Frédéric CHOPIN

SCHERZO 3

Opus 39 C♯ minor

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Frédéric CHOPIN 1810 - 1849

SCHERZO 3

Opus 39 C♯ minor

For a description detailing the intrinsic value of the scherzos, we need look no further than Cortot's introduction to his *Édition de Travail:*

> *In response, and in expressive contrast to the emotional and tragic poetry of the four Ballades, Chopin, with equivalent inventive genius, offers the four Scherzos, pulsating with passionate rhythms and overflowing with tumultuous energy.*
>
> *As for the designation "Scherzo", there is an apparent contradiction between the choice of a Beethovenian title which, in principle, should be synonymous only with pleasant vibrant music, and the character of tragic exaltation which prevails in at least three of these masterpieces of pianistic literature.*
>
> *However they are terrifying diversions; feverish and hallucinating dances, whose quivering voice seems only to find its way after the painful round of human torment. While clearly discerned in the first three of these astonishing compositions, the fourth, as with other works from Chopin's late period, finds inspiration rather more nostalgic than traumatic, echoing a somewhat more submissive melancholy, while not excluding a certain quality of objectivism.*

As with the Nocturnes, the Polonaises and the Etudes, Chopin rediscovered and renewed traditional musical genres, but the four Scherzos explored a new form of piano composition. There is very little in common between the classical sonata scherzo and these outstanding and passionate works which often reflect Beethoven's headlong pulse and bitter irony. As a symphonic third movement, these musical "jests" replaced the more serene minuet. Chopin, however, created an independent virtuoso showpiece, its frenzied character a true innovation of the Romantic movement; he has never been more virile and more charged with vital energy.

No-one was better placed than his friend and colleague Franz Liszt who recalls the astonished reaction in Chopin's circle:

> *His Scherzos evoke intense wrath and despair, sometimes with scorn, sometimes with contempt. A false impression may have been due to his personal manner — generous, charming, and affable in his relationships. Serene and outwardly jovial, he would not allow any suspicion of the secret turmoil which distressed him.*

The scherzos, more than any other form, express spirited defiance and disdain; an appropriate release of his fearless originality, resolute, generous and poetic.

Sharing a fiery *(presto con fuoco)* tempo with the first Scherzo written some seven years earlier, the third (published in 1839) was dedicated to Adolphe Gutmann, one of Chopin's few pupils of professional ability. Many believe this is an invitation to hurtle through the octaves as in the B minor *étude* Op 25 N° 10. However the drama and seething rage at ***13*** *(risoluto)* demands tight control and articulation, with a measured tempo dictated by the polyphonic section at **29**.

The surprising, quiet and menacing opening with most original modulation was conceived during the last few weeks of Chopin's ill-fated visit with George Sand to Majorca in the winter of 1838, and recalls the stifling and sinister climate of the more sombre preludes written at the same time.

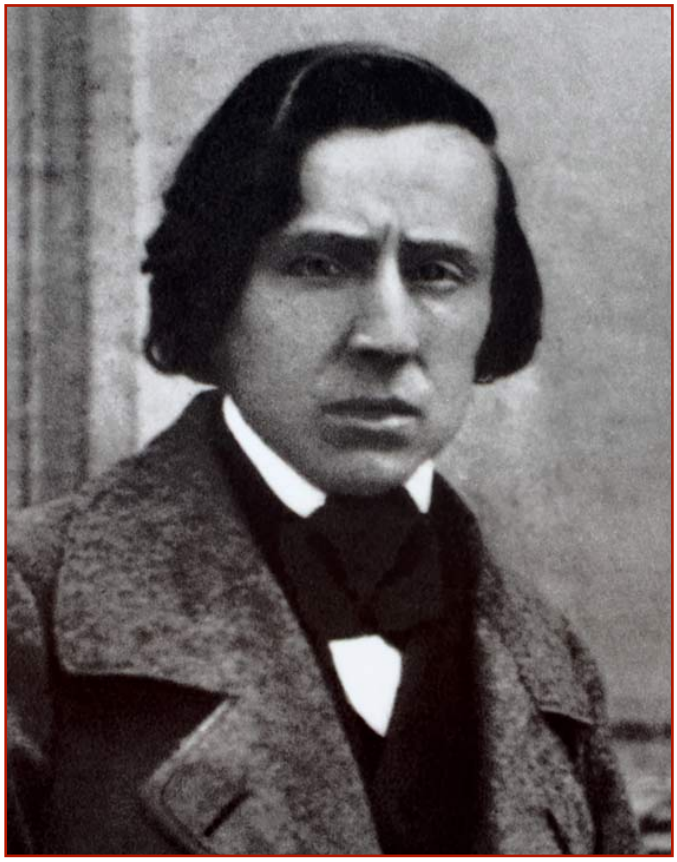
For stunning contrast, at **78** a quasi-religious chorale appears as if from nowhere, interspersed with delicate showers of descending quavers. At **249** a profoundly desolate transposition to E minor leads to my favourite moment — a wonderfully luminous modulation to D flat at **271** and then to a characteristically vivid stretto and coda.

Ray Alston May 2021

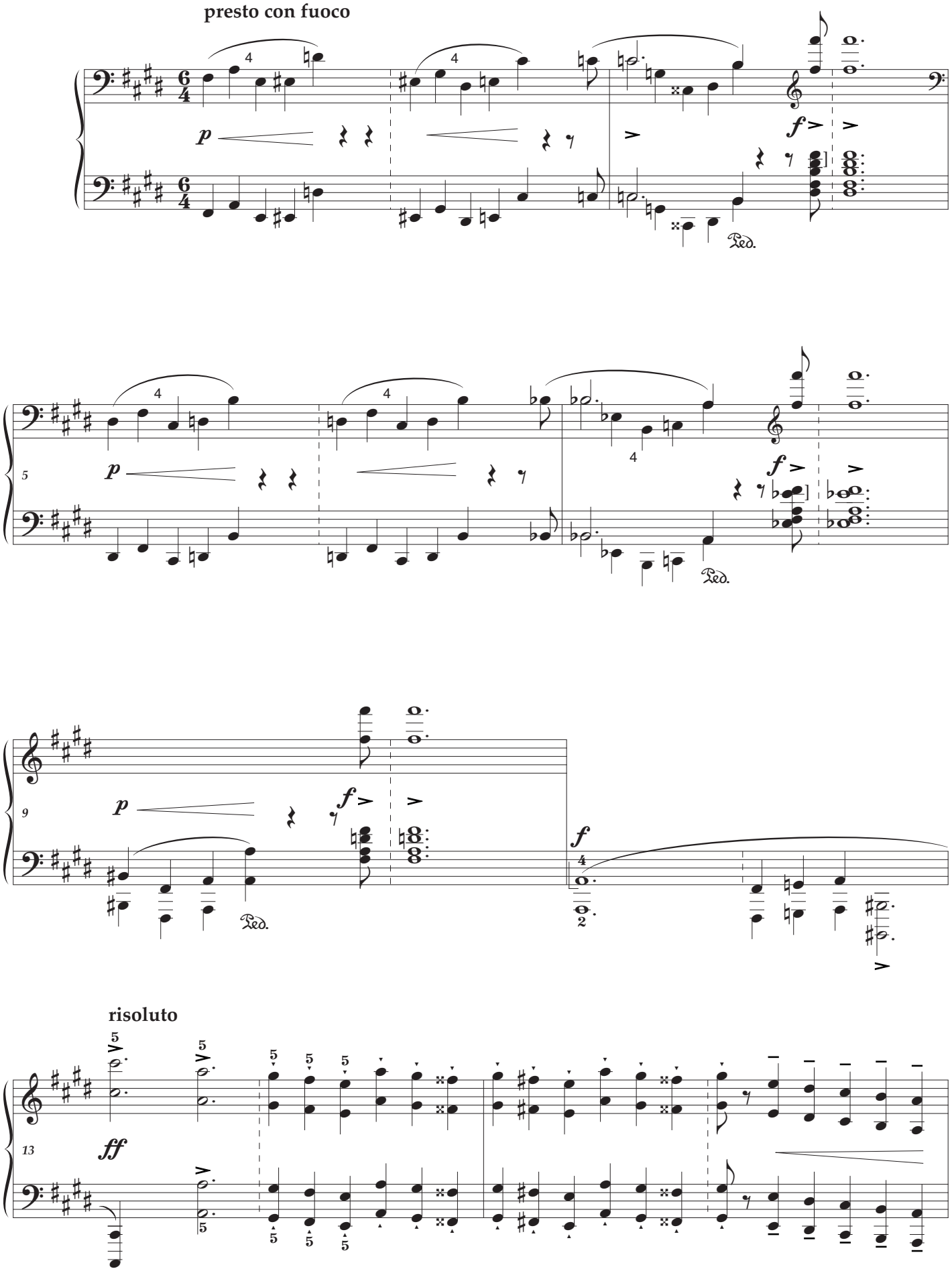
Notes

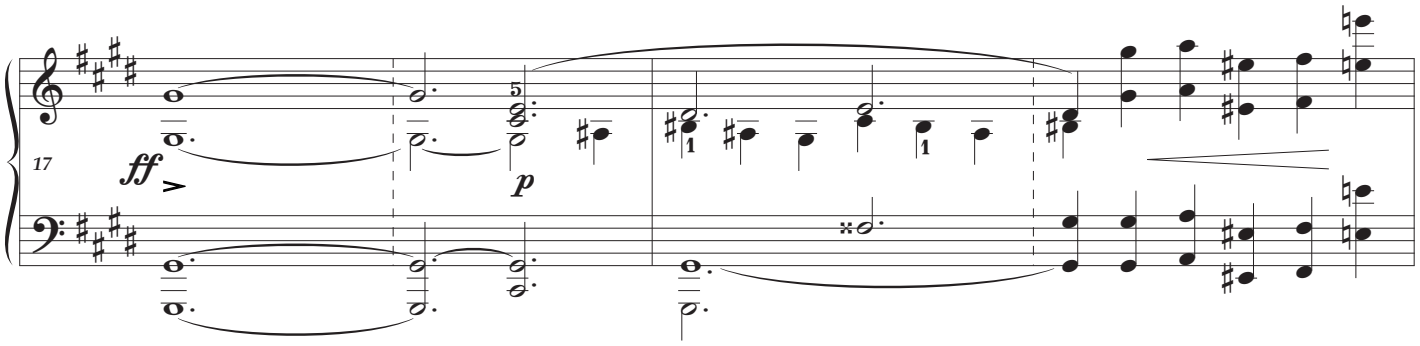
Sometimes marked with an asterisk, expression and accentuation may differ. The work is presented in 6/4 with dashed barlines to clearly show the metre.

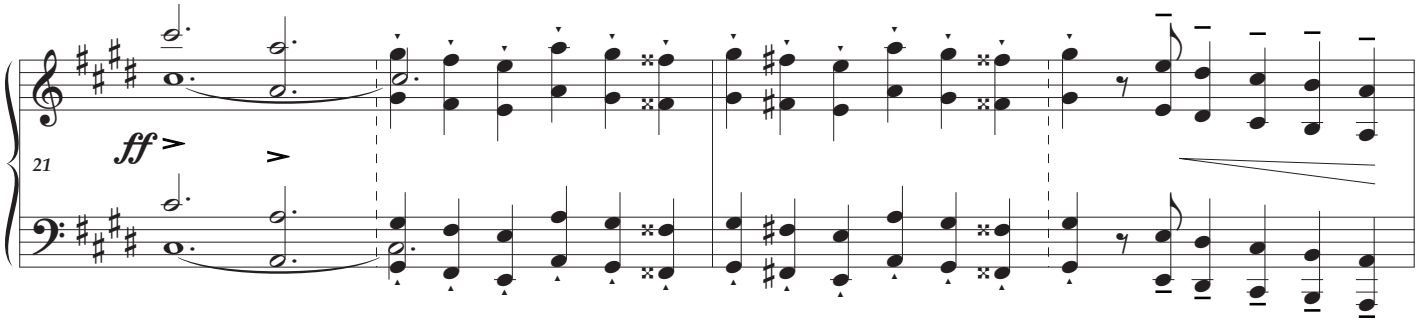
- **44** LH editorial tie as in **40**
- **79** quavers resized and rebeamed
- **122** some editions give D flat
- **125** RH modification
- **130** some editions give C flat
- **133** RH modification
- **167** & **171** editorial bass ties
- **271** editorial bass voice and phrasing
- **301** LH trill is an editorial "interpretation"
- **311** quavers rebeamed
- **323** editorial pedal

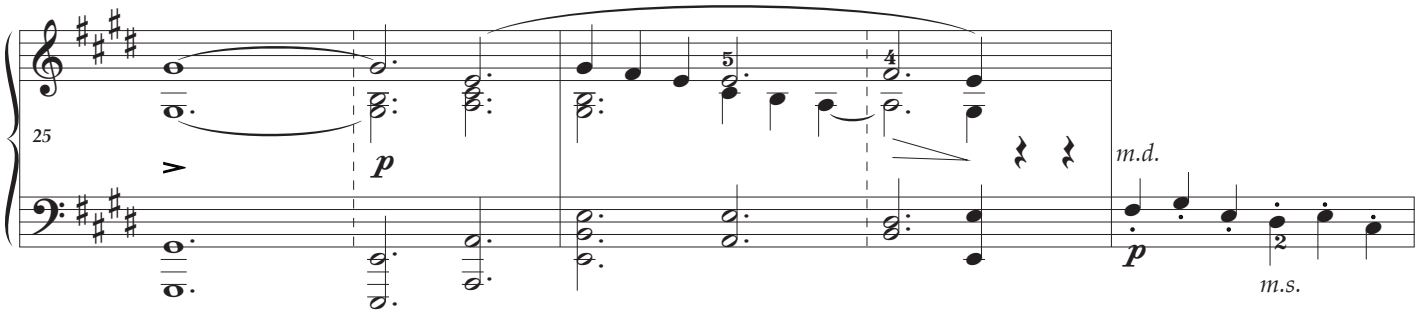


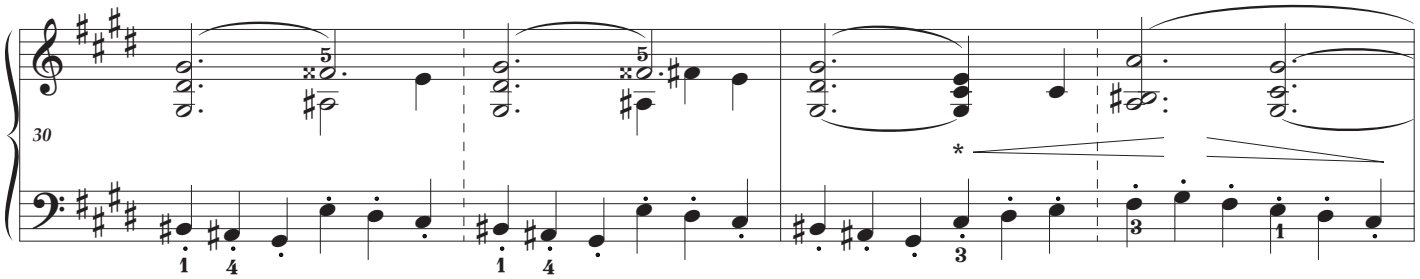
Scherzo Nº 3 Op 39

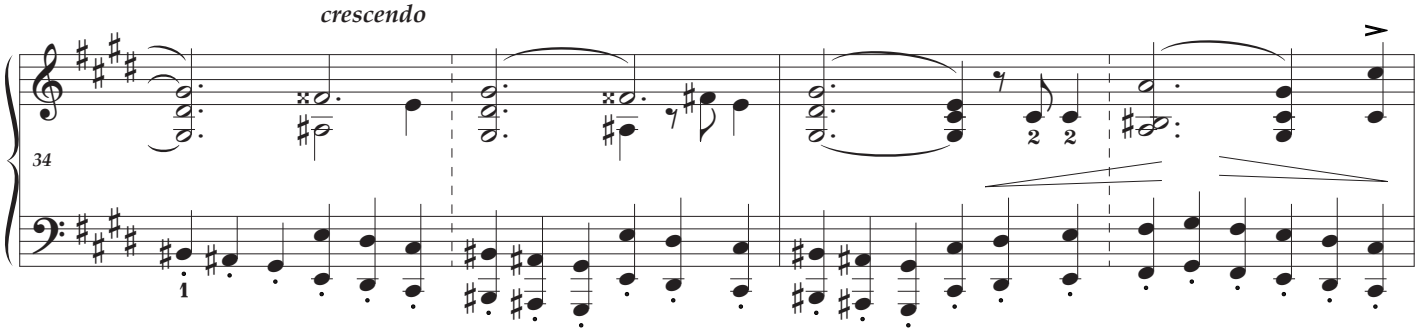


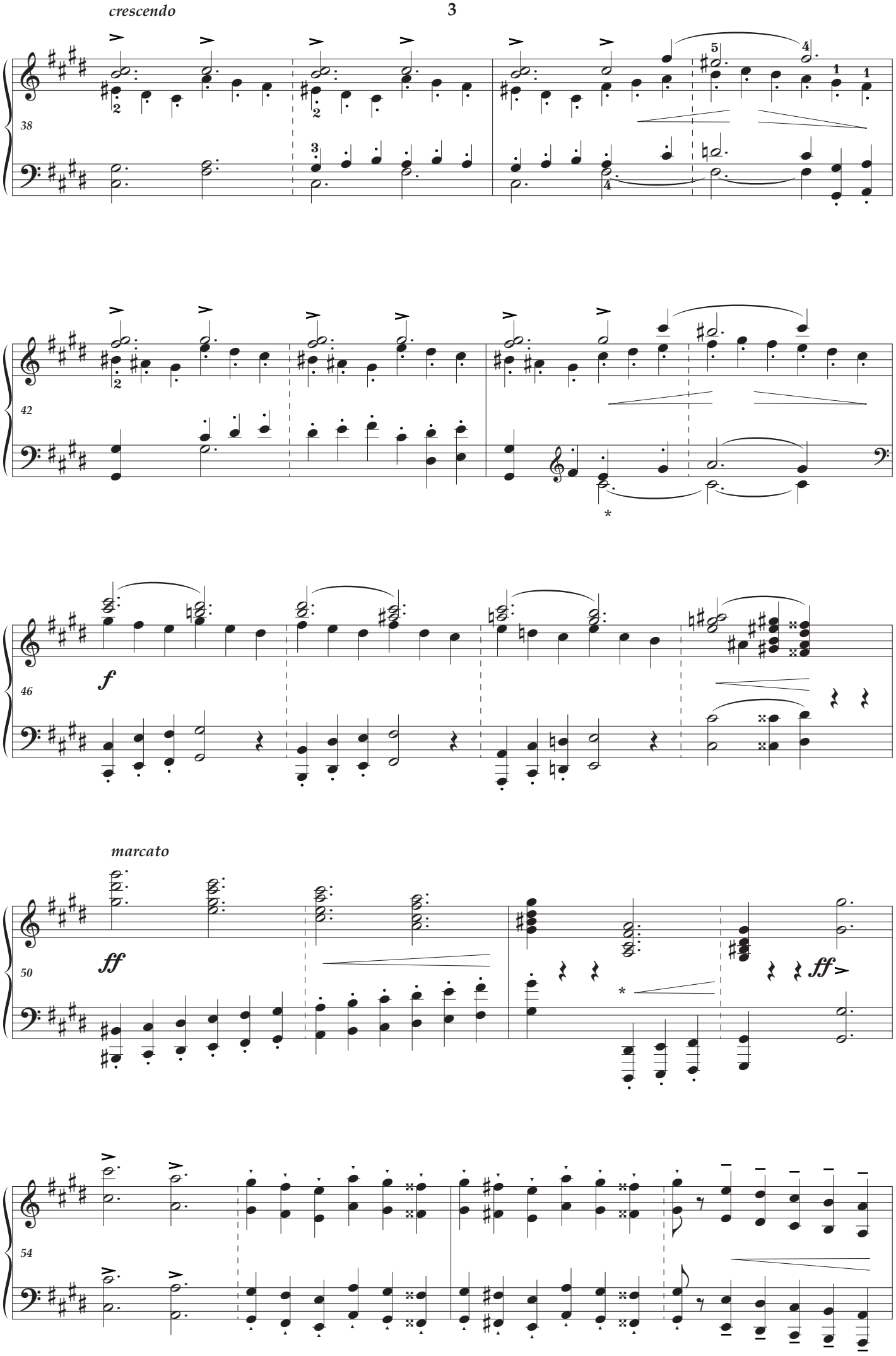

17
ff
p

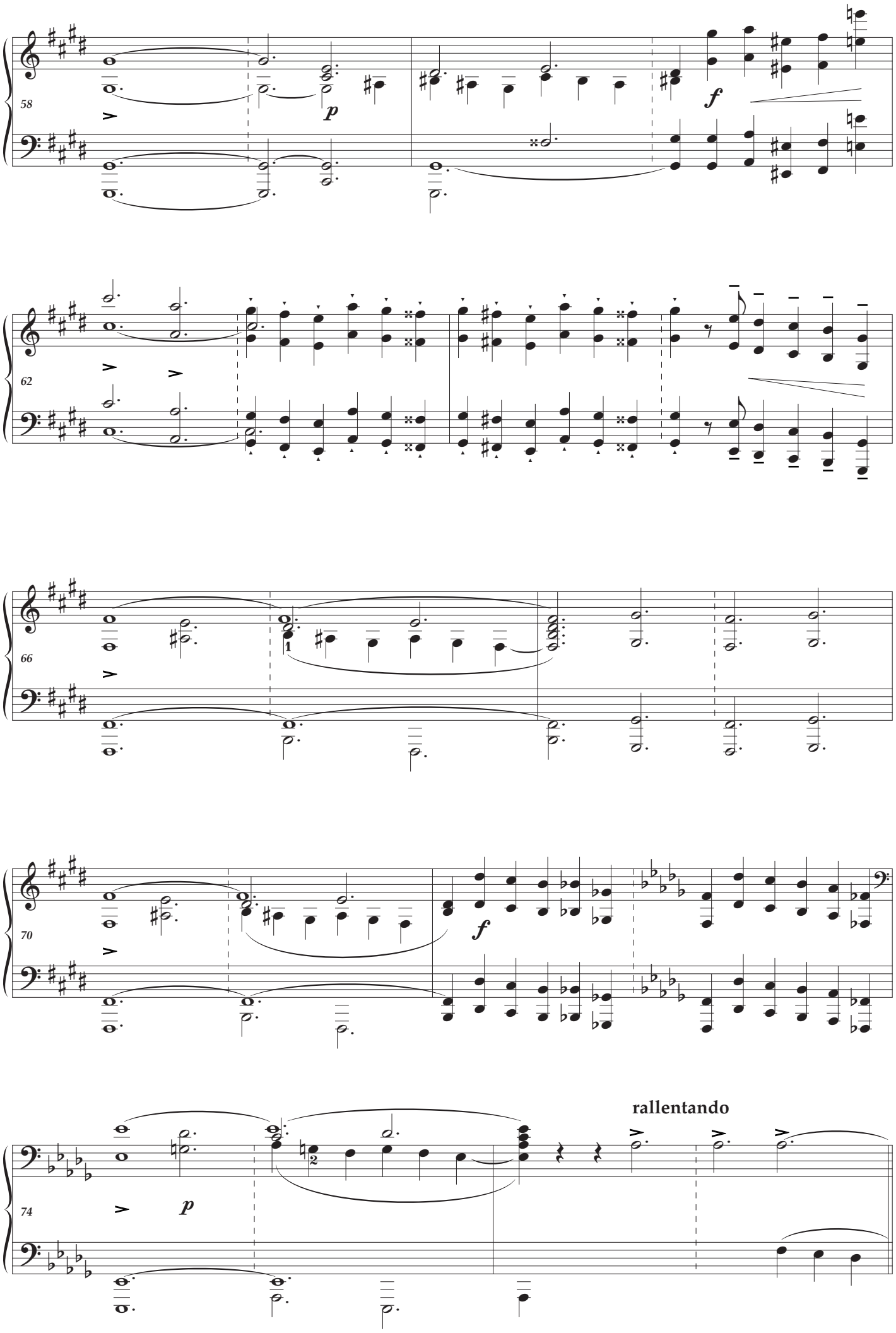

21
ff

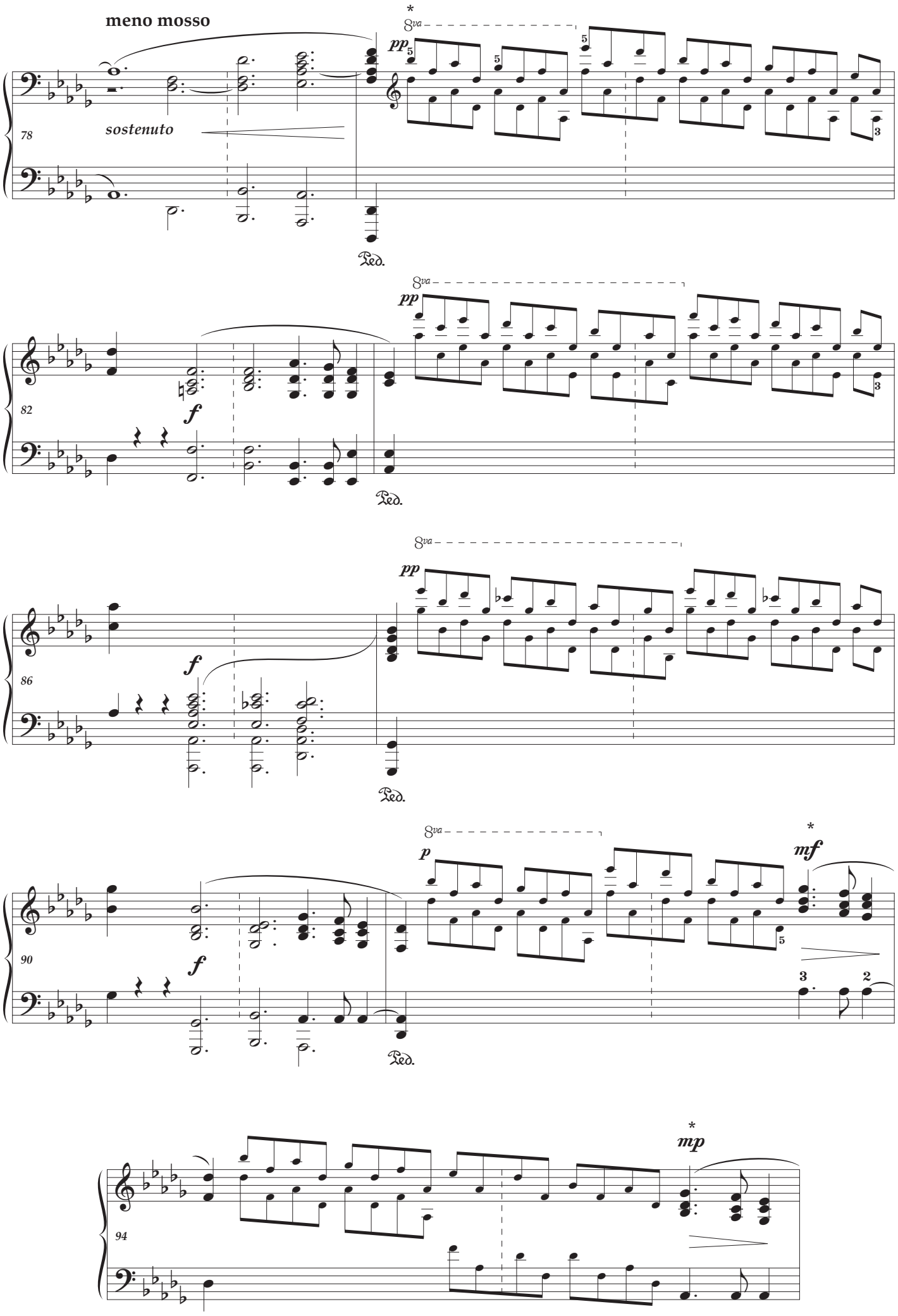

25
p
m.d.
p
m.s.

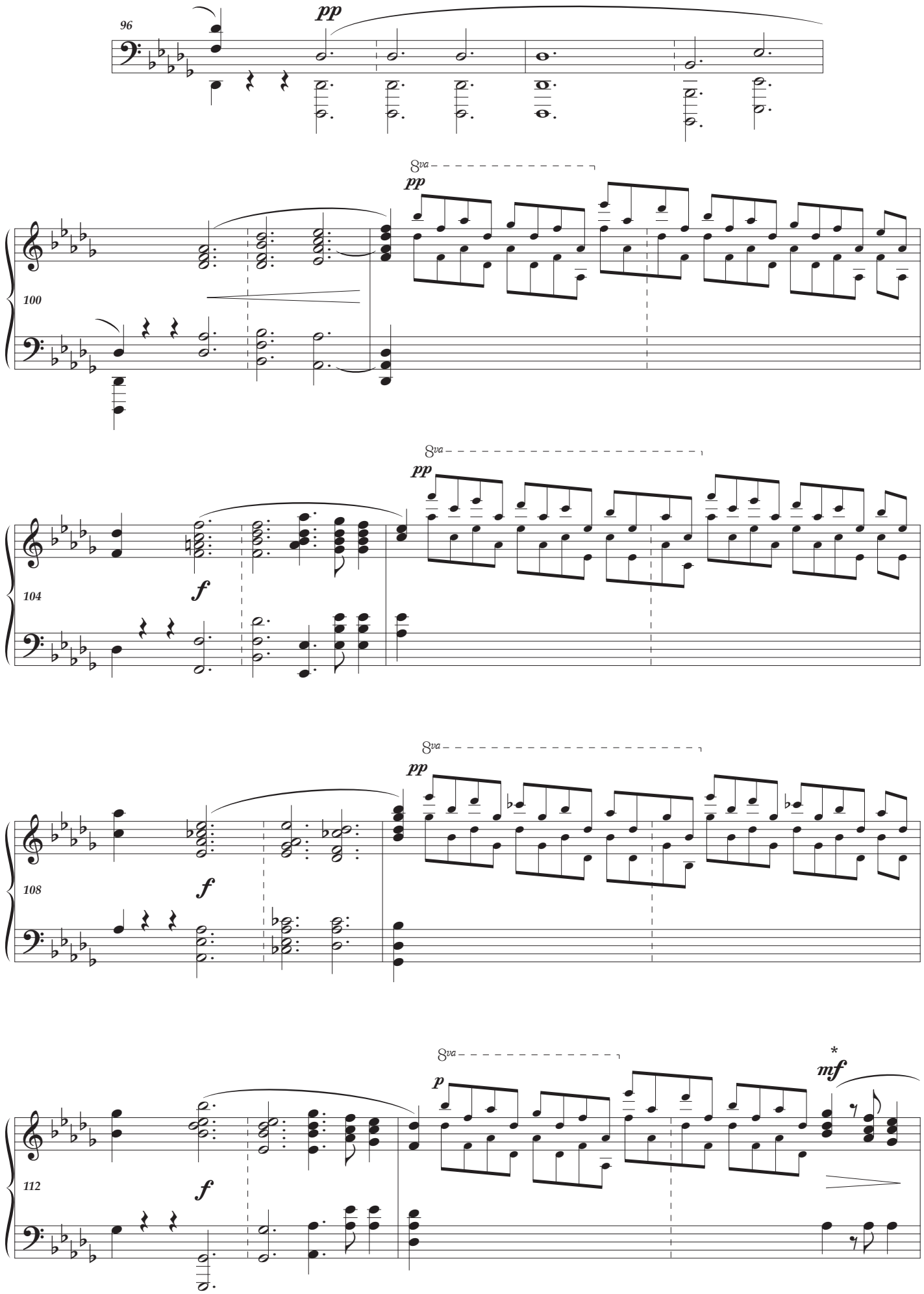

30

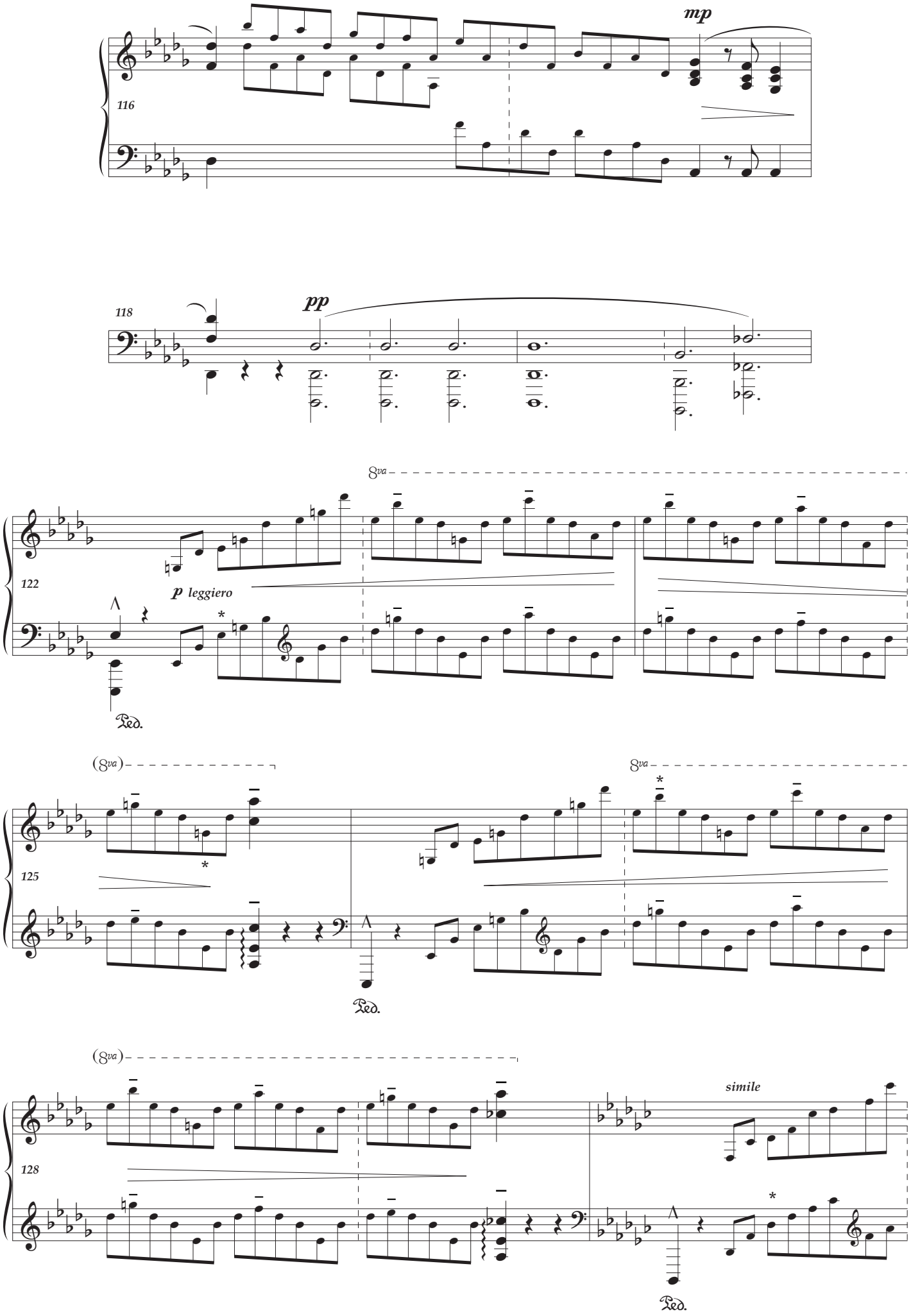

crescendo
34

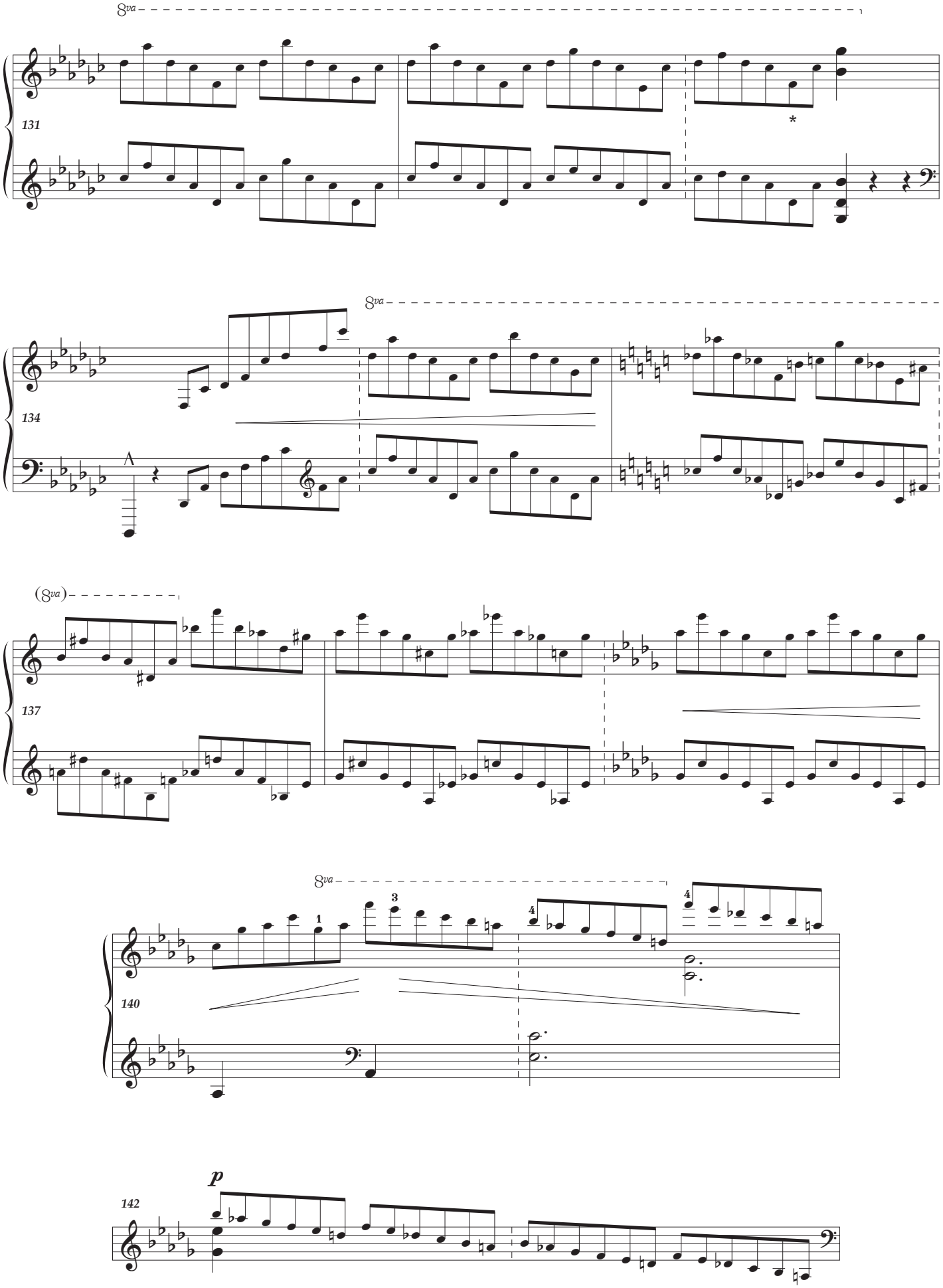

crescendo
38
42
46
f
marcato
50
ff
ff
54

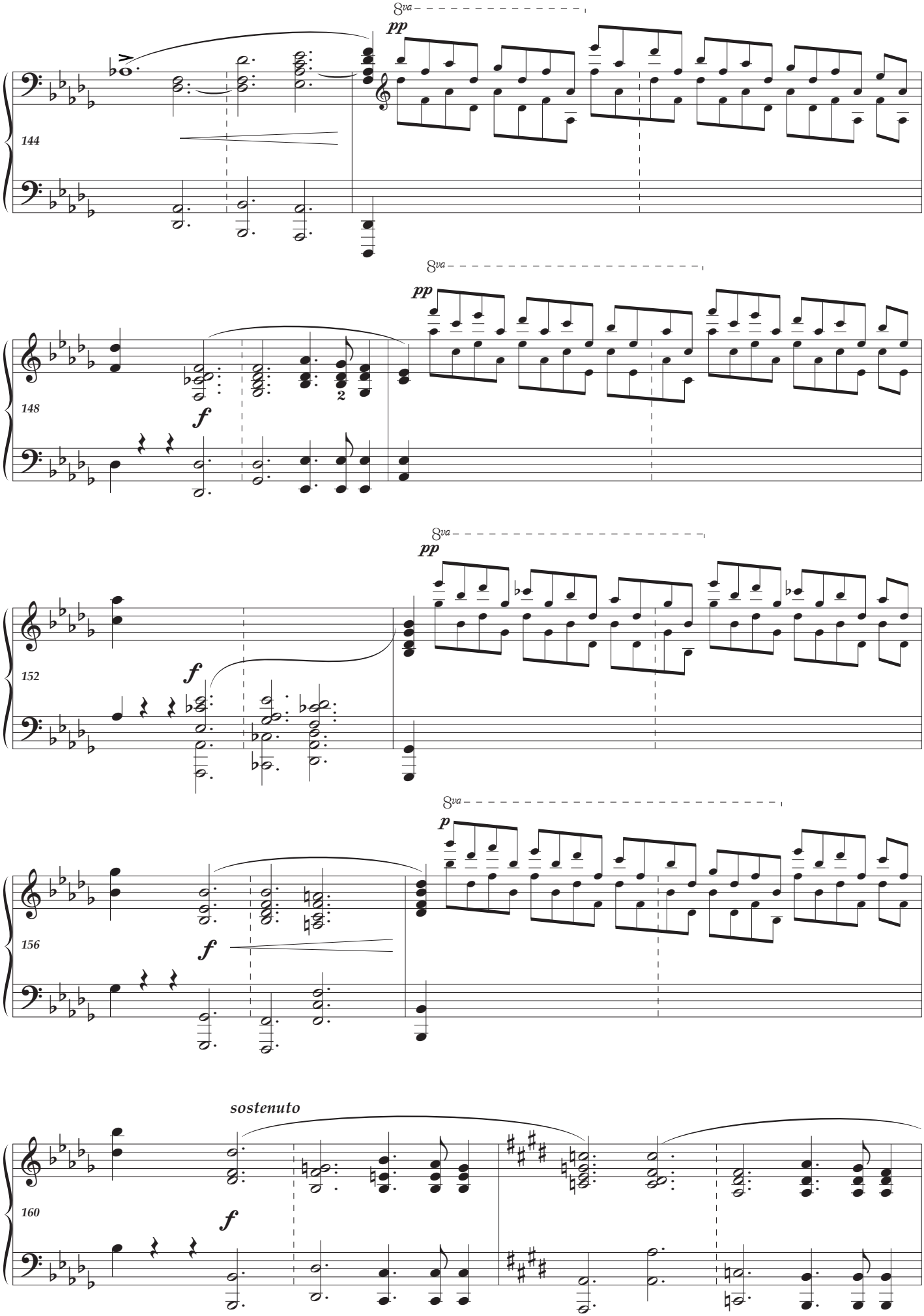

58
p
f
62
66
70
f
74
p
rallentando

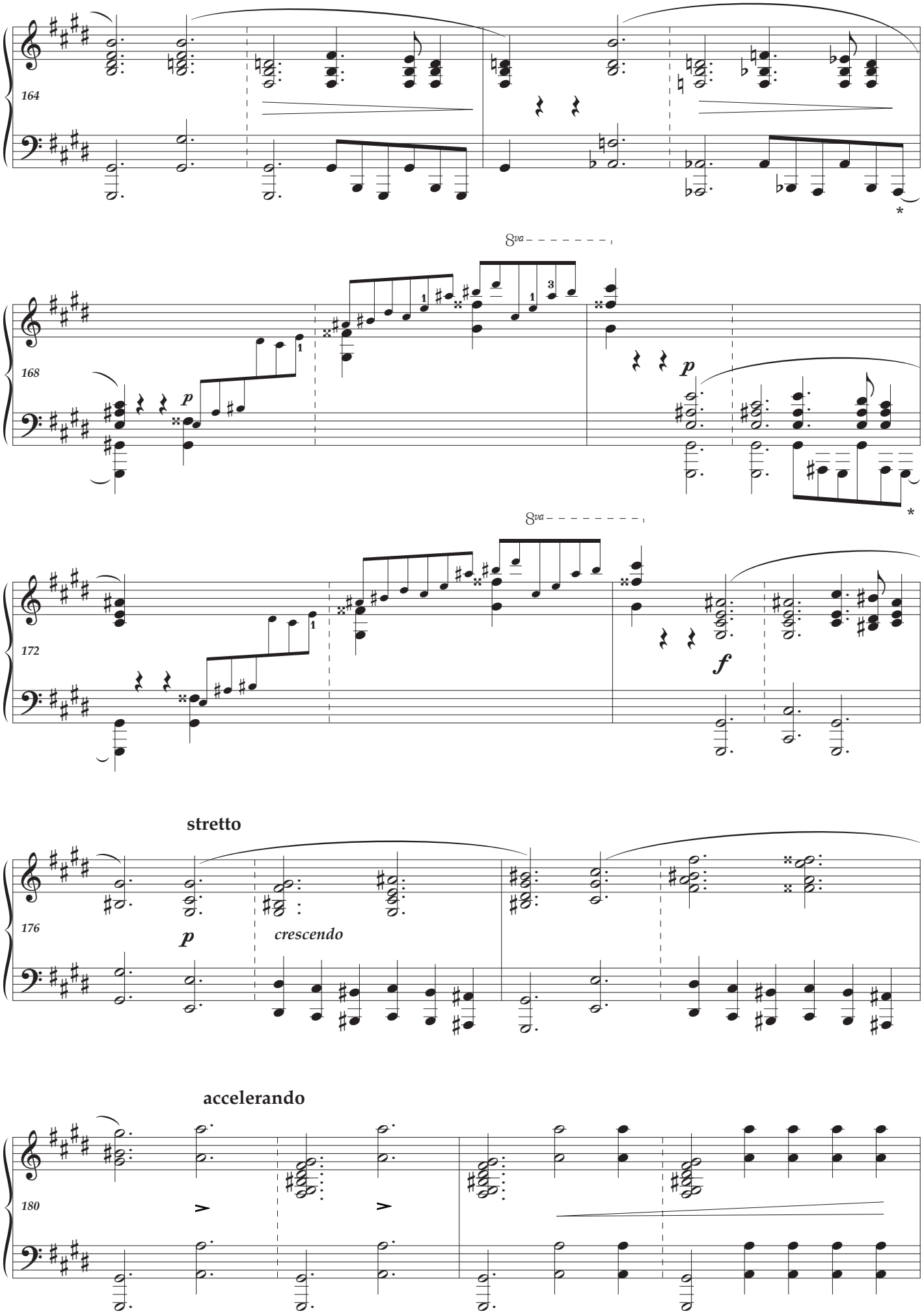

meno mosso
sostenuto
pp
f
p
mf
mp
8va
Ped.
78
82
86
90
94

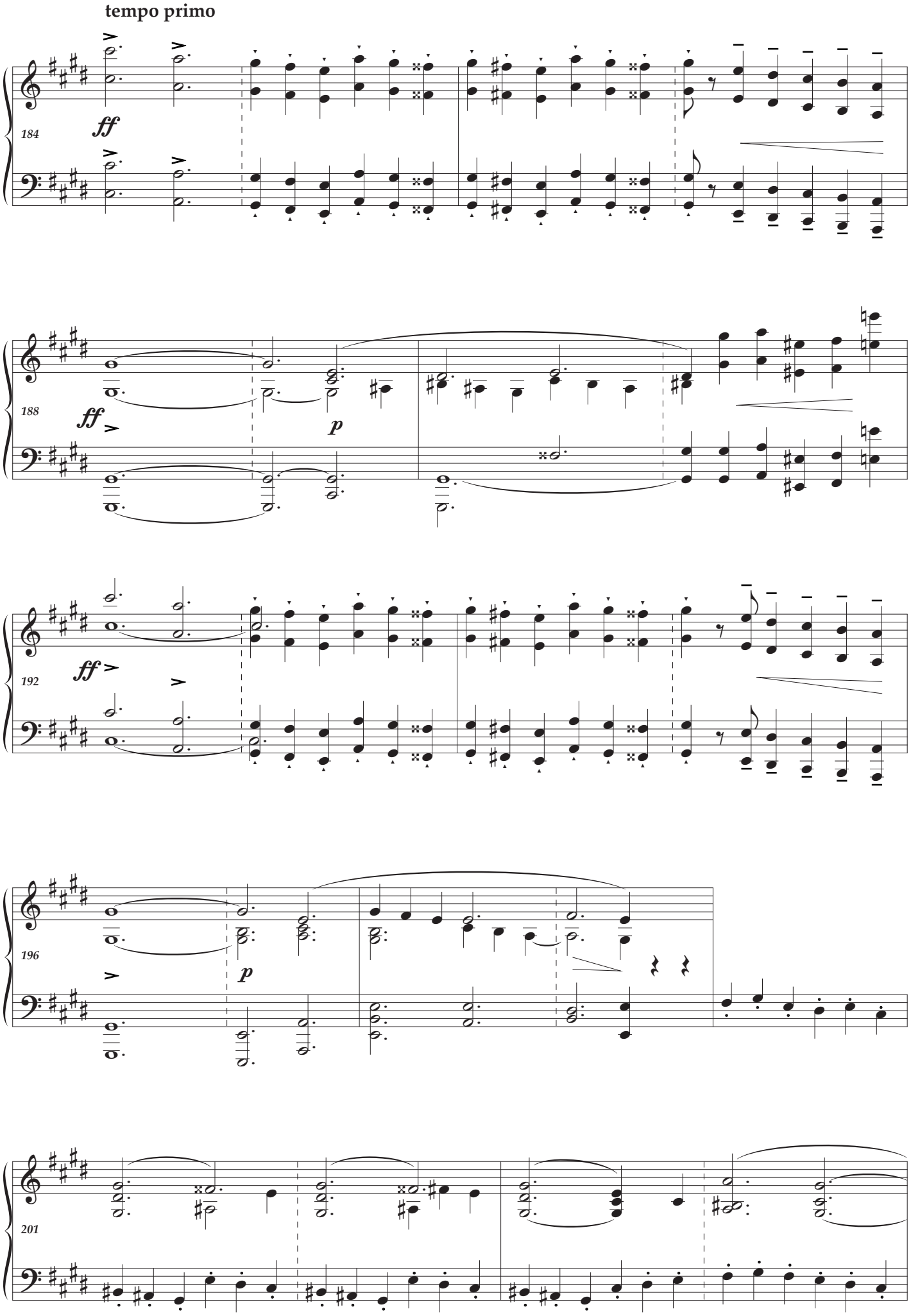

96
pp
100
8va
pp
104
8va
pp
f
108
8va
pp
f
112
8va
p
*
mf
f

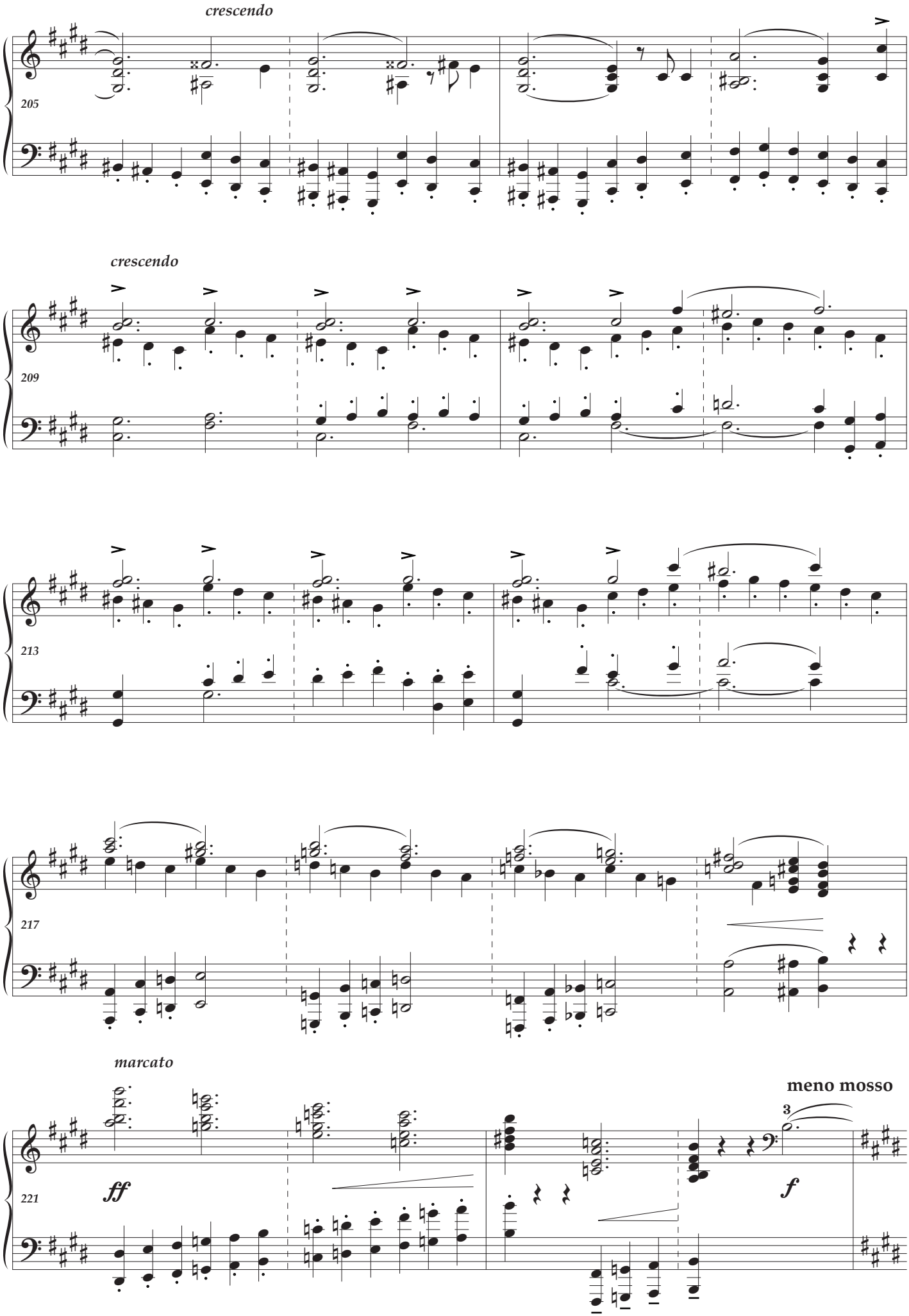

116
mp
118
pp
122
8va
p leggiero
Ped.
125
(8va)
8va
Ped.
128
(8va)
simile
Ped.

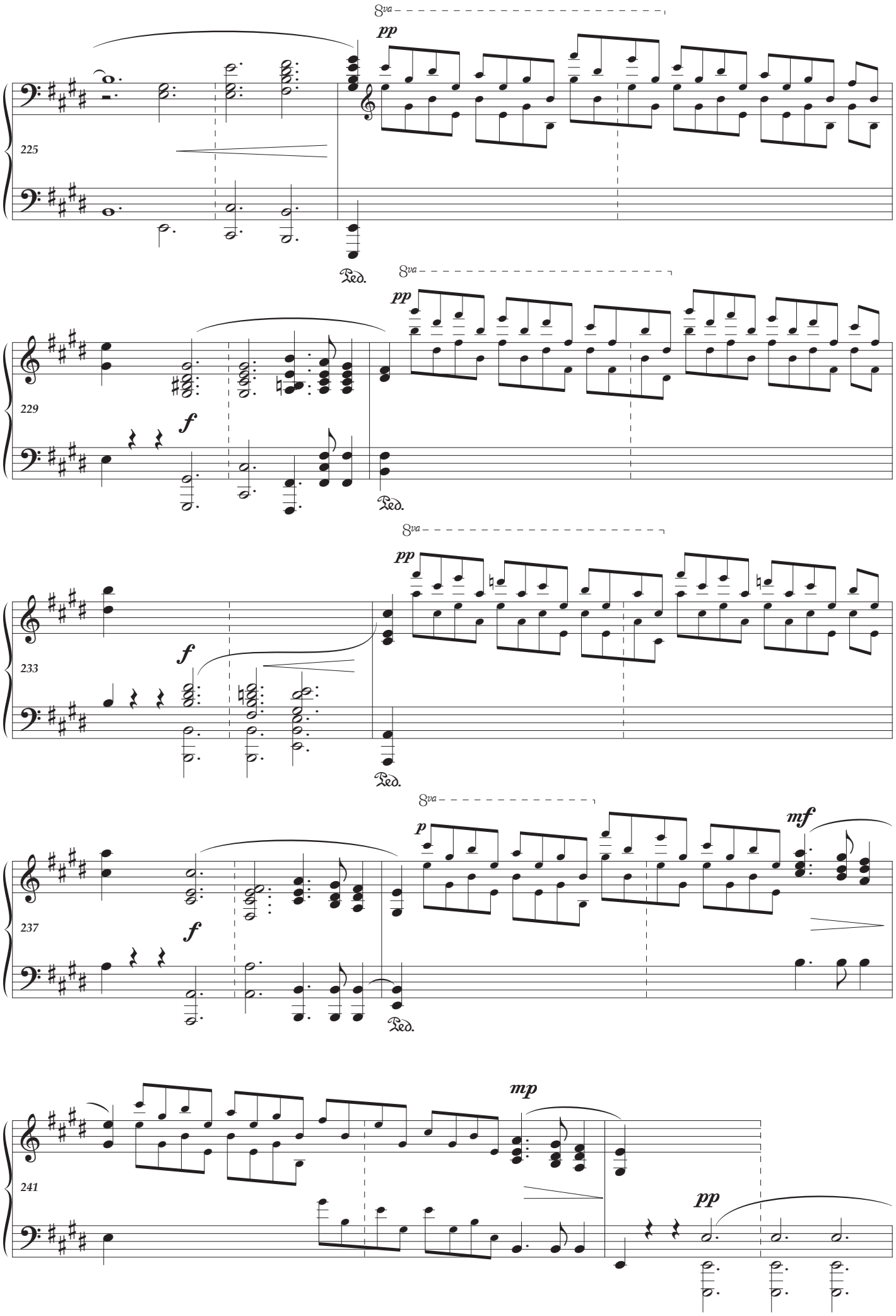

8va
131
*
8va
134
(8va)
137
8va
1
3
4
4
140
p
142

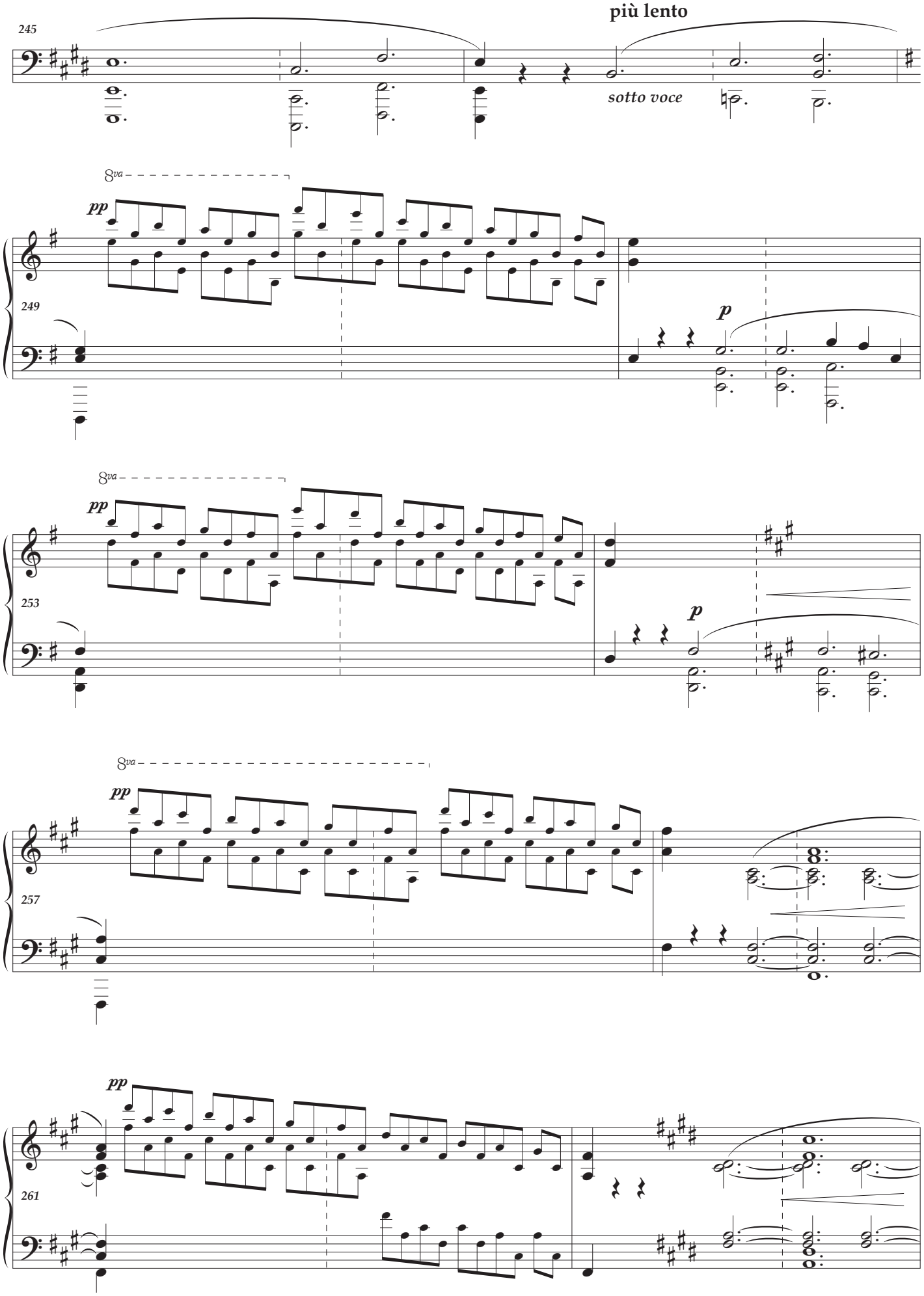

8va
pp
144
8va
pp
f
148
8va
pp
f
152
8va
p
f
156
sostenuto
f
160

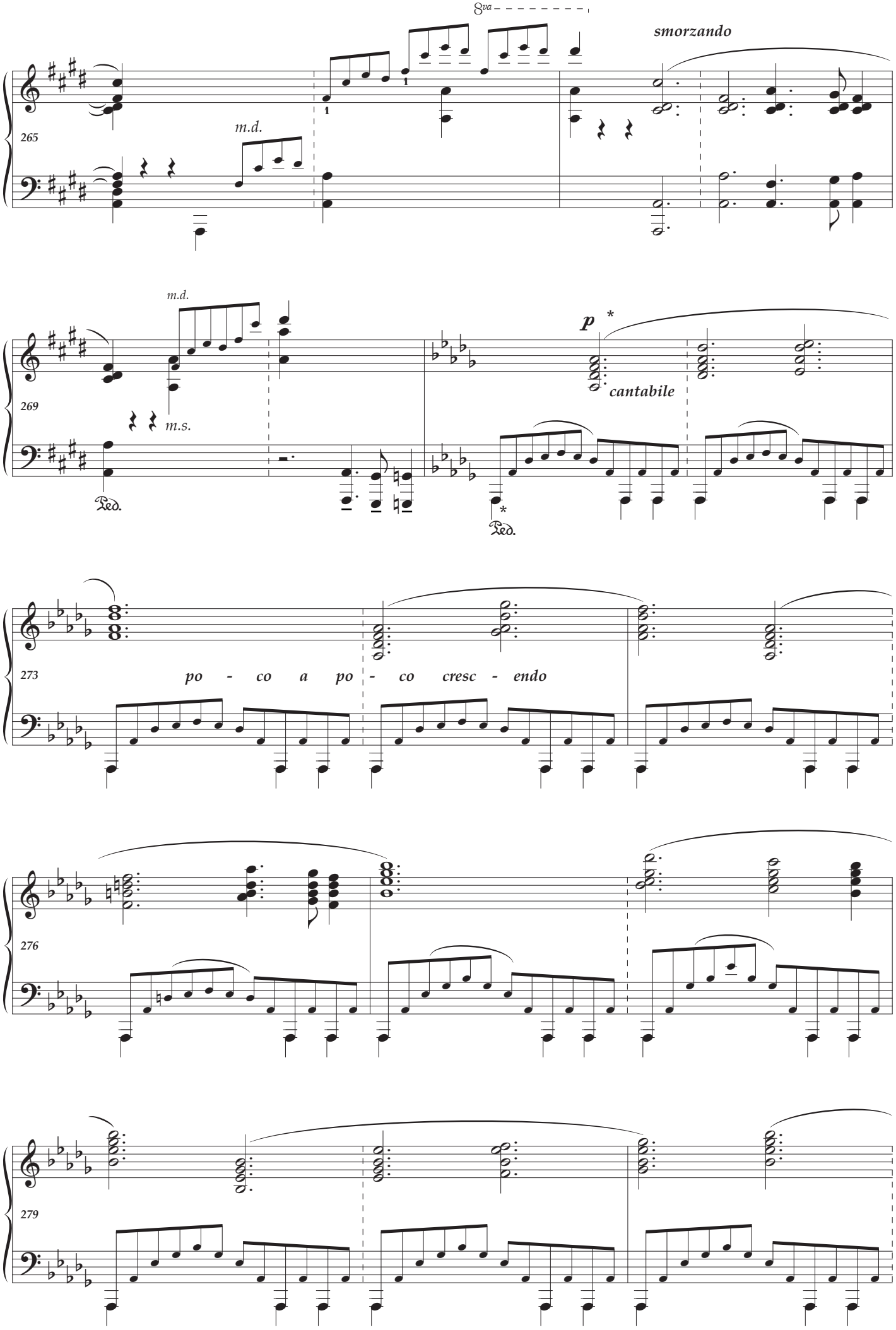

164
168
8va
p
172
8va
f
stretto
176
p
crescendo
accelerando
180

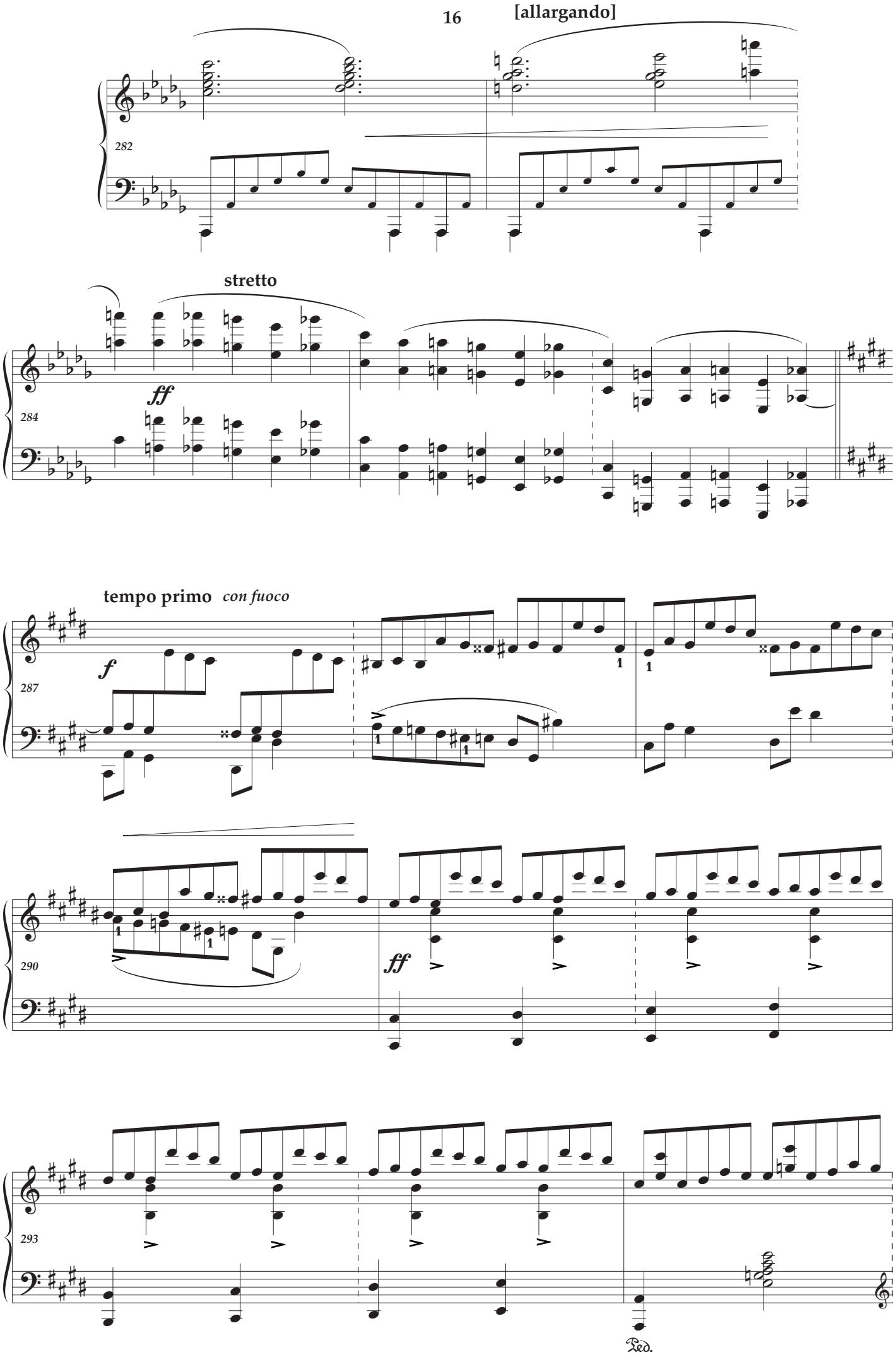

tempo primo
184
ff
188
ff
p
192
ff
196
p
201

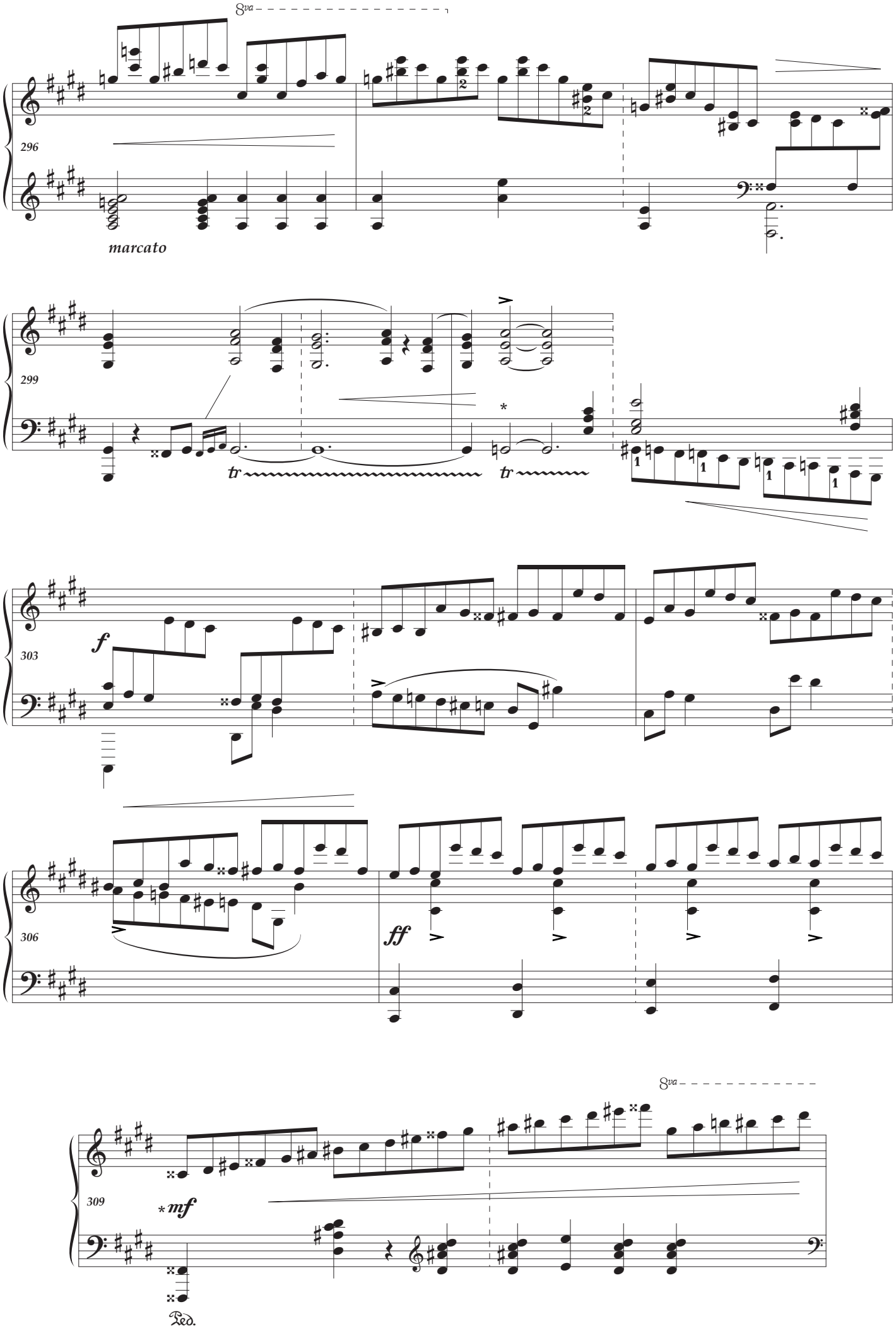

crescendo
205
crescendo
209
213
217
marcato
ff
221
meno mosso
3
f

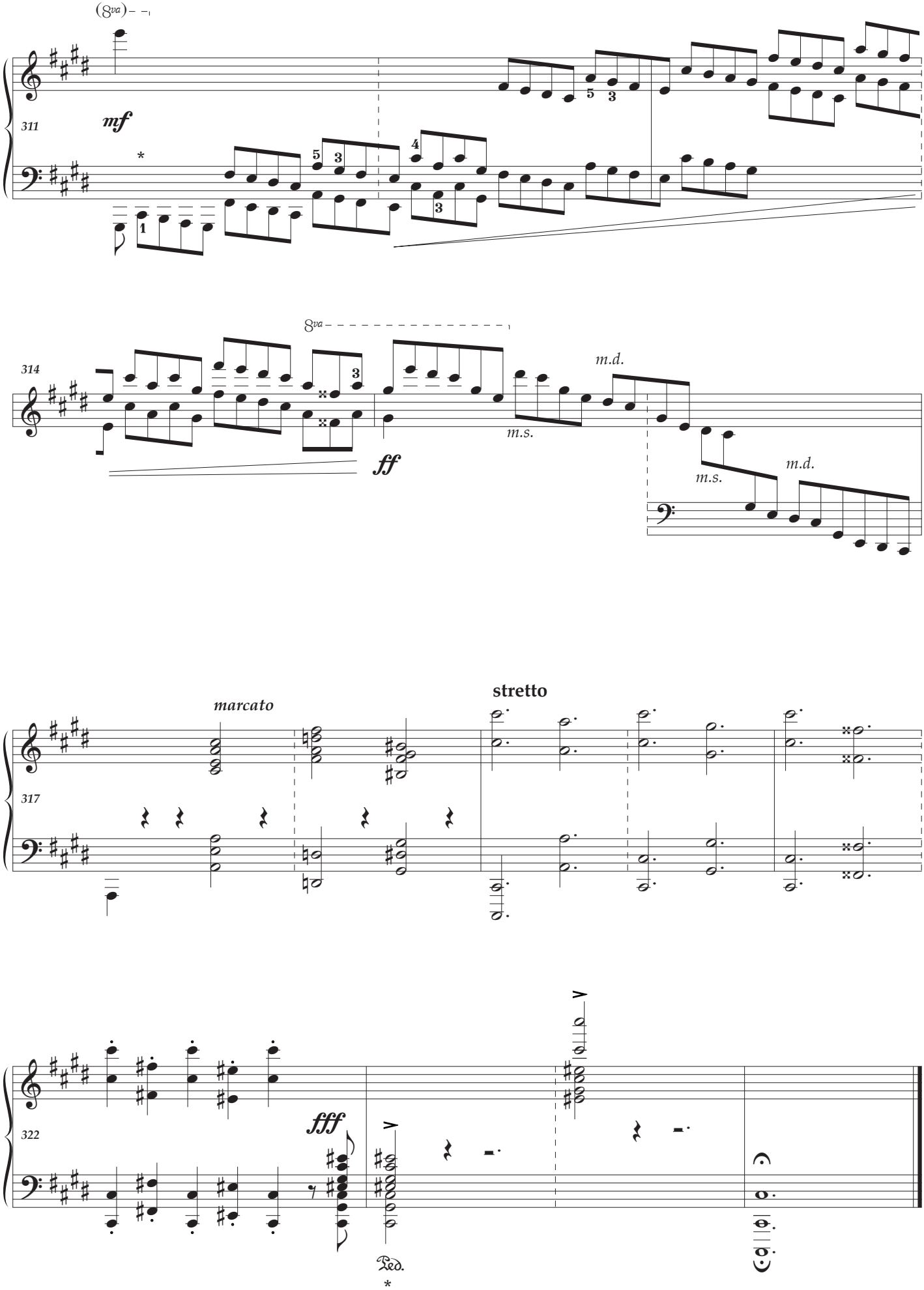

8va
pp
225
Ped.
8va
pp
229
f
Ped.
8va
pp
233
f
Ped.
8va
p
mf
237
f
Ped.
mp
241
pp


245
più lento
sotto voce
8va
pp
249
p
8va
pp
253
p
8va
pp
257
pp
261


8va
smorzando
265
m.d.
m.d.
m.s.
269
p
cantabile
Ped.
Ped.
273
po - co a po - co cresc - endo
276
279


[allargando]
282
stretto
ff
284
tempo primo
con fuoco
f
287
ff
290
293
Ped.


8va
296
marcato
299
tr
tr
303
f
306
ff
8va
309
mf
Ped.


(8va)
311
mf
314
8va
ff
m.d.
m.s.
m.s.
m.d.
317
marcato
stretto
322
fff
Ped.

CHOPIN

FOUR SCHERZOS

N° 3 C sharp minor Op 39

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