Max Bruch (1838-1920)

Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor, Op. 26 (1866)

I. Vorspiel: Allegro moderato
II. Adagio
III. Finale: Allegro energico

The Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor, Op. 26 by Max Bruch is considered by many as a cornerstone of the romantic violin repertoire, alongside the great concertos by Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky. It has everything that a great concerto from that period had, luscious and rich orchestration, expressive chromatic harmonies, dramatic and passionate moments, great emotional intensity, and unabashed romanticism.

This concerto has been revised countless times over the span of four years as Bruch himself was not satisfied with the first performance of the work. The Hungarian violinist, Joseph Joachim, played a crucial role in the revisions of this concerto, offering his insights regarding bowings, virtuoso passages, as well as the formal structure of the work.

The concerto opens with a quiet timpani tremolo, followed by a gentle woodwind passage that sets the stage for a short solo violin cadenza. Bruch showcases all the four strings of the violin in this short cadenza, through ascending arpeggios and scale fragments, before introducing the main theme, characterised by syncopated rhythms in the lower strings and virtuosic flourishes in the solo violin. This contrasts with the more lyrical second theme, which conveys a sense of longing through melodic dialogues between the soloist and orchestra. The main theme then returns, building towards a dramatic orchestral outburst before the movement concludes with two brief solo cadenzas.

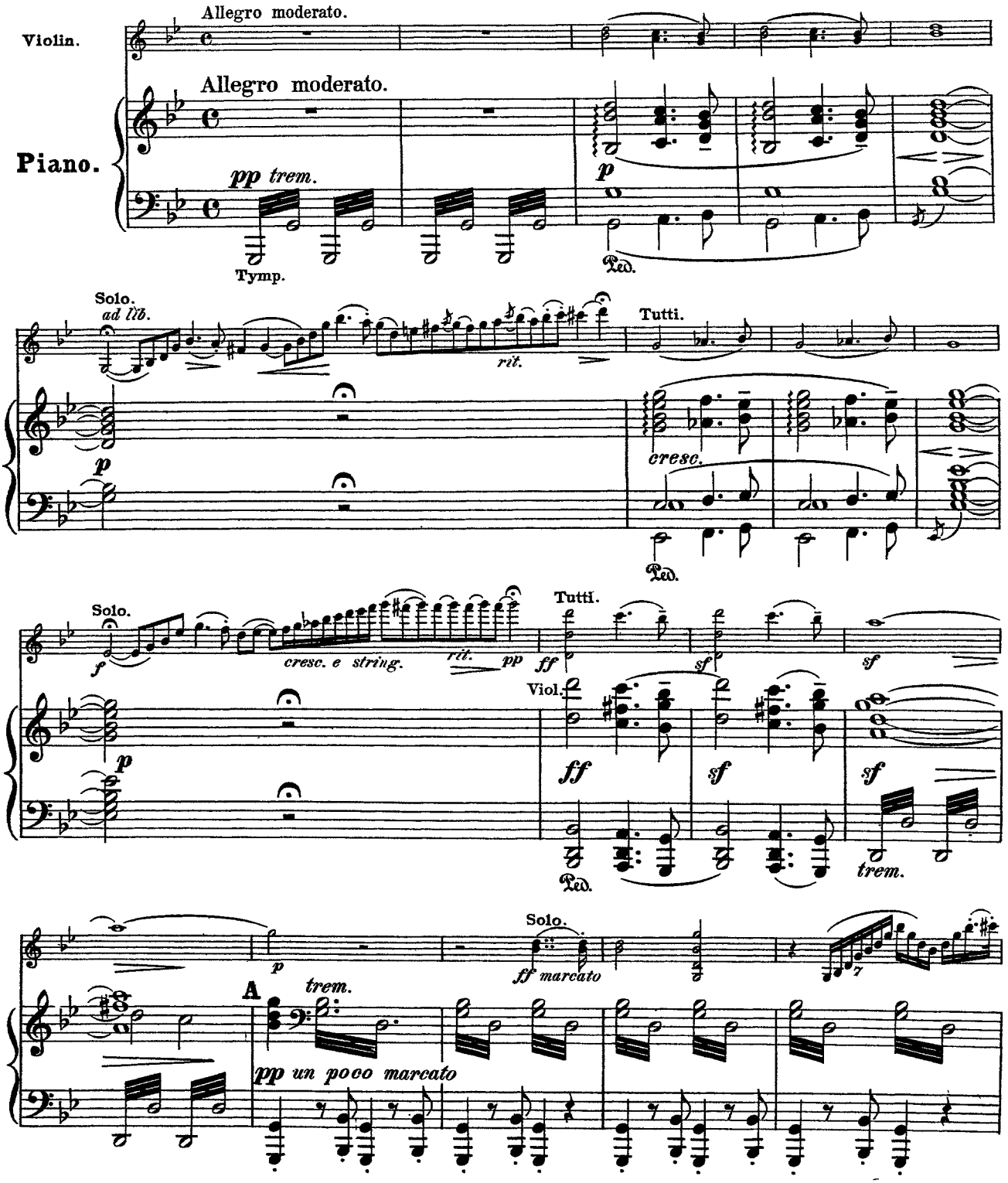
The *Adagio*, often regarded as the heart of the concerto, is a slow movement in which the solo violin sings almost continuously, accompanied by lush orchestration. This movement evokes feelings of comfort, intense yearning, and peace, through its long, flowing melodic phrases and warm orchestral accompaniment. The solo violin seems to sing almost effortlessly, drawing the listener into an intimate and deeply expressive musical landscape.
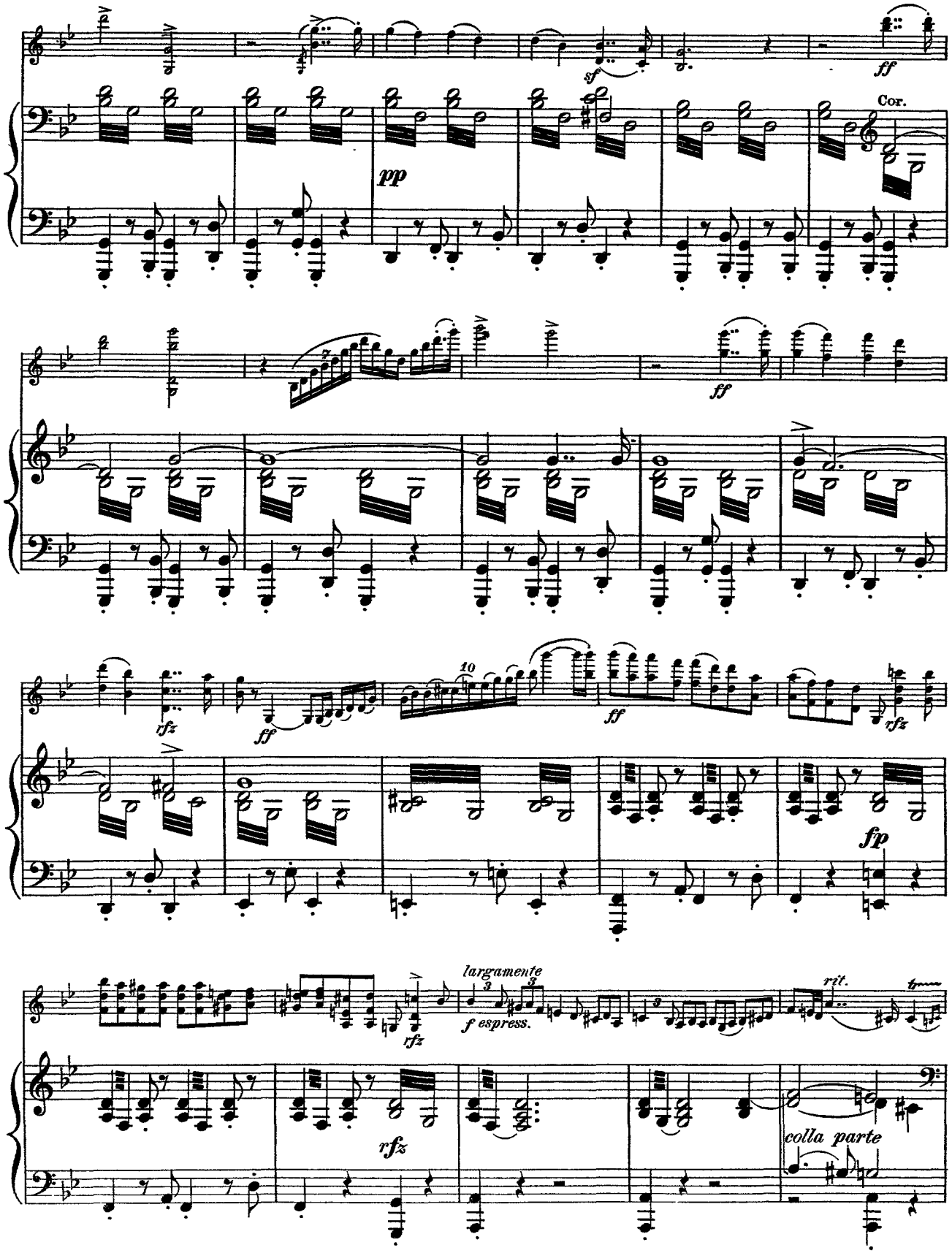
The *Finale: Allegro energico*, opens with a lively orchestral introduction that establishes its energetic and spirited character. The solo violin introduces the main theme of the movement, accompanied by driving rhythms in the orchestra. Bruch showcases the violin's virtuosity through rapid runs, sweeping arpeggios, double stops, and brilliant passagework, balanced by broad, lyrical melodies that provide moments of contrast. The soloist and orchestra engage in an increasingly animated musical dialogue, building momentum towards a triumphant and exhilarating conclusion.
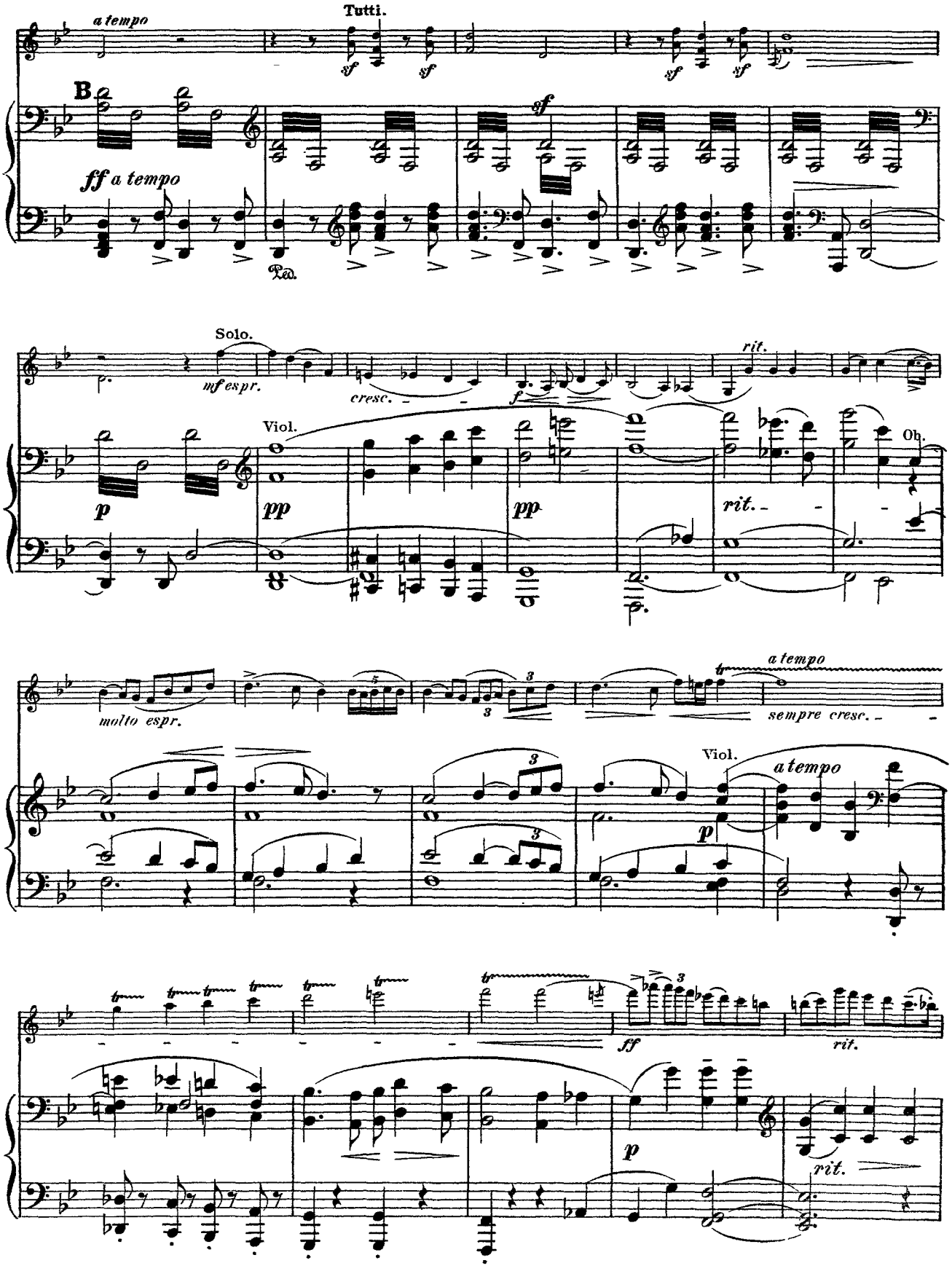
Bruch

Concerto No. 1 in G Minor

Op. 26




sf
ff
Cor.
pp
ff
rfz
ff
10
ff
rfz
fp
largamente
f espress.
rit.
rfz
colla parte


a tempo
Tutti.
sf
sf
sf
sf
B
sf
ff a tempo
Ped.
Solo.
mf espr.
cresc.
f
rit.
Viol.
pp
pp
rit.
Ob.
molto espr.
a tempo
sempre cresc.
Viol.
a tempo
ff
rit.
rit.

Un poco più lento.

molto espr.

ff

Un poco più lento.

pp

sfz

p

molto cresc.

p

sf

p

ad lib.

rit.

Tempo I.

sfz

p

ff

Cor.

Tempo I.
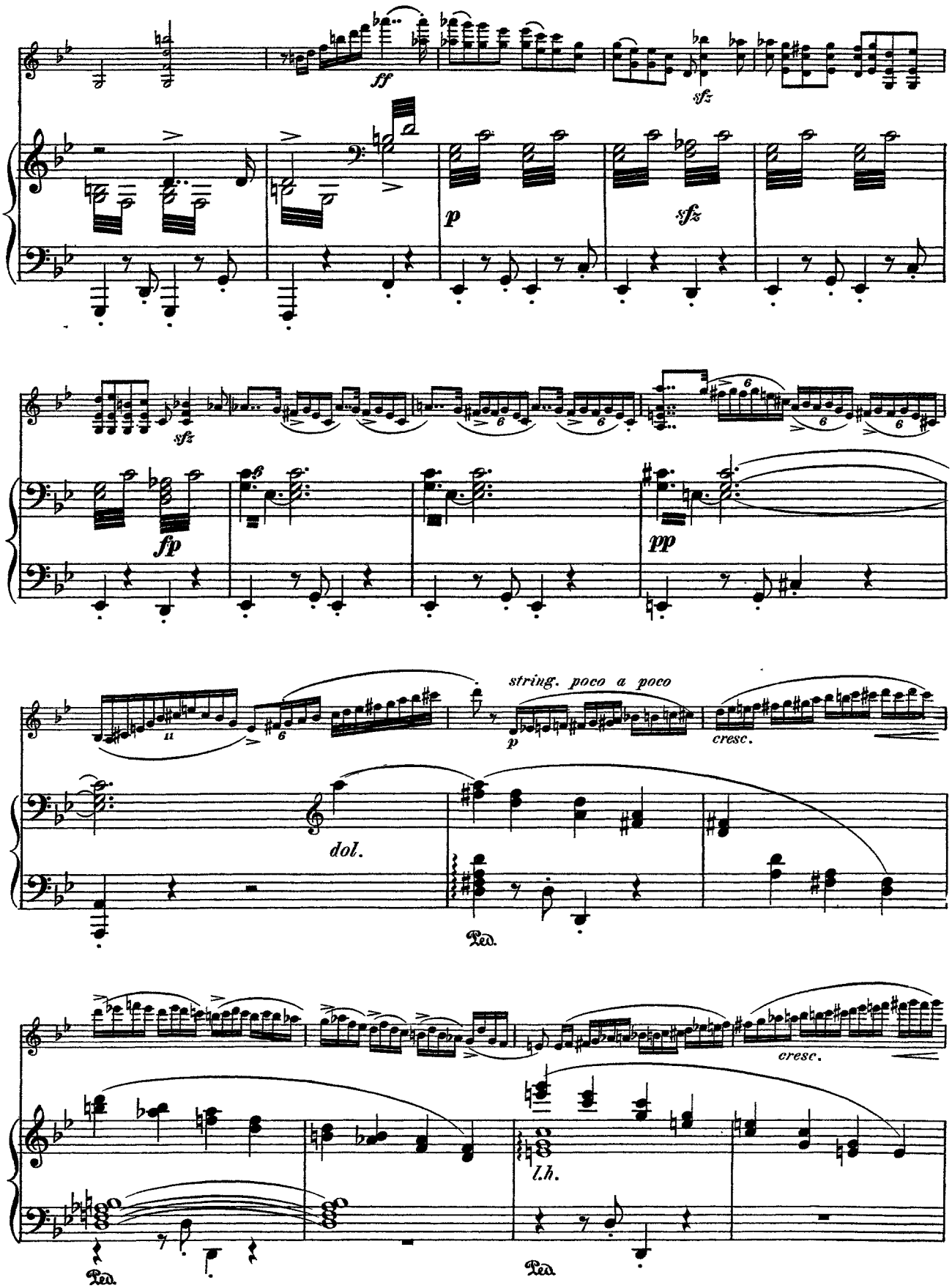
C
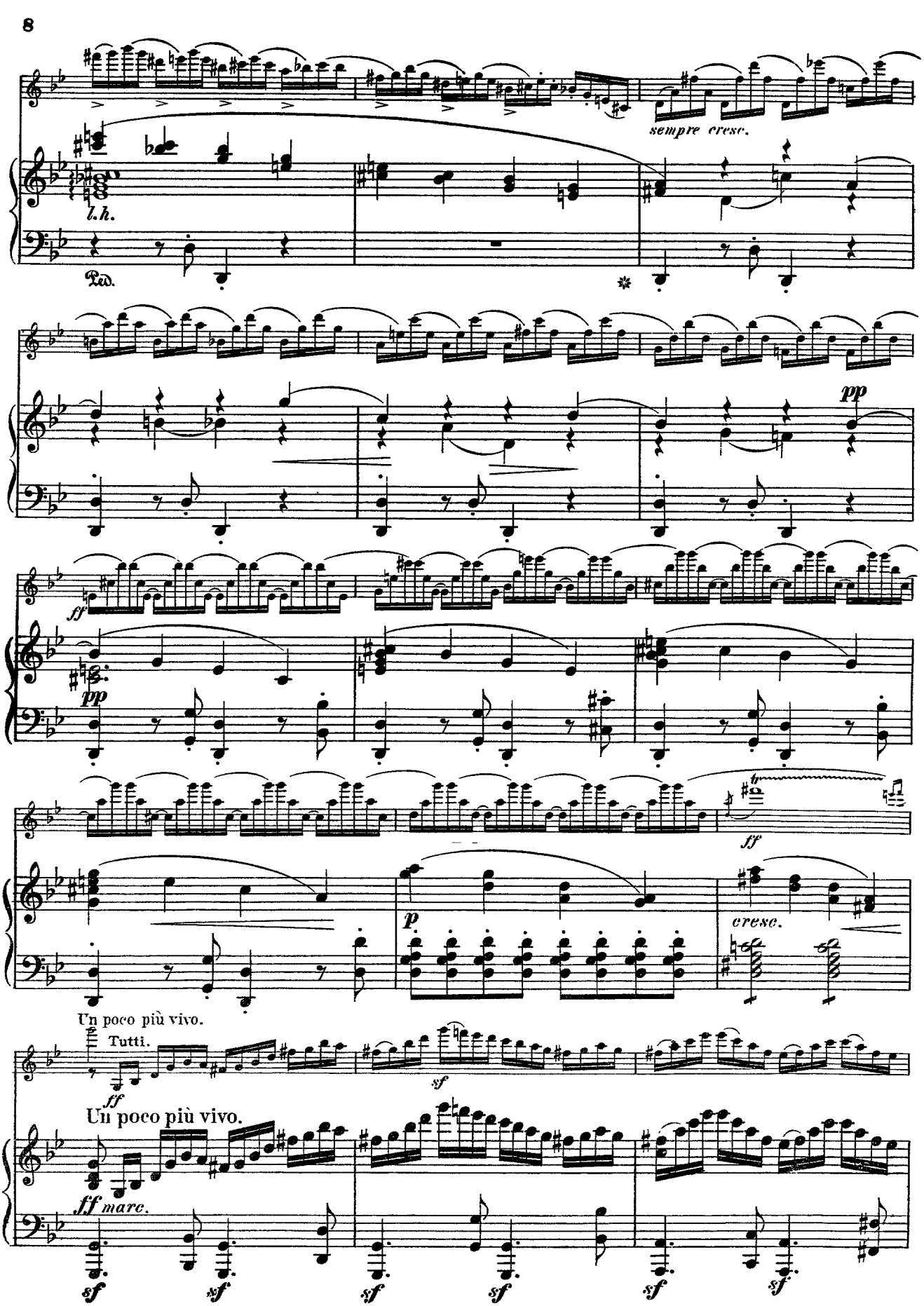
pp
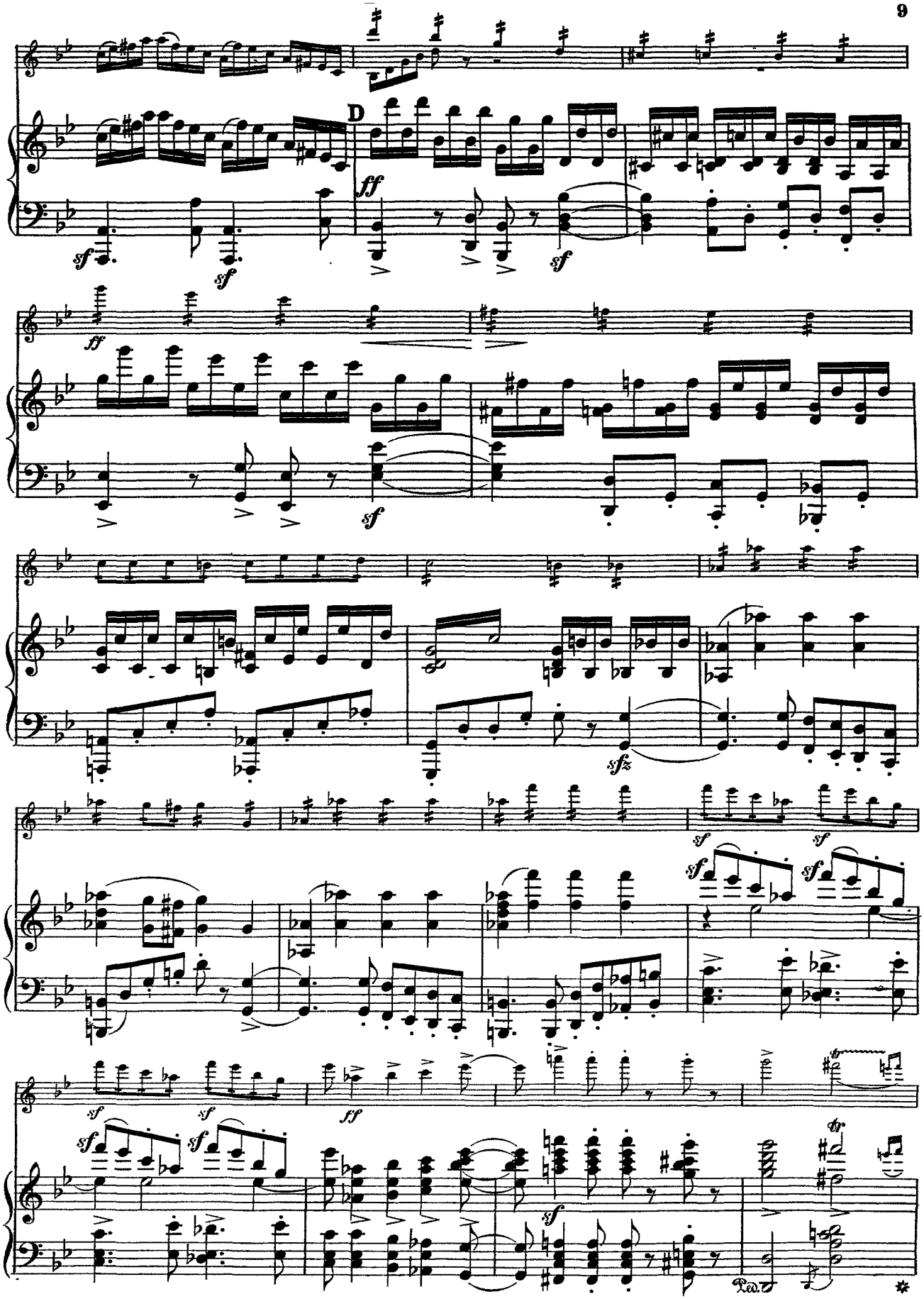
pp
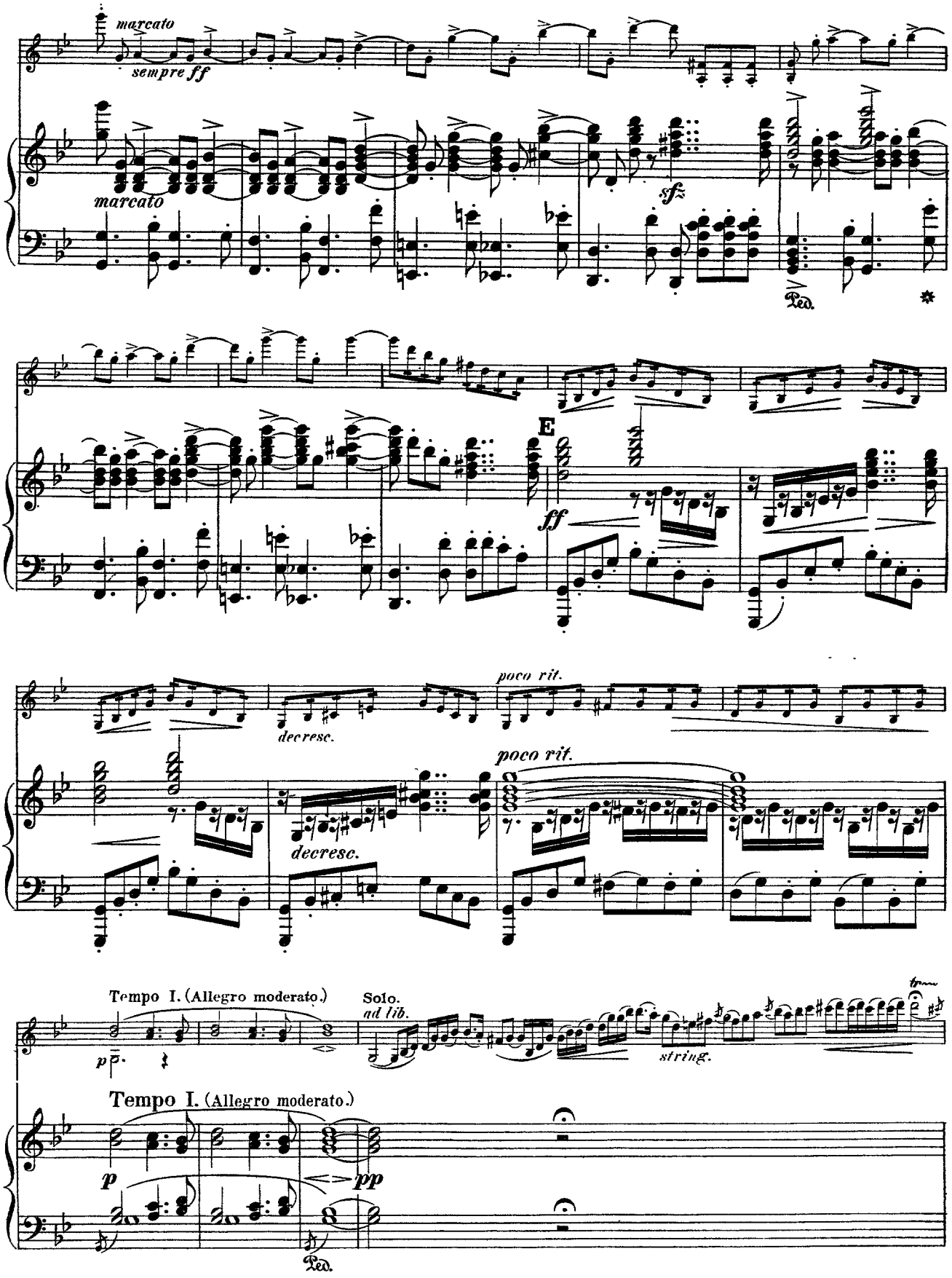
un poco marc.
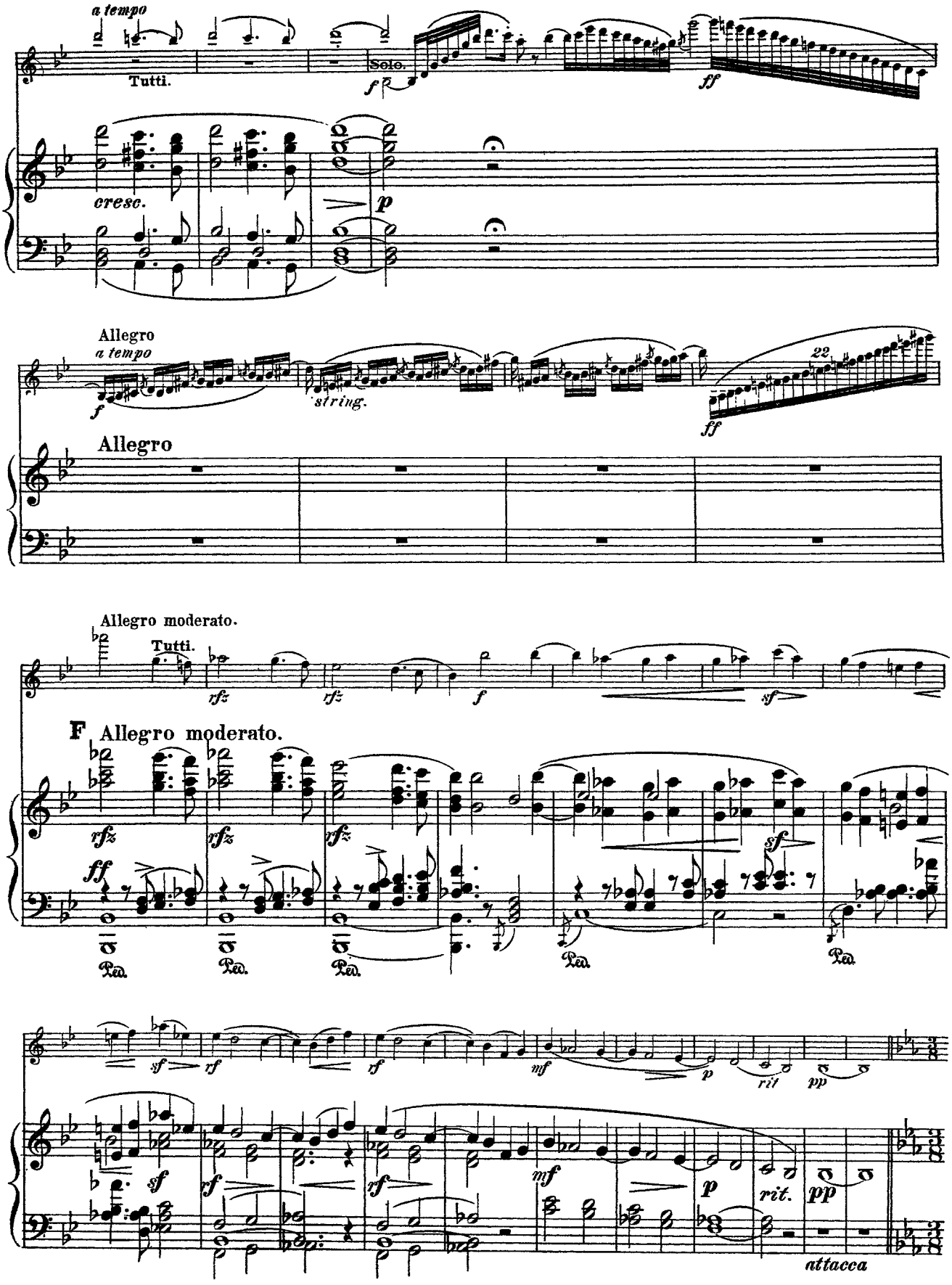
Cor.


ff
sfz
p
sfz
sfz
fp
pp
string. poco a poco
p
cresc.
dol.
Ped.
cresc.
l.h.
Ped.
Ped.
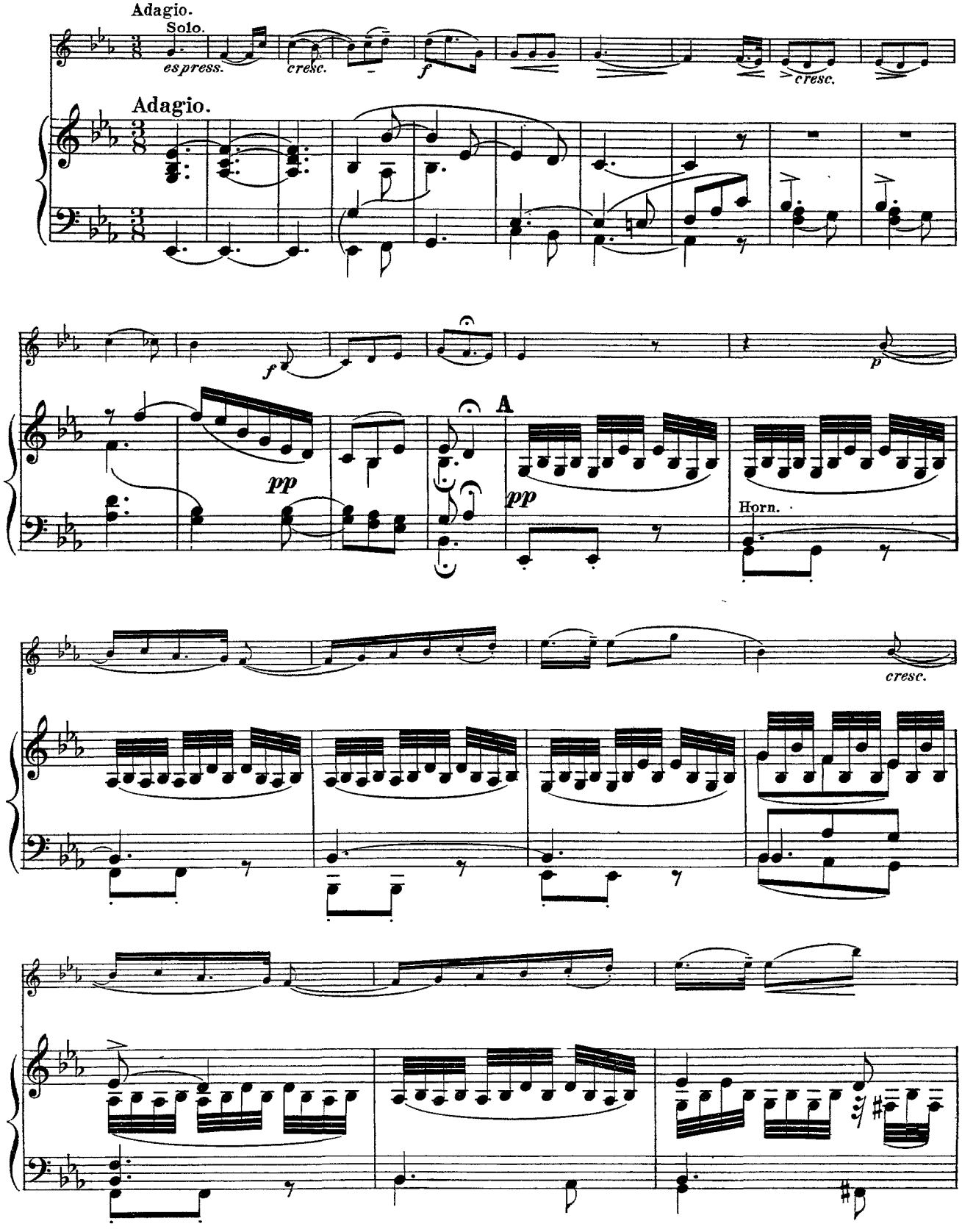

8
sempre cresc.
l.h.
Ped.
pp
ff
pp
ff
p
cresc.
Un poco più vivo.
Tutti.
ff
sf
Un poco più vivo.
ff marc.
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
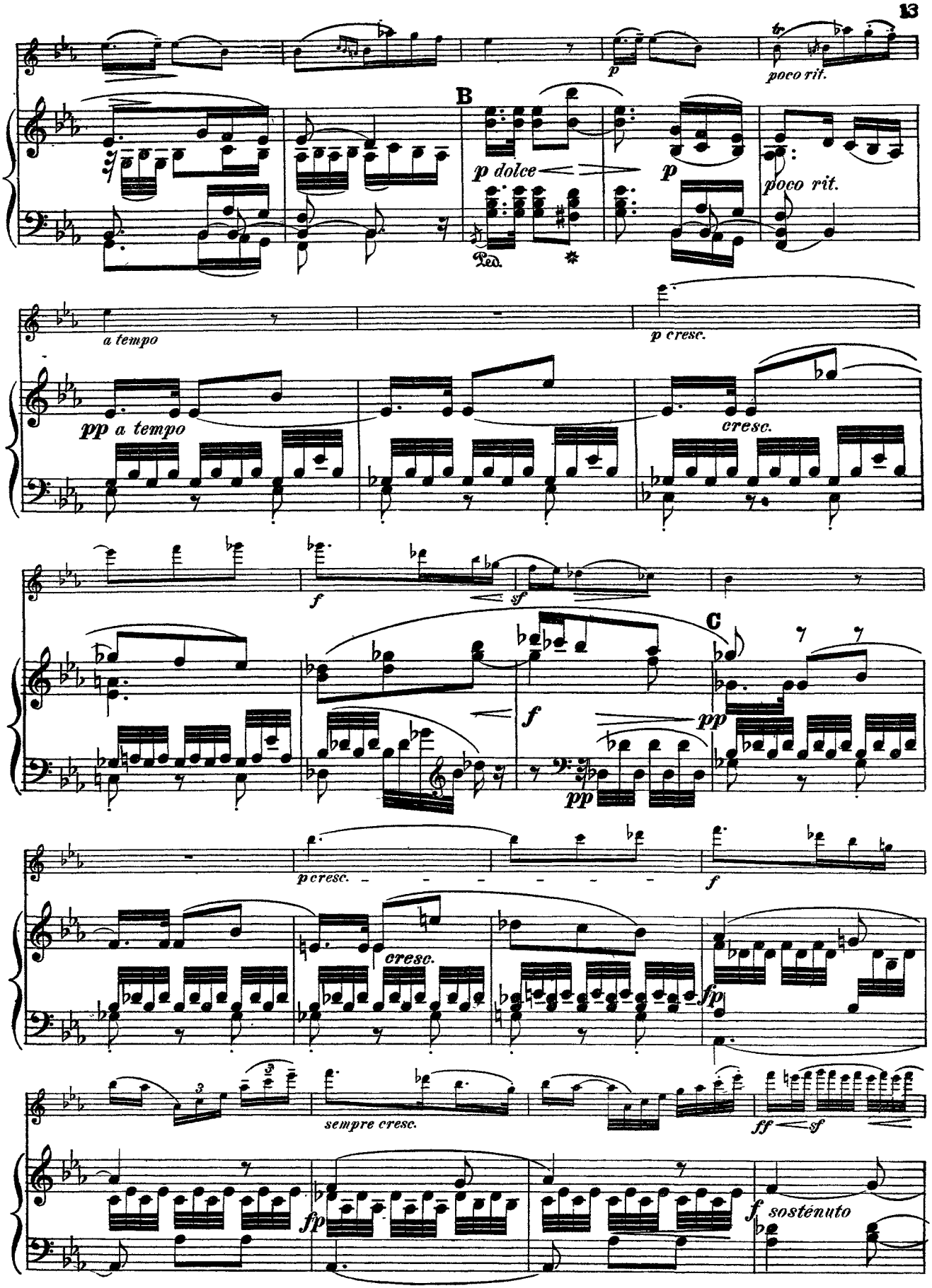

D
ff
sf
sfz
Ped.
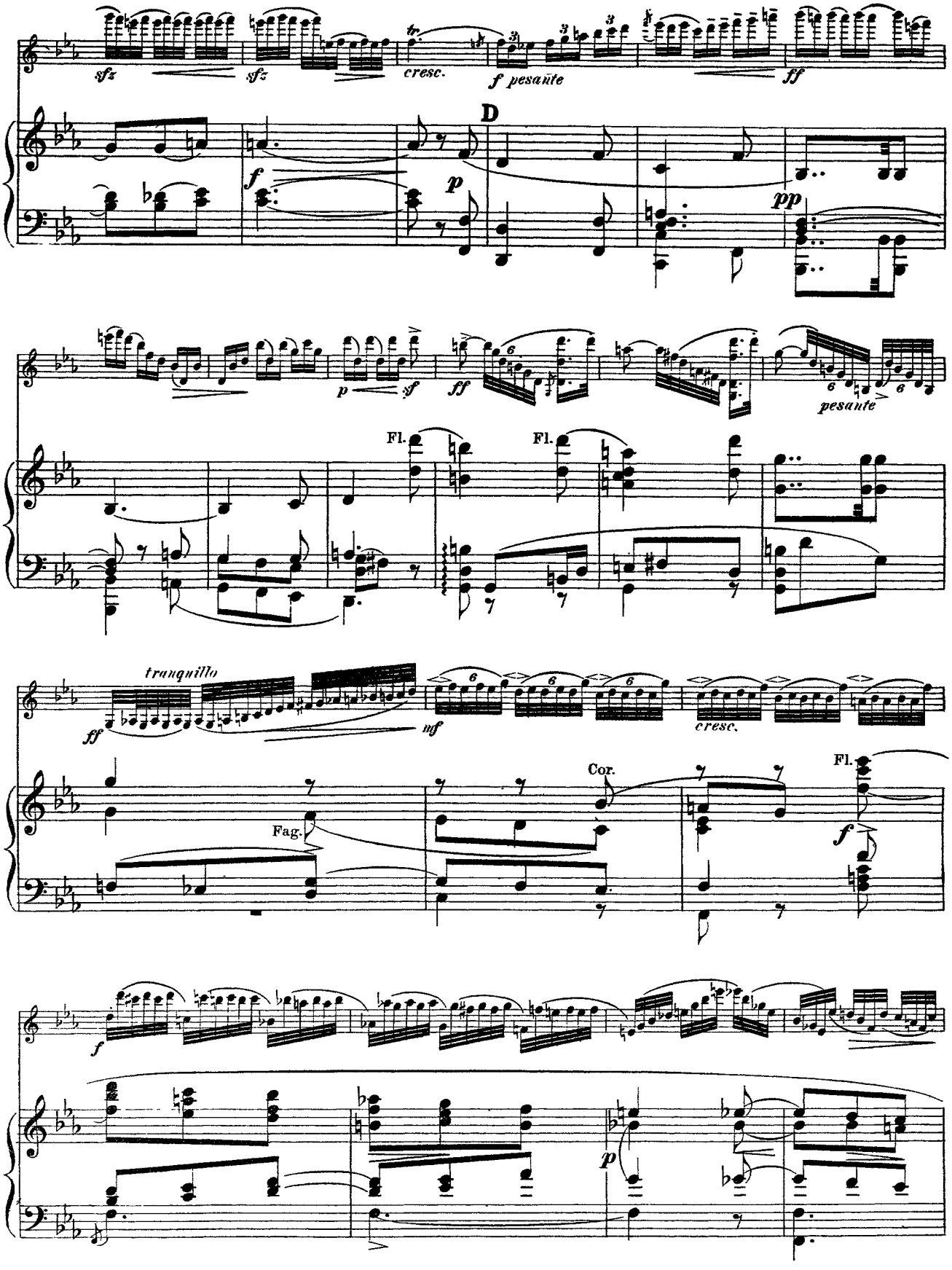

marcato
sempre ff
marcato
sf
Ped.
E
ff
poco rit.
decresc.
poco rit.
decresc.
Tempo I. (Allegro moderato.)
Solo.
ad lib.
string.
Tempo I. (Allegro moderato.)
p
pp
Ped.
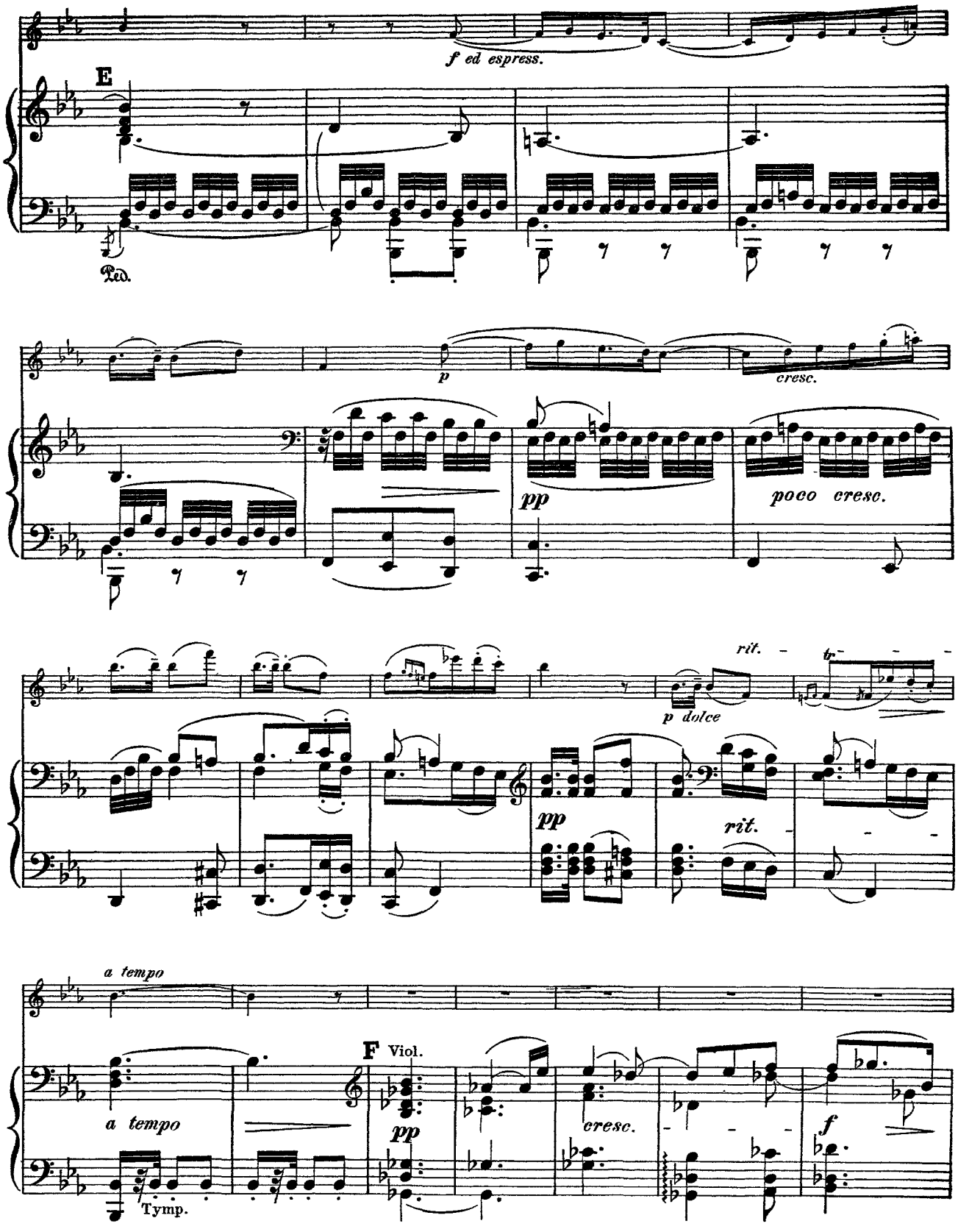

a tempo
Tutti.
Solo.
cresc.
Allegro
a tempo
string.
22
Allegro
Allegro moderato.
Tutti.
F Allegro moderato.
rit.
attacca
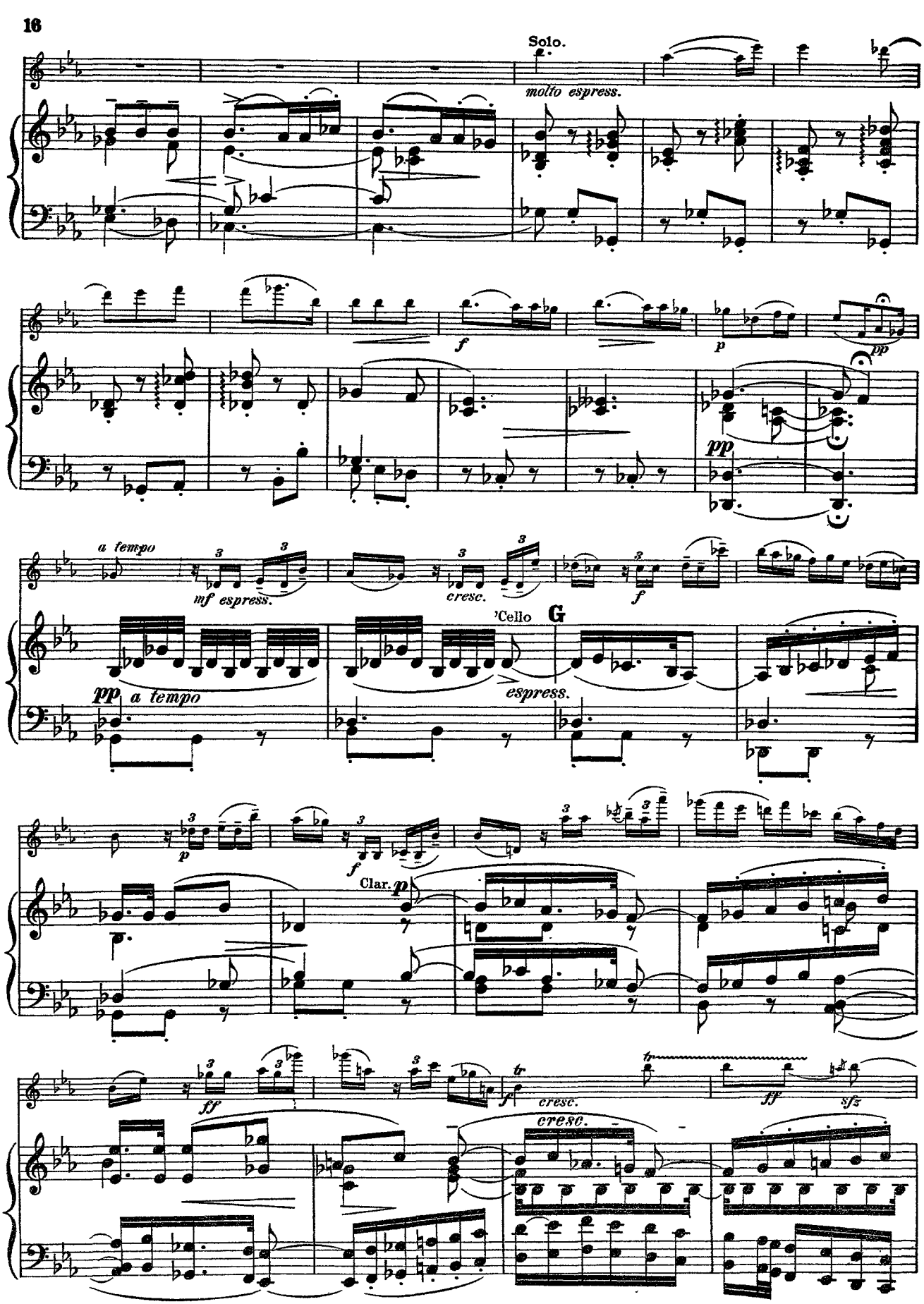
II. Adagio.
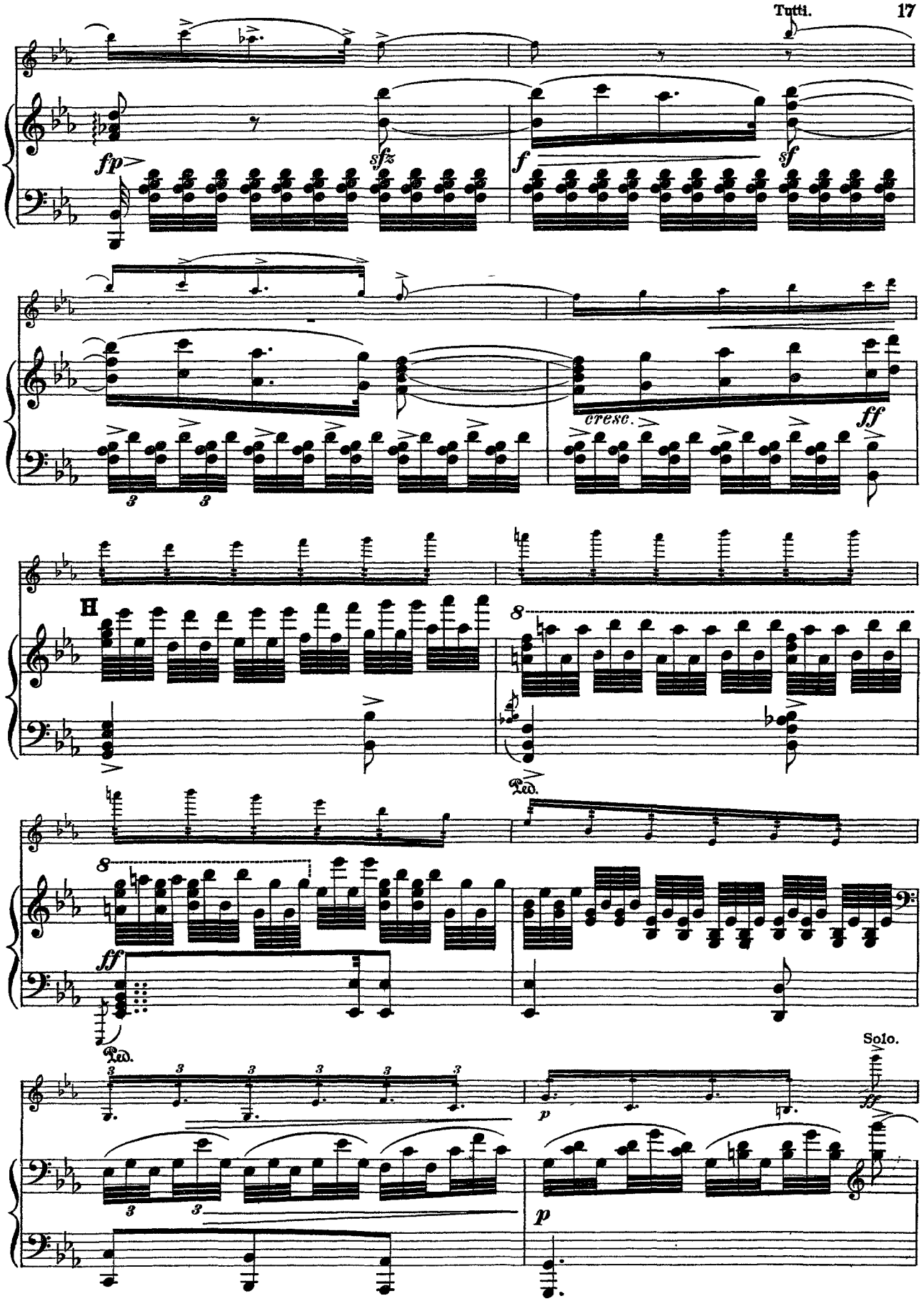

Adagio.
Solo.
espress.
cresc.
f
cresc.
Adagio.
f
p
pp
A
pp
Horn.
cresc.

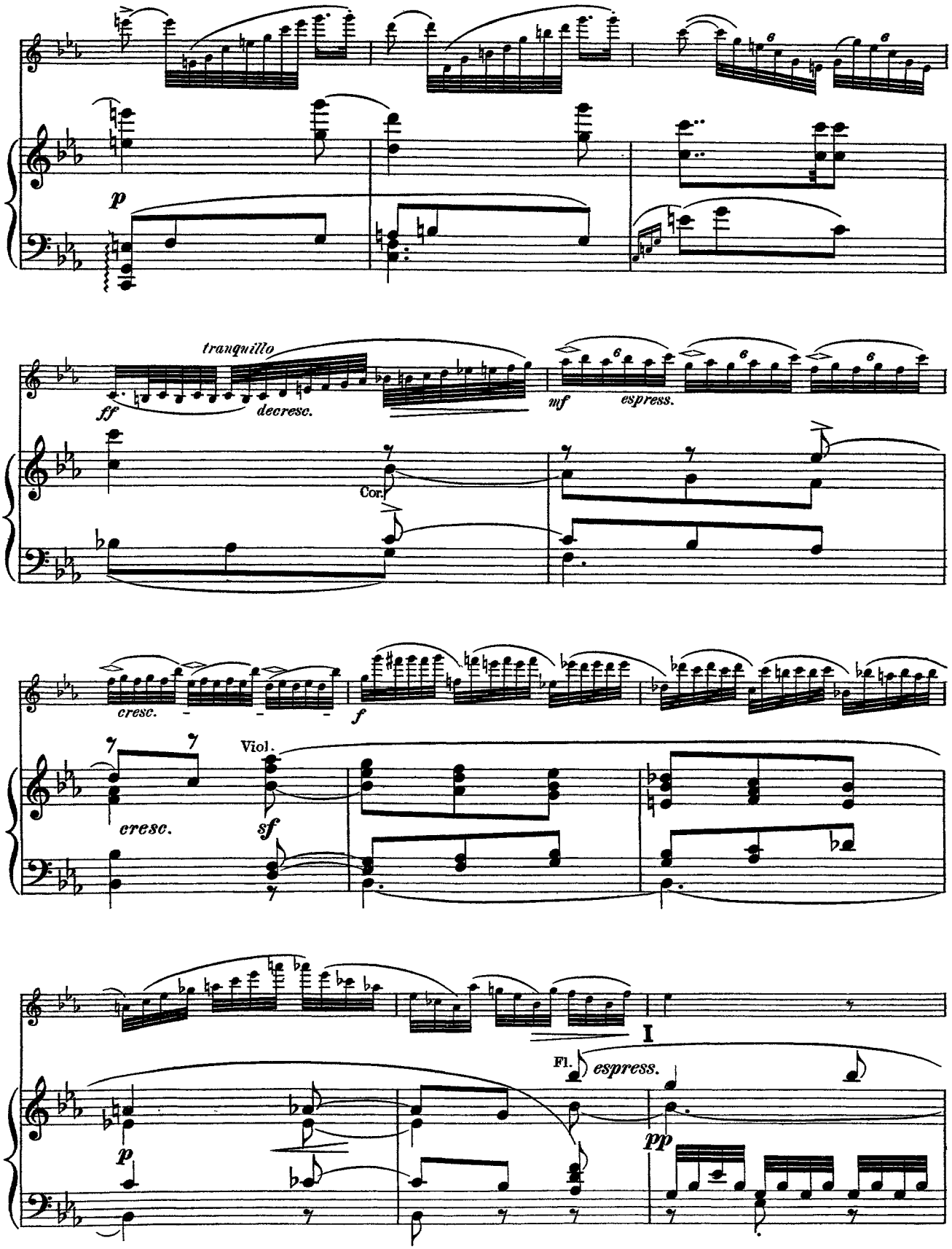

p
poco rit.
B
p dolce
p
poco rit.
Ped.
a tempo
p cresc.
pp a tempo
cresc.
f
sf
C
f
pp
pp
p cresc.
f
cresc.
fp
sempre cresc.
ff
sf
fp
f sostenuto
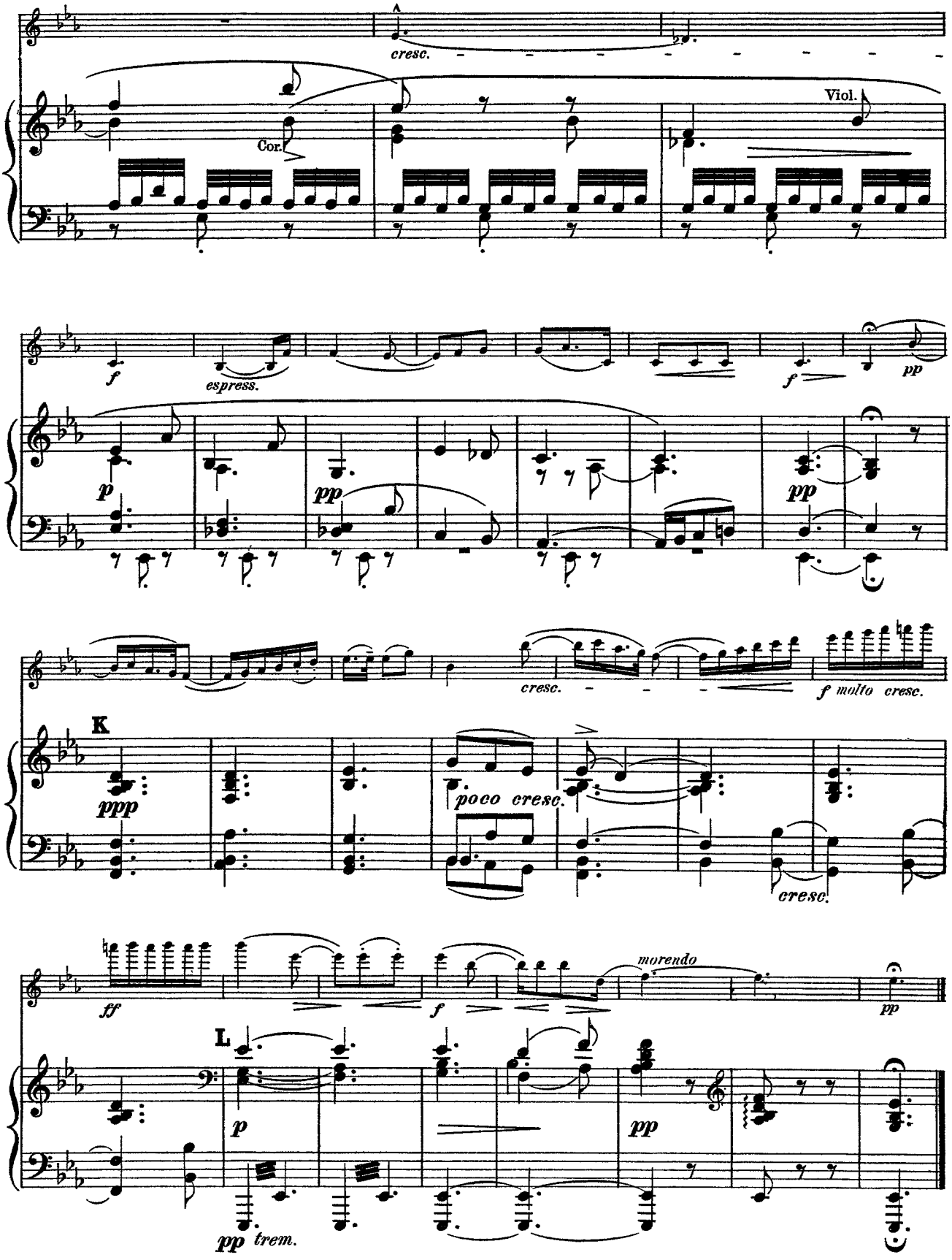

sfz
sfz
cresc.
f pesante
ff
D
f
p
pp
p
sf
ff
pesante
Fl.
Fl.
tranquillo
ff
mf
cresc.
Fag.
Cor.
Fl.
f
f
p
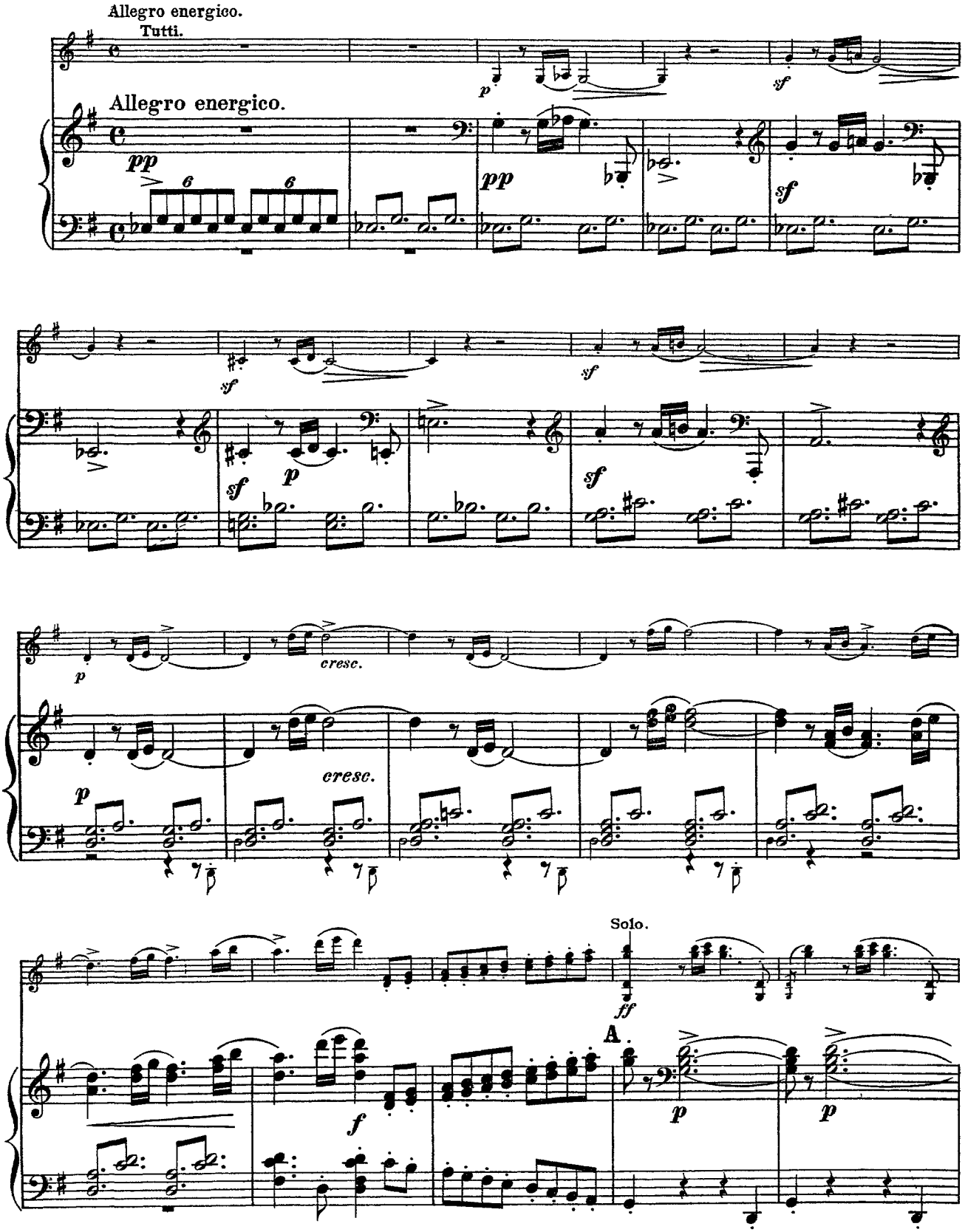

f ed espress.
E
Ped.
p
cresc.
pp
poco cresc.
rit.
p dolce
pp
rit.
a tempo
a tempo
F Viol.
pp
cresc.
f
Tymp.
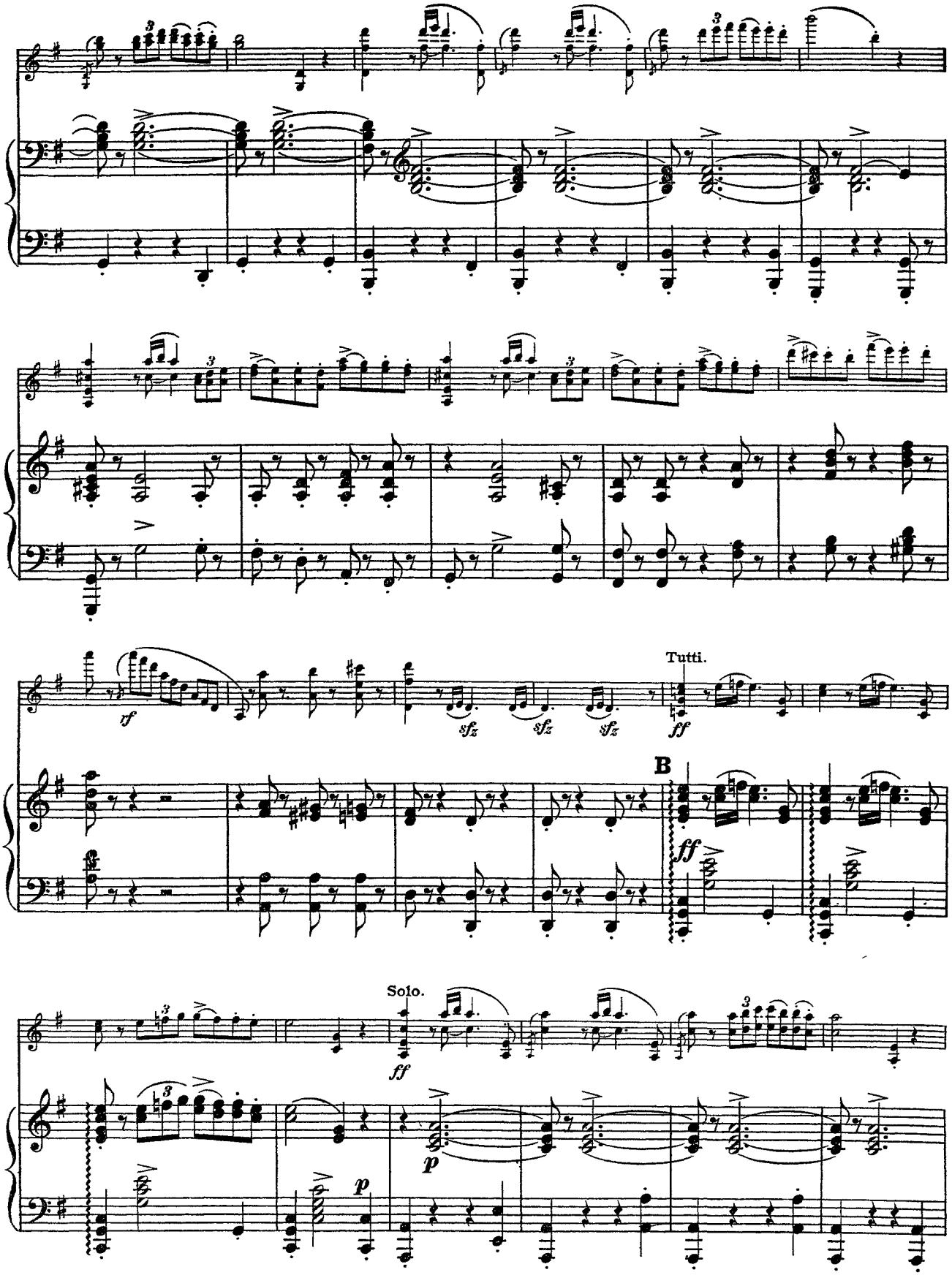

16
Solo.
molto espress.
f
p
pp
pp
a tempo
mf espress.
cresc.
f
'Cello
G
espress.
pp
a tempo
p
f
Clar.
p
ff
f
cresc.
tr
ff
sfz
cresc.
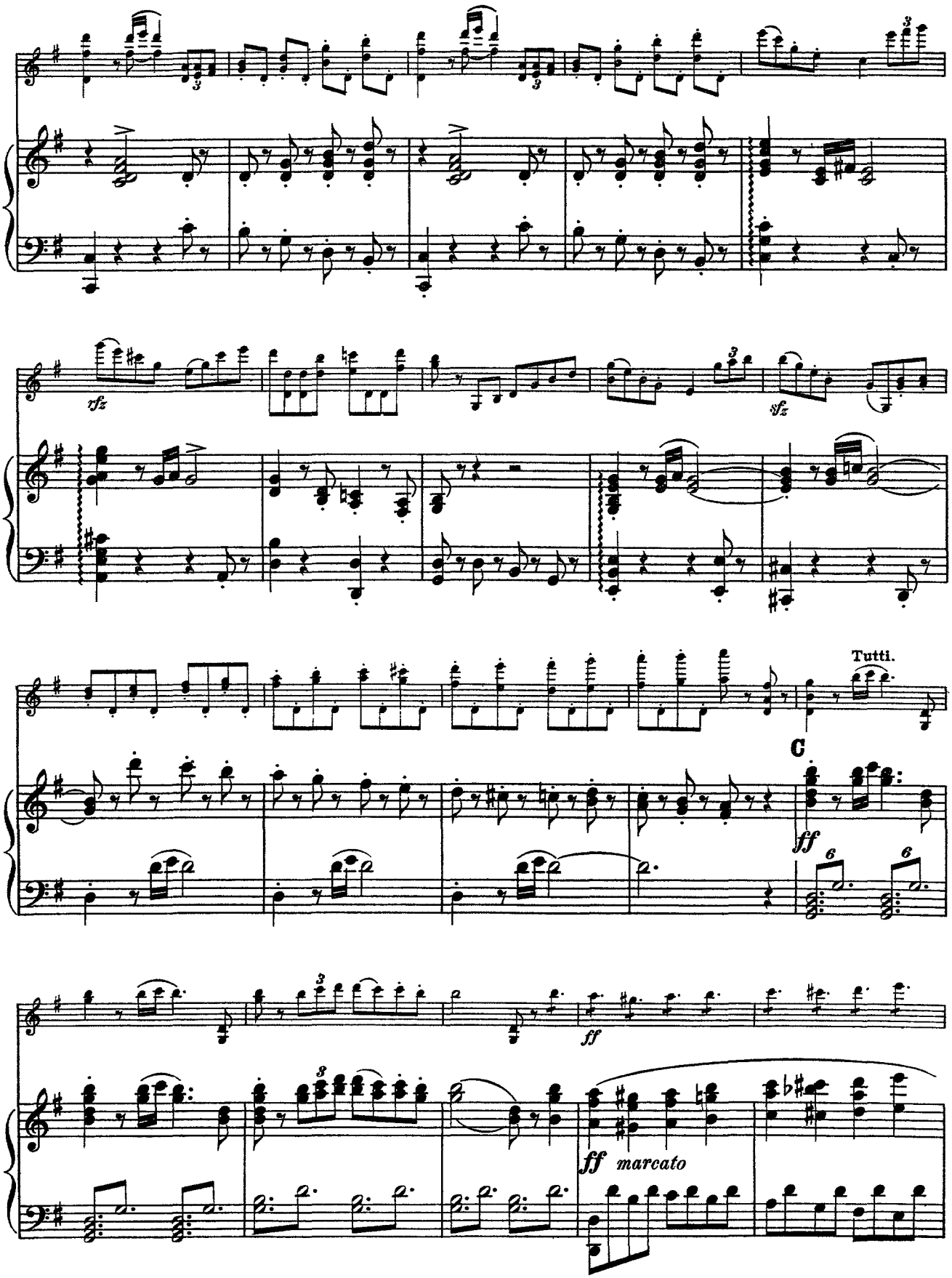

fp
sfz
f
sf
cresc.
ff
H
8
Ped.
8
ff
Ped.
Solo.
p
ff
p
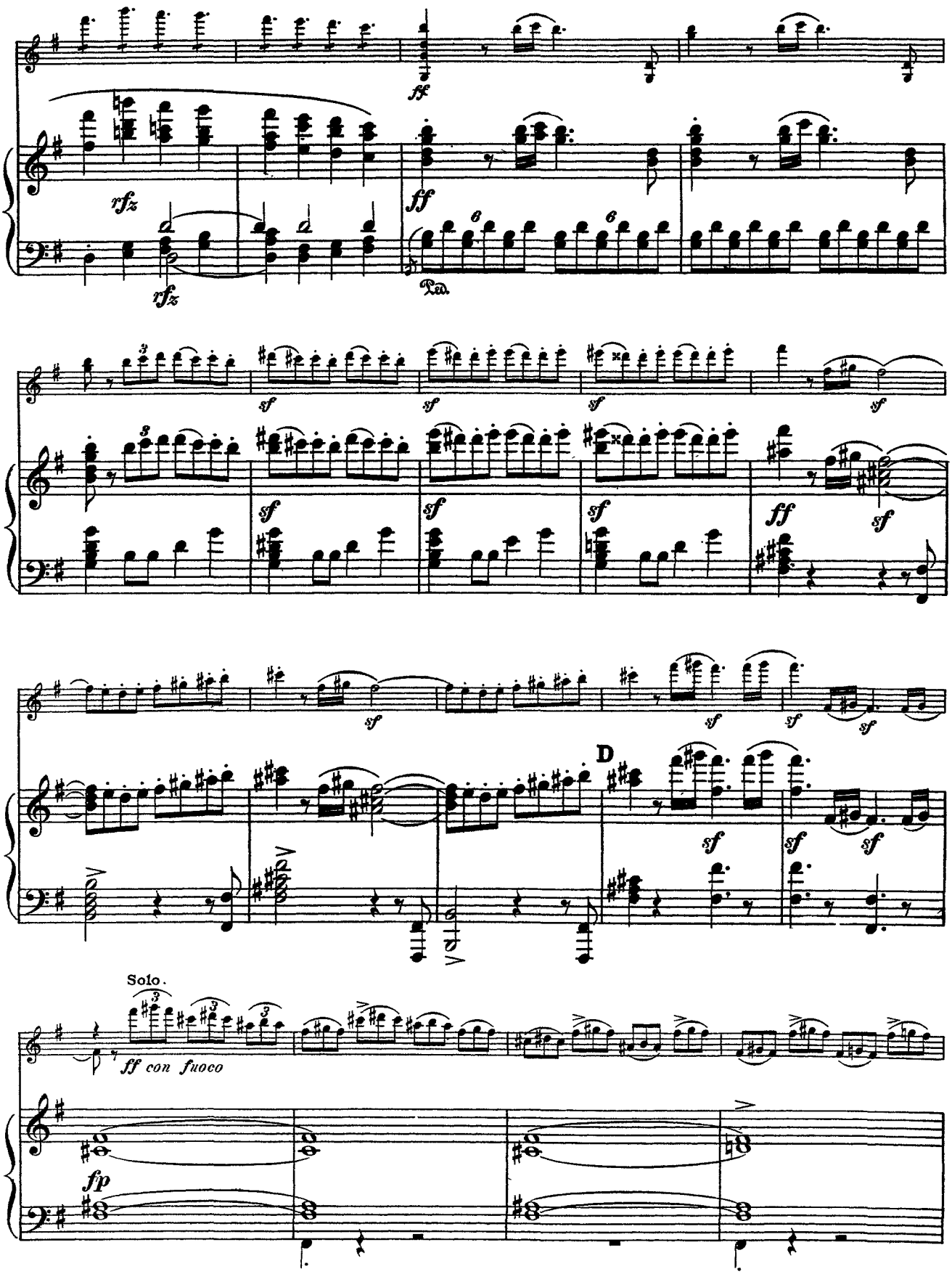

p
tranquillo
ff
decresc.
mf
espress.
Cor.
cresc.
f
Viol.
cresc.
sf
I
Fl.
espress.
p
pp
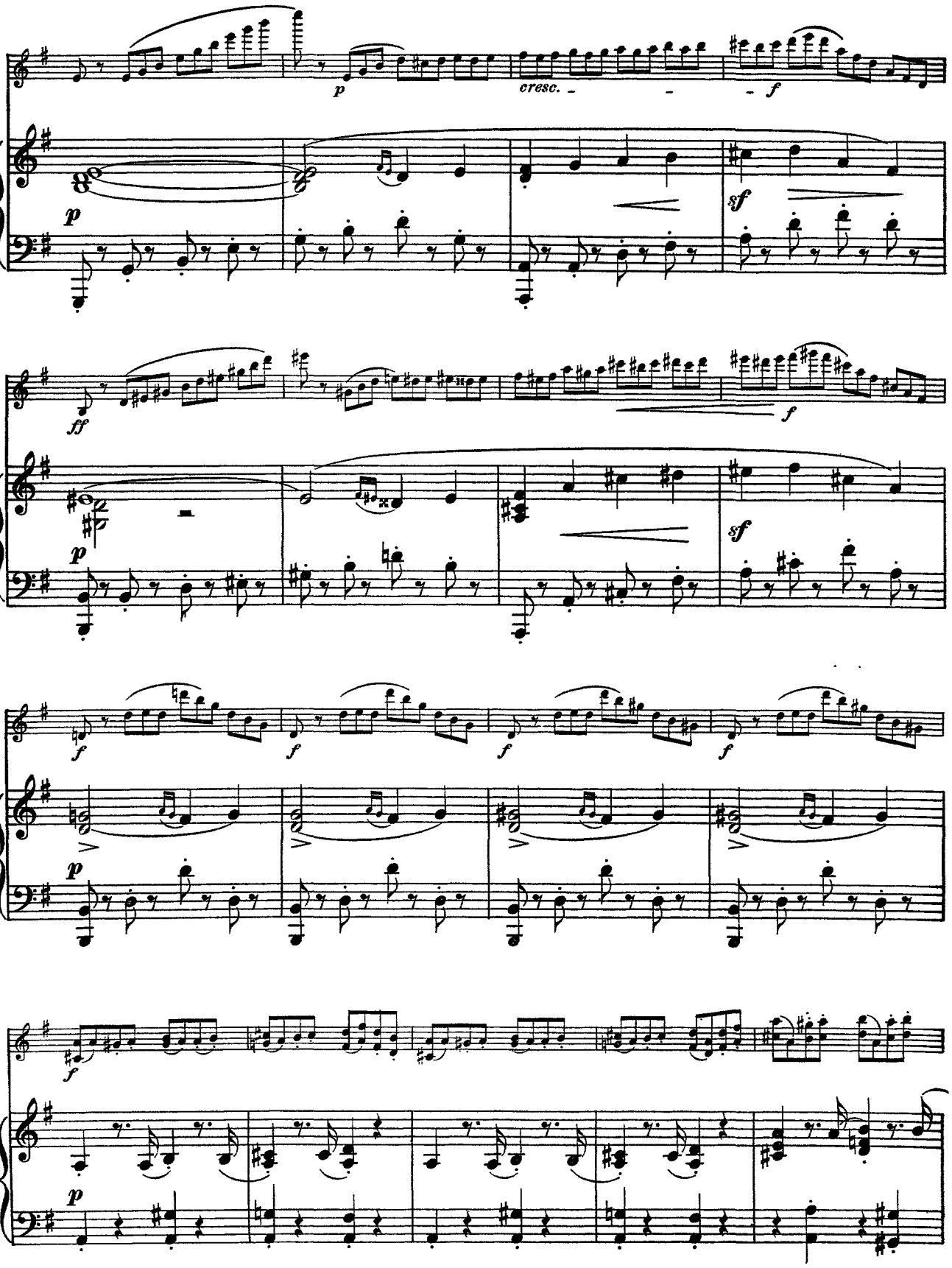

cresc.
Cor.
Viol.
f
espress.
p
pp
f
pp
pp
cresc.
f molto cresc.
K
ppp
poco cresc.
cresc.
ff
f
morendo
pp
L
p
pp
pp trem.
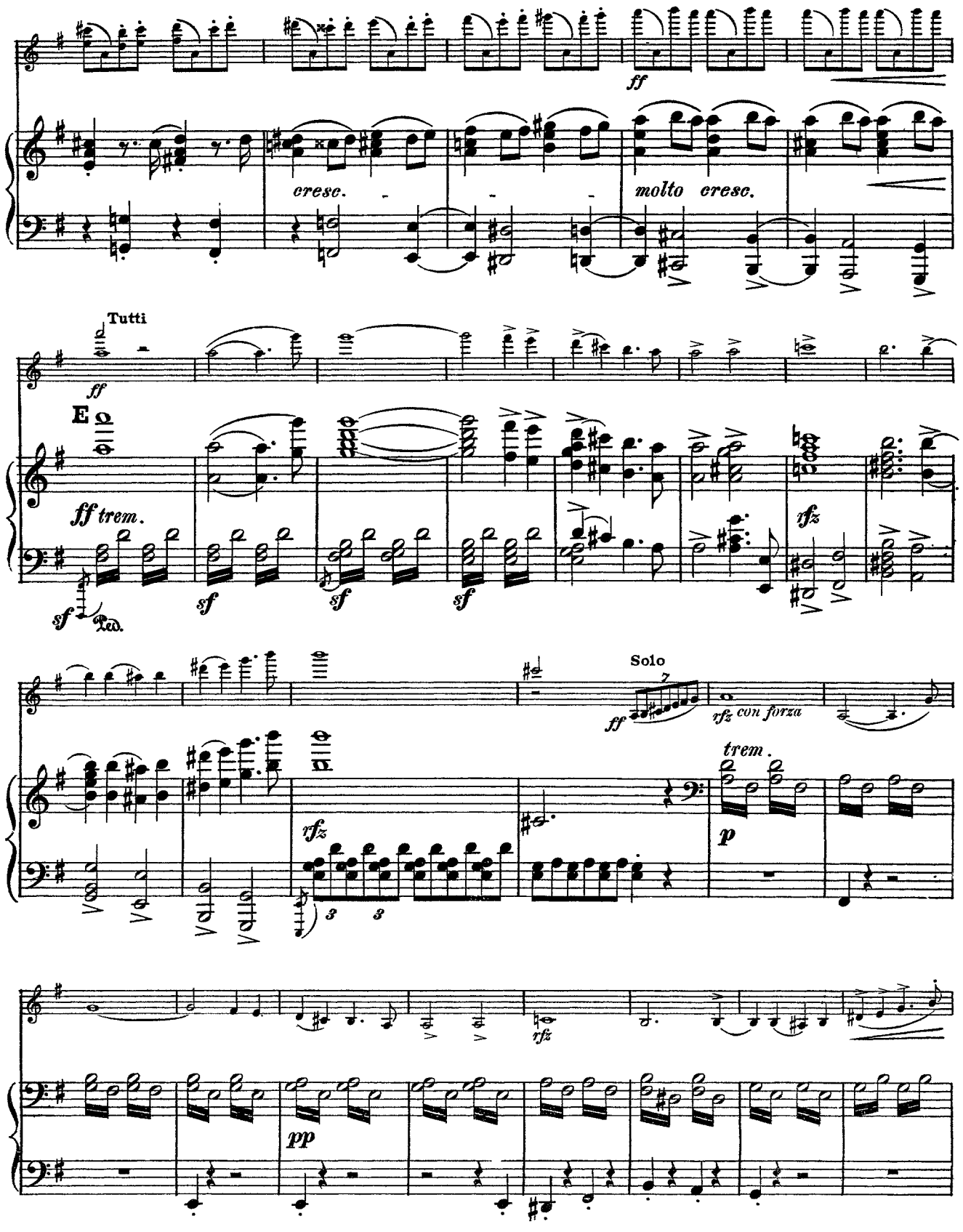

Allegro energico.
Tutti.
Allegro energico.
pp
6
6
p
pp
sf
sf
sf
p
sf
sf
p
cresc.
p
cresc.
Solo.
ff
A
f
p
p
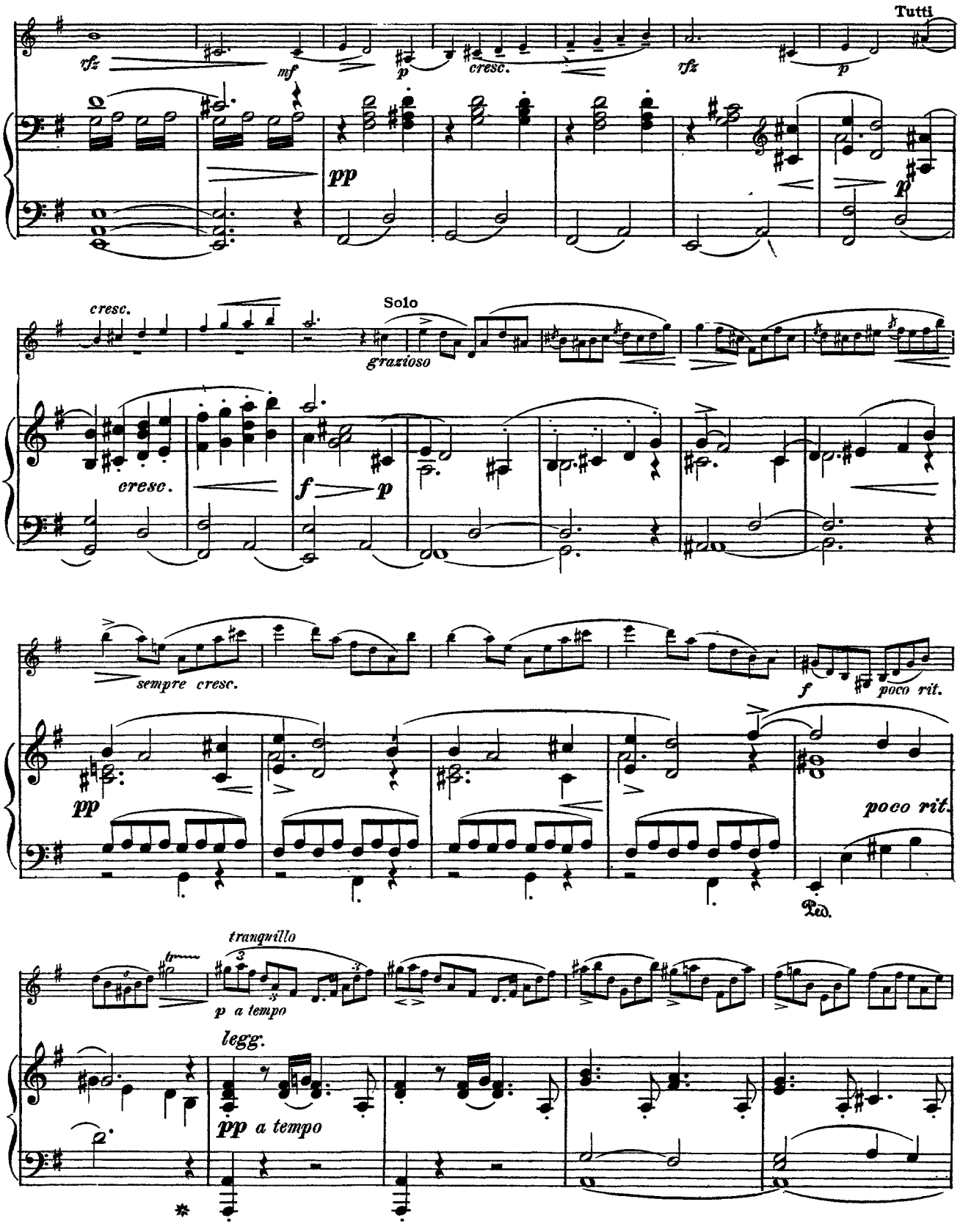

Tutti.
B
Solo.
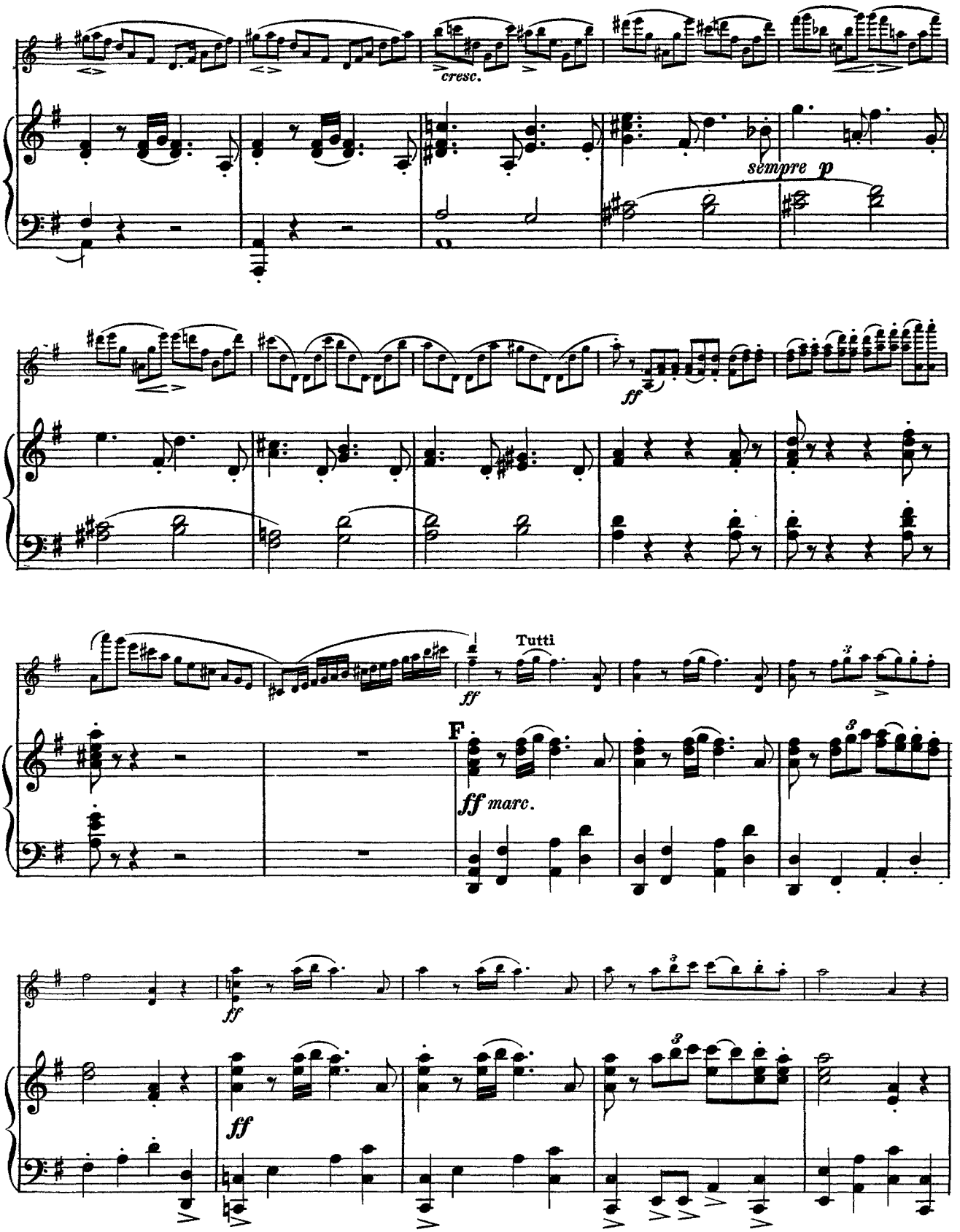

tfz
sfz
Tutti.
C
ff
ff
ff marcato
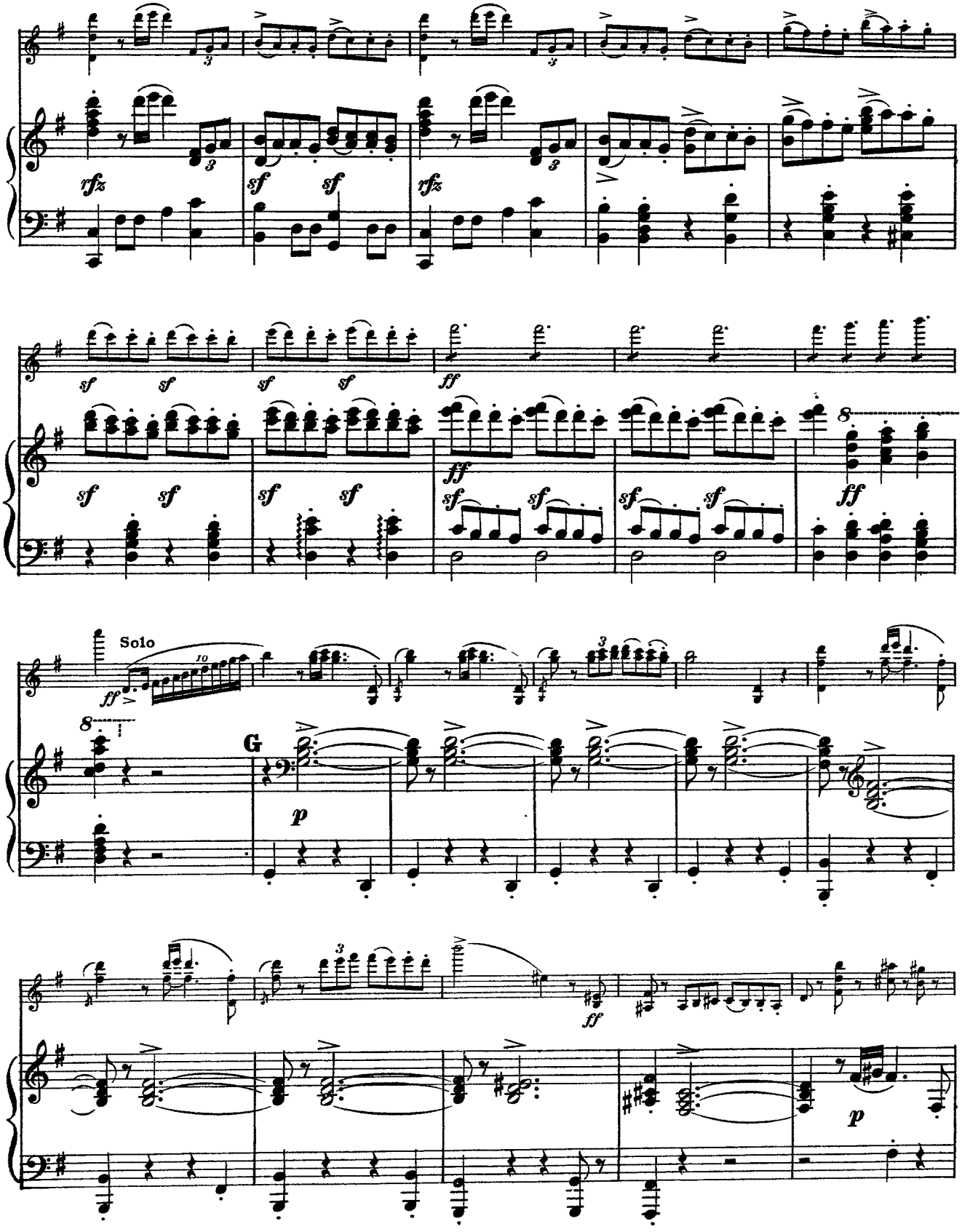

ff
rfz
rfz
ff
Ped.
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
ff
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
D
sf
sf
sf
Solo.
ff con fuoco
fp
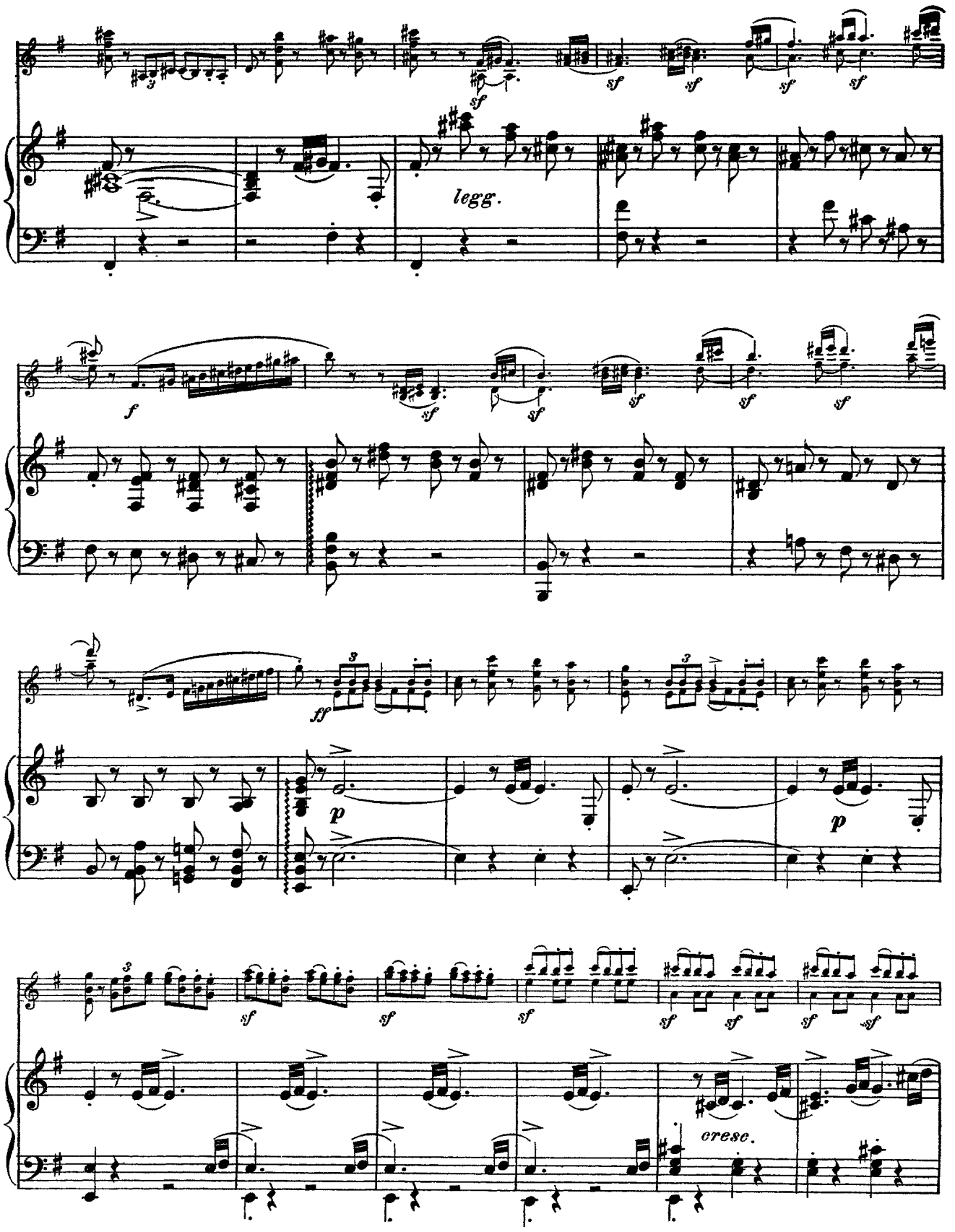

p
cresc.
f
sf
ff
f
sf
f
f
f
f
p
p
f
p
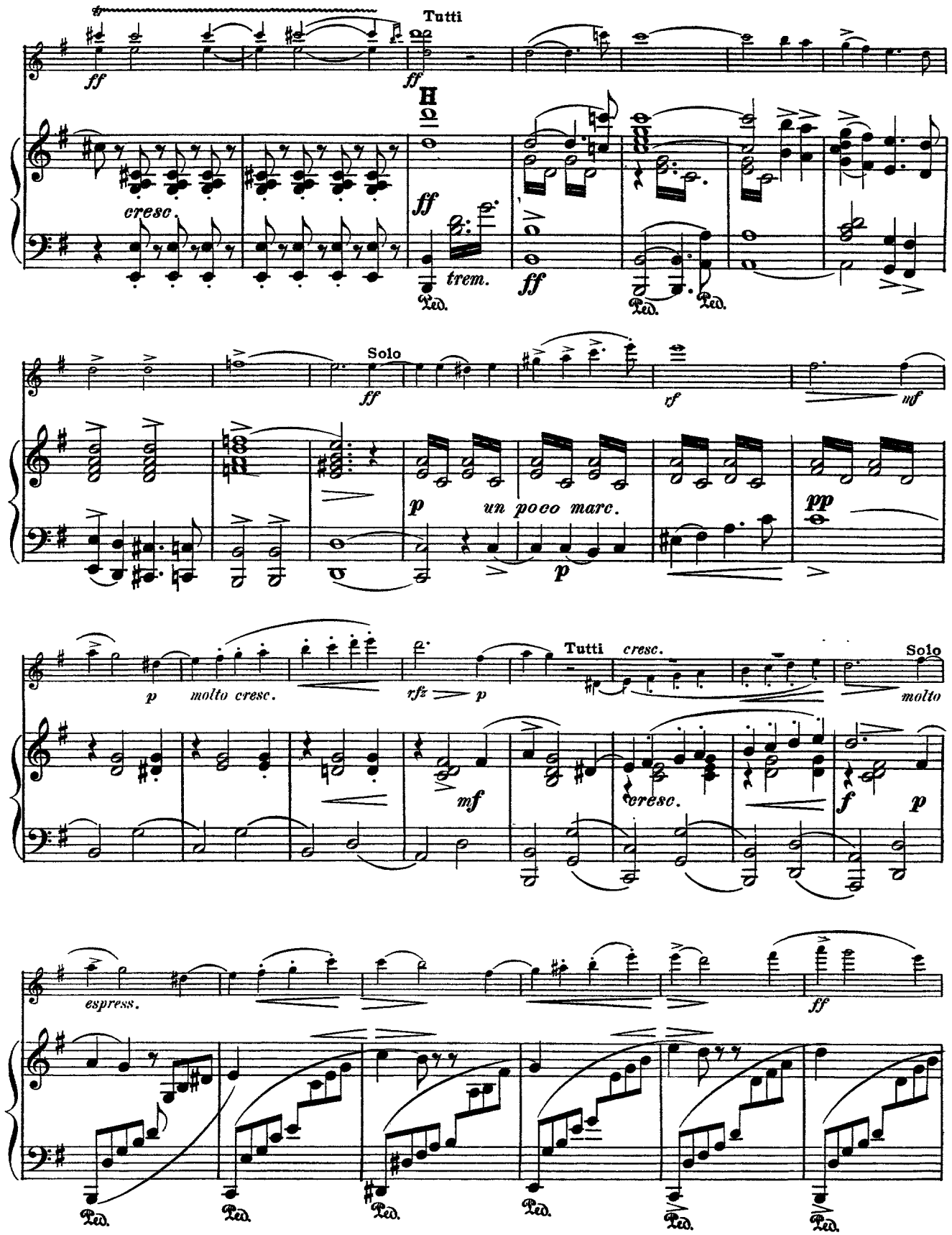

ff
cresc.
molto cresc.
Tutti
ff
E
ff trem.
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
Ped.
rfz
Solo
ff
rfz con forza
trem.
p
rfz
3
3
rfz
pp
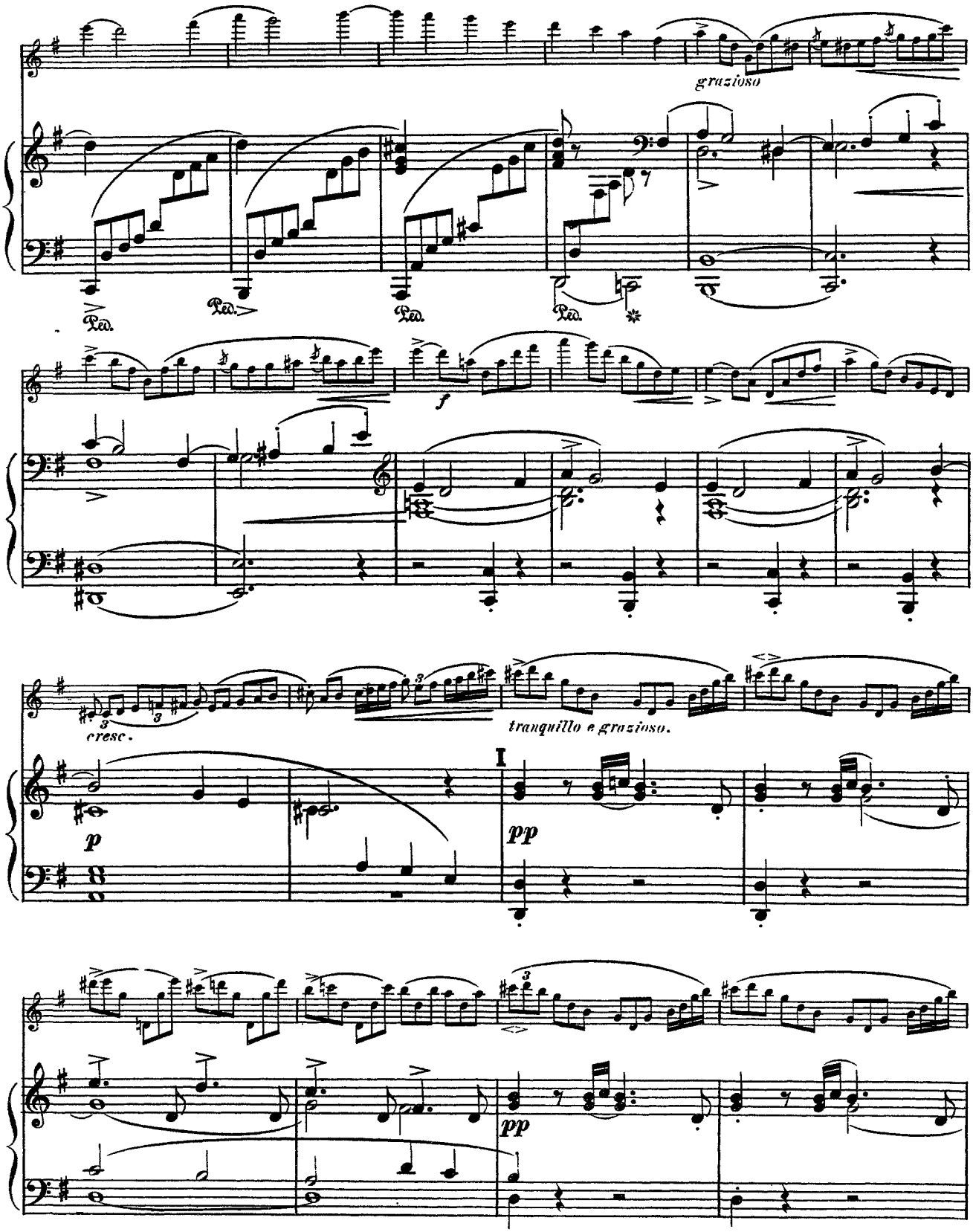

Tutti
rfz
mf
p
cresc.
rfz
p
pp
p
cresc.
Solo
grazioso
cresc.
f
p
sempre cresc.
f
poco rit.
pp
poco rit.
Ped.
tranquillo
p a tempo
legg.
pp a tempo
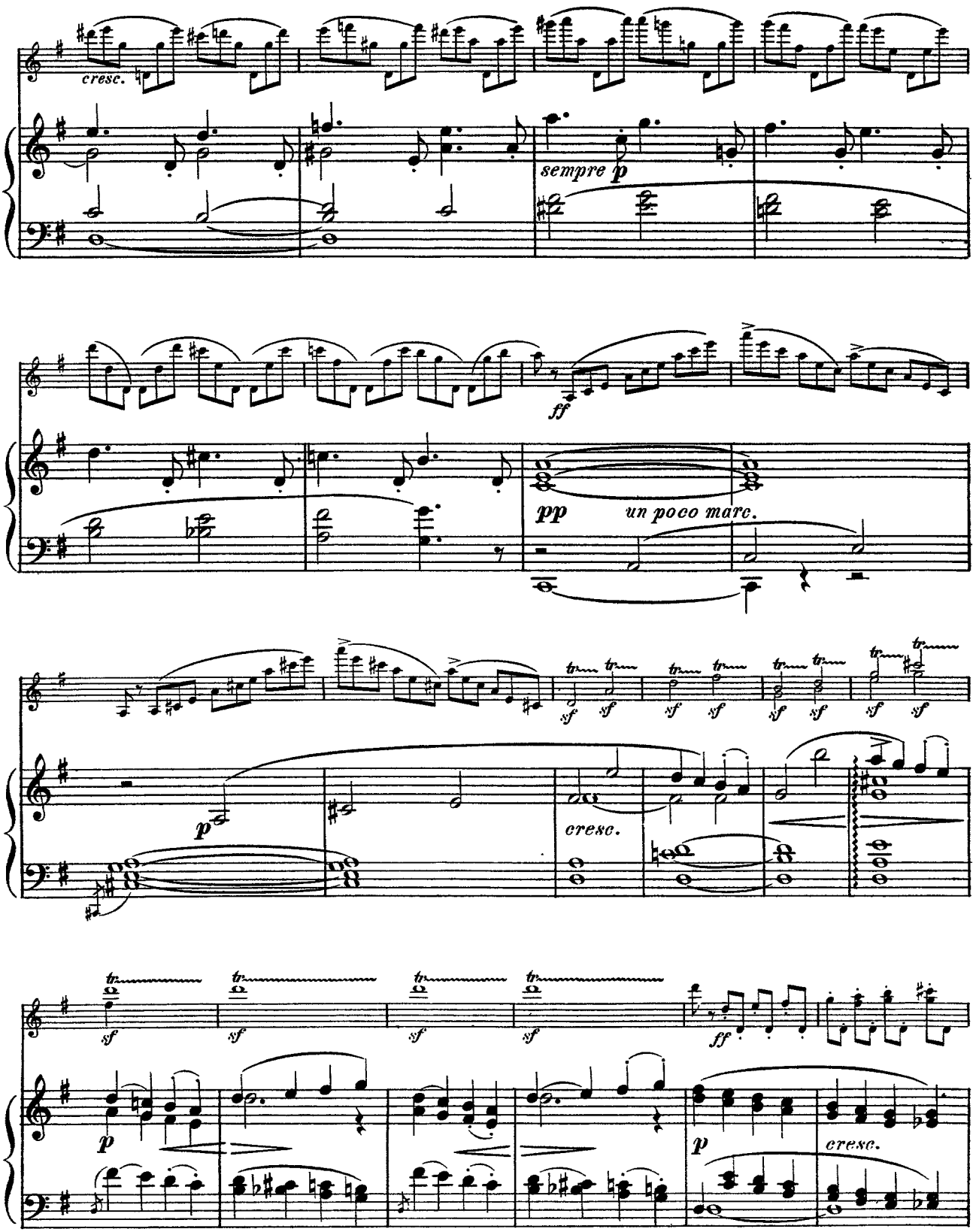

cresc.
sempre p
ff
Tutti
ff
F
ff marc.
ff
ff
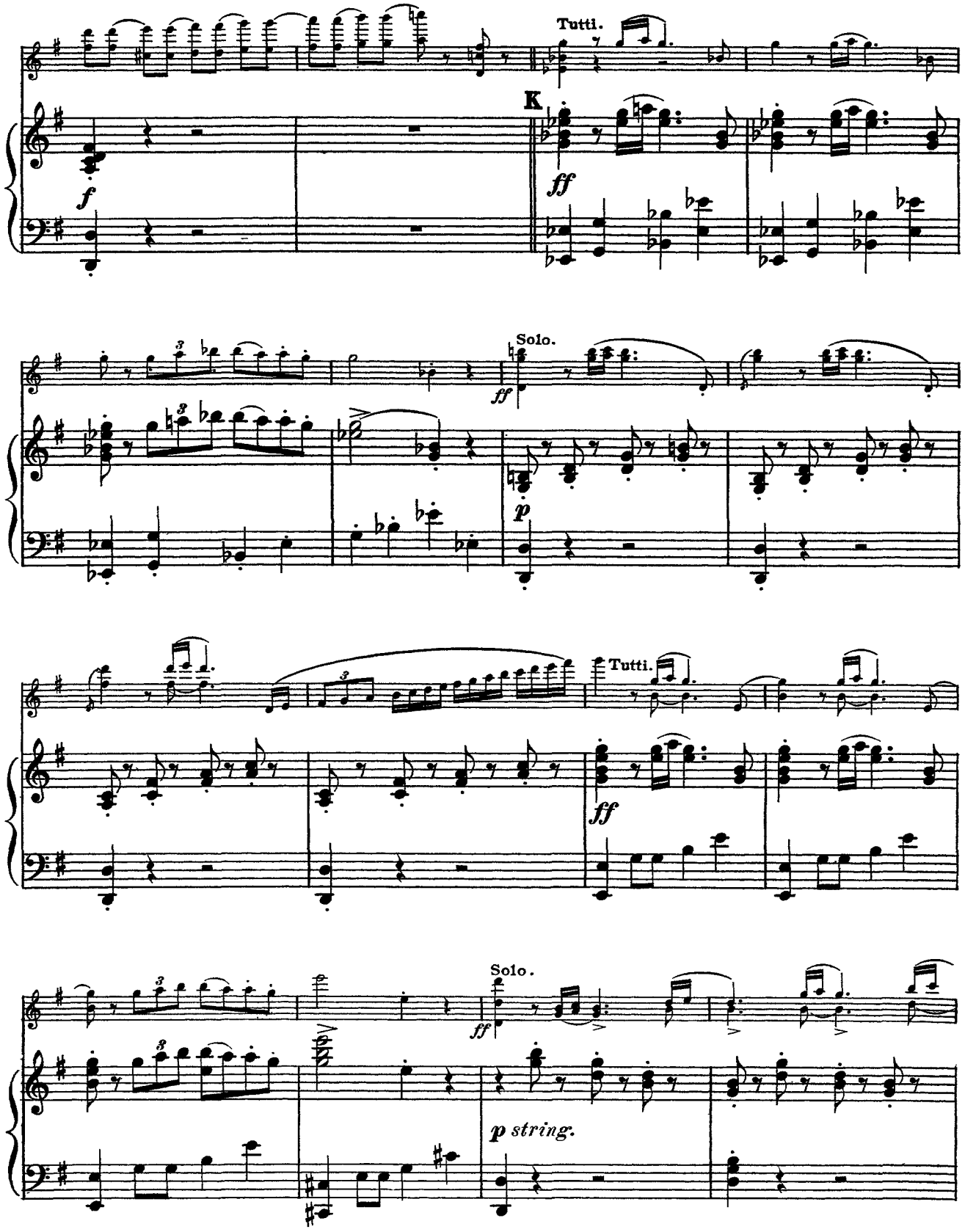

rfz
sf
sf
rfz
sf
sf
sf
sf
ff
ff
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
ff
Solo
ff
G
p
ff
p
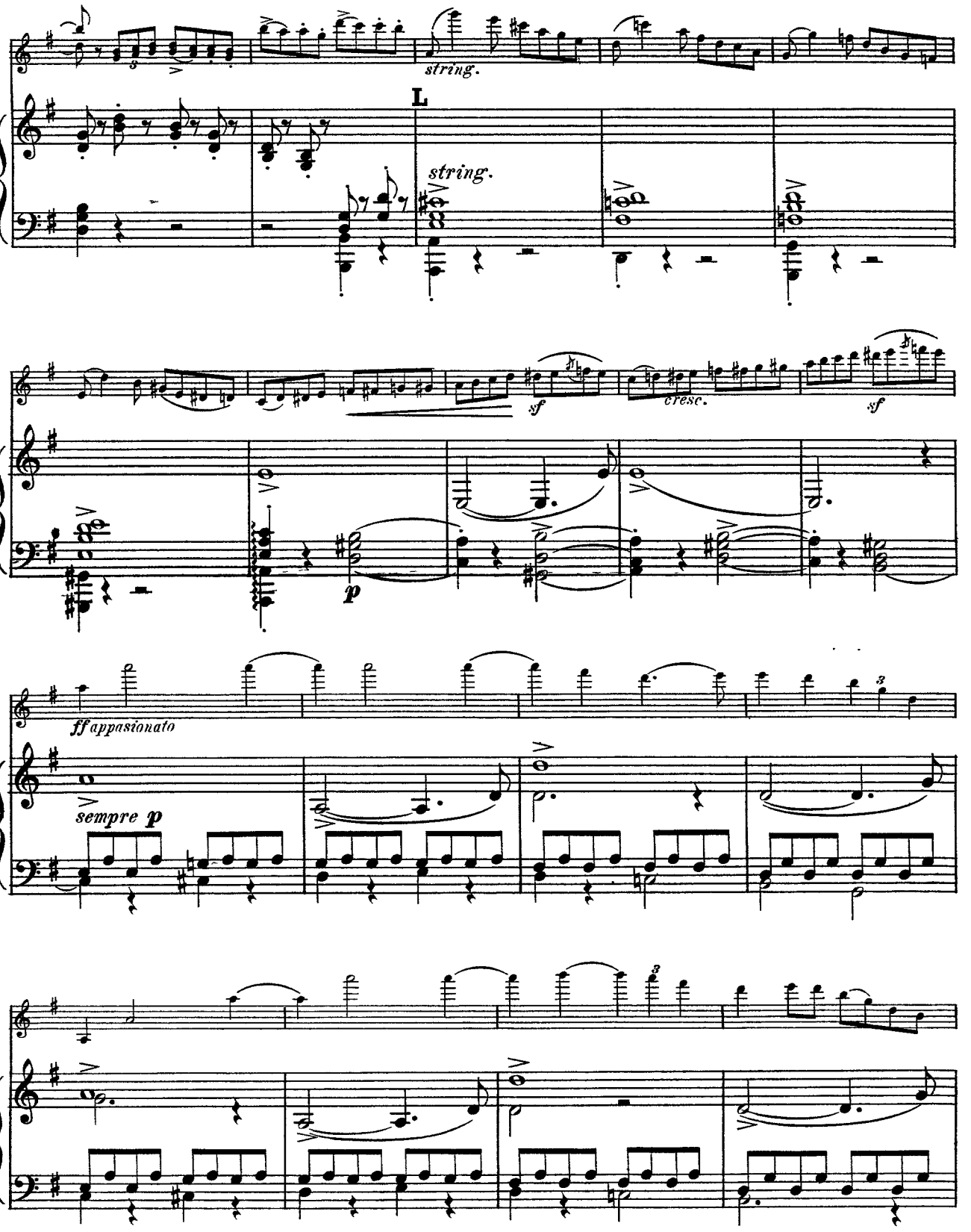

legg.
cresc.
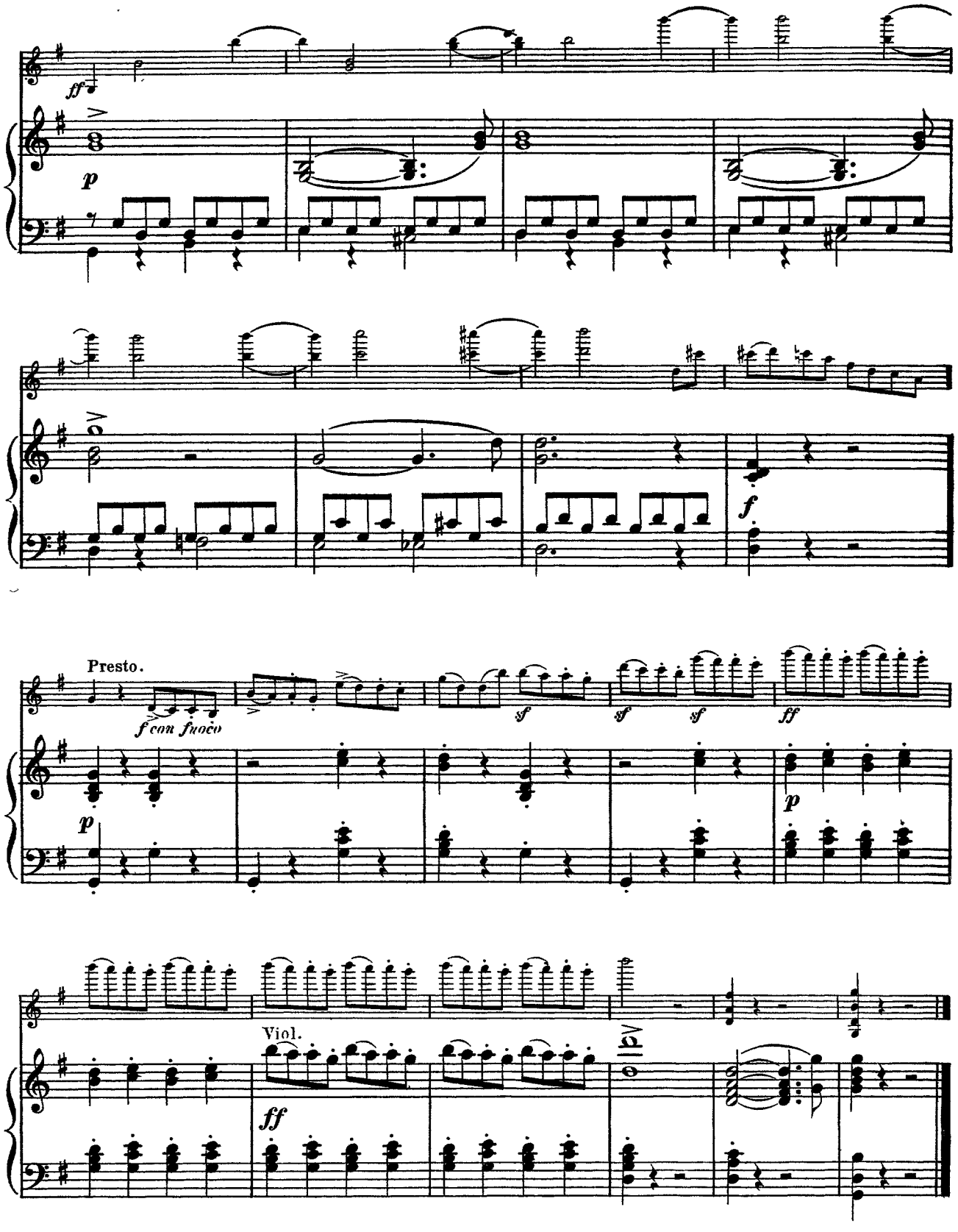

30
Tutti
cresc.
ff
trem.
Ped.
Solo
vf
mf
p
un poco marc.
pp
molto cresc.
rfz
Tutti
cresc.
Solo
molto
mf
cresc.
f
espress.


grazioso
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
f
cresc.
tranquillo e grazioso.
p
I
pp
pp


cresc.
sempre p
ff
pp
un poco marc.
sf
p
cresc.
ff
p
cresc.


Tutti.
K
f
ff
Solo.
ff
p
Tutti.
ff
Solo.
ff
p string.


string.
L
string.
sf
cresc.
sf
p
ff appasionato
sempre p


ff
p
f
Presto.
f con fuoco
sf
sf
sf
ff
p
Viol.
ff