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FREDERIC CHOPIN

Complete Works for the Piano

Edited and Fingered,
and provided with an Introductory Note by
CARL MIKULI

Historical and Analytical Comments by
JAMES HUNEKER

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FRÉDÉRIC FRANÇOIS CHOPIN

According to a tradition—and, be it said, an erroneous one—Chopin's playing was like that of one dreaming rather than awake—scarcely audible in its continual *pianissimos* and *una cordas*, with feebly developed technique and quite lacking in confidence, or at least indistinct, and distorted out of all rhythmic form by an incessant *tempo rubato!* The effect of these notions could not be otherwise than very prejudicial to the interpretation of his works, even by the most able artists—in their very striving after truthfulness; besides, they are easily accounted for.

Chopin played rarely and always unwillingly in public; "exhibitions" of himself were totally repugnant to his nature. Long years of sickliness and nervous irritability did not always permit him the necessary repose, in the concert-hall, for displaying untrammeled the full wealth of his resources. In more familiar circles, too, he seldom played anything but his shorter pieces, or occasional fragments from the larger works. Small wonder, therefore, that Chopin the Pianist should fail of general recognition.

Yet Chopin possessed a highly developed technique, giving him complete mastery over the instrument. In all styles of touch the evenness of his scales and passages was unsurpassed—nay, fabulous; under his hands the pianoforte needed to envy neither the violin for its bow nor wind-instruments for the living breath. The tones melted one into the other with the liquid effect of beautiful song.

A genuine piano-hand, extremely flexible though not large, enabled him to play arpeggios of most widely dispersed harmonies and passages in wide stretches, which he brought into vogue as something never attempted before; and everything without the slightest apparent exertion, a pleasing freedom and lightness being a distinguishing characteristic of his style. At the same time, the tone which he could *draw out* of the instrument was prodigious, especially in the *cantabiles;* in this regard John Field alone could compare with him.

A lofty, virile energy lent imposing effect to suitable passages—an energy without roughness; on the other hand, he could carry away his hearers by the tenderness of his soulful delivery—a tenderness without affectation. But with all the warmth of his peculiarly ardent temperament, his playing was always within bounds, chaste, polished and at times even severely reserved.

In keeping time Chopin was inflexible, and many will be surprised to learn that the metronome never left his piano. Even in his oft-decried *tempo rubato* one hand—that having the accompaniment—always played on in strict time, while the other, singing the melody, either hesitating as if undecided, or, with increased animation, anticipating with a kind of impatient vehemence as if in passionate utterances, maintained the freedom of musical expression from the fetters of strict regularity.

Some information concerning Chopin the Teacher, even in the shape of a mere sketch, can hardly fail to interest many readers.

Far from regarding his work as a teacher, which his position as an artist and his social connections in Paris rendered difficult of avoidance, as a burdensome task, Chopin daily devoted his entire energies to it for several hours and with genuine delight. True, his demands on the talent and industry of the pupil were very great. There were often "de leçons orageuses" ("stormy lessons"), as they were called in school parlance, and many a fair eye wet with tears departed from the high altar of the Cité d'Orleans, rue St. Lazare, yet without the slightest resentment on that score against the dearly beloved master. For this same severity, so little prone to easy satisfaction, this feverish vehemence with which the master strove to raise his disciples to his own plane, this insistence on the repetition of a passage until it was understood, were a guaranty that he had the pupil's progress at heart. He would glow with a sacred zeal for art; every word from his lips was stimulating and inspiring. Single lessons often lasted literally for several hours in succession, until master and pupil were overcome by fatigue.

On beginning with a pupil, Chopin was chiefly anxious to do away with any stiffness in, or cramped, convulsive movement of, the hand, thereby obtaining the first requisite of a fine technique, "souplesse" (suppleness), and at the same time independence in the motion of the fingers. He was never tired of inculcating that such technical exercises are not merely mechanical, but claim the intelligence and entire will-power of the pupil; and, consequently, that a twentyfold or fortyfold repetition (still the lauded arcanum of so many schools) does no good whatever—not to mention the kind of practising advocated by Kalkbrenner, during which one may also occupy oneself with reading! He treated the various styles of touch very thoroughly, more especially the full-toned *legato.*

As gymnastic aids he recommended bending the wrist inward and outward, the repeated wrist-stroke, the pressing apart of the fingers—but all with an earnest warning against over-exertion. For scale-practice he required a very full tone, as *legato* as possible, at first very slowly and taking a quicker tempo only step by step, and playing with metronomic evenness. To facilitate the passing under of the thumb and passing over of the fingers, the hand was to be bent inward. The scales having many black keys (B major, F-sharp, D-flat) were

studied first, C major, as the hardest, coming last. In like order he took up Clementi's Preludes and Exercises, a work which he highly valued on account of its utility. According to Chopin, evenness in scale-playing and arpeggios depends not only on the equality in the strength of the fingers obtained through five-finger exercises, and a perfect freedom of the thumb in passing under and over, but foremostly on the perfectly smooth and constant sideways movement of the hand (not *step* by *step*), letting the elbow hang down freely and loosely at all times. This movement he exemplified by a *glissando* across the keys. After this he gave as studies a selection from Cramer's Études, Clementi's Gradus ad Parnassum, The Finishing Studies in Style by Moscheles, which were very congenial to him, Bach's English and French Suites, and some Preludes and Fugues from the Well-Tempered Clavichord.

Field's and his own nocturnes also figured to a certain extent as studies, for through them—partly by learning from his explanations, partly by hearing and imitating them as played indefatigably by Chopin himself—the pupil was taught to recognize, love and produce the *legato* and the beautiful connected singing tone. For paired notes and chords he exacted strictly simultaneous striking of the notes, an arpeggio being permitted only where marked by the composer himself; in the trill, which he generally commenced on the auxiliary, he required perfect evenness rather than great rapidity, the closing turn to be played easily and without haste.

For the turn (*gruppetto*) and appoggiatura he recommended the great Italian singers as models; he desired octaves to be played with the wrist-stroke, but without losing in fullness of tone thereby. Only far-advanced pupils were given his Études Op. 10 and Op. 25.

Chopin's attention was always directed to teaching correct phrasing. With reference to wrong phrasing he often repeated the apt remark, that it struck him as if some one were reciting, in a language not understood by the speaker, a speech carefully learned by rote, in the course of which the speaker not only neglected the natural quantity of the syllables, but even stopped in the middle of words. The pseudo-musician, he said, shows in a similar way, by his wrong phrasing, that music is not his mother-tongue, but something foreign and incomprehensible to him, and must, like the aforesaid speaker, quite renounce the idea of making any effect upon his hearers by his delivery.

In marking the fingering, especially that peculiar to himself, Chopin was not sparing. Piano-playing owes him many innovations in this respect, whose practicalness caused their speedy adoption, though at first certain authorities, like Kalkbrenner, were fairly horrified by them. For example, Chopin did not hesitate to use the thumb on the black keys, or to pass it under the little finger (with a decided inward bend of the wrist, to be sure), where it facilitated the execution, rendering the latter quieter and smoother. With one and the same finger he often struck two neighboring keys in succession (and this not simply in a slide from a black key to the next white one), without the slightest noticeable break in the continuity of the tones. He frequently passed the longest fingers over each other without the intervention of the thumb (see Étude No. 2, Op. 10), and not only in passages where (e.g.) it was made necessary by the holding down of a key with the thumb. The fingering for chromatic thirds based on this device (and marked by himself in Étude No. 5, Op. 25), renders it far easier to obtain the smoothest *legato* in the most rapid tempo, and with a perfectly quiet hand, than the fingering followed before. The fingerings in the present edition are, in most cases, those indicated by Chopin himself; where this is not the case, they are at least marked in conformity with his principles, and therefore calculated to facilitate the execution in accordance with his conceptions.

In the shading he insisted on a real and carefully graduated *crescendo* and *decrescendo*. On phrasing, and on style in general, he gave his pupils invaluable and highly suggestive hints and instructions, assuring himself, however, that they were understood by playing not only single passages, but whole pieces, over and over again, and this with a scrupulous care, an enthusiasm, such as none of his auditors in the concert-hall ever had an opportunity to witness. The whole lesson-hour often passed without the pupil's having played more than a few measures, while Chopin, at a Pleyel upright piano (the pupil always played on a fine concert grand, and was obliged to promise to practise on only the best instruments), continually interrupting and correcting, proffered for his admiration and imitation the warm, living ideal of perfect beauty. It may be asserted, without exaggeration, that only the pupil knew Chopin the Pianist in his entire unrivalled greatness.

Chopin most urgently recommended ensemble-playing, the cultivation of the best chamber-music—but only in association with the finest musicians. In case no such opportunity offered, the best substitute would be found in four-hand playing.

With equal insistence he advised his pupils to take up thorough theoretical studies as early as practicable. Whatever their condition in life, the master's great heart always beat warmly for the pupils. A sympathetic, fatherly friend, he inspired them to unwearying endeavor, took unaffected delight in their progress, and at all times had an encouraging word for the wavering and dispirited.

CARL MIKULI.

THREE SONATAS

WHAT is a Sonata? Hector Berlioz once said impertinent things about this old classic form. It is an easy question to answer in terms of the theorist; but if Scarlatti wrote Sonatas, what, then, is the Appassionata? If the A flat of Weber is one, can the F minor Brahms be called a Sonata? Is the Haydn form orthodox and the Schumann heterodox? These be enigmas to make weary the formalists. There is a great amount of scholastic cant and hypocrisy in the matter. Any conservatory student can learn the receipt for turning out a smug specimen of the form; yet when we study the great examples it is just the subtle eluding of hard and fast rules that distinguishes the efforts of the masters from the machine-made work of apprentices and academic monsters. Because it is no servile copy of the Mozart Sonata, the F minor of Brahms is a piece of original art. At first Beethoven trod the well-blazed path of Haydn, but consider his second period and it sounds the big Beethovian note. There is no final court of appeal in matters of musical form; the history of the Sonata is the history of musical evolution. Every great composer has added to the form, filing here, chipping there at the edifice and introducing lawlessness where reigned prim order—witness the F sharp minor Sonata of Schumann. Then came Chopin, whose essays in the form caused almost as much critical warfare as did the Wagner music-drama. This is all the more perplexing as Chopin never wrote but one piano Sonata that boasts a classical complexion; in C minor, opus 4, it was composed as early as 1828. Published posthumously (not till May, 1851), it demonstrates without the possibility of a doubt that the composer had no particular sympathy for the form *per se*. He tried so hard at his self-imposed task that it is a relief when the second and third Sonatas are reached, for in them there are only traces of formal beauty and organic unity. But, then, there is much Chopin, while little of his precious essence is to be savored in his first Sonata.

Chopin wrote of his C minor Sonata: "As a pupil I dedicated it to Elsner" (his master). And the irony of criticism is that it was praised by the critics of the day because it was not as "revolutionary" as the Variations, opus 2. This, too, despite the fact that the *Larghetto* is in five-four time. The opening movement is all but lifeless. One asks in astonishment why Chopin is rowing in this classic galley. And it is technically difficult. The *Menuetto* is excellent, its trio a faint approach to Beethoven. The unaccustomed rhythm of the slow movement is rather irritating. The youthful Chopin does not move about as freely as does Benjamin Godard in the scherzo of his violin and piano Sonata in the same bizarre rhythm. Niecks sees naught but barren waste in the *Finale*. I disagree with him. There is the breath of a stirring spirit, an imitative attempt that is at least more diverting than the other movements. Above all, there is some motion, and the close if banal is vigorous. This Sonata is probably the dullest music penned by Chopin, but as a whole it hangs better together as a pure Sonata than its two successors. So much for an attempt at strict devotion to a scholastic form, that with its barriers only checked the flow of Chopin's inspiration.

We are transported from this schoolroom atmosphere to the theatre of a larger and more passionate life in opus 35. The B flat minor Sonata was published in May, 1840. Between the composition of the two Sonatas was the gulf of an agitated existence. The first two movements are masterpieces, the Funeral March that forms the third is one of his most popular compositions, while the *Finale* has no parallel in piano music. Schumann said that in this Sonata Chopin "bound together four of his maddest children," and he is not astray in his judgment. He thinks that the March does not belong to the work. It was certainly written before its companion movements. As much as Hadow admires the first two movements he groans over the last pair, admirable as they are when separately considered. In reality, these four movements have no common life. Chopin declares that he intended the strange *Finale* as a commentary on the March. "The left hand *unisono* with the right hand are gossiping after the March." Perhaps by straining comparisons the last two movements do hold together; but what have they in common with the first two? Tonality proves nothing. Notwithstanding the grandeur and beauty of the *Grave*, the power and passion of the Scherzo, this Sonata in B flat minor is no more a Sonata than it is a sequence of Ballades and Scherzi. But we could ill spare the work. It is Chopin mounted for action and in the thick of the fight. The introduction always recalls to me the opening bars of Beethoven's Sonata in C minor, opus 111, though Chopin's brief prelude is less massive. The *doppio movimento* is pulse-stirring—a strong, curt and characteristic movement for treatment. Here is power; and in the swelling prologue there flashes more than a

hint of the tragic. The D flat melody is soothing, charged with magnetism, and is urged to a splendid fever of climax. The working-out section is too short and dissonantal, but there is development, perhaps more technical than logical—I mean by this more pianistic than intellectual—we mount with the composer until the B flat major version of the second subject is achieved; oddly enough the first theme does not return. From that on to the firm chords of the close there is no misstep, no faltering or obscurity. Noble pages have been sounded and the Scherzo is eagerly approached. Again there is no disappointment. This Scherzo in E flat minor is probably the most powerful of all the Chopin Scherzi. It certainly has few equals for brevity, lucidity, and polish in the Chopin literature. There is less irony, more muscularity and native sweetness in it than in the C sharp minor Scherzo. (See the volume devoted to the Four Scherzi.) The composition has something elemental about it; true storm music with the whistling of the wind in the chromatic succession of chords of the sixth. It has a pregnant beginning; the second bar is a true Rossinian *crescendo*, which, as I remember, Anton Rubinstein delivered like a savage explosion. The first part ends at the apex of passion. The swaying rhythm of the G flat trio, with its melodic phrase-echoing, is fascinating. The second part and the return to the Scherzo proper are proof of the composer's sense of balance and feeling for dramatic suspense and anticipation. The closest parallelisms are present and the formal technique so admirable that the work seems to float in mid-air.

Follows the Funeral March, which Ernest Newman, in his "Study of Wagner," compares with the Marches of Beethoven and Wagner. He finds Wagner possesses the more concrete imagination; the "inward picture" of Beethoven "much vaguer and more diffused." Nevertheless, Chopin has seldom been so realistic as here; the bell-like basses, and the morbid funeral coloring. Schumann thought that "it contained much that is repulsive," and Liszt rhapsodizes over it. For Karasowski it was "the pain and grief of an entire nation"; while Ehlert thinks "it owes its renown to the wonderful effects of two triads, which in their combination possess a highly tragical element. The middle movement is not at all characteristic. Why could it not have worn second mourning? After so much black *crêpe* drapery one should at least once display white *lingerie*." The trio in D flat is a logical relief after the booming and glooming of the opening. That it is "a rapturous gaze into the beatific regions of a beyond," as Niecks writes, I am not prepared to say. We do know, however, that the March when isolated exerts a much profounder effect than when played in its normal sequence. The *Presto* is too wonderful for words. Rubinstein called it, "Night winds sweeping over churchyard graves." Its agitated, whirring, unharmonized triplets are strangely disquieting, and could never be mistaken for étude passage-work—except when rippling off the fingers of the unimaginative pianist. The movement is too sombre, its curves too charged with half-repressed meanings, its rush and moaning too enigmatic. Schumann compares it to a "sphinx with a mocking smile." Mendelssohn abhorred it and said so. For Henri Barbadette, "C'est Lazare grattant avec ses ongles la pierre de son tombeau"—which sounds as if M. Barbadette had been reading too much Poe or Hoffmann. (Poe was still alive, though not translated into French, in 1840. He died the same month and year as Chopin.) This movement has Asiatic coloring, thanks to its unisons. It means something different to every one. The Sonata is not dedicated.

The third Sonata, in B minor, opus 58, has more organic unity, withal not so powerful, so pathos-breeding, nor so compact of thematic interest as its predecessor. The first page, as far as the chromatic chords of the sixth, promises much. There is clear statement, a sound theme for development, the crisp march of chord progressions, and then—the edifice goes up in iridescent smoke. After wreathings and curlings of passage-work, we witness the exquisite budding of the melody in D. It is an *aubade*. There is moving freshness in its hue and scent, and as it bursts, a parterre of roses. The close of the section is inimitable. All the more regret at what follows: wild disorder and tropical luxuriance. When the B major is compassed it augurs for us a return of delight. The ending is not that of a Sonata, but a love-lyric. For Chopin's is not the marmoreal majesty of blank verse. He sonnets to perfection, but the epical air ill suits his intimate art. Vivacious, charming, light as a harebell in the soft breeze, is the Scherzo in E flat major that follows. It is largely arabesque, and in its ornamentation ingenious. It has the clear ring of a Scherzo and harks back to Weber in its amiable hurry. It might go on forever. The resolution is not intellectual, but one of tonality. The thought is tenuous; it is a light, highly embroidered relief after the first movement. The trio in B major is not noteworthy—a salon Scherzo which challenges Mendelssohn on his native heath. It should be considered as an *intermezzo*, or as a prelude to the *Largo* that follows. This is tranquilly beautiful, rich in reverie, lovely as to tune. The trio is reserved, almost hypnotic. The last movement, with its force and brilliancy, is become a parade-piece for *virtuosi*, but it is rather lacking in significance.

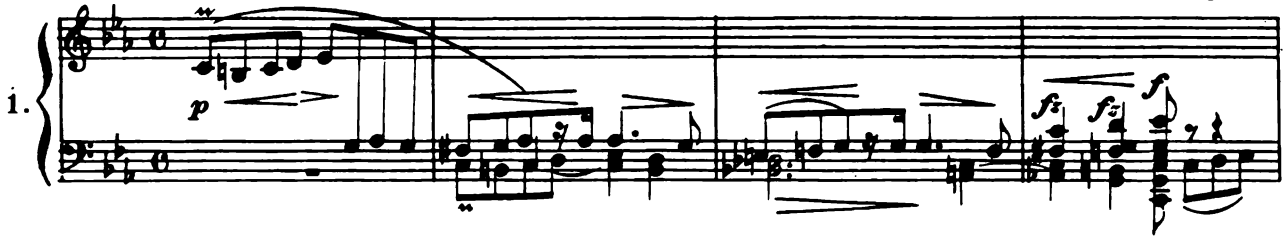
James Huneker

Thematic Index.

SONATA.

(Posthumous.)

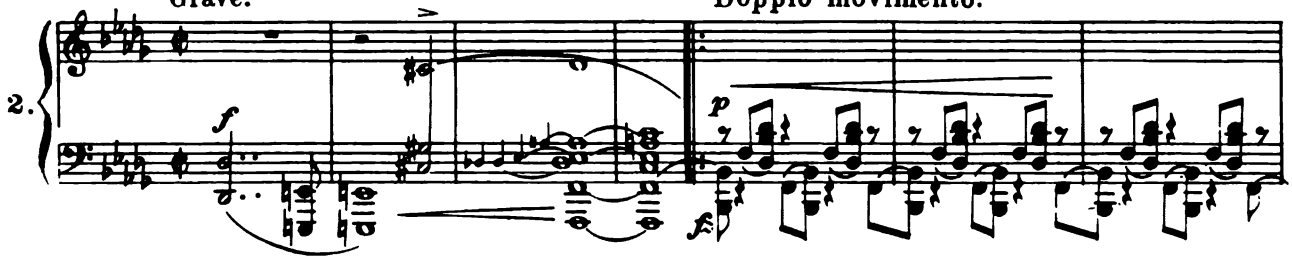
Allegro maestoso. Op. 4.



1. C Minor. Page 3.

SONATA.

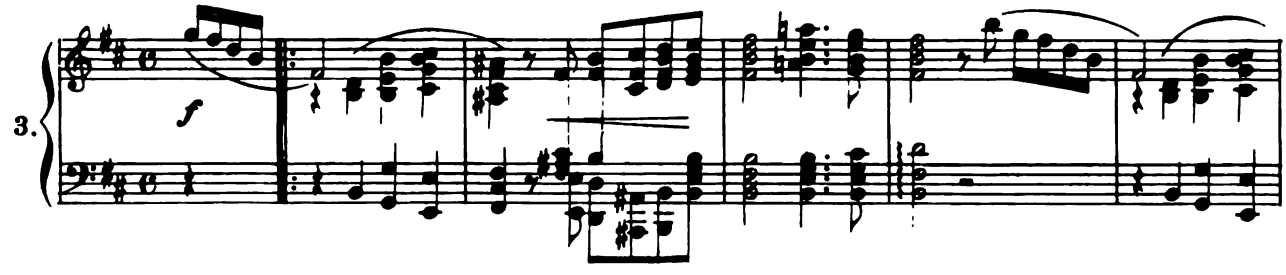
Grave. Doppio movimento. Op. 35.



2. B♭ Minor. Page 35.

SONATA.

Allegro moderato. Op. 58.



3. B Minor. Page 58.

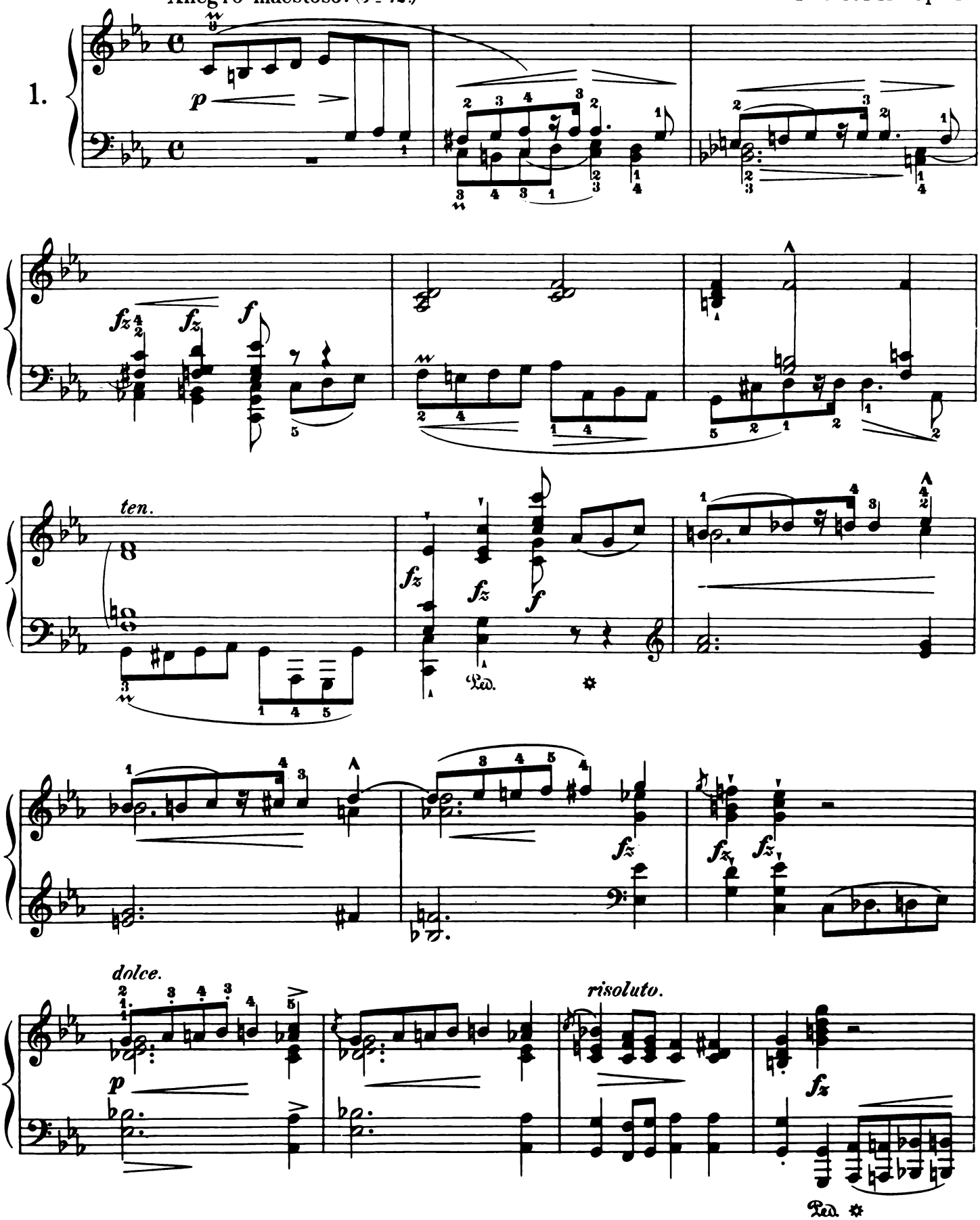
Sonate.

(Posthumous.)

JOS. XAVER ELSNER.

Allegro maestoso. (♩ = 72.)

F. CHOPIN. Op. 4.



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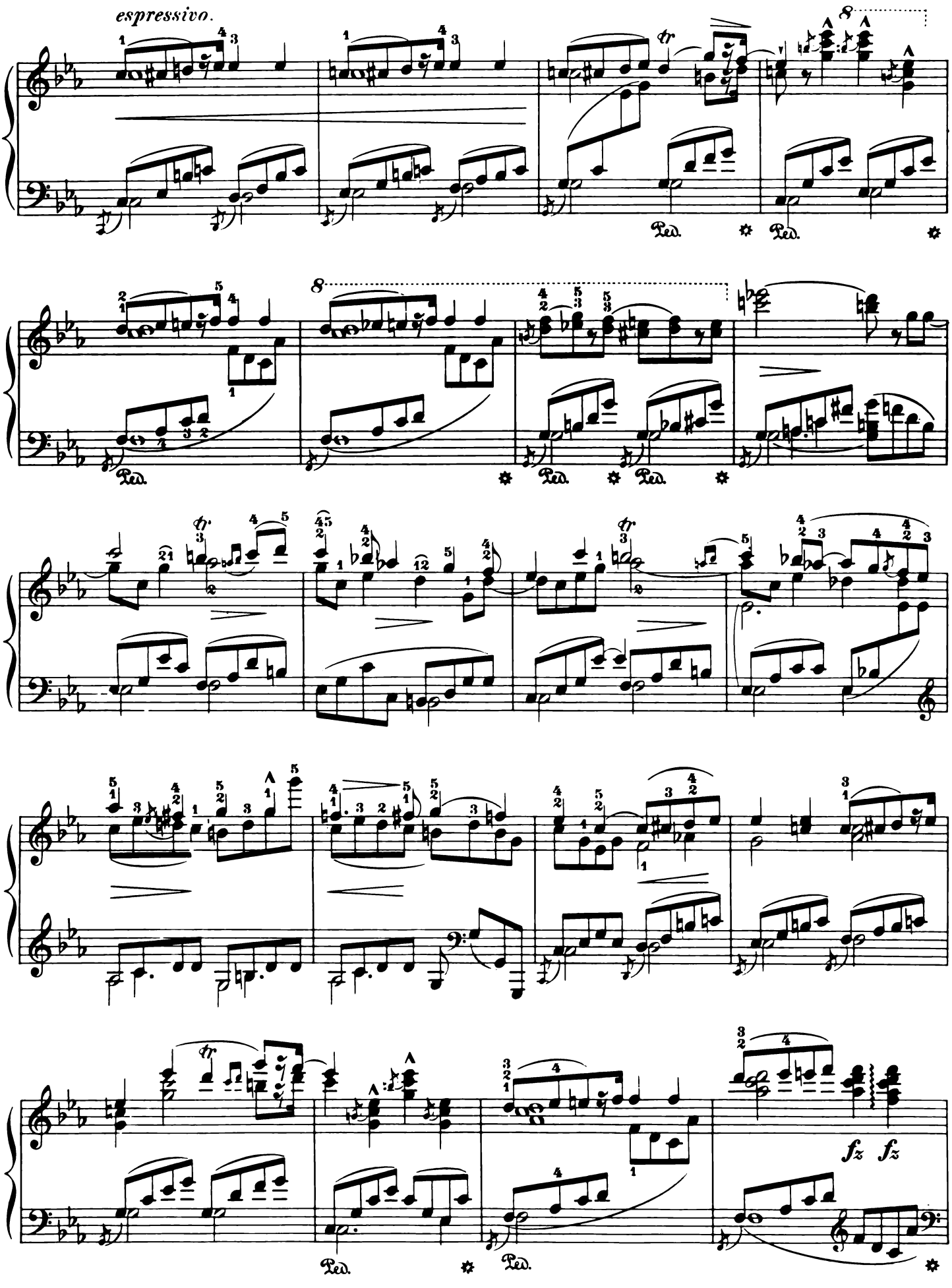
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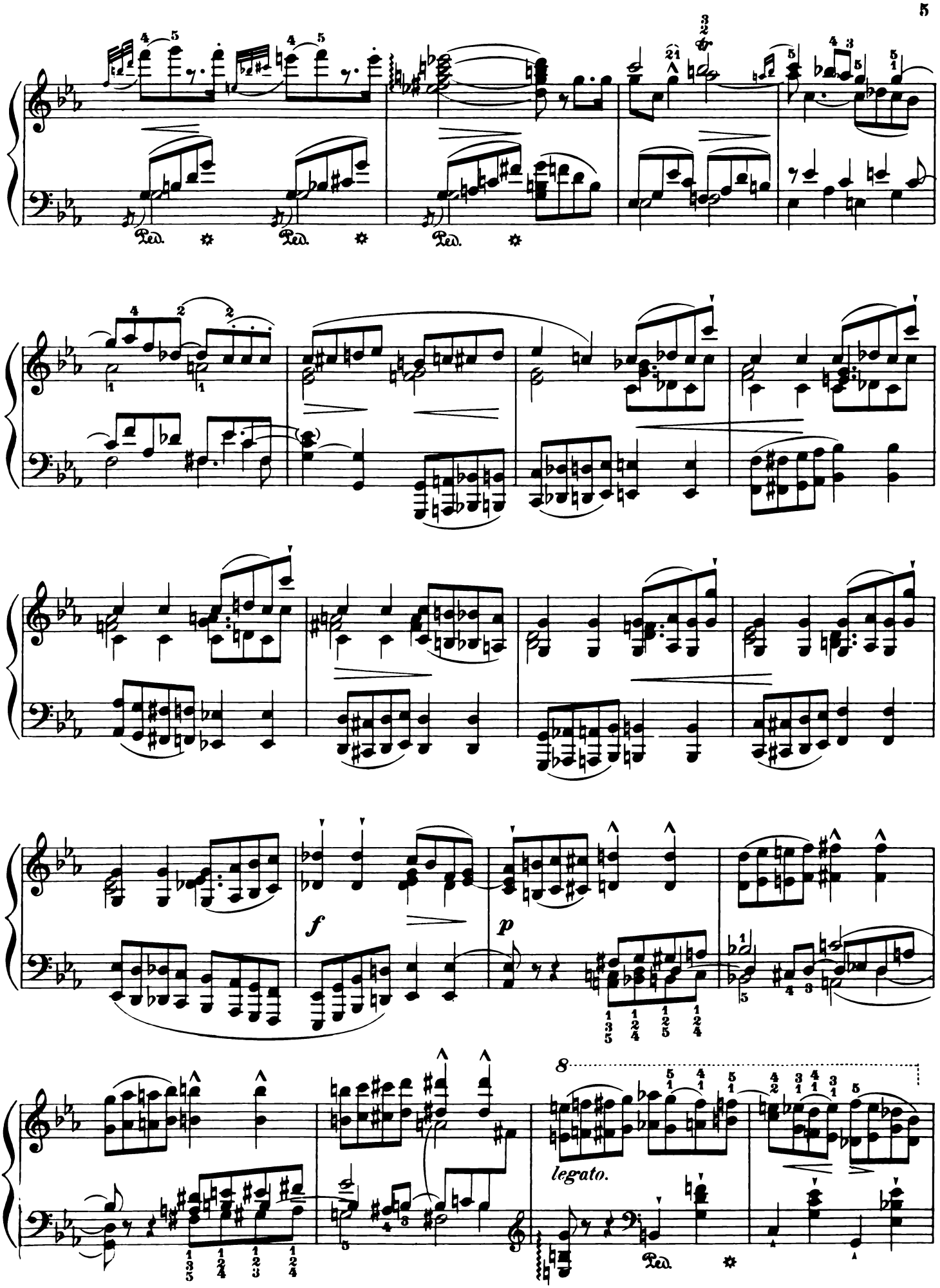
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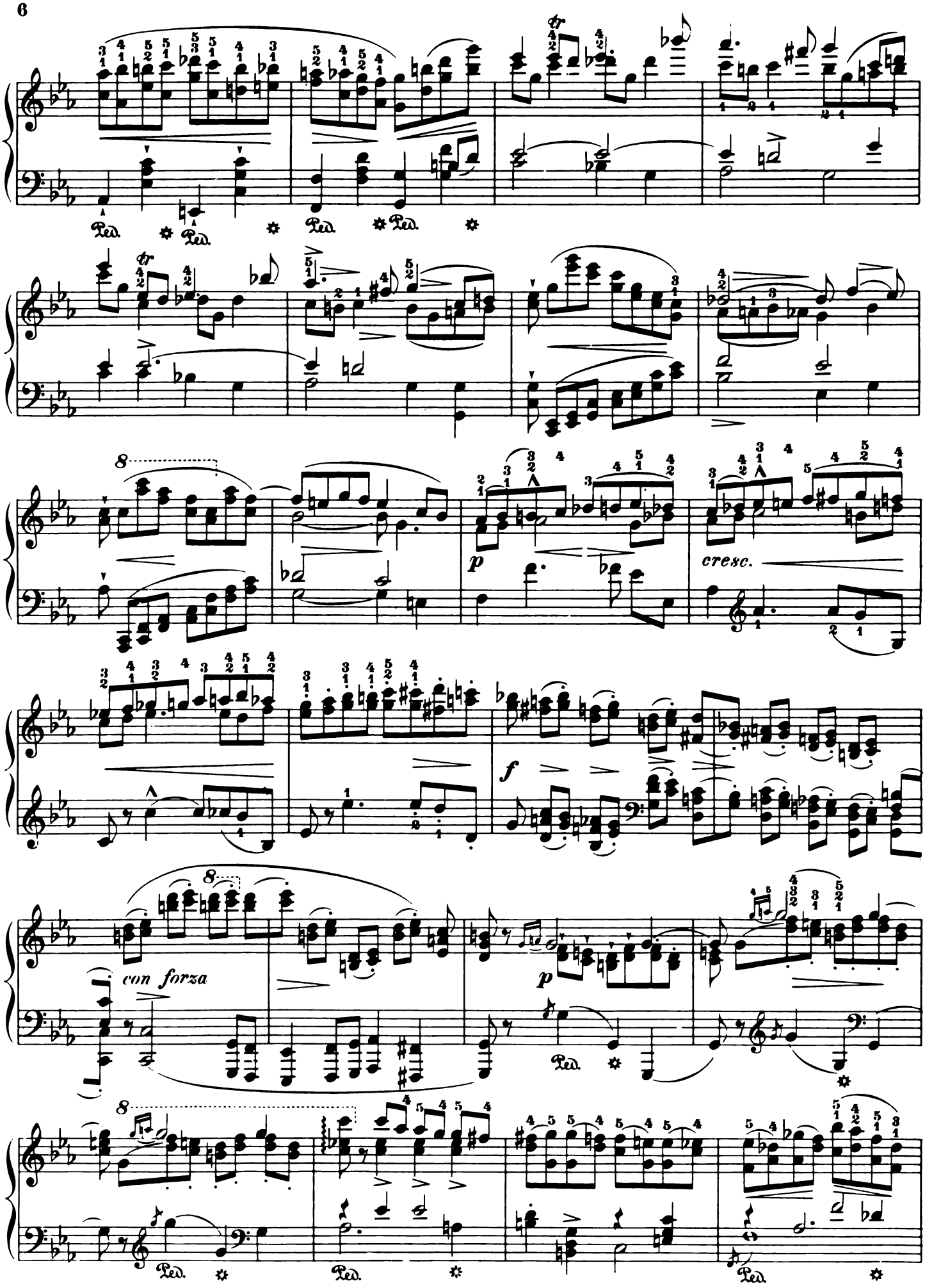
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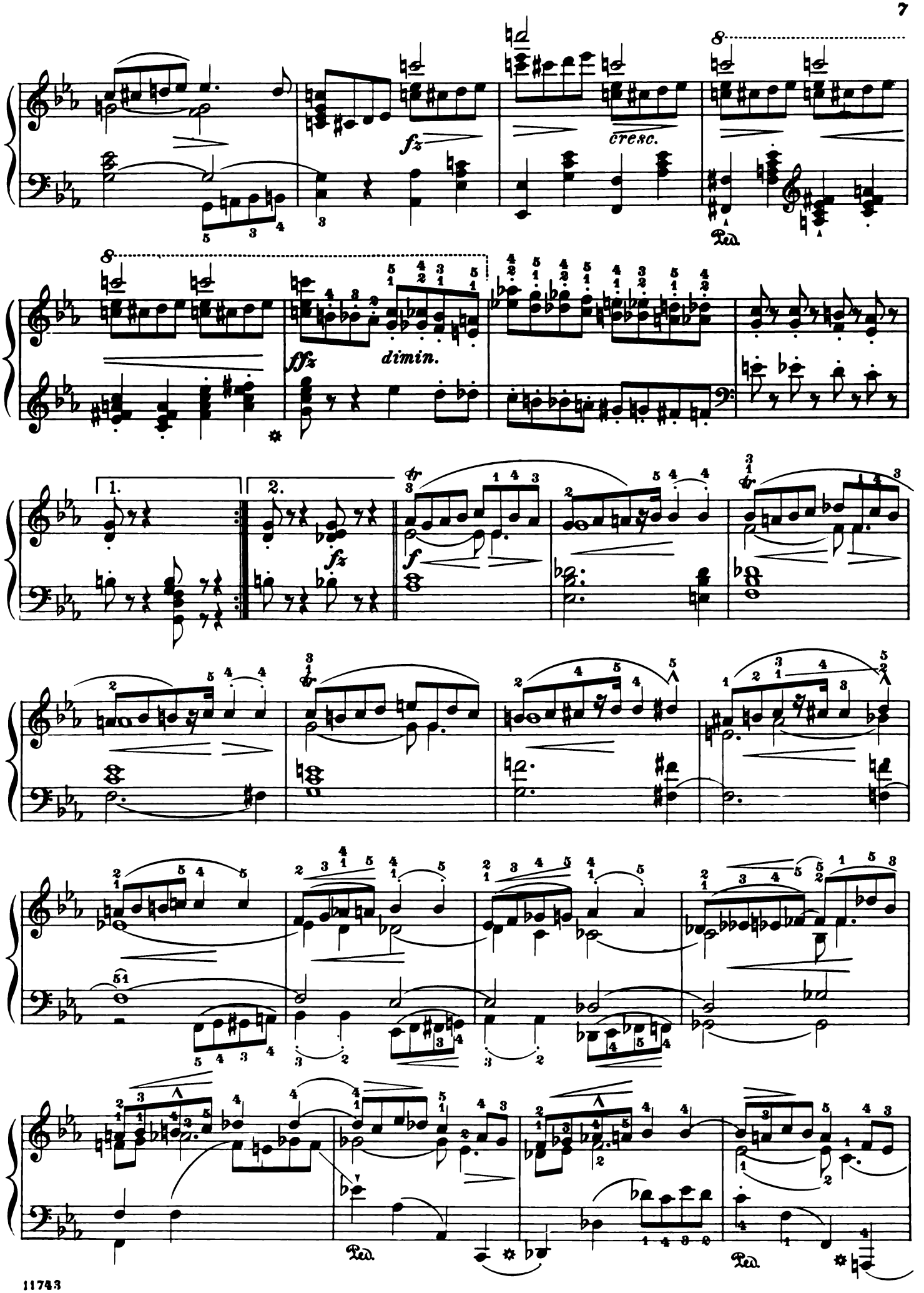
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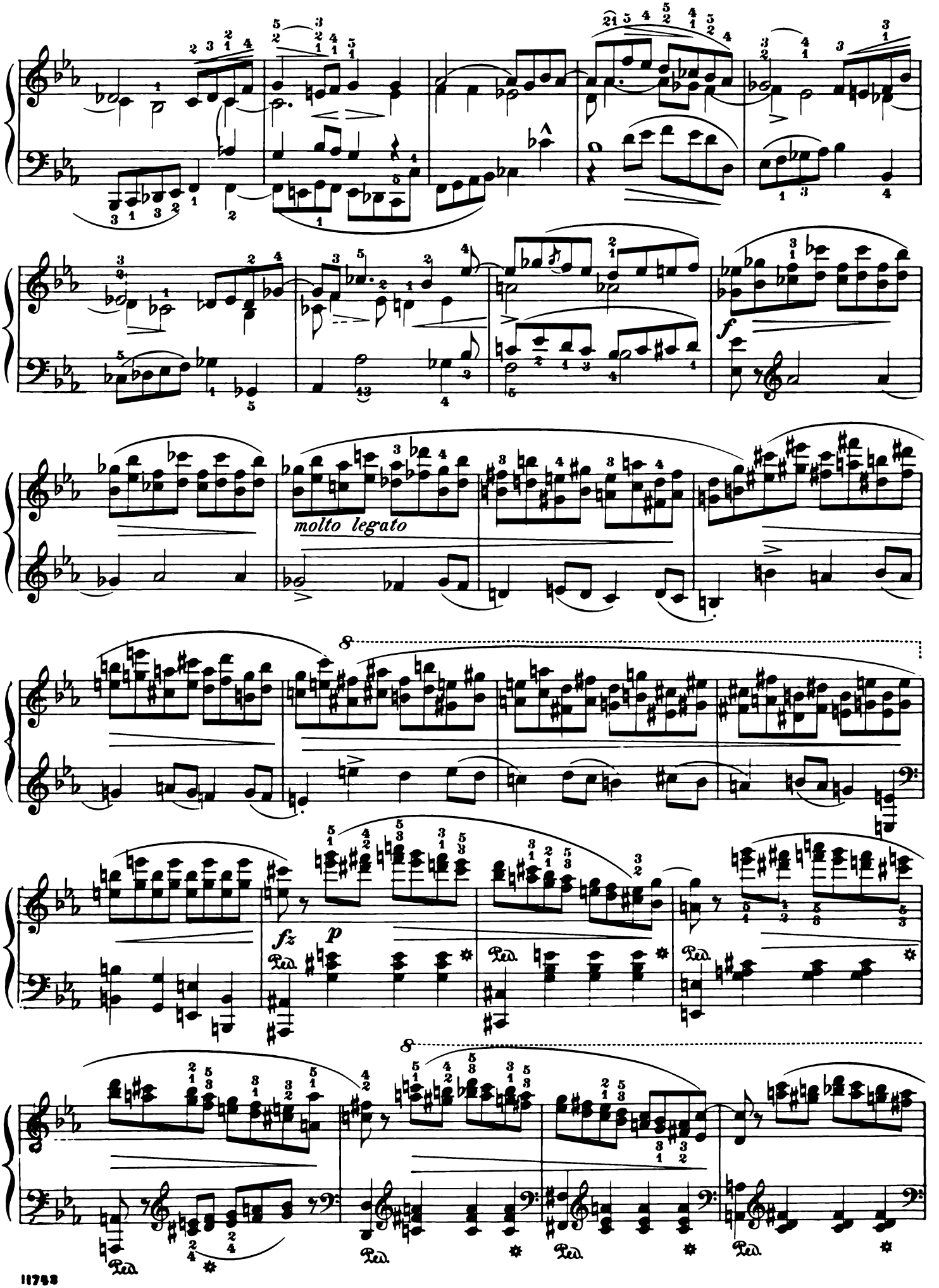
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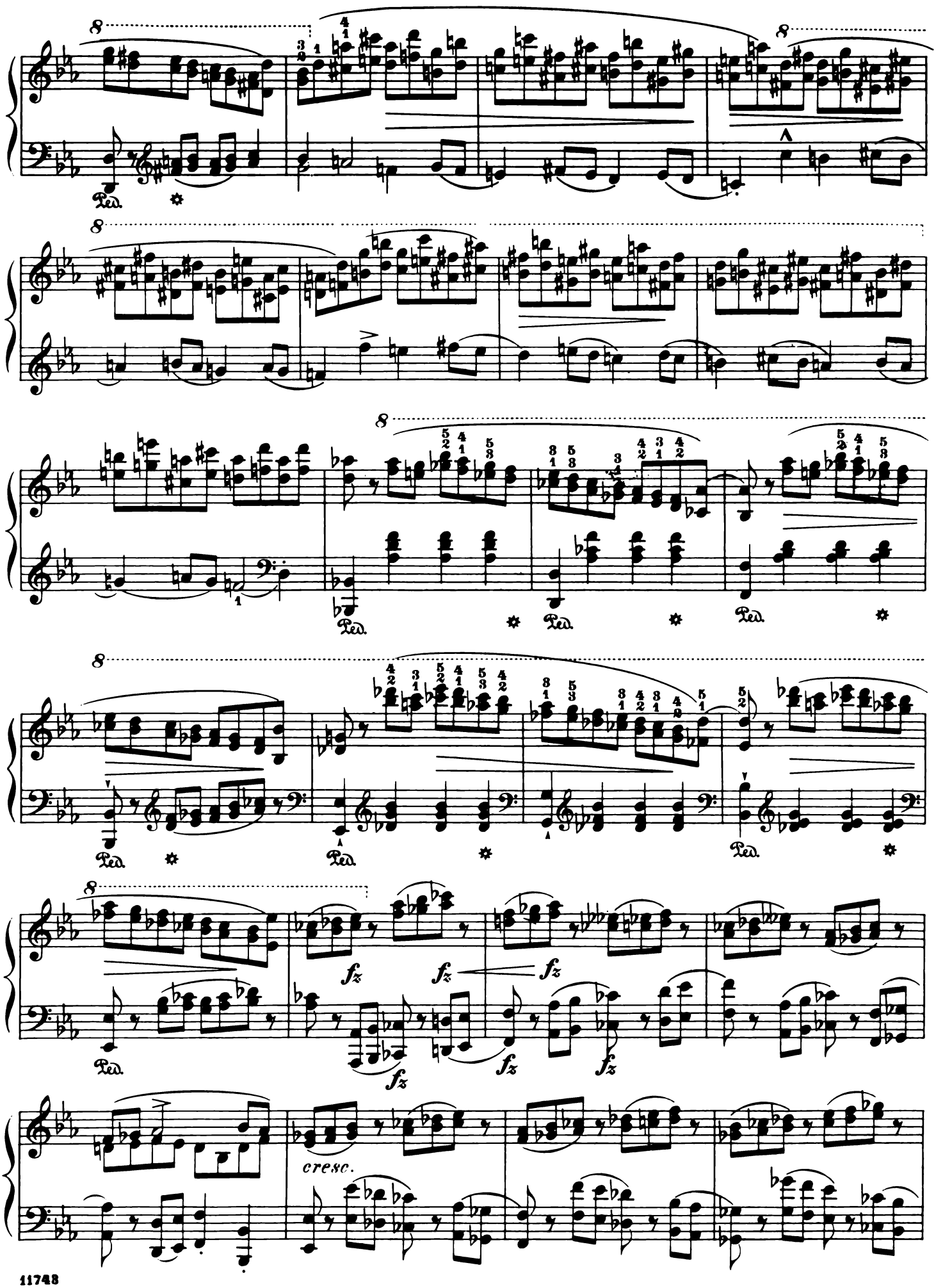
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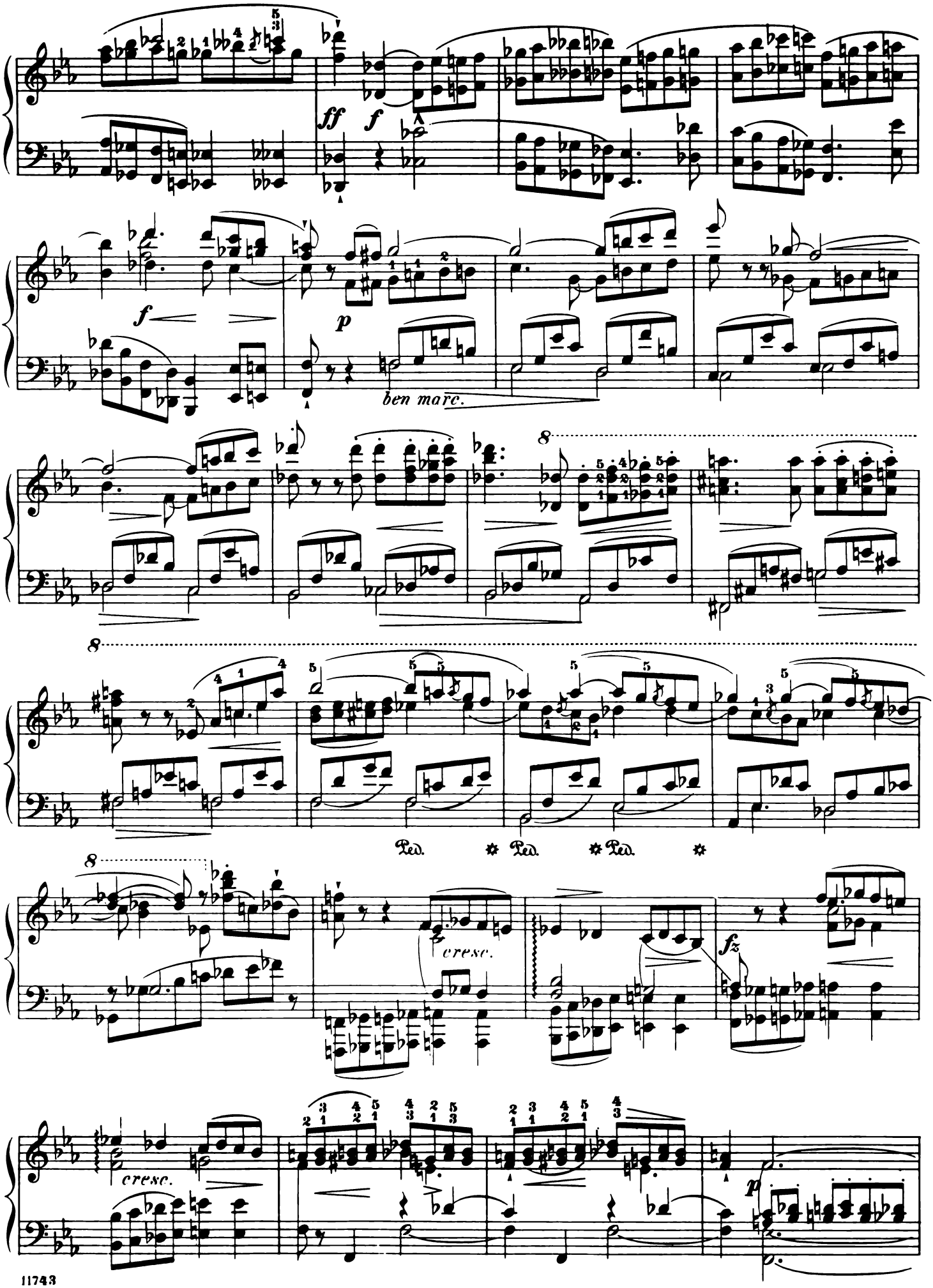
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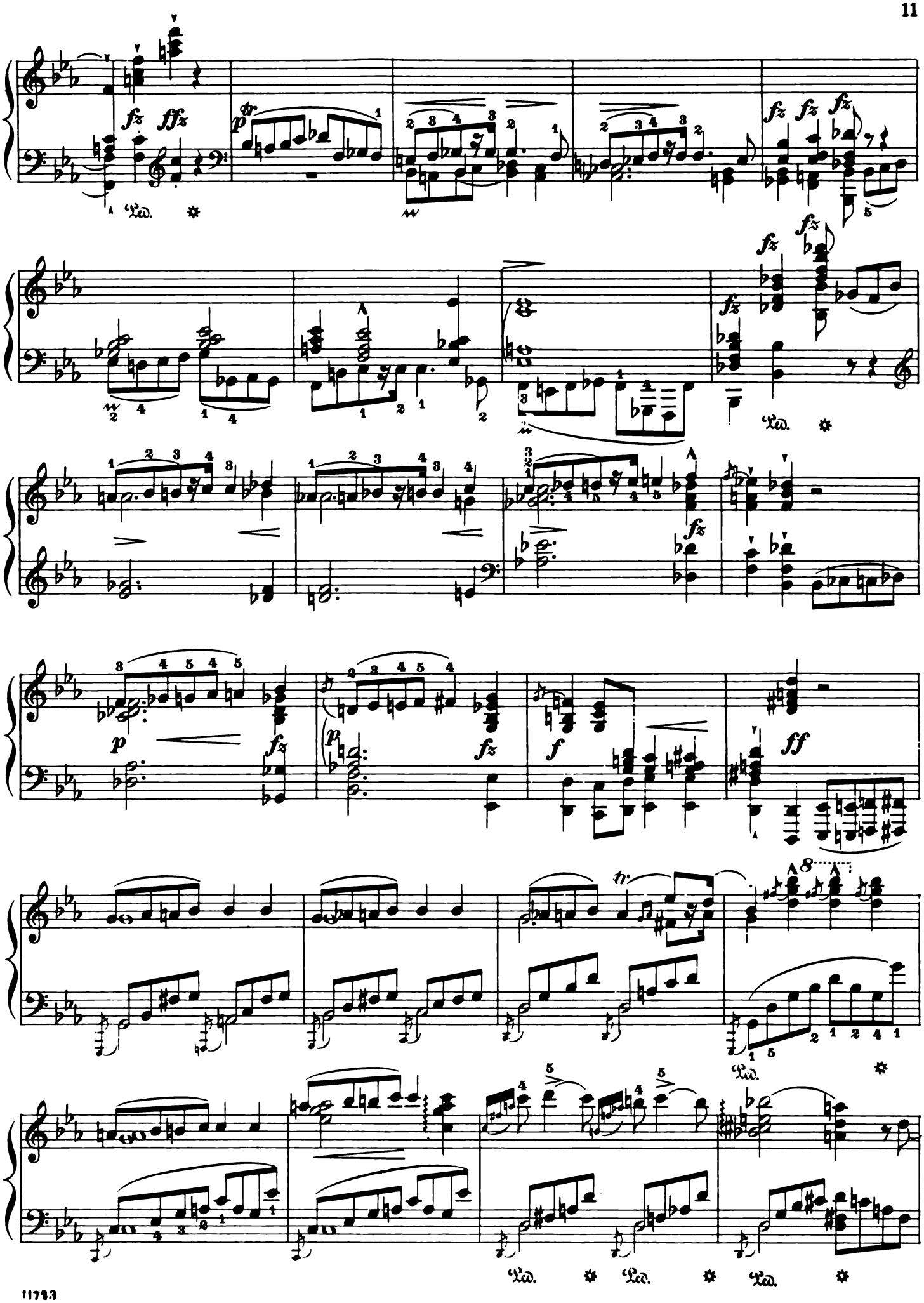

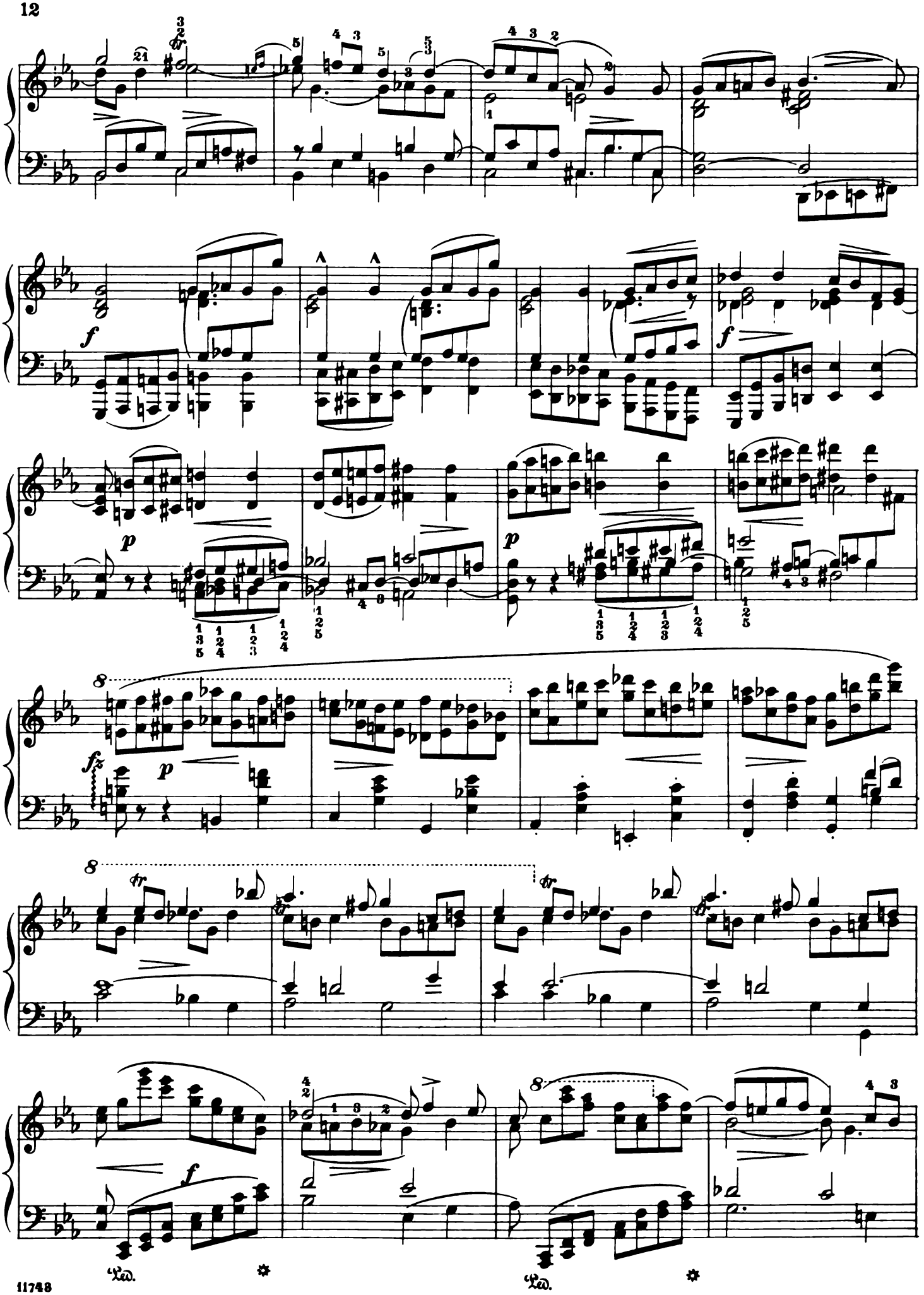
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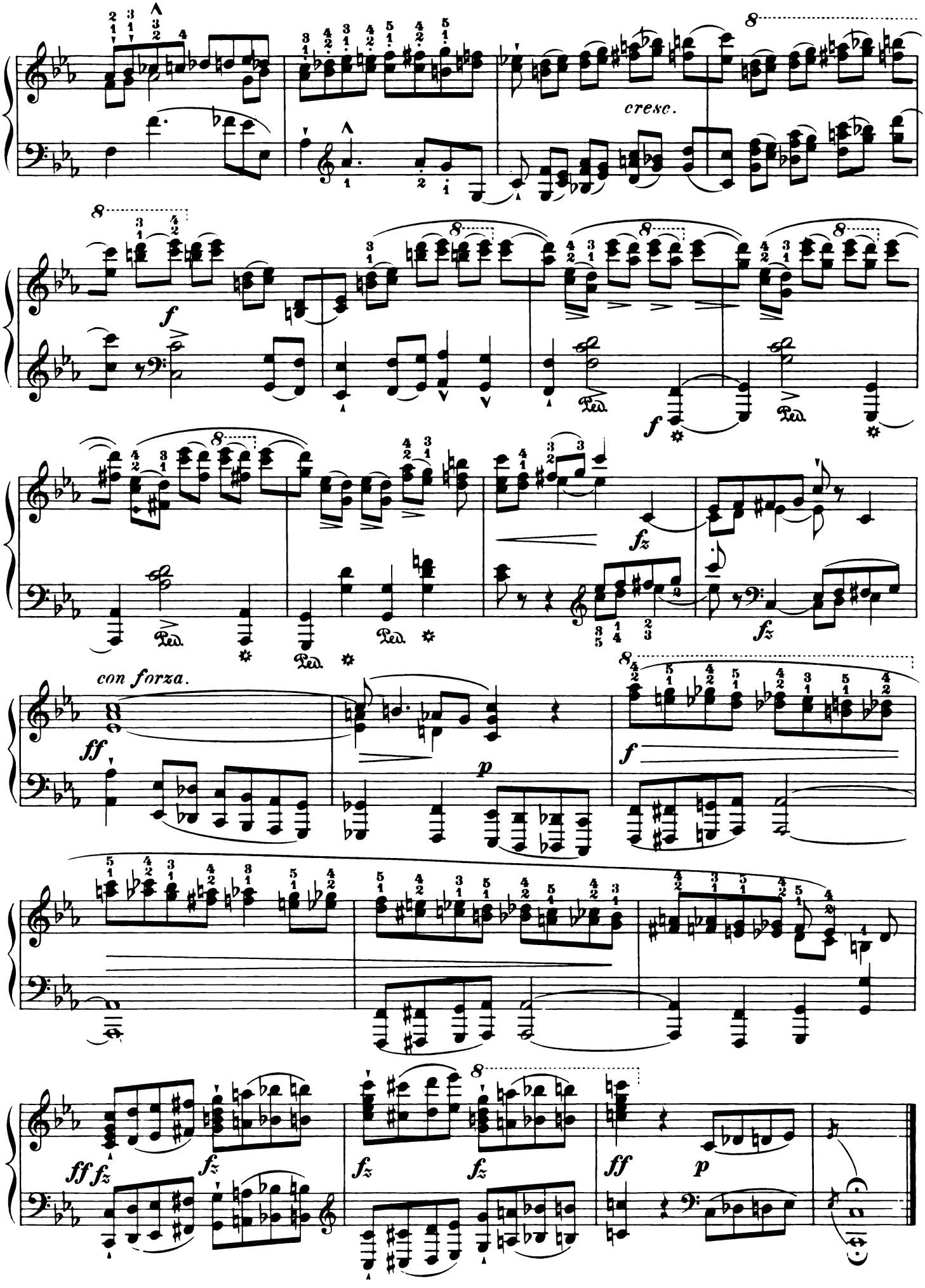
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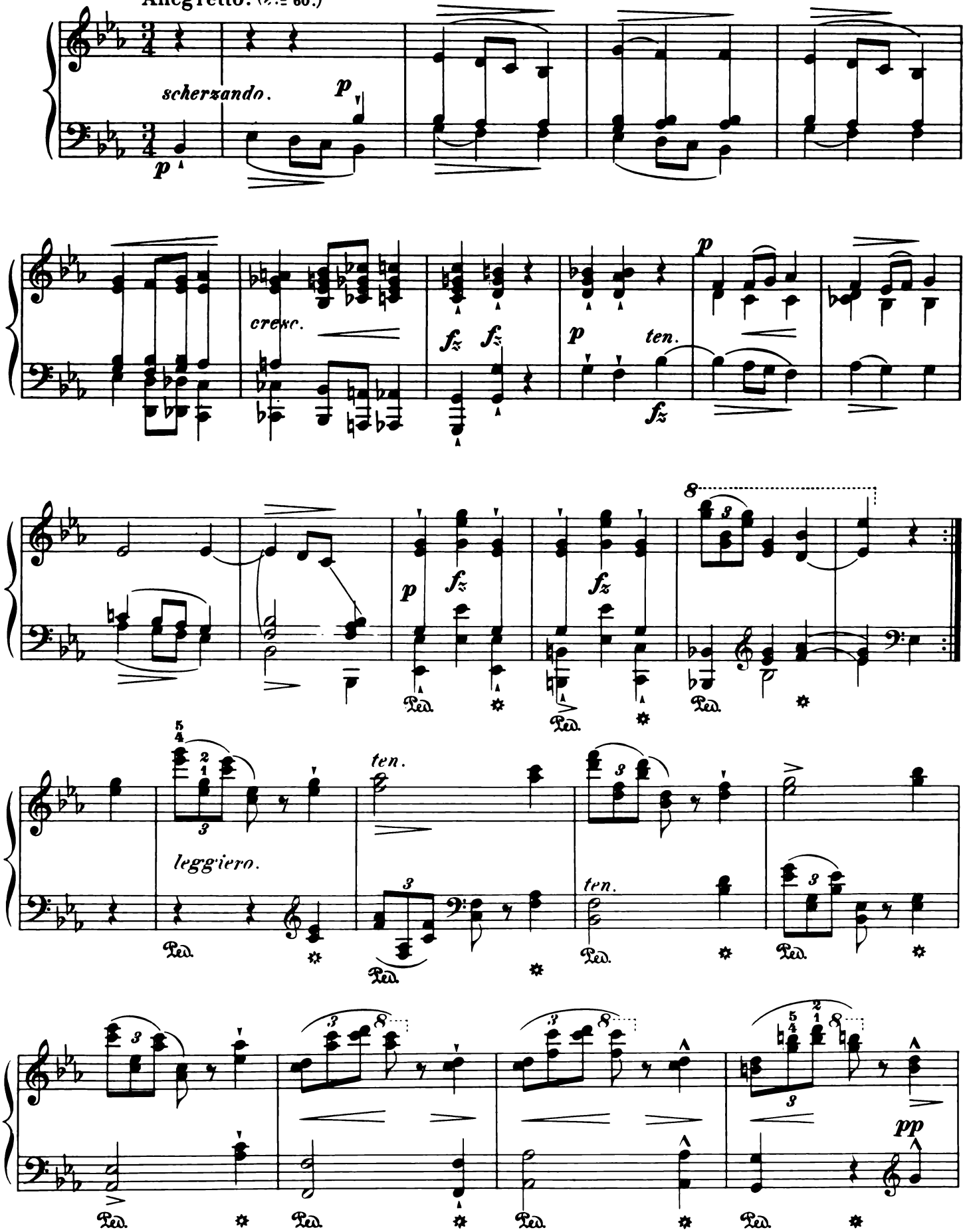

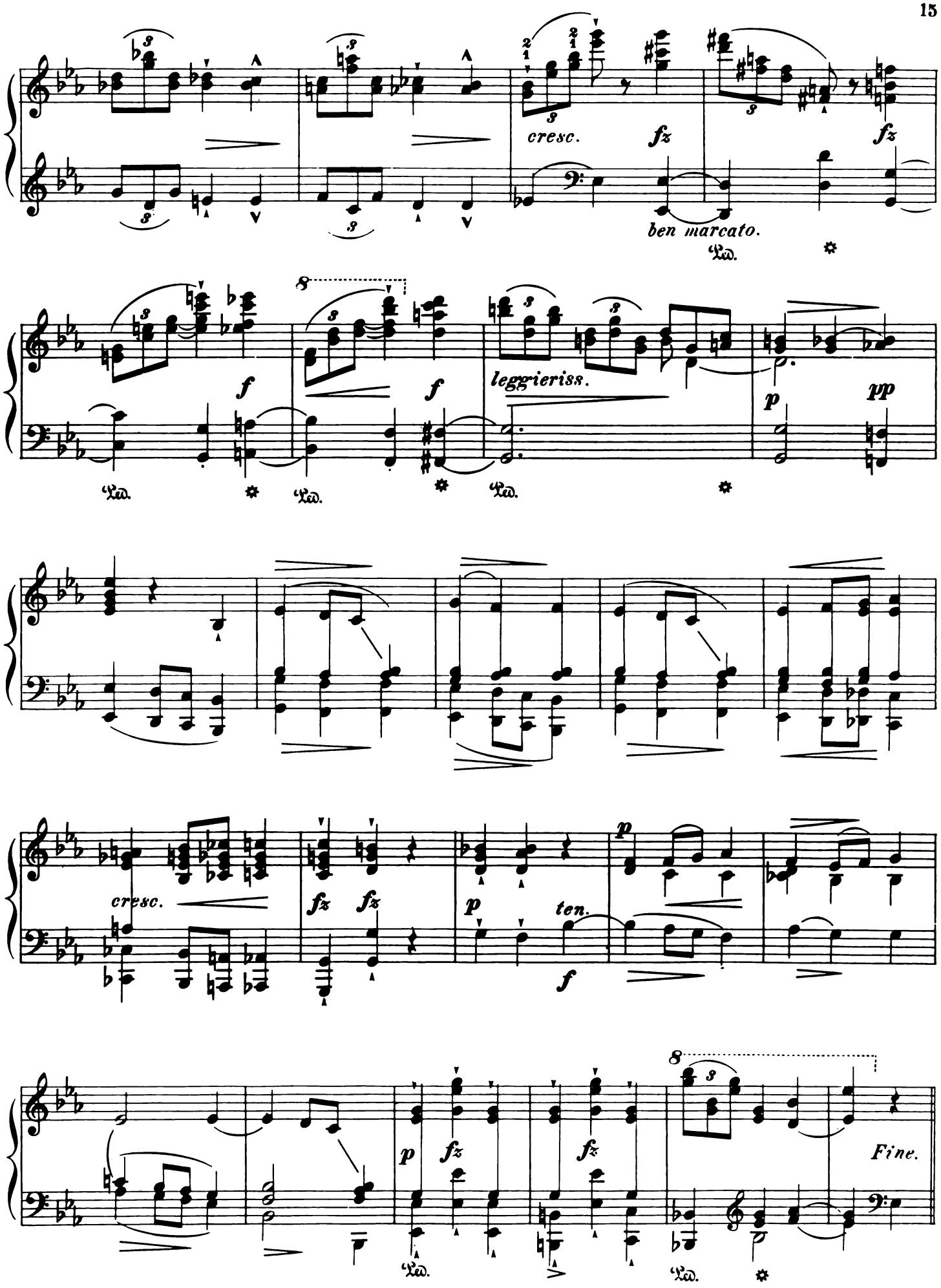
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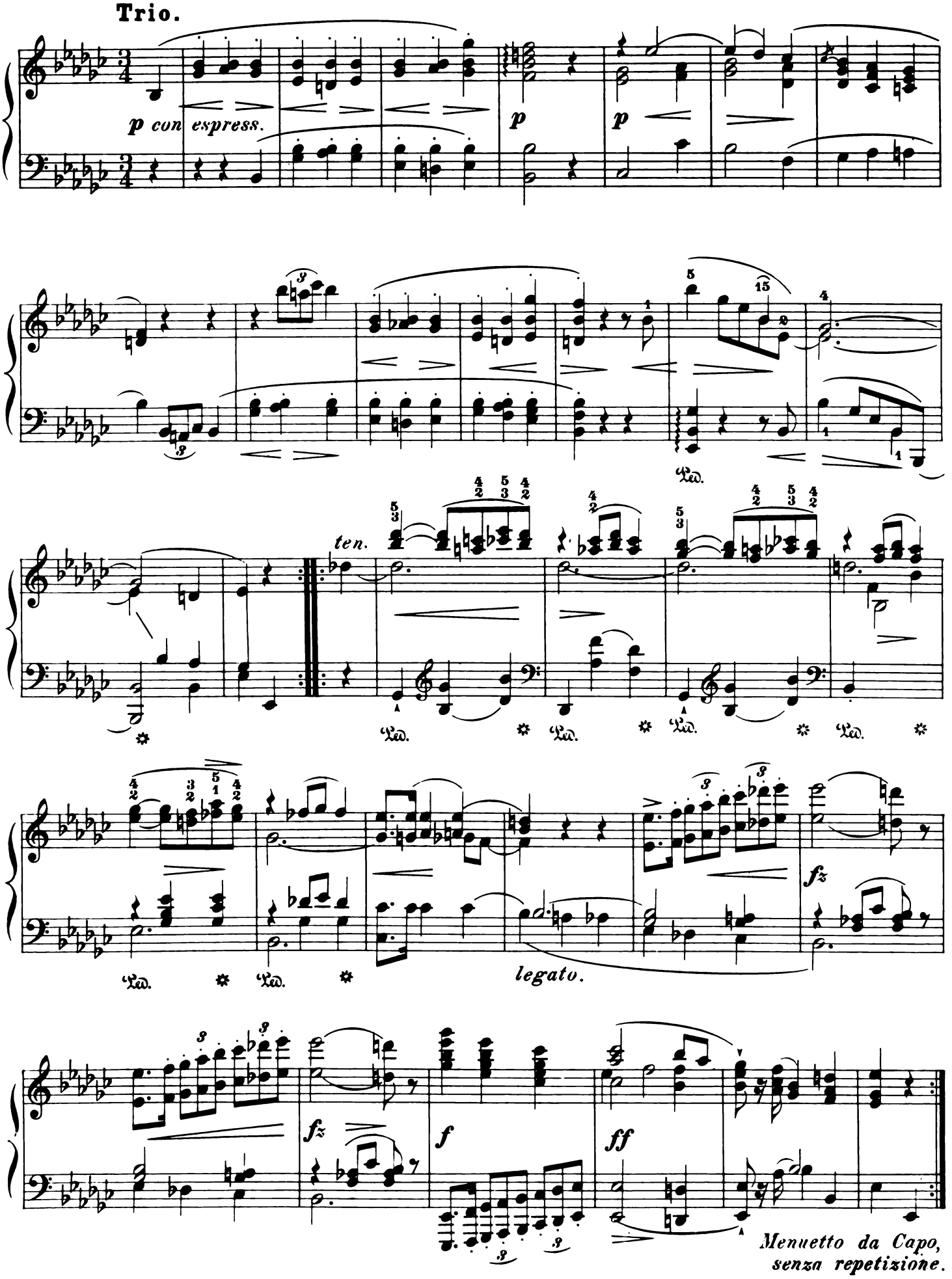
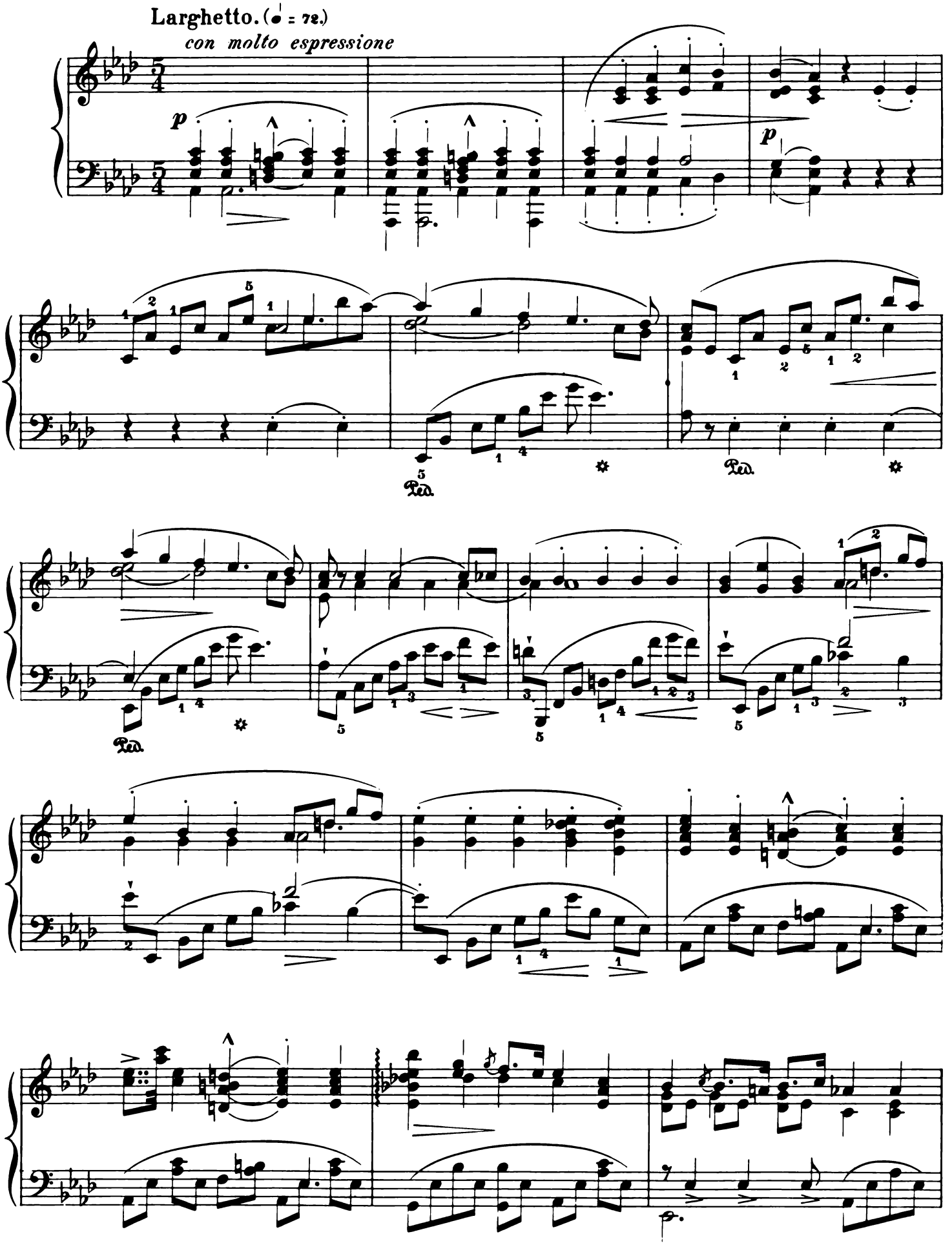
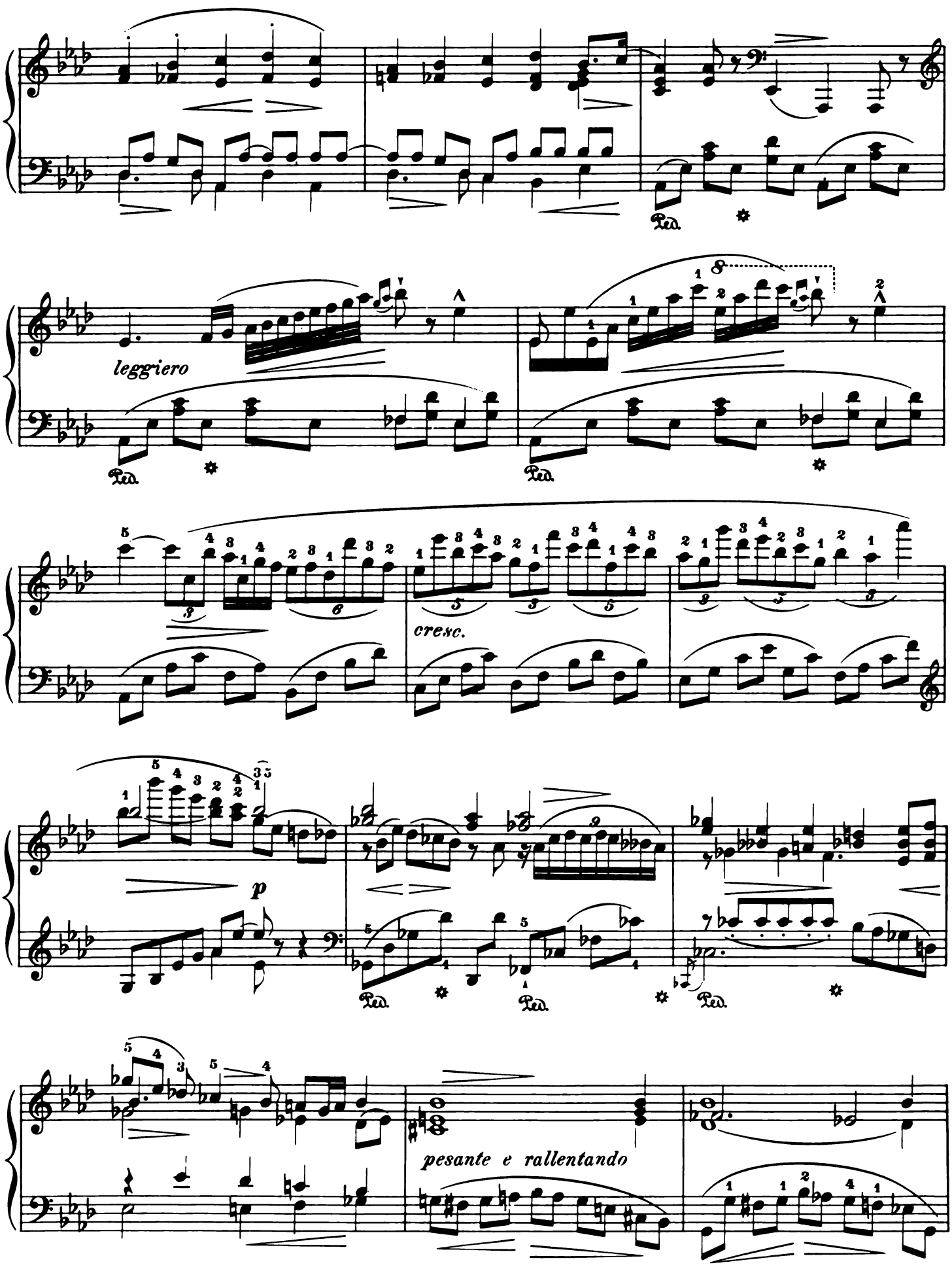
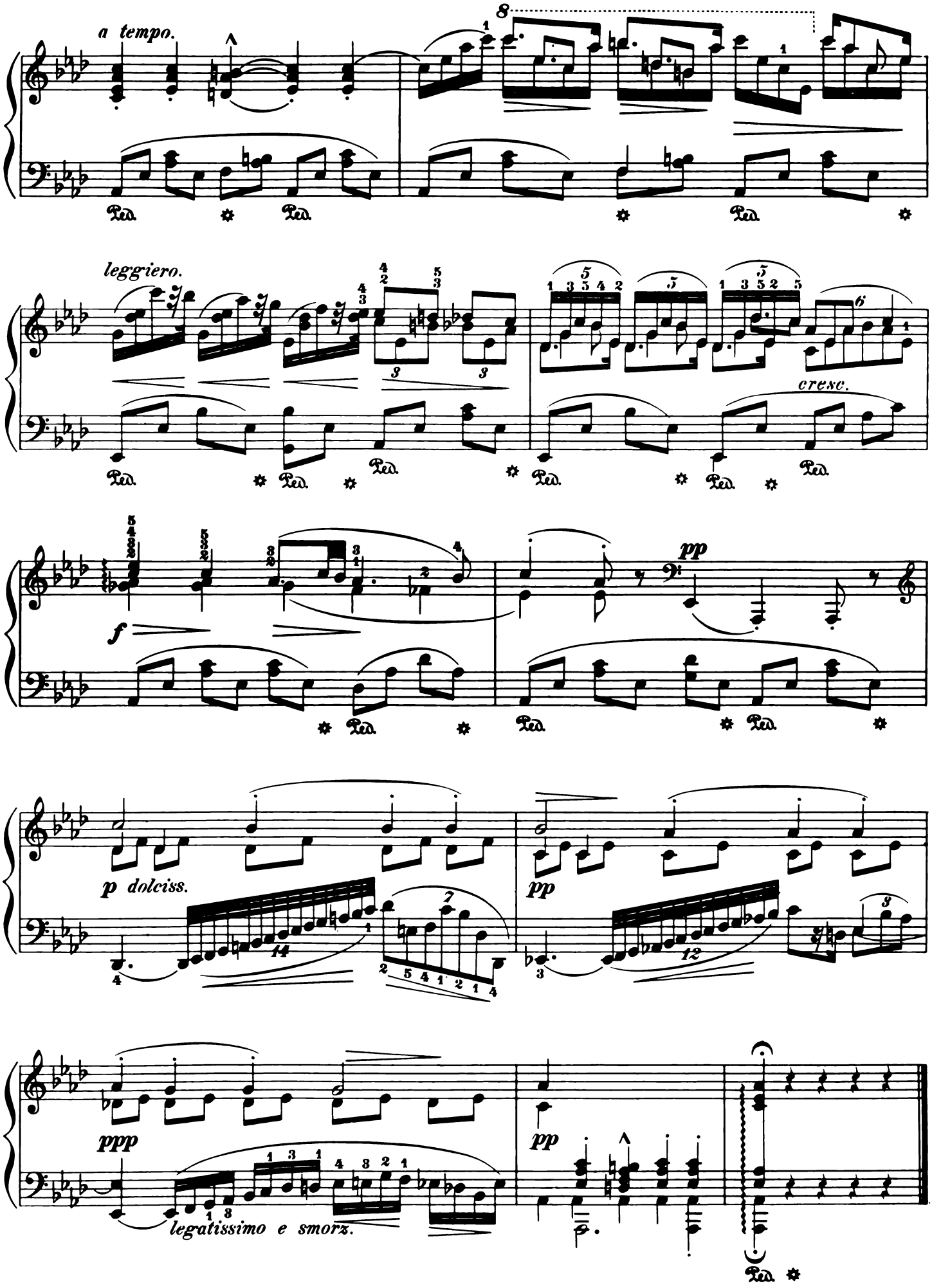
p
pp
cresc.
fz fz
p
ten.
f
p
p
fz
fz
Fine.

Trio.


p con espress.
p
p
ten.
legato.
fz
fz
f
ff
Menuetto da Capo,
senza repetizione.

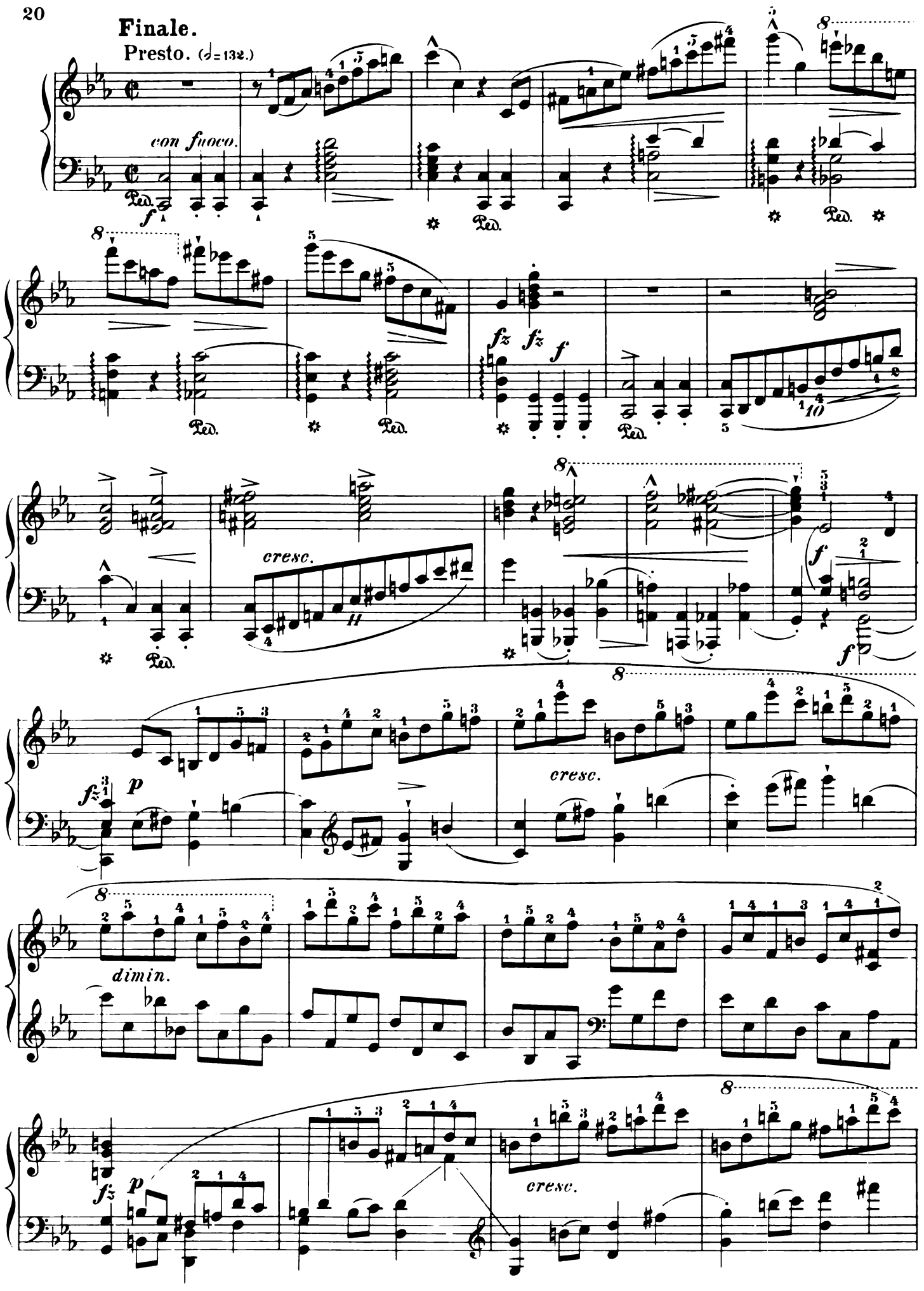

Larghetto. (♩ = 72.)
con molto espressione
p
p
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

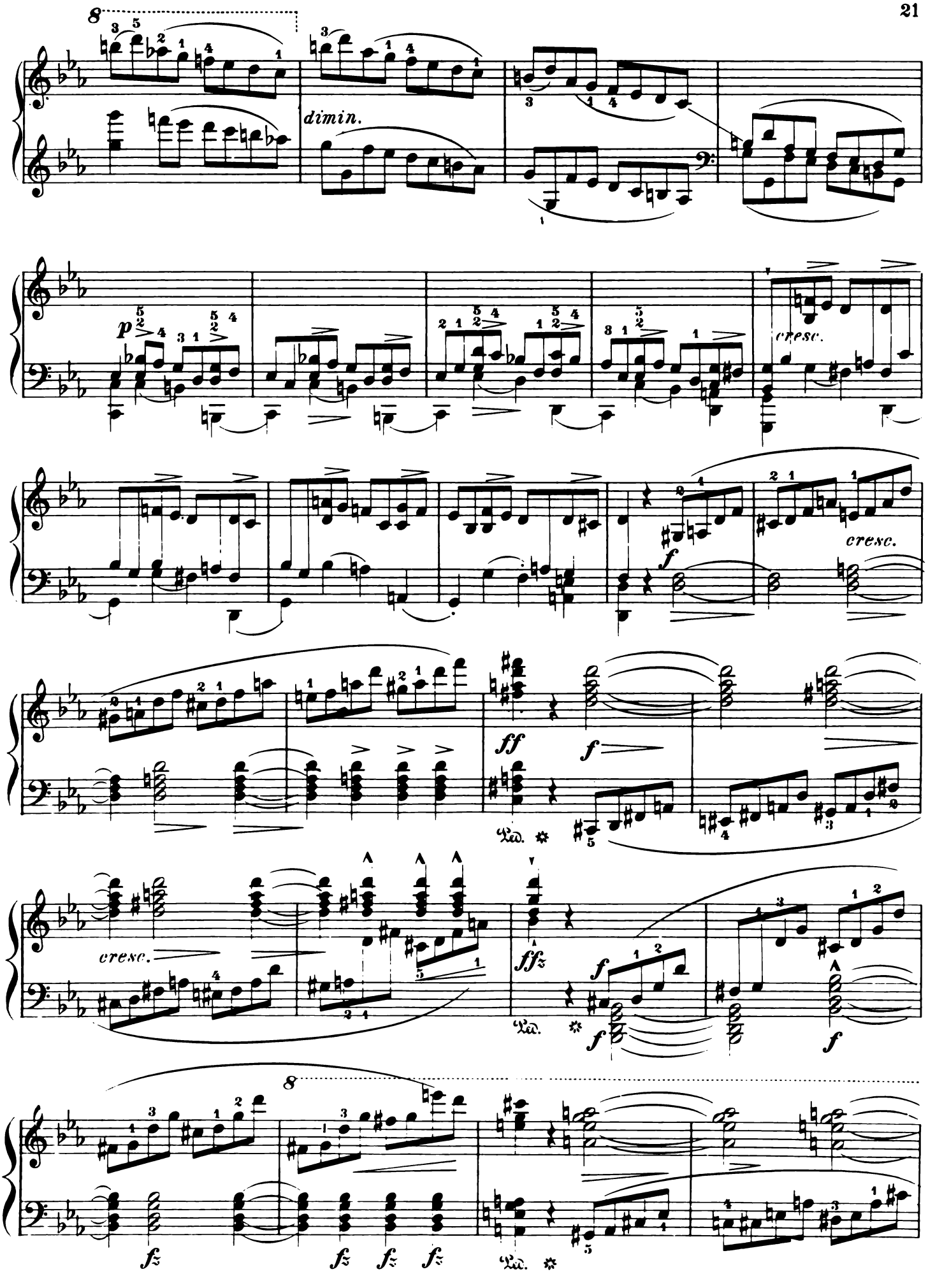

leggiero
cresc.
p
pesante e rallentando

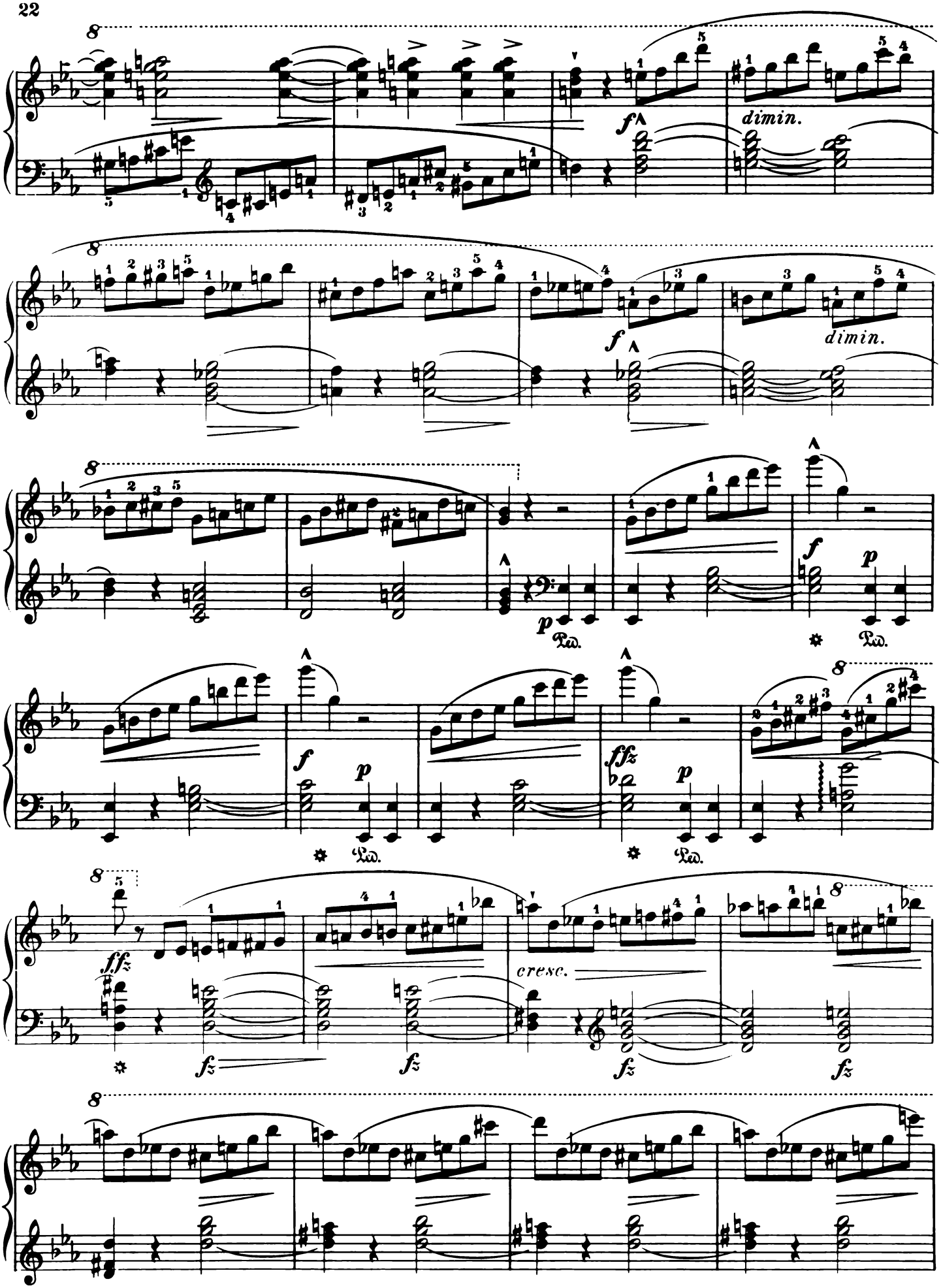

a tempo.
8
leggiero.
cresc.
f
pp
p dolciss.
pp
ppp
legatissimo e smorz.
pp

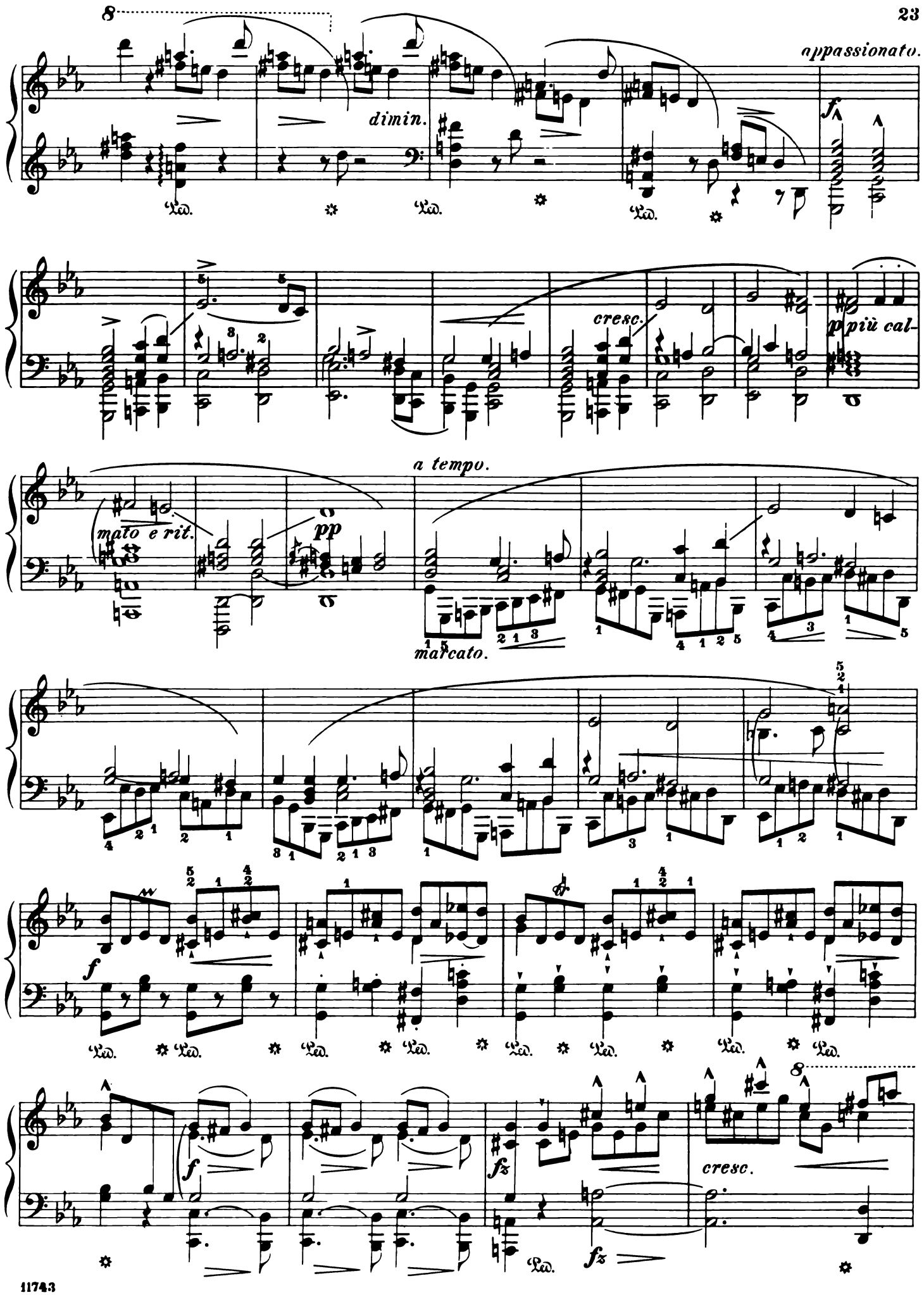
Finale.

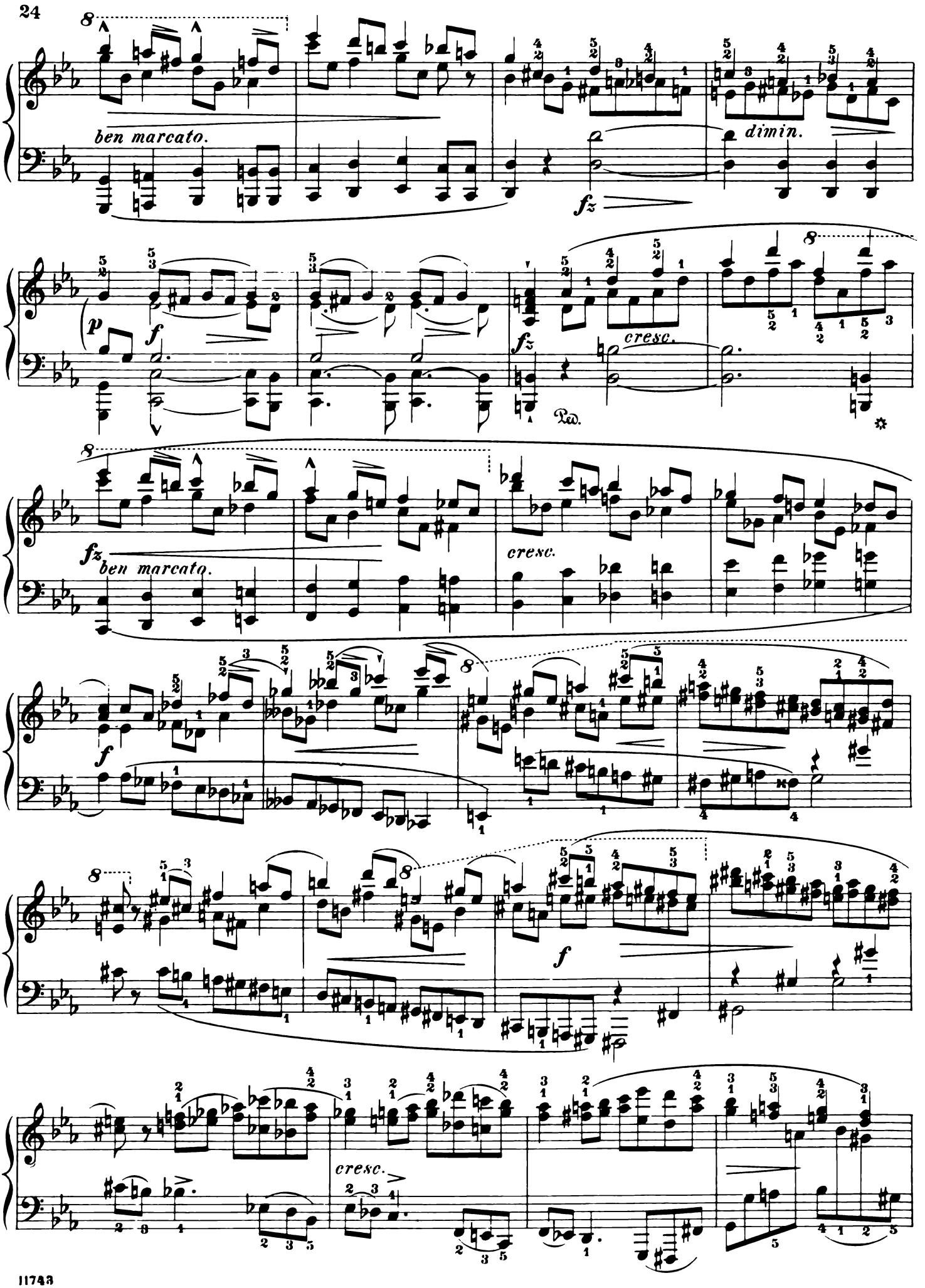
Presto. (𝅗𝅥 = 132.)

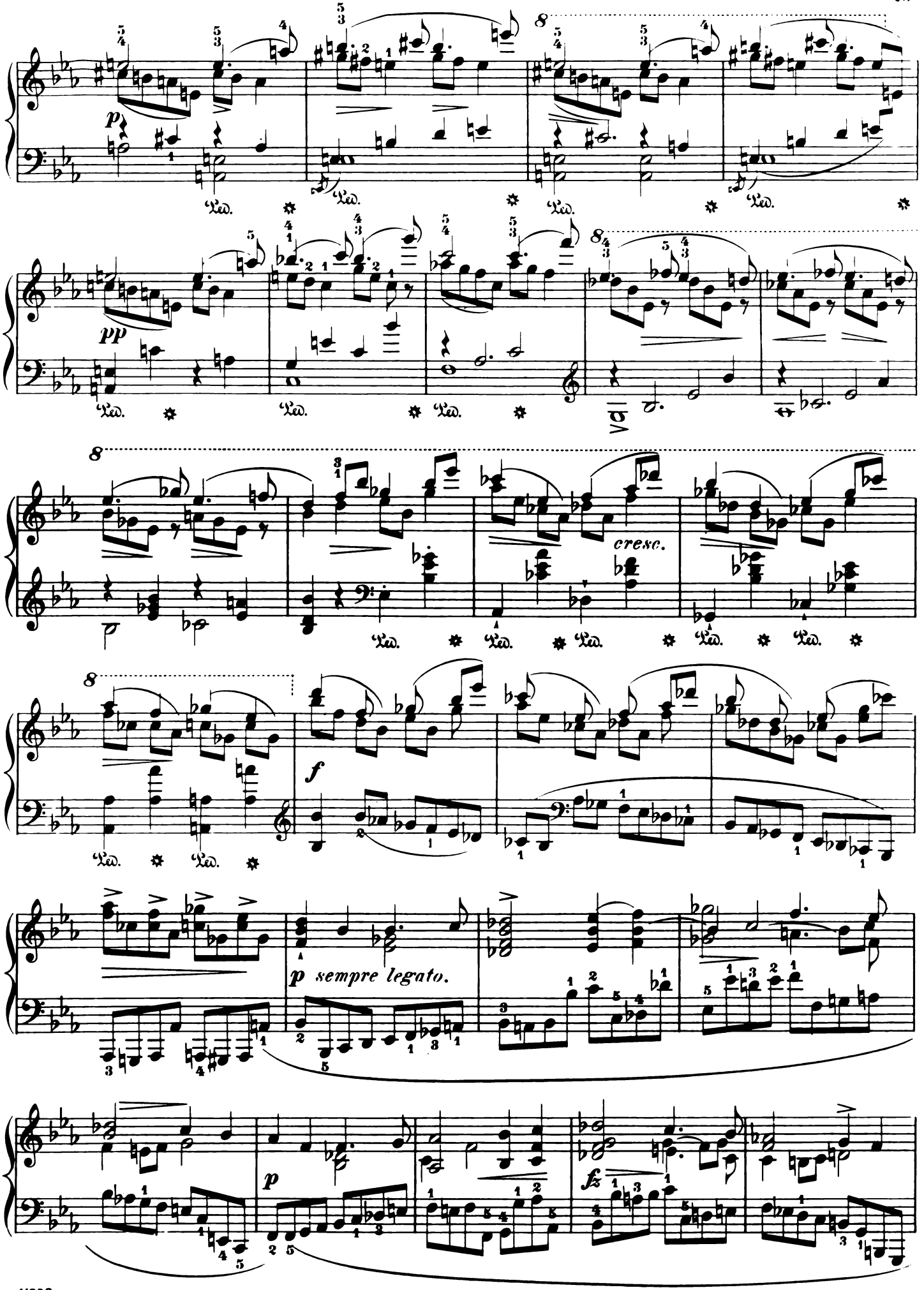


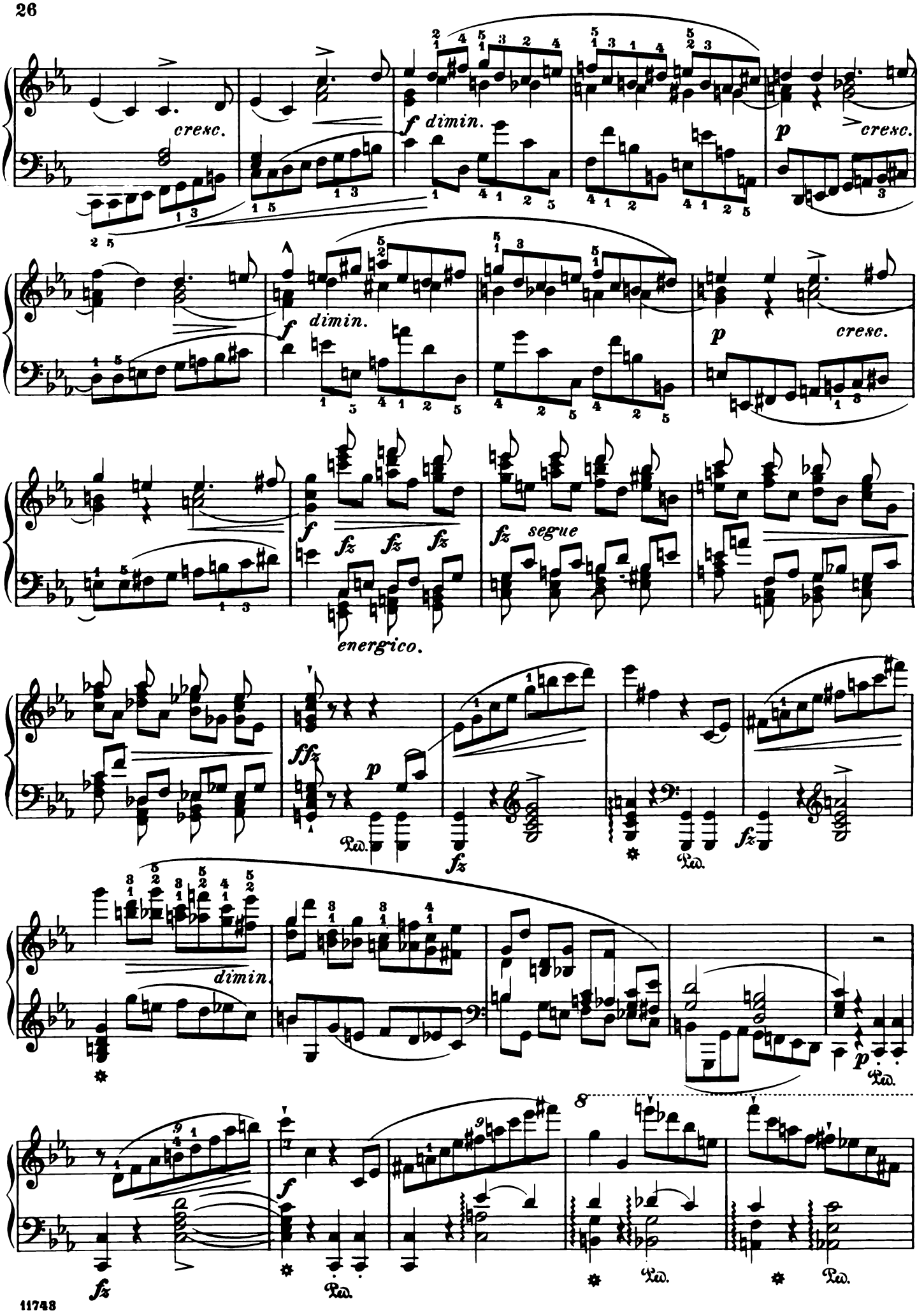

8
dimin.
p
cresc.
cresc.
f
ff
f
cresc.
ffz
f
f
8
fz
fz
fz
fz

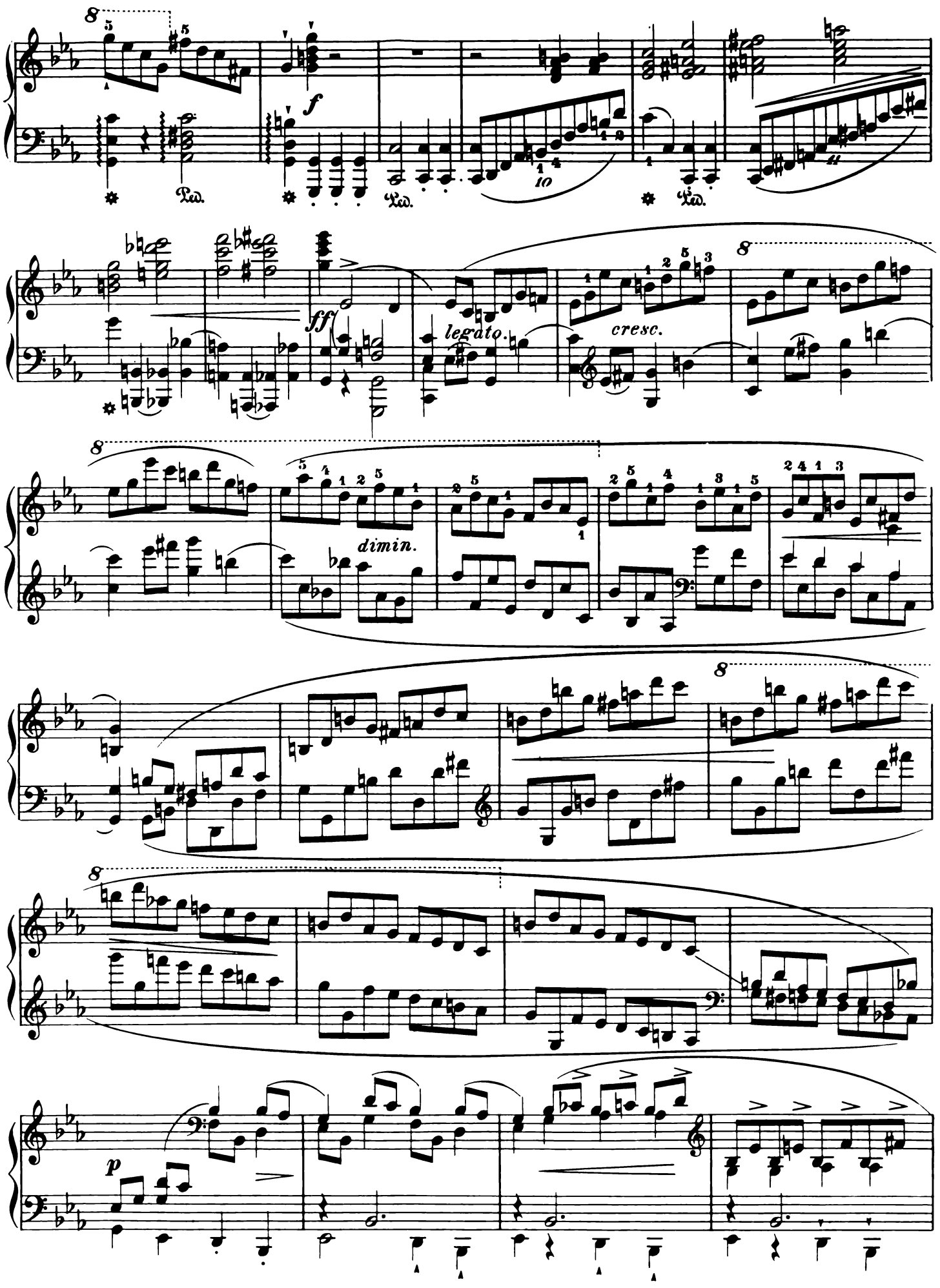

dimin.
dimin.
cresc.

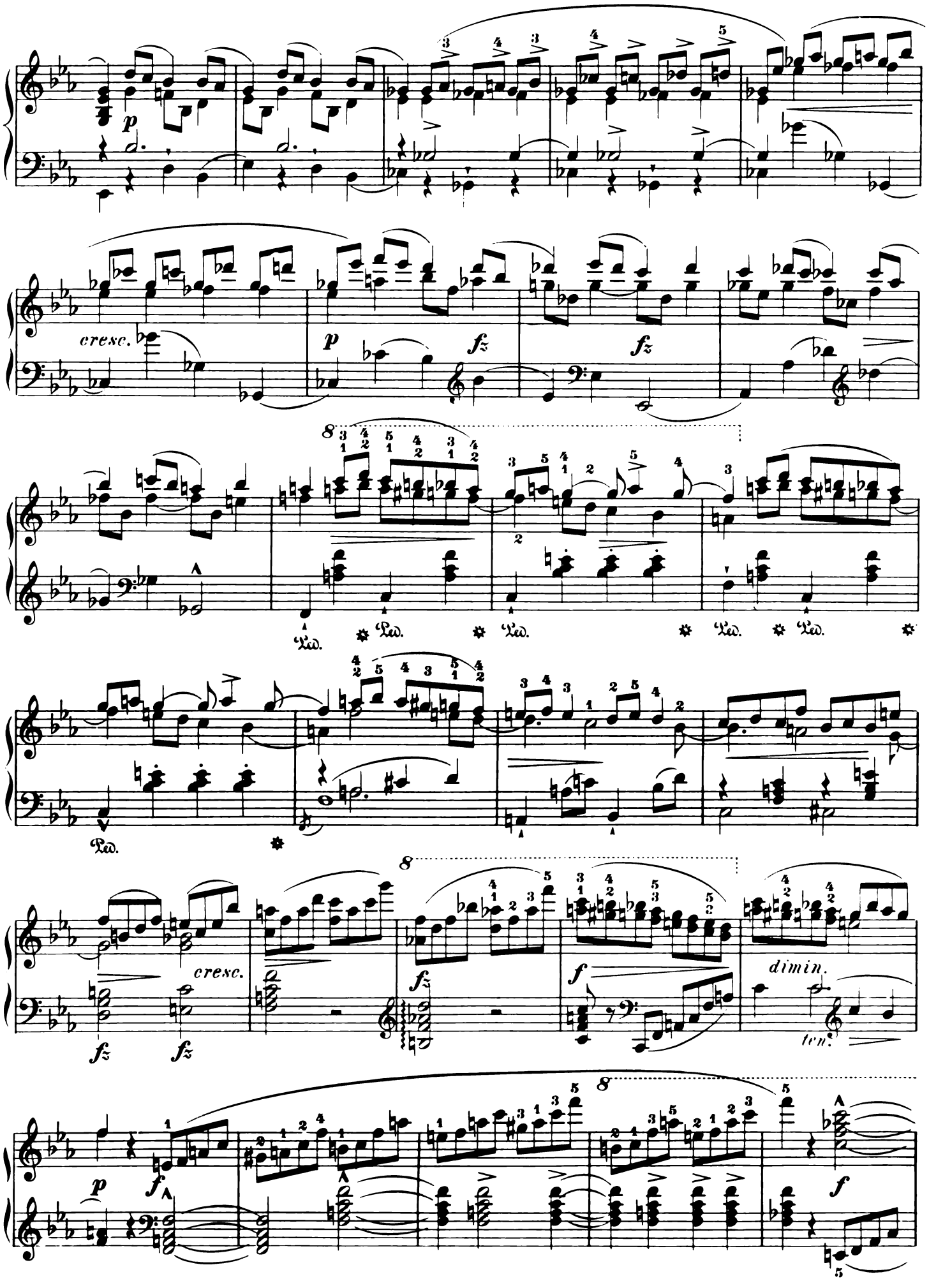

appassionato.
dimin.
cresc.
p più cal-
a tempo.
mato e rit.
pp
marcato.
cresc.

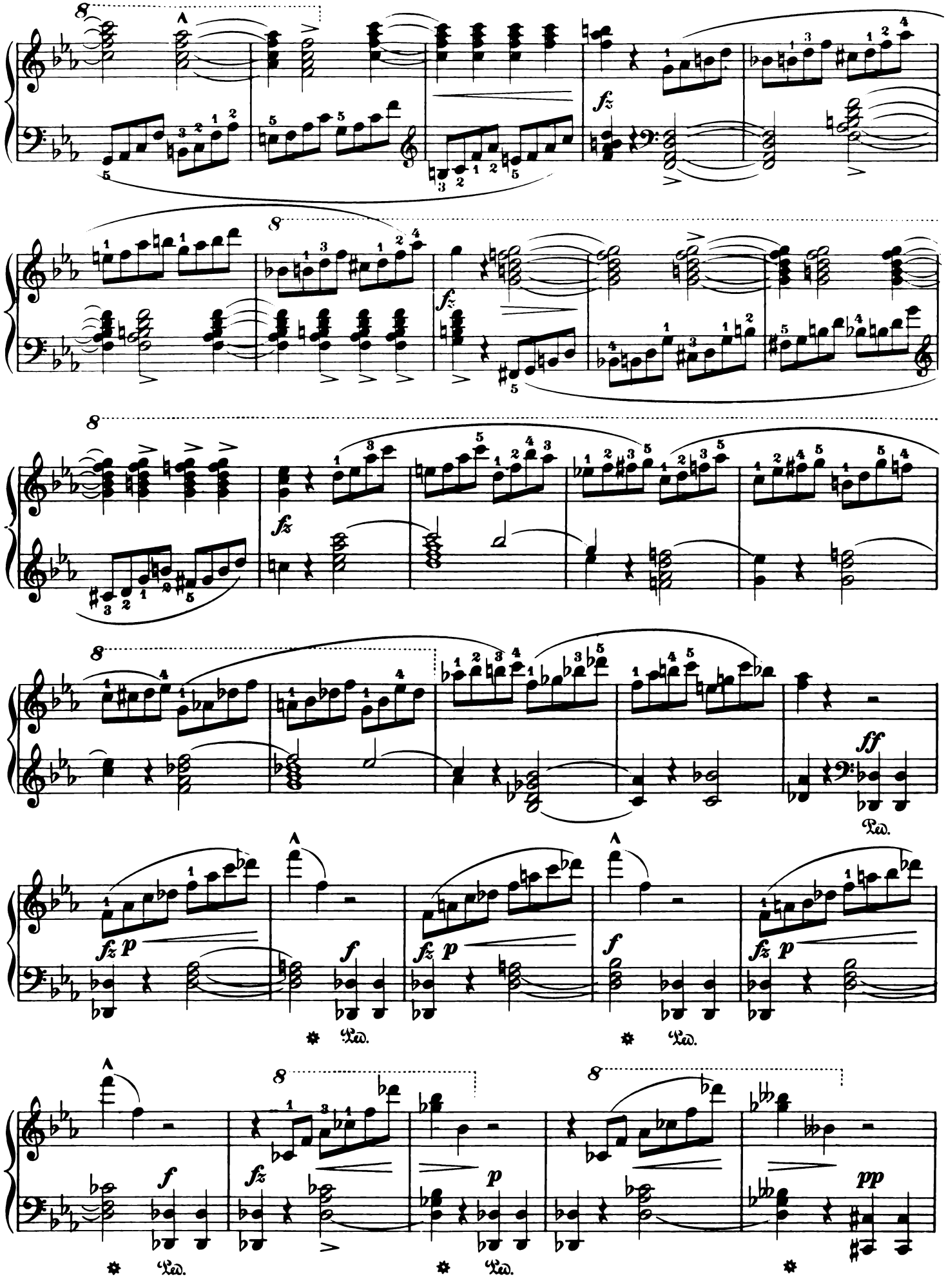

ben marcato.
dimin.
fz
p
f
fz
cresc.
Ped.
fz
ben marcato.
cresc.
f
f
cresc.

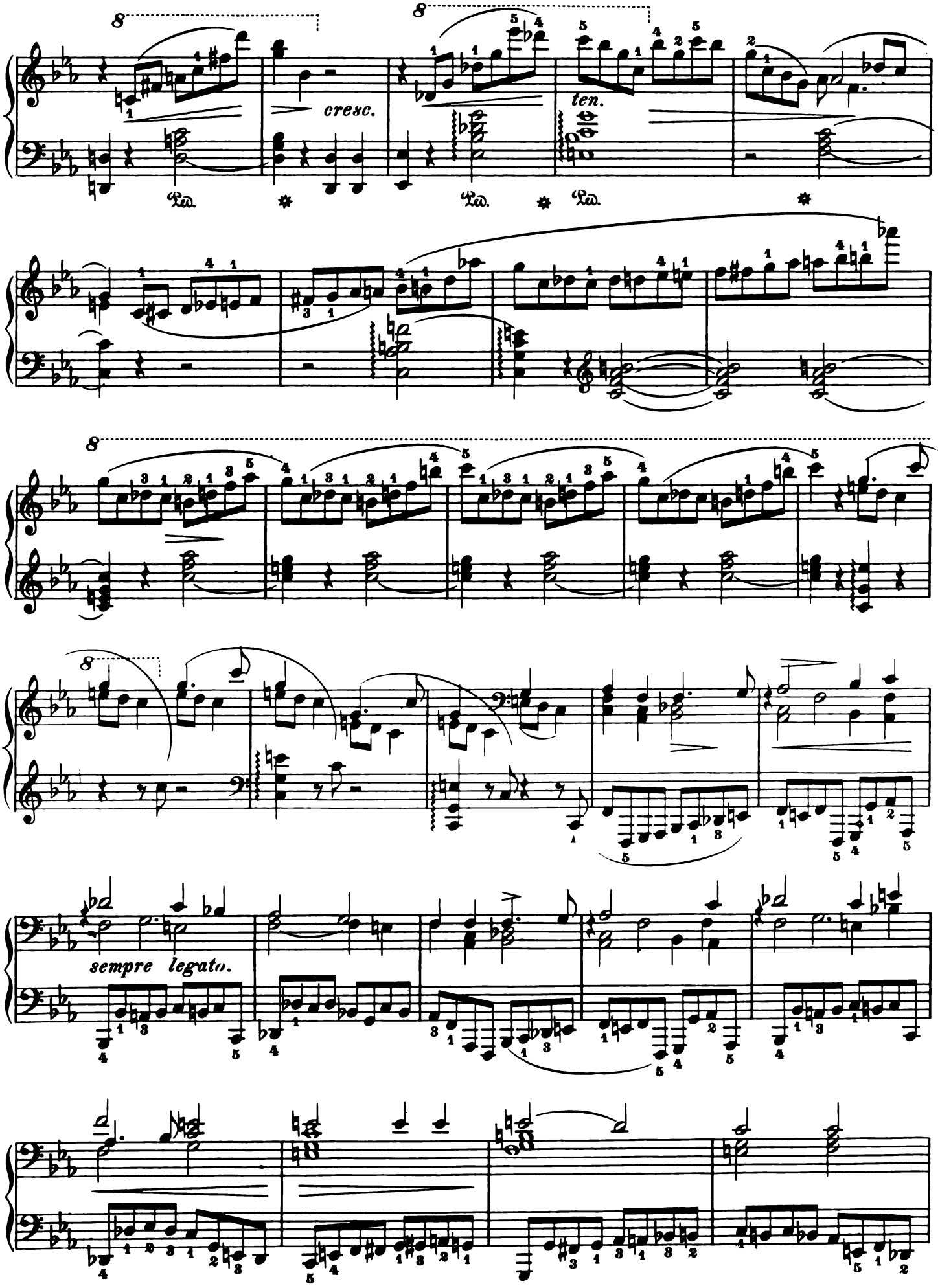

p
Ped.
pp
Ped.
8va
cresc.
f
p sempre legato.
p
fz

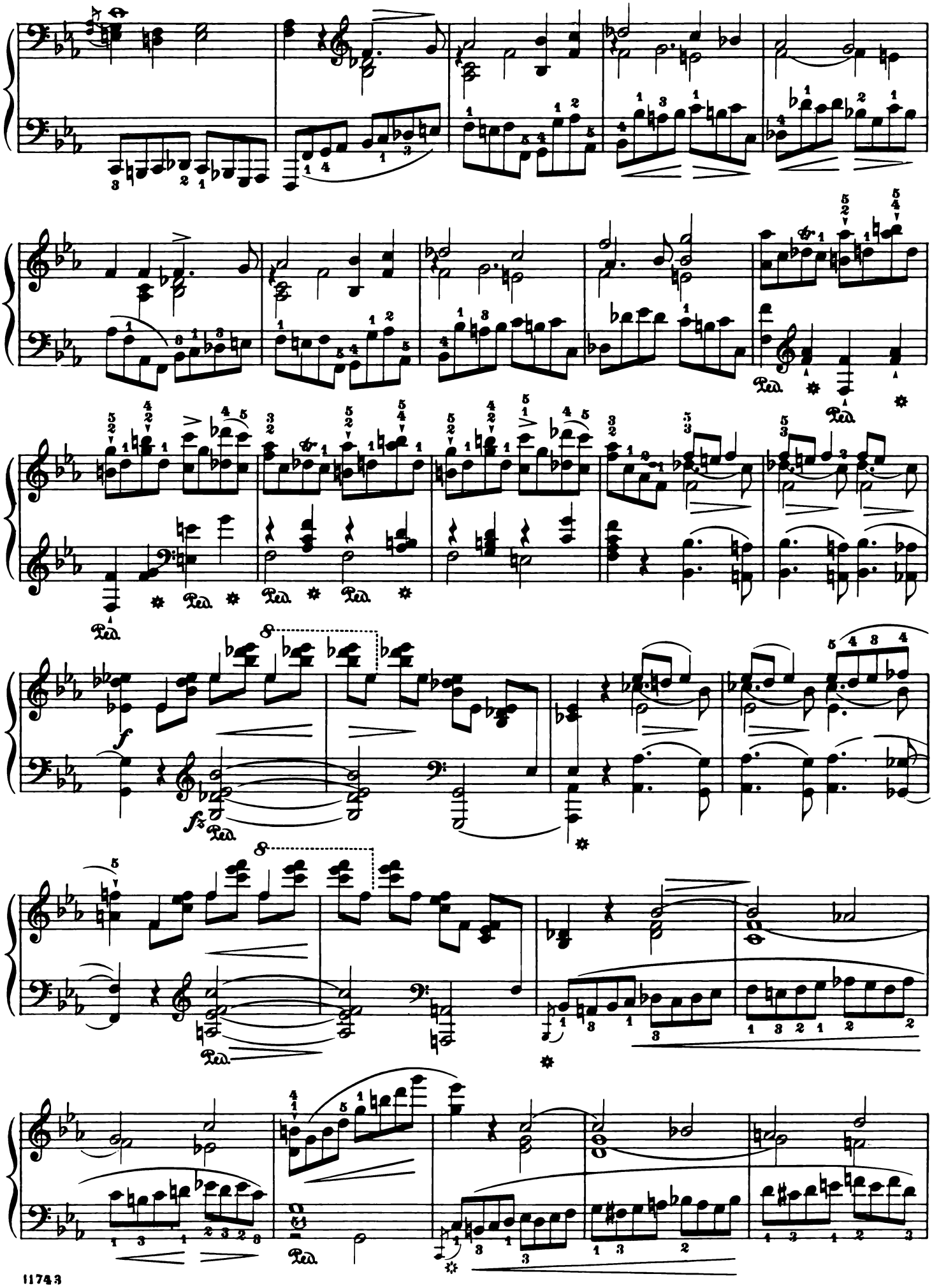

cresc.
f dimin.
p cresc.
f dimin.
p cresc.
f fz fz fz
fz segue
energico.
ffz
p
fz
fz
dimin.
p
f
fz
8

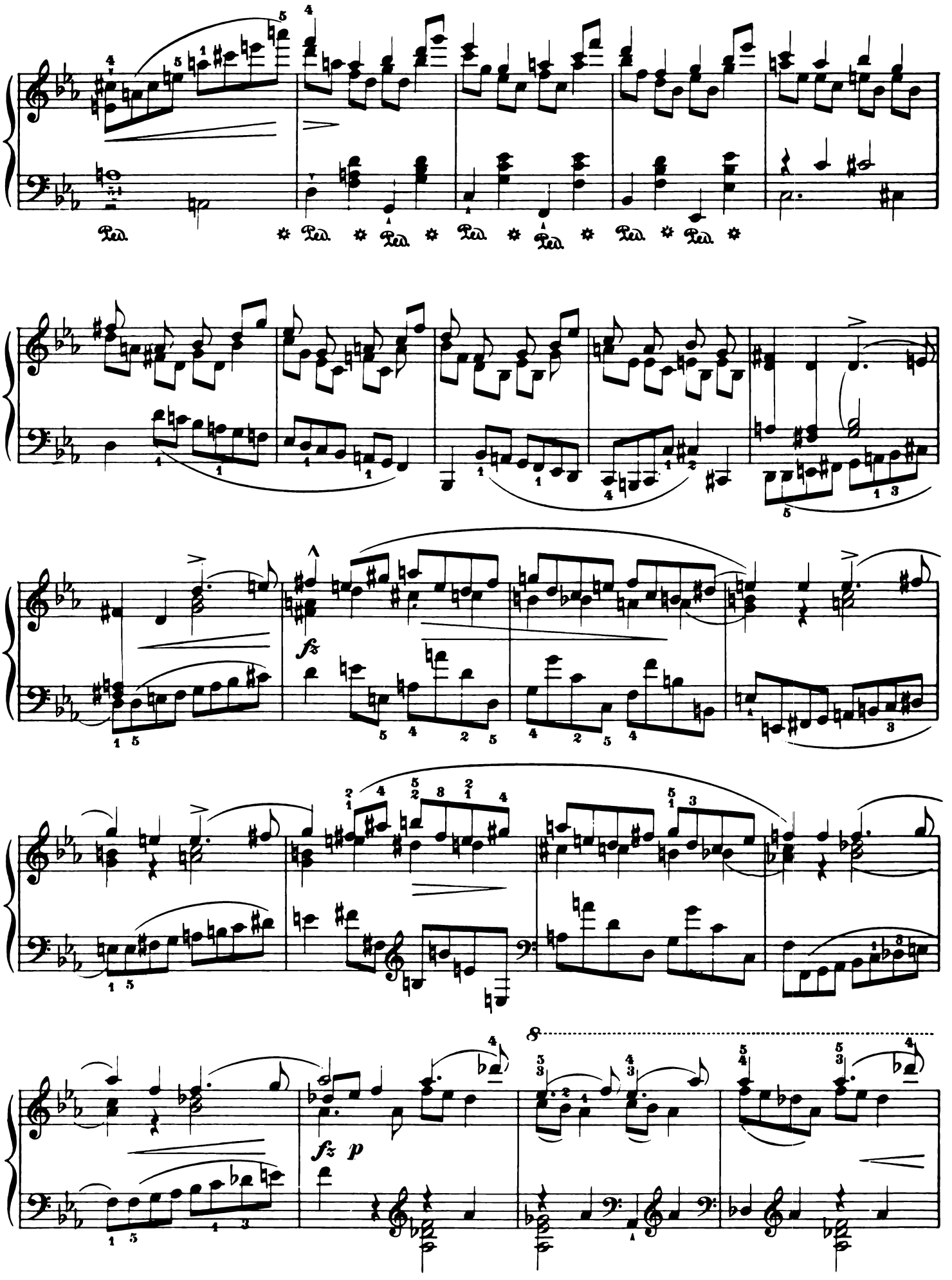

f
Ped.
ff
legato.
cresc.
dimin.
p

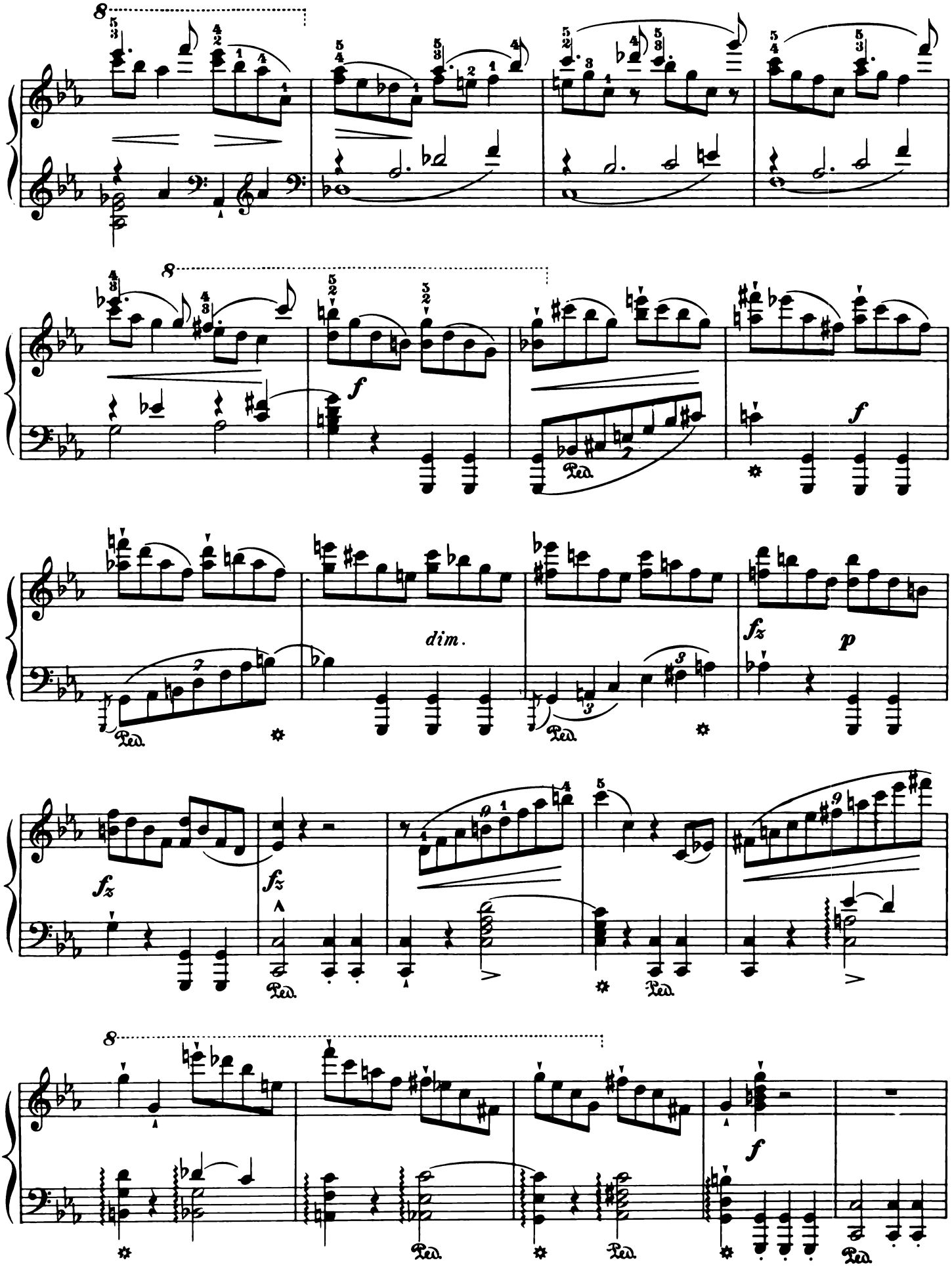

p
cresc.
p
fz
fz
Ped.
cresc.
fz
fz
fz
f
dimin.
ten.
p
f
f

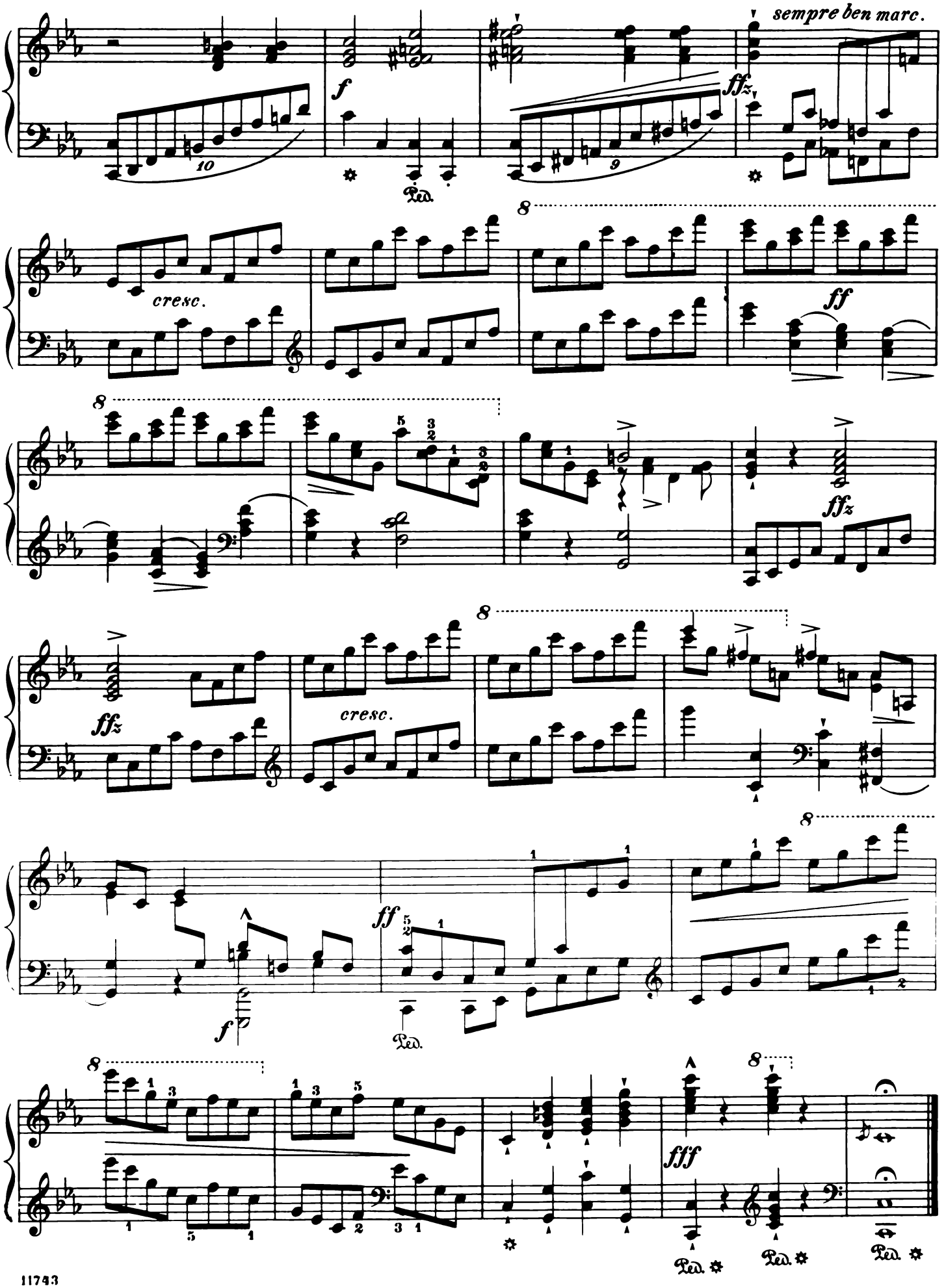

8
fz
8
fz
8
fz
8
ff
Ped.
fz p
f
fz p
f
fz p
Ped.
Ped.
8
8
f
fz
p
pp
Ped.
Ped.


cresc.
ten.
Ped.
sempre legato.


Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
f
fz
8
8


Ped.
fz
fz p
8


8
f
Ped.
f
dim.
fz
p
fz
fz
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
8
f
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


sempre ben marc.
f
ffz
cresc.
ff
ffz
cresc.
ff
f
fff
Ped.

Sonate.

F. CHOPIN. Op. 35.

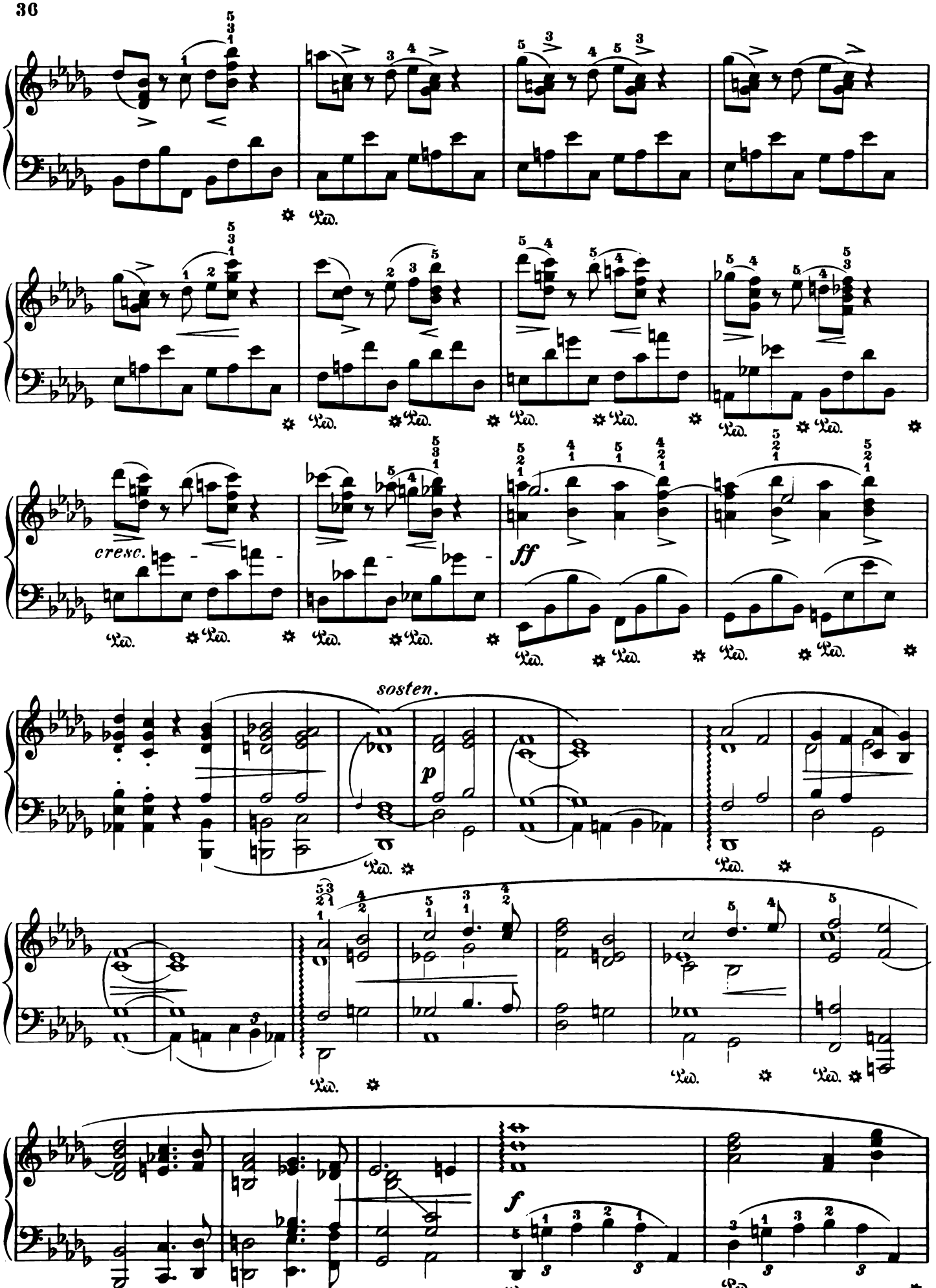
2.

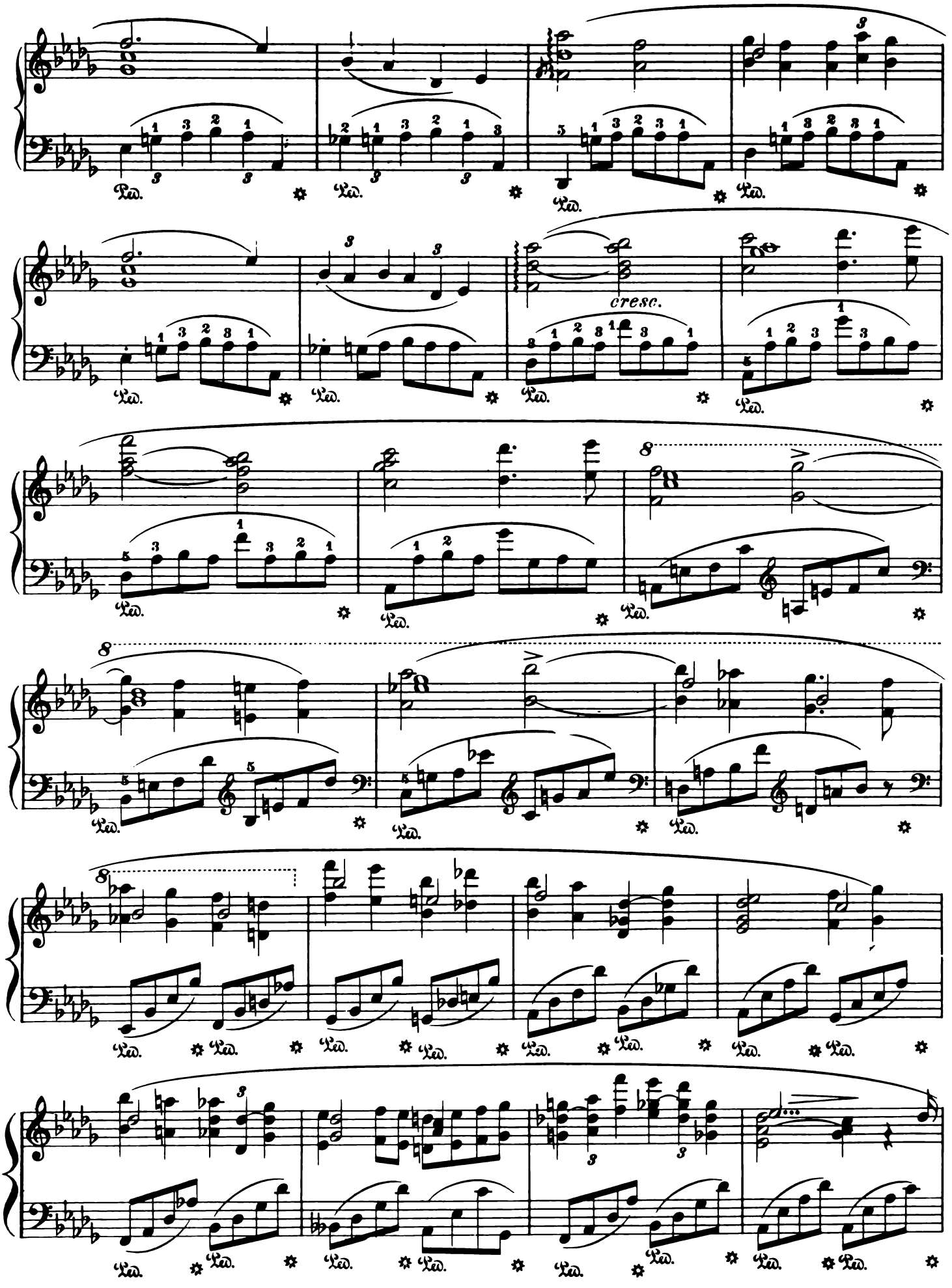
Grave.

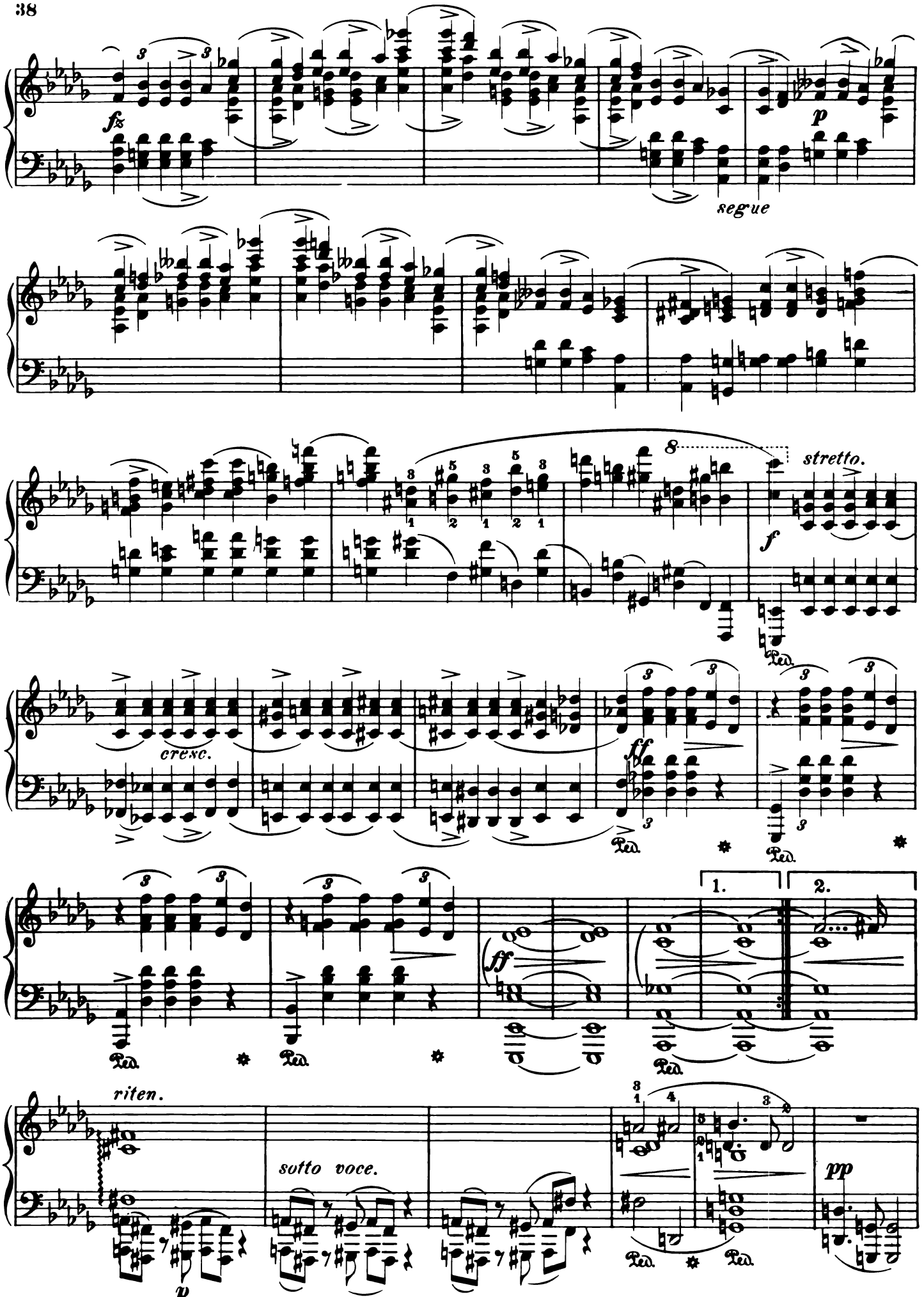
Doppio movimento.

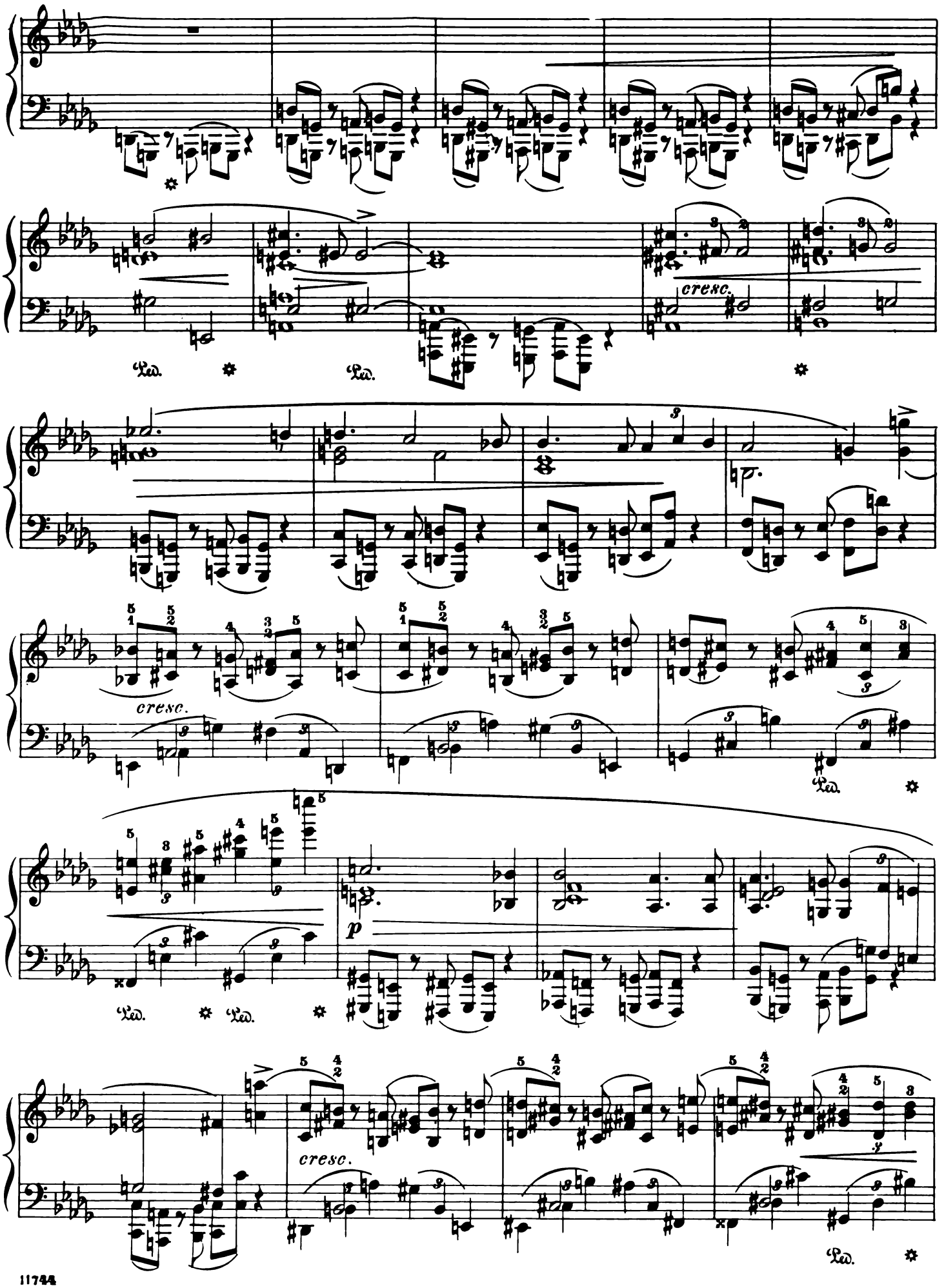
Agitato.

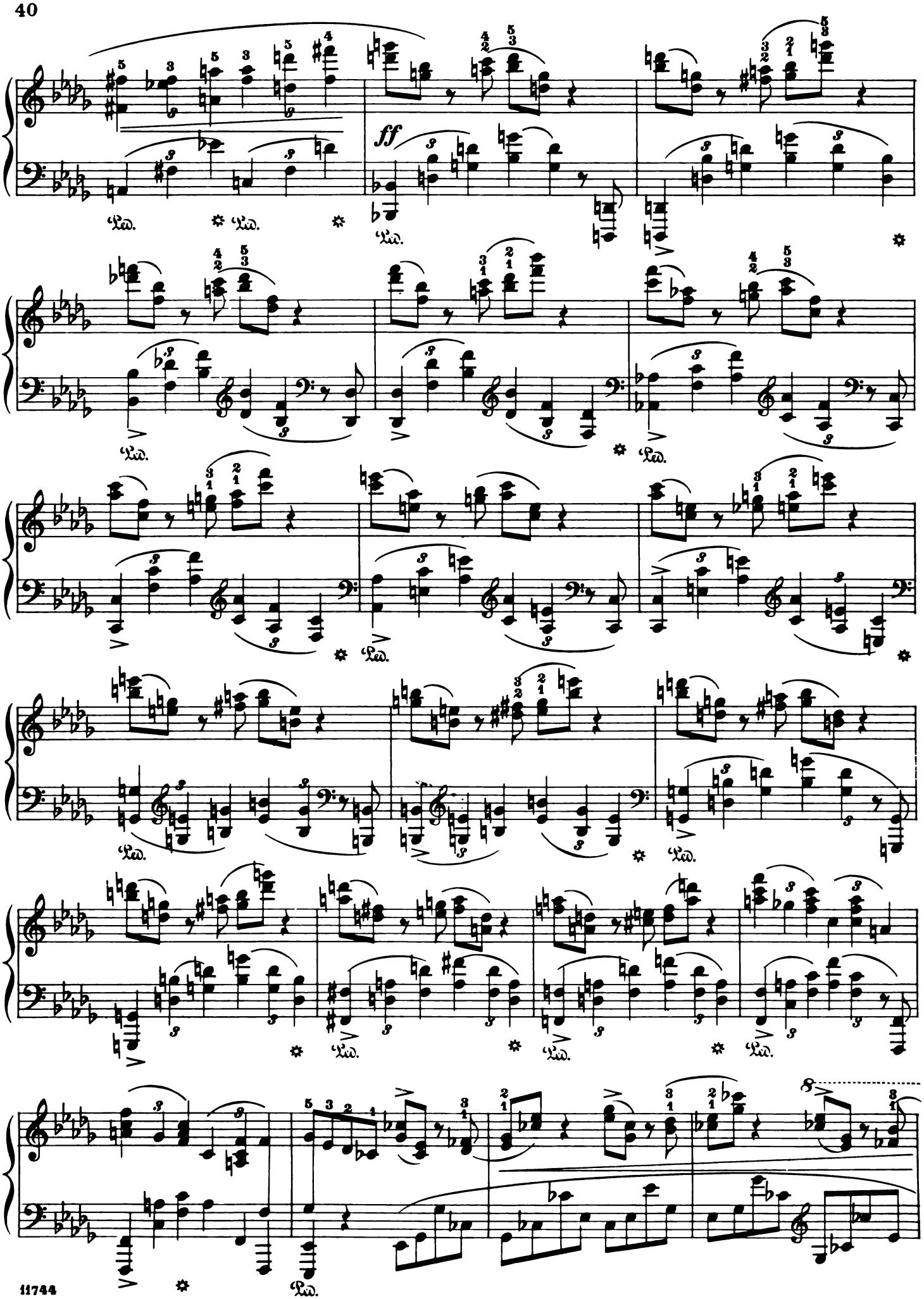
cresc.

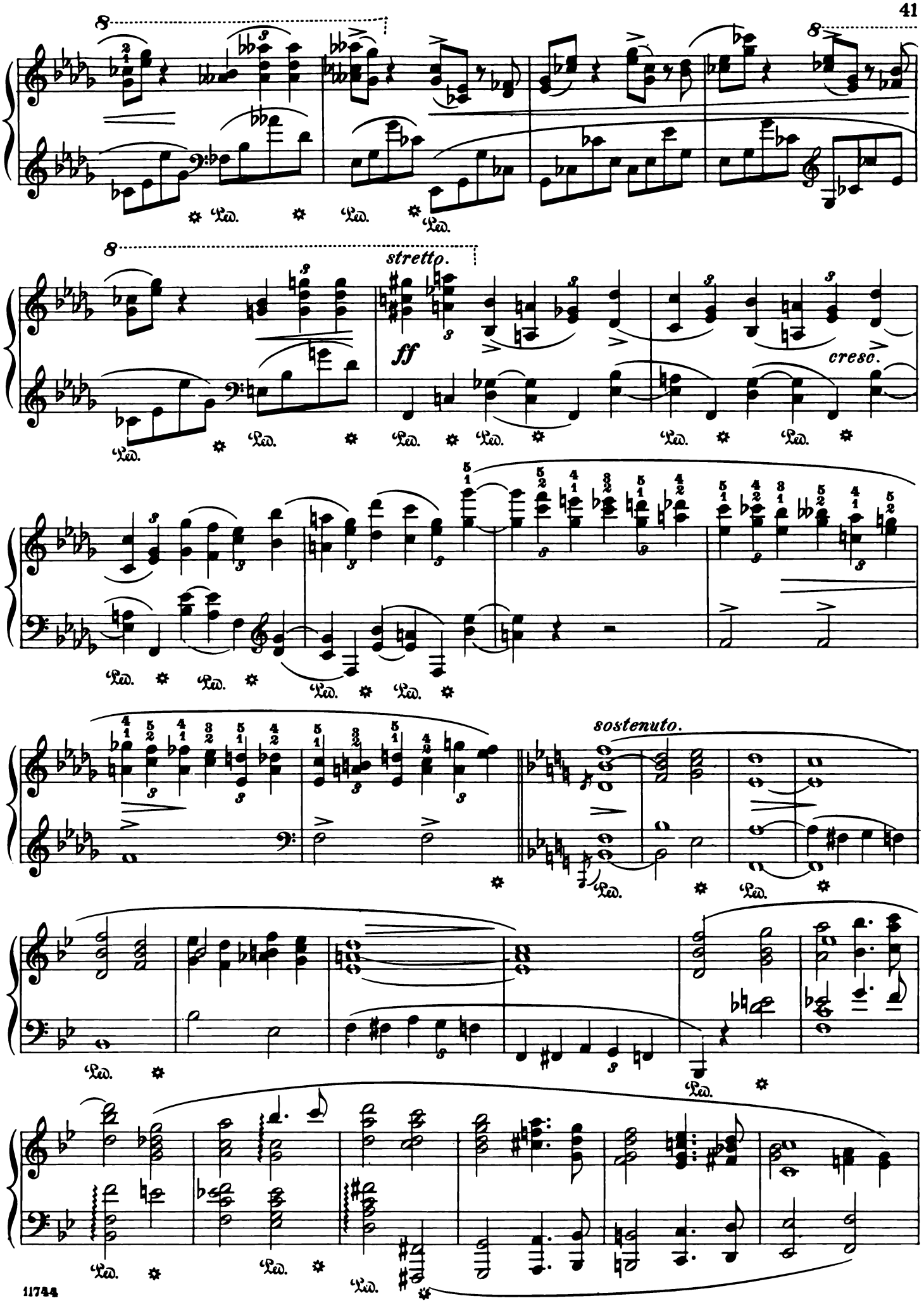

cresc.
ff
sosten.
p
f

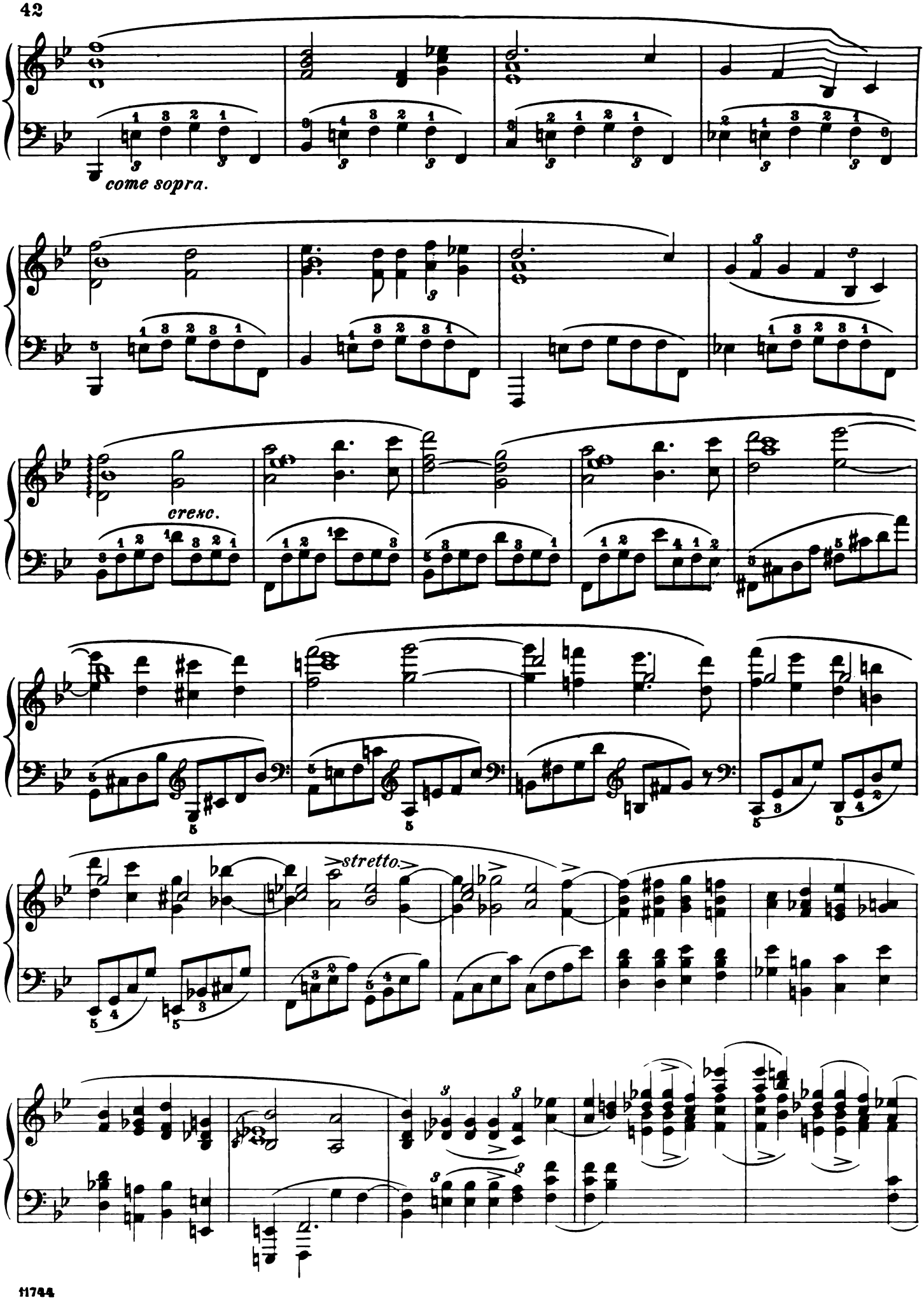

cresc.

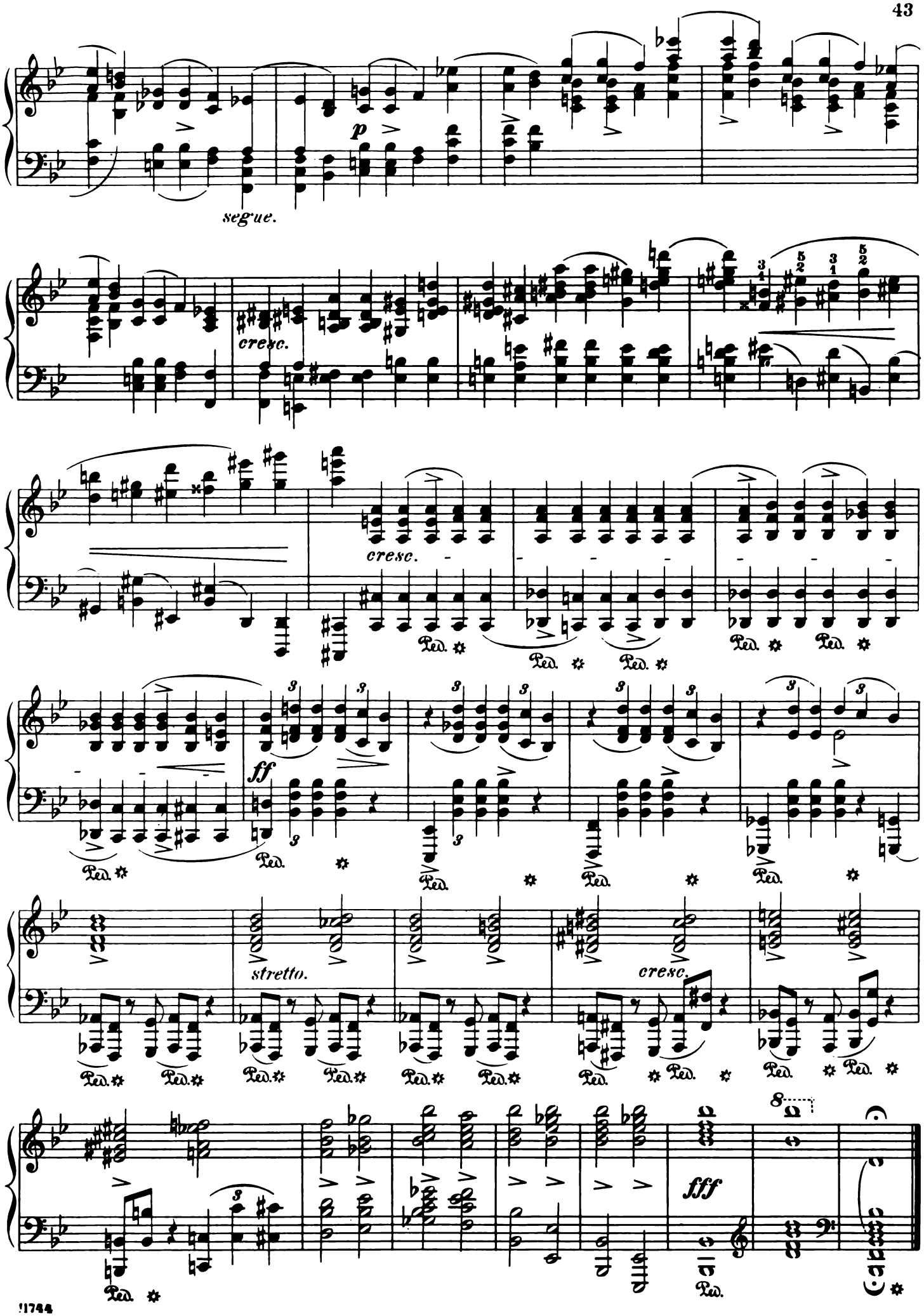

fz
p
segue
8
stretto.
f
cresc.
ff
Ped.
1.
2.
riten.
sotto voce.
p
pp


cresc.
Ped.
cresc.
p
cresc.

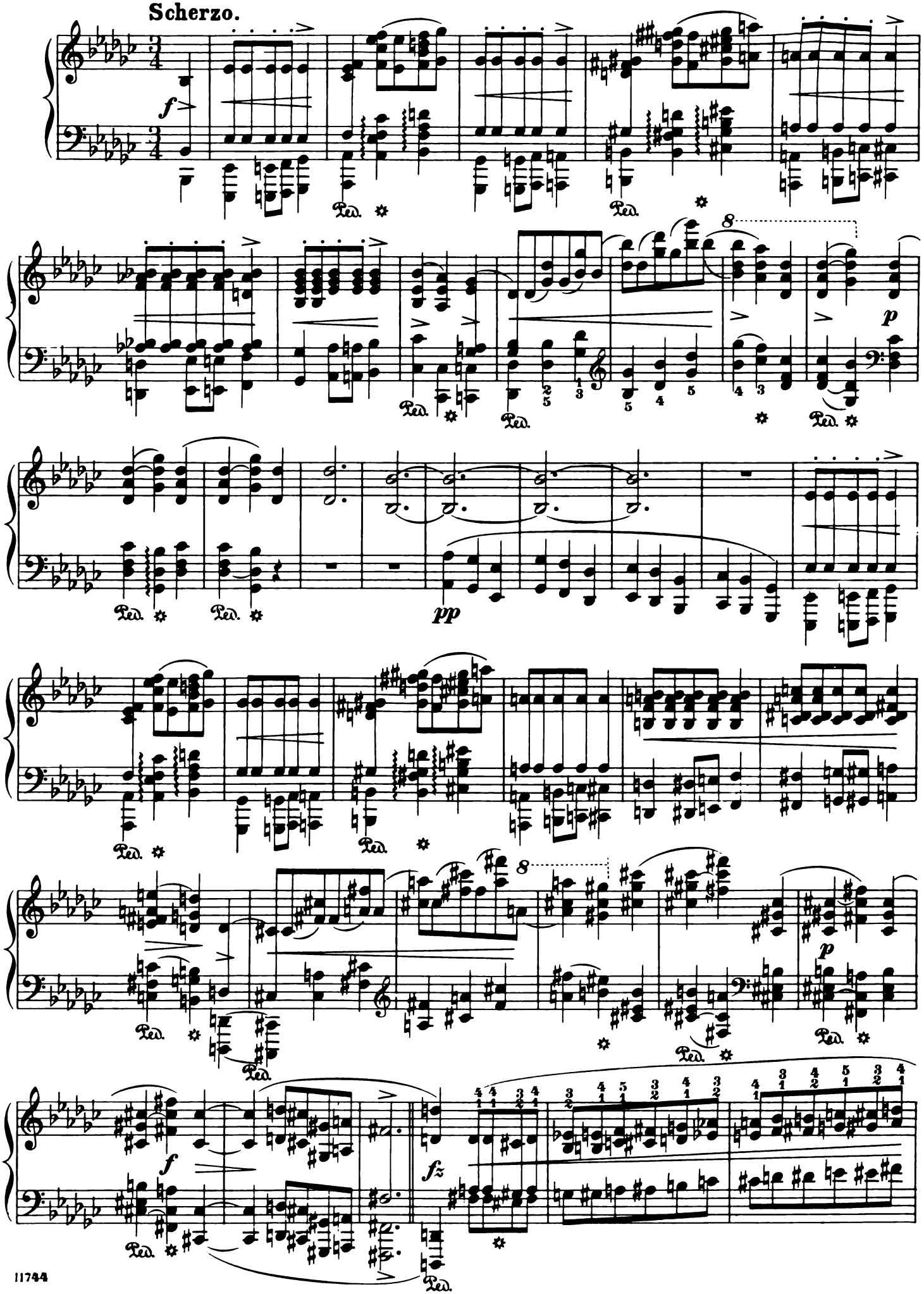

ff
Ped.

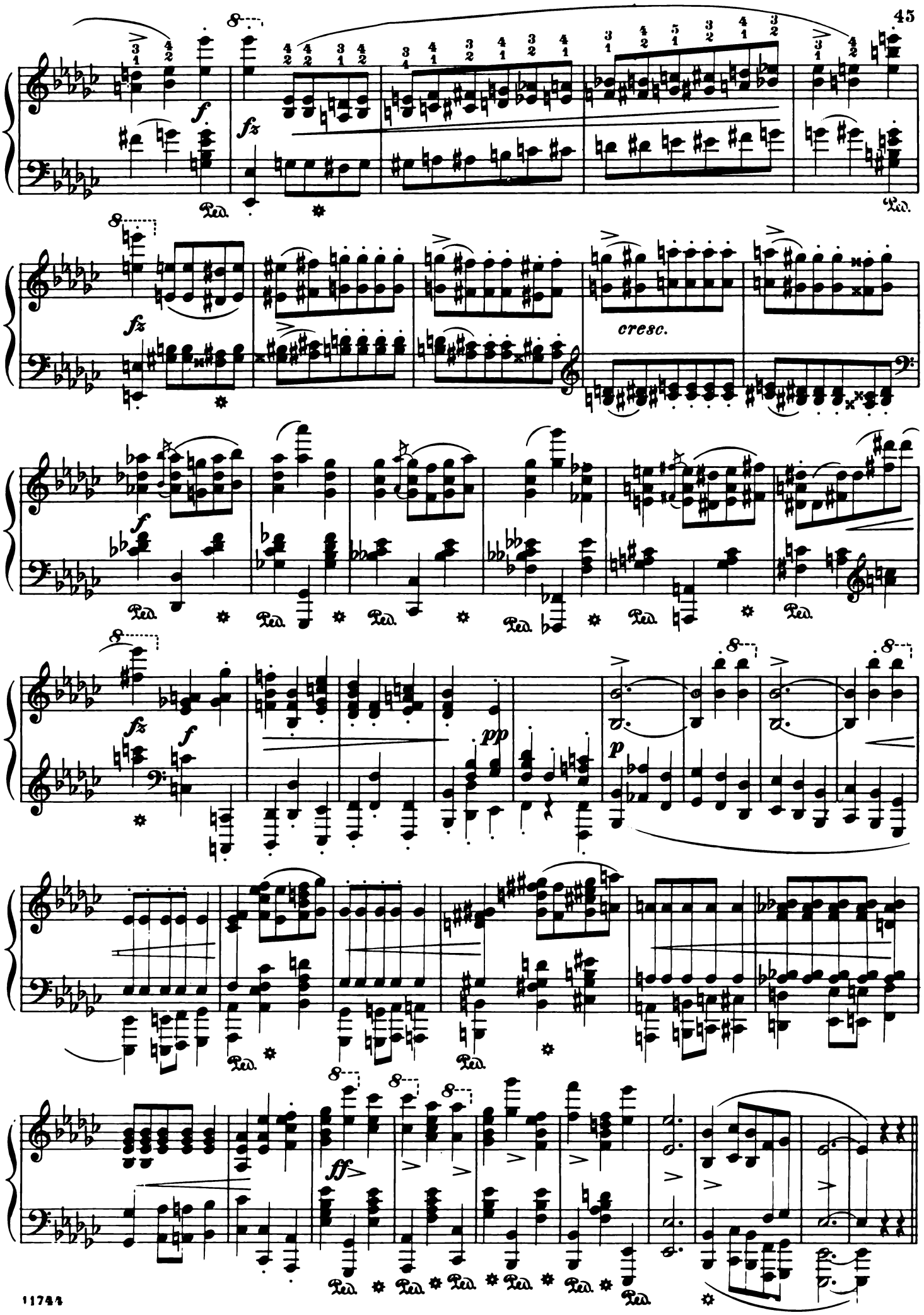

stretto.
ff
cresc.
sostenuto.

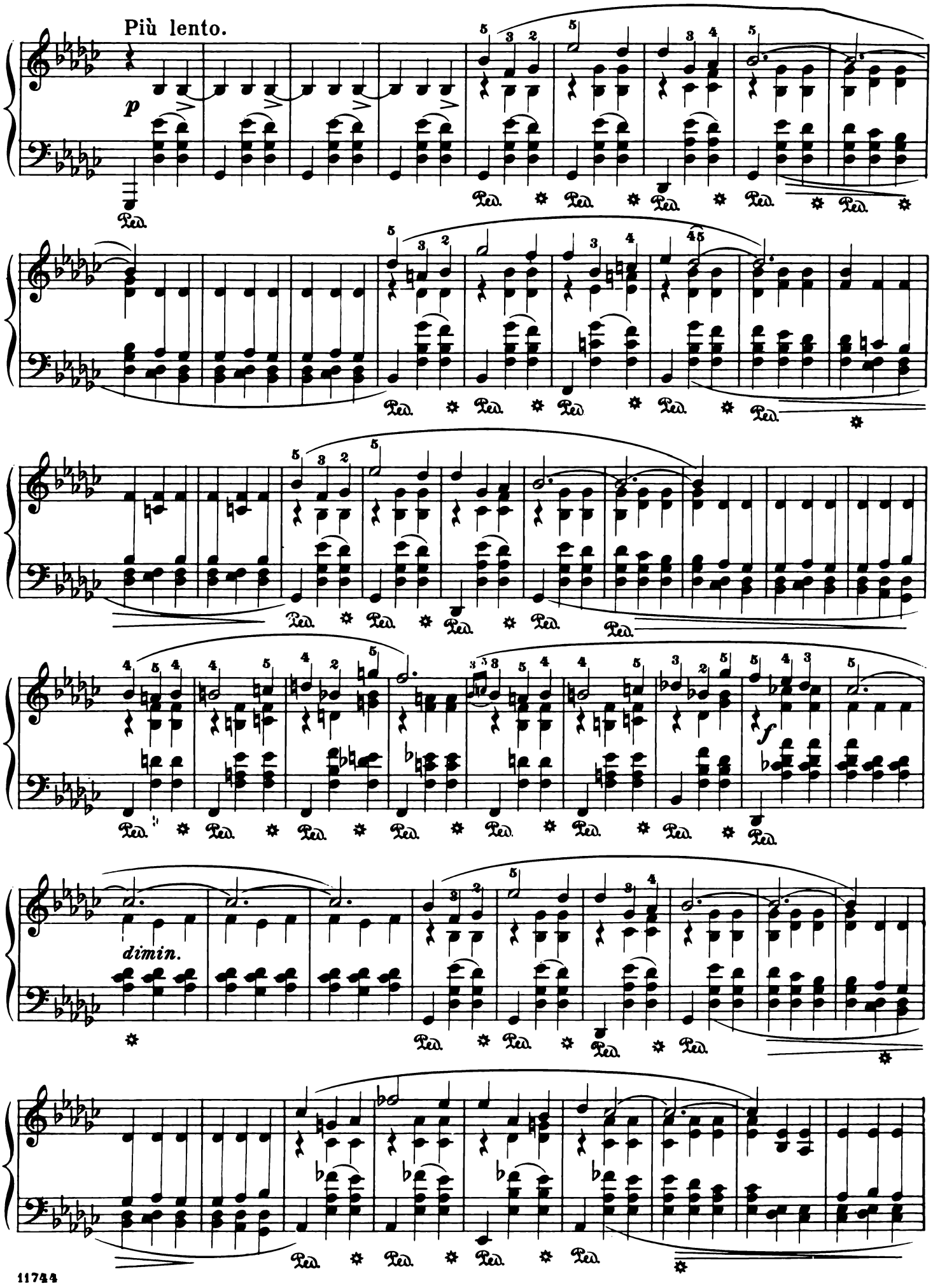

come sopra.
cresc.
stretto.

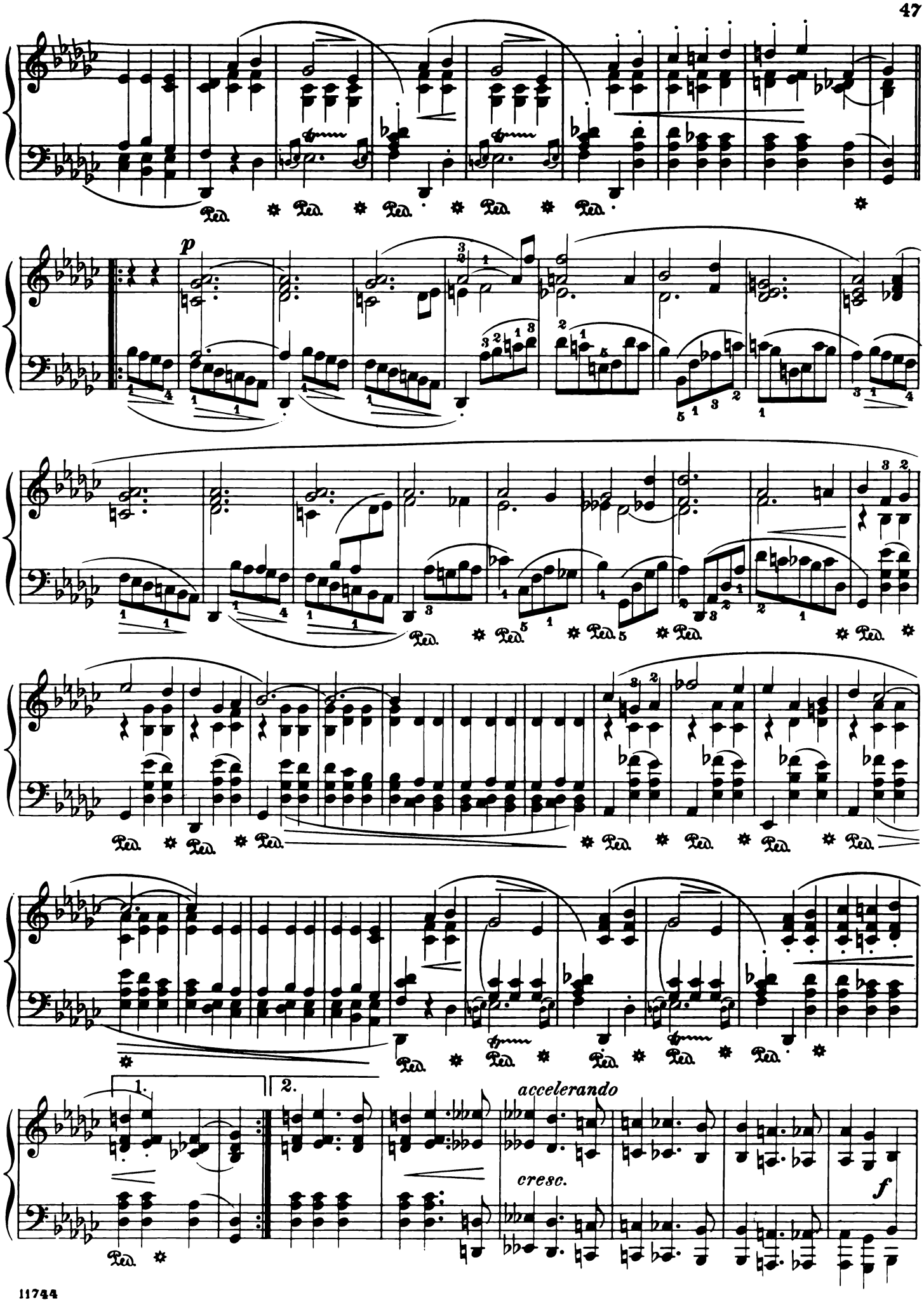

segue.
p
cresc.
cresc.
ff
stretto.
cresc.
fff

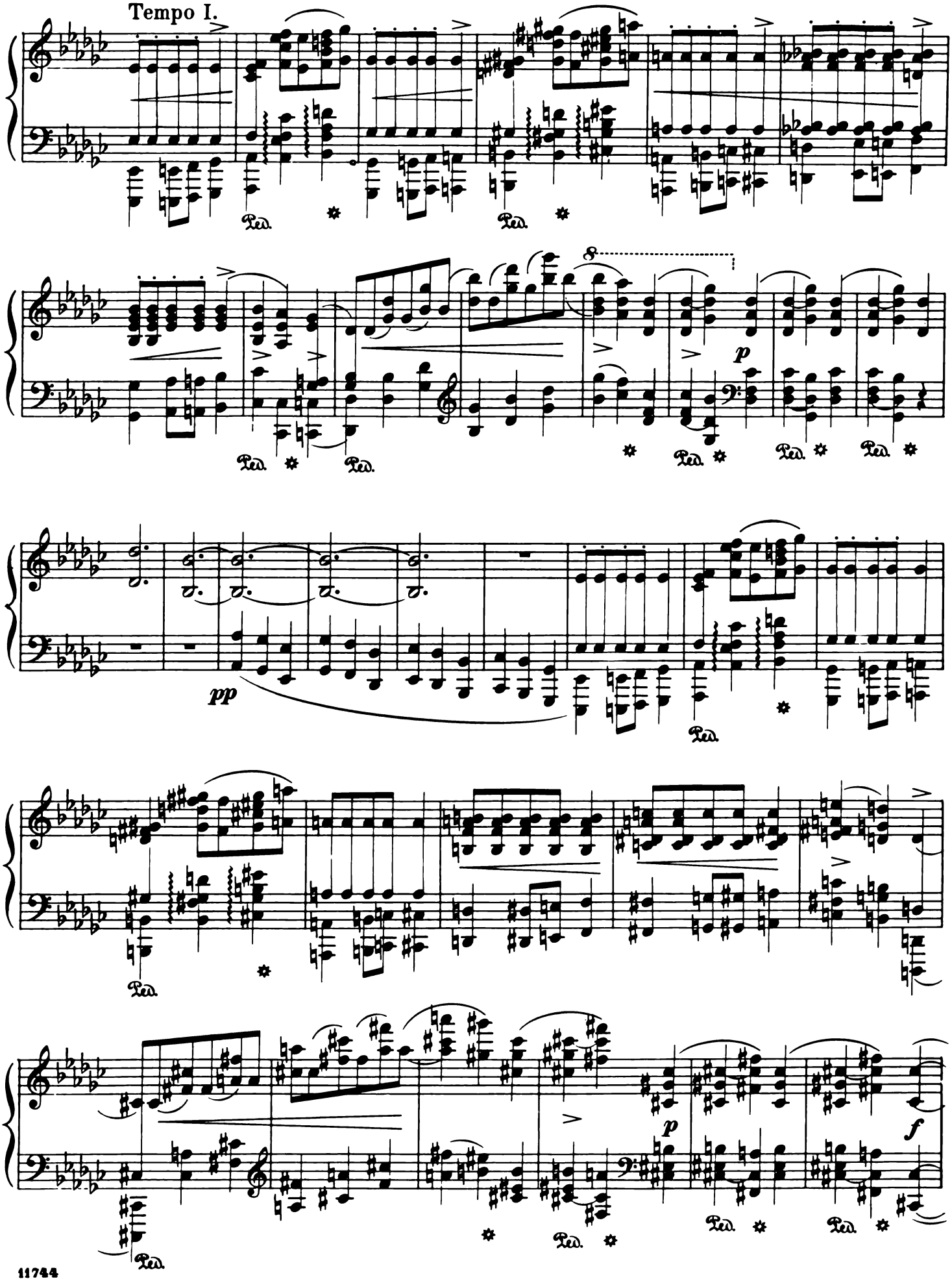
Scherzo.

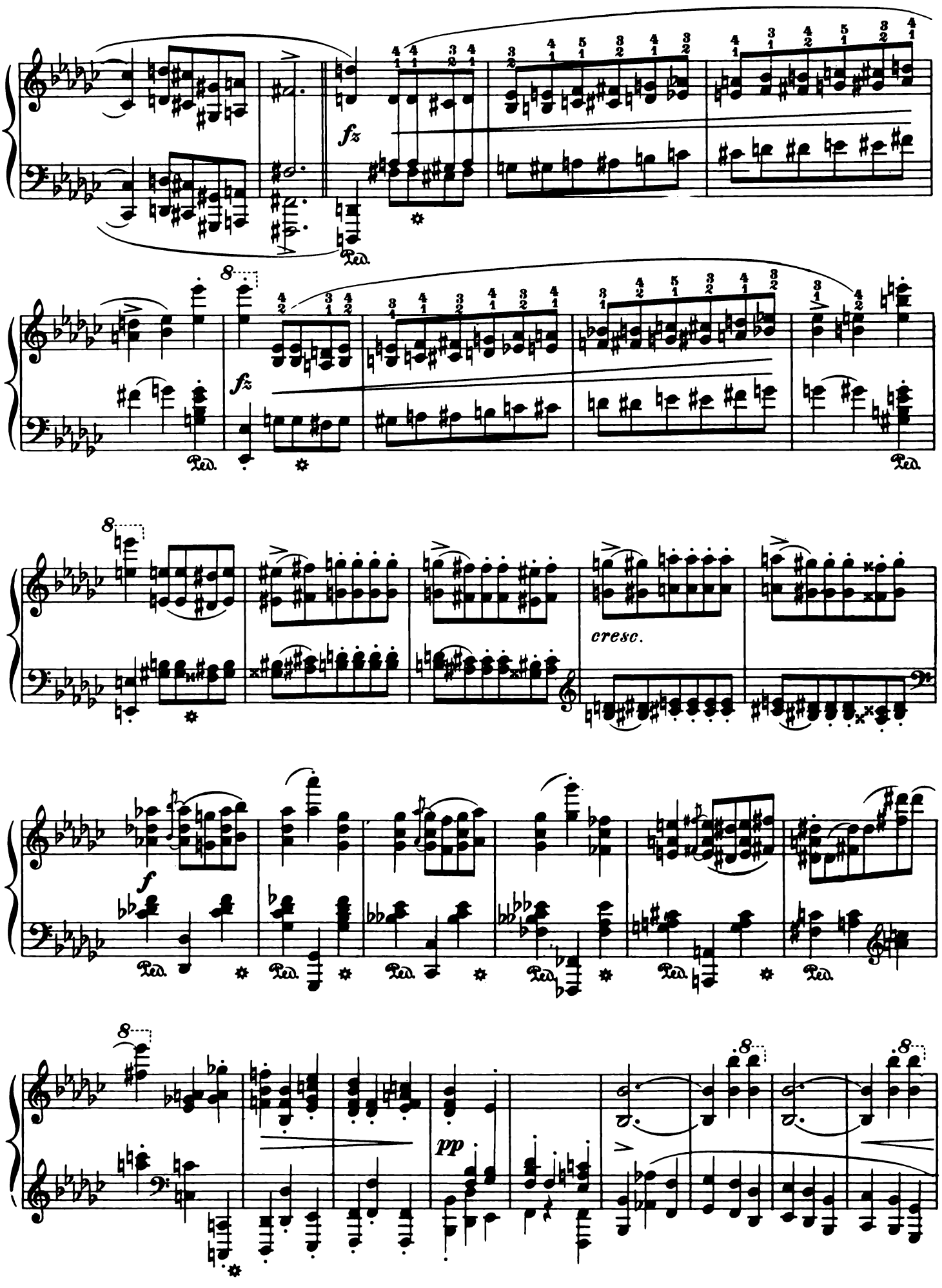


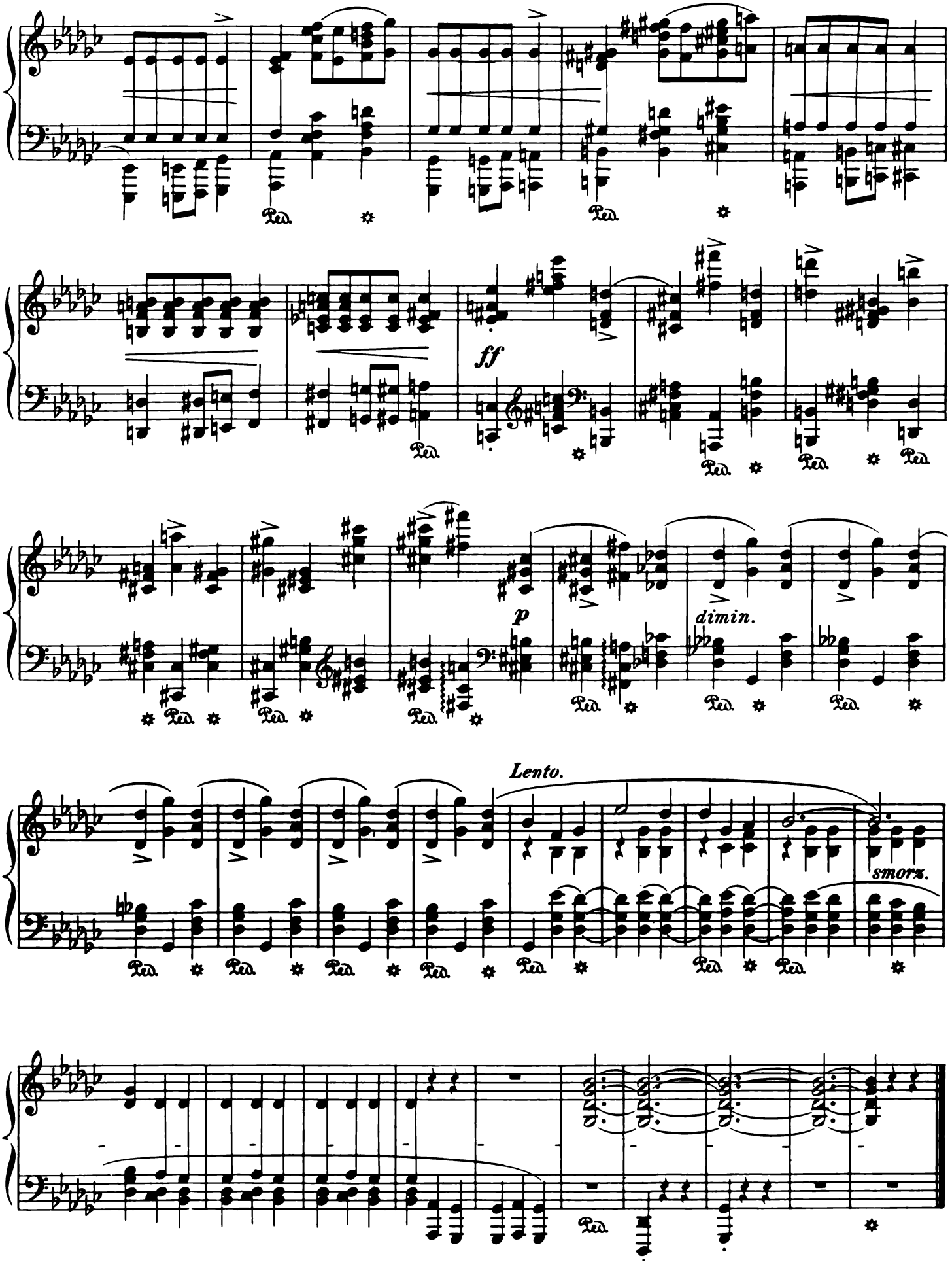

f
fz
cresc.
pp
p
ff


Più lento.
p
dimin.
f


Ped.
p
1.
2.
accelerando
cresc.
f

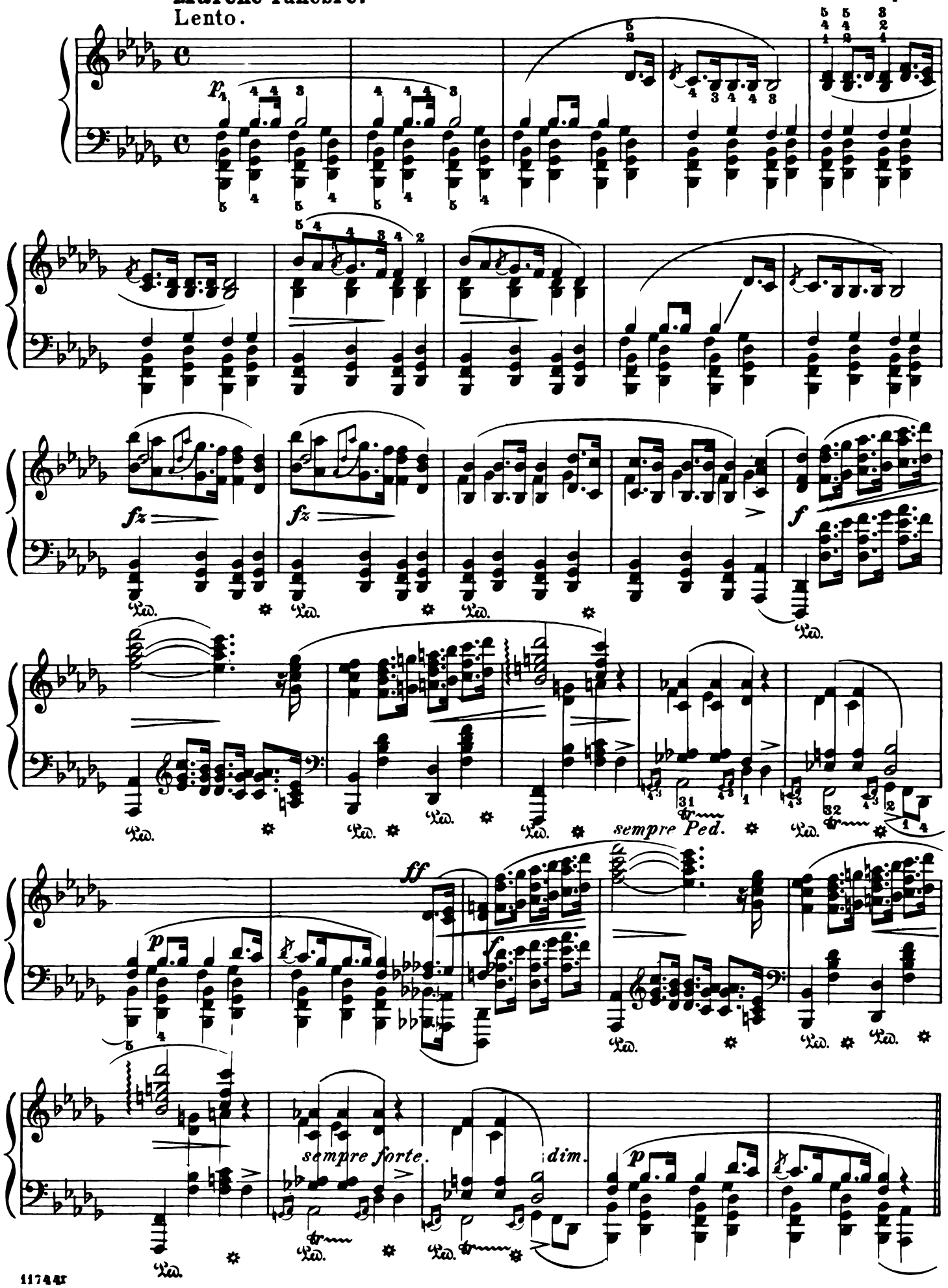

Tempo I.
8
p
pp
p
f

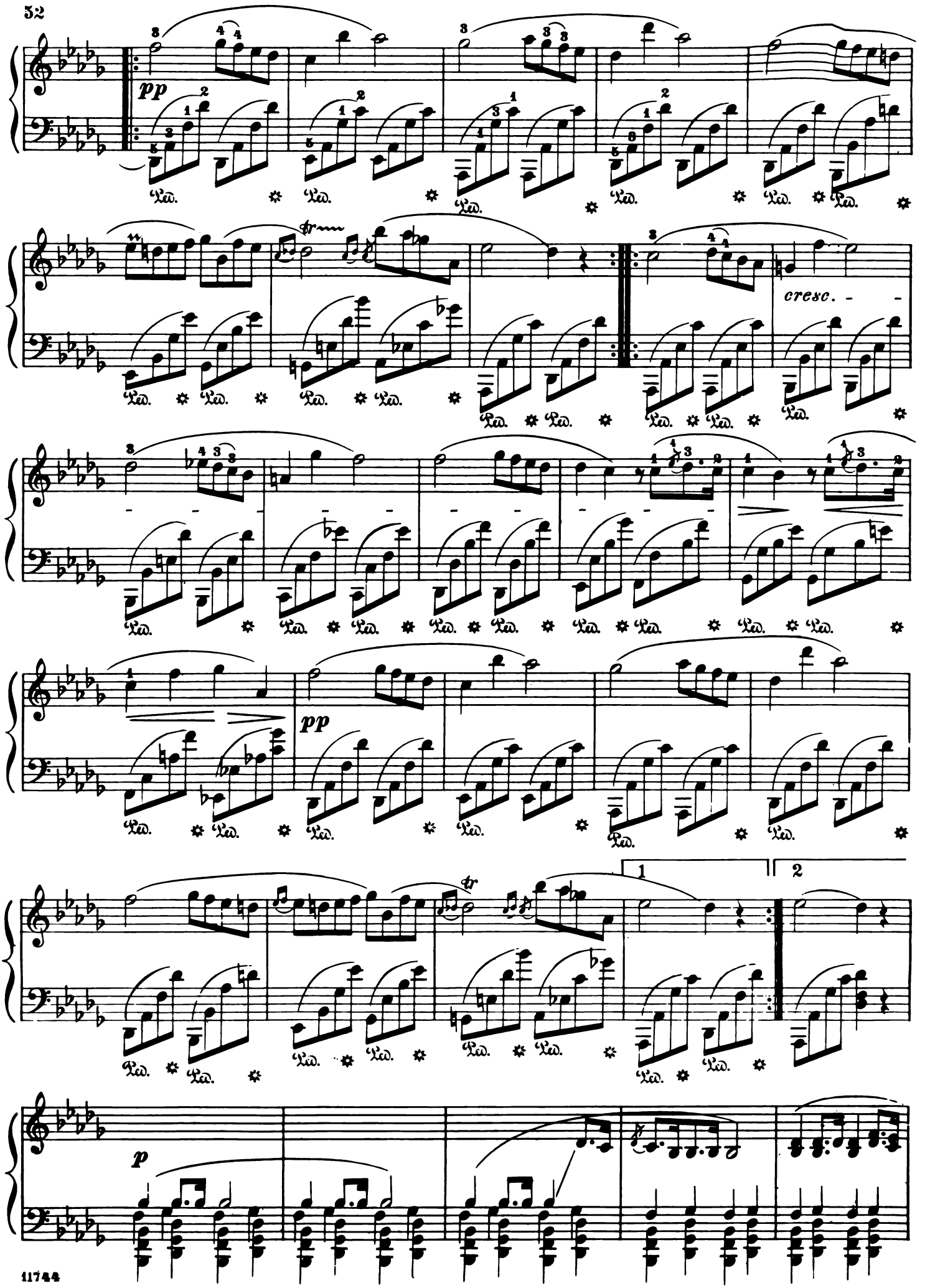

fz
Ped.
8
fz
Ped.
Ped.
8
cresc.
f
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
8
pp
8
8

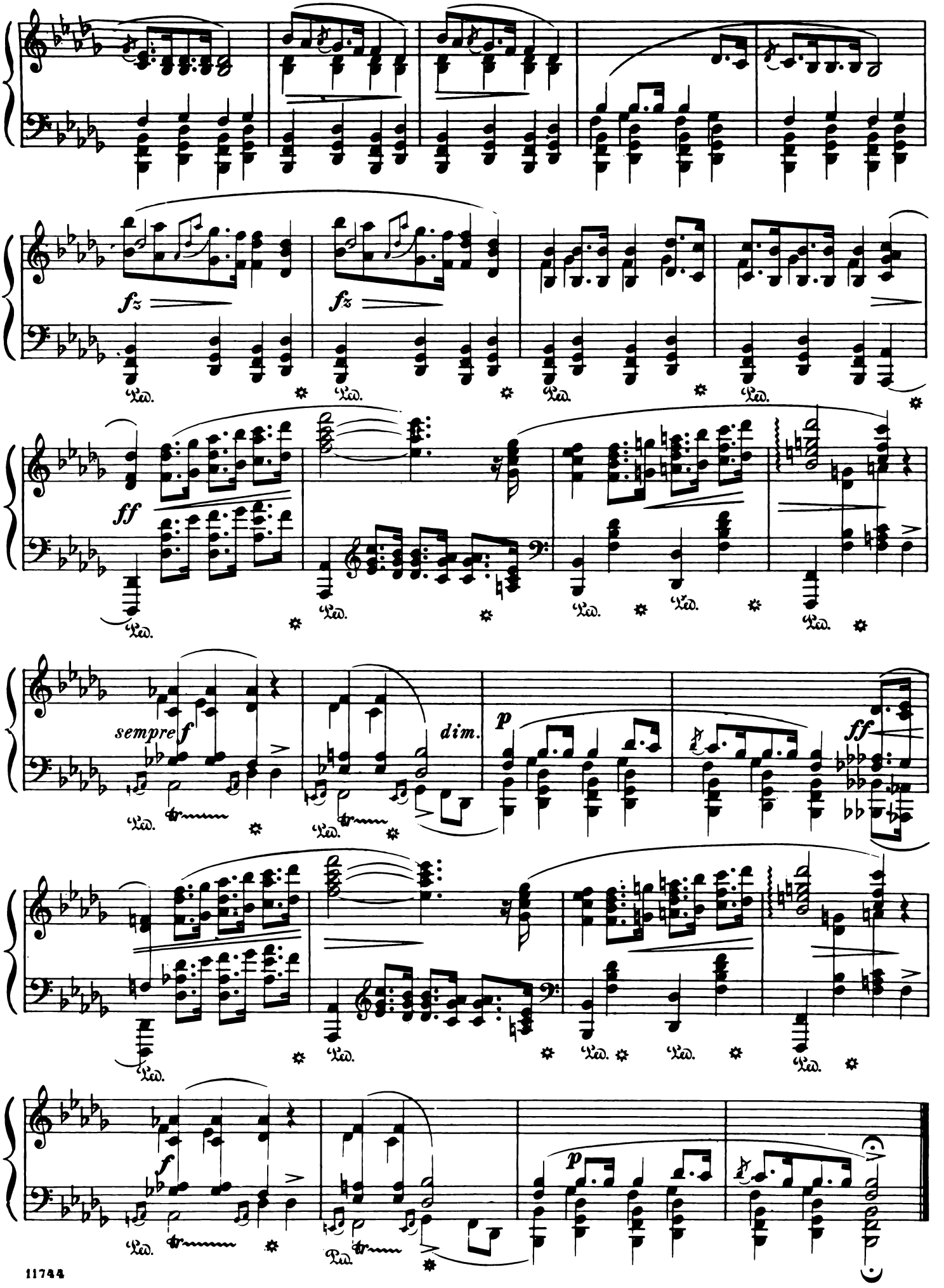

ff
p
dimin.
Lento.
smorz.

Marche funèbre.

Lento.

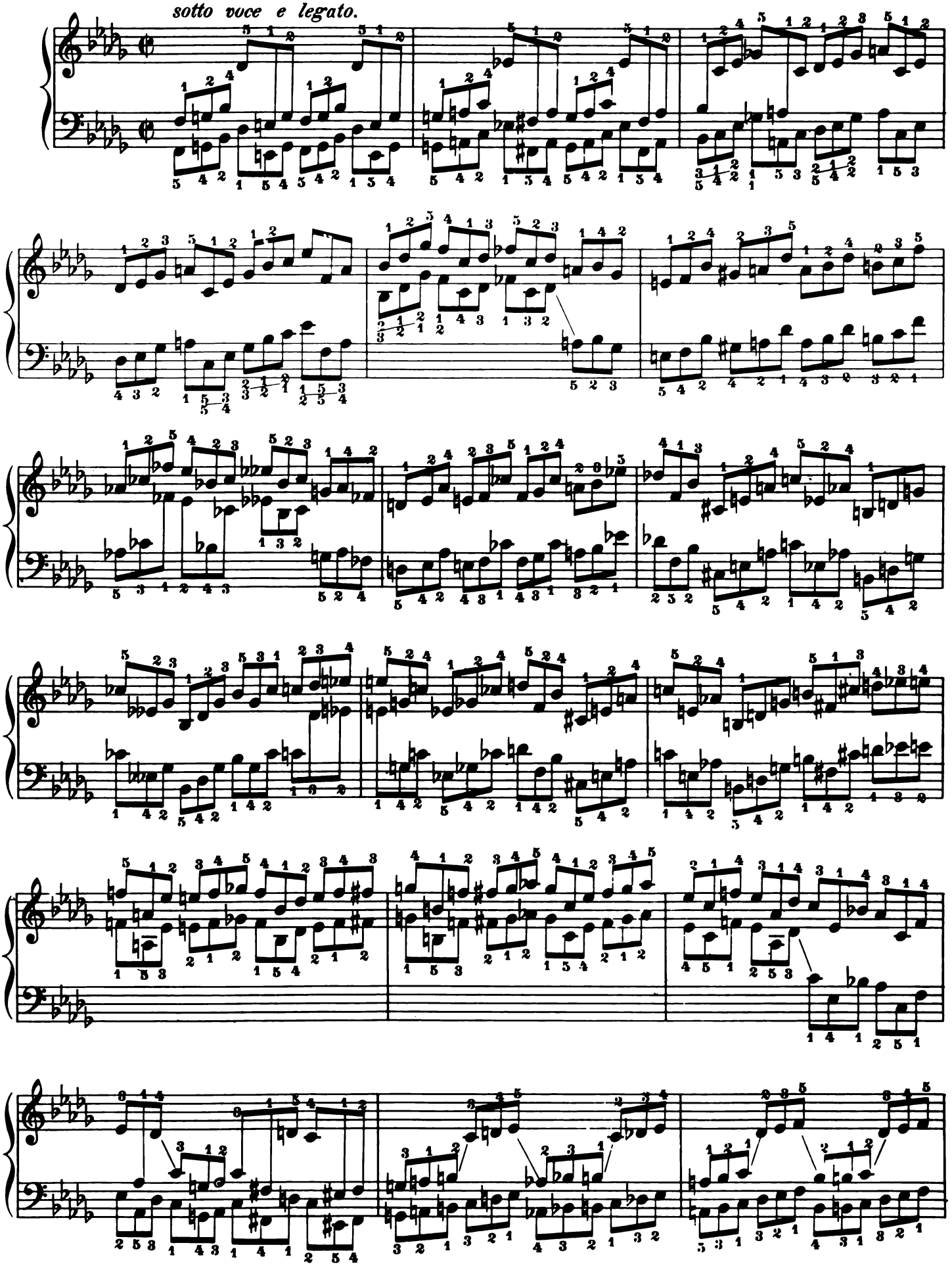


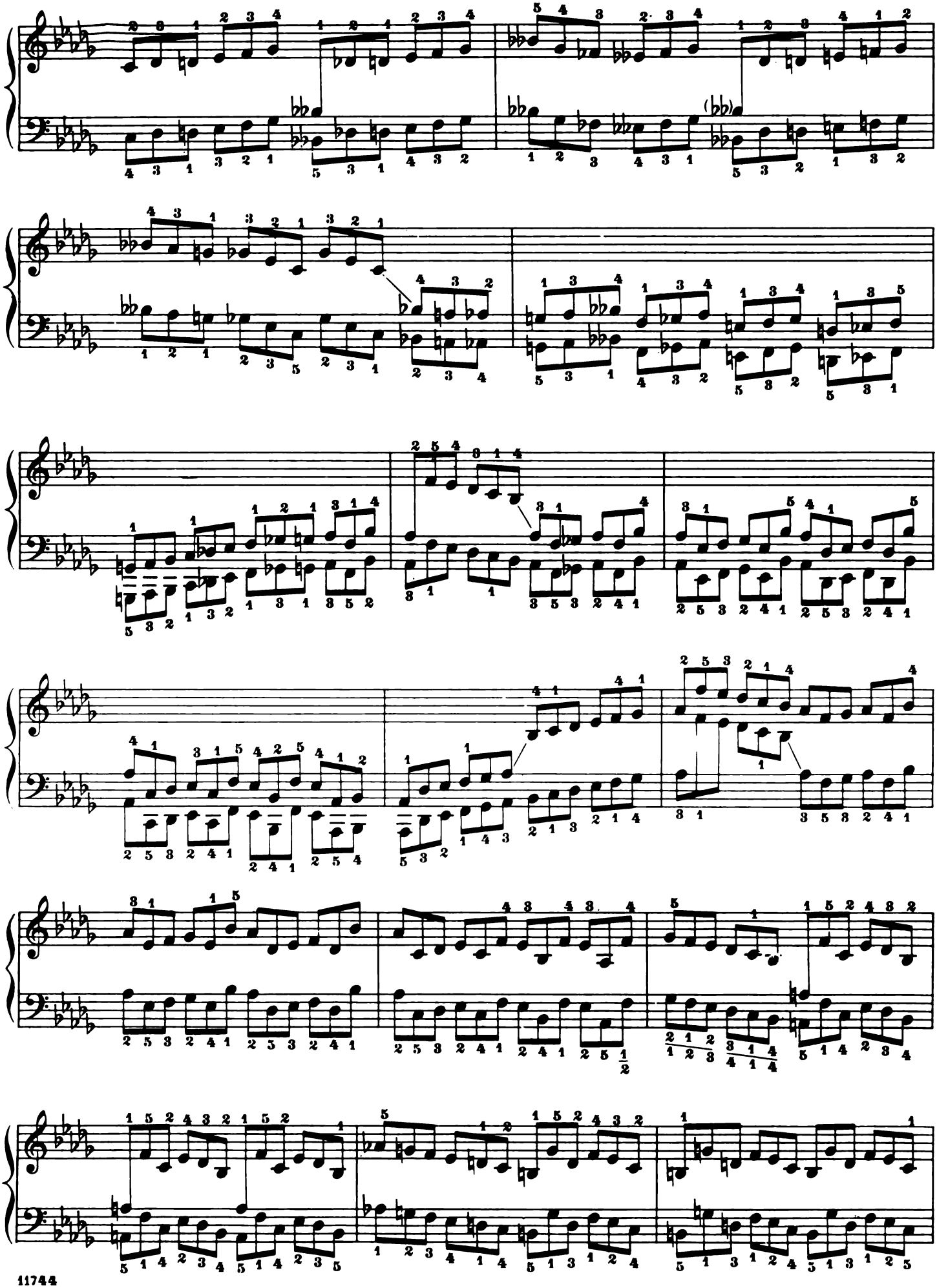

pp
cresc.
pp
1
2
p

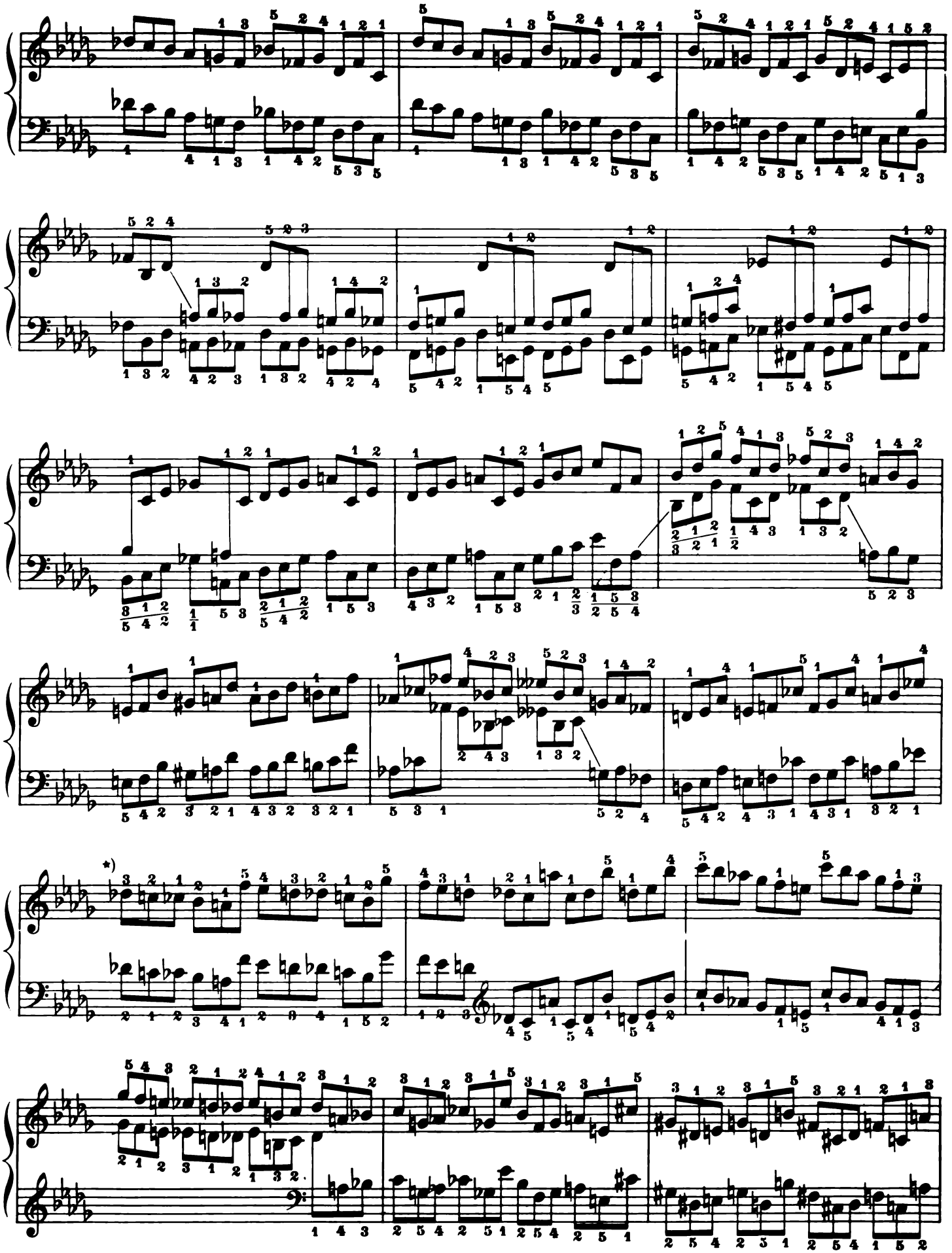

fz
fz
ff
sempre f
dim.
p
ff
f
p

Presto.

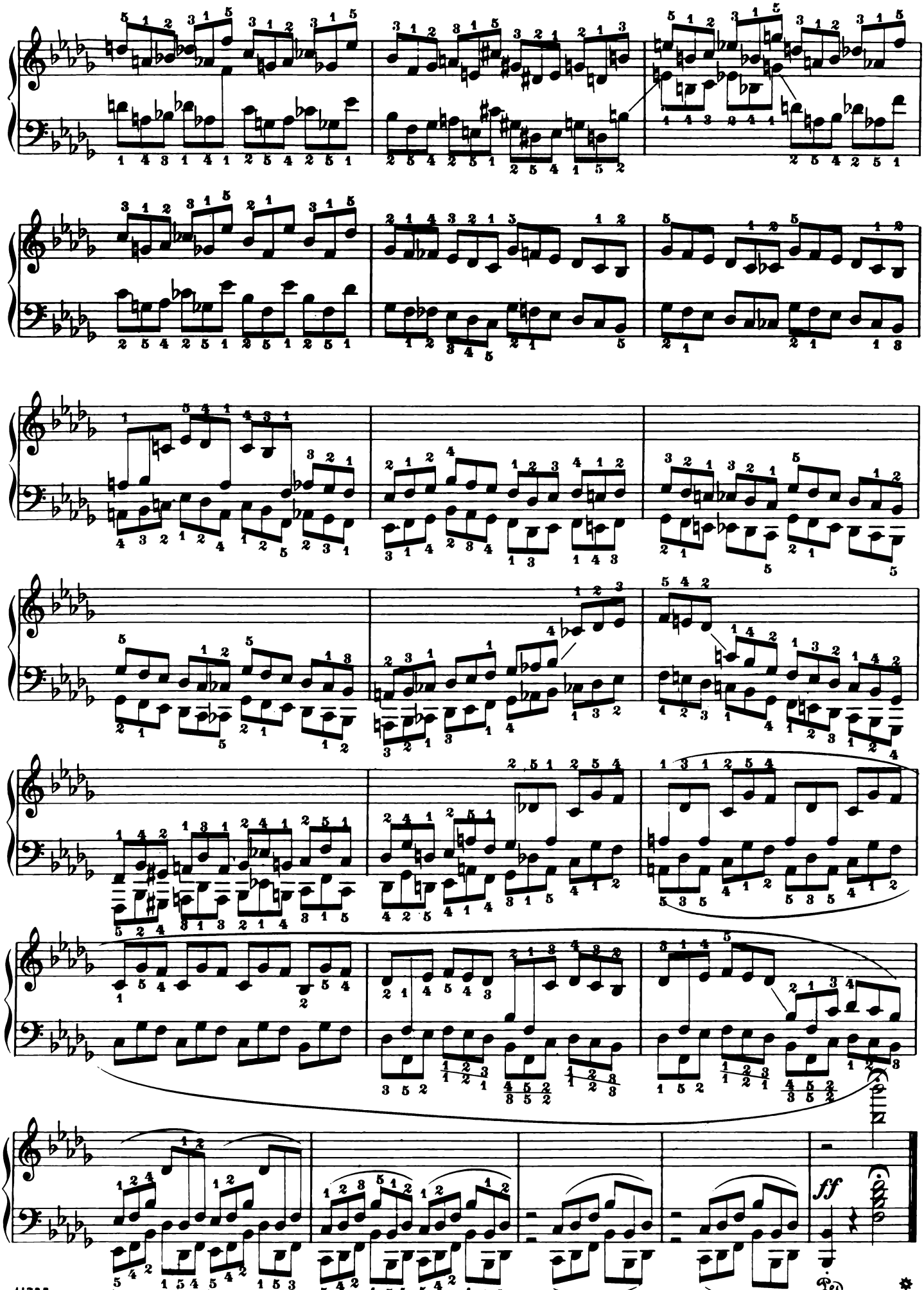
sotto voce e legato.







*) Between measures 8 and 9 are found, in earlier editions, *two measures more* which Chopin crossed out with his own hand in the copies belonging to Princess Czartoryska and Frau Streicher.


ff
Ped.

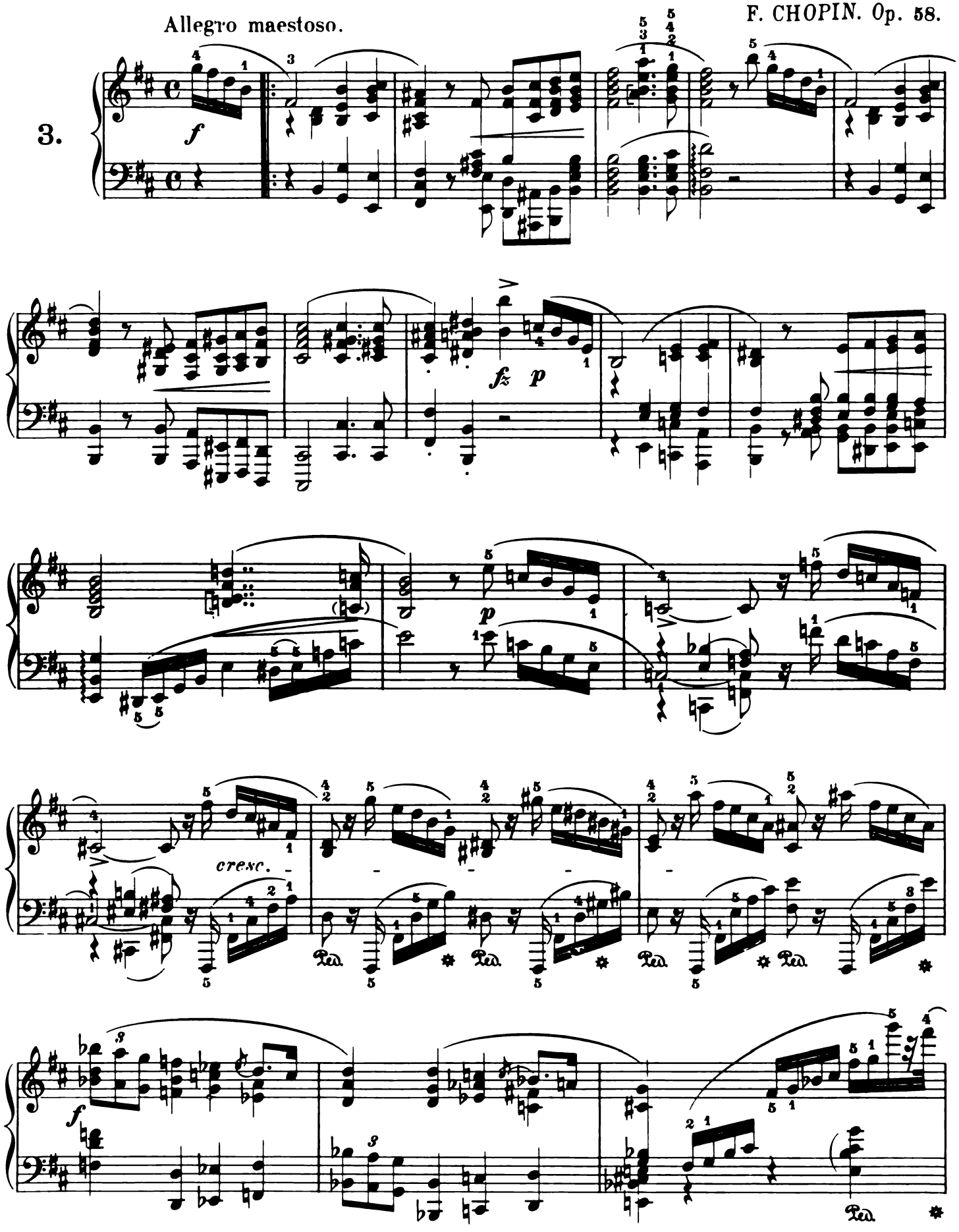
Sonate.

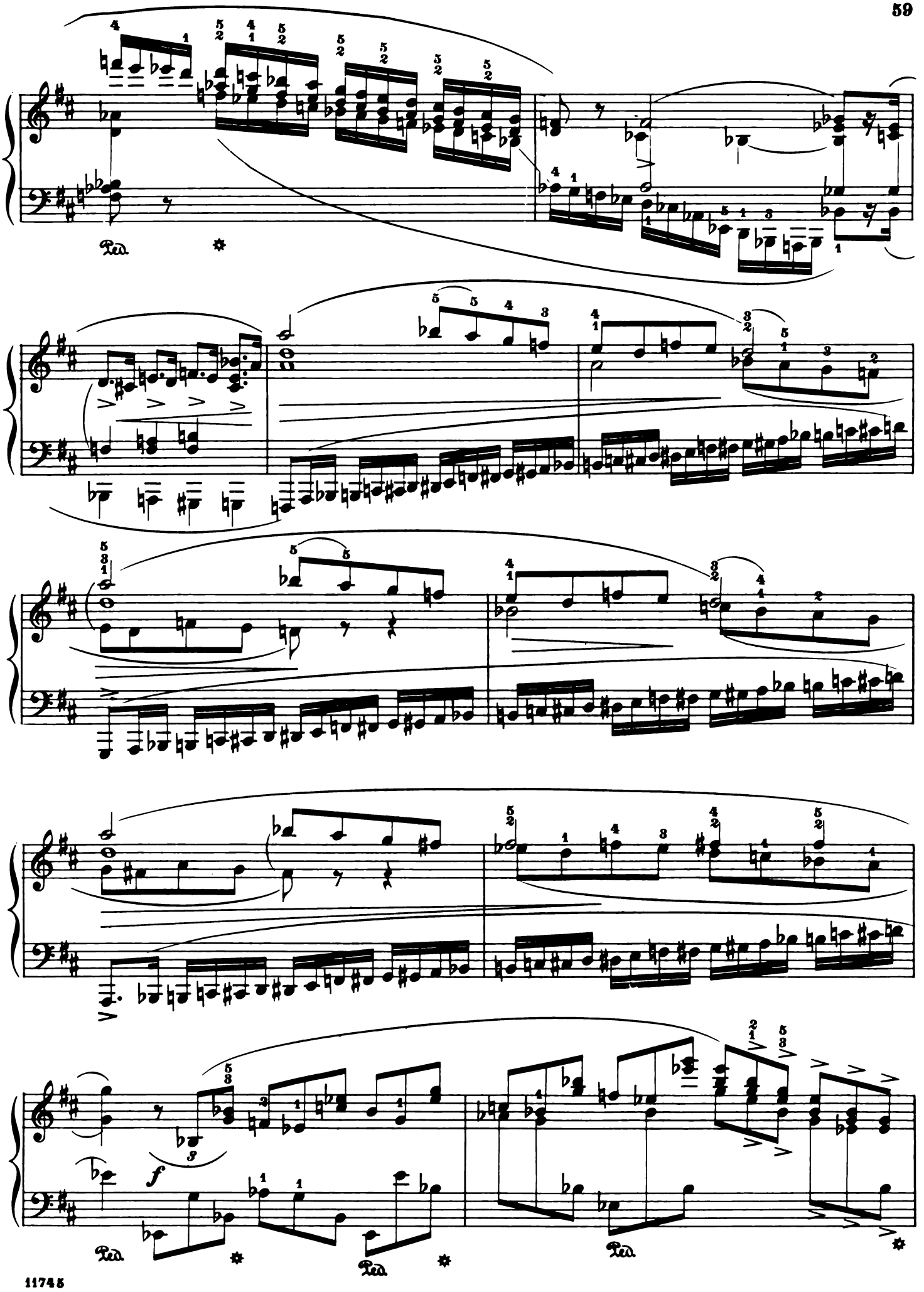
à Mme la Comtesse E. de PERTHUIS.

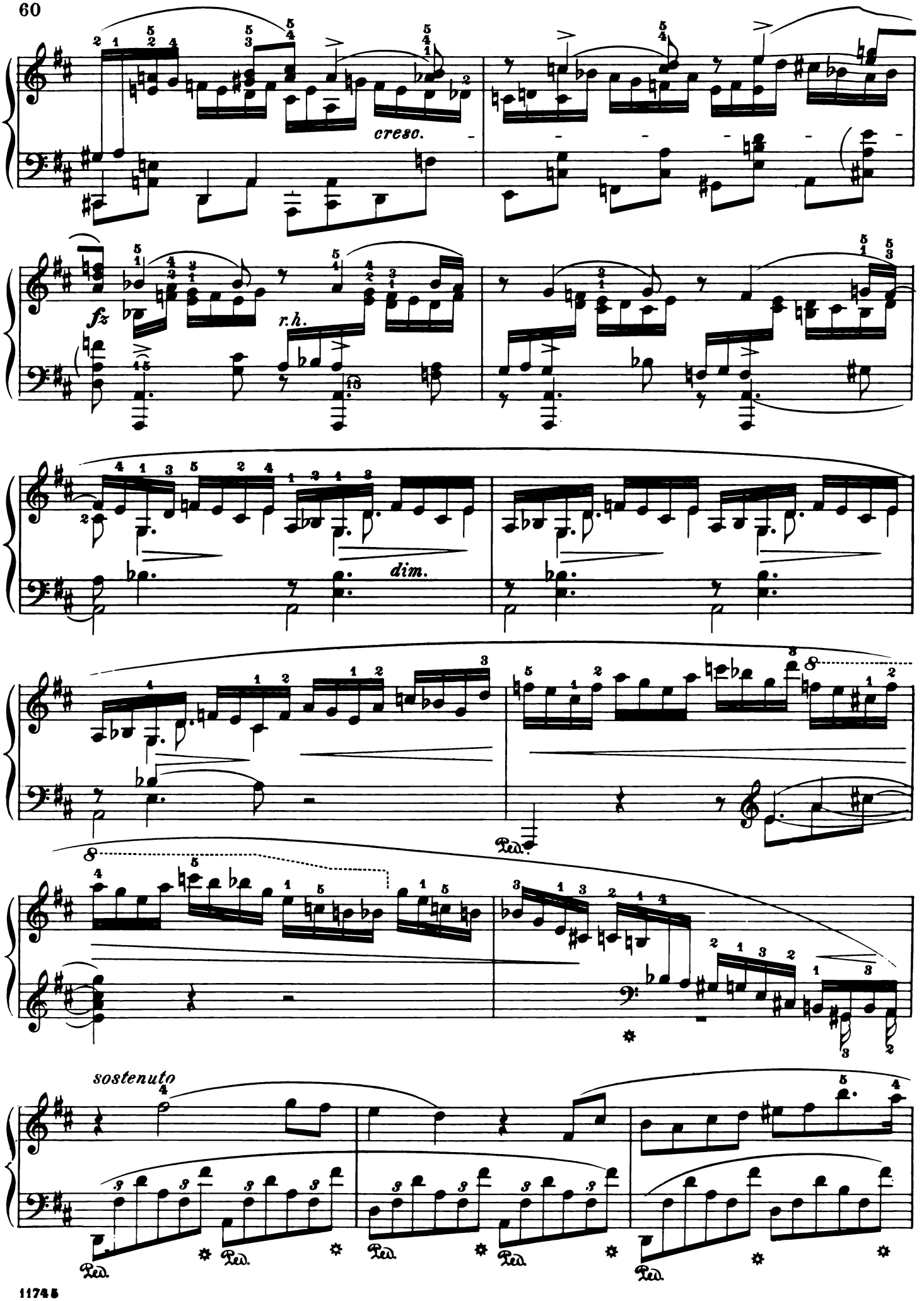
F. CHOPIN. Op. 58.

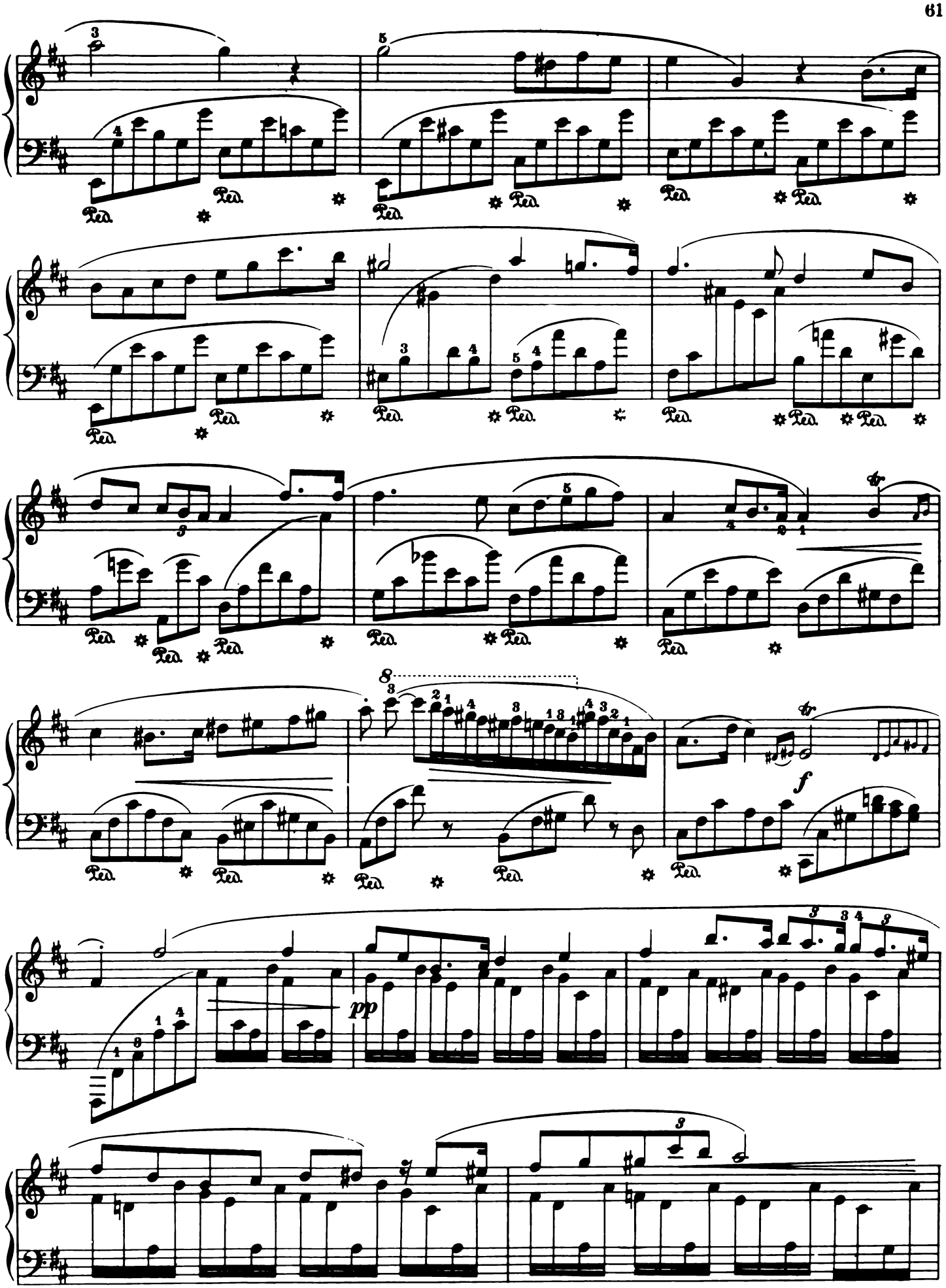
Allegro maestoso.

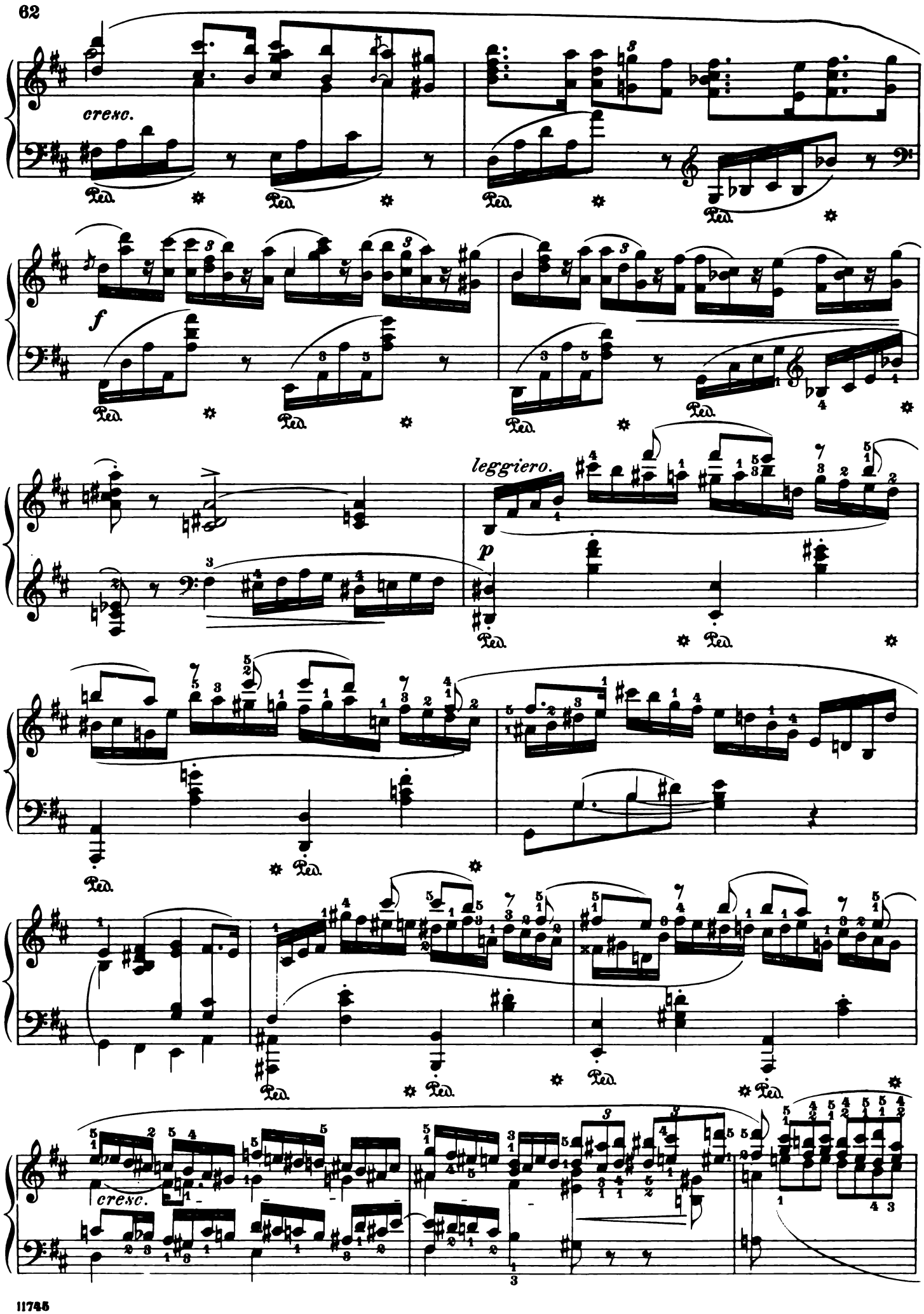
3.




Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
f


cresc.
fz
r.h.
dim.
Ped.
sostenuto


8
pp
f


cresc.
Ped.
f
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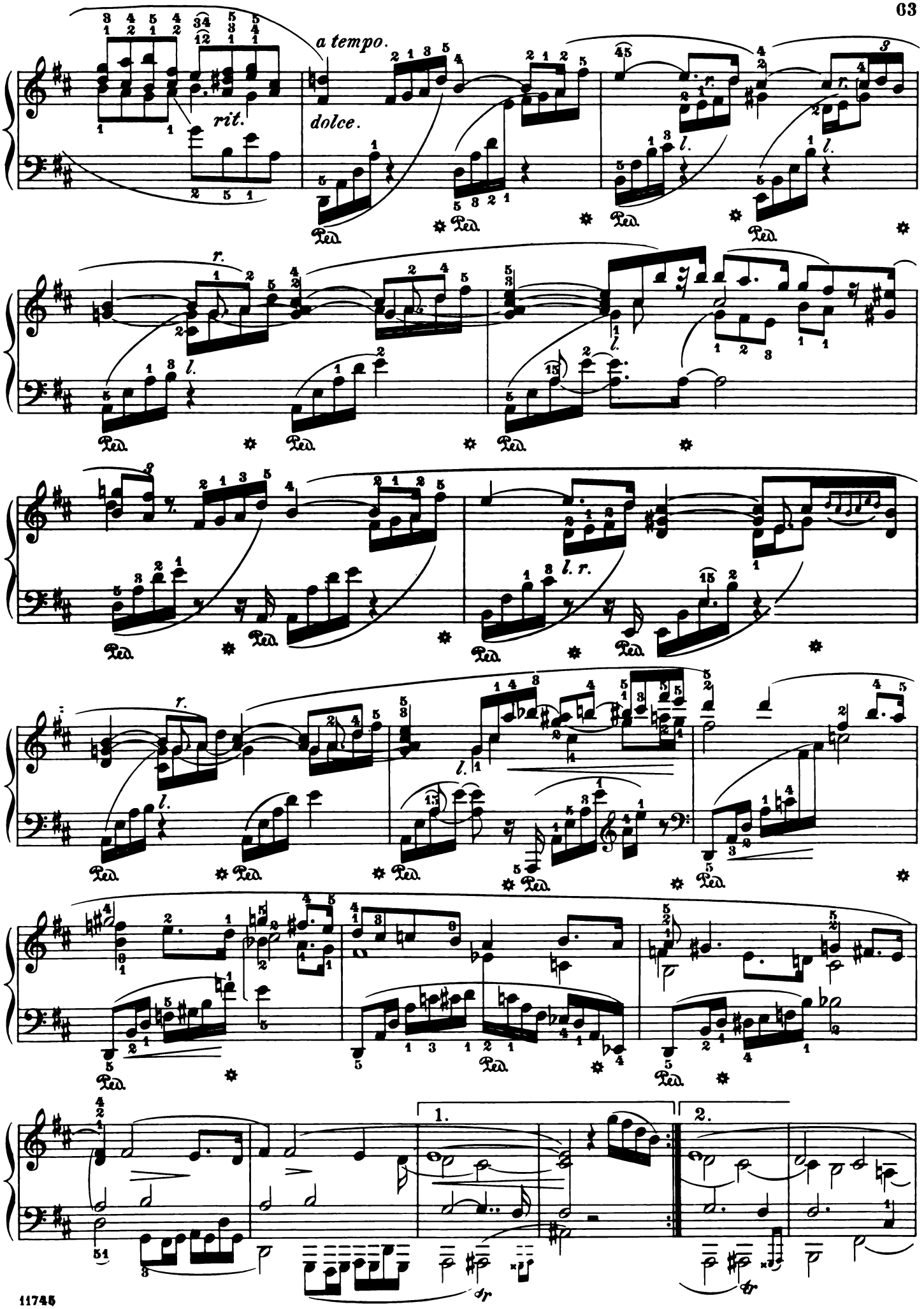
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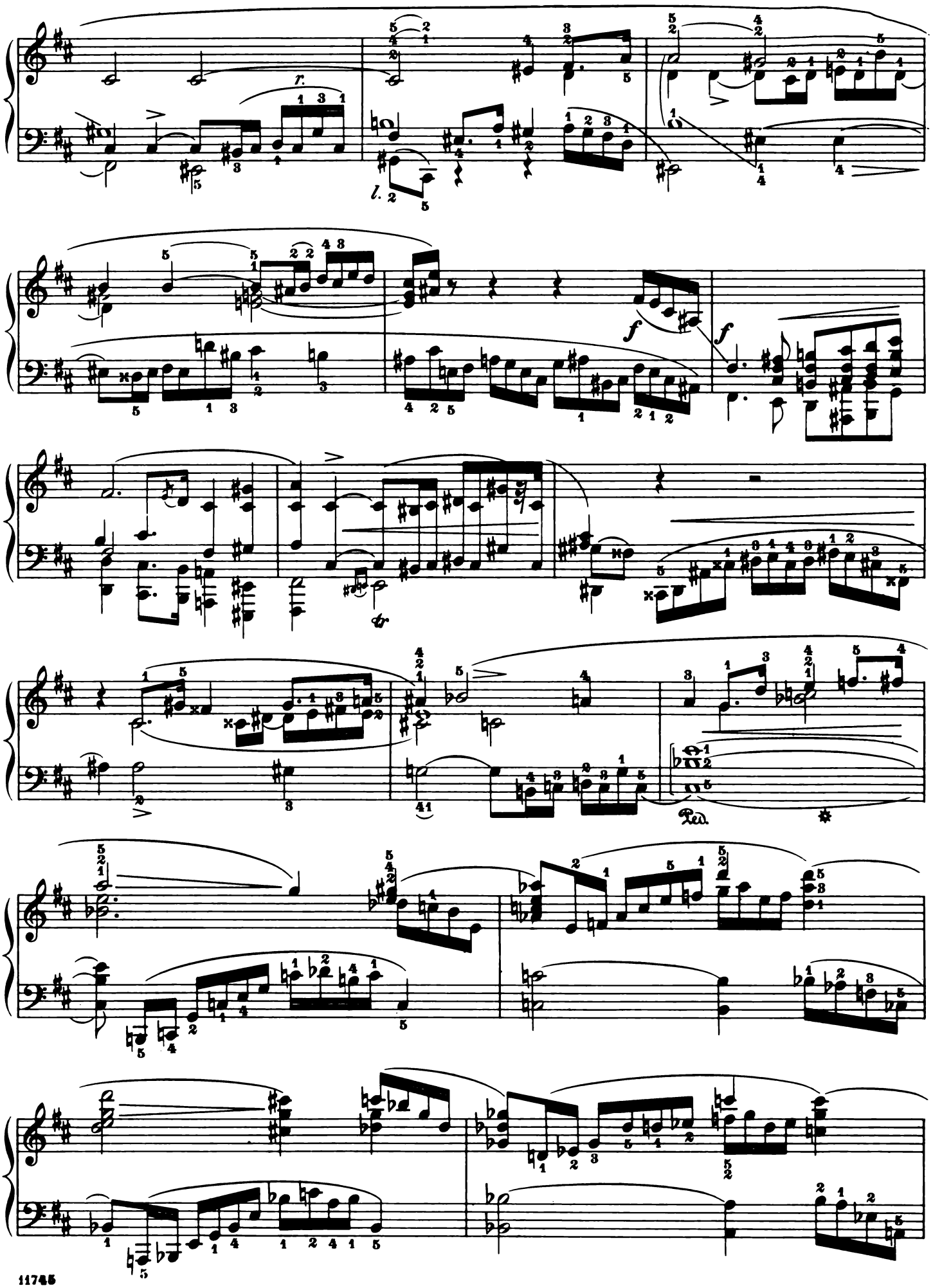
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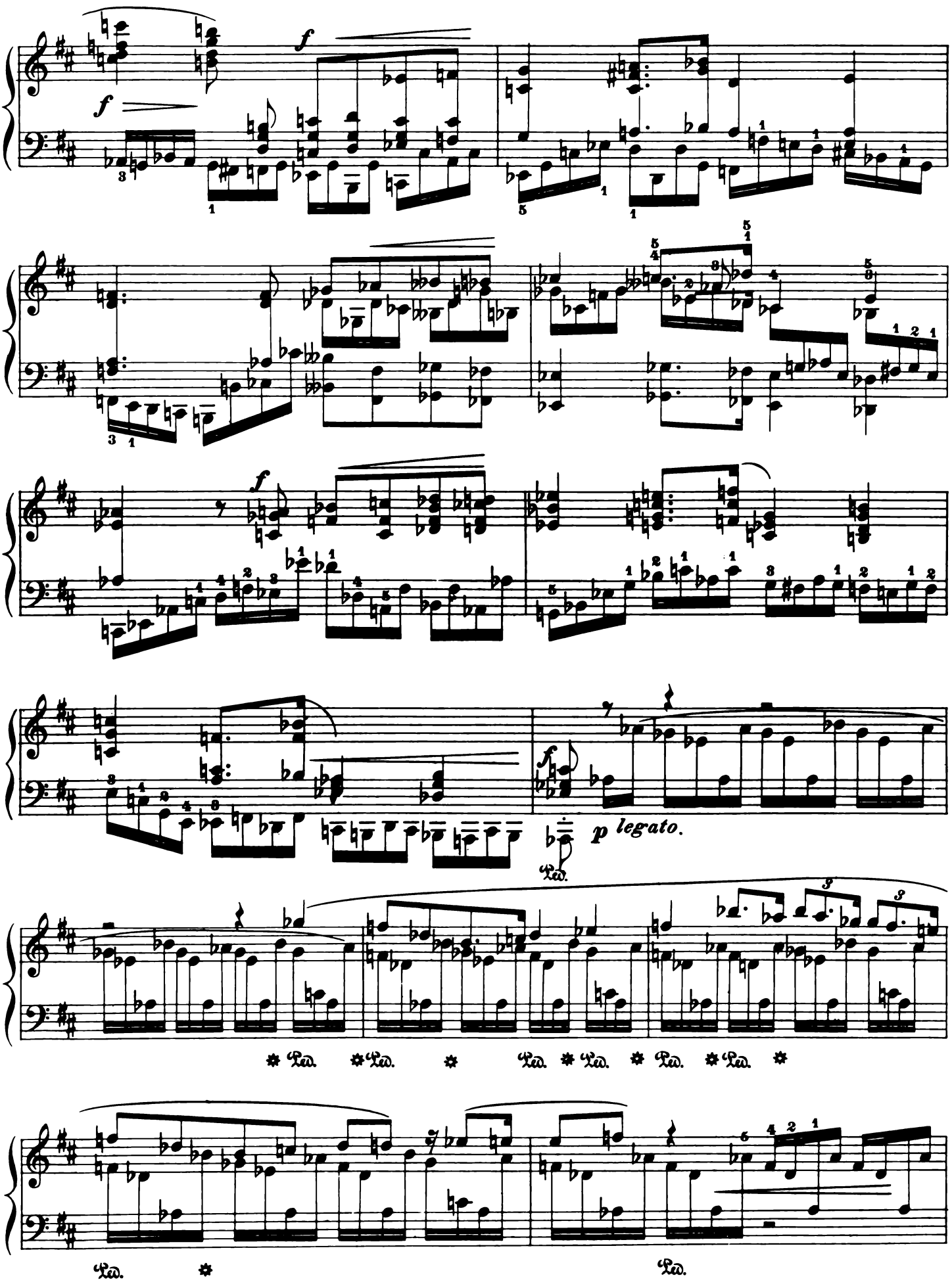
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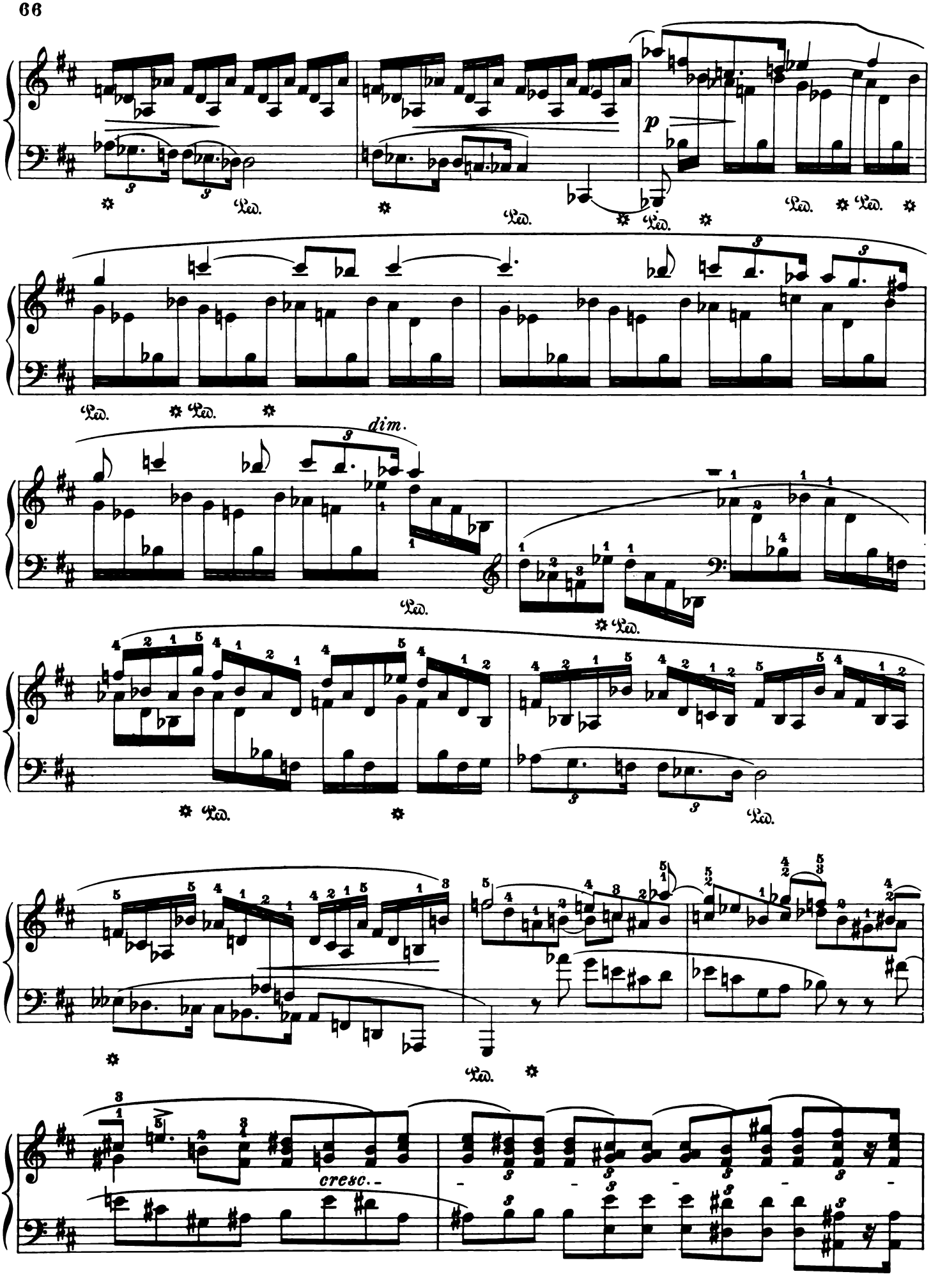
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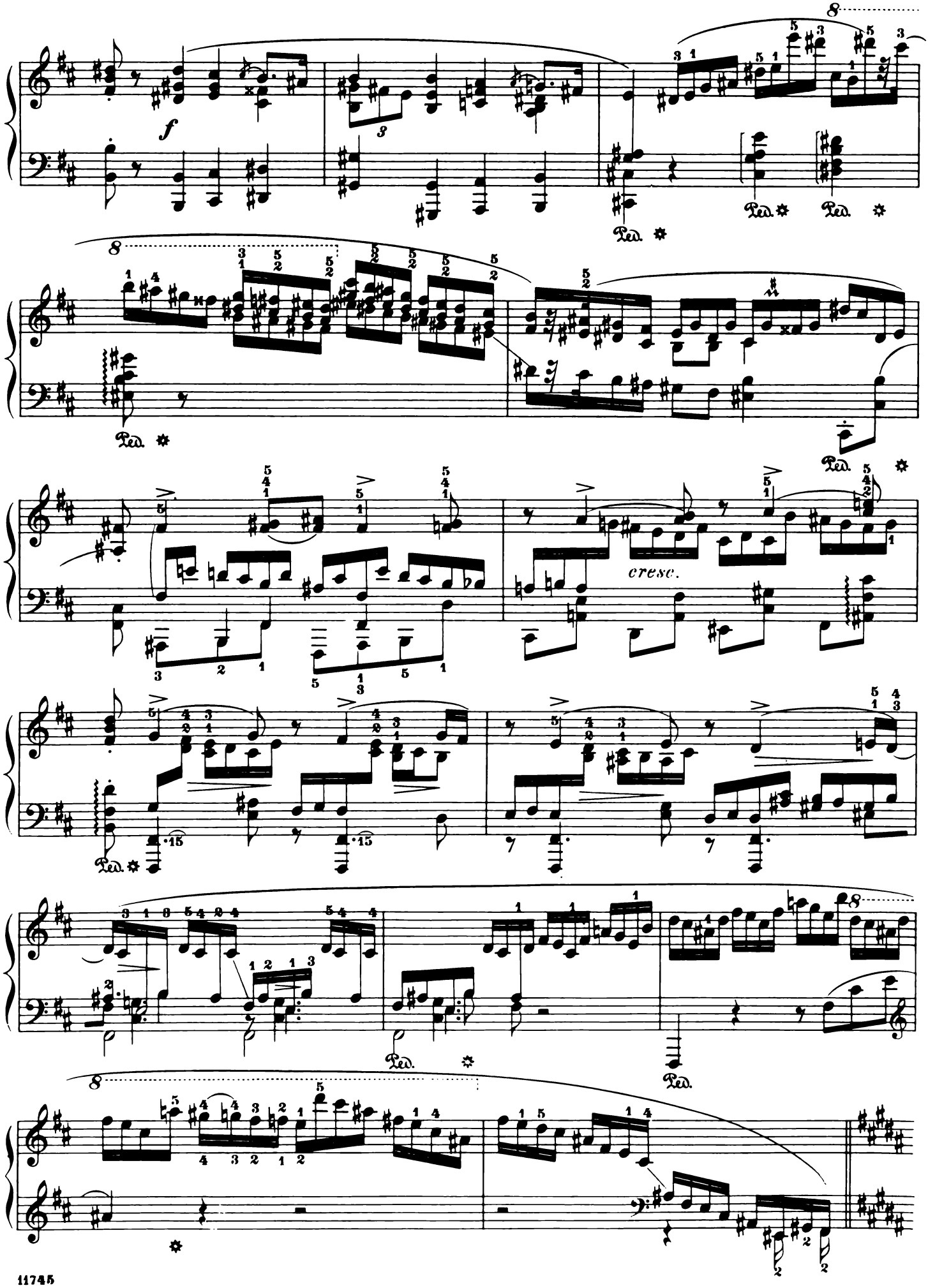
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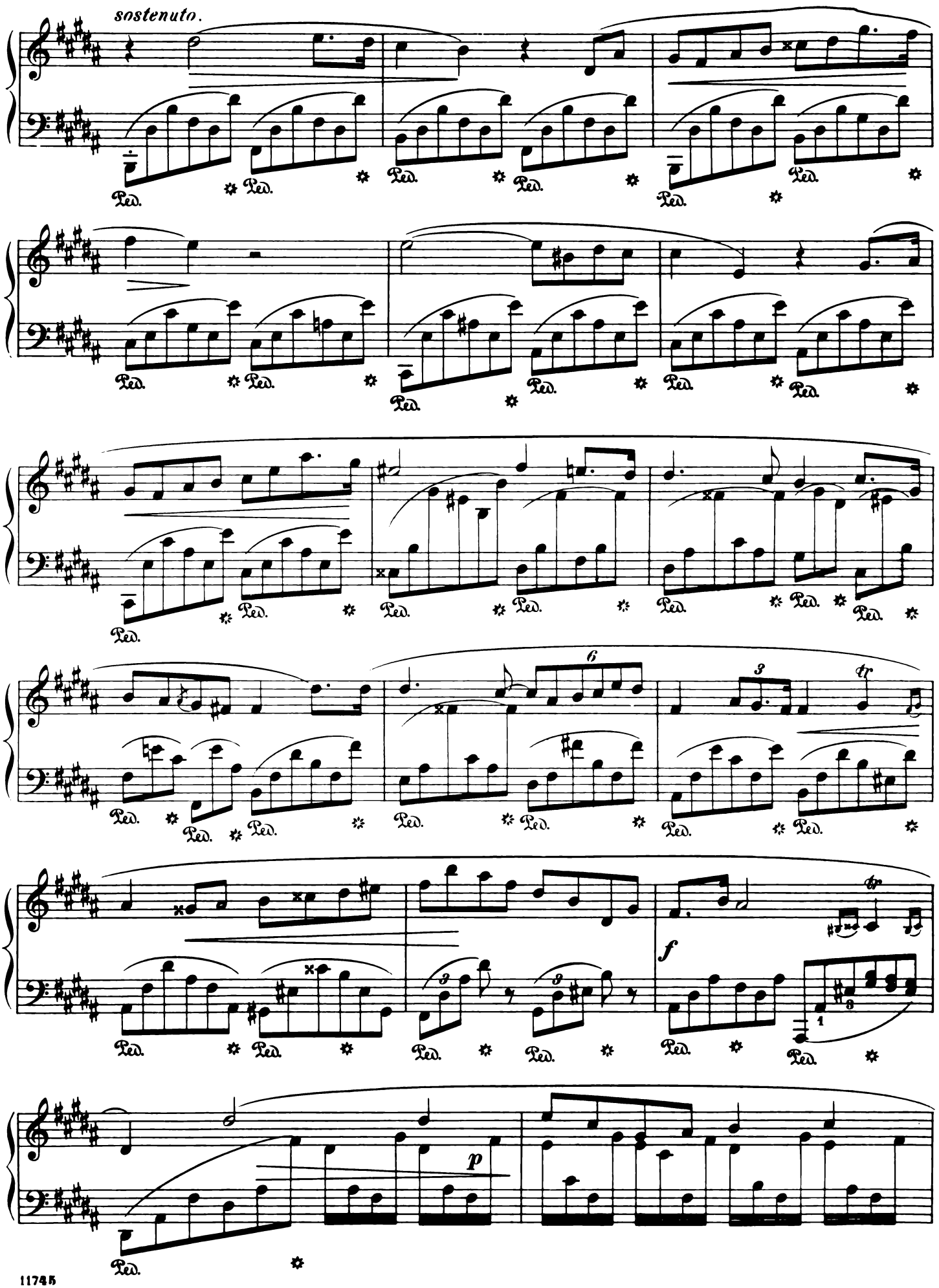
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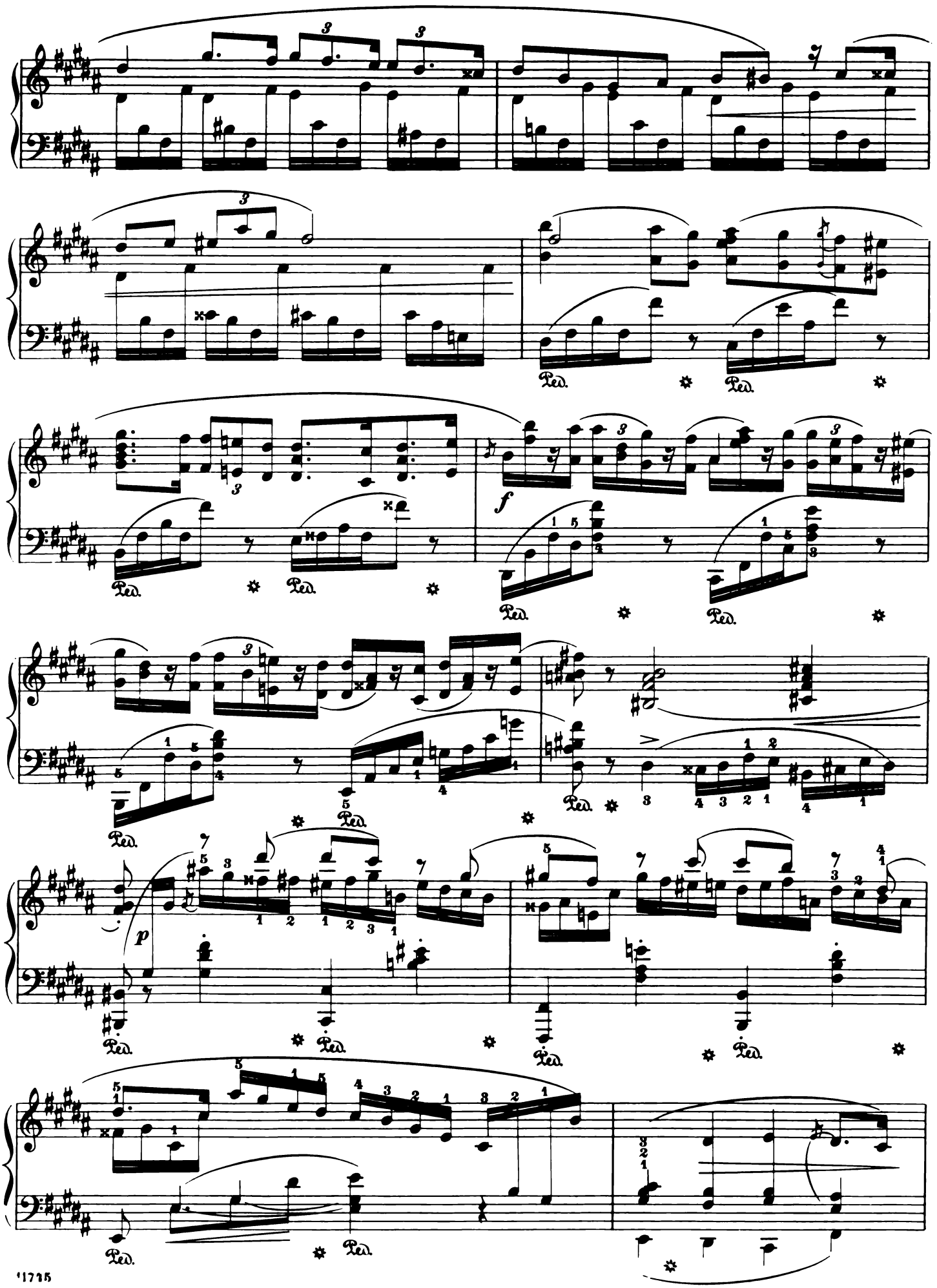
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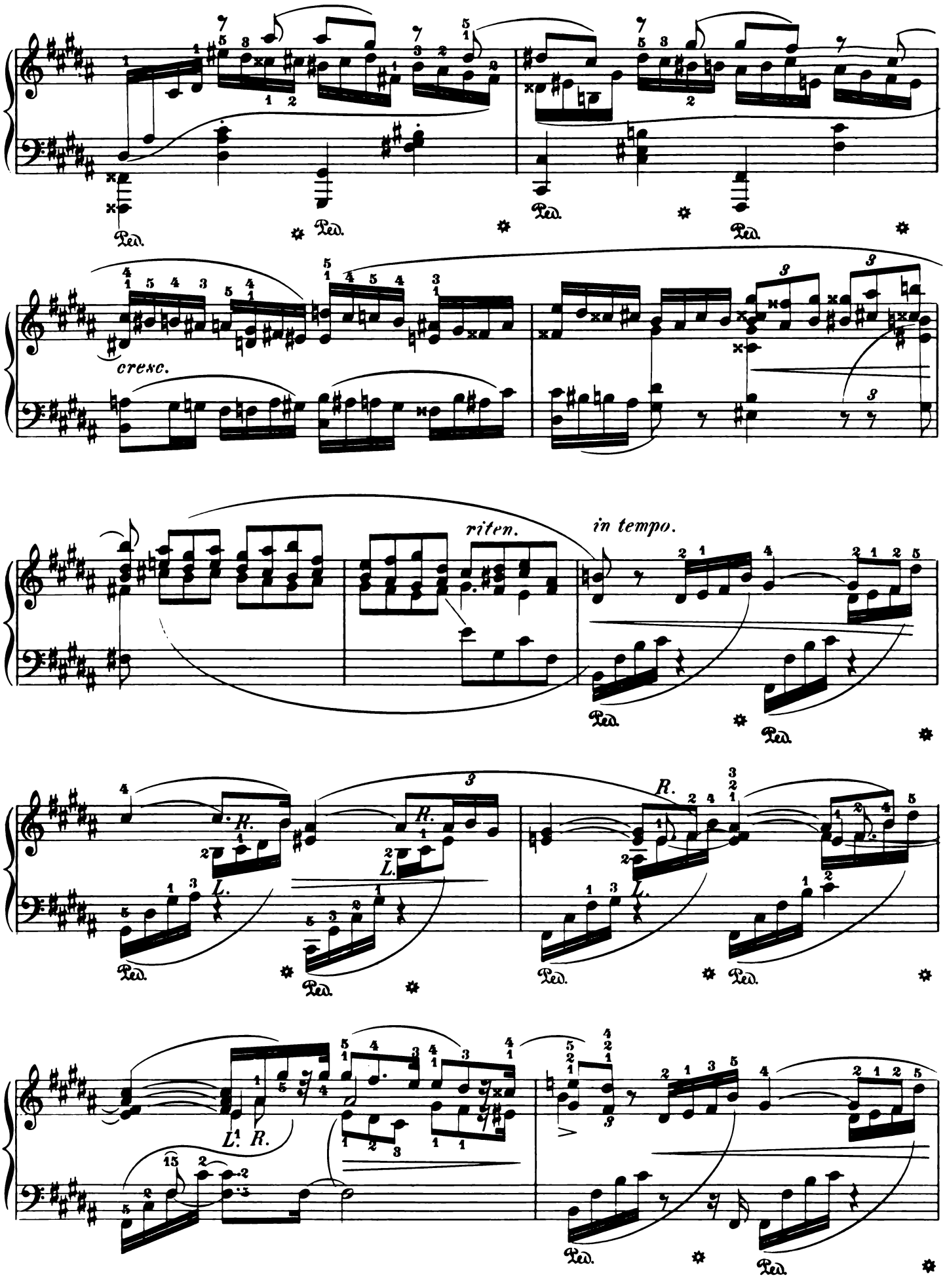
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R.
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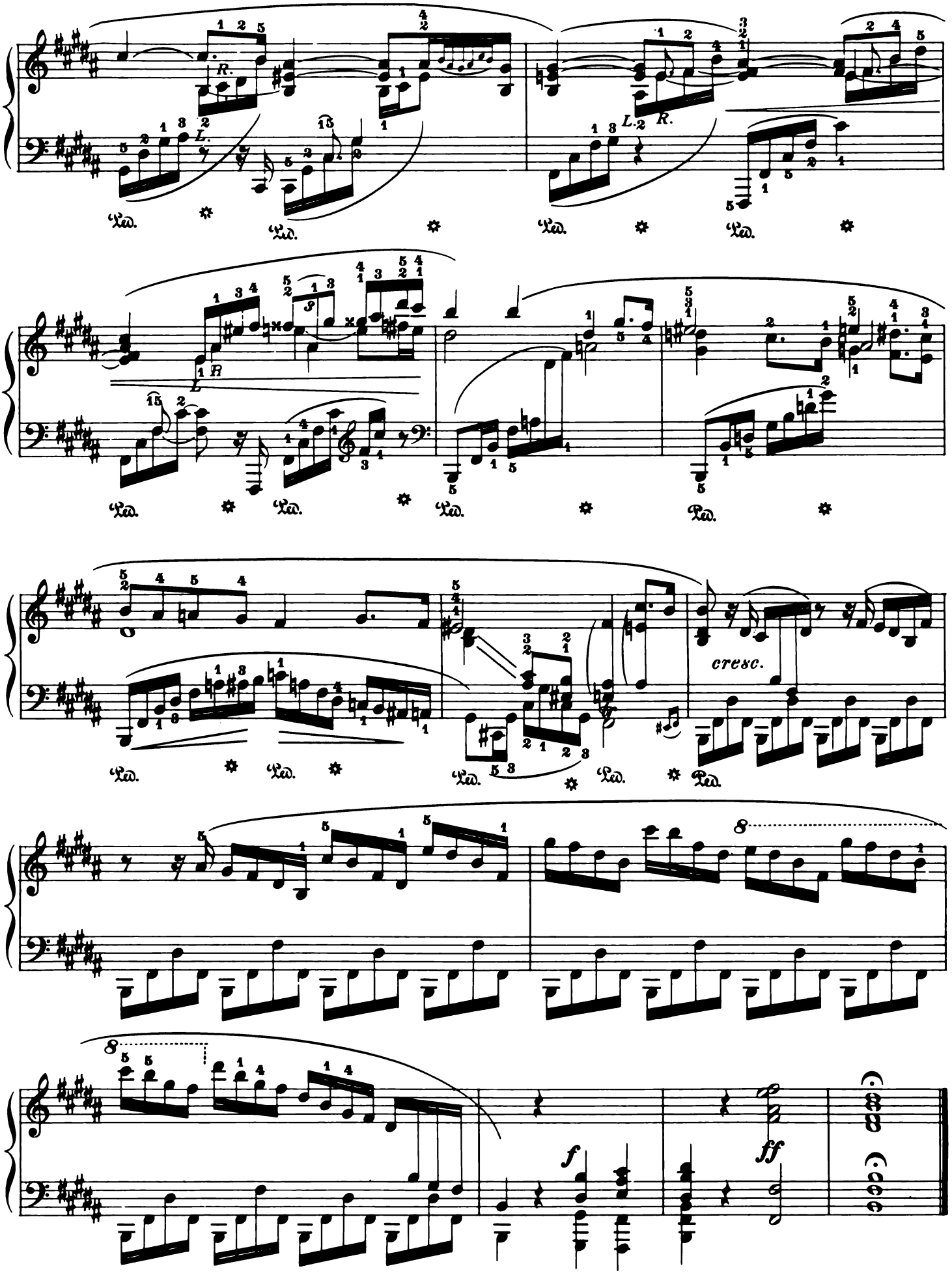
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ff

Scherzo.

Molto vivace.

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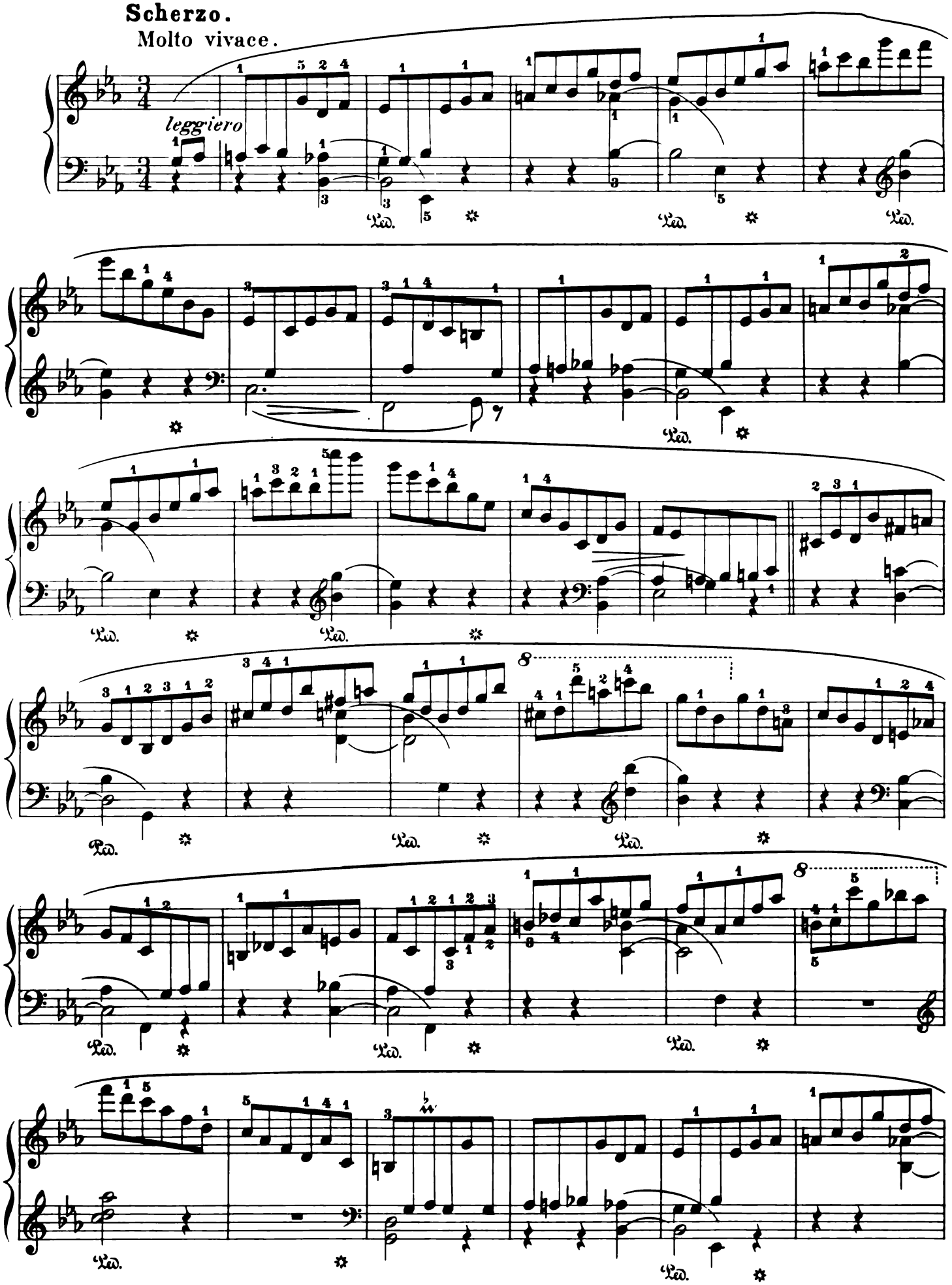

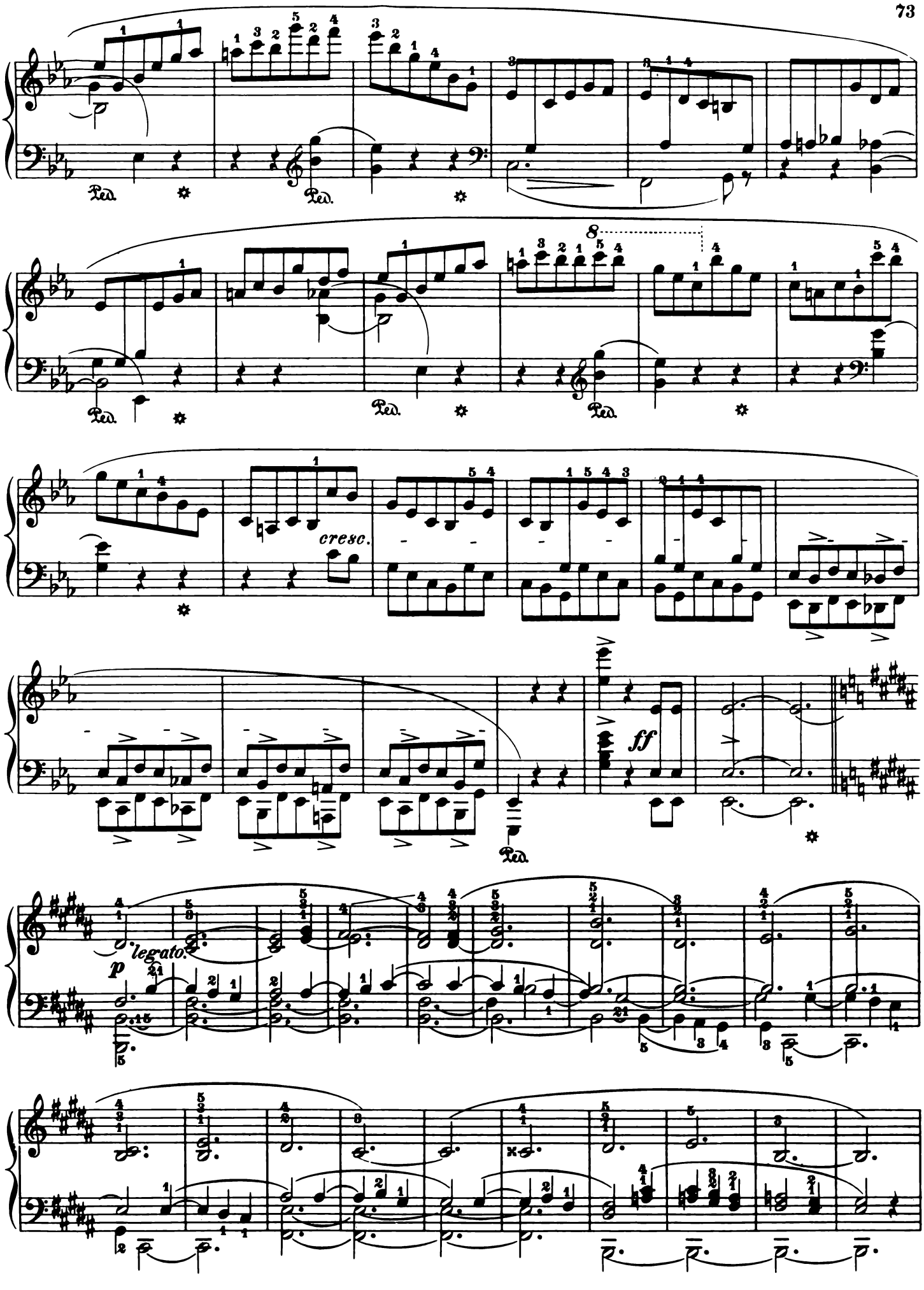
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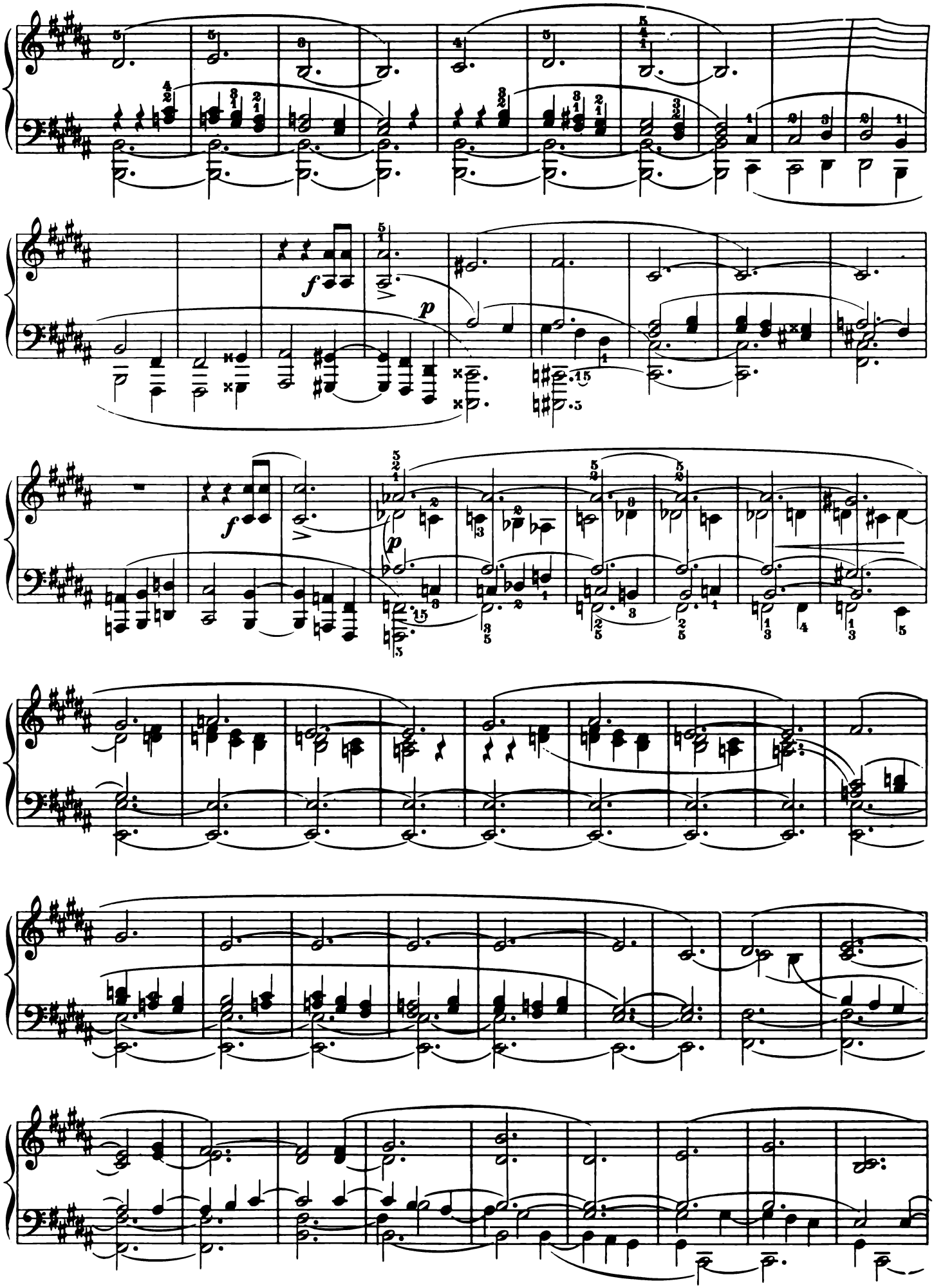

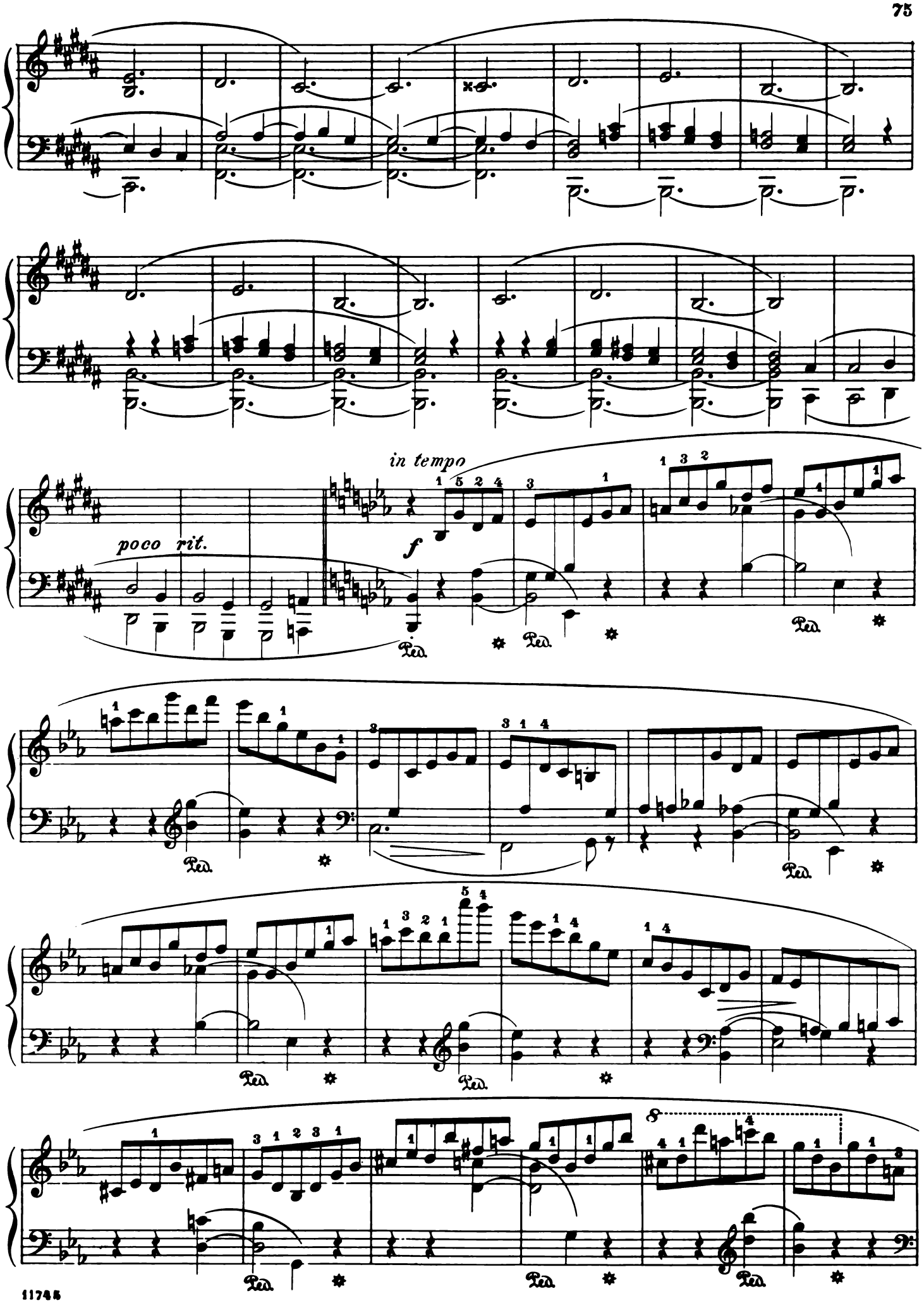
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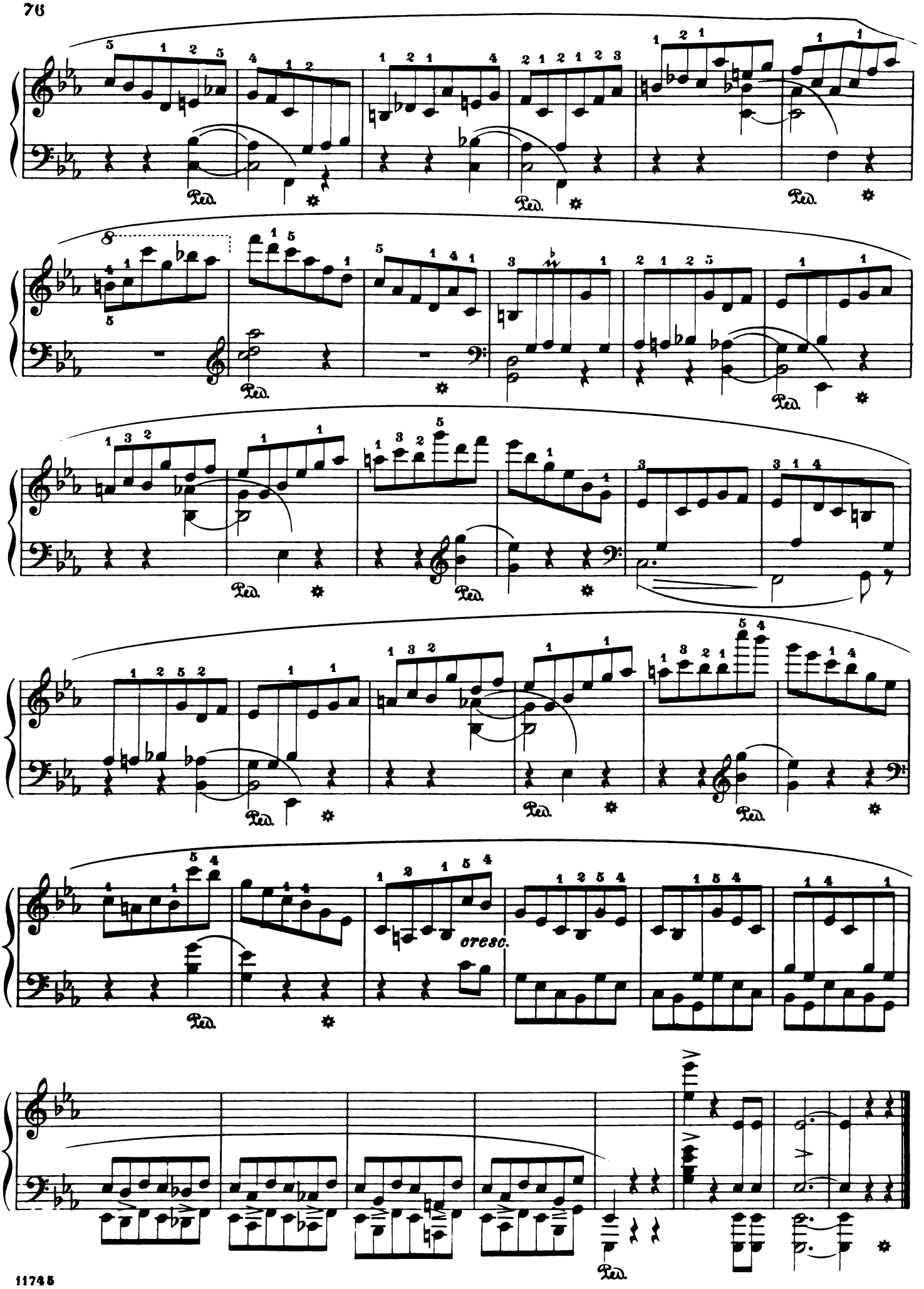
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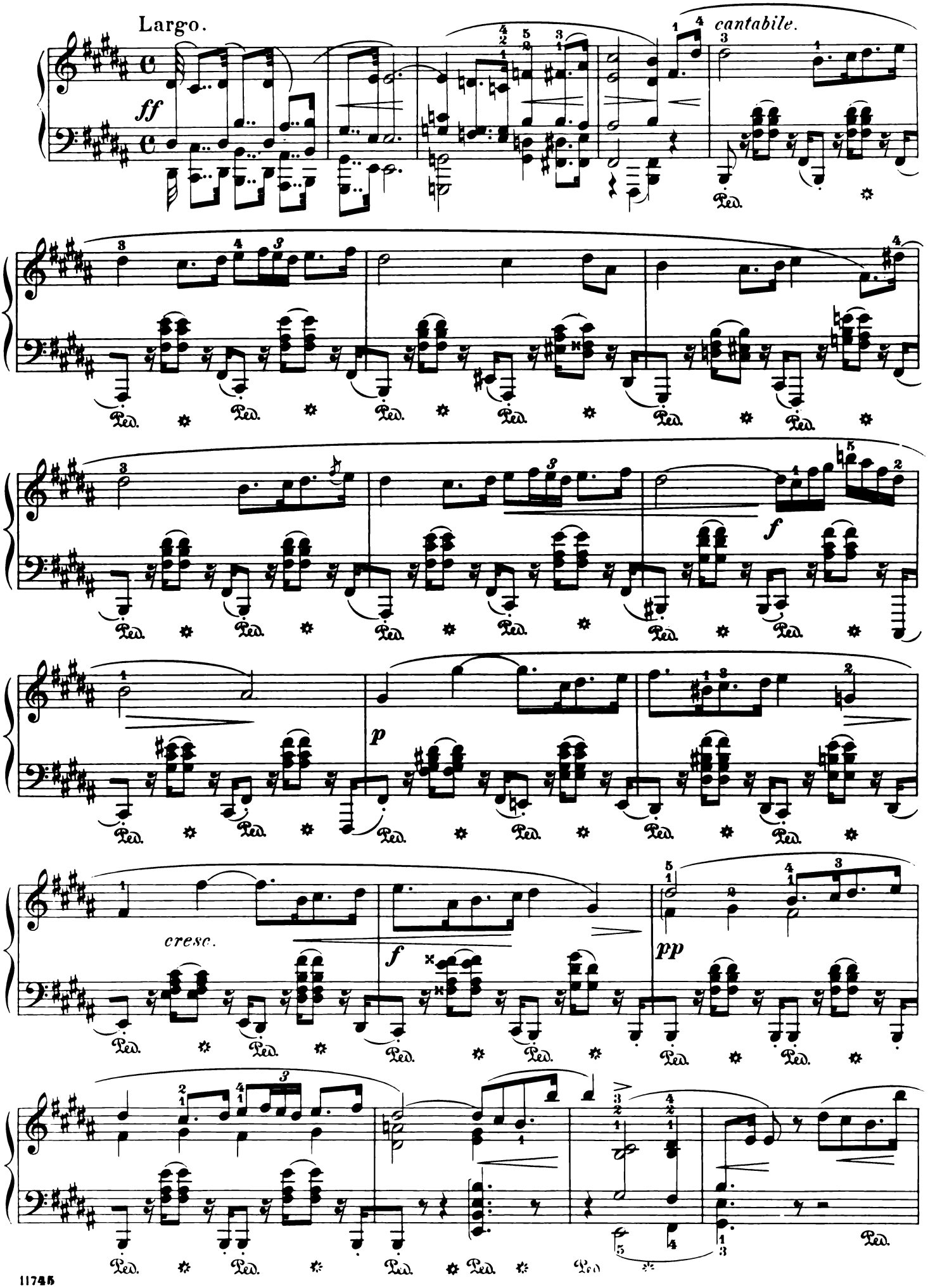
Largo.
ff
cantabile.
Ped.
f
p
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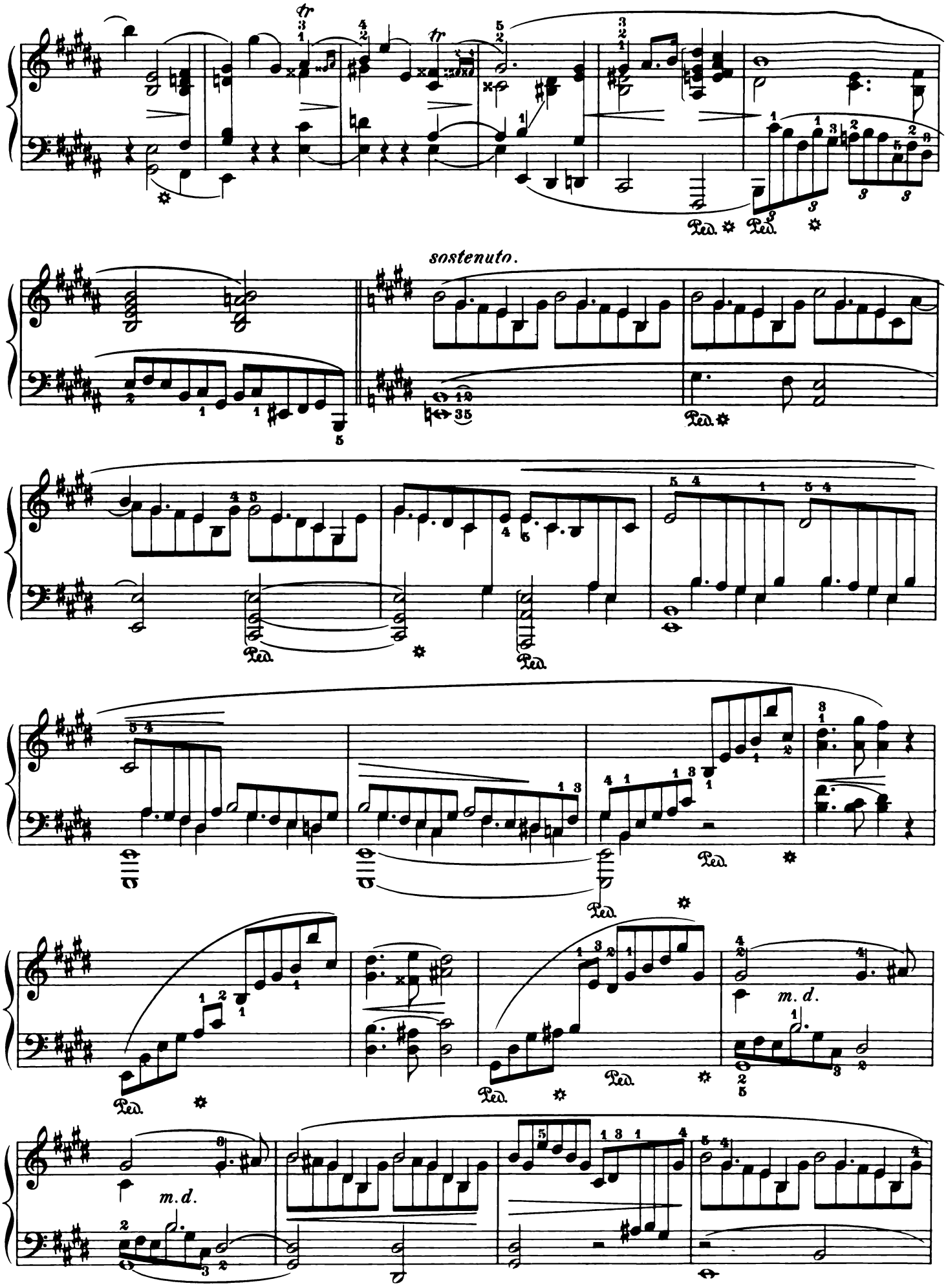
pp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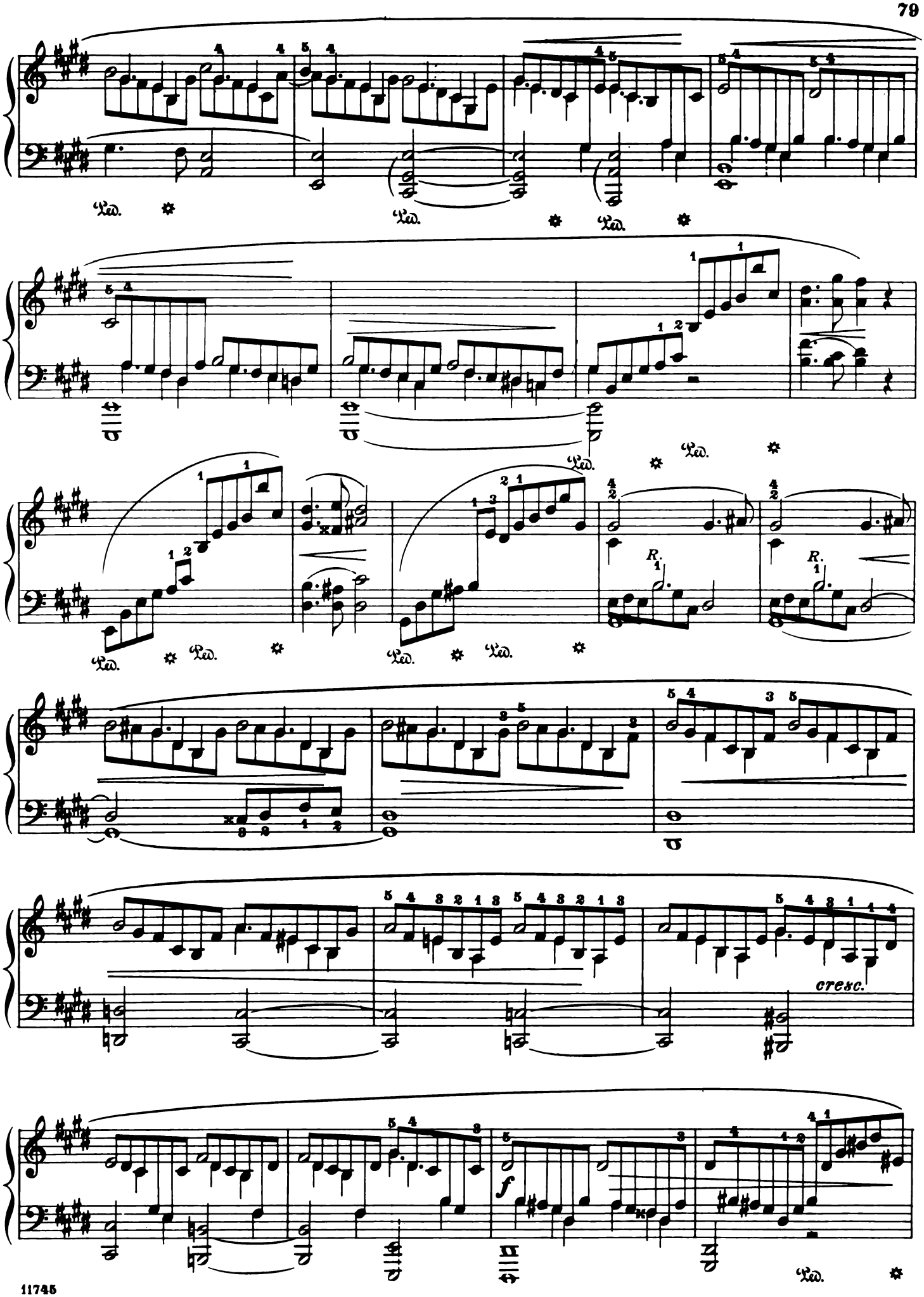
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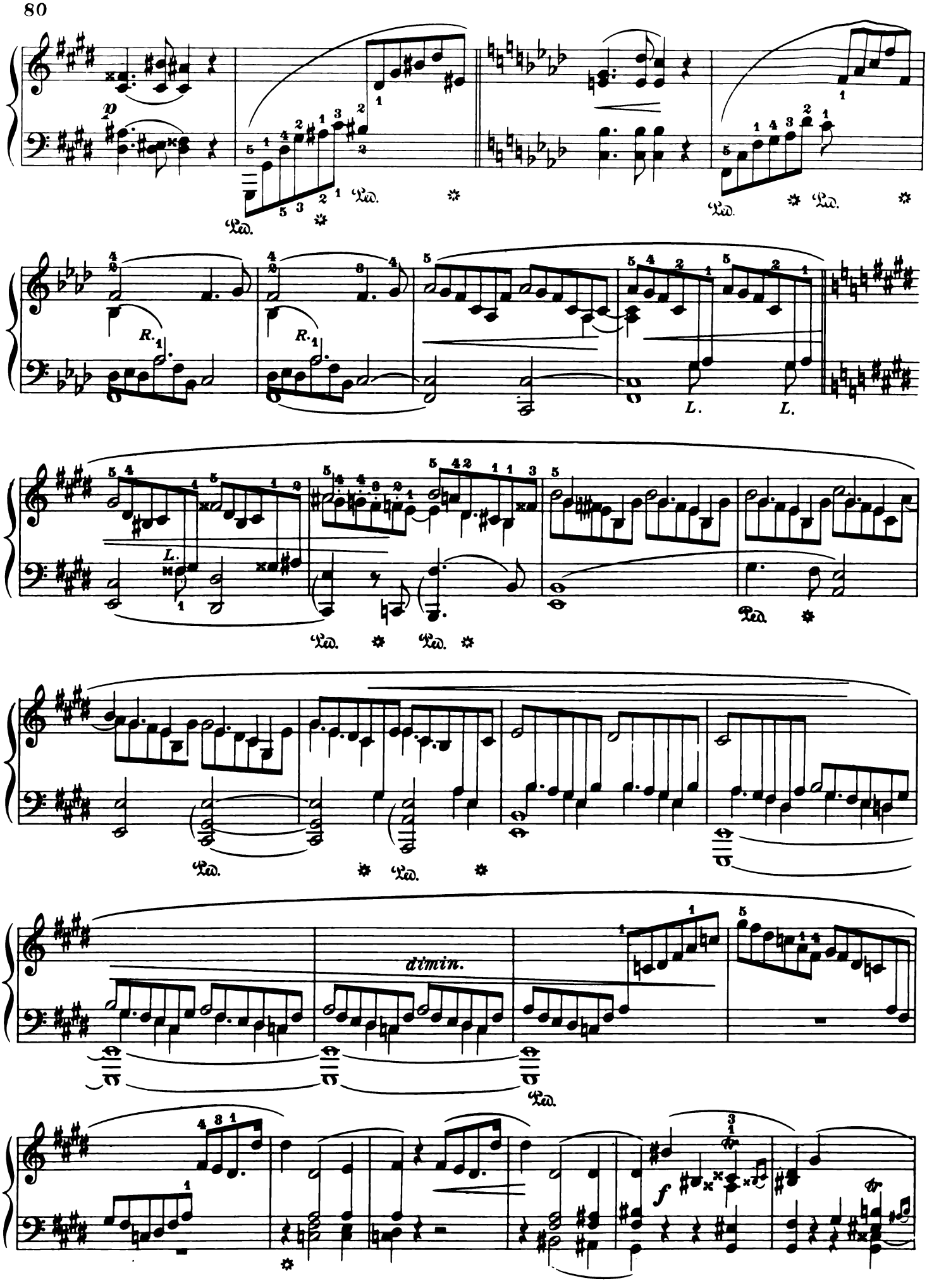
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R.
L.
dimin.
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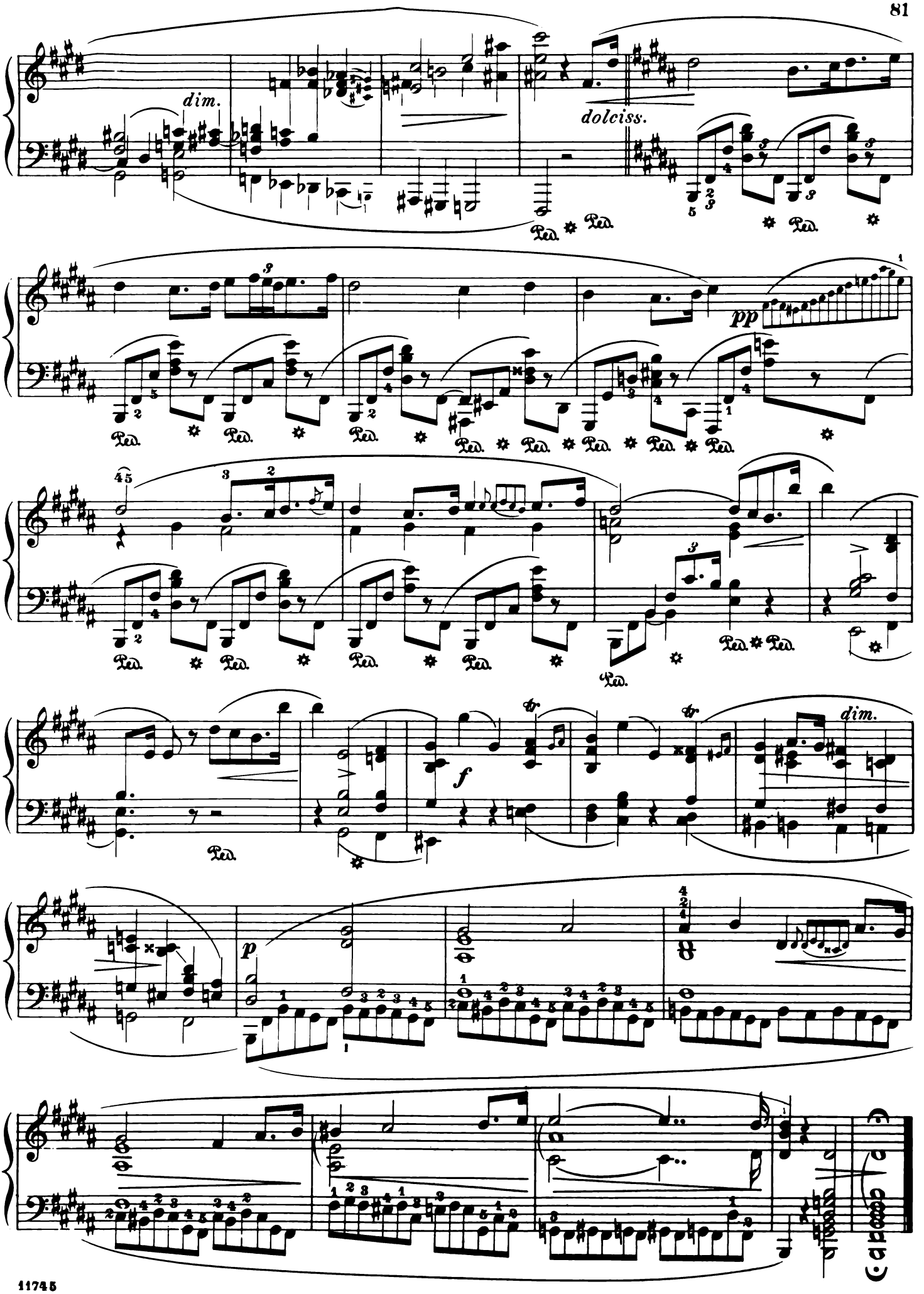
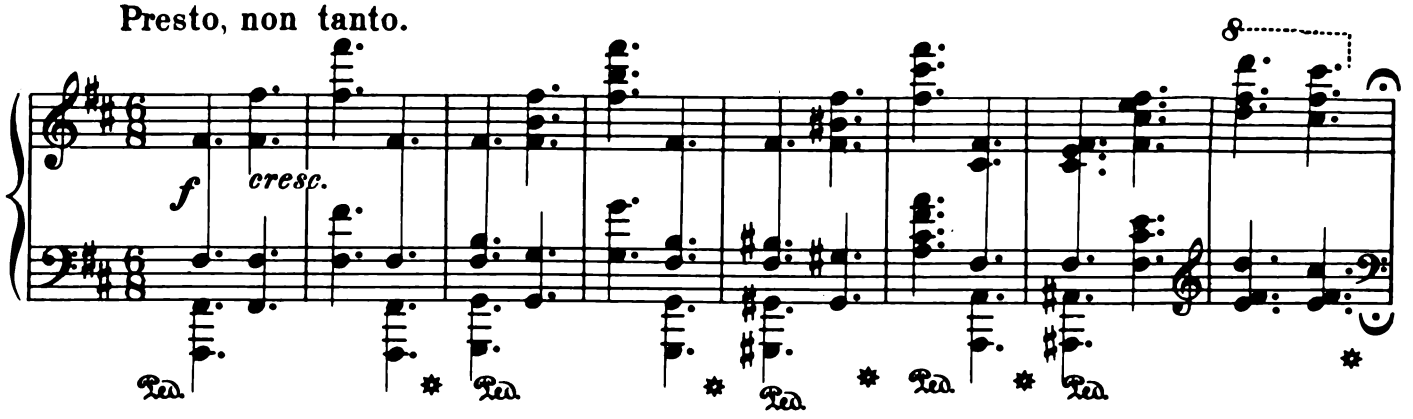

dim.
dolciss.
pp
f
dim.
p

Finale.

Presto, non tanto.



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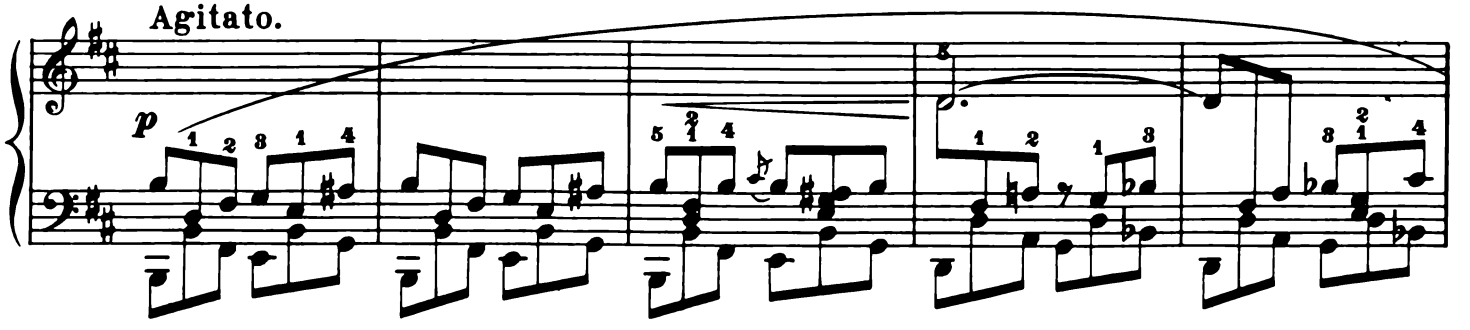

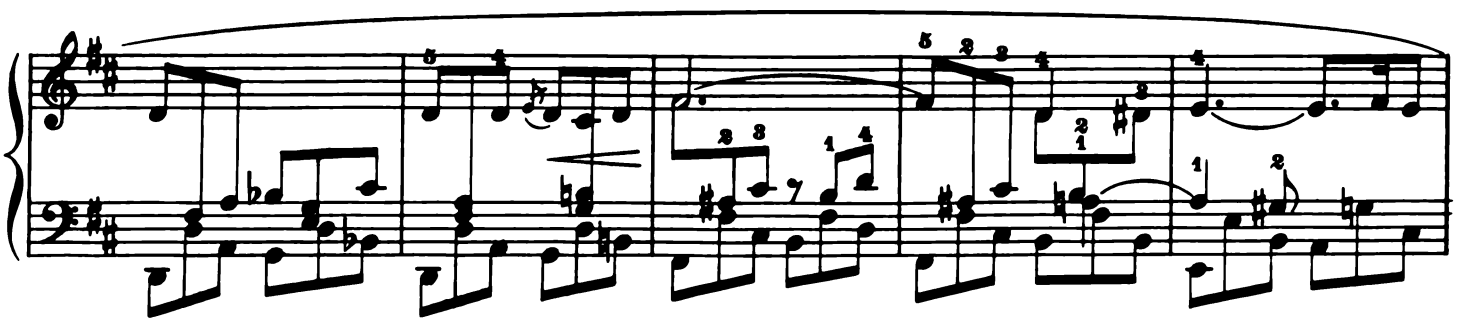

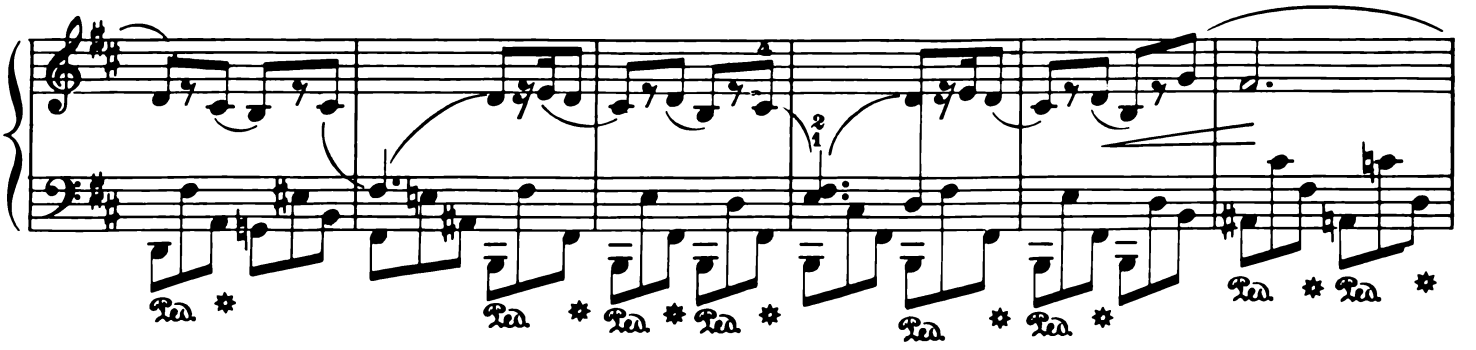

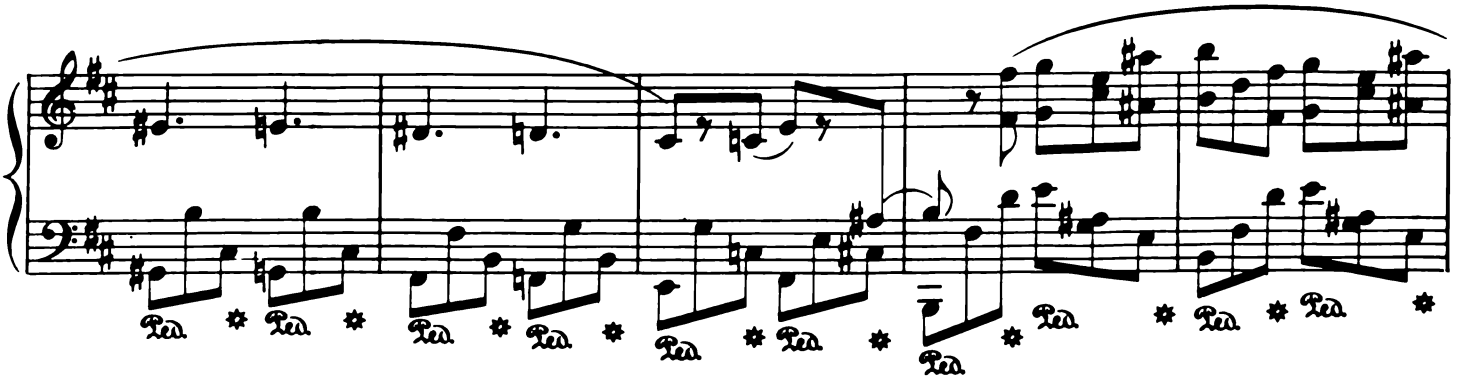

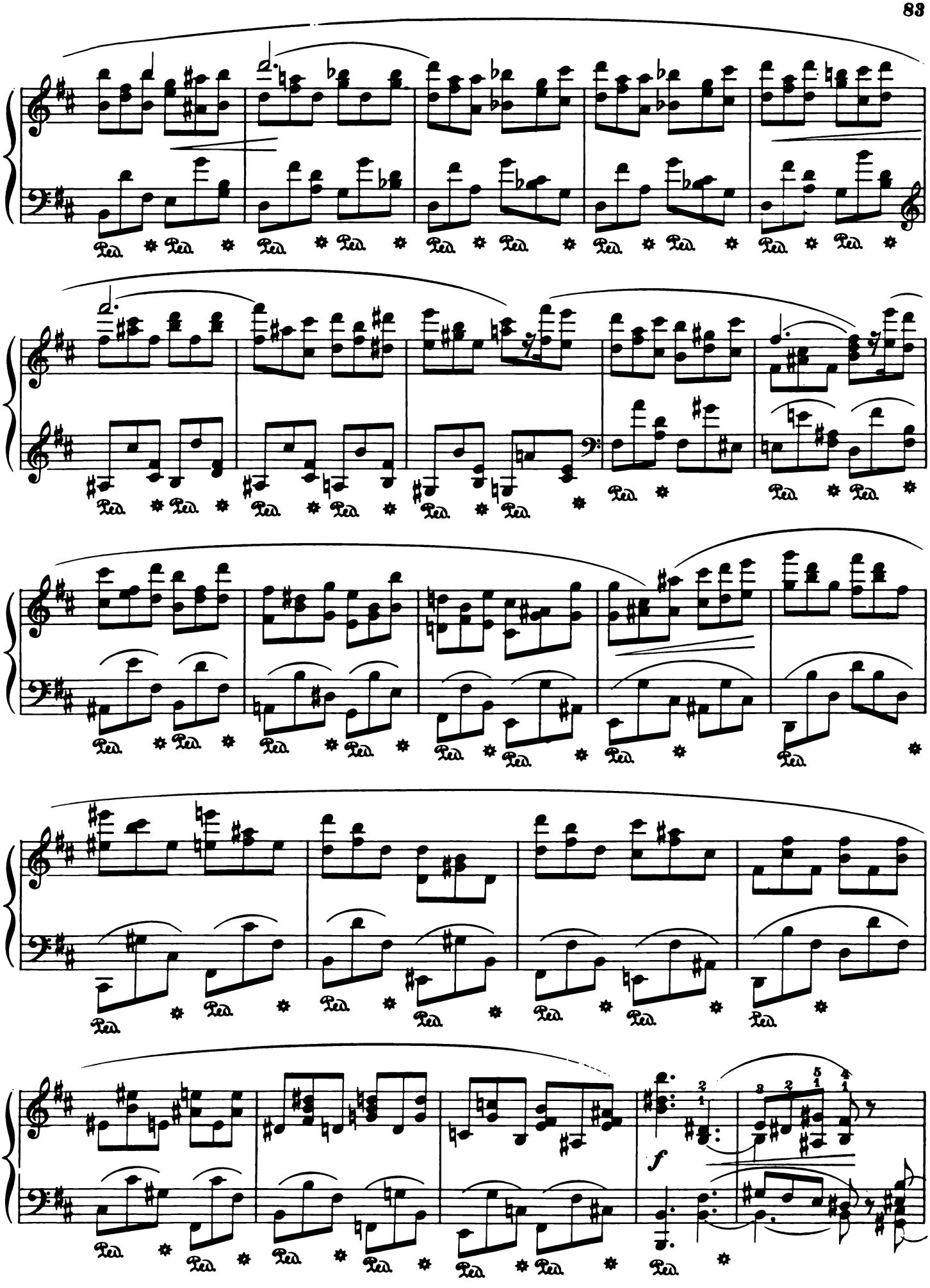
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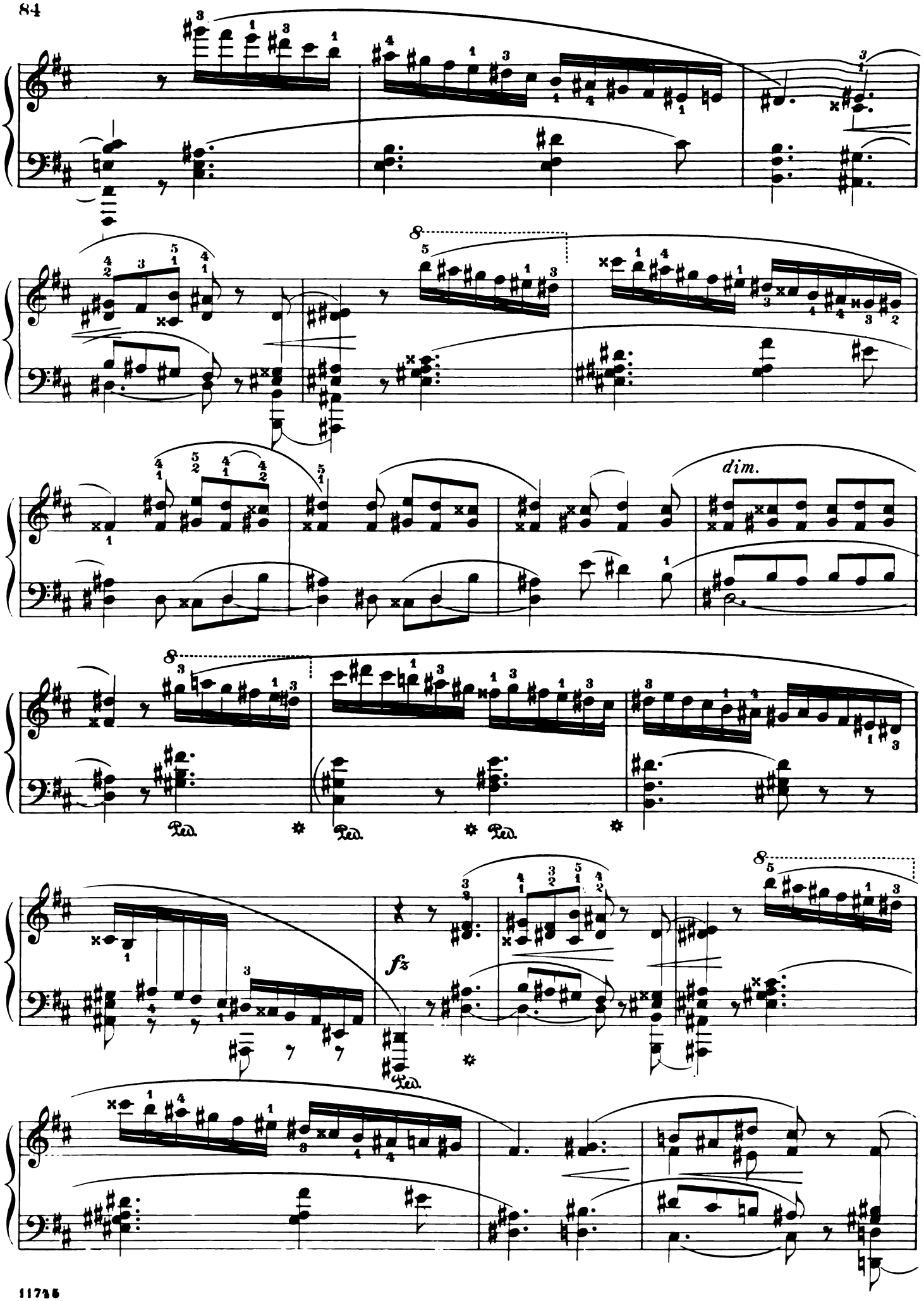
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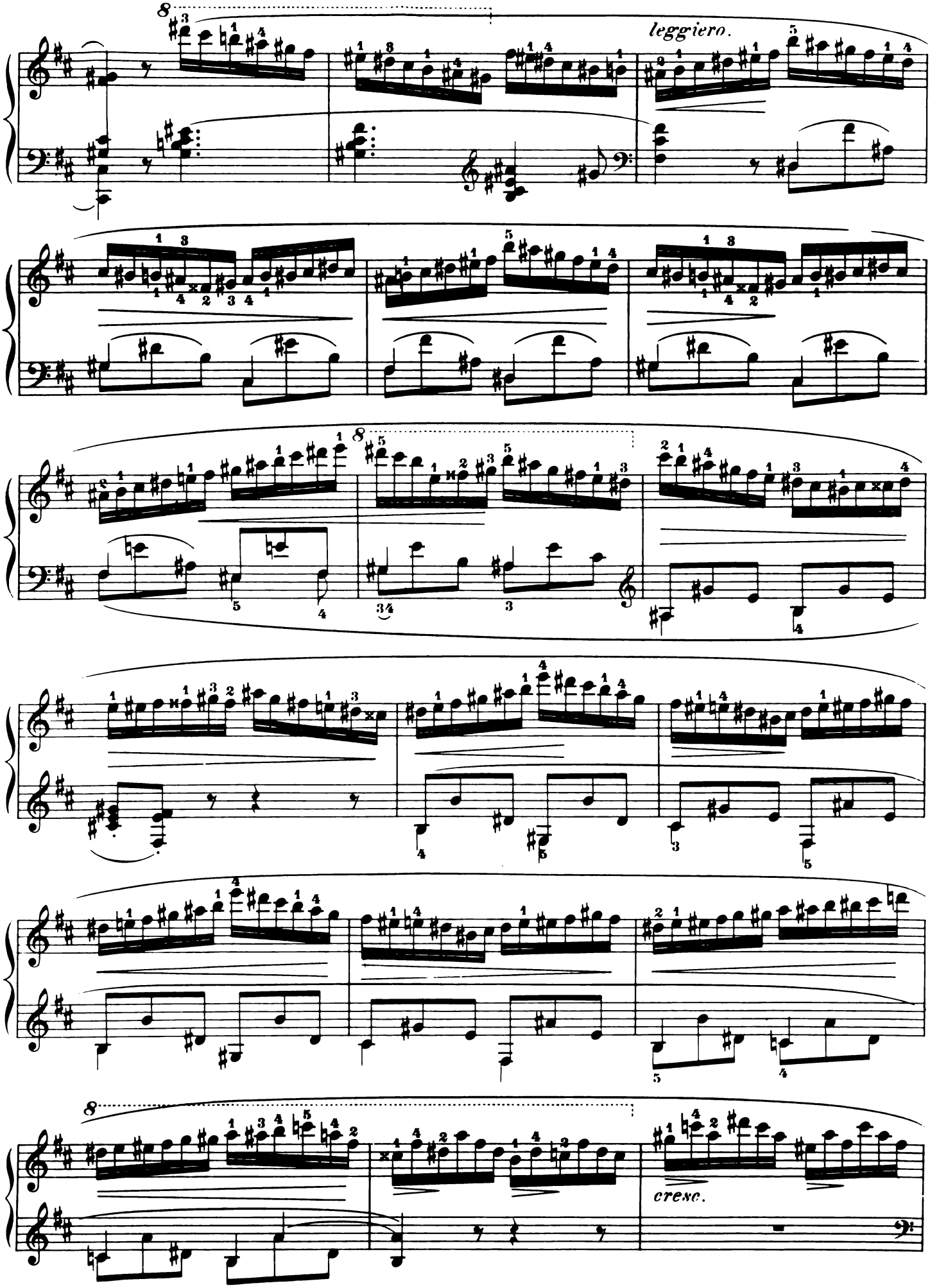
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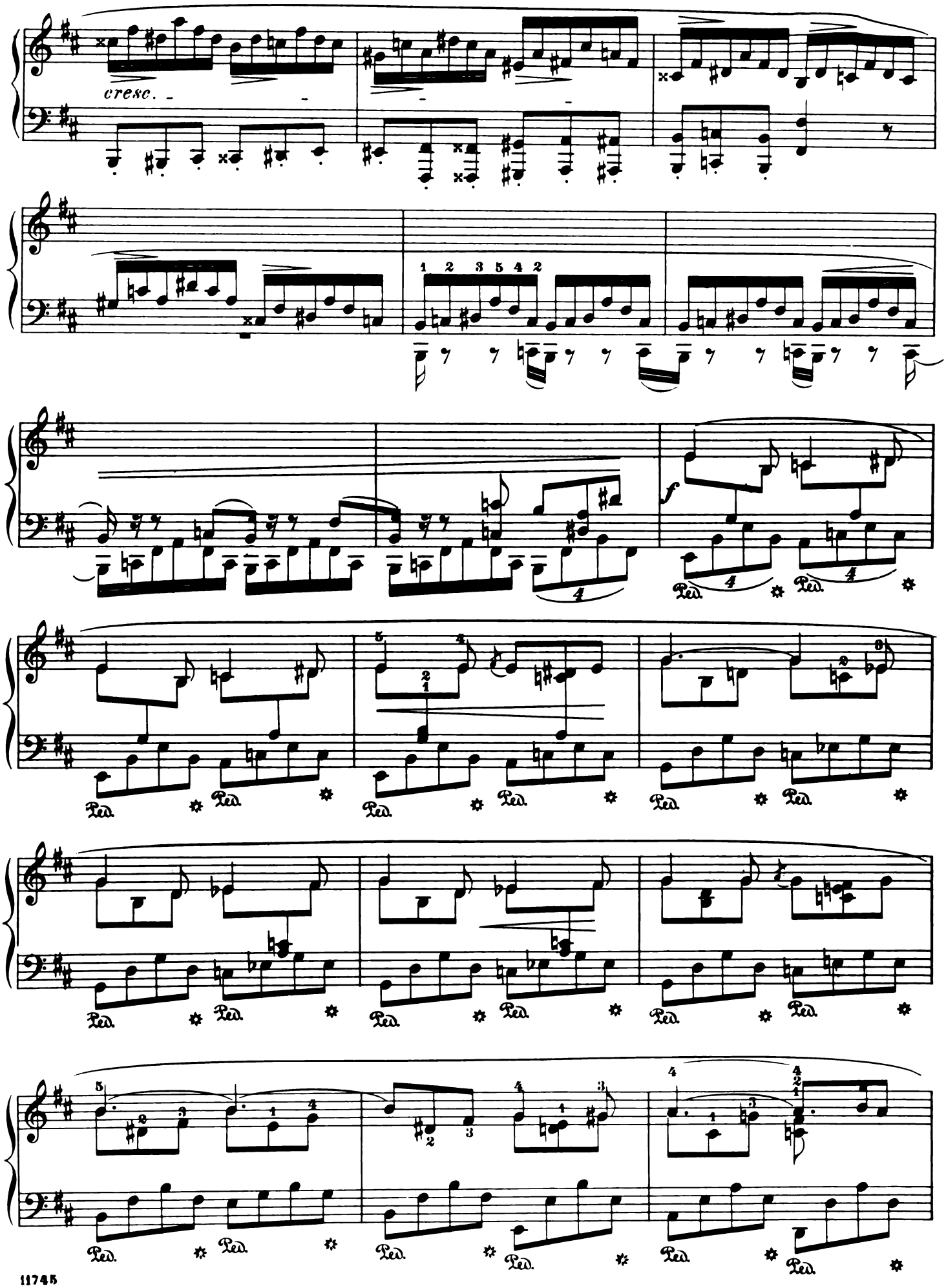
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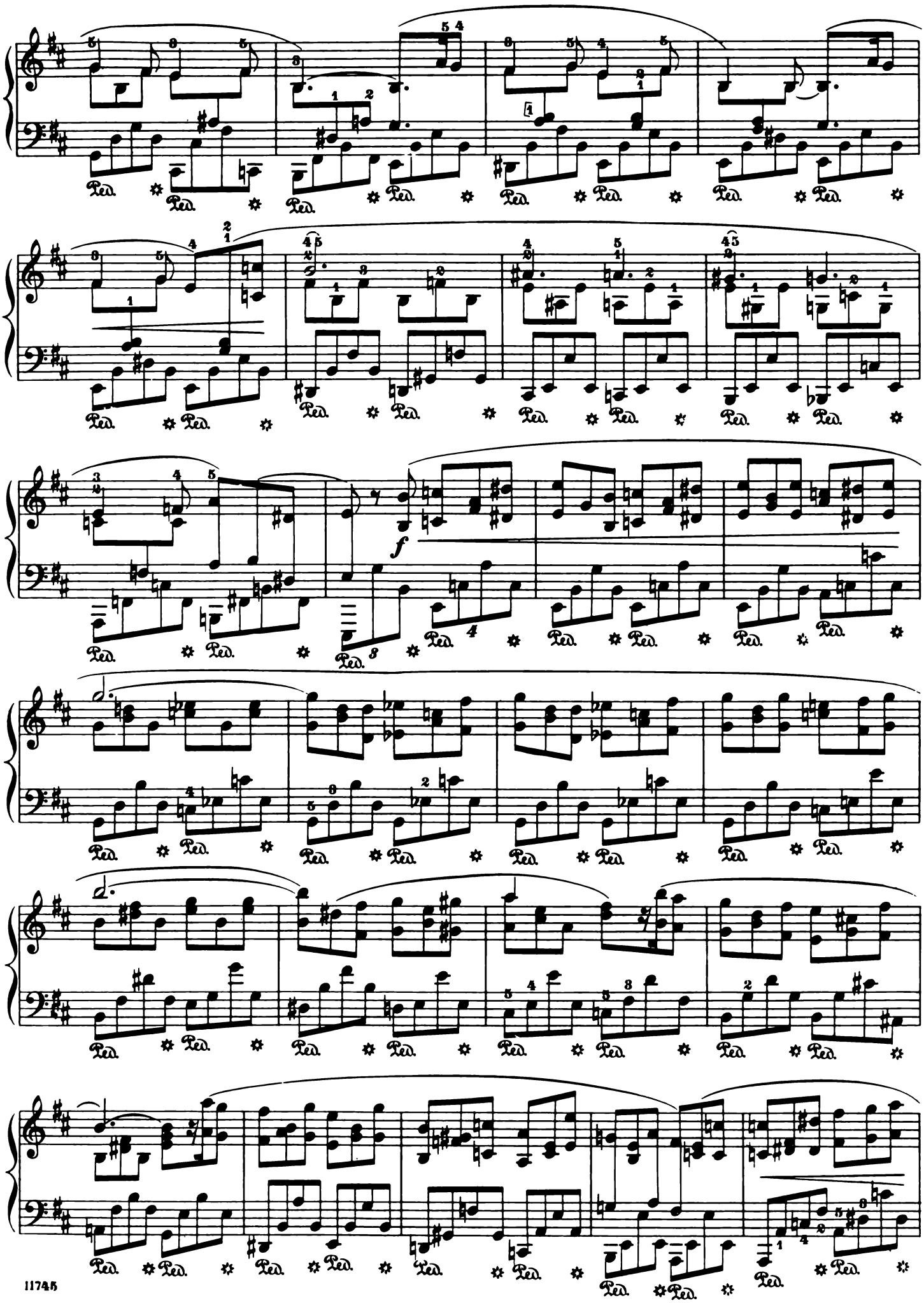
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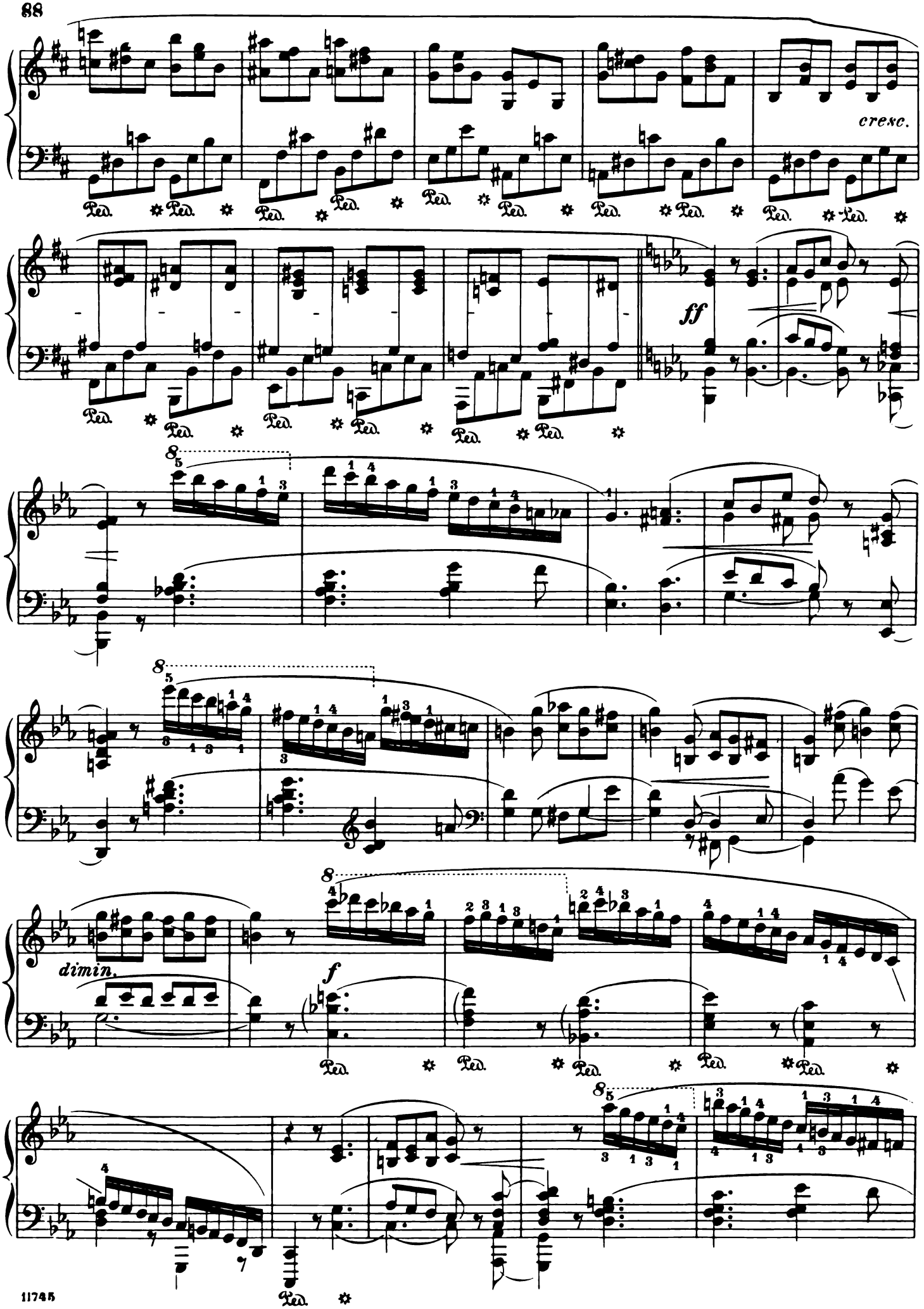
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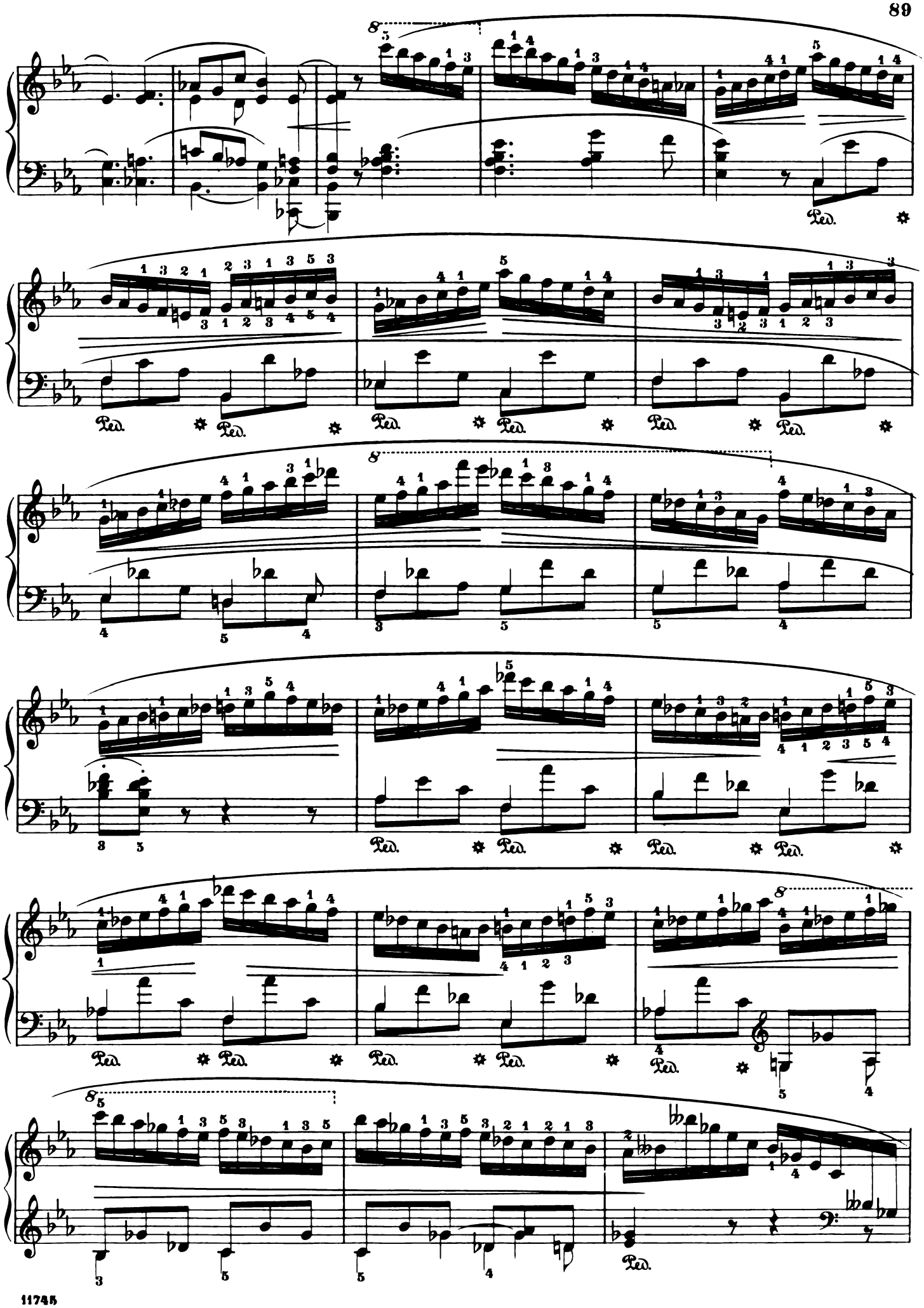
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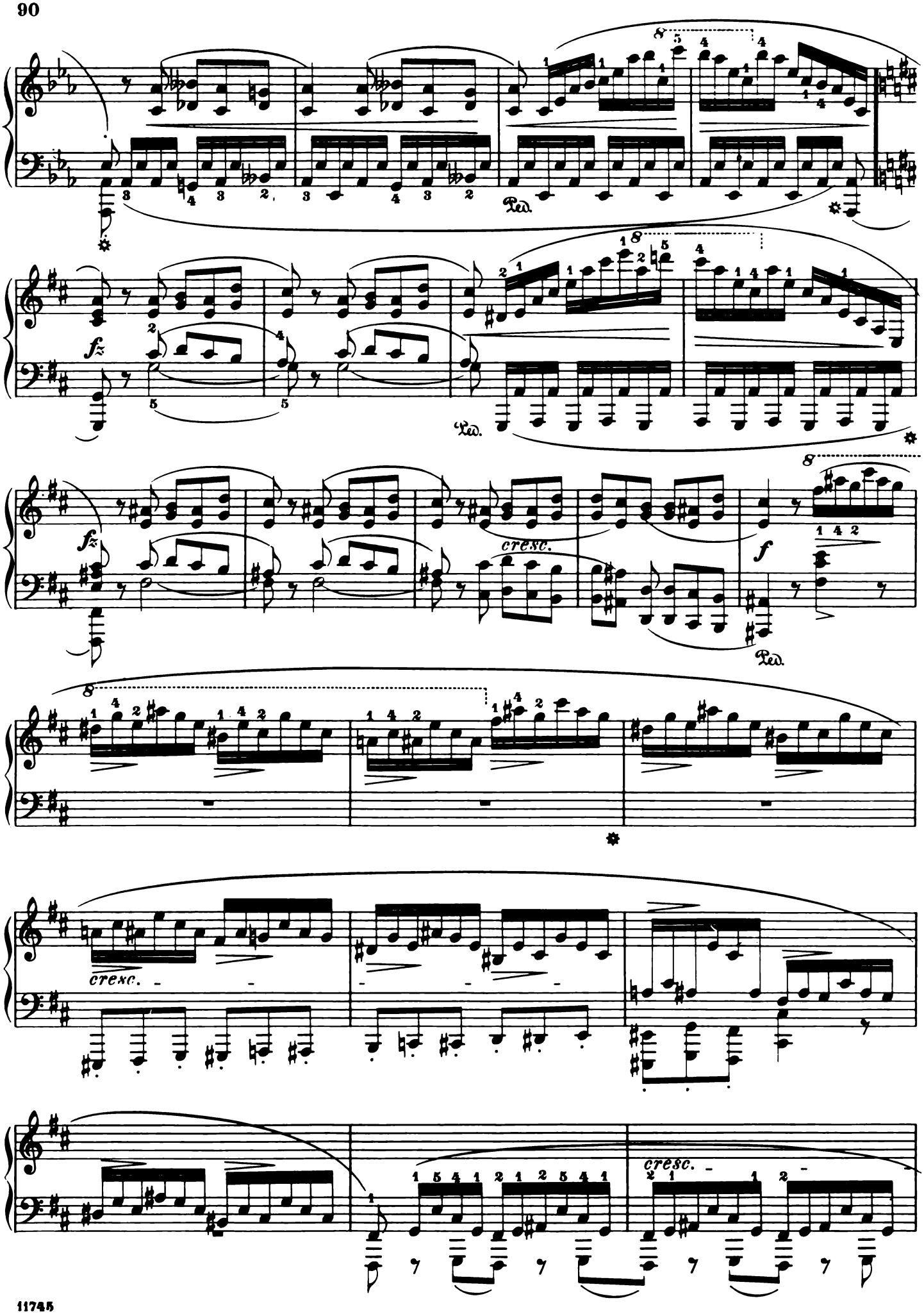
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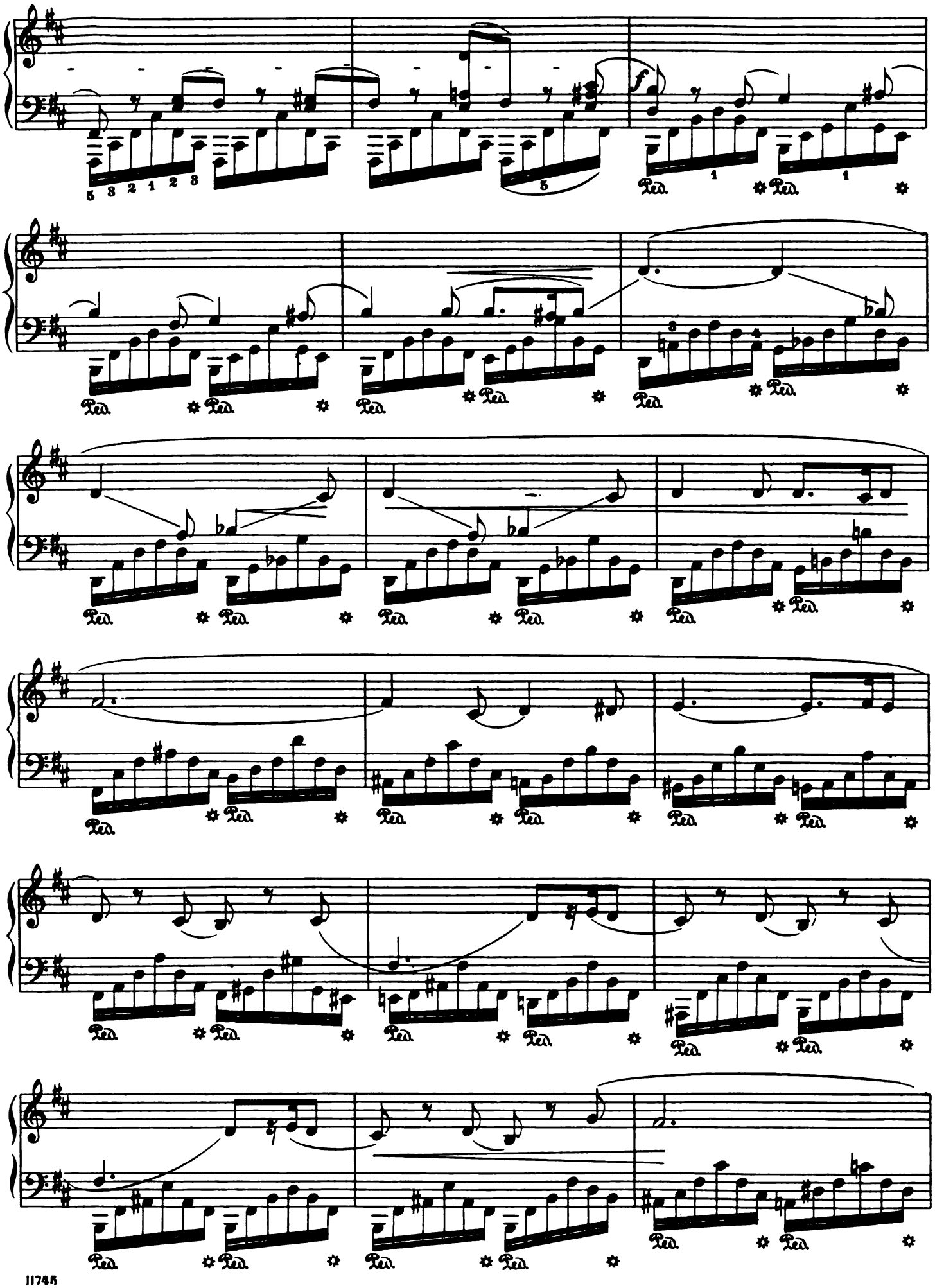
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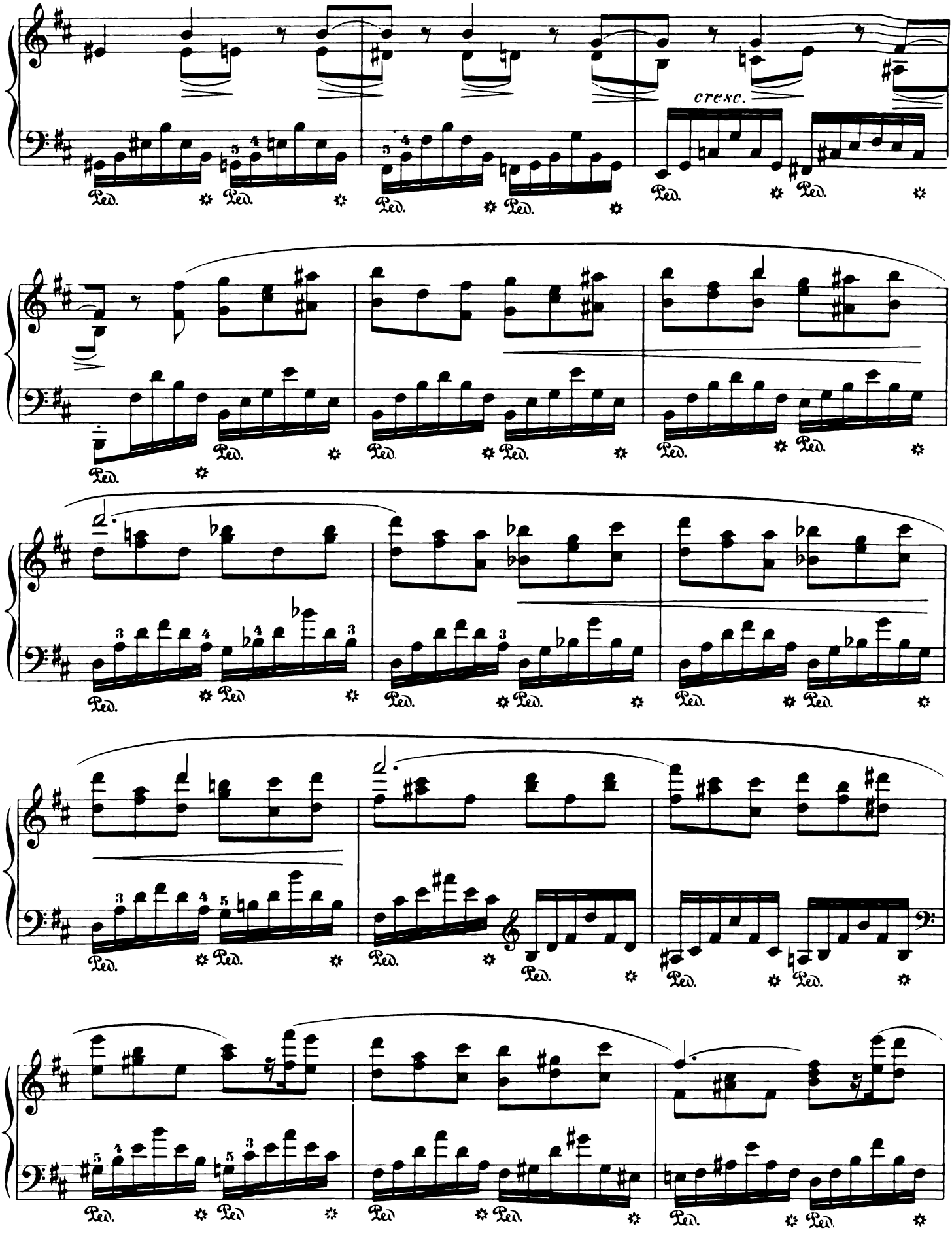
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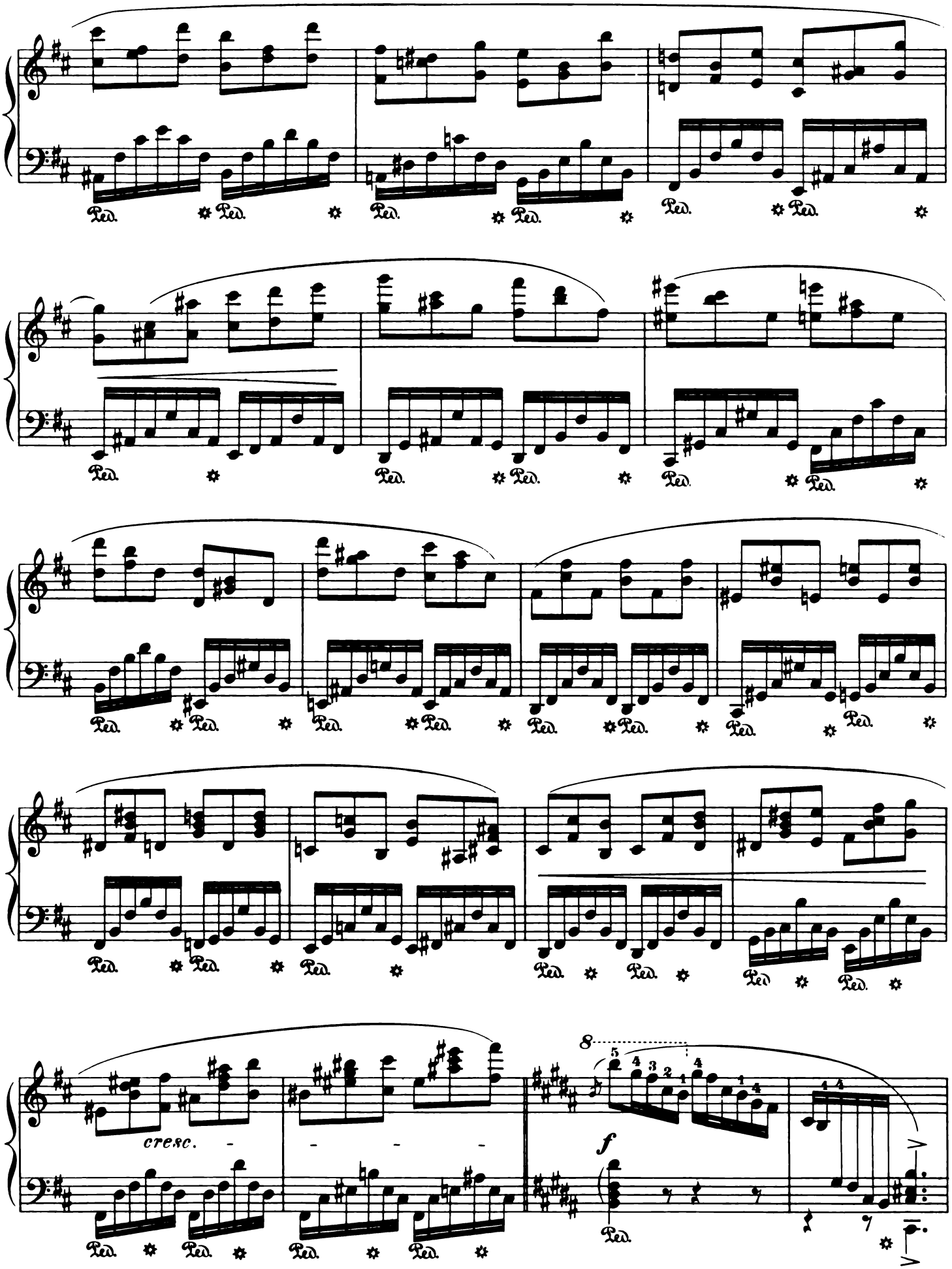
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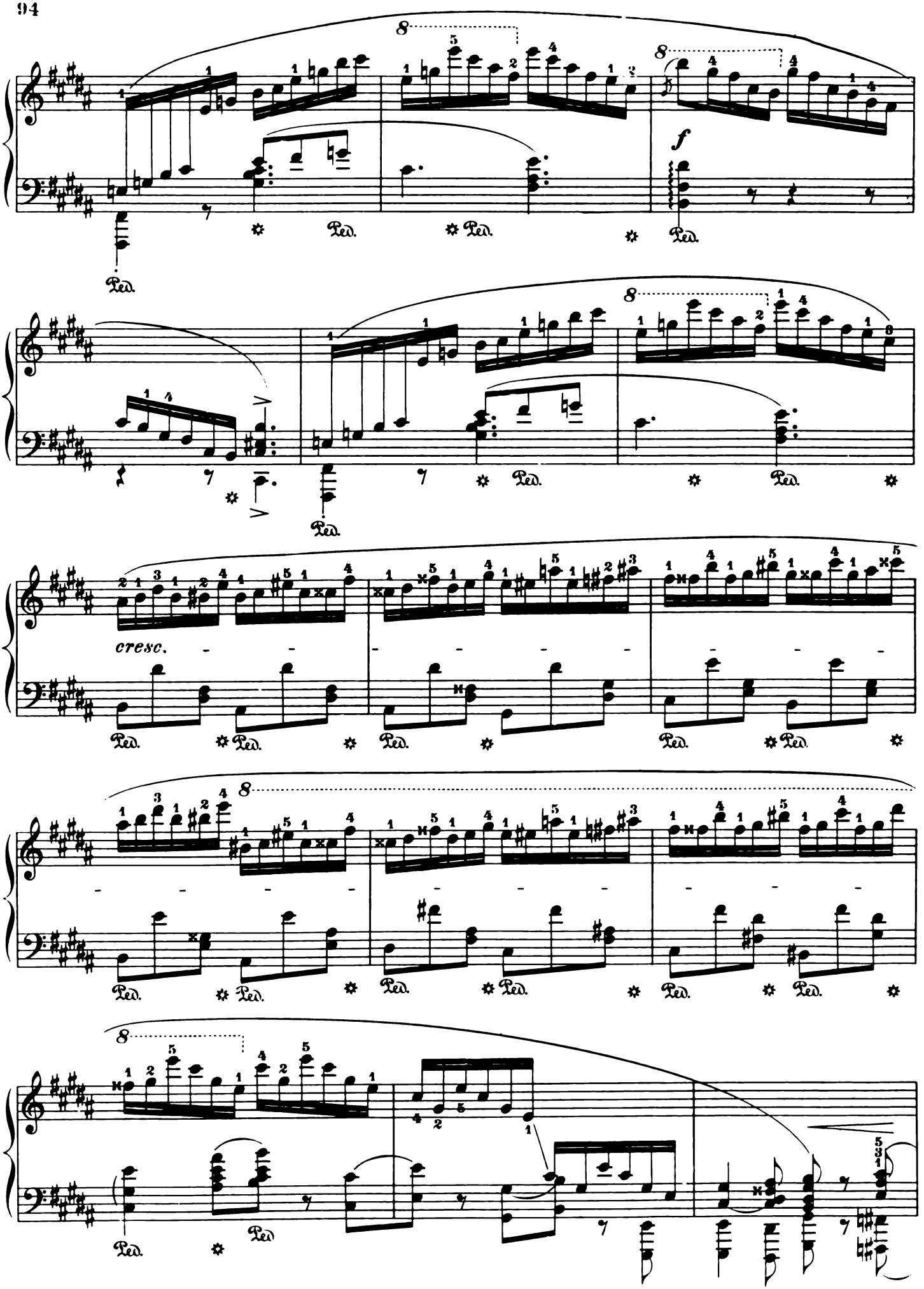
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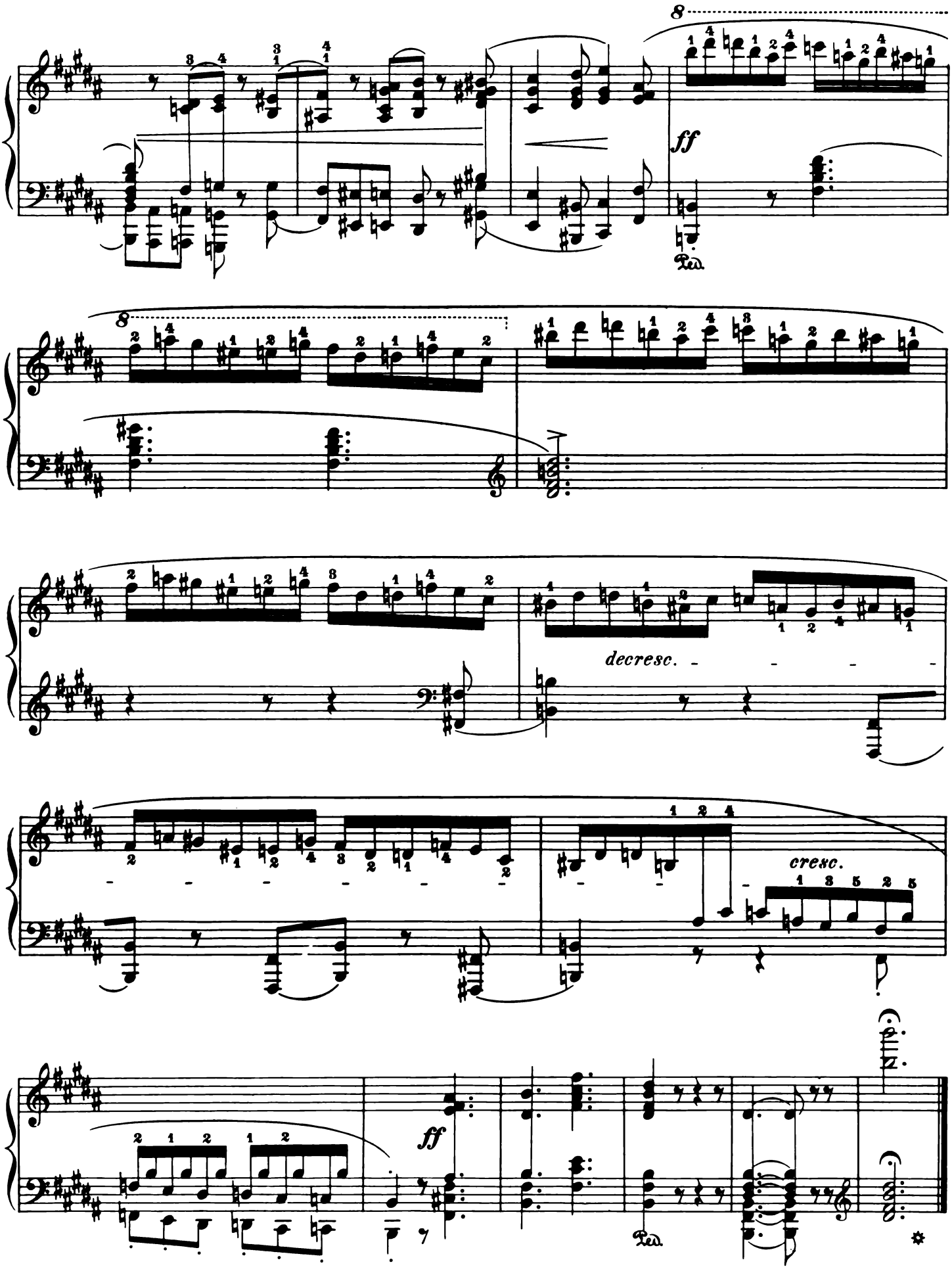
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