FRANZ SCHUBERT

SONATA FOR THE ARPEGGIONE AND PIANOFORTE

Transcribed for Viola & Piano in G minor
by Alan Bonds
based on the Urtext

ARCODORO PUBLICATIONS

PREFACE

For generations, viola players (and cellists) have studied and performed the Arpeggione Sonata by Schubert in a variety of transcriptions which all have one thing in common–they are in the original key of A minor. This edition makes the bold and logical step of transposing the entire work down a whole tone to G minor for reasons outlined below. At last the natural resonances of the instrument can be heard and some of the passage work (especially in the last movement) now suits the tuning of the viola.

We know that the Arpeggione was a short-lived hybrid of the cello and the guitar, invented in 1823 by Georg Staufer. It was also known as the guitar-cello, the bowed-guitar, and the Guitarre d'amour. Like the guitar, it had six strings and frets on the fingerboard, but it had an elevated fingerboard and was bowed like the cello in the 'gamba' position. In fact it sounds like it shared more in common with the viola da gamba than any other instrument. Vincenz Schuster, a guitar-player from Schubert's circle of friends, seems to have been the principal (or only?) exponent of the instrument, and who published a method for the Arpeggione in 1825. In this method Schuster published an engraving of the Arpeggione which looks suspiciously like a Viola da Gamba–it has a quite distinctive 'waist'–but with f holes and frets to the very top of the fingerboard. This illustration is at odds with photographs of the two surviving instruments attributed to Staufer and Mitteis. They have a distinctive guitar curvature, have C holes and are likewise extensively fretted. The tuning for the instrument was: e2 a2 d3 g3 b3 e4, the same as the guitar. Similarly, the part is written an octave higher than it sounds.

It is very clear that Schubert knew how to write for the guitar. He was by all accounts a very accomplished guitarist and often used it in conceiving his songs. It was also a very popular household instrument in Schubert's Vienna. He writes very idiomatically, using open string resonances and arpeggiated passage work on this E–A–D axis. The problem is that the viola needs the same resonances and patterns based on the C–G–D open strings. This G minor version does precisely that. A few of the chords in the arpeggione part have been altered to suite the viola and only occasionally was it necessary to transpose an octave higher.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

The Arpeggione Sonata has become an important part of the viola repertoire, especially in the absence of a major work by another important composer from this period. Arguments about whether it sounds better on the viola or cello are unimportant. They are both transcriptions. As a student I dutifully studied the A minor version and performed it many times. Later I taught it. In the background I was performing Schubert's chamber music in a professional quartet. Increasingly we consulted the manuscripts and newly published urtext editions in search of explanations for some of Schubert's idiosyncrasies. I became increasingly uneasy about how the Arpeggione Sonata 'sat' on the instrument. I began experimenting and finally the penny dropped–simply transposing it down a tone transformed the sound.

In preparing this version I initially consulted the excellent Bärenreiter Urtext edition. Finally I aquired the invaluable Fuzeau edition of the autograph and continued editing from there. Like a large proportion of Schubert's work, the Sonata was never published in his lifetime. Unlike Beethoven, for example, we can't consult the manuscript, the first published edition, and then read the correspondence with his publishers about his true intentions. However, despite the fact that Schubert's manuscripts are about as messy as most composers, and given the speed at which the pen moved on the page, his intentions are quite clear. There are a few ambiguous markings and a few inconsistencies. These I have faithfully retained in the piano score and the 'urtext' viola part. I have attempted to resolve some of them and add a few suggestions for bowings and fingerings in the edited viola part. Depending on the approach you take to playing this work, they may, or may not, be applicable. If we accept that the Arpeggione probably sounded like a Viola da Gamba and was destined to be played in a salon accompanied by a modest piano of the period, a lighter approach would be more appropriate. If played in the modern concert hall accompanied by a concert grand piano, more robust bowings and fingerings are obviously necessary. I suggest that you too consult the autograph and decide on your own interpretation.

NOTES ON INTERPRETATION

The Sonata seems to consist of three quite distinct ingredients –song, dance and bravura passage work–which need to be characterized as such and not confused.

As far as the lyrical element is concerned, Leopold von Sonnleithner, a contemporary of Schubert, wrote:

> *"I heard him accompany and rehearse his songs more than a hundred times . Above all, he always kept the most strict and even time, except in the few cases where he had expressly indicated in the writing a ritardando, morendo, accelerando, etc. Furthermore he never allowed violent expression in performance. The Lieder singer, as a rule, only relates experiences and feelings of others; he does not himself impersonate the characters whose feelings he describes. Poet, composer, and singer must conceive the song lyrically, not dramatically. With Schubert especially, the true expression, the deepest feeling is already inherent in the melody as such, and is admirably enhanced by the accompaniment. Everything that hinders the flow of the melody and disturbs the evenly flowing accompaniment is, therefore, exactly contrary to the composer's intention and destroys the musical effect."*

From this quotation it is clear that one should perform this piece with a more restrained "classical" approach and without any of the histrionics typical of the later 19th Century. (Even 50 years earlier, Leopold Mozart had railed at the indulgences of virtuosi, especially those who couldn't keep an even tempo and insisted on embellishing everything in a tasteless manner). Regardless of the new expressive ingredients Schubert deployed (especially his harmony), he must have seen himself more as the son of Mozart than as a prophet of romanticism. His music is imbued with those important classical values of simplicity, naturalism, balance, restraint and moderation. His lyricism is of the Lieder rather than opera. His preference was for the subtle and refined expression of chamber music rather than the cheap dramatic mannerisms of the opera house.

Schubert's use of dynamic markings has been the subject of great debate for generations. His usual dynamic palette rages from *pp* to *f* with only two *ff* chords at the end of the outer movements. He also uses *sf* and *fp* for special emphasis, but it is the difference between the different accent (>) signs which provokes contoversy. In the autograph manuscript the small accents are easy to see, and so are the longer diminuendos, but some seem to be intermediate. Writing at great speed, Schubert's pen often rotates the small accent to look like a figure 7 which actually makes them easier to spot–but even these are by no means consistent. The accents are lesser intensifications in the hierarchy of nuances (and metric accents) and often as points of arrival in phrases. In some cases they can be played literally as miniature diminuendos on one note. In the last movement, the reiterated accents on the first beat of each bar seem to reassure the performer that it is, after all, a dance and not a song (a return to vigorous life after the dreamy song interlude of the 2nd Movement!).

MORE NOTES ON THIS EDITION

Page turns in the viola part are a nightmare. I have chosen not to turn at the double bar in the first movement, and rather than compromise the clarity of the typeset I use a 3 page spread for the first 3 pages and again in the 3rd movement.

The solo viola part contains no bowings and fingerings. I have attempted to simply present Schubert's original slurs and phrasings, no matter how ambiguous thy may be.

The few necessary octave transpositions are a matter of personal preference. The piano part contains the original registers in the *8vb* clef for players to consult and decide for themselves.

For an amusing and exhaustive reference to the work from a bassist's perspective, I highly recommend an article emtitled Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata Revisited by Michael Hovnanian & David Cardon presented by Discordia Music (2001) www.discordia-music.com.

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June 2016
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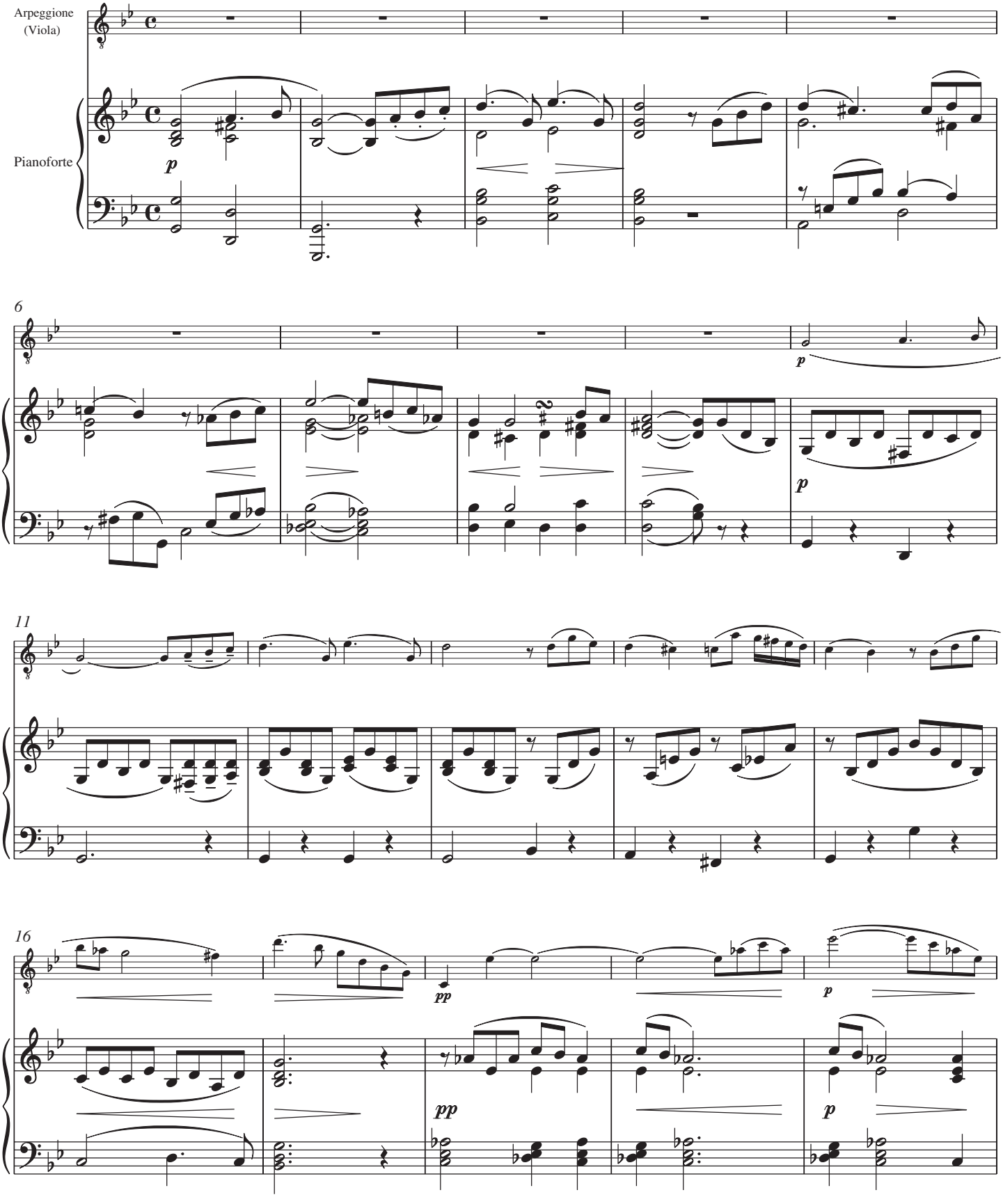
Sonata for Arpeggione & Pianoforte

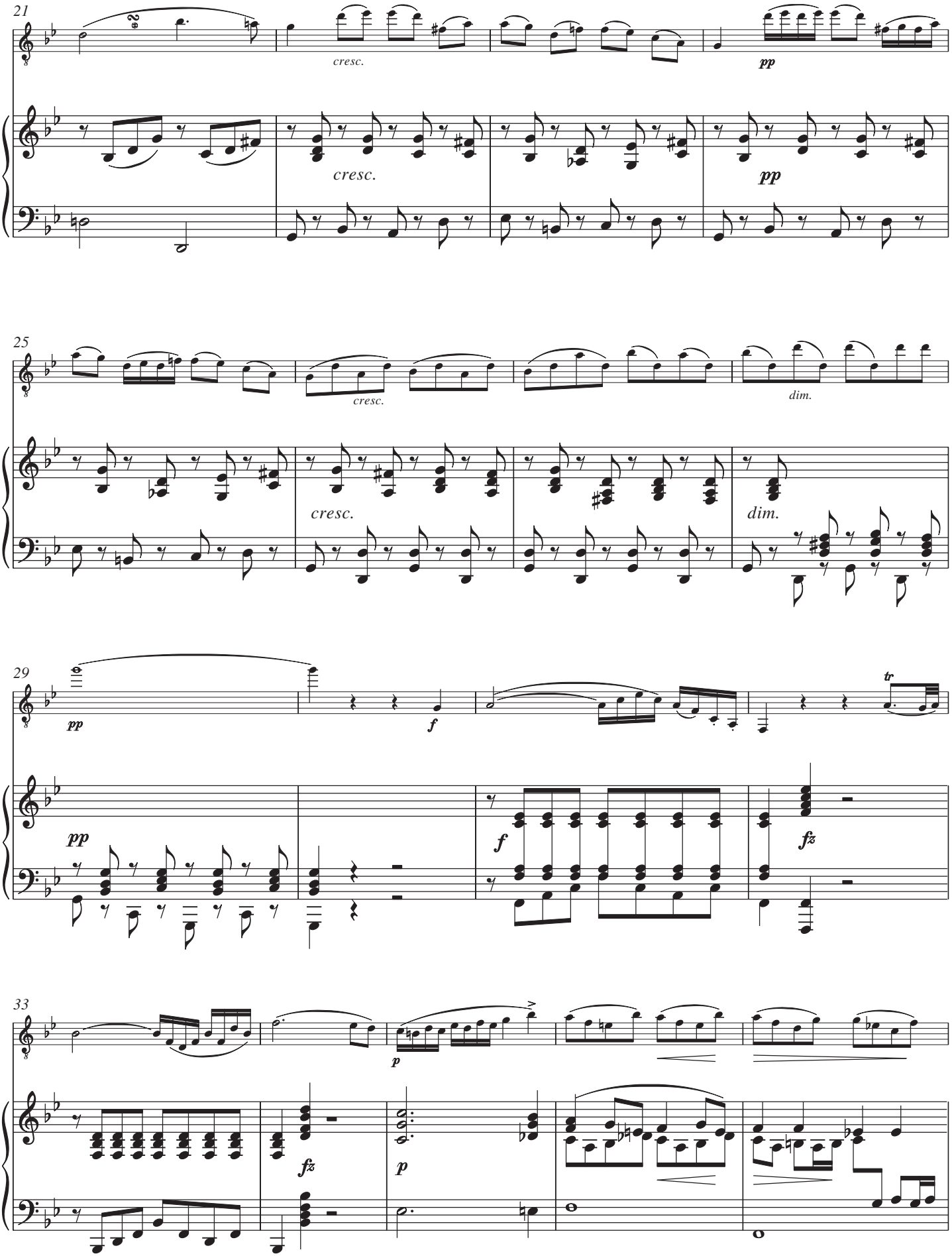
in g minor

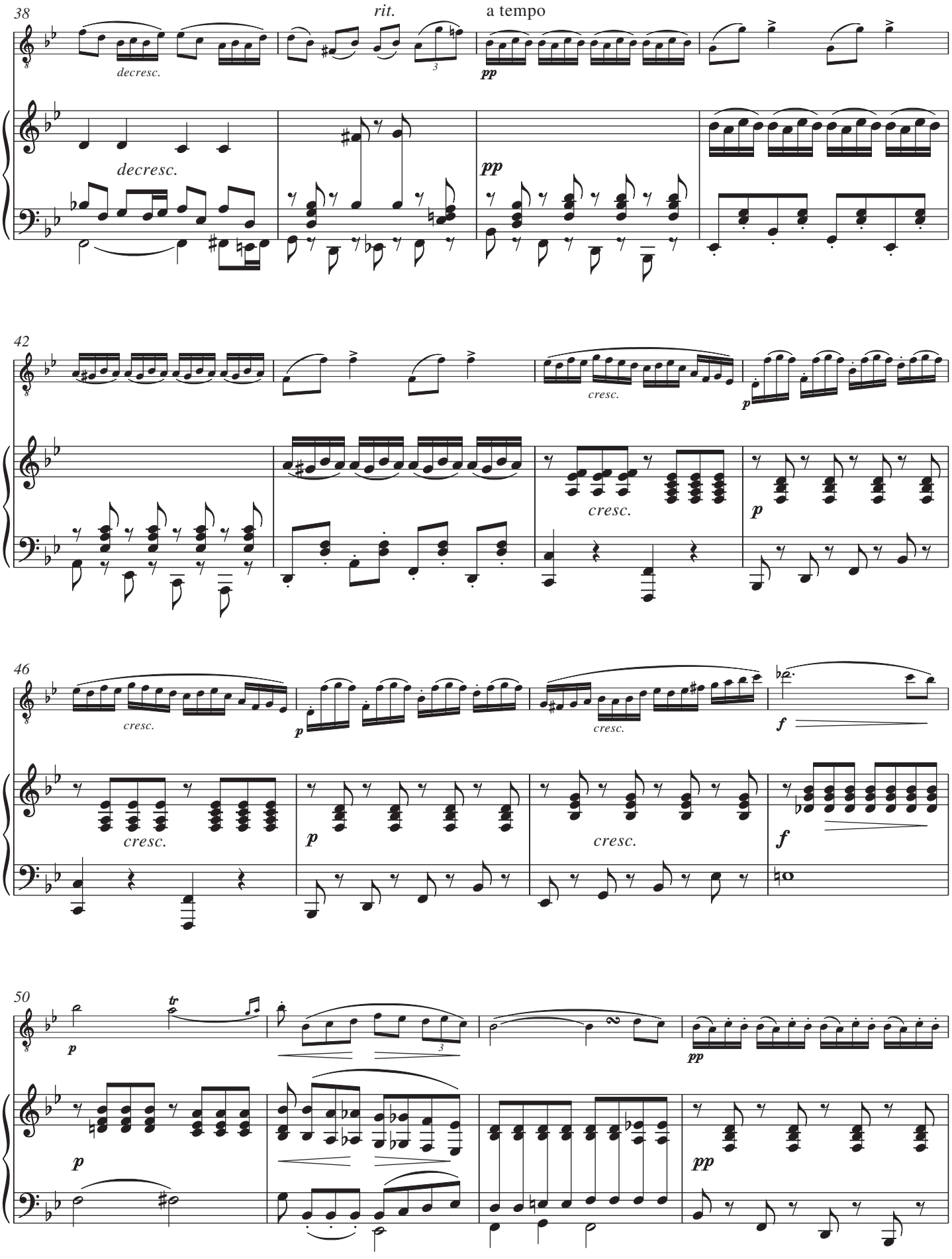
Transcribed & edited
from the autograph manuscript
by Alan Bonds

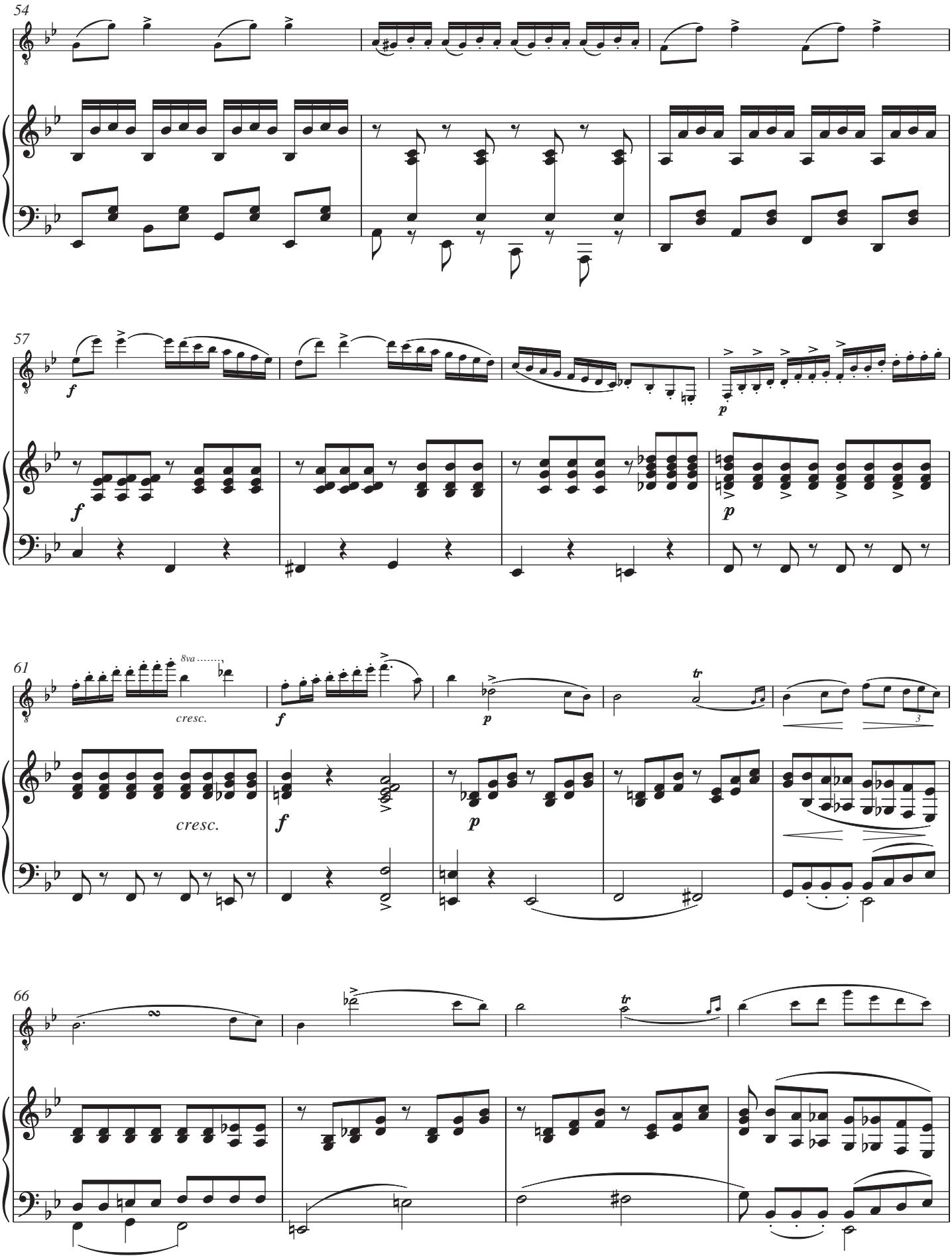
Franz Schubert
(1824)

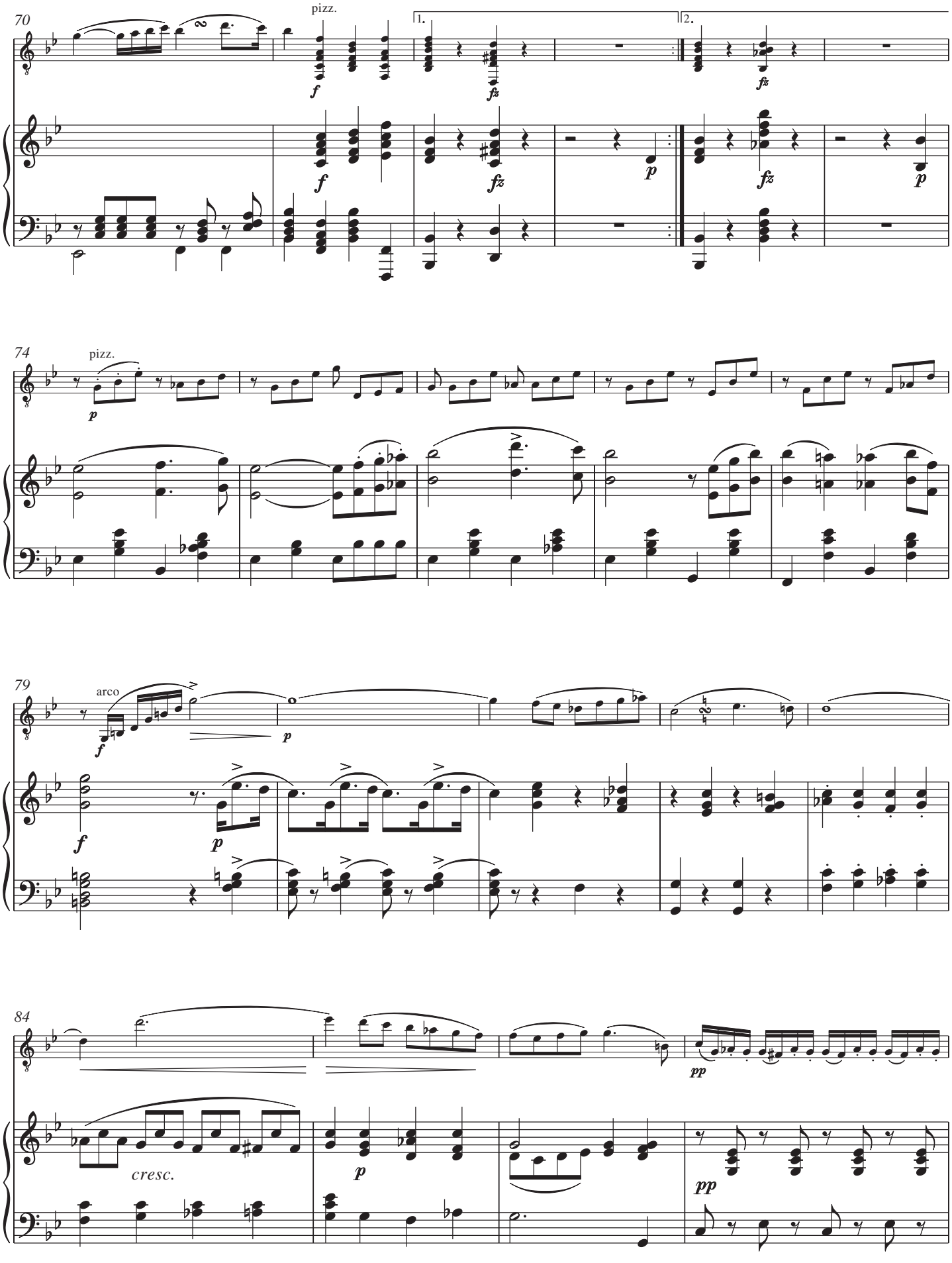
Allegro moderato

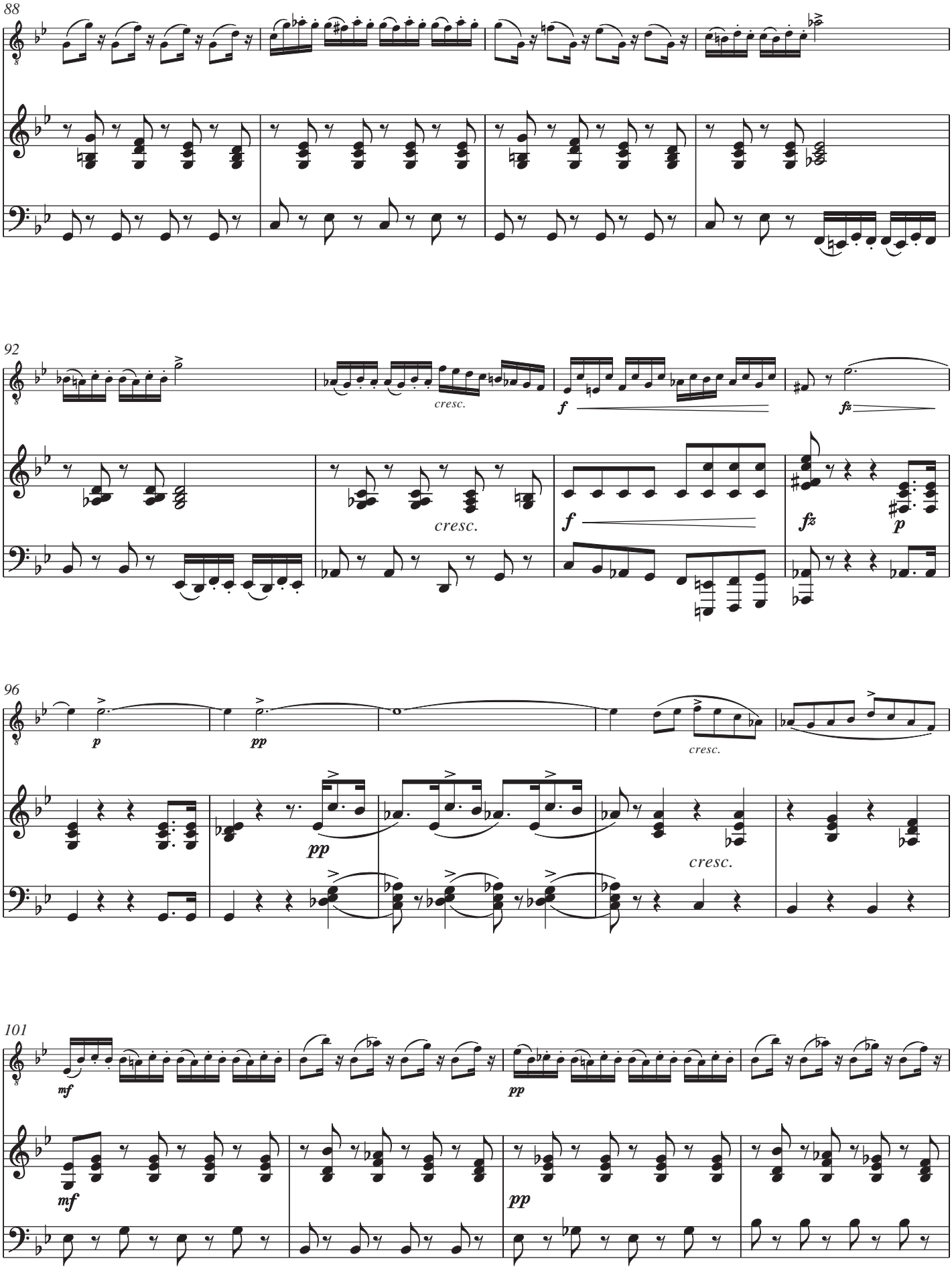


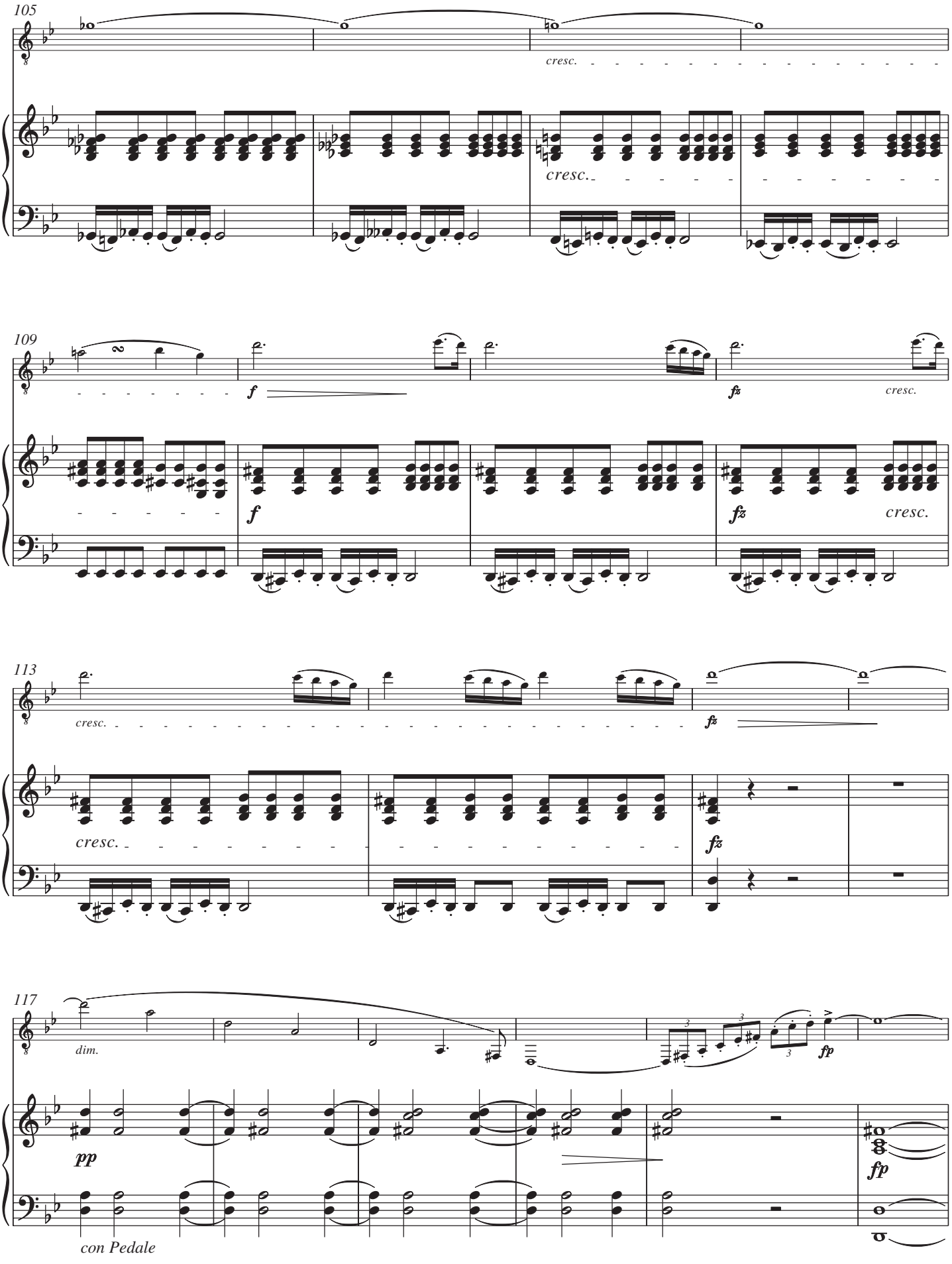

21
cresc.
pp
cresc.
pp
25
cresc.
dim.
cresc.
dim.
29
pp
f
tr
pp
f
fz
33
p
fz
p

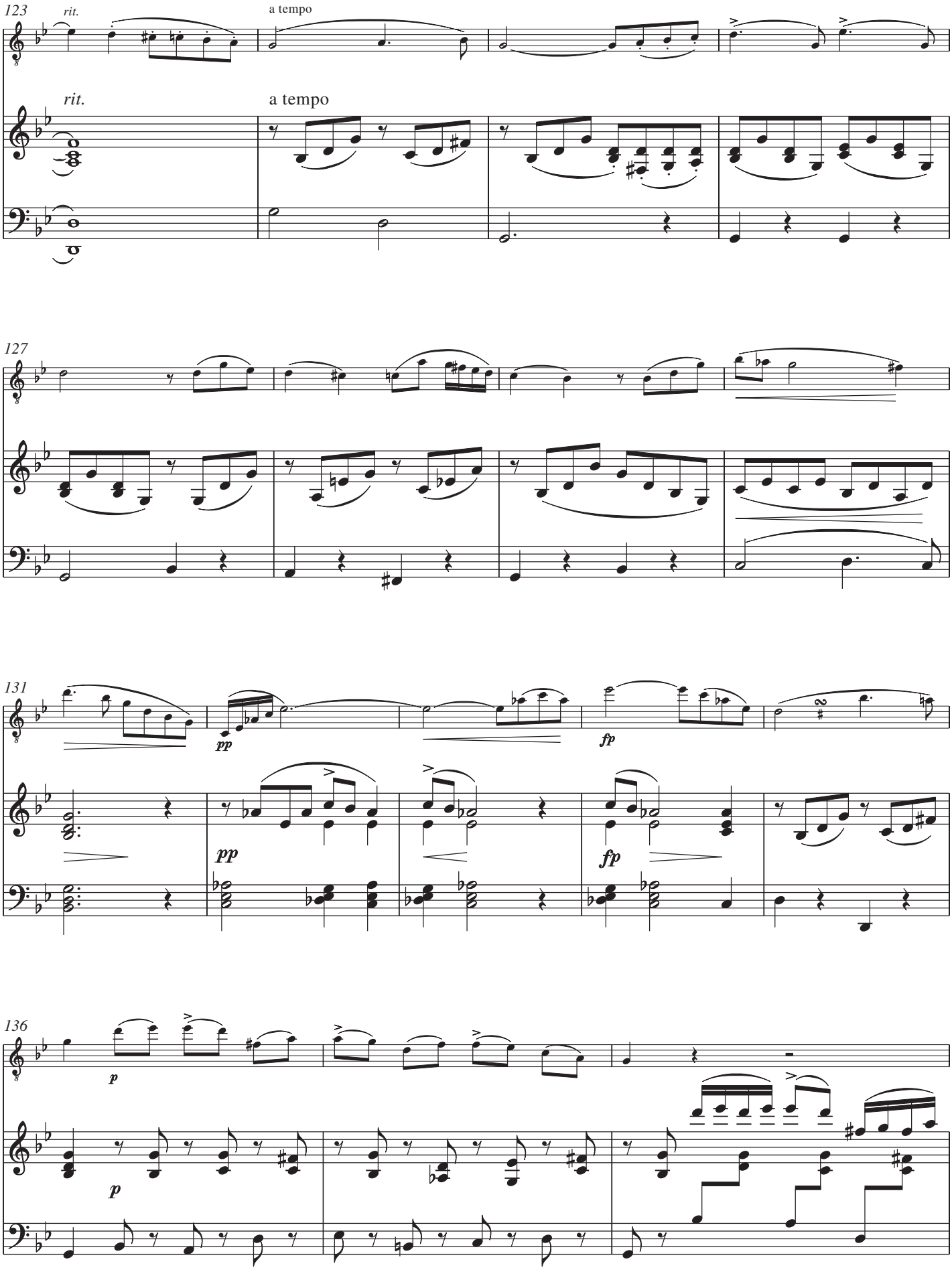

38
rit.
a tempo
decresc.
pp
42
cresc.
46
cresc.
50
tr

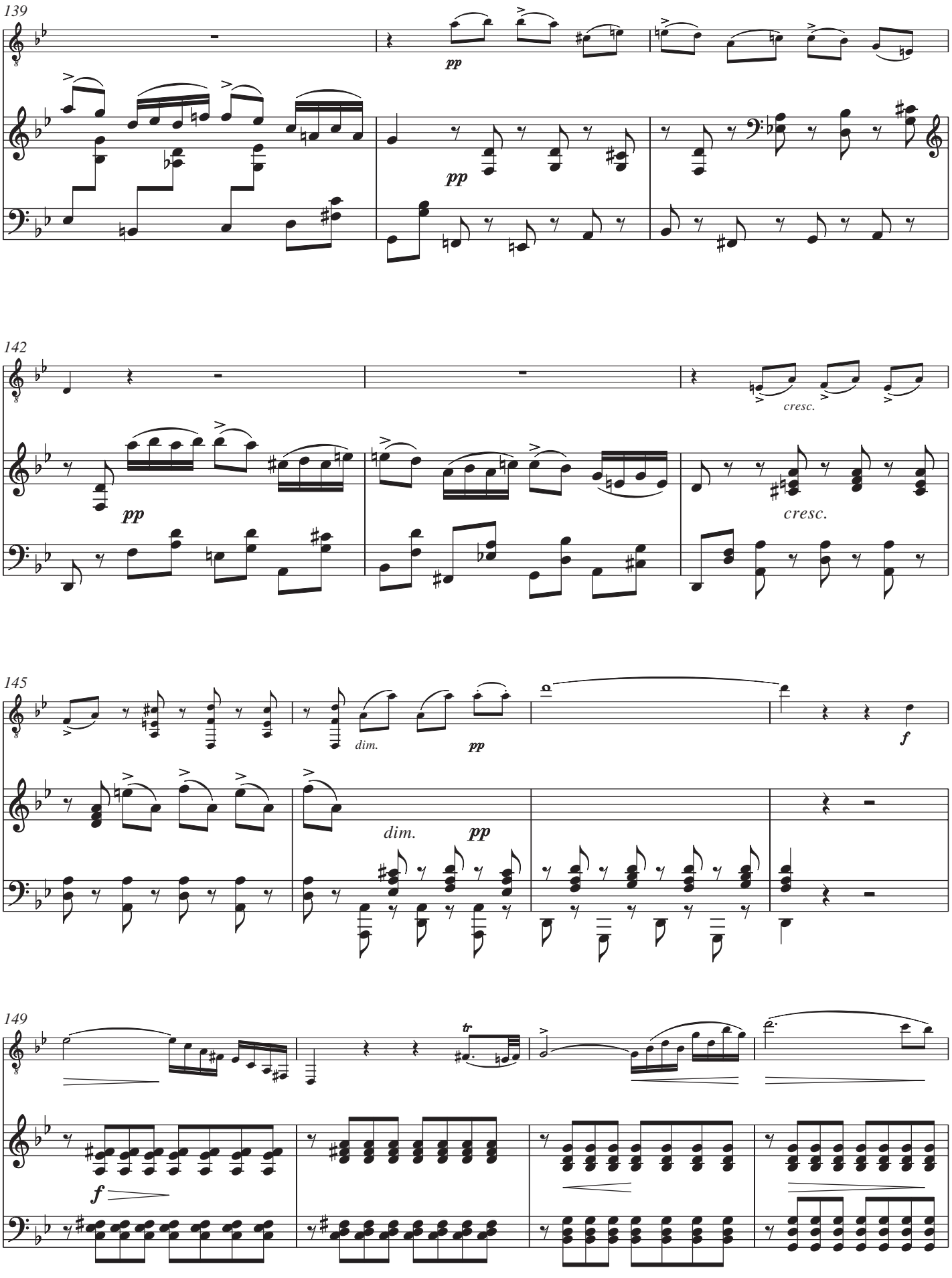

54
57
f
p
61
8va
cresc.
f
p
tr
cresc.
f
p
66
tr

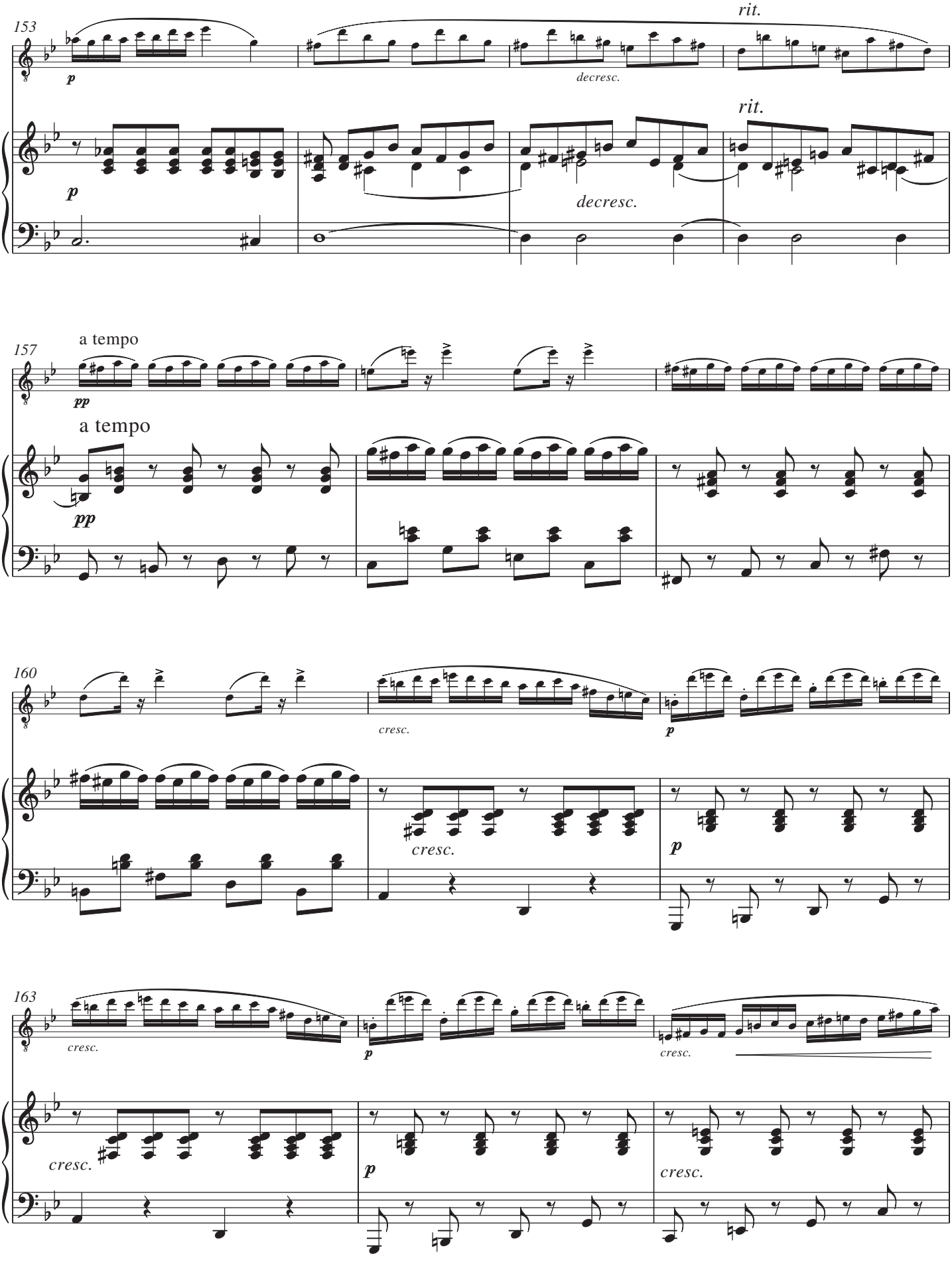

70
pizz.
1.
2.
74
pizz.
79
arco
84
cresc.

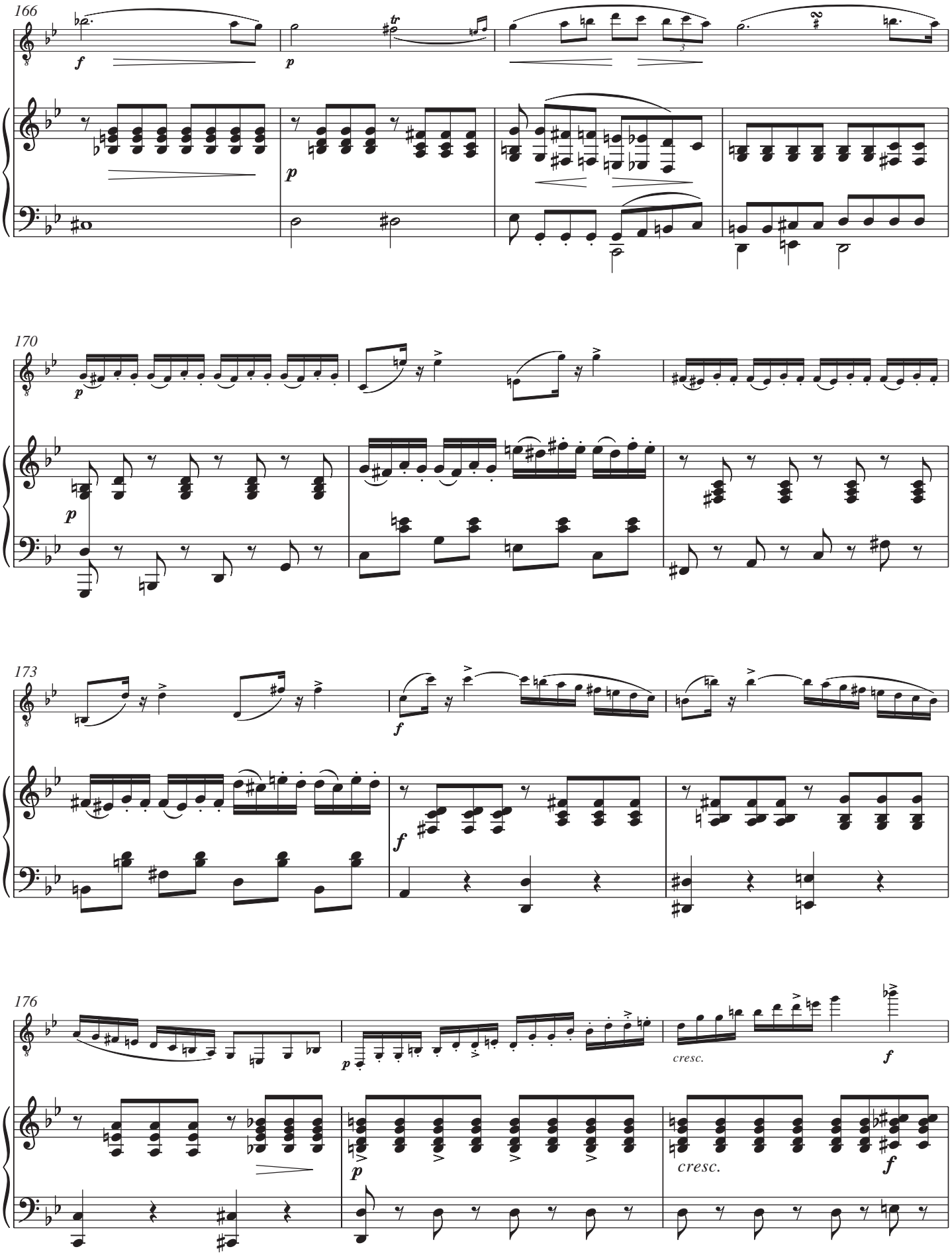

88
92
cresc.
f
fz
cresc.
f
fz
p
96
p
pp
cresc.
pp
cresc.
101
mf
pp
mf
pp

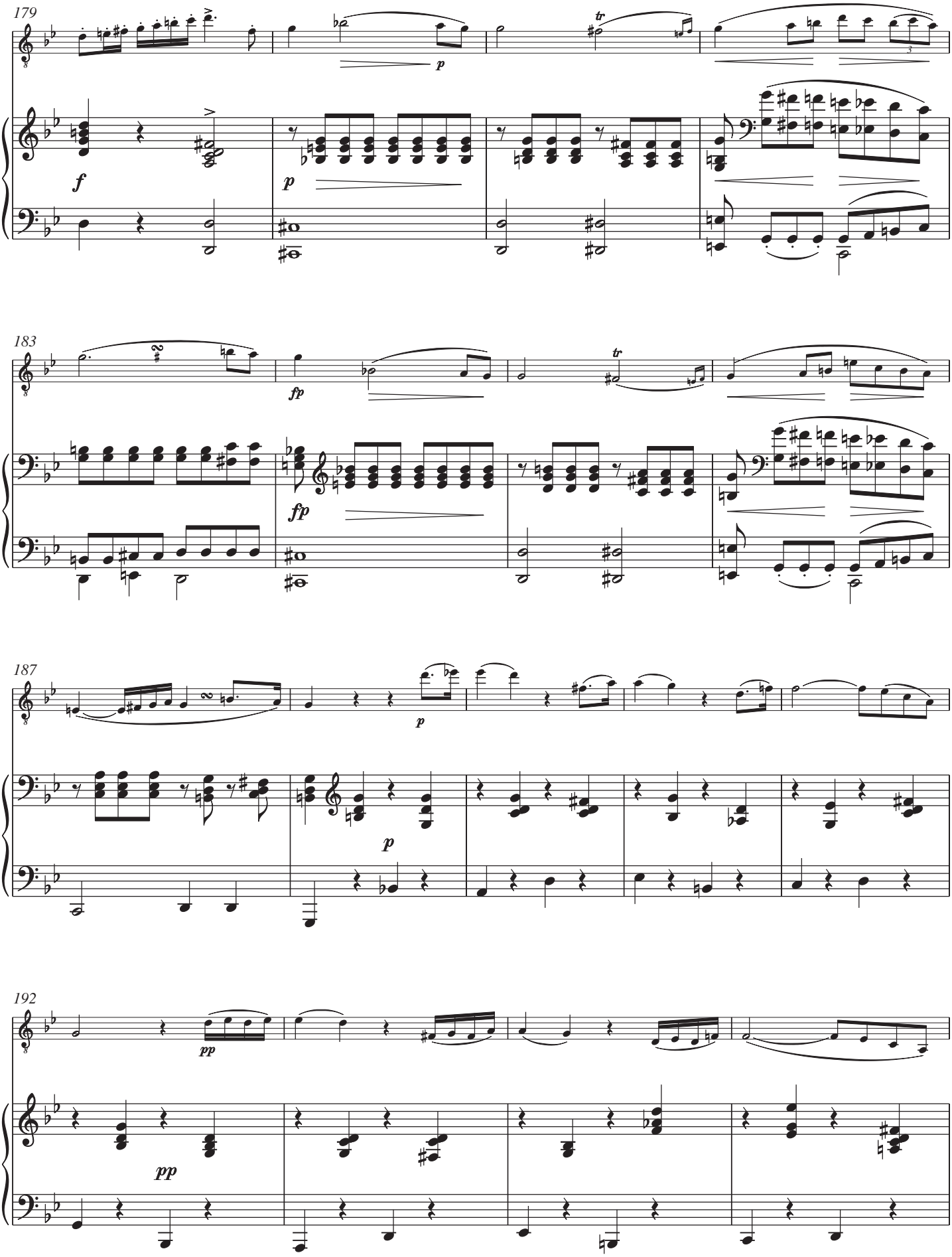

105
cresc.
cresc.
109
f
fz
cresc.
f
fz
cresc.
113
cresc.
fz
cresc.
fz
117
dim.
fp
pp
fp
con Pedale

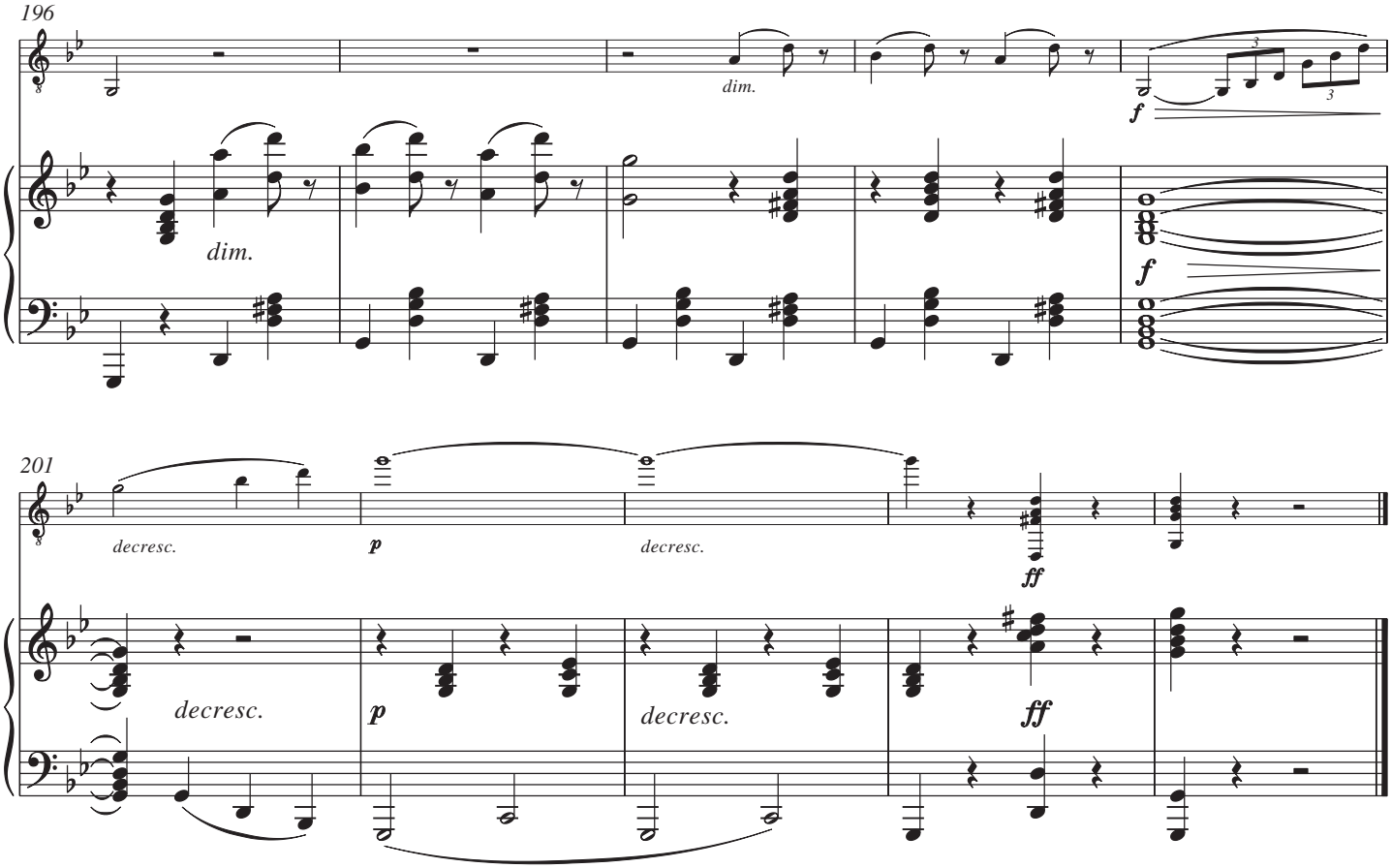

123
rit.
a tempo
rit.
a tempo
127
131
pp
fp
pp
fp
136
p
p


139
pp
pp
142
cresc.
pp
cresc.
145
dim.
pp
f
dim.
pp
149
tr
f

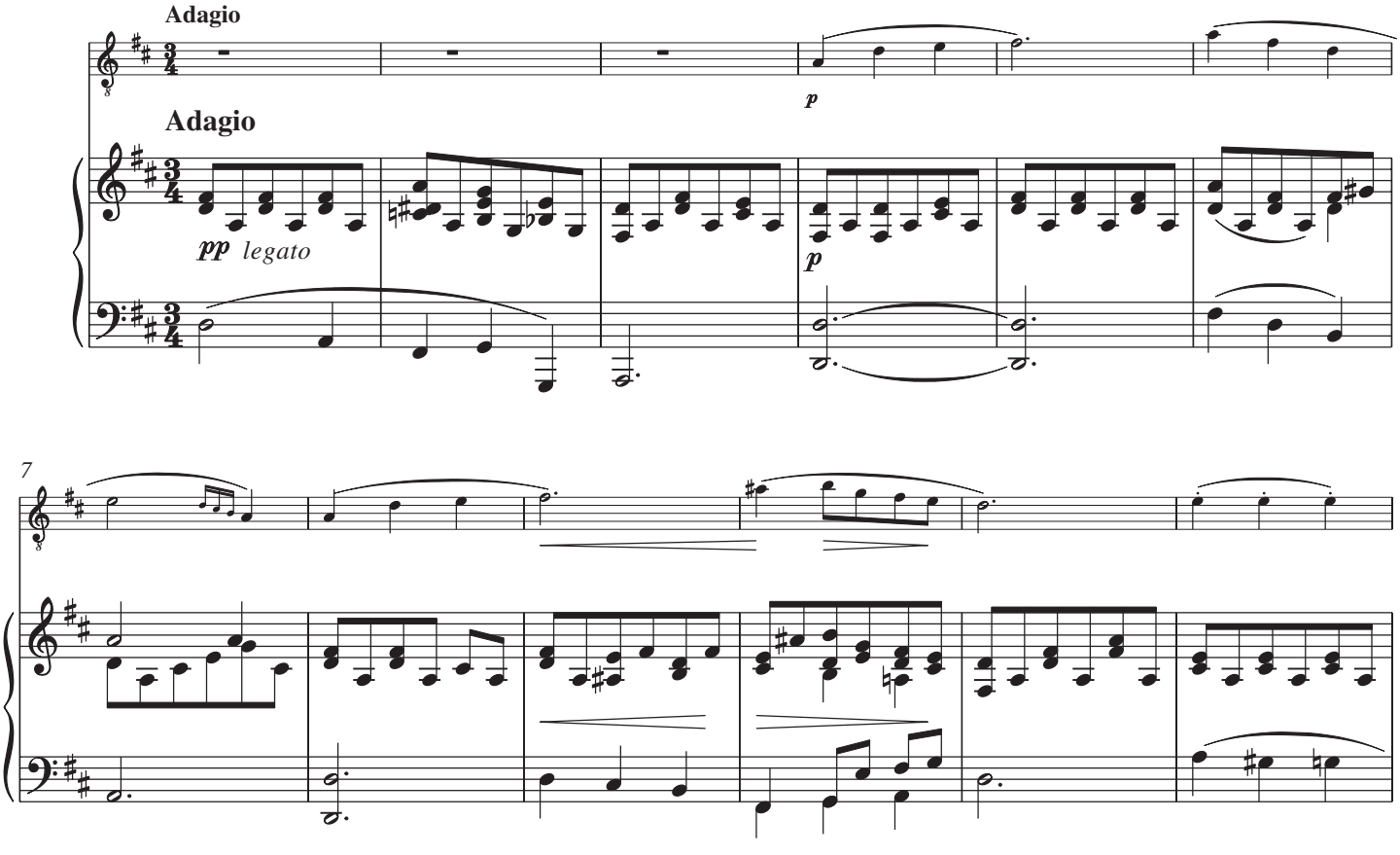

153
rit.
p
decresc.
rit.
p
decresc.
157
a tempo
pp
a tempo
pp
160
cresc.
p
cresc.
p
163
cresc.
p
cresc.
cresc.
p
cresc.

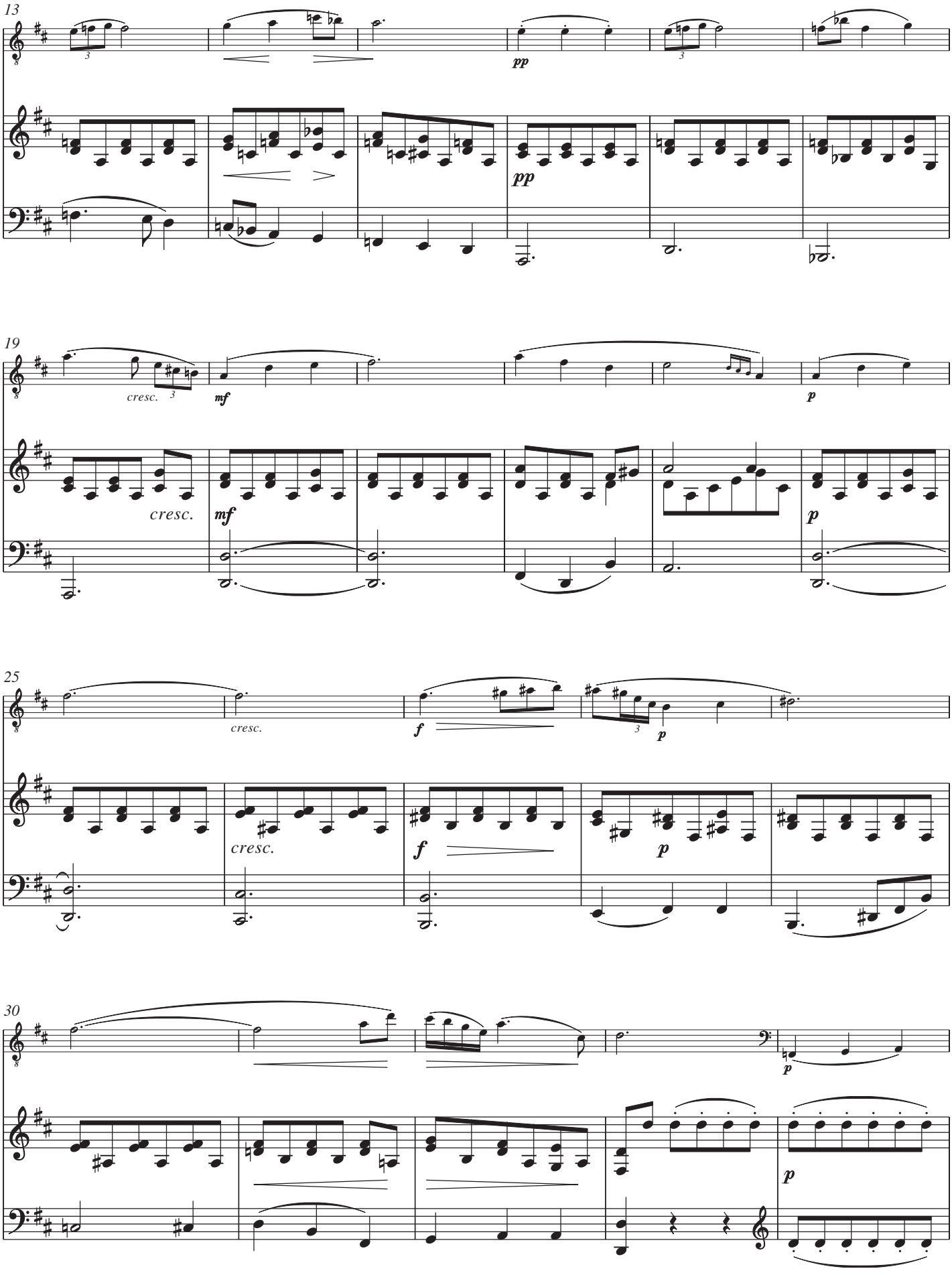

166
170
173
176
cresc.
cresc.

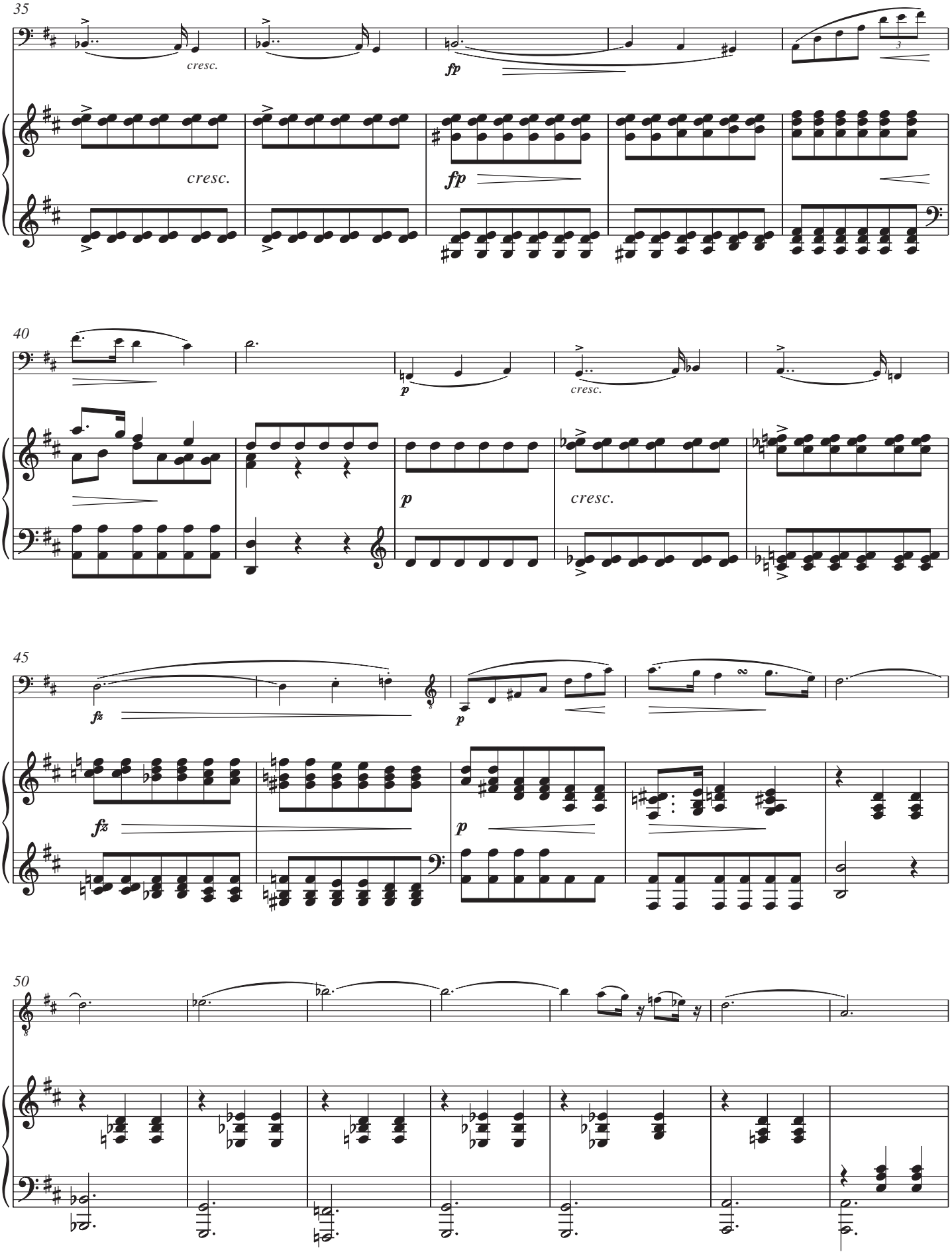

179
f
p
tr
183
fp
fp
tr
187
p
p
192
pp
pp

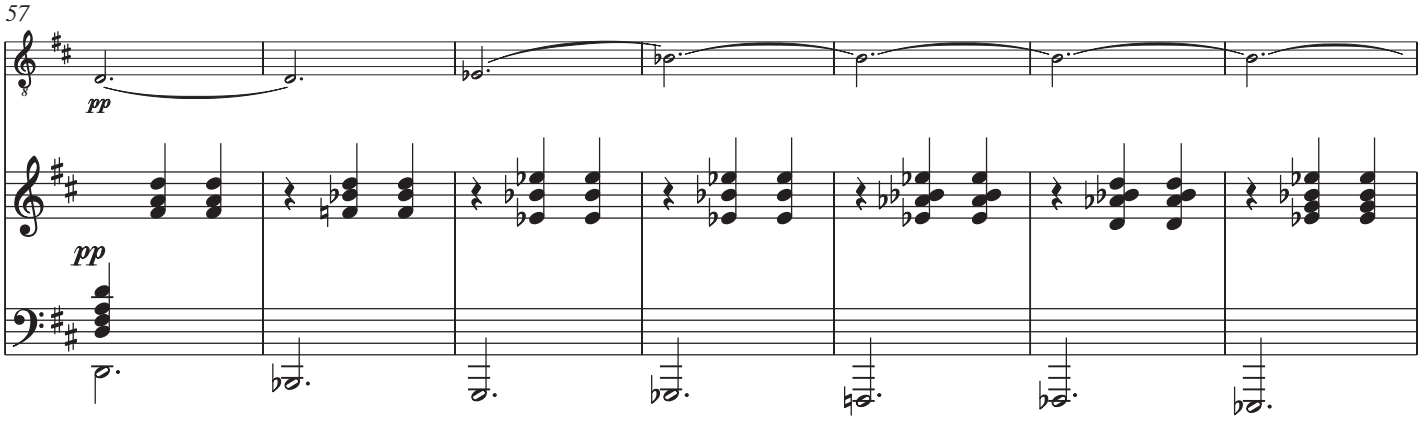

196
dim.
dim.
f
f
201
decresc.
p
decresc.
ff
decresc.
p
decresc.
ff

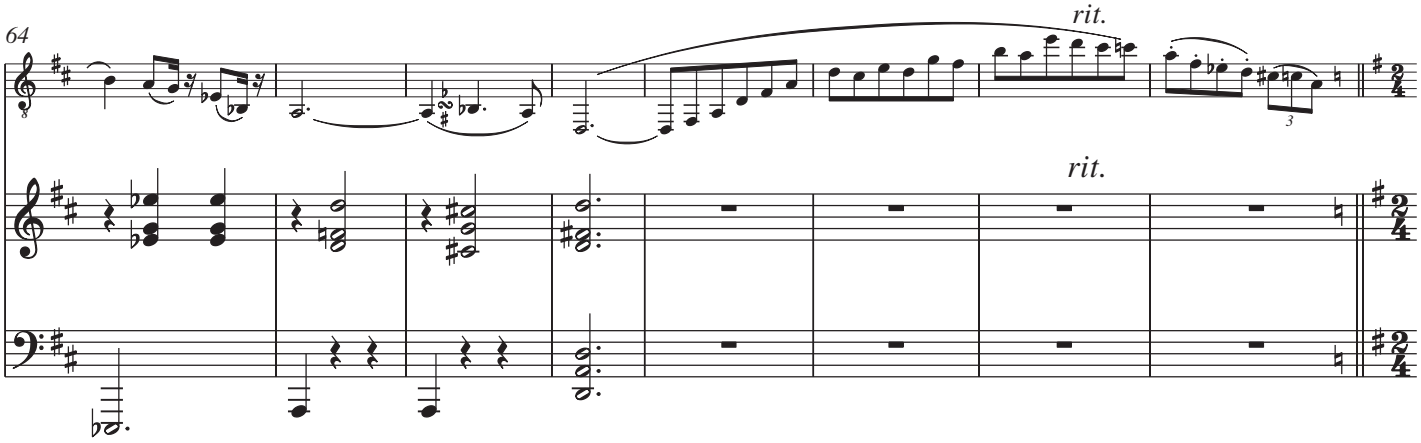
II


Adagio
p
Adagio
pp legato
p
7

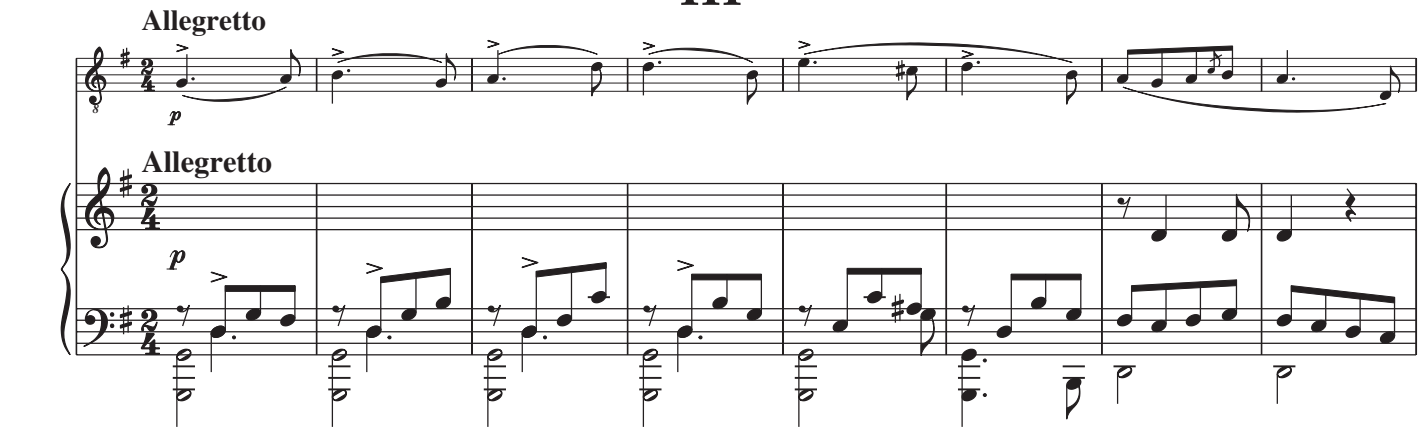

13
pp
pp
19
cresc.
mf
p
cresc.
mf
p
25
cresc.
f
p
cresc.
f
p
30
p
p

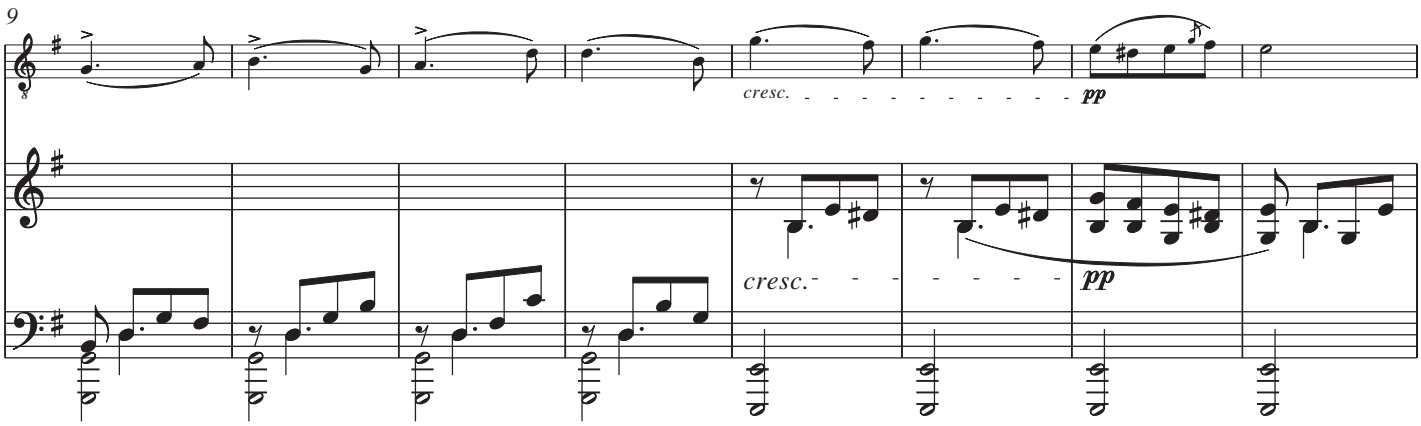

35
cresc.
fp
cresc.
fp
40
p
cresc.
p
cresc.
45
fz
p
fz
p
50

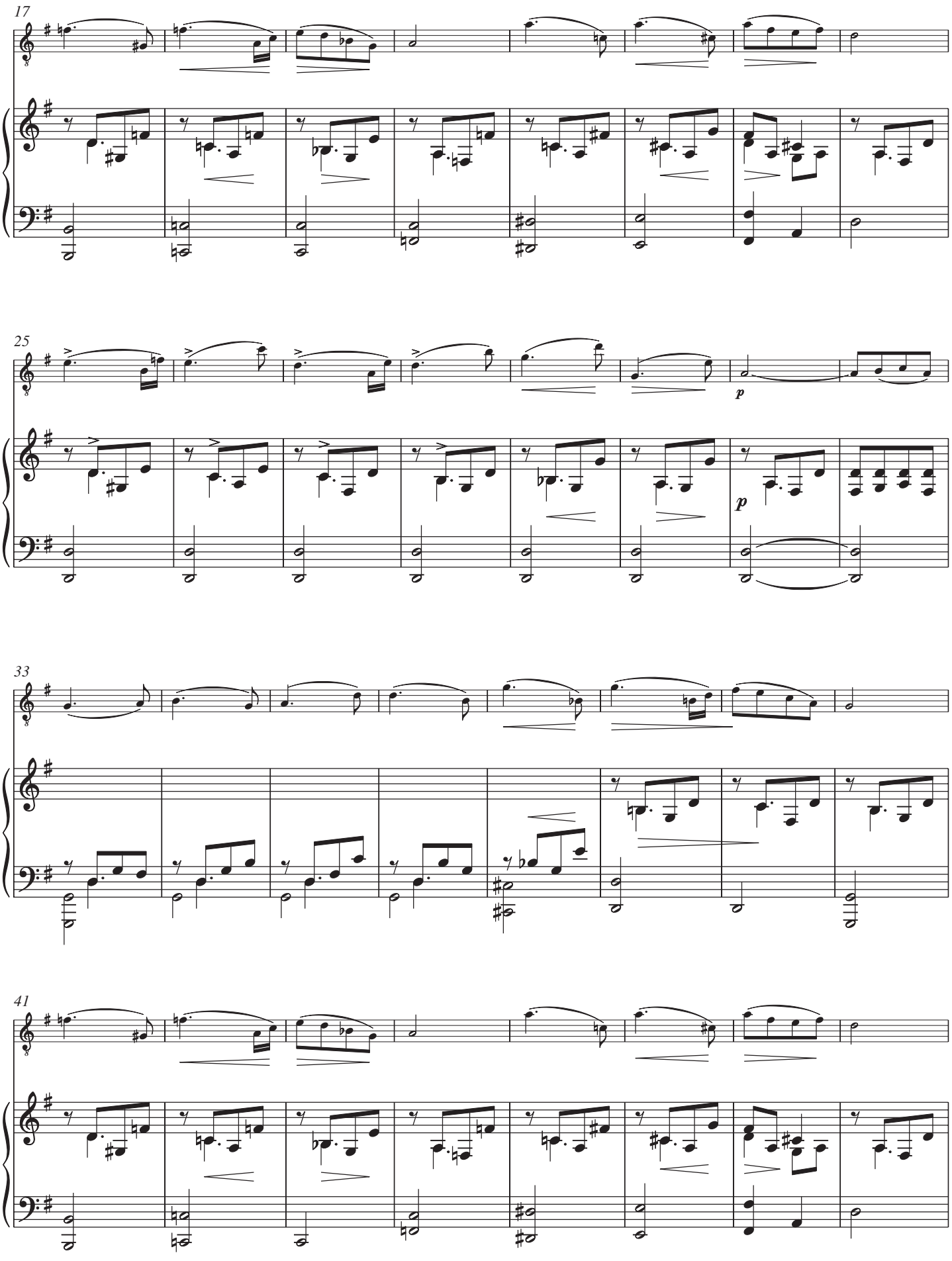

57
pp
pp

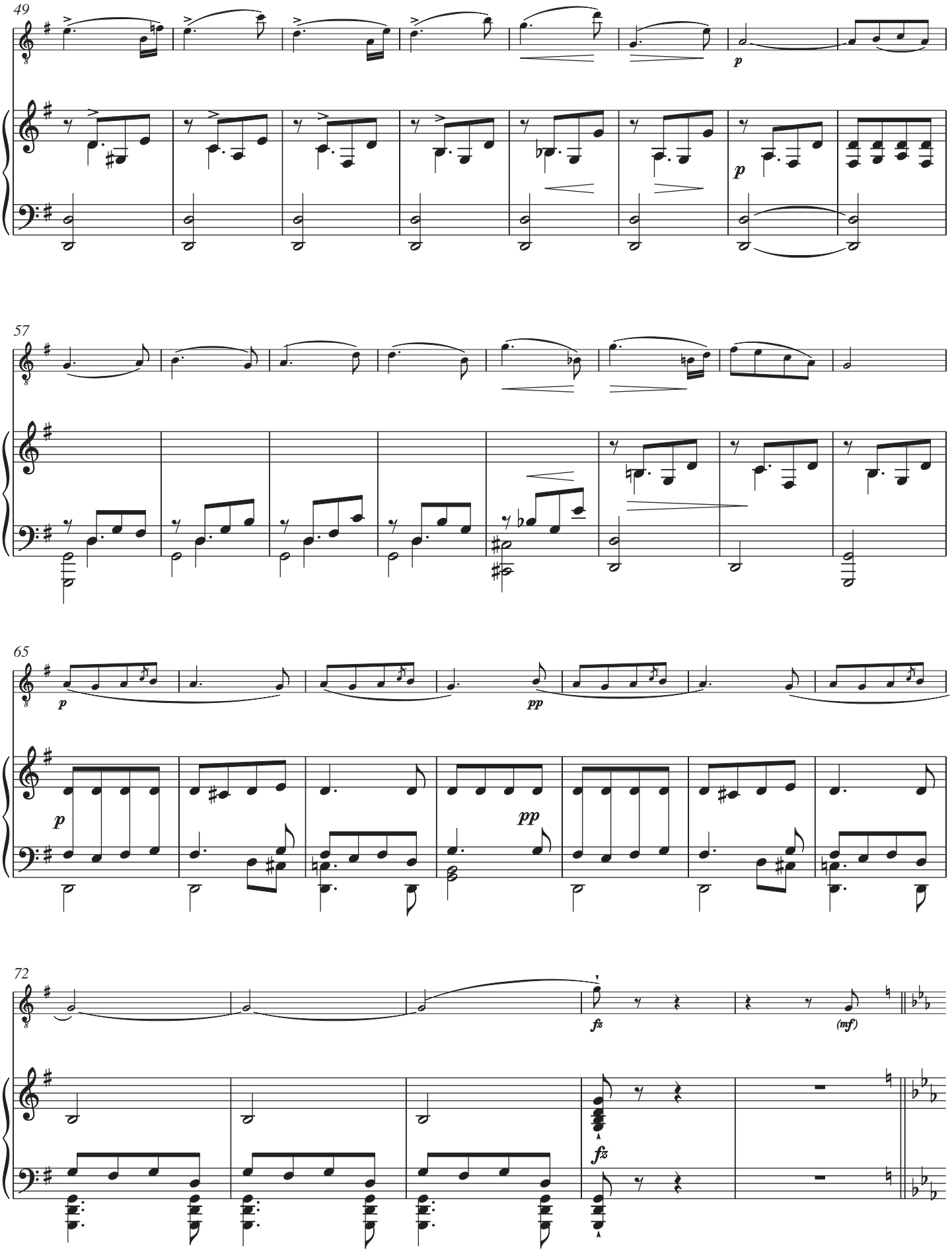

64
rit.
rit.

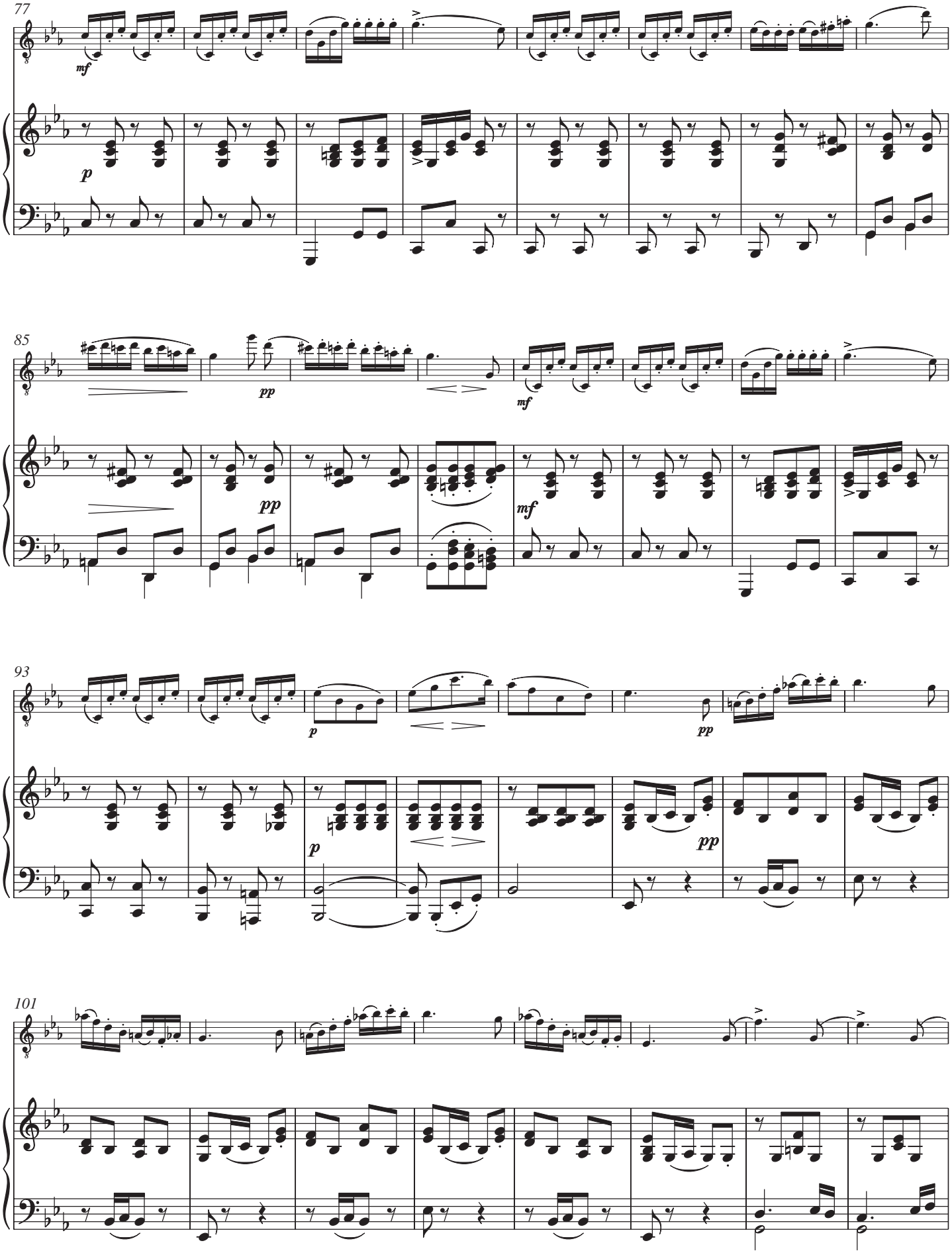
III

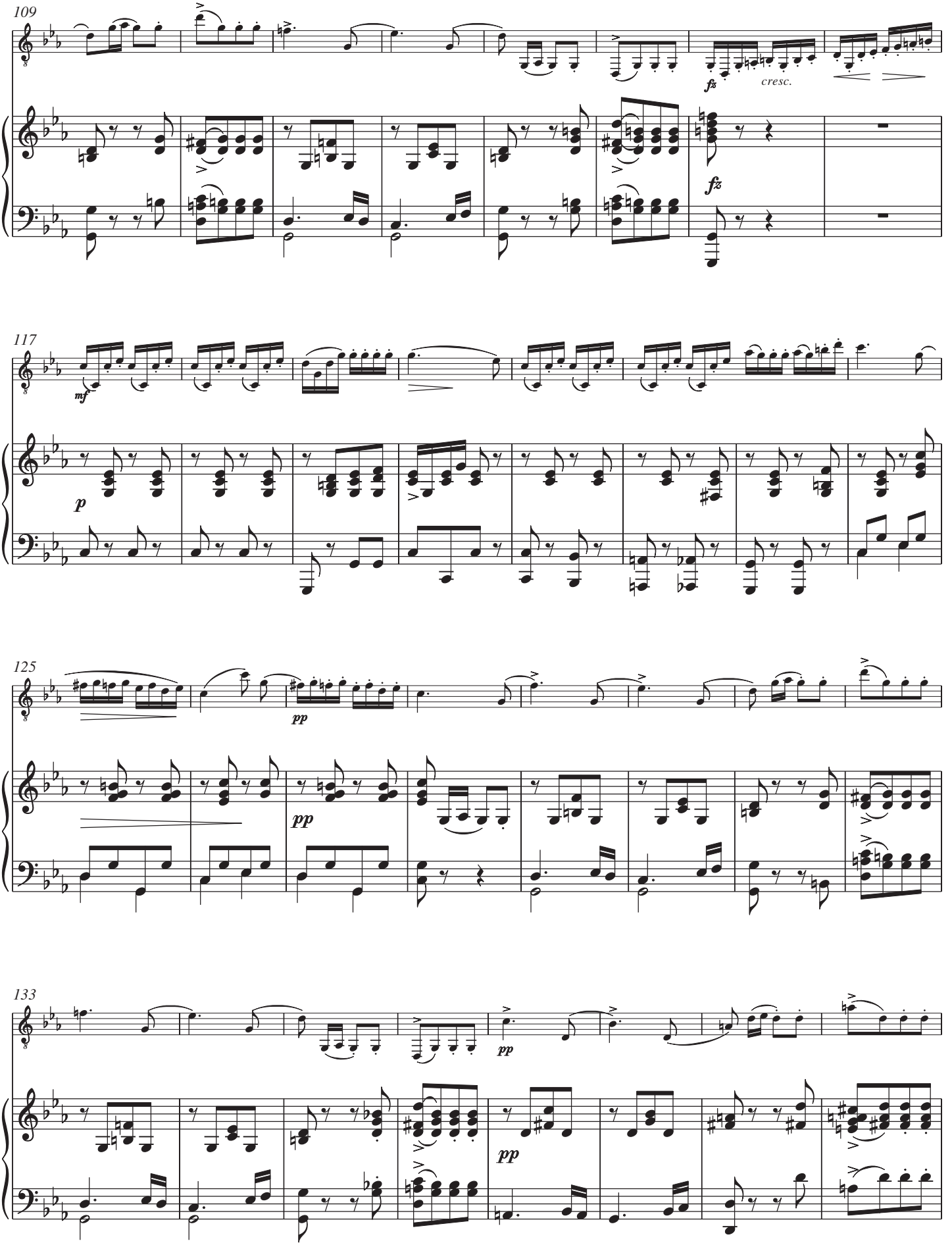

Allegretto
p
Allegretto
p

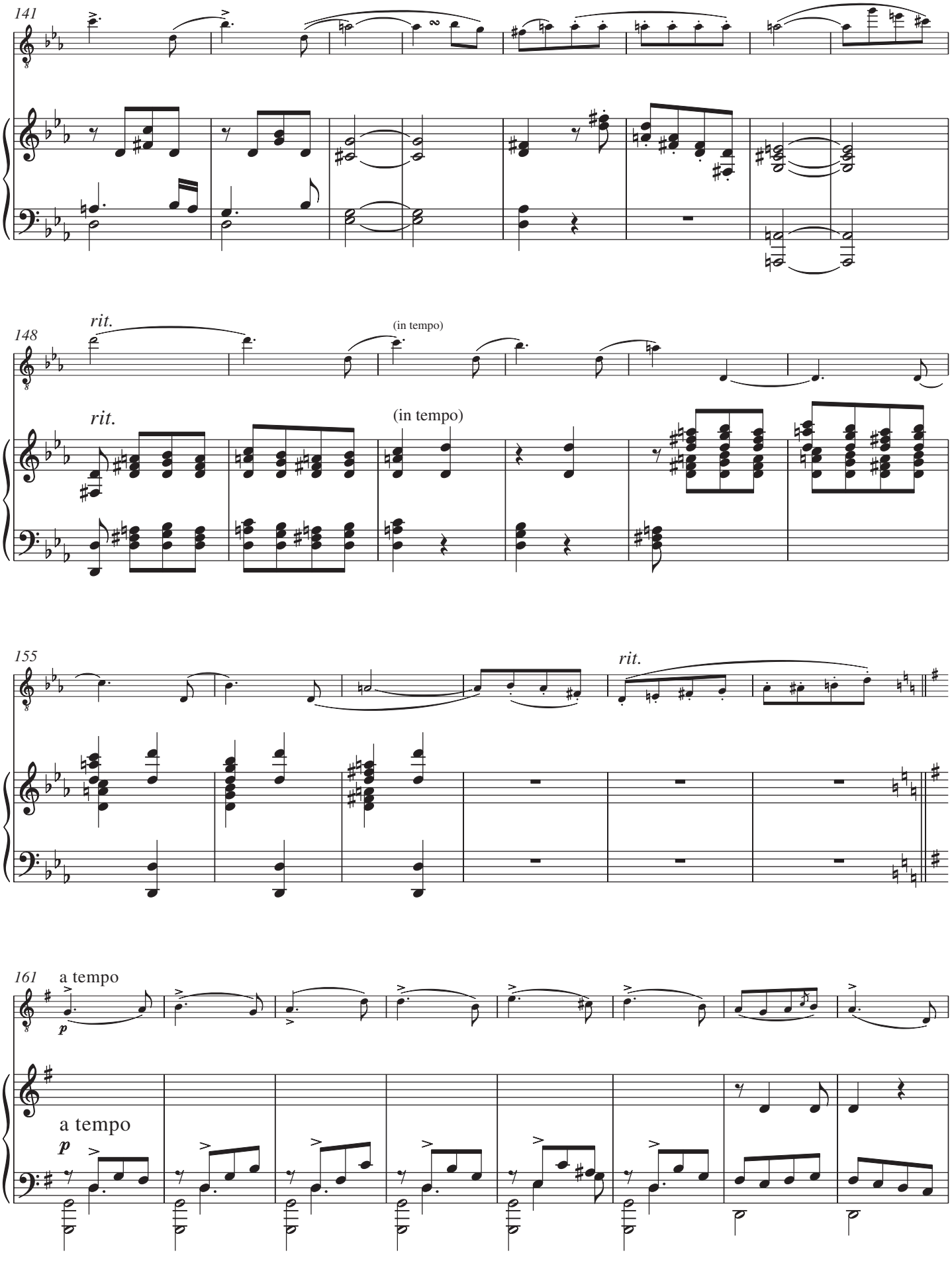

9
cresc.
pp
cresc.
pp

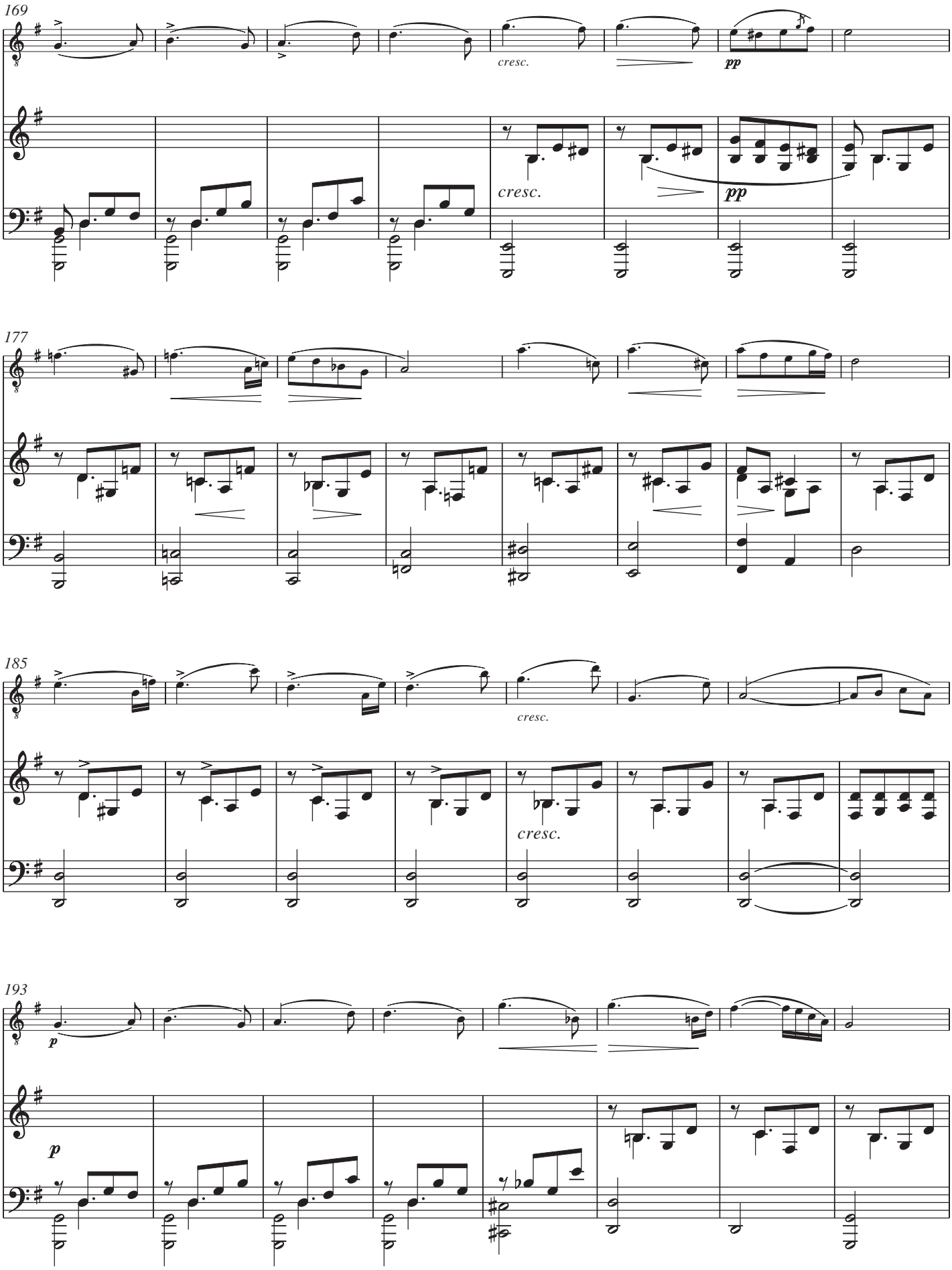

17
25
p
p
33
41

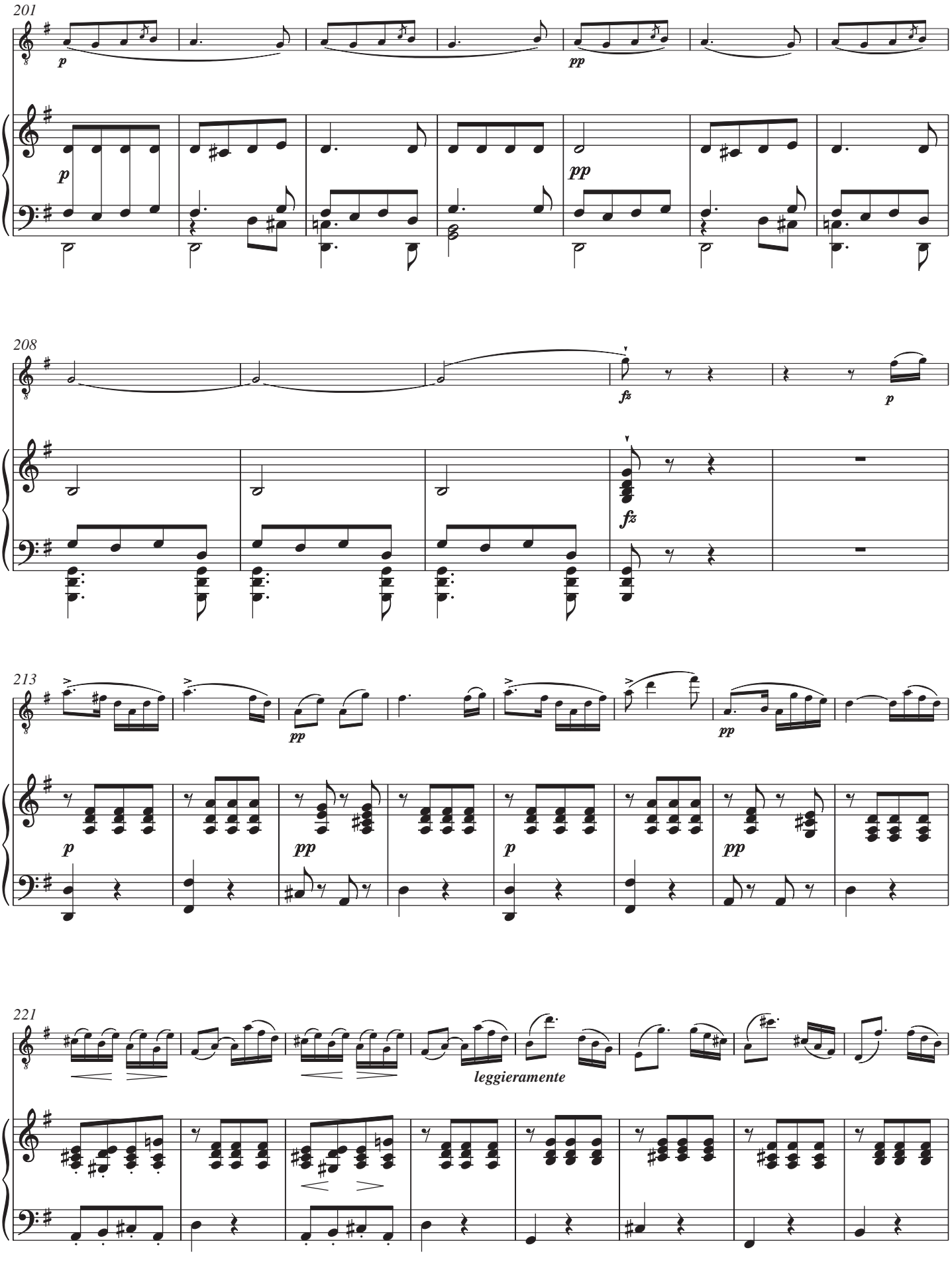

49
p
p
57
65
p
pp
p
pp
72
fz
(mf)
fz

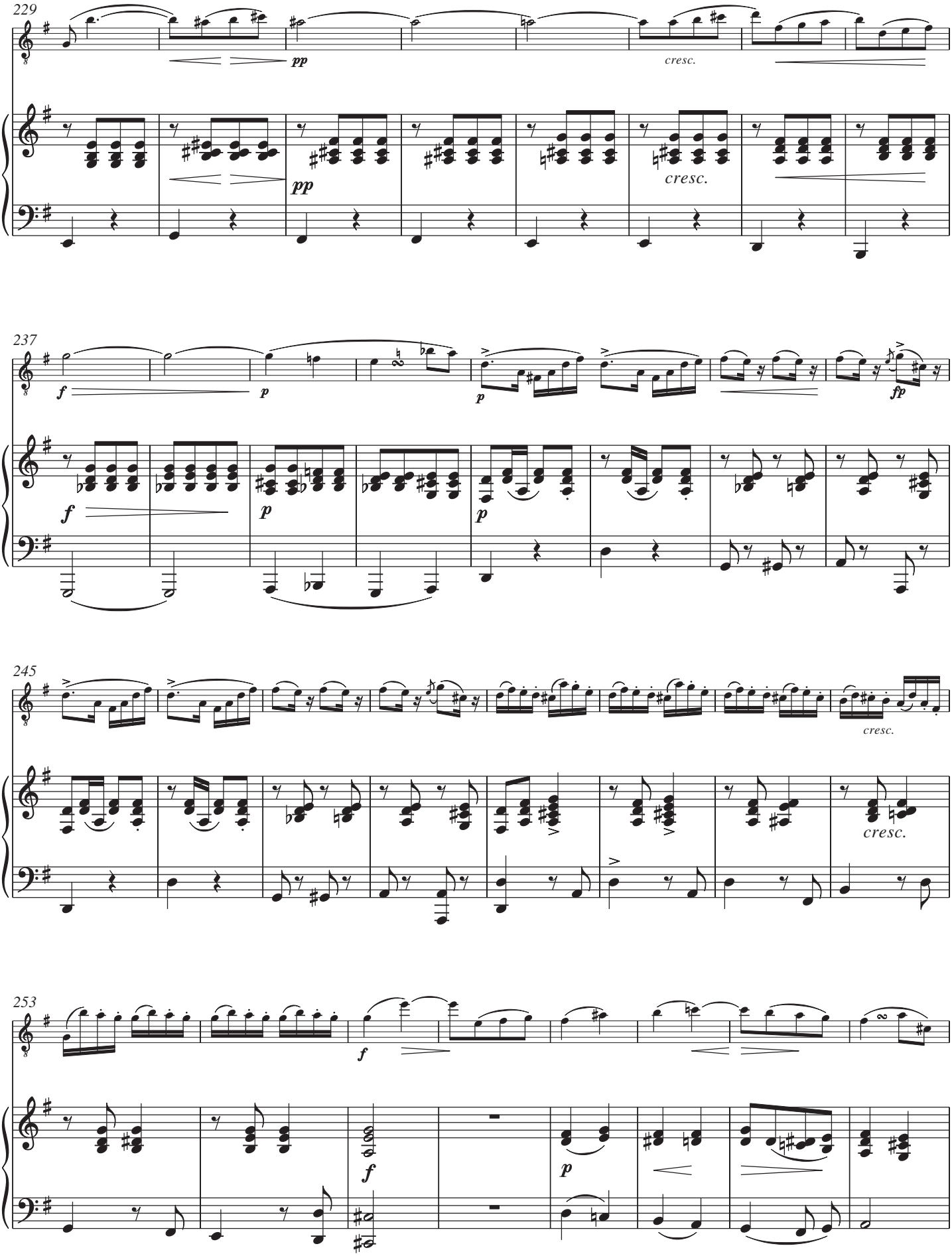

77
mf
p
85
pp
mf
93
p
pp
101


109
fz
cresc.
fz
117
mf
p
125
pp
pp
133
pp
pp


141
148
rit.
(in tempo)
rit.
(in tempo)
155
rit.
161
a tempo
p
a tempo
p


169
cresc.
pp
cresc.
pp
177
185
cresc.
cresc.
193
p
p


201
p
pp
208
fz
p
213
pp
p
pp
p
pp
221
leggieramente


229
pp
cresc.
pp
cresc.
237
f
p
p
fp
f
p
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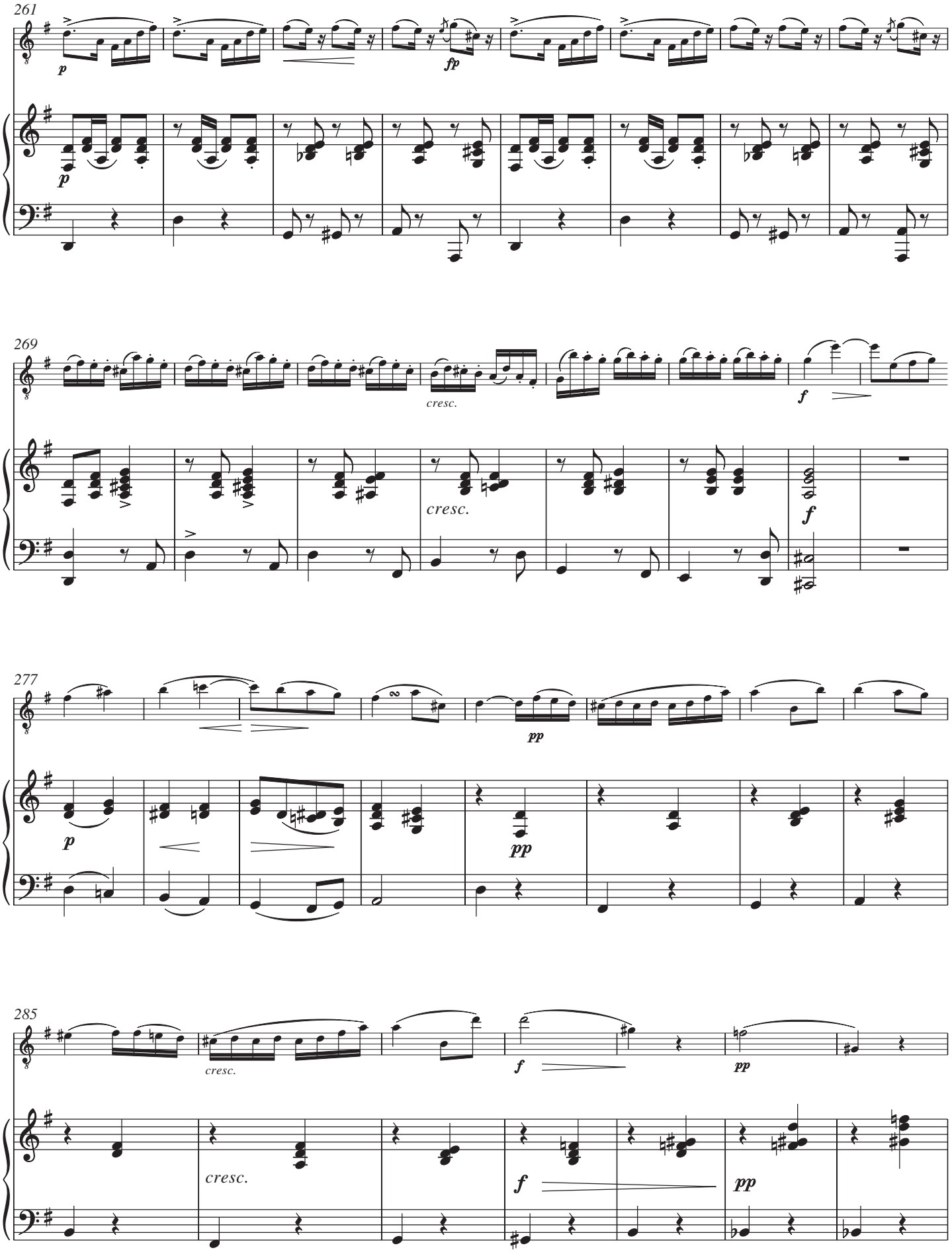
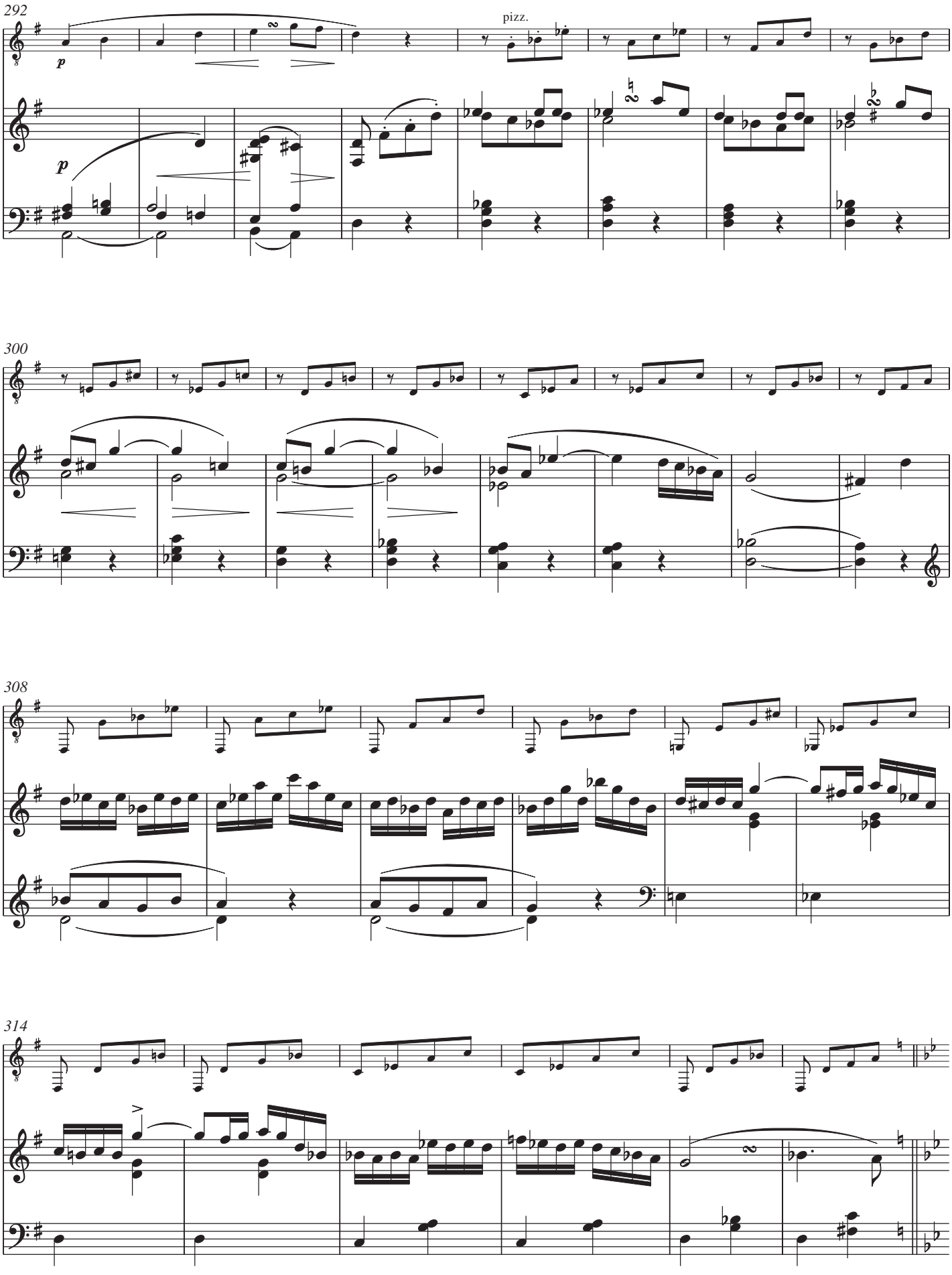
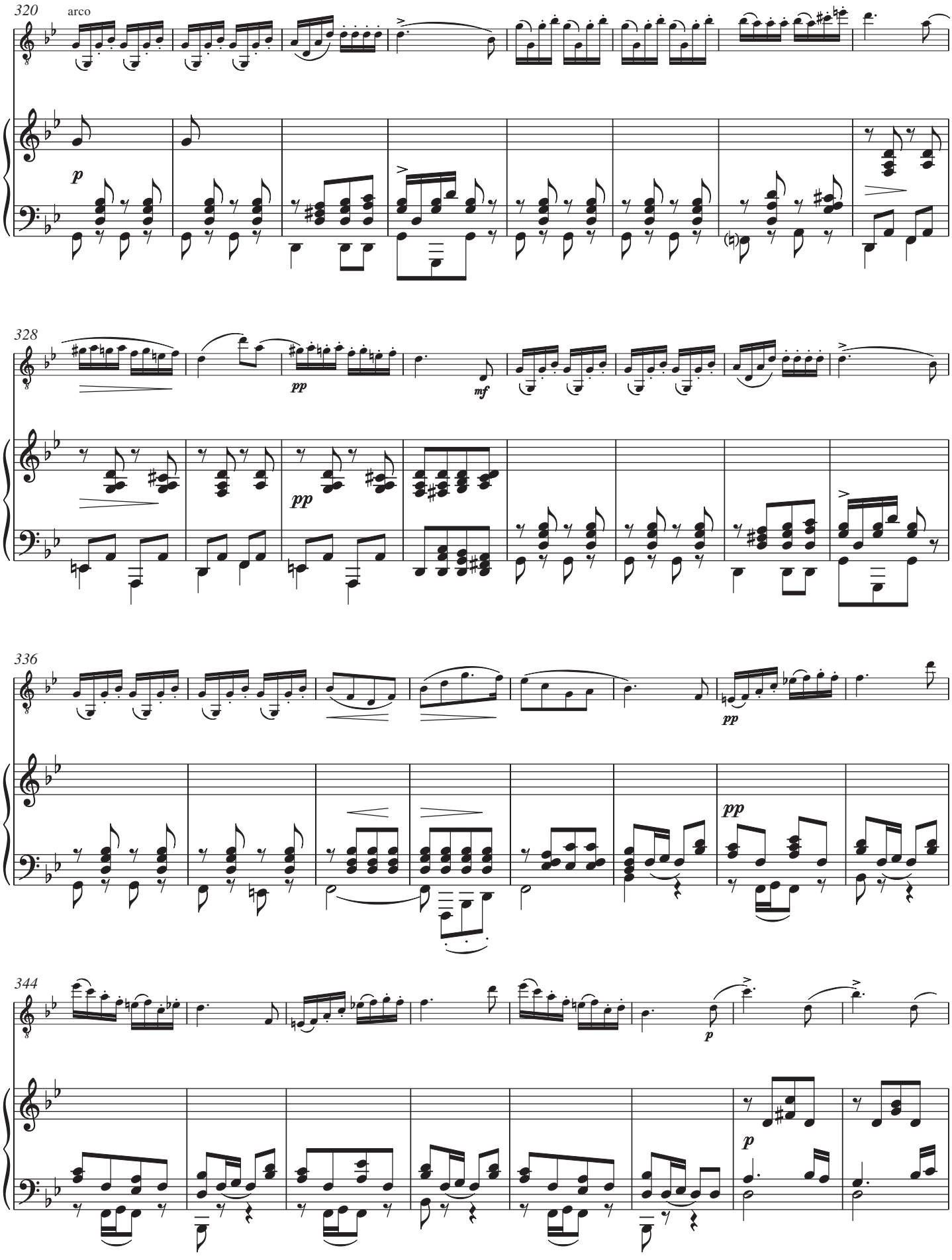
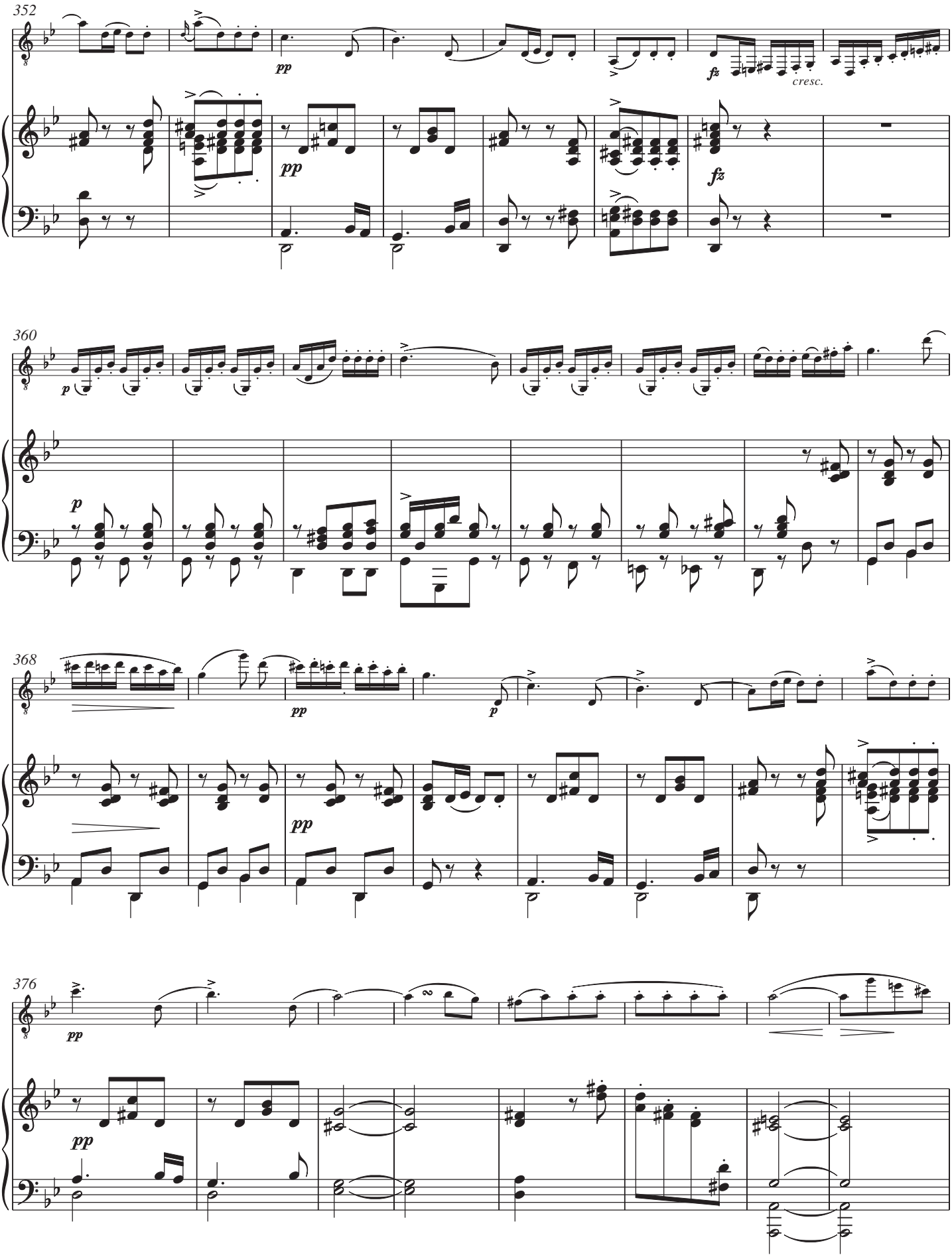
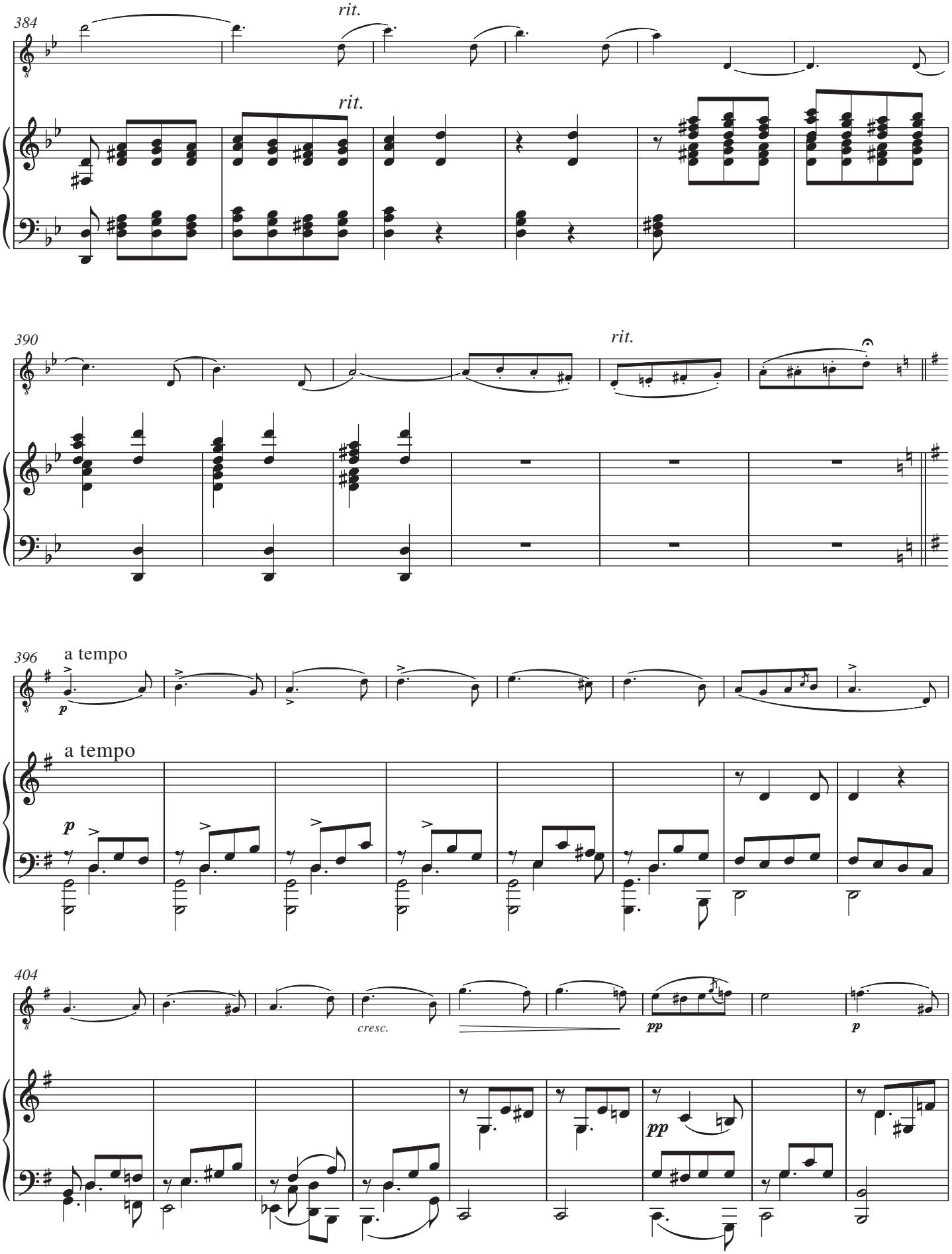
245
cresc.
cresc.
253
f
f
p

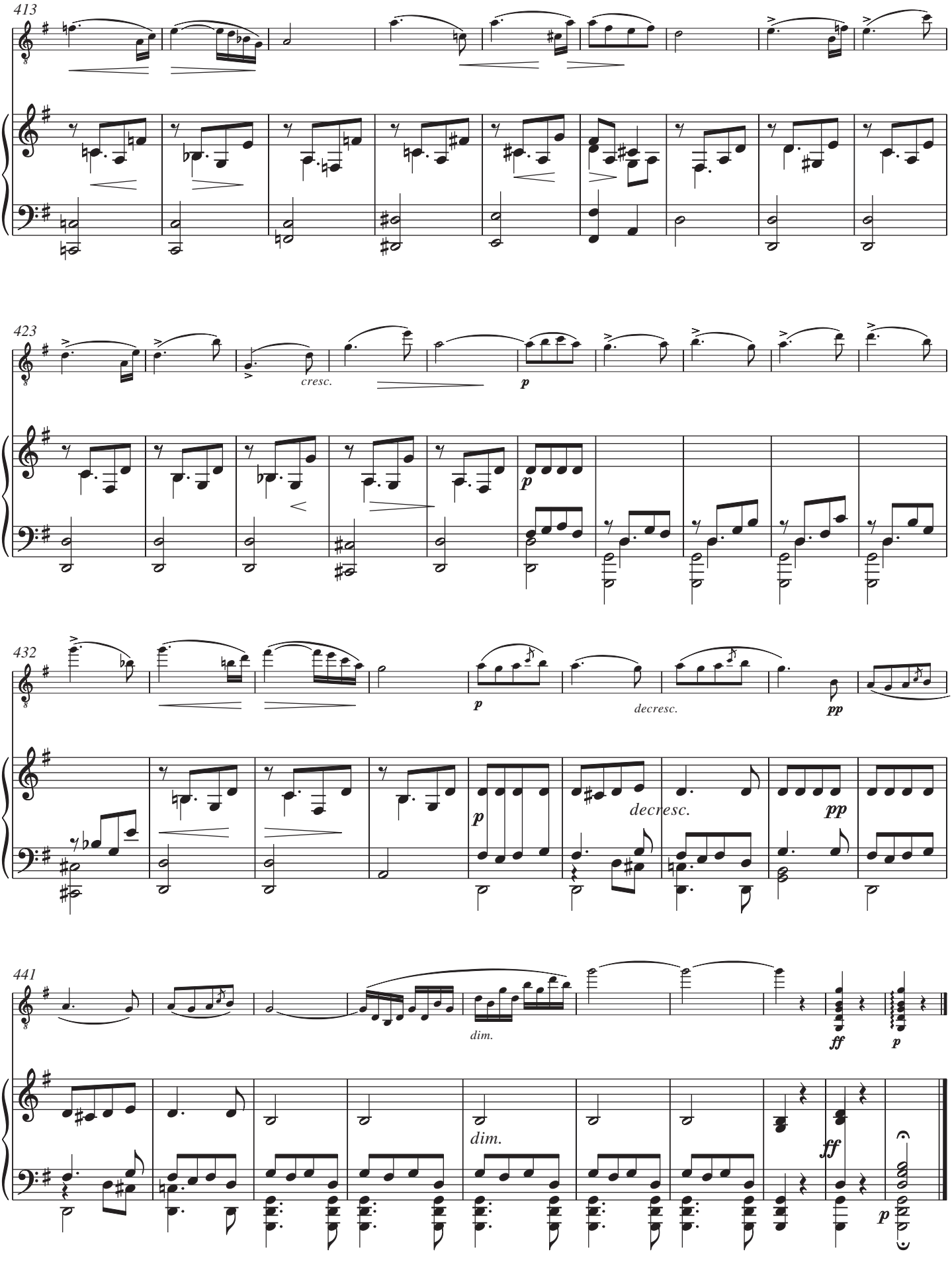

261
p
fp
269
cresc.
cresc.
f
f
277
p
pp
pp
285
cresc.
f
pp
cresc.
f
pp


292
pizz.
300
308
314


320
arco
p
328
pp
mf
pp
336
pp
pp
344
p
p


352
pp
fz
cresc.
pp
fz
360
p
p
368
pp
p
pp
376
pp
pp


384
rit.
rit.
390
rit.
396
a tempo
a tempo
p
404
cresc.
pp
p
pp


413
423
cresc.
p
432
p
decresc.
pp
441
dim.
ff
p