Contents

Introduction iv
Notes on the pieces v

Agnus Dei from *Requiem* 2
Anvil Chorus from *Il trovatore* 6
Bella figlia dell'amore from *Rigoletto* 11
Brindisi from *La traviata* 17
Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves from *Nabucco* 24
Grand March from *Aida* 30
Prega per chi adorando te from *Otello* 38
Prelude to Act III from *La traviata* 41
Requiem aeternam from *Requiem* 44
Stride la vampa from *Il trovatore* 46
Tarantella from *La forza del destino* 48
La Vergine degli angeli from *La forza del destino* 52

Introduction

It was the sound of the church organ that first inspired Verdi as an altar boy in the little church of Le Roncole, the village where he was born. He took his first lessons from the local organist, Baistrocchi, and had succeeded him officially before he was twelve years old. Modest yet secure income as a church organist sustained Verdi throughout his early years, and he applied (albeit unsuccessfully) for further organist positions. Yet it appears he left no original music for the instrument, being quickly drawn to the dramatic rather than the liturgical, and following the Italian predilection for opera above all else.

Given the immense popularity of Verdi's operas and the Italian love of operatic-style music in church, it is hardly surprising that many of his most popular numbers found their way back to the church as organ transcriptions. Carlo Fumagalli (1822–1907), for example, compiled numerous volumes, selecting pieces suitable for the various sections of the Mass. It is no surprise, either, that the Victorians, with their penchant for operatic music transcribed for keyboard, seized on Verdi, so much so that he was forced to take legal action against British organists in the 1890s for publishing unauthorized organ arrangements of his music.

The tradition of Verdi for organ is thus well established. Yet apart from the familiar 'Grand March' from *Aida*, few pieces remained in print or were heard much outside Italy. Edwin Lemare, the celebrated organist and transcriber, contributed to this situation by including only two pieces by Verdi (the 'Grand March' and the 'Anvil Chorus') among his transcriptions of Italian music, which appeared in the late 1920s.

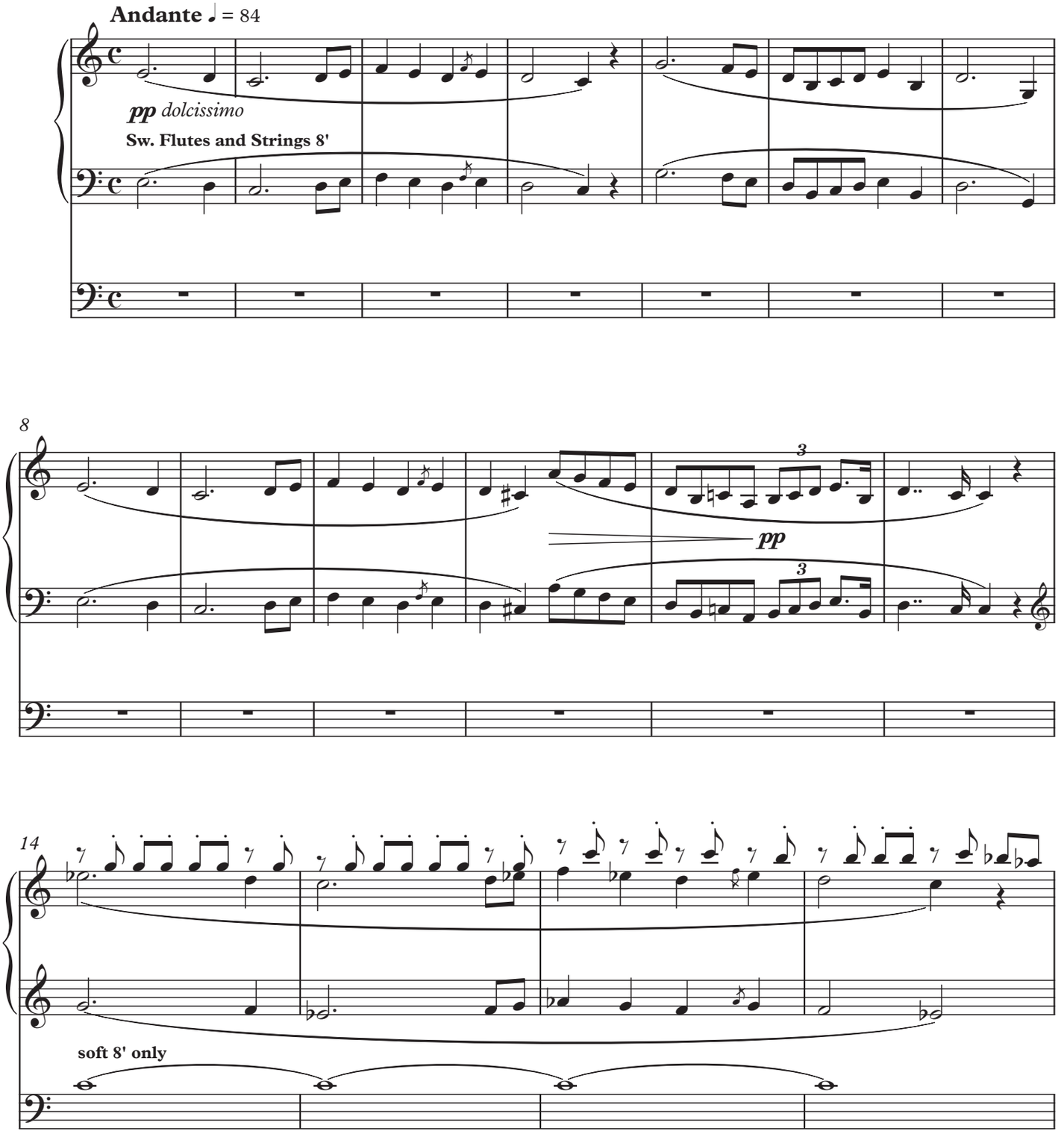
This volume attempts to give a more rounded and updated account, recognizing the wide appeal of Verdi's music and the need, today, for varied repertoire of manageable length serving a range of uses. Opera, understandably, takes pride of place in this collection, but the final choice of works and balance of styles rested ultimately on what transcribed well for the organ, what was fun to play, and what captured the drama and atmosphere. With its transparent textures, memorable melodies and simple yet effective harmony, Verdi's music has always had instant and wide appeal. I hope both church and concert organists will enjoy 'reclaiming' Verdi for their instrument, and that these transcriptions will bring as much pleasure to both players and listeners as their originals.

MARTIN SETCHELL
Christchurch, New Zealand
2019

Agnus Dei

from *Requiem*

GIUSEPPE VERDI
arr. Martin Setchell



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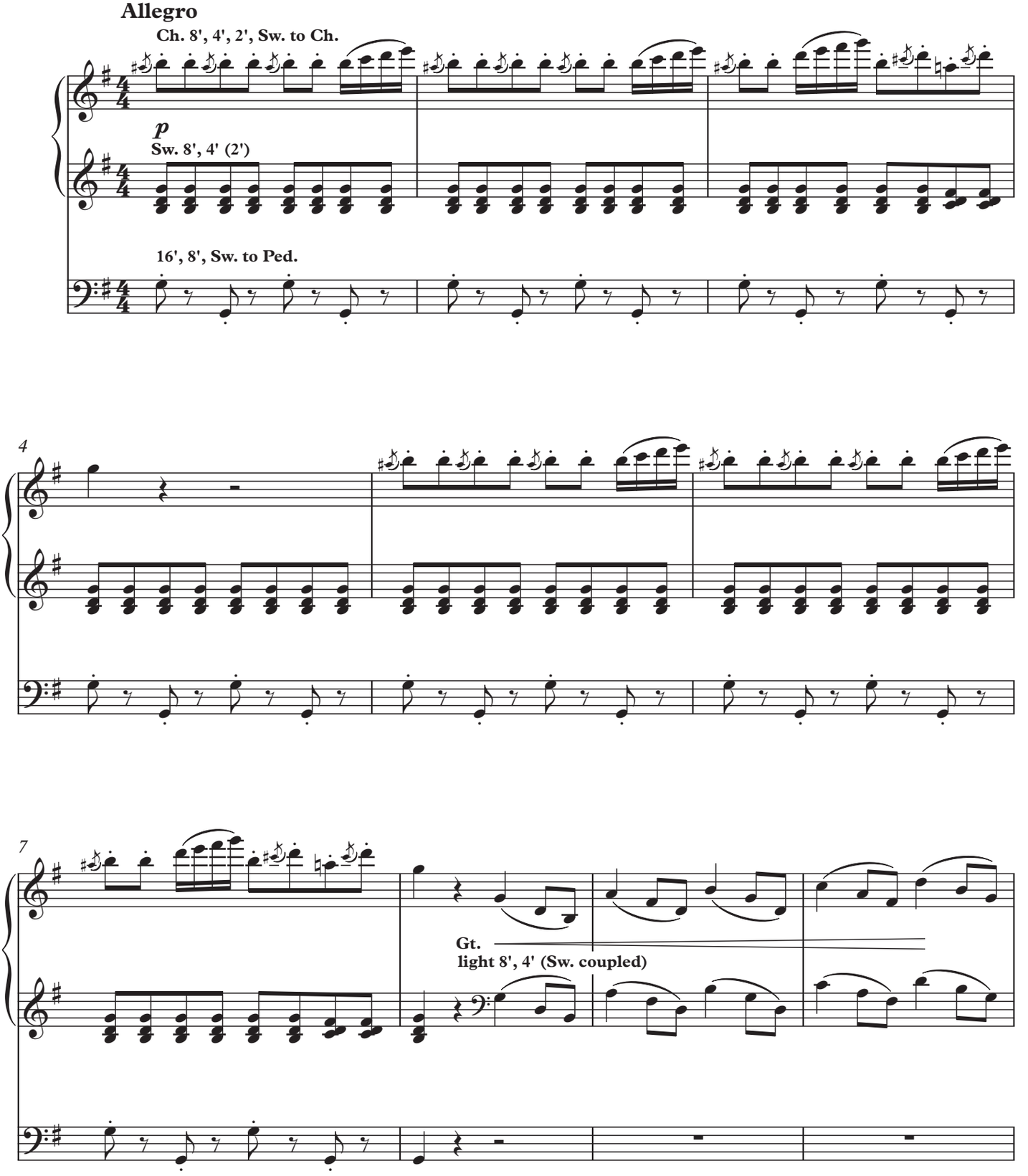
Anvil Chorus

from *Il trovatore*

GIUSEPPE VERDI
arr. Martin Setchell



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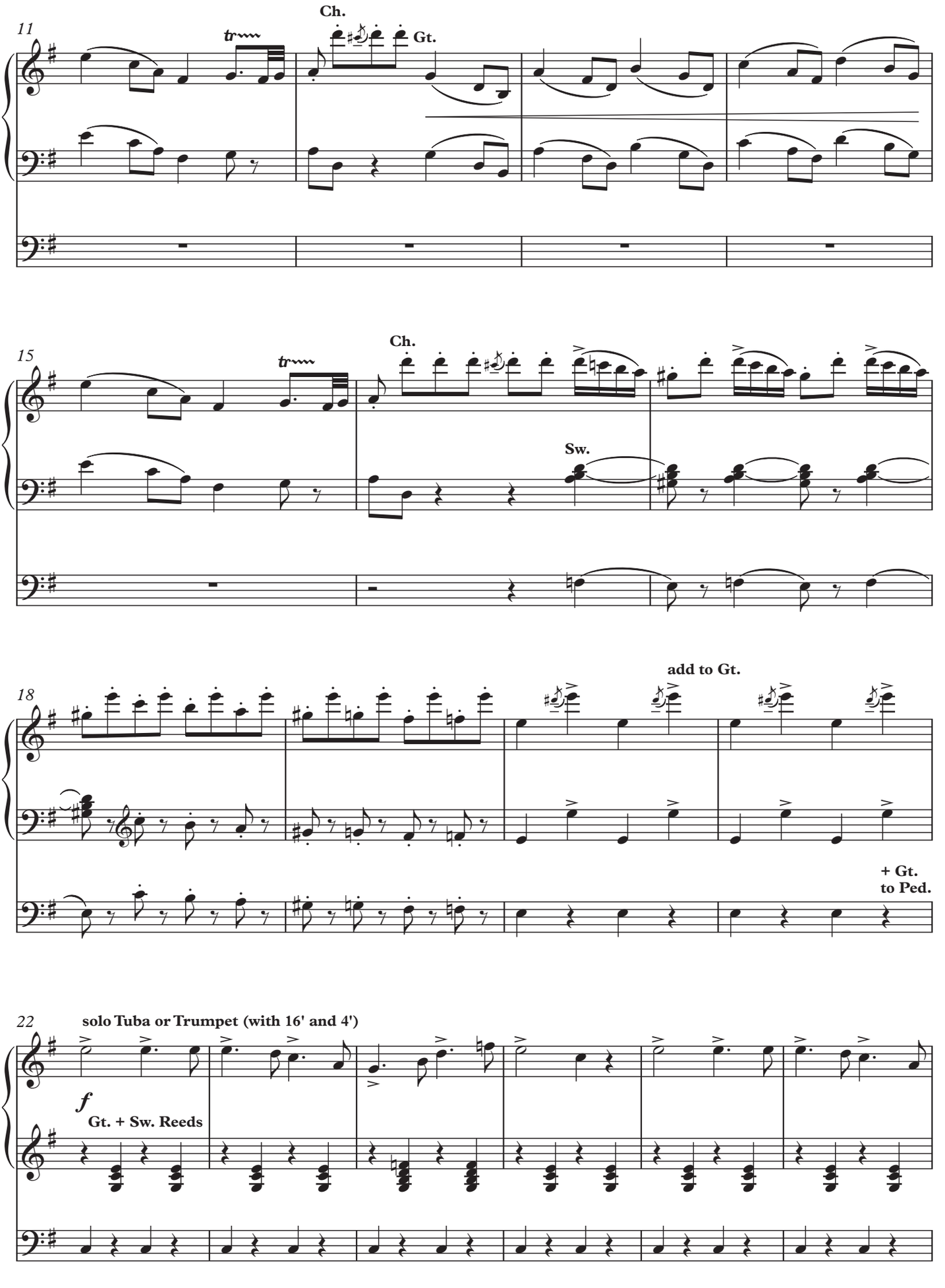
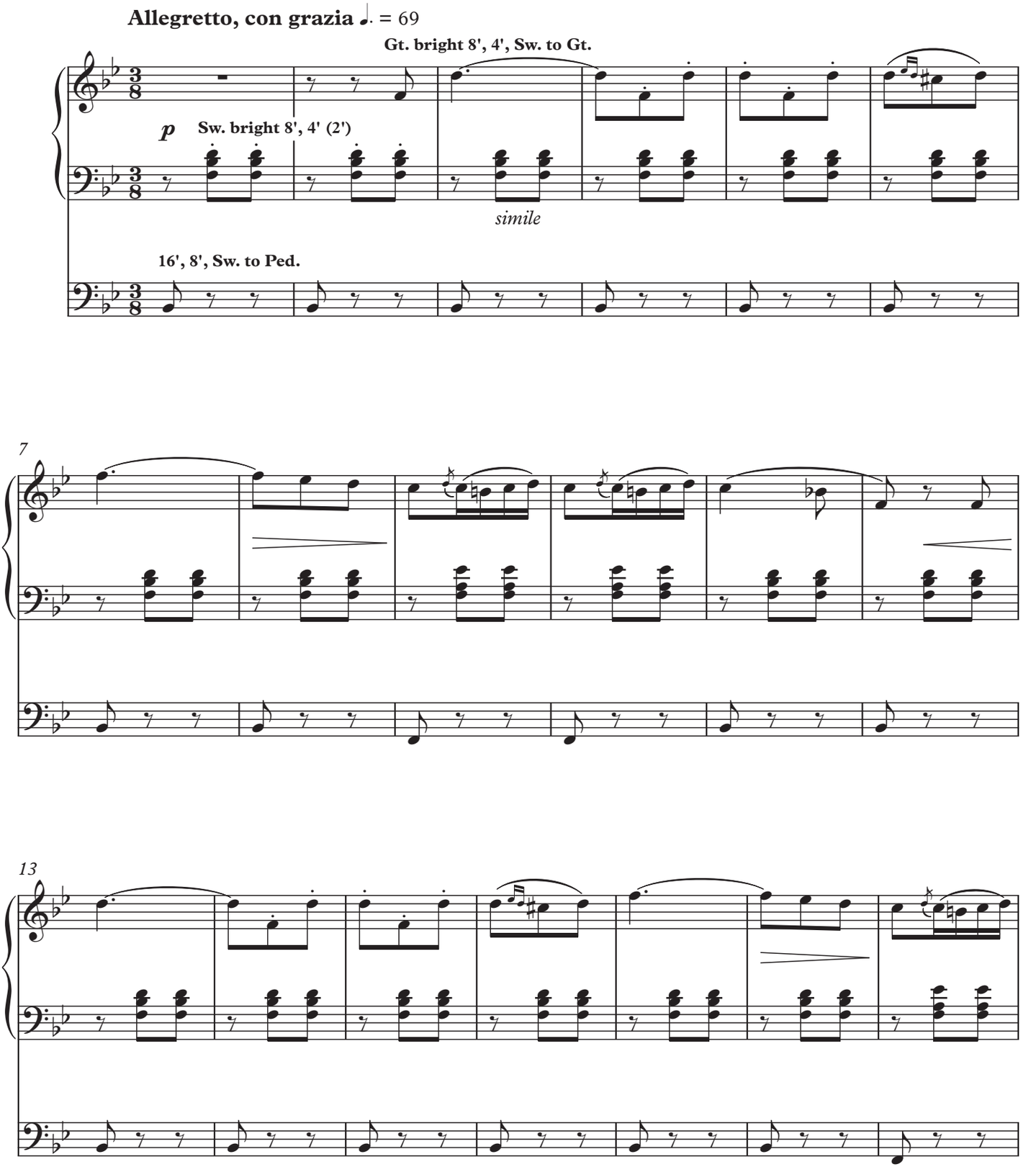

11
Ch.
Gt.
15
Ch.
Sw.
18
add to Gt.
+ Gt.
to Ped.
22
solo Tuba or Trumpet (with 16' and 4')
f
Gt. + Sw. Reeds

Brindisi

from *La traviata*

GIUSEPPE VERDI
arr. Martin Setchell



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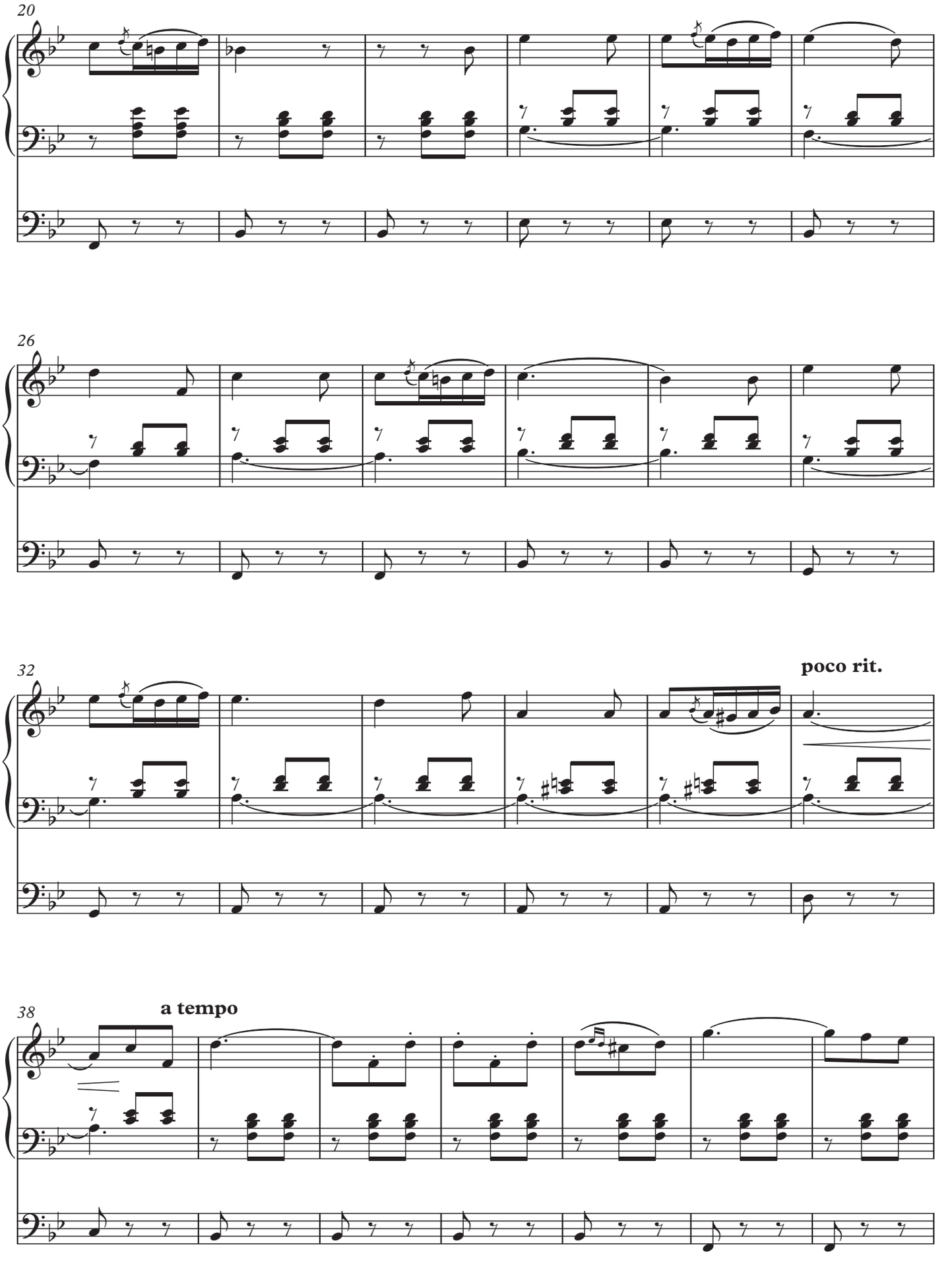
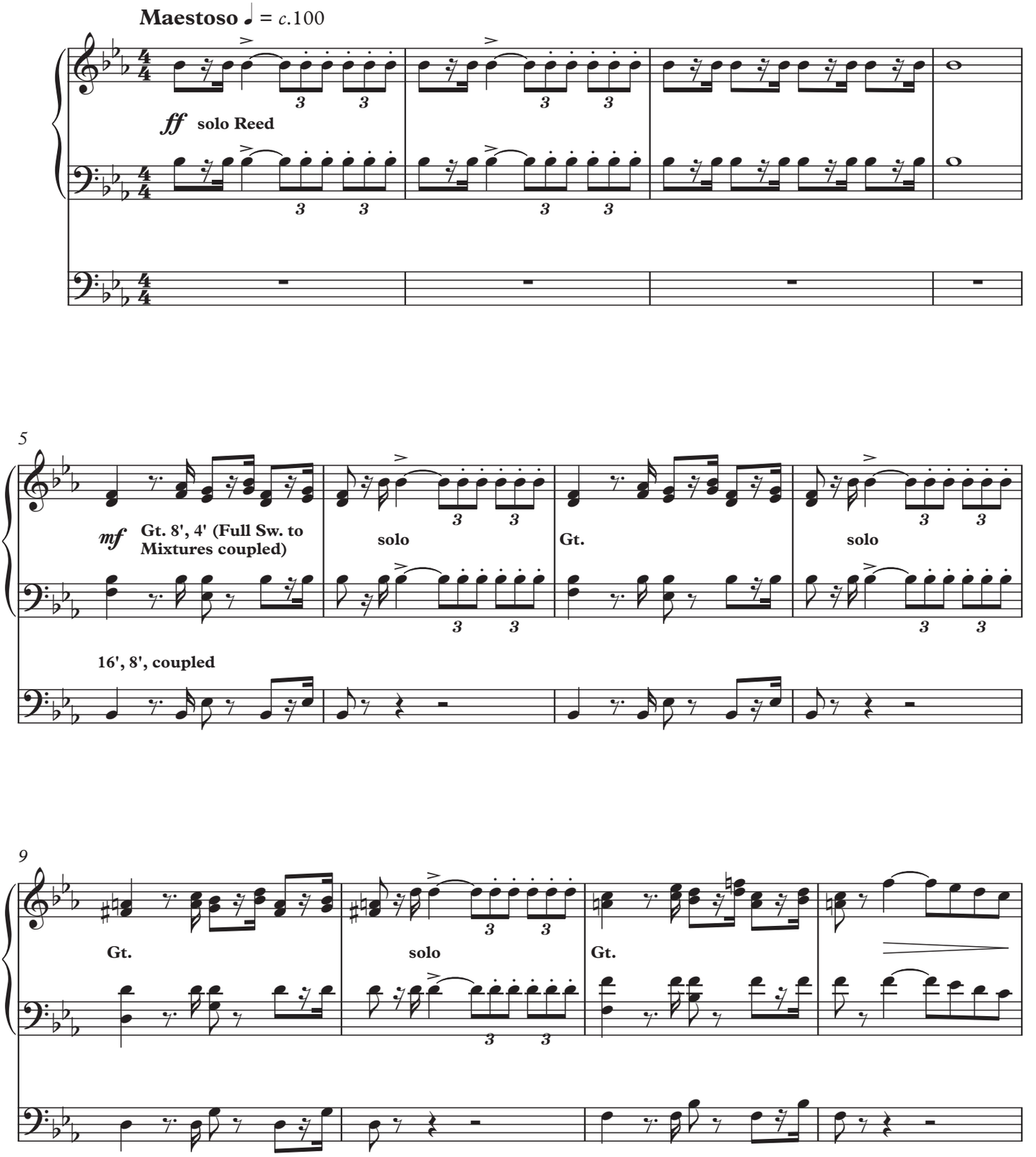

20
26
32
poco rit.
38
a tempo

Grand March

from *Aida*

GIUSEPPE VERDI
arr. Martin Setchell



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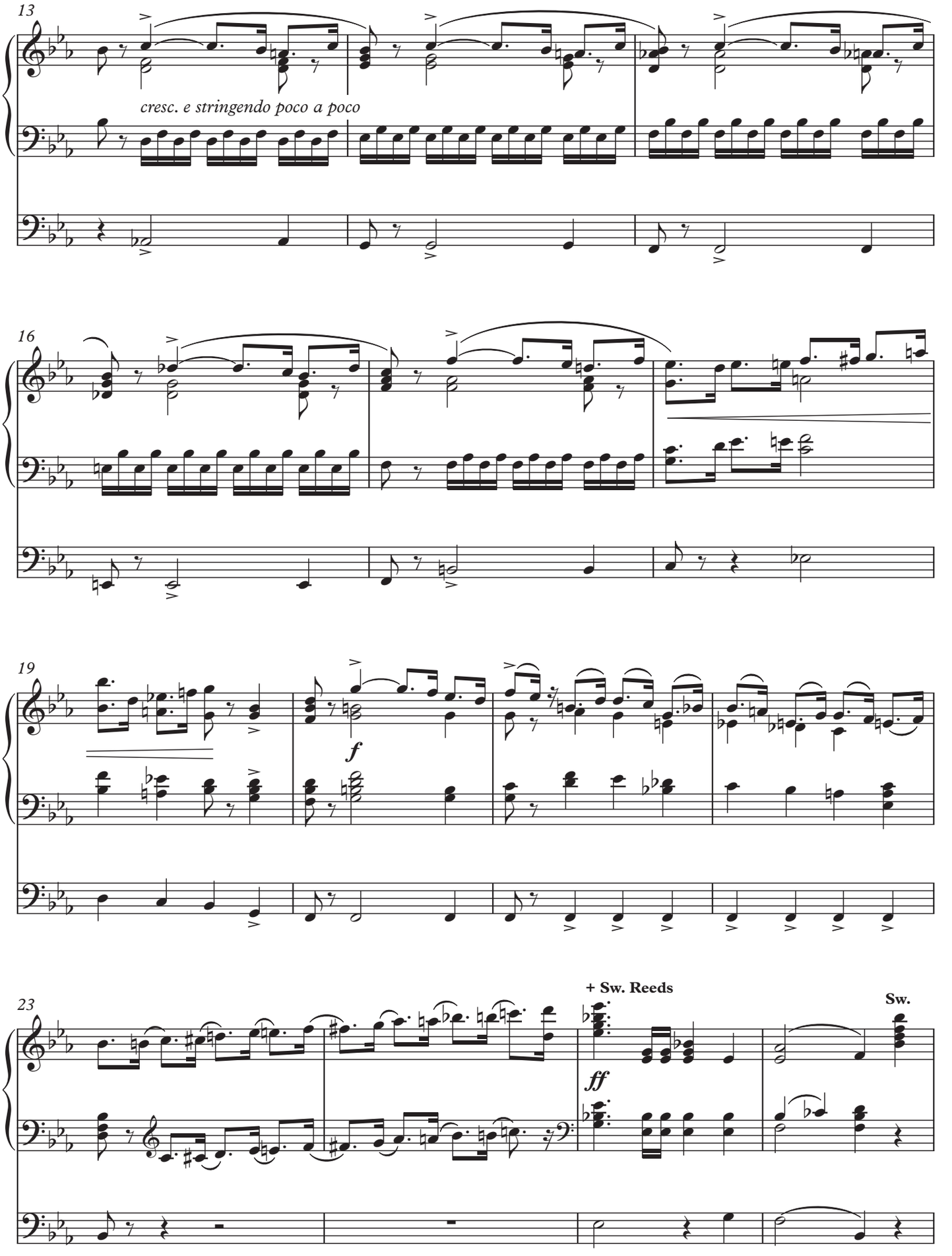
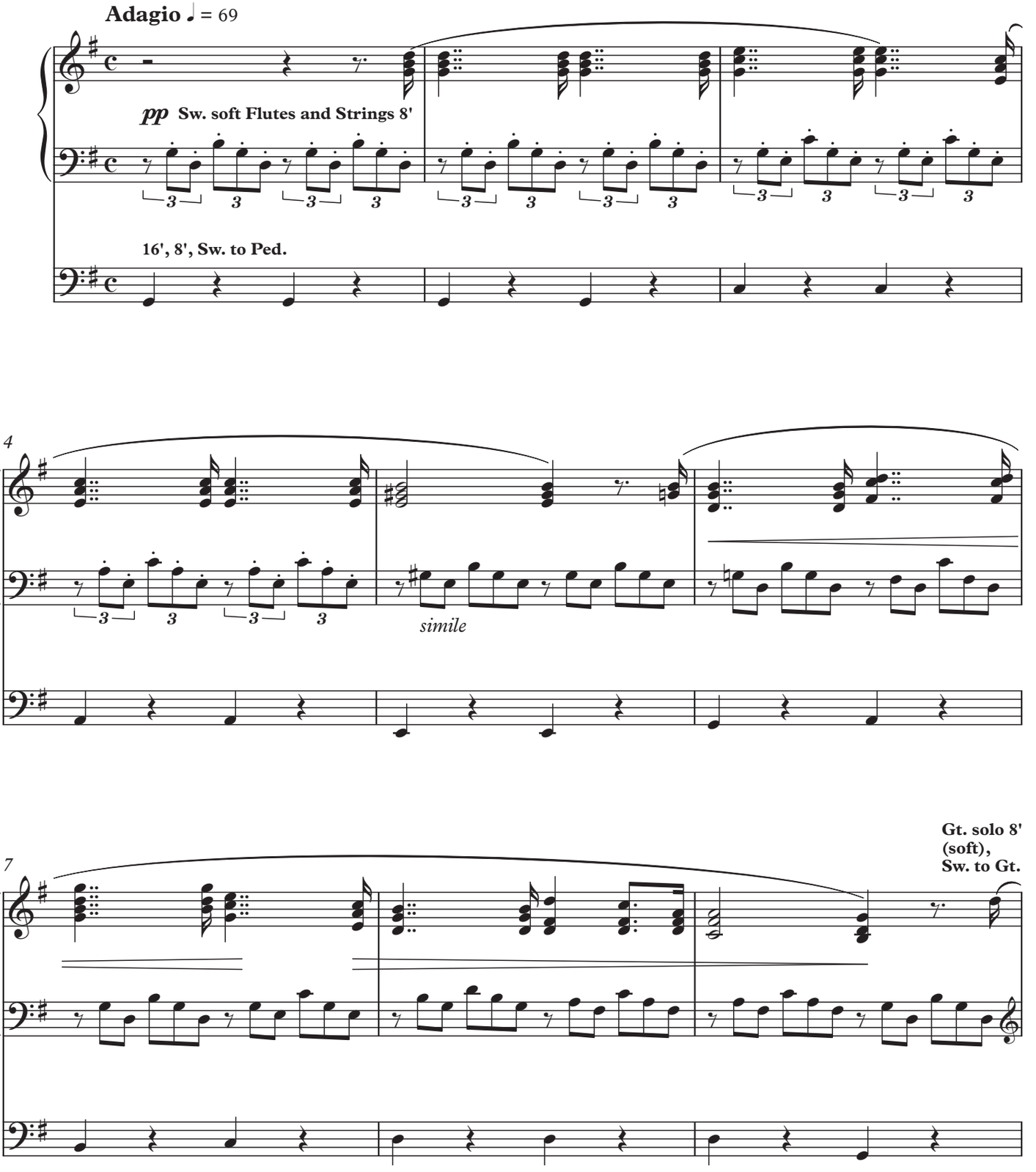

13
cresc. e stringendo poco a poco
16
19
f
23
+ Sw. Reeds
ff
Sw.

La Vergine degli angeli

from *La forza del destino*

GIUSEPPE VERDI
arr. Martin Setchell



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