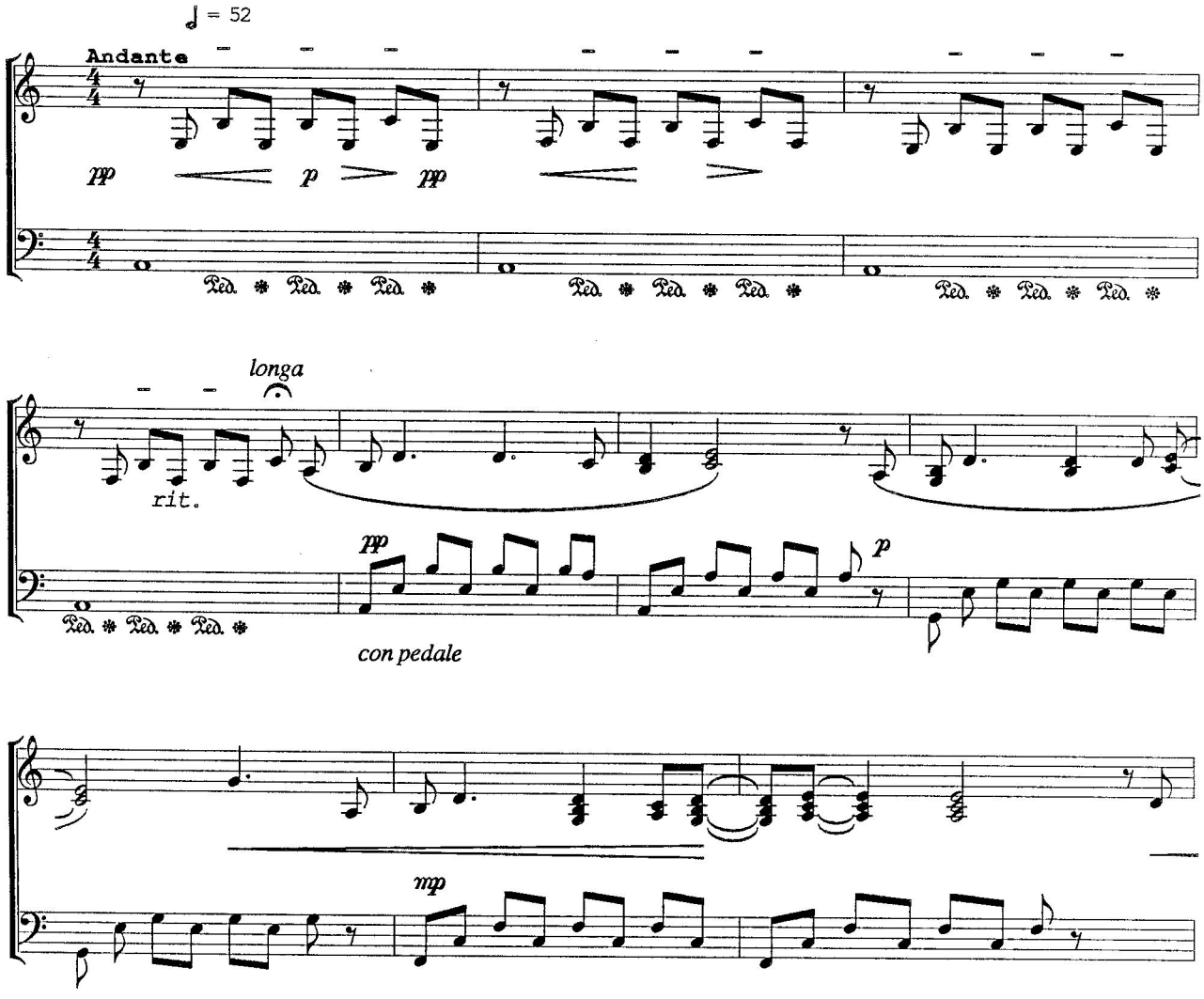
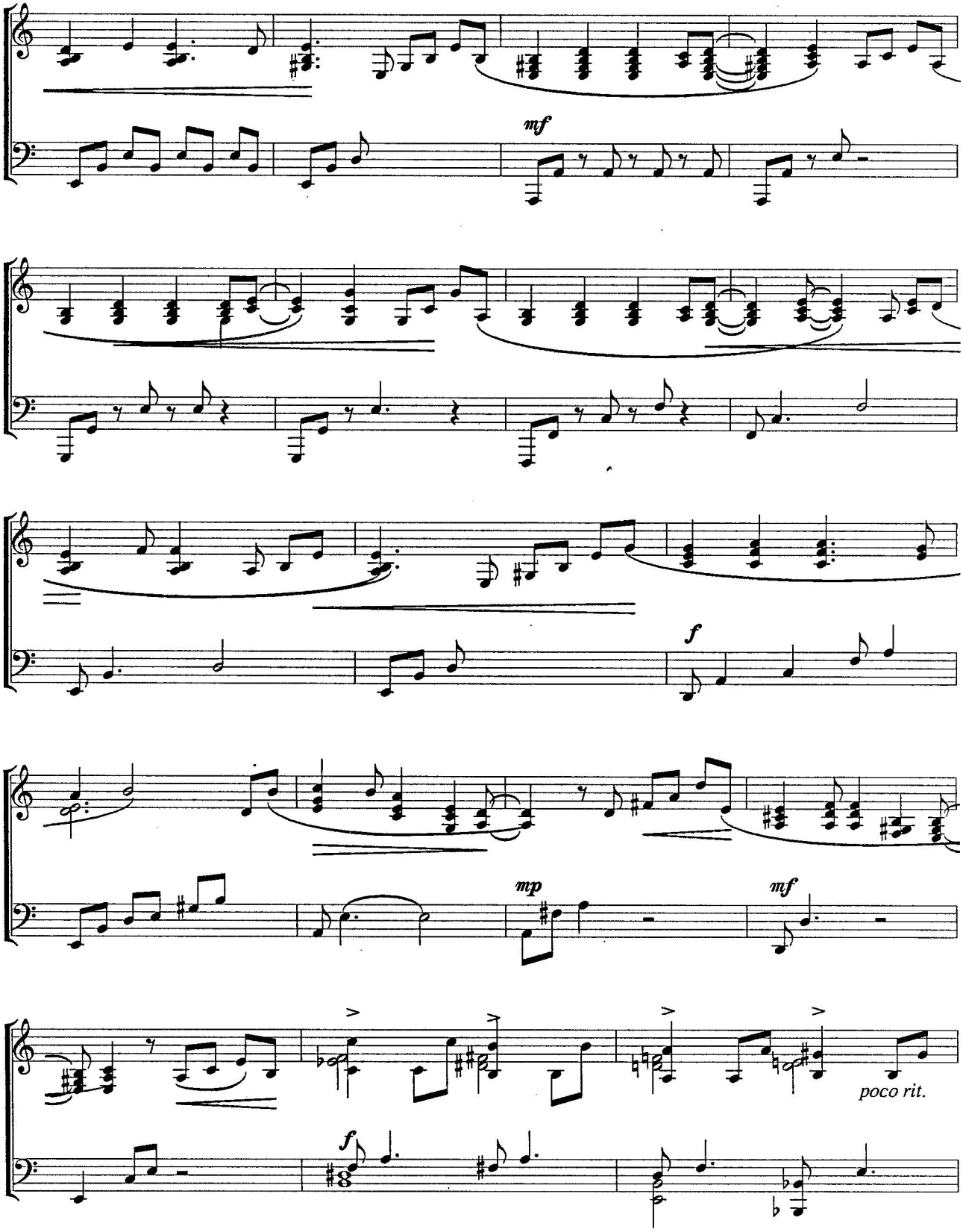
Agawa Canyon

To mom and dad in memory of that peaceful and healing trip to Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Agawa Canyon, Canada

Jim Andrisse copyright 1985
edited by Sheila Dugan

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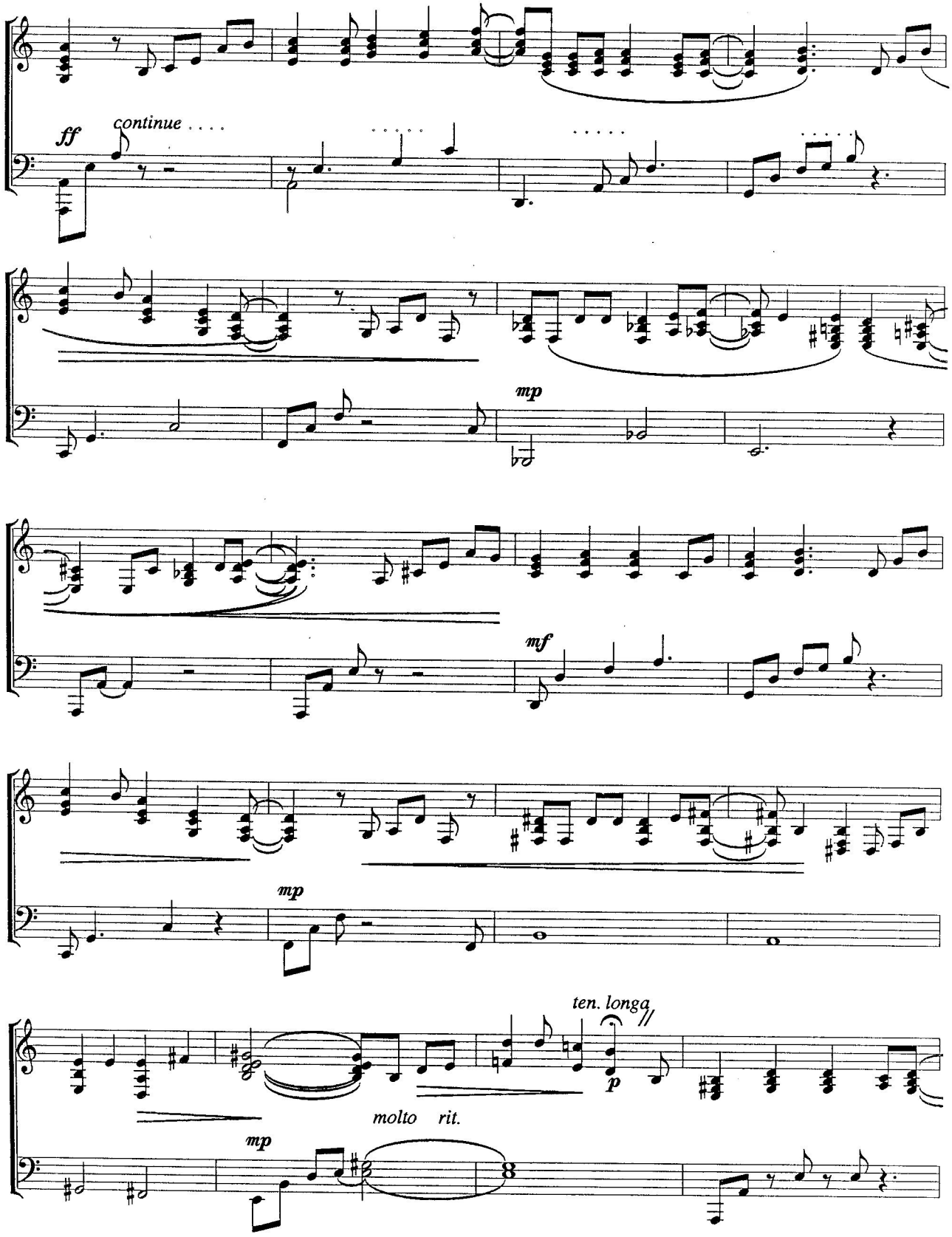
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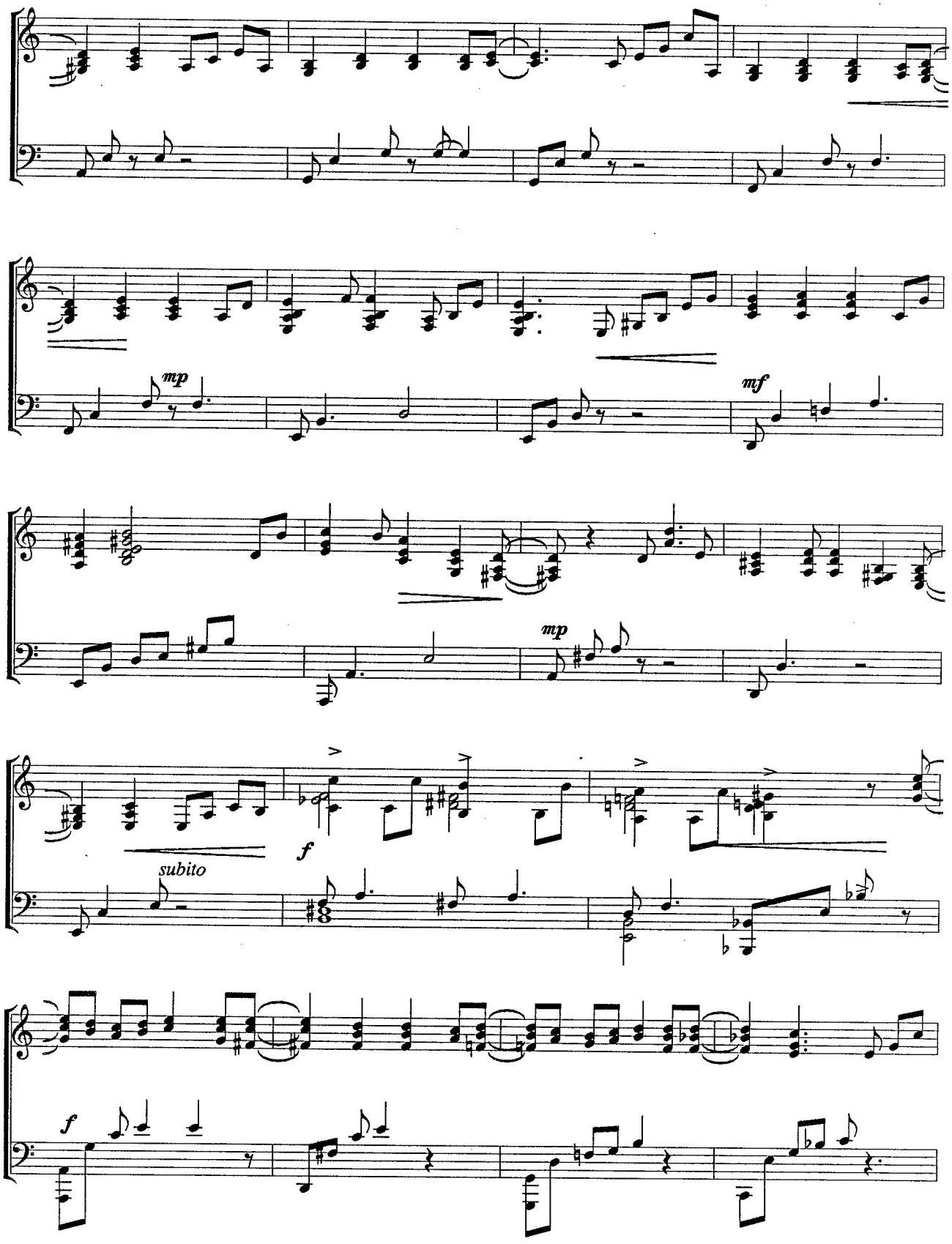
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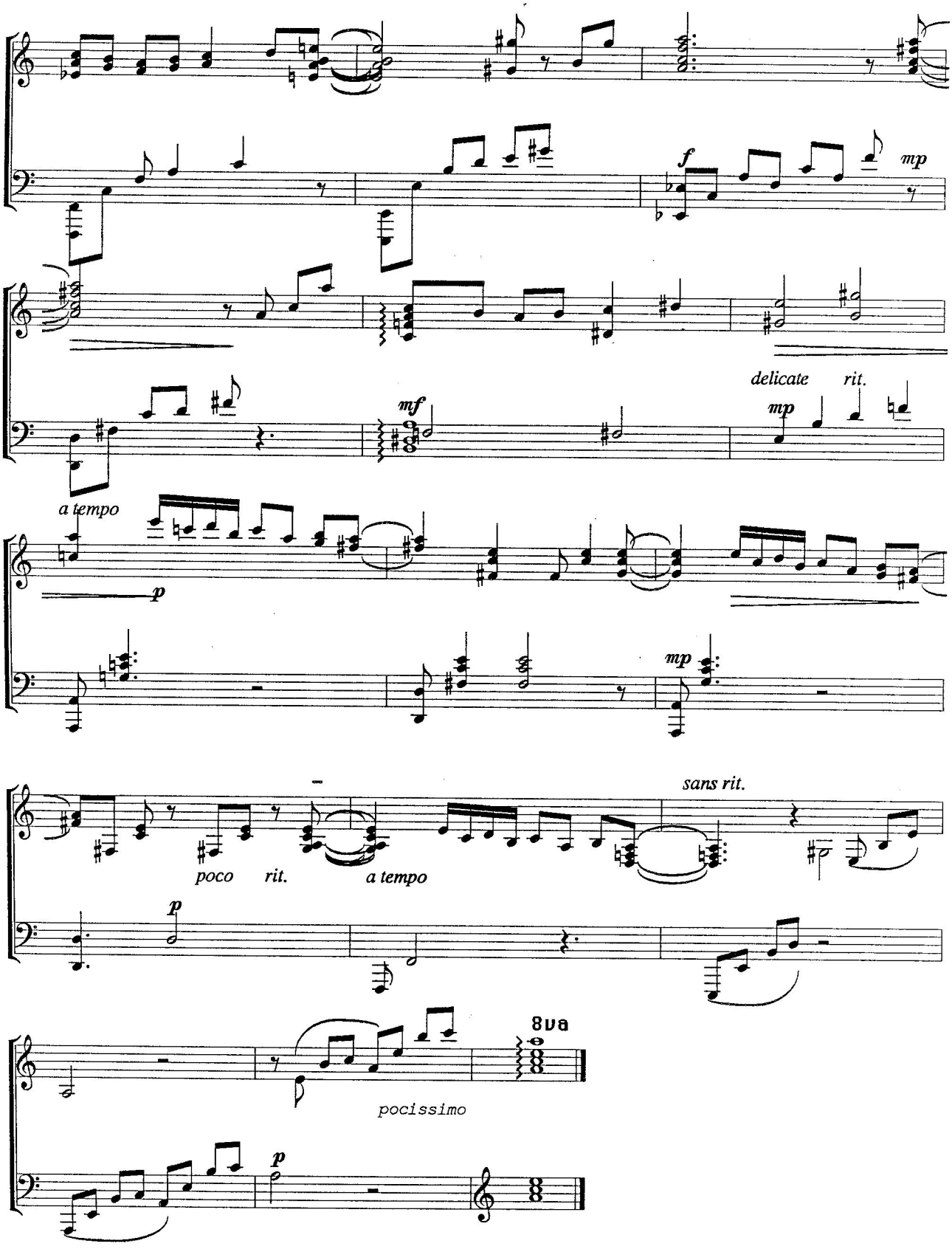
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AGAWA CANYON

a three sonnet suite by Jim Andrisse

I.

We rode up to the canyon, Algoma Central Rail.
We got up very early, before the dawn had paled.
My father and my mother, both now near seventy,
And I, in my mid-forties, had traveled far to be
Together in this canyon. First time in twenty years.
Time has a way of stilling their worries and my fears.
My brother and my sister, both married and with kids,
Had found a way to please them and pick up on their bids.
The path I took while growing up was much less straight than bent.
It wasn't very easy to be so different.
Of course, I could have married, or given it a try,
But both my folks had told me how wrong it was to lie.
So in my early twenties I set out on my own,
And, though not always lonely, I've always been alone.

II.

We got off in that canyon--"Agawa," it is called--
And there we shared the beauty of its steep and tree-lined walls.
We savored crystal waters and those slopes of evergreen.
As with other sons and daughters, there were things that went unseen.
My father climbed three hundred steps the lookout point to see.
And, though his boldness worried me, I chose with him to be.
It wasn't always so, I thought, for in my younger days
I found myself attracted more to mother's thoughts and ways.
I risked and told my father how he had frightened me,
But he replied, "There's other things, you know, like jealousy."
I pondered what my dad had said the next day on the train;
I searched the bottom of my soul and riffled through my brain.
I couldn't find a single shred of jealousy for him,
Though in the process I encountered memories just as grim.

III.

We rode down from that canyon, and somehow things had changed--
My feelings, better sorted out, my thoughts, more rearranged.
Our lives are like a train ride, my parents' lives and mine.
There's more than we can fathom as we move along the line.
We all are seeking beauty, yet we see it differently--
One finds it in a flower; another, in a tree.
We should not tell each other what beauty we should find.
It isn't in the things we see, you see; it's in our minds.
It isn't so important, then, the cards that fate has dealt,
The thoughts that we've been thinking or the feelings we have felt.
Important is the fact that we have had the chance to share,
To take the ride together, to listen, learn and care.
And so I love my parents as our journey nears its end,
For I know the truth is waiting, and it's just around the bend.