Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Sonata
in A Minor

"Per Arpeggione"
(1824)

arranged for Viola and piano

Full Score

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Franz Schubert

Sonata in A Minor “Per Arpeggione”

The “Guitarre d’amour” was invented in 1821 by Johann Georg Stauffer (1778-1853). About the size of a ‘cello, this instrument had a fretted fingerboard and six strings, tuned the same as the guitar (E A D G B E). It later became known as the “Arpeggione,” because of its facility with guitar-like arpeggiations.

Due to a number of technical problems, the Arpeggione never became popular, and suffered a rapid obsolescence. Its guitar-shaped body made it awkward to hold, and it was difficult to play loudly on a single string because of the low curvature imposed by its many strings. In fact, the sonata presented here is probably the only significant work written specifically for this unusual instrument.

Schubert wrote this piece in 1824, and the care taken to suit the music to the instrument is quite apparent. It can be noted that rarely are dynamics stronger than “p” indicated, especially in fast passages. He made good use of the instrument’s arpeggiating abilities, and wrote the music to show off the arpegionne’s extensive range.

The fact that the music has outlived the instrument by some two centuries is a tribute to Schubert’s genius for memorable melodies. It is sometimes used as a showpiece by exceptional ‘cello players, as only the most capable virtuosi can reach the impossibly high places. Even on viola the higher ranges are difficult, and the lower registers (below open C) are of course impossible.

Nonetheless, the piece lends itself ideally to the tonality of the viola. In this arrangement, I have relied heavily on the assistance of Jean-Pierre Coulon. The low ranges had to be re-octavised to fall within the range of the viola. For the high parts, I have opted to re-octavise a few passages to make the piece more accessible to amateur and semi-professional players. The octave on the A string was taken as the practical limit.

Regarding bowings - Schubert’s bowings for the arpeggione are of course of limited use, but do give an idea of the phrasing. Since I am not myself a violist, I have deferred to the bowings offered in the edition by Paul Doktor. Still, the player is encouraged to take these with a grain of salt, and to work out for him- or herself bowings and phrasing that are appropriate to one’s individual style and capacities. Similarly, the dynamics indications are best taken as suggested starting points. As implied earlier, had the piece been written for other bowed instruments, it would have probably had a lot more mf, f, and ff markings.

Tempo indications in the original are sketchy, and in several places ambiguous. The markings shown (and reflected in the demo midi file) are my own interpretation, largely influenced by a wonderful midi created by John Cowles.

A note on the passage starting at bar 330, and similar passages later in the piece. The recommended way to play this is to double-stop the C and G strings, playing the A on the G-string as a “drone.” This gives an interesting “fiddle” effect and is easier than negotiating the shifts if the section is played on adjacent strings in 3rd position.

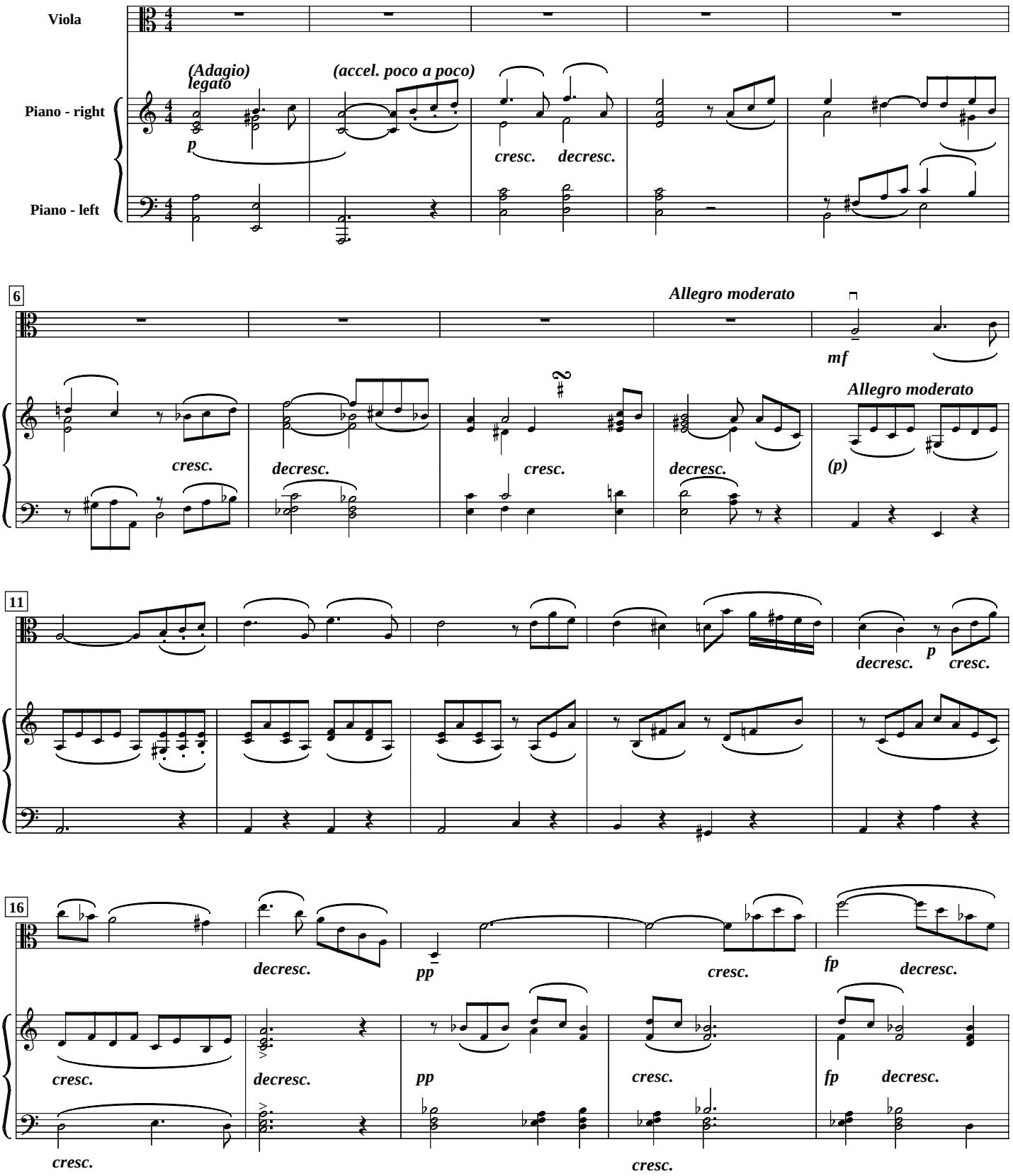
Special thanks to Werner Icking of GMD for his encouragement, and to Jean-Pierre Coulon for his welcome collaboration.

Fred Nachbaur, January 1999

Sonata "Per Arpeggione" in A Minor

Franz Schubert (1824)

Allegro moderato



Arranged for Viola by Fred Nachbaur & Jean-Pierre Coulon, Rev. 2b, Jan. 2000
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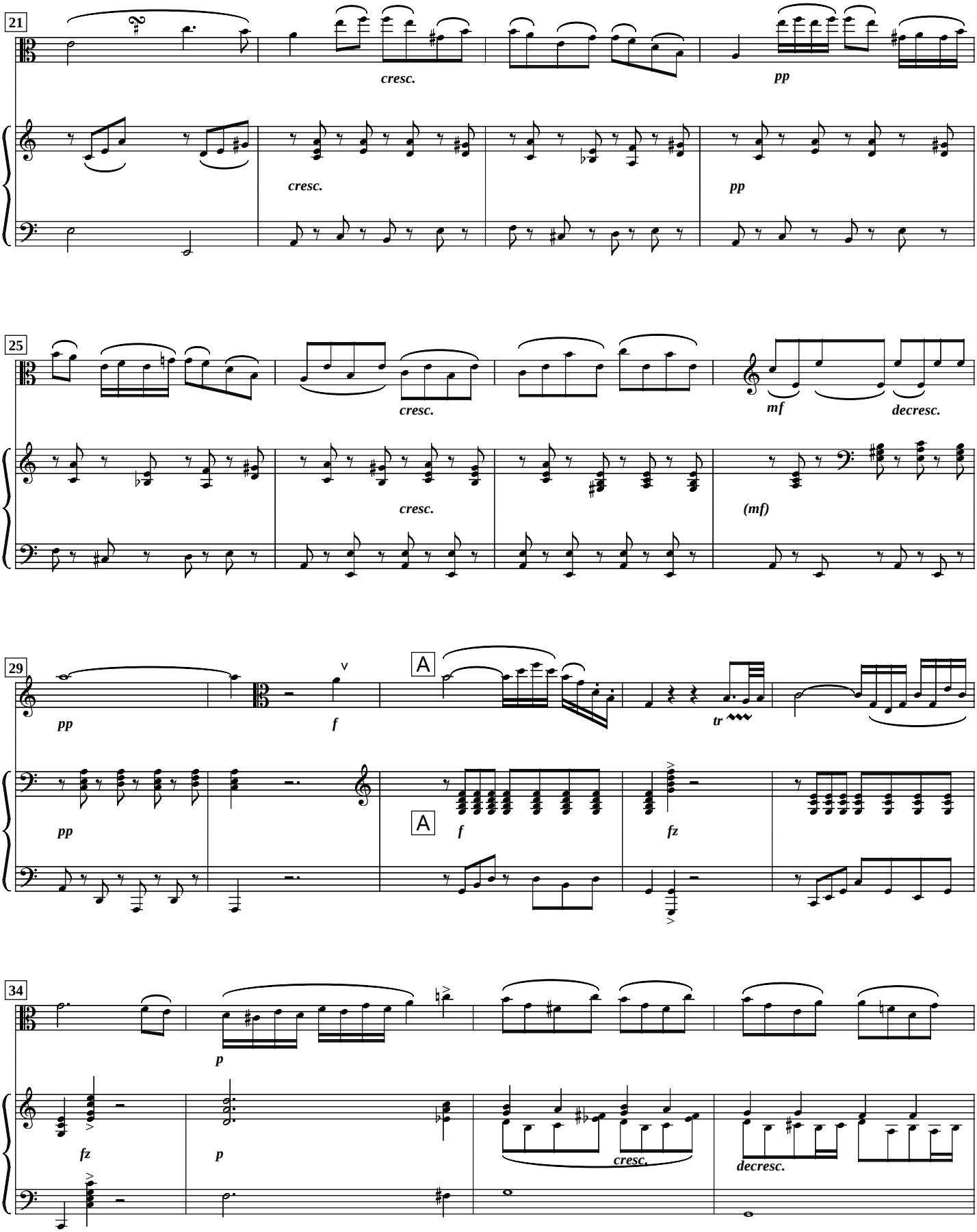
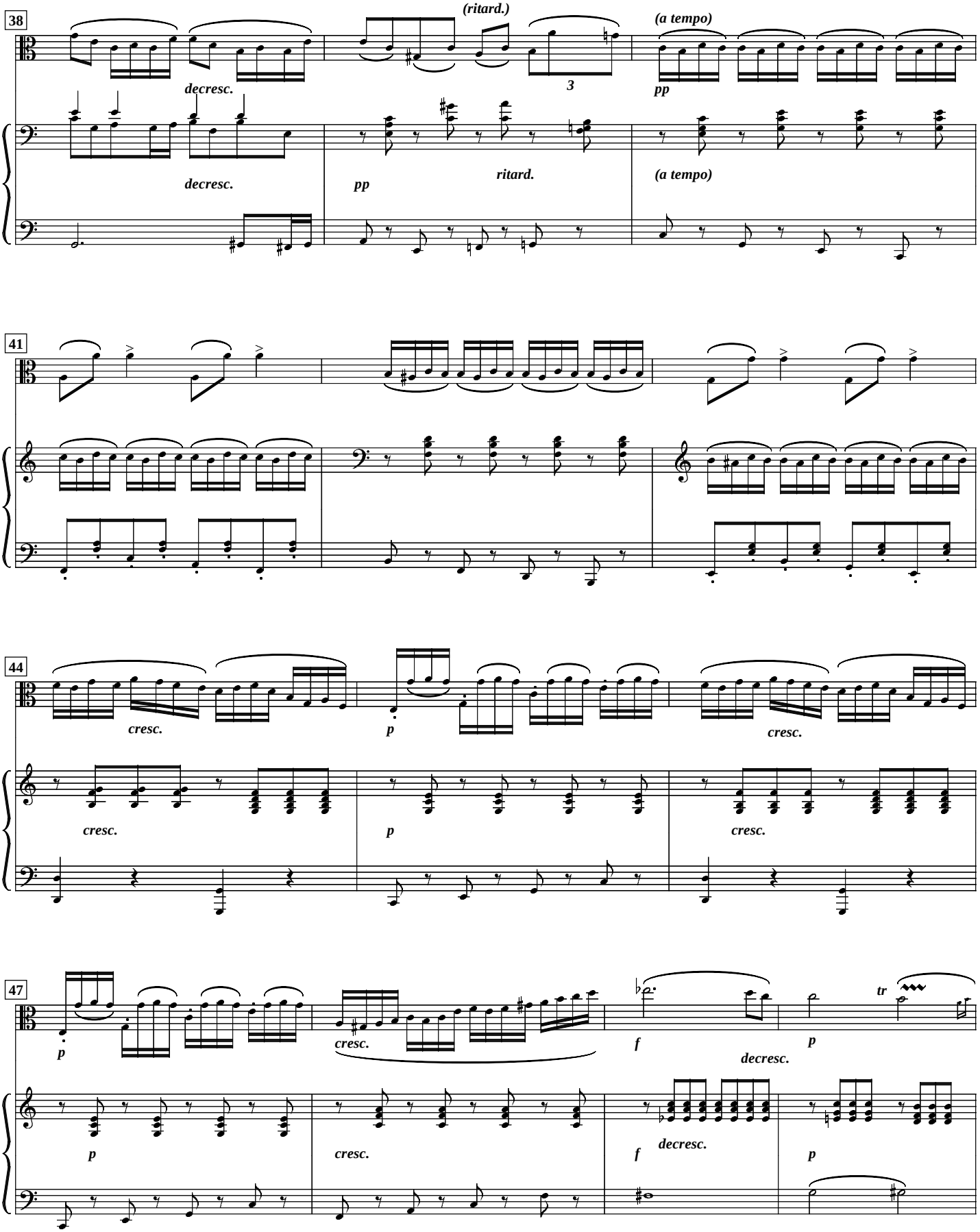
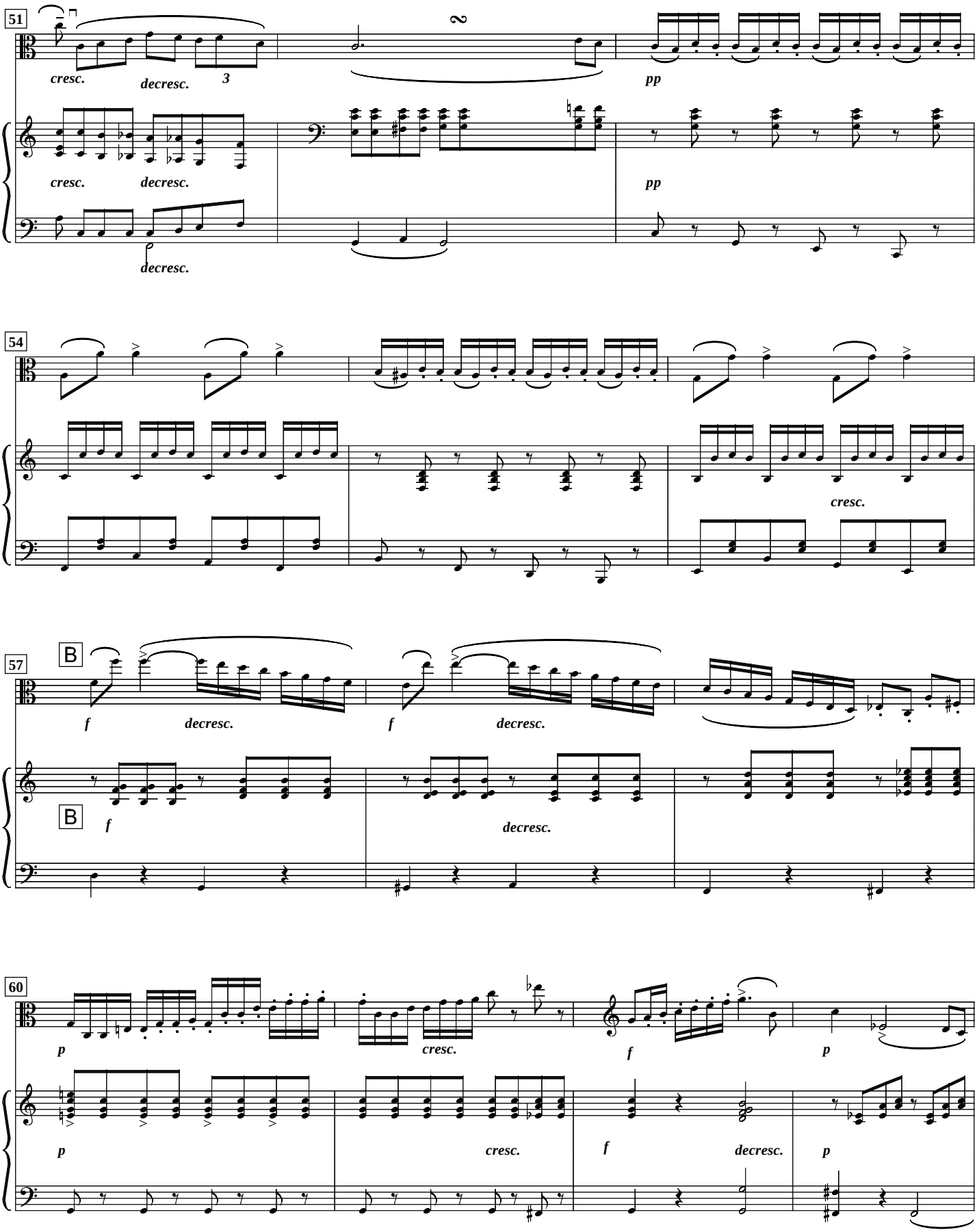
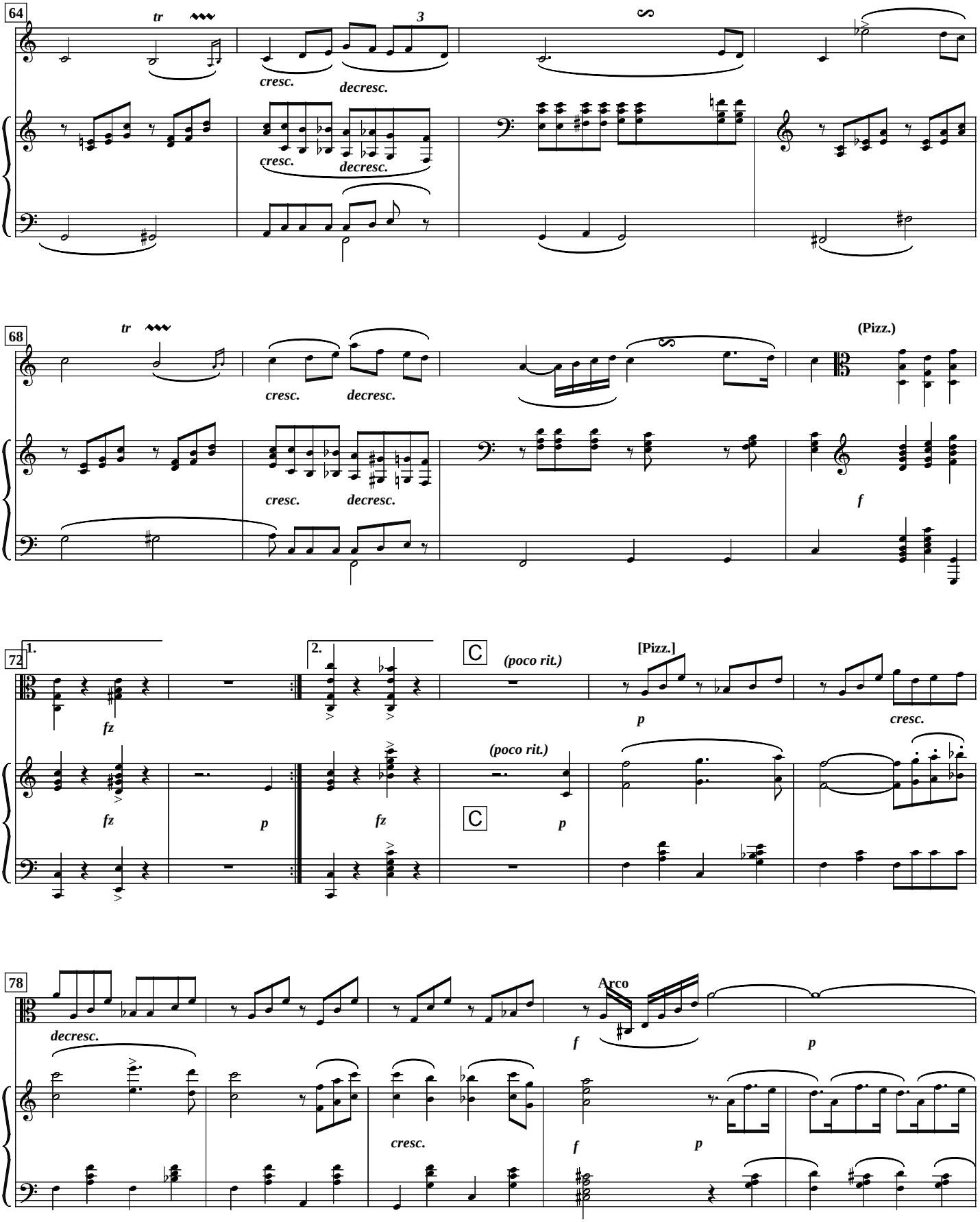
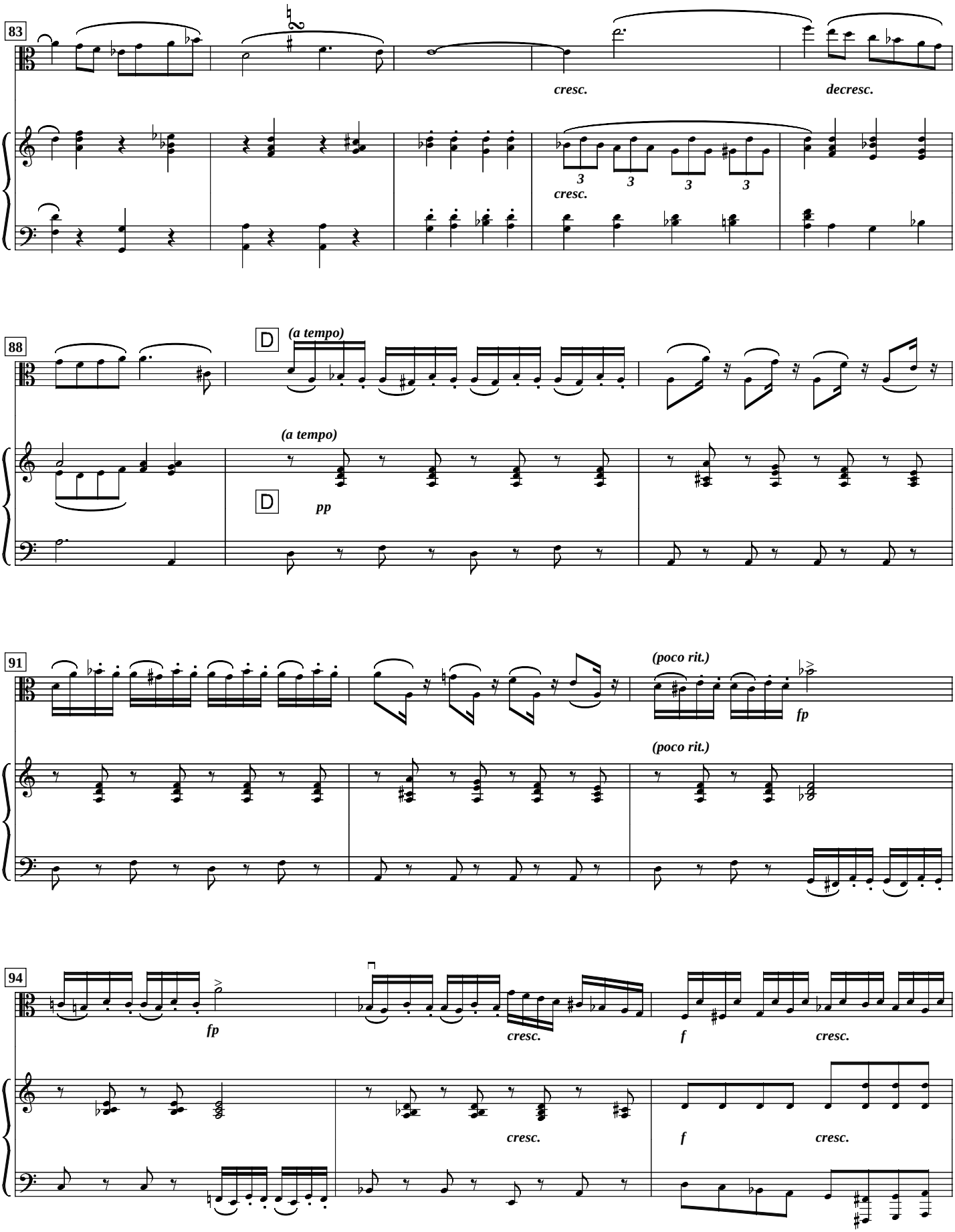
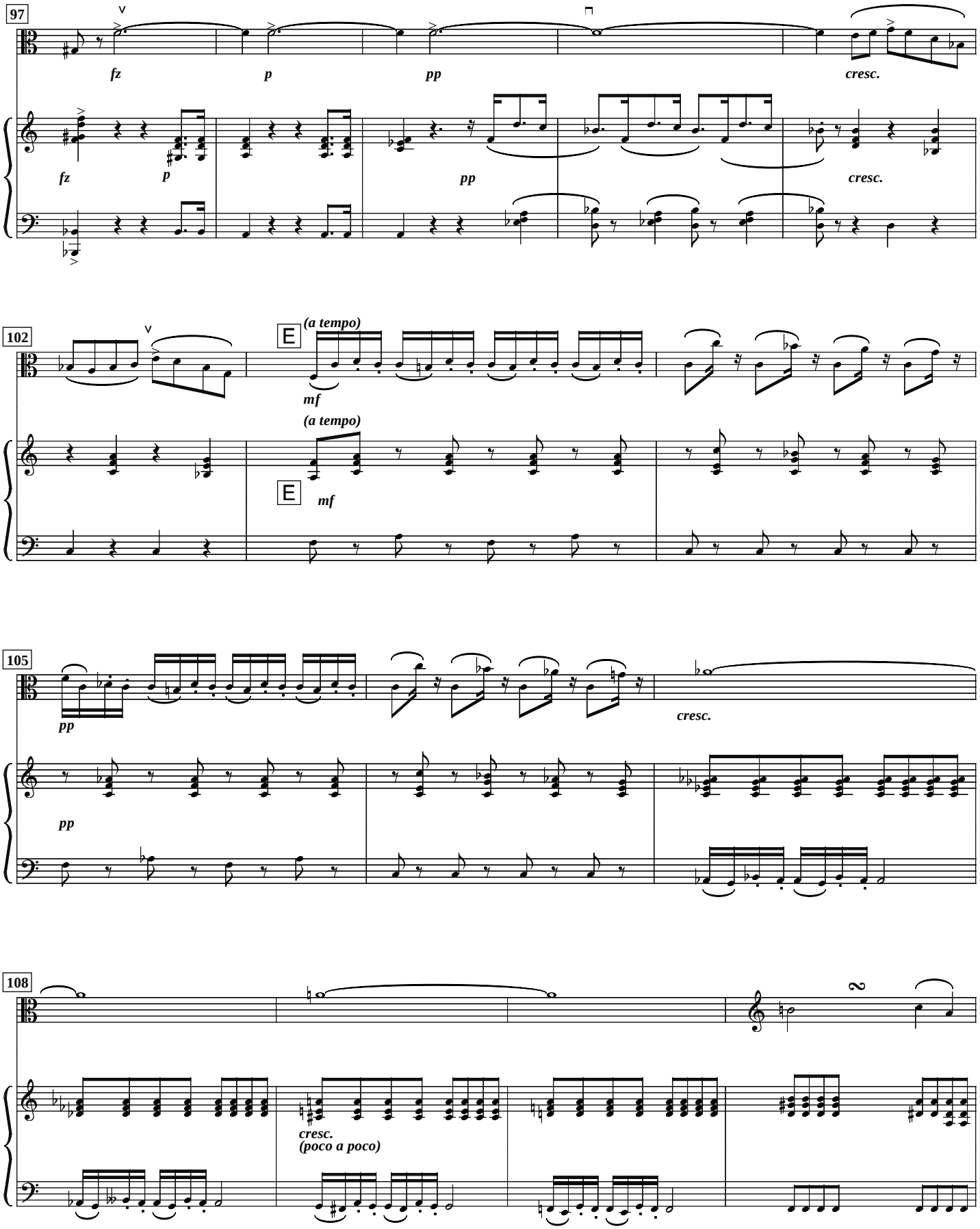

21
cresc.
pp
cresc.
pp
25
cresc.
mf
decresc.
cresc.
(mf)
29
pp
f
A
tr
pp
A
f
fz
34
p
fz
p
cresc.
decresc.

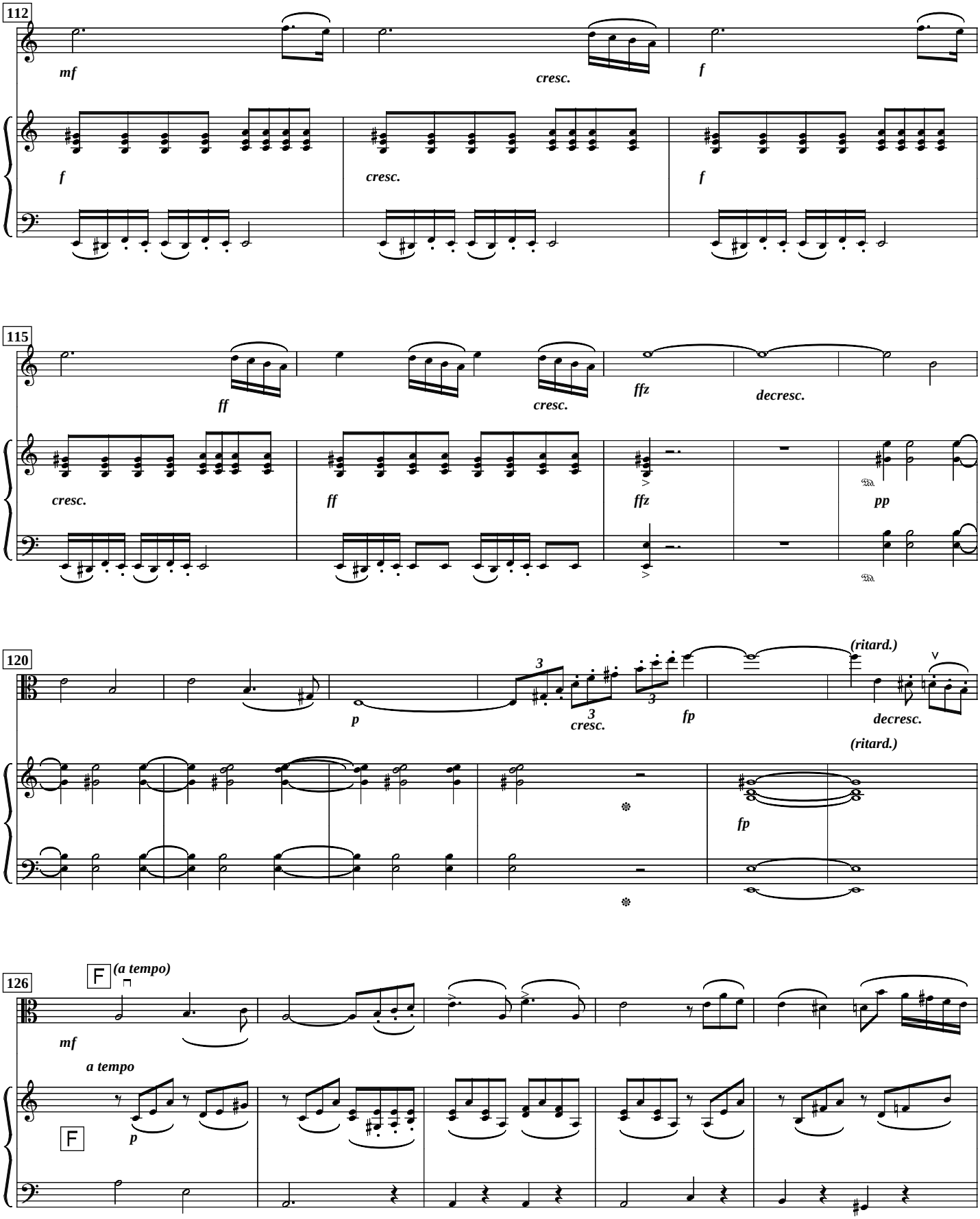

38
(ritard.)
(a tempo)
decresc.
3
pp
decresc.
pp
ritard.
(a tempo)
41
44
cresc.
p
cresc.
cresc.
p
cresc.
47
p
cresc.
f
decresc.
p
tr
p
cresc.
f
decresc.
p

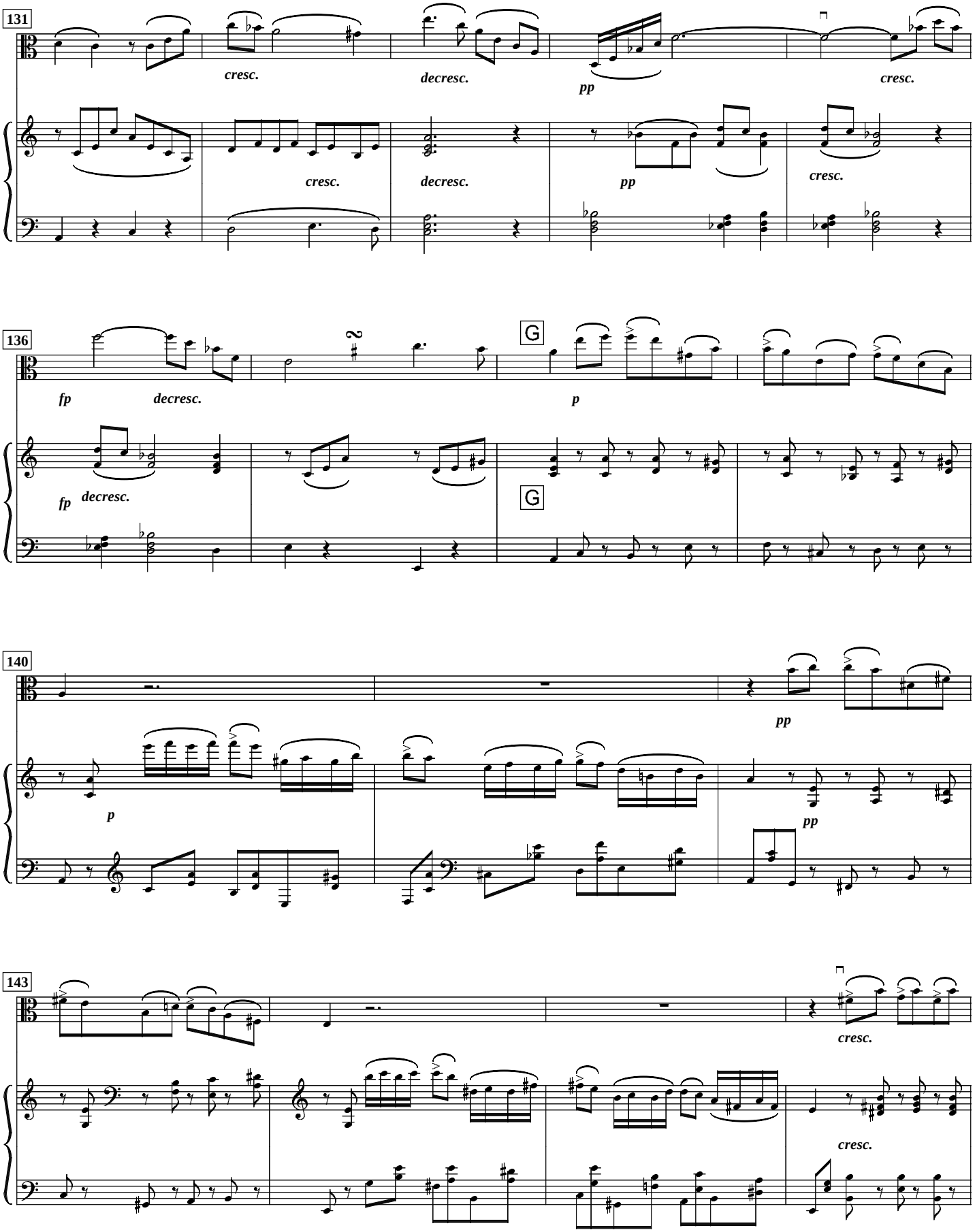

51
cresc.
decresc.
3
2
pp
cresc.
decresc.
pp
decresc.
54
cresc.
57
B
f
decresc.
f
decresc.
B
f
decresc.
60
p
cresc.
f
p
p
cresc.
f
decresc.
p

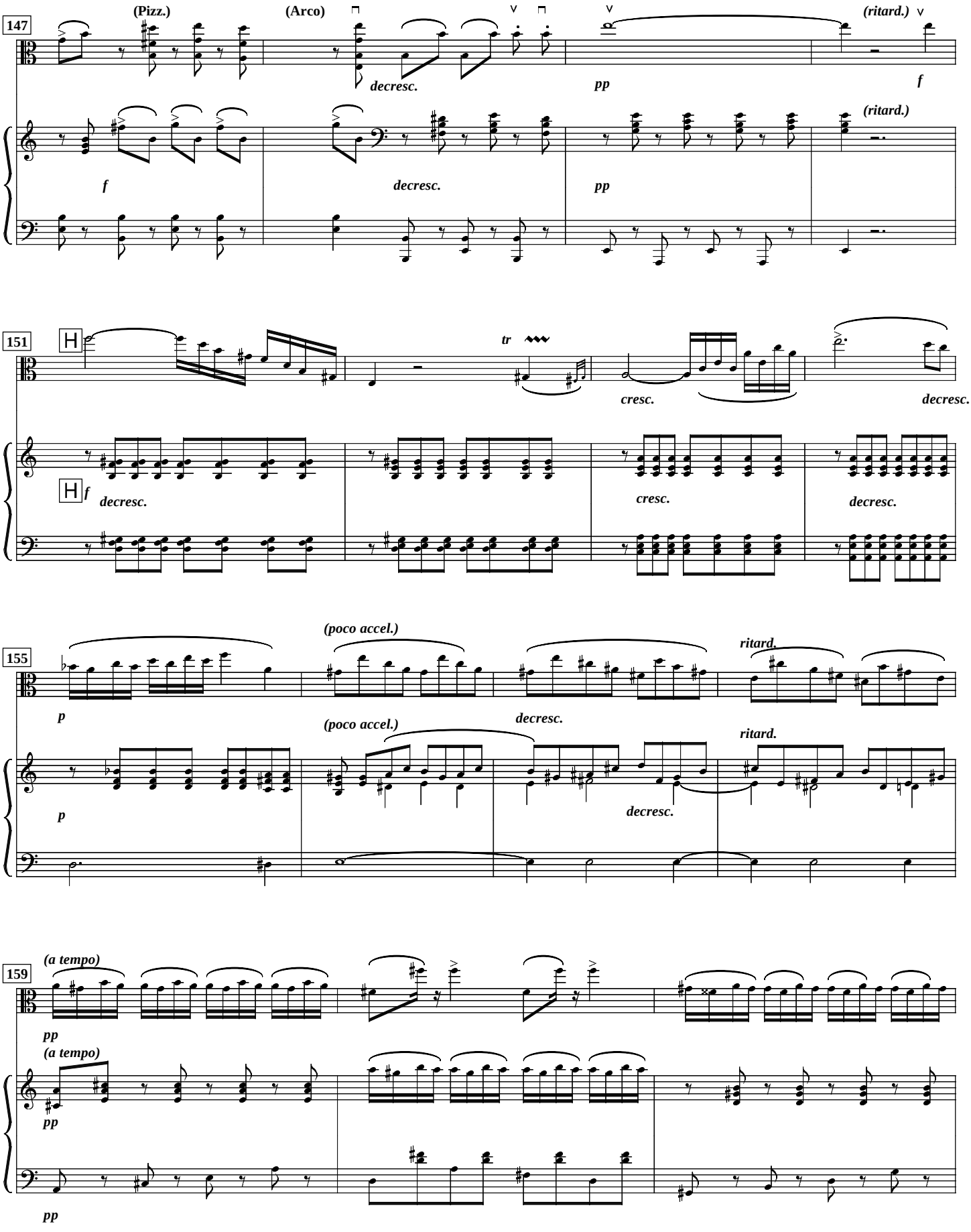

64
tr
3
cresc.
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
68
tr
cresc.
decresc.
(Pizz.)
cresc.
decresc.
f
72
1.
2.
C
(poco rit.)
[Pizz.]
fz
p
cresc.
fz
p
fz
(poco rit.)
C
p
78
decresc.
Arco
f
p
cresc.
f
p

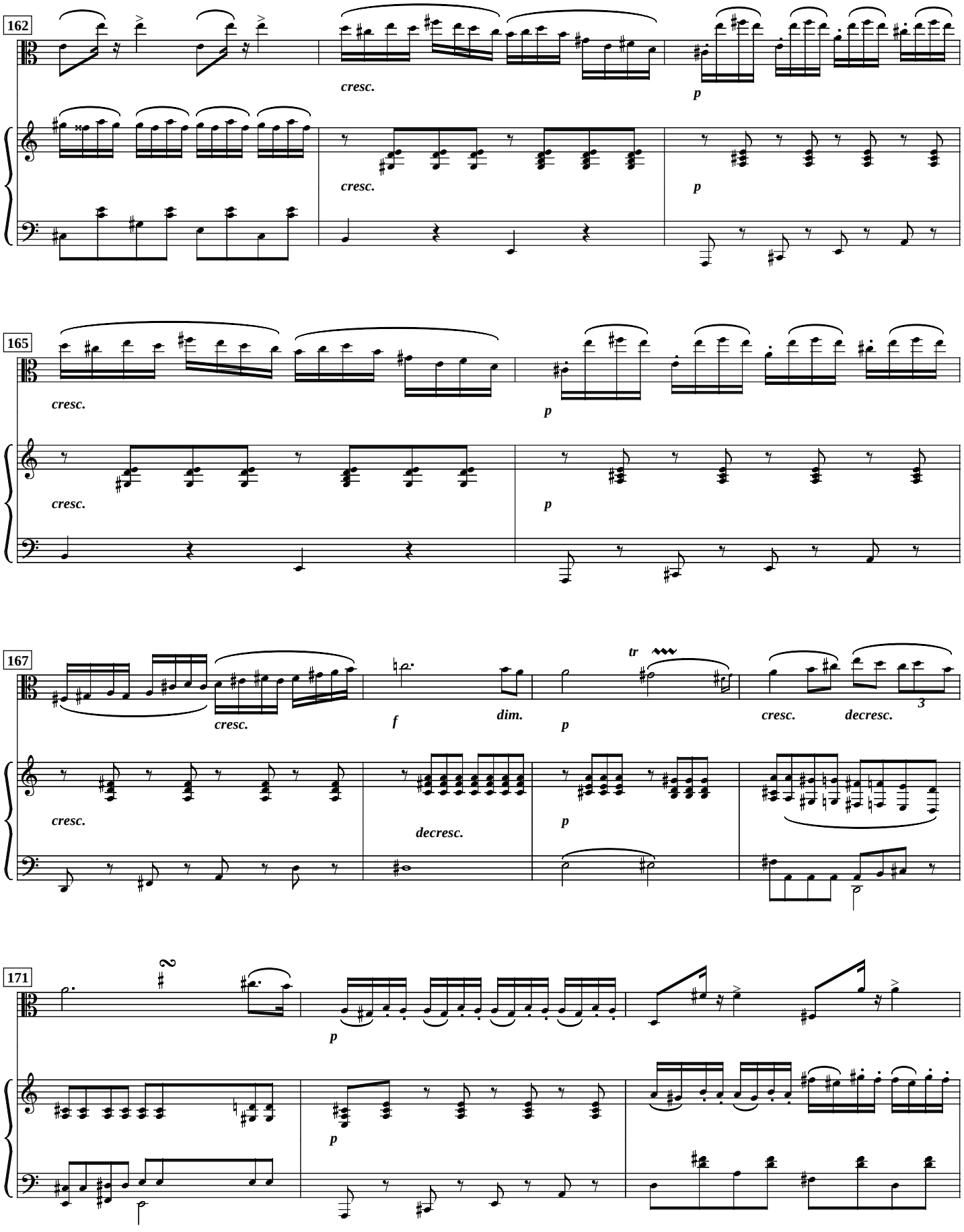

83
cresc.
decresc.
3
3
3
3
cresc.
88
D
(a tempo)
(a tempo)
D
pp
91
(poco rit.)
fp
(poco rit.)
94
fp
cresc.
f
cresc.
cresc.
f
cresc.

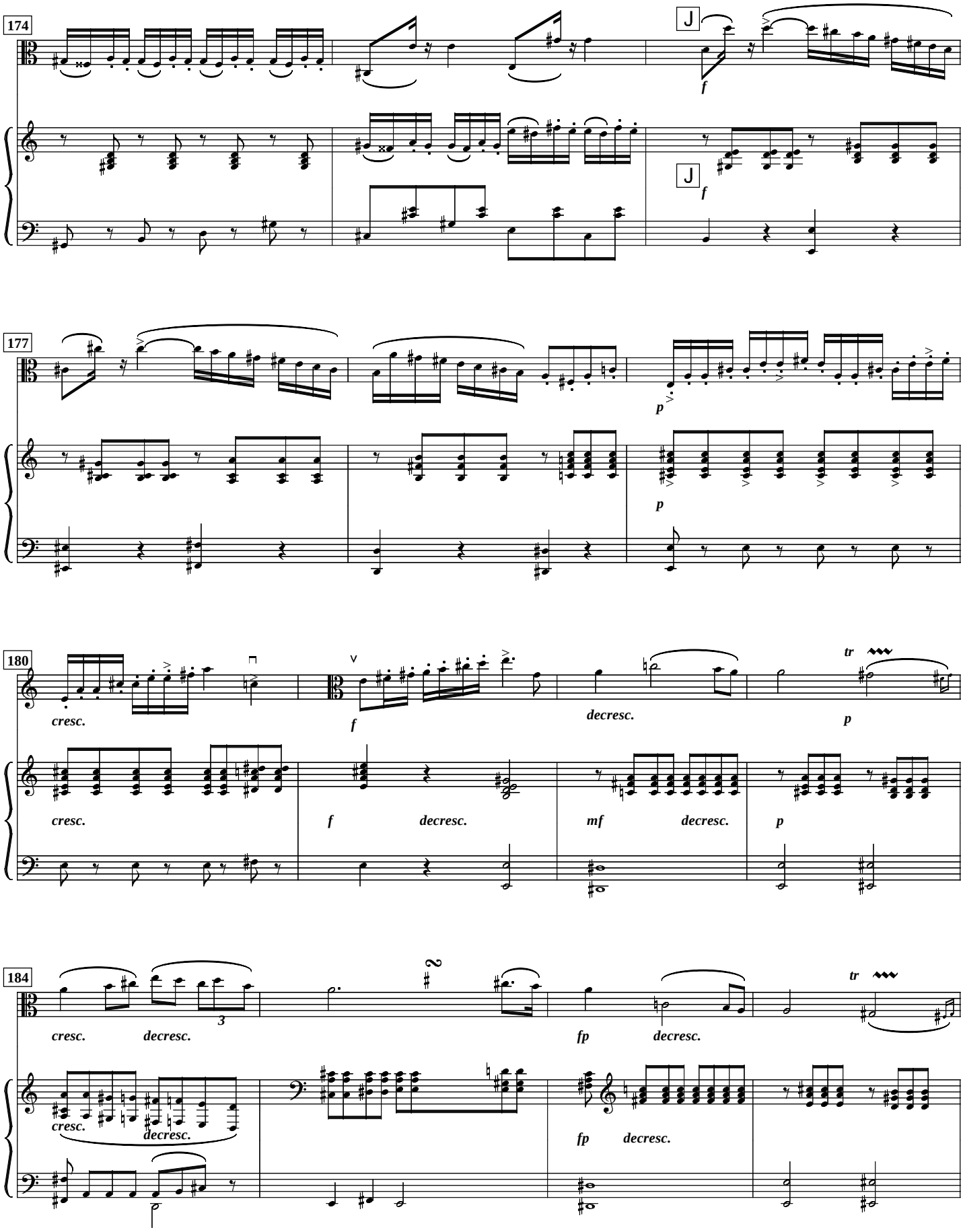

97
fz
p
pp
cresc.
fz
p
pp
cresc.
102
(a tempo)
mf
(a tempo)
mf
105
pp
cresc.
pp
108
cresc.
(poco a poco)

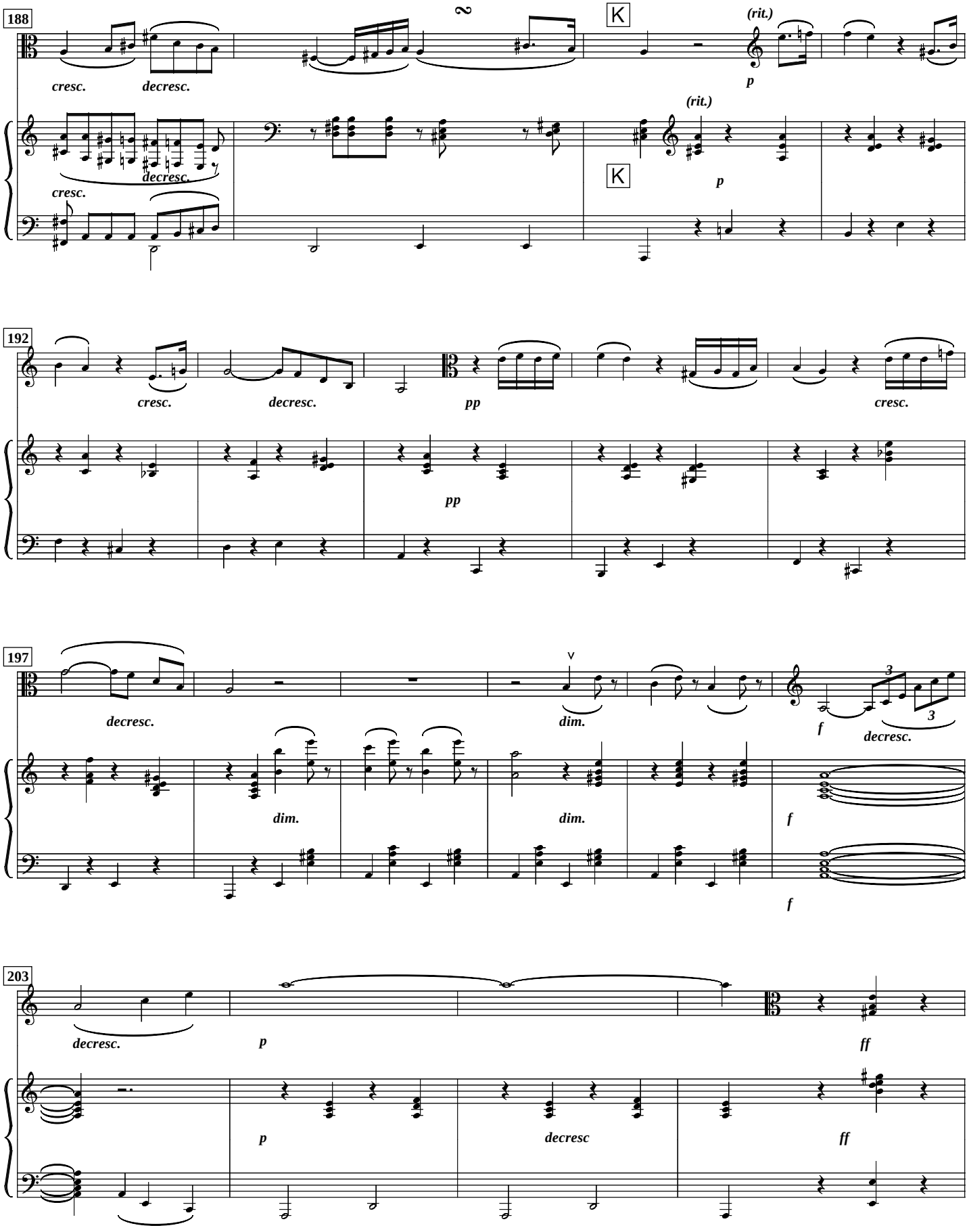

112
mf
cresc.
f
f
cresc.
f
115
ff
cresc.
ffz
decresc.
cresc.
ff
ffz
pp
120
(ritard.)
p
3
3
cresc.
fp
decresc.
(ritard.)
fp
126
F
(a tempo)
mf
a tempo
F
p

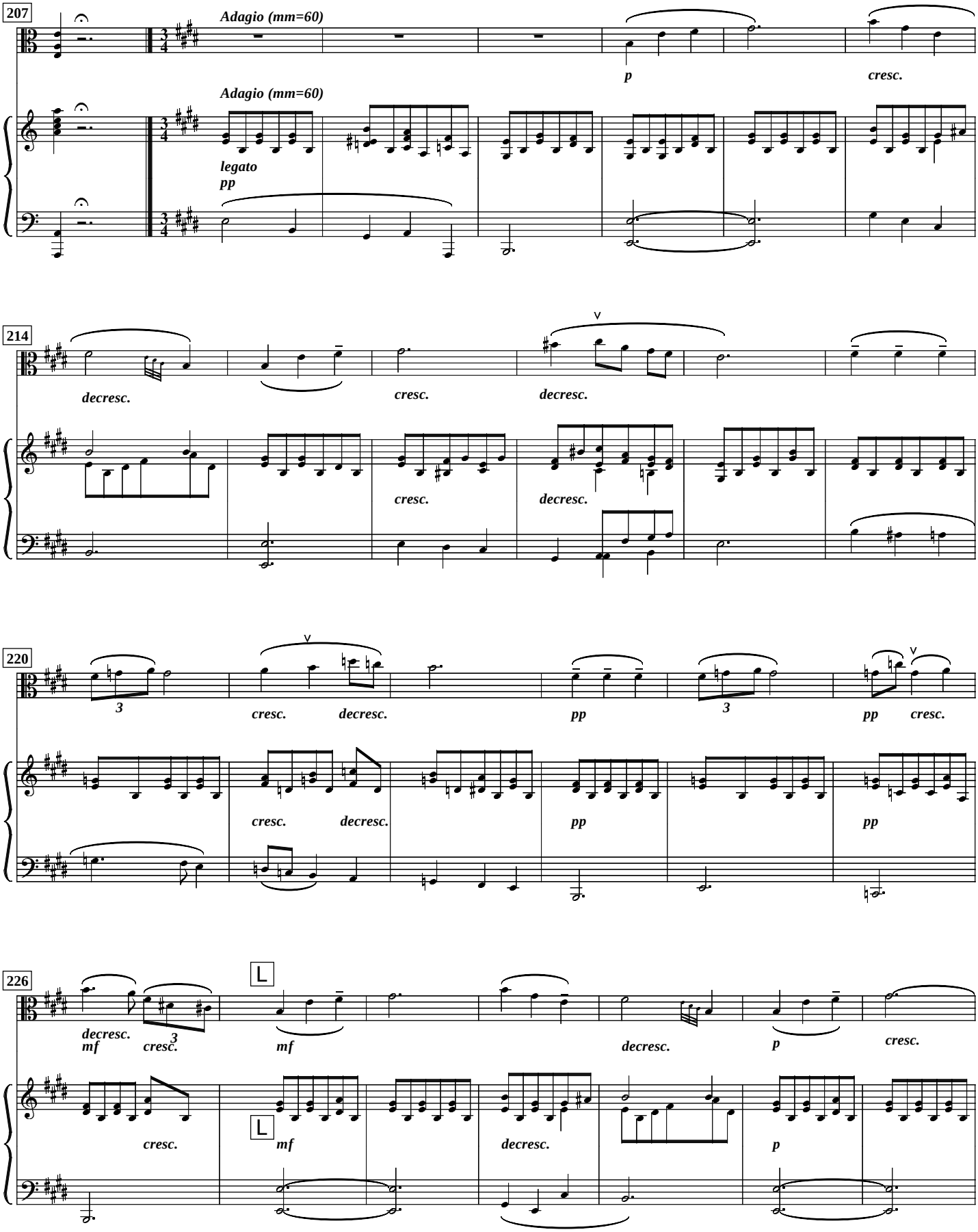

131
cresc.
decresc.
pp
cresc.
cresc.
decresc.
pp
cresc.
136
fp
decresc.
p
fp
decresc.
G
G
140
pp
p
pp
143
cresc.
cresc.

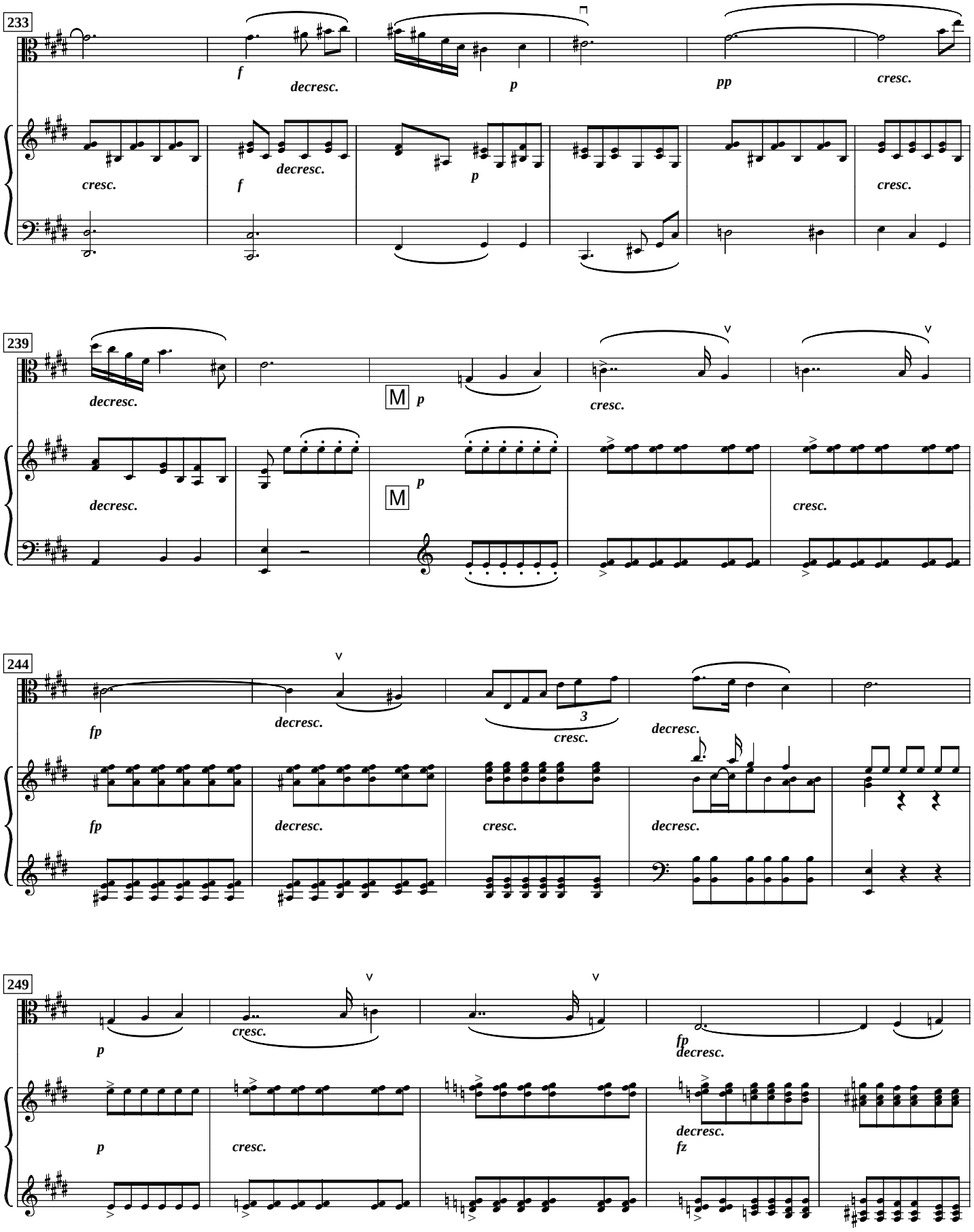

147
(Pizz.)
(Arco)
decresc.
pp
(ritard.)
f
f
decresc.
pp
(ritard.)
151
tr
cresc.
decresc.
f
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
155
(poco accel.)
ritard.
p
decresc.
(poco accel.)
ritard.
p
decresc.
159
(a tempo)
pp
(a tempo)
pp
pp

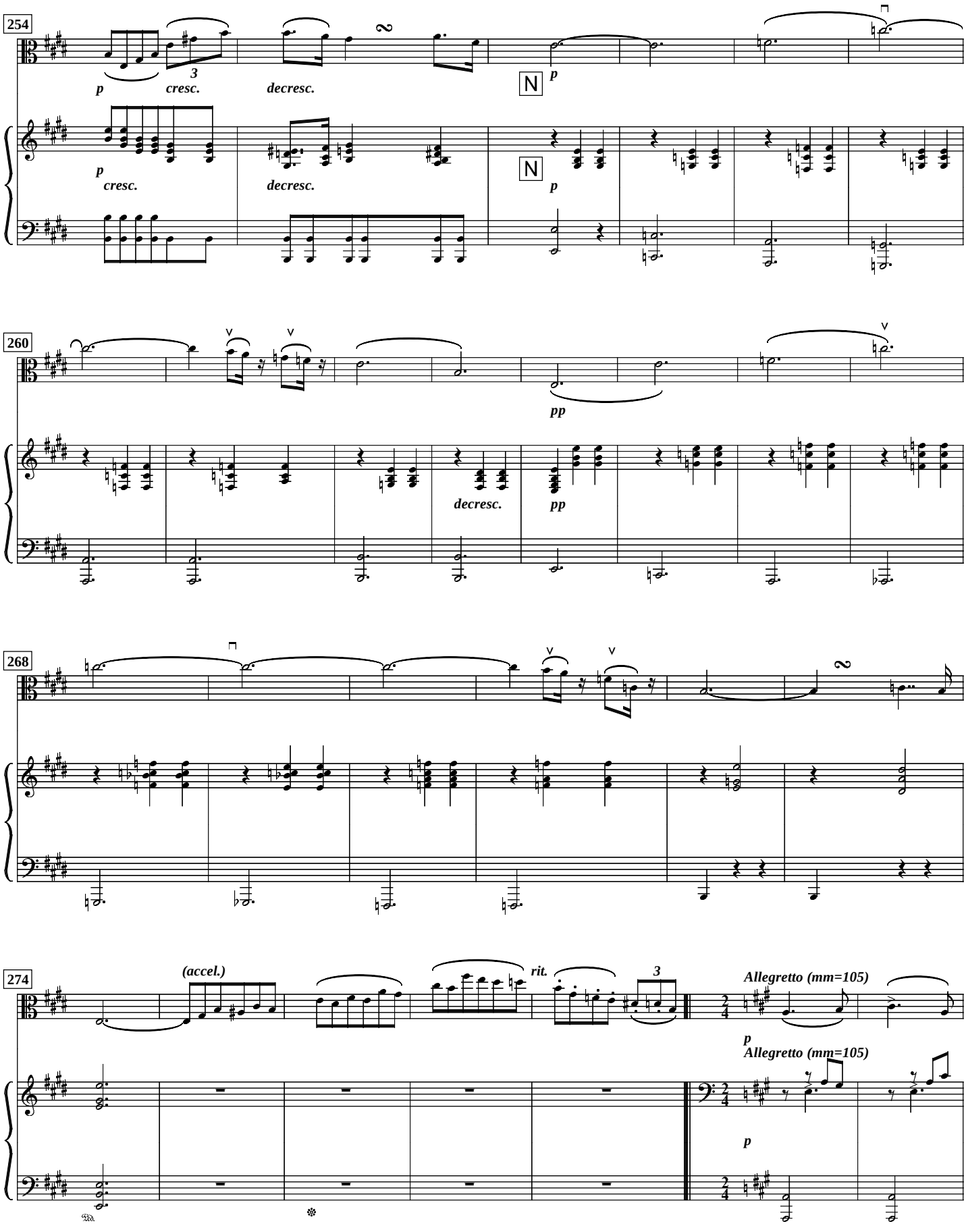

162
cresc.
p
cresc.
p
165
cresc.
p
cresc.
p
167
cresc.
f
dim.
p
tr
cresc.
decresc.
3
cresc.
decresc.
p
171
p
p

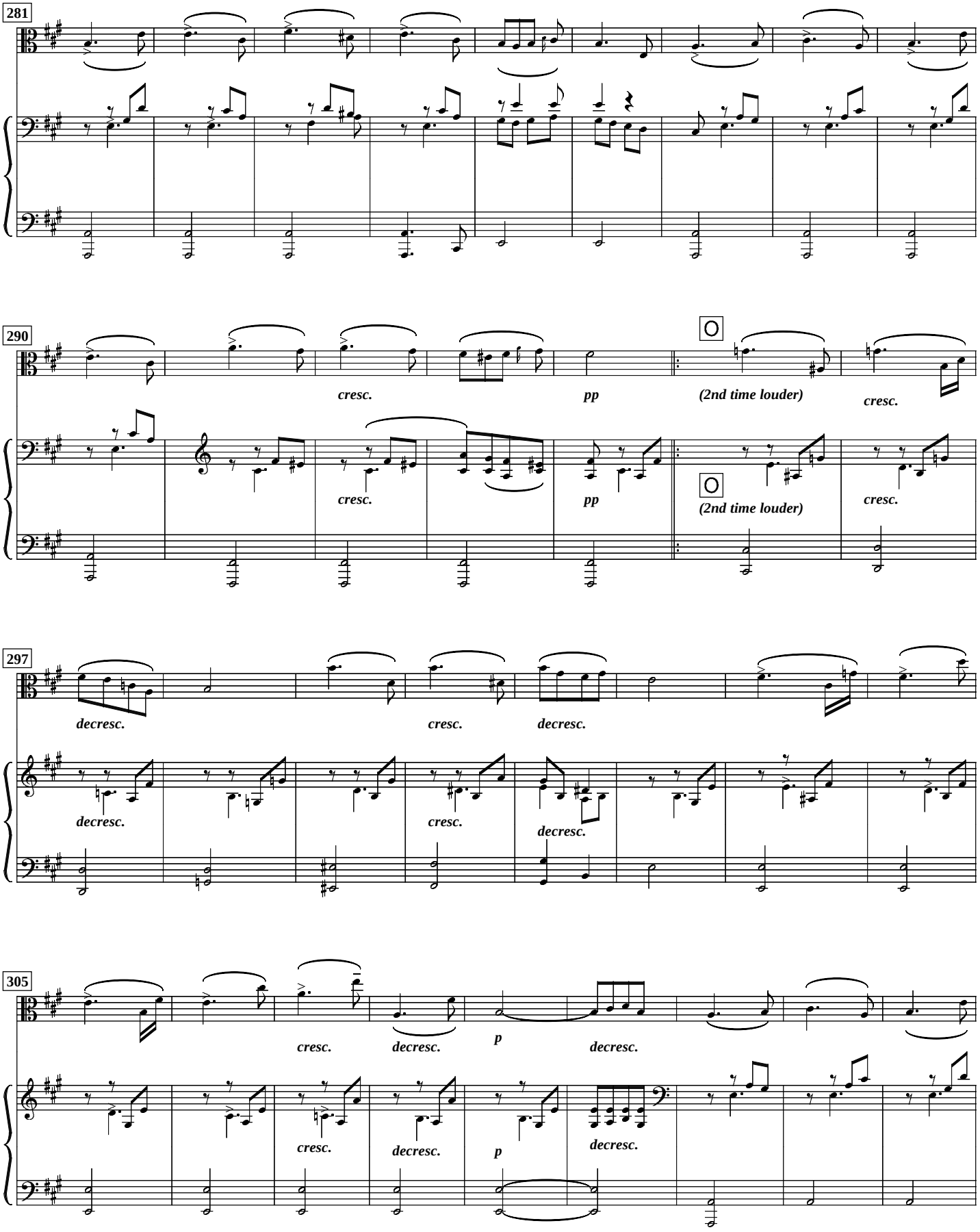

174
J
f
J
f
177
p
p
180
cresc.
f
decresc.
tr
p
cresc.
f
decresc.
mf
decresc.
p
184
cresc.
decresc.
3
fp
decresc.
tr
cresc.
decresc.
fp
decresc.

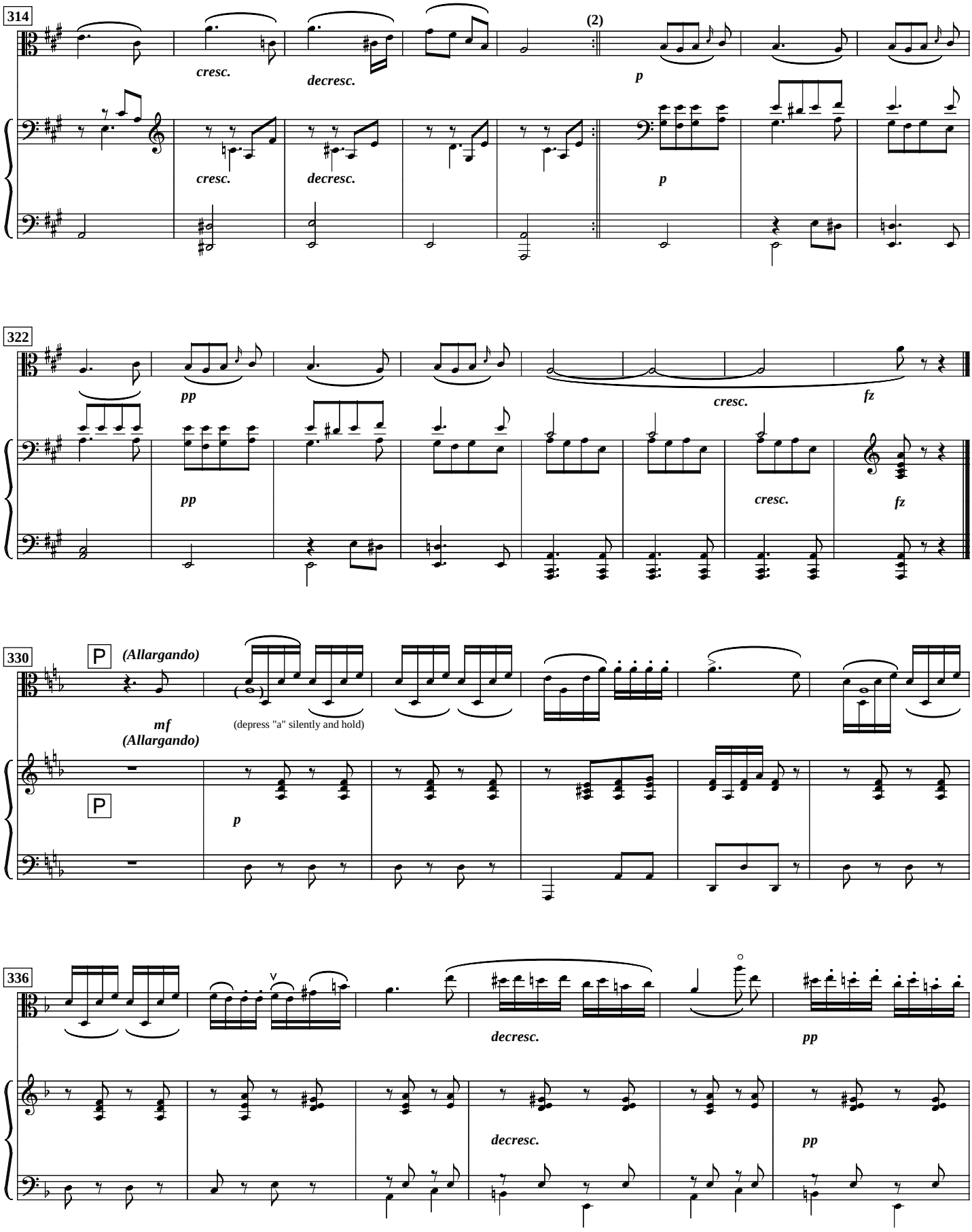

188
cresc.
decresc.
K
(rit.)
p
192
cresc.
decresc.
pp
197
dim.
f
203
ff
decresc

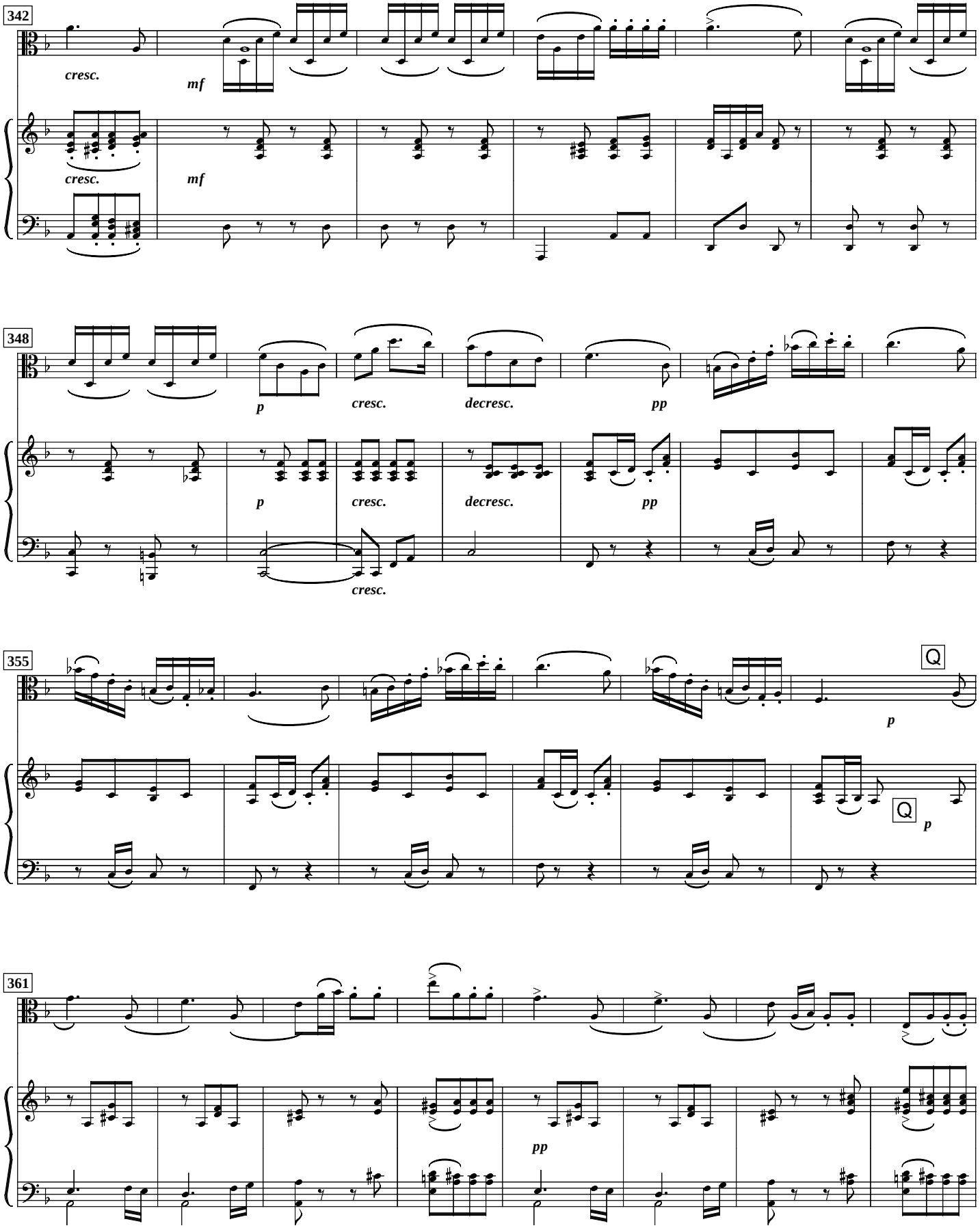

207
Adagio (mm=60)
Adagio (mm=60)
p
cresc.
legato
pp
214
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
220
3
cresc.
decresc.
pp
3
pp
cresc.
cresc.
decresc.
pp
pp
226
decresc.
mf
cresc.
3
mf
decresc.
p
cresc.
cresc.
mf
decresc.
p

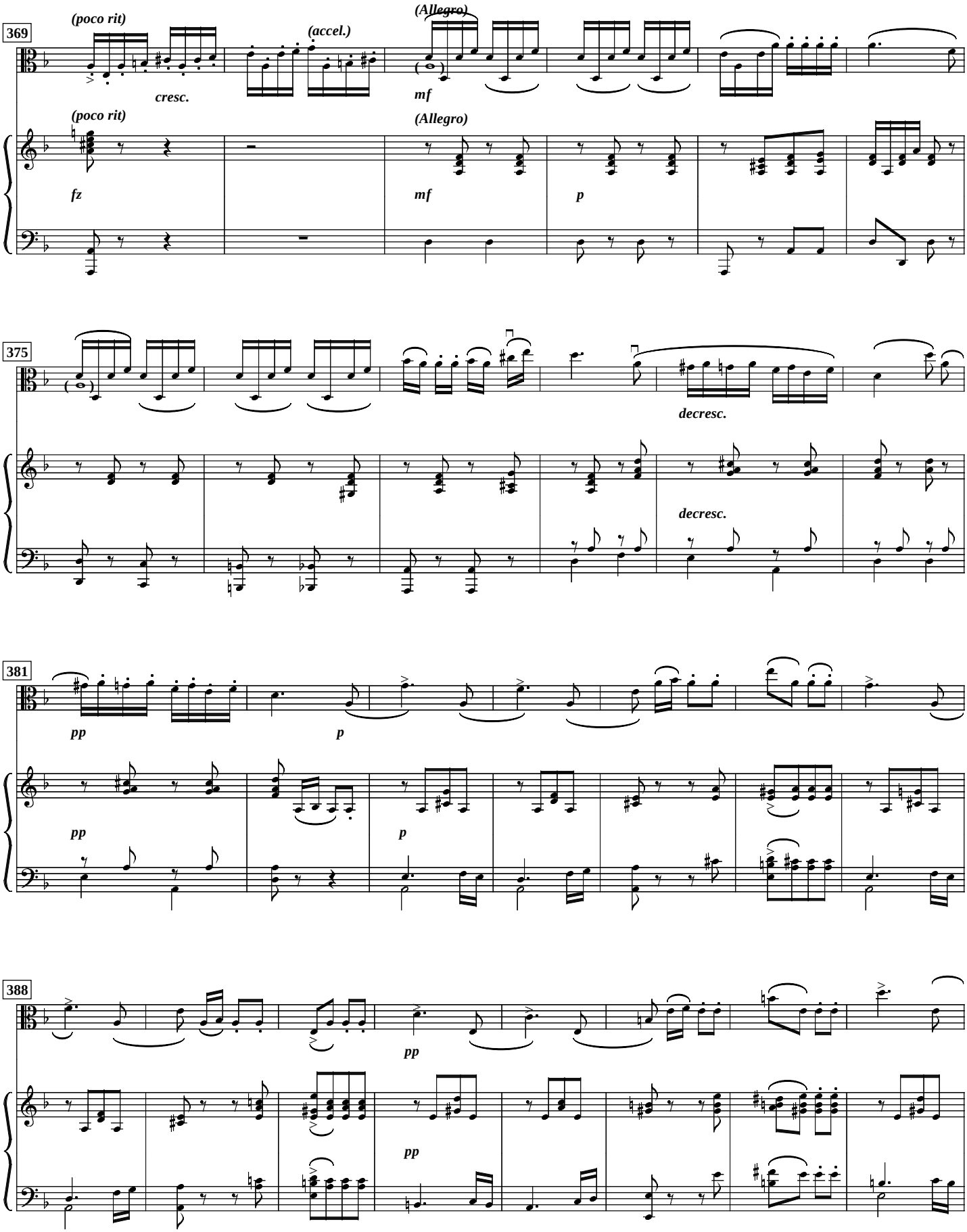

233
f
decresc.
p
pp
cresc.
cresc.
f
decresc.
p
cresc.
239
decresc.
M
p
cresc.
decresc.
M
p
cresc.
244
fp
decresc.
3
cresc.
decresc.
fp
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
249
p
cresc.
fp
decresc.
p
cresc.
decresc.
fz

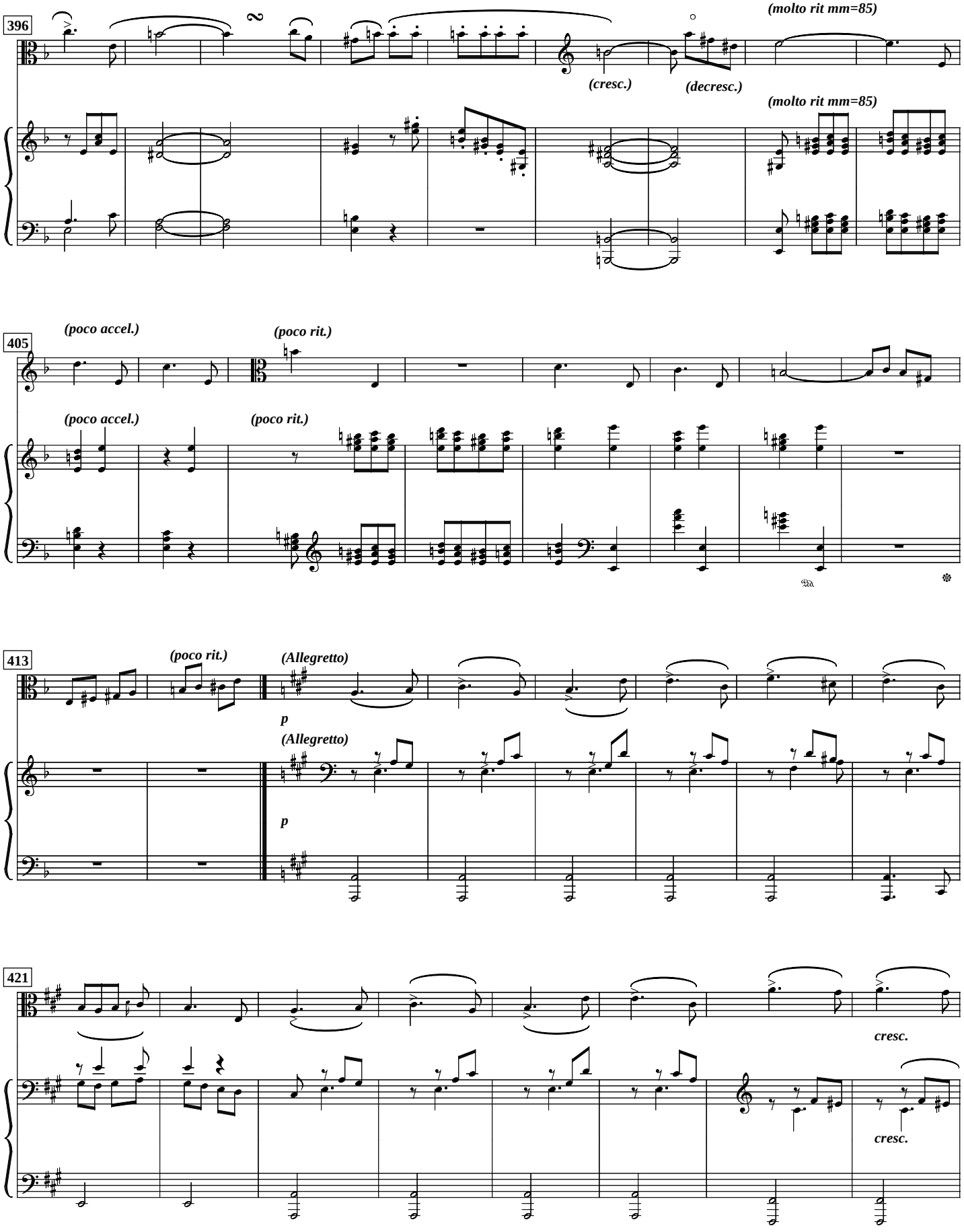

254
p
cresc.
3
decresc.
N
p
p
cresc.
decresc.
N
p
260
pp
decresc.
pp
268
274
(accel.)
rit.
3
Allegretto (mm=105)
p
Allegretto (mm=105)
p

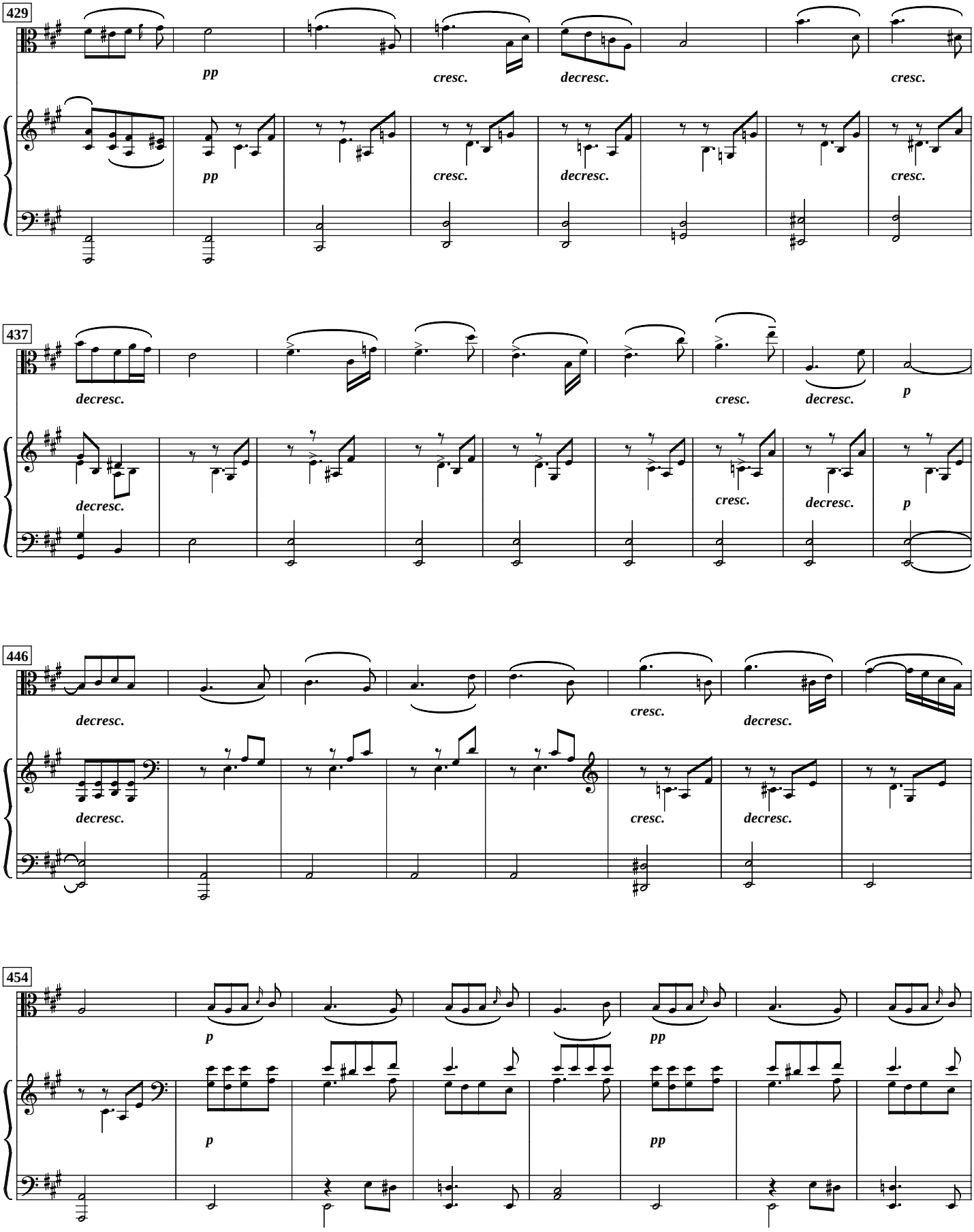

281
290
cresc.
pp
(2nd time louder)
cresc.
297
decresc.
cresc.
305
p

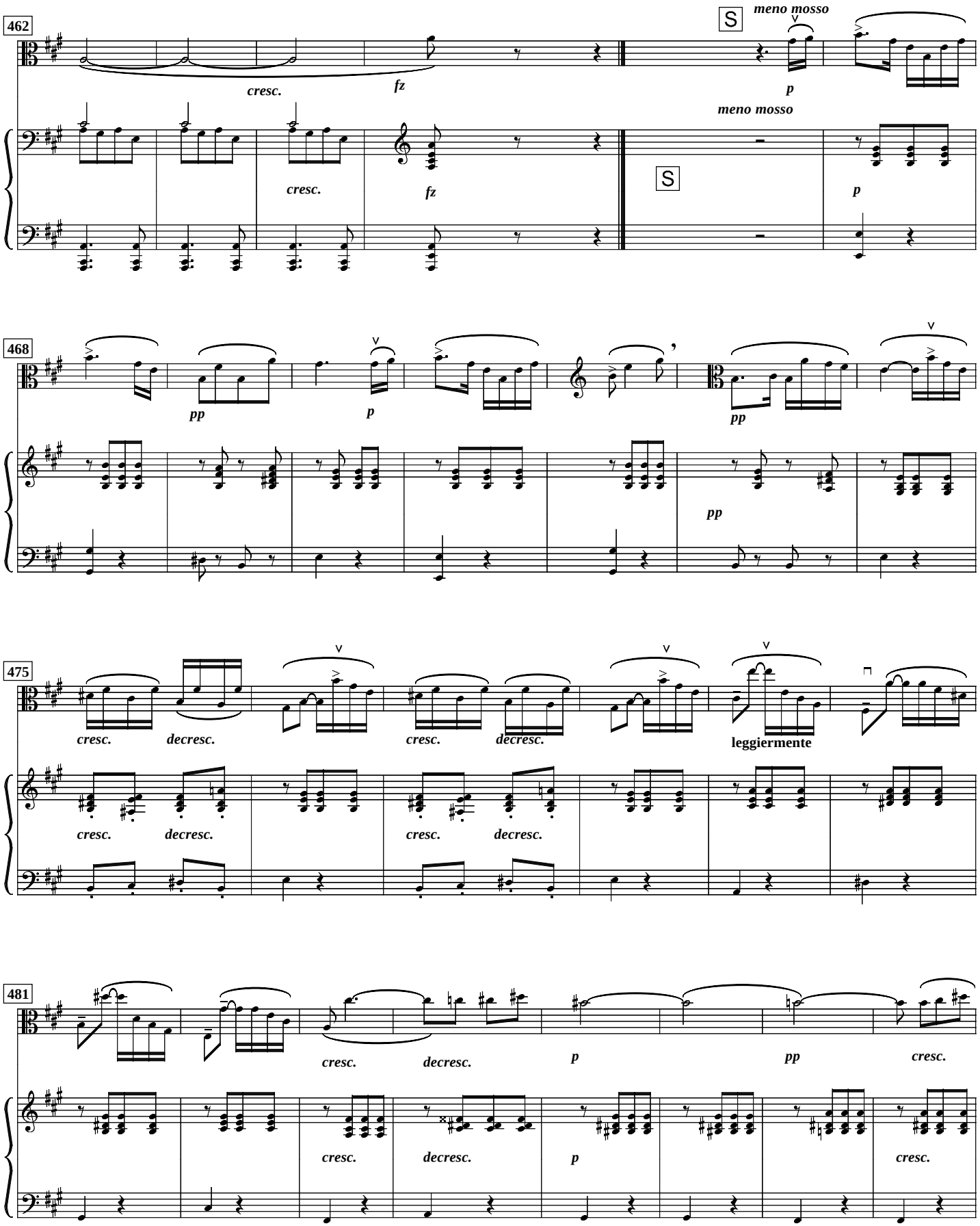

314
cresc.
decresc.
(2)
p
cresc.
decresc.
p
322
pp
cresc.
fz
pp
cresc.
fz
330
P
(Allargando)
mf
(Allargando)
(depress "a" silently and hold)
P
p
336
decresc.
pp
decresc.
pp

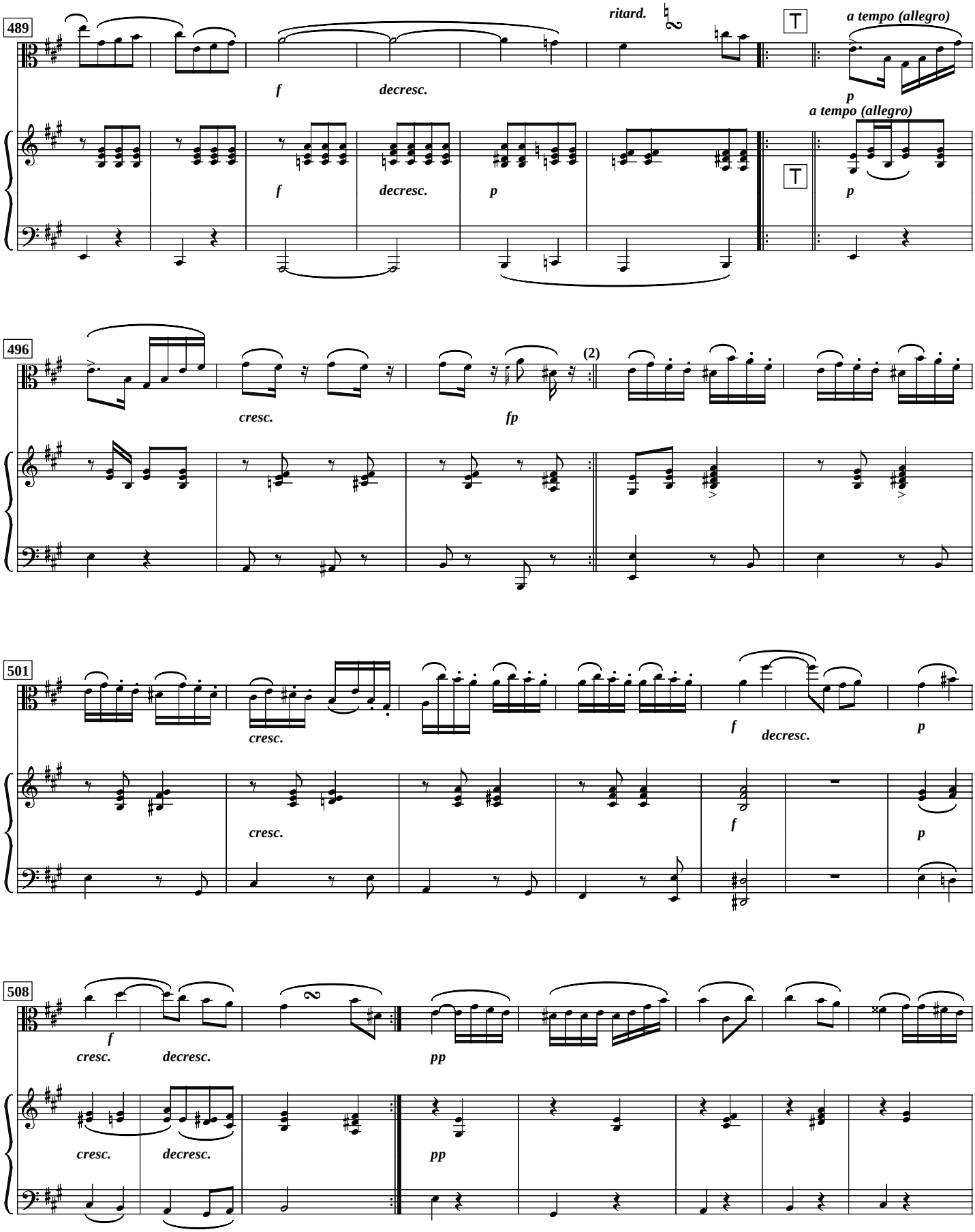

342
cresc.
mf
cresc.
mf
348
p
cresc.
decresc.
pp
p
cresc.
decresc.
pp
cresc.
355
p
Q
Q
p
361
pp

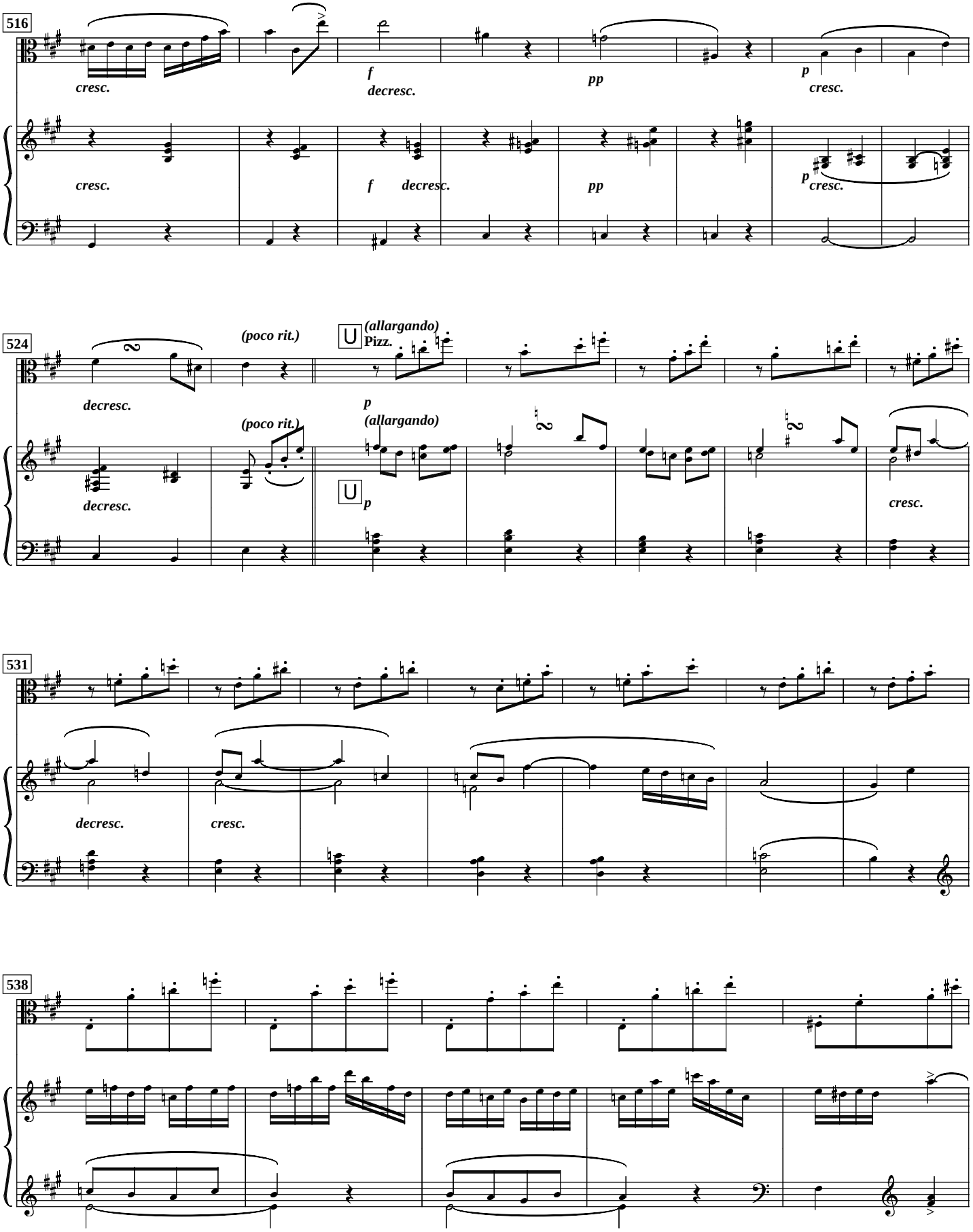

369
(poco rit)
cresc.
(accel.)
(Allegro)
mf
(poco rit)
fz
(Allegro)
mf
p
375
decresc.
decresc.
381
pp
p
pp
p
388
pp
pp

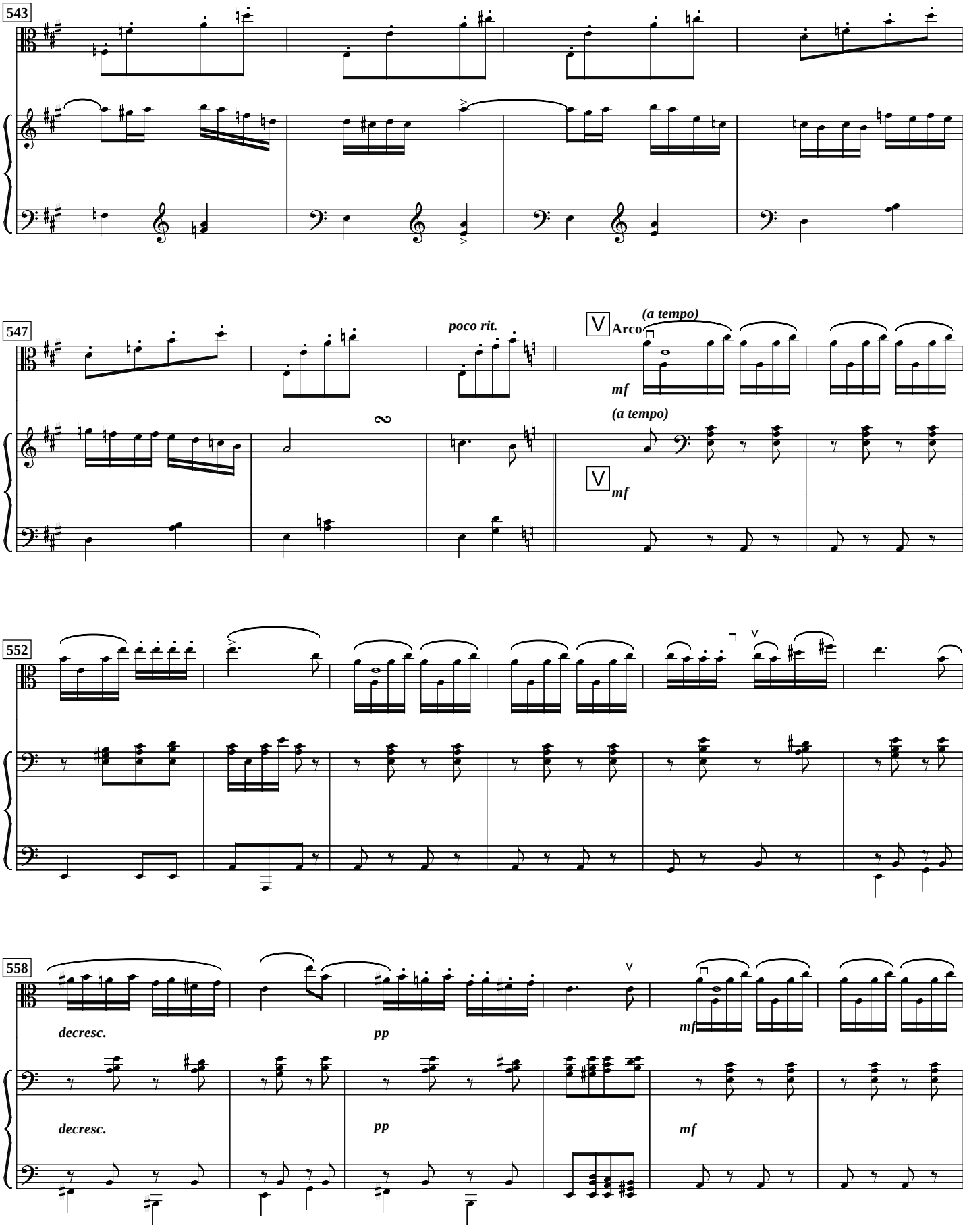

396
(molto rit mm=85)
(cresc.)
(decresc.)
(molto rit mm=85)
405
(poco accel.)
(poco rit.)
(poco accel.)
(poco rit.)
413
(poco rit.)
(Allegretto)
p
(Allegretto)
p
421
cresc.
cresc.

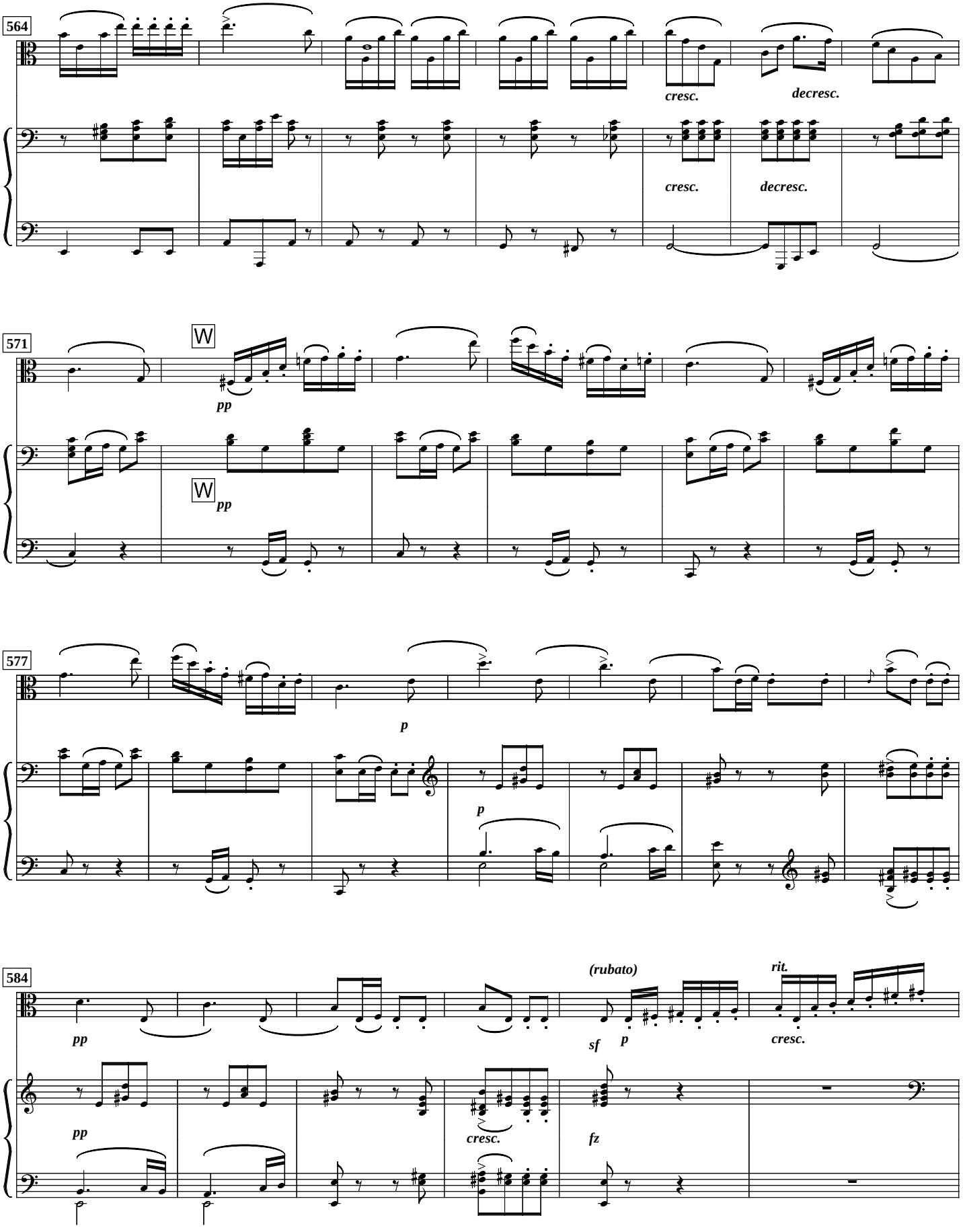

429
pp
cresc.
decresc.
cresc.
pp
cresc.
decresc.
cresc.
437
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
p
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
p
446
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
454
p
pp
p
pp

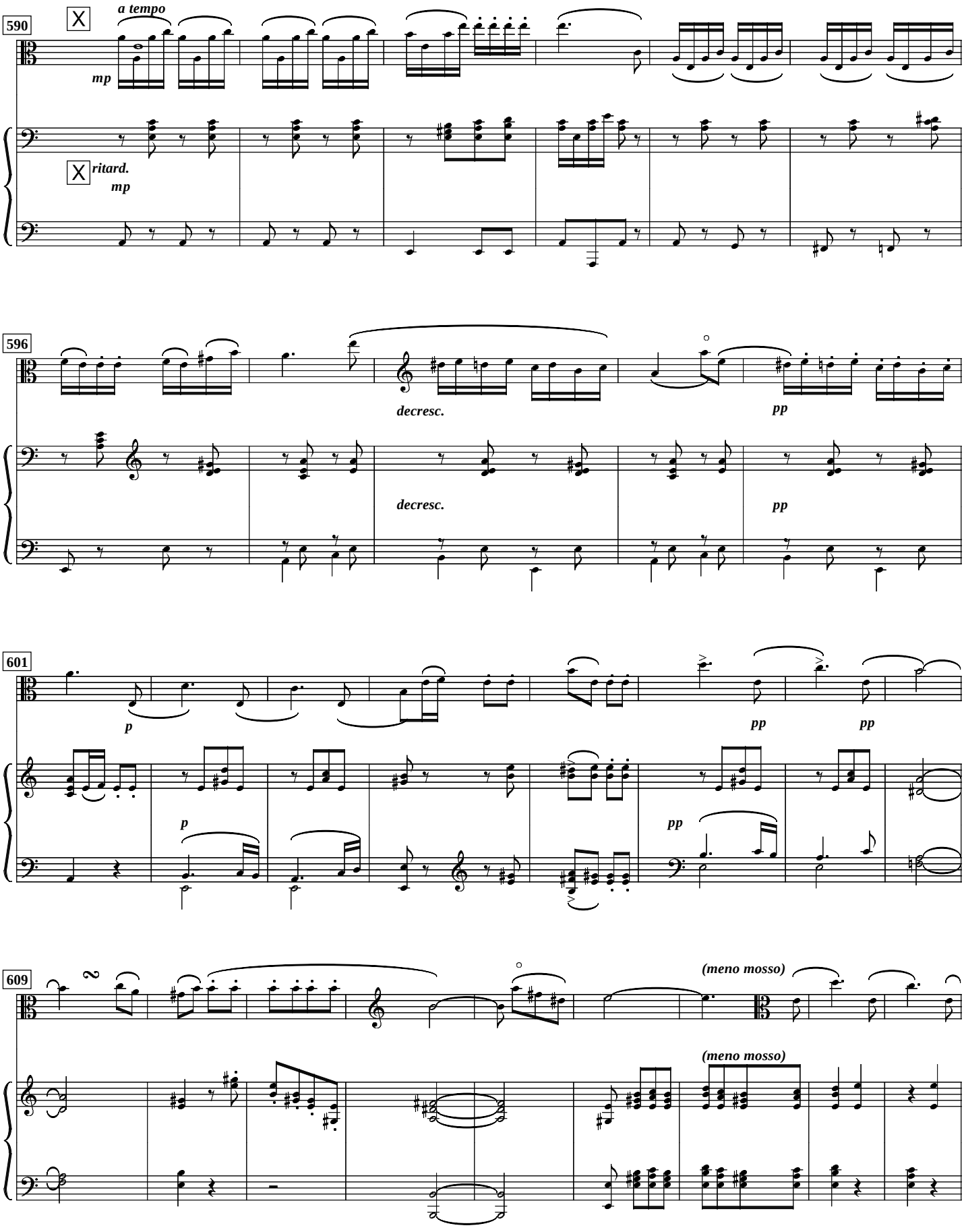

462
S
meno mosso
cresc.
fz
p
meno mosso
S
468
pp
p
pp
475
cresc.
decresc.
leggiermente
481
cresc.
decresc.
p
pp
cresc.

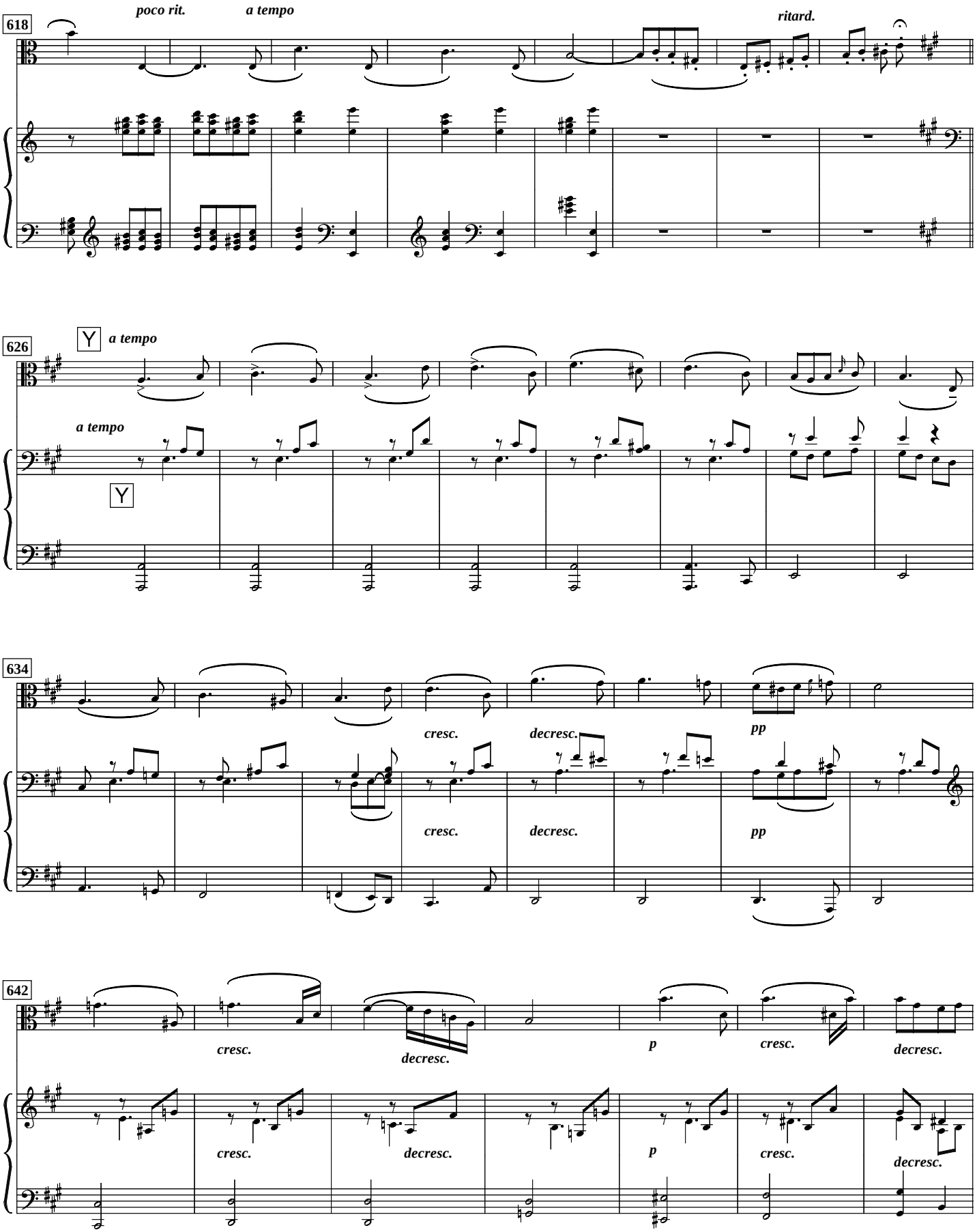

489
ritard.
a tempo (allegro)
f
decresc.
p
a tempo (allegro)
f
decresc.
p
p
496
(2)
cresc.
fp
501
cresc.
f
decresc.
p
cresc.
f
p
508
f
cresc.
decresc.
pp
cresc.
decresc.
pp

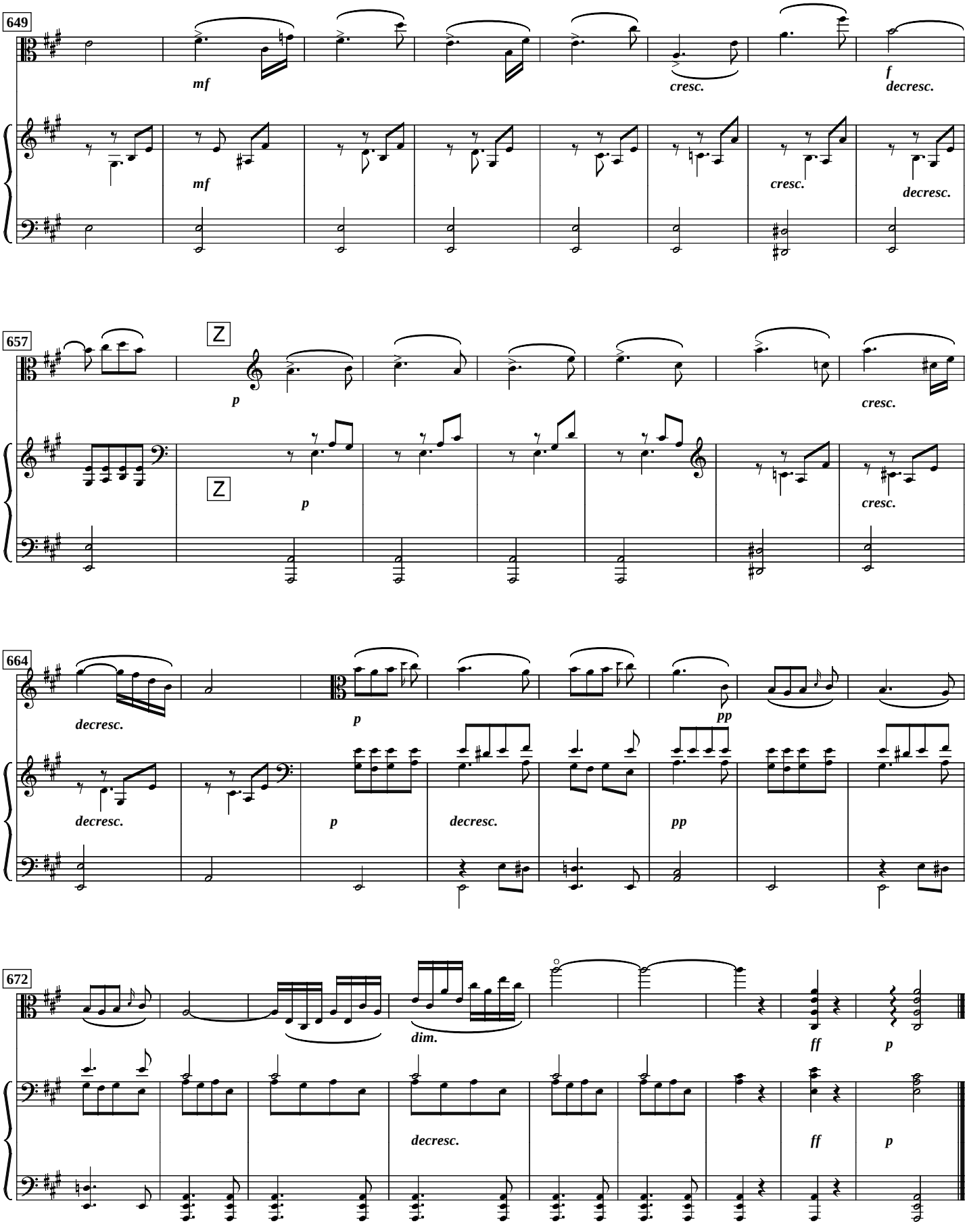

516
cresc.
f
decresc.
pp
p
cresc.
cresc.
f
decresc.
pp
p
cresc.
524
(poco rit.)
(allargando)
Pizz.
decresc.
p
(allargando)
(poco rit.)
decresc.
p
cresc.
531
decresc.
cresc.
538


543
547
poco rit.
Arco
(a tempo)
mf
(a tempo)
mf
552
558
decresc.
pp
mf
decresc.
pp
mf


564
cresc.
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
571
W
pp
W
pp
577
p
p
584
pp
(rubato)
sf
p
rit.
cresc.
pp
cresc.
fz


590
a tempo
mp
ritard.
mp
596
decresc.
pp
decresc.
pp
601
p
pp
pp
p
pp
609
(meno mosso)
(meno mosso)


618
poco rit.
a tempo
ritard.
626
Y
a tempo
a tempo
Y
634
cresc.
decresc.
pp
cresc.
decresc.
pp
642
cresc.
decresc.
p
cresc.
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
p
cresc.
decresc.


649
mf
cresc.
f
decresc.
mf
cresc.
decresc.
657
Z
p
cresc.
Z
p
cresc.
664
decresc.
p
pp
decresc.
p
decresc.
pp
672
dim.
ff
p
decresc.
ff
p