Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

Diabelli Variations

opus 120

33 Veränderungen
über einen Walzer
von Diabelli

Piano Practical Editions
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Piano Practical Editions

Musical Health Warning : please be aware that these editions are definitely not urtext and should be consulted together with a traditional version. They have been devised purely to help solve musical and technical problems at the piano.

Please send comments and error reports to
Ray Alston contact@pianopracticaleditions.com

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

1770 — 1827

33 Veränderungen* über einen Walzer von Diabelli

Opus 120 1819 - 1823

dedicated to Antonie von Brentano

My first encounter with the Diabelli Variations was in Lamar Crowson's weekly themed class at the Royal College of Music in London. In the spring term of 1964, my first, Beethoven was placed under the microscope and we were each required to prepare two of these mercurial variations plus a sonata. I was given the 'Hammerklavier'. In earlier times I had encountered the usual basket of popular sonatas such as the Pathetique, the Waldstein and Op 10 N° 3, but nothing could have prepared me for the avalanche of opus 106 and these variations, which have inspired pianists and musicians without interruption ever since, of which a terrifying number of recordings have been made and about which thousands of pages have been written. Its popularity is also reflected in the number of editions: Henle, Peters, Schnabel (Tonmeister Berlin), Breitkopf & Härtel, Cappi & Diabelli, Schuberth & Co, and now PianoPractical.

some enthusiastic comments :

> Donald Tovey — the greatest set of variations ever written — Variation 20 achieves unusual depth and is one of the most awe-inspiring passages in music
>
> Alfred Brendel — the greatest of all piano works
>
> Hans von Bülow — a microcosm of Beethoven's art
>
> Martin Cooper — the variety of treatment is almost without parallel, so that the work represents a book of advanced studies in Beethoven's manner of expression and his use of the keyboard, as well as a monumental work in its own right
>
> Arnold Schoenberg — in respect of its harmony, the Diabelli variations deserve to be called the most adventurous work by Beethoven
>
> Maynard Solomon — the final image (coda) of a tender, songful, profound nostalgia, a vantage point from which we can review the purposes of the entire journey

Beethoven wrote his first piano variations as a young teenager and continued to be attracted to the form throughout his life, and by the time Diabelli approached him in 1818 with the variation project**, he had become very experienced.

From a waltz which he ironically identified as 'a cobbler's patch', Beethoven created a work with a varied palette — from tragedy to euphoria, from roguish wit to momentous profundity. There are also various quotations including his final sonata Op 111, equally centred around tonic C.

While the waltz cannot claim distinction, its catchy theme must have whirled through his head interminably, forcing the only possible cure — to write a few mutations! Perhaps he was relieved to put the Missa Solemnis aside. At first he responded with 19 variations, but by 1822 the total had expanded to 33, published as an independent composition.

Diabelli's original dance music and the subsequent invitation to the greatest composer of the age, would not be out of place as a Monty Python sketch; an initial approach by a somewhat mediocre piano promoter with a mundane waltz and a proposition to write just one variation as part of a grand design. The maestro, not particularly keen, replied appropriately :

> "You have indeed a whole army of composers, who will manage it far better than I — give them one bar each and what a wonderful piece of music may be expected. Long live this, your Austrian Association, which can so expertly handle this *Schusterfleck*" — (Cobbler's Patch — a derogatory name for sequential repetitions, each degree higher than the last).

asterisk comments

1 editorial *sf* are a logical conclusion

2 there is no repeat at bar 16

5 the opening bar staccato and the slurs at bars 4 & 8 are editorial

8 this may be a D depending on the edition source and your own personal preference

9 Beethoven sometimes interchanges *f* & *sf* — I believe the *sf* at 20 & 21 should match 16 & 17

10 the octave sign extension at 56/57 is not given in the manuscript, nor the original and some other editions; I therefore endorse Schnabel's interpretation. In the original edition at 44 bass G is not tied; most editions omit the tie although I believe this is more likely an error.

12 This slur of three beats is omitted in several editions. The version here is from the first edition, revised by Beethoven himself — surely the most authentic.

13-14 editorial barlines

16 editorial tweaks at 5, 7 & 12

19 staccato indicated only in the manuscript

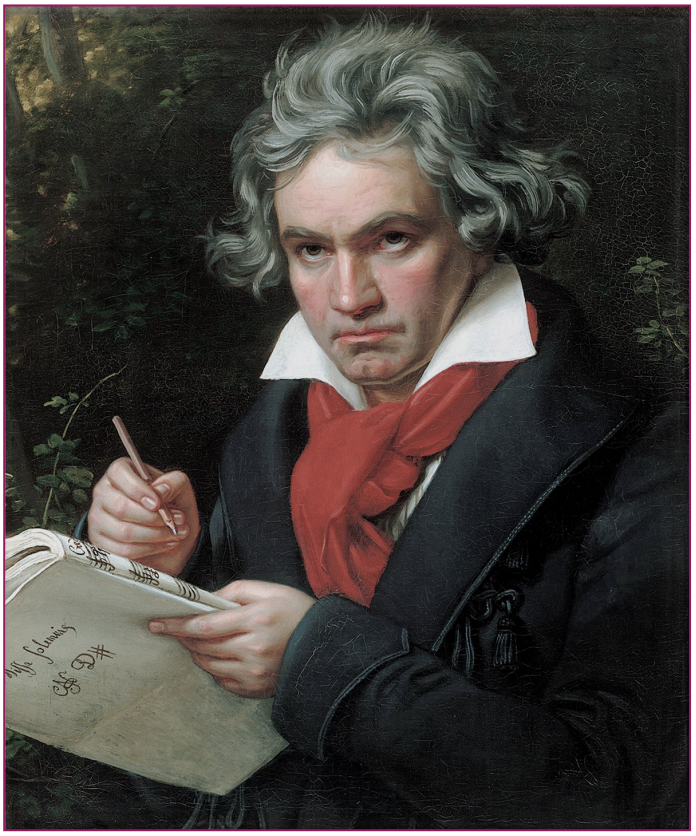
24 editorial solutions at 7, 15 & 16

26 the *diminuendo* is unrealistic — one solution is to delay it until 31

28 there is no dynamic indicated for this variation

31 Changes of time signature have been omitted. The suffix at 31 is editorial.

32 editorial pedal suggestion at 111 and hand disposition at 160



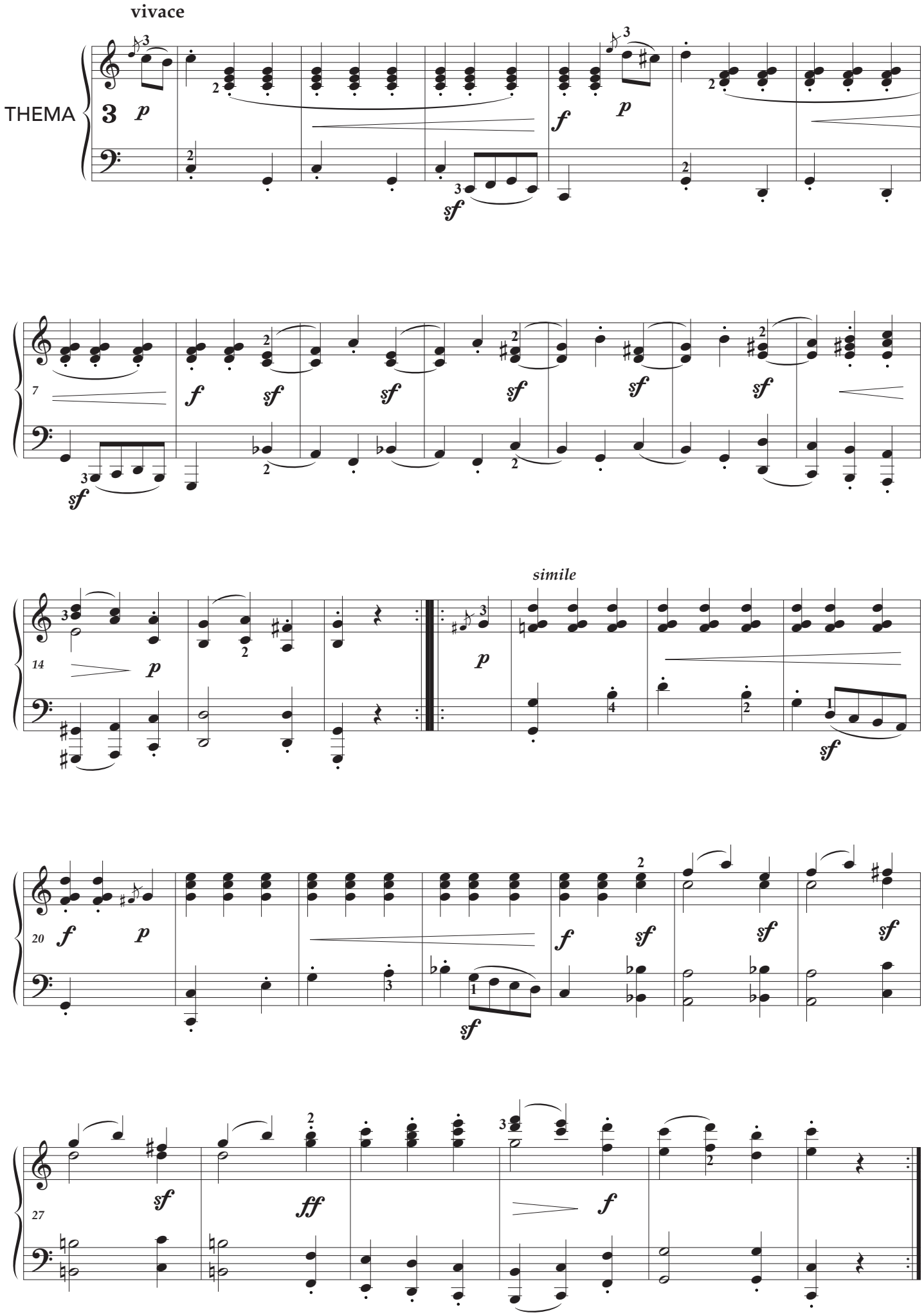
Beethoven with the Missa Solemnis score
by Joseph Karl Stieler 1820

Anton Diabelli 1781 - 1858
by Joseph Karl Stieler 1820

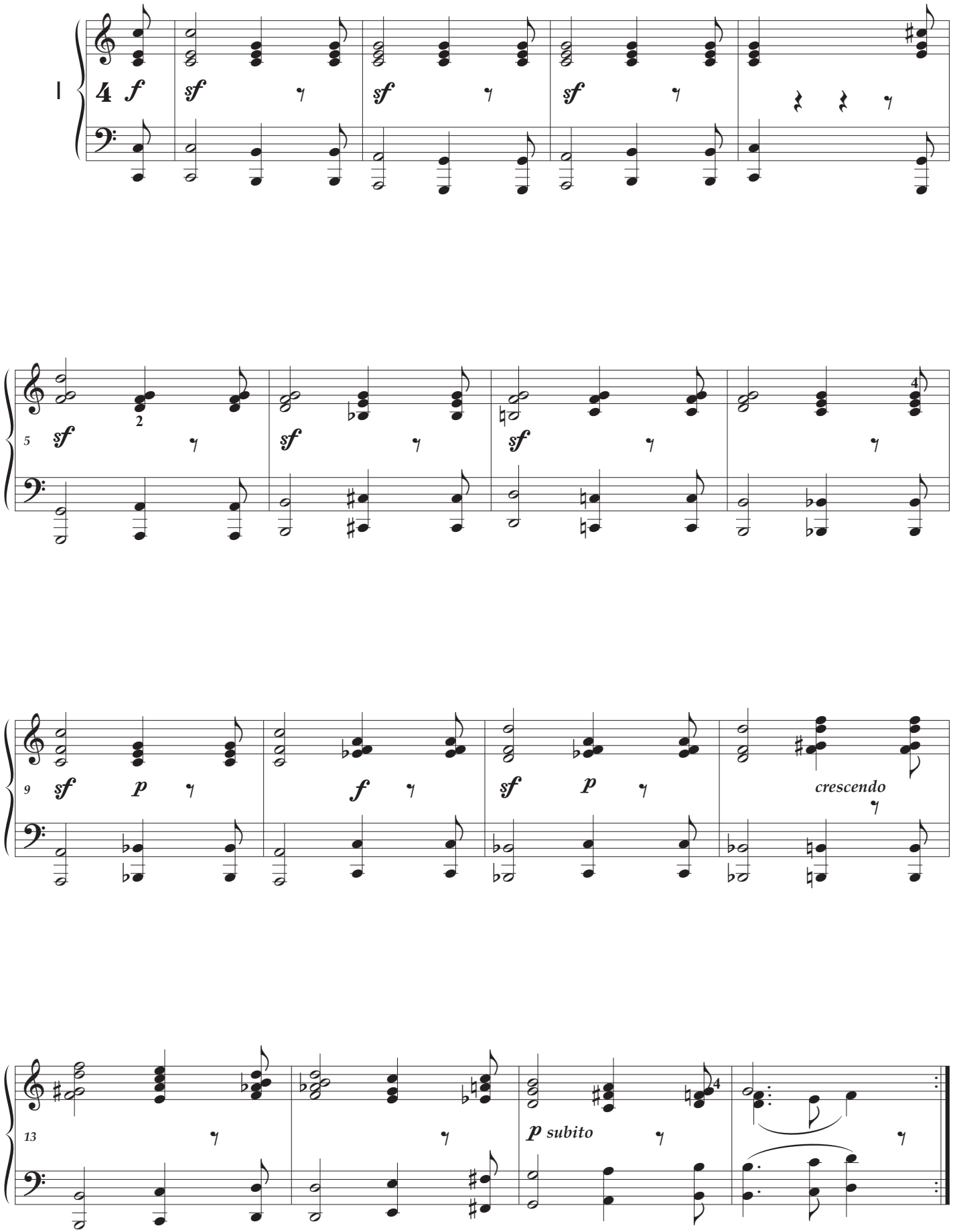
* transformations, modifications, variations, mutations

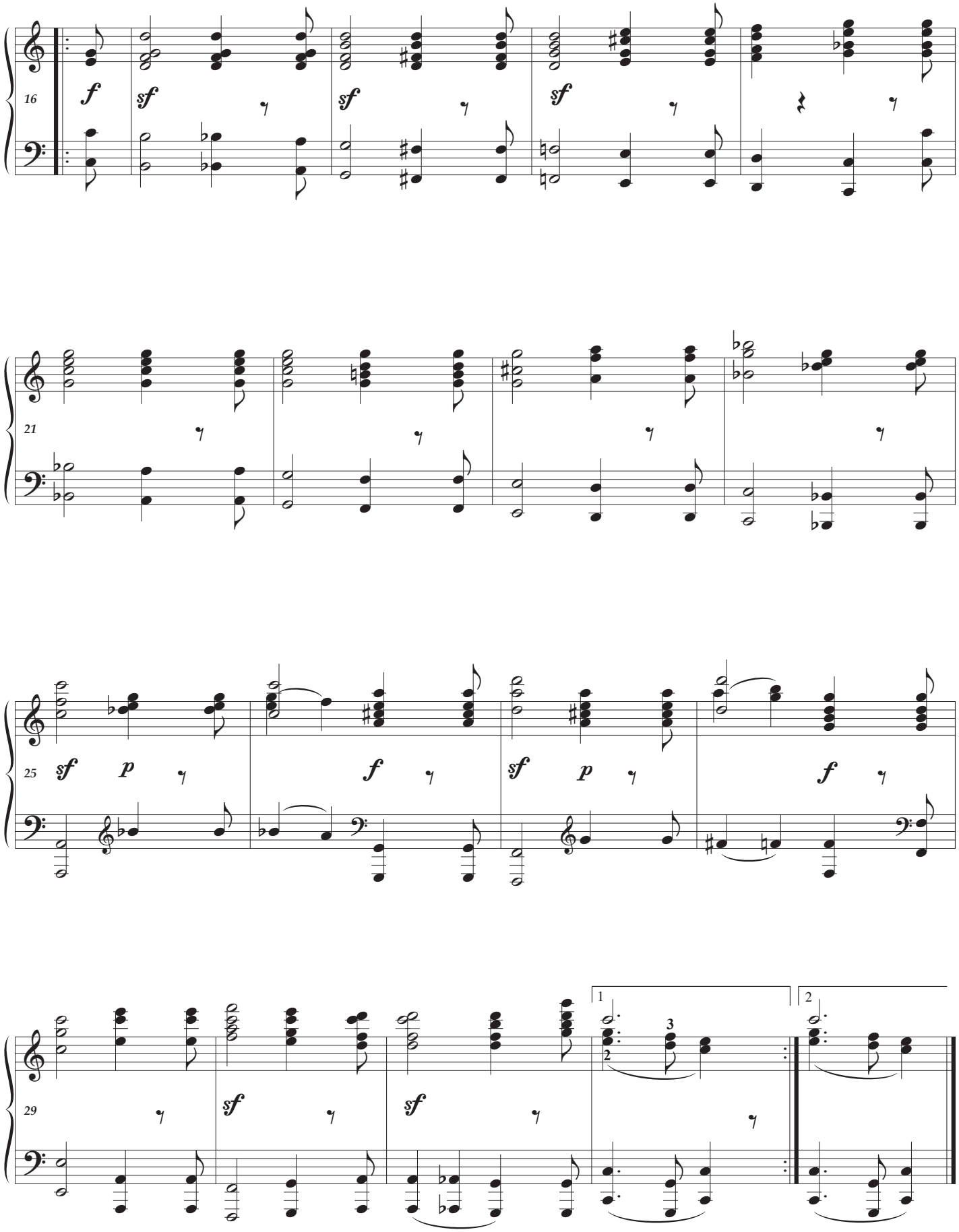
** publisher, teacher and dealer, Diabelli sent a number of notable colleagues*** a waltz of his own composition suggesting that they should each contribute one variation for a collaborated publication

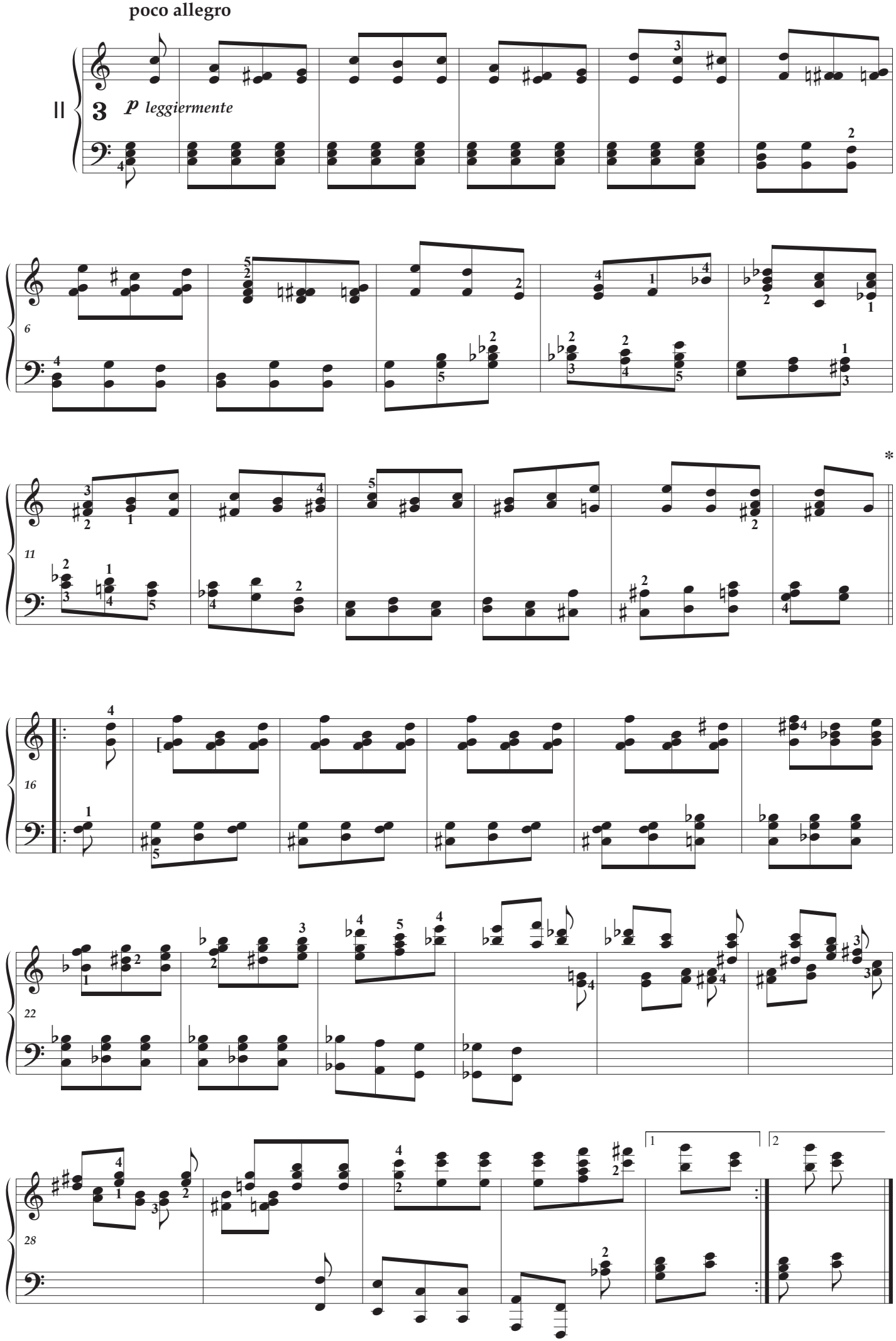
*** Including Schenk, Hummel, Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart, a very young Liszt, a virtually unknown Schubert, Kalkbrenner, Moscheles, Czerny and the Archduke Rudolph.

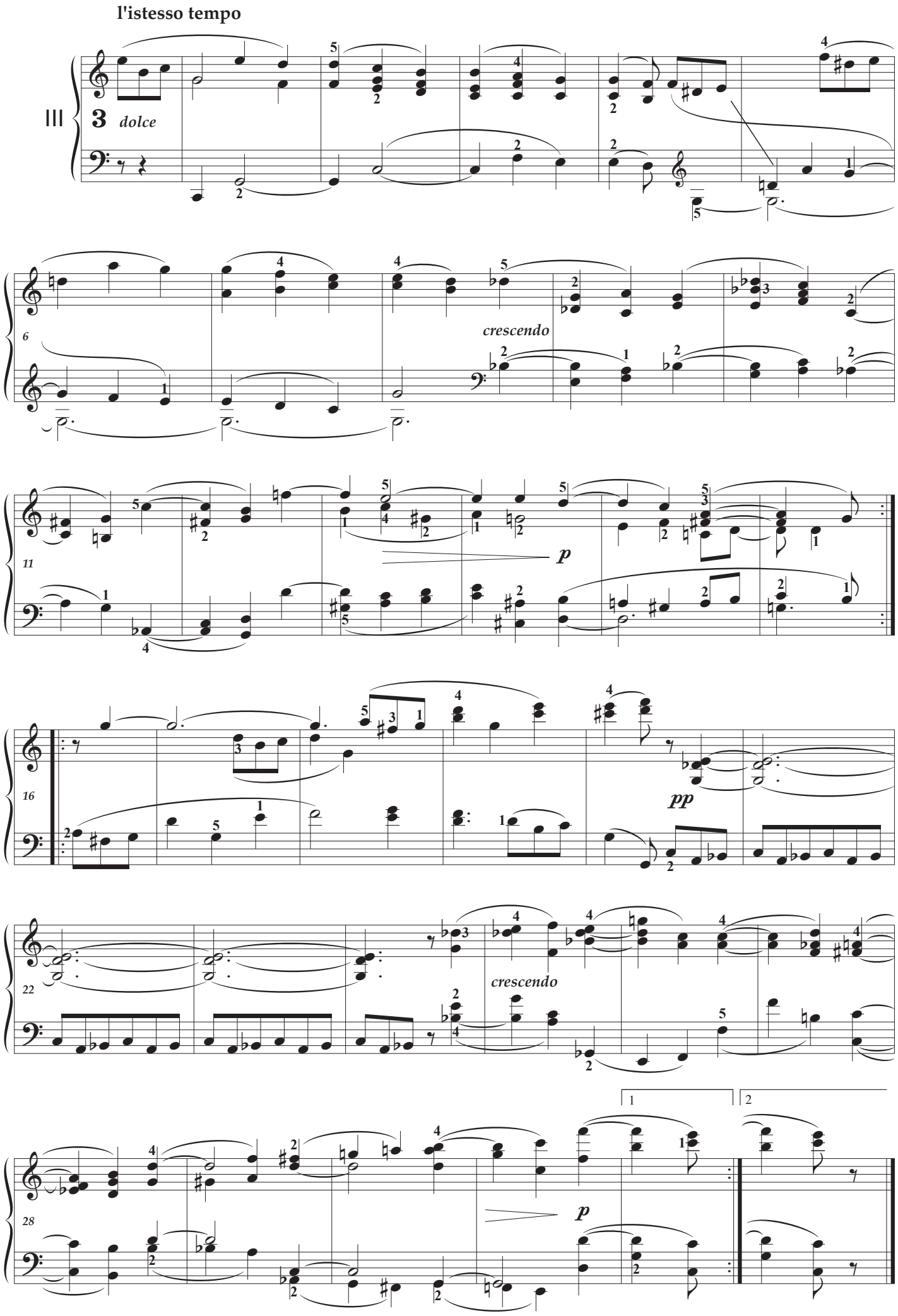

vivace
THEMA
simile

alla marcia, maestoso

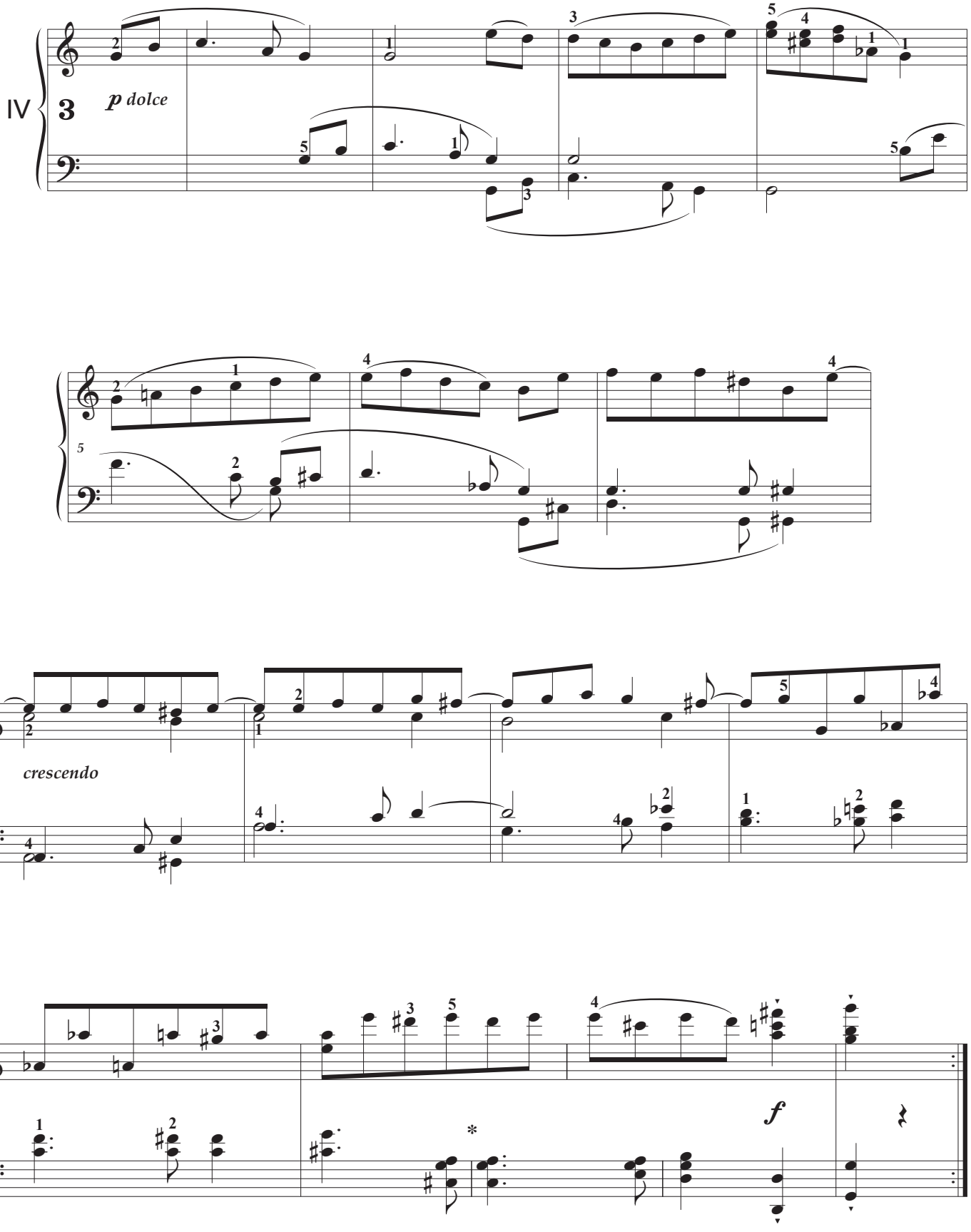


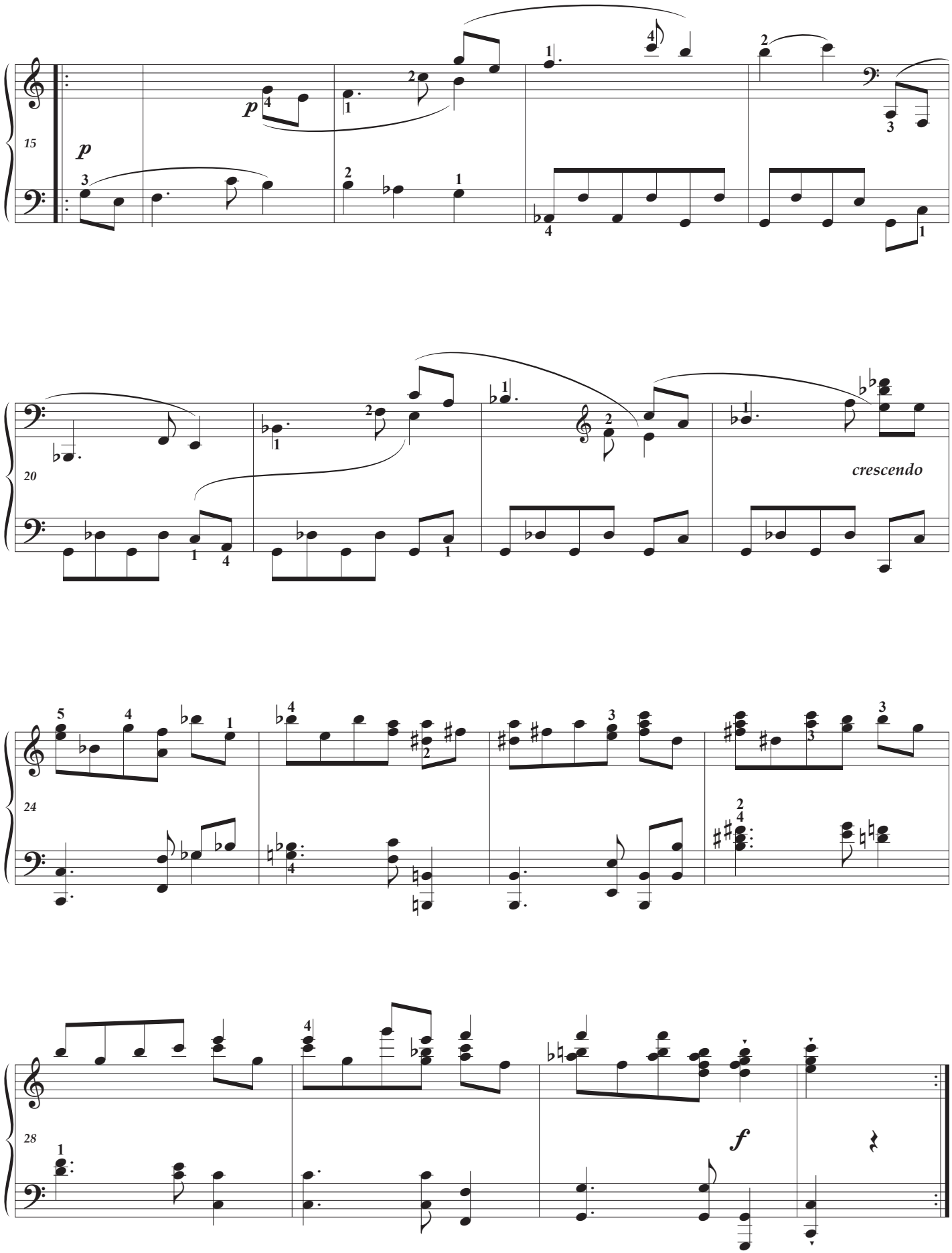

16
f
sf
sf
sf
21
25
sf
p
f
sf
p
f
29
sf
sf
1
2
3
2

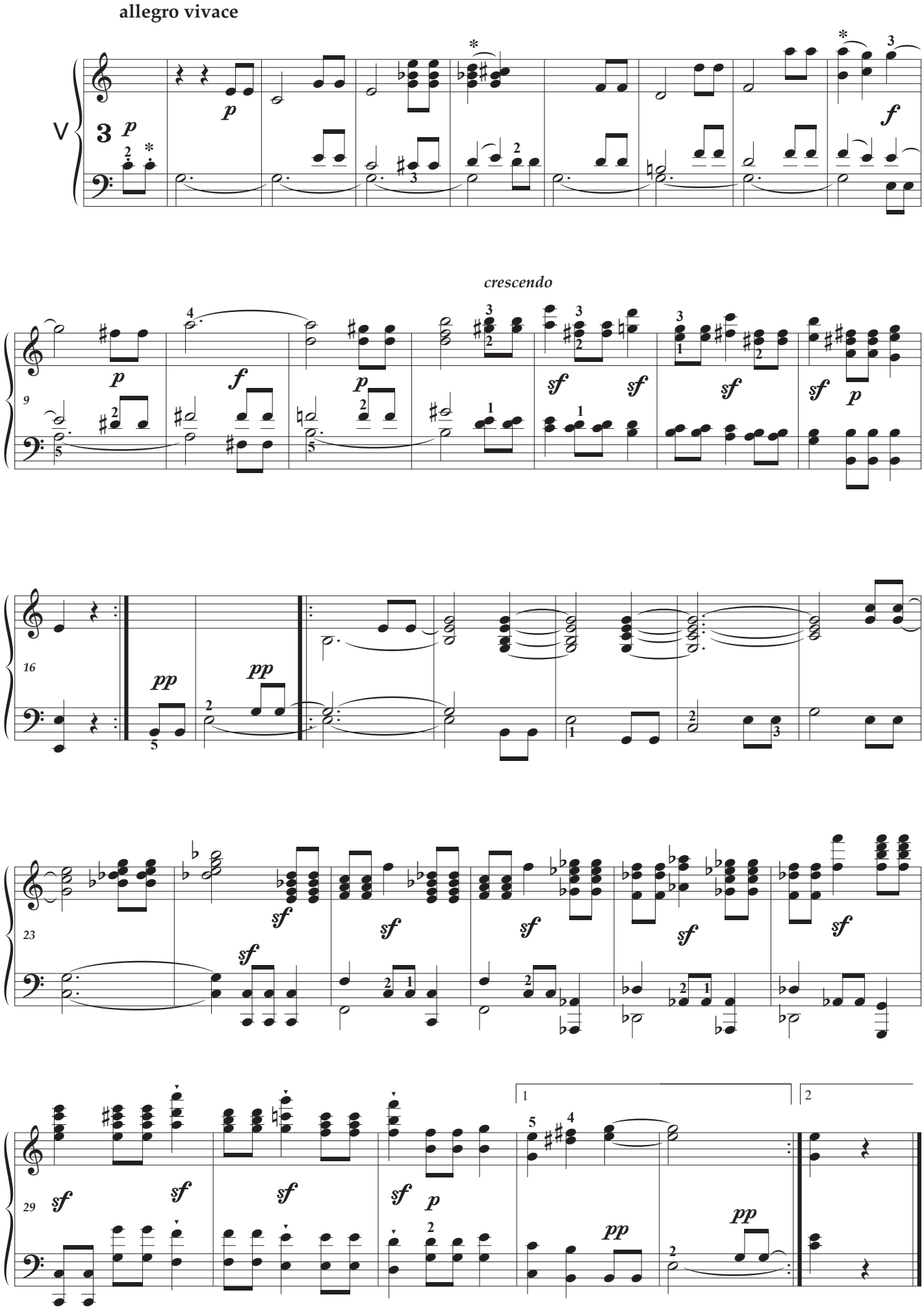

poco allegro
3
p leggiermente
6
11
16
22
28
1
2


l'istesso tempo
III
3
dolce
6
crescendo
11
p
16
pp
22
crescendo
28
1
2
p

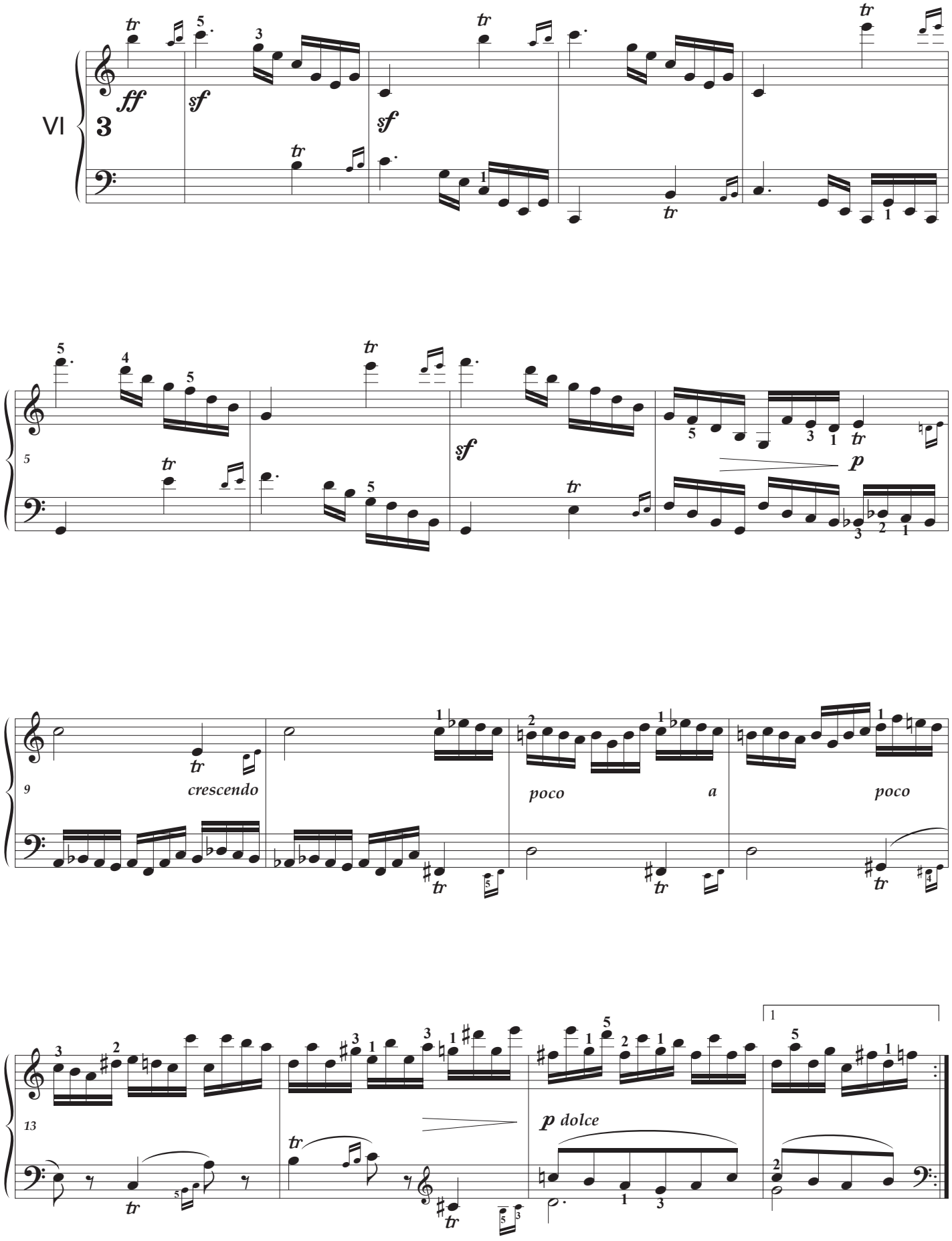
un poco più vivace

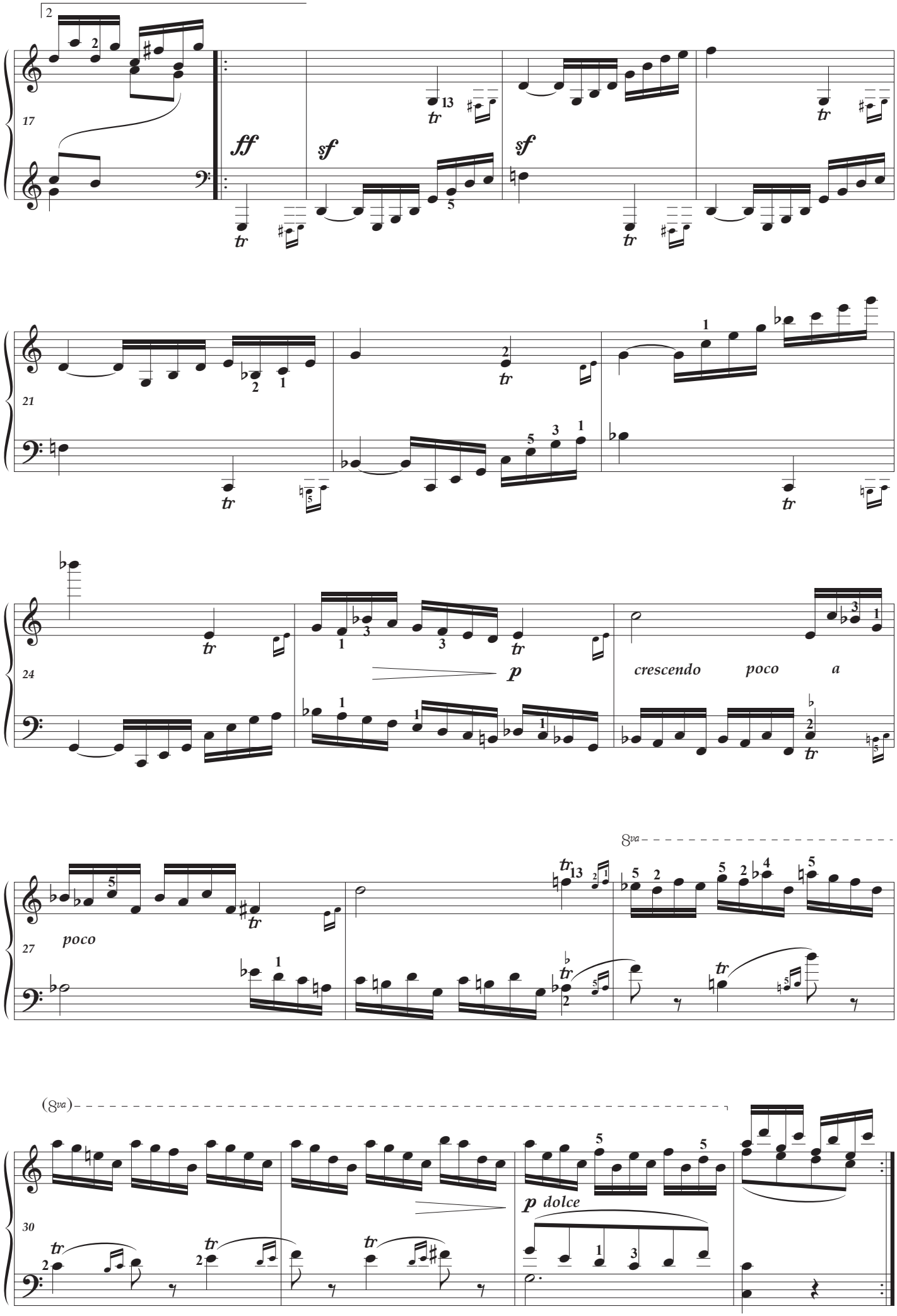


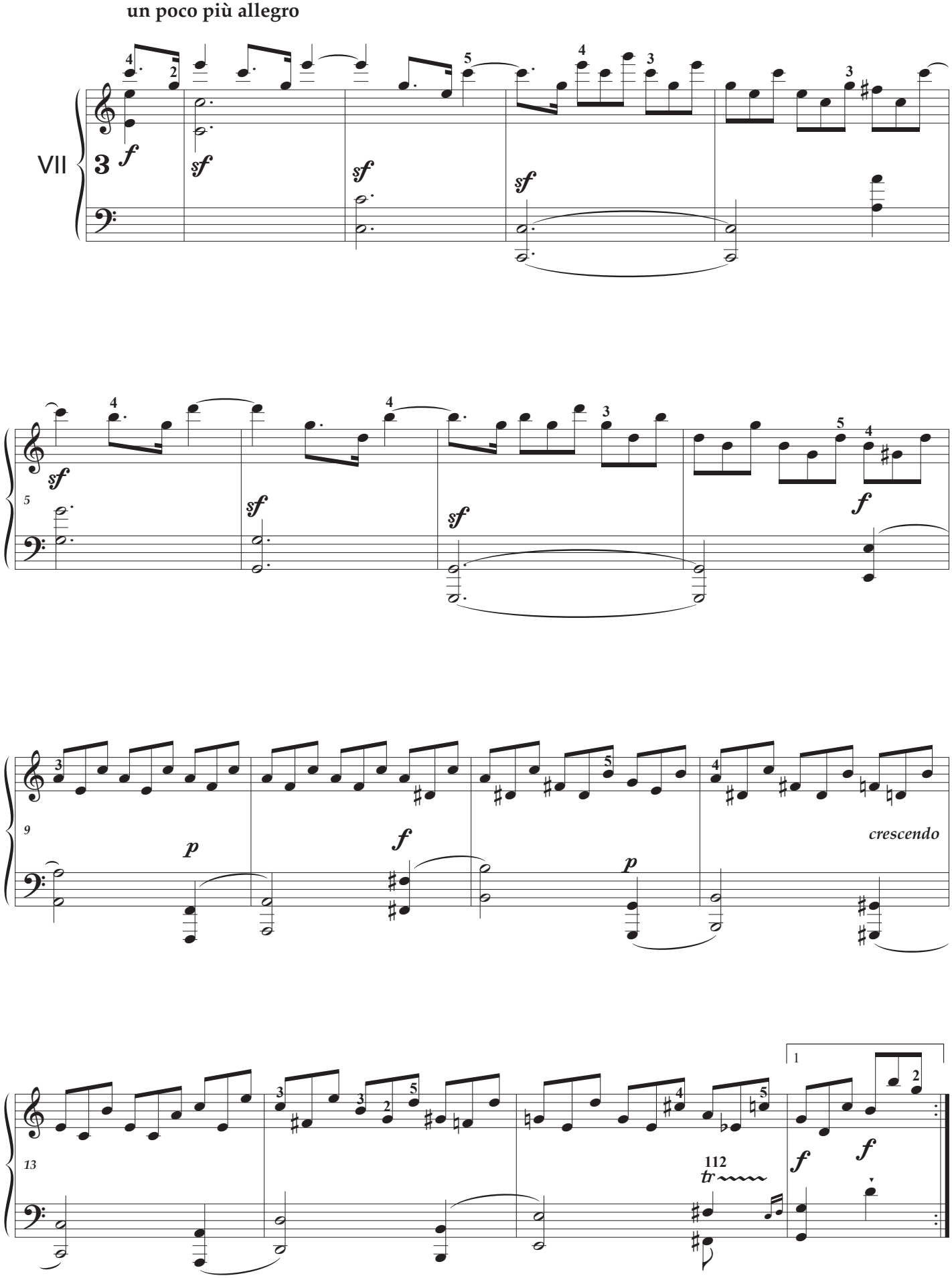

15
p
p
20
crescendo
24
28
f

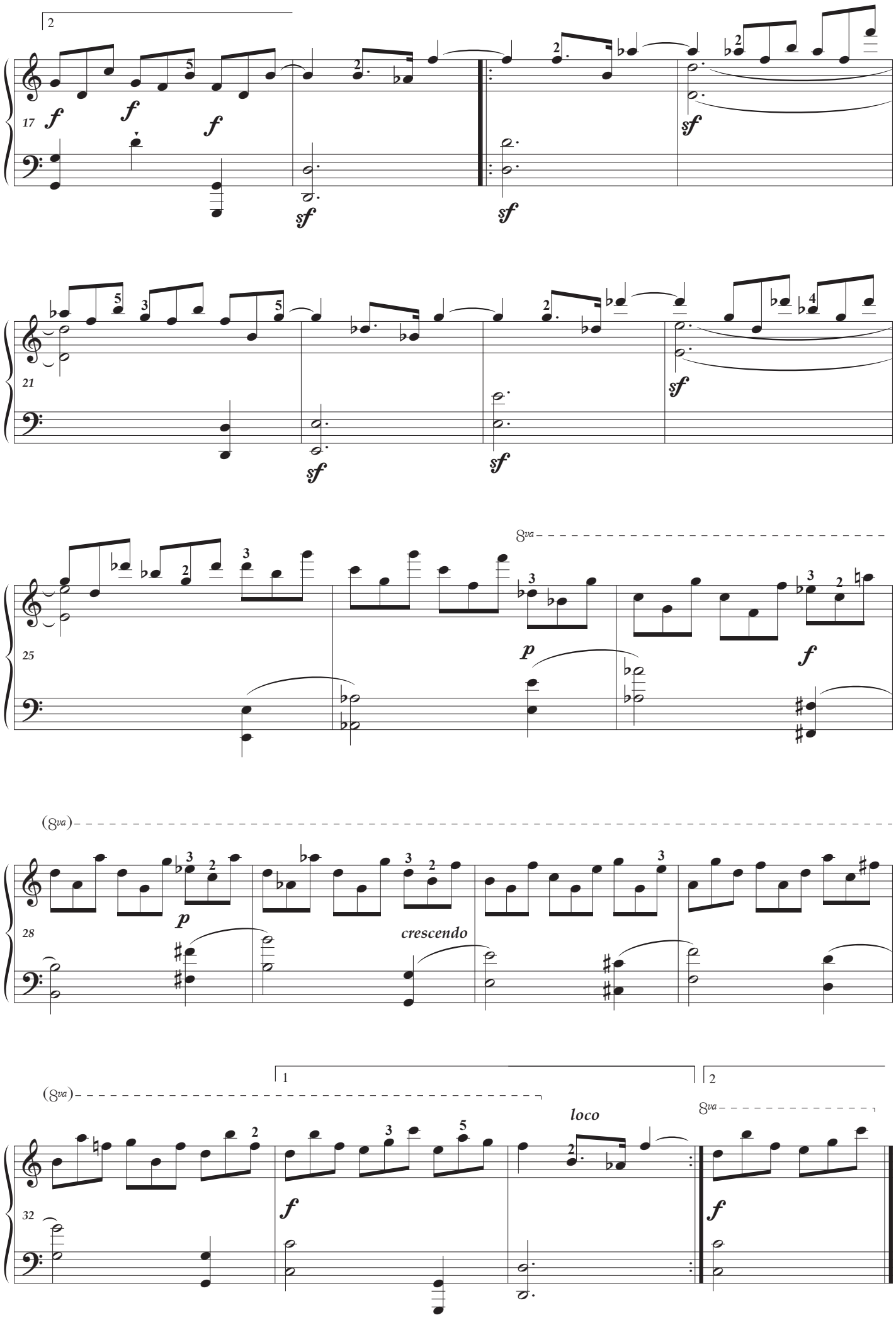

allegro vivace
crescendo

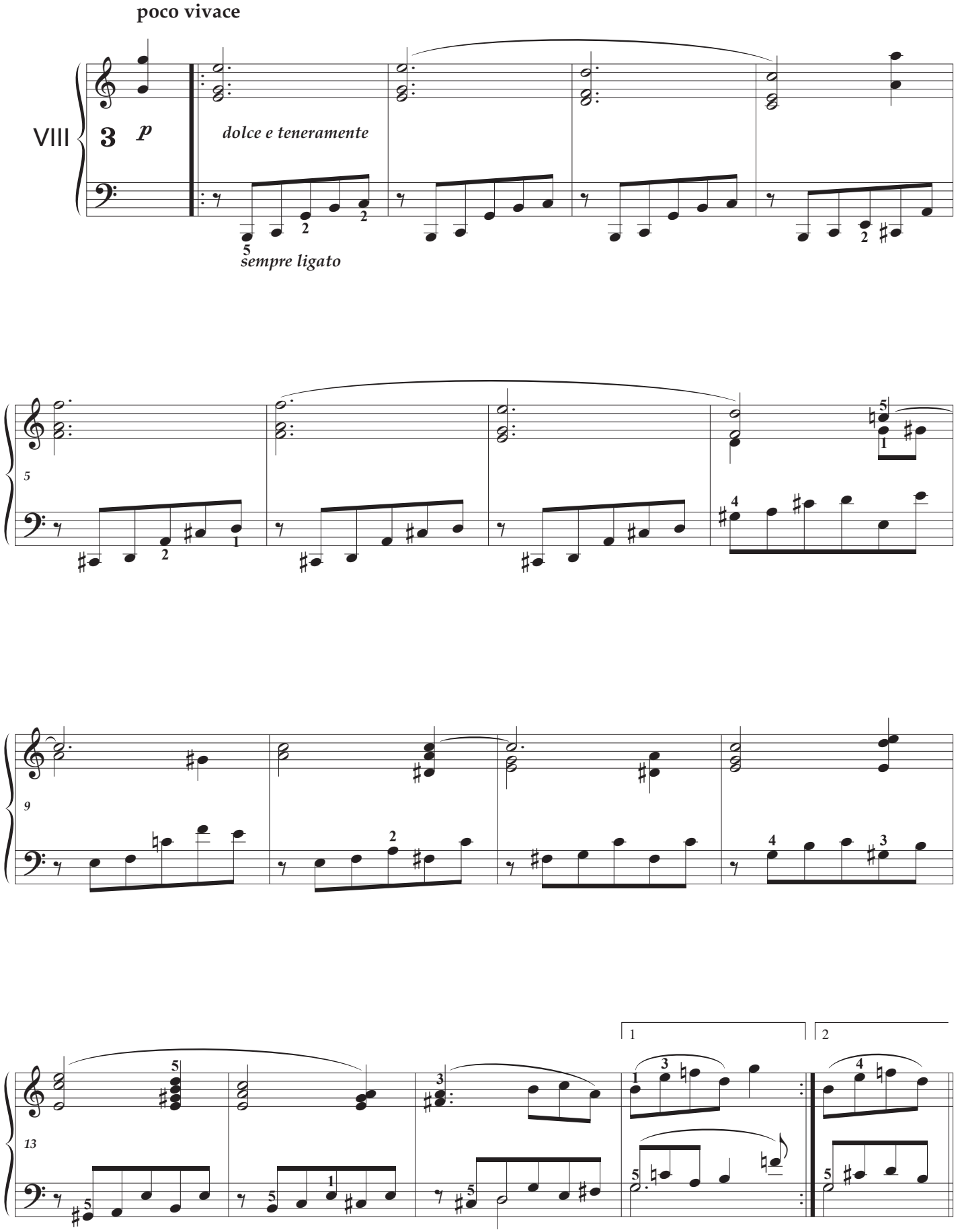
allegro ma non troppo e serioso

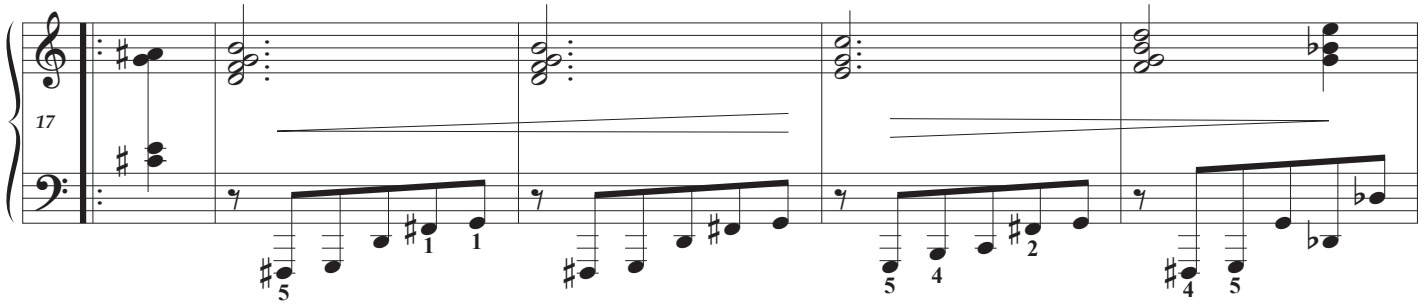



17
ff
sf
sf
21
24
p
crescendo poco a
27
poco
8va
(8va)
30
p dolce


un poco più allegro
VII
3
f
sf
sf
sf
sf
5
sf
sf
sf
f
9
p
f
p
crescendo
13
112
tr
1
f
f


2
17
f
f
f
sf
sf
sf
sf
21
sf
sf
sf
25
8va
p
f
(8va)
28
p
crescendo
(8va)
1
2
32
loco
8va
f
f


poco vivace
VIII
3
p
dolce e teneramente
sempre ligato
5
9
13
1
2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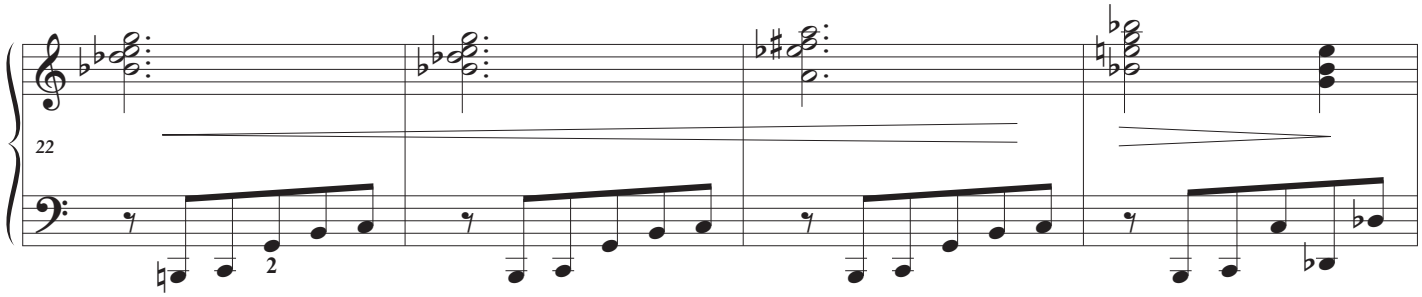
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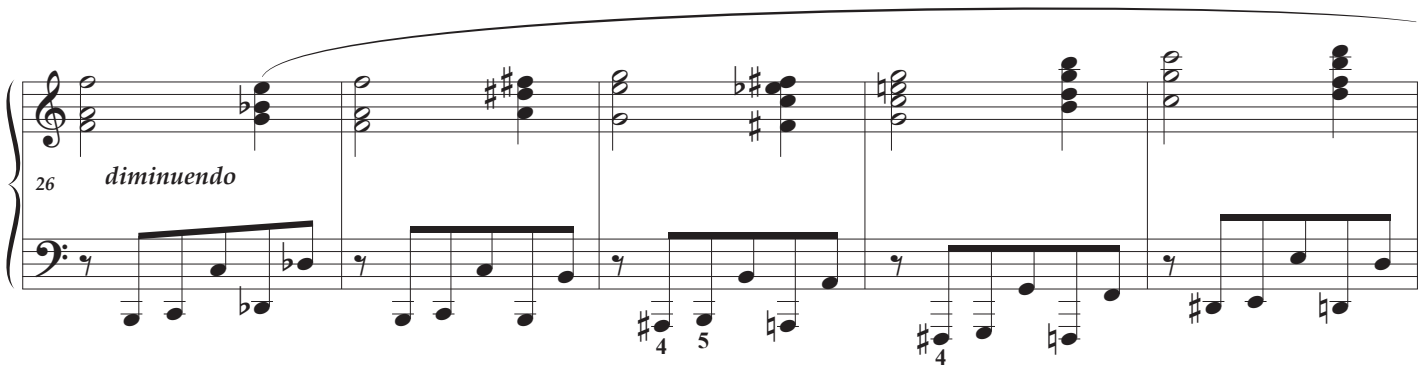
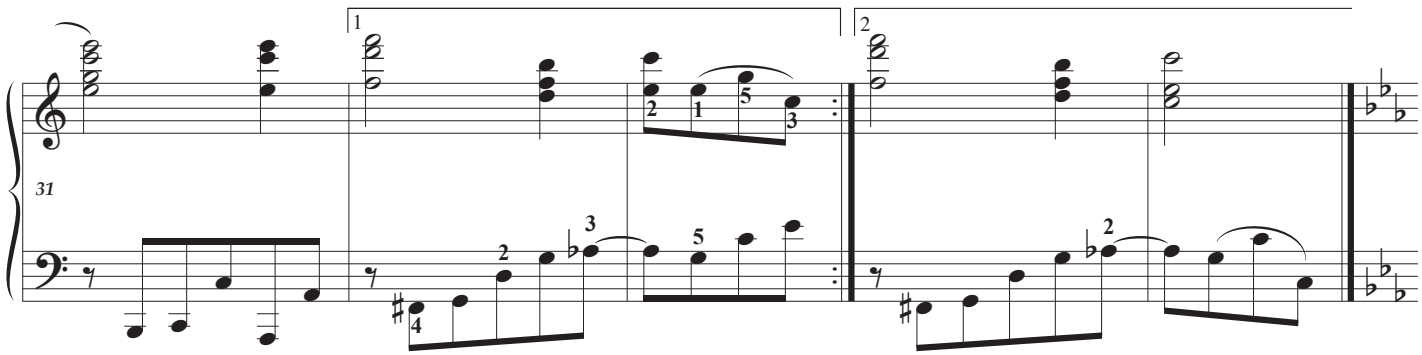
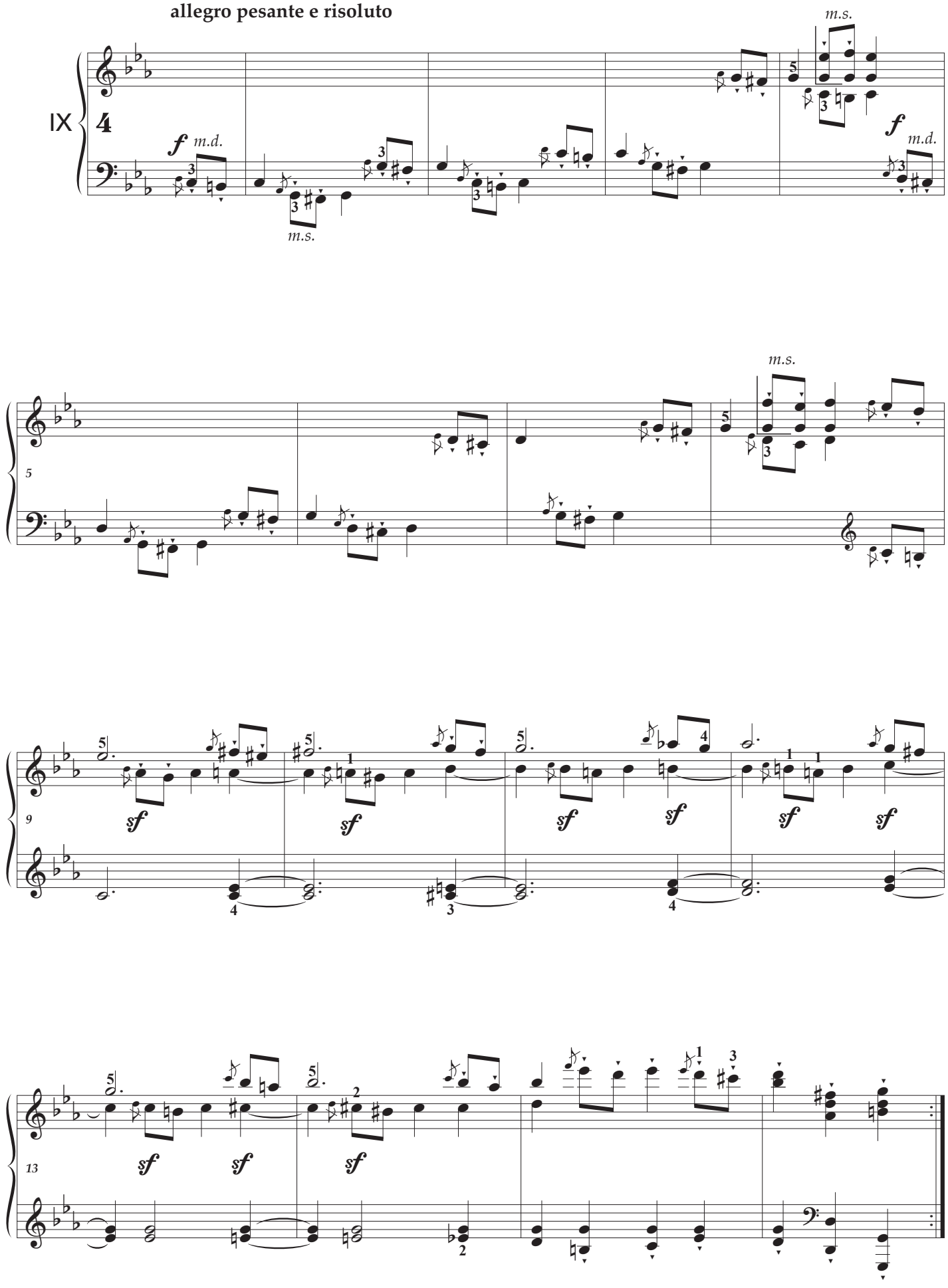
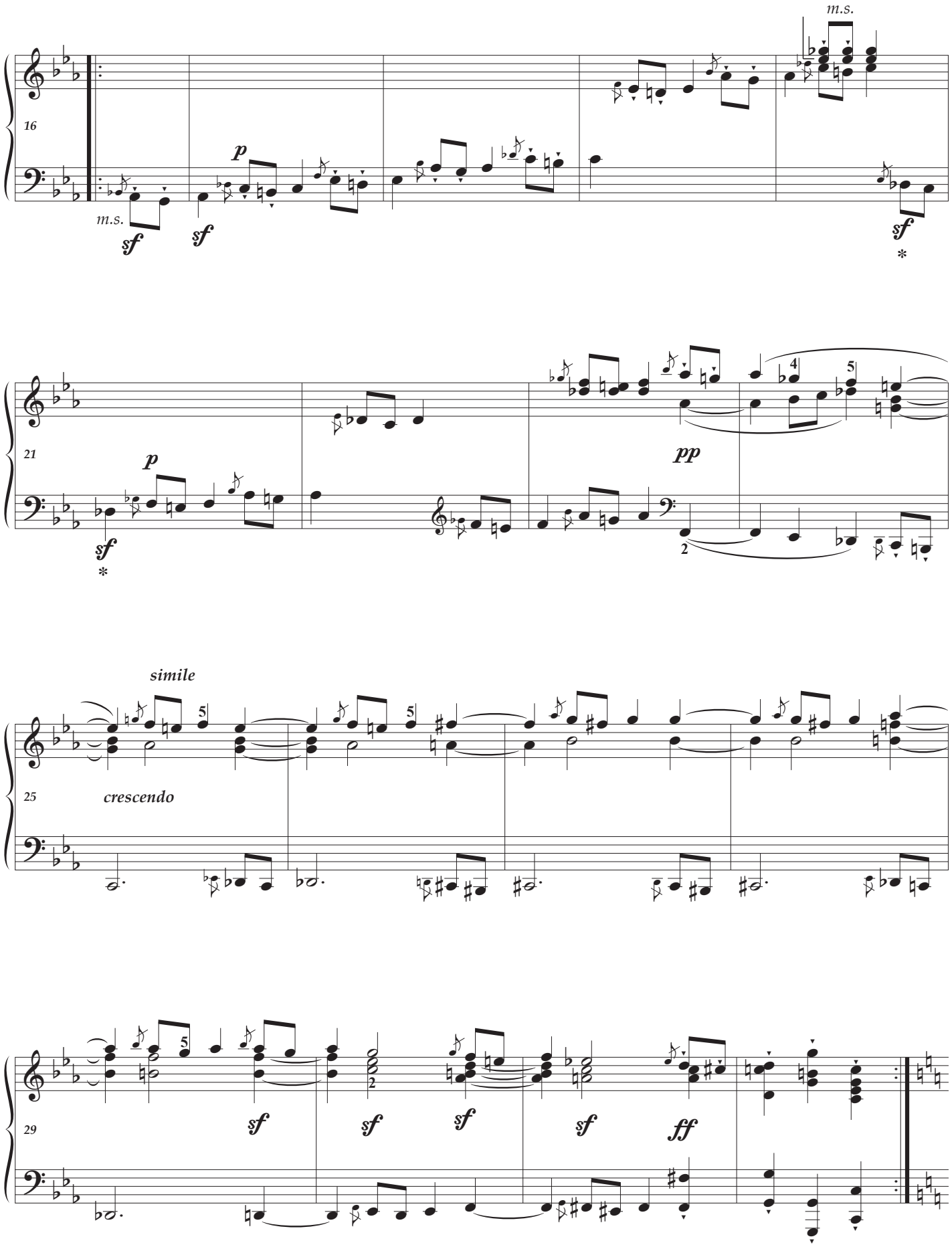
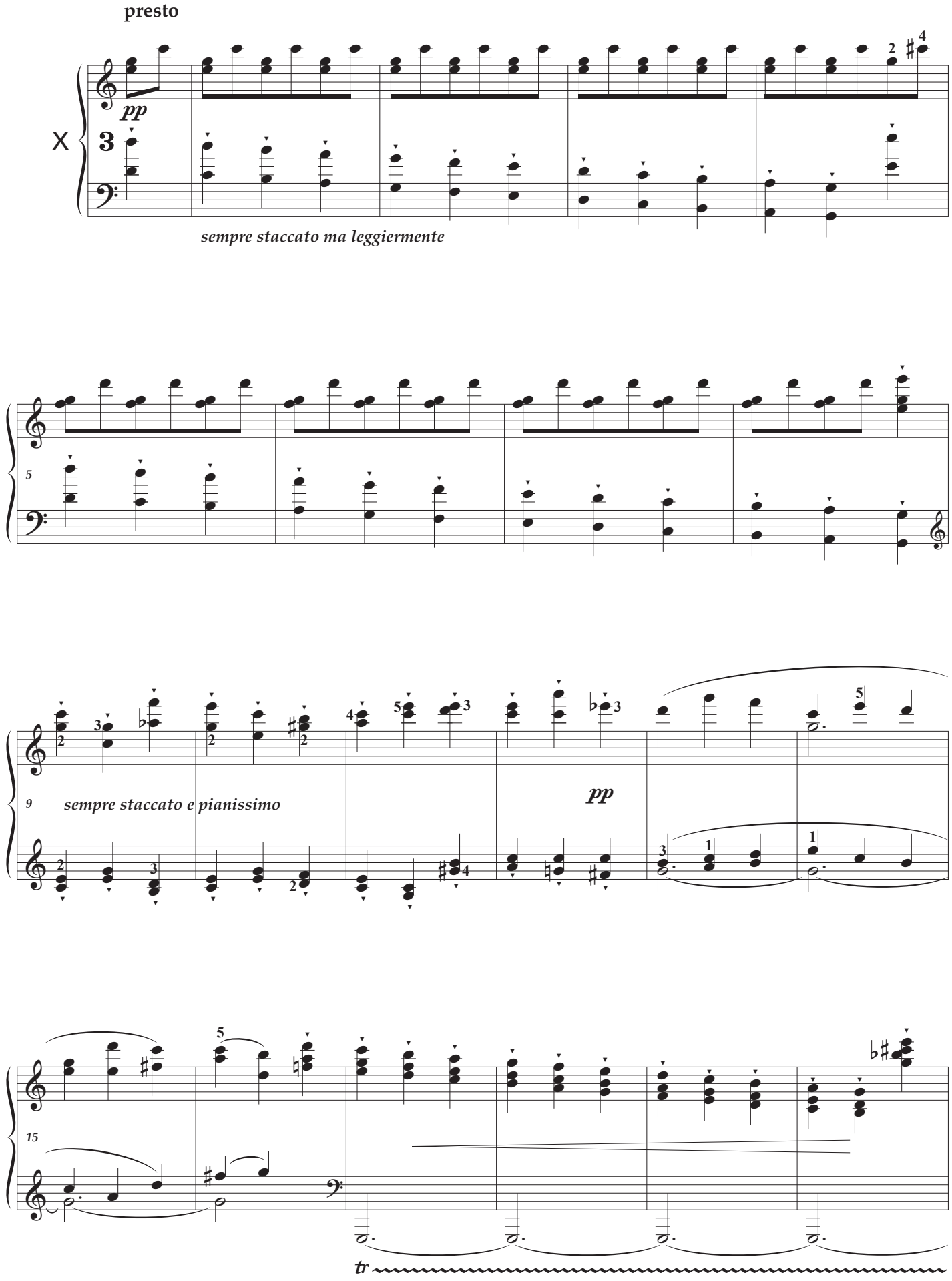
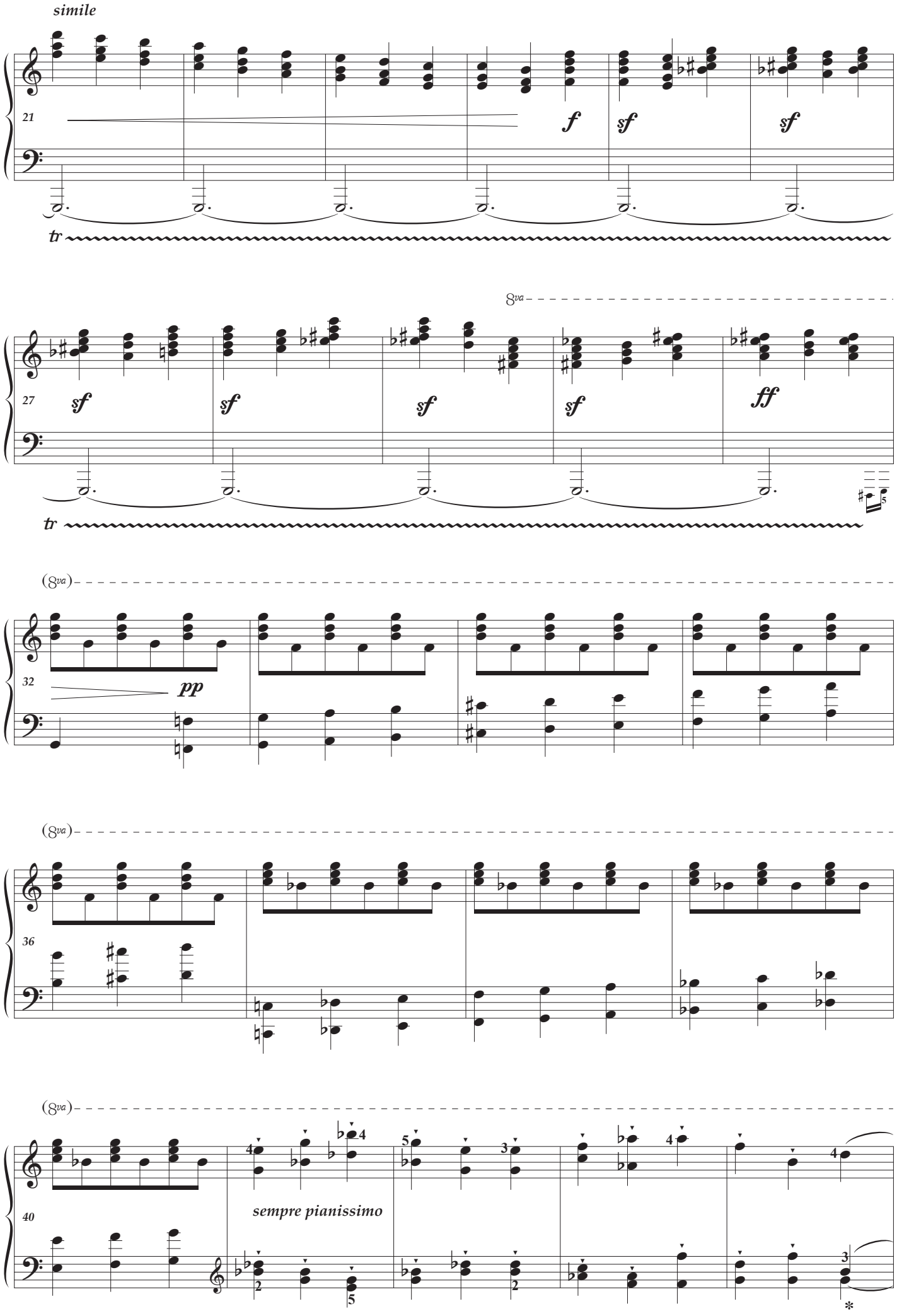

26
diminuendo

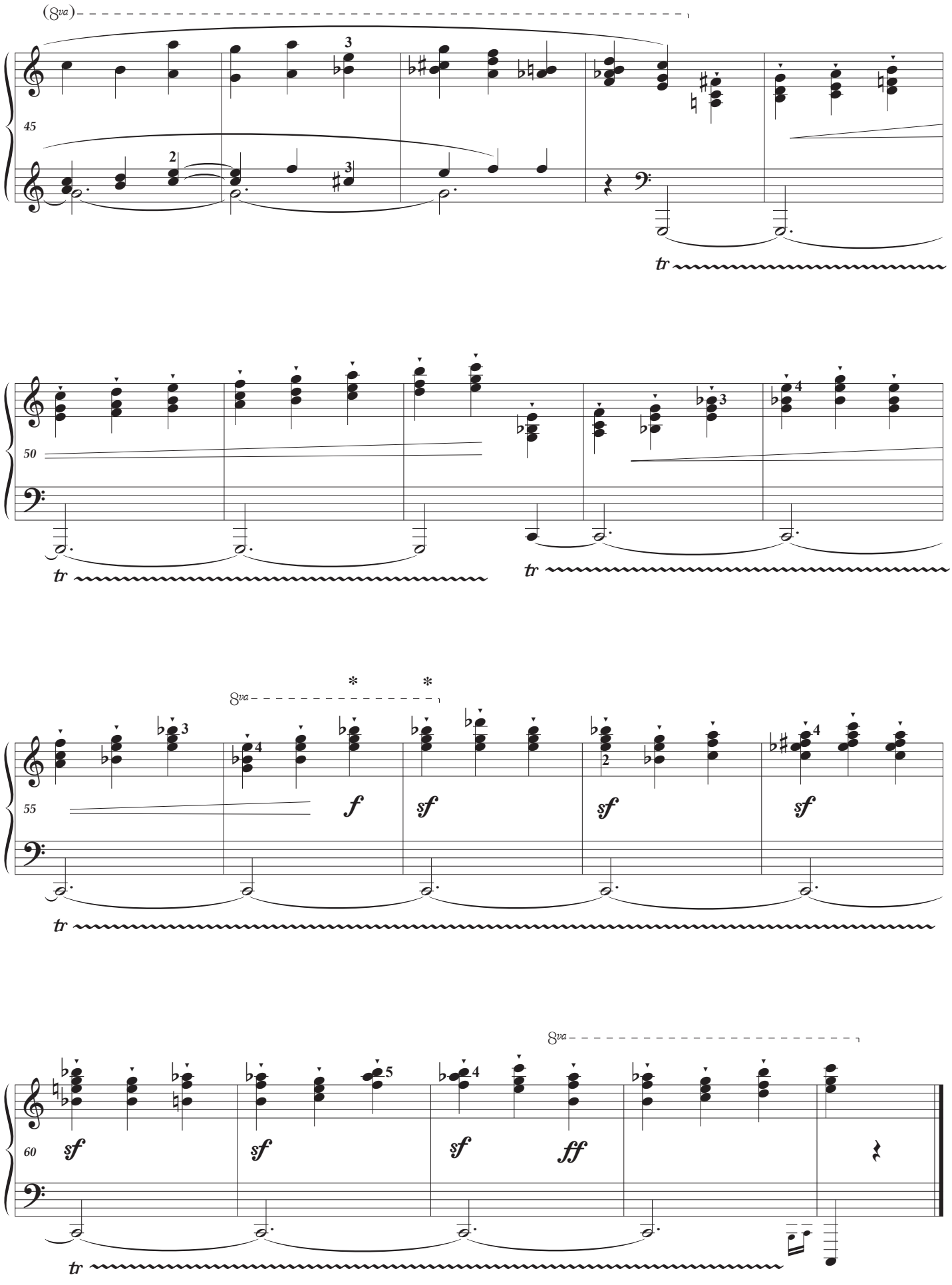

31
1
2


allegro pesante e risoluto
IX
m.s.
m.d.
5
9
13
sf


m.s.
16
m.s.
sf
p
sf
m.s.
sf
*
21
p
sf
*
pp
2
simile
25
crescendo
29
sf
sf
sf
sf
ff

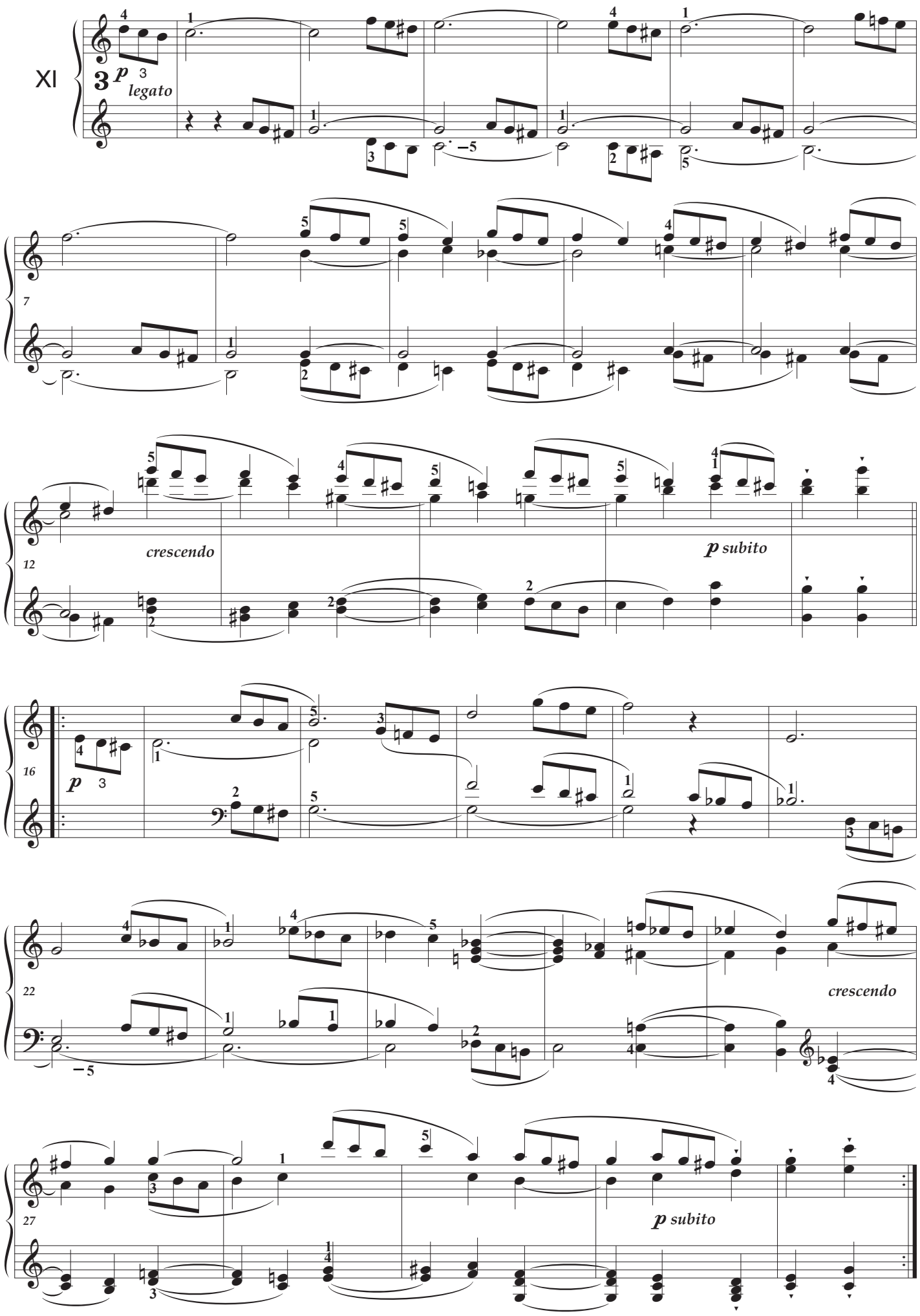

presto
pp
sempre staccato ma leggiermente
5
9
sempre staccato e pianissimo
pp
15
tr


simile
21
f
sf
sf
tr
8va
27
sf
sf
sf
sf
ff
tr
(8va)
32
pp
(8va)
36
(8va)
40
sempre pianissimo

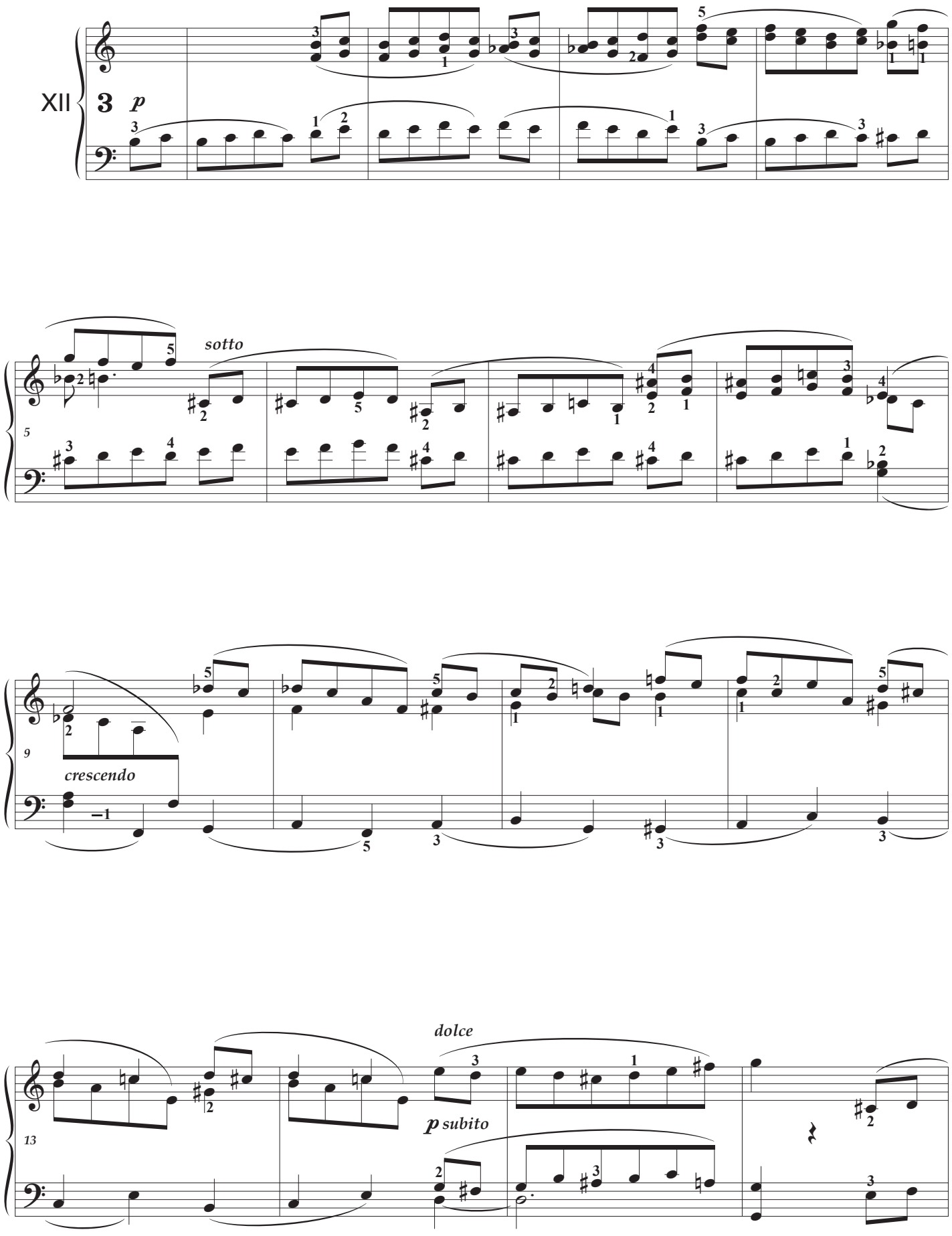

(8va)
45
tr
50
tr
tr
8va
*
*
55
f
sf
sf
sf
tr
8va
60
sf
sf
sf
ff
tr

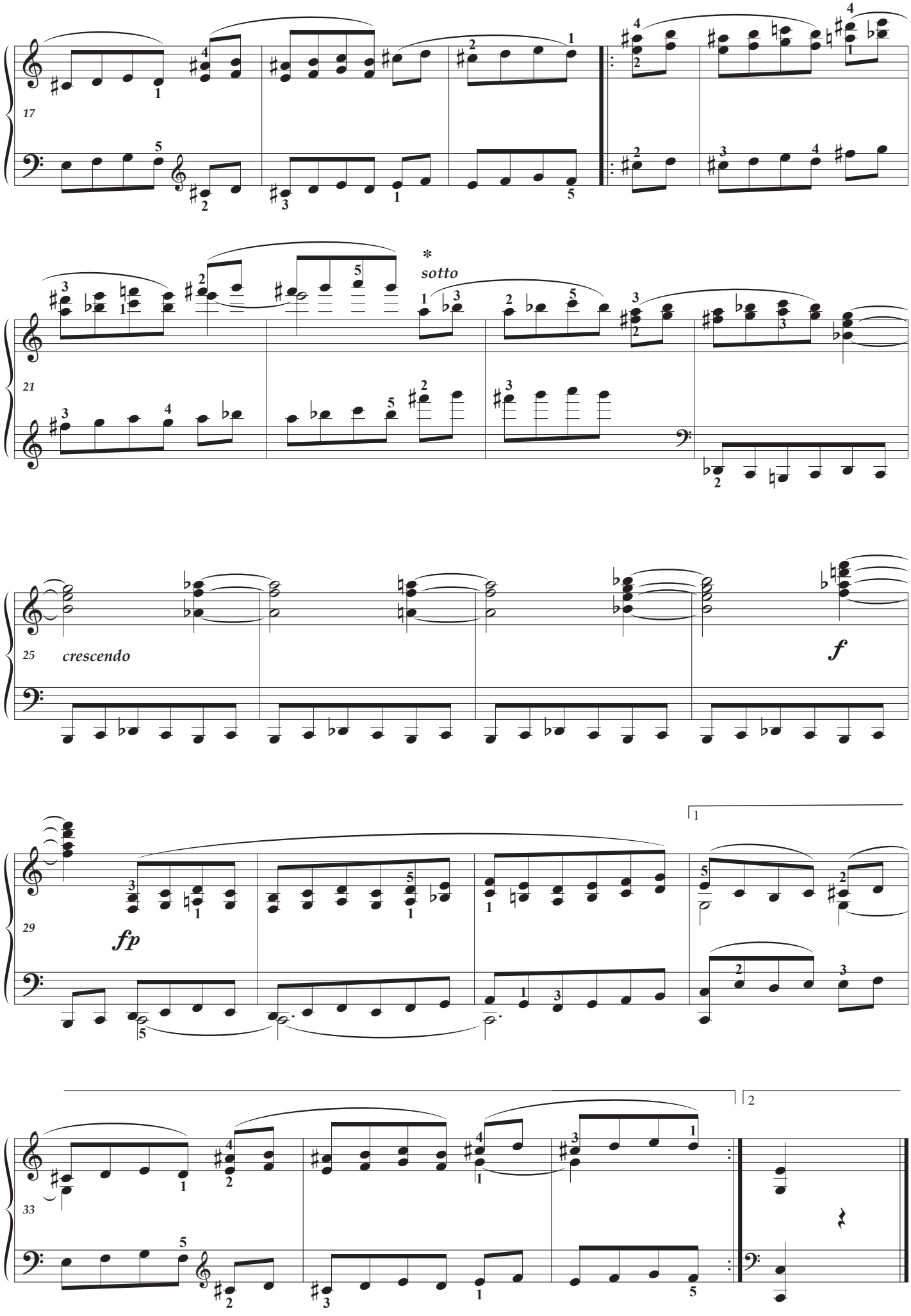
allegretto

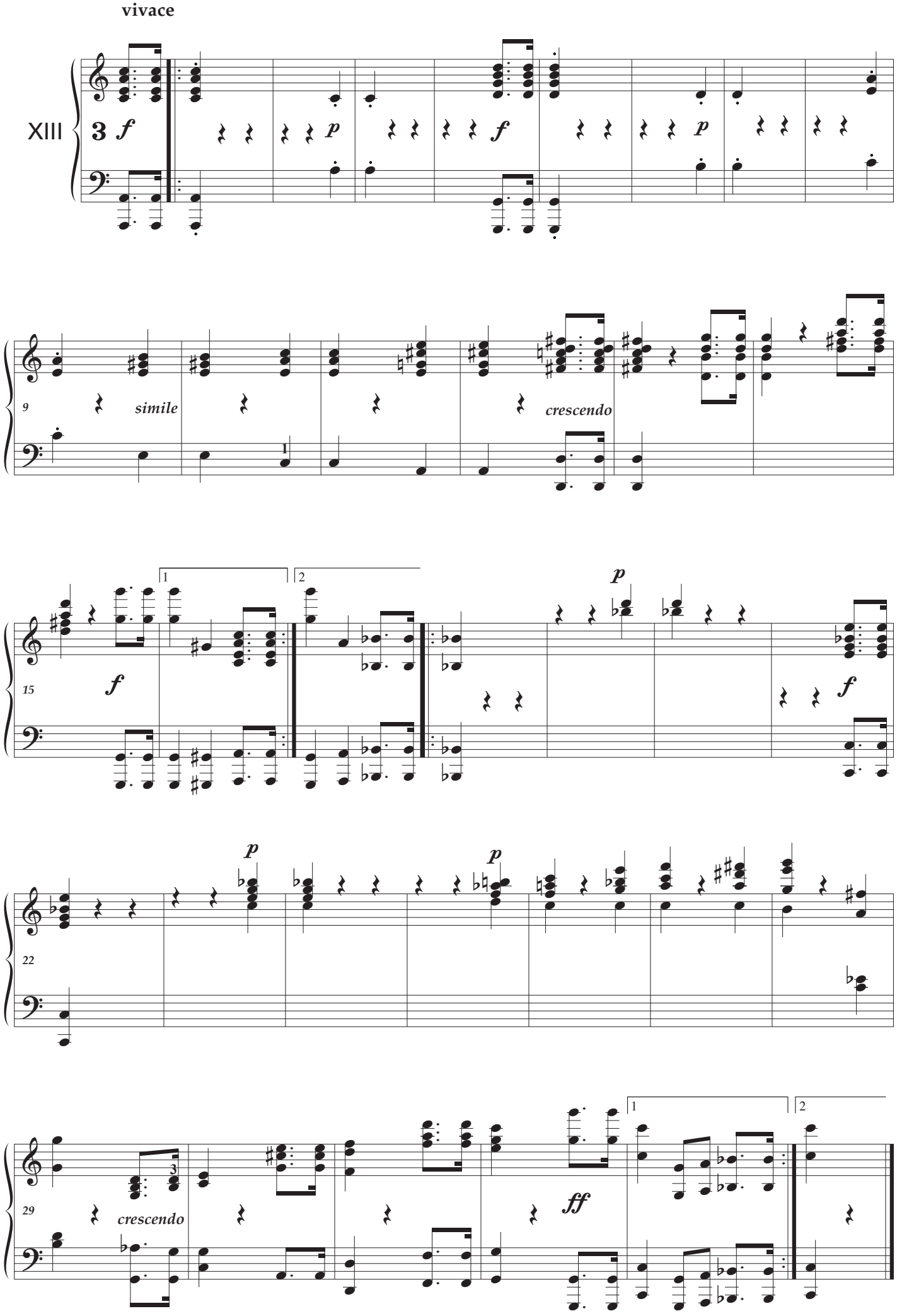
XI



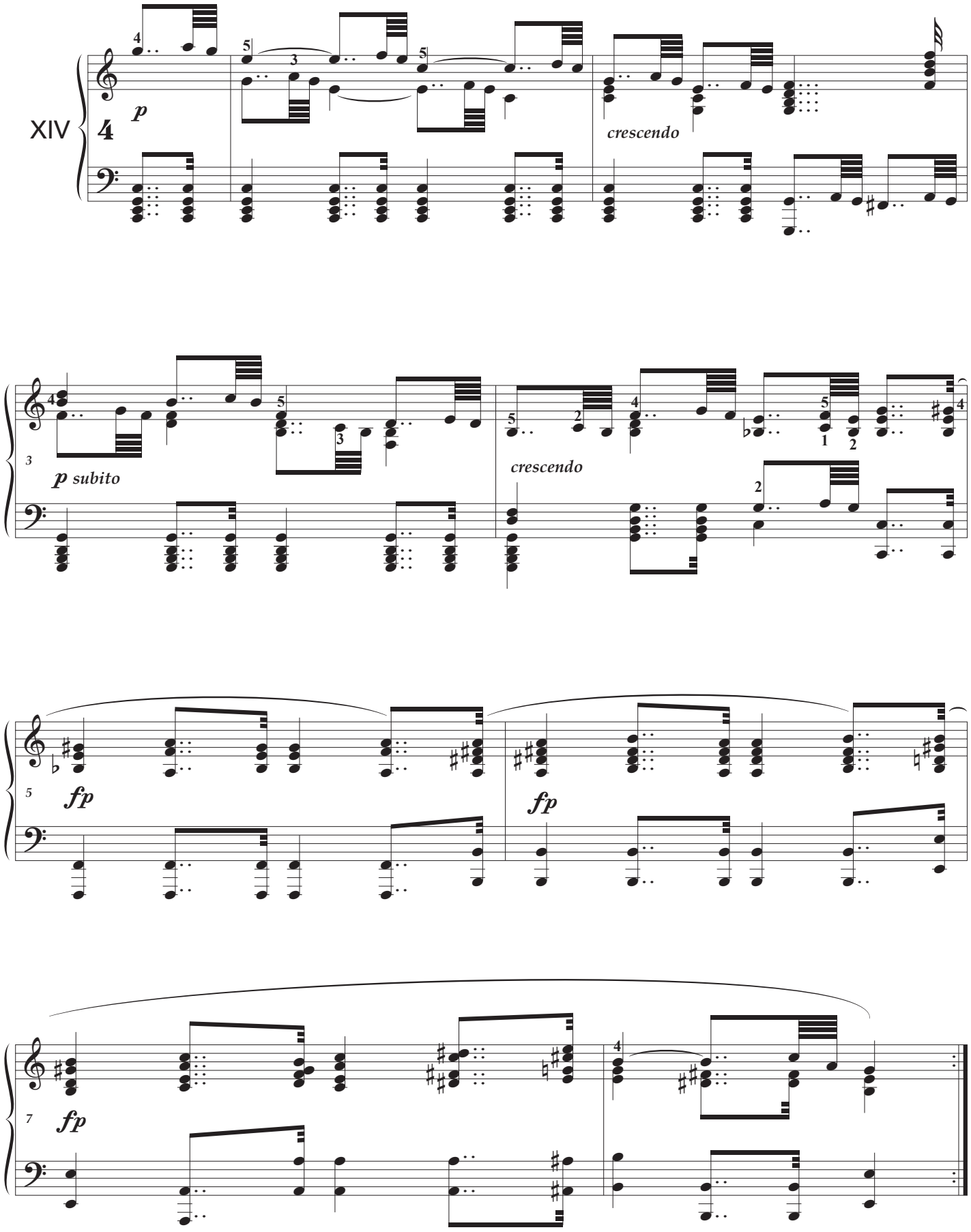
un poco più mosso

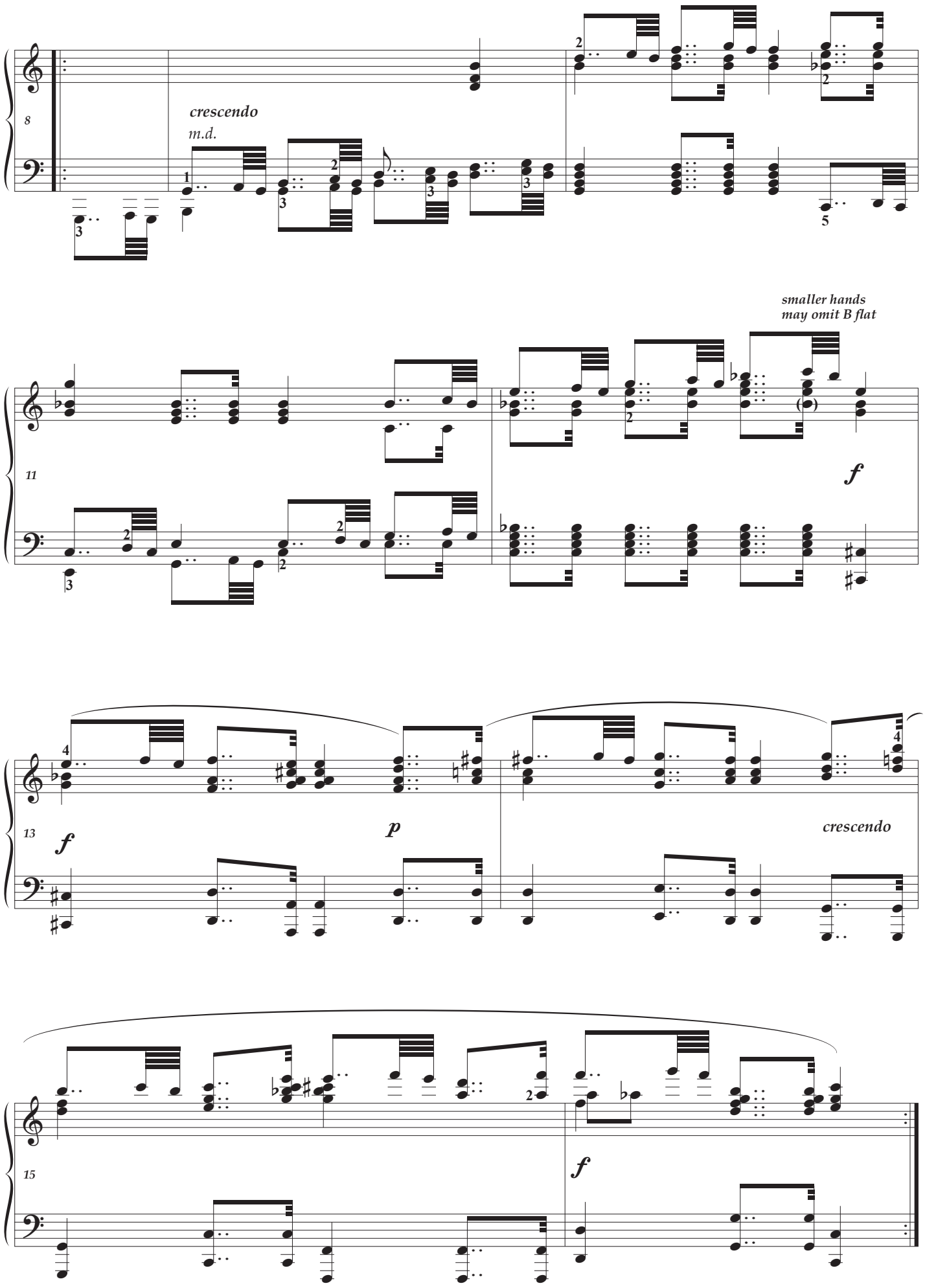



17
21
*
sotto
25
crescendo
f
29
fp
1
33
2

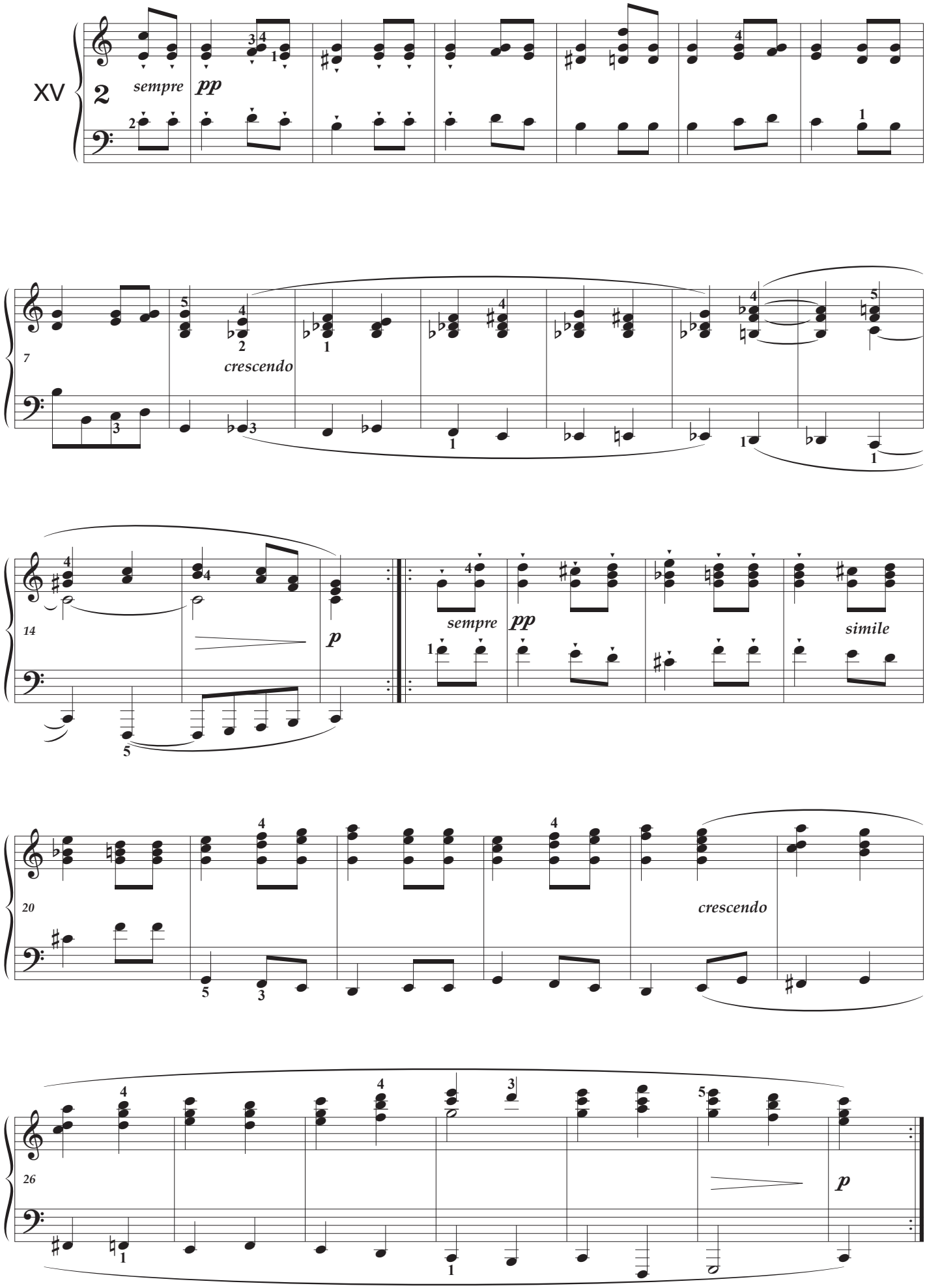

vivace
XIII
3
f
p
f
p
9
simile
crescendo
1
15
f
1
2
p
f
22
p
p
29
crescendo
3
ff
1
2

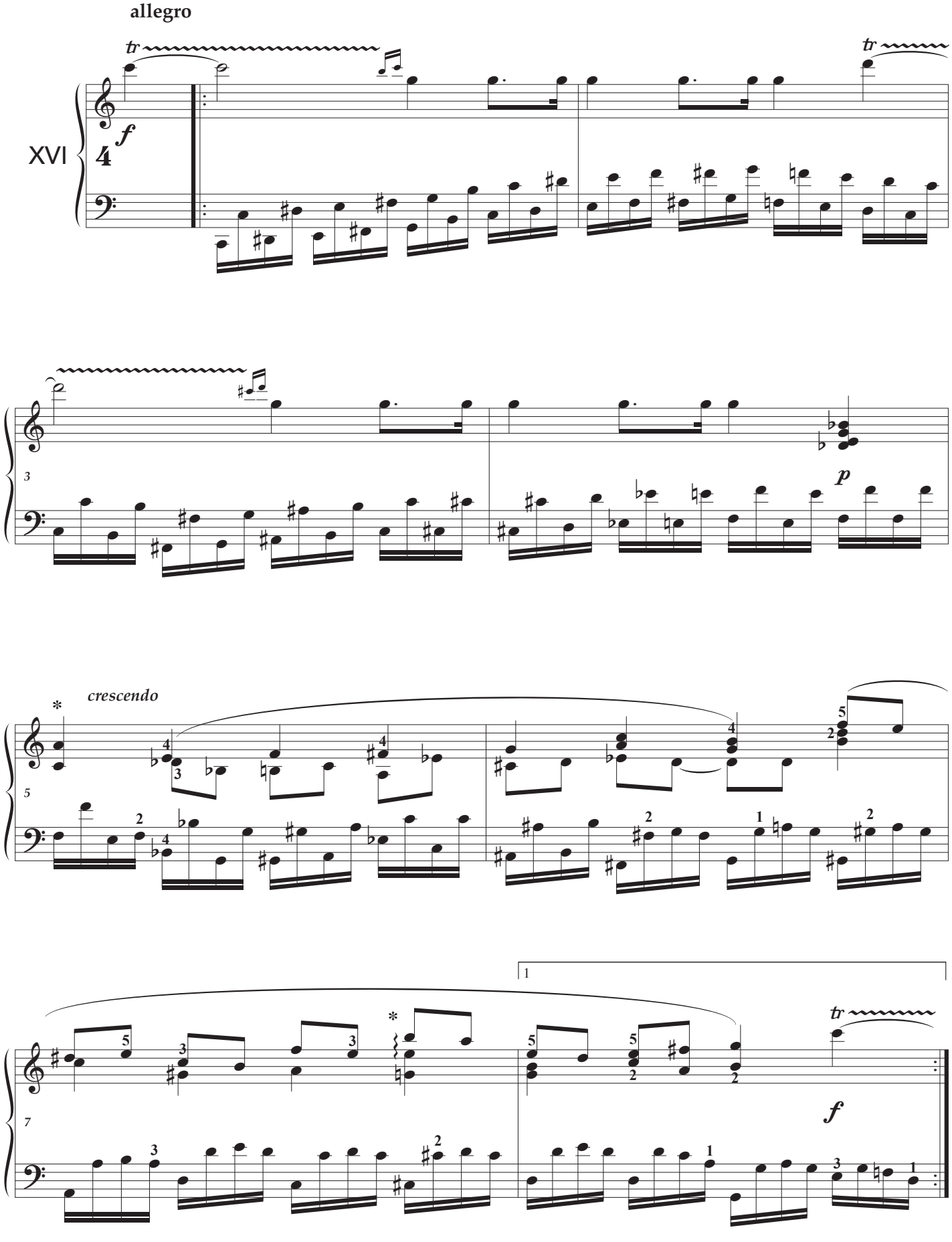
grave e maestoso

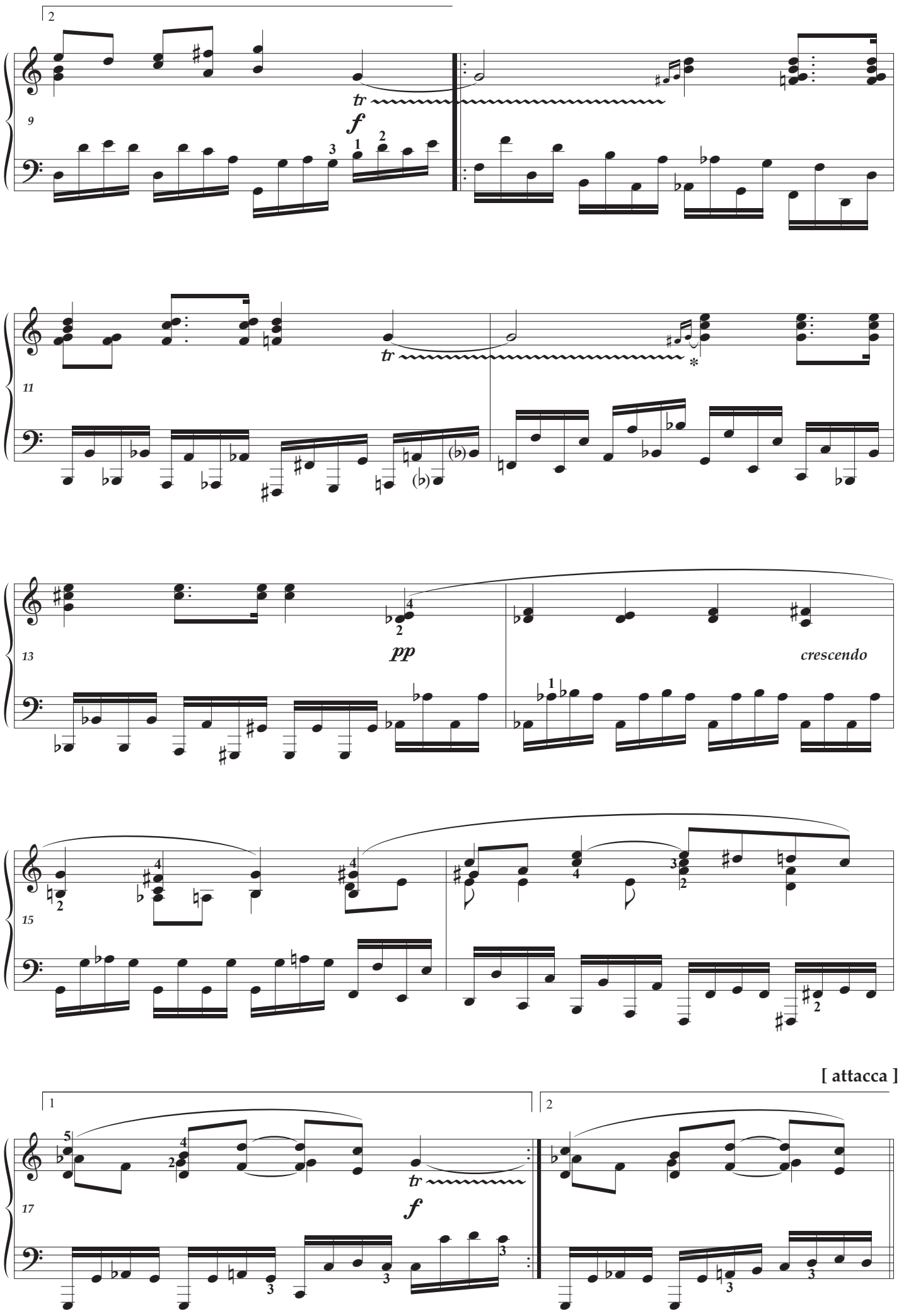



8
crescendo
m.d.
11
smaller hands
may omit B flat
f
13
f
p
crescendo
15
f

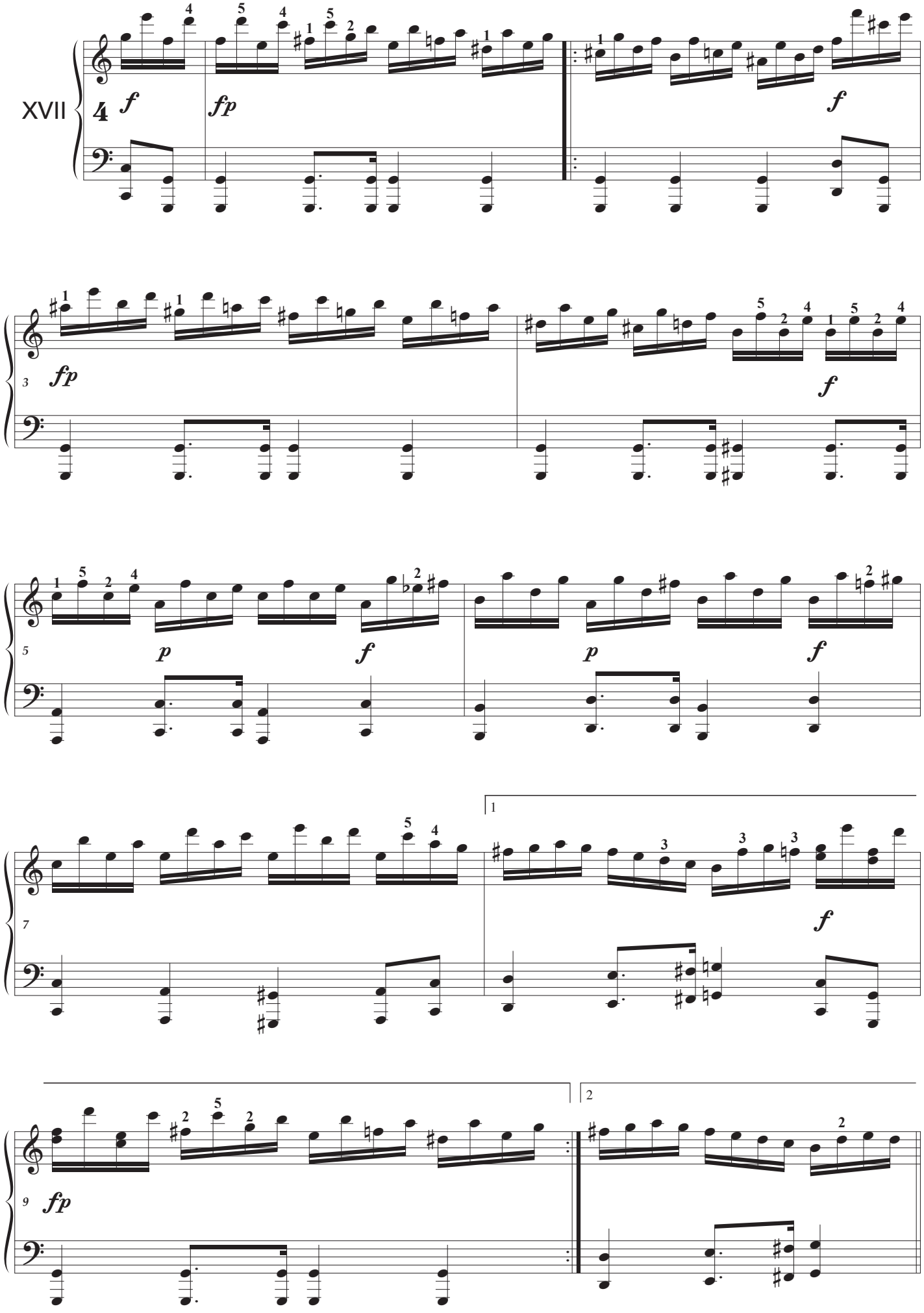
presto scherzando

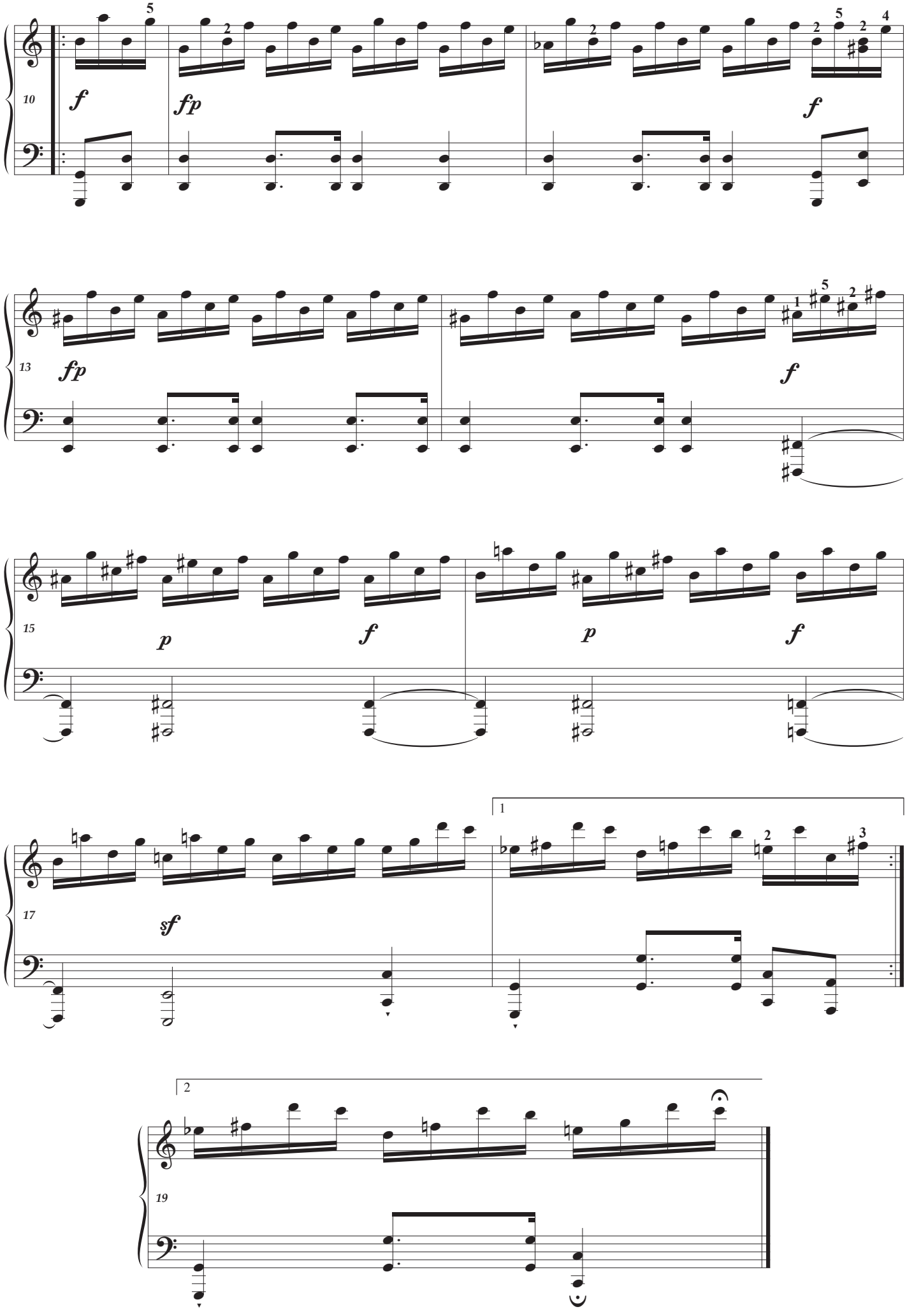


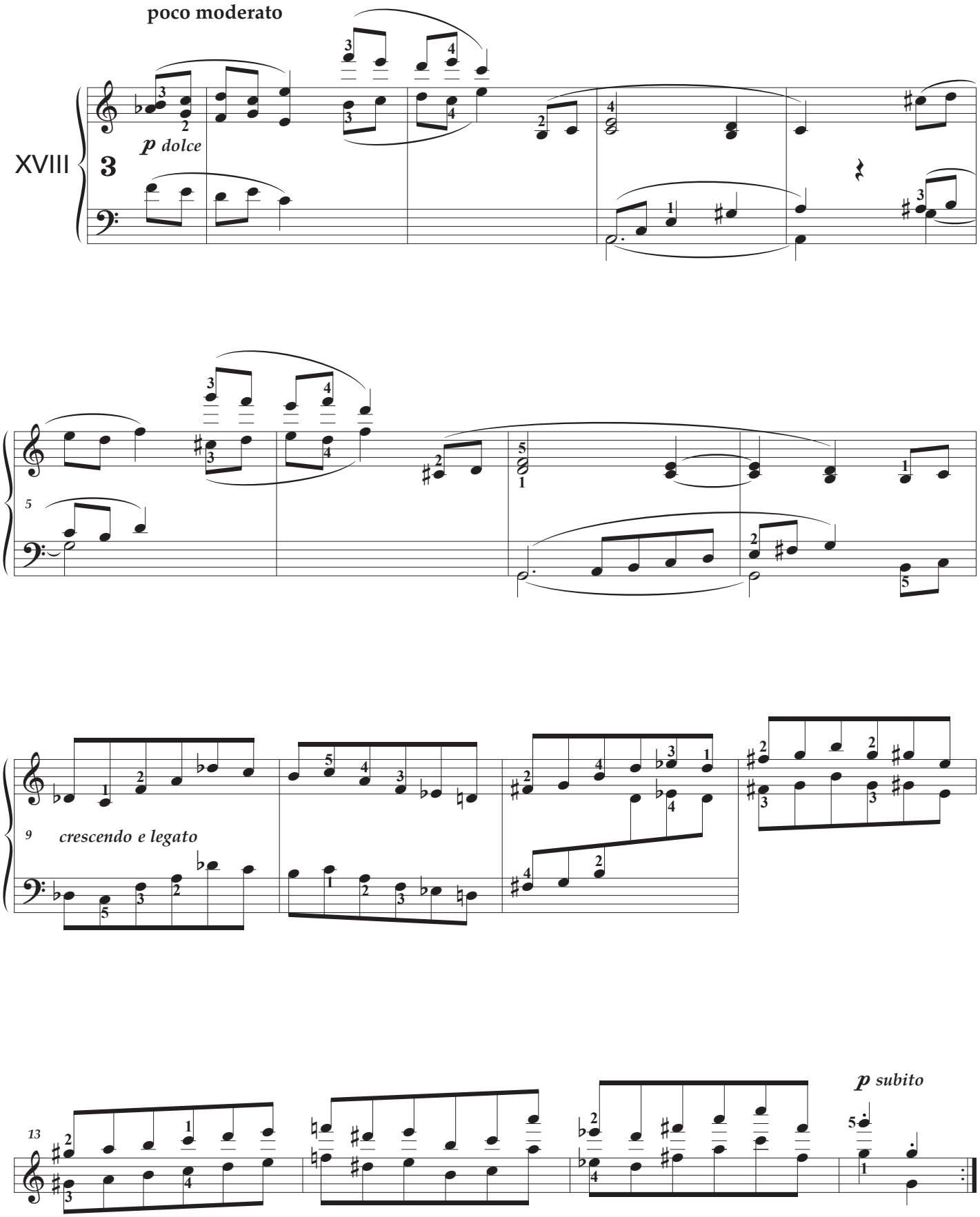

allegro
XVI
tr
f
tr
3
p
crescendo
5
7
1
tr
f

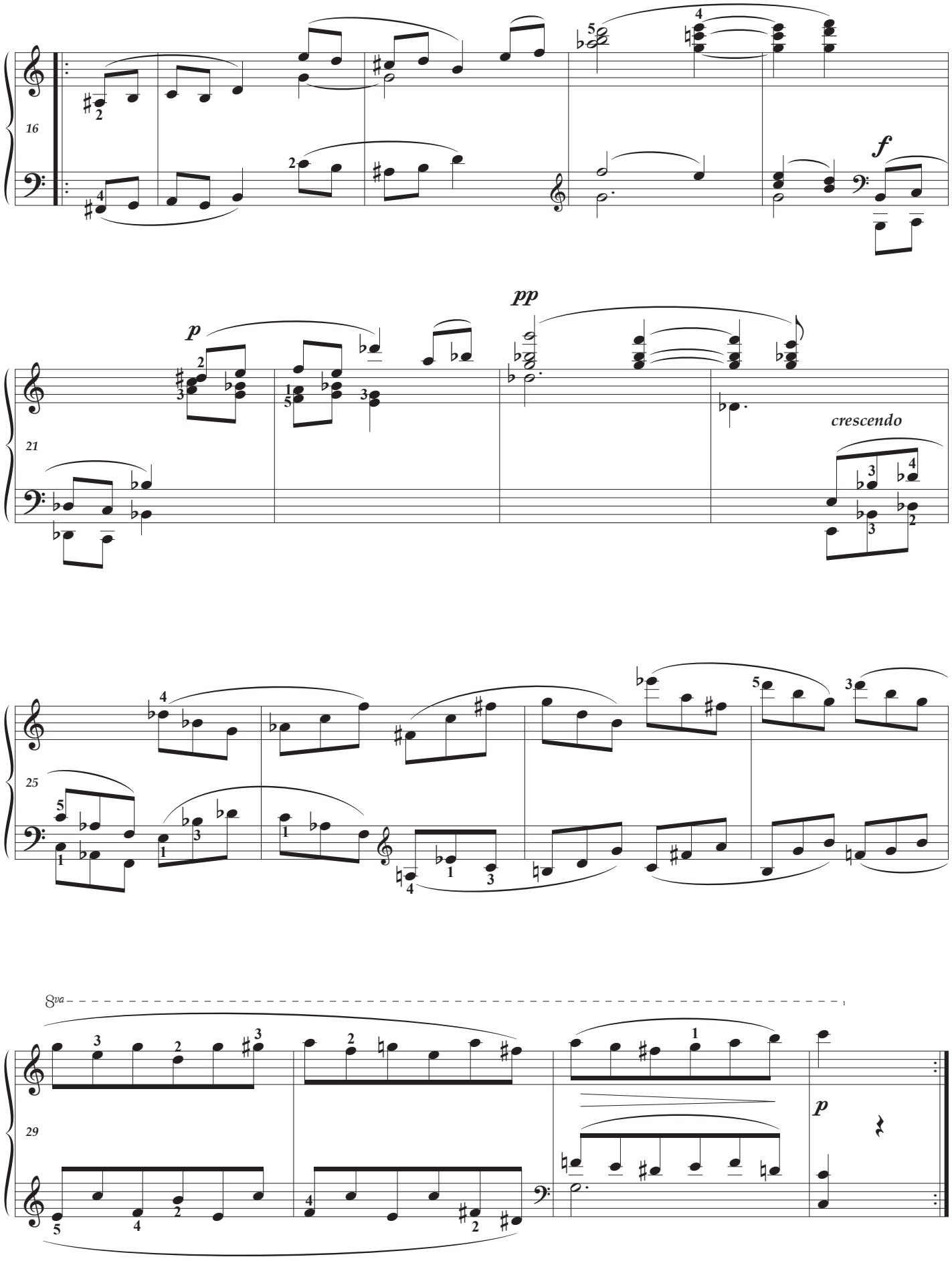

2
9
tr
f
11
tr
*
13
pp
crescendo
15
[attacca]
1
2
17
tr
f

[l'istesso tempo]

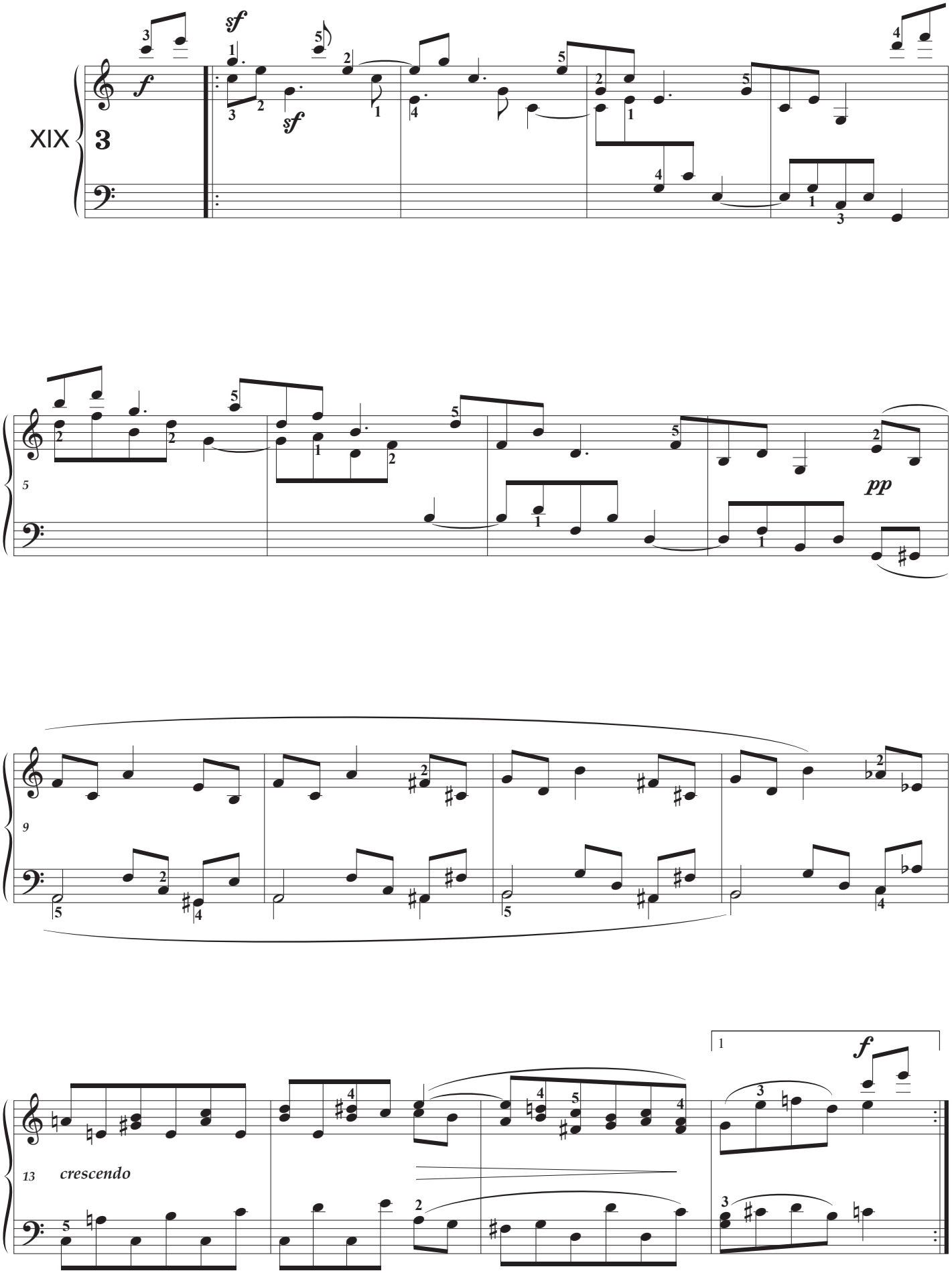


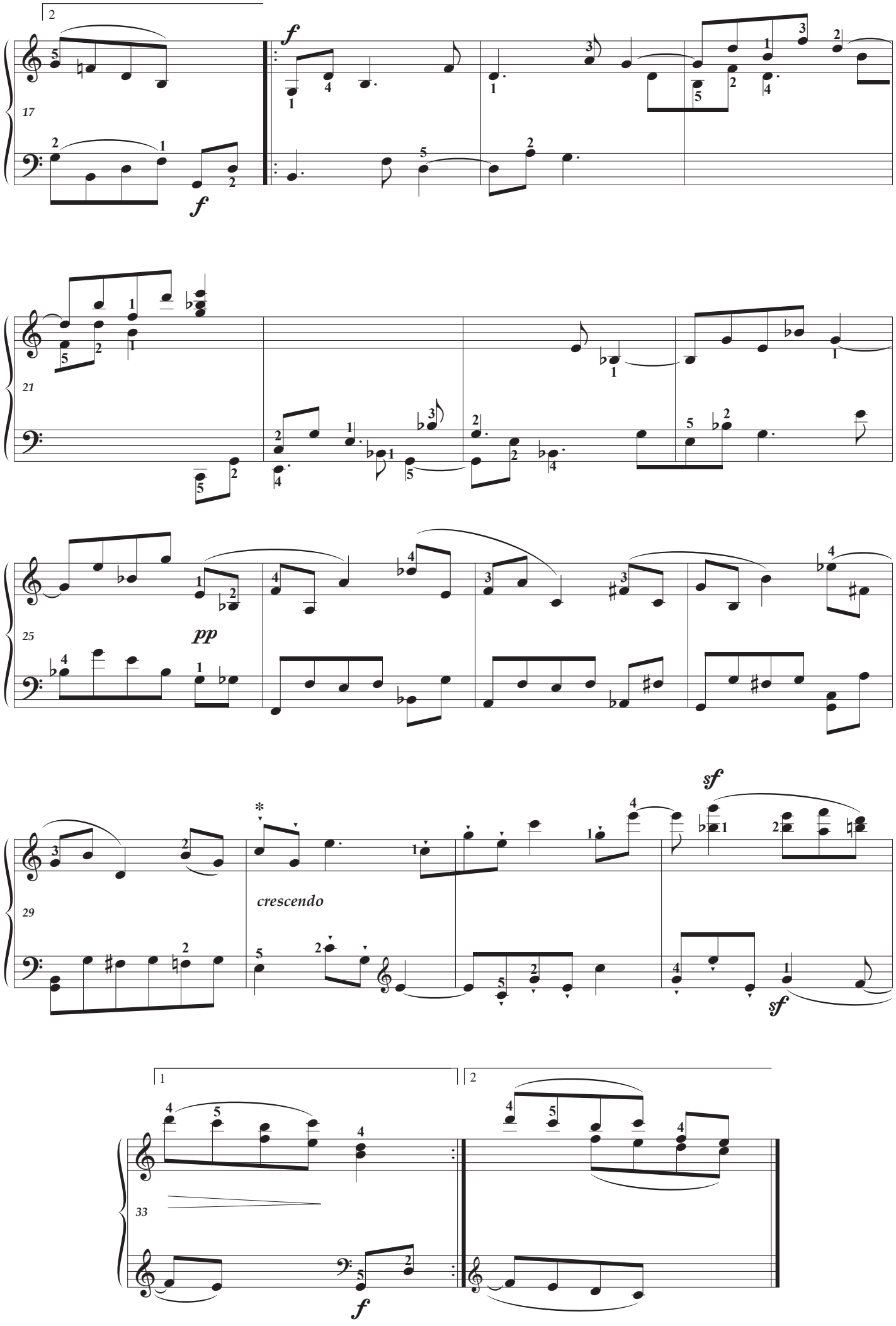

10
f
fp
f
13
fp
f
15
p
f
p
f
17
sf
1
2
19

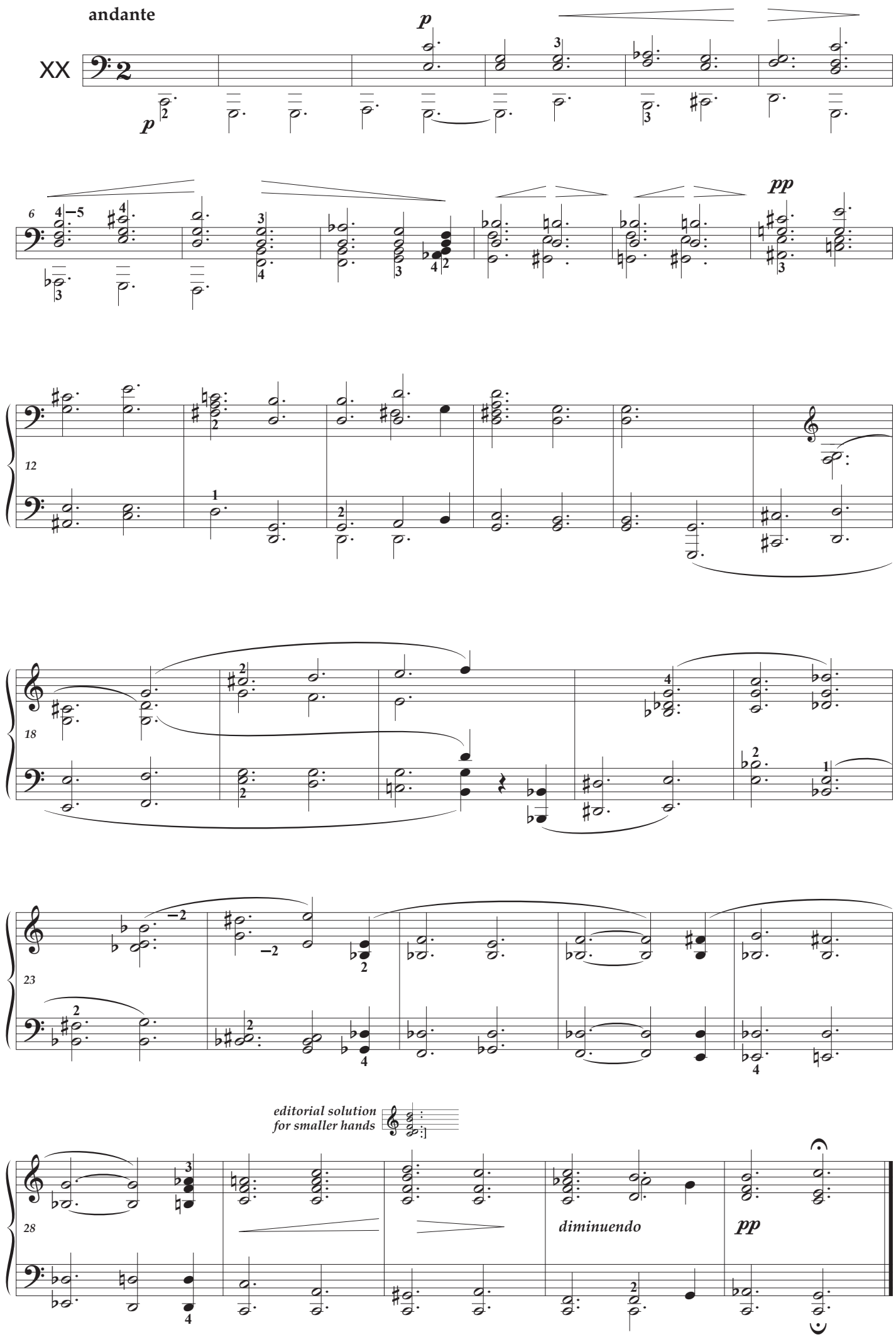

poco moderato
XVIII
3
p dolce
5
9
crescendo e legato
13
p subito


16
f
21
p
pp
crescendo
25
8va
29
p

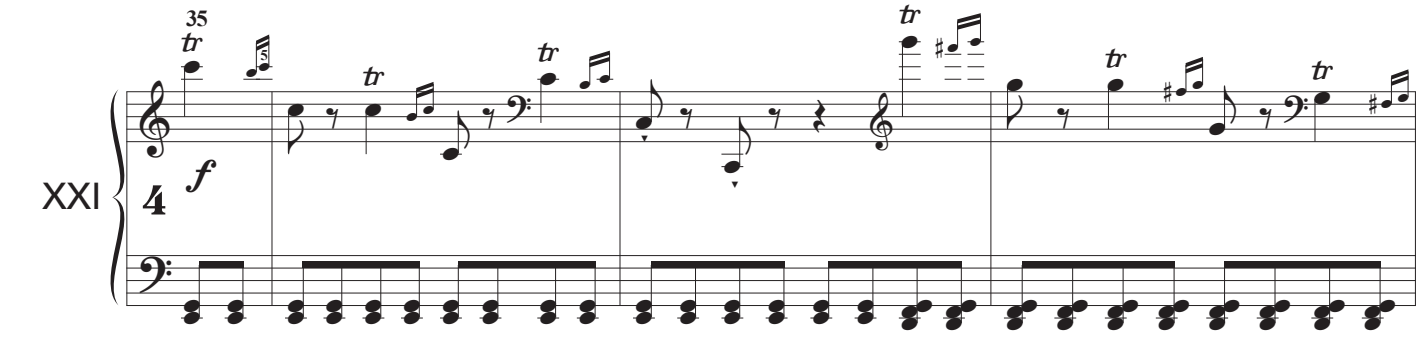
presto



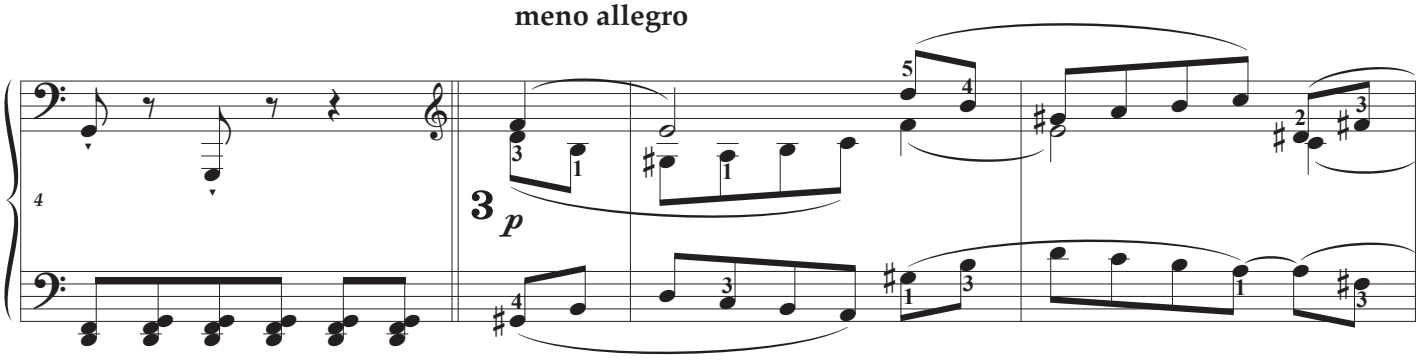

2
17
f
f
21
25
pp
29
crescendo
sf
sf
1
2
33
f

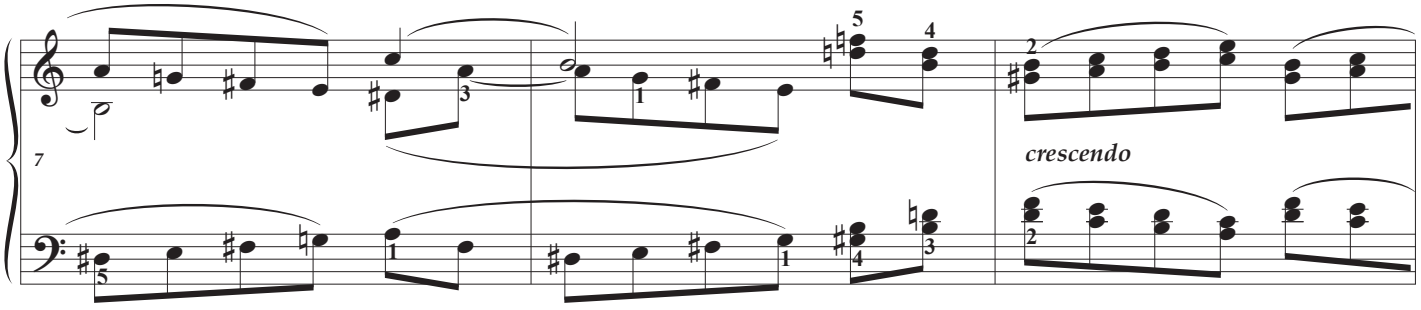

andante
p
p
pp
6
12
18
23
28
editorial solution
for smaller hands
diminuendo
pp

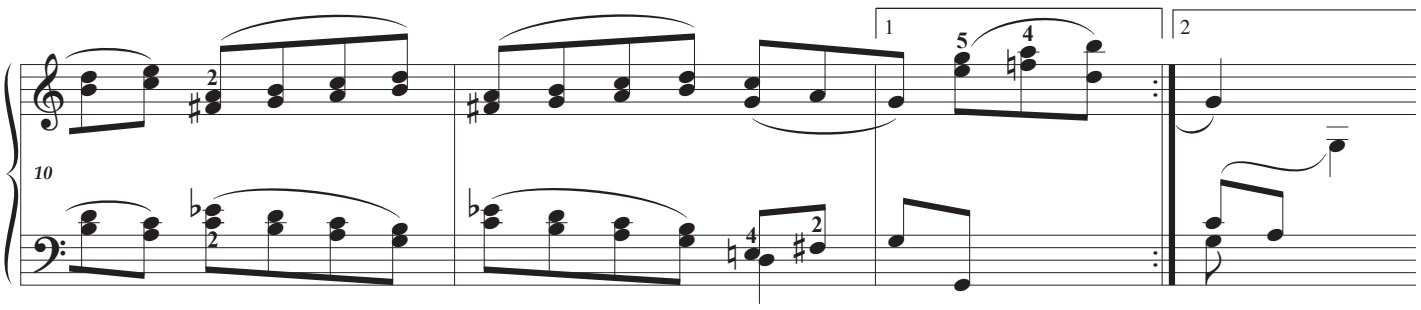
allegro con brio

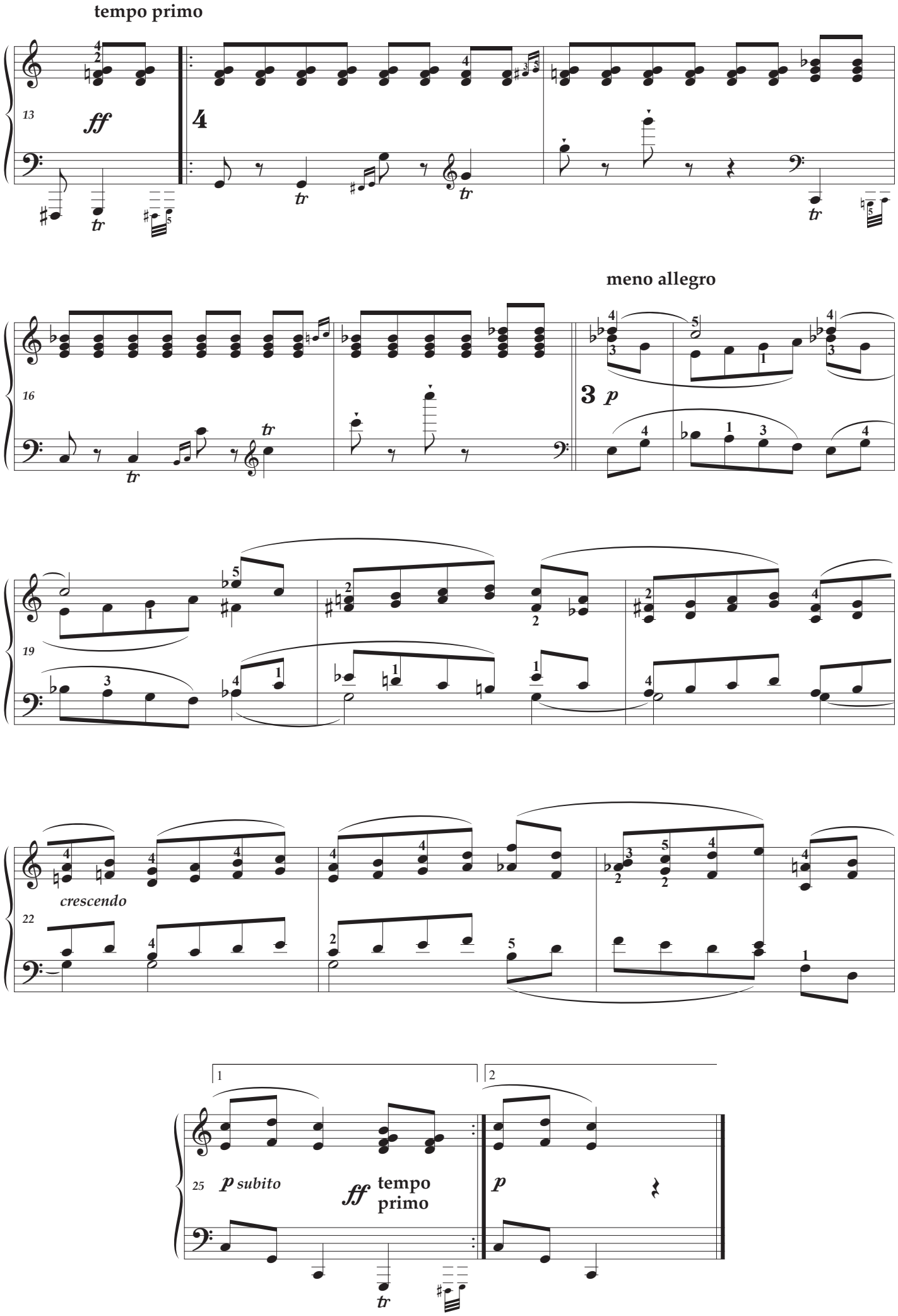


meno allegro



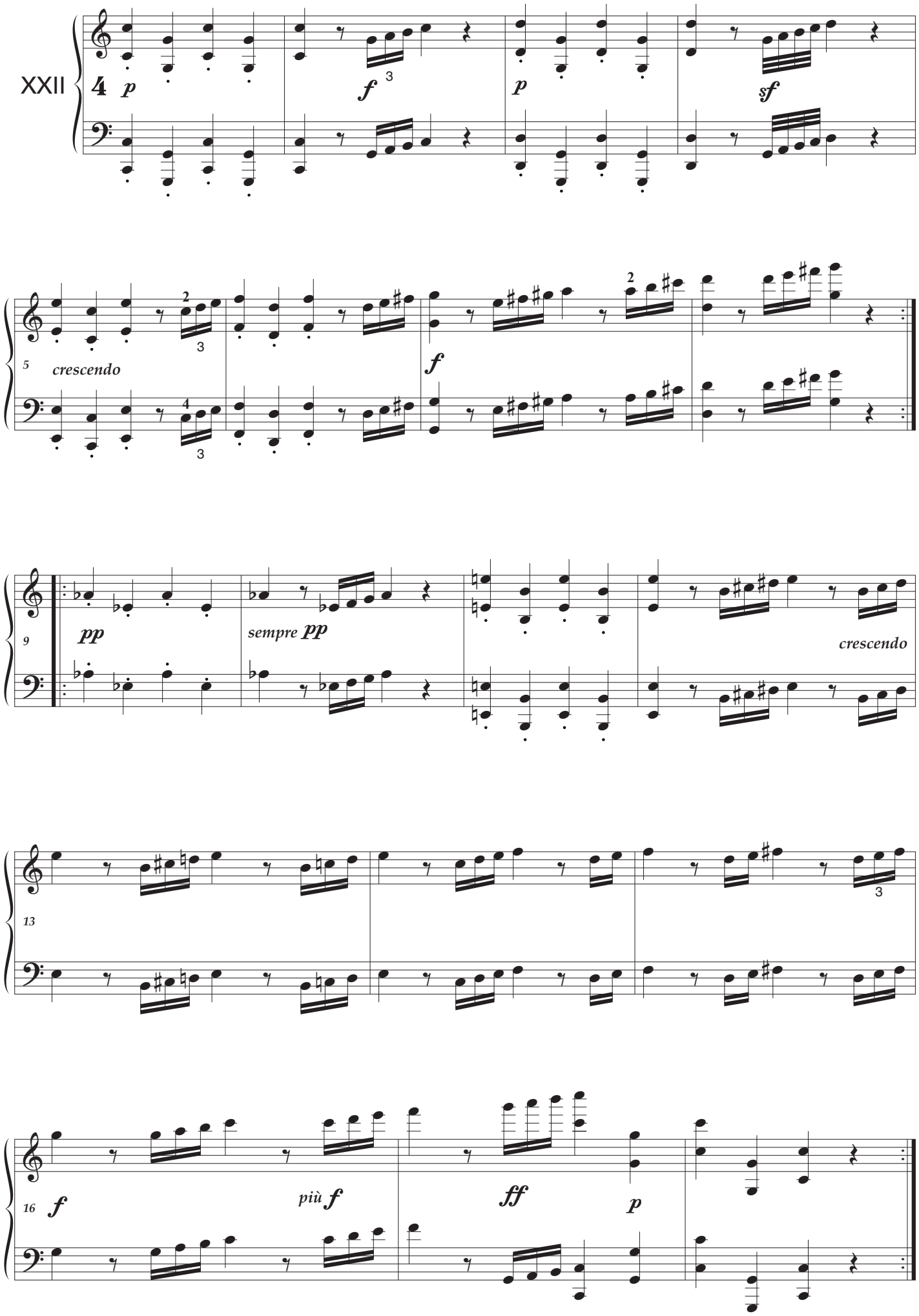




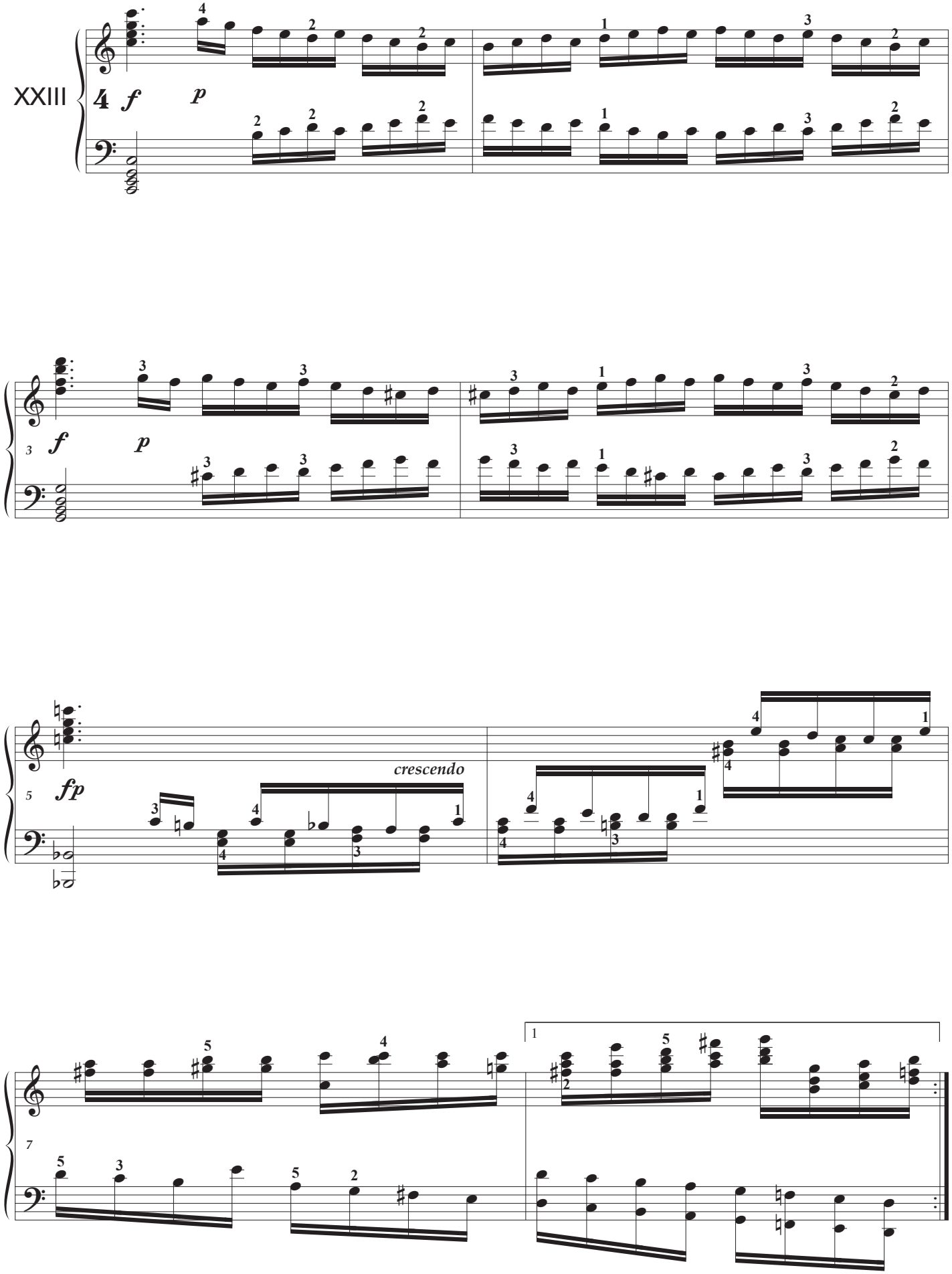

tempo primo
13
ff
4
tr
meno allegro
16
3 p
19
crescendo
22
1
2
25
p subito
ff tempo primo
p

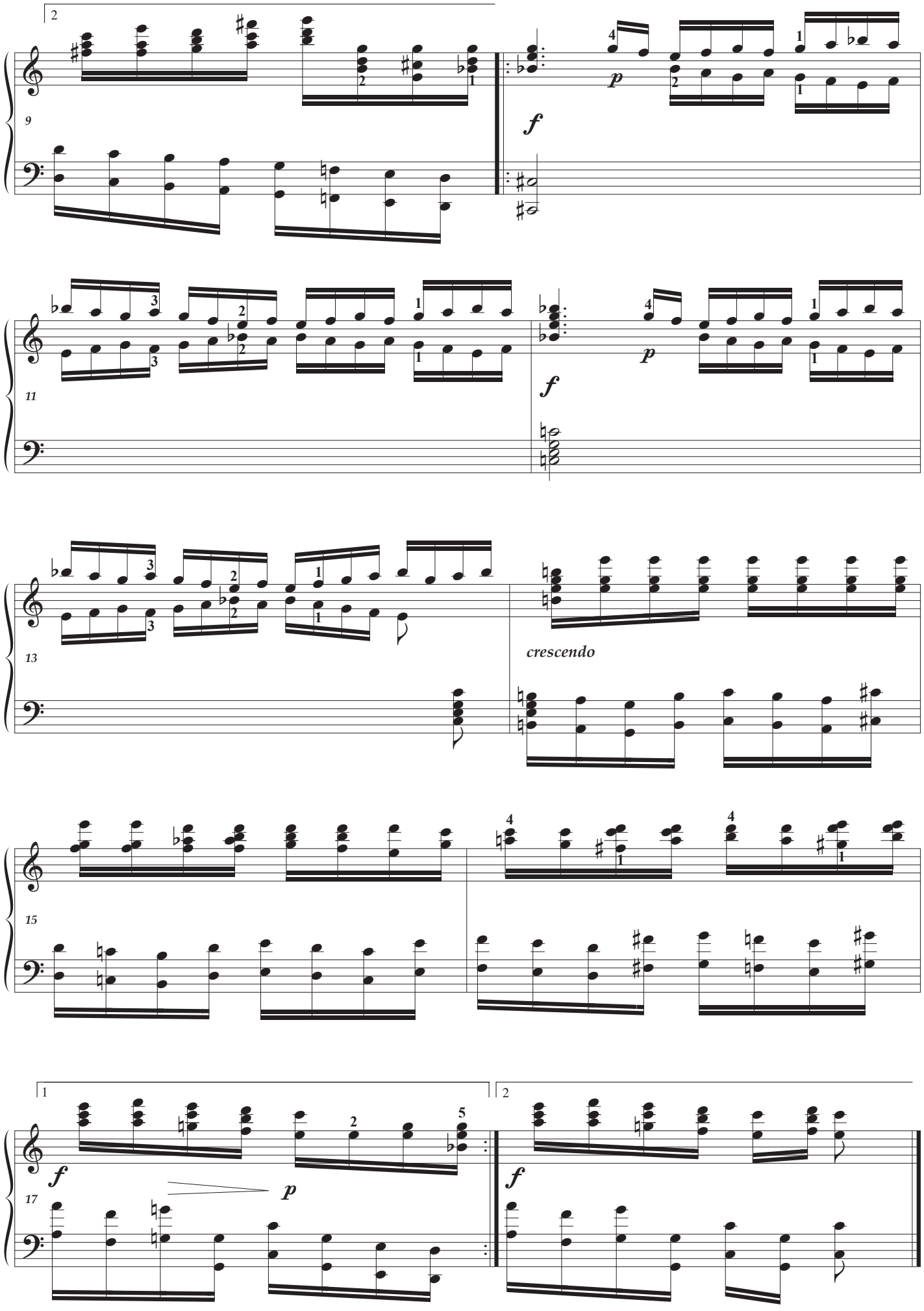
allegro molto

alla *«notte e giorno faticar»* di Mozart



allegro assai

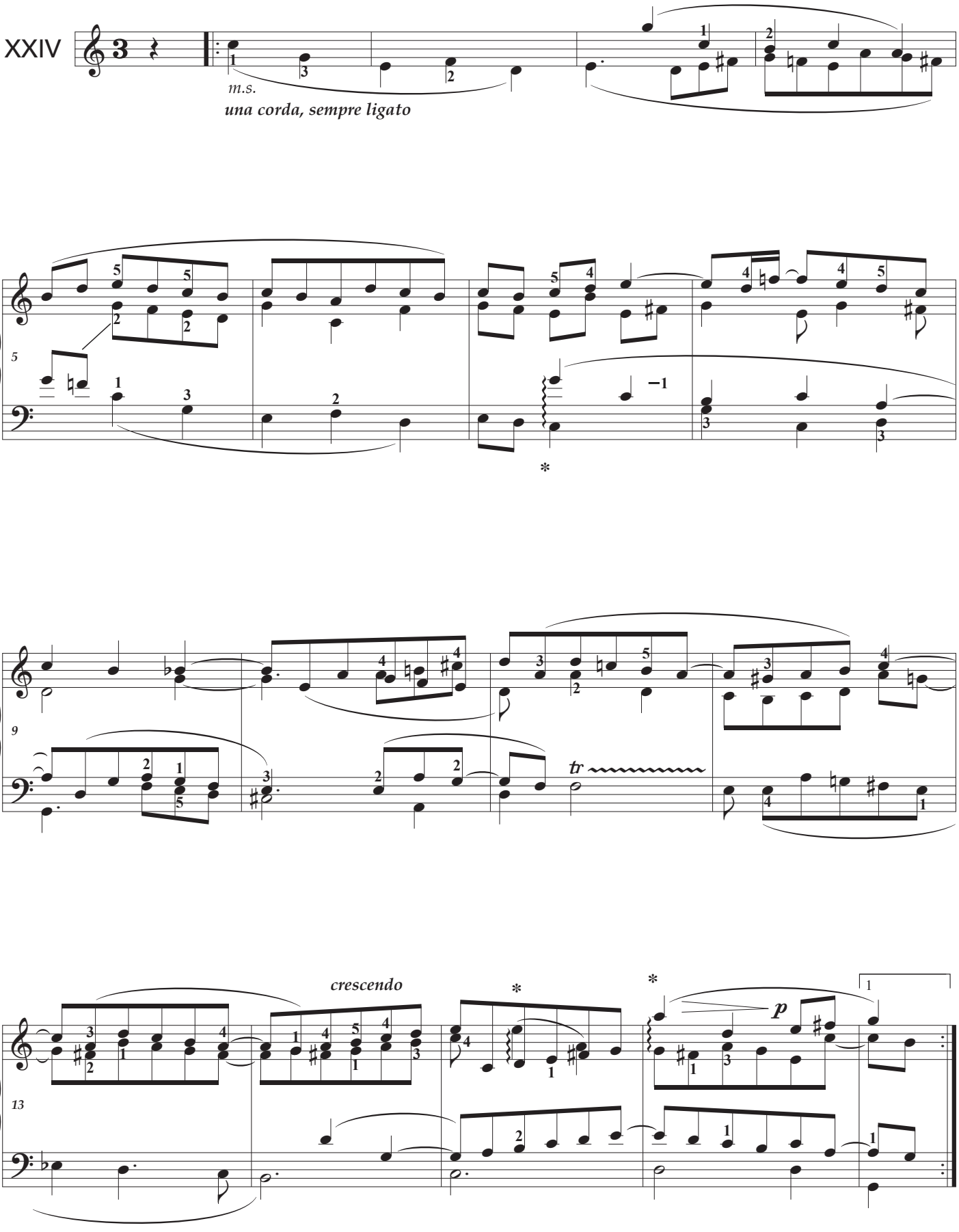


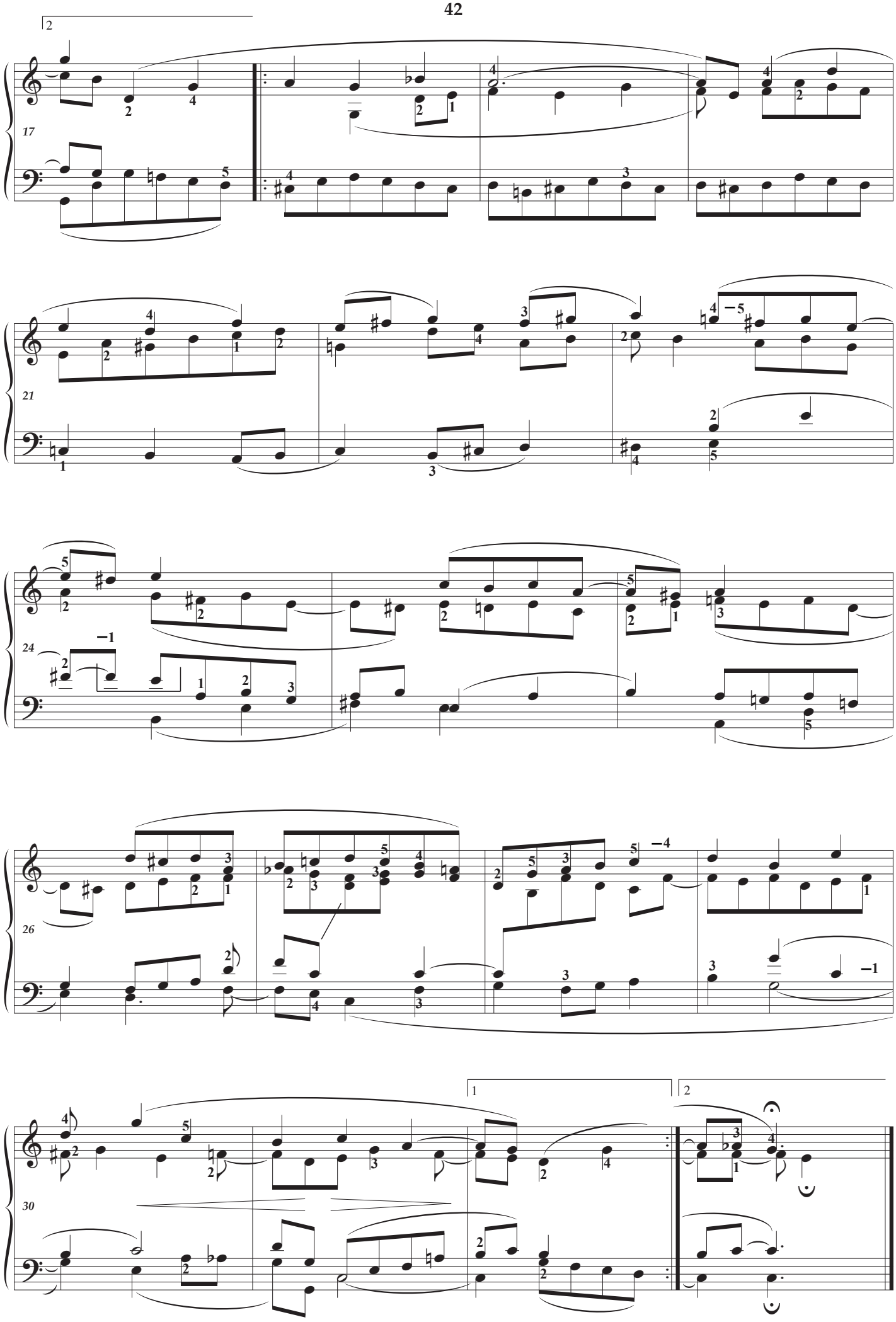

9
11
13
crescendo
15
17

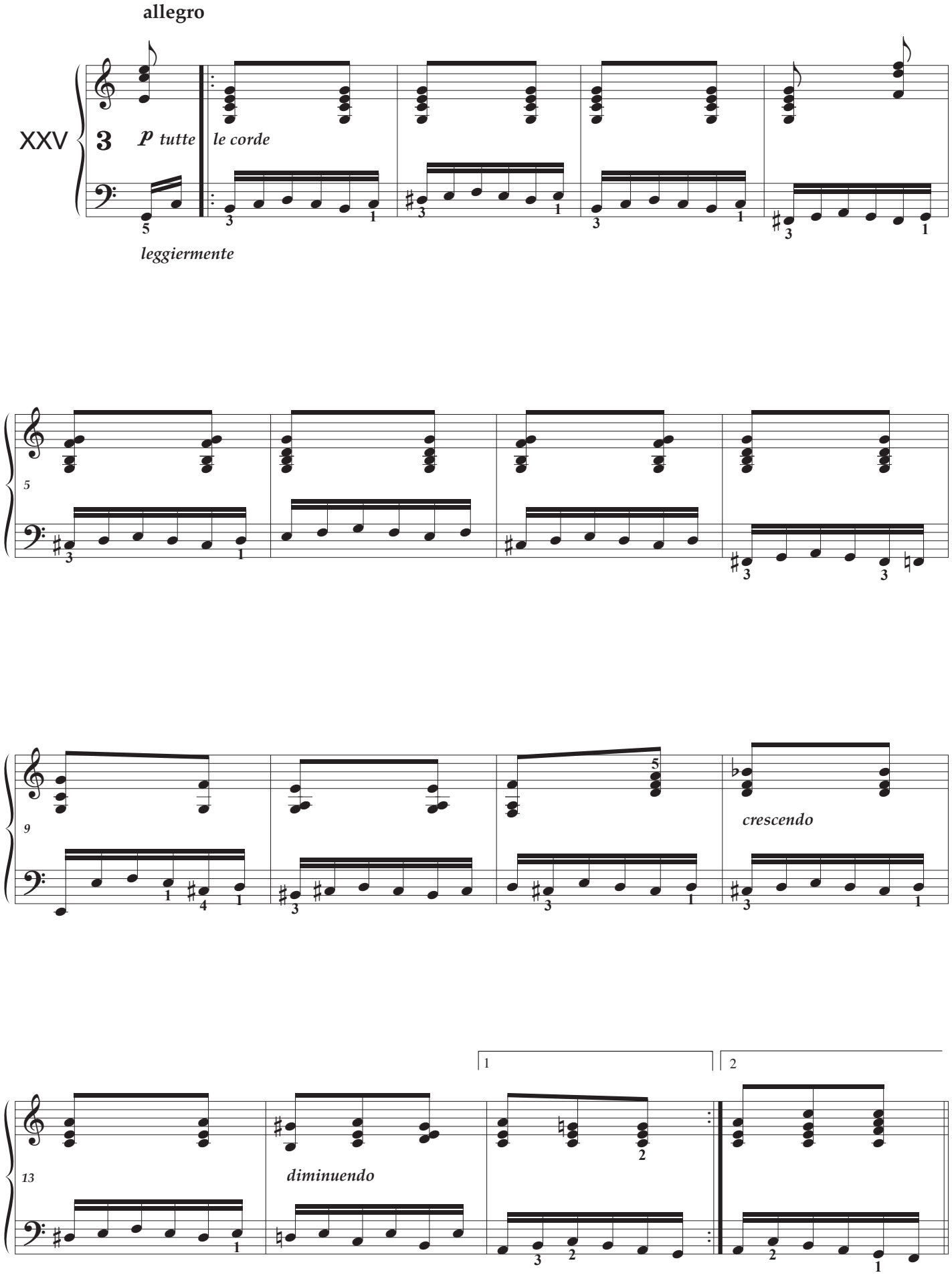
FUGHETTA

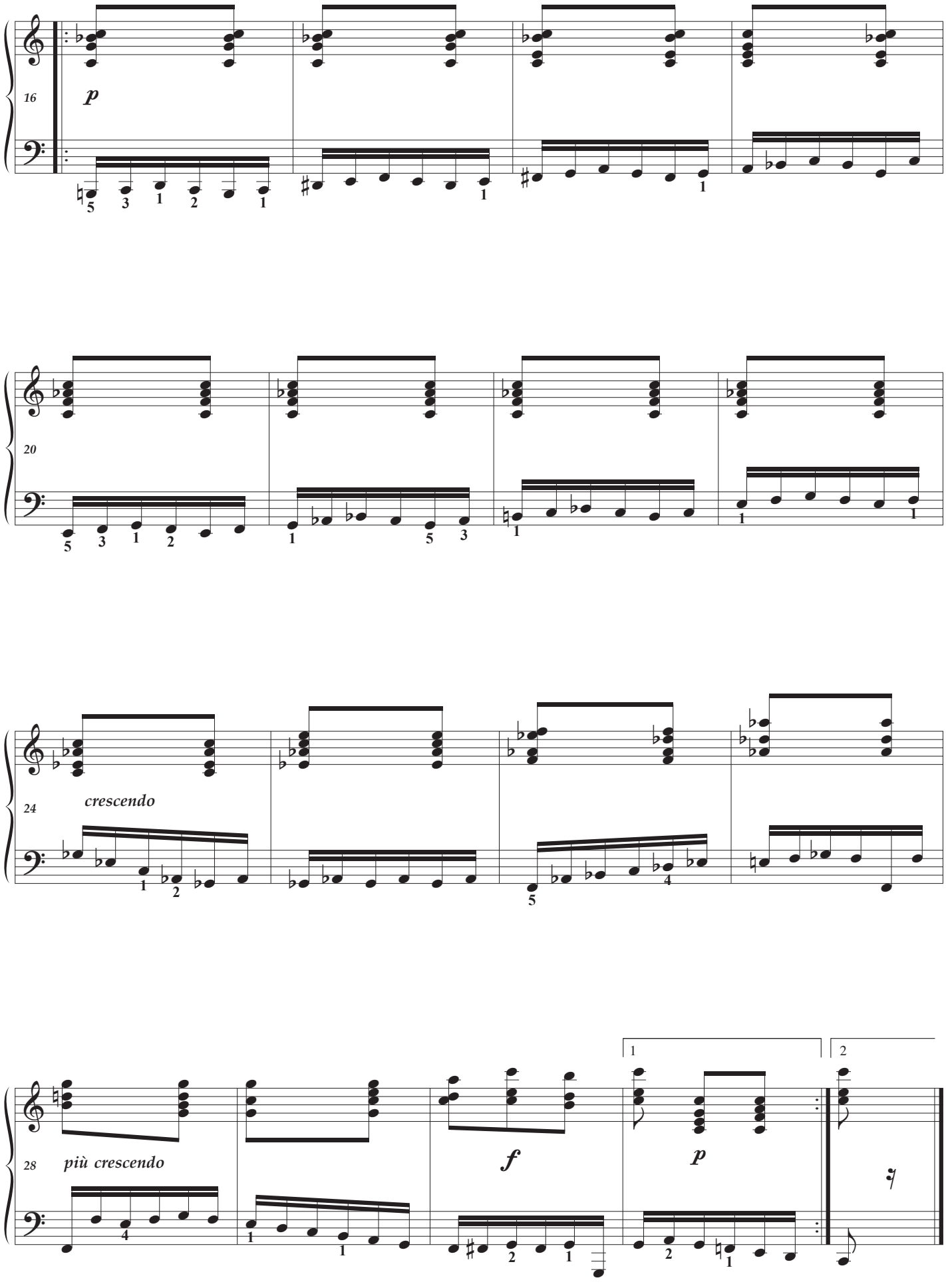
andante

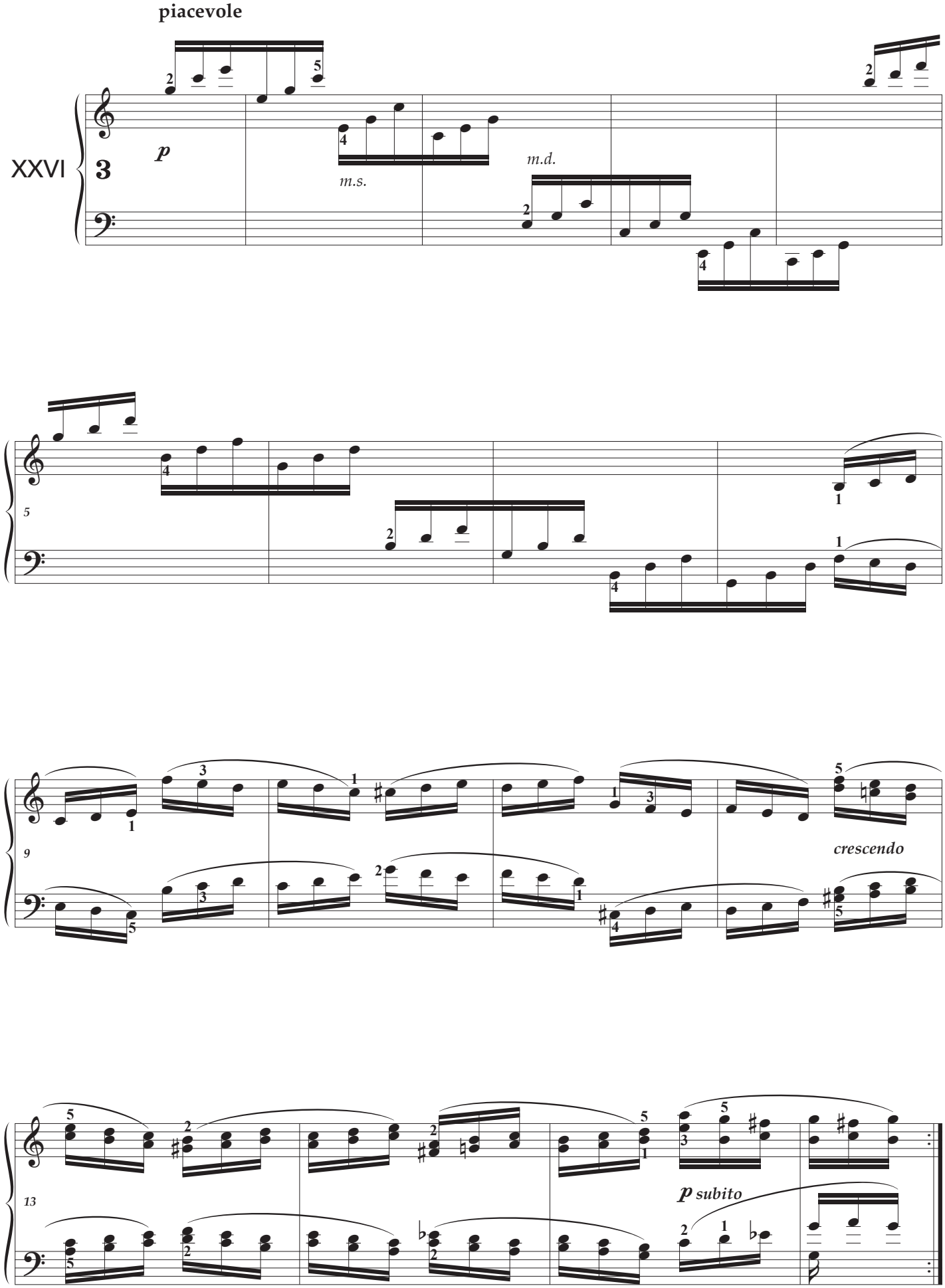
XXIV

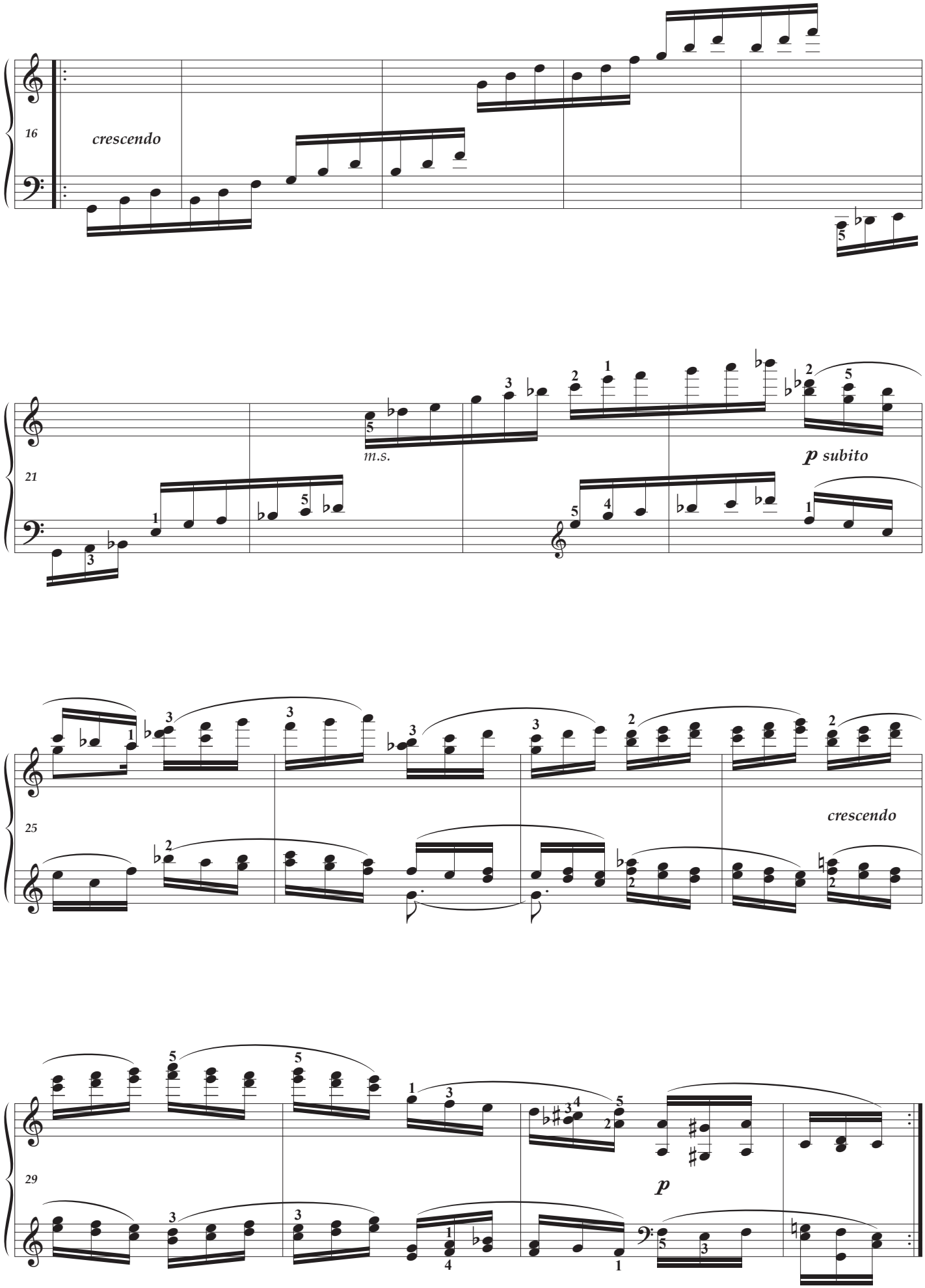


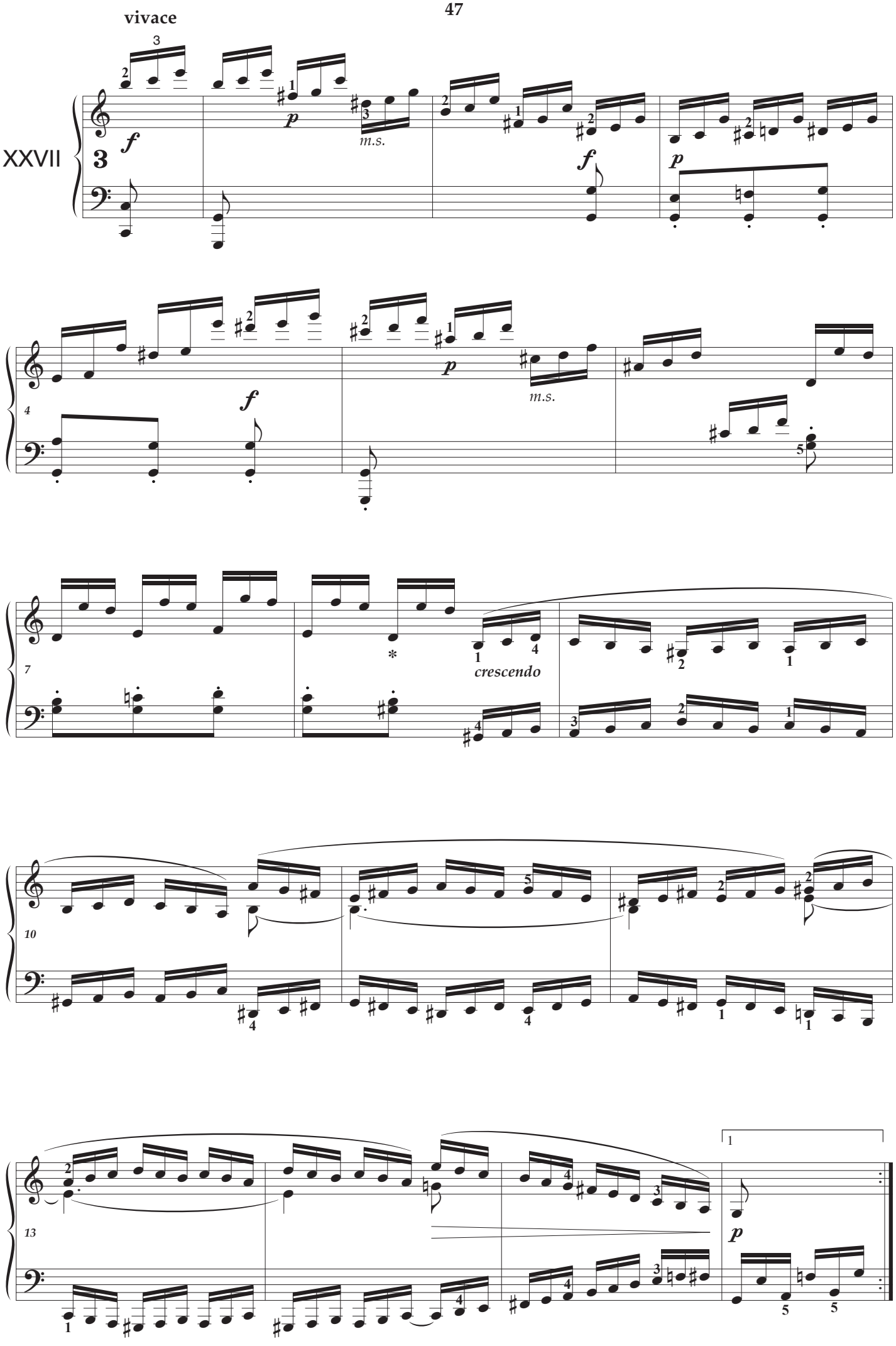

17
21
24
26
30
1
2

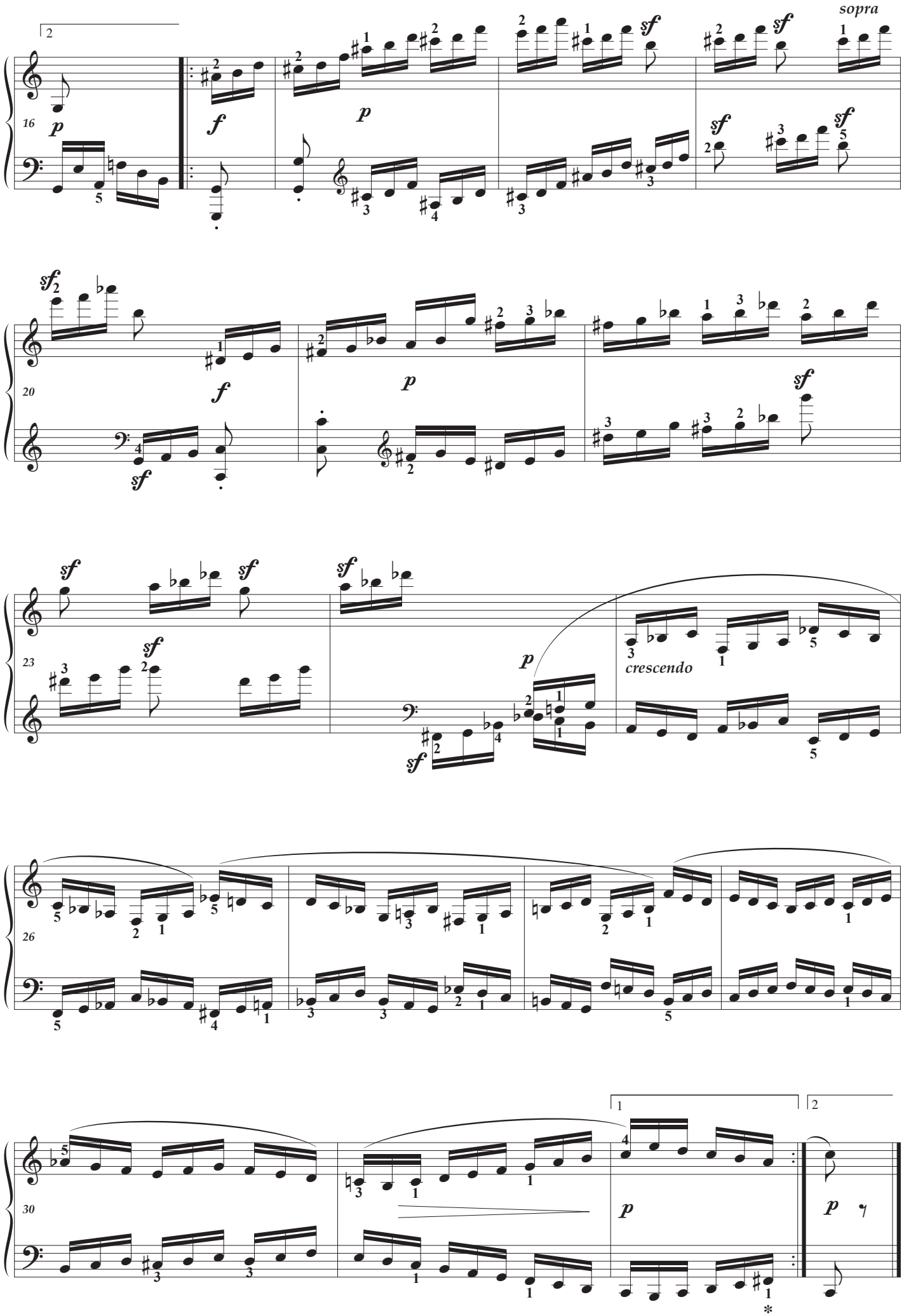

allegro
XXV
3
p tutte
le corde
leggiermente
5
9
crescendo
13
diminuendo
1
2

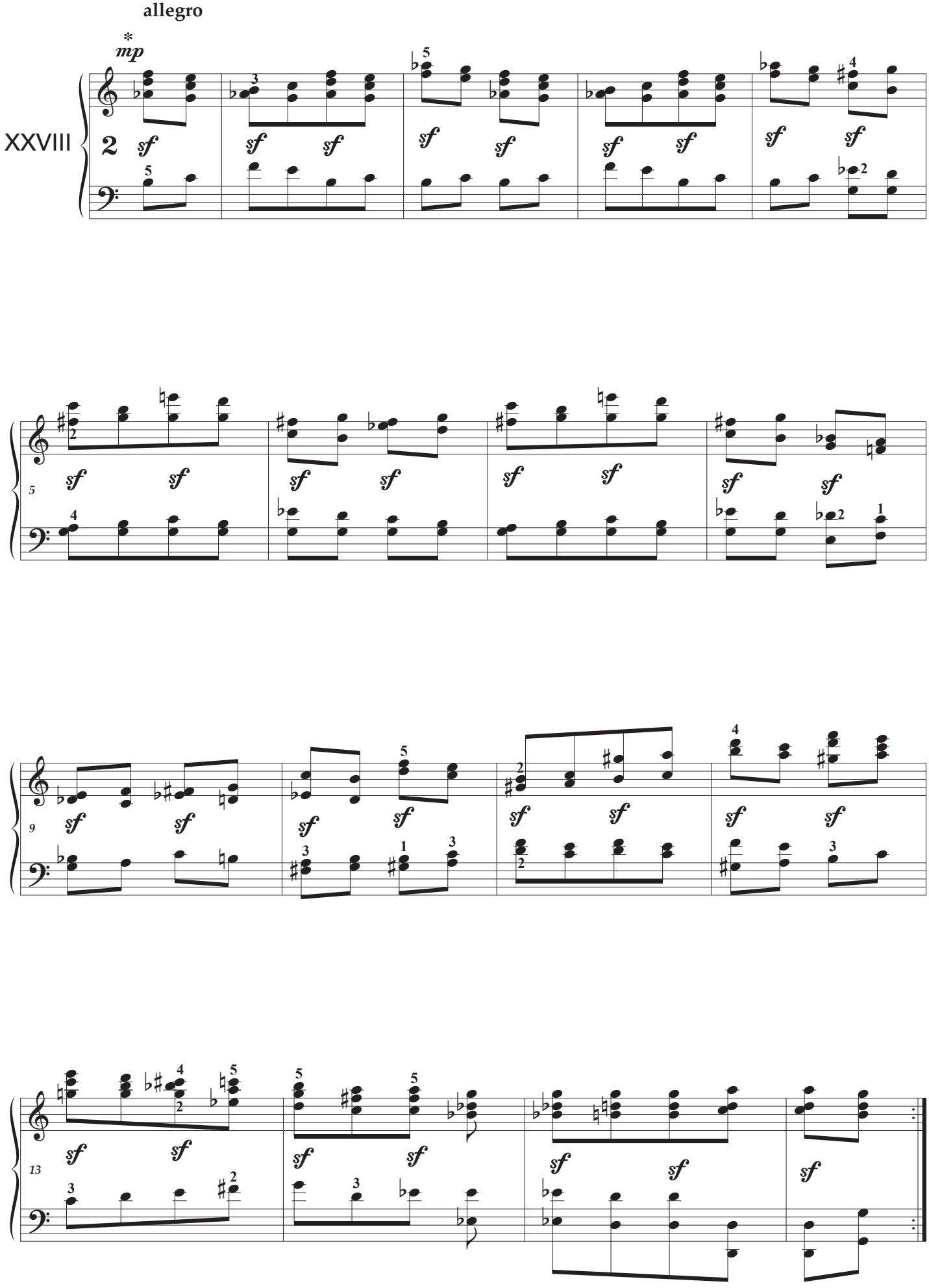

16
p
20
24
crescendo
28
più crescendo
f
p
1
2

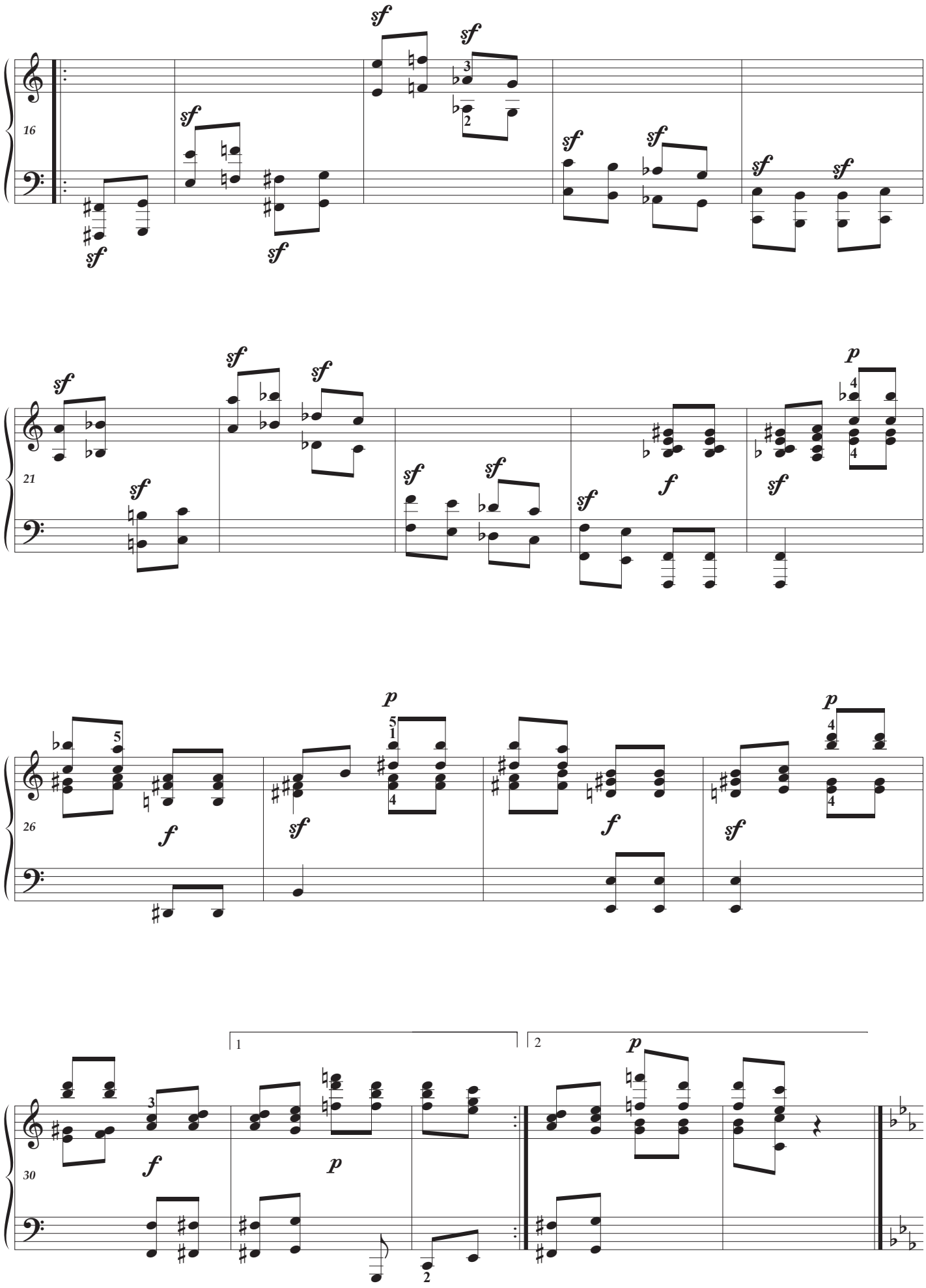

piacevole
XXVI
3
p
m.s.
m.d.
5
9
crescendo
13
p subito


16
crescendo
21
m.s.
p subito
25
crescendo
29
p

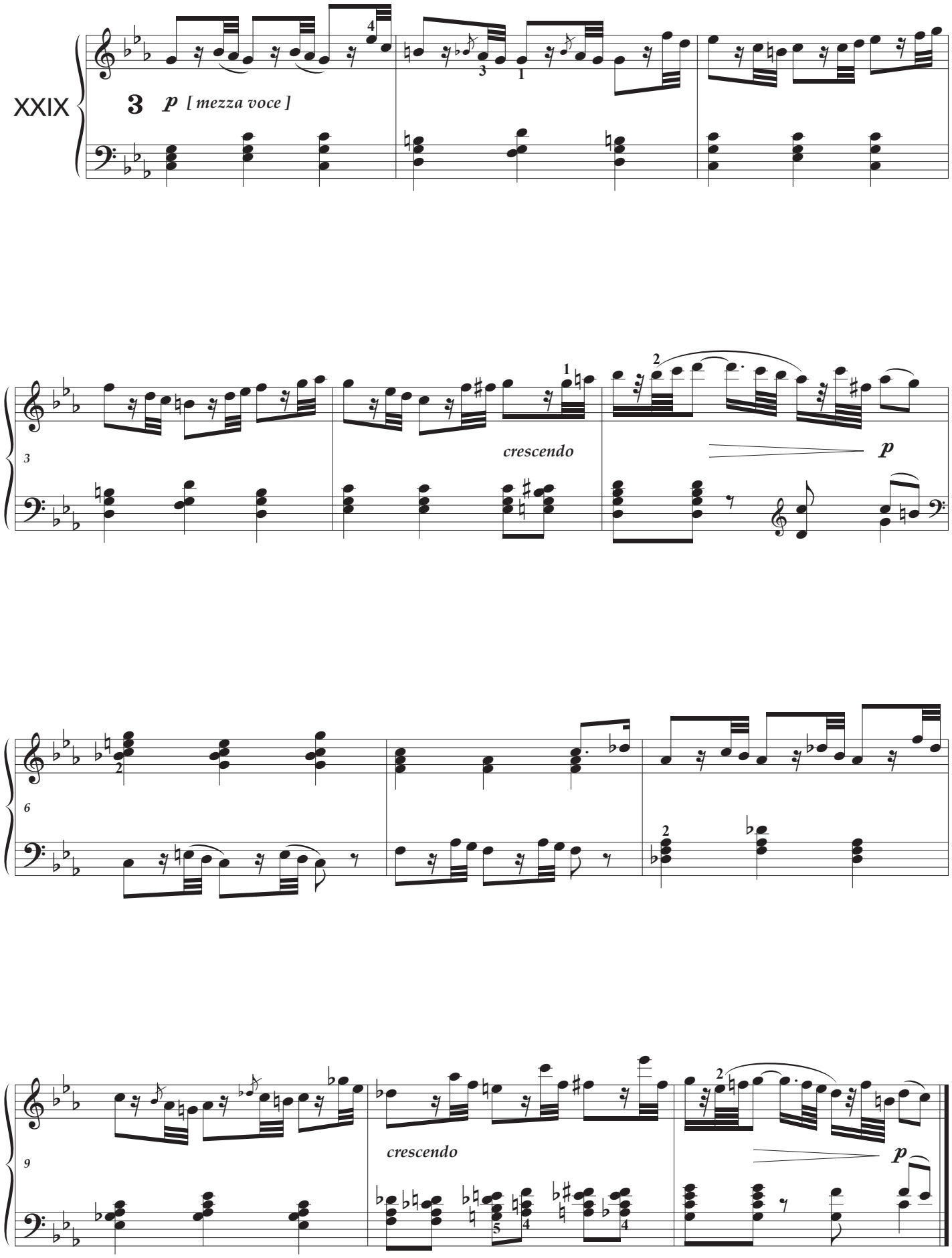

vivace
XXVII
m.s.
m.s.
crescendo

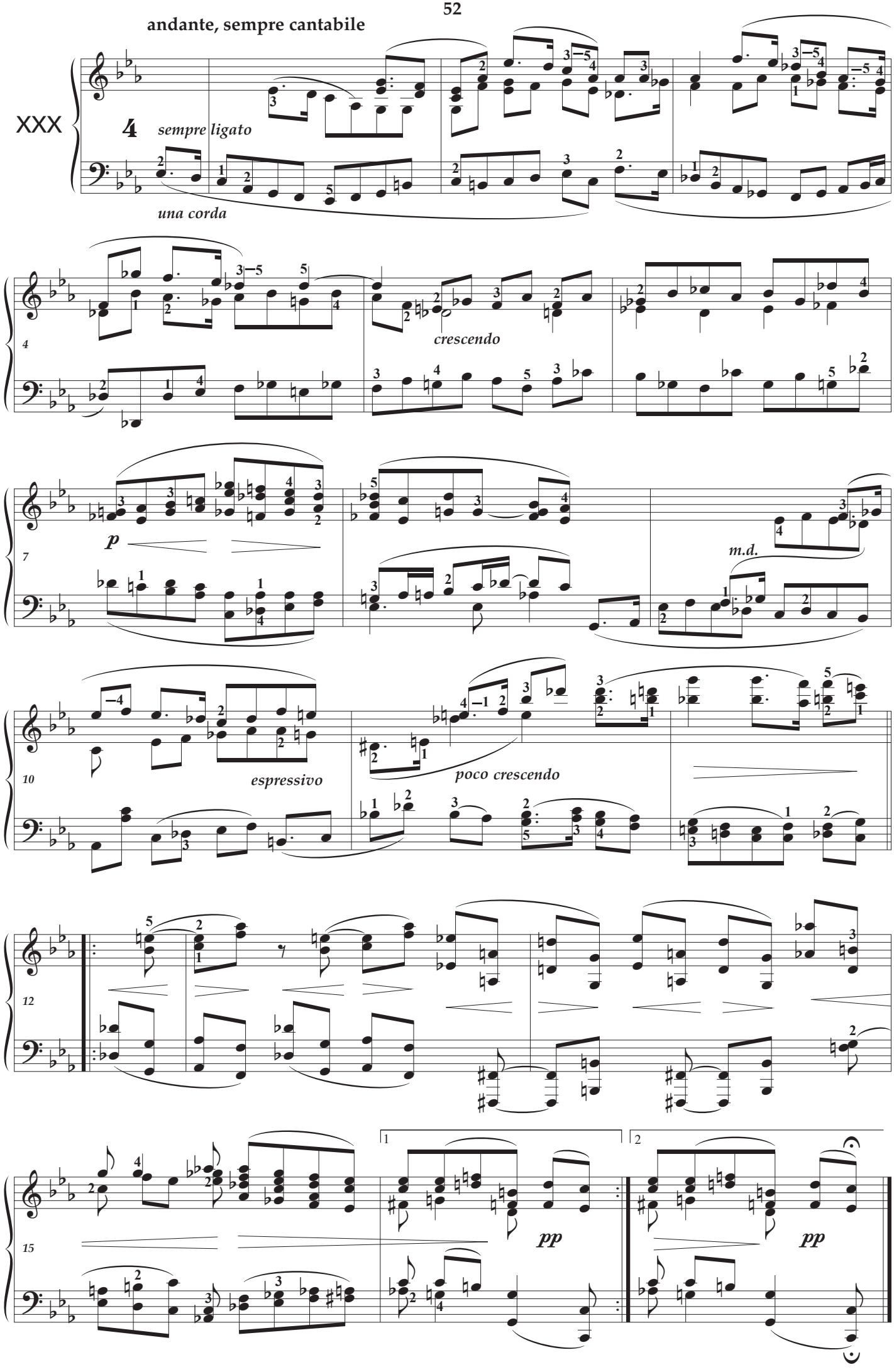

sopra
16
20
23
crescendo
26
30
1
2
*


allegro
mp
XXVIII
sf


16
21
26
30
1
2

adagio ma non troppo




andante, sempre cantabile
XXX
sempre ligato
una corda
crescendo
p
m.d.
espressivo
poco crescendo
pp
pp

largo, molto espressivo

XXXI

tutte le corde
sotto voce

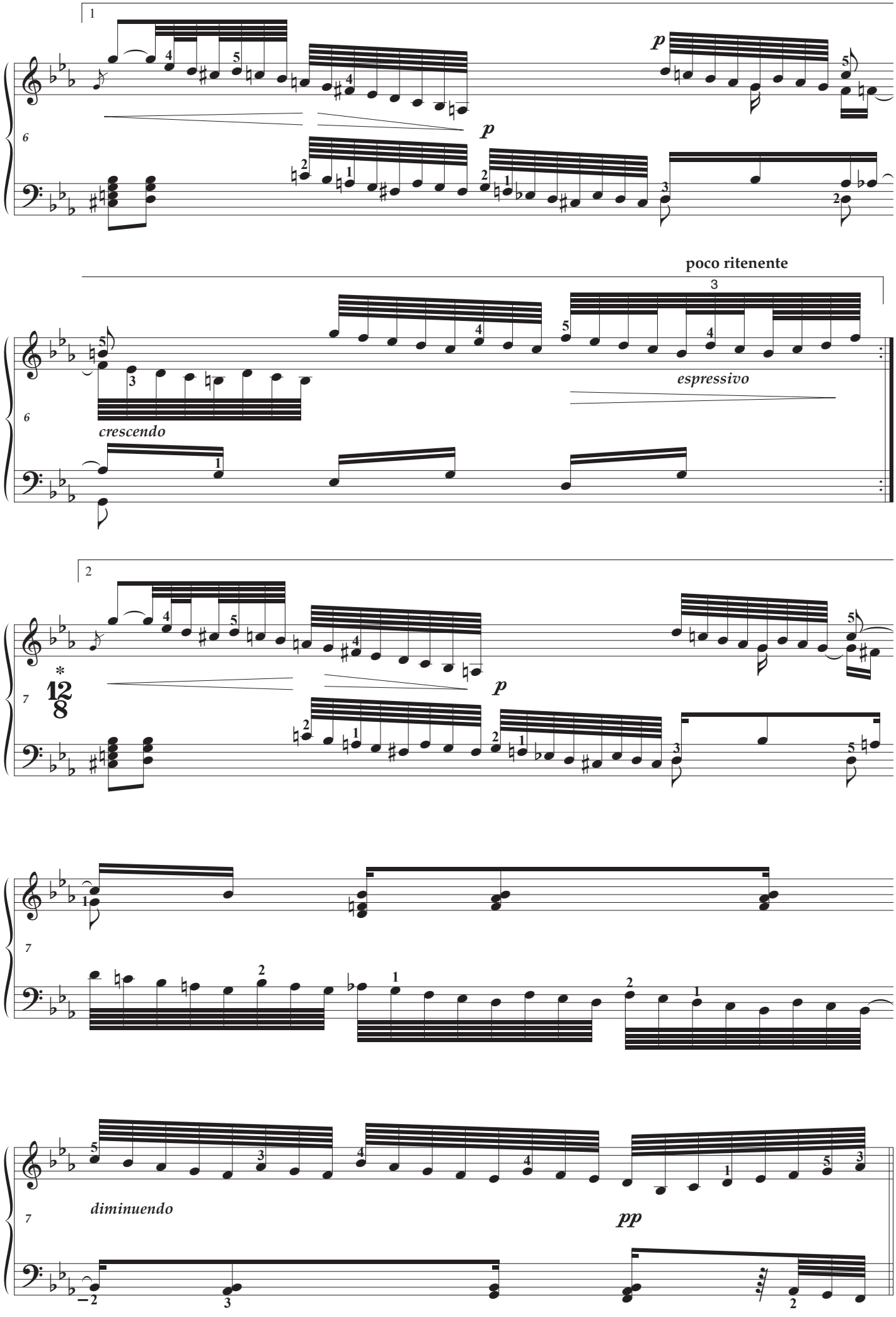
p dolce

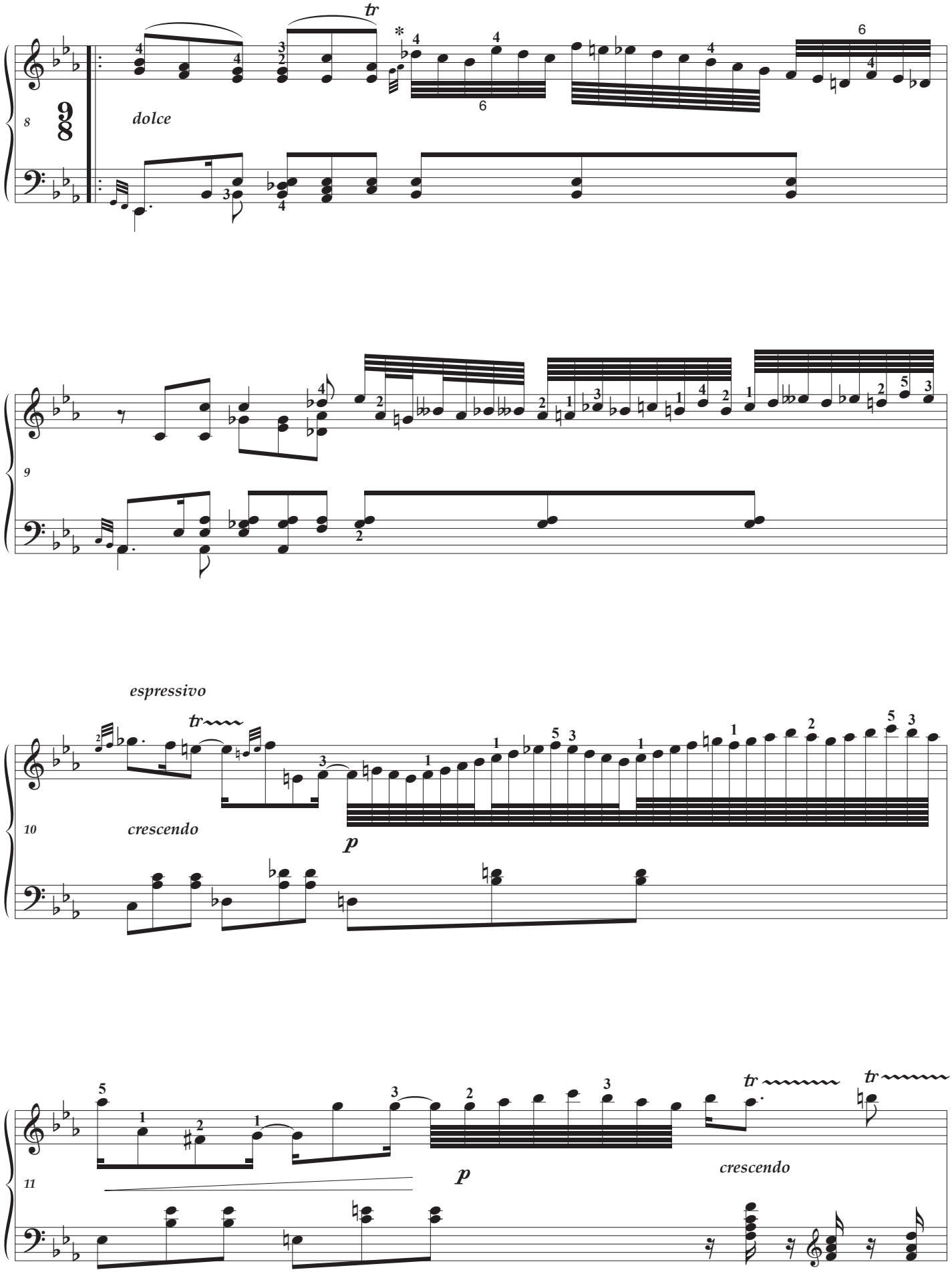
crescendo

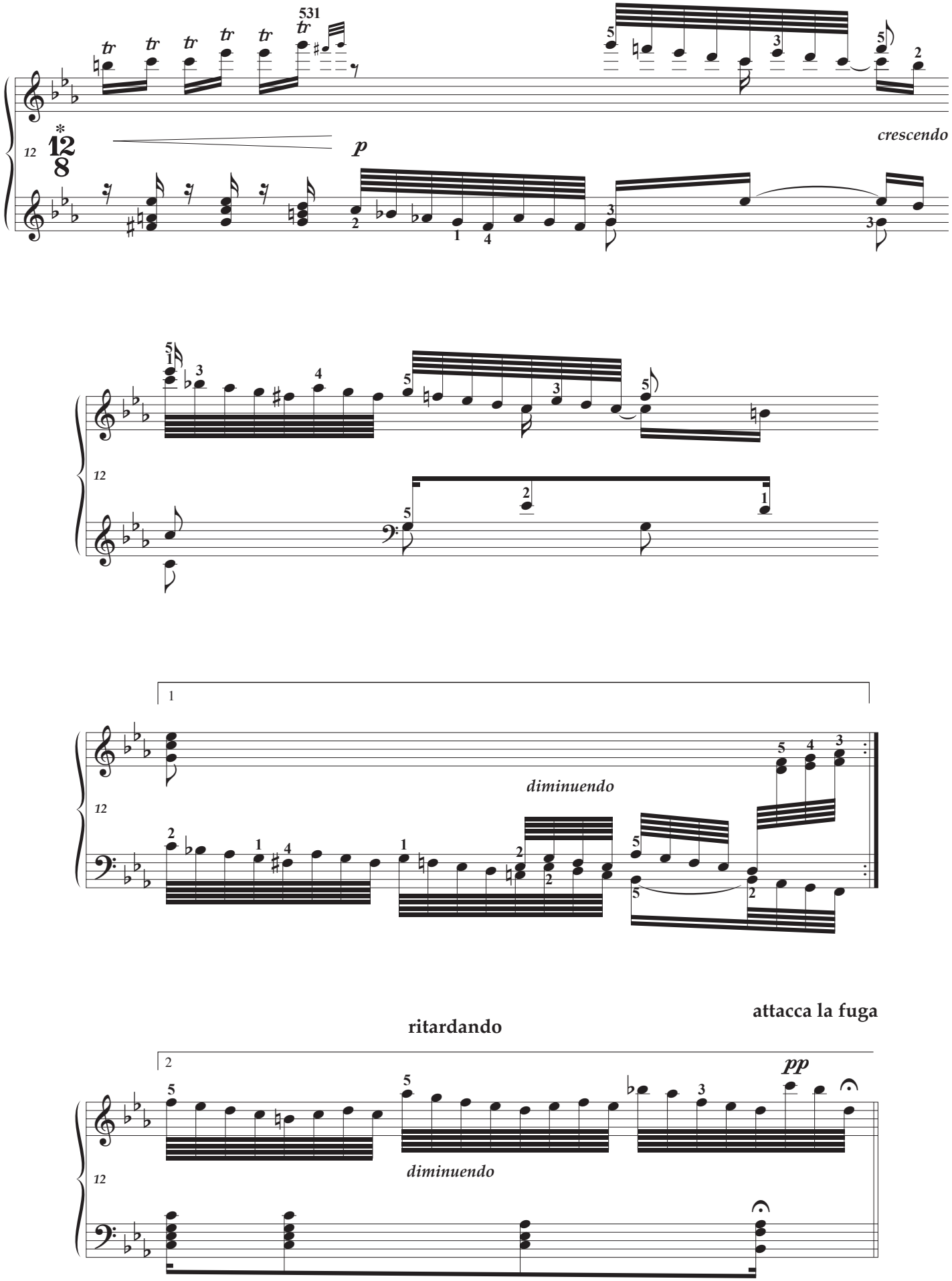
sf

diminuendo

pp


1
p
p
poco ritenente
espressivo
crescendo
2
12/8
p
diminuendo
pp

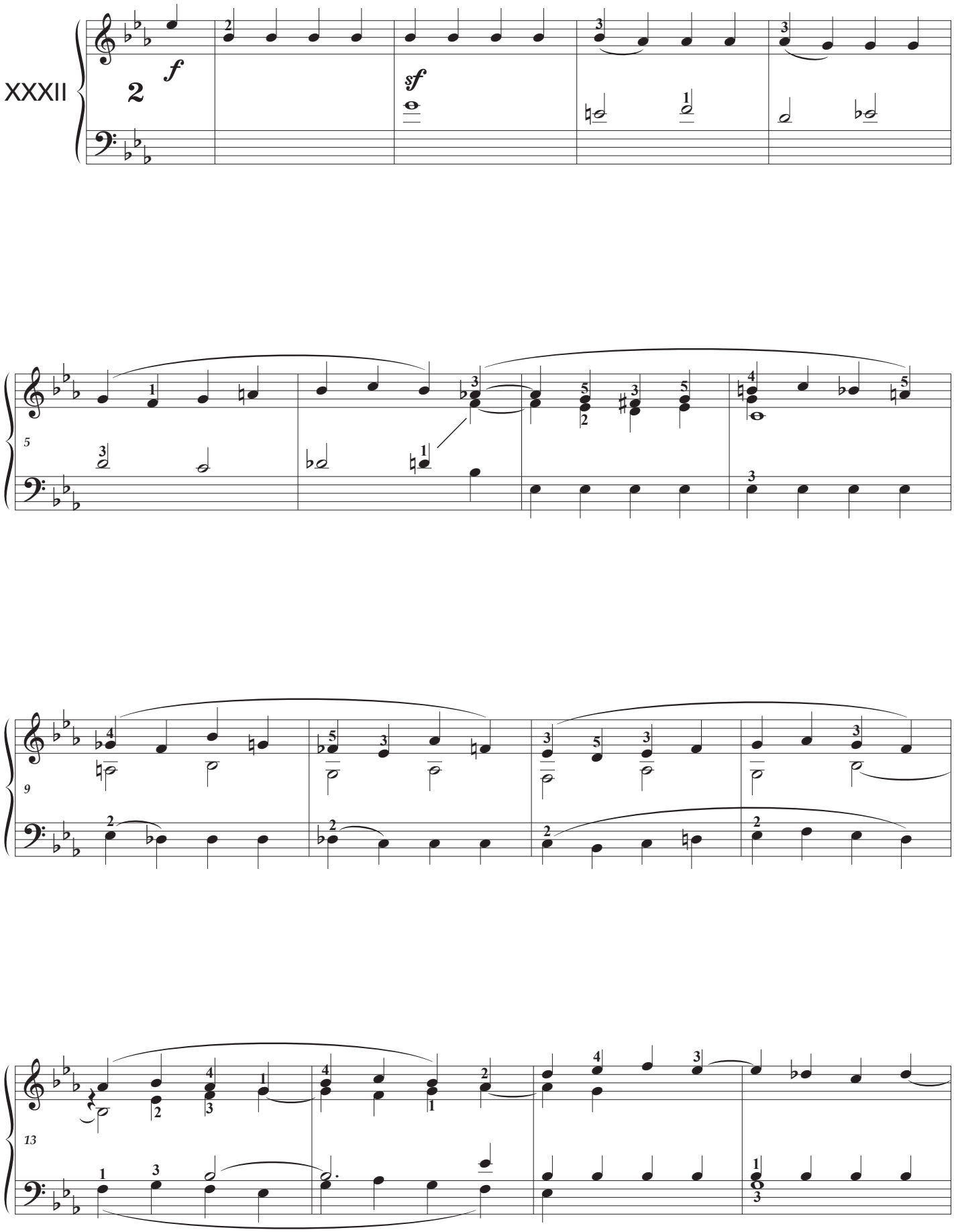

dolce
espressivo
crescendo
p
p
crescendo

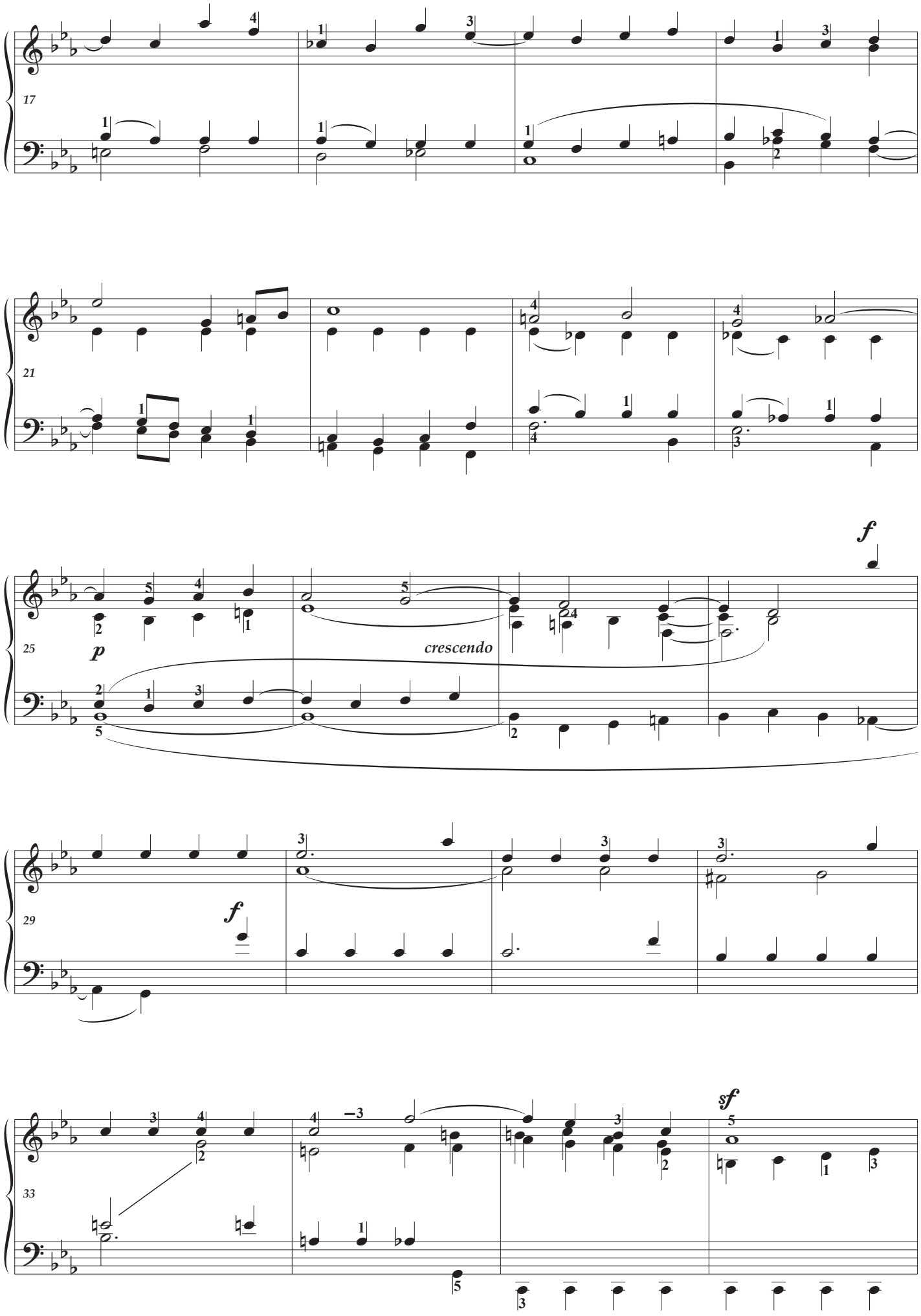

531
p
crescendo
diminuendo
ritardando
attacca la fuga
pp
diminuendo

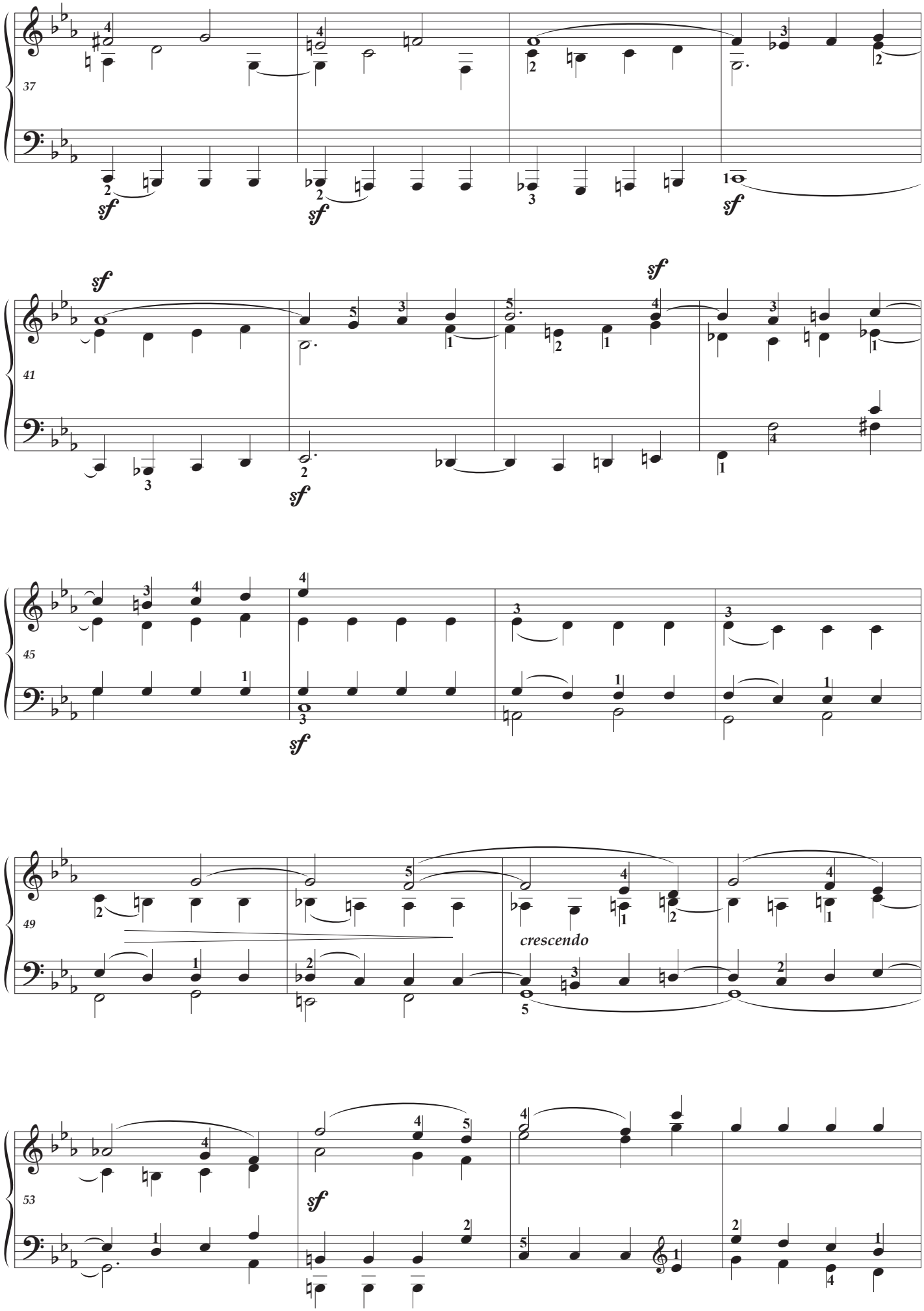
FUGA

allegro

XXXII




17
21
25
p
crescendo
f
29
f
33
sf


37
41
45
49
53
sf
crescendo

57

sf

editorial
ossia

61

ff

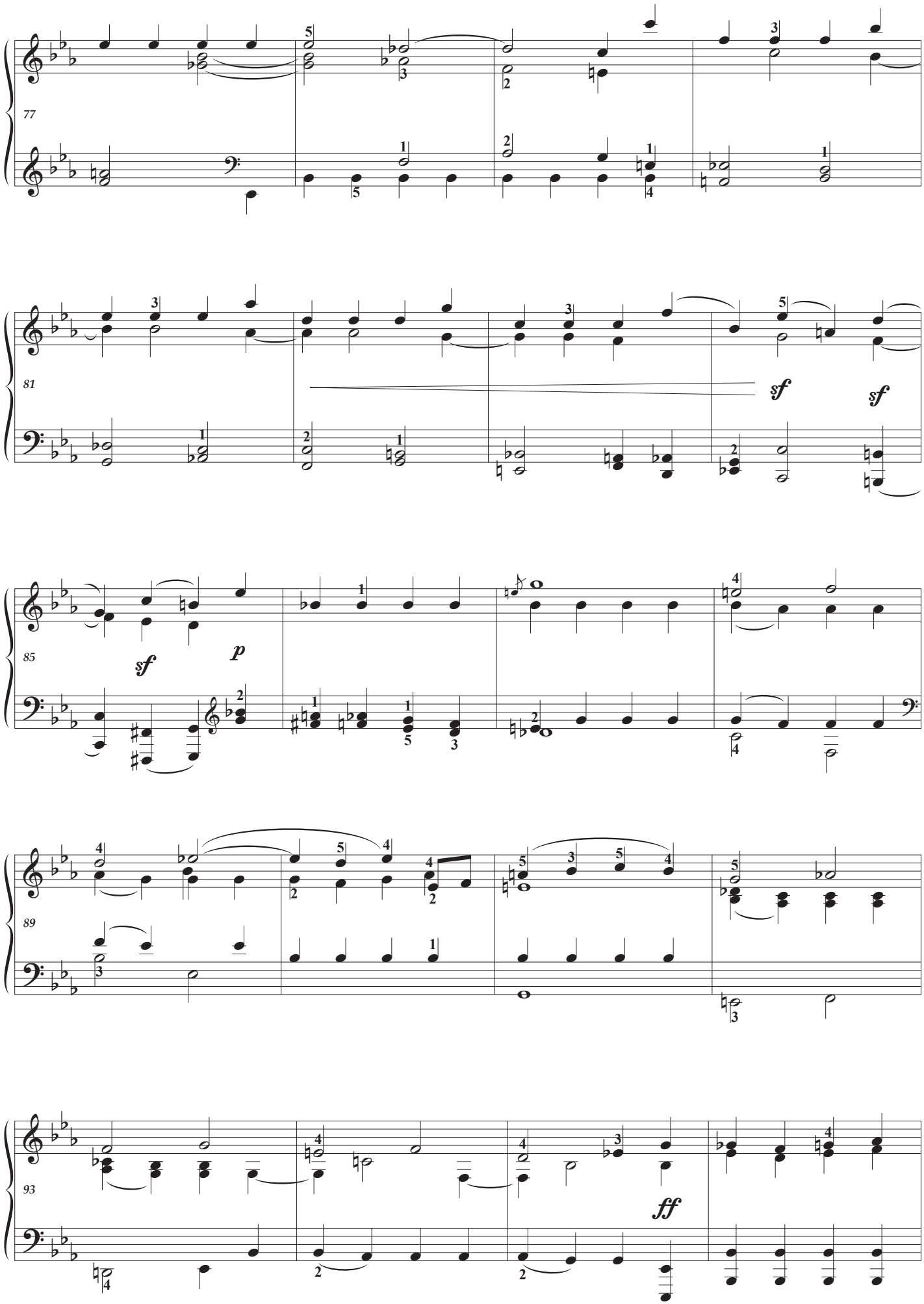
65

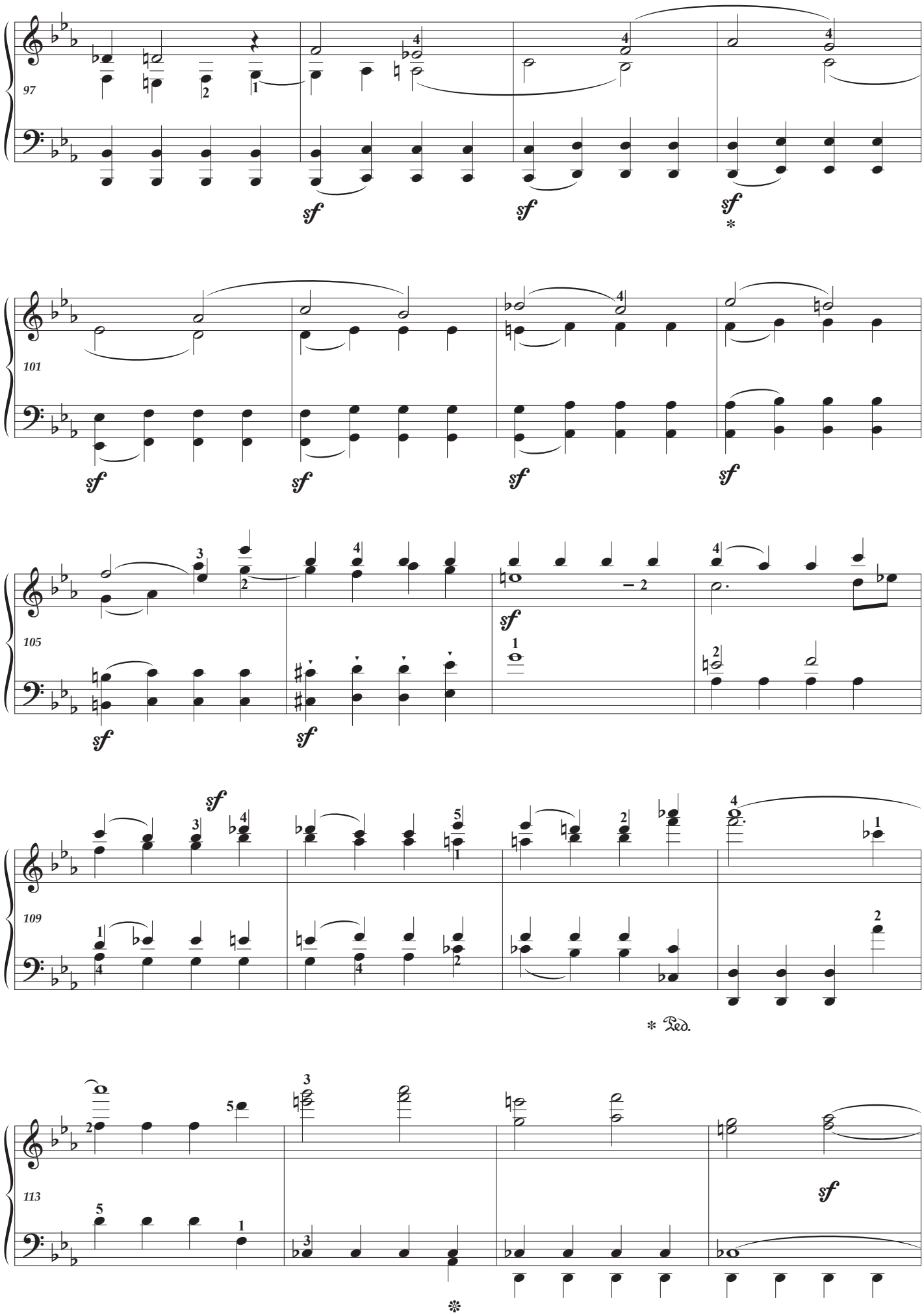
69

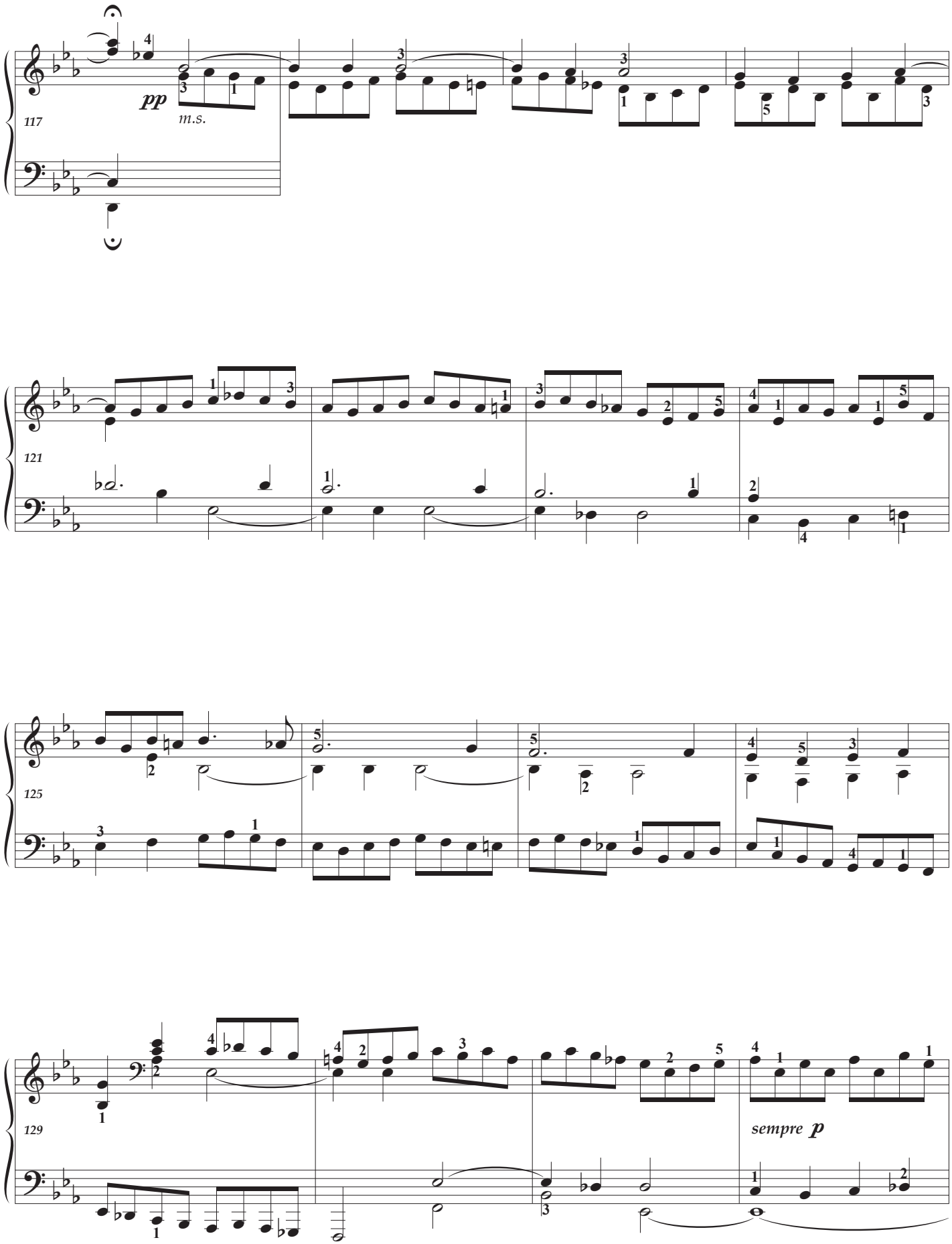
[mf]

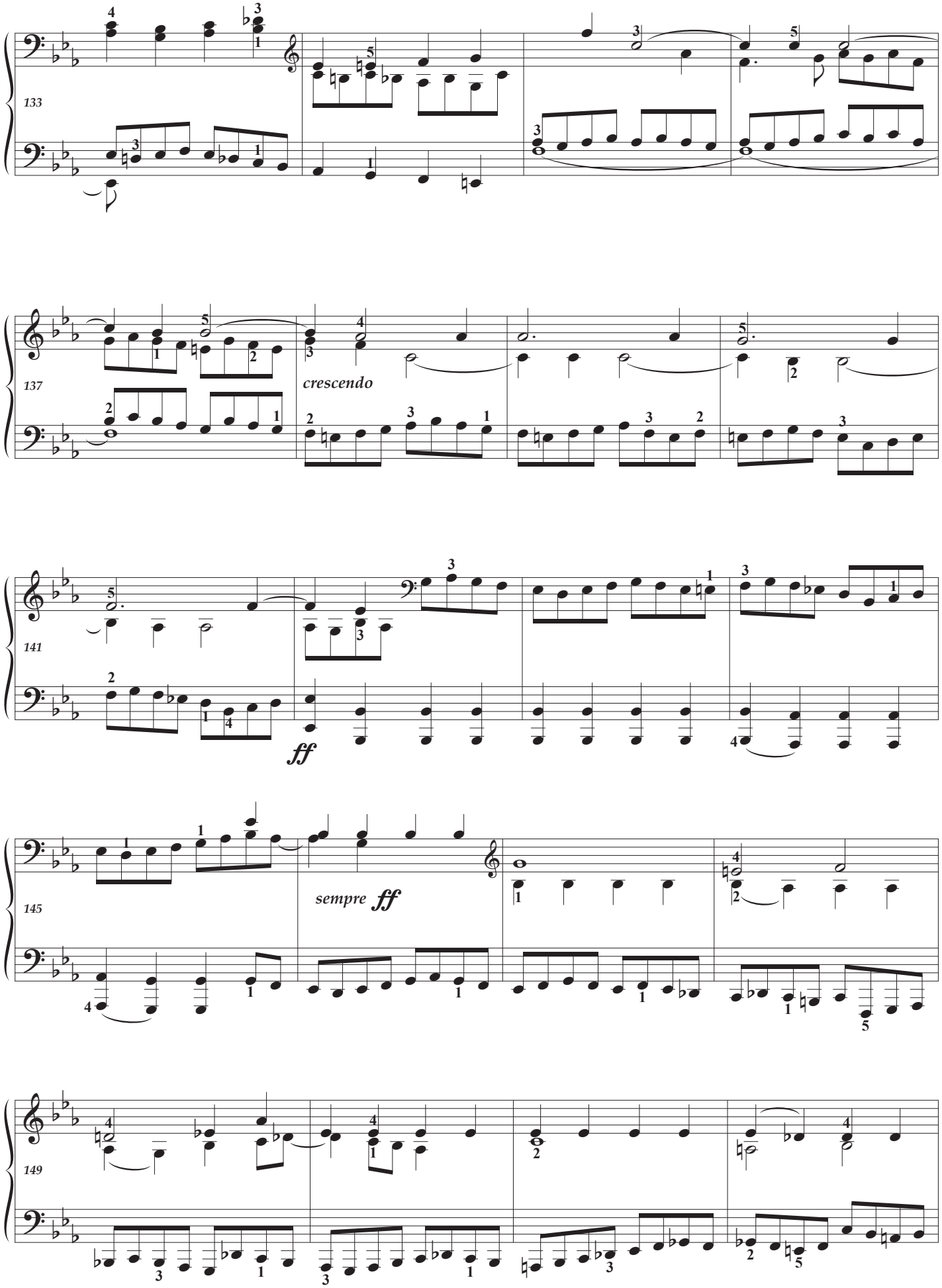
73

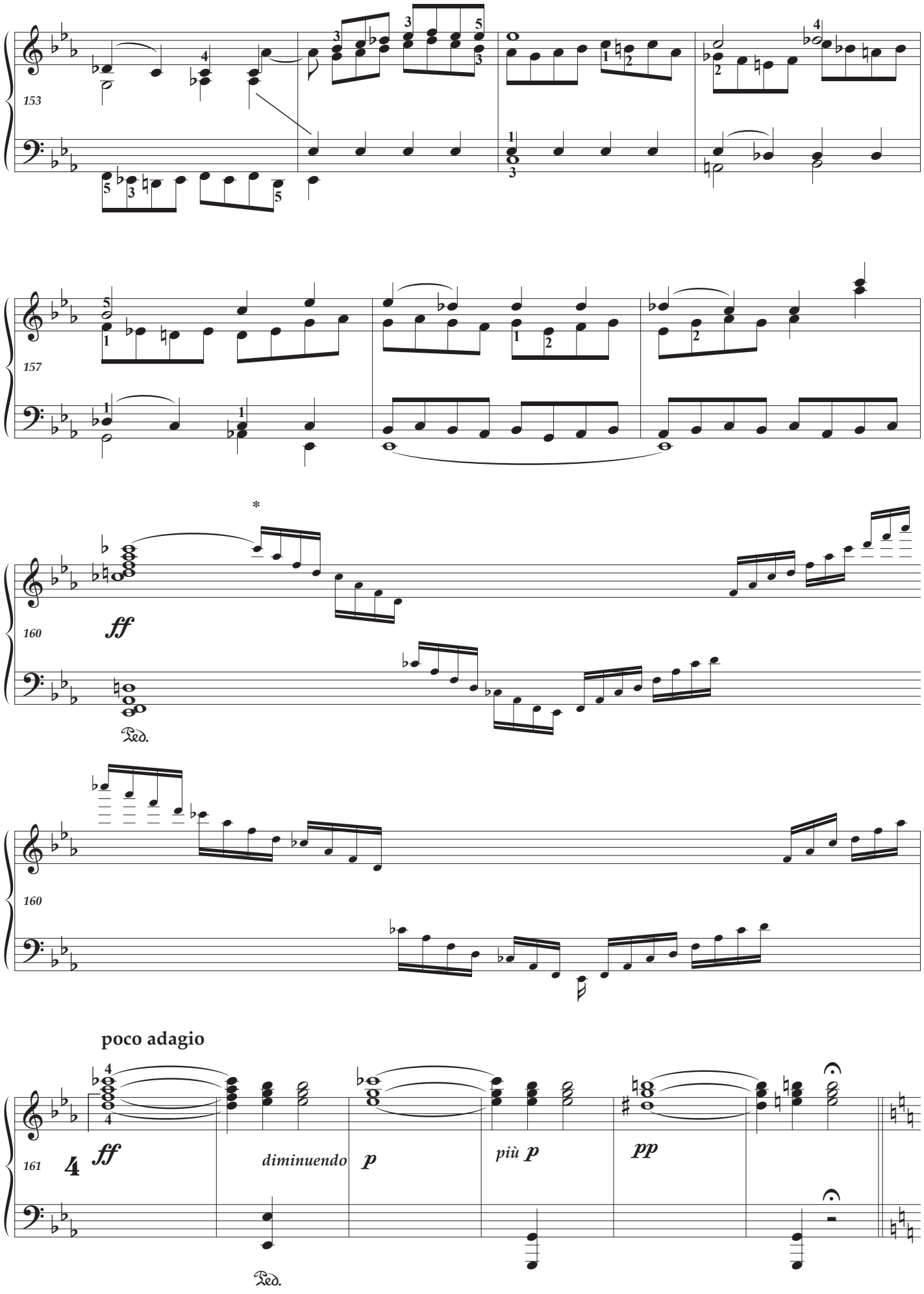
sf


77
81
sf
sf
85
sf
p
89
93
ff


97
sf
sf
sf
*
101
sf
sf
sf
sf
105
sf
sf
sf
1
2
109
sf
* Ped.
113
sf
*


117
pp
m.s.
121
125
129
sempre p


133
137
crescendo
141
ff
145
sempre ff
149

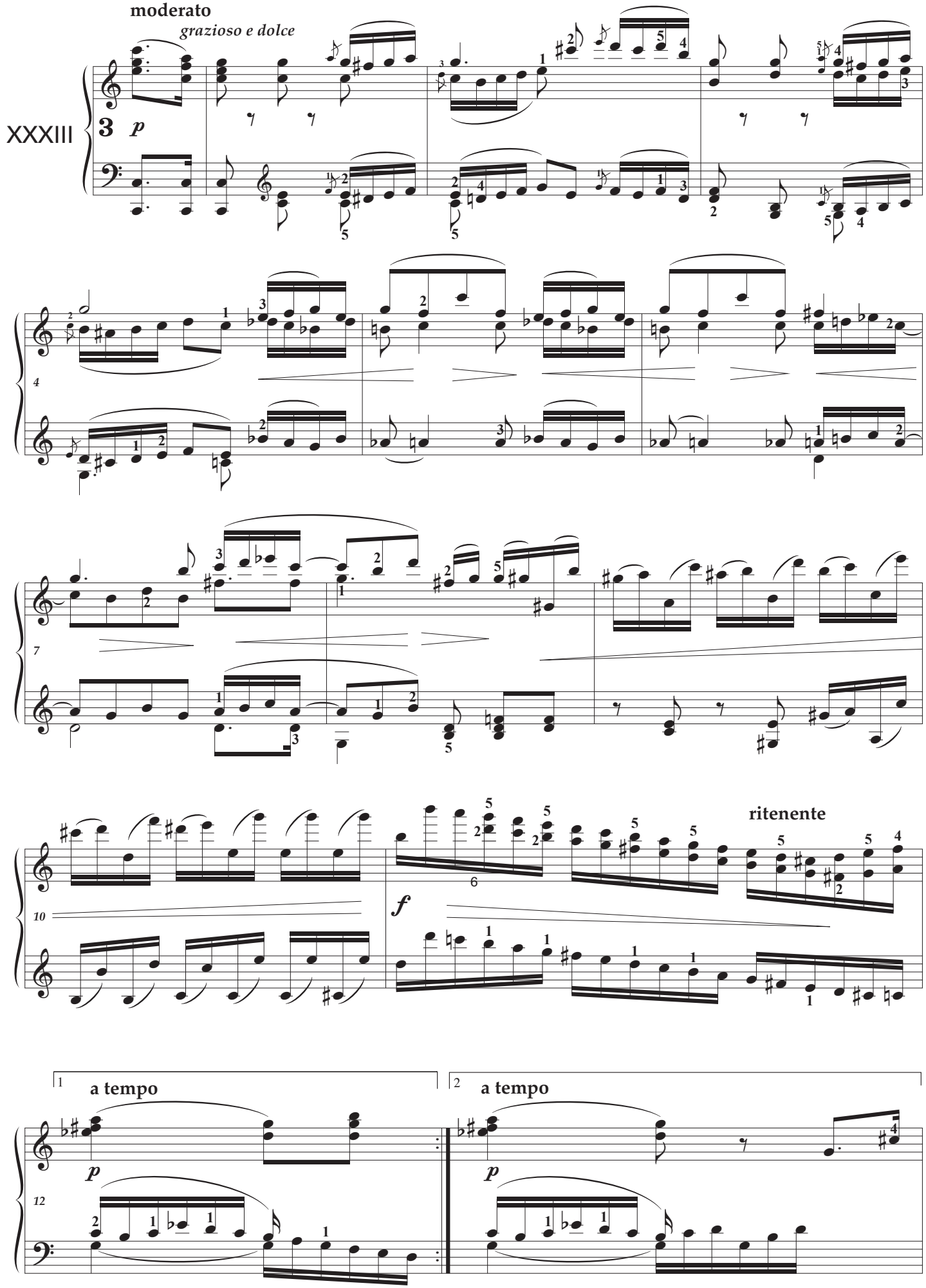

153
157
160
ff
Ped.
160
poco adagio
161
4
ff
diminuendo
p
più p
pp
Ped.

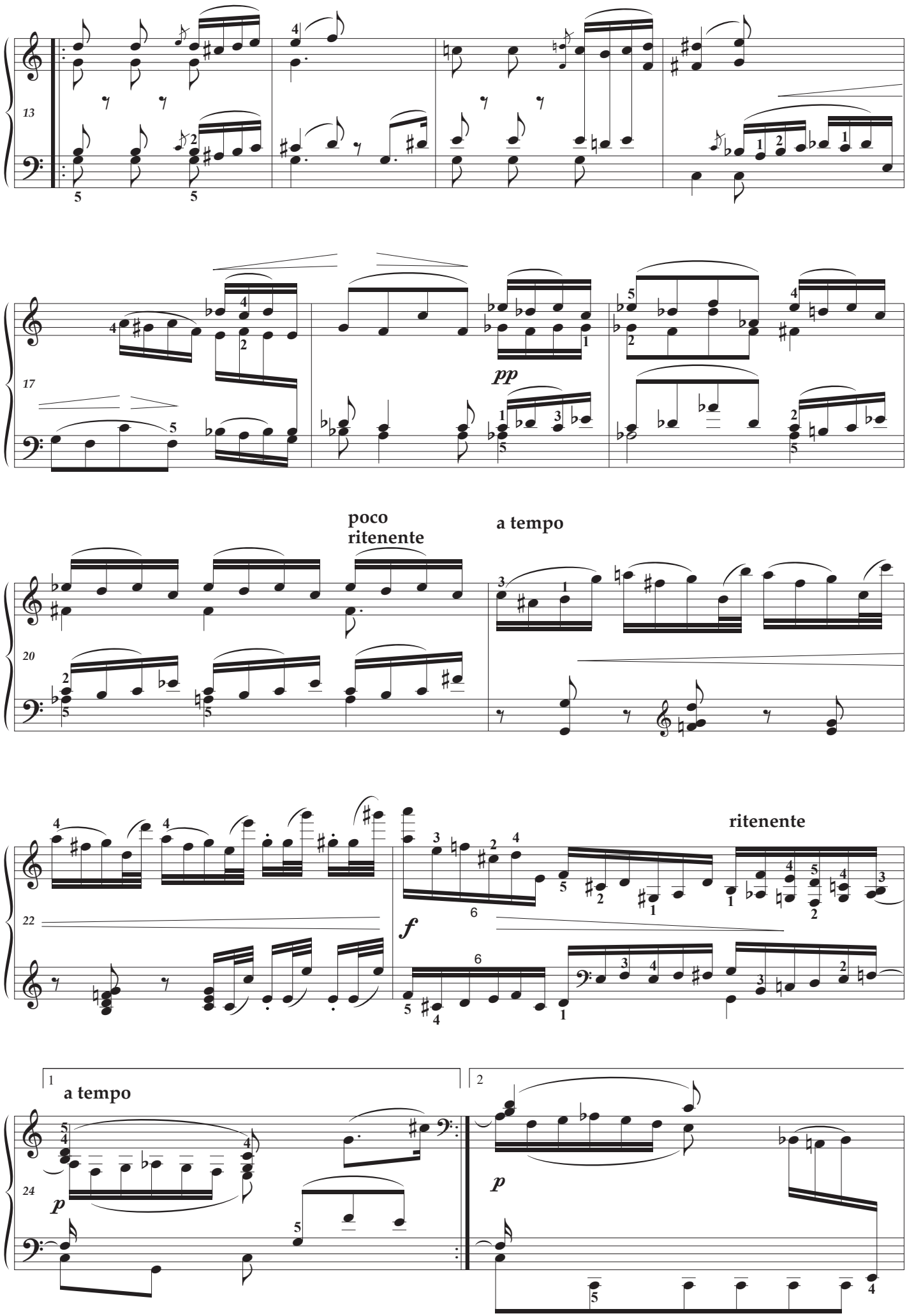
TEMPO DI MINUETTO *(ma non tirarsi dietro)**

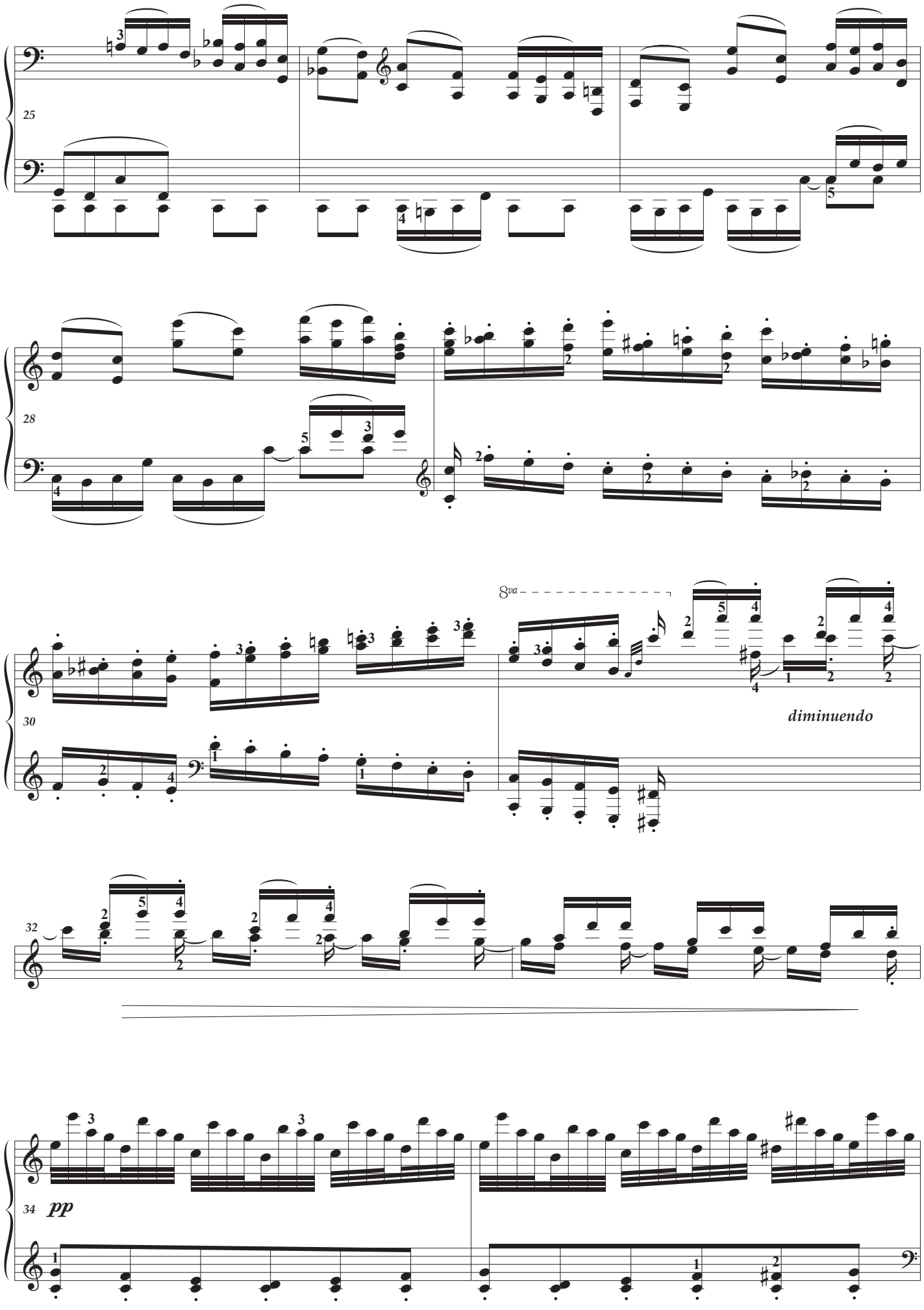
moderato

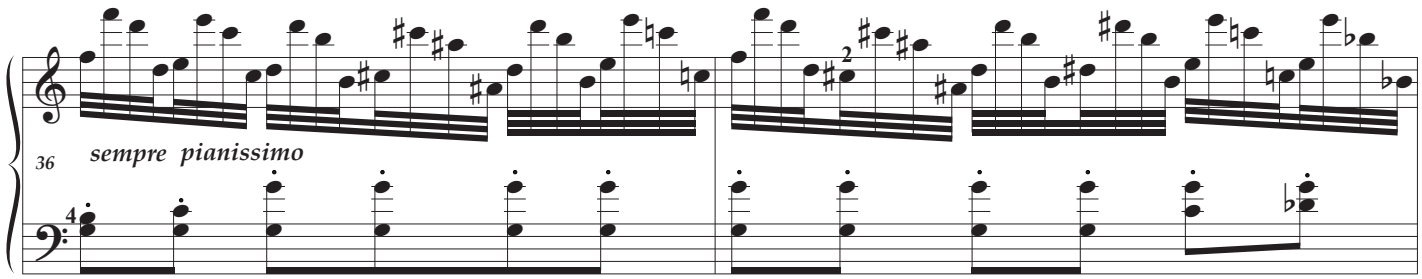
grazioso e dolce

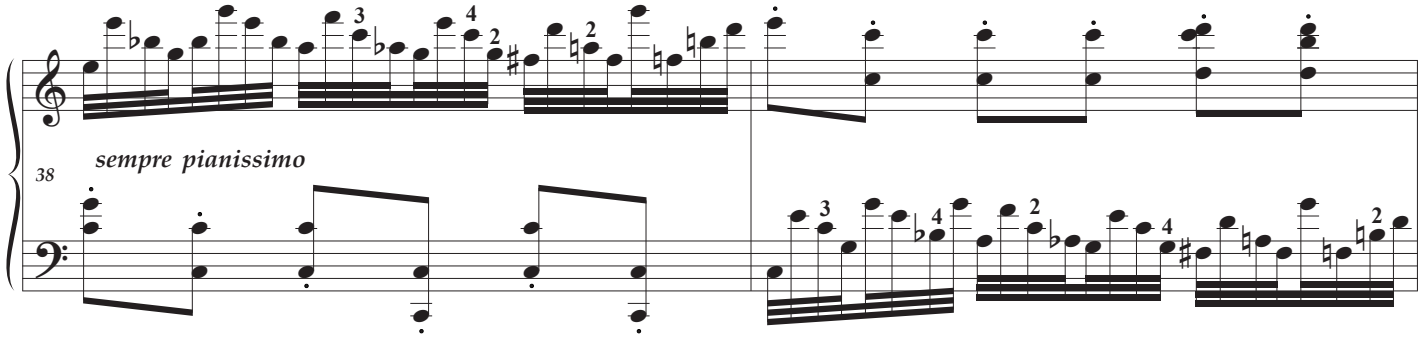
XXXIII

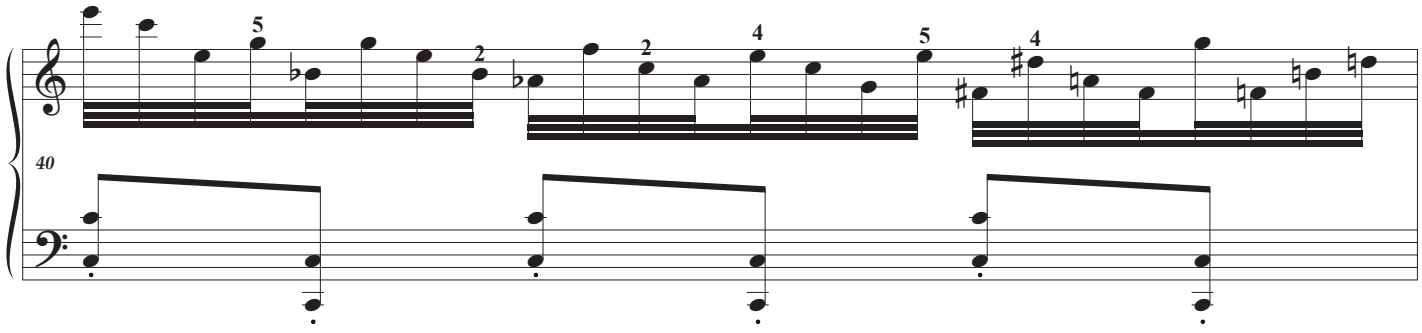


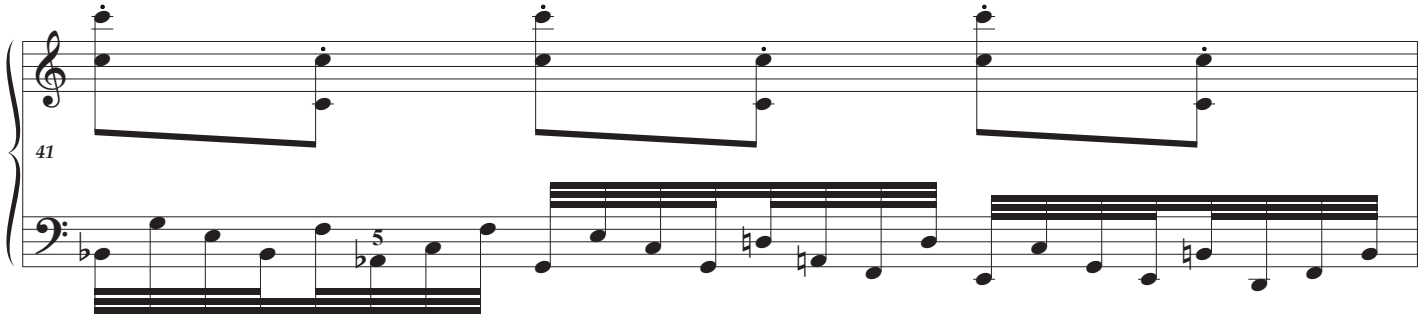

13
17
pp
poco
ritenente
a tempo
20
22
ritenente
f
1
a tempo
2
24
p
p

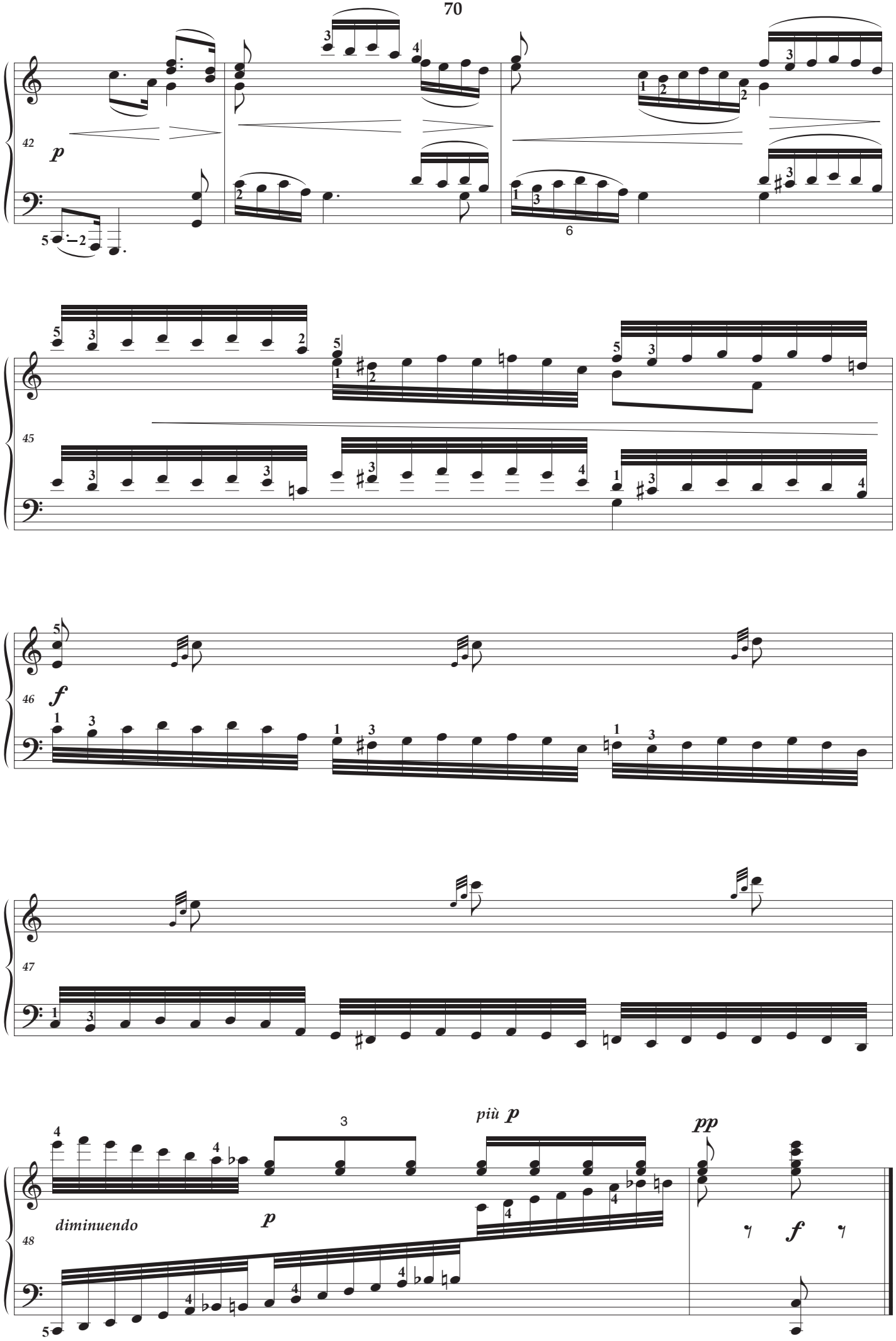

25
28
30
8va
diminuendo
32
34
pp

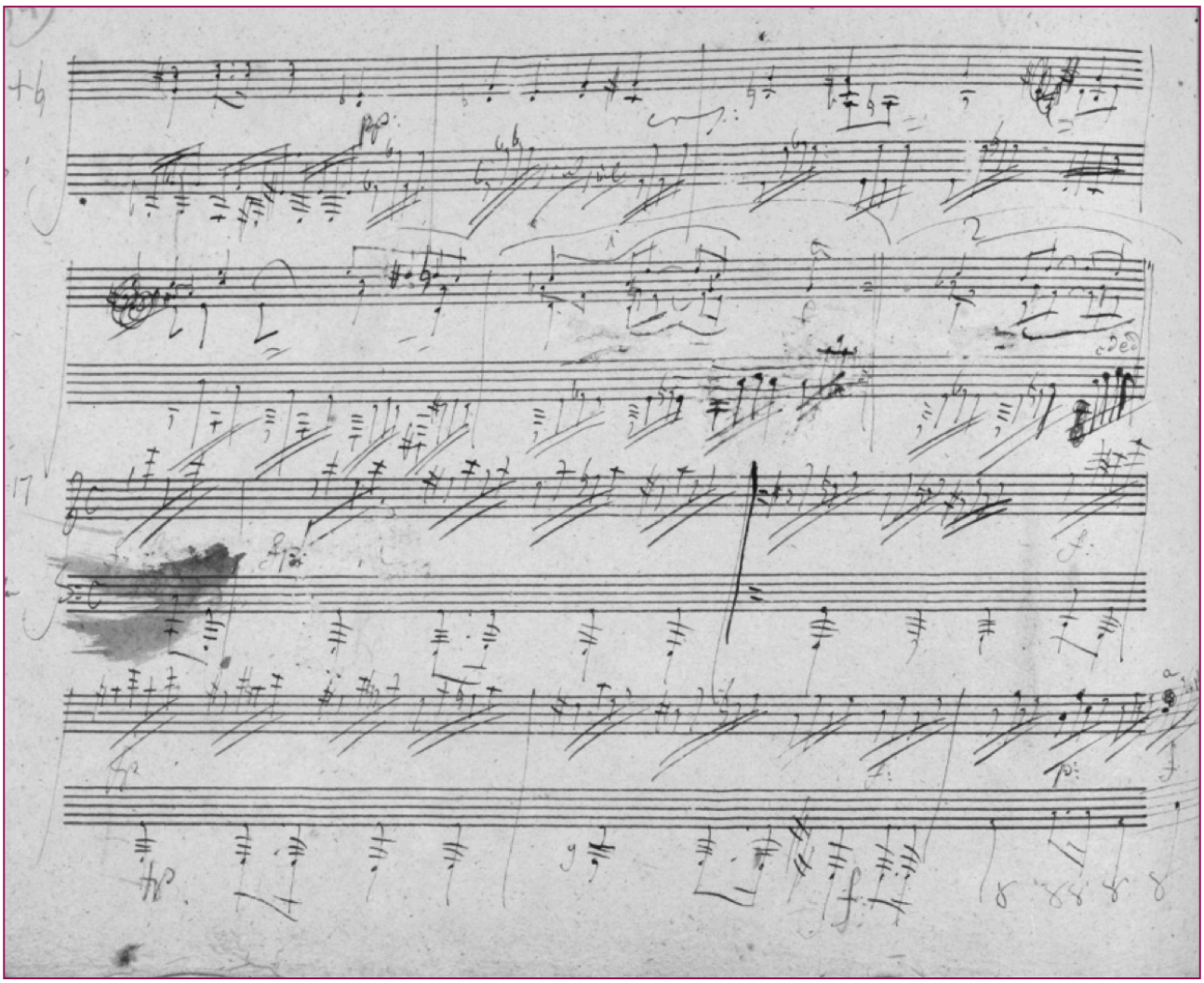

36
sempre pianissimo


38
sempre pianissimo

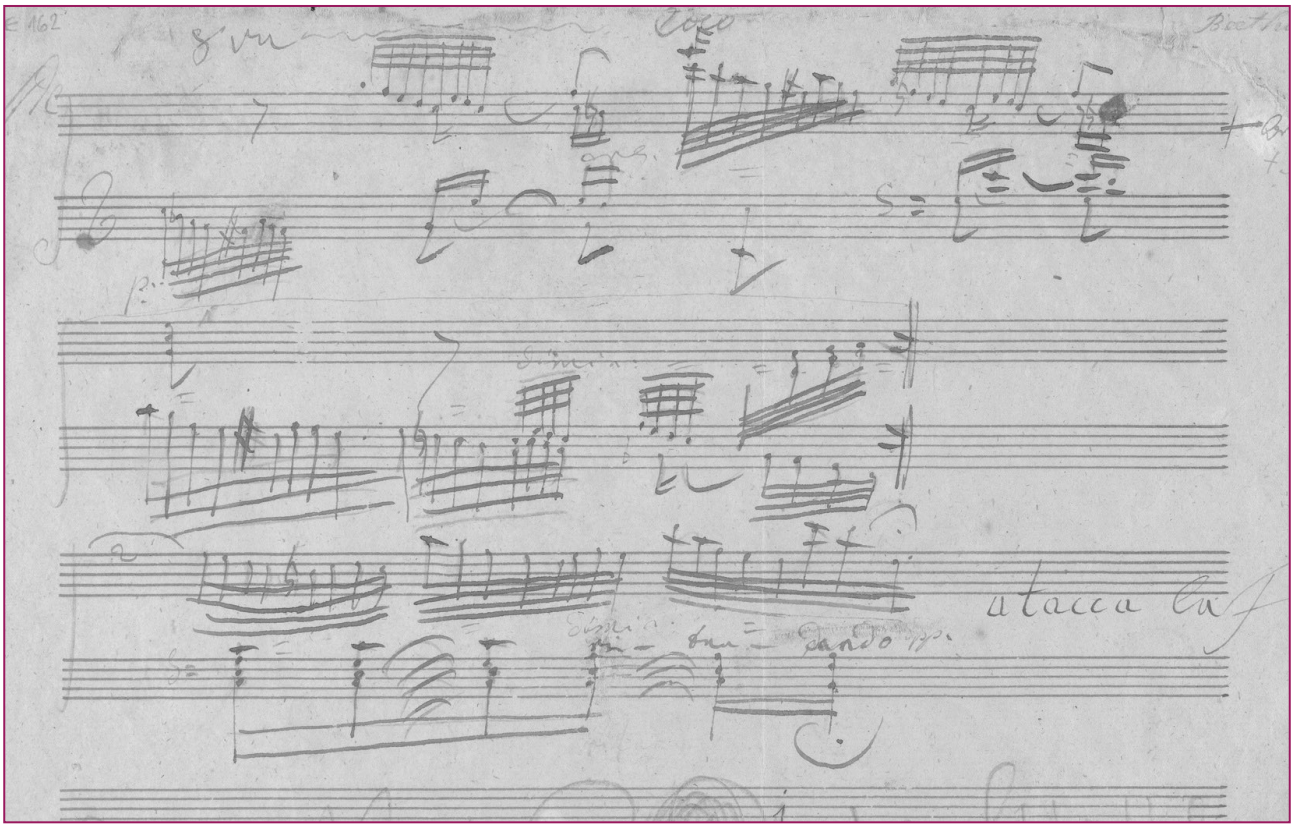

40


41


42
p
45
46
f
47
48
diminuendo
p
più p
pp
f



facsimile — variation 16 (from bar 13) and 17 (to bar 5)



facsimile — variation 31 final bar

BEETHOVEN

DIABELLI VARIATIONS

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