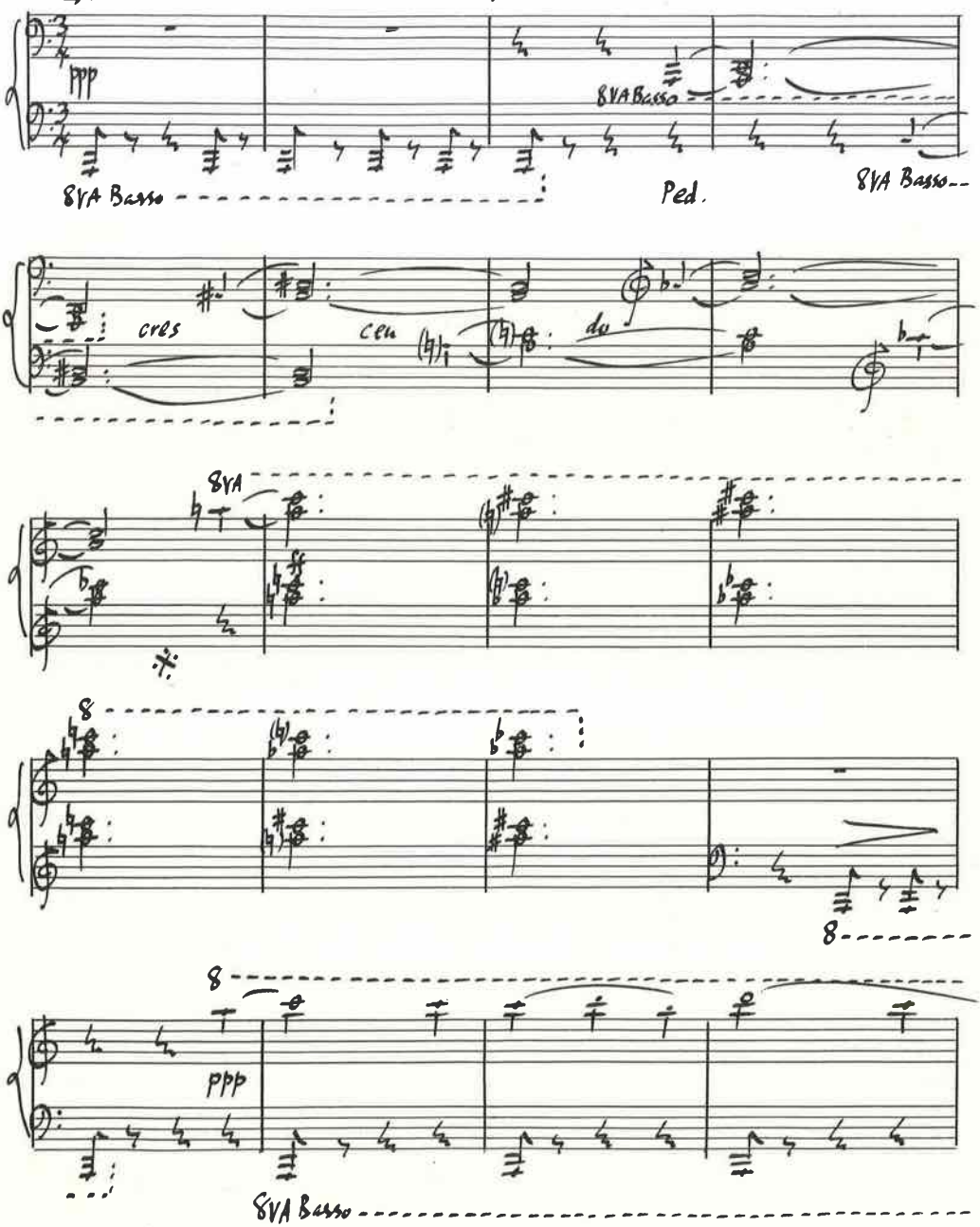
TO
YONTY SOLOMON

1. Intrada



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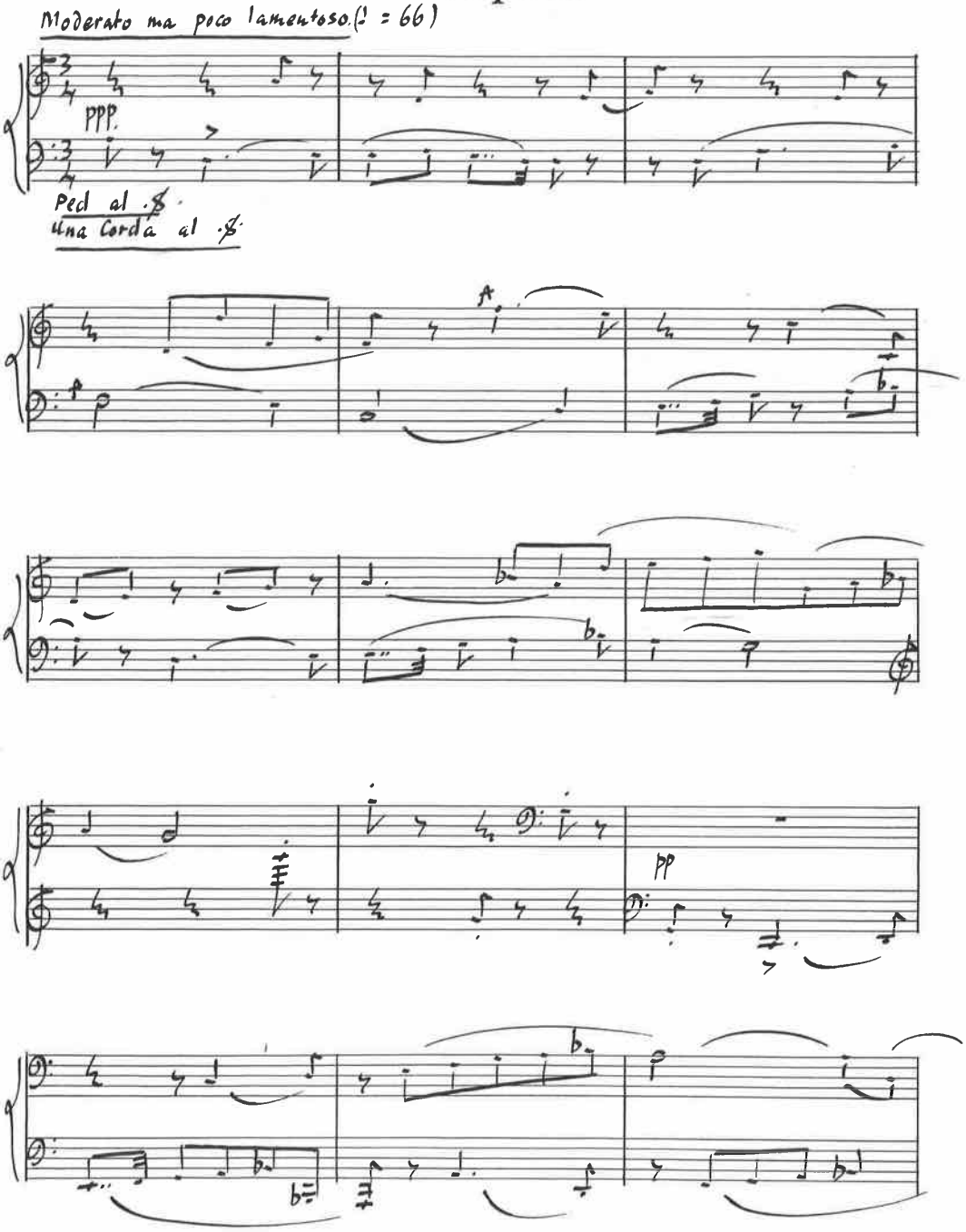
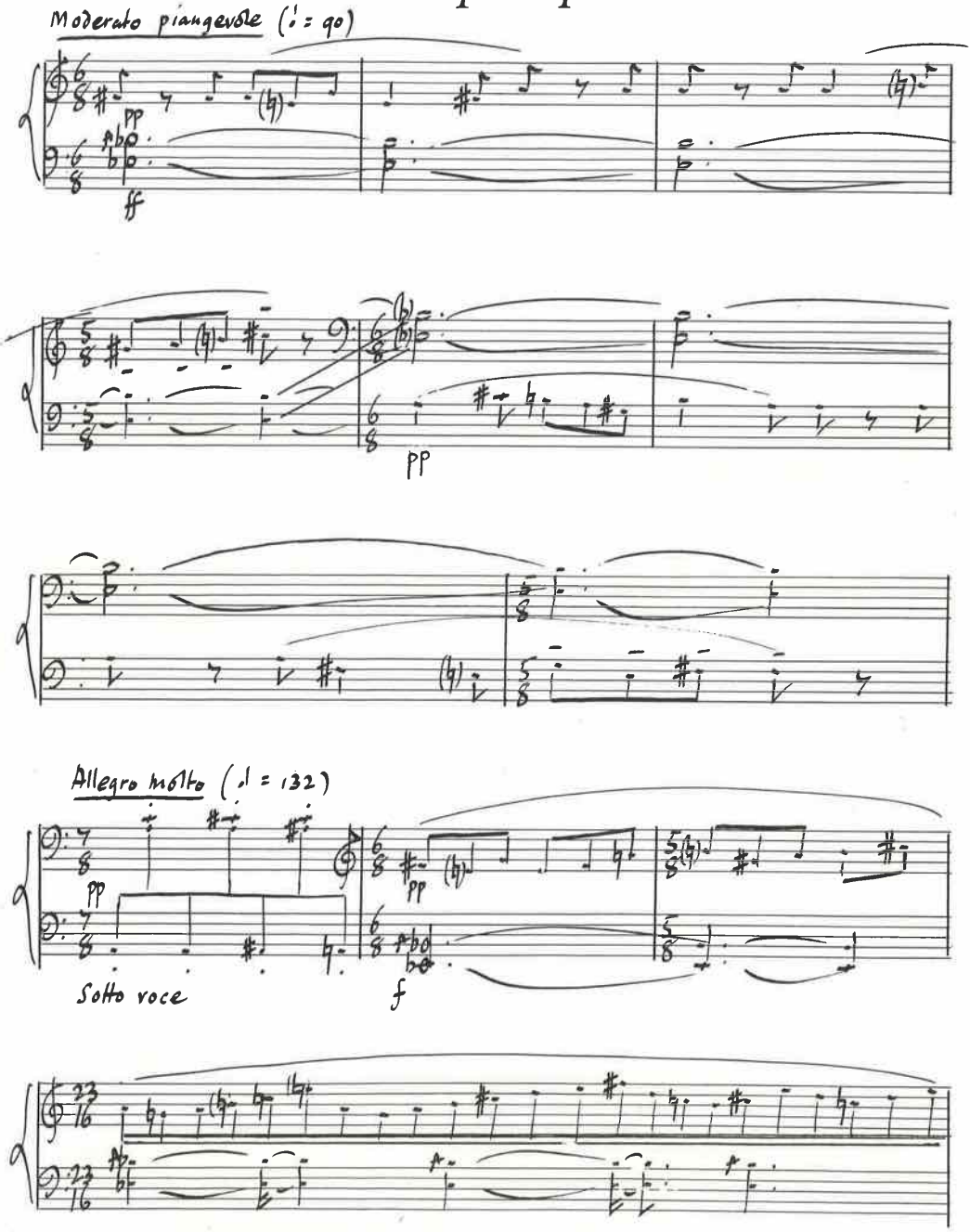
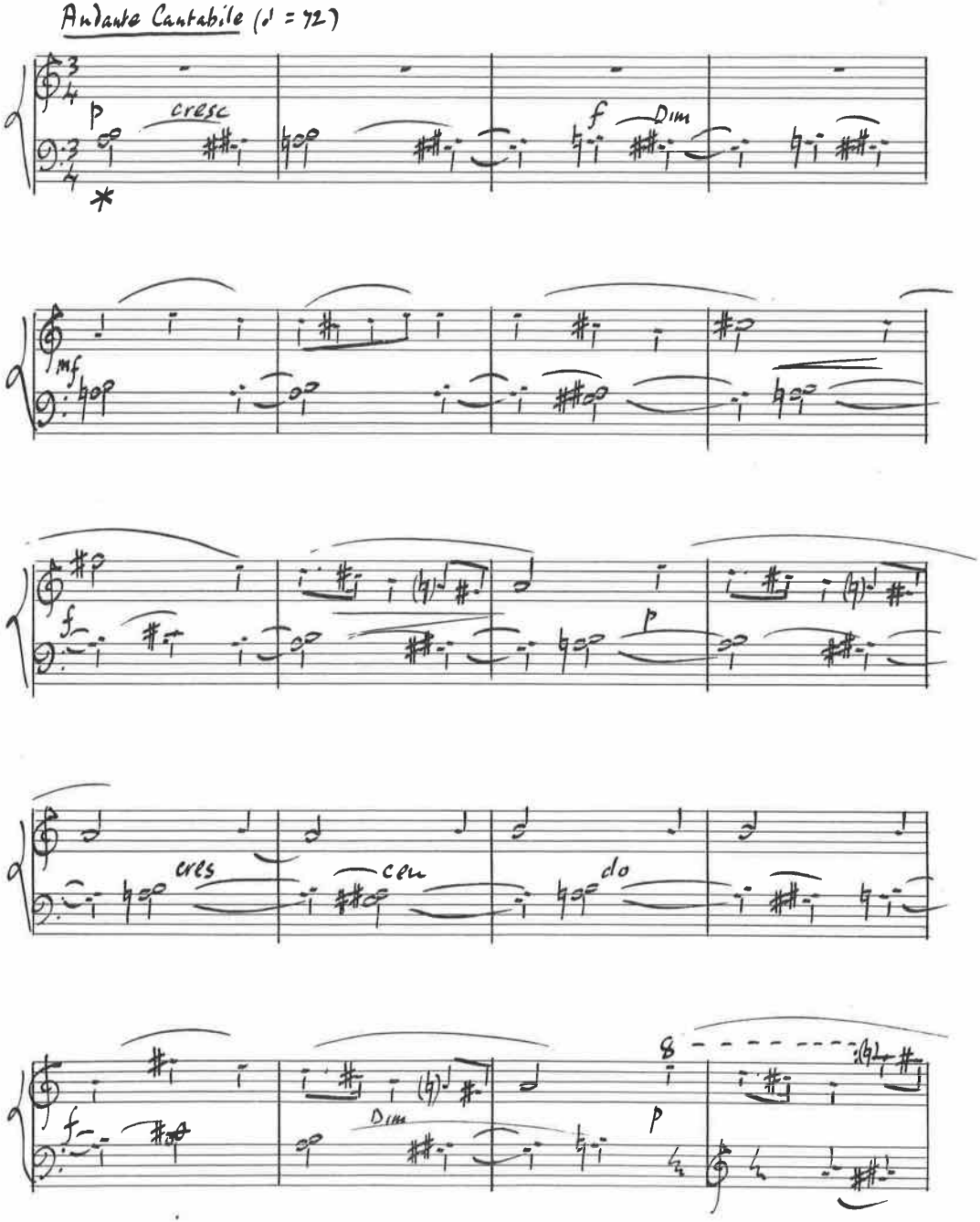
2. Antiphon



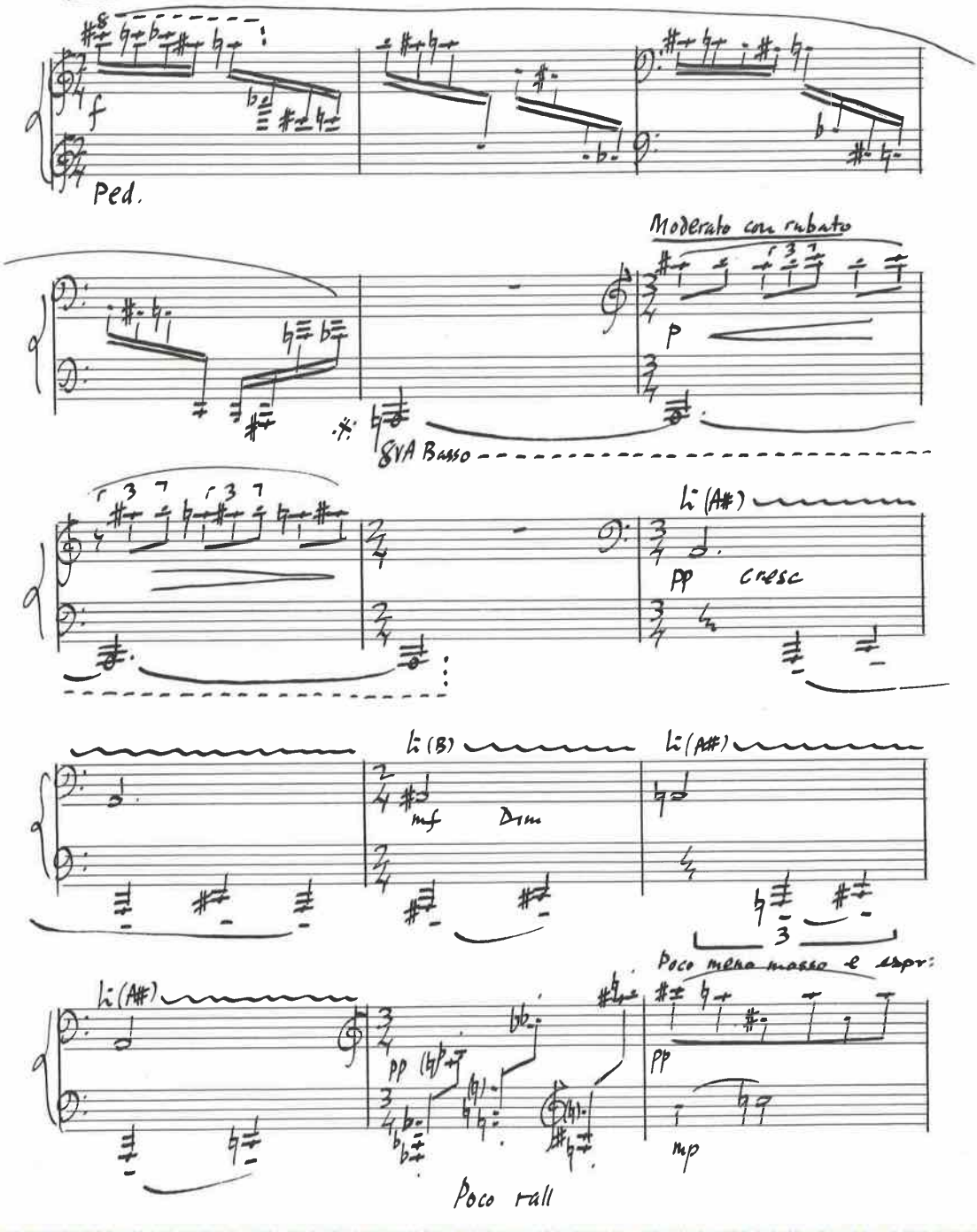
3. Impromptu


Moderato piangevole (♩. = 90)
pp
ff
pp
Allegro molto (♩. = 132)
pp
Sotto voce
pp
f

4. Canzonetta



5. Epitome


Allegretto flessible
f
Ped.
Moderato con rubato
p
8VA Basso
l.v. (A#)
pp
cresc
l.v. (B)
mf
Dim
l.v. (A#)
Poco meno mosso e espr:
l.v. (A#)
pp
pp
mp
Poco rall

This work was commissioned by the City Music Society and given its first performance by Yonty Solomon at Goldsmiths' Hall, London, on 7 March 1974.

NOTE TO THE PERFORMER

A small drum, with a tabor-like sound, is needed in the first and last movements. Since the pianist must place it on or between his knees it must be fairly small but should have sufficient resonance to be audible in a medium-sized hall. A tambourin-type circular drum (without jingles) has been found suitable.

The drum should not be easily visible to the audience before it is used, and should be unobtrusively handed to the pianist by the turner-over, who can similarly hand him the pair of finger cymbals.

NOTE ON THE WORK

The theme of this piece is an anonymous Crusader song dating from 1147 called 'Chevalier, mult estes guariz'. Originally a patriotic exhortation, I must admit to having completely broken away from this concept of it. Troubadours, or Minstrels, were often a group of entertainers and 'Jongleurs', and could perform acrobatic feats as well as being poets, singers, and players of musical instruments. I have tried to convey these qualities by using a wide range of textures and spacing in the piano writing allied to a spare harmonic language. Thus I hope that something of the instrumental flavour of the period has been transferred to the modern keyboard, in stylized form.

1st Movement – INTRADA

The song is announced, after an introductory few bars, as if on a Pipe with a Tabor background. Its first two notes, A (sometimes A sharp or A flat) and C (sometimes C sharp or C flat), give the interval of a third (minor or major); their reversal, the interval of a sixth. These intervals and their compression (e.g. the third becoming a second) predominate not only in this movement, but throughout the whole work, in various combinations.

2nd Movement – ANTIPHON

A retrograde (backwards) and chant-like setting of the song with much pedalling. It unfolds gradually by way of various nuances to a climax. This subsides into a coda which combines more flexible statements of the tune 'Naturale' in the right hand, with its retrograde version in the left hand, and with a couple of soft, but persistent, Mediaeval Bells chiming in on A sharp and C sharp.

Continued on inside back cover

3rd Movement – IMPROMPTU

The song is now inverted (turned upside down) with the addition of an itinerant Bagpipe drone making appearances. The continually changing patterns are virtually non-mensural (in fact, bar lines are only used for convenience) and give a sense of improvisation: the effect is at times one of (organized) chaos – all the performers are 'having a go' and the end is a rather 'breathy' dance, with somewhat uncertain intonation. After all, it can't be easy to sing, dance, and play simultaneously!

4th Movement – CANZONETTA

A retrograde plus inverted interpretation. An accompanying quasi ostinato figure in 2nds gives the non-vibrato tone quality of early string instruments, such as the Rebec, in combination with the more shrill and Shawm-like upper register.

5th Movement – EPITOME

A summary of the Explorations, phrases from which appear in various moods. They eventually lead to a modern, quasi Pop interpretation of the Troubadour Song, discovering, perhaps, that there is a distinct affinity between the popular music of the Middle Ages with that of today, despite the gap of some eight centuries.

The five movements are continuous except for a short break between Numbers 3 and 4.

P.T.

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Duration 20 minutes