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Simon Preston

TOCCATA

for organ

ENCÔRE
publications

Composer's note

The starting-point for my Toccata (1998) was, not altogether surprisingly, the Toccata and Fugue in D minor ascribed to J. S. Bach, which, while being a familiar work, repays a certain amount of scrutiny. Its dramatic gestures, bravura displays and motoric rhythms remain startling even today, while the harmonic idiom is simple, even plain.

I have tried to retain the dramatic and virtuosic elements in my own work while, at the same time, seeking to free it from the harmonic retraints of D minor. To do this, I have started with all the notes of the first two bars of Bach's Toccata, removed the note D, and created my own chordal, melodic and rhythmic patterns with what is left. After the exposition (the work is in loose Sonata form), the tonality seems to be heading towards either C sharp major or B flat: the re-introduction of the note D, as soon as it is safe to do so, decides the matter in favour of the latter.

Biography

Simon Preston studied at King's College, Cambridge, where he served as Organ Scholar. In 1962, he made his debut at the Royal Festival Hall, London, performing the organ solos in Janacek's Glagolitic Mass. Shortly afterwards, he was appointed Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey, and later that same year appeared for the first time at the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall. Simon made his first tour of the USA and Canada in 1965, and by the time he left Westminster Abbey in 1967, Simon was already an internationally acclaimed artist.

Simon served as Acting Master of the Music at St Albans Cathedral for a year in 1968 during Peter Hurford's sabbatical. In 1970, he became Organist of the Cathedral and Tutor in Music at Christ Church Oxford, before returning to Westminster Abbey from 1981-87 as Organist and Master of the Choristers. His work with both choirs received great acclaim and, in 1986, he directed the music at the Royal Wedding of Sarah Ferguson and Prince Andrew. He was responsible for writing much of the Salieri music in the film Amadeus.

Since leaving Westminster Abbey, Simon has continued to pursue an active career as a highly sought-after concert organist. He recorded the Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony with the Berlin Philharmonic and James Levine, the Poulenc Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Seiji Ozawa, and the Copland Symphony for Organ and Orchestra with the St Louis Symphony Orchestra and Leonard Slatkin.

In 2009, Simon was made a CBE in the New Year's Honours List; and in 2011 he was made an Honorary Student of Christ Church, Oxford.

Toccata (1998) by Simon Preston
First published 2012
Duration 6½ minutes

Tom Winpenny has recorded Toccata on the organ of
St Albans Cathedral (JAV Recordings, JAV 190)

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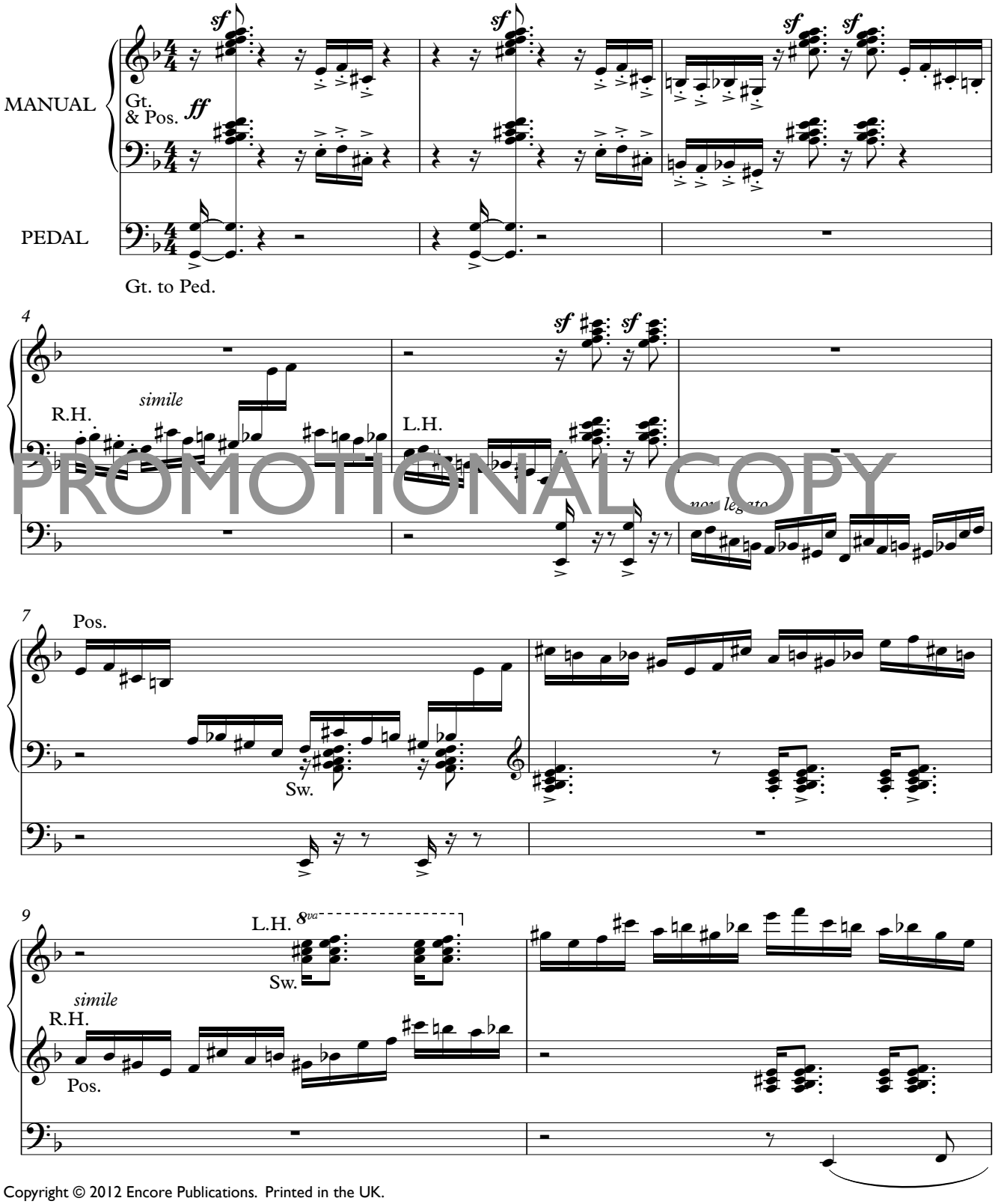
for Sarah Baldock

Toccata

Simon Preston
(b. 1938)

Gt. 8' to Mixture, 8' reed
Pos. 8' to Mixture
Sw. 8'4'2' and reeds 8'&4'
Ped. 16'8'4' Mixture, 16' reed

Allegro giusto ♩ = 88



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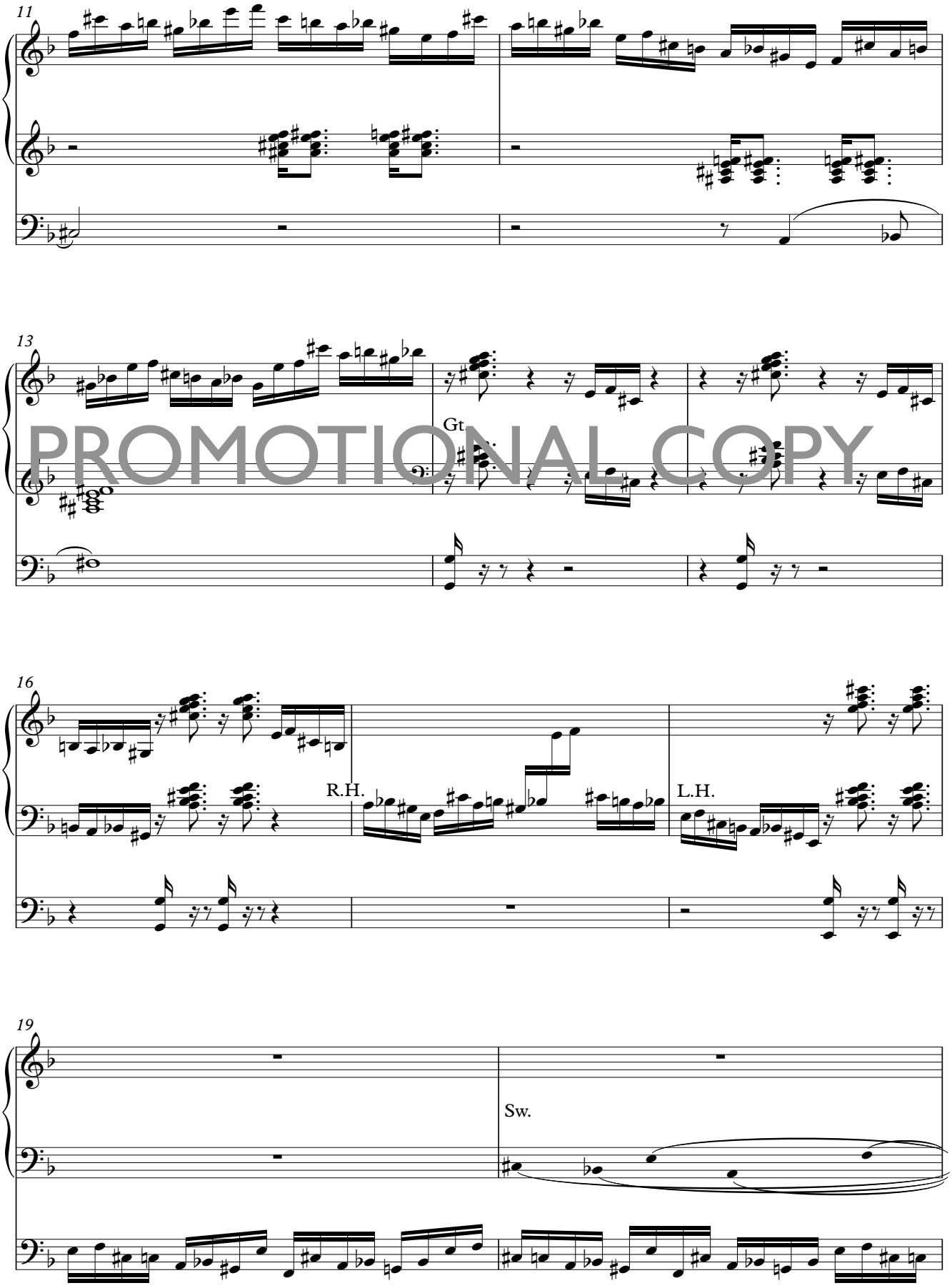

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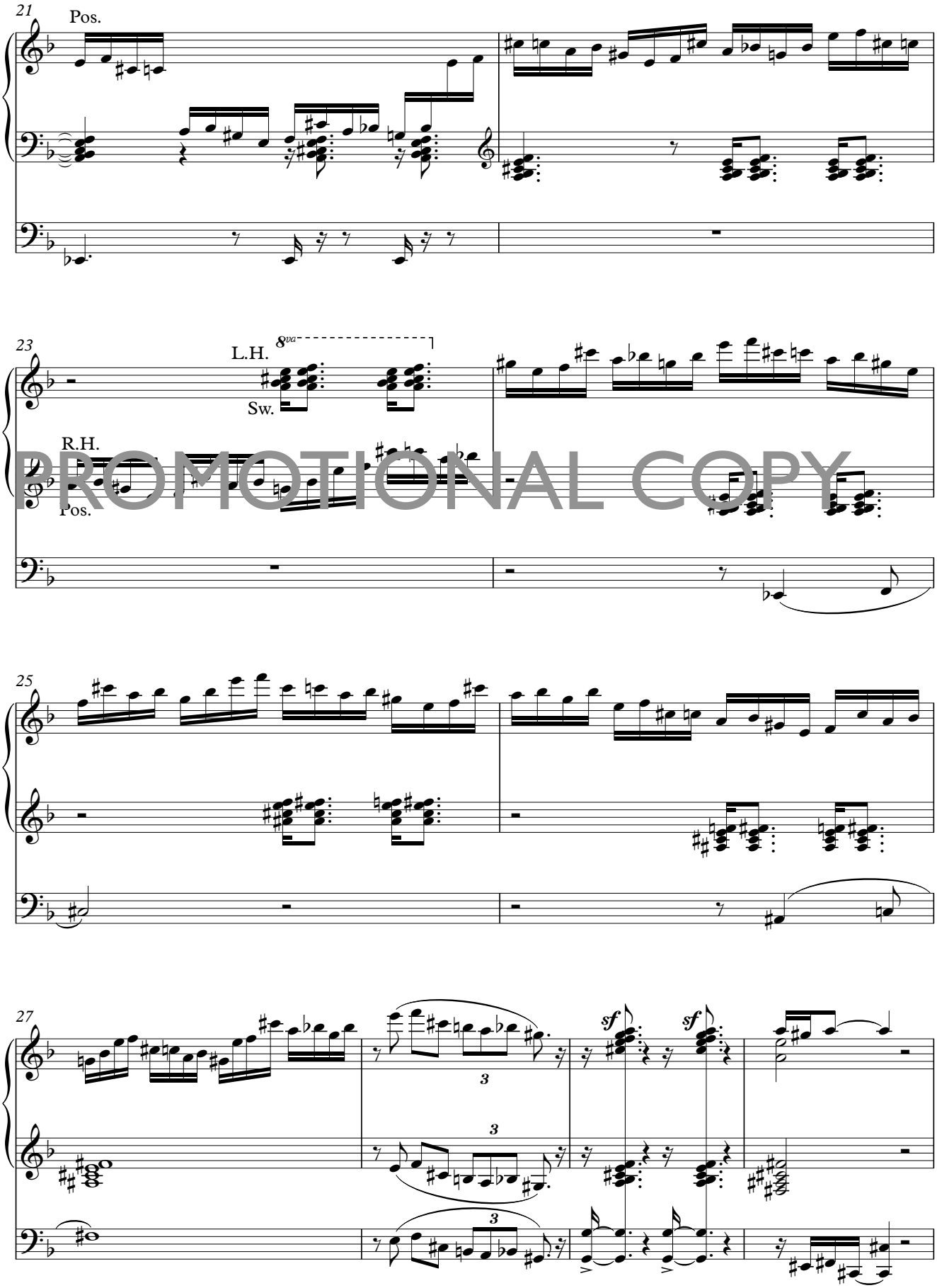

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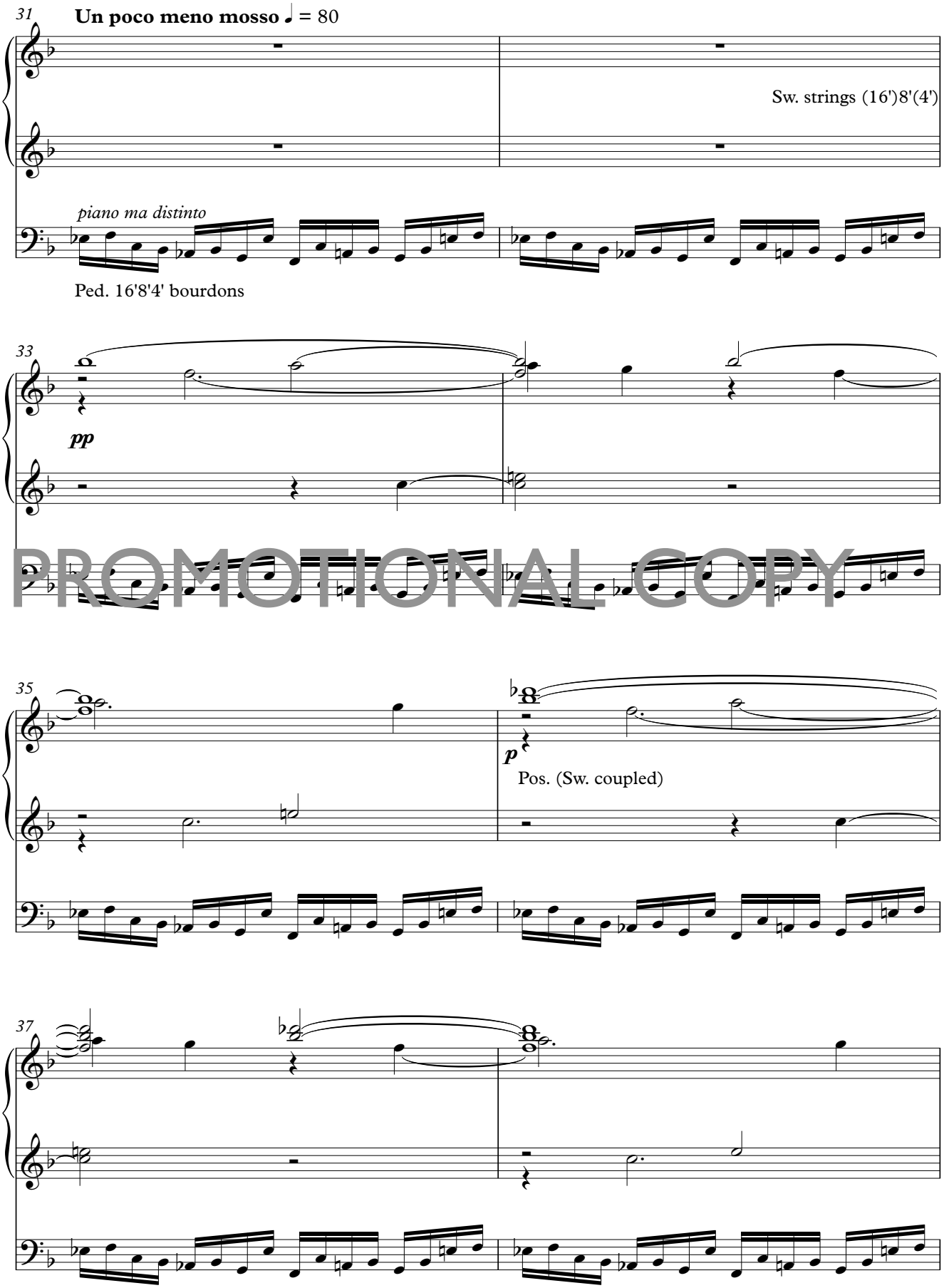

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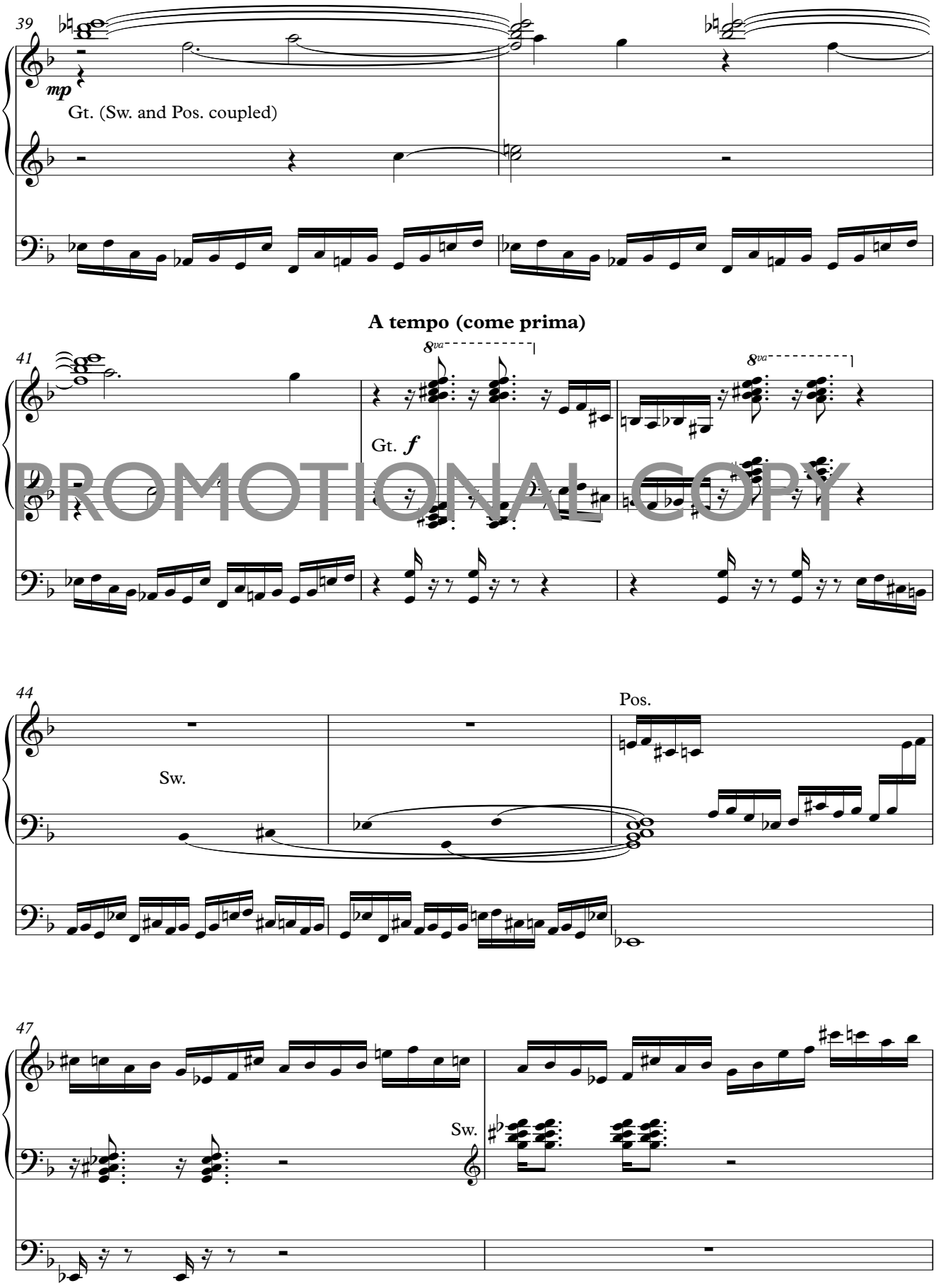

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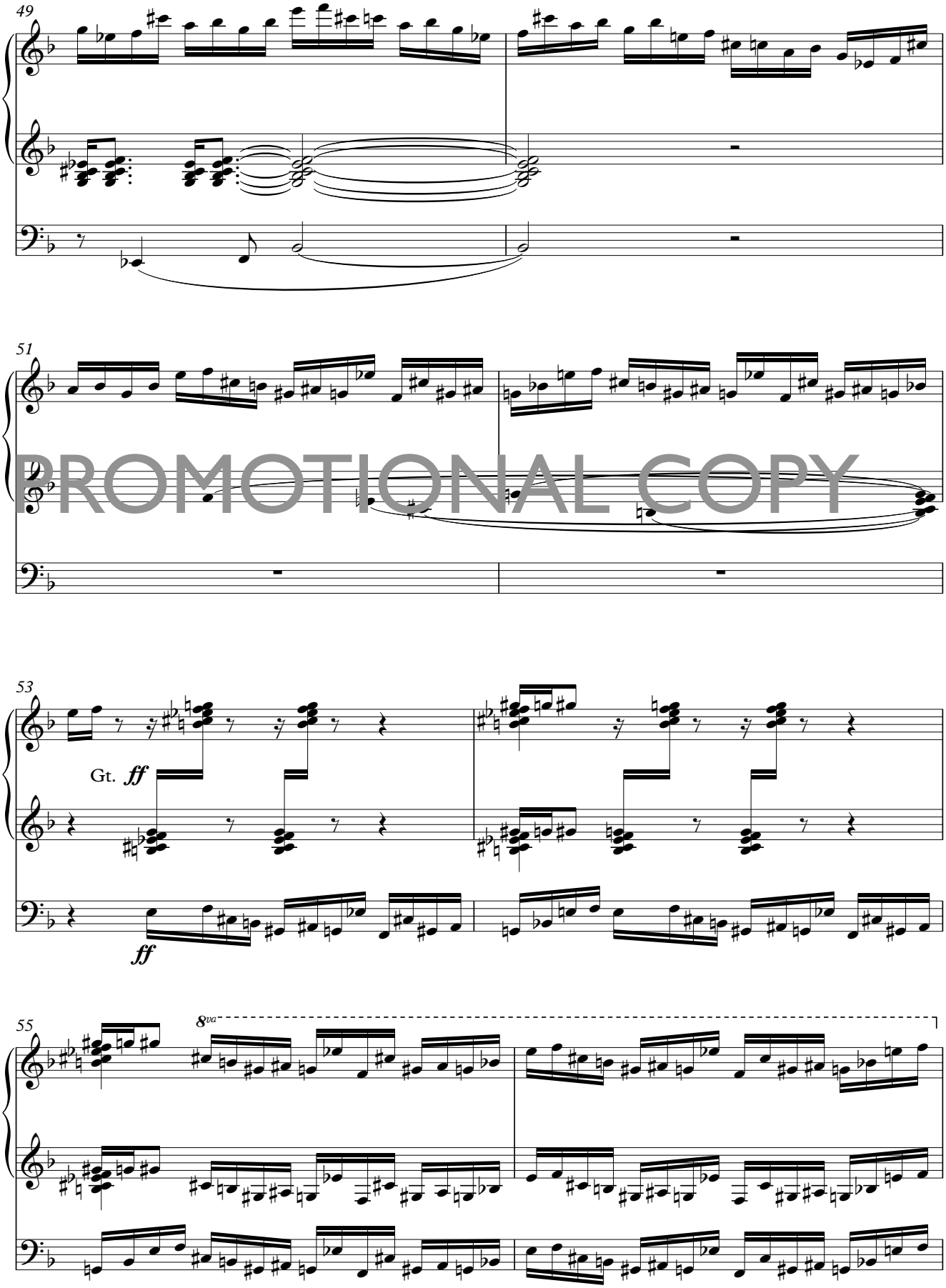

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