Jacques Offenbach was born in Cologne, Germany but at an early age settled in Paris and became a naturalized Frenchman. At the age of fourteen, he joined the orchestra of the Opera Comique as a cellist. He originated a rather individual style of comic opera known as *opéra bouffe* many of which, together with his ballet pantomime, were produced in his own theatre, the Bouffes-Parisiens. His greatest work, the *Tales of Hoffmann*, was produced after his death. The first performance was given in Paris, Feb. 10, 1881.

The poet Hoffmann and his student friends of Nuremburg, are making merry in the tavern while he tells of his three unhappy love adventures. The scene changes, Hoffmann is given a pair of magic glasses through which he sees Olympia, his first love, who is in reality a beautiful mechanical doll. He pleads to dance with her and they waltz so madly and rapidly that Hoffmann falls in a swoon. The glasses break and he learns that his love was an illusion. In the next act (in Venice), he discovers his friend, Niklaus, with a captivating lady, Giulietta, seated in a gondola, singing the "Barcarolle" in the mystic moonlight. He falls in love with her, fights a duel with his rival, and kills him but, to the bitter disappointment of Hoffmann, Giulietta elopes with another. He then goes to Munich and wins the heart of the lovely Antonia, a delicate singer with a wonderful voice, whose doctor warns her that if she sings she will bring on a fatal illness. The wedding of Hoffmann and Antonia is set for the next day. In her happiness she sings and falls lifeless in her father's arms. The "Tales" are ended, the students depart and Hoffmann, sad and lonely, is consoled by the Muse of Poetry.

Olympia, the Dancing Doll—Act I

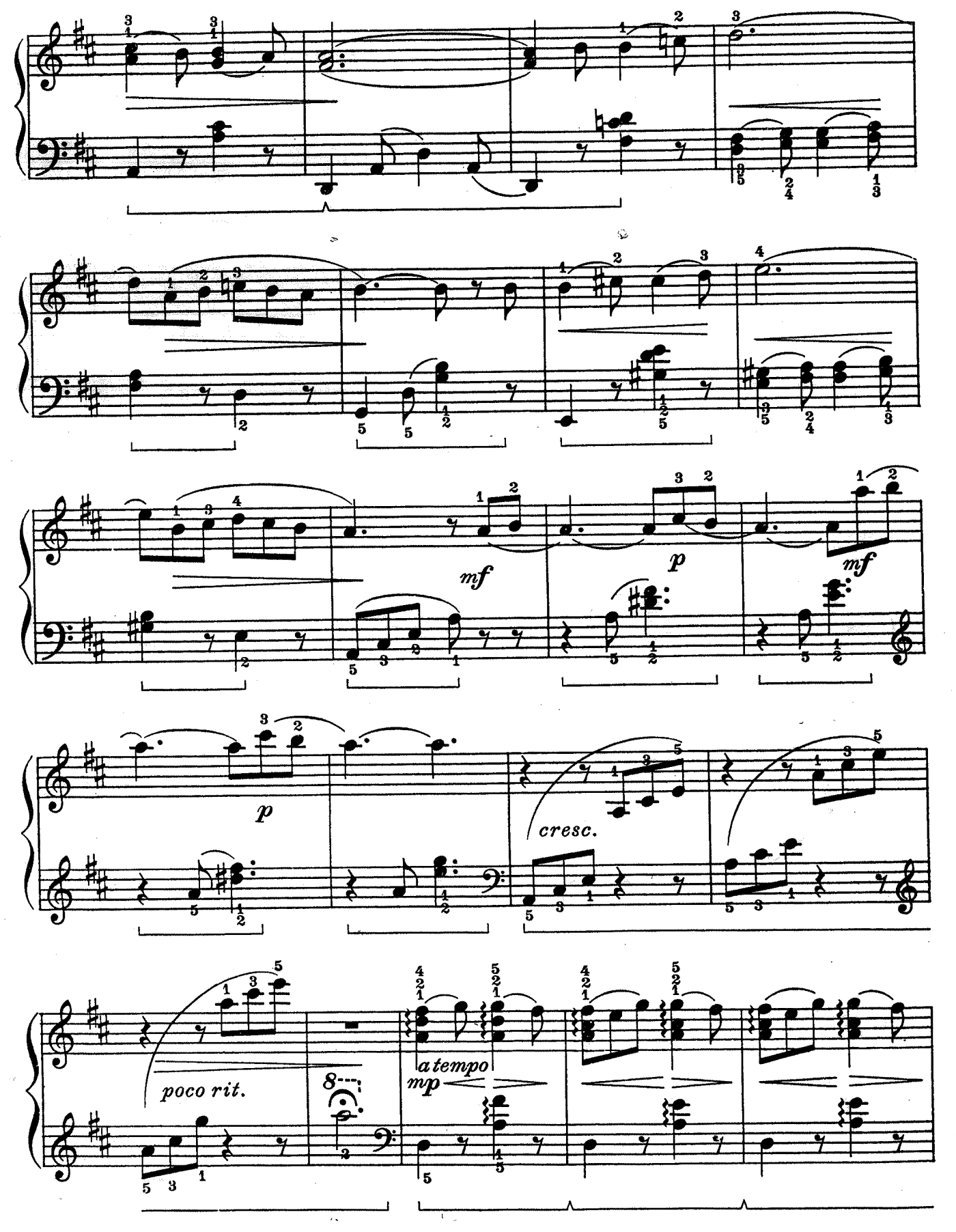
Barcarolle from Tales of Hoffmann

Play with a swinging six-eighth rhythm to suggest a swaying gondola drifting under moonlight, a night in Venice.

Offenbach (1819-1880)

Moderato

pp *mp*


mf
p
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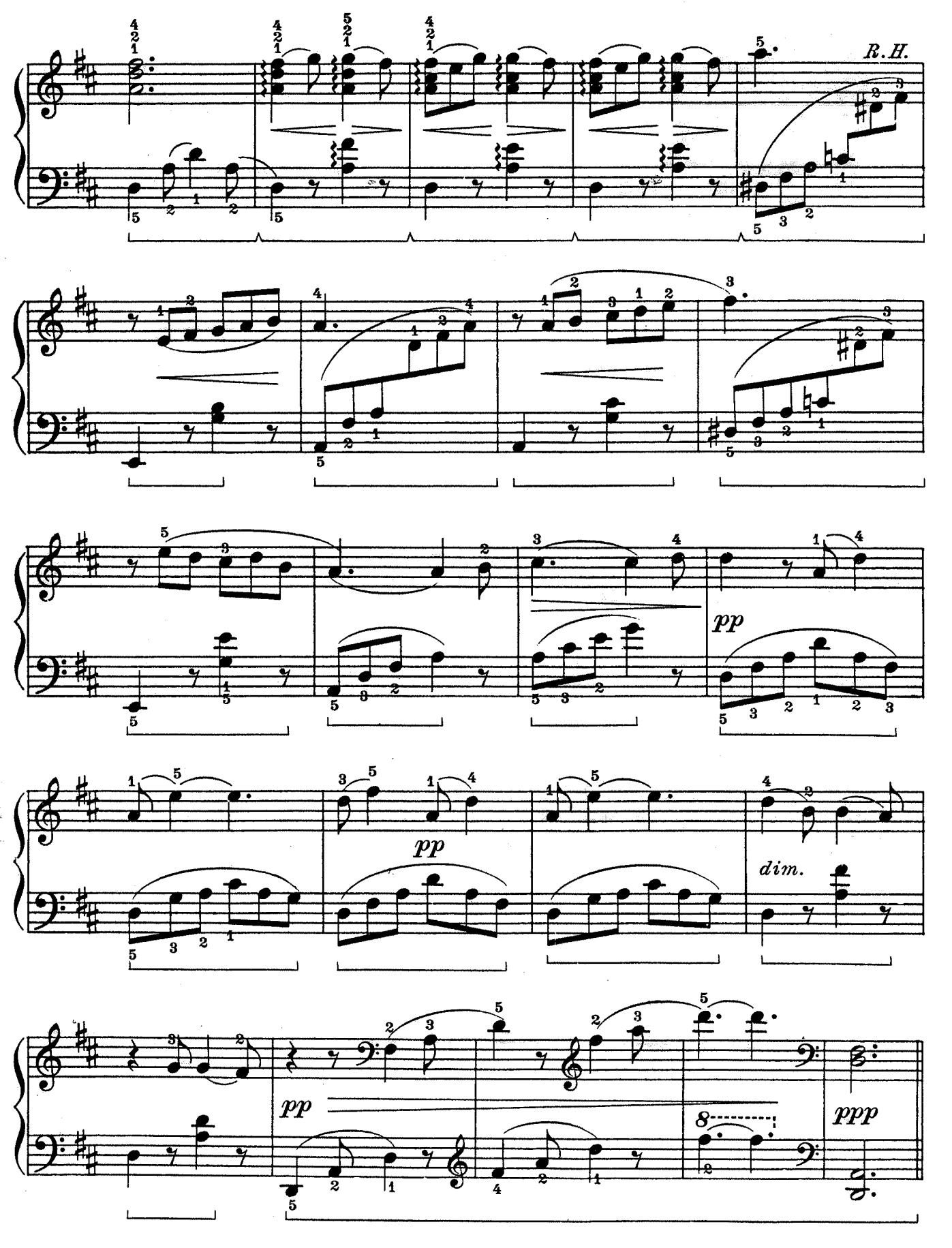
R.H.
pp
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8
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