Igor Markevitch

VARIATIONS, FUGUE, AND ENVOI

on a Theme of Handel

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VARIATIONS, FUGUE, ET ENVOI

sur un Thème de Haendel

Piano Solo

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This work was first performed on 14th December 1941 at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, by Pietro Scarpini.

J'ai voulu, avec cette oeuvre, faire honneur à une grande tradition qui me semble trop en défaveur: celle du piano traité pour lui-même, comme *instrument héroique.* Il me semble, en effet, que nous avons trop tendance, aujourd'hui, à perdre le sentiment de l'instrument en soi, lorsque nous écrivons pour lui; il serait regrettable que nous oublions le plaisir qu'il y a à lui rendre hommage, en mettant ses ressources en valeur. Ce plaisir, cette tendresse pour la réalité même du piano, ne leur devons-nous pas les principaux chefs d'oeuvres et la plupart des trouvailles qui rendent sa littérature si attrayante?

Voici donc une oeuvre dont mon plus grand désir a été de la faire pianistiquement intéressante. J'ai proposé des doigtés, malgré leur apparence rébarbative, pensant qu'ils pourraient en faciliter l'étude. On trouvera, en outre, des explications, pour les variations qui posent des problèmes de technique nouveaux. J'ai aussi noté la pédale avec soin, son emploi s'écartant souvent de l'emploi traditionnel, soit que je l'utilise comme élément dynamique, soit qu'elle doive lier des combinaisons dont les notes font partie, à mon point de vue, d'une même harmonie.

Deux mots, maintenant, sur l'interprétation générale. Dans l'exécution d'oeuvres en forme de variations, la diversité des parties retient souvent l'attention au détriment de ce qui lie ces parties entre elles et les fait participer à un monument unique.

Dans cette oeuvre, c'est principalement le mouvement qui donne son équilibre à l'architecture. On remarquera, en effet, que les variations I à IV forment un premier groupe, obéissant à une métrique commune (♩ = 104). Le second groupe est formé, tout d'abord, des variations V à IX qui ont pour base métrique 144. (Dans la var. VII, la ♩ = 72, c'est à dire ♪ = 144). Dans la var. X, 5 ♪ égalent la 𝅗𝅥 précédente; elle dépend donc encore de la même unité (72 à la mesure). Elle détèrmine le nouveau tempo de la var. XI, puisque la ♪ y est égale à la ♪ précédente. Et de la var. XI découle, par le ritardando qui l'amène, le tempo de la var. XII, celle-ci préparant elle-même la var. XIII, de sorte que toutes deux se rattachent encore au grand groupe central.

En outre, la var. XIII annonce déjà la var. XV qui suit un même mouvement (144–152) et qui n'est elle-même qu'une brillante introduction à la Fugue. La Fugue constitue la troisième période principale de l'oeuvre.

La var. XIV est un repos, un interlude essentiellement expressif.

Naturellement cette division est tout-à-fait abstraite, et son seul intérêt est de mieux permettre à l'exécutant de récréer la phisionomie rythmique de l'ensemble.

Les variations se suivent sans interruption, mis à part, bien entendu, les ritardando ou points d'orgue qui doivent atténuer certaines transitions, ou préparer à la variation nouvelle.

Le Thème demande une exécution speciale: immatériel, voilé, assez lent, lointain; plutôt un souvenir du thème que le thème lui-même. Long point d'orgue sur le dernier accord. Ce n'est qu'avec l'attaque de la première variation que le piano manifeste sa réalité.

L'Envoi est une signature, une prise de congé.

I.M.

With this work, I wanted to honour a tradition which seems to me unjustly discredited: that of the piano treated as a *heroic instrument.* In fact, it seems that when writing for it today we are too much inclined to lose any feeling for the instrument itself; it will be a pity if we entirely overlook the pleasure to be got from paying homage to it, in developing its resources. For it is surely this pleasure, this fondness for the reality of the piano to which we owe the chief masterpieces as well as the many works that make its literature so attractive.

This then is a work which I wanted above all to make pianistically interesting. In spite of their off-putting appearance, I have proposed some fingerings as an aid to study, in addition to explanations for those variations which pose new technical problems. I have also notated the pedalling with some care, since it often deviates from traditional usage, whether employed as a dynamic element or to connect combinations of notes which, from my point of view, form part of the same harmony.

Now a few words on general interpretation. In the performance of works in variation form, it is the diversity of the parts which often arrests attention, to the detriment of that which links the parts together and makes them contribute to a single whole.

In this work, it is mainly speed of movement which gives the architecture its equilibrium. It will indeed be noted that the first group, formed by variations I to IV, has a common metronome mark (♩ = 104). The second group begins with variations V to IX, based on a metronome mark of 144. (In var. VII, the ♩ = 72, that is to say ♪ = 144). In var. X, 5 ♪ equal the preceding 𝅗𝅥; thus it is still dependent on the same unit (72 to the bar). This determines the new tempo of var. XI, since the ♪ here equals the preceding ♪. And from var. XI – through the ritardando which leads into it – springs the tempo of var. XII, which itself leads to the tempo of var. XIII, so that both remain connected to the large central group.

Furthermore, var. XIII already heralds var. XV, which observes a similar speed (144–152) and is itself merely a brilliant introduction to the Fugue. The Fugue constitutes the third main section of the work.

Var. XIV is a resting-place, an essentially expressive interlude.

Of course, these divisions are completely abstract, of interest only in that they enable the player better to recreate the rhythmic physiognomy of the whole.

The variations follow one another without a break, apart, of course, from the ritardandos and pauses which prolong certain transitions or prepare for succeeding variations.

The Theme requires special playing: immaterial, veiled, rather slow and remote; more a memory of the theme than the theme itself. A long pause on the last chord. It is only with the start of the first variation that the piano reveals its true colours.

The Envoi is a signature, a leave-taking.

I.M.

Duration: 17 minutes

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a Nikita e Irene Magalov

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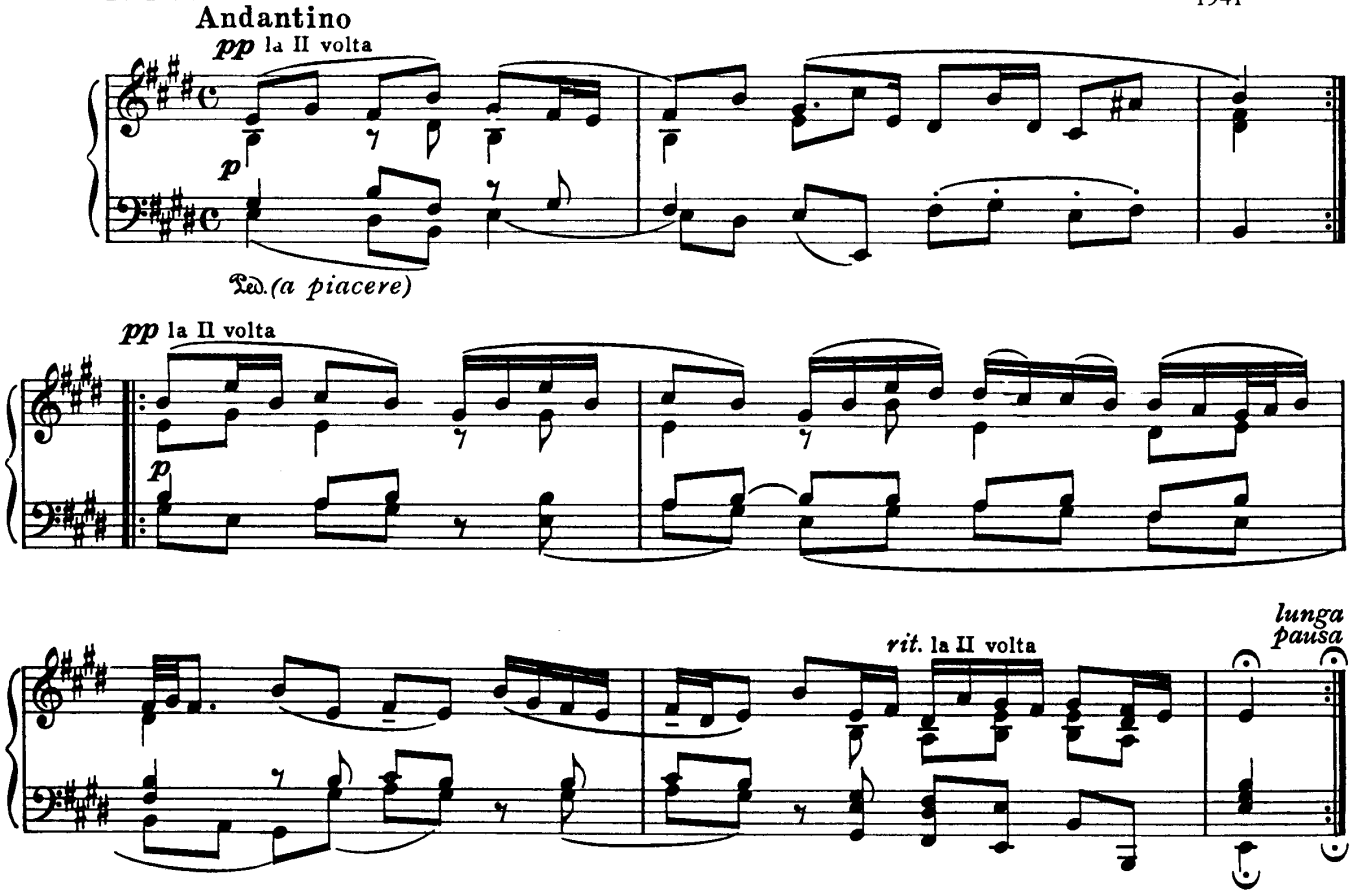
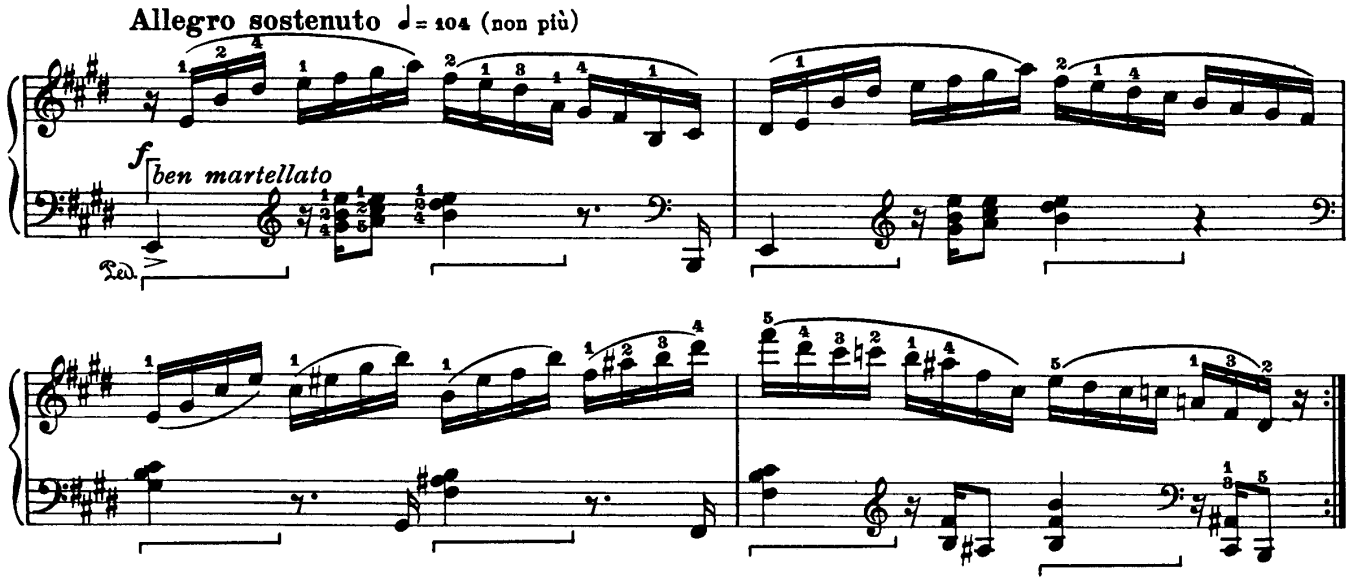
on a Theme of Handel

IGOR MARKEVITCH
1941

TEMA



VAR. I.



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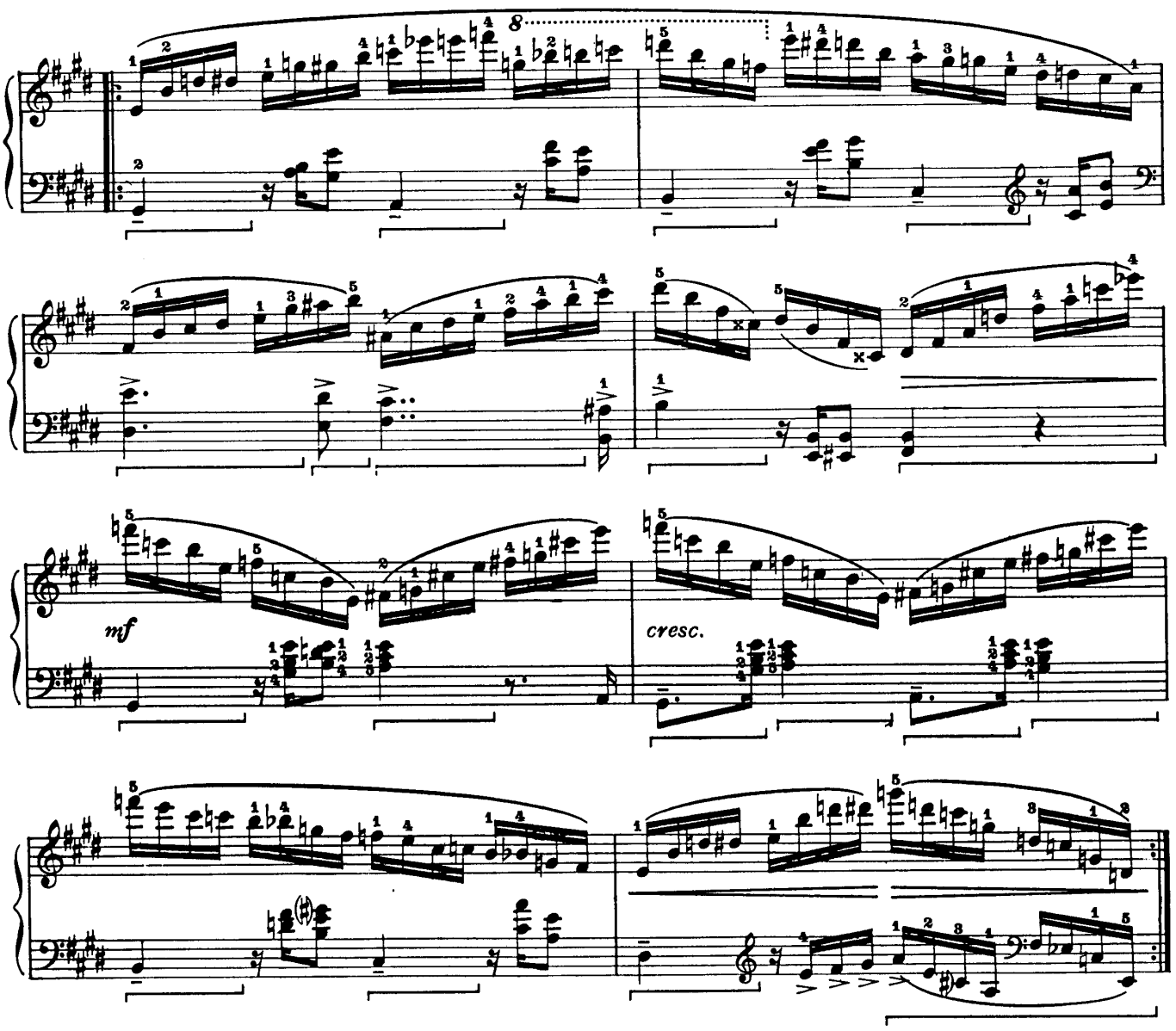
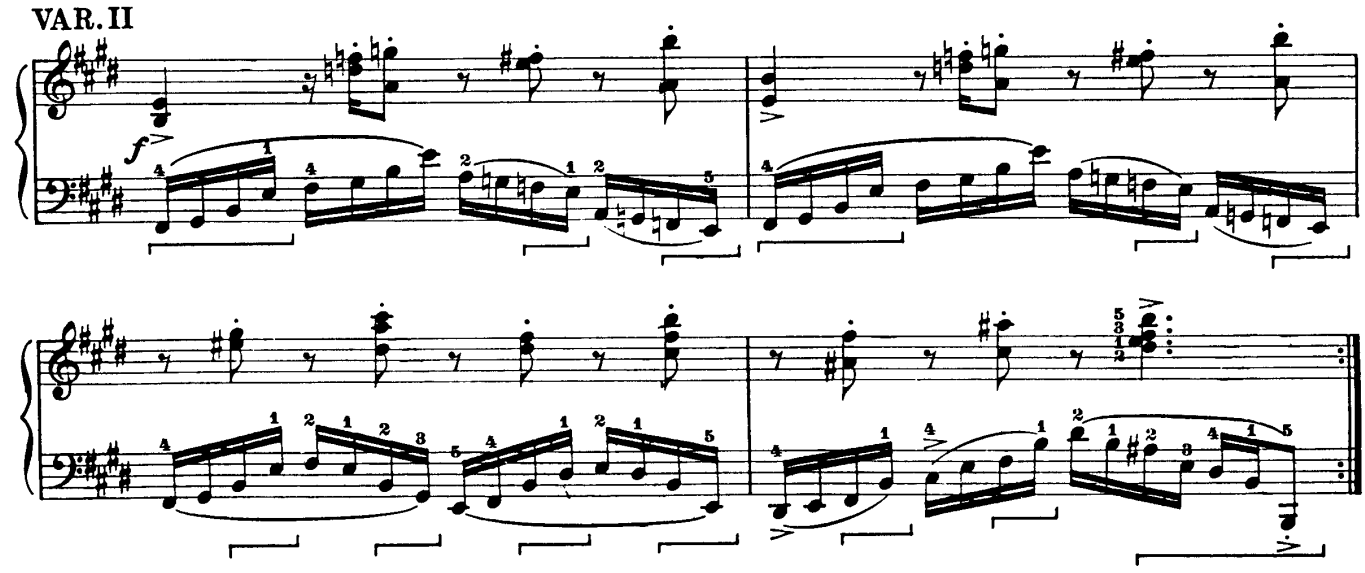
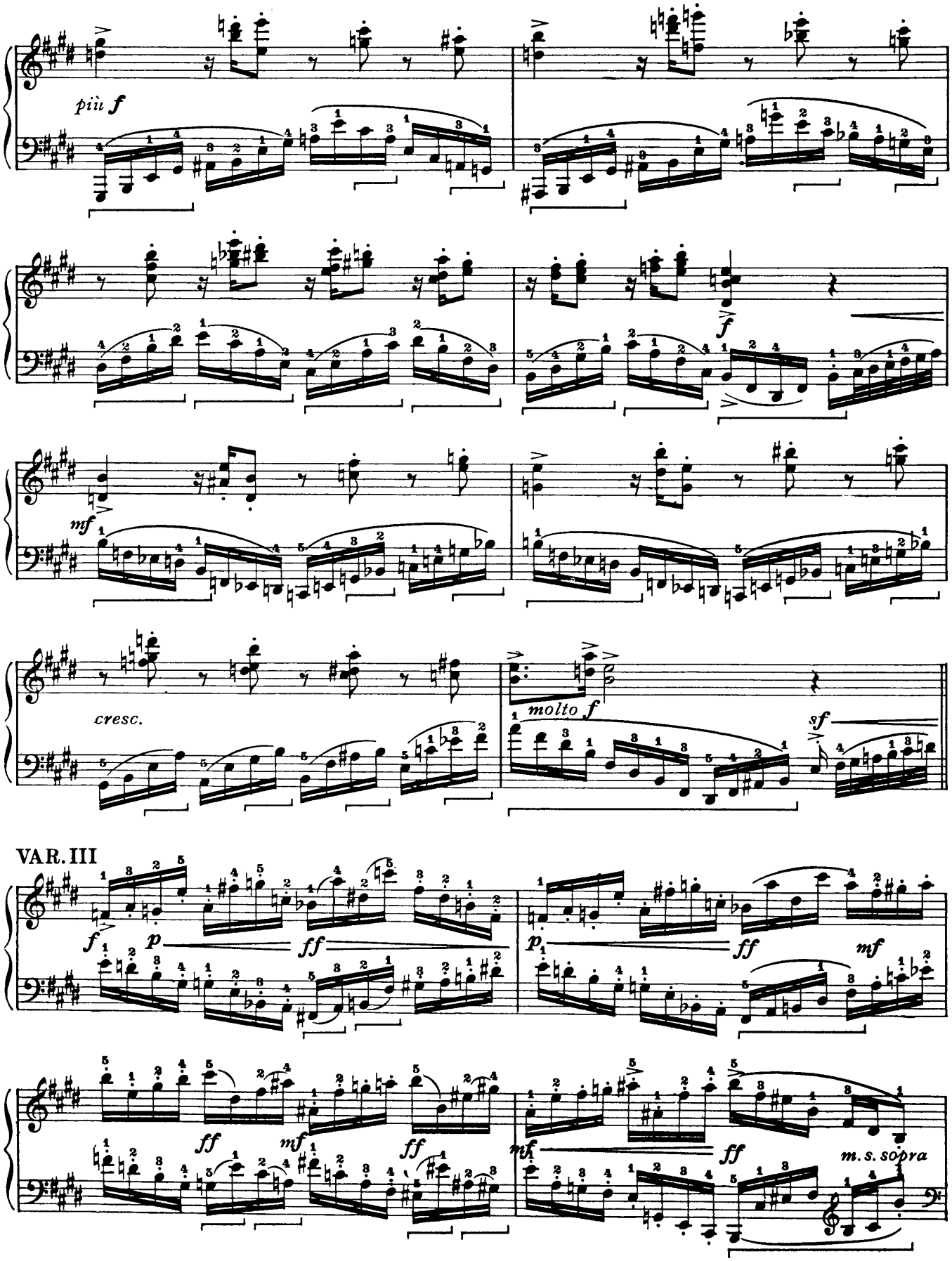
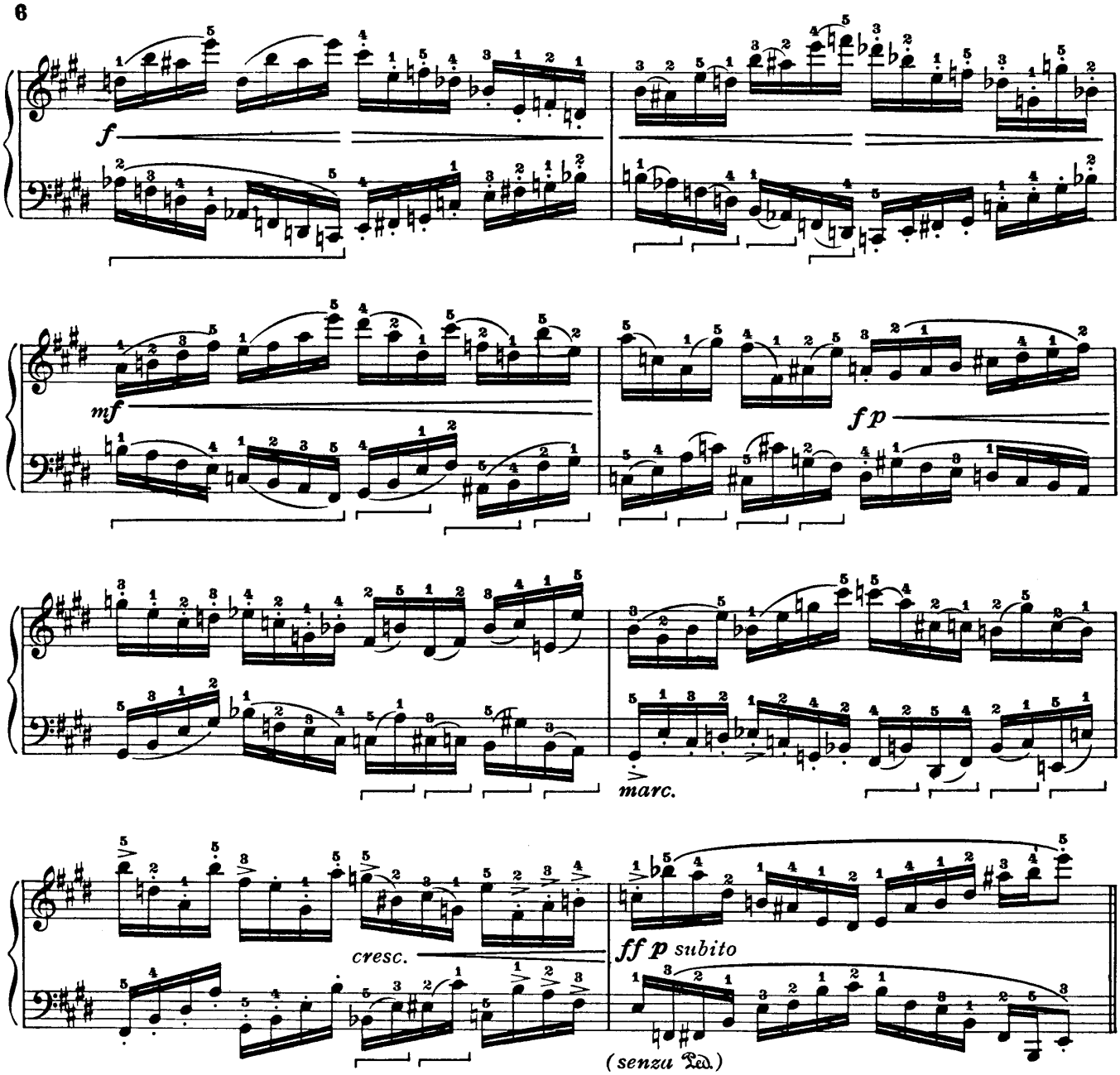


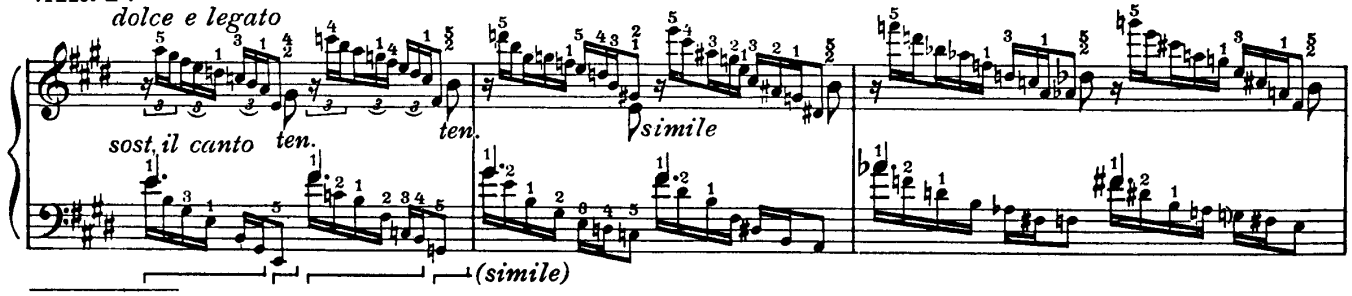
VAR. II




più f
f
mf
cresc.
molto f
sf
VAR. III
f
p
ff
p
ff
mf
ff
mf
ff
mf
ff
m. s. sopra

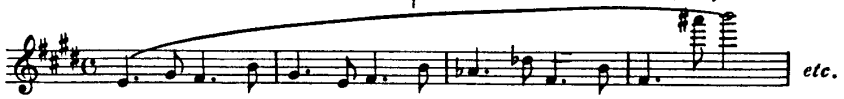


VAR. IV



Var. IV. Mettre le chant en évidence:

Var. IV. Underline the melody:



Dans cette variation, je recommande l'emploi de la "demi pédale", suffisante pour lier la partie principale sans alourdir le reste.

In this variation, I recommend half-pedalling, sufficient to bind the principal part without dulling the rest.

(simile)

un poco rit.

VAR. V

♩=144

(simile)

(simile)

La var. V demande un travail rigoureux pour éviter que la syncope ne donne l'impression d'un temps fort et le groupe des triples croches d'une levée. Ce groupe doit être exécuté énergiquement, la première note attaquée avec une grande fermeté. La ♩ de la syncope est jouée staccato; c'est par la pédale qu'on la lie a la ♪ suivante. Cet emploi de la pédale sur un temps faible est difficile et demande un soin particulier. Je suggère les exercices suivants:

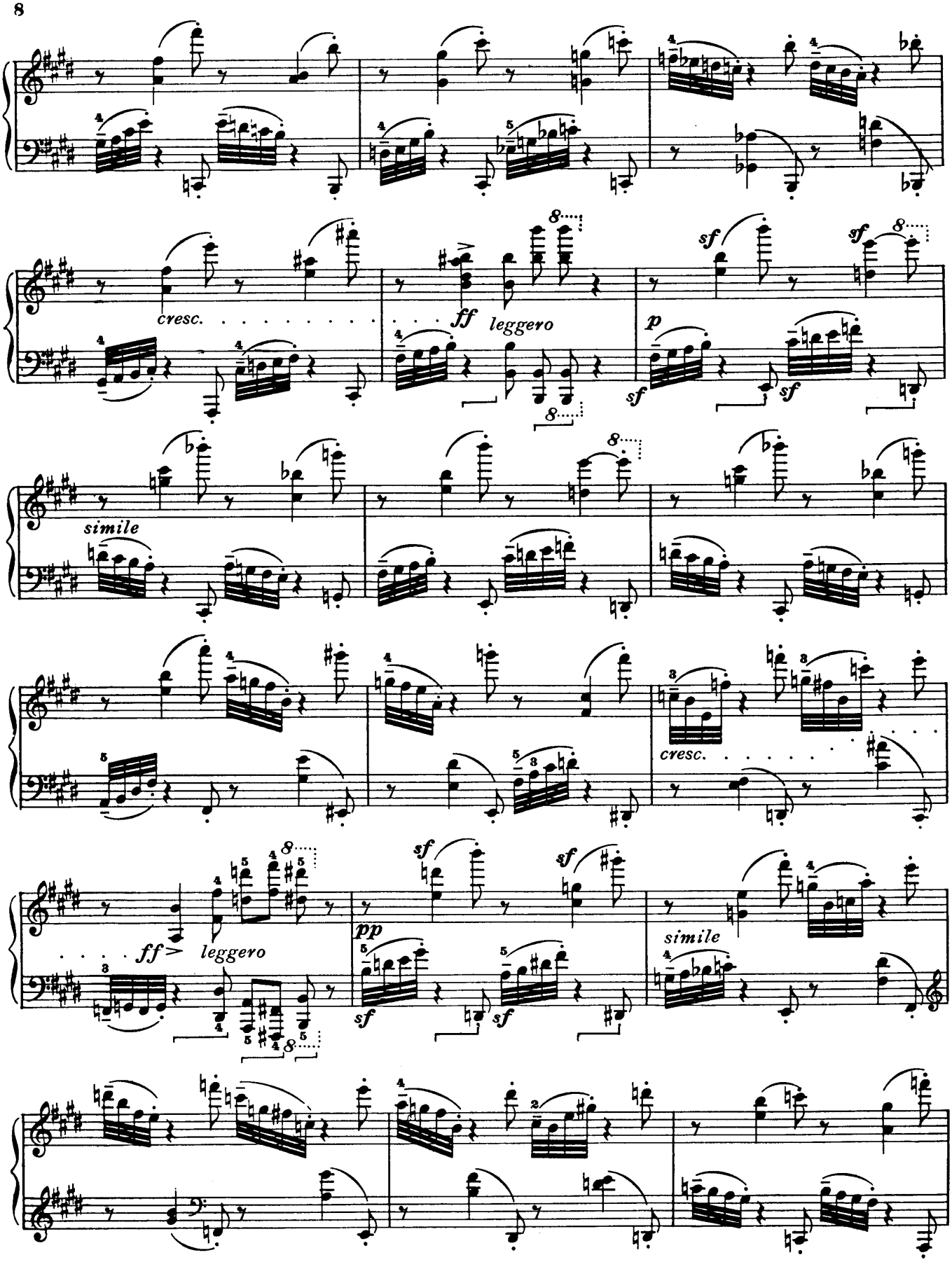
Var. V requires vigorous effort to avoid giving the impression that the groups of demisemiquavers are up-beats to the syncopations. These demisemiquaver groups must be played with energy, the first note attacked very firmly. The syncopated ♩ is played staccato; *it is joined to the ensuing ♪ by means of the pedal. This use of the pedal on a weak beat is difficult and needs particular care. I suggest the following exercises:*

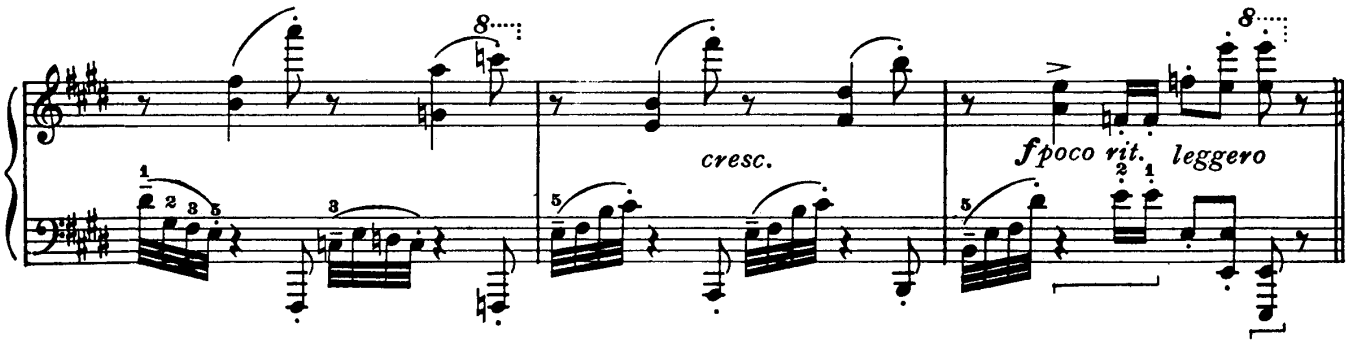
1. etc.

2. etc.

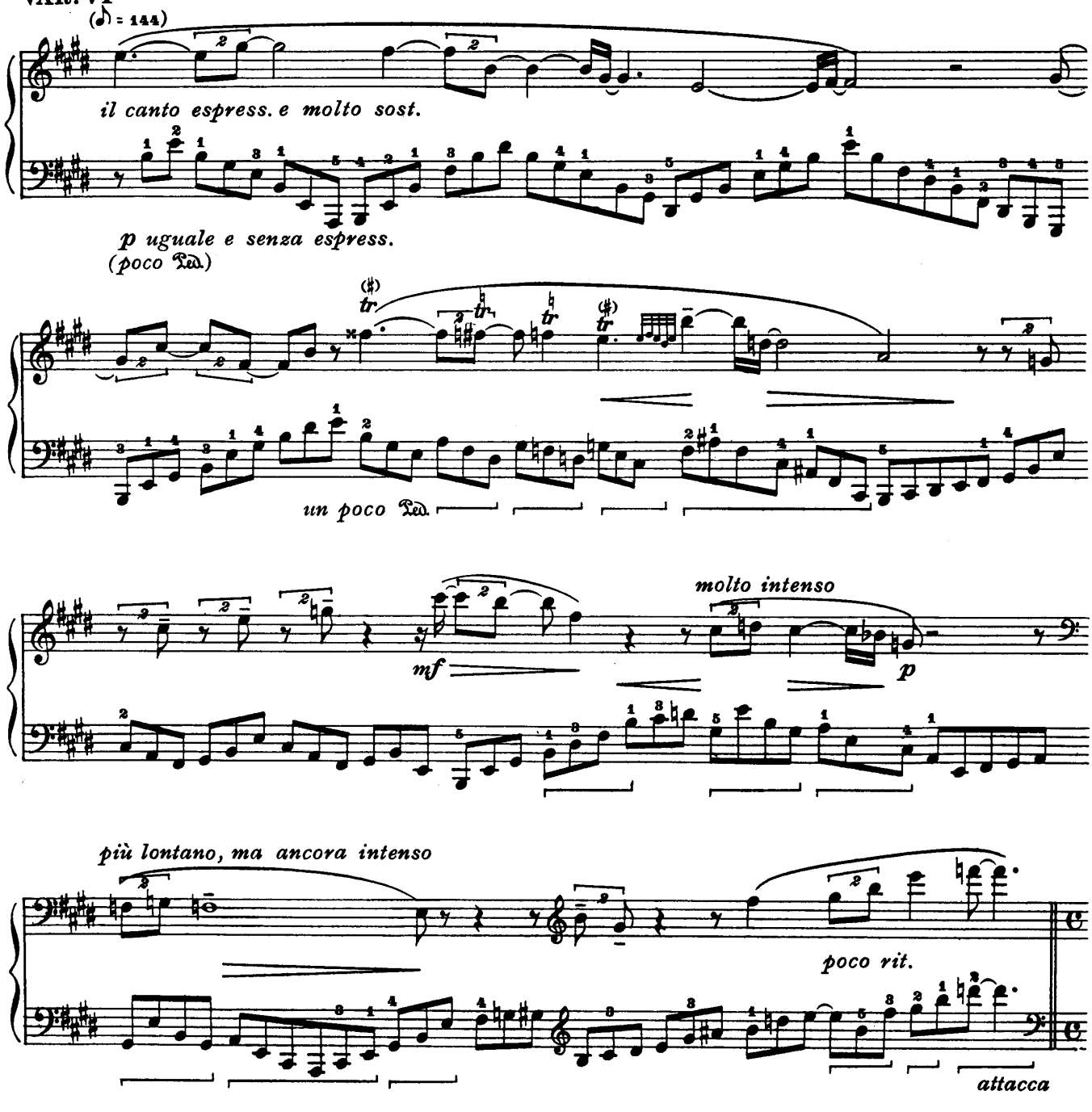
3. etc.

4. etc.


cresc.
ff leggero
p
sf
simile
cresc.
ff leggero
pp
sf
simile

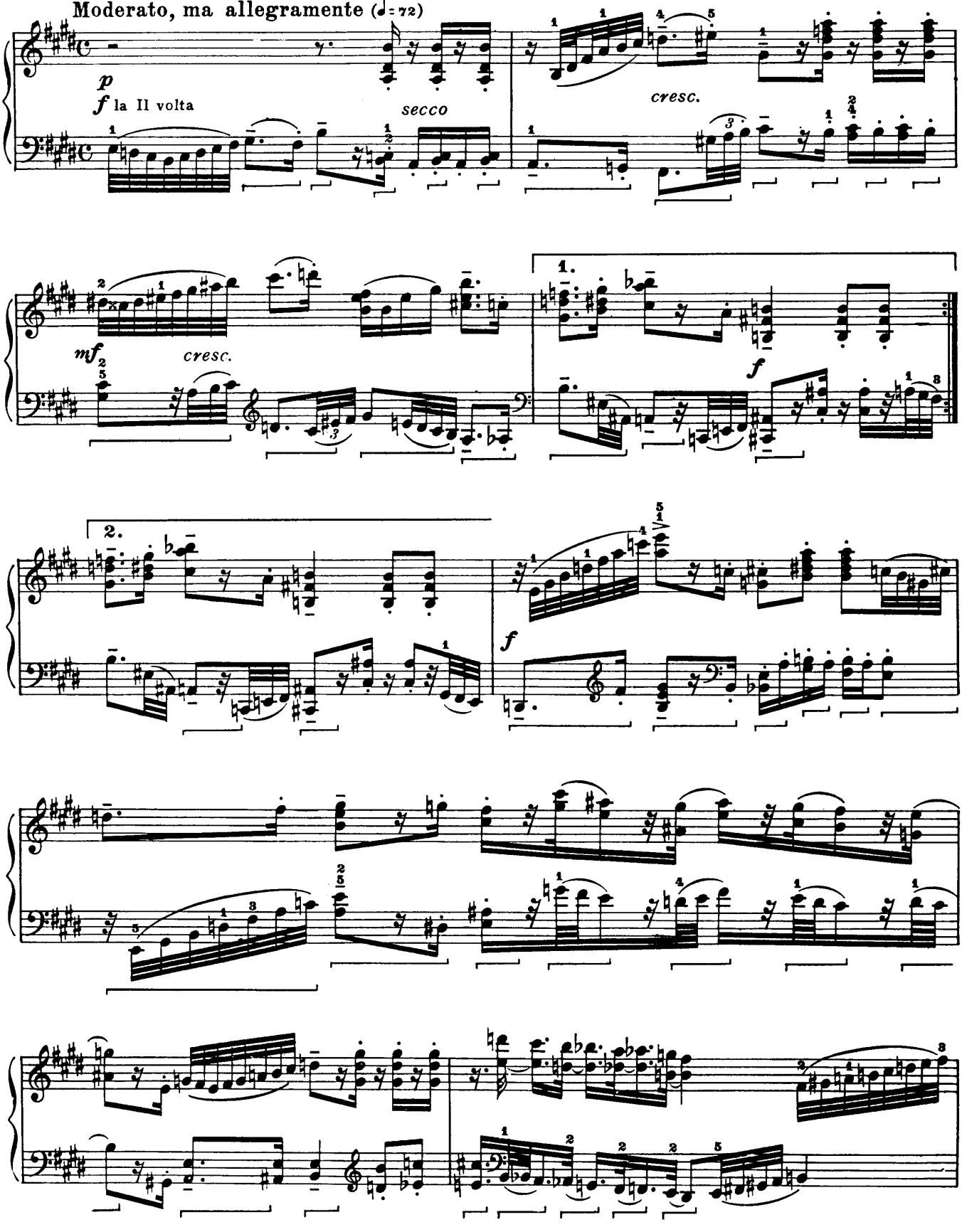

cresc.
f poco rit. leggero

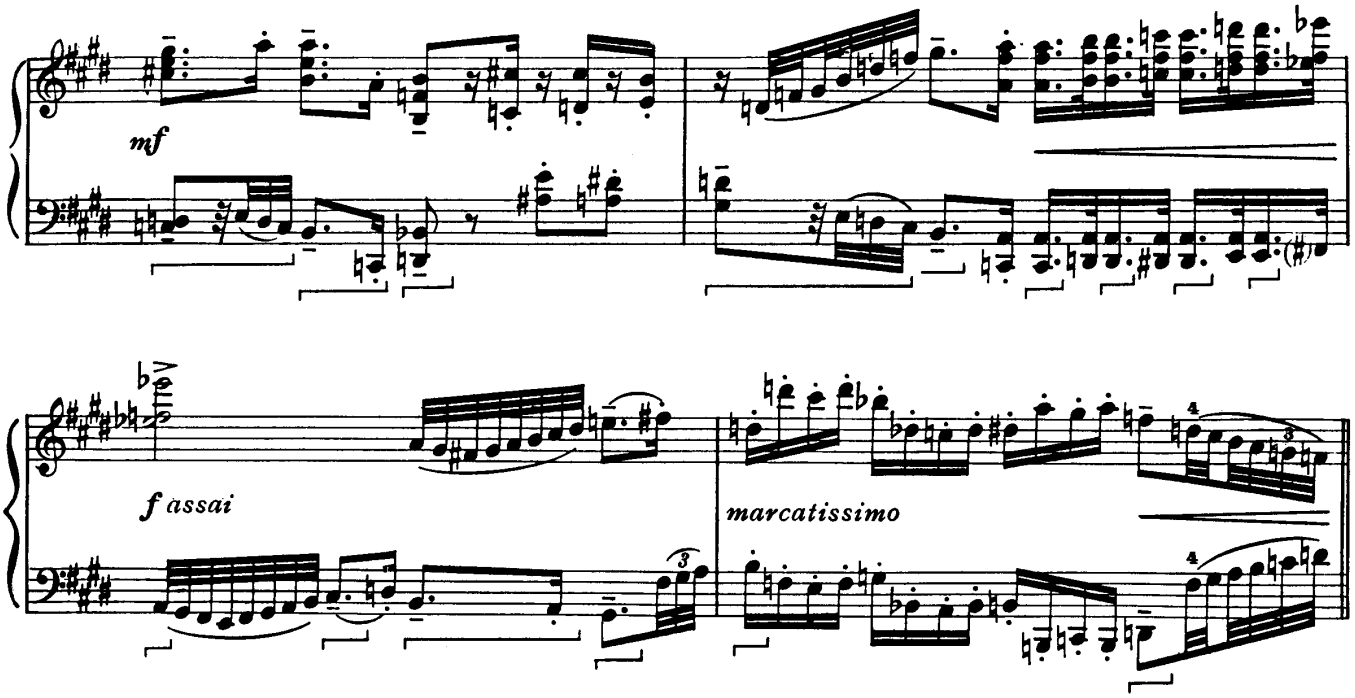
VAR. VI


(♪ = 144)
il canto espress. e molto sost.
p uguale e senza espress.
(poco Ped.)
un poco Ped.
molto intenso
mf
p
più lontano, ma ancora intenso
poco rit.
attacca

VAR. VII

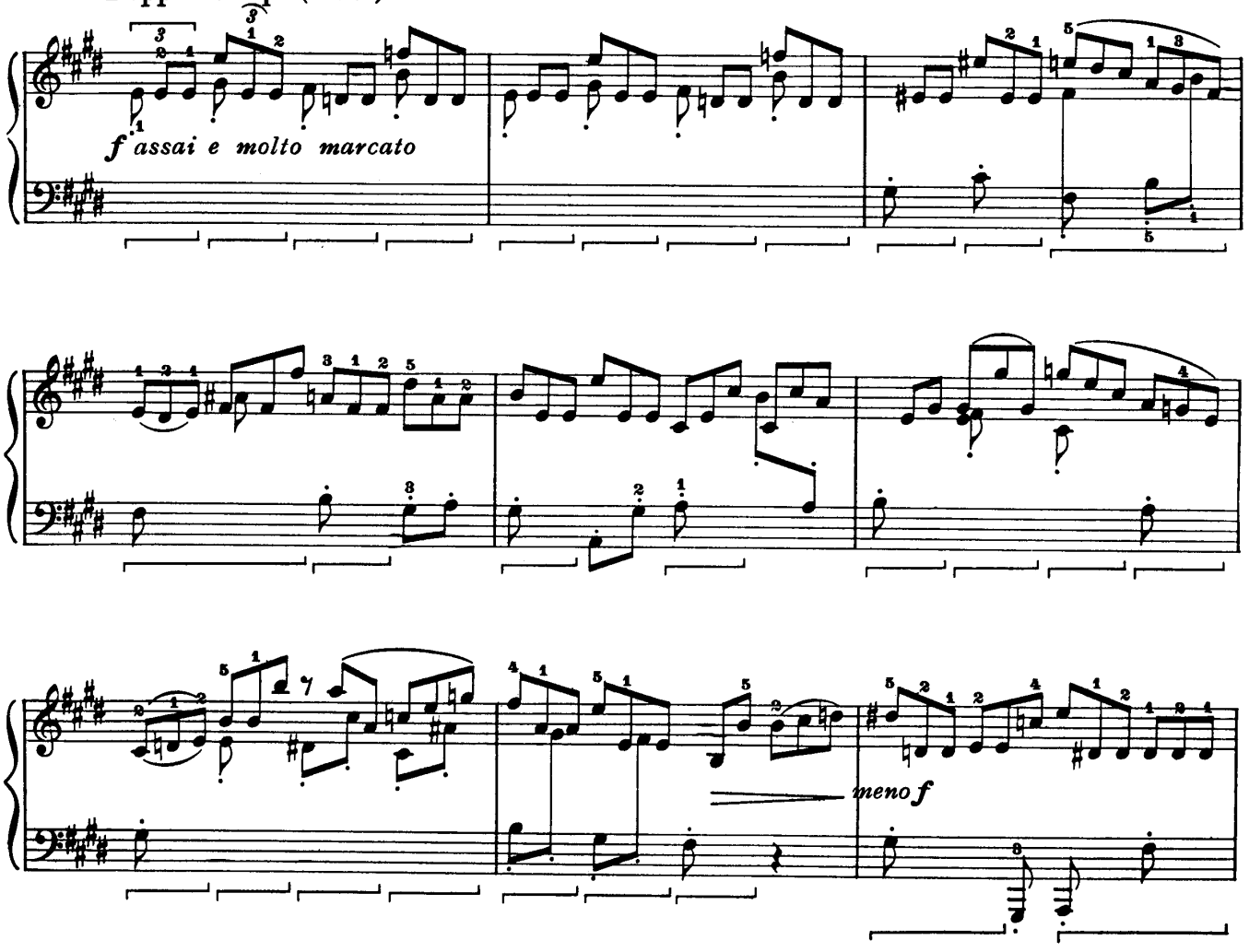
Moderato, ma allegramente (♩= 72)

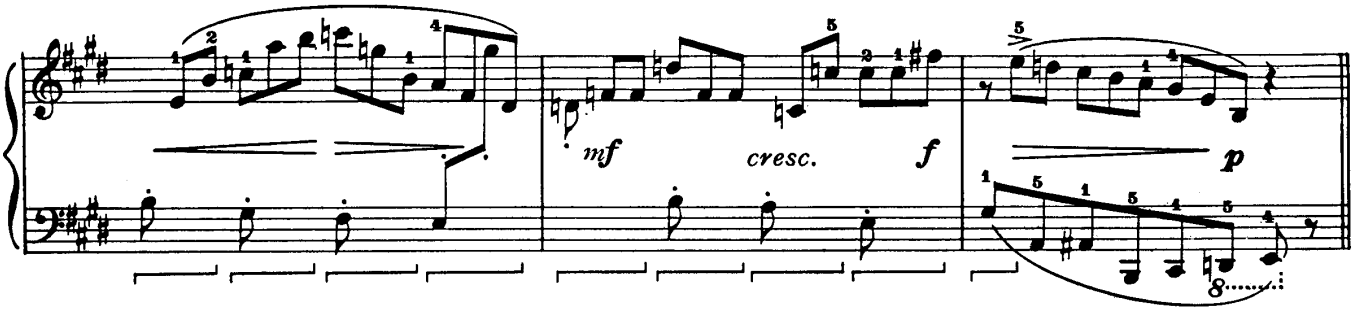




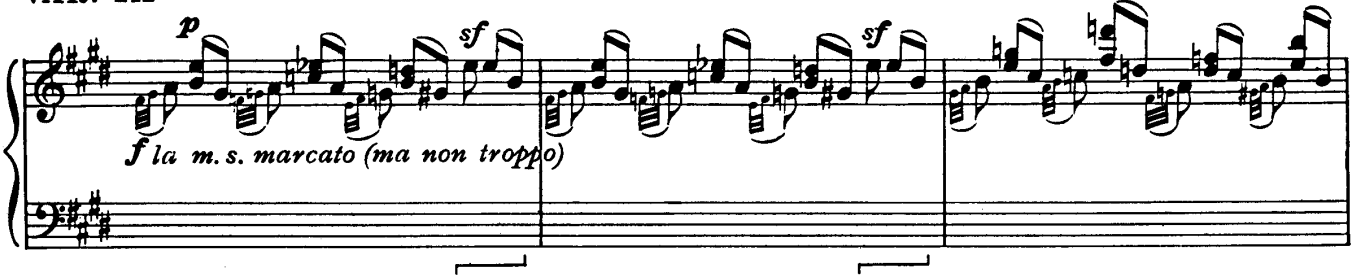
VAR. VIII

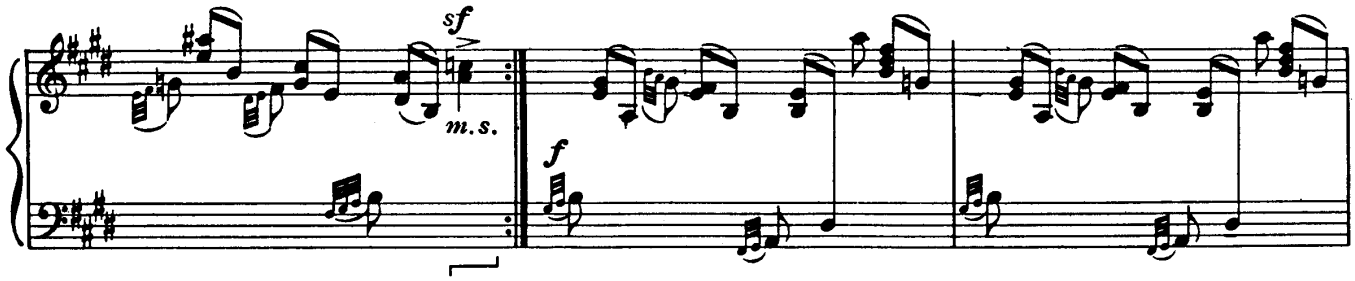
Doppio tempo (♩= 144)

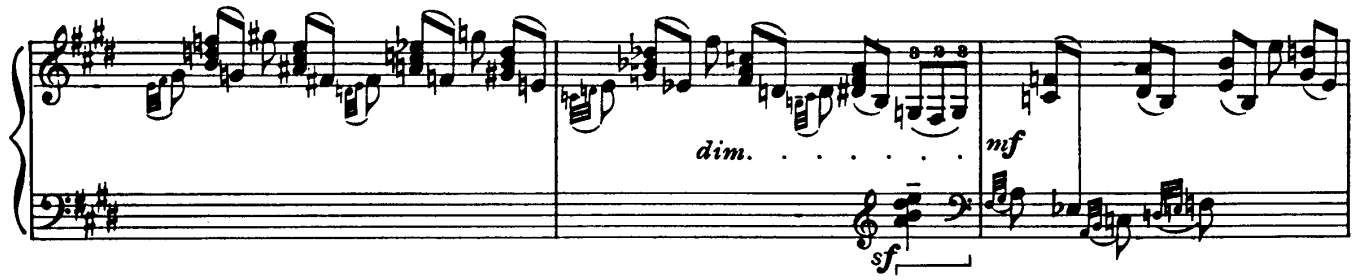


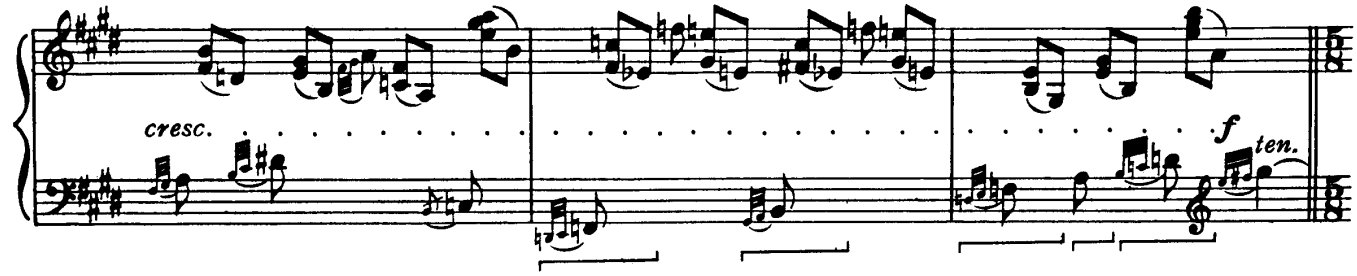

mf
cresc.
f
p
8

VAR. IX


p
sf
sf
f la m.s. marcato (ma non troppo)

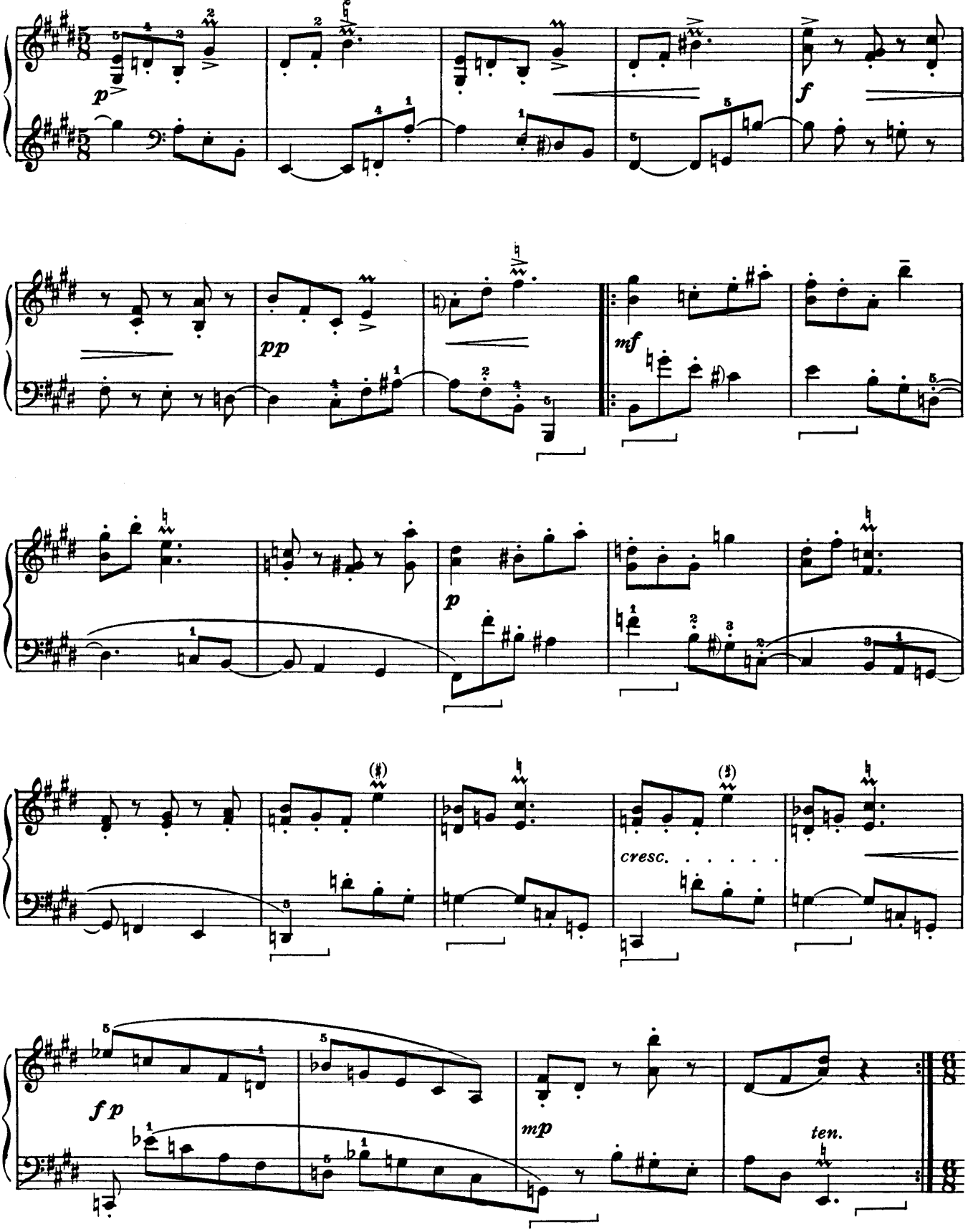

sf
m.s.
f


dim.
mf
sf

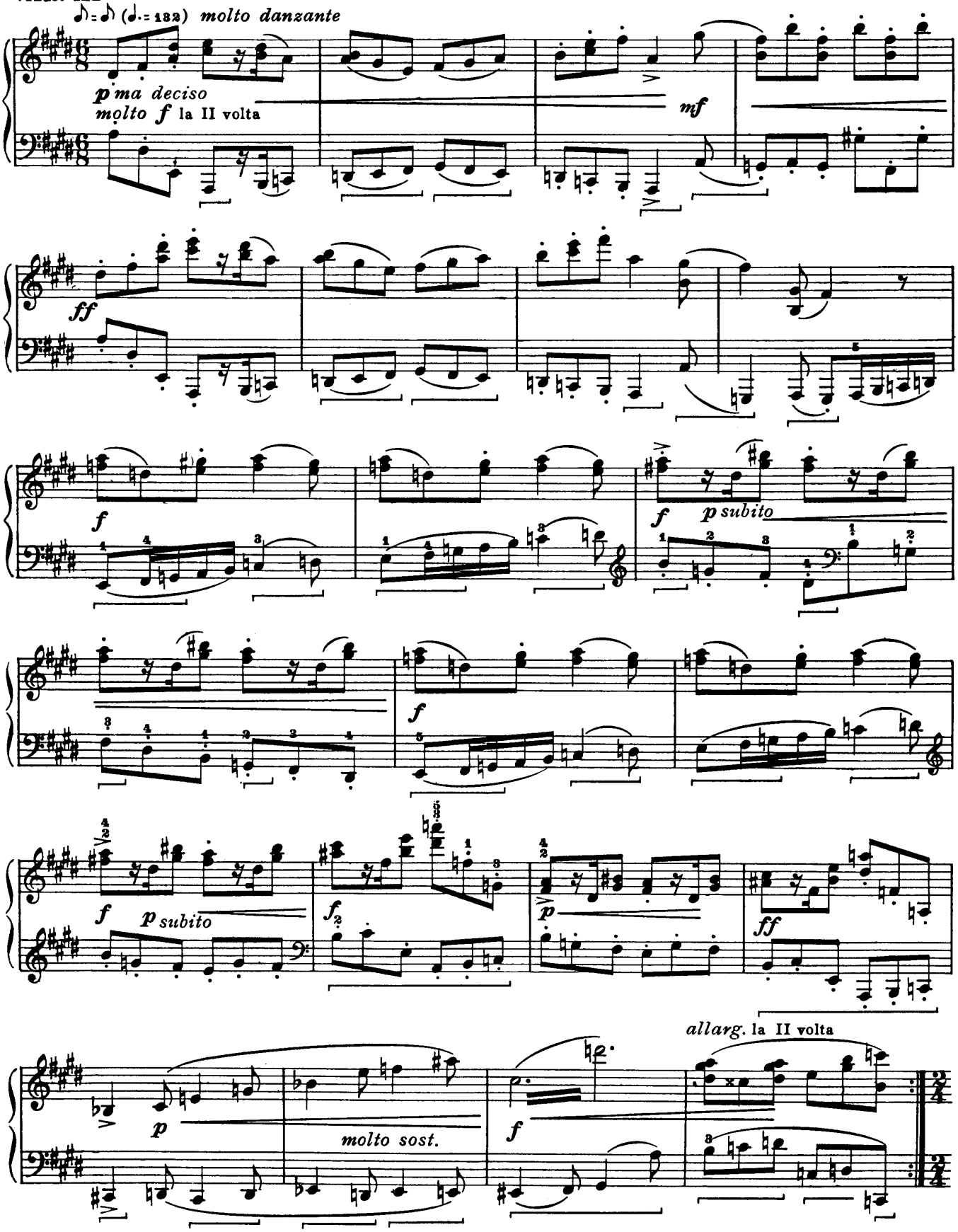

cresc.
f
ten.

VAR. X

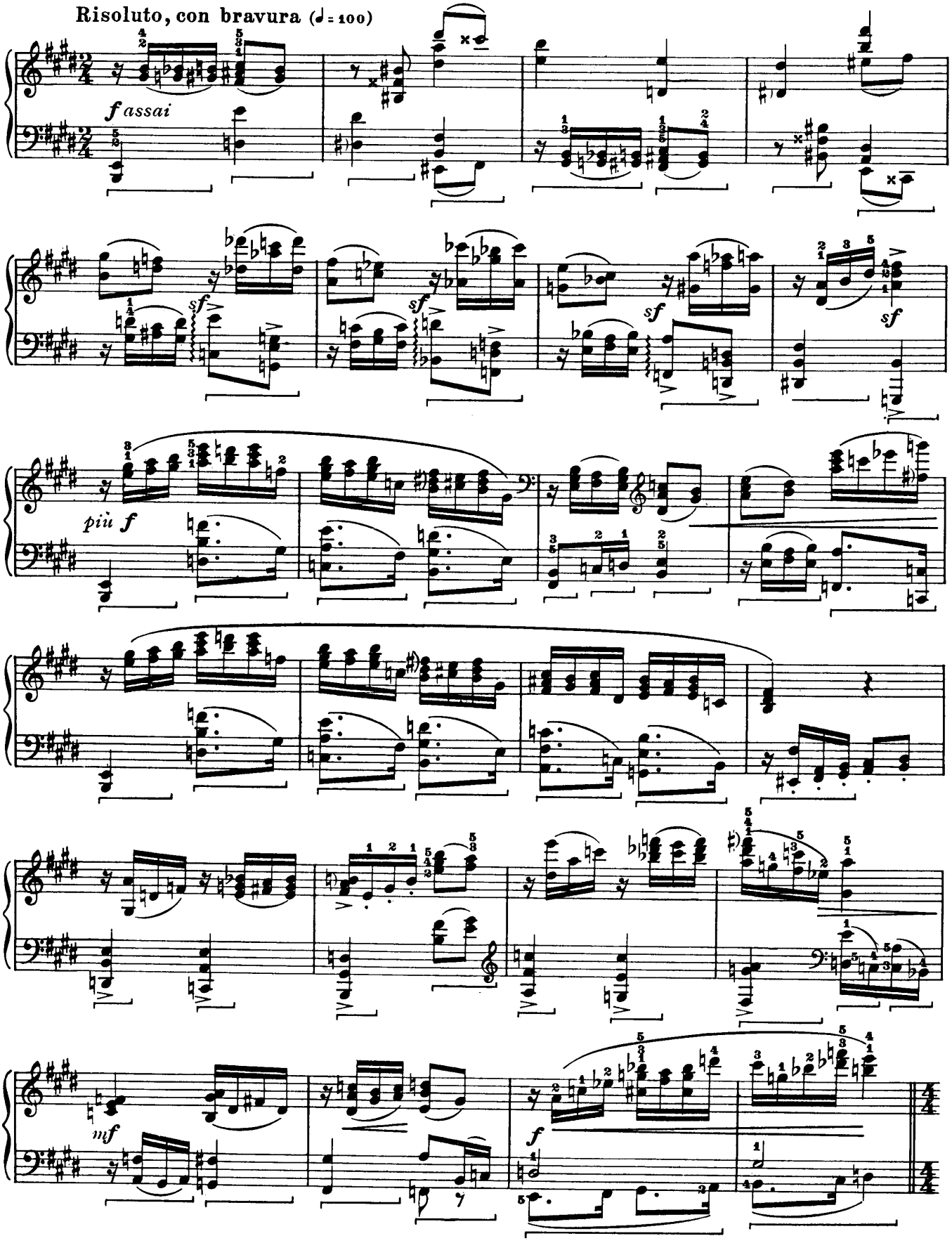
Scherzoso ♪♪♪♪♪ = ♩ preced.



VAR. XI

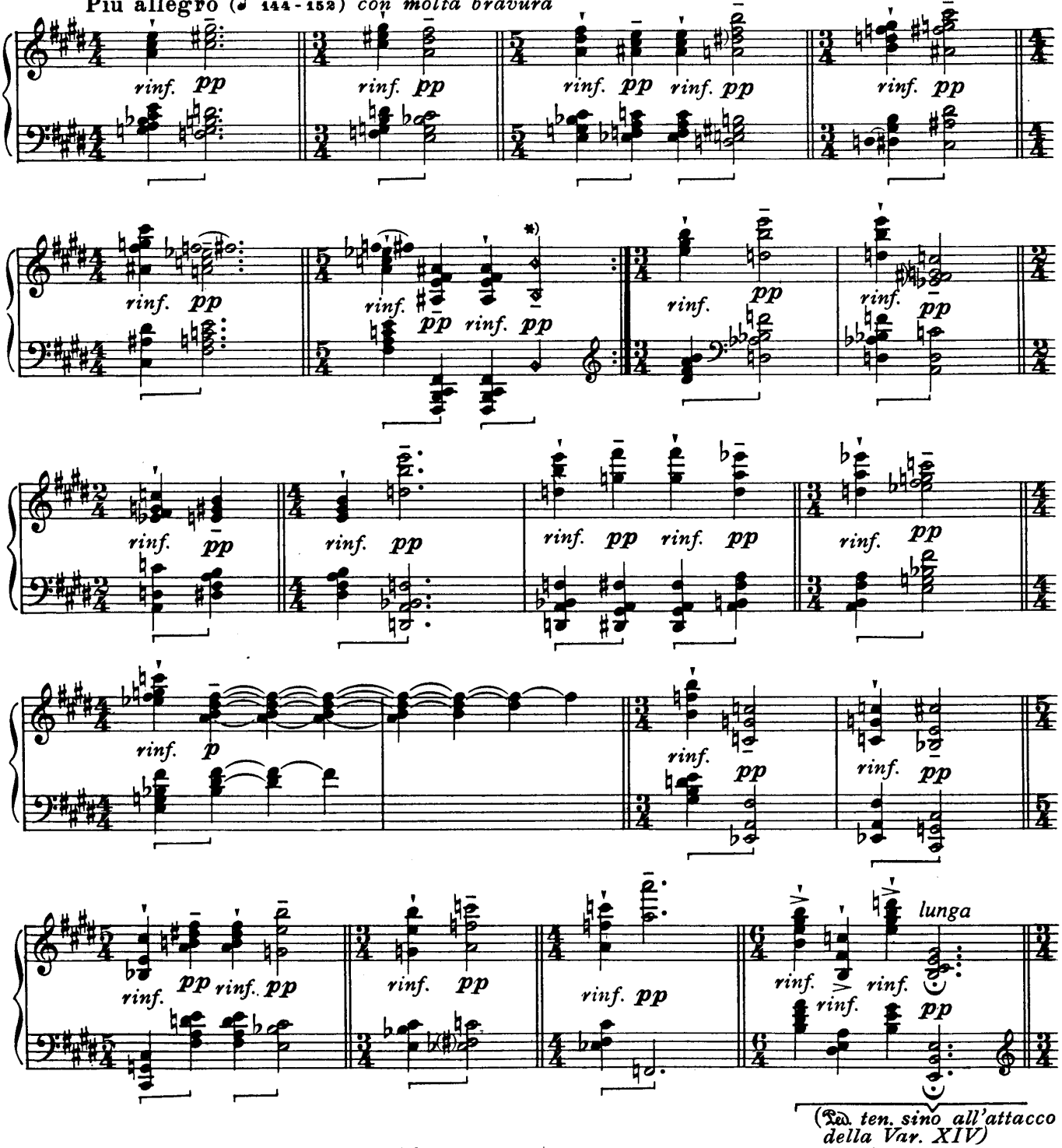

(♩.= 132) molto danzante
p ma deciso
molto f la II volta
mf
ff
f
p subito
molto sost.
allarg. la II volta

Risoluto, con bravura (♩= 100)



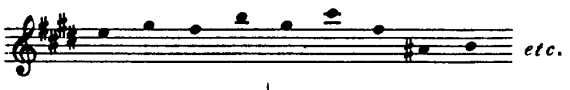
VAR. XIII

Più allegro (♩ 144-152) *con molta bravura*



Var. XIII. Effet de clair-obscur. Les accords marqués **rinf**: très forts et arrachés. On retombe sur l'accord ***pp*** qui s'attaque de très près, en allant bien au fond des touches. L'exécution de cette variation dépend essentiellement du jeu de la pédale: on l'enfonce en plaquant l'accord **rinf**. On la relève exactement en enfonçant l'accord ***pp*** . Remarquer la thème:

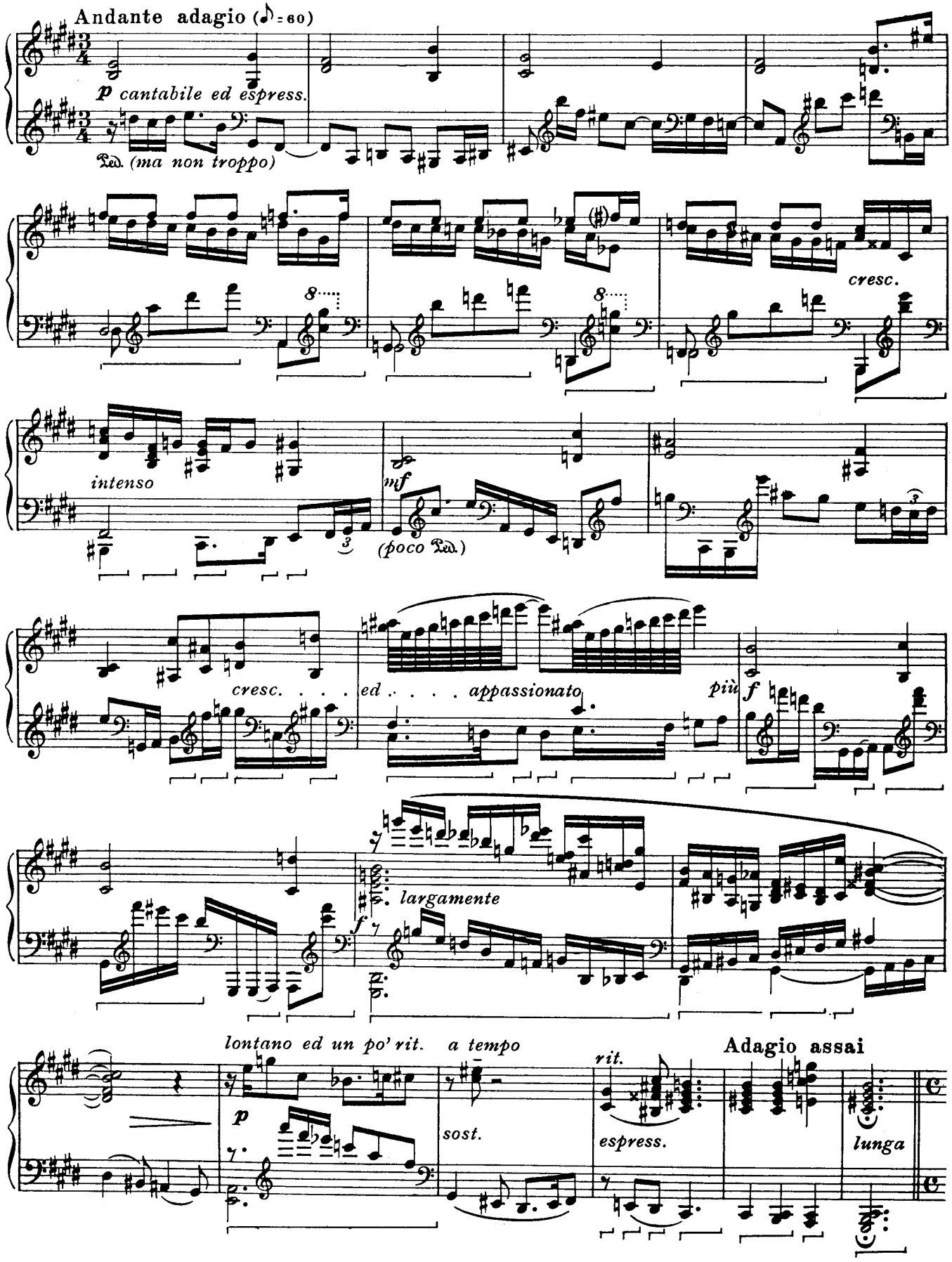
Var. XIII. An effect of light and shade. The chords marked **rinf**: *very loud and as if torn off. Dropping back, the* ***pp*** *chord is attacked from very close and going right to the base of the keys. The performance of this variation is essentially dependent on the use of the pedal: this is depressed while striking the* **rinf** *chord. It is released at the precise moment of subsiding onto the* ***pp*** *chord. Note the theme:*



*) Sons harmoniques: enfoncer les touches sans faire parler les notes.

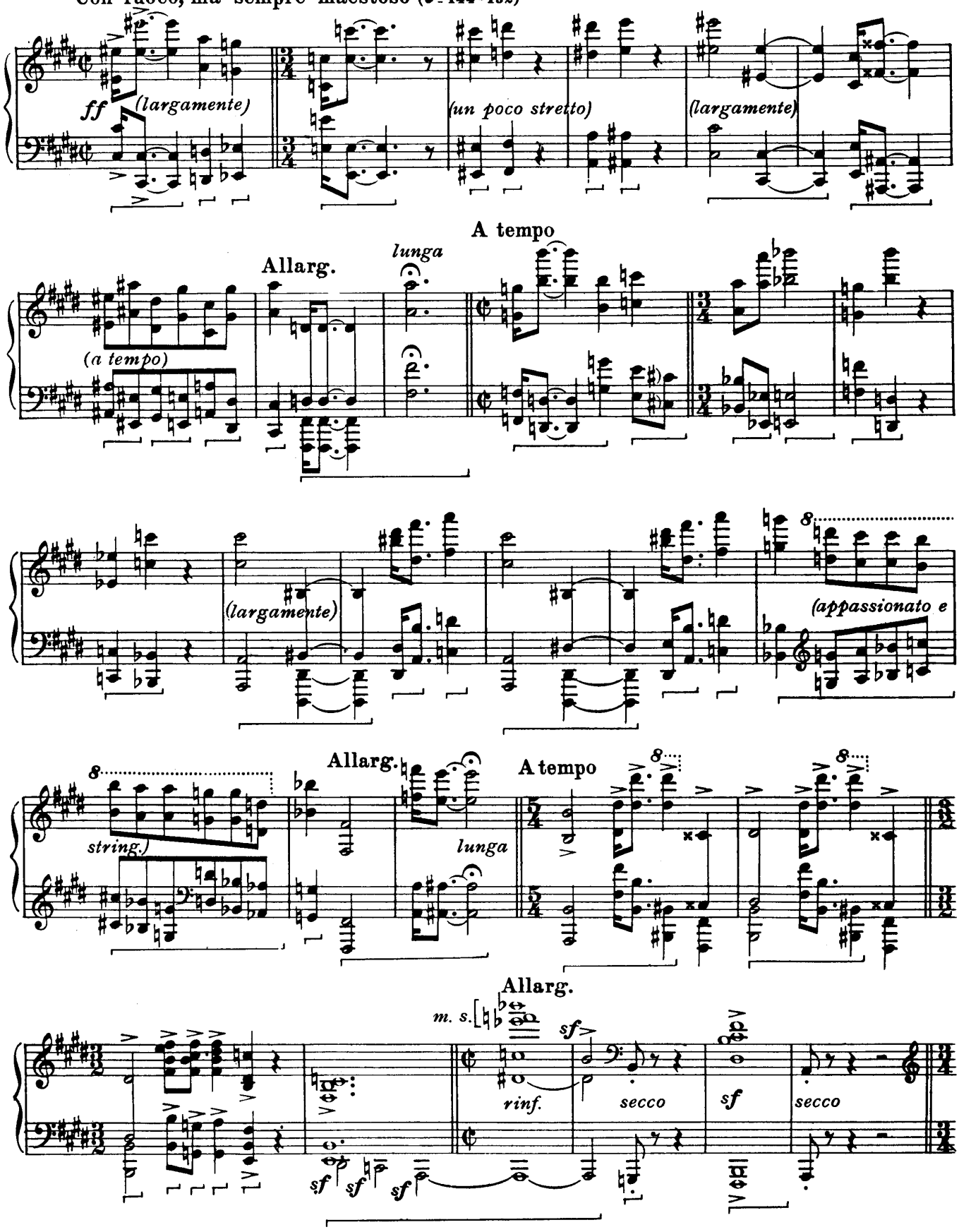
*) *Harmonics: depress the keys without sounding the notes.*

VAR. XIV

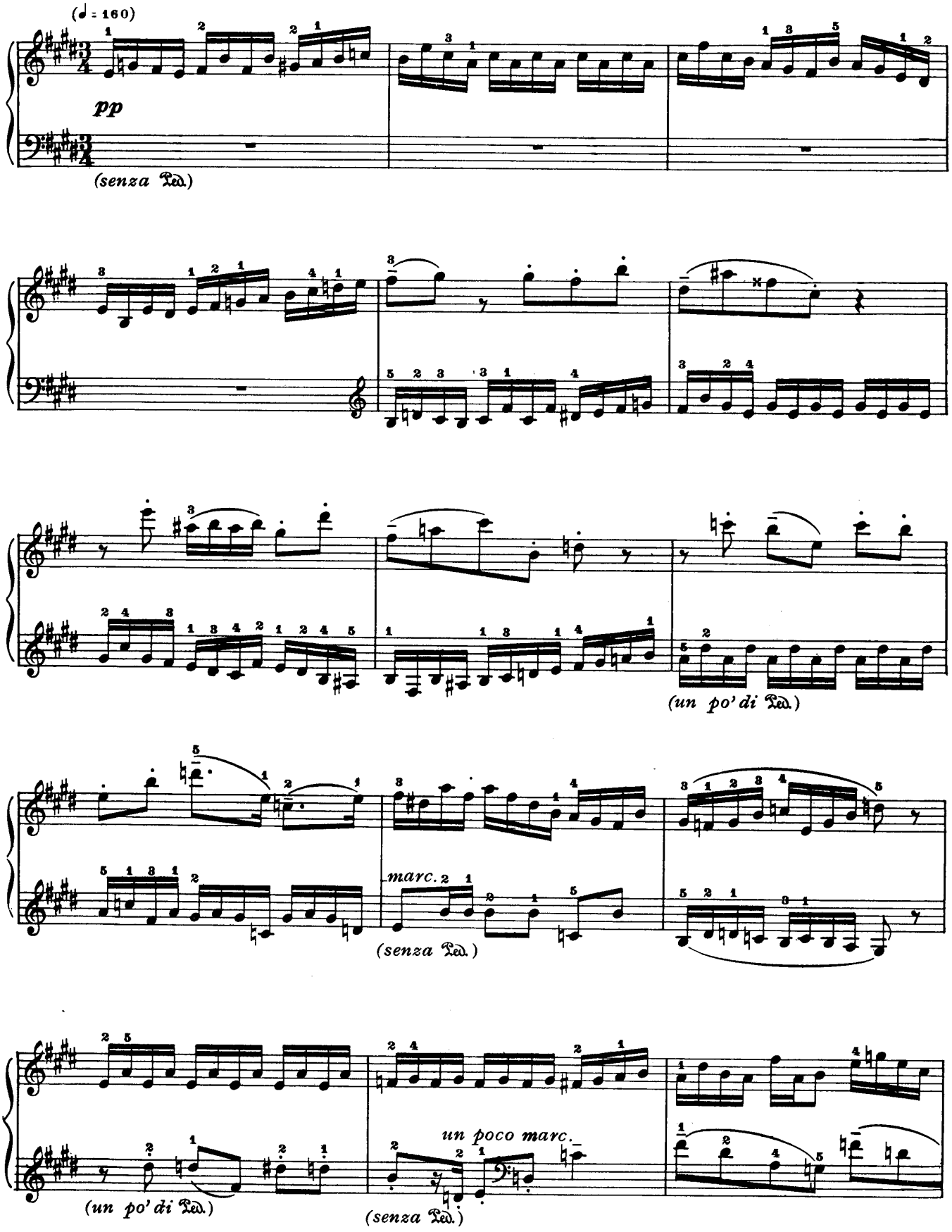

Andante adagio (♪ = 60)
p cantabile ed espress.
Ped. (ma non troppo)
cresc.
intenso
mf
(poco Ped.)
cresc. . . . .
ed . . . . appassionato
più
f
largamente
f
lontano ed un po' rit.
a tempo
p
sost.
rit.
espress.
Adagio assai
lunga

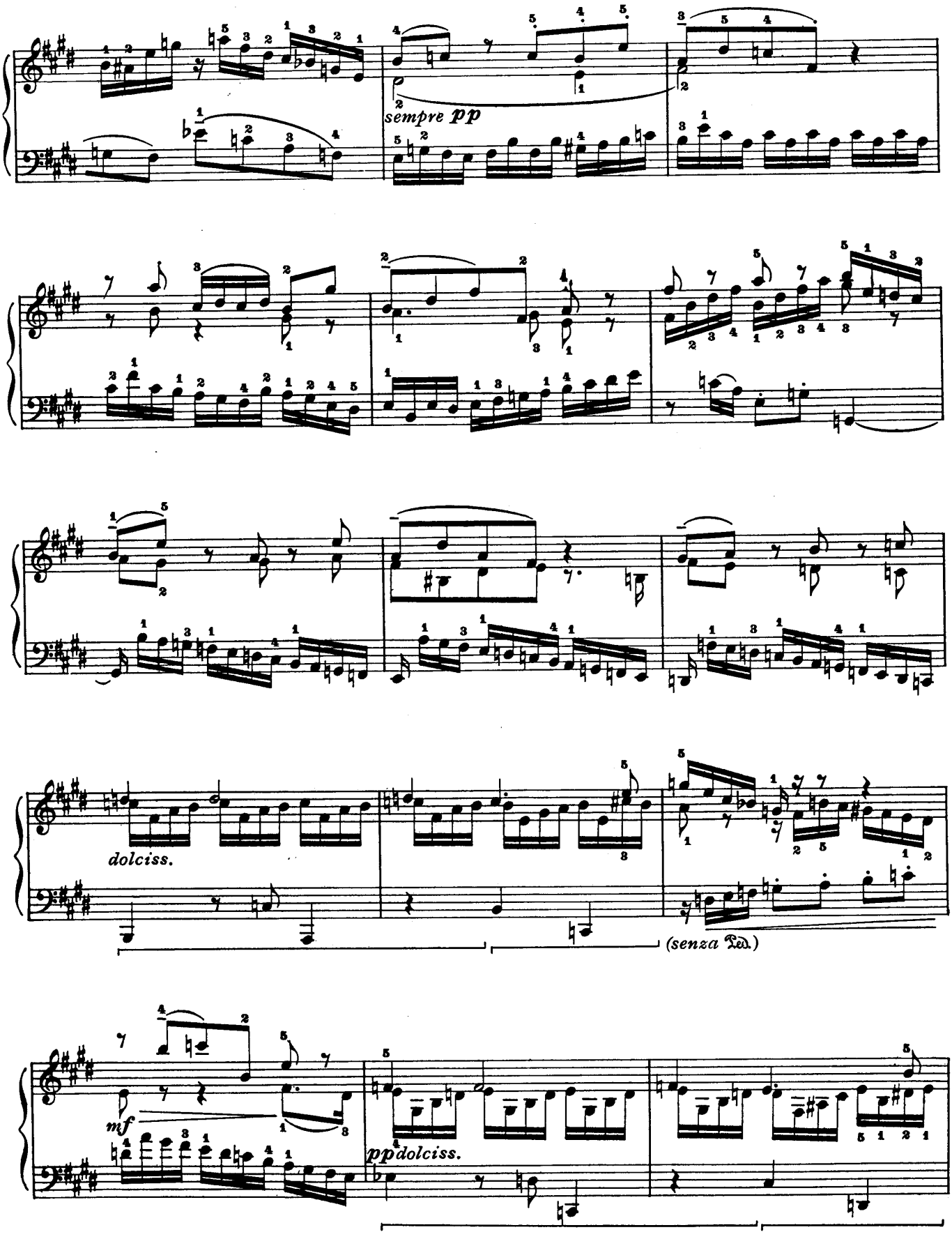
VAR. XV

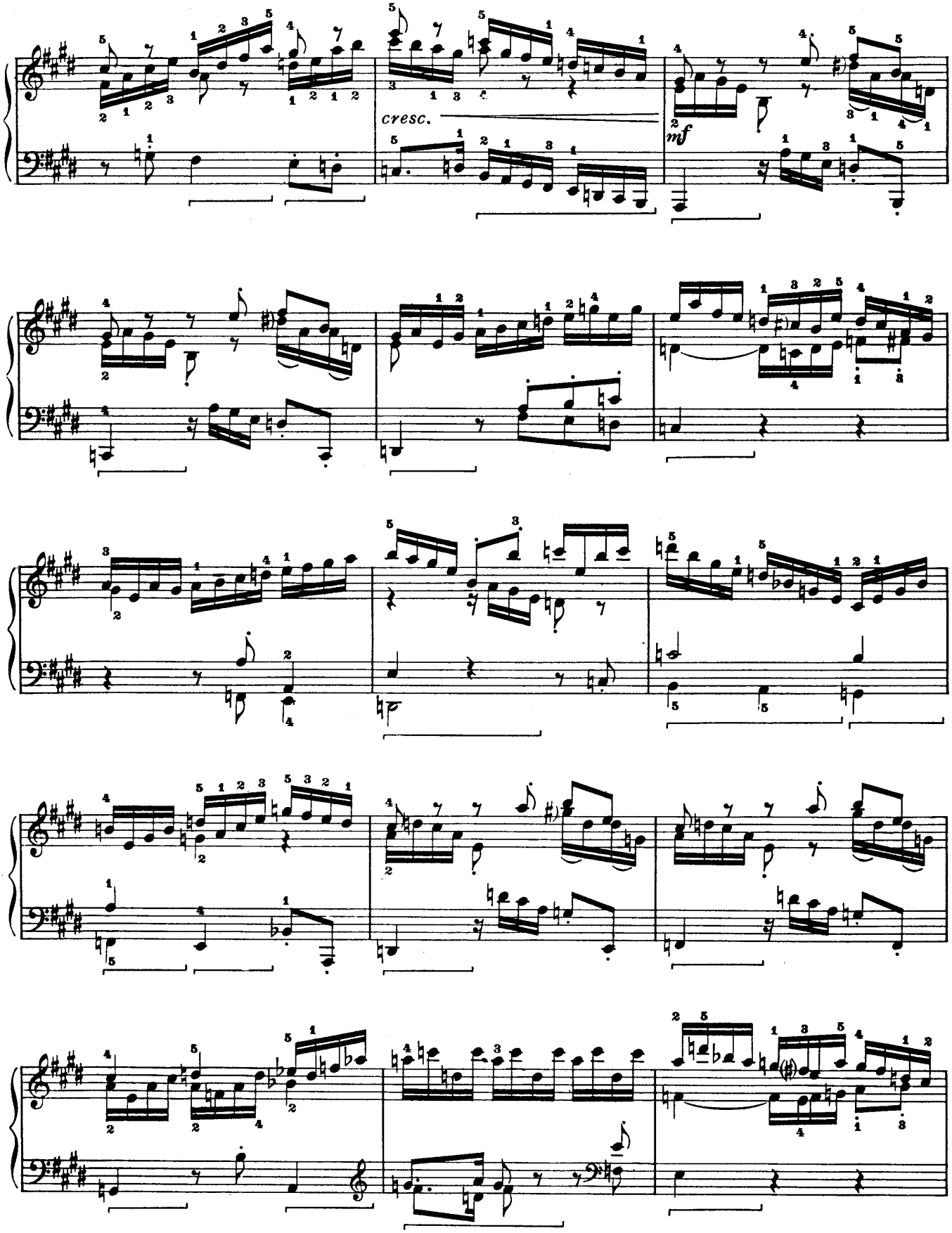
Con fuoco, ma sempre maestoso (♩= 144 - 152)

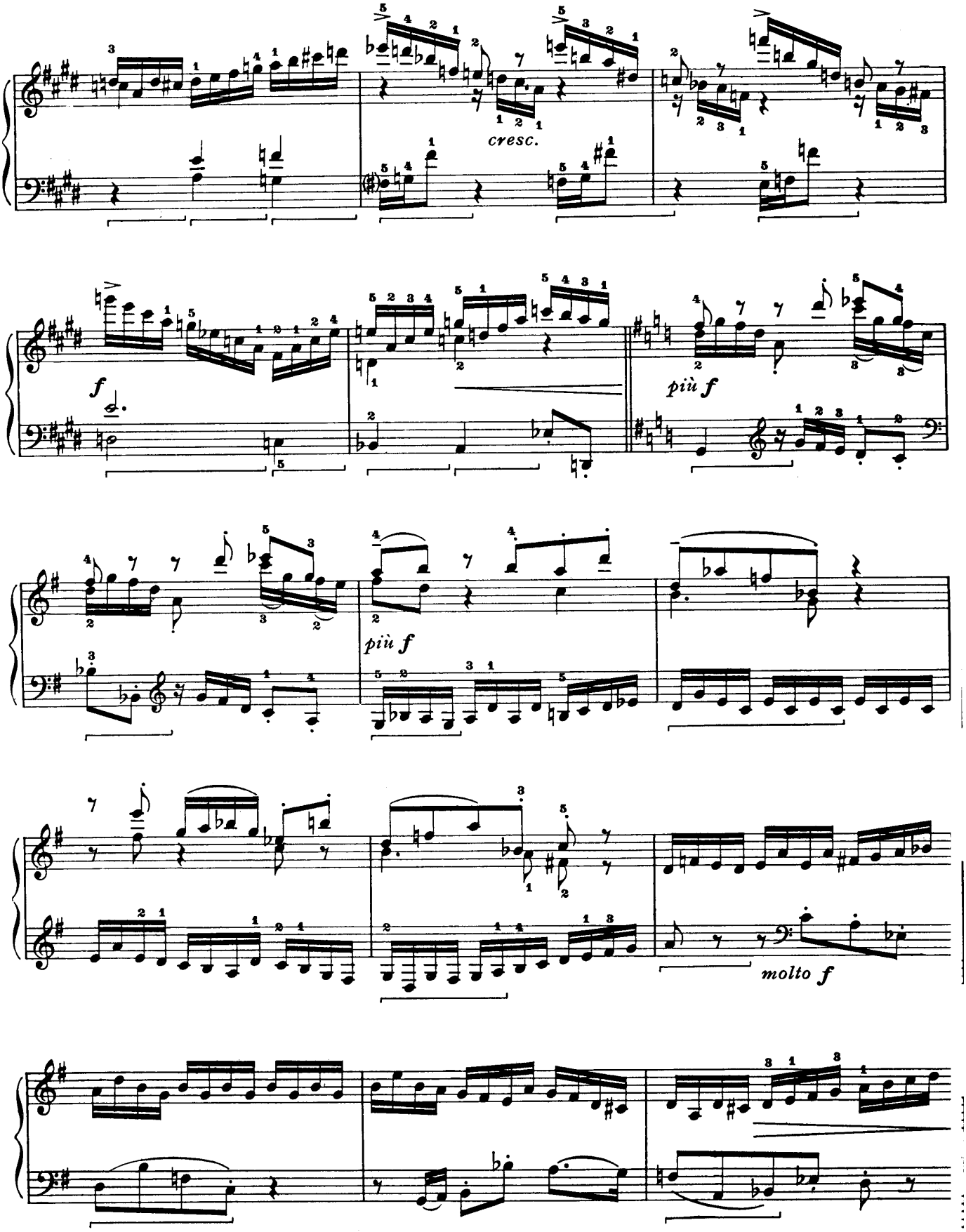


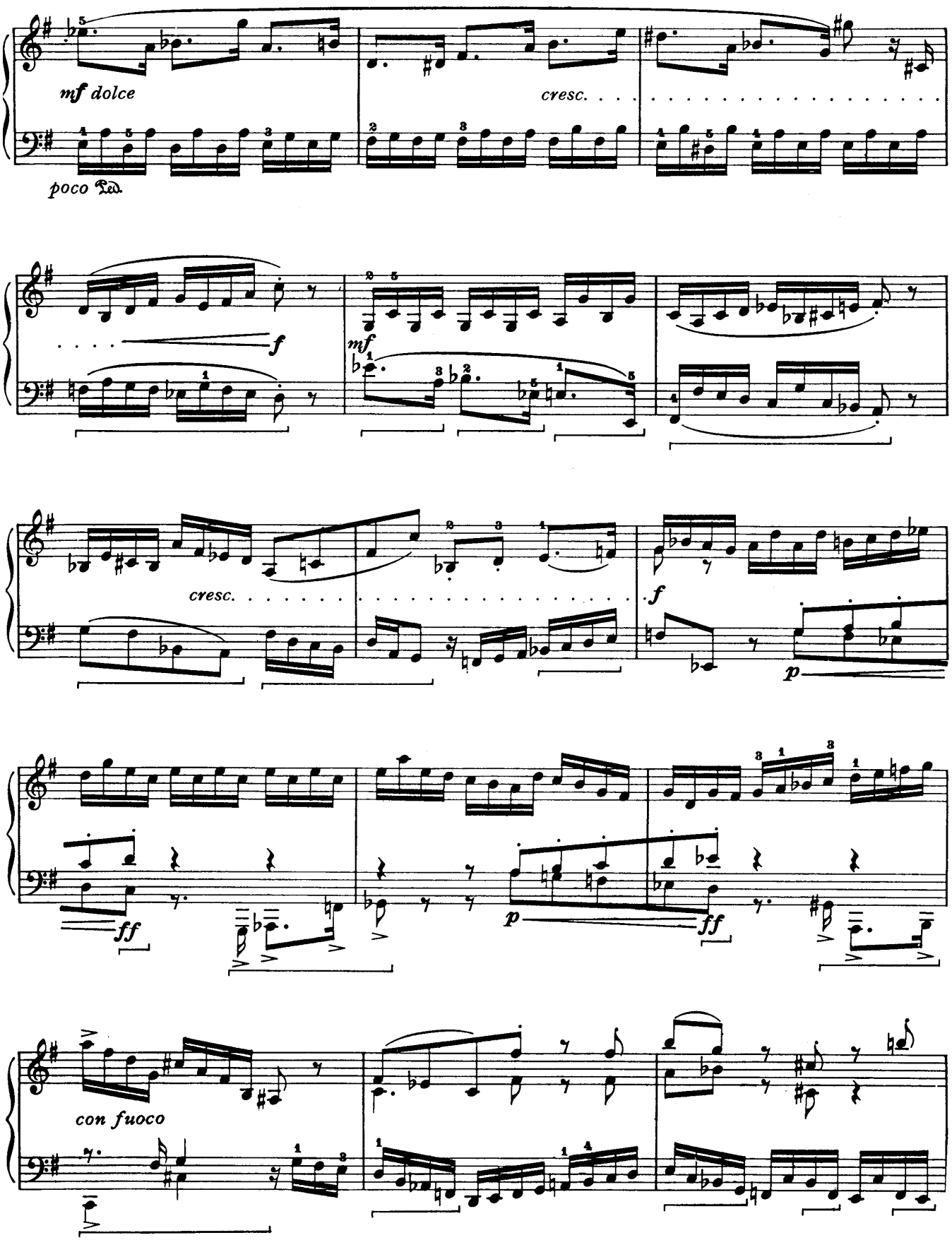
FUGA

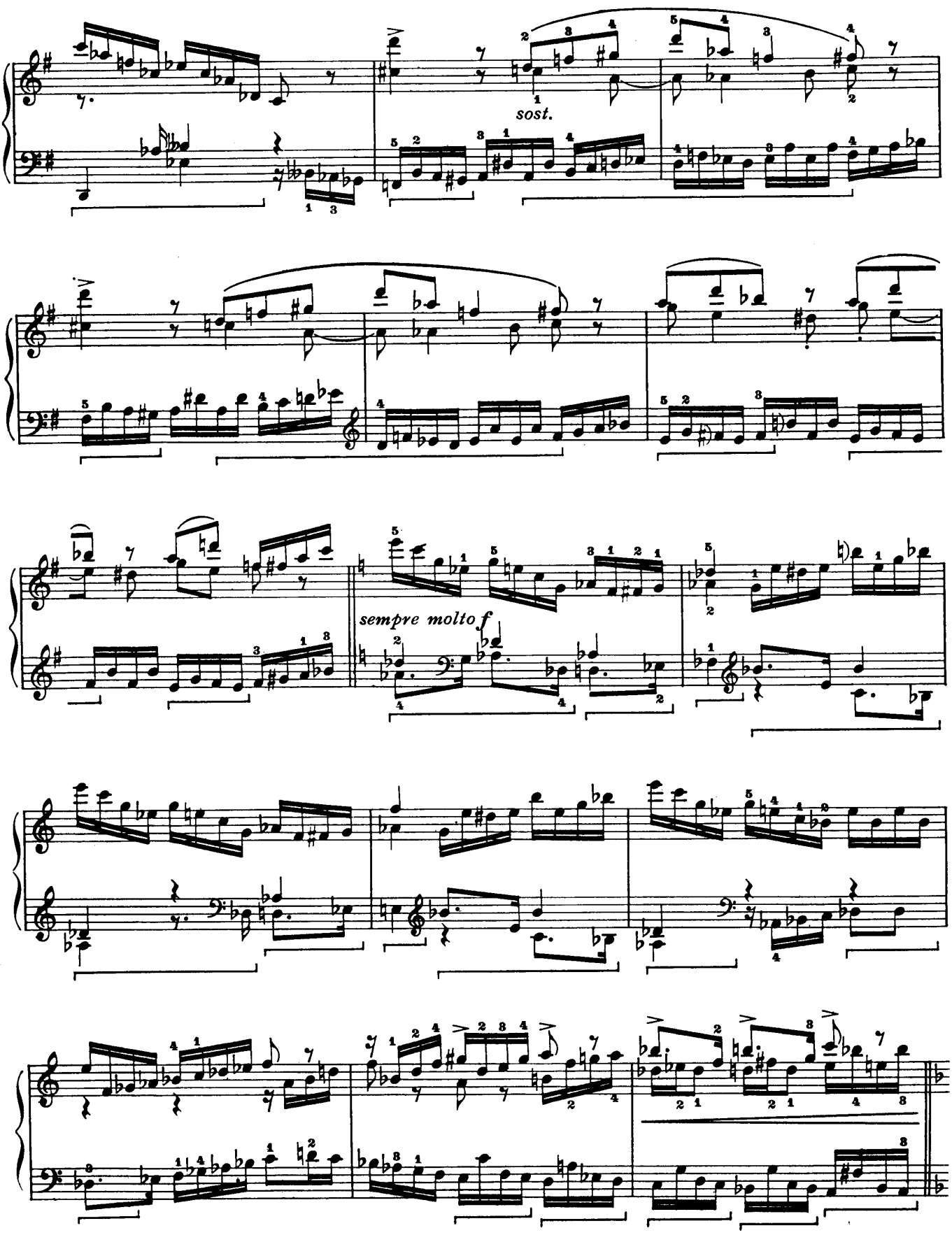

(♩ = 160)
pp
(senza Ped.)
(un po' di Ped.)
marc.
(senza Ped.)
(un po' di Ped.)
un poco marc.
(senza Ped.)

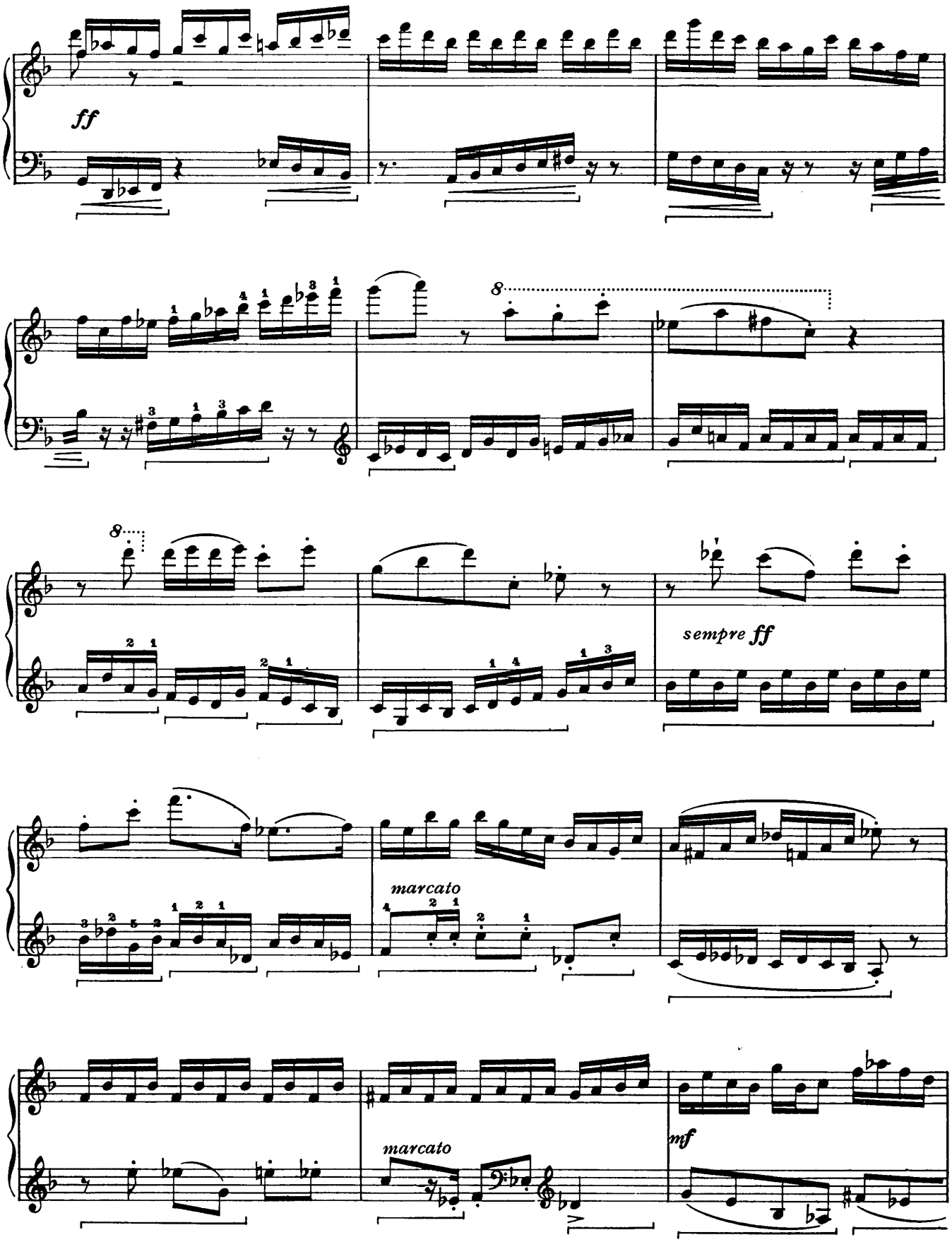

sempre pp
dolciss.
(senza Ped.)
mf
ppdolciss.

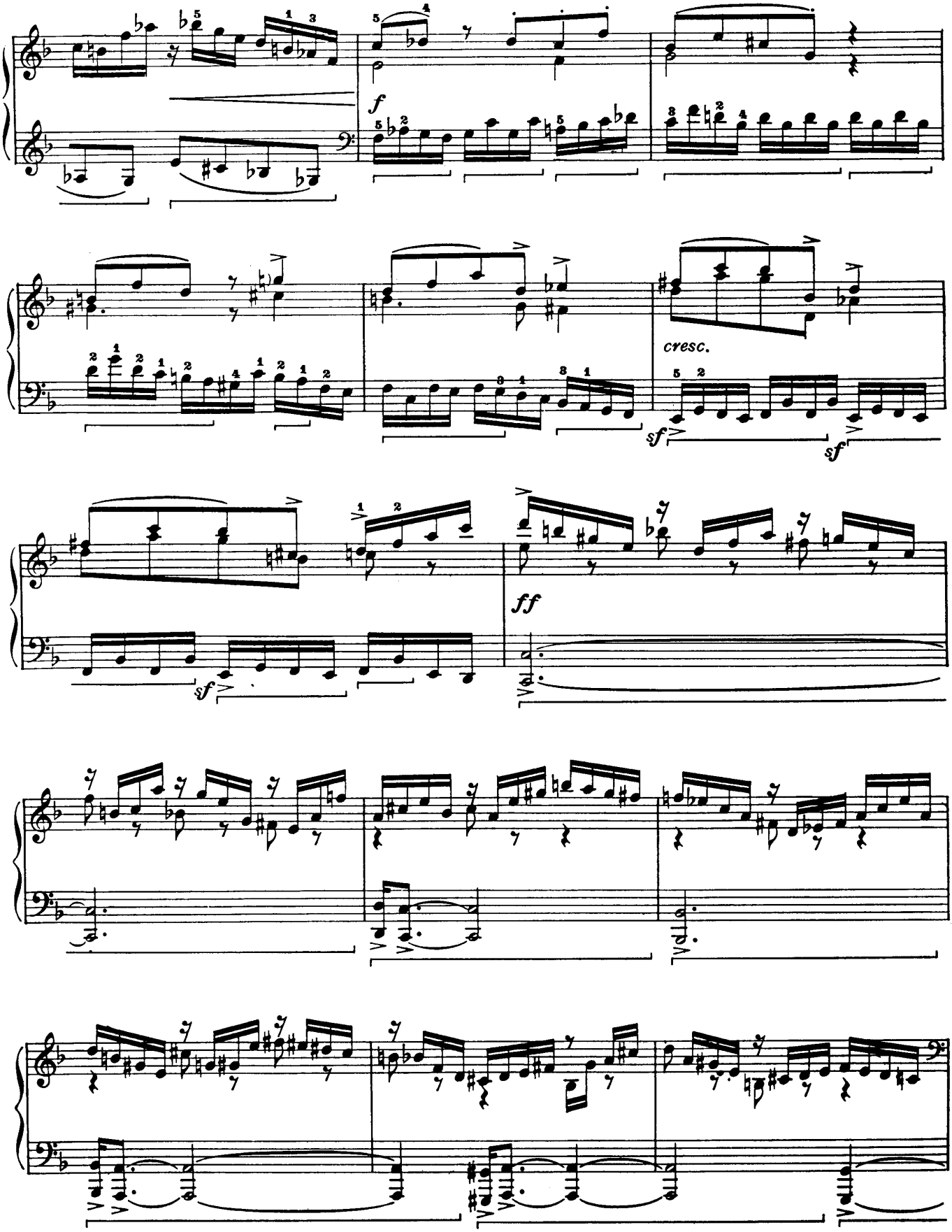

cresc.
mf

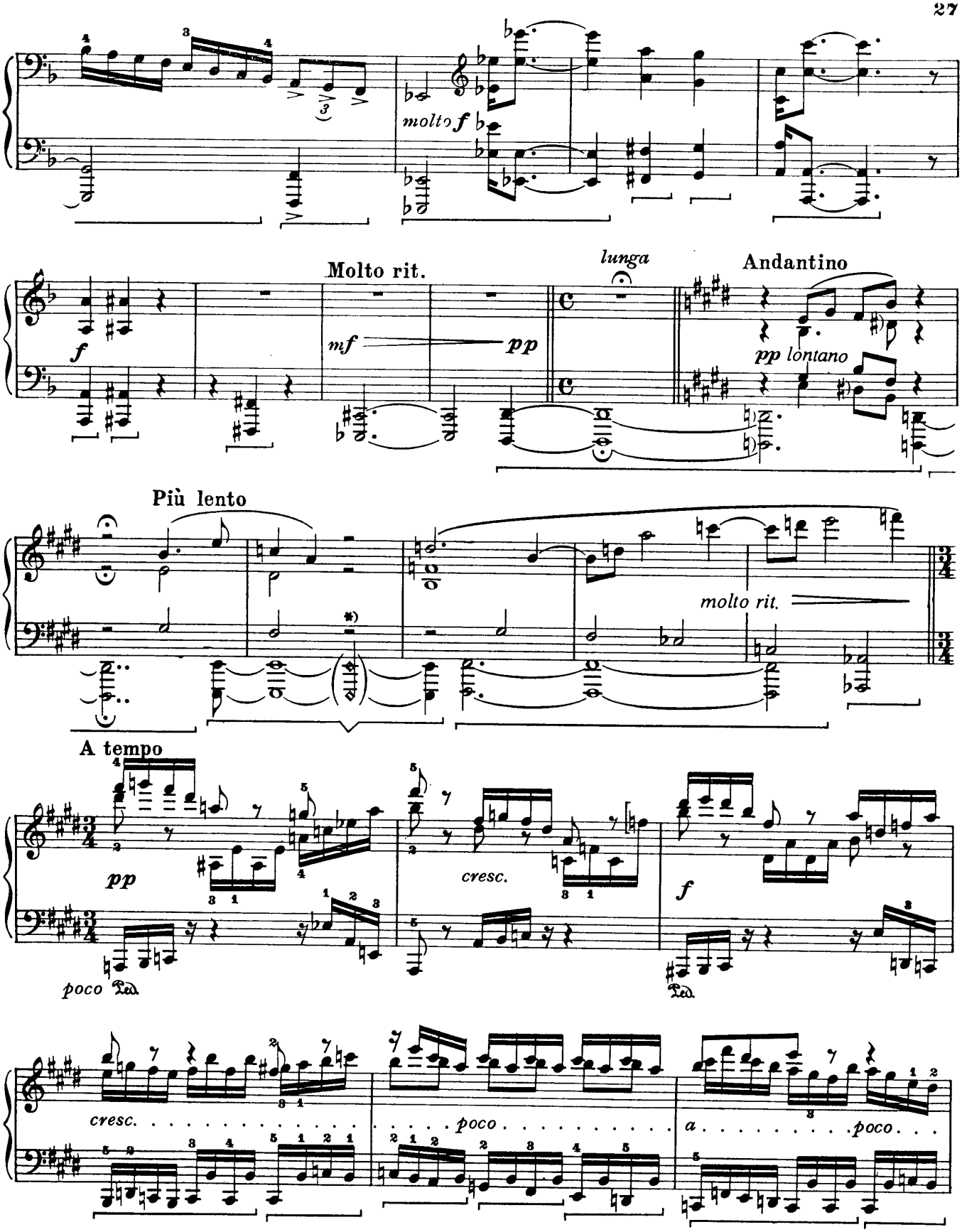

cresc.
f
più f
più f
molto f


mf dolce
poco
cresc.
f
mf
cresc.
f
p
ff
p
ff
con fuoco


sost.
sempre molto f

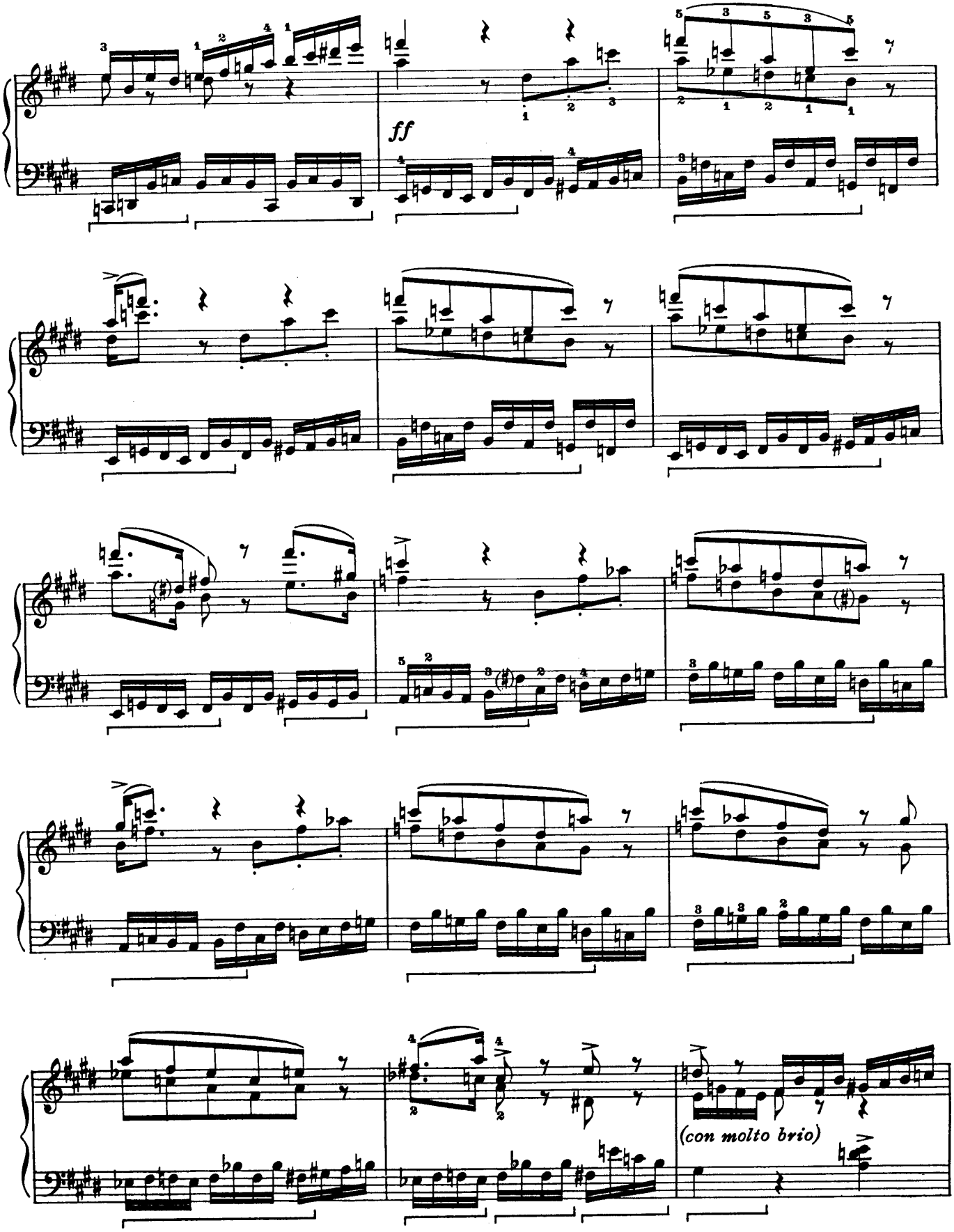

ff
8
8
sempre ff
marcato
marcato
mf

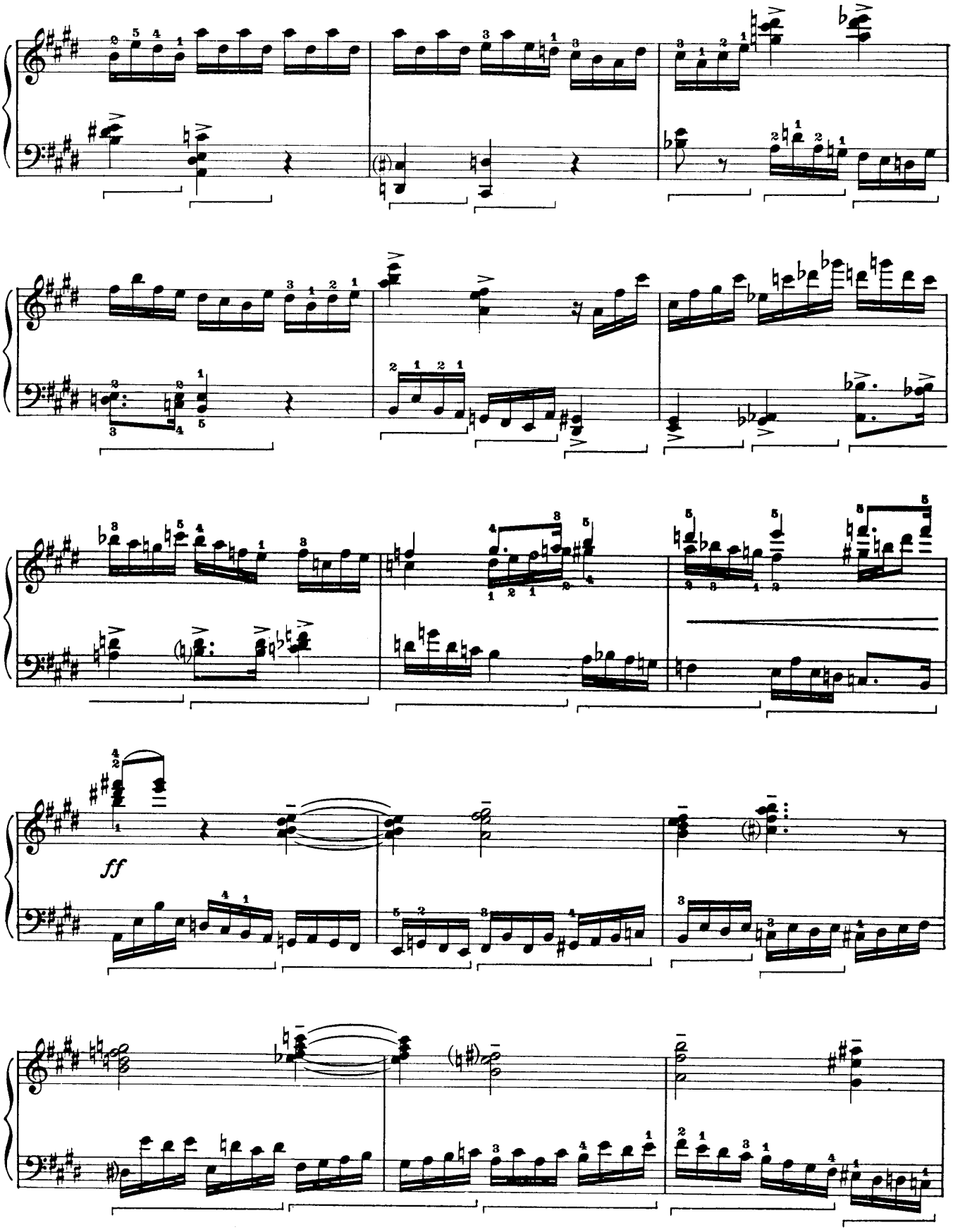

f
cresc.
sf
sf
sf
ff

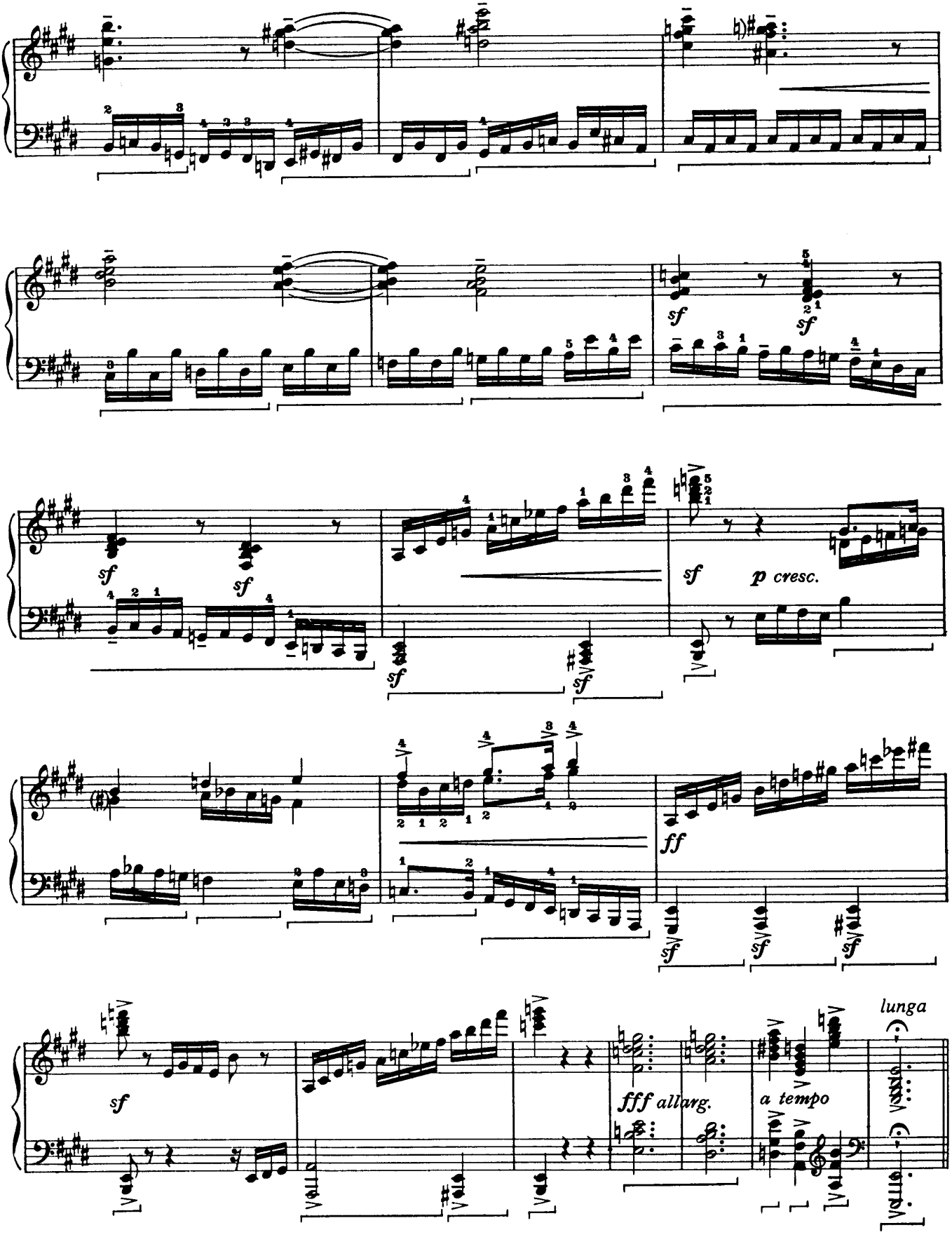


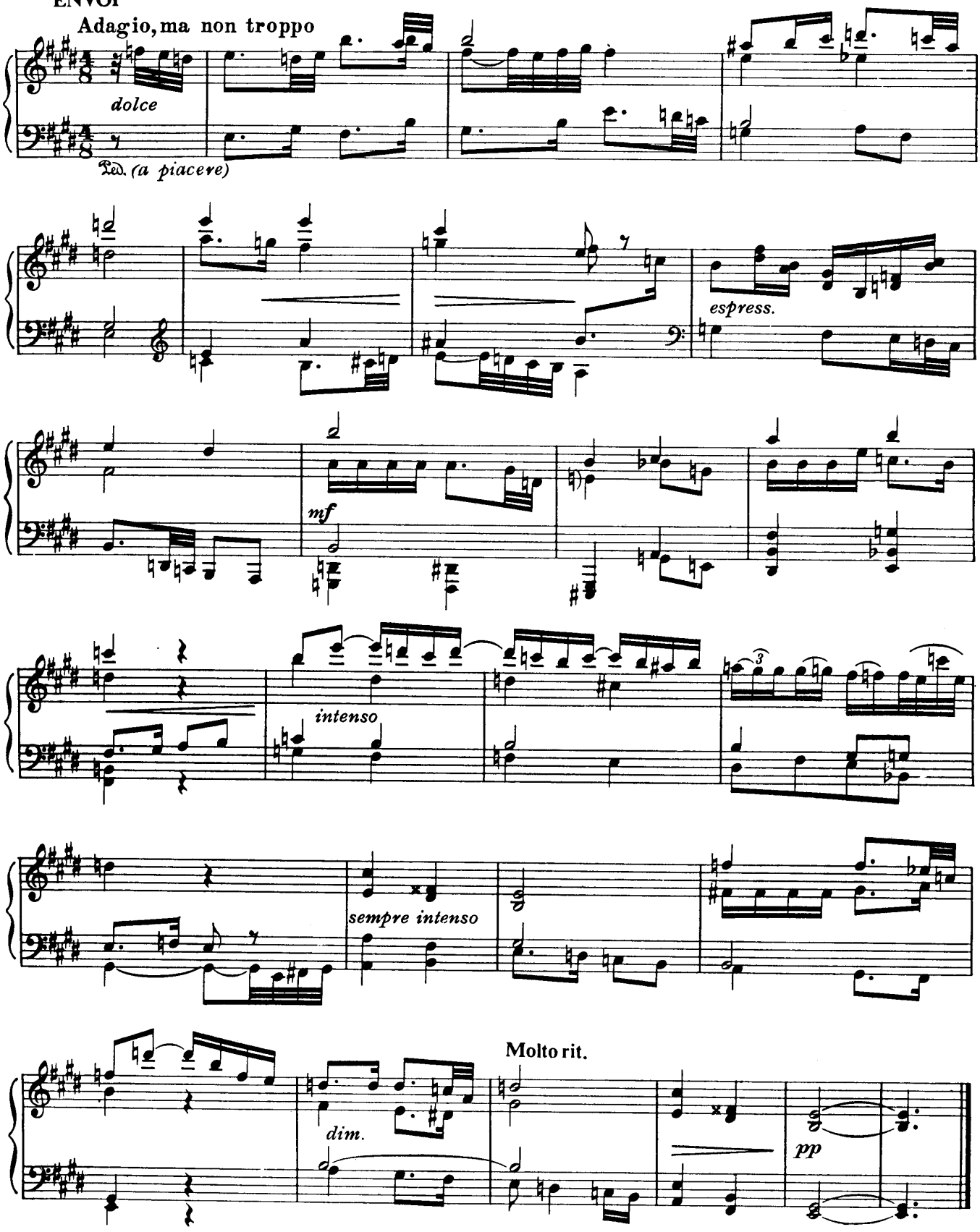
*) Réenfoncer délicatement les touches sans faire parler les notes avant de changer la Ped.

*) *Before changing the pedal, carefully re-depress the keys without sounding the notes.*


ff
(con molto brio)


ff


sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
p cresc.
ff
sf
sf
sf
sf
fff allarg.
a tempo
lunga


Adagio, ma non troppo
dolce
Ped. (a piacere)
espress.
mf
intenso
sempre intenso
Molto rit.
dim.
pp

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