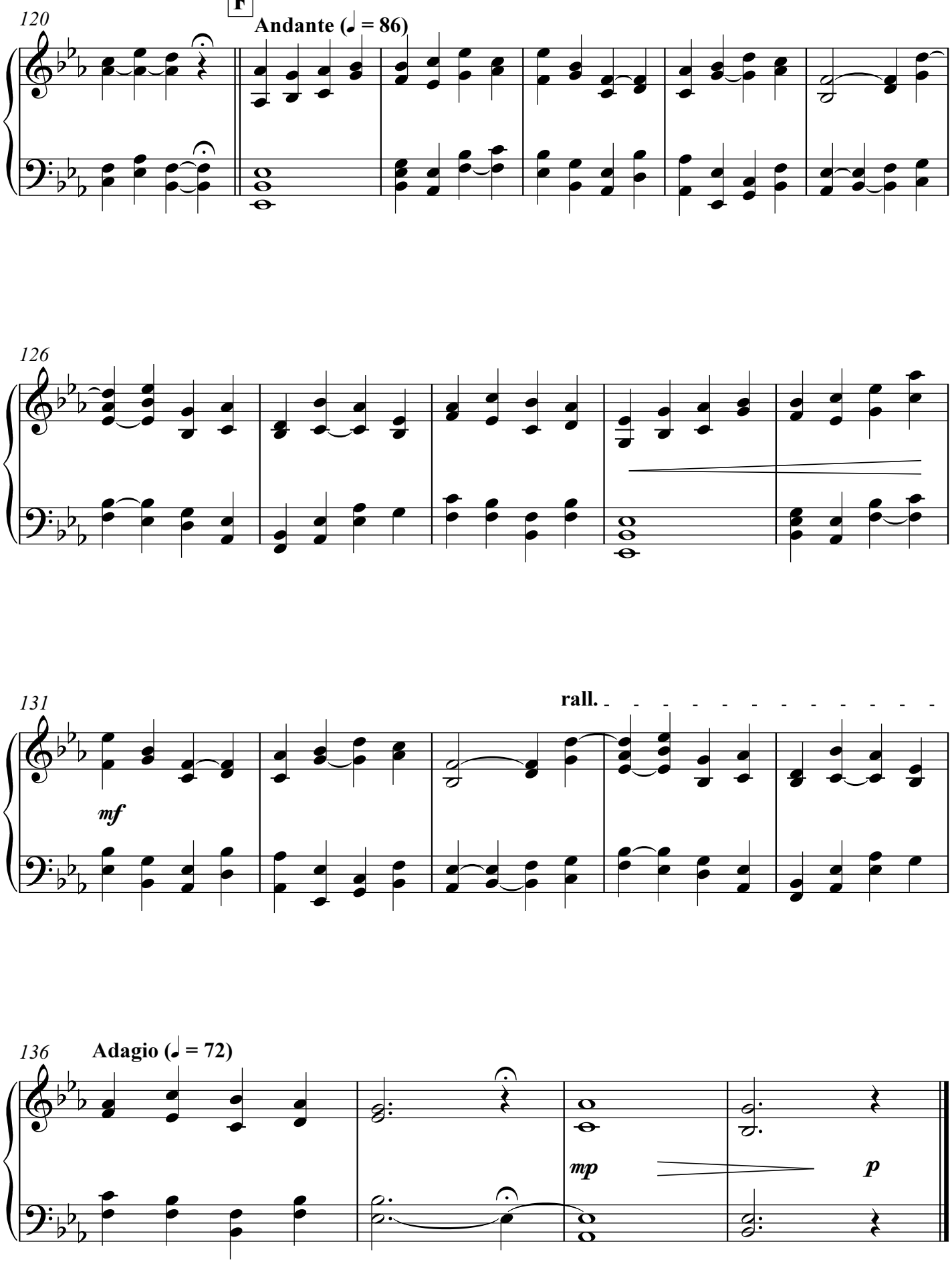

A
18
27
accel.
rit.
T/Bar Solo:
This tribe was once pow er ful. Be fore the great sick ness, it could num ber three thous and war riors.
B
28
Andante ♩ = 80
11
11
mp
42
To Hpsd.
C
48
Harpsichord (or Piano, 8va)
59


69
78
D
Andantino (♩=100)
To Org.


82
Organ
mp
90
99
107
115
E
mf
mp


120
F
Andante (♩ = 86)
126
131
rall.
mf
136
Adagio (♩ = 72)
mp
p

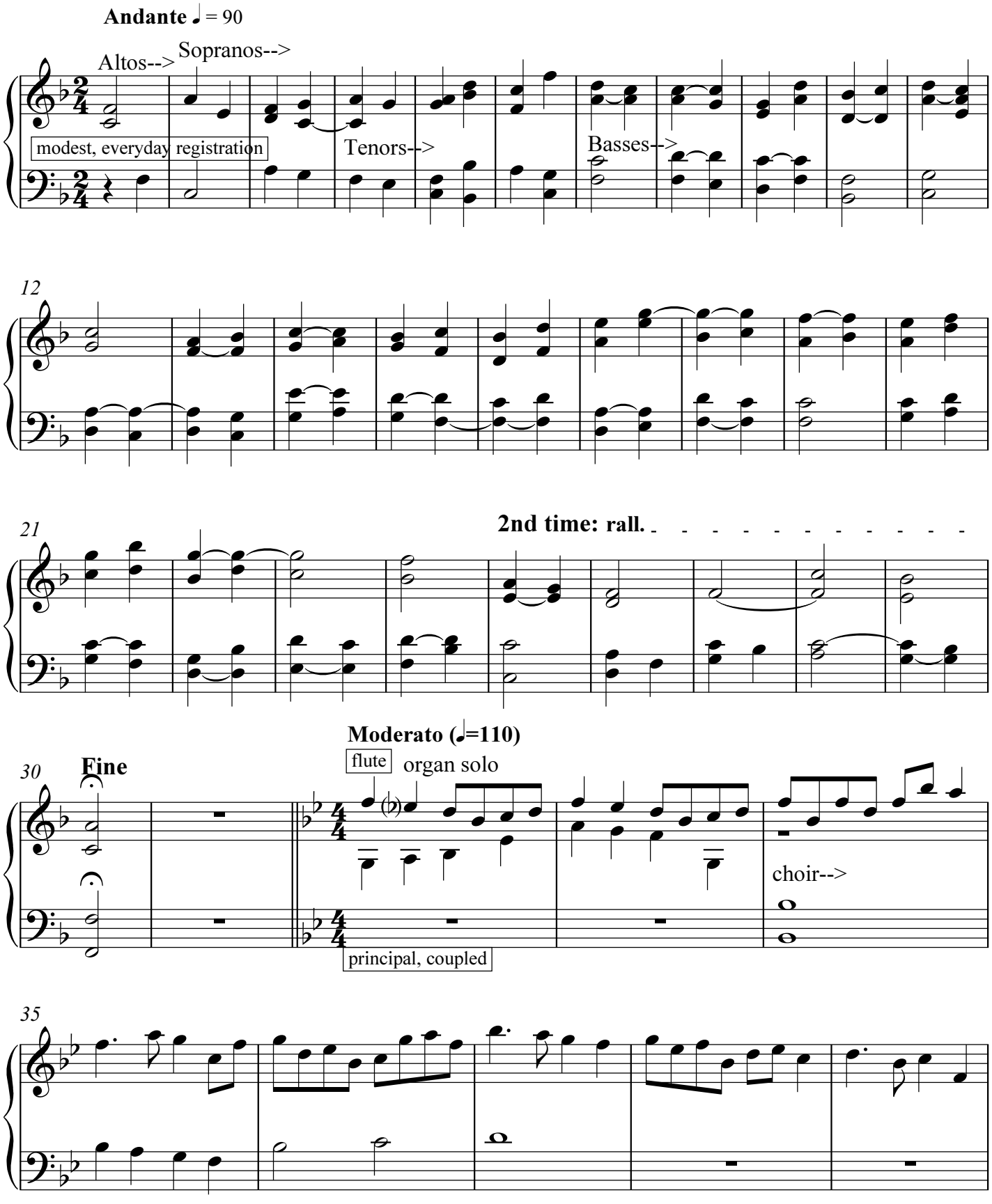
Concord: 2*. Meetinghouse

(*harmony despite diversity)

ORGAN

William Kethe (1561), after Psalm 100

Loys Bourgeois (1551); arr. by Peter Bird



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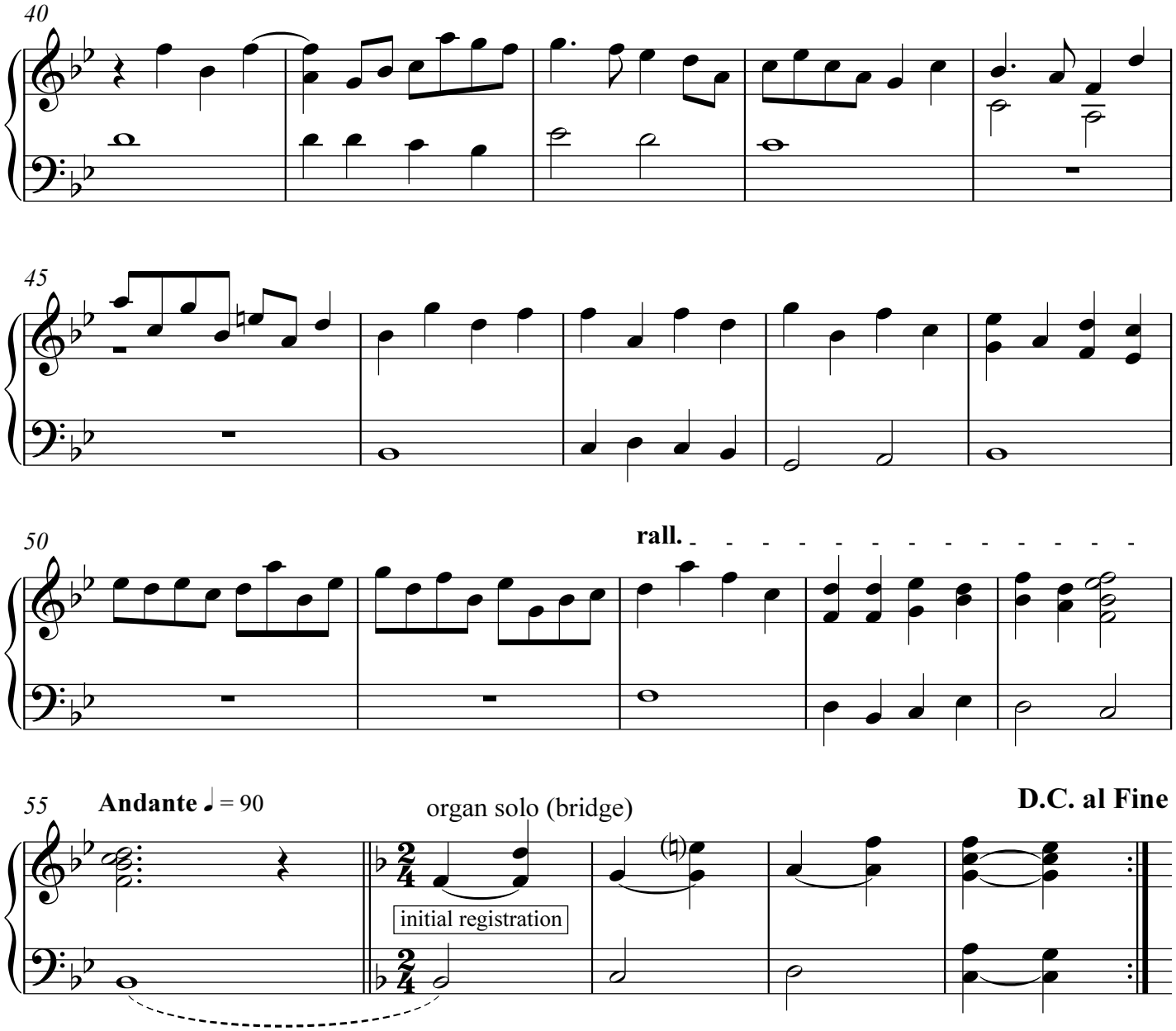
40
45
50
rall.
55
Andante ♩ = 90
organ solo (bridge)
initial registration
D.C. al Fine

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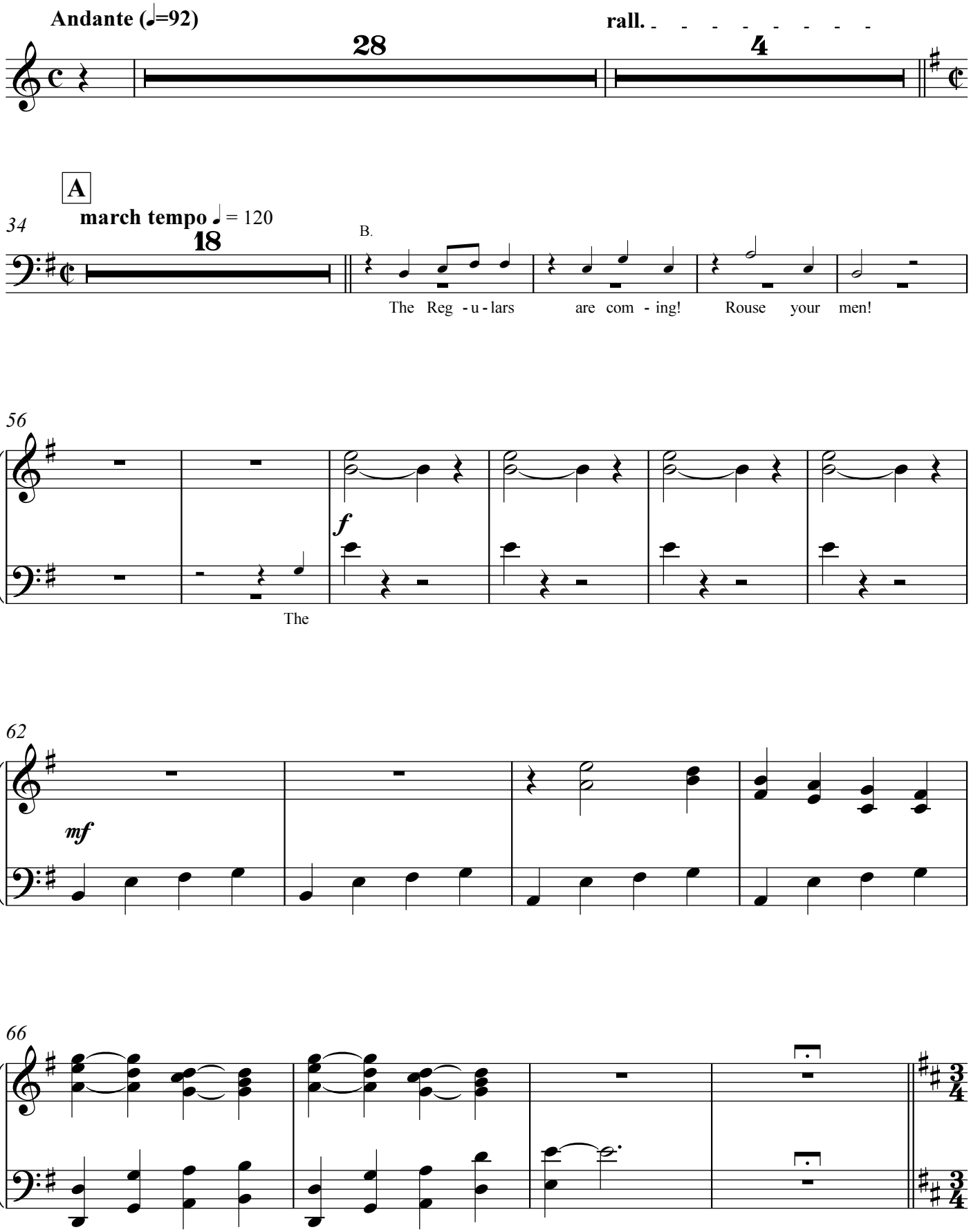
Concord: 3*. North Bridge

(*not conquered)

Gen. Thomas Gage & Samuel Prescott (1775);
Ralph Waldo Emerson (1837)

Thomas Arne (1740);
Martin Parker (1643);
Peter Bird



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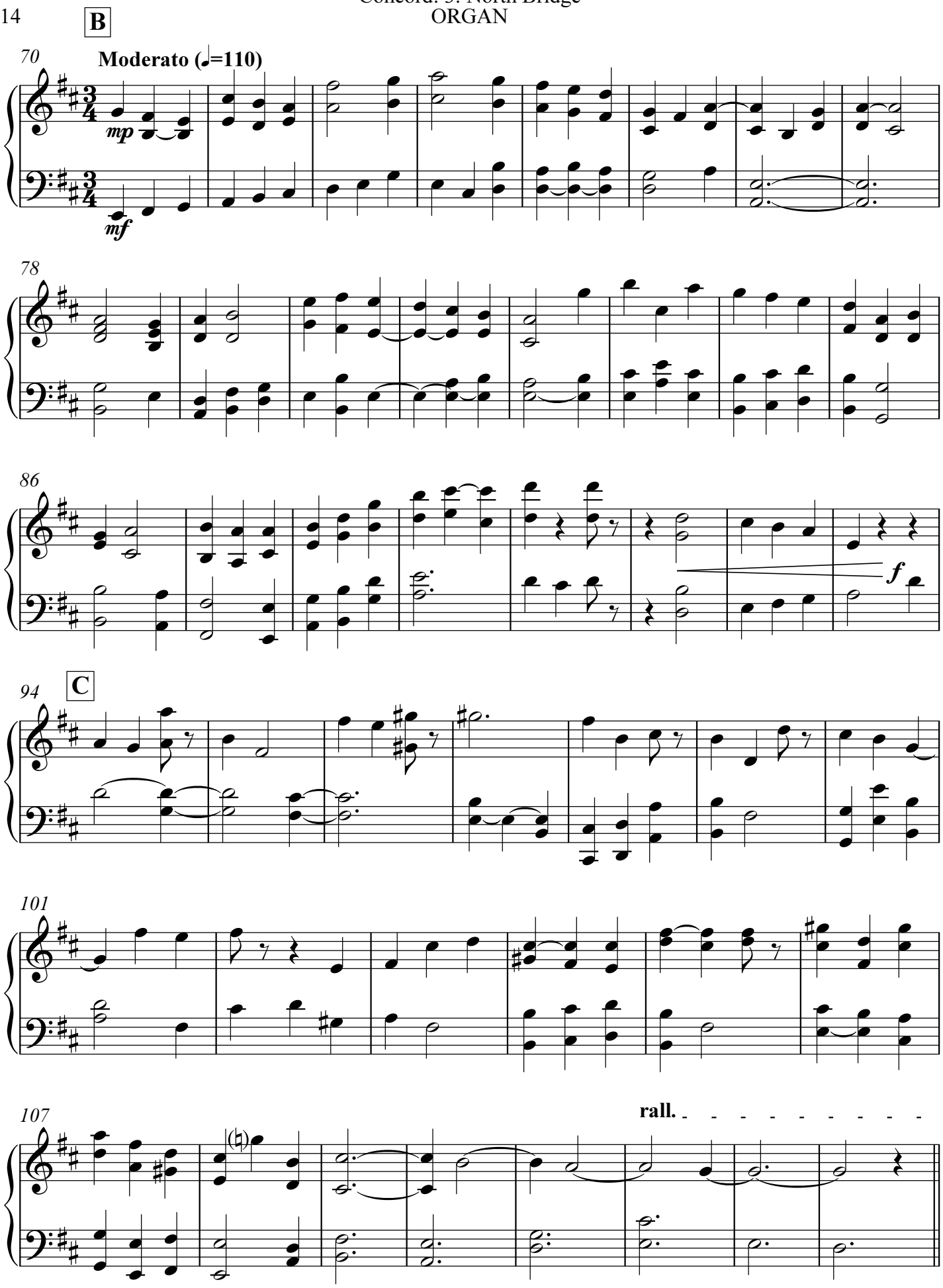

B
70
Moderato (♩=110)
mp
mf
78
86
f
C
94
101
107
rall.

D

Andante (♩=92)

115

S.

The foe long _ since in si - lence slept;

p

123

129

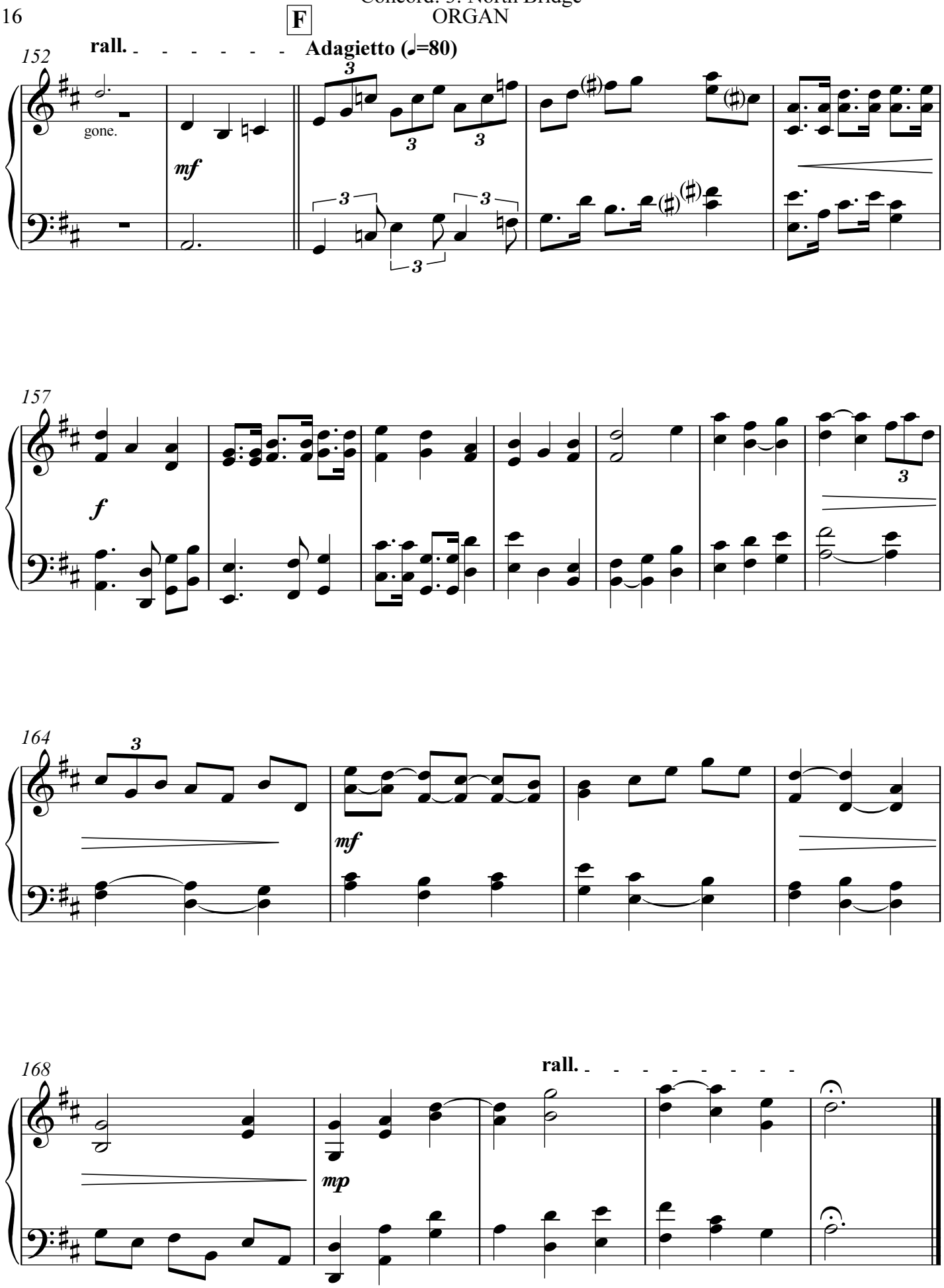
135

E

13

S.

like our sires, ___ our ___ sons are


F
rall.
Adagietto (♩=80)
152
gone.
mf
157
f
164
mf
168
mp
rall.

ORGAN

Concord: 4. Sleepy Hollow

TACET

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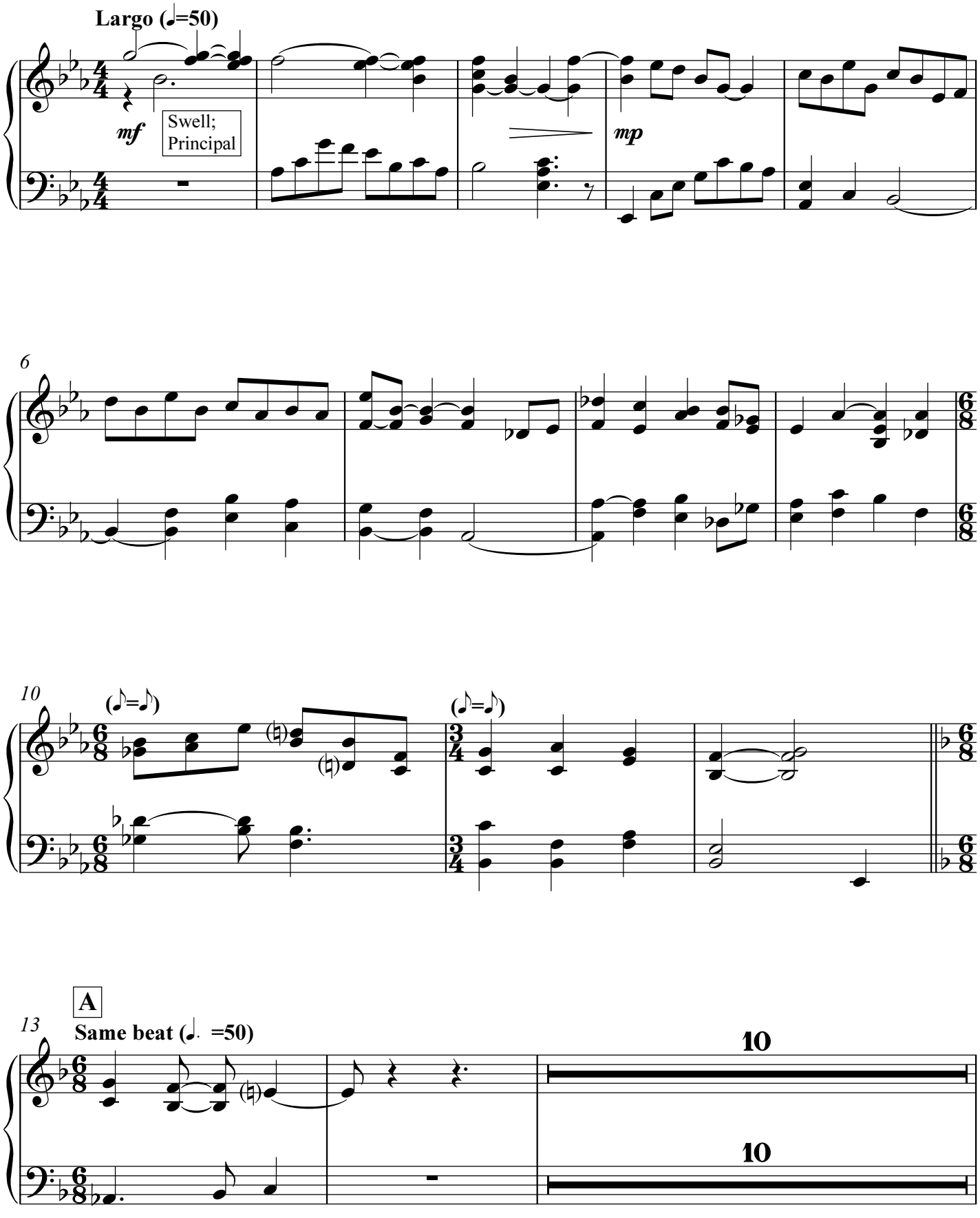
Concord: 5*. Great Meadows

(*the natural order)

Peter Bird

Peter Bird



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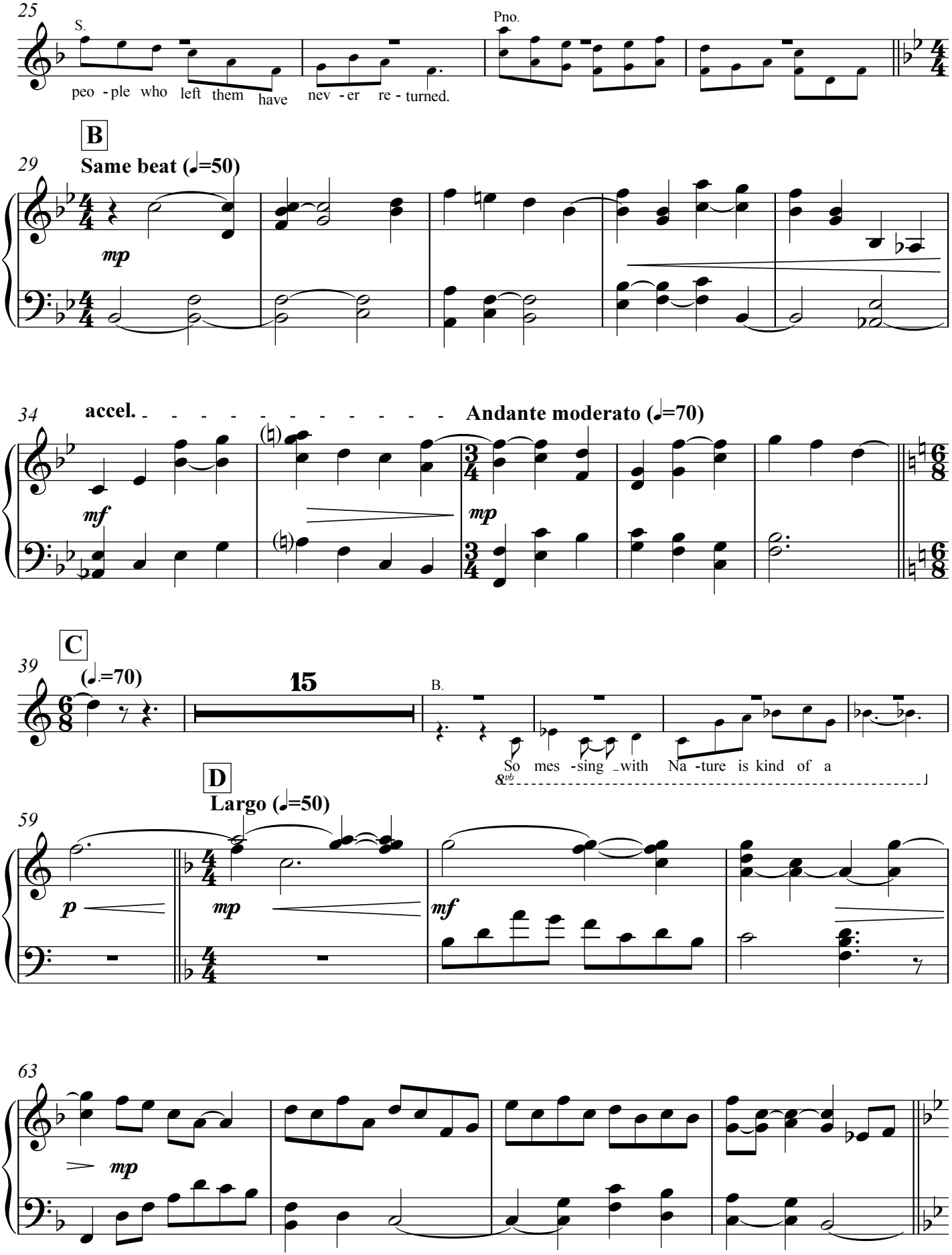
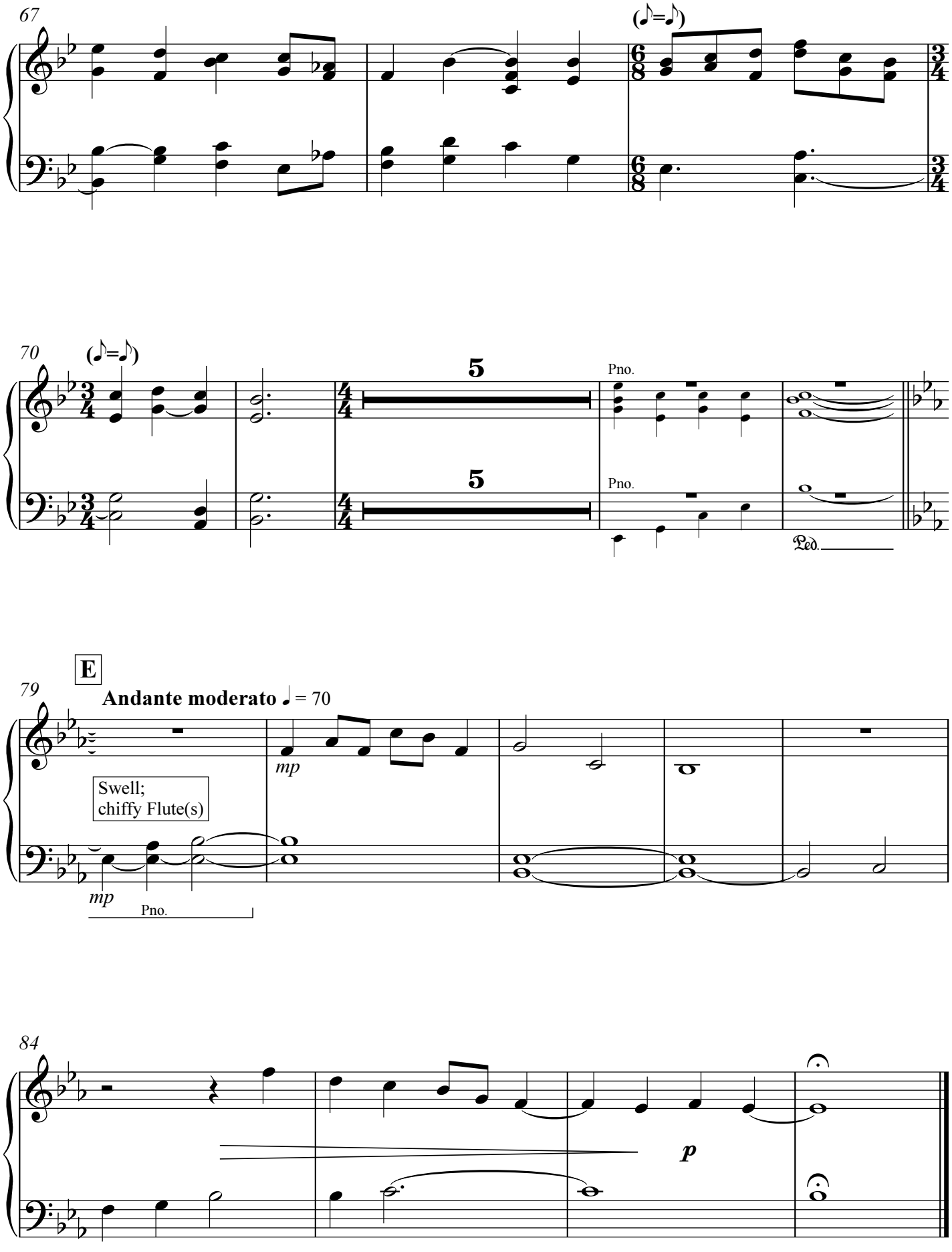

25
S.
peo - ple who left them have nev - er re - turned.
Pno.
B
29
Same beat (♩=50)
mp
34
accel.
Andante moderato (♩=70)
mf
mp
C
39
(♩.=70)
15
B.
So mes - sing with Na - ture is kind of a
D
Largo (♩=50)
59
p
mp
mf
63
mp


67
(♪=♪)
70
(♪=♪)
5
5
Pno.
Pno.
Ped.
E
79
Andante moderato ♩ = 70
mp
Swell;
chiffy Flute(s)
mp
Pno.
84
p

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