Opera Intermezzi
(& Ballet Music)

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Opera Intermezzi: Introduction

THE TERM "INTERMEZZO" comes from the Italian, literally meaning "in the middle", and refers in one of its specifically musical senses to an instrumental piece in the middle of an opera – for example, the orchestral music written either for the transition between scenes while the stage is empty or to accompany some action on-stage. The skill of the opera composer lies not only in writing for the voice; it is also in his ability to utilise the orchestra to prepare the listener for these changes in scene or mood, or to provide appropriate purely orchestral interludes to colour a scene.

The "Dance of the Hours" from Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* (The Joyful Girl) is a balletic divertissement in an opera about unrequited love during the Inquisition. The plot is taken from a story by Victor Hugo. In the final Act of the opera we are presented with a delightful sequence of dances representing the hours from Morning through to Night.

Like Ponchielli, the youthful Schmidt also went to Victor Hugo for the subject of his only opera, *Notre Dame*. This *verismo* work is set in the great Parisian cathedral and a hunchback is its tragic hero. Its lusciously orchestrated intermezzo is suggestive of gypsy music and is associated with Esmeralda, the object of Quasimodo's desires.

Adriana Lecouvreur by Cilea is likewise set in Paris. The intermezzo is brief but contains many rich harmonics. It comes in the second Act of a tragic love story whose eponymous heroine is an actress who dies before the final curtain.

Wolf-Ferrari's *I gioelli della Madonna* (The Jewels of the Madonna) is a tale of love and death in which the dashing Rafaele undertakes to steal the jewels from a statue of the Virgin Mary to prove his love for Maliella. The intermezzo of the final Act is based extensively on the melody of his earlier waltz-like serenade, "Aprila, o bella, la fene-strella".

The intermezzo of Mascagni's one-act opera *Cavalleria rusticana* (Country Chivalry) is taken from the *Ave Maria* of a *Sacra Musica* written nine years previously. In a full-blooded story of betrayed love and a jealously which ultimately leads to a duel and death, this famous intermezzo, only 48 bars long, is played between the opera's two scenes to an empty stage.

L'amico Fritz (Friend Fritz), also by Mascagni, is quite unlike his *Cavalleria rusticana*. It is a light comedy, set in the countryside of Alsace, in which the beautiful young Suzel, a farmer's daughter, finally captivates the wealthy landowner Fritz Kobus, a confirmed bachelor. The intermezzo begins Act III and is based around the violin tune which Fritz plays offstage before his first entrance.

The intense intermezzo of *Pagliacci* (Players) by Leoncavallo links two sections of this smouldering drama, a *verismo* tale of love and death set in Calabria in south Italy among the rivalries of a troupe of travelling actors. The intermezzo makes use of a passionate theme heard first in the tenor aria "Si può? si può?".

Ancient Egypt is the setting for Massenet's *Thaïs*. The exquisite "Méditation" is a perfect blend of the sensual with the mystical. The plot revolves around Thaïs, a courtesan, and the priest who converts her to religion although he loses his soul in the process. The "Méditation" occurs between the second and last Acts and is an inspired piece for solo violin.

The intermezzo of Puccini's poignant one-act opera *Suor Angelica* takes place as night falls in the garden of a 17th-century convent. Sister Angelica, learning of the death of her illicitly conceived child, gathers herbs with which to poison herself. The basis of this music is the earlier heard aria *Senza mamma*.

The harmonically expansive intermezzo of Puccini's early opera *Manon Lescaut* plays between the last two Acts. Manon has been wrongly accused and exiled to America. Some of the material of the intermezzo is taken from the love duet "Tu, tu, amore tu!", which Puccini extends to an intense climax, moving through a constantly shifting harmonic series.

Fedora by Giordano is set in Russia. It is the story of the doomed love of the revolutionary Count Ipanov for Fedora from the imperial family Romanov. Its intermezzo uses material from the Count's soaring aria "Amor ti vieta".

Also set in Russia, though in the court of Peter the Great in the 17th-century, is Mussorgsky's masterpiece *Khovanshchina*, a tale of political intrigue and religious conflict. The solemn intermezzo of Act IV accompanies the emptying of the stage of the troopers and the people after Prince Khovanshchina's assassination.

During the "Bacchanale" of Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*, Delilah and the Philistines rejoice in the defeat of Samson with a drunken orgy accompanied by distinctively exotic melody lines. Although blinded and apparently helpless he will, in fact, escape to pull the roof of the temple down around them.

The intermezzo from Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (The Tales of Hoffman) links Act III and the Epilogue. It is a version for orchestra of the duet "Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour", the rocking barcarolle sung by Nicklausse and Giulietta as they float in a gondola.

Rachmaninov's graduation piece *Aleko* is a tale of love, jealousy and murder within a camp of seemingly carefree gypsies. Aleko, inconsolable as he realises that Zemfira is being unfaithful to him, turns his thoughts to revenge. In the one-act opera's intermezzo, night turns to day as Zemfira consummates her love with another. This oddly restless intermezzo only resolves to the tonic in its last bars.

The intermezzo of *Tiefland* (Lowland) by d'Albert plays as the moon rises following Marta's fraudulent marriage to Pedro. It is set in the Pyrenees. The theme was heard previously in the duet between Marta and the manipulative Sebastiano, "Ja, ja, ich bin bereit". D'Albert was known as a composer who would tackle subject matters that others would not.

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Opera Intermezzi
(& Ballet Music)

Editorial Notes

These new arrangements of famous intermezzi and other ballet music from opera attempt to adhere as closely as possible to the original score. However, some differences do inevitably occur when transcribing from orchestra to piano, notably:

i. It has been necessary to transpose some parts in order that they either fit within the hand span (e.g. in *Pagliacci* it was felt not inappropriate to transpose the "E" of the left hand in bar 21 down an octave so that the arrangement was more pianistic) or inverting certain chords (in particular in the left hand of *Cavalleria rusticana* from bar 20 onwards. This was necessary to avoid unacceptable overlapping between the hands). Such changes are kept to a minimum.

ii. Tremolandi have been used on occasion to imitate certain sustained notes that the piano, because of its limitations in sustaining, would not otherwise be able to execute (e.g. the high "E" in bar 23 of *Fedora*). Additionally, some timpani rolls are transcribed as tremolandi doubling the octave (e.g. bars 13 and 15 in *Tiefland*). Bars 107 onwards, left hand, of *Samson et Dalilah* are notated as notes; they are, in the original, untuned percussion.

iii. Pizzicati articulations are shown as staccati in the present arrangements.

iv. Some chords (e.g. the first chord of *Samsun et Dalilah*) have been arpreggiated; otherwise they would not fit easily under the hand span. Other appreggios (e.g. the opening of *Adriana Lecouvreur*) are interpretational.

v. The endings on some of the intermezzi (e.g. *Suor Angelica*, *Tiefland*, *Samson et Dalilah*) have been slightly modified in order to bring them to a natural close.

vi. The *ossai* notes of bars 225 onwards, *Samson et Dalilah*, are given for information only.

All arrangements are in their original keys. Tempo markings and articulations also follow the original scores.

John Gribben, Spring 2003

Thematic Index

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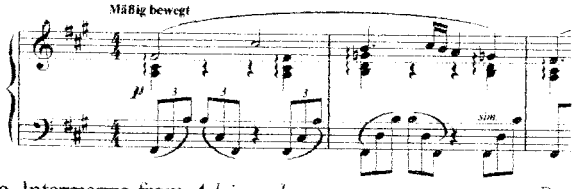
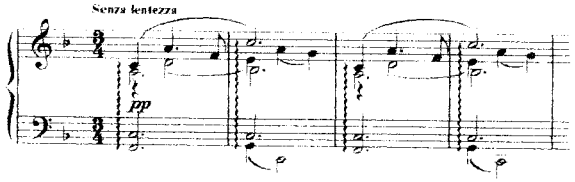
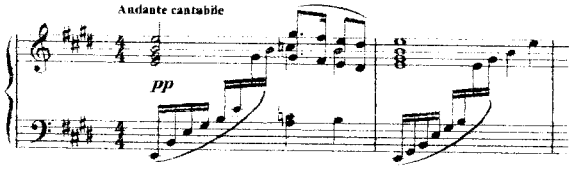


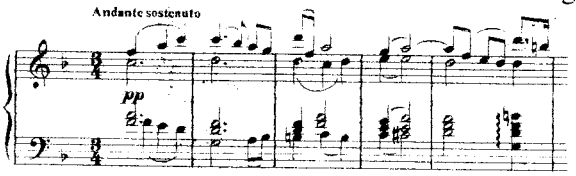
Cilea, Intermezzo from *Adriana Lecouvreur* Page 4



Giordano, Intermezzo from *Fedora* Page 6



Mascagni, Intermezzo from *Cavalleria rusticana* Page 8



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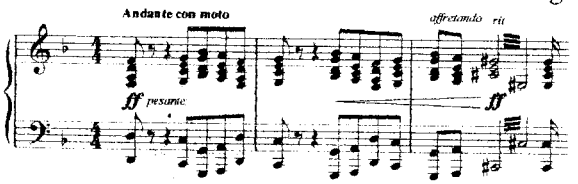

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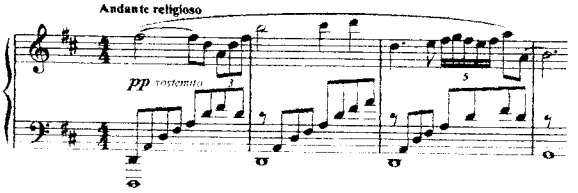
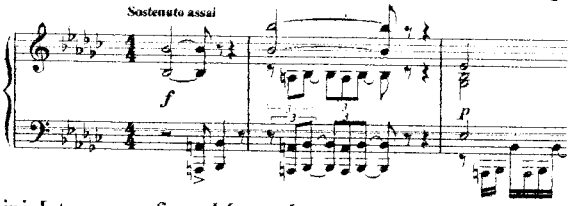
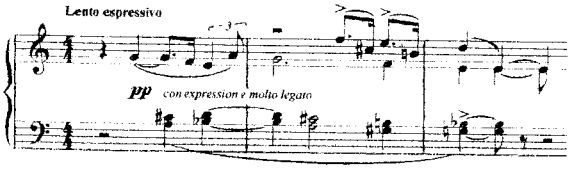


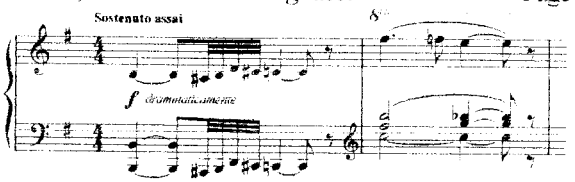
Mussorgsky, Intermezzo from *Khovanshchina* Page 18



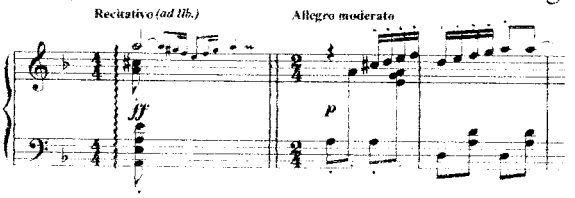
Puccini, Intermezzo from *Manon Lescaut* Page 22



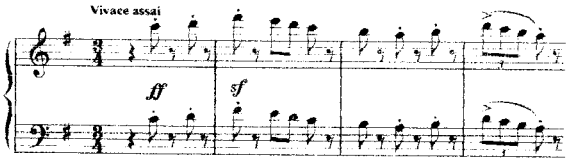
Leoncavallo, Intermezzo from *Pagliacci* Page 26



Saint-Saëns, "Bacchanale" from *Samson et Dalila* Page 29



Wolf-Ferrari, Intermezzo from *I gioella della Madonna* Page44



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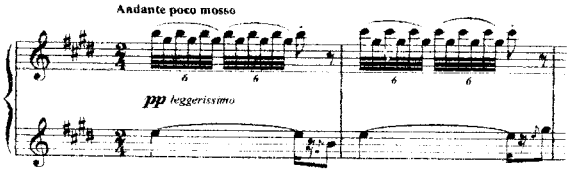
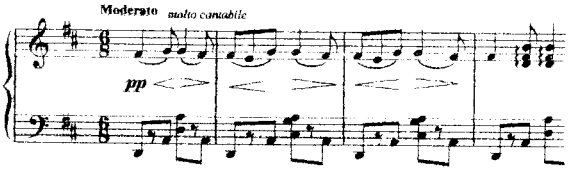
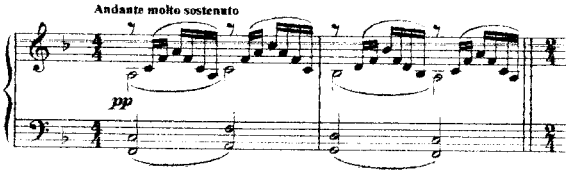


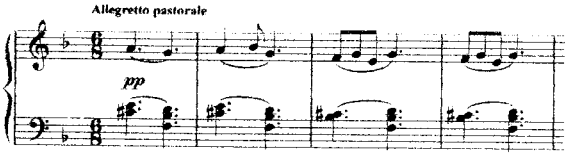
Offenbach, "Barcarolle" from *Les contes d'Hoffman* Page 68



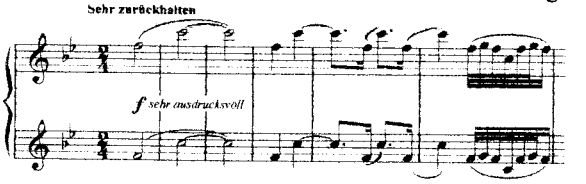
Puccini, Intermezzo from *Suor Angelica* Page 72



Rachmaninov, Intermezzo from *Aleko* Page 76



Schmidt, Intermezzo from *Notre Dame* Page 78



Opera Intermezzi
(& Ballet Music)

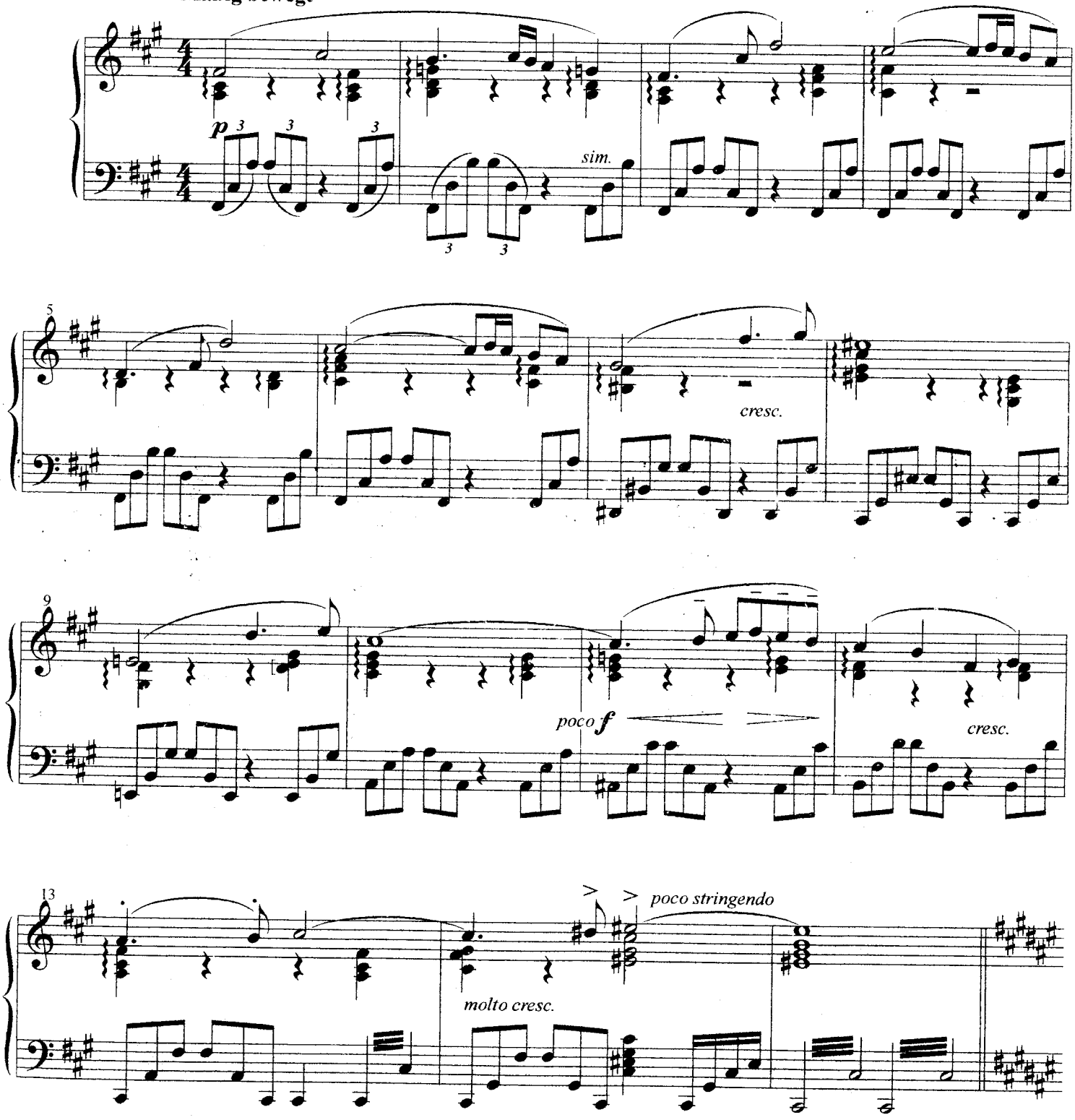
Intermezzo

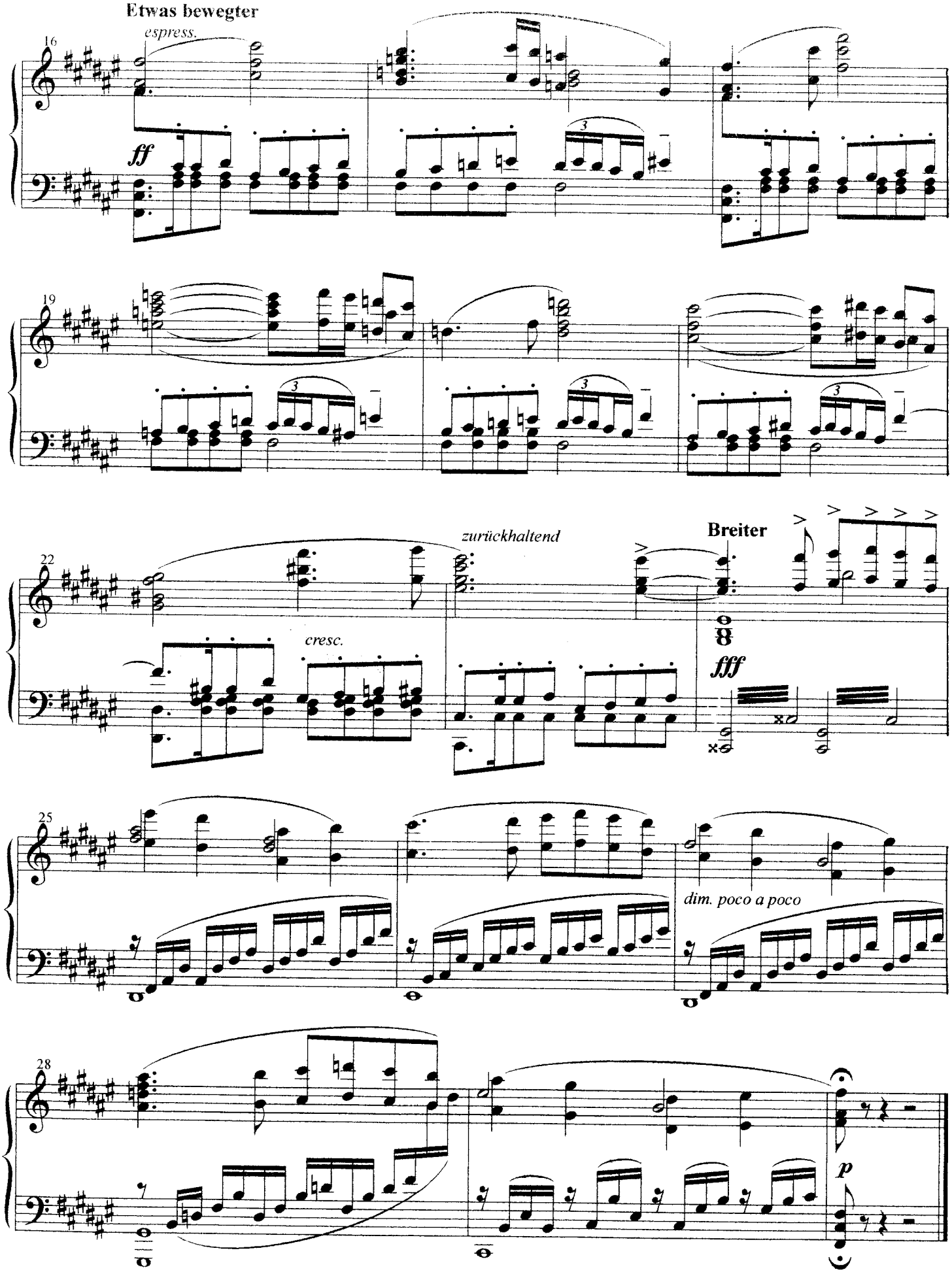
from the opera

Tiefland

Eugène d'Albert
(1864-1932)

Mäßig bewegt



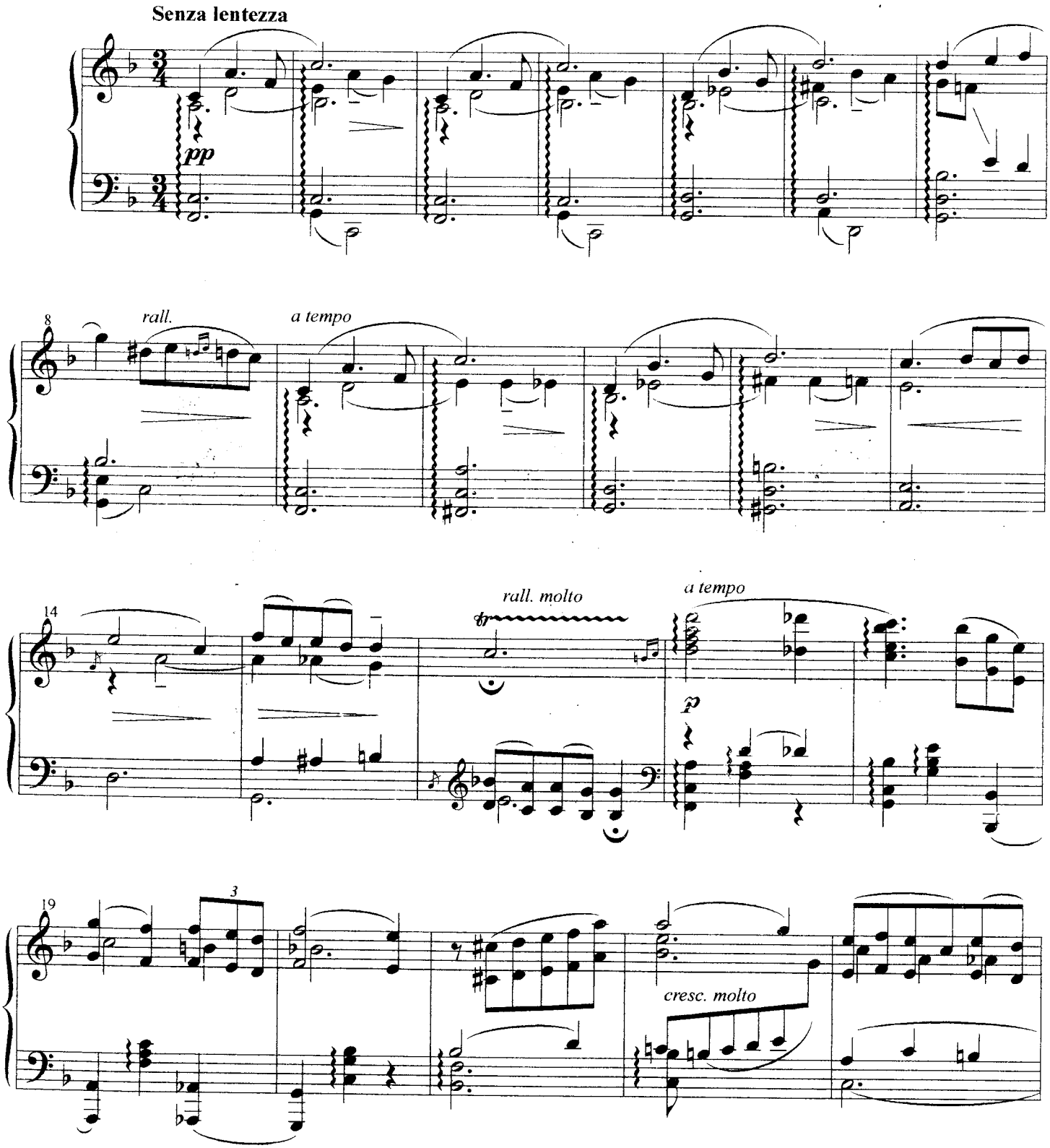

Etwas bewegter
espress.
16
ff
19
zurückhaltend
Breiter
22
cresc.
fff
25
dim. poco a poco
28
p

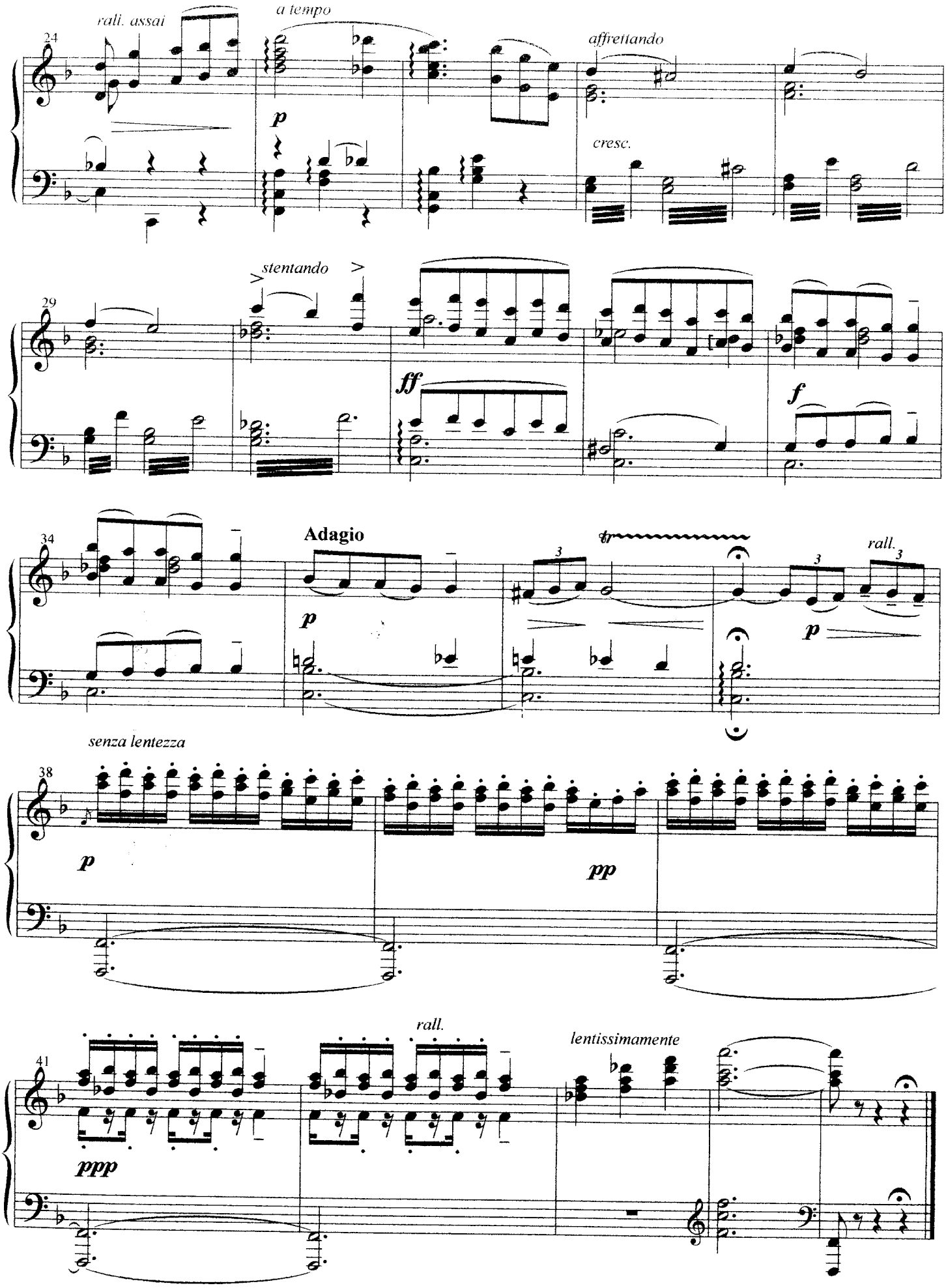
Intermezzo

from the opera

Adriana Lecouvreur

Francesco Cilea
(1866-1950)



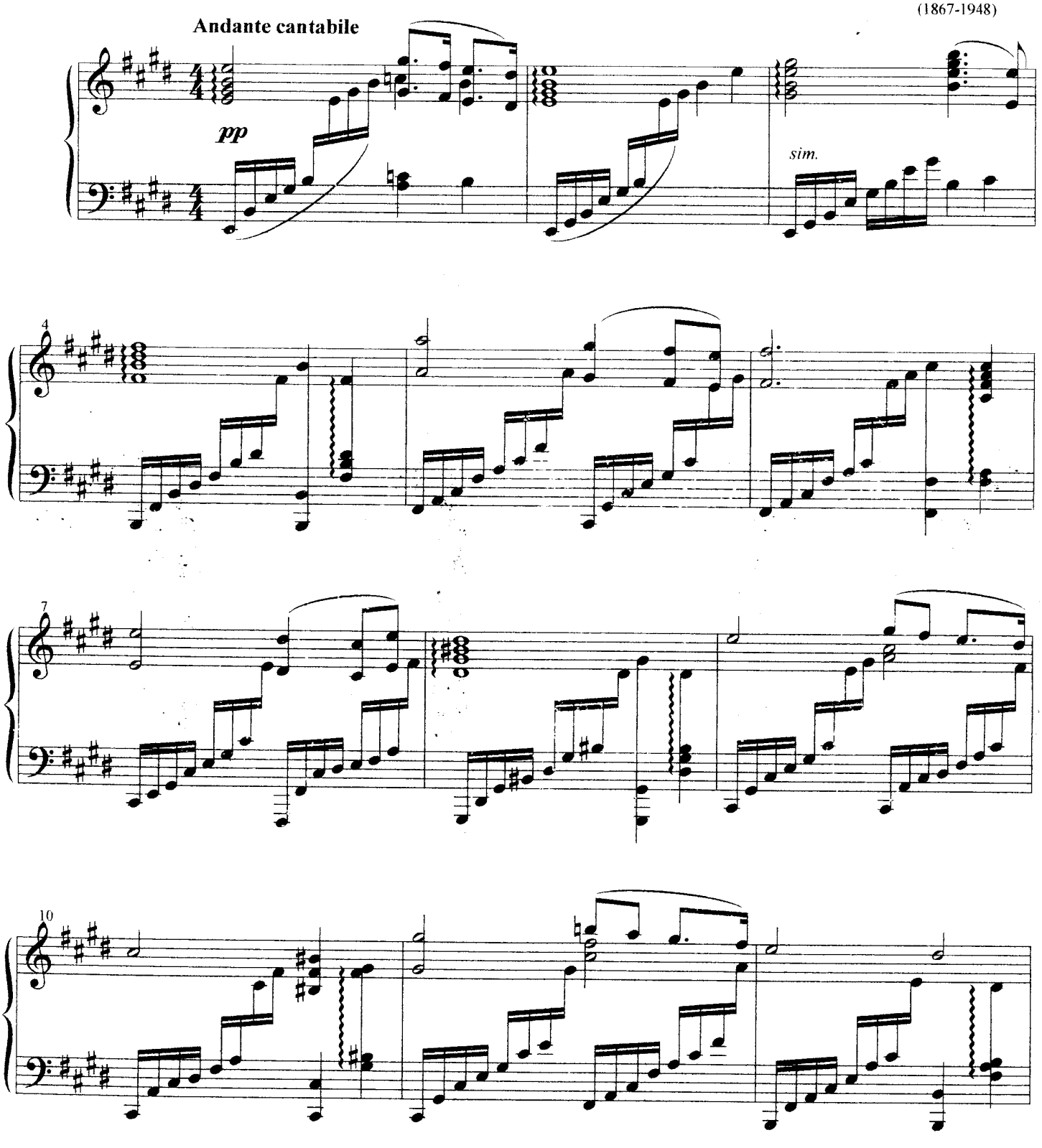

rall. assai
a tempo
affrettando
cresc.
stentando
Adagio
rall.
senza lentezza
rall.
lentissimamente

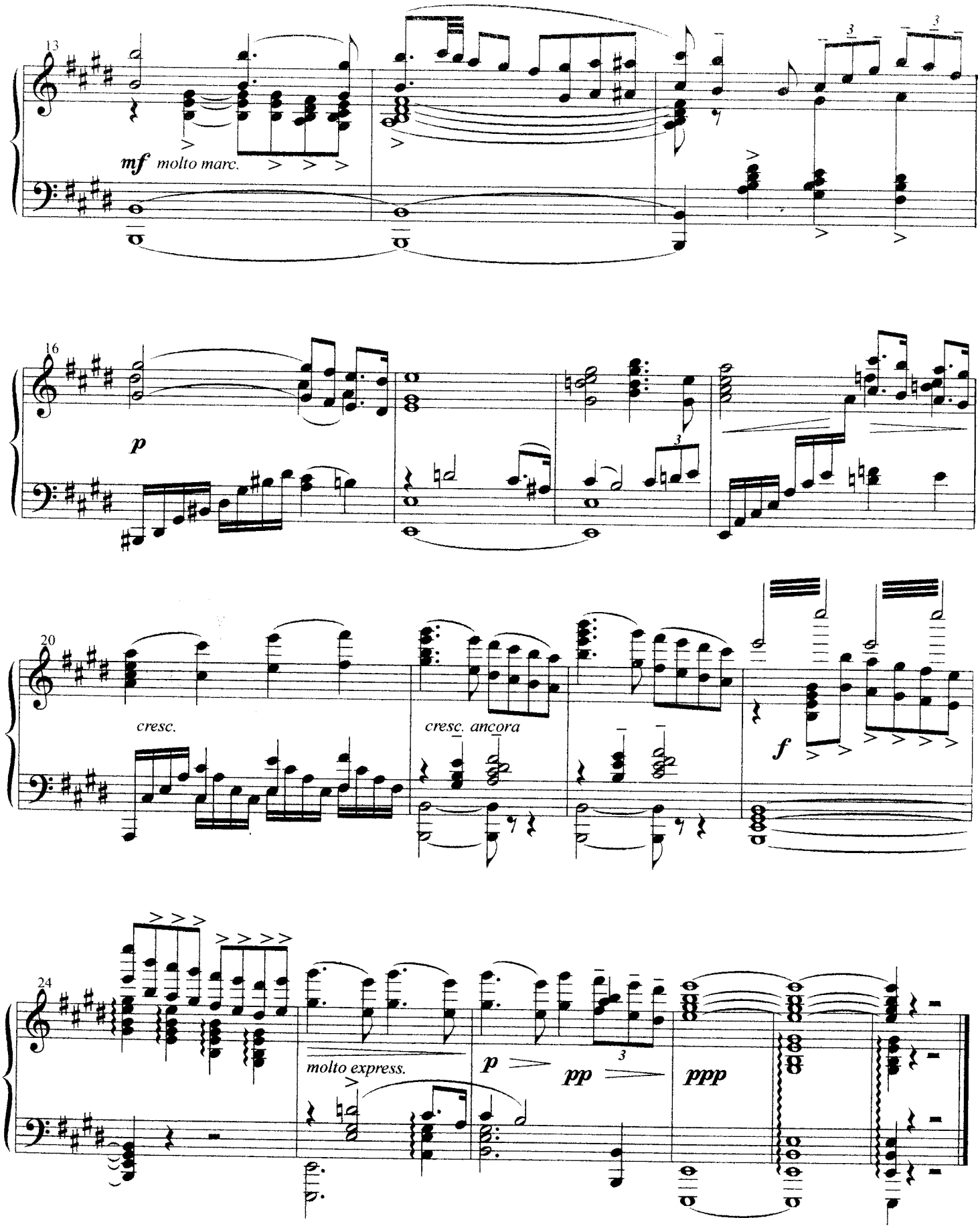
Intermezzo

from the opera

Fedora

Umberto Giordano
(1867-1948)




13
mf molto marc.
16
p
20
cresc.
cresc. ancora
f
24
molto express.
p
pp
ppp

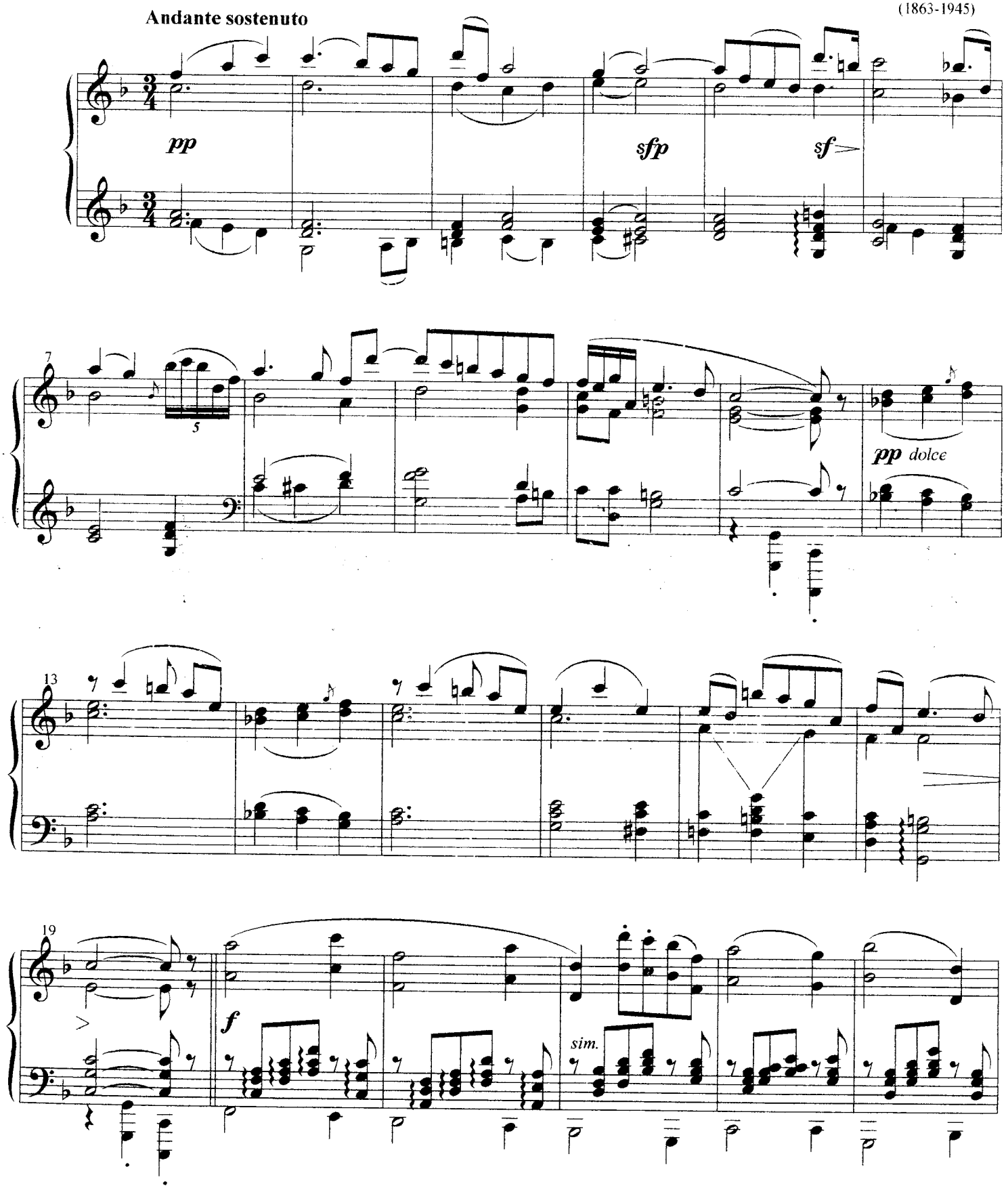
Intermezzo

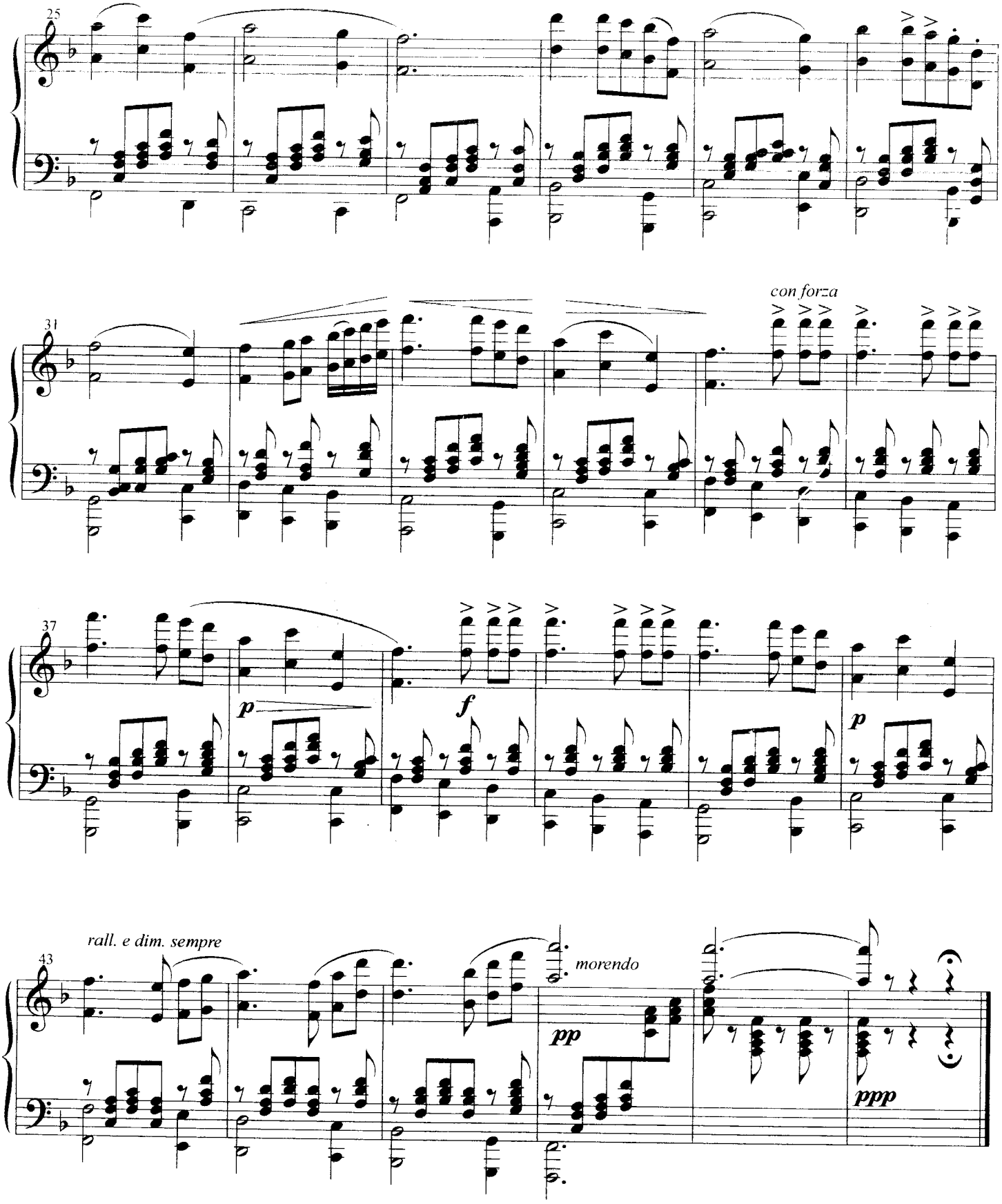
from the opera

Cavalleria rusticana

Pietro Mascagni
(1863-1945)

Andante sostenuto




25
31
con forza
37
p
f
p
43
rall. e dim. sempre
morendo
pp
ppp

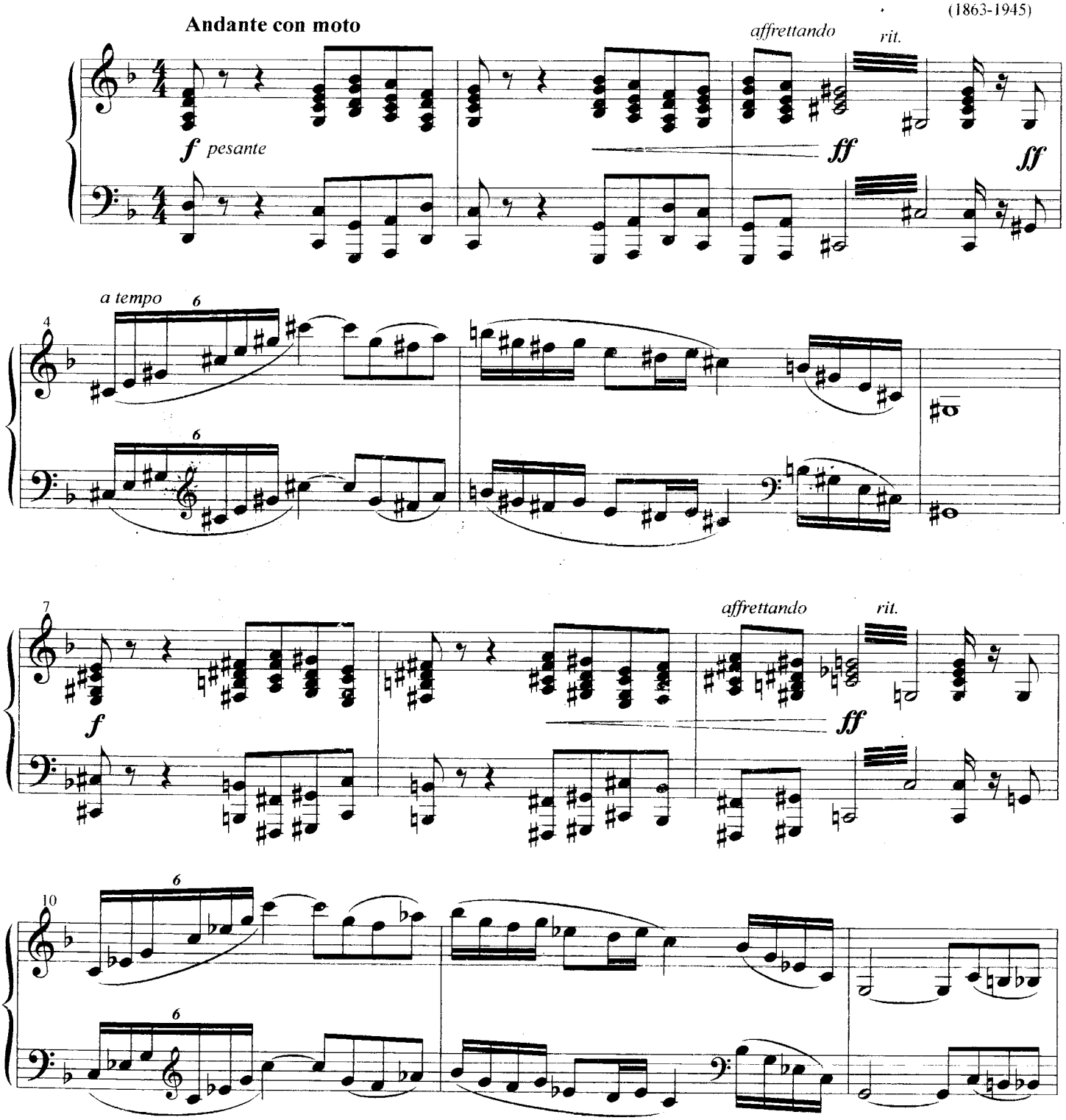
Intermezzo

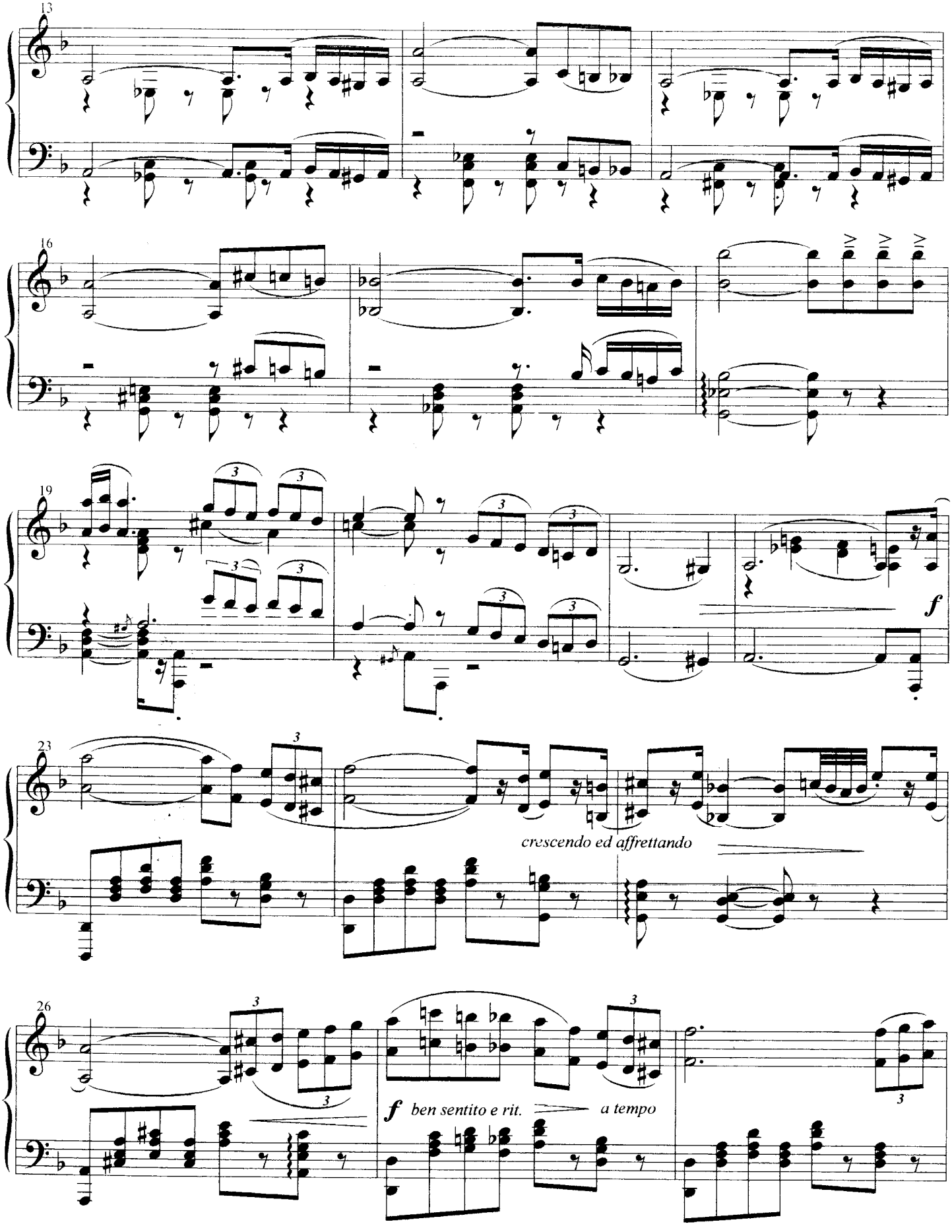
from the opera

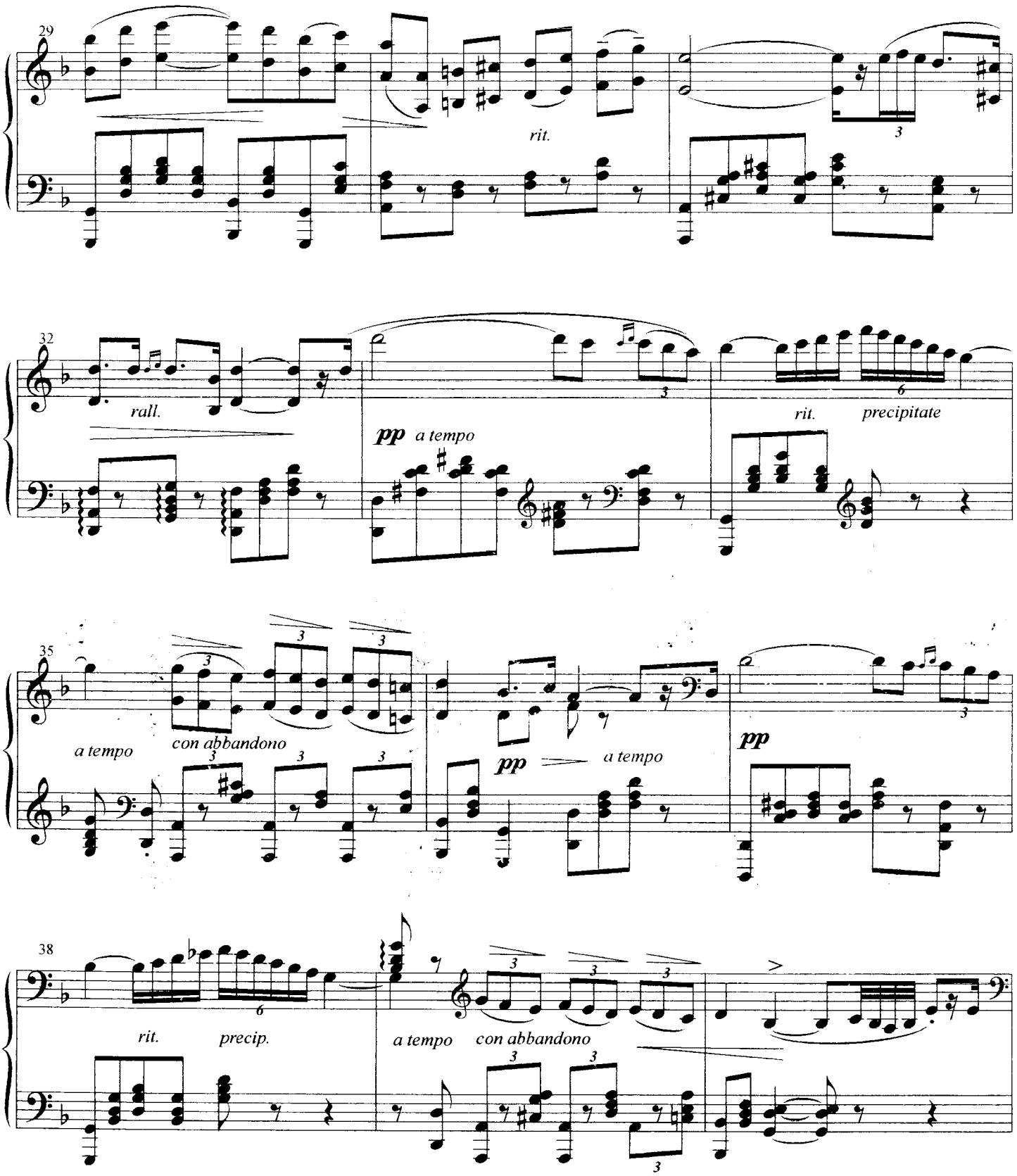
L'amico Fritz

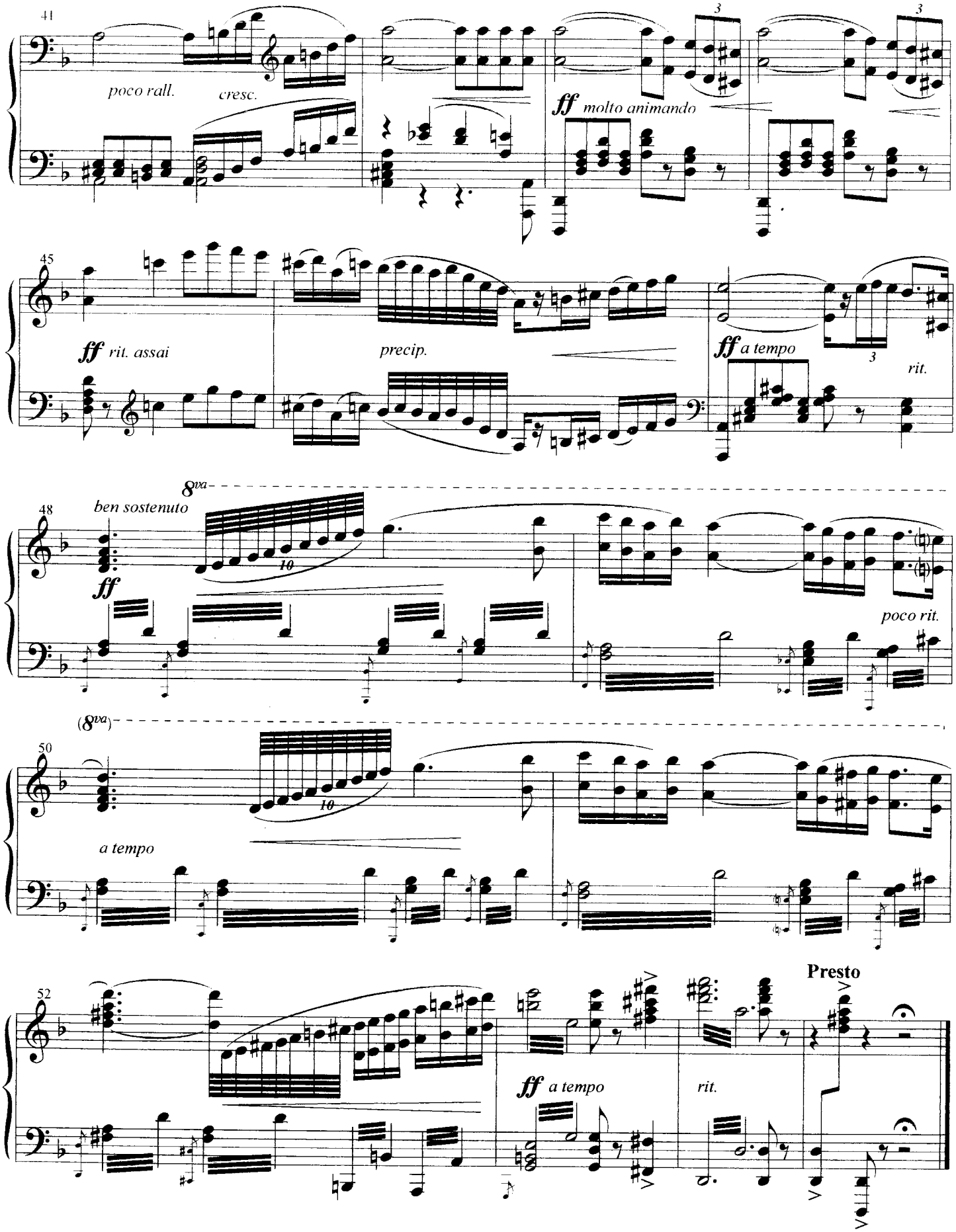
Pietro Mascagni
(1863-1945)

Andante con moto




13
16
19
f
23
crescendo ed affrettando
26
f ben sentito e rit.
a tempo


29
rit.
32
rall.
pp a tempo
rit. precipitate
35
a tempo
con abbandono
pp
pp a tempo
38
rit. precip.
a tempo con abbandono


41
poco rall.
cresc.
ff molto animando
45
ff rit. assai
precip.
ff a tempo
rit.
48
8va
ben sostenuto
ff
poco rit.
(8va)
50
a tempo
52
ff a tempo
rit.
Presto

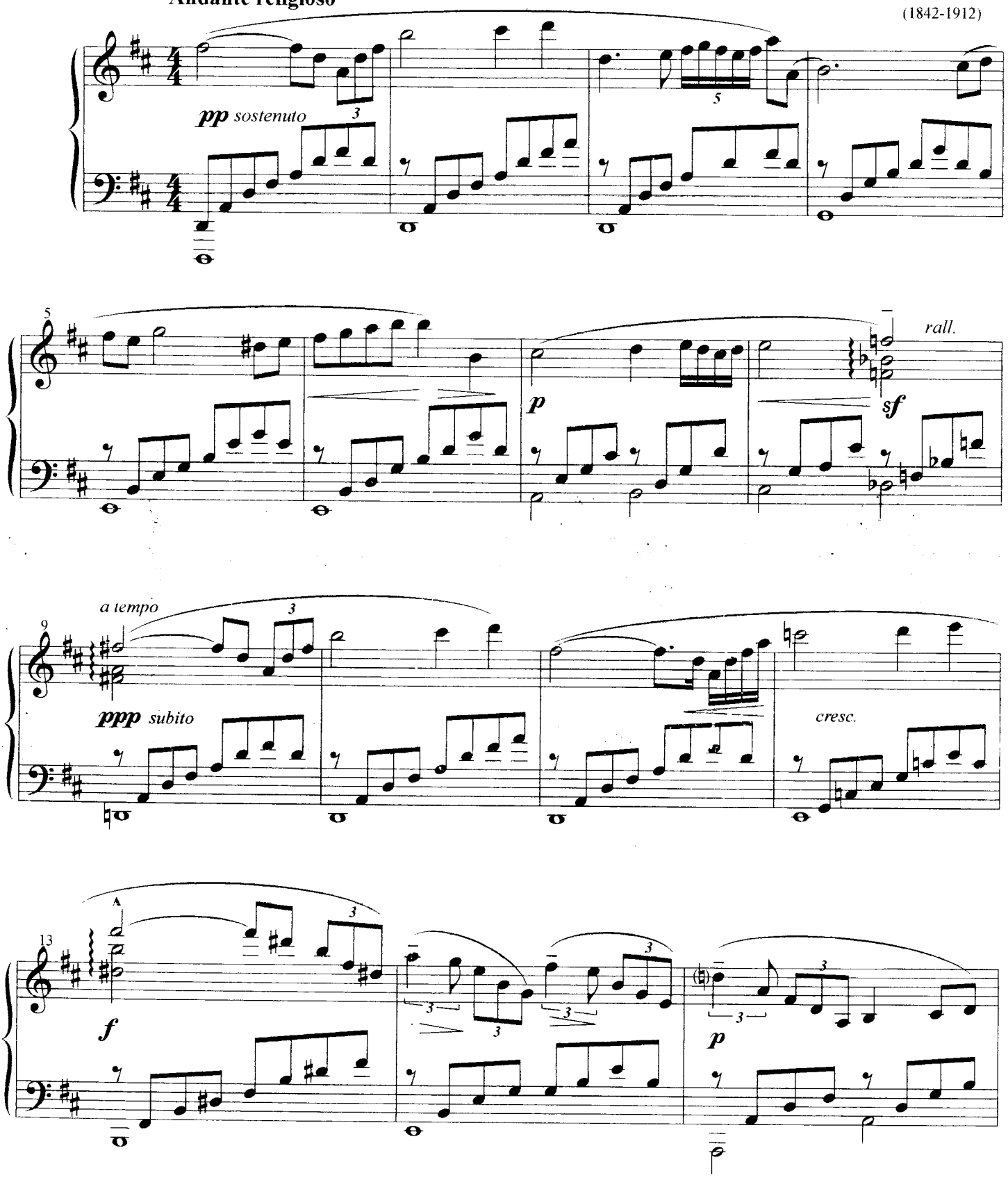
Méditation

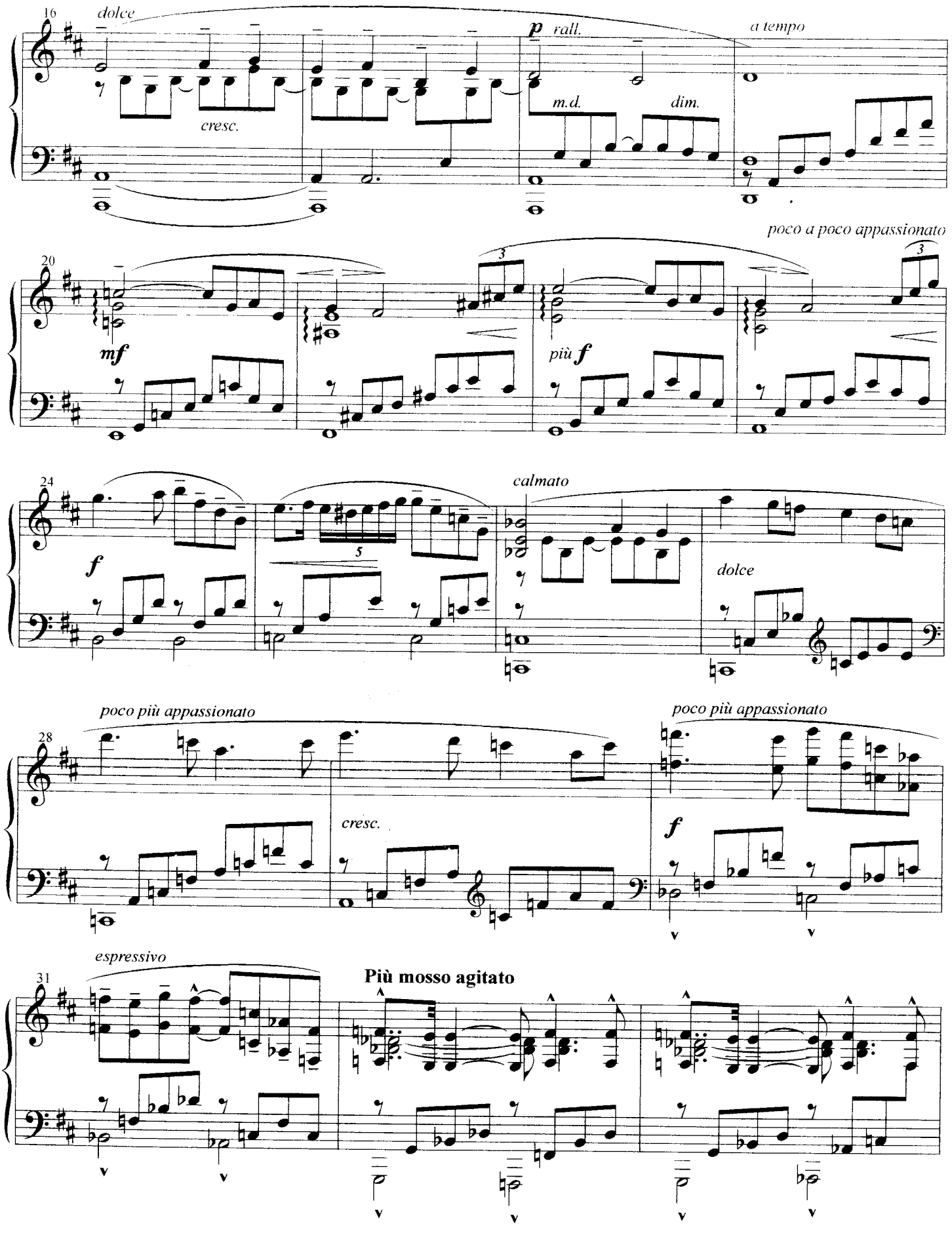
from the opera

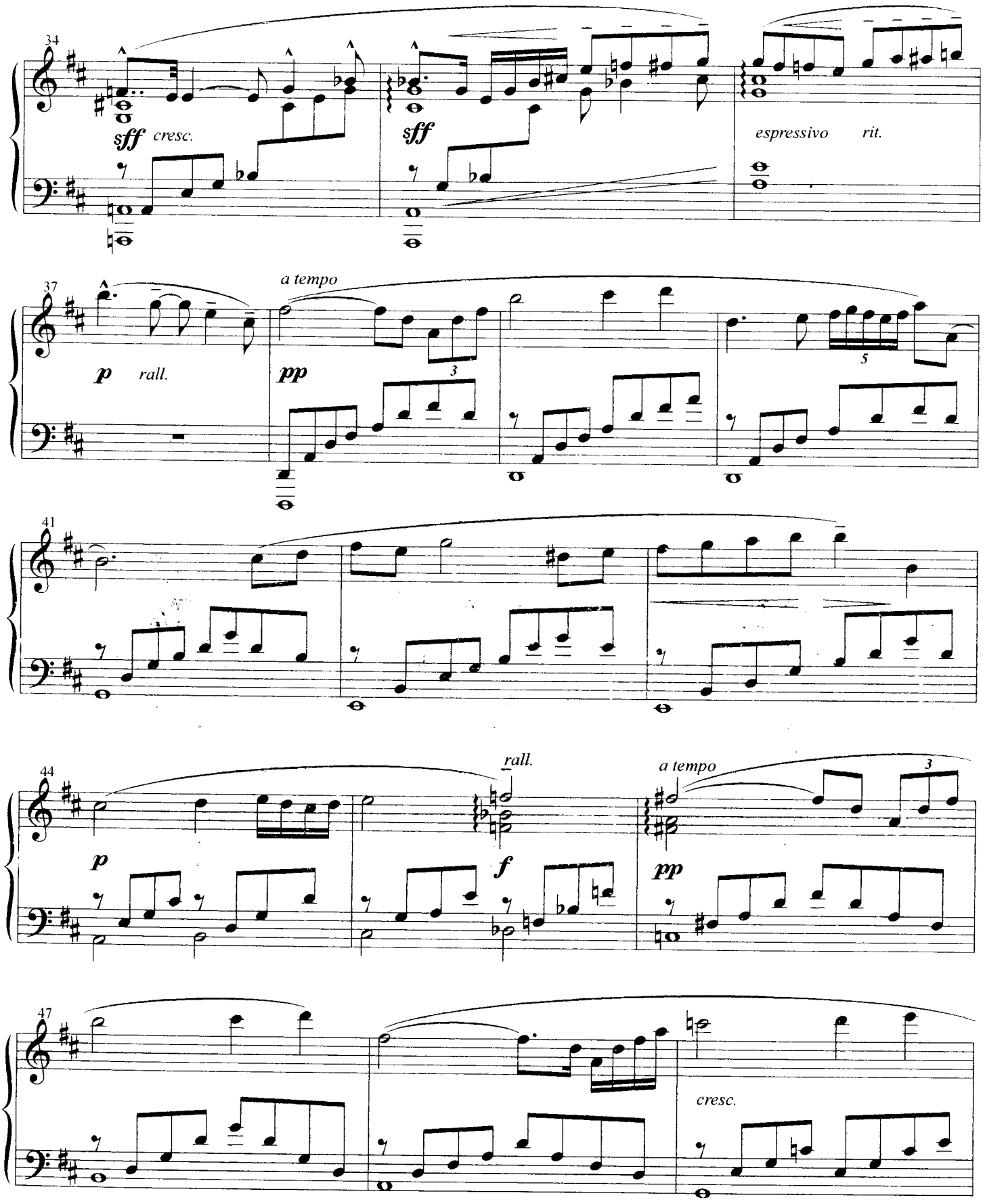
Thaïs

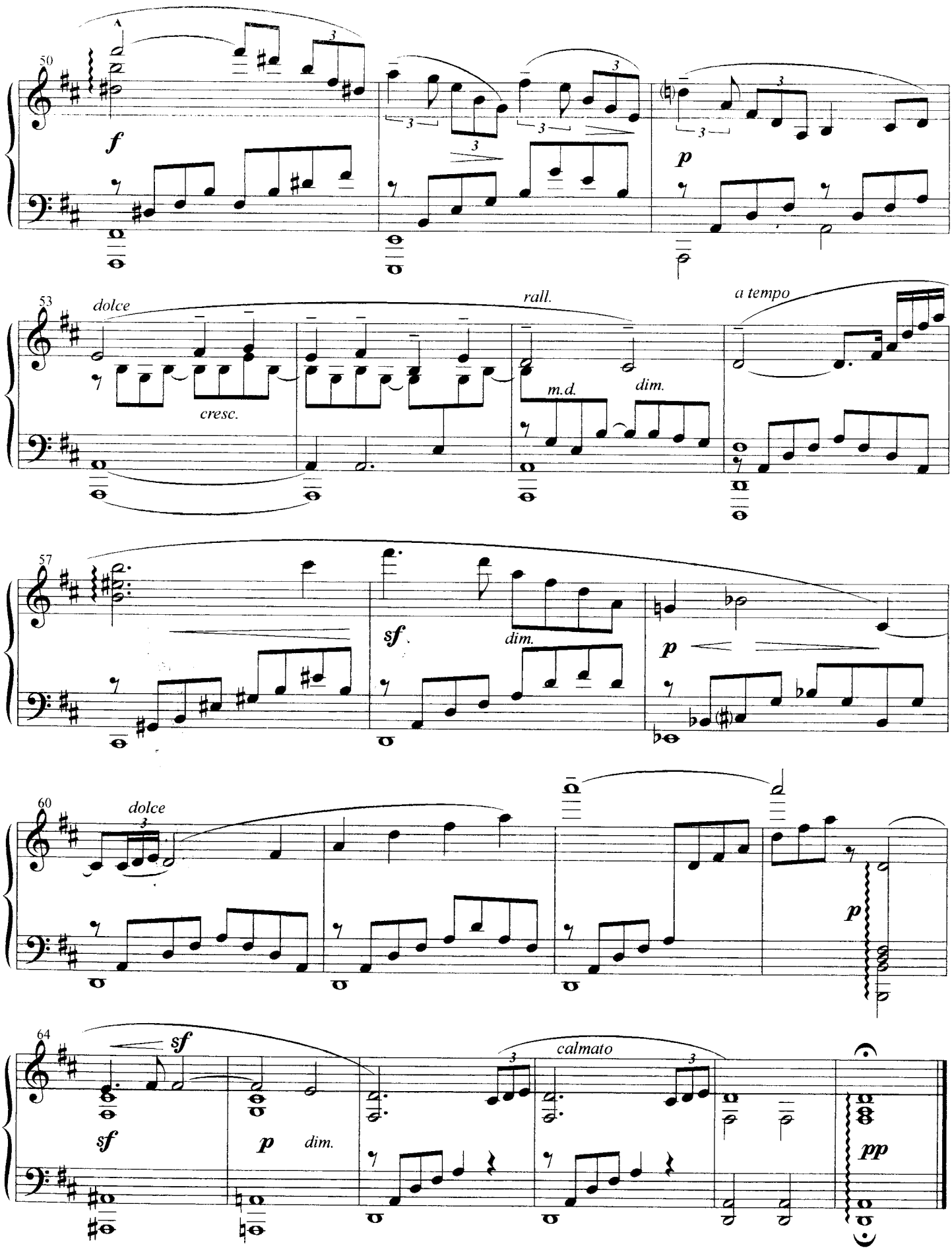
Andante religioso

Jules Massenet
(1842-1912)




16
dolce
cresc.
p
rall.
m.d.
dim.
a tempo
20
poco a poco appassionato
mf
più f
24
calmato
f
5
dolce
poco più appassionato
28
cresc.
poco più appassionato
f
espressivo
31
Più mosso agitato


34
sff cresc.
sff
espressivo rit.
37
a tempo
p rall.
pp
41
44
rall.
a tempo
p
f
pp
47
cresc.

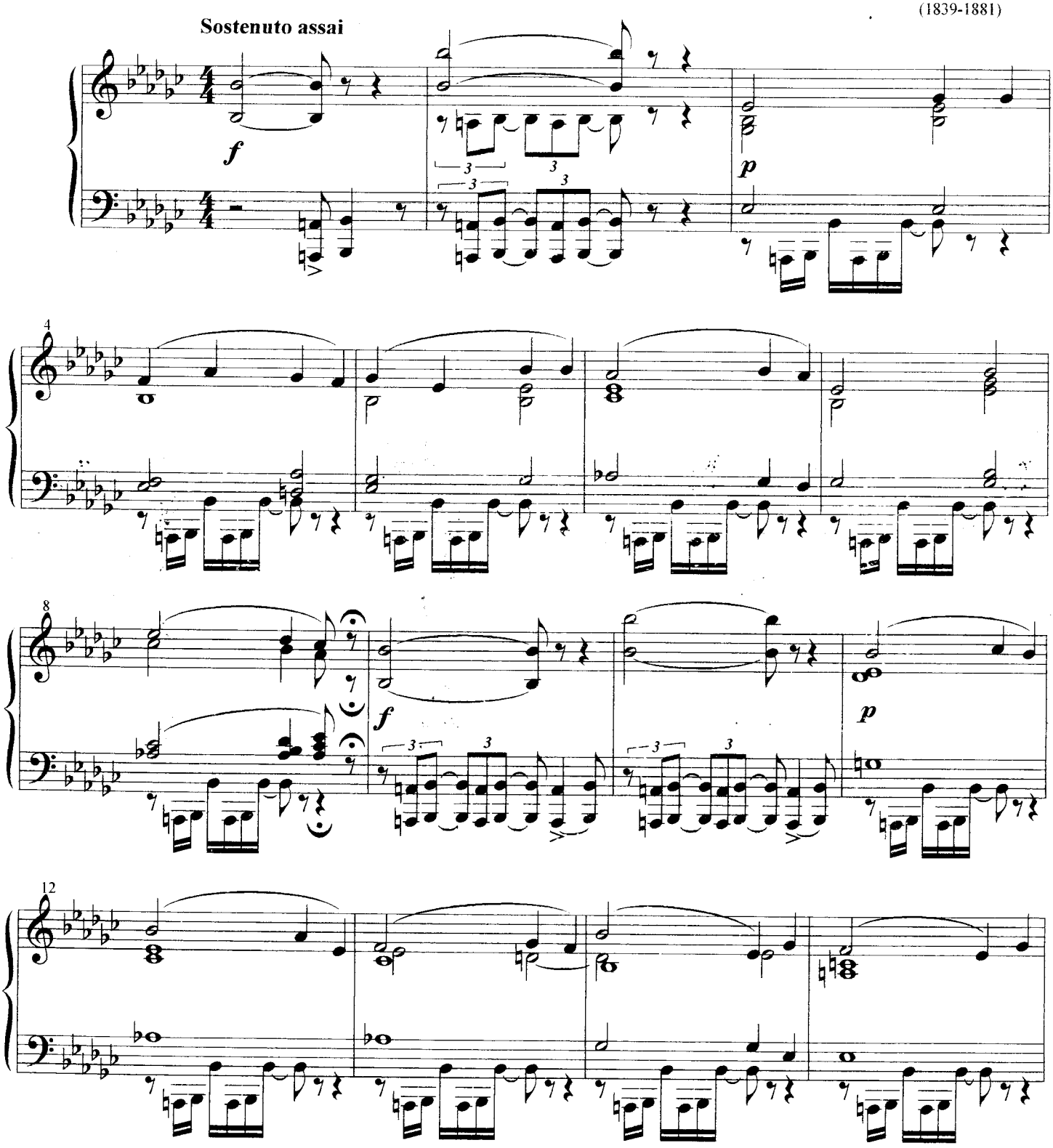

50
f
p
53
dolce
cresc.
rall.
m.d.
dim.
a tempo
57
sf
dim.
p
60
dolce
p
64
sf
sf
p
dim.
calmato
pp

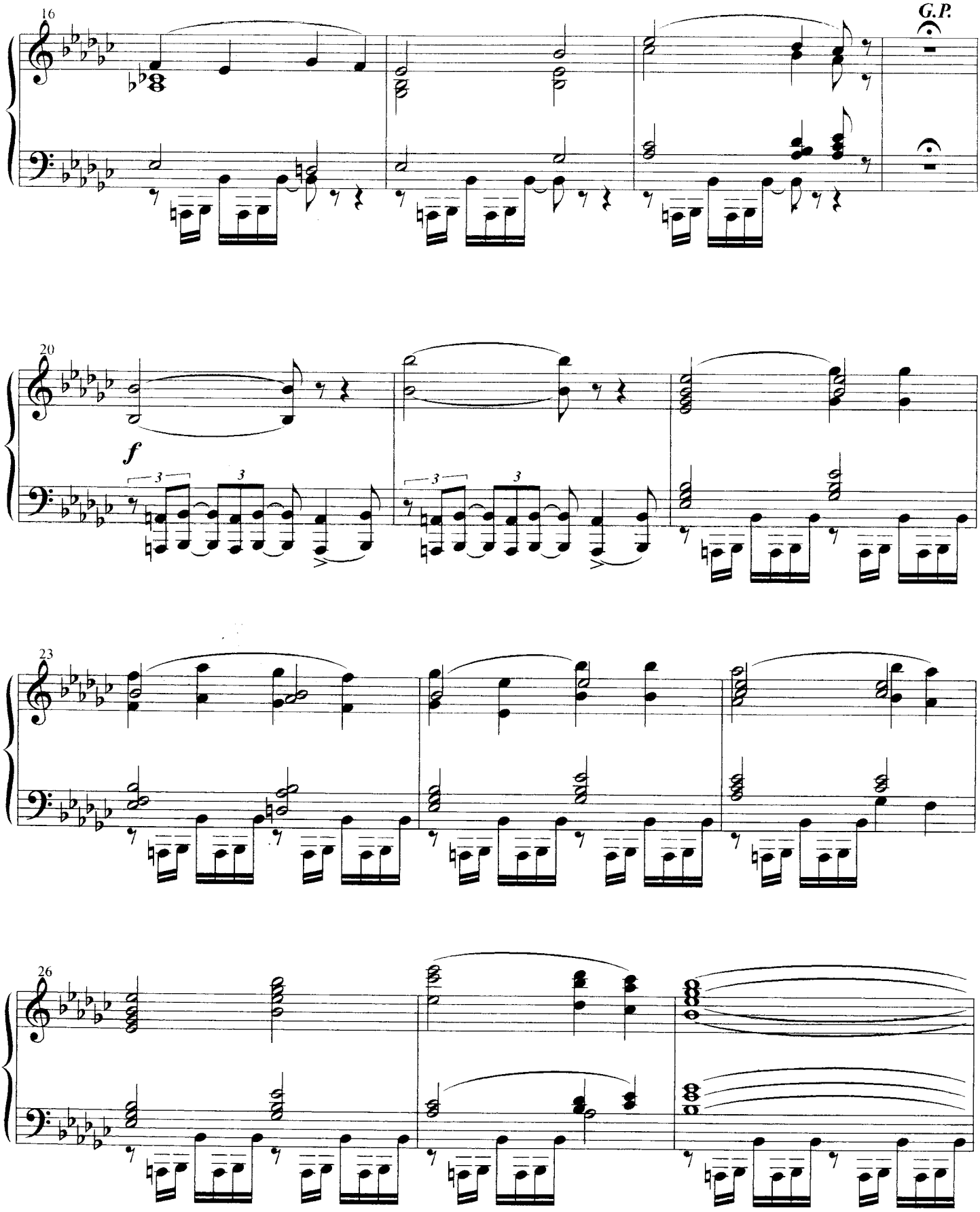
Intermezzo

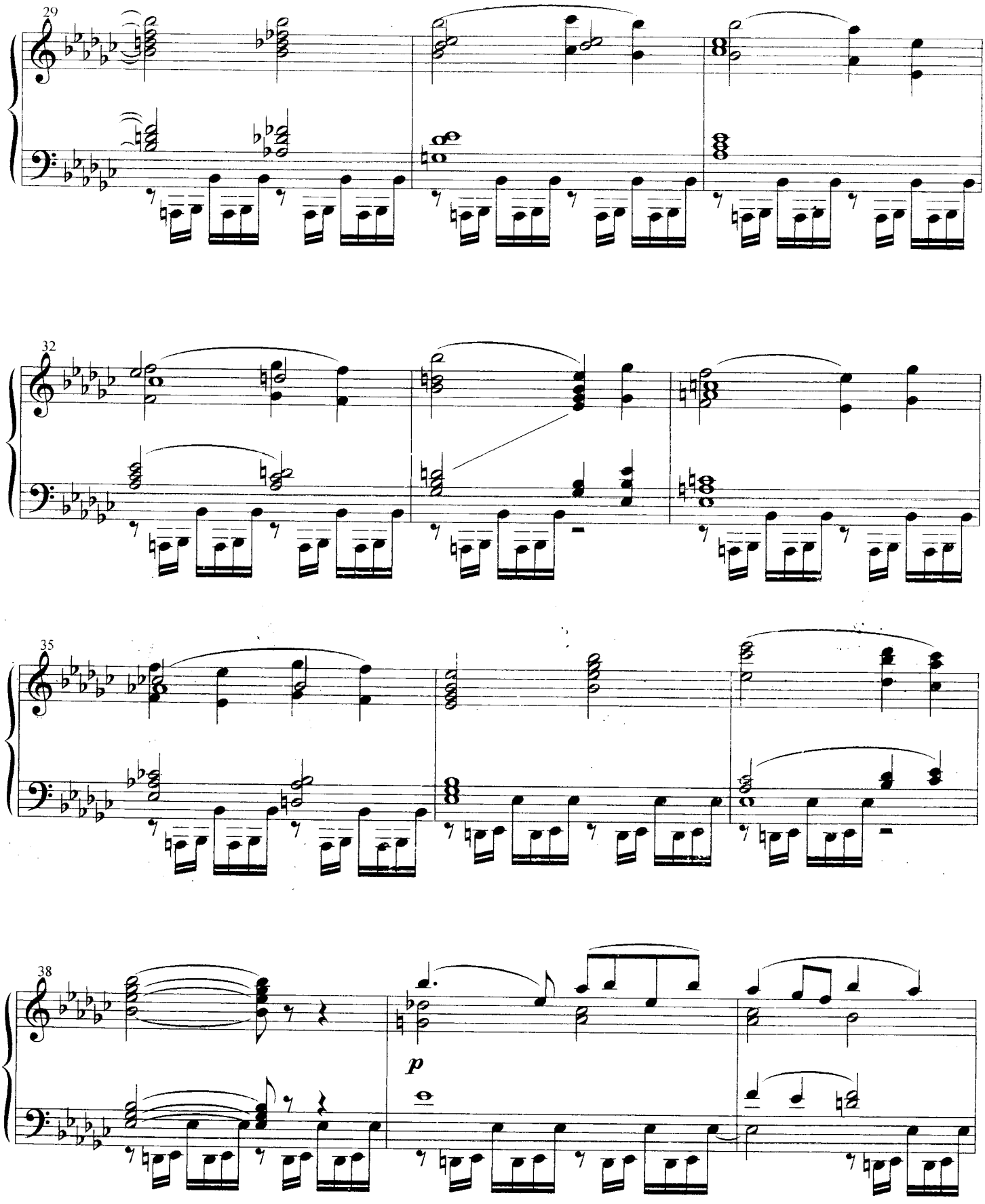
from the opera

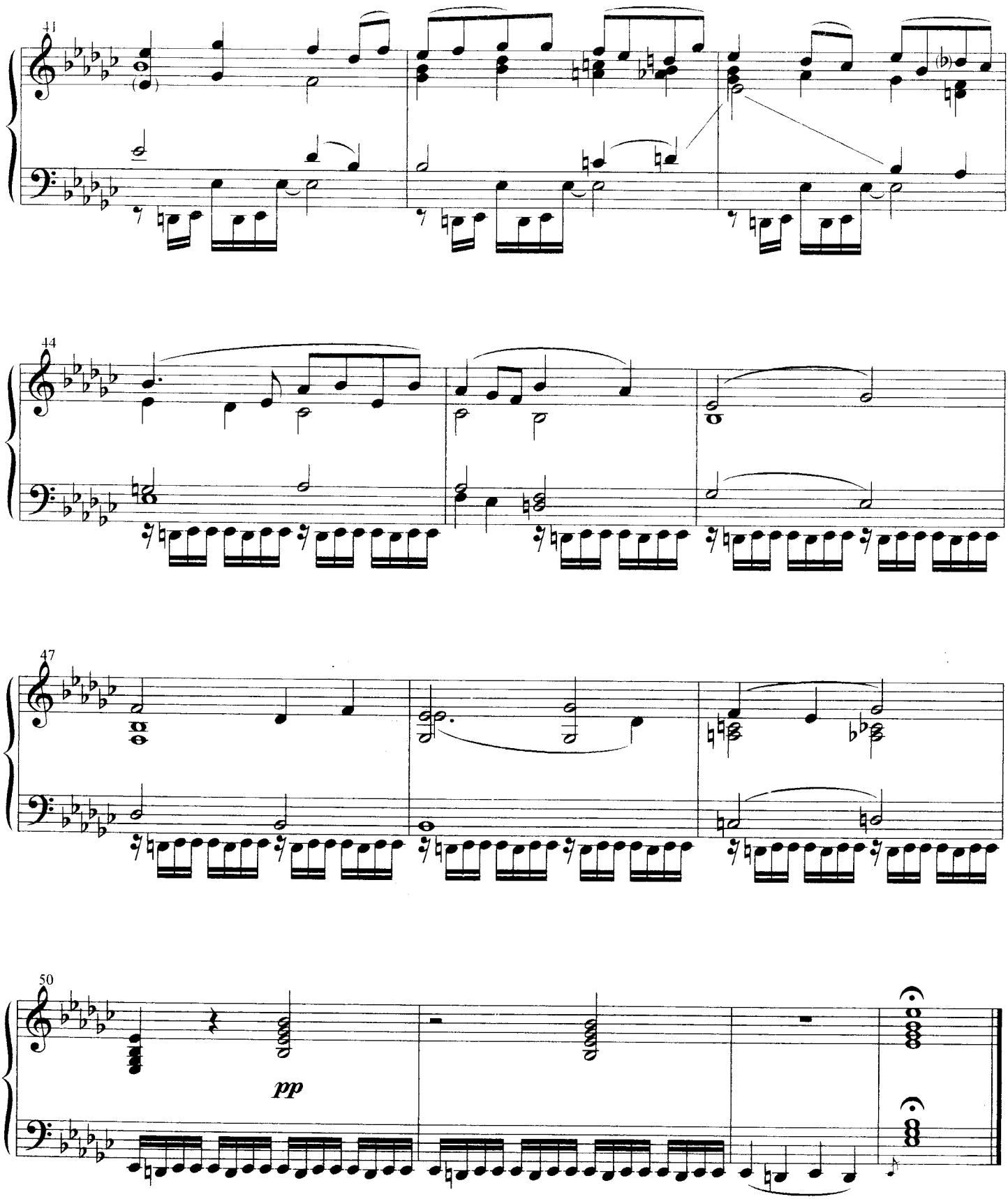
Khovanshchina

Modeste Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)




16
G.P.
20
f
3
3
3
3
23
26


29
32
35
38
p

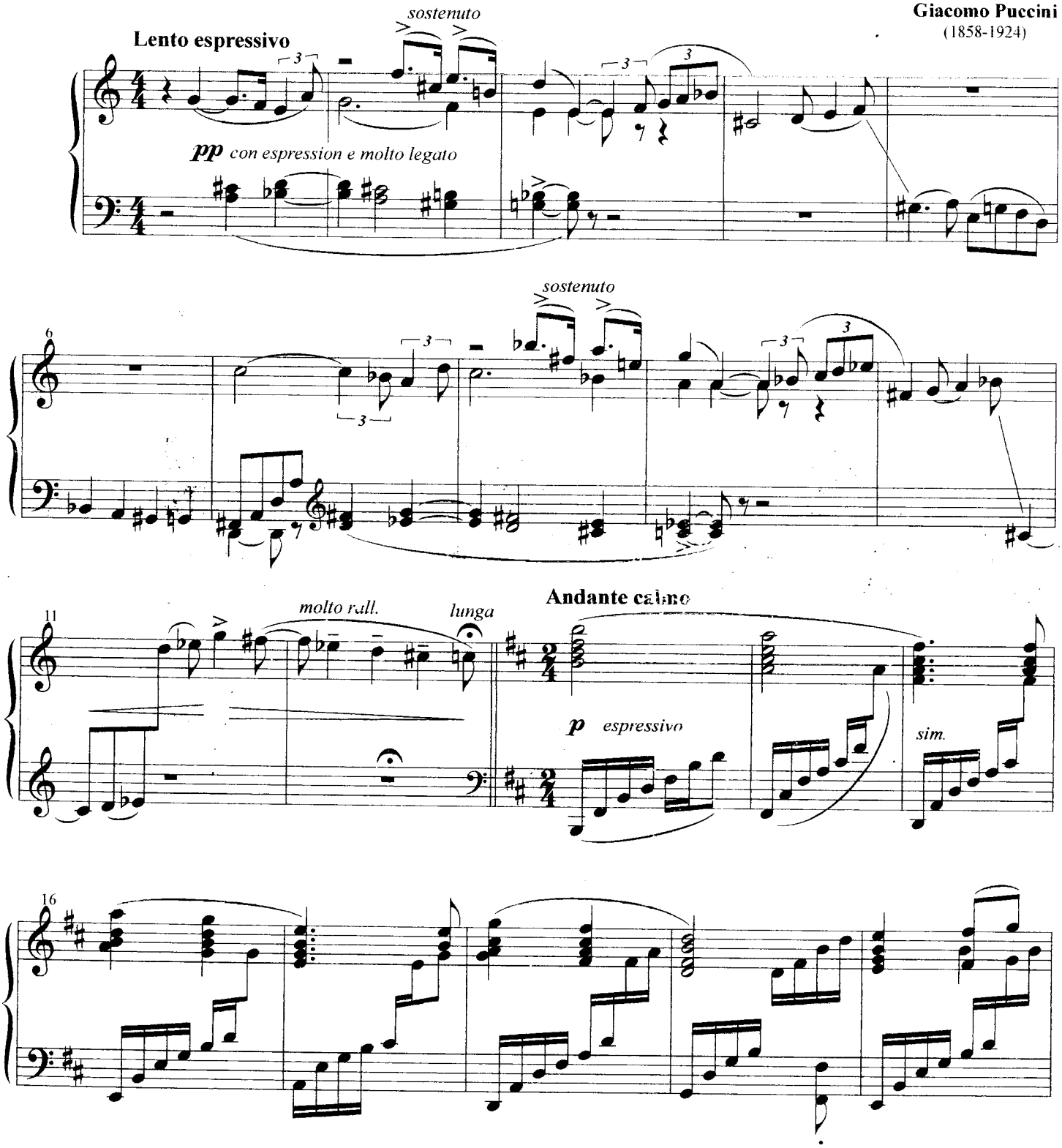

41
44
47
50
pp

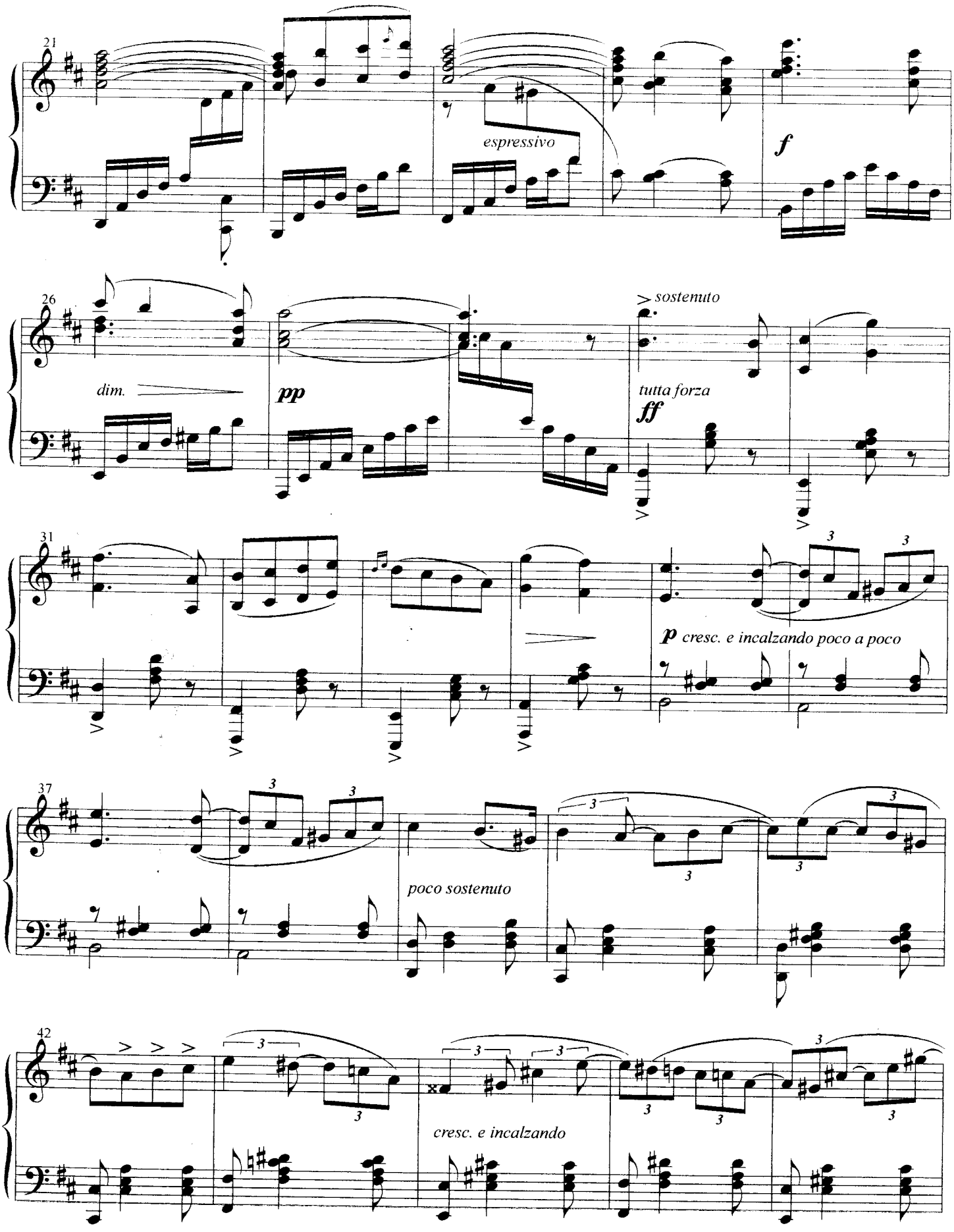
Intermezzo

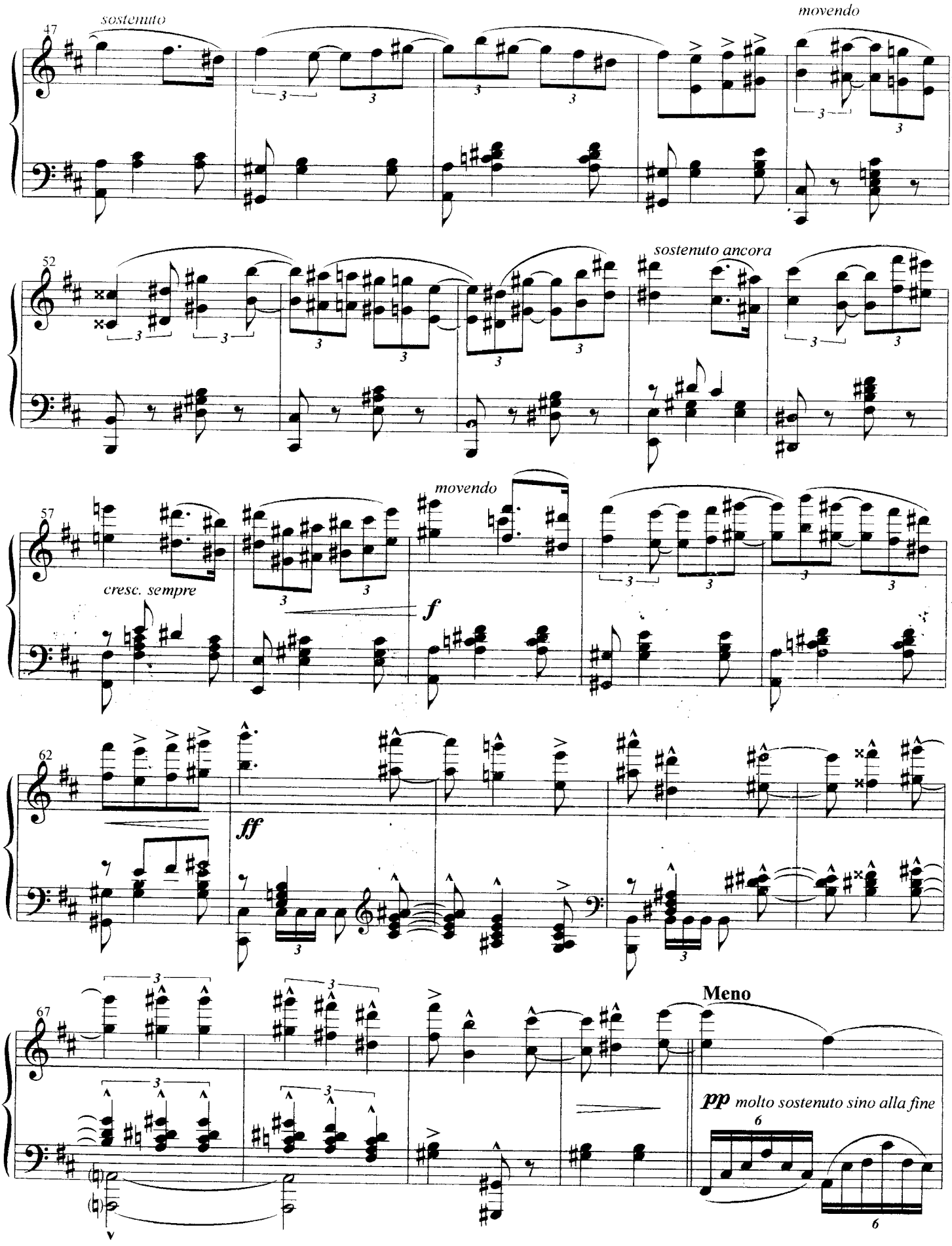
from the opera

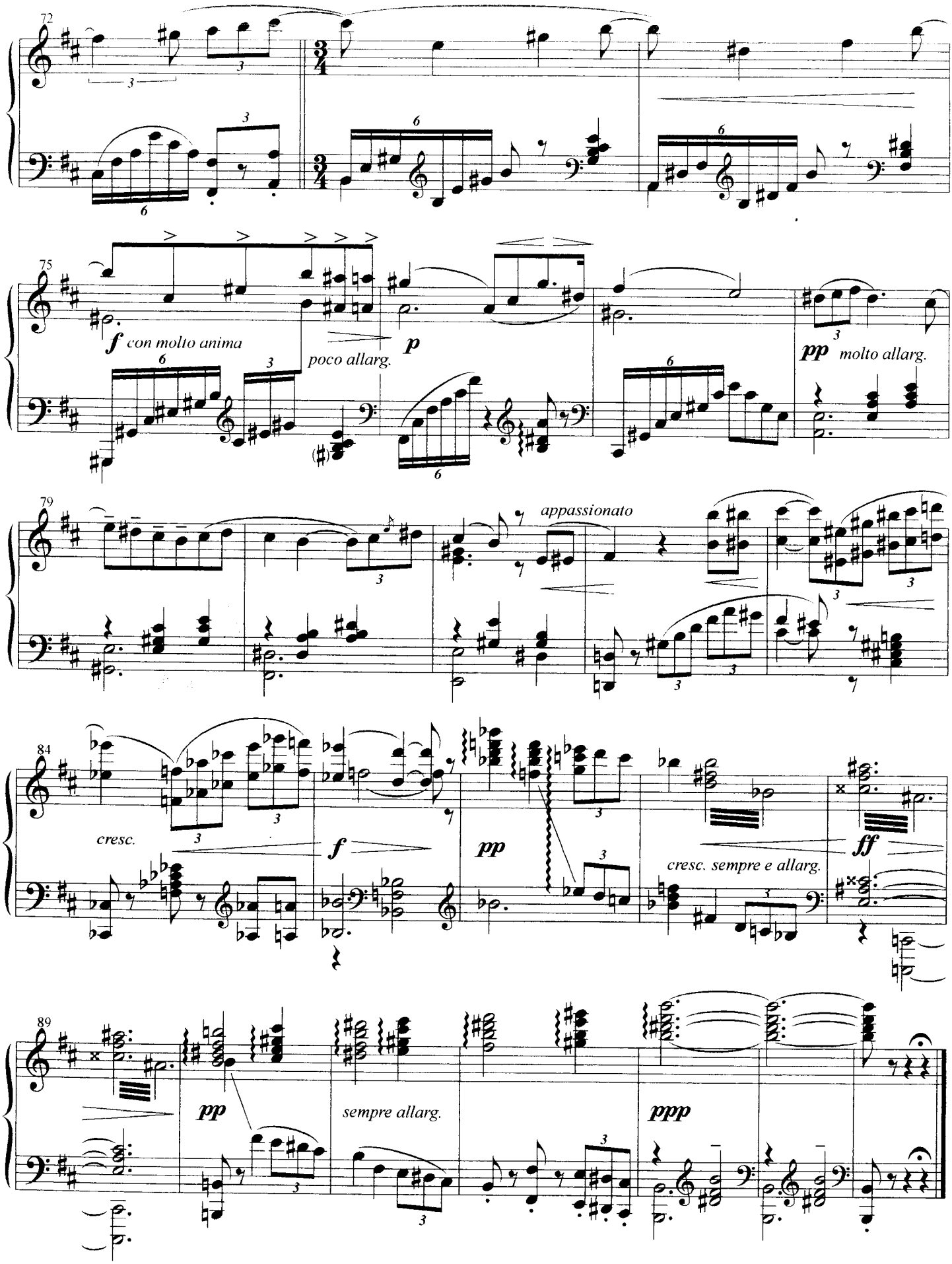
Manon Lescaut

Giacomo Puccini
(1858-1924)




21
espressivo
f
26
dim.
pp
sostenuto
tutta forza
ff
31
p cresc. e incalzando poco a poco
37
poco sostenuto
42
cresc. e incalzando


47
sostenuto
movendo
52
sostenuto ancora
57
movendo
cresc. sempre
f
62
ff
67
Meno
pp molto sostenuto sino alla fine

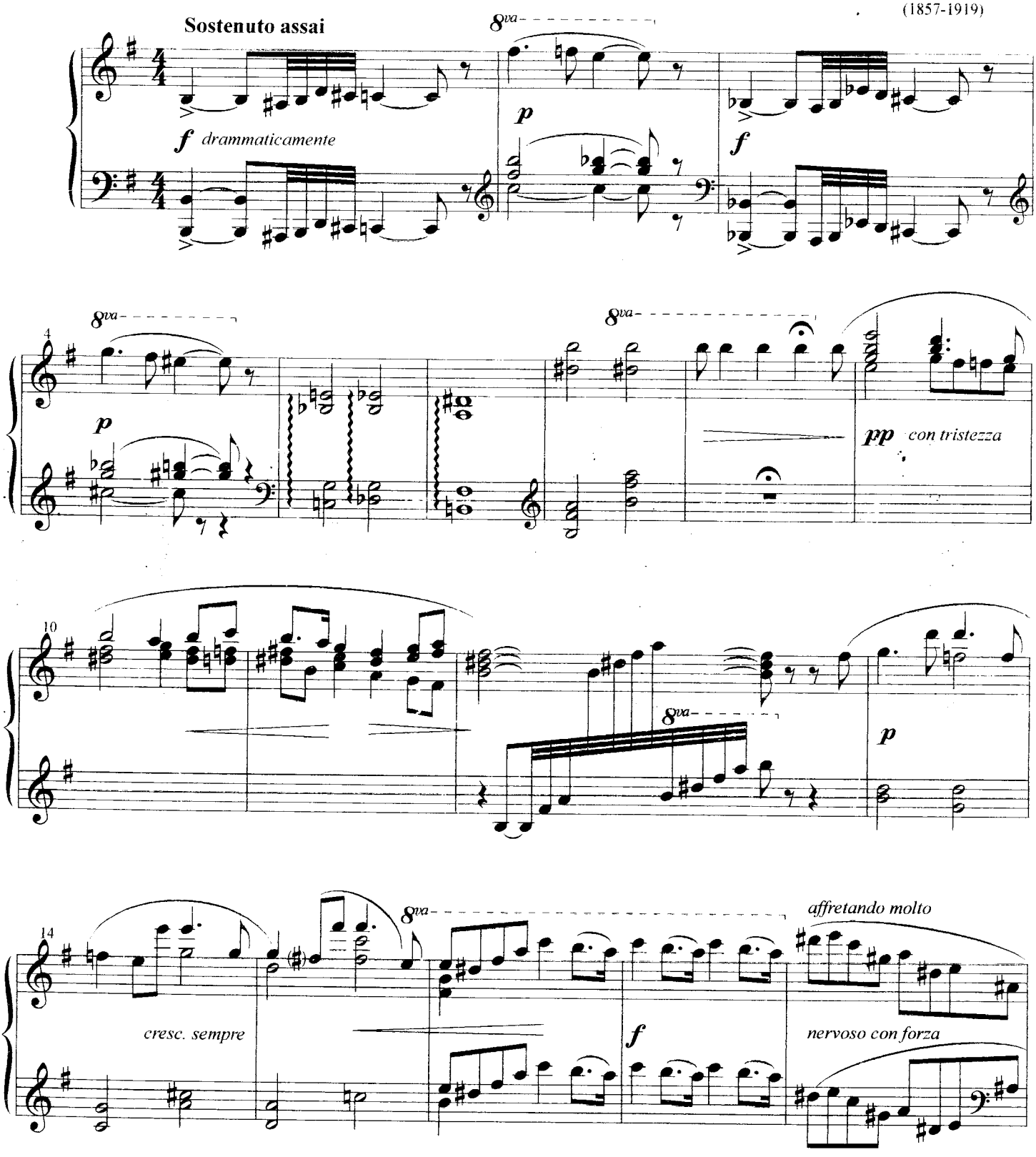

72
75
f con molto anima
poco allarg.
p
pp molto allarg.
79
appassionato
84
cresc.
f
pp
cresc. sempre e allarg.
ff
89
pp
sempre allarg.
ppp

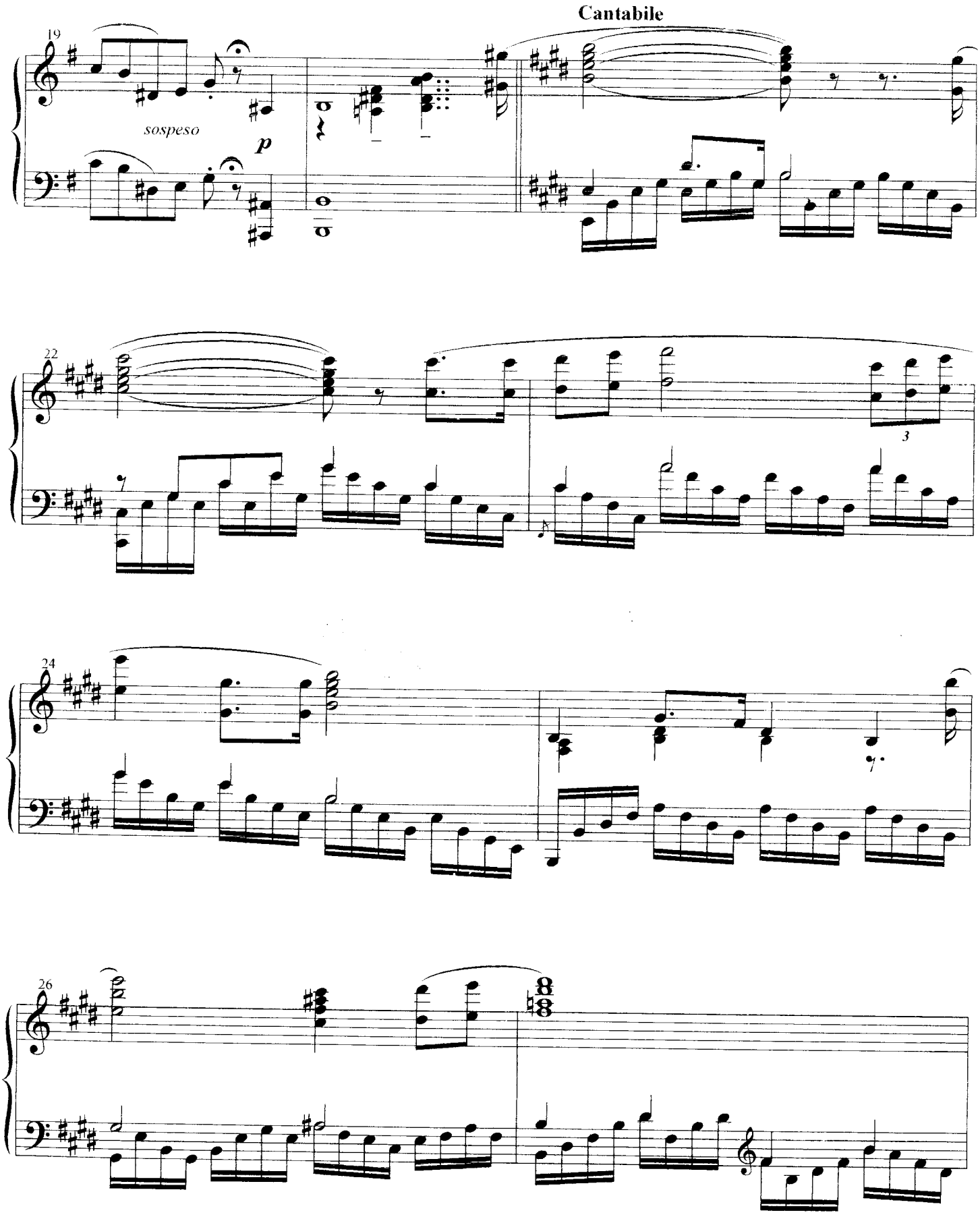
Intermezzo

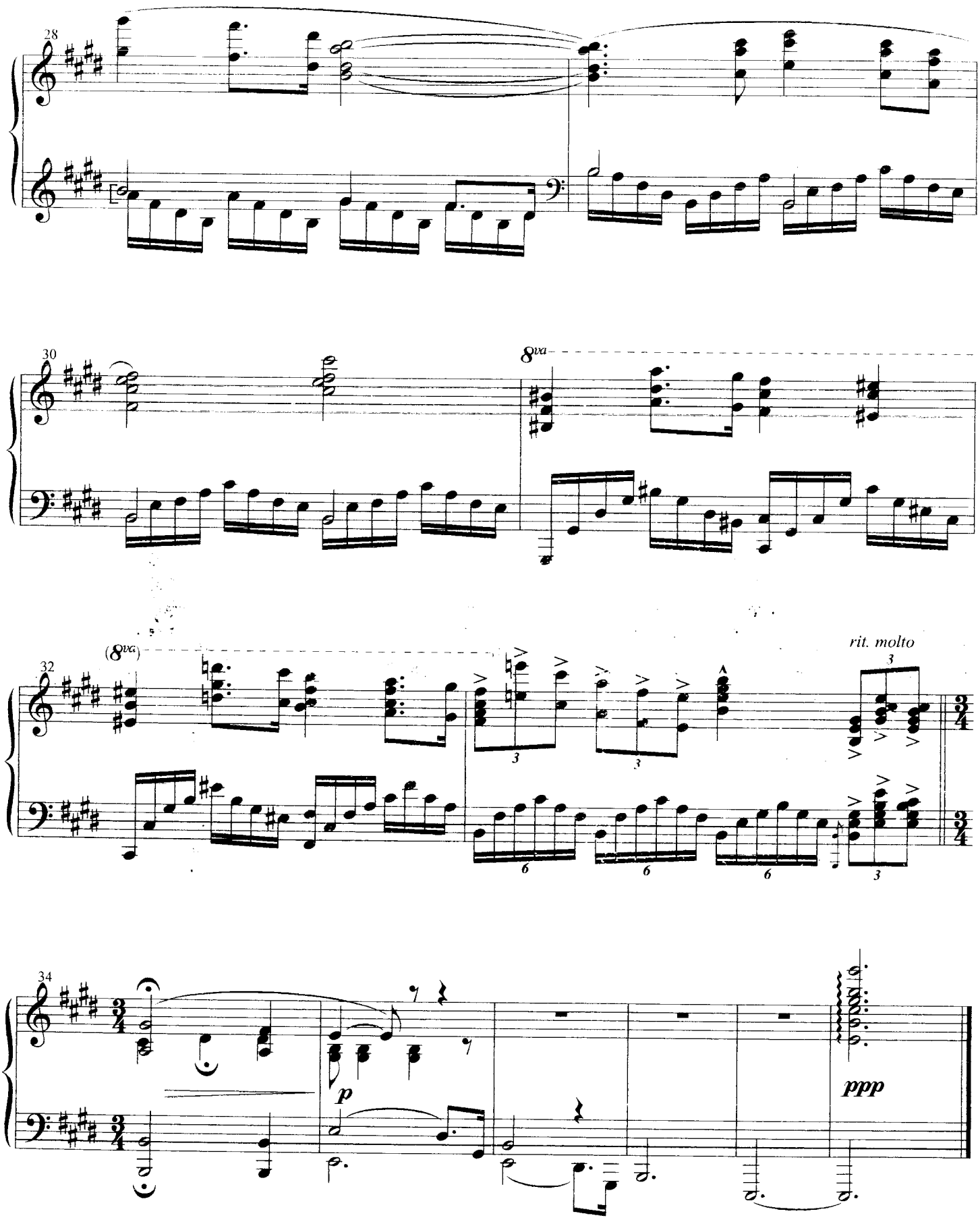
from the opera

Pagliacci

Ruggiero Leoncavallo
(1857-1919)




Cantabile
19
sospeso
p
22
3
24
26


28
30
8va
(8va)
32
rit. molto
34
p
ppp

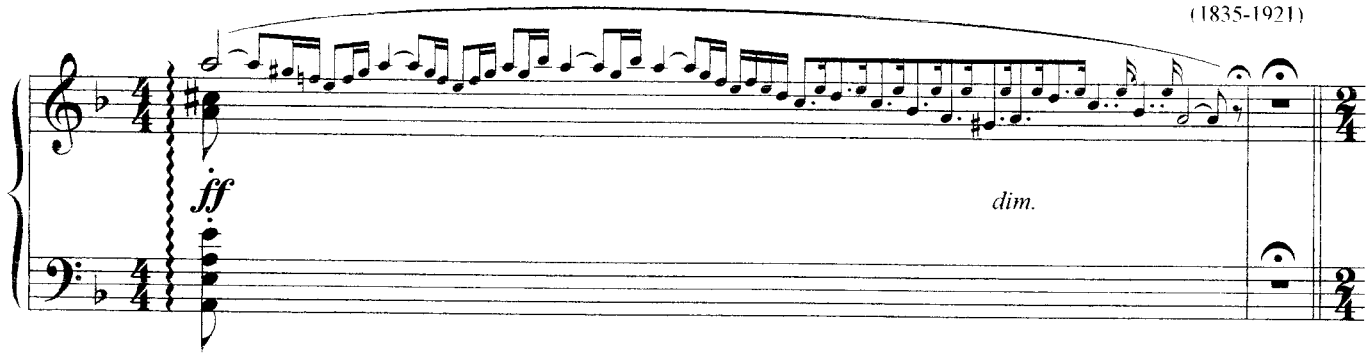
Bacchanale

Ballet from the opera

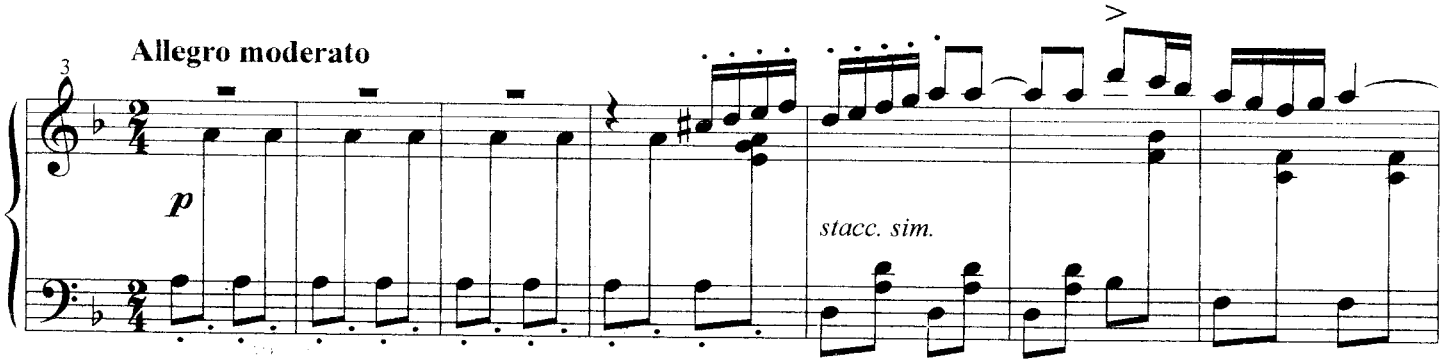
Samson et Dalila

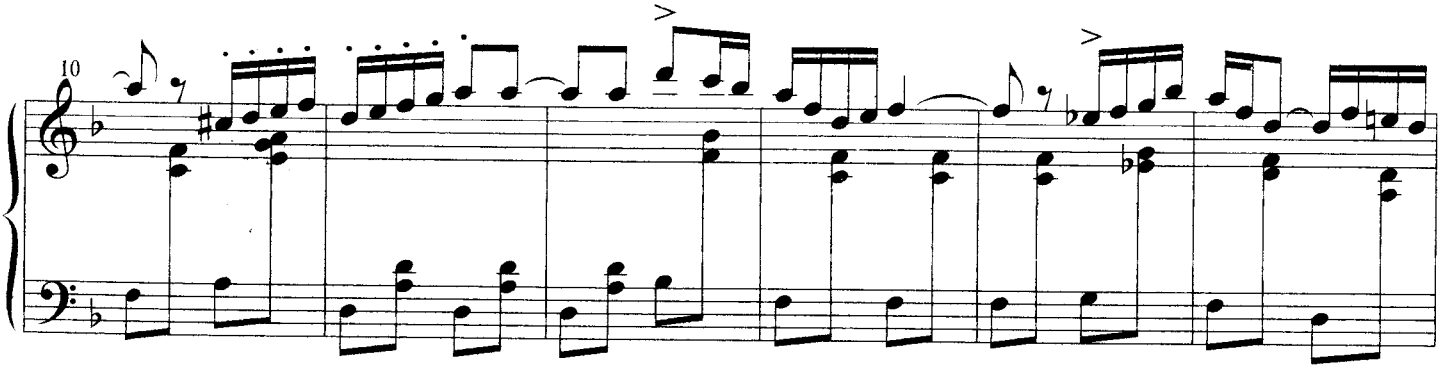
Recitativo ***(ad lib.)***

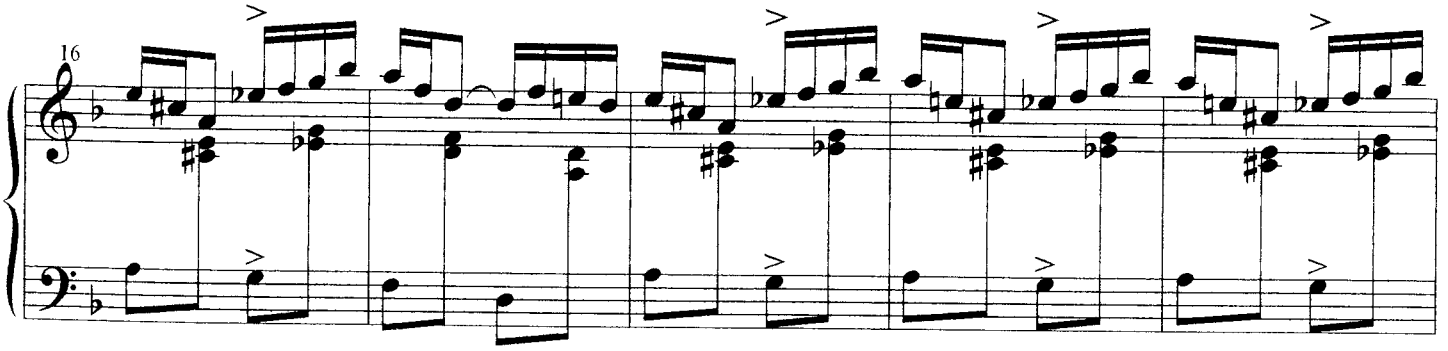
Camille Saint-Säens
(1835-1921)

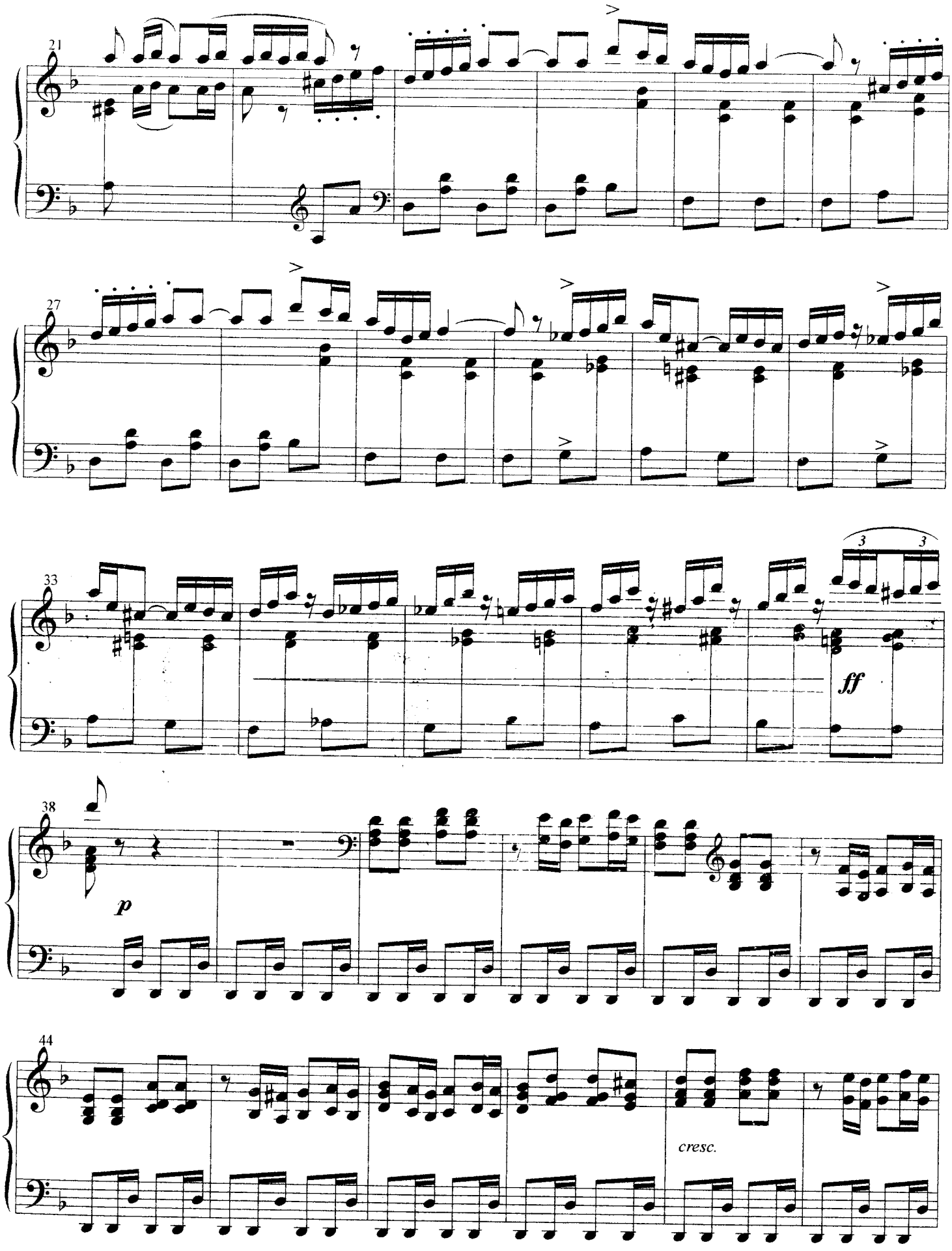


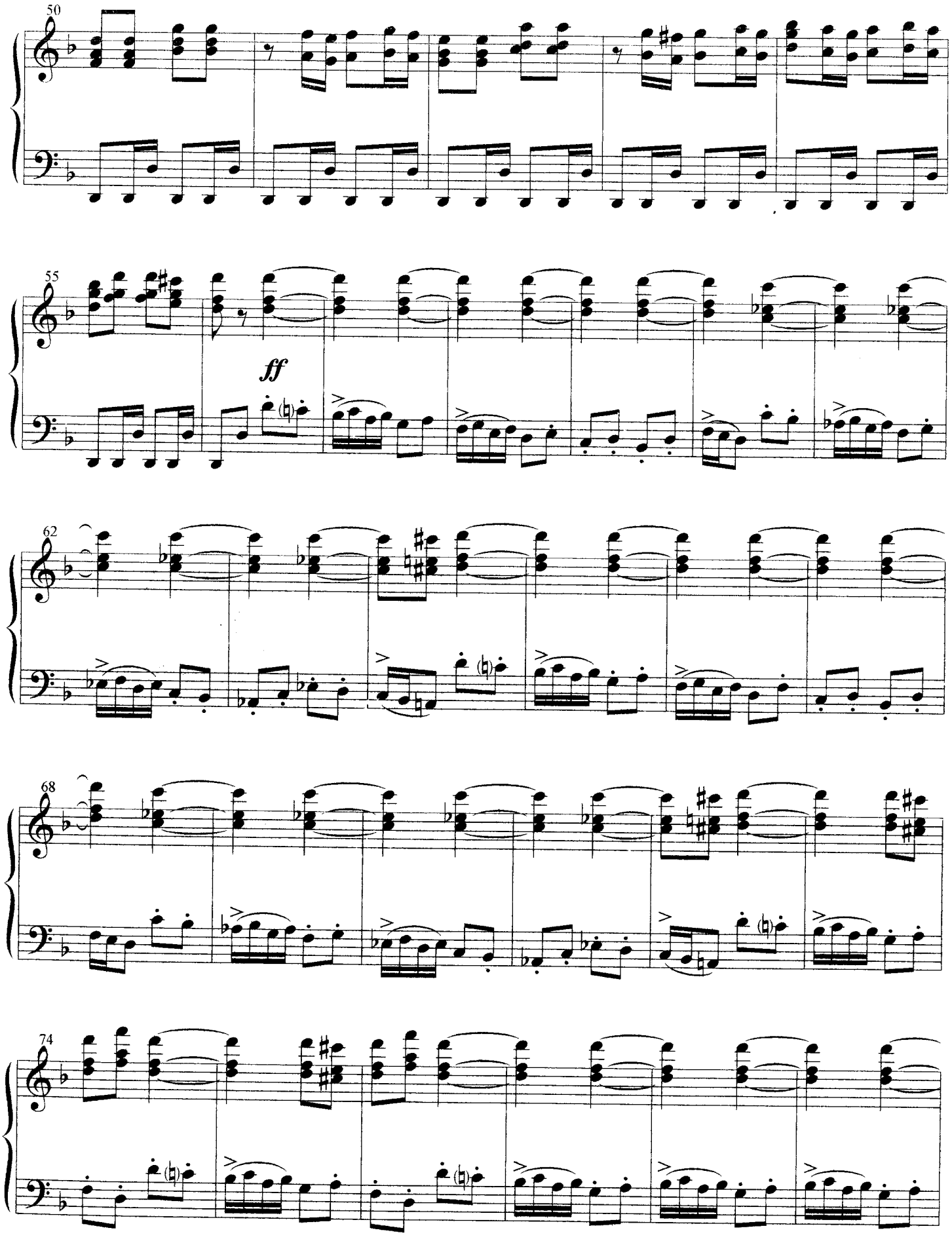
Allegro moderato

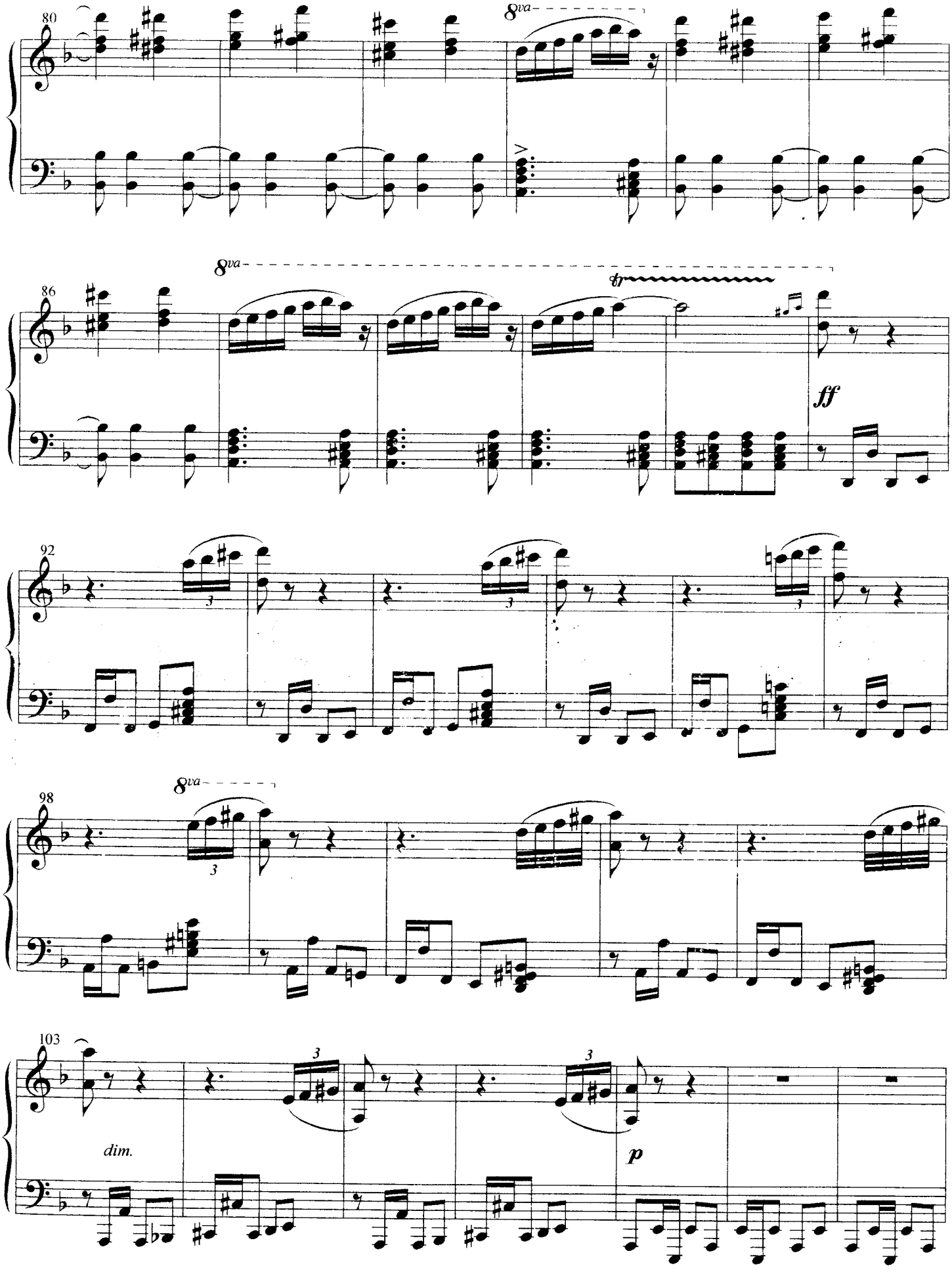


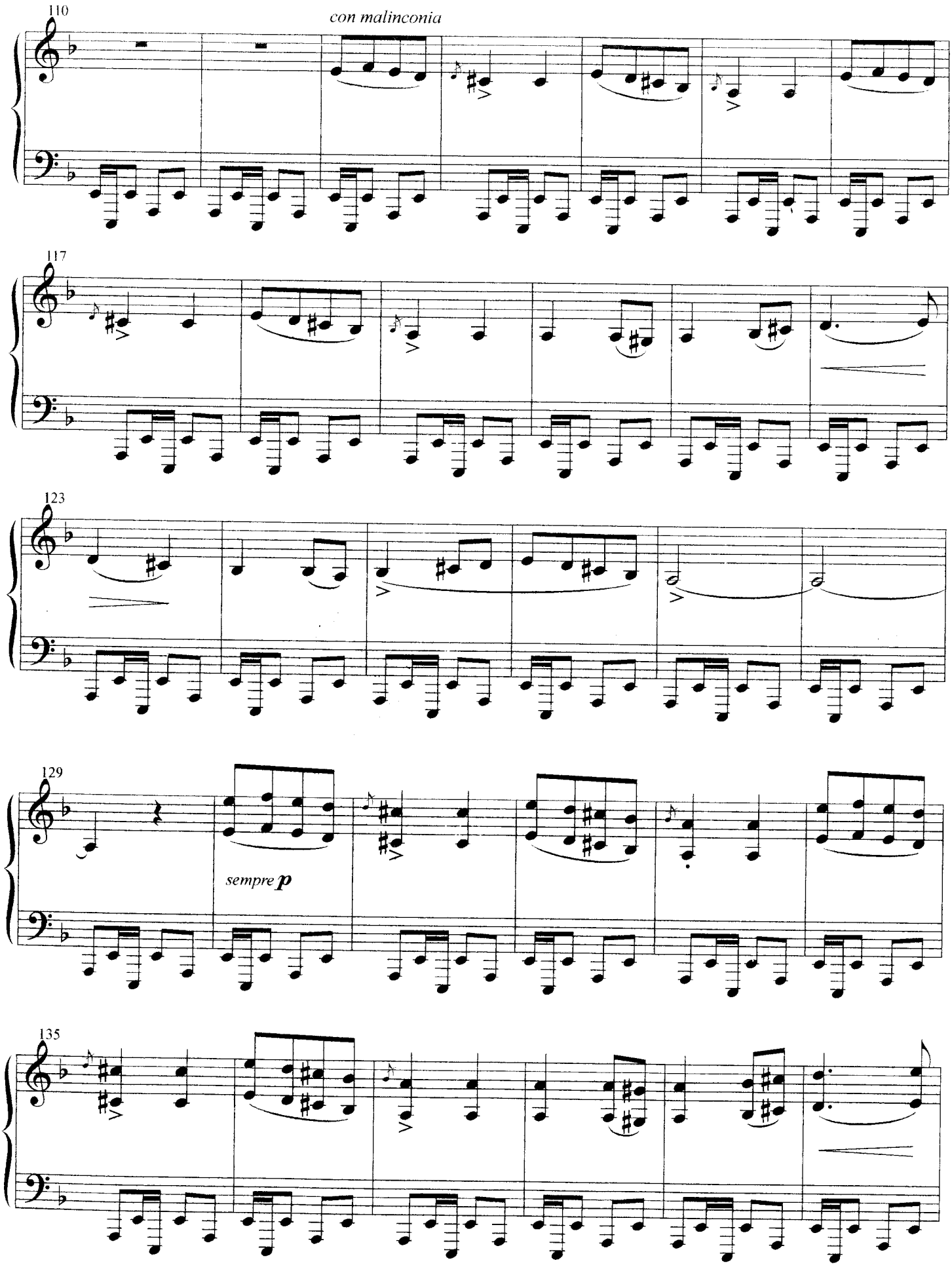


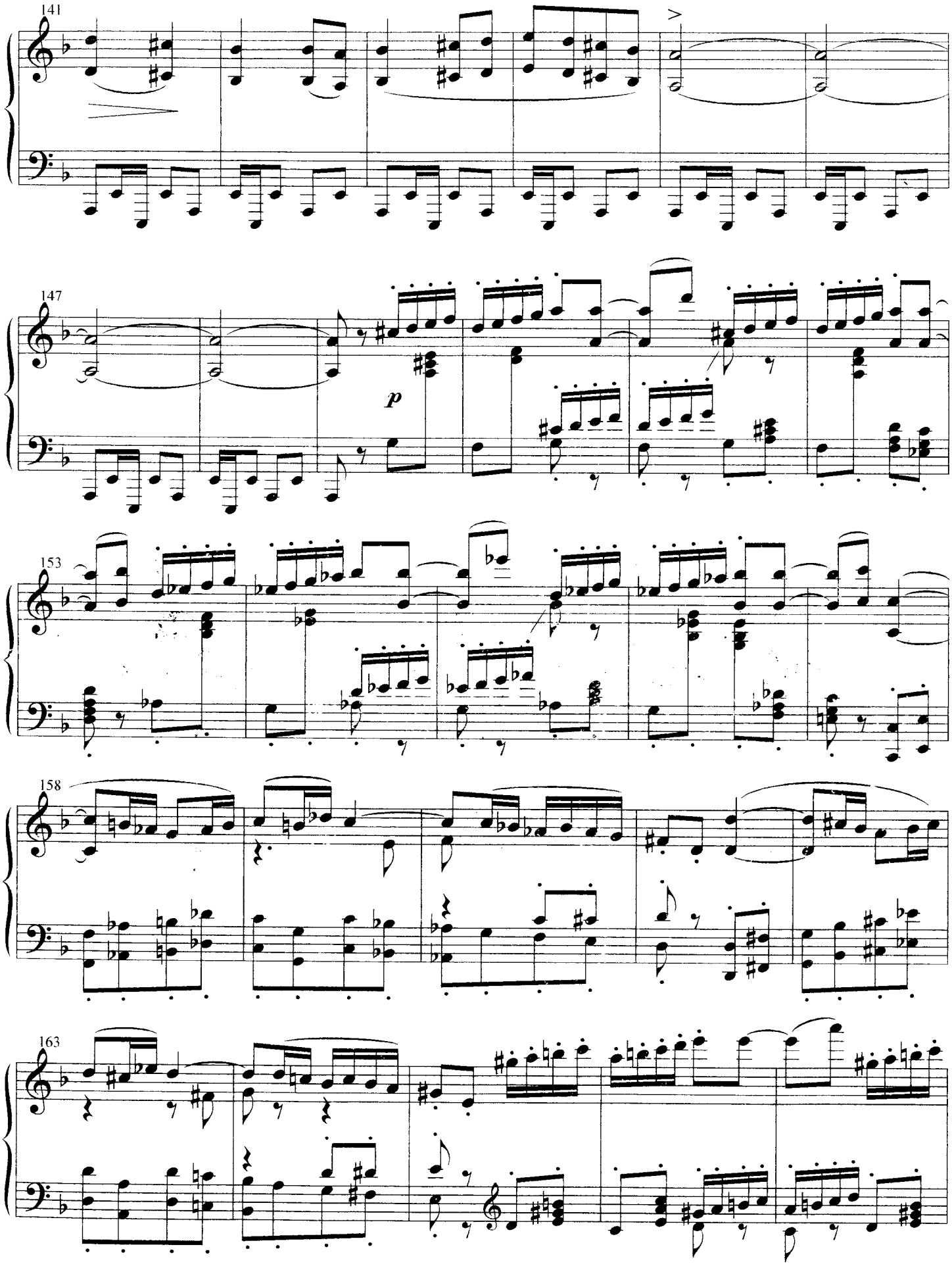


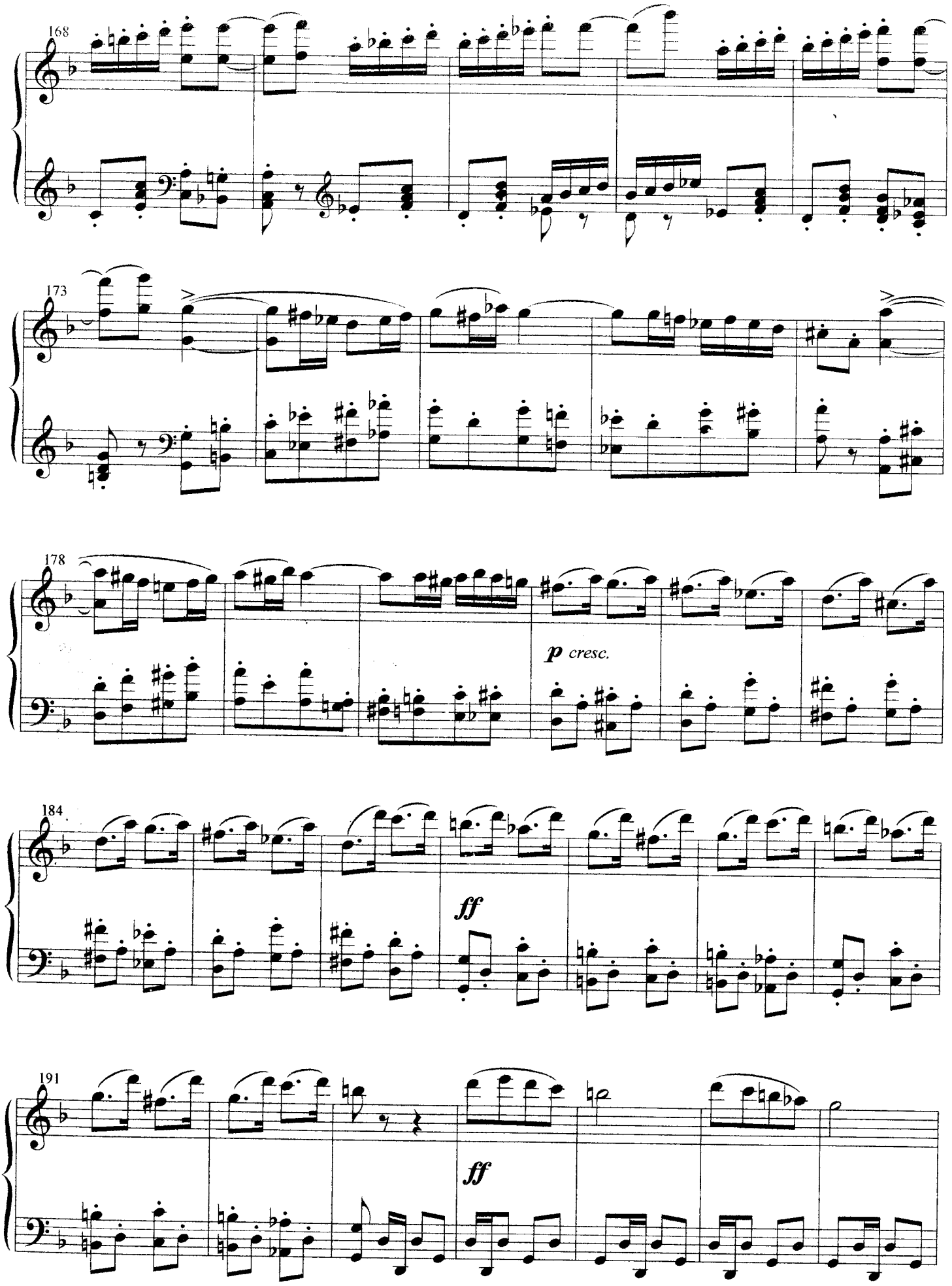

21
27
33
3
3
ff
38
p
44
cresc.

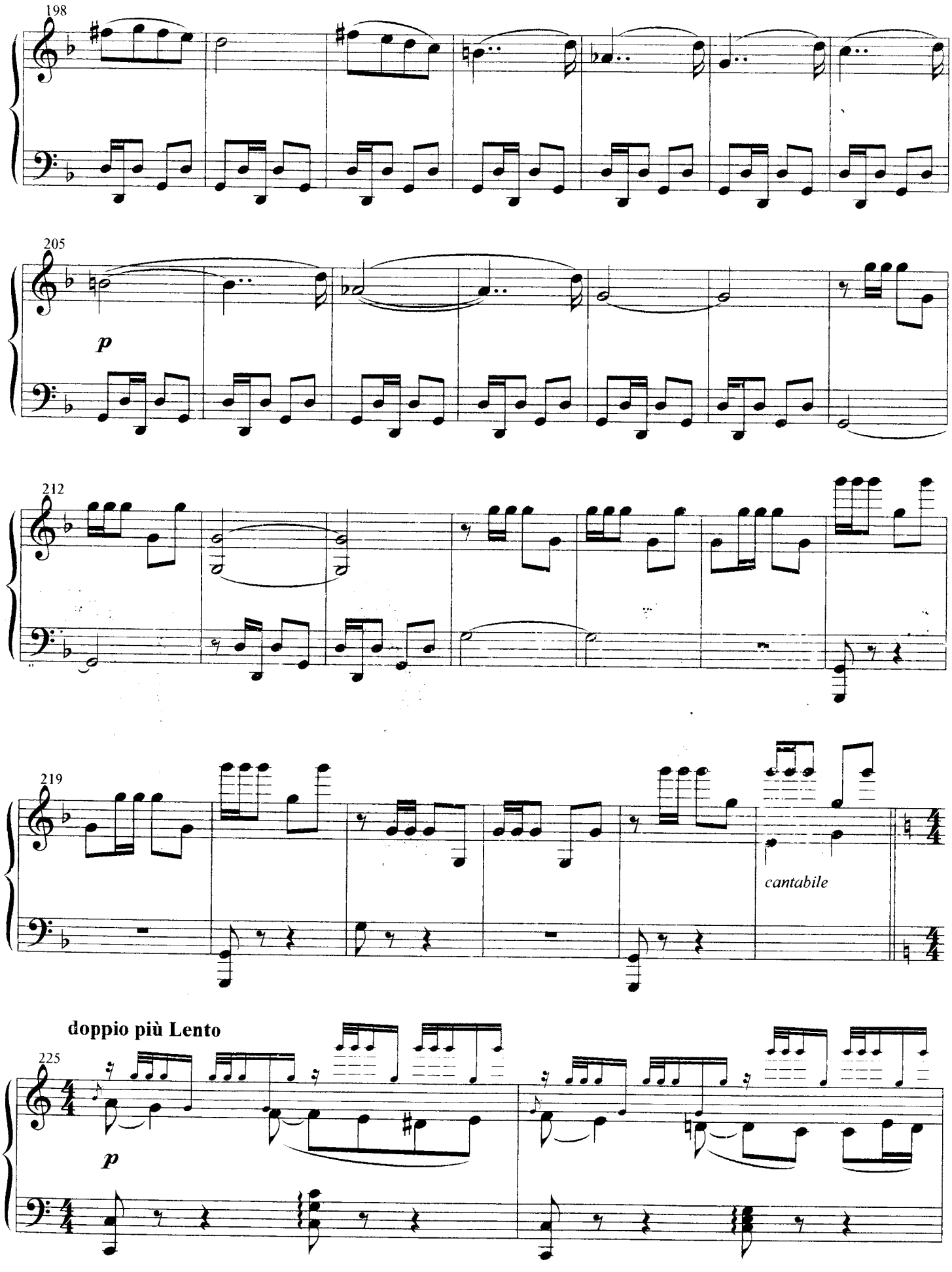

50
55
ff
62
68
74

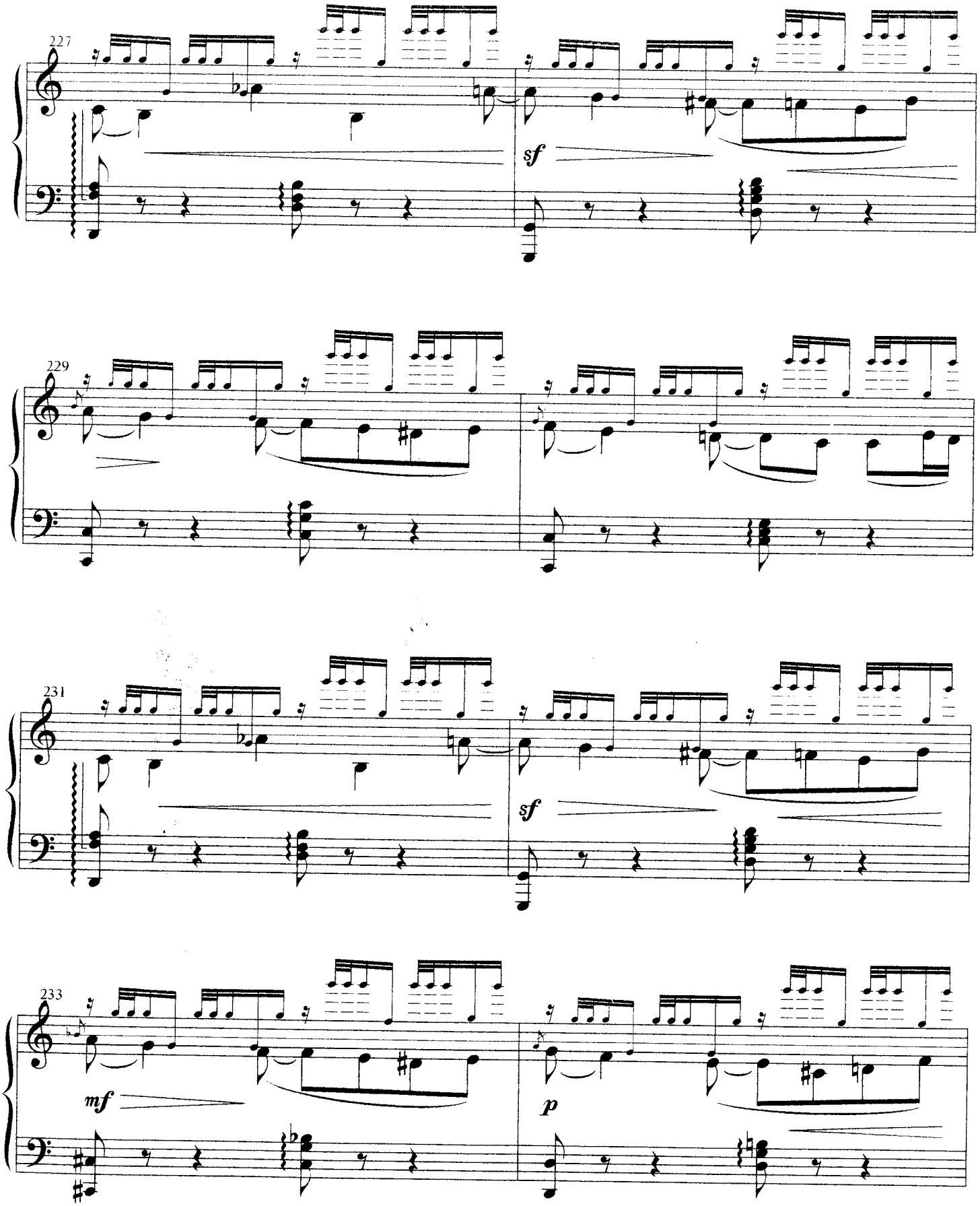

80
8va
86
8va
tr
ff
92
3
98
8va
3
103
3
3
dim.
p

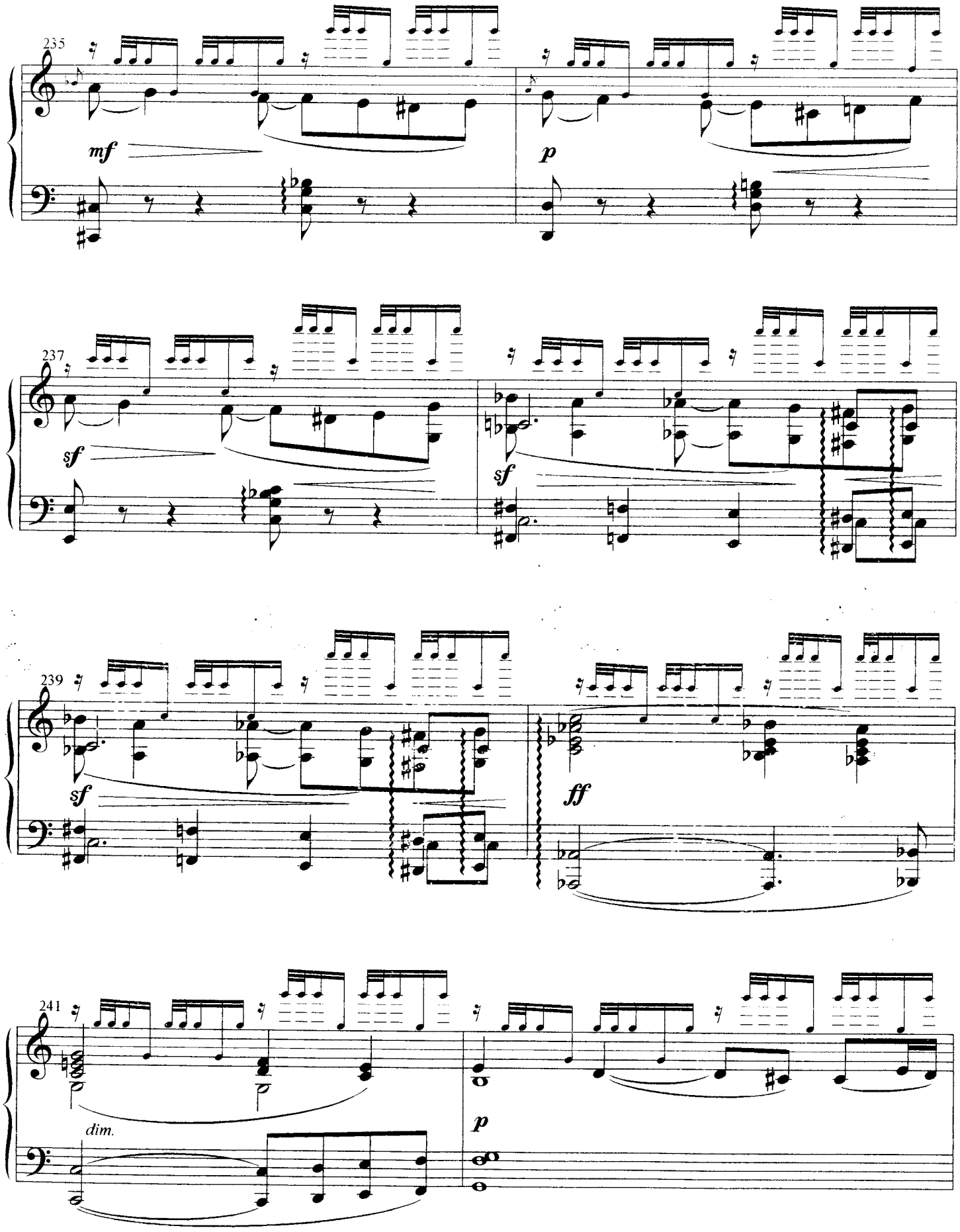

110
con malinconia
117
123
129
sempre p
135

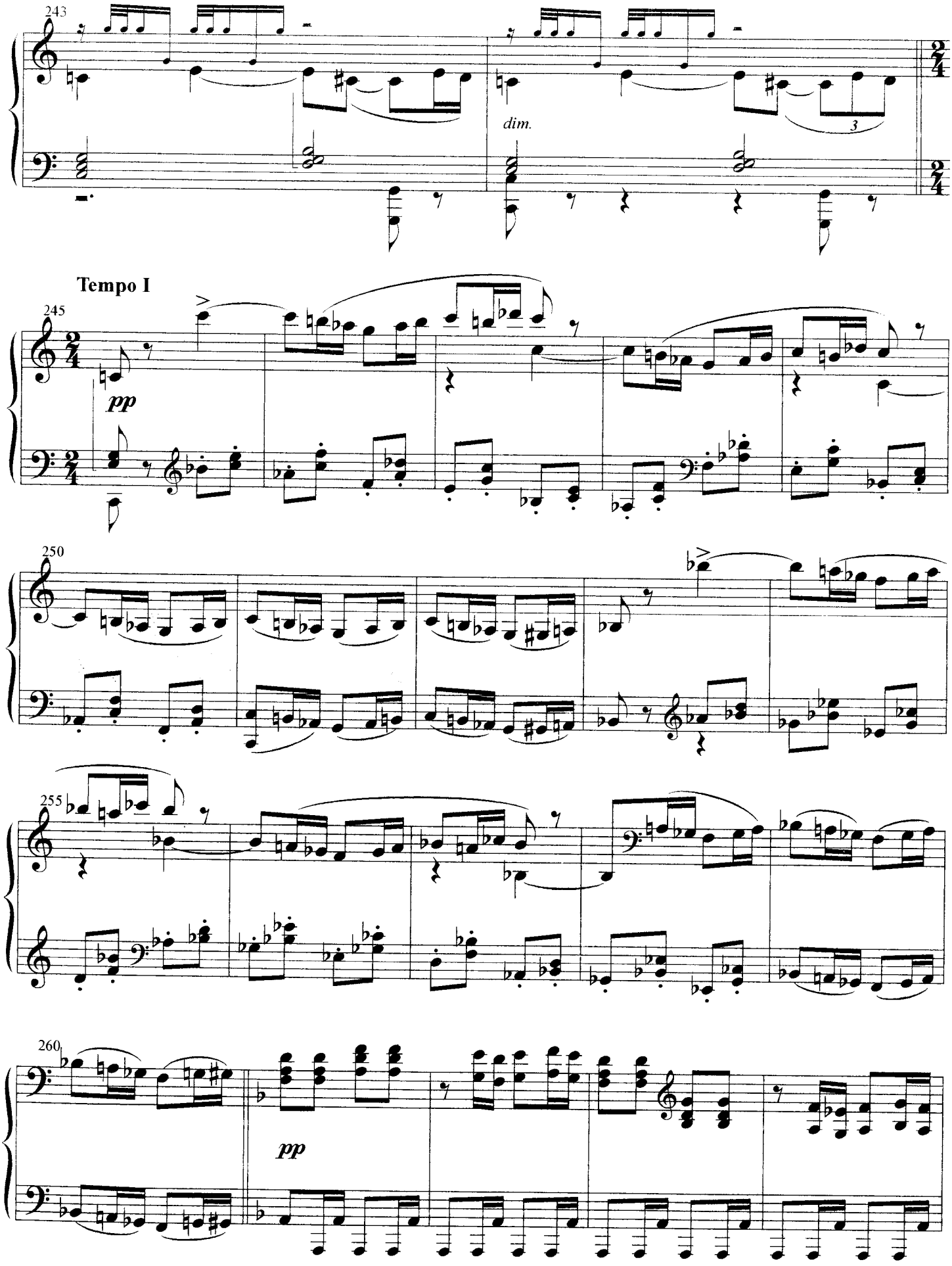

141
147
p
153
158
163

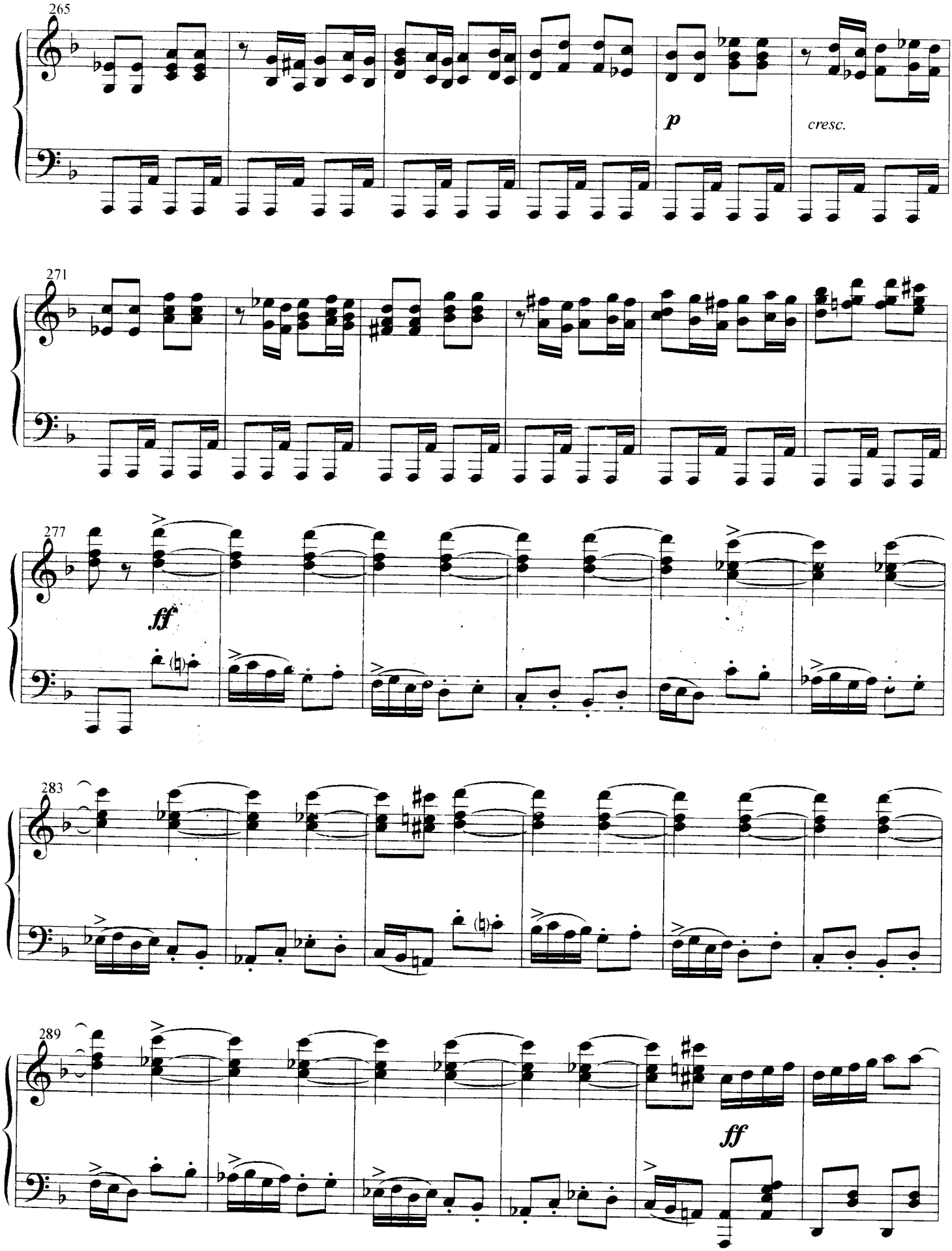

168
173
178
p cresc.
184
ff
191
ff

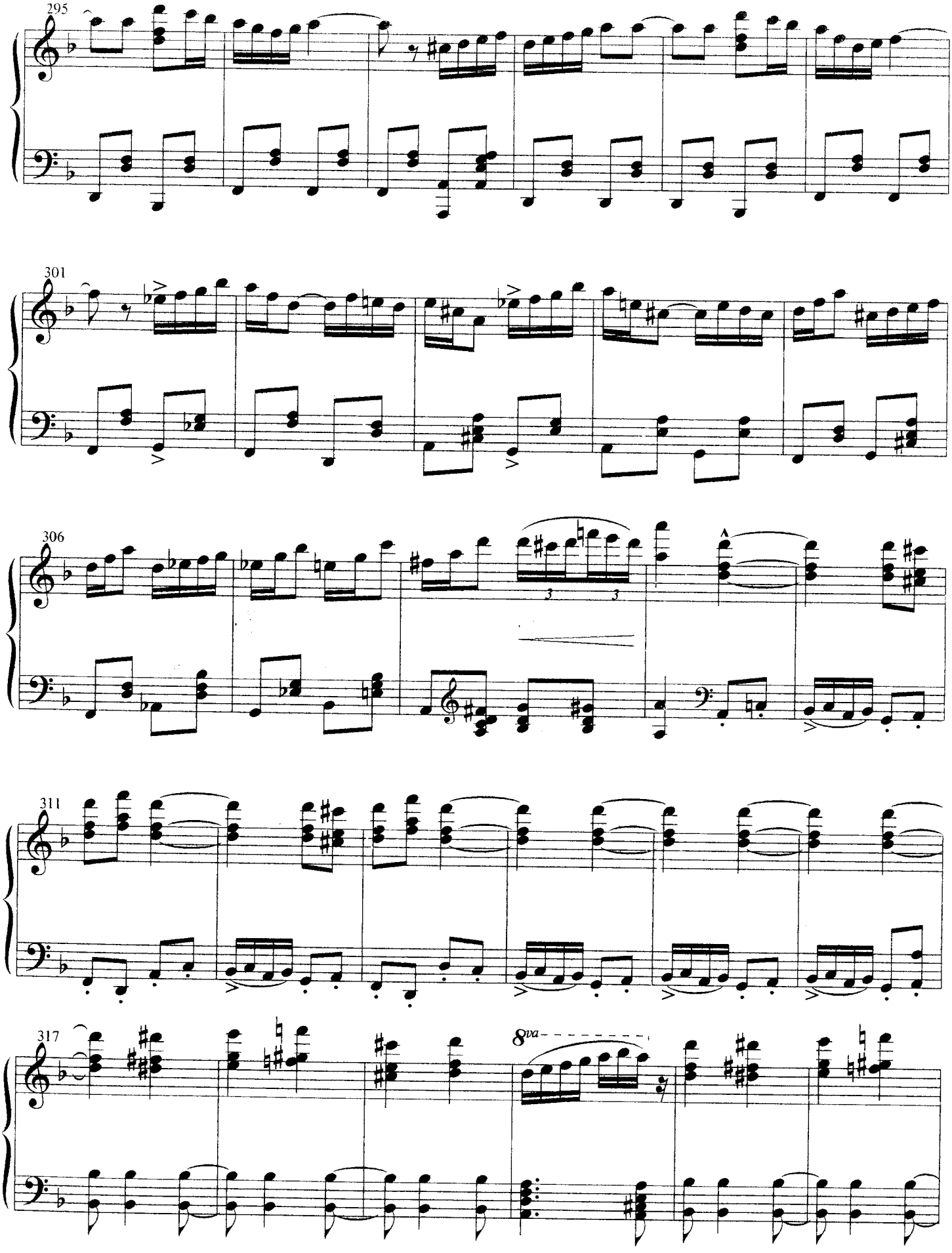

198
205
p
212
219
cantabile
doppio più Lento
225
p

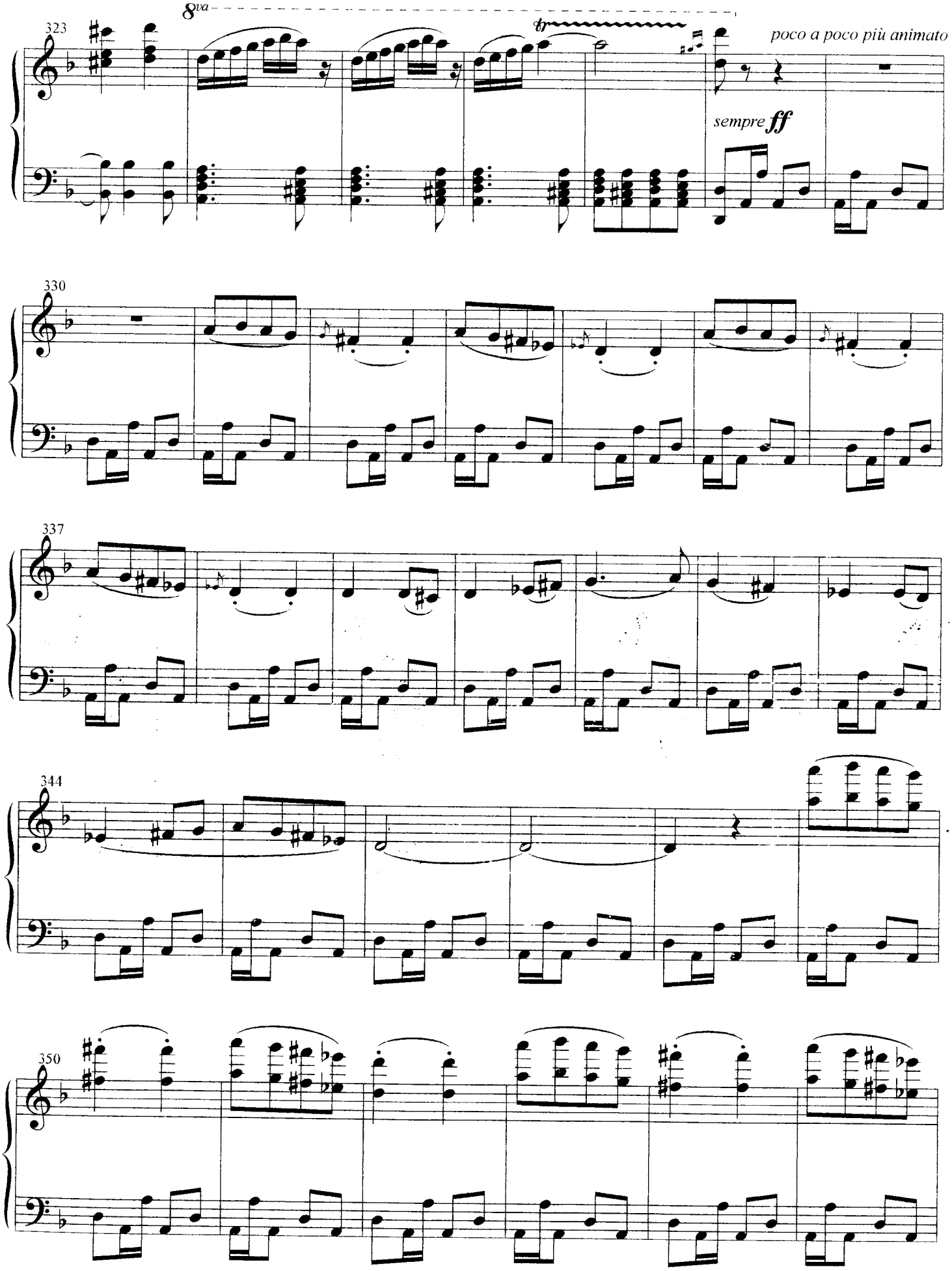

227
sf
229
231
sf
233
mf
p

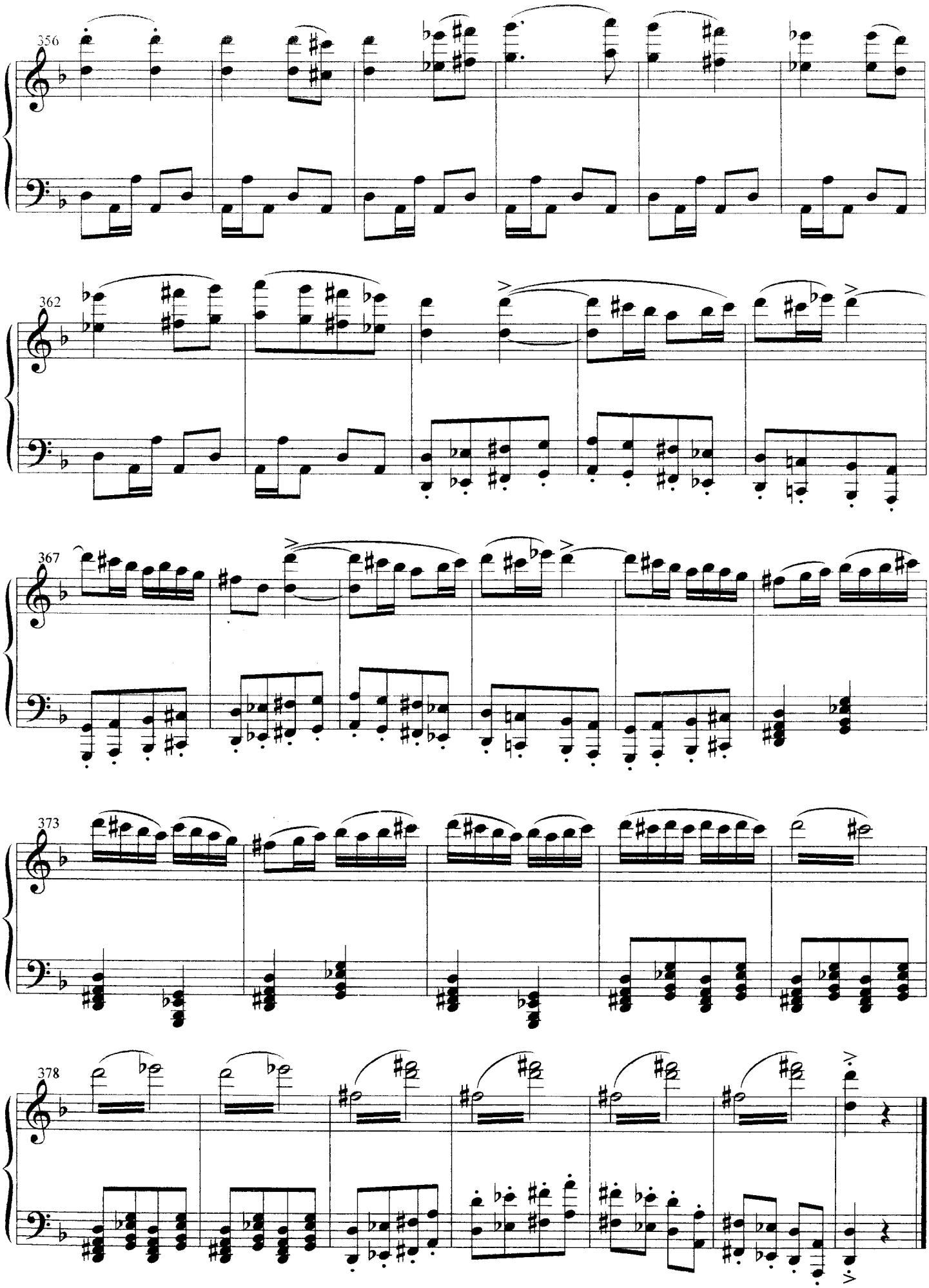

235
mf
p
237
sf
sf
239
sf
ff
241
dim.
p


243
dim.
3
Tempo I
245
pp
250
255
260
pp


265
p
cresc.
271
277
ff
283
289
ff


295
301
306
311
317
8va


323
8va
tr
poco a poco più animato
sempre ff
330
337
344
350

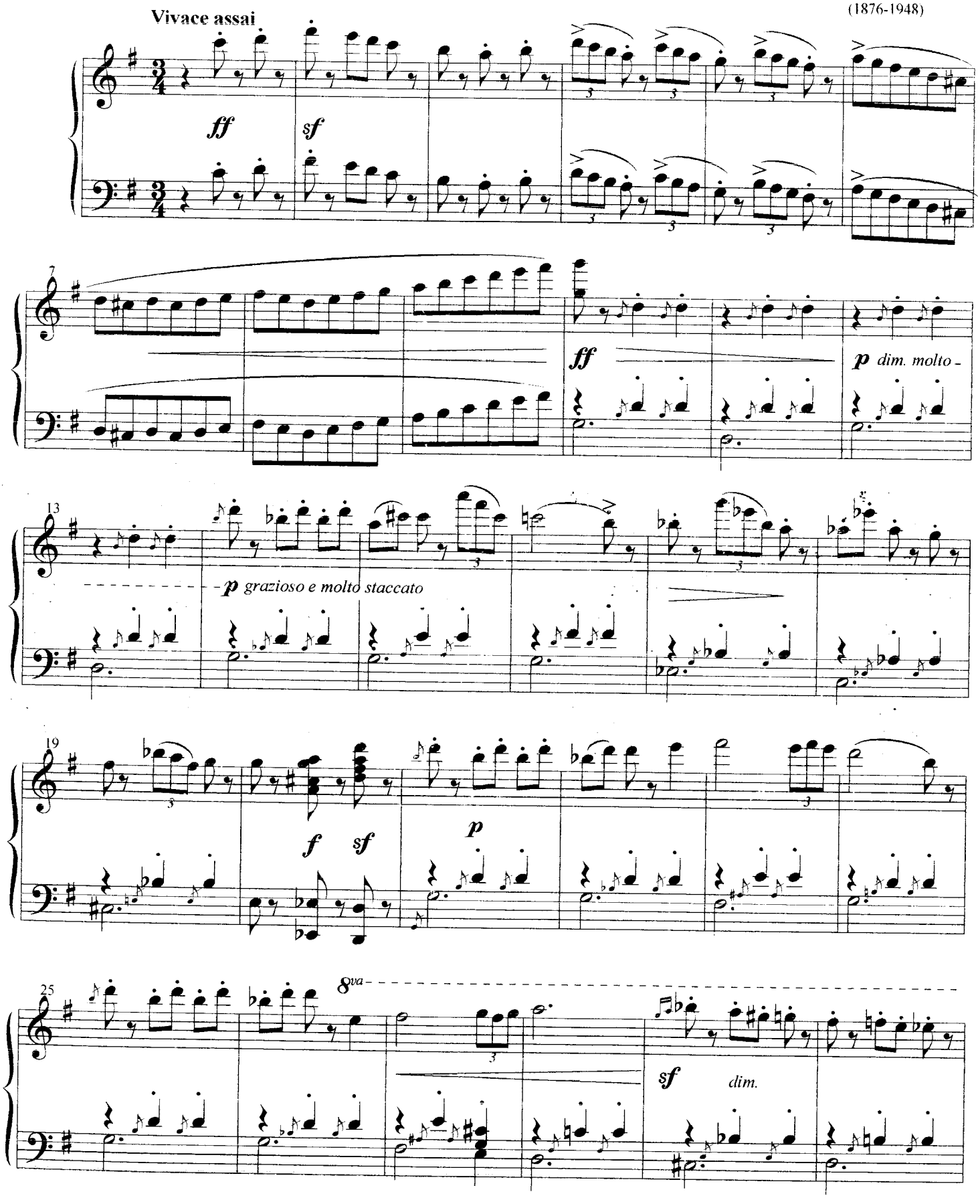

356
362
367
373
378

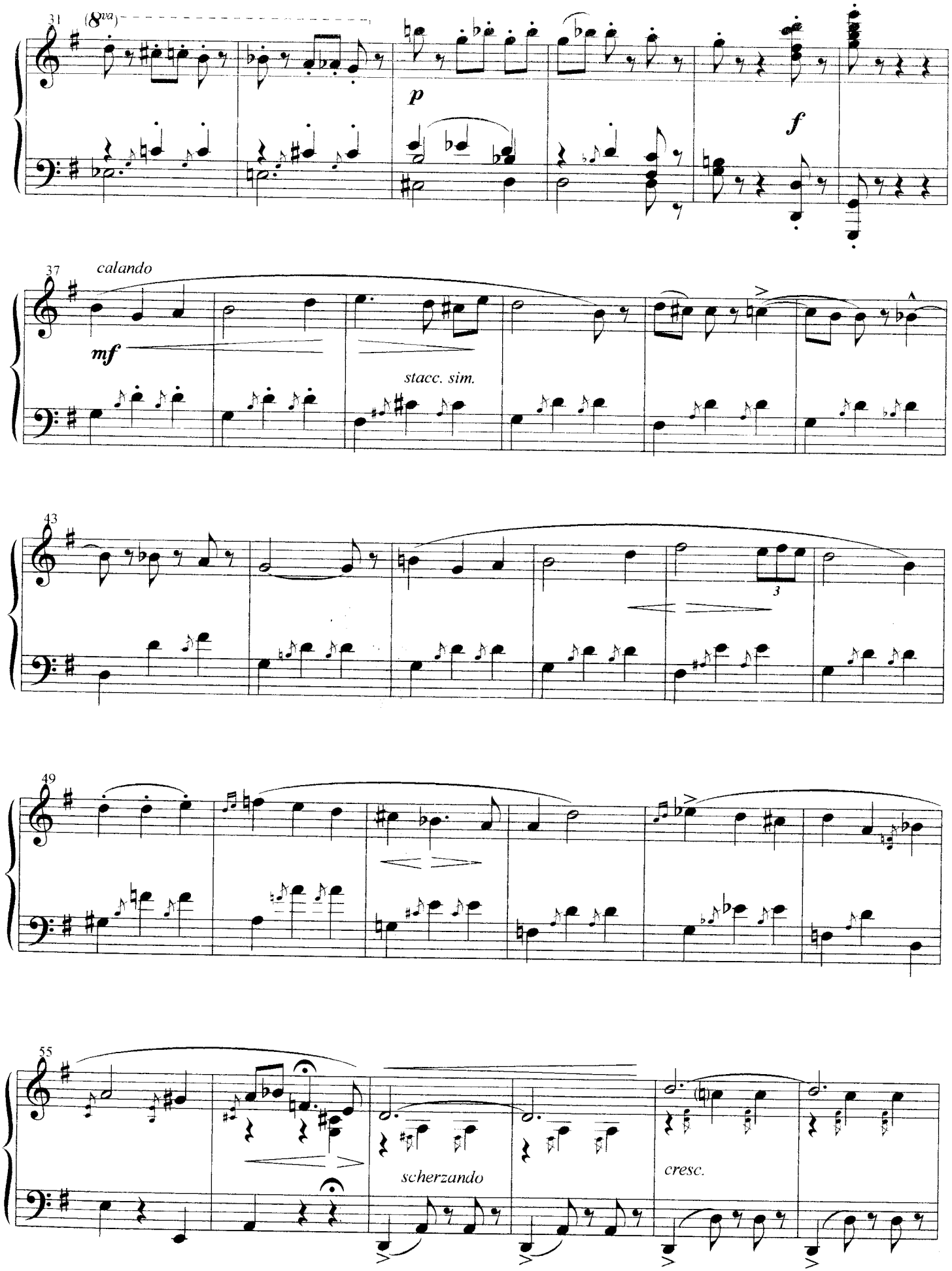
Intermezzo

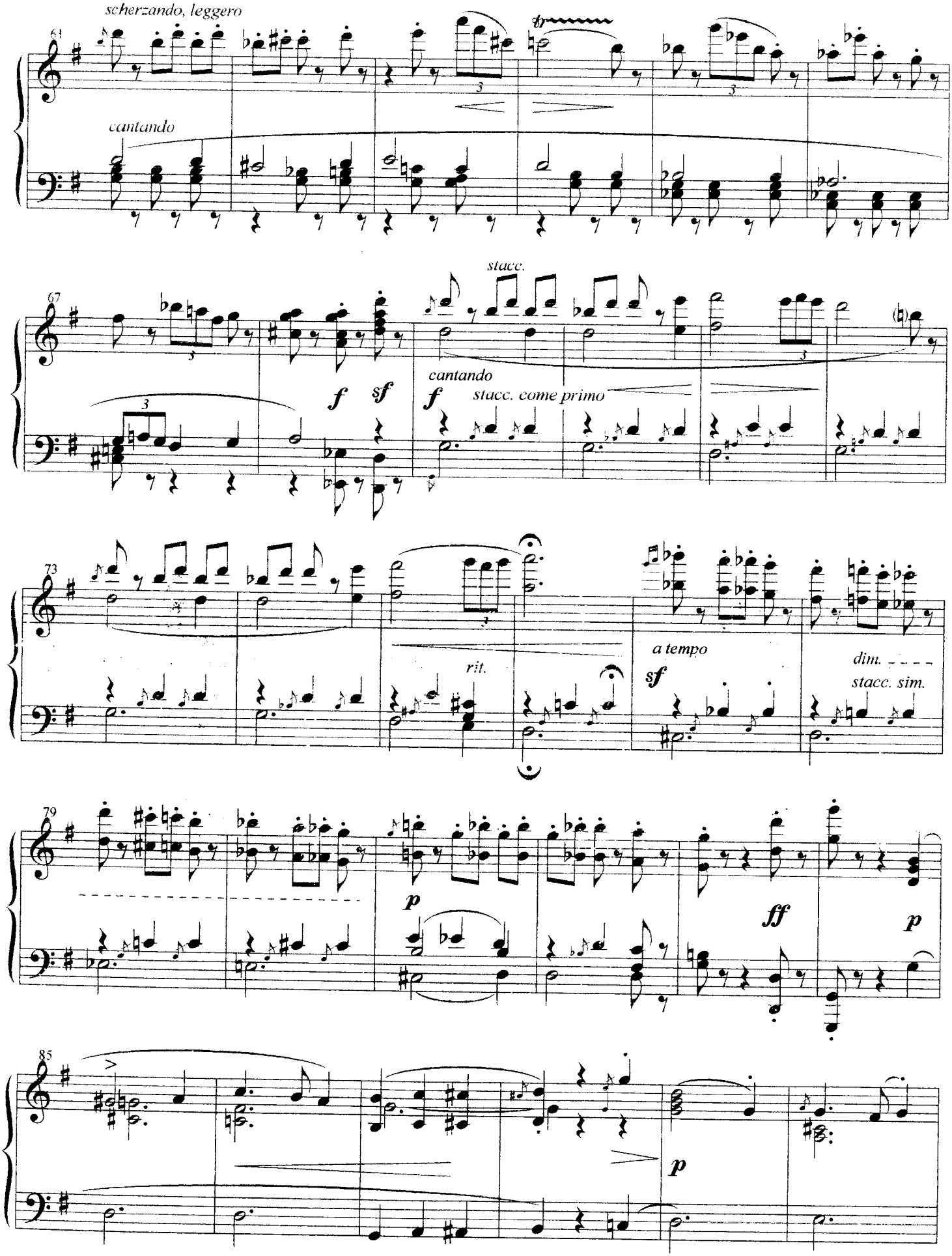
from the opera

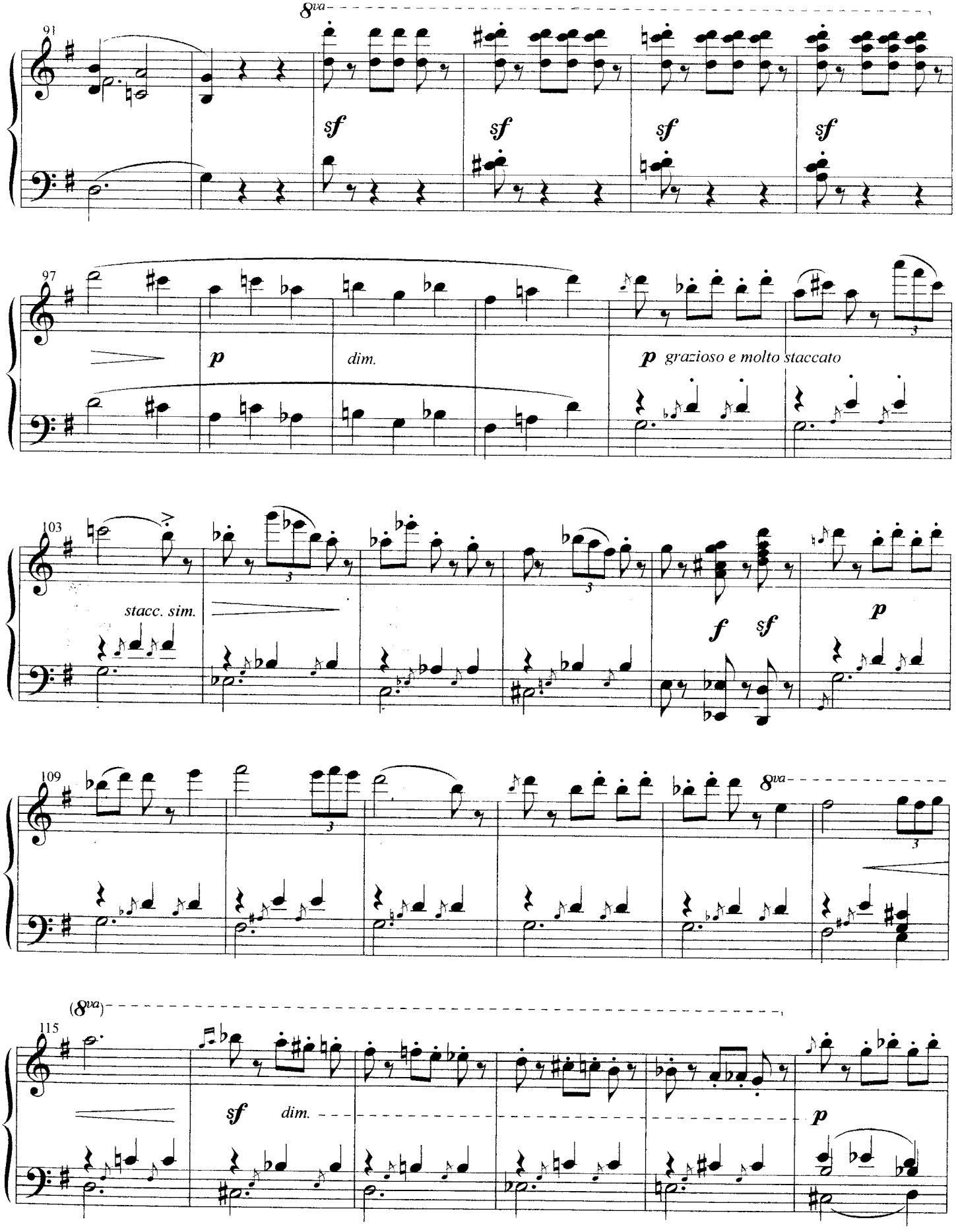
I gioella della Madonna

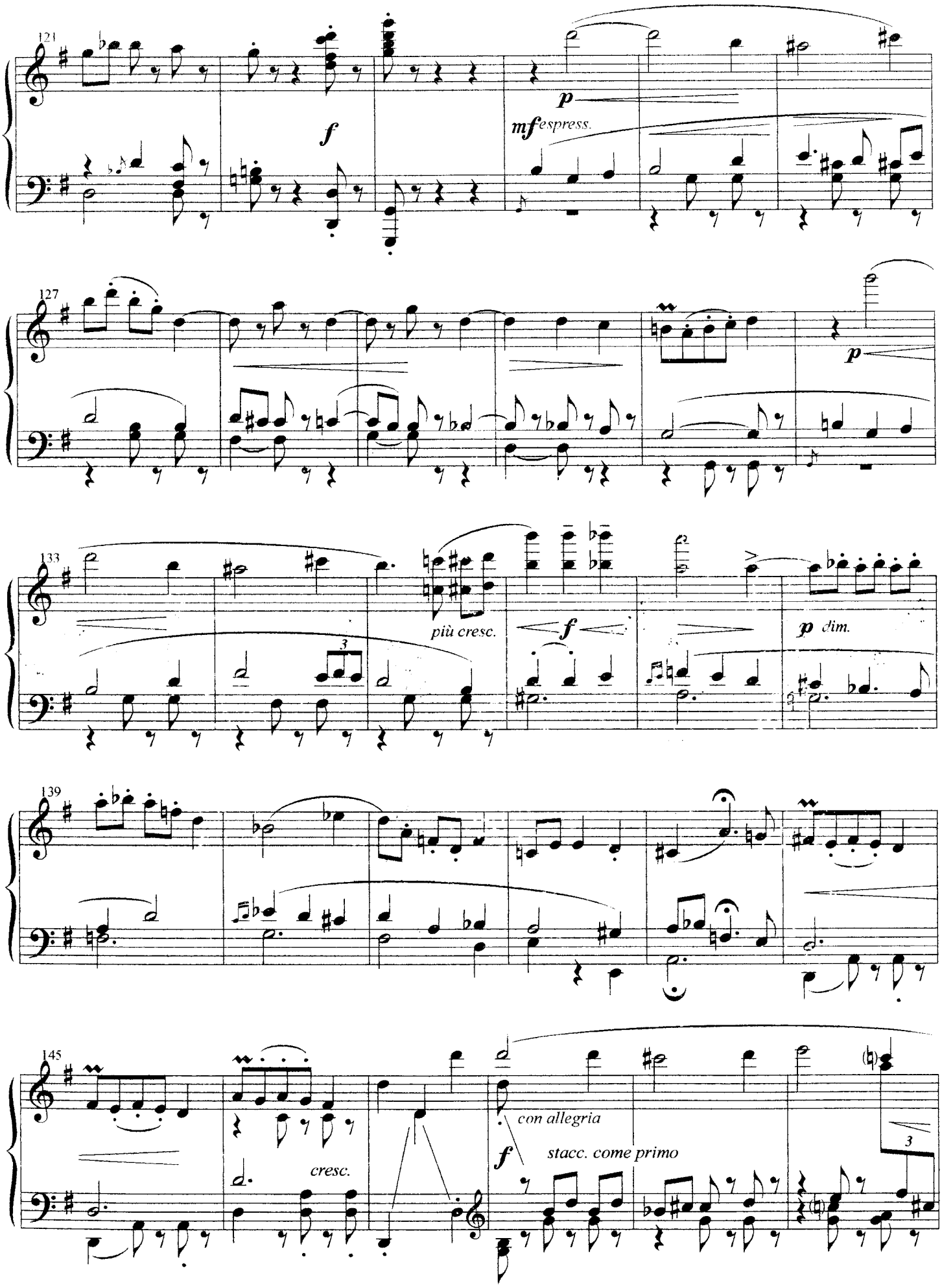
Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari
(1876-1948)

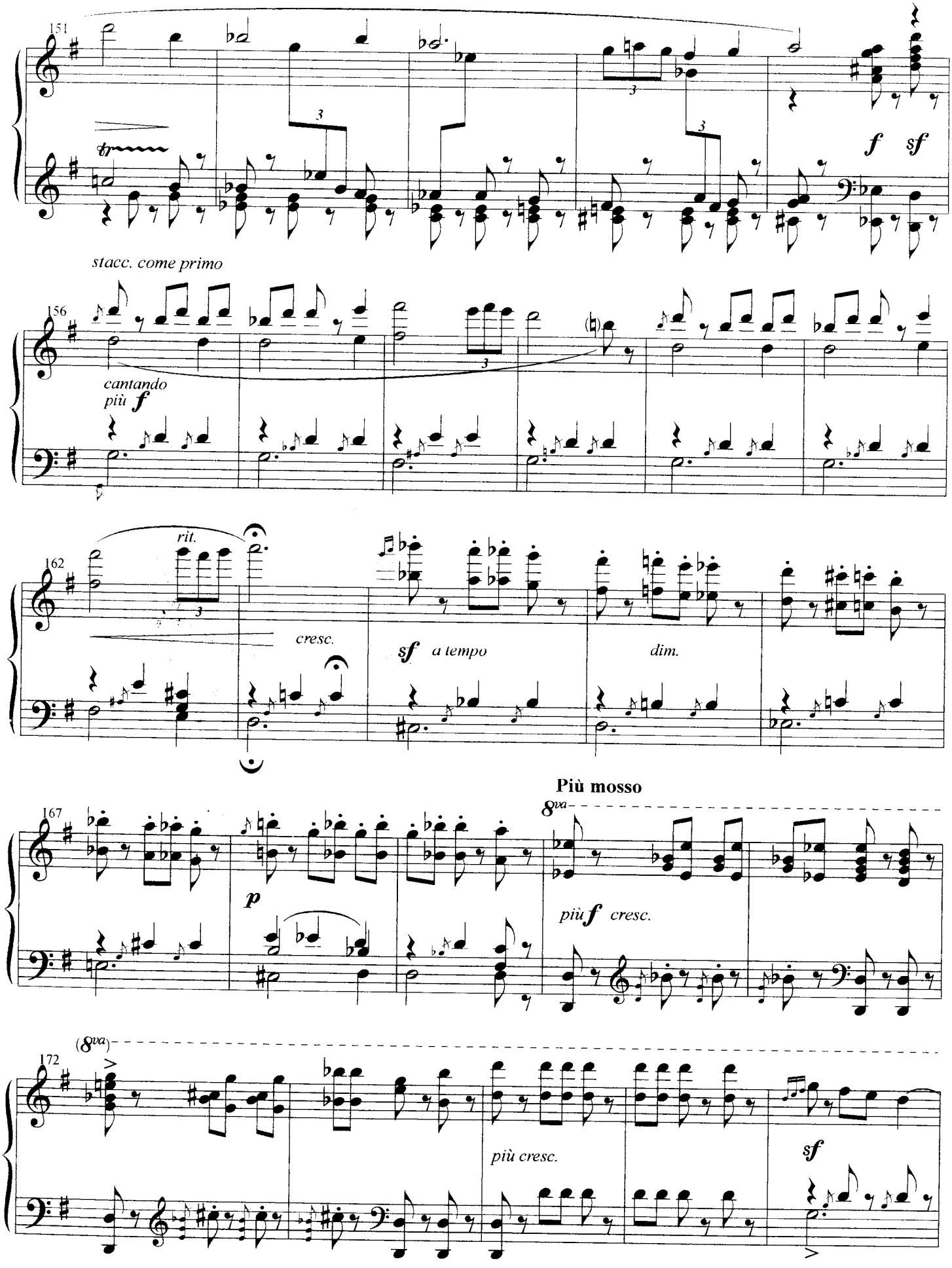


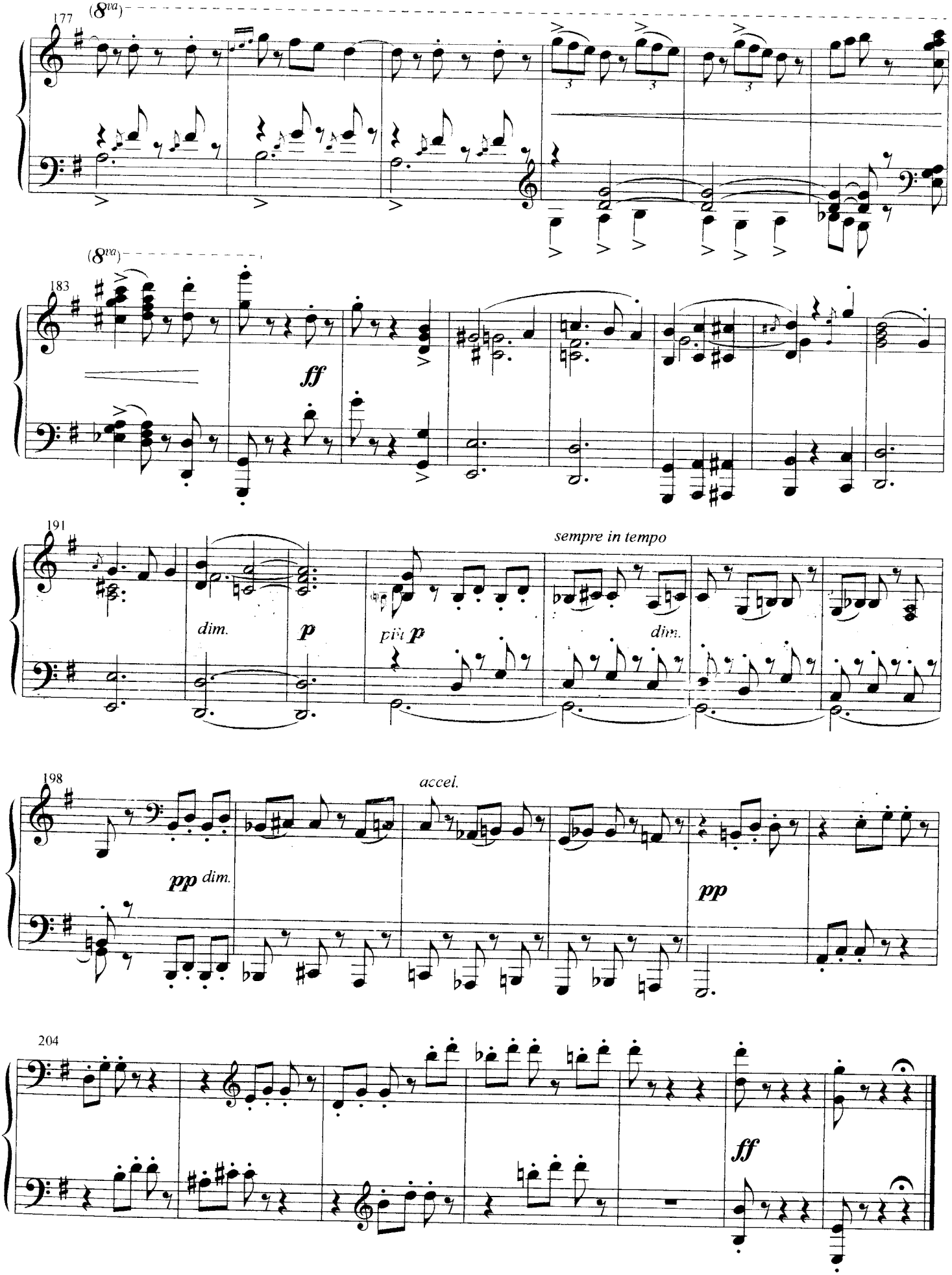

31
(8va)
p
f
37
calando
mf
stacc. sim.
43
3
49
55
scherzando
cresc.


scherzando, leggero
61
cantando
67
stacc.
f
sf
cantando
f
stacc. come primo
73
rit.
a tempo
sf
dim.
stacc. sim.
79
p
ff
p
85
p


8va
91
sf
sf
sf
sf
97
p
dim.
p grazioso e molto staccato
103
stacc. sim.
f
sf
p
109
8va
(8va)
115
sf
dim.
p


121
f
p
mf espress.
127
p
133
più cresc.
f
p dim.
139
145
cresc.
con allegria
f
stacc. come primo


151
tr
f
sf
stacc. come primo
156
cantando
più f
rit.
162
cresc.
sf a tempo
dim.
Più mosso
167
p
8va
più f cresc.
(8va)
172
più cresc.
sf


177
(8va)
183
(8va)
ff
191
dim.
p
più p
sempre in tempo
dim.
198
accel.
pp dim.
pp
204
ff

Dance of the Hours

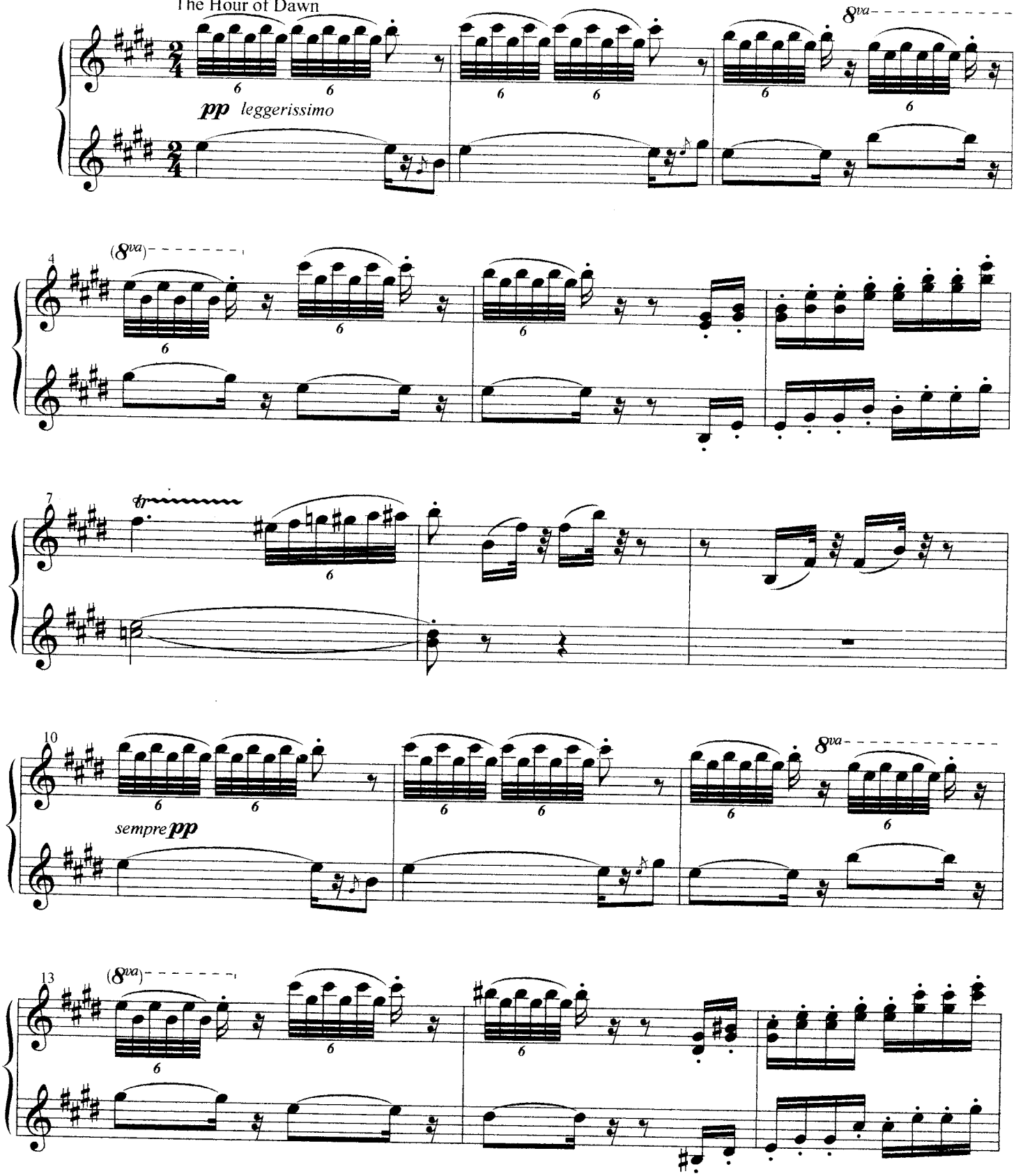
Suite de ballet from the opera

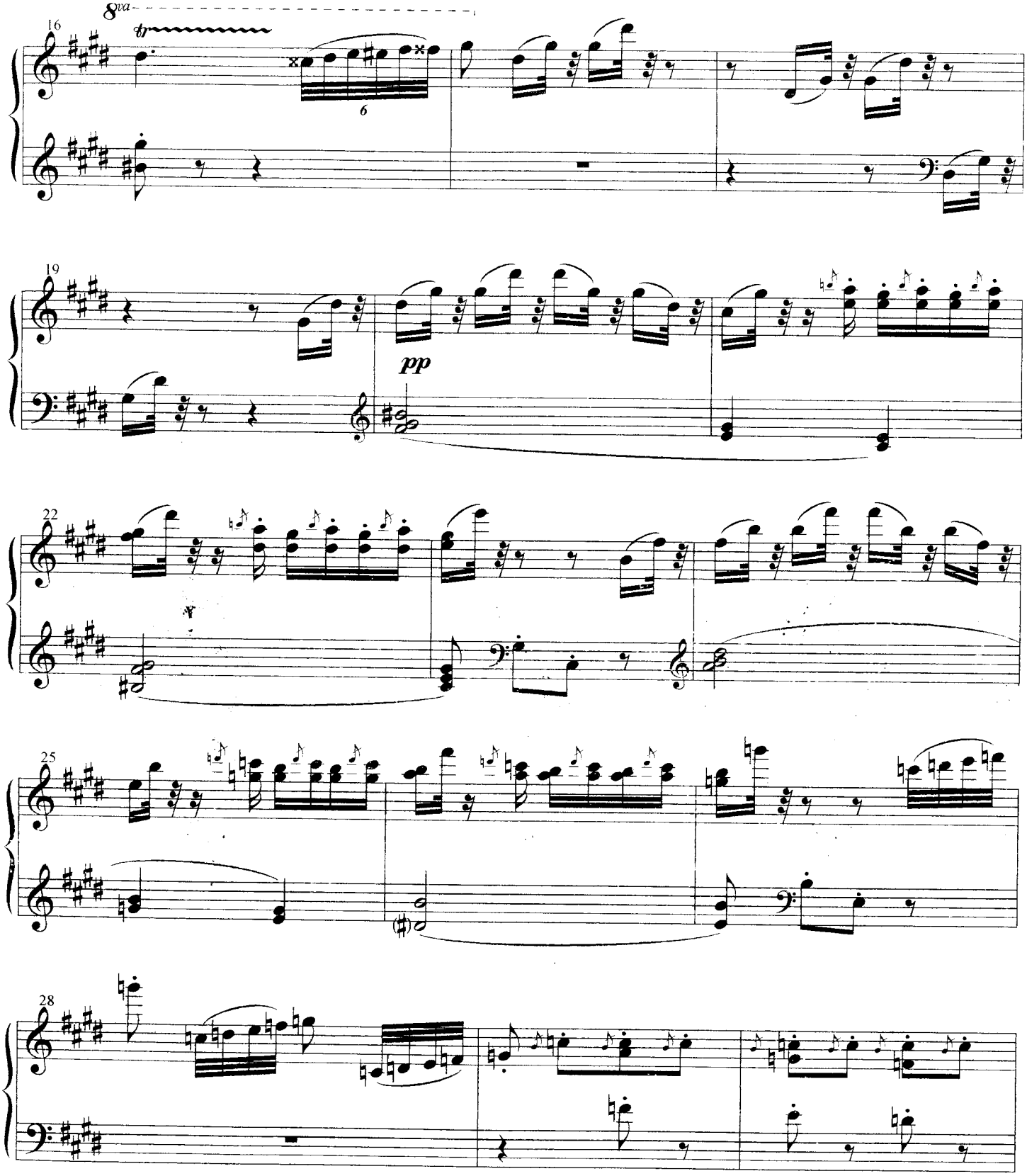
La Gioconda

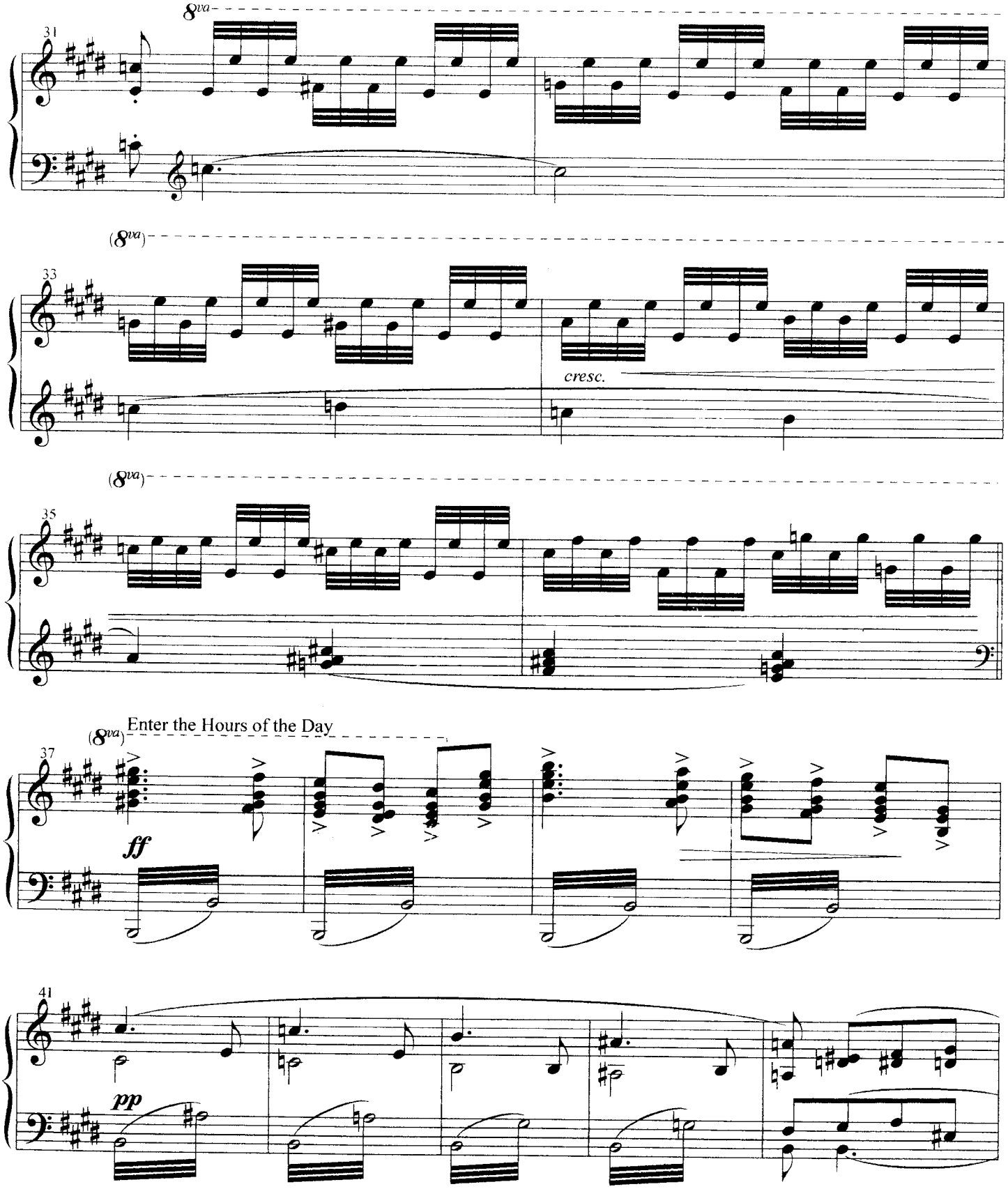
Andante poco mosso

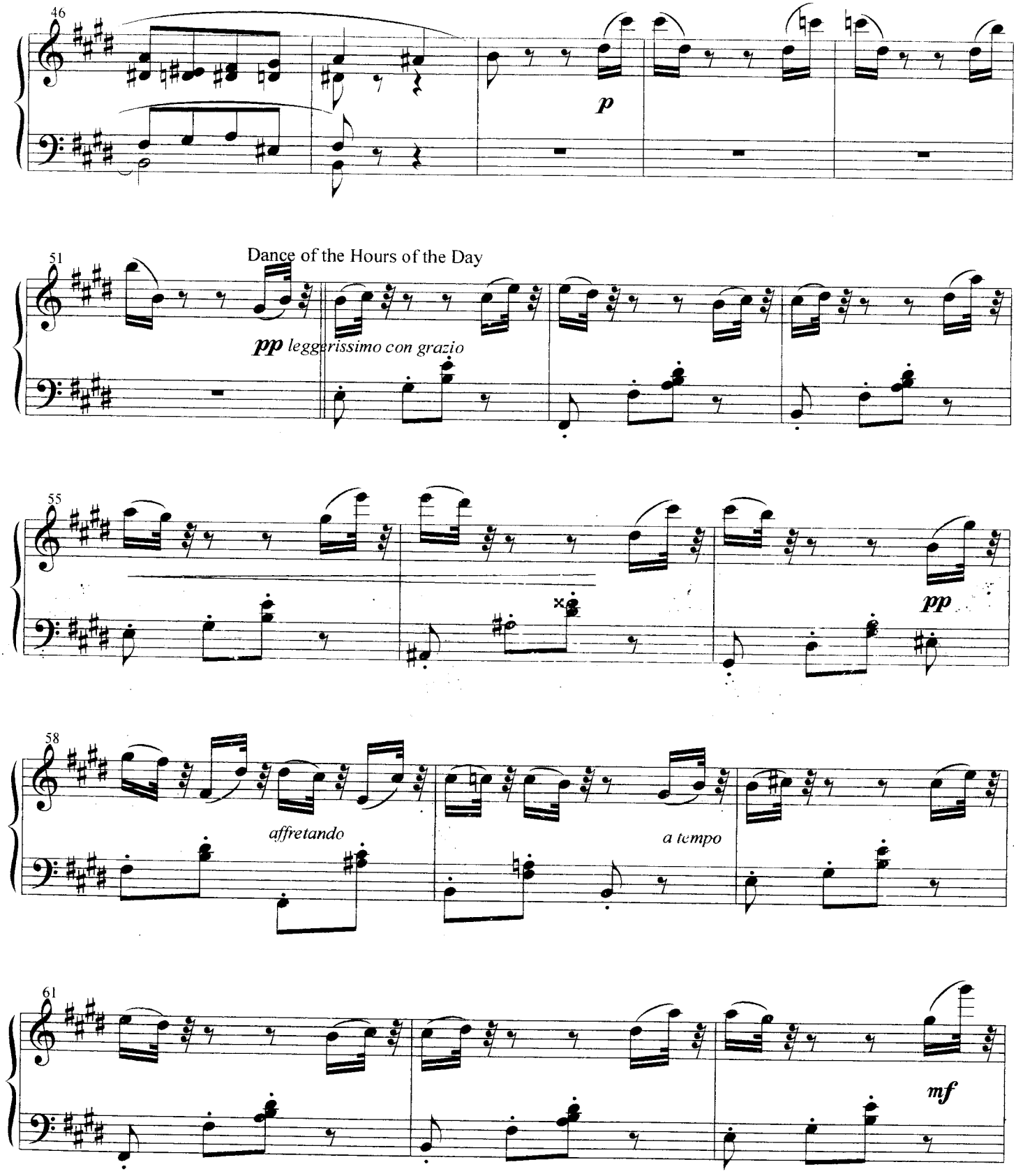
Amilcare Ponchielli
(1834-1886)

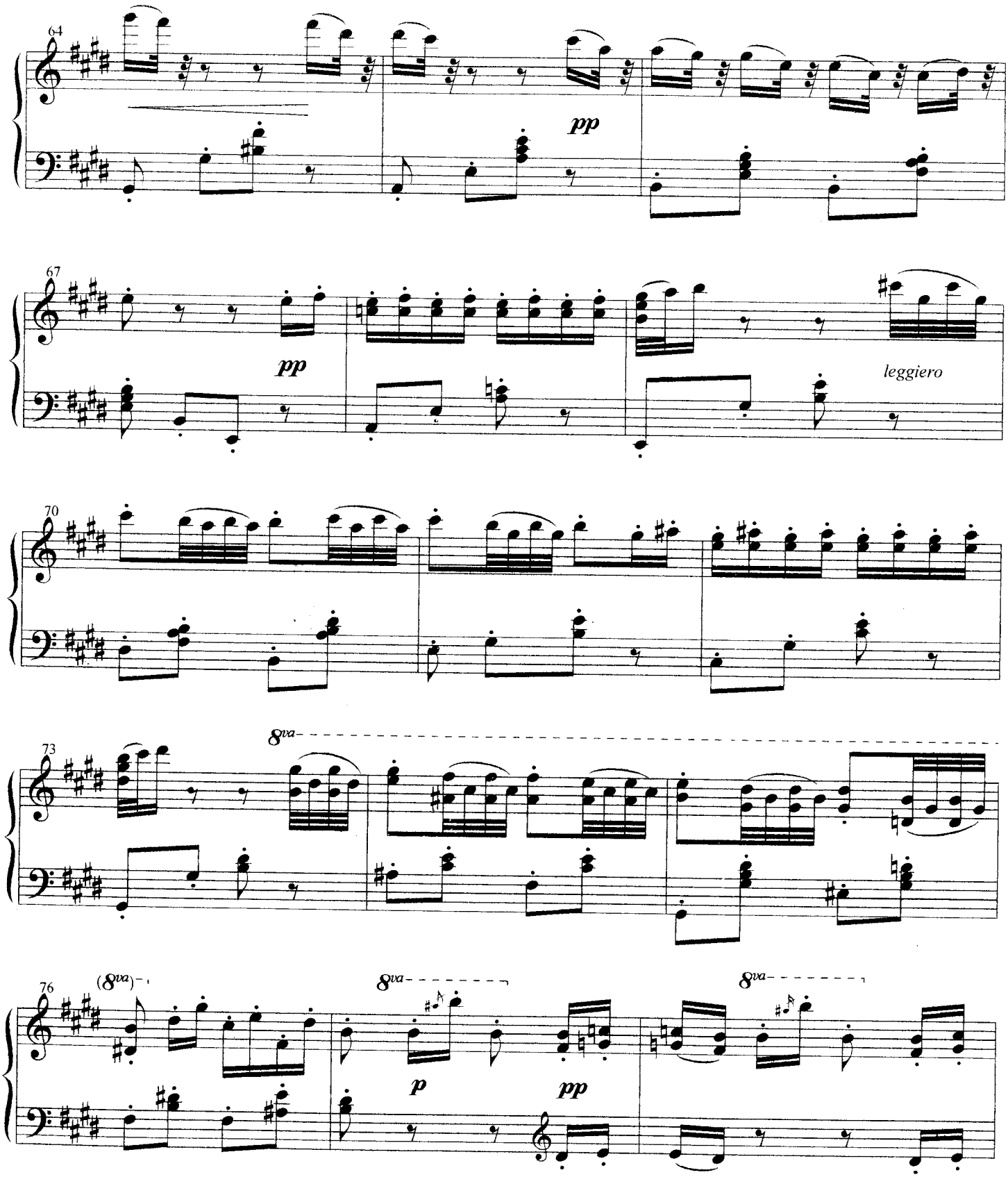
The Hour of Dawn

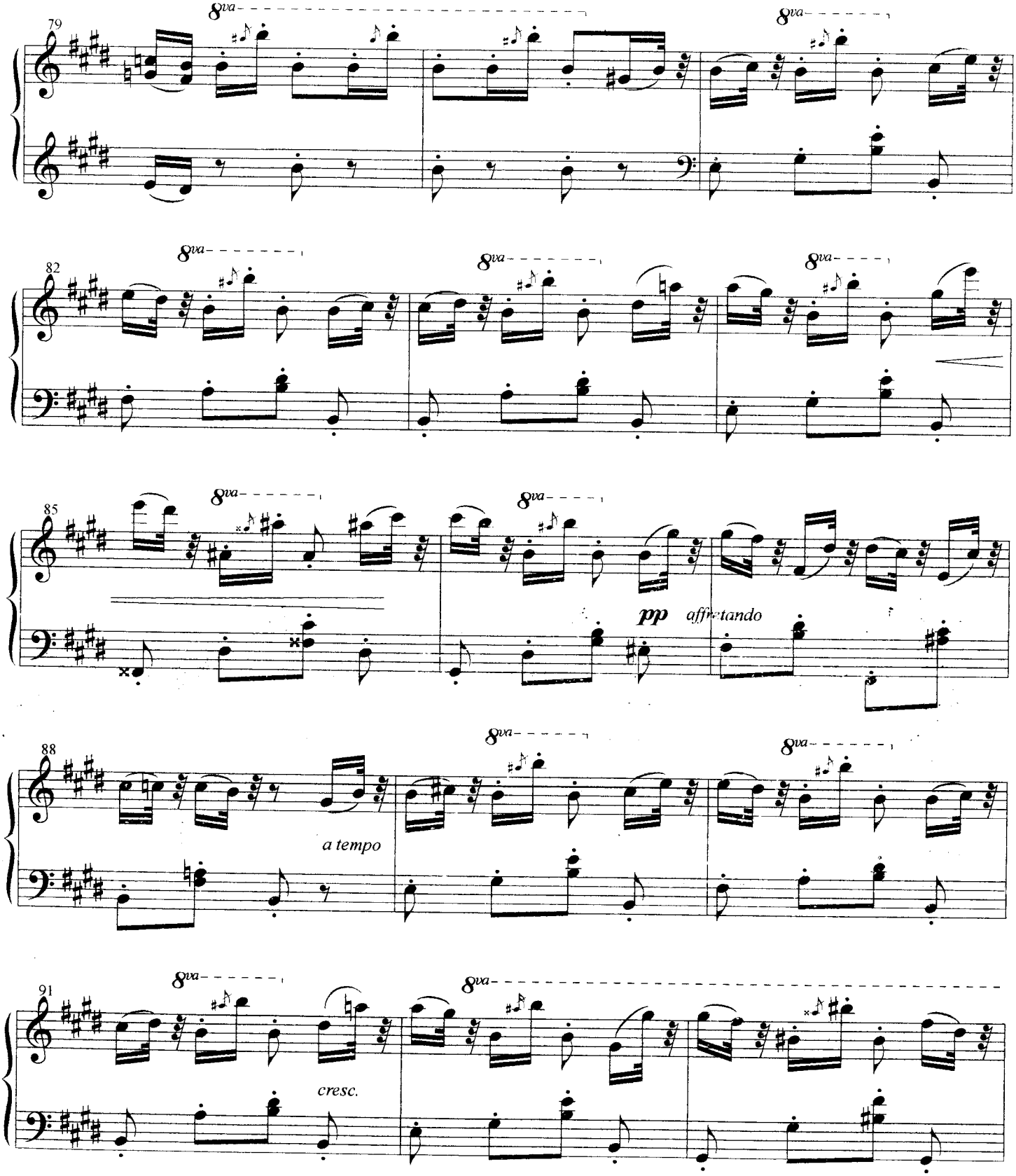


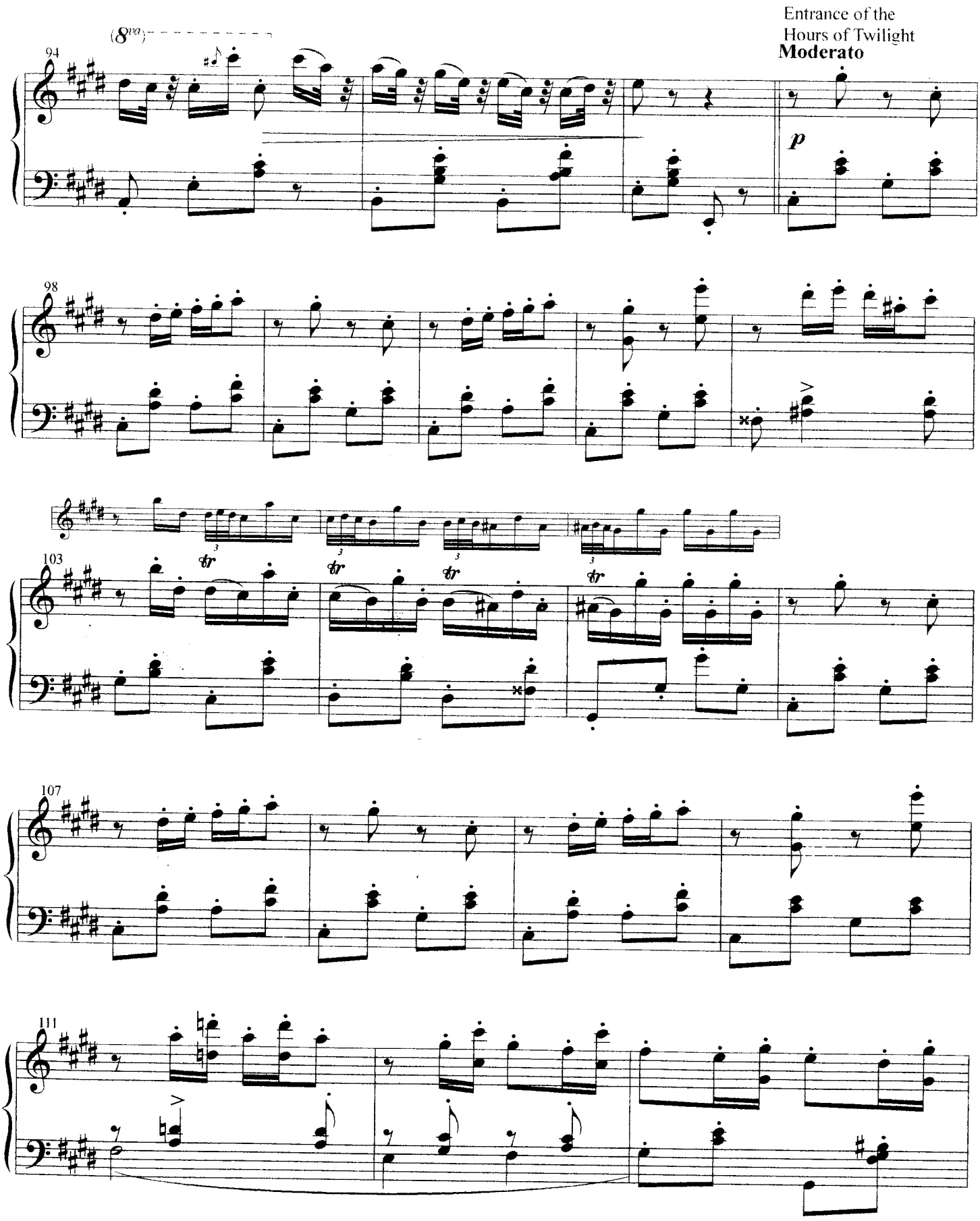

8va
tr
16
6
19
pp
22
25
28

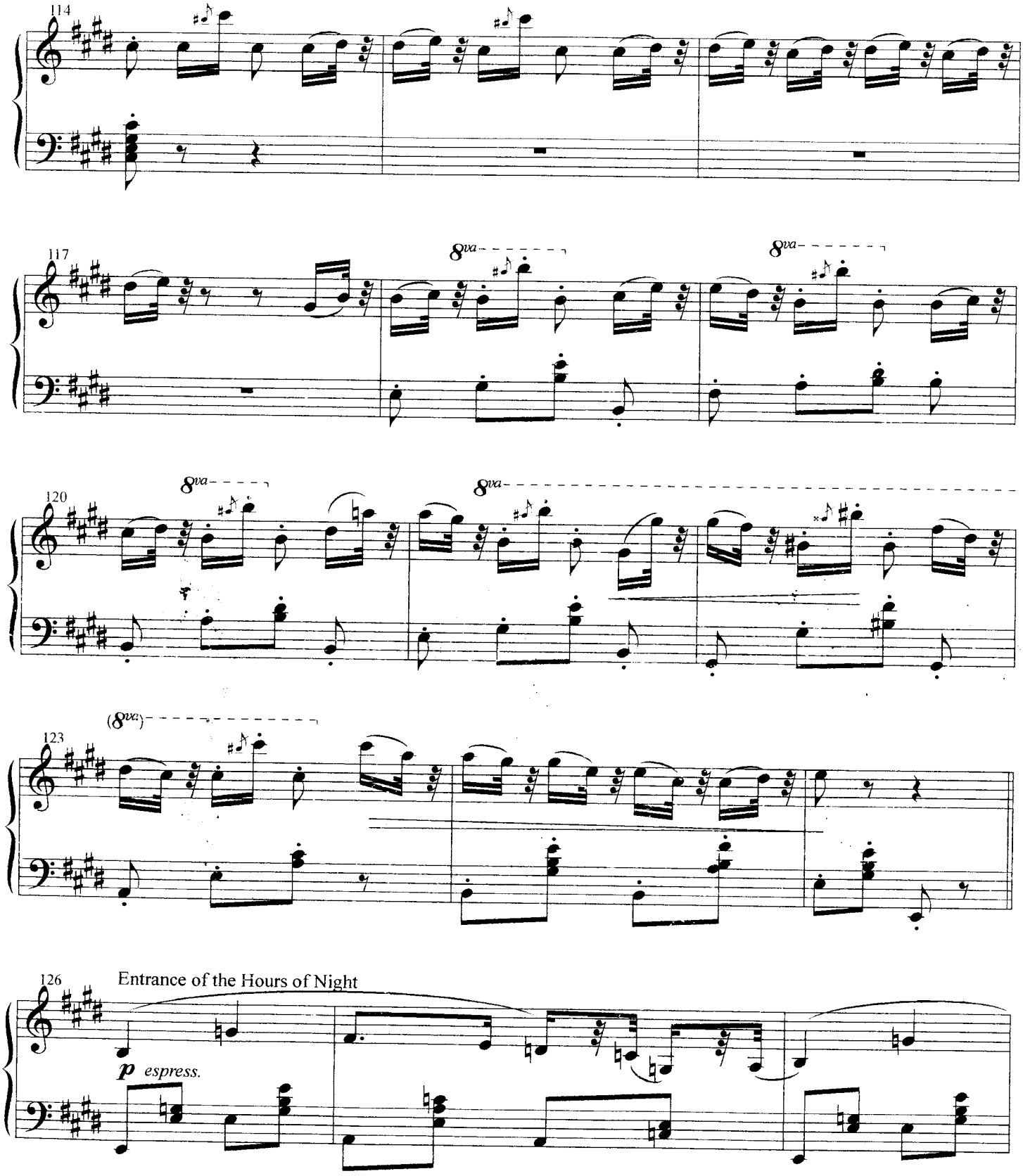

8va
31
(8va)
33
cresc.
(8va)
35
(8va)
Enter the Hours of the Day
37
ff
41
pp

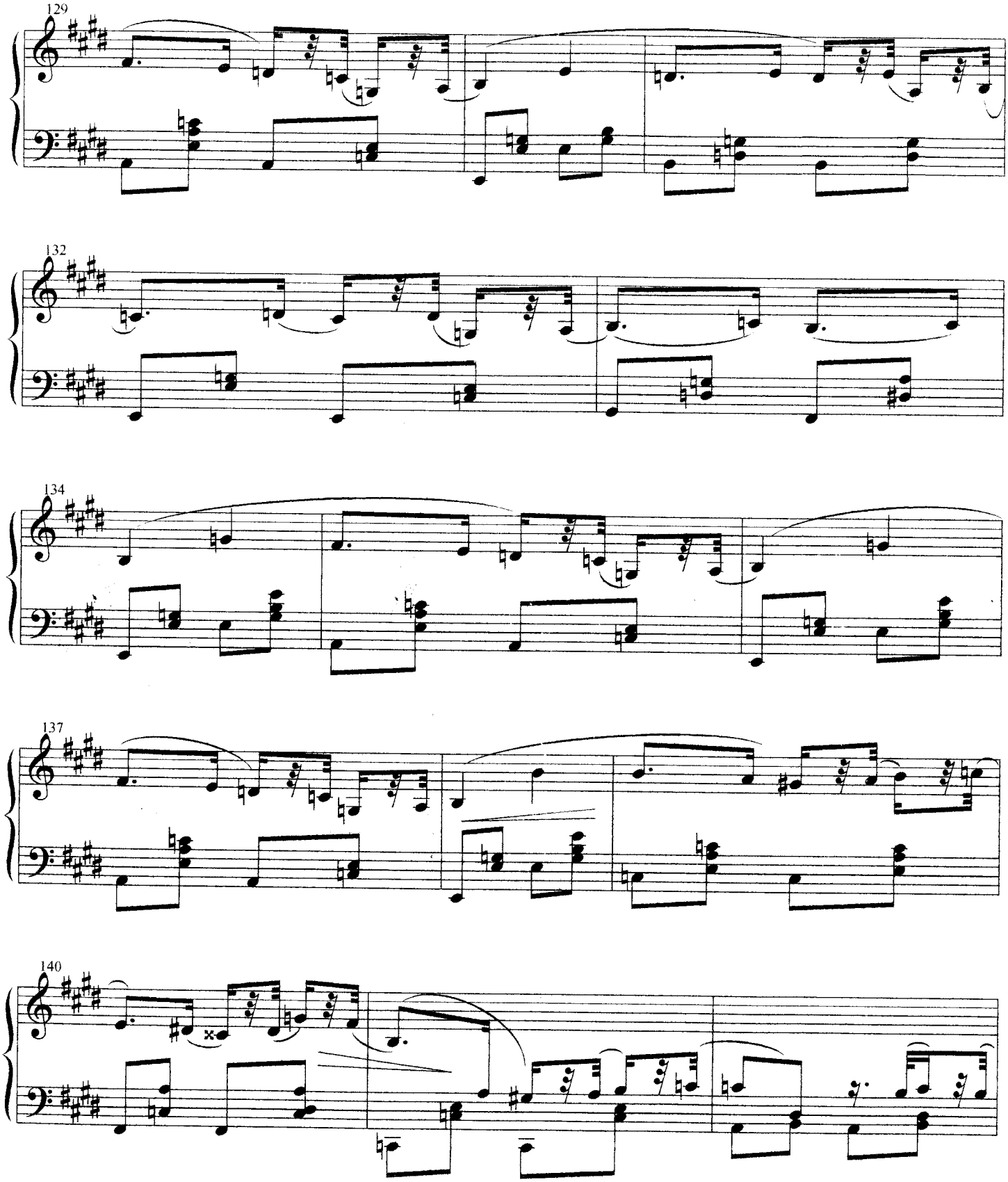

46
p
51
Dance of the Hours of the Day
pp leggerissimo con grazio
55
pp
58
affretando
a tempo
61
mf

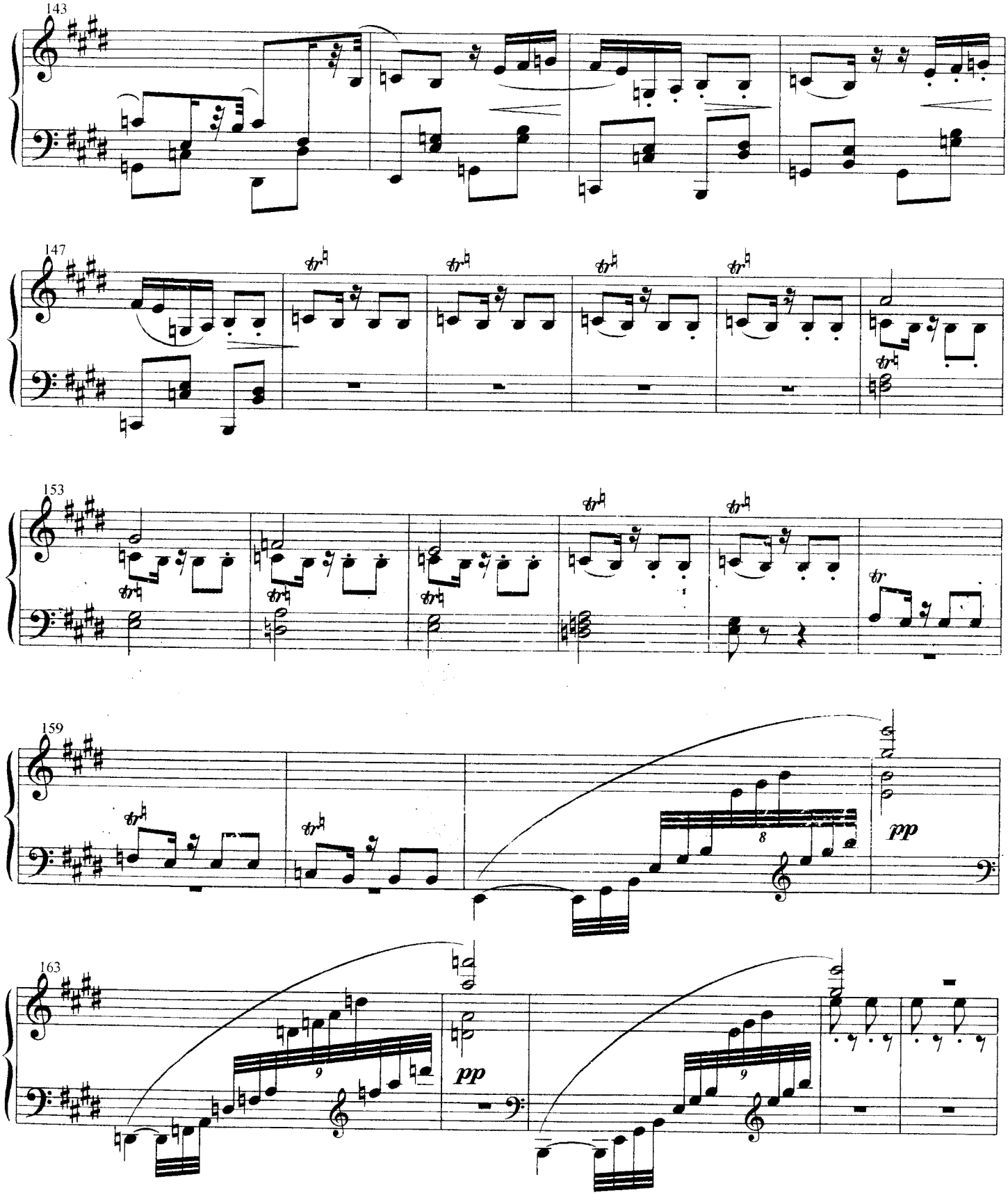

64
pp
67
pp
leggiero
70
73
8va
76
(8va)
8va
8va
p
pp

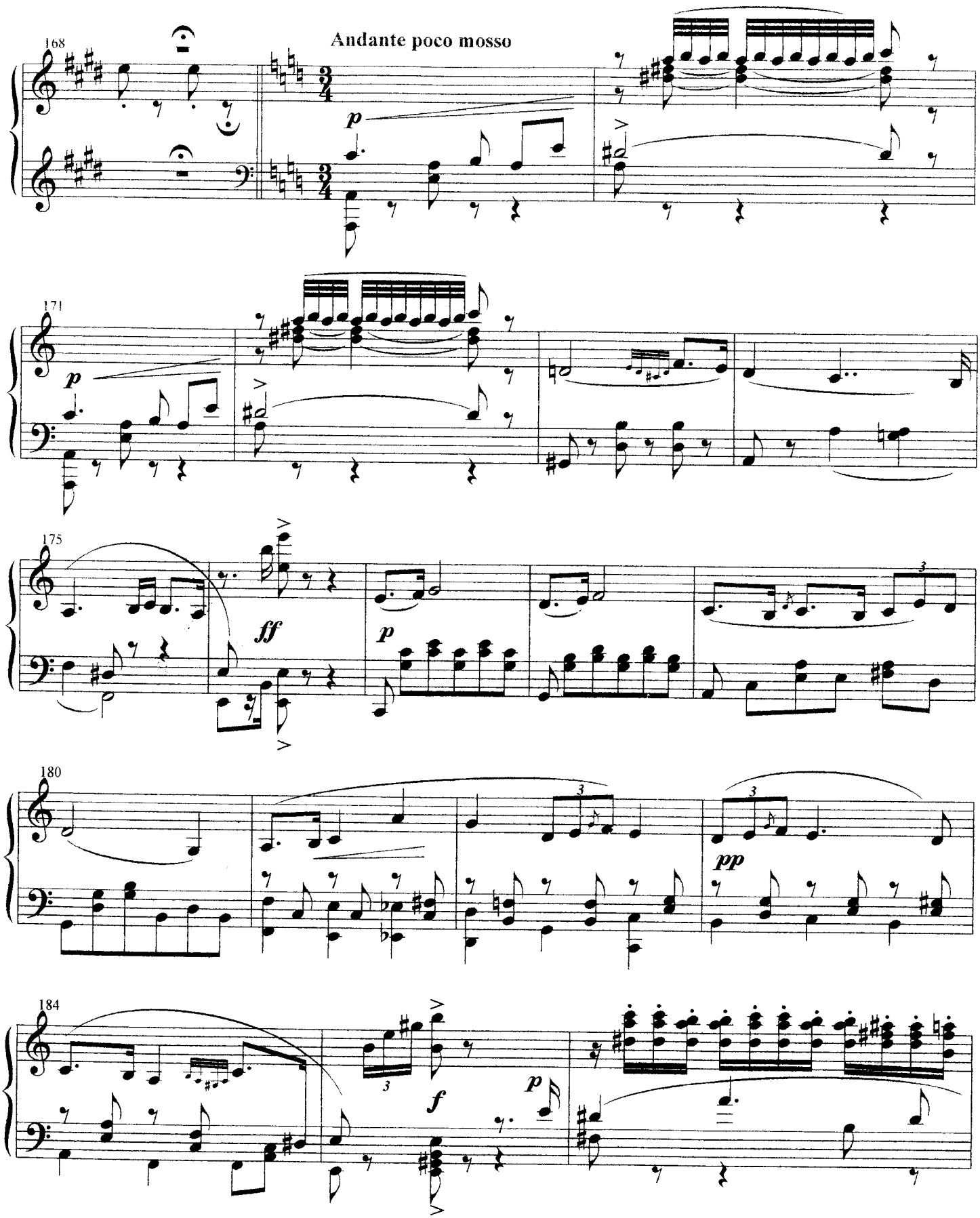

79
8va
82
85
pp
affrettando
88
a tempo
91
cresc.

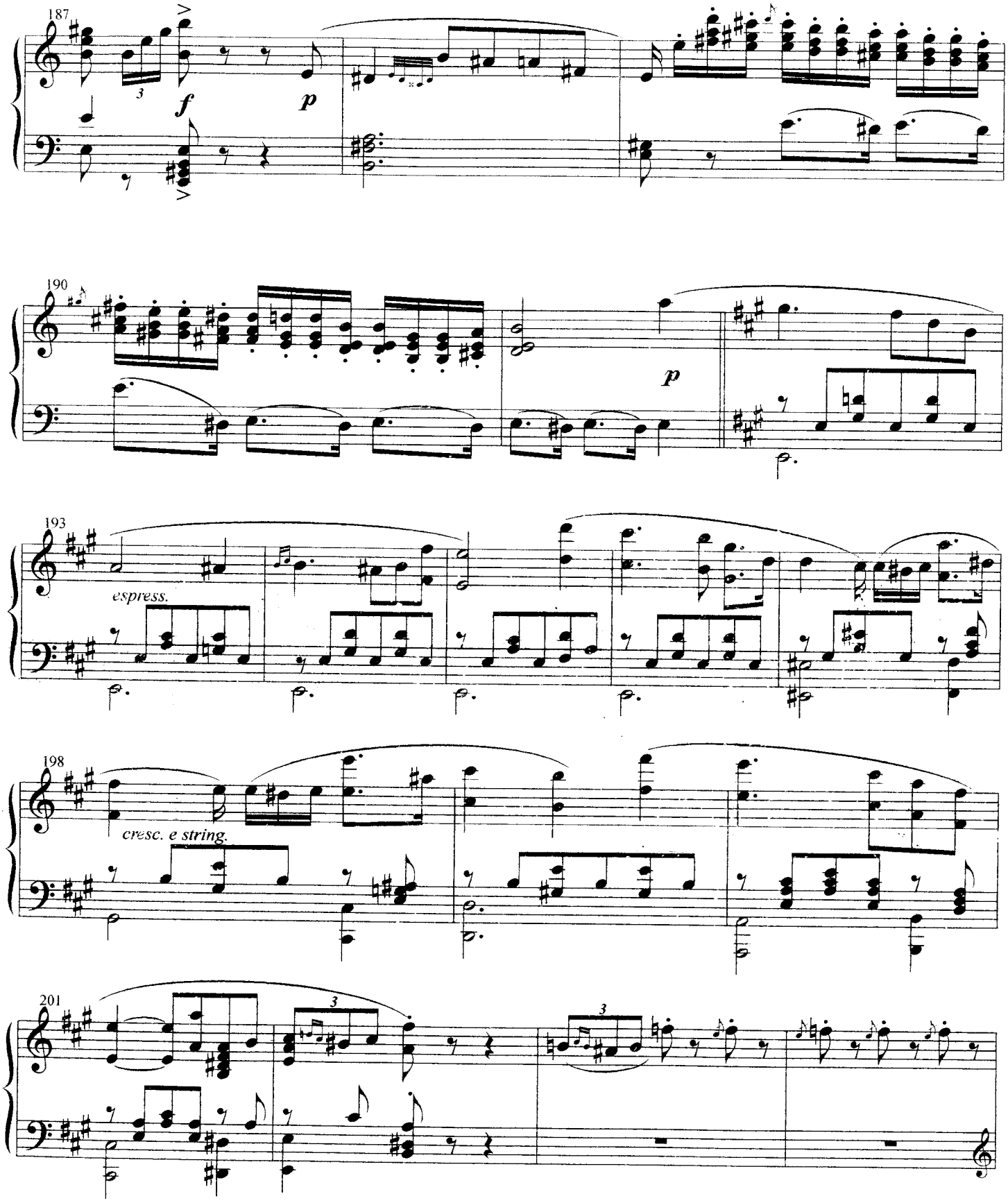

Entrance of the
Hours of Twilight
Moderato
(8va)
94
p
98
103
tr
107
111

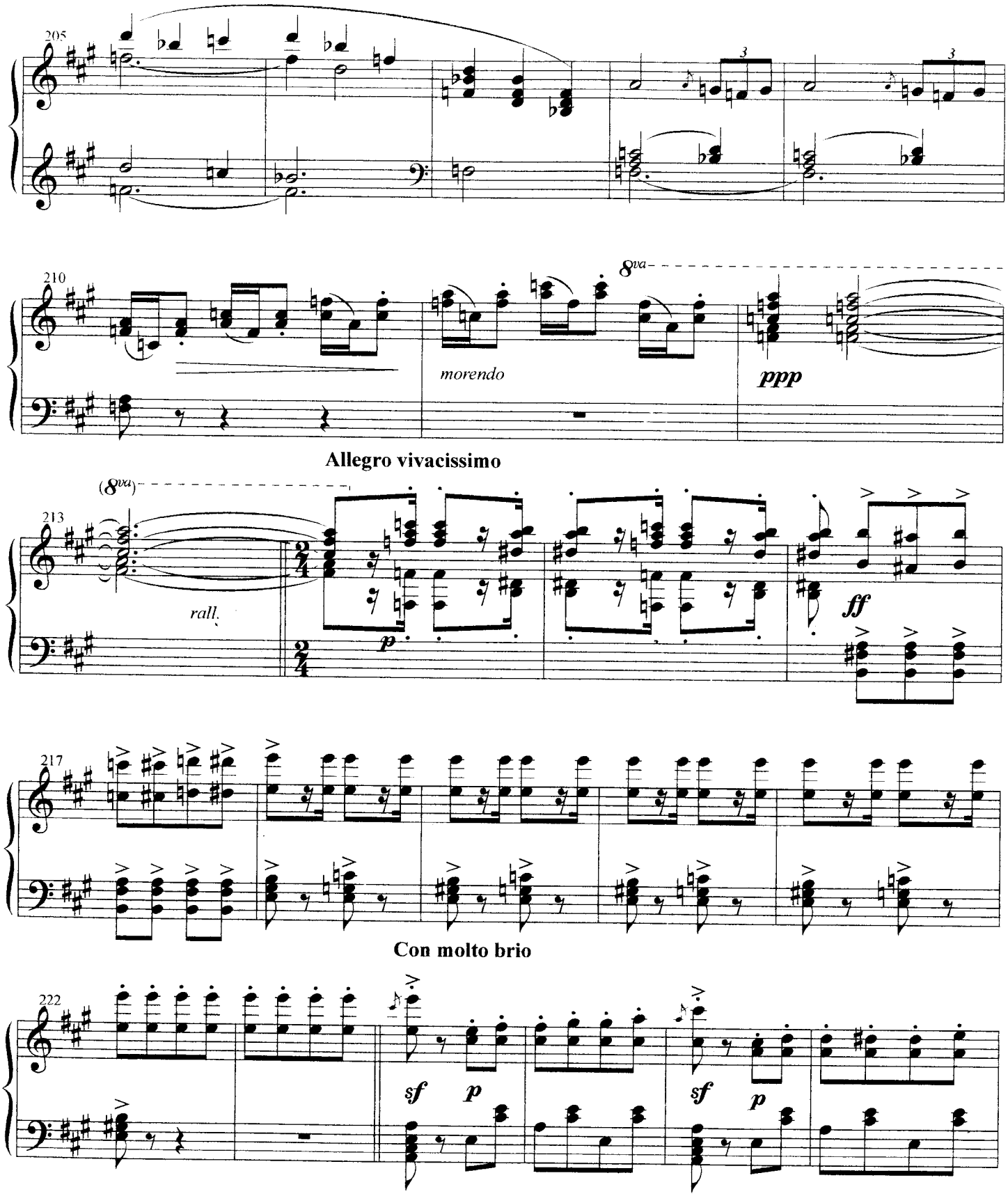

114
117
8va
8va
120
8va
8va
123
(8va)
126
Entrance of the Hours of Night
p espress.

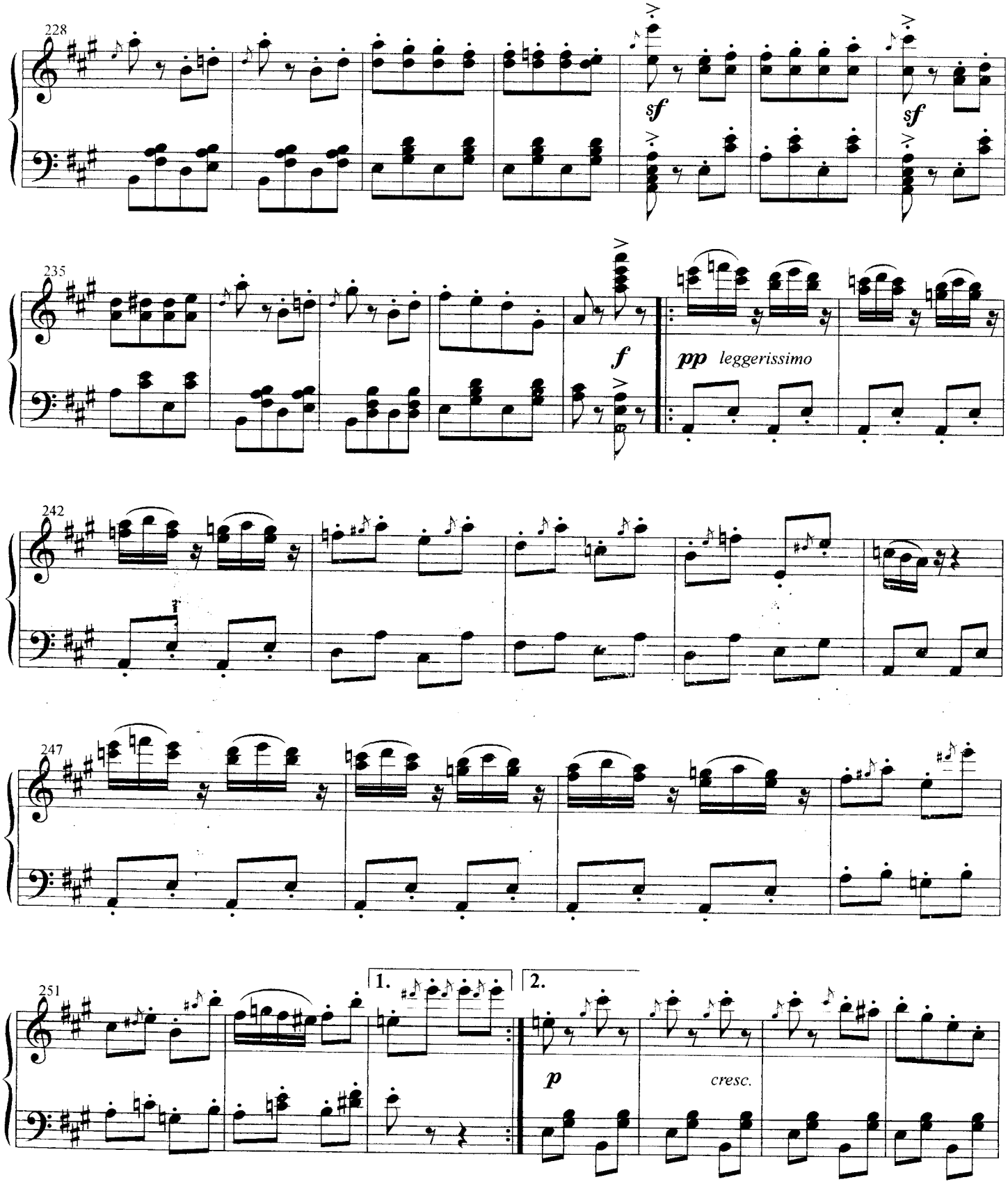

129
132
134
137
140

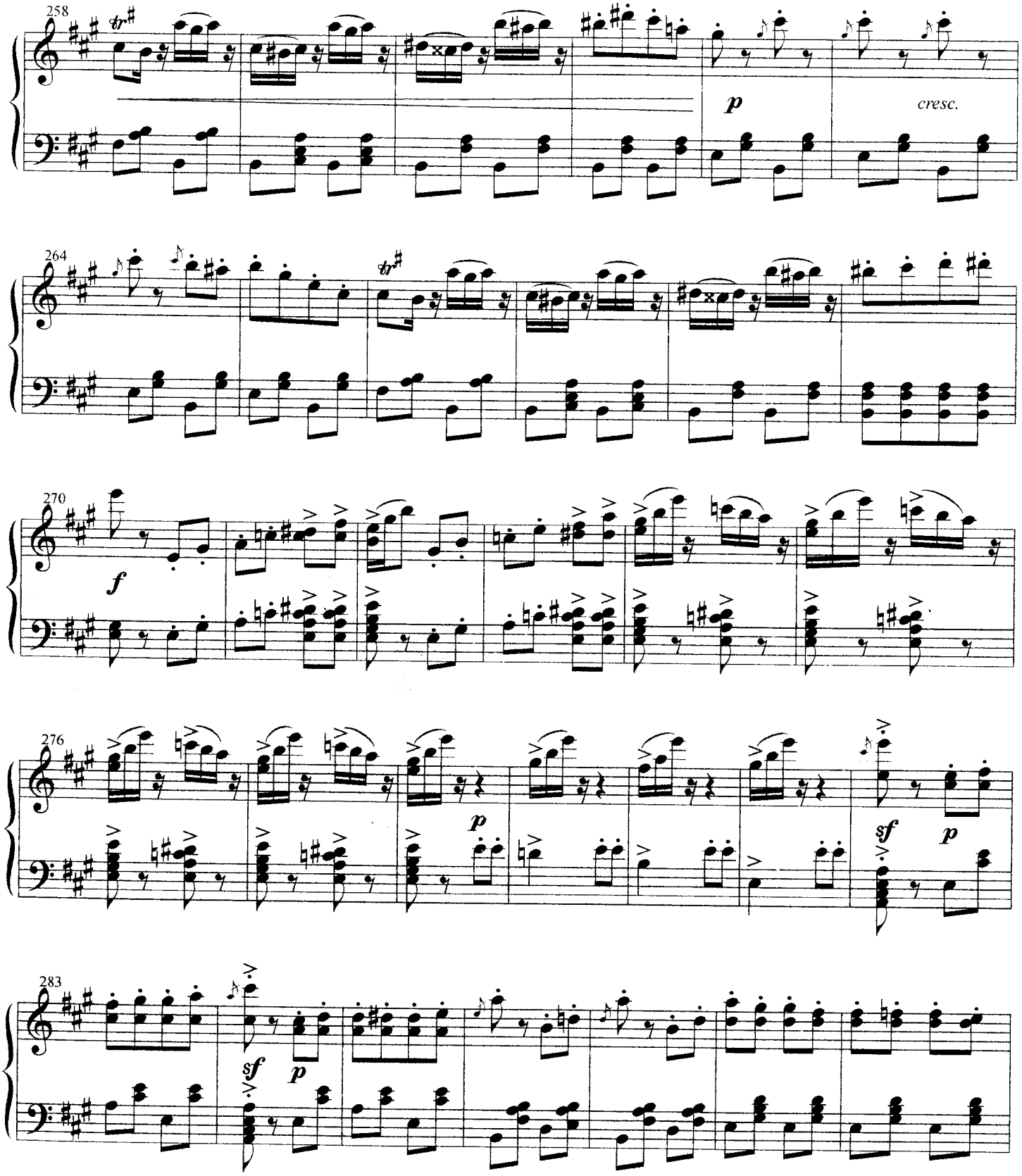

143
147
153
159
pp
163
pp

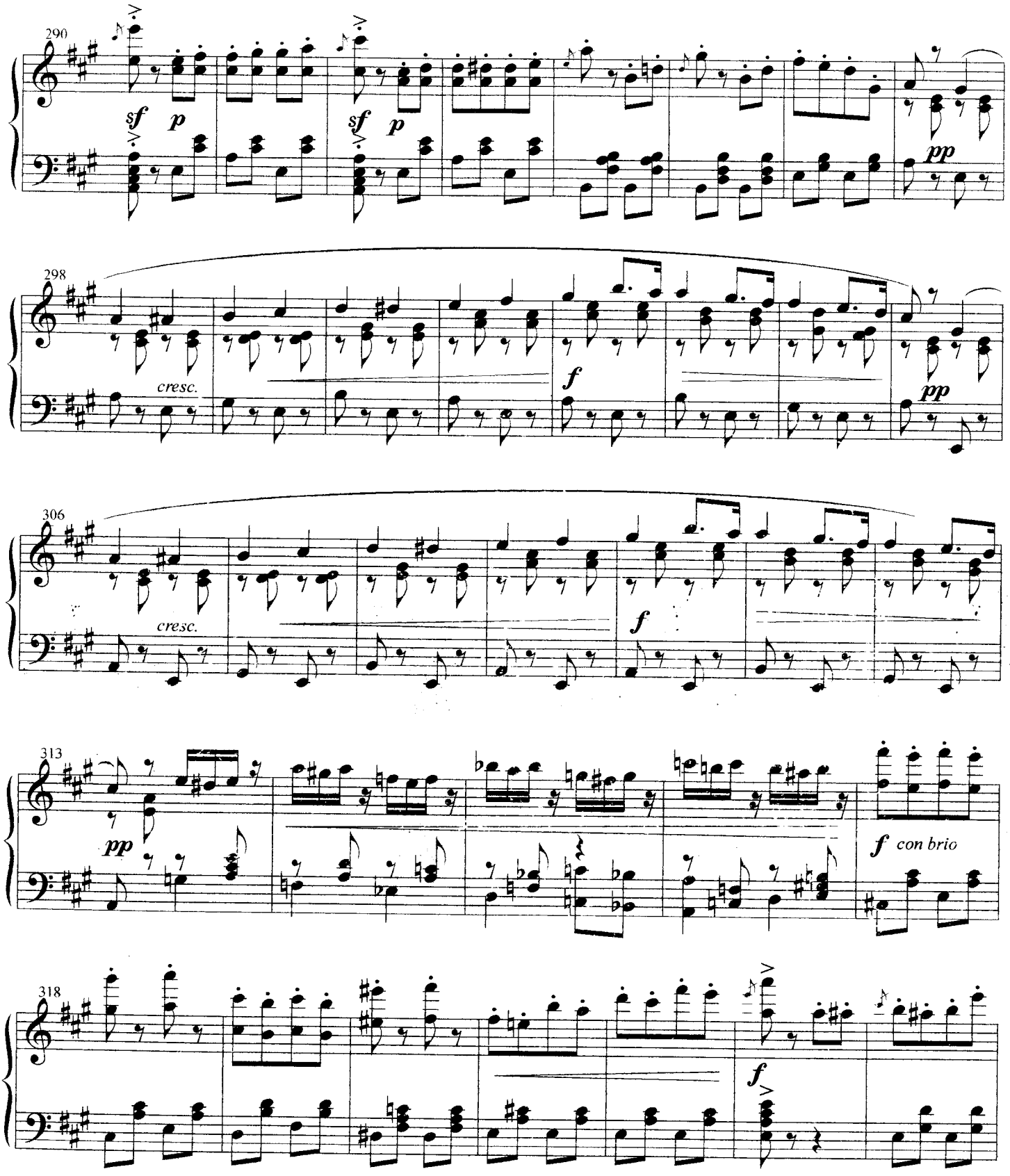

168
Andante poco mosso
p
171
p
175
ff
p
180
pp
184
f
p

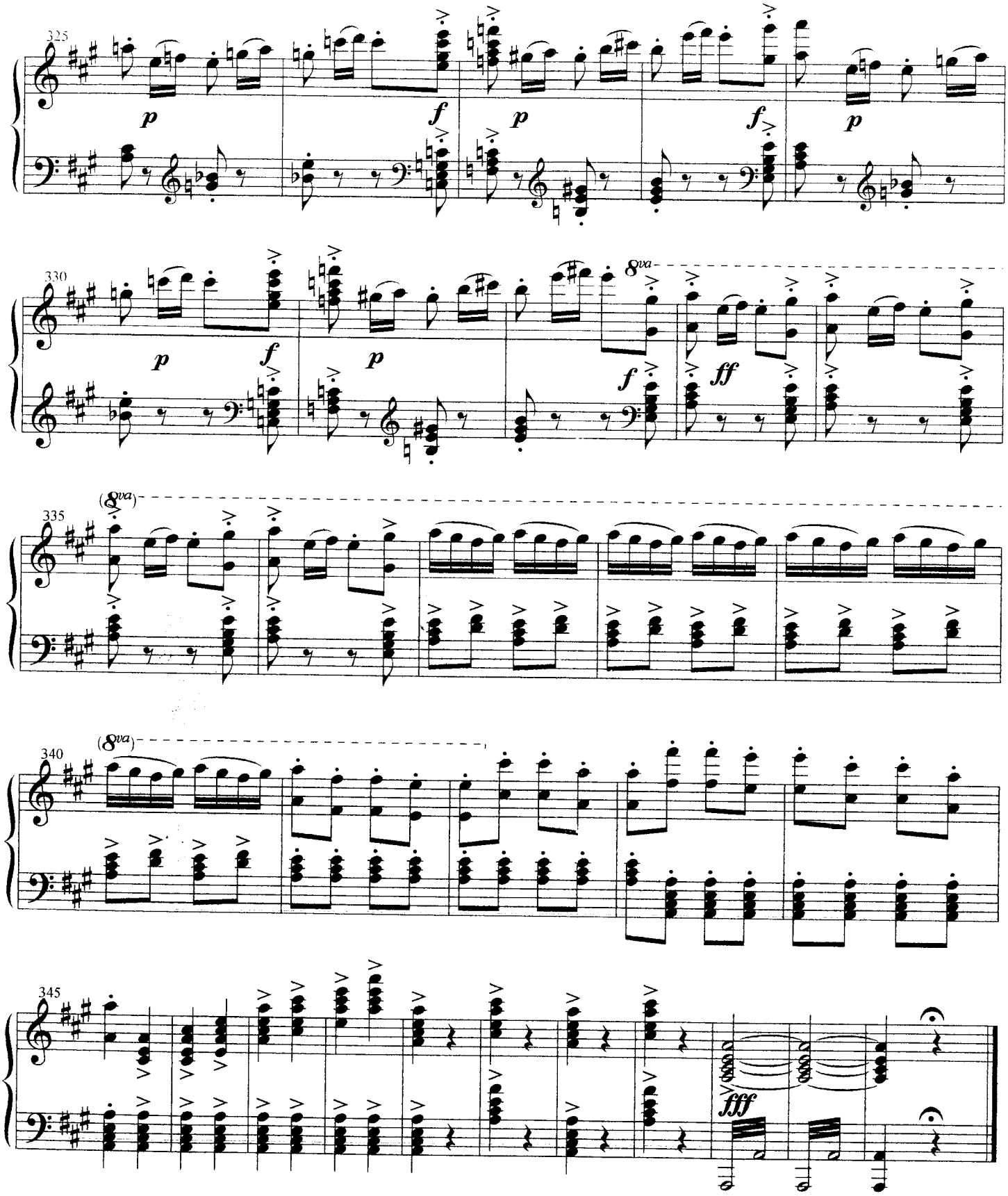

187
f
p
190
p
193
espress.
198
cresc. e string.
201
3
3


205
210
8va
morendo
ppp
Allegro vivacissimo
(8va)
213
rall.
p
ff
217
Con molto brio
222
sf
p
sf
p


228
sf
sf
235
f
pp leggerissimo
242
247
251
1.
2.
p
cresc.


258
p
cresc.
264
270
f
276
p
sf
p
283
sf
p


290
sf
p
sf
p
pp
298
cresc.
f
pp
306
cresc.
f
313
pp
f
con brio
318
f


325
p
f
p
f
p
330
p
f
p
8va
f
ff
(8va)
335
(8va)
340
345
fff

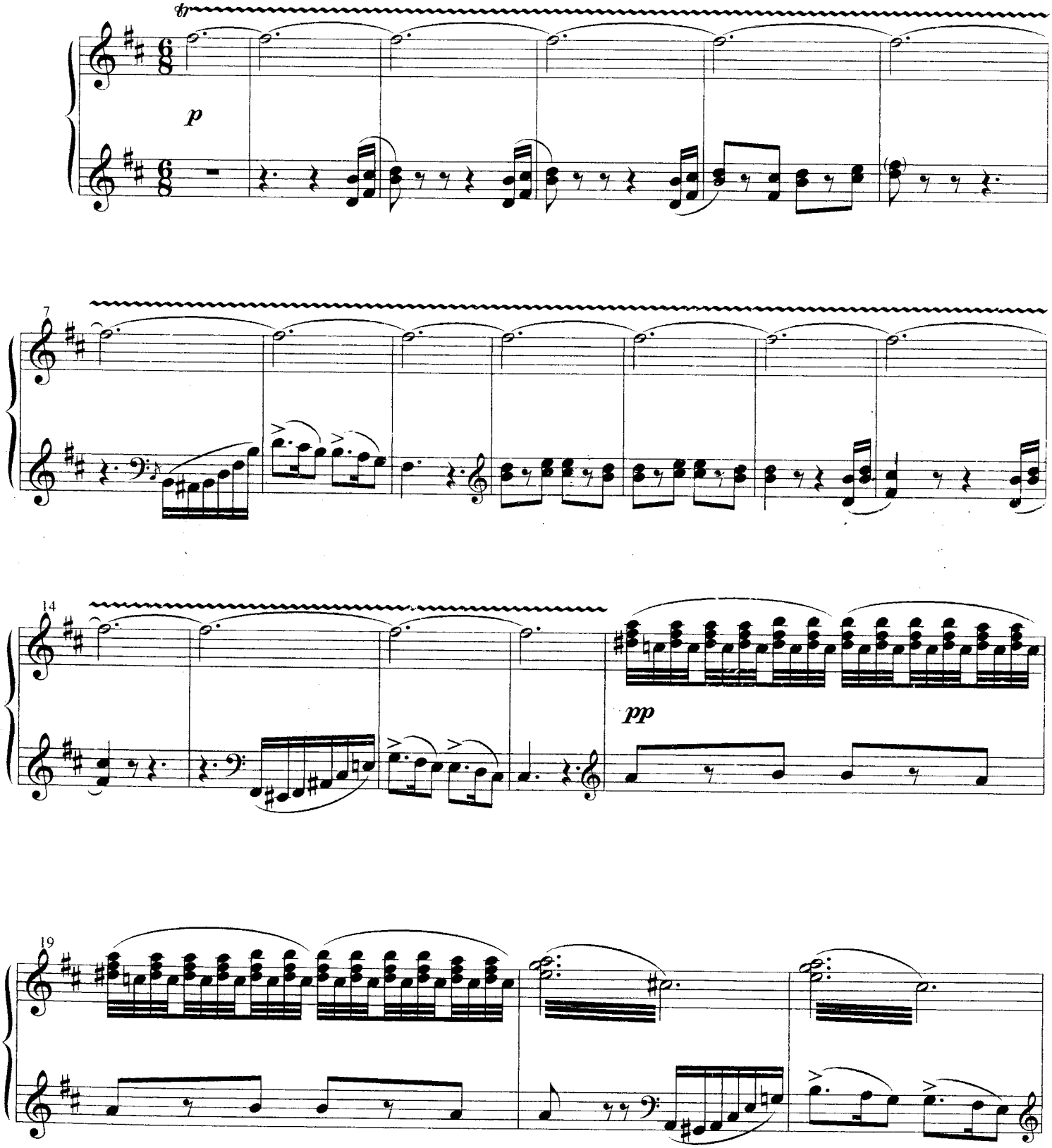
Intermezzo

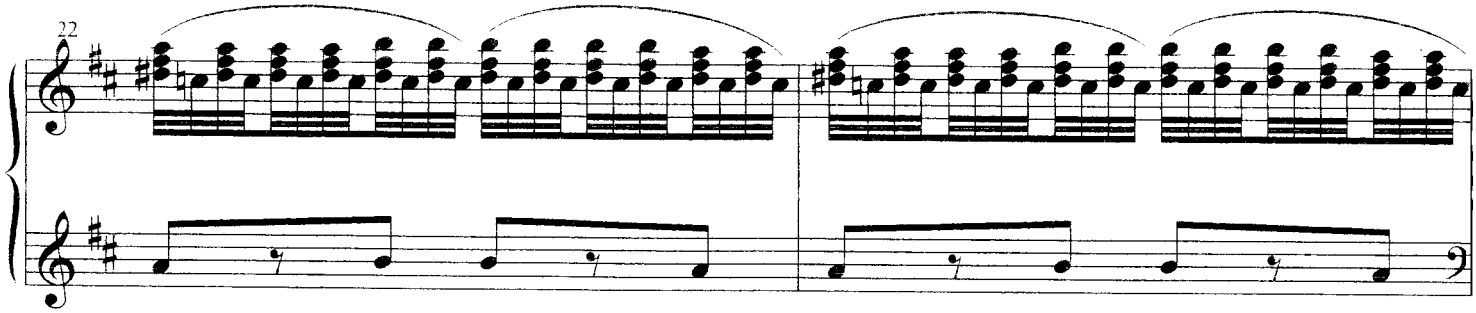
from the opera

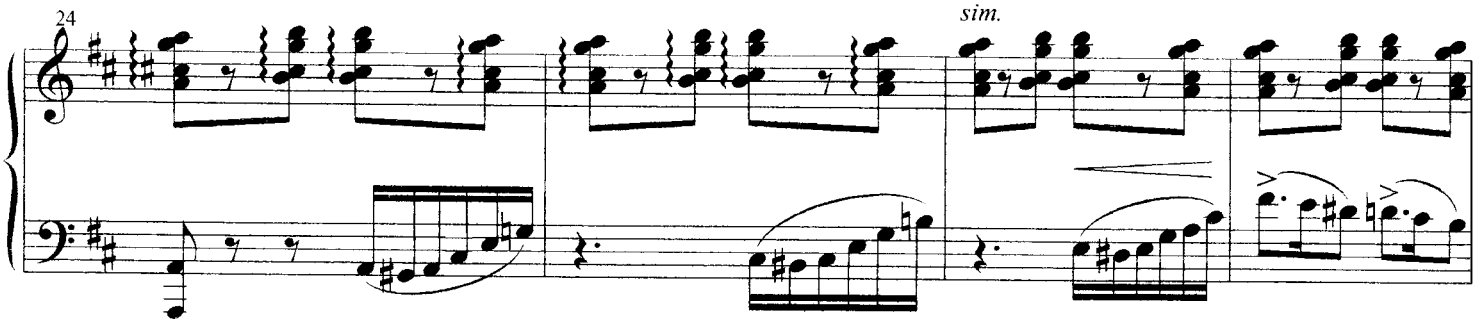
Les Contes d'Hoffmann

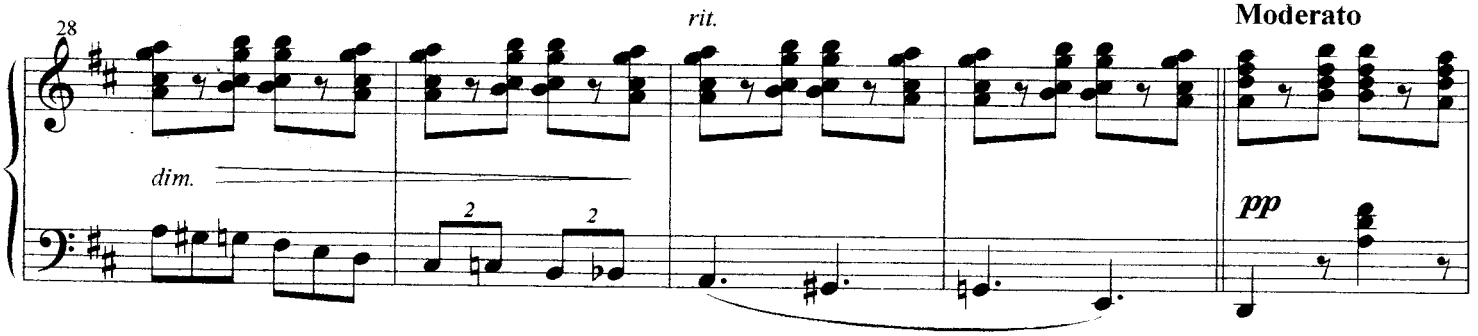
Jacques Offenbach
(1819-1880)

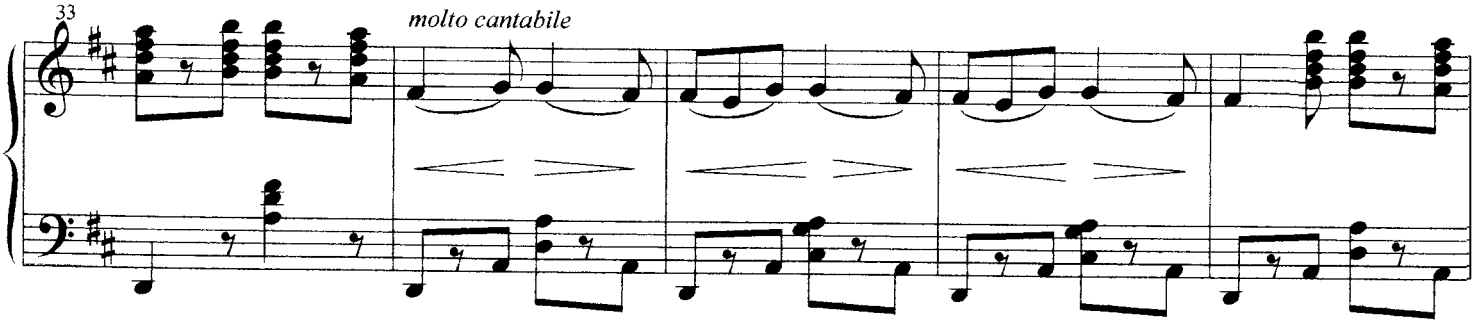
Allegretto moderato

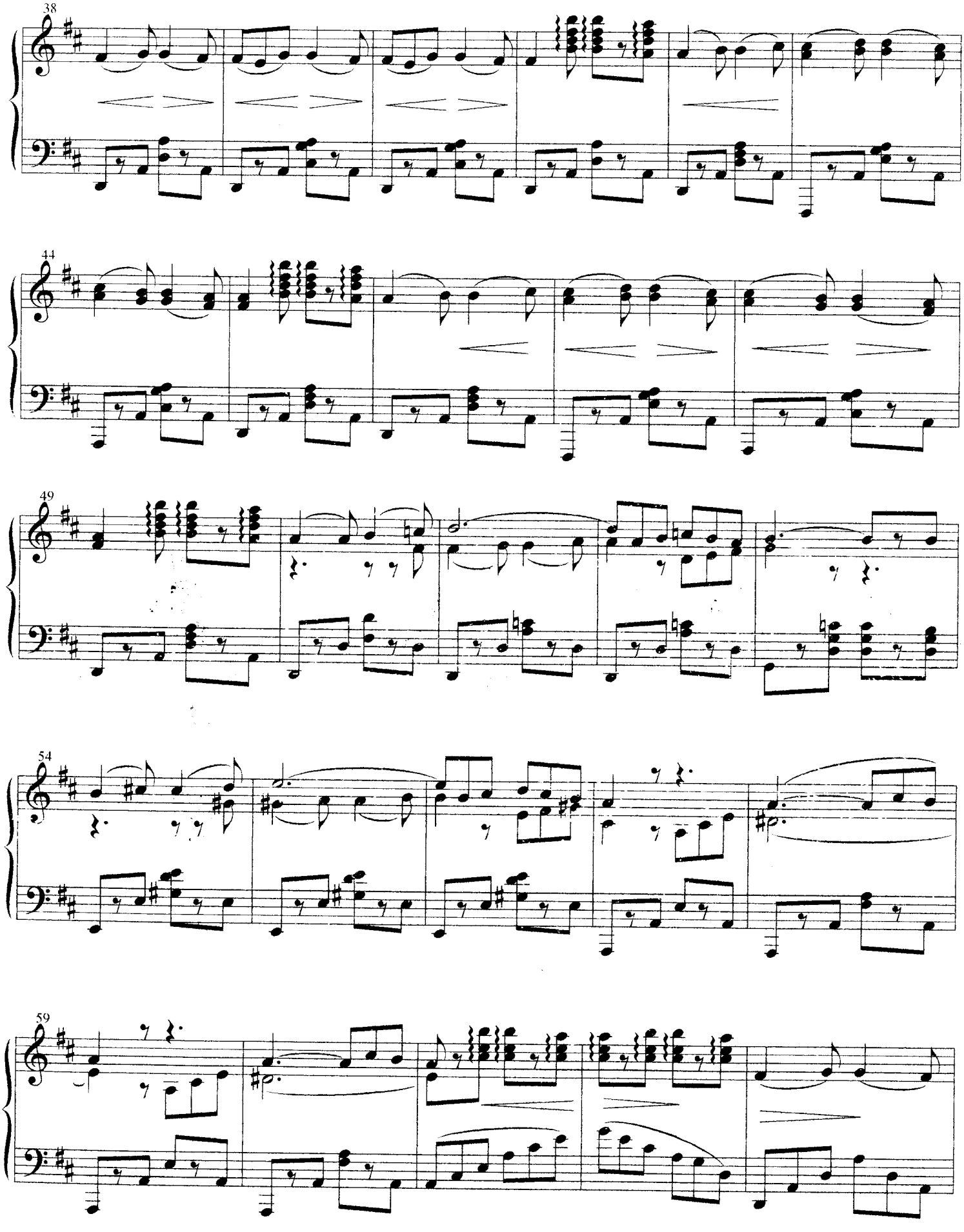


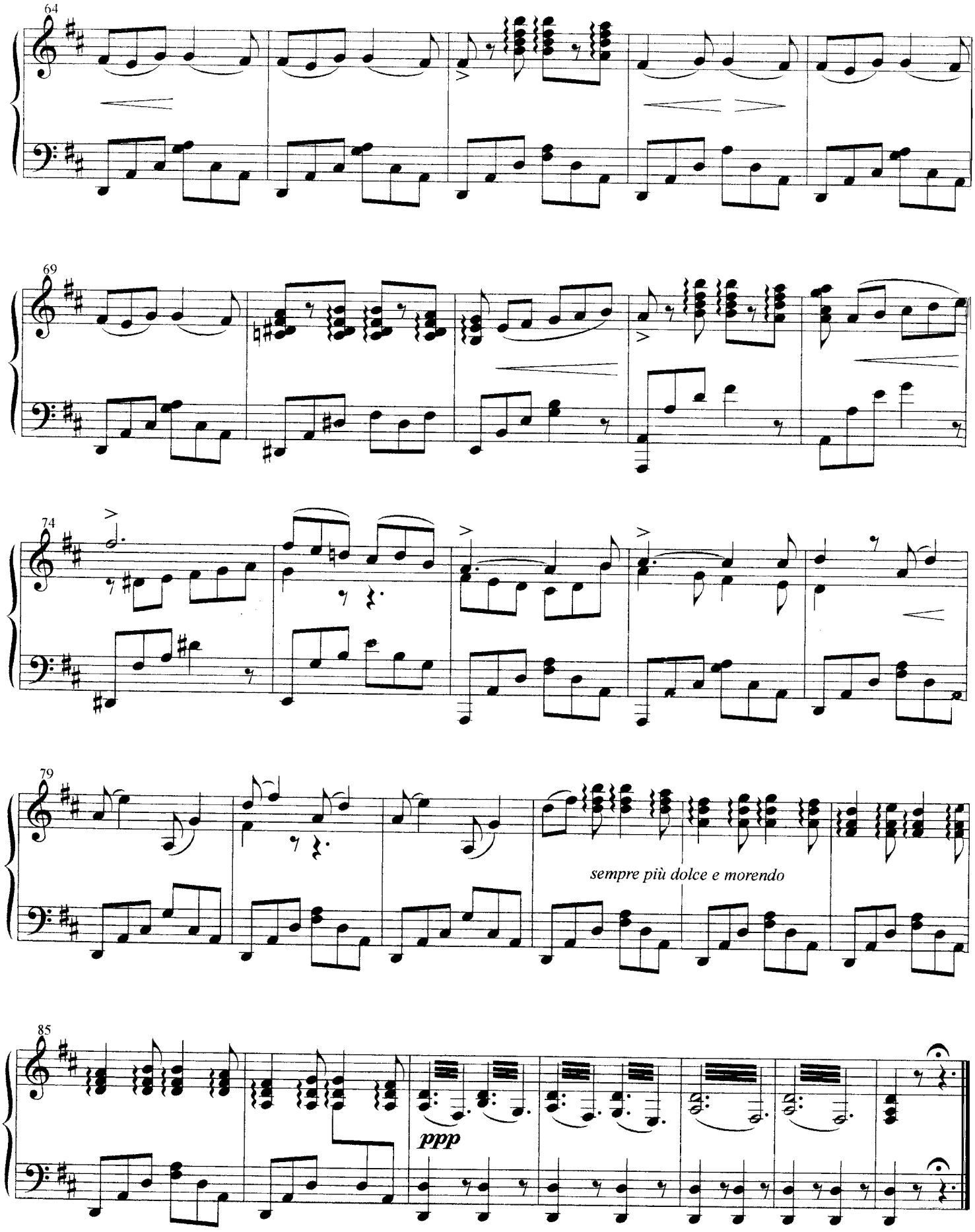

22


24
sim.


28
rit.
Moderato
dim.
2
2
pp


33
molto cantabile


38
44
49
54
59


64
69
74
79
sempre più dolce e morendo
85
ppp

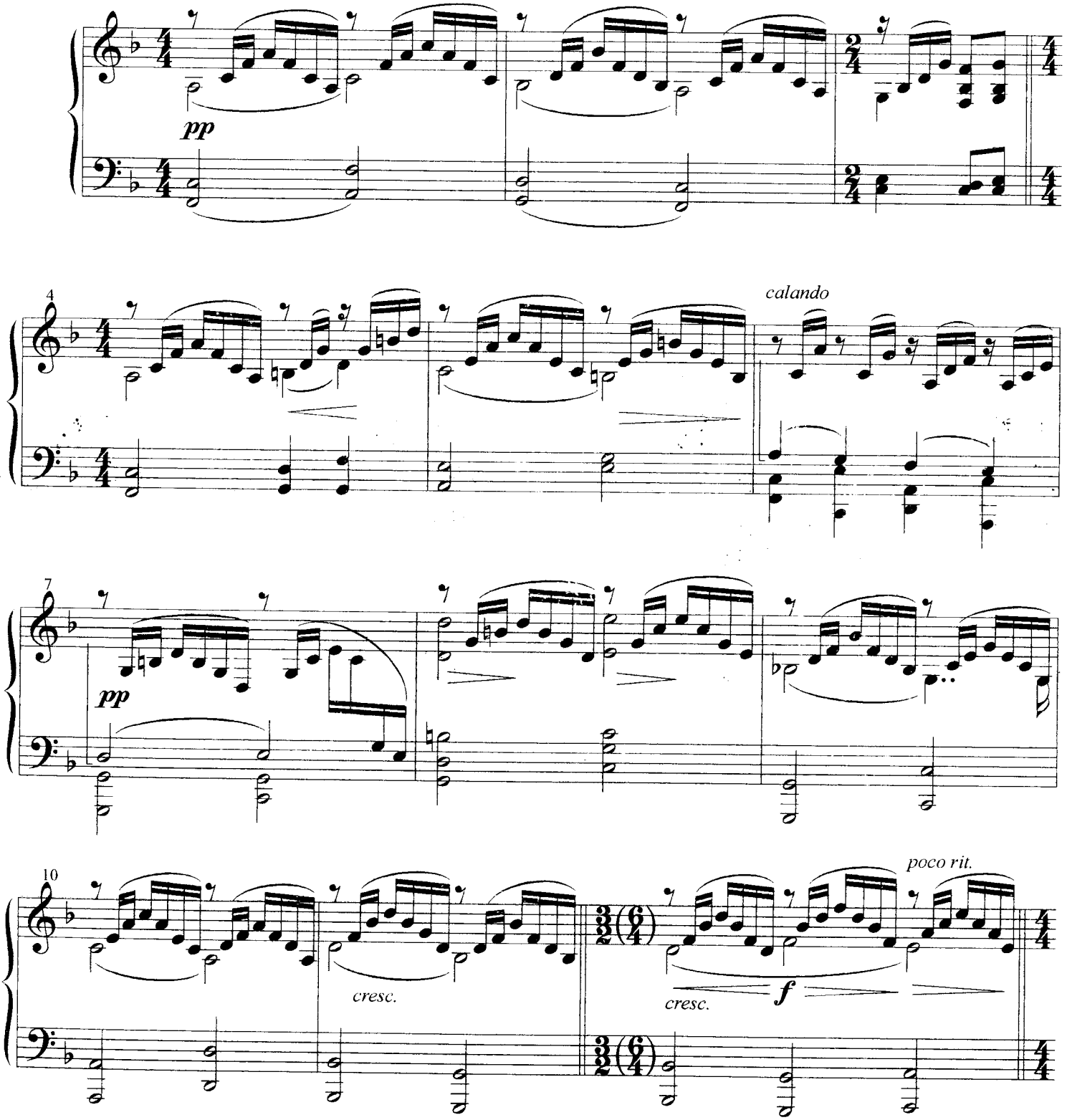
Intermezzo

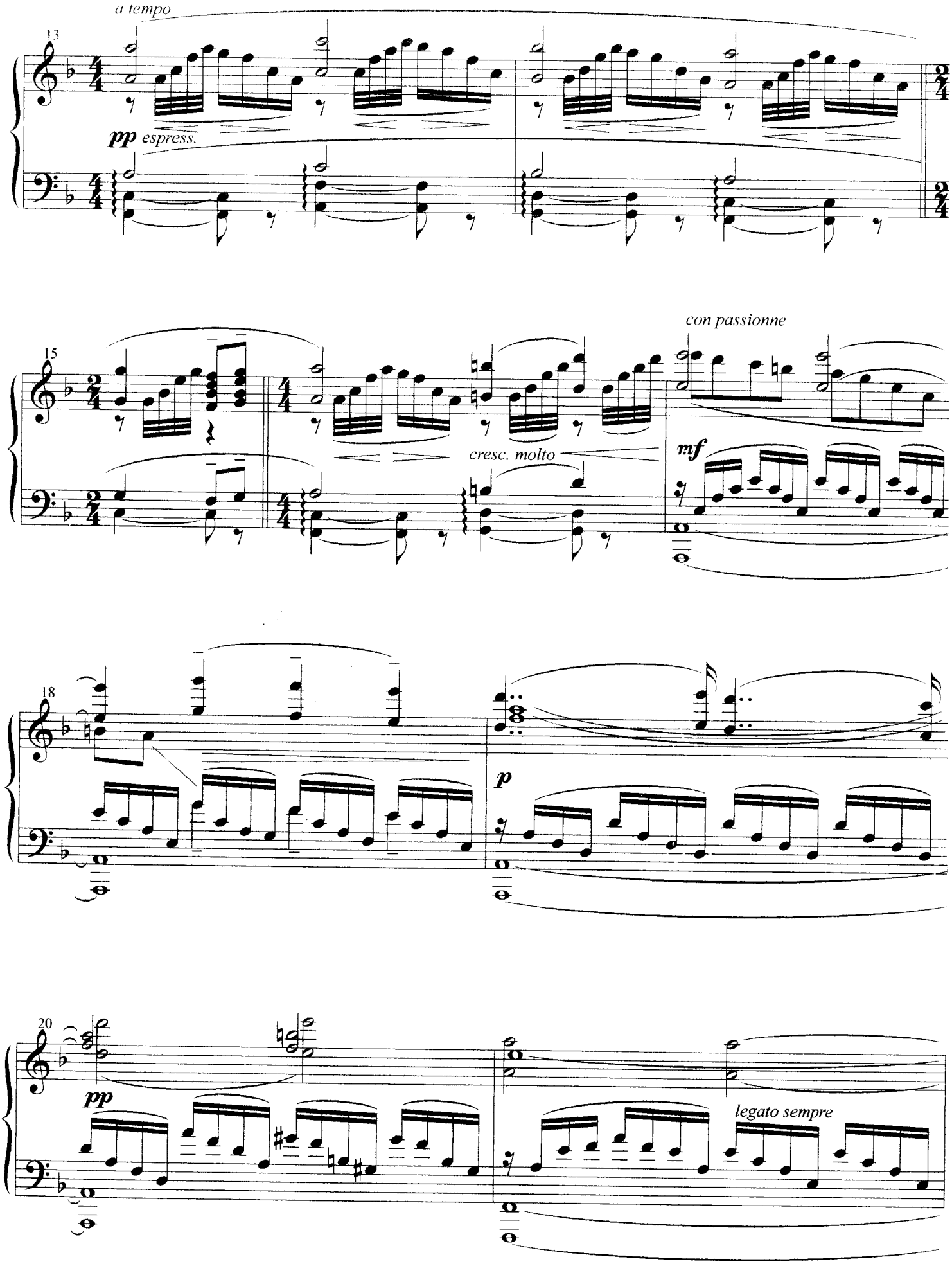
from the opera

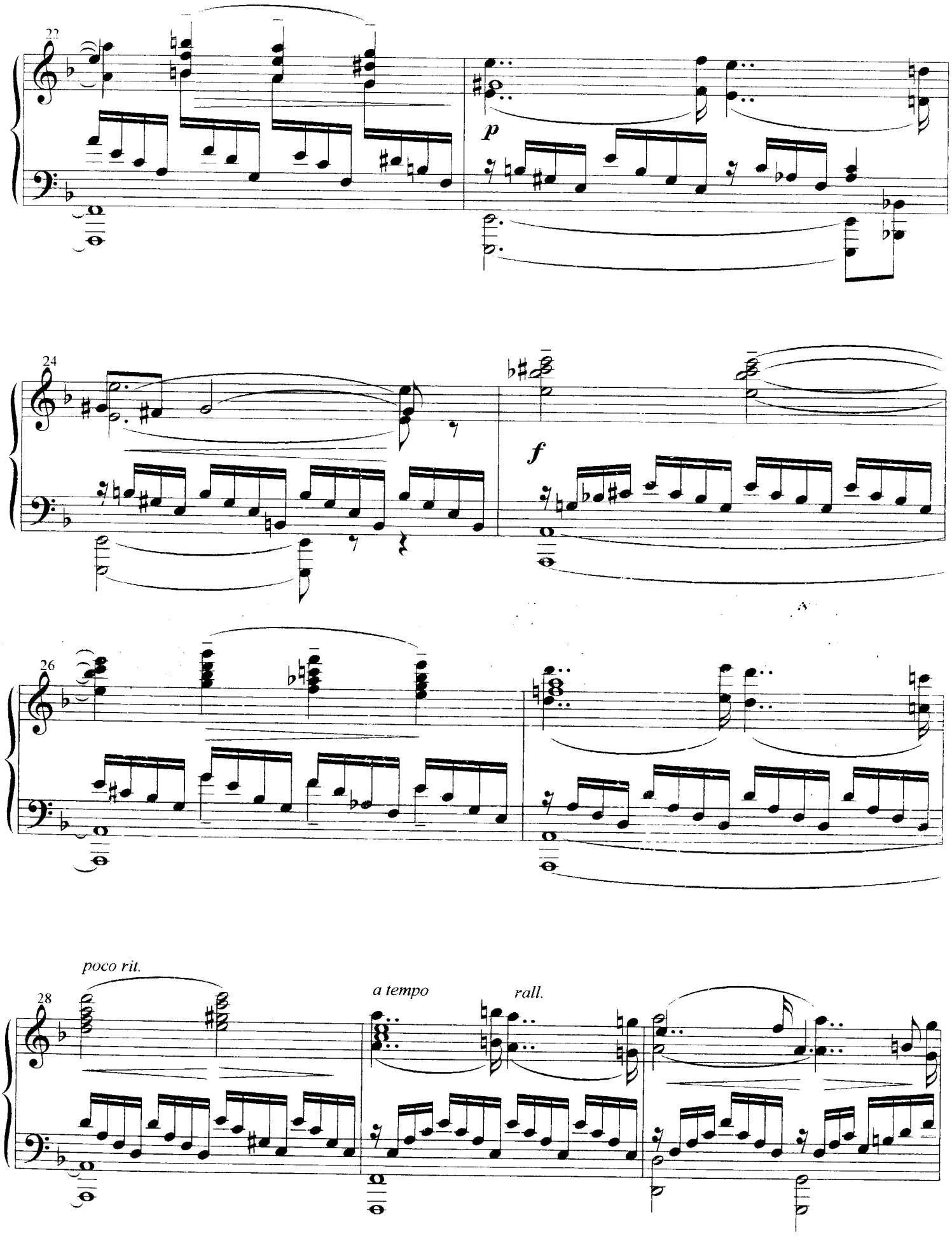
Suor Angelica

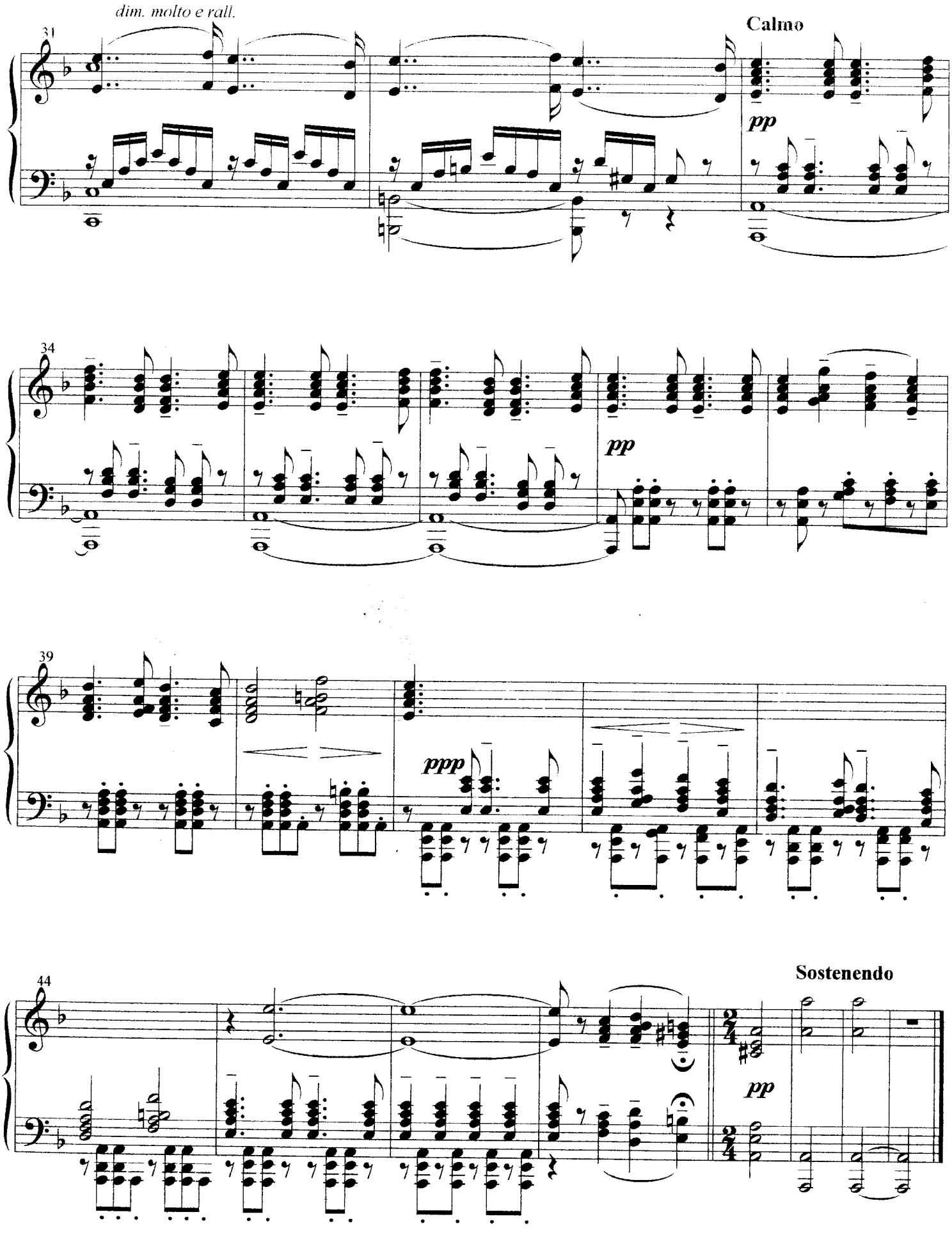
Giacomo Puccini
(1858-1924)

Andante molto sostenuto




a tempo
13
pp espress.
15
con passionne
cresc. molto
mf
18
p
20
pp
legato sempre


22
p
24
f
26
poco rit.
28
a tempo
rall.


dim. molto e rall.
31
Calmo
pp
34
pp
39
ppp
44
Sostenendo
pp

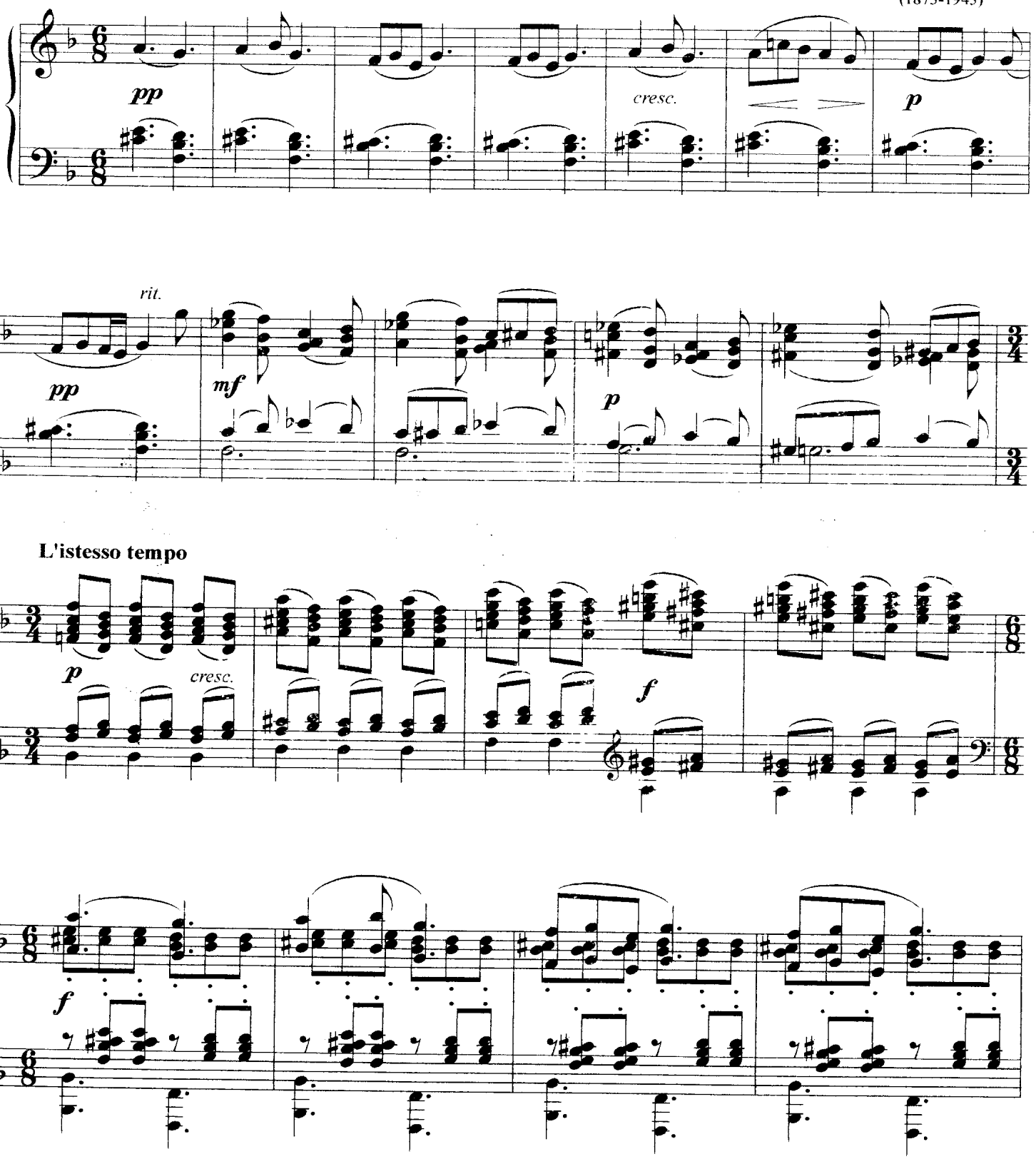
Intermezzo

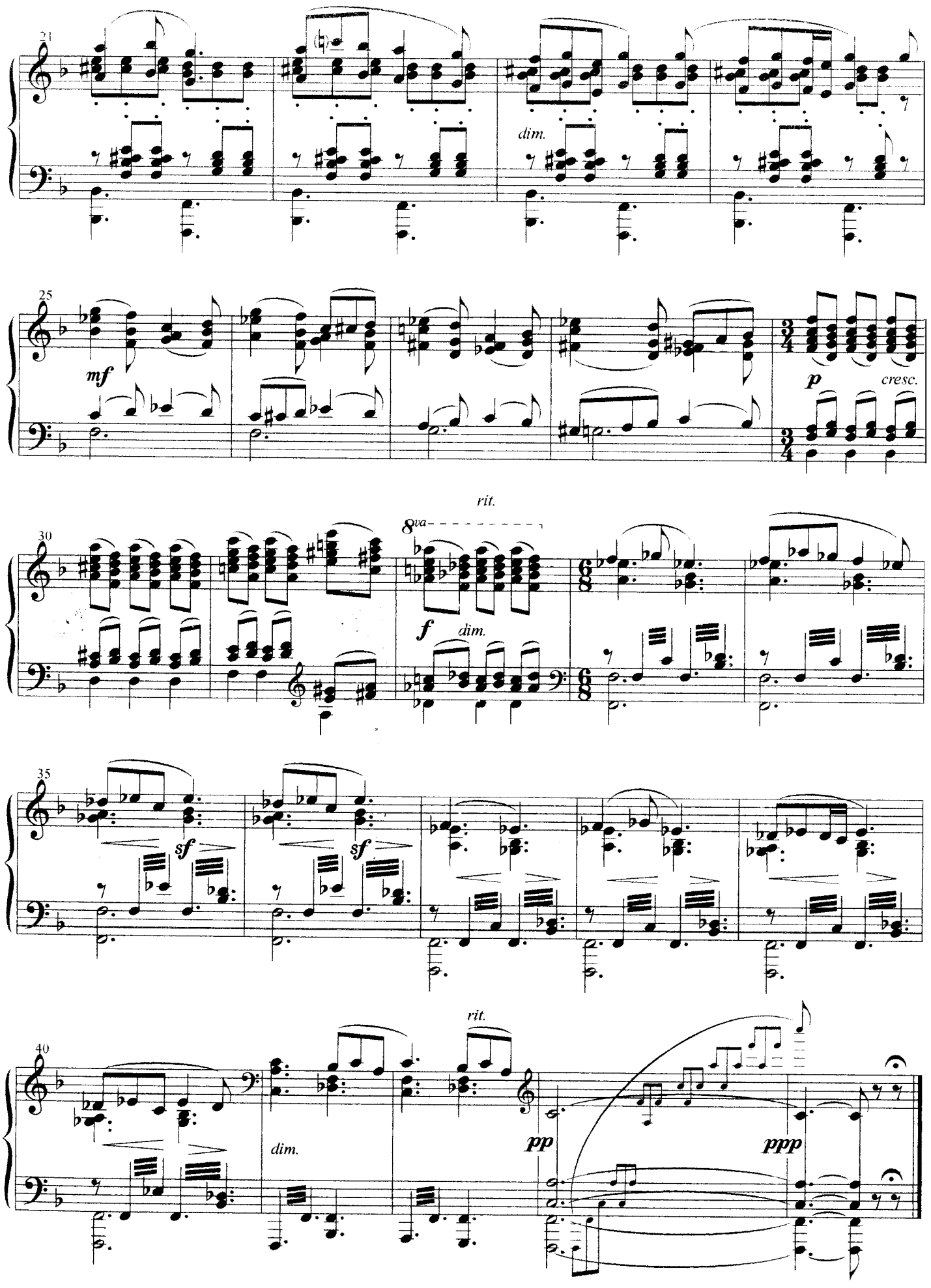
from the opera

Aleko

Allegretto pastorale

Sergei Rachmaninov
(1873-1943)




21
dim.
25
mf
p
cresc.
rit.
8va
30
f
dim.
35
sf
sf
rit.
40
dim.
pp
ppp

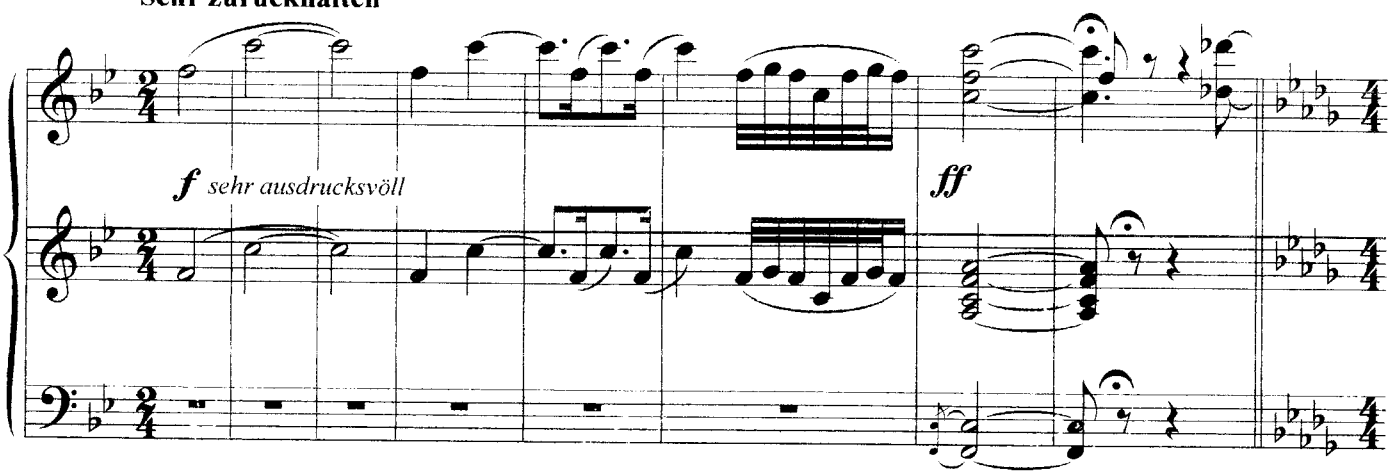
Intermezzo

from the opera

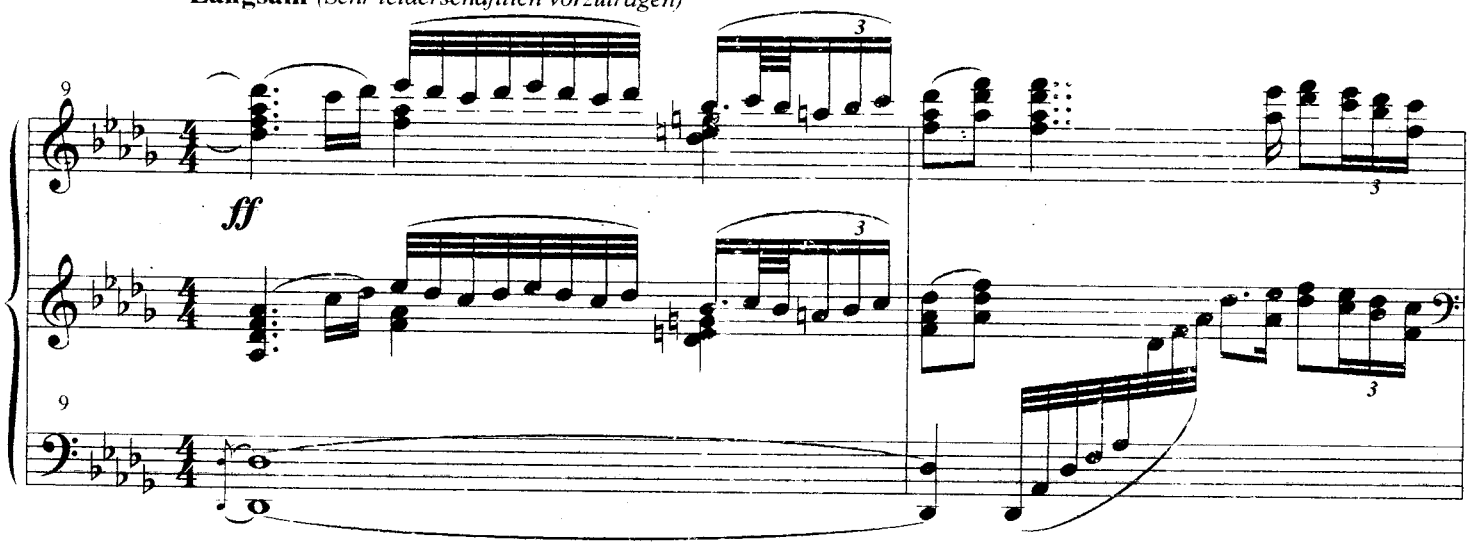
Notre Dame

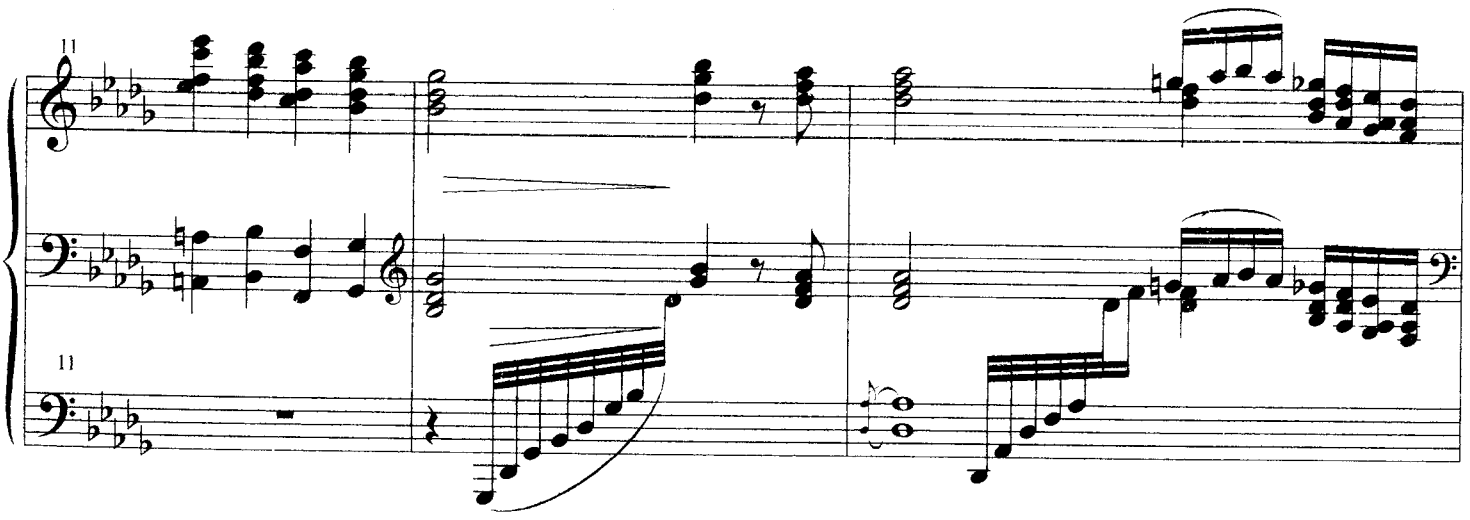
Franz Schmidt
(1874-1939)

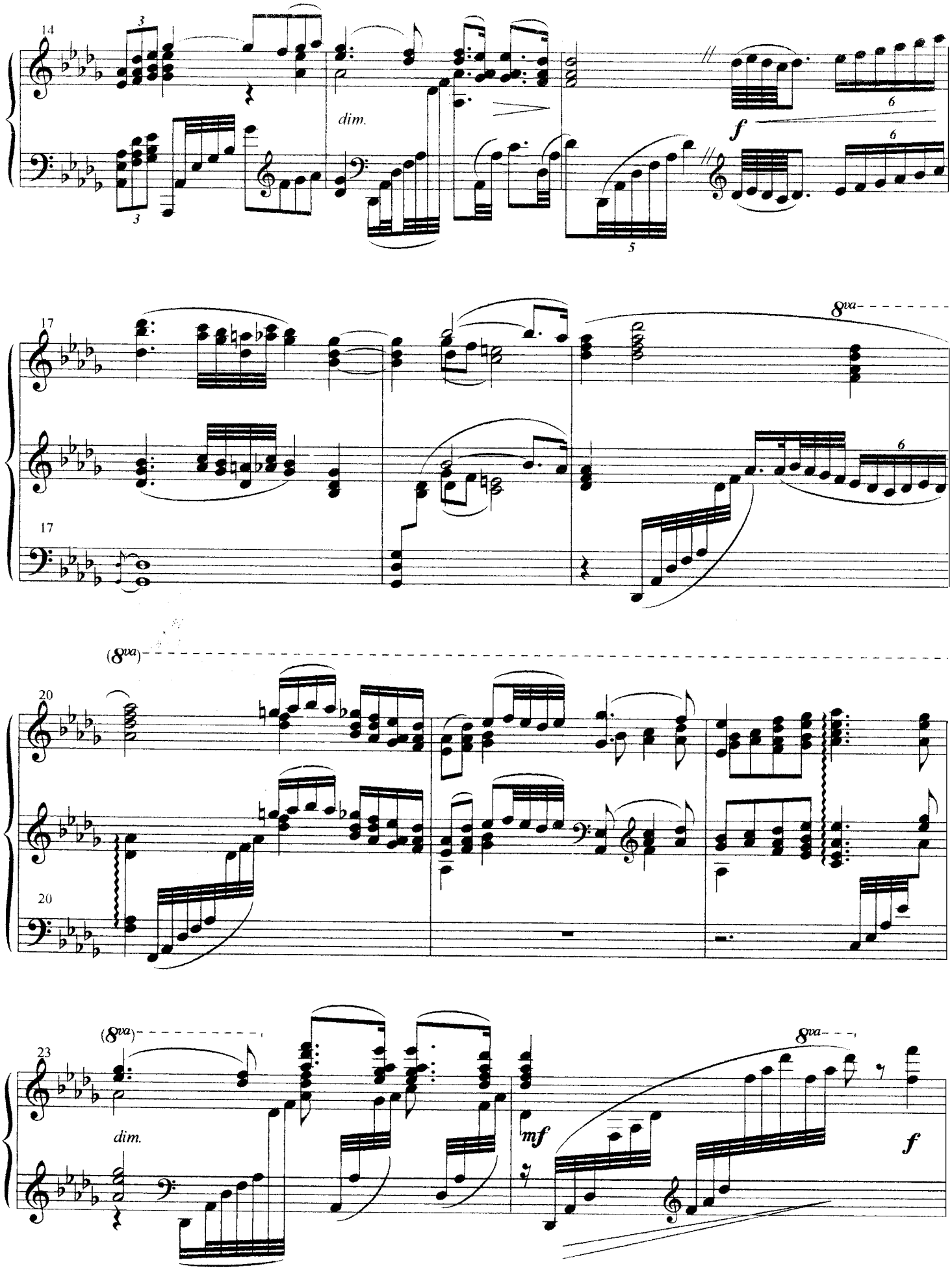
Sehr zurückhalten

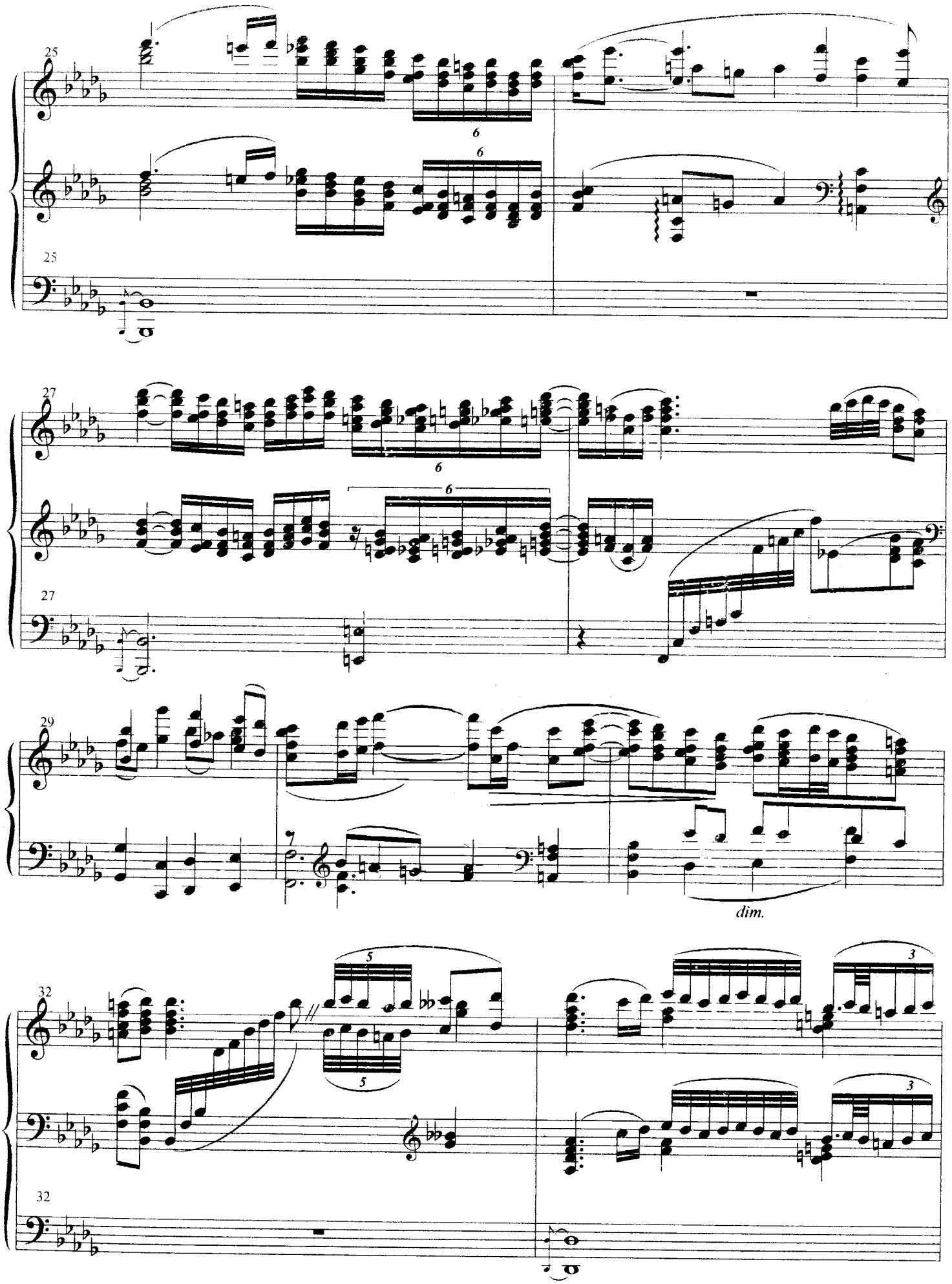


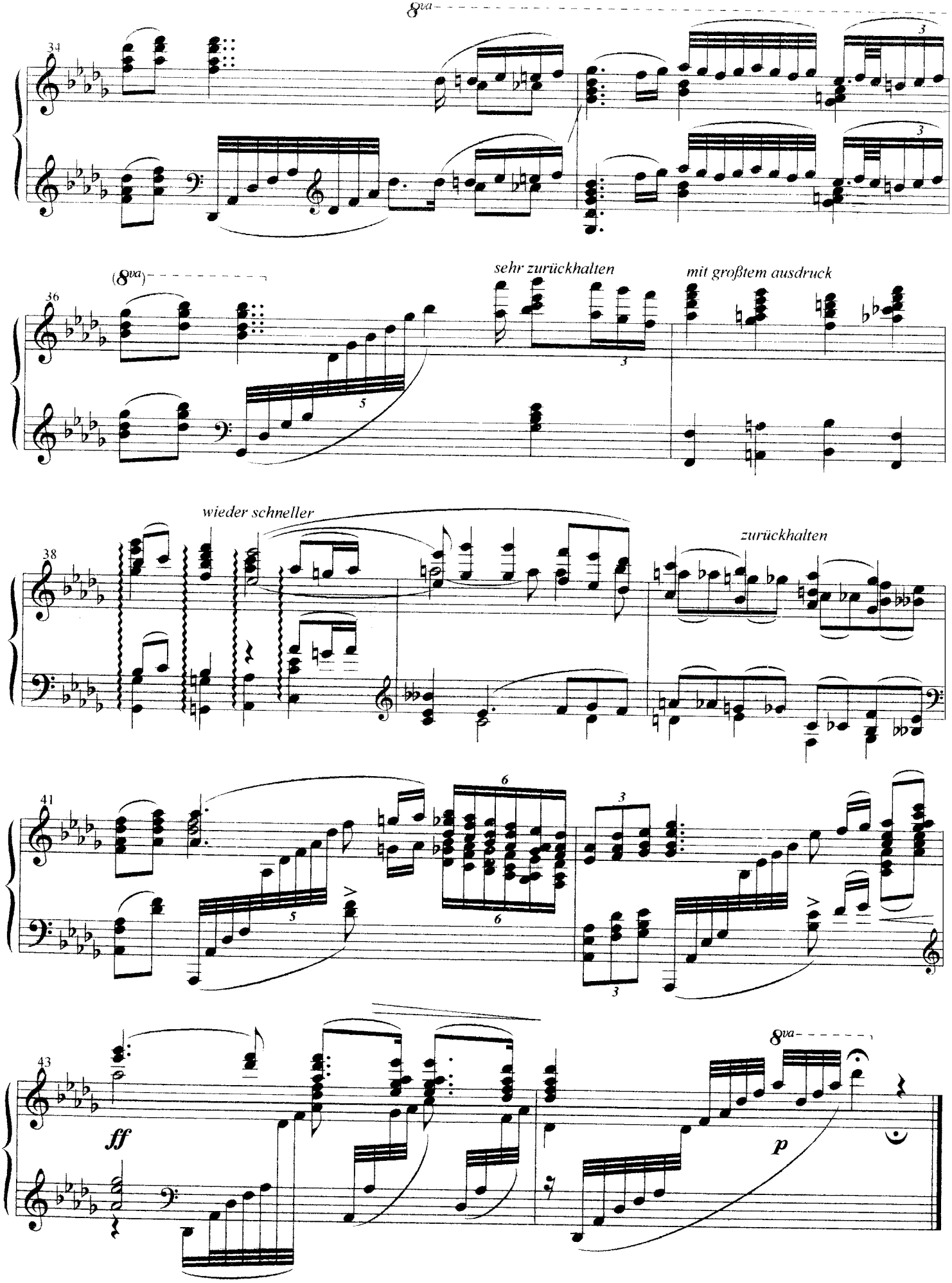
Langsam *(Sehr leiderschaftlich vorzuragen)*






14
dim.
f
17
8va
20
(8va)
23
(8va)
dim.
mf
8va
f


25
6
6
25
27
6
6
27
29
dim.
32
5
5
3
3
32


8va
34
3
3
(8va)
36
sehr zurückhalten
mit großtem ausdruck
5
3
wieder schneller
38
zurückhalten
41
6
5
6
3
3
43
8va
ff
p