A Christmas Quodlibet

for organ

by

John Burge

Duration: 6' 30"

About the work...

John Burge's, ***A Christmas Quodlibet***, was composed in the summer of 2007 for Edward Norman, organist and choir director at St. George's Cathedral in Kingston, Ontario. Edward was starting his second year in this position and had asked John if he had a work for organ related to Christmas that could possibly be included on a planned CD of Christmas organ music. Not wanting to see an opportunity go unrealized, John responded that it wouldn't take too much time to construct an organ composition that combined an original theme with two traditional Christmas carols, ***Silent Night*** and ***The First Noel***. These two carols had already been worked together by the composer in an SSA choir and orchestra composition that had been written for the St. Louis Children's Chorus. Entitled, ***And the Angel Said***, this latter work is published by Boosey and Hawkes (M-051-47736-4).

A "quodlibet" simply refers to a piece that combines two or more independent melodies. Often these melodies are familiar tunes and the charm of the form is that the listener doesn't expect them to fit together. This quodlibet takes a rather systematic approach in the compositional design by first presenting the original melody alone and then combining it with each of the carols separately and finally ending with the original melody played simultaneously with both carols. Between each of these presentations, the music modulates to different keys, sometimes in a quite chromatic fashion.

It is perhaps curious to note that the idea of combining the two carols occurred to the composer many years before when he was asked to improvise some piano music for a Christmas pageant at St. George's Cathedral. At that time his two young boys were participating in the event. It seems somehow fitting that this idea should now become a much more involved work for the organist and organ at the same church.

About the composer...

John Burge was born in Dryden, Ontario in 1961. He holds degrees from the University of Toronto (B.Mus. and M.Mus.) and the University of British Columbia (D.M.A.) where his composition professors included John Beckwith, Walter Buczynski, Stephen Chatman, John Hawkins and Derek Holman. Since 1987 he has been teaching at the School of Music, Queen' s University where he is a Professor of Composition and Theory. In addition to teaching at Queen's he was Composer-in-Residence for National Youth Orchestra of Canada during their three-week residency in Kingston, Ontario in 2001, 2002 and 2003. The National Youth Orchestra premiered Burge's composition, ***Sonic Architecture***, on their Canadian tour in 2003. A passionate advocate of Canadian music, he has been a member of the executive of the Canadian League of Composers for 14 years, serving as President from 1998-2006.

Burge has written music for a variety of ensembles and instrumentalists but he is particularly recognized for his choral music, much of it involving organ accompaniment. Many of these works have been published by the American publishing firm, Boosey and Hawkes. His orchestral compositions include a symphony, a piano concerto, a trumpet concerto, a clarinet concerto and a number of orchestral tone poems. Since composing his first work for solo organ in 1992 (***Dance***, commissioned by the Toronto chapter of the Royal College of Canadian Organists), Burge has written many works for solo organ and organ with other instruments. This latter category includes, ***One Sail***, for organ and cello, ***Shades of Blue***, for organ and trumpet, ***The Blues of a Chagall Window***, for organ and saxophone, ***Variations Exotiques***, for violin and organ, and ***Organ Concertino***, for organ and woodwind quintet.

for Edward Norman

A Christmas Quodlibet

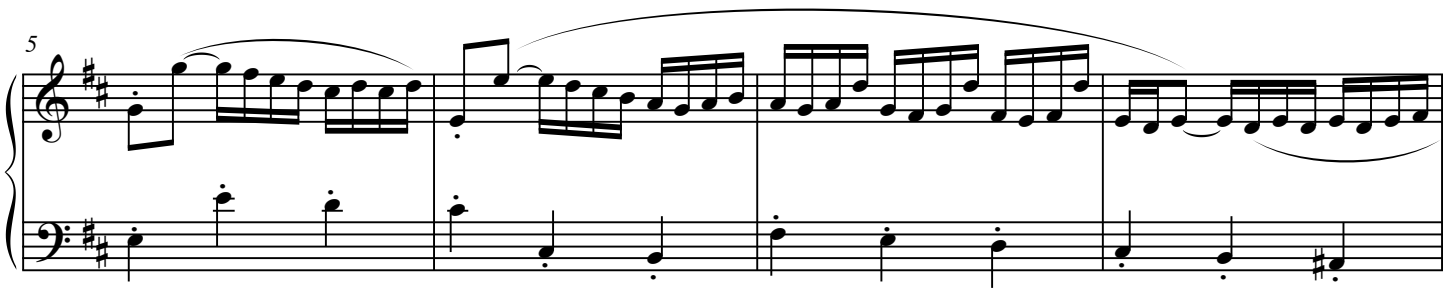
John Burge

Moderato ♩= *72*

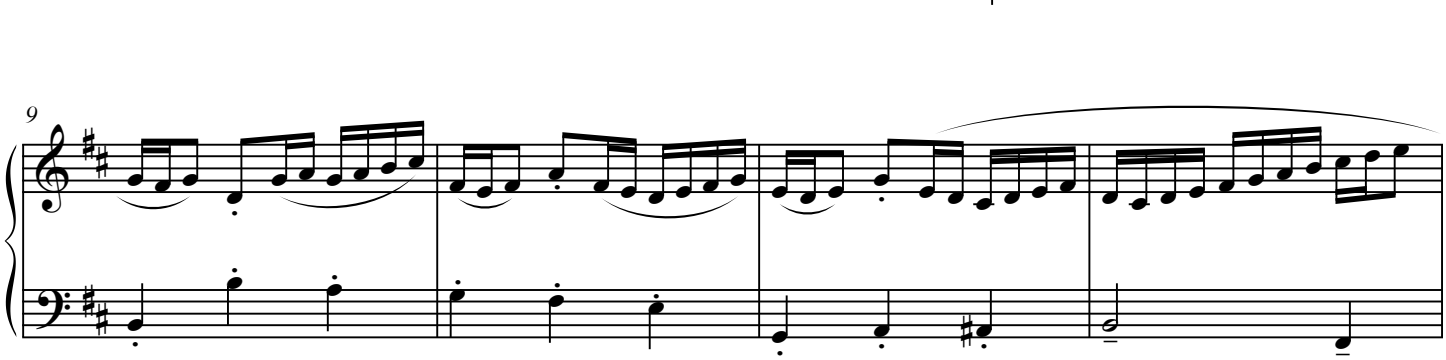
Sw. (Ch.) 8' + 1'

mf

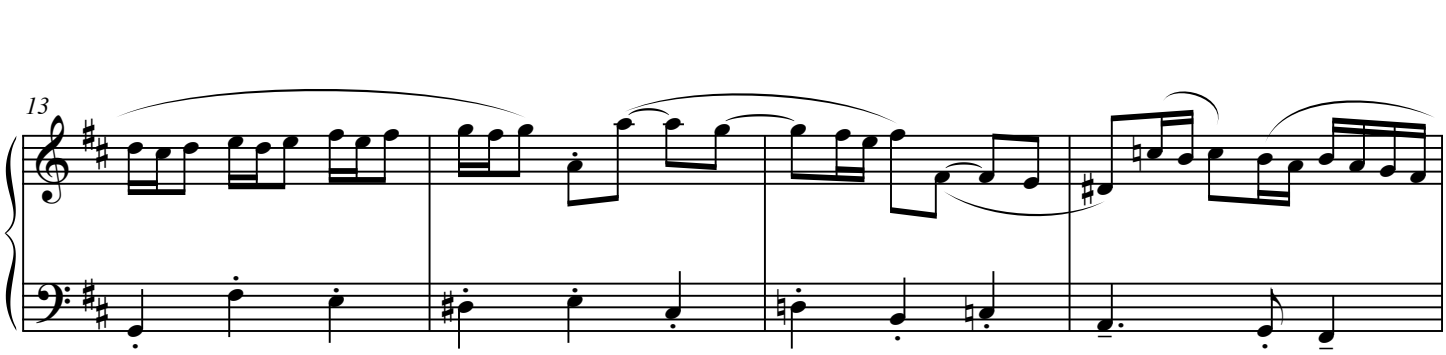
[Pedal - 16']



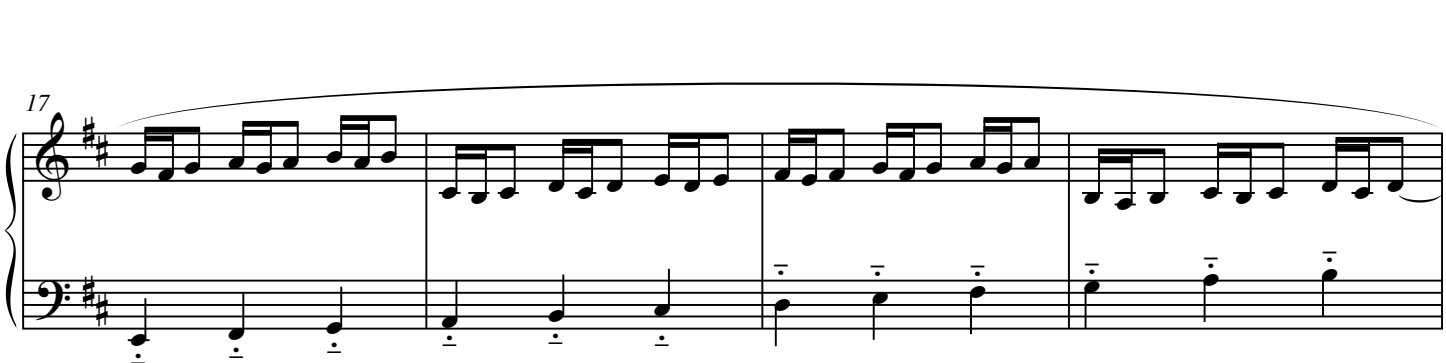
5



9

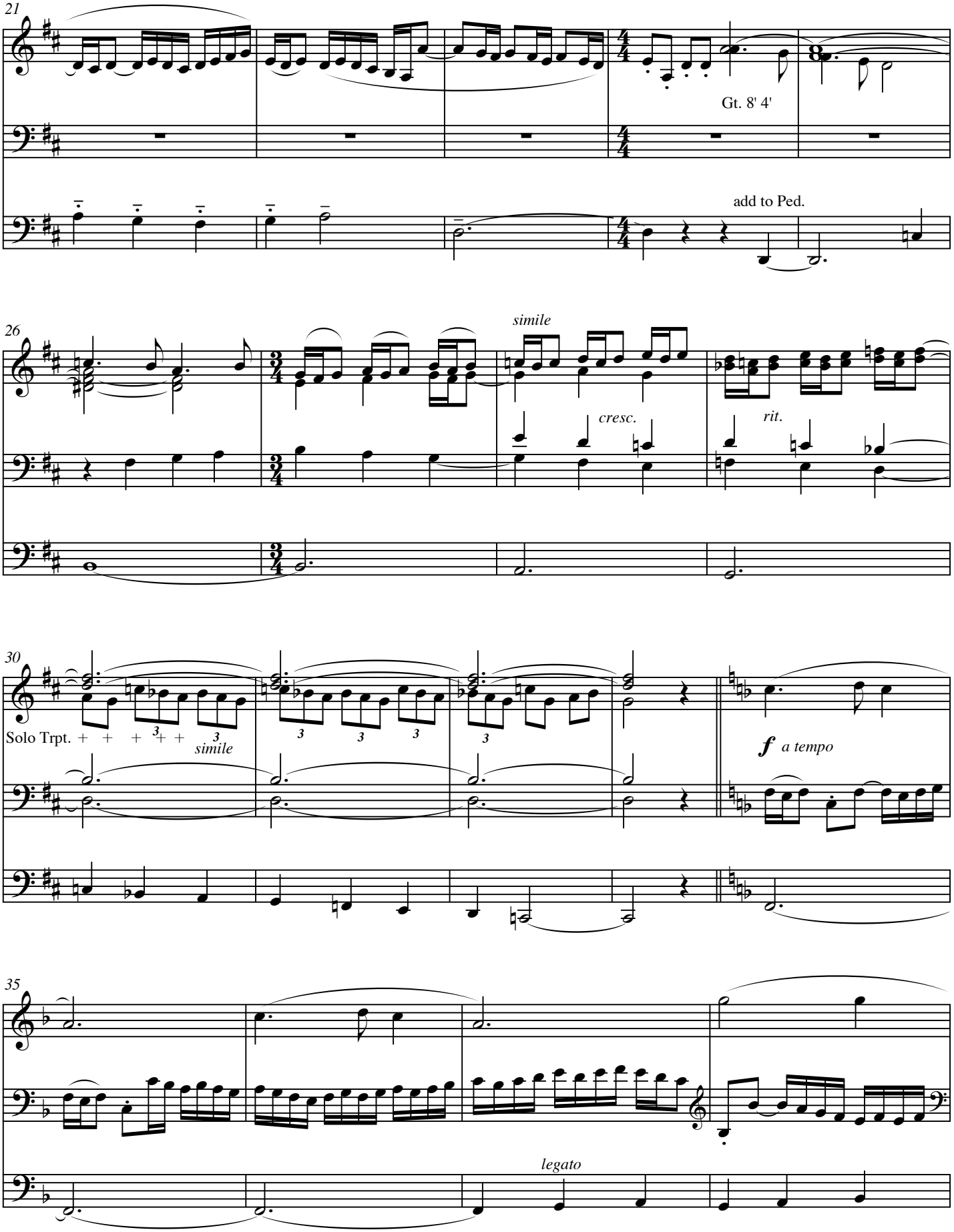


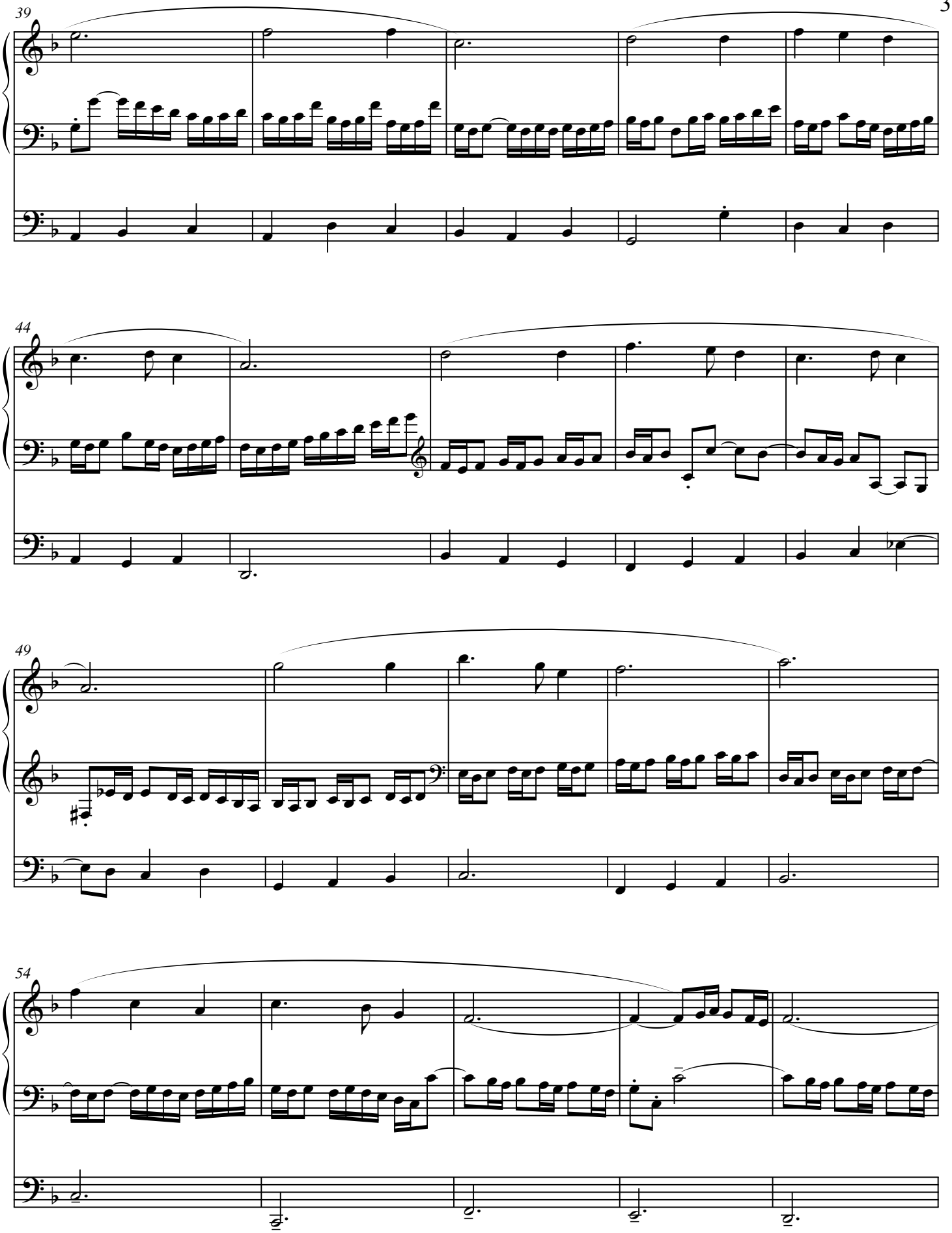
13

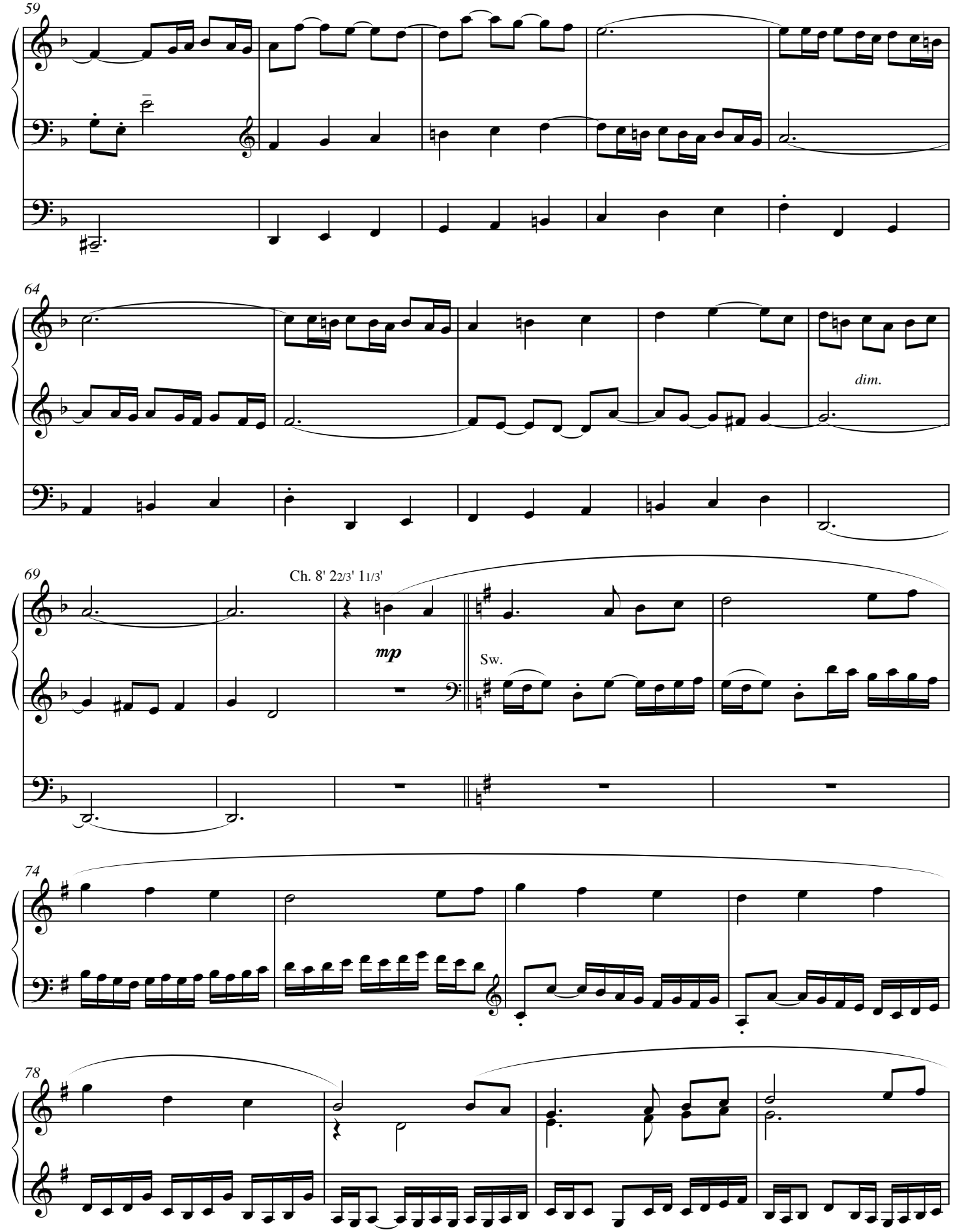


17

©2007 by John Burge


21
Gt. 8' 4'
add to Ped.
26
simile
cresc.
rit.
30
Solo Trpt.
simile
f a tempo
35
legato


39
44
49
54


59
64
dim.
69
Ch. 8' 2 2/3' 1 1/3'
mp
Sw.
74
78