One Fourth and a Pair (OFAP)

The previous modules in this workbook have explored two pairs of chords using the Musicarta Easy Piano Style. This module uses exactly the same principles to produce a keyboard composition covering three positions (chords): A minor, E minor and D major. A minor and E minor are a fourth apart, hence the title.

The final-version module study is called *The Vigil*, and is a series of variations on the basic fourth-plus-a-pair movement (MS at end of module). Here is what it sounds like.

Video

The chord sequence for the music you've just heard is:

1

Am	Em	Am	Em	Am	Em	D	Em

33 *(repeats)*

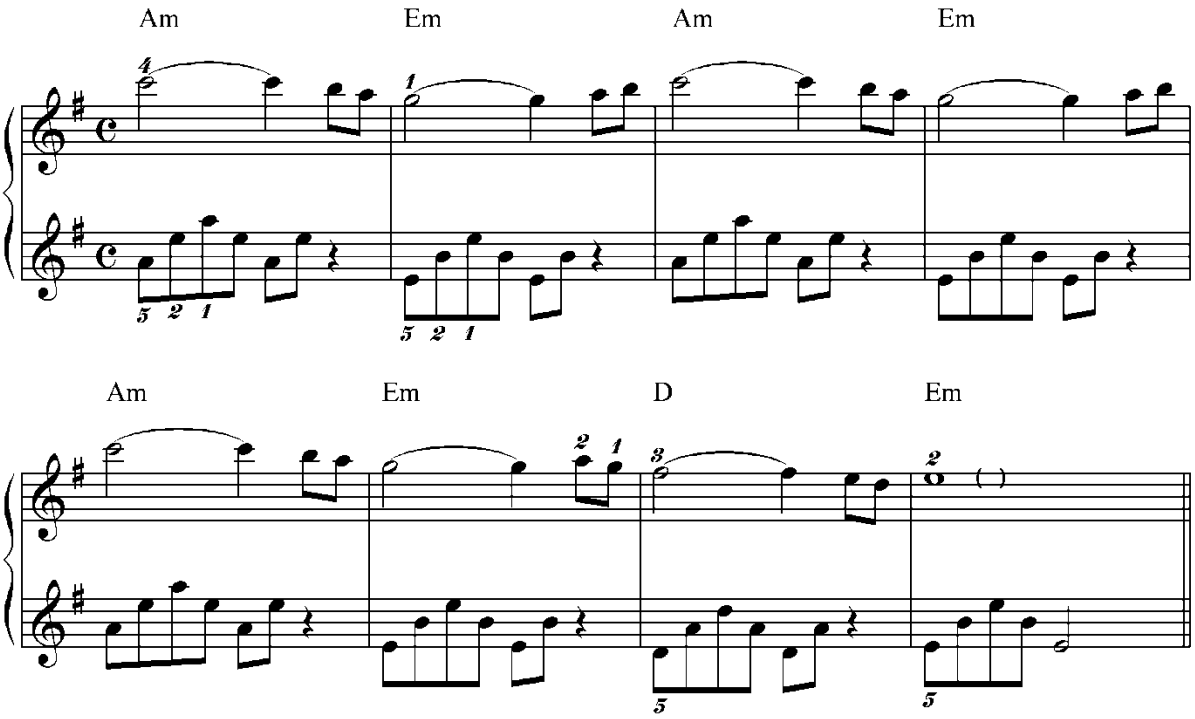
D	Em	D	D	Em	Em

The basic eight-chord phrase plays four times before going on to the extended ending at bar 33.

You can find the basic MEPS hand positions in the glossary on page 27. Note that both hands play in the treble clef, that is, above middle C. The music is in E minor – key signature, F sharp.

Movement and variations

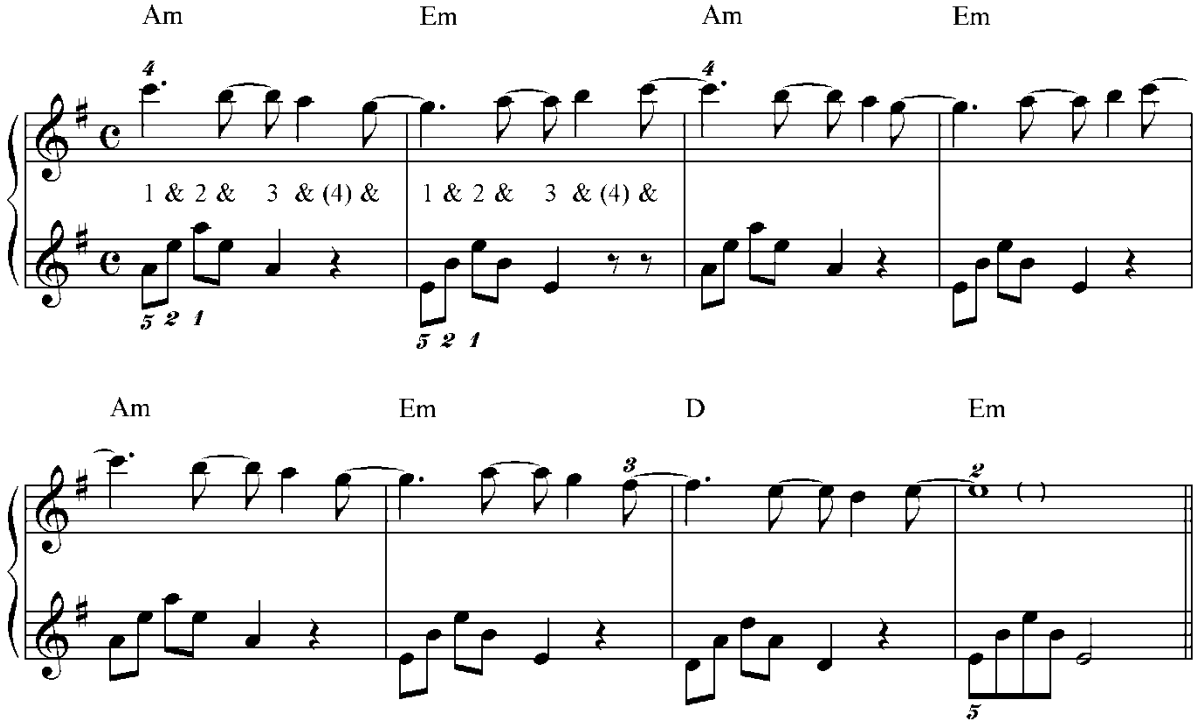
Here is the basic movement – walking down from A minor to E minor and back again



OFAP_02

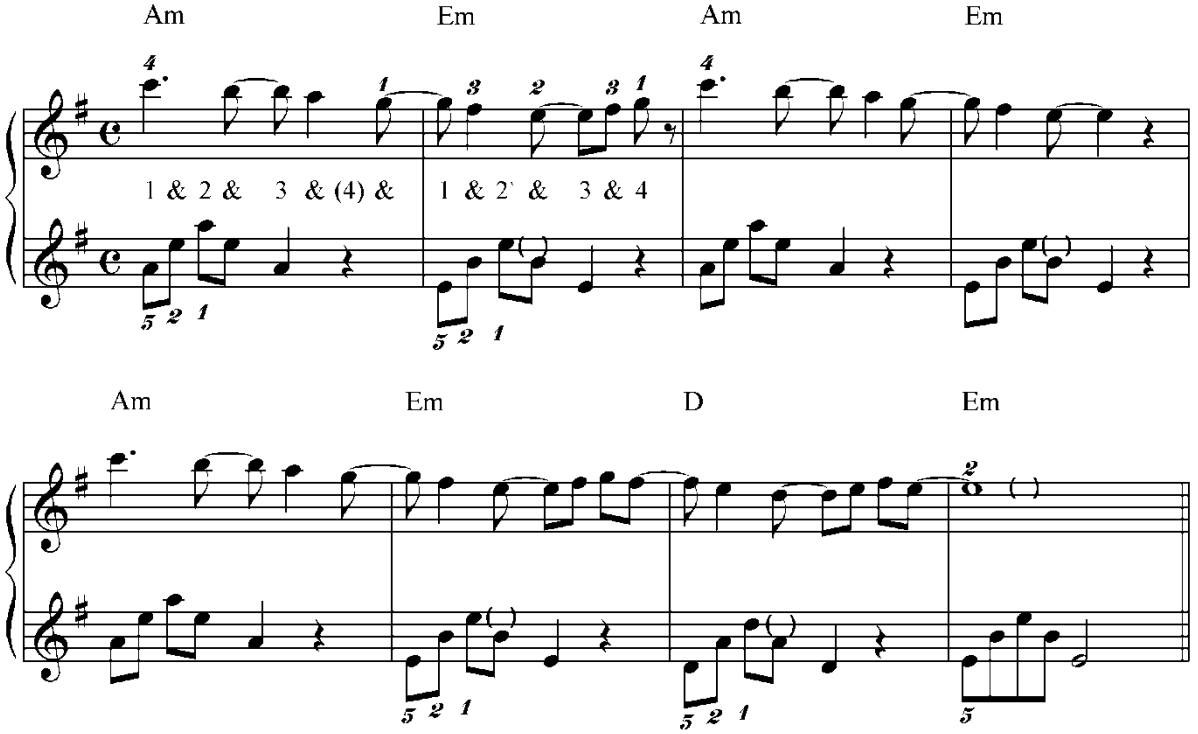
The left hand stops on count 3, when the right hand walks to the third of the next chord.

Now, introduce some anticipation in the right hand. The left hand plays one fewer quavers.



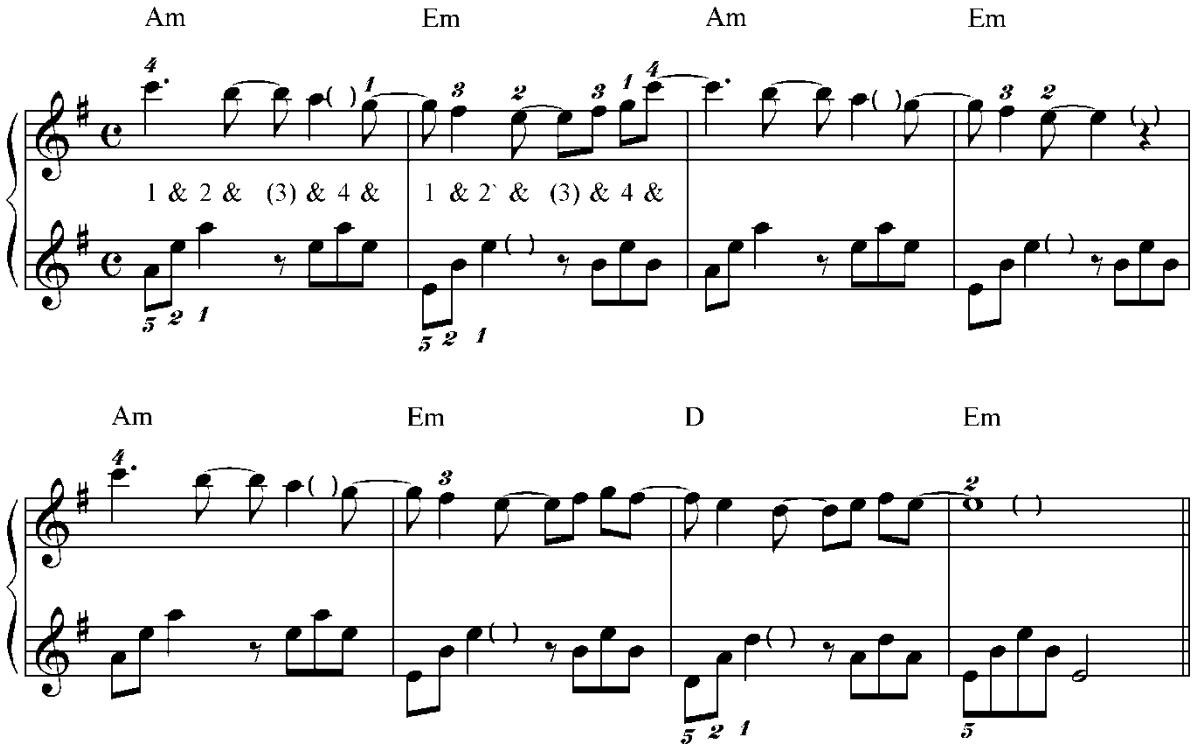
OFAP_03

Extend the right hand run as far as the root of the E minor chord, and carry the pattern over into the D major bar.



OFAP_04

Here's the same right hand with a different left hand.



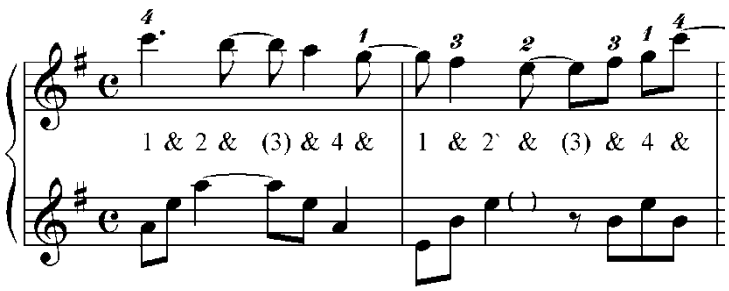
OFAP_05

One more right hand note is anticipated – the melody C in bar 3 is brought forward into the end of bar 2. The counting applies to both hands combined.

Competing notes

The hands play close together in the Musicarta Easy Piano Style, and in fact they often compete over the same note, (usually the root) which is needed both as a melody note and in the rhythmic left hand pattern (ostinato). This is indicated in the MS by a small pair of brackets which say, in effect, "Get out of the way quickly – this note will soon be needed by your other hand!"

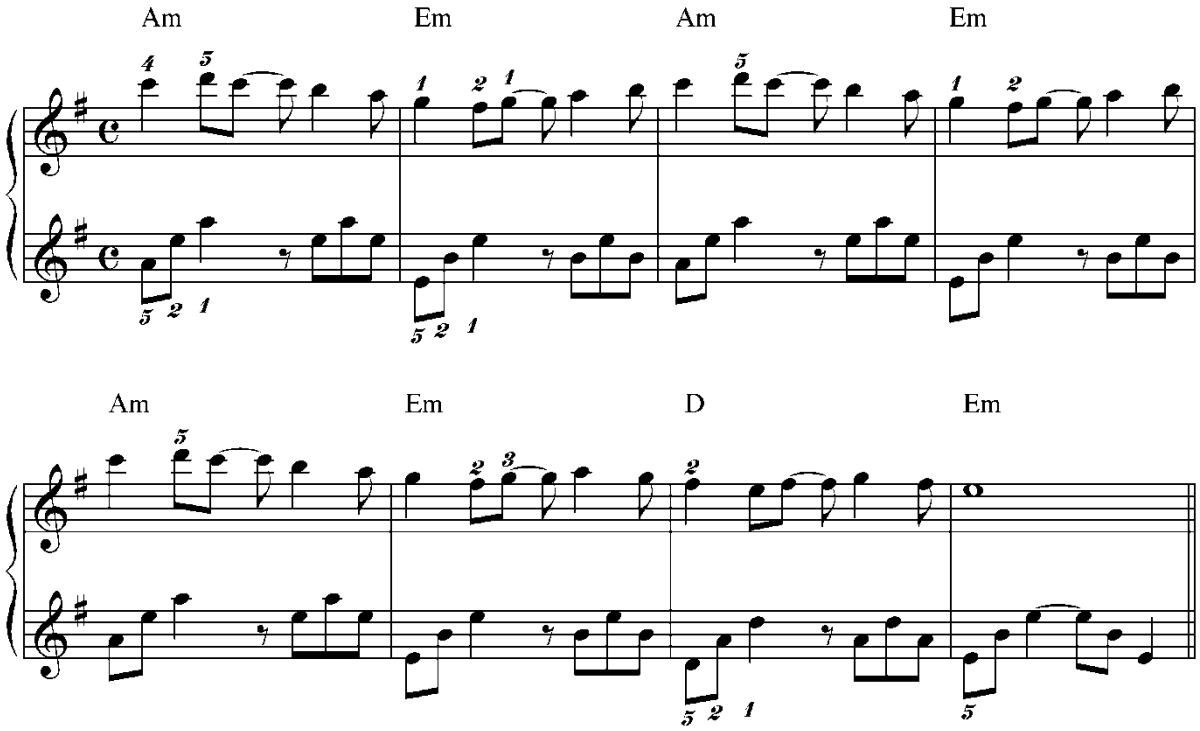
To achieve this effect, you play the first of the two notes very short but use the sustain pedal so it doesn't sound staccato. It may take a little time to master playing like this. There's an easier left hand which skirts round the problem – and is actually used in the performance of this module's final-version study. You see it in the first bar, below.



You play just five notes – B, M, T, M, B. You can substitute this left hand pattern wherever you find sharing notes too difficult – the important thing is to keep playing.

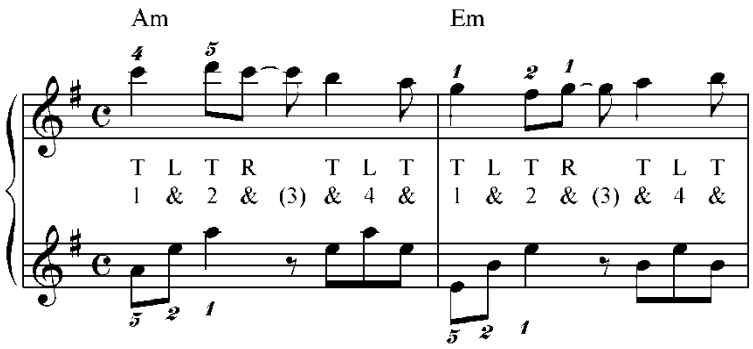
Development (continued)

Here, the right hand has brought the note D above the A minor third into play.



OFAP_06

Still, count 3 (the fifth quaver) is the only quaver slot where nothing is played. Here are two bars of that pattern with counts and full TLR (together, left, right) analysis.



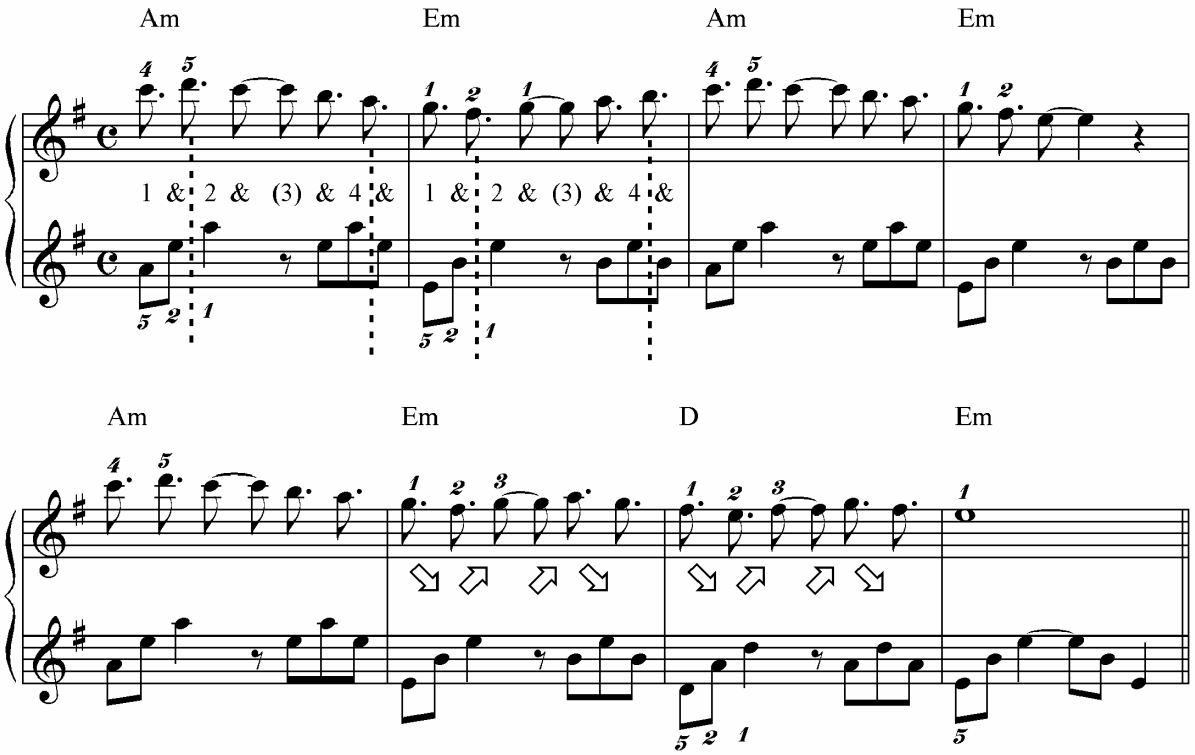
Repeat the segment until your performance is secure.

OFAP_07

Rhythmic smoothing

Now here is the right hand rhythmically ‘smoothed’ as in previous modules.

OFAP_08



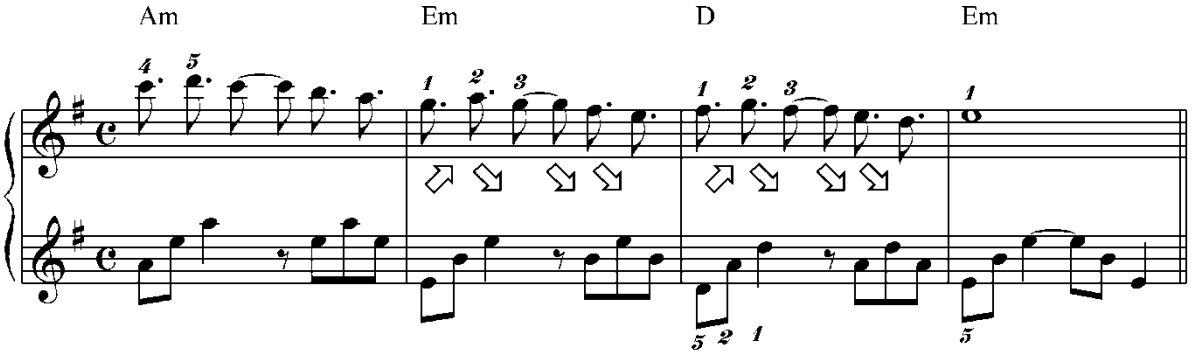
The first two-bar pattern has the dotted lines and counts to show exactly where the in-between right hand notes fall. All the other right hand notes are in the same place as before.

Once you've mastered the smoothed rhythm, you can apply it to any of the patterns. Remember that this rhythmic smoothing is optional. Your performance will sound fine with the original crotchet-plus-quaver pairs.

Melodic 'contour'

Being aware of melodic contour – and deliberately varying it – is an important part of the improviser's skill. (By 'contour', we mean whether the melody goes up or down or stays the same.)

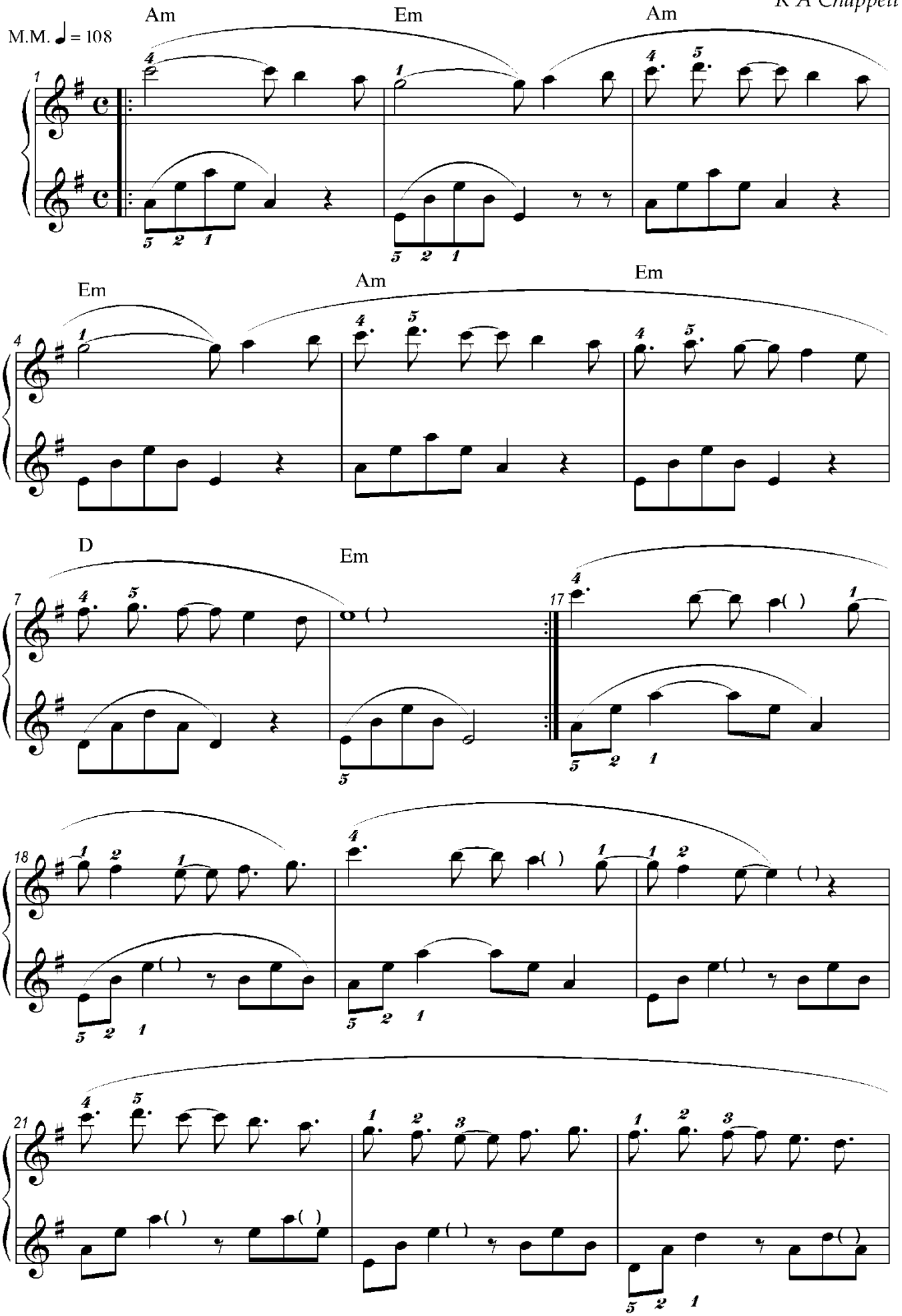
Here's the last line of the previous study with a different up/down contour. OFAP_09

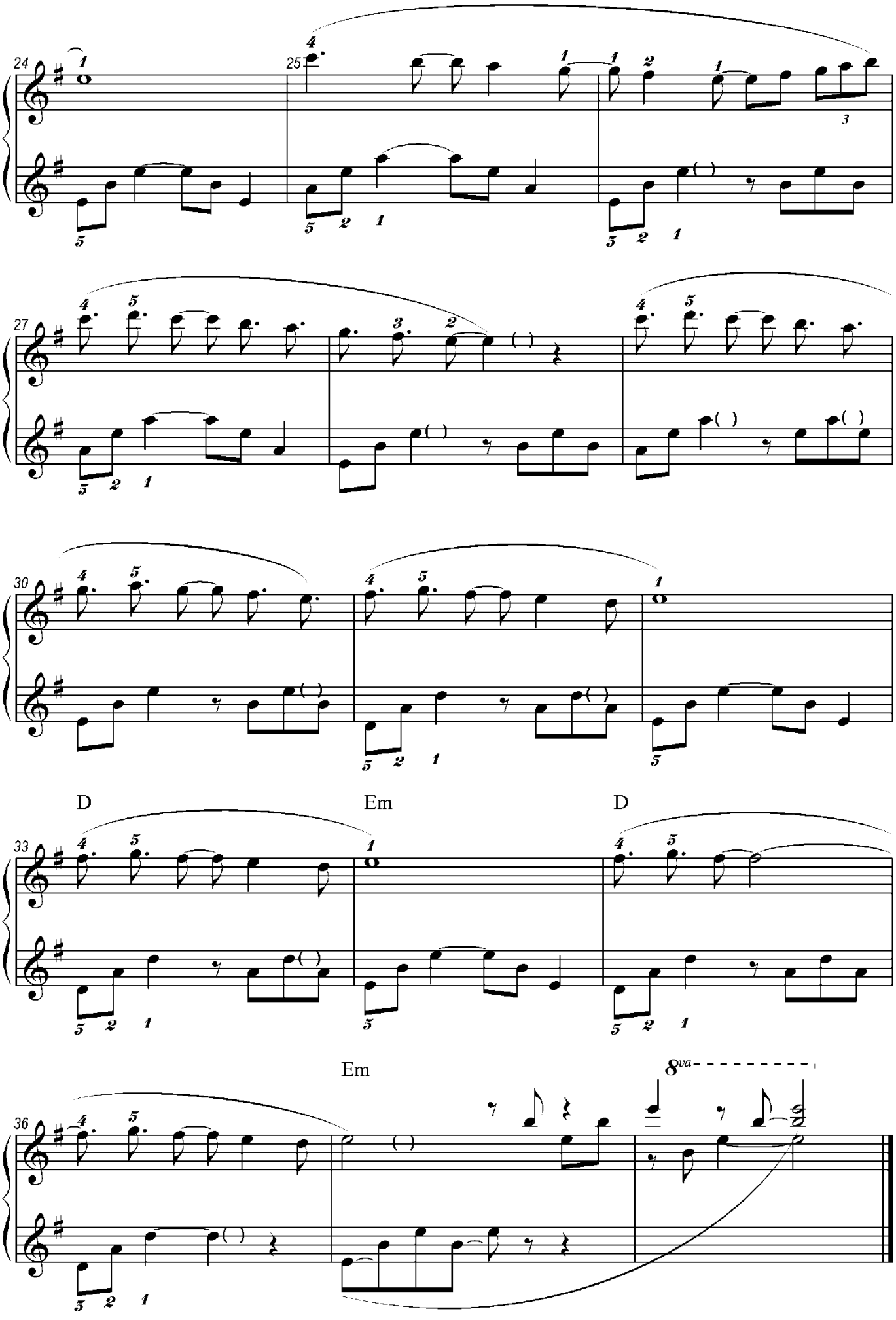


(Notes continue after the MS.)

The Vigil

R A Chappell





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Here's another melodic contour variation.

OFAP_10

Play this segment on repeat and listen to it carefully until you can hear the up/down pattern and point out where it varies from the previous one. (This is an invaluable exercise in 'playing by ear'.)

Feel free to experiment with the up/down choices and see if you come up with a combination you prefer.

Module performance – *The Vigil*

Here's the finished module study again.

OFAP_perf (Video)

If you listen carefully, you will hear that, in the repeat of the first section, the right hand in bars 10 and 12 has the 'smoothed' rhythm. Tiny variations in repeated material keep it sounding fresh, and often creep into performance by themselves, as your understanding of the music deepens.

Here are sections of the module performance to check your understanding

The first phrase

OFAP_11

'Composing at the keyboard' means you can play how you like. Here's that same phrase with more 'smoothing'. Listen carefully and compare with the previous performance, then try yourself.