The MAYRON COLE PIANO METHOD

The Entertainer

Scott Joplin 1867 – 1917

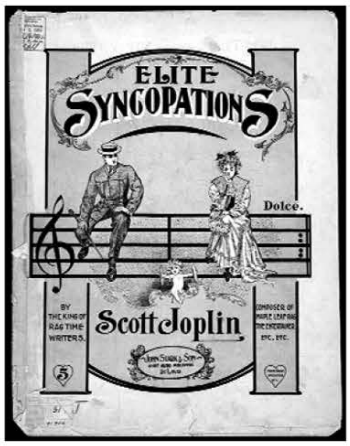


Scott Joplin was born in Texas to a family of laborers. Scott's father abandoned his wife and children when Scott was quite young, so Scott's mother worked as a housekeeper to support her family. At the age of eleven, Scott's keen desire for musical knowledge led him to a local piano teacher, Julius Weiss.

Weiss had immigrated to the USA after studying piano at a university in Germany. Weiss, seeing Scott's enthusiasm for music and knowing of his family's dire financial straits, taught Scott Joplin for free from the time Scott was eleven until he was sixteen. With those piano lessons and Weiss's encouragement, Scott's creative musical mind blossomed. Weiss introduced Scott Joplin to folk and classical music as well as opera. Weiss also helped Scott's mother purchase a second-hand piano for her talented son.

The 1893 World's Fair in Chicago was an enticement that Scott could not turn down. He wanted to see it and be a part of it, so he traveled north and formed his first band for which he arranged music and played the cornet. The fair was attended by over twenty-seven million people, and Scott's band was playing the kind of music people loved to hear: ragtime. Many historians credit that Chicago World's Fair with the spread of ragtime's popularity which quickly became a national craze.

The next year, 1894, Joplin had settled in Missouri and was a piano teacher. Still caught-up in the exuberance of ragtime music, Scott taught his students how to break a beat into four parts and how to stress the "off-beat" (syncopation) that was characteristic of ragtime. Several of his students later became well-known ragtime composers. By 1895 Joplin was writing ragtime compositions and had several of his creations published.



His greatest accomplishment occurred in 1899 when his foot-tapping *Maple Leaf Rag* was published. This wonderful composition has long been hailed as the best ragtime music ever written. Scott was so confident of how good *Maple Leaf Rag* was that he gave a friend a silver dollar with "1899" engraved on the coin and told the friend, "Remember this date. This is the year that I finally will make it as a composer of

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ragtime!" And he was right! That one composition gave Scott Joplin enough royalties to live on for the rest of his life.

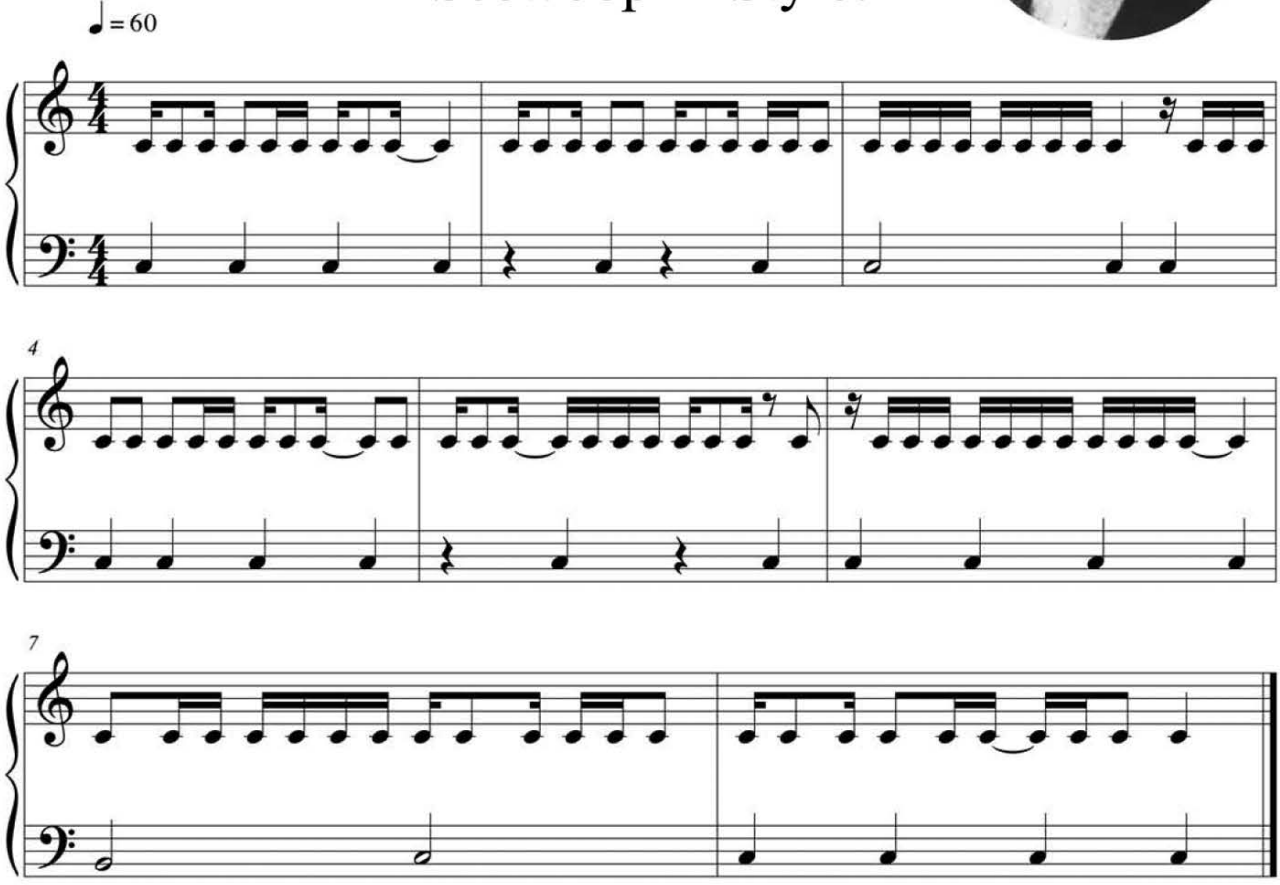
In 1901 Scott Joplin moved to Saint Louis, Missouri. While living there he continued to compose and publish music. But he was finding that his fingers were starting to tremble and his coordination was failing. Soon he had difficulty speaking. He had contracted a venereal disease and by 1917 he had descended into dementia. He was admitted to a mental hospital and died three months later at the age of forty-nine.

During Scott Joplin's too short life he wrote forty-four ragtime compositions, one ragtime ballet, and two ragtime operas. The author of this piano method, Mayron Cole, saw Scott Joplin's opera Treemonisha performed by the Houston Opera company in the 1970s. It was a marvelous experience for her!

Scott Joplin never forgot the kindness of Julius Weiss. Years later, after Scott Joplin had received money and fame for his compositions, he sent money to his beloved teacher because Weiss was in failing health. Scott continued sending money until Weiss died.



Rhythm Taps, Scott Joplin Style!



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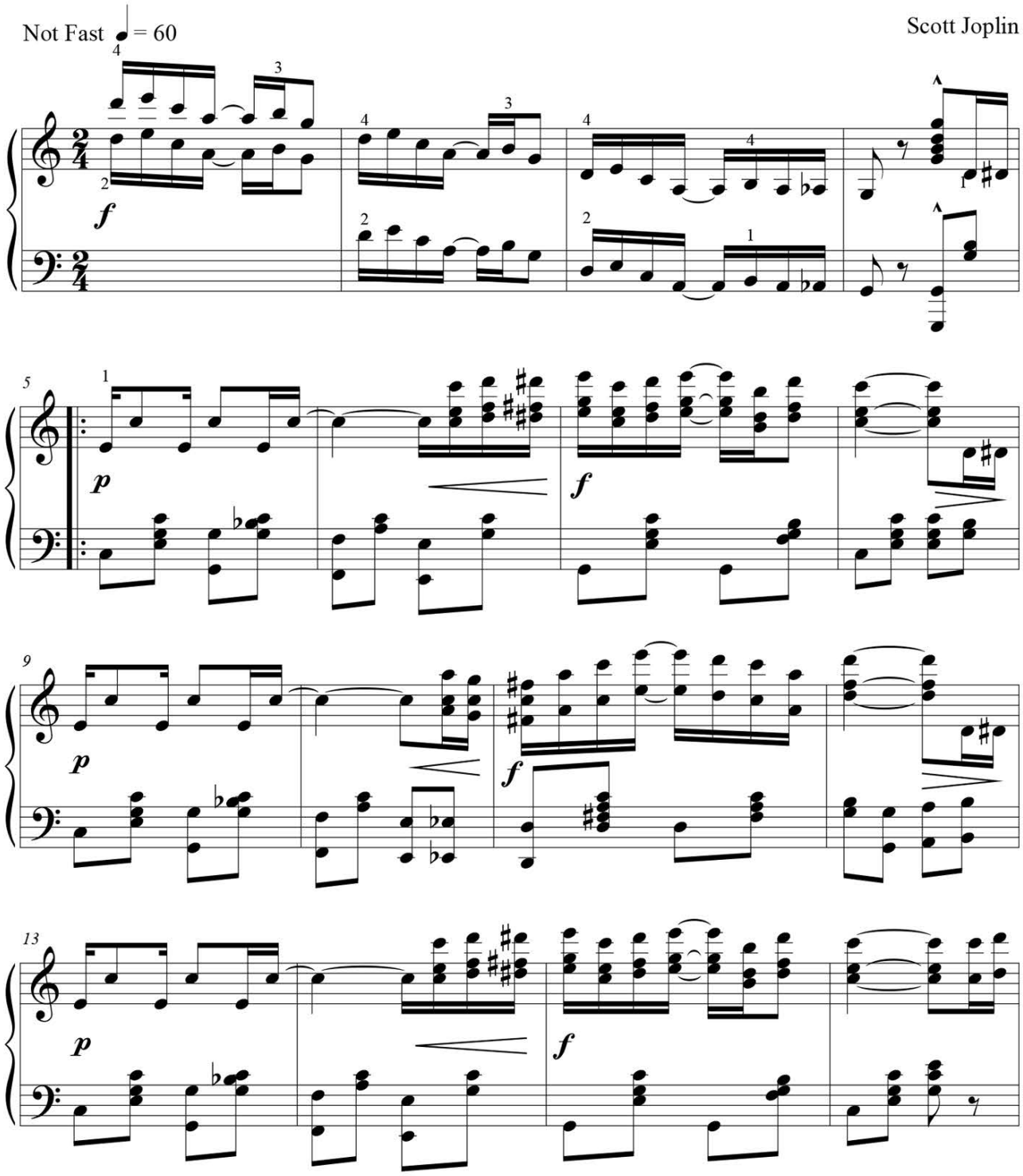
(orchestrated accompaniment has a 2 measure count-in)



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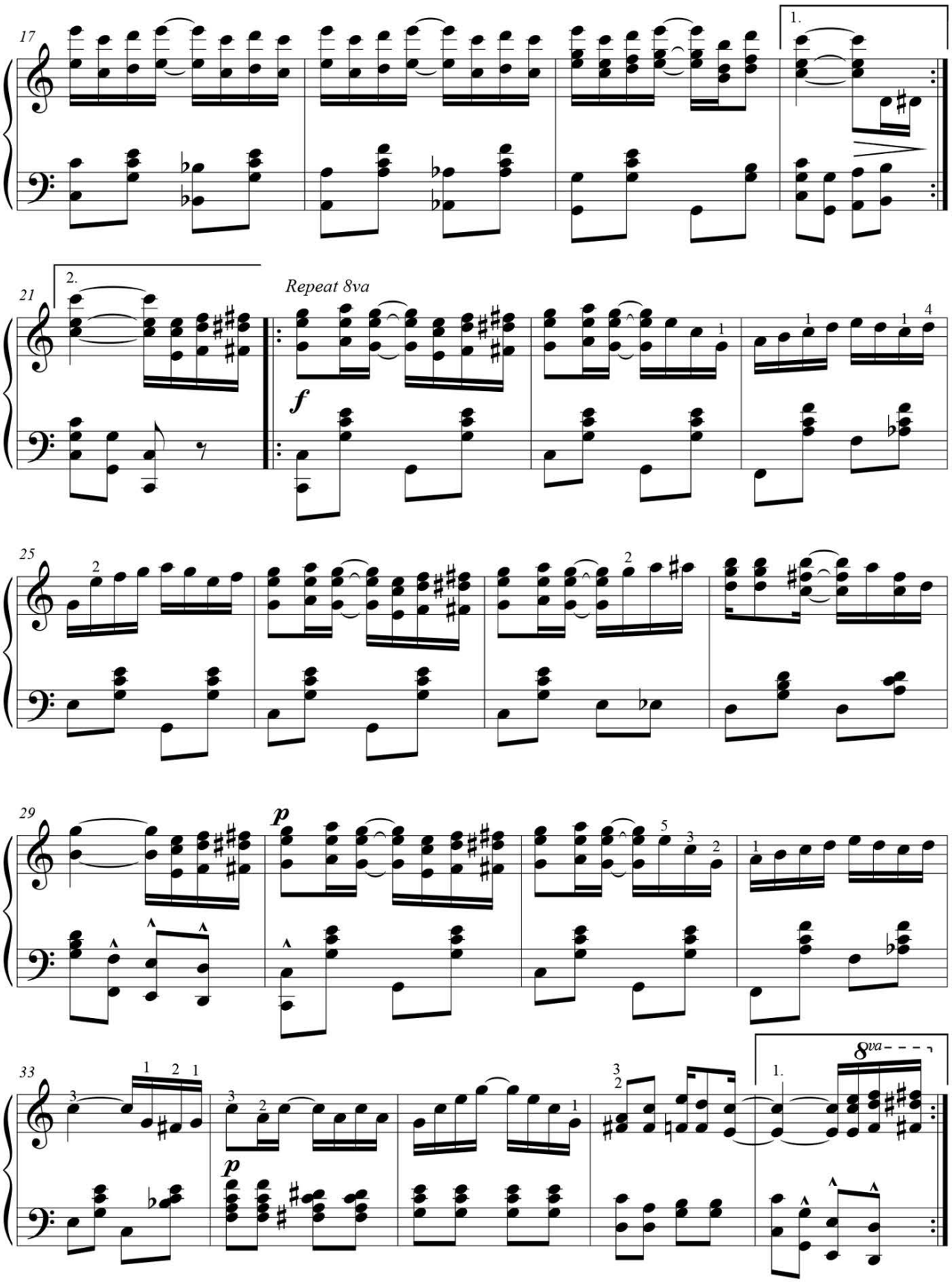

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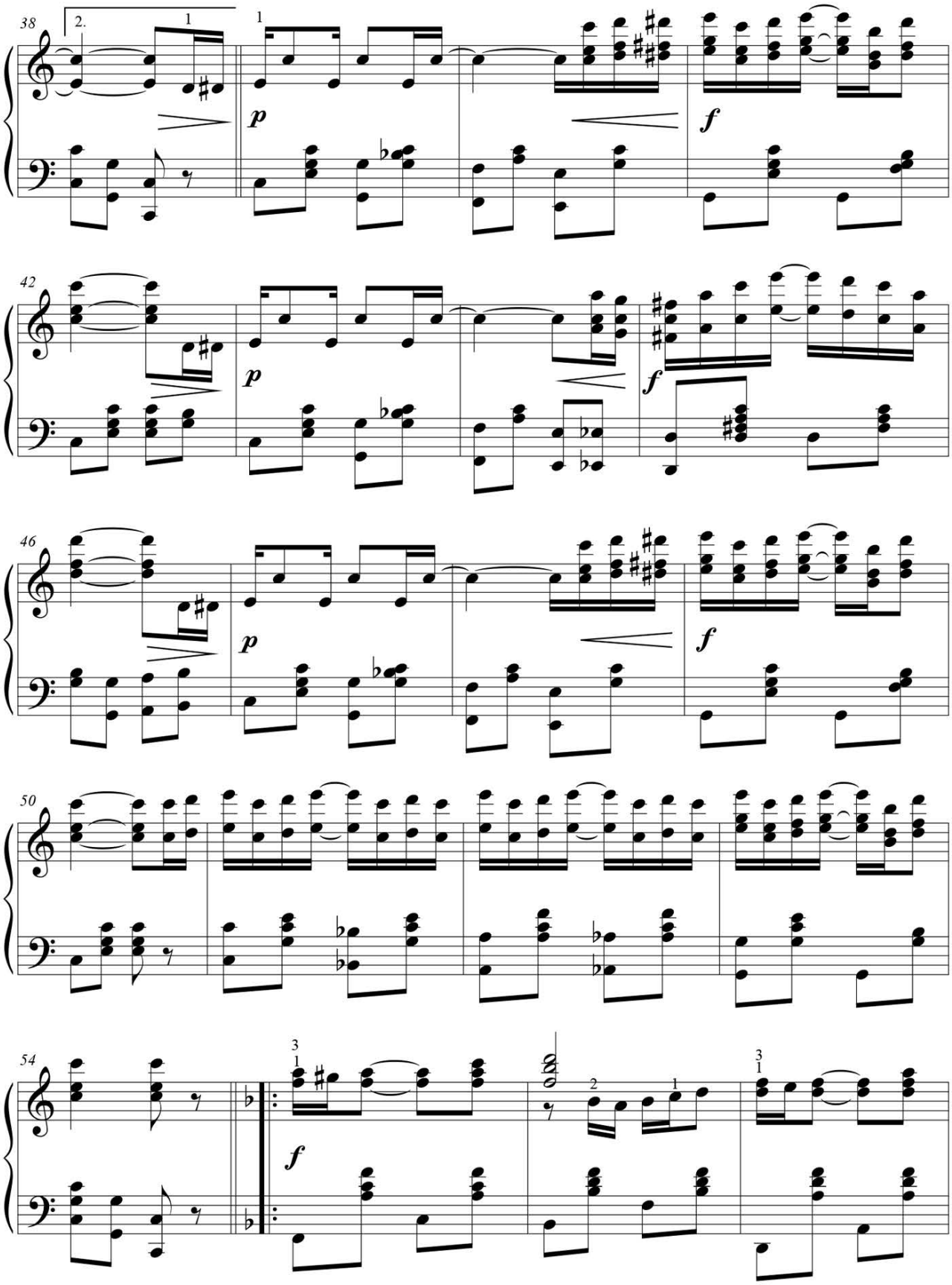

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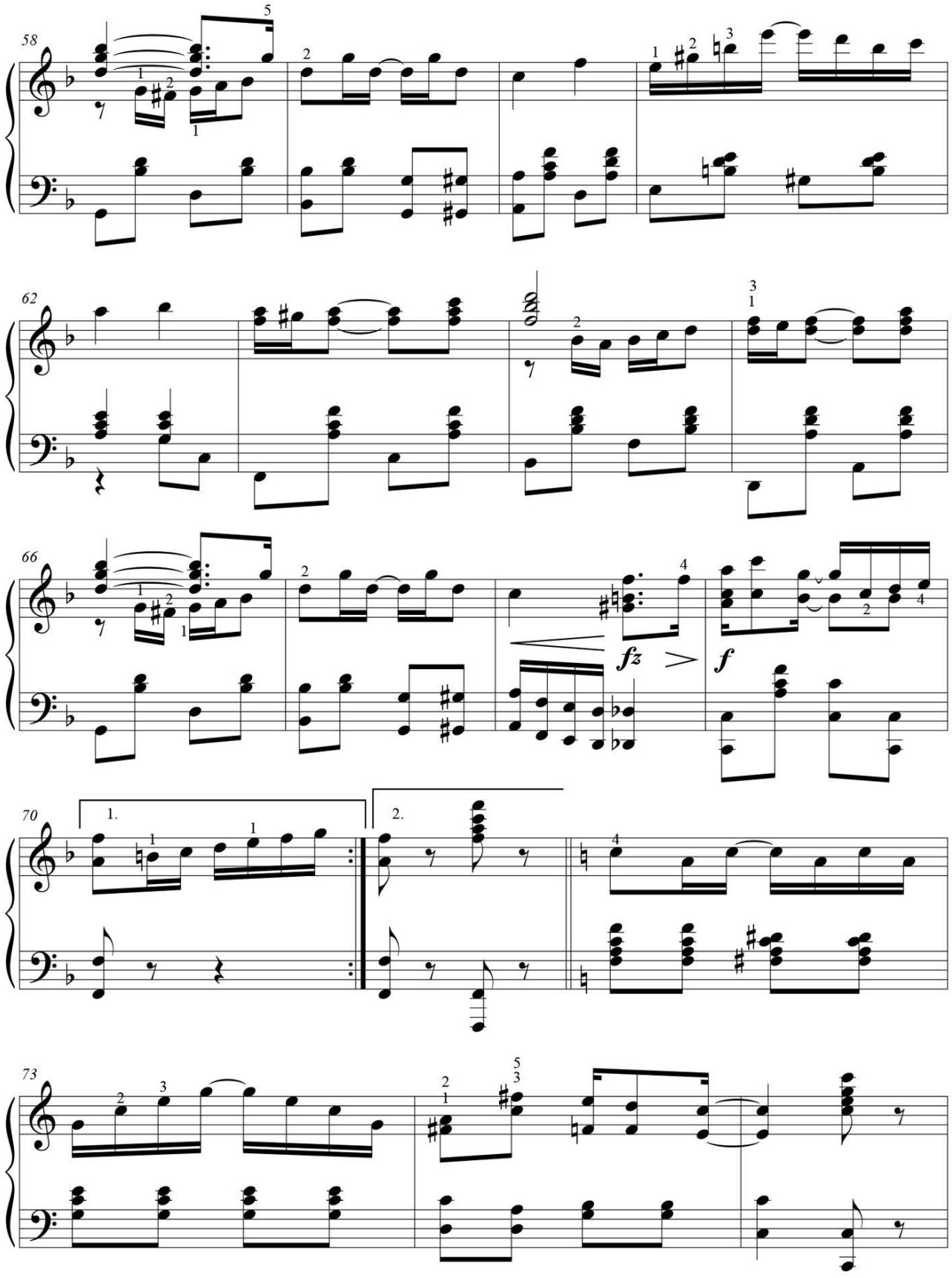

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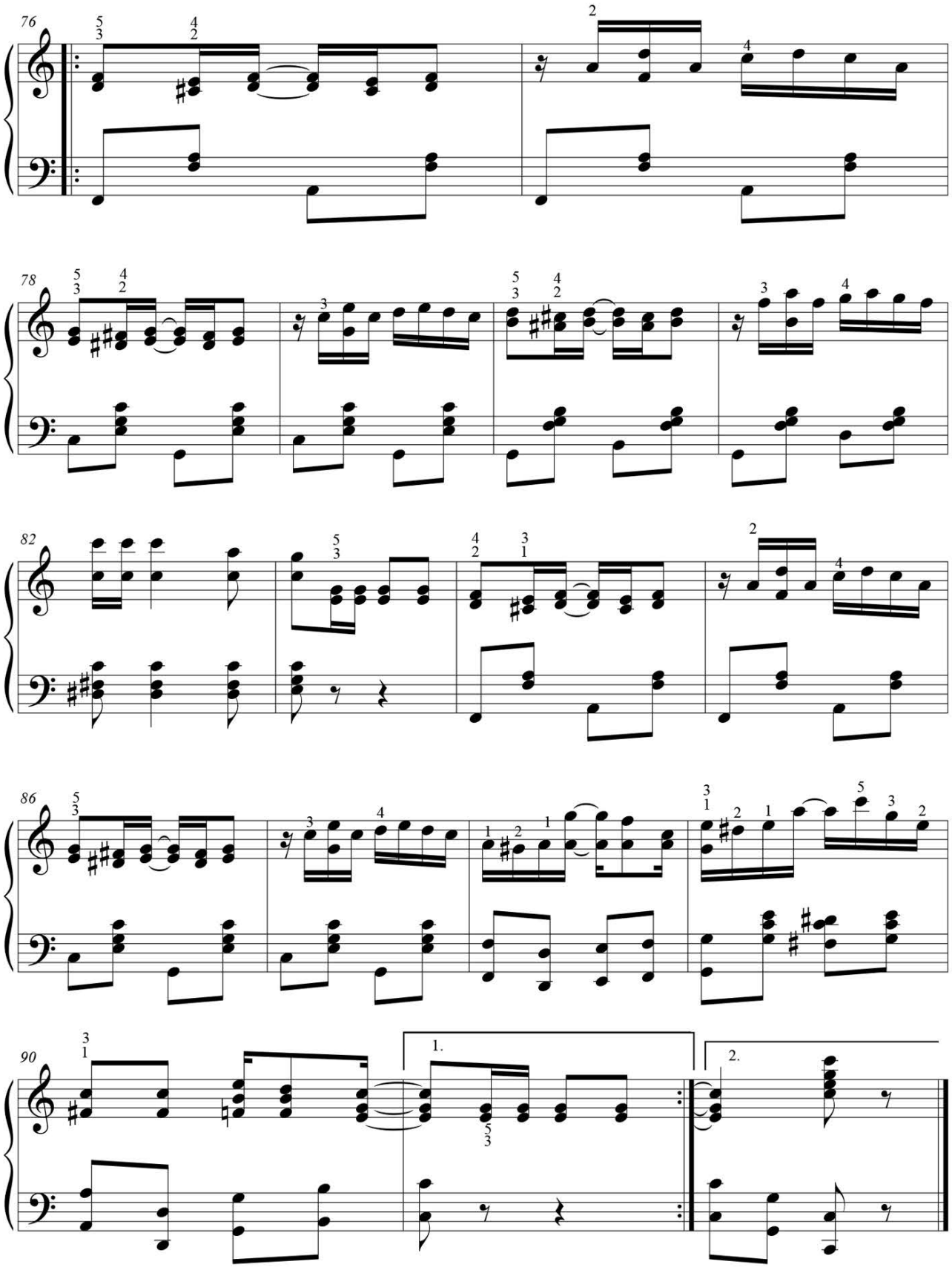

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