Three Waltzes for piano, four hands; op. 35

Early in 1982 I wrote a short waltz for four hands, replicating the style of the popular "Jenny and Anna" from my opus 30. (Although the Four Characteristic Pieces from which the latter hails had been completed only the previous September, its opening number "Jenny and Anna" was nearly two years old by this point.) I gave my latest effort to my friend Marcella Pambrun to play at leisure with our respective teacher, Calvin Hampton. I did not mention at the time that the opening strain represented the Terpsichorean Pambrun herself, with the somewhat dour, contrasting slower section depicting Calvin at the piano with her.

I had similarly represented the two sisters "Jenny and Anna" in that bauble, as Marcella knew quite well. Calvin passed on tragically in 1984. A few years before Marcella herself went to the great Isadora Duncan rehearsal space in the sky, I owned up to the genesis of my Waltz in G major, opus 35, number 1. "Oh, Victor, I could always tell about that!" she exclaimed. I am mentioning this in print though for the first time now. The work is twenty-one, and ready to leave the house, and it's about time I publicly acknowledged its origins!

After weeks of balmy spring weather, during which snow plows were retired in addition to the people who drove them, the weather abruptly changed and New York and New Jersey were paralyzed with a blizzard in the second week of April! I was homebound for several days, and took up the composition of another four hands waltz to complement the piece I didn't call (and still don't, please) "Marcella and Calvin." But I had turned a corner conceptually. The first waltz I shared with these two friends did not exceed the parameters of the pedagogically based opp. 9 and 30, written to be played by teacher and student. (Opus 9 has easy primo; opus 30, easy secondo.) I had begun to prepare a four hands recital with yet another friend, and our practicing together through Schubert and Dvořák instilled in me a desire to write for the medium myself free of pedagogical restraints. The B-flat Waltz is twice as long as its predecessor. Then, I began work on a third waltz, and its slow intro alone is longer than the opening number in the present set. The canvas expanded again, and my new finale in its turn became twice as long as my Waltz number 2!

To forestall boredom, It had always been common for my partner's and my four composite hands to play through non-recital items whenever we got together to rehearse. After the rude interruption by Mother Nature I document above, we finally resumed rehearsals at my apartment, and naturally I pulled out my spanking new opus 35. Upon reading with me through the last page of the last Waltz, my friend vehemently exclaimed, "Let's play *these!"* He meant, the new waltzes, in lieu of the already slated Four Characteristic Pieces, opus 30. So, we did. It seems my recital partner had had misgivings all along about the reception of my opus 30 duets, which he liked well enough, but regarded as so much *Hausmusik.* At the recital, we had to make an announcement from the piano

about a change in the printed program. (I let him do it!) Let me assure you, nobody minded.

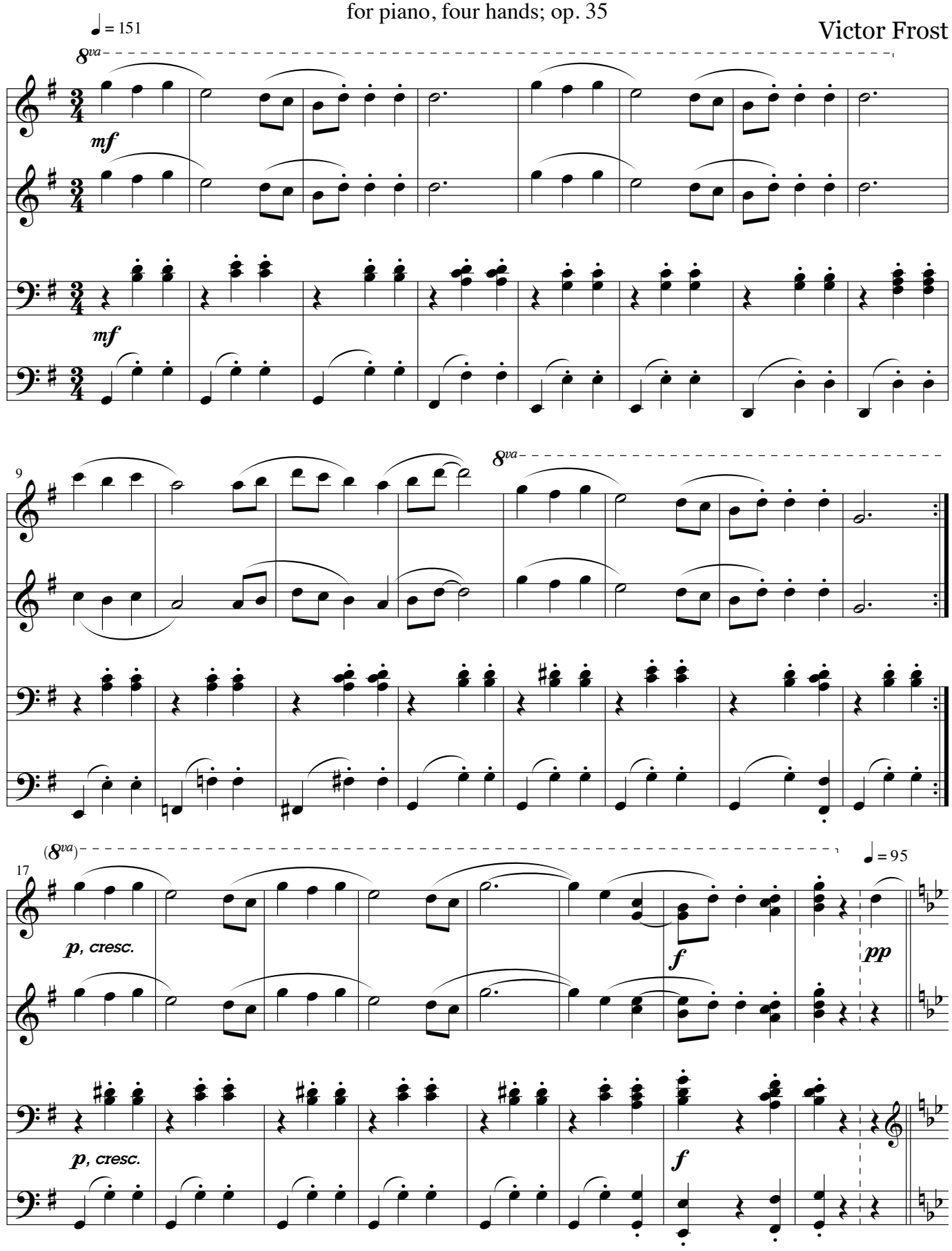
1. Nominally in ABA form, this waltz features a bridge from the B back to the A. Also, that recap of A is heard first in a pizzicato variant before being replayed literally as at the outset. To Susan Deborah Sobel.
2. Simpler melodies lend themselves to the most development, I would have averred at the time (and still would do, for the most part). In this case, an involved, final elaboration of the end of the first waltz strain culminates in an extreme augmentation of its first two notes, punctuated by silence. This happens twice again. Finally, its third note. Silence. Then, back in tempo, the last four notes of the opening melodic cell clinch things decisively. To Rodolfo Guzmán.
3. A bluesy opening soliloquy on a motive that I knew to be reminiscent of another composer's opus 35! At length the tempo accelerates and we hear the waltz's main theme, Allegro. But unexpectedly the tempo slows again, and we hear a contrasting melody whose key center is also remote from where we have just been. As things unfold, this tune alternates with two other slow melodies, the first of which is based subtly on the main Allegro tune. (The opening interval is inverted and the dotted rhythm is displaced from the second beat to the first.) But the derivation of the next slower theme that we hear from the Allegro one is not subtle at all: the music picks up steam, huffing and puffing its way back to the Allegro tempo, thus affording a proper recapitulation of the Waltz's big tune. The secondo player takes the melody this time out, with Weberesque filigree in the treble spun out by the primo. There can be no withstanding the momentum that has gathered from here on. The first theme out of the slow central section (the only material in there not derived from the big Allegro tune) gets whirled up into the headlong tempo now prevailing. In this breathless excitement we have, by the way, a sequence that uses the highest and lowest notes of the piano within just a few measures. Now, that left me with but a single element in the whole structure that had never been presented fast, and that was the work's dreamy intro: material, mind you, to which I'd made no reference for a good eight minutes. But I couldn't resist reinvoking it, at the breakneck speed currently in play, as a boisterous final solo for the secondo player. As such it confers a decisive coda upon my rather profligate finale and, in the bigger picture, frames effectively the complete waltz set too. To Nelly Vuksic.

Victor Frost
10 XI 03
New York City

Three Waltzes

for piano, four hands; op. 35

Victor Frost



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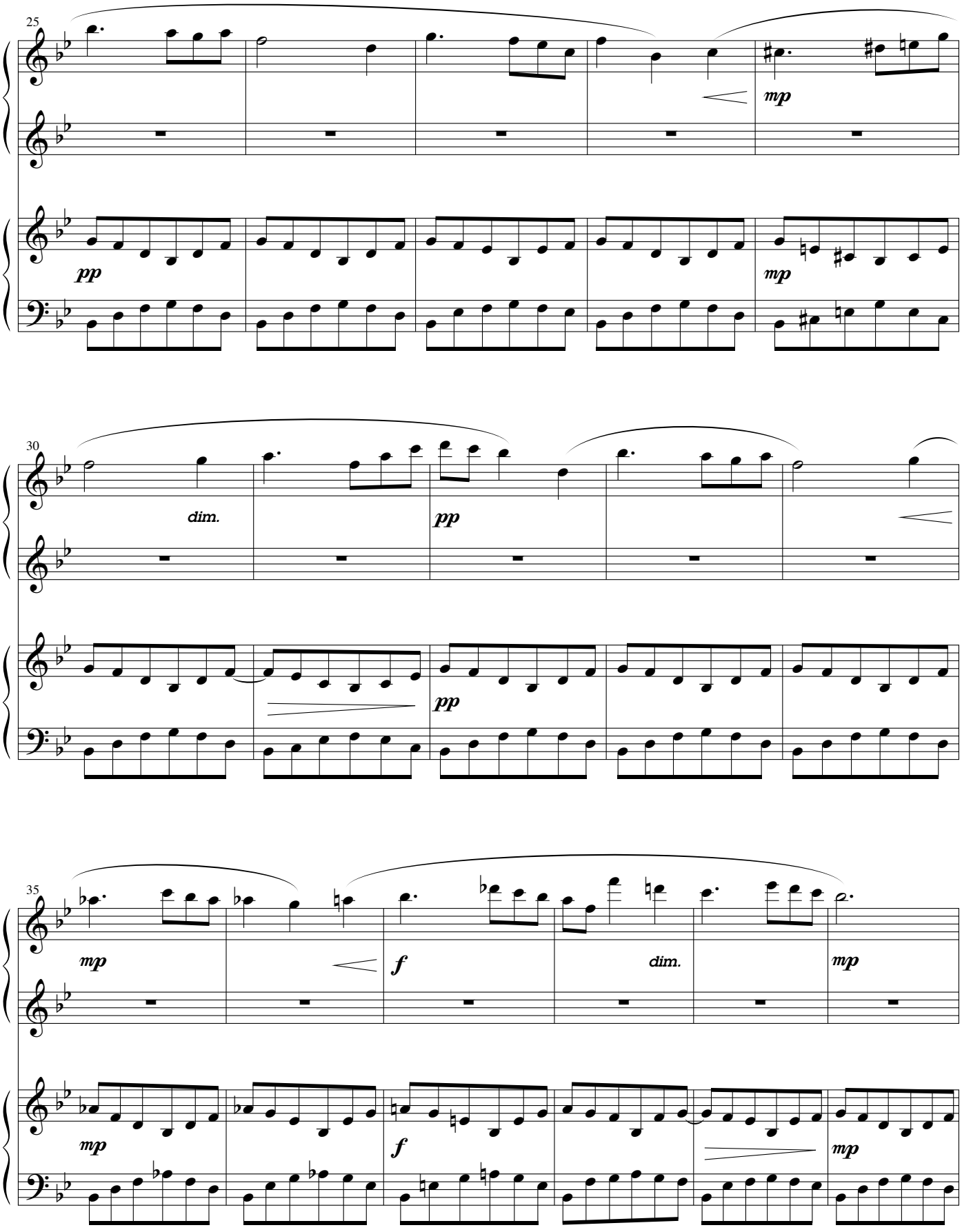
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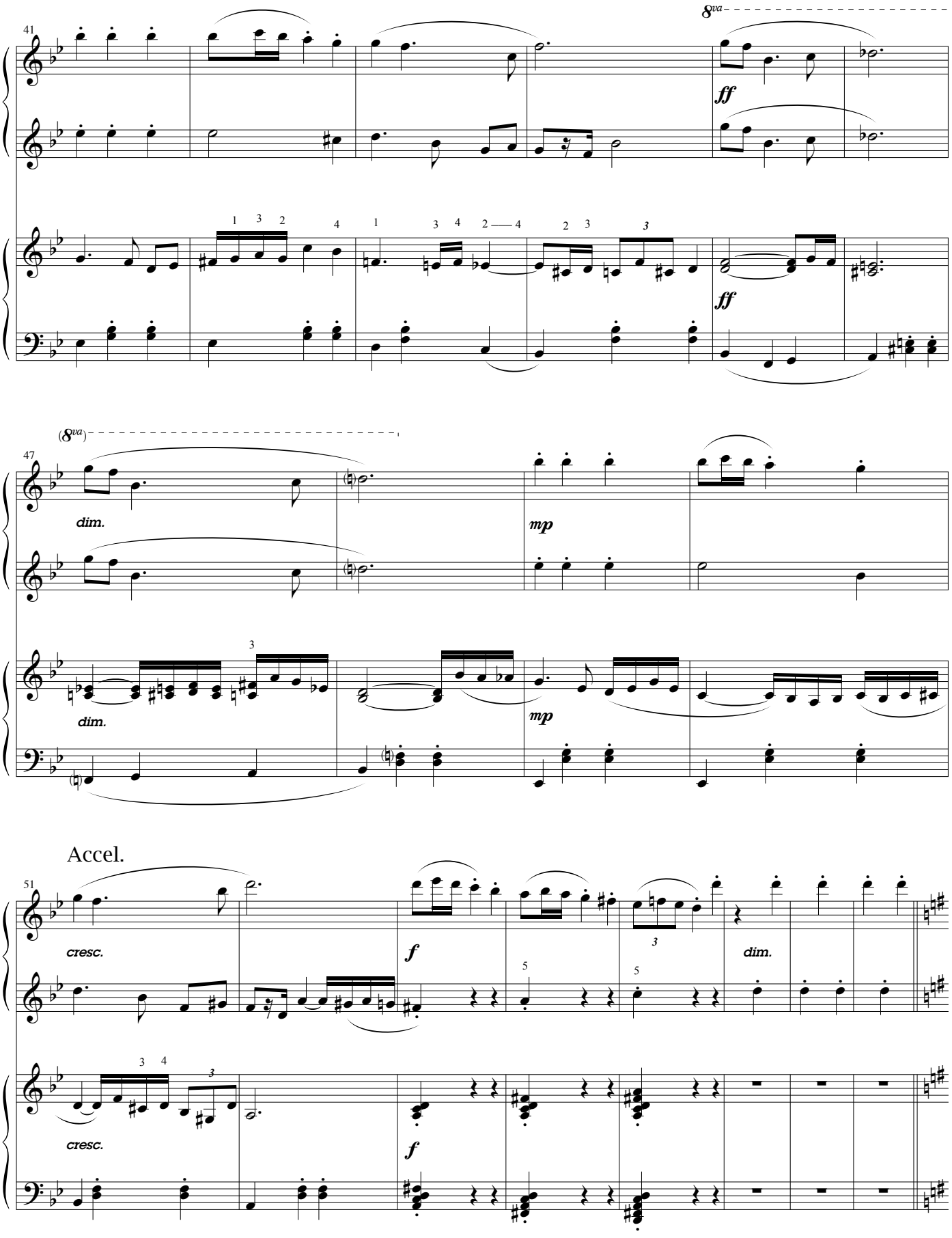
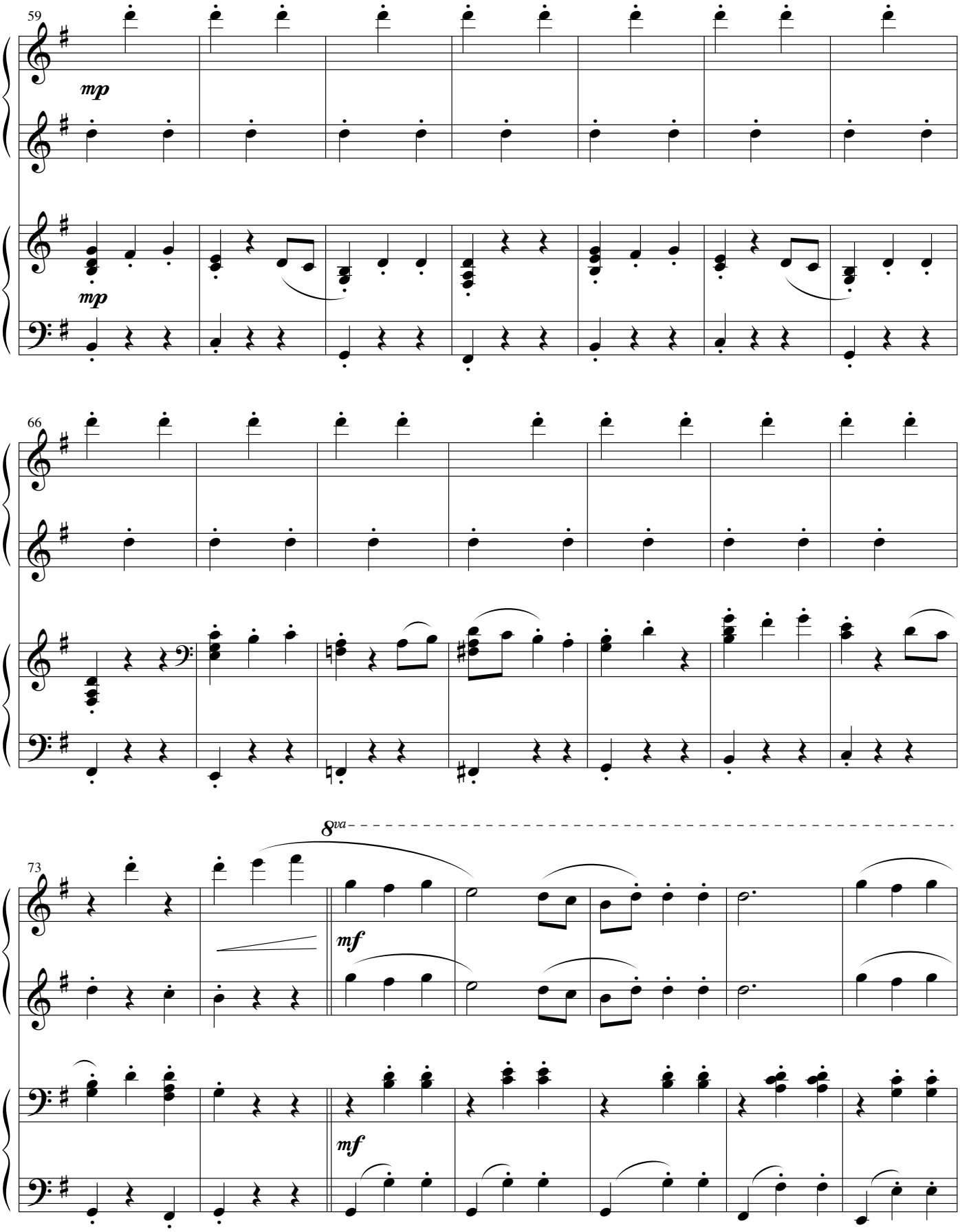
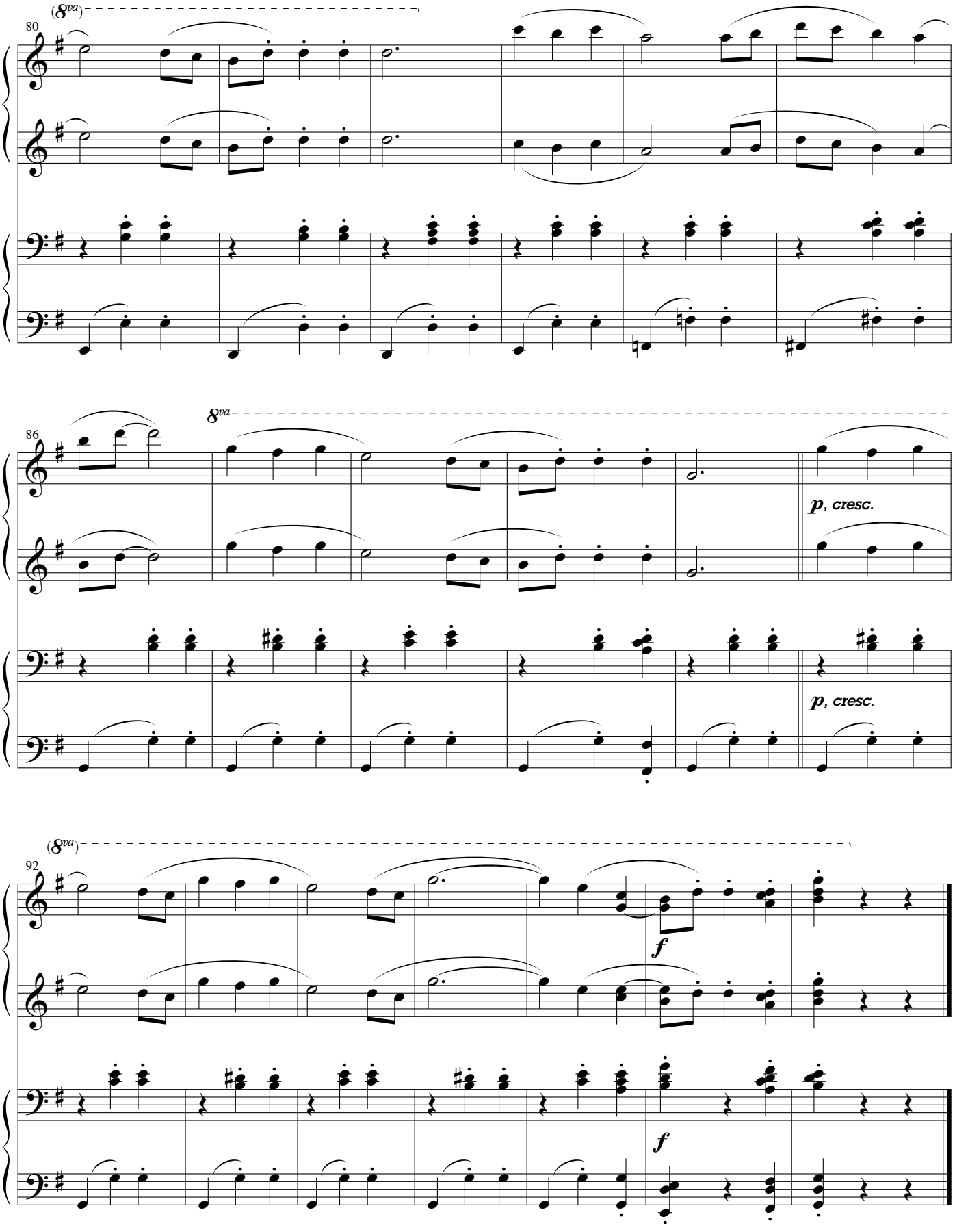
30
dim.
pp
pp
35
mp
f
dim.
mp
mp
f
mp

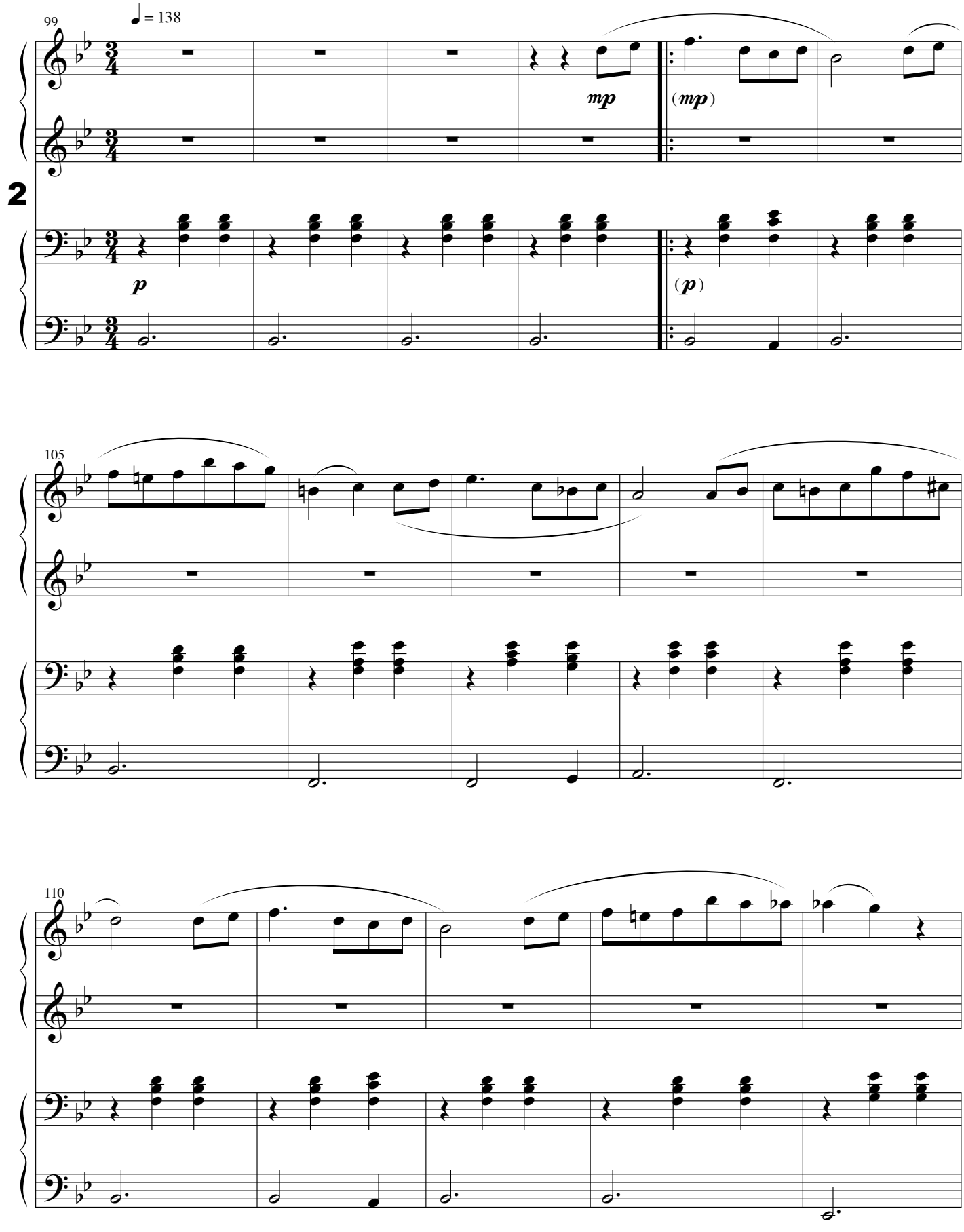

41
8va
ff
ff
(8va)
47
dim.
mp
dim.
mp
Accel.
51
cresc.
f
dim.
cresc.
f

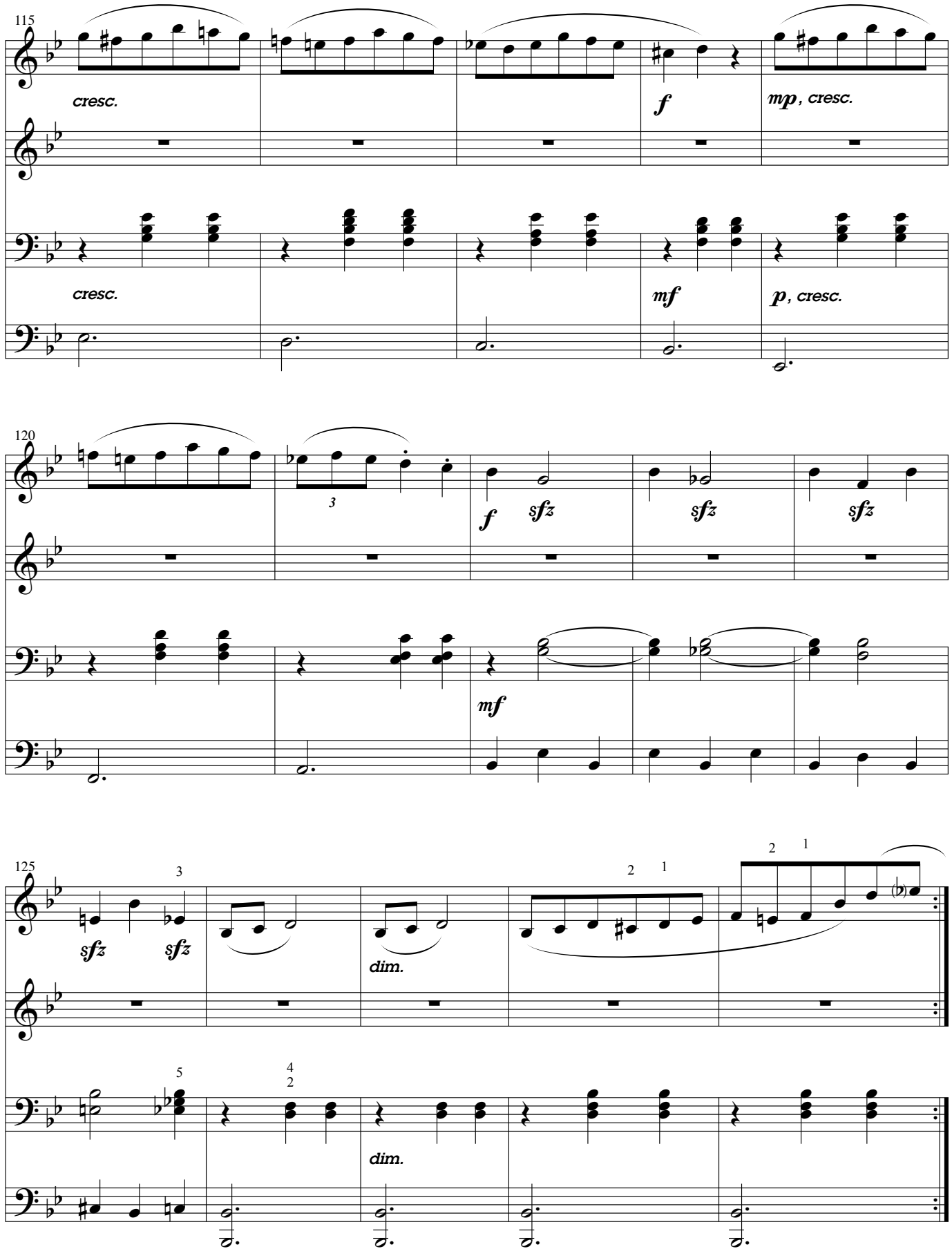
Tempo I

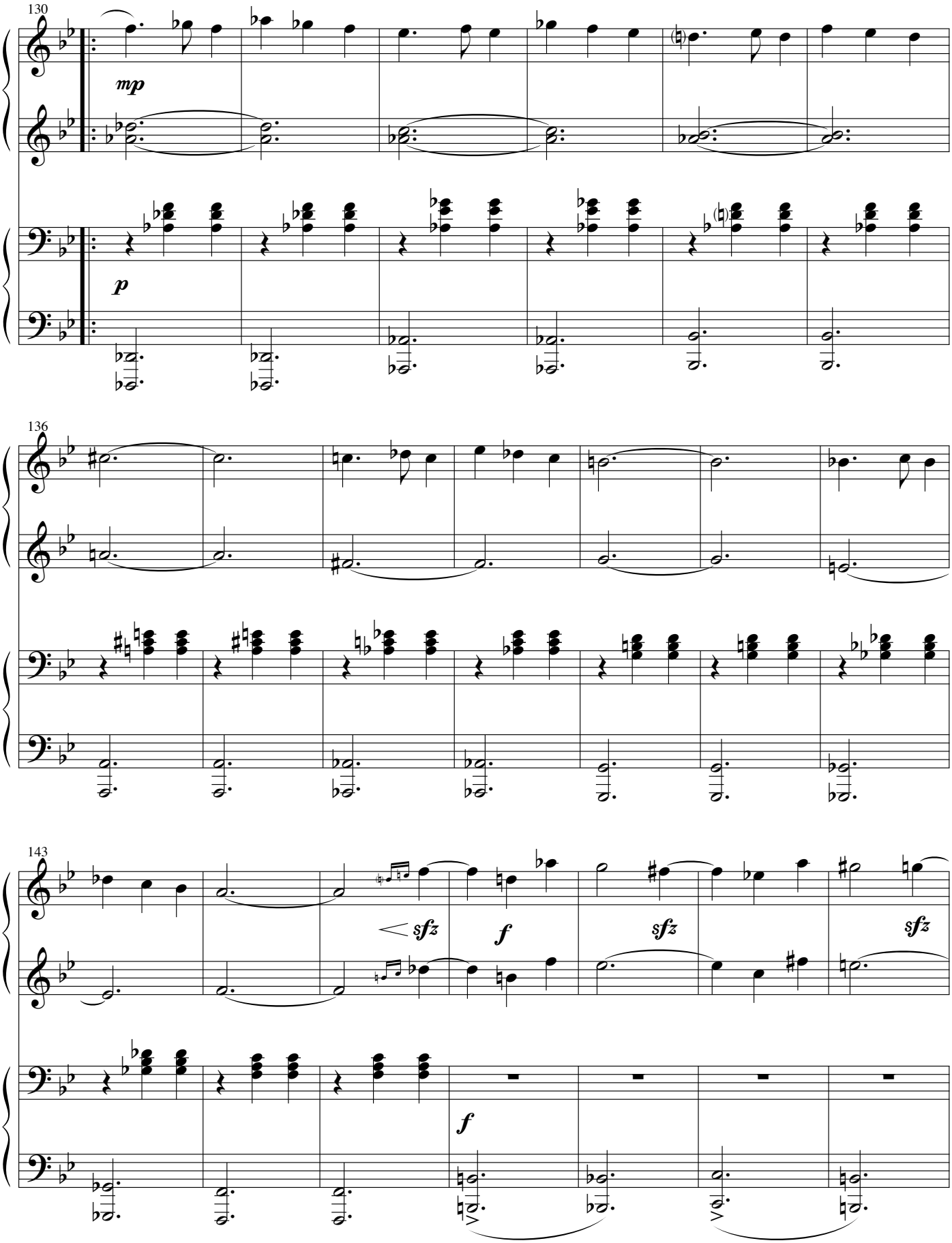




to Susan Deborah Sobel


99
♩ = 138
mp
(mp)
p
(p)
105
110


115
cresc.
cresc.
f
mp, cresc.
mf
p, cresc.
120
3
f
sfz
sfz
sfz
mf
125
3
sfz
sfz
dim.
2
1
2
1
5
4
2
dim.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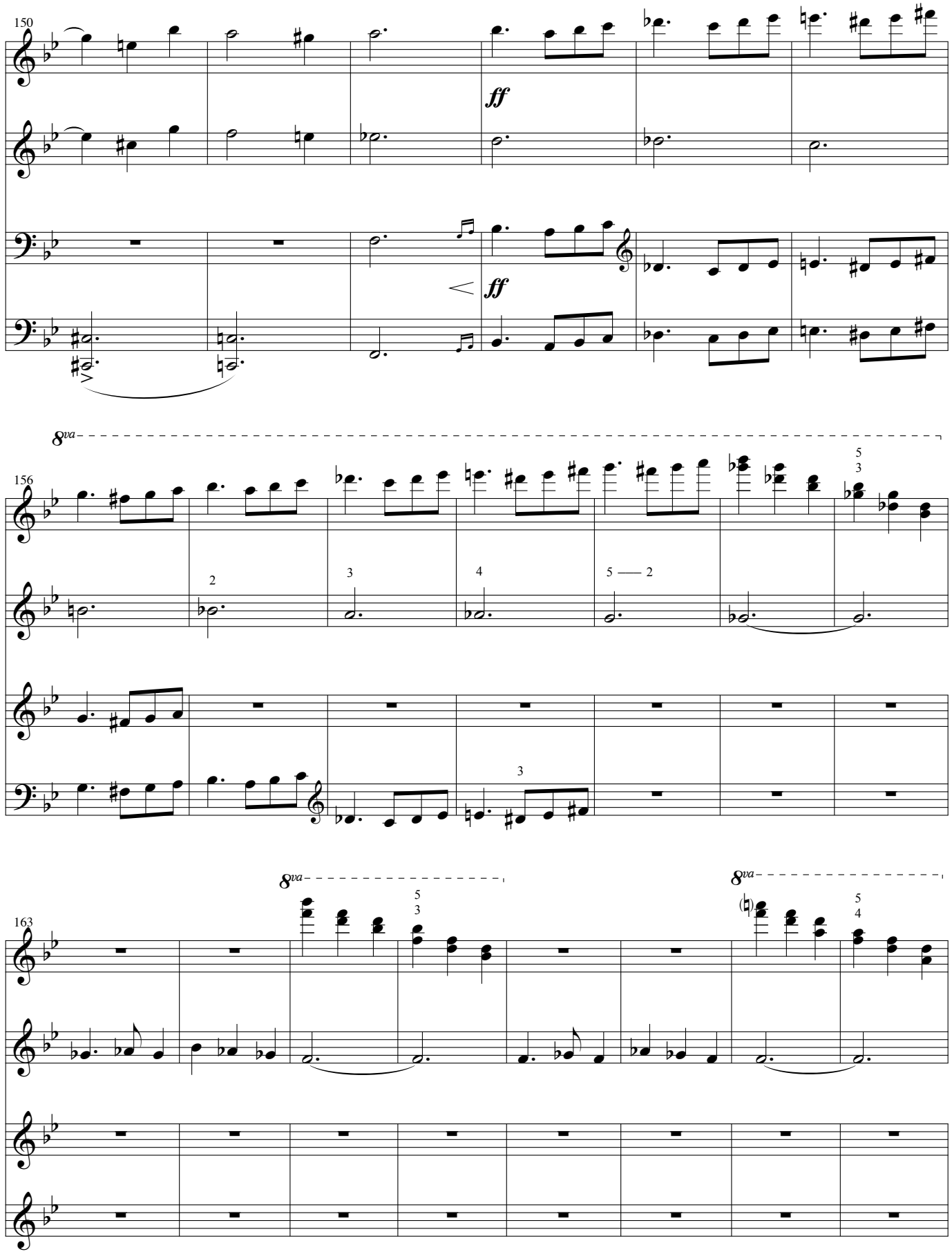
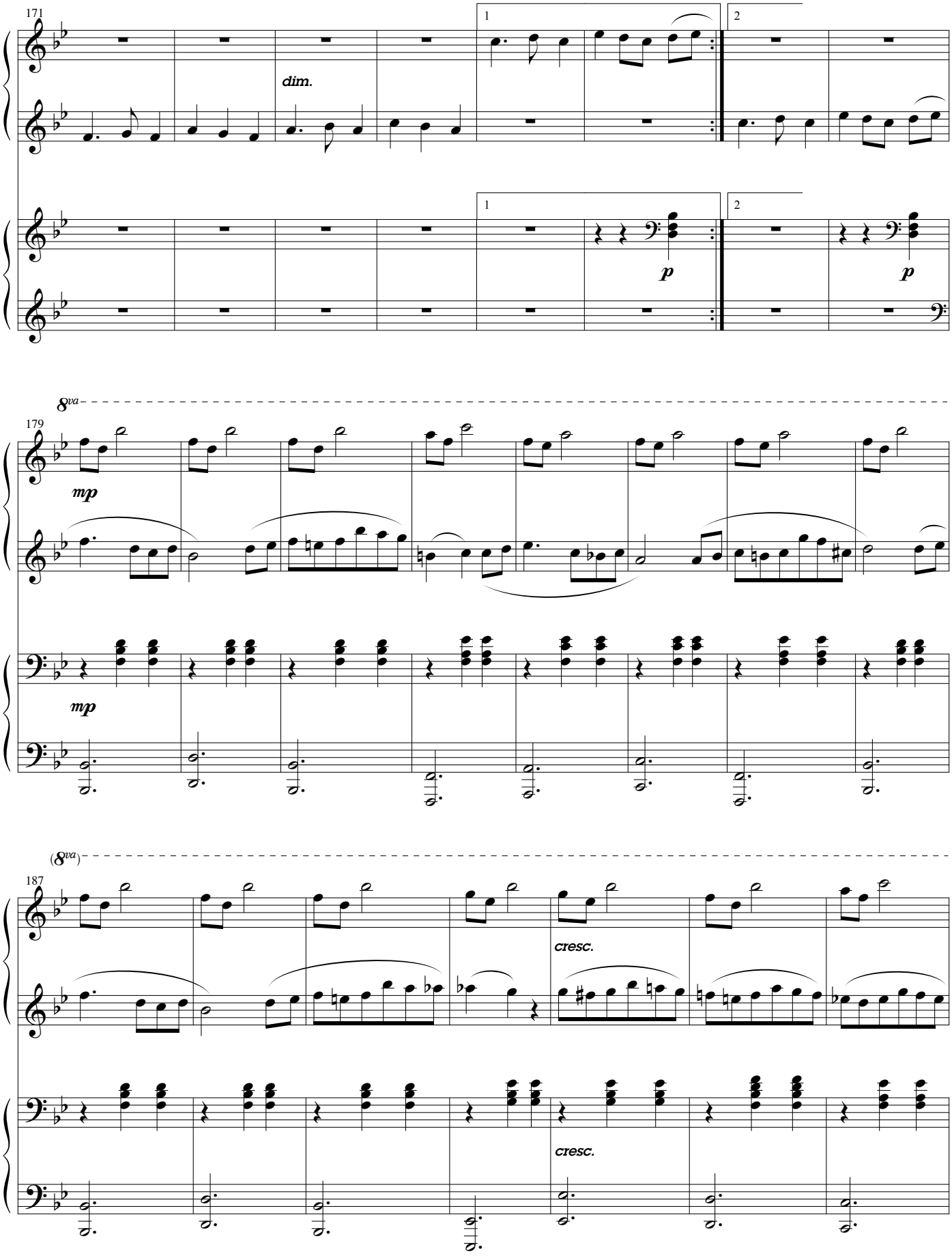
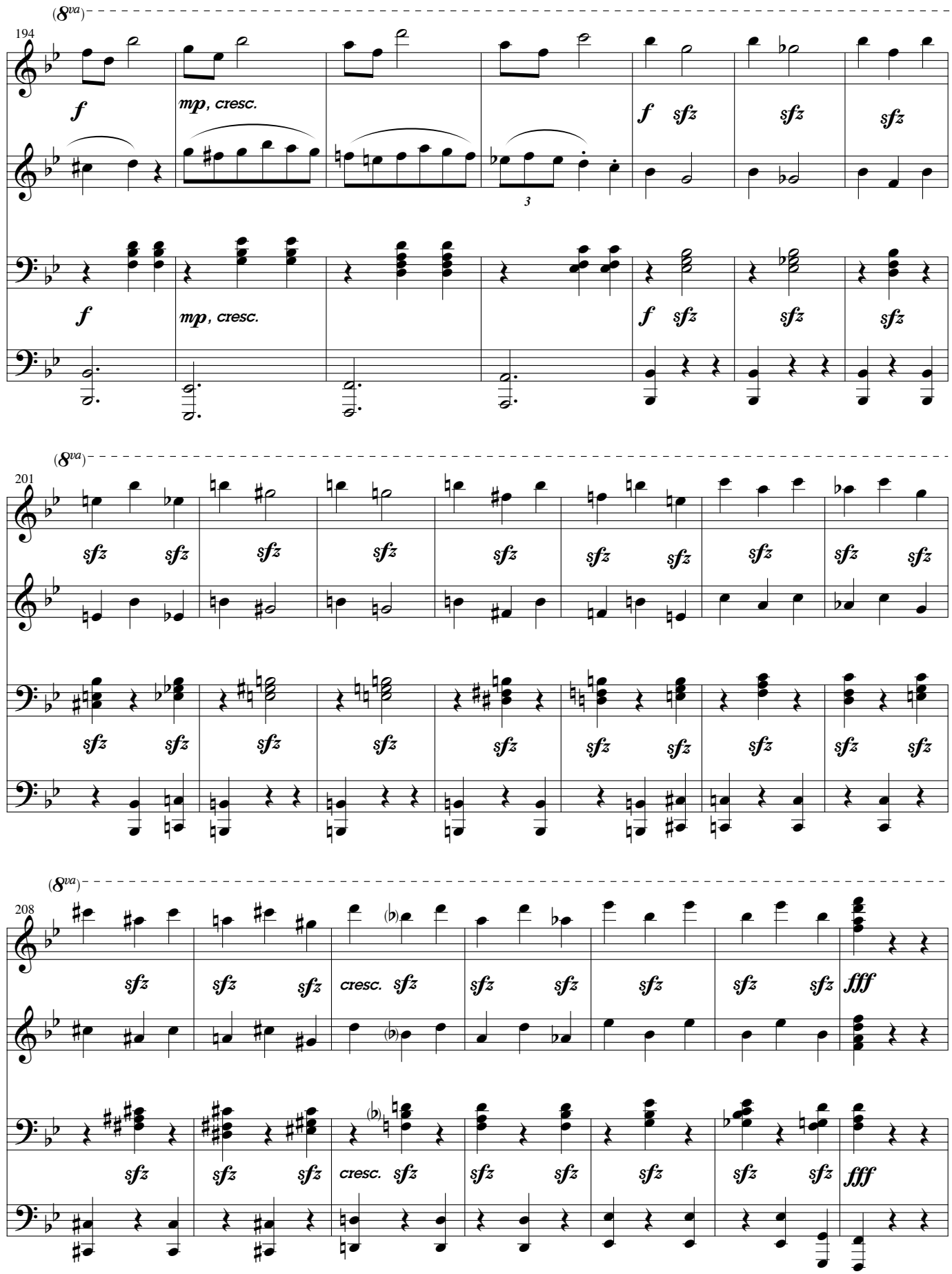
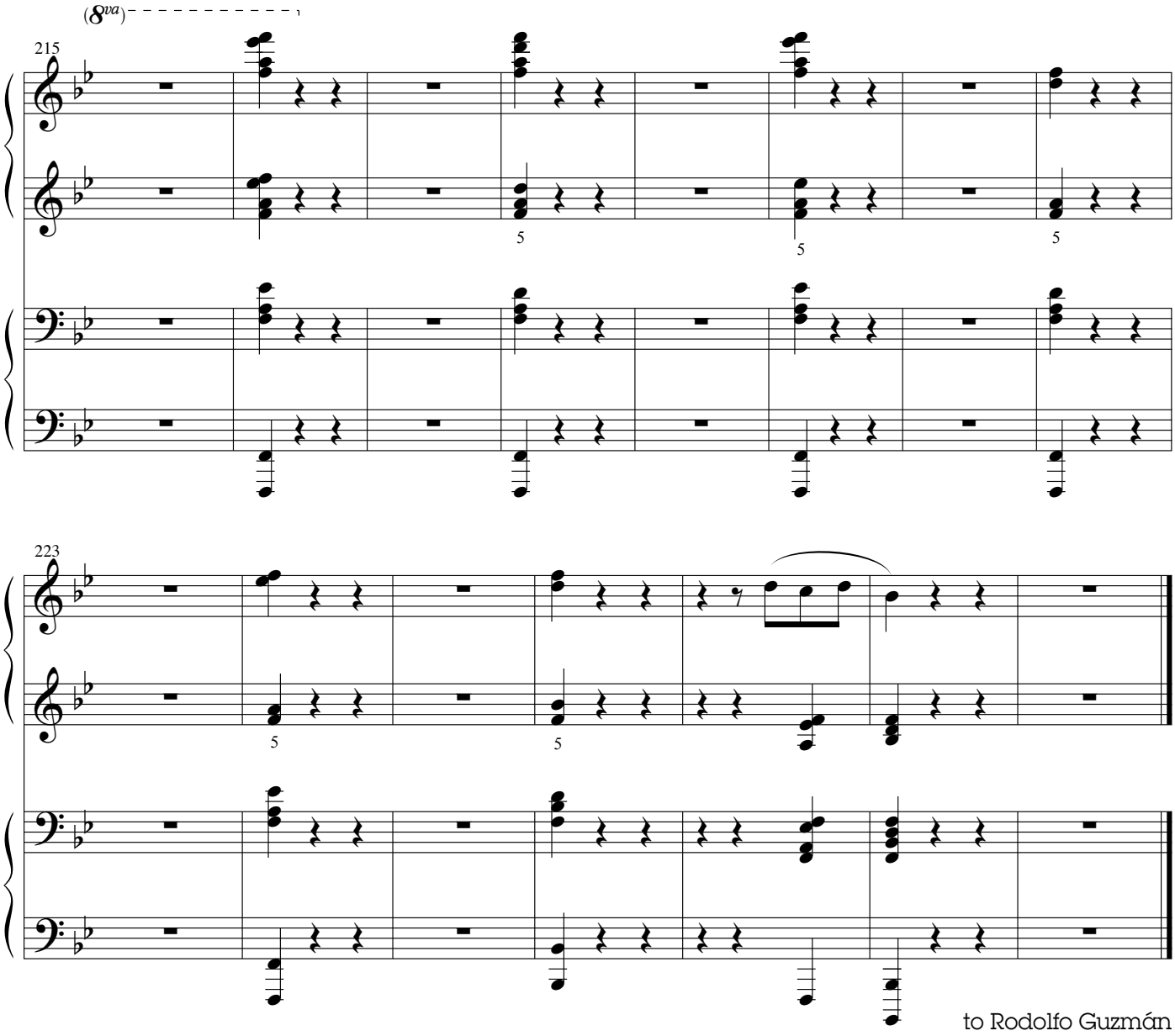
mp
p
136
143
sfz
f
sfz
f
sfz
f


150
ff
ff
8va
156
2
3
4
5 — 2
5
3
3
8va
163
5
3
8va
5
4

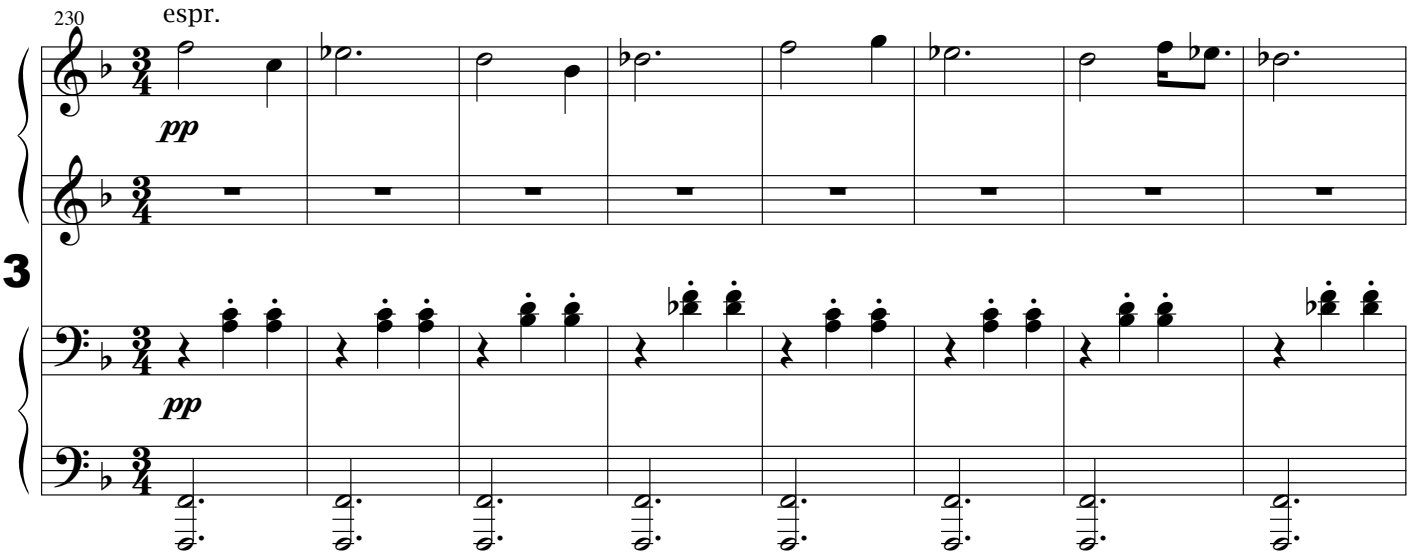

171
1
2
dim.
p
p
8va
179
mp
mp
(8va)
187
cresc.
cresc.

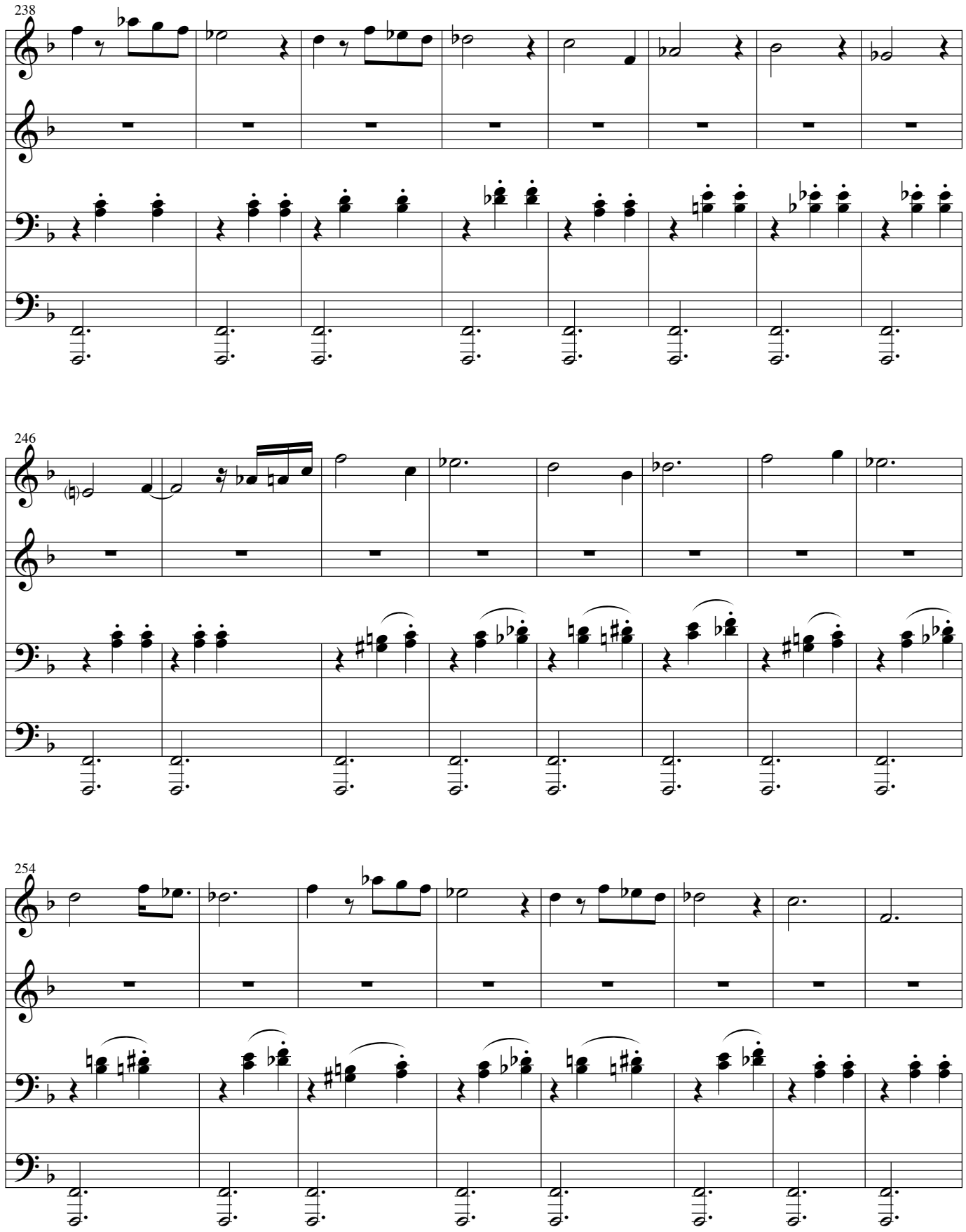

(8va)
194
f
mp, cresc.
f sfz
sfz
sfz
3
f
mp, cresc.
f sfz
sfz
sfz
(8va)
201
sfz sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz sfz
sfz
sfz sfz
sfz sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz sfz
sfz
sfz sfz
(8va)
208
sfz
sfz sfz
cresc. sfz
sfz sfz
sfz
sfz sfz
fff
sfz
sfz sfz
cresc. sfz
sfz sfz
sfz
sfz sfz
fff



to Rodolfo Guzmán

Lento ♩= 92

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246
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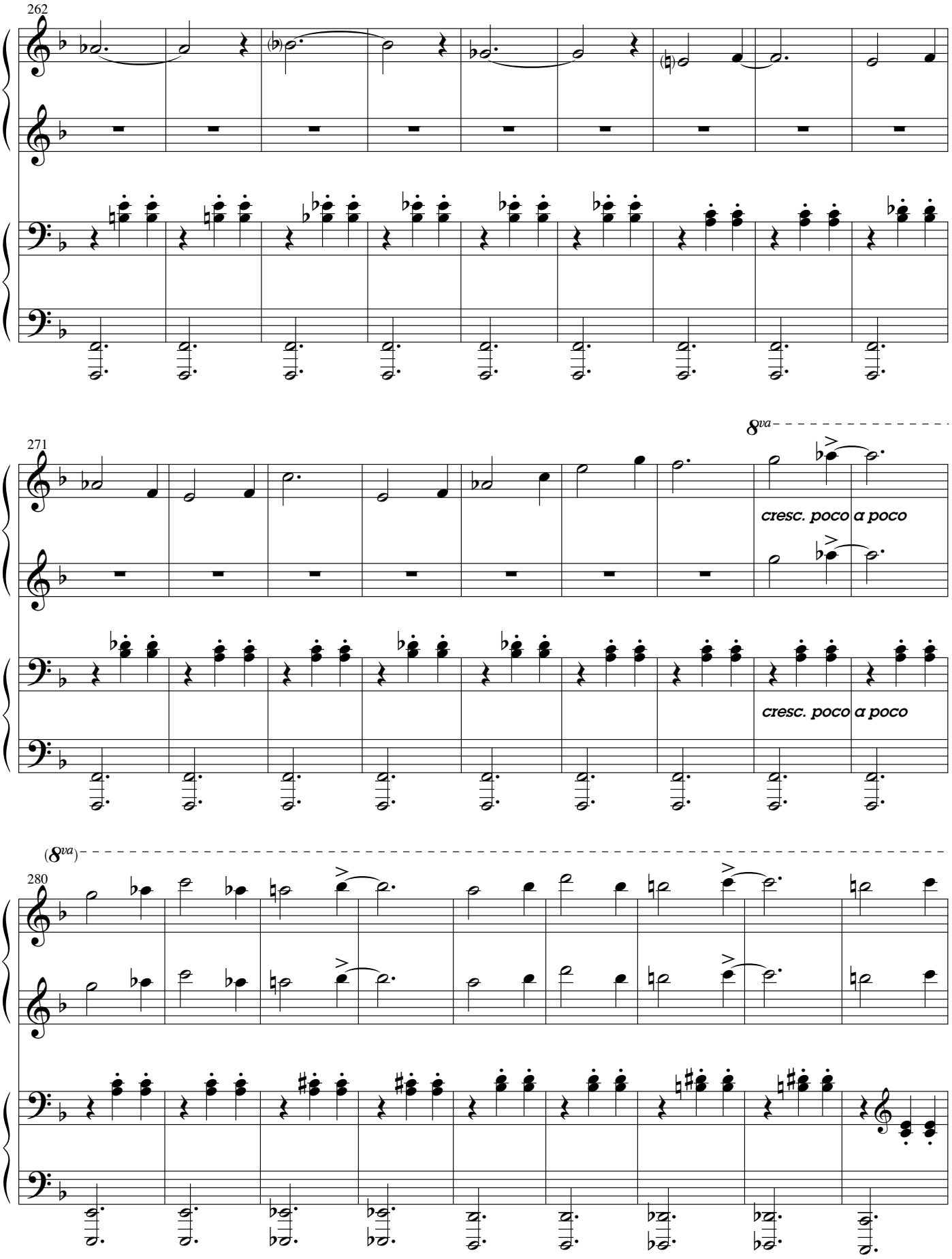
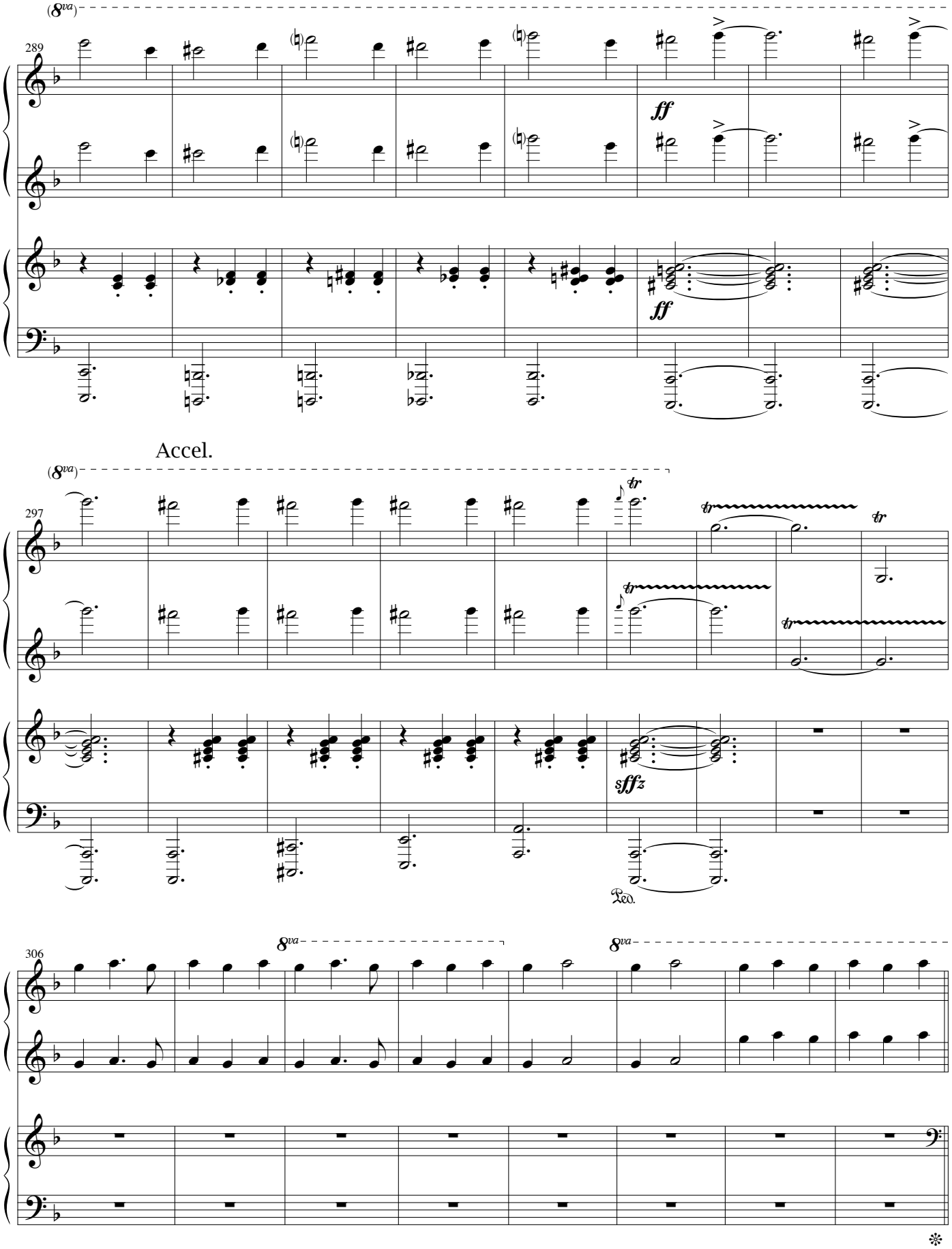
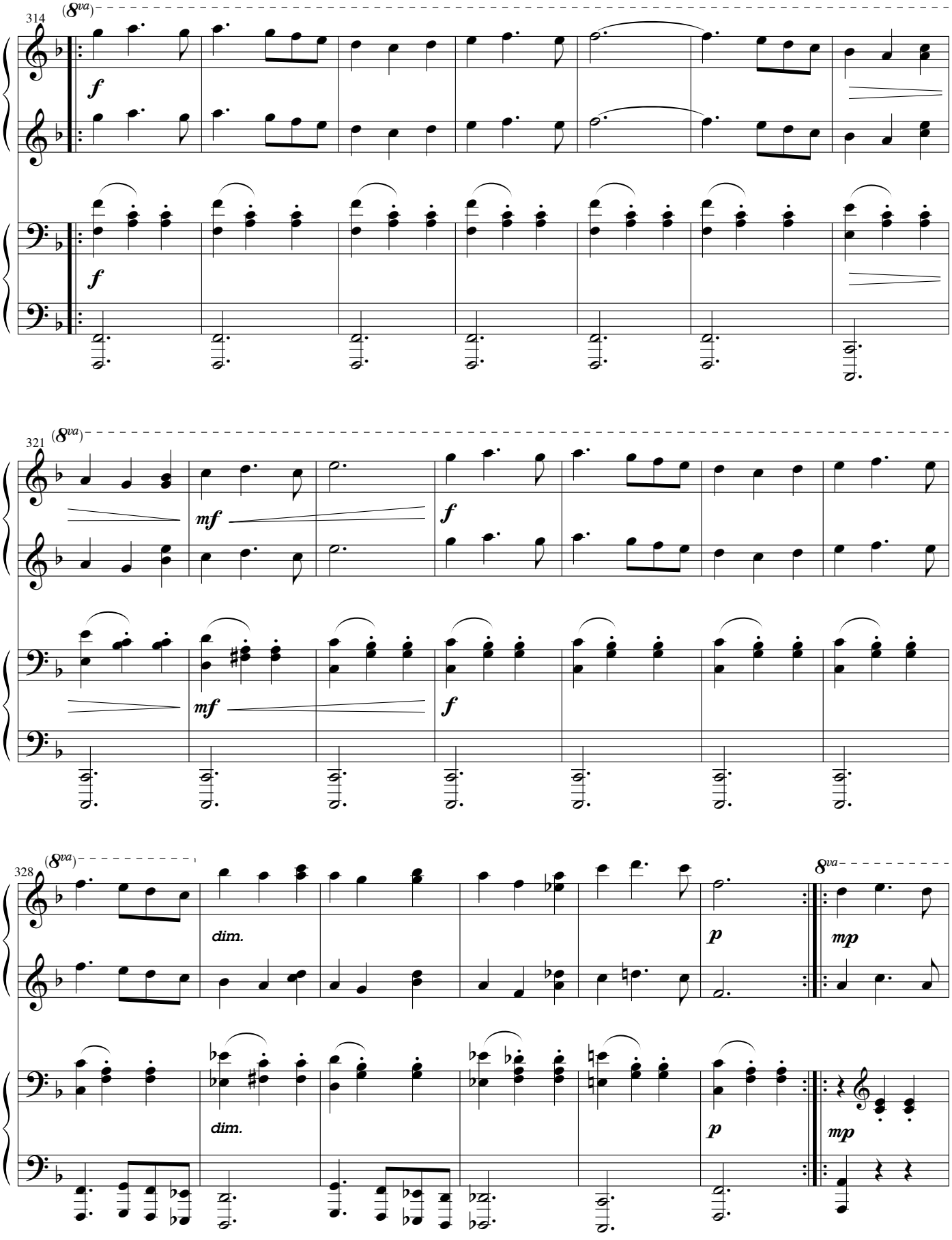
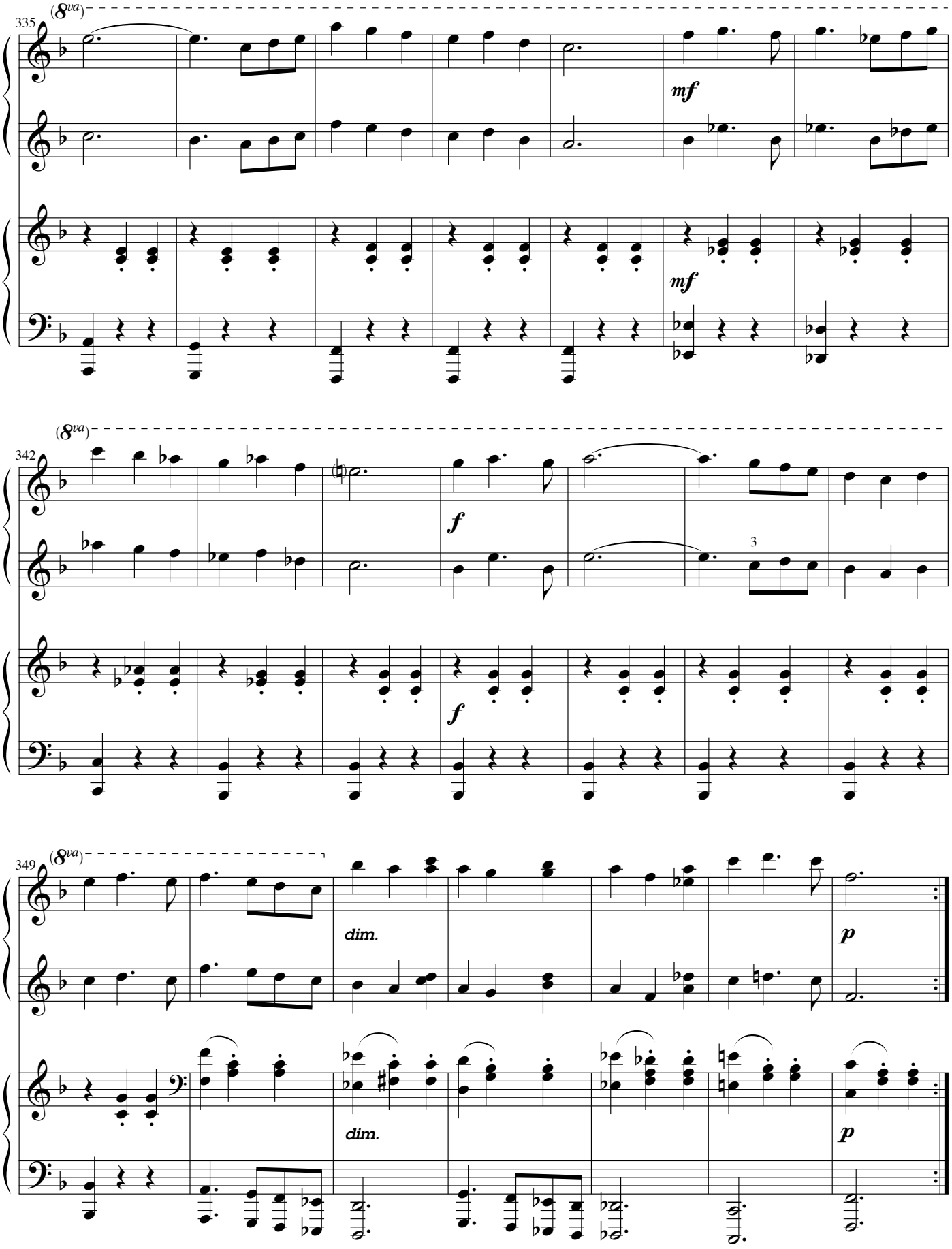

262
271
8va
cresc. poco a poco
cresc. poco a poco
(8va)
280


(8va)
289
ff
ff
Accel.
(8va)
297
tr
tr
tr
tr
sffz
Ped.
306
8va
8va

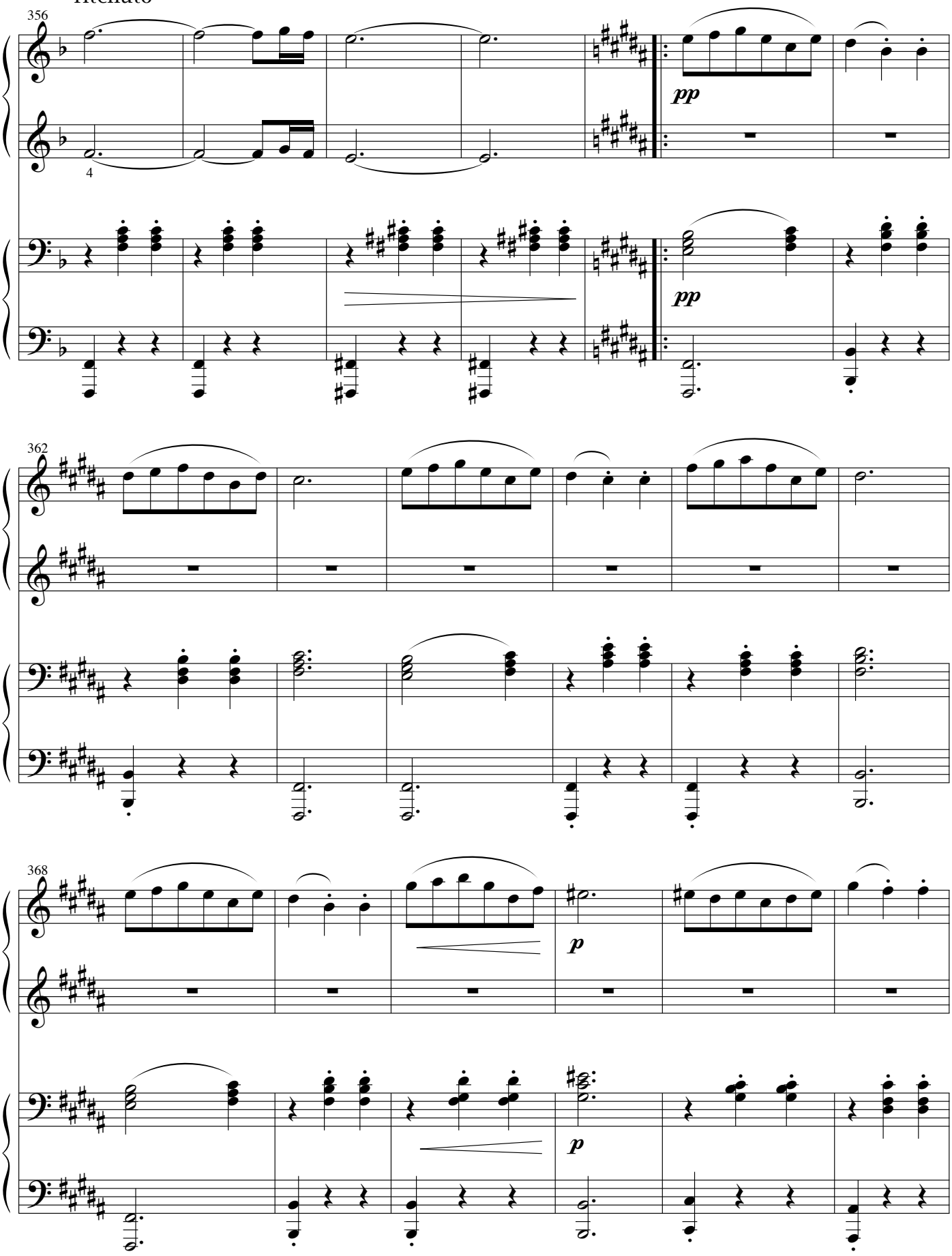
Allegro ♩. = 59

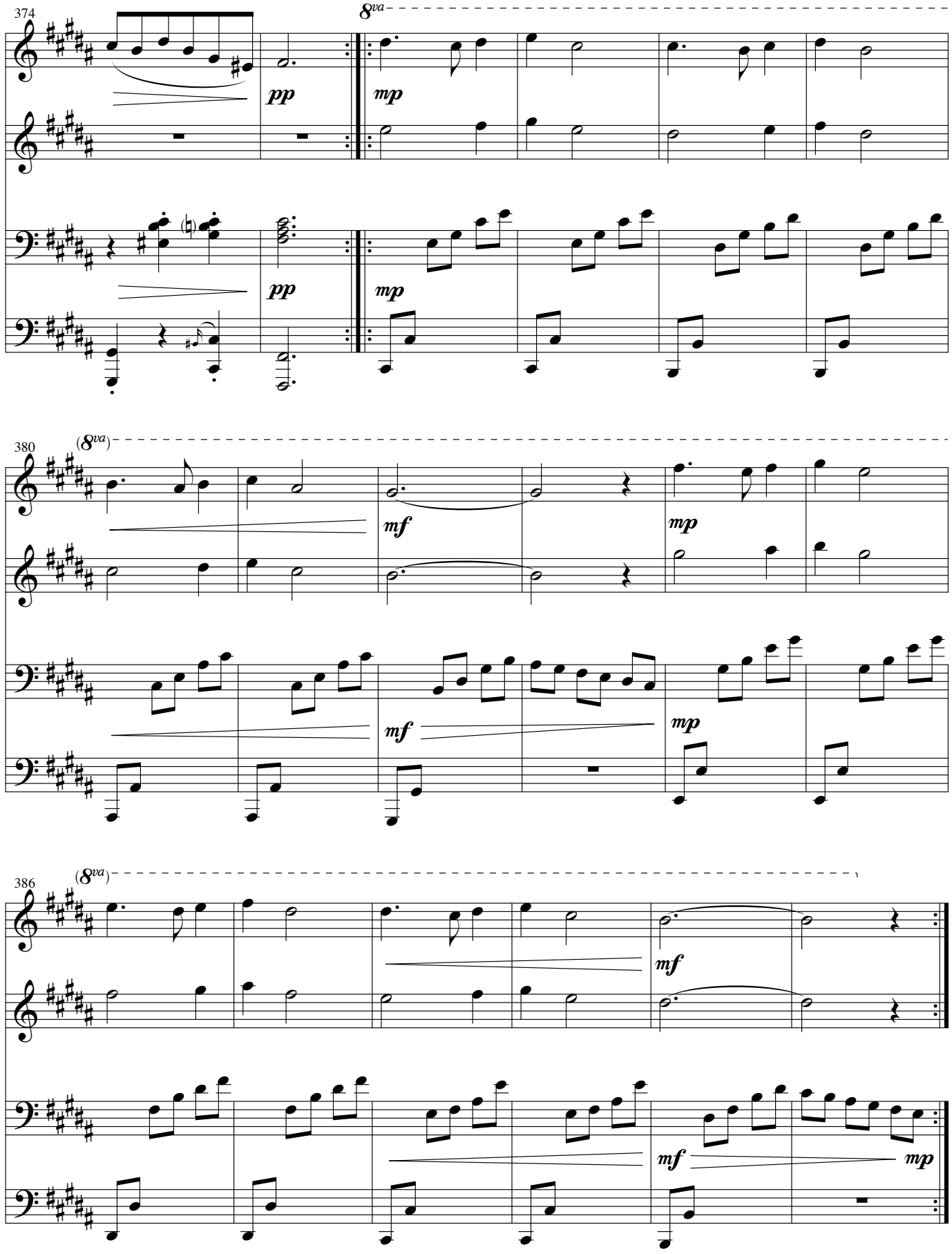


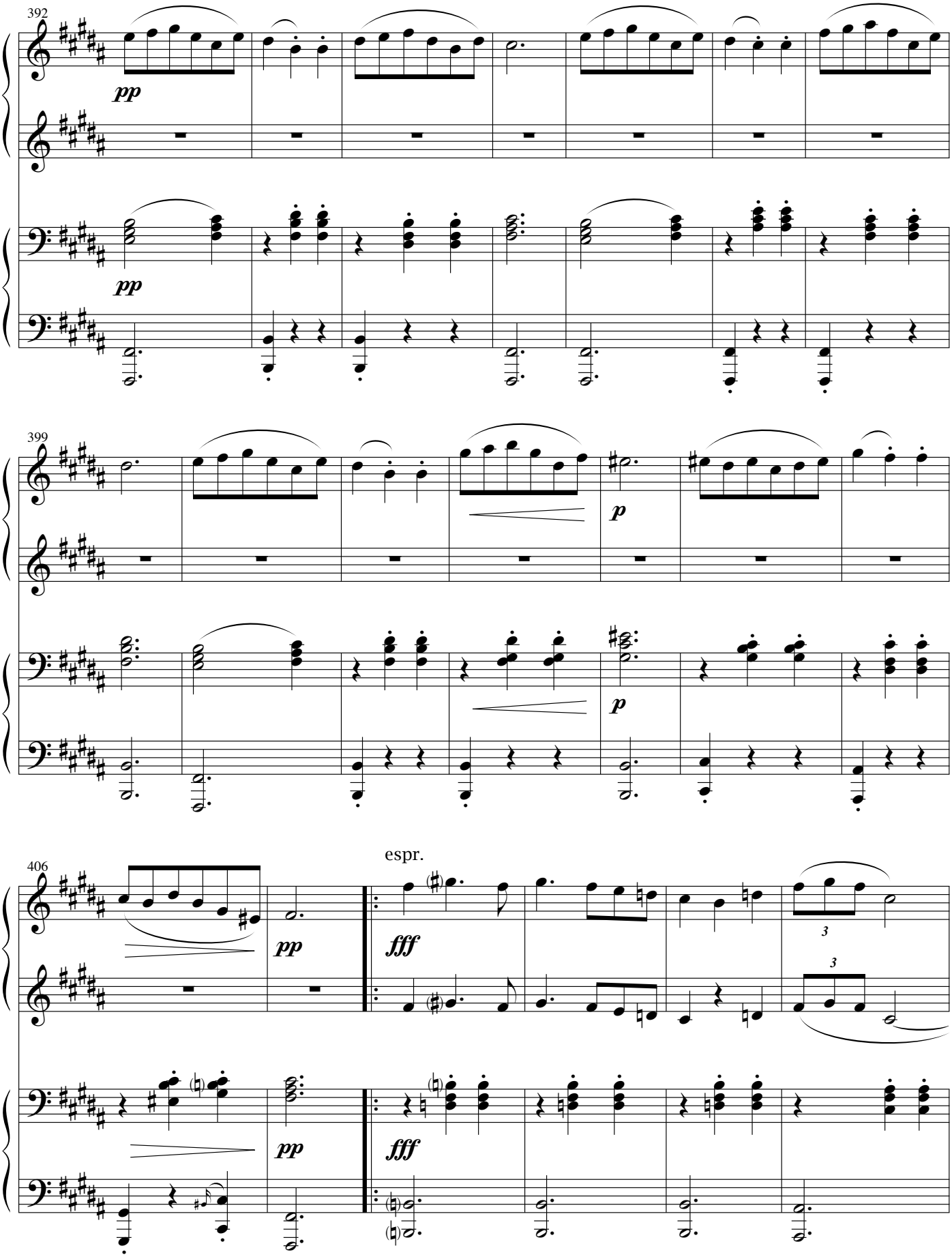

335
(8va)
mf
mf
342
(8va)
f
f
3
349
(8va)
dim.
dim.
p
p

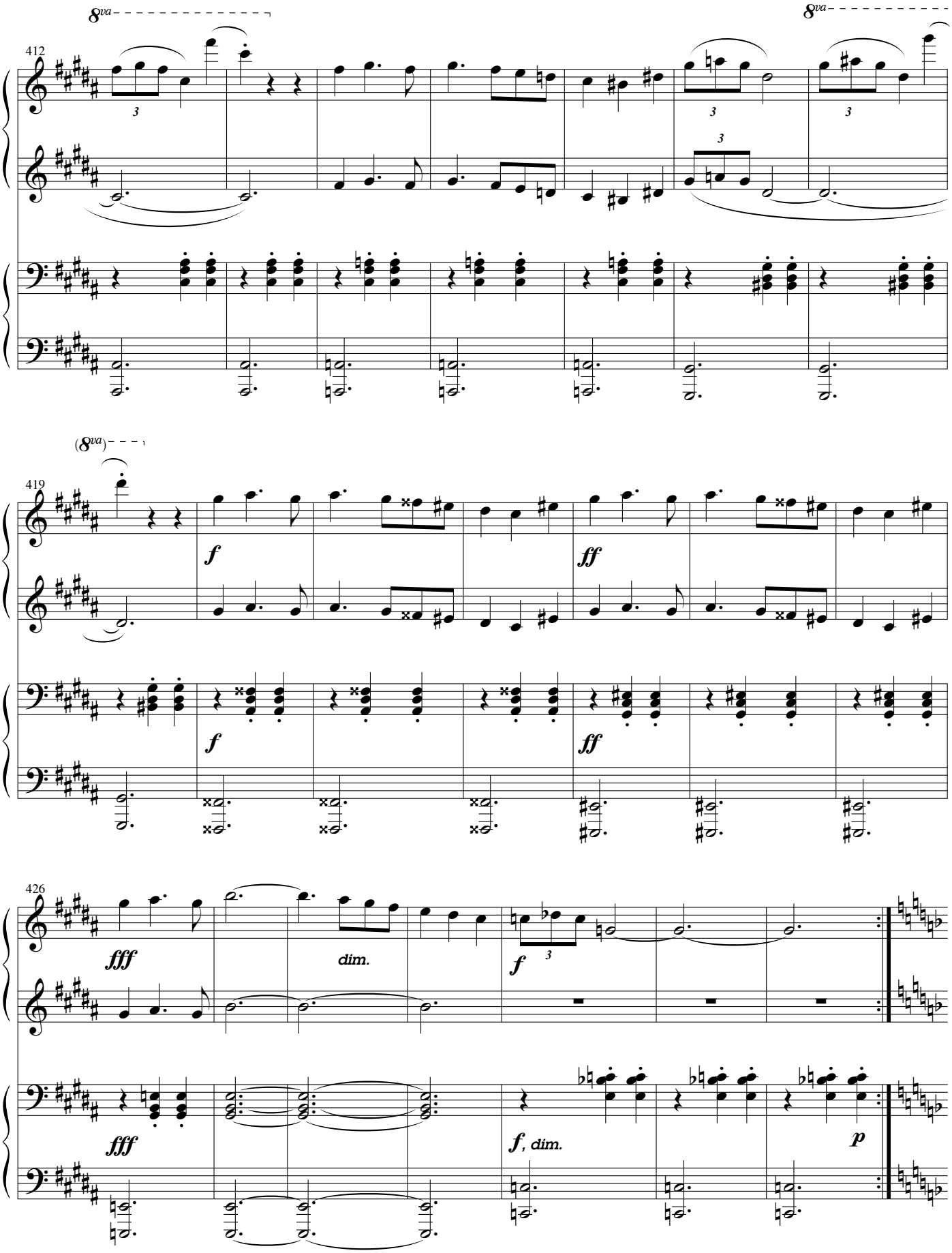
ritenuto

Andante ♩= 106

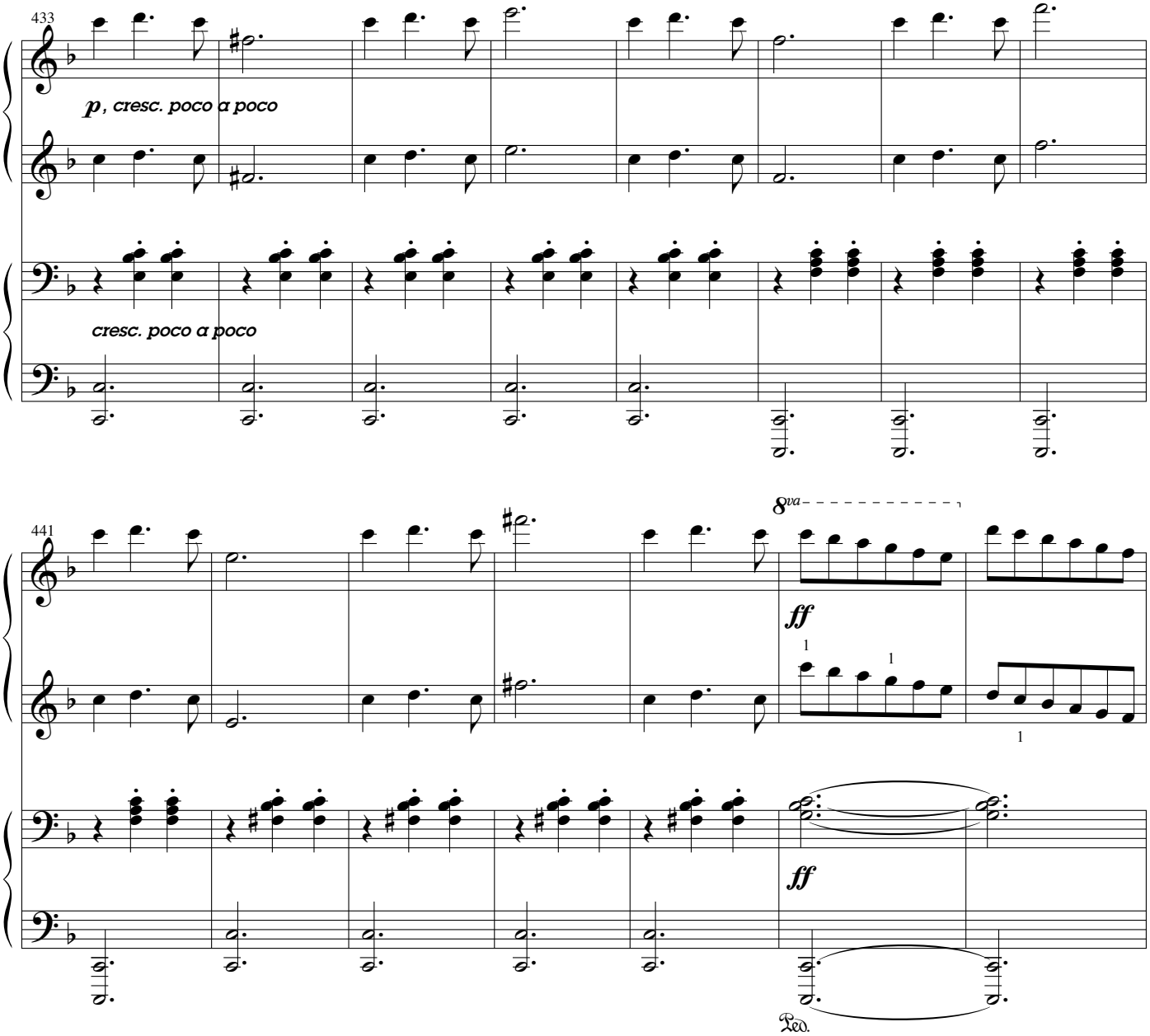



374
8va
pp
mp
pp
mp
380
(8va)
mf
mp
mf
mp
386
(8va)
mf
mf
mp

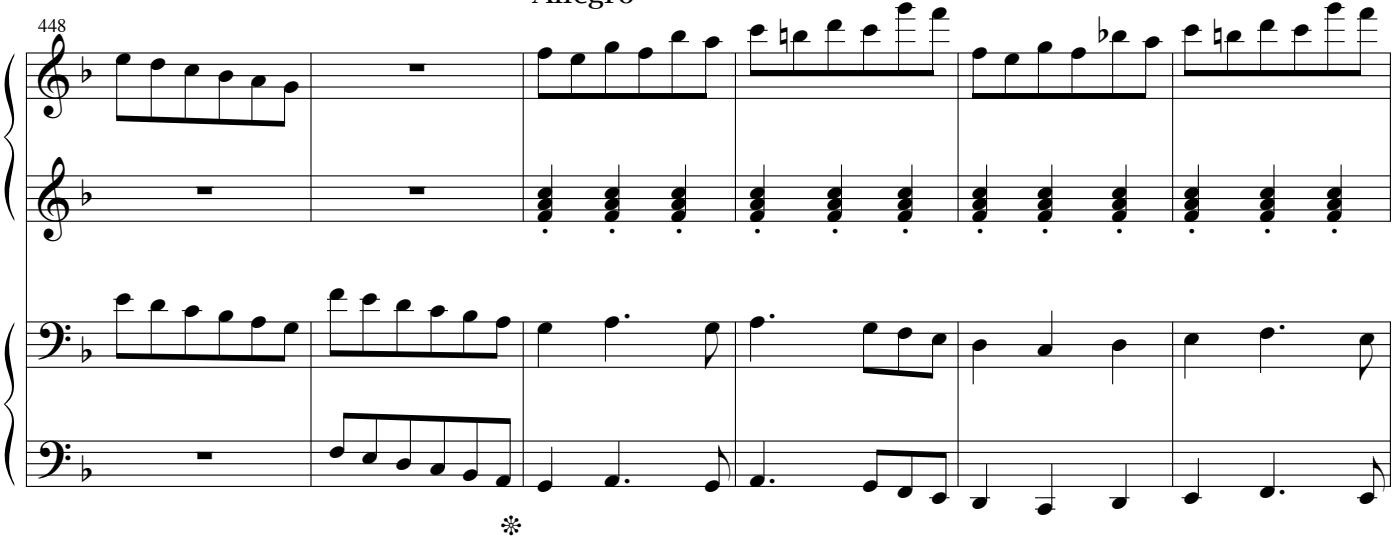

392
pp
pp
399
p
p
406
espr.
pp
fff
3
3
pp
fff

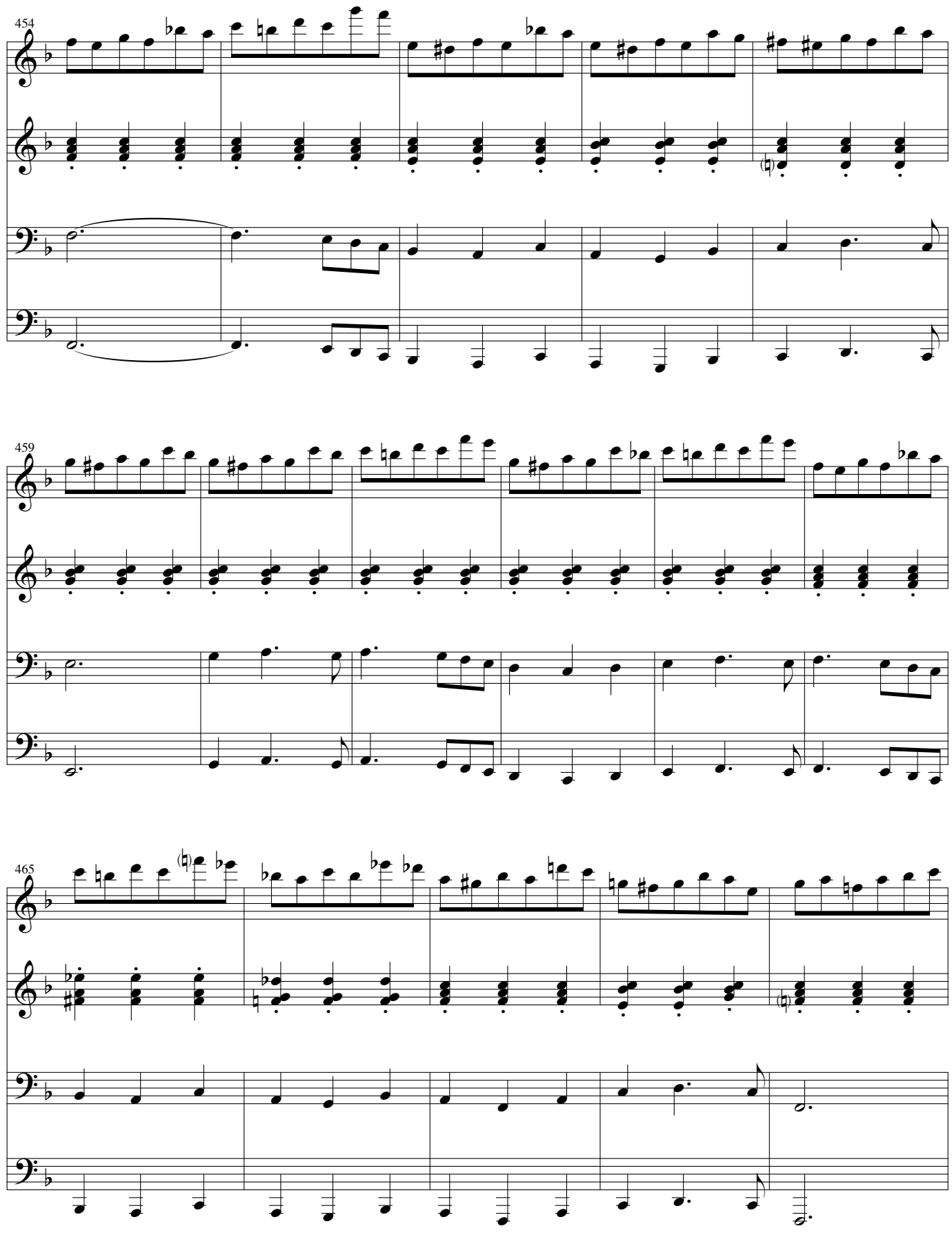

8va
412
8va
(8va)
419
f
ff
f
ff
426
fff
dim.
f
3
fff
f, dim.
p

22 Accel.



Allegro

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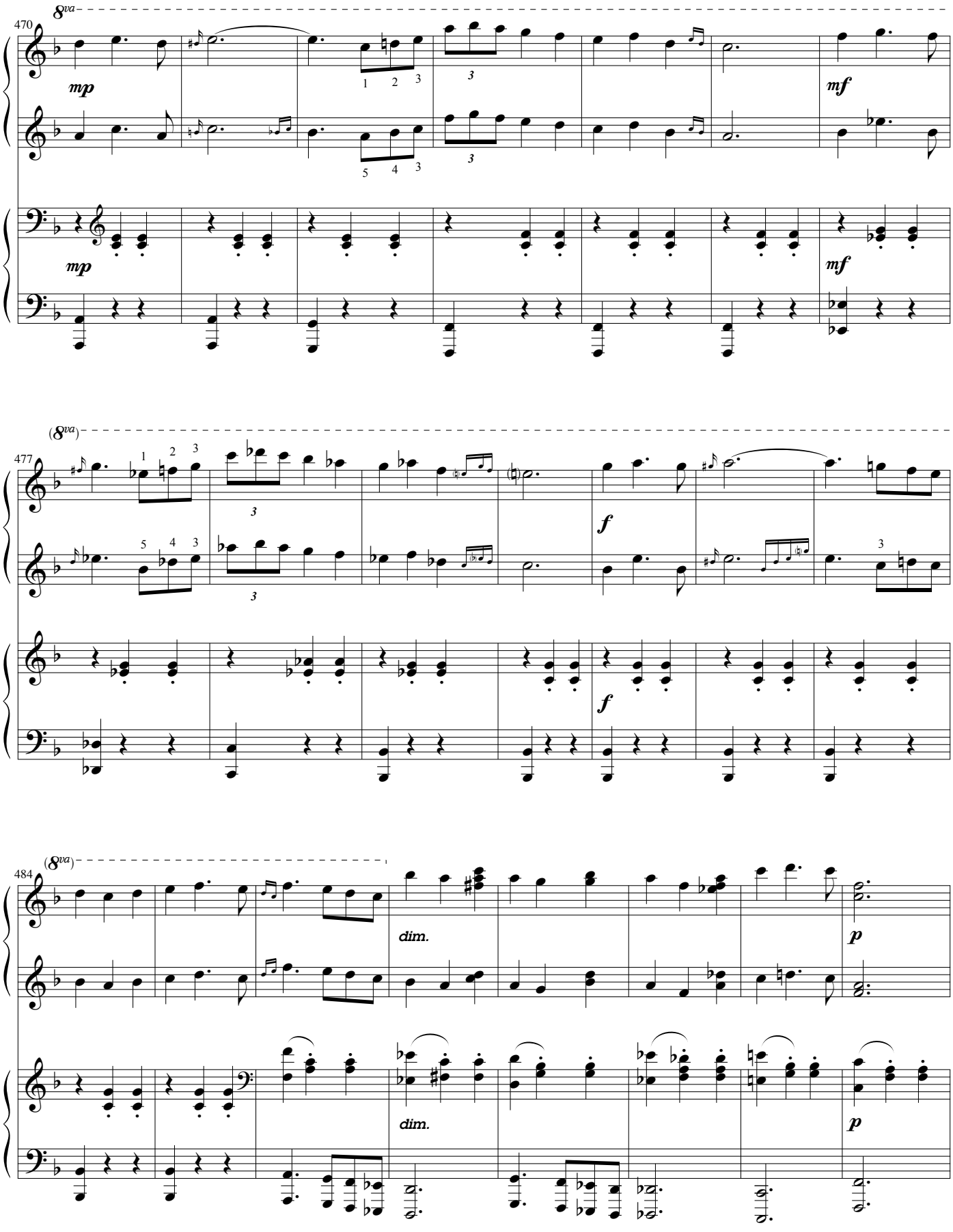
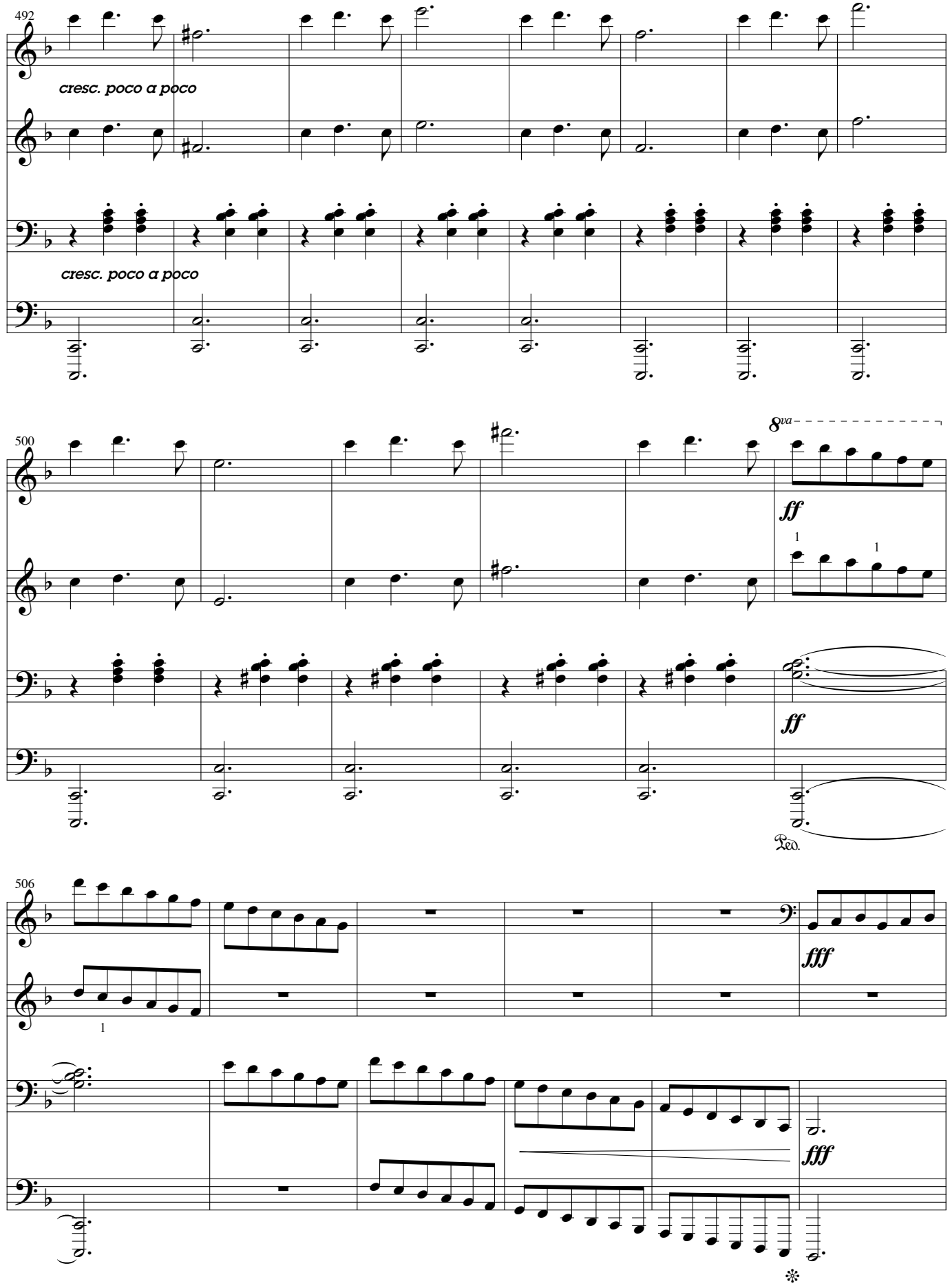
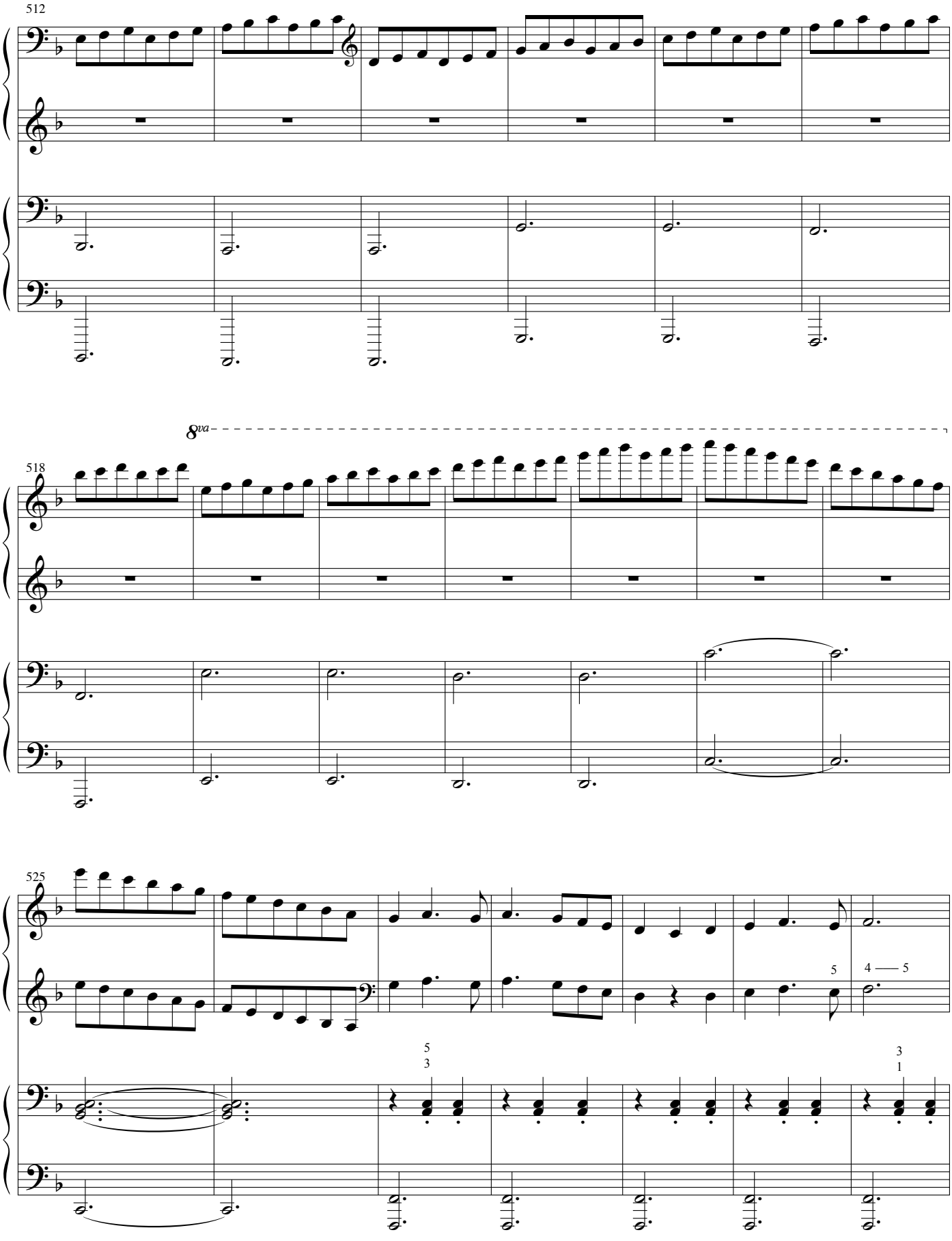
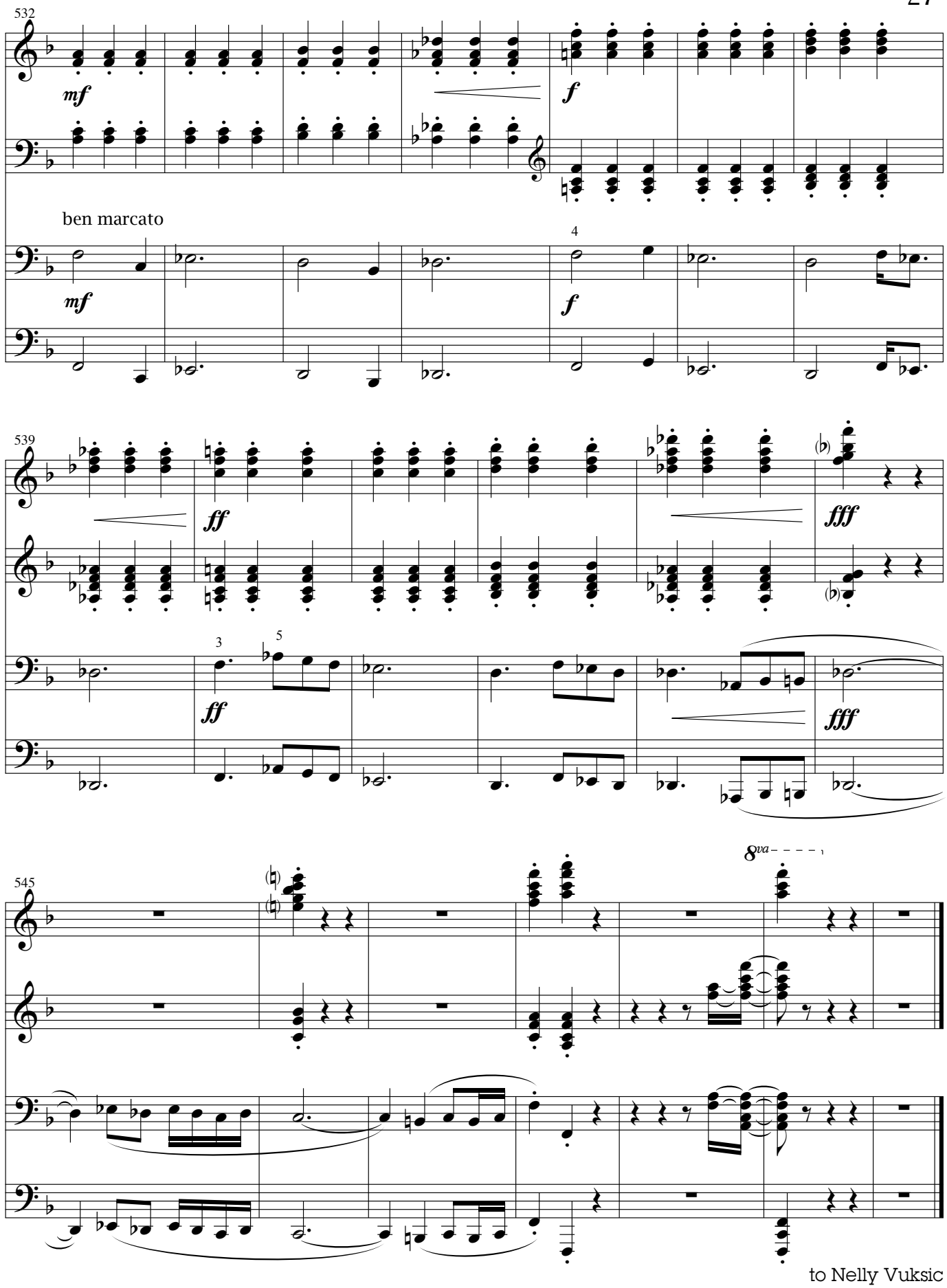

8va
470
mp
mf
(8va)
477
f
(8va)
484
dim.
p


492
cresc. poco a poco
cresc. poco a poco
500
8va
ff
ff
Ped.
506
fff
fff


512
8va
518
525
5
4 — 5
5
3
3
1


532
mf
f
ben marcato
4
mf
f
539
ff
fff
3
5
ff
fff
545
8va
to Nelly Vuksic