# *Suite on Luther Chorales*

Texts and Melodies by Martin Luther
arr. by Barbara Harbach

In 1517, Martin Luther purportedly nailed 95 theses to the door of All Saints' Church in the German town of Wittenberg. His criticisms challenged the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and led to a split with the Catholic Church, giving birth to the beginnings of Protestantism, the Reformation. As the Reformation spread throughout Europe, it was marked by horrific episodes of warfare and violence. The 500th anniversary of the nailing of the theses has led to many creative projects, and as Barbara Harbach was a Minister of Music at an ELCA Lutheran Church in Missouri, she, too, was inspired to pay homage to Martin Luther.

Harbach's seven-part ***Suite on Luther Chorales for Solo Organ*** follows the centuries-old practice of invigorating traditional melodies with contemporary harmonizations, rhythms, and orchestral colors. The melody which she uses in three of the seven movements (Parts I, IV, VII) is *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A Mighty Fortress is Our God), one of the best-known hymns by Luther, who wrote the words and music sometime between 1517-1519. *Ein feste Burg* is also known as the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation" since it increased support for the Reformation movement. The second Luther hymn (Part II), *Vater unser im Himmelreich* (Our father in Heaven), is a paraphrase in German of the Nunc dimittis, the canticle of Simeon written in 1524, and often used for funerals. The third Luther hymn (Part V)*, Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* (From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee), was written in 1524, a paraphrase of Psalm 130.

I. Motet - A Fortress Strong is an exuberant arrangement of the original rhythmic melody *Ein feste Burg*; it features counterpoint enunciation of each theme and a lively middle section before the echoes of the familiar theme herald the end of the first movement.

II. Chorale on *Vater unser im Himmelreich* is a newly harmonized four-part chorale based on the tune.

III. Reverie on *Vater unser* has an improvisatory approach with melodies that seem to implore Heaven.

IV. Chorale Fantasy on *Ein feste Burg* is a powerful and lively setting of the second verse of *Ein feste Burg* which announces Christ as our triumphant advocate.

V. Chorale on *Aus tiefer Not* is a new harmonization that reflects the strife of *From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee*.

VI. Rhapsody on *Aus tiefer Not* has the melody in the tenor with a soaring improvisatory right hand that seems to reach upwards.

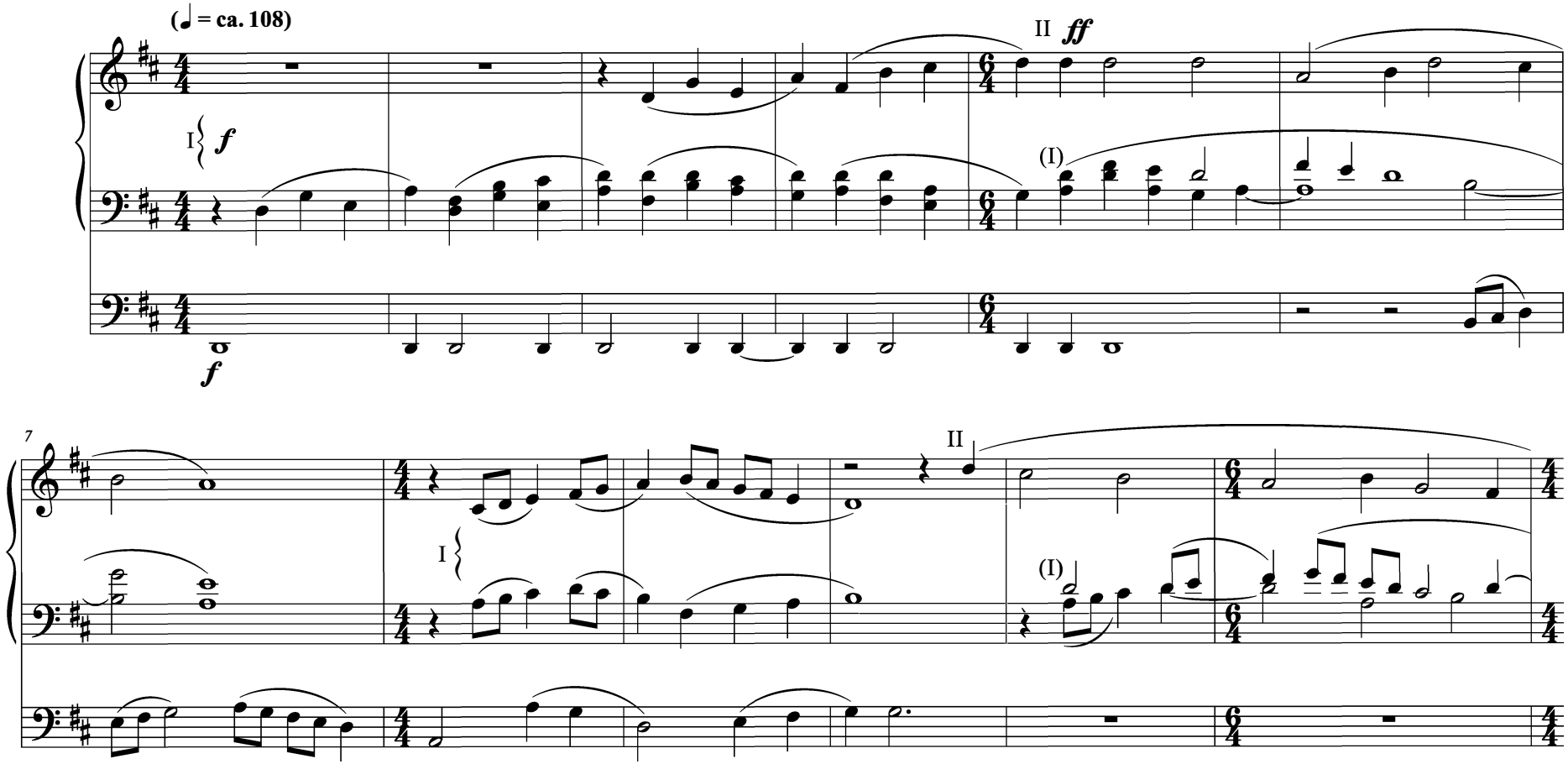
VII. *Ein feste Finale* marks the return of Luther's exhilarating hymn – this time with the more familiar hymn tune and features a moving accompaniment and contemporary harmonization while it retains the famous melody.

# Suite on Luther Chorales

## I. Motet - A Fortress Strong

I: Principal Mixture 8', 4', 2'
II: Trumpet
III: Prinicipal 8', 4'
Ped: Gt/Ped 16', 8', 4'

Setting, Barbara Harbach
Ein feste Burg
Tune: Martin Luther, 1483-1546

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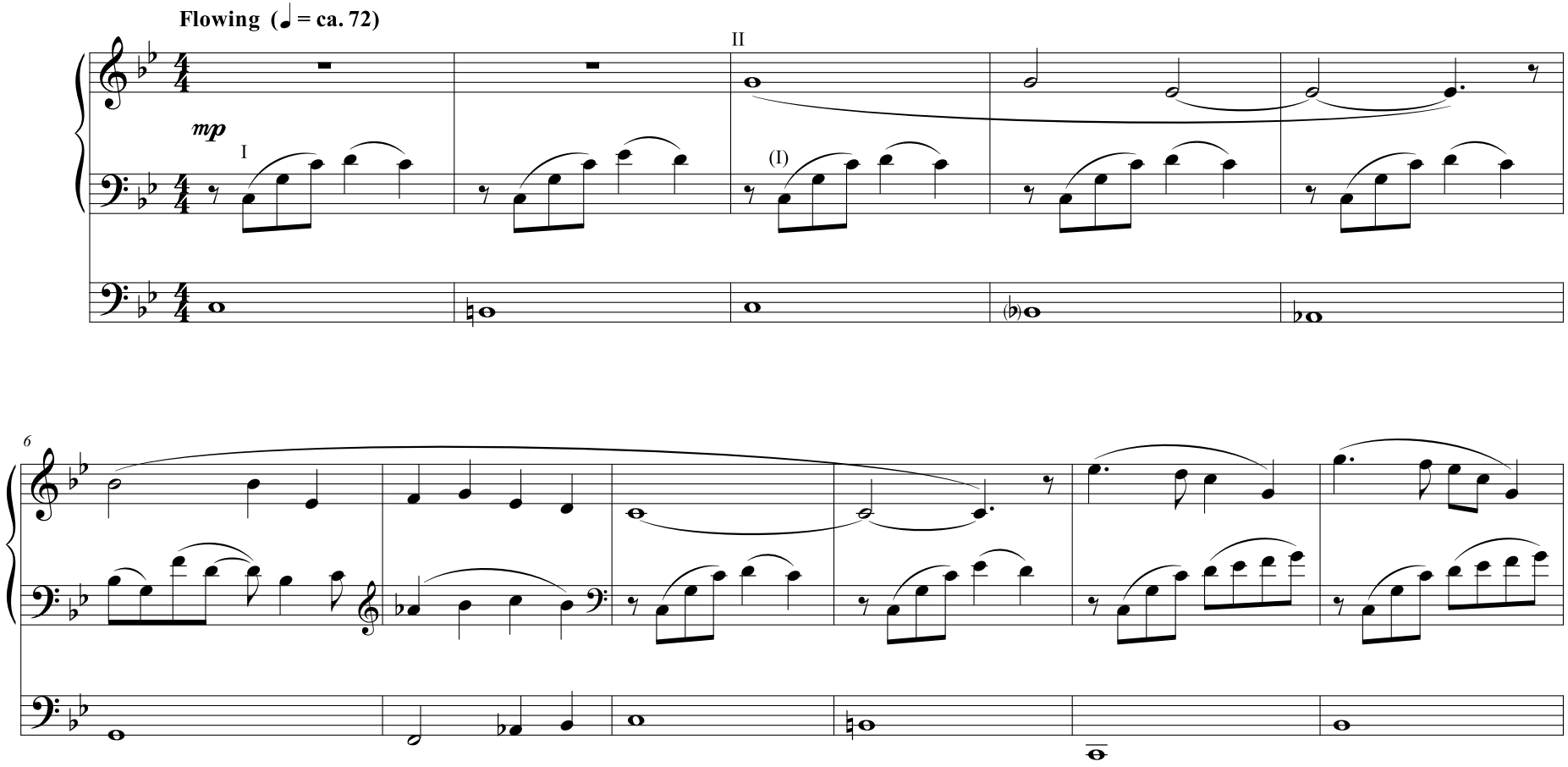
# III. Reverie on Vater Unser

I: Soft Reed 8'
II: Flutes 8', 4'
Ped: 16', 8'

Setting, Barbara Harbach
Vater unser
Tune: V. Schumann, Geistliche Lieder, 1539

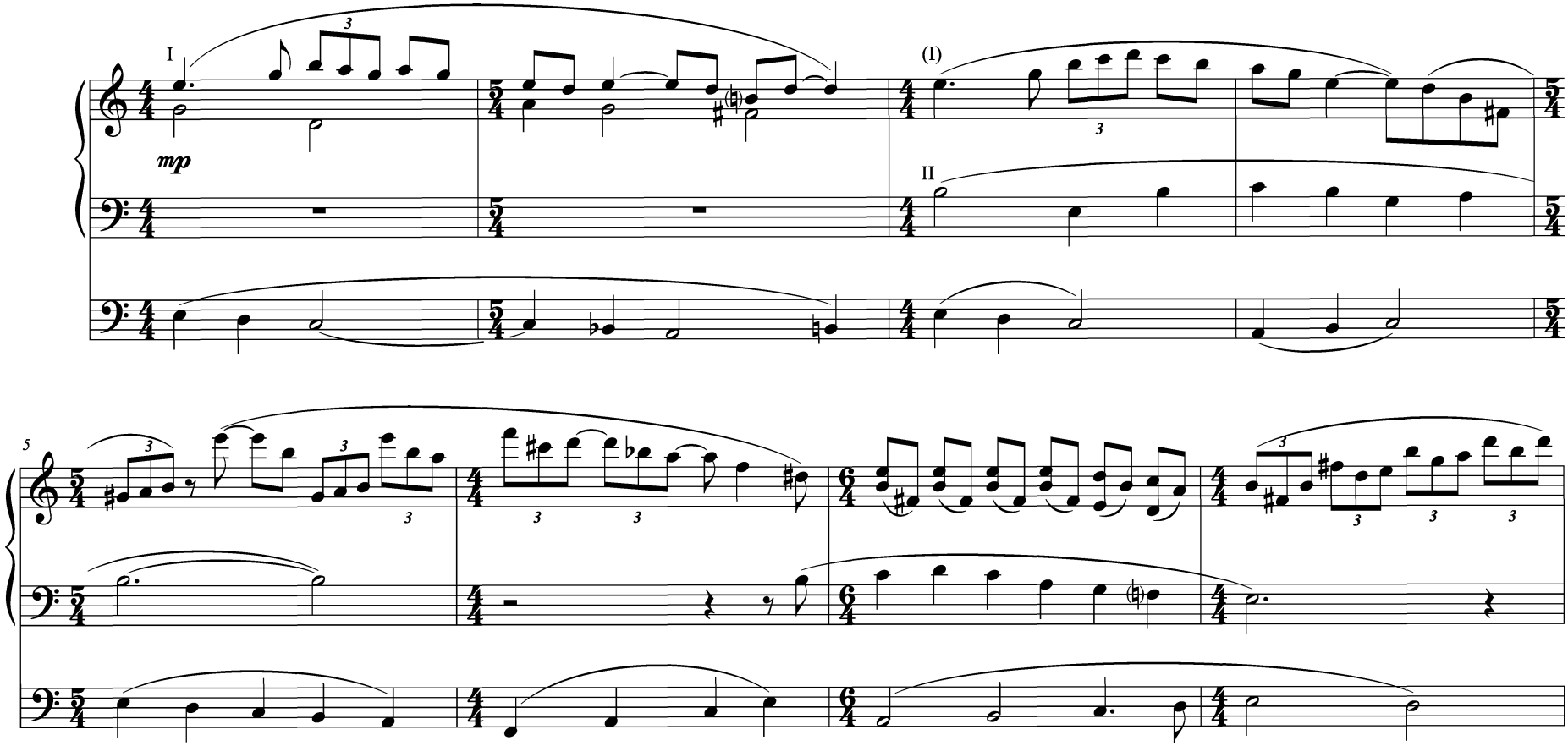


# VI.
## Rhapsody on Aus tiefer Not

I: Flute 8'
II: Soft Reed
Ped: Flute 16', 8'

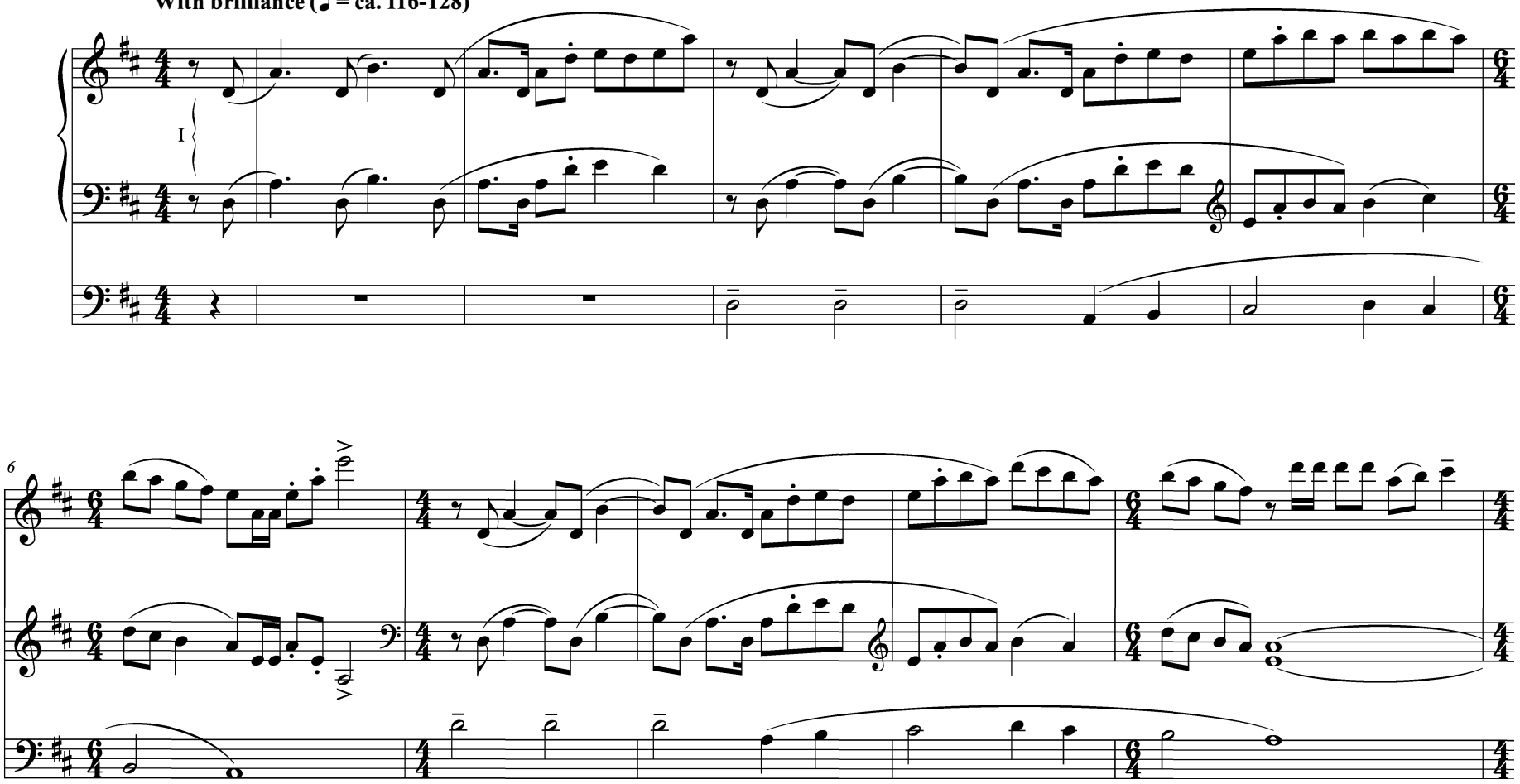
Settings, Barbara Harbach
Aus tiefer Not
Tune: Martin Luther, 1483-1546

**Smoothly, with freedom (♩ = ca. 66)**



# VII. Ein feste Finale

Full Organ
Ped: Full with light 16'

Setting, Barbara Harbach
Ein feste Burg
Tune: Martin Luther, 1483-1546

**With brilliance (♩ = ca. 116-128)**