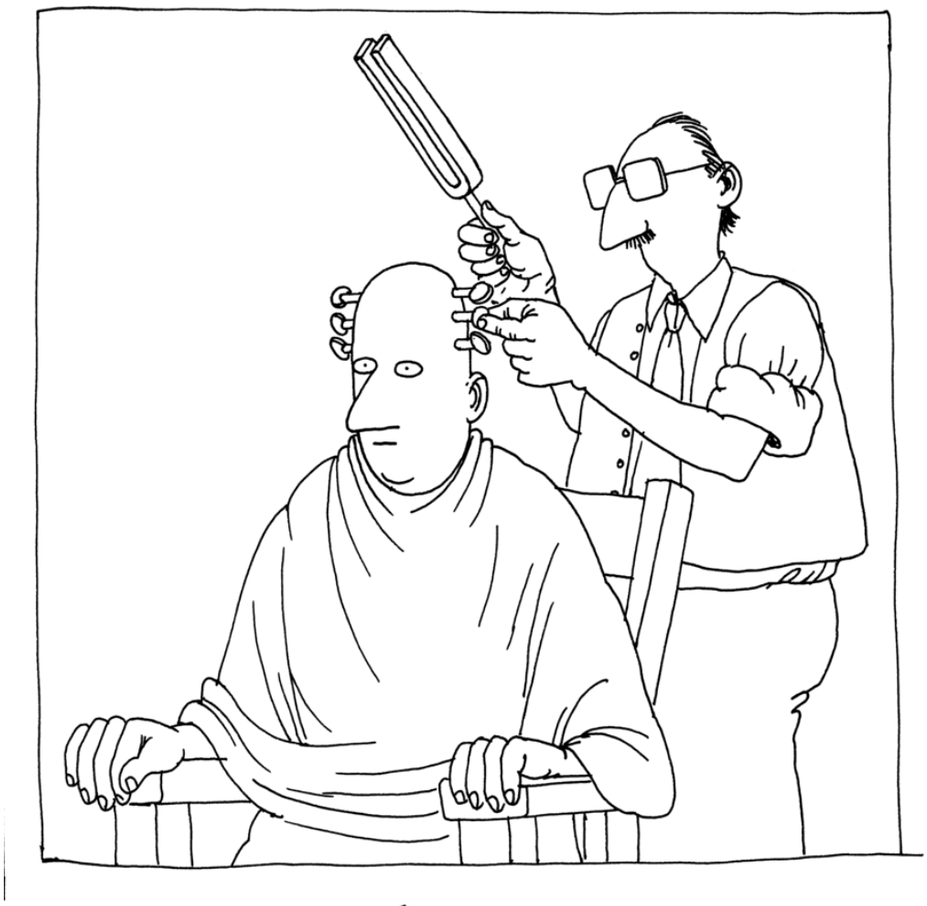
Ten Sonatas for 6 String Violin



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Bill Robinson

Ten Sonatas for 6 String Violin

(completed July 7, 2017)

Bill Robinson

These sonatas were written between 1975 and 2003 in a rather complex pattern of starts and stops, composition and disposal, editing and recopying. I wrote a solo violin sonata in the spring of 1975, and based my now-eliminated First Symphony based on its ideas; dissatisfied, I completely re-wrote it in January 1979, saving little from the original. I revised the first movement again in the spring of 1991 and the last movement in 2002. The second sonata came along in 1976, composed for Deborah Moreland's 18th birthday as a two-movement work. I rewrote both movements in 1991, and in 2002 reversed their order and added a third movement written in 1991. (In addition, in 1975 I wrote a sonata for solo 'cello or viola, but discarded it later.)

In 1979 I decided to write a total of 64 movements in 21 sonatas for solo violin, correlating each movement to a hexagram of the "I Ching"—not by using chance to determine things, as John Cage did, but just as a kind of unifying device and as an illustration of the nature of each hexagram. As I finished the 21 sonatas, my arthritis became severe enough that I could no longer play violin, and the sonatas remained unperformed.

In 1991 I made an electric violin which I used for six months. It appeared that I was going to be able to play again, so I went back to work on the 21 sonatas, throwing out the weaker movements, rewriting those that had promise, and keeping the best as they stood. This made the new total of 16 sonatas with about a third completely new material. After this six month period I was no longer able to play, both physically and due to other complications. When I was forced to vacate my dwelling, my landlord threw away all my compositions that had been copied in ink.

There followed ten years where making music was not possible. In late 2001 and early 2002, I had a stable life studying physics at NCSU, an old piano, housing, and access to a woodshop. I made two electric violins, a 4-string and a 6-string, that I held like a cello, with an assistive device to hold up my bow-arm. I could only play for a limited time before it became too painful, but the new attempt at performance inspired me to rework once again my old solo violin sonatas, including arrangements for viola and 6-string violin. I bought a curved bow from Michael Bach, allowing for polyphonic performance.

By spring of 2003, it became clear that the arthritis was too advanced and my attempt at a return to performance had to end.

In November 2015 I was making a revision of the copy work and making an experimental arrangement for cello, when I realized that the eighth of the eleven sonatas had two weak movements. I kept only the middle movement, and made what had been #9, 10, and 11 the new #8, 9, and 10, with the old middle movement now the first movement of the new #8.

In February 2017, I decided to try again to play violin, with new instruments and adaptive gear. I arranged all the ten sonatas for 6 string violin. Note that there are *significant* differences with the 4 string version. I also made a new edition of the original sonatas. My health did not sustain this effort to play again. With contributions from several friends as I left Raleigh and retired from teaching physics at NCSU in May, I bought a fine 6 string violin made by Tom Reiter in the Czech Republic that arrived in early July, and for a few months could play about an hour a day. I lived in rural western Rowan County from May 2017 to April 2019, which was very positive for composition and peace of mind. I moved to Garner, North Carolina (next to Raleigh) in April 2019 into subsidized senior housing.

Performance notes: Most of the movements in the 6 string edition have pedal indications. This signifies the use of a freeze effect (sound retainer) pedal, which many electric violinists will be familiar with. (The curved bow mentioned above is very rare, rather expensive, and takes months to master, but may be used if available.) The freeze pedal sustains the sound at the moment of depression, and continues that sound until released. Other notes played during this period will not be sustained and play normally. Thus the pedal indication is like the sostenuto pedal on a piano (*not* the sustain pedal), and should be interpreted in that manner if this is played on a piano.

The tuning is, from the bottom, F-C-G-D-A-E.

These 6 string violin sonatas will be dedicated to the first violinist to perform them.

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(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

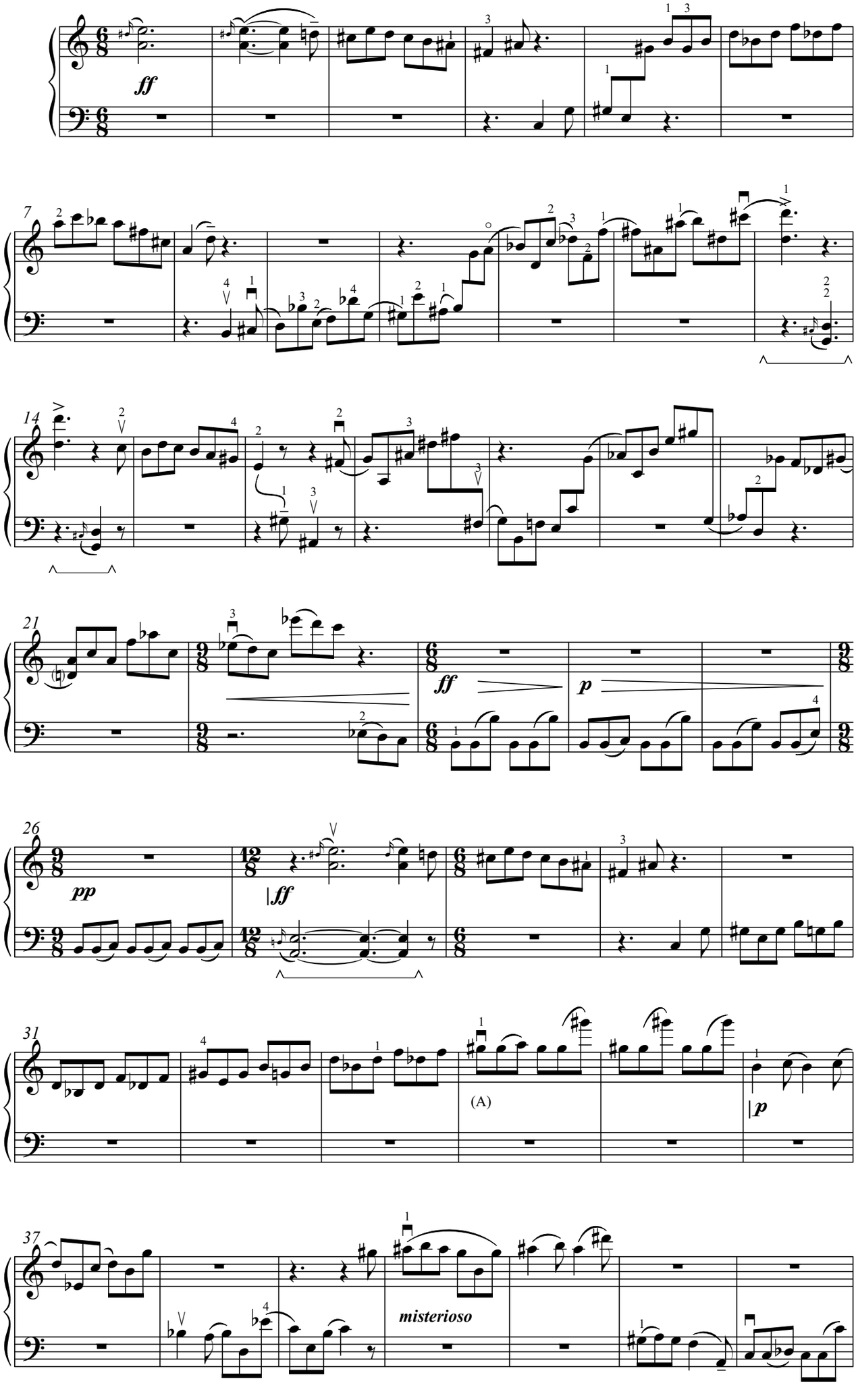
Sonata No. 1 for 6 String Violin

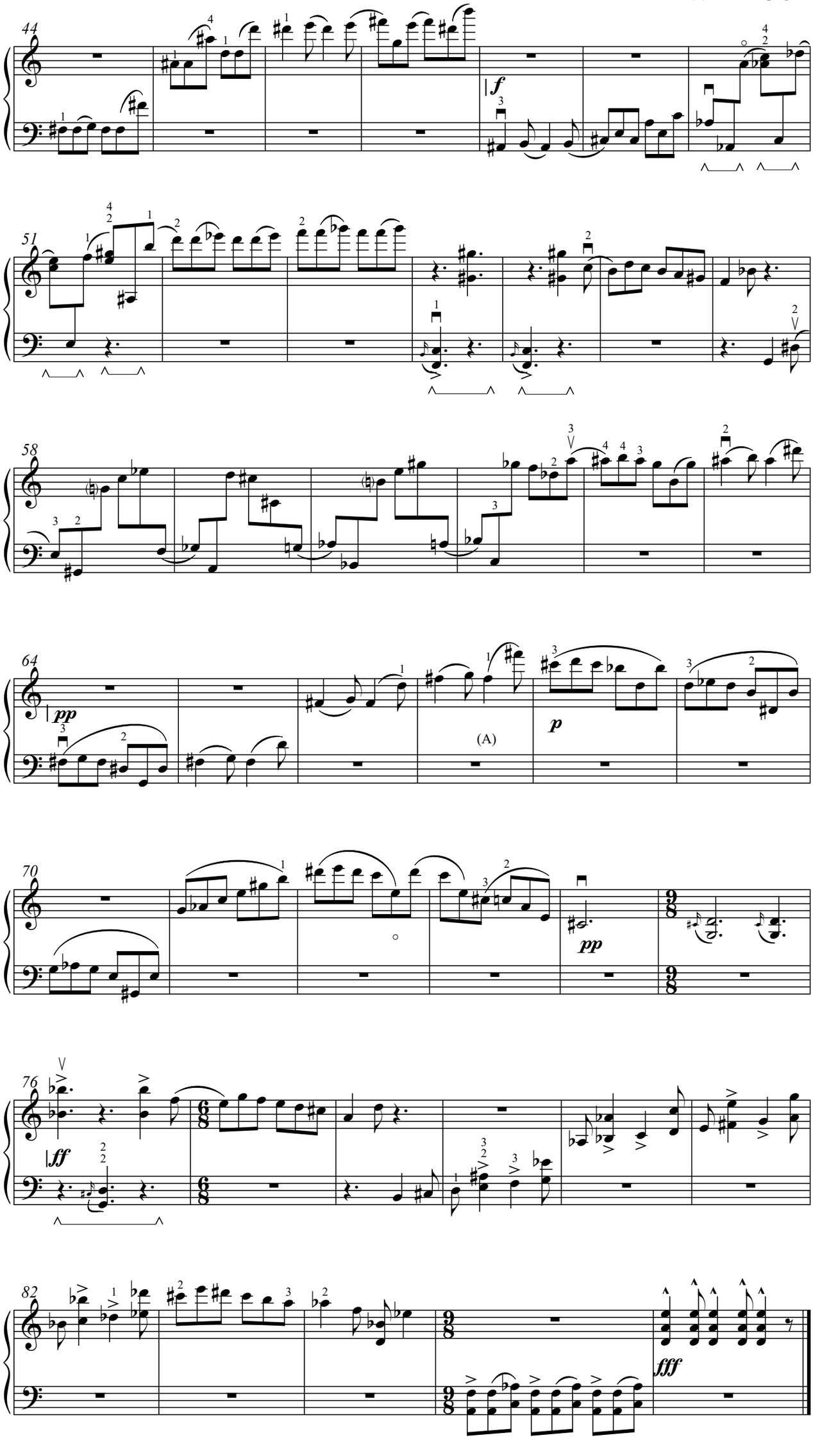
I. Jig

[1:40]

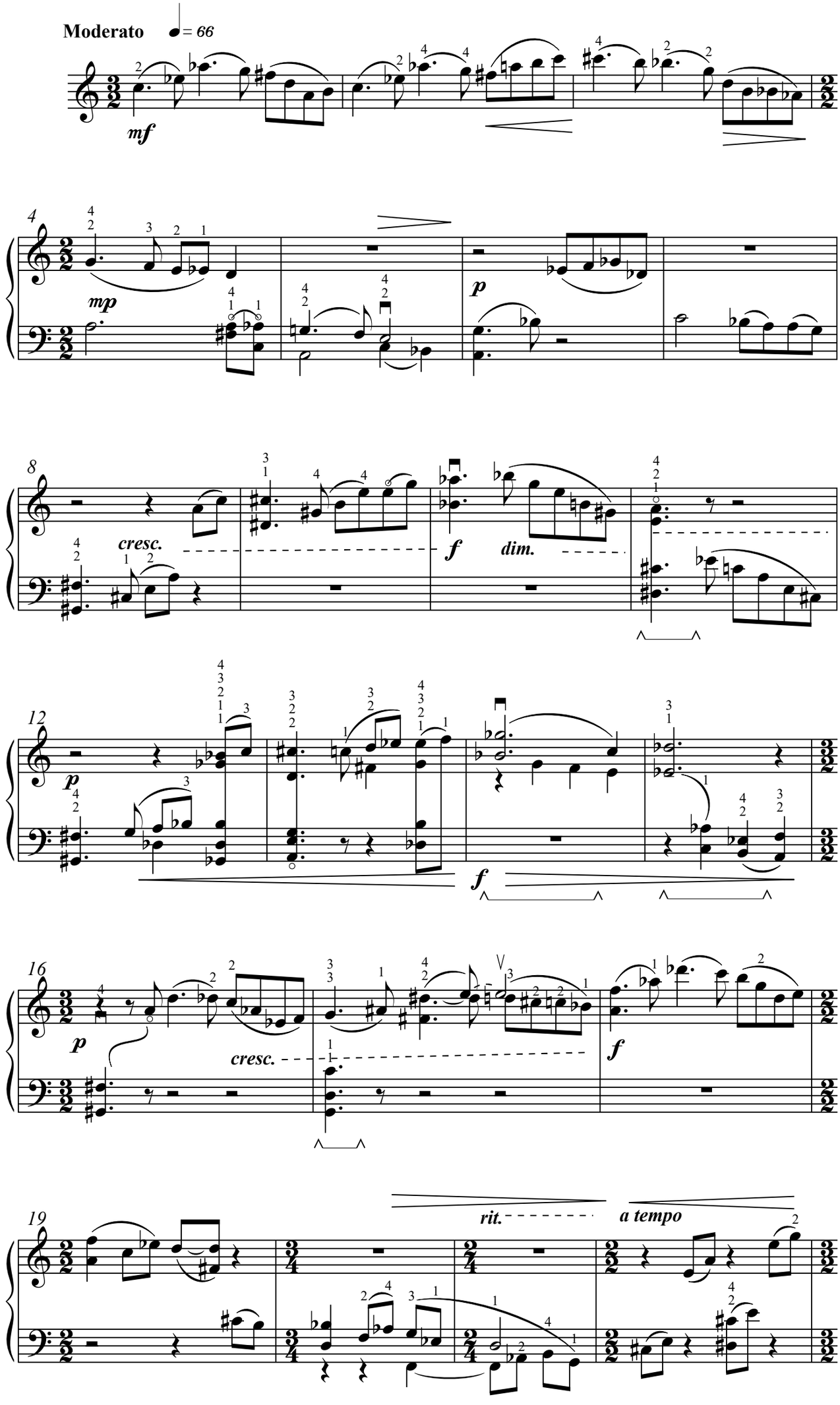
Bill Robinson

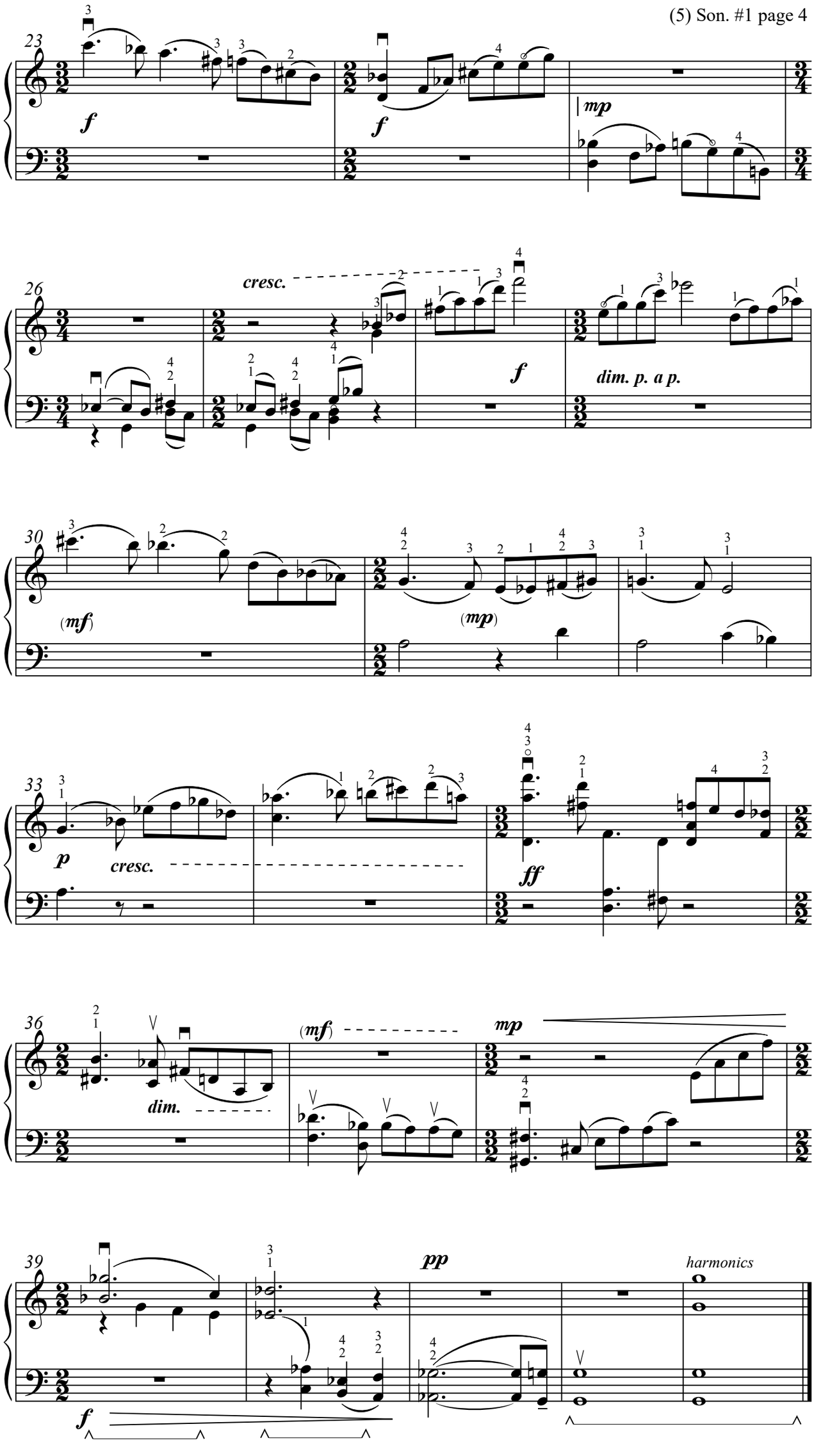
Is Uptempo ♩. = 108




44
f
51
58
64
pp
(A)
p
70
pp
76
ff
82
fff

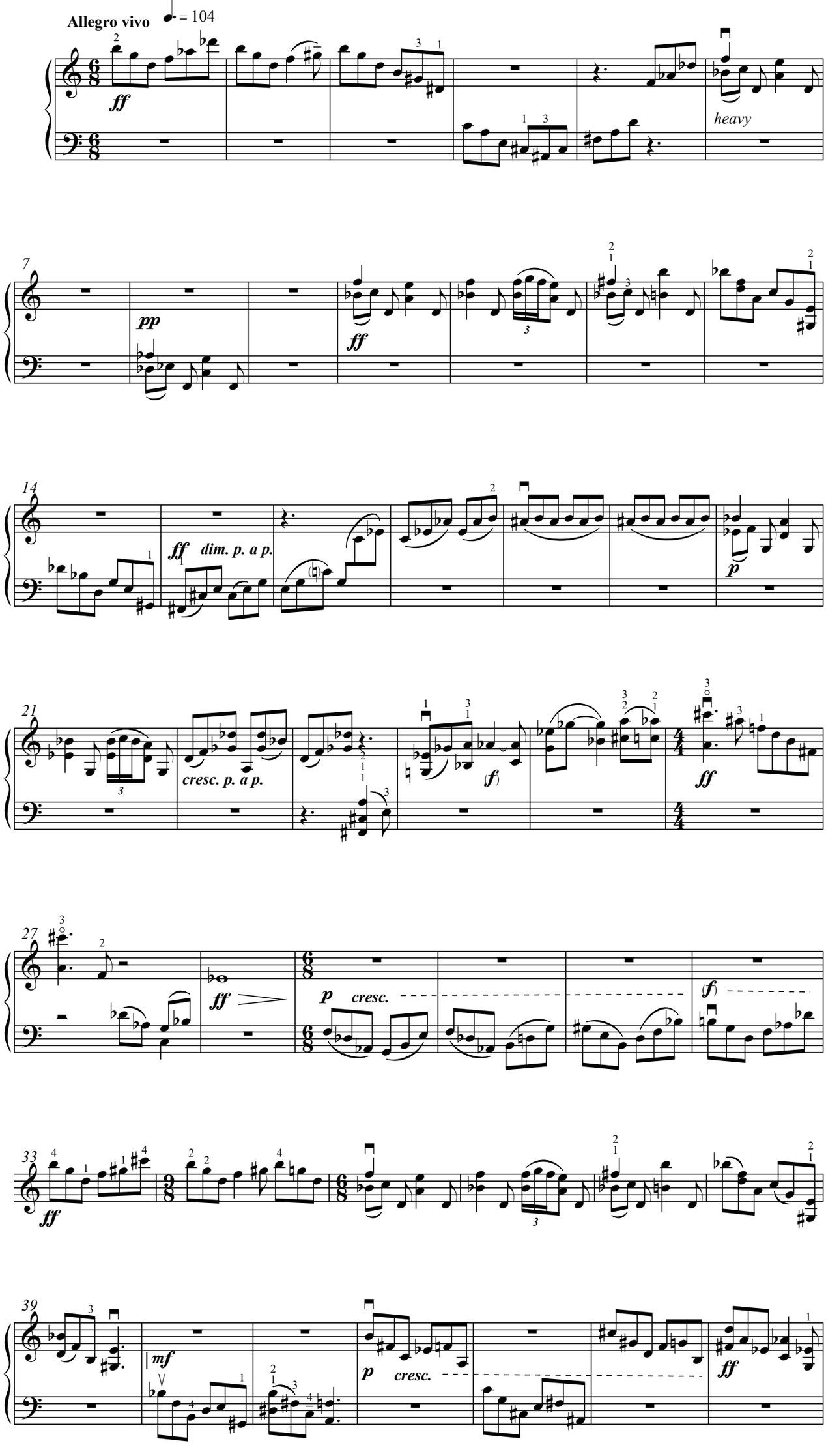
II. Second Movement [3']

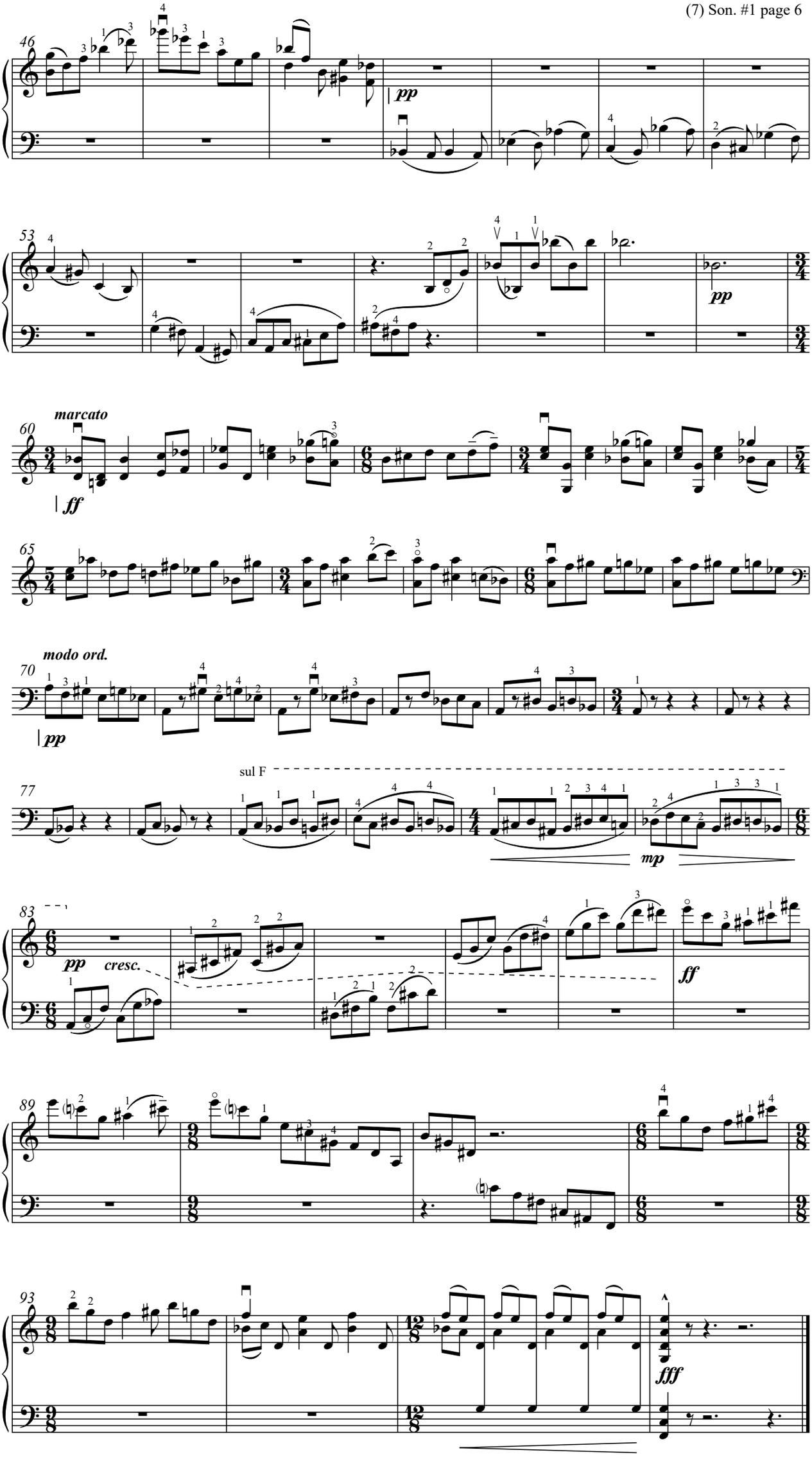



23
f
f
mp
26
cresc.
f
dim. p. a p.
30
(mf)
(mp)
33
p
cresc.
ff
36
dim.
(mf)
mp
39
pp
harmonics
f

III. Third Movement

[2:20]



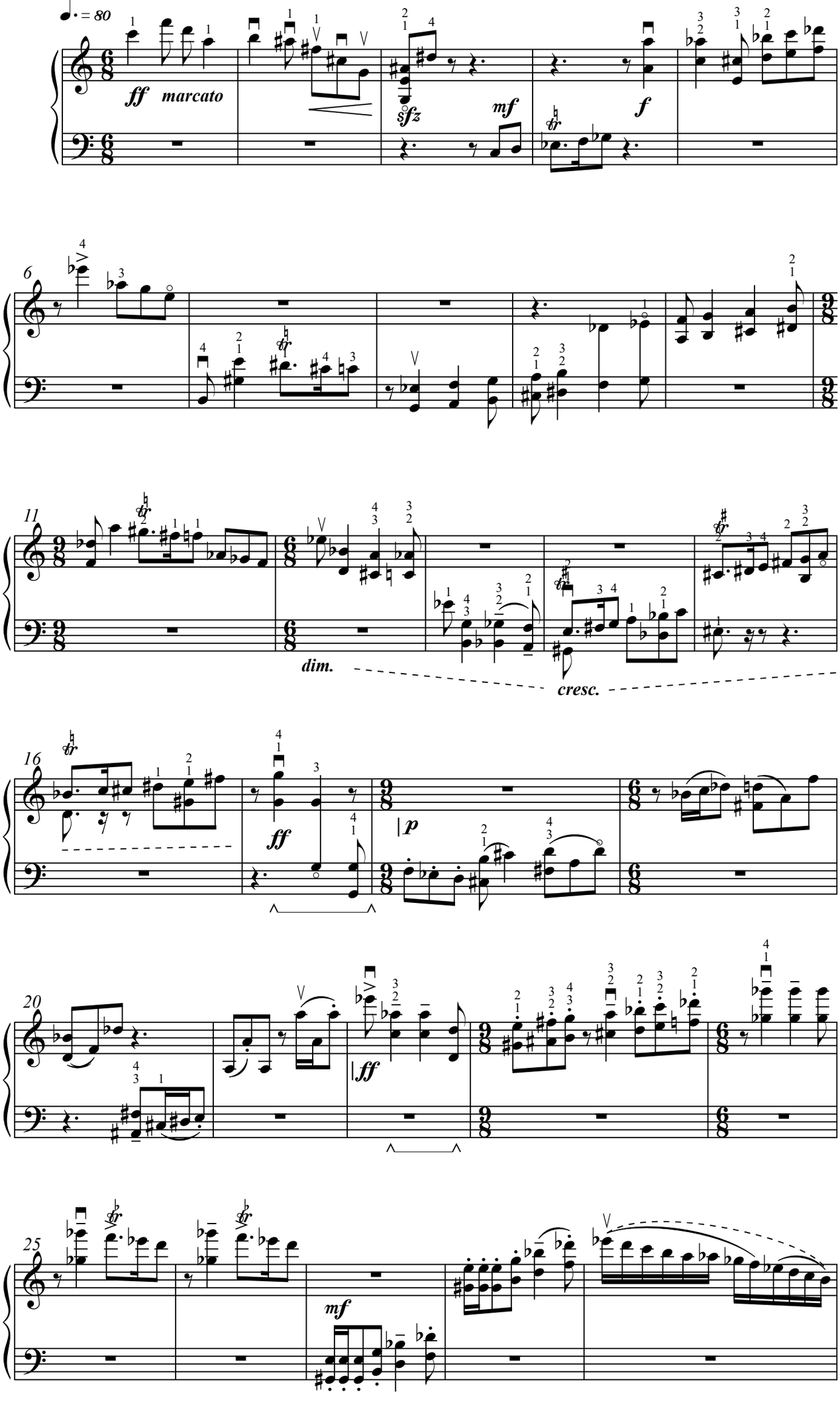

46
pp
53
pp
60
marcato
ff
65
modo ord.
70
pp
77
sul F
mp
83
pp
cresc.
ff
89
93
fff

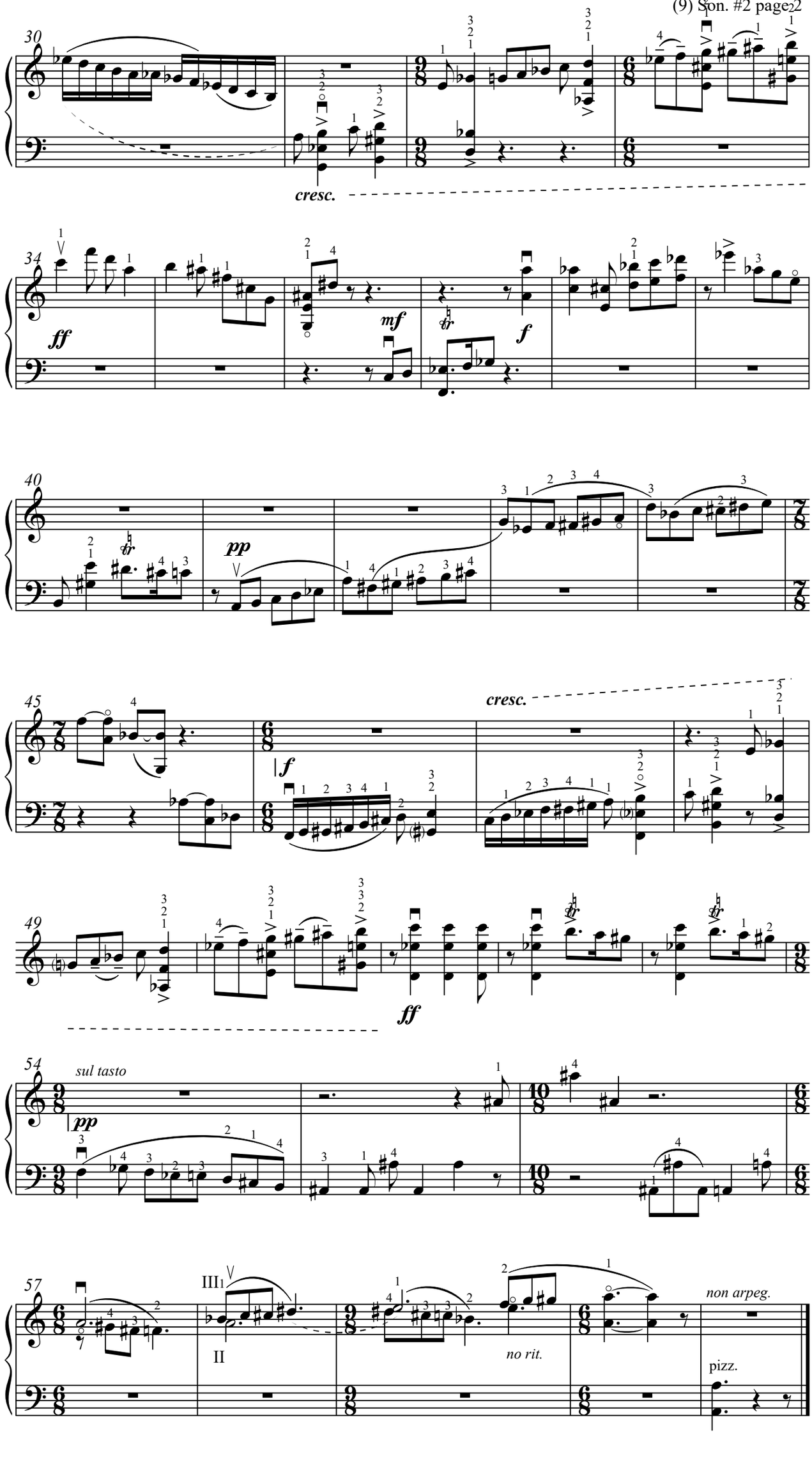
Sonata No. 2 for 6 String Violin

(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

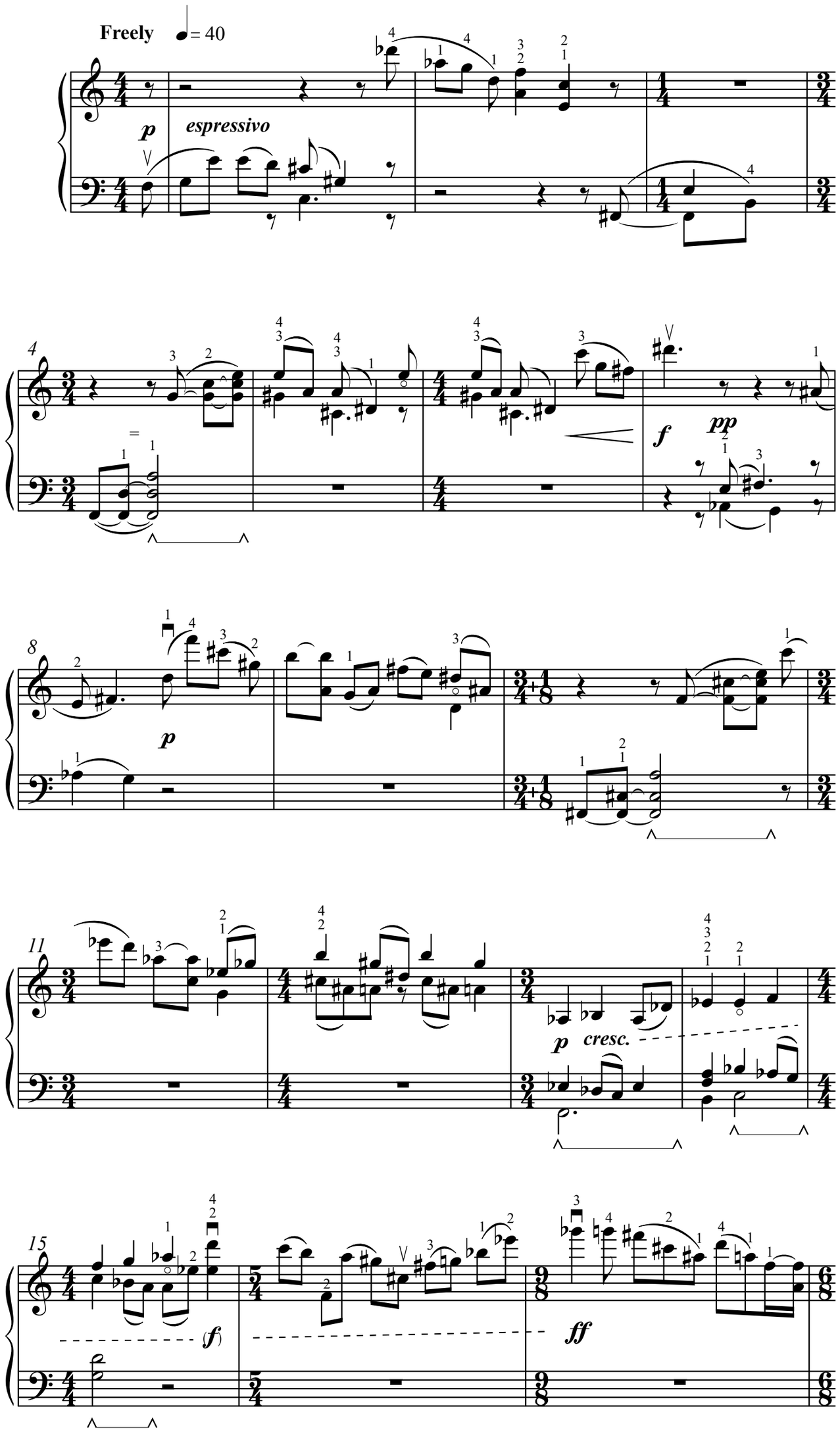
I. First Movement [1:40]

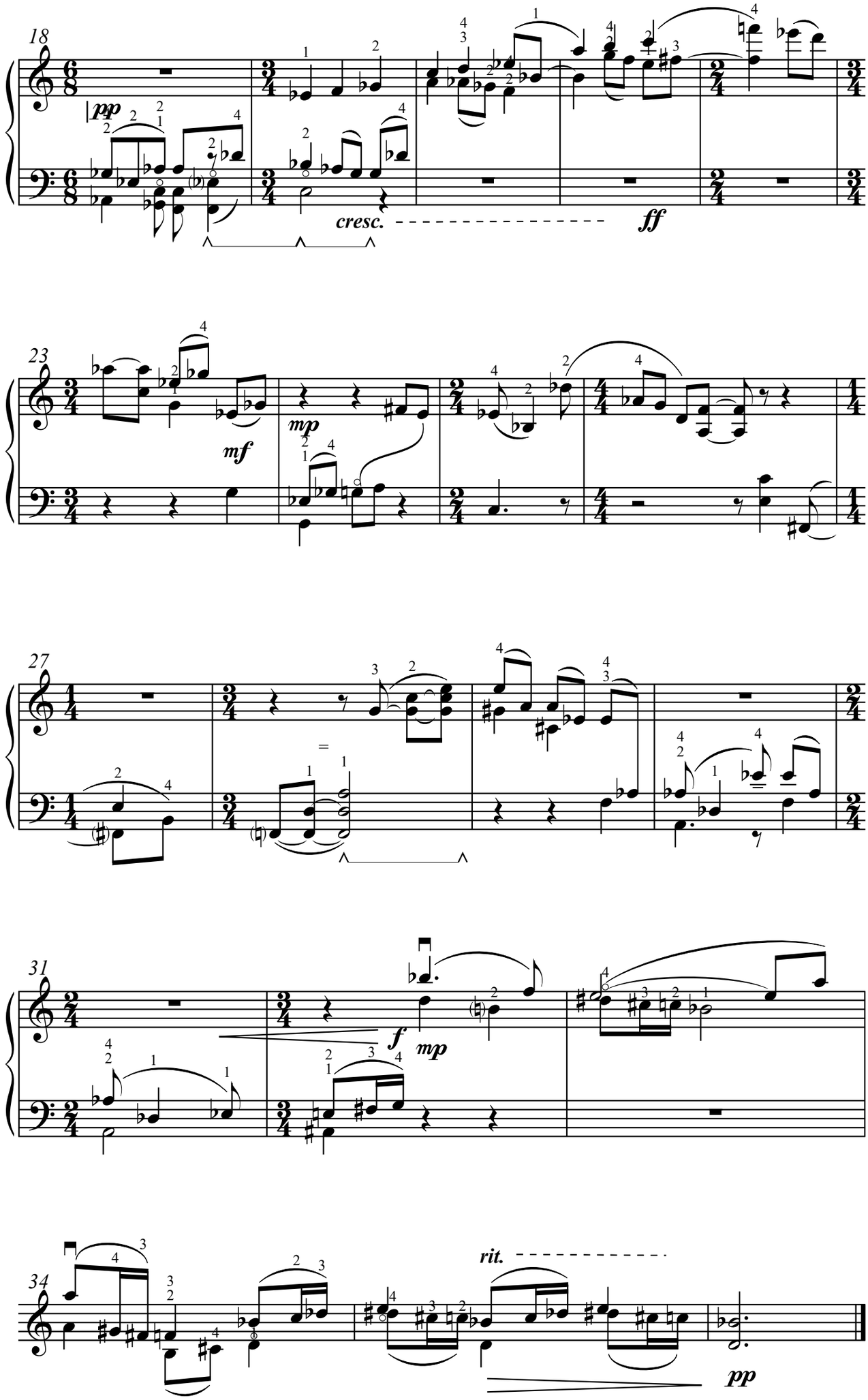
Bill Robinson




30
cresc.
34
ff
mf
f
40
pp
45
cresc.
f
49
ff
54
sul tasto
pp
57
III
II
no rit.
non arpeg.
pizz.

II. Second Movement [4']




18
pp
cresc.
ff
23
mf
mp
27
31
f
mp
34
rit.
pp

III. Sousiana

[2']

Allegro machismo ♩= 116

marcato

ff *mp* *f*

5

mp *ff* *mp* *f*

9

ff

13

mp *ff* *mp*

17

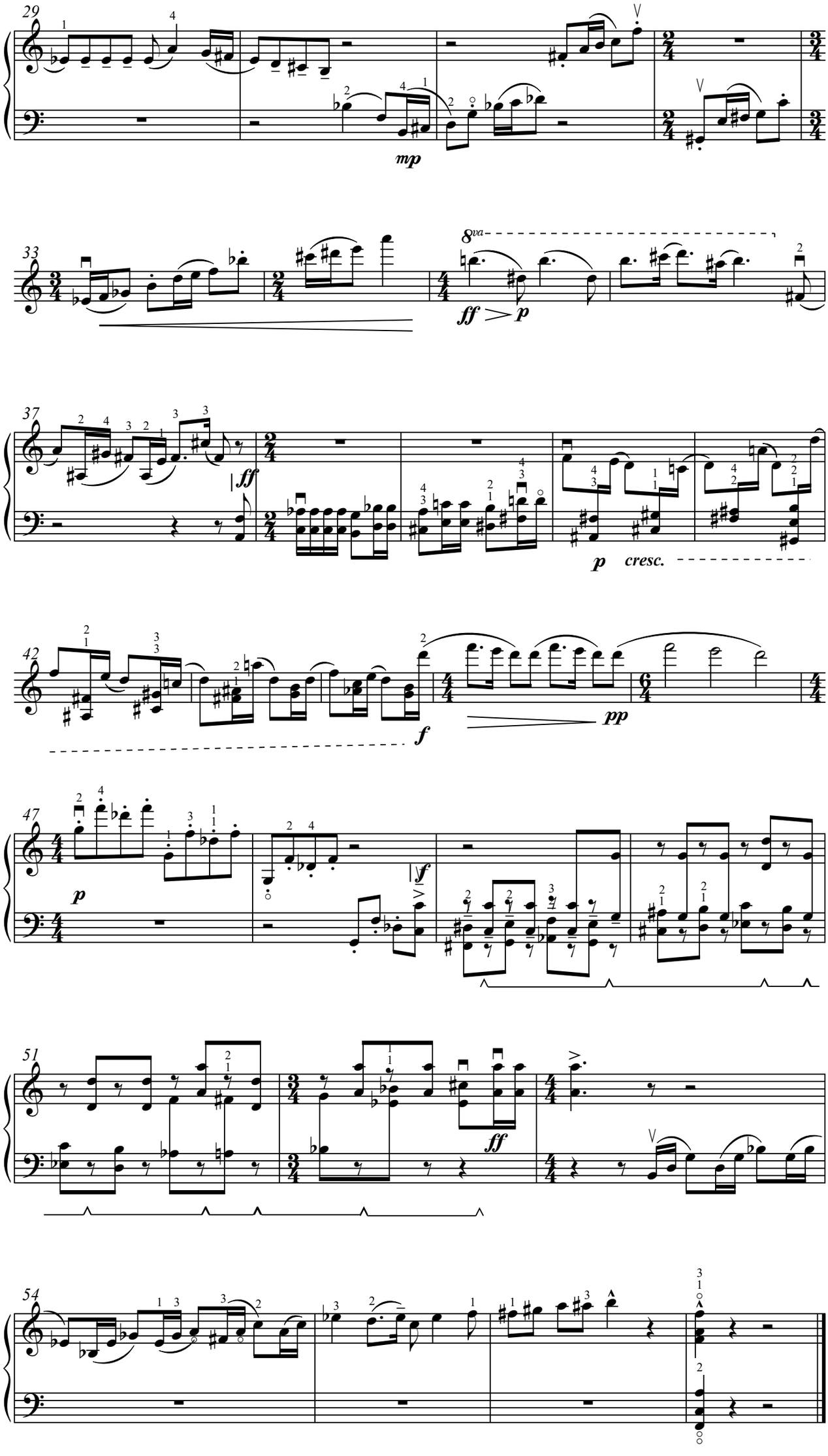
ff *p* *ff*

21

p *ff* *mp*

25

mp *ff* *f*


29
mp
33
8va
ff
p
37
ff
p
cresc.
42
f
pp
47
p
f
51
ff
54

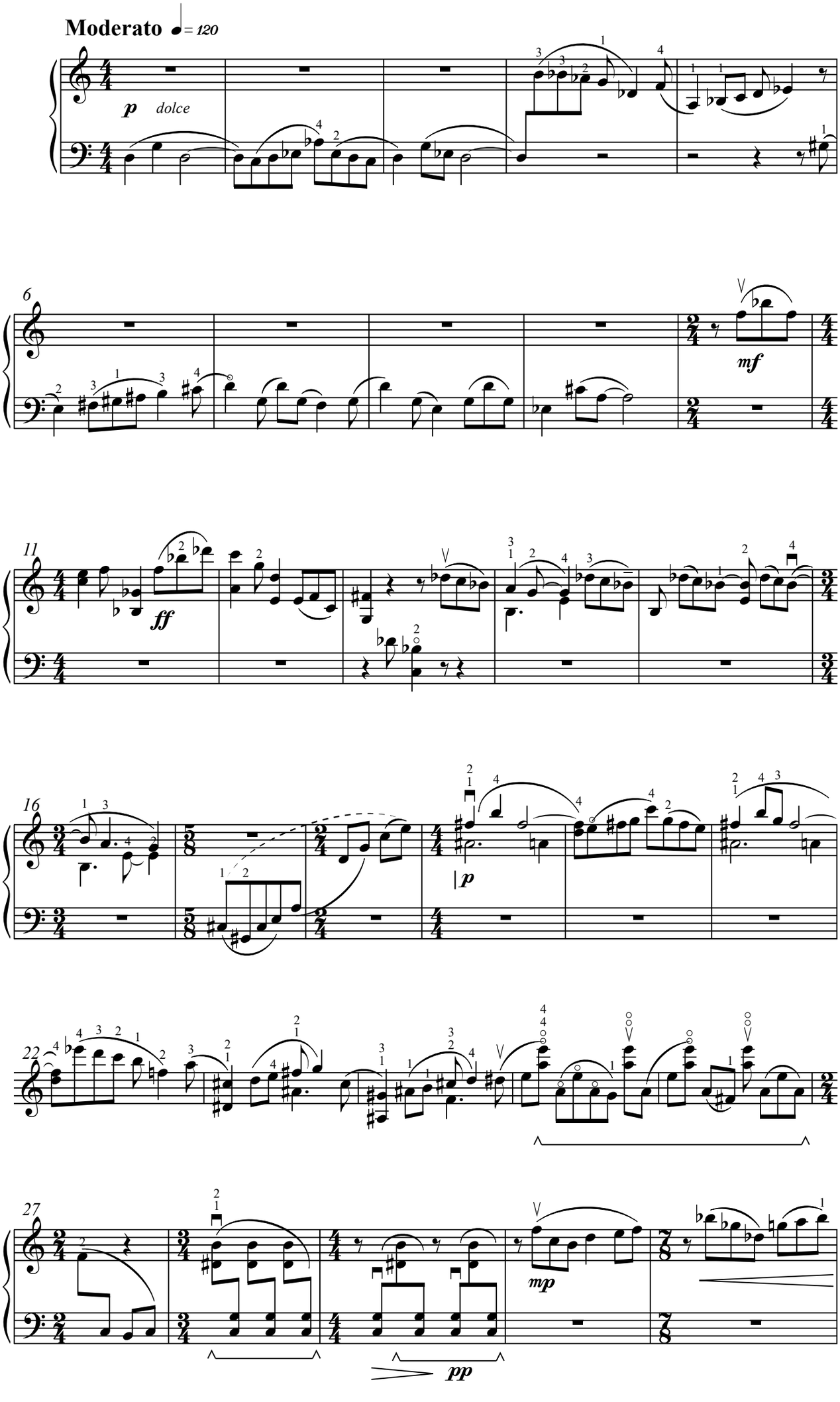
Sonata No. 3 for 6 String Violin

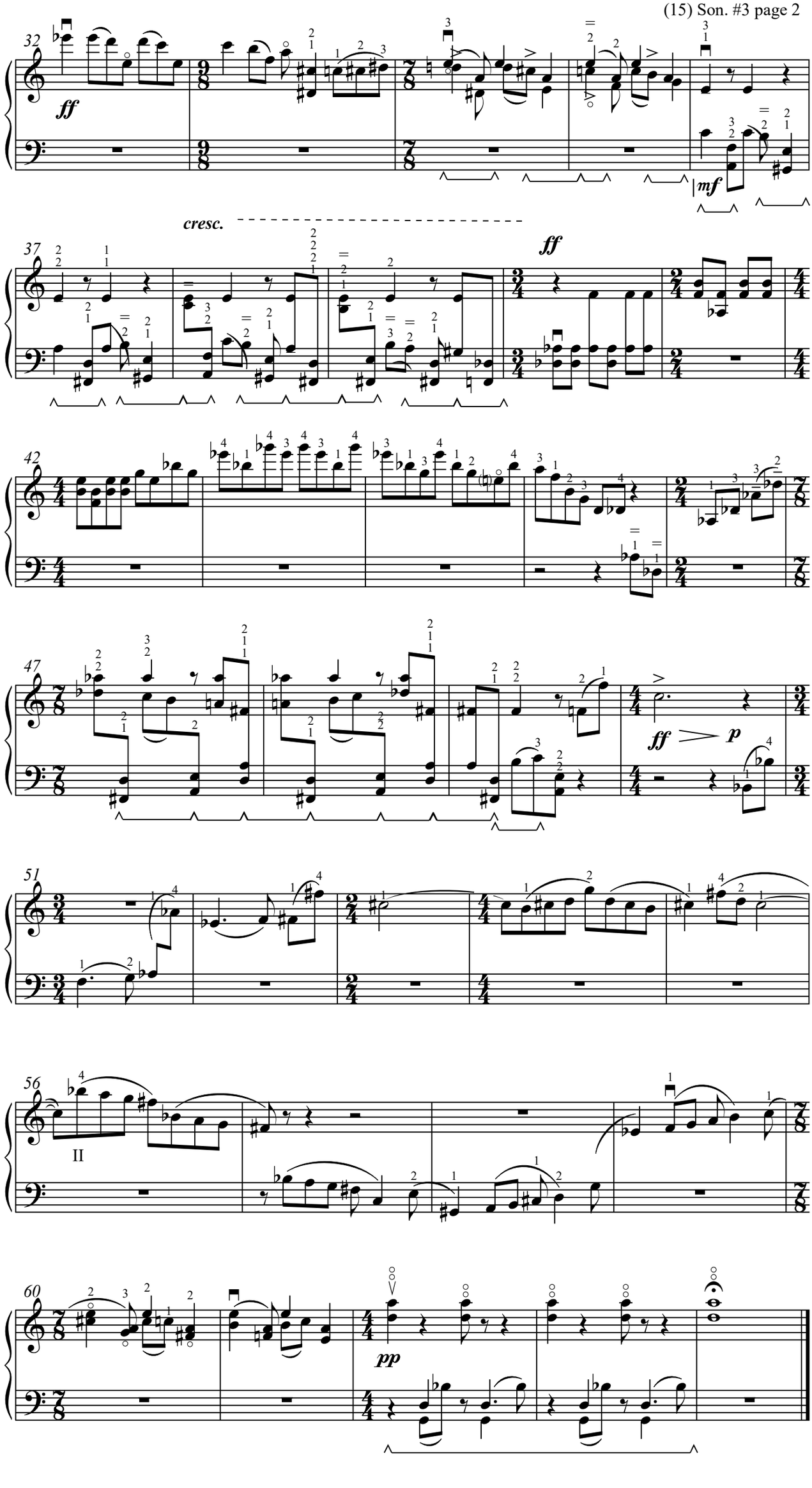
(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

I. First Movement [2']

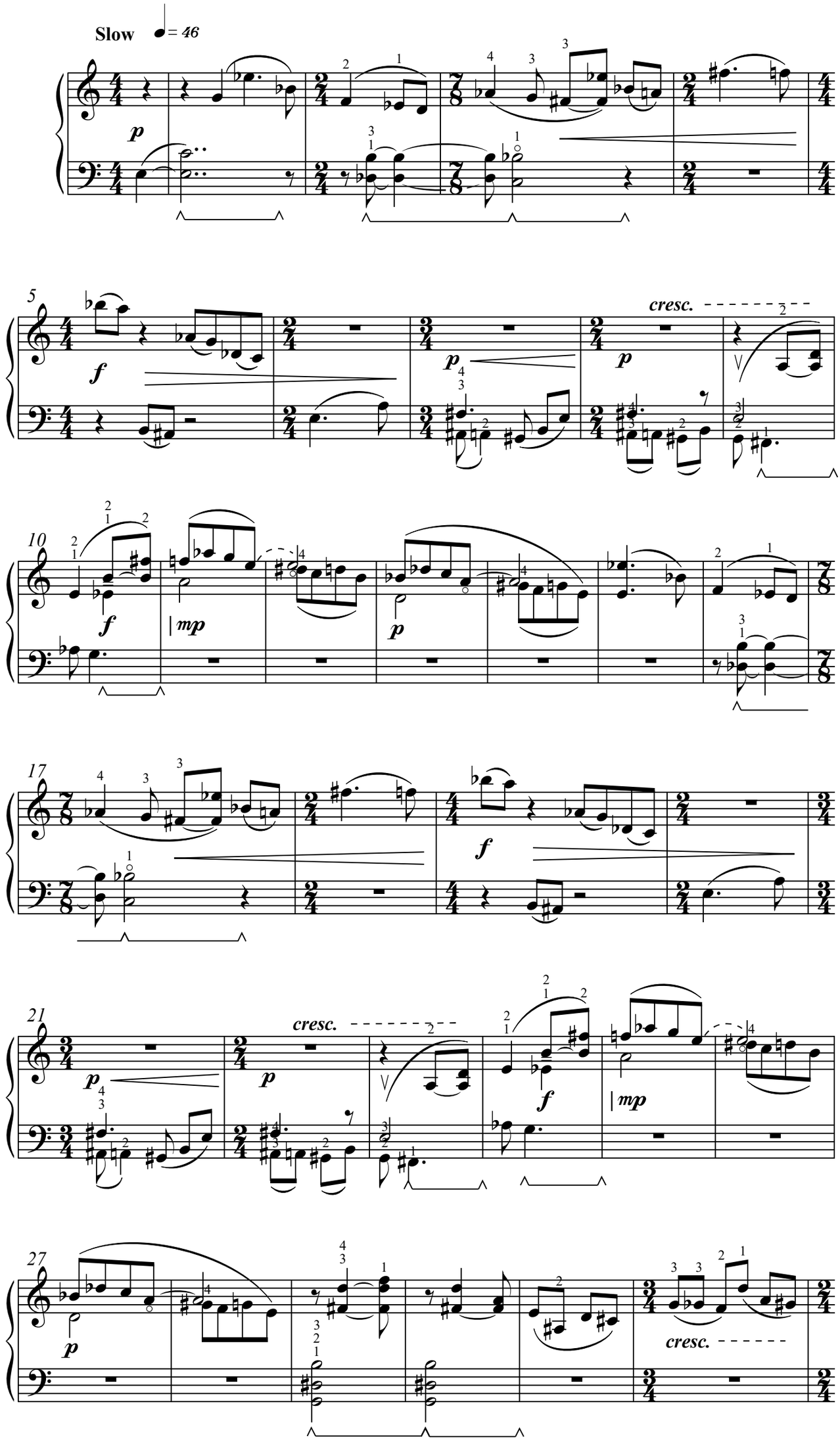
Bill Robinson

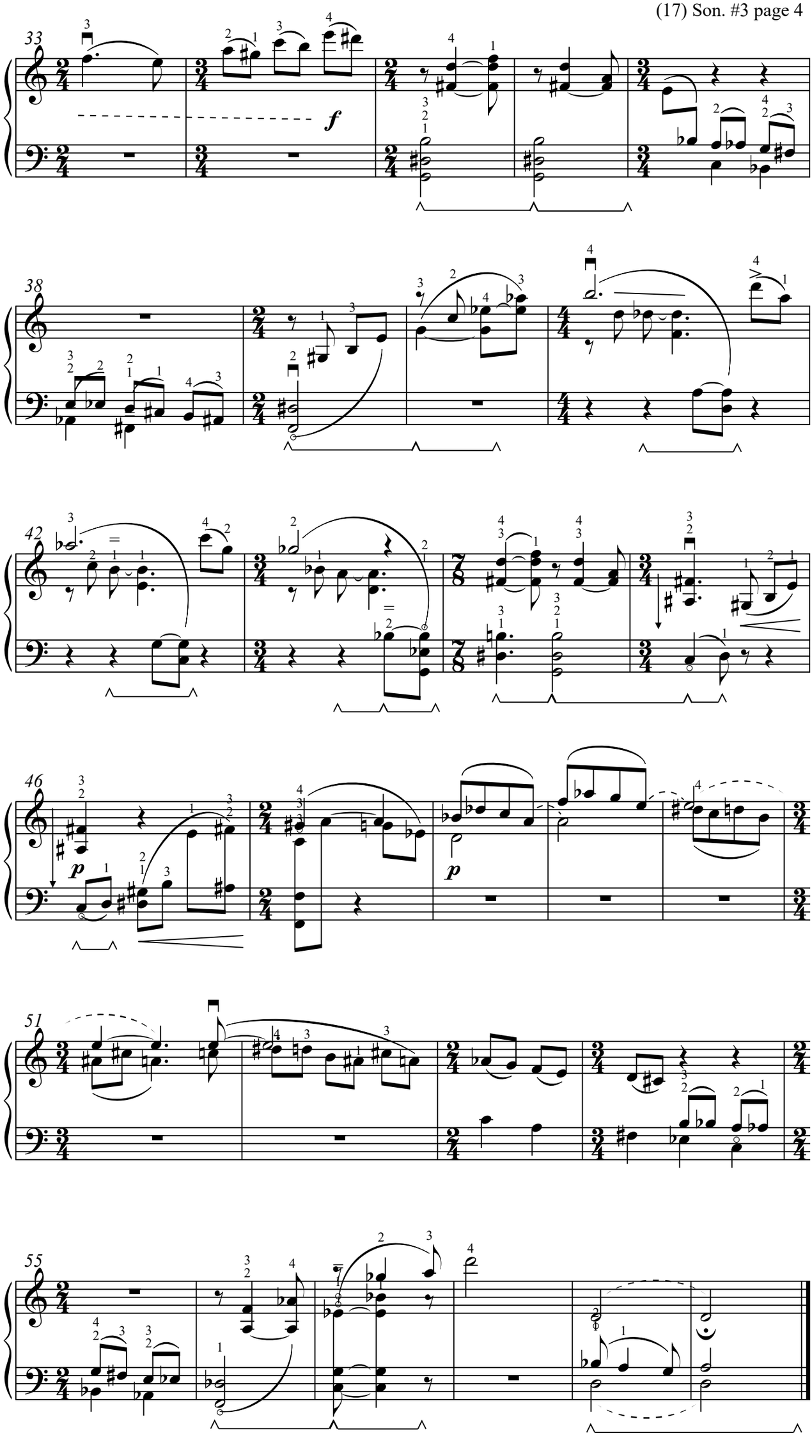
Moderato ♩ = 120




32
ff
mf
cresc.
37
ff
42
47
ff
p
51
56
II
60
pp

II. Second Movement [3:20]



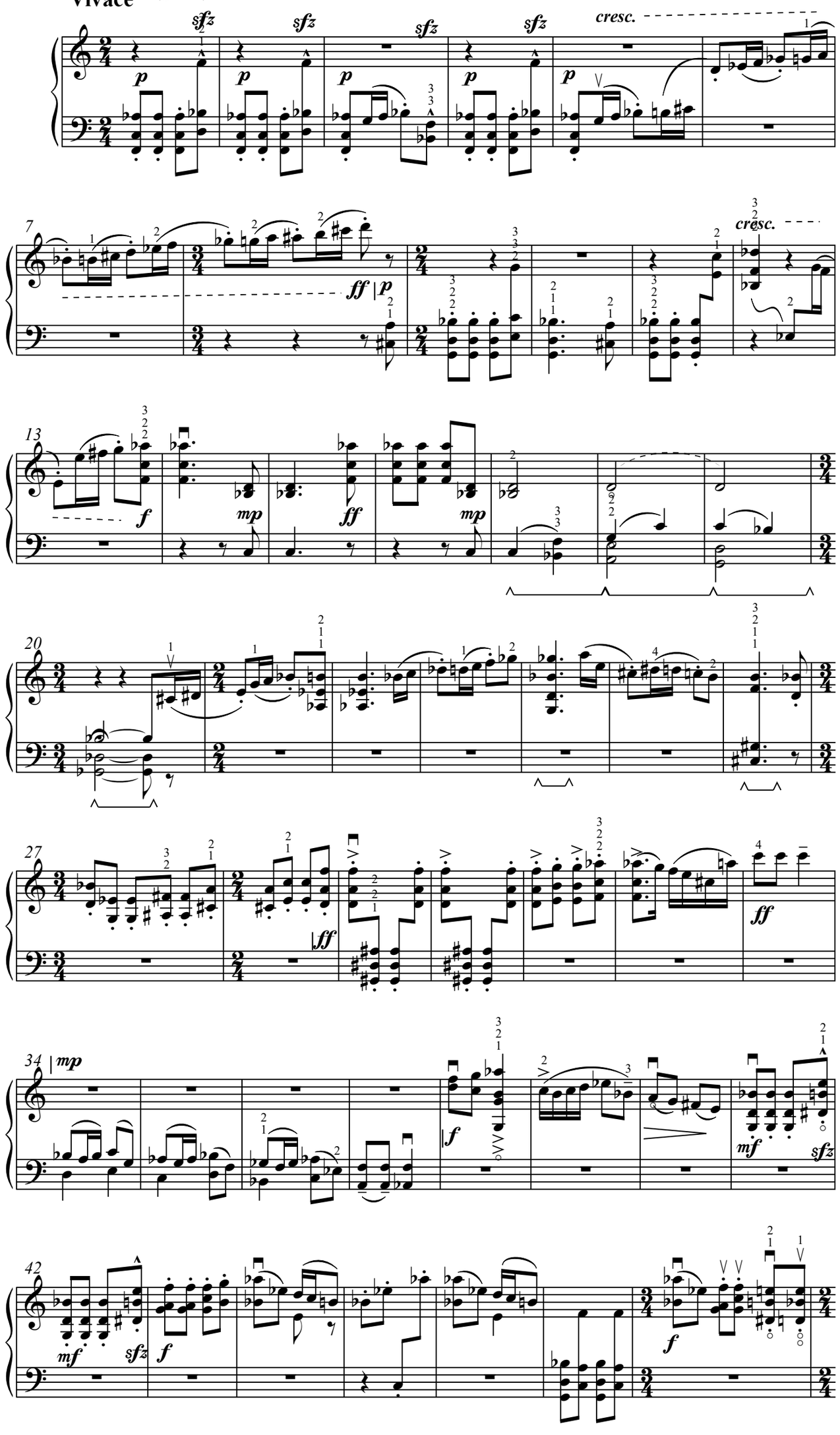

33
f
38
42
46
p
p
51
55

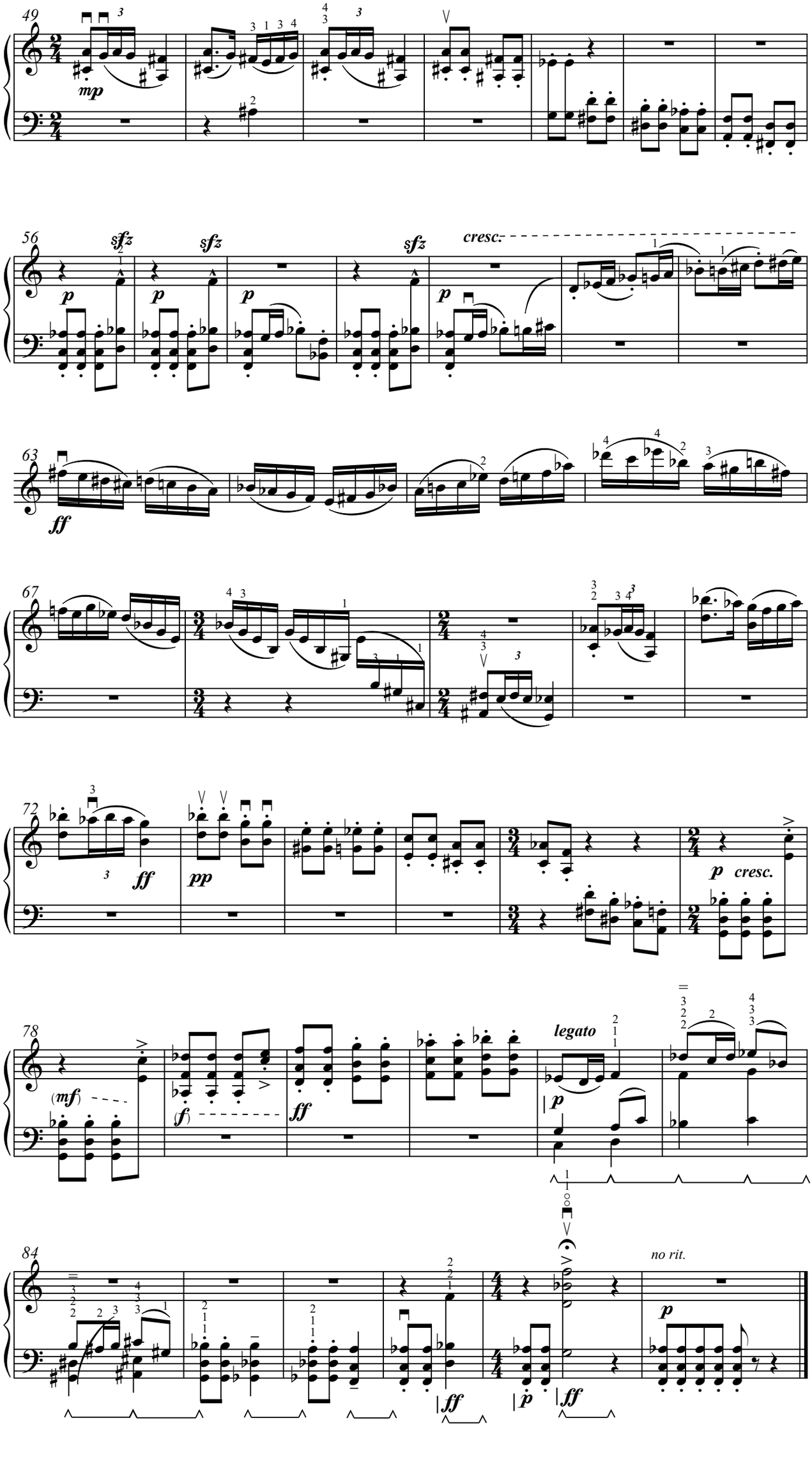
III. Third Movement

[2']

note: undotted notes are not short.

Vivace (♩ = 88)




49
mp
56
sfz
sfz
sfz
cresc.
p
63
ff
67
72
ff
pp
p cresc.
78
(mf)
(f)
ff
legato
p
84
no rit.
p
ff
p
ff
ff

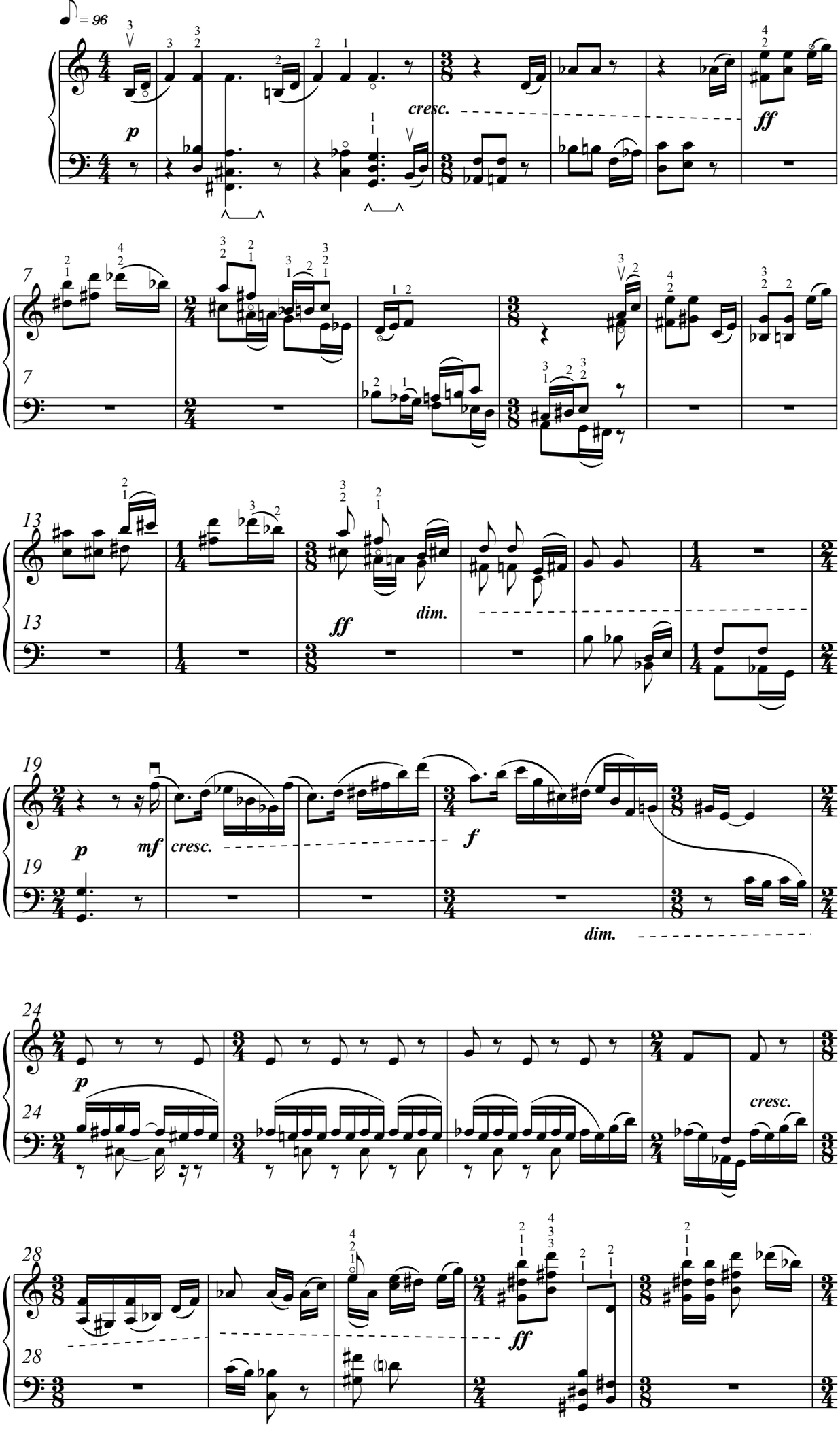
Sonata No. 4 for 6 String Violin

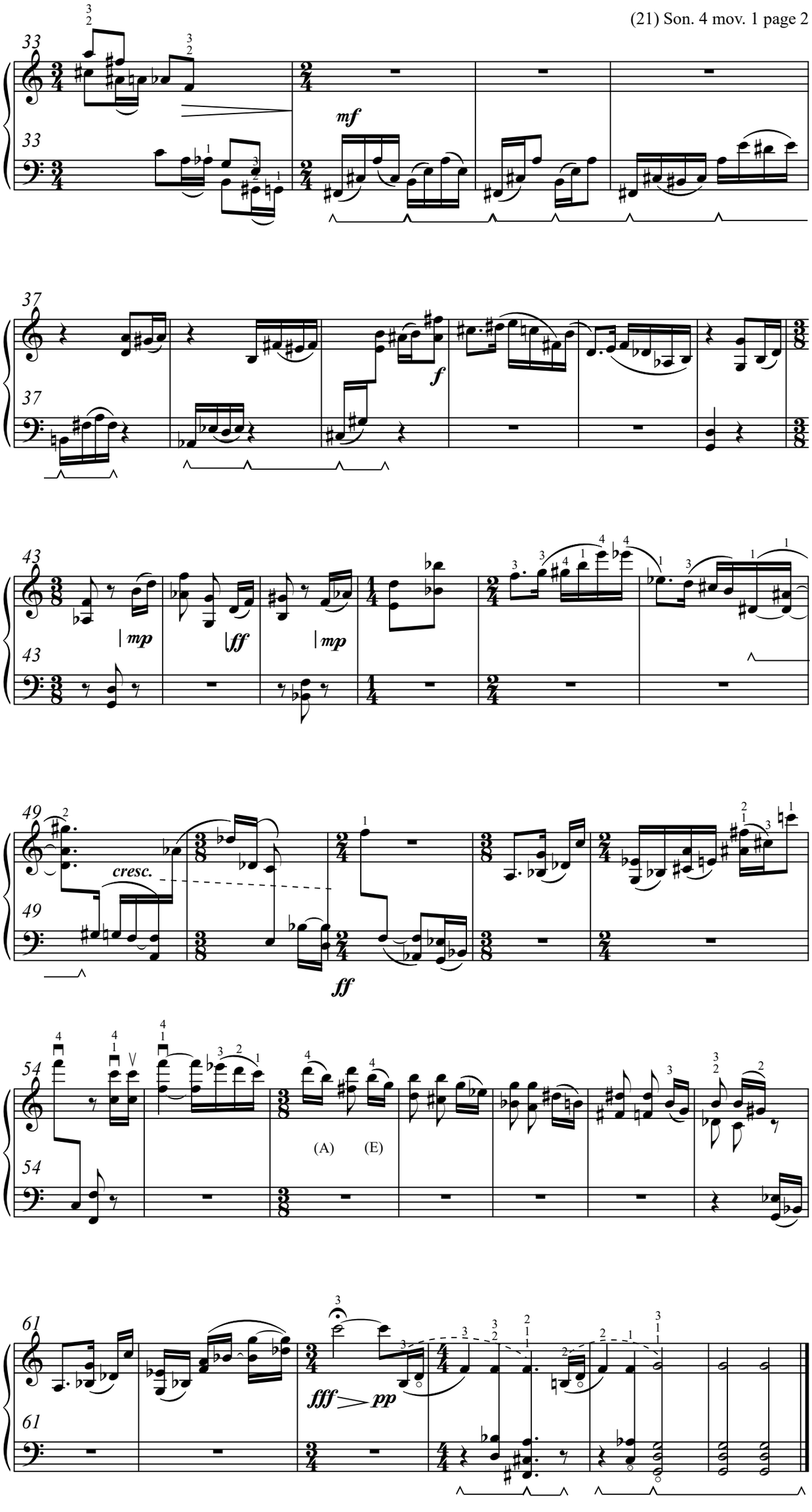
(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

I. First Movement

[3']

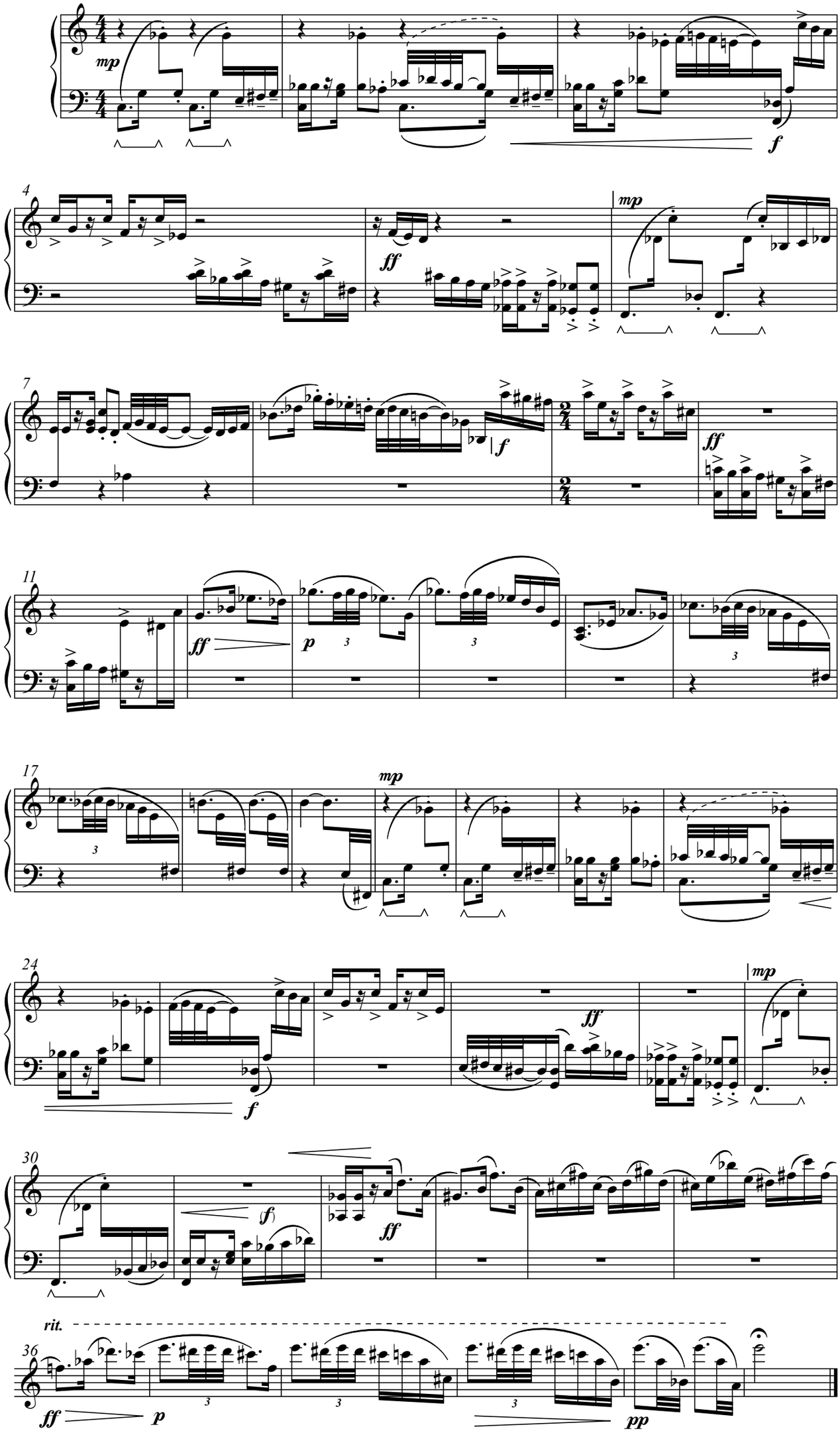
Bill Robinson

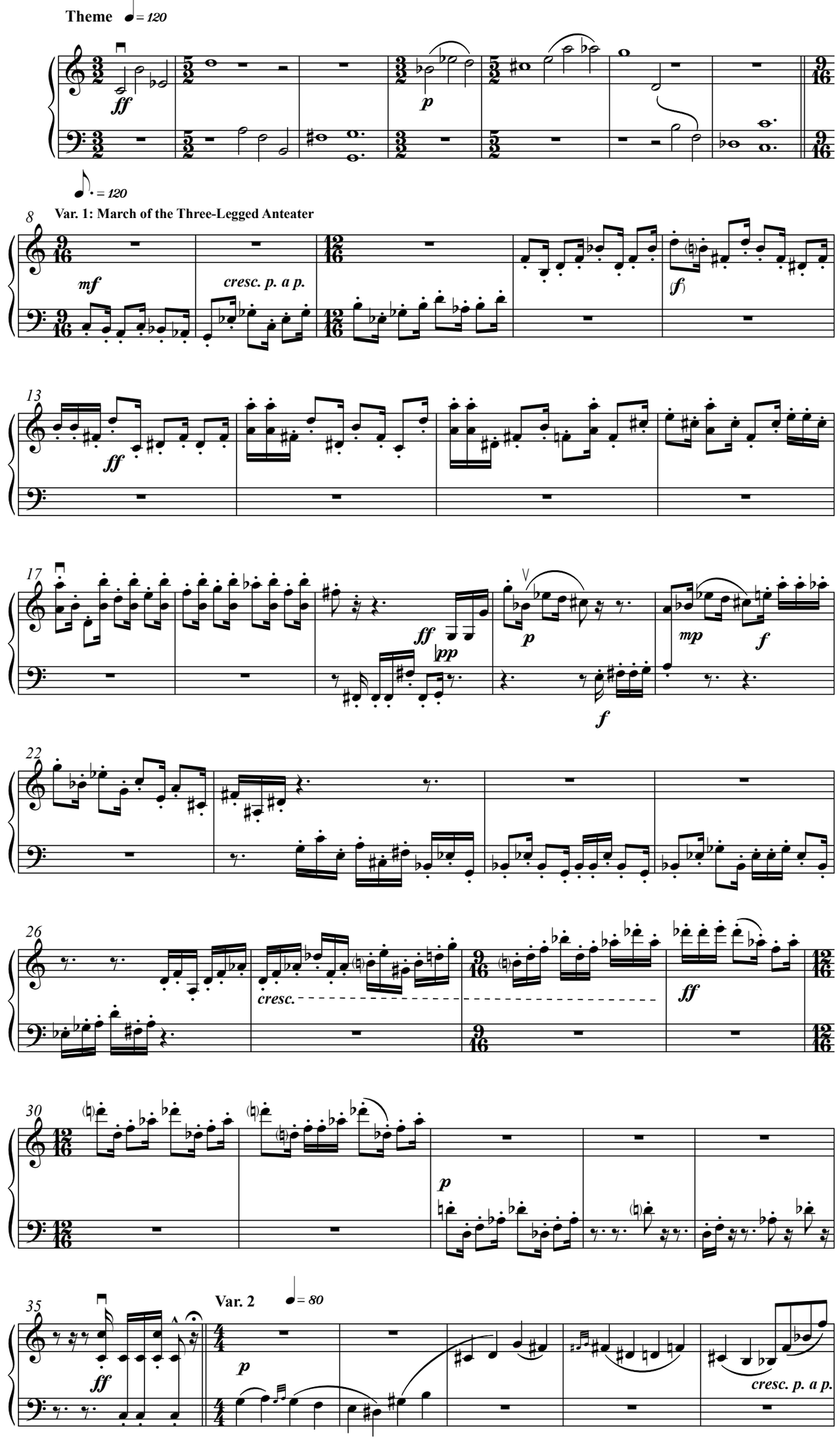


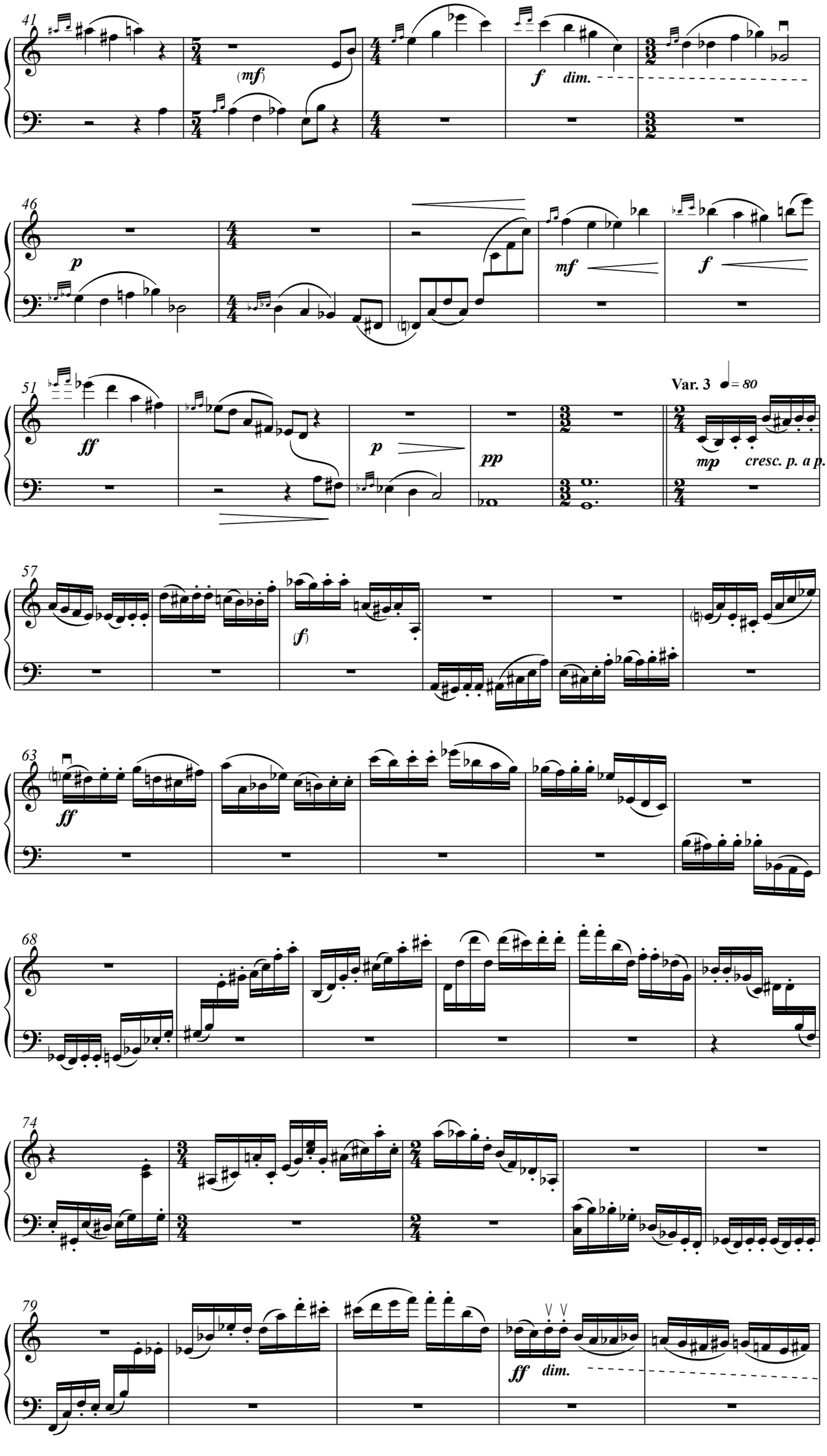

33
mf
37
f
43
mp
ff
mp
49
cresc.
ff
54
(A)
(E)
61
fff
pp

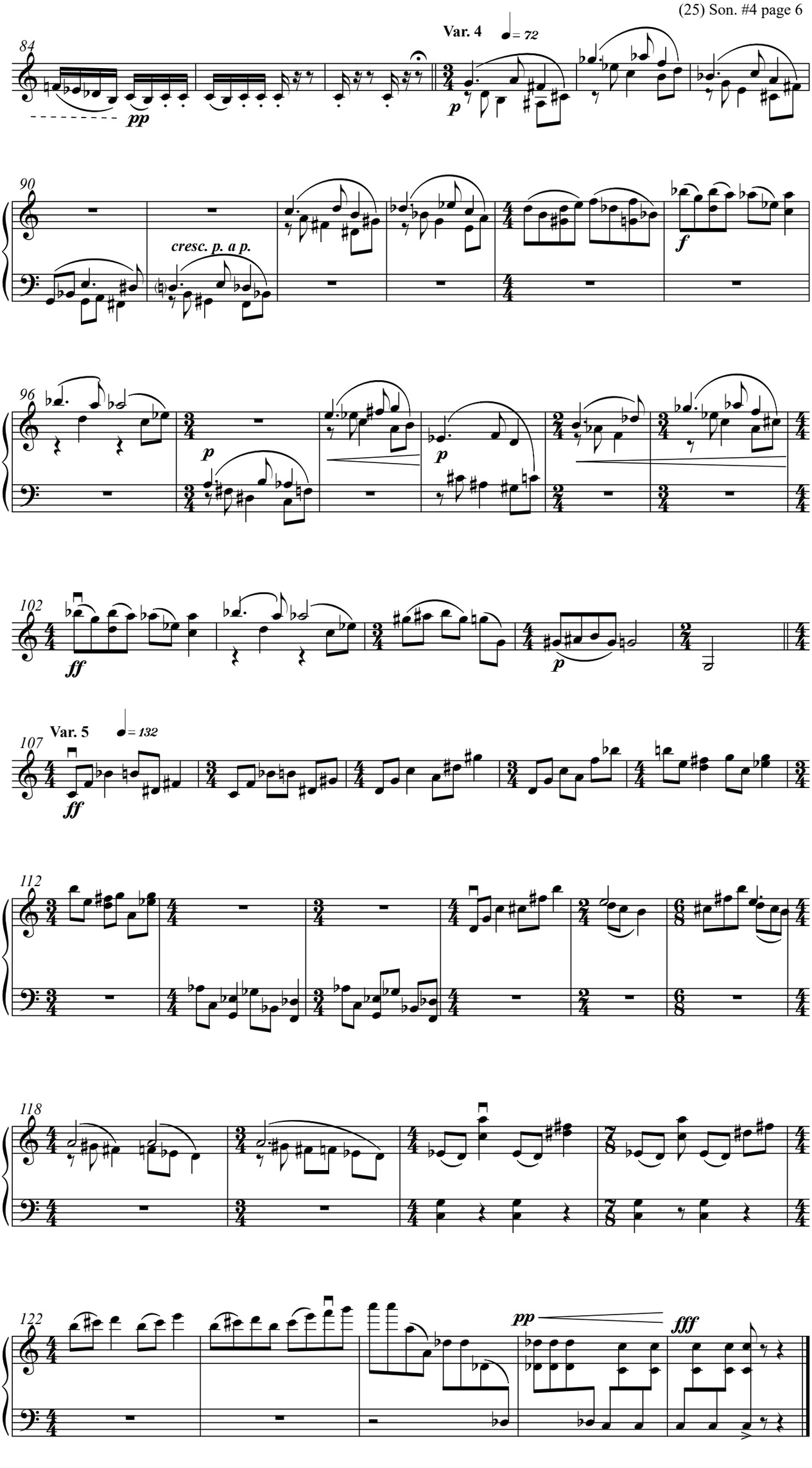
II. Contradanza [1:30]

Fiddelio ♩= 66




Theme
= 120
ff
p
= 120
8
Var. 1: March of the Three-Legged Anteater
mf
cresc. p. a p.
f
13
ff
17
ff
pp
p
mp
f
f
22
26
cresc.
ff
30
p
35
ff
Var. 2
= 80
p
cresc. p. a p.


41
(mf)
f
dim.
46
p
mf
f
51
ff
p
pp
Var. 3
= 80
mp
cresc. p. a p.
57
(f)
63
ff
68
74
79
ff
dim.

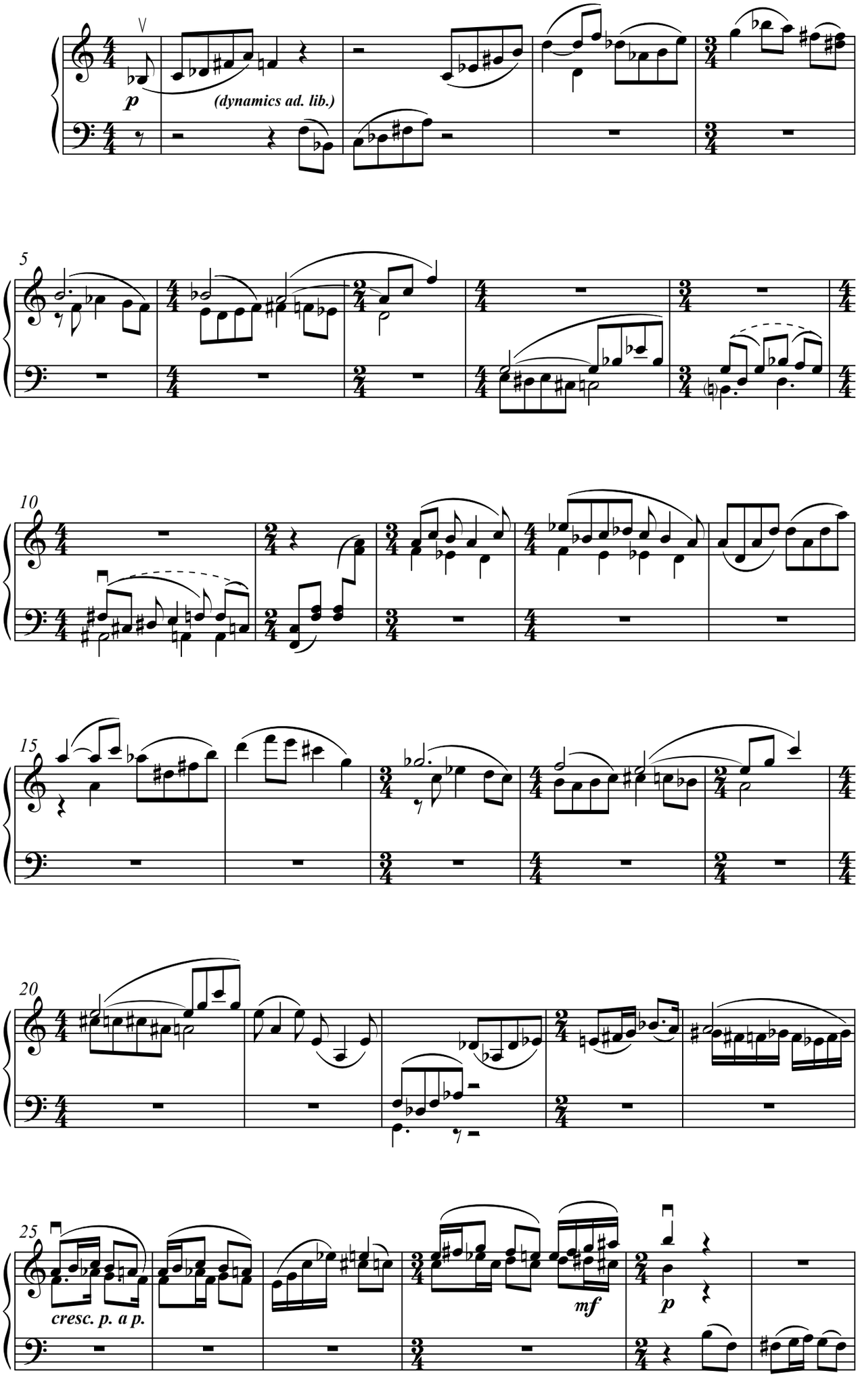

84
Var. 4
♩= 72
pp
p
90
cresc. p. a p.
f
96
p
p
102
ff
p
Var. 5
♩= 132
107
ff
112
118
122
pp
fff

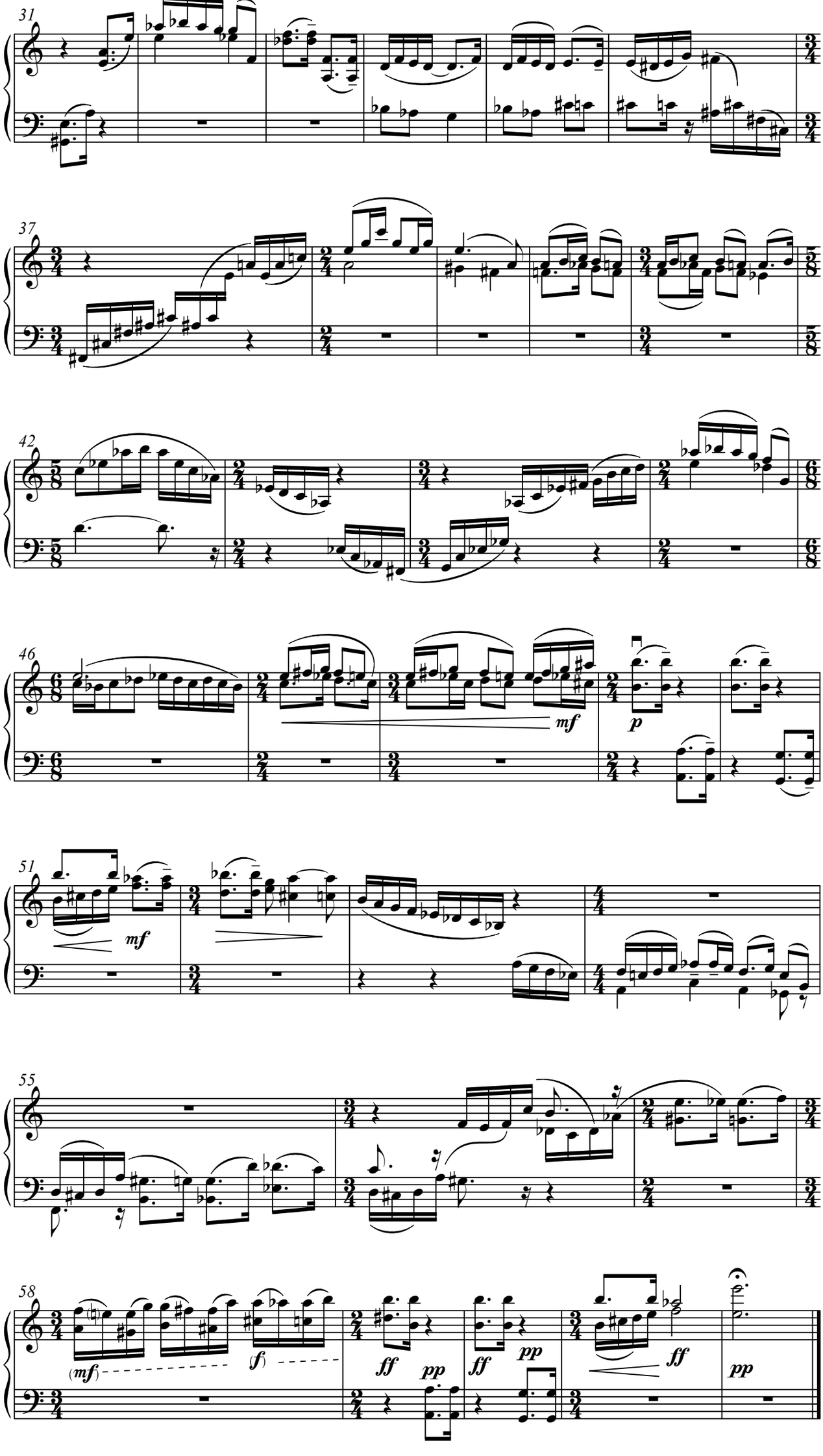
Sonata No. 5 for 6 String Violin

I. First Movement [4:15]

Bill Robinson

Slow (♩ = 42)



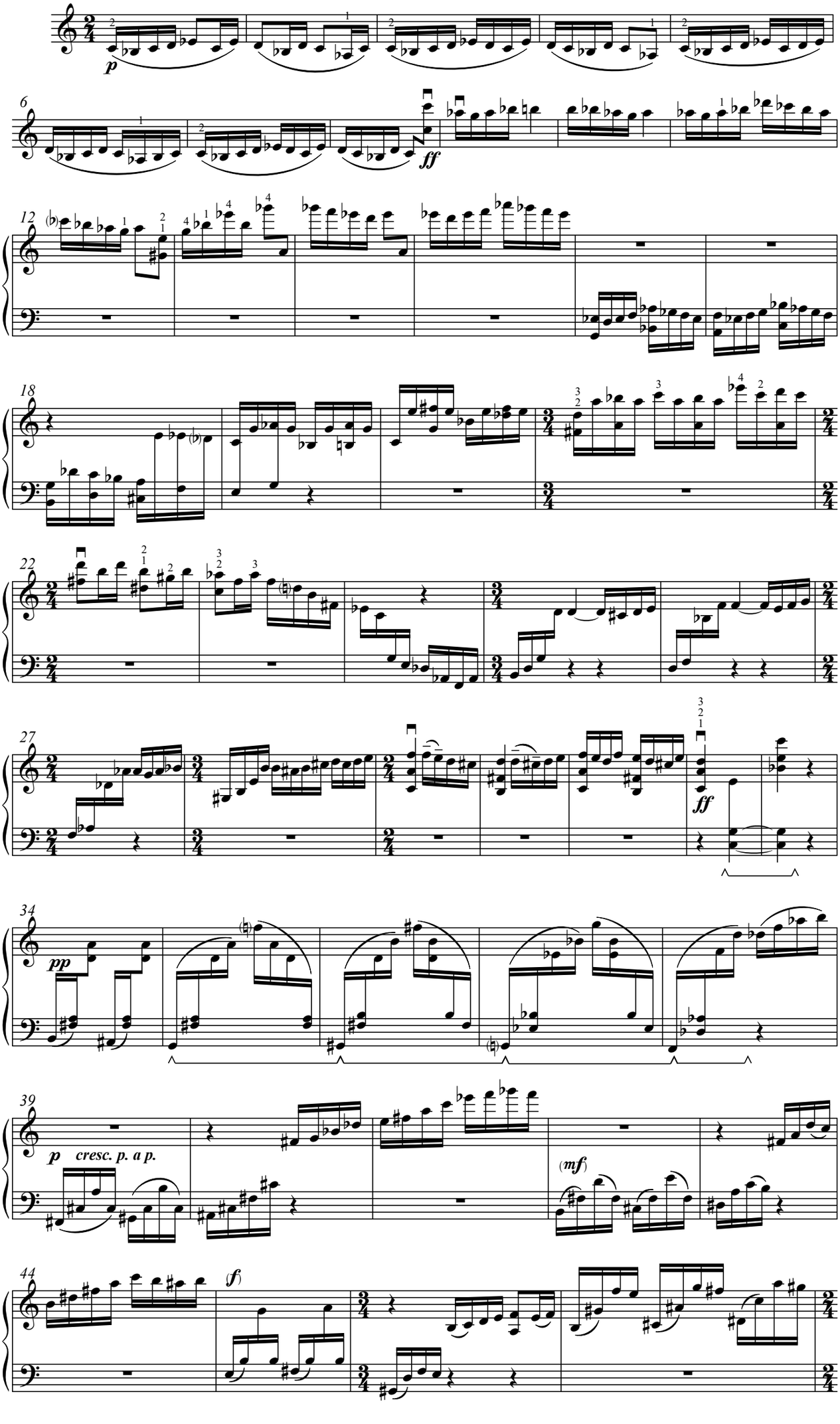

31
37
42
46
mf
p
51
mf
55
58
(mf)
(f)
ff
pp
ff
pp
ff
pp

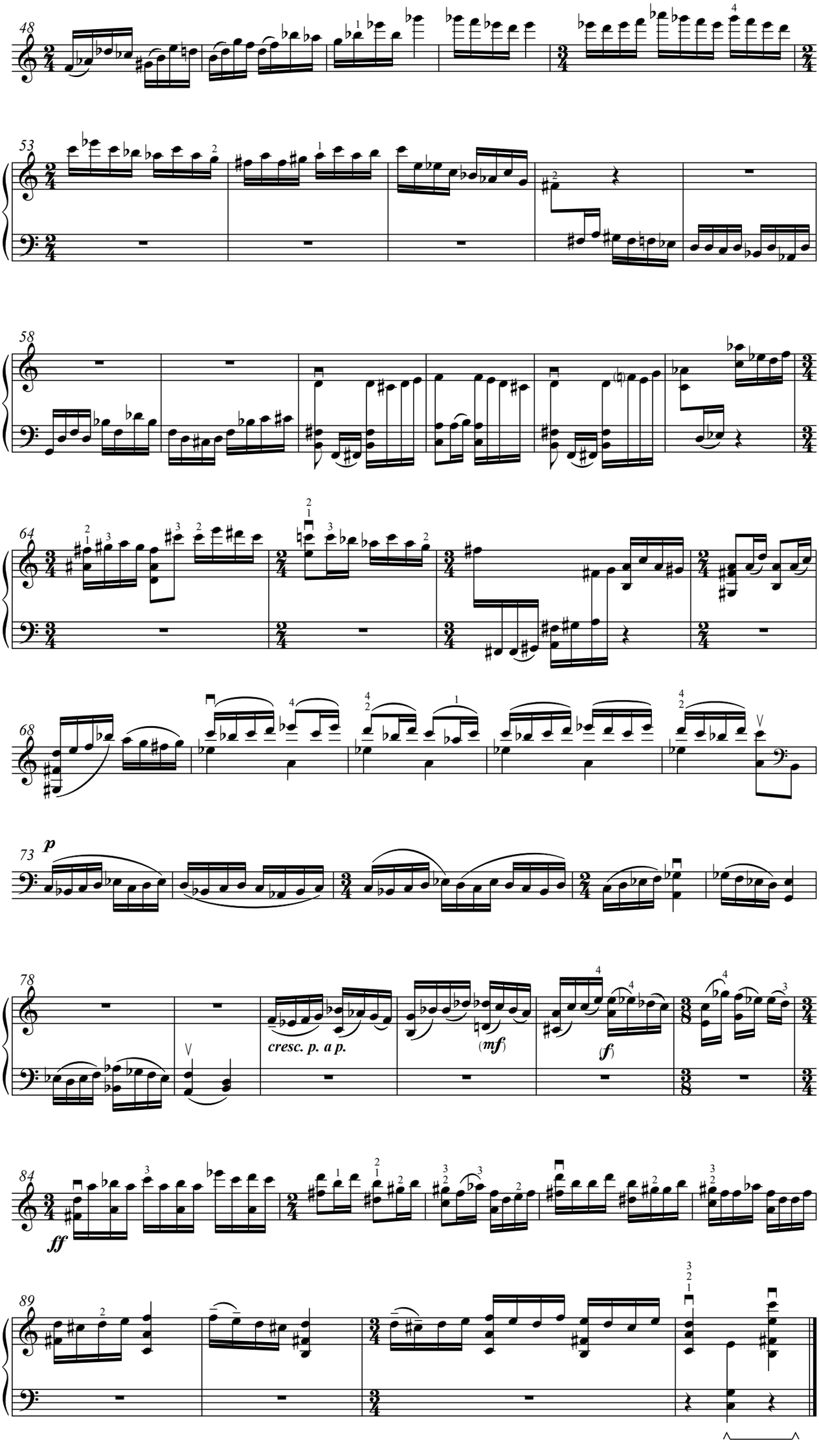
II. Second Movement

[2:40]

(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

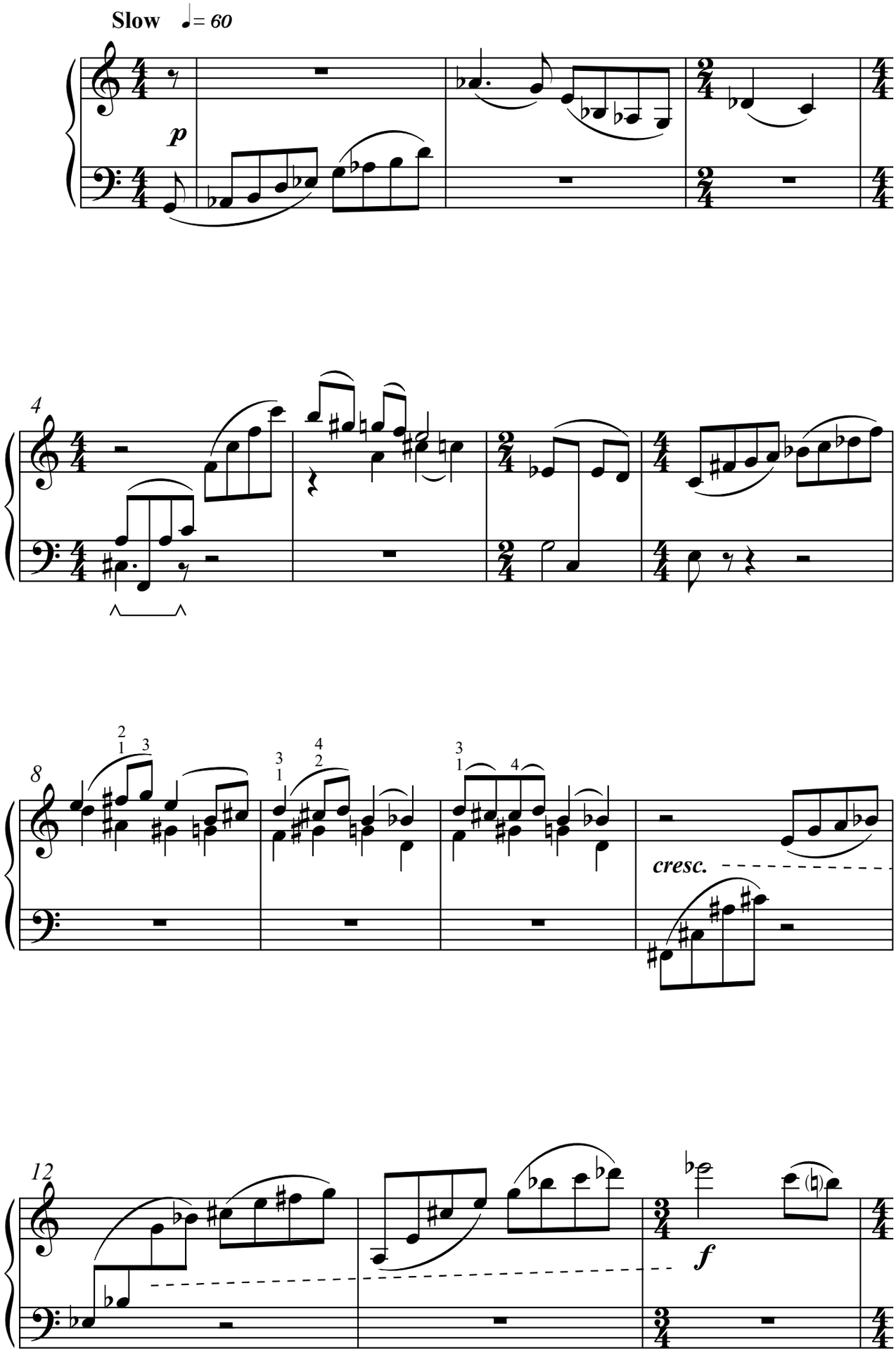
Allegro assai ♩= 76

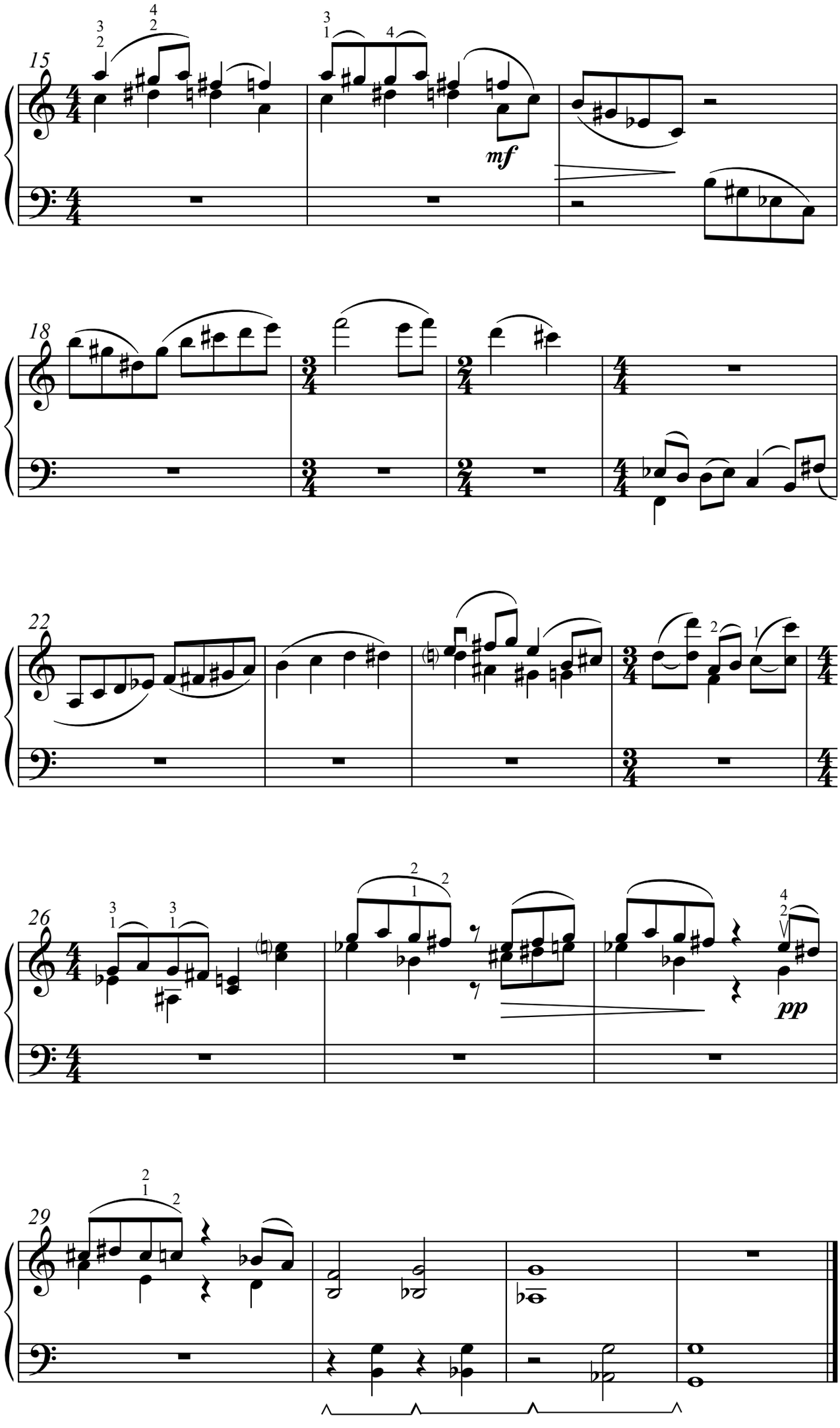



48
53
58
64
68
73
p
78
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
(f)
84
ff
89

III. Third Movement

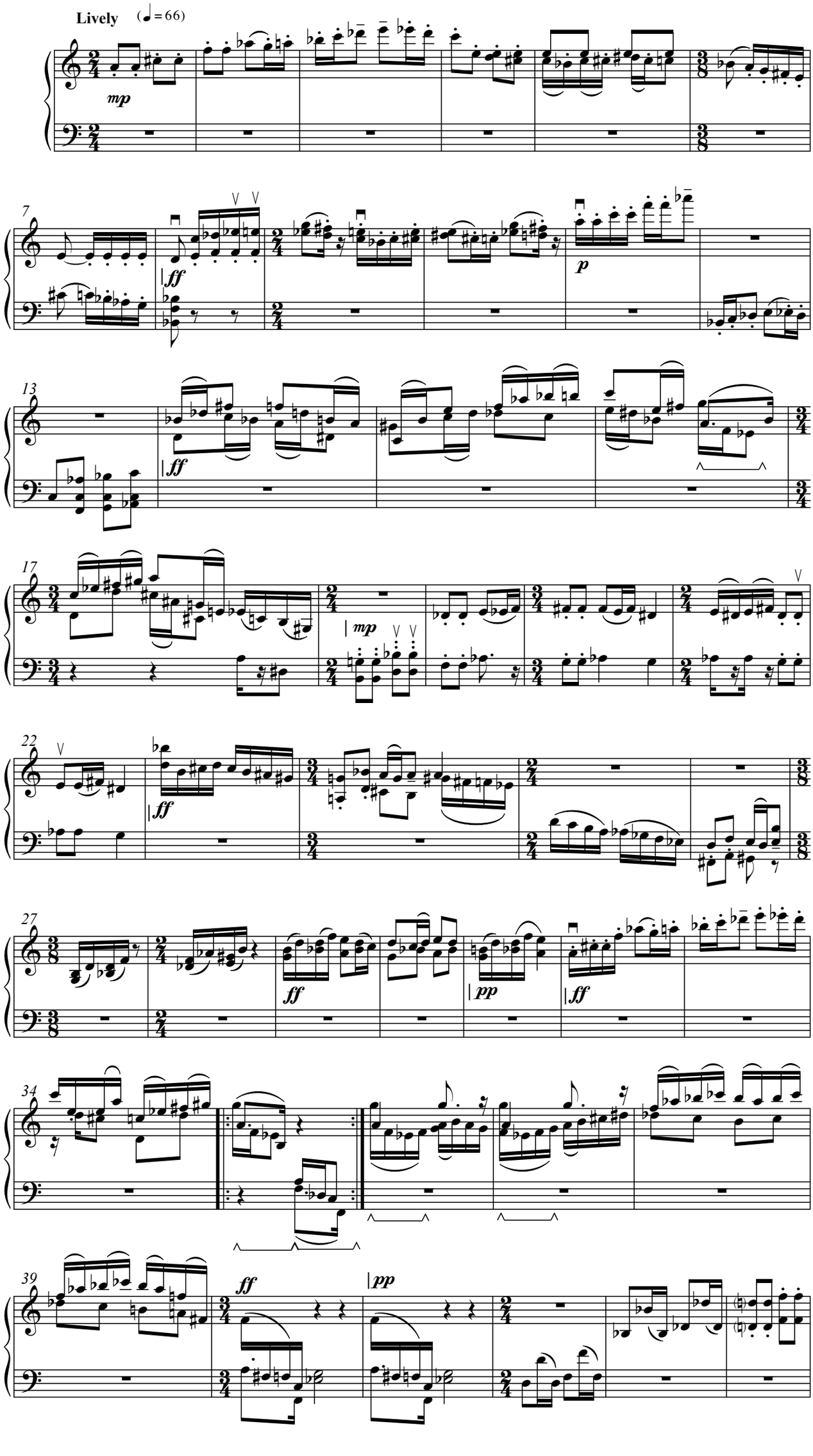
[2']

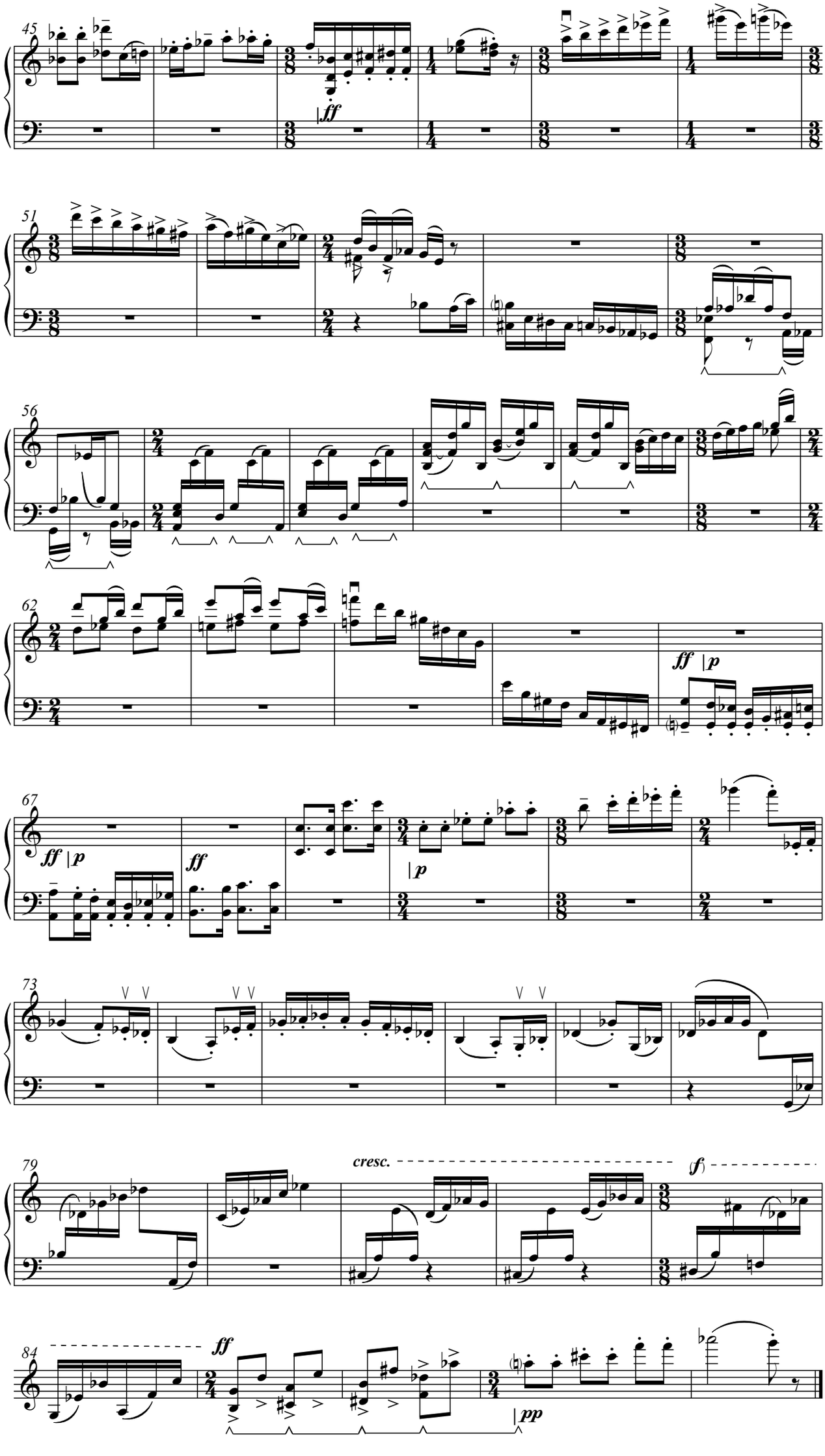



15
mf
18
22
26
pp
29

IV. Rondo

[2:40]




45
ff
51
56
62
ff
p
67
ff
p
ff
p
73
79
cresc.
f
84
ff
pp

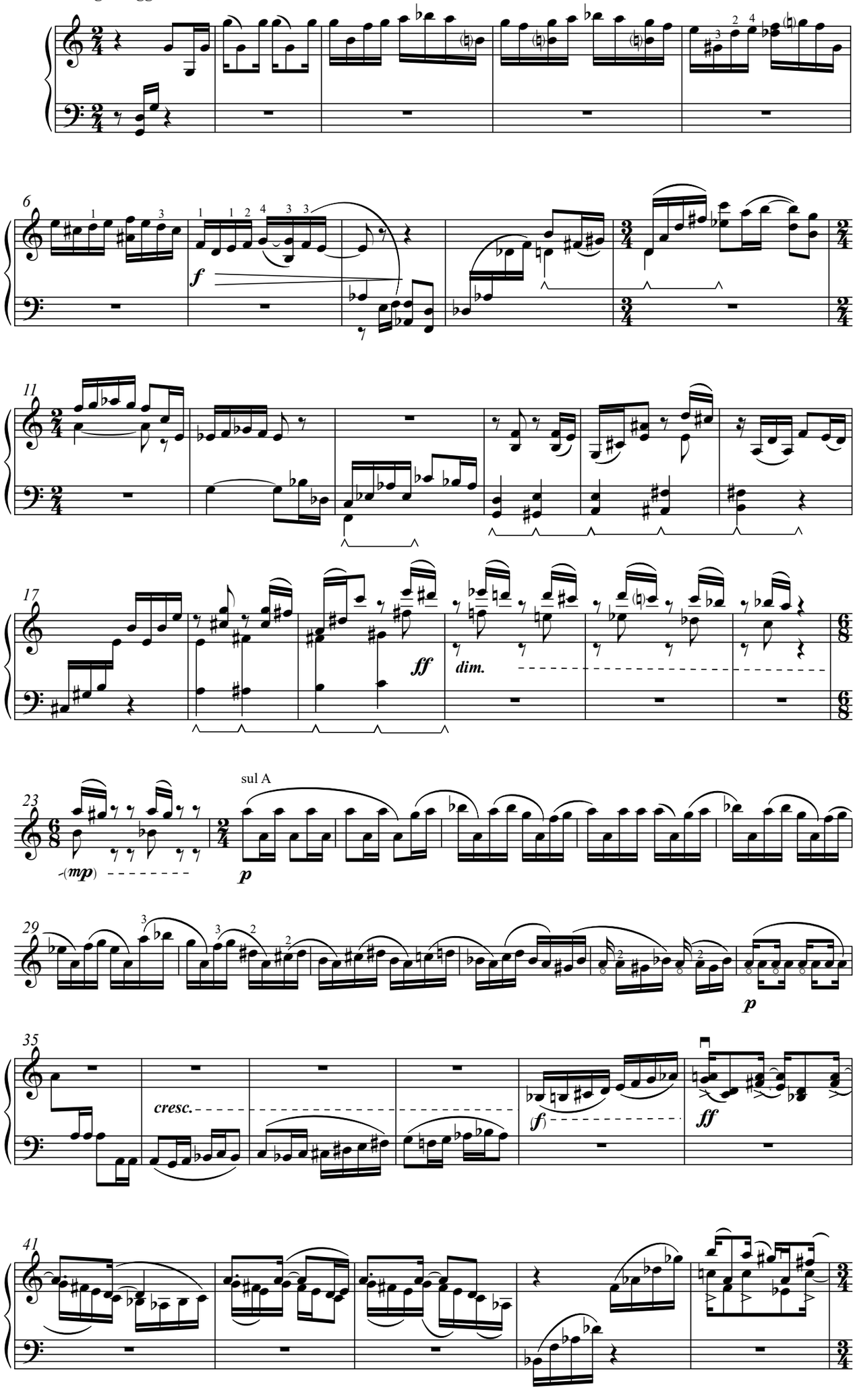
Sonata No. 6 for 6 String Violin

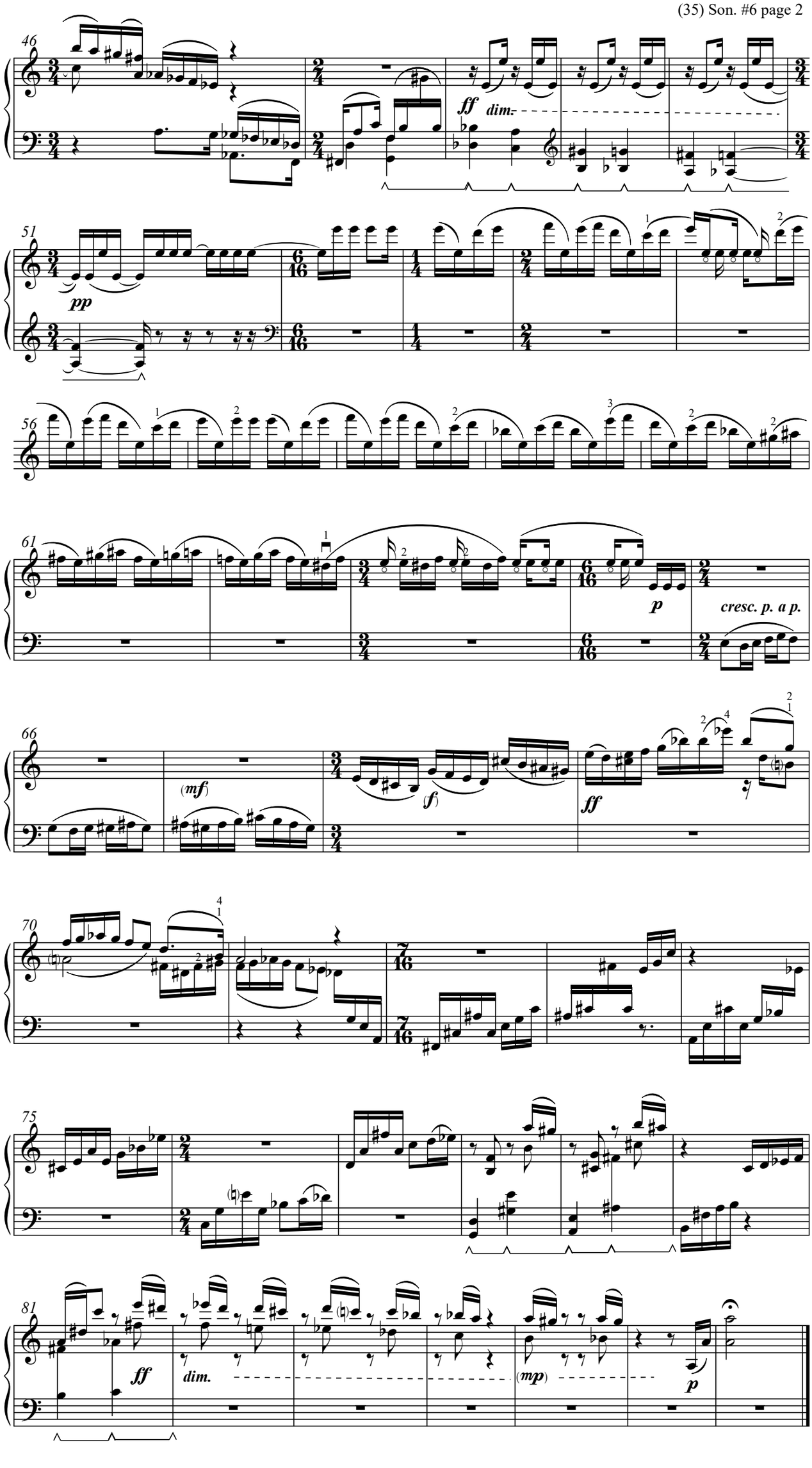
(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

I. Big Notes on a Small Fiddle [2:50]

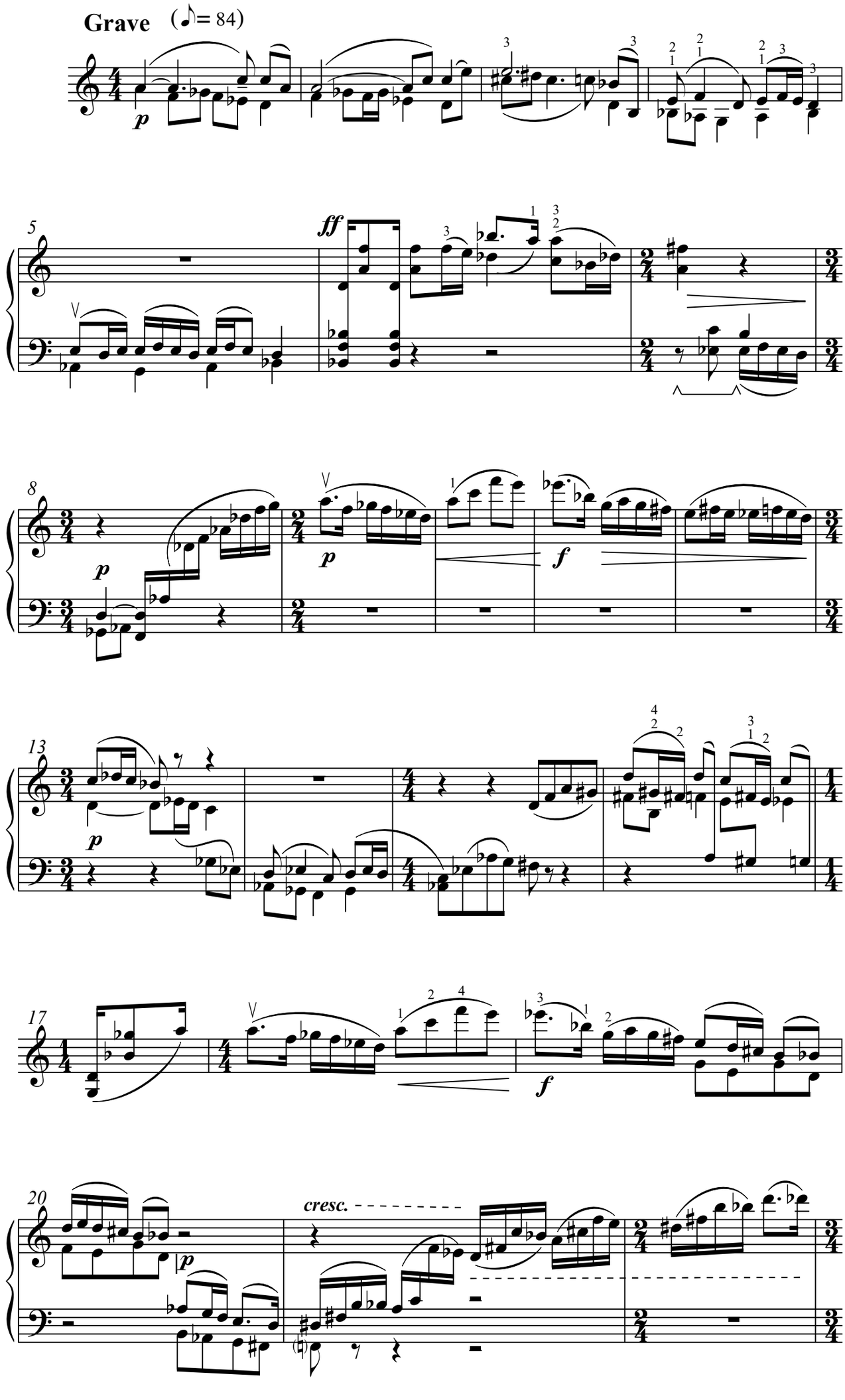
Bill Robinson

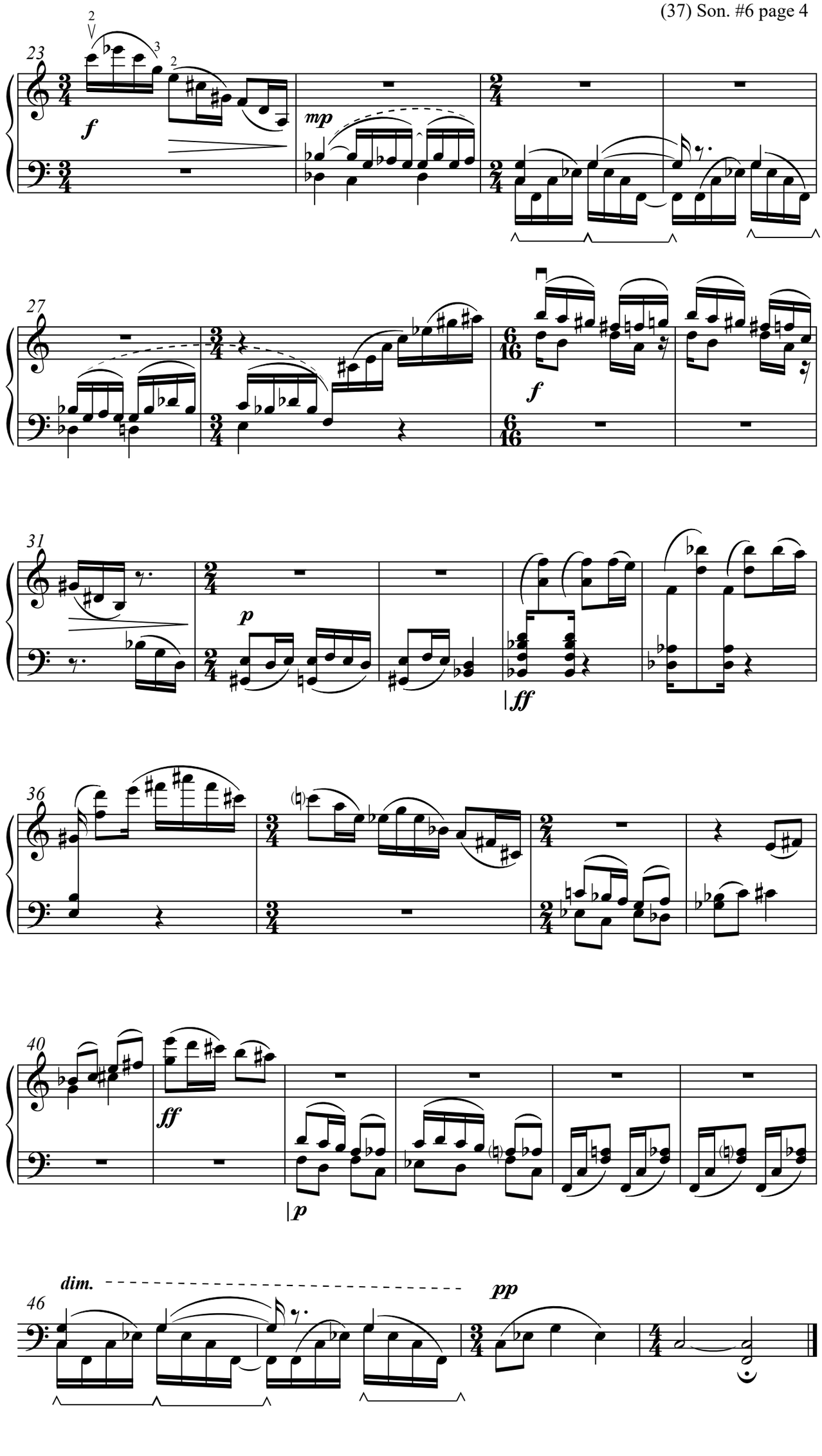
Allegro bigga nota (♩ = 66)




46
ff
dim.
51
pp
56
61
p
cresc. p. a p.
66
(mf)
(f)
ff
70
75
81
ff
dim.
(mp)
p

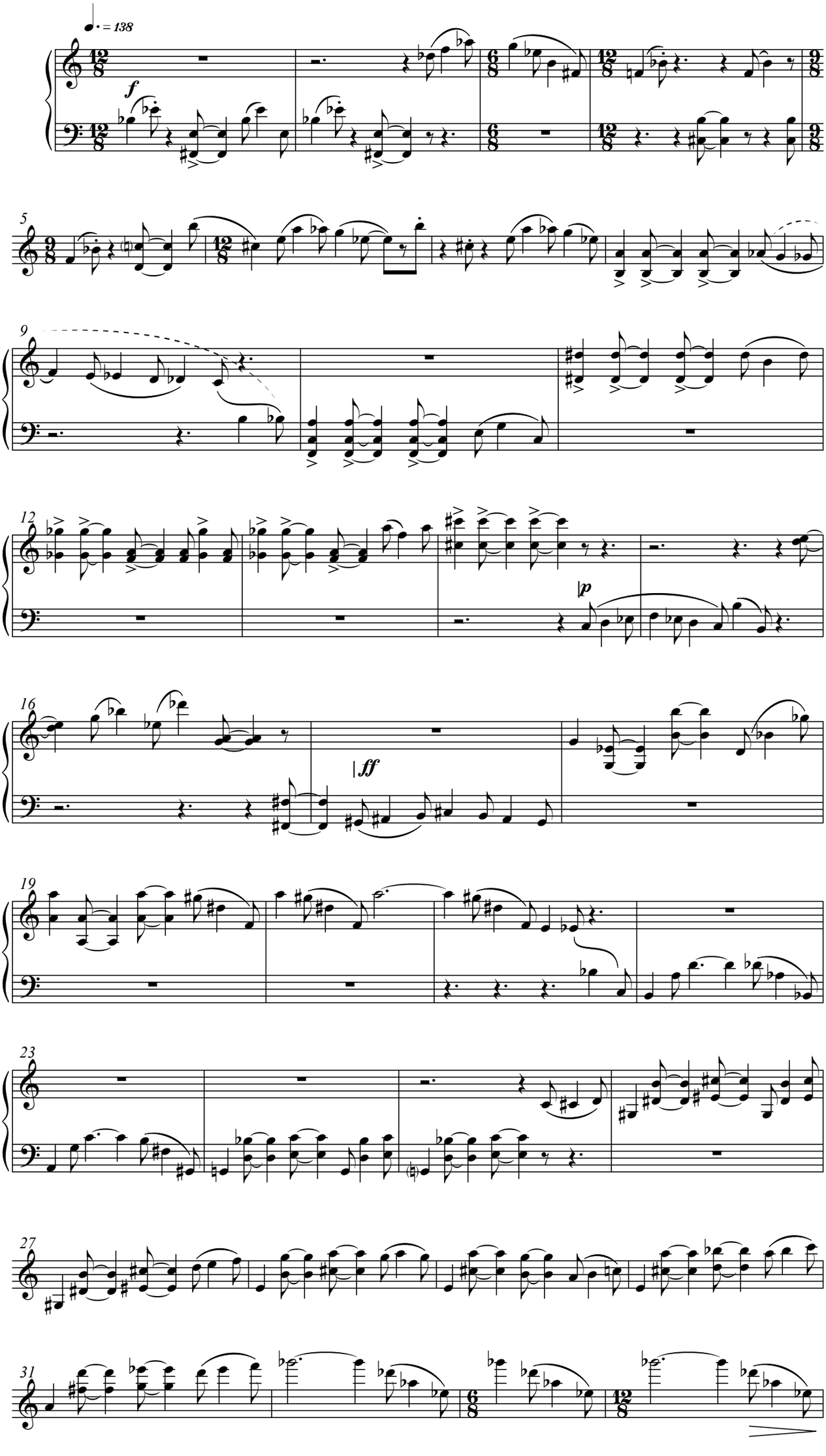
II. Second Movement [3']

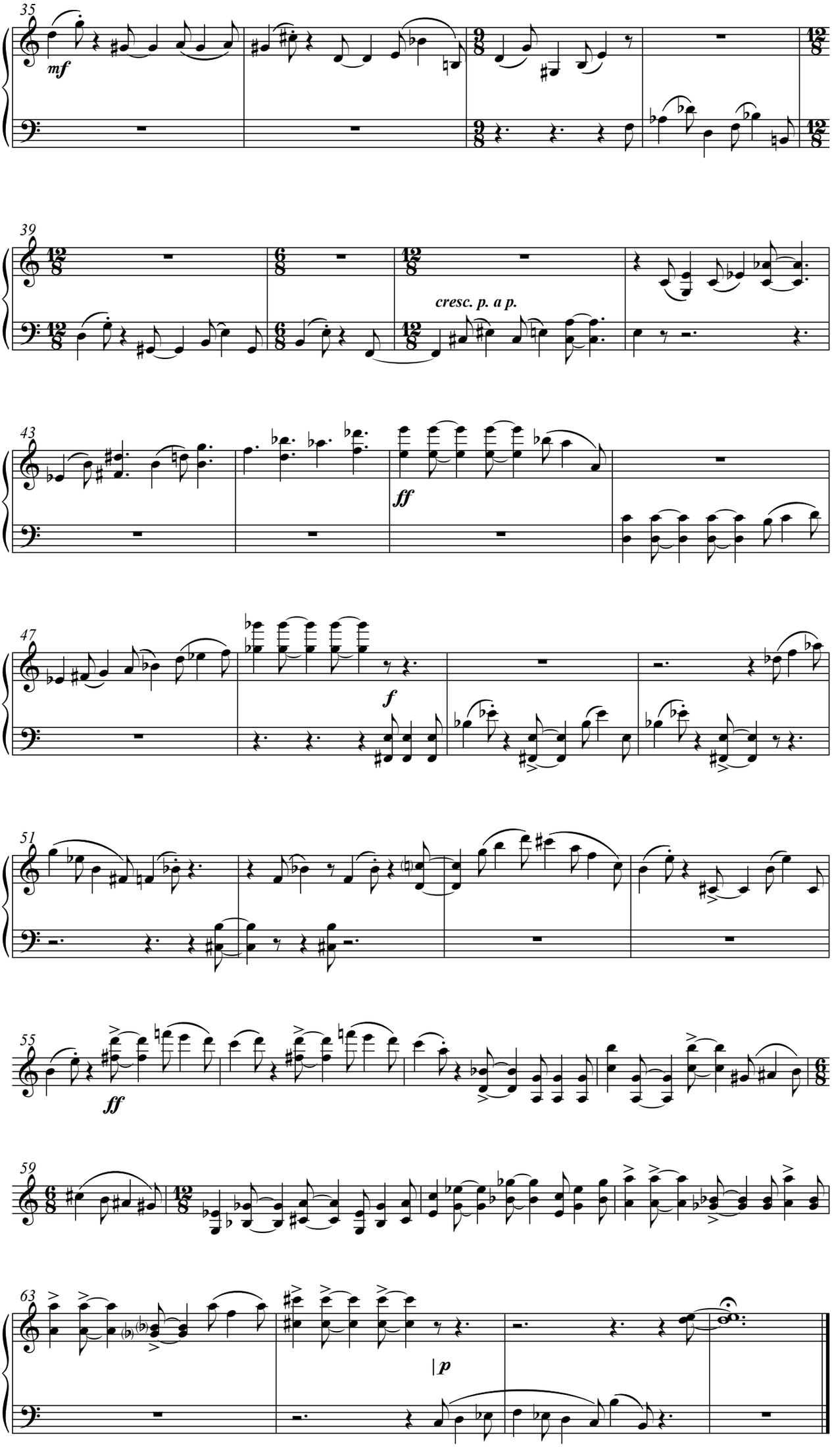



23
f
mp
27
f
31
p
ff
36
40
ff
p
dim.
46
pp

III. Swing Time

[1:50]



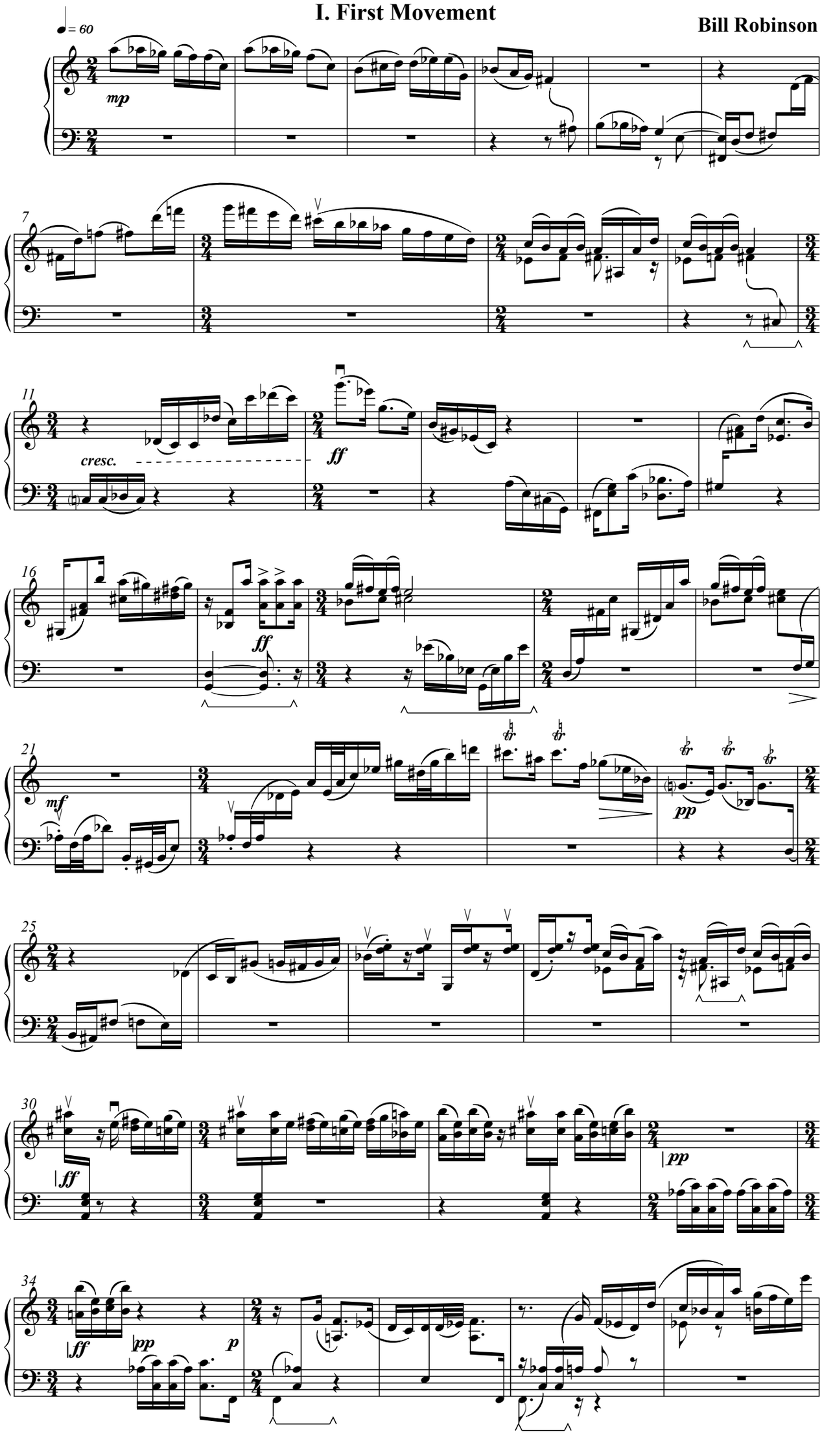

35
mf
39
cresc. p. a p.
43
ff
47
f
51
55
ff
59
63
p

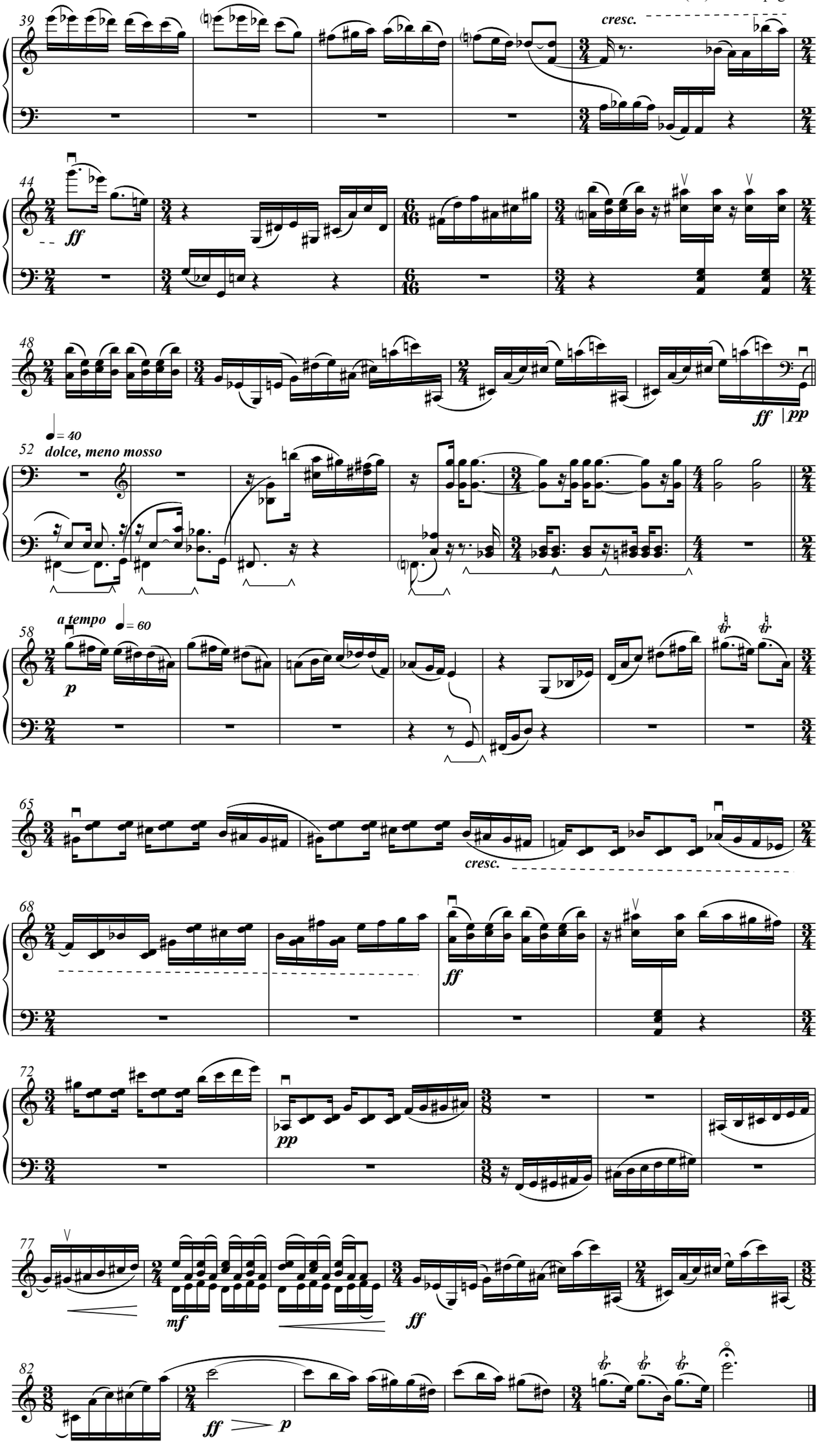
Sonata No. 7 for 6 String Violin

(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

I. First Movement

Bill Robinson




39
cresc.
44
ff
48
ff
pp
52
dolce, meno mosso
= 40
58
a tempo
= 60
p
65
cresc.
68
ff
72
pp
77
mf
ff
82
ff
p

II. Second Movement [2:30]

Moderately Slow (♩ = 50)

p

4

cresc.

f

p

8

accel. p. a p.

cresc.

Piu mosso (♩ = 60)

13

f

ff

19

22

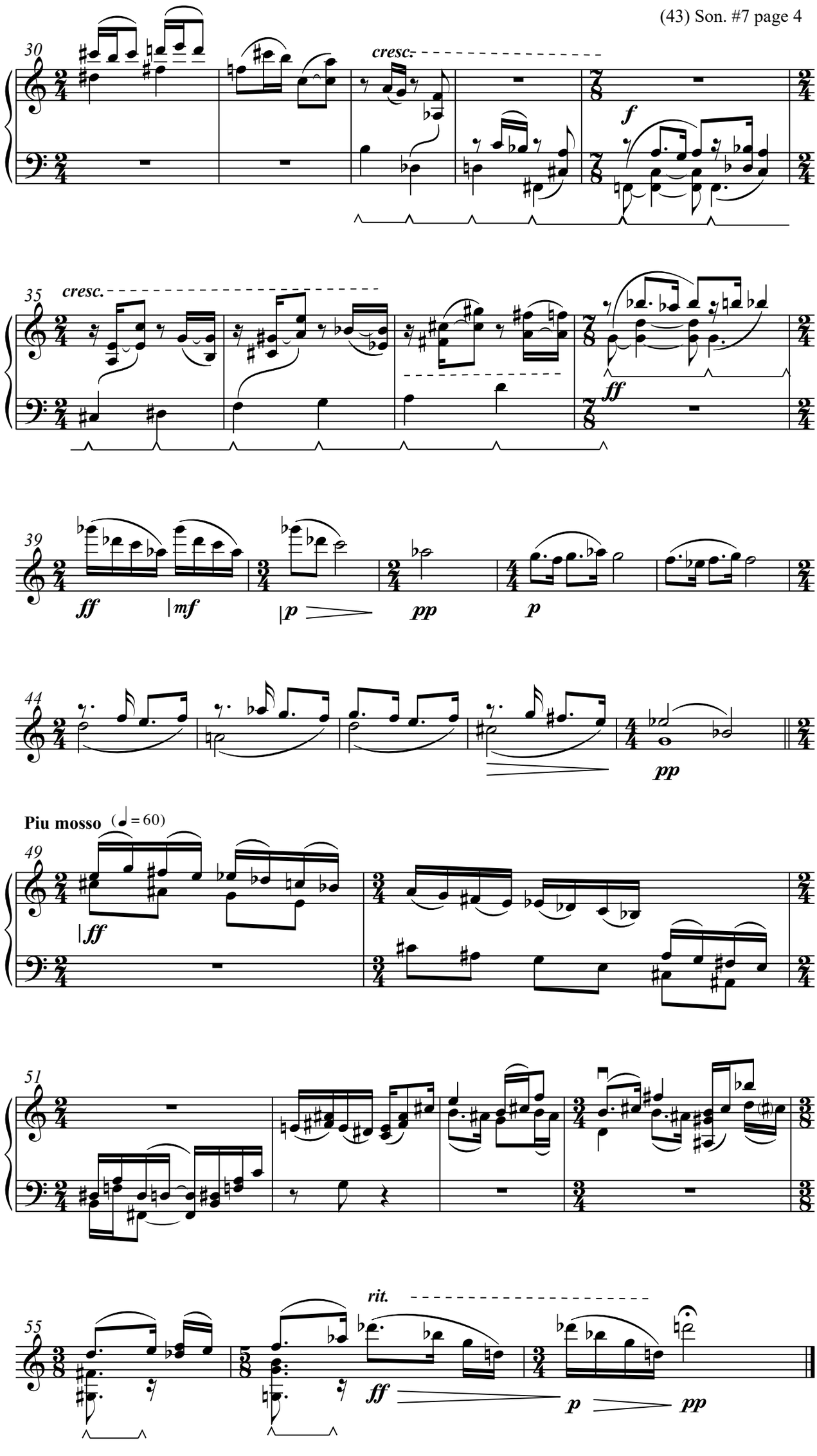
rit.

Tempo I (♩ = 50)

26

ff

p


30
cresc.
f
35
cresc.
ff
39
ff
mf
p
pp
p
44
pp
Piu mosso
(♩ = 60)
49
ff
51
55
rit.
ff
p
pp

III. Goulash

[2:15]

Allegro quasi Bartokoid ♩= 72

ff

7

13

pp

18

ff | *p*

ff | *p*

ff

22

ff

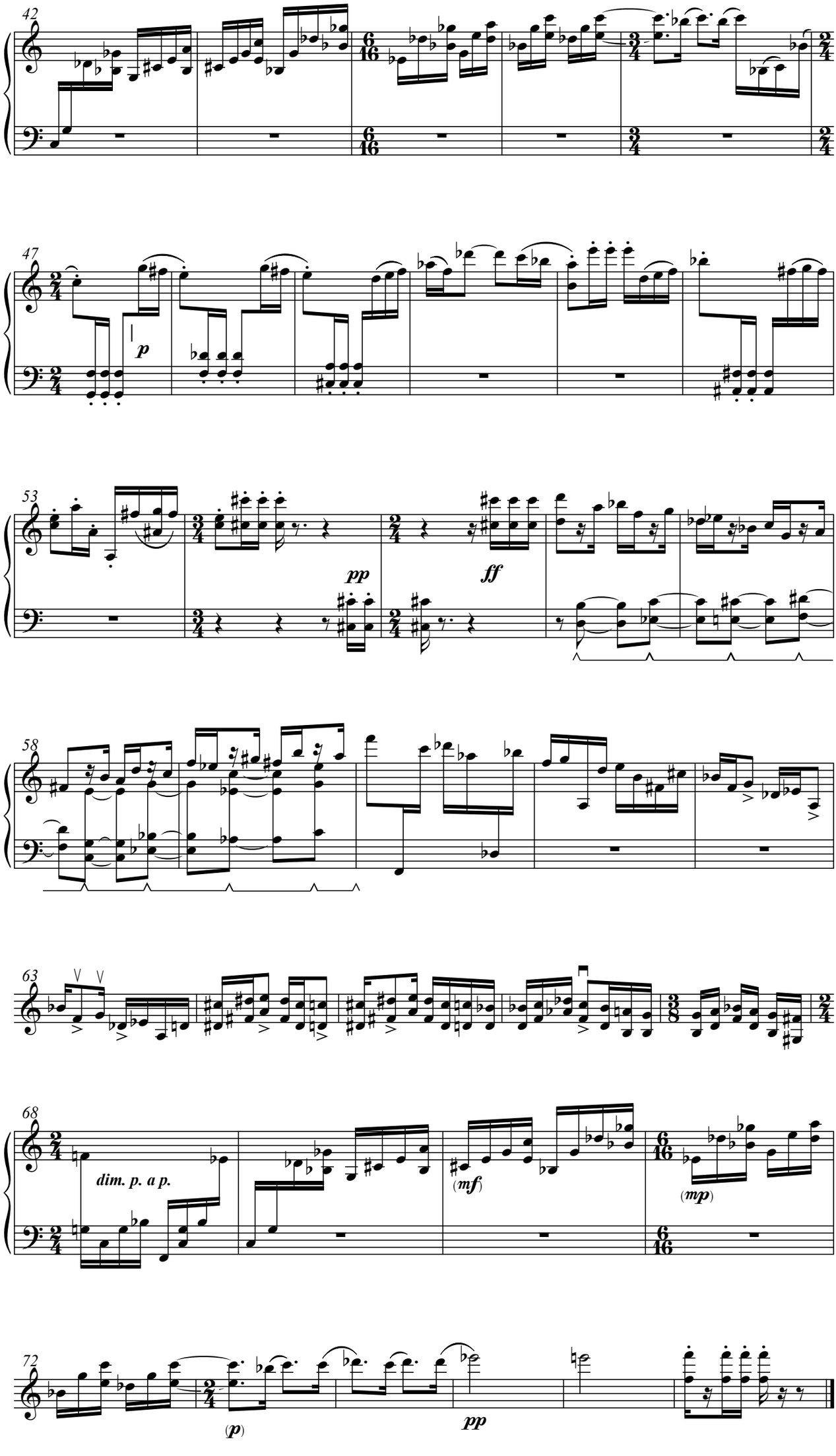
p

p < *ff*

27

32

37

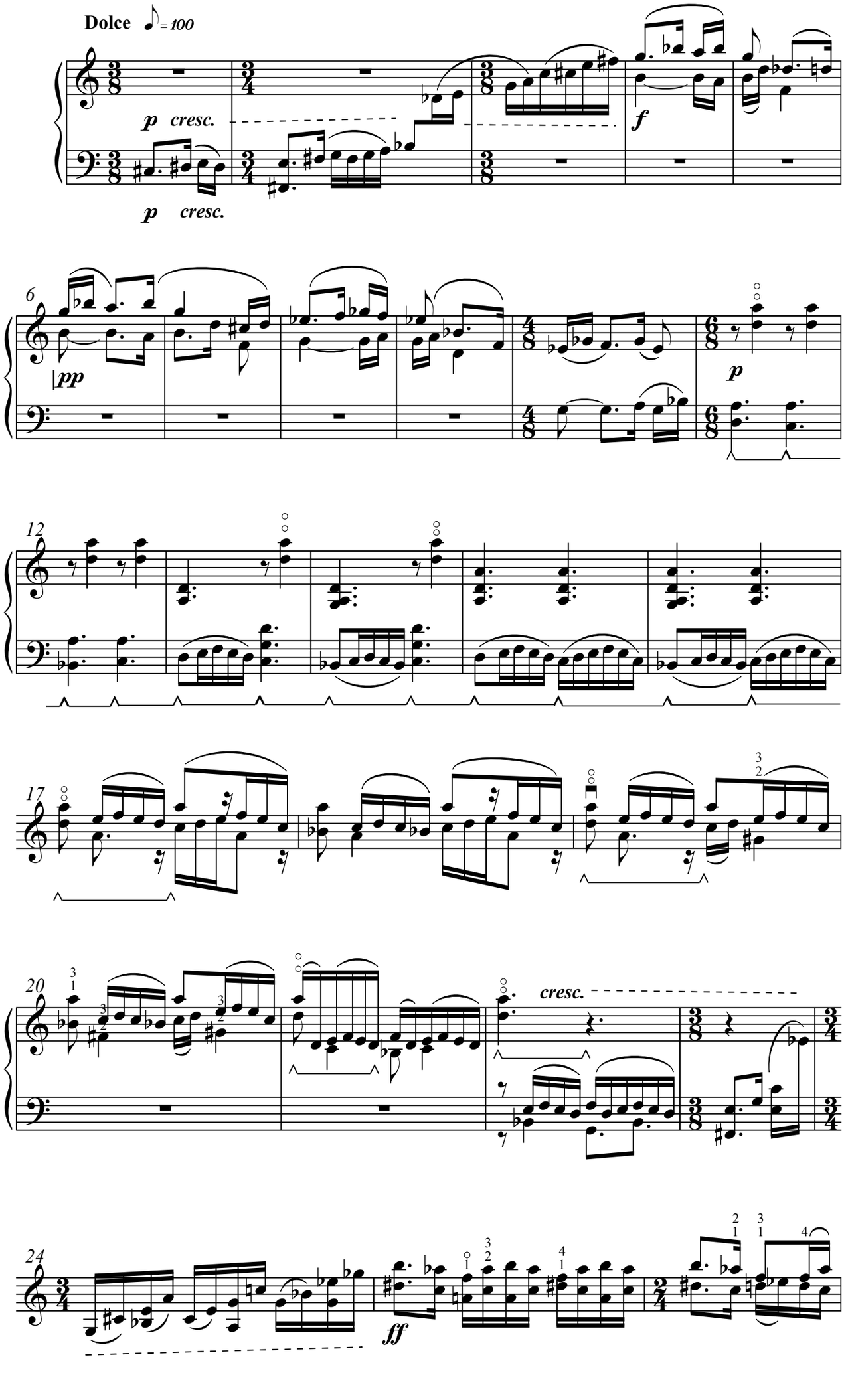

42
47
p
53
pp
ff
58
63
68
dim. p. a p.
(mf)
(mp)
72
(p)
pp

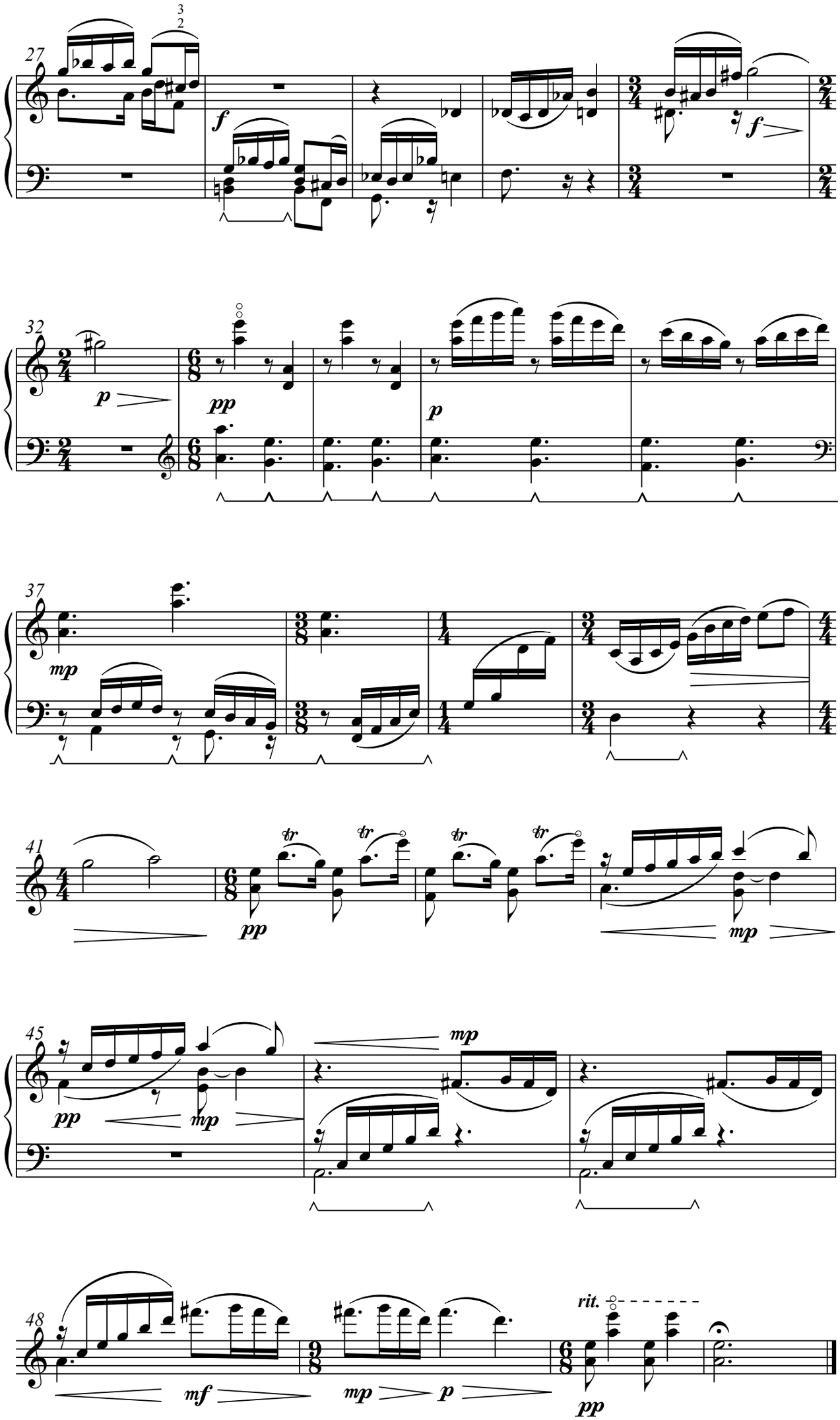
Sonata No. 8 for 6 String Violin

(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

I. Death is Near [2:40]

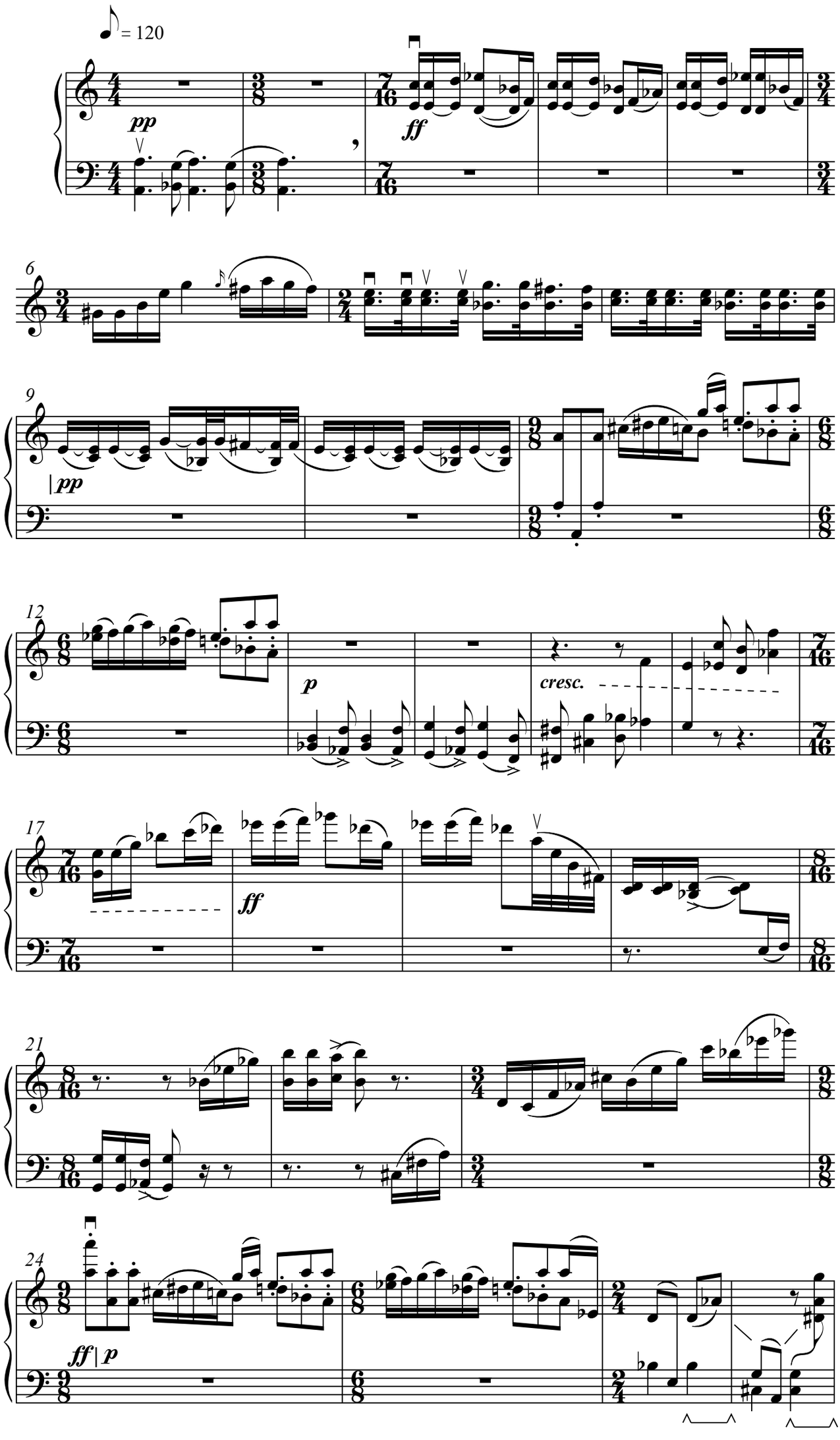
Bill Robinson

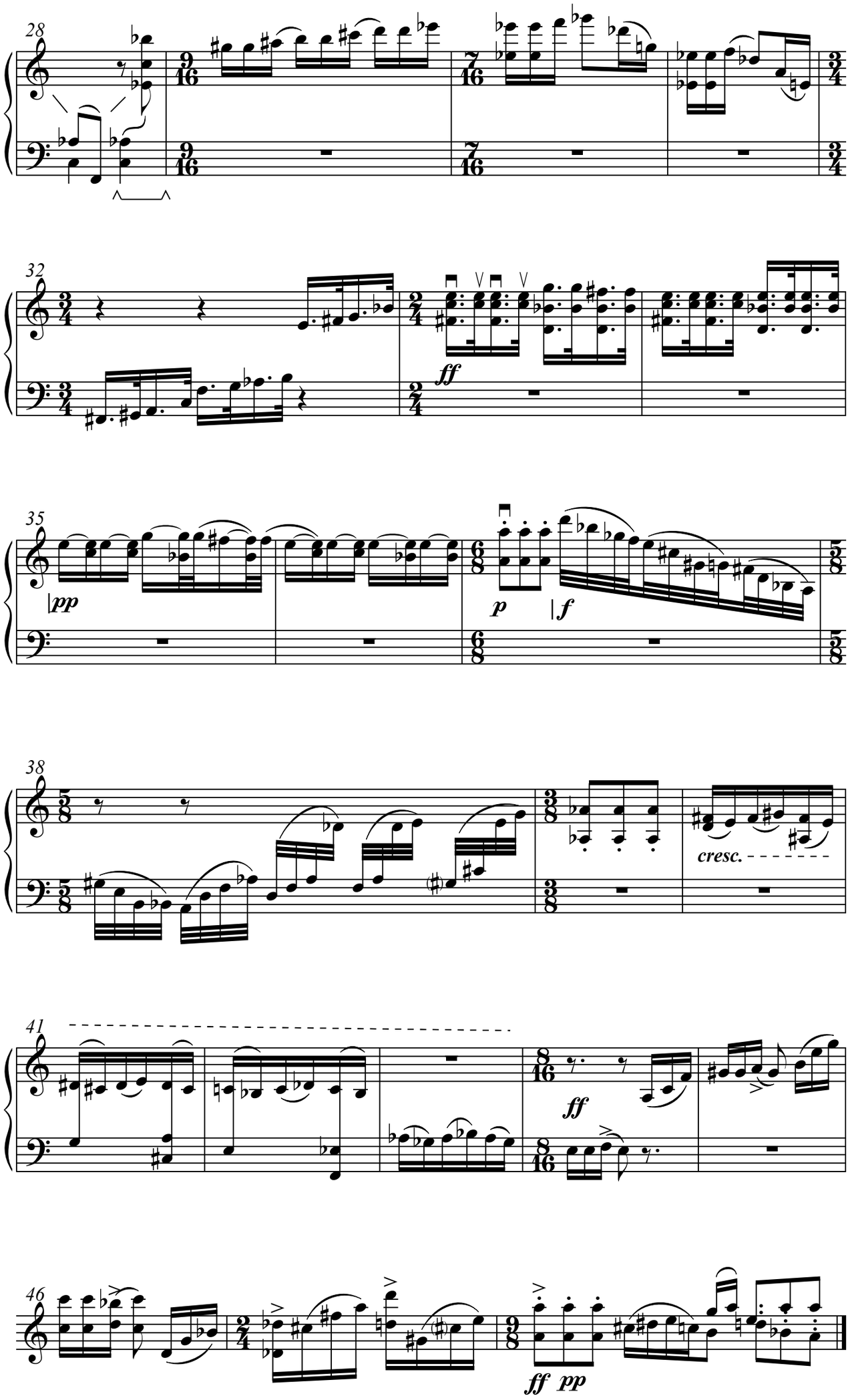



27
f
f
32
p
pp
p
37
mp
41
pp
mp
45
pp
mp
mp
48
mf
mp
p
rit.
pp

II. Backfeifengesicht

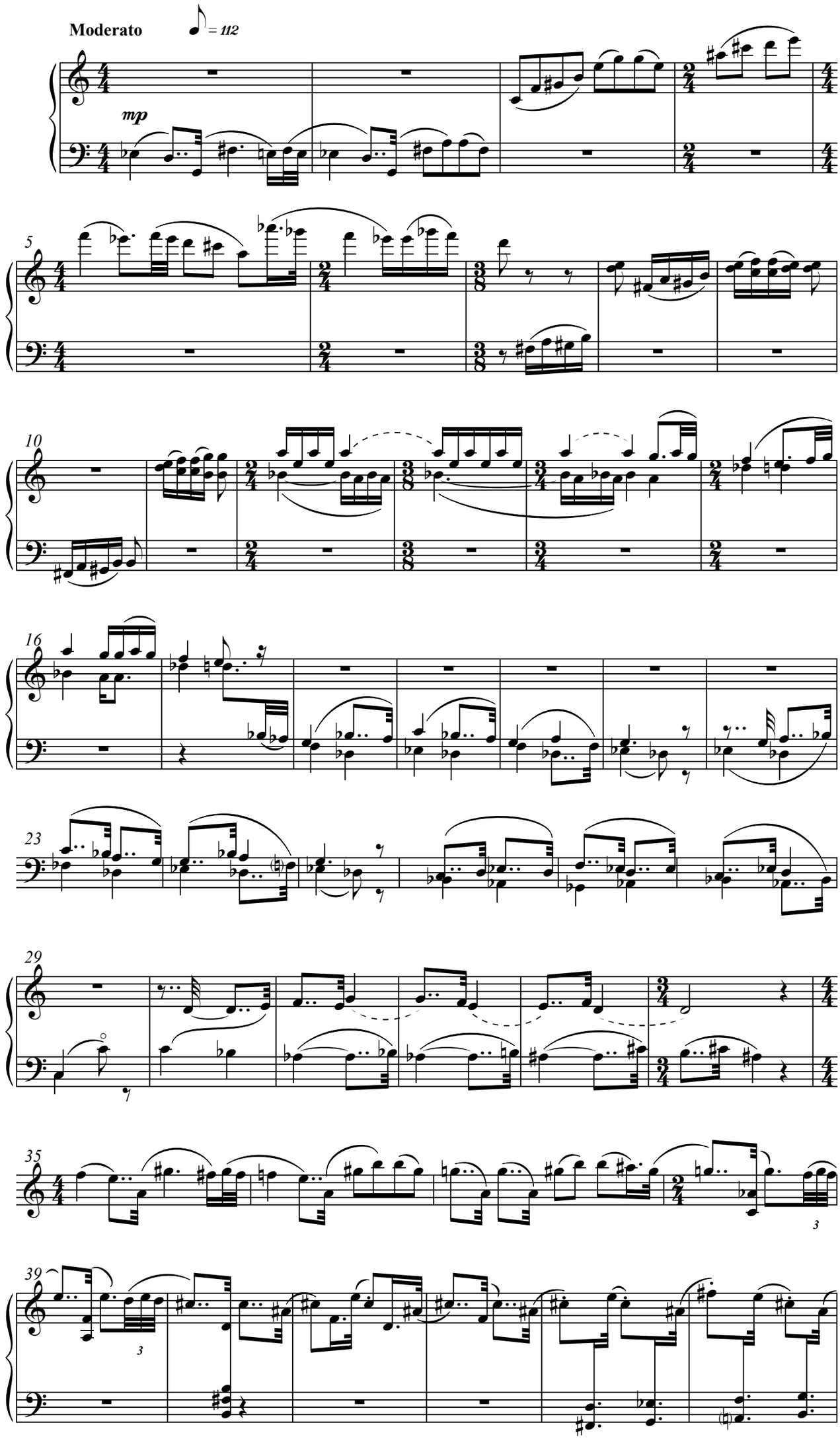
[1:50]

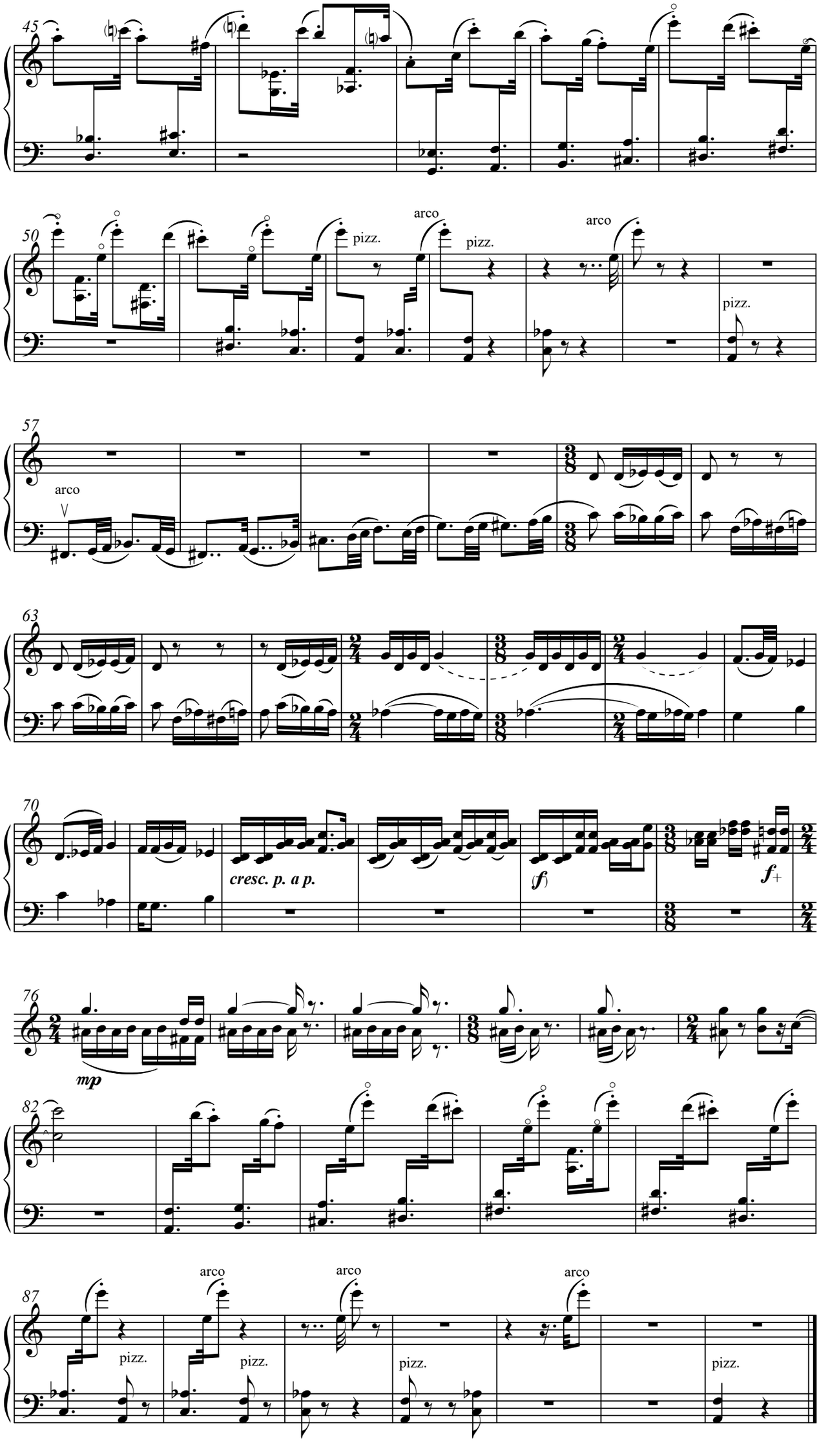



28
32
ff
35
pp
p
f
38
cresc.
41
ff
46
ff pp

III. Third Movement

[3:30]




45
50
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
57
arco
63
70
cresc. p. a p.
(f)
f+
76
mp
82
87
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
pizz.

IV. Military Waltz

[2:25]

Allegro martelé ♪. = 76

ff

6

cresc. p. a p.

p

13

18

pp

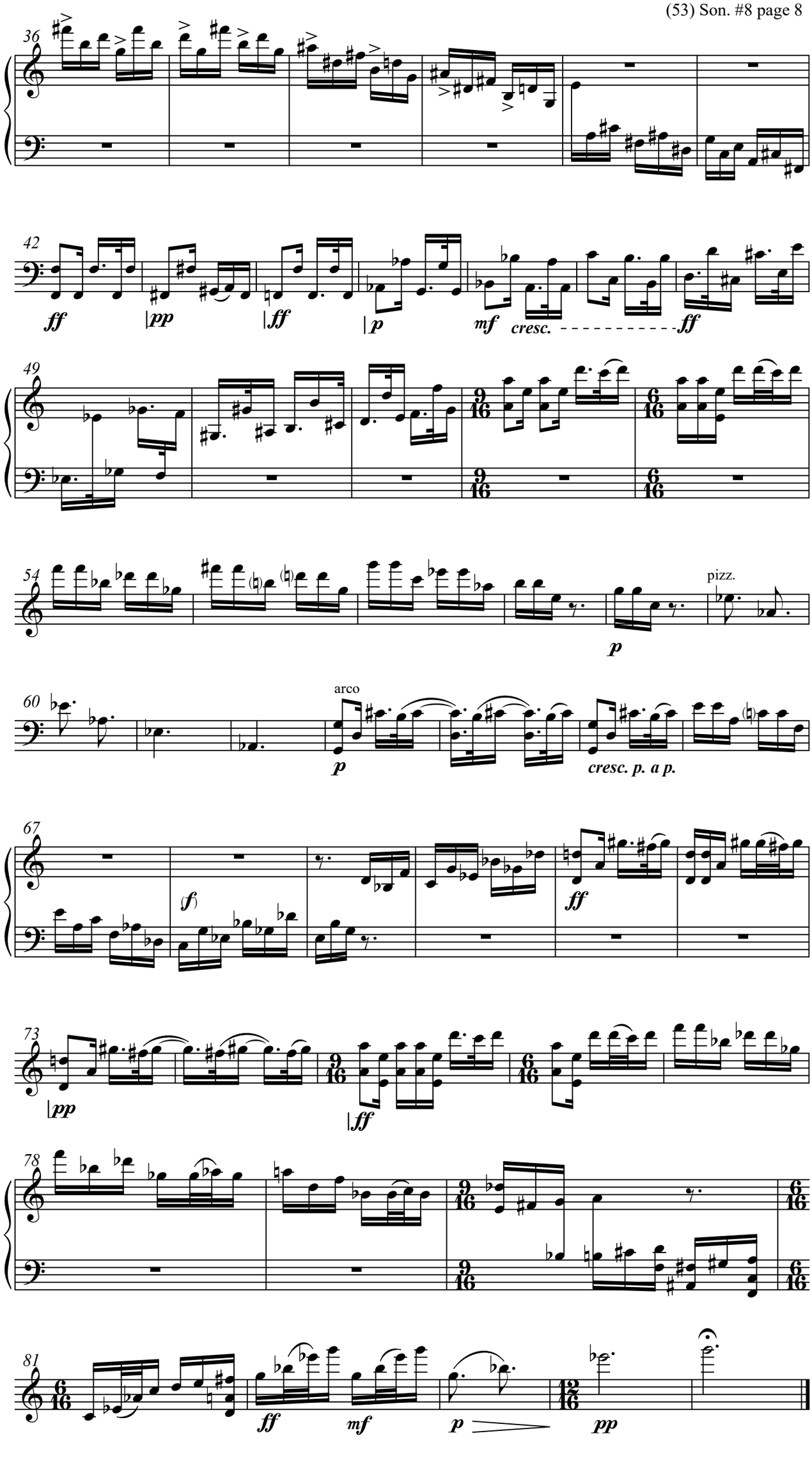
23

p

28

ff

32


36
42
ff
pp
ff
p
mf
cresc.
ff
49
54
pizz.
p
60
arco
p
cresc. p. a p.
67
(f)
ff
73
pp
ff
78
81
ff
mf
p
pp

Sonata No. 9 for 6 String Violin

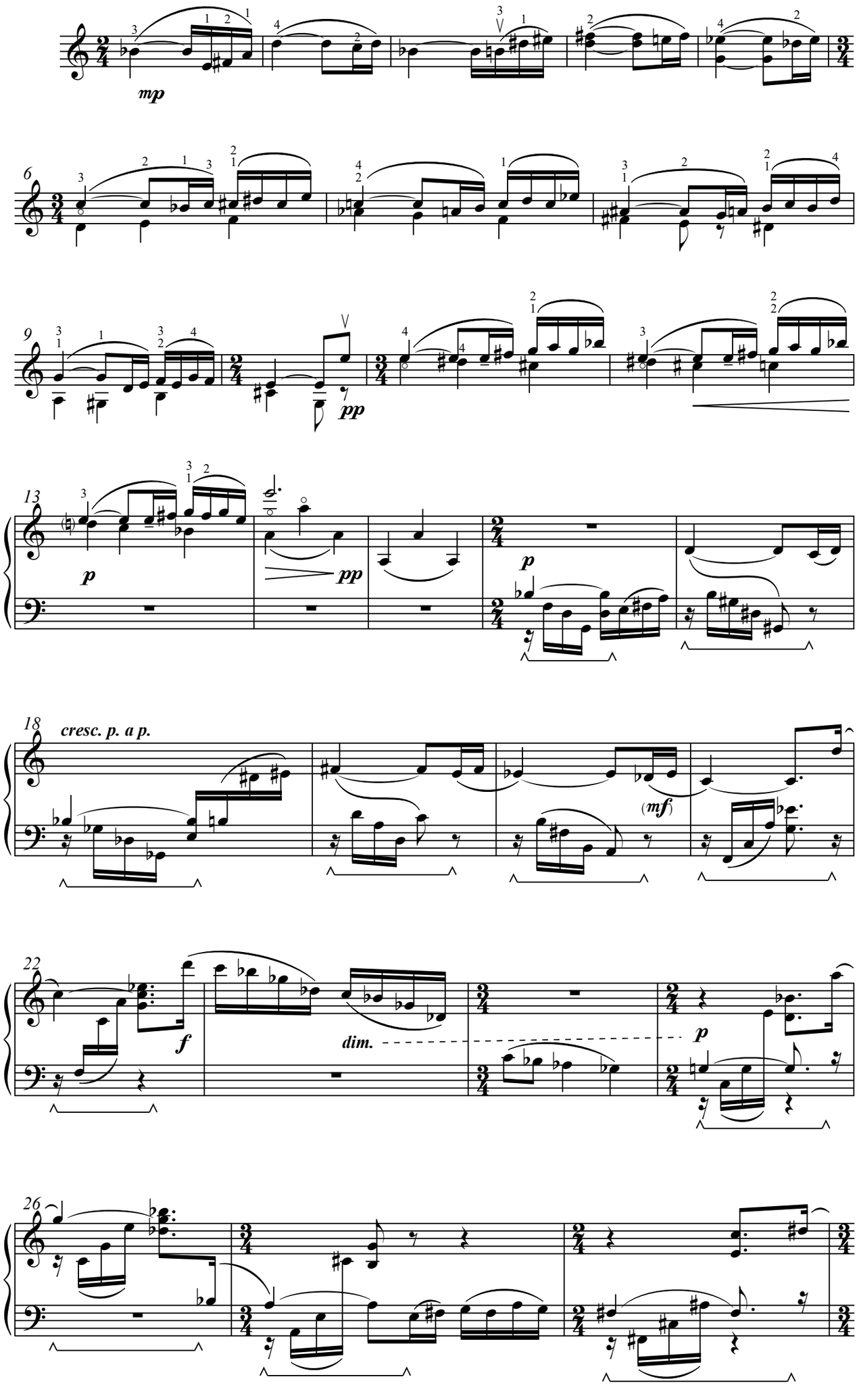
(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

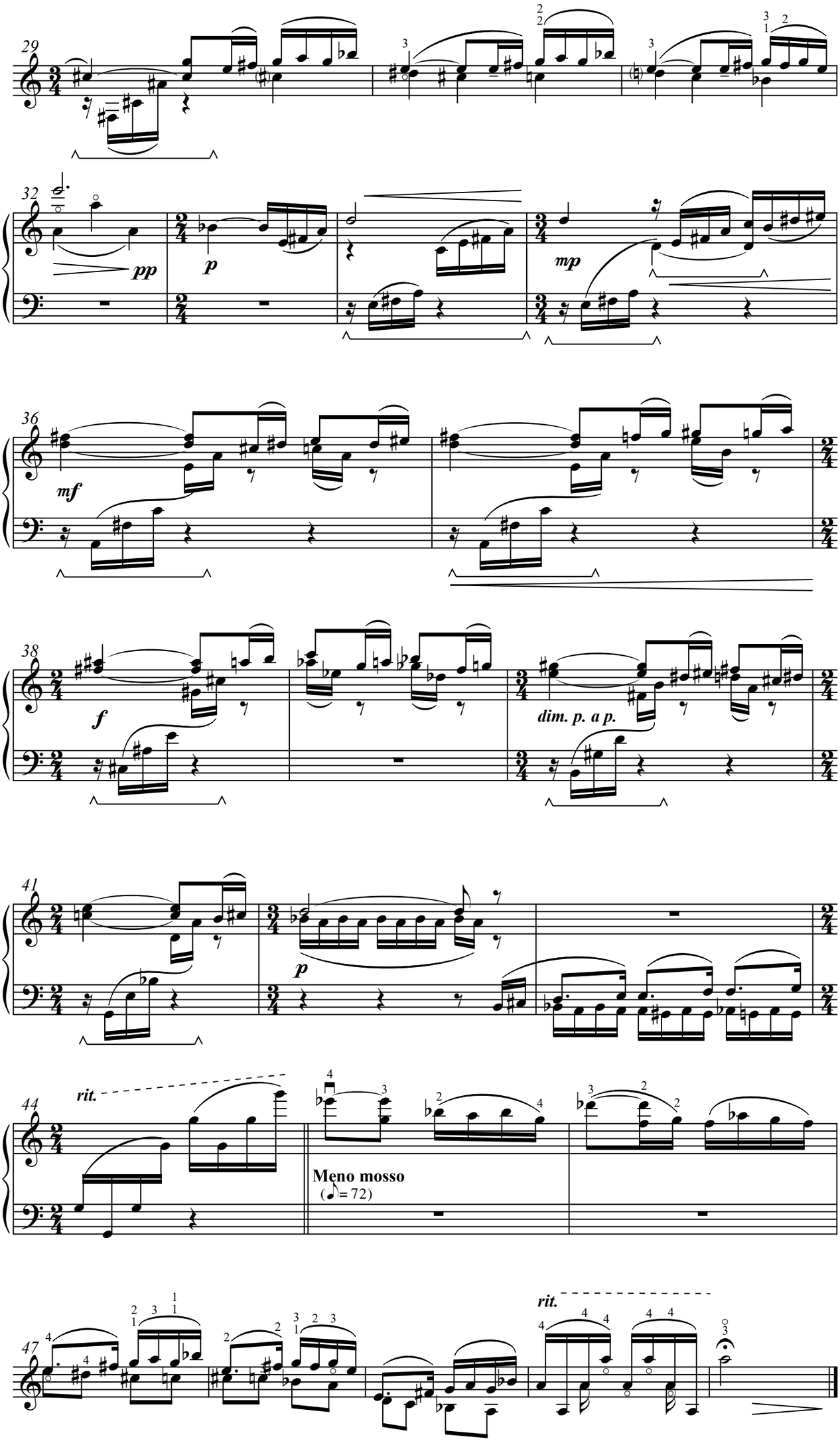
I. First Movement

[2:50]

Bill Robinson

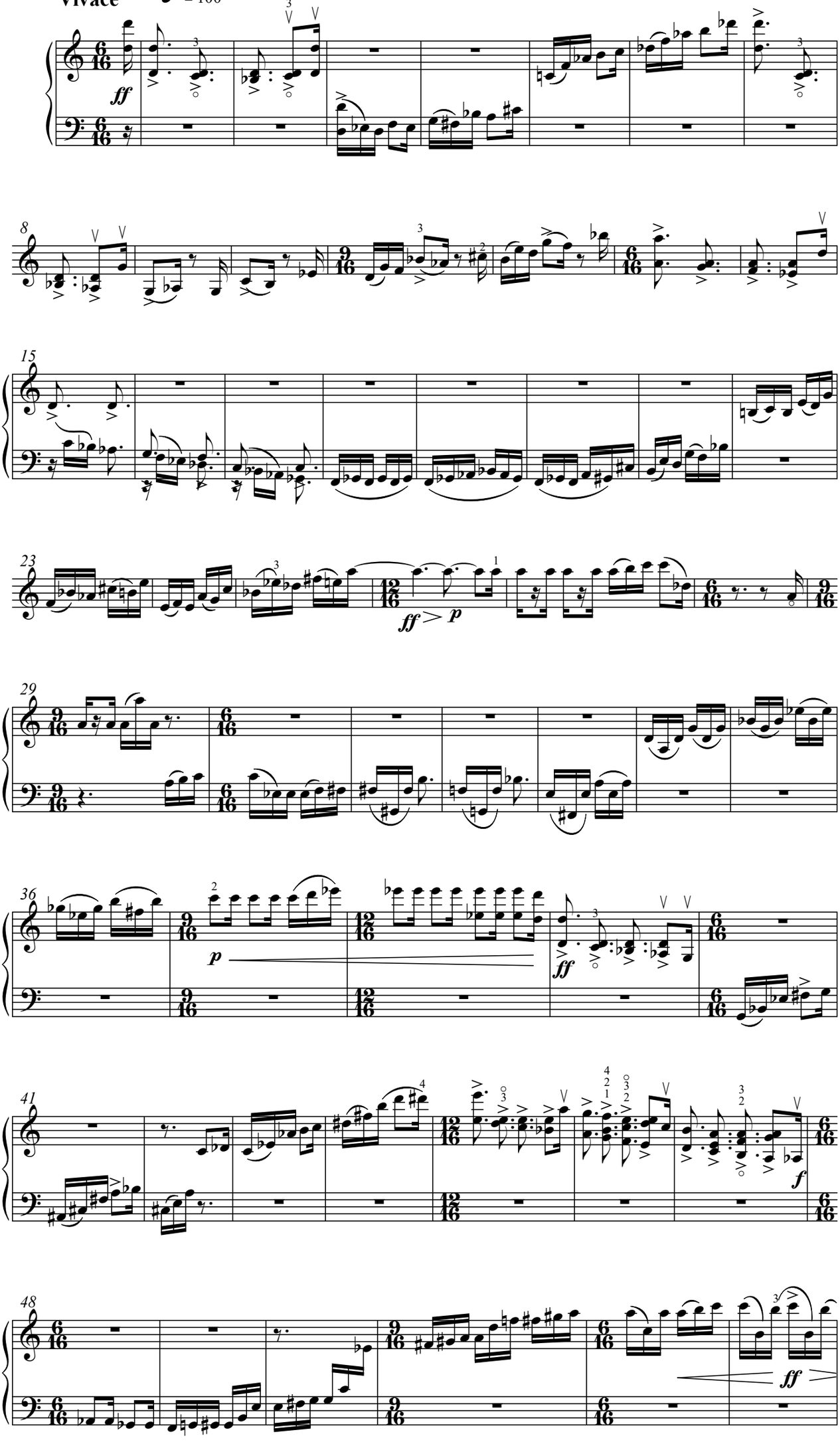
Moderato espressivo ♩= 45

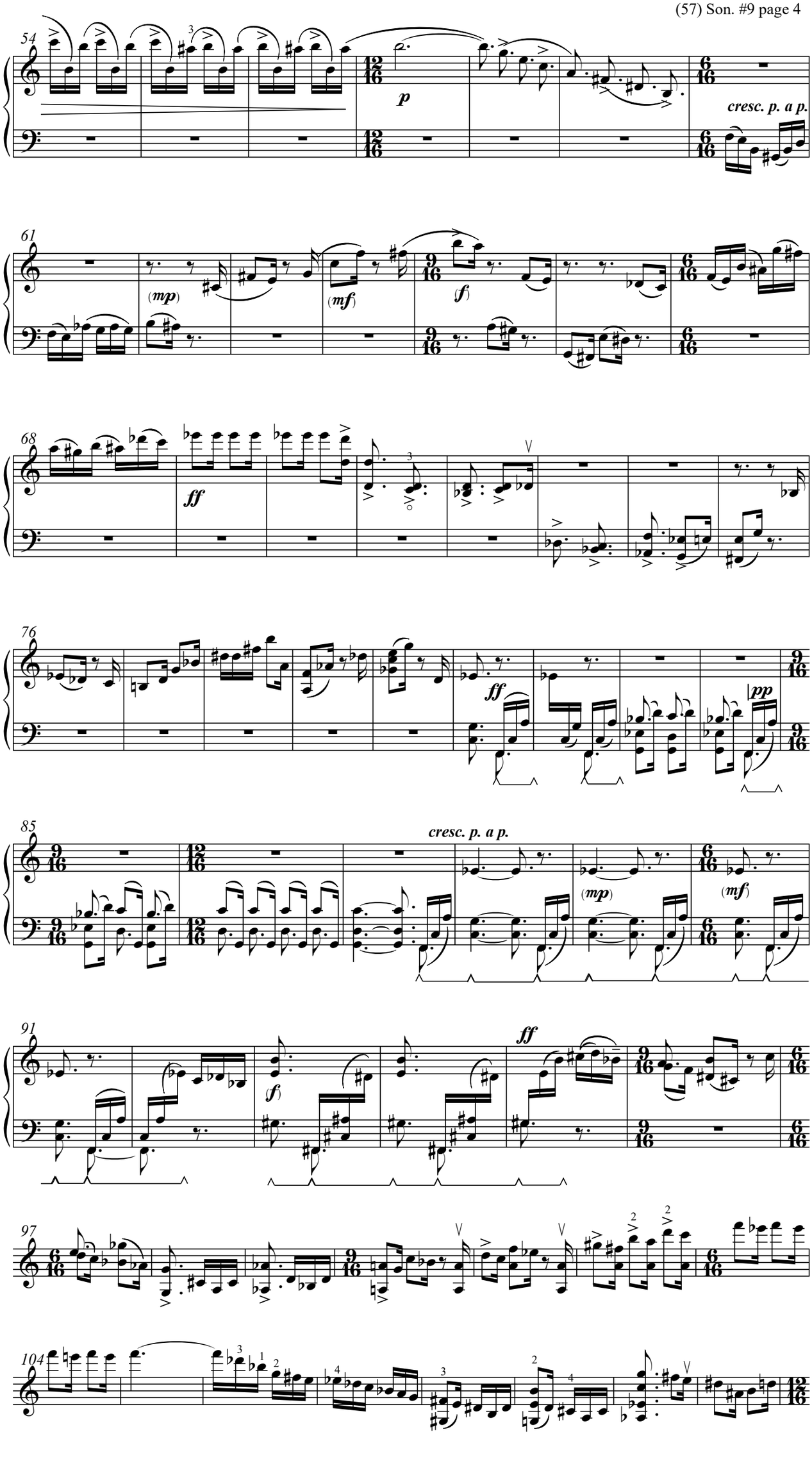


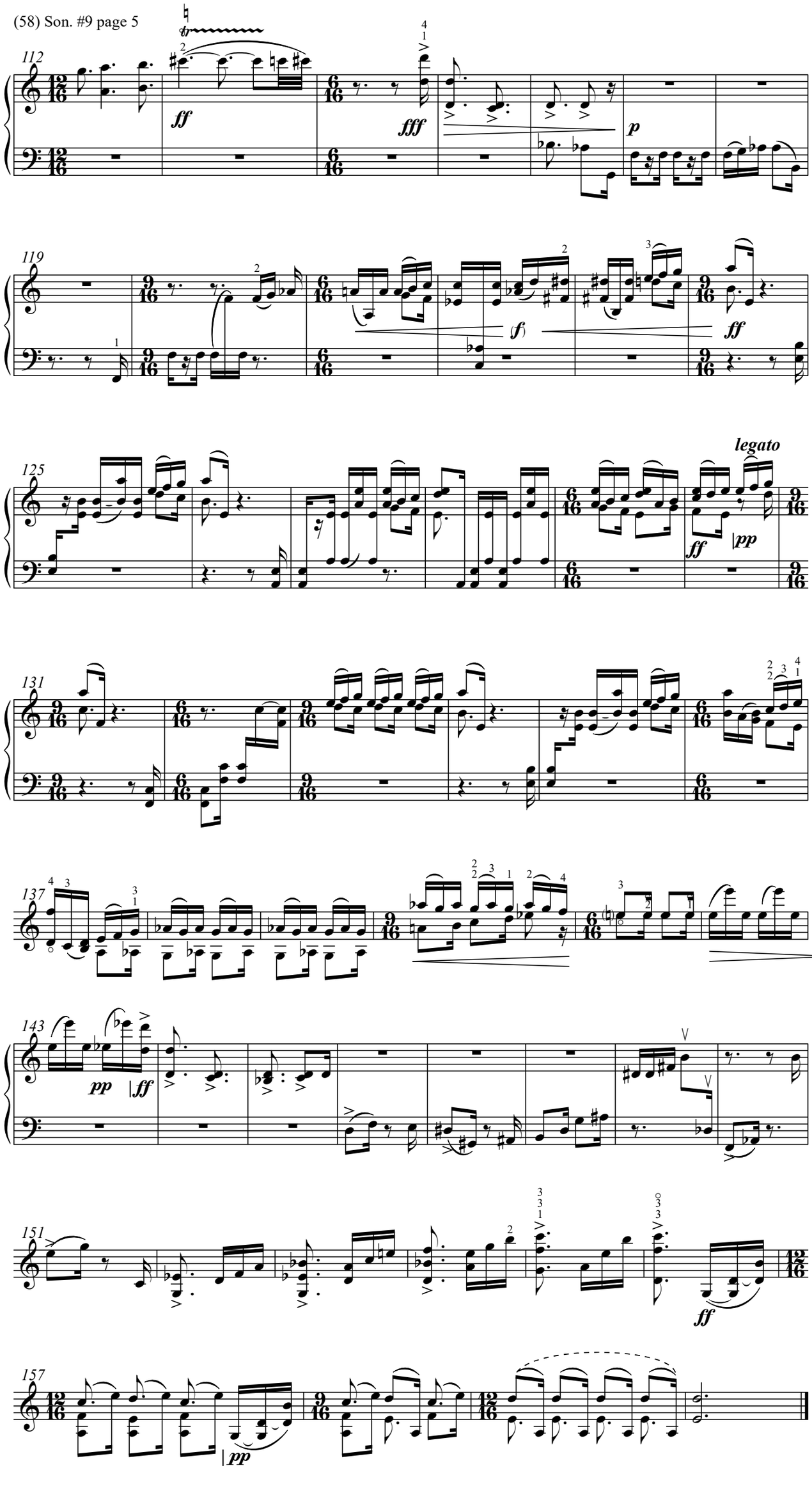

29
32
pp
p
mp
36
mf
38
f
dim. p. a p.
41
p
44
rit.
Meno mosso
(♪= 72)
47
rit.

II. Scherzo [3:50]

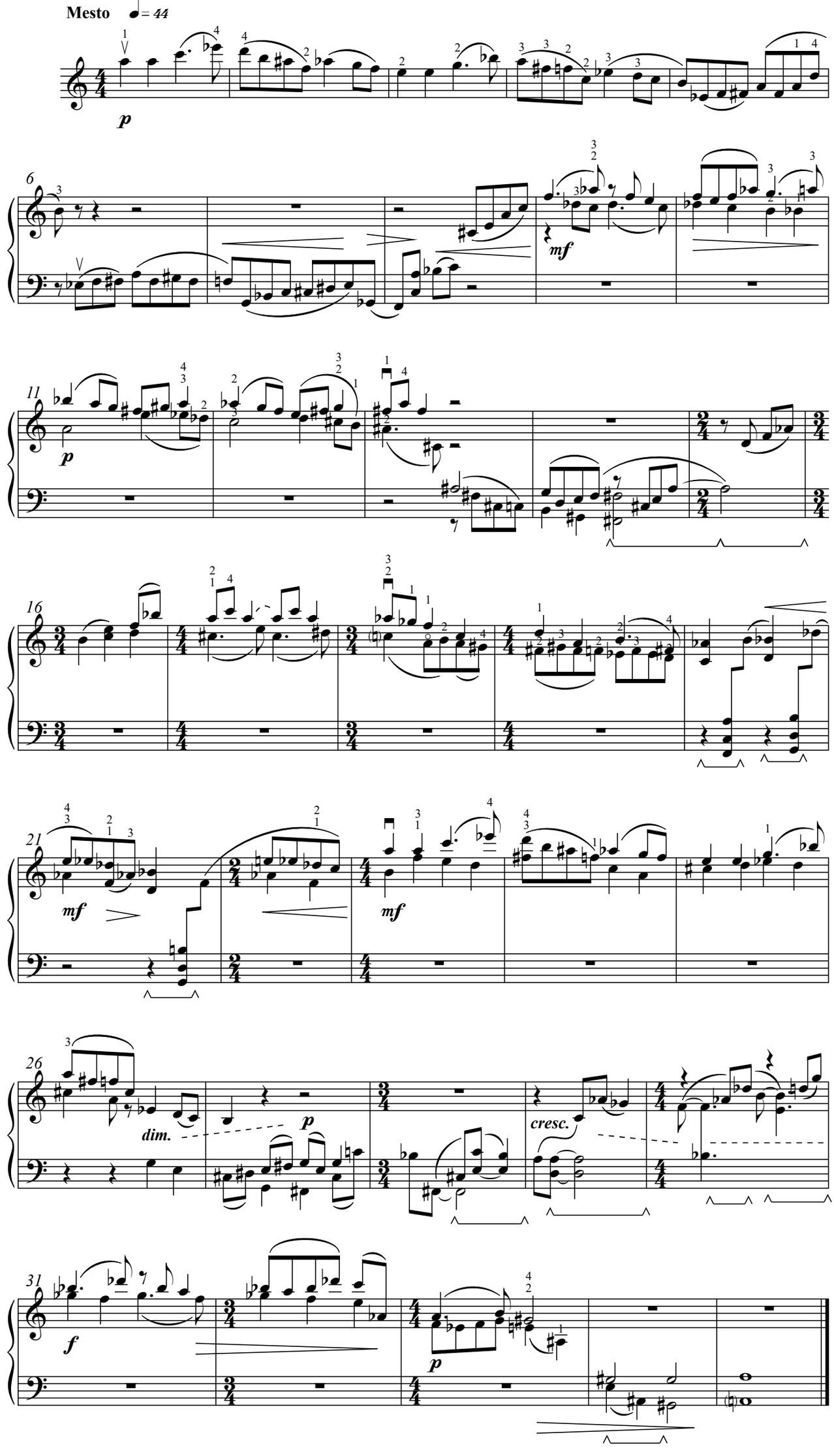
Vivace ♪. = 100




54
p
cresc. p. a p.
61
(mp)
(mf)
(f)
68
ff
76
ff
pp
85
cresc. p. a p.
(mp)
(mf)
91
(f)
ff
97
104


112
ff
fff
p
119
f
ff
125
legato
ff
pp
131
137
143
pp
ff
151
ff
157
pp

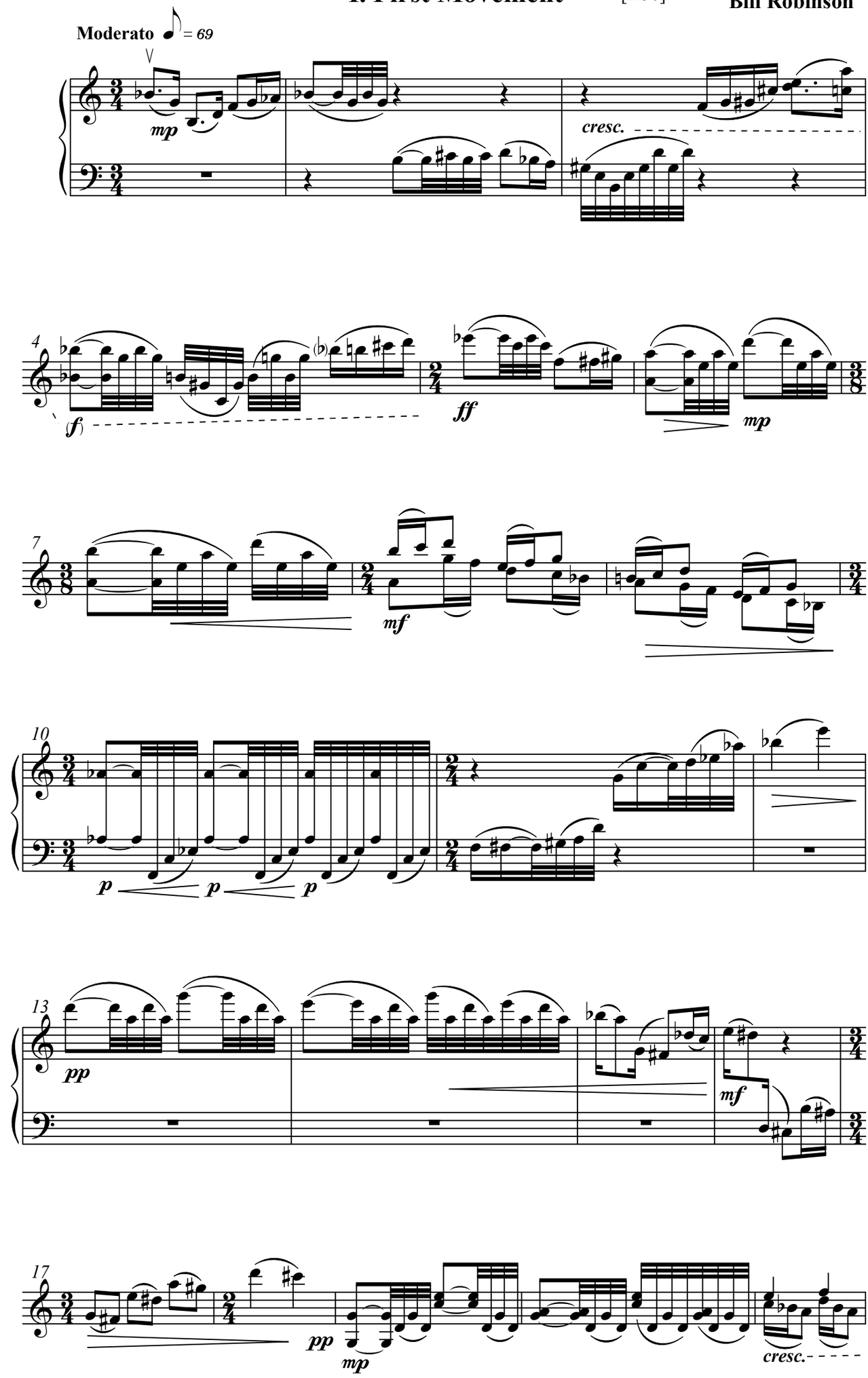
III. Third Movement

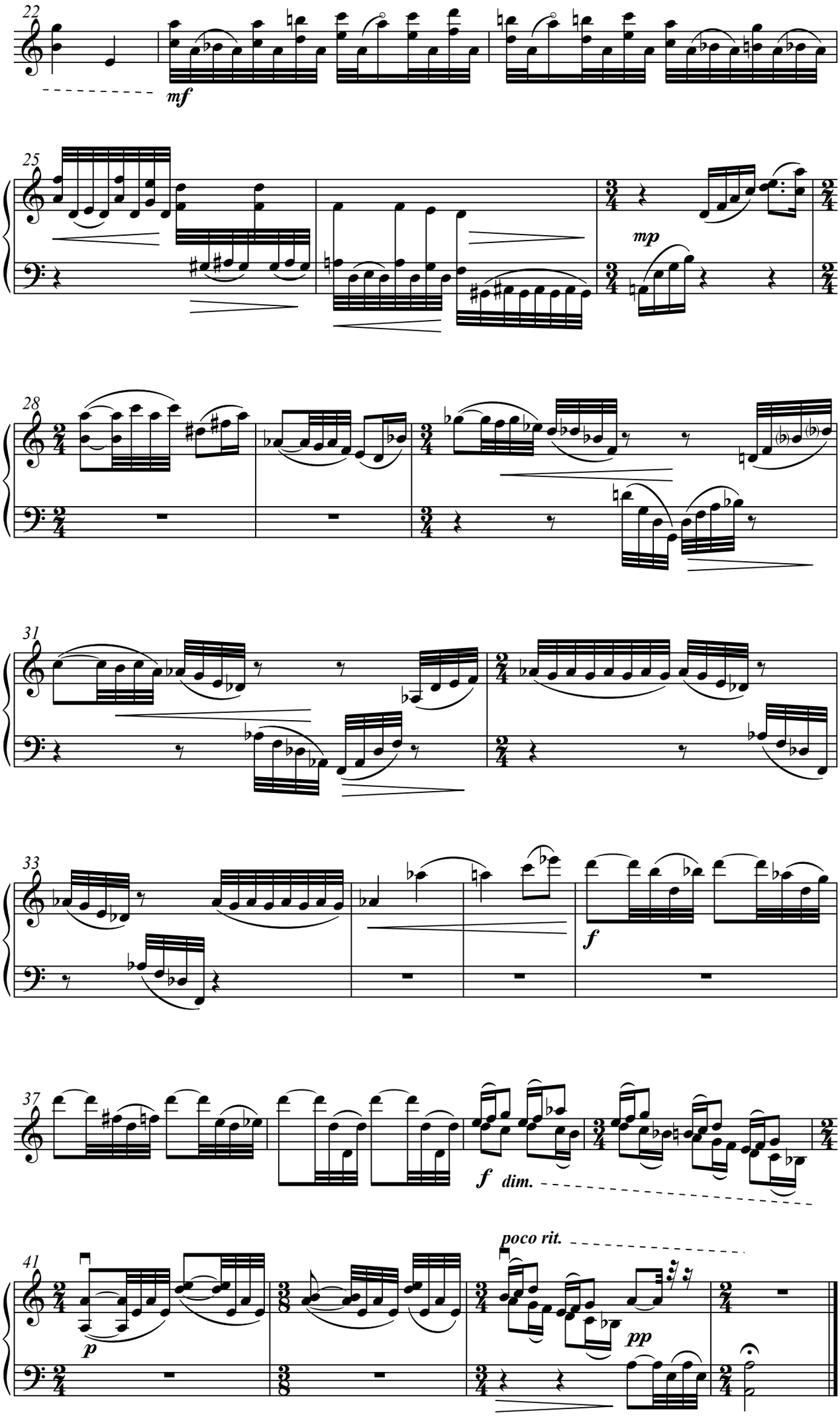


Sonata No. 10 for 6 String Violin

I. First Movement [2:50]

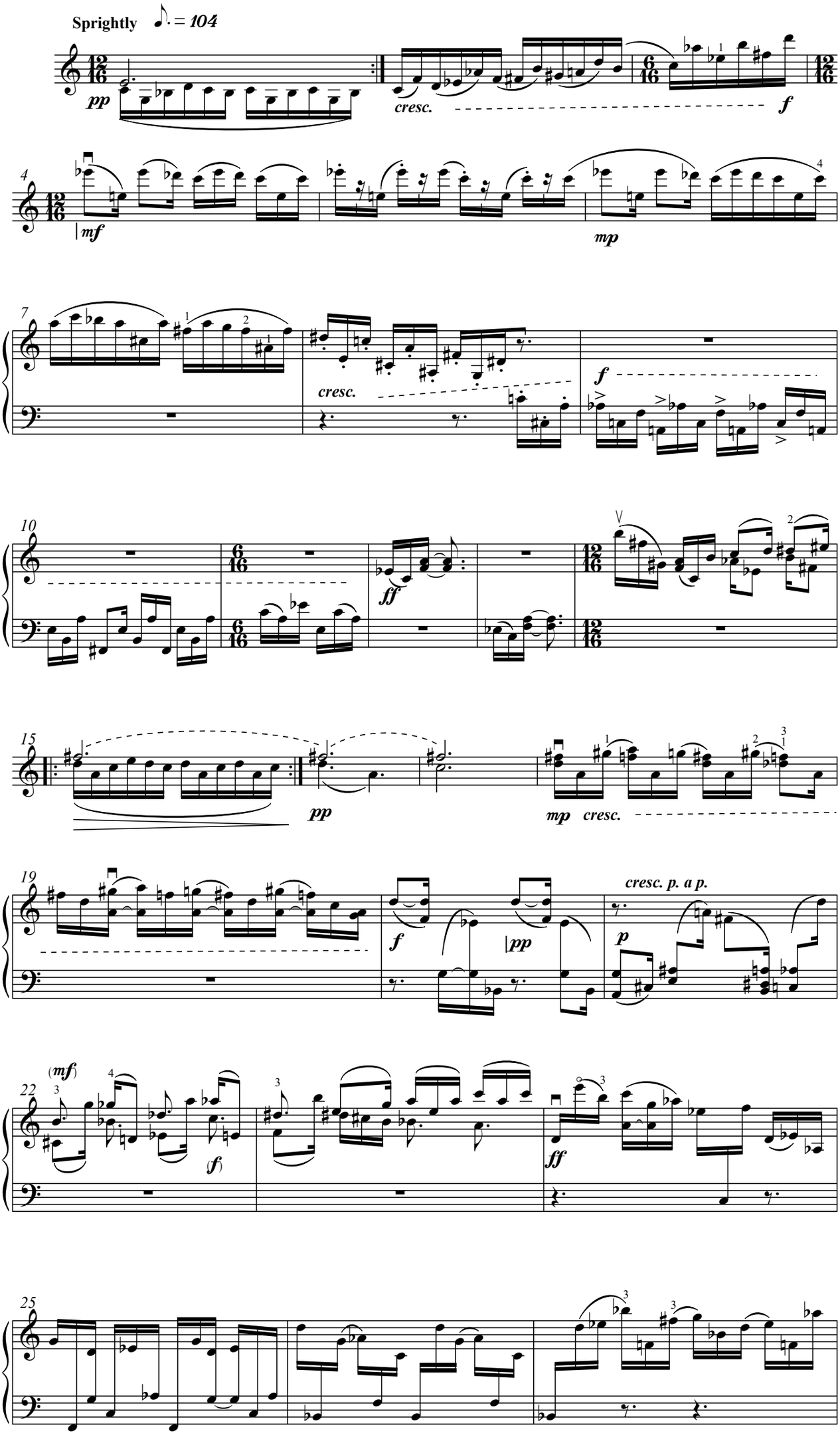
Bill Robinson

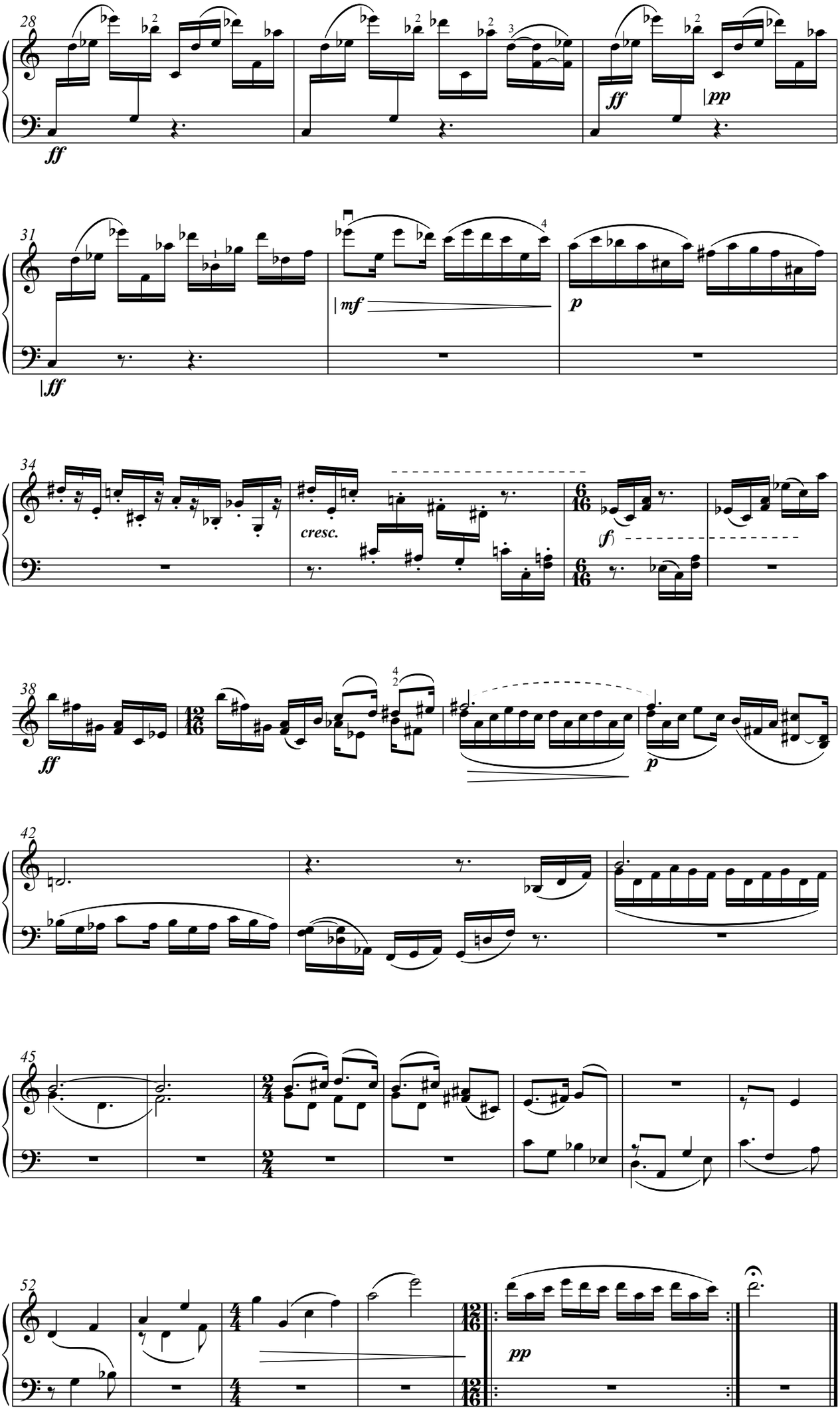



22
mf
25
mp
28
31
33
f
37
f dim.
41
poco rit.
p
pp

II. Second Movement

[2:10]



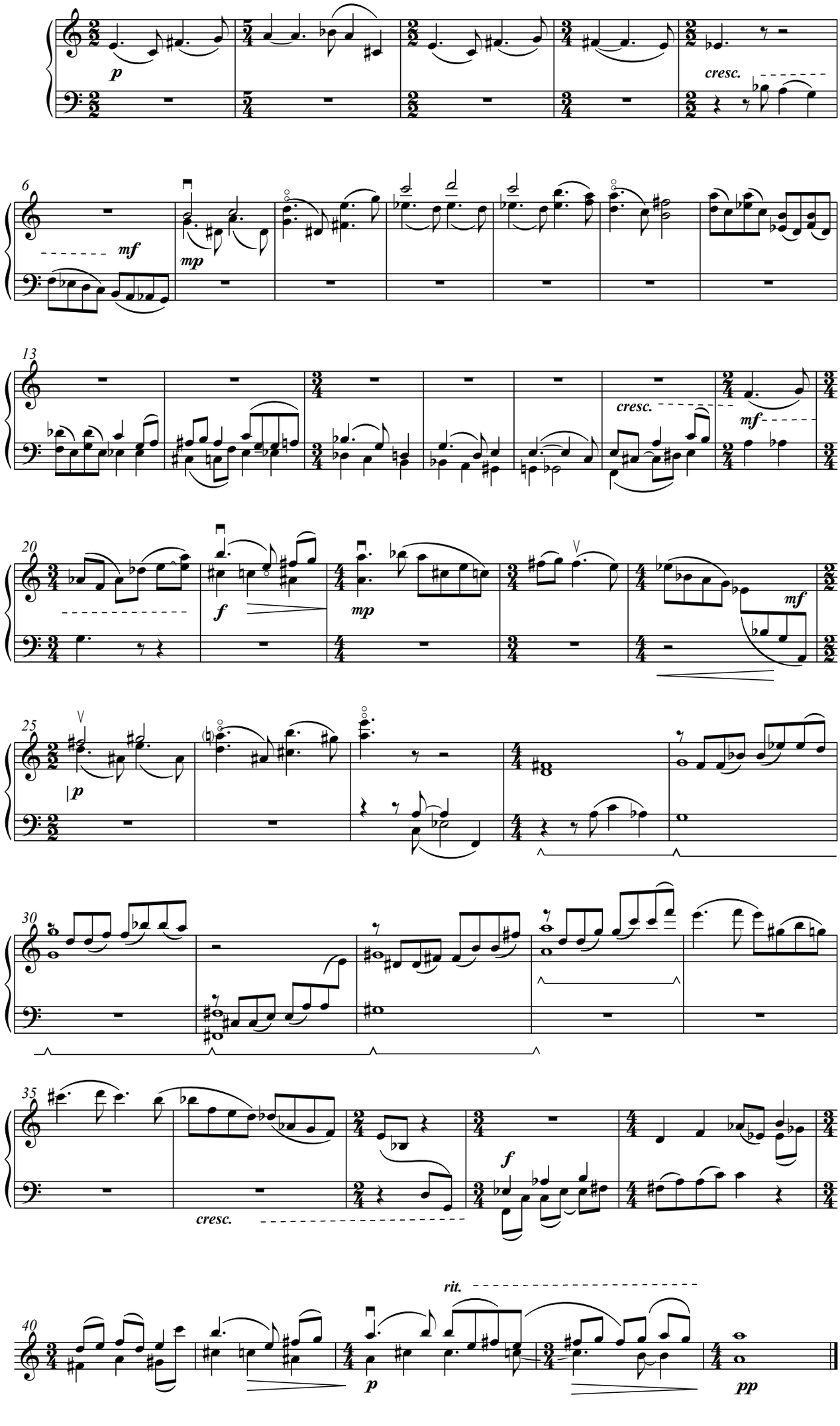

28
ff
ff
pp
31
ff
mf
p
34
cresc.
(f)
38
ff
p
42
45
52
pp

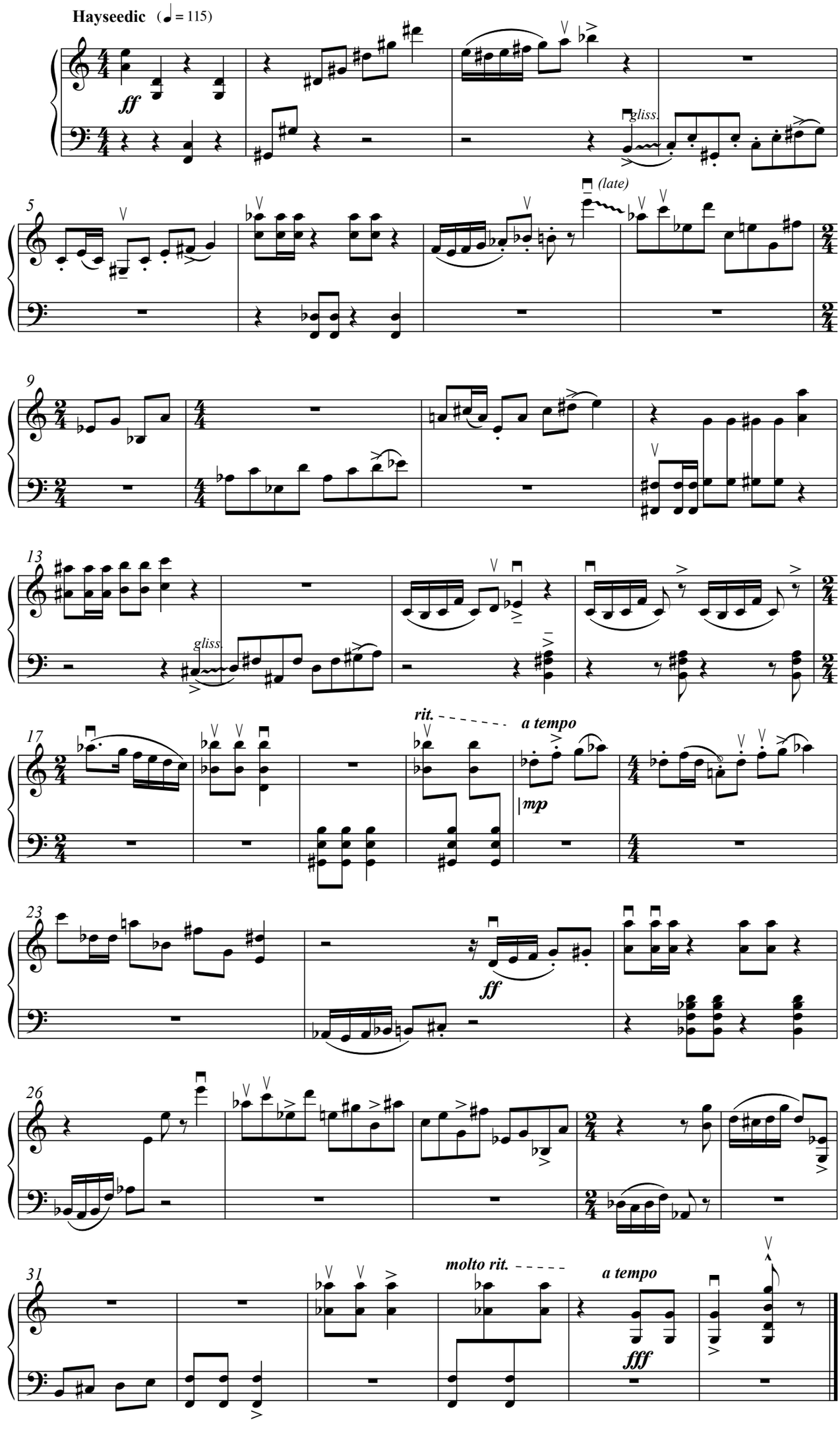
III. Third Movement

[2:40]

(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

Slow ♩= *63*




Hayseedic (♩ = 115)
ff
gliss.
(late)
5
9
13
gliss.
17
rit.
a tempo
mp
23
ff
26
31
molto rit.
a tempo
fff