# JOHN SYKES

# TOCCATA

## for

## Pianoforte

The JOHN SYKES PROJECT

MMXVIII

# 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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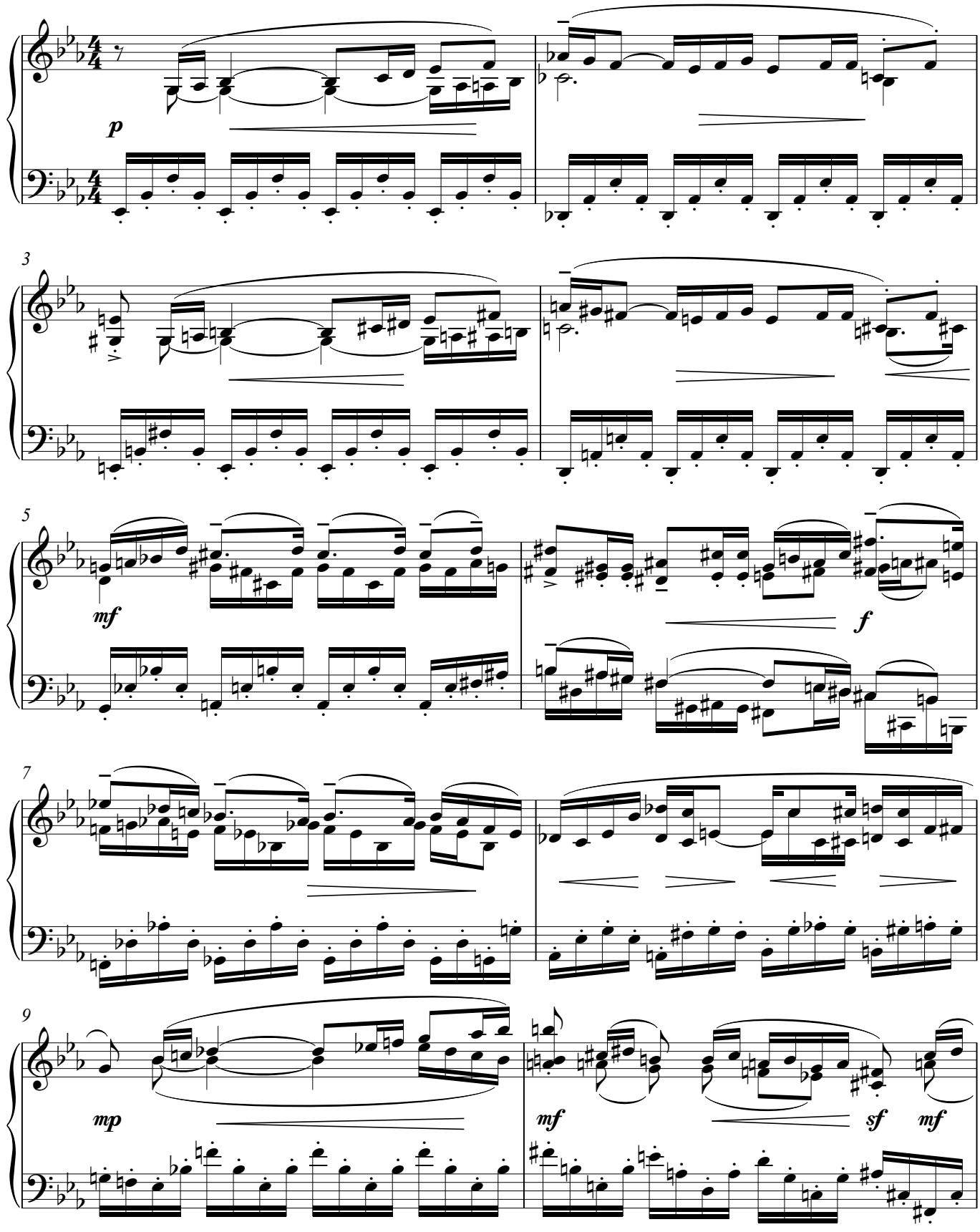
# Toccata for Pianoforte

This work started life as *Cavalcade*, composed in October and November 1932, while Sykes was a composition pupil of Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music in London. The *Toccata* version is undated, but probably was finished considerably later when he was teaching at Kingswood School. He had a sufficiently high regard for it to have it professionally copied and reproduced in several copies by Golderstat of London – an expensive undertaking for a (at that time) lowly paid schoolmaster. It is a virtuoso piece, needing a powerful pianistic technique to do it full justice. The concert pianist James Gibb (one of Sykes' left-wing friends and a frequent visitor to Randall Swingler's 'People's Republic of Pebmarsh') had the work in his repertoire.

# Toccata

John Sykes

**Allegro con moto**

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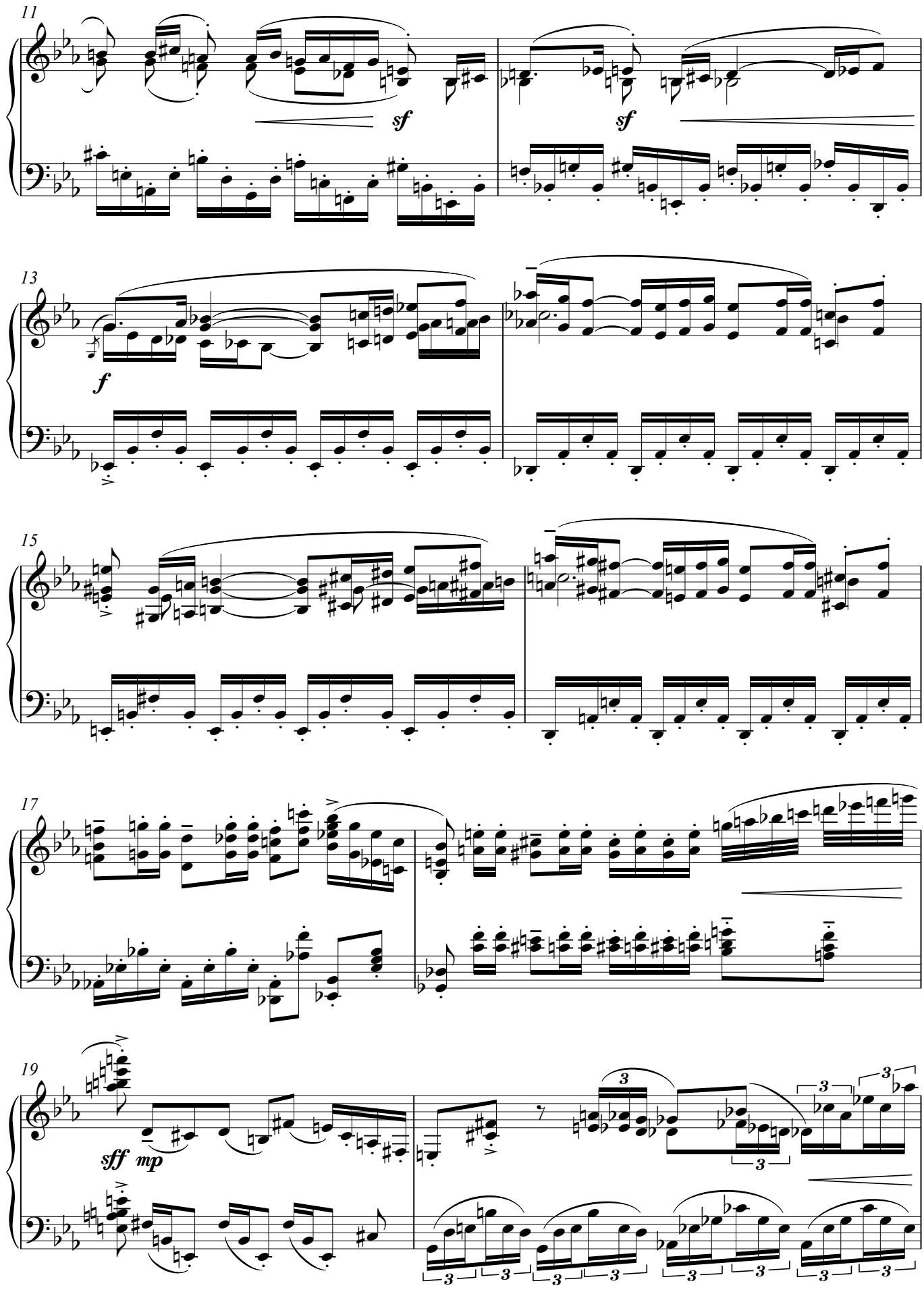
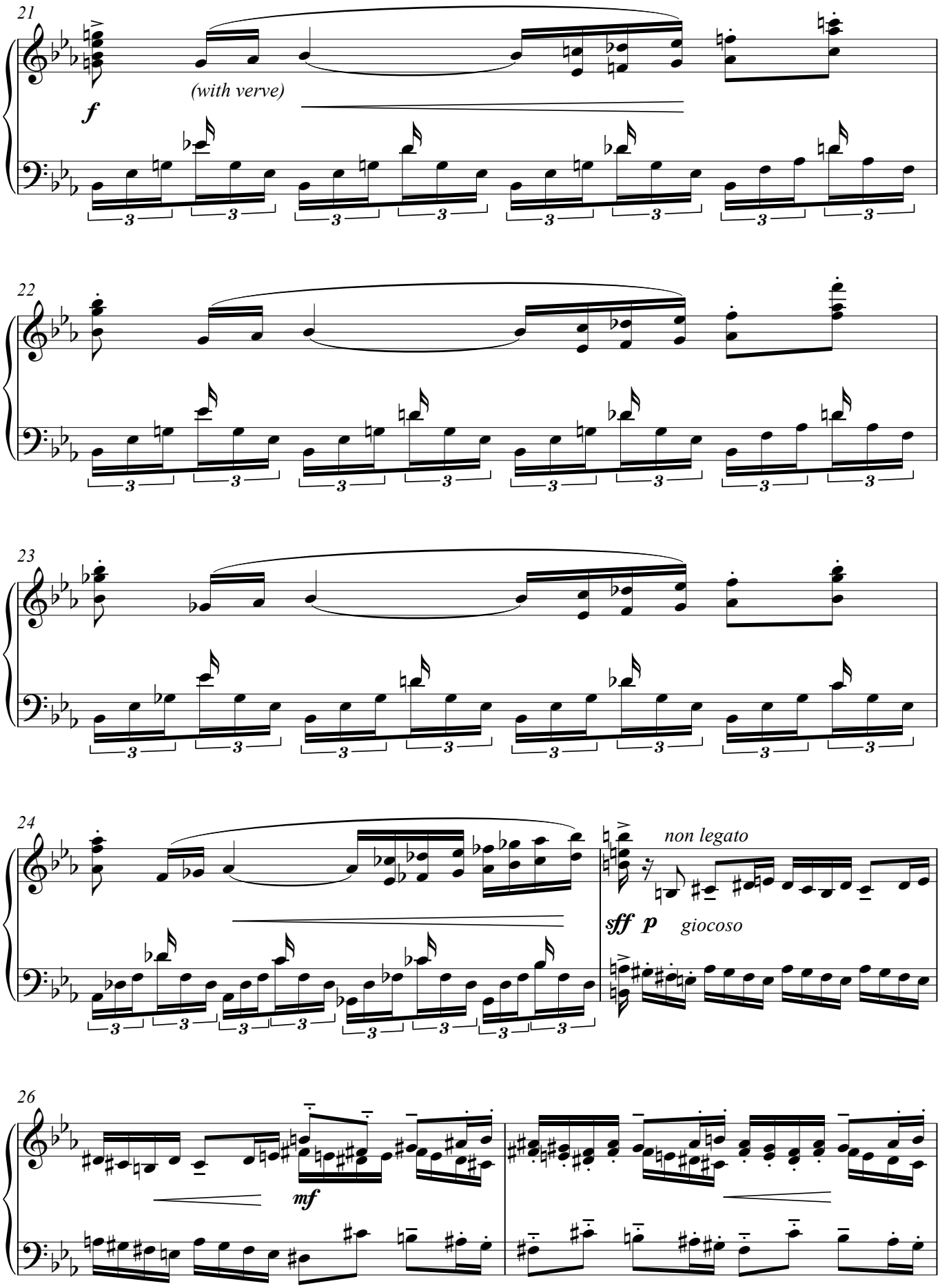
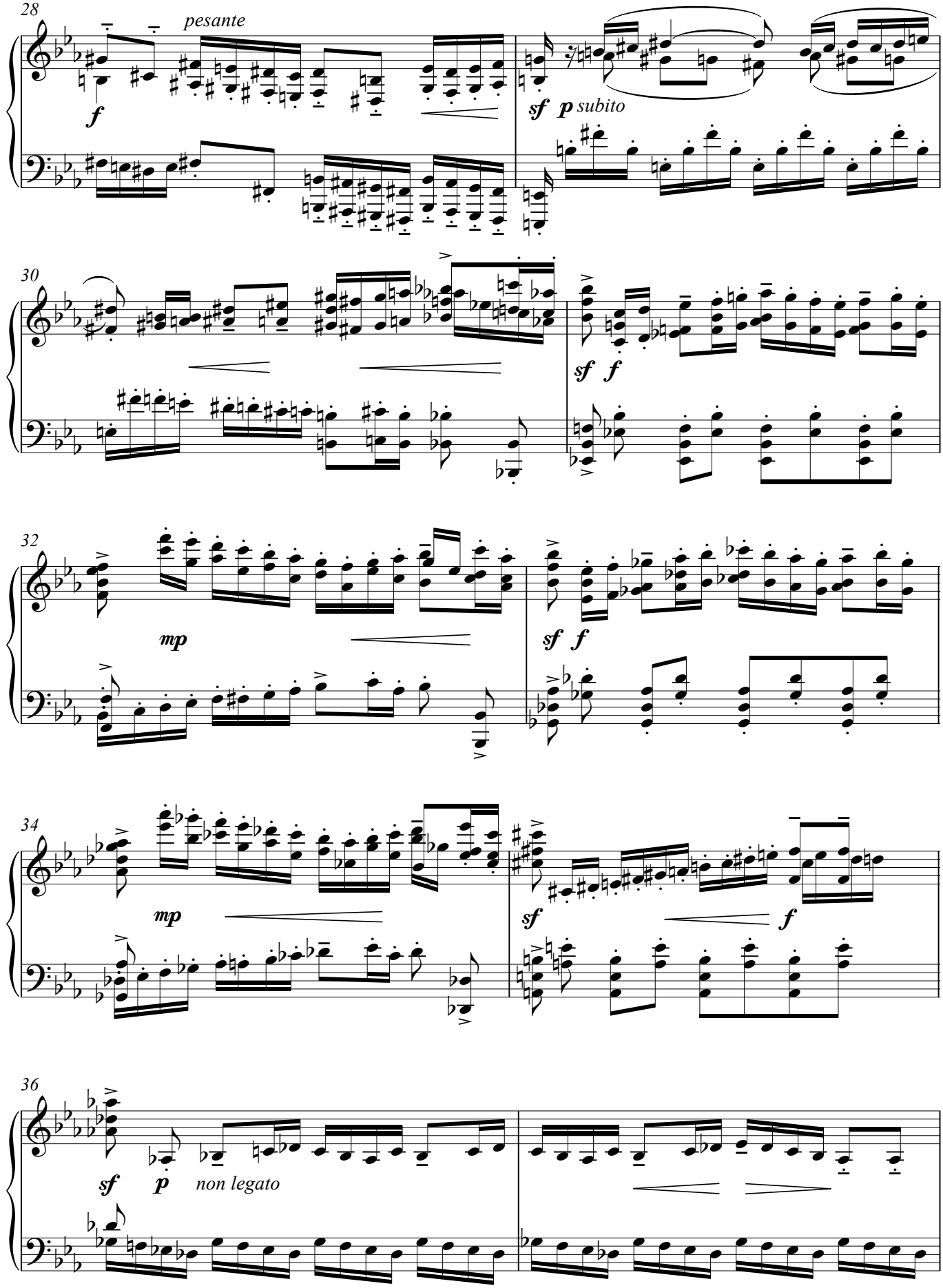
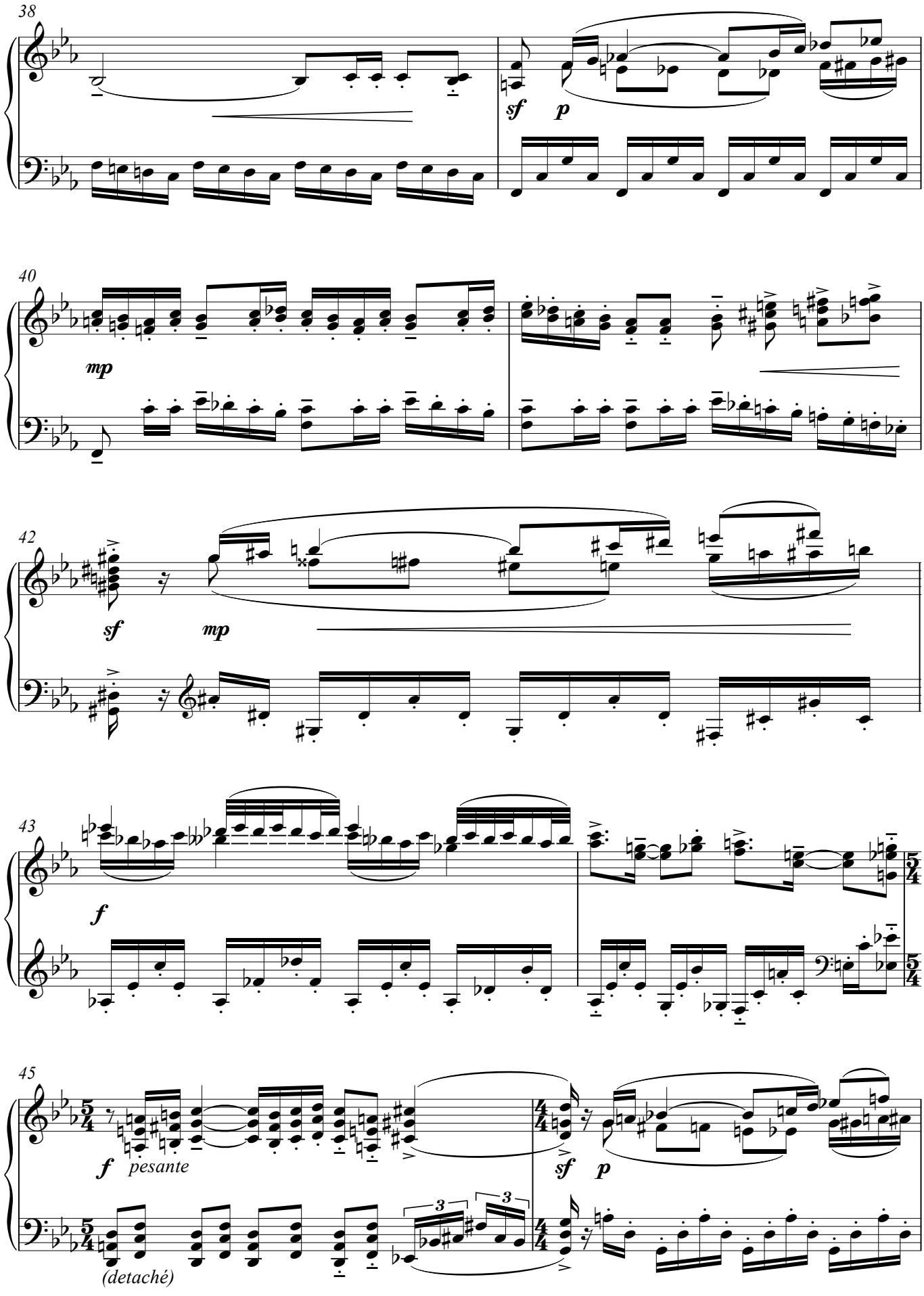
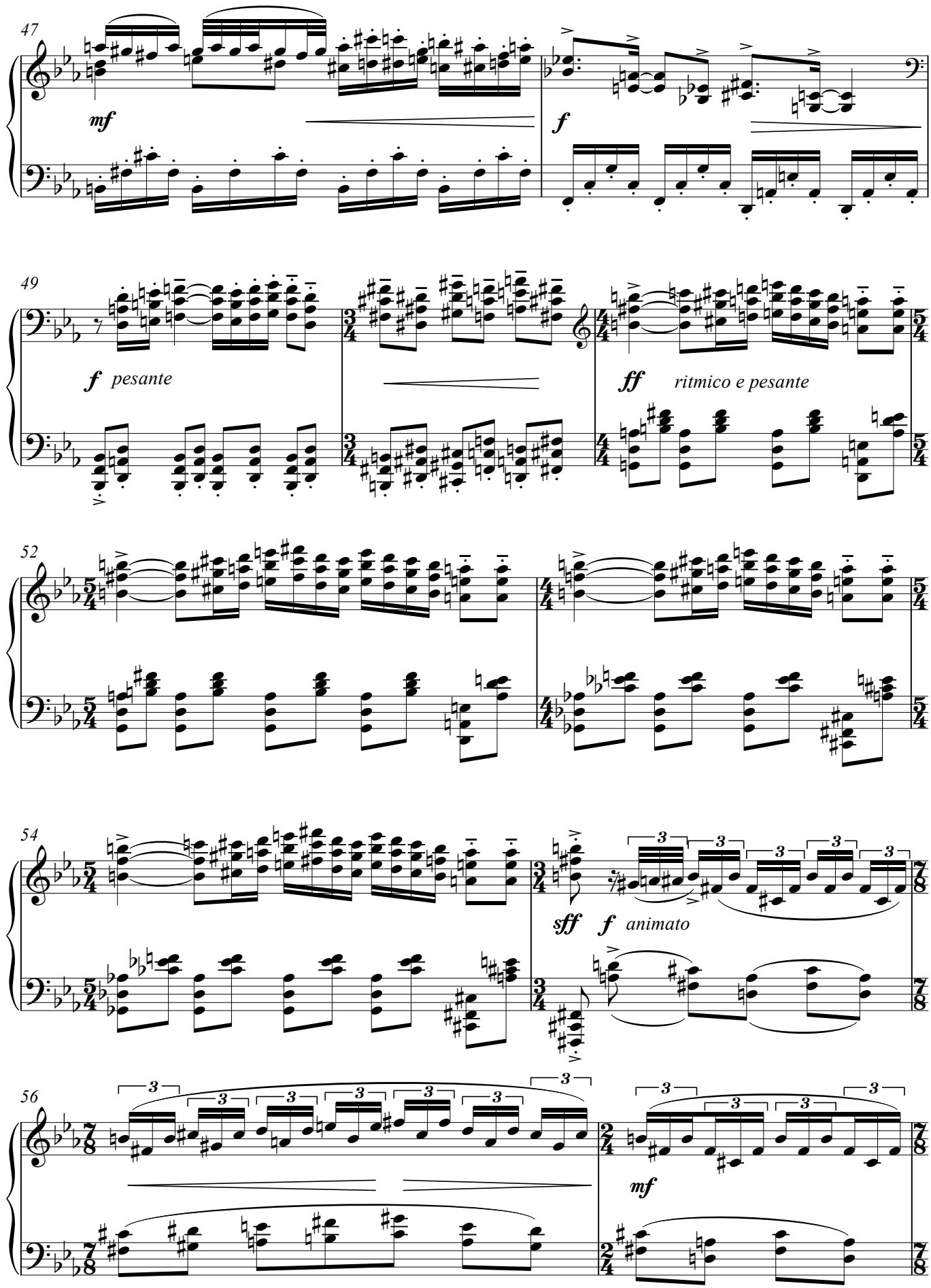
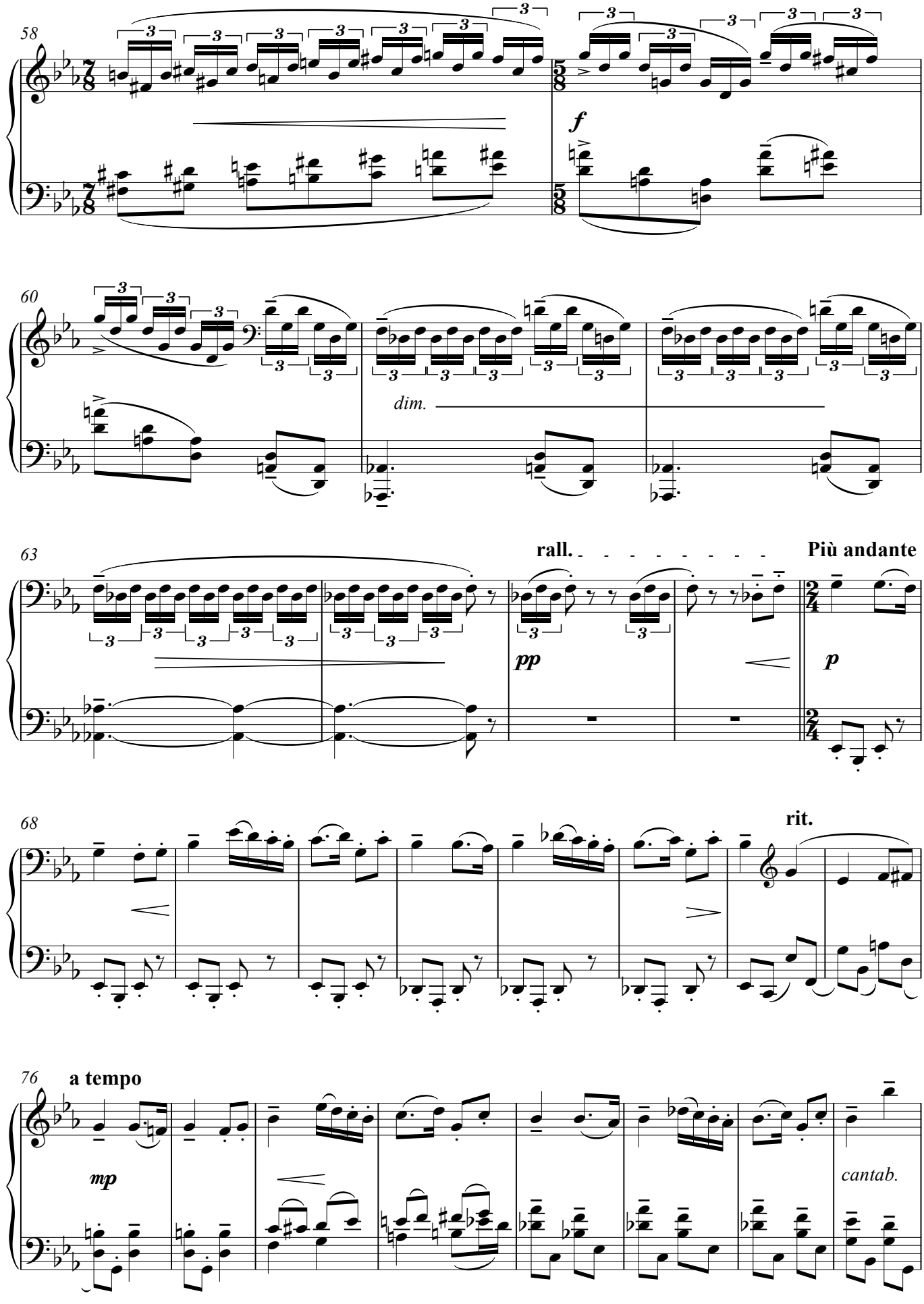

11
sf
sf
13
f
15
17
19
sff
mp
3

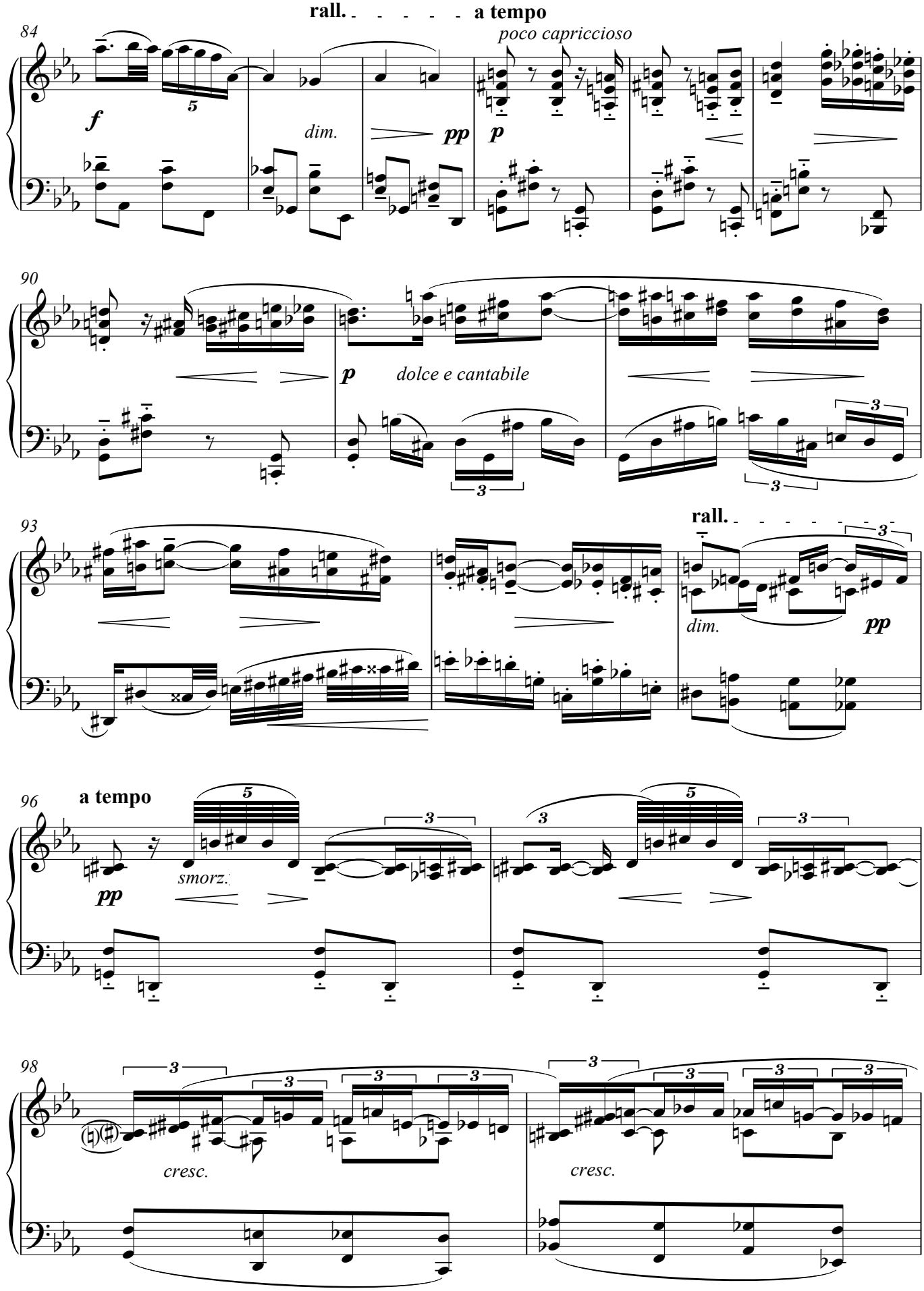

21
(with verve)
f
22
23
24
non legato
sff p giocoso
26
mf

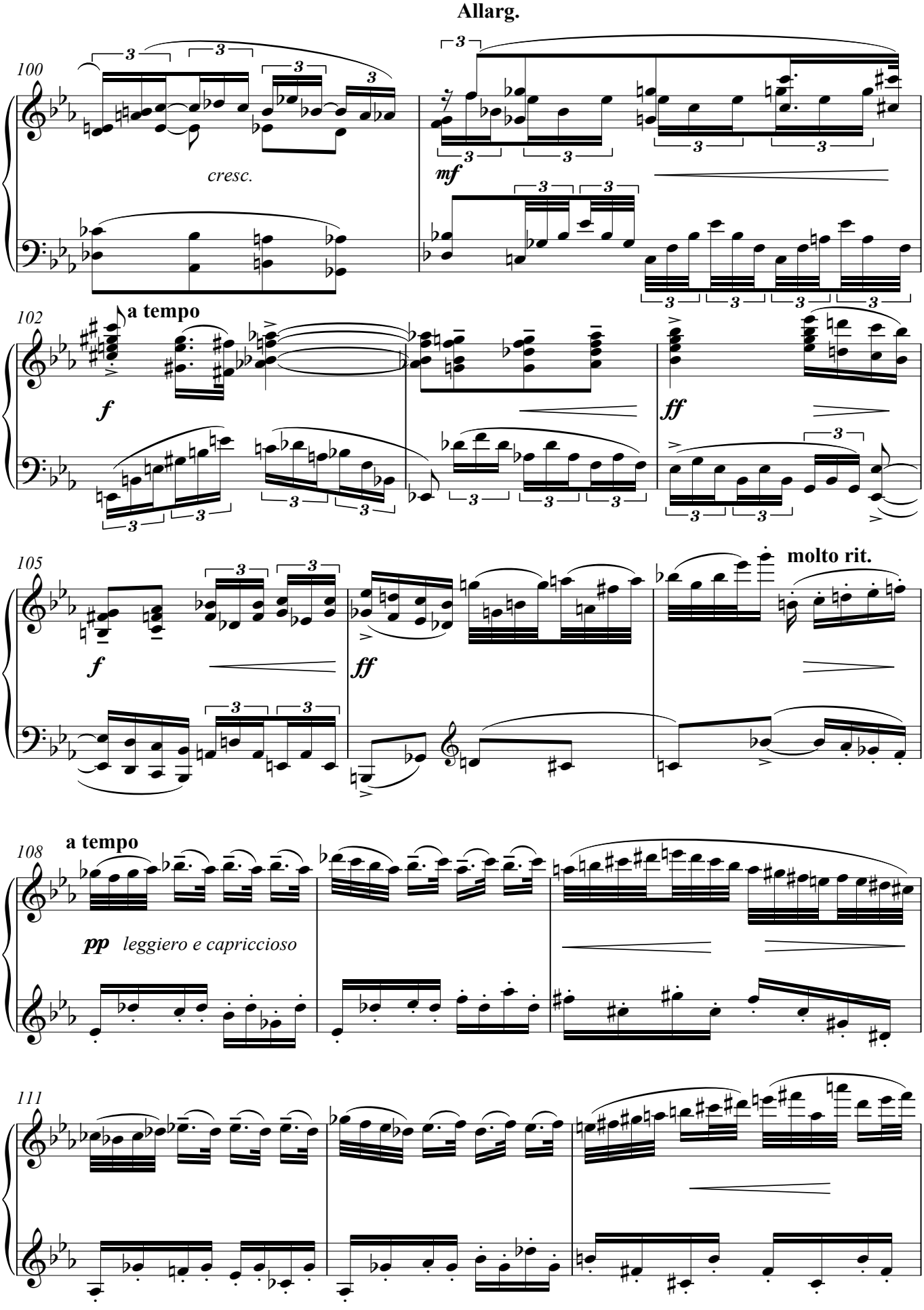

28
pesante
f
sf p subito
30
sf f
32
mp
sf f
34
mp
sf f
36
sf p non legato

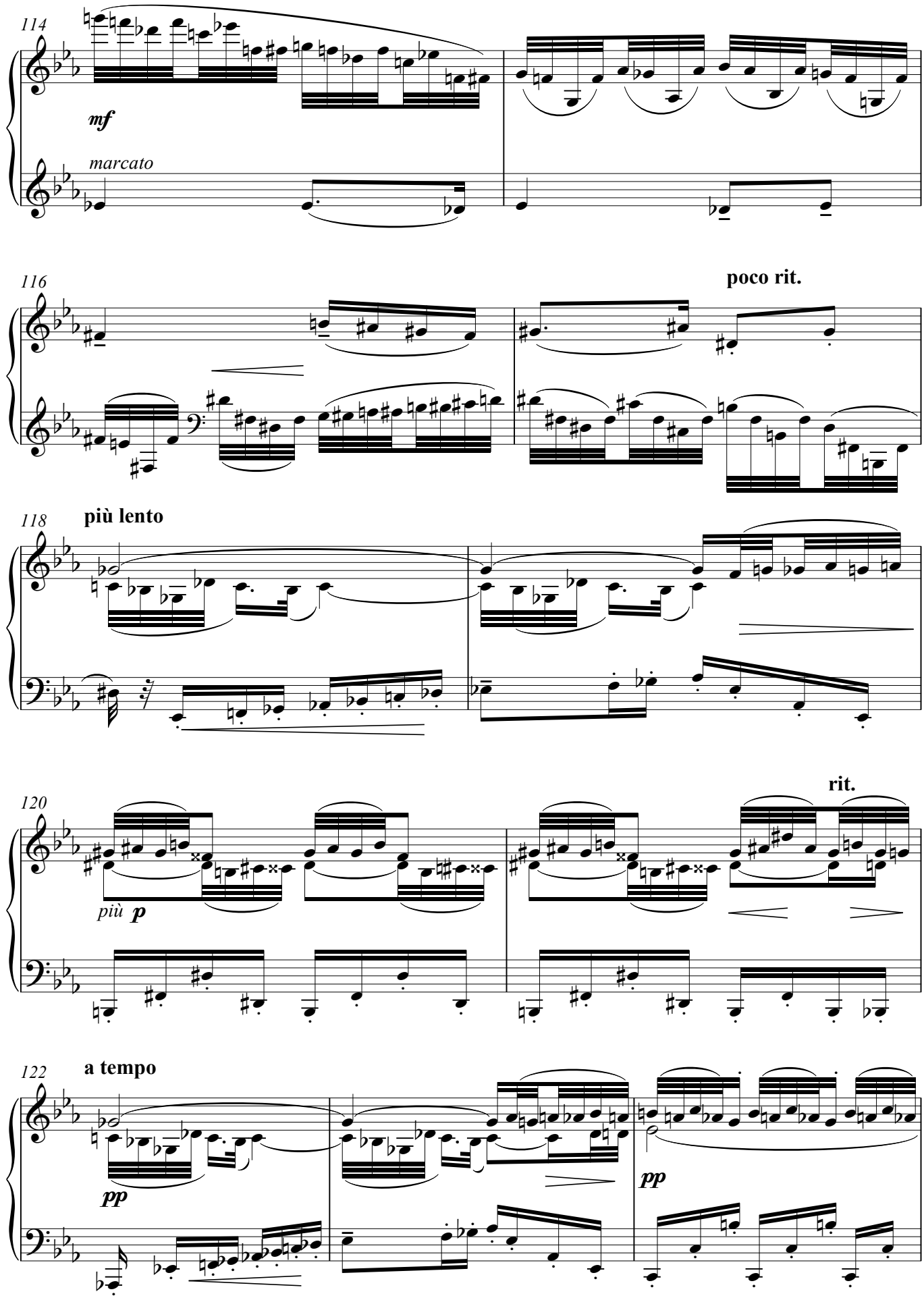

38
sf
p
40
mp
42
sf
mp
43
f
45
f
pesante
(detaché)
sf
p

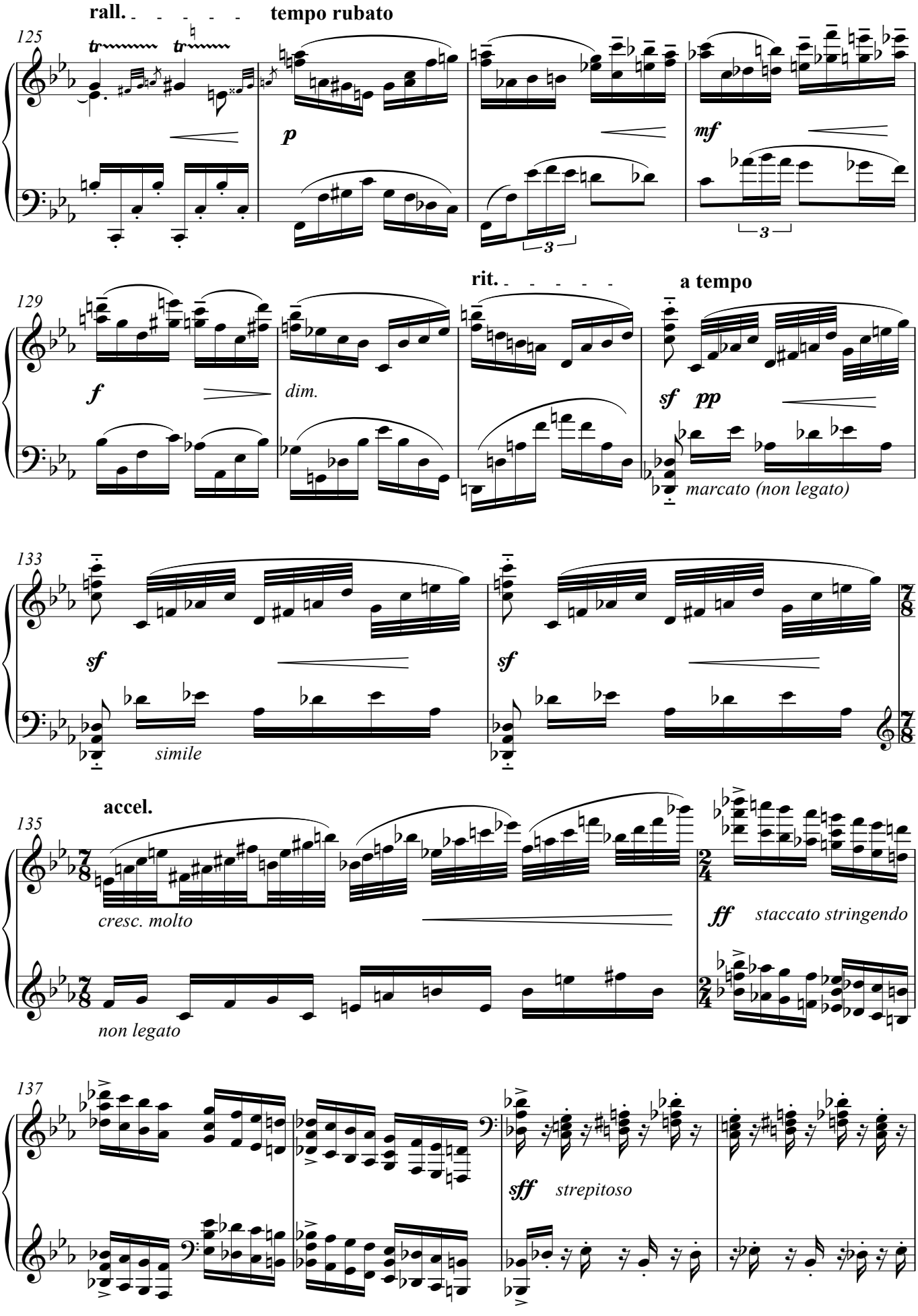

47
mf
f
49
f pesante
ff ritmico e pesante
52
54
sff f animato
56
mf

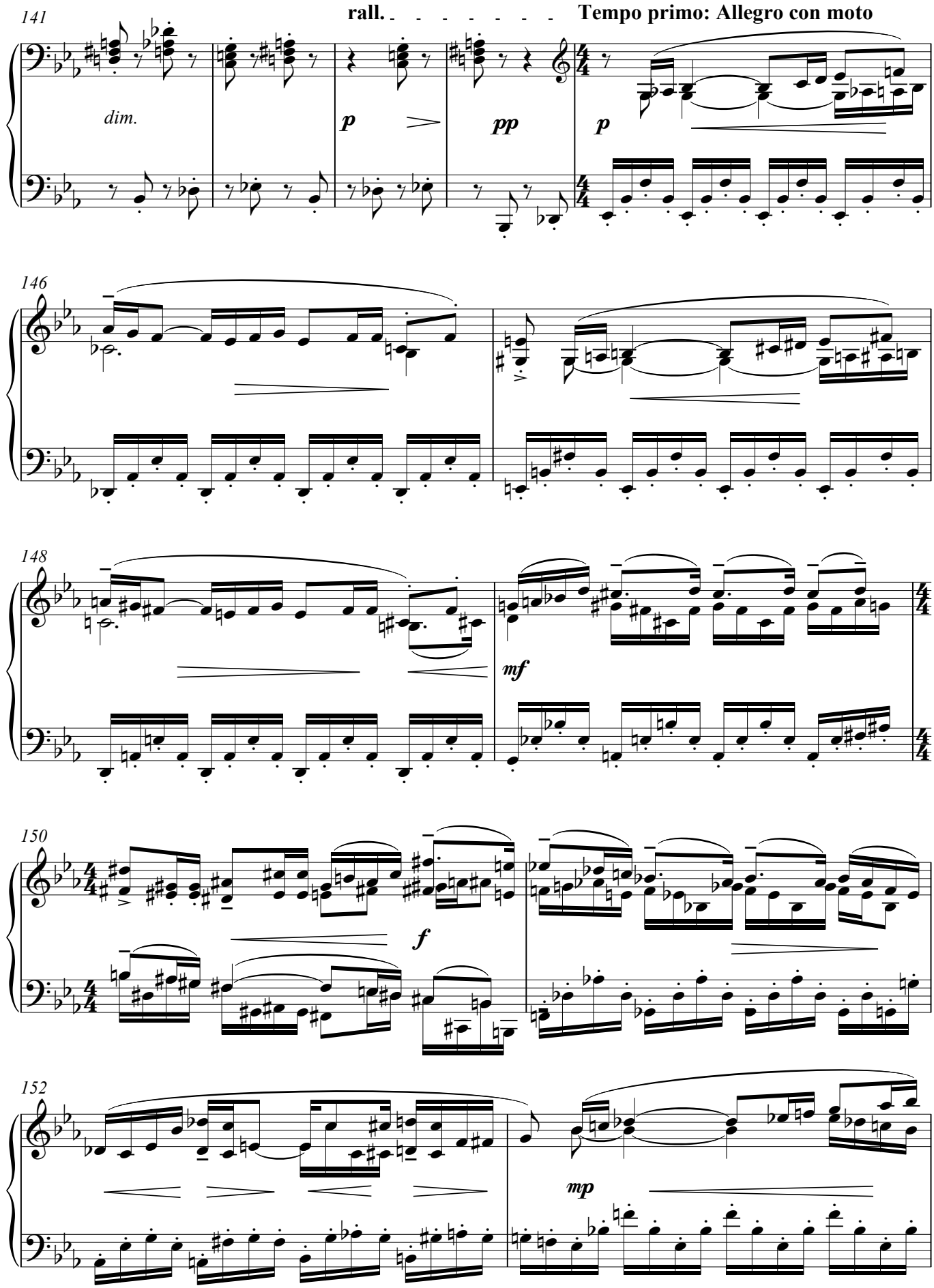

58
f
60
dim.
63
rall.
Più andante
pp
p
68
rit.
76
a tempo
mp
cantab.

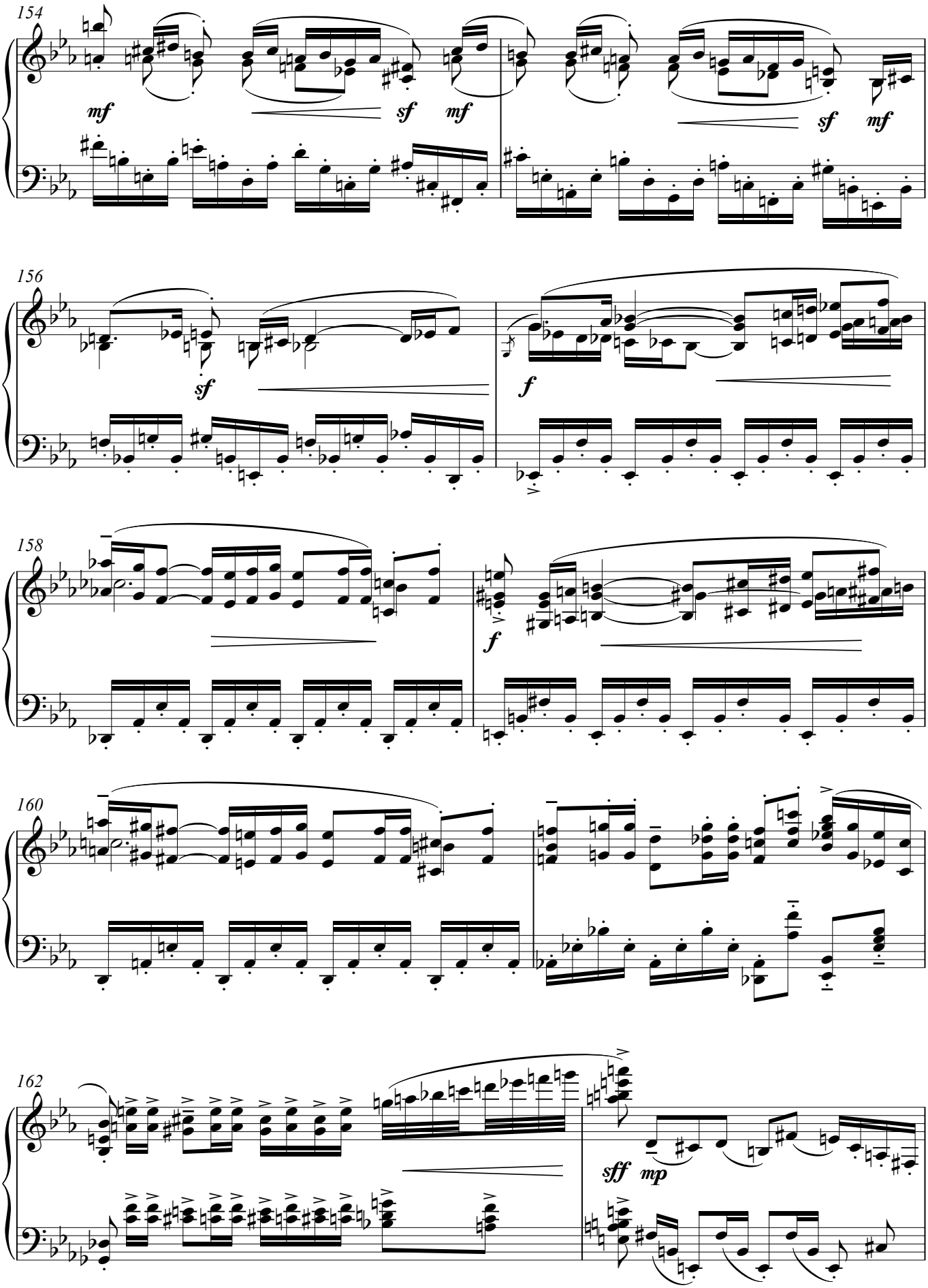

rall. a tempo
84
poco capriccioso
f
dim.
pp
p
90
p
dolce e cantabile
93
rall.
dim.
pp
96
a tempo
pp
smorz.
98
cresc.
cresc.

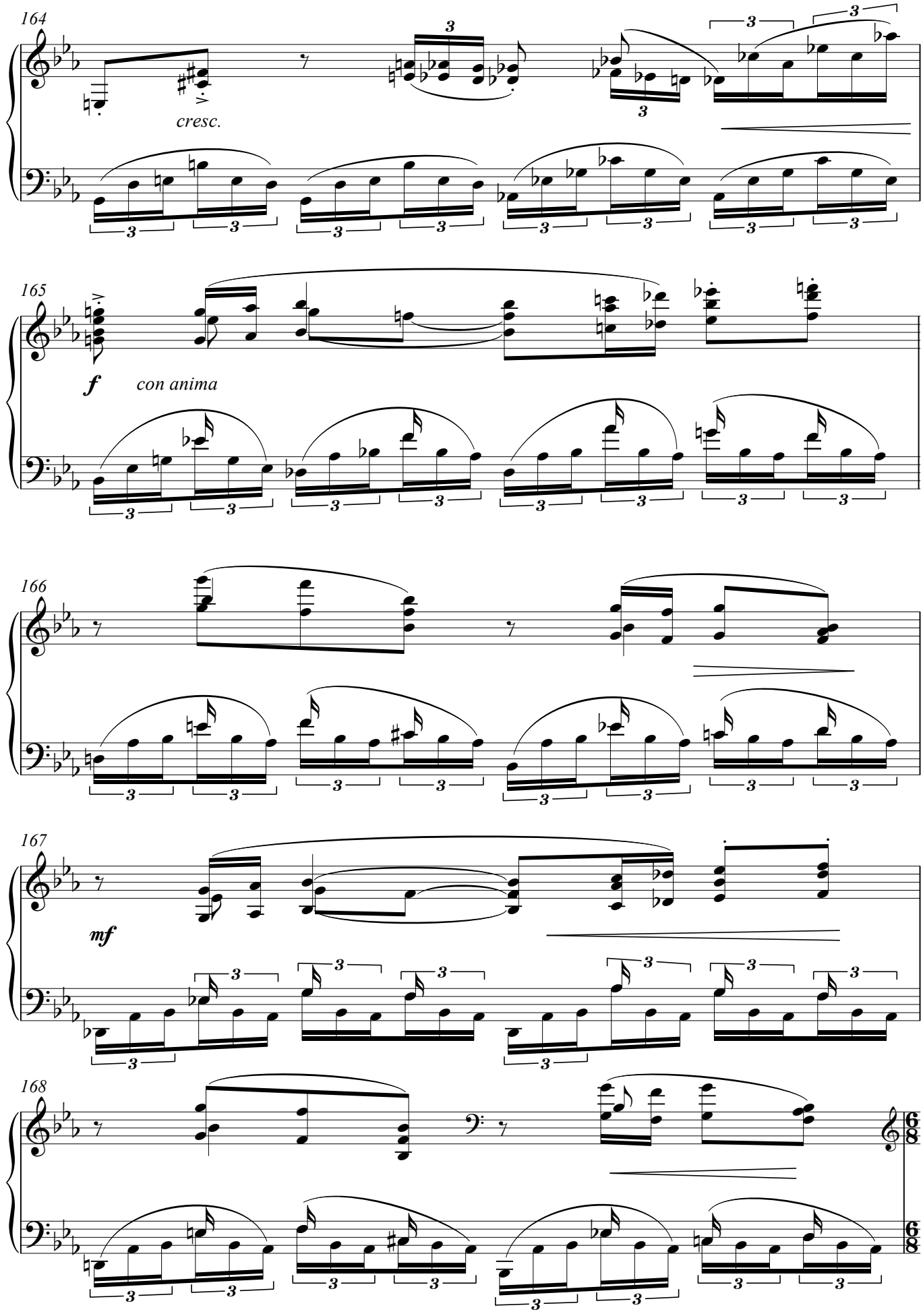

Allarg.
100
cresc.
mf
102
a tempo
f
ff
105
molto rit.
108
a tempo
pp leggiero e capriccioso
111

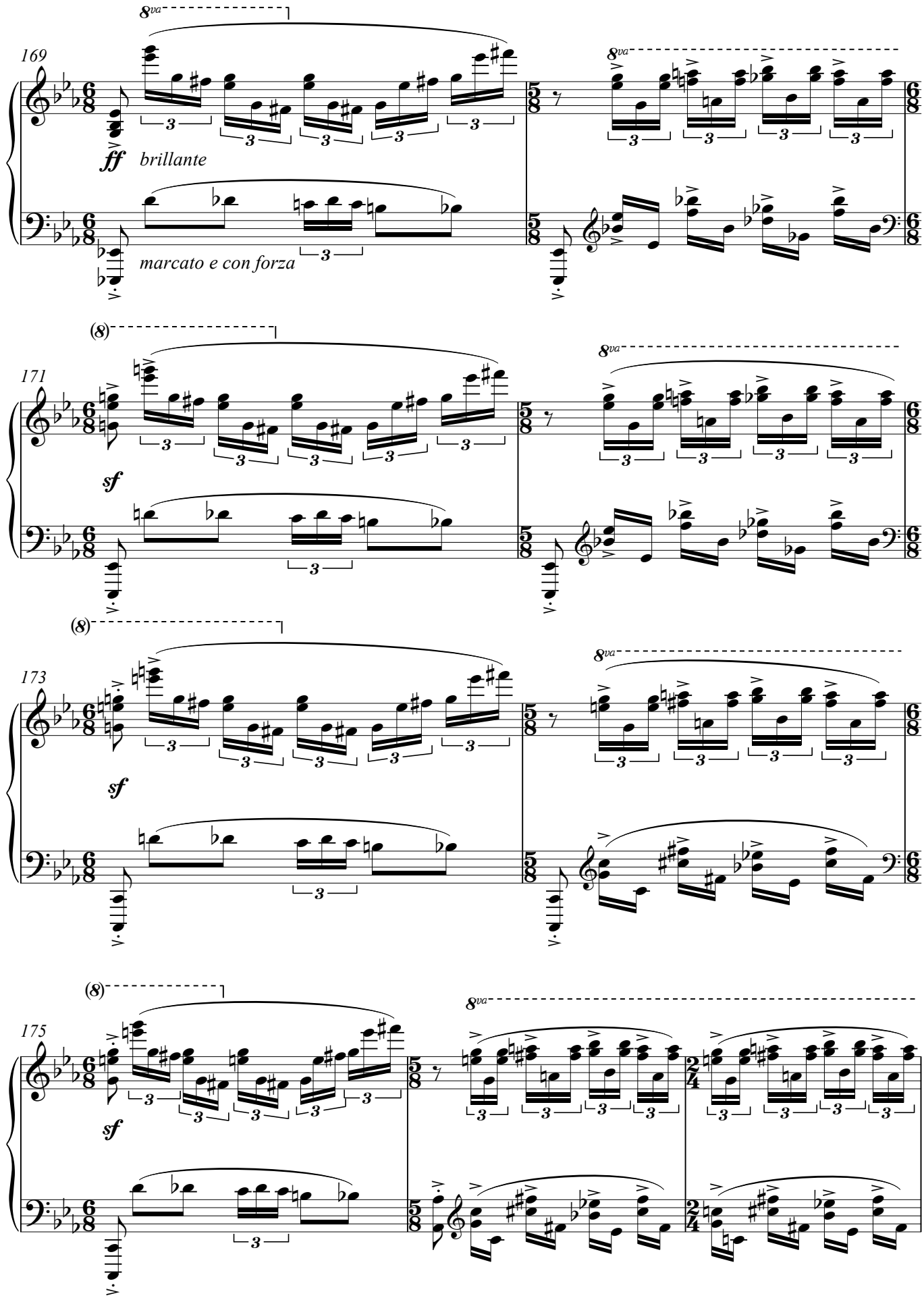

114
mf
marcato
116
poco rit.
118
più lento
120
più p
rit.
122
a tempo
pp
pp

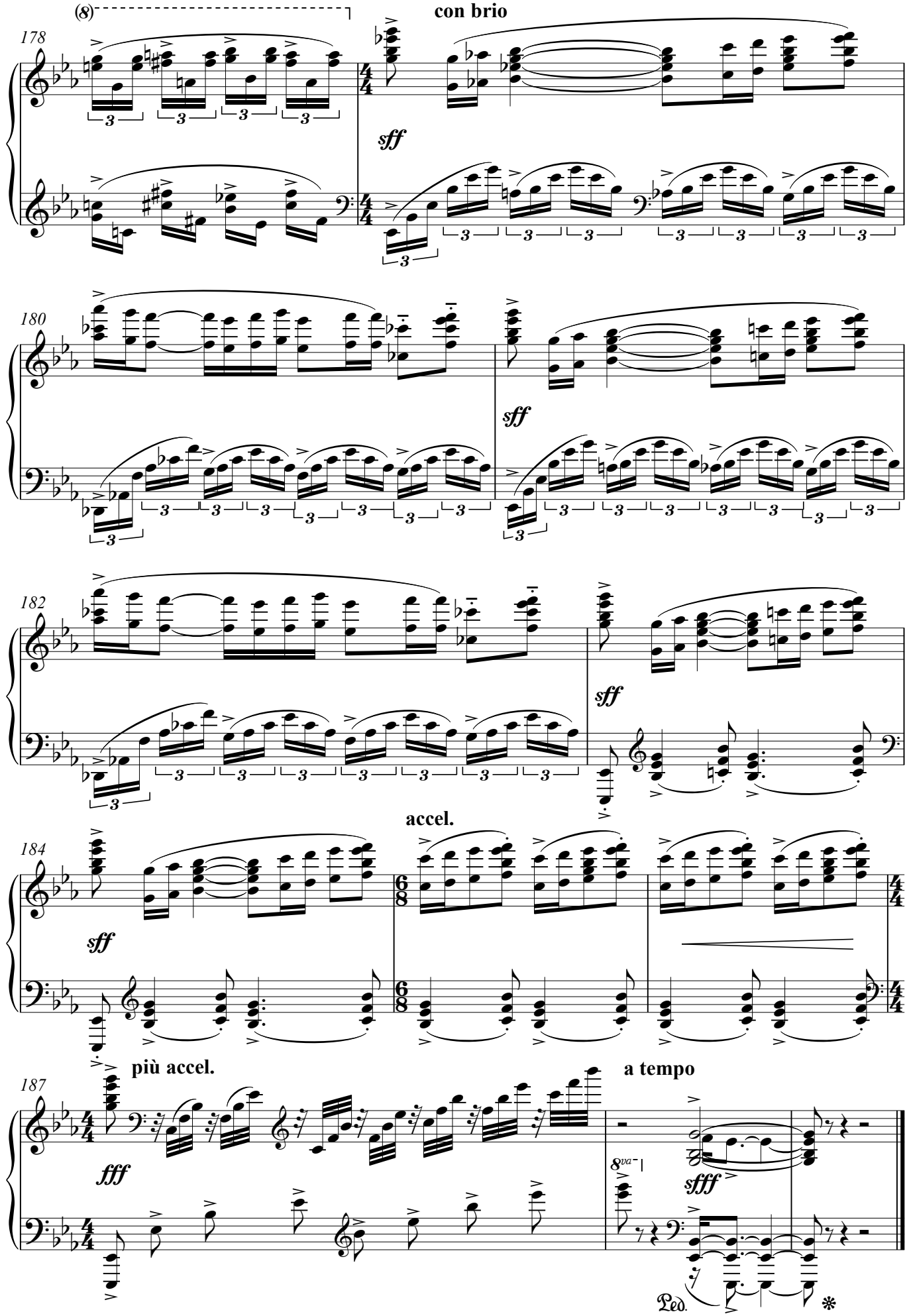

rall.
tempo rubato
125
tr
tr
p
mf
3
3
rit.
a tempo
129
f
dim.
sf
pp
marcato (non legato)
133
sf
sf
simile
accel.
135
cresc. molto
ff
staccato stringendo
non legato
137
sff
strepitoso


141
rall.
Tempo primo: Allegro con moto
dim.
p
pp
p
146
148
mf
150
f
152
mp


154
mf
sf
mf
sf
mf
156
sf
f
158
f
160
162
sff
mp


164
cresc.
165
f
con anima
166
167
mf
168


169
8va
ff
brillante
marcato e con forza
171
(8)
sf
173
sf
175
sf


(8)
con brio
178
sff
180
sff
182
sff
accel.
184
sff
più accel.
a tempo
187
fff
8va
sfff
Ped.