# Eight Chinese Folk Songs

Intermediate Level | Solo Piano

Traditional | Arr. Gossell & Geng

Mary M. Gossell & Shenwei Geng

# Eight Chinese Folk Songs

## For Intermediate Piano

(2024)

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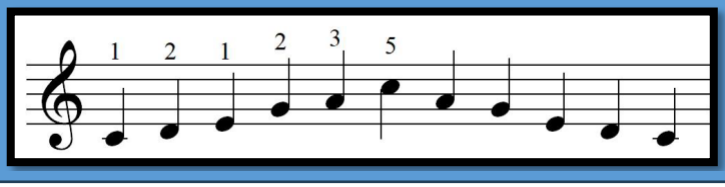
# Note to the Teacher

One of the most noticeable differences between Chinese music and most Western music is the prevalent use of the pentatonic scale, shown below. If students have already learned major scales, the pentatonic scale can be introduced as scale steps 1-2-3-5-6 of the major scale. Alternatively, students can be shown that the black keys of the piano also follow the pentatonic scale (whole step, whole step, minor third, whole step, and minor third to arrive back at tonic).

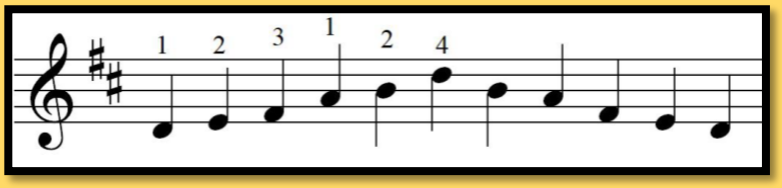
**THE PENTATONIC SCALE**

The pentatonic scale is used in many Chinese folk songs and follows scale steps 1-2-3-5-6 of the major scale. The following is a C pentatonic scale:



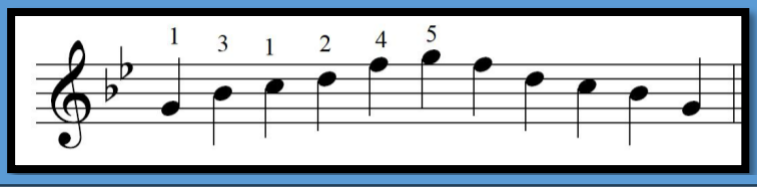

Above is the standard fingering for the C pentatonic scale. Students should practice this scale (right hand only) to achieve fluency with the third gaps. The same fingering can be applied to the keys of G and F. D pentatonic and G minor pentatonic are also shown below (the G minor fingering can also be applied to D minor pentatonic). Mastery of C, F, G, D, G minor, and D minor pentatonic scales will assist students in their preparation for the arrangements in this collection.

**D PENTATONIC**




**G MINOR PENTATONIC**

Minor pentatonic scales follow the pattern "minor third, whole step, whole step, minor third, whole step."



# About the Folk Songs

### COLORFUL CLOUDS CHASING THE MOON

*Colorful Clouds Chasing the Moon* is a folk song from Guangdong. The title comes from a story of an immortal who drives colorful clouds while flying to the Moon Palace.

### LIUYANG RIVER

Flowing through Hunan Province in South China, the *Liuyang River* nourishes many crops and people along its way. The lyrics of this song depict the beautiful waterfalls, cliffs, and forests that adorn the river. A distinct feature of the Liuyang River is its nine curves; this is expressed musically through a melody that frequently changes direction.

### KANGDING LOVE SONG

*Kangding Love Song* is a representative Chinese folk song from the Sichuan area. The lyrics depict the image of seamless mountains and sky, and a young boy is expressing love for his beloved girl. The grace notes in the melody mimic the unique accent of people from the Sichuan region.

### FROM AFAR

Originating from Qinghai Province, *From Afar* is a love song describing a girl in a faraway place, who has the attention of everyone who passes by. This distance is expressed musically as the right hand moves up an octave on the repeat, giving a sense of more space. The coda at the end also has the same effect.

### JASMINE FLOWER

*Jasmine Flower* is one of the most well-known Chinese folk songs. From Jiangsu Province, this song depicts the beauty of the jasmine flower, a flower which has significance in Chinese culture because it represents sincereness and kindness between people.

### FENGYANG FLOWER DRUM

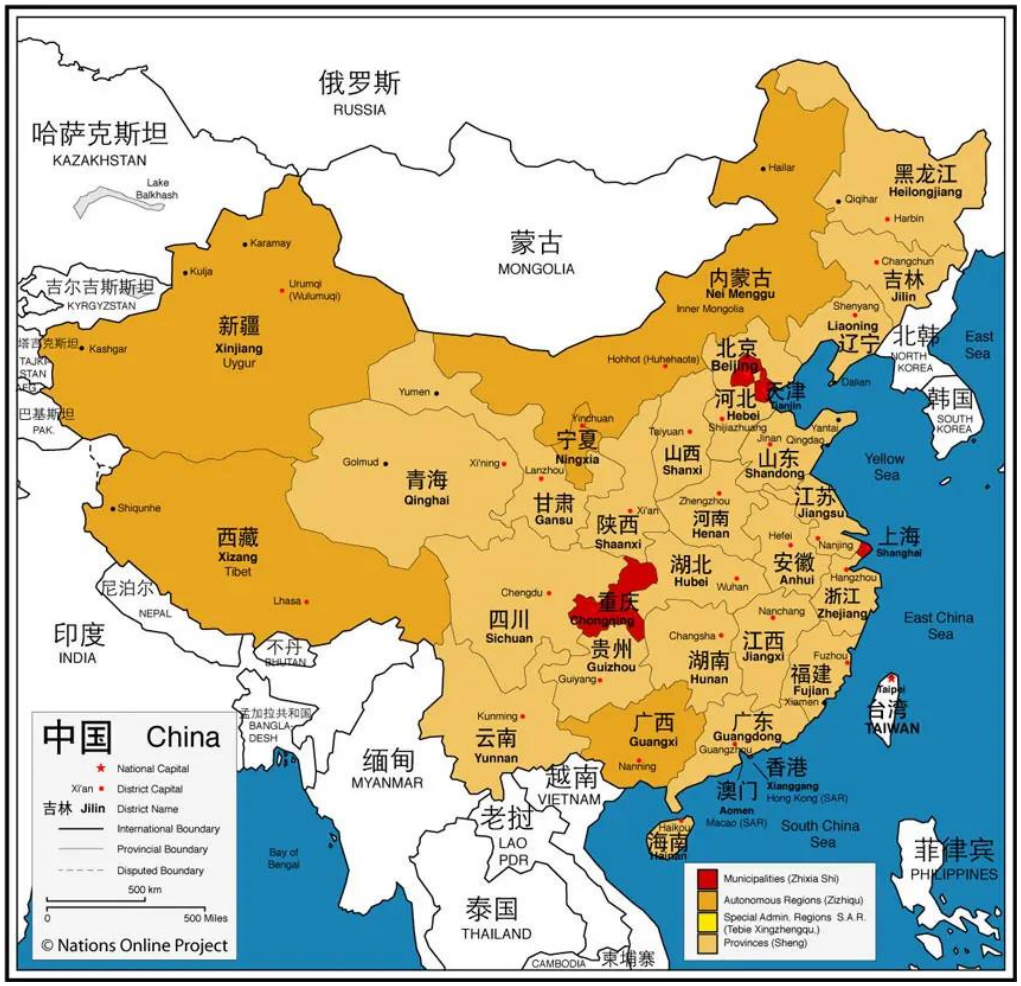
*Fengyang Flower Drum* is a traditional Chinese folk song from the Anhui Province that appeared during the late Ming Dynasty. Although the song sounds cheerful and upbeat, it is actually a satire about the careless emperor, the heavy taxes, and the suffering people. Musically, the left hand of the piano frequently imitates the accents of a drum.

## THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS

*The Butterfly Lovers* is a Chinese legend of a tragic love story of a pair of lovers, Liang and Zhu. Originally from the violin concerto of the same name, this famous melody expresses the admiration Zhu and Liang have for each other, and the happy time they spend together.

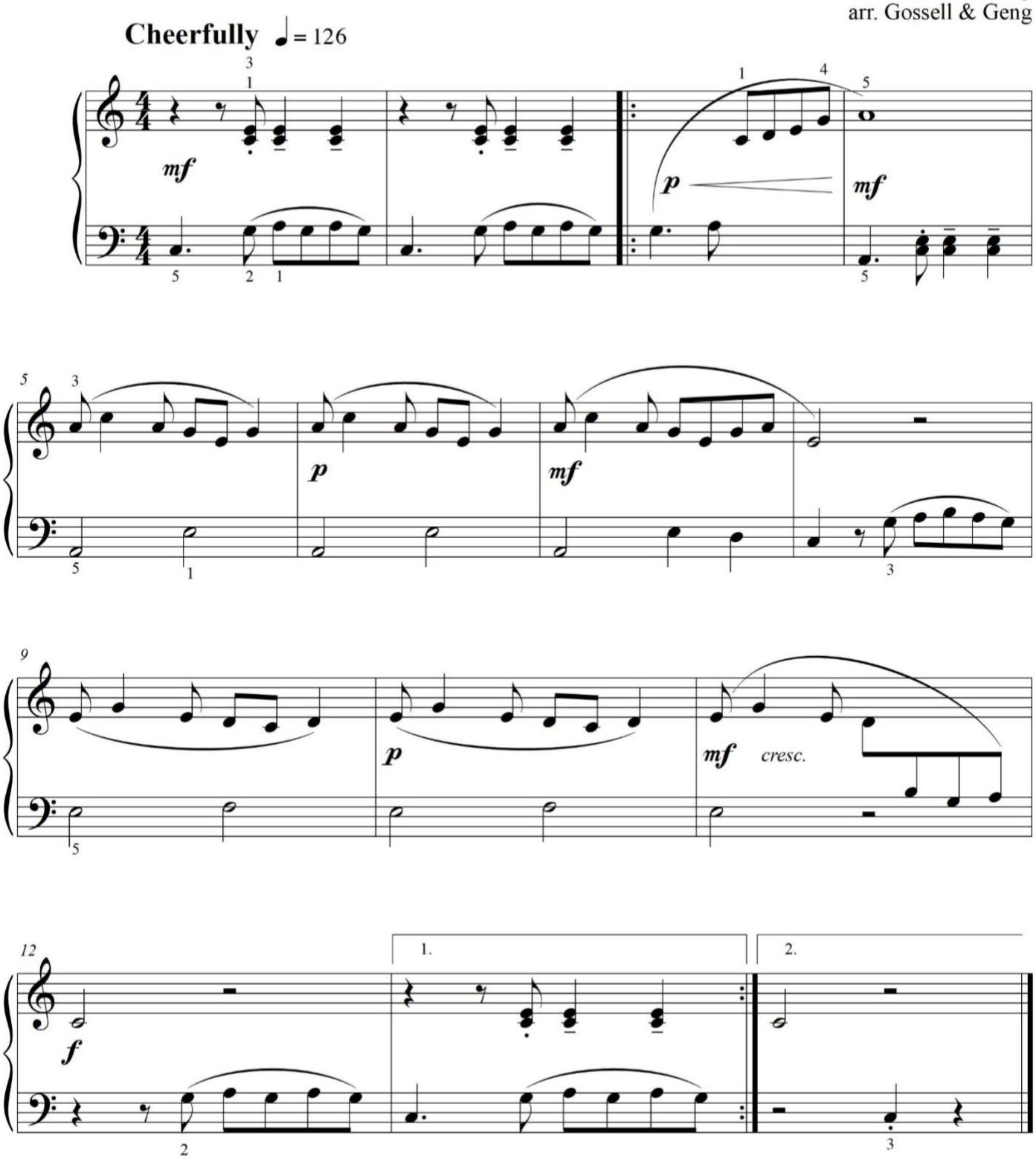
## DANCE OF YOUTH

A Xinjiang folk song, *Dance of Youth* is an energetic and rhythmic dance of the Uyghur people. Uyghur music tends to be melodic, passionate, and dance-like, and this song certainly has those qualities. The text of the song reflects on the brevity of youth, saying, "the fallen sun will rise again… the withered flower will bloom again… but my youth is like a bird that never comes back." This folksong uses a melodic technique called "Yu-Yao-Wei" ("tail-biting-fish"), in which the ending note of each phrase becomes the first note of the next phrase.



# Colorful Clouds Chasing the Moon

Traditional Chinese Folk Song
arr. Gossell & Geng

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# Liuyang River

Traditional Chinese Folk Song
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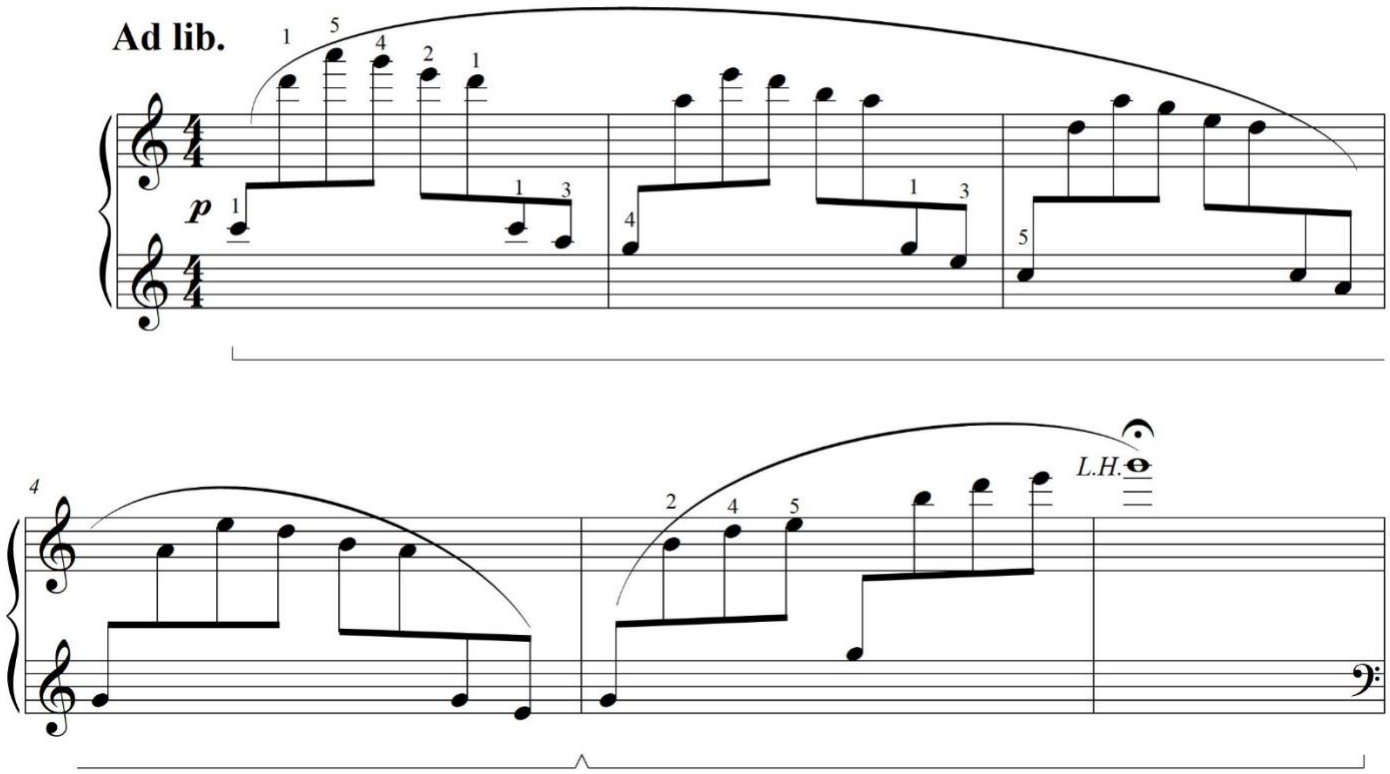


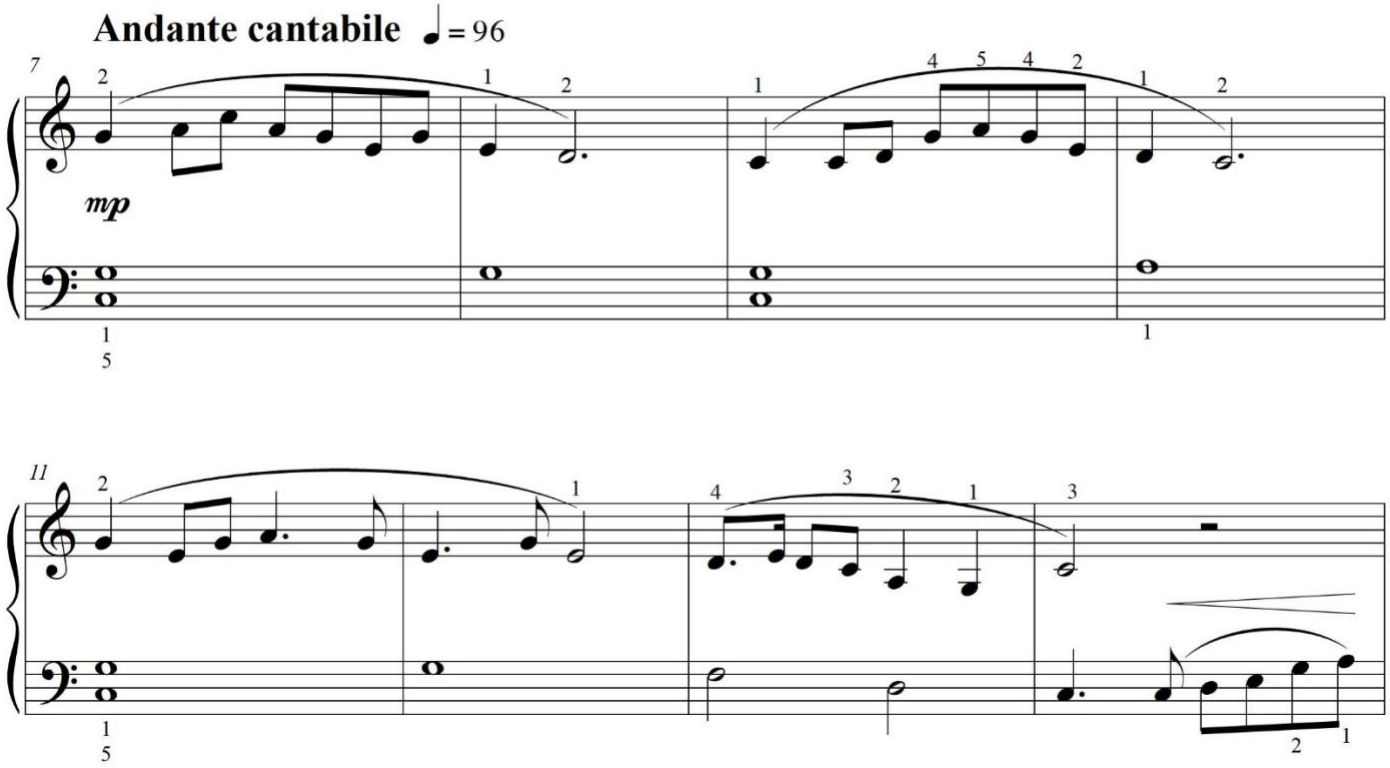

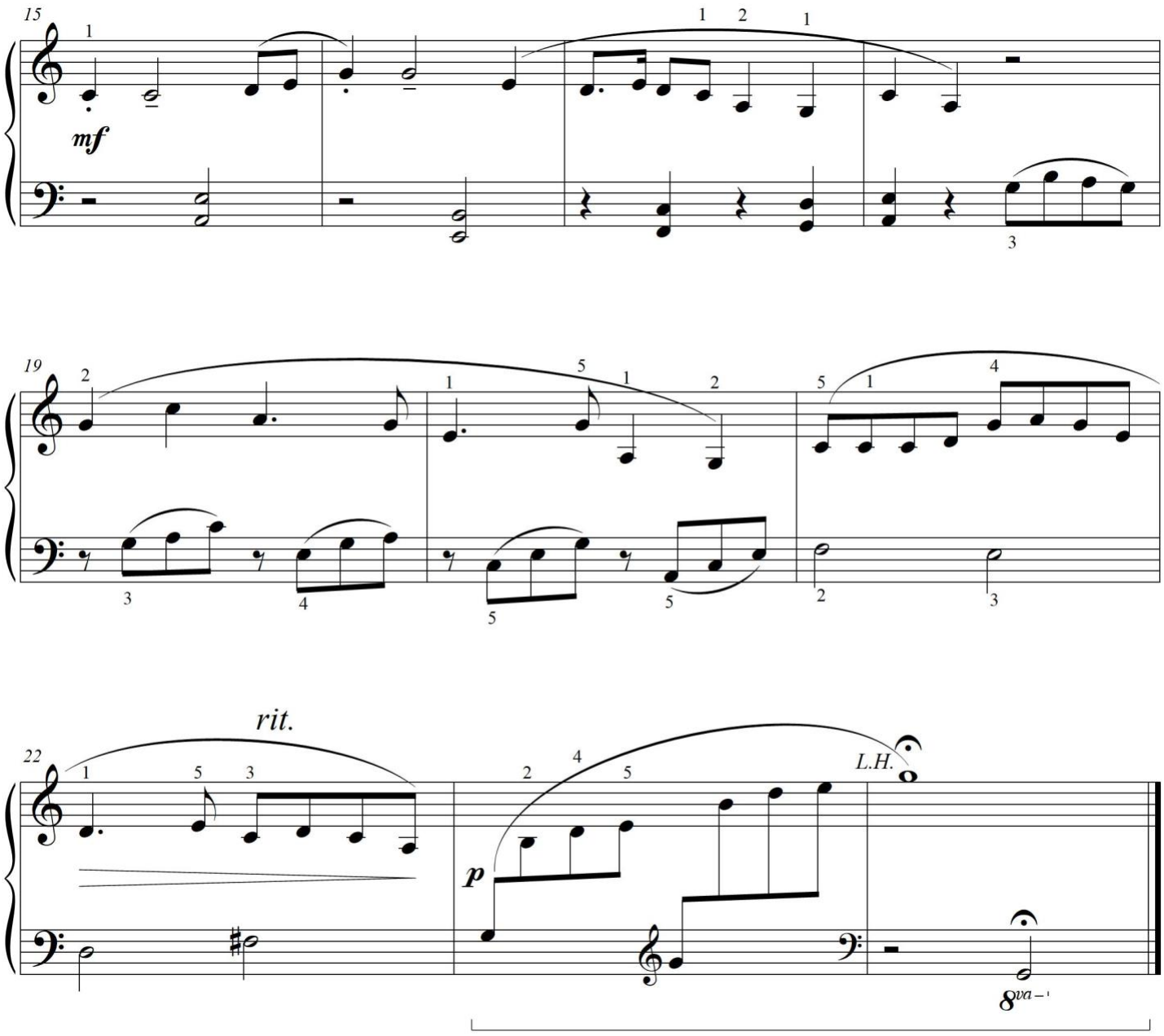
15
mf
19
22
rit.
p
L.H.
8va

# Kangding Love Song

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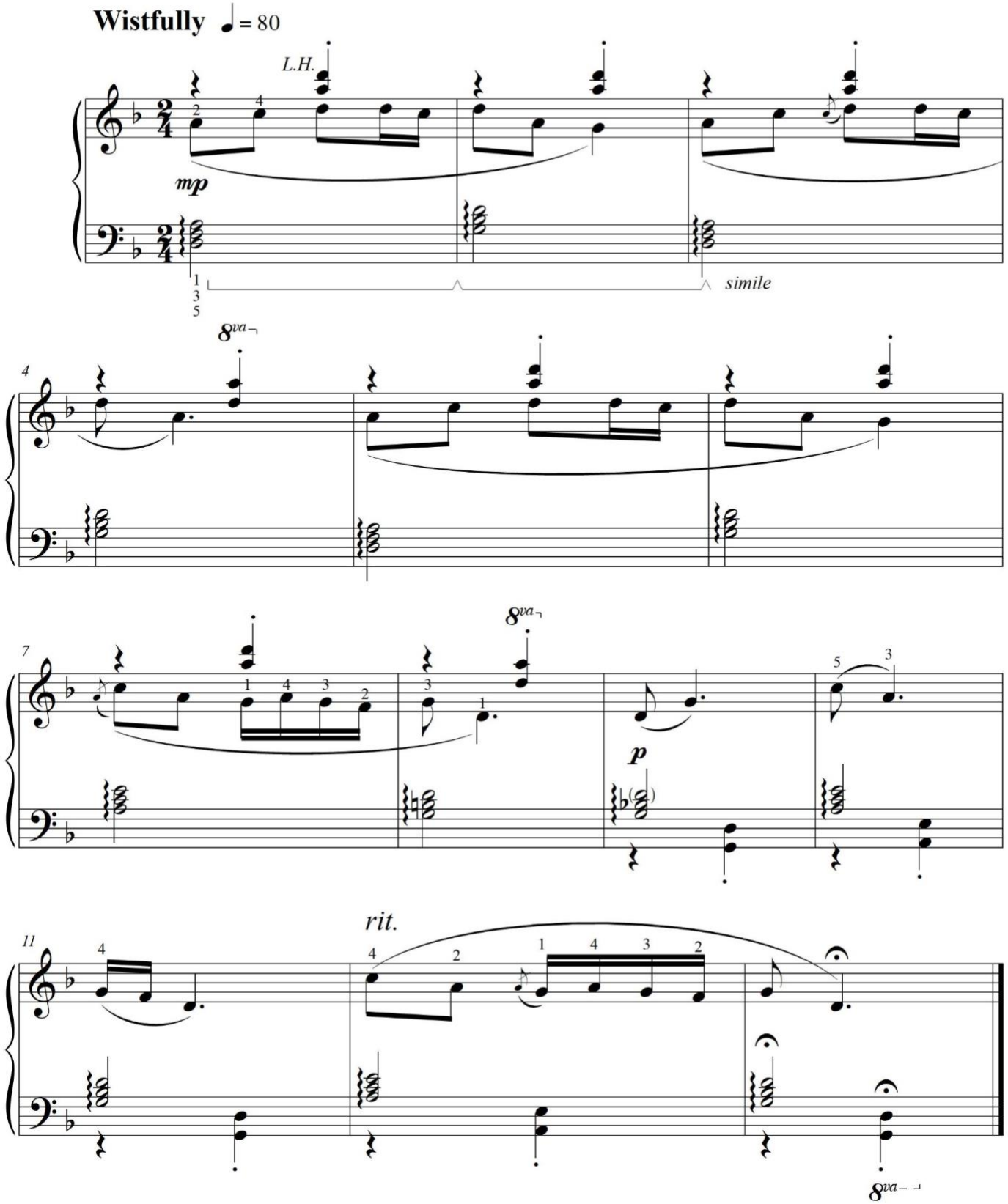
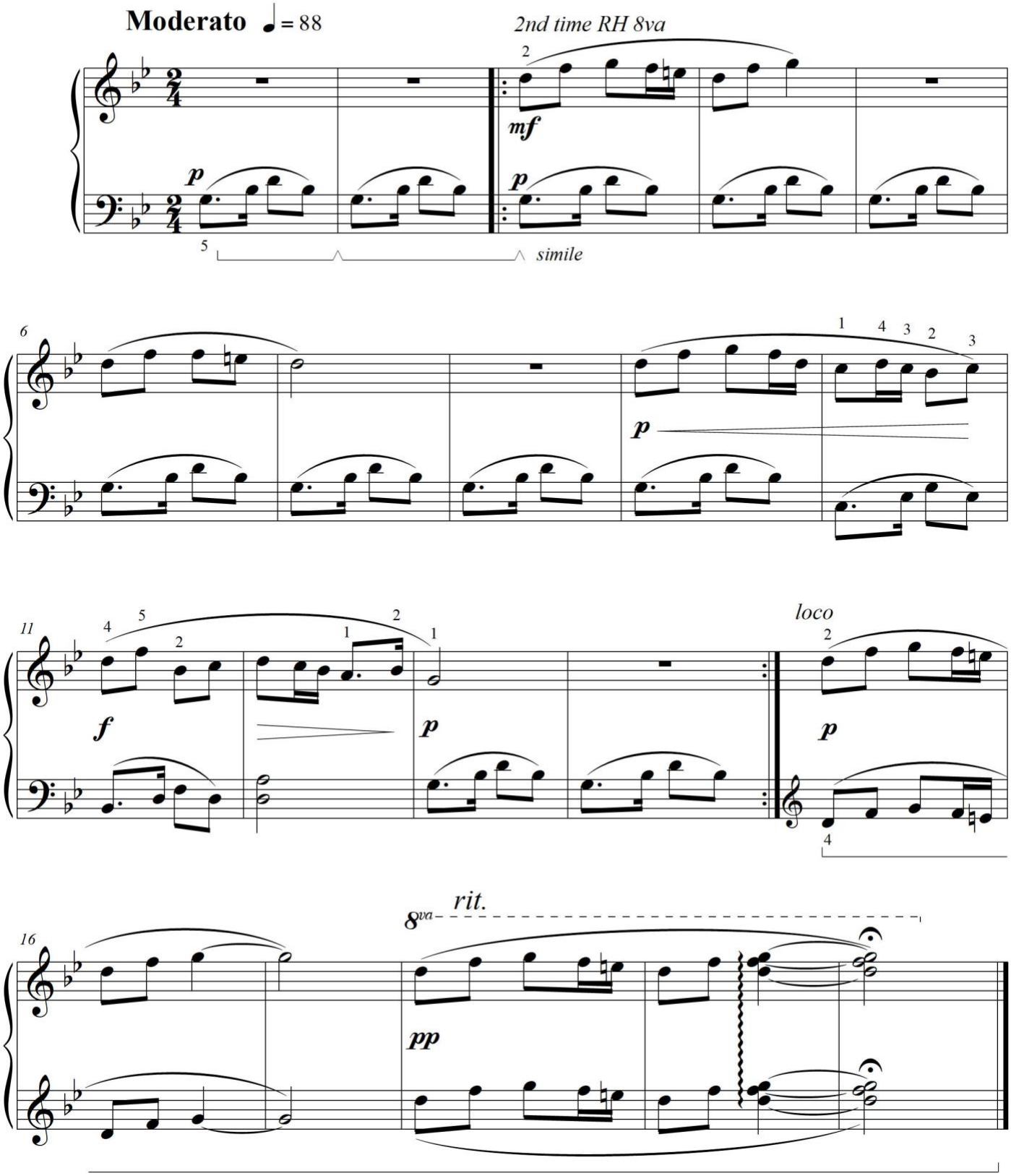


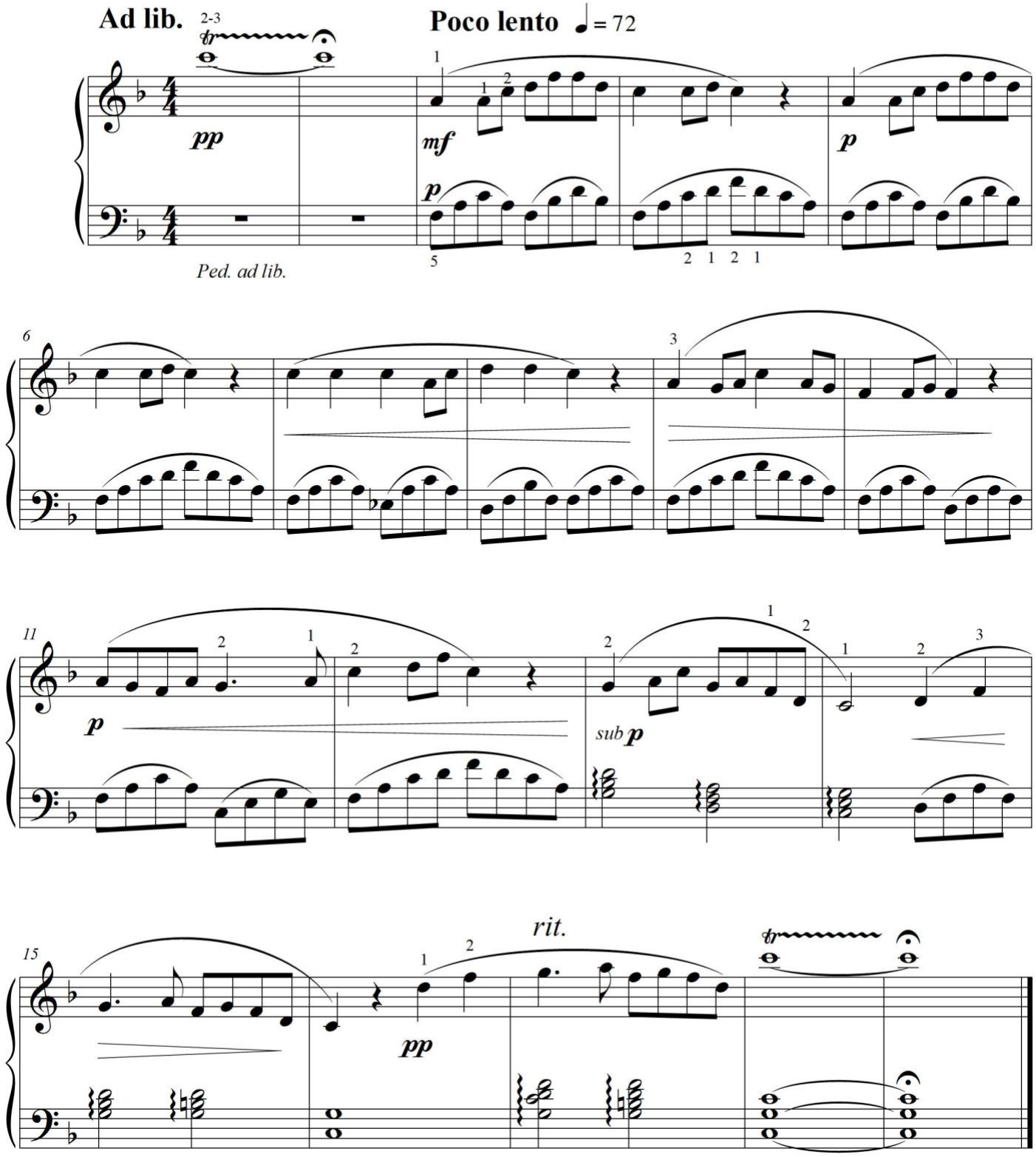
# From Afar

Traditional Chinese Folk Song
arr. Gossell & Geng



# Jasmine Flower

Traditional Chinese Folk Song
arr. Gossell & Geng



# Fengyang Flower Drum

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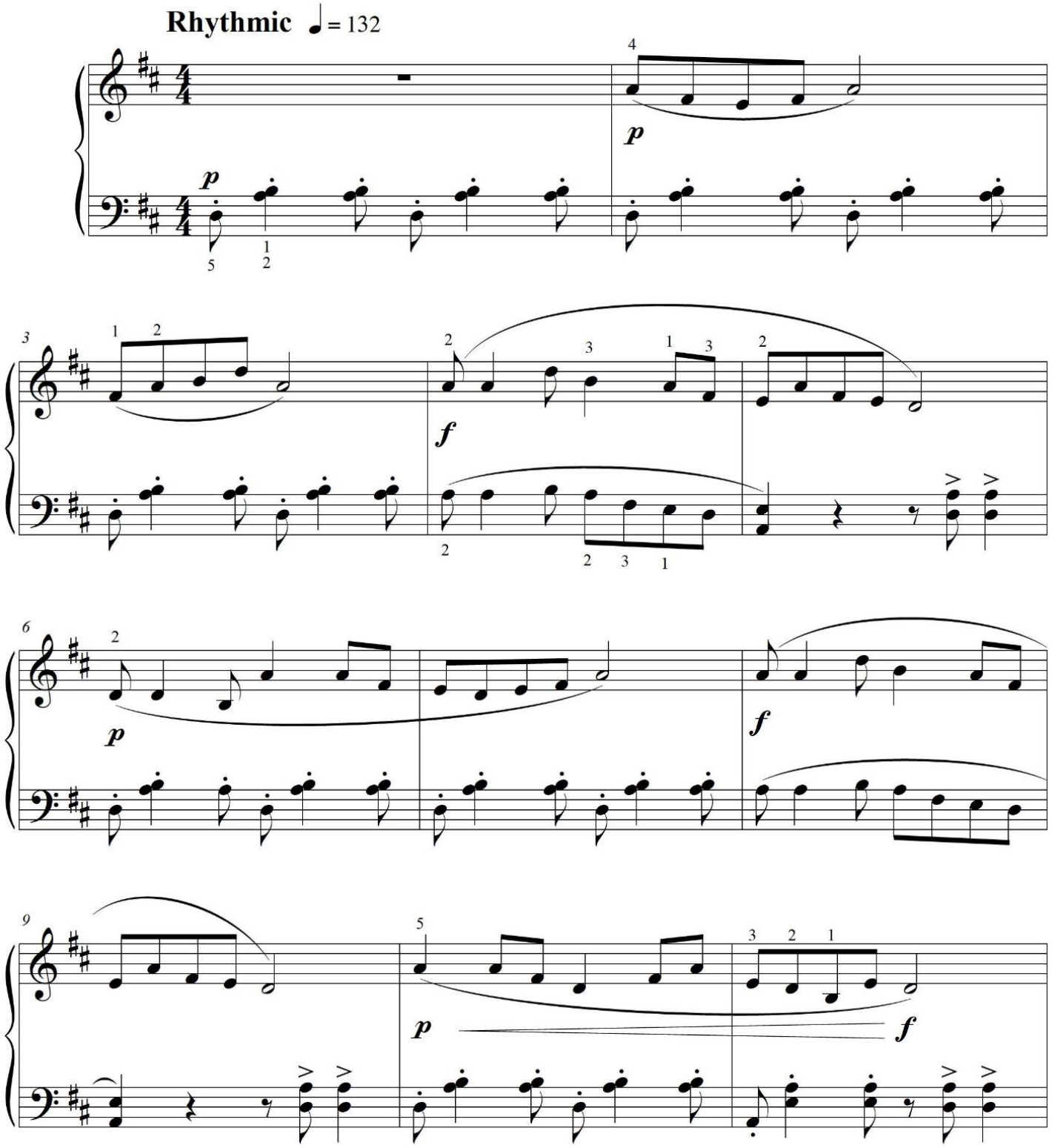
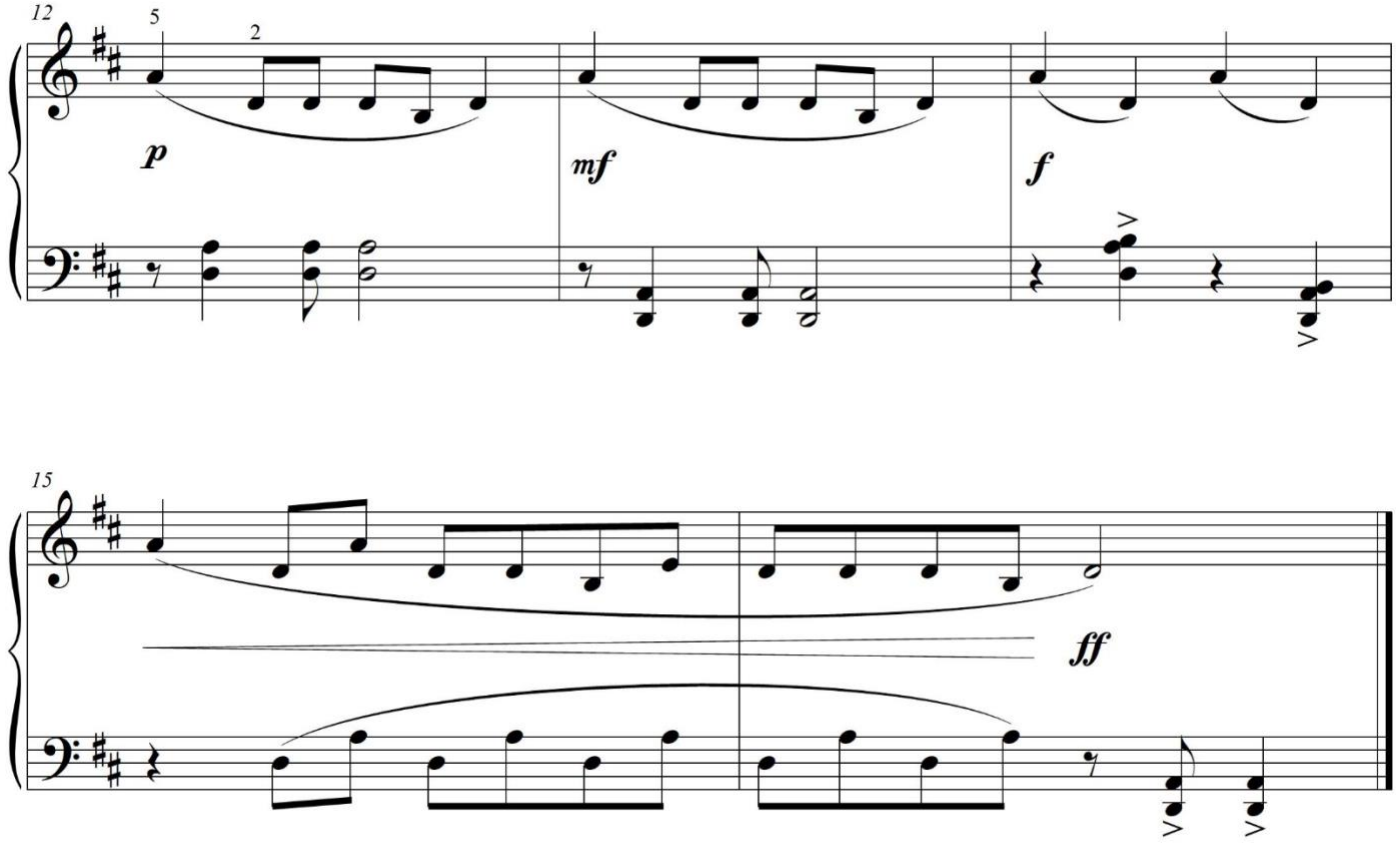
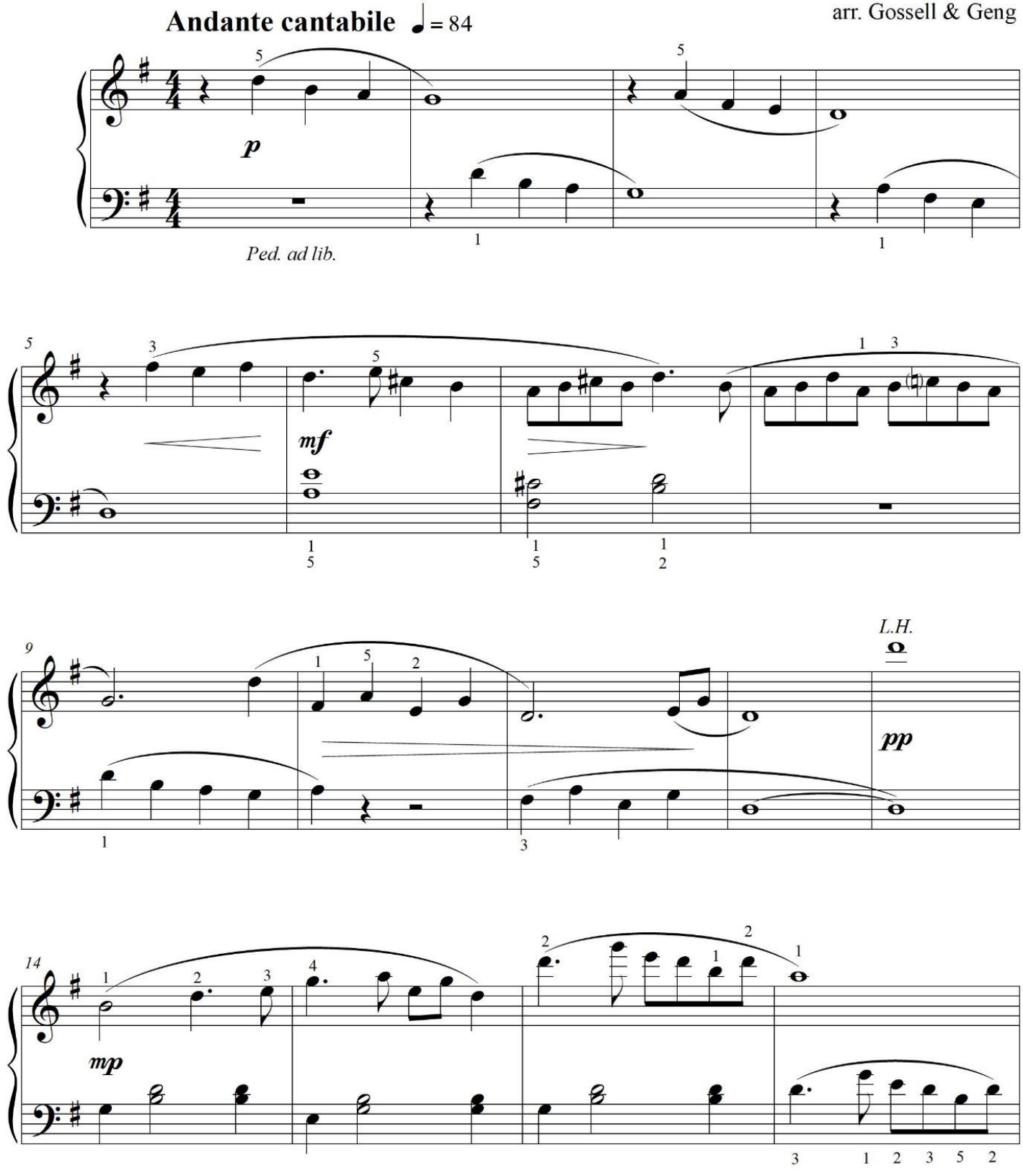


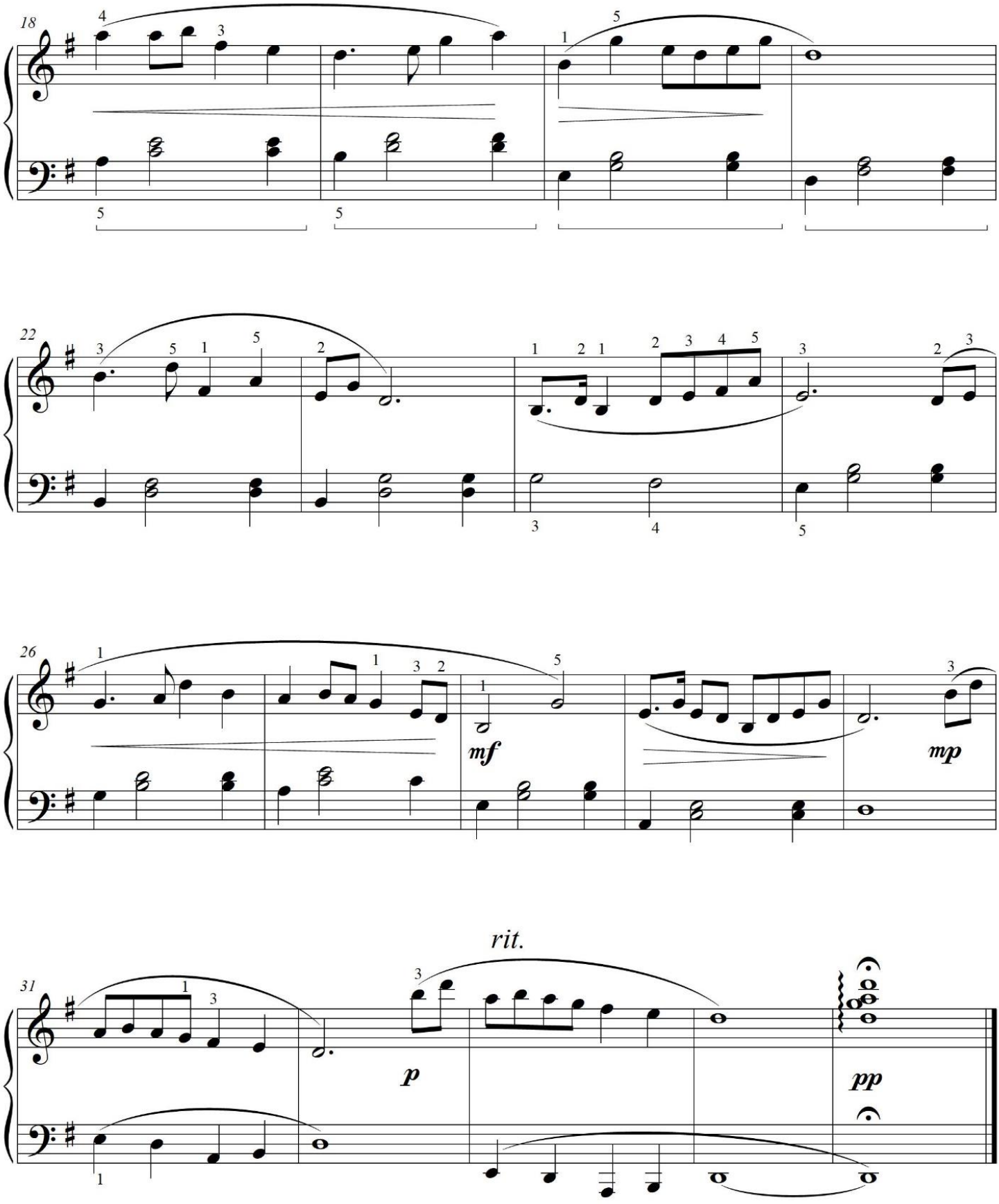

12
5
2
p
mf
f


15
ff

# The Butterfly Lovers

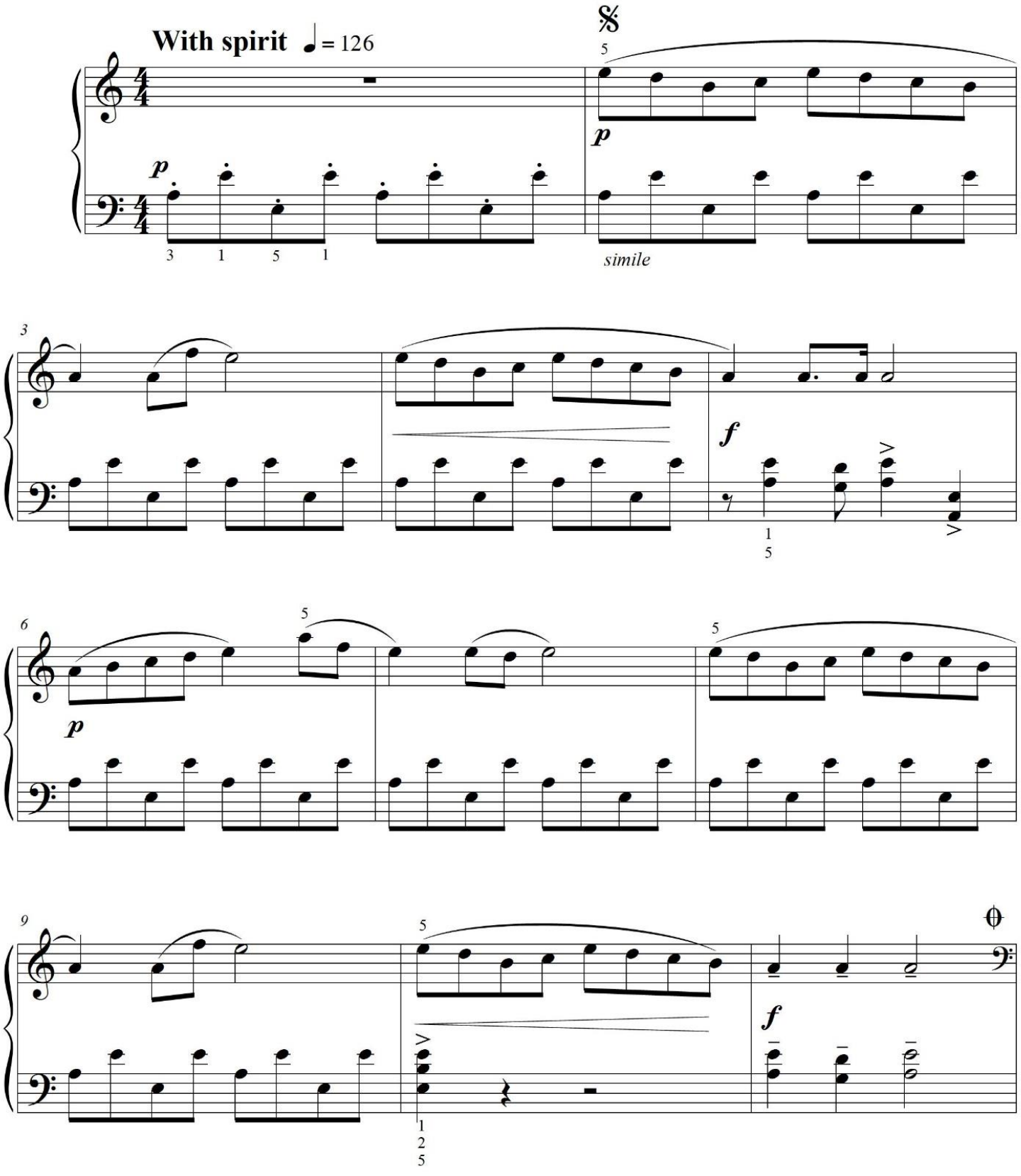
Z. He & G. Chen
arr. Gossell & Geng

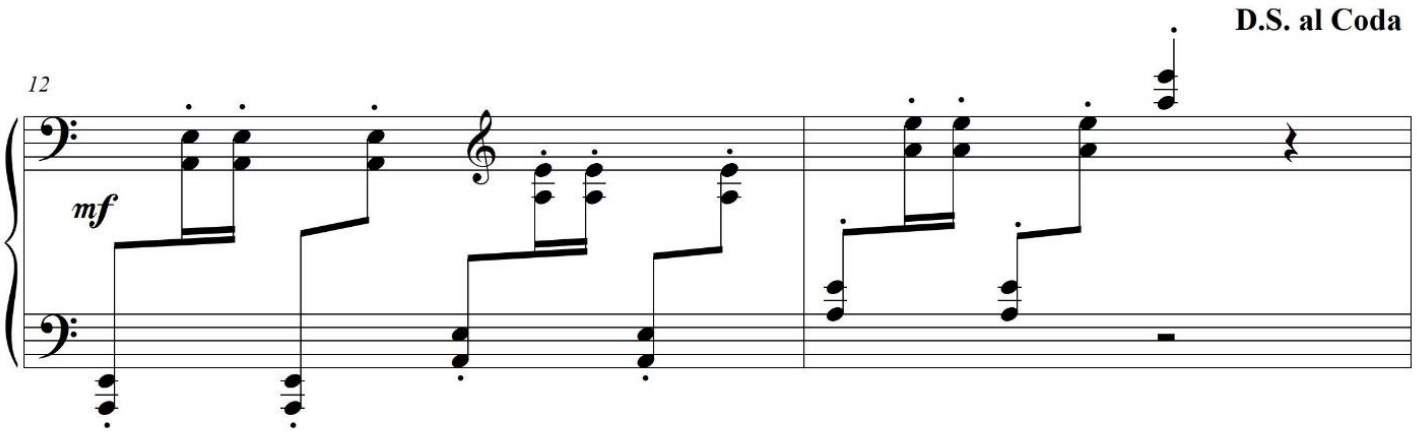


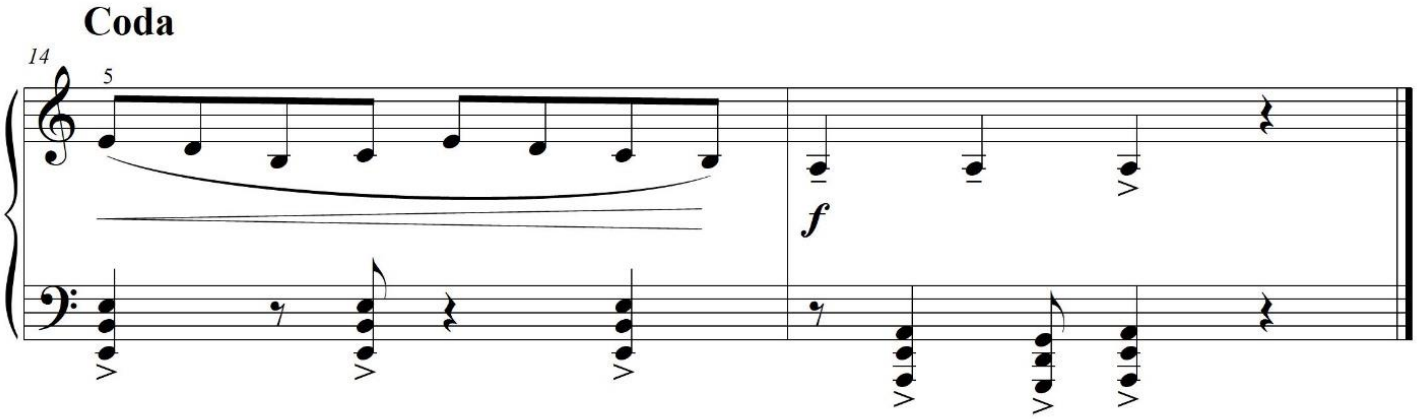

18
22
26
mf
mp
31
rit.
p
pp

# Dance of Youth

Traditional Chinese Folk Song
arr. Gossell & Geng




D.S. al Coda
12
mf


Coda
14
5
f