J. S. Bach
Sonata No. 1, Partita No. 2
arranged for 6 String Violin
by Bill Robinson (2002)

I started playing violin at age ten in 1965. By 1982, my arthritis was severe enough so that even with adaptive gear, I had to stop playing, and sold my violin. In 1991 I made an electric violin. After six months I was no longer able to play, both physically and due to other complications.

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. This is when I made arrangements of J. S. Bach's Sonata No. 1 and Partita No. 2 for the 6 string violin. The photograph shows the 6 string violin that I made, which has since been thrown away, and the Bach Bogen, now sold.

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 February 2017, I decided to try again to play violin, with new instruments and adaptive gear. As a result, I am going back to the Bach arrangements, which are still in the now antiquated format of ink and paper, and have redone the copy work in Finale. I don't know yet if my health will sustain this effort to play again.

Performance notes: Most of the movements 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 damper 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.

This 6 string edition will be dedicated to the first violinist to perform them.

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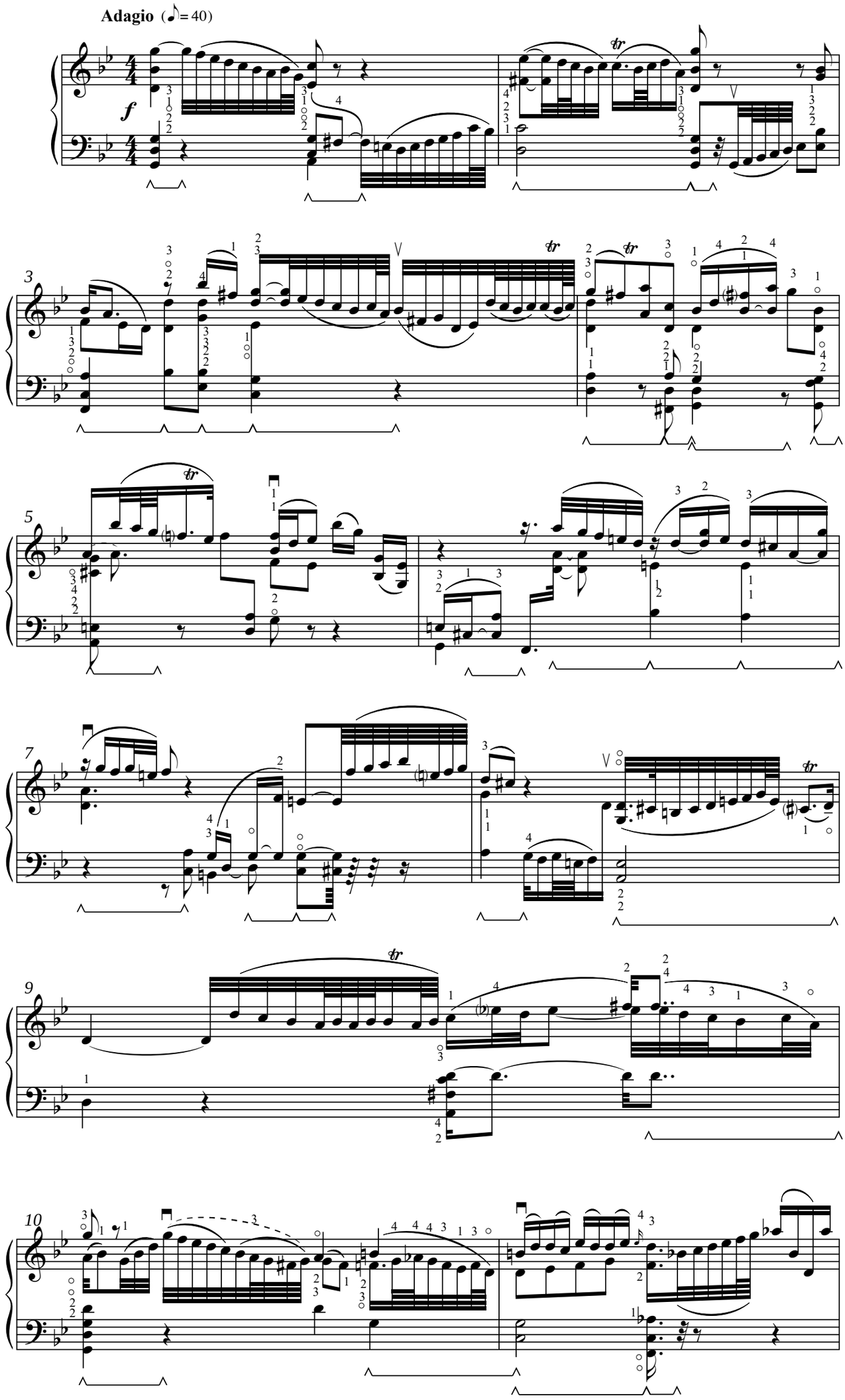
cover art; title page to "On Friendship", 1580, by Michel de Montaigne

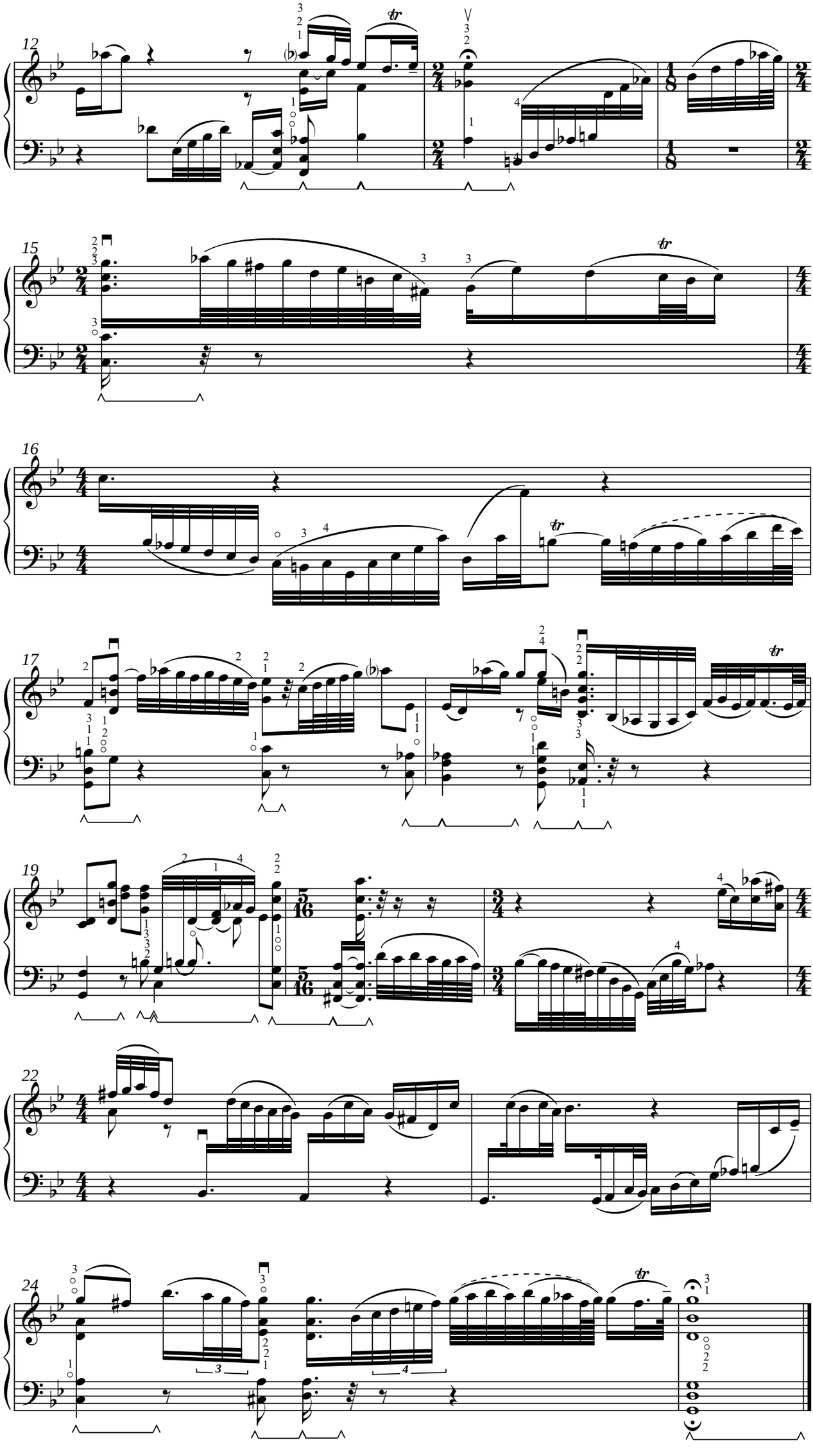
(pedal markings are for freeze effect; see title page)

Sonata No. 1 for 6 String Violin

I. First Movement

J. S. Bach
arr. Bill Robinson

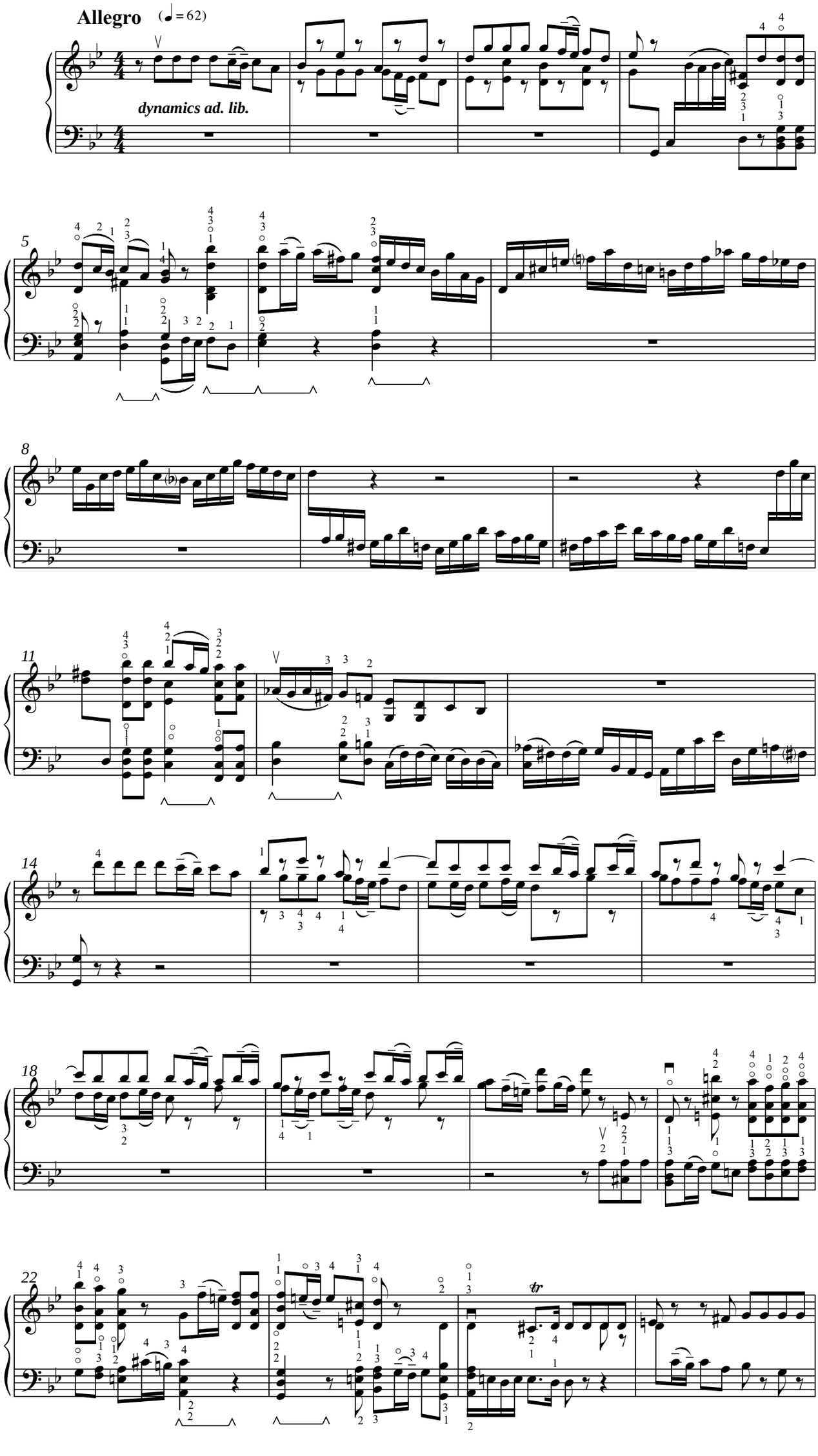


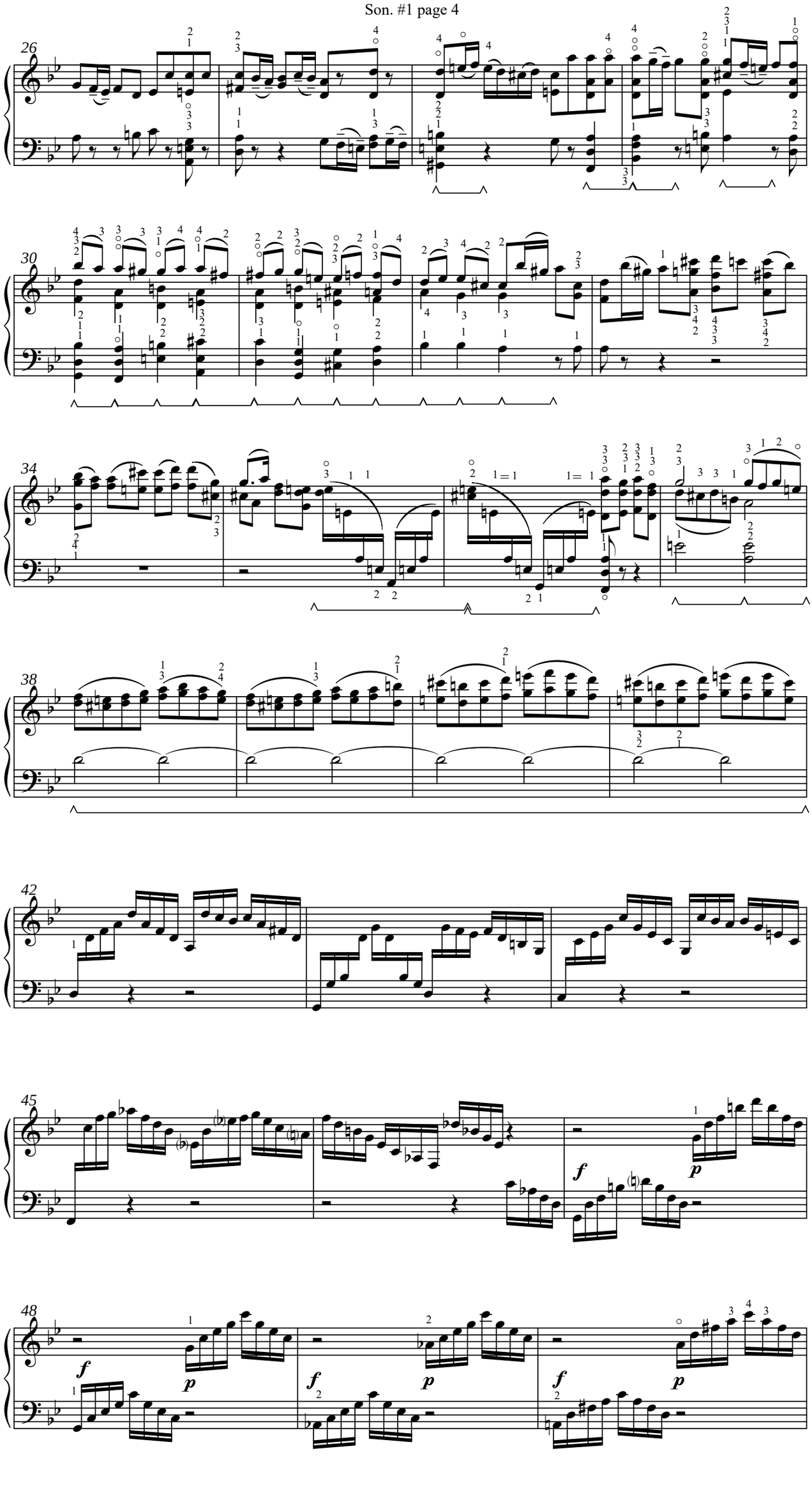


II. Fuga

Allegro (♩ = 62)

dynamics ad. lib.

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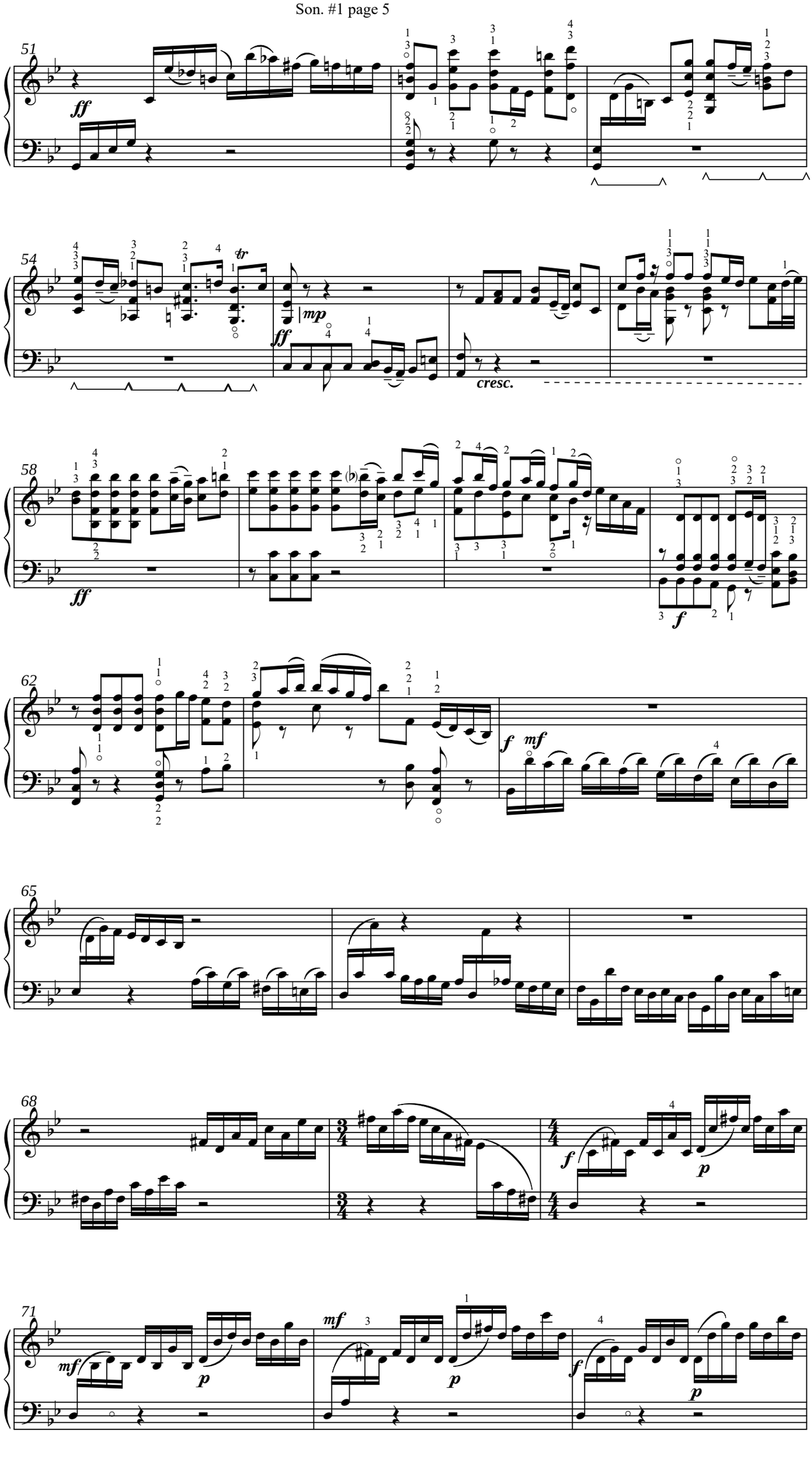
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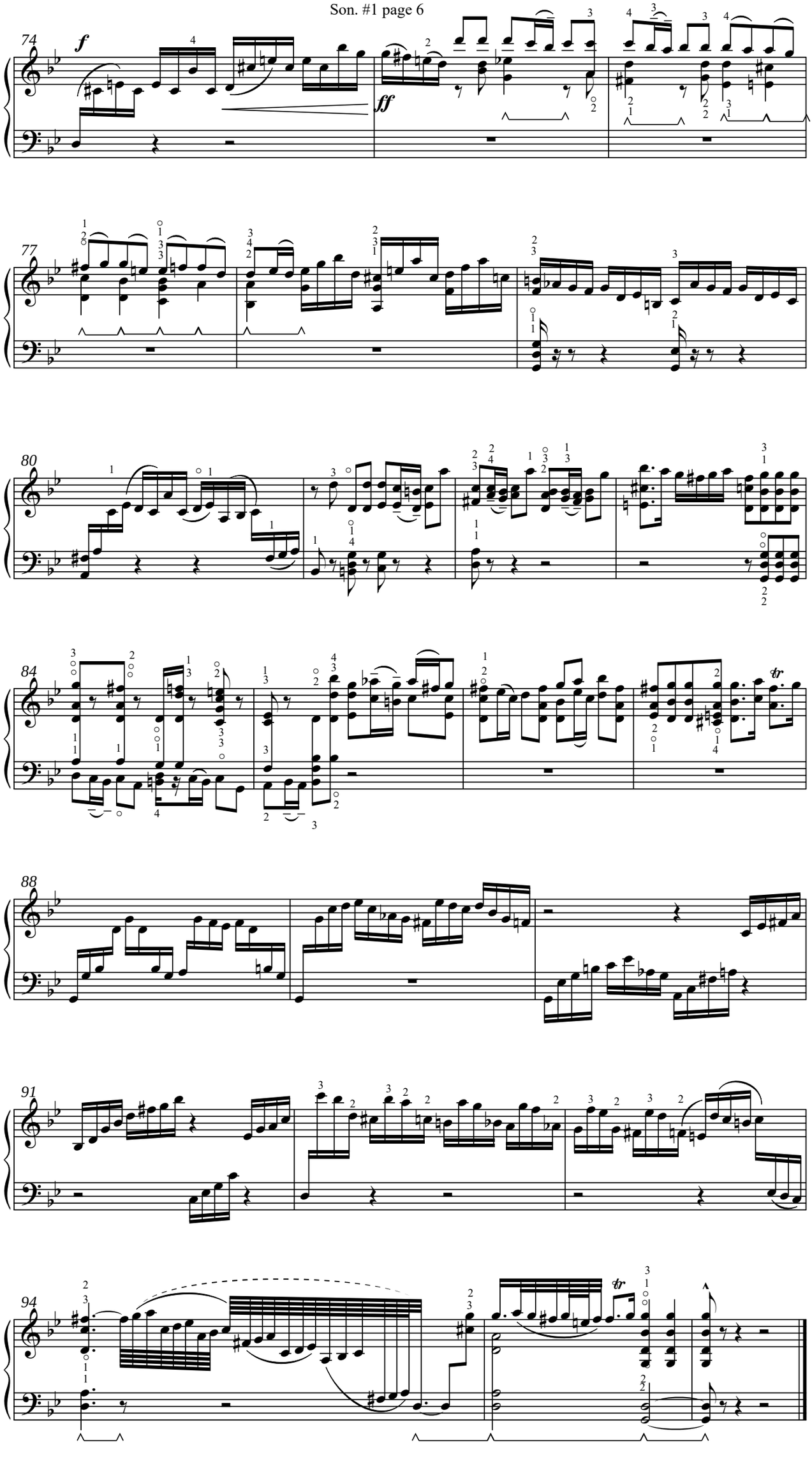
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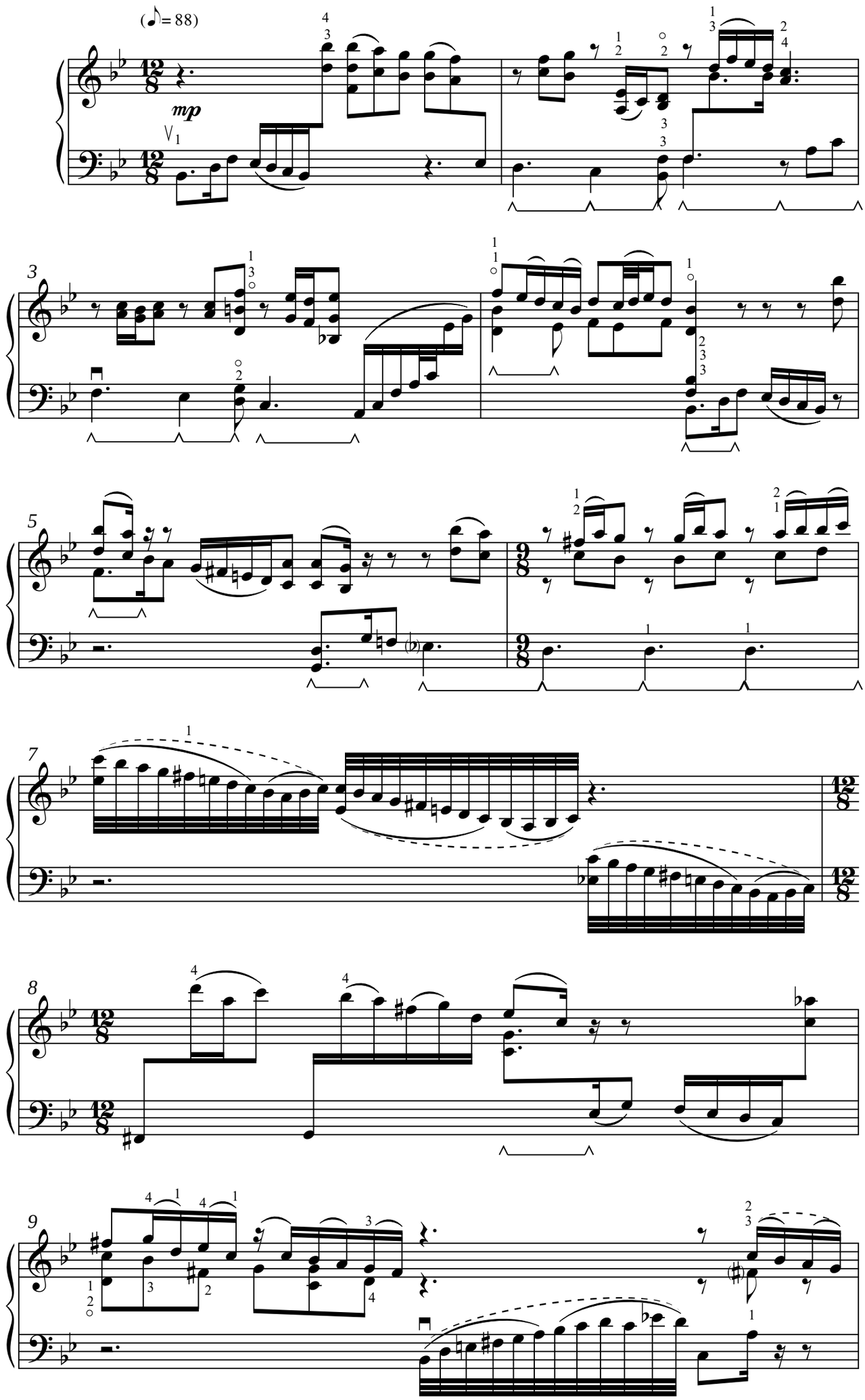
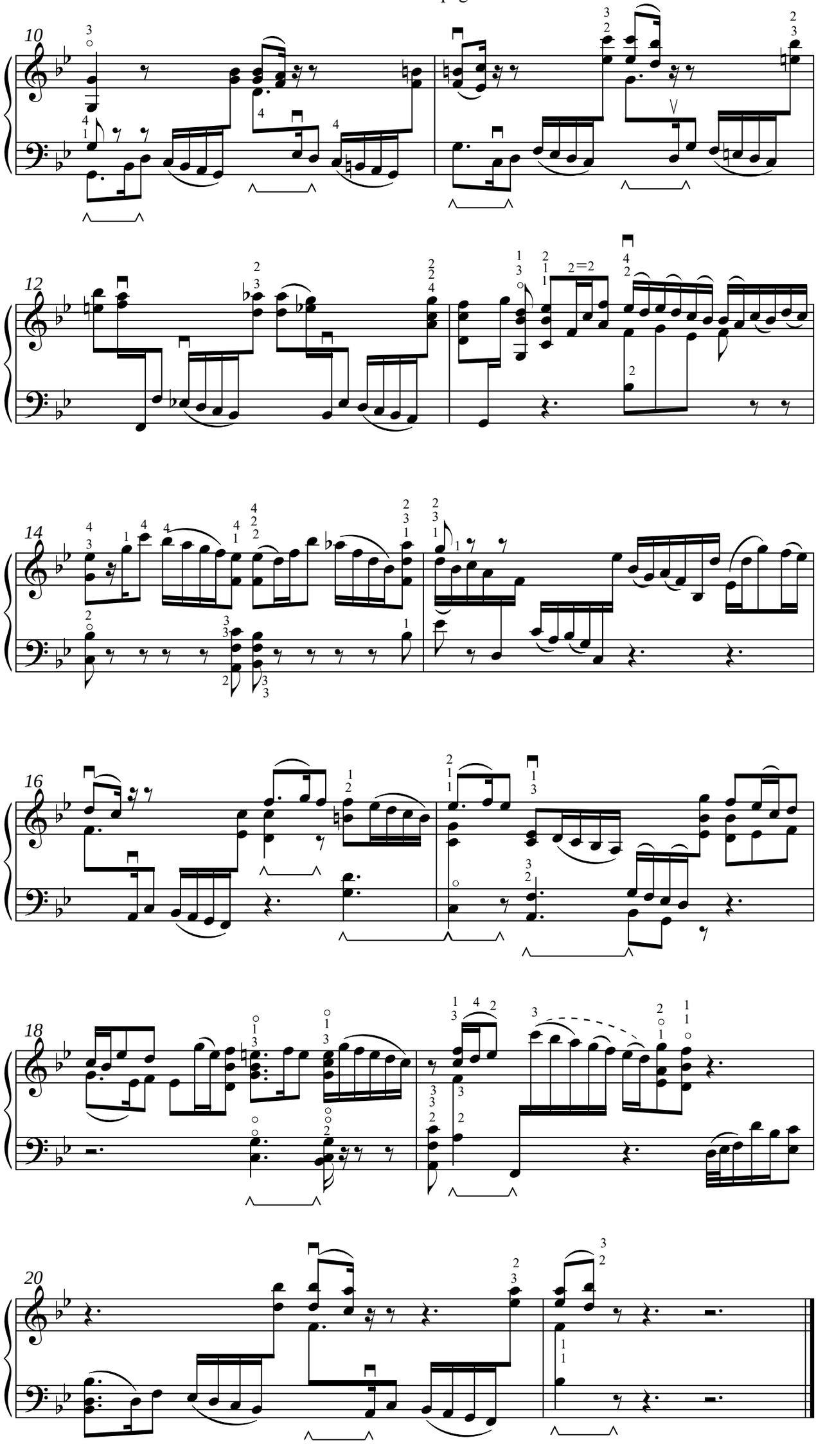
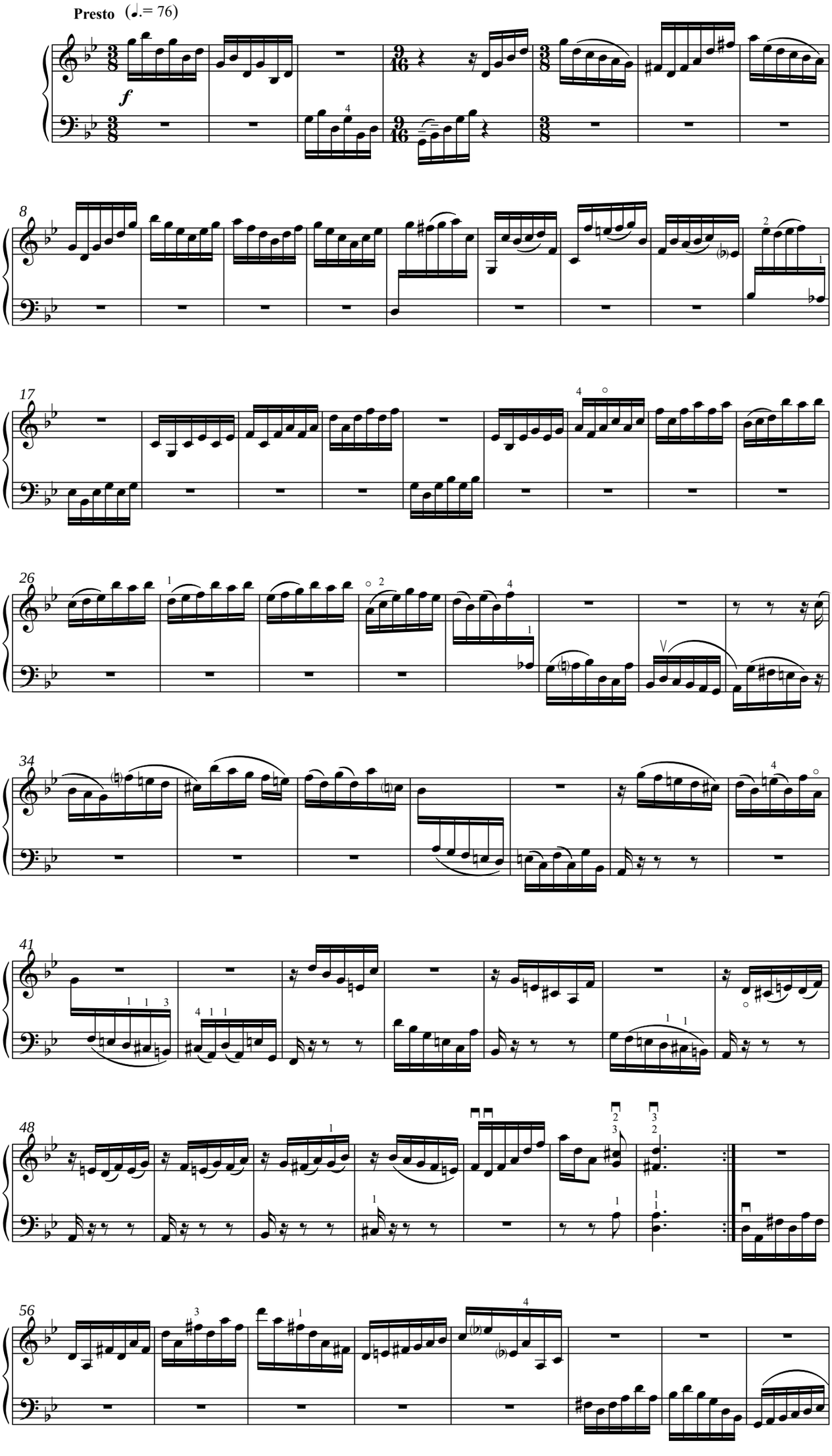
III. Siciliana

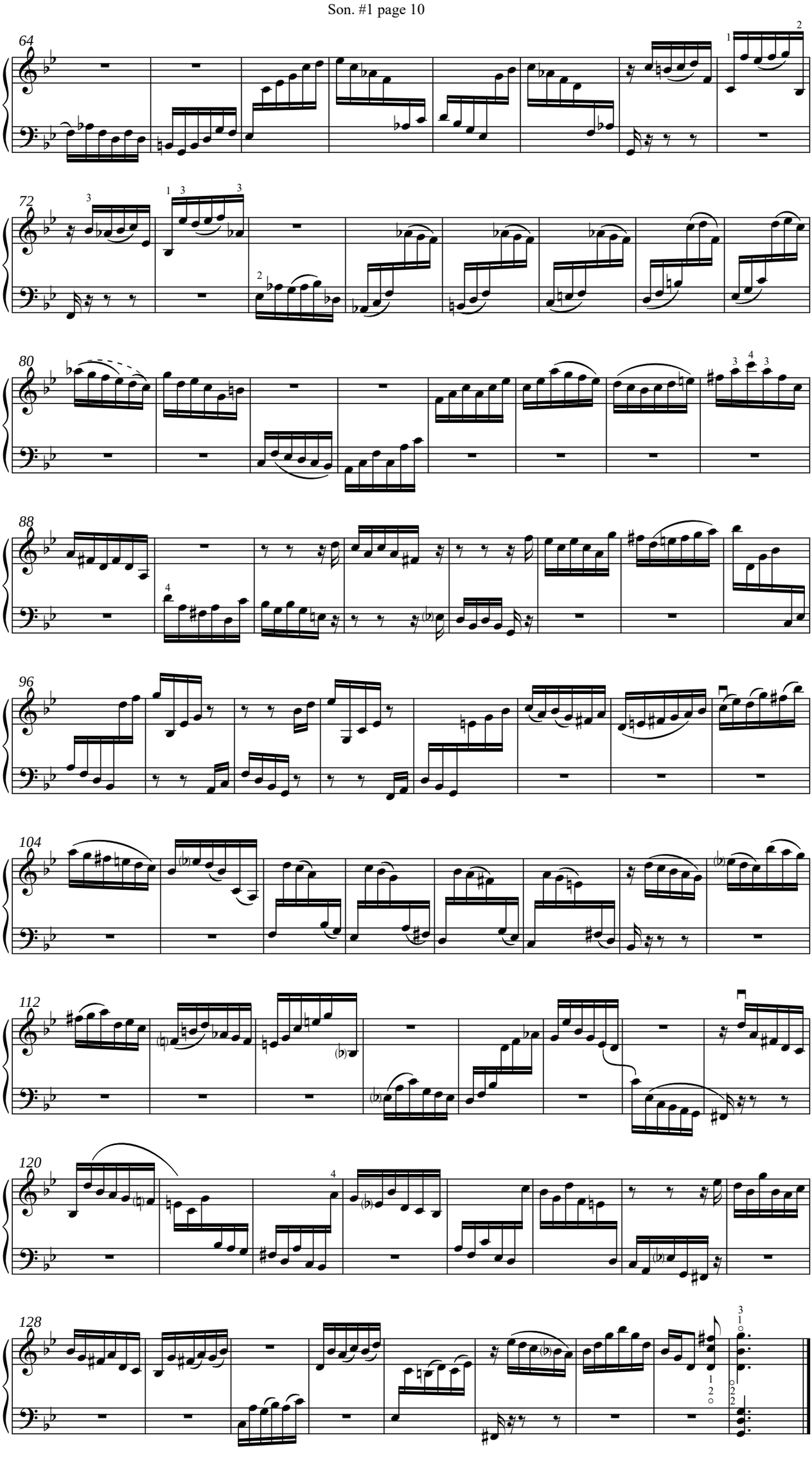




IV. Fourth Movement

Presto (♩.= 76)

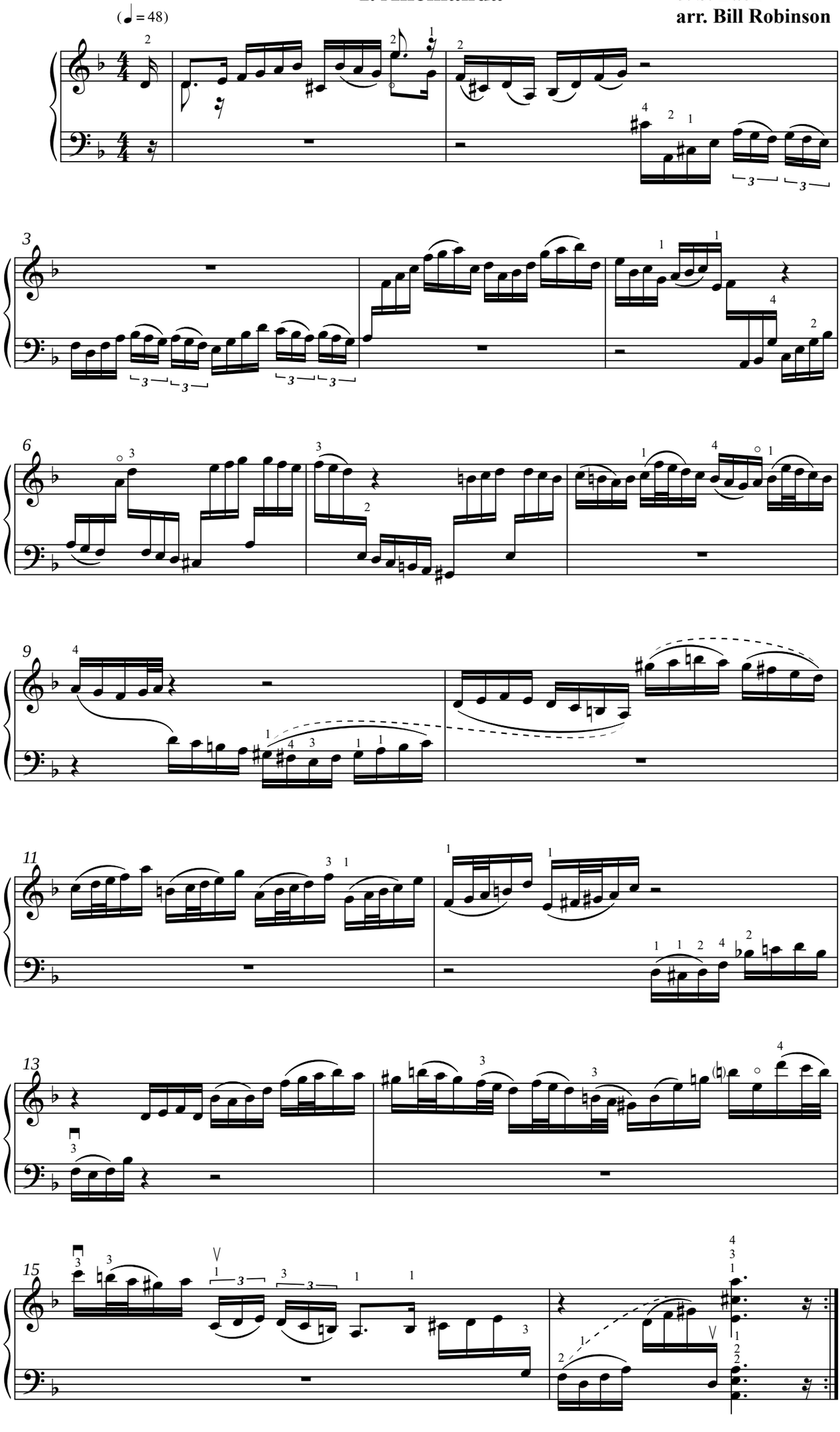


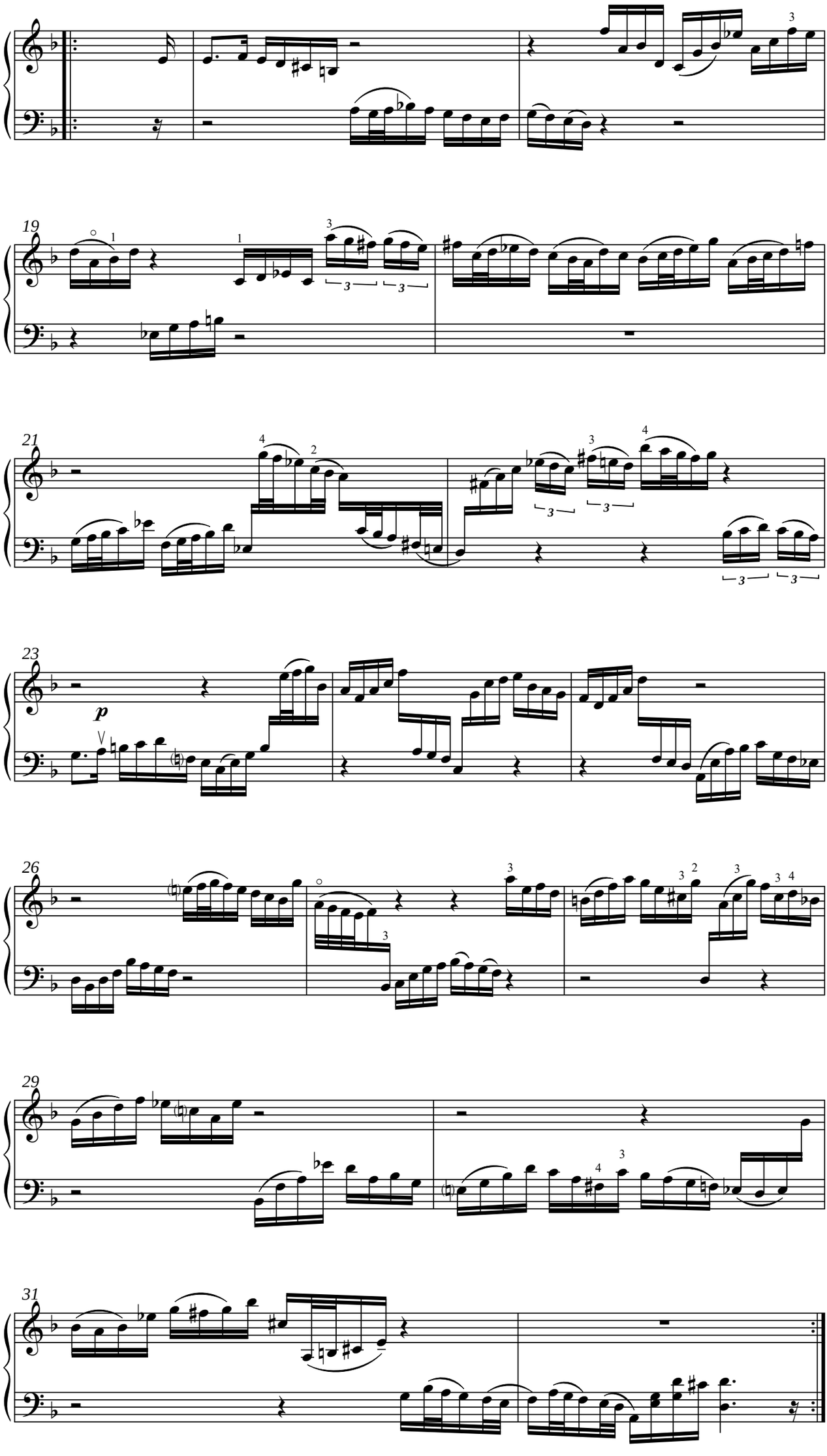


Partita No. 2 for 6 String Violin

I. Allemanda

J. S. Bach
arr. Bill Robinson

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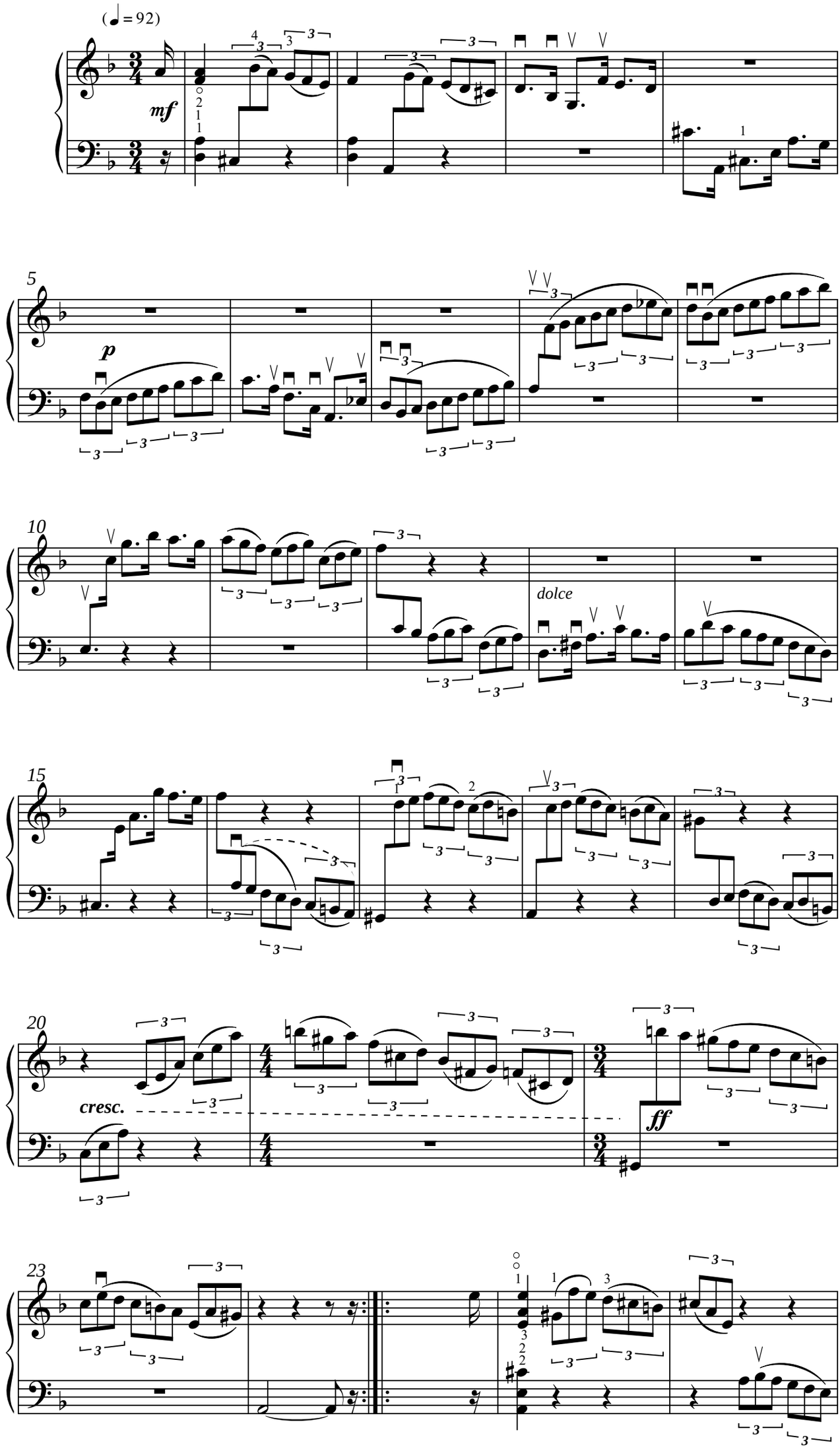
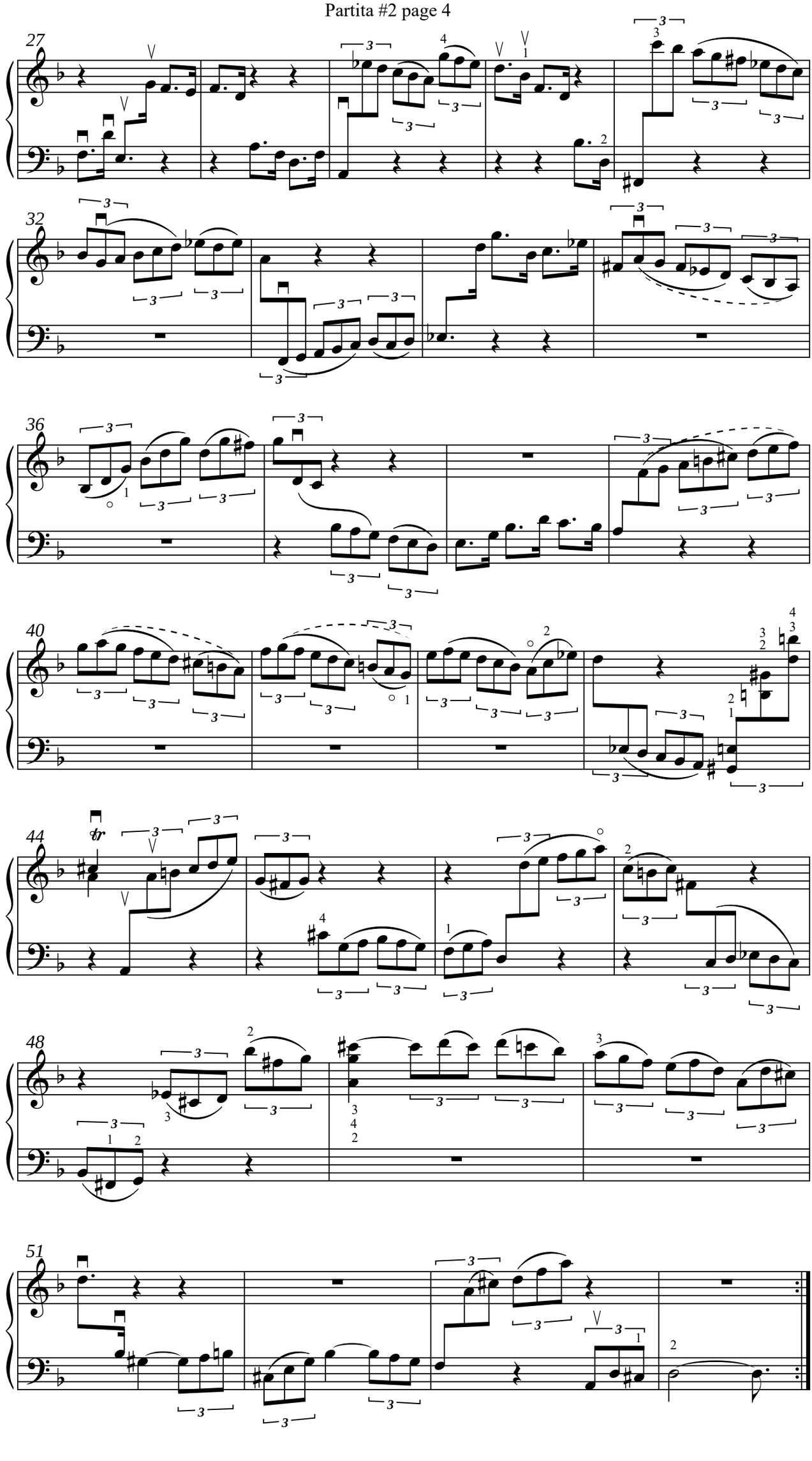
II. Corrente

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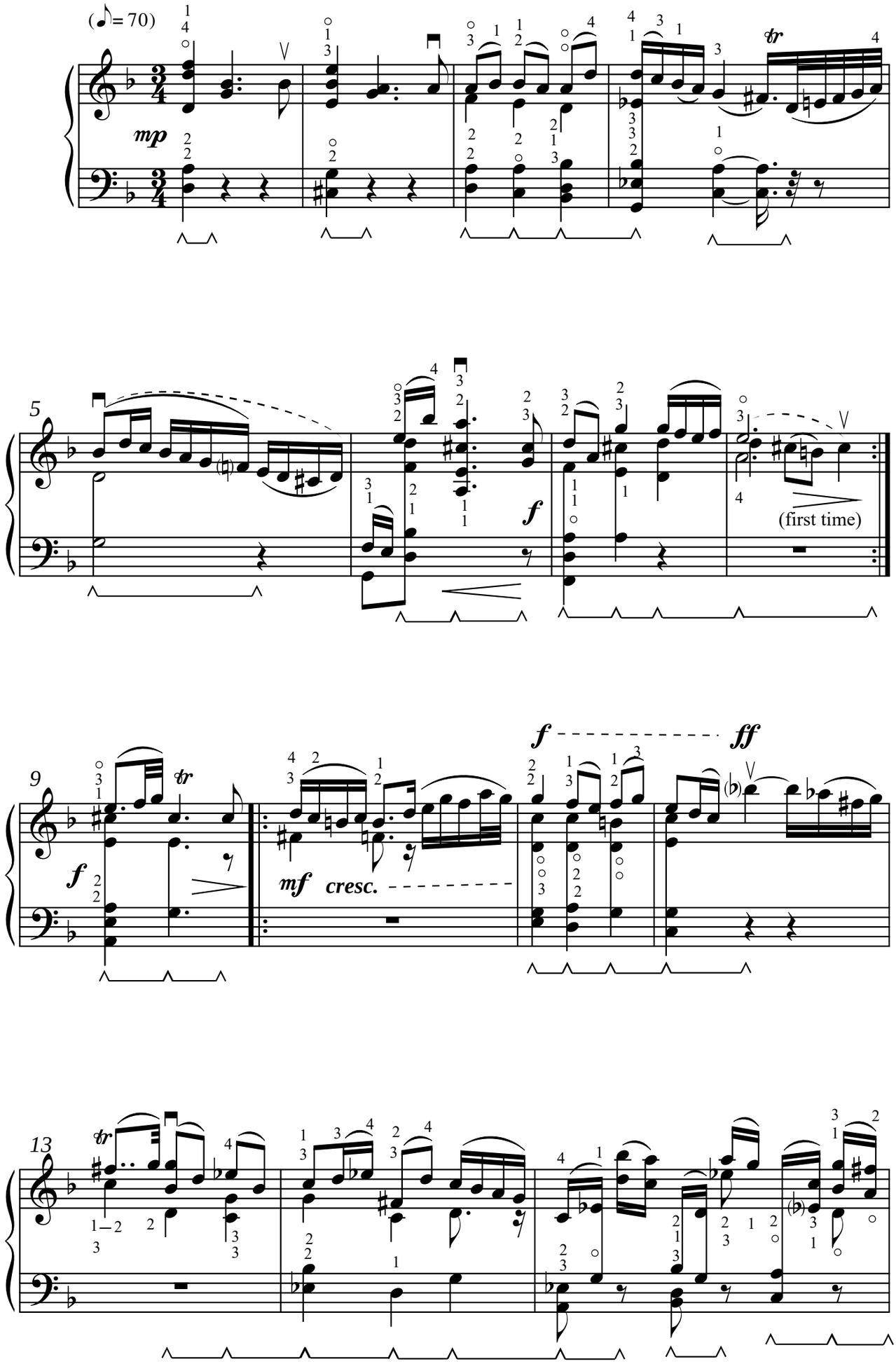
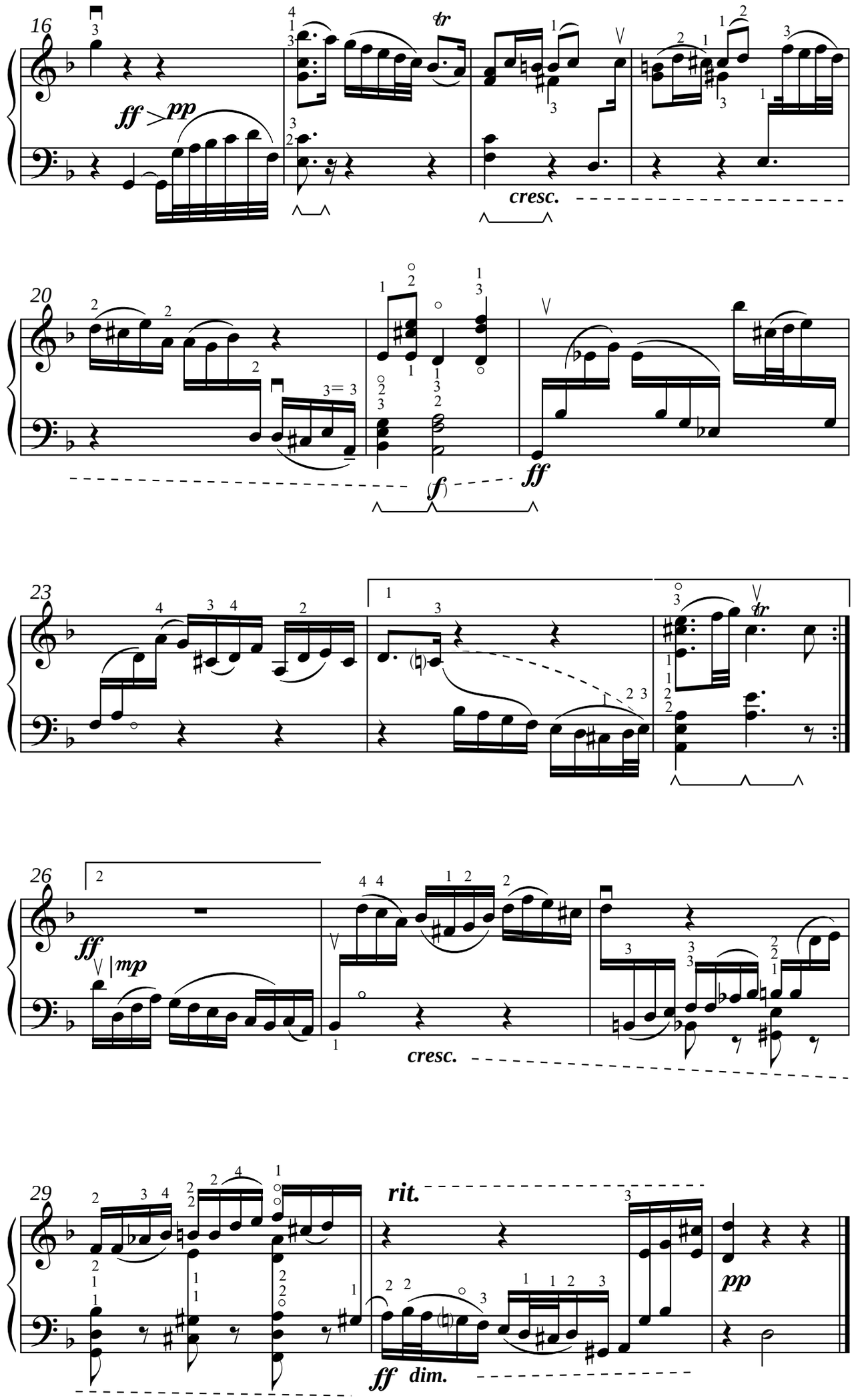
III. Sarabanda

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

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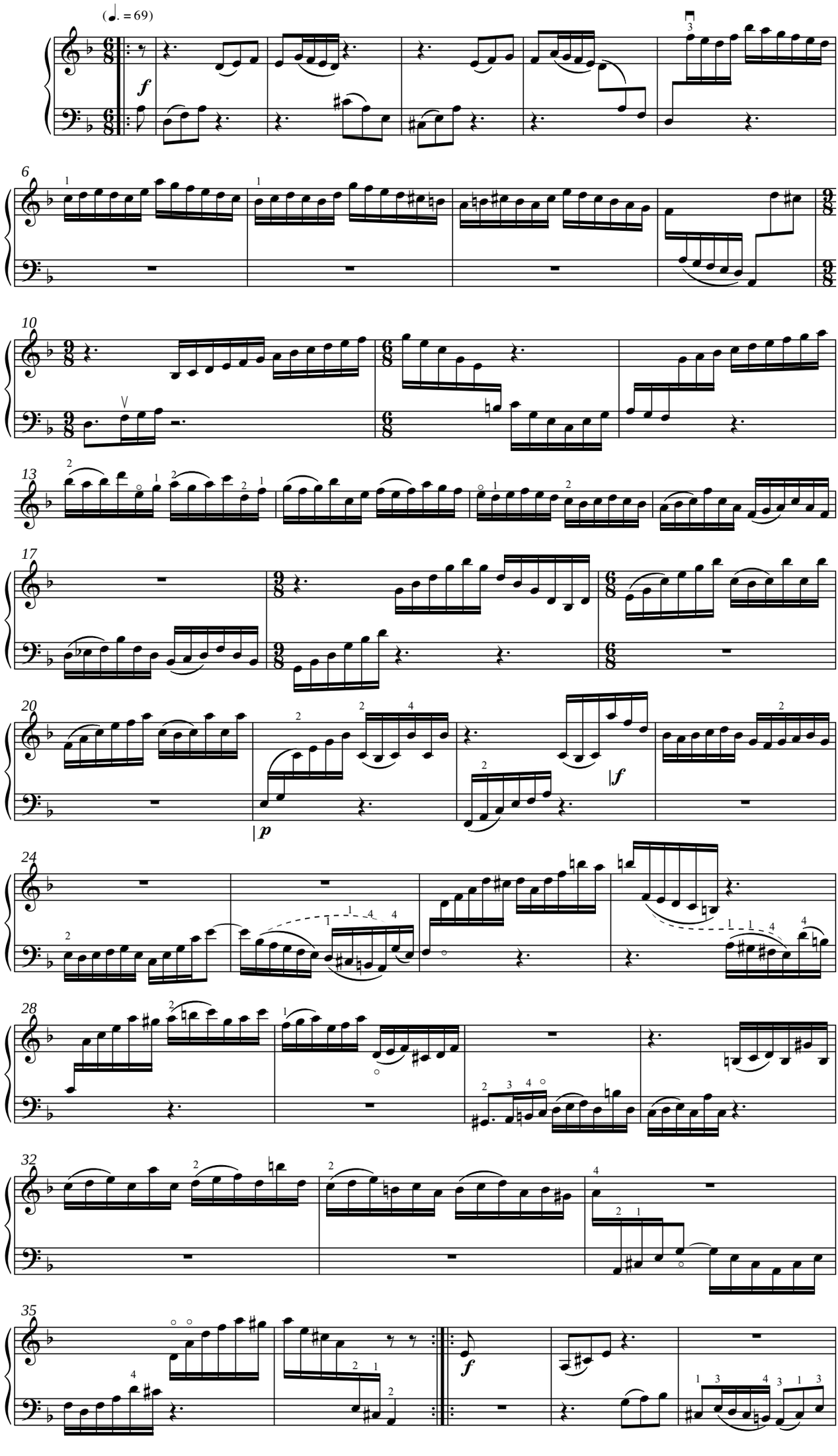
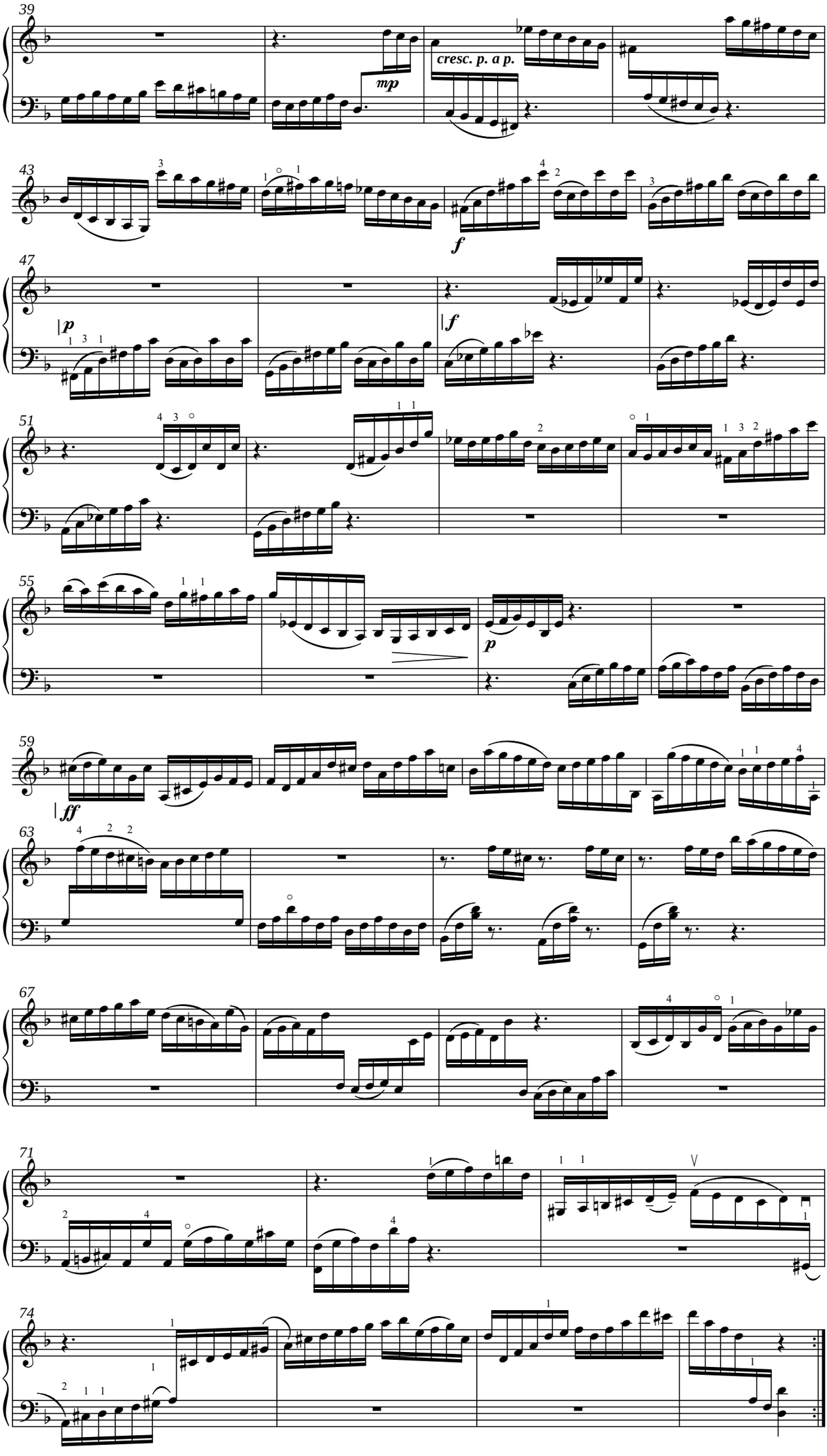
IV. Giga

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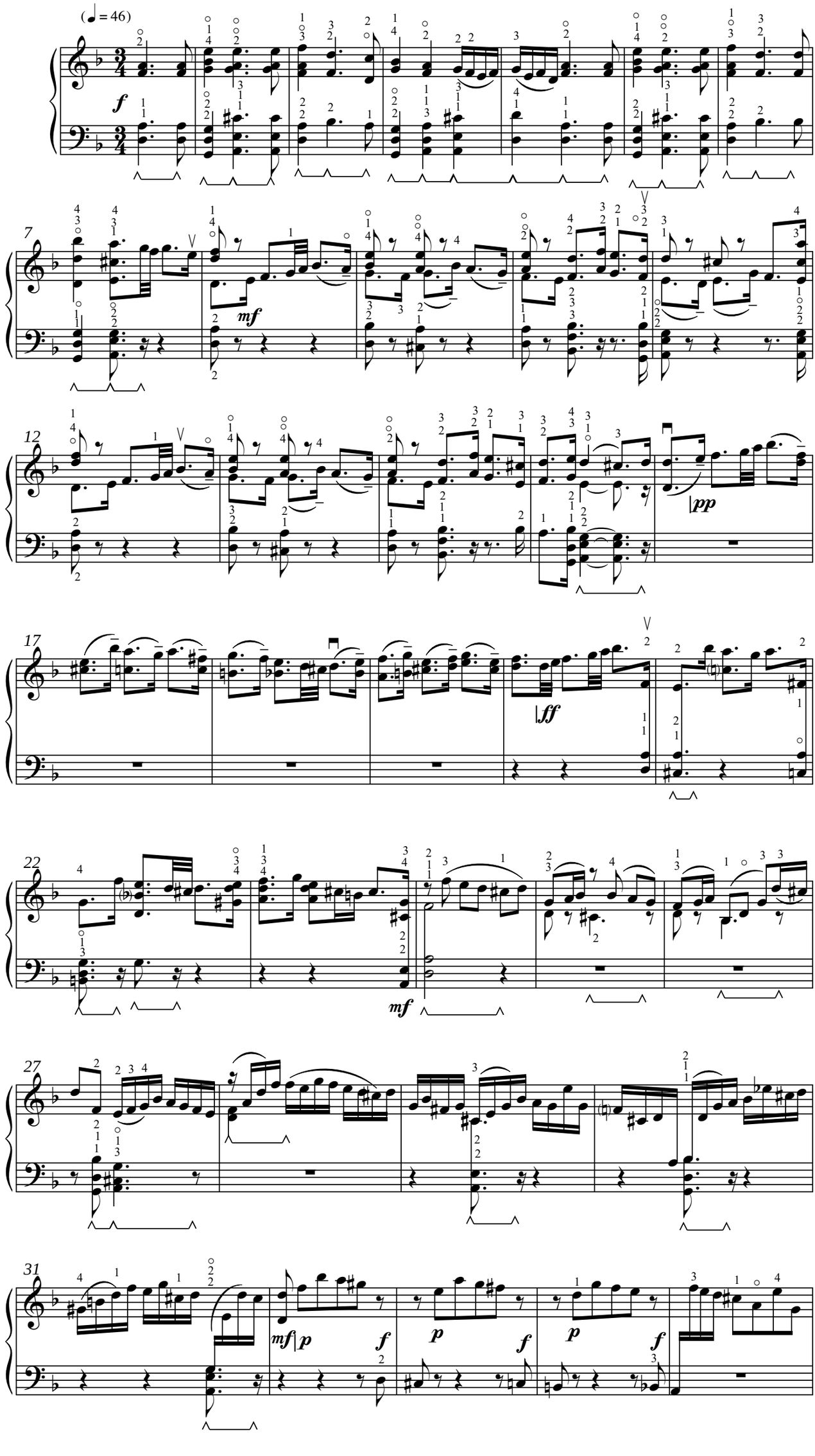
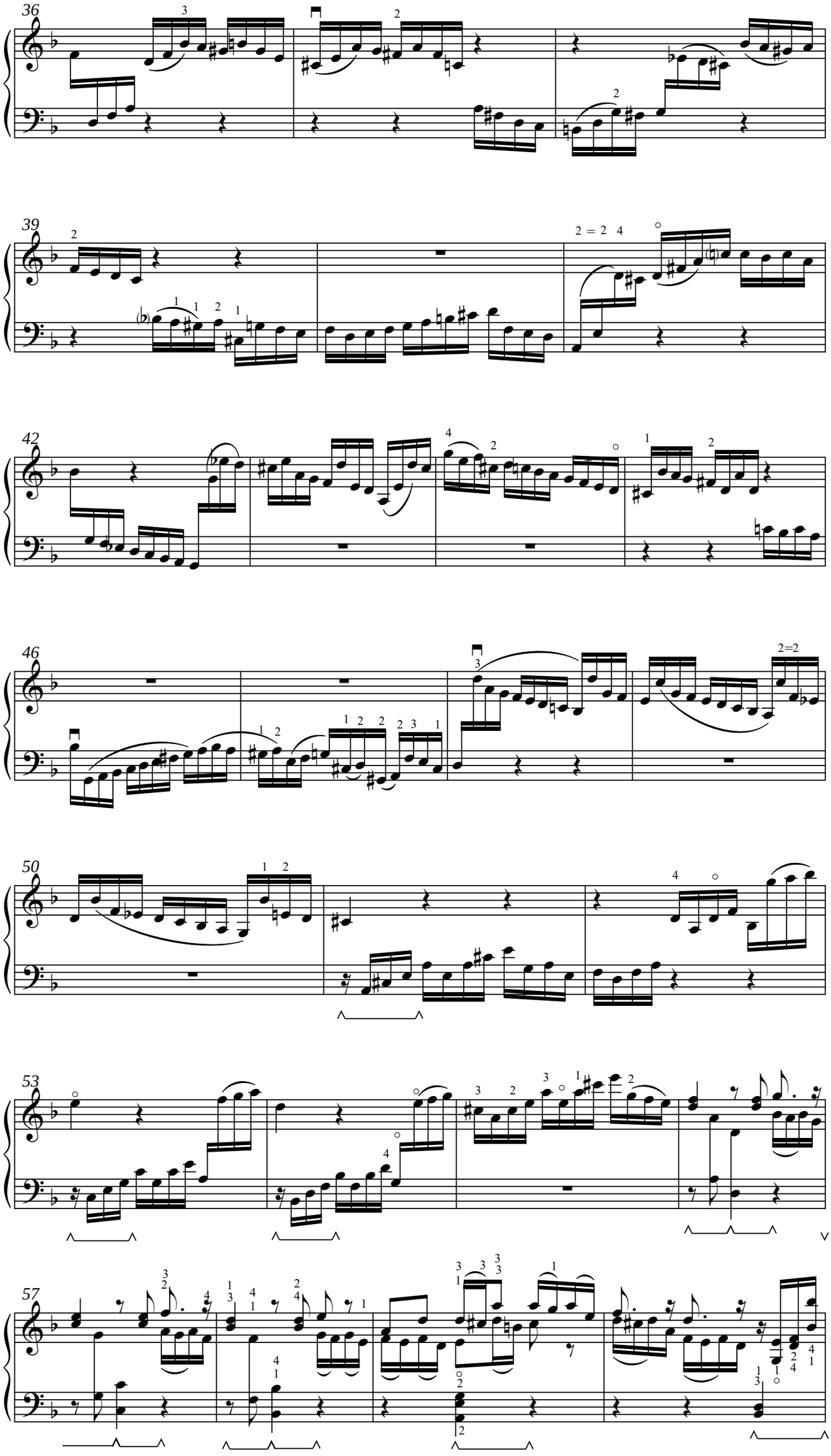
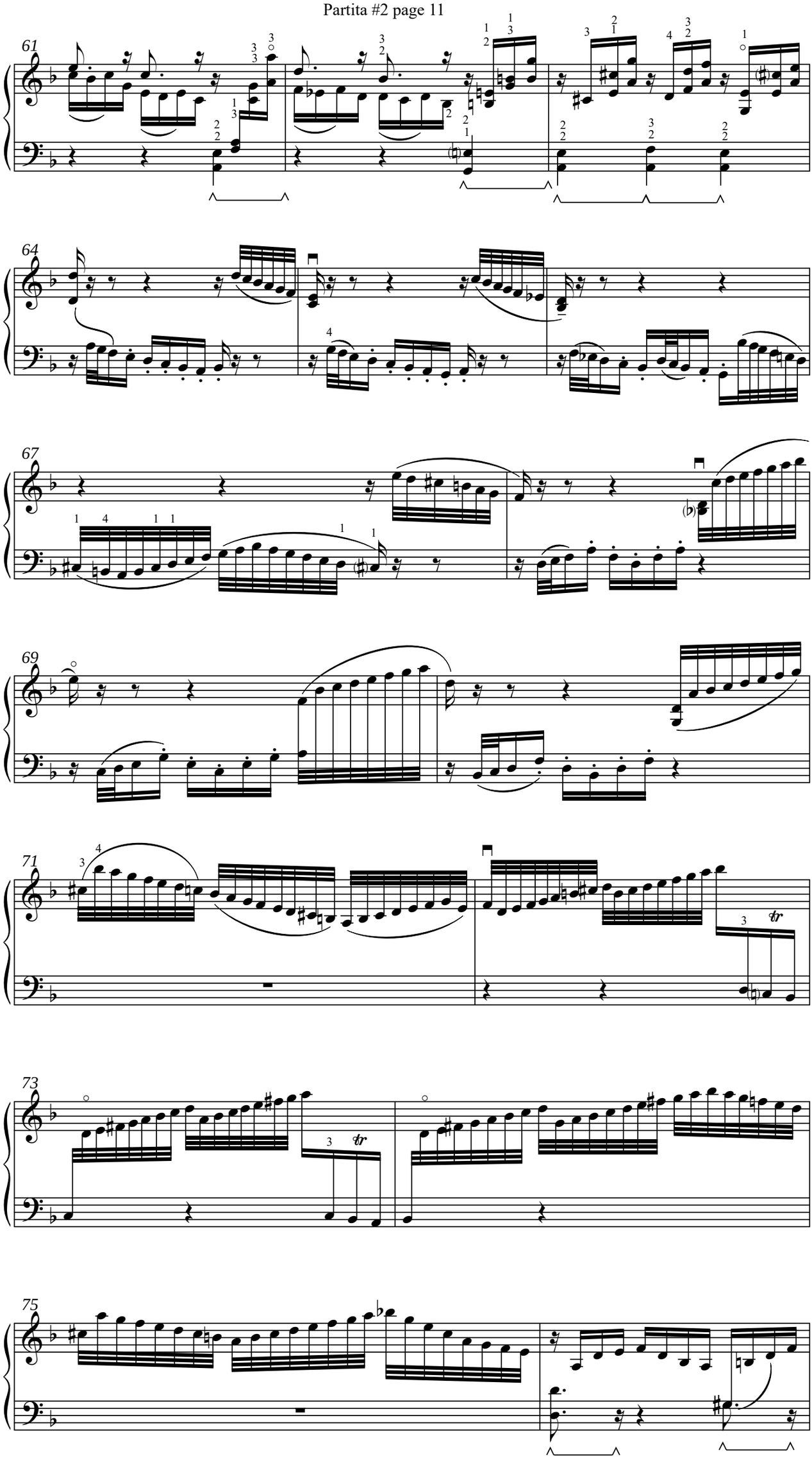
IV. Chaconne



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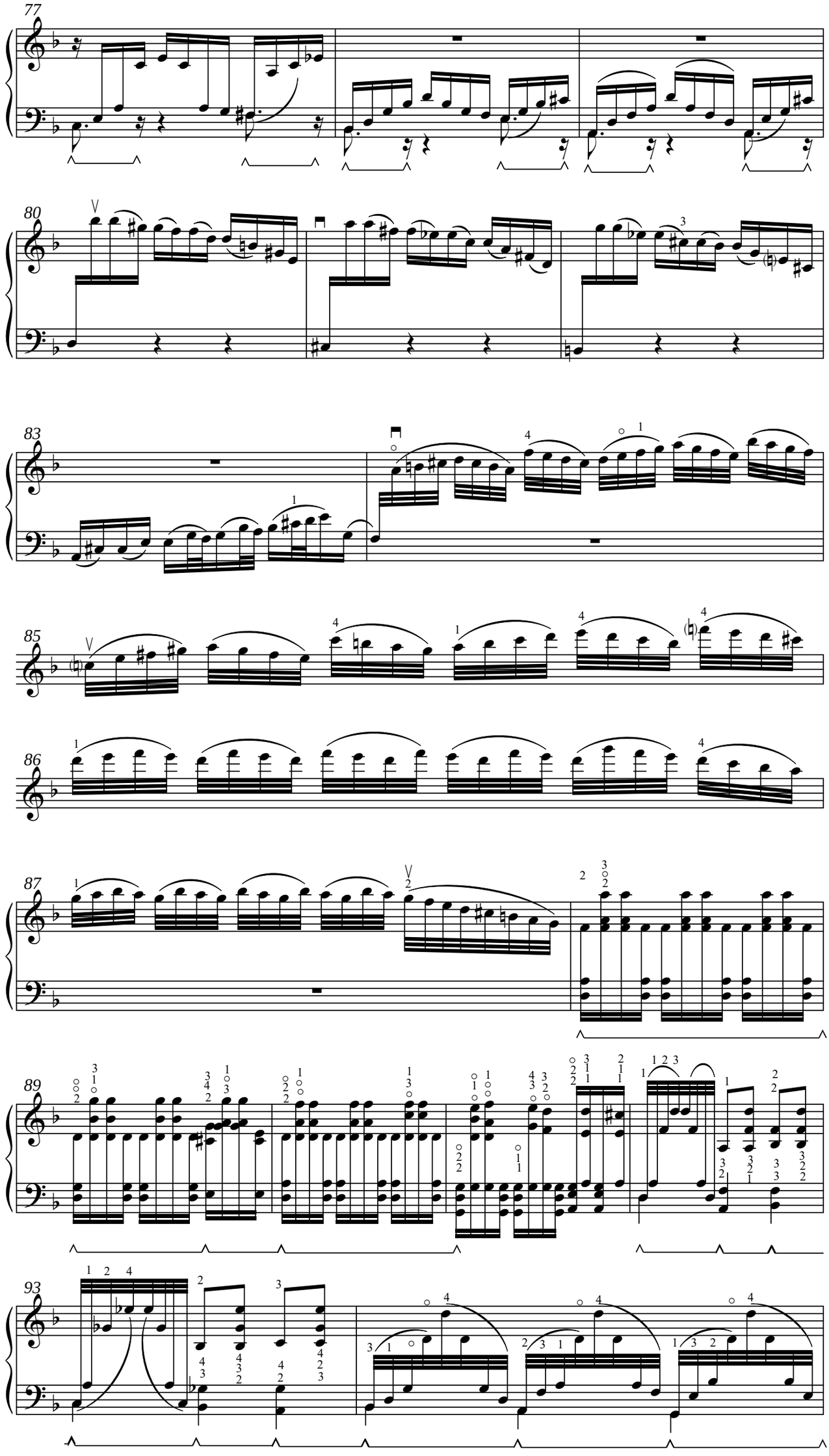
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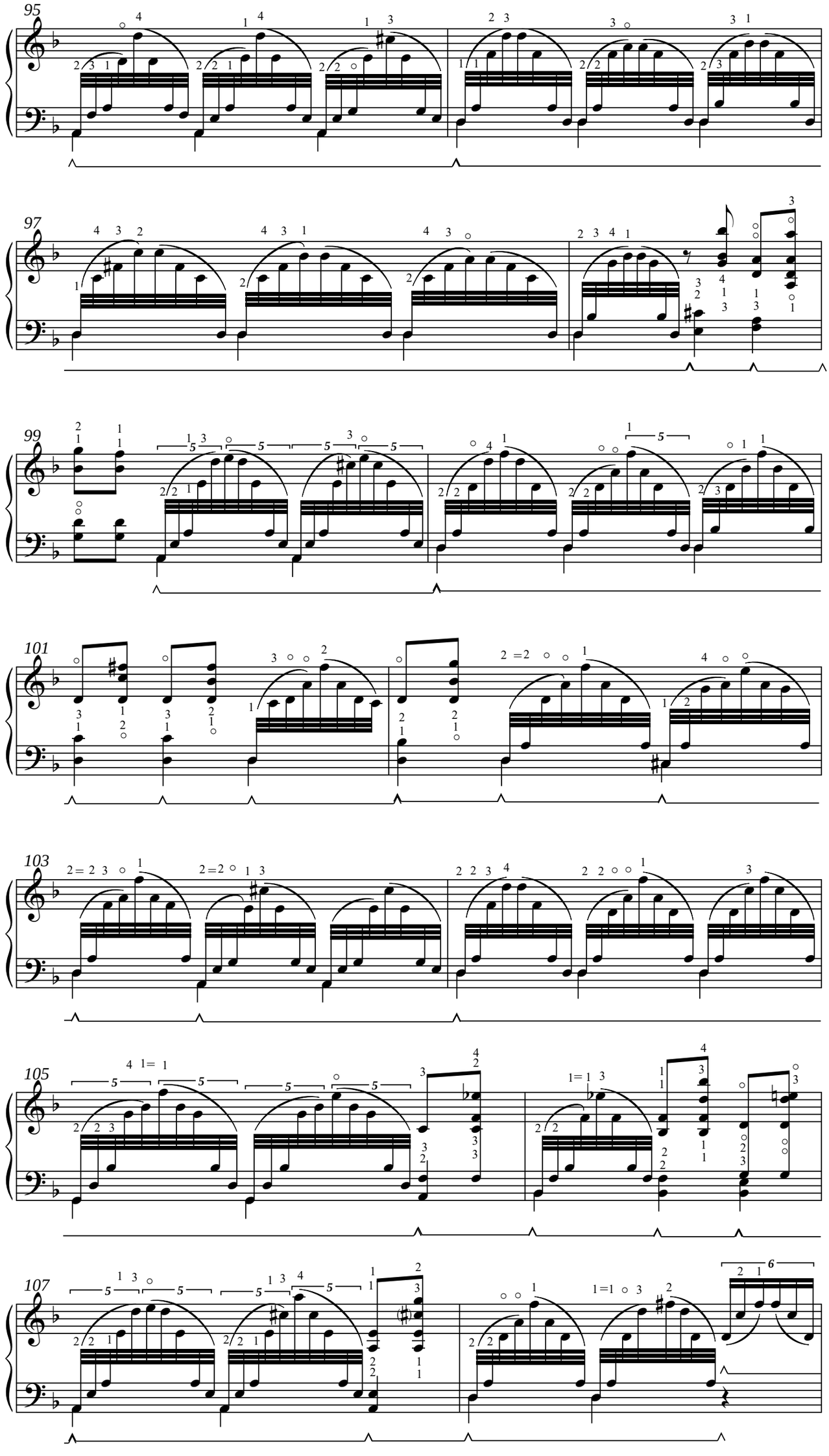

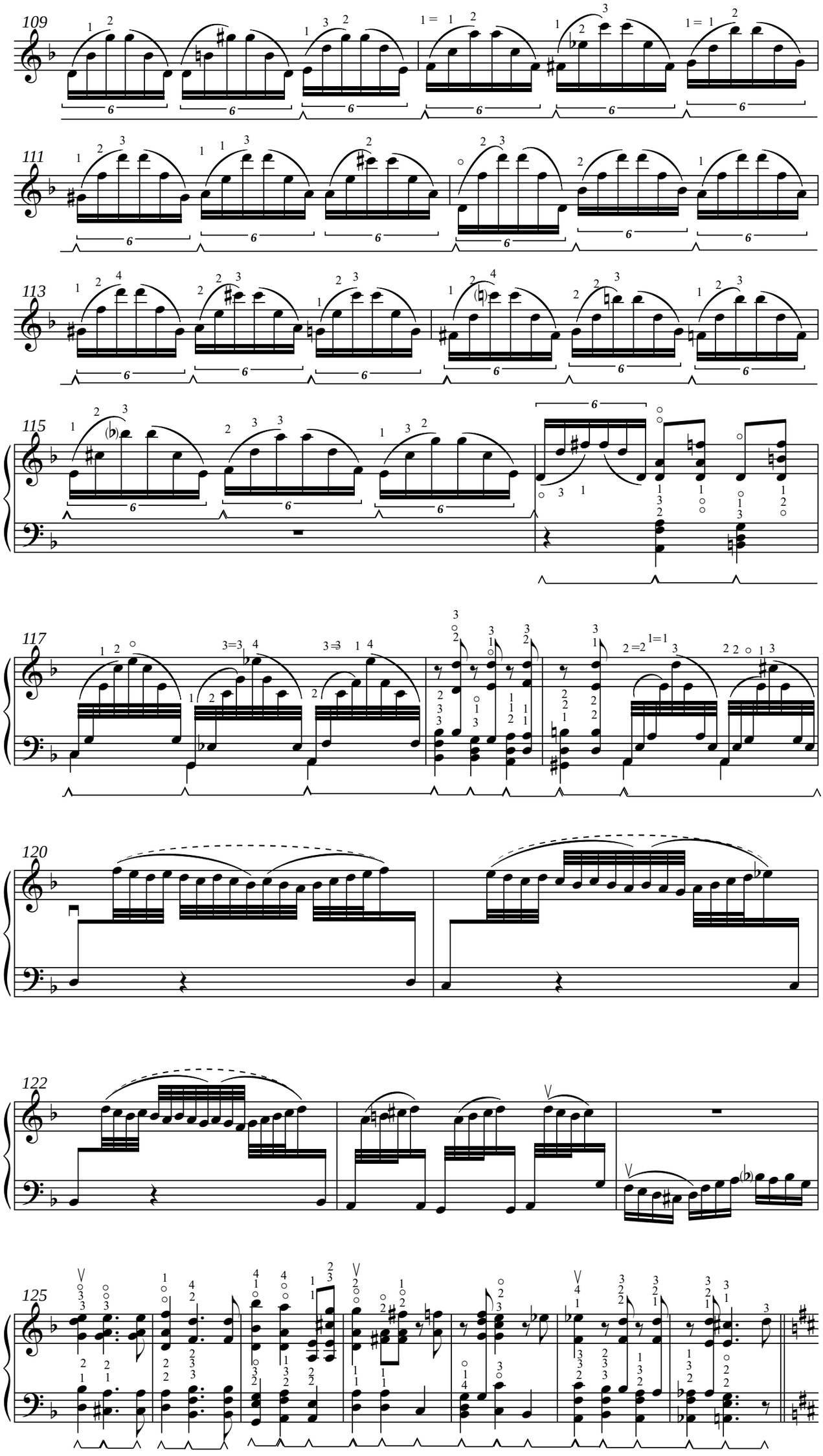
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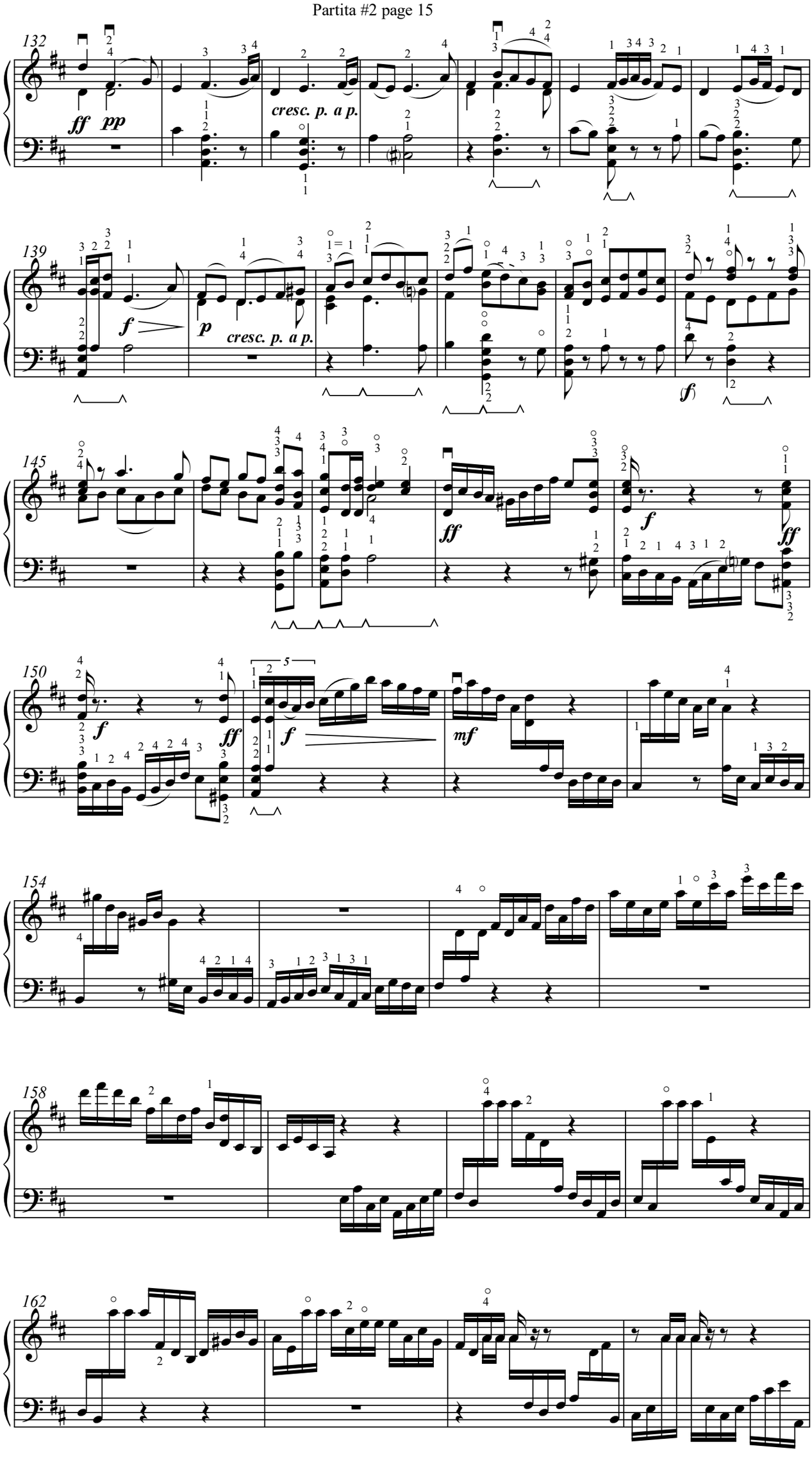
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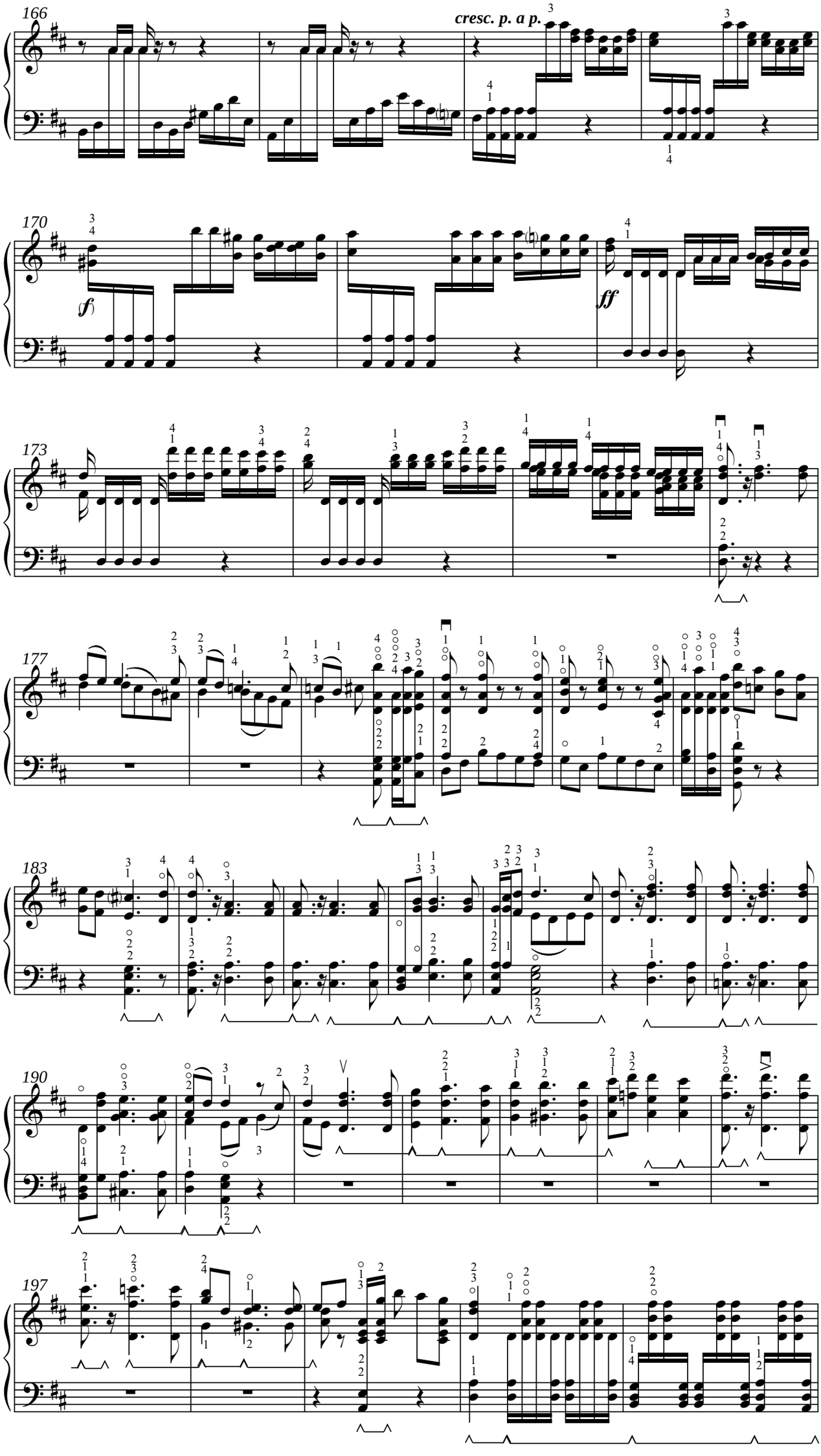
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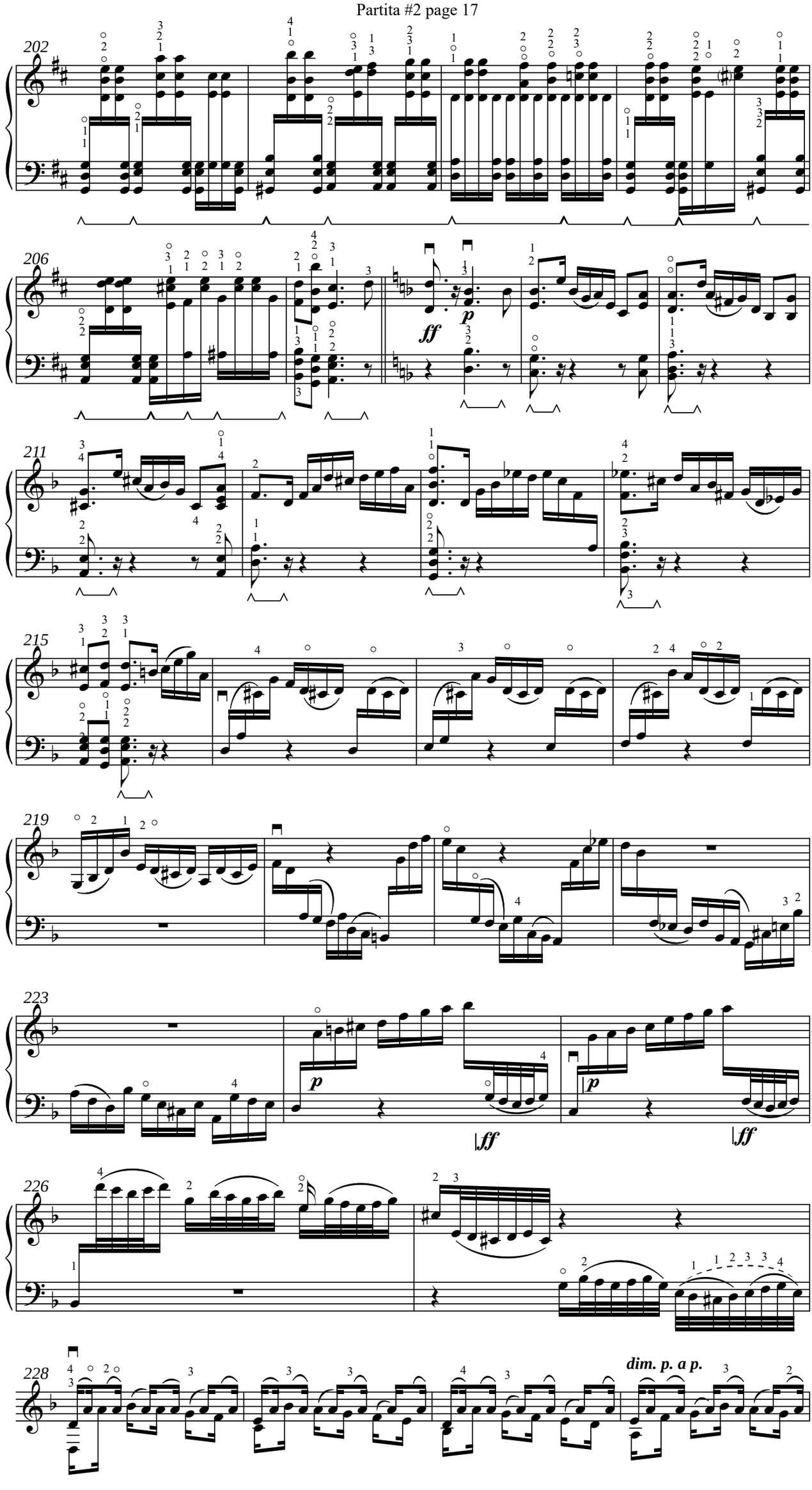
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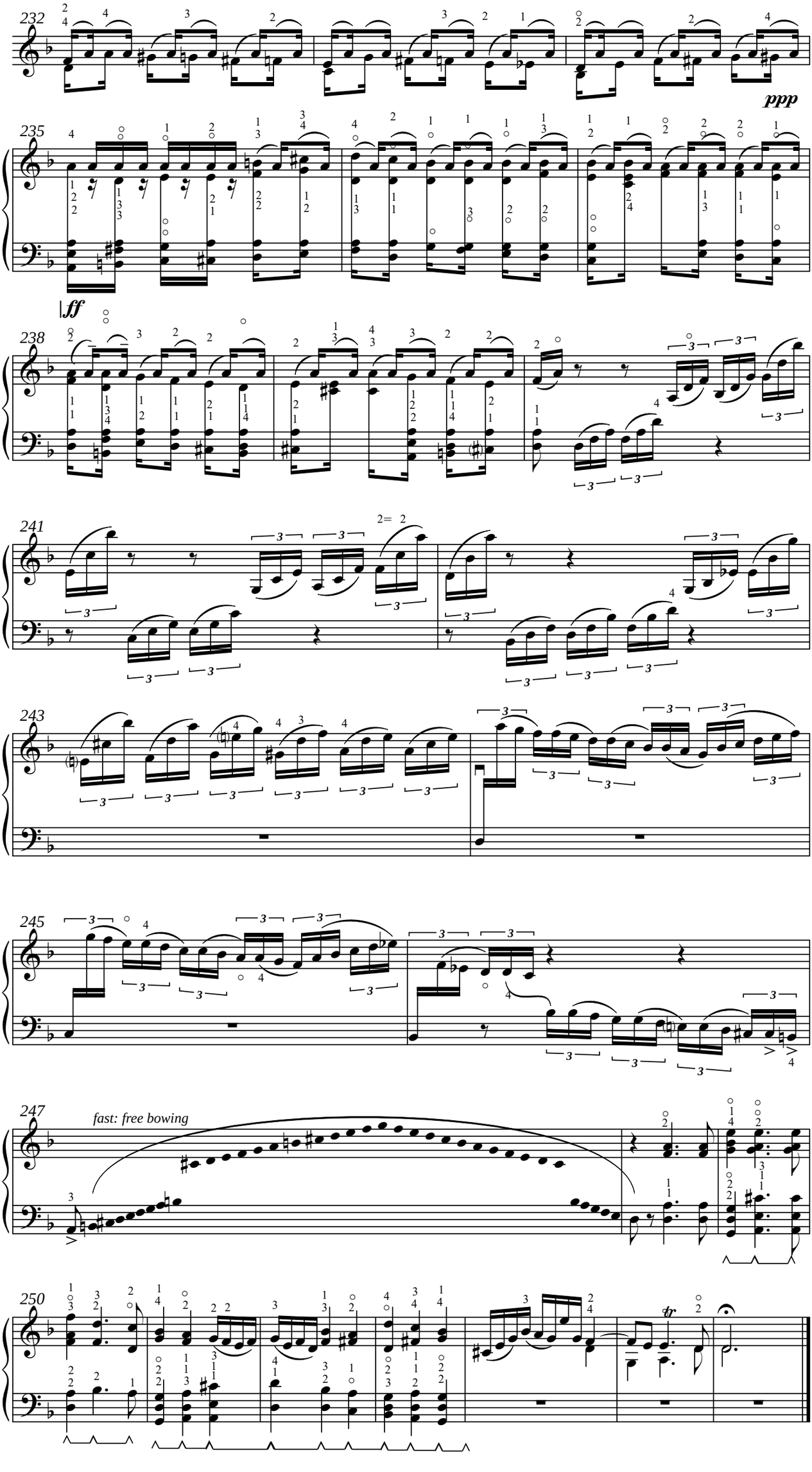
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