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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECTED MARCHES OF KENNETH ALFORD AND JOHN PHILLIP SOUSA

BY

ALAN TODD ALEXANDER

B.A., University of Mississippi, 1992

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
The University of Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Music
in the Department of Music

The University of Mississippi

May, 1994

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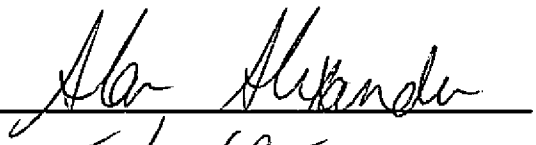
Signature 

Date 5/1/95

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the essential characteristics of the British and American quickstep march styles, specifically by comparing selected marches of the British composer Kenneth Alford (whose real name was Major Frederick Ricketts) and the American bandmaster John Phillip Sousa. Marches, for the purposes of this study, may be defined as "all music with a strong, duple beat and multistrained form that could accompany marching." [1] They are generally classified by their tempo, with quick-step marches being those marches between 100 and 130 beats per minute. The other three types are the funeral march (less than 70 beats per minute), the regular march (70 to 100 beats per minute) and the double quickstep march, also known as a circus march or gallop (over 130 beats per minute).[2] Sousa and Alford achieved recognition in each of their respective homelands as "the leading march composers" of their generation.[3] In fact, both composers are known today almost exclusively through their march compositions. This study was prompted by the fact that these two composers were contemporaries, and there were certain parallels in their lives.

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[1]Bierley, Paul E. John Phillip Sousa, A Descriptive Catalog of His Works. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973) Page 73.

[2]Sadie, Stanley, ed. New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. (London: Macmillan Publications, 1980), s.v. "March," by Erich Schwandt and Andrew Lamb.

[3]Ibid.

John Phillip Sousa (November 6, 1854-March 6, 1932) was born in Washington, D.C., as the son of Portuguese immigrants. At the age of thirteen, he enlisted as an apprentice in the Marine Band of which his father was a member. Later, after a brief stint as a composer of operettas, he was offered the position of conductor of the U.S. Marine Band, at the age of twenty-five. Sousa led the Marine Band for twelve years, making it one of the most renowned performing groups in North America. In 1891, he elected to leave the military to put together a civilian band with which he toured America and the world for thirty-nine years. Over the course of his career, he composed over 130 marches for different occasions, several of which also became the official marches of various military branches and other organizations, and one of which, The Stars and Stripes Forever, eventually became the official march of the United States.[4]

Kenneth Alford (February 21, 1881-May 15, 1945) entered military service at a young age and became involved with the British Military Band Service. In time, he rose through the ranks to become conductor of several of the best British military bands. While he only composed fourteen marches, several of these would also become official marches of various military organizations. At the time of his death, just days before D-Day, he had only recently retired from over forty years service to the Crown.[5]

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[4]Bierley, Paul E. John Phillip Sousa, American Phenomenon. (Columbus, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1986). Page 187.

[5]Trendell, John Colonel Bogey to the Fore (London: Blue Book Press) Page 9.

For this study, eight marches were chosen (four from each composer) based on how representative they were of the composer's style and how readily available they were in the original format. All of the scores used are the original condensed scores except for Alford's Cavalry of the Clouds, which is no longer in print except for a 1923 arrangement by a French composer named Winter. Regrettably, Alford's publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, has kept only a few of the original Alford marches in print, although arrangements are available for almost all of them. All of the Sousa marches are available in the original format through Carl Fischer, Inc. The two composers wrote only piano scores for their bands, and for that reason only the original piano scores were analyzed for this study.

Semper Fidelis, (Sousa, 1888) was originally written for President Chester Arthur as an alternative for Hail to the Chief. Its title is the motto of the U.S. Marine Corps, and it eventually became accepted as the official march of that group.[6]

The Thunderer, (Sousa, 1889) was written for an unidentified member of the Masons, an organization of which Sousa was an enthusiastic member.[7]

The Washington Post, (Sousa, 1889) written for the newspaper of that name, was Sousa's most popular march during his lifetime. The march was well-suited for

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[6]Bierley, A Descriptive Catalog, 275.

[7]Ibid., 300.

the two-step, a popular dance of the day, and for that reason, this march became Sousa's first international success.[8]

The Stars and Stripes Forever, (Sousa, 1896) is the most famous of all Sousa marches, and one of the best known works by any American composer. In 1987, it was chosen as the official march of the United States of America.[9]

Colonel Bogey, (Alford, 1914) is easily the most familiar of all Alford marches due to its use by Malcolm Arnold in the soundtrack to the 1957 motion picture Bridge Over the River Kwai. Ironically, the march does not have a military origin at all. Rather, the principal melody came to Alford while playing golf.[10]

The Vanished Army, (Alford, 1919) a poignant, elegiac march, was written in memory of the first 100,000 casualties of World War I. It is subtitled "They Never Die."[11]

Cavalry of the Clouds, (Alford, 1923) was written in commemoration of the Royal Air Force in its first year of existence.[12]

The Standard of St. George, (Alford, 1930) was one of Alford's most popular marches during his lifetime. It is particularly famous for its quotation from No Place Like Home woven into the countermelody of the second strain, allegedly included for

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[8]Ibid., 350.

[9]Ibid., 276.

[10]Trendell ,Colonel Bogey, 20.

[11]Ibid., 24.

[12]Ibid., 29.

the benefit of military servicemen stationed overseas.[13]

In this study, the following factors of the various marches are considered: tonality, form, harmony, scoring, instrumentation, dynamic variation, and articulation. Each of these factors are compared in an attempt to determine general characteristics of each composer's style.

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[13]Ibid., 36.

Chapter 2

Form and Tonality

All eight of the marches studied shared many common elements that may be considered typical of the quickstep march. The form of the American quickmarch is somewhat more standardized than the British quickmarch. The form generally used by Sousa was as follows: an introduction, generally four bars in length; an A section that was repeated; a B section that was repeated; a C section which modulates to the subdominant key, which was repeated once or twice with contrasting material inserted between repetitions. The individual sections are usually referred to as "strains," while the point at which the modulation occurs is called the "Trio." The contrasting material in the Trio is often called the "break" strain.[14] This form (Intro-A-B-Trio) was also used by Alford, but he did not use break strains in any of the four marches selected for this study. The other terms listed above, however, were used to refer to the various sections of his marches. In fact, not all Sousa marches have that exact form. In Semper Fidelis, for example, the Trio begins with a transitional percussion feature, followed by a C section and then a D section, both in the subdominant key. However, a large majority of Sousa's marches are written in this form, including all of his marches written after World War I.[15]

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[14]Sadie, New Grove Dictionary, s.v. "March."

[15]Bierley, A Descriptive Catalog, 200.

The marches were all written for wind bands, which employed woodwinds, brass and percussion, but no strings. Consequently, they were written in keys that took advantage of the natural pitch tendencies of brass and woodwind instruments. That is, they were generally written in keys with flats instead of sharps. Alford, generally speaking, used keys with more flats in them than Sousa did, as the chart on the next page demonstrates.

As the table illustrates, some generalities can be made at once. All but one of the marches (Standard of St. George) have an introduction, which is always written in the key of the first strain, or A section. Like most quickstep marches, each example modulates to the subdominant key at the Trio, except for The Vanished Army which begins in Bb minor, modulates to the relative major key of Db major, and then modulates to Gb major (the subdominant of Db major) at the Trio.

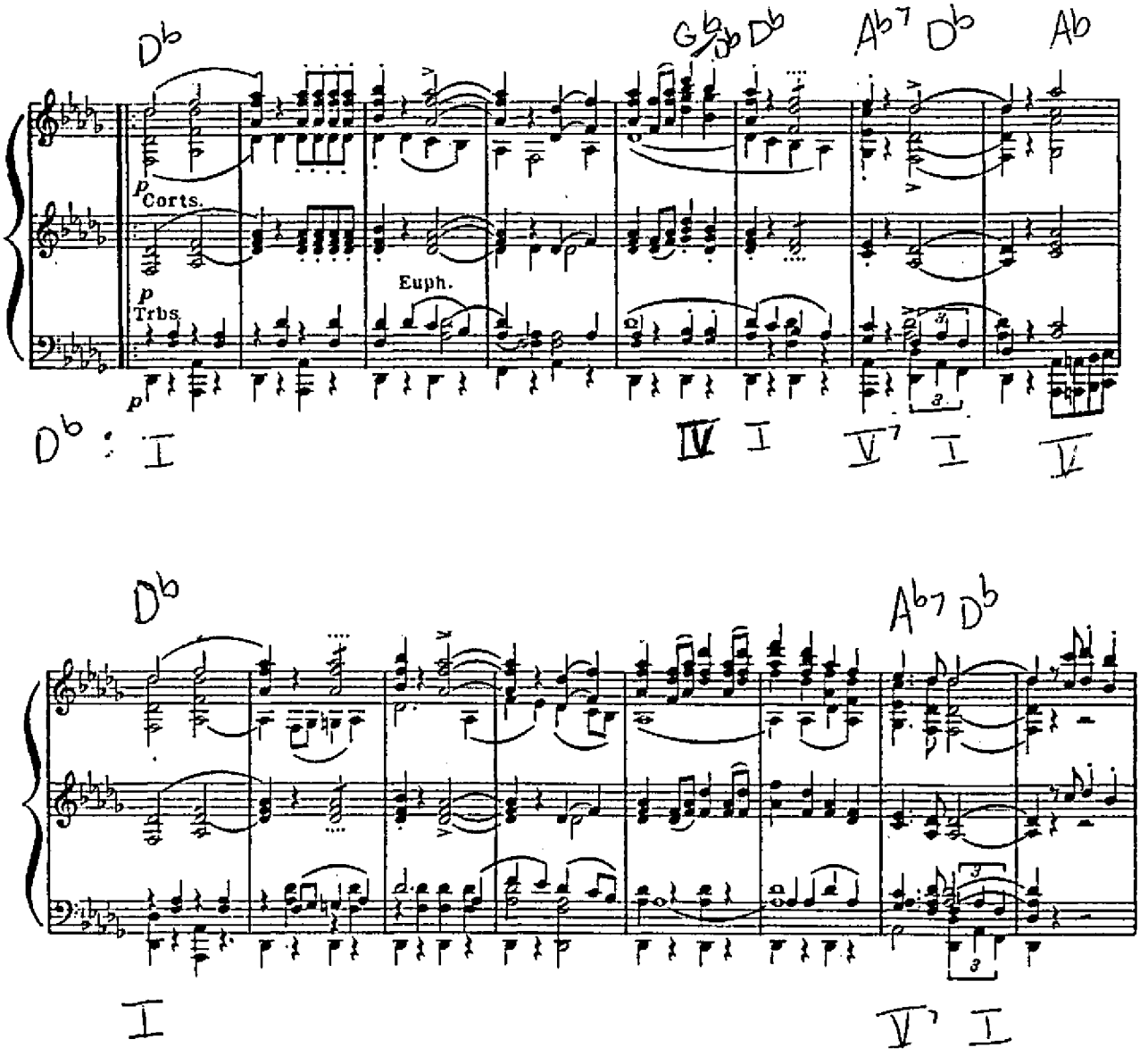
The Vanished Army shares an important distinction with Colonel Bogey: of all the marches studied, only these two have sections written in minor keys. In Colonel Bogey, the second strain (or B section) was written in the key of Bb minor and was situated between two statements of the first strain, which was written in Db major. In The Vanished Army, on the other hand, the first and second strains alternate freely between Bb minor and Db major. Sousa did not use the minor mode in any of the principal sections of the marches included in this study. Also, both of these differ from the other six in form; while all the other marches are in the standard A-B-Trio form, these two Alford marches have the form A-B-A-Trio.

	INTRO	A SECTION	B SECTION	TRIO
SOUSA				
Stars and Stripes Forever	Eb	Eb	Eb	Ab
The Thunderer	F	F	F	Bb
Semper Fidelis	C	C	C	F
Washington Post	F	F	F	Bb
ALFORD				
Standard of St. George	None	Ab	Ab	Db
Cavalry of the Clouds	F	F	F	Bb

	INTRO	A SECTION	B SECTION	A SECTION	TRIO
Vanished Army	Bb Min	Bb Min/Db	Db/Bb Min	Bb Min/Db	Gb
Colonel Bogey	Db	Db	Bb Min	Db	Gb

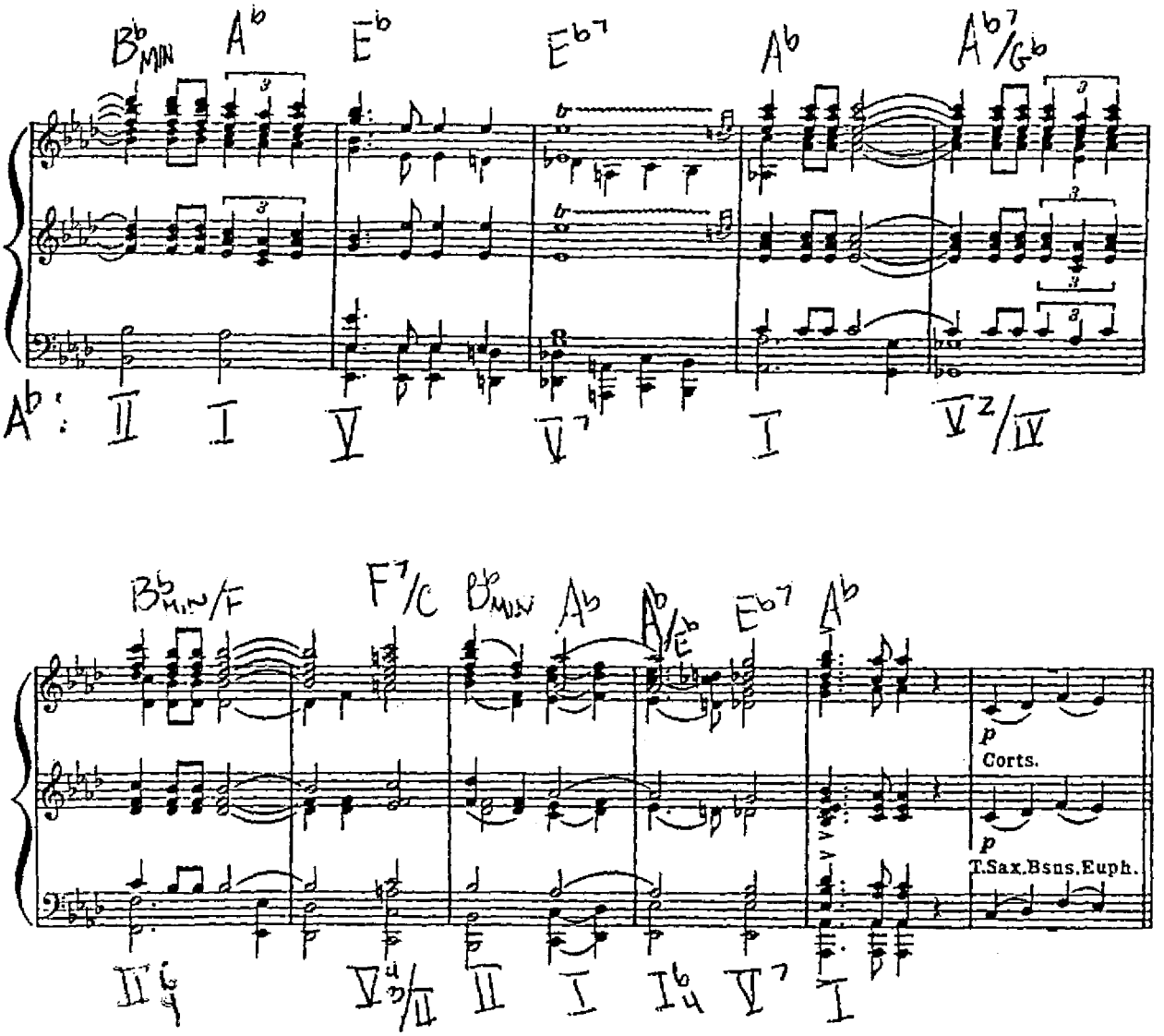
The marches were also analyzed in terms of harmonic variety and harmonic rhythm (the rhythm of the chord changes). Alford would often employ only the tonic or dominant chords for several measures, as in Example 1.

Example 1. The Standard of St. George, meas. 65-80.



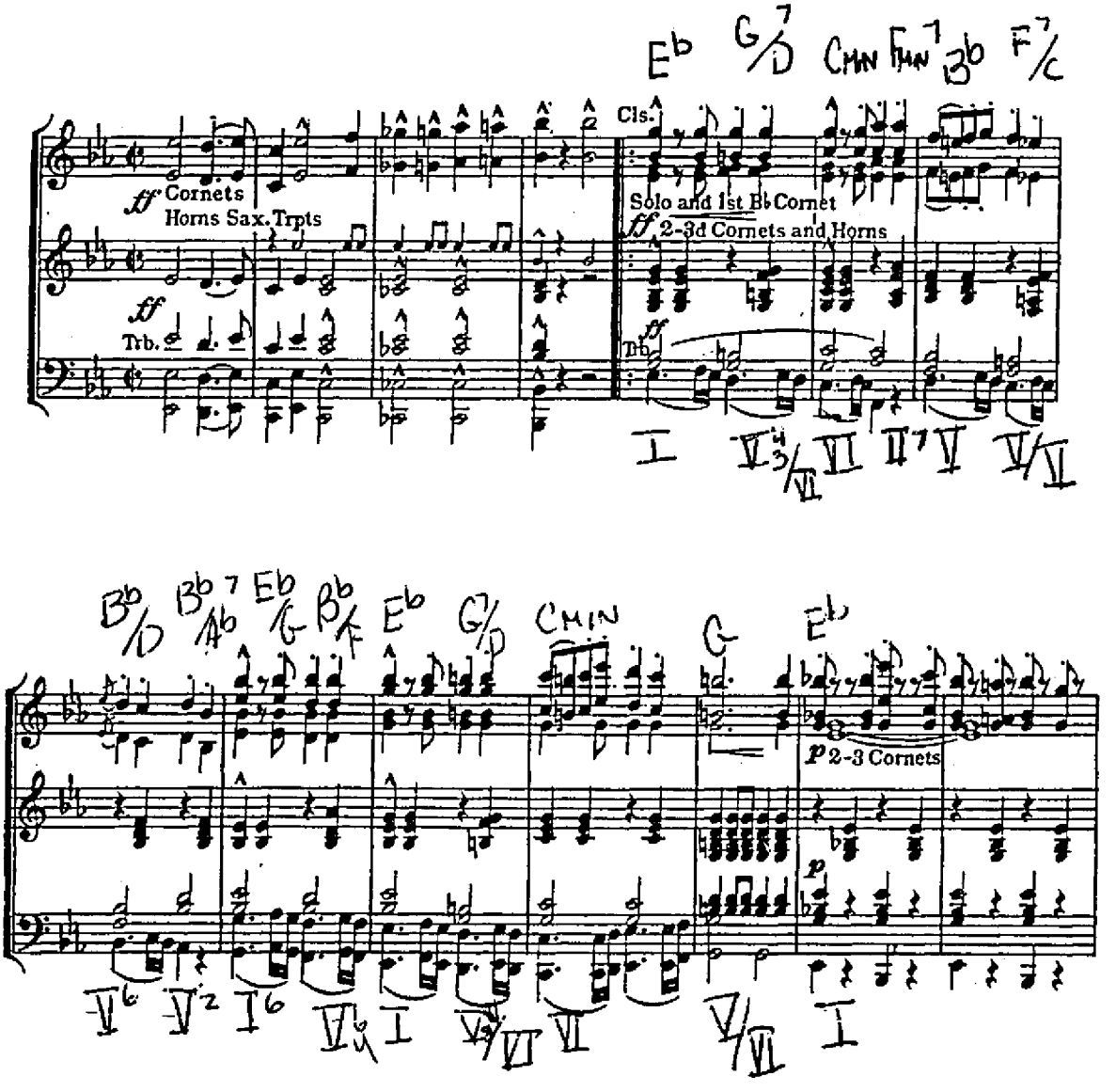
However, other sections are frequently punctuated by brief periods of rapid harmonic activity, often employing secondary dominants, as is demonstrated in Example 2.

Example 2. The Standard of St. George, meas. 22-32.



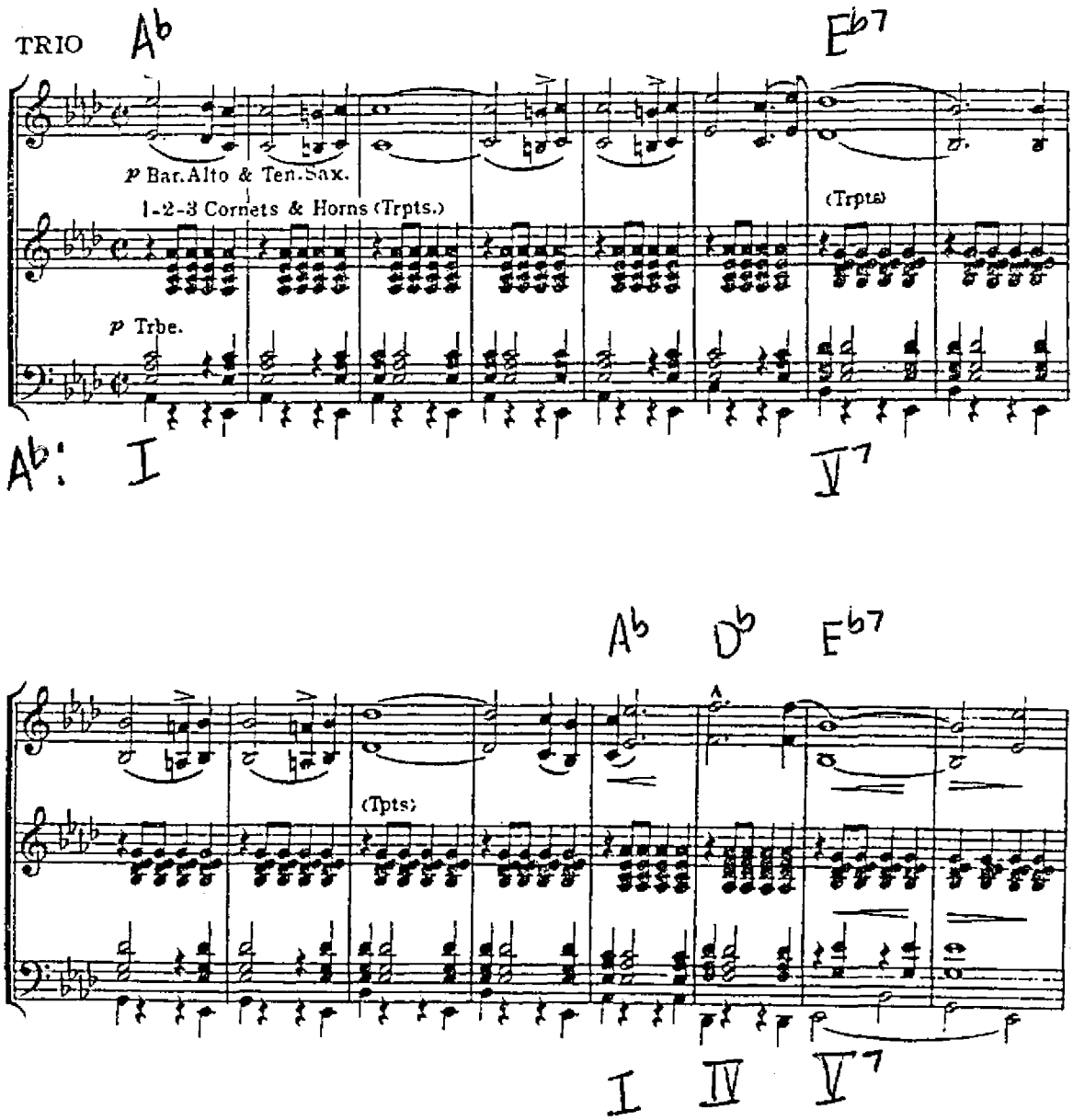
Sousa's marches contained even longer sections that employ only the tonic and dominant chords. They also contain brief periods of harmonic activity which would be even more active than Alford's. The first strain of The Stars and Stripes Forever, for example, begins with a flurry of harmonic activity, with the chords changing with every beat.

Example 3, The Stars and Stripes Forever, meas. 1-21.



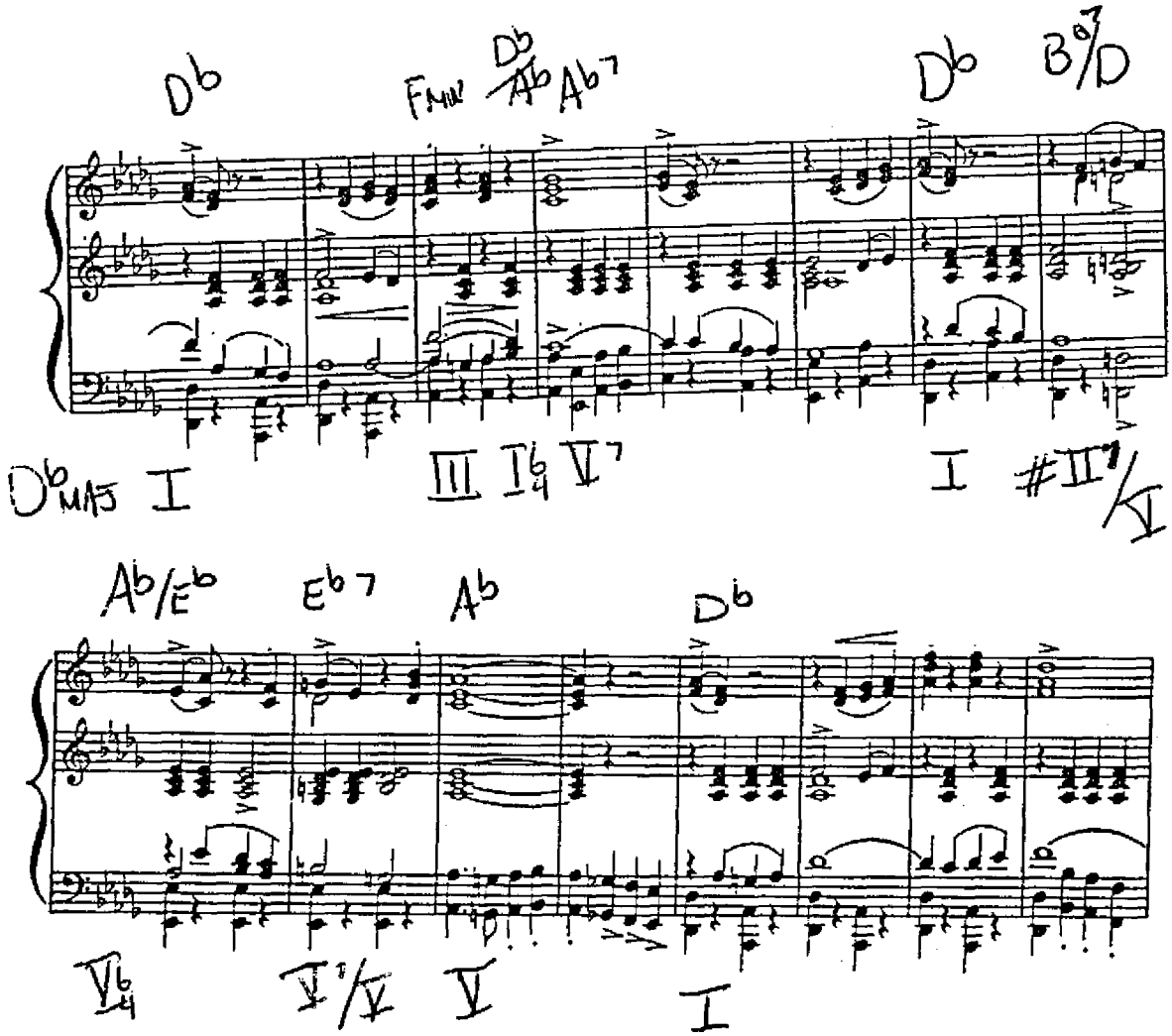
By comparison, the Trio consists almost entirely of the tonic and dominant chords, each of which is held for several measures.

Example 4, The Stars and Stripes Forever, meas. 39-62.



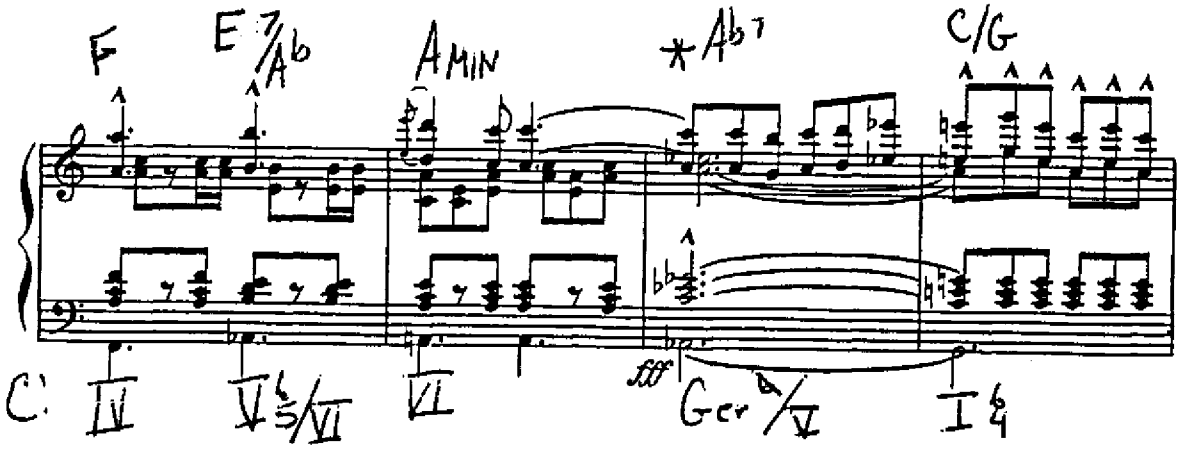
Both composers made frequent use of chromaticism, although in somewhat different ways. The Alford marches generally have more secondary dominants (V/x, VII7/x, etc.) and raised II7 chords such as in Example 5. Please note that there is a typographical error in measure 18, which should contain a B flat and a G natural in the bottom two staves.

Example 5. Colonel Bogey, meas. 9-24.



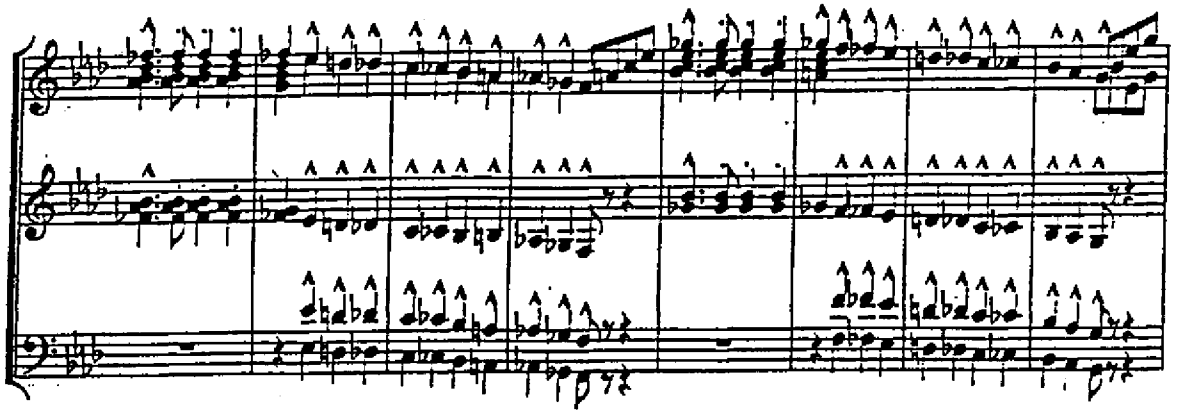
Sousa also made use of secondary dominants, but he made special use of the German augmented sixth chord, which appears to have been something of a habit with Sousa. At least one German augmented sixth chord appears prominently in Washington Post, Stars and Stripes Forever, and Semper Fidelis. Notice the untraditional spelling of the augmented sixth in meas. 33 and the dominant seventh chord in meas. 31, both for melodic reasons.

Example 6, Semper Fidelis, meas. 31-34.



An analysis of the chromaticism of the two composers reveals that Alford relied primarily on chromatic harmony, while Sousa's chromaticism appears most often as non-harmonic tones. In fact, in several of Sousa's marches, he used chromatic runs with the entire band.

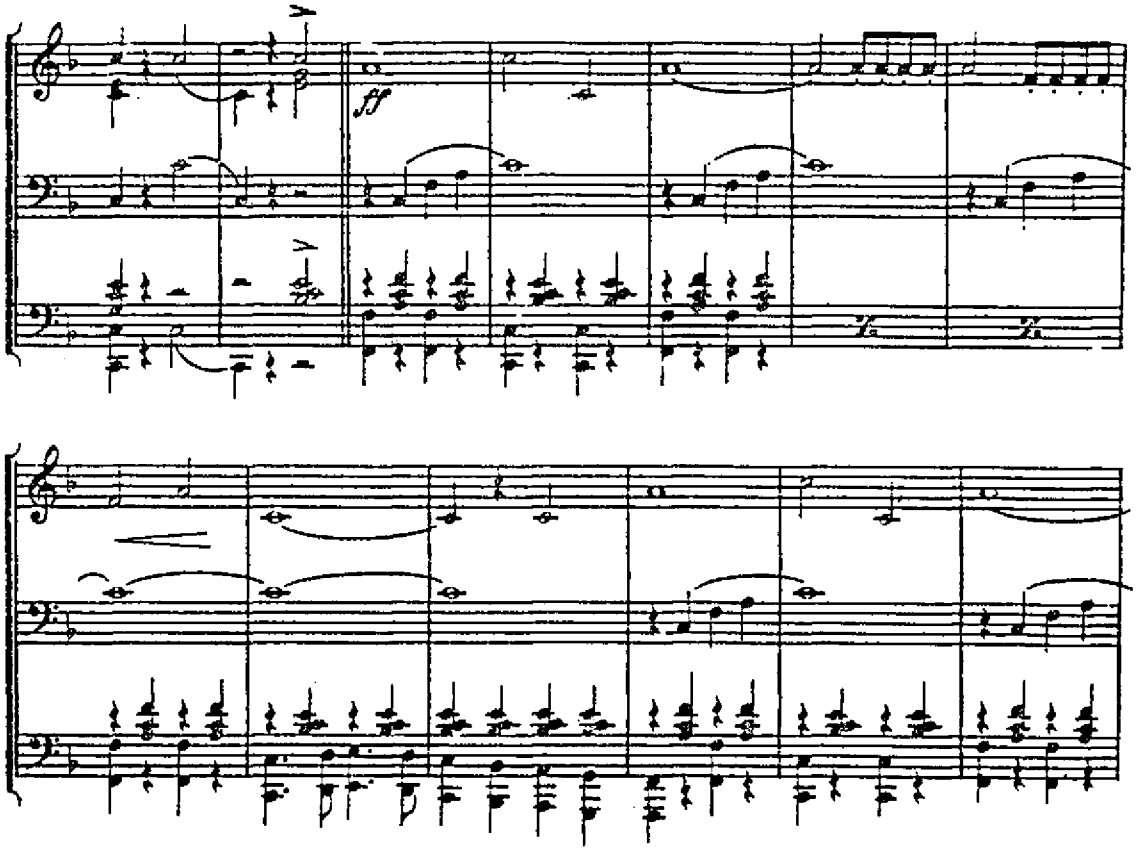
Example 7, The Stars and Stripes Forever, meas. 79-86.



It is important to note that both composers were fairly conservative with their harmonies. While both Alford and Sousa lived at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, they seemed unaffected by the extreme chromaticism associated with late Romantic and early Twentieth Century works.

Of the two composers, Sousa was somewhat more inclined to use disjunct melodies in his marches. Although both composers used some skips of a fifth or more in their melodies, Sousa not only used such skips more frequently, but he also wrote even larger skips, often as large as an octave.

Example 8, The Thunderer, meas. 35-47.



In summary, Alford generally employed keys with more flats than Sousa. He also was less reliant on the form Intro-A-B-Trio, and he did not use break strains. He was more inclined to use chromaticism in his harmony than in his melodies, which were less prone to large skips than Sousa's.

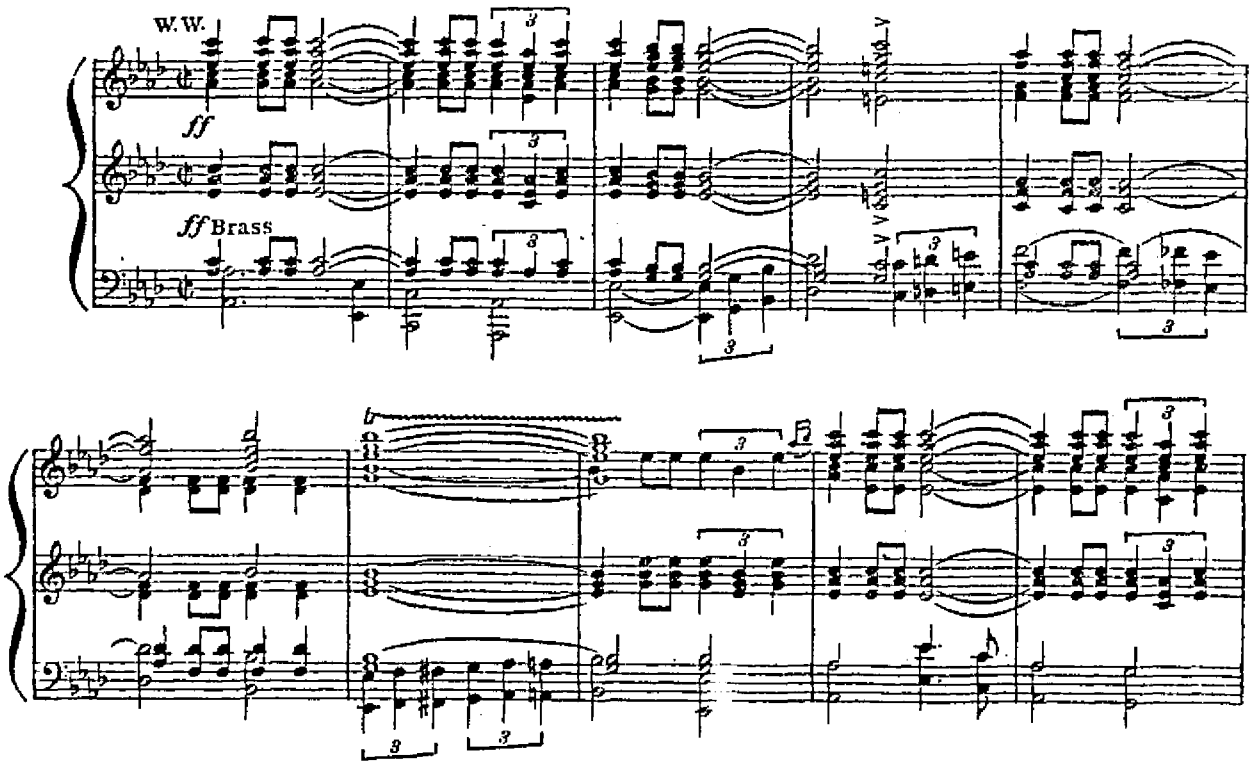
Chapter 3

Rhythm, Articulation, Dynamics, Scoring, and

Instrumentation

There are a number of distinctive differences between the Sousa examples and the Alford examples concerning rhythm, articulation, and dynamics. Sousa and Alford each wrote two marches in cut time. Sousa's other marches were written in six-eight time, while Alford's were written in two-four time. While Alford didn't use six-eight time in the examples studied, he frequently alternated between duple and triple rhythms, unlike Sousa, who did not use triplets in any of the selected works.

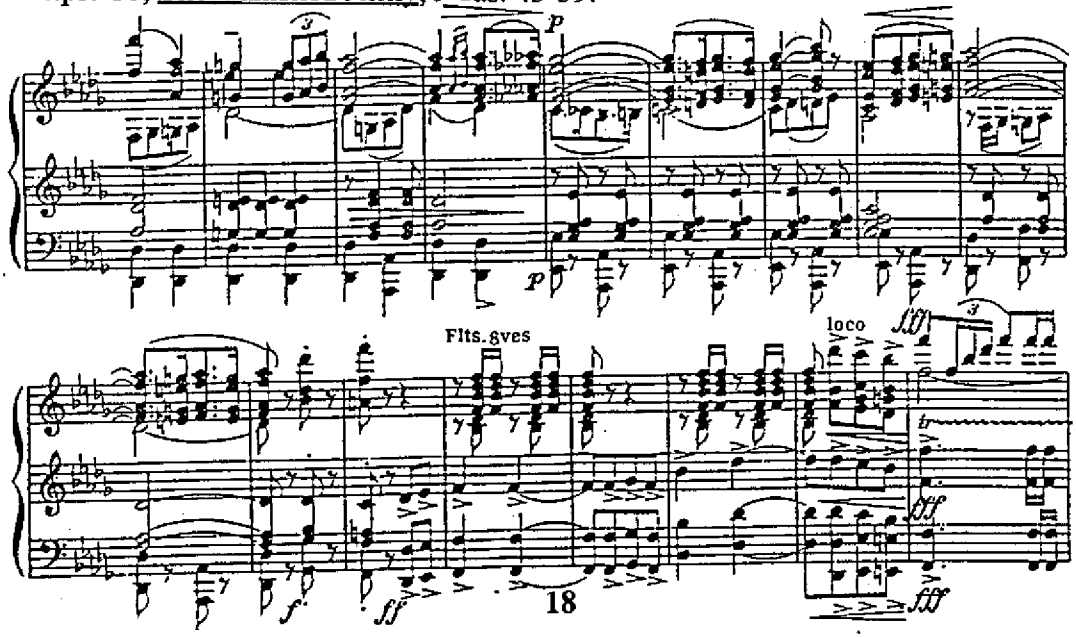
Example 9, The Standard of St. George, meas. 1-10.



After examining the use of articulation markings by both composers, several generalizations about articulations can be made. Marches, by definition, are generally marcato in style. However, the Sousa marches are even more marcato than the Alford marches, except for the Sousa Trios, which have a mixture of legato and marcato markings. The Alford marches generally are marked with slur markings over the principal melodies, although countermelodies are frequently marked staccato.

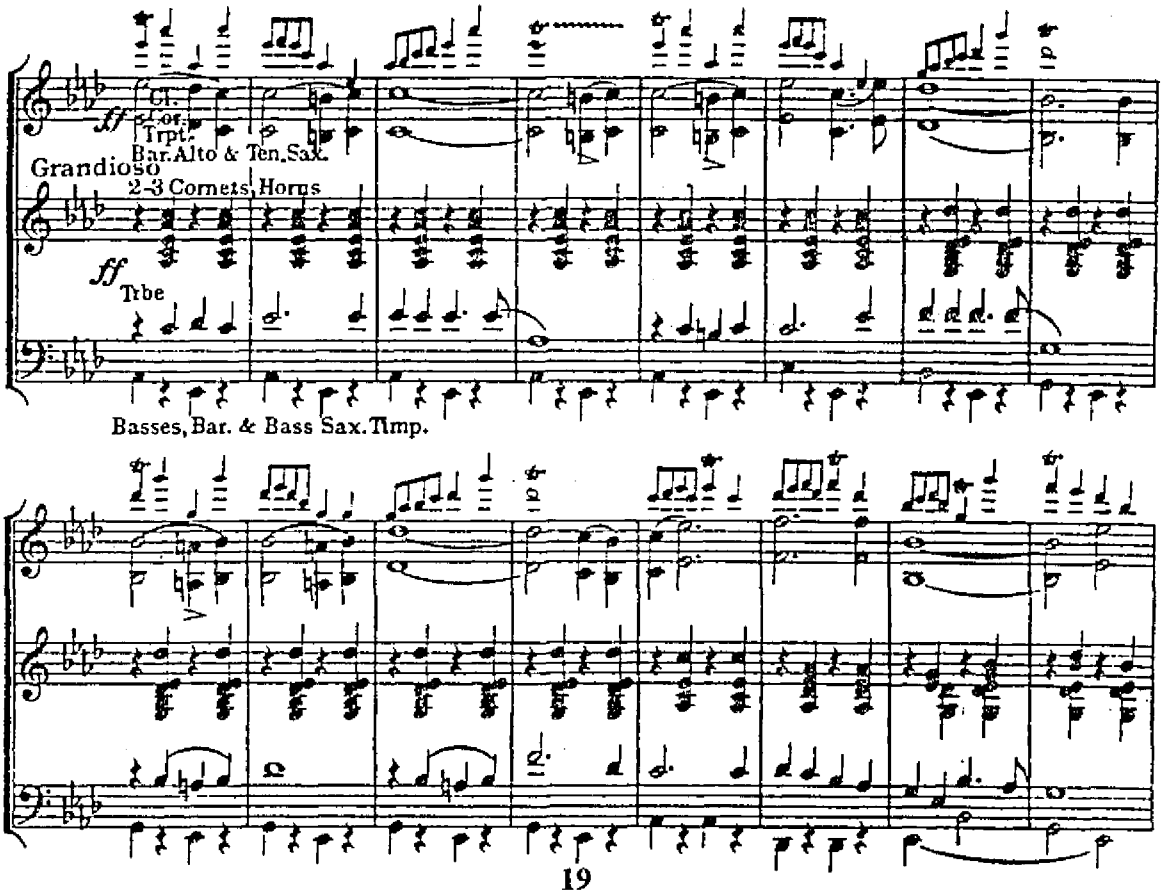
As far as dynamics are concerned, the Sousa marches follow a definite pattern. They are predominantly fortissimo, but they drop to mezzoforte or pianissimo for the first strain of the Trio. Occasionally, the dynamics are lowered slightly in the middle of a phrase, often after a particularly loud section; however, the louder dynamics always return in the next strain. The last section is always marked fortissimo. The Alford marches are not as predictable and do not follow any discernible pattern of dynamic changes. The dynamic level does change more frequently in the Alford marches, however, even in the middle of a single phrase, as in the following example.

Example 10, The Vanished Army, meas. 43-59.

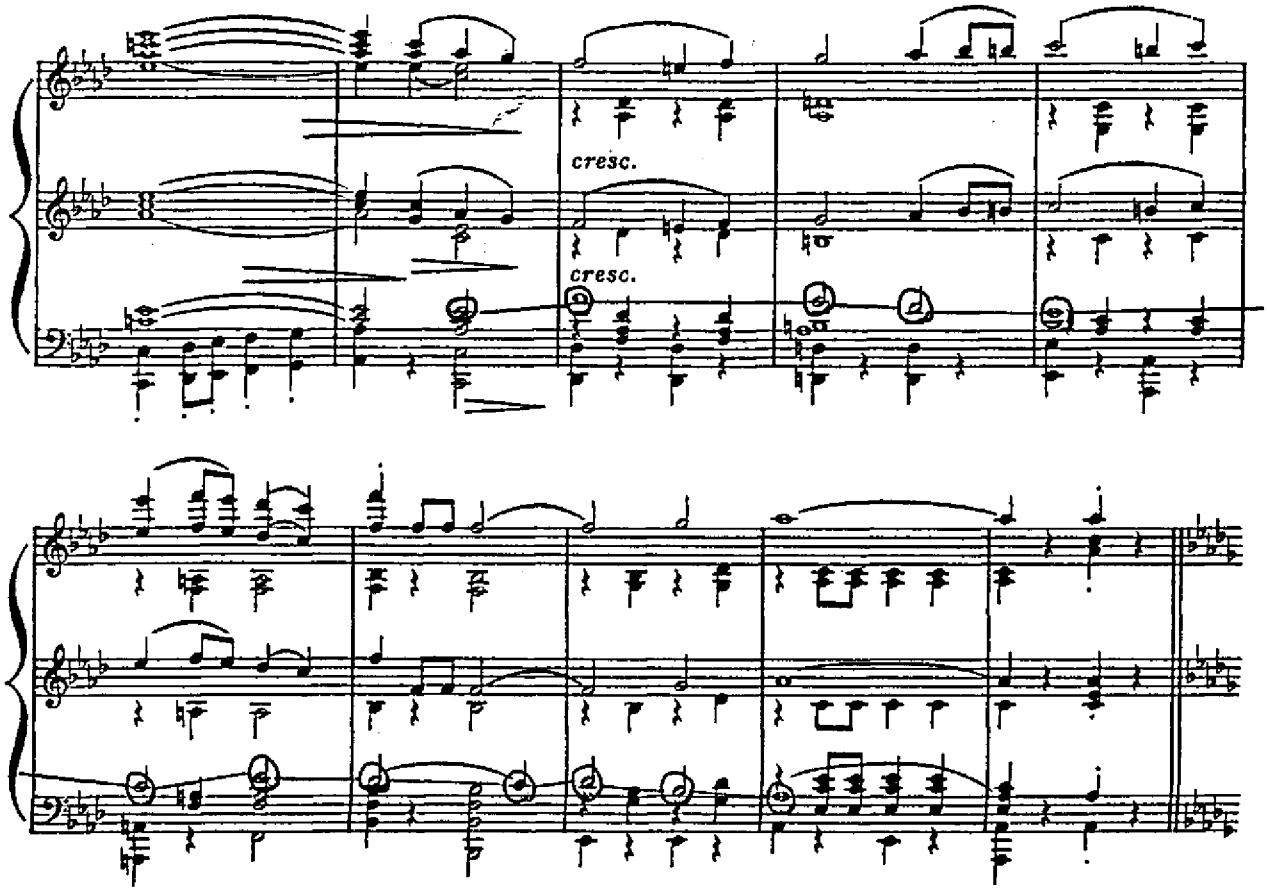


All eight marches were written for the standard instrumentation for a wind band. Alford's bands frequently performed concerts indoors and parades outdoors. While Sousa's civilian band never performed in parades as the Marine Band did, they did perform outdoors in a "concert in the park" setting about as frequently as they did in a concert hall. Thus, both composers wrote music that would be appropriate for both indoor and outdoor environments. Sousa generally favored a melody and accompaniment style for his marches, with the melody usually carried by the trumpets (doubled by the woodwinds) or, less frequently, by the low brass. Thus, the brass generally dominate the texture of much of a Sousa march. However, in each of his marches there is usually one or more sections (usually the last strain) which features one or more countermelodies in addition to the main melody.

Example 11, Stars and Stripes Forever, meas. 95-110.

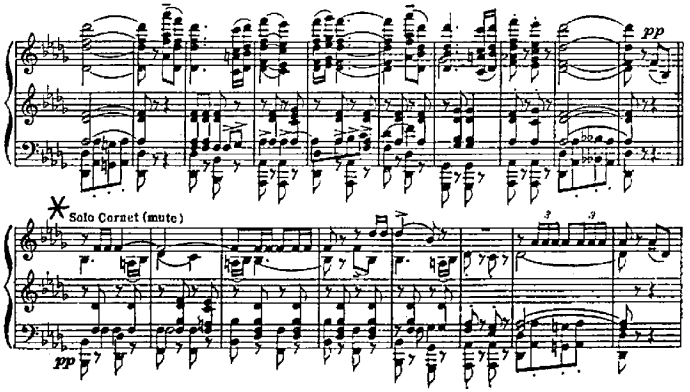


The Alford marches use countermelodies much more frequently, and it is often difficult to determine which is the principal melody. In The Standard of St. George, the melody of the song No Place Like Home is interwoven with the melody of the B section. Example 12, The Standard of St. George, meas. 55-64.



Also, in the Alford marches, the woodwinds are usually independent of the trumpet line which frequently will appear as a solo countermelody.

Example 13, The Vanished Army, meas. 59-76.



In summary, Alford seemed to prefer duple prolations to triple prolations, but made frequent use of the triplet pattern, especially in combination with a duple rhythm. Alford made much greater use of legato articulations than Sousa, and he also combined articulations more frequently. Alford's dynamic changes were not as predictable as Sousa's, and Sousa favored much louder dynamics leading up to a powerful finish. Alford was much more inclined to use countermelodies than Sousa, who favored a melody-and-accompaniment style. However, one strain in each march would often have several competing melodies. This would usually be the last strain. Alford also allowed the upper woodwinds greater independence than Sousa, who usually had them double the trumpets.

Chapter 4

Summary

In conclusion, the following general features can be seen in the eight marches studied. Alford wrote in keys with more flats, was less reliant on the form A-B-Trio, and did not use break strains. His harmony was more chromatic than Sousa's, with a greater use of chords foreign to the key signature. Sousa's melodies were more chromatic, however, and he frequently employed chromatic runs in his marches. At the same time, Sousa also wrote melodies that were more disjunct than Alford's melodies, often employing skips of an octave. Alford generally favored duple prolations over triple prolations, but made frequent use of the triplet pattern, especially in combination with a duple rhythm. Alford made much greater use of legato articulations than Sousa, and he also combined contrasting articulations more frequently. Sousa favored louder dynamics than Alford, in a more predictable pattern that led up to a dramatic fortissimo finish. Alford generally employed more countermelodies, while Sousa favored more of a melody-and-accompaniment style, except for one prominent strain of each march that featured several competing voices. Alford generally gave the upper woodwinds greater independence from the brass than Sousa, who generally had them double the trumpets.

As was stated in the introduction, only four marches were used from each composer. Thus, the conclusions stated above should not be construed as being universal to all the marches of these two composers. Indeed, since Sousa wrote over 130 marches, it would be imprudent to assume that he followed the patterns listed above for all of them, at least

at least without further research. In fact, some suitable topics for further research in this area might be to study more or even all of the marches of these two composers to see how many of them conform to the patterns listed above, and to investigate why the composers might have deviated from these patterns. An additional area of investigation might be to determine how these patterns might be applied to the marches of other British and American composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, perhaps with an eye to determining what factors account for the so-called "British" sound and "American" sound that is often referred to when discussing different marches.

However, the eight marches studied are all considered to be representative of their respective composers, and the author does feel that the information compiled in this paper does provide a useful starting point for further investigation into this area of research.

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Sadie, Stanley, ed. New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. London: Macmillan Publications, 1980), s.v. "March," by Erich Schwandt and Andrew Lamb.

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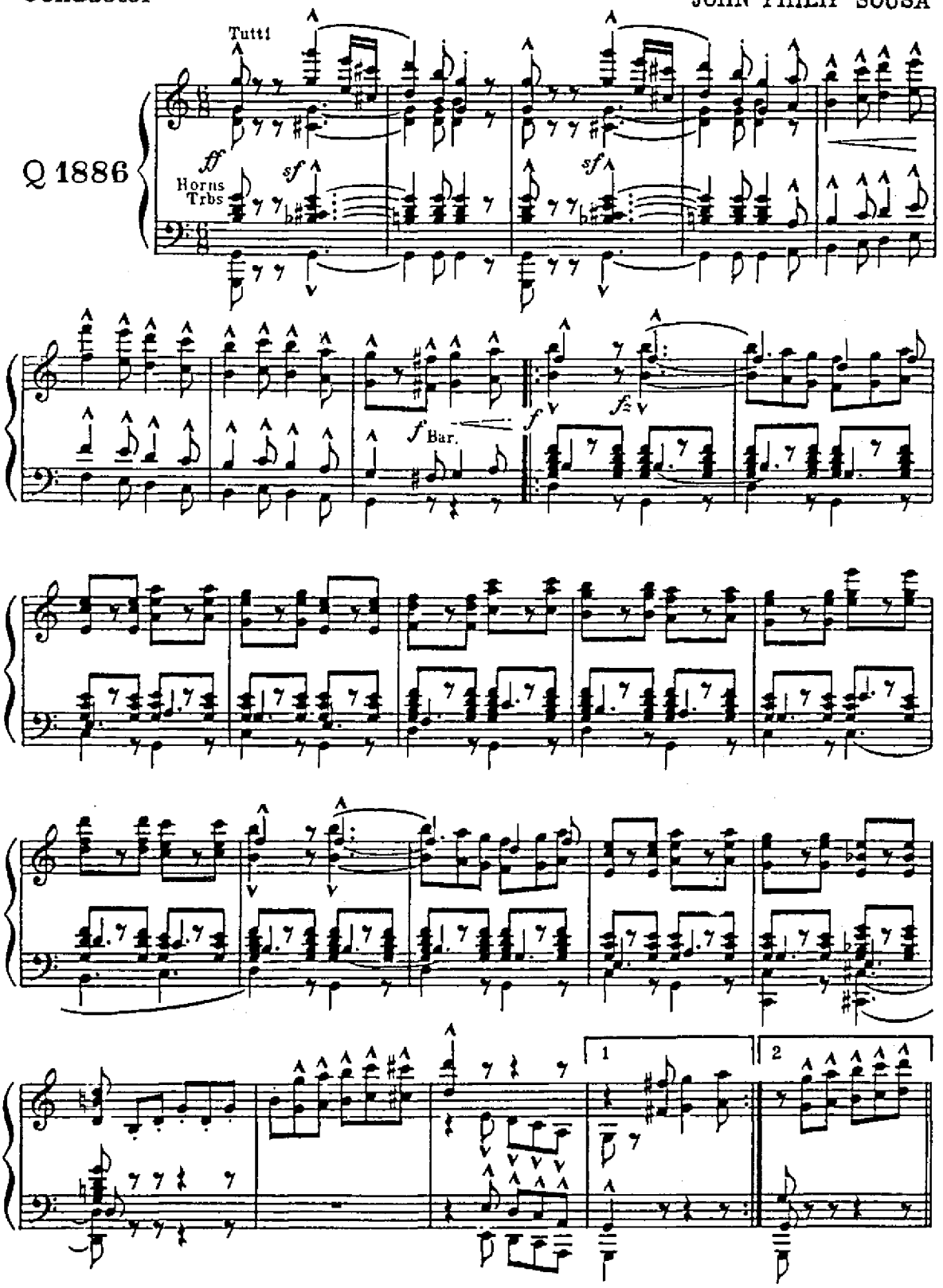
APPENDIX OF SCORES

Semper Fidelis

March

Conductor

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA



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15737-13

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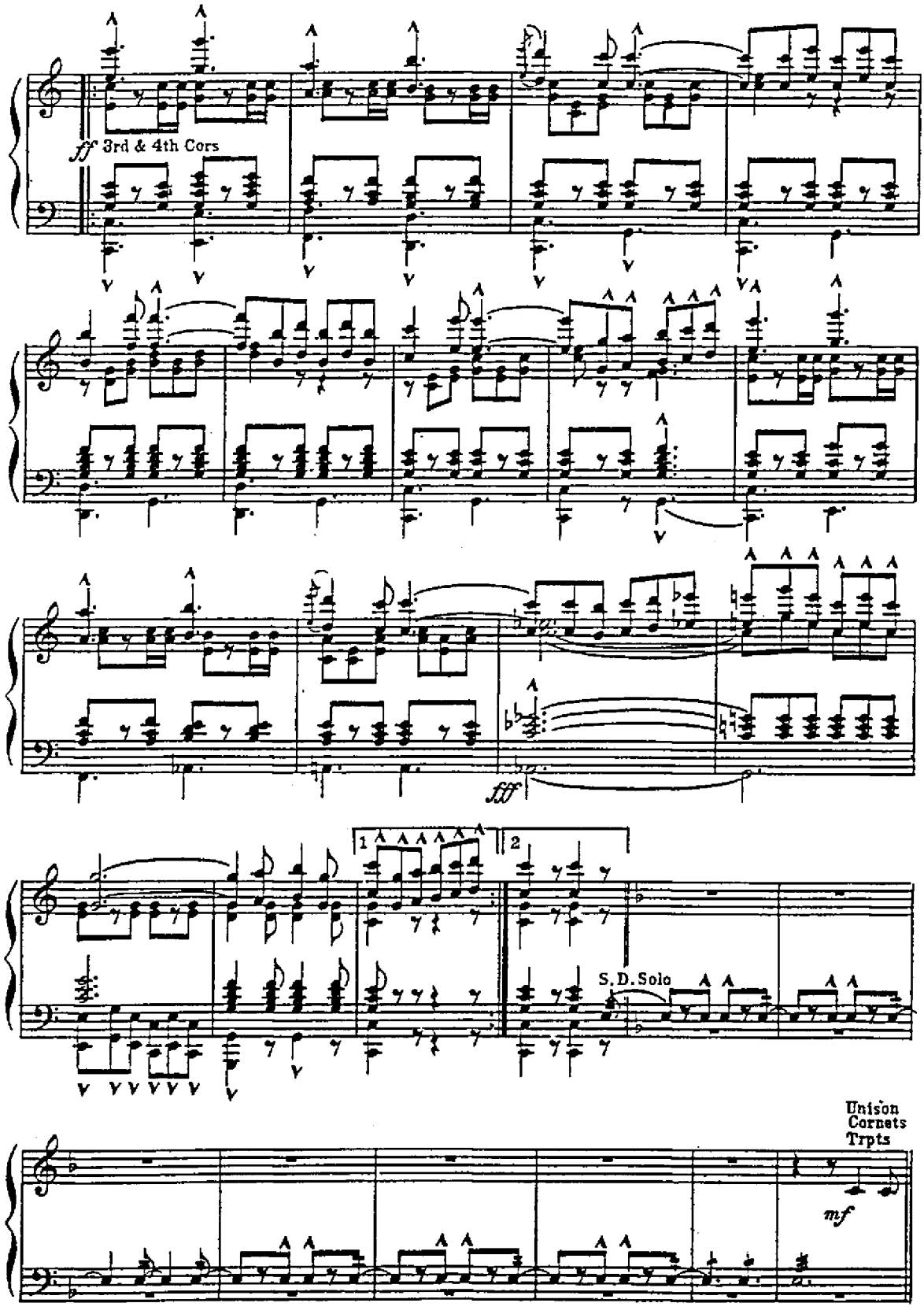
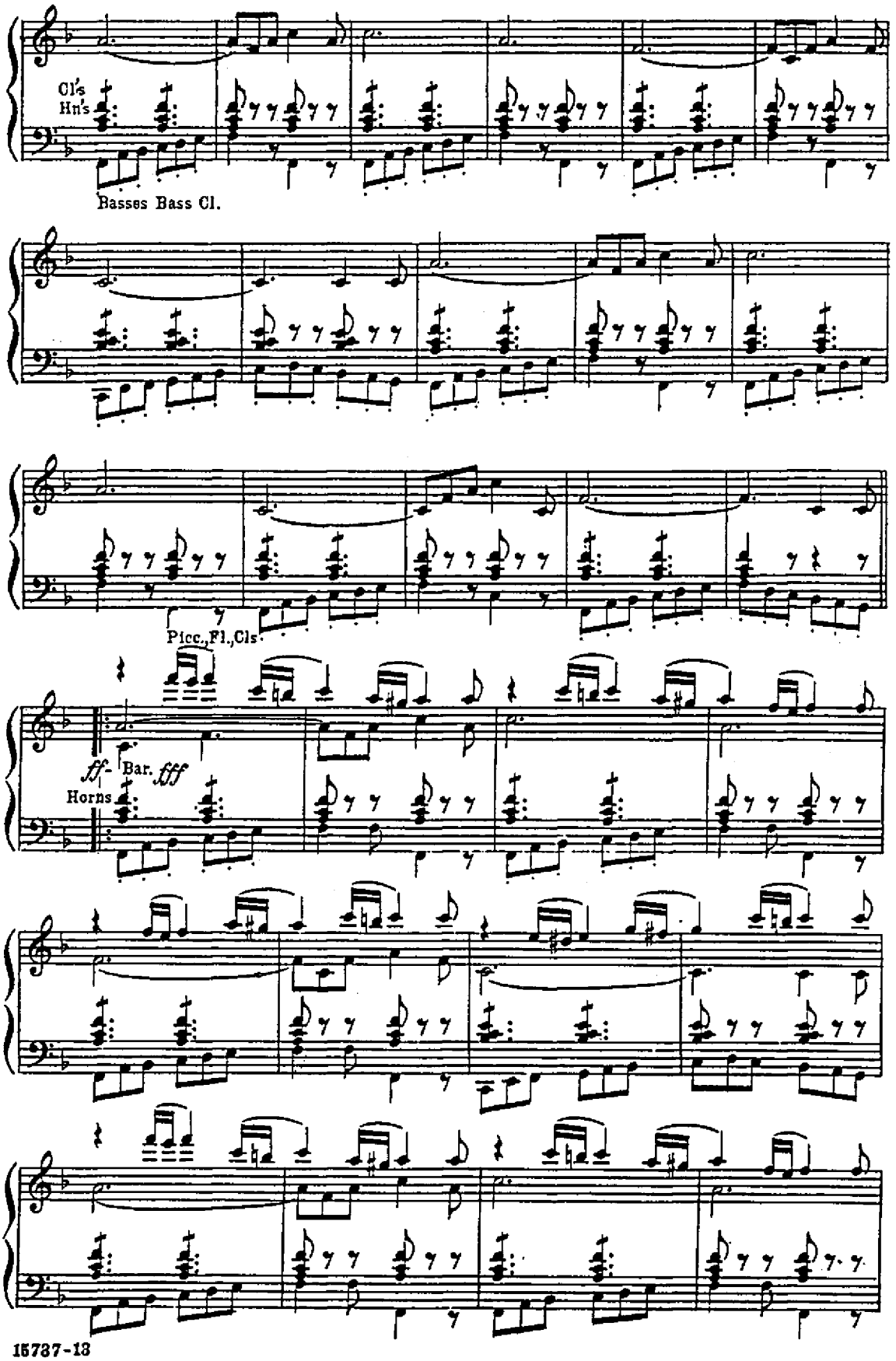
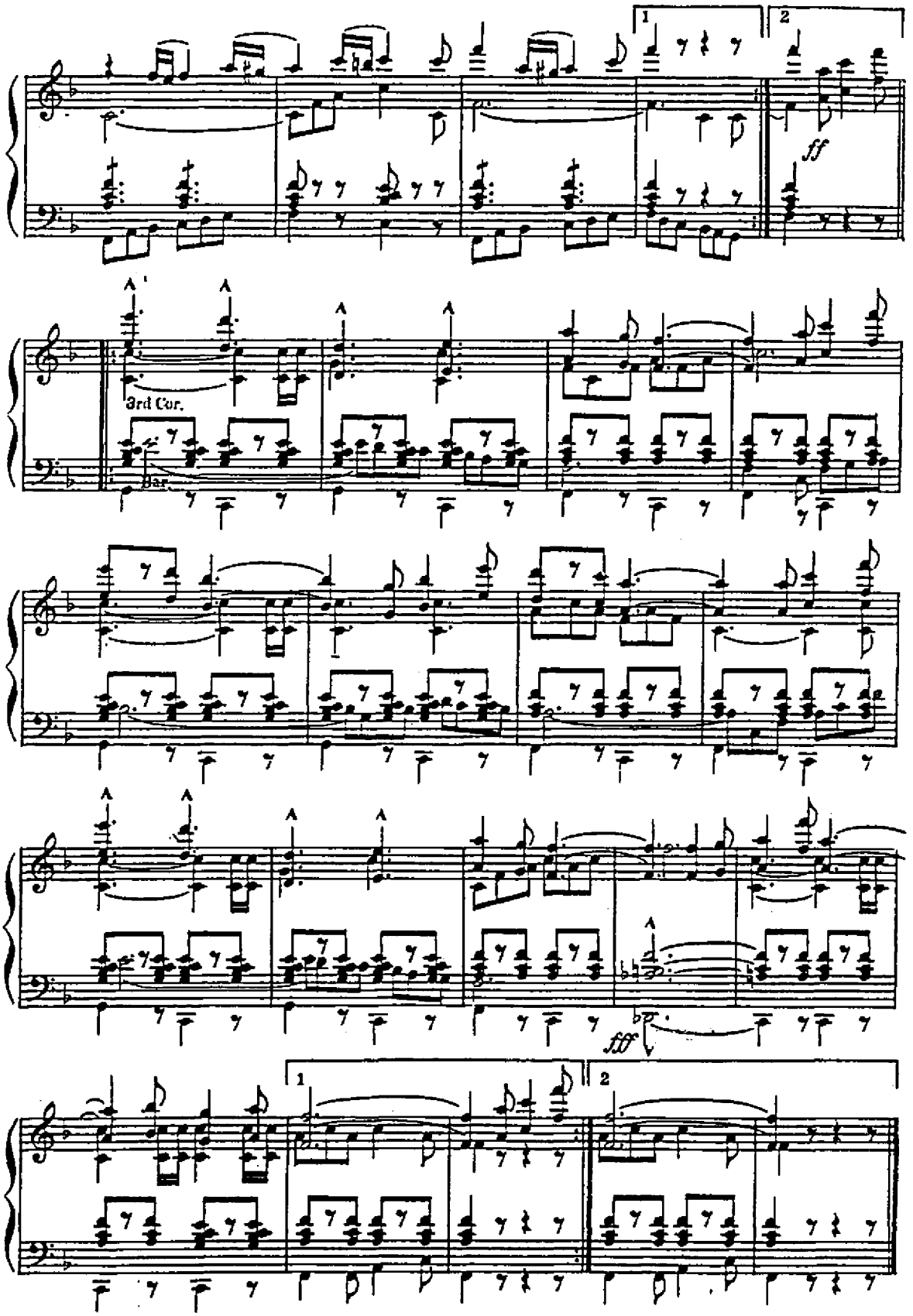

ff 3rd & 4th Cors
fff
1
2
S.D. Solo
Unison
Cornets
Trpts
mf

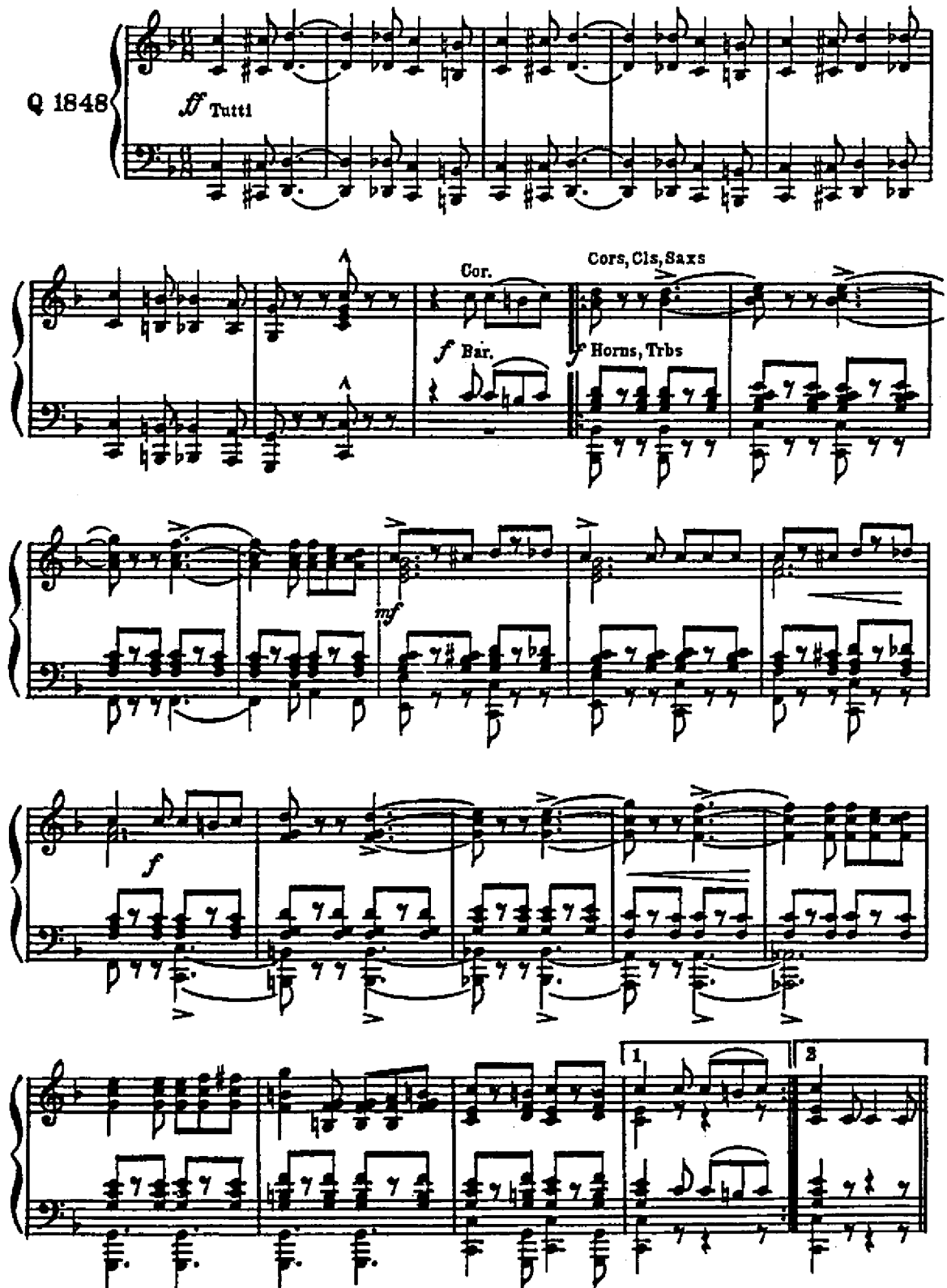

Cl's
Hn's
Basses Bass Cl.
Picc., Fl., Cls.
ff - Bar. fff
Horns


1
2
ff
3rd Cor.
Bar
fff
1
2

Washington Post March

CONDUCTOR

J. P. SOUSA



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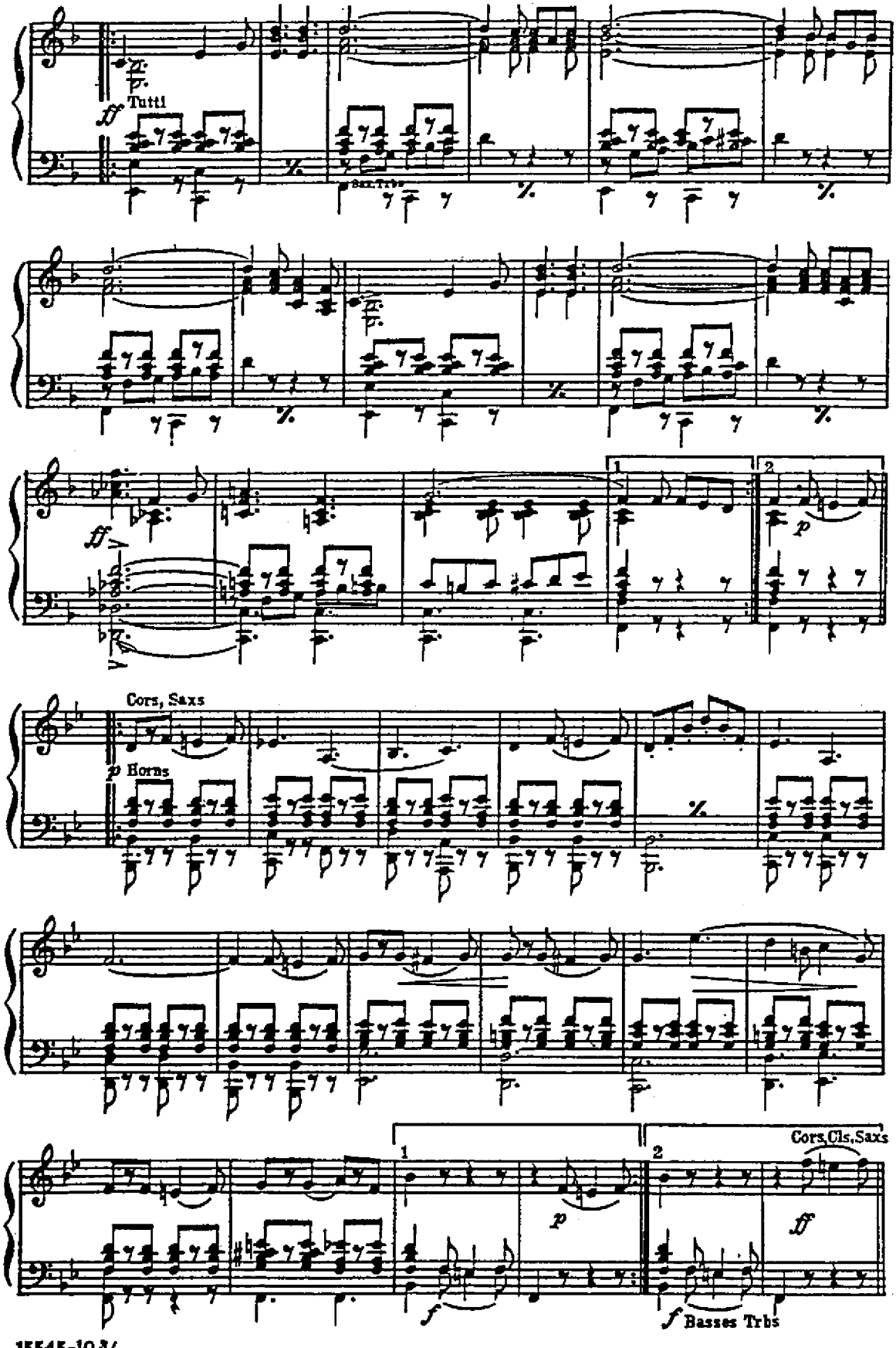
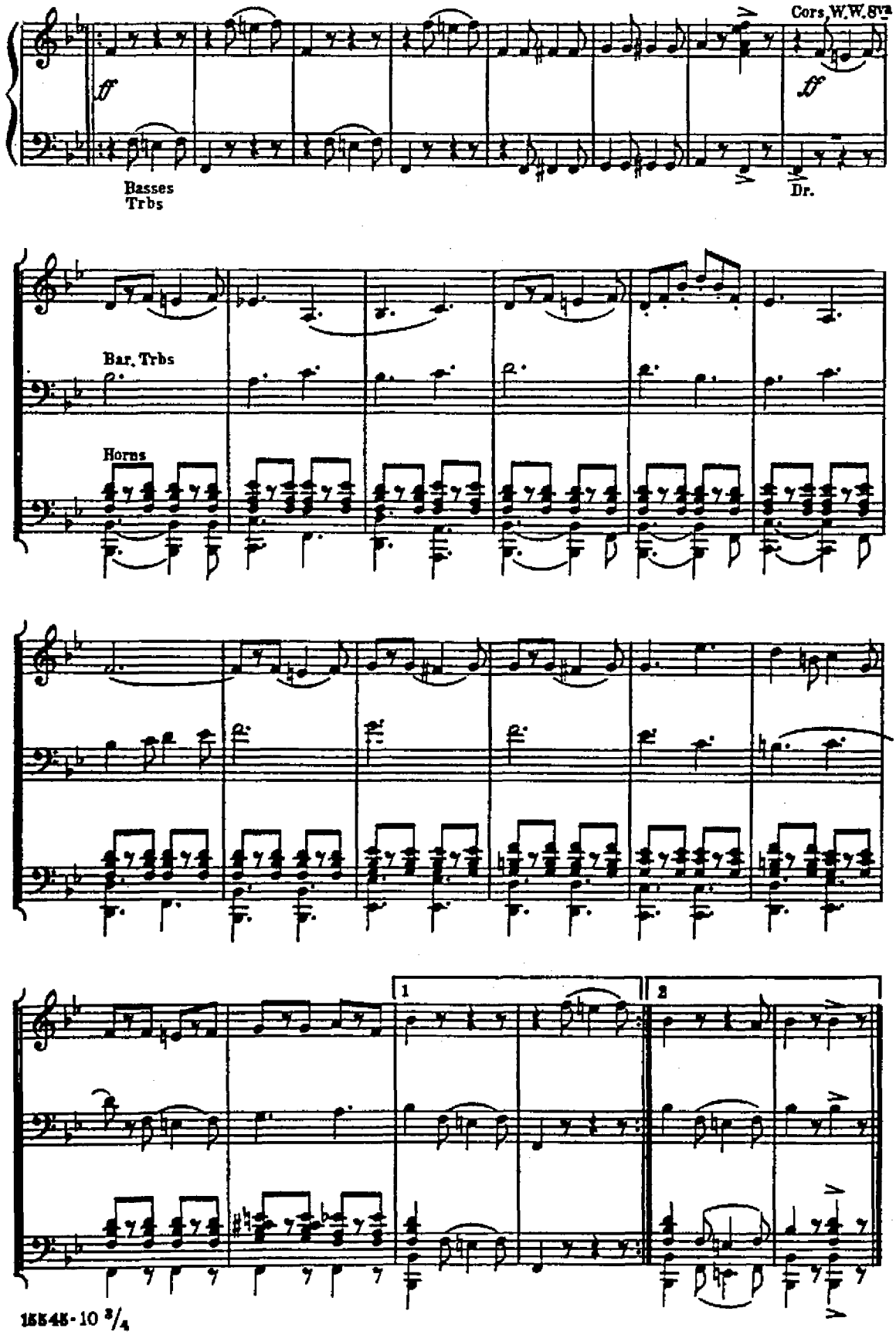
Printed in U.S.A.


Tutti
Cors, Saxs
Horns
Cors,Cls,Saxs
Basses Trbs


Cors, W.W. 8va
ff
ff
Basses
Trbs
Dr.
Bar. Trbs
Horns
1
2

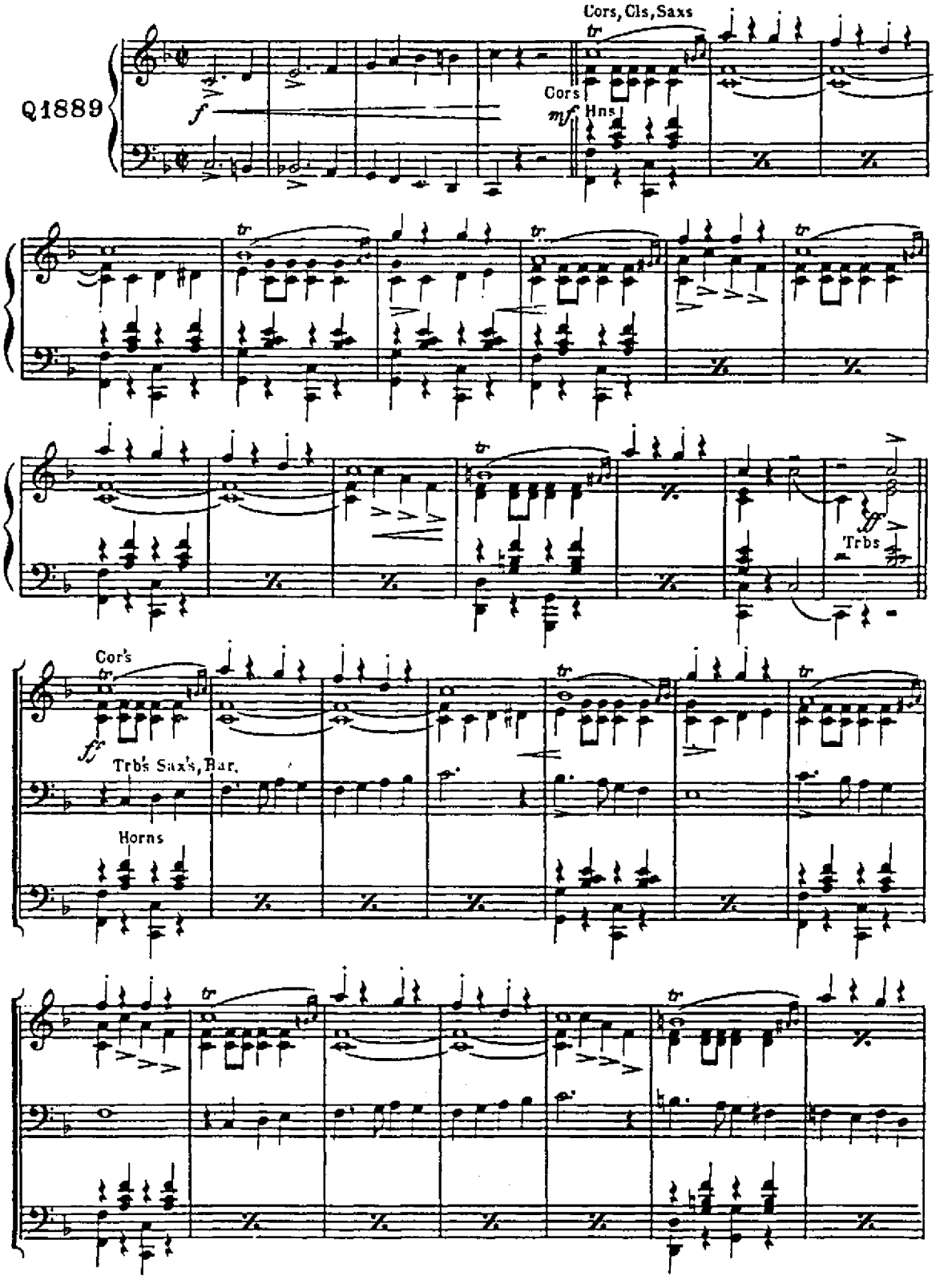
The Thunderer

MARCH

SOUSA

Conductor

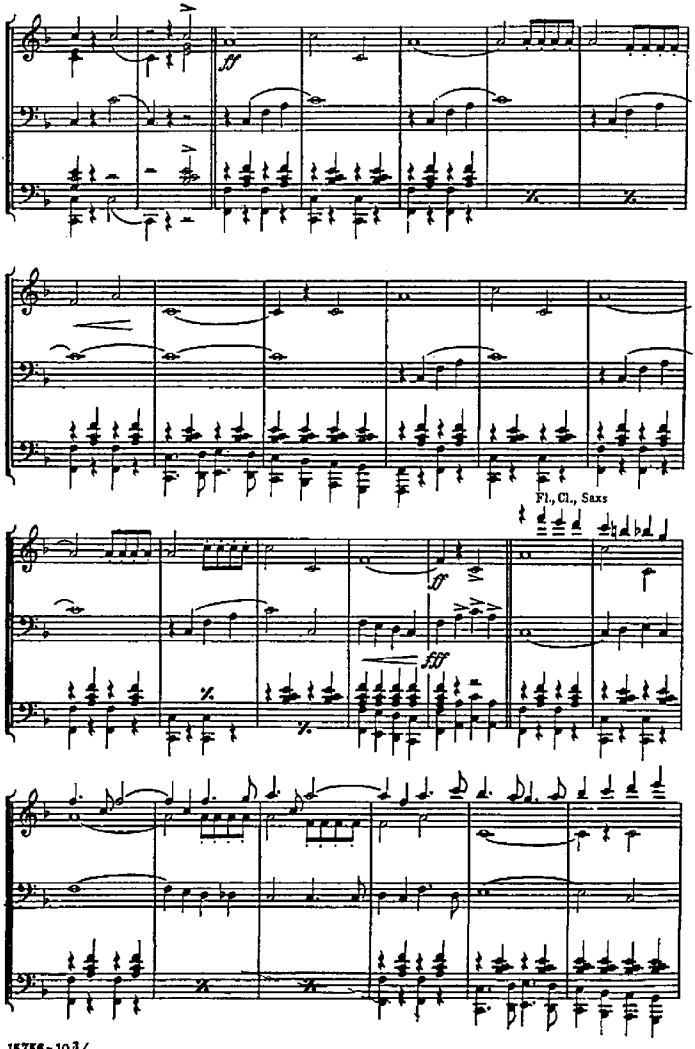
Q1889

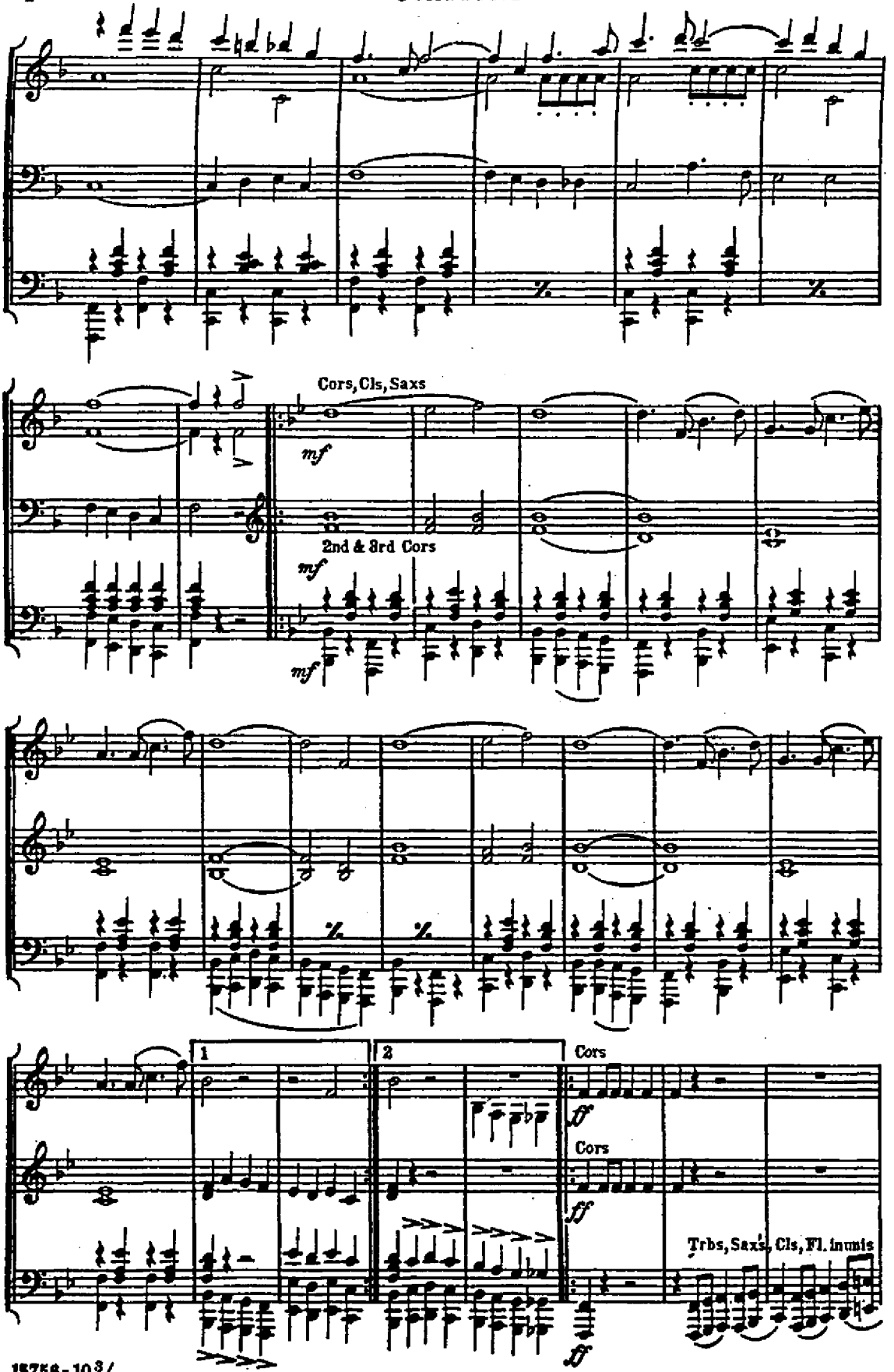


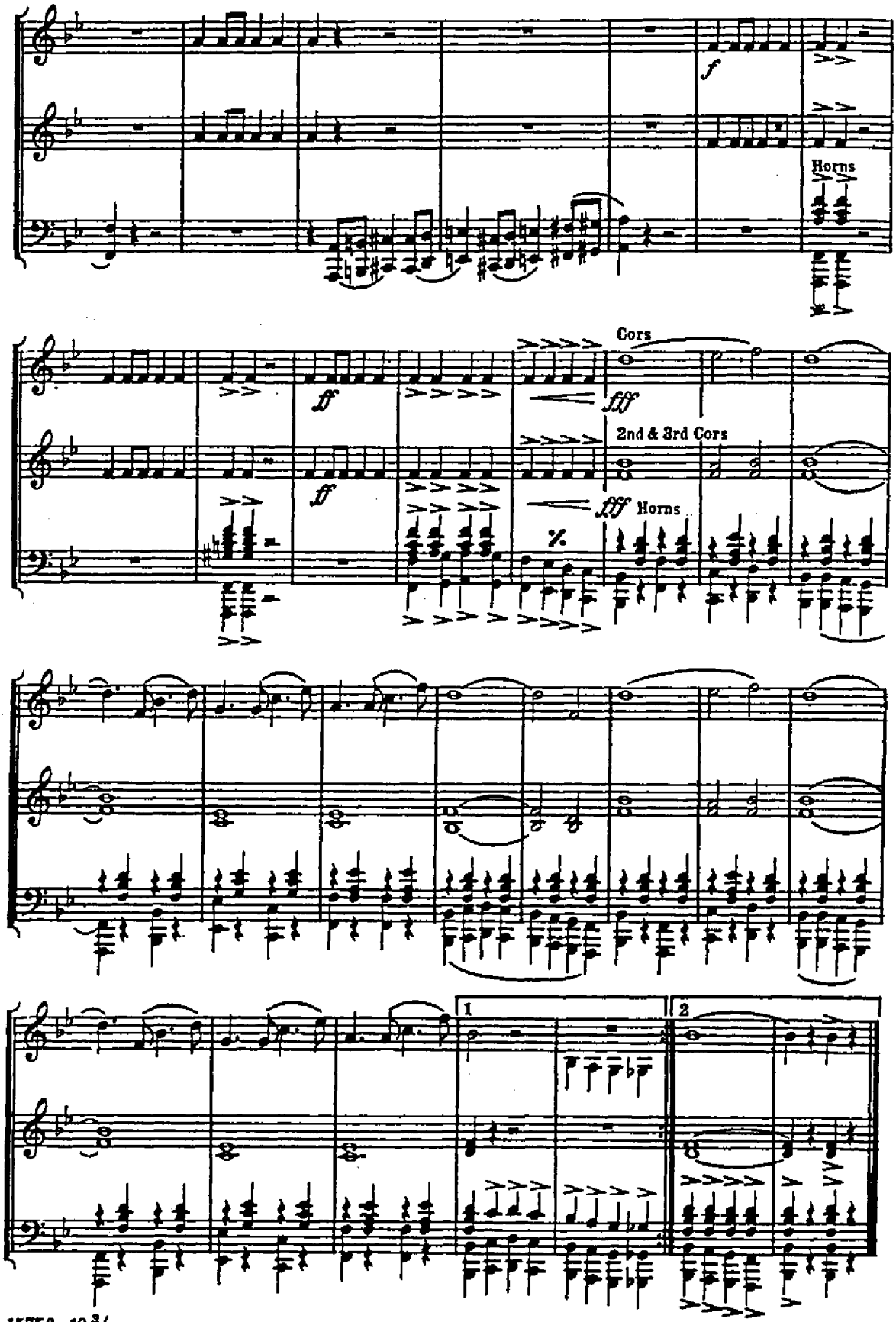
15756-10 3/4

Published by Carl Fischer, Inc., New York

Recorded by Carl Stevens and his Band, Mercury Record Corp. MG 20162.


ff
Fl., Cl., Saxs
ff
fff


Cors, Cls, Saxs
mf
2nd & 3rd Cors
mf
mf
1
2
Cors
ff
Cors
ff
Trbs, Saxs, Cls, Fl. inunis
ff

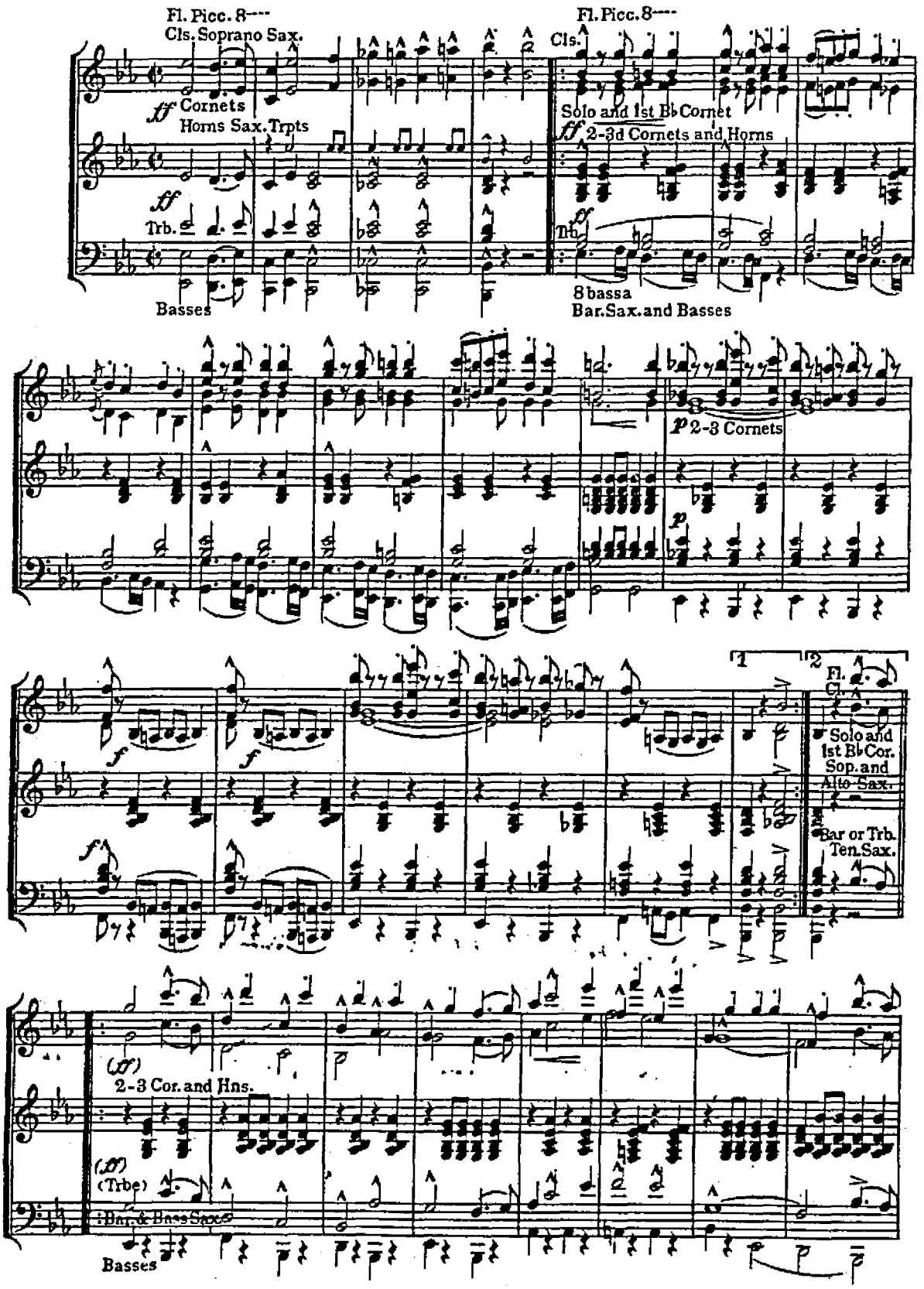

f
Horns
Cors
ff
fff
2nd & 3rd Cors
ff
fff Horns
%
1
2

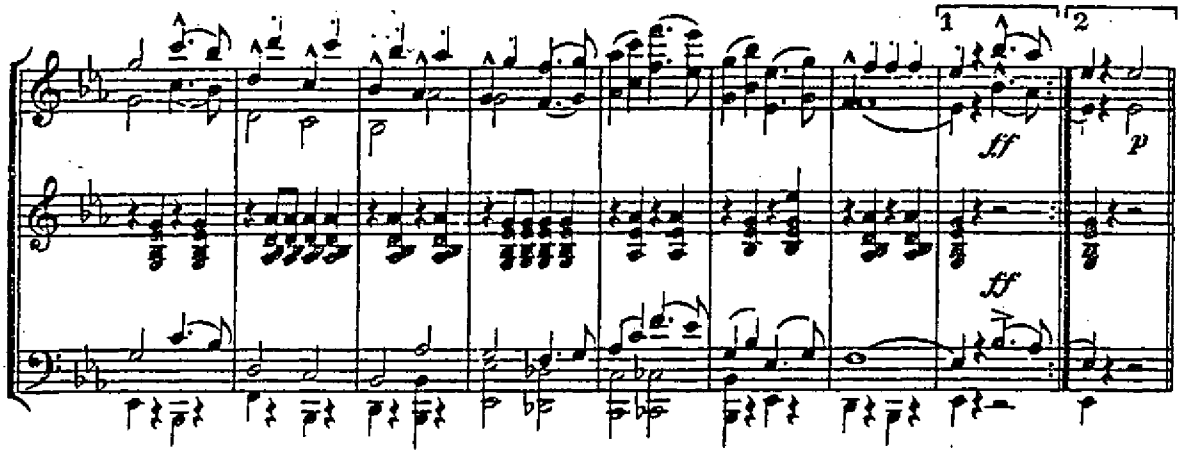
The Stars and Stripes Forever

March

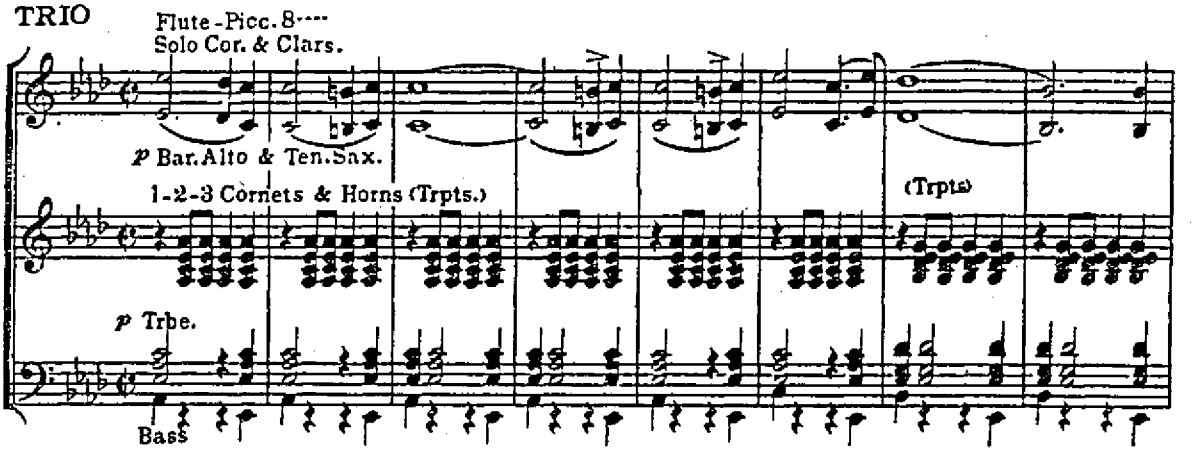
Conductor

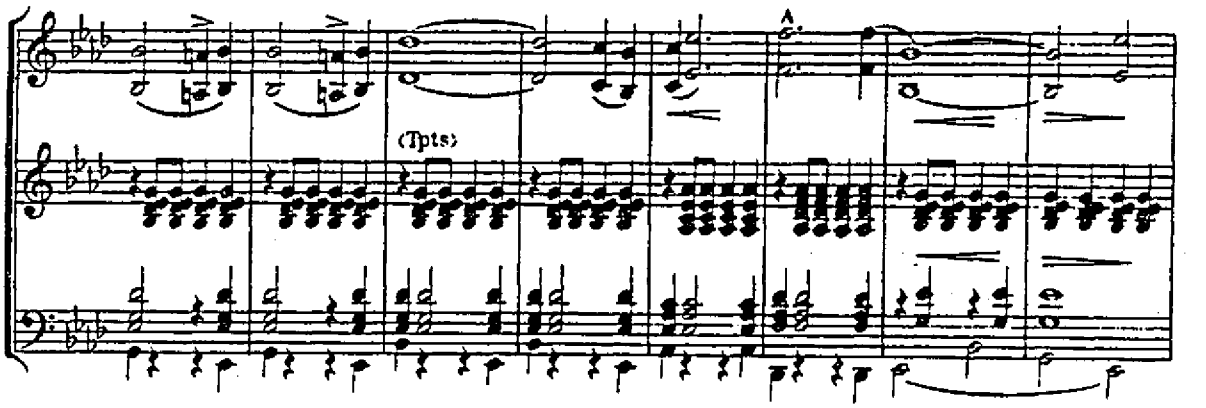
JOHN PHILIP SOUSA

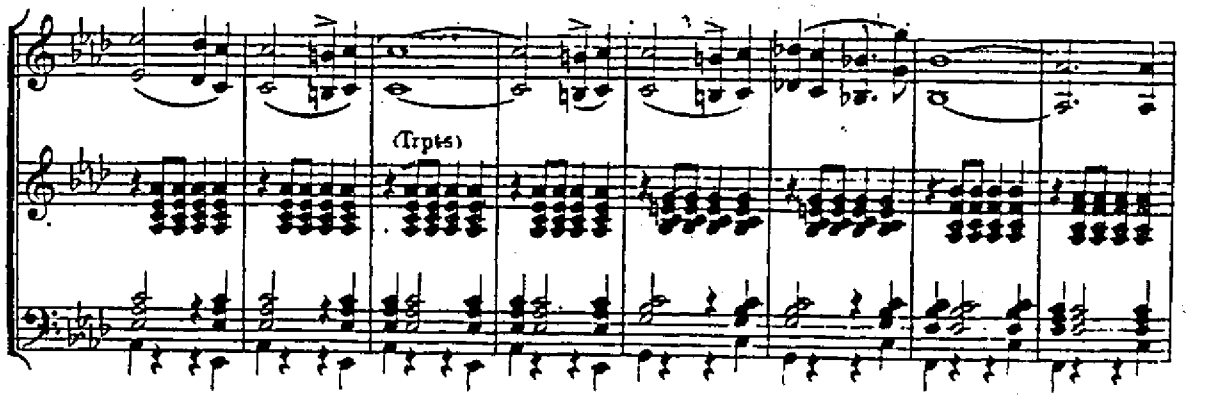



1
2
ff
p
ff

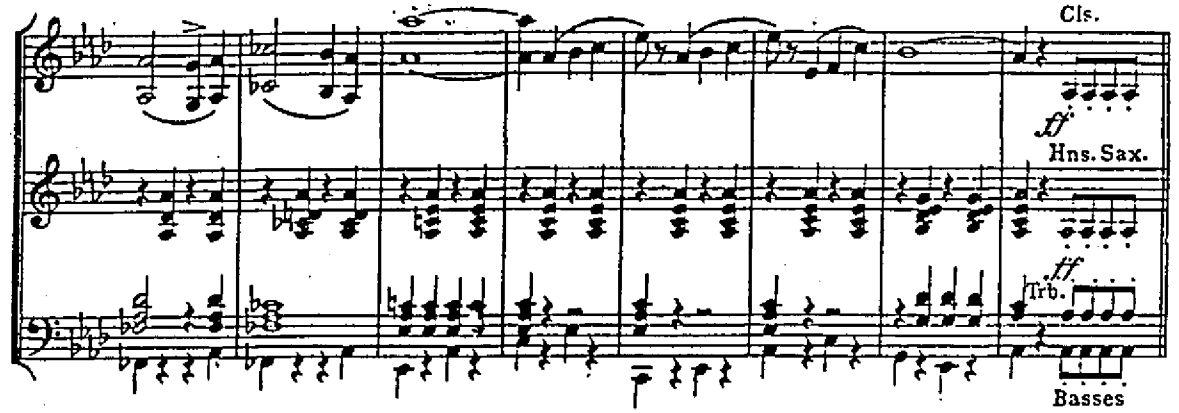
TRIO

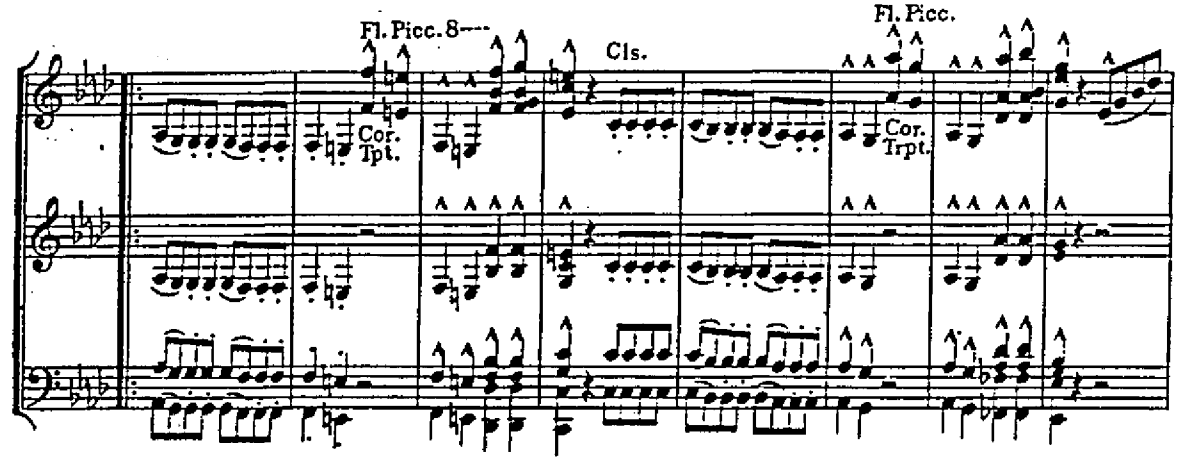

Flute-Picc. 8----
Solo Cor. & Clars.
p Bar. Alto & Ten. Sax.
1-2-3 Cornets & Horns (Trpts.)
(Trpts)
p Trbe.
Bass

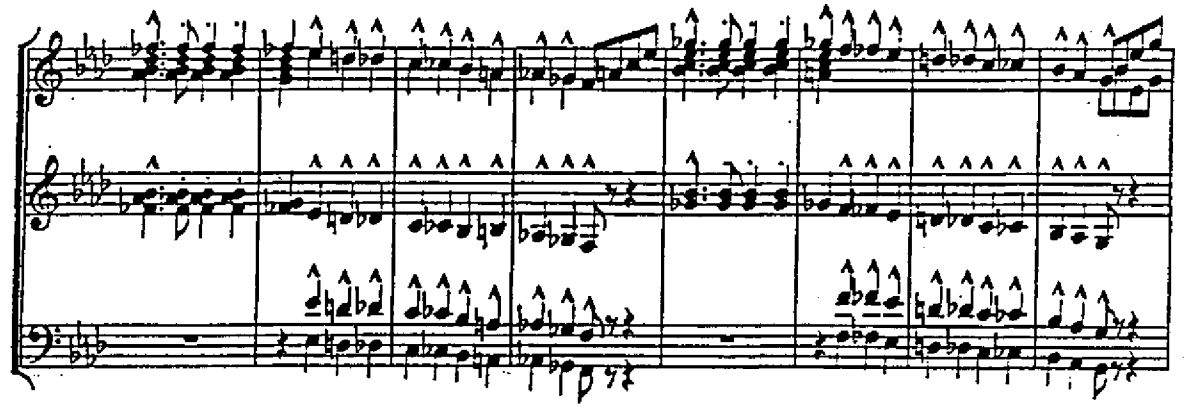

(Tpts)

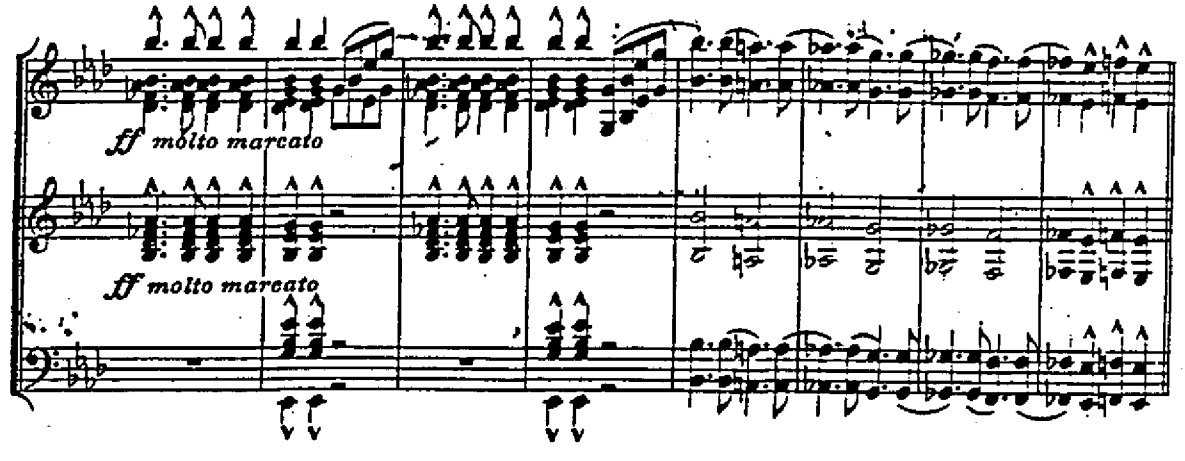

(Trpts)

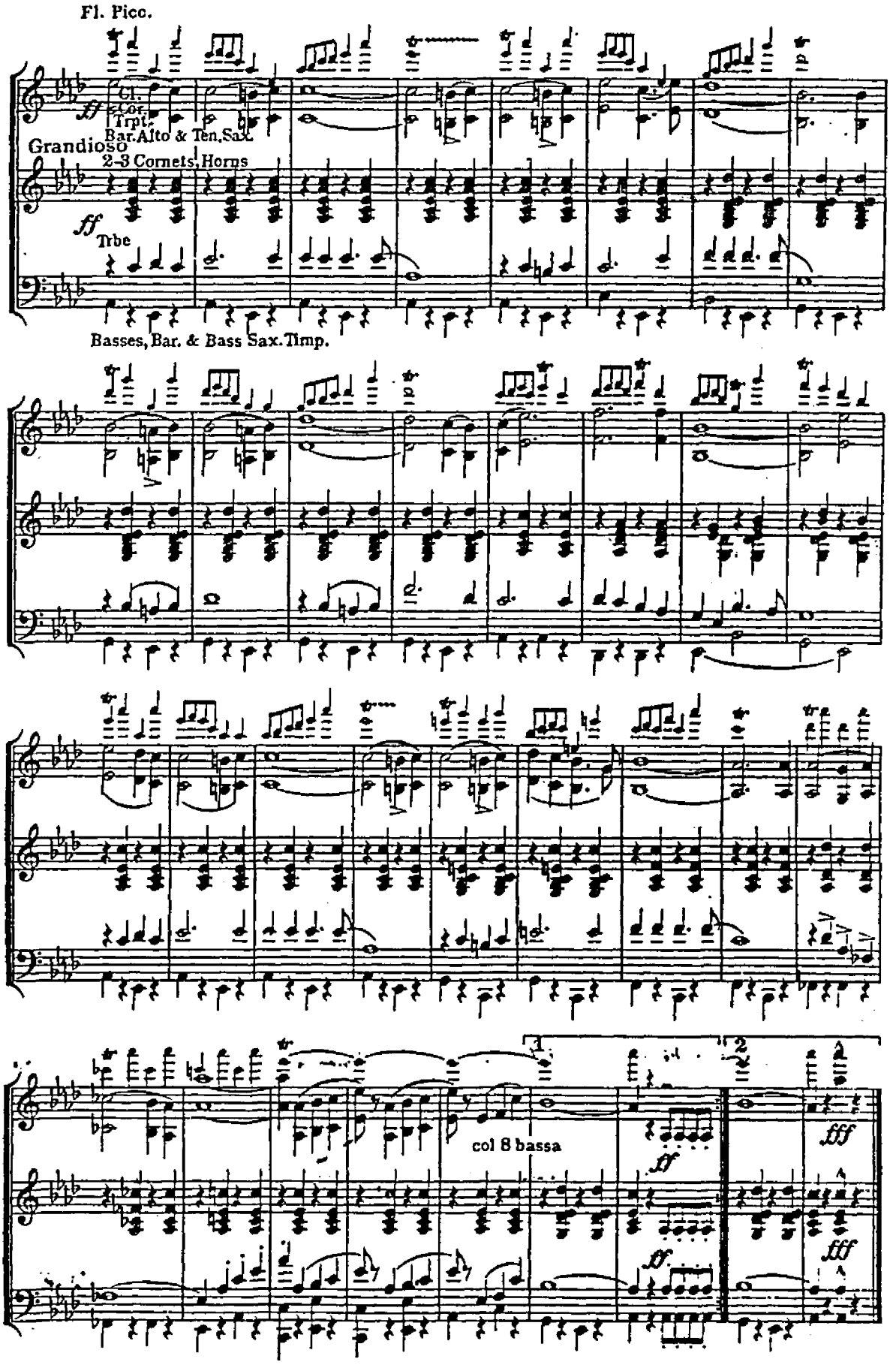
Conductor


Cls.
ff
Hns. Sax.
ff
Trb.
Basses


Fl. Picc. 8---
Cor. Tpt.
Cls.
Fl. Picc.
Cor. Trpt.




ff molto marcato
ff molto marcato

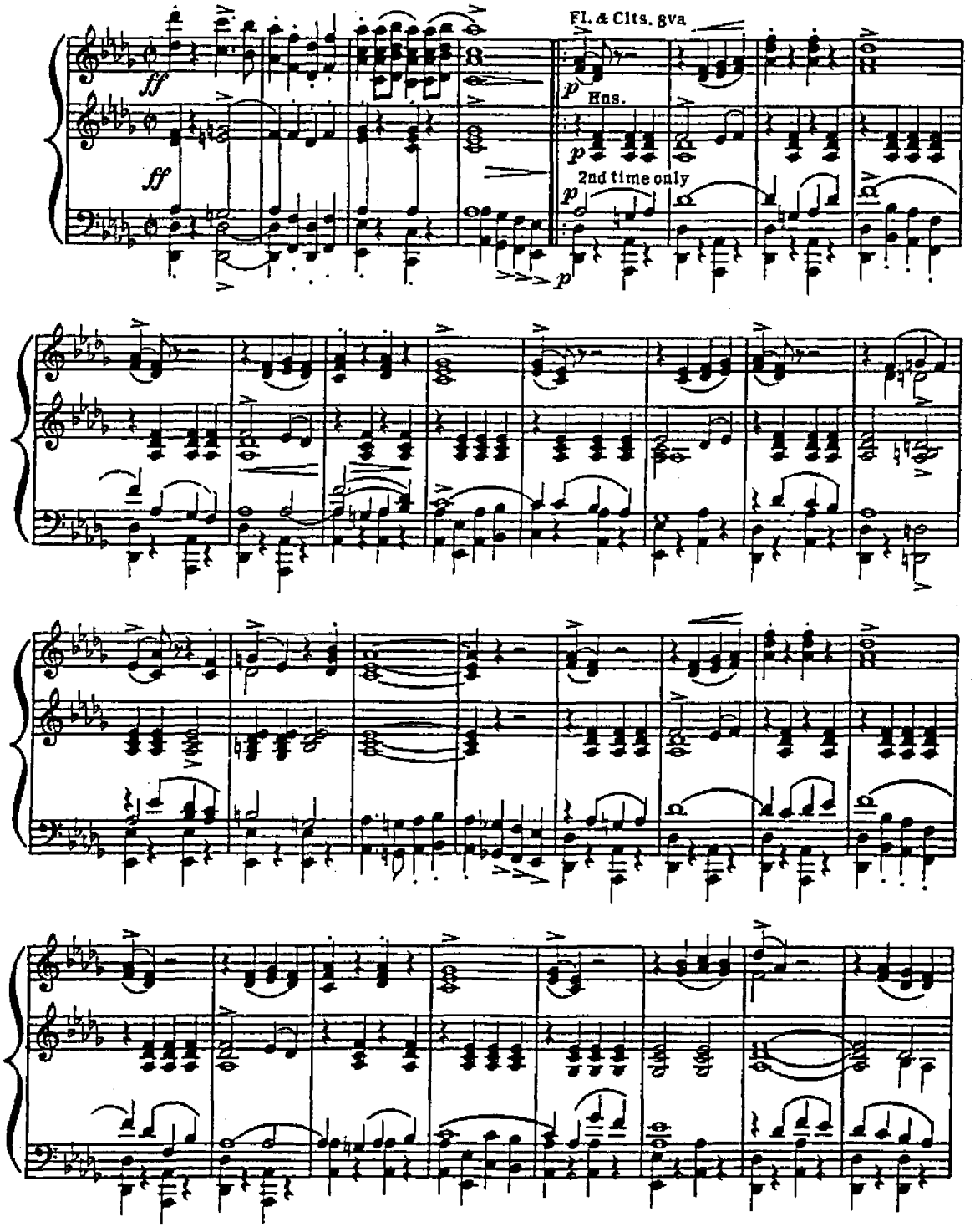

Fl. Picc.
ff
Cl.
Cor.
Trpt.
Bar.Alto & Ten.Sax.
Grandioso
2-3 Cornets, Horns
ff
Trbe
Basses, Bar. & Bass Sax. Timp.
col 8 bassa
fff
ff
ff
fff

COLONEL BOGEY

CONDUCTOR

March

KENNETH J. ALFORD



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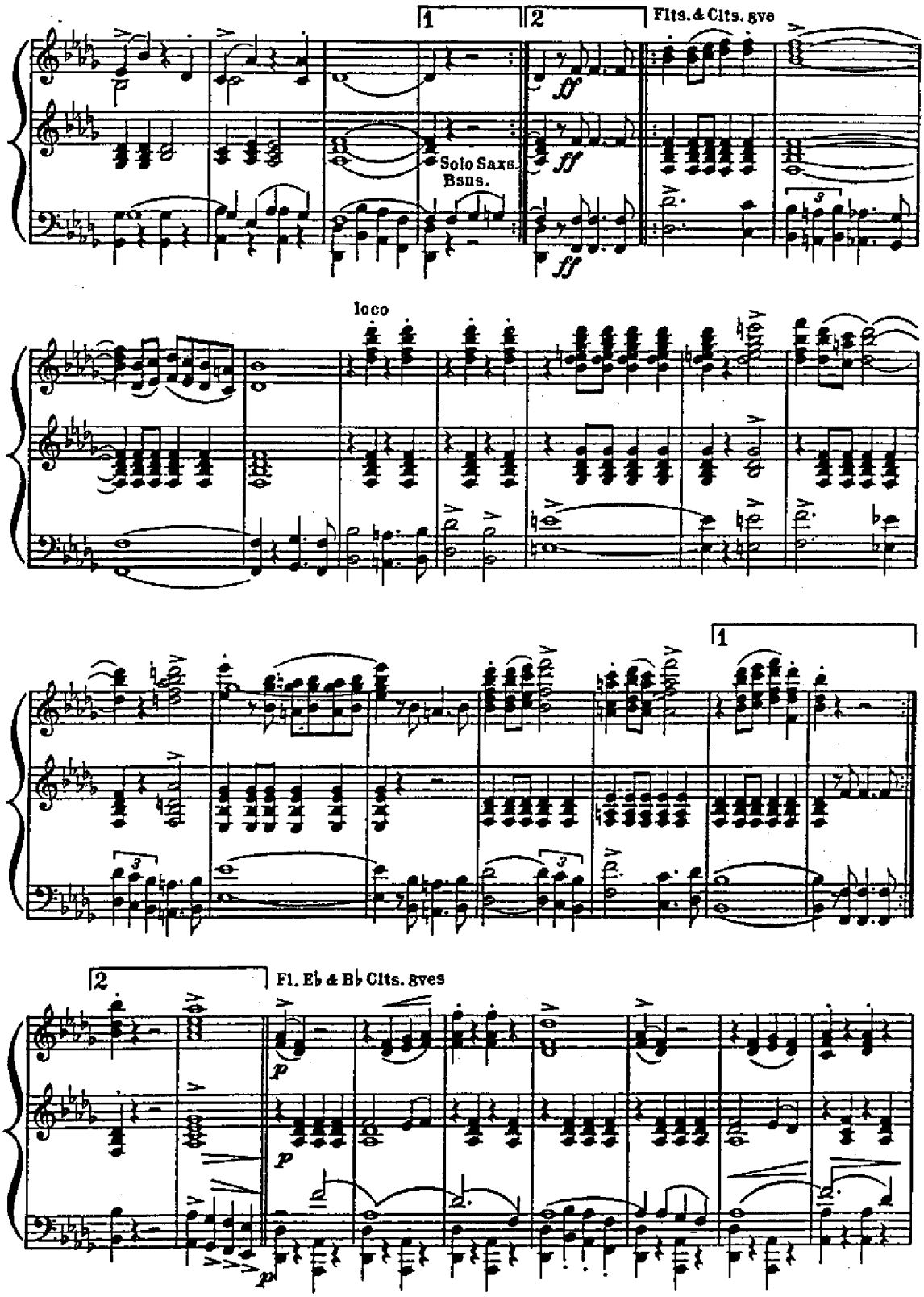
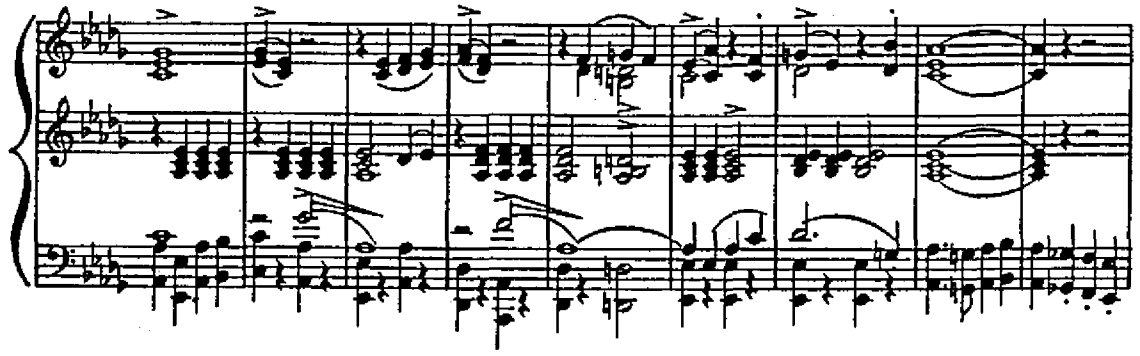
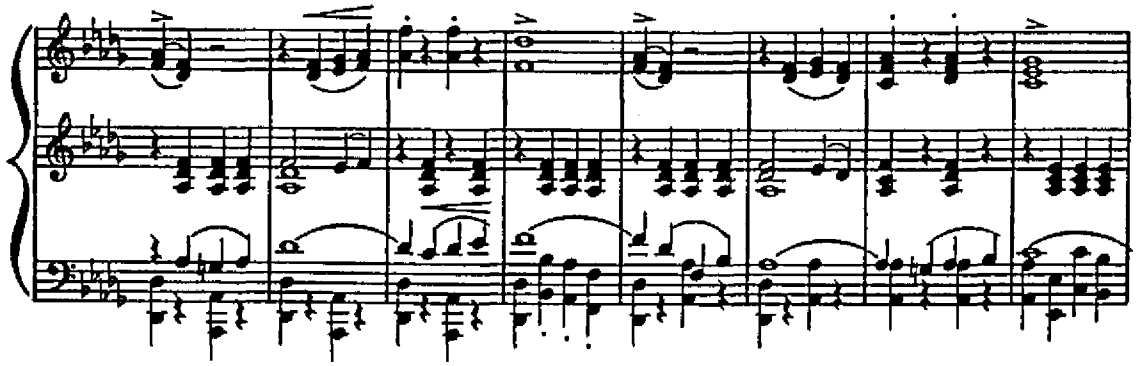
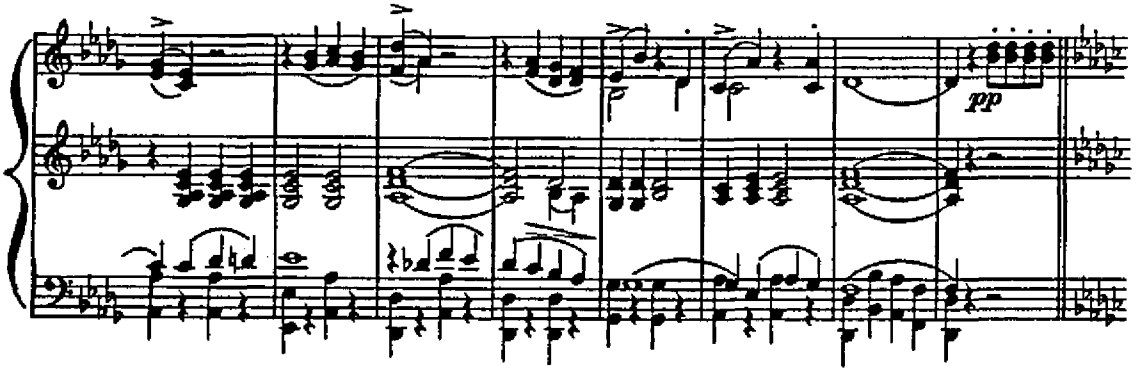

1
2
Flts. & Clts. 8ve
Solo Saxs.
Bsns.
ff
loco
Fl. Eb & Bb Clts. 8ves
p

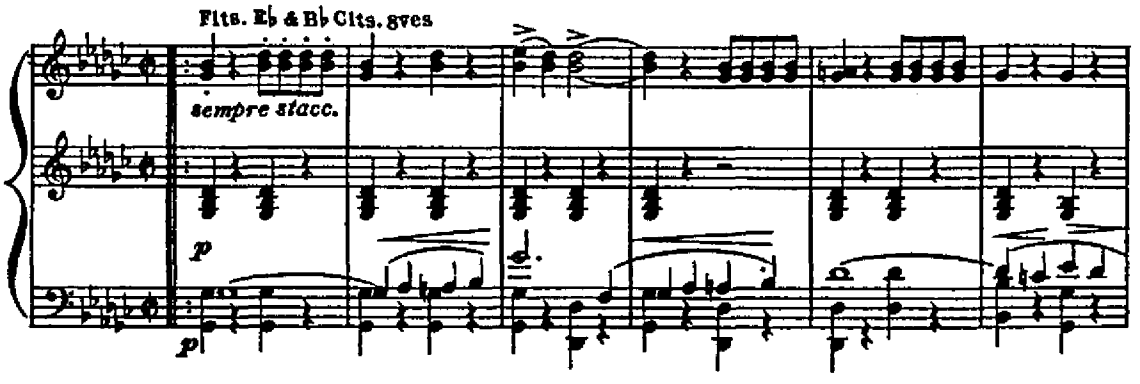


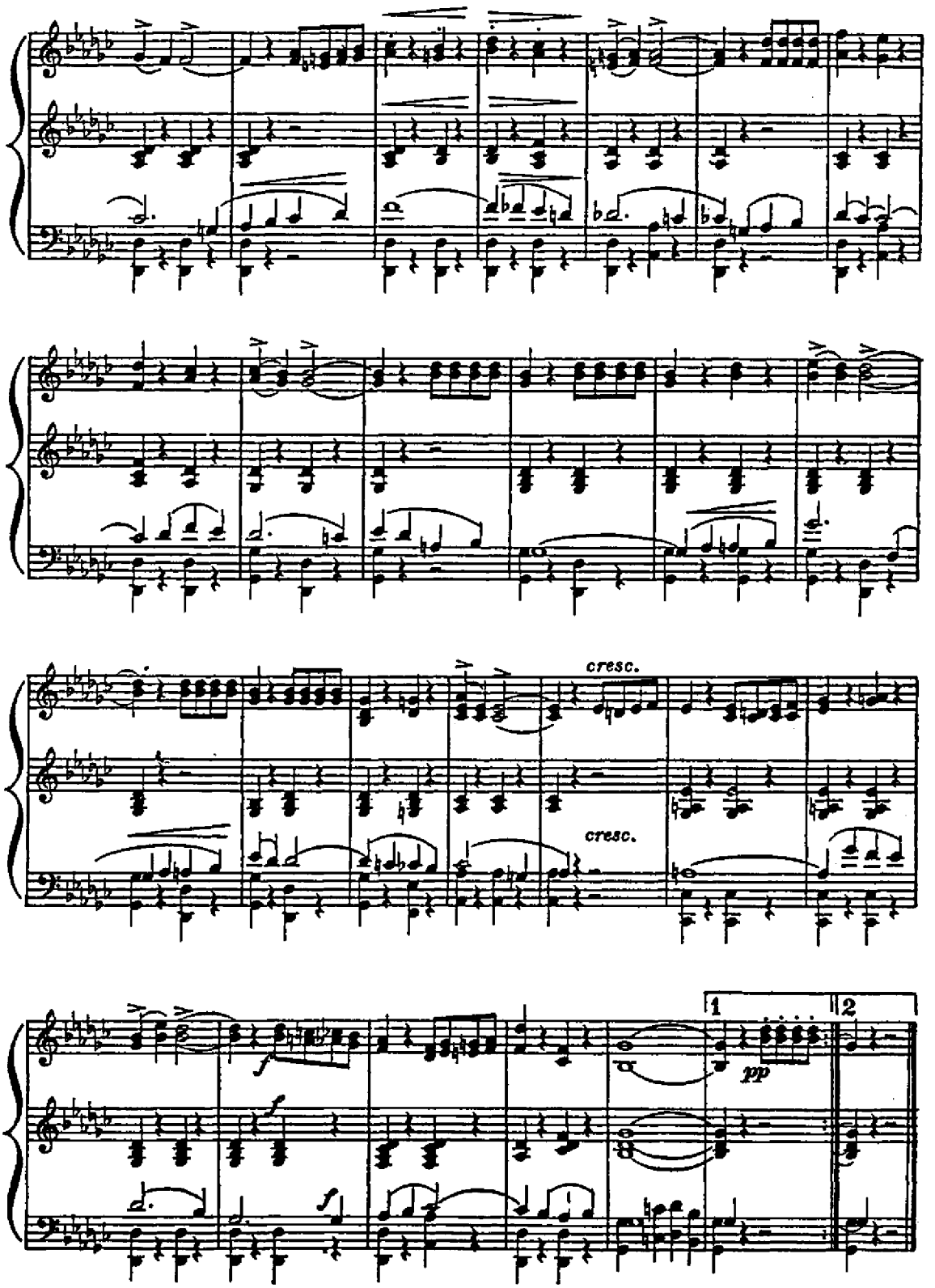




TRIO

Flts. E♭ & B♭ Clts. 8ves




cresc.
cresc.
1
2
pp

Dedicated to the first Hundred Thousand

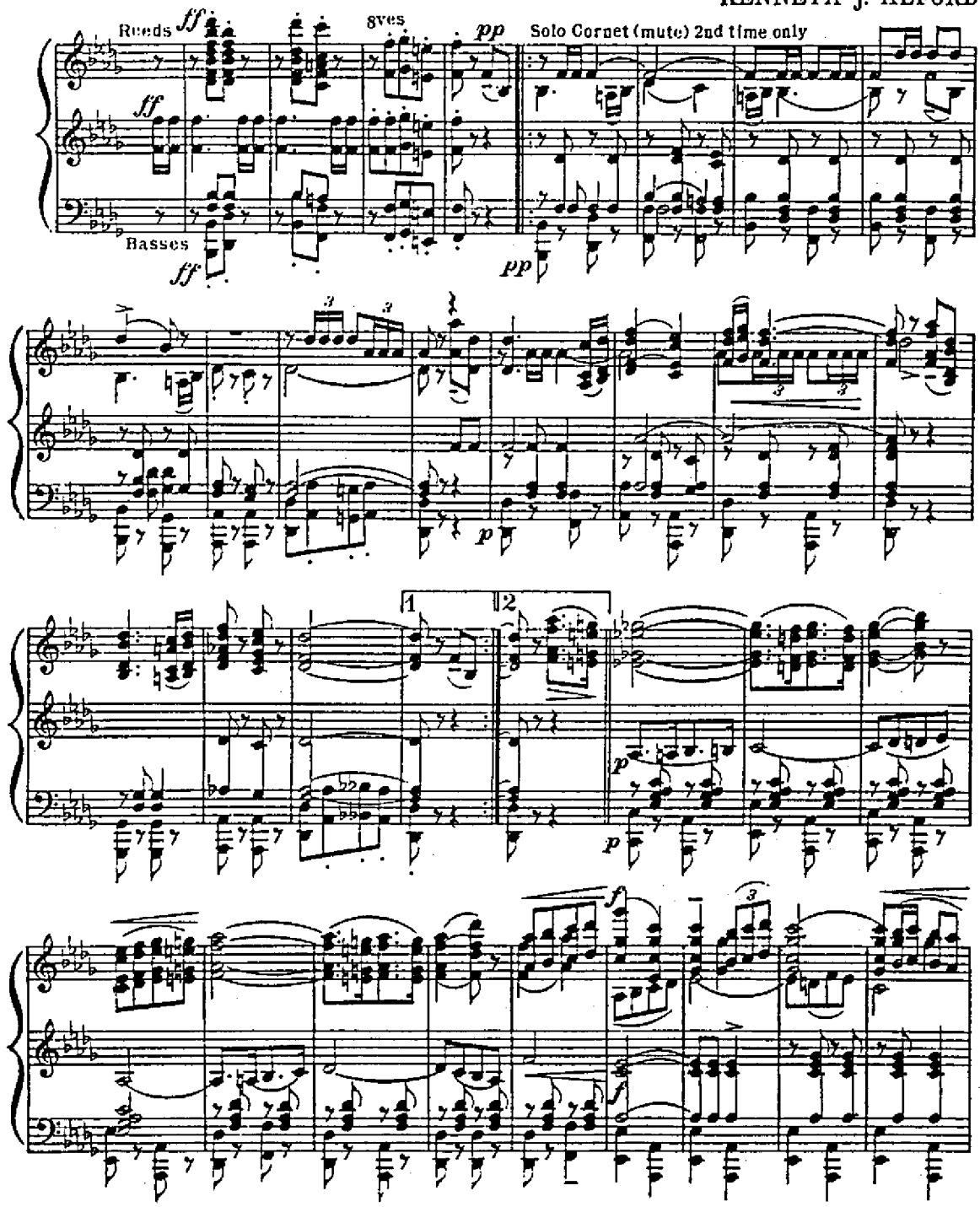
THE VANISHED ARMY

(THEY NEVER DIE)

POETIC MARCH

CONDUCTOR

KENNETH J. ALFORD



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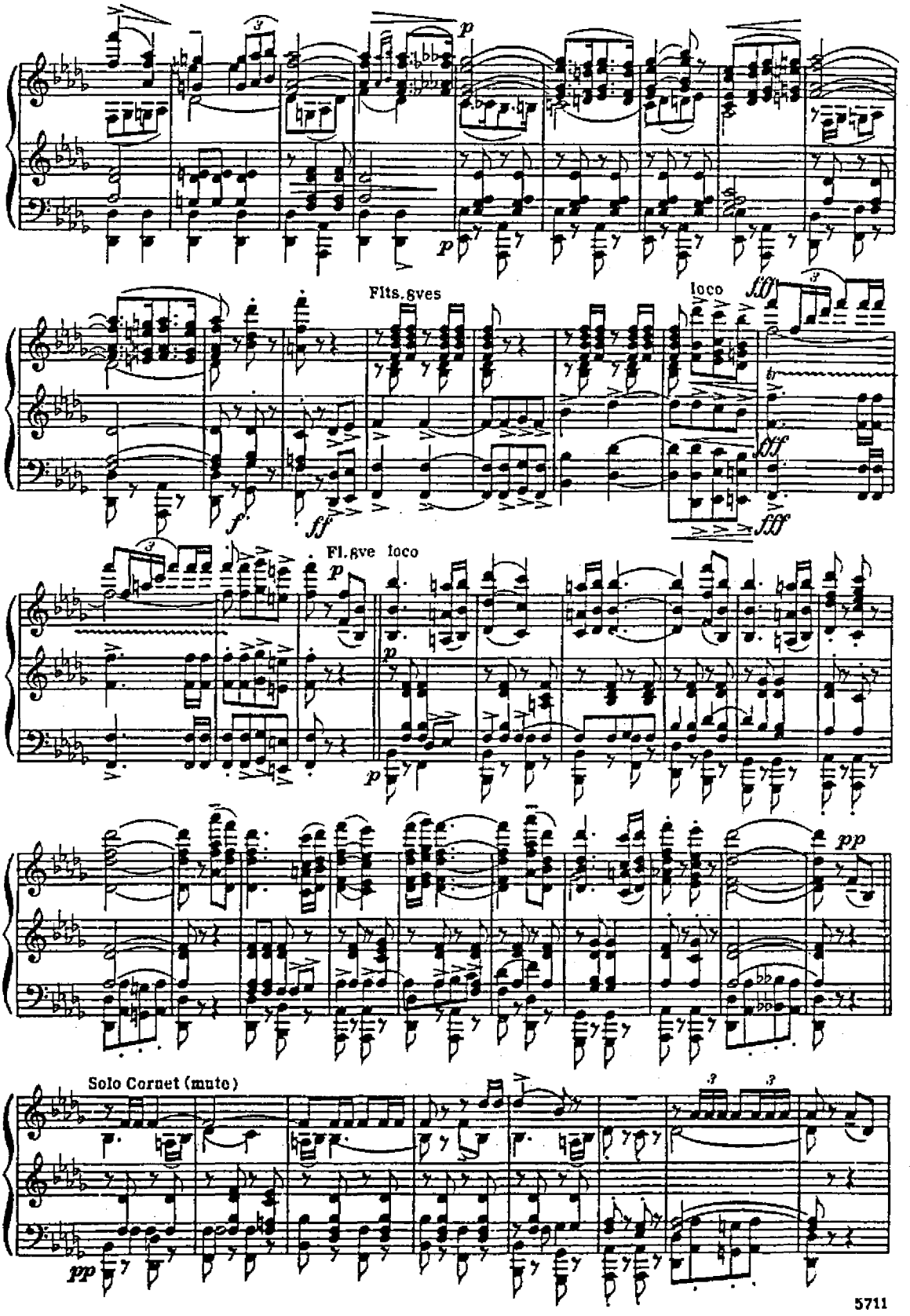
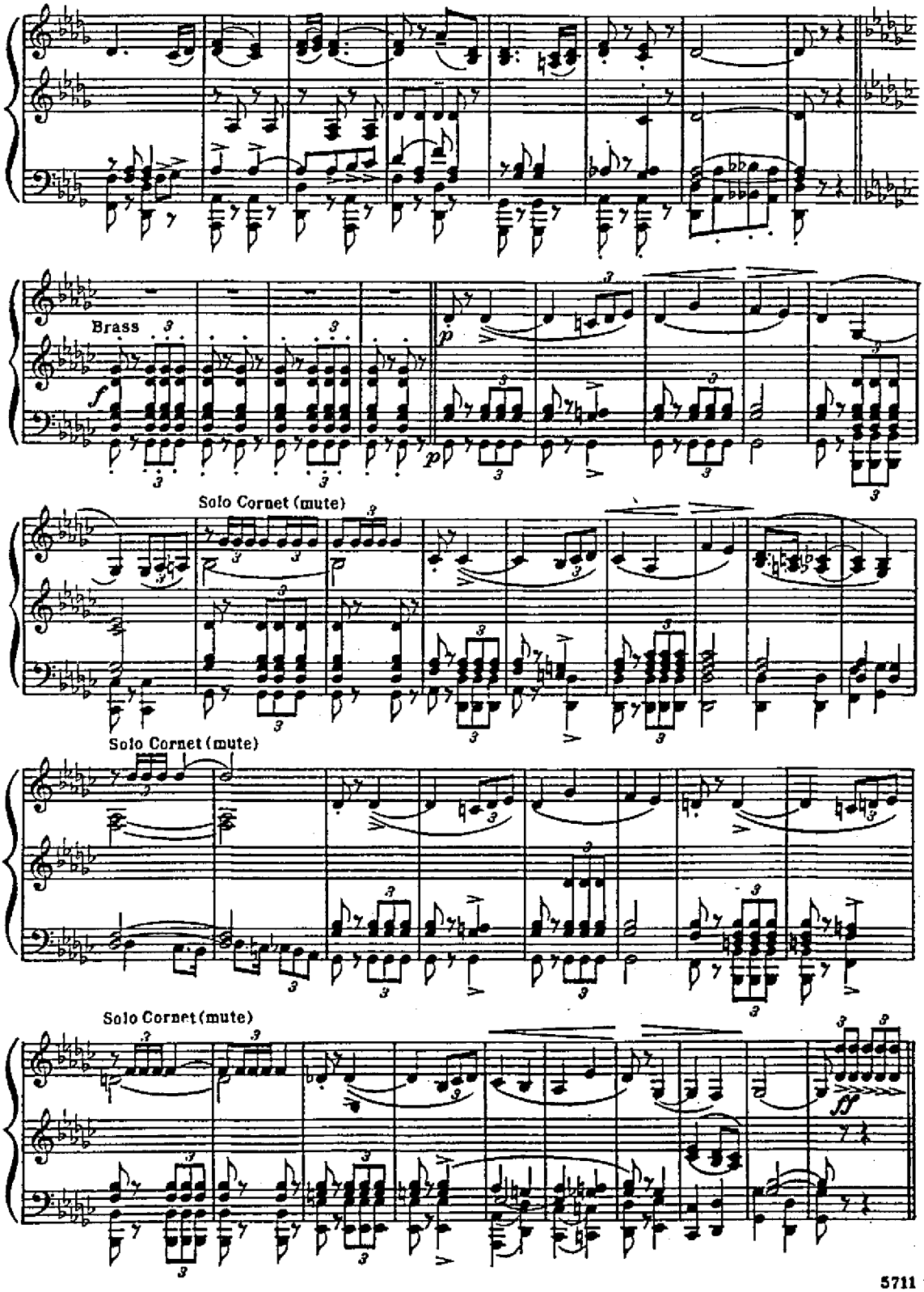
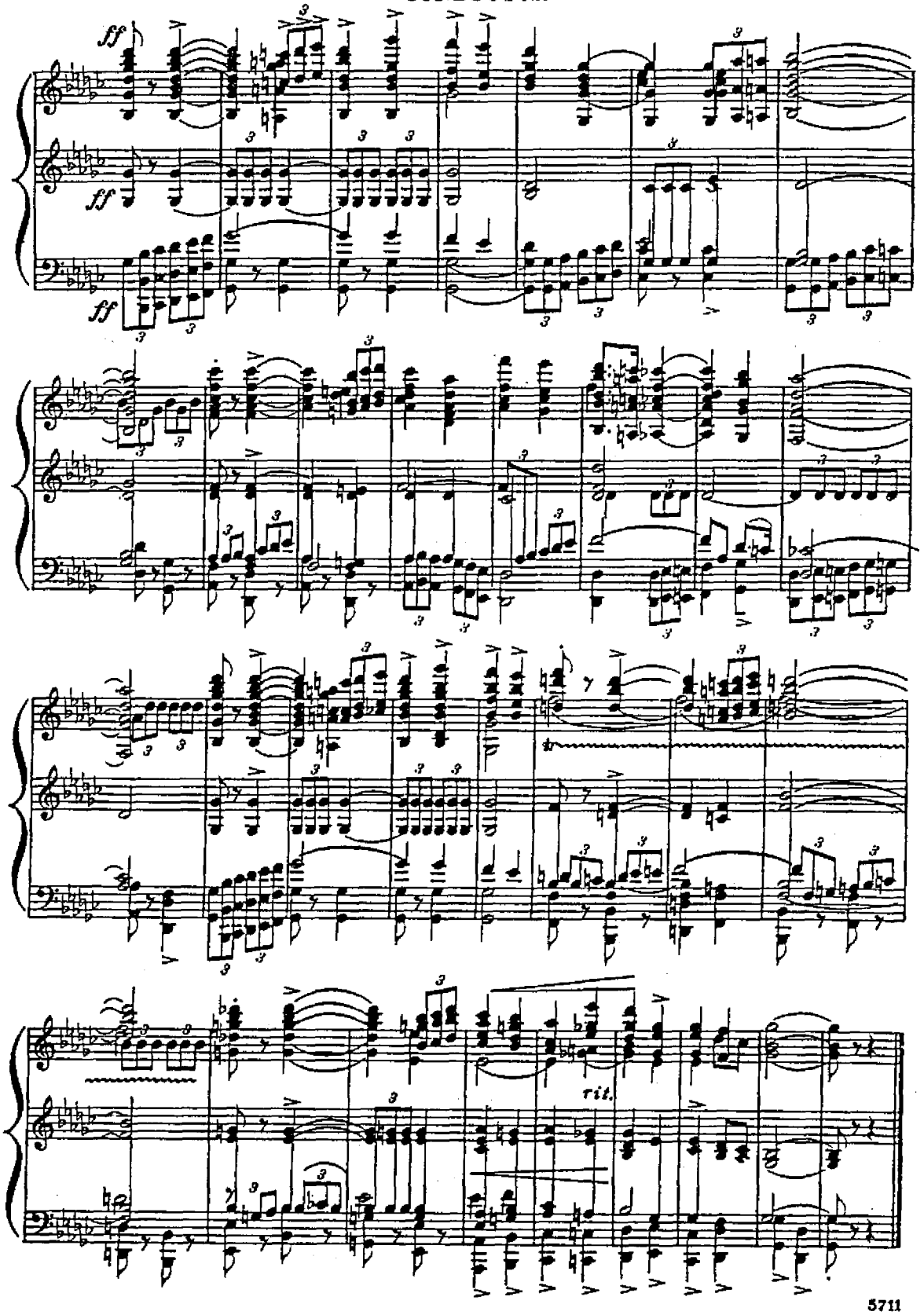

Flts. 8ves
loco
Fl. 8ve loco
Solo Cornet (mute)


Brass
Solo Cornet (mute)
Solo Cornet (mute)
Solo Cornet (mute)

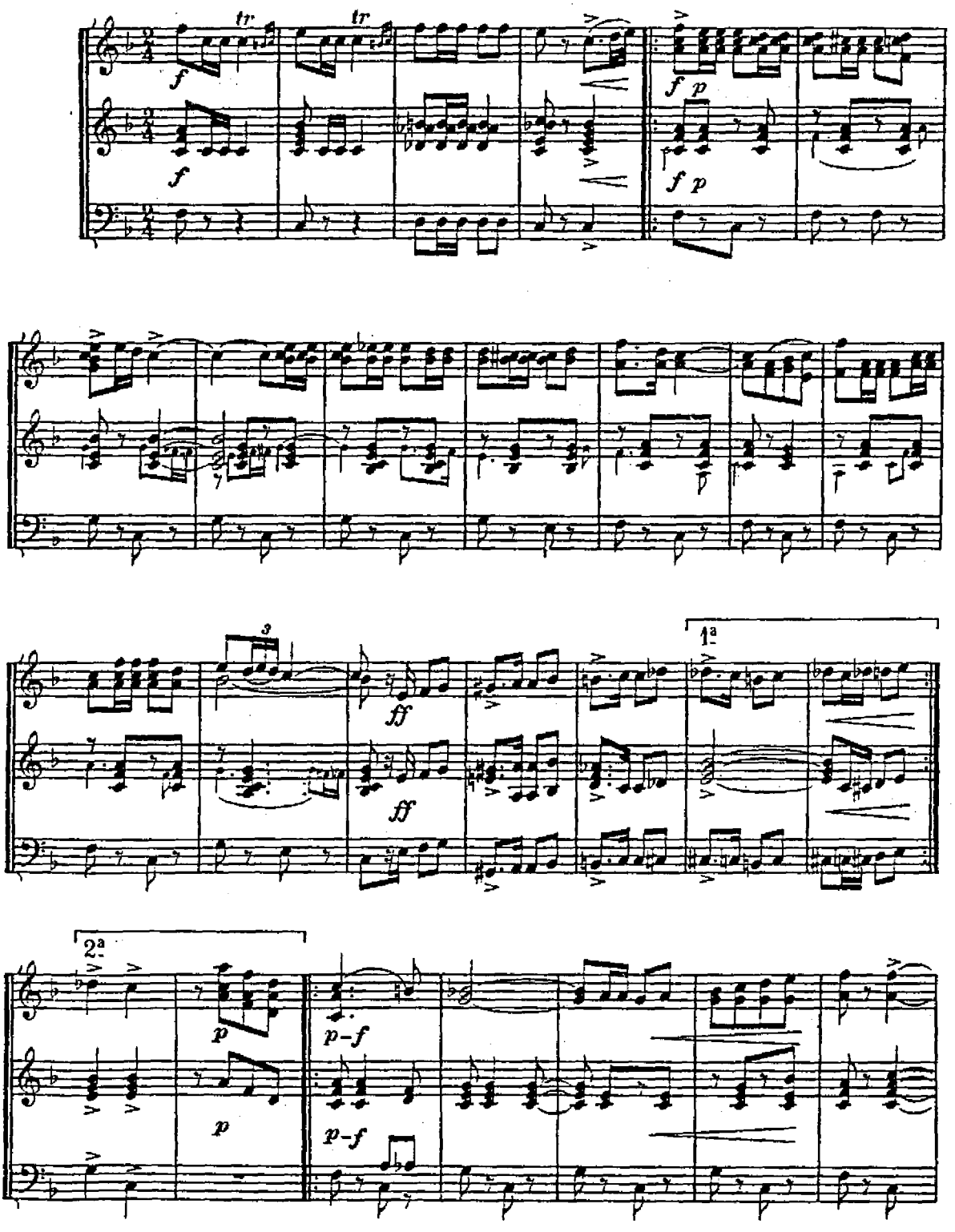

ff
ff
ff
rit.

CAVALRY OF THE CLOUDS

MARCHE

KENNETH J. ALFORD
arr par A. WINTER

CONDUCTEUR SIb



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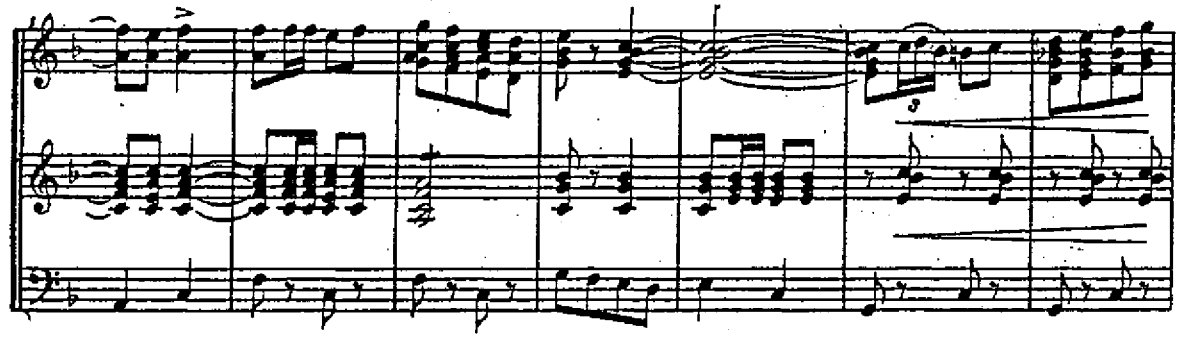
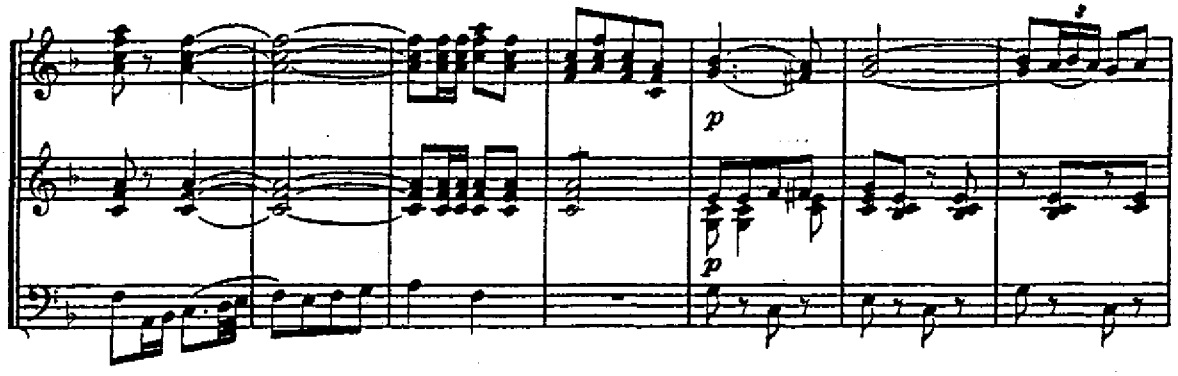
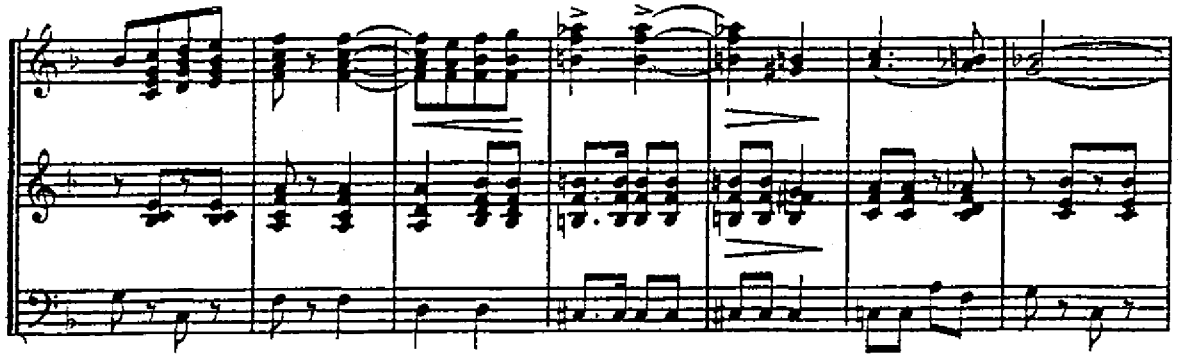
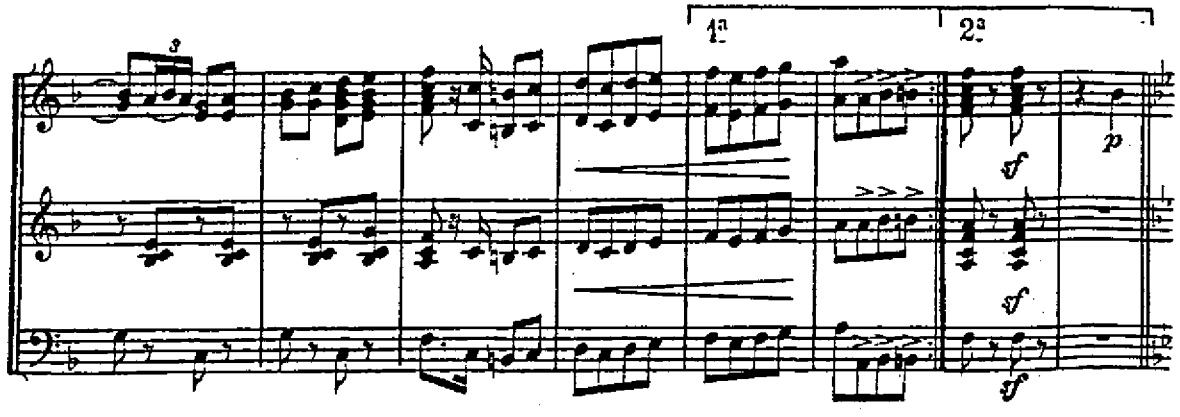
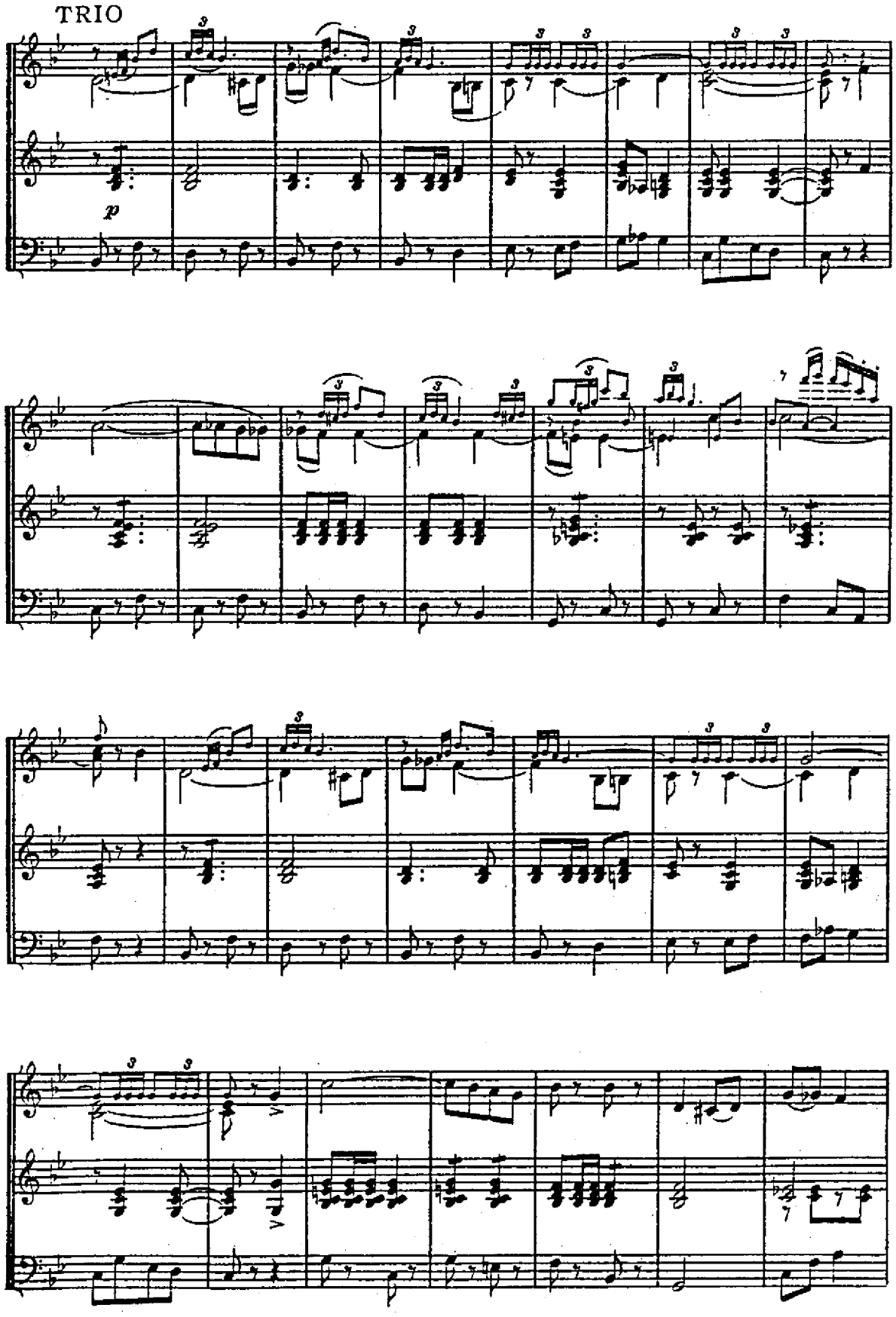
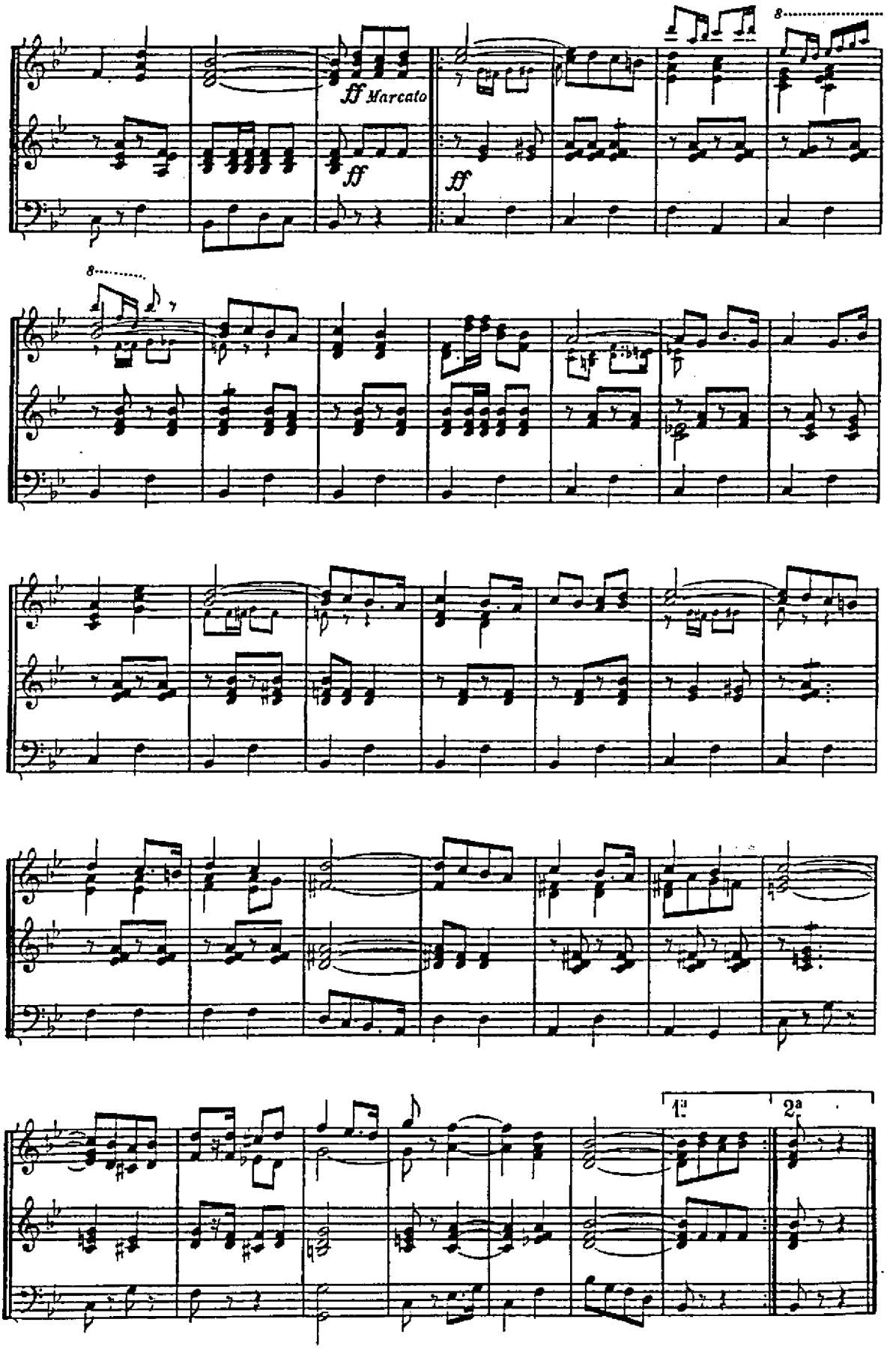



p
p




1a
2a
sf
p
sf
sf


TRIO
p

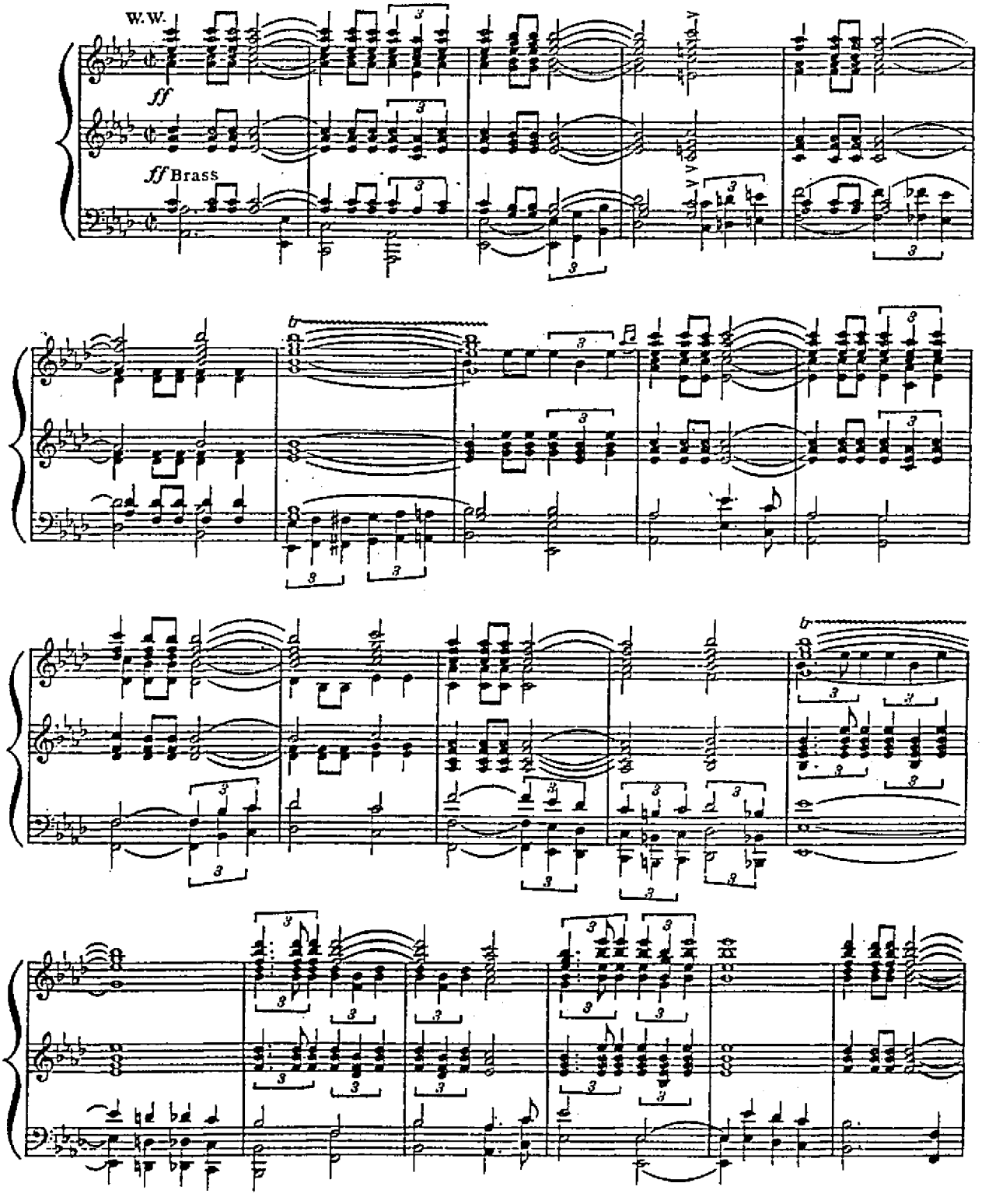

ff Marcato
ff
ff
8
8
1.
2.

THE STANDARD OF ST GEORGE

MARCH

CONDUCTOR

KENNETH J. ALFORD



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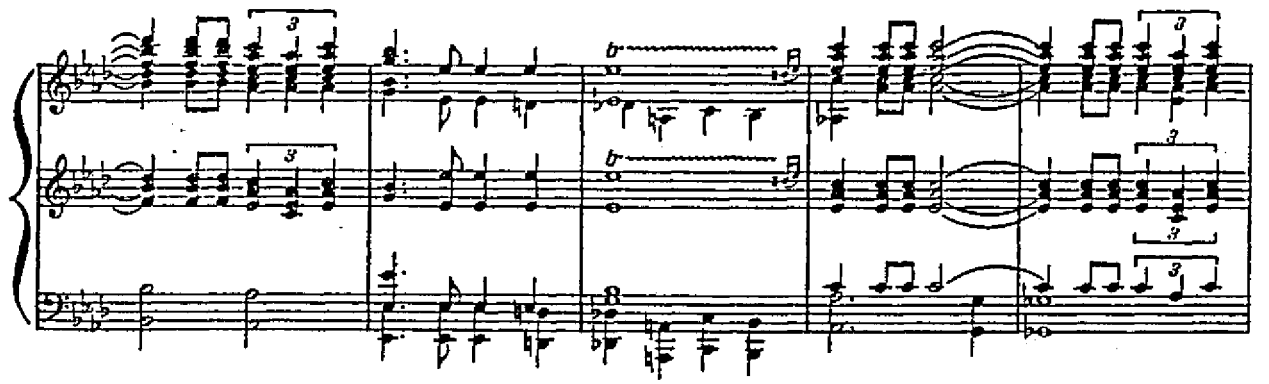
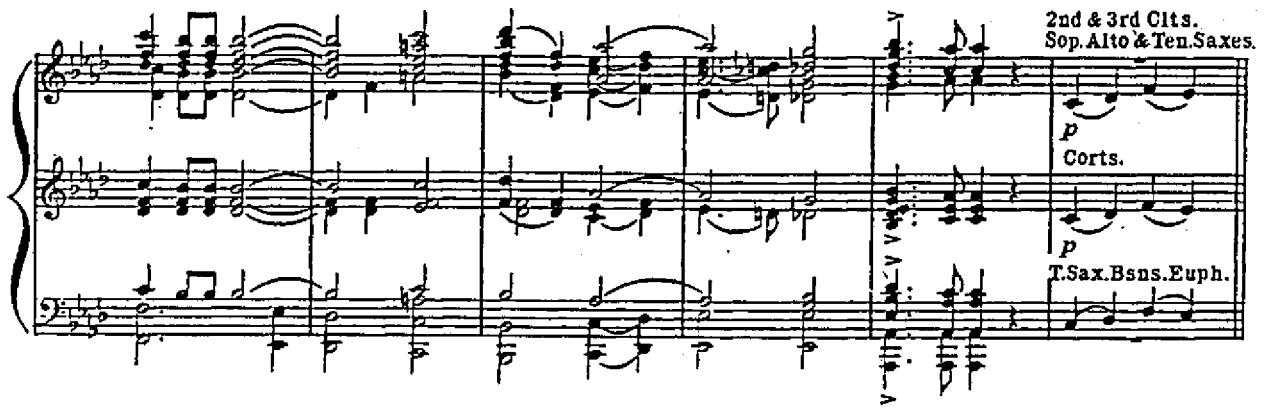
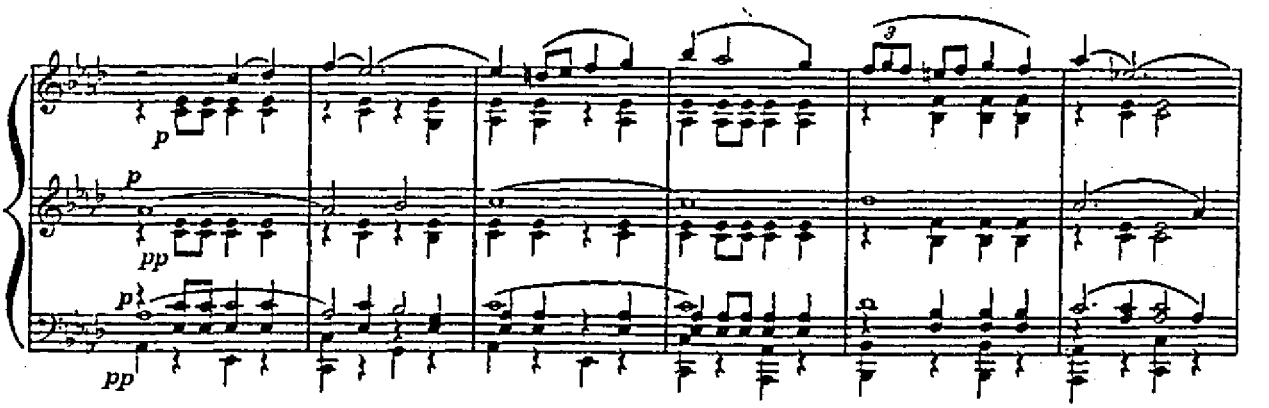
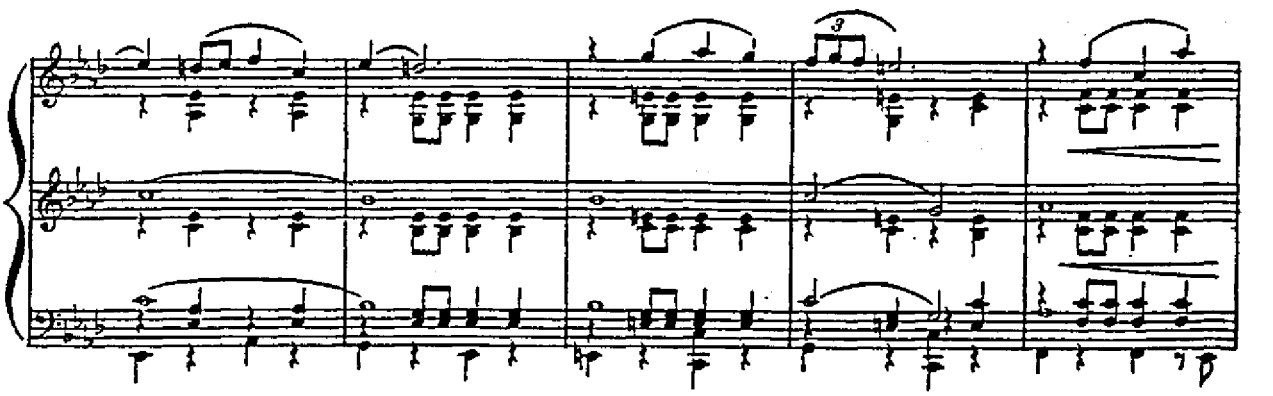
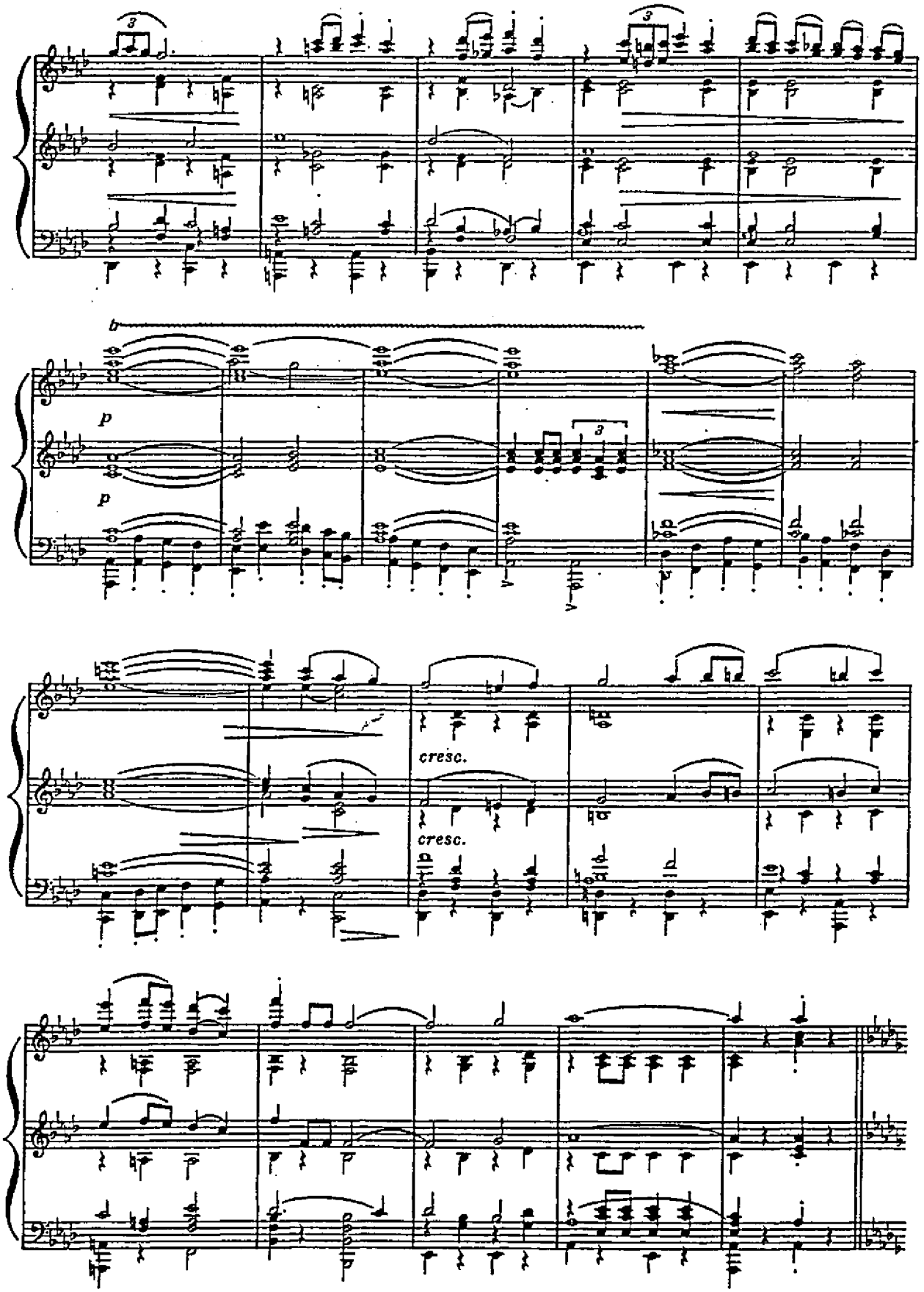
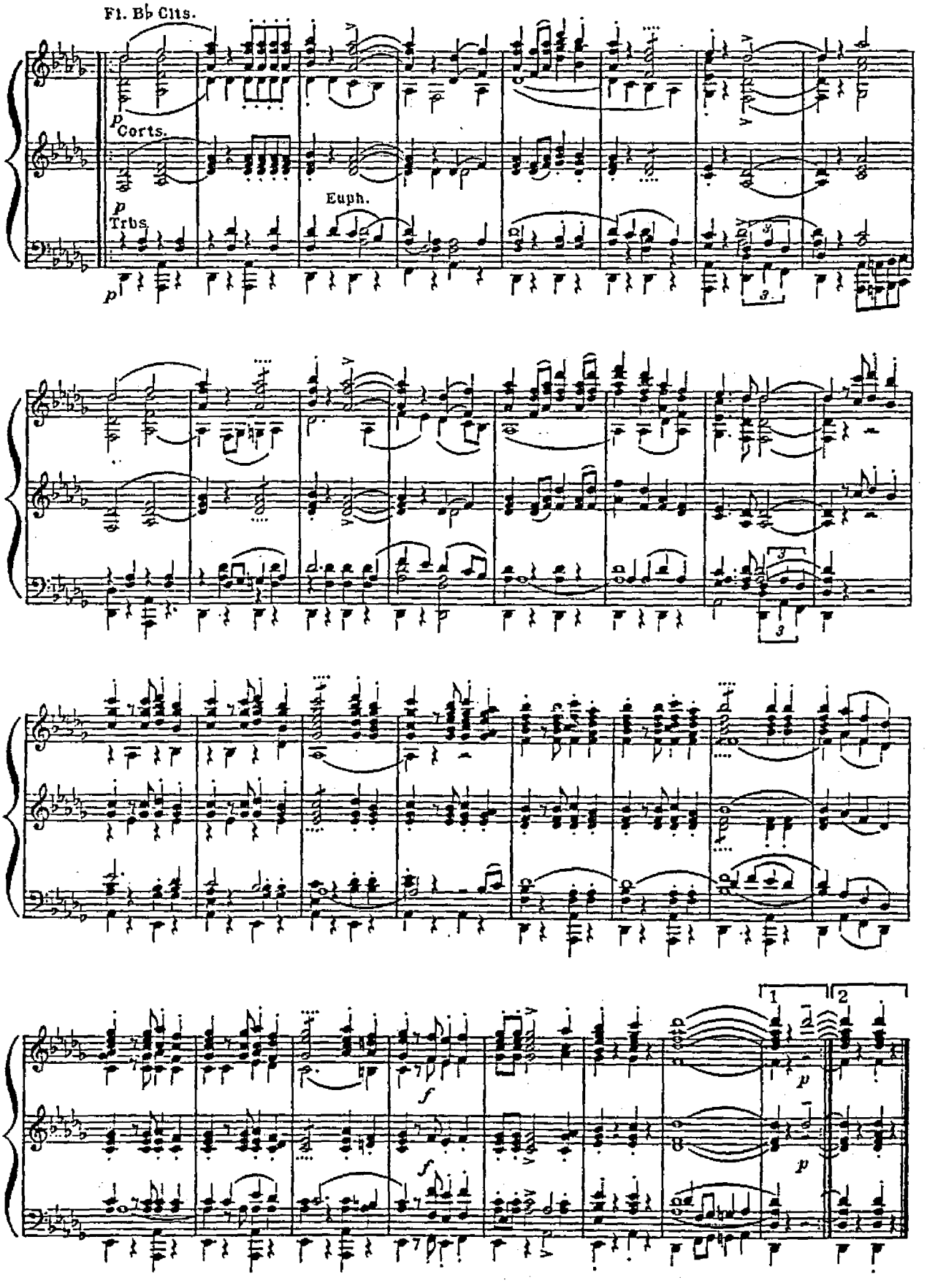



2nd & 3rd Clts.
Sop. Alto & Ten. Saxes.
p
Corts.
p
T.Sax.Bsns.Euph.


p
p
pp
p
pp




3
3
b
p
p
3
cresc.
cresc.


Fl. Bb Clts.
p
Corts.
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VITA

Alan Todd Alexander was born on August 8, 1969 and raised in New Albany, Mississippi. He attended Ingomar Attendence Center for eight years before graduating from W.P. Daniel High School with honors in 1987. He attended the University of Mississippi as a Carrier Scholar, majoring in Music Education. After receiving the degree of Bachelor of Music Education in 1992 (*cum laude*), he became the band director of the Biggersville School System in Corinth, Mississippi, while pursuing a Master's Degree in Music Theory in his spare time. He returned to full time study in 1993 as a Graduate Assistant to the University of Mississippi Band Department.

He is currently self-employed as a drill designer and consultant to numerous bands in Northeast Mississippi, while preparing to reenter the teaching profession somewhere in the Southeastern United States.