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Амандо Бланкер и контрабас: мини-сюита «Испанский медведь» в контексте испанского музыкального наследия

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Аннотация. Амандо Бланкер Понсода создал мини-сюиту для контрабаса и фортепиано *L'ós Hispànic* в 1976 году. Несмотря на музыкальную и техническую ценность, это произведение остается малоизвестным как в музыковедении, так и в исполнительской практике, редко встречаясь в стандартном камерном репертуаре. В представленном исследовании рассматриваются история создания сочинения, его форма и ладовая организация, а также технические и интерпретационные задачи, стоящие перед исполнителем партии контрабаса. Анализ базируется на издании 1990 года (издательство *Piles*), дополненном сведениями из концертных программ 1983 и 2023 годов, интервью с Грегорио Касасемпере Хисбертом и записью версии для тубы и фортепиано в исполнении Висенте Лопеса. Четыре части сюиты анализируются с точки зрения формы, ладовой организации, имитационной техники, регистрового строения, взаимодействия инструментов, артикуляции, интонирования, аппликатуры, баланса звучания и координации с фортепиано. Анализ позволил выявить различные подходы, используемые в цикле. Часть «Радость» (*Joy*) сочетает маршевый ритм с элементами лидийского и дорийского ладов и имитационным диалогом. В части «Страсть» (*Passion*) развивается кантилена на фоне фортепианного остинато, а партия контрабаса охватывает высокий регистр. «Ожидание» (*Waiting*) строится на кратких репликах, ферматах и смене звуковых красок, тогда как в «Сальто» (*Somersault*) повторяющийся материал развивается посредством вариаций, смены ладов и перераспределения контрапунктических голосов. Эти особенности создают специфические технические и интерпретационные трудности, особенно в вопросах интонирования, артикуляции, аппликатуры, работы в различных регистрах и ансамблевого взаимодействия. Таким образом, *L'ós Hispànic* — это значительное камерное сочинение, подходящее как для углубленного изучения игры на контрабасе, так и для концертного исполнения. Структурная ясность, ладовая специфика, техническая сложность и активный диалог инструментов обосновывают целесообразность включения этого произведения в испанский камерный репертуар XX века и в учебные программы для продвинутых исполнителей, а также способствуют расширению знаний о менее известных инструментальных сочинениях Бланкера.

Ключевые слова: Амандо Бланкер Понсода, *L'ós Hispànic*, контрабас, контрабас и фортепиано, современная испанская музыка, камерная музыка, музыкальное наследие, исполнительский анализ, педагогический потенциал

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Performing Arts

Original article

Amando Blanquer and the double bass: A performance-analytical study of *L'ós Hispànic* in twentieth-century Spanish chamber music

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Abstract. Amando Blanquer Ponsoda composed *L'ós Hispànic: Minisuite per a Contrabaix i Piano* in 1976 for double bass and piano. Despite its musical and technical interest, the work remains little known both in the literature and in performance, rarely appearing in the usual chamber repertoire. This study examines its historical documentation, formal and modal organization and the technical and interpretative demands made on the double-bass part. The analysis is based on the 1990 Piles edition, and is complemented by concert programs from 1983 and 2023, an interview with Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert,

and Vicente López's recording of Blanquer's version for tuba and piano. The four movements are considered in terms of form, modal organization, imitation, register, instrumental interaction, articulation, intonation, fingering, balance, and coordination with the piano. The analysis shows contrasting approaches across the cycle. "Joy" combines a march rhythm with Lydian and Dorian writing and imitative exchanges. "Passion" develops a cantilena over a piano ostinato and extends the double bass into its upper register. "Waiting" uses brief responses, fermatas, and changing sonorities, while "Somersault" develops recurring material through variation, modal shifts, and contrapuntal redistribution. These features create specific technical and interpretative challenges, especially in intonation, articulation, fingering, register, and ensemble coordination. The study concludes that *L'ós Hispànic* is a substantial chamber work, suitable for advanced double-bass study and concert performance. Its formal clarity, modal writing, technical demands, and active dialogue between the instruments make a case for its inclusion in the twentieth-century Spanish chamber repertoire and in advanced double-bass pedagogy, while also expanding our knowledge of Blanquer's less familiar instrumental output.

Keywords: Amando Blanquer Ponsoda, *L'ós Hispànic*, double bass, double bass and piano, contemporary Spanish music, chamber music, musical heritage, performance analysis, pedagogical potential

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1. Introduction

This article examines the minisuite *L'ós Hispànic* (1976) for double bass and piano[1] by the Valencian composer Amando Blanquer Ponsoda (1935–2005). The choice of this work is motivated by the wish to draw performers' attention to repertoire that could substantially enrich the double bass recital literature, while also introducing the chamber music of a composer who remains little known beyond Spain.

Blanquer studied music in Valencia with Miguel Asins Arbó and Manuel Palau Boix, later continuing his composition training in Paris with Olivier Messiaen. His output includes solo piano pieces, chamber music, concertante works, and a large number of compositions for wind band, many of which are closely tied to Valencian festive traditions. Among his most representative titles are the *Suite Blanca* (1956), *Cuatro Preludios* (1975), *Reflexiones* (1978), and the *Trio Valenciano* (1982). Besides composing, Blanquer also contributed to music theory, publishing the pedagogical manuals *Técnica del contrapunto* (1984) and *Análisis de la forma musical* (1989).

The article offers a close reading of the suite's four movements, concentrating on form, musical character, harmonic language and textural organization. Performance is considered together with these elements. Particular attention is given to articulation, register, timbre, intonation, fingering, and ensemble coordination. This approach makes it possible to pinpoint specific ensemble difficulties arising from the combination of double bass and piano, to draw conclusions about the dialogic interplay between the two instruments, and to suggest practical solutions for performers. The 1990 Piles edition of *L'ós Hispànic* was our working score.[2]

In spite of its musical vividness and expressive appeal, *L'ós Hispànic* has so far escaped scholarly attention: there is no article, dissertation chapter, or monograph specifically devoted to it. Existing studies deal mainly with Blanquer's piano output or give general overviews of his work. Worthy of mention are Marisa Blanes Nadal's 2004 dissertation at the Polytechnic University of Valencia and her monograph

[1] The original Valencian title is *L'ós Hispànic: Minisuite per a Contrabaix i Piano* ("The Spanish Bear: Minisuite for Double Bass and Piano"). The title *L'ós Hispànic* is retained throughout the article.

[2] Blanquer Ponsoda, A. (1990). *L'ós Hispànic: Minisuite per a Contrabaix i Piano* [Score]. Valencia: Piles. Legal deposit: V-1751-1990.

Amando Blanquer: vida y obra. Aproximación a su repertorio pianístico (Blanes Nadal, 2006), both of which offer valuable insights into the composer's style, though almost exclusively through his piano music. Broader, largely biographical data appear in Josep Ruvira Sánchez de León's *Compositores valencianos actuales* (Ruvira Sánchez de León, 1987).

In general, Spanish chamber music has received considerably less scholarly attention than other genres in current musicological literature. One notable exception is Juan Carlos Garvayo Medina's substantive article on Jesús Torres's piano trio (2001) (Garvayo Medina, 2024). This gap becomes especially evident when the solo instrument in question is one that rarely assumes a solo role — and the double bass is certainly a case in point.

The lack of specialist literature has inevitably shaped the source base of the present study. Alongside peer-reviewed publications, we have drawn on concert programs, and publicly available recordings. These materials prove indispensable for reconstructing aspects of the work's reception and performance history that are not documented in conventional academic sources (see, e.g., Casanova Jordán, 2023). We consulted two concert programs (1983, 2023).[3] These documents were used for dates and information about performances of the work. Another source was our interview with Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert.[4] He knew Blanquer and his professional circle. His recollections provided useful information about the composer and the background to *L'ós Hispànic*.

The full interview with Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert is reproduced in Appendix A. Musical Examples 1–14, which support the analysis in Section 4.2, are provided in Appendix B. Musical Examples 15–18, presenting the proposed fingerings discussed in Section 4.4, are provided in Appendix C.

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[3] *Conciertos de Mediodía: Jaime Antonio Robles, contrabajo; Sebastián Mariné, piano*. [Concert program]. (June 20, 1983). Fundación Juan March. Retrieved 28 Aug. 2026, from https://www.march.es/es/madrid/concierto/recital-contrabajo-piano-4228; *Concerts Primavera 2023—Capella de la Sapiència, Centre Cultural La Nau* [Concert program and notes]. (May 3, 2023). Universitat de València. Retrieved Aug. 28, 2026, from https://www.uv.es/infoactiv/musica/concertsprimavera20230503.pdf

[4] Interview by the authors with Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert concerning Amando Blanquer and the suite *L'ós Hispànic*. Valencia, September 8, 2025. Used with the interviewee's written consent (permission letter dated September 8, 2025). Unpublished.

During the study we found one public recording related to the work: Vicente López's performance of Blanquer's version for tuba and piano.[5] We listened to it for comparison. Since the solo instrument is a tuba rather than a double bass, conclusions about form, texture, and tonal-modal organization were taken from the original double-bass and piano score.

The work also presents useful material for advanced double-bass study. Its upper register, modal changes, imitative passages, dynamic contrasts, and exchanges with the piano require technical control and careful listening. For this reason, the discussion is intended for performers, teachers, and advanced students who may wish to work with the score. Recent studies of contemporary music in Spanish professional and higher music conservatories also report a limited presence of twentieth- and twenty-first-century repertoire in instrumental teaching, despite its recognized educational value (García Torán et al., 2023; Cuenca Rodríguez et al., 2025).

2. L'ós Hispànic: Context and Interview
Premiere and Documented Performances

L'ós Hispànic is dedicated to Jaime Antonio Robles Pérez.[6] The work is unusual in Blanquer's chamber music because he rarely wrote for this combination of instruments. A concert program published by the Universitat de València in 2023 gives 1979 as the year of the premiere. J. Pascual Hernández Farinós, who wrote the program notes, states that the first performance took place in Madrid, with Robles playing the double bass.[7]

[5] López Velasco, V. (2021, July 28). *L'ós Hispànic—Movement I, De gaubança (CD grabado en el Auditorio Municipal de Guadassuar, 2003)* [Video]. You Tube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plQ7CI5wwqc; López Velasco, V. (2021, July 28). *L'ós Hispànic—Movement II, La passió* (*CD grabado en el Auditorio Municipal de Guadassuar, 2003*) [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moSbFIAH5sc&list=RDmoSbFIAH5sc&start_radio=1; López Velasco, V. (2021, July 28). *L'ós Hispànic—Movement III, L'espera* (*CD grabado en el Auditorio Municipal de Guadassuar, 2003*) [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKRv9N0DuDo&list=RDbKRv9N0DuDo&start_radio=1; López Velasco, V. (2021, July 28). *L'ós Hispànic—Movement IV, La tombarella* (*CD grabado en el Auditorio Municipal de Guadassuar, 2003*) [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JhjA01GOus&list=RD5JhjA01GOus&start_radio=1.

[6] Blanquer Ponsoda, A. (1990). *L'ós Hispànic: Minisuite per a Contrabaix i Piano*.

[7] Hernàndez Farinós, J. P. (2023). Paraules al concert: Amando Blanquer i la música de cambra. In *Concerts Primavera 2023—Capella de la Sapiència, Centre Cultural La Nau*. [Concert program and notes]. (May 3, 2023). Retrieved Aug. 28, 2026, from https://www.uv.es/infoactiv/musica/concertsprimavera20230503.pdf [p. 4].

On June 20, 1983, Robles performed *L'ós Hispànic* again in Madrid. Pianist Sebastián Mariné joined him for the *Conciertos de Mediodía* series at the Fundación Juan March. The program, preserved in the foundation's archive, gives the title as *L'ós Hispànic* (*Minisuite*).[8]

Blanquer later prepared a version for tuba and piano.[9] The musical structure remained the same, but the solo instrument changed. Only one public recording of this version was found during the preparation of this study.

The next documented performance dates from 2023. Fran Roche (Francisco Roche Raga), a soloist with the Valencia Orchestra, played the double bass part at the Capella de la Sapiència in Valencia on May 3. Bartomeu Jaume played the piano.[10] Few concert programs for performances of *L'ós Hispànic* between 1983 and 2023 have been found. Competitions and local *festero* practices[11] formed an important part of musical life in the Valencian region (Botella Nicolás, 2013). The material found for this study does not show how often the work was performed during this forty-year period. It is therefore difficult to know whether it ever entered the regular double-bass repertoire.

Robles worked both as a performer and as a teacher. Born in Teruel, he studied at the Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid and received its Honor Prize for double bass. He later became a soloist with the Spanish Radio and Television Orchestra and worked with several chamber ensembles, including the RTVE Soloists Trio, ProArte, and the Reina Sofía Chamber Orchestra. In 1990 he joined the Spanish National Orchestra and also taught at the Professional Conservatory of Music in Guadalajara.[12]

3. Documentary Evidence from the Interview with Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert

On September 8, 2025, we interviewed Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert, a conductor and musicologist from Alcoy who knew Blanquer and his professional

[8] *Conciertos de Mediodía*, June 20, 1983.
[9] See Hernàndez Farinós, 2023, [p. 4].
[10] *Concerts Primavera 2023* [May 3, 2023]. Universitat de València. Retrieved August 28, 2026, from https://www.uv.es/infoactiv/musica/concertsprimavera20230503.pdf
[11] *Festero* refers to local Valencian festive and celebratory practices (including *Moros y Cristianos*).
[12] *Concerts Primavera 2023* [May 3, 2023].

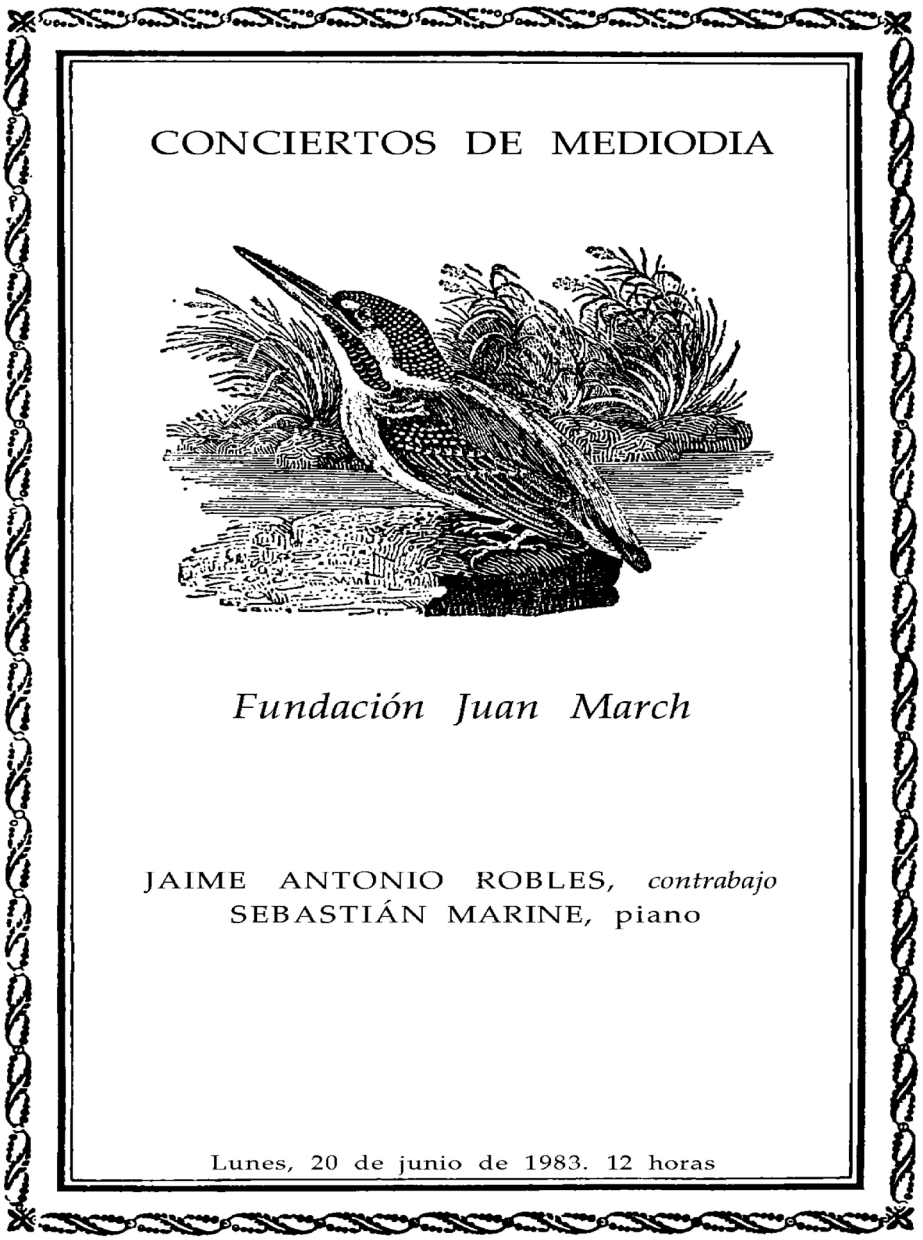


Figure 1. Conciertos de Mediodía: Jaime Antonio Robles, double bass; Sebastián Mariné, piano (June 20, 1983, Madrid). Source: Fundación Juan March. Retrieved August 28, 2026, from https://www.march.es/es/madrid/concierto/recital-contrabajo-piano-4228

Figure 2. Concerts Primavera 2023 — Capella de la Sapiència, Centre Cultural La Nau (May 3, 2023). Source: Universitat de València. Retrieved August 28, 2026, from https://www.uv.es/infoactiv/musica/concertsprimavera20230503.pdf

circle.[13] Casasempere did not give a definite explanation for Blanquer's choice of double bass and piano. He considered two possibilities: the work may have originated from a performer's request, or Blanquer may simply have wanted to explore an unusual instrumental combination. Neither possibility can be confirmed. For this reason, we do not use either possibility as a basis for the musical analysis, which starts from the score itself.

Casasempere also recalled that Blanquer had told him how strongly Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente's television series *El hombre y la tierra* had impressed him.[14] The music for the series was composed by Antón García Abril.[15] The comment is especially interesting in relation to the title *L'ós Hispànic*. The interview, however, does not tell us whether the series influenced the music, the title, or both. Blanquer's interest in verbal images, literary references, and related associations has also been discussed by other researchers [7].

Casasempere described Blanquer's musical language as open and not confined to any fixed aesthetic position. In *L'ós Hispànic*, he pointed especially to the contrast between lyrical passages and music with a strong motoric character. The contrast appears throughout the four movements. He also related the work to Alcoy and to the Valencian tradition of *Moros y Cristianos*.[16] During the interview he used the word *socarró* for a type of local humor based on wit and subtle irony.[17] Sharp accents, rhythmic shifts, sudden dynamic changes, dry cadential gestures, and abrupt endings can be heard in the score in this context.[18] Valencian festive music provides a broader cultural background for this interpretation (Botella Nicolás, 2009).

[13] Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert is a conductor and musicologist from Alcoy, Spain, and a representative of Valencian musical and cultural life. In this study, he serves as an interviewee and contextual expert on Amando Blanquer. His interview and advice, provided on September 8, 2025, were used to clarify the origins and reception of the Minisuite *L'ós Hispànic*. The full interview is reproduced in Appendix A.

[14] Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente was a Spanish naturalist and science communicator, as well as the creator and presenter of the television series *El hombre y la tierra*.

[15] Antón García Abril was a twentieth-century Spanish composer.

[16] *Moros y Cristianos* refers to traditional festivals held in the Valencian Community, especially in the province of Alicante. They include street processions accompanied by wind bands. The repertoire includes Moorish marches, Christian marches, and pasodobles, characterized by march-like rhythms and a prominent role for percussion.

[17] *Molt socarró* is a Valencian expression meaning, literally, "very slyly ironic." It describes a specifically Alcoyan or Valencian form of wit marked by subtle mockery and irony.

[18] Author's interview with Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert, September 8, 2025.

Casasempere also discussed the comparison between Blanquer and Paul Hindemith. He considered it useful only in a broad sense, since both composers worked with a variety of techniques and avoided a single stylistic model. Their timbral and coloristic language, in his view, was quite different. He also noted a difference in reception: Hindemith's works are widely published and recorded, while much of Blanquer's music remains difficult to obtain. At the end of the interview, Casasempere remembered Blanquer as a kind and inspiring teacher. He also believed that much of the composer's musical legacy still remained to be rediscovered.[19]

4. Analysis of L'ós Hispànic

4.1. Structure of the Cycle and Genre Features of the Movements

L'ós Hispànic consists of four character pieces: "Joy," "Passion," "Waiting," and "Somersault." Each movement has a distinct character, and the four titles help organize the contrasts within the cycle. Lyrical passages alternate with motoric writing, tension, and moments of musical play. Similar links between verbal images and musical organization have been observed in other works by Blanquer (Ferrando Morales, 2016). As recalled by Casasempere, Blanquer had been strongly impressed by *El hombre y la tierra*, Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente's television series with music by Antón García Abril. Here, this connection is treated only as contextual background for the title, not as evidence of a direct programmatic source.

The four movements can also be read as a loose sequence of states. "Joy" suggests play and the discovery of the surrounding world. "Passion" introduces conflict, threat, and territorial confrontation. "Waiting" slows the movement and may recall a seasonal pause. "Somersault" brings back physical energy and suggests a move toward independence.[20] The musical contrasts support this reading. The titles move from early activity to conflict, then to waiting and finally to a new state. Taken together, the four movements can be understood as a broad outline of a bear's life cycle, although the score does not present an explicit narrative.

[19] Author's interview with Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert, September 8, 2025.

[20] To develop this interpretive framework, the authors consulted episodes of Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente's television series *El hombre y la tierra* devoted to the Iberian bear. The episodes contain playful passages, lyrical sections, and moments of dramatic tension in Antón García Abril's music. They are considered here only as contextual material for interpreting the titles and contrasts of the cycle, not as evidence of a direct programmatic relationship with Blanquer's work.

The four pieces are also connected by their formal structure. Rondo-like returns, reprises, and variation appear at different points in the cycle. Musical material returns in altered forms, with changes of register, textural density, and dynamics. The movements also differ in their sense of motion. "Joy" is active and playful. "Passion" is more tense and dramatic. "Waiting" creates a slower and more static atmosphere. "Somersault" closes the cycle with renewed movement and energy. The result is a cycle of four independent miniatures connected by recurring formal ideas and contrasting expressive states.

4.2 Structure, Tonal-Modal Organization, and Ensemble Texture: Double Bass and Piano, Polyphonic Techniques, and Dialogue

The first movement, "Joy," is marked *Alla marcia* (♩ = 106–108) and is in 4/4 time. Its form is A–B–A′–Coda. The piano opens the movement alone, with a bass ostinato in the left hand and syncopated chords in the right. The opening is in *A Lydian* and gives the march a light, playful character (see Appendix B[21], Musical *Example 1*).[22]

The double bass enters in bar 3 with the main theme, built from two six-bar phrases. The second phrase is placed one octave higher and changes the rhythmic position of the material. Unlike the piano opening, the double-bass line is based on *D Dorian*. Imitation becomes important from bar 6. Between bars 6 and 8, a motive passes between the double bass and the piano's left hand (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 2*).[23]

Another exchange begins in bar 11. The double bass introduces the material, and the piano answers from the second beat of bar 12. During these bars the piano moves between Dorian and Lydian sonorities (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 3*).[24]

The piano carries the transition in bars 15–18. Grace notes and chromatic writing become more noticeable. *D minor* and *D Lydian* appear in close succession, and the tempo changes to *Meno mosso* and then *A piacere*. By bar 22 *D minor* is clearer. The following bars introduce *E-flat* and *G-sharp*, and bars 24–25 move

[21] All musical examples were prepared by the first author in Sibelius and are based on Blanquer Ponsoda, A. (1990). *L'ós Hispànic: Minisuite per a Contrabaix i Piano*. Piles. Legal deposit: V-1751-1990.
[22] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement I, bars 1–5.
[23] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement I, bars 6–8.
[24] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement I, bars 11–14.

toward *E-flat major*. The passage ends with the double-bass trill marked *forte* in bar 25. *Tempo I* returns in bar 26. The ostinato and the *A Lydian* coloring of the opening also return. The Coda begins in bar 31 and uses the same kind of repeated material. The piano states the motive first, and the double bass follows it in a short *quasi fugato* exchange (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 4*).[25]

The movement finishes *pianississimo*. Most of its polyphonic writing comes from these short imitations between the two instruments. Lydian and Dorian sonorities dominate the movement, with shorter passages in *D minor* and *E-flat major*.

The second movement, "Passion," is marked *Andante* (♪ = 80–84) and is in 2/4 time. Its form is A–A′–Coda. The piano begins with a steady ostinato, while the double bass carries the melodic line. The opening is centered on *D Phrygian*. In section A, bars 1–9, the piano begins with an upbeat, followed by the double bass in bar 3 with a *con passione* cantilena. Chromatic notes appear in the solo part while the piano maintains the regular pulse (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 5*).[26]

As the music develops, the roles of the two instruments remain clearly separated. The piano continues mainly as accompaniment, while the double bass moves gradually into a higher register. In section A′, bars 10–26, the rhythmic organization changes from duple to triple groupings. Grace notes become more noticeable, and the range of the double bass expands. In bar 18, the line reaches a very high *F*, which marks the climax of the section (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 6*).[27]

D remains the principal modal center, although the harmony becomes denser. *E-flat*, the lowered second scale degree, appears together with added tones, while neighbouring-note motion in the piano's left hand reinforces the modal center before the final section. The Coda, bars 27–29, is almost entirely a solo cadenza for the double bass. The piano contributes a single chord. A *molto ritardando* follows, written with progressively longer note values, and the movement ends *fortissimo* (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 7*).[28]

Polyphonic writing has only a limited role in "Passion." For most of the movement, the double bass carries the melody and the piano accompanies it.

[25] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement I, bars 30–32.
[26] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement II, bars 1–9.
[27] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement II, bars 16–19.
[28] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement II, bars 27–29.

The third movement, “Waiting,” is marked *Allegro* (♩ = 138–142) and follows a free-rondo form: A–B–A′–B′–A″–Coda. *D Phrygian* dominant is the main modal basis for most of bars 1–30. F natural appears in bars 5, 8, and 11 and returns later in the movement. *C-sharp* and *G-sharp* occur together in bars 8 and 24. These notes add chromatic color, while *D* remains the main point of reference. The opening section, bars 1–9, works as a dialogue. The piano begins, and the double bass replies with short *pizzicato* figures. Fermatas separate the replies and leave brief spaces between the two instruments. This creates the sense of waiting suggested by the title (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 8*).[29]

A different texture appears in bars 10–16. The double bass plays a sixteenth-note cantilena marked *molto espressivo*. Under it, the piano sustains a more static sonority and adds *sforzando* accents and tremolo. The bass now carries the melodic line, while *D* continues as the modal reference (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 9*).[30]

The opening material returns in A′, bars 17–25, but the rhythm is altered. B′, bars 26–30, is much thinner. Here a single chord is enough to support the passage before A″ begins. The music becomes harmonically denser in bars 30–36. Bar 31 briefly introduces an *A Phrygian* inflection. In bars 32–33, quartal structures with chromatic additions appear in the double bass, while the piano plays broken cluster-like sonorities. During bars 34–36, the double bass has a major triad on the second scale degree against a minor IV6/4 chord in the piano. Their combination increases the tension before the closing bars (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 10*).[31]

The Coda occupies bars 36–38. The double bass begins *piano*, and the piano answers *forte*. The exchange is brief and direct. Throughout the movement, this type of dialogue is more important than strict canonic writing (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 11*).[32]

The fourth movement, “Somersault,” is marked *Ritmico* (♩ = 106–110) and is in 3/4 time. Its form is a chain of variations: A–A′–A″–A‴–A⁗–A′′′′′–Coda. A occupies bars 1–13. Bar 14 serves as a transition, followed by A′ in bars 15–24, A″ in bars 25–32, A‴ in bars 33–40, A⁗ in bars 40–50, and A′′′′′ in bars 51–57. The Coda covers bars 58–60. The movement begins with two different modal references: the piano uses

[29] Blanquer, *L’ós Hispànic*, Movement III.
[30] Blanquer, *L’ós Hispànic*, Movement III, bars 10–16.
[31] Blanquer, *L’ós Hispànic*, Movement III, bars 30–36.
[32] Blanquer, *L’ós Hispànic*, Movement III, bars 36–38.

C Mixolydian, while the double bass is in *G Ionian*. The texture is contrapuntal: entries do not always coincide, and the piano often contains several independent lines. The main theme consists of two components, A and B. The double bass states A in bars 2–4. The piano's right hand then takes B in bars 4–6. The same pattern returns: A appears again in the double bass in bars 6–8, and B is heard in the upper part of the piano in bars 8–11 (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 12*).[33]

Bar 14 leads into variation A′. From the upbeat to bar 17, *E-flat Dorian* becomes the main modal reference. The exchange between the two instruments also becomes more active, with thematic material moving from one part to the other (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 13*).[34]

The modal contrast becomes more pronounced in variation A″, bars 25–32. The double bass uses *G Aeolian*, while the piano is in *D Phrygian* dominant. In bar 36, material from bars 17–19 returns in *F Dorian*. From bar 40, *G minor* appears with a raised seventh. In bars 44–47, component B is heard in the piano's right hand. The double bass answers with the same material in bars 47–50, producing a canonic exchange. This episode is connected with the double-bass passage in bars 29–31 and with material from A″. *C Mixolydian* returns in bar 51 and continues through the last variation.

The Coda begins in bar 58. Ostinato figures and chords dominate the final three bars, ending with *sfffz*. Imitative writing remains present until the close (see Appendix B, Musical *Example 14*).[35]

4.3 Irony as a Stylistic Mode: Markers of Contrast and Playful Reinterpretation

Several passages in *L'ós Hispànic* have an ironic character. Blanquer uses syncopated accents, displaced beats, abrupt dynamic changes, and quick exchanges between the double bass and the piano. In "Joy," the march is treated playfully. Imitative writing and *quasi fugato* appear within a movement that still keeps its march rhythm. The result is lighter and less conventional than a typical march.

In "Waiting," the irony is heard in the short dialogue between the instruments. The piano and double bass answer each other in brief phrases, with fermatas breaking the continuity. The movement then ends with a sudden contrast in the Coda.

[33] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement IV, bars 1–12.
[34] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement IV, bars 14–24.
[35] Blanquer, *L'ós Hispànic*, Movement IV, bars 58–60.

In “Somersault,” the theme returns several times, but each return changes its position in the ensemble. It may pass from piano to double bass, move to another register, or appear in a different modal setting. The listener recognizes the material, but never hears it in exactly the same form. This gives the movement much of its playful and ironic character.

4.4 Performance Challenges: The Importance of Accurate and Functional Fingering in the Double Bass Part

The double-bass part of *L’ós Hispànic* requires careful fingering planning.[36] Chromatic passages, changes of register, and modal shifts often make intonation difficult. Recent research on string intonation emphasizes the interaction of listening, technical control, register, and practical performance strategies (Huovinen & Weng, 2026; Williams, 2025). In our work with the score, we looked for solutions that would ensure secure movement of the left hand without interfering with the musical phrase. Khomenko’s fingering system provides a useful reference for this approach (Khomenko, 1980). His approach to scales and arpeggios is based on recurring patterns that help organize movement across the fingerboard, an idea we apply where the musical material permits. Rakov, however, warned against treating such patterns as fixed rules in actual performance (Rakov, 2004, p. 232). For us, the musical context remains decisive: register, articulation, phrasing, and the relationship with the piano may require different solutions.

In “Joy,” we try to keep left-hand movement economical. The motoric character of the music can easily be disturbed by unnecessary position changes. Shorter shifts also make repeated figures easier to control. “Passion” presents another problem. The *con passione* line moves gradually into the upper register and reaches the high F at the climax. Here the fingering has to support the cantilena. An uncomfortable shift may produce an audible correction or an unwanted glissando.

[36] In conventional notation for a double bass in solo tuning (*A–E–B–F♯*, strings I–IV), the separate double-bass part is written one whole tone lower than concert pitch, while the piano part and the double-bass line in the full score normally preserve the concert-pitch tonal or modal framework. In the Piles edition of *L’ós Hispànic*, this relationship is reversed: the double-bass line in the full score is notated one whole tone lower, whereas the separate double-bass part is written at concert pitch. Given this notational inconsistency, and considering the present-day practice of performing double-bass repertoire in orchestral tuning (*G–D–A–E*), our analysis follows the separate double-bass part and reads it as written for orchestral tuning. Pitch names discussed in the text and the proposed fingering therefore correspond to this reading.

In “Waiting,” several short entries give the player little time to prepare the left hand, especially in *pizzicato*. Later, the ascending arpeggio passage allows for a more systematic fingering solution. We use a fingering pattern related to Khomenko’s system, as shown in Musical *Example 17*. In “Somersault,” thematic figures return in different registers. Where possible, we keep similar fingerings for similar material. When the register or articulation changes, we modify them.

The piano part was also considered when choosing and testing the proposed fingerings, since some solutions that work well when the double-bass part is played alone are less convincing in the ensemble. Examples 15–18 present the first author’s fingering proposals for the four movements, with brief comments on the principal technical decisions.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of *L’ós Hispànic* shows its relevance to Spanish chamber music of the second half of the twentieth century and to the present-day double-bass repertoire. Blanquer combines clear formal organization, motoric energy, lyrical episodes, and irony. The four movements are connected by principles of reprise, rondo, and variation. The double bass plays an active role in the ensemble. It presents thematic material, answers the piano, and participates in imitation and counterpoint.

Form and modal organization are also important for performance. Modal changes, polymodal combinations, and complex chords require accurate intonation and carefully planned fingering. Reference notes and logical position changes are particularly useful for maintaining stable intonation, while fingering also affects sound quality and coordination with the piano.

The Minisuite can be used in advanced study and in concert performance. The double-bass part includes the use of the upper register, different types of articulation, dynamic contrasts, and passages that require close coordination with the piano. The polymodal sections are demanding for intonation. Imitative passages require the two players to listen carefully to each other. *L’ós Hispànic* combines musical value with specific performance challenges. Its formal structure helps the performer follow the musical logic of the work. Practical work on the instrument, in turn, helps to understand details of the score. The Minisuite expands the chamber repertoire for double bass and draws attention to a little-known part of Spanish musical heritage.

Appendices

Appendix A. Interview with Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert

Interview conducted by Antuán Arutyunyán Zhabsky on September 8, 2025.

The interview has been edited for length and clarity while preserving the content and meaning of the responses.

Question 1: From your experience as a musician close to Amando Blanquer, what circumstances or motivations may have led him to compose *L'ós Hispànic* for double bass and piano, an unusual combination in his catalog? Did you know anything about the compositional process or its first performances?

Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert: Blanquer composed *L'ós Hispànic* in 1976, after leaving his position as Director of the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Valencia. This allowed him to devote more time to composition, and 1976 was a particularly productive year in his career.

The work was dedicated to the double bassist Jaime Antonio Robles and was premiered in Madrid in 1979 with pianist Luciano González Sarmiento. I do not know the exact reason why Blanquer chose this instrumental combination. It may have resulted from a request by the double bassist or from the composer's own interest in exploring it.

I remember, however, a conversation in which Blanquer spoke about the impression made on him by Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente's television series *El hombre y la tierra*, whose music was composed by Antón García Abril. One of its episodes was entitled "Oso Hispánico." Blanquer knew and appreciated García Abril from their student years in Valencia. Whether its connection with *L'ós Hispànic* was one of influence, coincidence, or simply inspiration is something I cannot determine.

Question 2: Do you consider *L'ós Hispànic*, in its title, structure, and musical language, consistent with Blanquer's usual aesthetic? Which characteristics of his style do you recognize in this work?

Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert: Yes. Blanquer was a curious and independent composer who worked in a very wide range of genres and

instrumental combinations. His catalog includes solo music, chamber music, vocal and choral works, orchestral music, concertos, wind-band music, stage works, and opera.

In each work he sought an appropriate way of communicating his ideas. His musical language was free, open, and eclectic, supported by a strong command of rhythm, harmony, counterpoint, timbre, and form. For this reason, despite the variety of genres and techniques, his music retains a recognizable individual identity.

Question 3: Some harmonic characteristics and the sarcastic character of *L'ós Hispànic* may suggest points of comparison with Paul Hindemith. Do you consider this comparison appropriate?

Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert: There are some broad similarities. Both were twentieth-century composers who worked freely with different musical languages and techniques, including dissonance, polytonality, neoclassical elements, and references to earlier traditions. Both also had important pedagogical interests and wrote theoretical or educational works.

However, I find their approaches to sound, timbre, and color quite different. Hindemith's background was essentially Germanic, whereas Blanquer was formed in Alcoy and Valencia and later studied in Paris and Rome. Blanquer remained, in this sense, a Mediterranean composer.

The sarcastic or humorous element is also important in Blanquer's music. He had what in Alcoy and Valencia is called a *molt socarró* sense of humor, and this quality can be found in a number of his works, including *L'ós Hispànic*.

There is also an important difference in the reception of the two composers. Hindemith's music is extensively published and recorded, whereas a substantial part of Blanquer's output remains unpublished, unrecorded, or difficult to obtain.

Question 4: Can *L'ós Hispànic* have pedagogical and artistic value for students, particularly double bass players?

Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert: Yes. Several of Blanquer's solo and chamber works have characteristics that make them suitable for different levels of musical education, from elementary and professional studies to higher education. Other works require a more advanced or virtuoso level and are appropriate for experienced concert performers.

One of the main difficulties is gaining access to the scores. Another problem is the limited presence of Spanish repertoire in the teaching programs of Spanish conservatories. This contributes to insufficient knowledge of Spanish composers and their musical heritage among students and performers.

Question 5: What personal and professional memories do you have of Amando Blanquer?

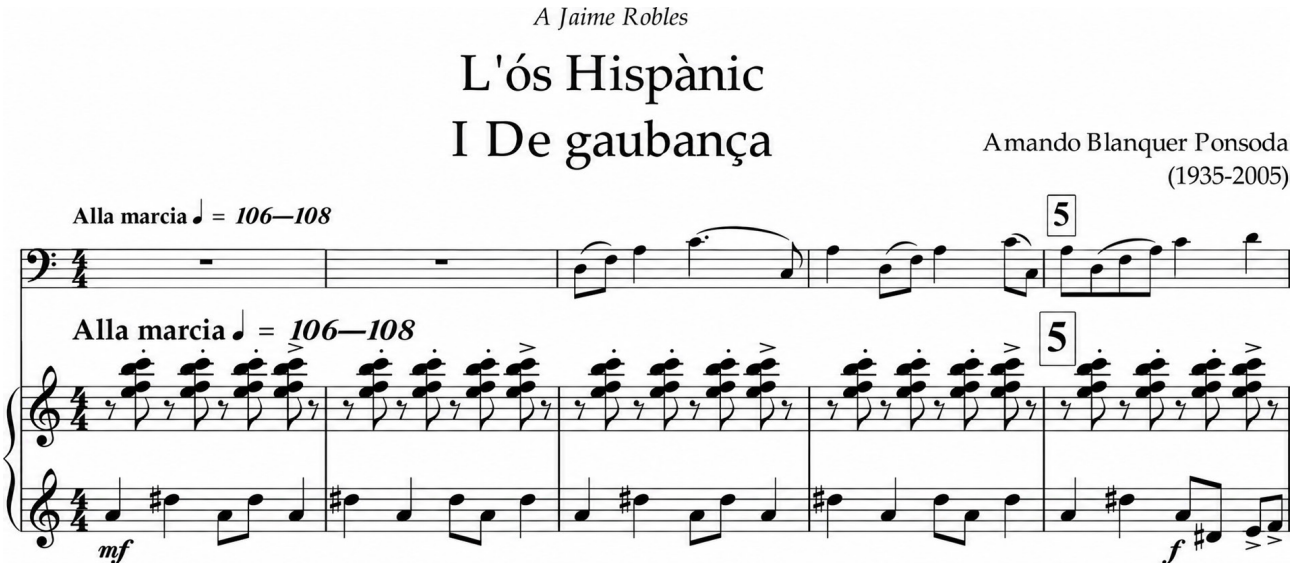
Gregorio Casasempere Gisbert: My relationship with Blanquer began through my family. He was a friend of my father, and my uncle Rafael had been involved in his early musical training. From a young age, I became familiar with his music through performances conducted by my father in Alcoy. In 1975, I began advanced studies in harmony and counterpoint in Valencia under Blanquer's guidance.

As a conductor, I later performed and premiered many of his works with the Corporación Musical Primitiva de Alcoy and the Orquesta Sinfónica Alcoyana. I also participated in recordings of his music between the early 1980s and 2005, and Blanquer was frequently present during the recording sessions.

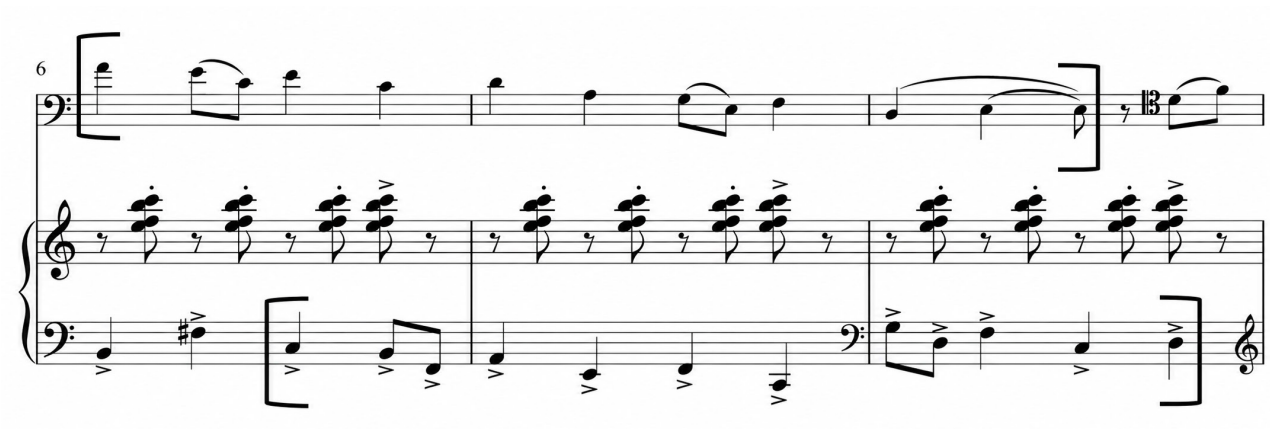
Personally, I remember him as a humble and simple man who devoted his life to music with discipline and integrity. For me he was a guide and a teacher: cordial, stimulating, tolerant, motivating, and sincere. His legacy remains alive, although an important part of it still needs to be discovered and disseminated.

Appendix B. Analytical Musical Examples

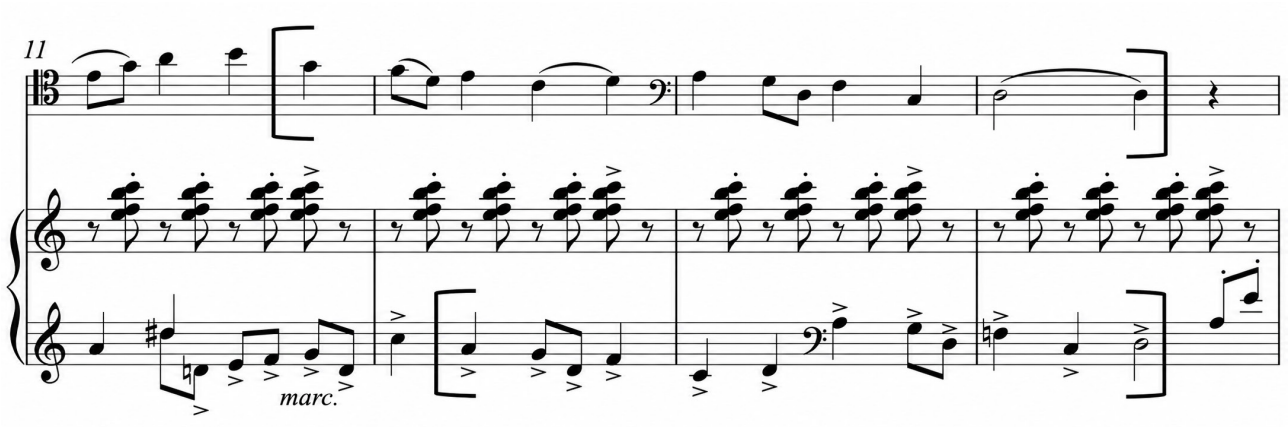
B.1. Movement I – “Joy”



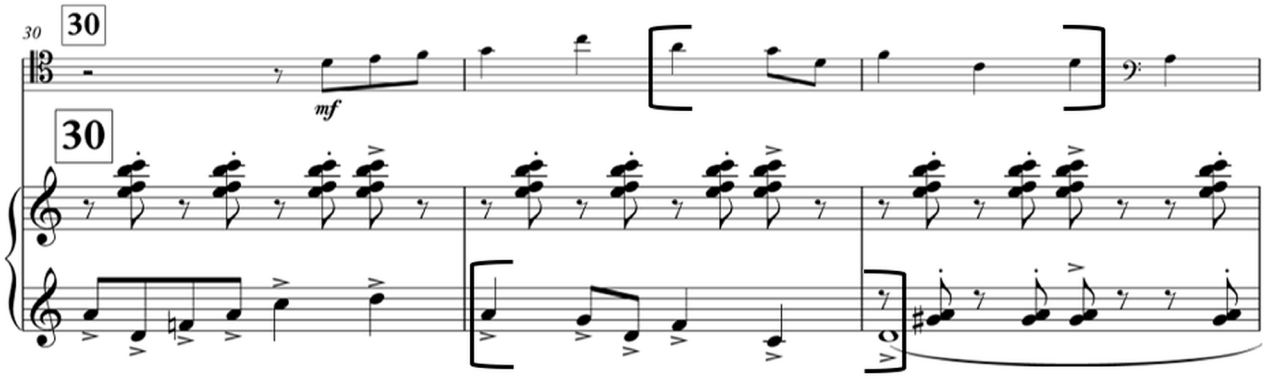
Example 1. Movement I, bars 1–5: piano introduction with *A Lydian* coloring; double bass entry and the opening of the theme



Example 2. Movement I, bars 6–8: local canonic relationship; the piano shifts toward *D Dorian*, and the motive passes between the double bass and the piano’s left hand

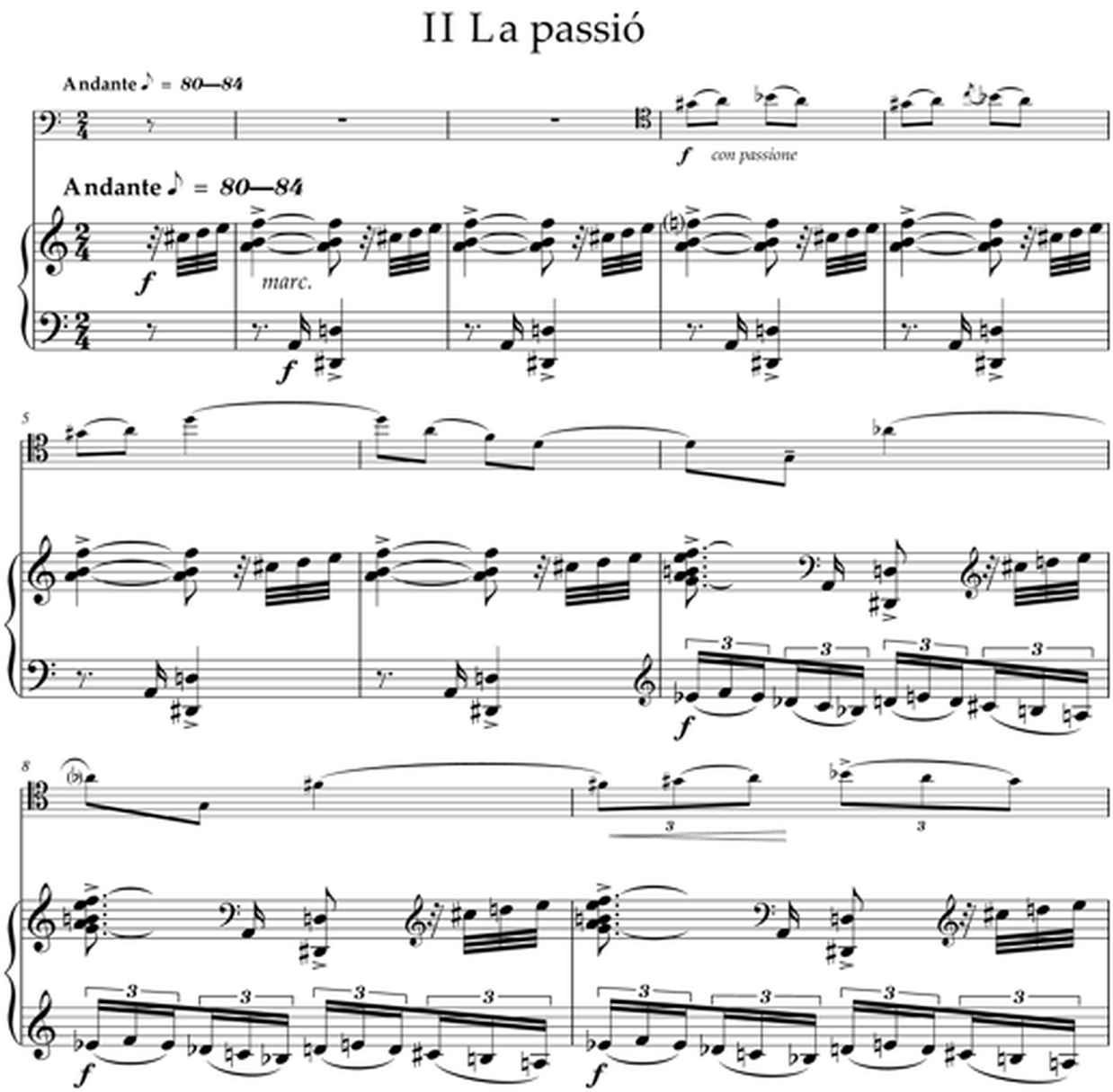


Example 3. Movement I, bars 11–14: canonic relationship with a delayed response in the piano; alternation between *Lydian* color and a *D Dorian* center

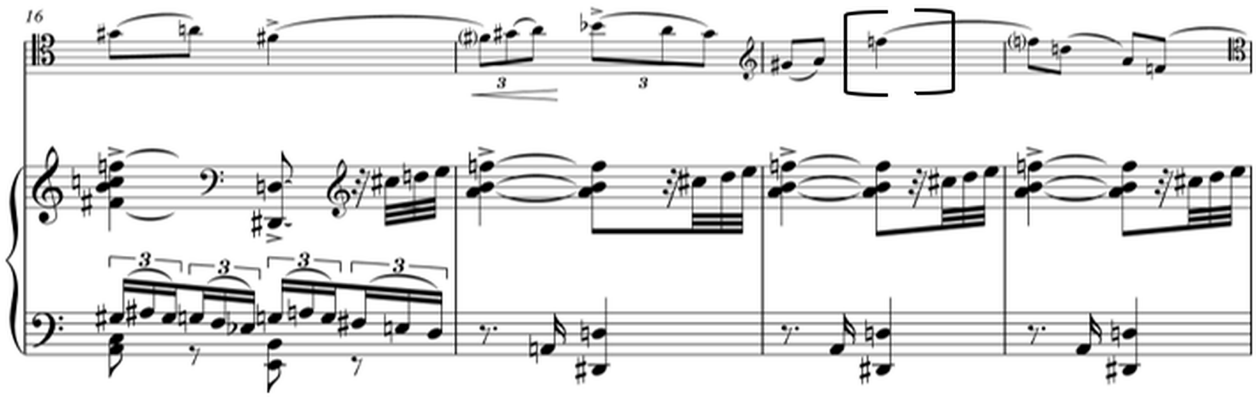


Example 4. Movement I, bars 31–32: opening of the Coda in *D Dorian*; *quasi-fugato* imitation, with the double bass entering after the piano's statement of the motive

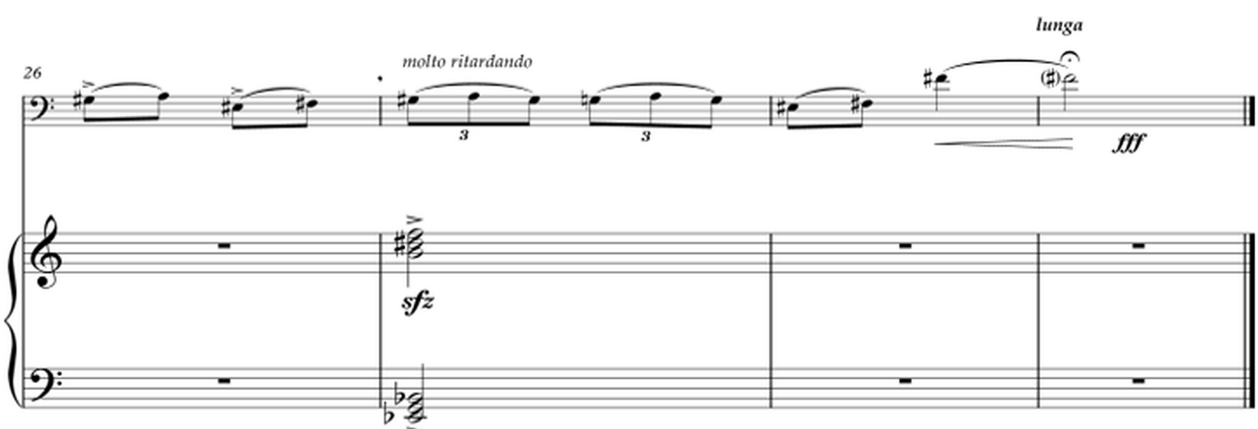
B.2. Movement II – “Passion”



Example 5. Movement II, bars 1–9: piano introduction and the first statement of the theme in the double-bass part; illustration of the melody-and-accompaniment model and the initial modal support

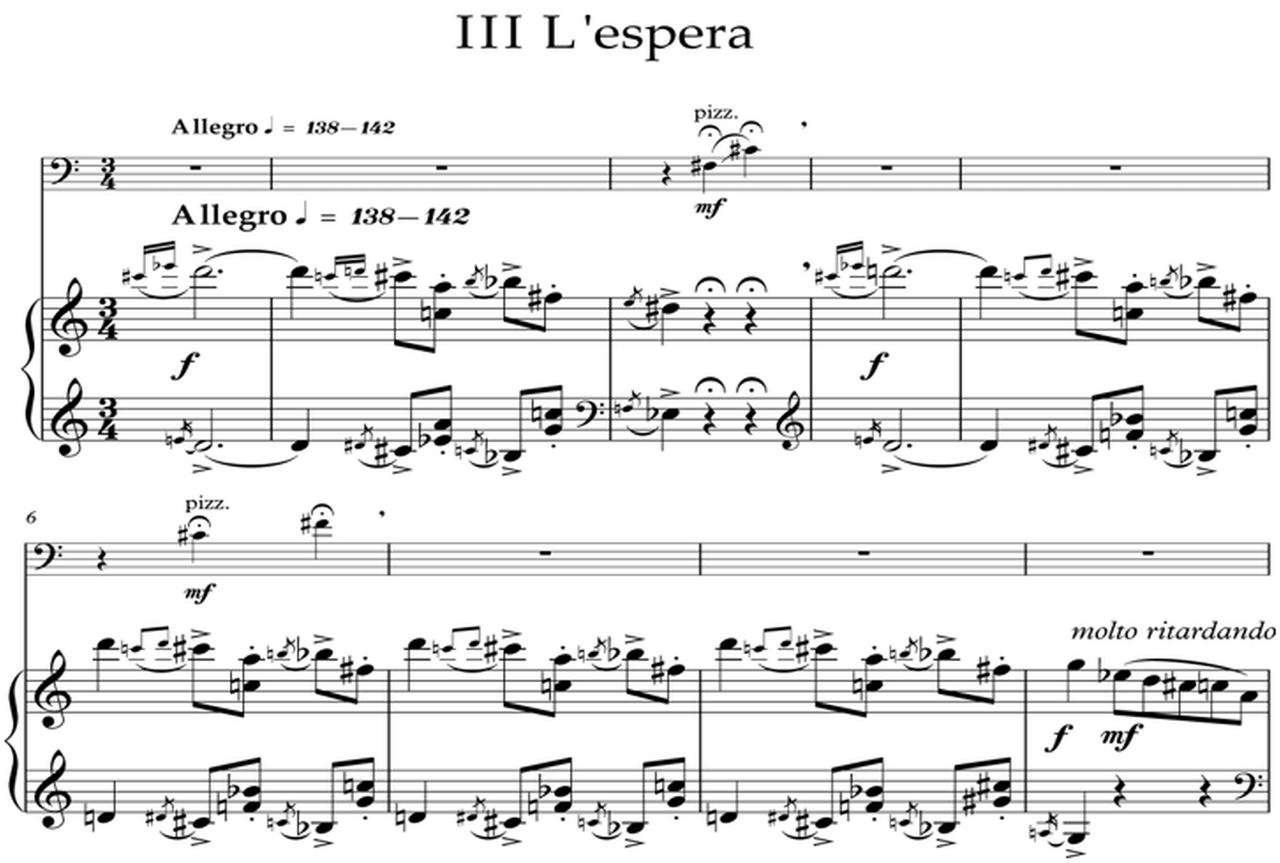


Example 6. Movement II, bars 16–19: expansion of the double-bass register, culminating in the very high *F* reached in bar 18

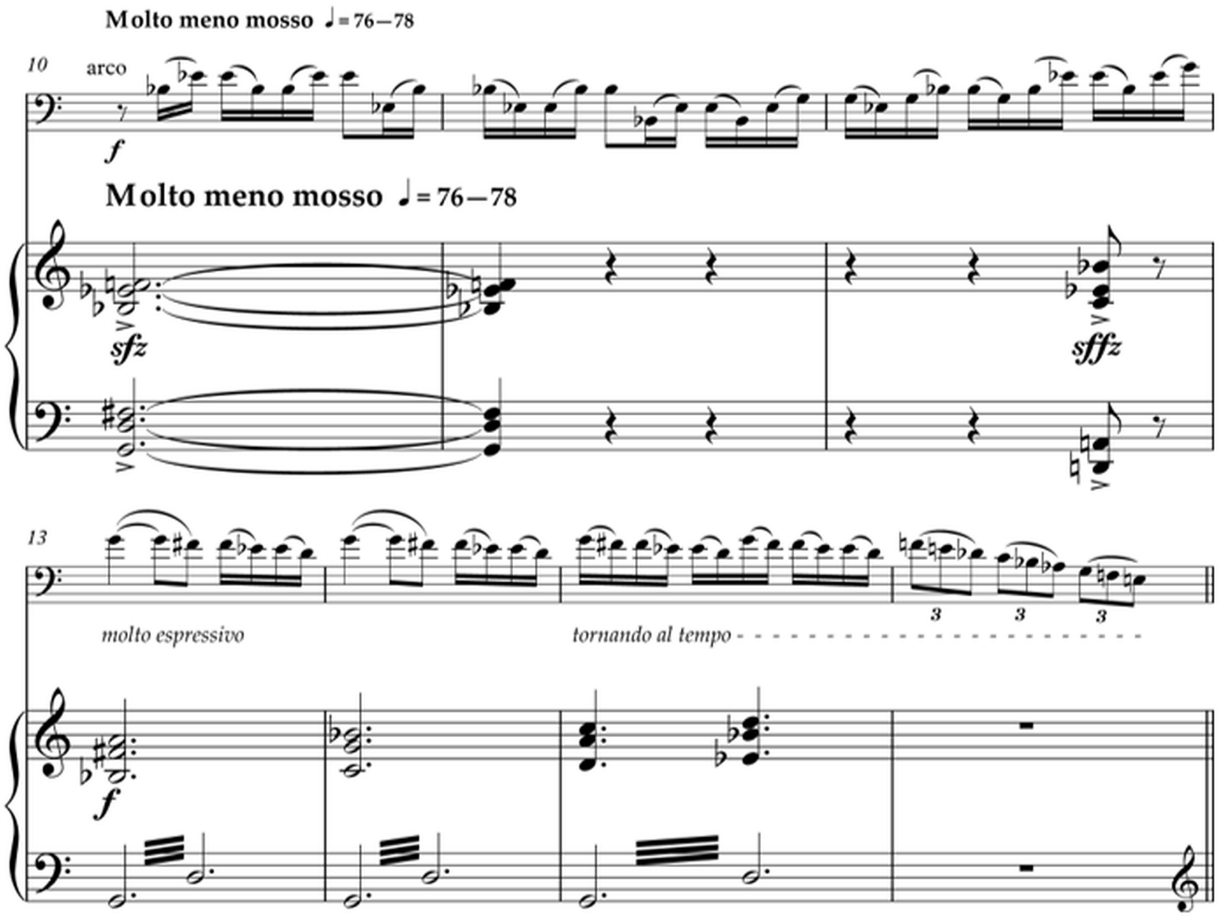


Example 7. Movement II, coda, bars 27–29: double-bass cadenza; written-out ritardando; final fortissimo

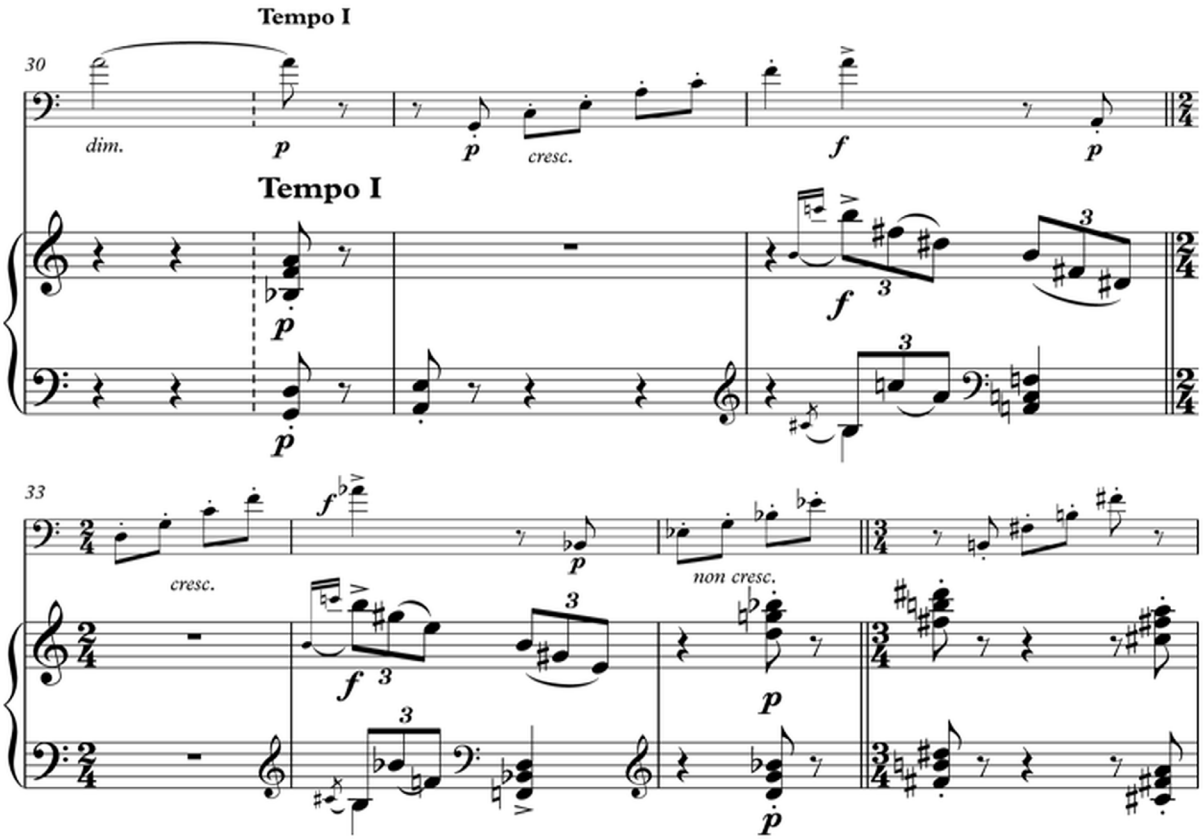
B.3. Movement III – “Waiting”



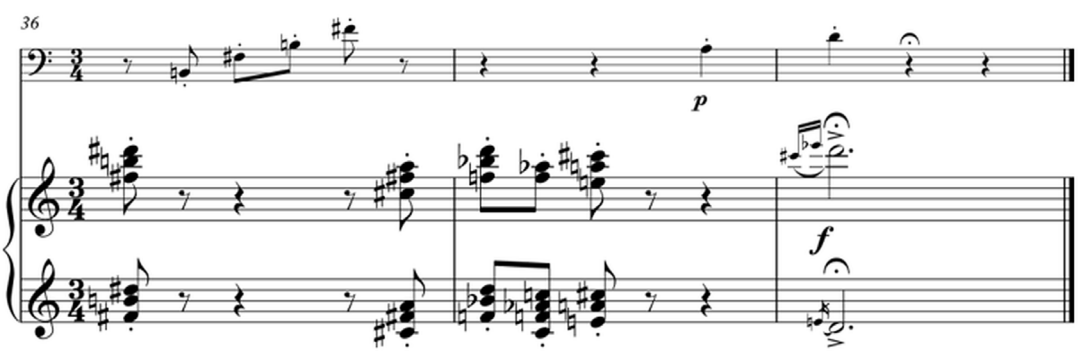
Example 8. Movement III, bars 1–9: call-and-response between piano and double bass



Example 9. Movement III, section B, bars 10–16: contrasting episode; unfolding of the double-bass cantilena

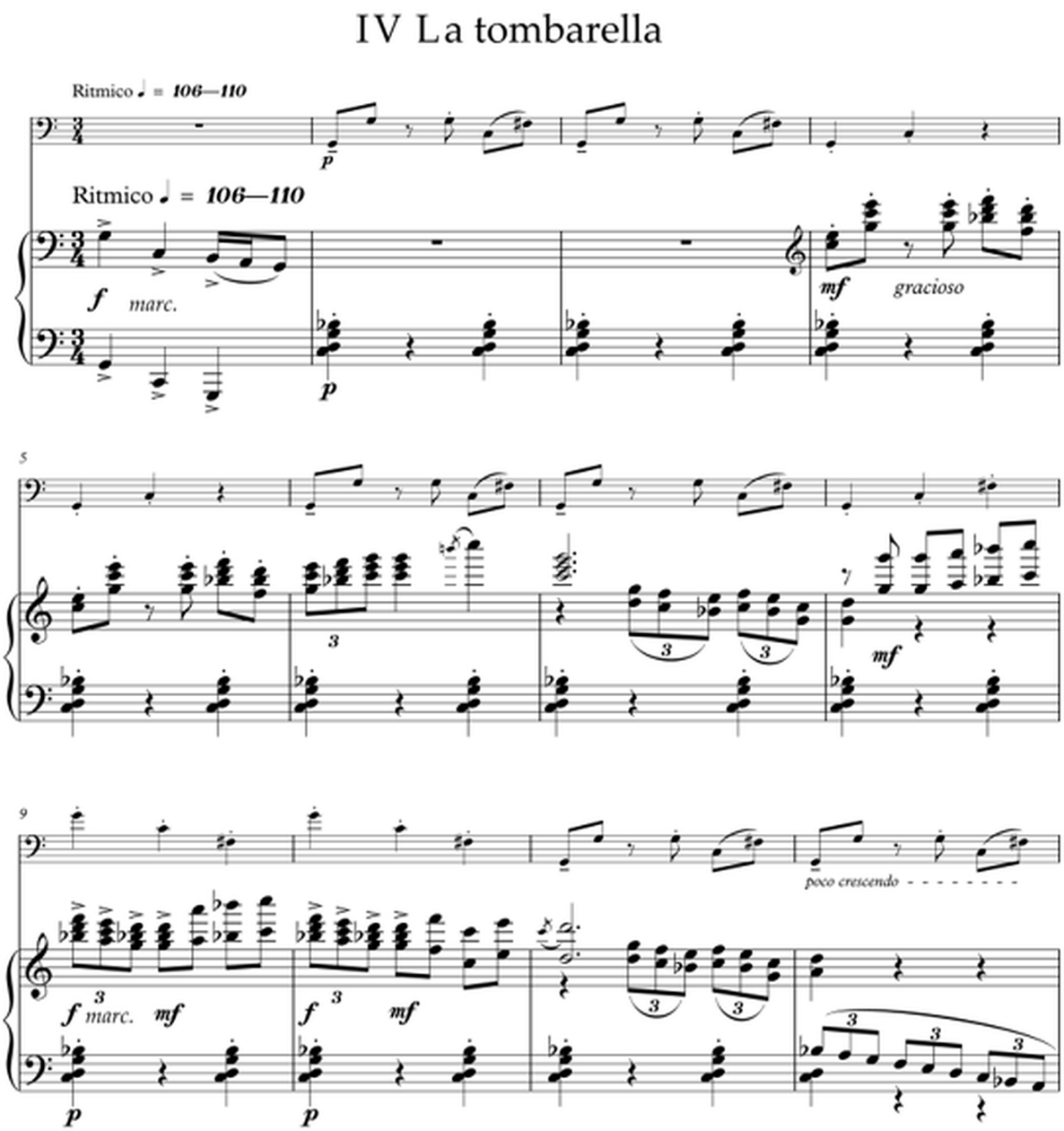


Example 10. Movement III, bars 30–36: reprise dialogue between the instruments; shifting modal supports and intensified vertical sonorities within a *D*-centered field

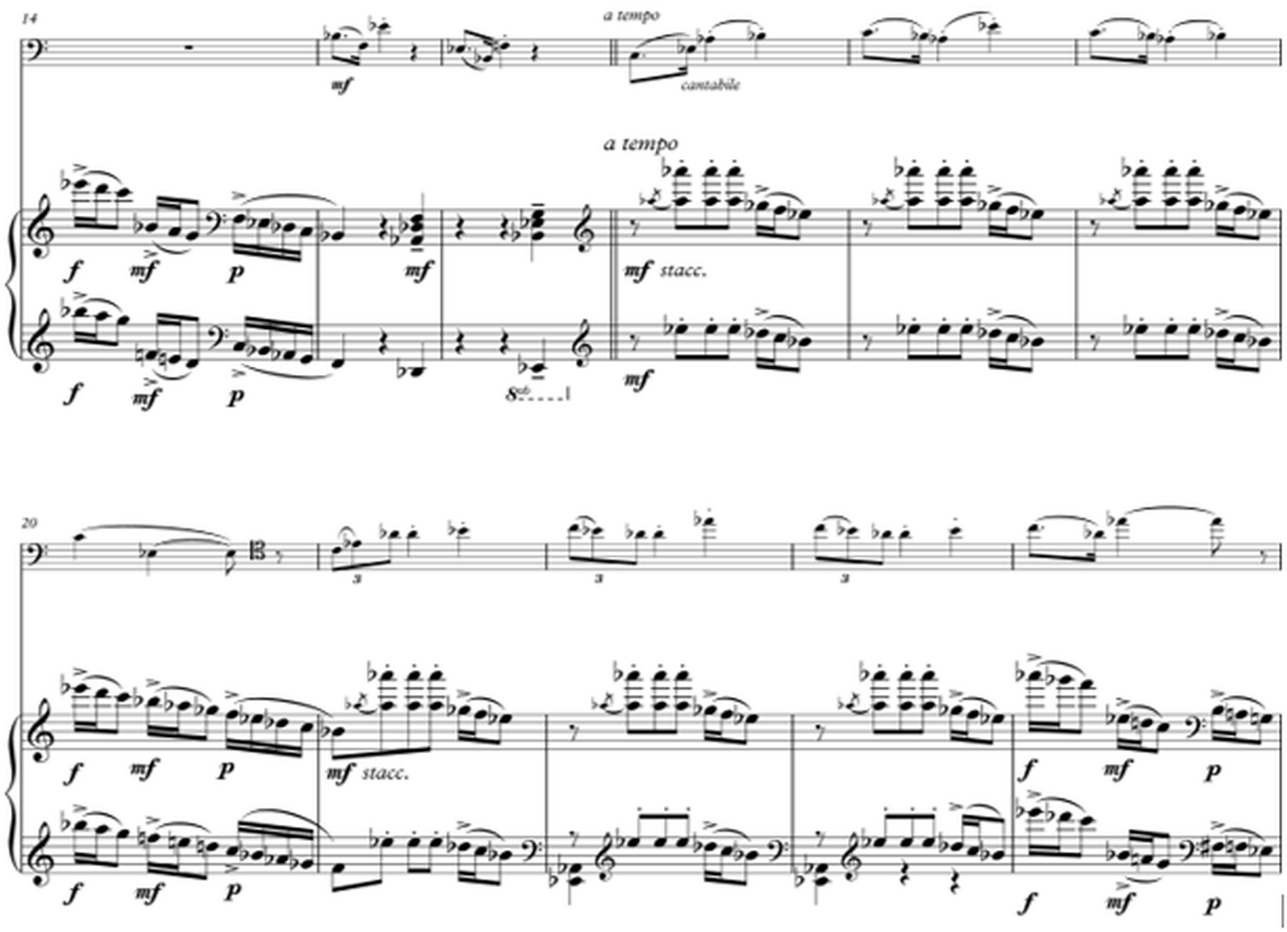


Example 11. Movement III, bars 36–38: coda; sharp dynamic contrast, with the double bass at *piano* and the piano at *forte*; a clearly articulated cadential ending

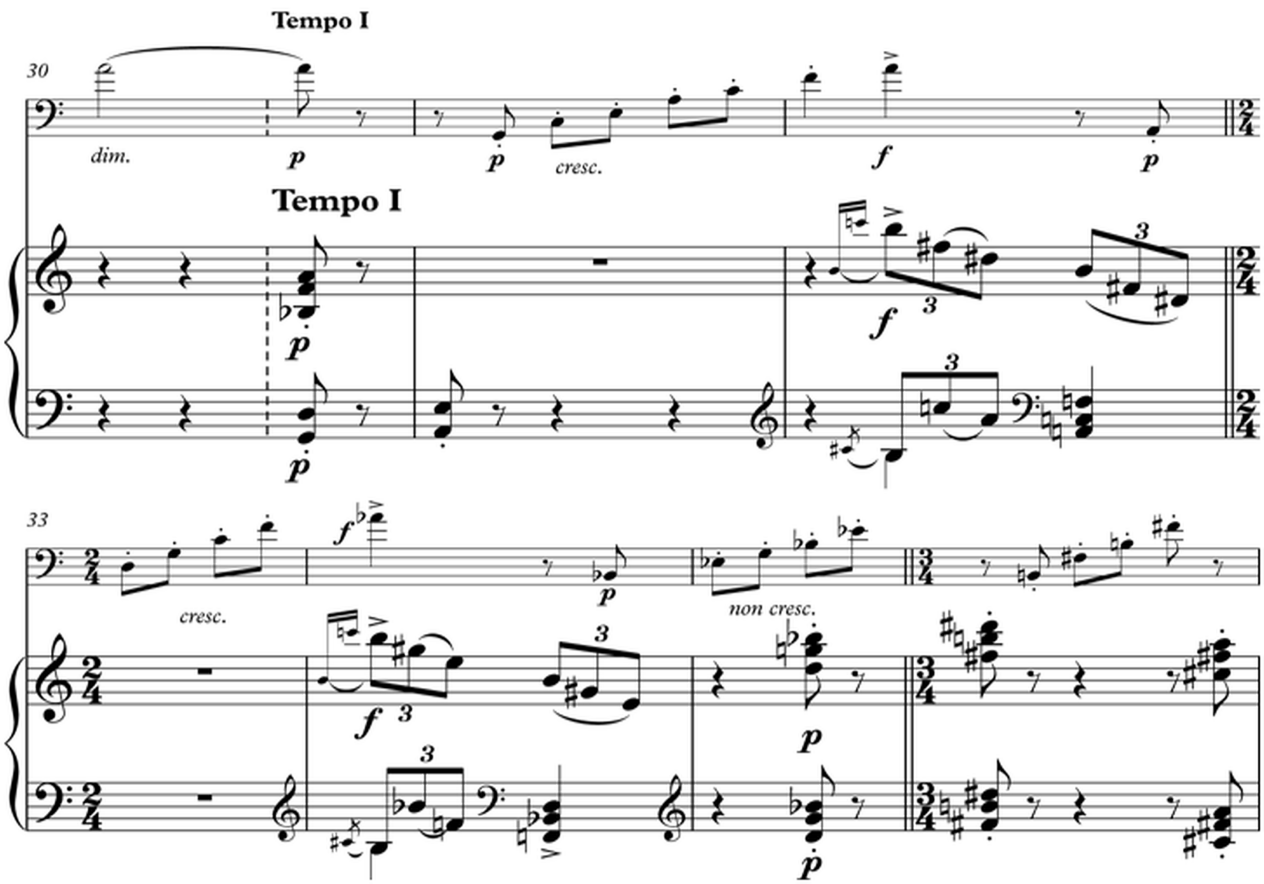
B.4. Movement IV – “Somersault”



Example 12. Movement IV, section A, bars 1–12: exposition of the theme and the initial textural and modal configuration; polymodal layering at the opening



Example 13. Movement IV, bars 14–24: variation A′; transformation of the thematic material and a denser texture reflecting a redistribution of functions between double bass and piano

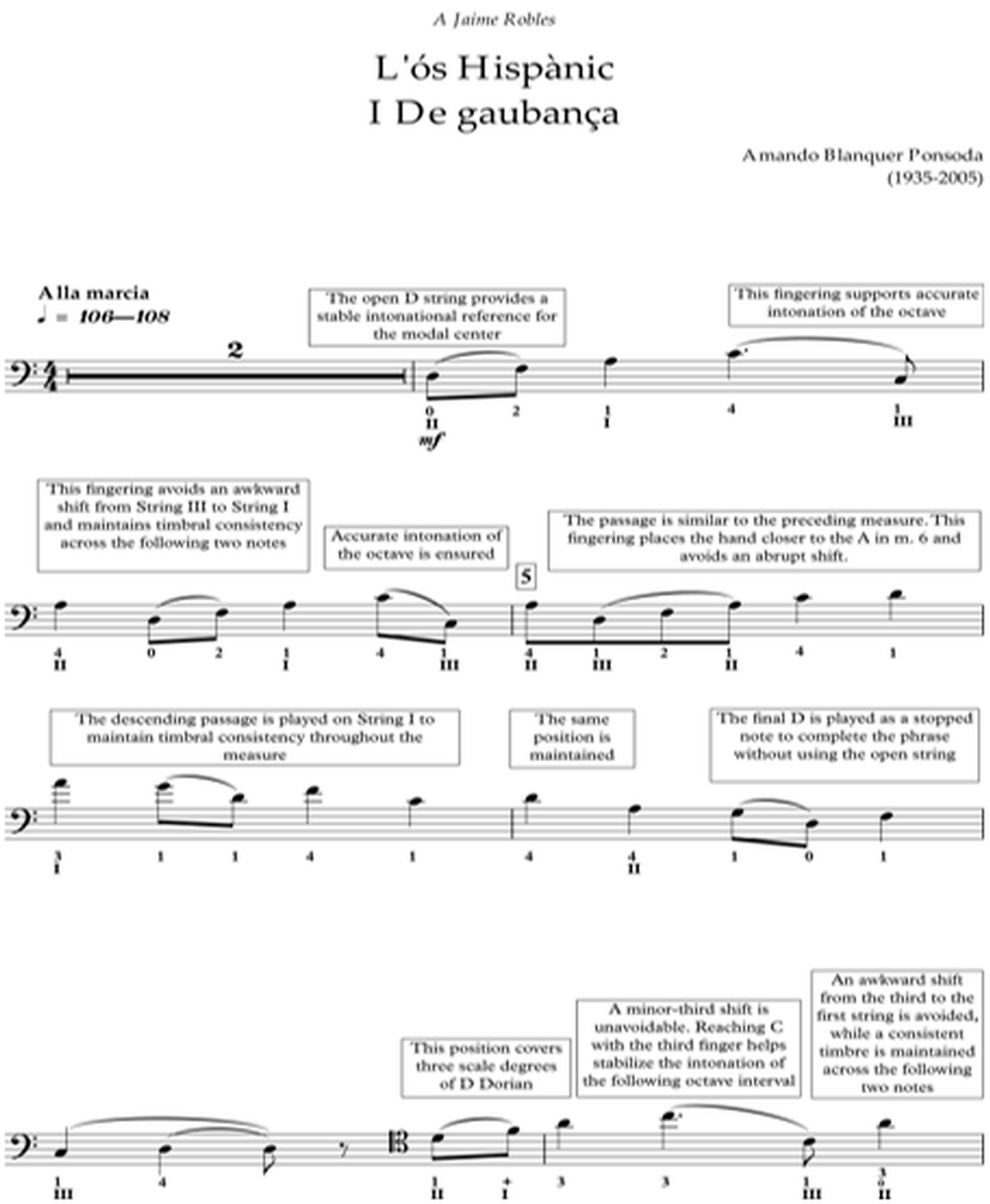


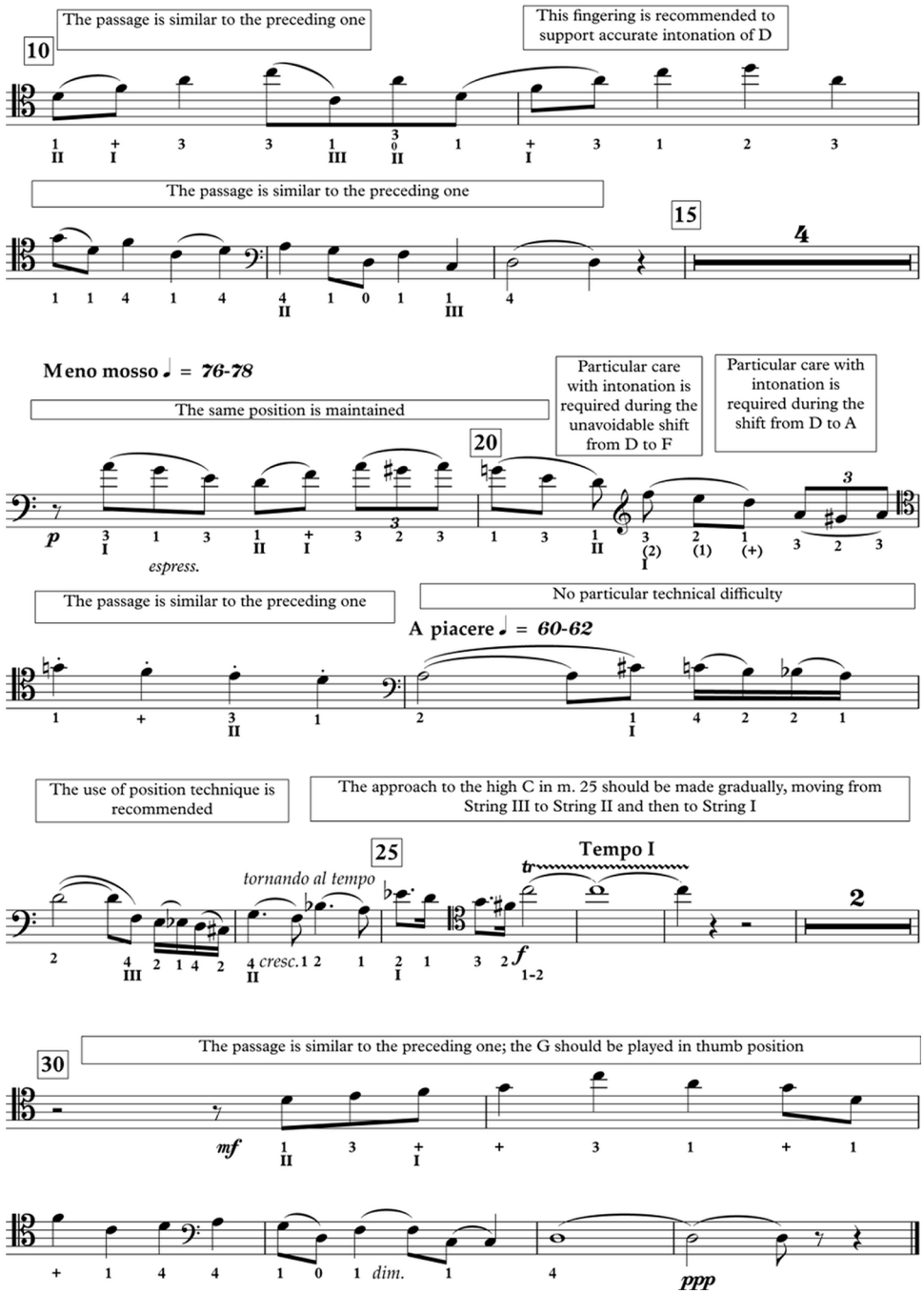
Example 14. Movement IV, coda, bars 58–60: concentration of ostinato figures and chords; imitative writing and final dynamic emphasis (*sfffz*)

Appendix C. Fingering and Performance Examples

C.1. Movement I – "Joy"

Fingering notation: 1–4 = left-hand fingers; 0 = open string; + = thumb; Roman numerals I–IV = strings I–IV.

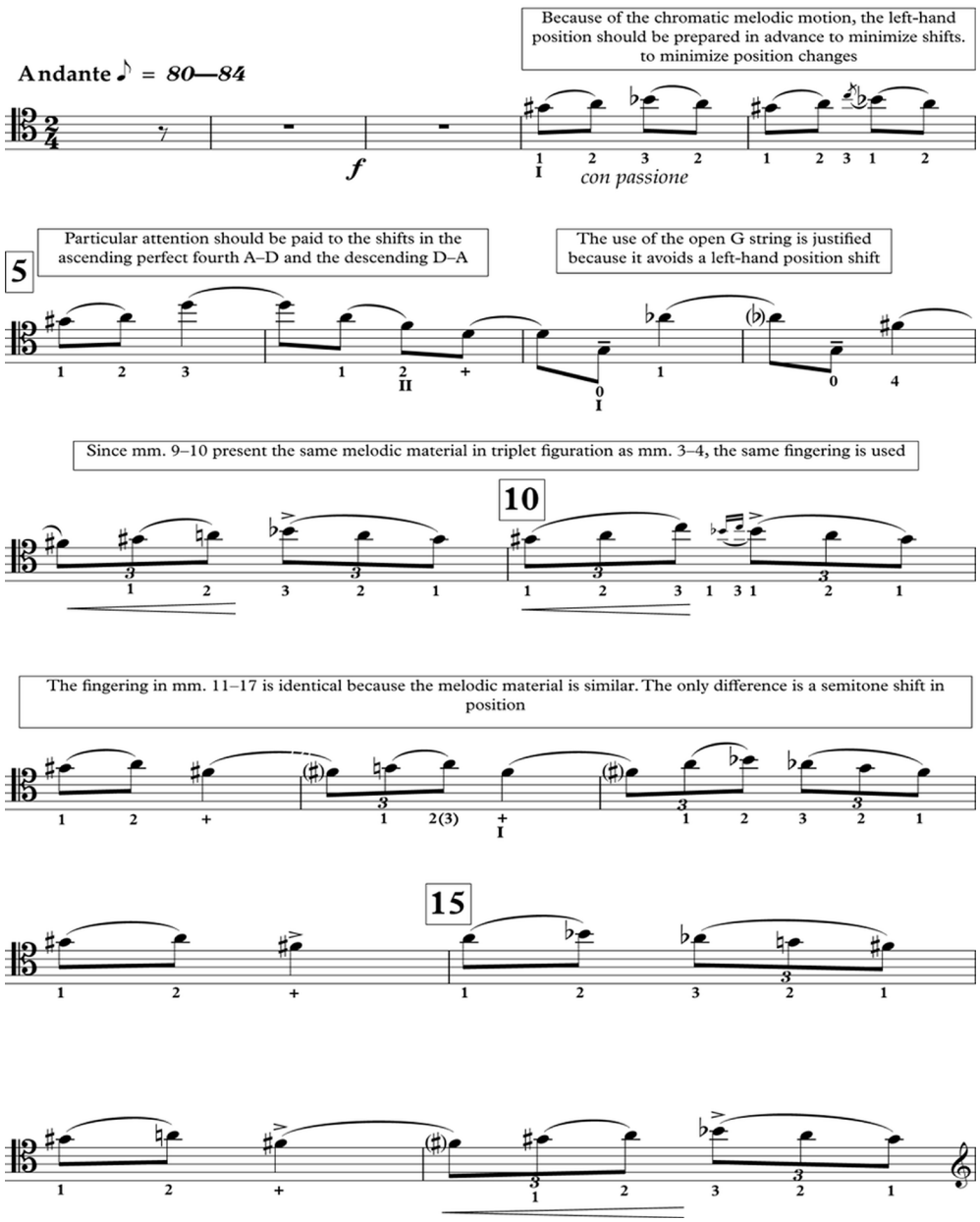


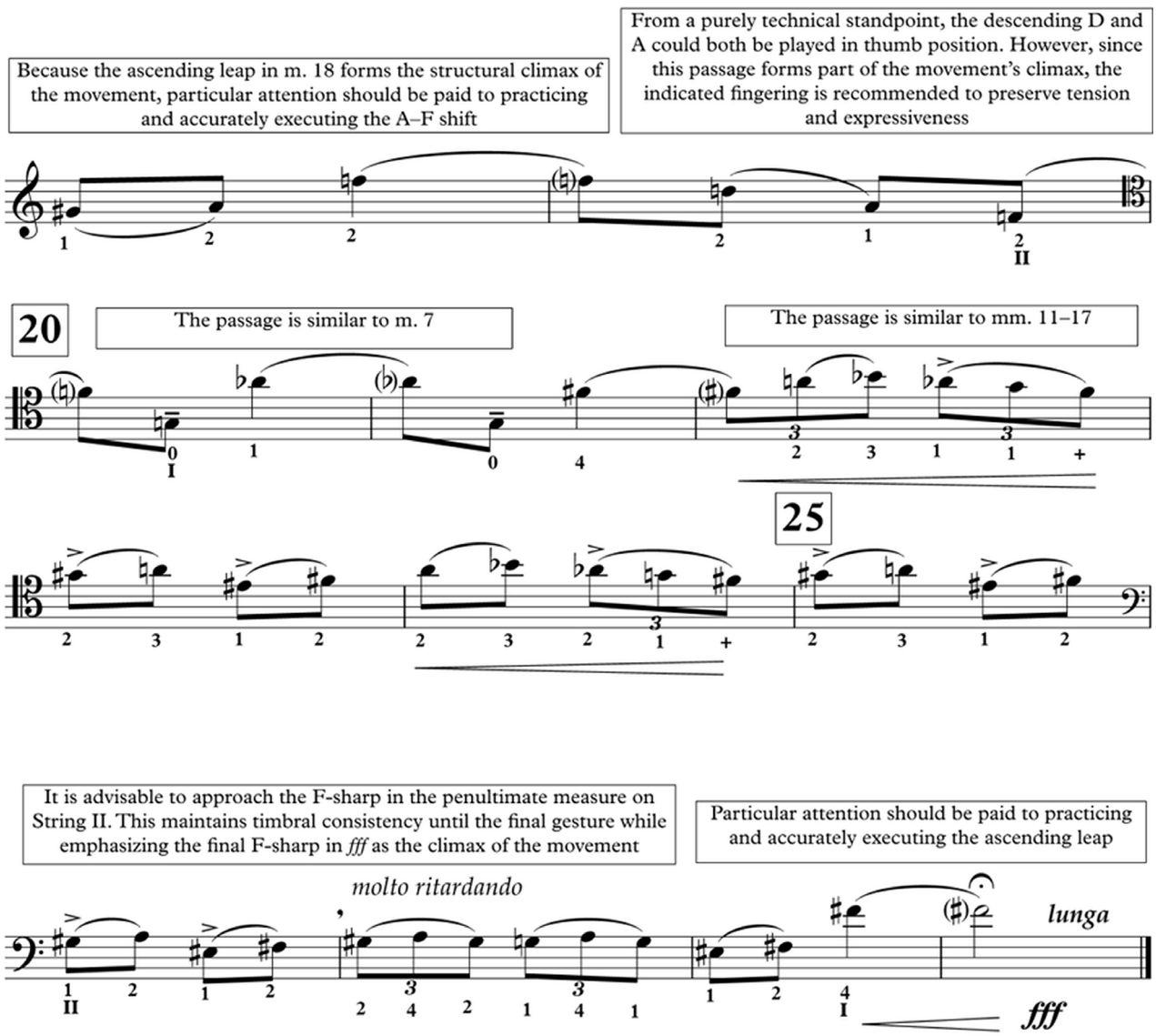


Example 15. Movement I: double-bass part; fingering and commentary by the first author

C.2. Movement II – “Passion”

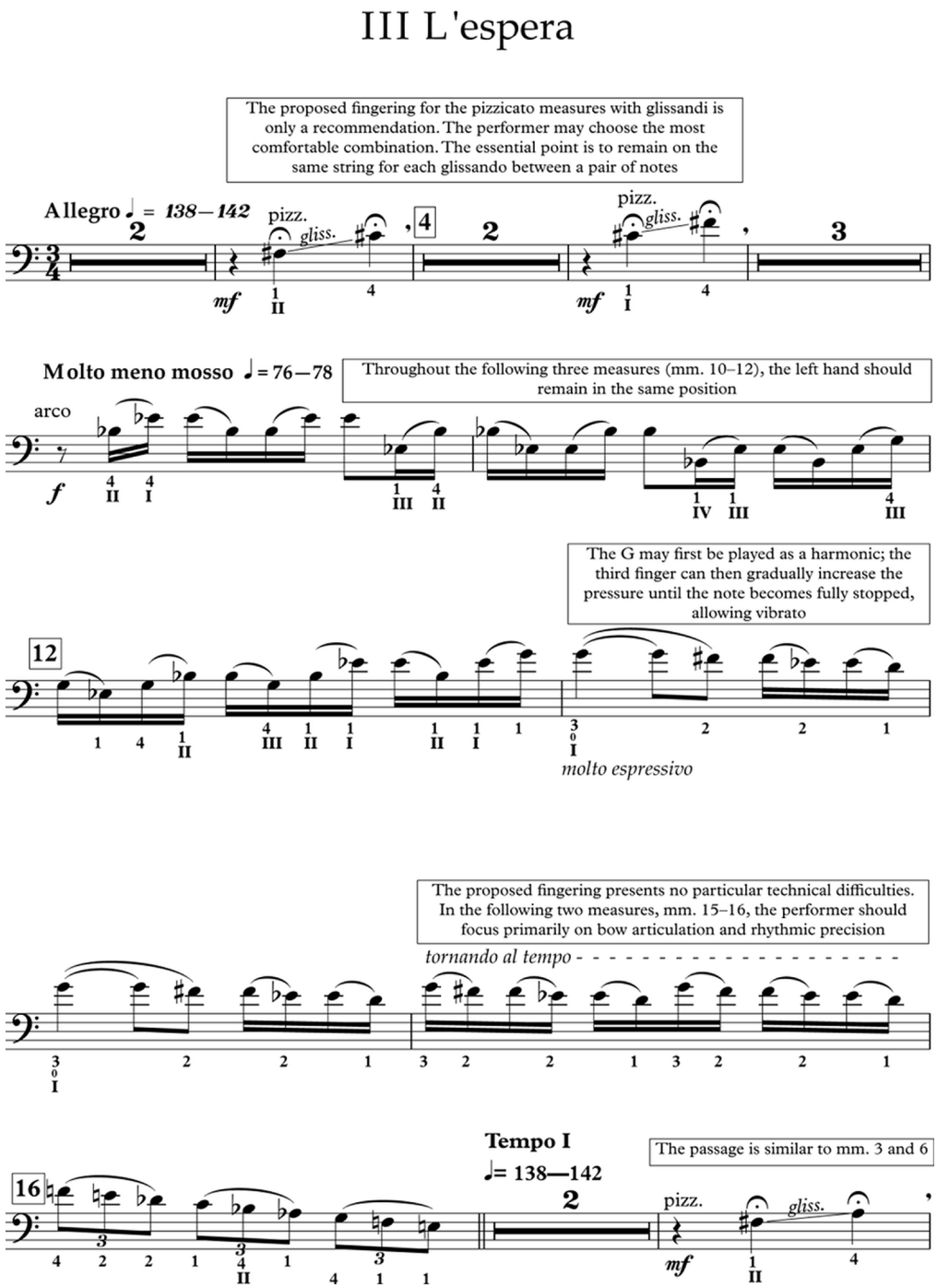
II La passió

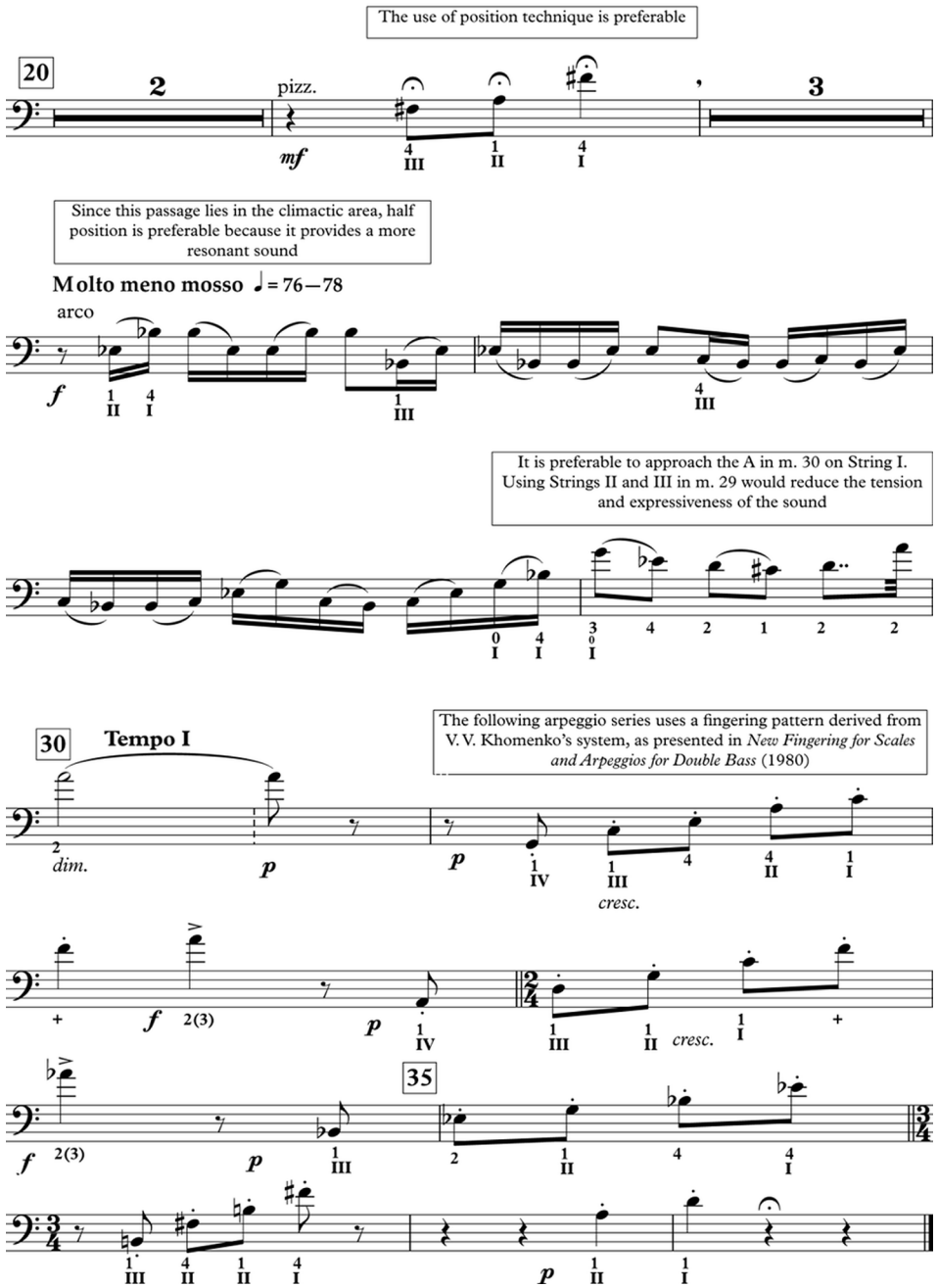




Example 16. Movement II: double-bass part; fingering and commentary by the first author.

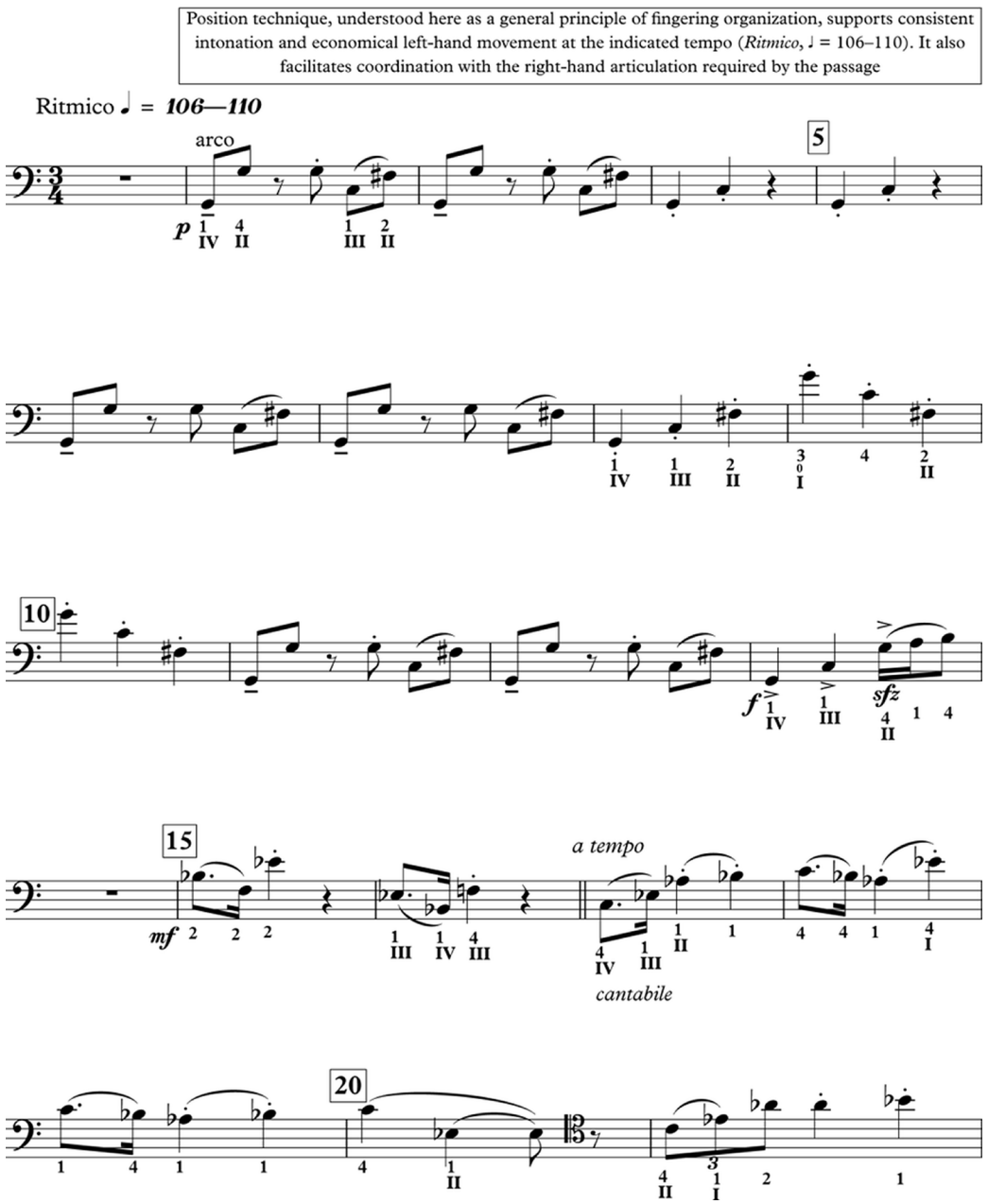
C.3. Movement III – “Waiting”

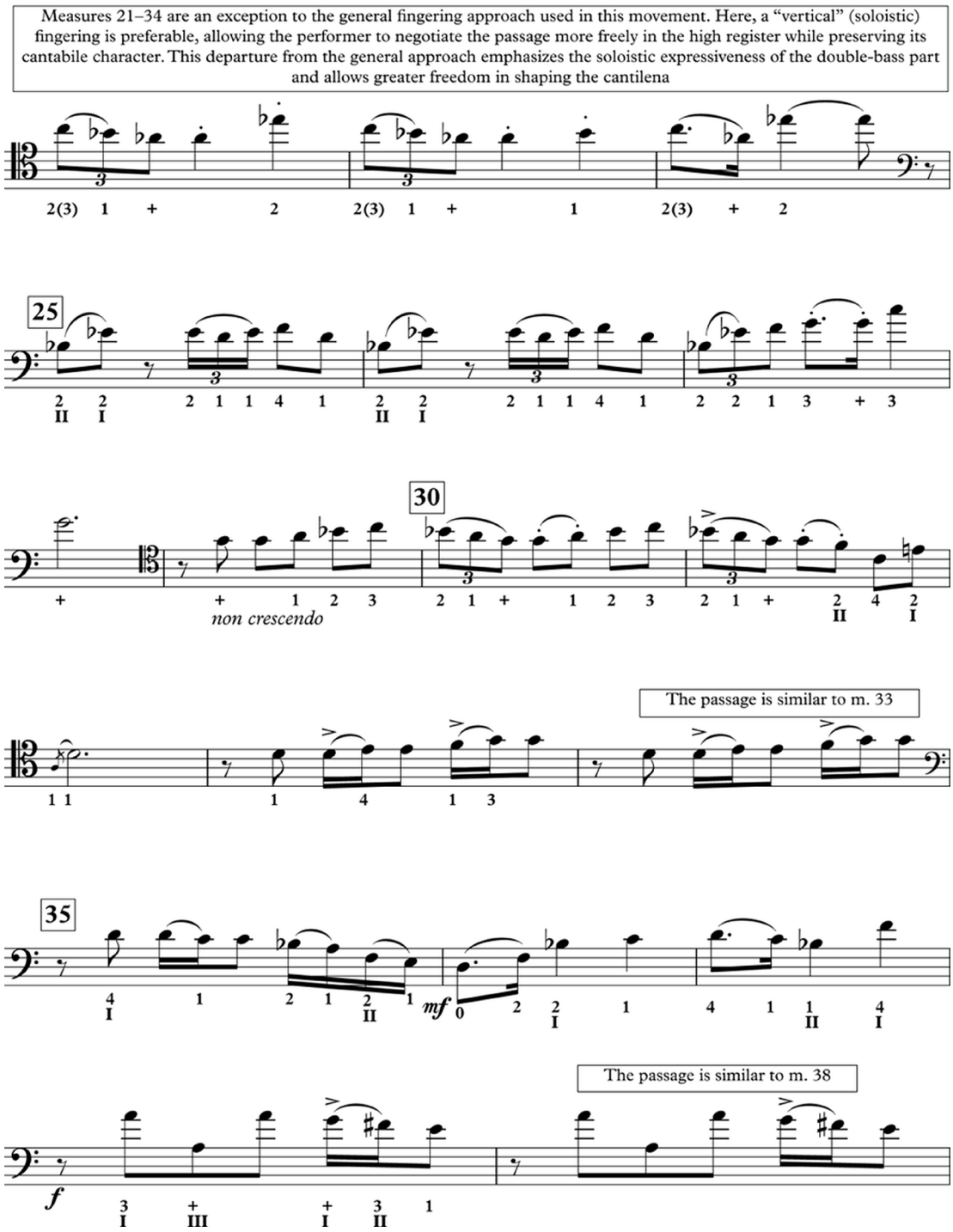


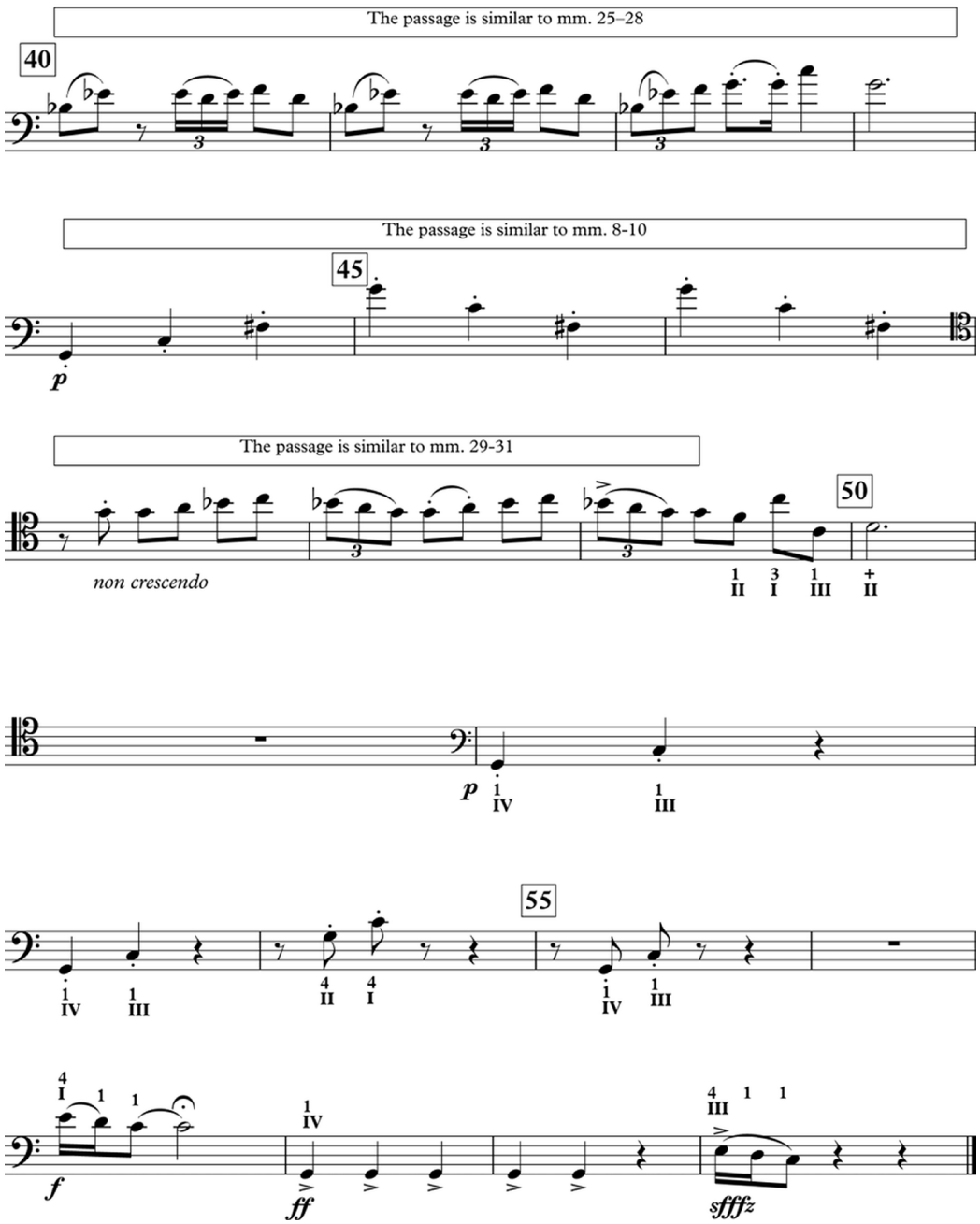


Example 17. Movement III: double-bass part; fingering and commentary by the first author

C.4. Movement IV – “Somersault”




Measures 21–34 are an exception to the general fingering approach used in this movement. Here, a “vertical” (soloistic) fingering is preferable, allowing the performer to negotiate the passage more freely in the high register while preserving its cantabile character. This departure from the general approach emphasizes the soloistic expressiveness of the double-bass part and allows greater freedom in shaping the cantilena
25
30
non crescendo
The passage is similar to m. 33
35
mf
The passage is similar to m. 38
f



Example 18. Movement IV: double-bass part; fingering and commentary by the first author

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