An edition to:

3 Nocturnes Op. 21

Written by
virtuoso pianist and composer:

Sigismund Thalberg
(1812-1871)

Originally published in 1837

Edition(2020) by:

Hazim Azlan

Pieces in this set:

1. Nocturne in A-flat major
2. Nocturne in D-flat major
3. Nocturne in A minor

Notes by the editor

Sigismund Thalberg was remembered for his extraodinary virtuosity that rivalled the great Franz Liszt. Both even had a duel in 1837 at Paris which resulted in a draw, where the judge stated: "Thalberg is the first pianist in the world, Liszt is unique." Despite the rivalry, Liszt and Thalberg became extremely close friends, where Liszt would praise Thalberg's compositions and technique in his future concerts, and for an instance stated "Thalberg is the only person who can play violin on the piano".

Such remarkable praise might be surprising, as for today, Thalberg is forgotten in the eyes of the audience and musicians, being just a bookshelf name for music historians. A suitable reason, for me, is that Thalberg has performed so much, that the audience grew tired of him. Liszt knew this and retired from the concert platform early, which might have saved his musical career. Another reason for this is because of Thalberg's sudden retirement from musical world. After performing extensively in America, Thalberg retired and never touched a piano ever again in his lifetime, stating that he has grown old to the newer audiences.

For others, another reason is because his music is very vapid to listen to. I find this theory odd as composers from Schumann, Mendelssohn, Rossini and Liszt himself found enormous respect for him, and some extremists like Joseph Fetis claimed that he was creating a new art form. My theory on this is that most pianists do not know really how to play Thalberg.

The nocturnes here are compositions written in 1837, the height of his duel with Franz Liszt. Although musically inferior to his later nocturnes, these pieces possibly give an insight to what Thalberg's compositional technique is: the importance of the melody. The first nocturne is a berceuse with hand configurations surrounding the main melody. The second is a barcarolle with sweeping left hand patterns accompanying a rather simple melody. The third is an etude-like nocturne which has a particularly beautiful middle section in A major.

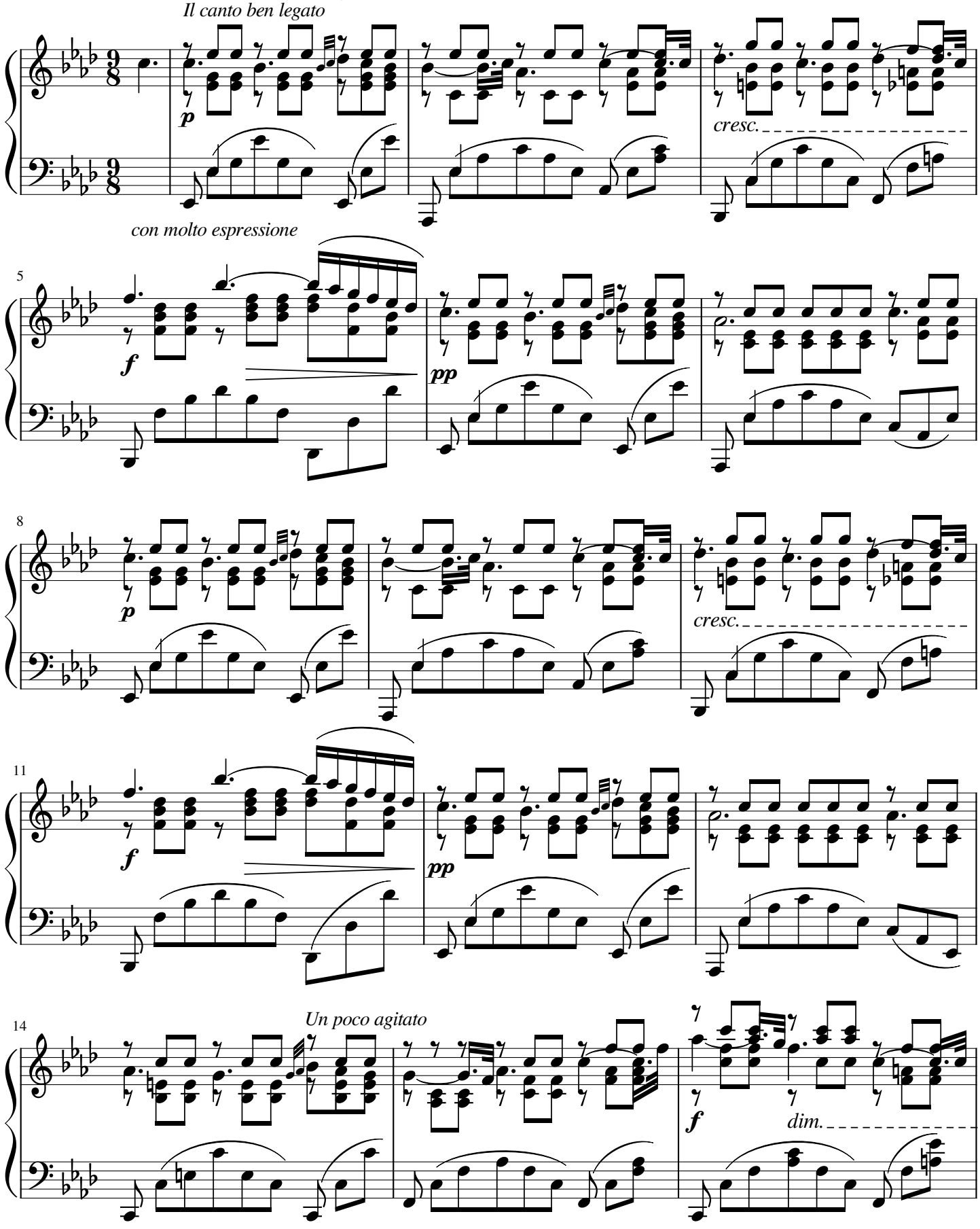
What I hope is that these nocturnes will help us as performers to understand the content of the music by this forgotten composer. For the performers of this music, remember to take in the history and the description of the composer's playing in account to your perfomance. Thalberg's cadenzas are not Liszt's cadenzas and Thalberg harmonies are not Chopin harmonies. He is a very different composer from the two. When we take in consideration of these details, we would be left with a greater magic that shines through his compositions, and you will be applauded by your audience.

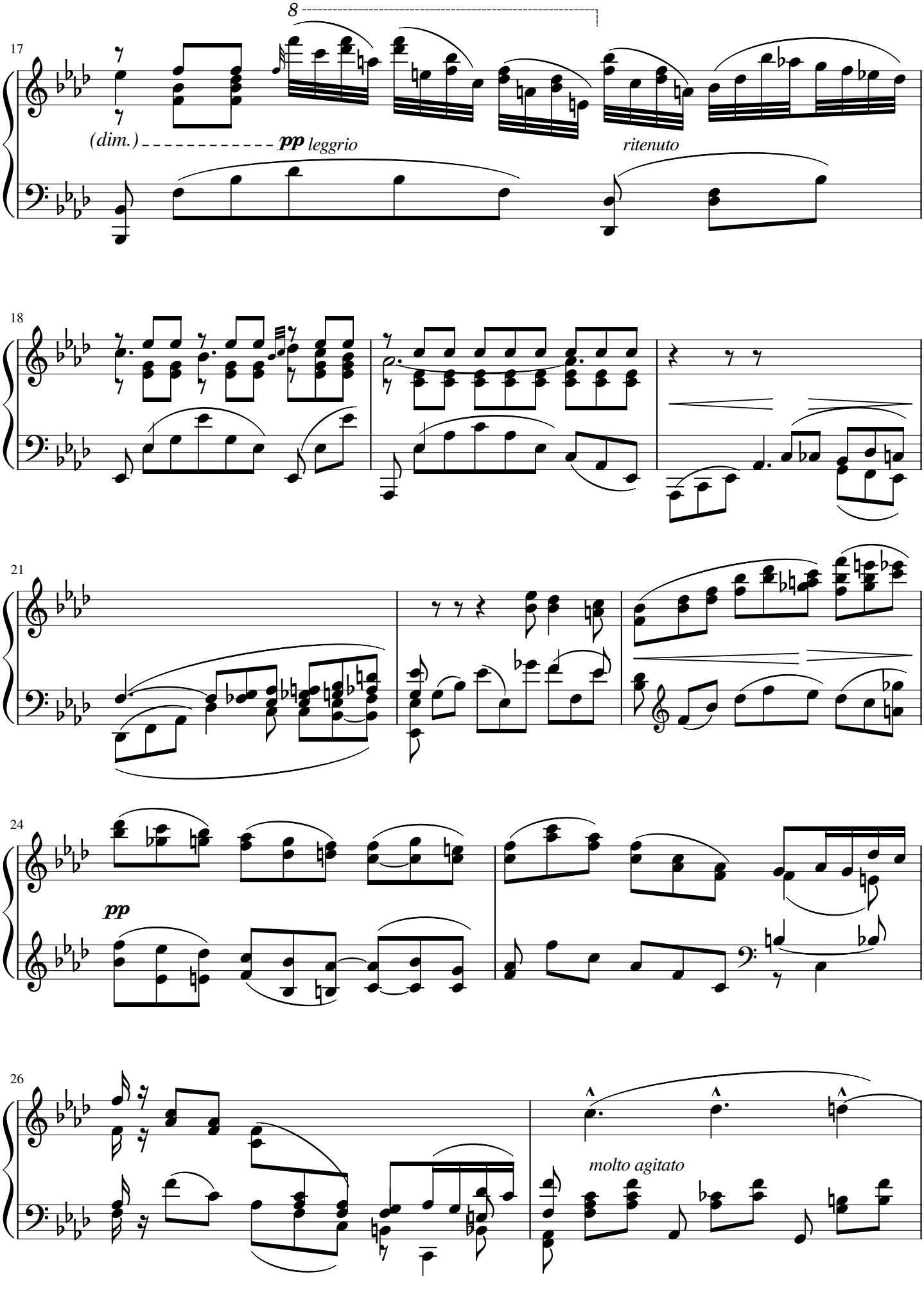
Hazim Azlan (2020)

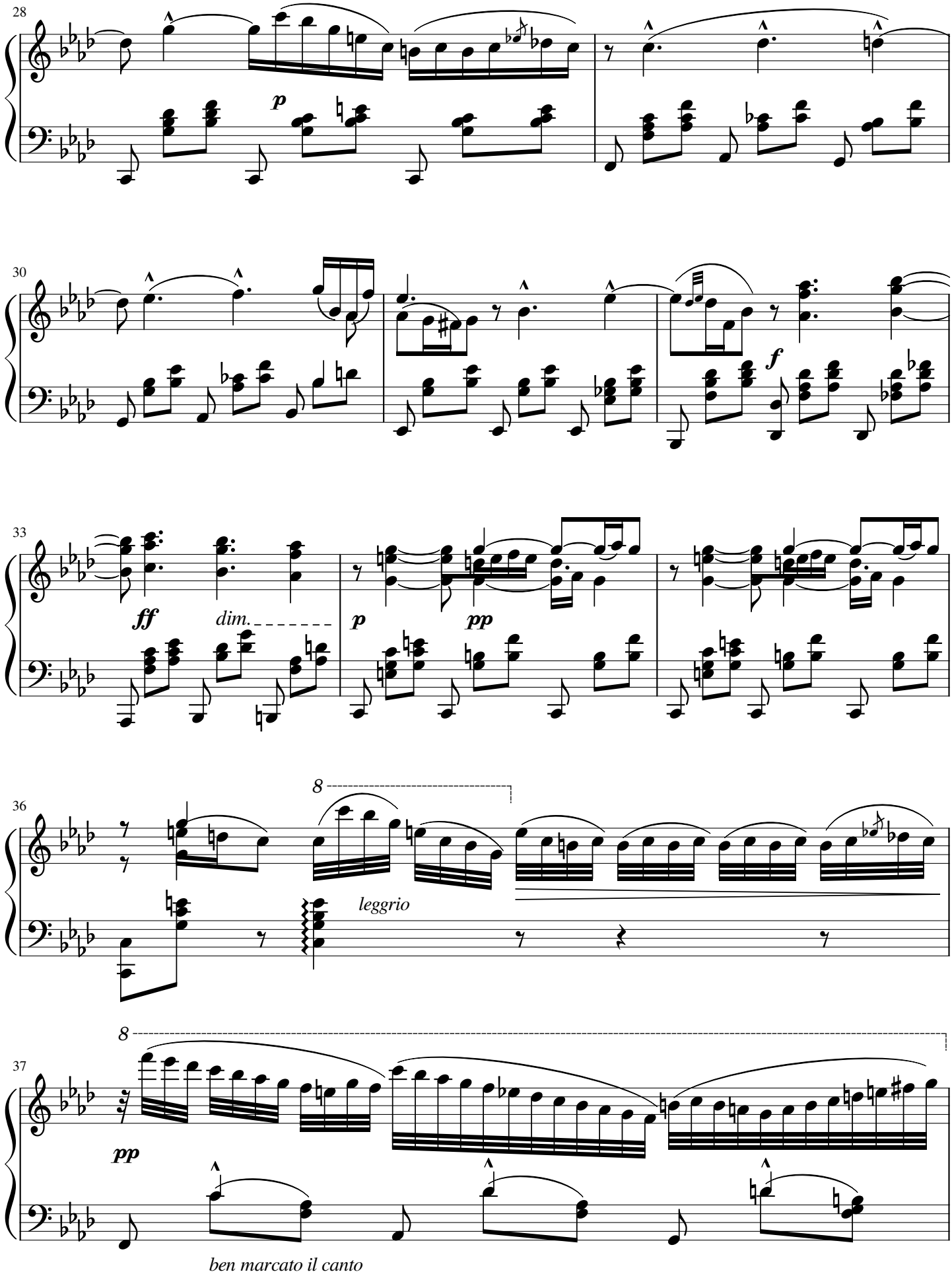
I

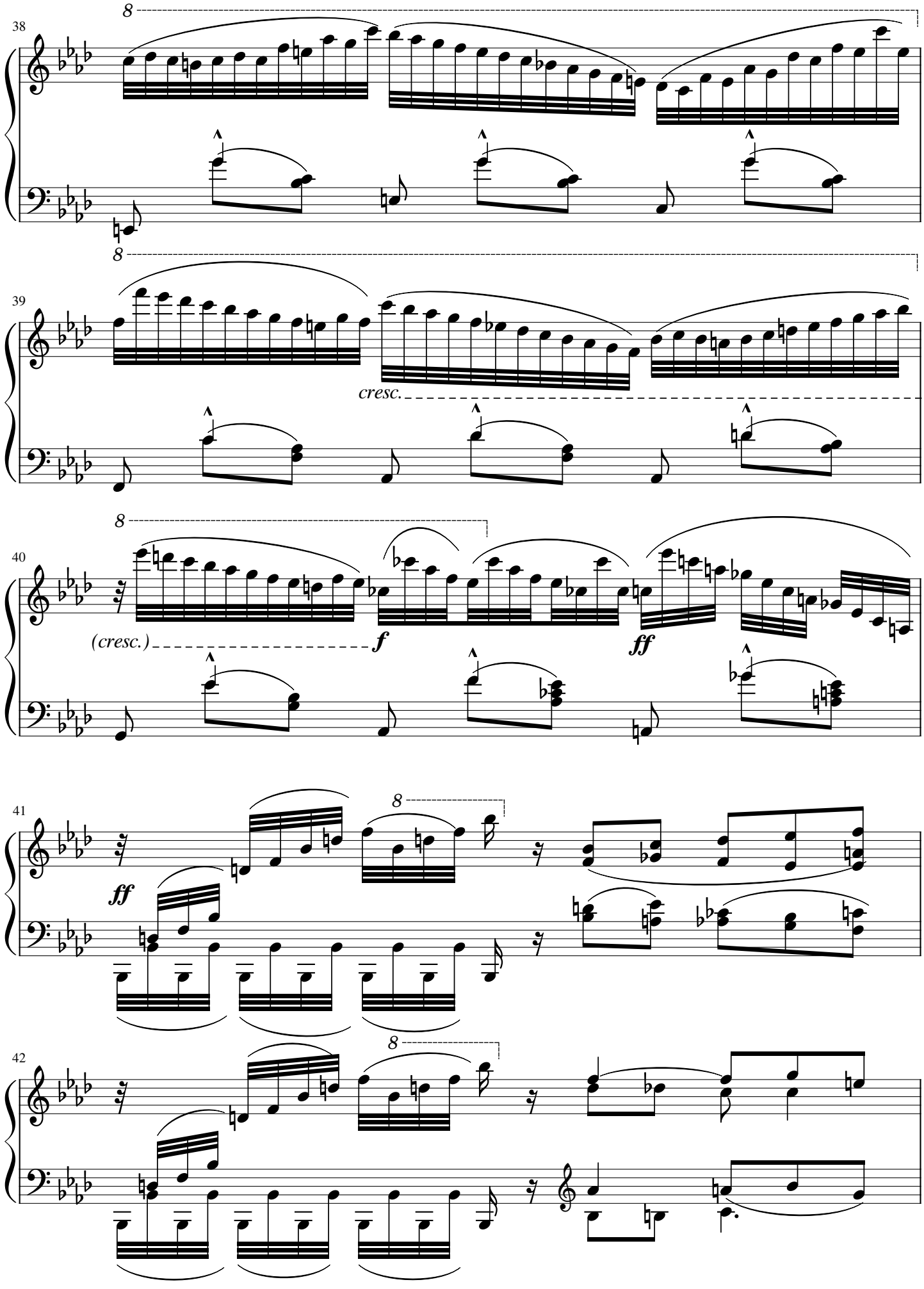
Andante sostenuto (♩ = 68)

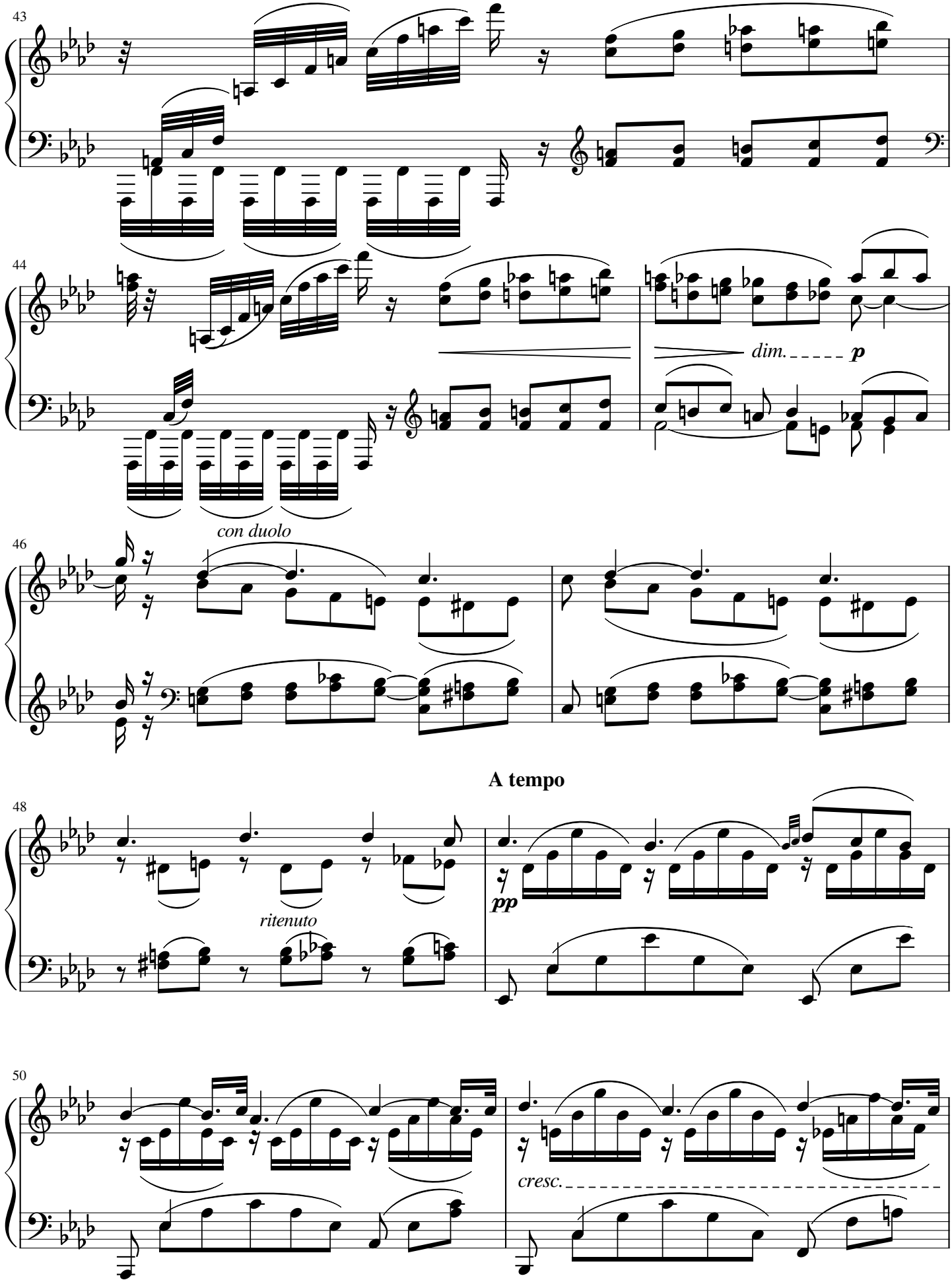
Il canto ben legato

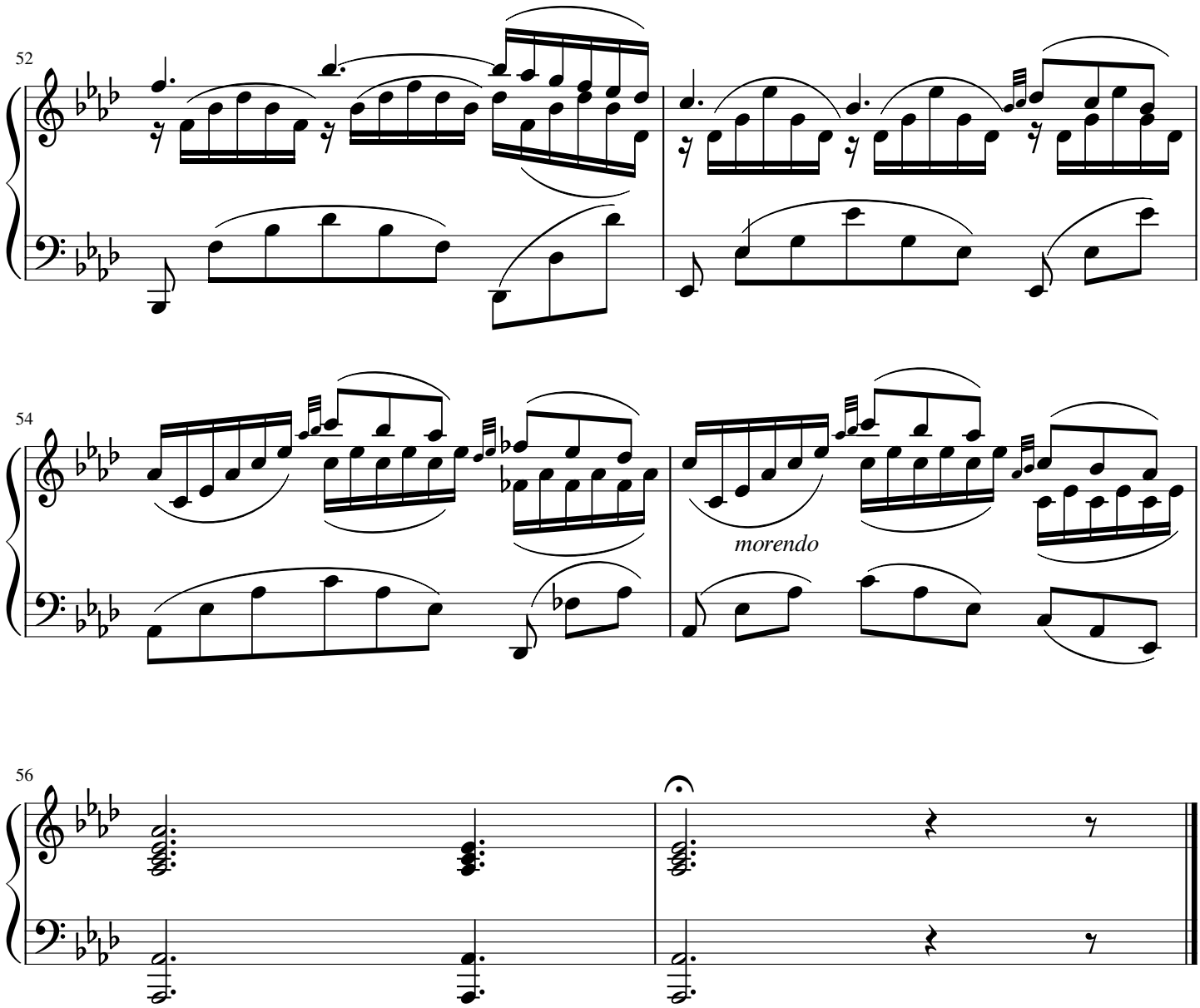



8
17
(dim.)
pp leggrio
ritenuto
18
21
24
pp
26
molto agitato

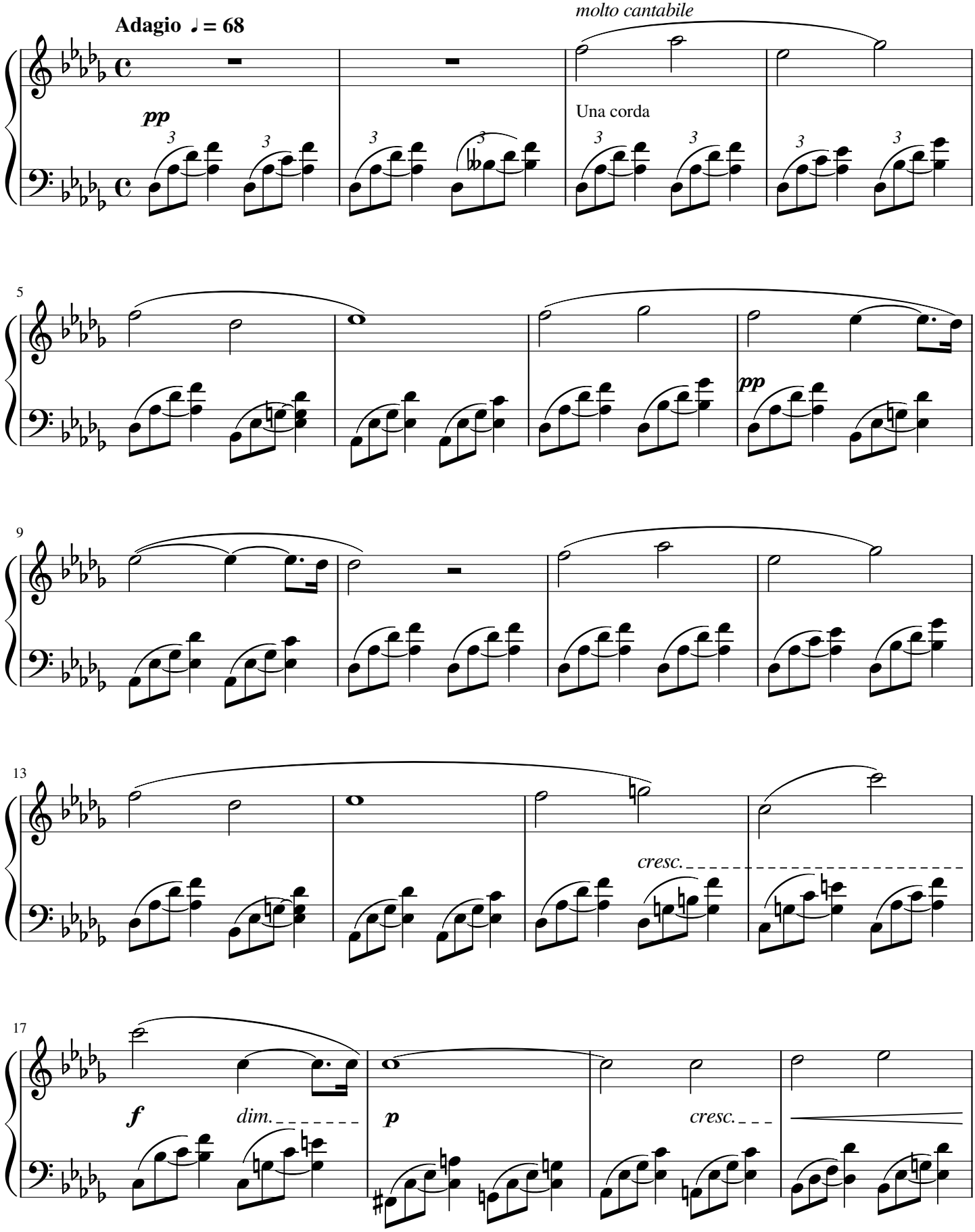

28
p
30
f
33
ff
dim.
p
pp
36
8
leggrio
37
8
pp
ben marcato il canto

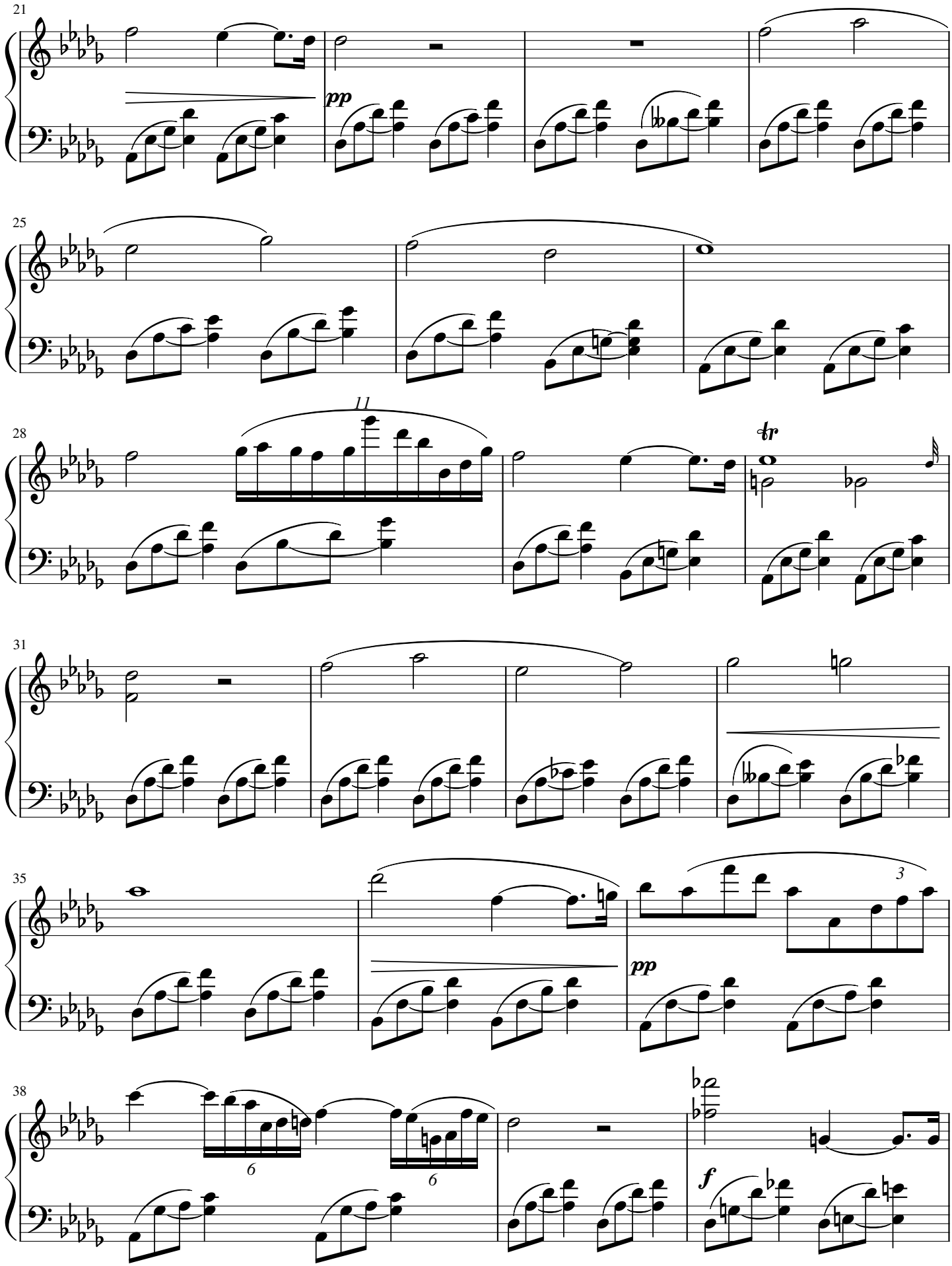

38
8
39
8
cresc.
40
8
(cresc.)
f
ff
41
8
ff
42
8

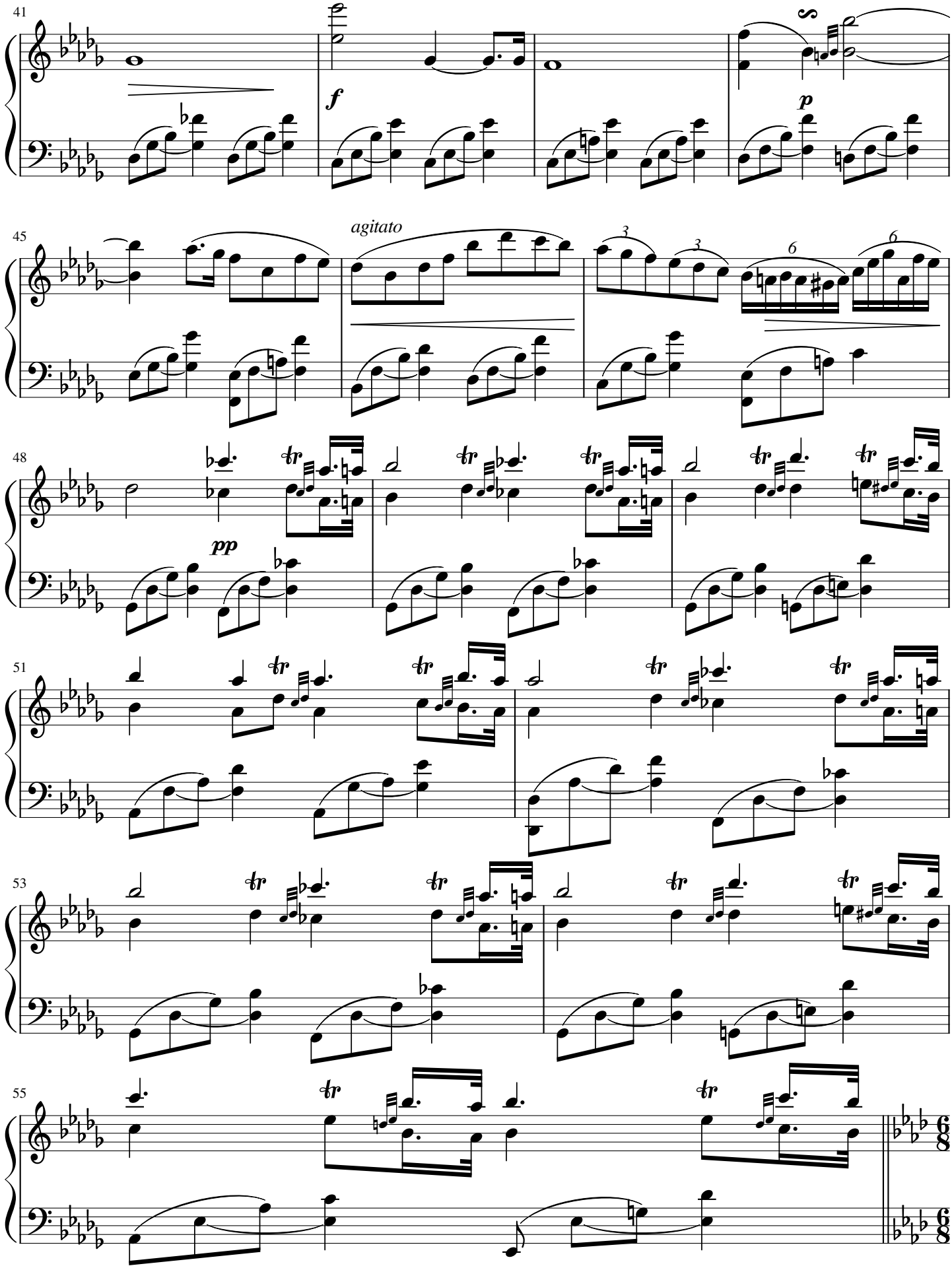

43
44
dim.
p
46
con duolo
A tempo
48
ritenuto
pp
50
cresc.

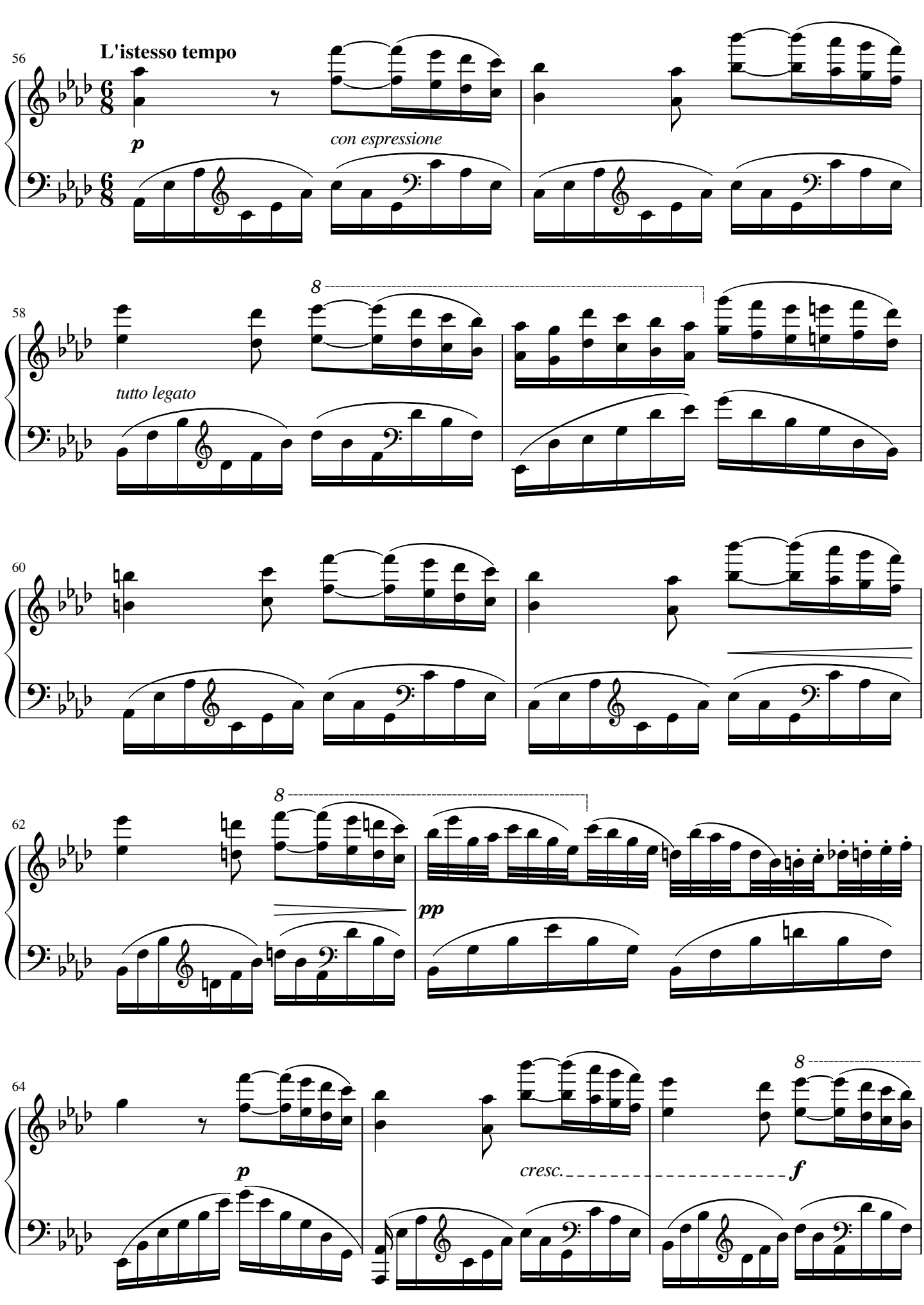

52
54
morendo
56

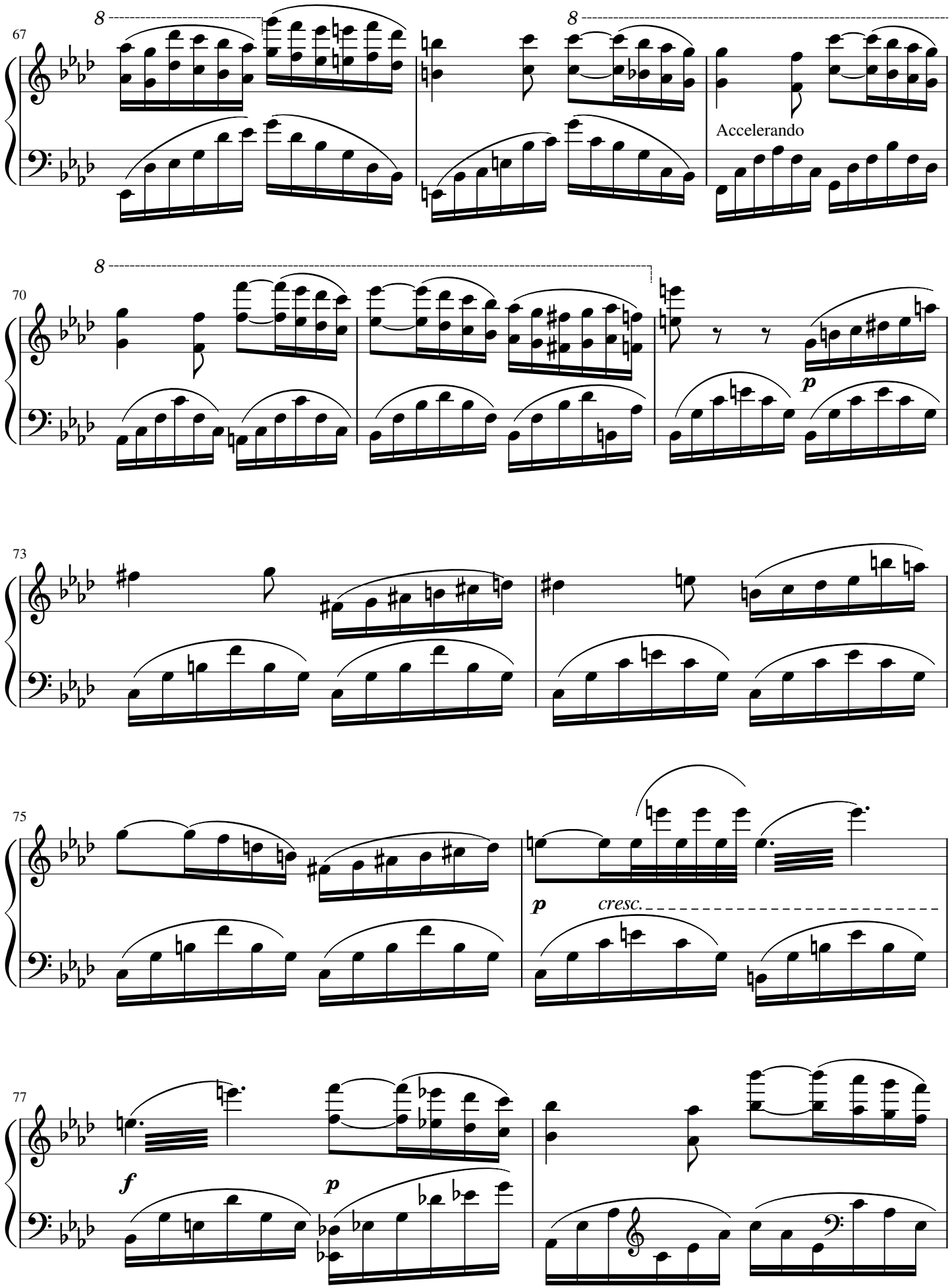
II

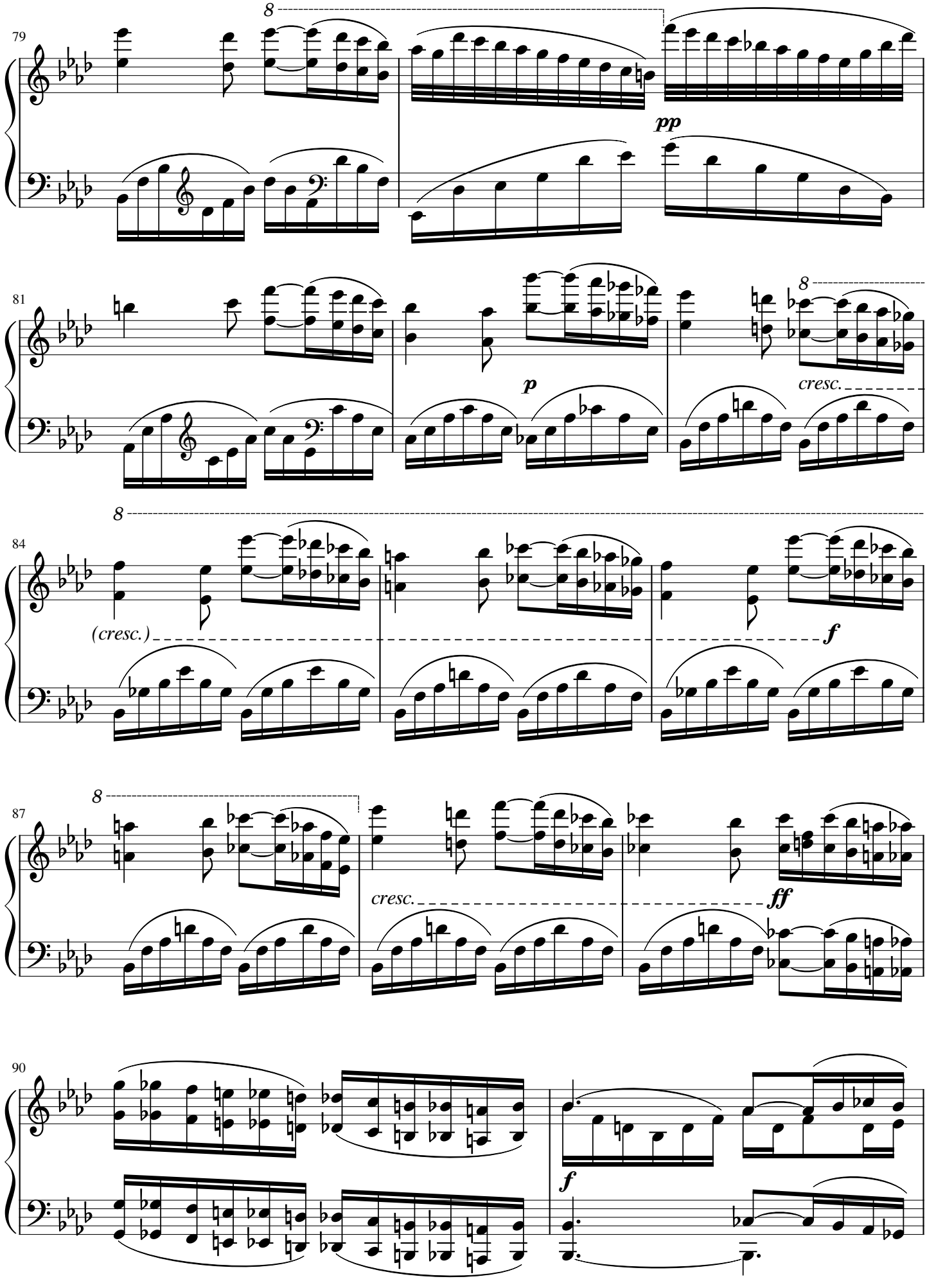

Adagio ♩ = 68
molto cantabile
pp
Una corda
5
pp
9
13
cresc.
17
f
dim.
p
cresc.

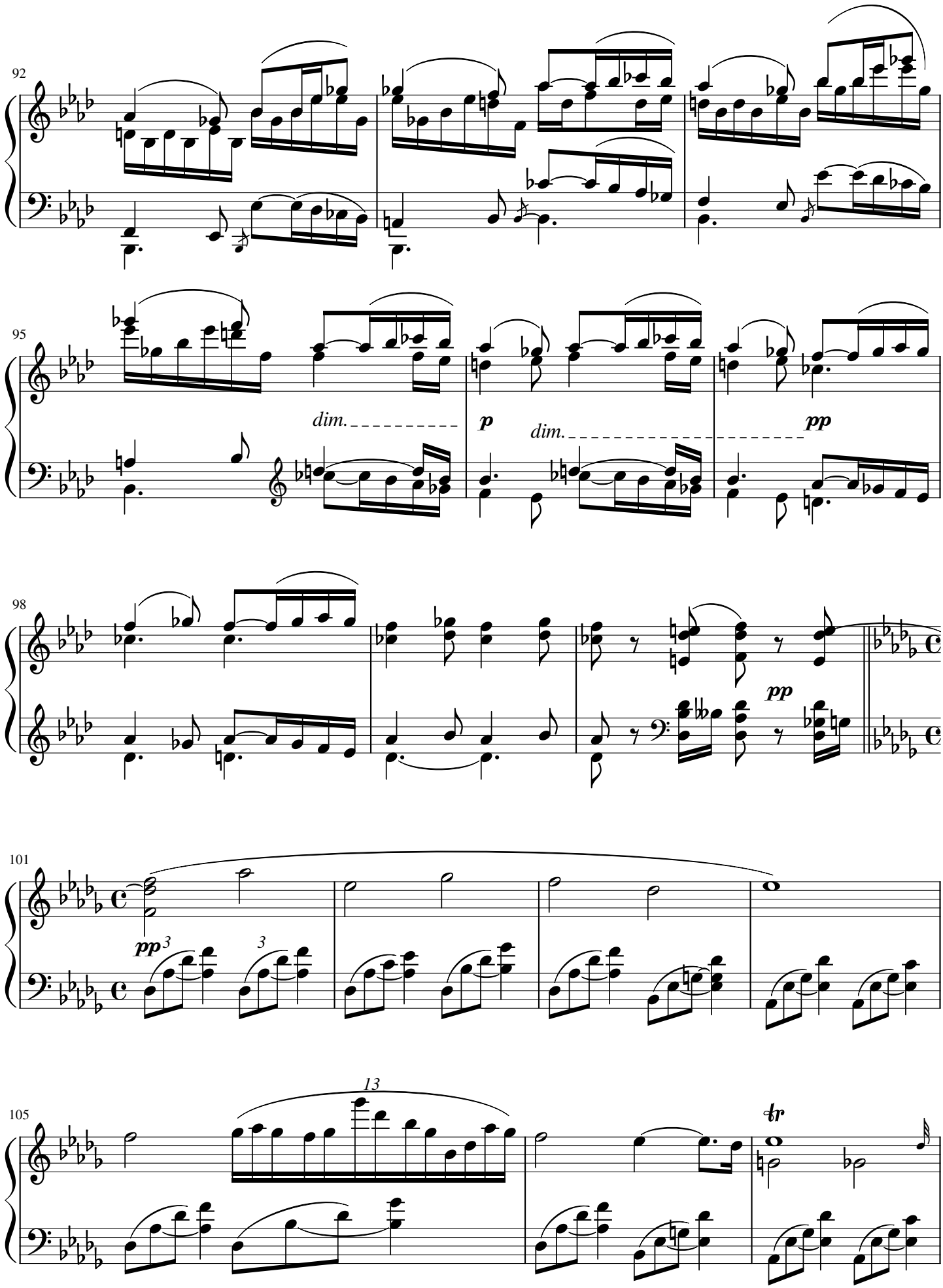

21
pp
25
28
11
tr
31
35
3
pp
38
6
6
f

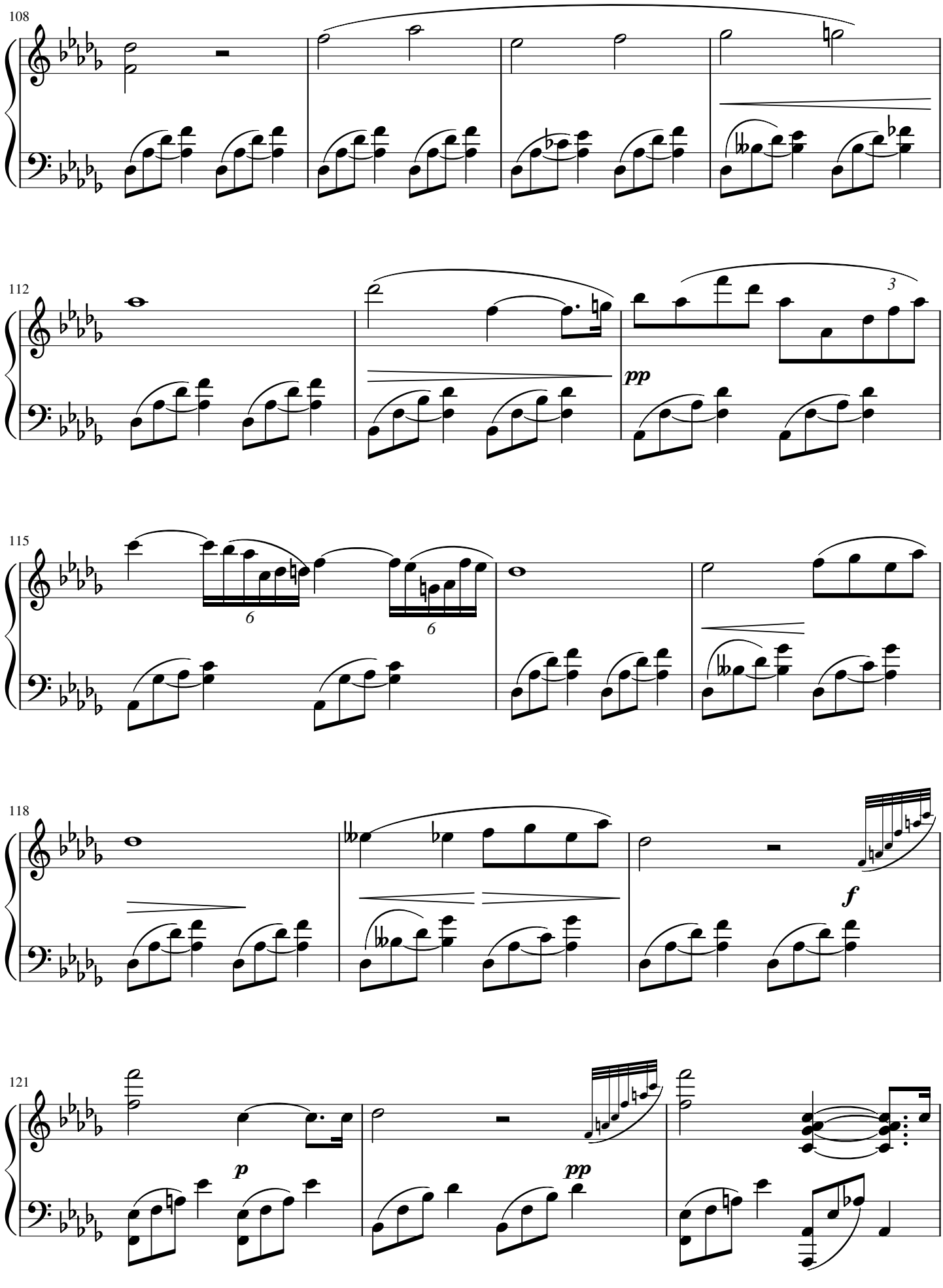

41
f
p
45
agitato
48
pp
51
53
55

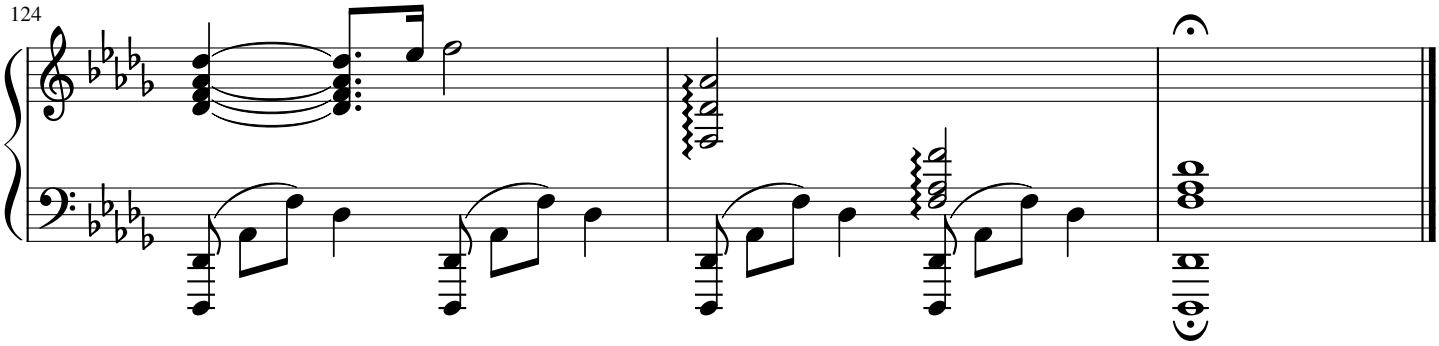

56
L'istesso tempo
p
con espressione
58
8
tutto legato
60
62
8
pp
64
p
cresc.
f
8


67
8
8
Accelerando
70
8
p
73
75
p
cresc.
77
f
p

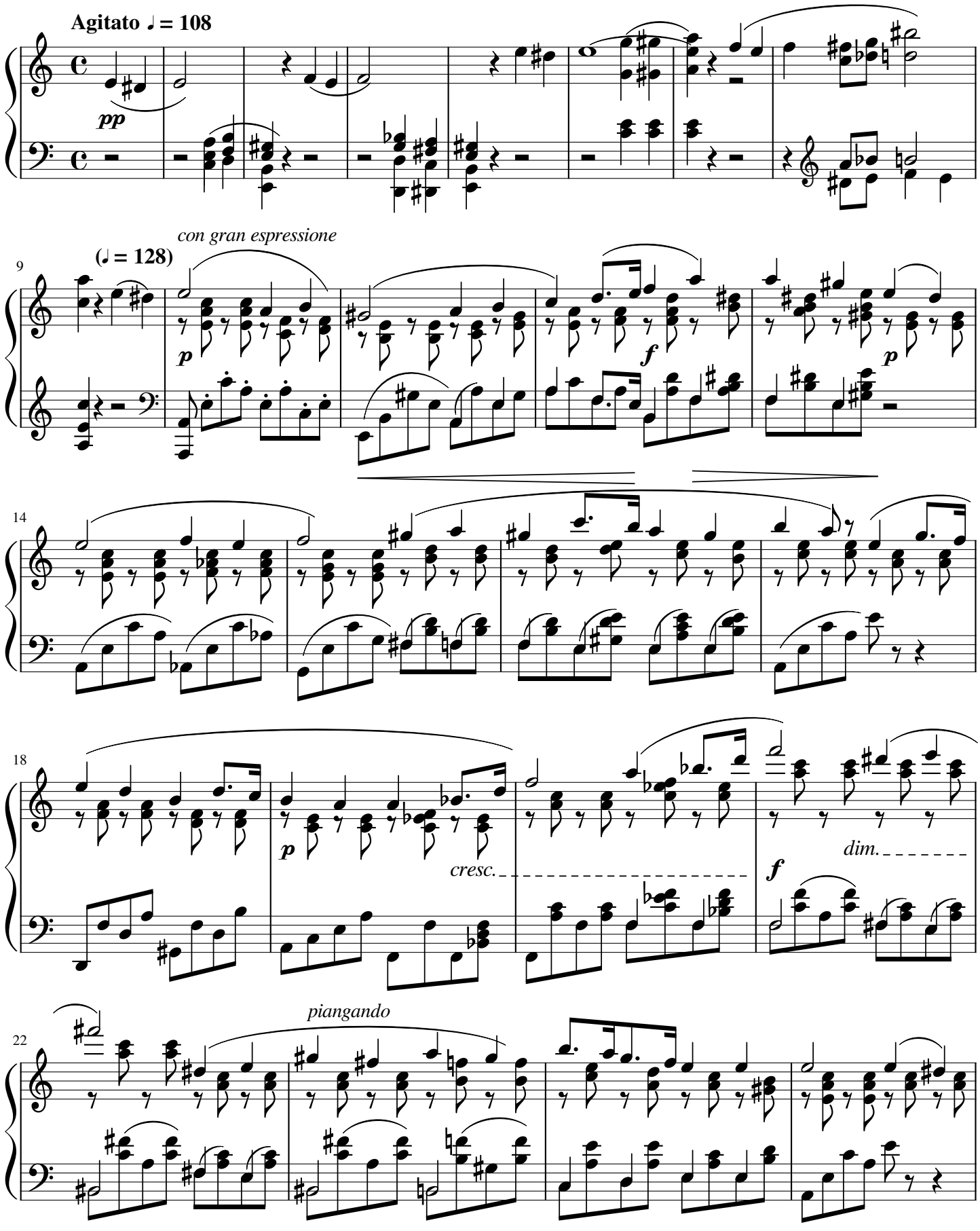

79
8
pp
81
p
8
cresc.
84
8
(cresc.)
f
87
8
cresc.
ff
90
f

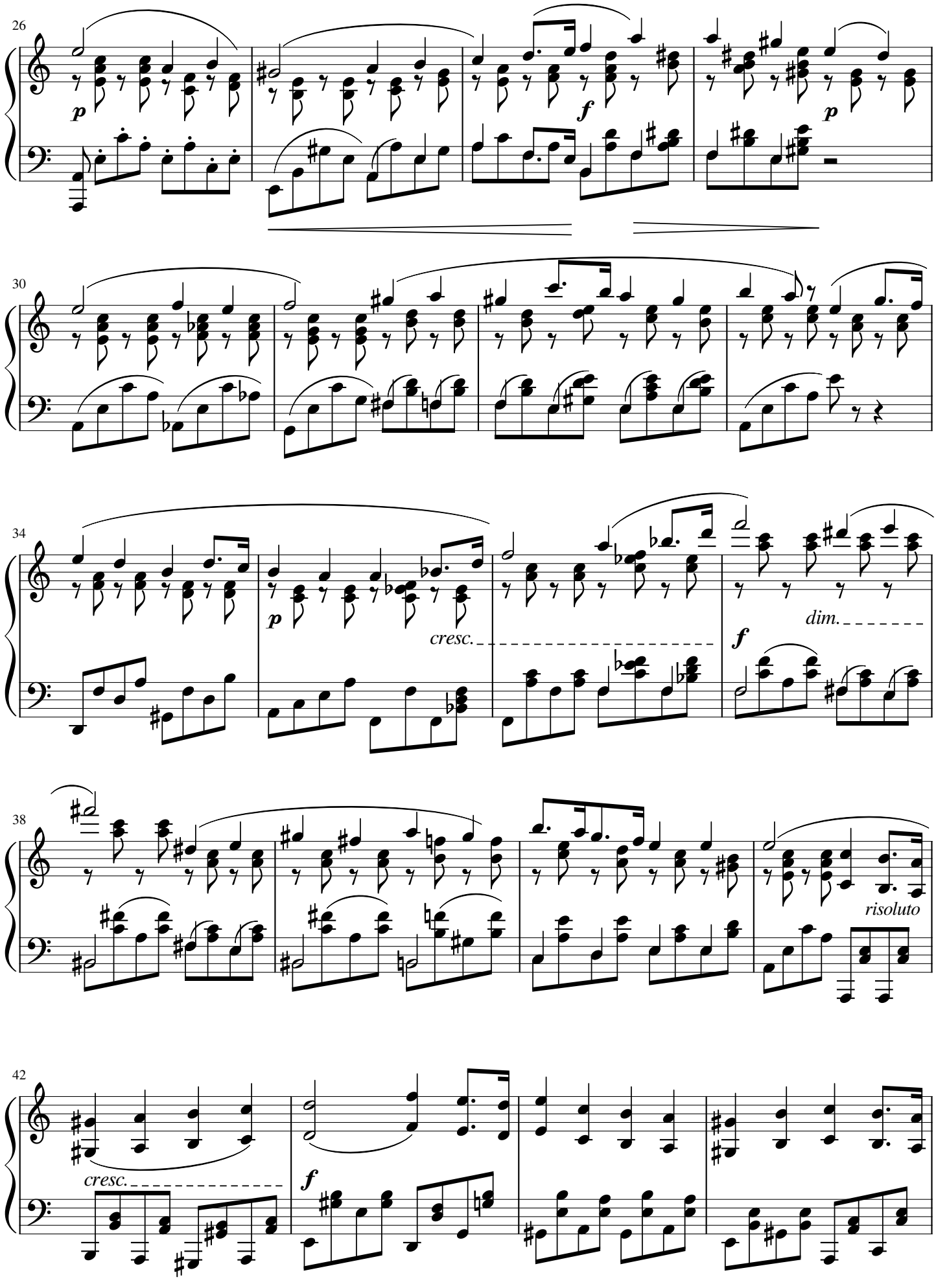

92
95
dim.
p
dim.
pp
98
pp
101
pp
3
3
13
105
tr

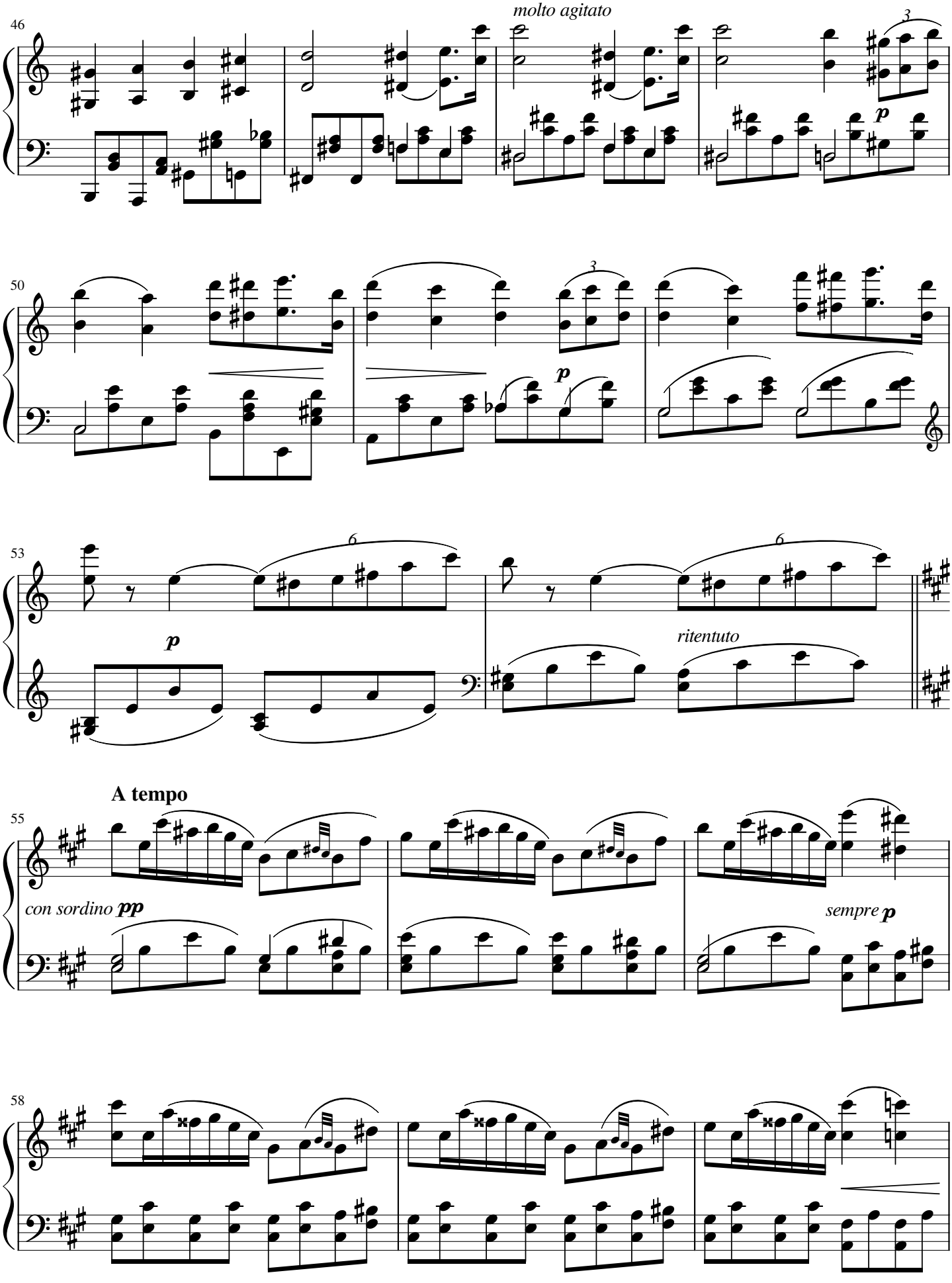

108
112
pp
115
6
6
118
f
121
p
pp

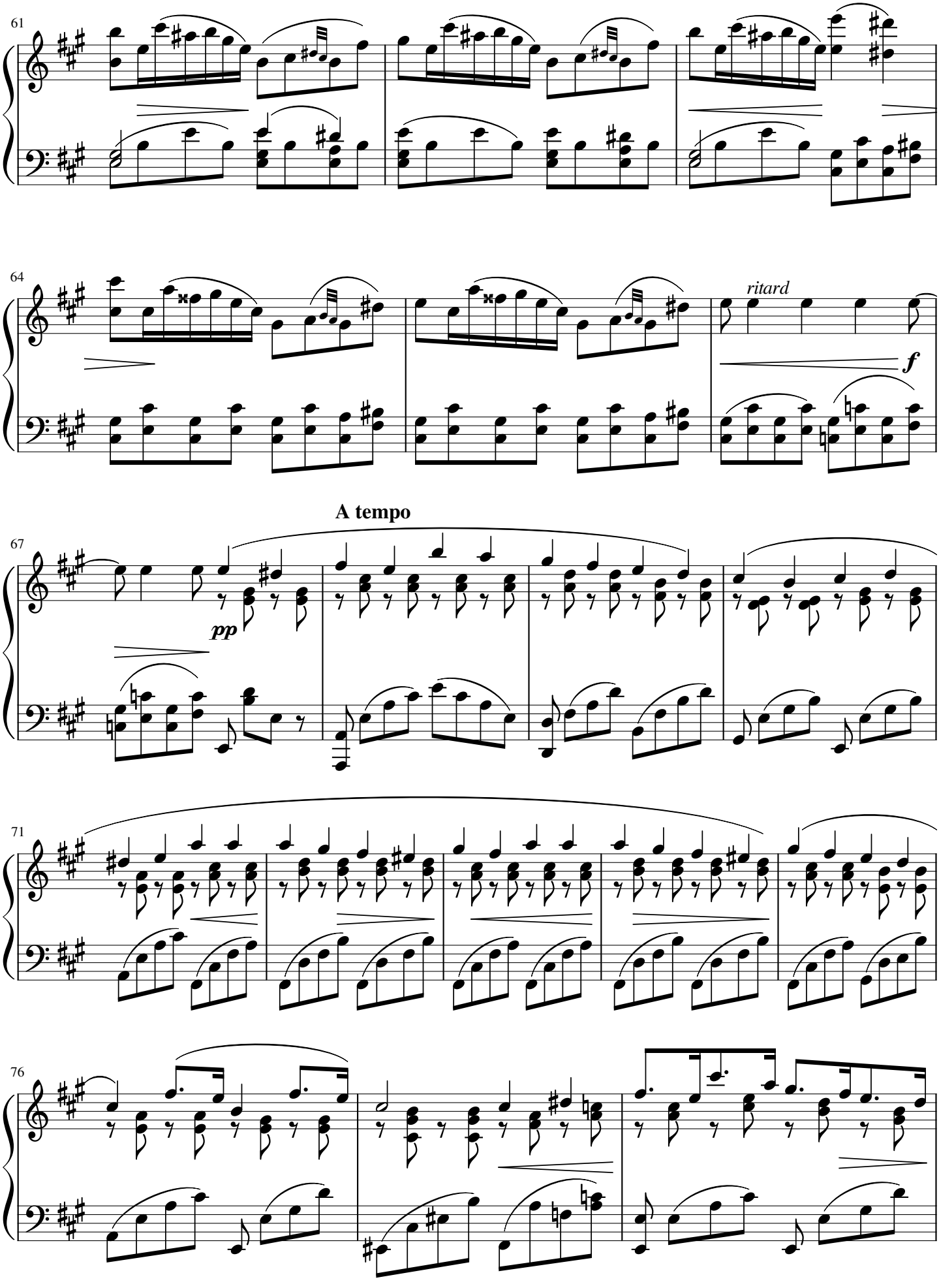

124

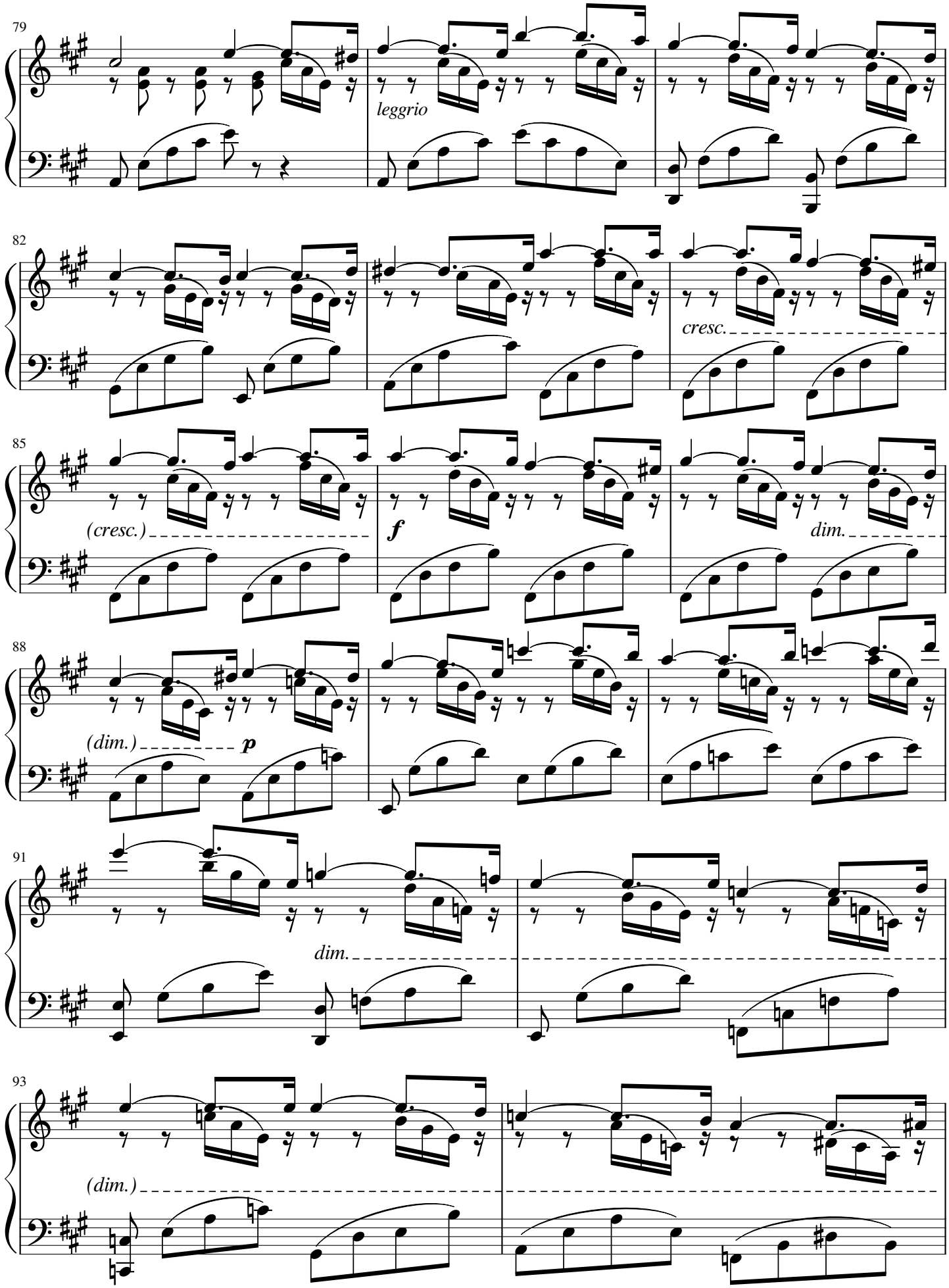
III

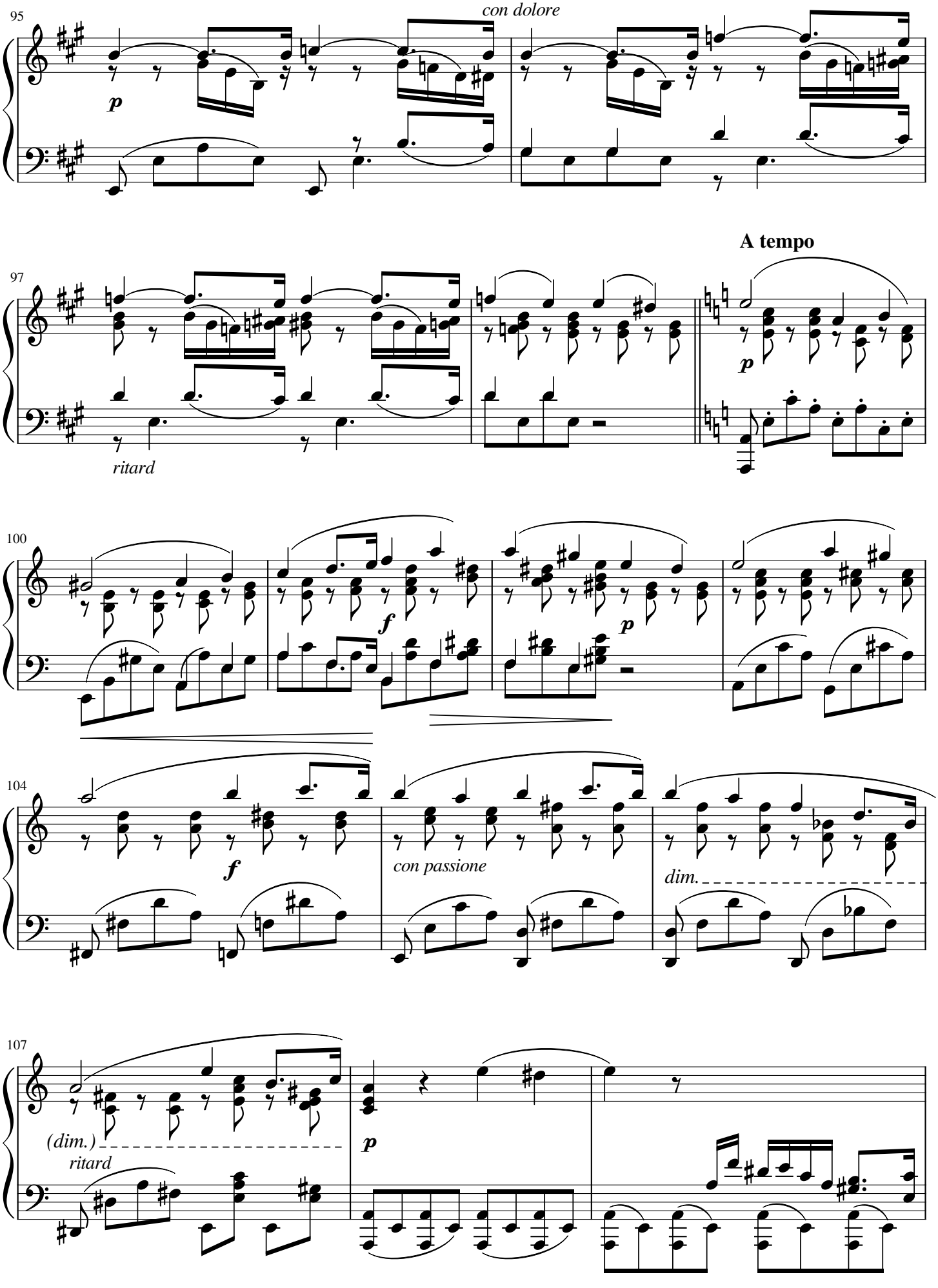

Agitato ♩ = 108
pp
con gran espressione
(♩ = 128)
9
p
f
p
14
18
p
cresc.
f
dim.
piangando
22

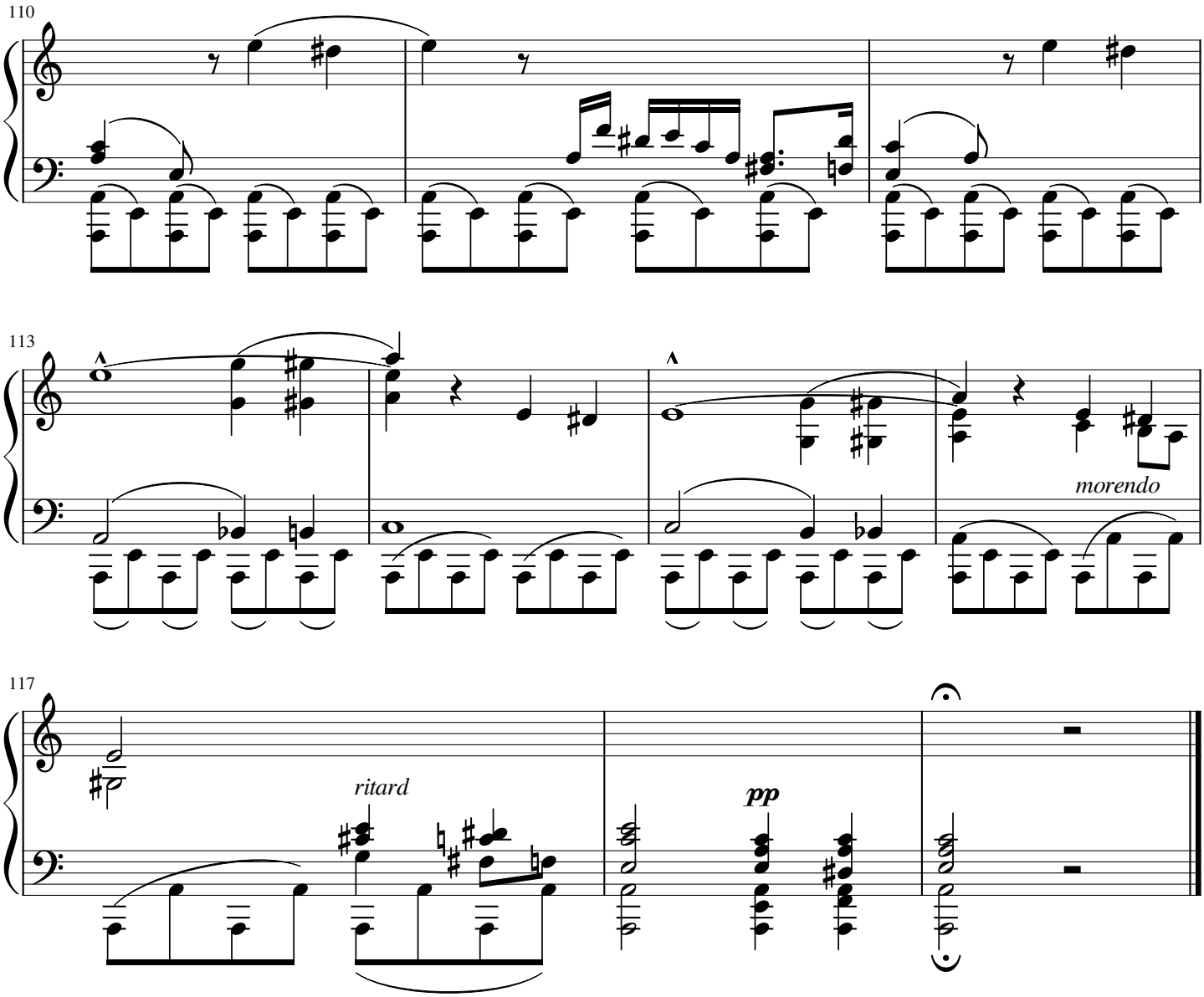

26
p
f
p
30
34
p
cresc.
dim.
f
38
risoluto
42
cresc.
f


46
molto agitato
3
p
50
3
p
53
6
6
p
ritentuto
A tempo
55
con sordino pp
sempre p
58


61
64
ritard
f
A tempo
67
pp
71
76


79
leggrio
82
cresc.
85
(cresc.)
f
dim.
88
(dim.)
p
91
dim.
93
(dim.)


95
con dolore
p
97
A tempo
ritard
p
100
f
p
104
f
con passione
dim.
107
(dim.)
ritard
p


110
113
morendo
117
ritard
pp