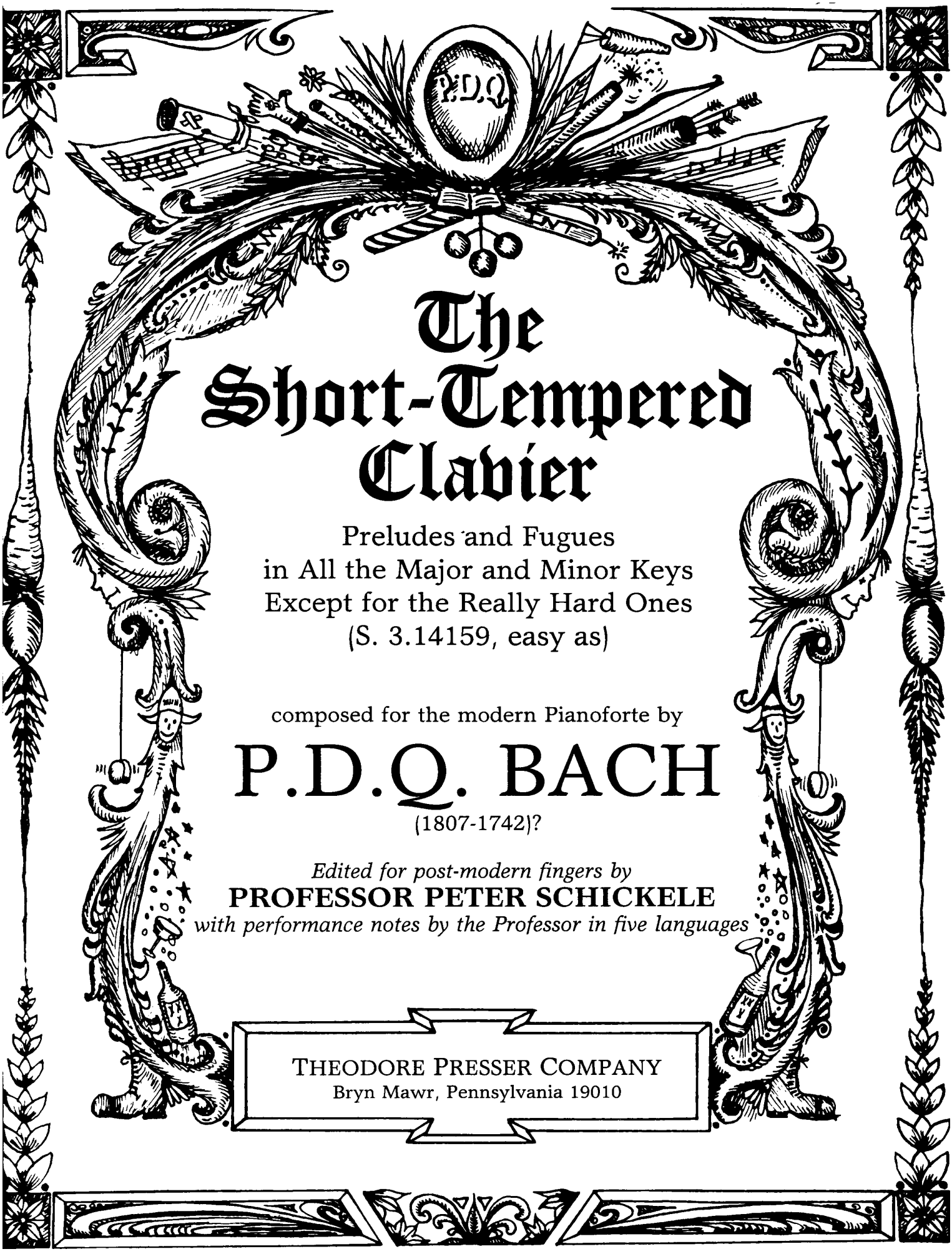


The Short-Tempered Clavier

Preludes and Fugues
in All the Major and Minor Keys
Except for the Really Hard Ones
(S. 3.14159, easy as)

composed for the modern Pianoforte by

P.D.Q. BACH

(1807-1742)?

Edited for post-modern fingers by
PROFESSOR PETER SCHICKELE
with performance notes by the Professor in five languages

THEODORE PRESSER COMPANY
Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania 19010

PROGRAM NOTES

P.D.Q. BACH AND COUNTERPOINT:
OIL AND WATER OR SIMON AND GARFUNKEL?

Of all the unearthments of P.D.Q. Bach manuscripts achieved by the present editor, of which manuscripts there are now almost a hundred (which, by the way, is more pieces than Webern wrote, and look at all the attention *he* gets, am I wrong?), that of *The Short-Tempered Clavier* was one of the most thrilling of all of them to unearth, not only because it is far and away the magnumest of the few solo keyboard opuses left to us by the twenty-first of Johann Sebastian Bach's twenty children, nor because it throws such an interesting light on the history and origins of some of the most common coins in the currency of modern American musical lore (of which more later), but also because it is so obviously inspired by, or based upon, or cribbed from, the composer's father's best-known *Elfenbeingreifenstück* (German, meaning, literally, "ivory tickle work," or, more colloquially, "composition for the musical keyboard"), proving once again, if proof were necessary, that Newton was right when he formulated his law stating that "every Jekyll has an equal and opposite Hyde."

The manuscript of this epochal oeuvre was discovered by the author of these notes among the recently-declassified archives of the former Soviet Conservatory for Right-Thinking Tractor Drivers in the Ukrainian city of ~~Trotskygrad Brezhnevgrad Gorbachevgrad~~ Podunsk. The Conservatory was secretly famous for its Department of Revisionist Music, which contained a wealth of compositions such as those of the Georgian pianist who, before 1918, billed himself as "Igor, Artist of the Eighty-Eight;" when, in the heady days of the early Comintern, he was made an "Artist of the Revolution," he jettisoned the last vestige of his bourgeois name and simply called himself Artist. He made so much money playing works with names like *Artist in Repose, Artist Walking Around*, and *Artist Doing What Comes Naturally*, that he fled to Italy, purchased a noble title from a member of the financially-strapped royal family, and retired to the Riviera, where he came to be called the Prince formerly known as Artist. (He was also a gifted percussionist, and once performed all nine Beethoven symphonies on the head of a pin.)

So where was I—oh, yeah, so the manuscript of the work under consideration, when rescued by yours truly from the fate of oblivion (an oblivion that would have been no less complete, having been caused by political considerations, than it would have been had the work been allowed to stand on its own two feet and achieve the same oblivion because of aesthetic considerations), was in surprisingly good condition (considering the fact that it was earmarked for oblivion) except for one thing, which was that the title page was missing, leaving both the name of the work and that of its composer a mystery, a mystery the solution of which would have been no higher on the agenda of Western laissez-faire musicologists than it was for their Communist counterparts. The identity of the discoverer (i.e., me) must be counted one of those rare strokes of good fortune that, fortunately, strike every once in a while; it took the present editor very little time whatsoever to deduce the name of the composer of the musical treasure, but the revelation of the name of the treasure itself had to await the timely and serendipitous (if those terms are not an egregious understatement) discovery of the title page, a few scant seconds before it would have been fed into the maw of the people's paper-shredder by the Head Chief Librarian, who, in spite of glasnostic developments, was not about to take any chances when it came to the black sheep of the Bach family, a composer who was, it must be remembered, disavowed, pilloried and generally excoriated on both sides of the Iron Curtain, by those, that is, who had heard of him at all.

The elation produced by the retrieval of the title page was short-lived, however, as it was discovered that all but the last word of the title itself had been rendered illegible by the panicked bureaucrat's hasty attempts at defacement (through the frenzied use of India ink, scissors, and borscht), which took place during an infantile and actually quite demeaning tug-of-war over the precious document. The editor is eternally grateful to Michael Ochs, a former music librarian at prestigious Harvard University, for reconstructing the page and deciphering the first words of the title. (Mr. Ochs pronounces his name "ox," since, in fact, it is the German word for ox; the ox is considered by many people to be a very stupid animal, but it is, if you think about it, the *only* animal that is equipped to play tic-tac-toe.)

In terms of form, *The Short-Tempered Clavier* follows that of the earlier *Well-Tempered Clavier*, that is, it consists of a series of preludes and fugues, each in a different key, with the major and minor modes equally represented. The P.D.Q. Bach work has only half as many pieces as does each volume of his father's opus; whether the decision to omit some keys is due, as P.D.Q.'s subtitle suggests, to a desire on the part of the composer not to overtax the abilities of the performer, or simply to laziness on the part of the composer, is a moot point. Whichever the case, the decision, as an artistic decision, is certainly to be applauded.

The derivation of the word "prelude" is obvious; "pre" is a prefix (a delightfully self-referential word, that) meaning "coming before," and "lude" referred originally to the lascivious nature of the dancing that, in pagan Rome, followed the introduction; the increased tolerance towards lasciviousness that has eaten away at Western mores (especially over the last millennium) has by now given the term "lude" a neutral meaning, to wit, "that which comes after (with "pre") or before (with "post") that which came (or will come) before (or after)." It goes without saying, therefore, that a prelude is a piece intended to be played before another piece. (It's true that Chopin wrote preludes that don't go before anything else, but he was Polish.) Although many foreign terms are used without change by musicians in English-speaking countries, others occur in translation, such as "in the foreground" (from the French "en dehors"), "through-composed" (from the German "durchkomponiert") and "ukelele" (from the Hawaiian "ukelele"). The German word for "prelude" is "vorspiel," but somehow, in this country at least, the designation "foreplay and fugue" has never caught on.

The history of the term "fugue" is a bit more complicated. We all know the expression "tempus fugit," which refers to the irresponsible but all-too-common tendency on the part of short-term office employees to change the numbers, if necessary, to make them lead to the desired result. The fact that the saying is just as applicable to modern offices as it was to those of ancient Rome shows how certain things never change, and the closeness of the English translation, "temps fudge it," shows how Latinate (or, if you will, Romantic) our language still is.

But of course the regular, permanent employees of the office must, when they return from their vacations, go back and retrace the temps' footsteps, as it were, in order to correct the figures

and see what the actual result should be, and it is this aspect of following, or chasing, that led to the use of fugue as a musical term, since, in a fugue, the various parts do not begin simultaneously, but enter one after the other, like The Three Stooges in *Malice in the Palace*.

(The "follow the leader" feeling of the beginning of a fugue is what endeared the form to the famous 18th-century Turkish general Attaboy. He was fond of both European and Near Eastern music, as long as it was played on the Turkish lute known as the oud (rhymes, in Attaboy's dialect, with "should"), and he kept his retinue of oud players with him at all times. Invariably, when they asked him what he wanted to hear before a battle, he would reply, "A fugue, oud men." This seemingly off-hand remark became a familiar quotation of such lasting currency that it was eventually adopted as a slogan of the U.S. Marines.)

It seems unlikely, at first glance, that P.D.Q. Bach should have been attracted to the fugue. Being by definition contrapuntal, it requires an inherently more complicated level of compositional technique than does music associated with, for instance, the minuet or the hootenanny. The first part enters with the theme, which in fugal writing is called a subject (this term has led to some historical confusion: when that most musical of monarchs King Frederick the Great, who supplied the theme upon which J.S. Bach's *Musical Offering* is based, made his oft-quoted remark, "My subjects are rarely short," he was actually referring to the physical stature of Prussians, as compared with that of, say, Italians or Munchkins; he was, in fact, quite capable of writing a good short subject (a skill, incidentally, that had been utterly lost by circa 1950, when double features became widespread) (sorry about all these parentheses; in an attempt to avoid the perceived stuffiness of much musicological discourse, the author is endeavoring to eschew the use of footnotes)); the second part then enters with the answer, which is the same, or virtually the same, as the subject, except that it begins on the note a fifth up from where the first part began (or sometimes a fourth down, in which case the player usually punts (from the Italian, "a punta d'arco," literally, "kicking around without any lights on"), in other words, he or she does the best he or she can under the circumstances), after which the other parts, if there's anyone left, stagger in, i.e., enter one after the other.

In one sense, however, the fugue is a paradigm of simplicity, in that it is usually an essentially monothematic form, and it is this aspect, in all likelihood, that attracted P.D.Q. Bach. In a letter to his cousin Schweinhardt Bach, P.D.Q. said, "For me, making up a theme is the hardest part of composing, because that's the part where you have to make something up. Once you've made up the theme, the rest is easy: cutting the stencil, inking it in, etc.—time-consuming, perhaps, but much easier than making things up."

That, however, leads to another question: how many of the subjects in *The Short-Tempered Clavier* did P.D.Q. Bach, in fact, "make up"? Every single one of them is a familiar, not to say clichéd, part of our musical culture, and it seems highly problematic, to say the least, to attribute that familiarity to a work that was, almost certainly, completely unheard during the 186 years that separated the composer's death and the rediscovery of his manuscript. In some cases the thematic material was obviously borrowed (to put it in the kindest light) from fellow composers such as Mozart and Beethoven, but one cannot help wondering about, for instance, the subject of the third fugue: is the song *Oh, They Don't Wear Pants in the Southern Side of France* much older than previously thought, or did someone (perhaps a decadent protocapitalist habitué of the Department of Revisionist Music in the Ukraine) put words, much later, to P.D.Q. Bach's melody?

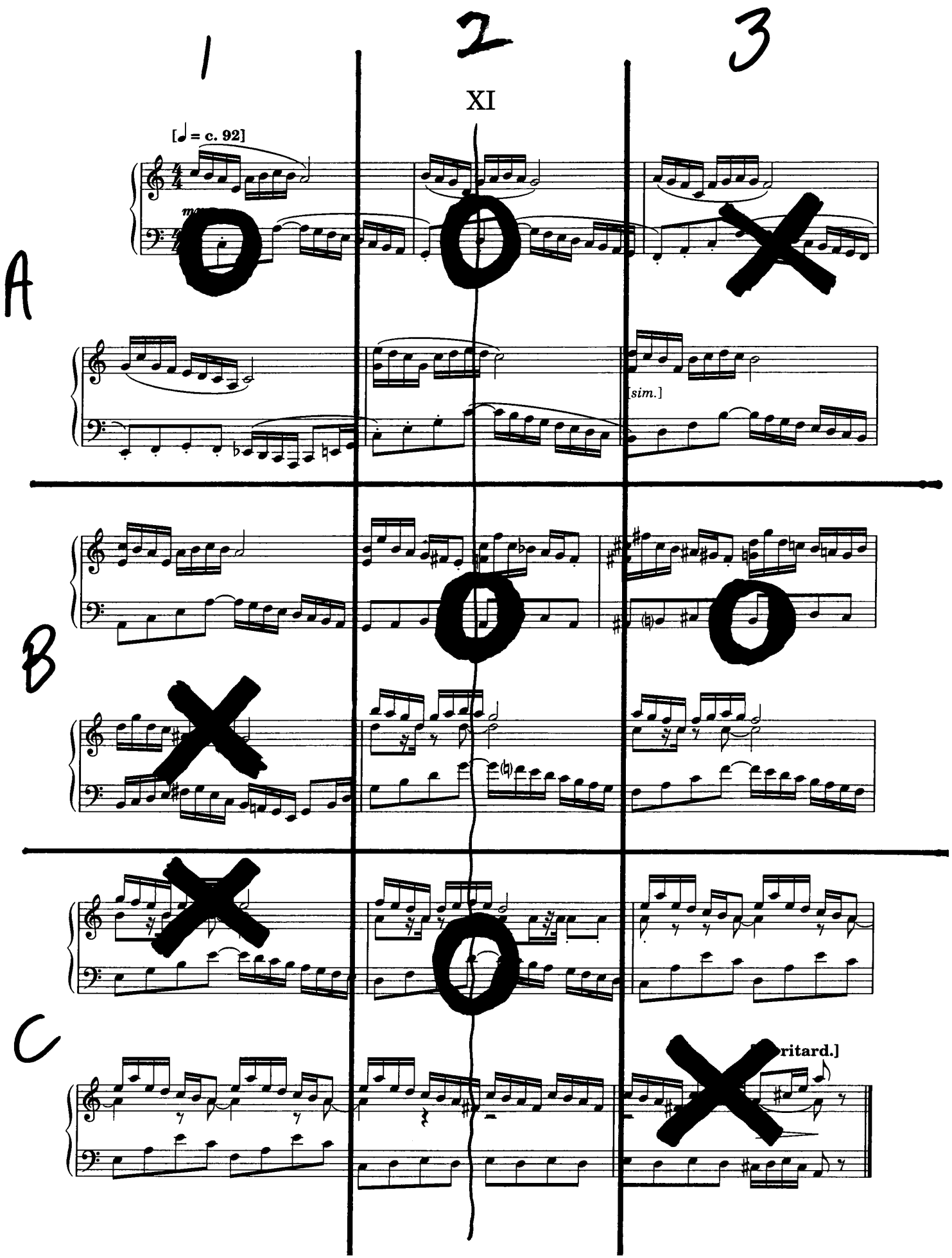
Further research will, it is fervently to be hoped, answer this and other similar questions; in the meantime, it seems safest to adhere to a time-tested rule-of-thumb: when in doubt, assume that it was P.D.Q. Bach who did the borrowing. It has been said that the only original places in P.D.Q.'s music are those in which he couldn't remember how what he was stealing from went, and the fact that there is actually quite a bit of original music in his oeuvre simply attests to how faulty his memory in fact was. According to Sam Spitta, the son of P.D.Q. Bach's father's biographer, the son of the subject of that biography felt that the ability to play by ear was vastly overrated; he (Spitta *fils*) claimed to have seen a letter from P.D.Q. to the aforementioned Schweinhardt Bach that began, "Dear Piggy, Contrary to what certain members of my family are saying, I have a good ear, but, let's face it, Vincent Van Gogh could have said the same thing, and nobody takes *him* seriously as a composer." (The pall of anachronism, it must be admitted, falls over Spitta's statement, but it really doesn't matter much one way or the other in terms of what we're talking about here anyway.)

The influences detectable in the *STC* (as insiders call it) are truly international in scope: the style of the third prelude hearkens back to that of Elizabethan virginal music (pieces written to be played by young women who, uh, haven't, you know), whereas that of the sixth prelude betrays an exposure to French overtures (i.e., Gallic attempts to start conversations with the players of virginal music). The ninth fugue mixes a quintessentially American-sounding subject (until the discovery of the *STC* it was thought to have arisen in the early days of baseball) with a load of distinctly Spanish bull. And, in an intricate but robust, and, ultimately, touching gesture of Freudian reconciliation, the last fugue is based on the notes B♭-A-C-B♮, which, in German nomenclature, or, rather, notenclature, are indicated by the letters B-A-C-H.

When all is said and done, and the last, titanic chord of this protean work is still ringing, willy-nilly, in our ears, it does not seem too much to say that *The Short-Tempered Clavier* is an astonishingly complete summation not only of P.D.Q. Bach's life and art, but also of the entire course of 18th-century European music. In this all-encompassing work, this most unmisunderstood composer in the history of Western music does not just give us a few scattered, fragmentary glimpses of his inner being; rather, he bares his hopes, fears and faith *in toto*. And, whether or not it's a good idea to put one's faith in a dog, it was a faith that enabled its holder to look deep into the mirror of his soul and say, "Hey, why shouldn't *I* write a great big humongous piece, I mean, what's the big deal? It's just a matter of putting one note after the other—you keep doing that long enough, you've got yourself a great big humongous piece."

And the rest of us—be we rich or poor, rural or urban, college-educated or real—the rest of us, almost two centuries later, are stuck with it.

Professor Peter Schickele
Department of Musical Pathology
University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople


1
2
3
XI
A
B
C
[♩ = c. 92]
[sim.]
ritard.]

GRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE A MINOR PRELUDE

Superimposing a nine-panel grid on the score reveals several fascinating biotonalnumerological relationships that might otherwise go unnoticed. According to a letter from the composer to his cousin Peter Ulrich Bach, the circled pitches were P.D.Q.'s "favorite notes—I get a little shiver you-know-where every time I play them," whereas the passages marked with an X are ones that P.D.Q. felt his father would have disapproved of, due to the "quite excessive prominence, to that old geezer's way of thinking," given the historically-suspect tritone (named after a "souped up" carriage, painted in three colors, owned by a disreputable brother of the medieval theoretician Guido d'Arezzo) and/or cross-relation (the composer's half-brother Wilhelm Friedemann, when he was drinking).

We must assume that the phrase "you-know-where" refers to the heart, and, speaking of the heart, it is interesting that, in spite of P.D.Q.'s pejorative reference to his father, the three circled notes in the second vertical column (connected in the diagram by a thin line) spell the word "Dad," indicating, surely, just how important to the composer his father was, even a half-century after the "old geezer" had, as the German folk saying goes, forcibly propelled the bucket with his foot.

But perhaps the most startling results of this graphic analysis are numerological in nature, revealing relationships that were almost certainly achieved subconsciously, but which are all the same none the less impressive for all that, anyway.

If one adds together the number of note-heads in row A (127), row B (143), and row C (147), one arrives at a sum of 417; if one then adds together the number of note-heads in column 1 (131), column 2 (147) and column 3 (139), one arrives at a sum of, incredible as it may seem, 417—the *exact same number* as the sum of the horizontal rows.

Not only that, but if one adds together the *digits* of the horizontal row numbers (A:10; B:8; C:12) and then adds those three sums together, one sees that the total is 30, which is, once again, *identical* to the total arrived at by adding the sums of the digits of the vertical column figures (1:5; 2:12; 3:13). How do you like *them* apples? Furthermore, 30 is the number of years that Johann Sebastian Bach outlived his first wife, and since his second wife, Anna Magdalena, was P.D.Q. Bach's mother, it seems perfectly natural that the younger composer should want to celebrate, however subliminally, that portion of his father's life that took place after the demise of the woman who would have been, had J.S. Bach married the other way around, P.D.Q.'s stepmother.

And finally, if we regard the X's in the diagram as Roman numerals, we see that the outside vertical columns (1-3) add up to 20-20, and, indeed, P.D.Q.'s eyesight was excellent during the first and last periods of his life, whereas during the middle, so-called "Soused" period (column 2), he often couldn't see a thing. Turning to the horizontal rows, we find the sums to be 10-10-20; the initials of those numbers in German (zehn, zehn, zwanzig) are also those of Zoë-Zelda Zénith, the "petite chanteuse chaleureuse" (hot little singer) associated with the theatrical troupe for whom P.D.Q. wrote the *March of the Cute Little Wood Sprites.* (When she toured in English-speaking countries she translated her last name and billed herself as Z.Z. Top.) P.D.Q. was so smitten with his "little French pastry" that he had a custom-designed tankard made for himself, fashioned in her image, which he liked to call "mein ganz und gar garni gehen-gehen Gallenstein ("my really trim go-go gal mug"), and in a letter to the aforementioned P.U. Bach he said that Zoë-Zelda was "sechsundsechzig" ("sexy as sexy can be"). The reference to her in this work, however veiled, gives us another tantalizing glimpse into the unconventional romantic life of a composer who, after all, poured as much of himself into his music as he did other things into himself.

Performance Notes

1. Trills begin on the upper auxiliary note.

2. P.D.Q. Bach made a distinction between "old-fangled" and "new-fangled" grace notes; those with slashes through the stems are played in the modern manner, i.e., before the beat. In this work he has written the "old-fangled" ornaments out.

3. Instructions in brackets are the editor's; those in parentheses are the composer's. The rest are up for grabs.

4. The metronome markings are a trustworthy guide, but need not be adhered to slavishly. The A Major fugue, for instance, might start a bit slower and end a bit faster than the indicated tempo.

Remarques sur l'Exécution

1. Découper le lapin en morceaux en réservant le foie.

2. Faire dorer la viande dans la cocotte; joindre à la dernière fraction un oignon coupé et l'aïl haché; saler, poivrer, ajouter le thym et le laurier; arroser d'un verre de vin rouge. Laisser cuire à feu doux pendant une vingtaine de minutes.

3. En fin de cuisson, écraser le foie sur une assiette, y incorporer du vin, verser sur le lapin. Laisser cuire quelques minutes.

4. Cuit la veille, le civet de lapin pourra développer tout son arôme. Servir accompagné de pommes de terre en robe des champs et du cépage ayant servi à la préparation.

Aufführungsnoten

1. Freude, schöner Götterfunken, Tochter aus Elysium.

2. Wir betreten feuertrunken, Himmlische, dein Heiligtum! Deine Zauber binden wieder, was die Mode streng geteilt. Alle Menschen werden Brüder, wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

3. Seid umschlungen, Millionen! Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt! Brüder, überm Sternenzelt muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.

4. Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen? Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt? Such' ihn überm Sternenzelt! Über Sternen muß er wohnen.

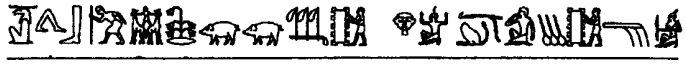
Erformancepay Otesnay

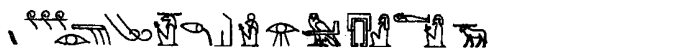
1. Illstray eginbay onway ethay upperway auxiliaryway otenay.

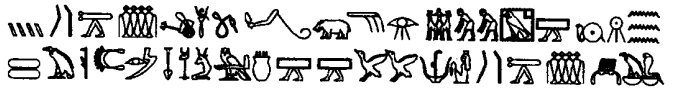
2. Eepay Eeday Uquay Achbay ademay anway istinctionday etweenbay "oldway-angledfay" andway "ewnay-angledfay" acegray otesnay; osethay ithway ashesslay oughthray ethay emsstay areway ayedplay inway ethay odernmay annermay, iway eway, eforebay ethay eatbay. Inway isthay orkway ehay ashay ittenwray ethay "oldway-angledfay" ornamentsway outway.

3. Instructionsway inway acketsbray areway ethay editor'sway; osethay inway arenthesespay areway ethay omposer'scay. Ethay estray areway upway orfay absgray.

4. Ethay etronomemay arkingsmay areway anway ustworthytray ideguay, utbay eednay otnay ebay adheredway otay avishlyslay. Ethay Away Ajormay uguefay, orfay instanceway, ightmay artstay anway itbay owerslay andway endway anway itbay asterfay anthay ethay indicatedway empotay.







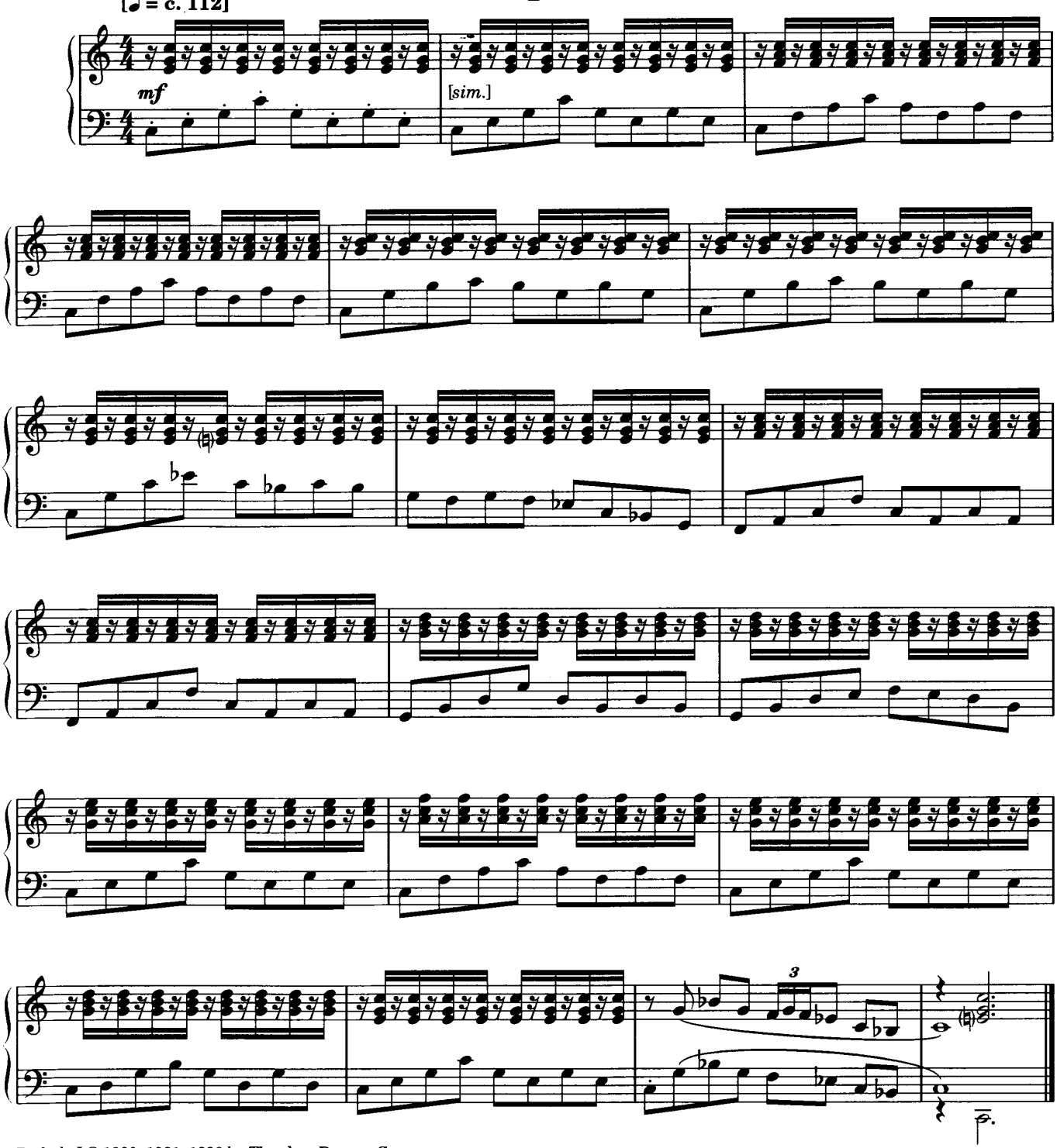
The Short-Tempered Clavier

Preludes and Fugues in All the Major and Minor Keys
Except for the Really Hard Ones
(S 3.14159, easy as)

Duration: c. 36'

Composed for the modern Pianoforte by
P.D.Q. BACH (1807–1742)?
Edited for post-modern fingers by
Professor Peter Schickele

I



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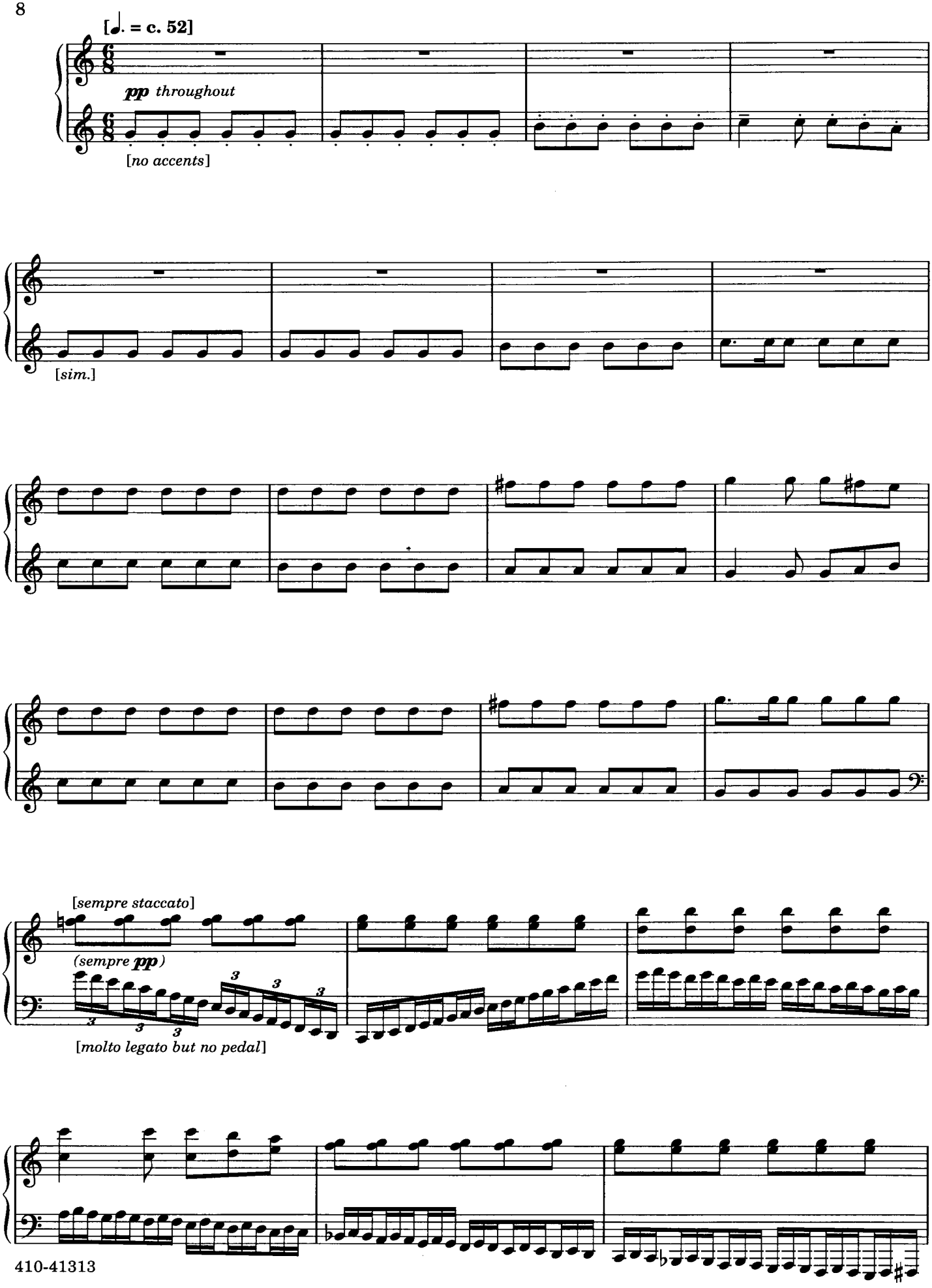
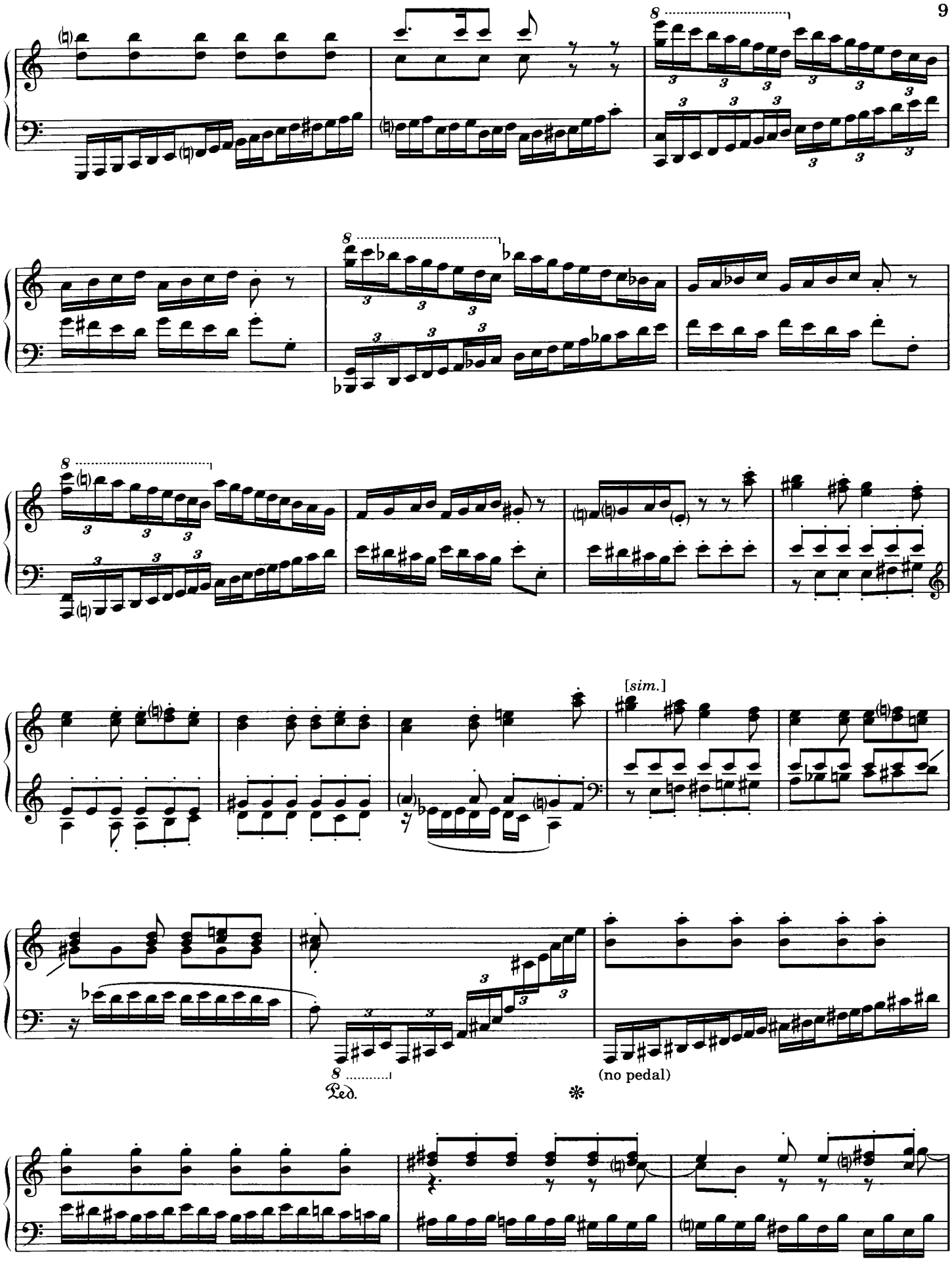
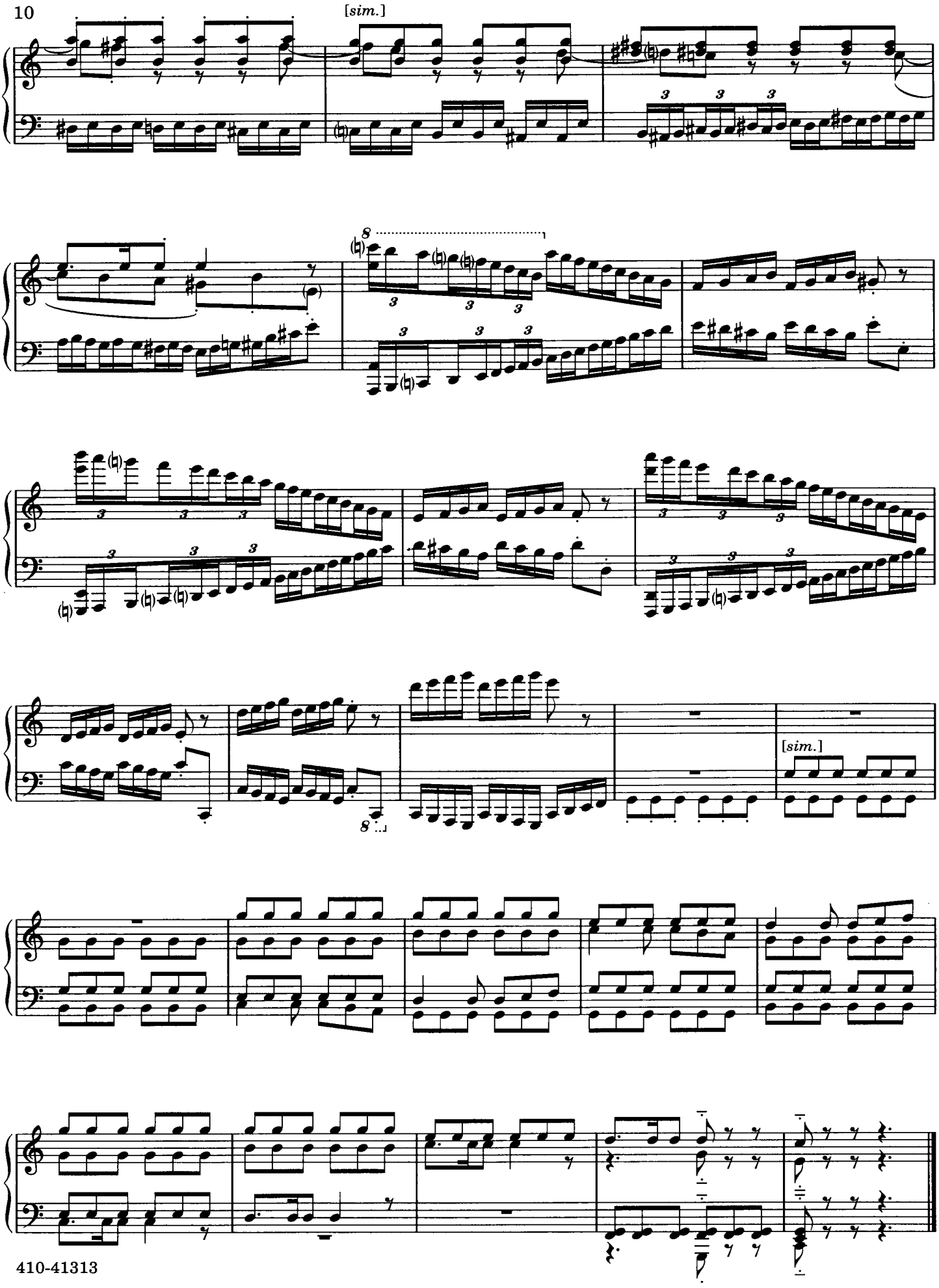
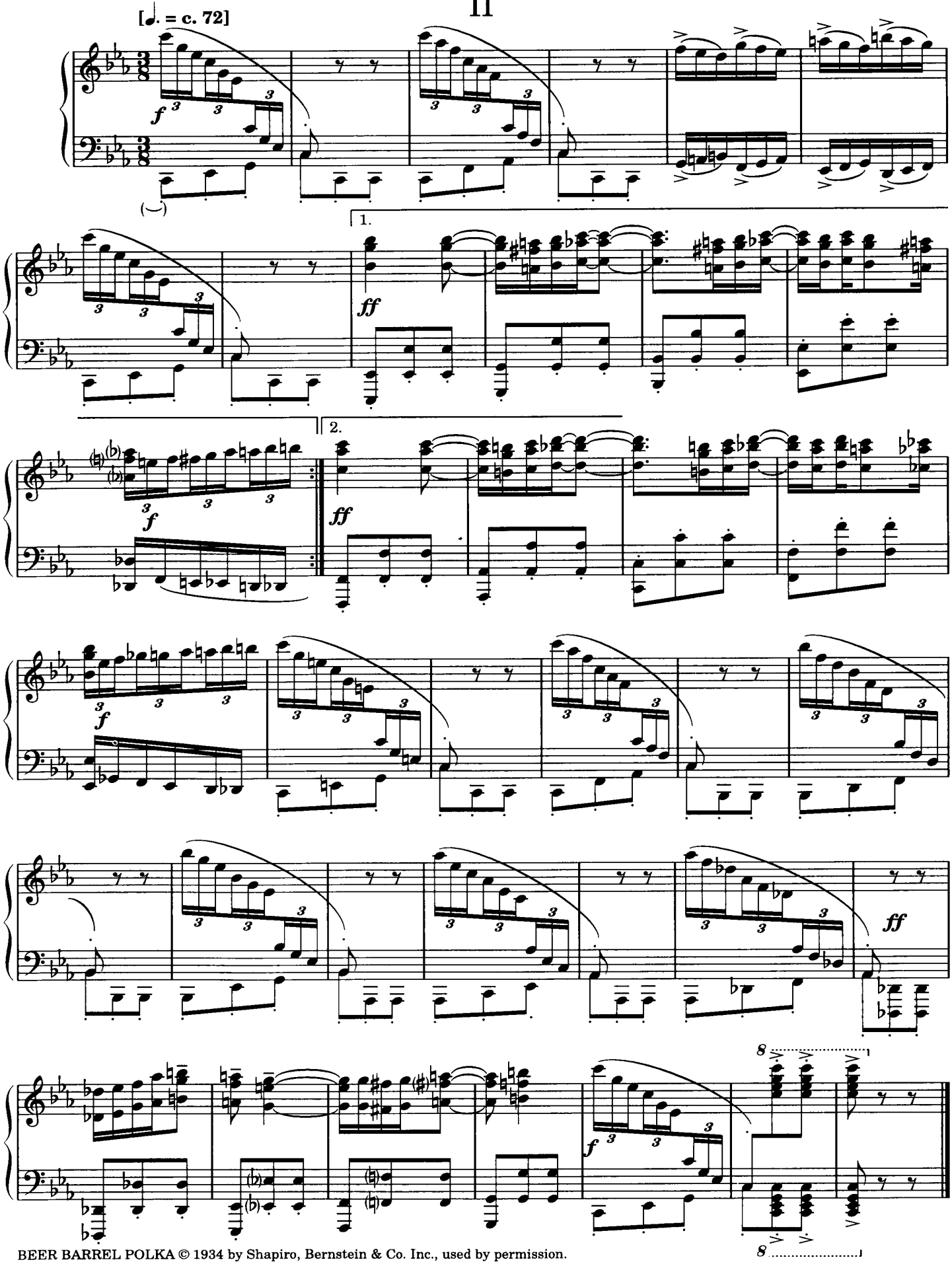

[♩. = c. 52]
pp throughout
[no accents]
[sim.]
[sempre staccato]
(sempre pp)
[molto legato but no pedal]

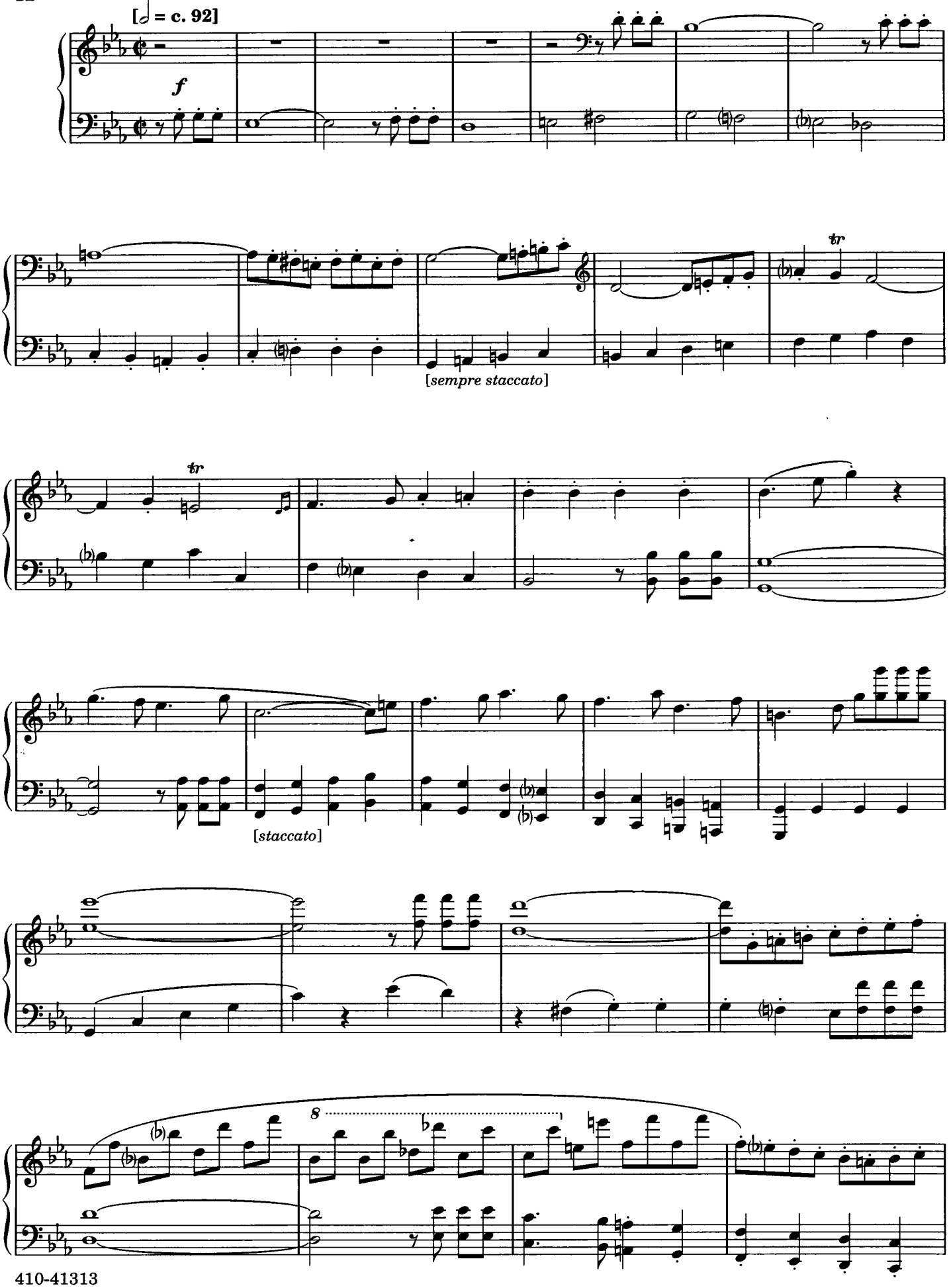

8
8
8
[sim.]
8
Ped.
(no pedal)

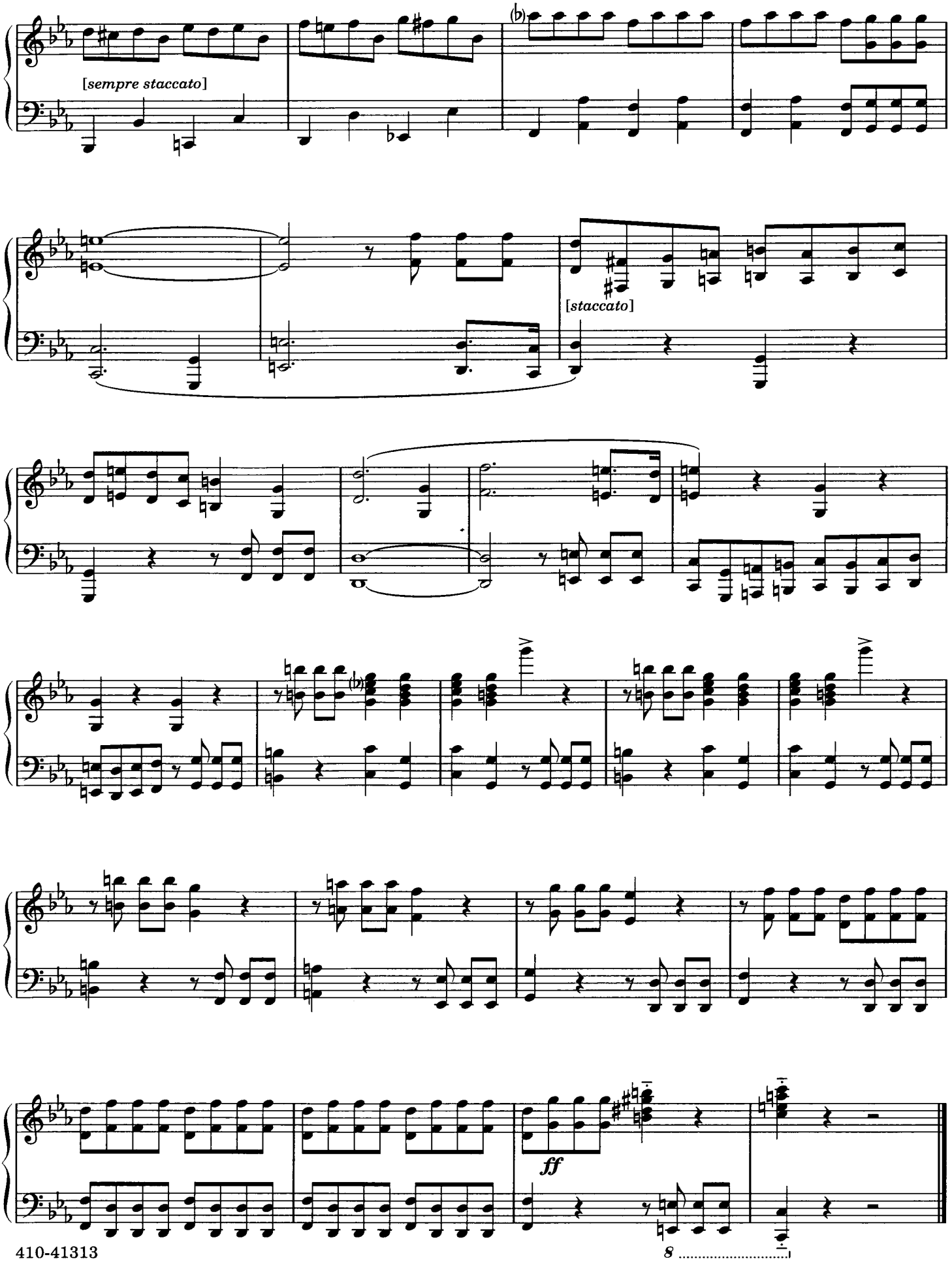

[sim.]
8
[sim.]

II

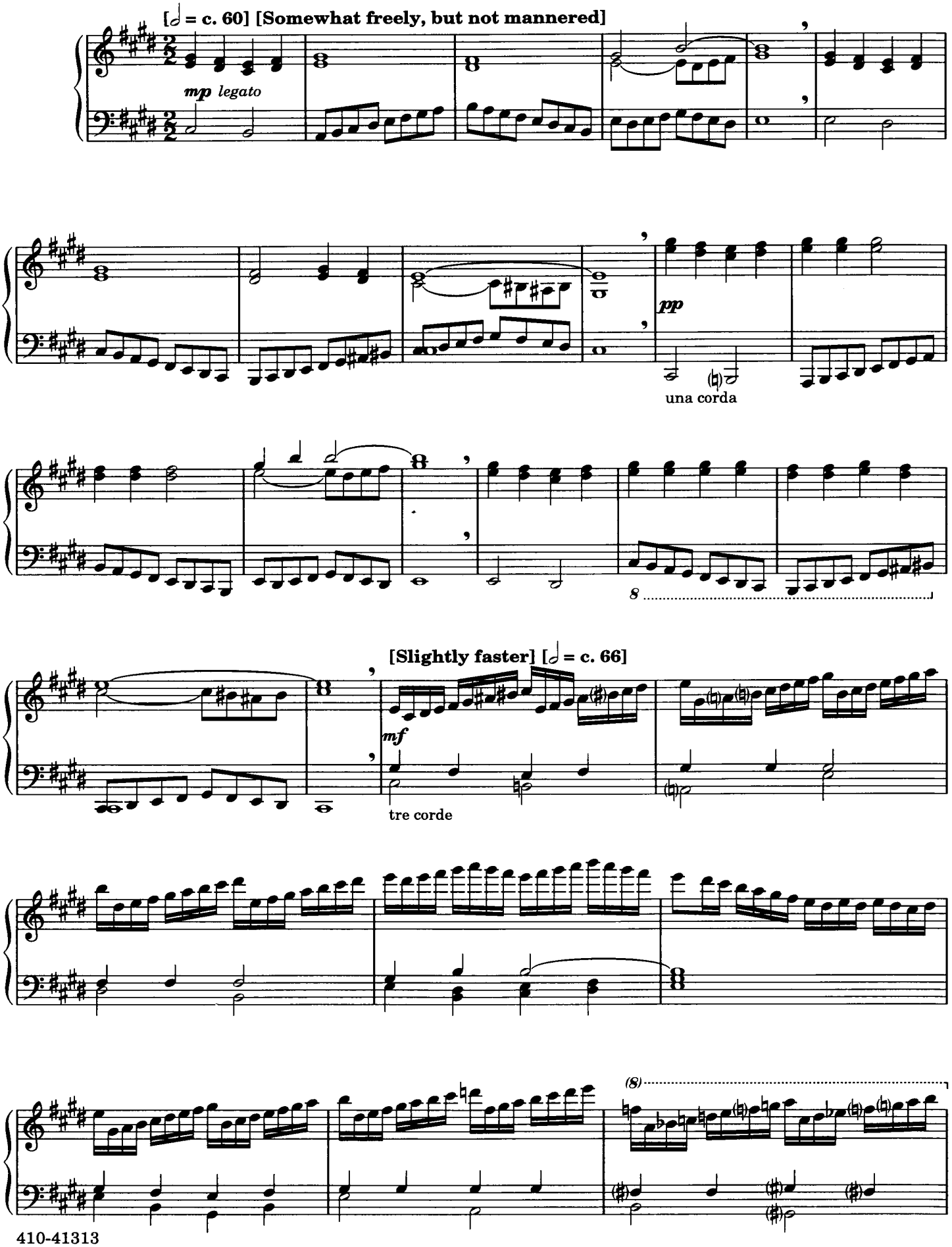


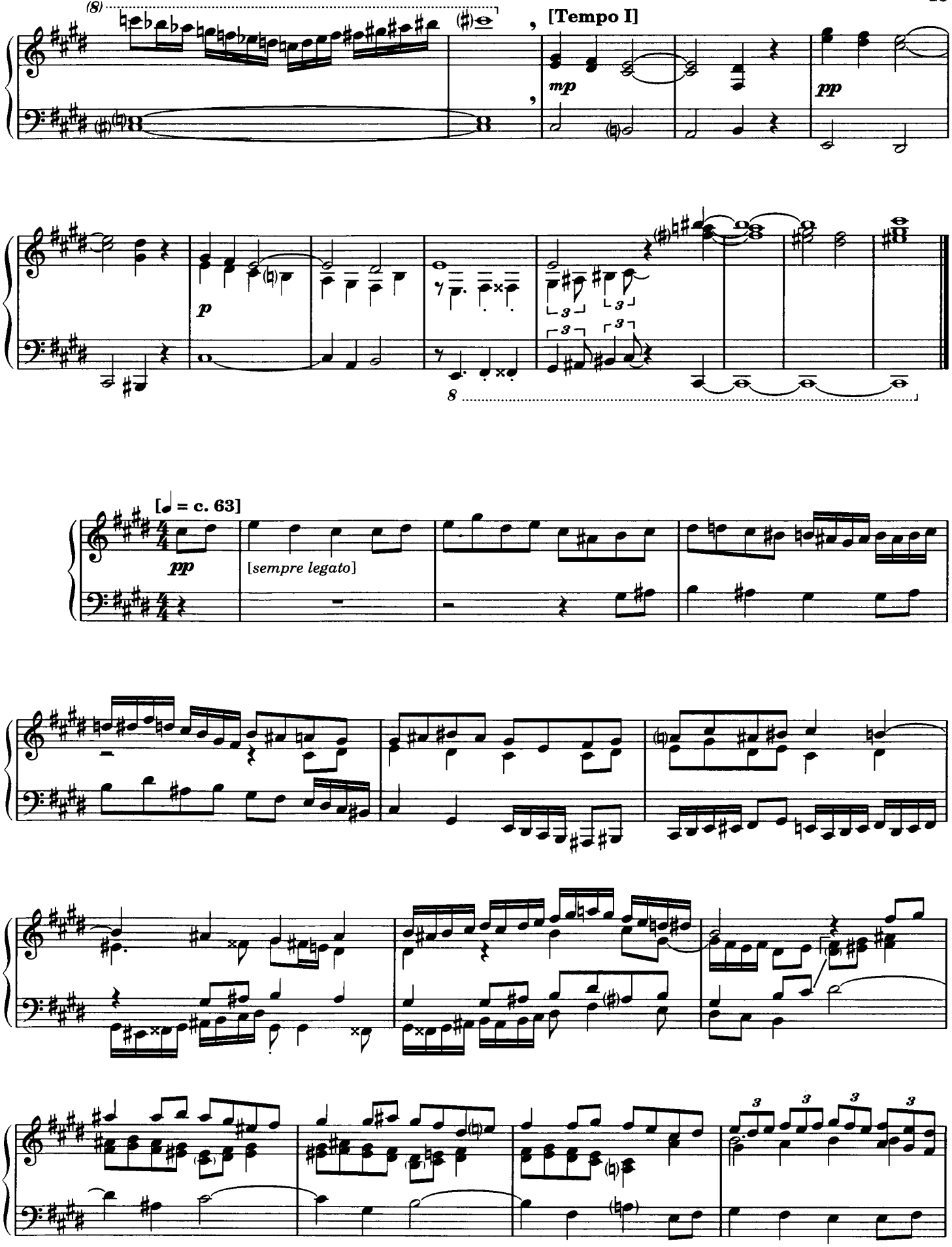
BEER BARREL POLKA © 1934 by Shapiro, Bernstein & Co. Inc., used by permission.

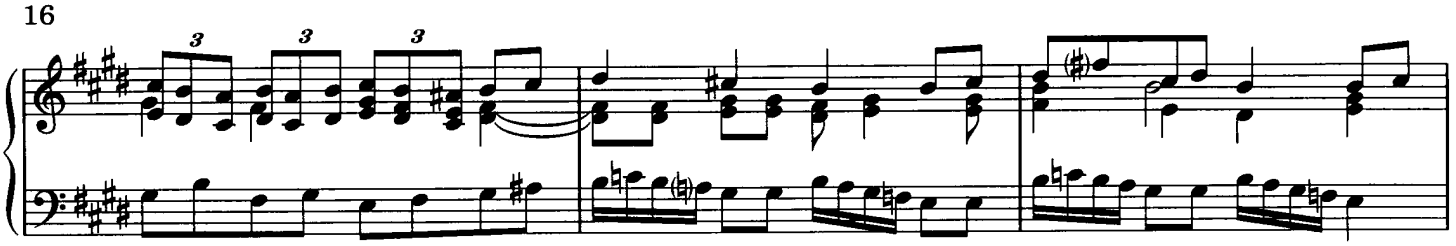

[𝅗𝅥 = c. 92]
f
[sempre staccato]
tr
[staccato]
8

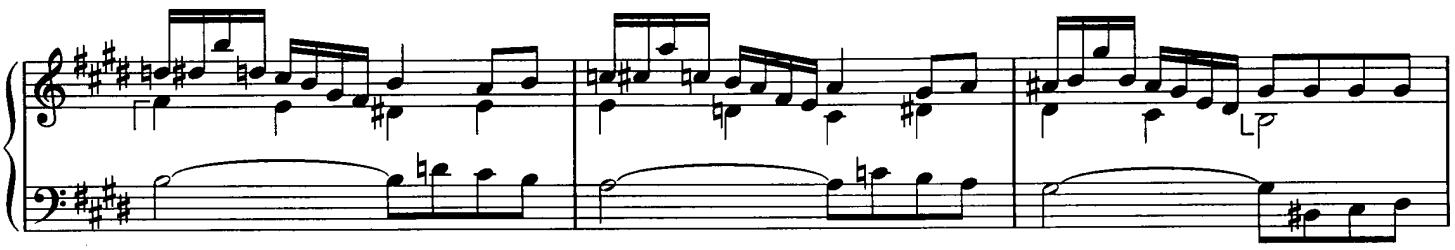

[sempre staccato]
[staccato]
ff
8

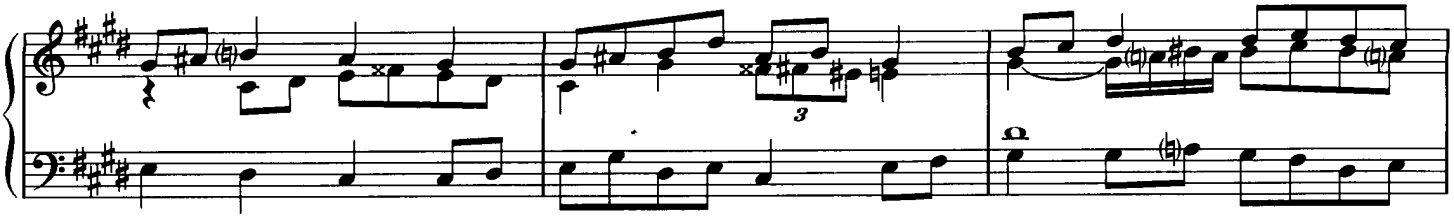
III

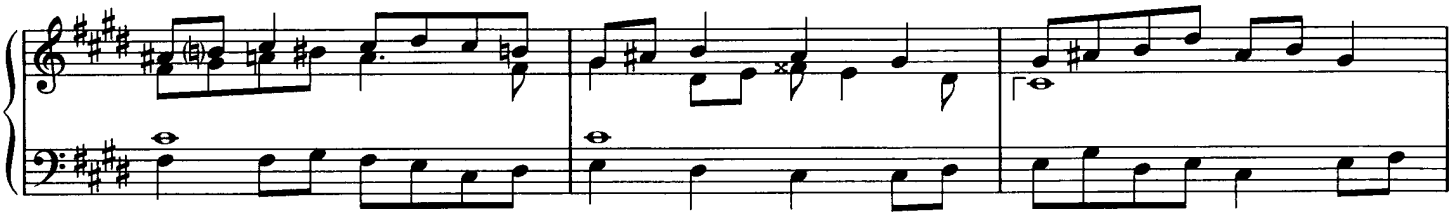

[𝅗𝅥 = c. 60] [Somewhat freely, but not mannered]
mp legato
pp
una corda
8
[Slightly faster] [𝅗𝅥 = c. 66]
mf
tre corde
(8)

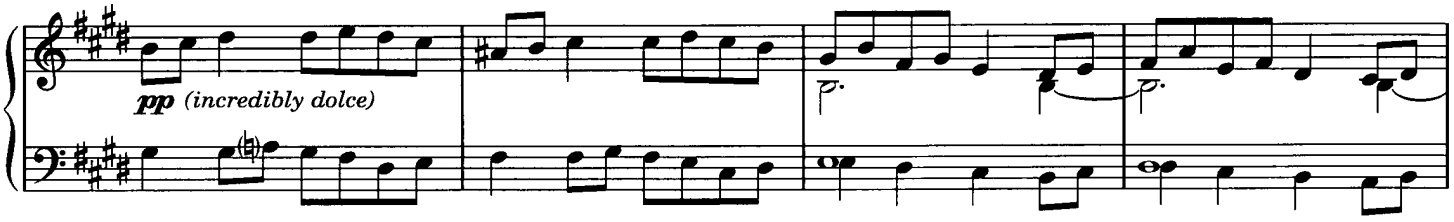

(8)
[Tempo I]
mp
pp
p
8
[♩ = c. 63]
pp
[sempre legato]

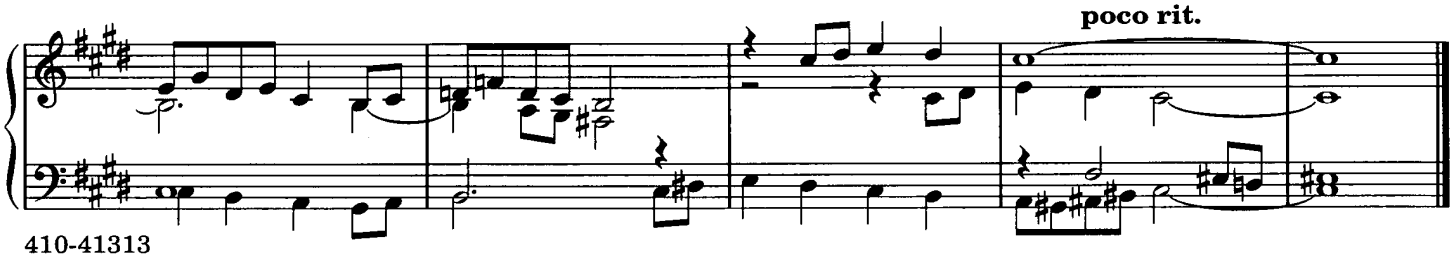




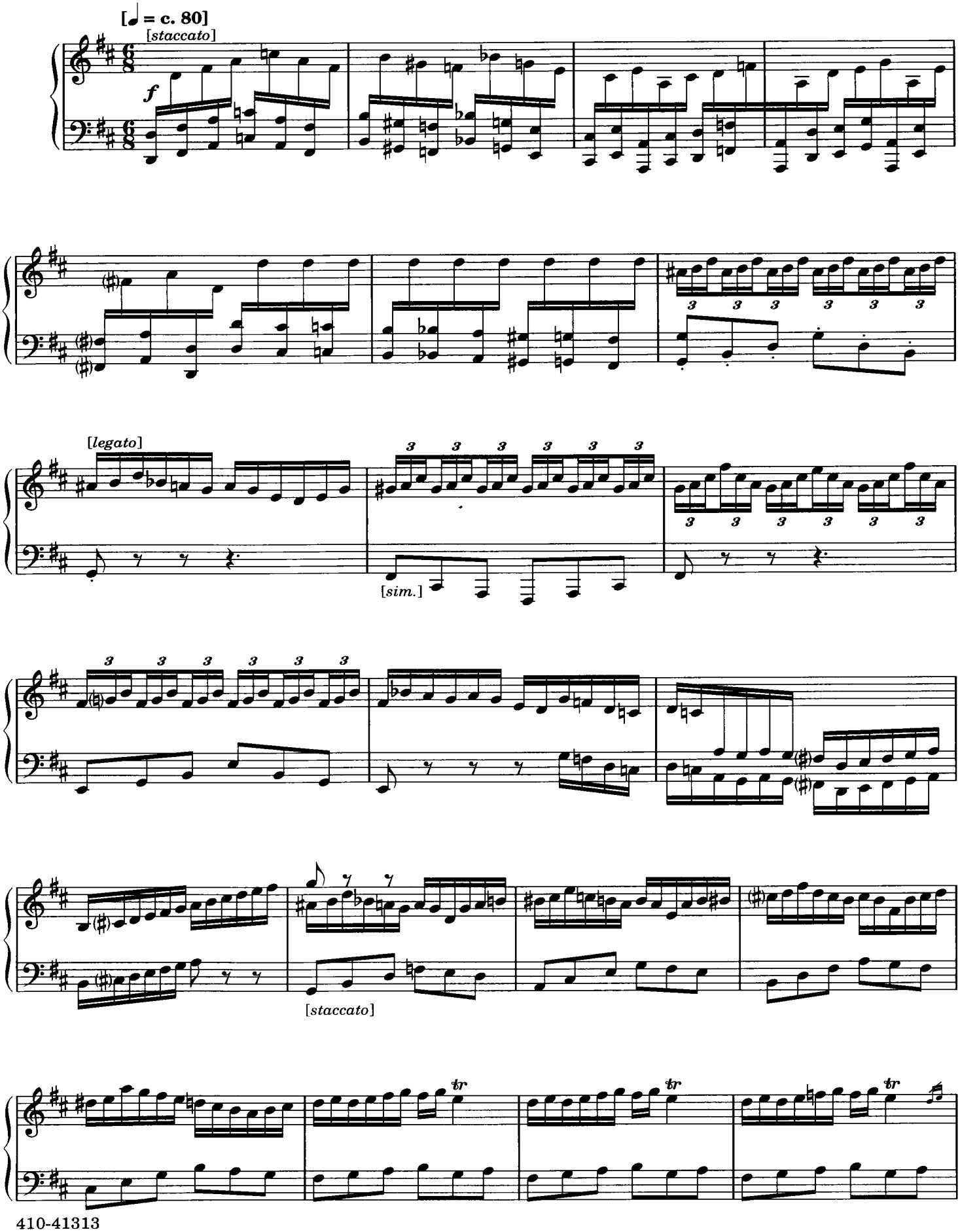


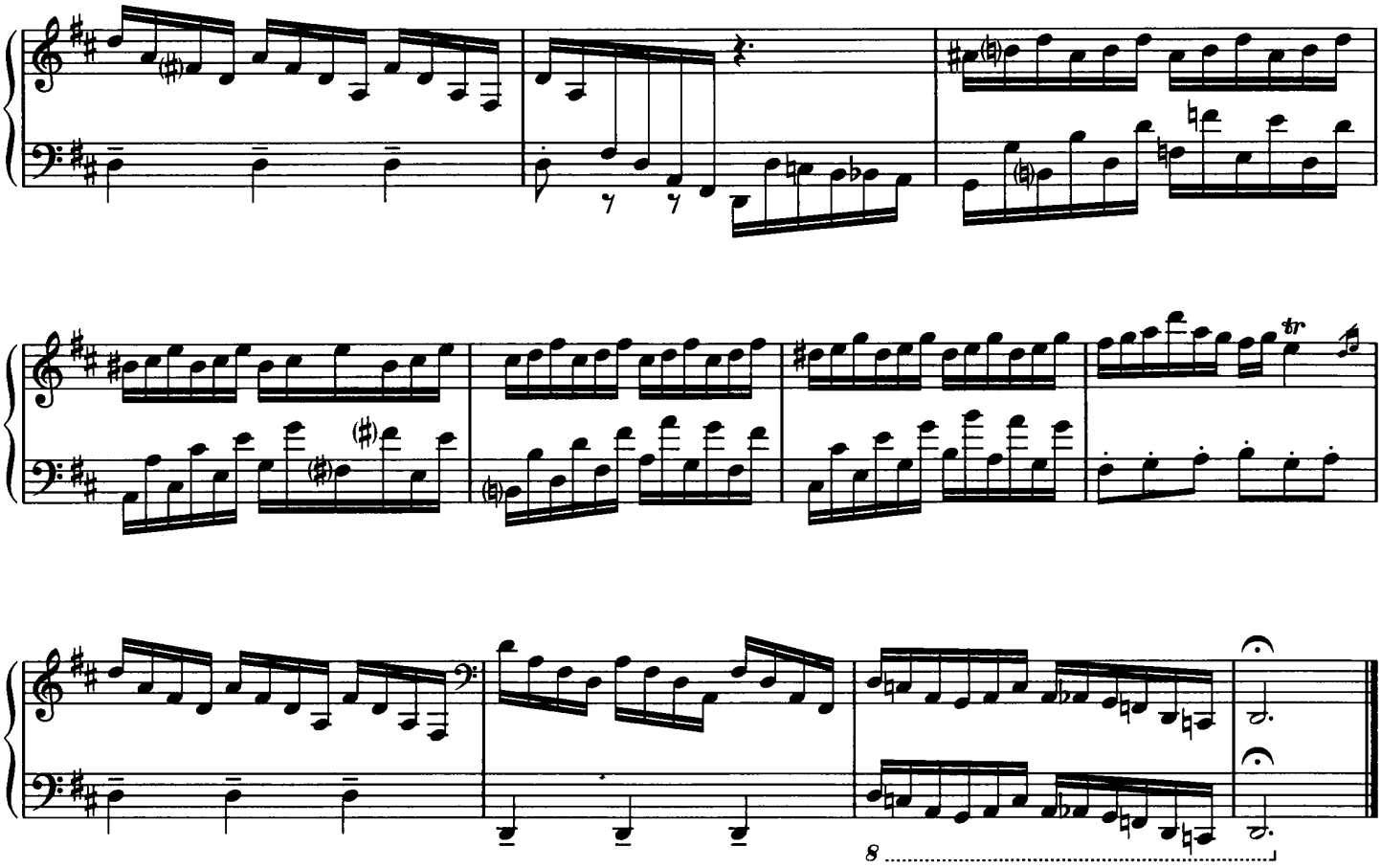


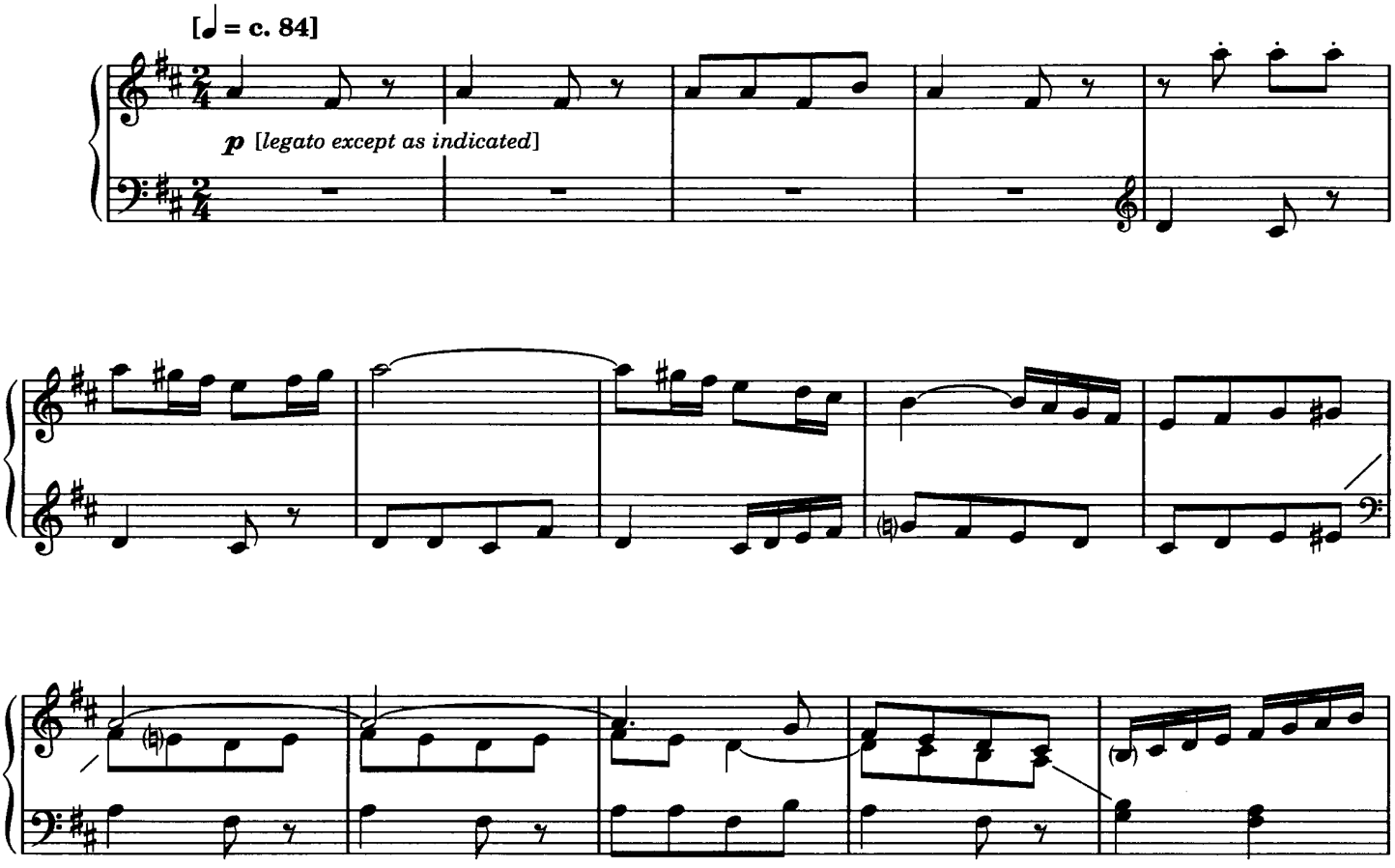

pp (incredibly dolce)


poco rit.

IV






[♩ = c. 84]
p [legato except as indicated]

8

(8)

cresc.

mp cresc.

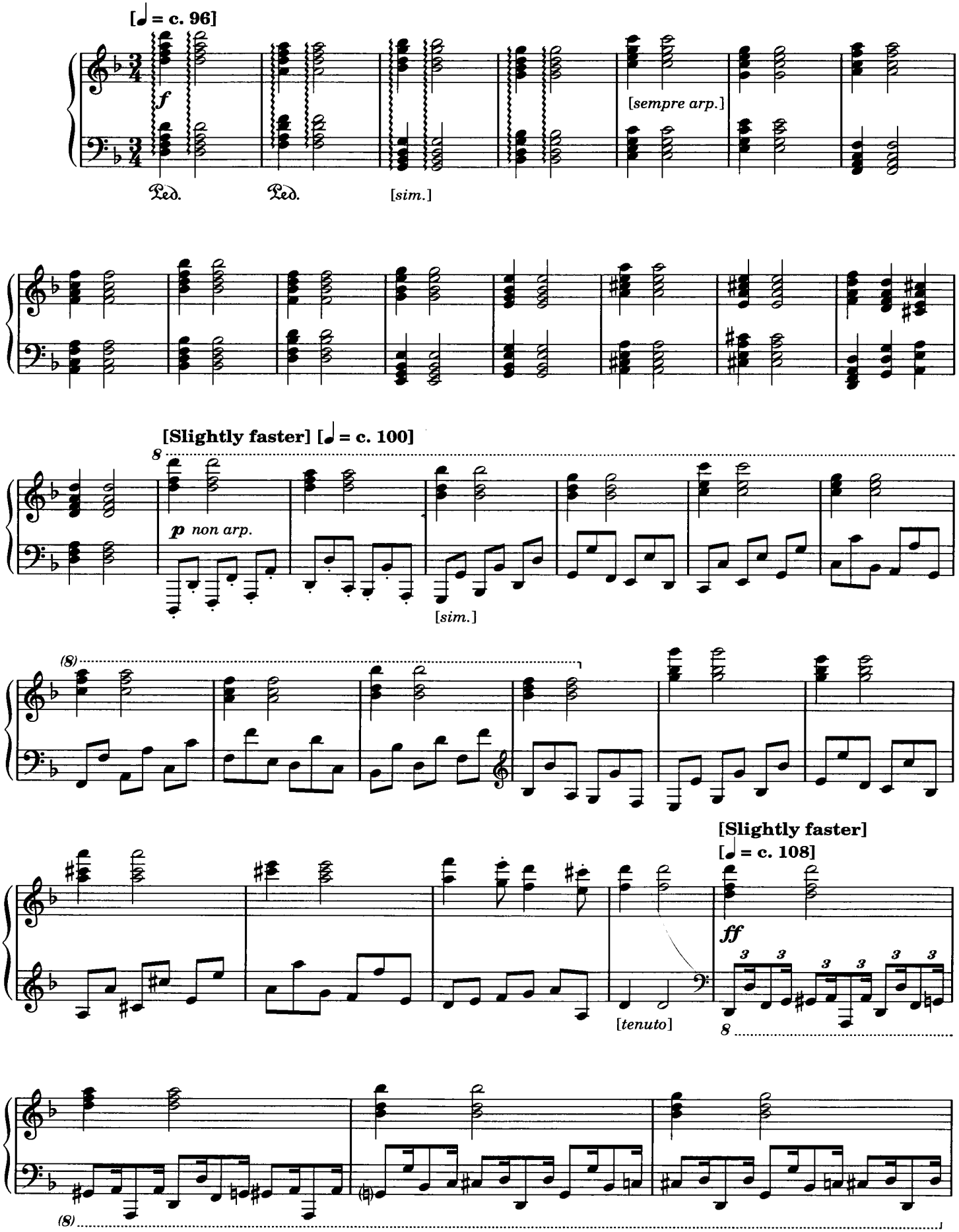
mf cresc.

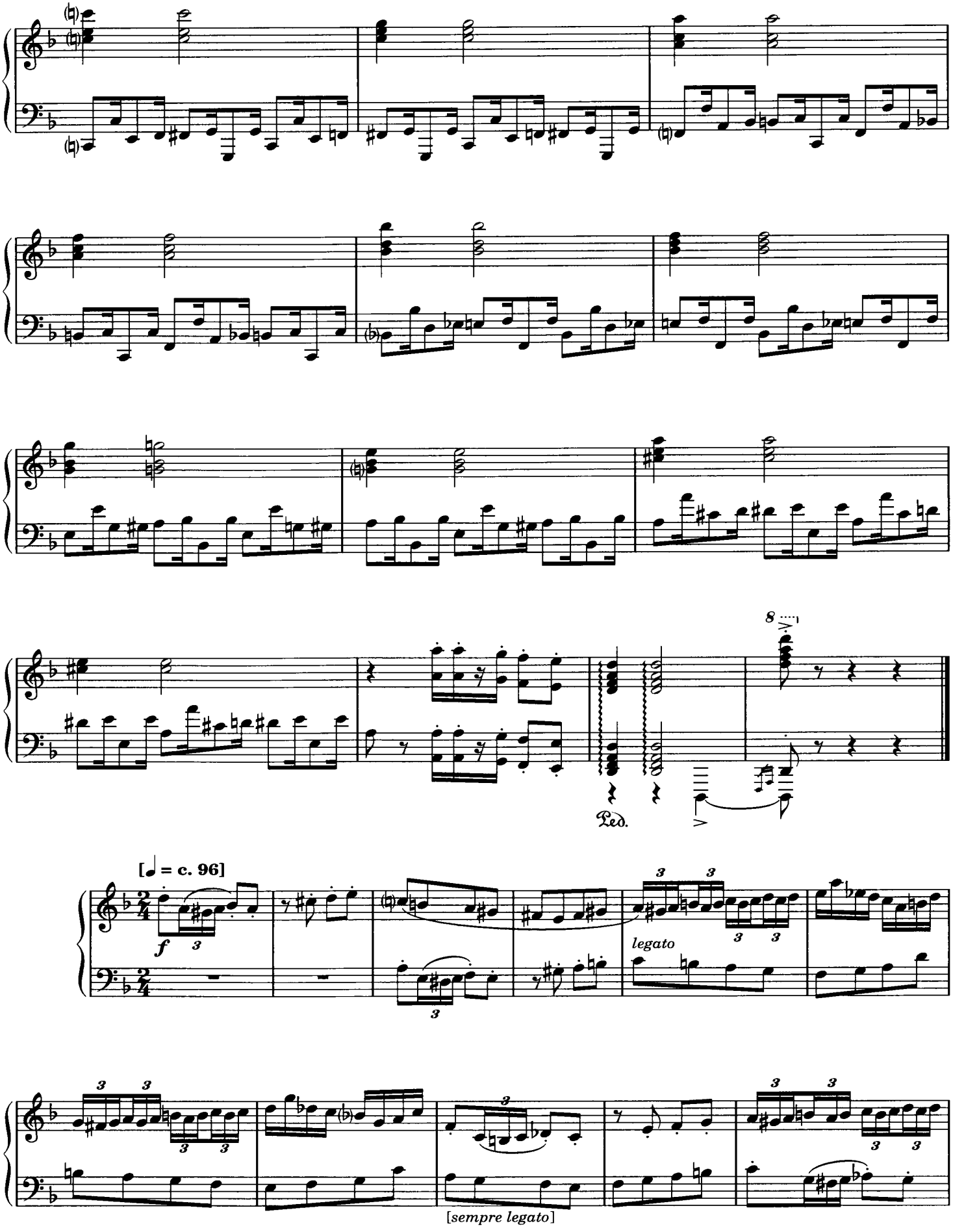
f

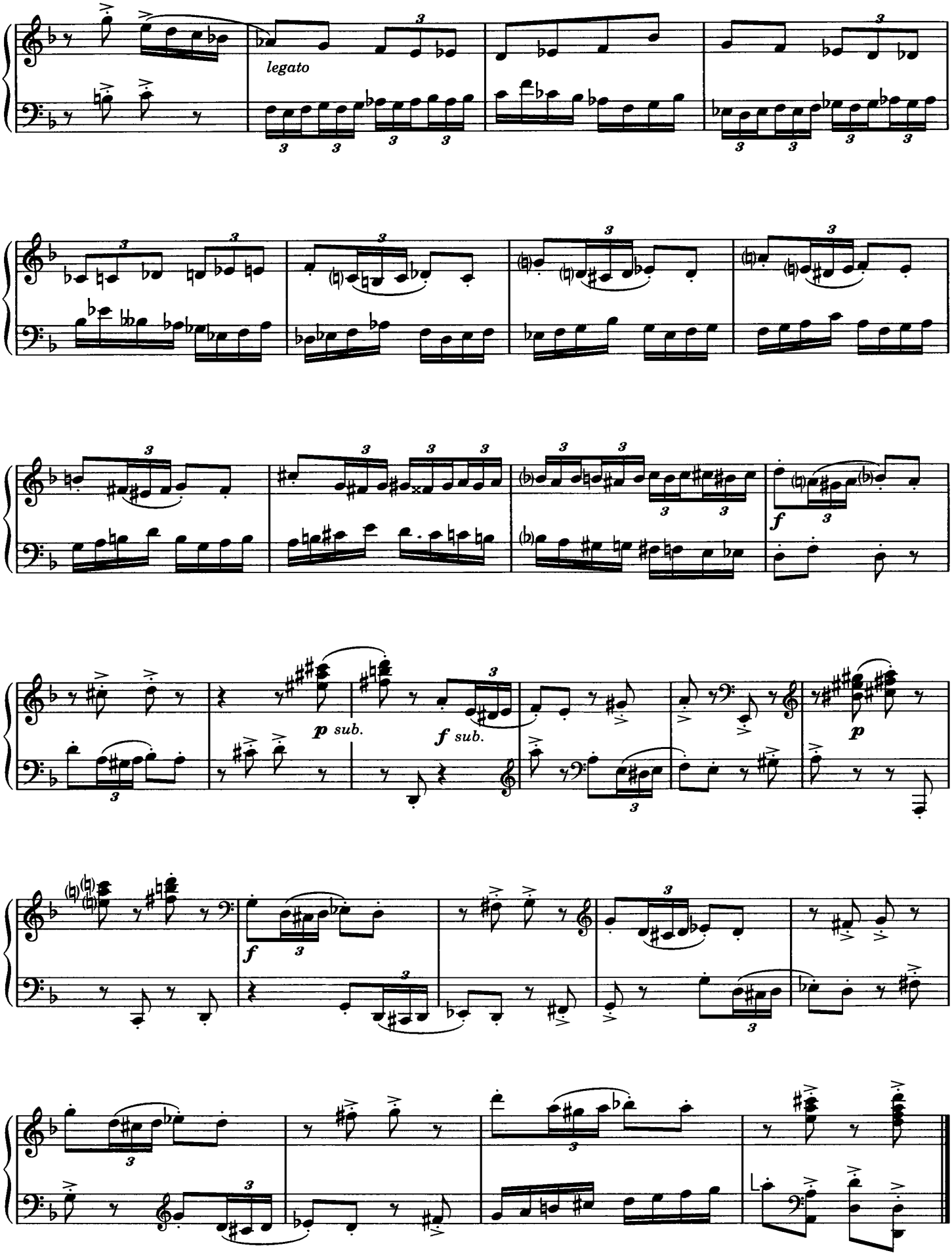
p sub.

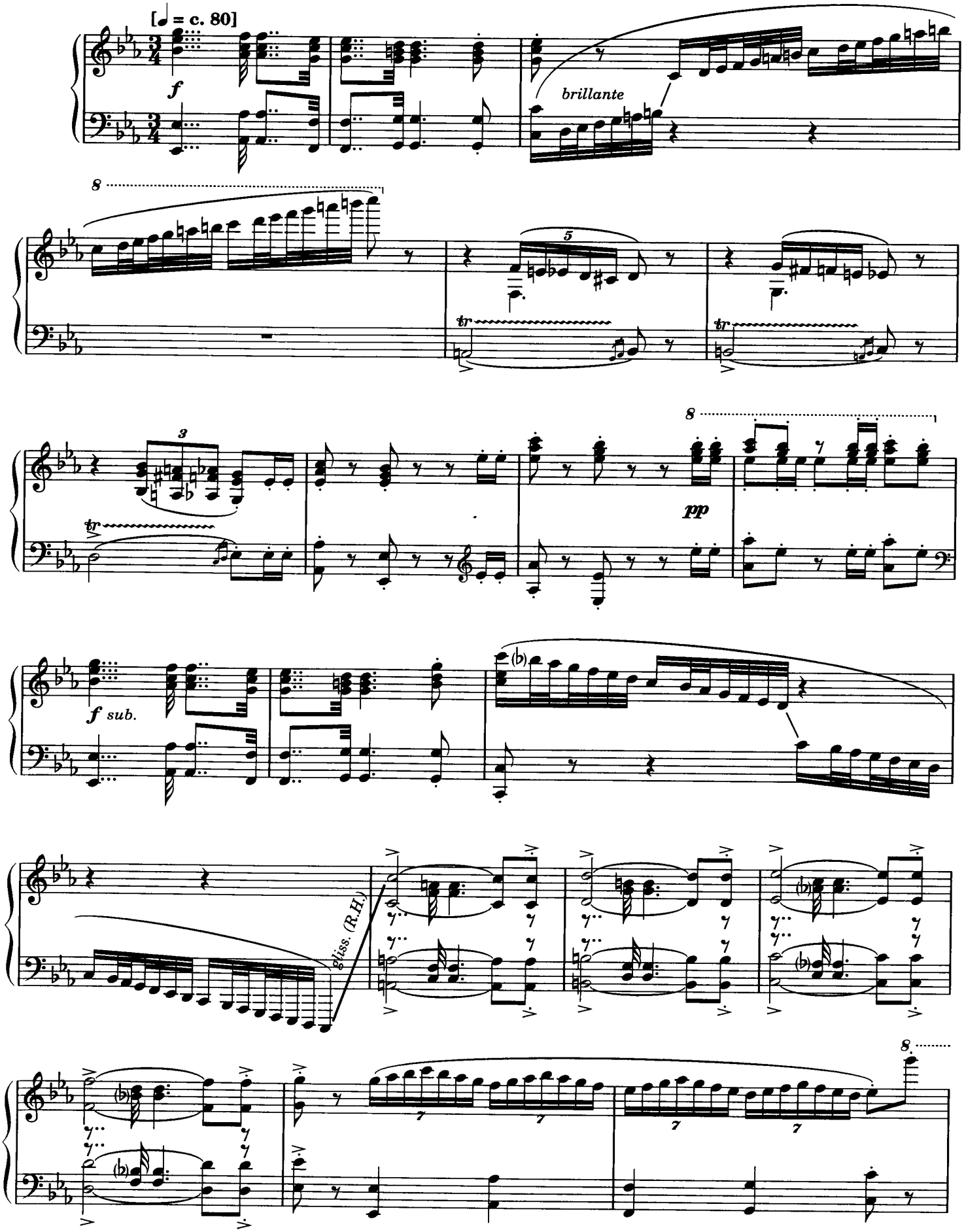
[very poco rit.]

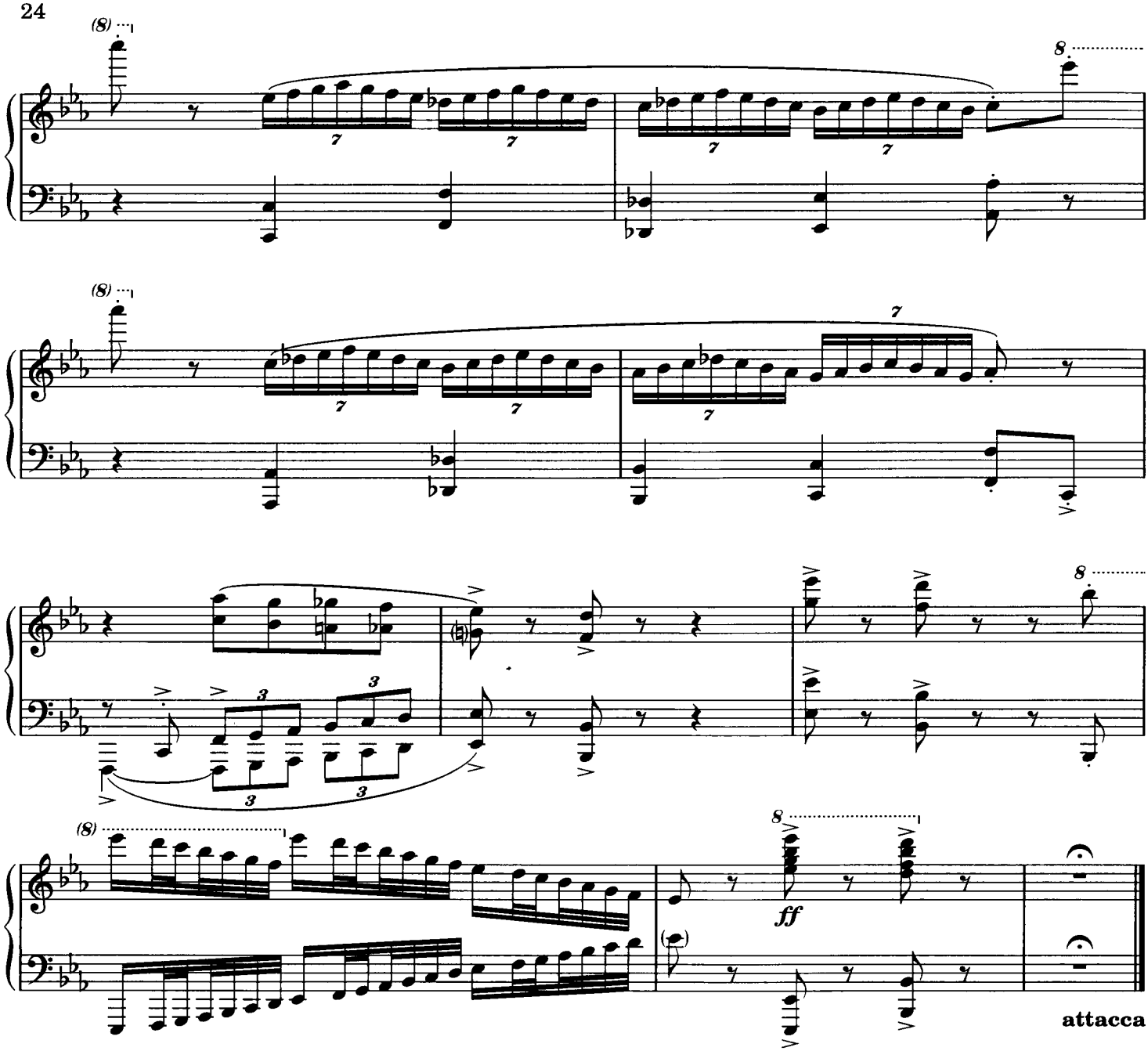
V

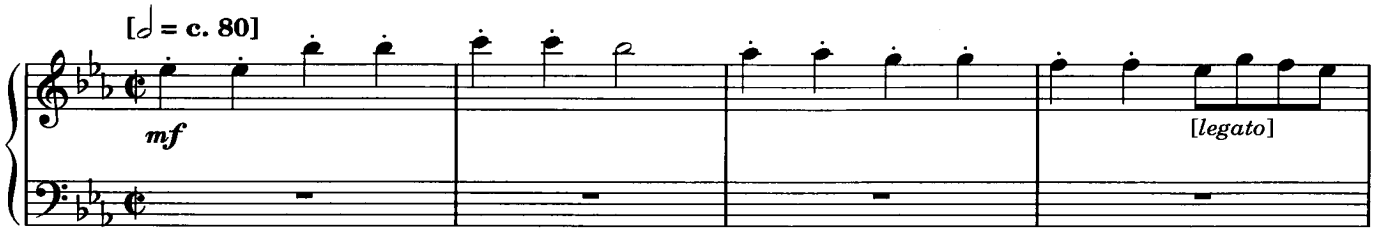

[♩ = c. 96]
f
Ped.
Ped.
[sim.]
[sempre arp.]
[Slightly faster] [♩ = c. 100]
8
p non arp.
[sim.]
(8)
[Slightly faster]
[♩ = c. 108]
ff
[tenuto]
8
(8)

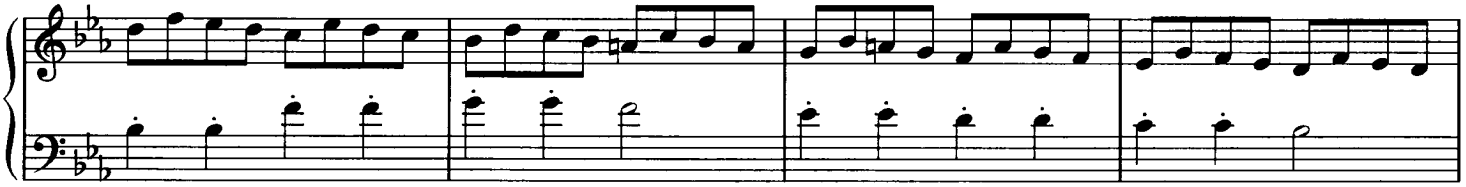

8
Ped.
[♩ = c. 96]
f
legato
[sempre legato]

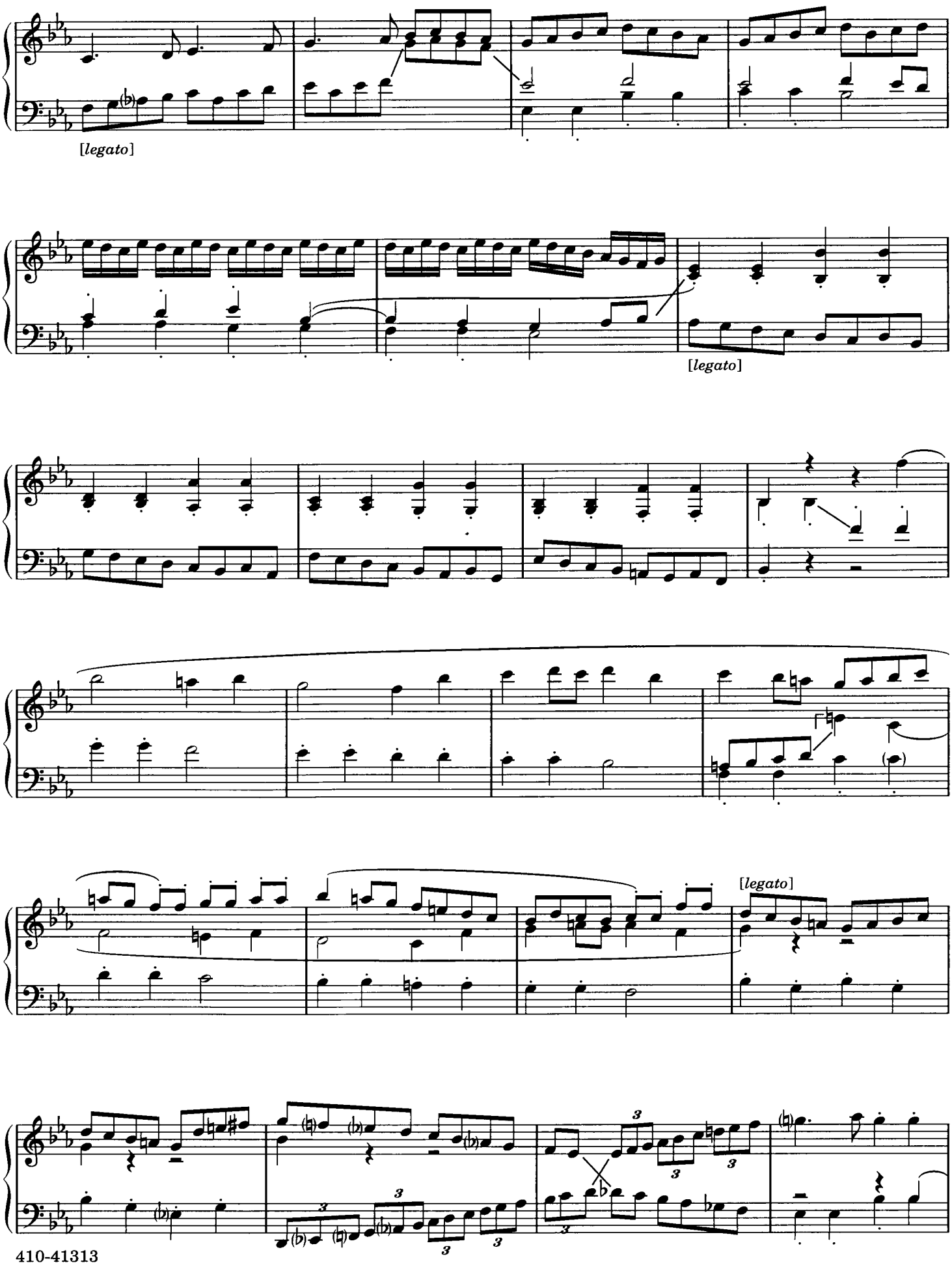

legato
p sub.
f sub.
f
p

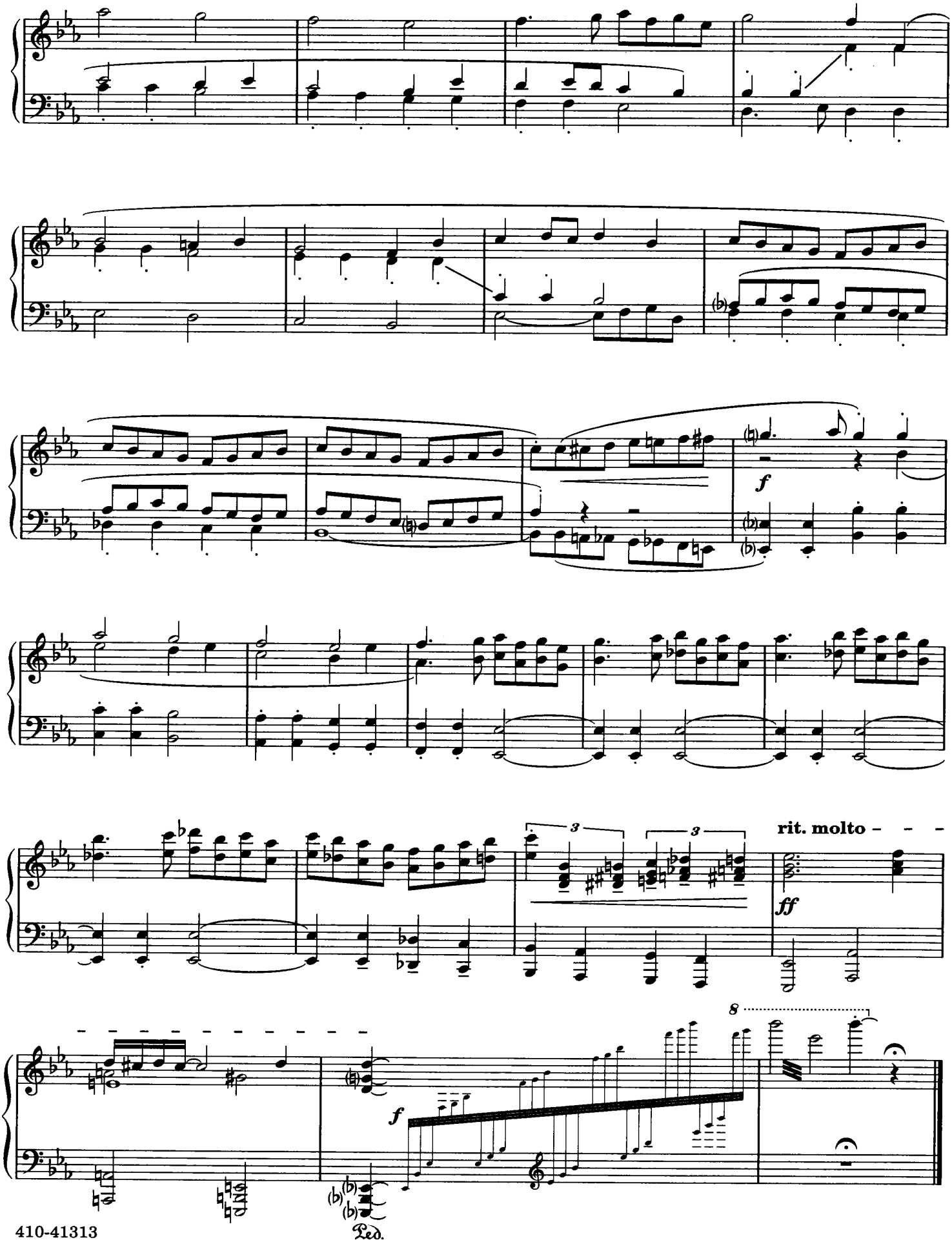

[♩ = c. 80]
f
brillante
8
5
tr
3
pp
f sub.
gliss. (R.H.)
7


(8)
8
7
(8)
7
8
(8)
8
ff
attacca

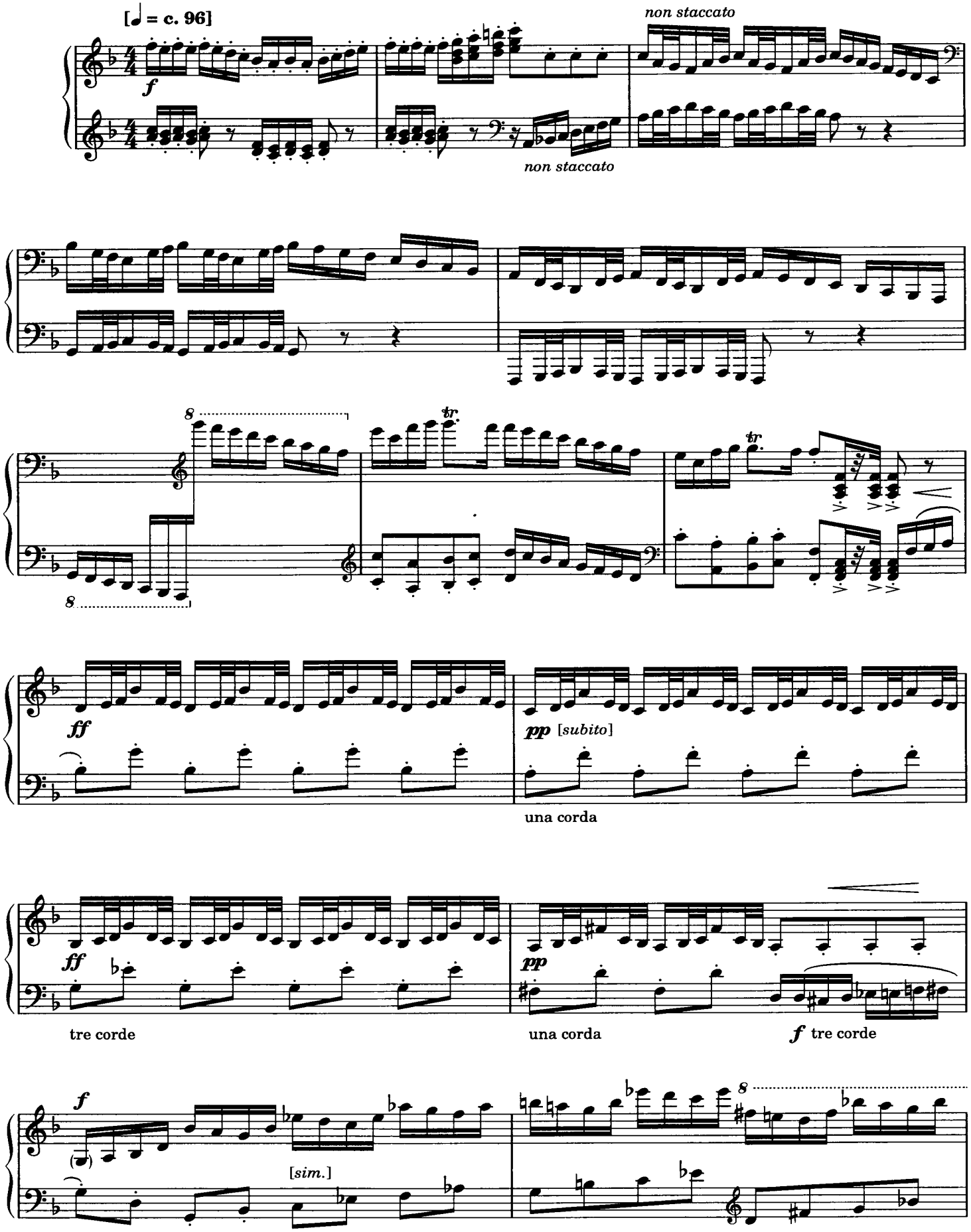

[♩ = c. 80]
mf
[legato]

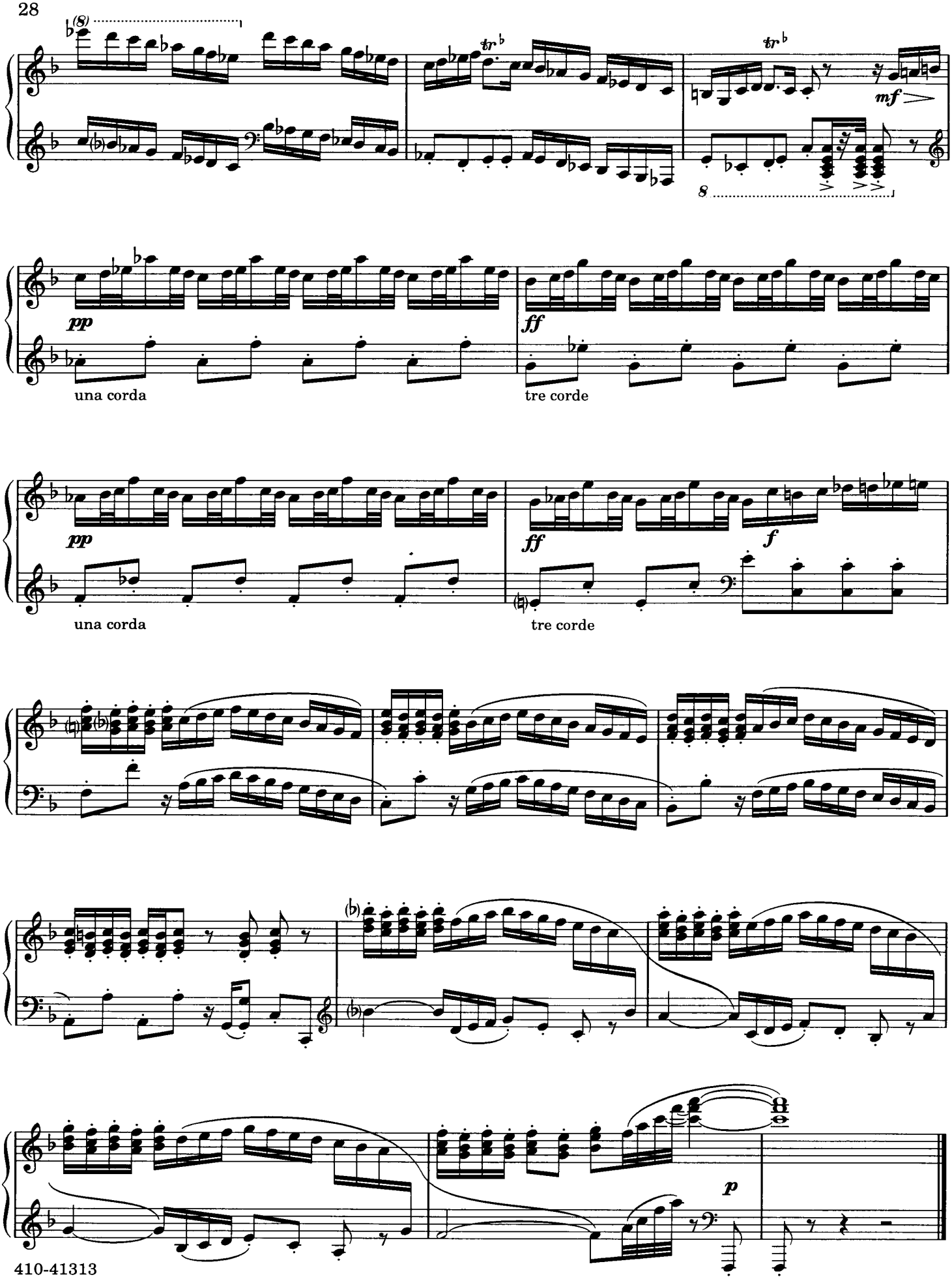


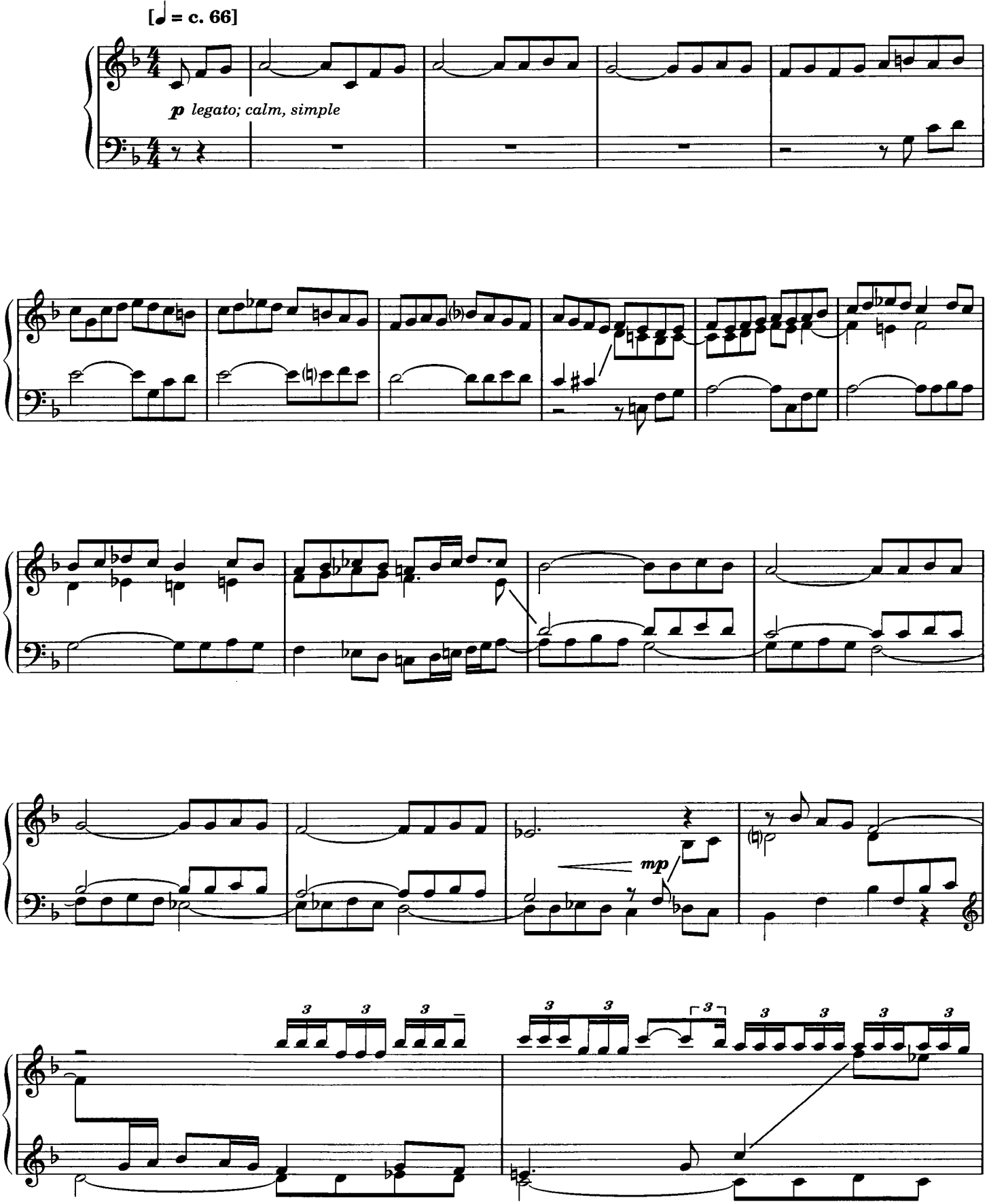

[legato]
[legato]
[legato]


f
3
3
rit. molto - - -
ff
8
f
Ped.

VII


[♩ = c. 96]
f
non staccato
non staccato
8
tr
8
tr
ff
pp [subito]
una corda
ff
tre corde
pp
una corda
f tre corde
f
[sim.]
8


(8)
tr
tr
mf
8
pp
una corda
ff
tre corde
pp
una corda
ff
f
tre corde
p



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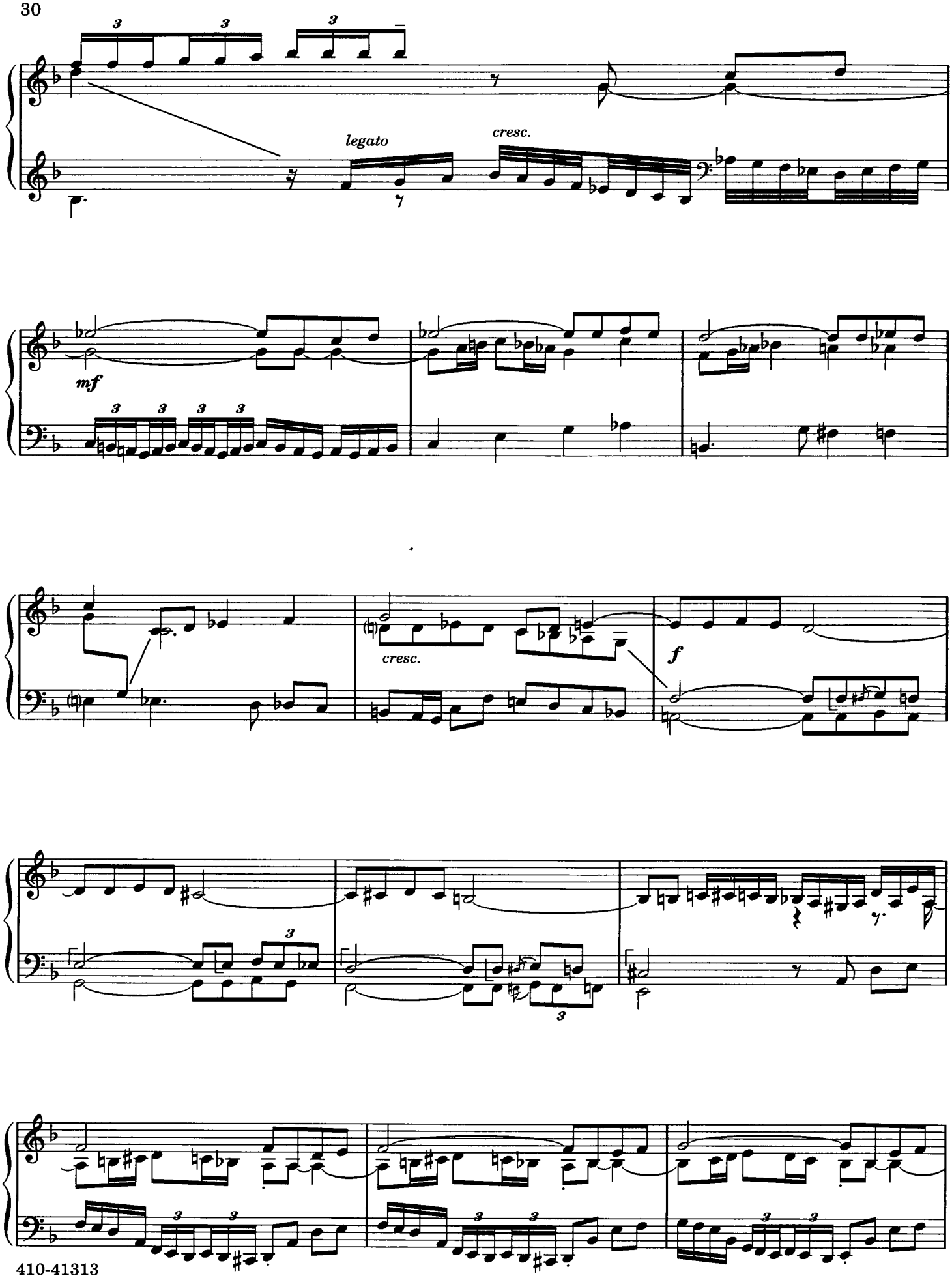
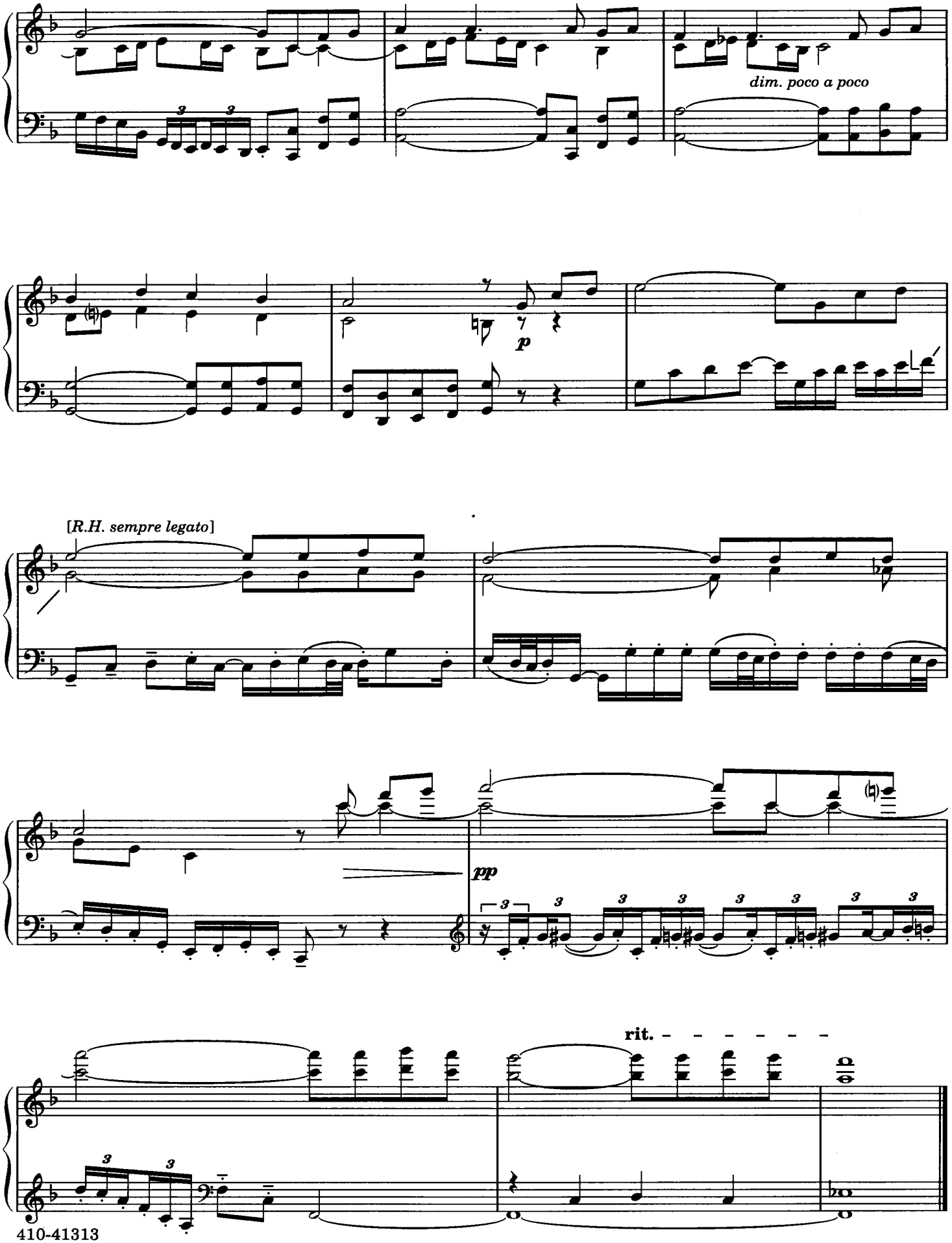
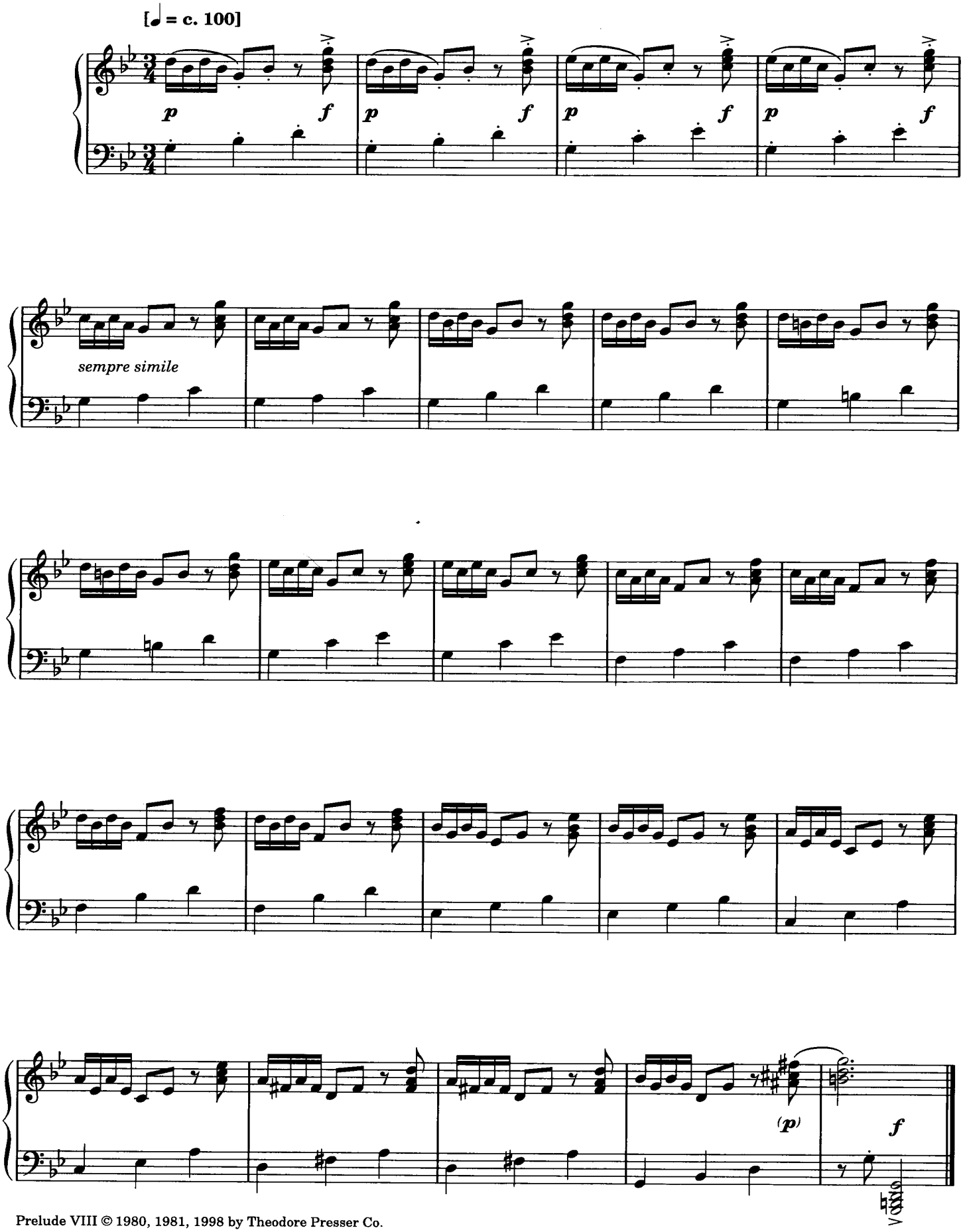

legato
cresc.
mf
cresc.
f


dim. poco a poco
p
[R.H. sempre legato]
pp
rit.

VIII



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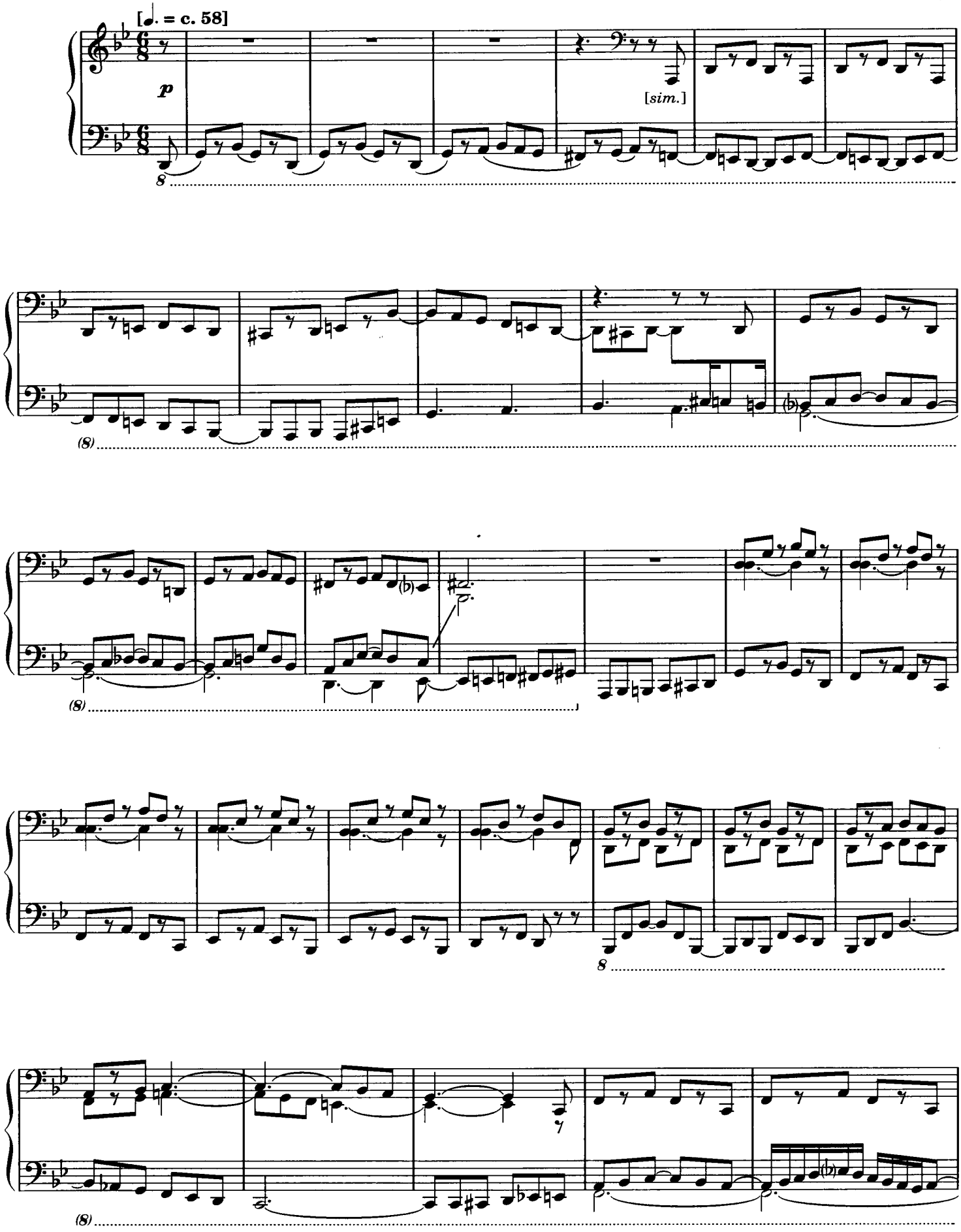
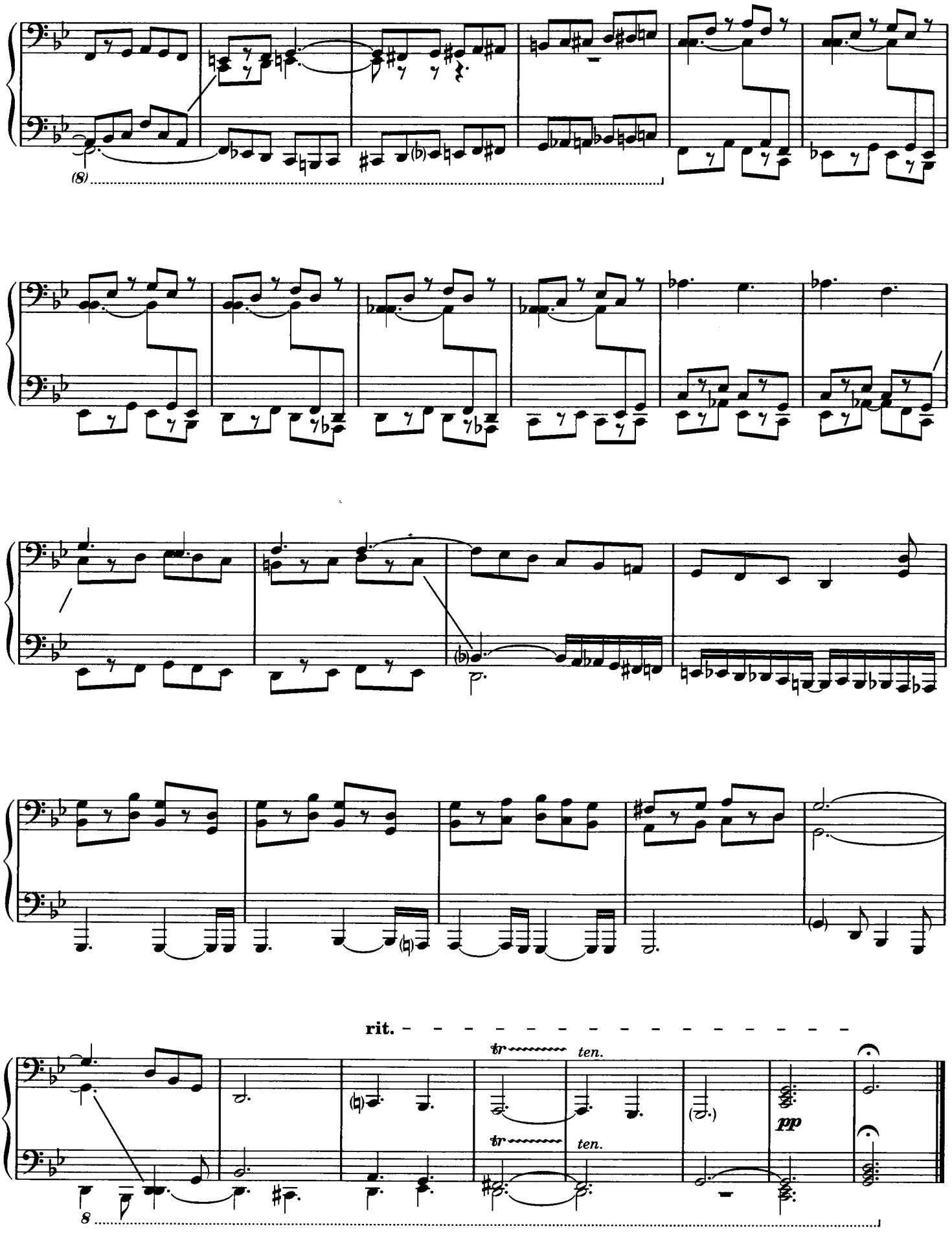
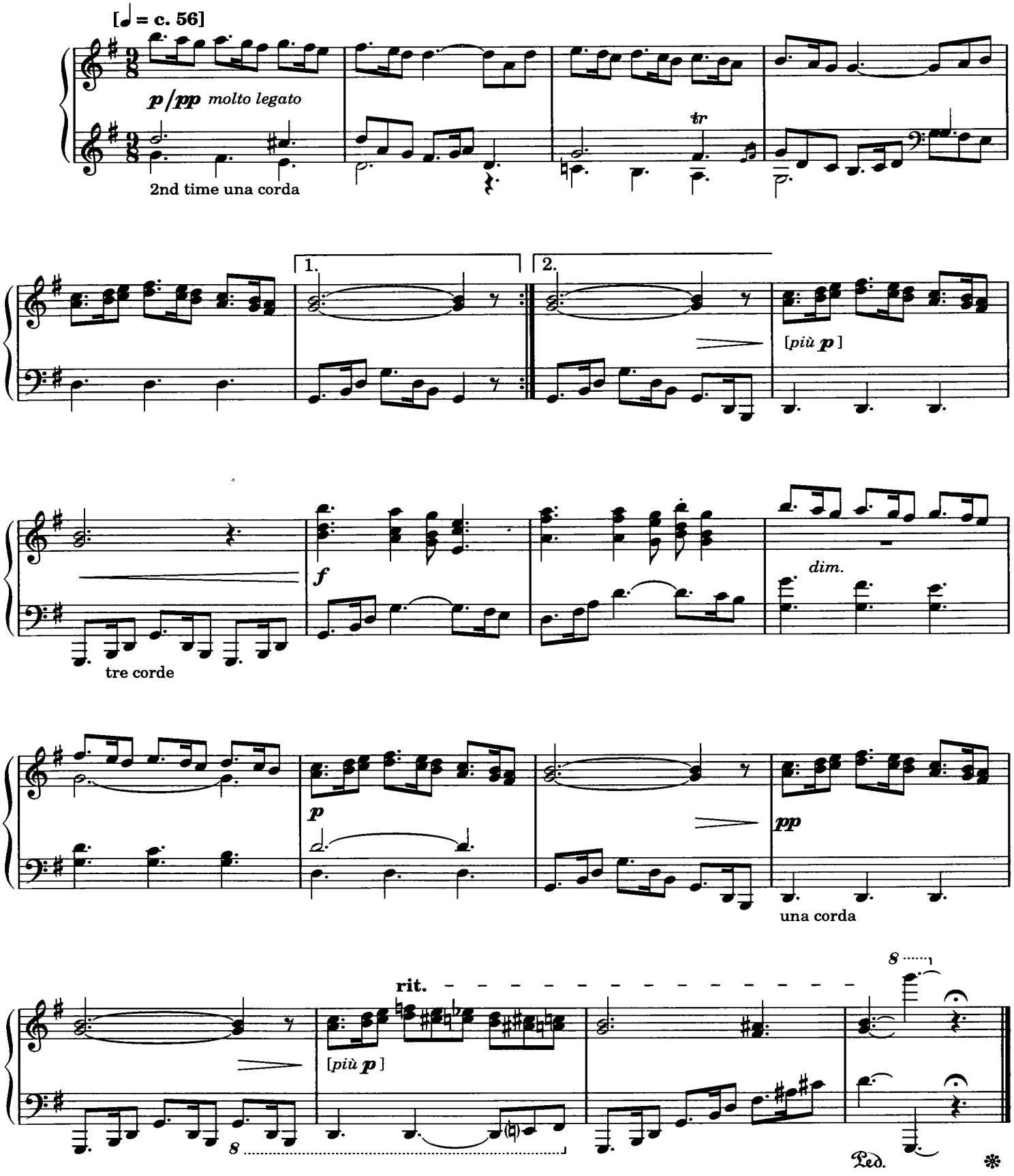
410-41313


[♩. = c. 58]
p
[sim.]
8
(8)
(8)
8
(8)


(8)
rit.
tr
ten.
tr
ten.
pp
8

IX



CIELITO LINDO
By C. FERNANDEZ
Translation adapted by NEIL C. WILSON
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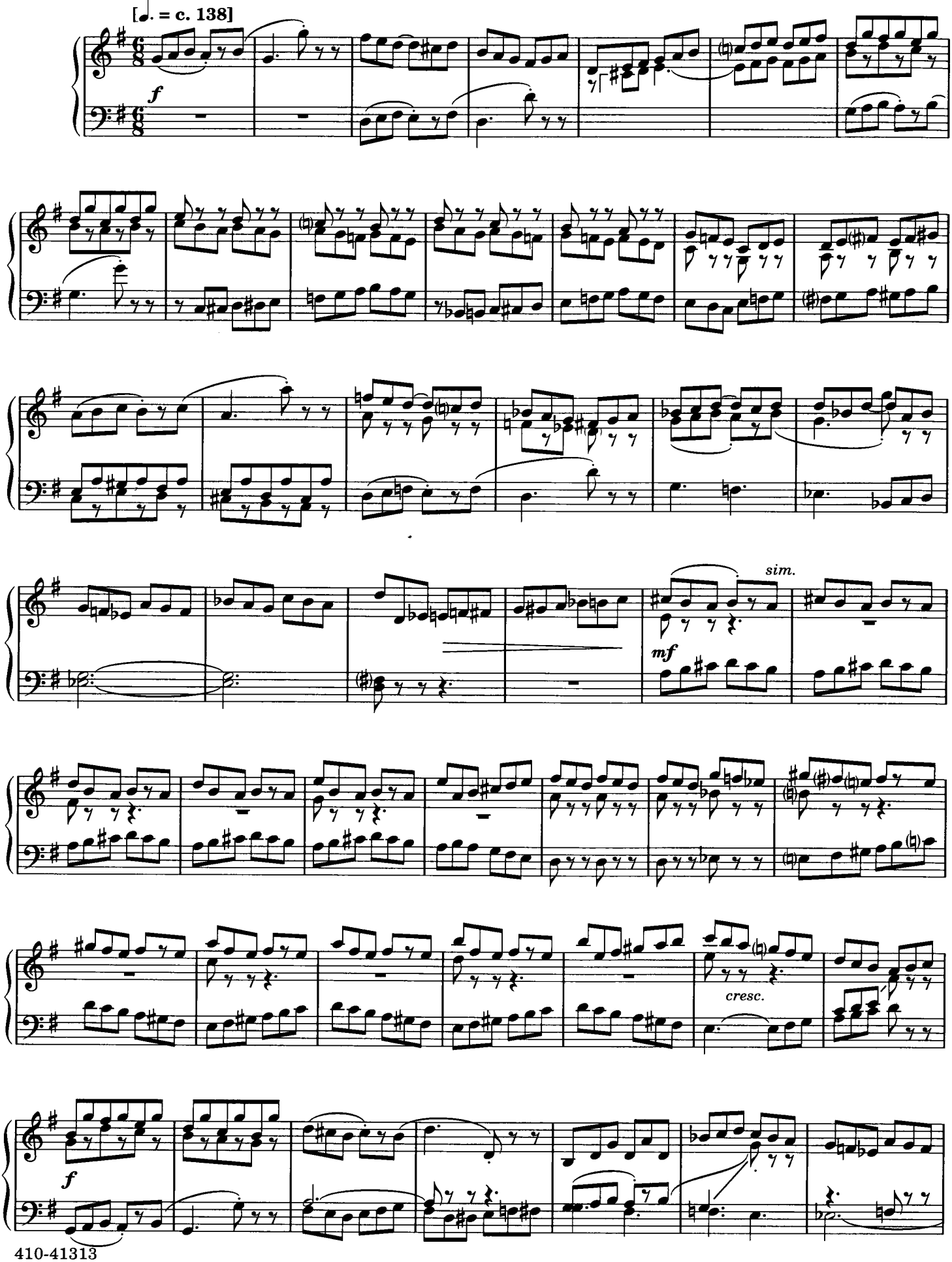
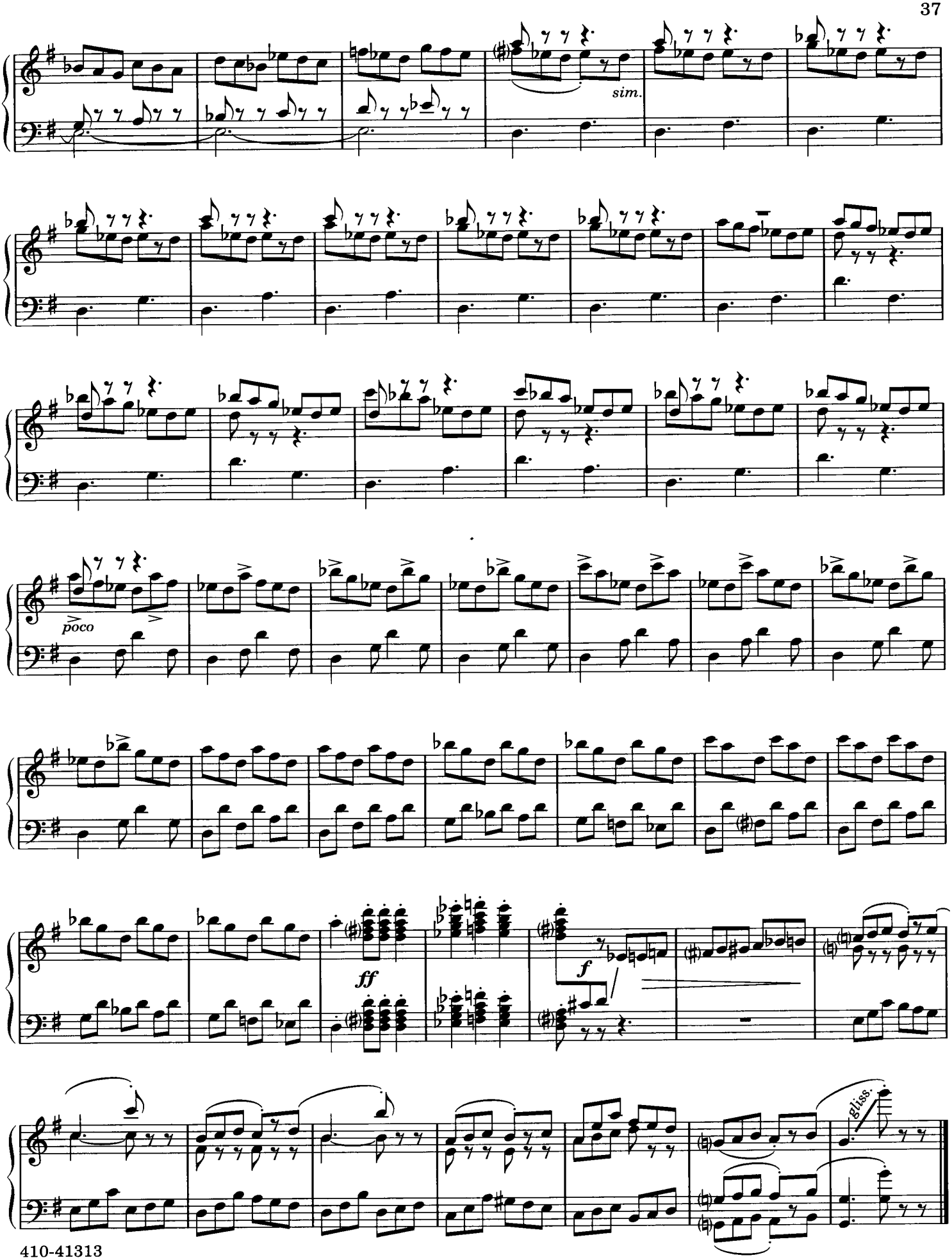
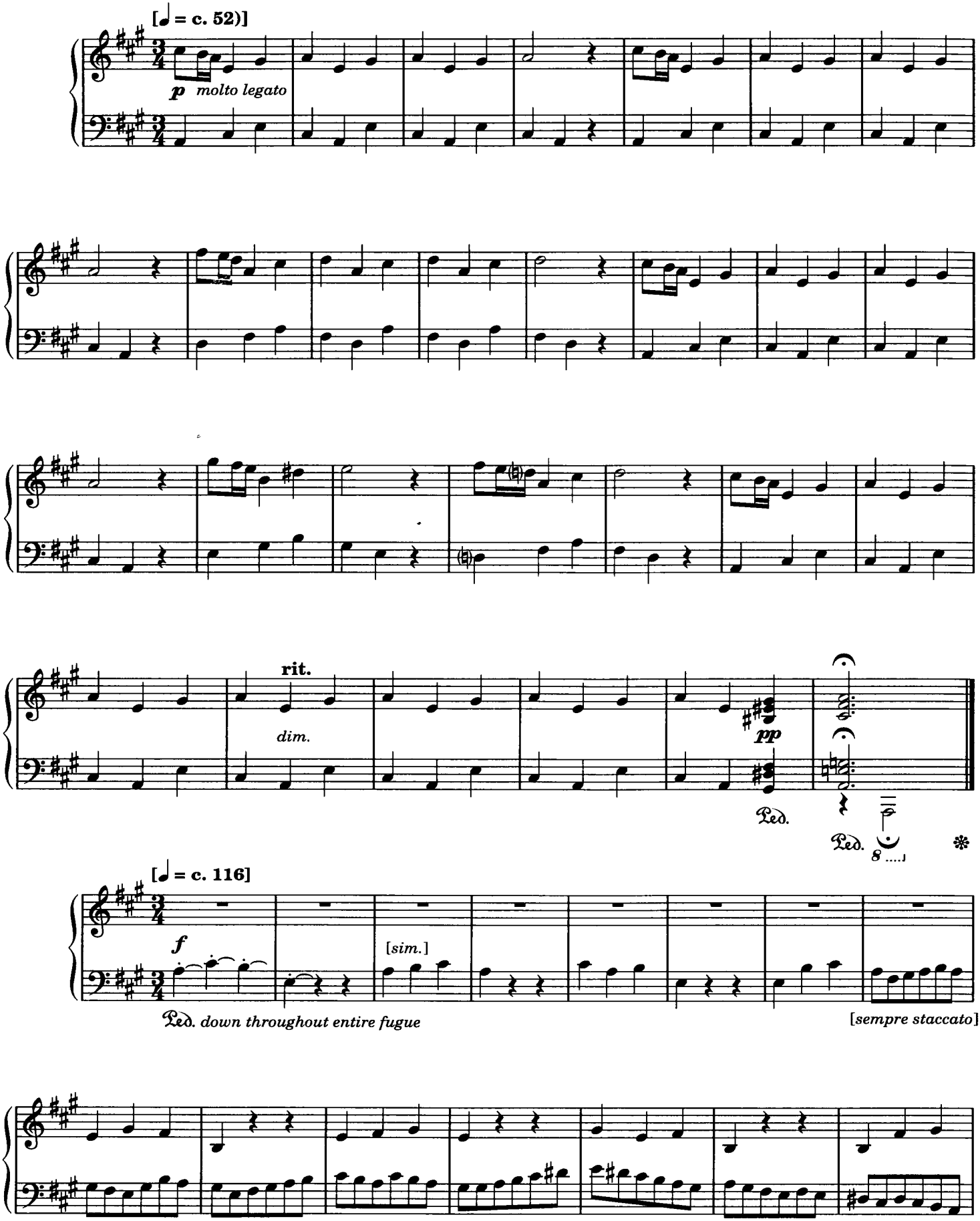

[♩. = c. 138]
f
sim.
mf
cresc.
f


sim.
poco
ff
f
gliss.

X



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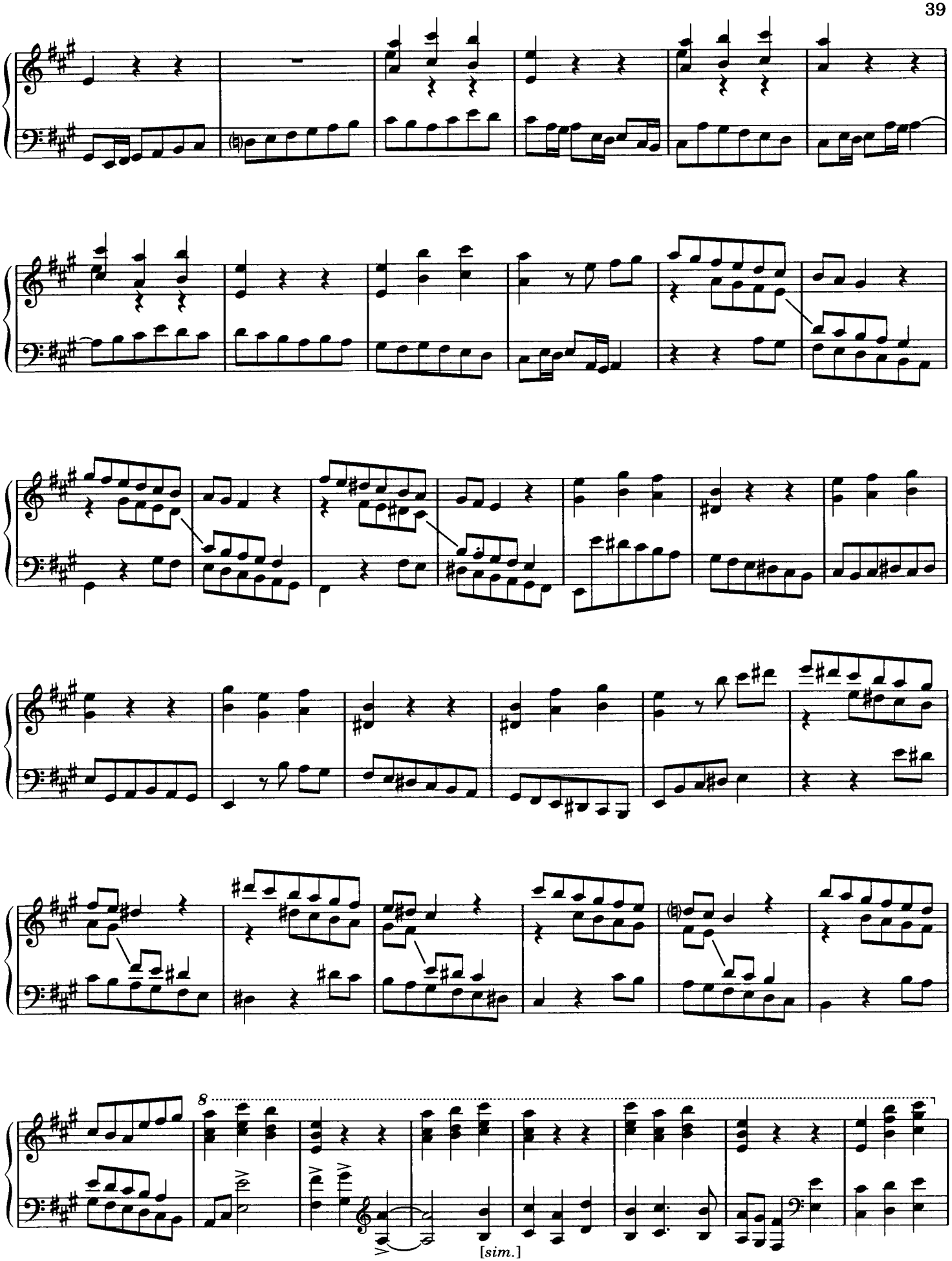
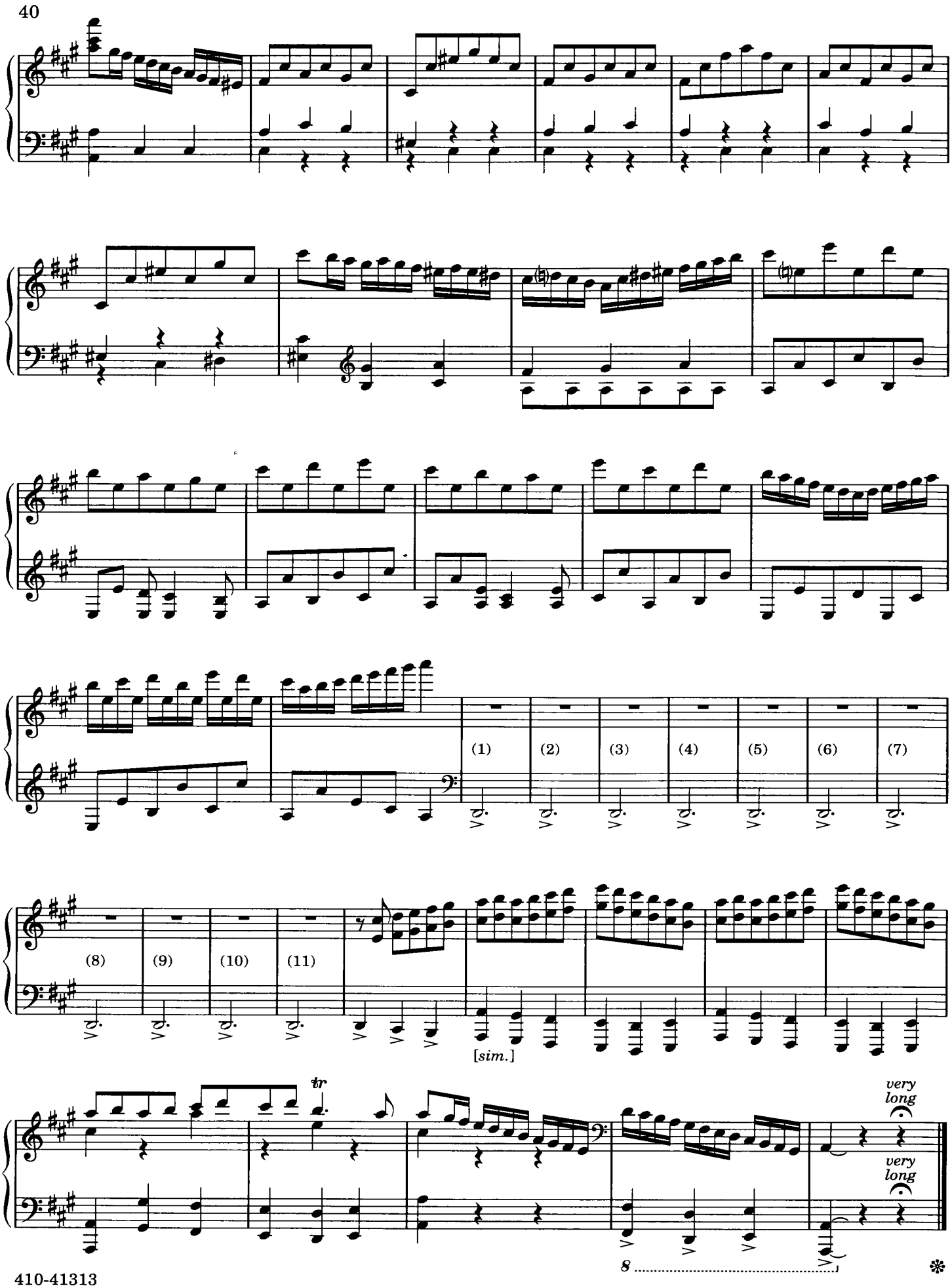
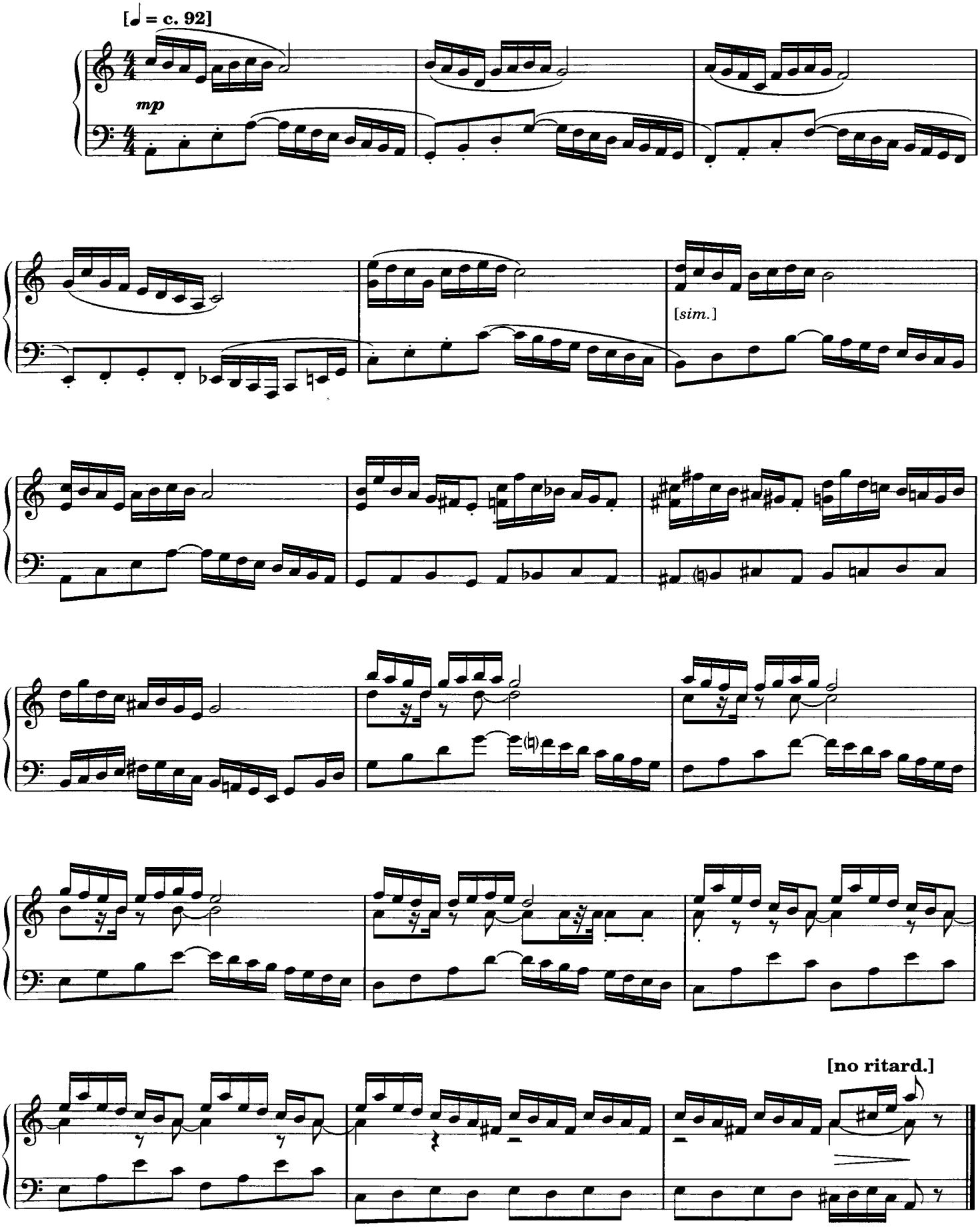
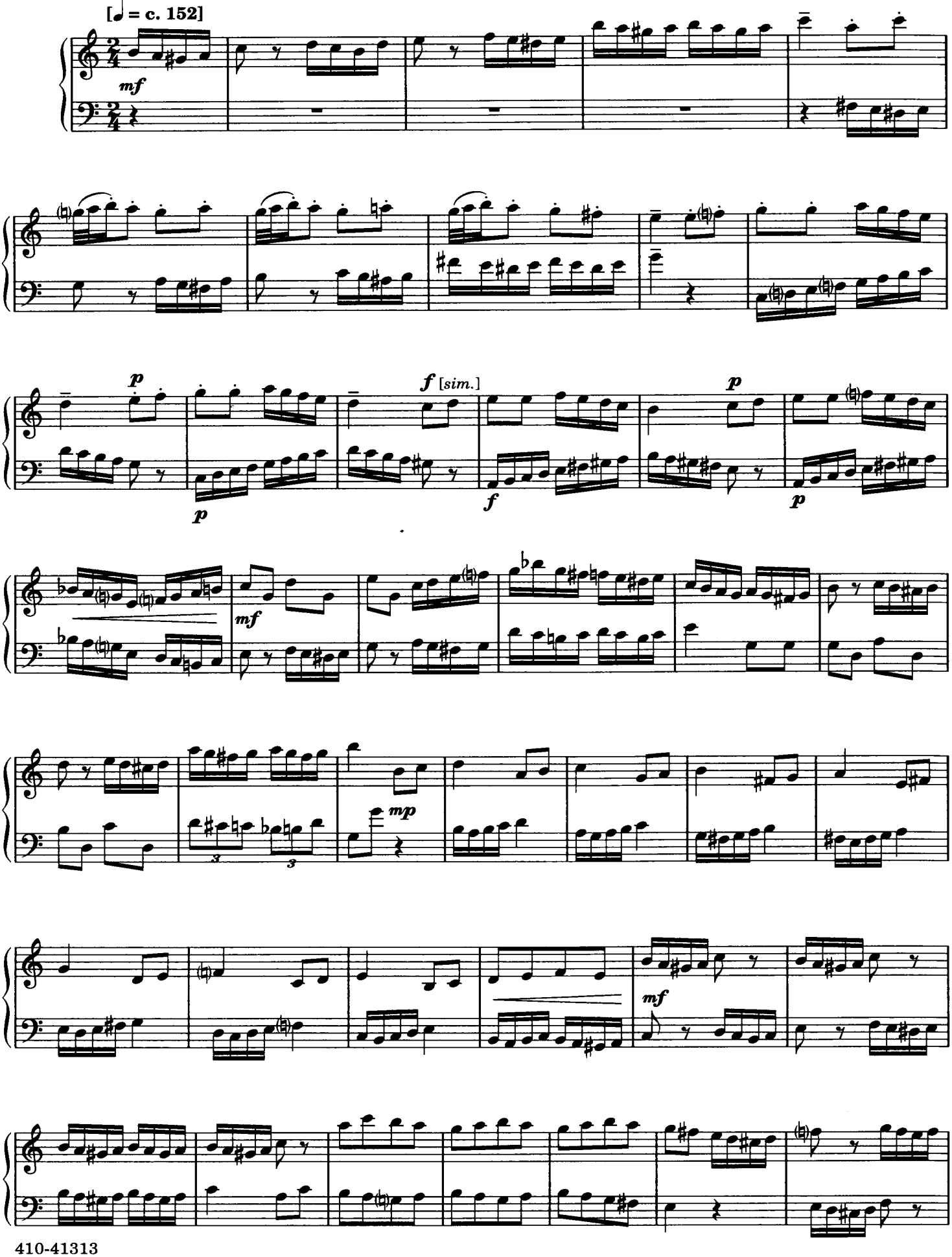
410-41313

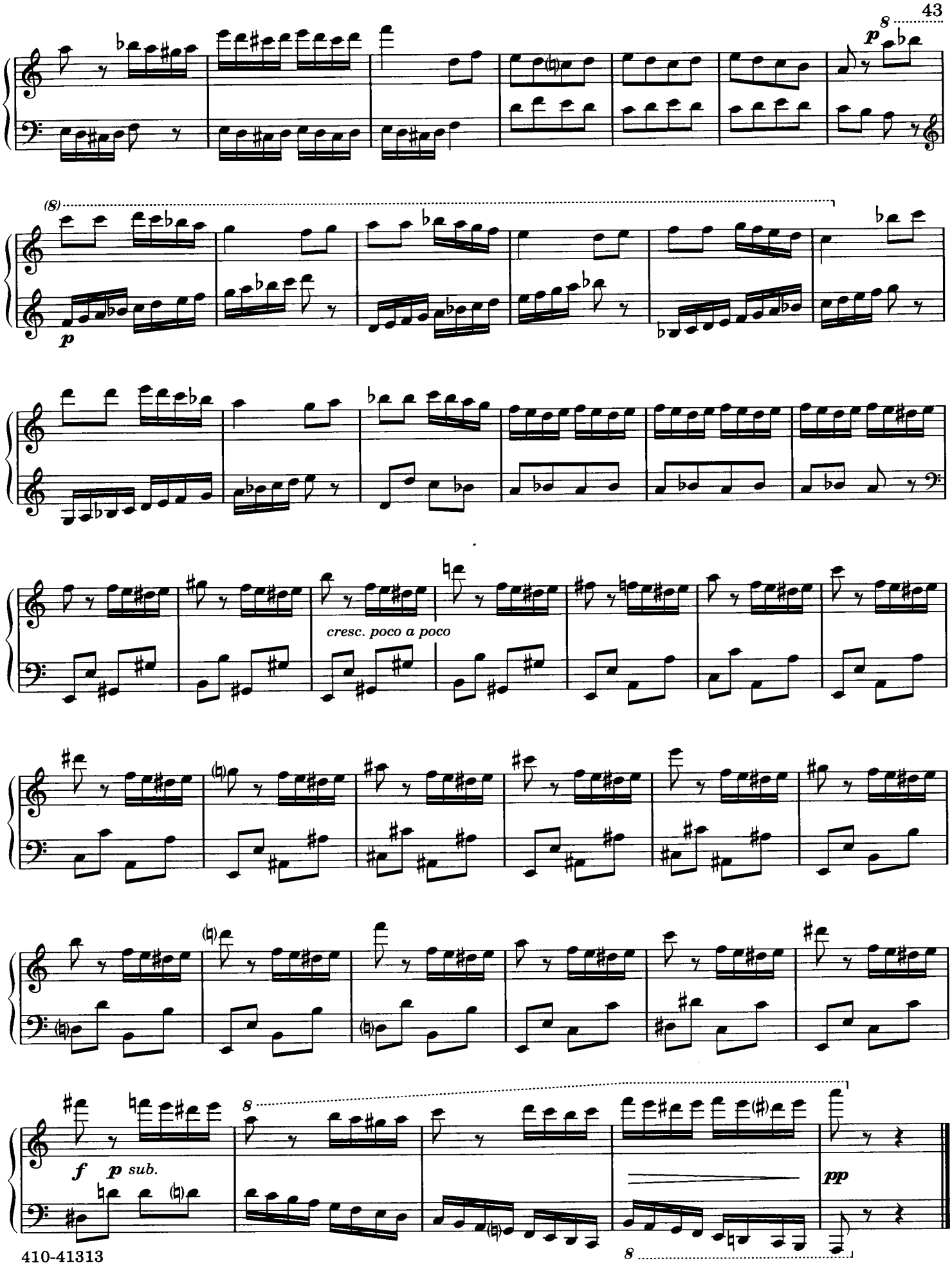

8
[sim.]


(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)
(5)
(6)
(7)
(8)
(9)
(10)
(11)
[sim.]
tr
very long
very long
8

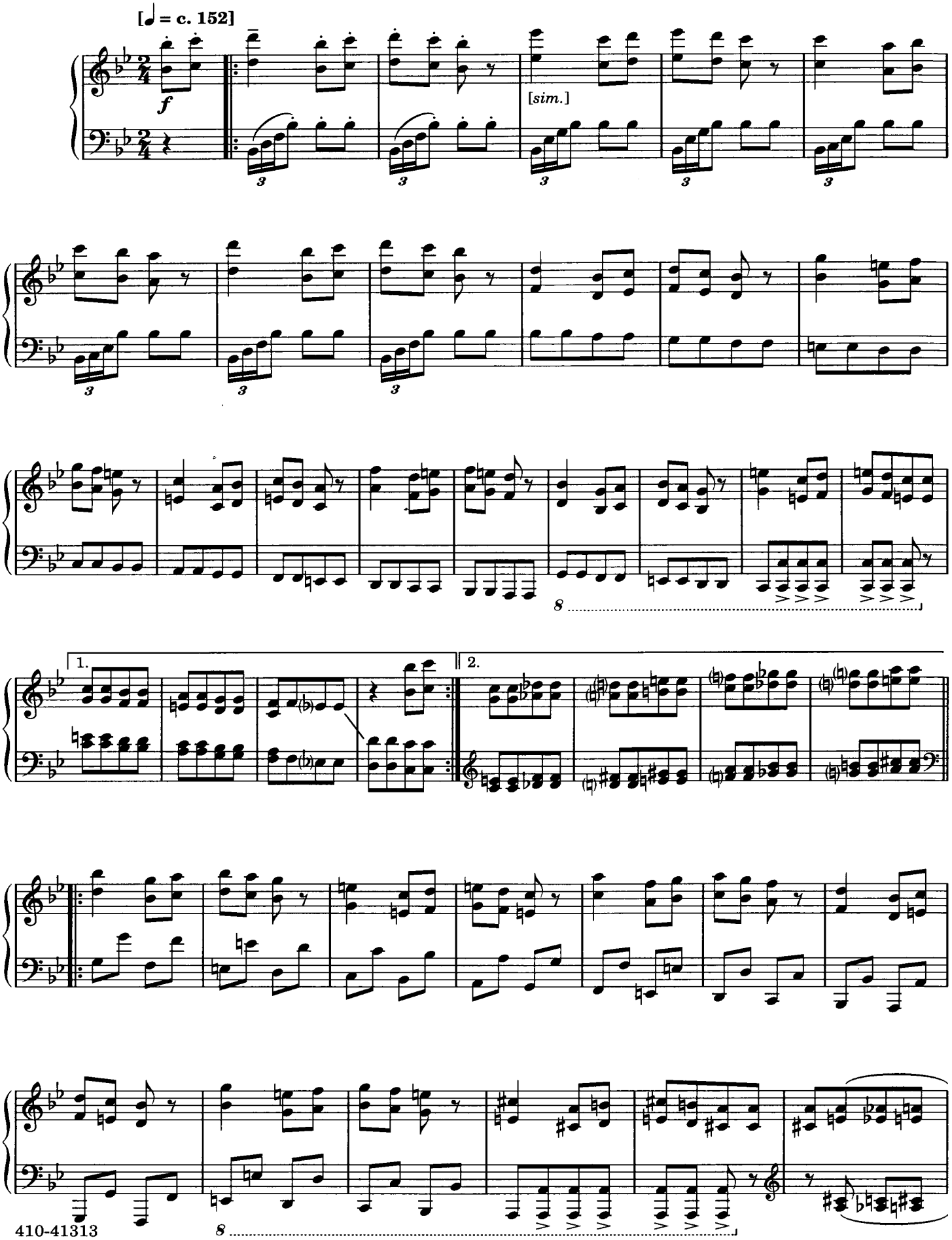
XI

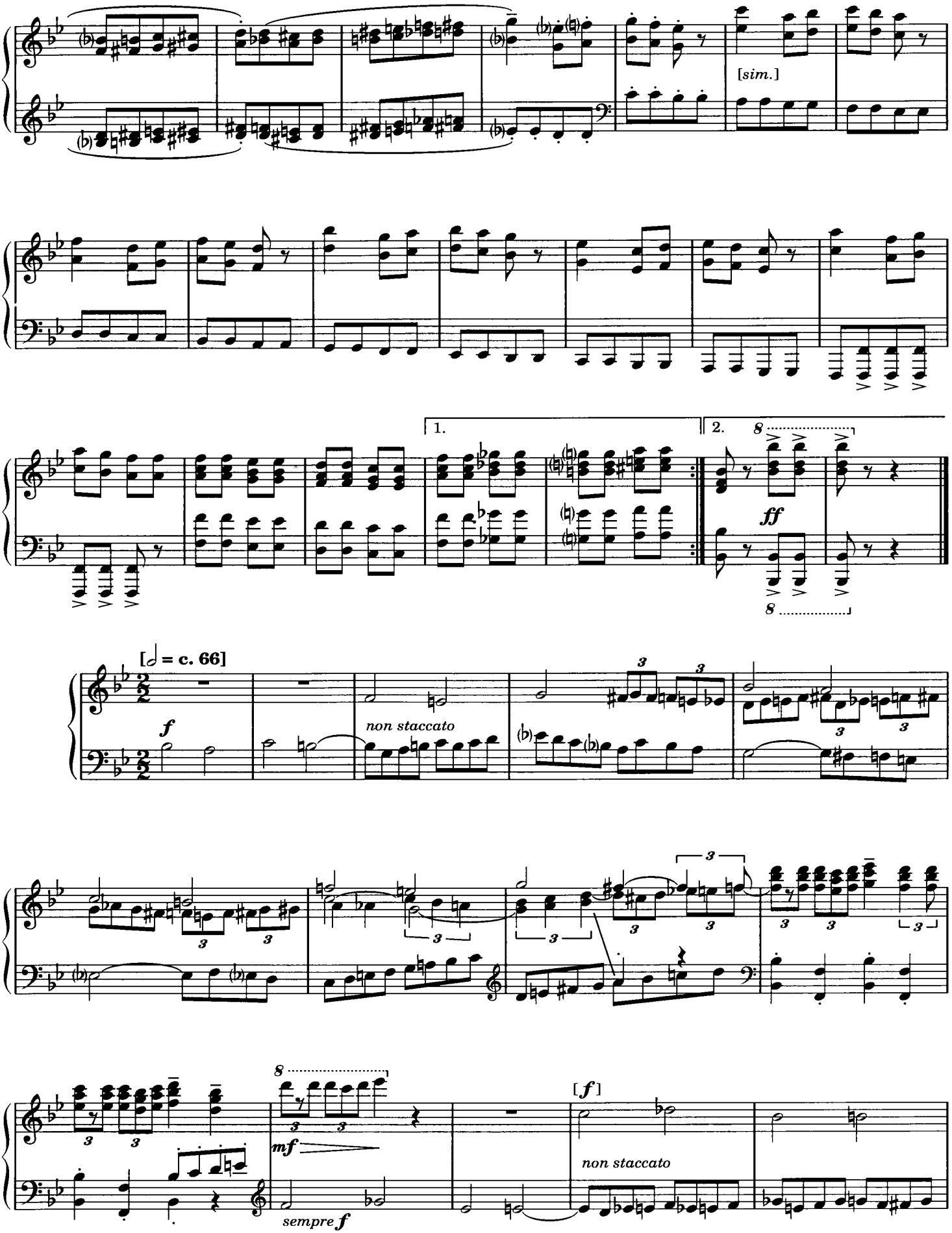


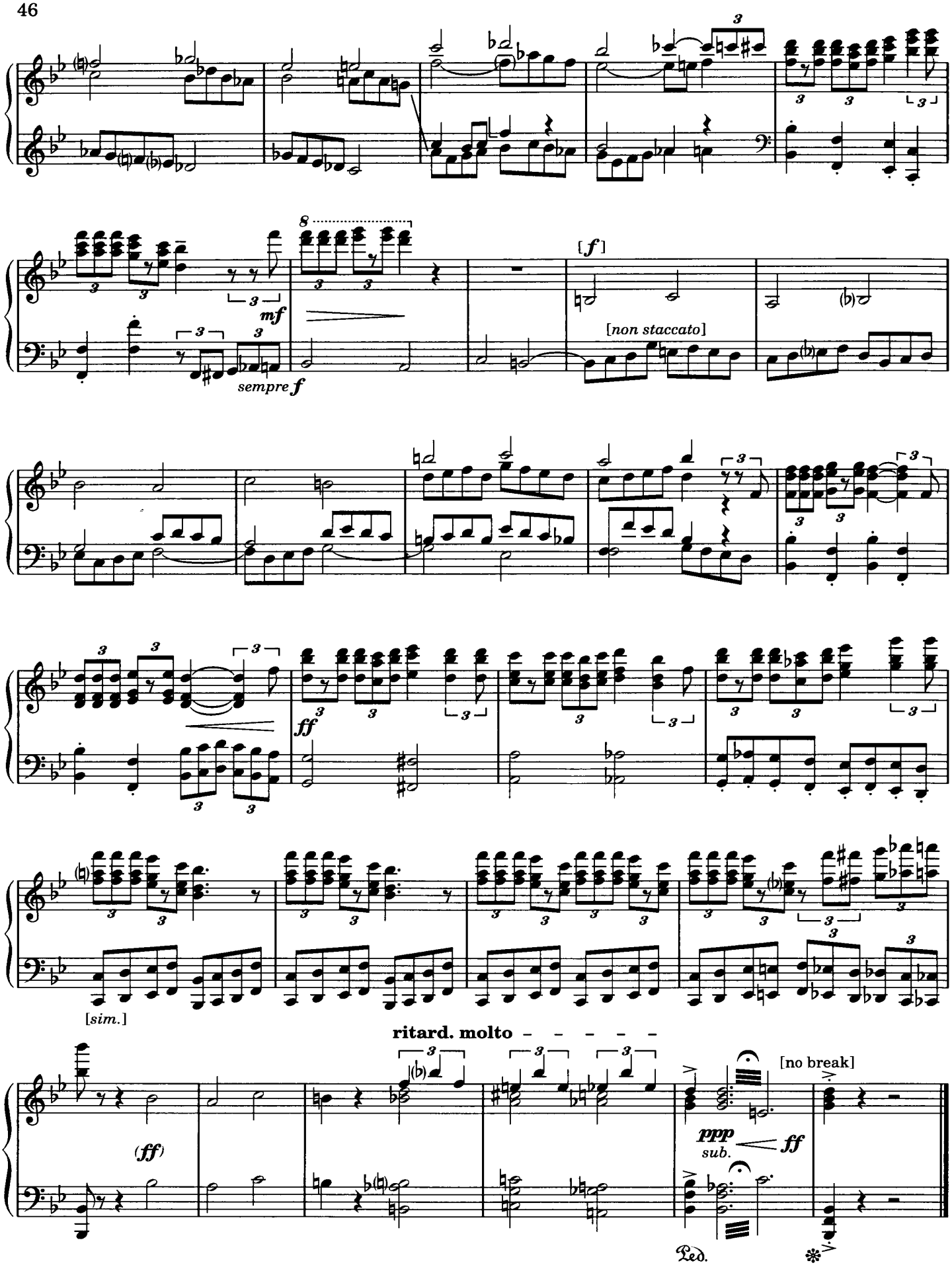

[♩ = c. 152]
mf
p
f [sim.]
p
f
p
mf
mp
mf


8
p
(8)
p
cresc. poco a poco
f
p sub.
8
pp
8

XII




[sim.]
1.
2.
8
ff
8
[𝅗𝅥 = c. 66]
f
non staccato
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
8
mf
sempre f
[f]
non staccato



Editorialization completed August 18, 1993