Frank A. Wallace

Patron Etudes

for solo guitar, op. 99

With gratitude to Dr. Daniel Pewsner
and Claude and Sheela at the Centre Artistique de Pièġon
who all revived my spirit

and thanks for support
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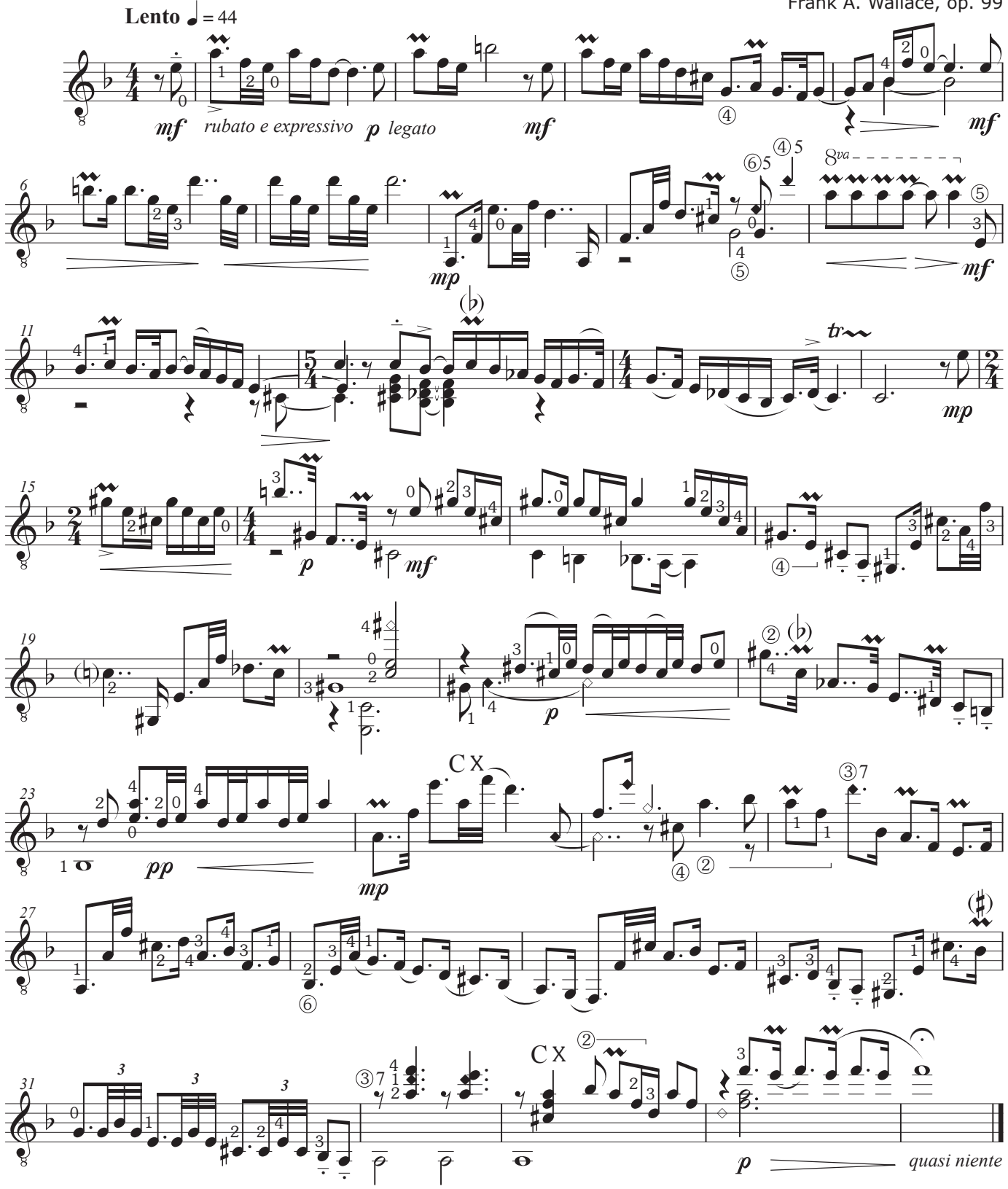
Patron Etudes

I. Chambre des Hirondelles

for Sheela and Claude

Frank A. Wallace, op. 99



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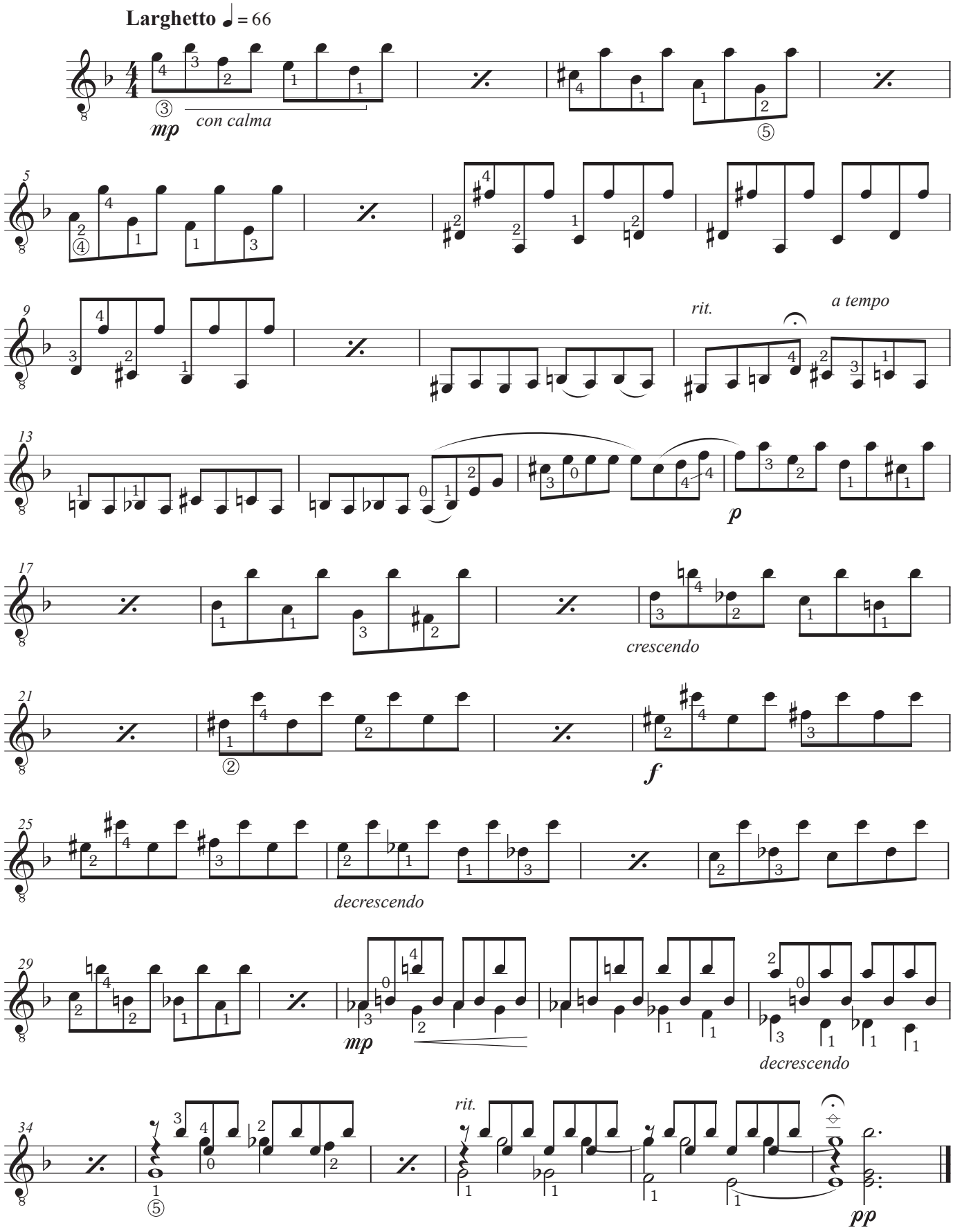
November 7, 2019
Piègon, France

II. Reach, my Friend

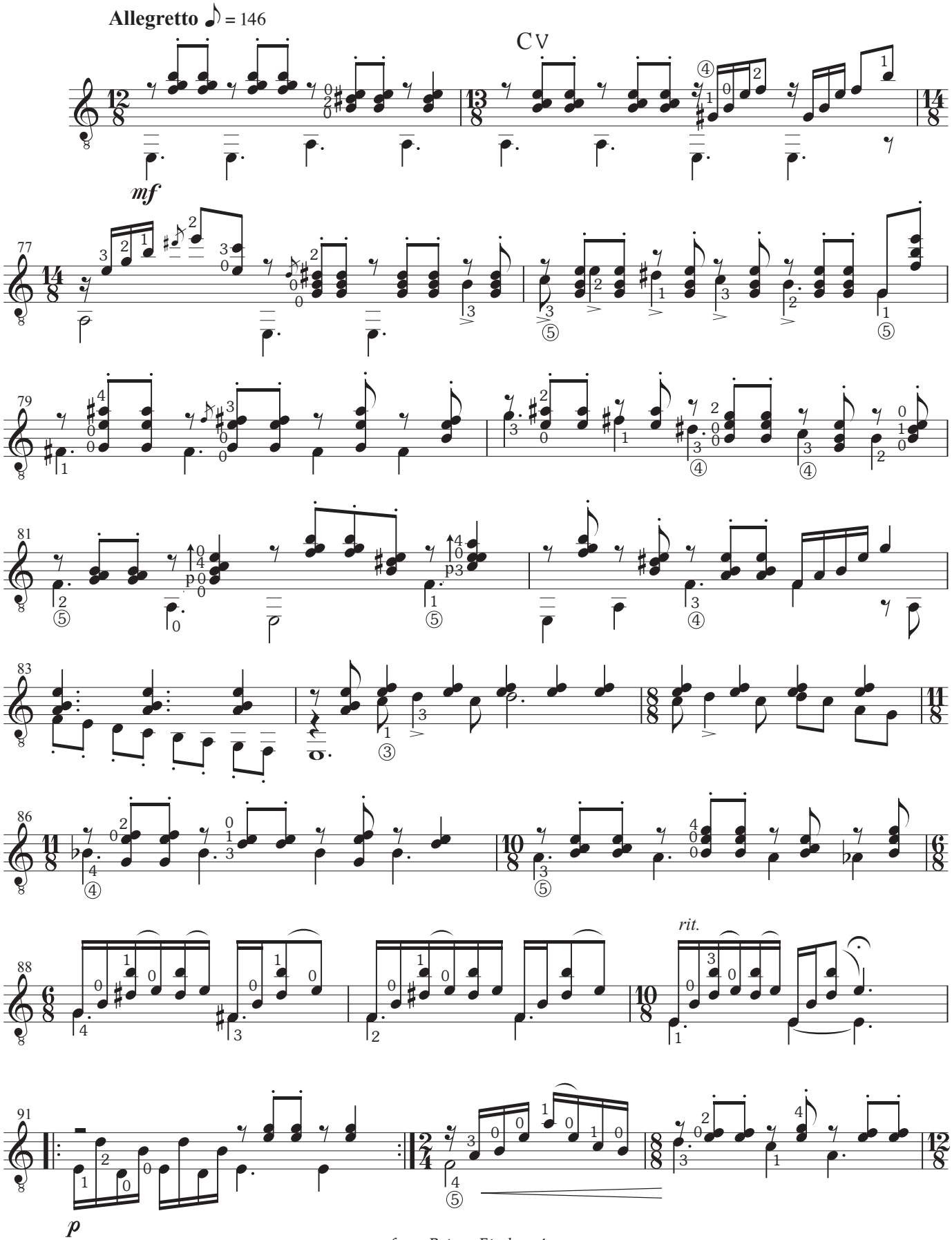
for Adam Wallace

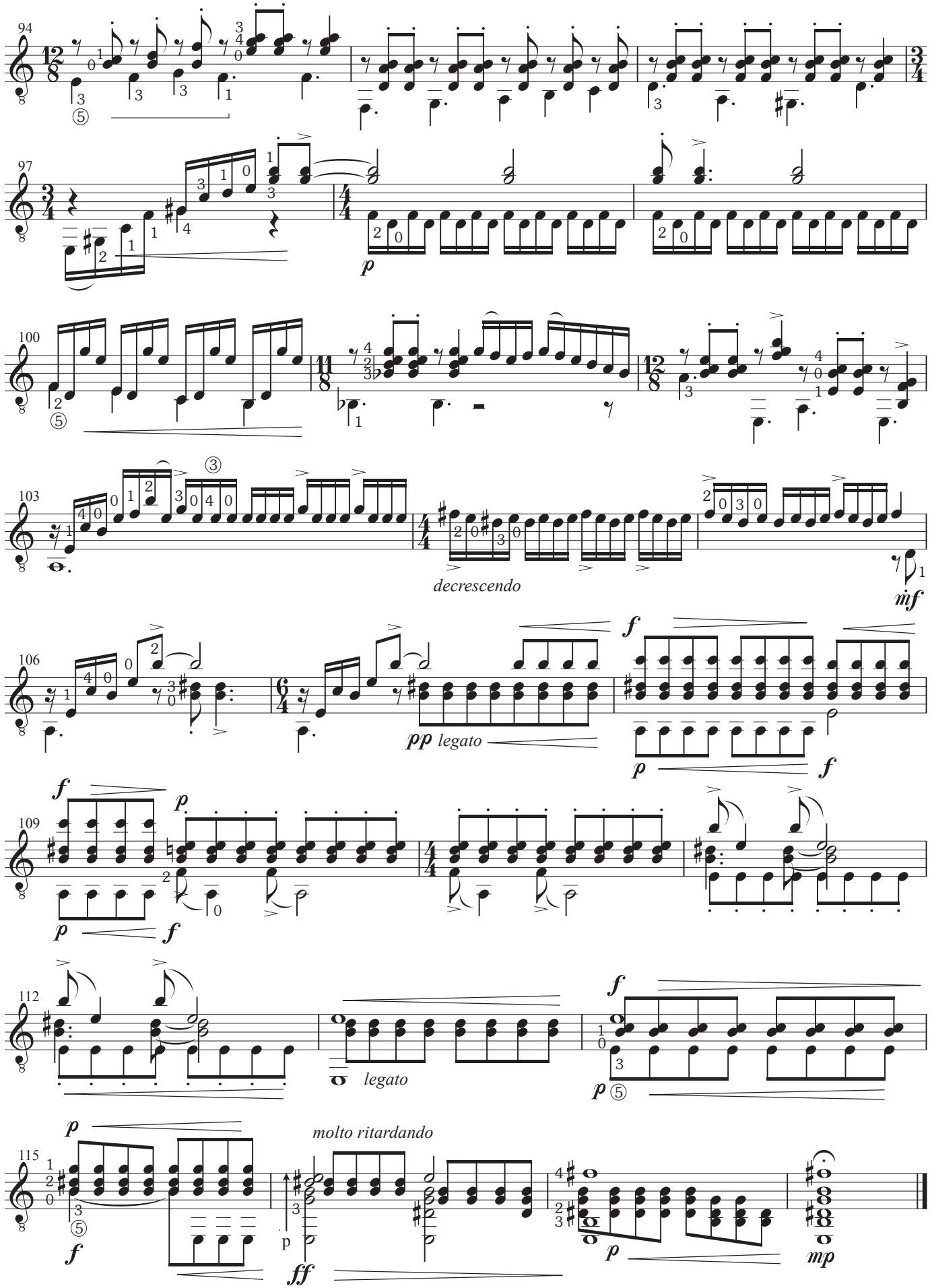


December 18, 2019
Croton Falls, NY

III. Opposition

for David Blanchard

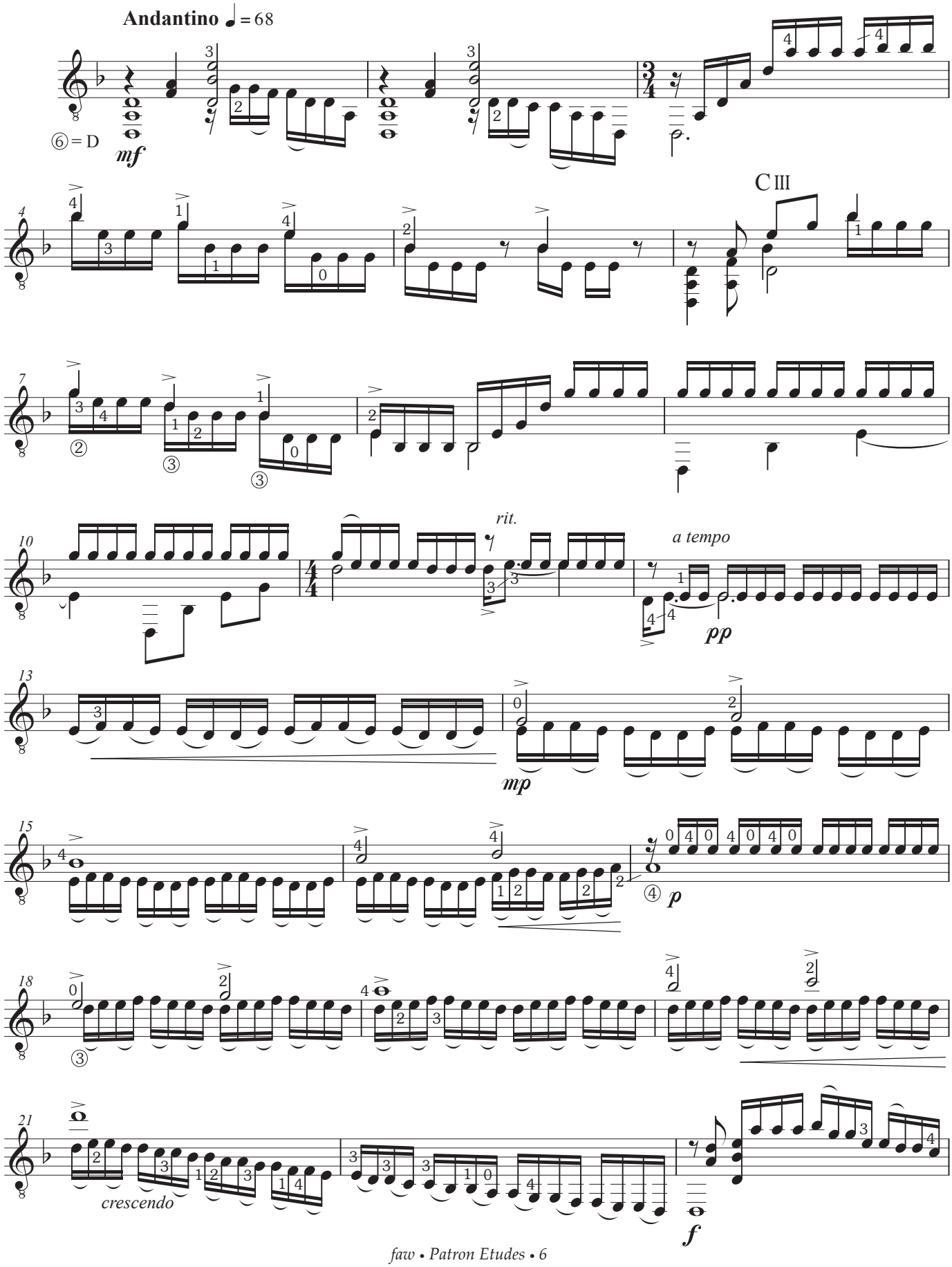


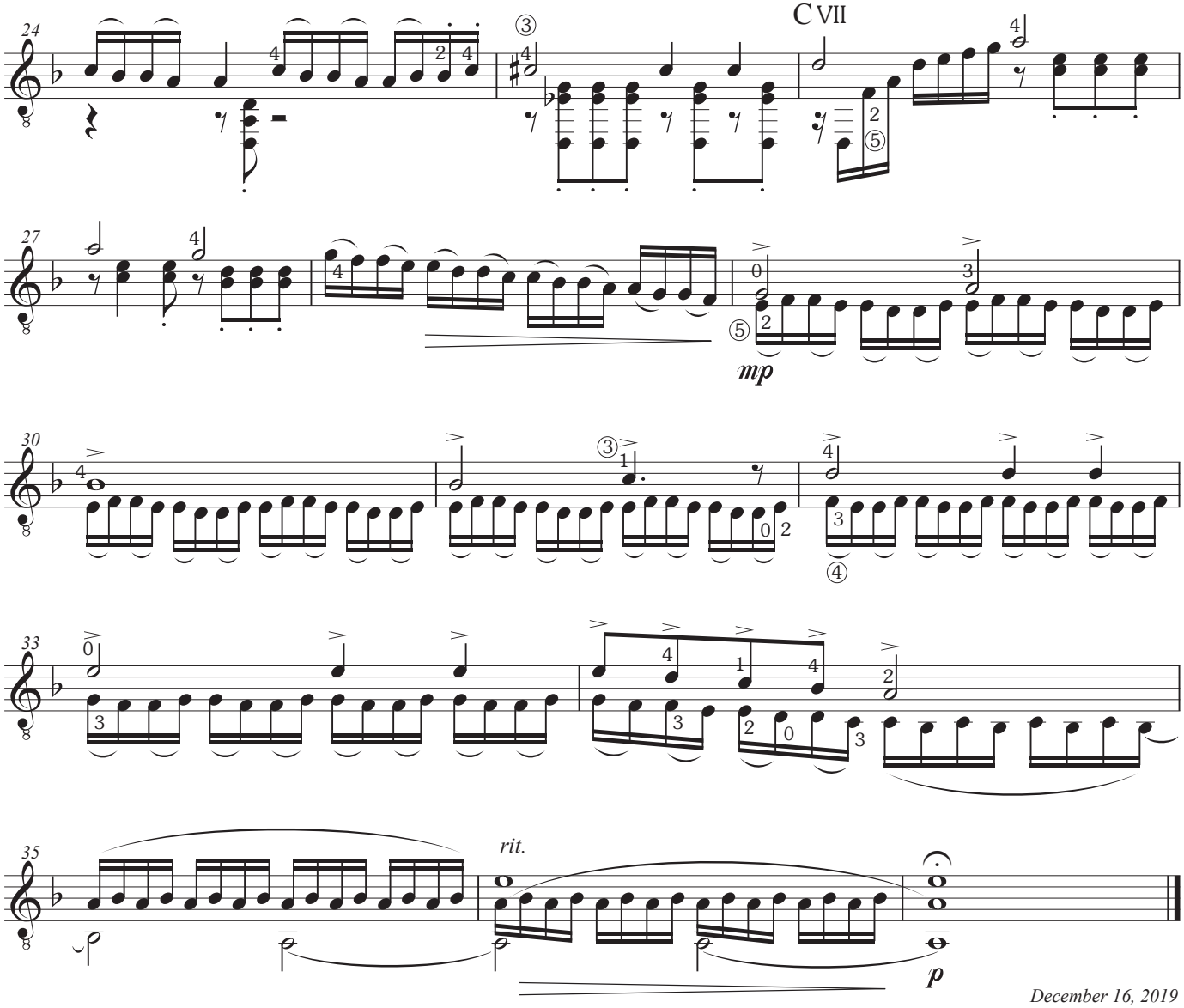


December 11, 2019
Antrim NH

IV. Slurry #1

for Trevor LaBarge

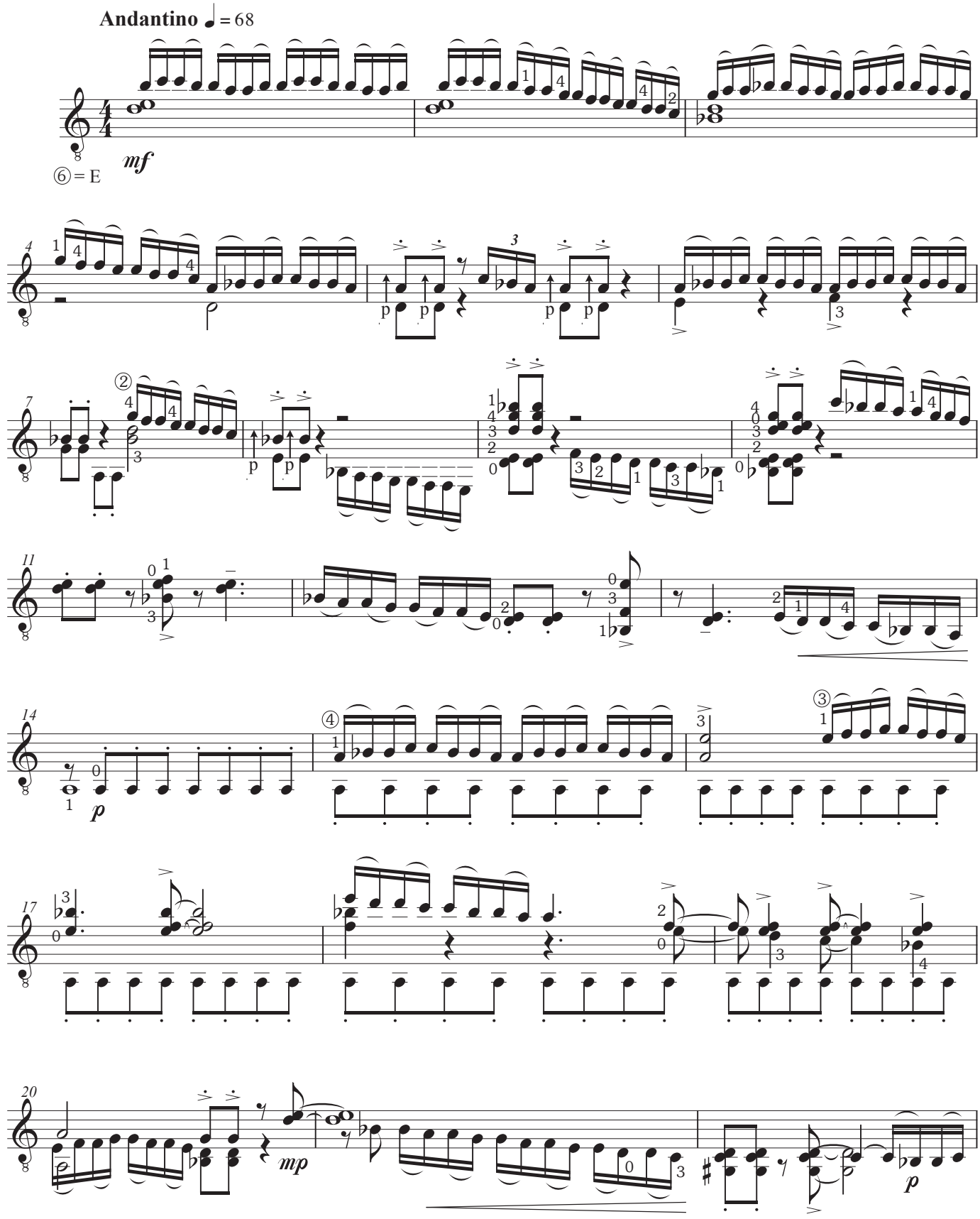


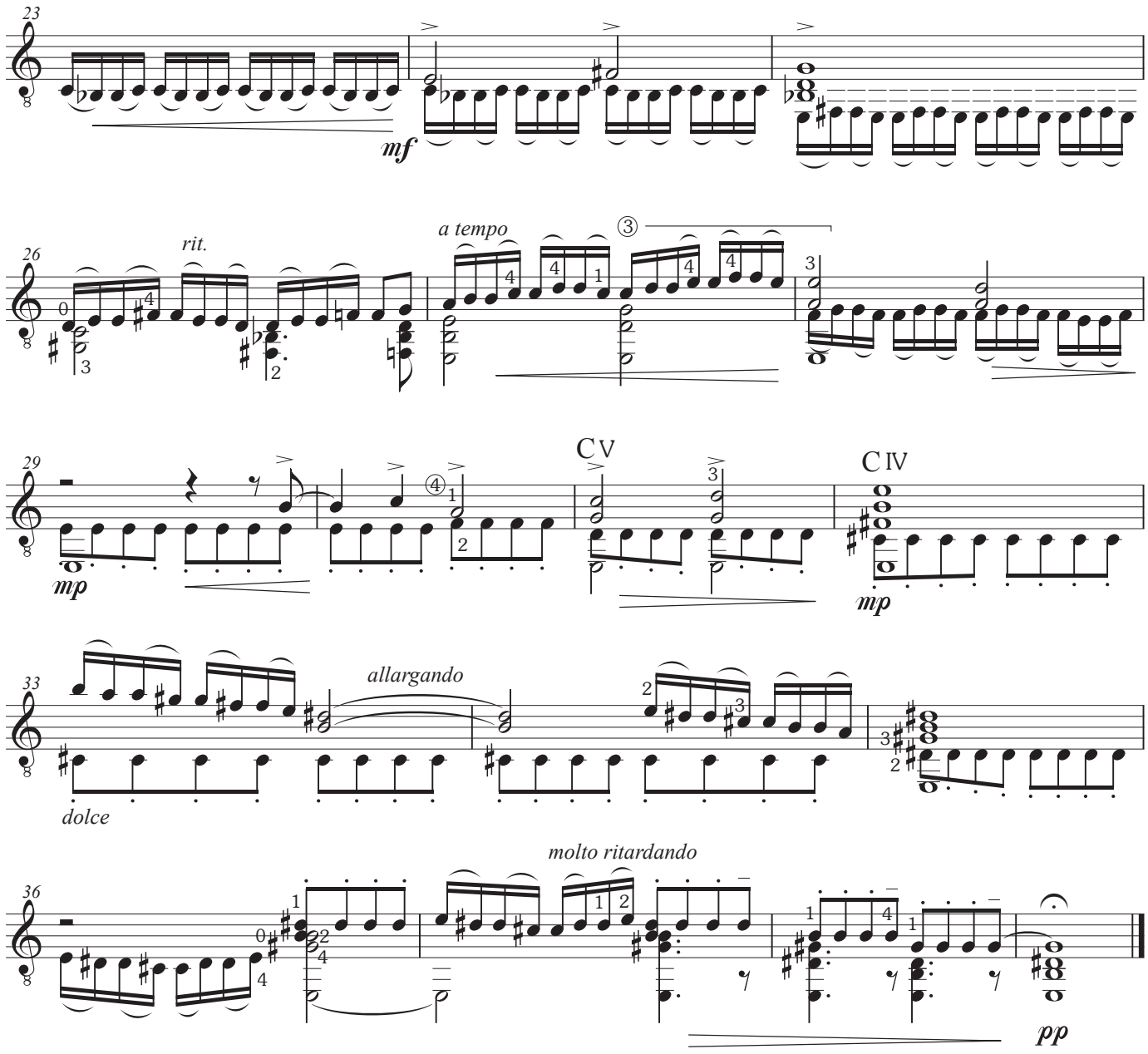


December 16, 2019
Croton Falls, NY

V. Slurry #2

for Celeste McClain

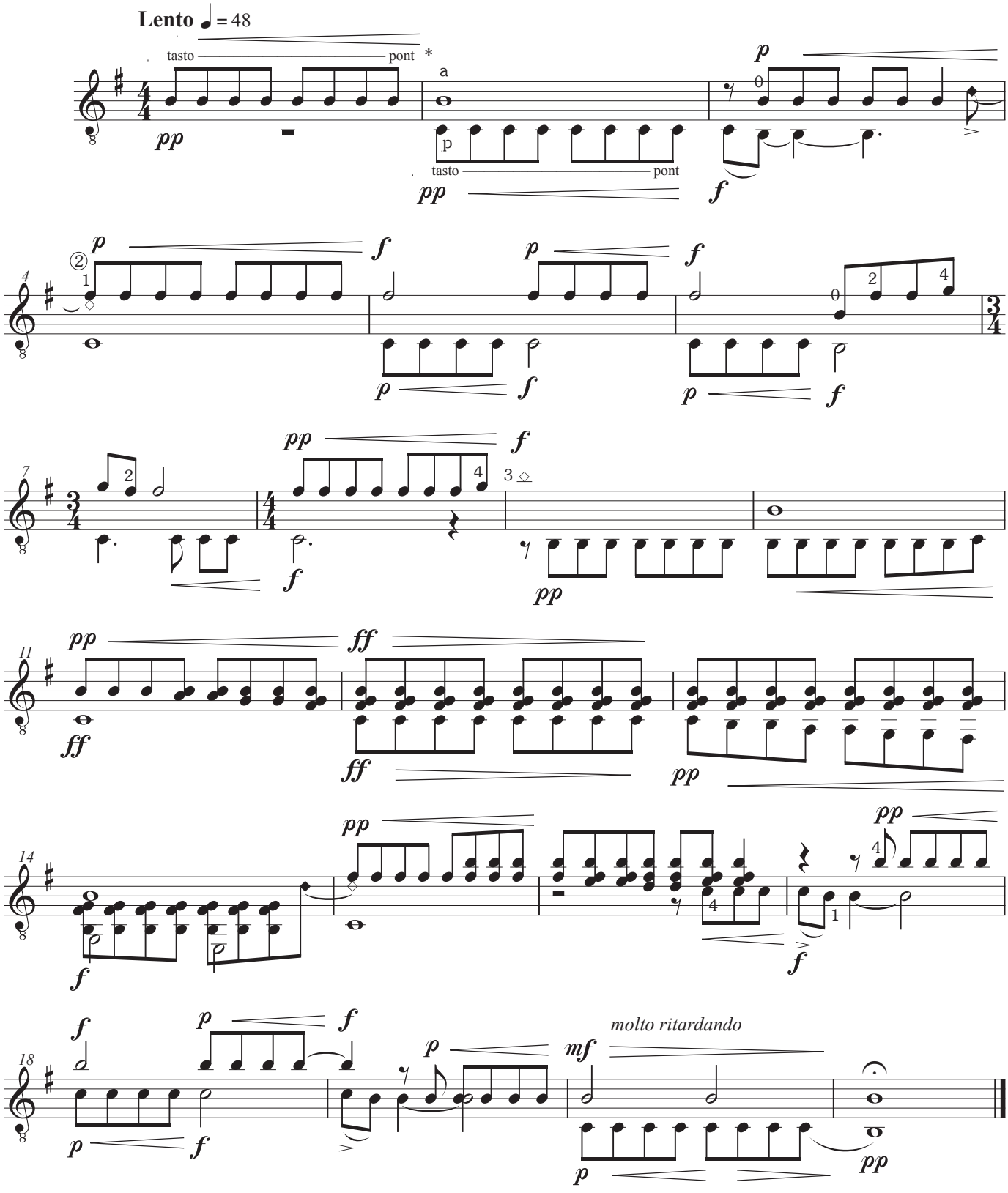




December 17, 2019
Croton Falls, NY

VI. Polly #1

for Trevor LaBarge

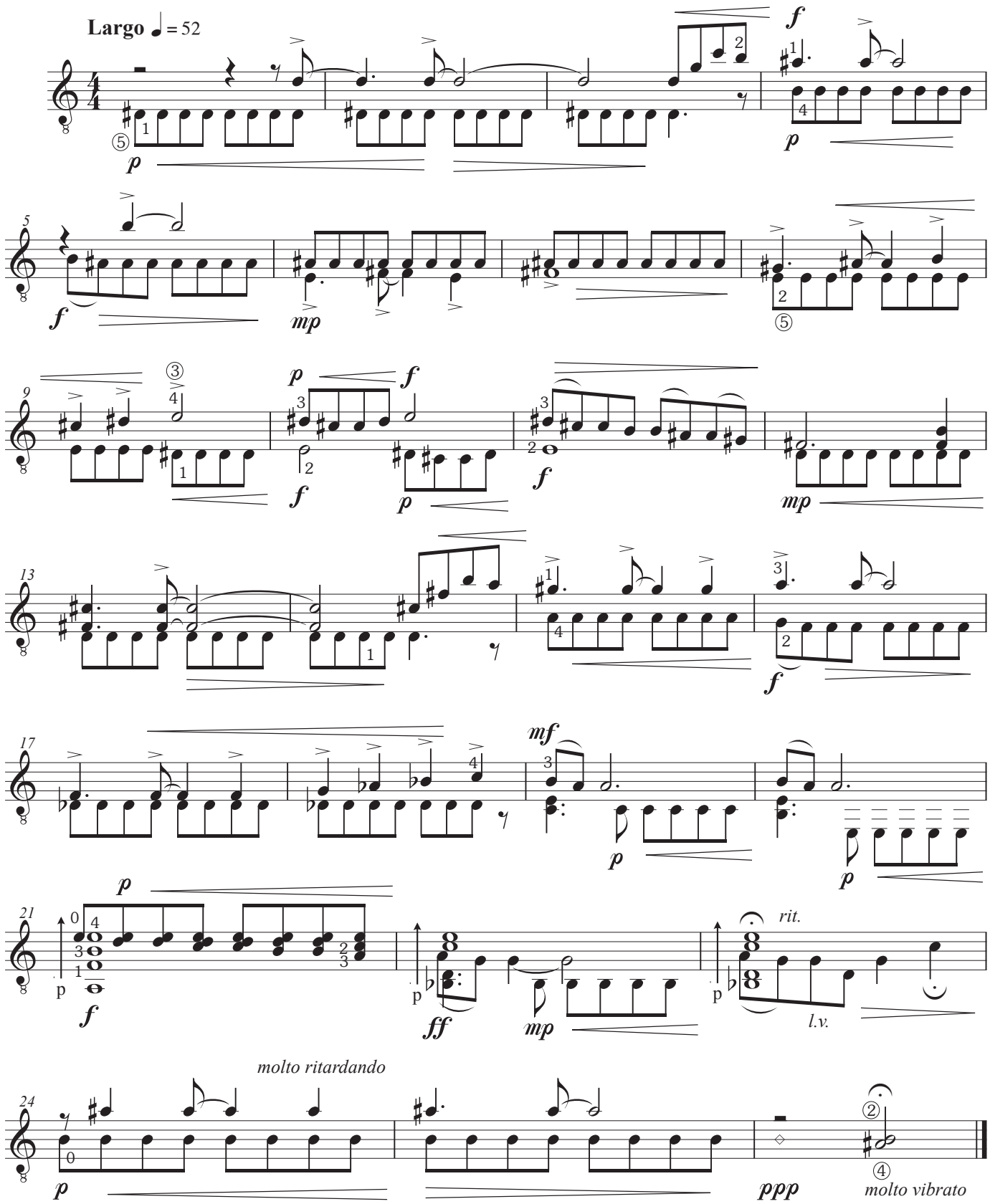


* Use timbre (position of attack in right hand) combined with type of stroke (rest or free) to enhance dynamics and seaparaion of voices.

December 18, 2019
Croton Falls, NY

VII. Polly #II

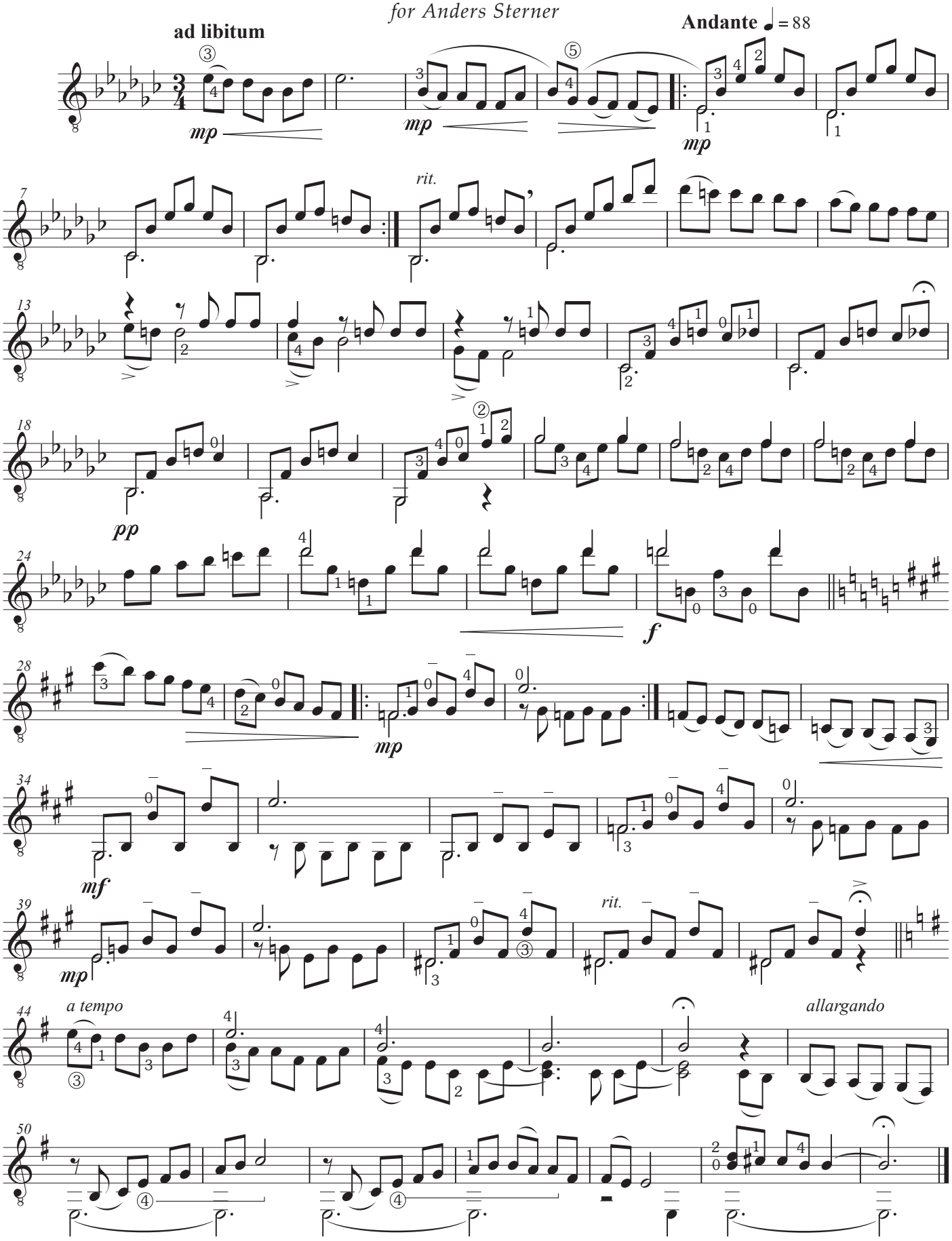
for Celeste McClain



January 12, 2020
Croton Falls, NY

VIII. Flat!

for Anders Sterner



December 24, 2019
Croton Falls, NY

I. Chambre des Hirondelle
…is a musical prayer, not a study, and was written on retreat at the Centre Artistque de Piégon, Provence, France, on 11/7/19. I prefer to publish collections rather than stand alone works, and so it seemed fitting that this should be included here as it represents a new beginning for me. After two years of health struggles and an ensuing one-year hiatus from composing, this is the piece that motivated my muse to reawake. The chambre is a beautiful room filled with art and resonant sound. I was fortunate to have it as my private studio for one week. At the time, I was primarily practicing long hours on a magnificent 1969 Bouchet loaned to me by a dear friend. On the fifth day, I needed a rest, and so took up my pencil. The whispering sounds of the swallows that once inhabited this space, when windows were shattered and abandonment of the ancient farm had taken its toll, inspired the music you will hear. It is spacious, ponders time, imbued with the natural beauty of the land and air surrounding this special retreat, lovingly restored by its owners and restorers: Claude, Sheela and Jean-Pierre Eichenberger.Now begin the true etudes, my first in many years. Recently I have been pondering very fundamental issues in my own playing: balance, articulation, dynamic clarity, voice separation. These are the results.

II. Equal and Opposite
One of the most difficult tasks of the guitarist is to play multiple voices with one hand. Both hands individually face this challenge, but here I focus on the right hand balance between thumb and fingers. The natural function of our opposing thumb is to grasp, to hold things and manipulate them, be it chipping stone blades, or holding a glass, hammering a nail or guiding a pipette into a test tube. The thumb must match the opposing pressure of the fingers and vice versa. But what if the music demands a soft note in the fingers and a loud one with the thumb. Bach fugues, Narváez fantasías, or any melody with accompaniment by Mozart or Sor require this skill. The three fundamental combinations are summarized by Equal and Opposite: loud thumb with soft fingers, equal value of both, or loud fingers with soft thumb. Endless variation can be, and should be employed.

III. Reach
It has been noted repeatedly that I have a big reach in my left hand and use that ability in my compositions to create unique sounds, harmonies and effects not otherwise achievable. Many times I am unaware of the demands I am placing on other players, though at times I see no alternative and need to practice the stretches myself. Stretch is the common word used, but reach seems to me much more appropriate. Why? We all have a natural ability, a limited span of the fingers and hand bones to open.

IV. Slurs
I have nothing new to say about slurs. But I will note that even some very accomplished players (including myself!) frequently forget the concept that a left hand slur is nothing more than a different kind of pluck. One can use free stroke or rest stroke, either way all left hand plucks need to be consciously controlled and musically informed. In the two etudes offered here, strive for fluidity, regular rhythm and adequate volume of the slur, ie: don't strike the preceding right hand pluck too loud. Right and left hands should be balanced in their attacks.

V. Polyphonic Expression
I spent more than ten years devoted to the music of Renaissance Spain. Seven composers left about 700 works for the vihuela de mano that still exist. Most classical guitarists are familiar with a small handful of their works. Sadly to me, these are the least characteristic of the genre, the more popular styles, but not the core of a very serious and sophisticated music. The vast majority of them are intricate polyphonic fantasías, inspired by Josquin and other famous authors of the day. As mentioned above in Equal and Opposite, the skills required to perform these fantasías and my two etudes, as well as many many other works, require a profound knowledge of the structure of the music and the concept of imitation. Musical imitation is the same as any other, a motive or phrase is repeated in its identical form, at a different time and/or pitch. It is essential that the imitation be exact in expression as well as form. Musical development may bring in more complex demands and so at times each repetition may expand or grow in dynamic or even be altered slightly, though retaining its fundamental character. Bach reached the ultimate expression of this concept in the art of the Fugue where he employed many techniques such as retrograde, etc. Read more on The Art of the Fugue and Bach's final output and obsession with fugal, or imitative writing.

My two "simple" etudes are the opposite. They mostly use repeated notes as motives, thus requiring little left hand preoccupation and total focus on right hand control: dynamic, articulate and timbral. I encourage the alternation of rest stroke and free stroke as well as a continuous flow of timbral changes to enhance the auditory effects. In other words, when playing a forte, use rest stroke and mostly *sul ponticello,* the opposite for piano: free stroke and *sul tasto.*