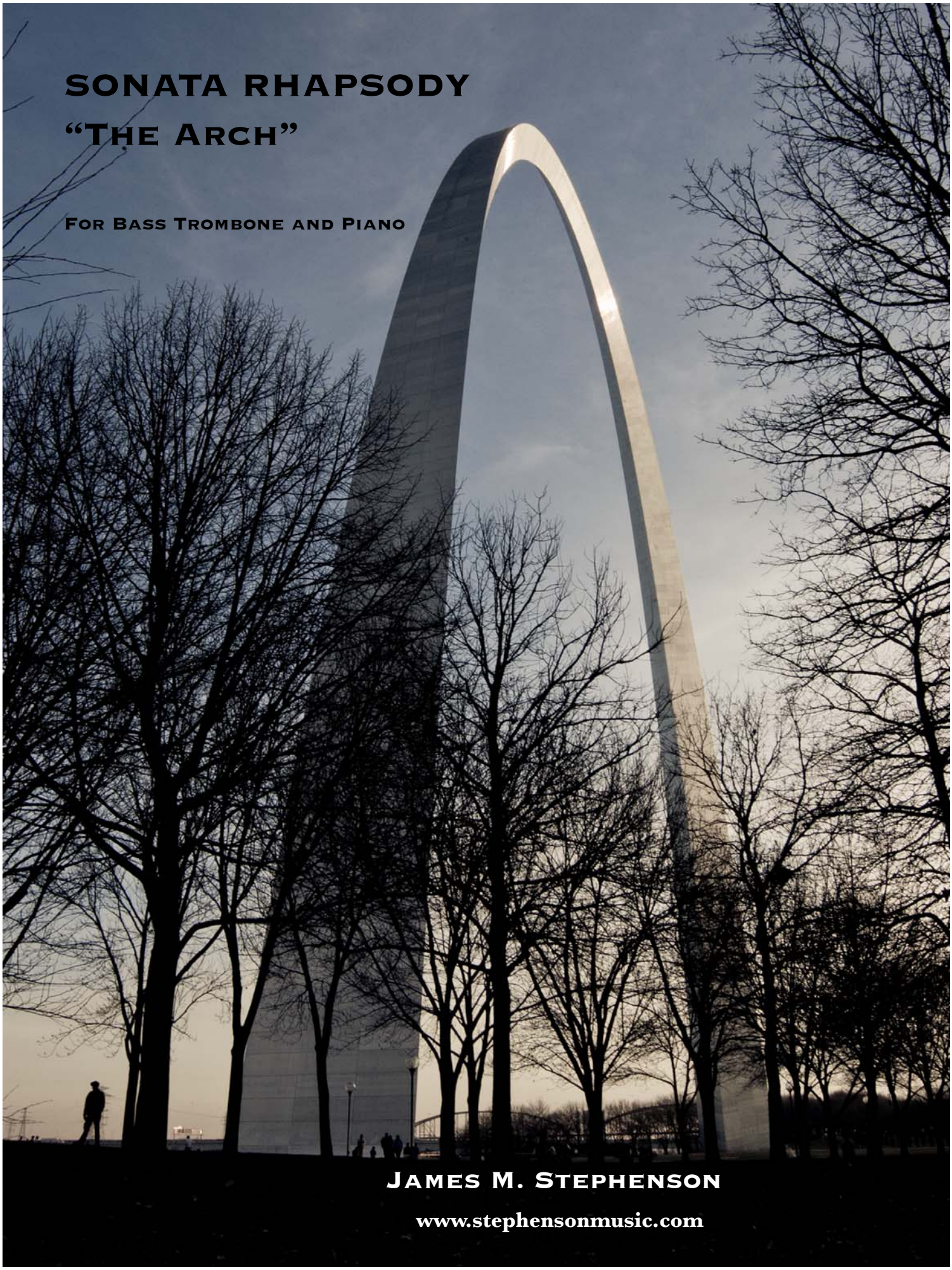
SONATA RHAPSODY
"The Arch"
For Bass Trombone and Piano
James M. Stephenson
www.stephensonmusic.com

Sonata Rhapsody

"The Arch"

for Bass Trombone and Piano
by James M. Stephenson

Program Notes

In the fall of 2009, after having heard some of my music at Interlochen, St. Louis Symphony's bass trombonist, Gerry Pagano, contacted me with the idea of writing a new sonata for him. It wasn't until several months had passed that the piece got written (Gerry is a patient man!), but a phone conversation with him in early June, 2010, sparked an immediate inspiration for the piece, and two weeks later, the piece was done. Gerry had mentioned offhandedly that it would be nice to have a piece that would somehow represent where he lived and worked, so therefore...

The entire piece is one big **Arch**. (Wonder where I got that idea!!) I am big on symbolism in my music, and this seemed the perfect opportunity.

Almost every phrase is a miniature arch. They start low, rise up, and return almost to where they started. This happens in both the solo part and the piano part. Even just the opening 6 notes, the way the slur is written over it: it visually looks like an arch.

And there's more.
Here are some facts about the St. Louis Arch, and how they inspired me musically:

> It was designed by Eero Saarinen. If you take the 'E's and 'A's in his name, they inspired the very first phrase in the solo part.
> The piece does begin in A, though I kept it ambiguous on purpose - an effort to capture how anyone must feel when first designing and building a structure that large and permanent. Will this work? Will people 'get it'? etc...
>
> The outer width of the arch is 630 feet. The piece is 630 measures.
>
> The width of each base is 54 feet. You'll notice that the opening section is 54 measures, and so is the last section. The first and last measures are also 5/4 bars, so as to further the symbolism.
>
> The dimension at the top of the Arch is 17 feet. So, the climactic section of this piece is 17 measures. I had to add one measure, however, and here's why:
>
> The piece is very symmetric, so as to recognize the sections of the arch that were constructed. After the first 54 bar section, each successive section "on the way up" is 64, 64, 64 and 60 measures before finally arriving at the climactic 17 measure (+1) top. I had to add that one extra measure so that the total count of 630 could be divided evenly in two. That middle 17 measures throws that off unless I add one more. The optional high Bb for the soloist at the end of that section is the highest note in the piece. It's not the EXACT middle of the piece - I had to take a little liberty there. After that climax, the sections repeat themselves, but in reverse: 60, 64, 64, 64 and the final 54. I found that this symmetry provided sonata-like options for repeating previously heard material.

Notes (cont'd)

> Lastly, I read one small mention of the worries of the builders during the construction process. If even the smallest of errors occurred (even miscalculating by 1/128th of an inch on either side's base), then the entire structure would fail to connect perfectly at the top. I symbolized this by adding two 1/128th rests near the beginning and end. Granted, the sonata's existence won't depend on those two small rests, but it was fun to further the connection musically.

Also worth mentioning is that each successive section rises in both key-domain and in tempo on the way up (and the reverse on the way down, of course.) We start ambiguously in A, and very slowly. We then go (in both major and minor keys) to Bb, B, C and D until we very definitively arrive in Eb at the climax, which is about as far away from the opening key of A as possible - like the Arch. While climbing through the keys, we also increase the tempo (and meter) gradually, until arriving at the very fast 1/2 section. Generally speaking, the range of the music moves higher as we go up, and lower as we come down.

It is important to note that all of the little games or tricks in the world won't matter unless the musical creation is genuine and honest (and good!). I didn't want it to be trite or kitsch, but a full musical statement that just happened to be supported by little mathematical facts created by the architect. I hope that the listener finds that my goals were successfully realized.

Jim Stephenson
July, 2010

www.stephensonmusic.com

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www.raymeibaumphotography.com

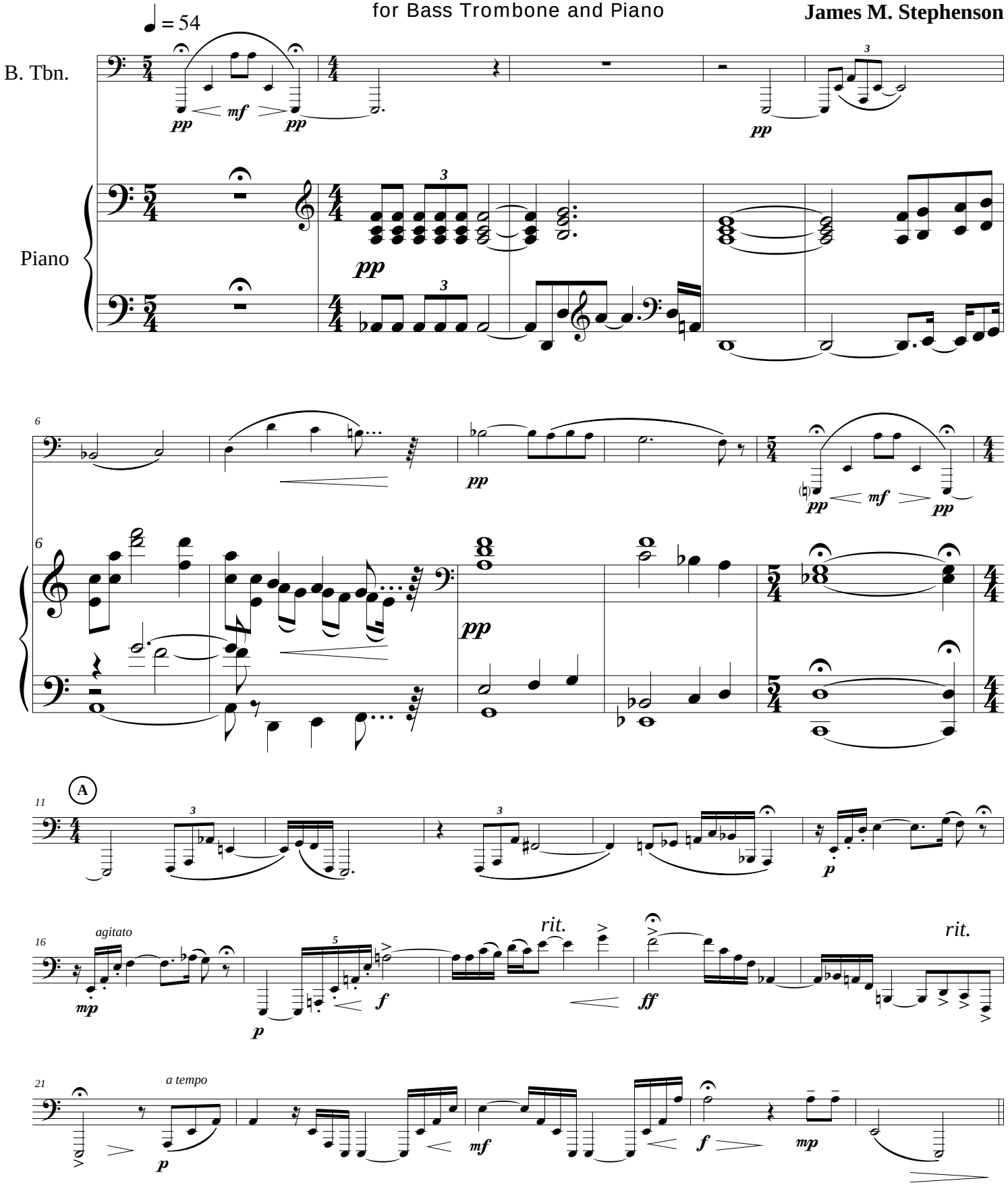
Piano

for Gerry Pagano

Sonata Rhapsody
"The Arch"

for Bass Trombone and Piano

James M. Stephenson



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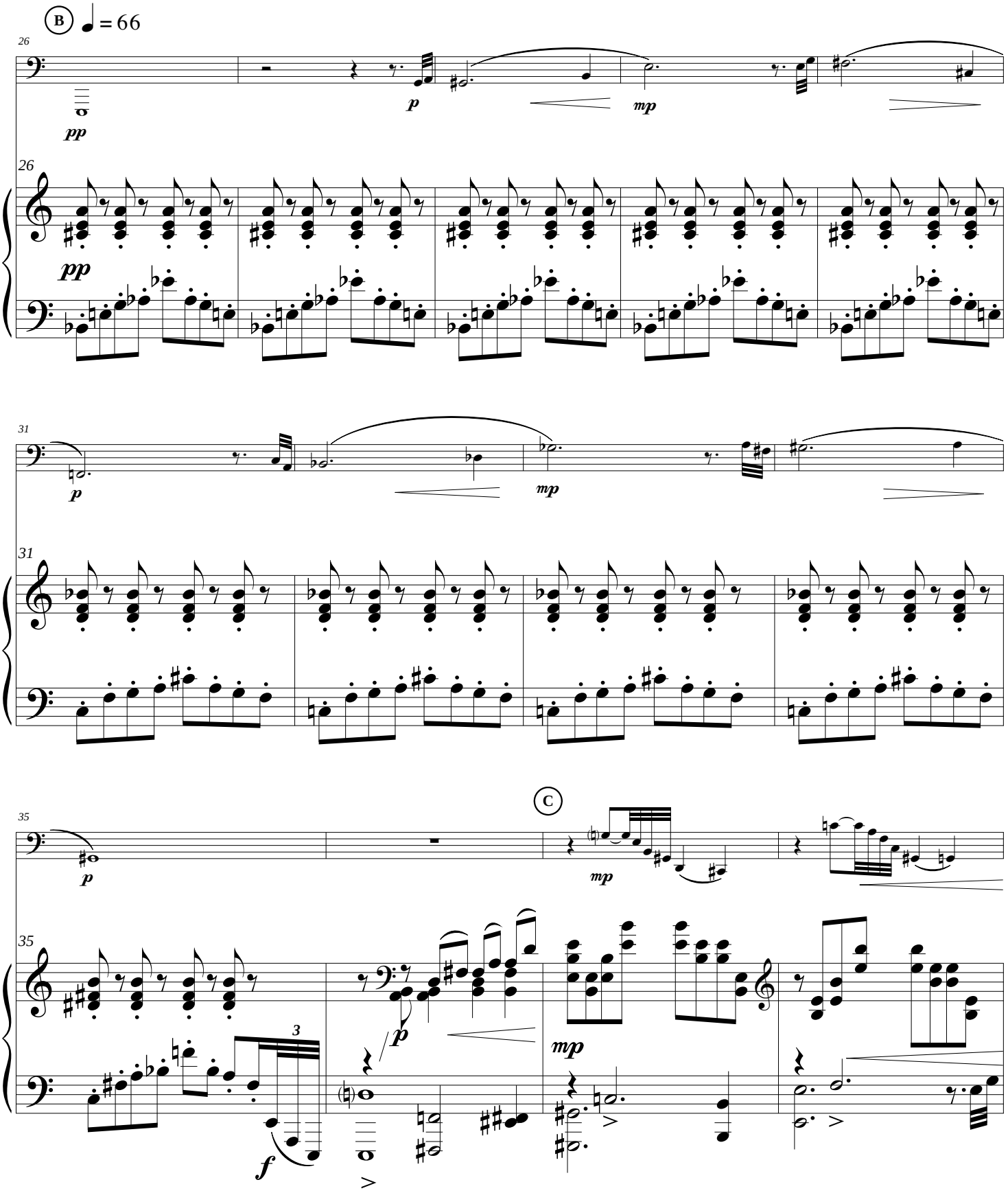
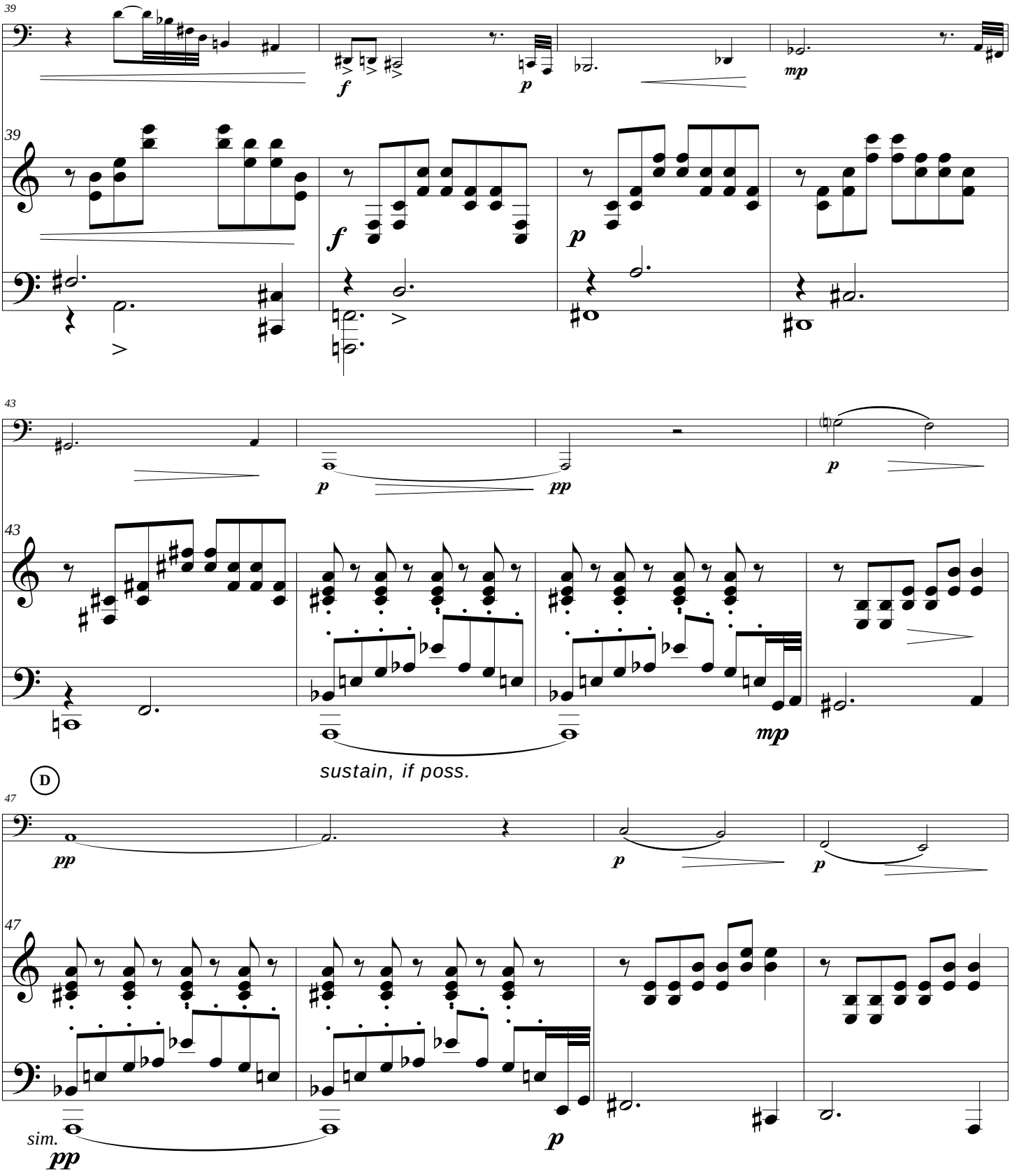
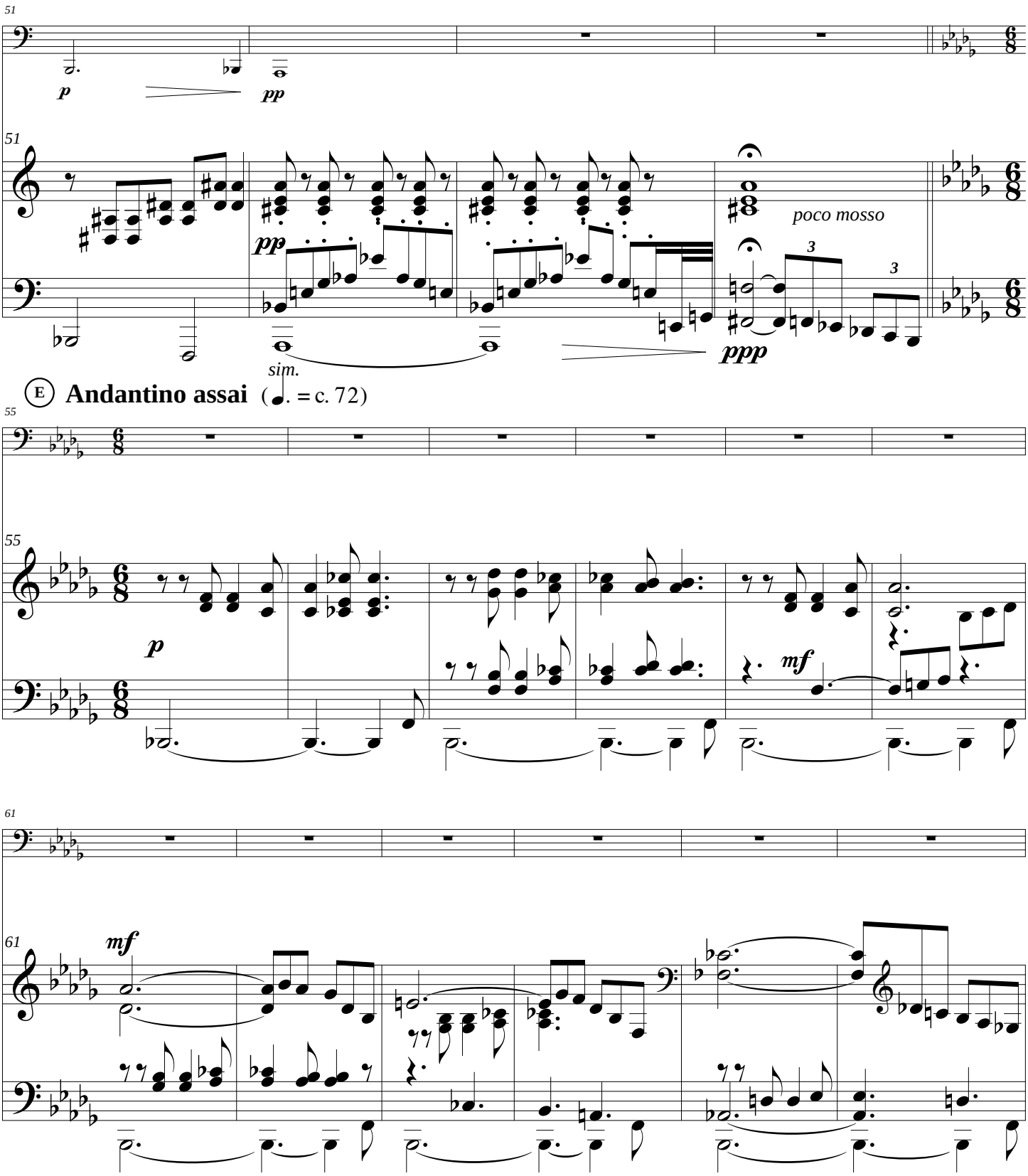
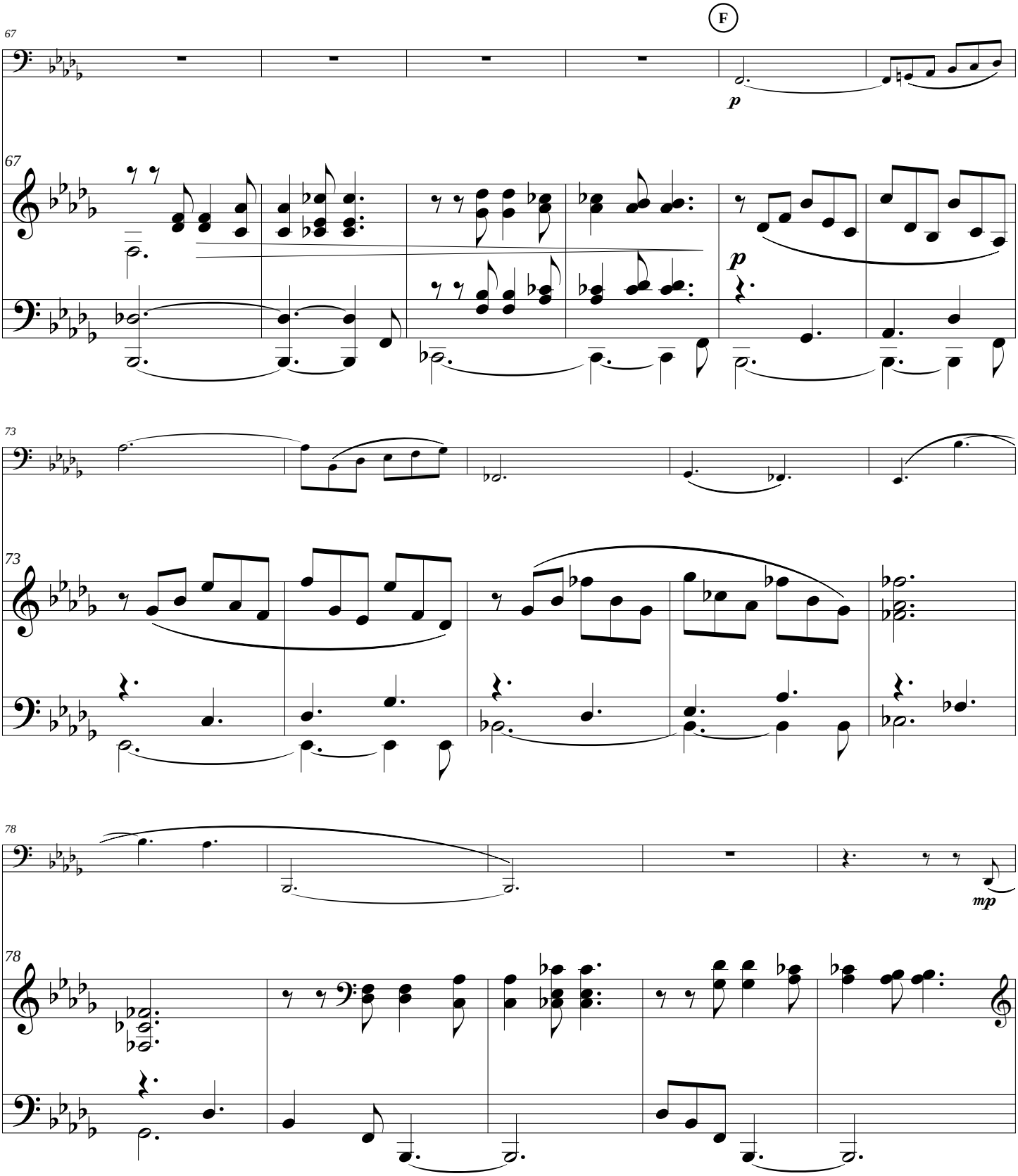
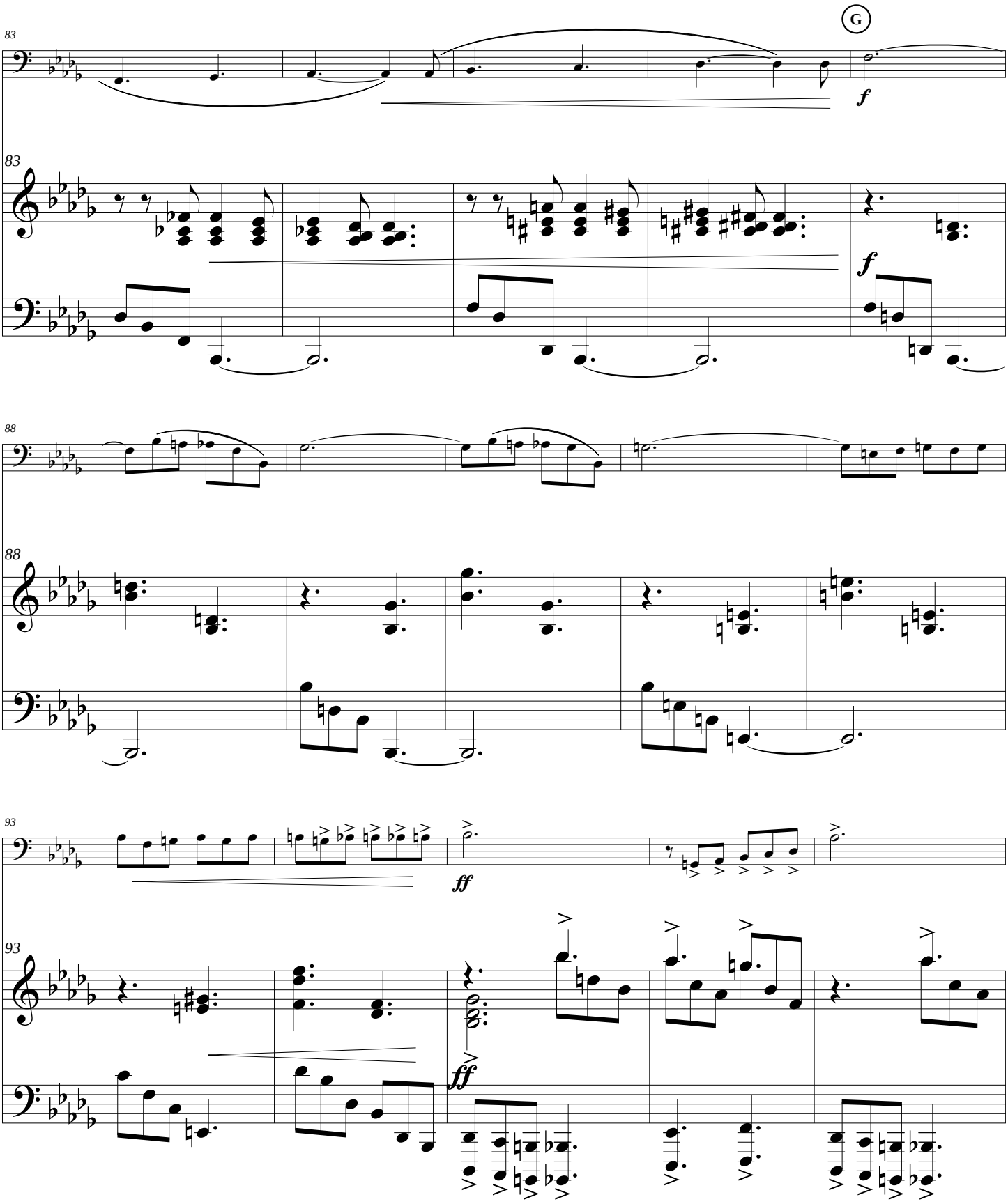
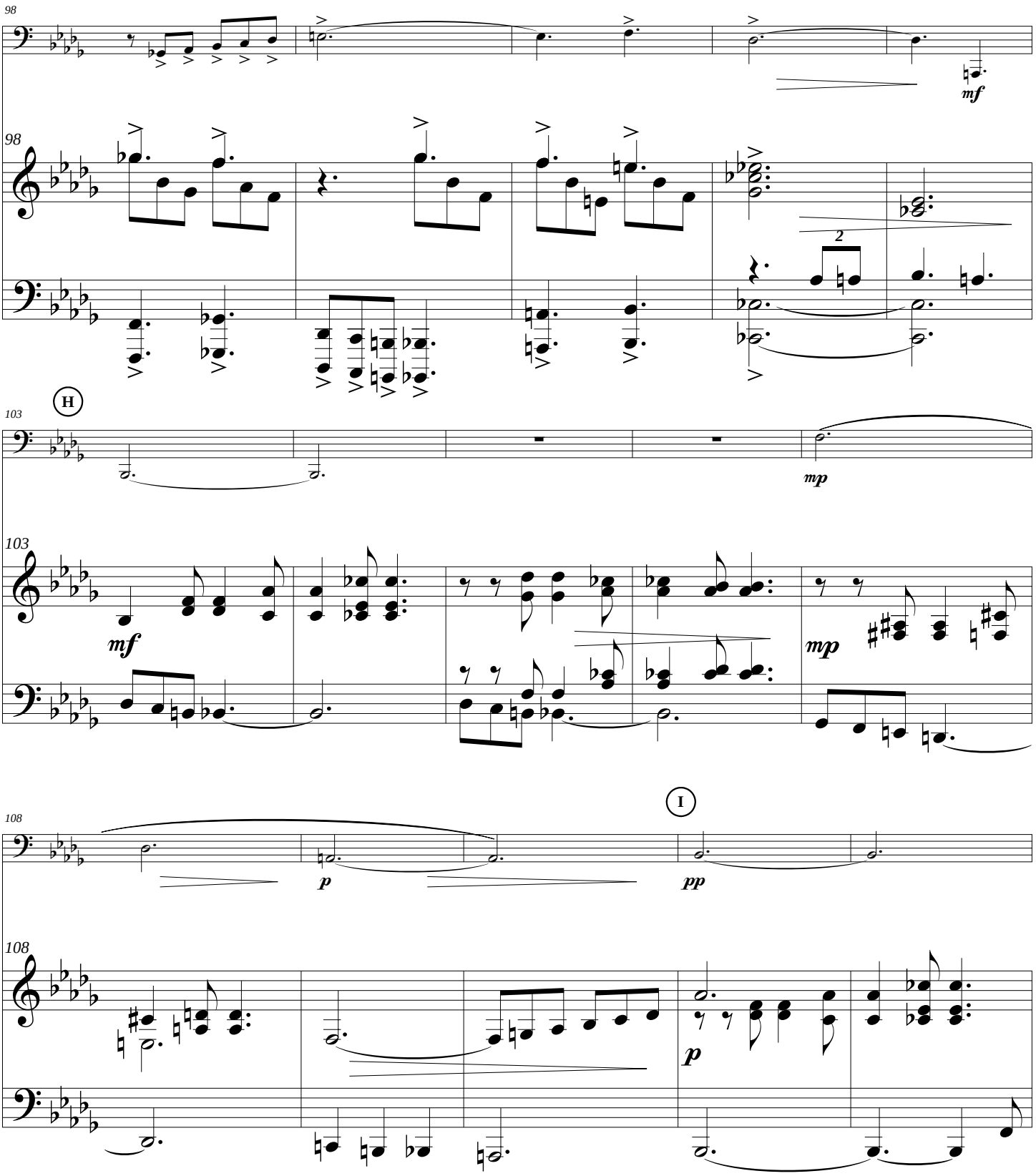

B
♩ = 66
26
pp
p
mp
26
pp
31
p
mp
31
35
C
p
mp
35
p
mp
3
f

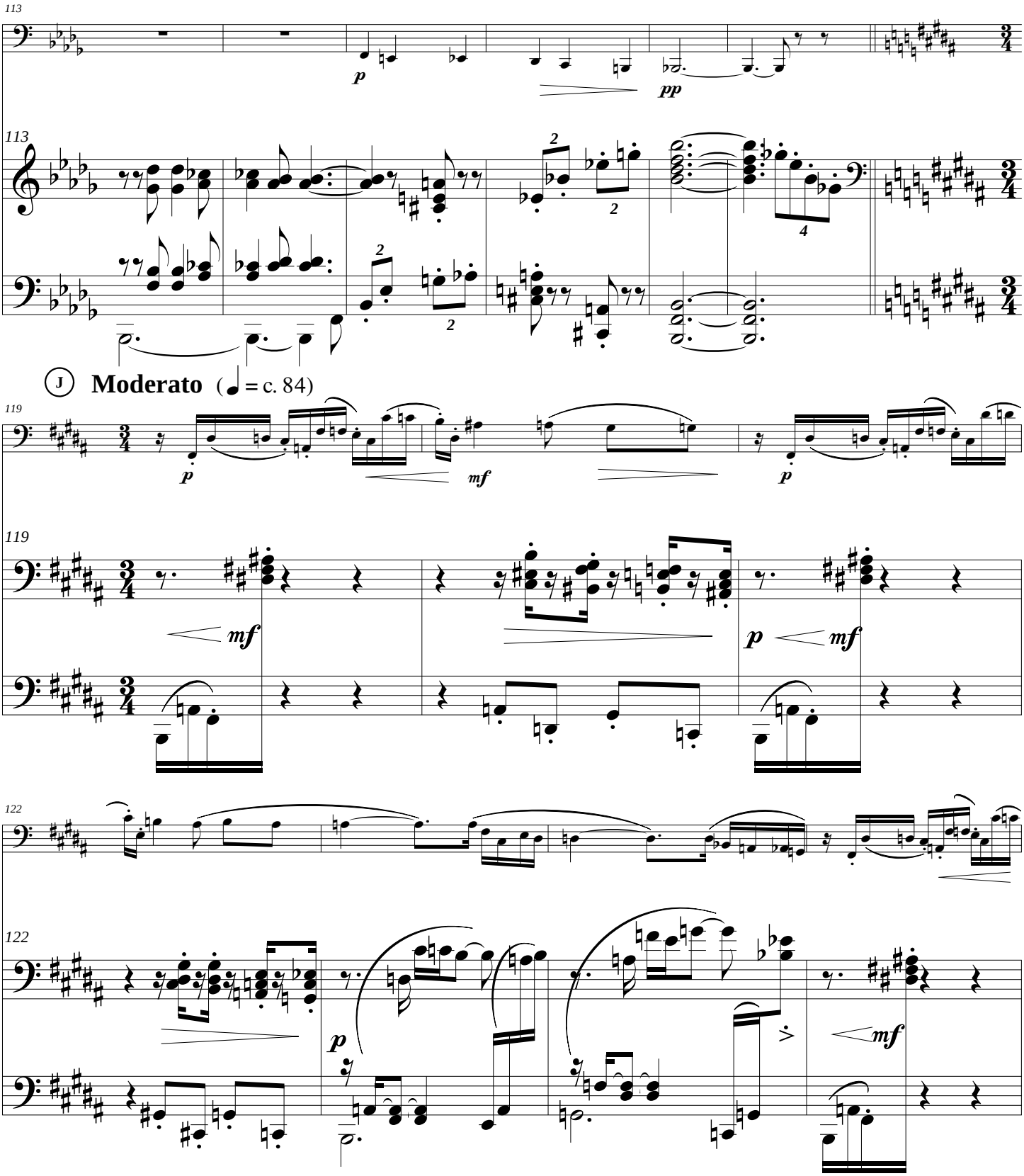

39
f
p
mp
39
f
p
43
p
pp
p
43
mp
sustain, if poss.
D
47
pp
p
p
47
sim.
pp
p

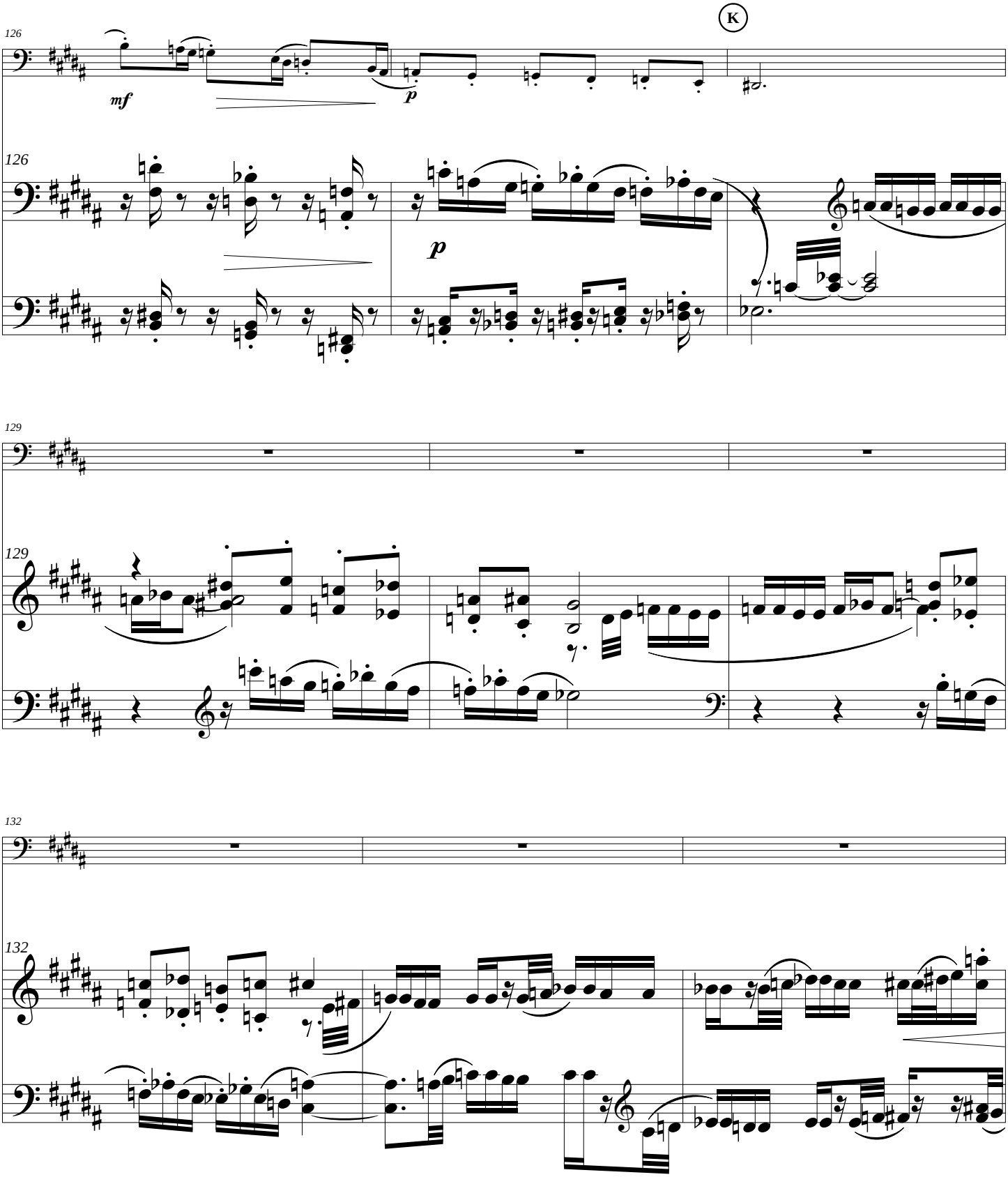

51
p
pp
51
pp
poco mosso
3
3
ppp
sim.
E
Andantino assai (♩. = c. 72)
55
55
p
mf
61
61
mf

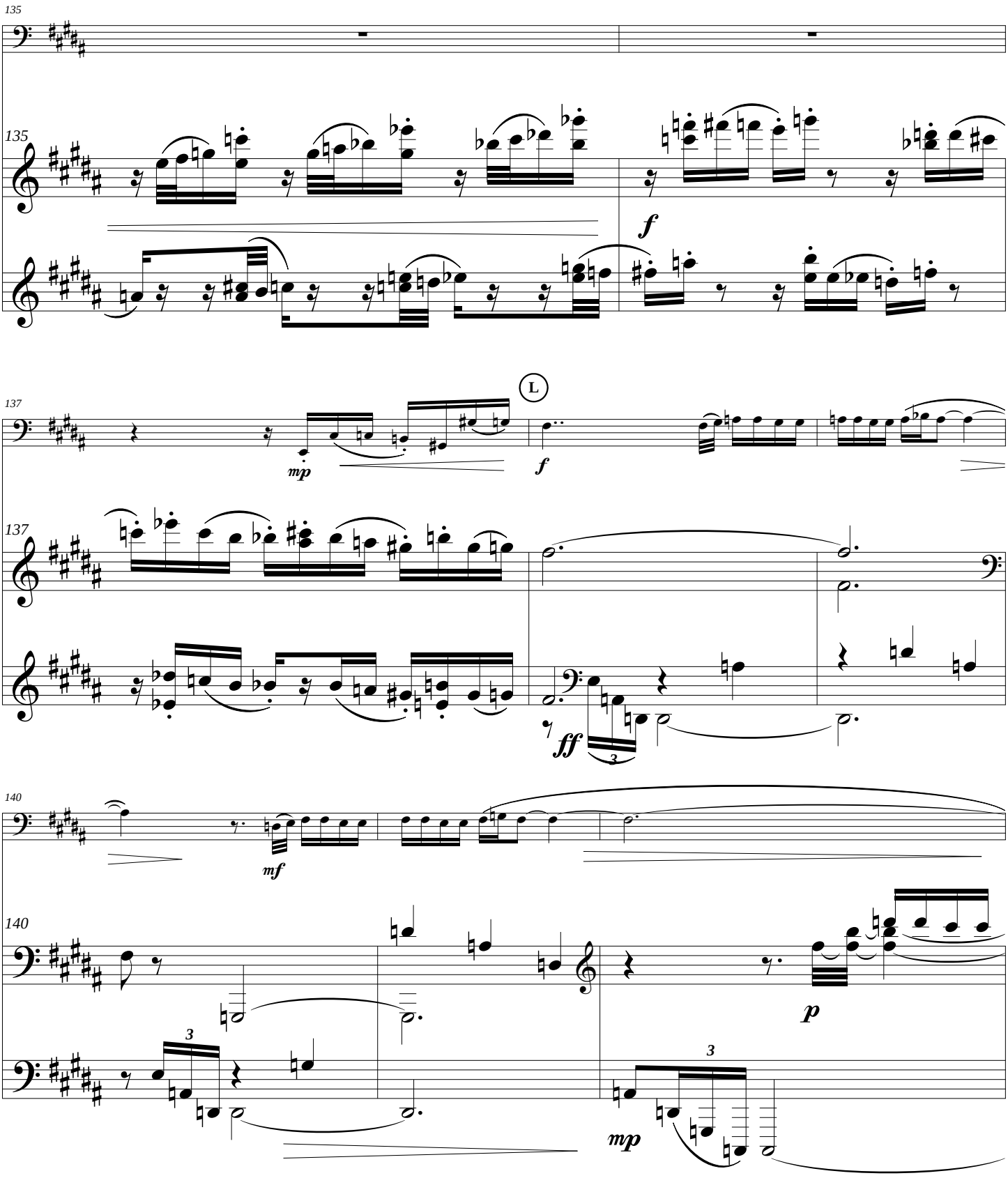

F
p
p
mp

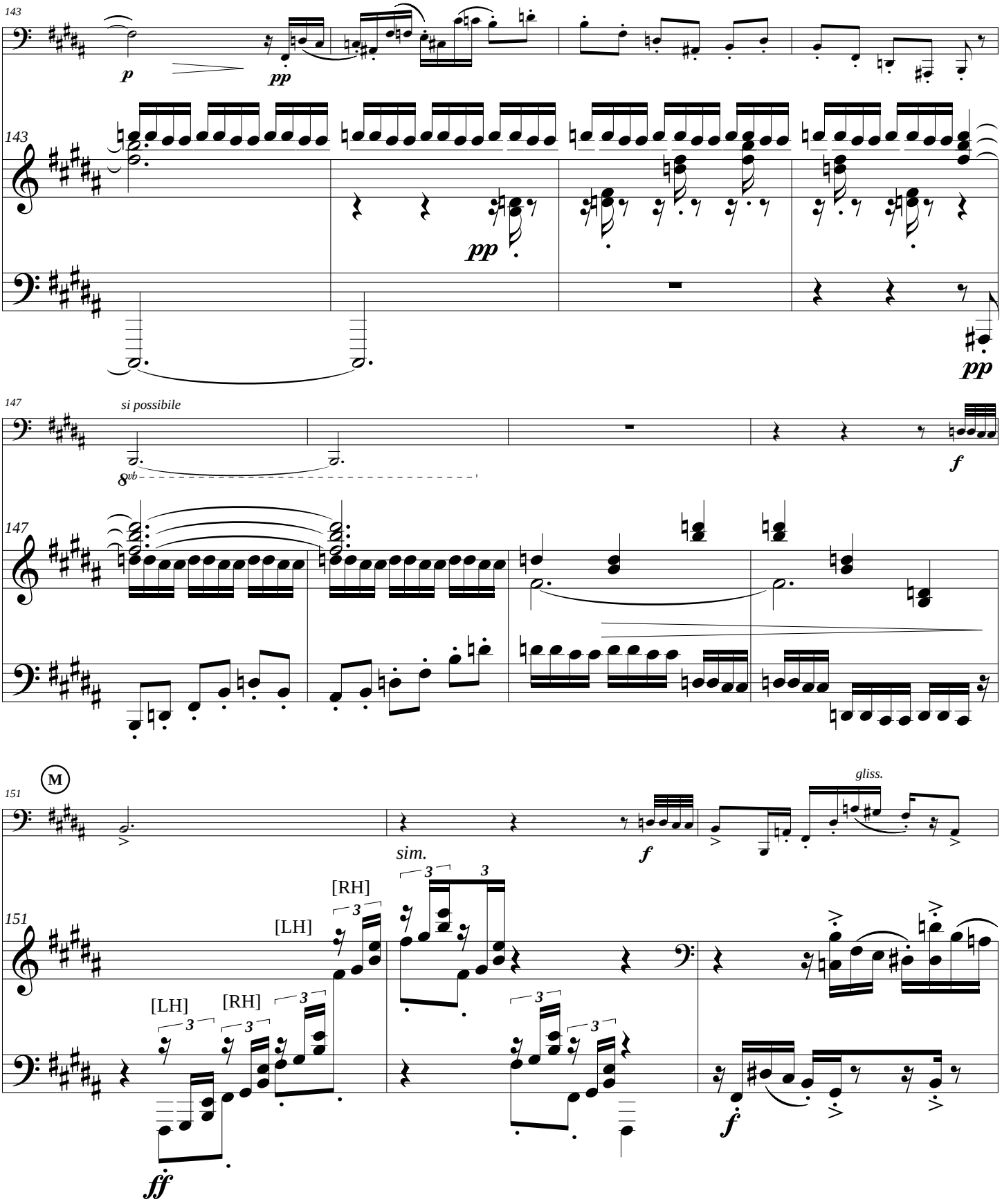

83
G
f
83
f
88
88
93
ff
93
ff

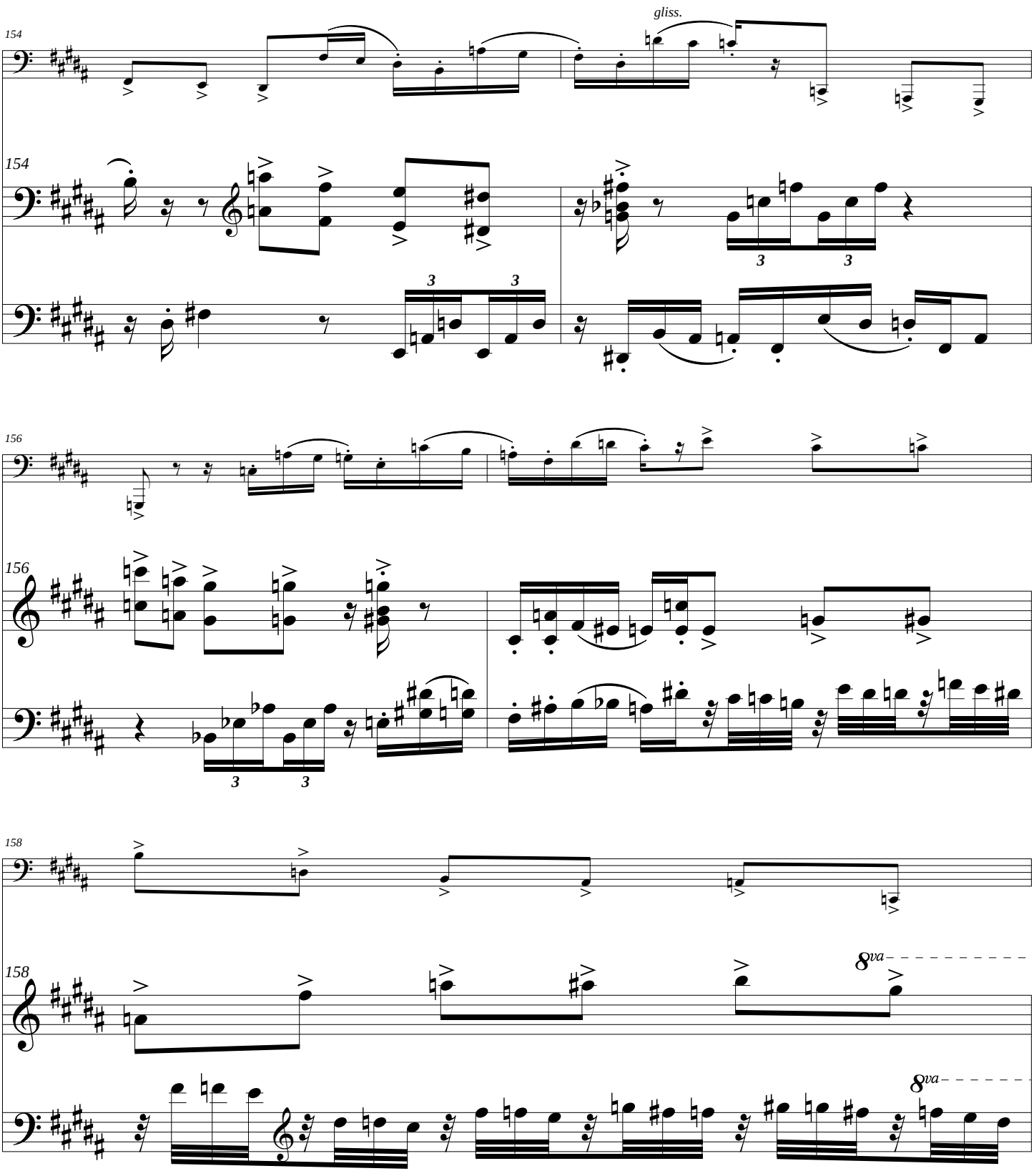

98
mf
98
2
H
103
mp
103
mf
mp
108
I
p
pp
108
p

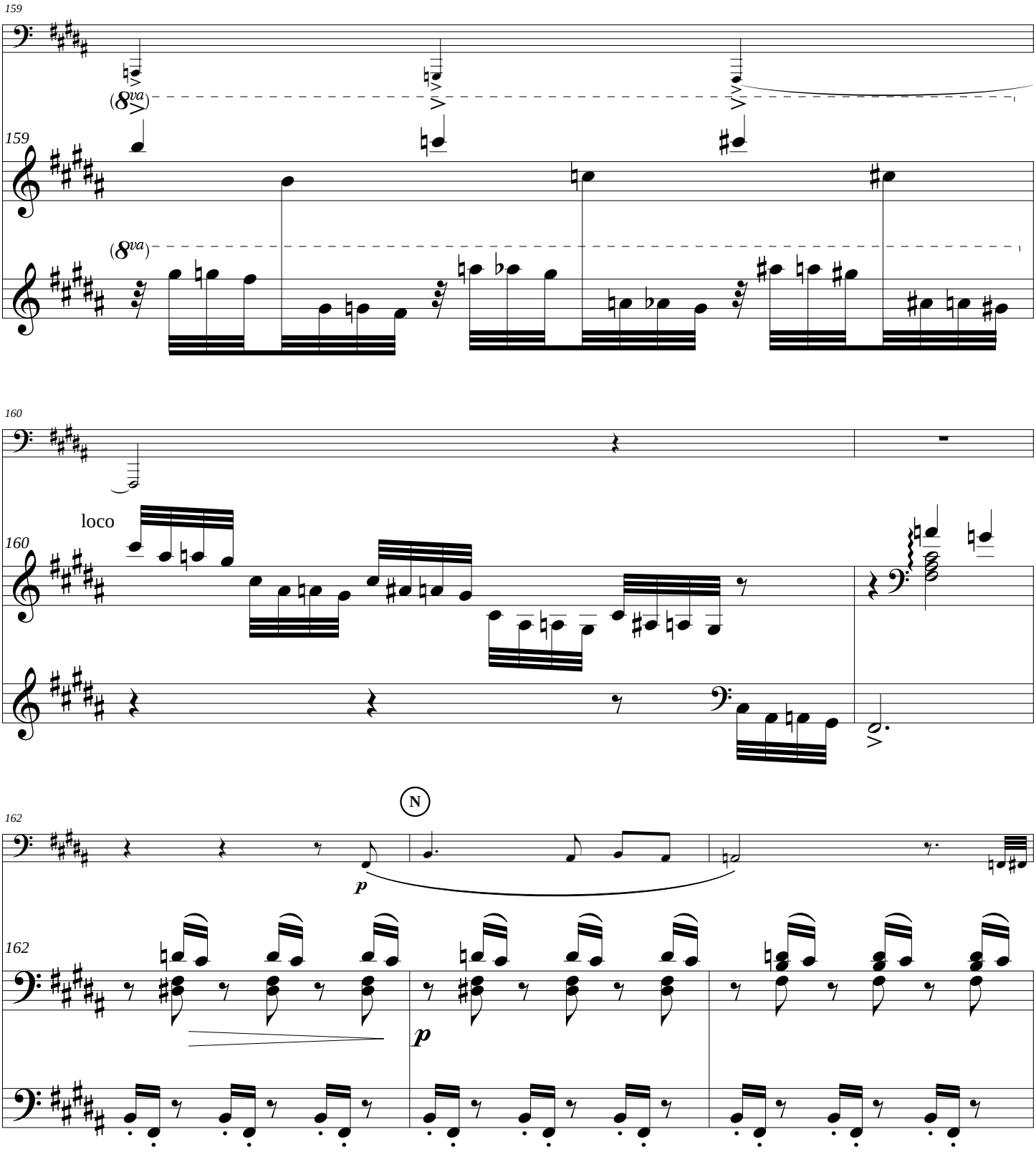

113
p
pp
113
J
Moderato
(= c. 84)
119
p
mf
p
119
mf
p
mf
122
122
p
mf

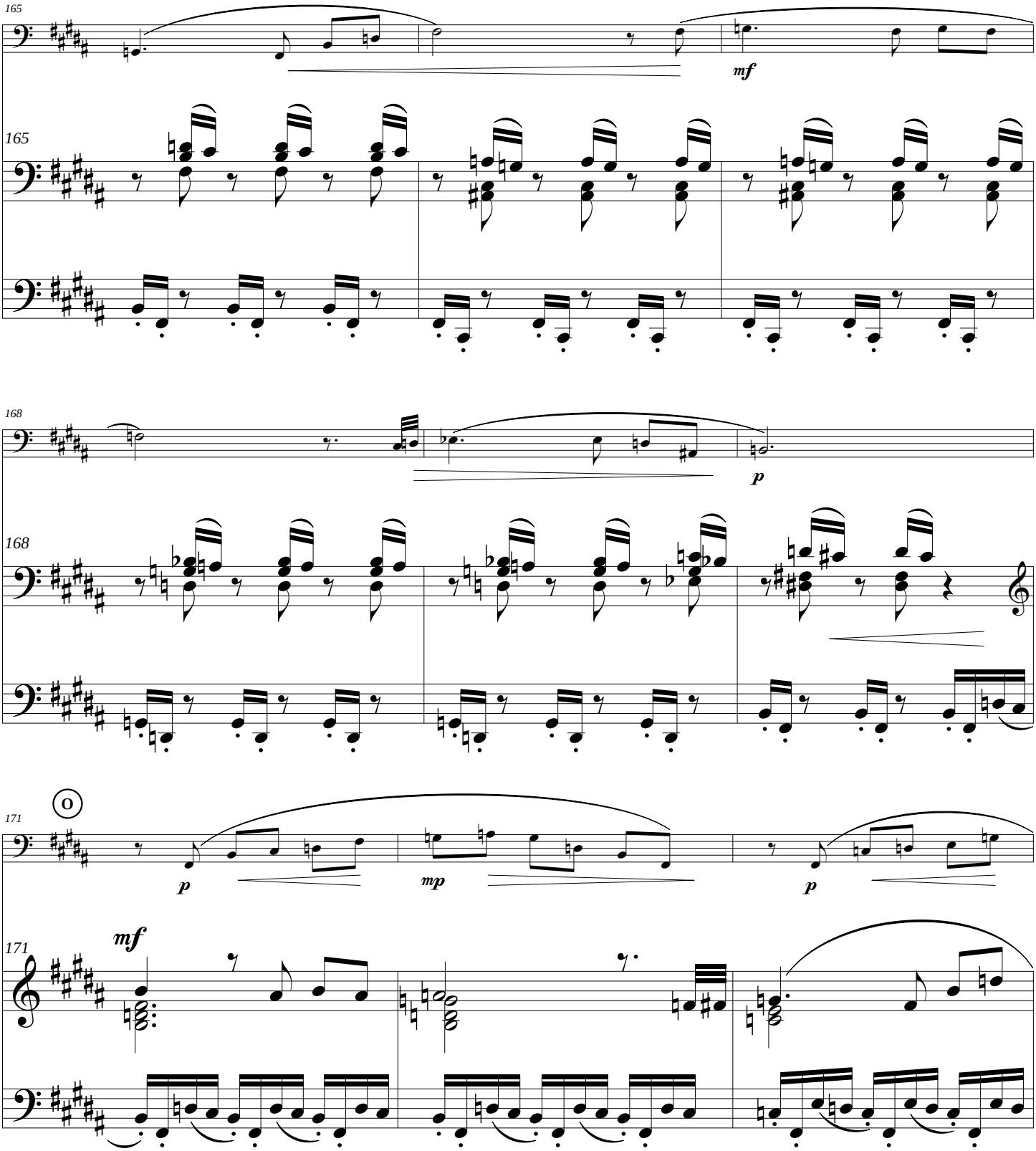

126
K
mf
p
126
p
129
129
132
132

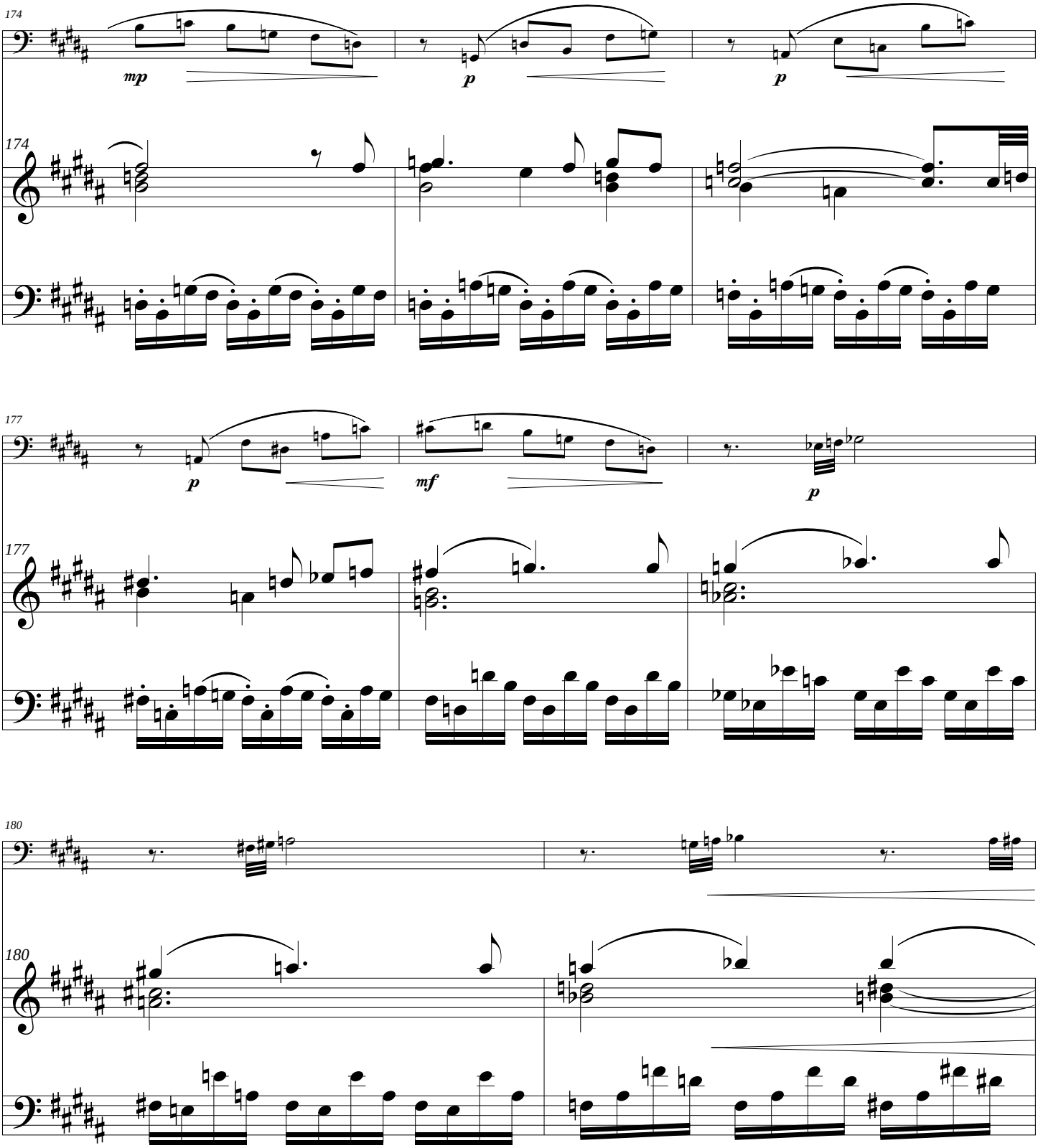

135
135
f
137
mp
L
f
137
ff
3
140
mf
140
3
p
3
mp


143
p
pp
143
pp
pp
147
si possibile
8vb
f
147
M
151
sim.
f
gliss.
151
[RH]
[LH]
[LH]
[RH]
ff
f

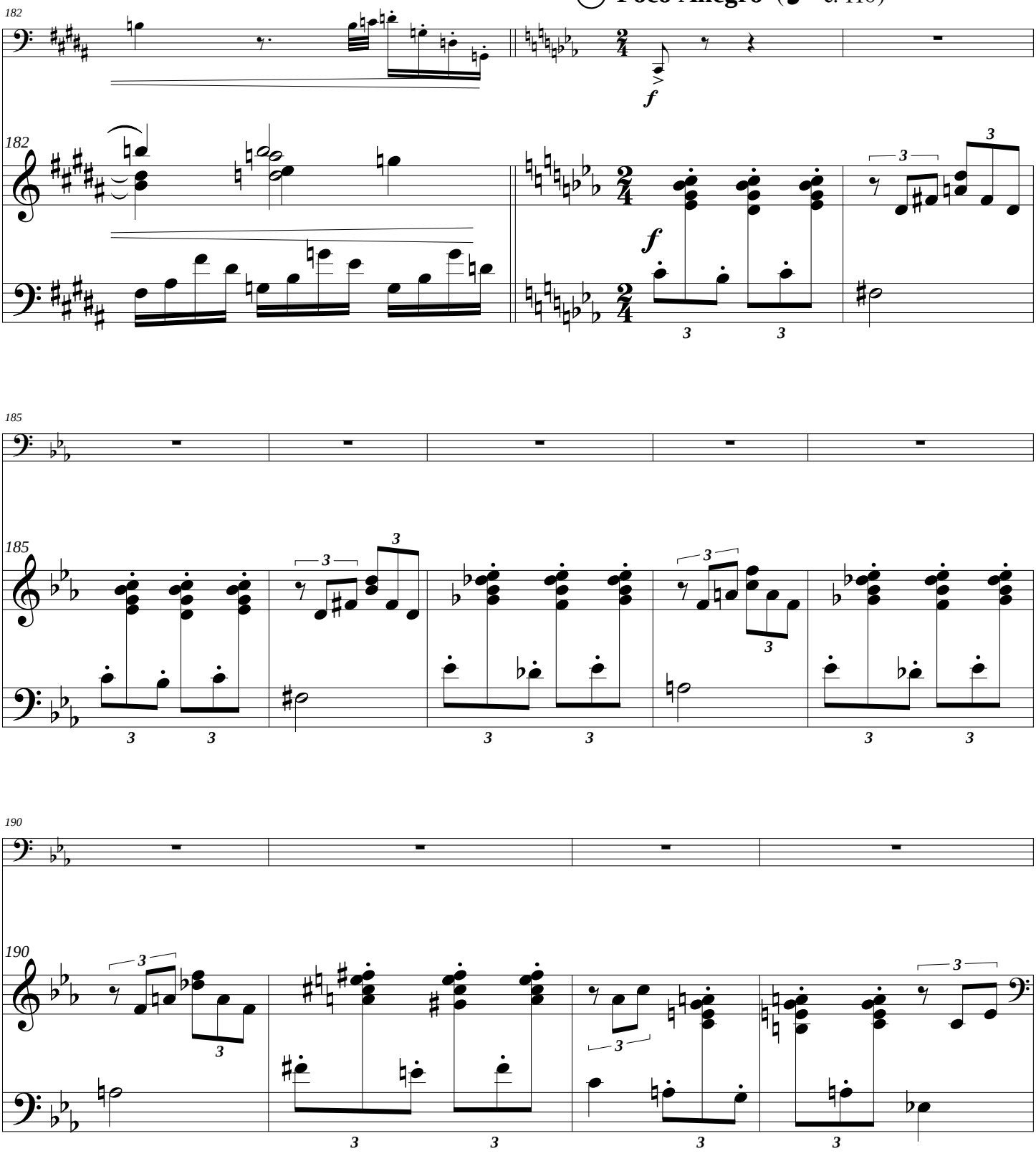

154
gliss.
154
156
156
158
158
8va
8va


159
(8va)
159
(8va)
160
loco
160
N
162
p
162
p


165
mf
165
168
p
168
171
p
mp
p
171
mf


174
mp
p
p
174
177
p
mf
p
177
180
180

P **Poco Allegro** (♩ = c. 116)



Q

194

194

p

199

mp

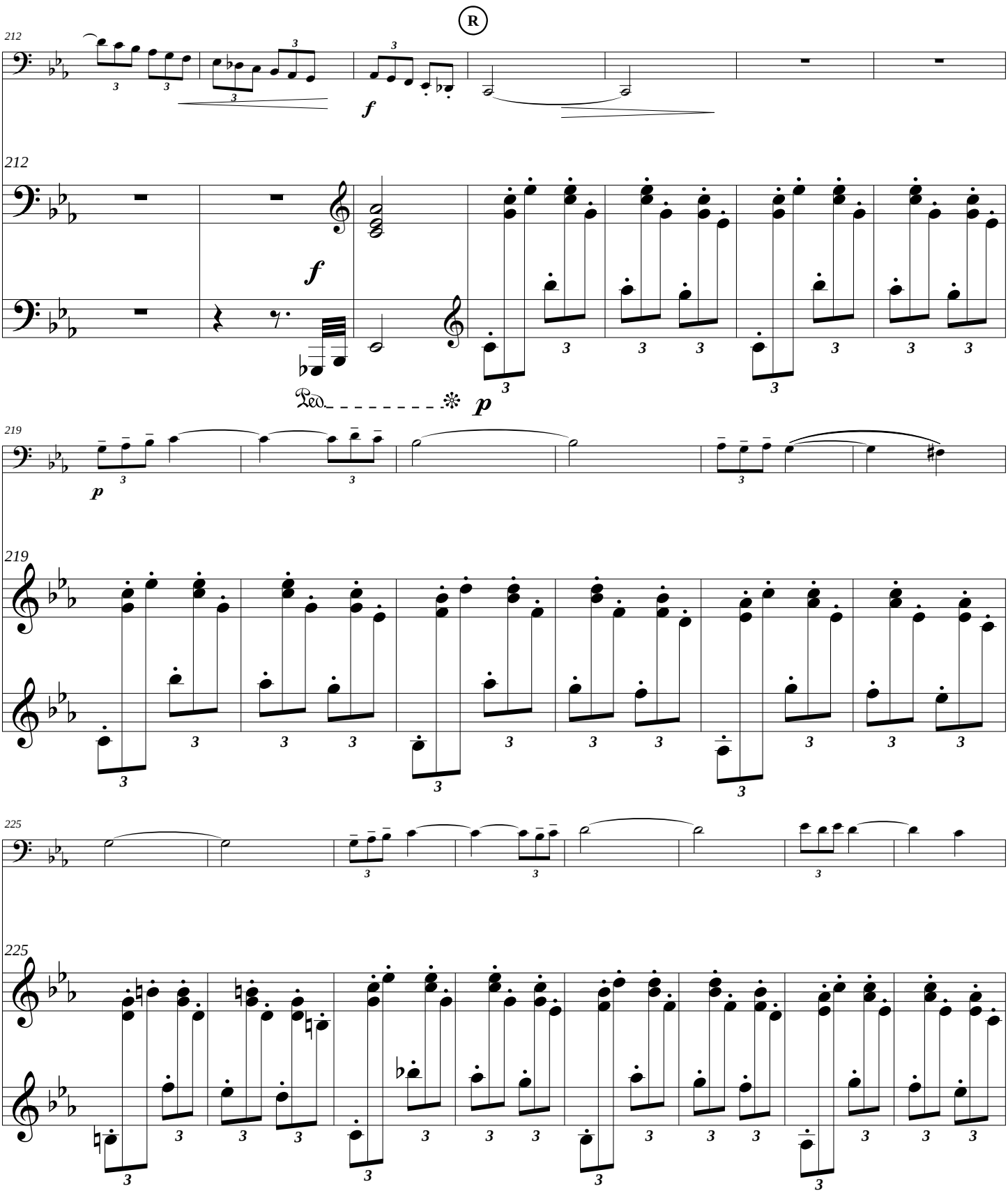
199

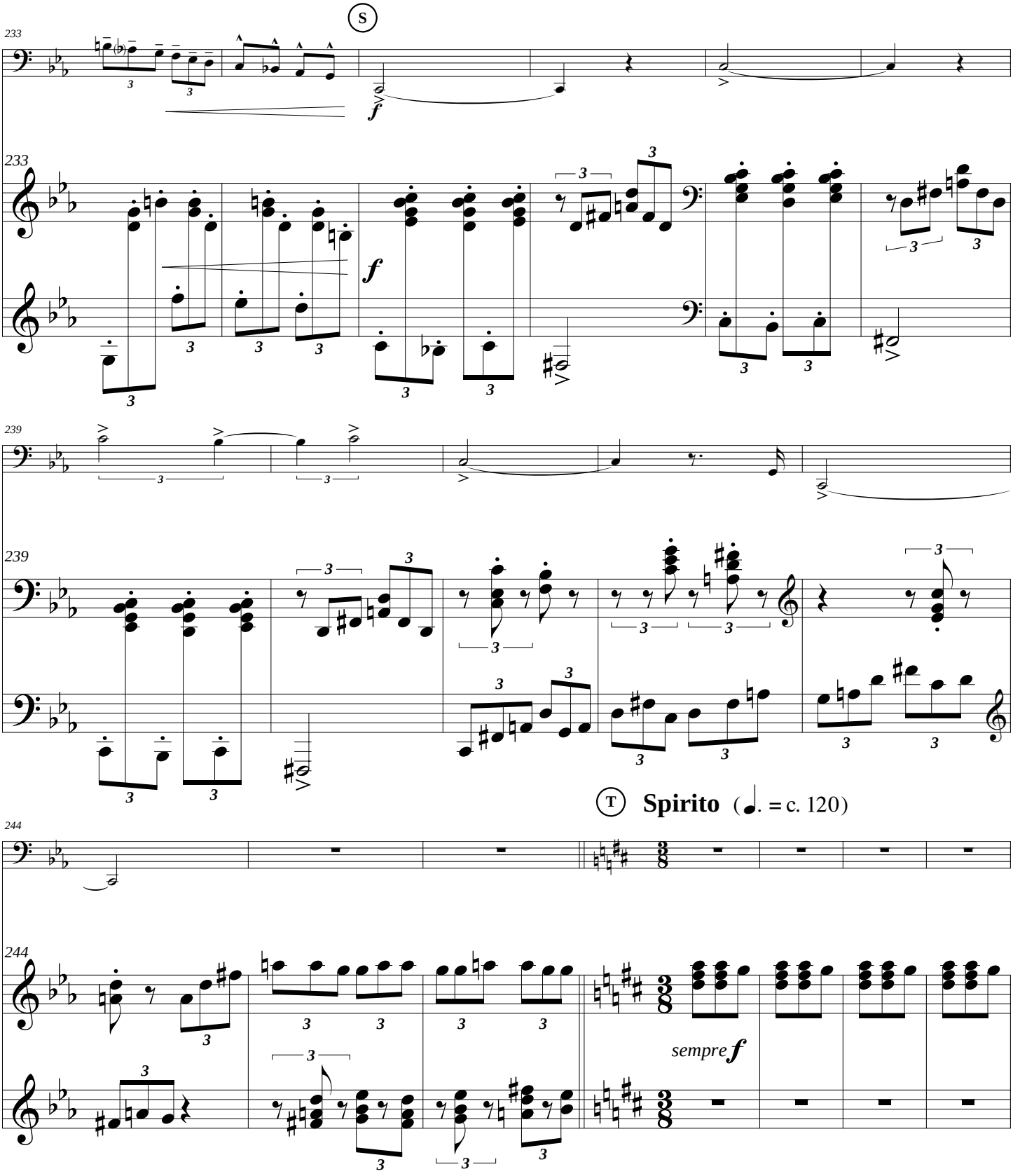
205

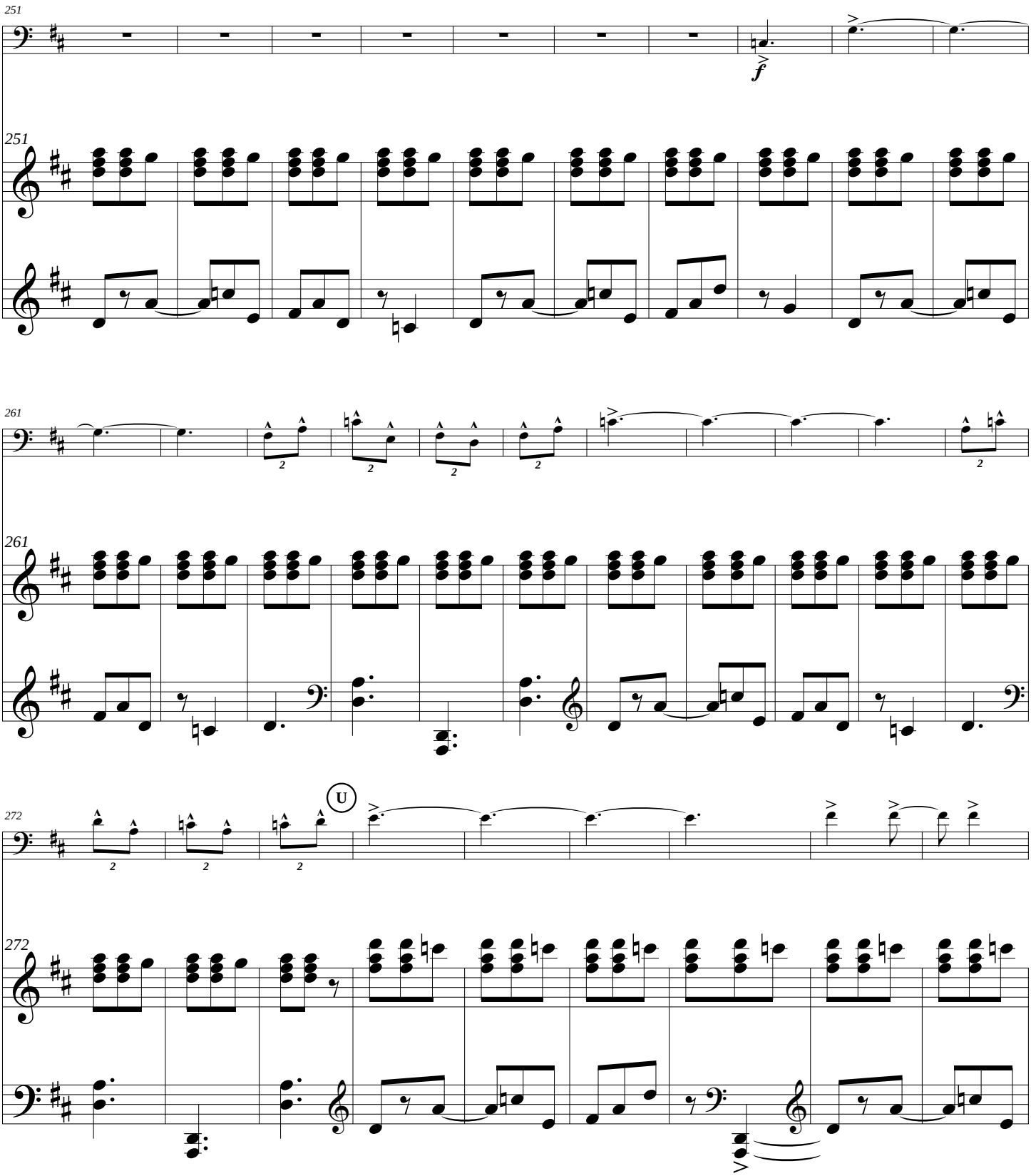
p

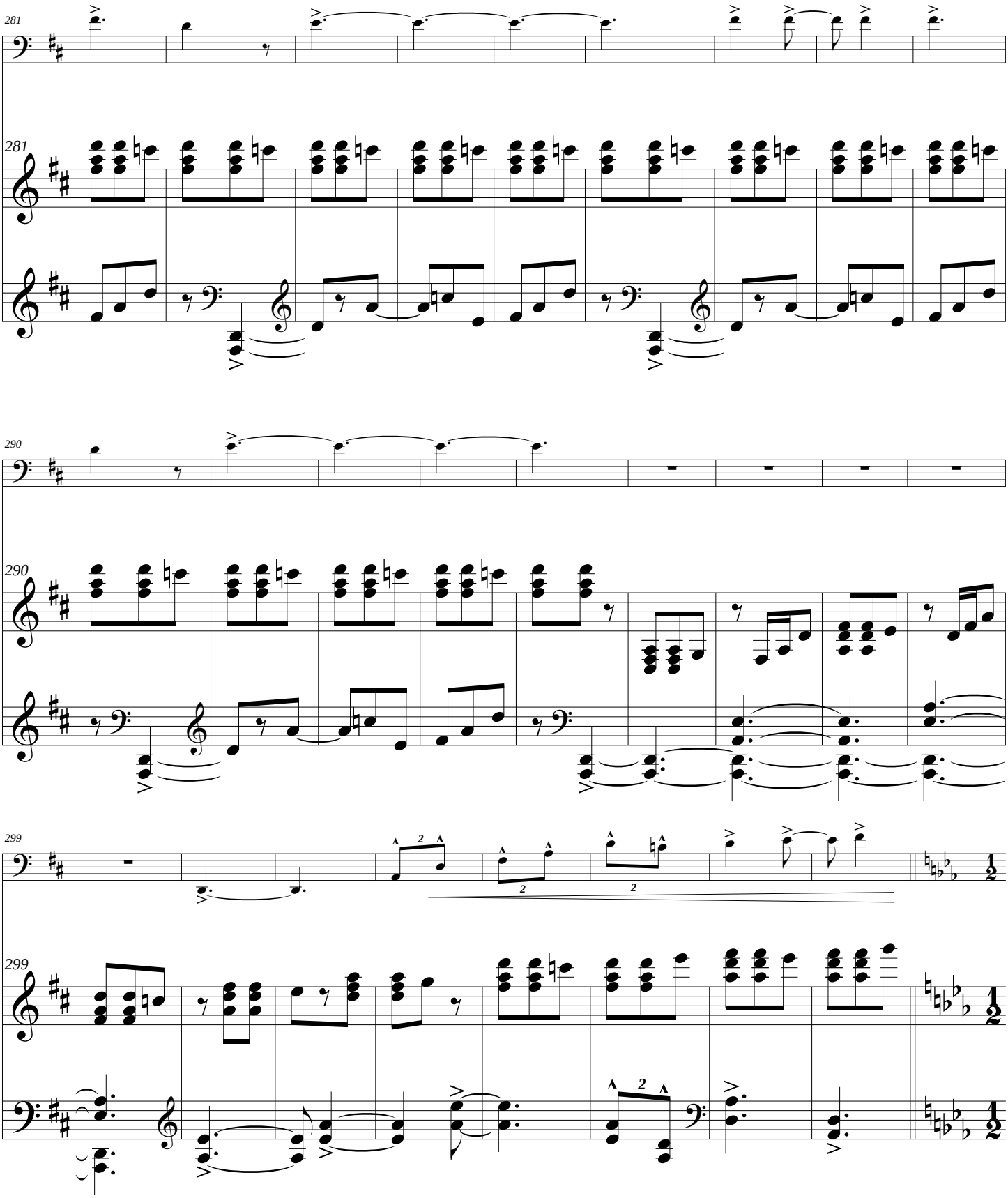
205

f

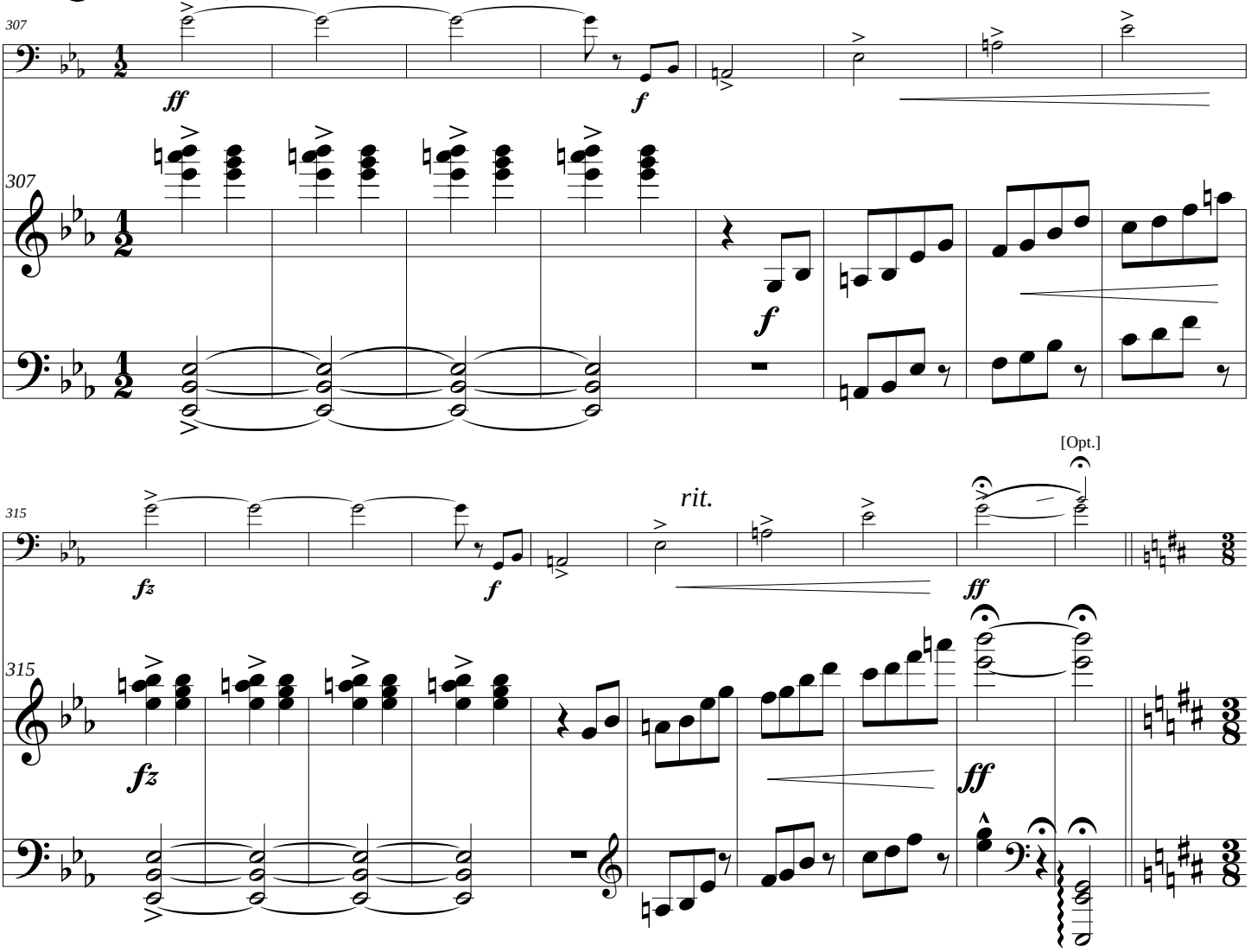

R
212
f
212
f
Ped.
p
219
p
219
225
225


S
233
f
233
f
239
239
T
Spirito (♩. = c. 120)
244
244
sempre f

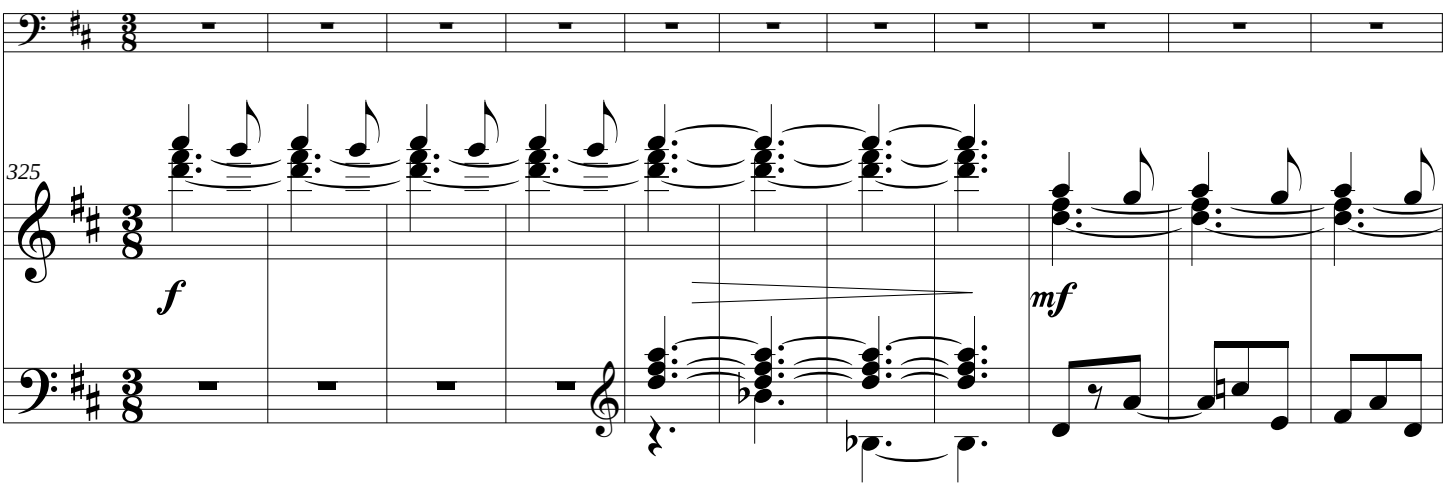

251
f
251
261
261
U
272
272

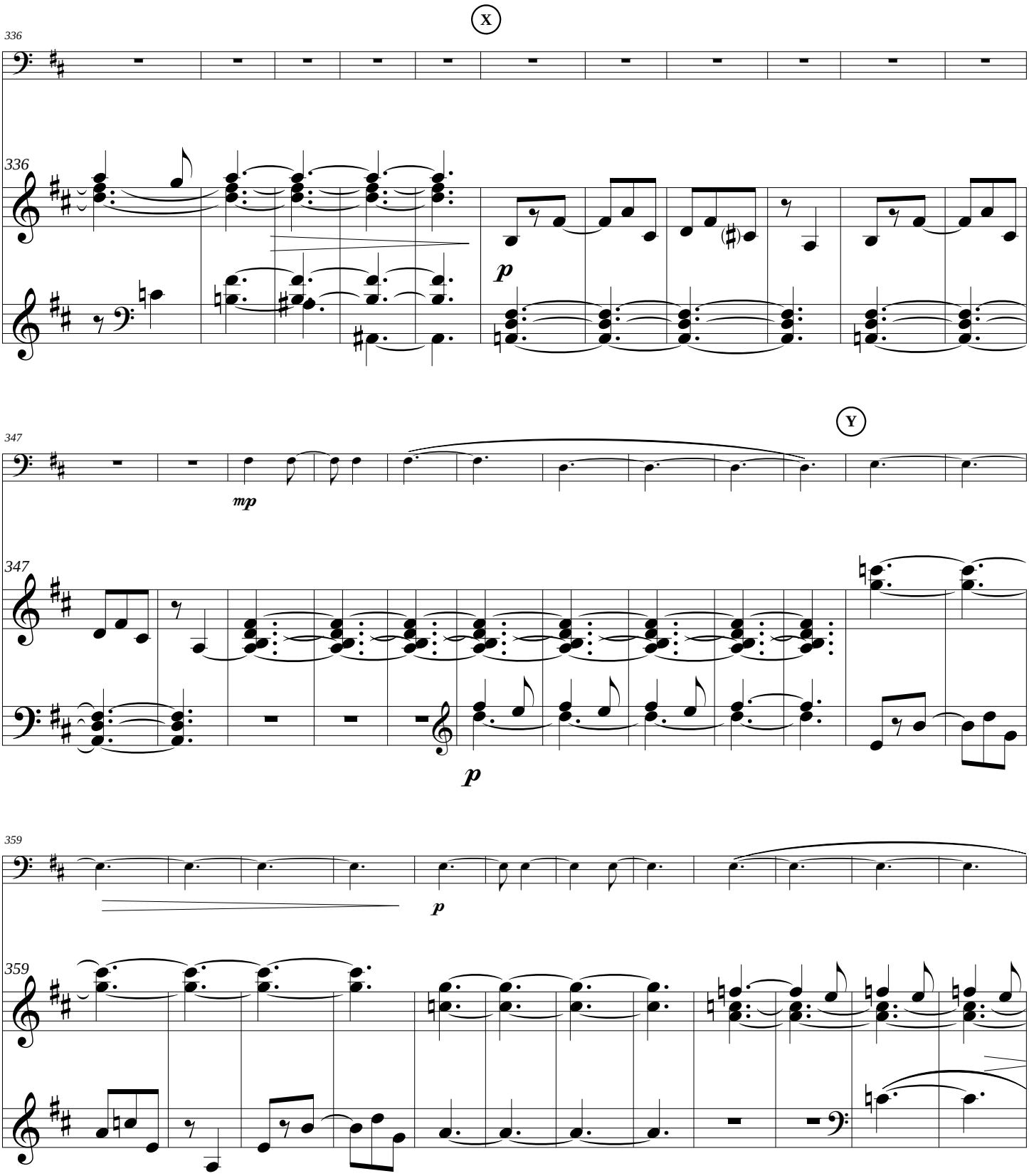

281
281
290
290
299
299

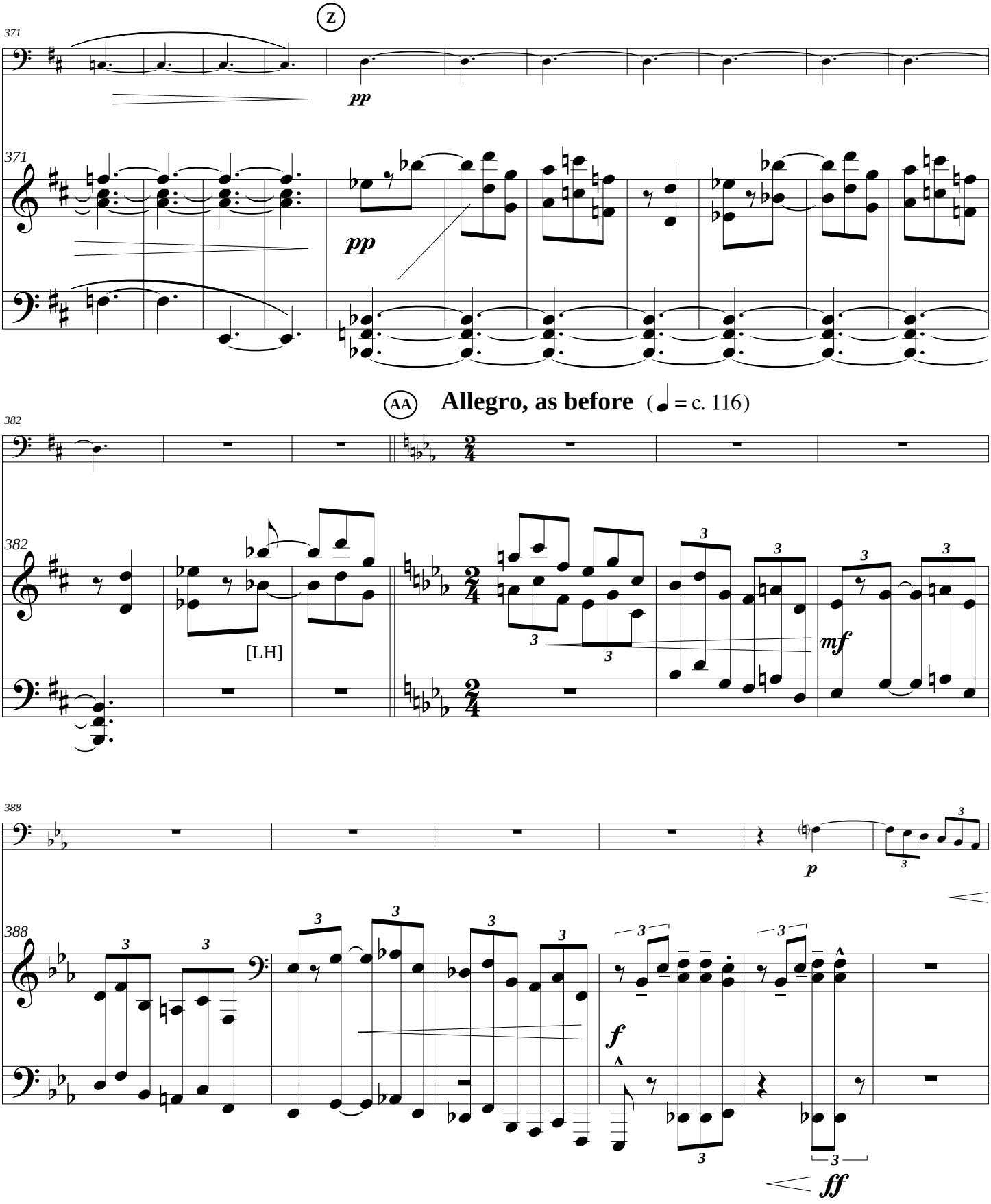
Ⓥ **Presto** (𝅗𝅥 = c. 126)

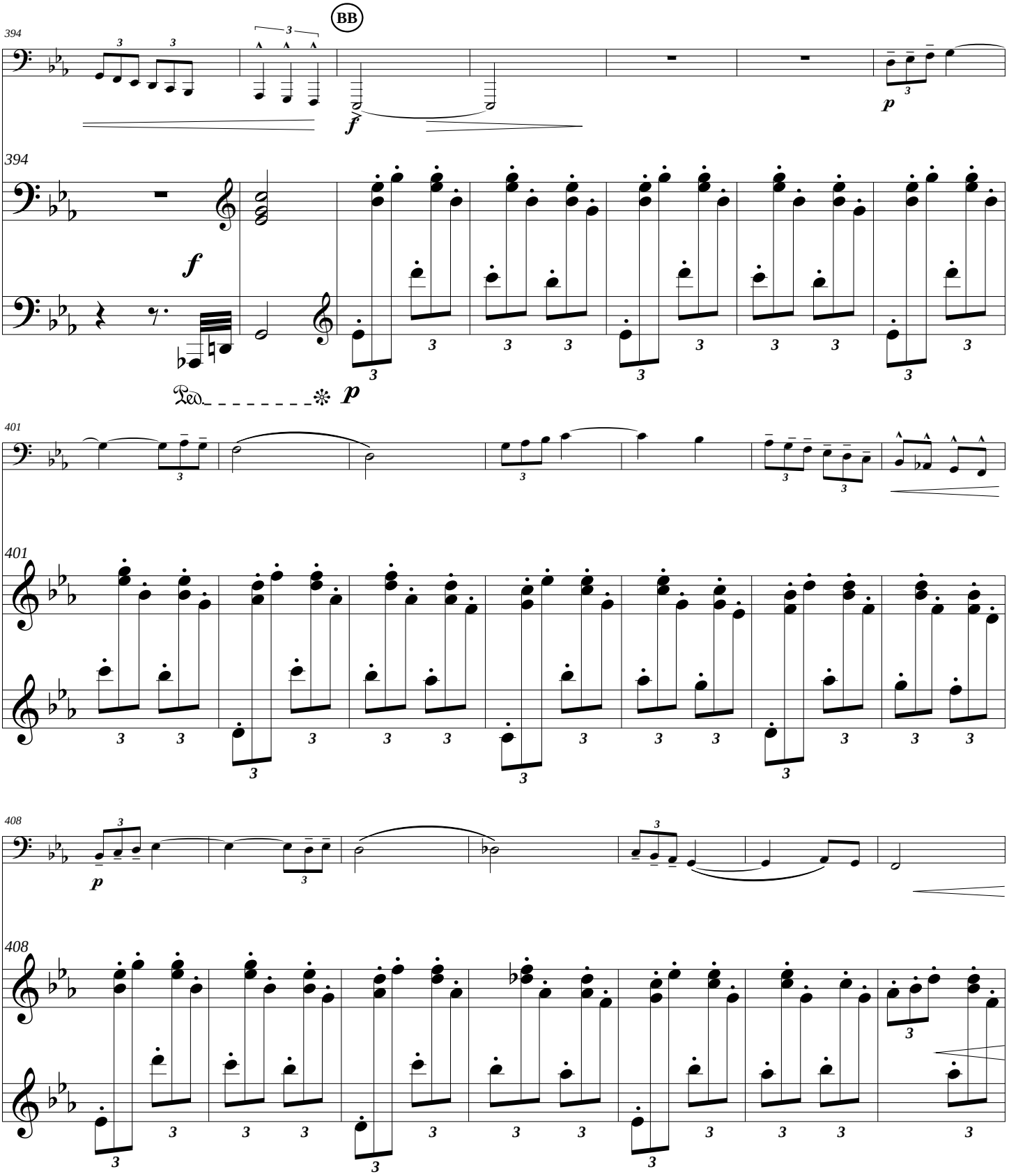


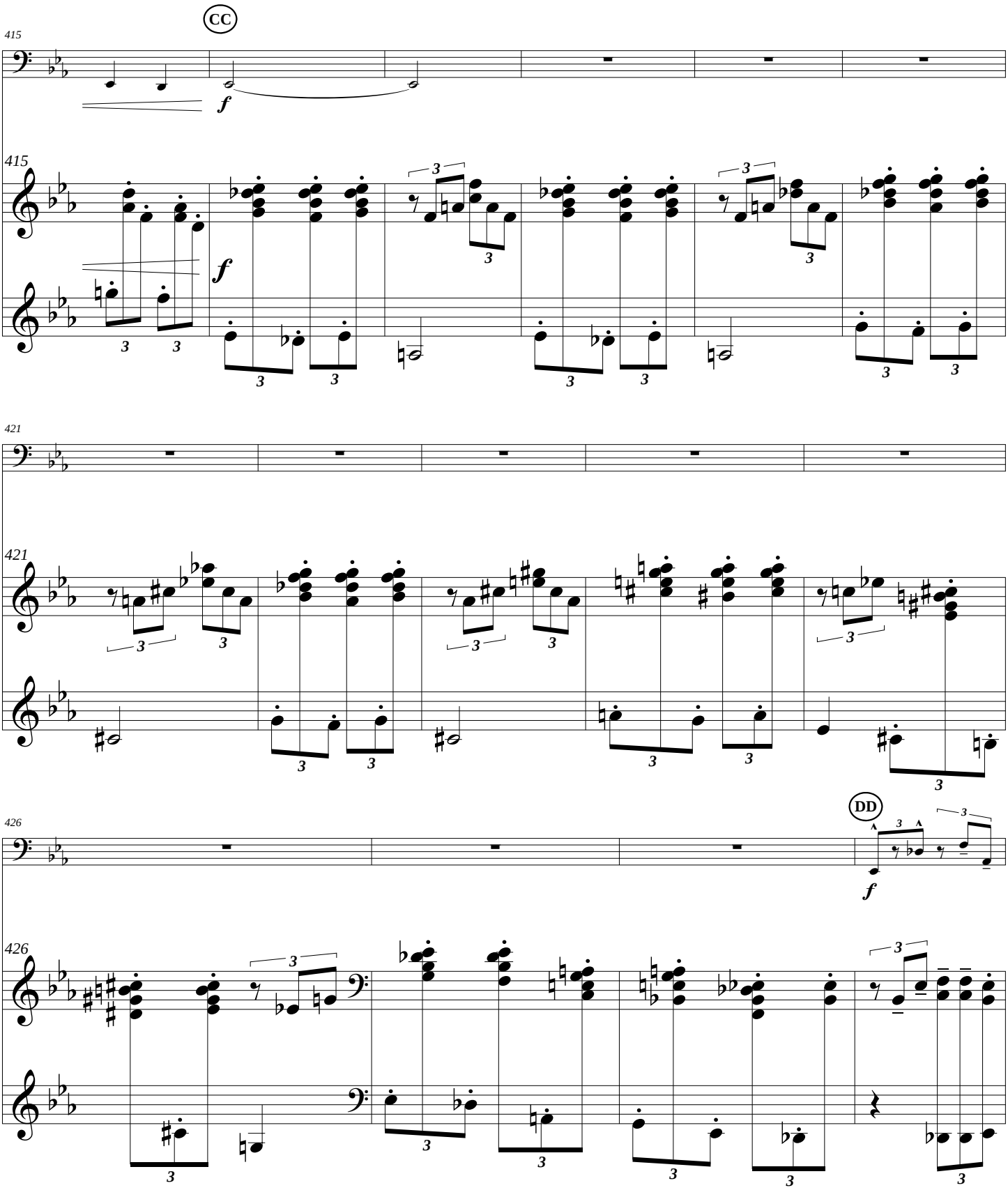
Ⓦ (♩. = c. 120)

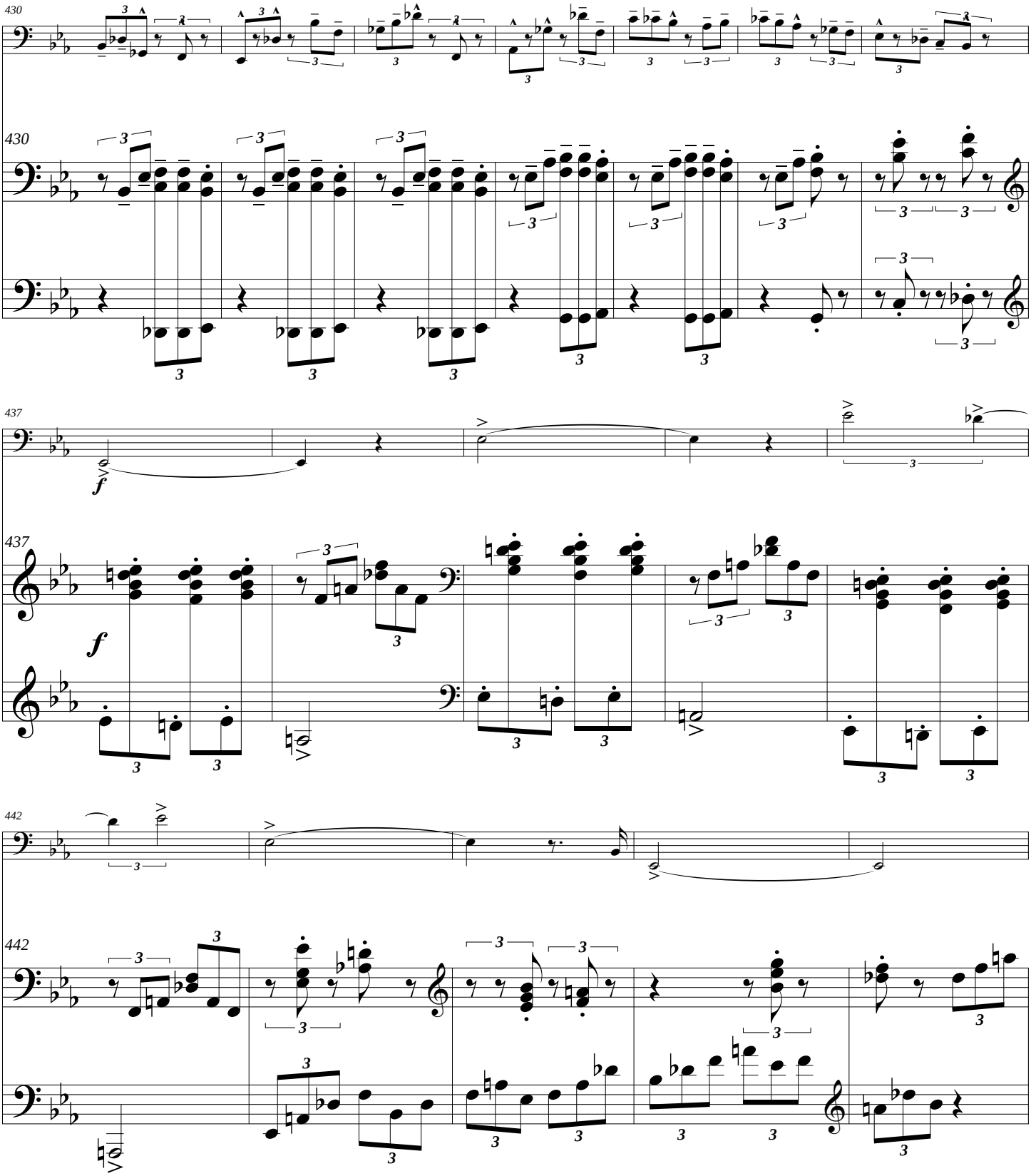



X
336
336
p
Y
347
347
mp
p
359
359
p


Z
371
pp
371
pp
AA
Allegro, as before (♩ = c. 116)
382
382
[LH]
3
mf
388
388
p
3
f
ff

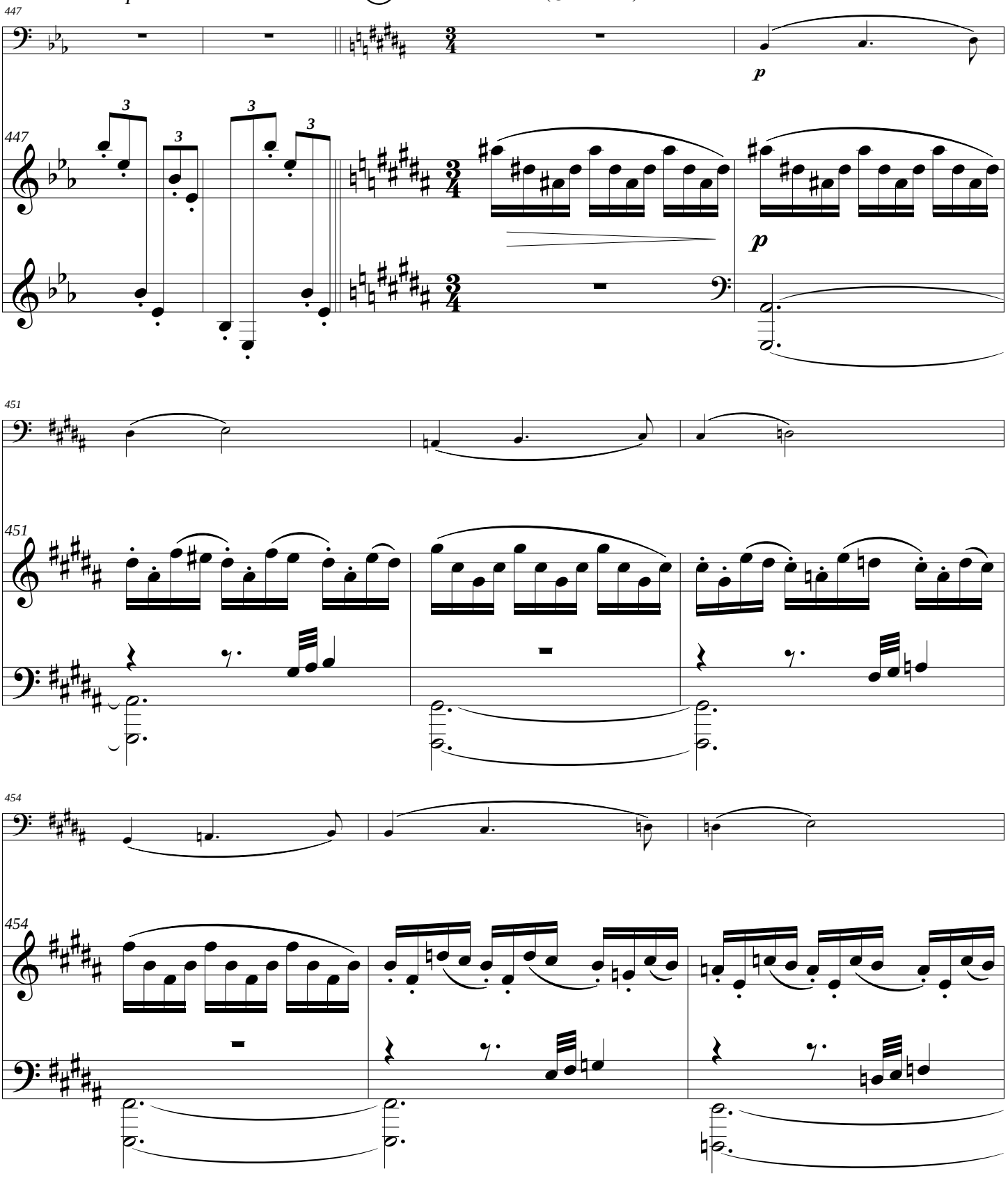

394
BB
f
p
394
f
Ped.
p
401
401
408
p
408

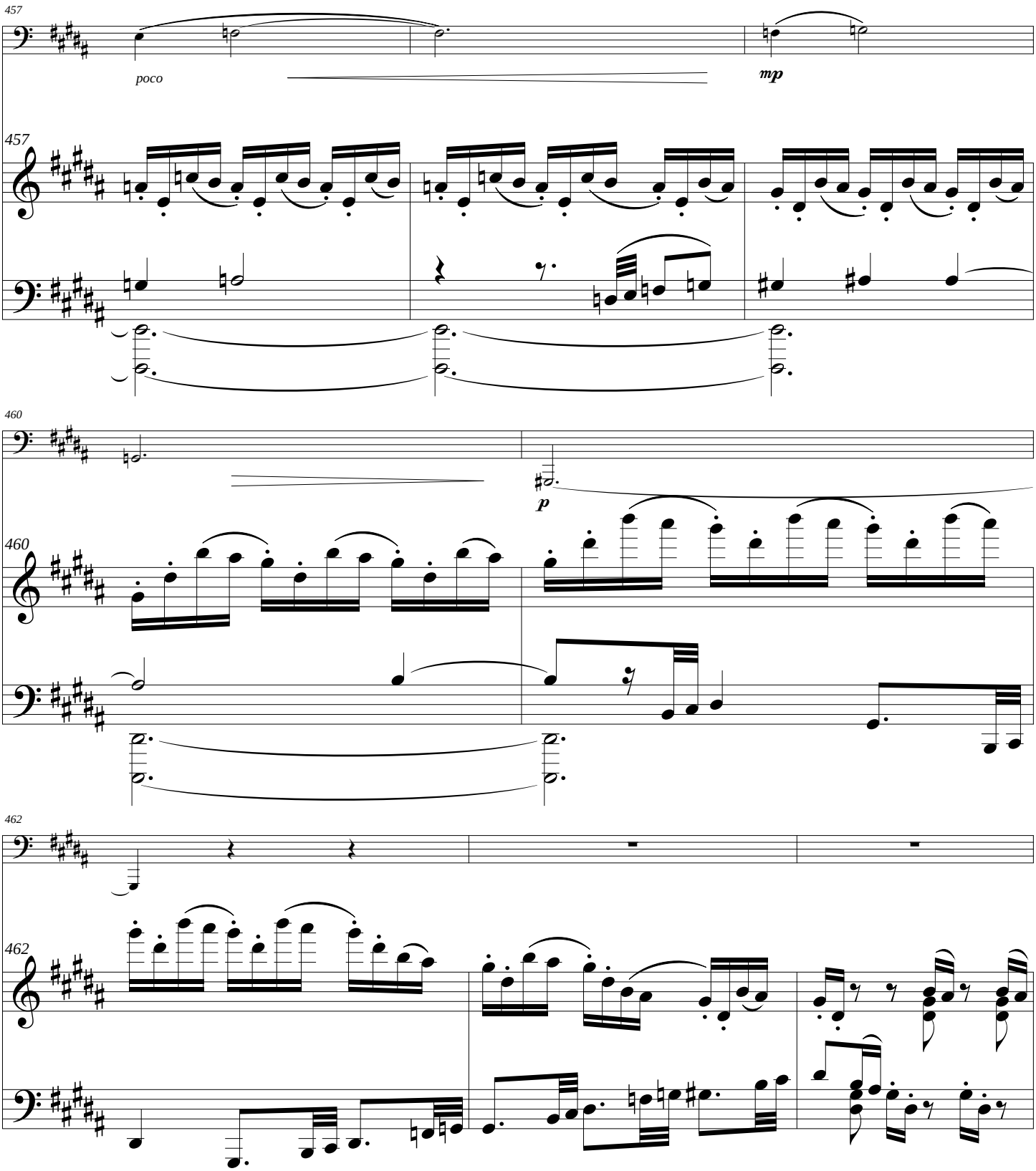

CC
415
f
415
f
421
421
426
DD
f
426

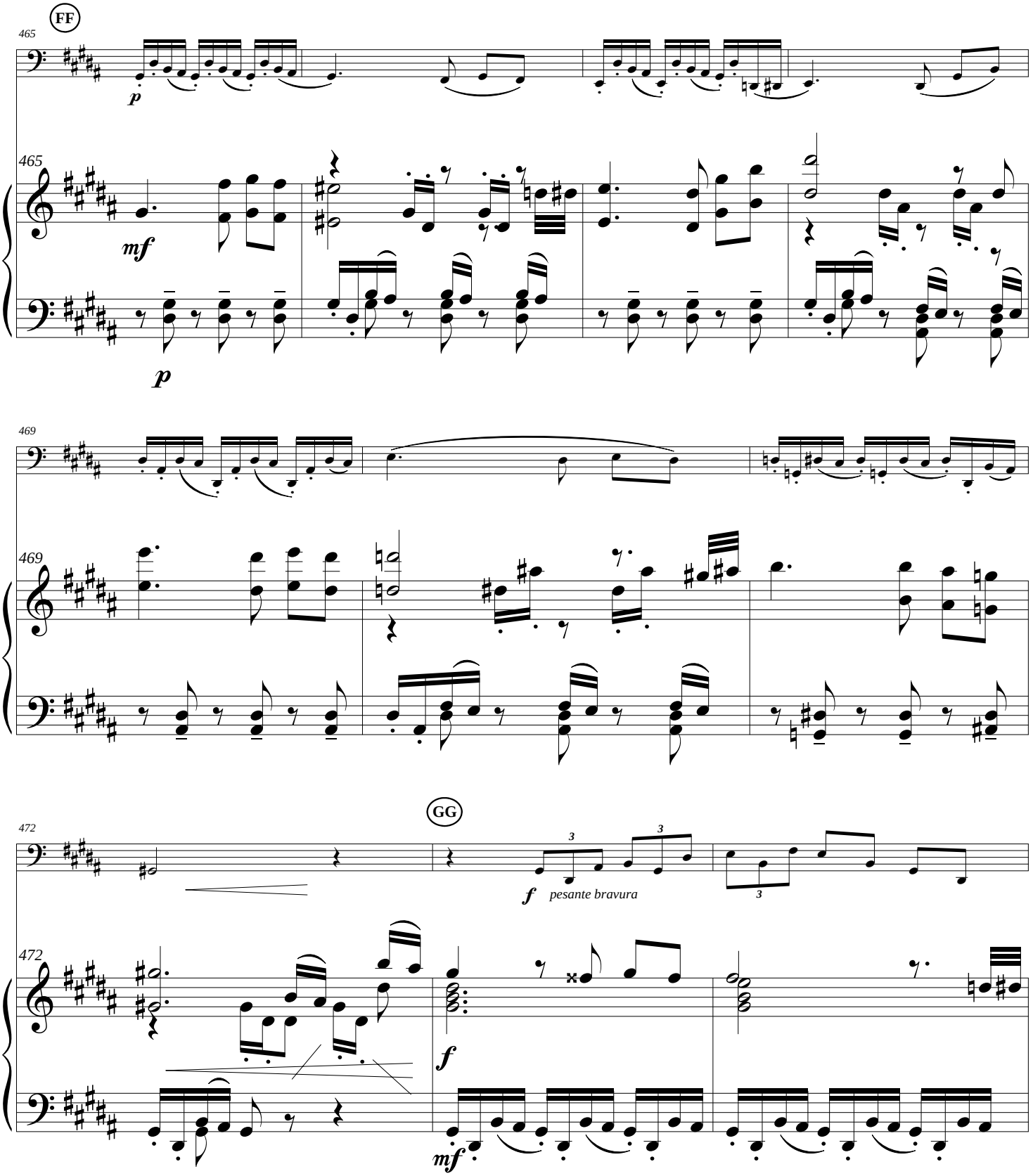

430
430
437
f
437
f
442
442

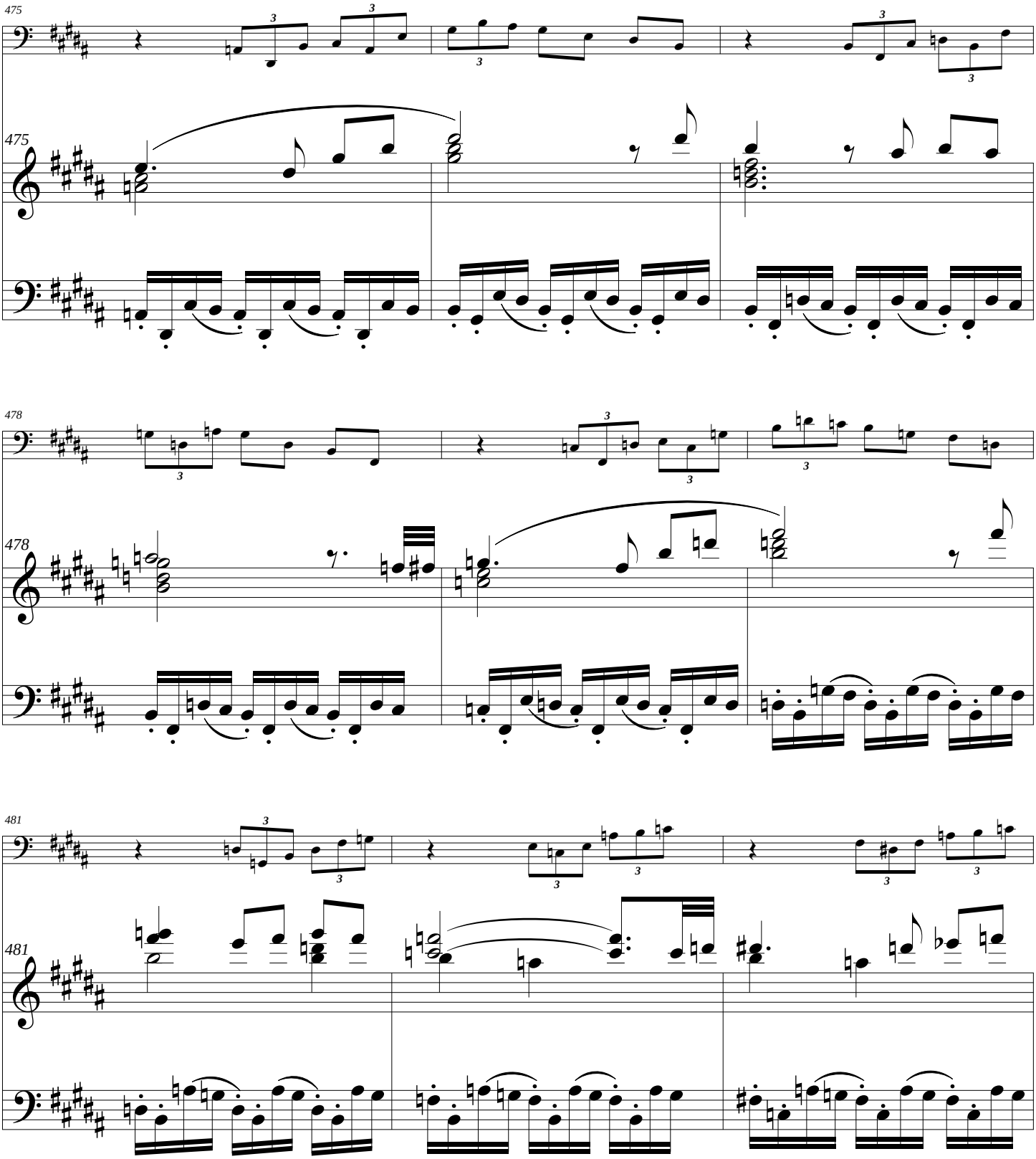
poco rit.

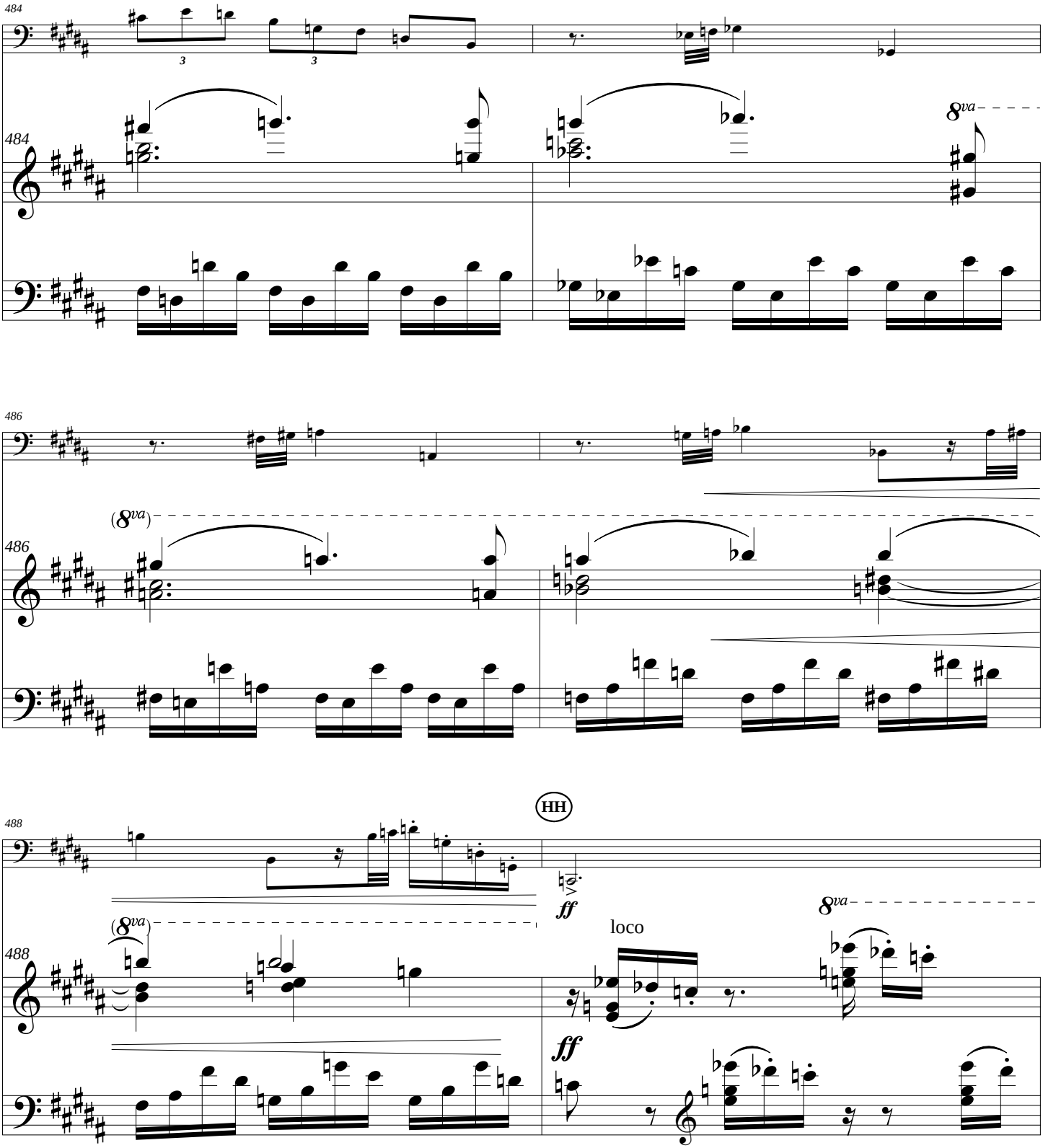
EE **Moderato** (♩ = c. 84)

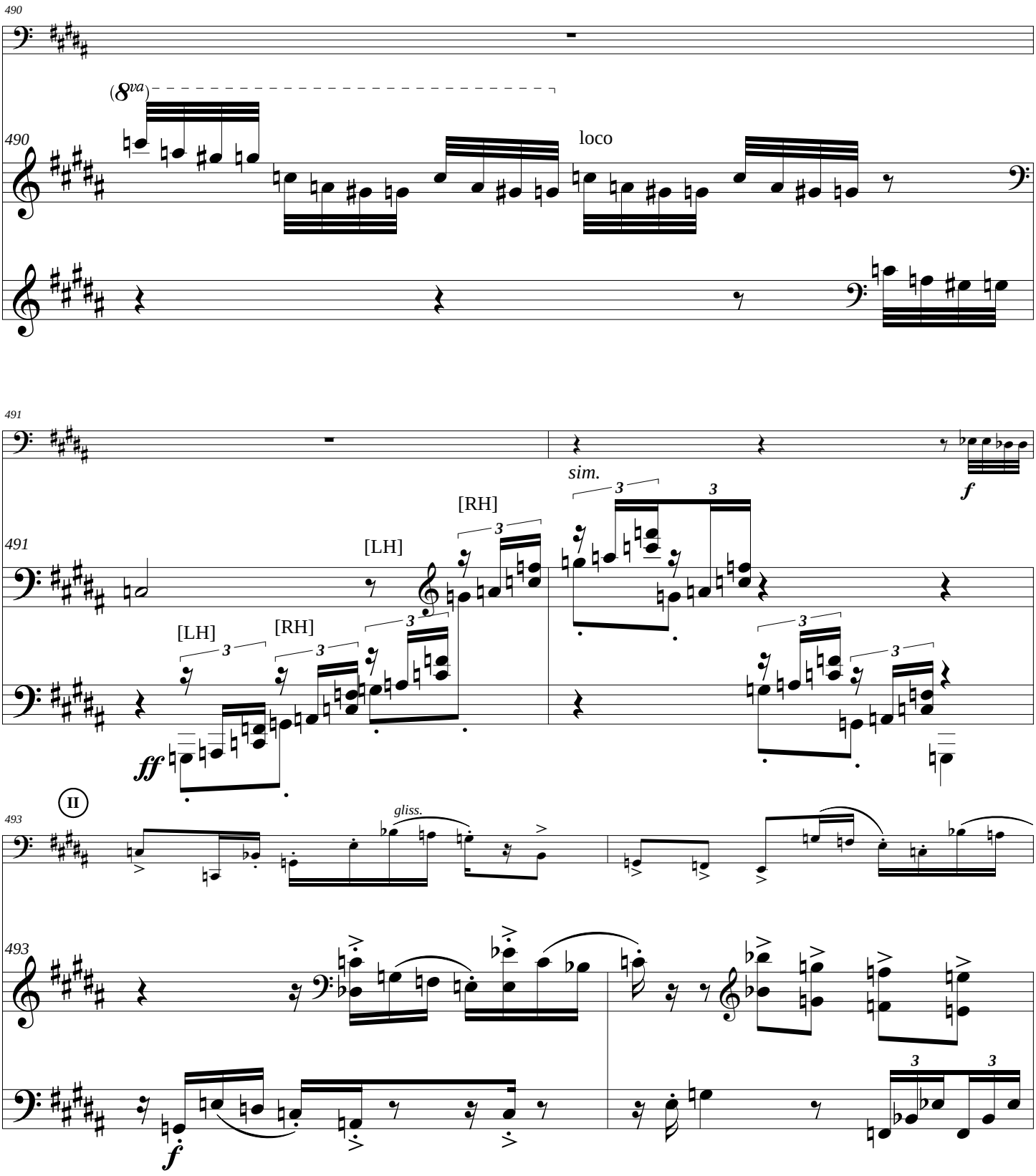


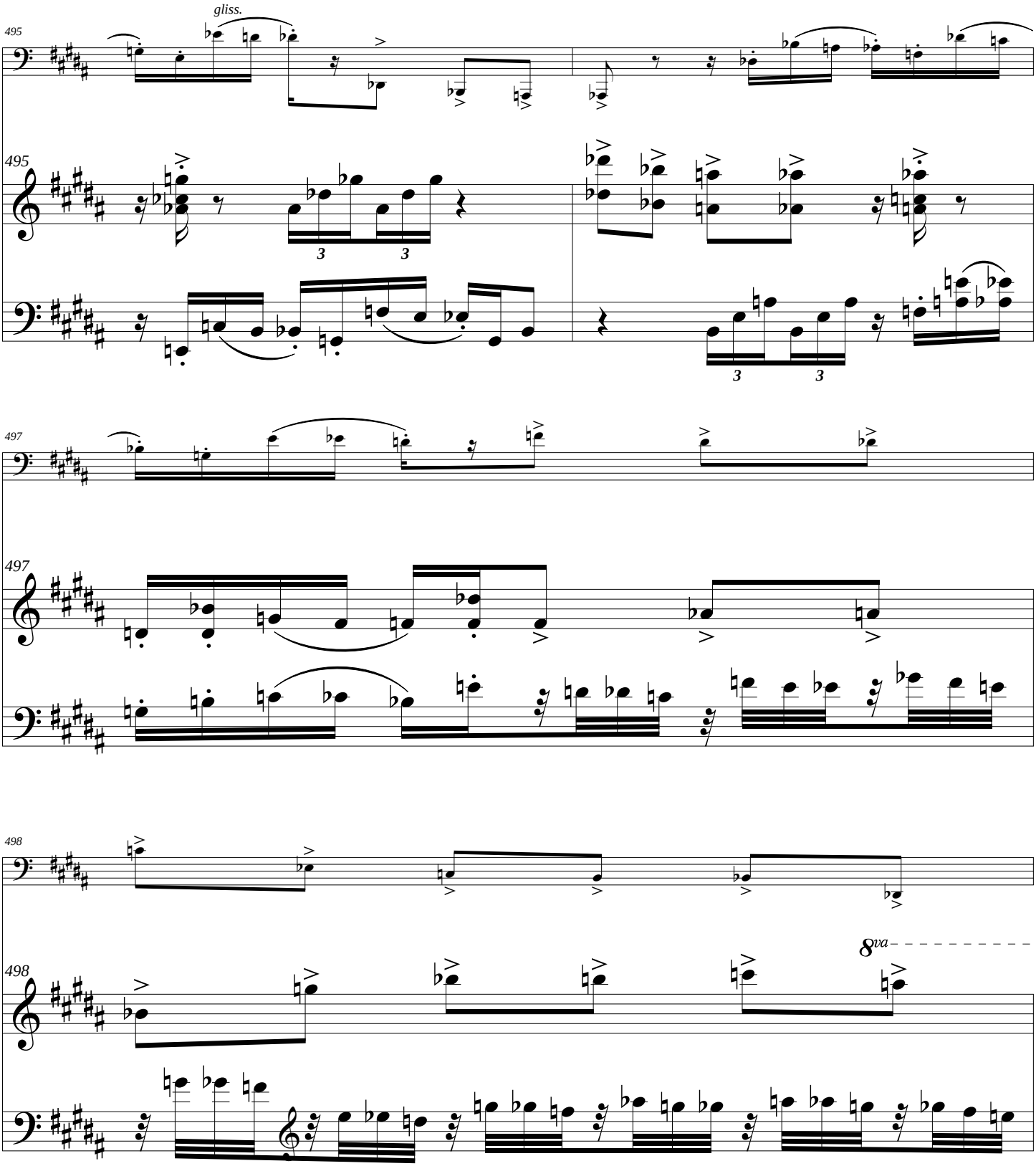

457
poco
mp
457
460
p
460
462
462

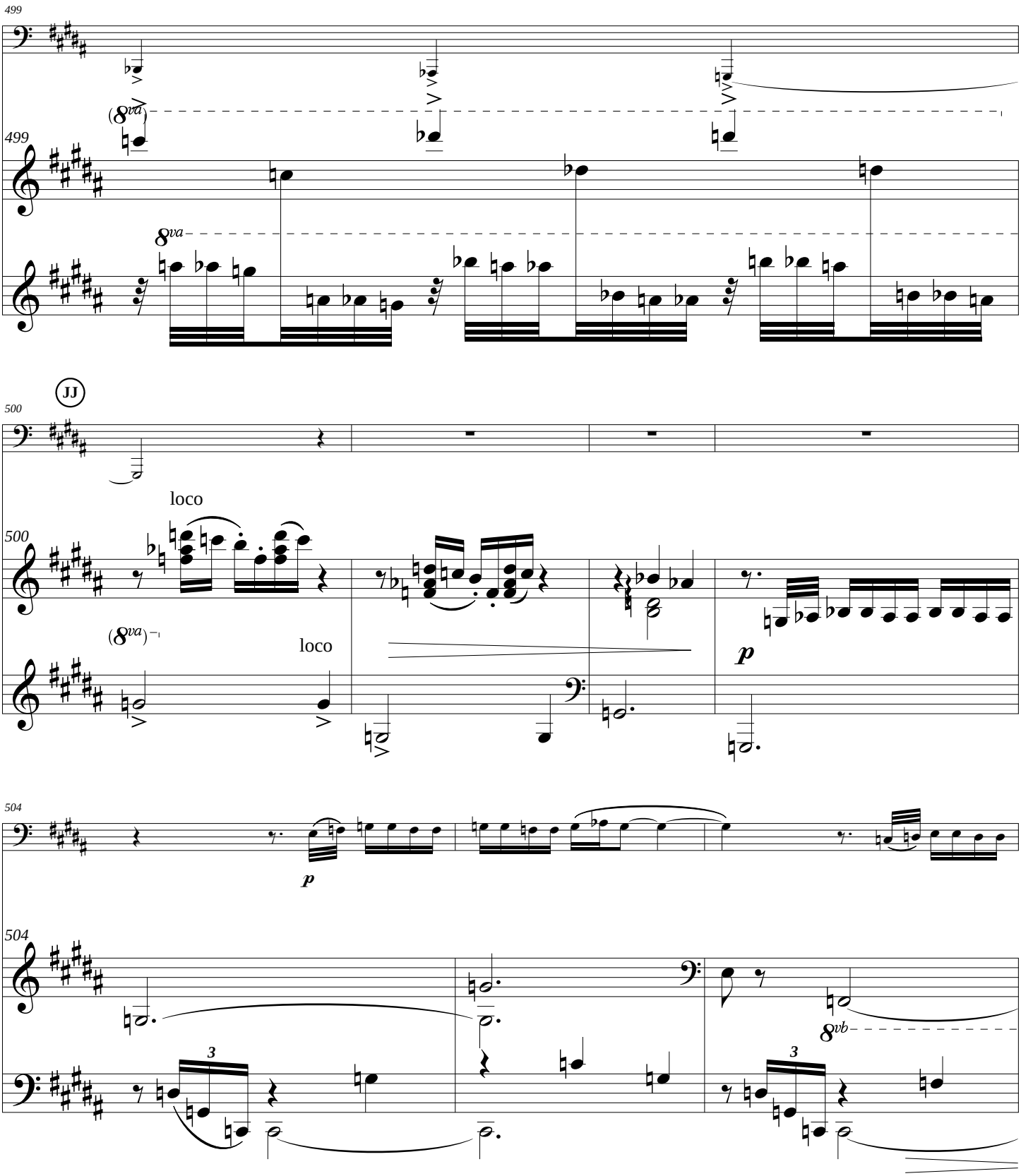

FF
465
p
mf
p
469
GG
472
f
pesante bravura
f
mf

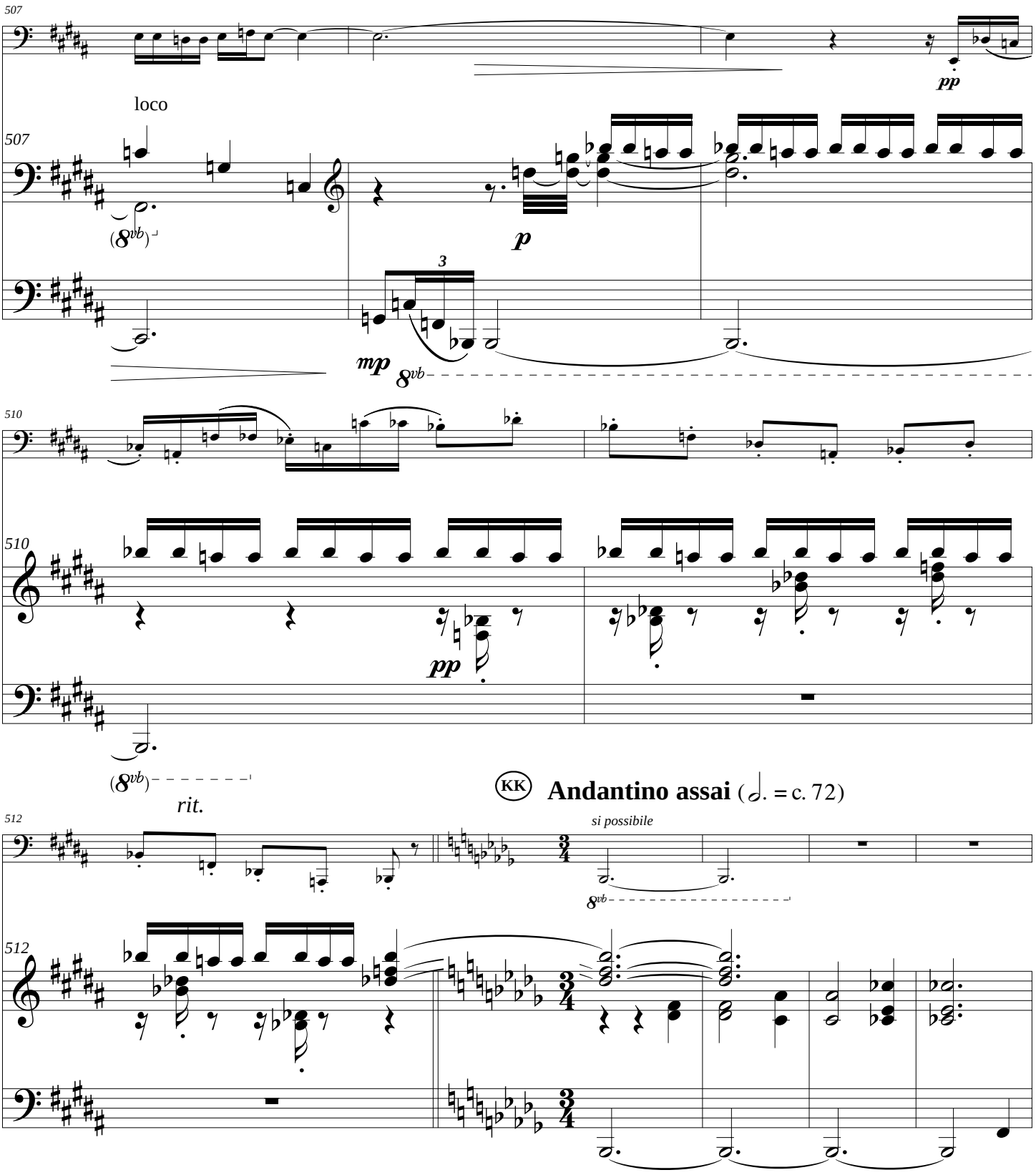

475
475
478
478
481
481


484
3
3
8va
486
(8va)
488
HH
ff
(8va)
loco
8va
ff


490
(8va)
490
loco
491
sim.
f
491
[LH]
[RH]
[LH]
[RH]
ff
II
493
gliss.
493
f


gliss.
495
495
497
497
498
498
8va

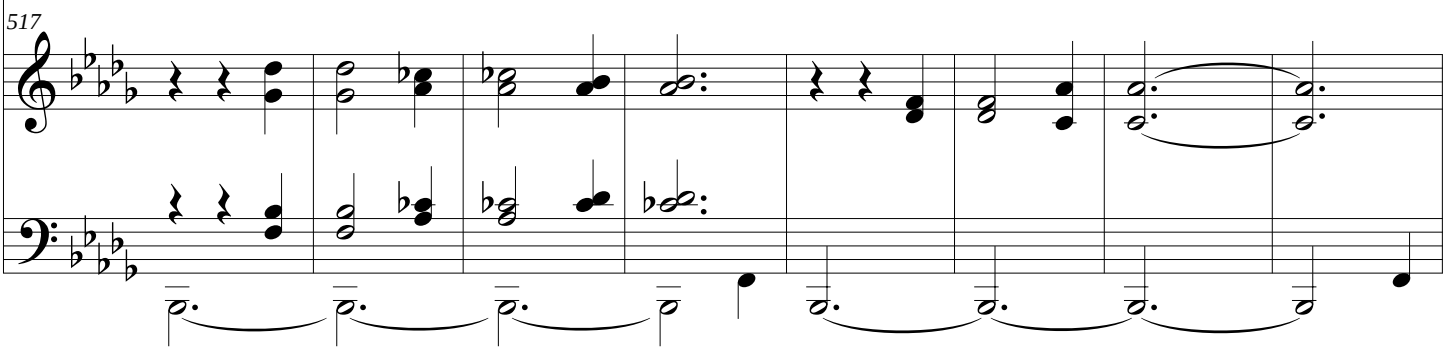

499
(8va)
499
8va
JJ
500
loco
500
(8va)
loco
p
504
p
504
8vb
3
3


507
loco
(8vb)
p
3
mp
8vb
pp
510
pp
(8vb)
rit.
KK
Andantino assai (𝅗𝅥. = c. 72)
512
si possibile
8vb

LL

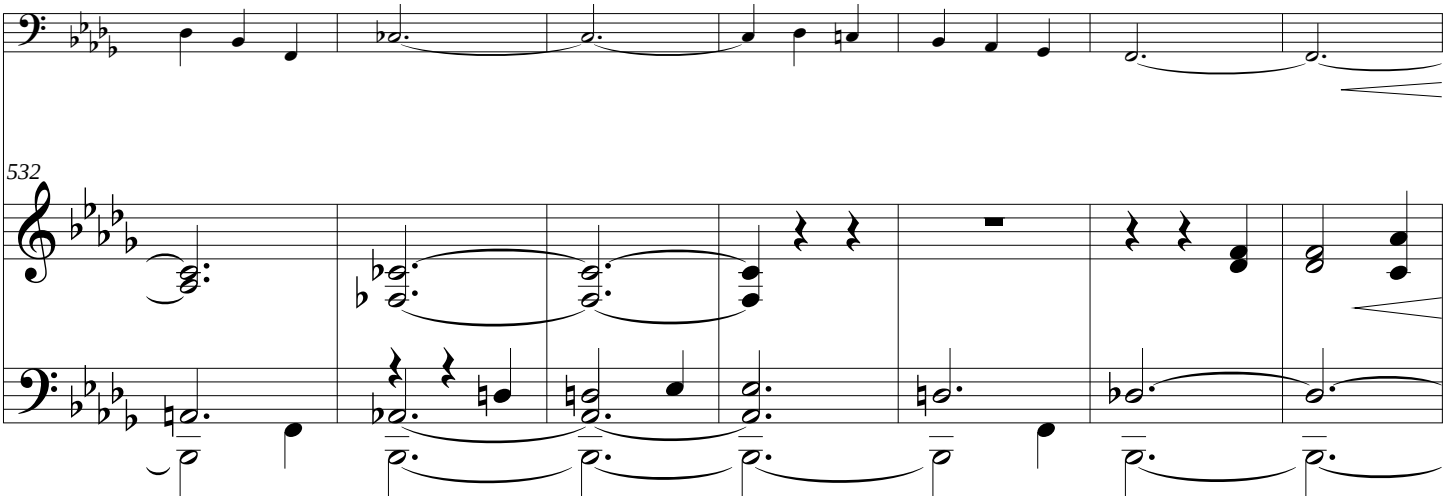
517

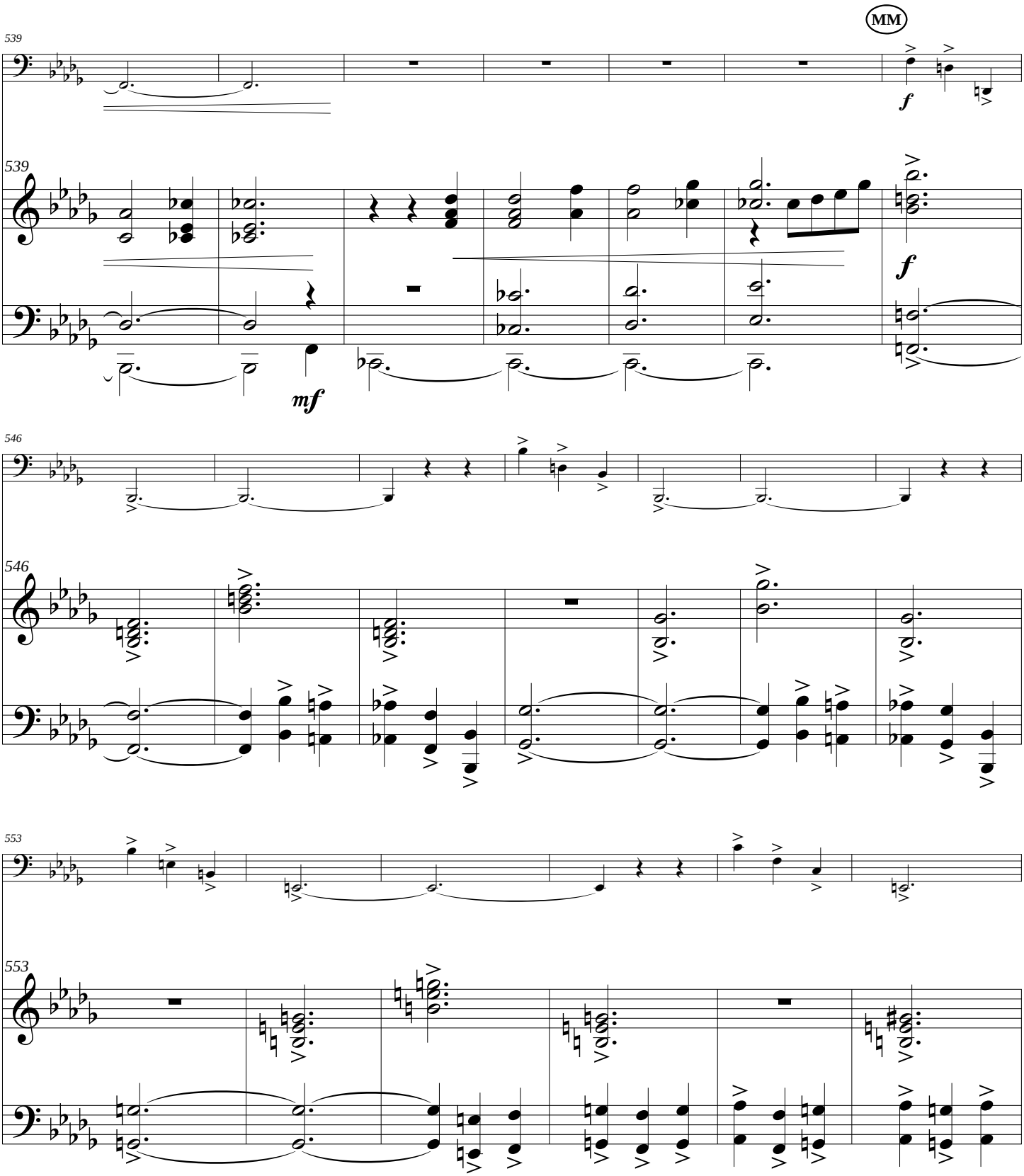
p *molto legato*

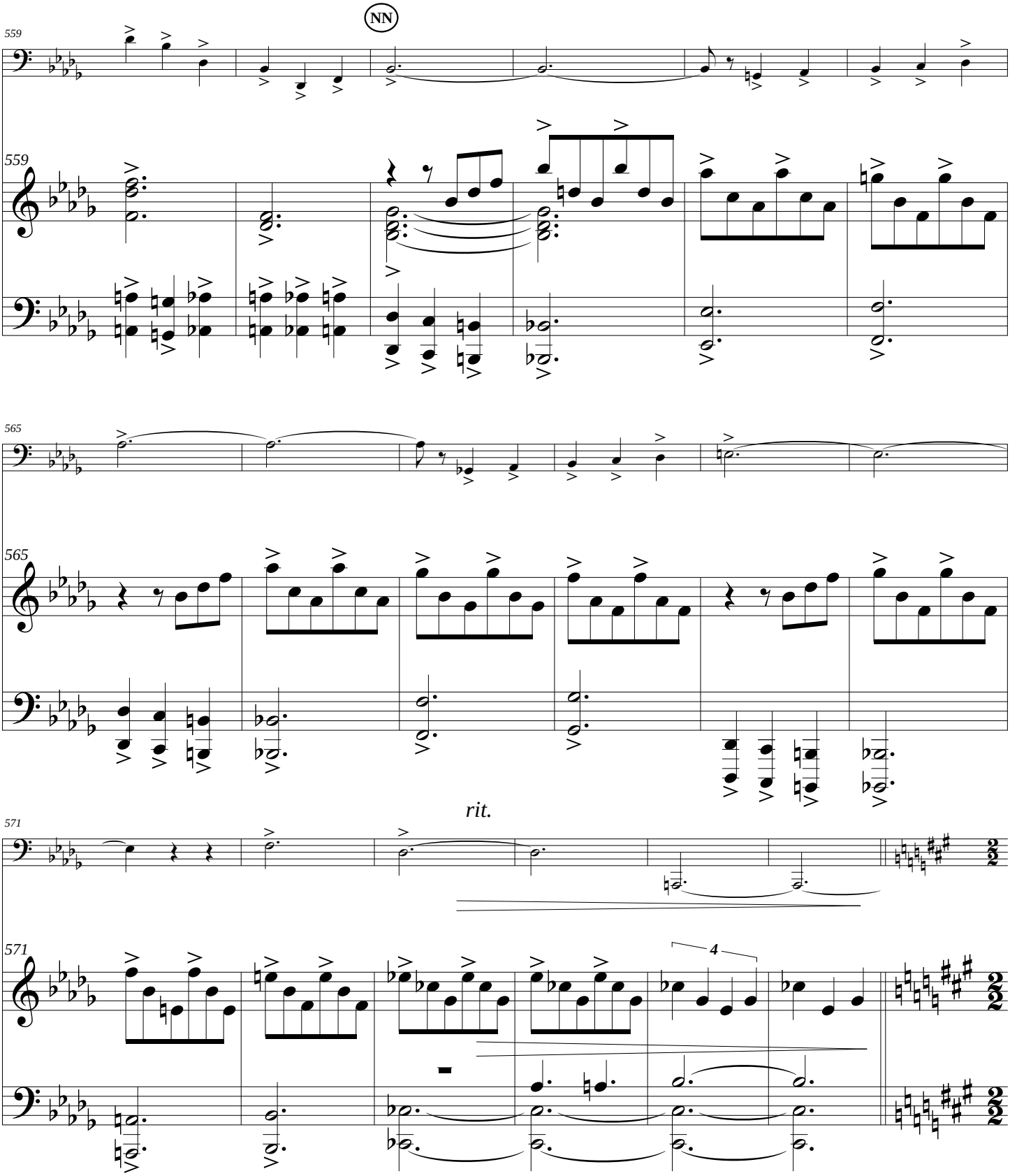


525

532




MM
539
f
539
mf
f
546
546
553
553


NN
559
559
565
565
rit.
571
571
4

Primo tempo, ma all breve; ♩ = 66

577

p

577

p

sustain, if poss.

581

p *pp*

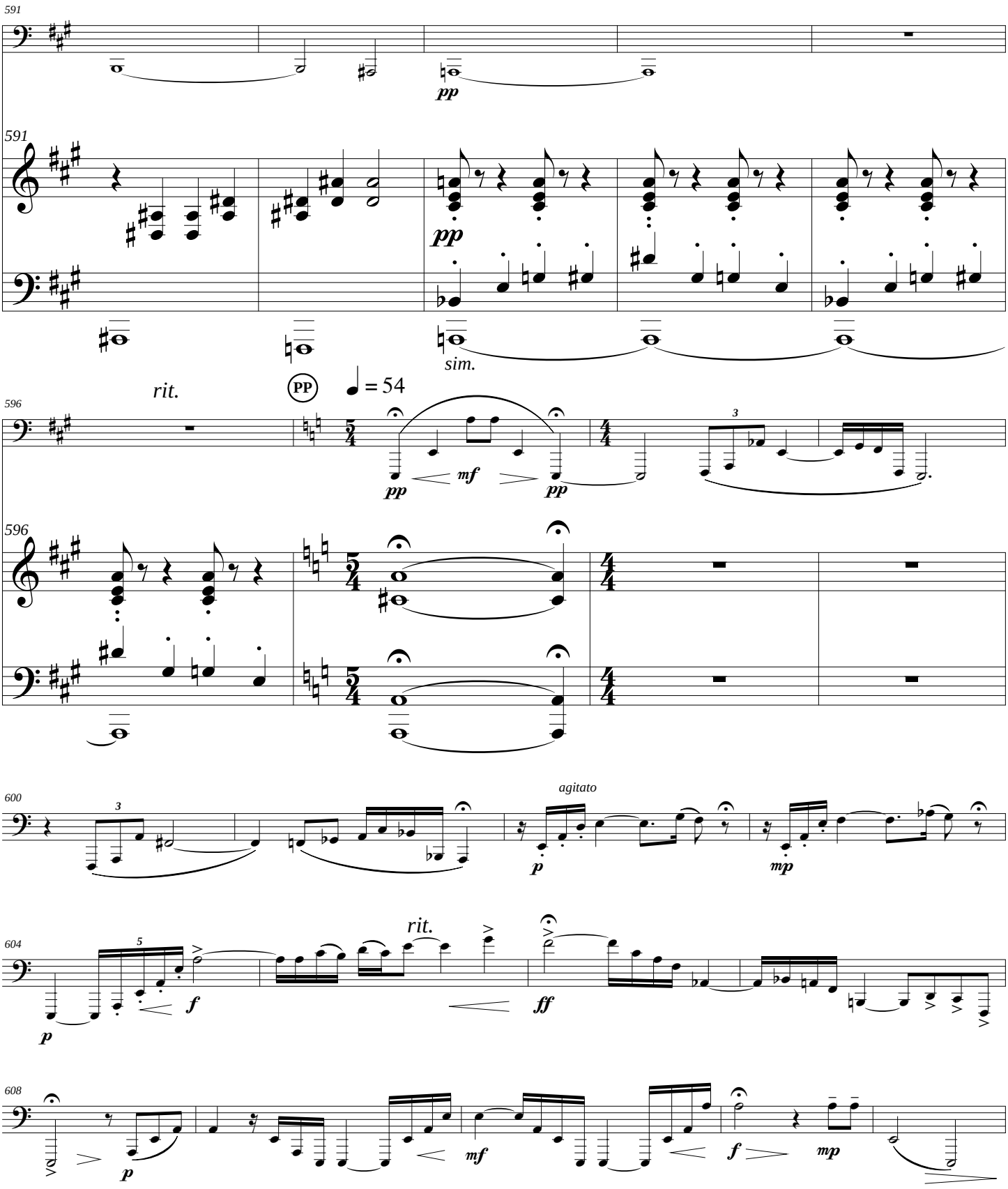
581

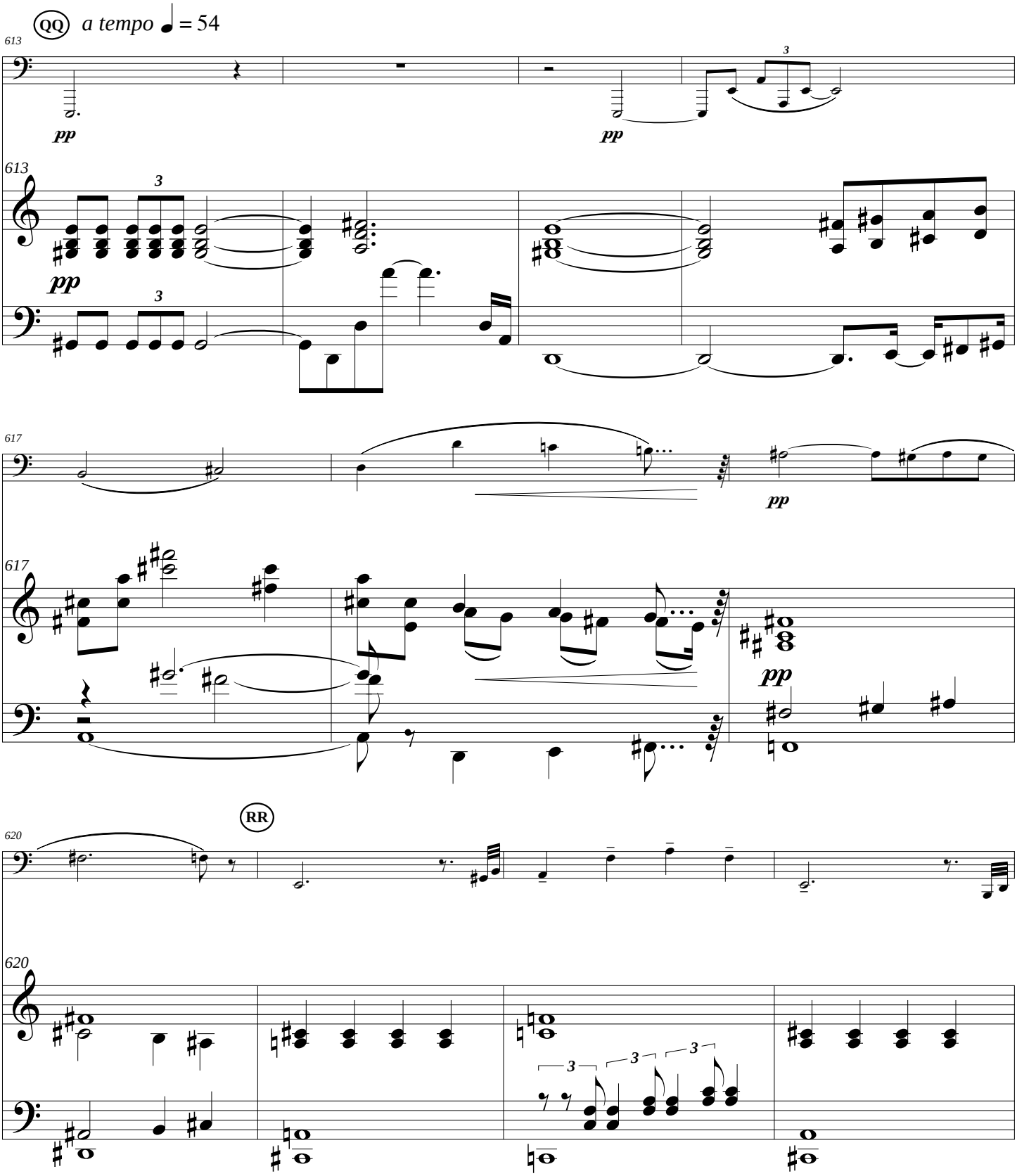
p

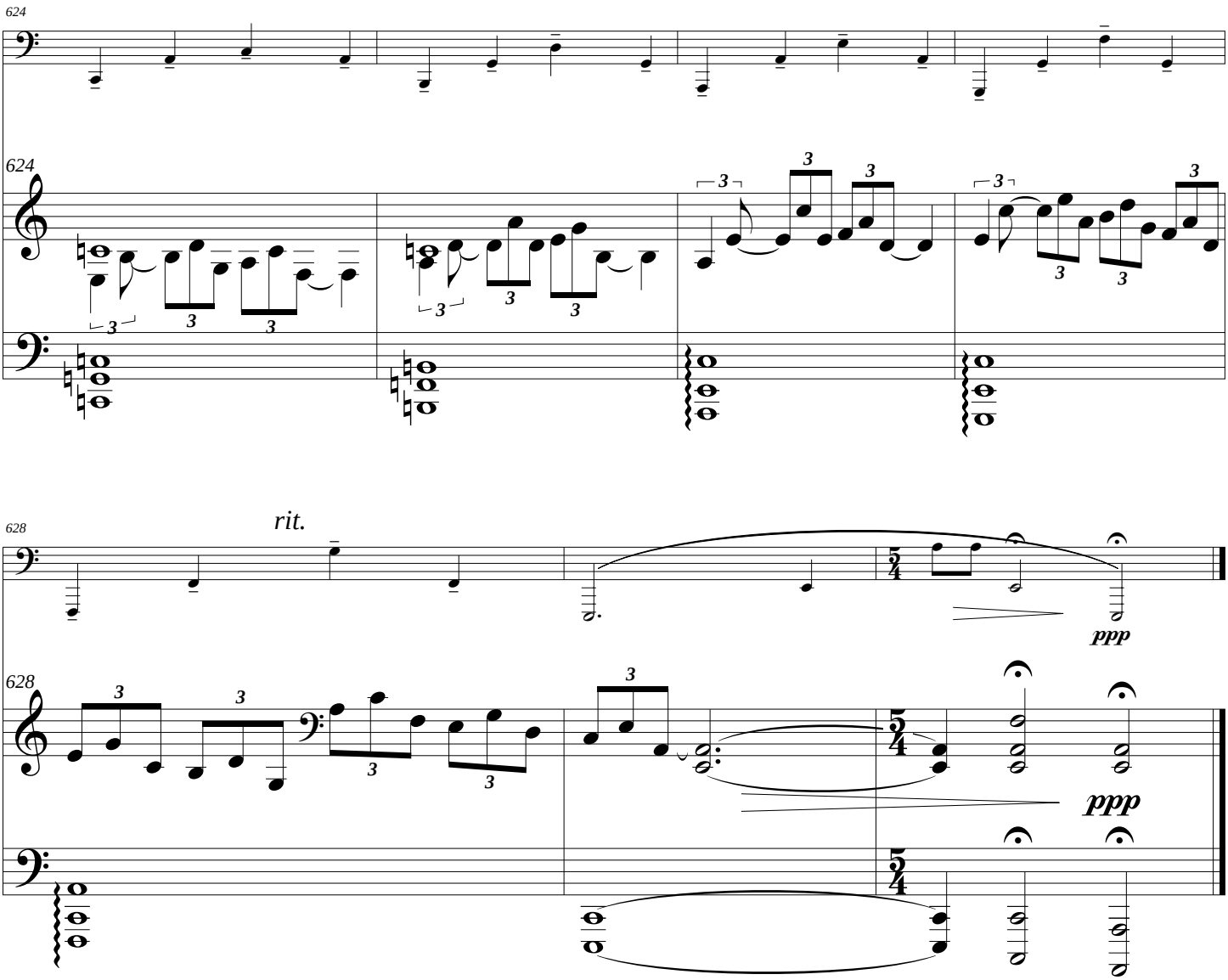
sim.

586

586


591
pp
591
pp
sim.
rit.
PP
♩ = 54
596
pp
mf
pp
3
596
600
3
agitato
p
mp
604
5
p
f
rit.
ff
608
p
mf
f
mp


QQ
a tempo ♩ = 54
613
pp
3
617
RR
620


624
624
628
rit.
628
ppp
ppp