MEDITATION OF PETRONIUS

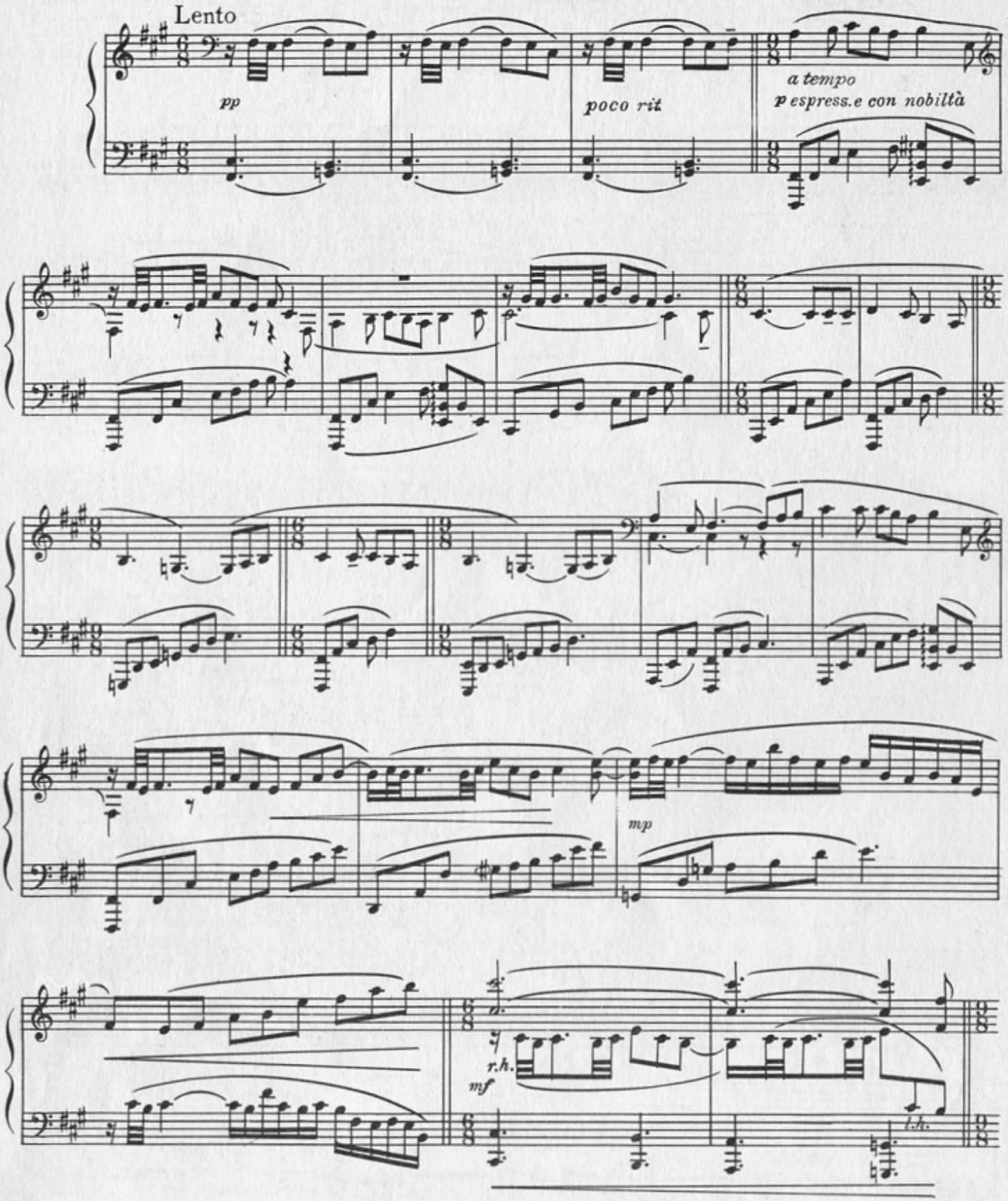
When Petronius, the arbiter of taste, the artist in living, the constant companion of Nero, sees the horror of burning Rome — the Rome that he loved — and when he hears the decision of Nero to sacrifice the Christians for his own crime, he is appalled. Knowing that he is thereby condemning himself to death he turns in contempt on the Emperor. But in his heart of hearts his contempt is mostly for himself.

Supremely cultured, of great administrative ability, as he showed when he held office as a young man, he reflects that he has allowed himself to drift into becoming little more than an amused cynic, a selfish onlooker — leaving others to shape the world. He should have gone out and told the mob that it was Nero who burnt Rome. He should have offered them a new Emperor. But he did not. This time he has sacrificed men's lives to his habit of putting first what he believed was his serenity.

In his deep regret is revealed the essential nobility of his nature. This nobility and this dignified resignation to what inevitably lies ahead find expression in the music.

MEDITATION OF PETRONIUS

MIKLOS ROZSA



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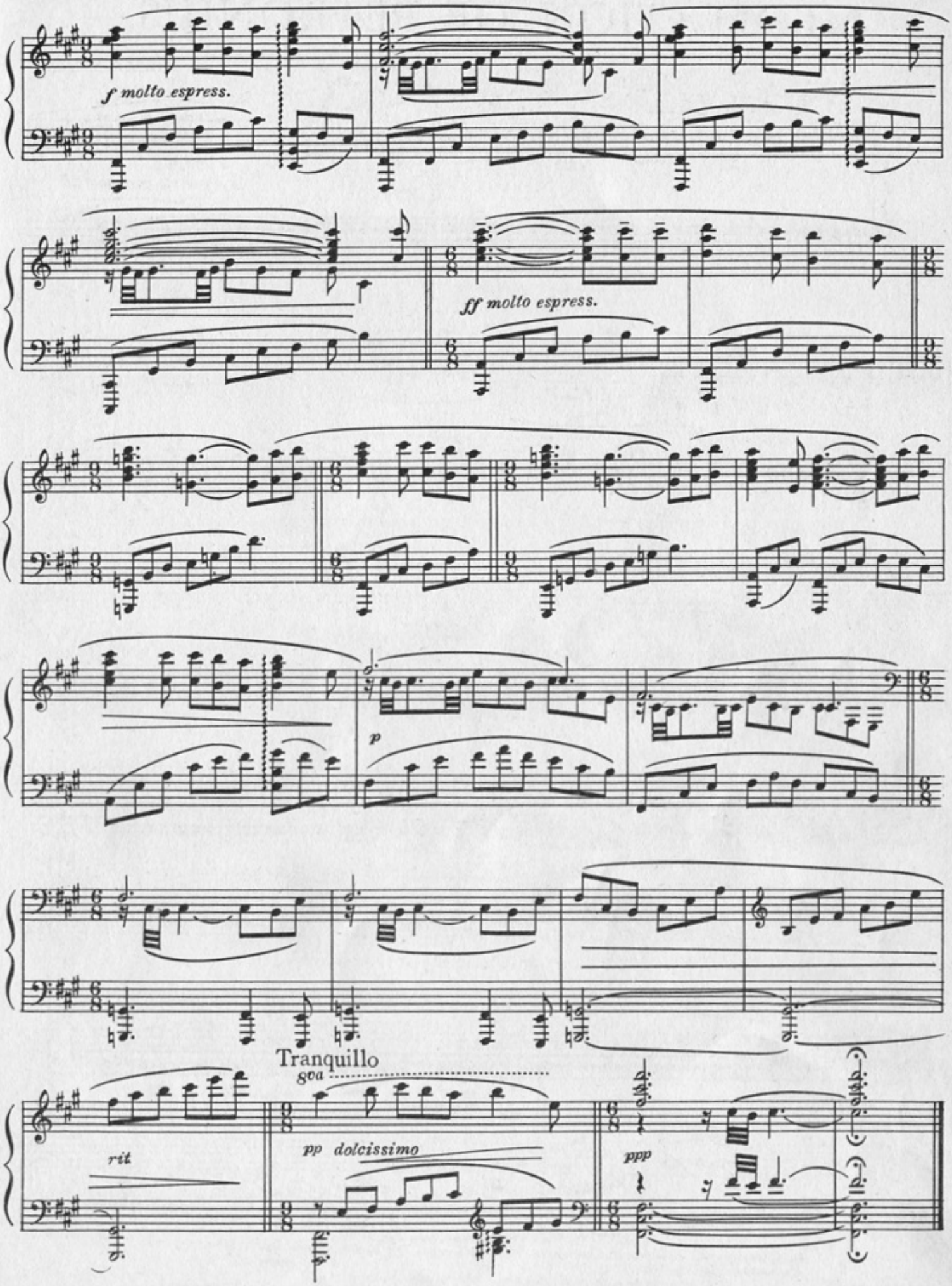
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