J.S. BACH

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A minor

BWV 1003

Educational Edition

With technical indications and comments by Georges Enescu

Collected and edited by Serge Blanc

More information at www.sergeblanc.com

J.S. BACH

Sonata & Partita
for Solo Violin

With technical indications and comments by Georges Enescu, collected and edited by Serge Blanc.

During the years of instruction he received from Maestro Georges Enescu, Serge Blanc noted and collected technical and interpretive indications for what Enescu called "The Himalayas of violinists": the Sonatas & Partitas for solo violin by Johann Sebastian Bach.

This exceptional document brings together these notes which concern sonority, phrasing, tempo, fingering, and expression. It is the culmination of the life's work of a master considered as one of the greatest interpreters of this work.

After having taught his own students for more than half a century, Serge Blanc wished to pass on to future generations of violinists the valuable guidance of Georges Enescu by collecting and commenting on his notes.

The complete document including Sonatas & Partitas BWV 1001 to BWV 1006, as well as Serge Blanc's recordings with Enescu, are available for free download at www.sergeblanc.com

Preface

It is common knowledge that the **Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin of JS Bach** were the daily bread of George Enescu, as they are for any musician who recognizes their value and necessity to their culture.

He considered these masterpieces as «the Himalayas of violinists» of which he was one of the greatest of the twentieth century!

He studied and taught this music all his life, both as a great performer with his reflection on all the technical problems posed by these particularly difficult works, but especially from the point of view of the brilliant composer that he was, understanding as well what this music expressed from the greatest musician of all time: JS Bach!

It was first and foremost necessary for Georges Enescu to transmit to future generations the wealth of his research, artistic, cultural and technical, that he had carried out and tested through his own magnificent career as a violinist alongside the career which mattered most to him, composer.

Once Georges Enescu returned to France in 1947 and decided to give lessons again, I had the opportunity to take them for five years, after which he offered me the unique opportunity to give a recital of the Sonatas with him at the piano! It was the chance of a lifetime.

During those five years, I had collected an enormous amount of his teachings, especially regarding what he considered the essential of musical culture: JS Bach!

I could not imagine at the time that the treasure he had passed to me, and to all his students (whom he modestly called his «colleagues»!), would serve me all my life as a musician... because it is only through experience that we understand what is contained in these works essential to the culture of any musician who plays a string instrument (violin, viola or cello).

It is no coincidence that all the great artists playing these instruments have spent their lives studying and playing these pieces throughout their careers... indeed reediting them in their own manner. But though Georges Enescu played, taught, and recorded them often... there is unfortunately no edition revealing his precise indications and his abundant comments!

One should be aware of the hardships that faced him at the time; he was over sixty years old and suffered from a serious disease of the spinal column, and he had lost at the same time all his possesions and his beloved homeland: Romania!

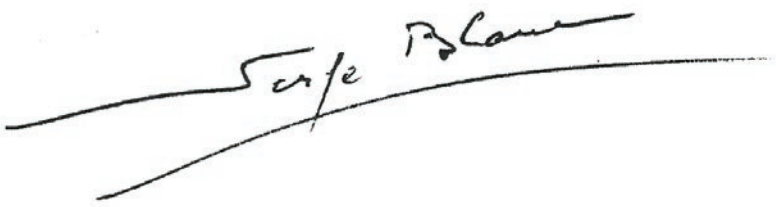
During the 55 years that followed, I continued thinking about the precious fruits of the education that I had received from this great master, learning how to pass on in my turn what I had received, passing on to each of my students the information that he had generously given to me in order to help them understand and interpret these pieces.

Proper tone, phrasing, musicality expressed in an artistic or intimate way, are the results obtained through a strict application of information and commentary gathered by patience and fierce determination!

For example concerning tempi advised by Enescu and shown at the beginning of each piece in this edition, he established these according to the indications given by the hand of JS Bach.

This single indication is essential... but is not in any edition. But when a young student (or teacher!) approaches these works for the first time, they cannot have this knowledge innately... Only later experience will eventually allow them to make their own interpretation and personal changes, having first understood the essential foundation thanks to proven sources.

It is the precious inheritance received by George Enescu that justifies the title **Educational Edition** that I have chosen.



Serge Blanc

Sonata II
BWV 1003

GRAVE ♪. = 44

It is no coincidence that Bach chose the indication GRAVE for this **introduction** to the **2nd Sonata**. This term refers to the slow tempo and particularly meditative character that is so far from that of the almost romantic improvisation at the **Adagio** of the **1st Sonata**.
Here we enter directly into the deeply religious and believing heart of this sublime author JS Bach. This page of music may be both the most contemplative and celebrant a human being had ever conceived up to that time.
Only Beethoven was able to find such peaks in certain slow and meditative passages of his string quartets.

This very slow work requires perfect control in the location, pressure, and placement of the bow on the string to find the sounds that music alone is able to use to translate the innermost feelings of the human soul pondering his tragic fate. Believer or not, we can not be insensitive to this melodic line interspersed with dramatic chords and mystical impulses towards a yearning for salvation, but which ends suspended on the Dominant... which leads to the following **Fugue!**... whose opening theme contrasts with its simplicity the metaphysical message that has just been made.

FUGA ♪. = 77

As with all **Fugues**, it begins with the successive entrance of each voice of which we must slightly accent first thrust. The theme cell consists of an anacrusis of two sixteenth notes followed by seven eighth notes. The development continues in various ways until the first **episode** that arrives in measure 45 and will itself develop until measure 61 where the theme returns in the soprano voice.
Meanwhile it is important to point out that on the last note of measure 39, when the theme enters in the bass the chords must be attacked from the top (which is unusual and thus quite difficult at first) in order to bring out the bass.

The same process recurs in measures 91 and 99 and then 272 and 281. As always we will avoid monotony by bringing out the indicated nuances, which follow the upward or downward changes of phrasing.

We must pay special attention to maintaining the original tempo ♪. = 77, which should be strictly resumed after the end of each phrase, and of which we can sometimes - but not always - expands the ending when it occurs after a long development.

Good luck!

Sonata II

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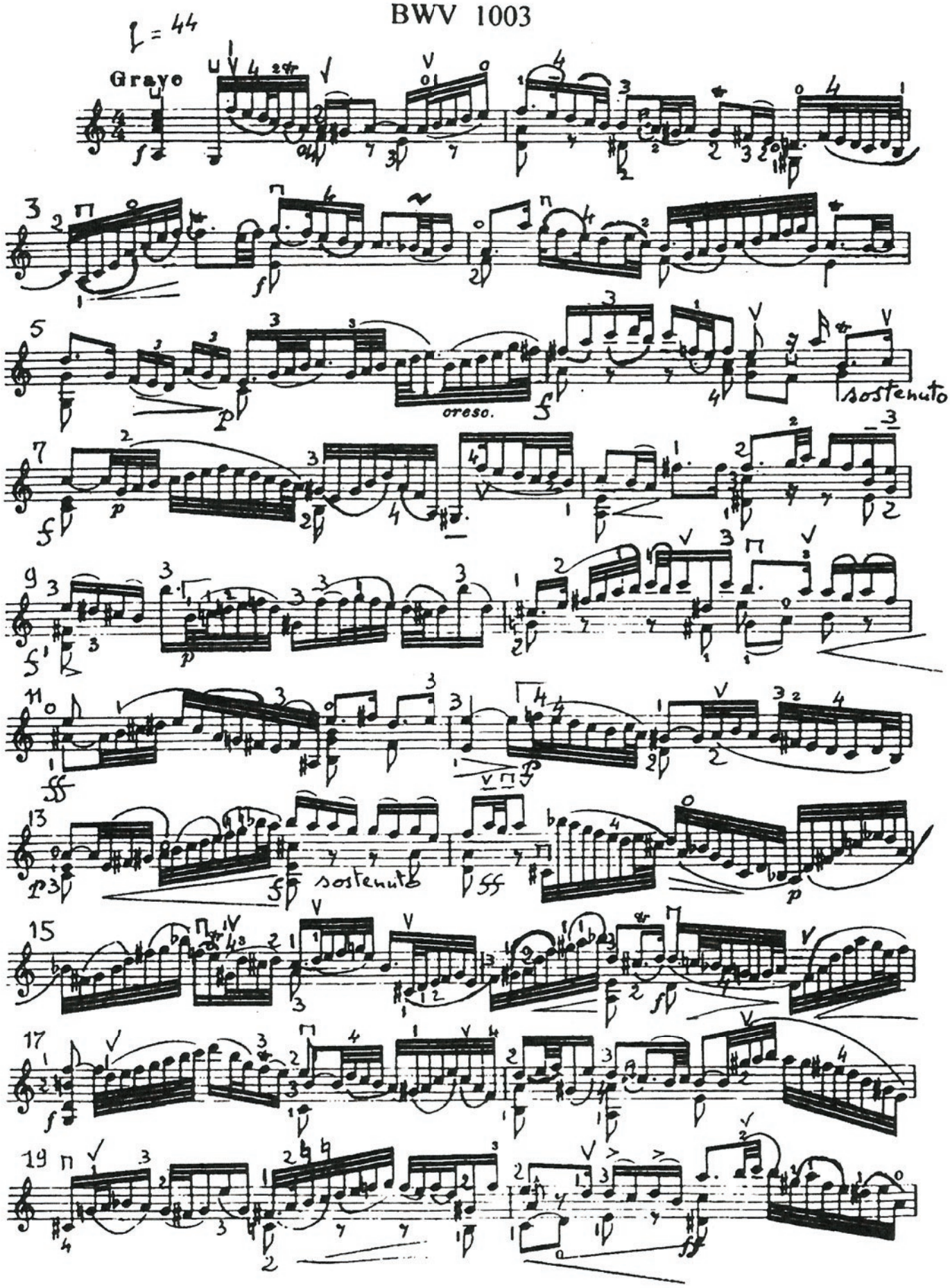
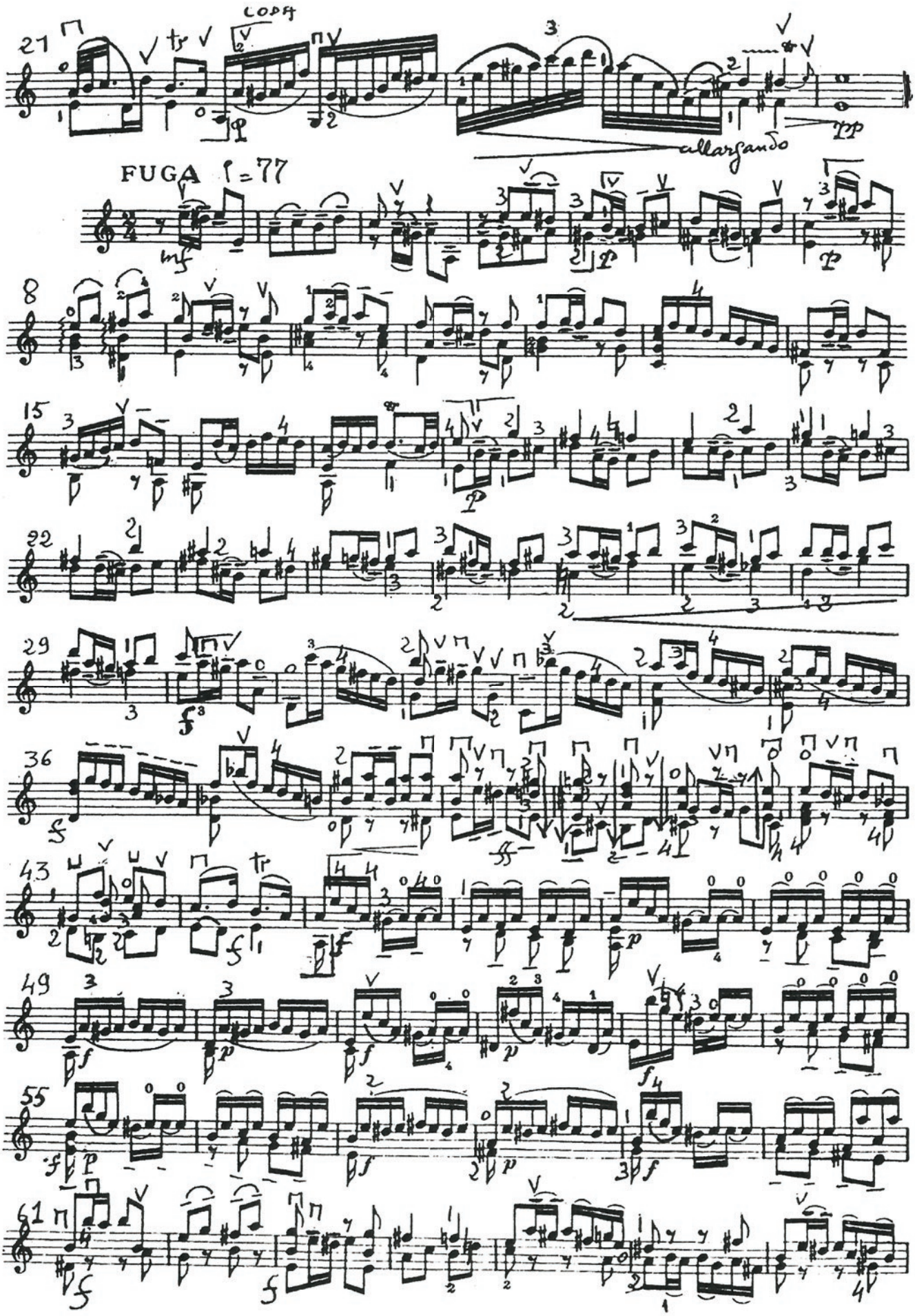
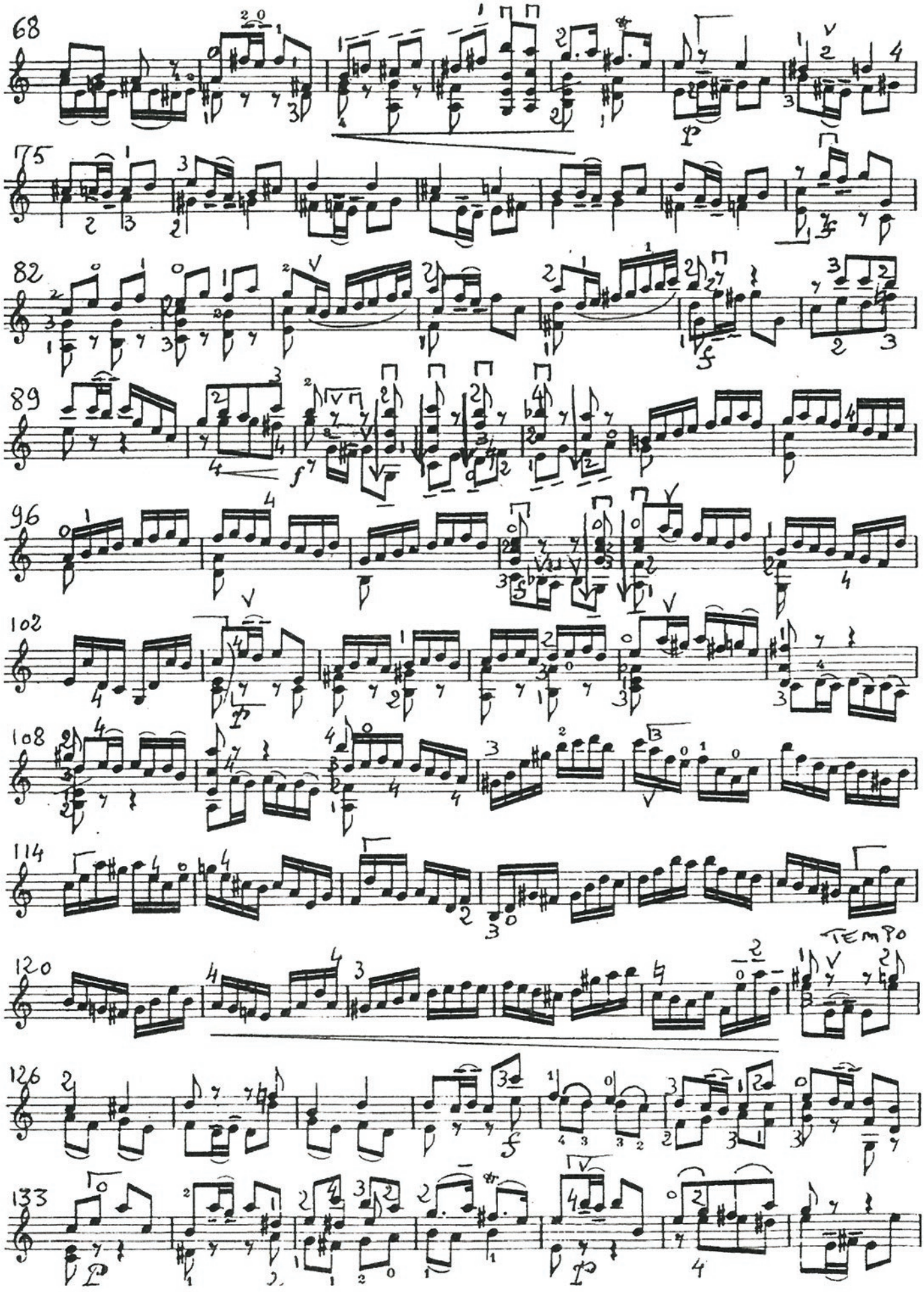
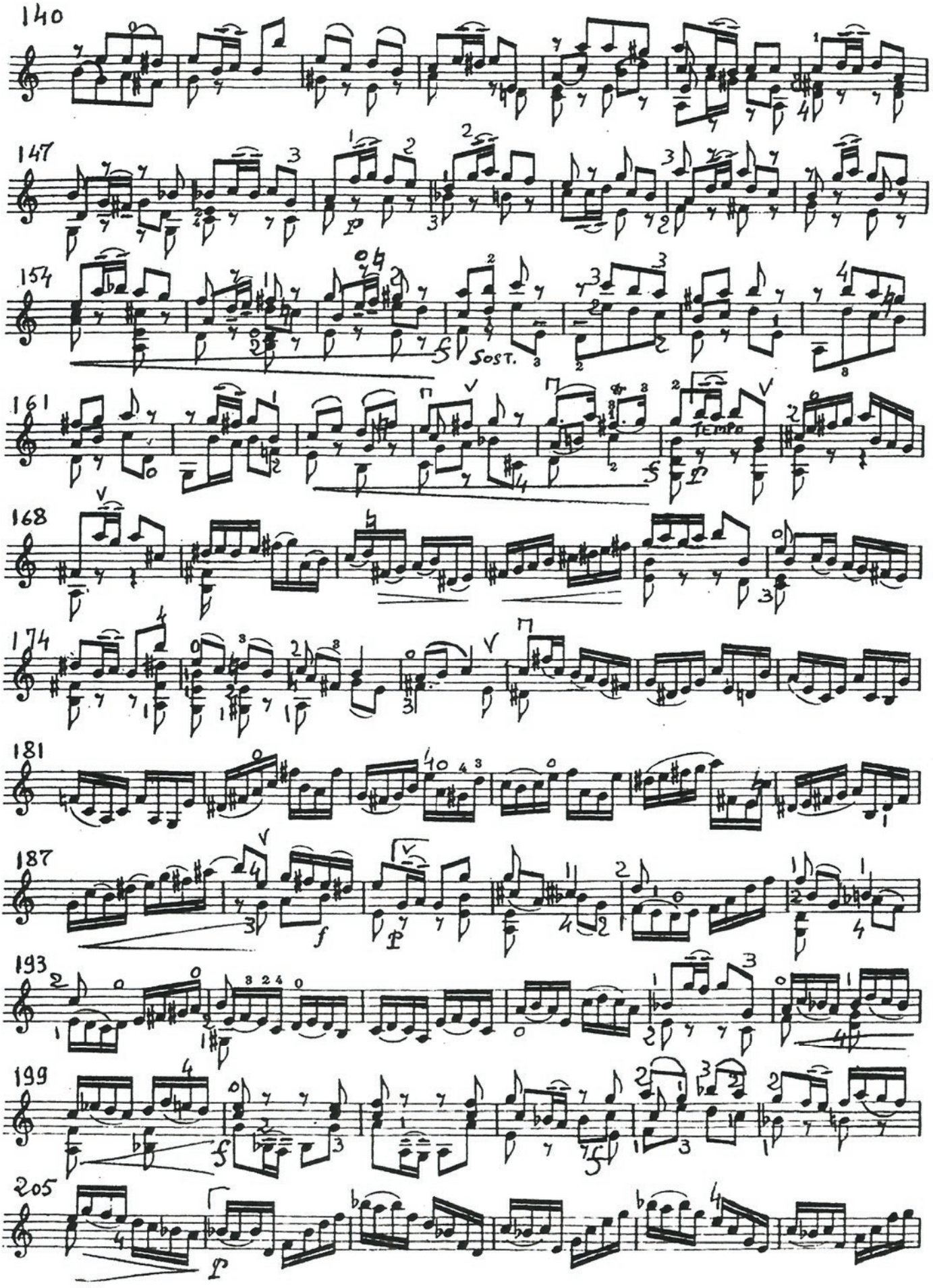
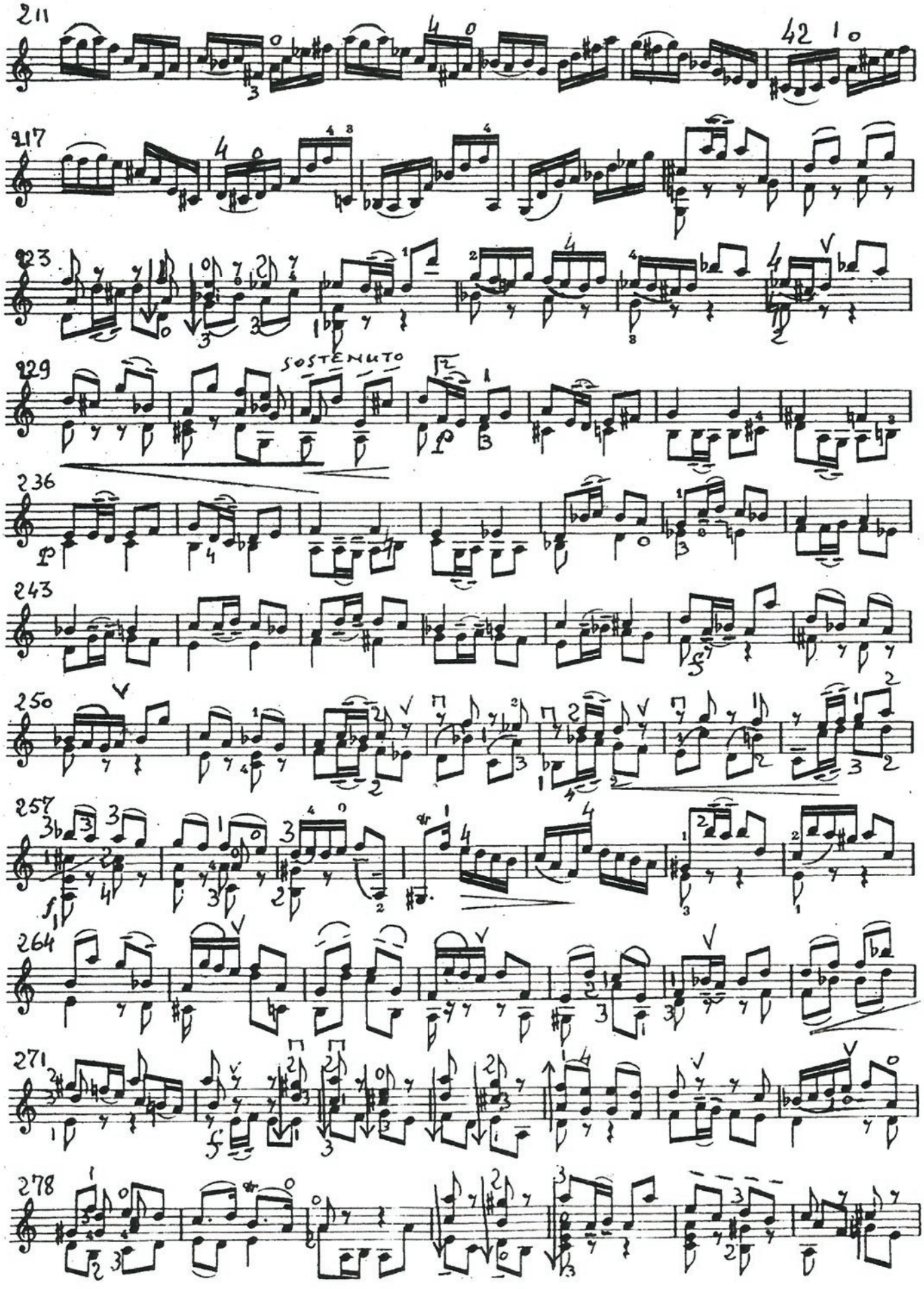
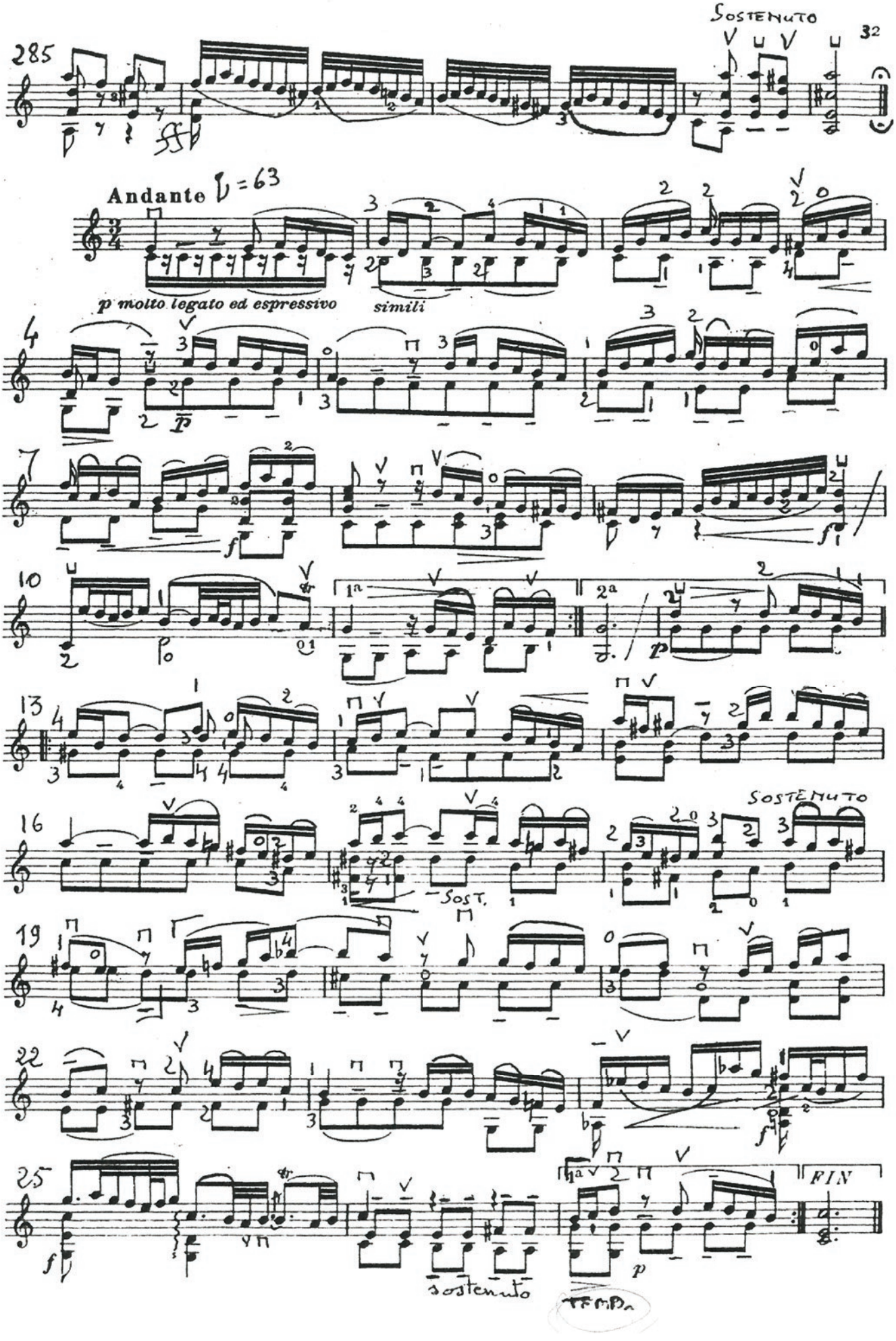



21
coda
allargando
pp
FUGA ♩=77
mf
8
15
22
29
36
43
49
55
61


68
75
82
89
96
102
108
114
120
TEMPO
126
133


140
147
154
SOST.
161
TEMPO
168
174
181
187
193
199
205


211
217
223
229
SOSTENUTO
236
243
250
257
264
271
278


Sostenuto
32
285
Andante ♩=63
p molto legato ed espressivo
simili
Sost.
Sostenuto
FIN
sostenuto
TEMPO

Sonata II
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ANDANTE
♪ = 63

As always JS Bach knows how to alternate moments of tension, like those of this **Fugue** rich in development and ending with a dazzling cadence on a brief but triumphant coda, with the calm provided by the **Andante**.

Enesco compared the accompaniment to « footprints in the snow ».

The particular difficulty of this piece is to bring out the upper melodic line, emphasizing it a bit more than the accompaniment, but discreetly. Be sure to sustain the melody without interrupting it with over accented bowing, and giving enough breathe to the sonority by lengthening the bow much more towards the fingerboard.

The left hand should be expressive, with a restrained vibrato on every note.

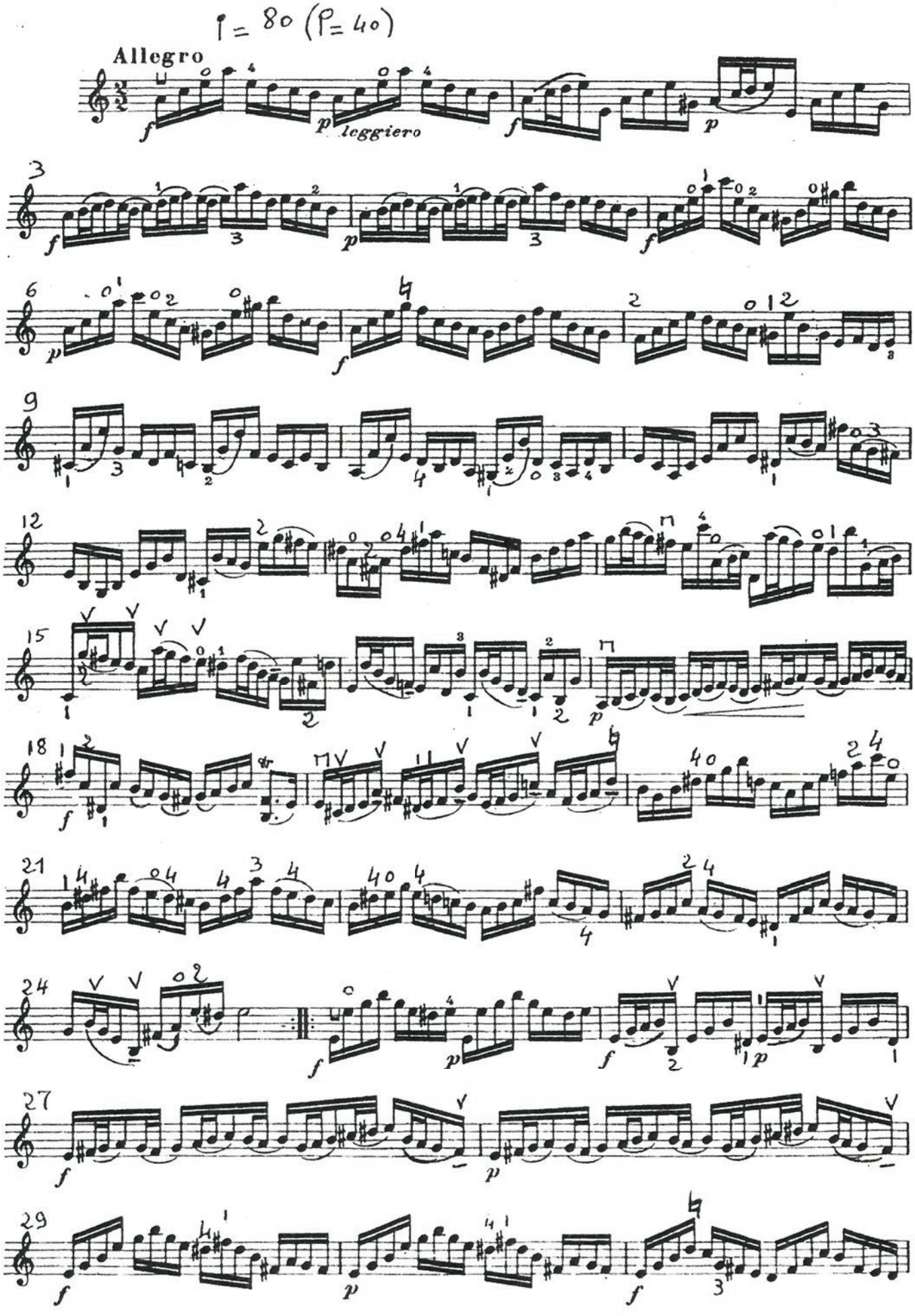
ALLEGRO
𝅗𝅥 = 40 **(BACH** $\frac{2}{2}$**)**
(♩. **= 80/84)**

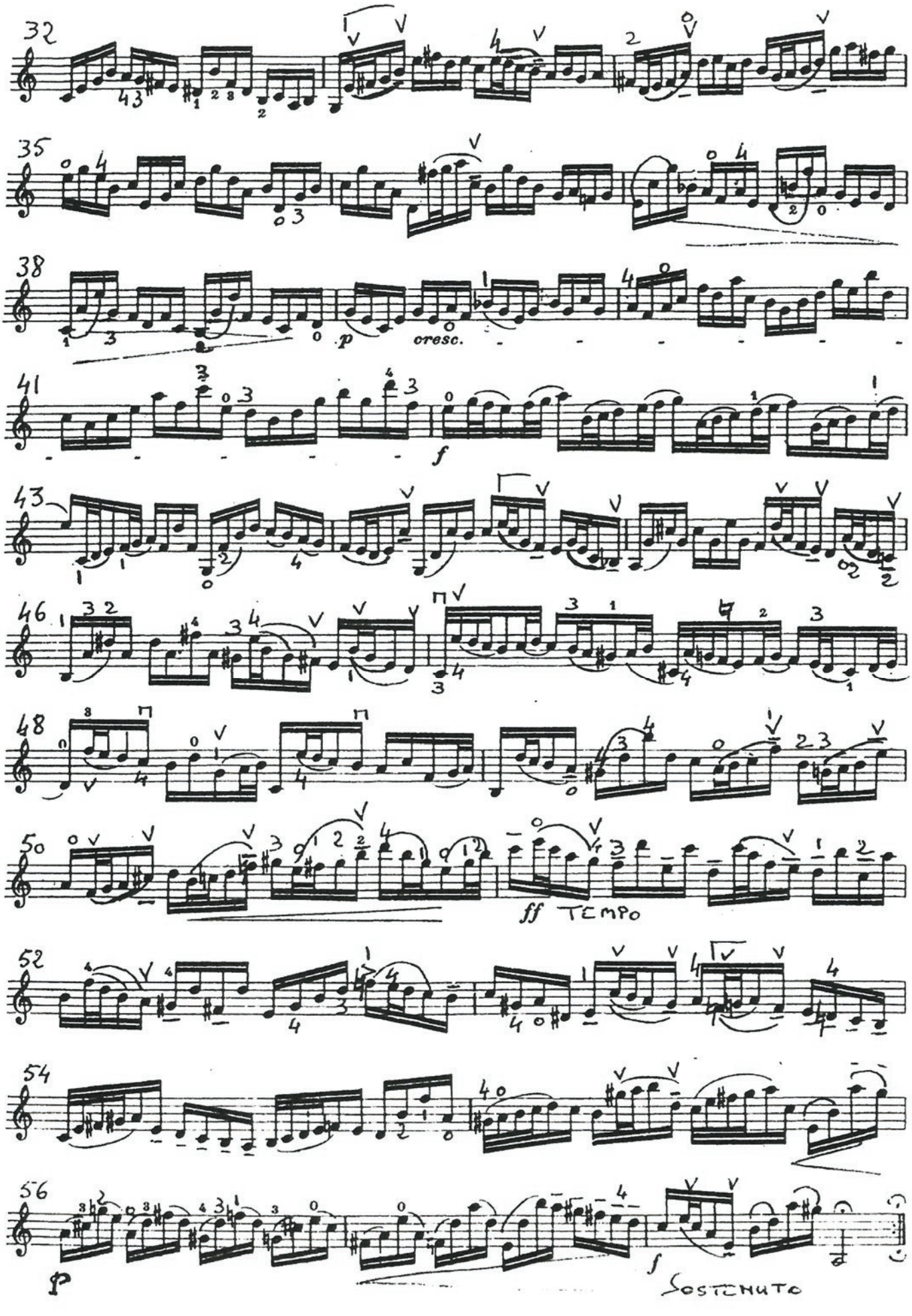
This last movement in turn brings a final contrast to the quiet prayer that has just taken place.

This is a brilliant **Allegro** - about ♩. = 80/84 - whose dynamics, alternating ***f*** and ***p***, are the author's own and must both be very clear.

As usual in these movements, rapid and with bariolage on all the strings, one uses little bow length with an ultra flexible right wrist and an almost immobile forearm.

Naturally the tempo must remain constant and without inappropriate accelerandi.


♩= 80 (♩= 40)
Allegro
leggiero


32
35
38
p
cresc.
41
f
43
46
48
50
ff TEMPO
52
54
56
p
f
SOSTENUTO

Conclusion in the form of ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am fully aware of what it means to boldly approach so closely two prestigious personalities like Jean-Sebastian Bach and George Enescu.

The first has been recognized for so long and everywhere as a Demi-God-Creator of music, and the second as the greatest interpreter of the **Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin**.

Having had the exceptional good fortune to work with Enesco for 5 years I always knew that he was offering me such a precious message that I immediately wrote down even the smallest detail with care... and I studied this and passed it to my students for 60 years...

I became aware during my participation of the Symposium of Bucharest for the 50th anniversary of his death that I had a duty to future generations of violinists to share Enescu's guidance, which I had jealously preserved for so long.

Having been unable to do this himself due to circumstances, I understood it was imperative to do so in his place before the information was lost forever.

Serge Blanc and Georges Enescu bowing at the end of their concert (Paris, 1952)
(recording available on www.sergeblanc.com)

A Serge Blanc, en souvenir de sa remarquable
exécution de ma Sonate roumaine, bien
amicalement
Georges Enesco
1952

For more information :

www.sergeblanc.com

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