JAMES SCLATER

Four Etudes for Solo Harp

Program Notes

These etudes were written at the request of Elaine Martin Barber and are dedicated to her with gratitude and affection. Many years ago, when Elaine was living in Clinton, Mississippi, she taught harp lessons to our daughter. The chance to compose this work was both an opportunity to salute a wonderful performer and to thank her for all the joy she has given through her teaching.

Completed in April 1998, these etudes were conceived as individual works rather than as a group of musical works with unifying musical elements. In each movement a specific technique, gesture or sound is exploited in a variety of ways.

The first, “Brooding, Mysterious,” alternates two types of gestures - quick, delicate arpeggiated figures and chromatic pedal-slips which give a restless intensity to the music.

The second movement is in a broad ABAB structure. The A sections feature music in which rocking 6/8 patterns alternate with *glissandi*. The contrasting sections spin out a lyrical tune which cannot seem to make up its mind regarding which mode it is in - Mixolydian or Ionian.

The third etude, “Papillon,” has a restless quality achieved by uneven groupings of 16th notes. In it, a spiky, pointillistic texture alternates with a more traditional melody and accompaniment.

Movement IV attempts to capture the spirit of “third-stream” jazz by using various “blue-note” chords and swing melodic patterns.

One aspect of the design of movements III and IV involves using a very limited set of pitches. The relatively few pedal changes allow for contrast to be achieved mainly by variation in rhythm, texture, register, dynamics, etc.

James Sclater

James Sclater (b. 1943)

James Sclater grew up in Mobile, Alabama and graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi with a B.M. and M.M. in Theory-Composition. At U.S.M. he studied clarinet with Gomer Pound. He earned the D.M.A. in Composition from the University of Texas at Austin in 1970. Sclater has been a faculty member at Mississippi College since 1970 and retired from the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra in the year 2000 after serving in the clarinet section for 29 years.

Sclater’s compositions have been performed both nationally and internationally. His chamber opera *The Christmas Gift is* a regular feature of the Children’s Musical Theatre in Cheropovets, Russia. He won the Ostwald Prize in 1974 and has been honored for thirteen straight years with a Serious Music award from ASCAP. Recent works include *Images of Southern Religion* for Organ and Brass Quintet, commissioned by the AGO, Region IV.

Sclater performs with colleague Angela Willoughby in the chamber duo LYRICAS. He is married to Judy Davis, a multi-talented musician who also dyes Ukrainian Easter eggs. They have a daughter, Patricia Ann, who lives and works in Kansas City, MO.

for Elaine Martin Barber

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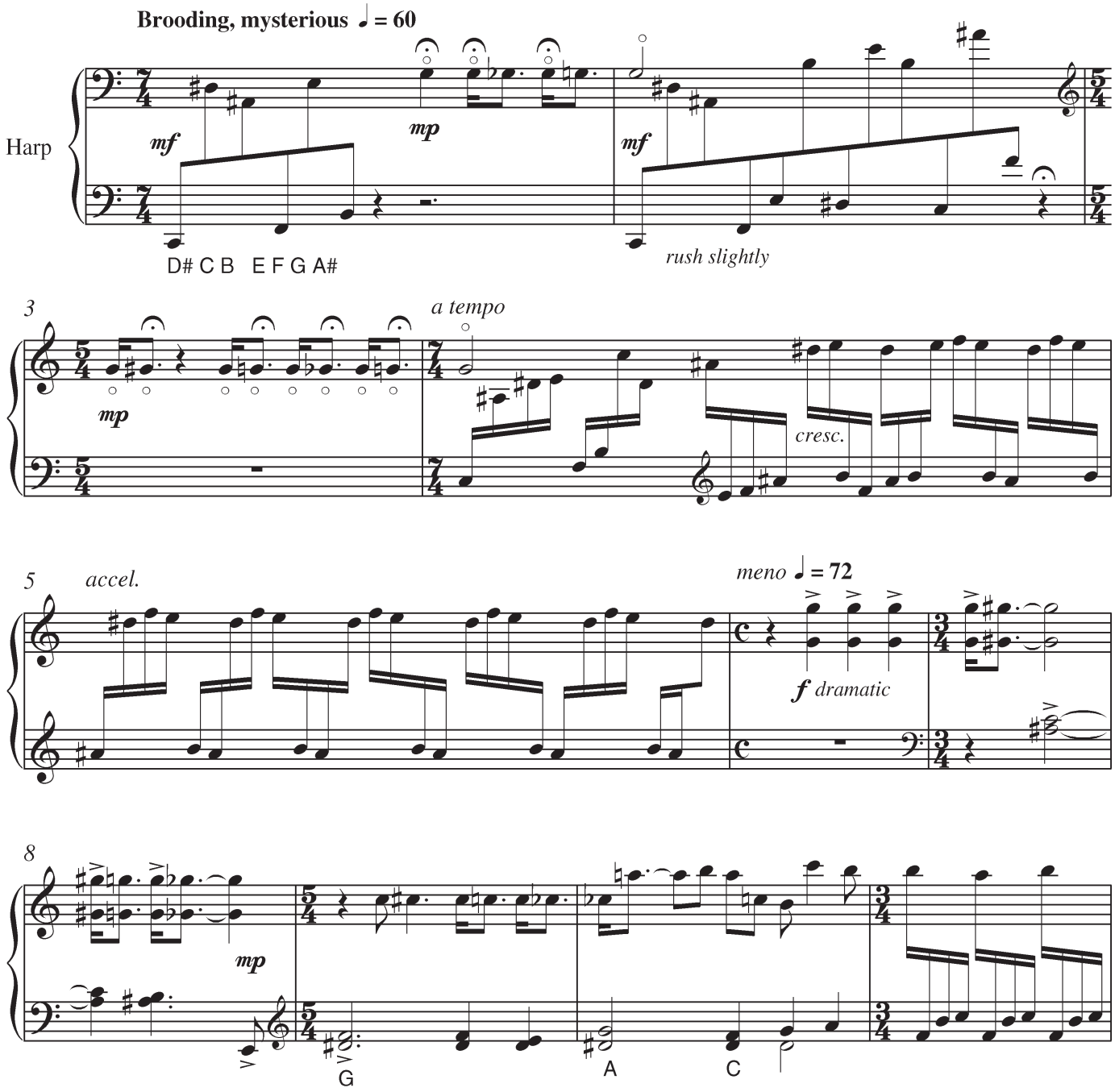
#1



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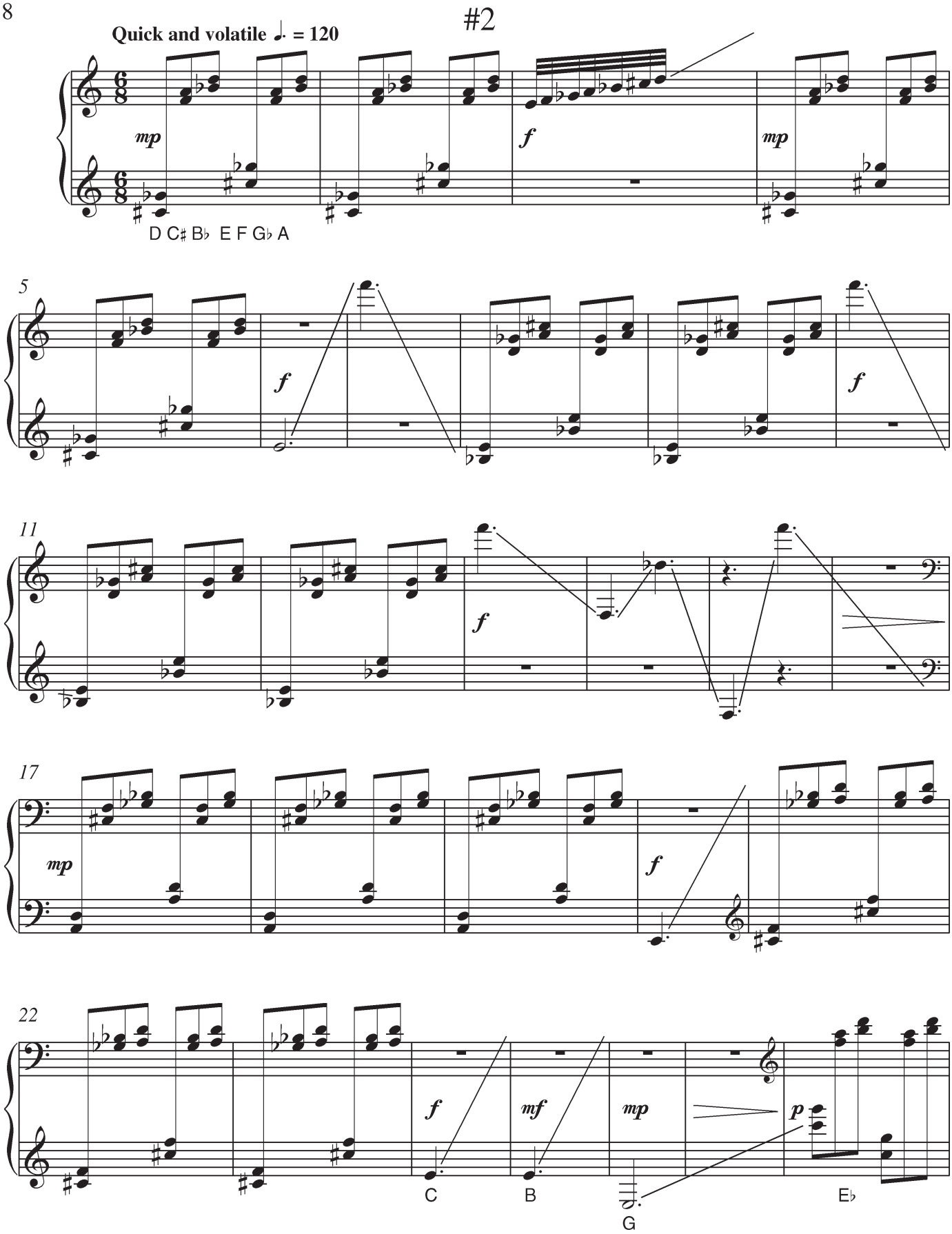
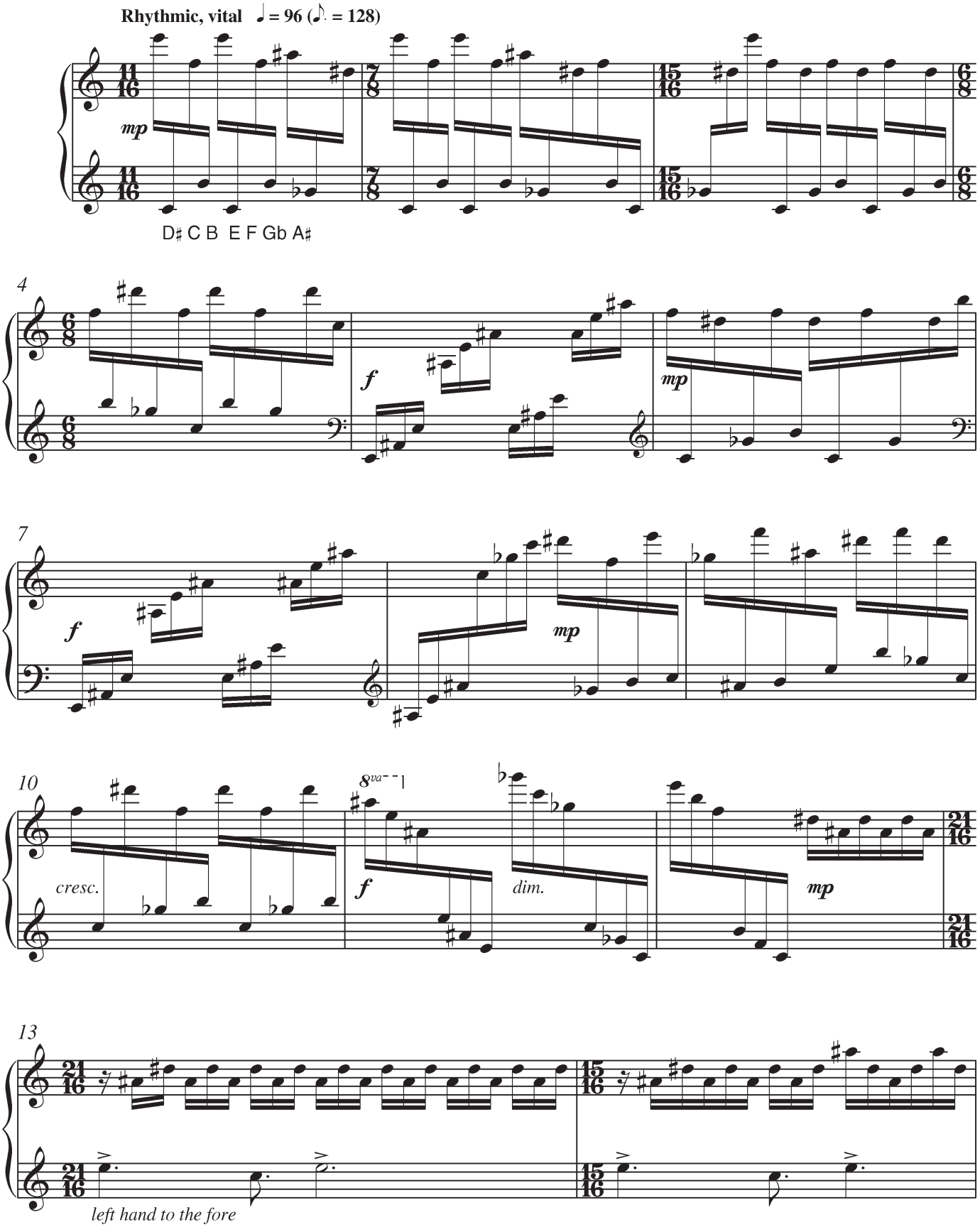
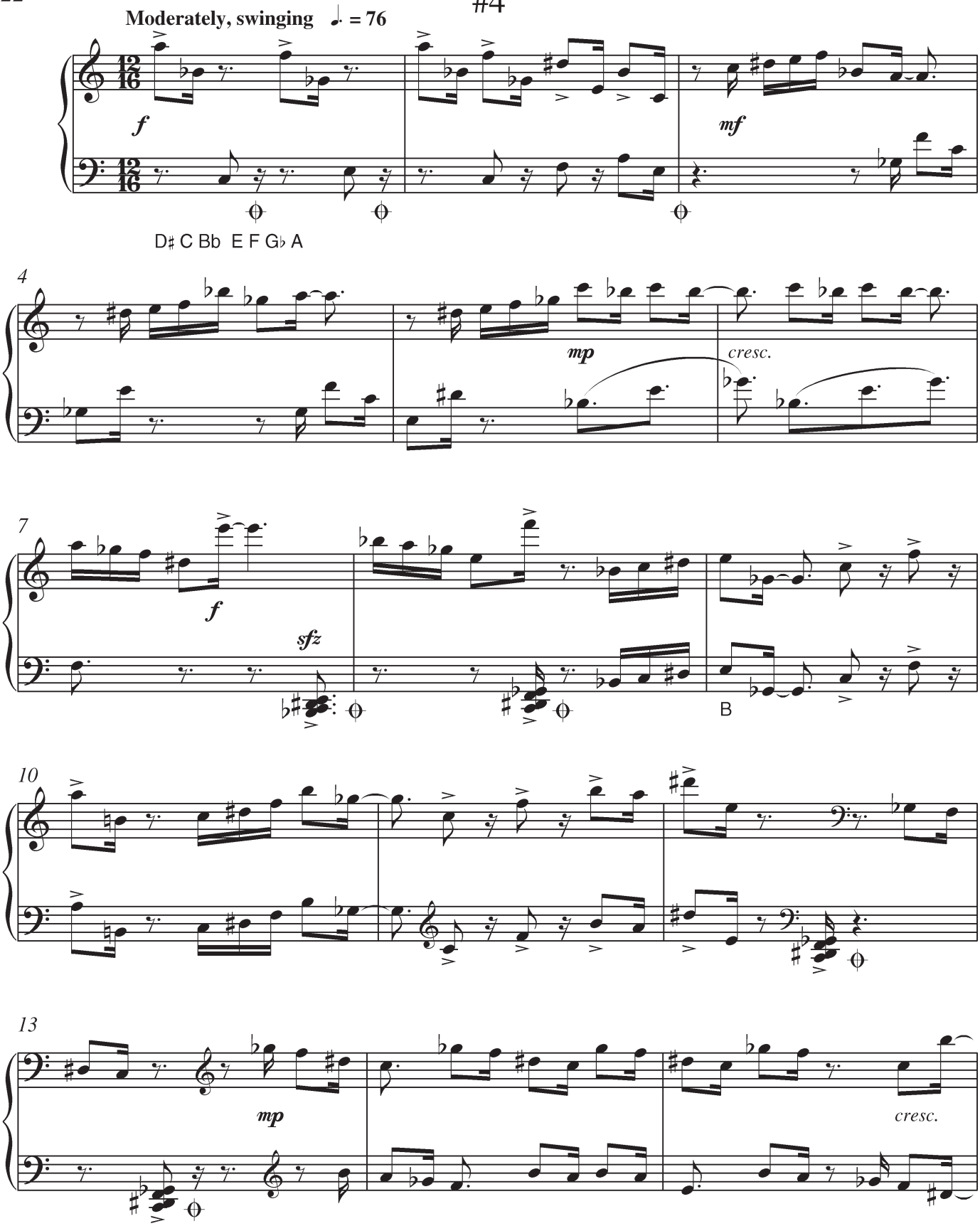

#2
Quick and volatile ♩. = 120
mp
f
mp
D C♯ B♭ E F G♭ A
5
f
f
11
f
17
mp
f
22
f
mf
mp
p
C
B
G
E♭

#3
"Papillon"


Rhythmic, vital ♩ = 96 (♪. = 128)
mp
D♯ C B E F Gb A♯
4
f
mp
7
f
mp
10
cresc.
f
8va
dim.
mp
13
left hand to the fore

#4


Moderately, swinging ♩. = 76
f
mf
D♯ C Bb E F G♭ A
4
mp
cresc.
7
f
sfz
B
10
13
mp
cresc.