JOHN SYKES

SONATA

in B minor for

'Cello and Piano

The JOHN SYKES PROJECT

MMXIII

John Austin Sykes (1909 – 1962)

John Sykes was born in India in 1909 - in India because his father was in the Indian civil service. Back in England he won a music scholarship to Clifton College, Bristol, and whilst still a schoolboy gained his A.R.C.O. and F.R.C.O. In 1928 he went up to Oxford as organ scholar at Balliol. In those days, undergraduates were not able to read Music as a first degree, so Sykes read Modern History, and followed it up with a B.Mus. One contemporary source considered him to have been the most distinguished musical undergraduate of his time. He was president of the famous Oxford University Opera Club and active in the Music Club and Union. He was sufficiently important to be given a full-page spread in the undergraduate newspaper 'Isis' – which referred to his ability to 'make a piano do anything but swim'. He was a friend of the left-wing poet Randall Swingler, and also a contemporary of W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and C. Day Lewis, whom he knew, so it is perhaps not surprising that he was a fluent, though not distinguished, poet. After Oxford, he went to London, to the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition under Ralph Vaughan Williams, R. O. Morris and Gordon Jacob. In 1936 he was appointed to the staff of Kingswood School, and there he stayed, except for war service, until he died of cancer in the school Sanatorium in the summer term of 1962.

The John Sykes Project is an informal group of former pupils who are transcribing and publishing his music on the internet, and encouraging its performance.

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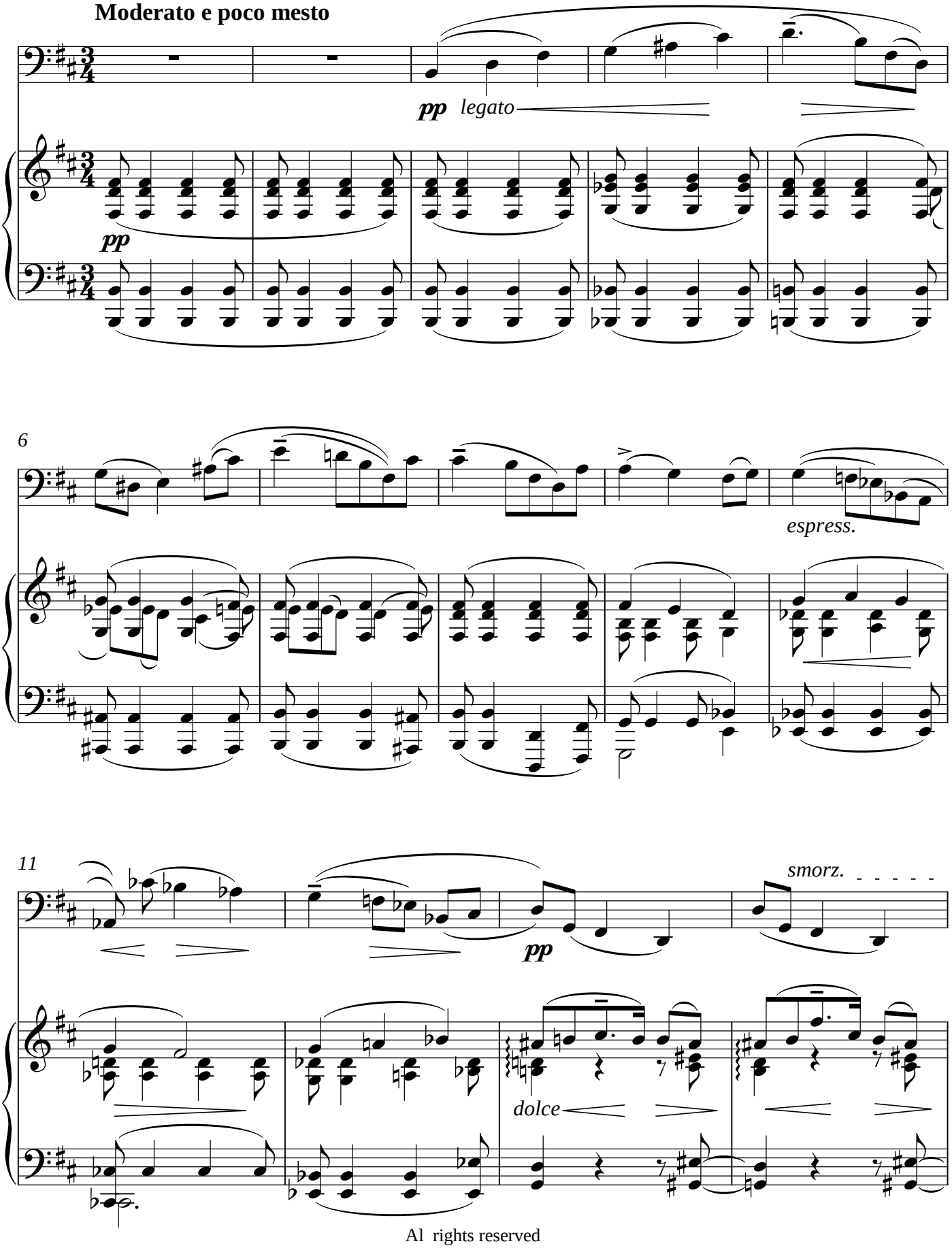
The manuscript of this sonata is dated 1928, the year which spanned the end of Syke's time at Clifton College and his start as an undergraduate at Balliol College, Oxford. It is therefore a student work and this is evident in a certain looseness and prolixity in structure, despite its melodic interest and his understanding of the instruments for which he was writing. It is conceived as a one-movement work, unlike the later three-movement sonata for 'cello and piano in G minor of 1942.

The 'cello part uses the treble clef as well as the tenor and bass clefs – and soars quite high in those upper regions. To avoid confusion with earlier practice, it is the editor's opinion (based on historical and contextual evidence) that the music in the treble clef should be played at written pitch and not transposed down an octave. By 1928, the old tradition of writing an octave higher than sounding pitch for 'cello music in the treble clef had not been used for many years.

Sonata in B minor for 'Cello and Piano

John Sykes

Moderato e poco mesto



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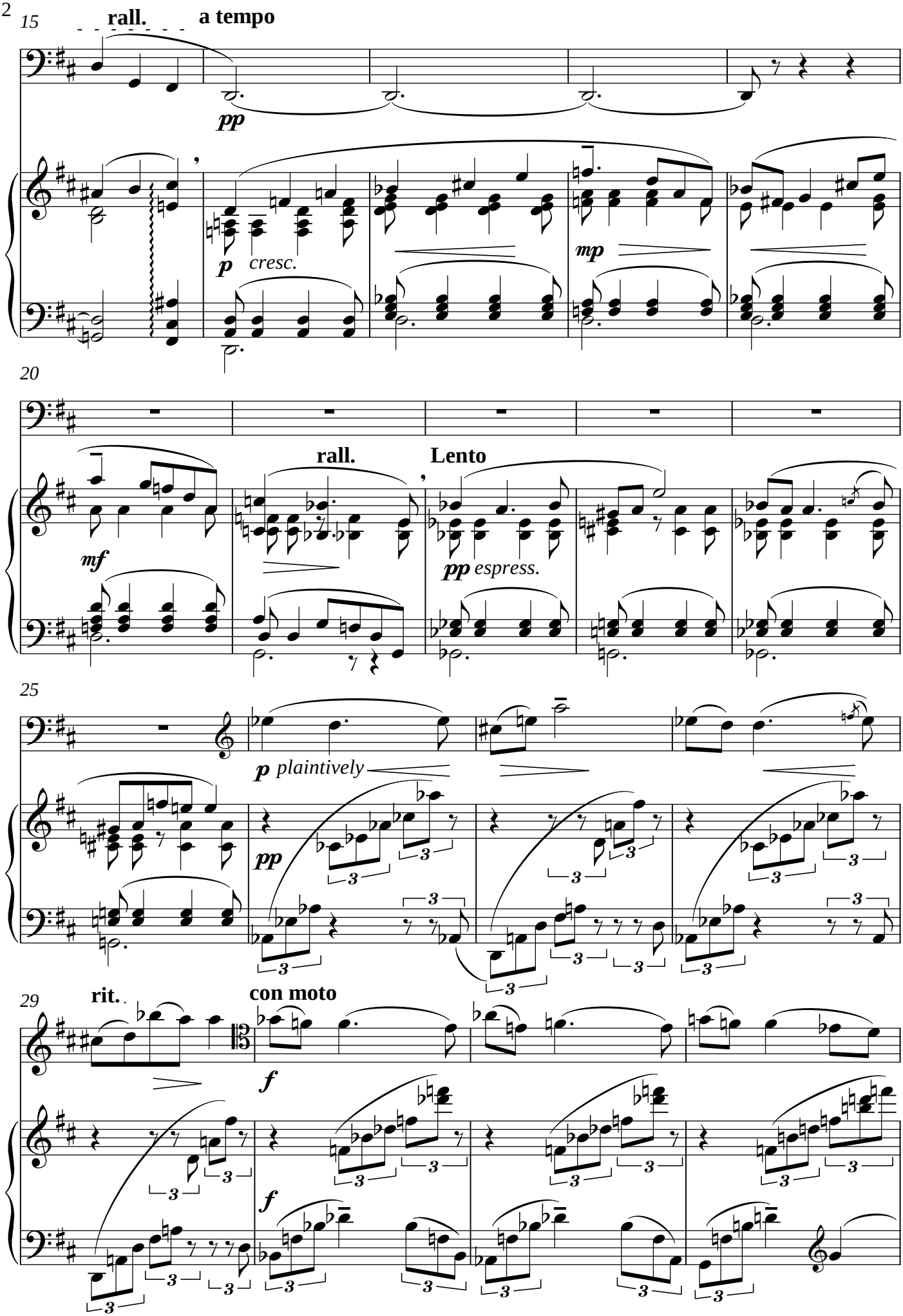
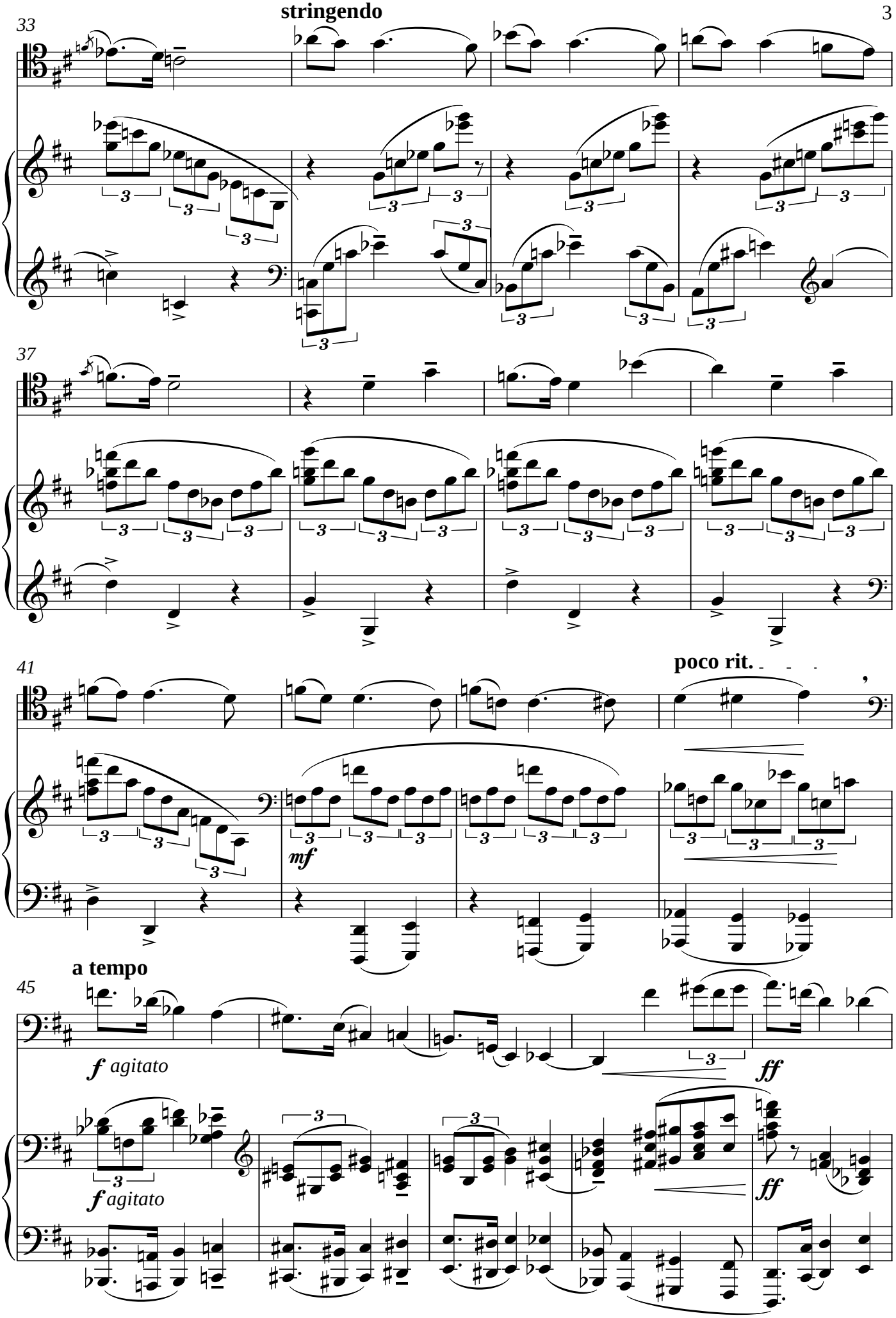
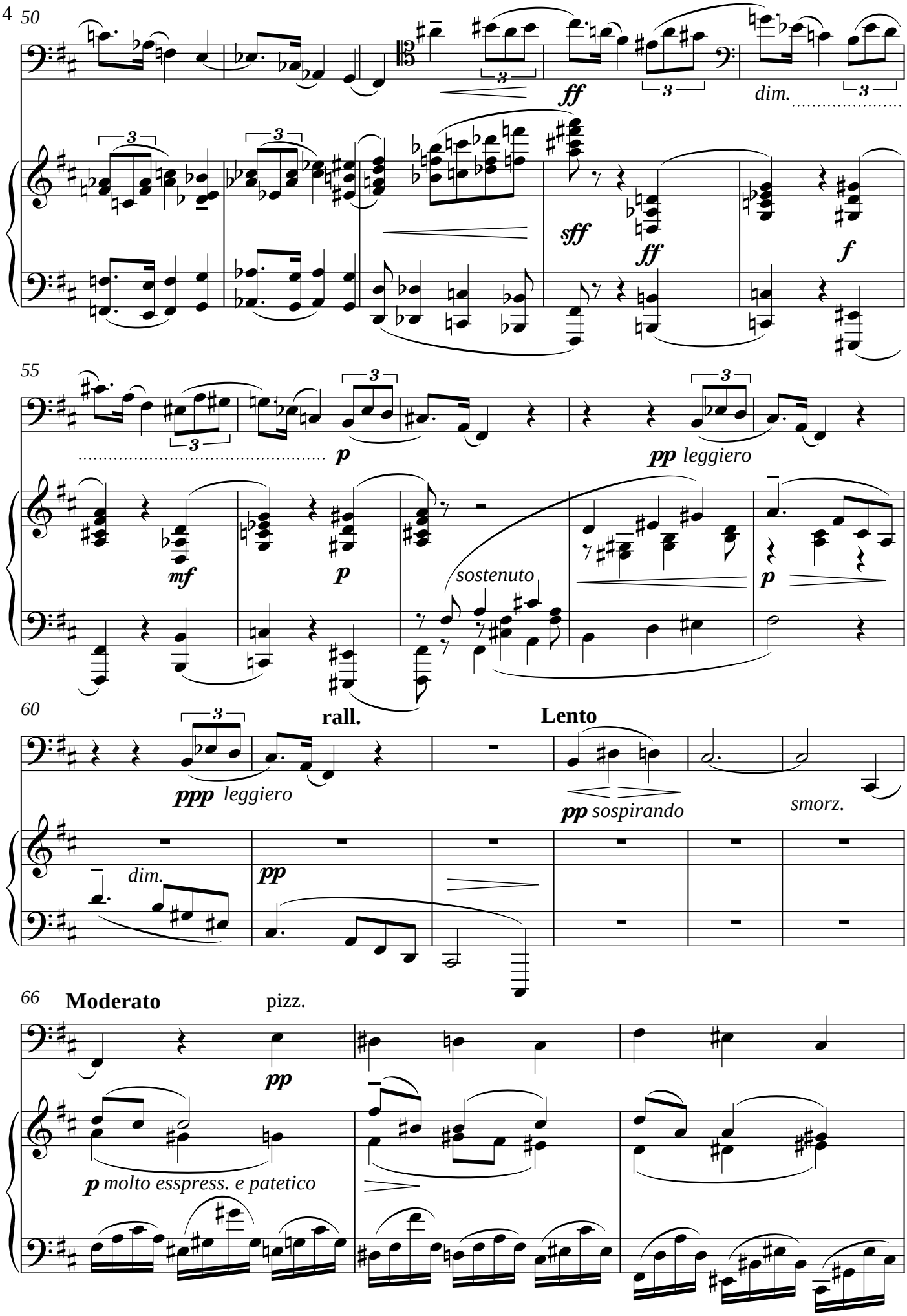

15
rall.
a tempo
pp
p
cresc.
mp
20
rall.
Lento
mf
pp espress.
25
p plaintively
pp
29
rit.
con moto
f
f


stringendo
33
37
41
poco rit.
mf
a tempo
45
f agitato
ff


50
ff
dim.
sff
ff
f
55
p
pp leggiero
mf
p
sostenuto
p
60
rall.
Lento
ppp leggiero
pp sospirando
smorz.
dim.
pp
66
Moderato
pizz.
pp
p molto esspress. e patetico

69

72

arco

poco rall.

pp

75

a tempo

p *cresc.*

sf

p *espress.*

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

79

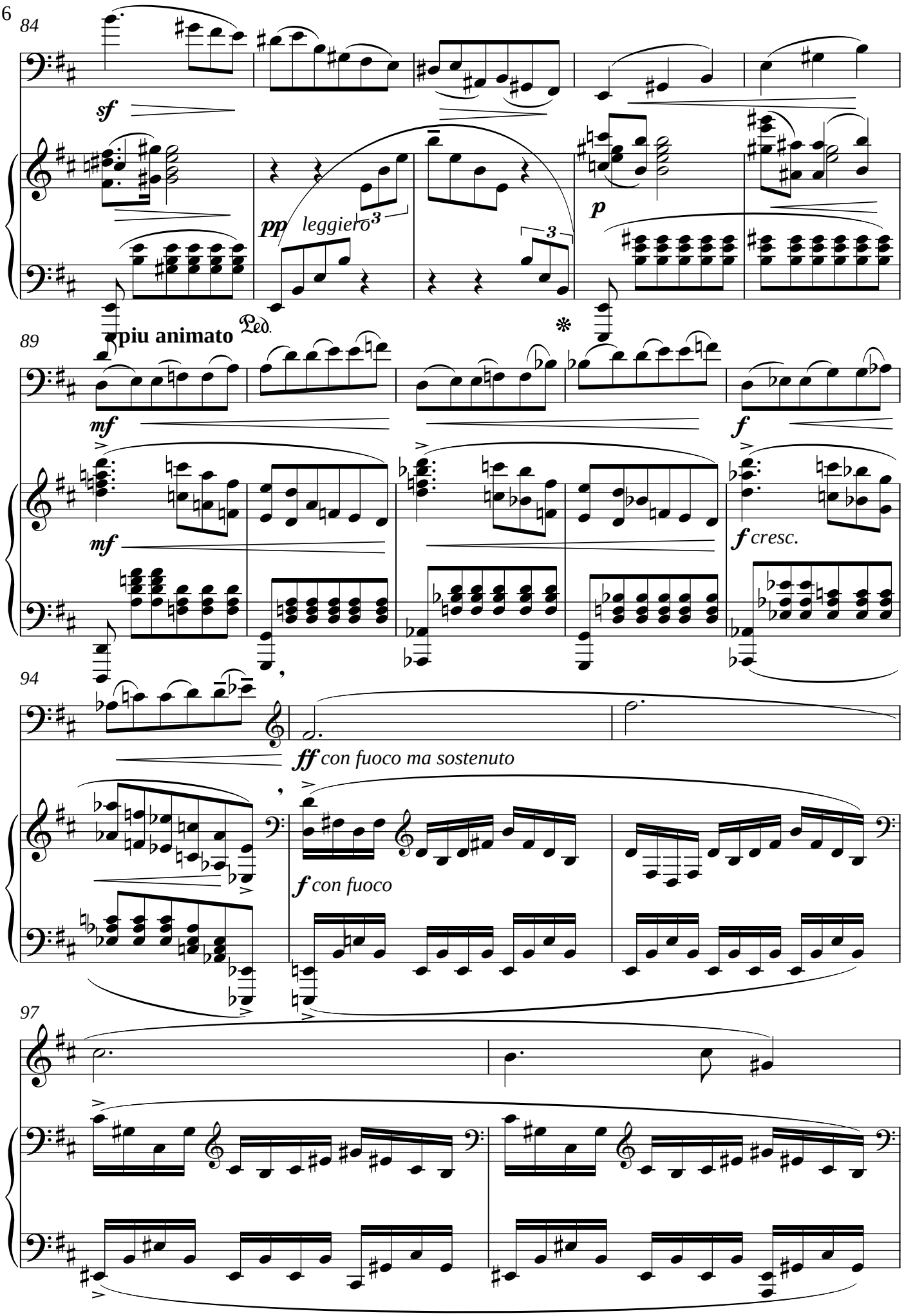
p

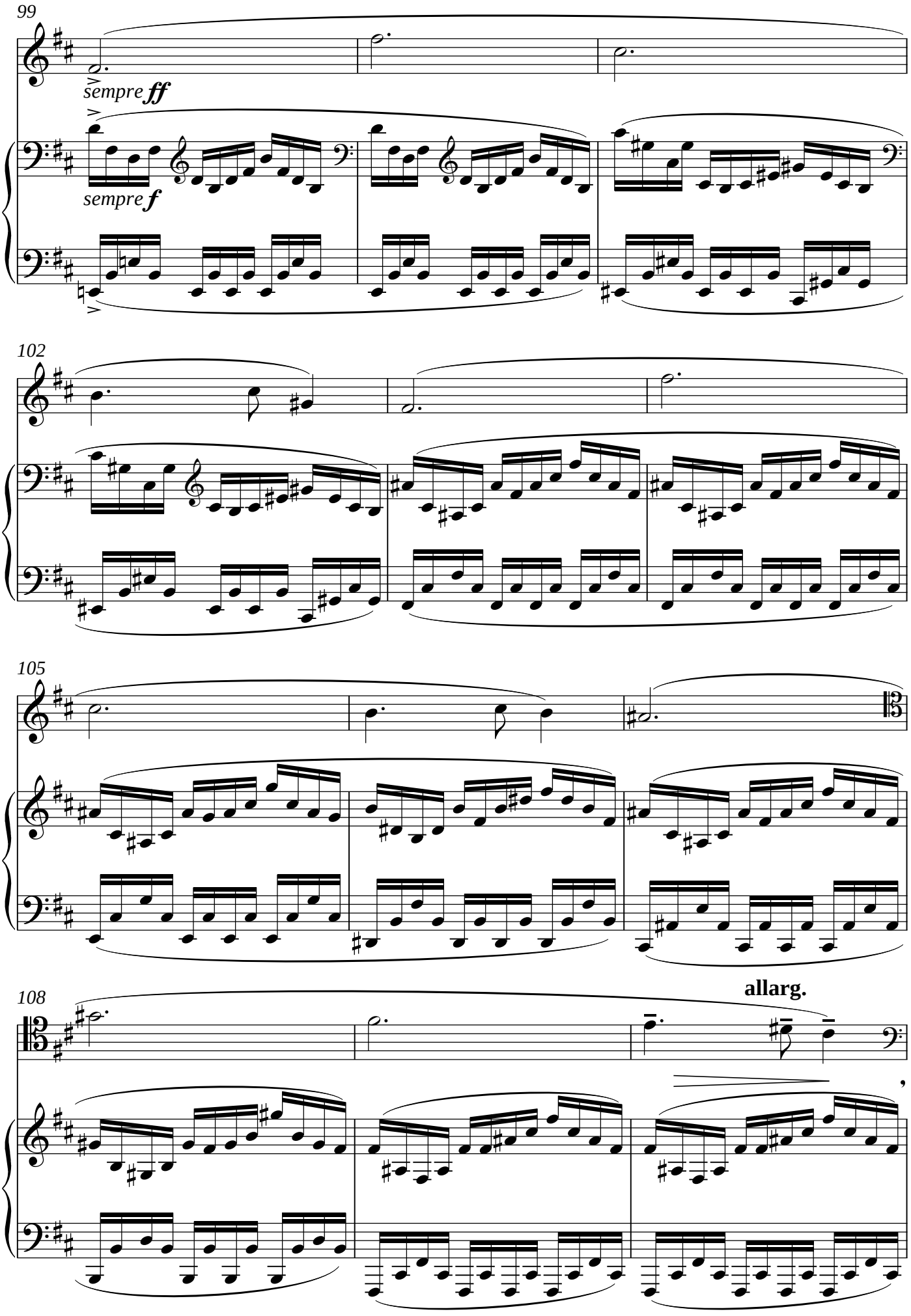
pp *leggiero*

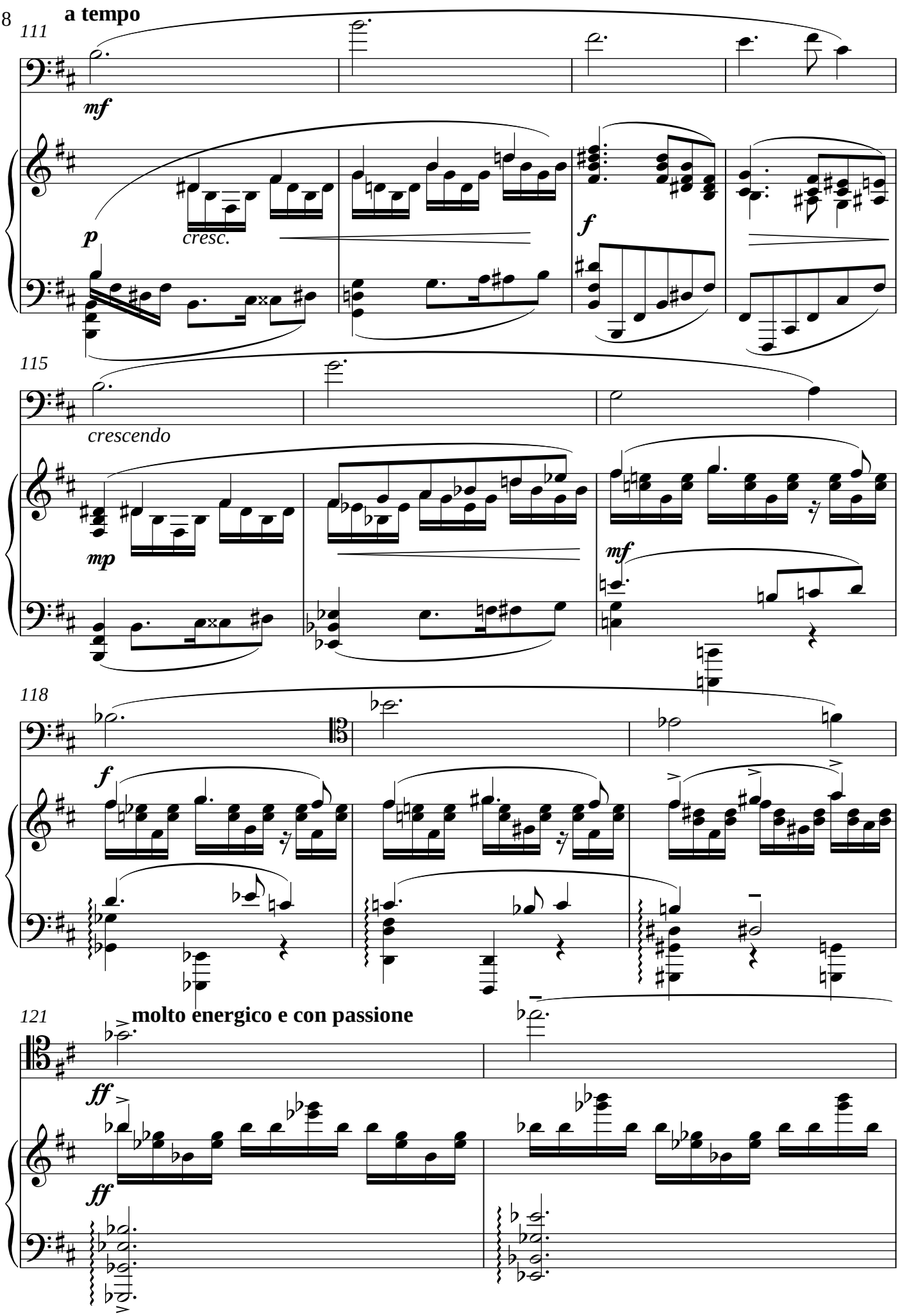
3 3

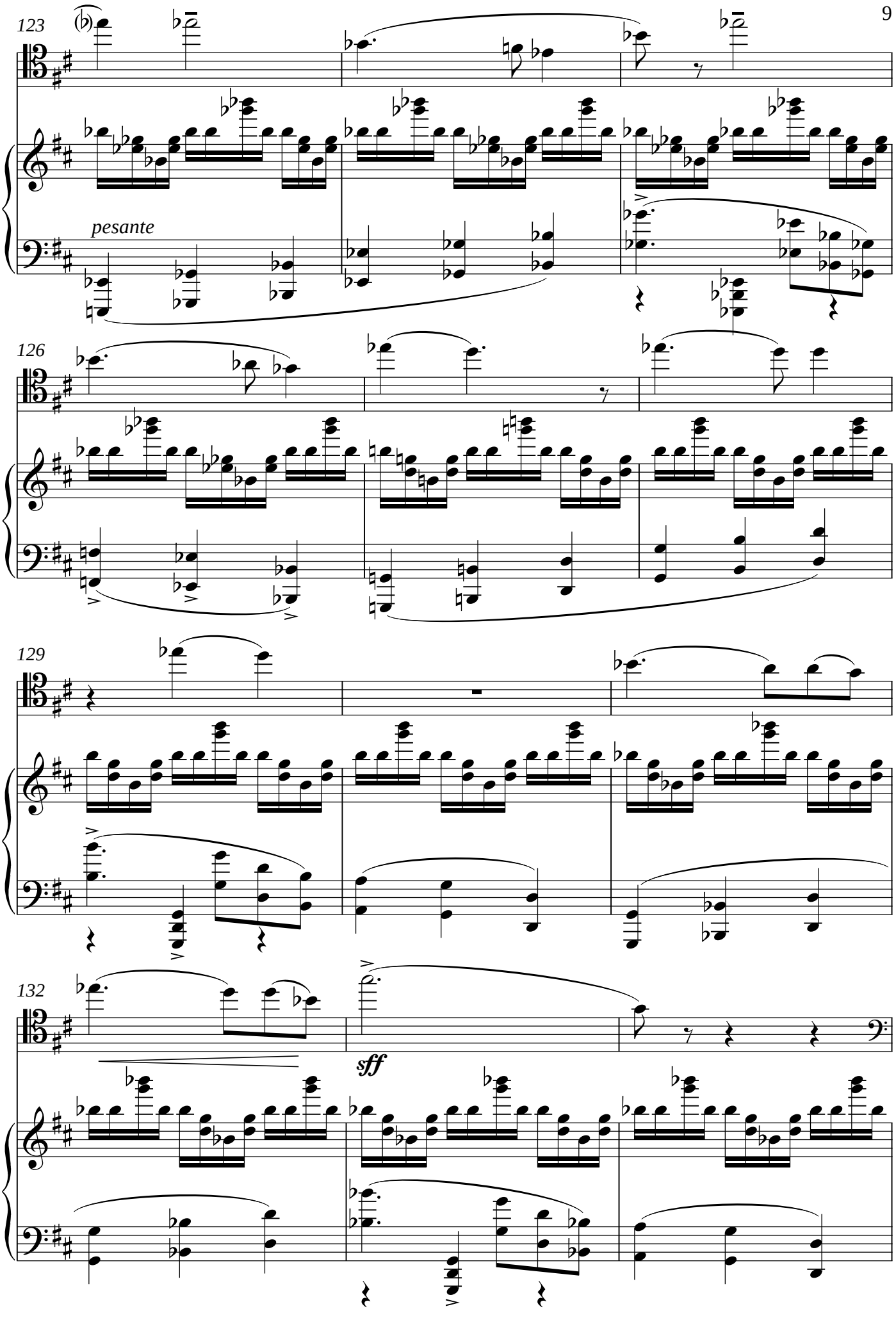
p

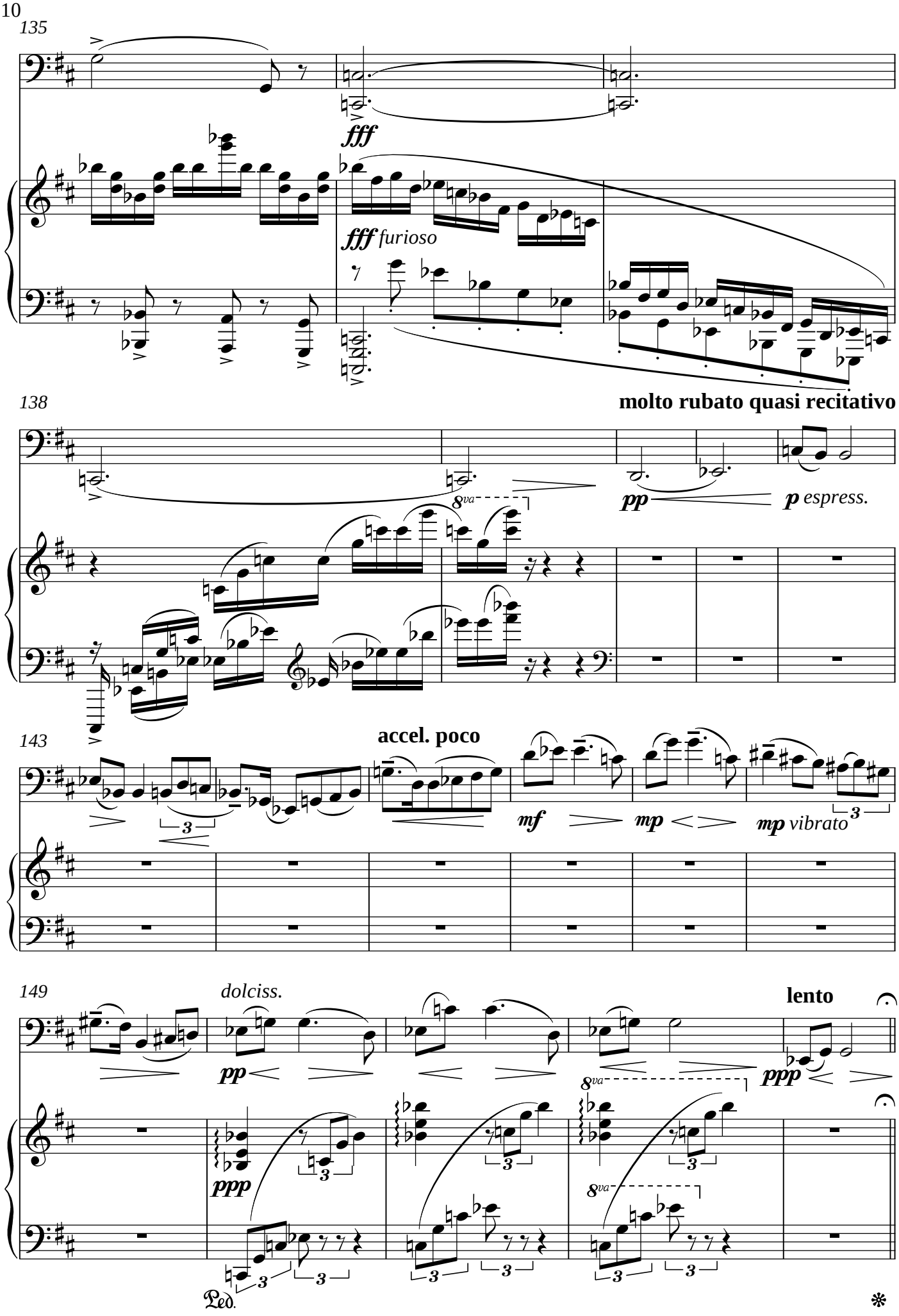
Ped. *


84
sf
pp leggiero
3
3
p
Ped.
89
più animato
mf
mf
f
f cresc.
94
ff con fuoco ma sostenuto
f con fuoco
97

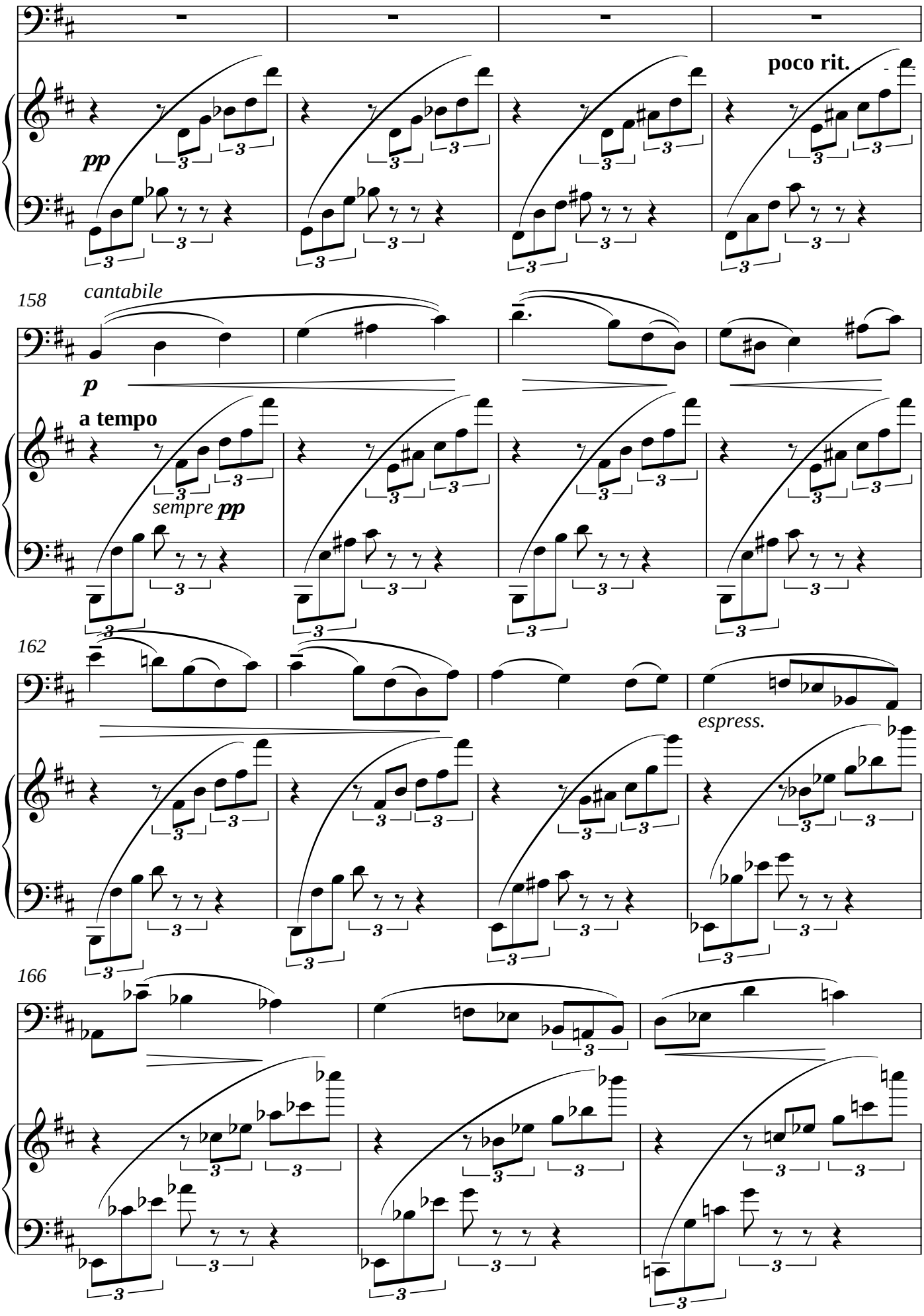

99
sempre ff
sempre f
102
105
108
allarg.


a tempo
111
mf
p
cresc.
f
115
crescendo
mp
mf
118
f
121
molto energico e con passione
ff
ff


123
pesante
126
129
132
sff


135
fff
fff furioso
138
molto rubato quasi recitativo
8va
pp
p espress.
143
accel. poco
mf
mp
mp vibrato
149
dolciss.
lento
pp
ppp
8va
Ped.

154 **Molto moderato, come I tempo**



169

pp

173

p

pp

177

mp

pp

p molto espress.

182

186

poco rit.

mp con moto

p

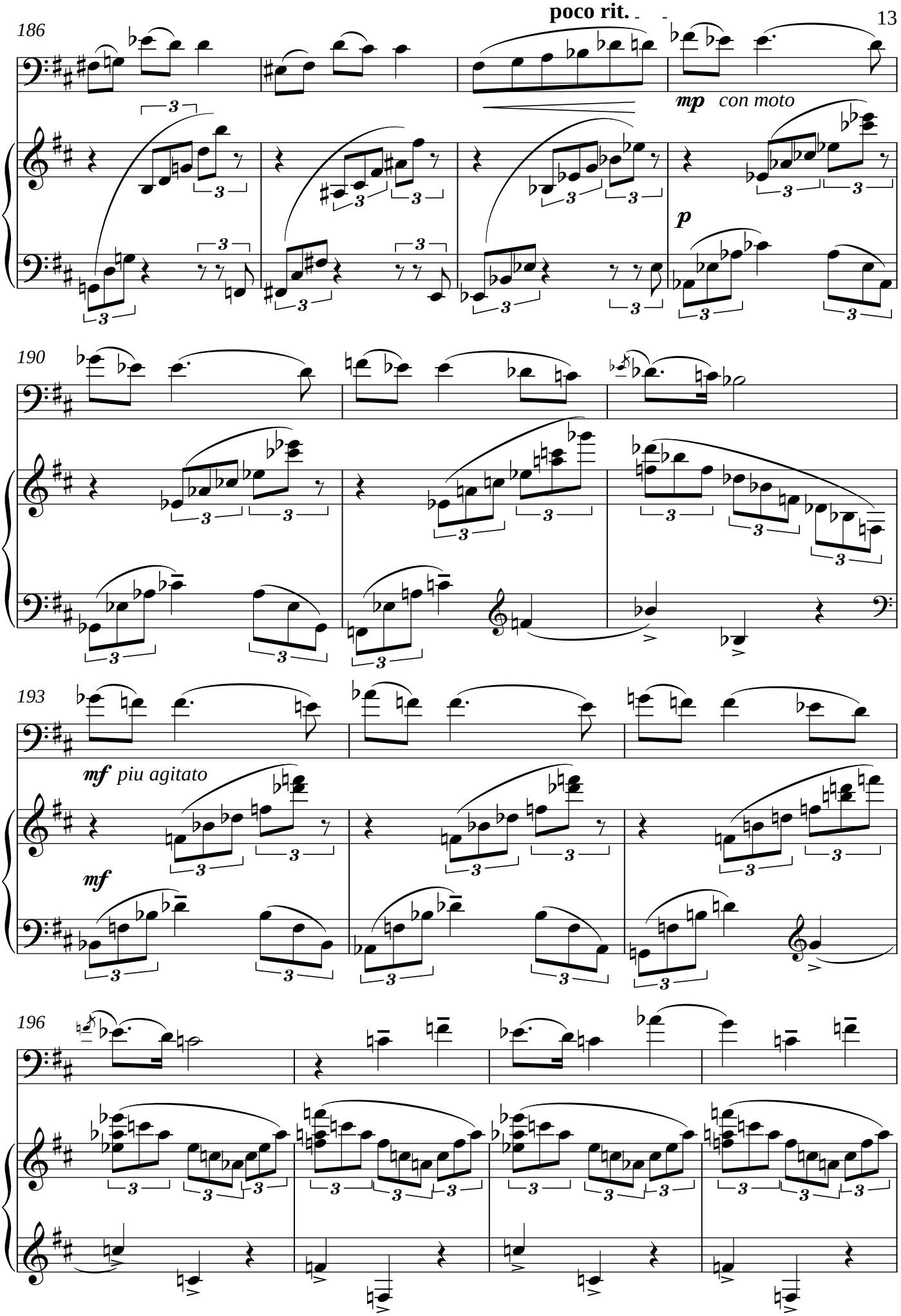
190

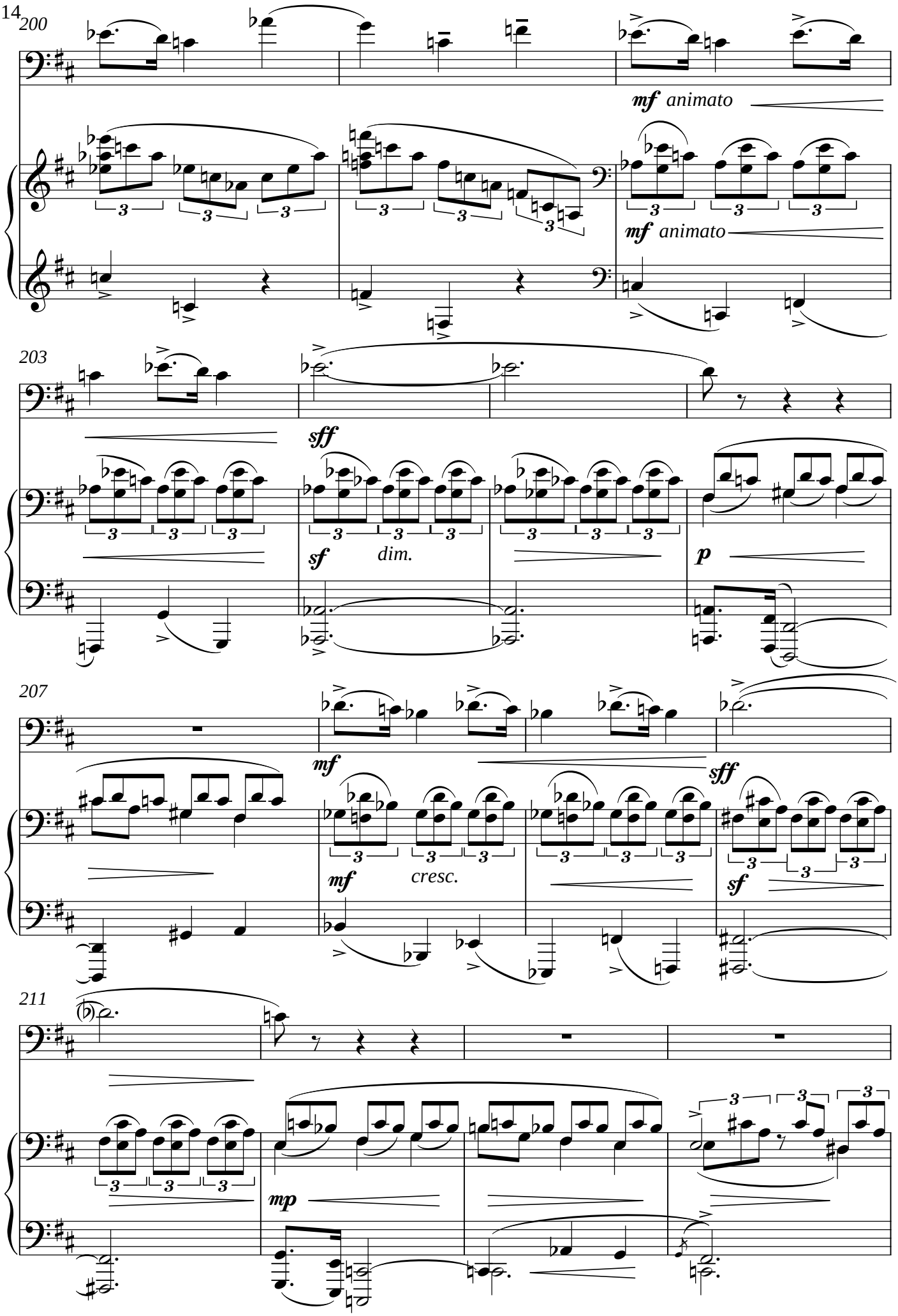
193

mf piu agitato

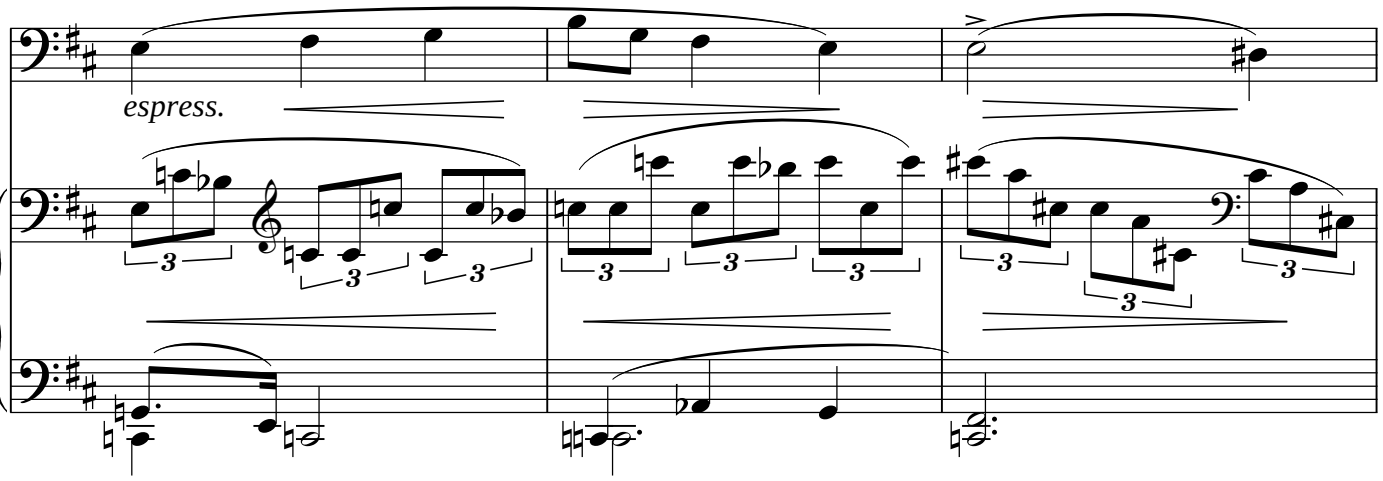
mf

196




200
mf animato
mf animato
203
sff
sf
dim.
p
207
mf
sff
mf
cresc.
sf
211
mp

215



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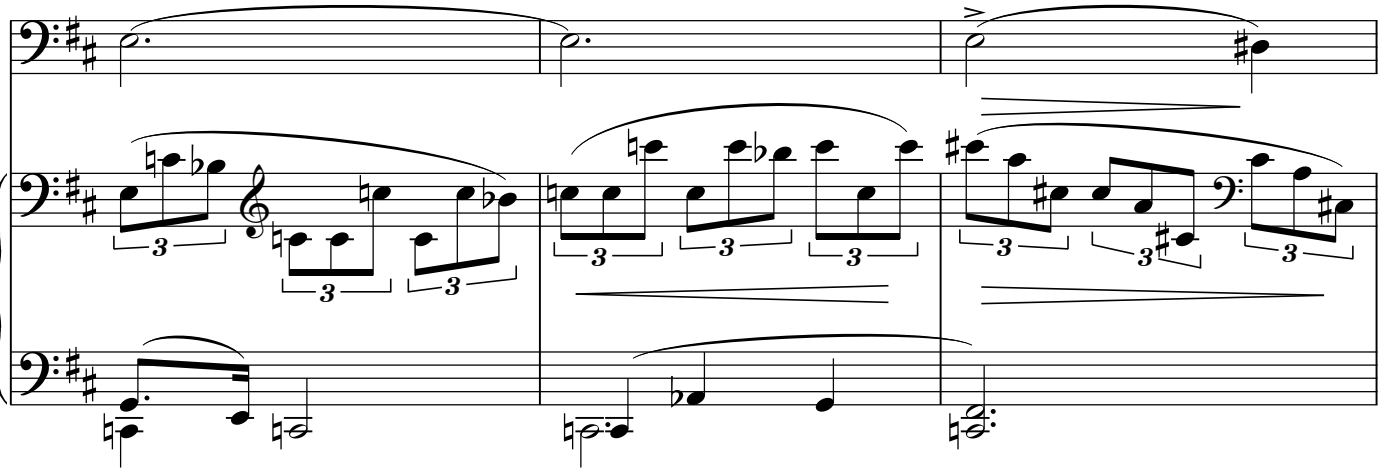

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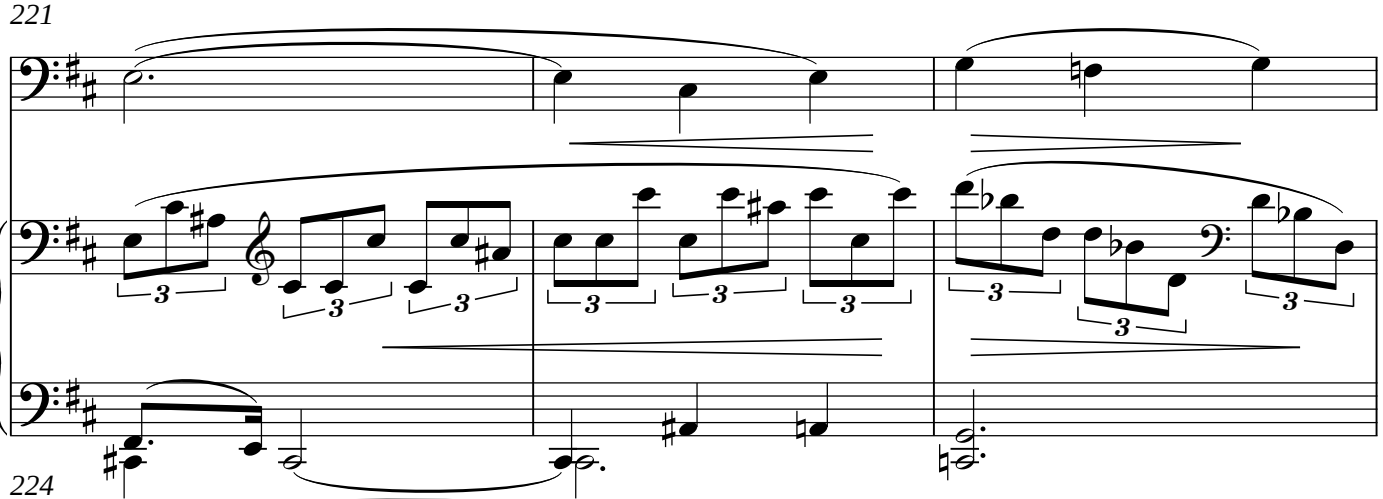

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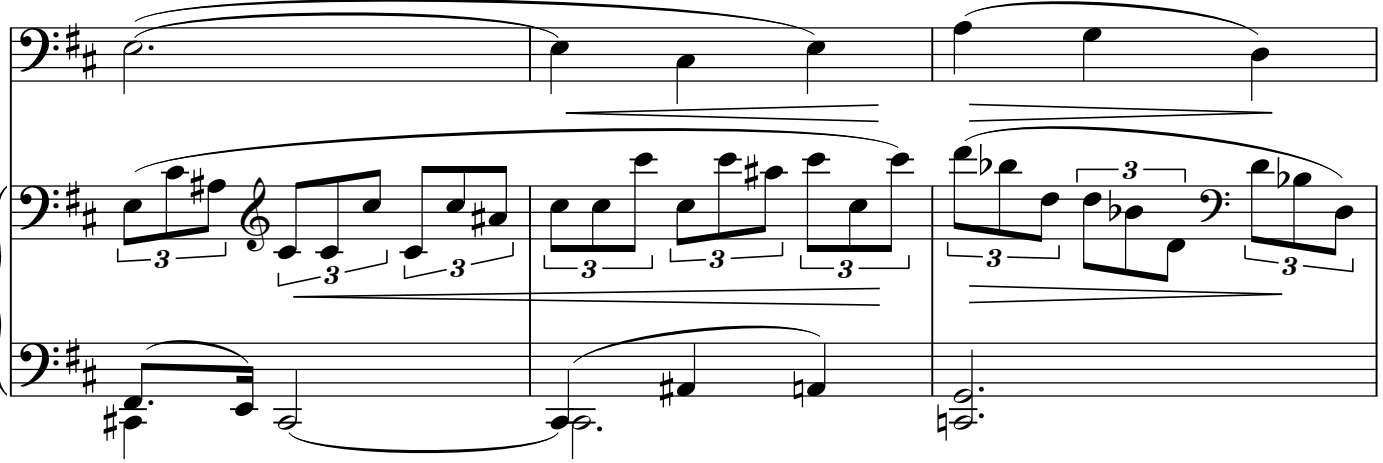


227

pp

Ped.

231

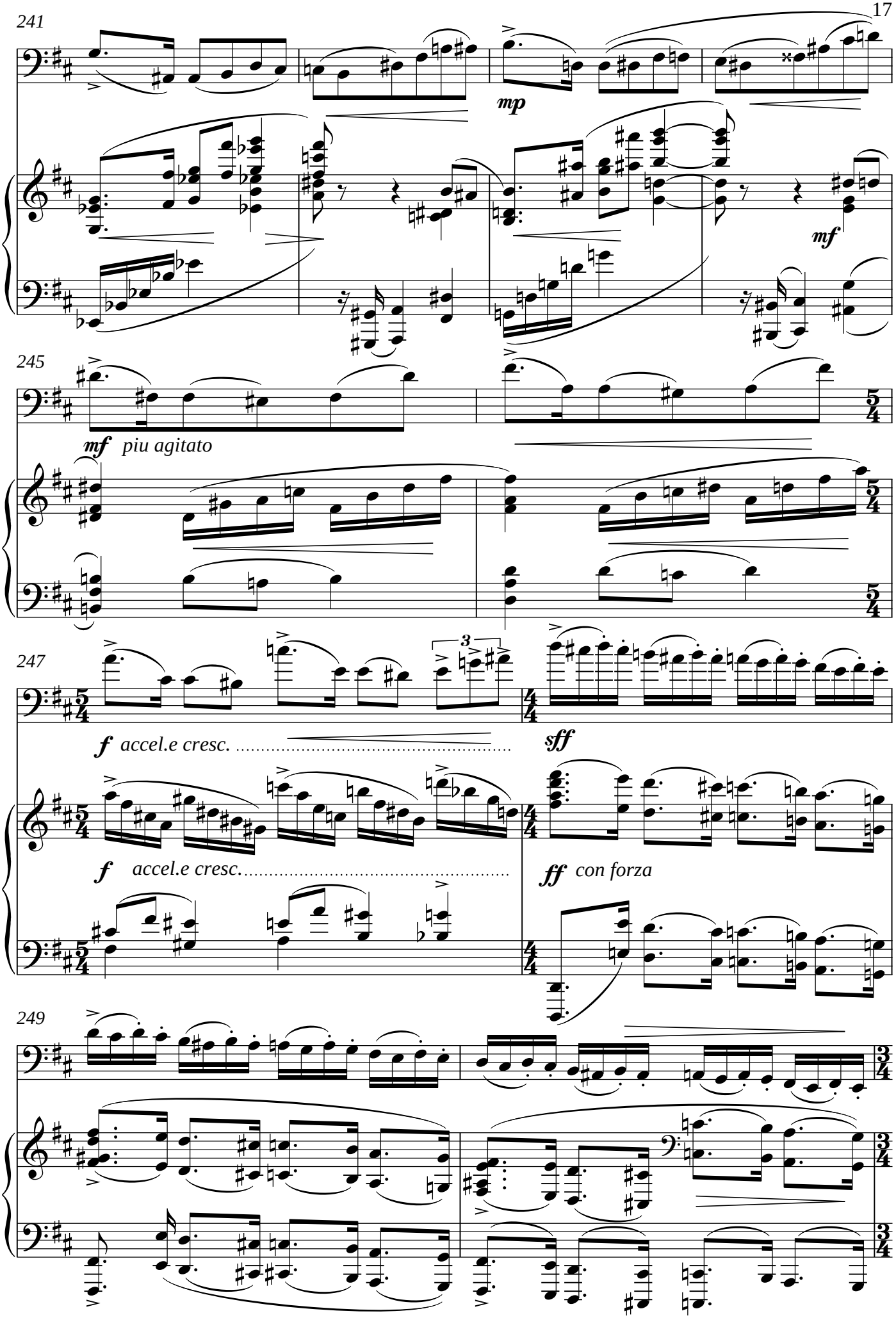
poco rit. - - - - - - **tempo moderato**

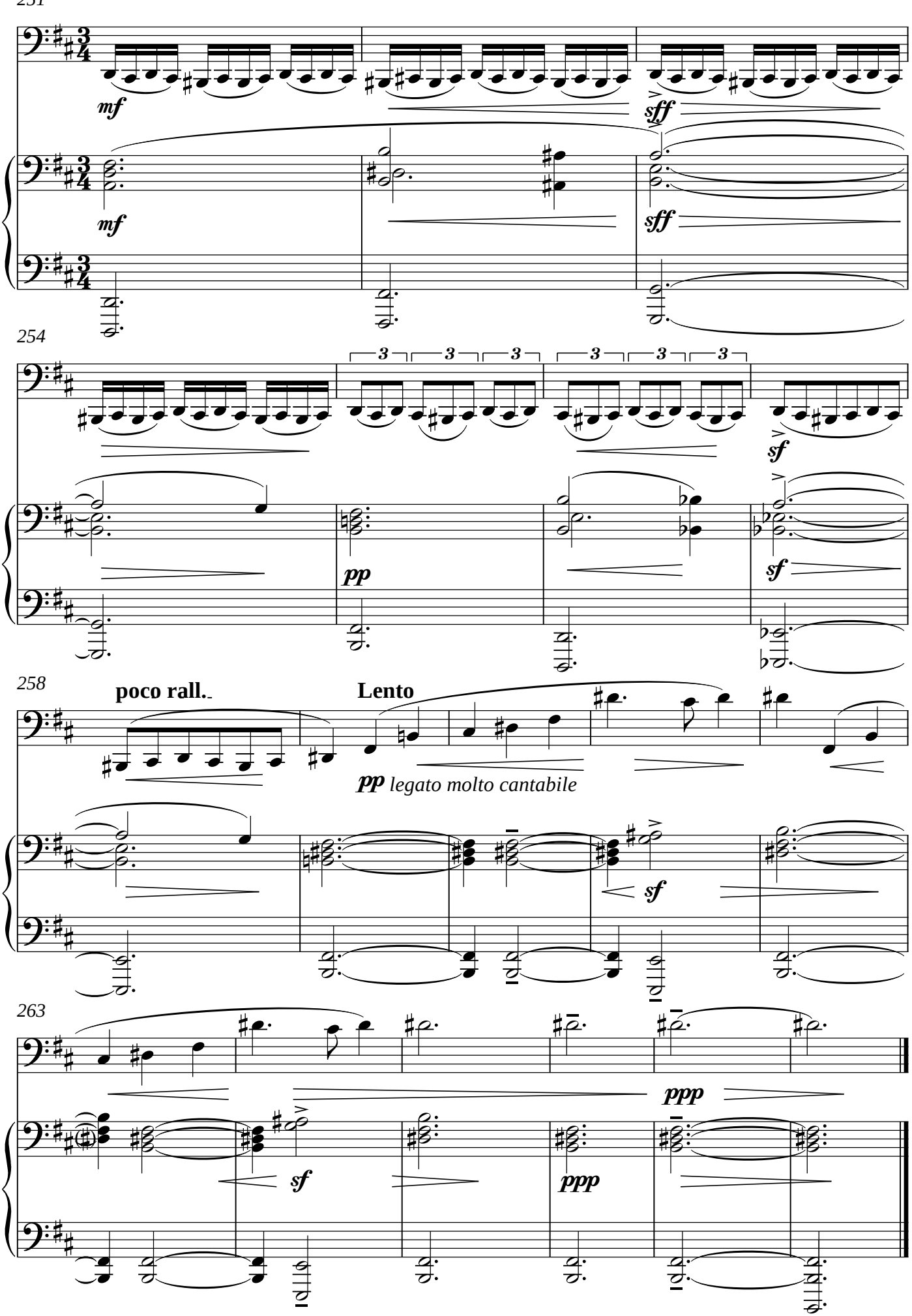
p *con rubato*

234

237

p *p*


241
mp
mf
245
mf piu agitato
247
f accel.e cresc.
sff
f accel.e cresc.
ff con forza
249


251
mf
mf
sff
sff
254
3
3
3
3
3
3
sf
pp
sf
258
poco rall.
Lento
pp legato molto cantabile
sf
263
ppp
sf
ppp