SERGEI

# BORTKIEWICZ

## Zweite Sonate
## für Klavier, Op. 60

## Second Sonata
## for Piano, Op. 60

## СЕРГЕЙ БОРТКЕВИЧ
### ВТОРАЯ СОНАТА, Соч. 60

*Edited by*

B.N. Thadani and L. Holleran

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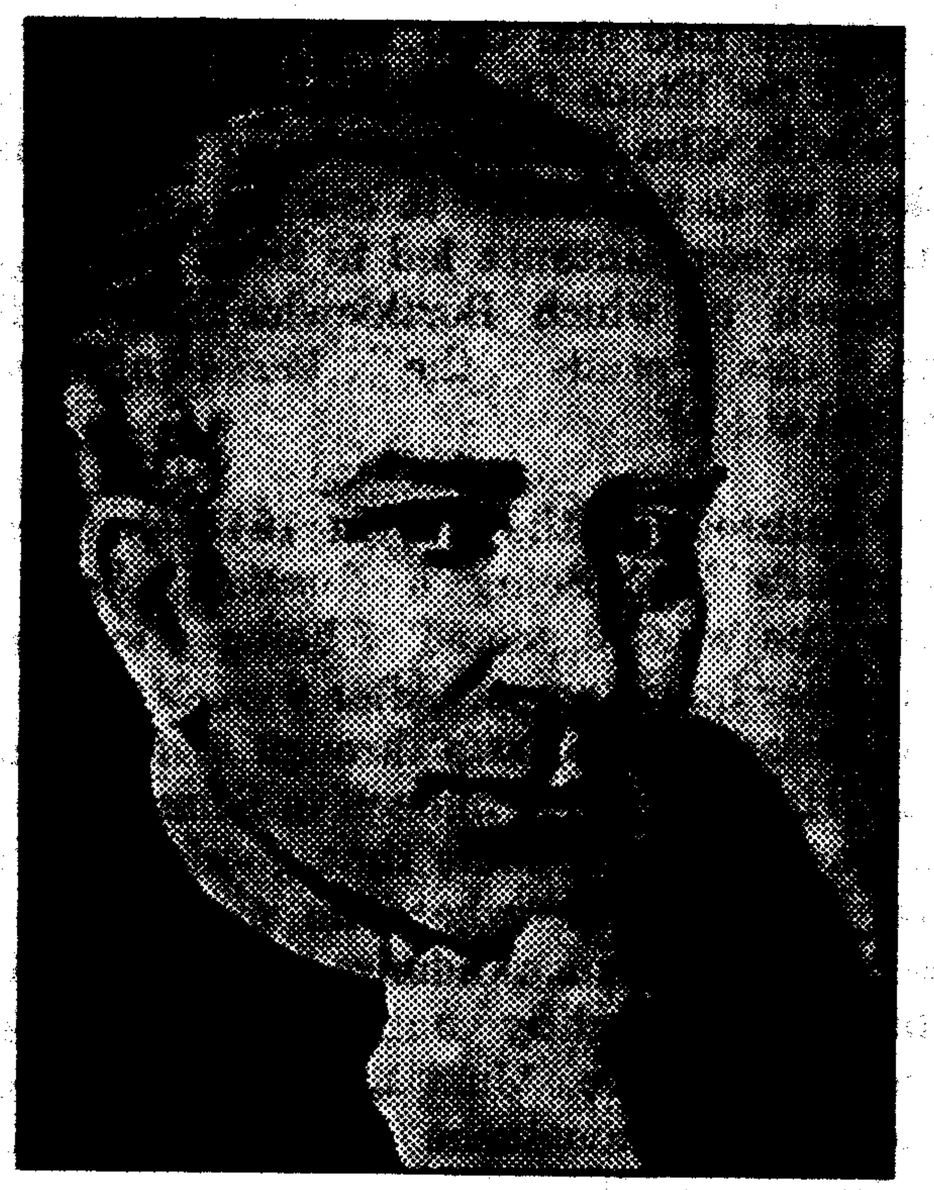
# SERGEI BORTKIEWICZ

## The Man and the Sonata No. 2



Sergei Bortkiewicz (1877-1952)

**The forgotten romantic**

It was more than 25 years ago that I first heard the music of *Sergei Bortkiewicz*, played by *Moritz Rosenthal*. It was the Etude, Op. 15, No. 8 and it absolutely enthralled me with its sweeping melody and great climaxes. I wanted to search out more of his gorgeous music, to play it myself. It was then than I realized that this was no easy task. Sergei Bortkiewicz was a composer relegated to the obscure back rooms of music's Hall of Fame and his major piano scores were no longer in print. In fact it took me more than 20 years to acquire most of his compositions for solo piano.

Such a situation really intrigued me. How was it that a composer born in the 19th century, a contemporary of *Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Glazounov* and others, who outlived all of them and died in 1952, should be forgotten so completely? He lived into the age of stereo recording and yet not a single example of his piano playing is available. He was a Russian, and no mention is made of him in books on music published in Russia[1]. (The superscripts refer to the corresponding items in the Bibliography.)

It was only after I got a copy of his autobiographical sketches, *Erinerrungen*[2] *(Reminiscences)*, published in 1971 that I was able to understand partially, Bortkiewicz's character and *Weltanschauung*. These recollections, at times whimsical and amusing but never dull, also explain to a certain extent the oblivion into which he has been relegated.

*Sergei Eduardovich Bortkiewicz*, or to spell out the name as it should be pronounced according to the Russian alphabet, Сергей Эдуардович Борткевич, was born in Kharkov in 1877 in a wealthy family of land-owners. He spent a happy childhood in the family estate of Artiomowka, about 24 kilometers from Kharkov, and showed an early interest in music. At the insistence of his father, after finishing his schooling, he left for St. Petersburg and enrolled in the Faculty of Law, as well as the Imperial Conservatory of Music.

The Petersburg Conservatory at that time was held in high regard and counted professors such as *Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Glazounov*, and *Blumenfeld* on its teaching staff. It was there that Bortkiewicz received his musical training, while at the same time trying to study law.

For three years he dutifully gave his law examinations, but never completed his fourth year and decided to leave the University so as to proceed abroad for further musical studies. But before that he had to complete one year of compulsory military service so that the authorities would issue him a passport to travel abroad.

Indeed, it was one of his great desires from early youth. He especially wanted to go to Germany, the land of *Goethe* and *Wagner*, where he thought he could discover wider horizons, and get a more thorough education.

So in the fall of 1899 he started his military service in St. Petersburg, but soon developed a lung inflammation due to the rigorous military life and was discharged from military service because of poor health. Early next year he left Petersburg for good and travelled to Leipzig, where he became a student of *Alfred Reisenauer*, who had been one of the favored students of the legendary *Liszt*. Bortkiewicz, in turn, was one of the favorites of Reisenauer, and it is to him that he dedicated his splendid set of Etudes, Op. 15. It is with reluctance that he describes Reisenauer's alcoholism and his early death due to a heart attack at the age of 43, brought about by alcohol addiction.

After his first year of his musical studies, Bortkiewicz spent the summer in Italy, learning Italian and giving concerts. He returned to Leipzig, studying assiduously, attending many concerts and was much impressed by the conducting of *Arthur Nikisch*. Years later, the conductor was enthusiastic about Bortkiewicz's Piano Concerto, No. 1, Op. 16 and strongly recommended its publication.

In July 1902, Bortkiewicz completed his studies at the Leipzig Conservatory, and was awarded the Schumann Prize. That summer he returned to Russia and to the family estate of Artiomowka where he met his future wife, *Elisabeth Geraklitowa*.

He gave concerts in Kharkov and also played with the symphony orchestra of the city. In July 1904, he married Elisabeth and traveled back to Germany, where he settled down in Berlin. It was only after marriage that he started composing seriously. His first publisher was *Daniel Rahter* of Leipzig, who unfortunately died early; the firm was subsequently taken over by *A.S. Benjamin*.

From 1904 till 1914, Bortkiewicz lived in Berlin, spending his summers in Russia, or traveling over Europe. For a year he also taught at the *Klindworth-Scharwenka* Conservatory, but left it after some unpleasant experiences. He then took to concertizing not only in Germany, but also in Vienna, Budapest, Italy, Paris and Russia. However, the career of a virtuouso did not appeal to him and he concentrated instead on composition and teaching.

His Etudes, Op. 15 had just been published by D. Rahter when he was in Berlin, and it was there that he found a lifelong friend in *Hugo van Dalen*, the Dutch pianist and composer (1888-1967). Dalen told him that it was through his playing of the Etude Op. 15, No. 8 that he had met his wife. She liked the piece so much that she came up to van Dalen to ask the composer's name. This acquaintance led to their marriage, as a result of which Bortkiewicz unofficially named this etude the *Verlobungsetude* (Betrothal etude).

The outbreak of the war in 1914 shattered Bortkiewicz's life. Being a Russian alien in Germany he was suspected of being a spy and placed under house arrest. After 6 weeks he was allowed to leave for Russia through Sweden and Finland. He established himself in Kharkov as a music teacher, at the same time giving concerts in Orel and Moscow, where he met *Scriabin*, whose music he much admired. He describes Scriabin as a slightly built man, with an upturned moustache. "Just imagine Chopin or Raphael with a moustache à la Wilhelm II!" he writes mischievously.

The situation took a turn for the worse in 1917 with the collapse of the Russian army. There was chaos in southern Russia till the German army occupied Kharkov in March 1918 and some order was restored by the German soldiers. However, after the German withdrawal in November, there was a complete social breakdown. Food, electricity and heating oil was scarce. Bortkiewicz describes how his piano students had to sit at the piano in furs and hats, with frostbitten fingers, continuously drinking tea to keep warm.

The Bolsheviks did not spare Bortkiewicz and plundered his family estate at Artiomowka. In the summer of 1919 he moved on to Crimea with his wife, where he lived in two furnished rooms in Sevastopol with a view of the harbor of Yalta. He rented a piano and composed his haunting Nocturne Op. 24, No. 1, subtitled *Diana*, during a wonderful moonlit night.

He had decided to leave Russia and waited till November of 1919 till he found place on a crowded steamer bound for Constantinople, now Istanbul, arriving with only 20 dollars in his pocket. His 1.5 million rubles were totally worthless! But his fame had preceded him and soon he was able to attract a cosmopolitan group of students from the well-to-do families in the city. He taught them in French and English.

"Knowing the strict morals of Orientals," he writes, "I had to put up with the presence of mamas or aunts who did not want to leave me alone with young ladies, and read a book during my lessons, while casting suspicious glances at my hands; and even with the presence of a husband who suddenly appeared in the room and looked at my posture jealously." Bortkiewicz did have a sense of humor!

In almost two years he had earned enough money from piano lessons and concerts to think of emigrating to Europe. He had established his old business contact with his publisher D. Rahter and set his goal as Vienna. He did not regret his decision to move on; within a couple of months after his departure, Kemal-Pascha had taken over Istanbul and the Sultan had abdicated. The majority of his students, Greeks and Armenians, had to leave the city.

A new chapter in his life began. He passed through Sofia to Belgrade where he had to wait for quite some time till he obtained an Austrian visa. Finally, he and his wife boarded a Danube steamer and arrived in Vienna on 22 July, 1922.

Bortkiewicz's *Erinnerungen* were completed in 1936 but Bortkiewicz stayed on in Vienna till his death in 1952, composing and teaching. I cannot find any more detailed information about his life during and after the Second World War, apart from the fact that he became an Austrian citizen, that he taught at the Vienna Conservatory and was a respected member of the faculty.

In spite of his great musical legacy, fate has not been kind to Bortkiewicz. His music has become increasingly harder to obtain since most of his publishers lost much of their stocks of his published works during the Allied bombing and occupation of Germany.

It seems he was always on the wrong side of the fence wherever he went. Though he spoke and wrote German fluently and even wrote his *"Erinnerungen"* in this language, he was not looked upon too kindly in Austria after the Second World War, partly because of his Russian origins and the behaviour of Soviet troops in Austria. The Bortkiewicz Gemeinde (Society) founded in 1947 soon became defunct and in 1977, twenty-five years after his death, the Viennese civic authorities levelled his grave in the city cemetery.

The Soviets have never forgiven Bortkiewicz for his cutting remarks regarding the communist regime and the hardships they made him endure just because he was one of the much hated "burshui" (from the French *bourgeois*). Not a single piece of music by Bortkiewicz has been printed in Russia, to my knowledge, and most Russians deny that he is a Russian, preferring to look on him as being Polish.

It interesting to speculate why Bortkiewicz never recorded his own music, though he lived into the age of high fidelity. Why, one can even hear Scriabin or Saint-Saens playing their works, thanks to the reproducing piano. A clue to his "old-fashioned" attitude is to be found in the remarks he makes in the *Erinnerungen*. "It is certain, at least for me, that the *Mechanization of Art* nowadays is a big backward step. The cinema is the greatest enemy of theatre, the radio – of music at home and of concerts." I guess he stuck to his beliefs and refused to record his music "mechanically" for posterity.

## The Second Sonata

Bortkiewicz's First Sonata, Op. 9 composed in 1909 has been recorded by *Ulla Graf* on the now defunct Genesis label. I had bought this 2 disc set of Bortkiewicz's piano music in 1981. The liner notes there refer to a Second Sonata composed somewhere around 1940, but no publisher is given. I therefore doubted if it had been published since it is not mentioned in *Feldmann's*[3] listing of Bortkiewicz's works. At various times I wrote to the British Museum, to music libraries in Vienna and Berlin, to R. Schauer, the successors of D. Rahter, for a copy of the sonata but obtained a negative response from all of them.

Obviously, this last major work of his for the piano had never been printed and lay waiting to be discovered somewhere. The problem was to

locate its whereabouts. I had an inkling that Borkiewicz had died without any heirs and his marriage had been childless. A phone call to Vienna confirmed that there was nothing and nobody related to Bortkiewicz in their phone books. It seemed I had struck an impasse.

I re-read the editor's introduction to the *Erinnerungen* and found this comment in fine print "... these come from the bequest of the Dutch pianist and composer Hugo van Dalen. The private music library of Hugo van Dalen, which specialized in Russian composers, was recently acquired by the Music Library of the Gemeentemuseums in the Hague."

Last year, knowing that van Dalen, (who died in 1967), was a great friend of Bortkiewicz and acting on a hunch, I phoned the Dutch embassy in Ottawa, got the address of the Gemeente-museum, and dashed off a fax to them. The reply came by mail after a considerable length of time during which I gave up hope of ever locating the missing sonata. I was thrilled to read in their letter that indeed van Dalen's papers included the autograph of the Second Sonata. I quickly negotiated a deal to obtain a microfilm of the autograph, which finally came into my hands after several months delay. At last I had the music I had been thirsting for so long and which I felt I had to share with others!

I decided to bring out a limited edition of the sonata at a reasonable price by notating it myself on a computer. Bortkiewicz might have hated the mechanization of music and the arts, but I am sure he too would have marvelled at what a little lap top Epson PC computer can do in the way of notating music. The final result is in your hands.

My long time friend and a mutual admirer of Bortkiewicz, *Laura Holleran*, has helped me unstintingly in reading the proofs and providing invaluable comments on how to make the score more readable and playable. I just cannot thank her enough. Her eagle eyes and great knowledge of music have spotted mistakes that would have greatly detracted from the value of this premier edition of the piano sonata. I take full responsibility for any errors that remain. I hope this splendid sonata, worthy of being ranked with the finest music that Bortkiewicz wrote, will go a long way to convince lovers of the piano that Bortkiewicz deserves a place in the premier rank of composers who knew how to make the piano sing out and express emotions that can only be shared through music. This indeed would be a fitting reward for the efforts I have put into this work.

I include a part of the original autograph and a little known picture of the composer to satisfy the curiosity of those who want to know what he looked like and how he wrote.

*B.N. Thadani*
*Winnipeg, October 1995*

**Works for solo piano:**

| *Opus No.* | *Title* |
|---|---|
| ? | Trois morceaux. (1908) |
| 3 | Quatre morceaux |
| 4 | Impressions |
| 8 | Esquisses de Crimée |
| 9 | Sonata No. 1 |
| 10 | Quatre pièces pour piano |
| 11 | Six pensées lyriques |
| 12 | Trois moreaux |
| 13 | Six préludes |
| 15 | Dix études |
| 16 | Konzert B dur für Klavier |
| 17 | Lamentations et consolations |
| 21 | Der kleine Wanderer |
| 24 | Trois morceaux |
| 27 | Trois valses |
| 28 | Klavierkonzert No. 2 for the left hand |
| 29 | Douze études nouvelles |
| 30 | Aus Andersens Märchen |
| 32 | Per aspera ad astra. Klavierkonzert No. 3 |
| 33 | Dix préludes |
| 35 | Roman für Klavier |
| 37 | Tausend und eine Nacht |

| *Opus No.* | *Title* |
|---|---|
| 40 | Sept préludes |
| 42 | Ballade |
| 46 | Elegie |
| 54 | Marionettes |
| 59 | Lyrica nova |
| 60 | Sonata No. 2 |
| 65 | 4 Klavierstücke |
| 66 | Préludes (?) |

**Discography**

Coombs, S. *Piano Concerto Op. 16,* Hyperion, CDA 66624

Graf, U. *Music for Piano,* Genesis, GS 1052/53

Huybregts, P. *Works for Piano,* Centaur, CC 2096

Mitchell, M. *Piano Concerto Op. 16,*Decca, DL 710100

Rosenthal, M. *Etude in D flat, Op. 15, No. 8,* Argo DA 42

**Bibliography**


(1) Asafyev, B. *Russkaya muzyka,* Izdatelstvo Muzyka, Leningrad, 1968.

(2) Bortkiewicz, S. *Erinnerungen,* Musik des Ostens, vi (1971), pp 136-169.

(3) Feldmann, R. *Musikwissentschaftliche Anmerkungen zu Sergei Bortkiewicz.* Musik des Ostens, vi (1971), 172-184.

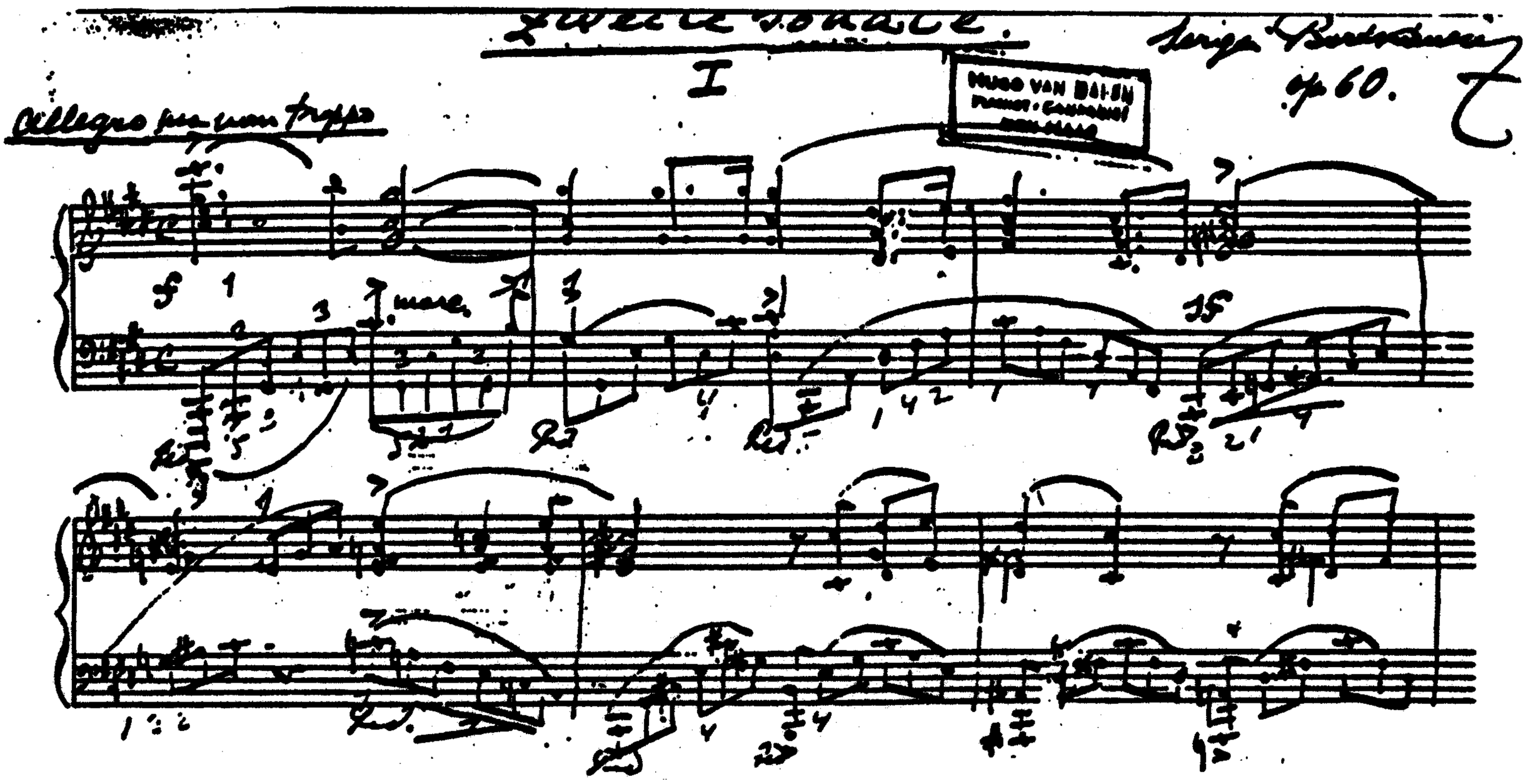
(4) Grove, G. *Dictionary of Music and Musicians.*

(5) Thadani, B.N. *Dolciss.,* Cantext, Winnipeg, 1993.

(6) Thadani, B.N. and L. Holleran, *Sergei Bortkiewicz,* to be published in the *Clavier.*


*Note:*

The top of the first page of the autograph shown below, as well as the bottom of the last page, seem to have been inadvertently cut off. Fortunately, the rest of the manuscript was intact.

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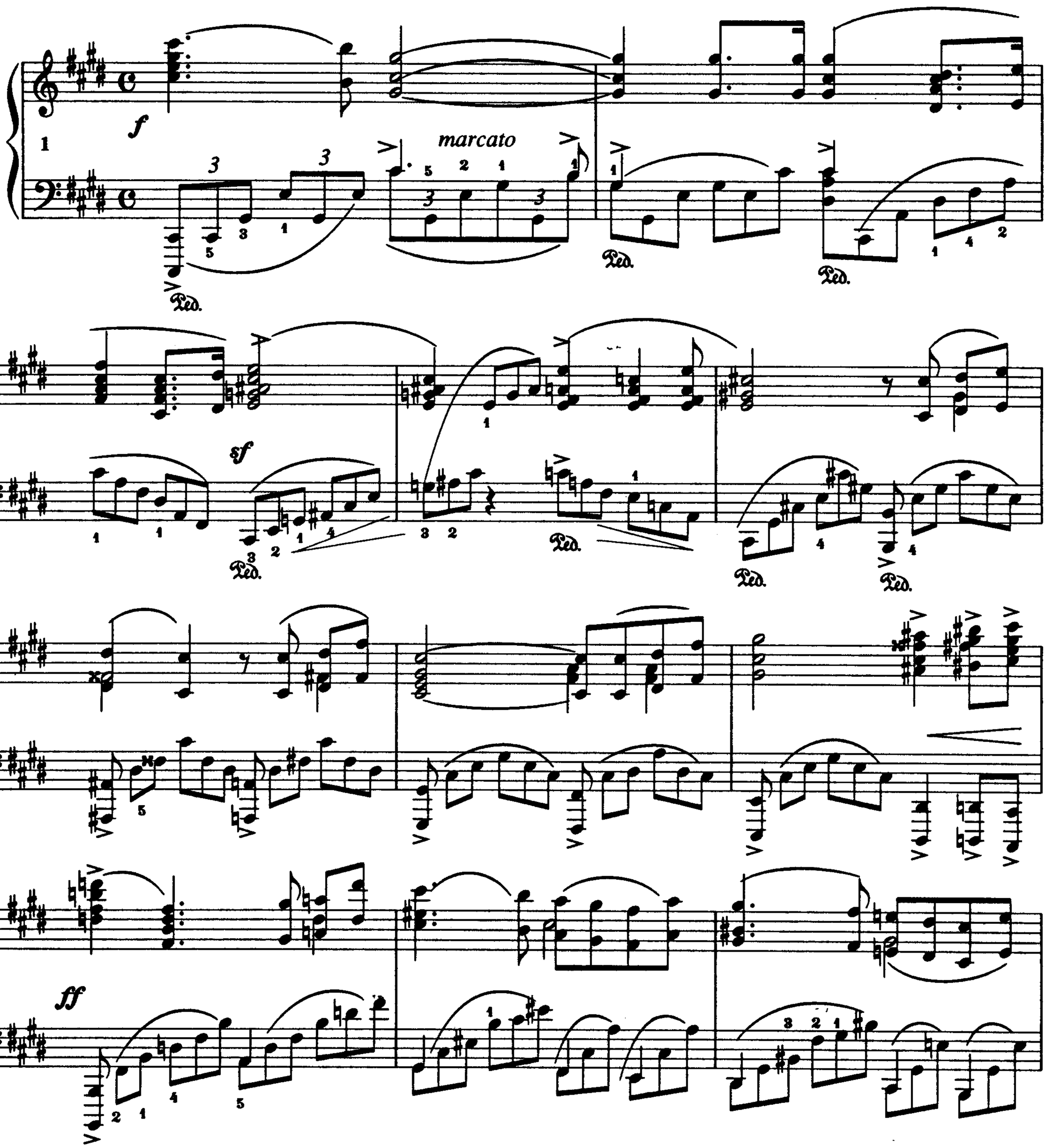
# Zweite Sonate
## (Second Sonata)
## I

**Allegro ma non troppo**

**Sergei Bortkiewicz, Op. 60**



12

15

*ff* *marcato* *sff*

18

21

*ff*

24

*marcatissimo*

8 -1

27

30

33

*p cresc.*

36

*cresc*

39

*rit.*

*meno mosso*

41

*molto espress.*

*p* *mf*

44

*espress.*

47

50

53

56

*dimin.*

**Piu allegro**

60

*p*

62

*f*

64

66

68

70

72

*ff*

74

*dimin.*

76

*p*

79

82

*pp*

84

*sempre* *pp*

*8 basso*

87

*8 basso*

90

*8 -|*

*cresc.*

93

8

cresc.

96

mf

Ped.

99

101

103

f

105

1 5 4 4 1

*rit.*

107

**Allegro**

109

*cresc.*

Ped.

111

*cresc.*

113

*cresc.*

115 *cresc.*

117 *p* *cresc.*

119 *cresc.*

122 *rit.*

*ff*

124

*espress.*

*p* *mf*

*espress.*

128

*mf*

132

136

*mf*

140

*dimin.*

**Piu allegro**

143

*p*

145

*f*

8

147

149

151

8

153

8

8

155

*cresc.*

157

*cresc.*

159

161

*ff*

163

165

Tempo I °

*rit.*

*ff*

*marcatiss.*

Ped.

167

*sff*

Ped. Ped.

170

173

*ff*

176

Piu allegro

179

*rit.*

*ff*

181

183

185

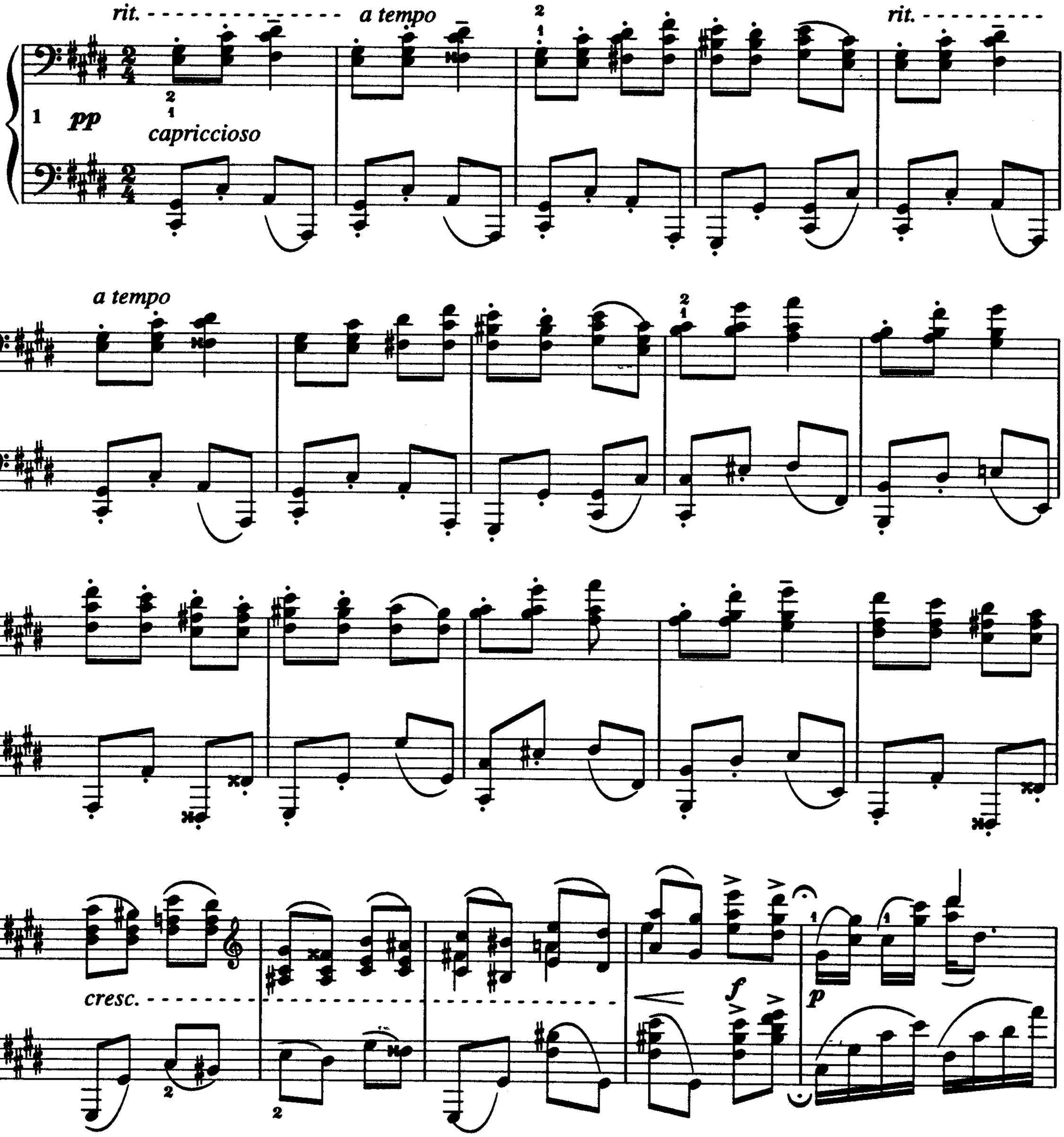
187

8

*rit.*

# II

**Allegretto**



21

25

29

33

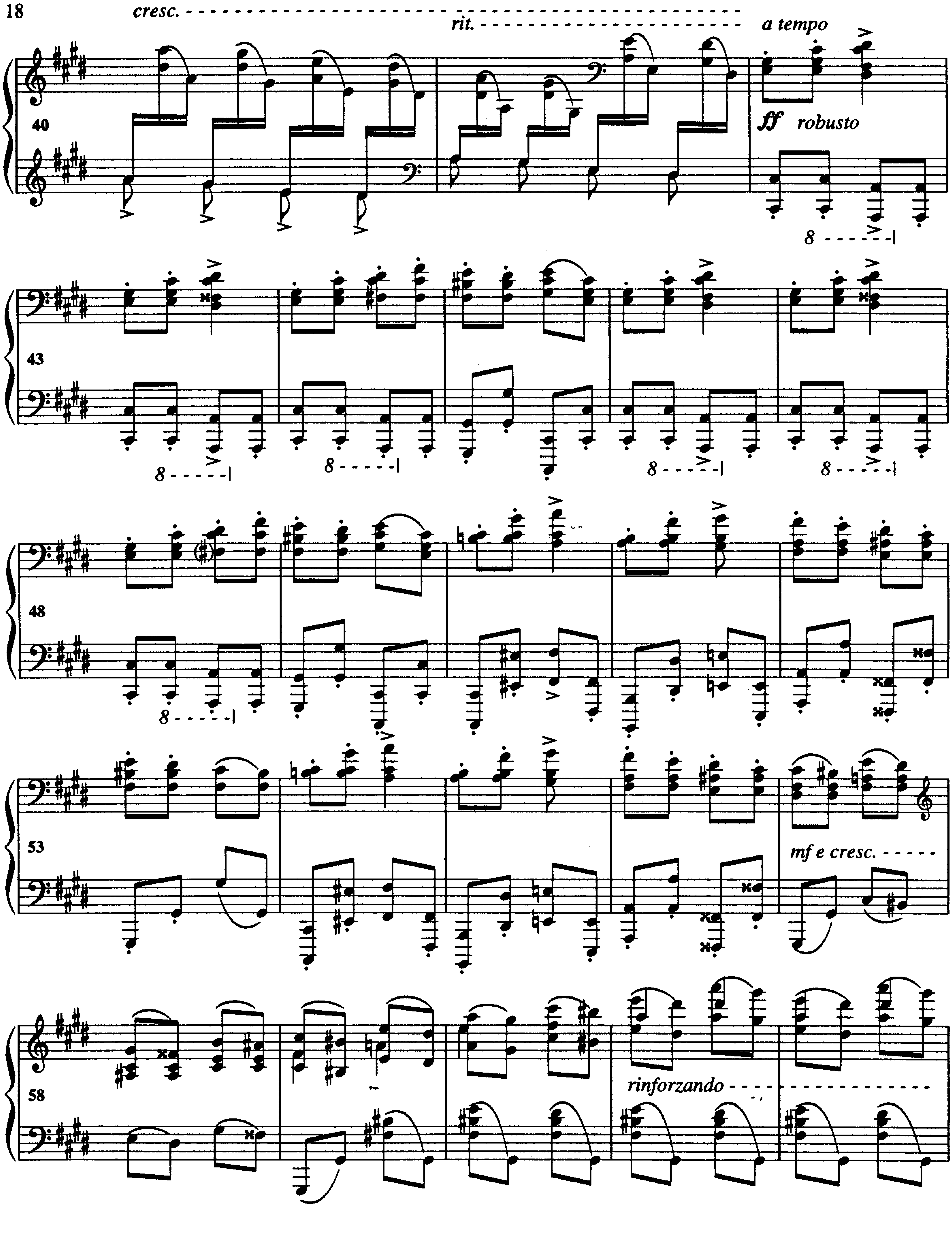
*cresc.*

8

37

*cresc.*

3 3 3 3


cresc.
rit.
a tempo
ff robusto
40
8
43
8
8
8
8
48
8
53
mf e cresc.
58
rinforzando

63 *rinforzando* - - - - - - - - *fff tutta forza*

68

73

78 **Fine.** *Meno mosso*

81

84

87

90

92

1.

Piu vivace

2

ff

94

marcatissimo

97

8

*sempre* ***ff***

100

103

***P****subito e cresc. poco a poco*

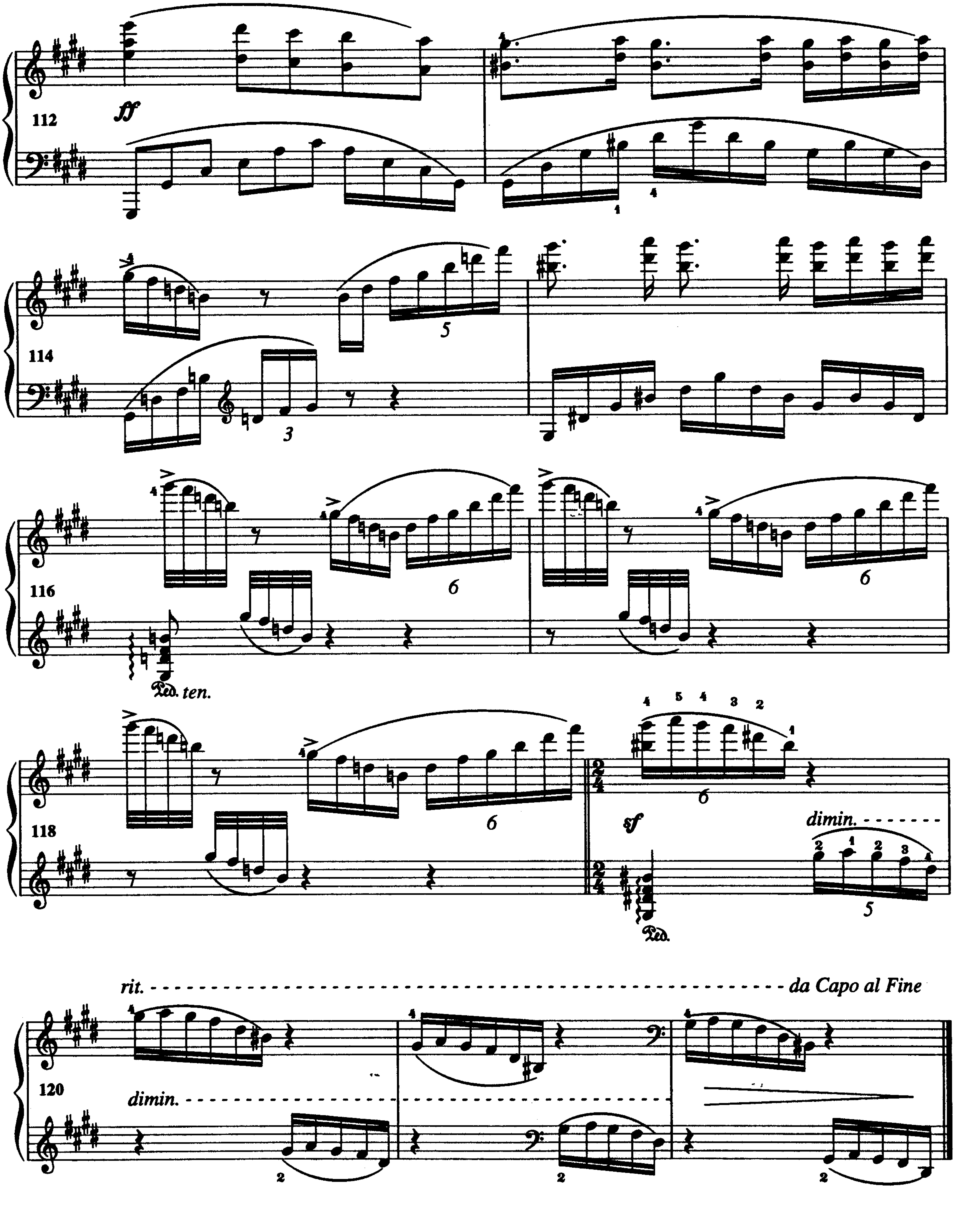
Ped.

106

*cresc. poco a poco*

109

*cresc. poco a poco*


112
ff
114
5
3
116
6
6
Ped. ten.
118
6
sf
6
dimin.
5
Ped.
rit.
da Capo al Fine
120
dimin.

# III

**Andante misericordioso**

1 *pp* *mp* *dimin.*

*Dolce cantando*

7 *p*

11 *espress.*

16 *cresc.*

21

*cresc.*

26

*mf*

30

*molto espress.*

34

39

*dimin.*

44

*pp*

*Religioso*

*(canto pasquale russo)*

48

*p*

*(il basso distinto)*

*pp u.c.*

54

*Sostenuto quasi recitando*

*Piu mosso*

60

*mf*

*tre corde*

*pp u.c.*

66

*rit. - -*

*p*

rit.

Tempo I°

72

*p*

77

82

*cresc.*

87

*cresc.*

92

*mf*

97

*ben sentito*

102

107

*p*

*pp*

112

116

*mf*

*pp*

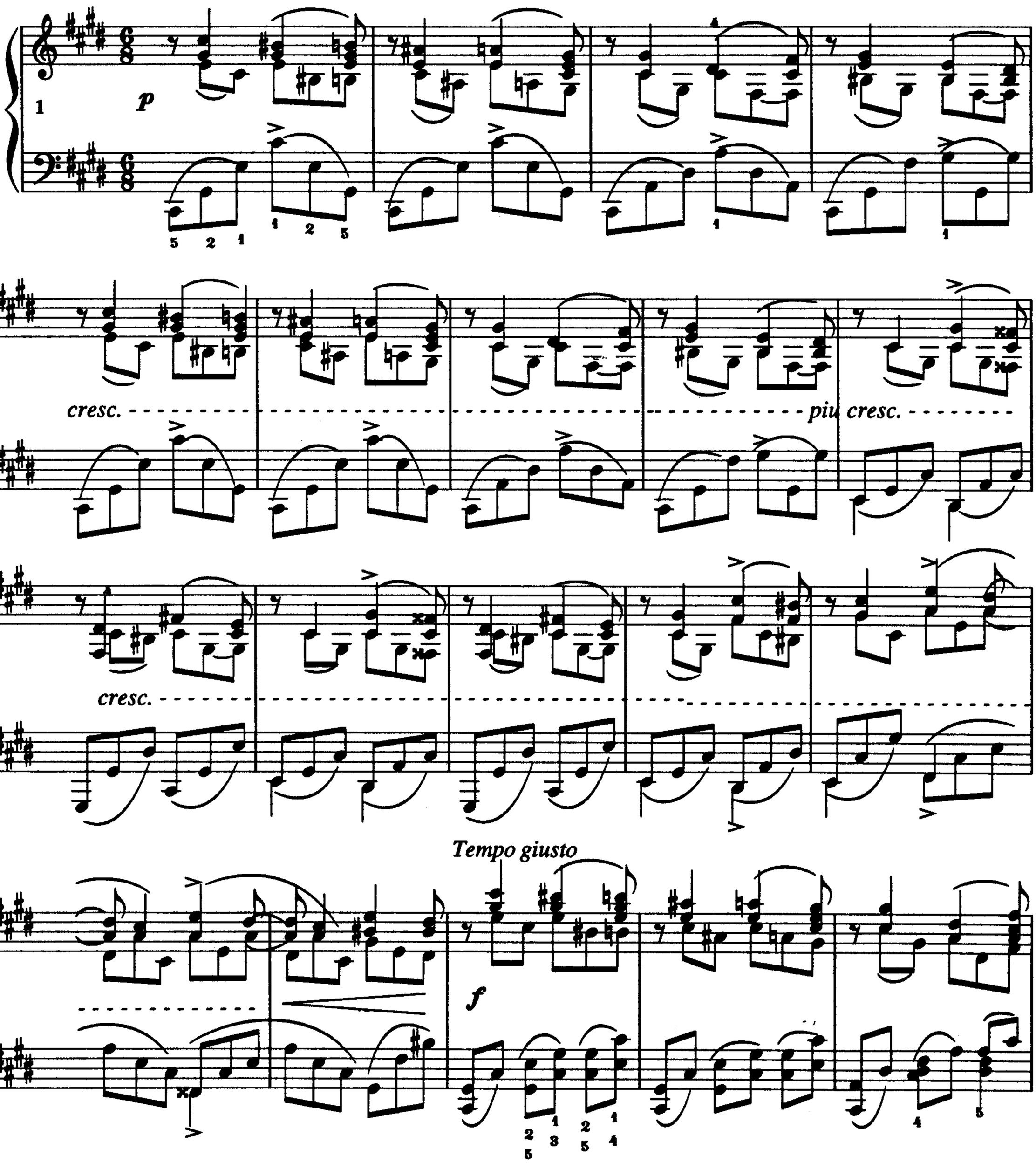
*rit.*

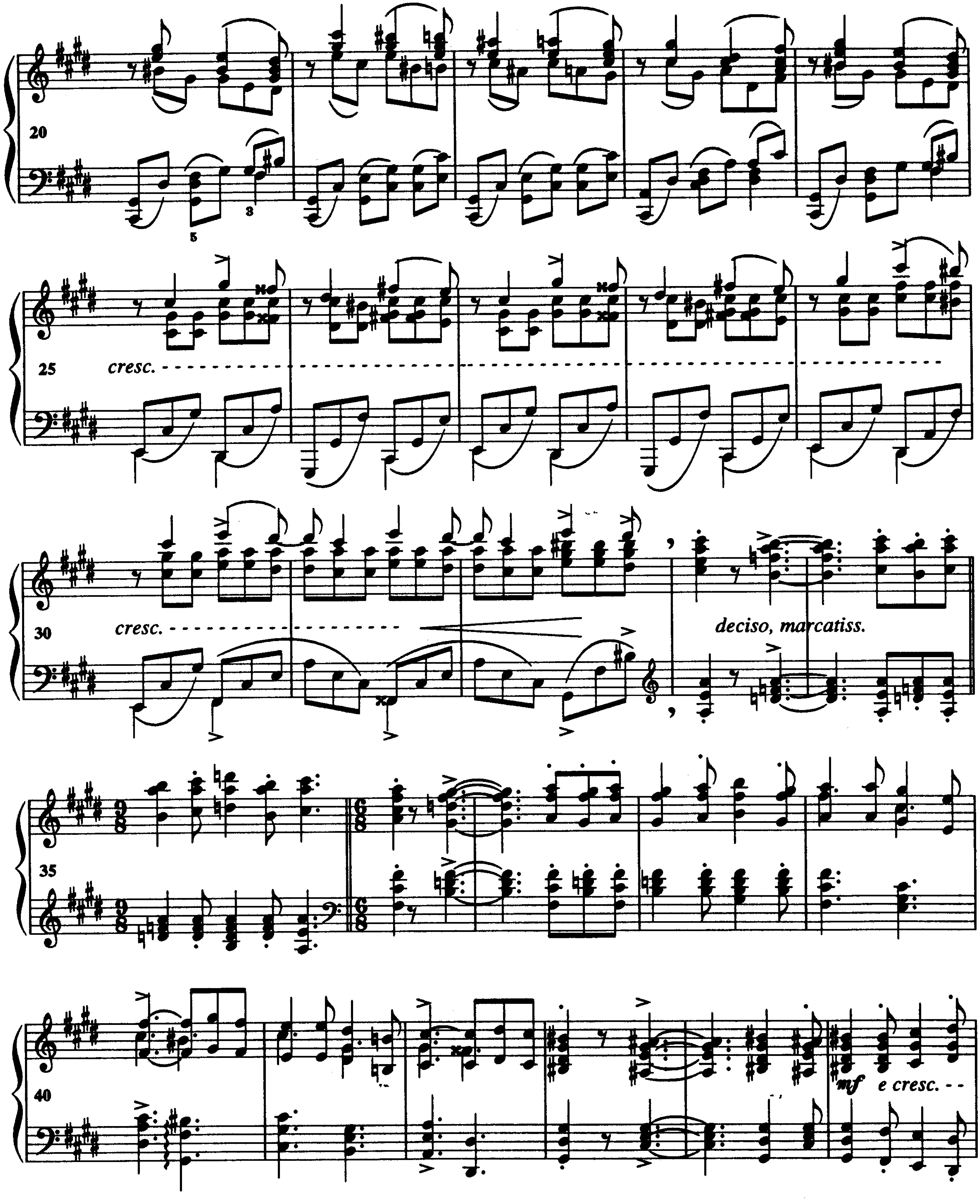
*ppp*

# IV

**Agitato**

*(ma poco a poco animando)*





cresc.
cresc.
deciso, marcatiss.
mf e cresc.

46

*cresc.*

*ff*

51

55

*mf e cresc.*

59

*ff*

63

67

71

75

*sempre* ***ff***

79

83

87

90

*allargando*

*lunga*

**Finale meno mosso con fierezza.**

94

*ff*

Ped. Ped.

96

*sff* *sf f*

99

*mf e cresc.*

101

*cresc.*

*rit.*

*a tempo*

103

*fff* *f e cresc.*

Ped.

*rit.*

105

*cresc.*

*ff*

Ped.

107

*a tempo*

109

*sff*

111

*sff*

*rit.*

*a tempo*

114

*f*

*cresc.*

1

1

8

116

*cresc.*

*ff*

Ped.

8

118

*sff*

*allargando*

*allargando*

120

*fff*