Eleven Sonatas for Solo Violin or Viola (Special Arrangement for Cello)

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 ones that were fine as they stood. This made the new total of 16 sonatas with about a third completely new material. However after this six month period I was no longer able to play, both physically and due to other complications. At this time, 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 located two copies of the old 21 sonatas that I had given to violinists, returned unperformed, and also recovered pencil drafts from the 1991 revisions—thus recovering from the landlord's editorial judgment.) This led to once again throwing away weaker movements and a radical re-ordering of the remaining ones in sets of three or four to make eleven sonatas that were reasonably consistent. The grouping is arbitrary, though, and in performance it is perfectly respectable for the violinist to pick whatever movements seem appropriate and play them in the order of his or her choice.

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

In November 2015 I was making a revision of the copywork 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, 10, with the old middle movement now the first movement of the new #8.

My website **billrobinsonmusic.com** has all the scores and recordings of each sonata as soon as they are available.

This special arrangement for cello is a bit of an experiment; I am far from sure that these sonatas are suited to cello, given the dexterity required on a violin to play them. I am sure that some of the faster movements are not practical. However, I am giving these to Bonnie Thron to take a look at and play with as she sees fit.

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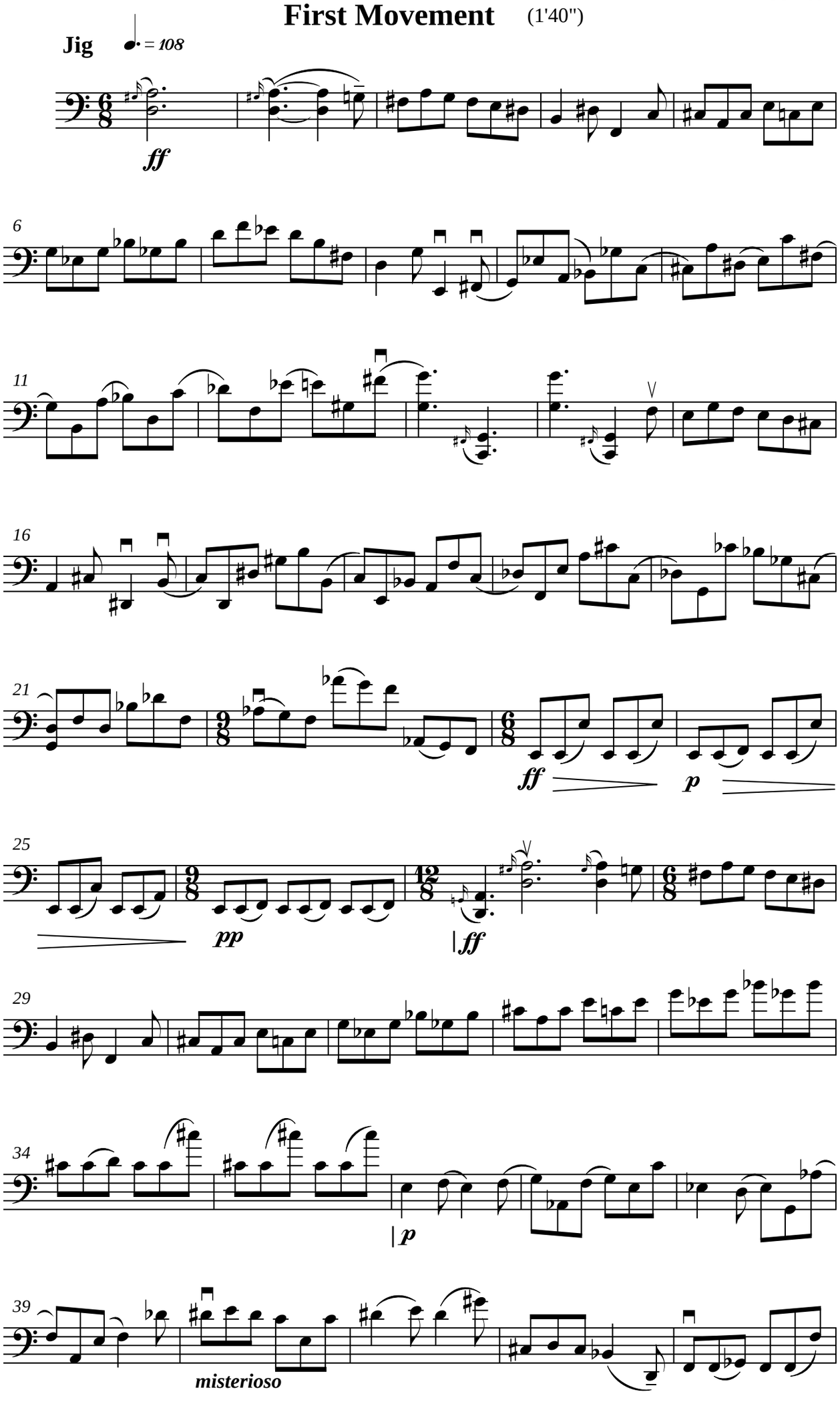
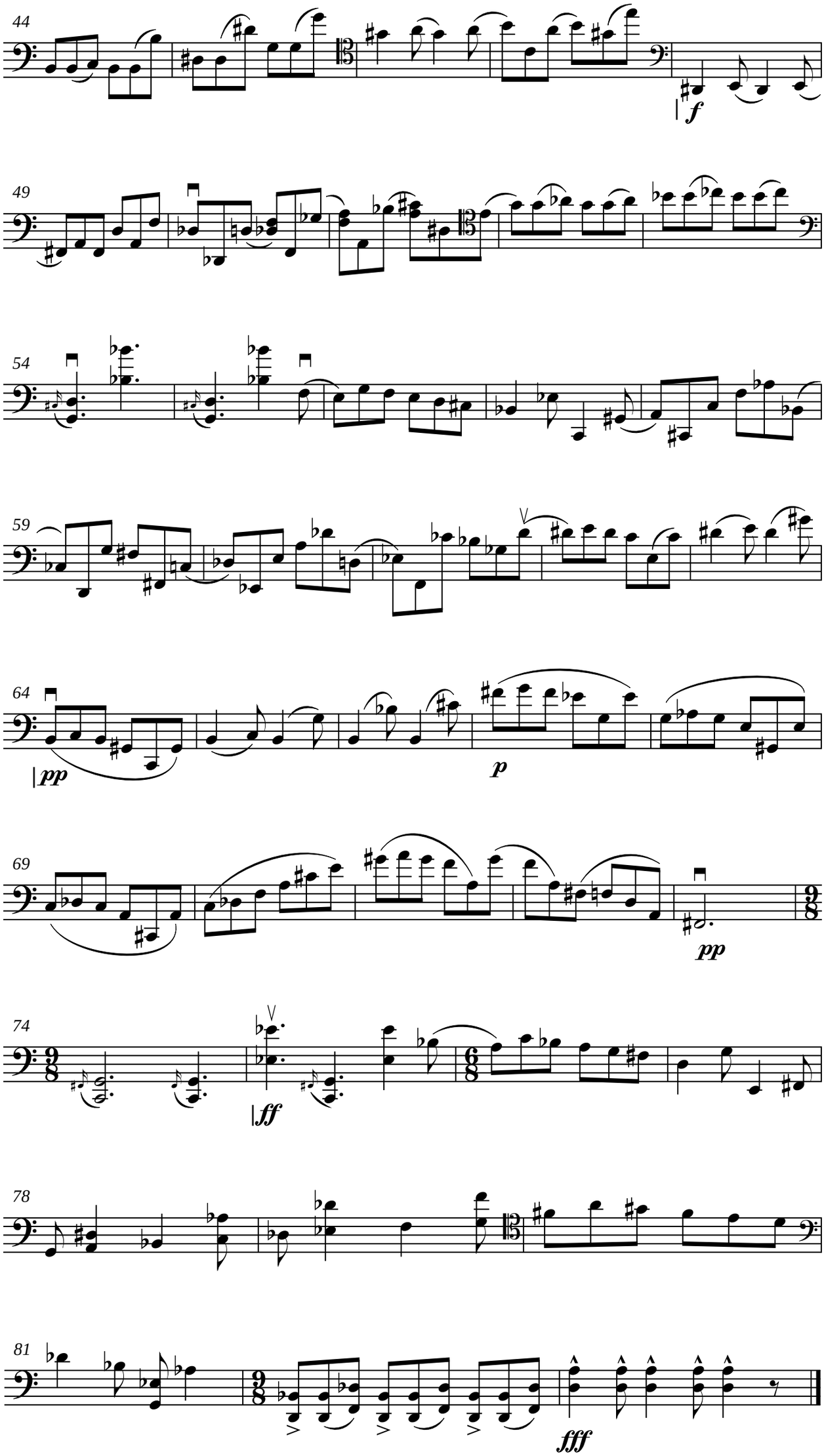
Sonata #1 for Solo Violoncello

Bill Robinson

First Movement (1'40")

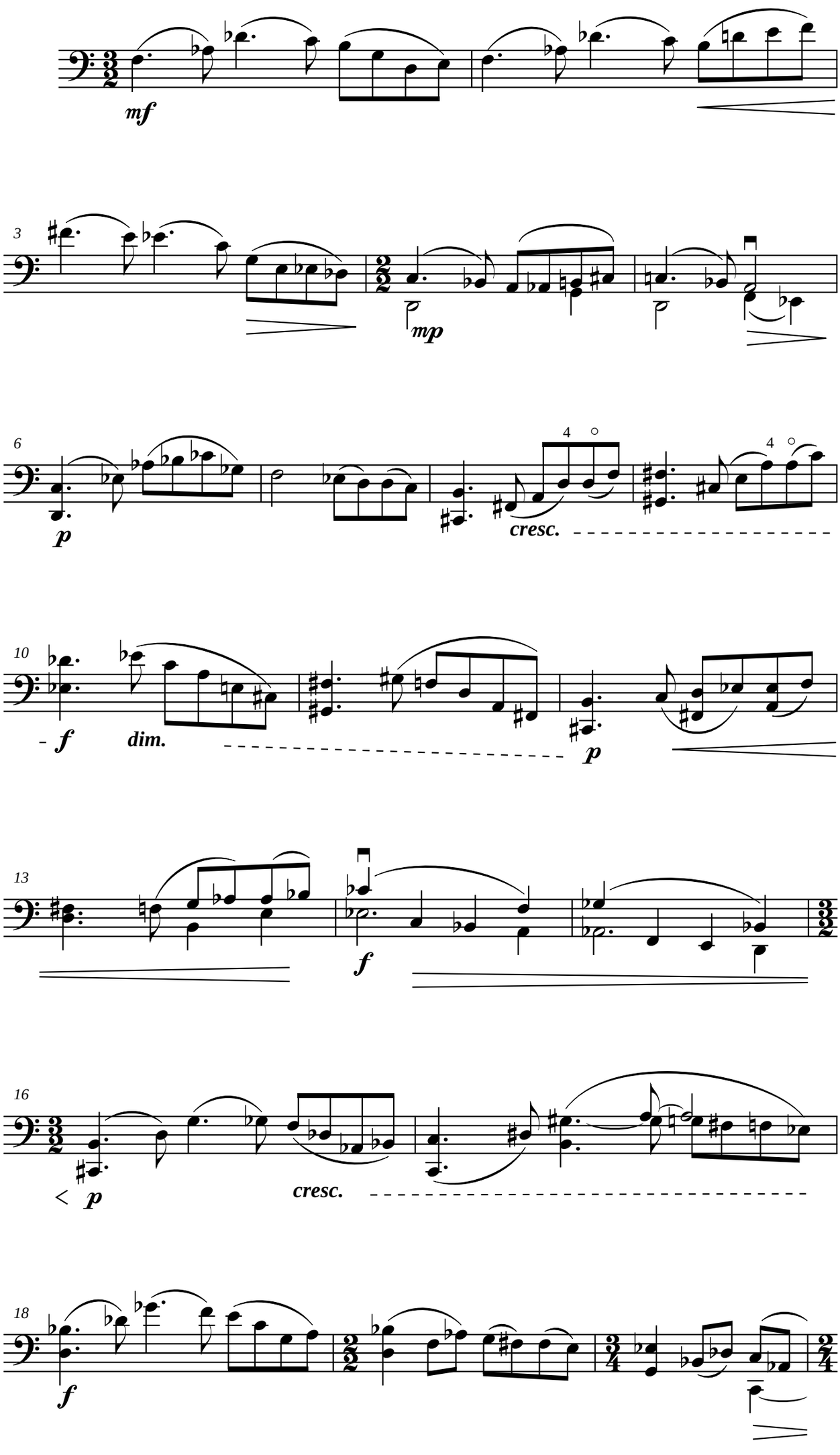
Jig ♩. = 108

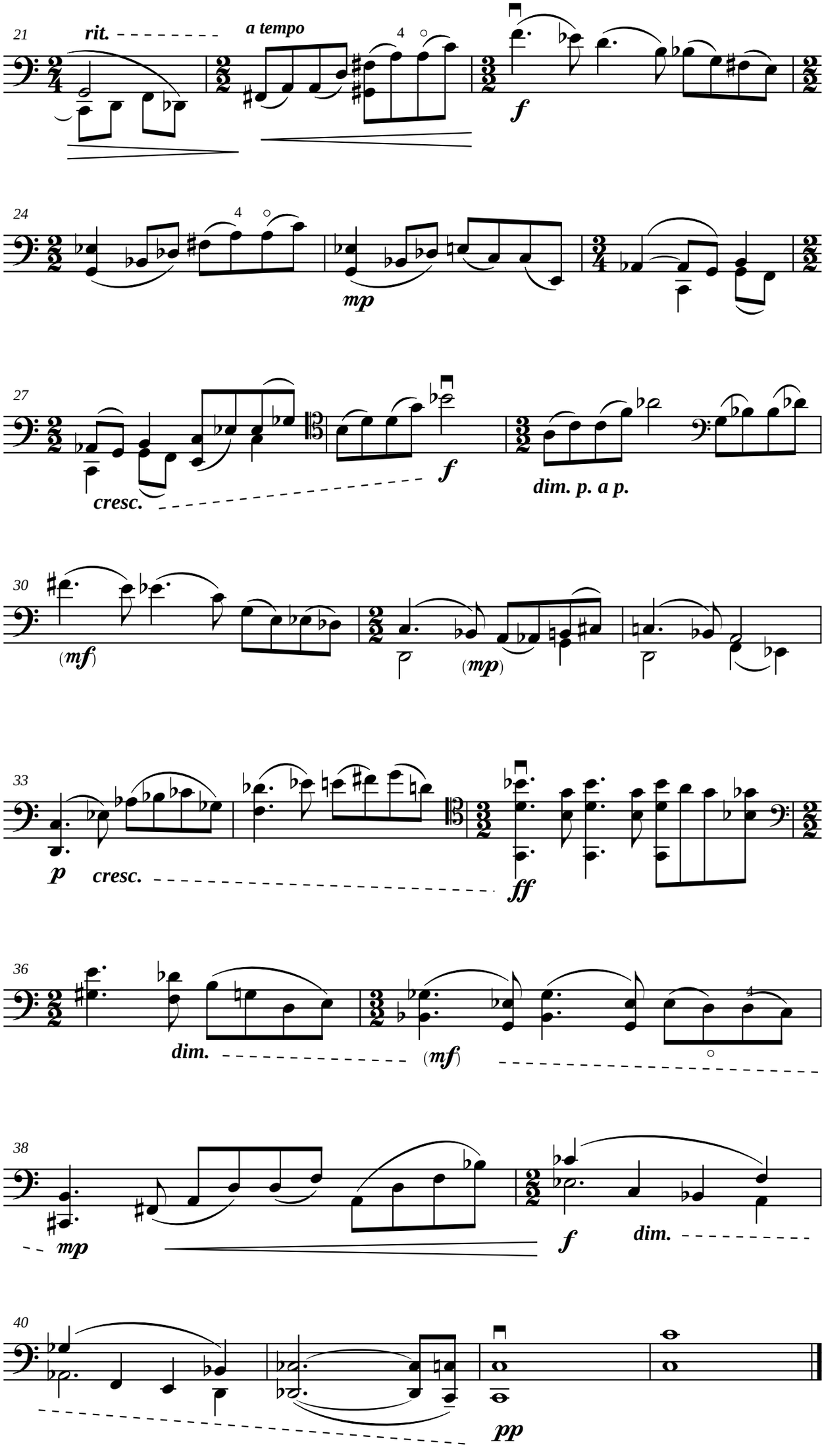



44
f
49
54
59
64
pp
p
69
pp
74
ff
78
81
fff

Second Movement (3')

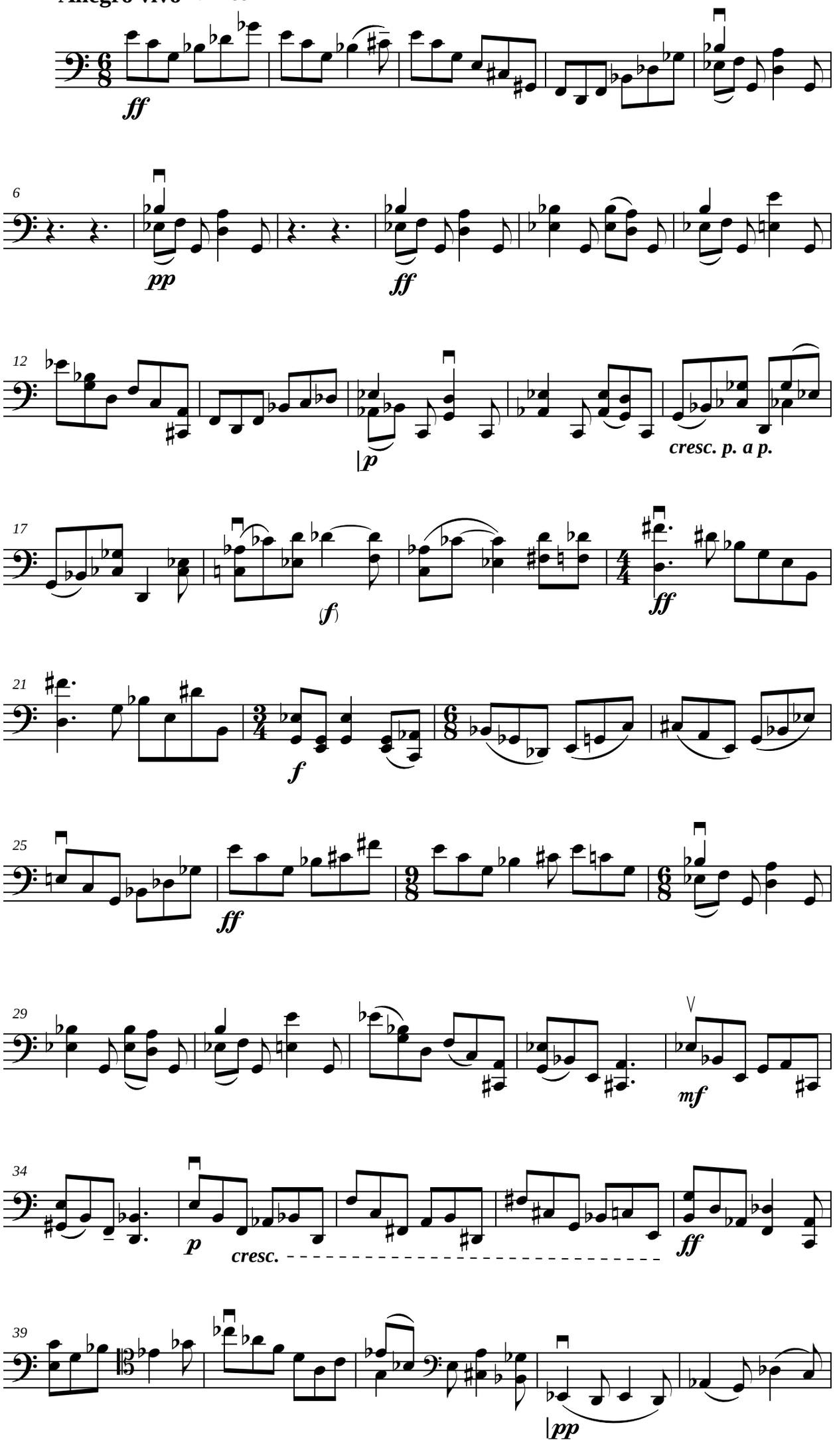
Moderato ♩ = 66

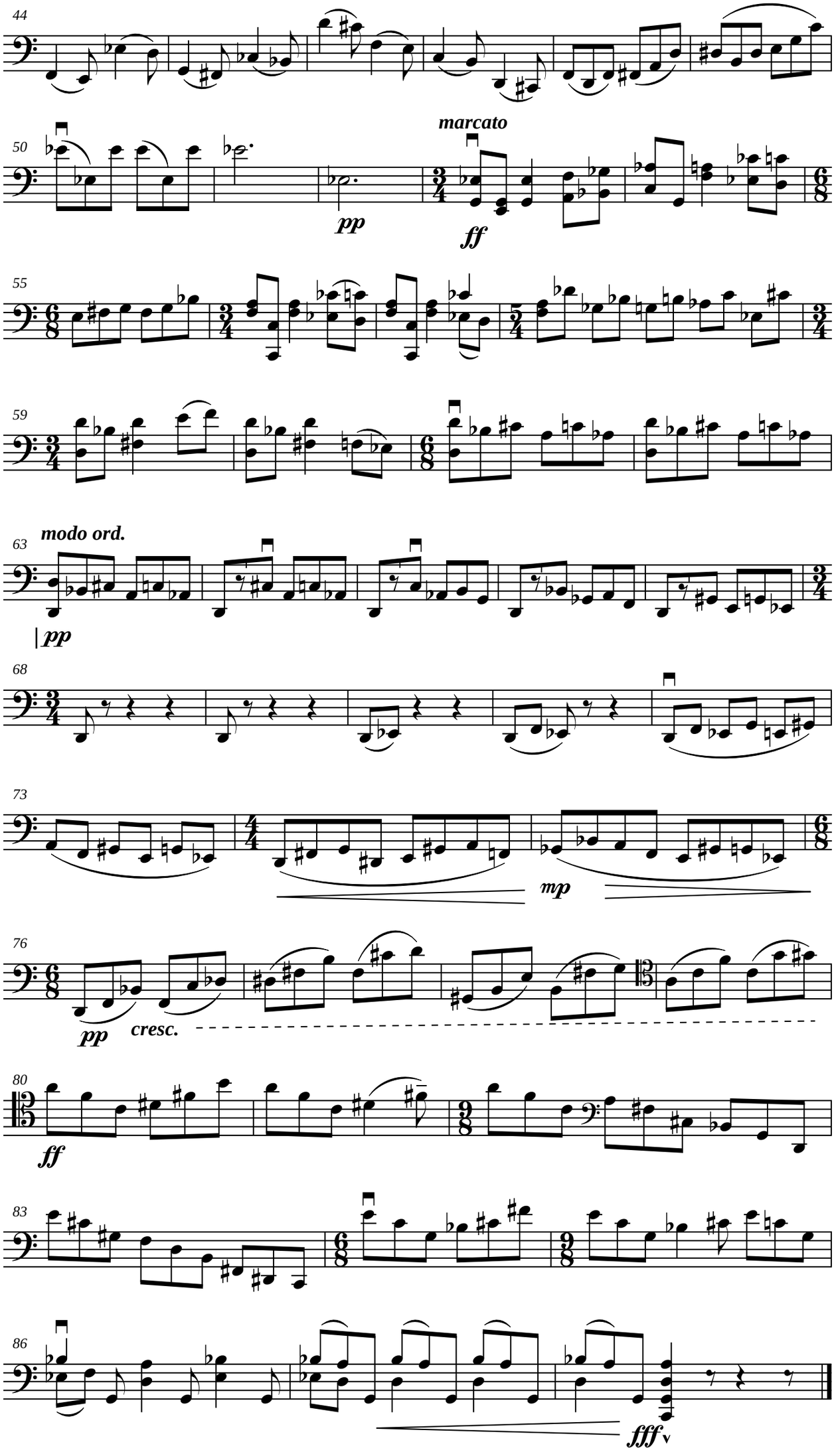



21
rit.
a tempo
4
f
24
4
mp
27
cresc.
f
dim. p. a p.
30
(mf)
(mp)
33
p
cresc.
ff
36
dim.
(mf)
4
38
mp
f
dim.
40
pp

Third Movement (2')

Allegro vivo ♩. = 88

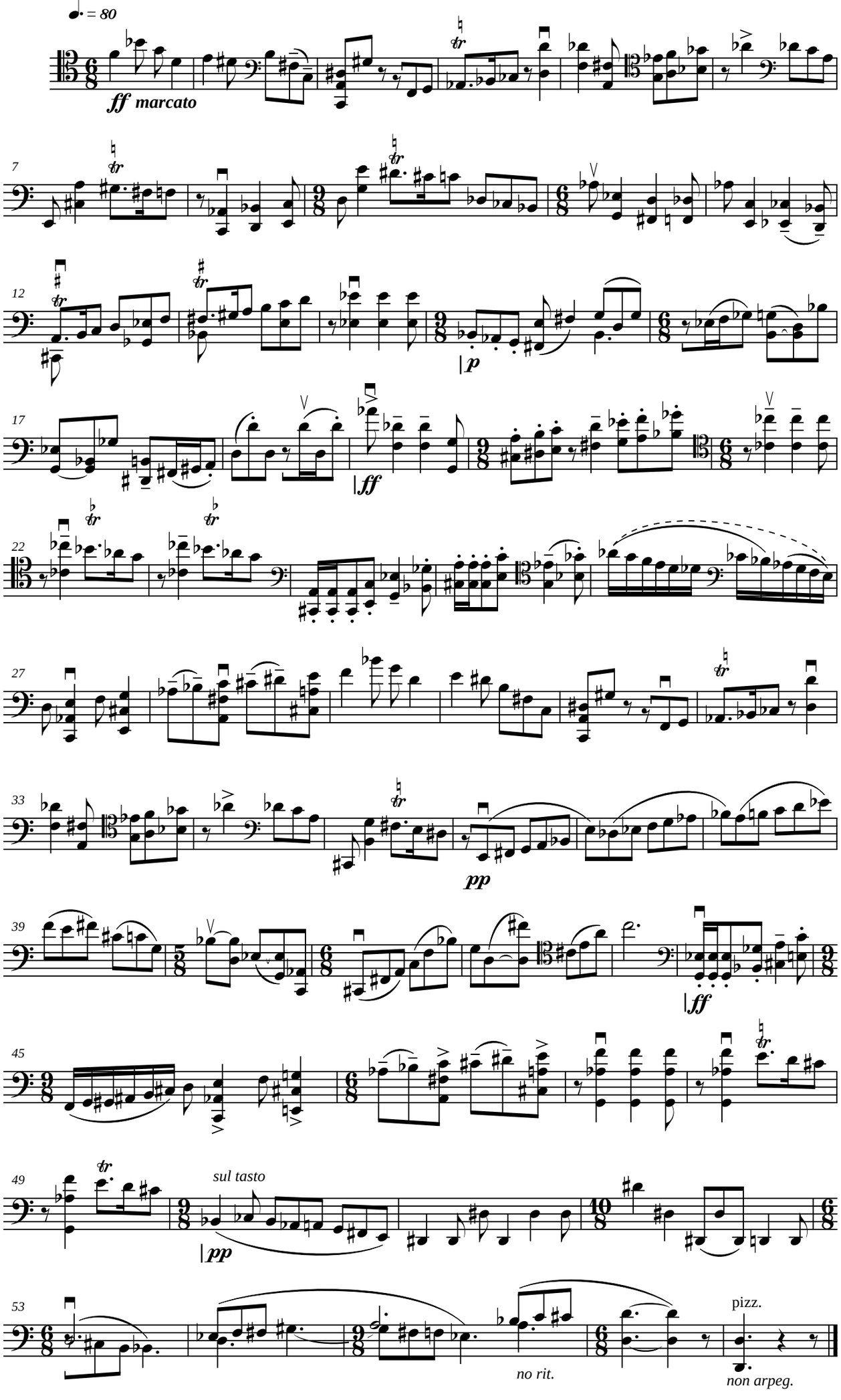



44
50
marcato
pp
ff
55
59
63
modo ord.
pp
68
73
mp
76
pp
cresc.
80
ff
83
86
fff

Sonata #2 for Solo Violoncello

First Movement (1.5')

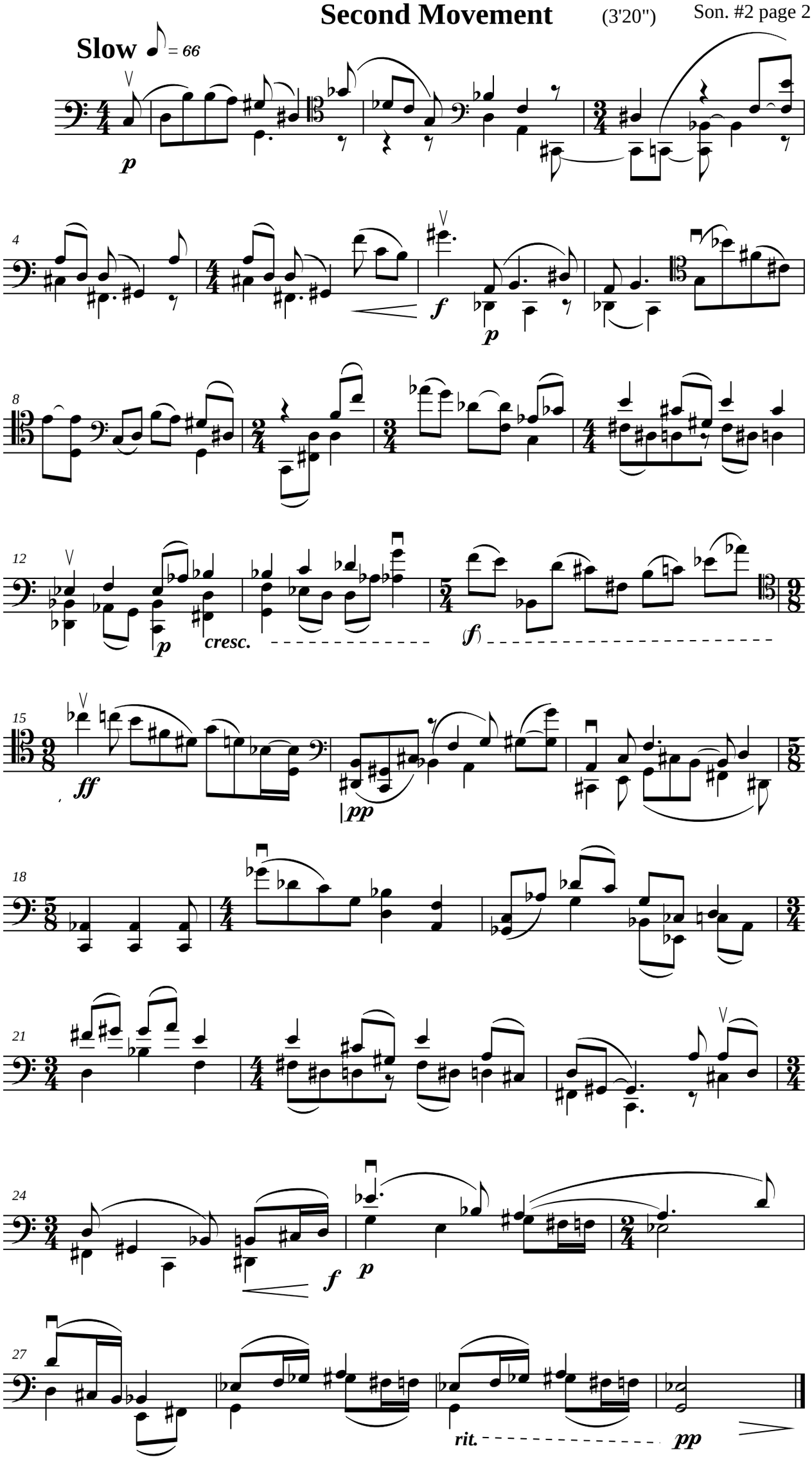
Bill Robinson



Second Movement

(3'20")

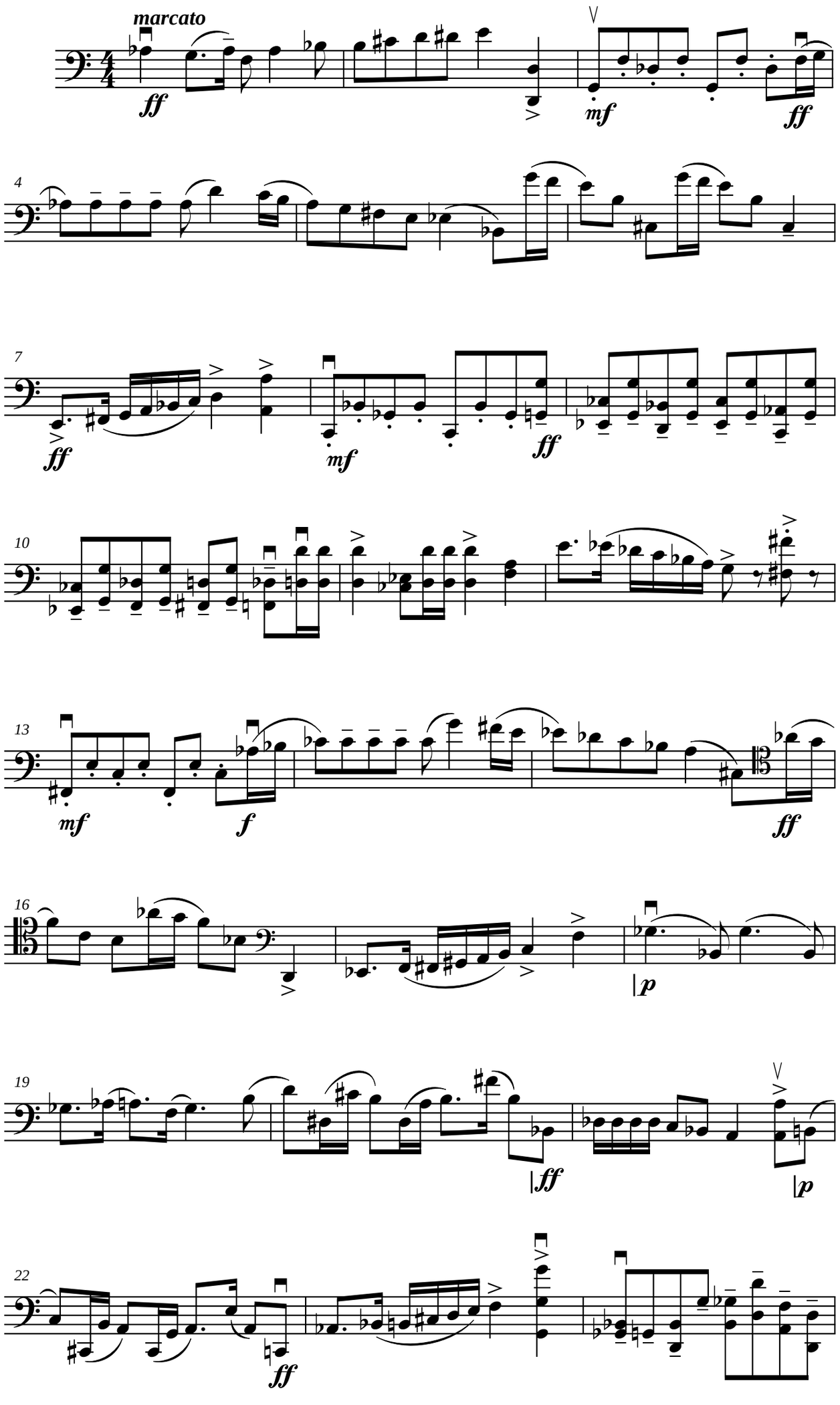
Slow ♪ = 66

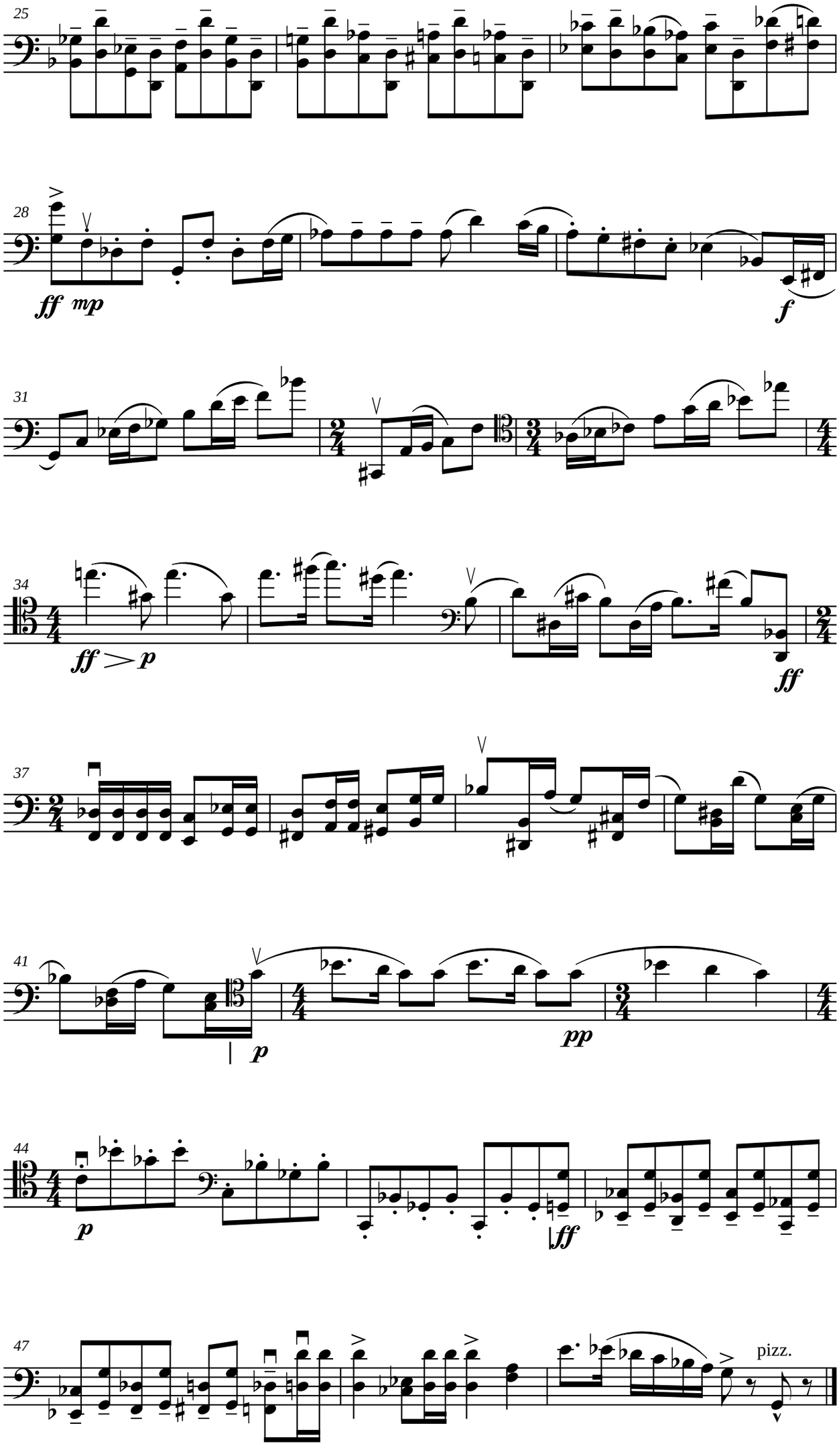


Sousiana

♩ = 105

marcato




25
28
ff mp
f
31
34
ff > p
ff
37
41
p
pp
44
p
ff
47
pizz.

Sonata #3 for Solo Violoncello

First Movement (1'35")

Bill Robinson

Moderato ♩ = 120

p *dolce*

6

mf

11

ff

15

p

20

25

mp

pp

30

ff

34

38

ff *p*

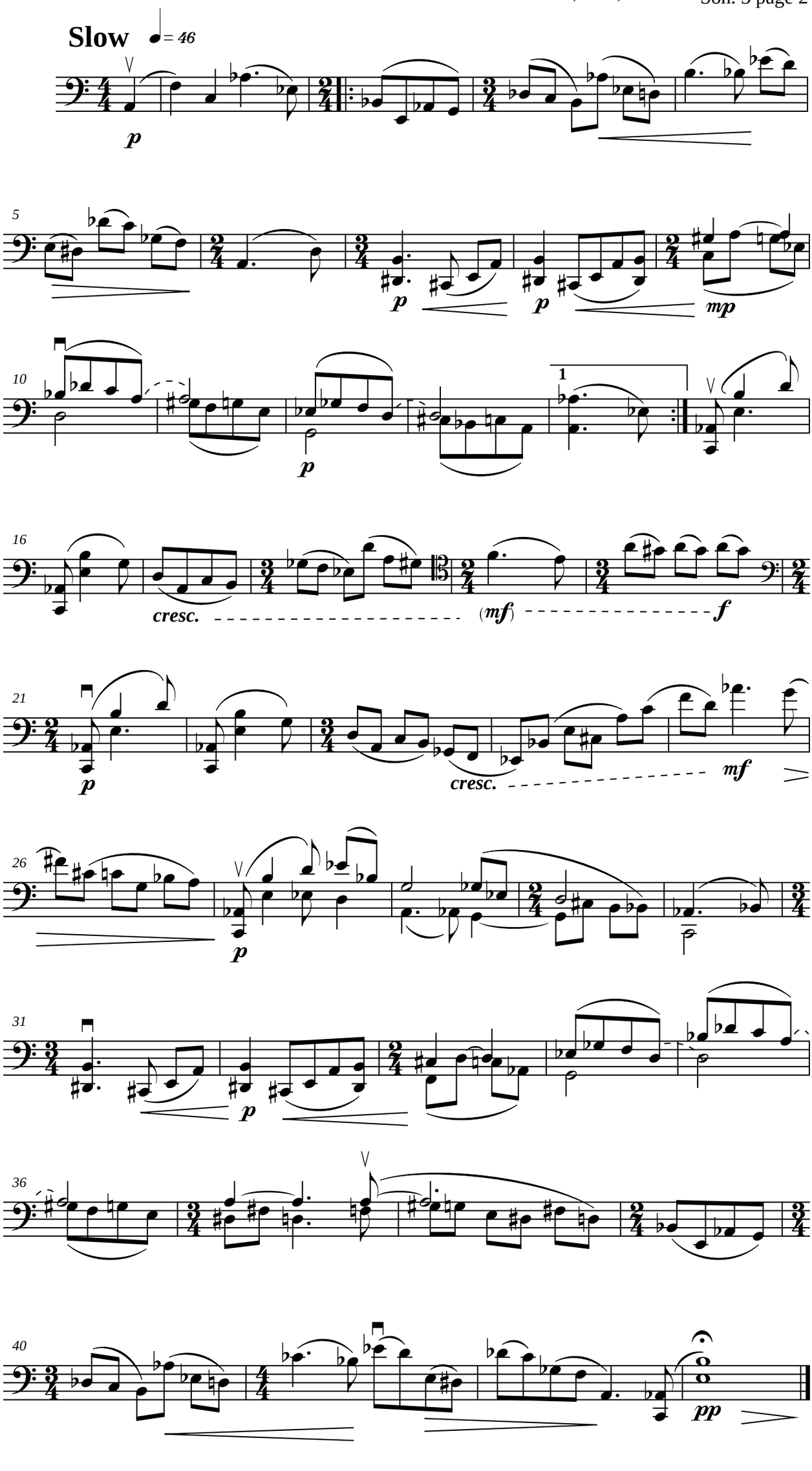
42

46

pp

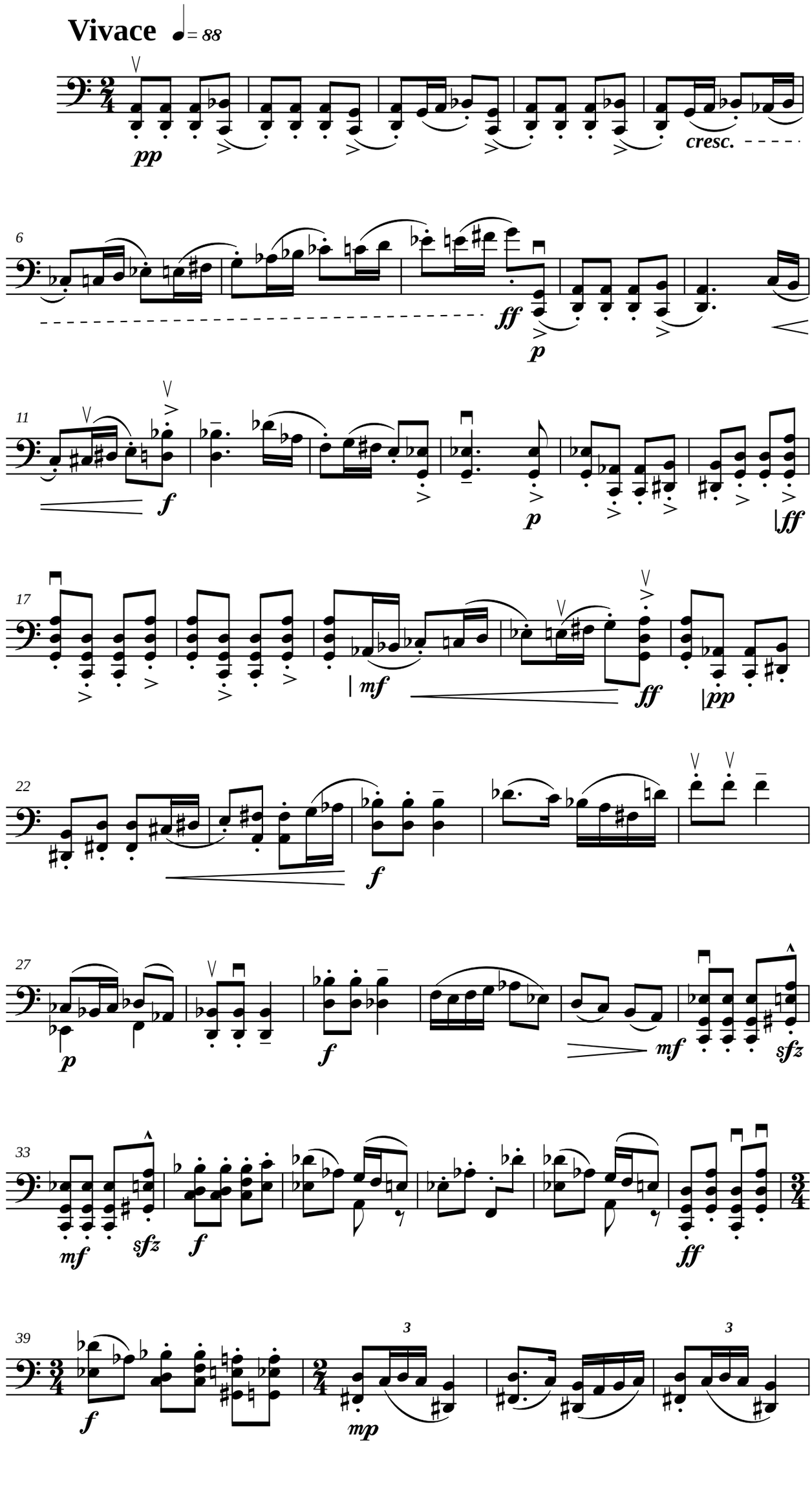
Second Movement (2'30")

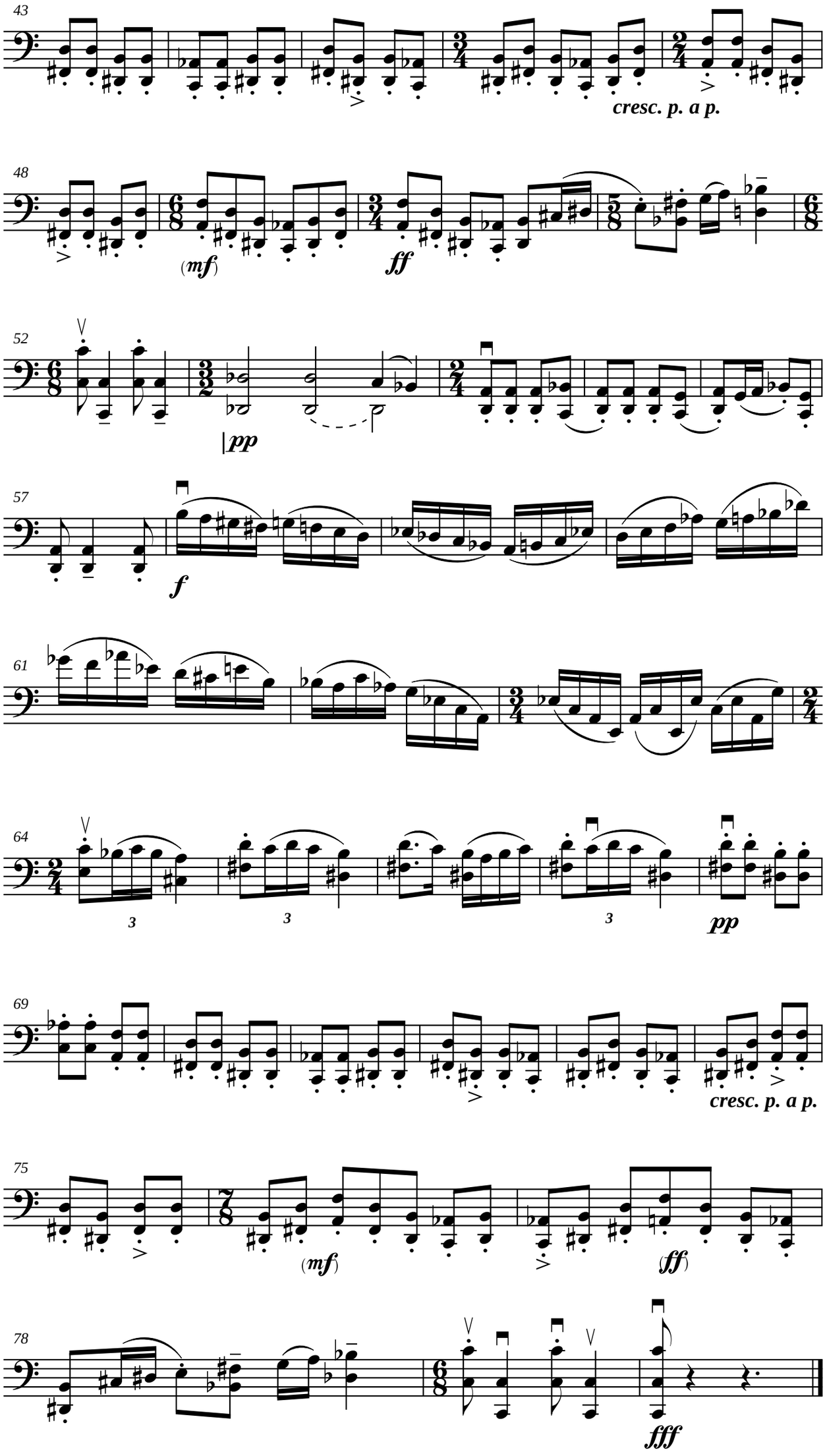
Slow ♩ = 46



Third Movement (2')

Vivace ♩= 88

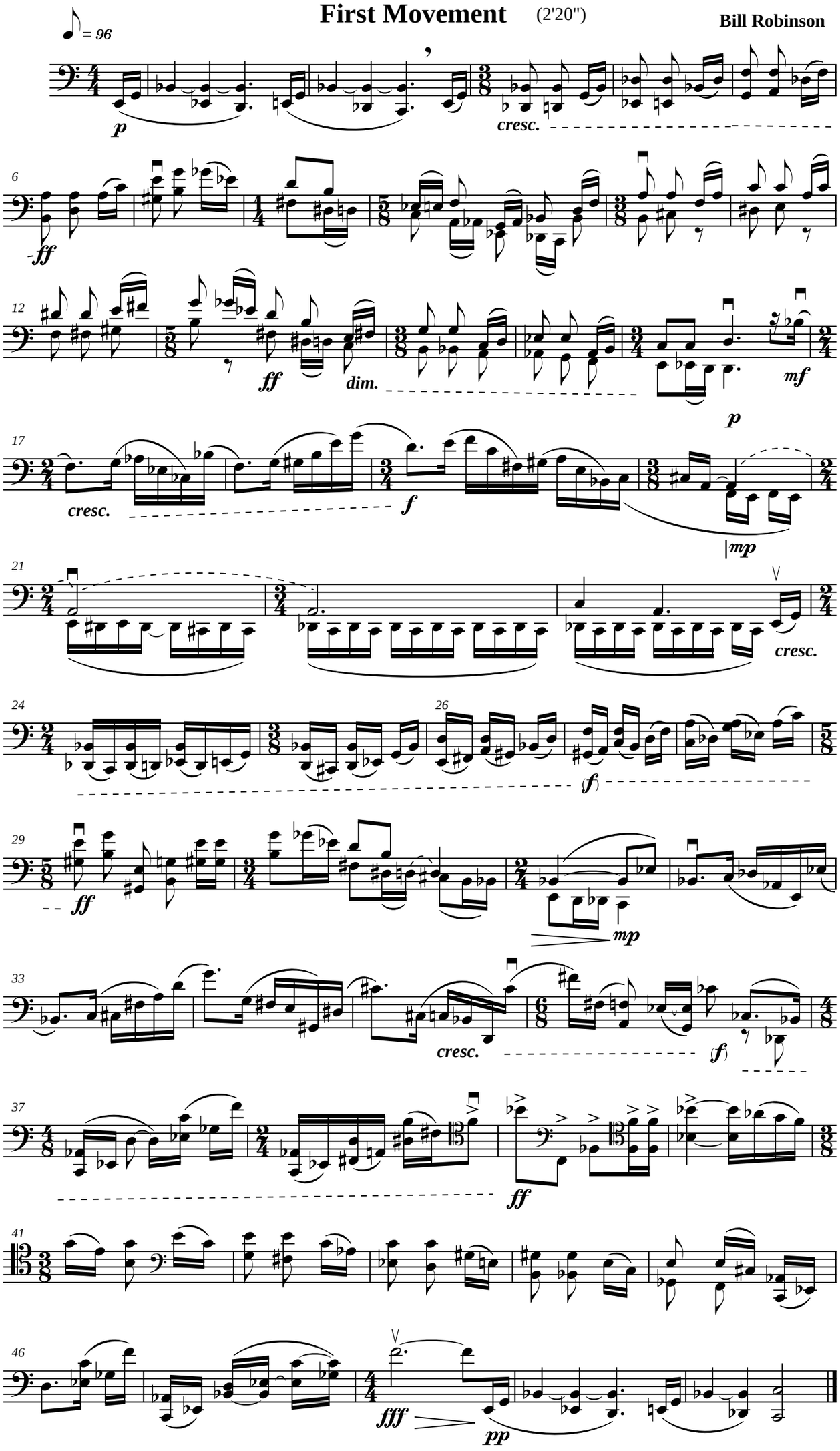



43
cresc. p. a p.
48
(mf)
ff
52
pp
57
f
61
64
3
3
3
pp
69
cresc. p. a p.
75
(mf)
(ff)
78
fff

Sonata # 4 for Solo Violoncello

First Movement (2'20")

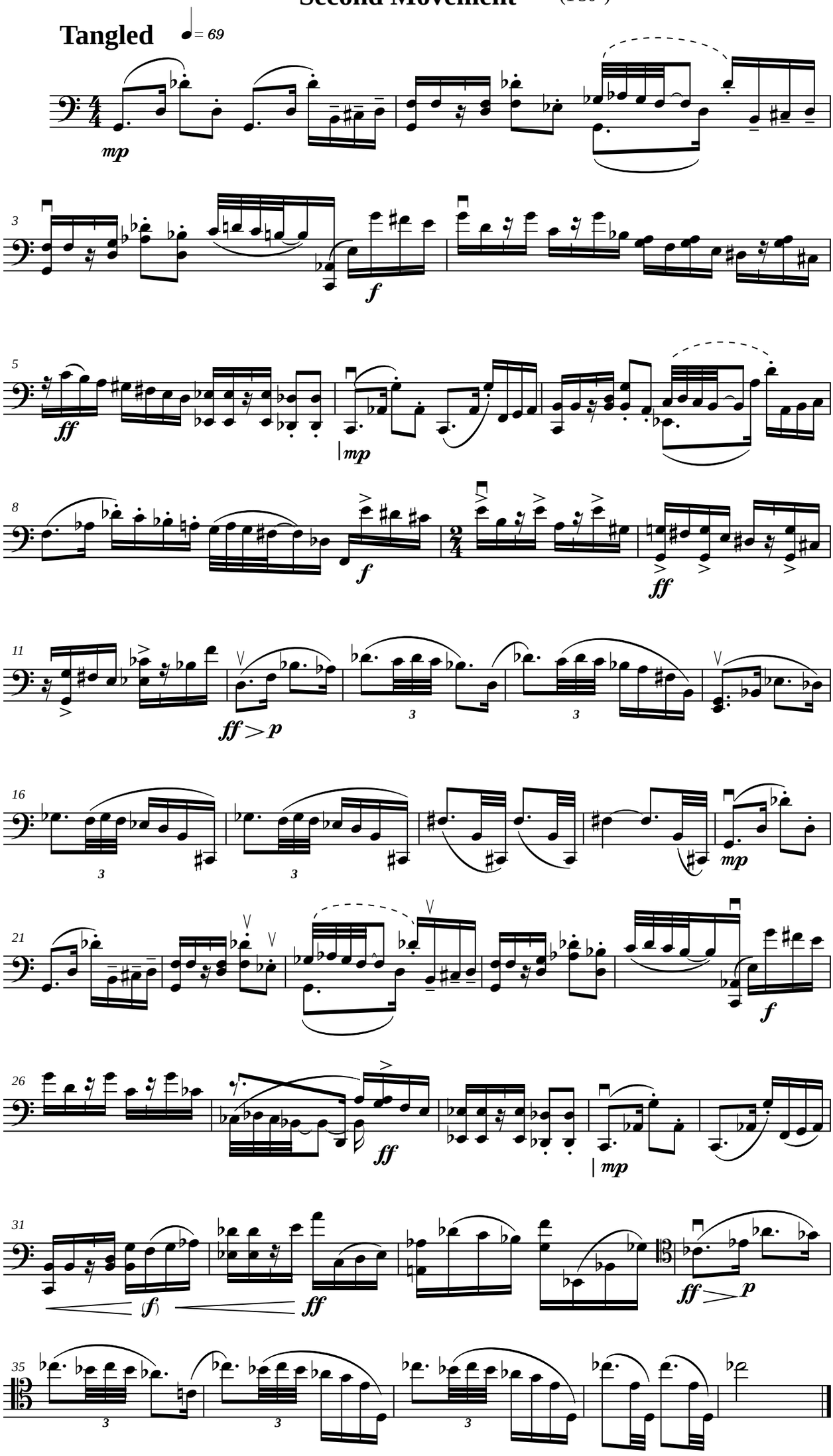
Bill Robinson



Second Movement (1'30")

Tangled

♩ = 69



Third Movement: Theme and Variations

Theme ♩ = 120

(4'40")

ff *p*

5

Var. 1: March of the Three-Legged Anteater

8 ♩. = 120

mf *cresc. p. a p.* *(f)* *ff*

12

17

ff *pp* *p* *f* *mp* *f* *mf*

21

mp *cresc. p. a p.* *(f)* *ff*

26

p

30

ff

Var. 2 ♩ = 80 (sul c)

p

35

cresc. p. a p.

40

(mf) *f* *dim.* *p*

45

f *cresc.*

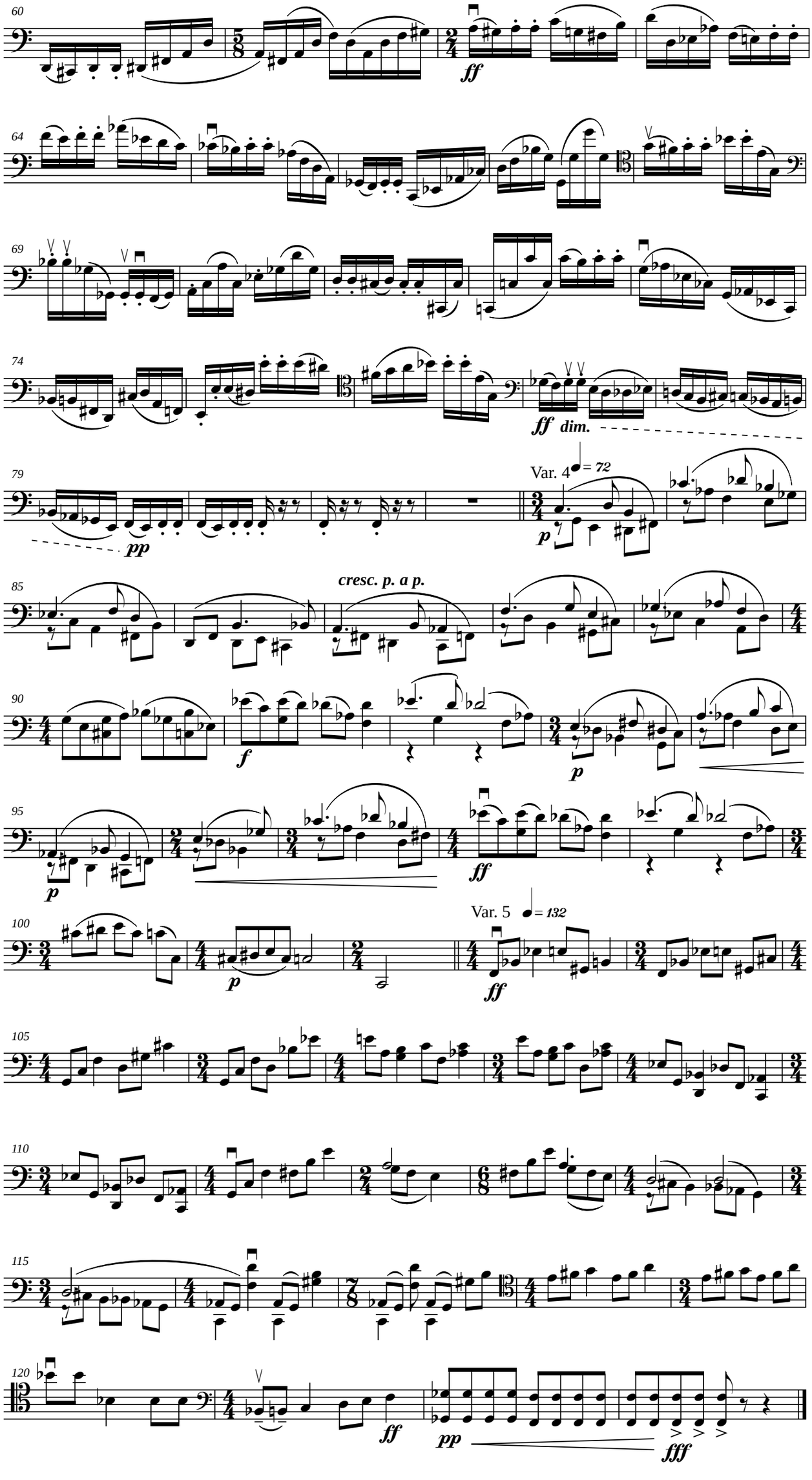
50

ff *p* *pp*

55

Var. 3 ♩ = 80

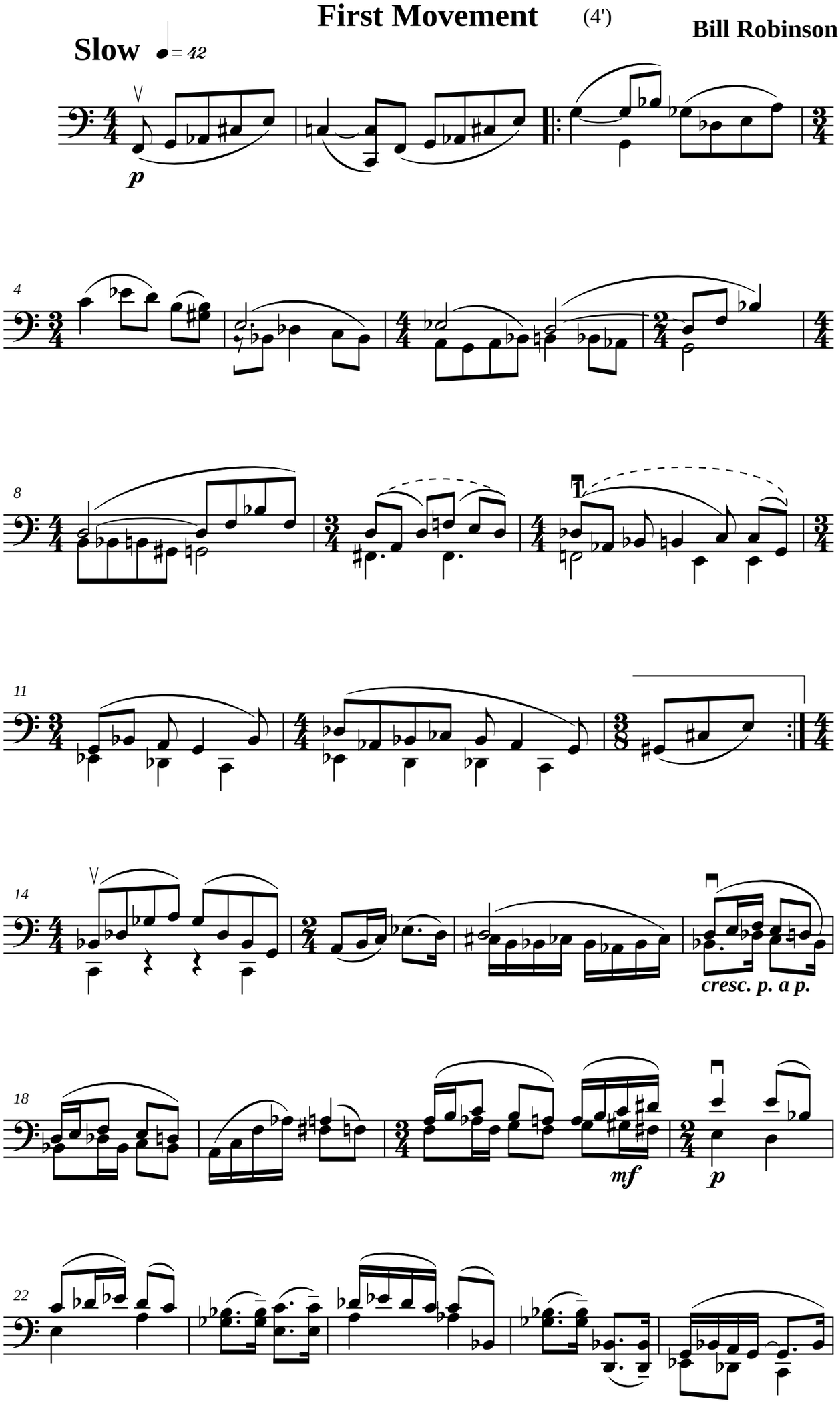
mp *cresc. p. a p.* *(f)*

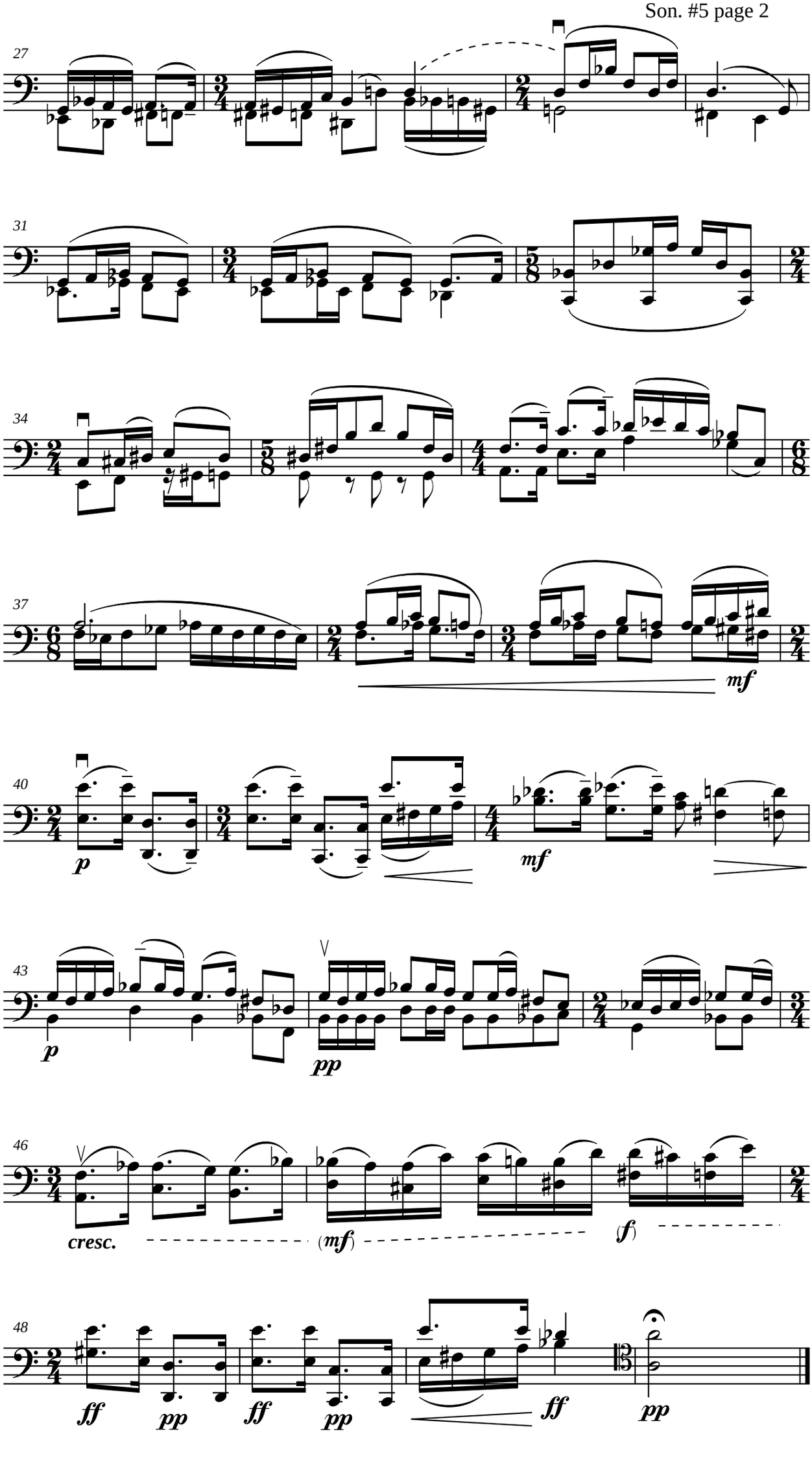

60
ff
64
69
74
ff dim.
79
pp
Var. 4 = 72
p
85
cresc. p. a p.
90
f
p
95
p
ff
100
Var. 5 = 132
p
ff
105
110
115
120
ff
pp
fff

Sonata #5 for Solo Violoncello

First Movement (4')

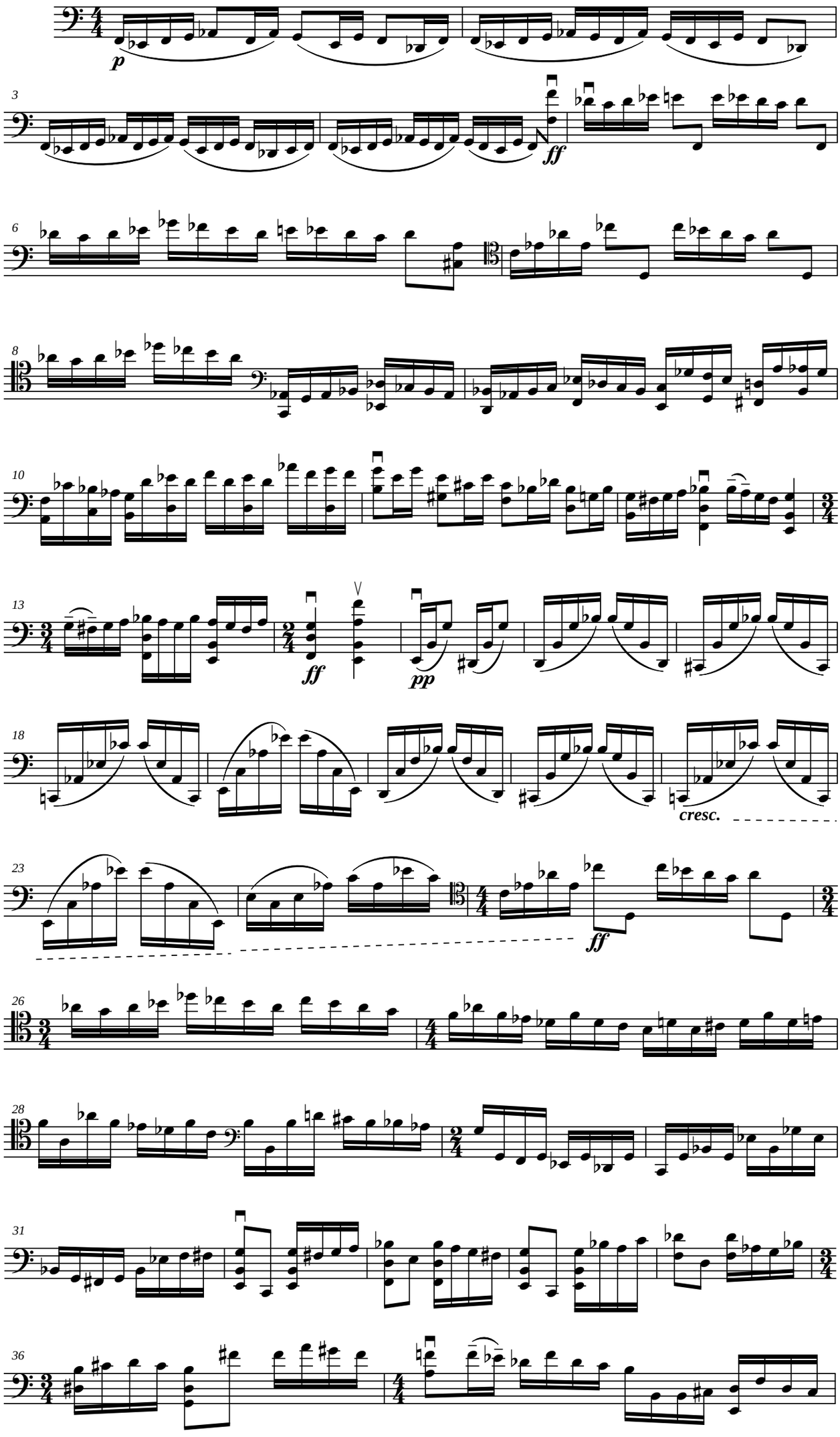
Bill Robinson




27
31
34
37
mf
40
p
mf
43
p
pp
46
cresc.
(mf)
(f)
48
ff
pp
ff
pp
ff
pp

Second Movement (2'15)

Allegro assai ♩= 76



38

40

p

42

45

cresc. p. a p.

(*mf*)

(*f*)

48

ff

50

52

Third Movement

(1'35")

Slow ♩ = *60*

54

60

cresc.

64

f

mf

p

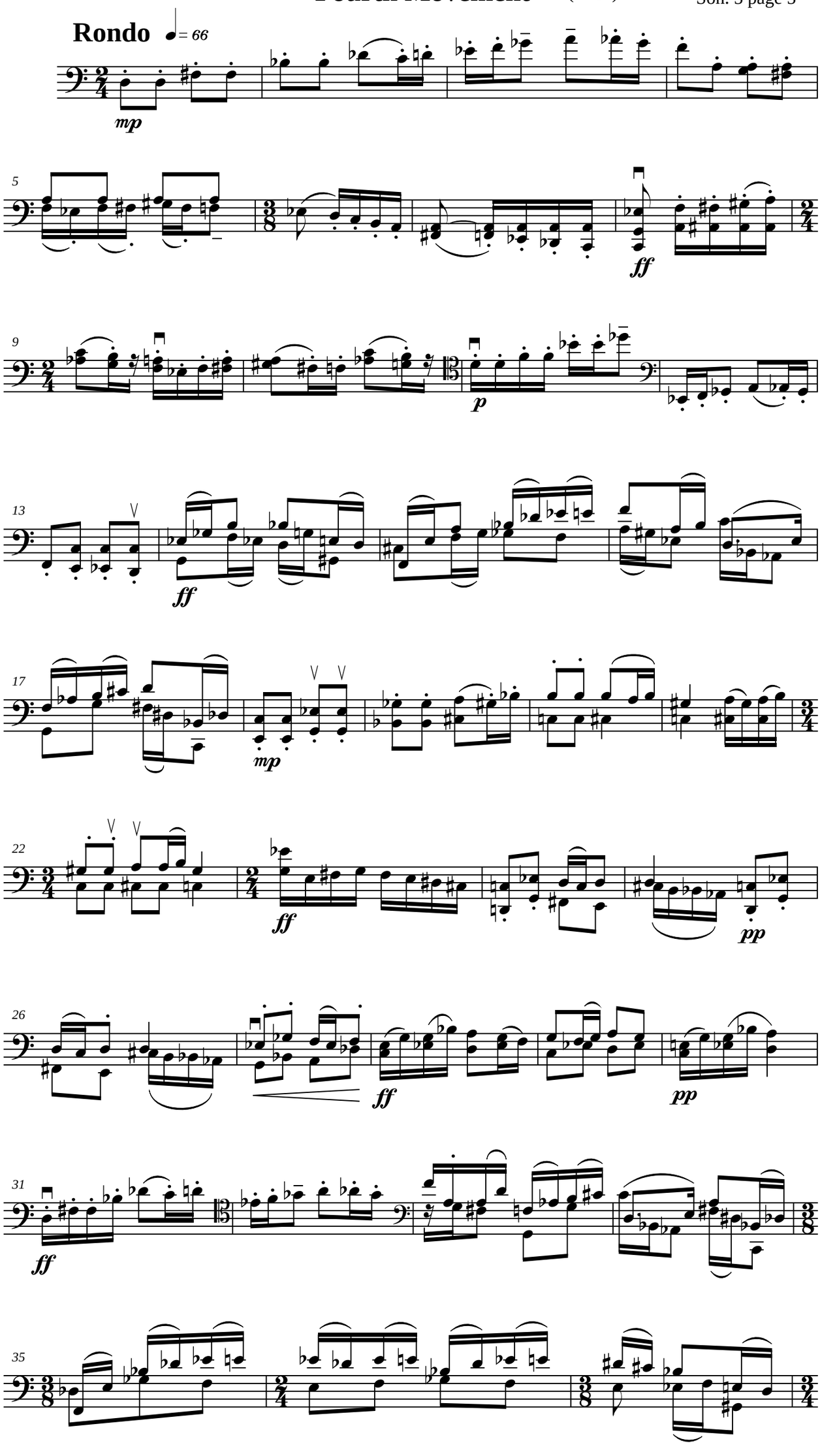
68

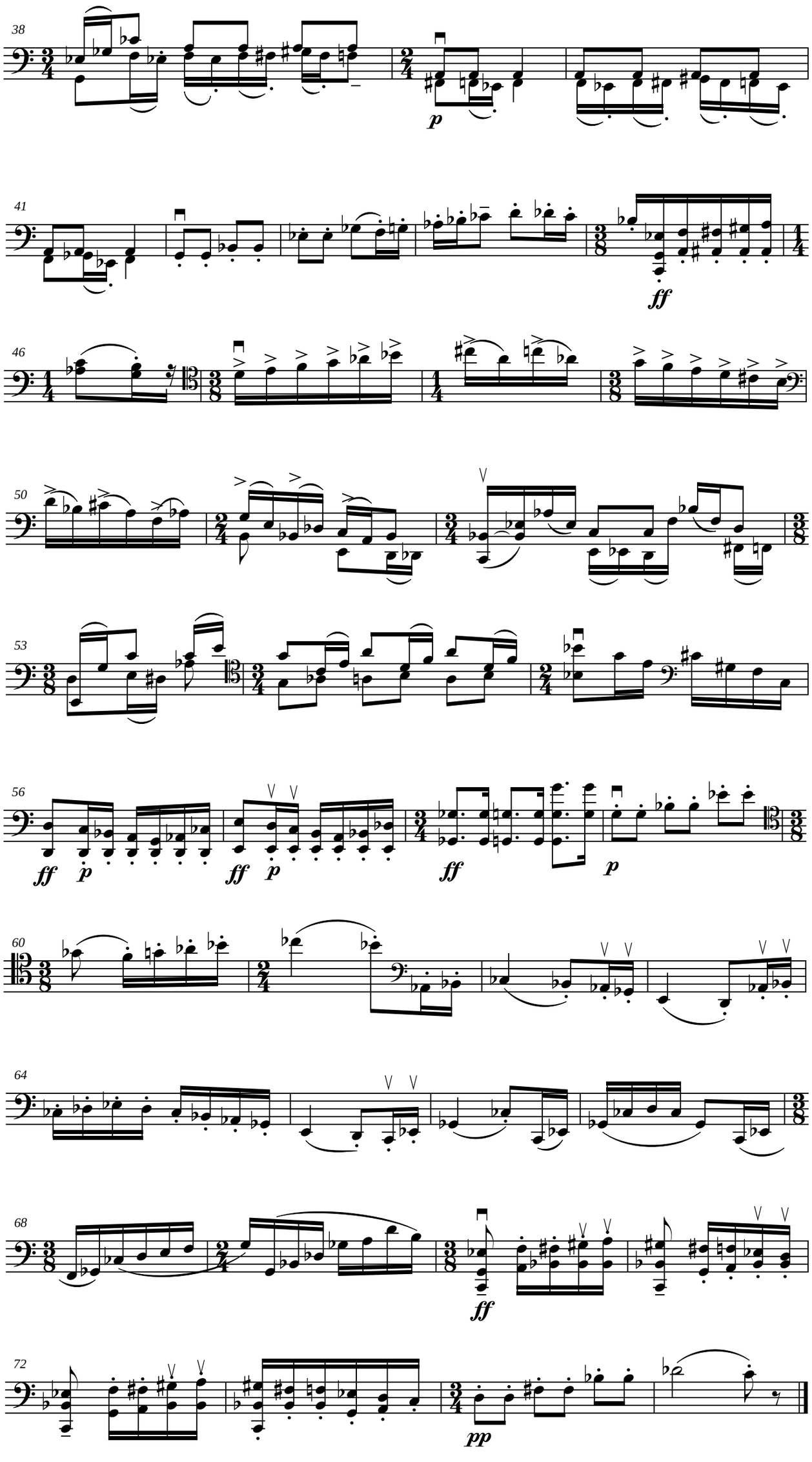
73

Fourth Movement (2'15")

Rondo

♩ = 66




38
p
41
ff
46
50
53
56
ff
p
ff
p
ff
p
60
64
68
ff
72
pp

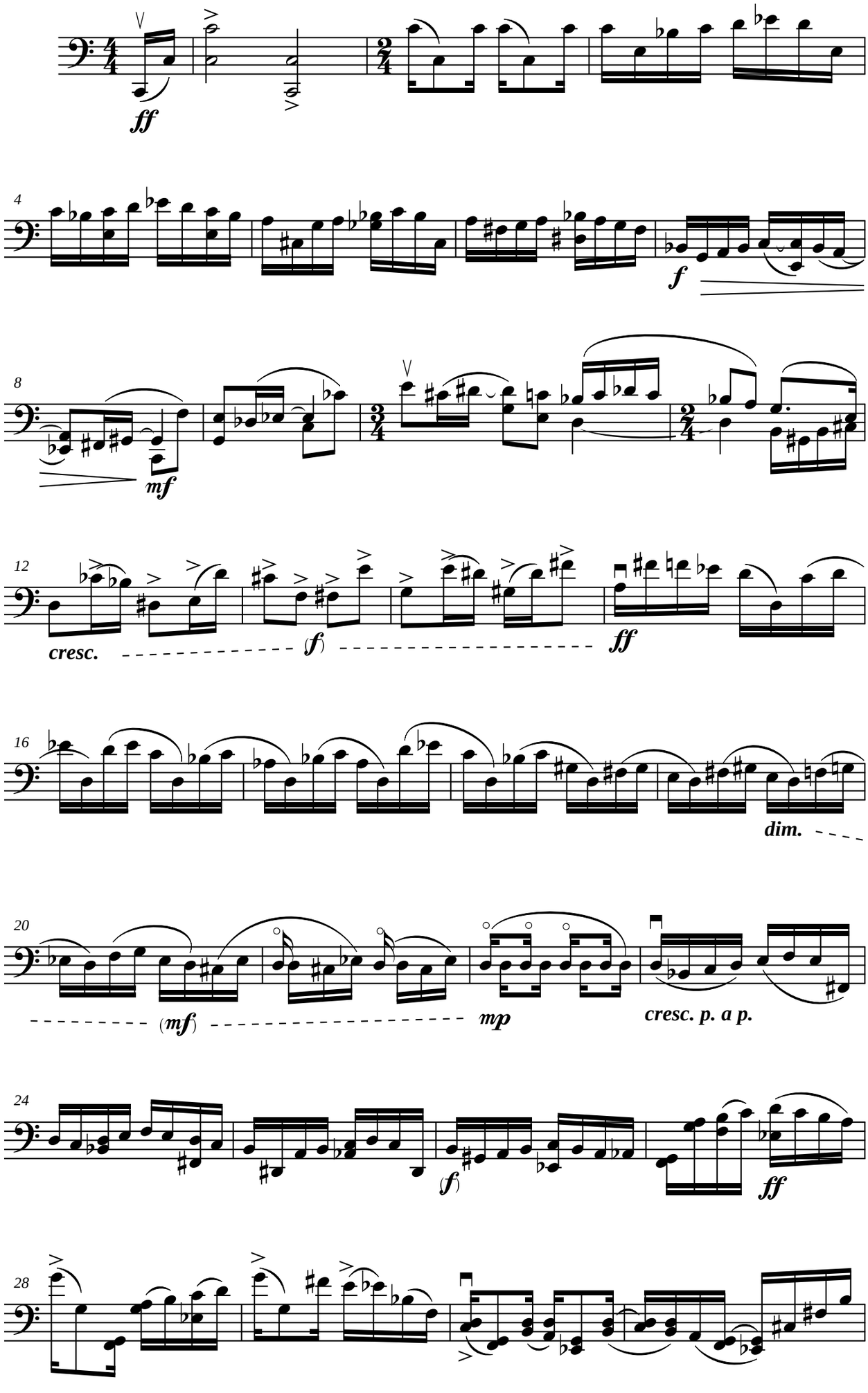
Sonata #6 for Solo Violoncello

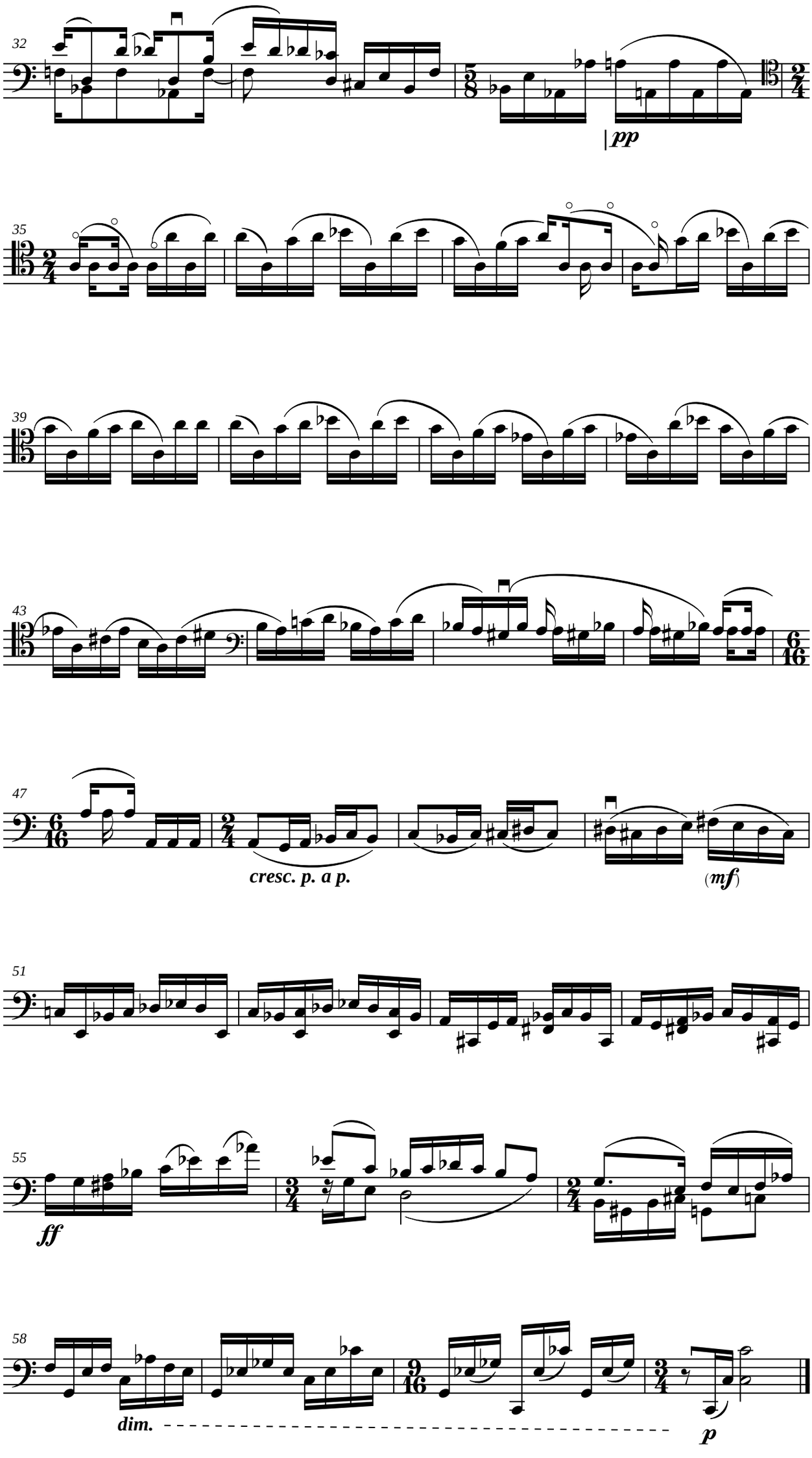
First Movement (2')

♩ = 66

Allegro Bigga Nota

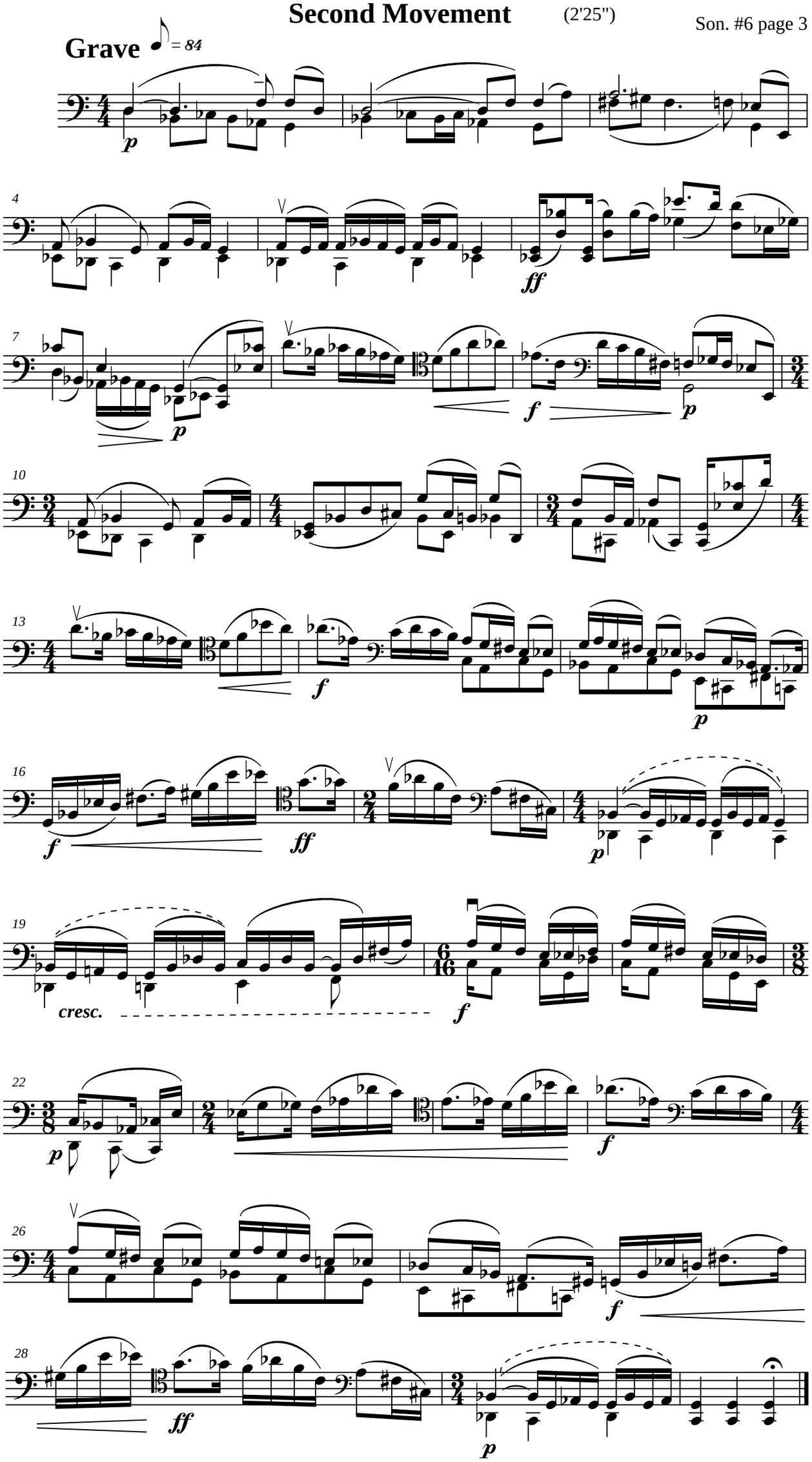
Bill Robinson




32
pp
35
39
43
47
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
51
55
ff
58
dim.
p

Second Movement (2'25")

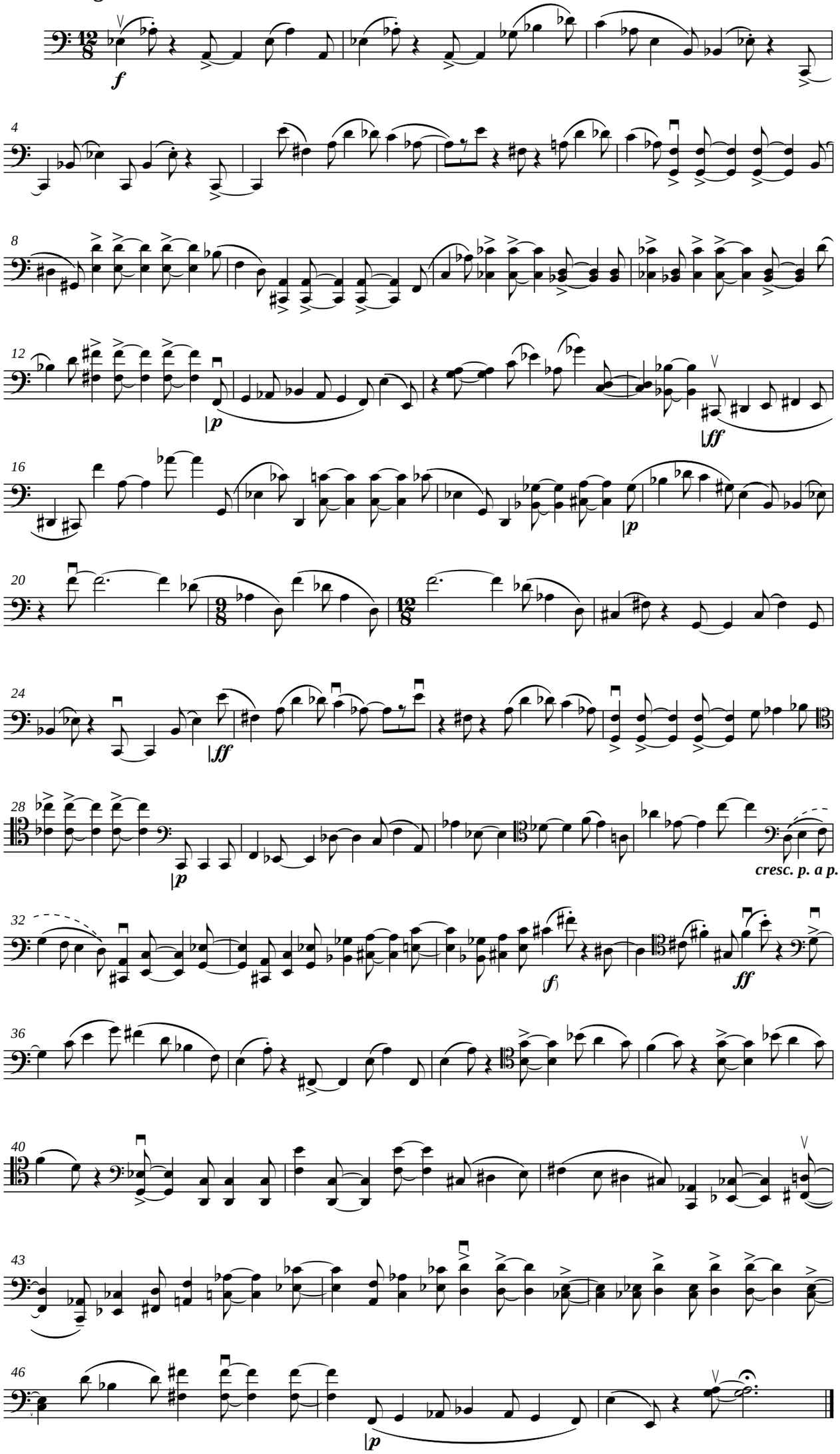
Grave ♪ = 84



Third Movement

(1'23")

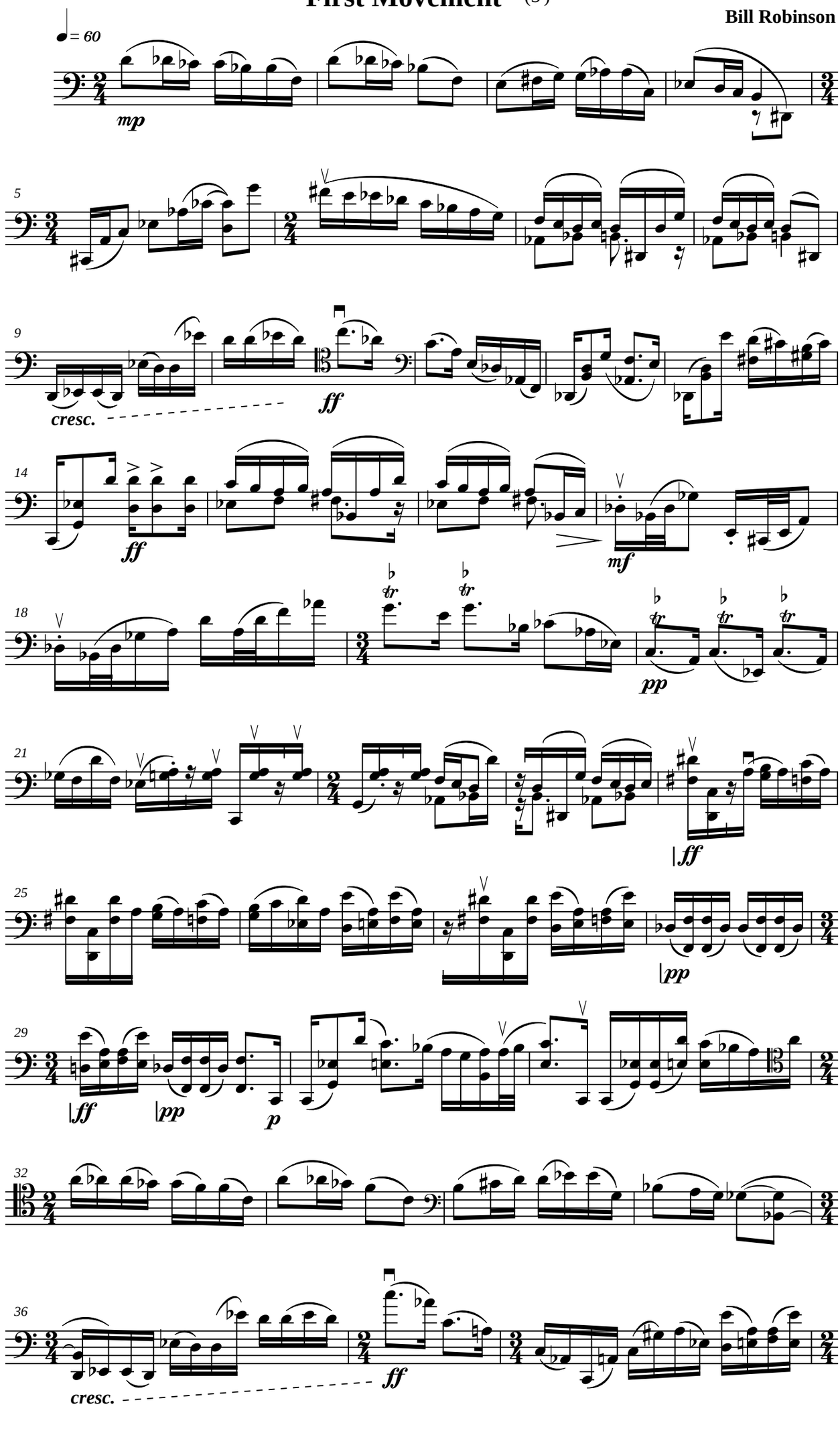
Swing Time ♩. = 138

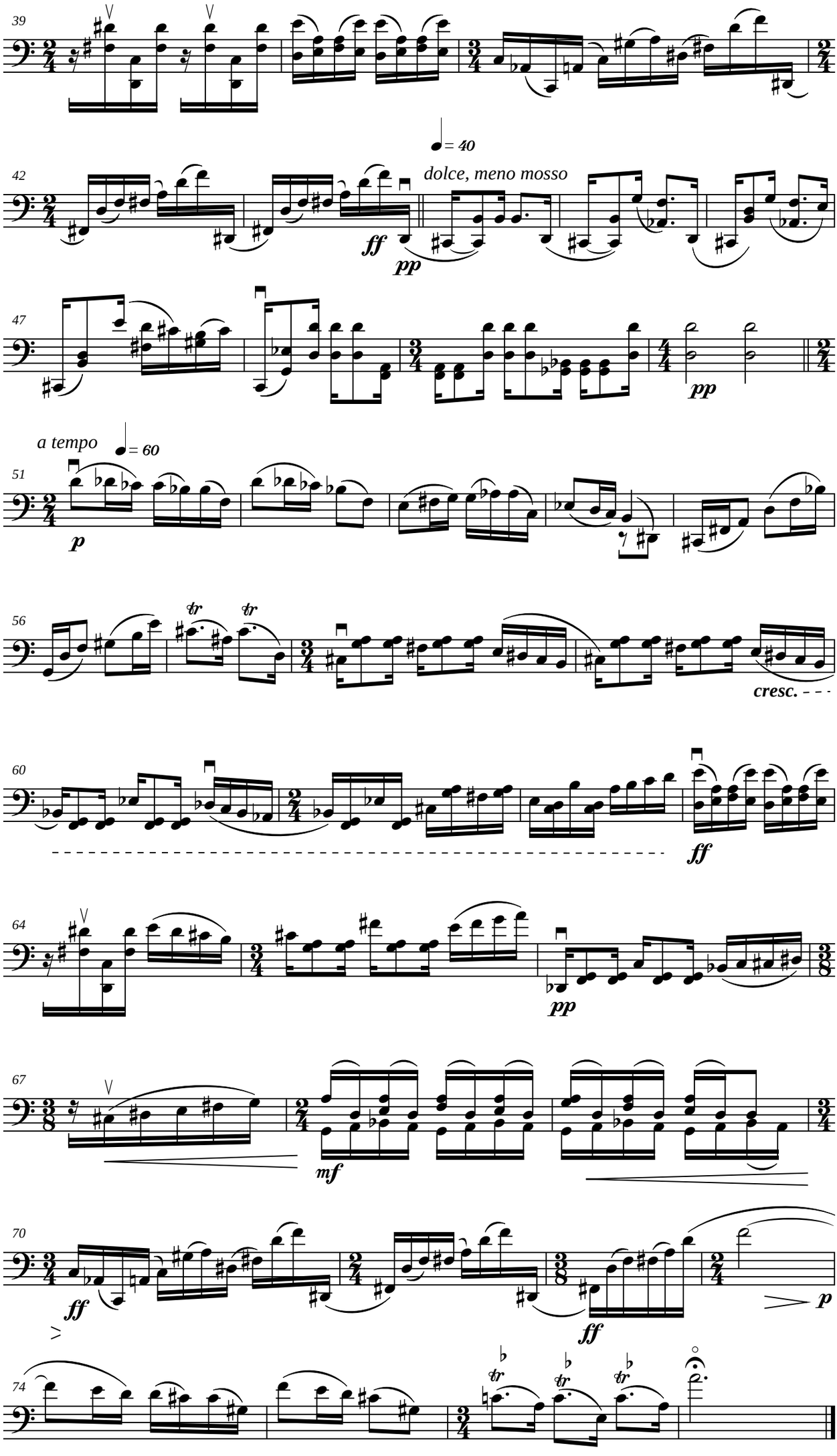


Sonata #7 for Solo Violoncello

First Movement (3')

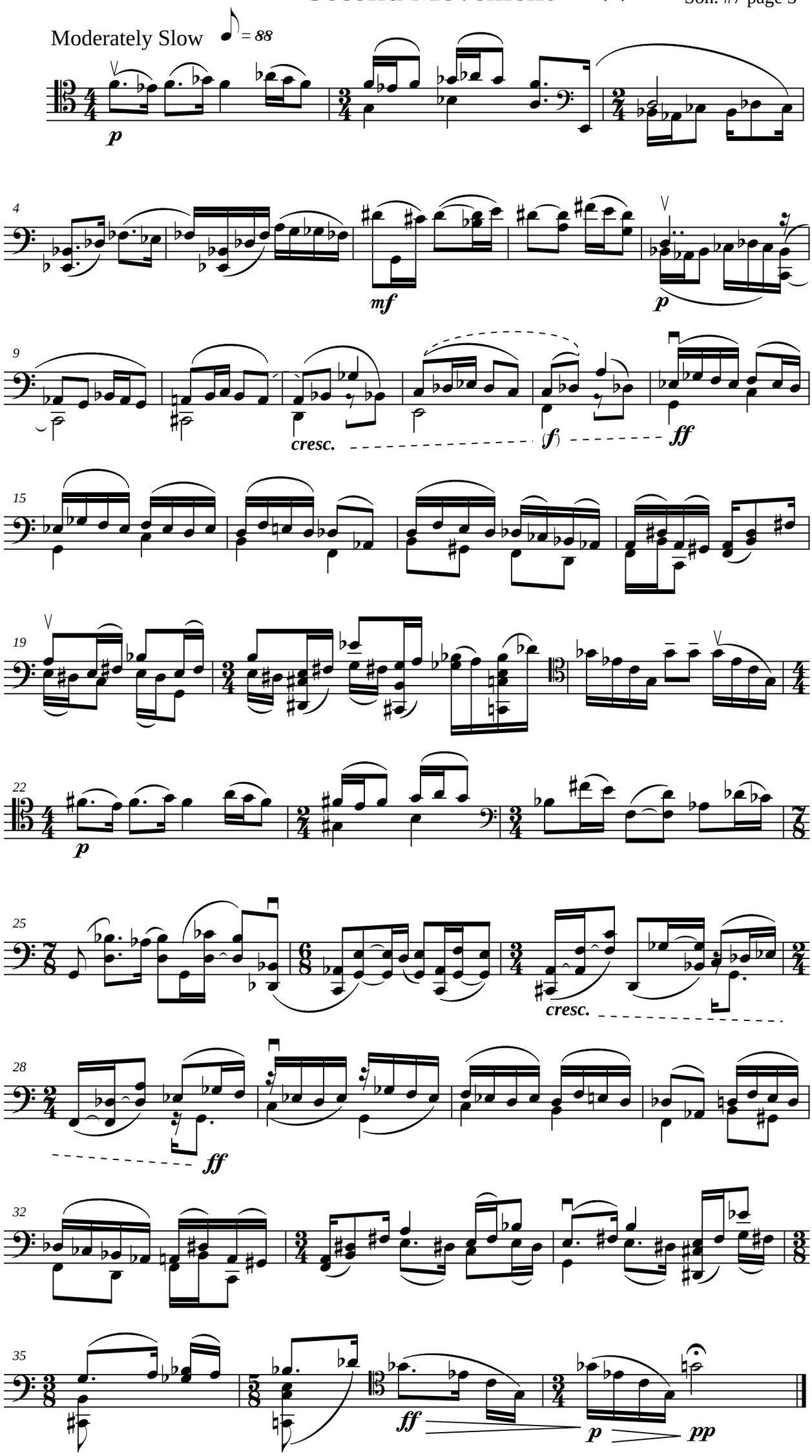
Bill Robinson




39
42
♩= 40
dolce, meno mosso
ff
pp
47
pp
a tempo
♩= 60
51
p
56
tr
tr
cresc.
60
ff
64
pp
67
mf
70
ff
ff
p
74
tr
tr
tr

Second Movement (2')

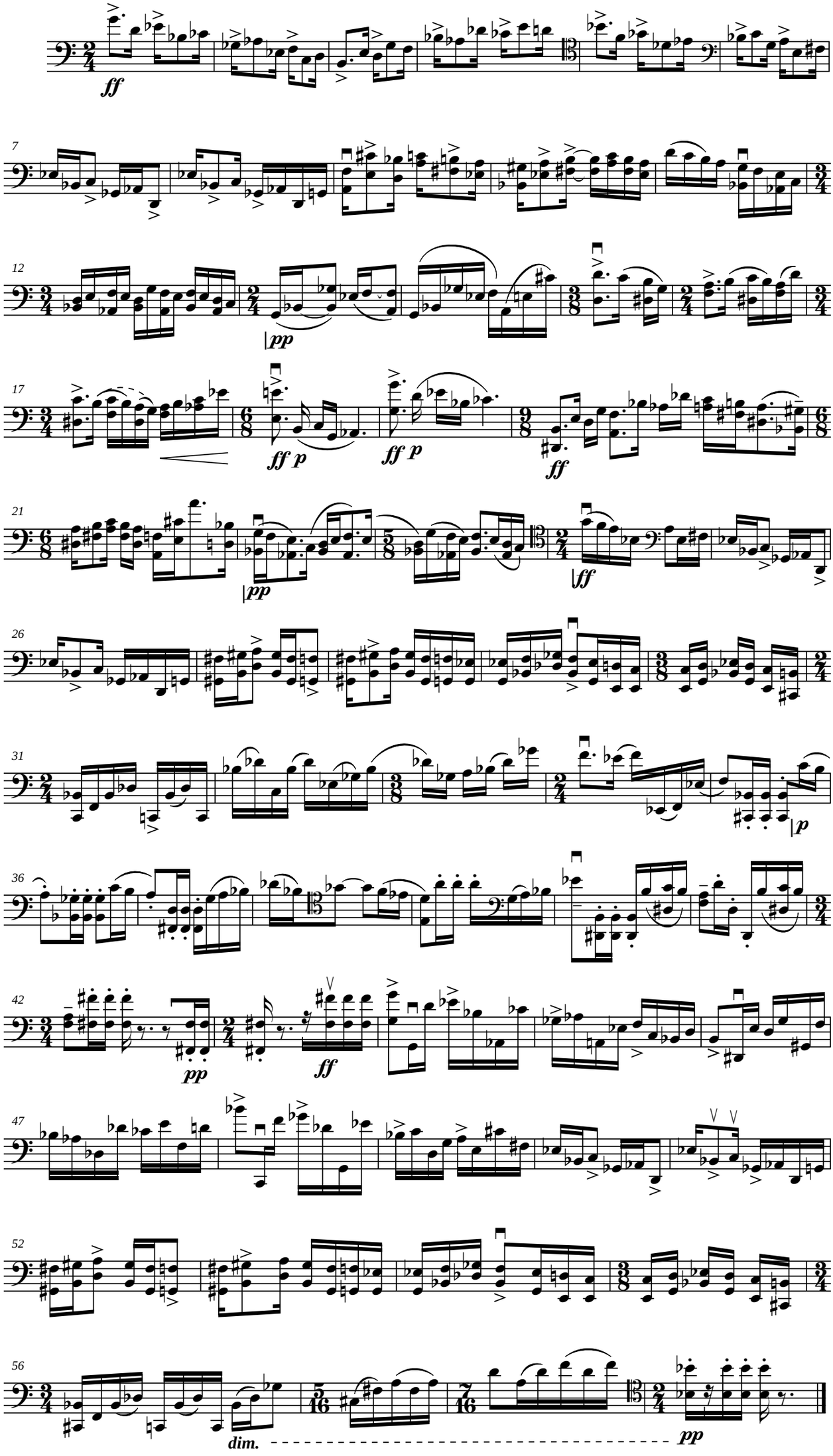
Moderately Slow ♪ = 88



Third Movement

(1'45")

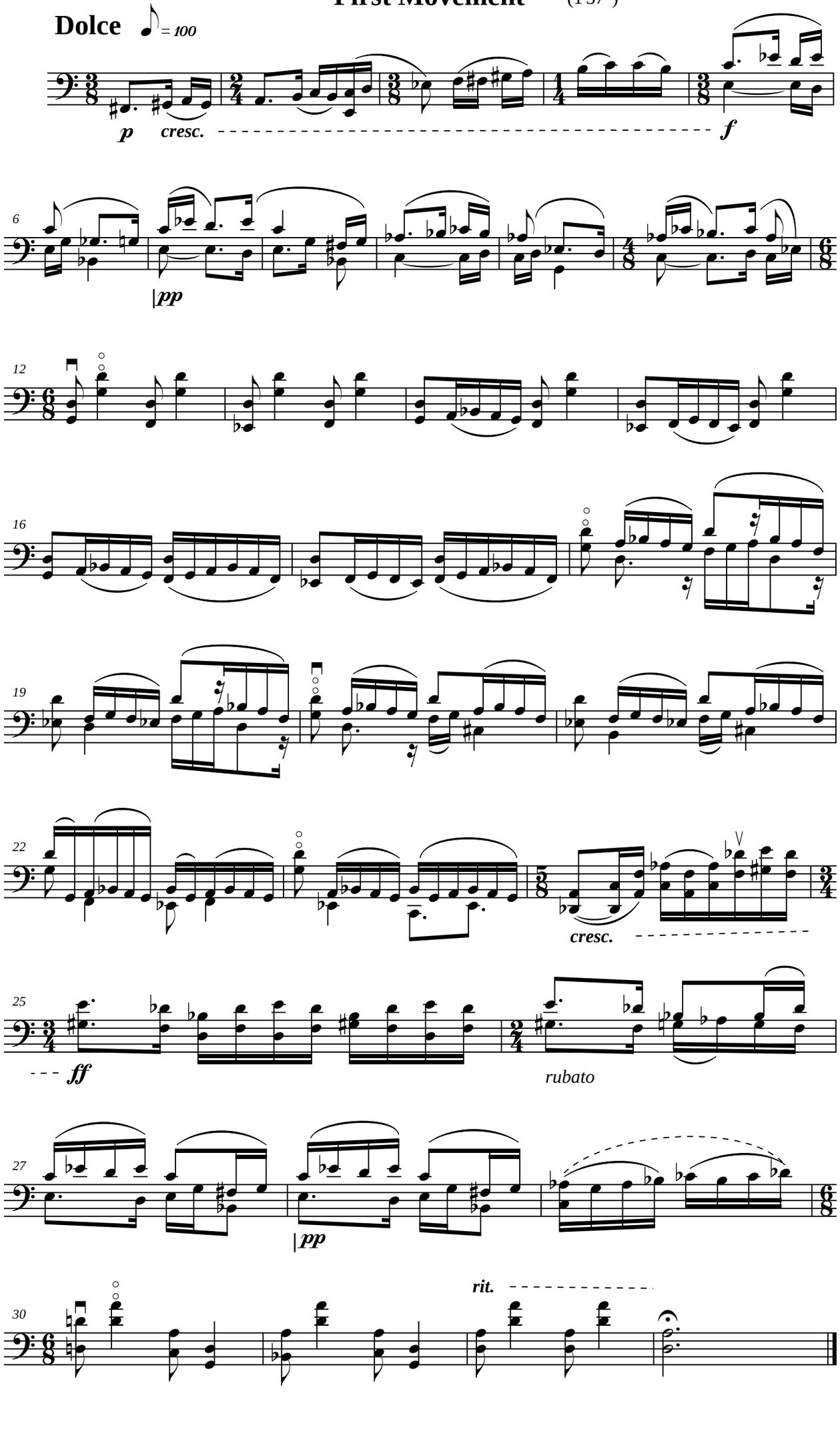
Allegro quasi Bartokoid ♩= 72



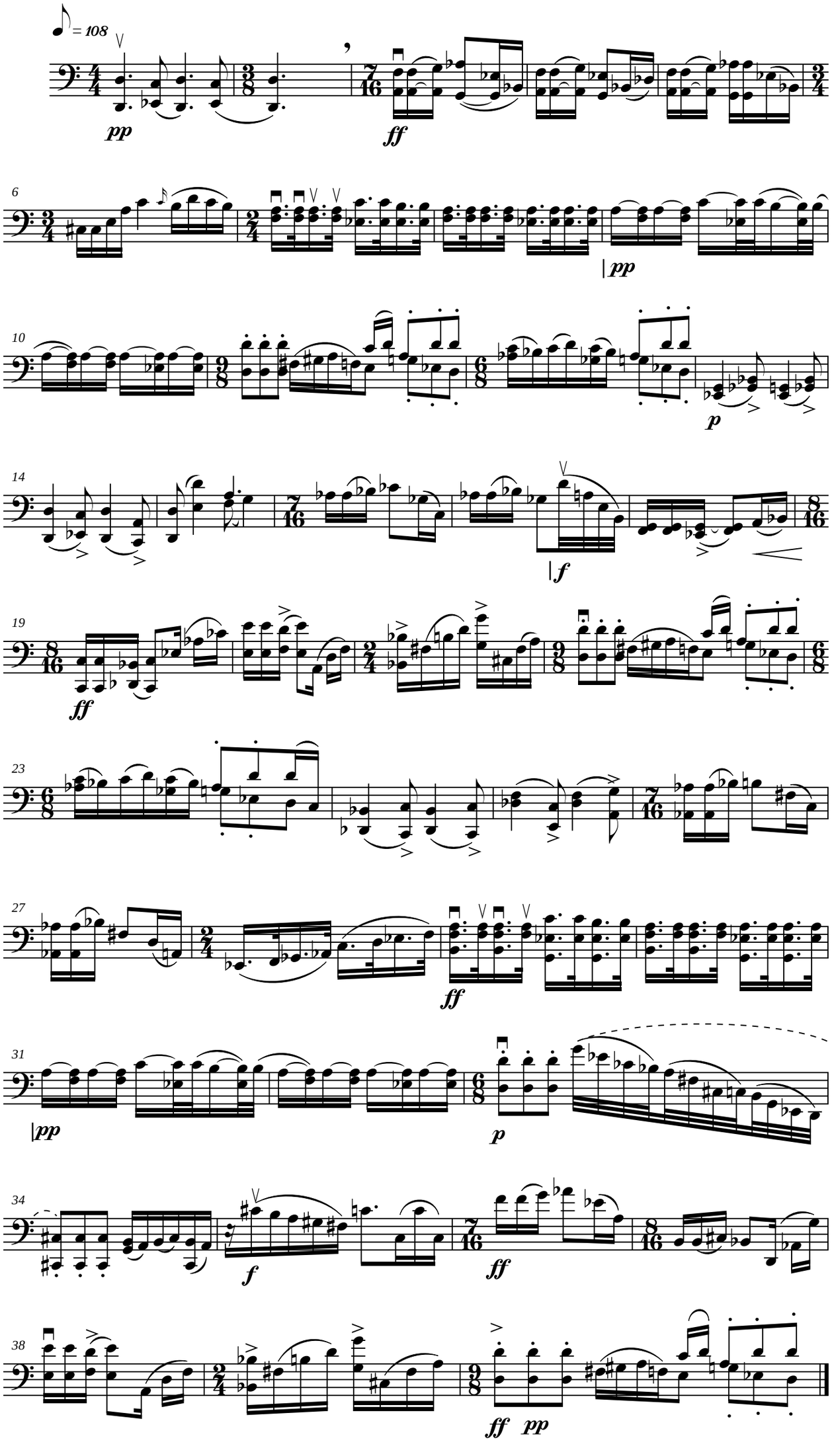
Sonata #8 for Solo Violin

First Movement (1'37")

Dolce ♪ = 100



Second Movement (1'50")



Moderato ♪ = 112

mp

4

9

13

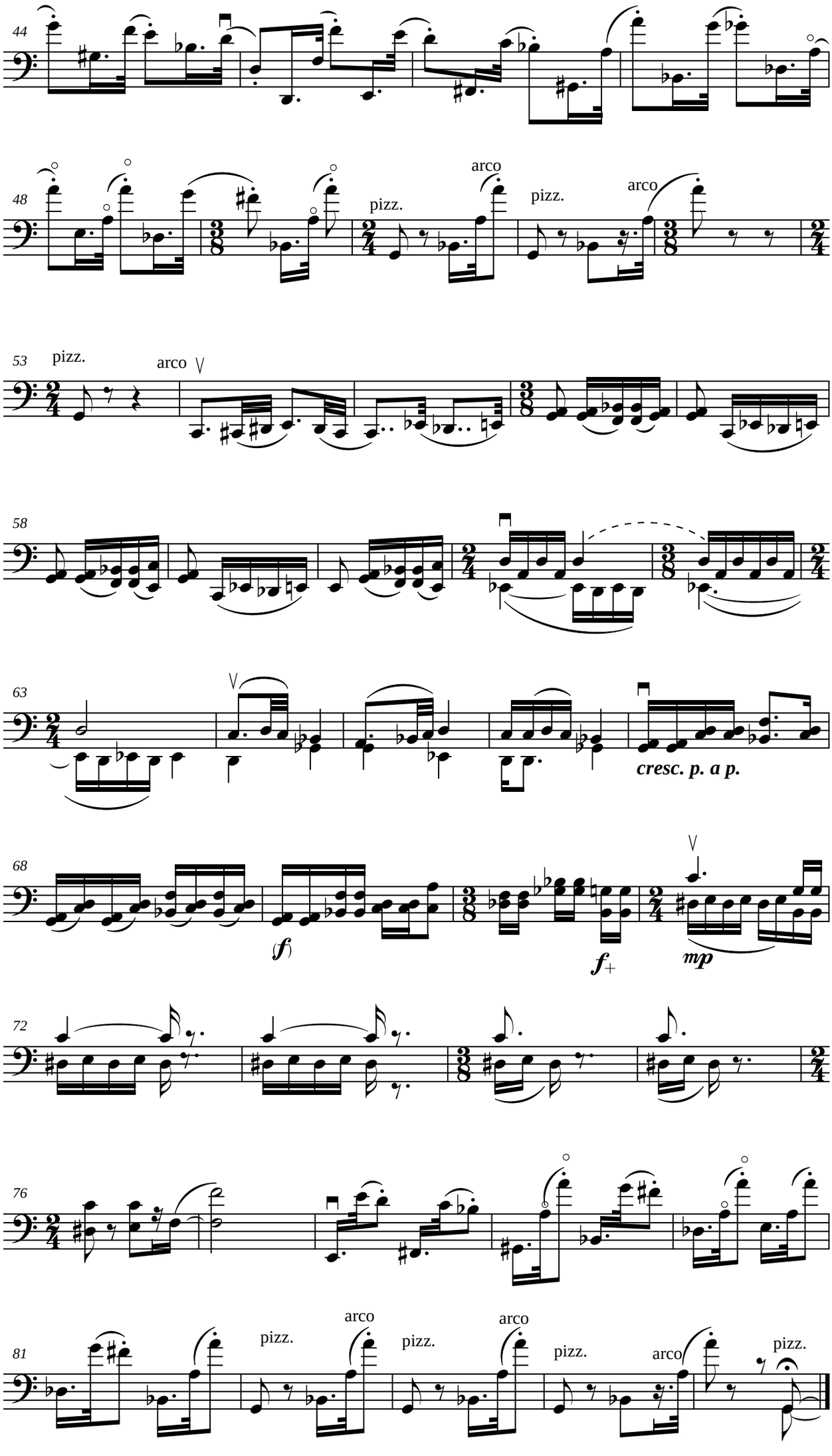
19

25

31

35

39


44
48
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
53
pizz.
arco
58
63
cresc. p. a p.
68
(f)
f+
mp
72
76
81
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.

Fourth Movement (1'50")

Allegro martele ♩. = 76

ff

4

p *cresc. p. a p.* *(f)*

7

ff

10

pp *p*

13

ff

16

pp *ff*

19

pp *ff*

22

p *mf* *(f)* *ff*

25

p pizz.

29

arco

p *cresc. p. a p.* *(f)*

32

ff

35

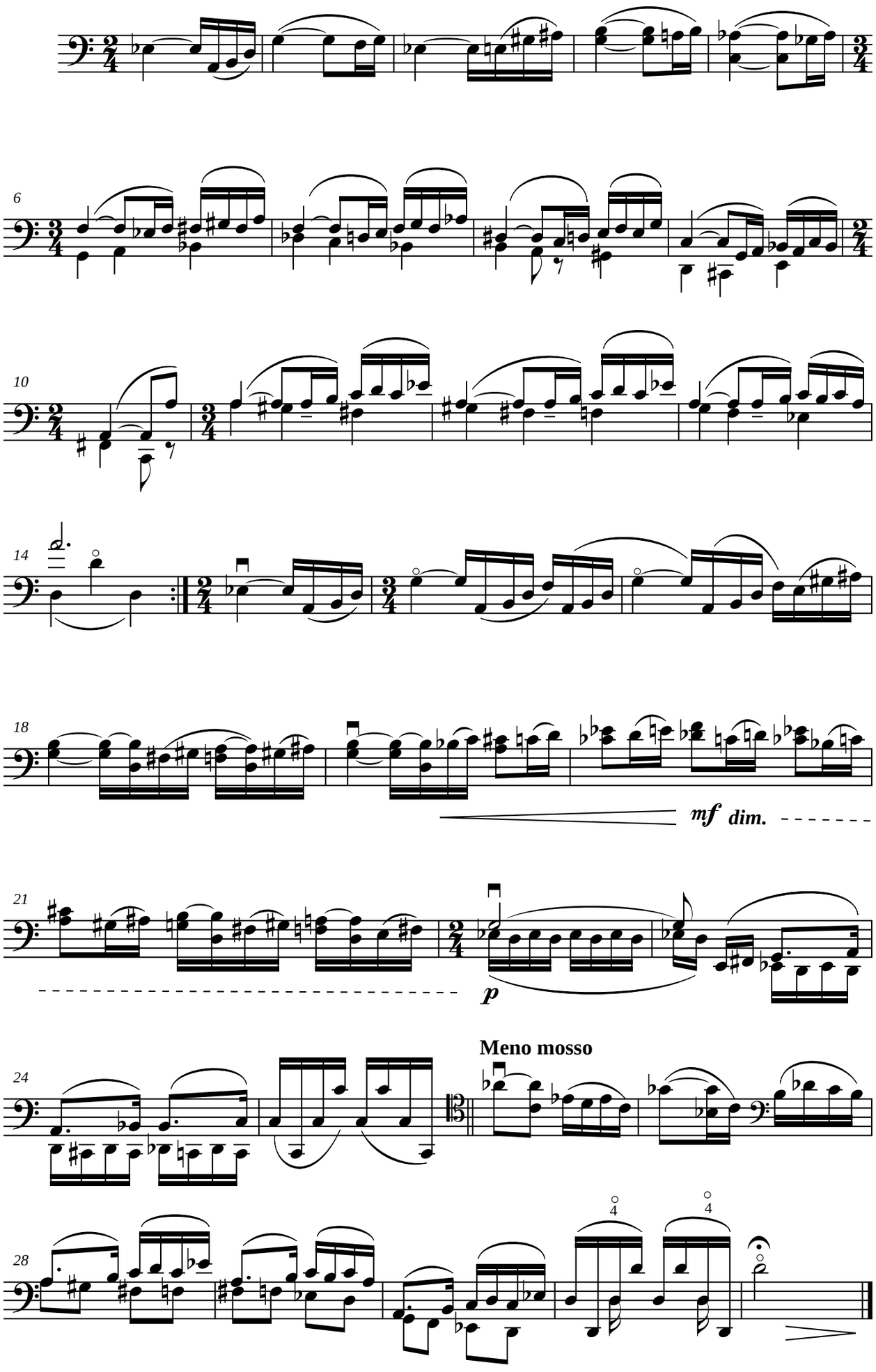
fff

Sonata #9 for Solo Violoncello

First Movement (2'50")

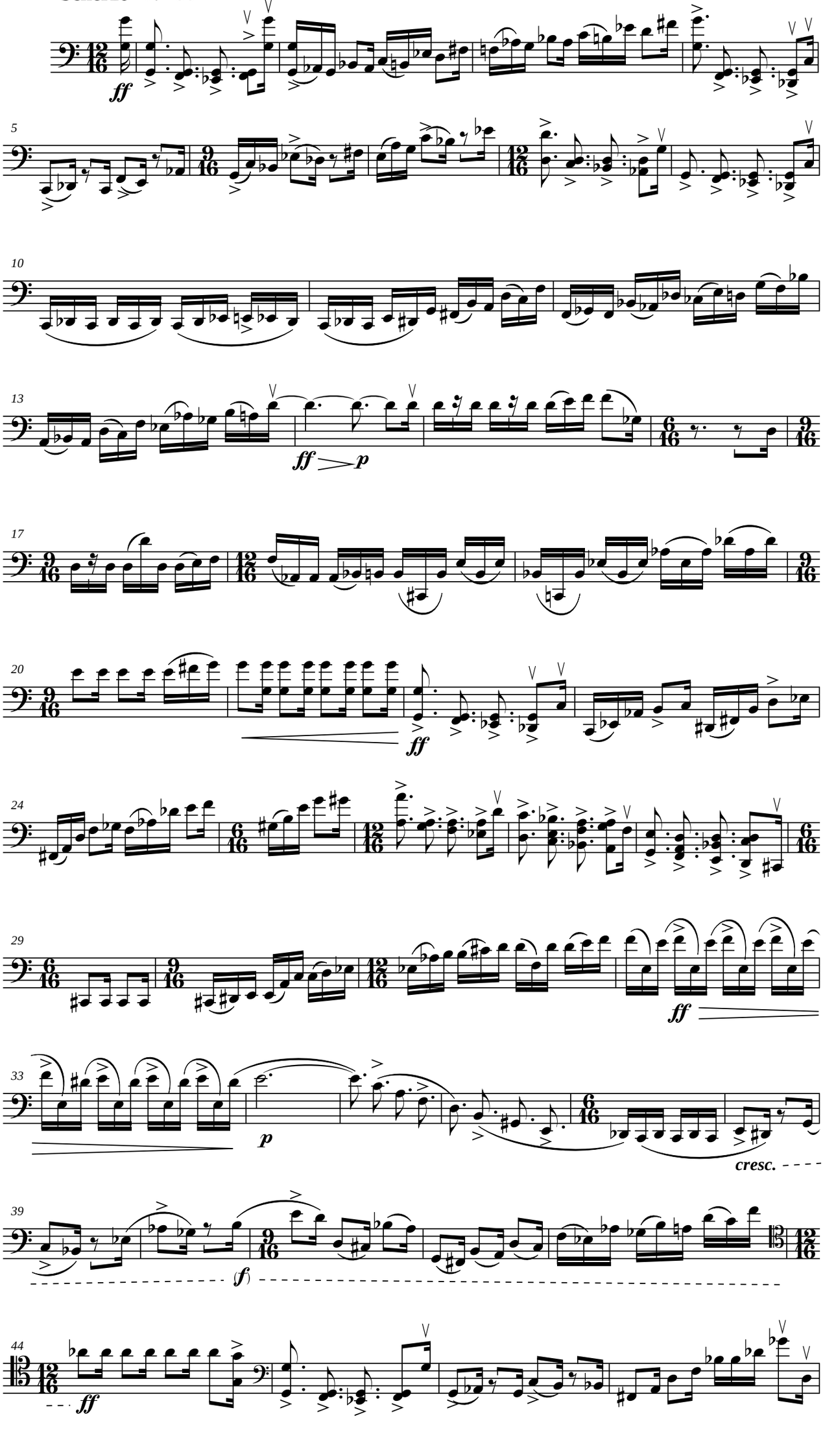
Bill Robinson

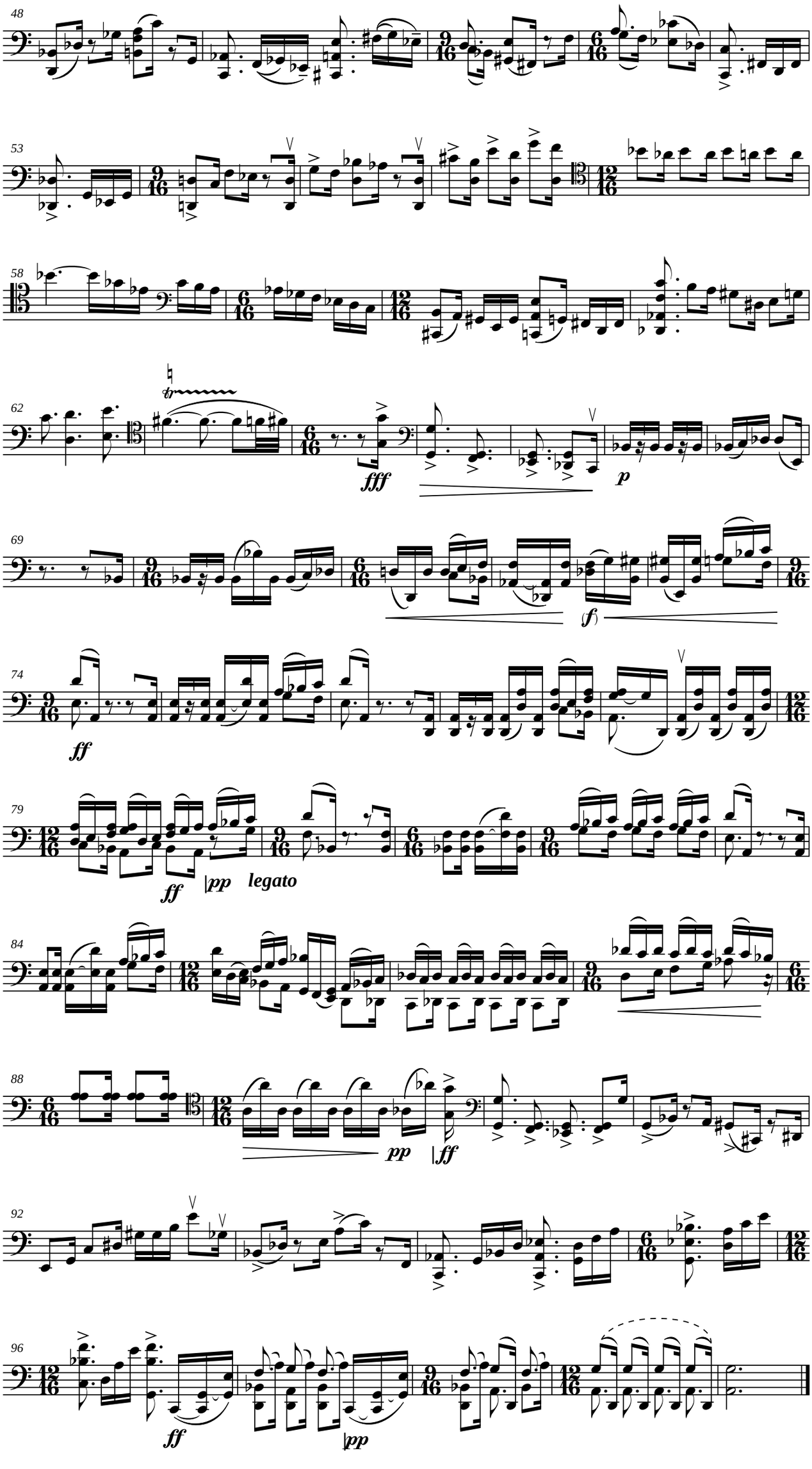
Moderato espressivo ♩= 50



Second Movement (3'20")

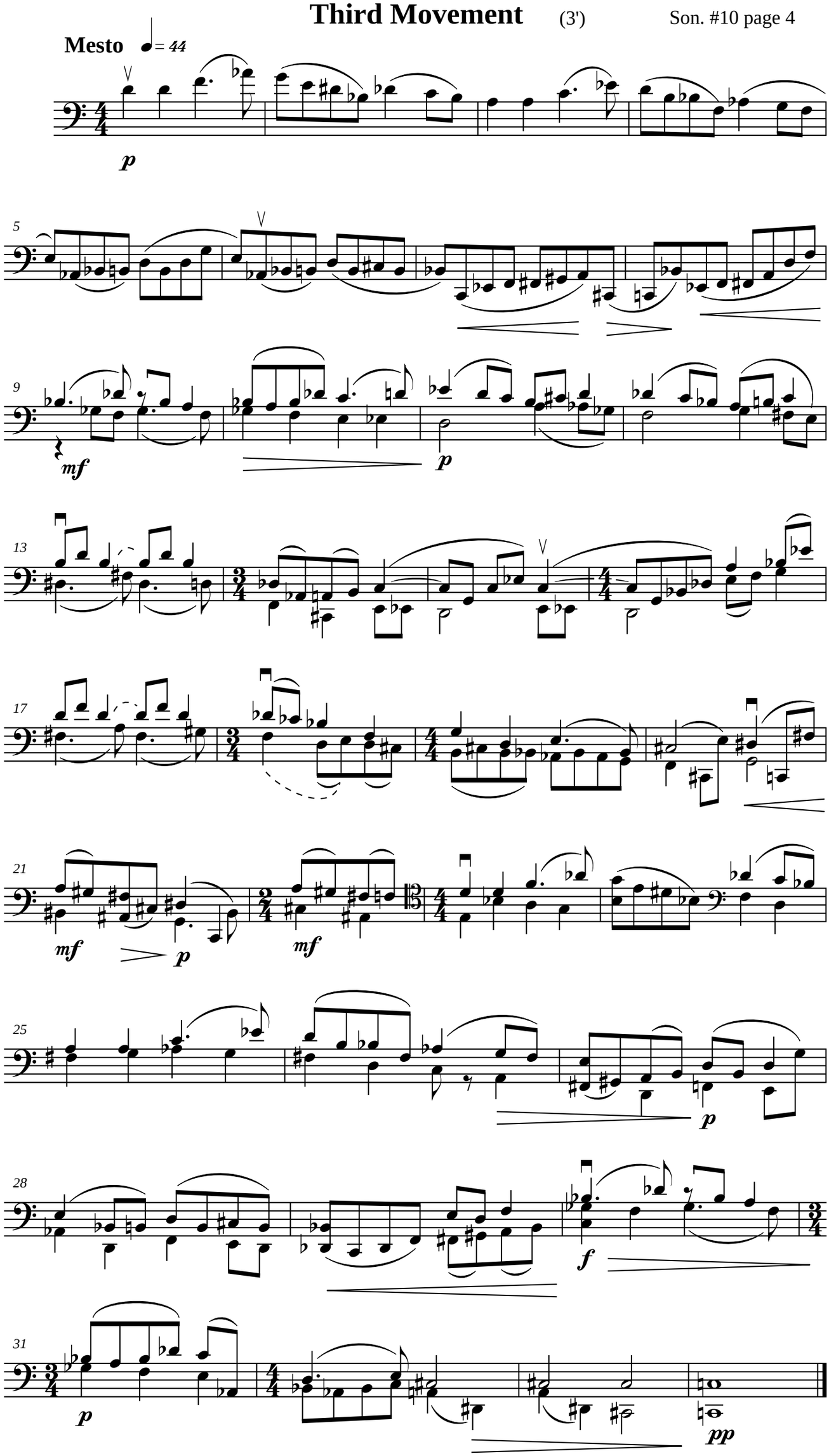
Scherzo ♩. = 60




48
53
58
62
fff
p
69
f
74
ff
79
ff
pp
legato
84
88
pp
ff
92
96
ff
pp

Third Movement (3')

Mesto ♩ = 44

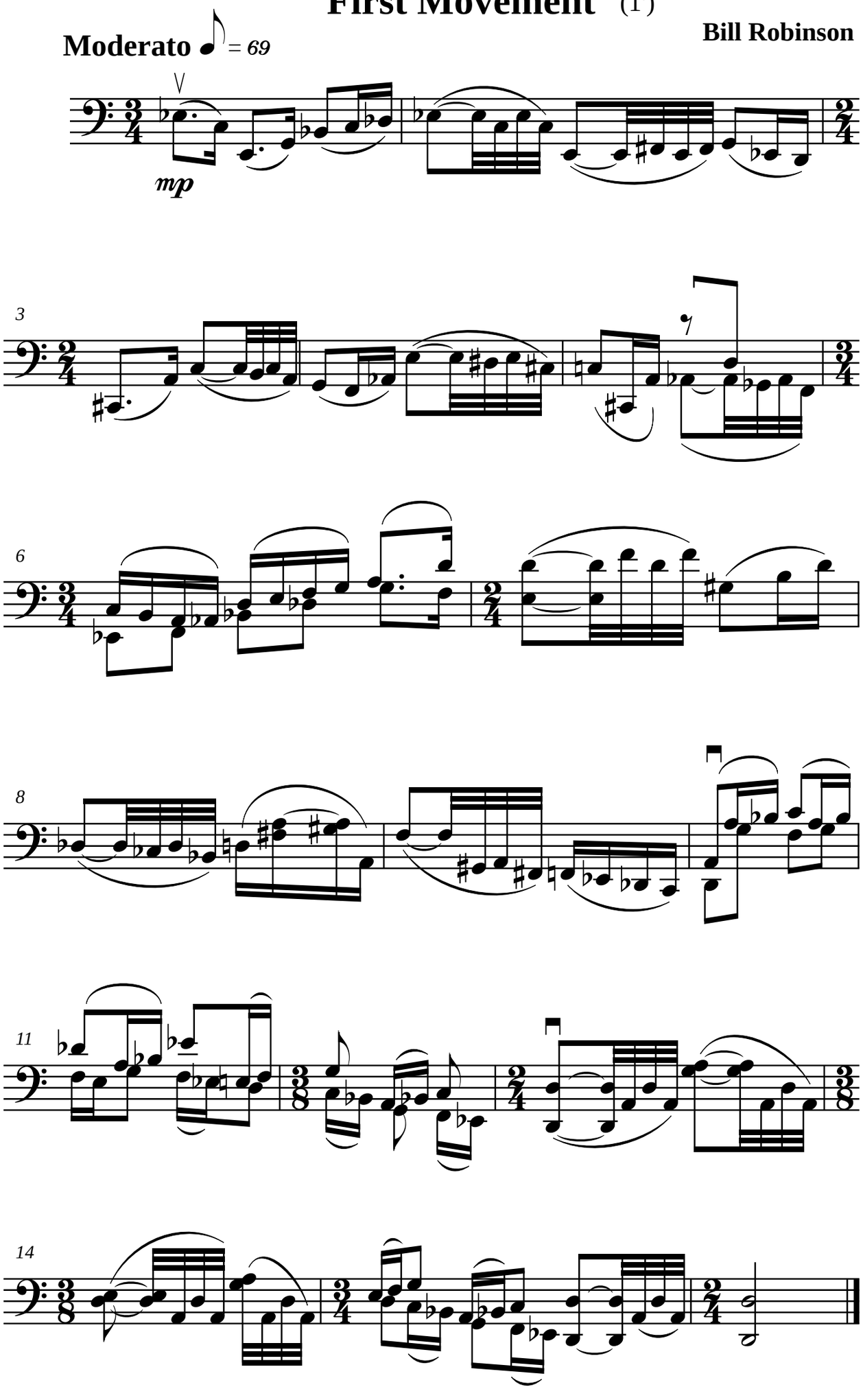


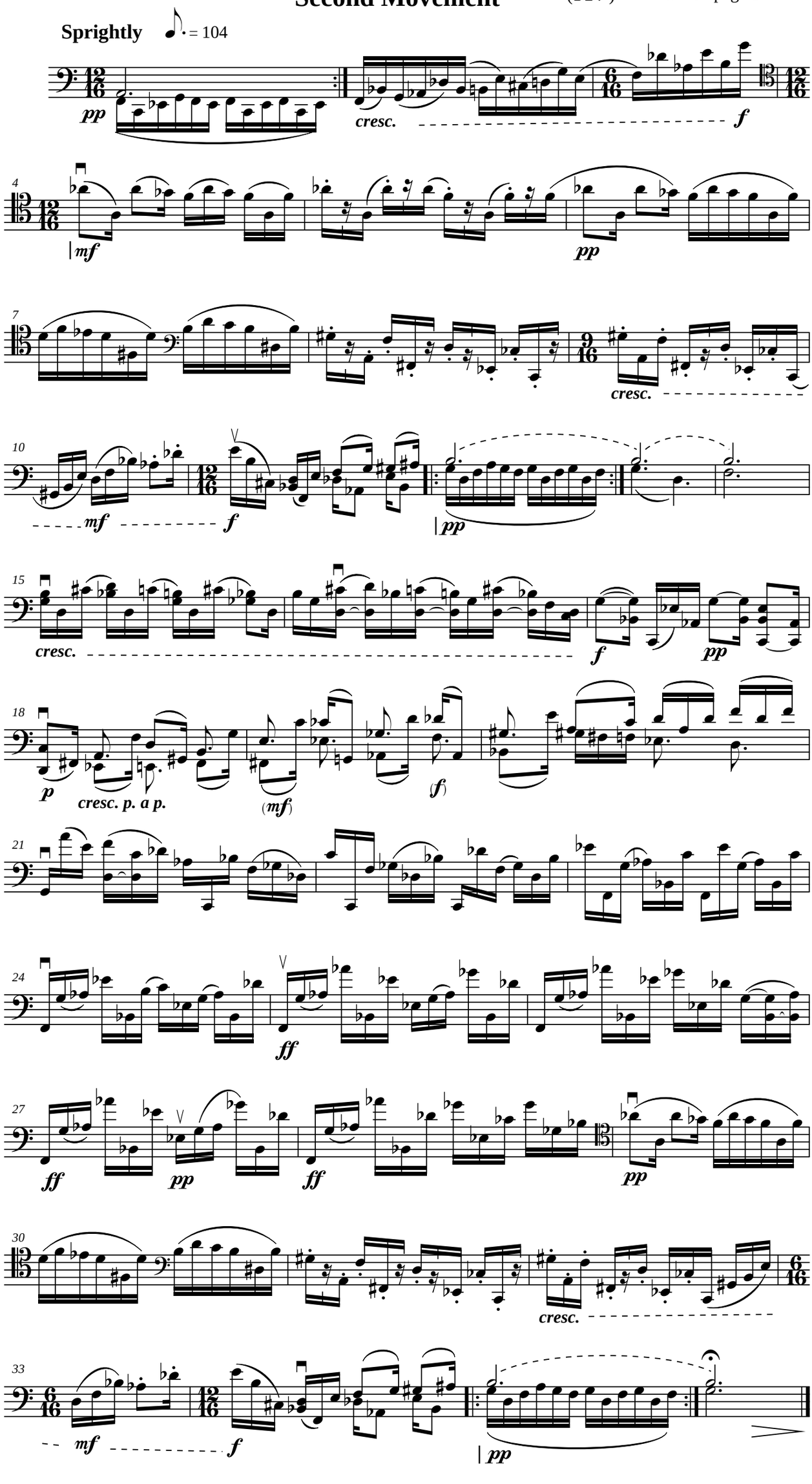
Sonata #10 for Solo Violoncello

First Movement (1')

Bill Robinson

Moderato ♪ = 69




Sprightly ♪. = 104
pp
cresc.
f
mf
pp
cresc.
mf
f
pp
cresc.
f
pp
p
cresc. p. a p.
(mf)
(f)
ff
ff
pp
ff
pp
cresc.
mf
f
pp

Third Movement (2'20")

Slow ♩ = 63

p

rit. -

Fourth Movement (1')

Ho Dao ♩= 115

ff

gliss.

(late)

Gliss.

Gliss.

mp

ff

fff