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Vol. 1546

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 FRANCOIS 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 practicability 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 neighbouring 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 sounds. 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 bars, 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 endeavour, took unaffected delight in their progress, and at all times had an encouraging word for the wavering and dispirited.

CARL MIKULI.

FOUR CONCERT PIECES

IN 1830, probably the month of March, Haslinger published a composition by a young Pole, Frédéric Chopin. Its title in full was: "Là ci darem la mano varié pour le piano, avec accompagnement d'orchestre. Dédié à Mr. Woyciechowski." These variations are in the amiable key of B flat major, and whether or not written under the eye of Chopin's teacher, Joseph Elsner, overflow with cheerfulness. With this piece Chopin had conquered the Vienna musical public the year previous. And of it Schumann wrote his now historical "Hats off, gentlemen: a genius!" He continued: "In reaching this work (variations on a theme from "Don Giovanni," opus 2) I seemed to be under the gaze of fantastic eyes, eyes of basilisks, of peacocks, of young girls . . . Leporello seemed to beckon me, and Don Juan to pass in a white cloak. The whole is dramatic and sufficiently in the manner of Chopin . . . Each bar is the work of a genius. Don Juan, Zerlina, Leporello, Masetto, are characterized in admirable style. The first variation is just a trifle too pompous; it is a Spanish grandee amorously cooing with a country maiden. In the second, more familiar and animated, two lovers seem to pursue one another and to laugh at their sport. What a difference in the third! The moon illumines the scene with its poetic glimmer; Masetto stands aside and swears in an unmistakable manner. And the fourth! Is it not captivating and full of boldness? The *Adagio* in B flat minor is like a warning to Don Juan to renounce his designs. Leporello, concealed behind a thicket, sets his master at defiance; the clarinet and oboe attract and provoke him; the key of D flat major, suddenly introduced, indicates the first kiss . . . All this vanishes if we compare it with the *Finale* ('Hast thou still any wine?' plaintively asks Schumann); the corks pop out, the bottles are smashed on the floor. Then come the voice of Leporello, the spirits who appear upon the scene, Don Juan who takes his flight. A few final bars which calm and satisfy the mind, and the work is concluded."

This fantastic interpretation, is, to confess the truth, more original than the variations. Schumann's enthusiasm seems nowadays a little overdone. Chopin had not much gift for variation in the sense that we now understand the term. Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms—one must also include the Serious Variations of Mendelssohn—are masters of a form that is by no means structurally simple. Chopin plays with his themes prettily, but it is all surface display, all heat lightning. He never smites, as does Brahms with his Thor hammer, the subject full in the middle, cleaving it to the core. These variations are rather slight, despite the cleverness of the arabesques, their brilliancy and euphony. Opus 2 has its dazzling moments, but its musical worth is not great. It was written to woo the ears of the groundlings, or else to astonish and confuse them, for the dynamics of the early Chopin music are never rude. It was because of the superiority to Herz and the rest of the shallow-pated variationists that the admiration of Schumann was so passionately aroused. And what an interesting page he has added to musical criticism! But that grumpy old fellow, Rellstab, was nearer right when he wrote of these variations that "the composer runs down the theme with roulades, and throttles and hangs it with chains of snakes." The skip makes its appearance in the fourth variation, and there is no gainsaying the brilliancy and piquant spirits of the *Alla Polacca.*

The Fantaisie, opus 13, in A major, on Polish airs, preceded by an Introduction in F sharp minor, was published in April, 1834. It is Chopin the brilliant. Its orchestral background does not count too heavily, but the energy and Polish character of the piece endeared it to the composer, who often played it. Kleczynski asks: "Are these brilliant passages, these bold leaps the sadness and despair of which we hear? Rather is it not youth exuberant with intensity and love? The melancholy tones are there to bring out, to enforce the principal ideas. For instance, in this Fantaisie the theme of Kurpenski moves and saddens us; but the composer does not give time for this impression to become durable; he suspends it by means of a long trill, and then suddenly by a few chords and with a brilliant prelude leads us to a popular dance, in which we mingle with the peasant couples of Mazovia. Does the *Finale* indicate by its minor key the gaiety of a man devoid of hope?" He then tells us that the Polish proverb "A fig for misery" is the keynote of a nation that dances to music in the minor key. Elevated beauty, not sepulchral gaiety, is the character of Polish, and also of Chopin's music. There are variations in this opus 13, which end with a vivacious Kujawiak.

The concert Rondo, opus 14, in F major, entitled Krakowiak (published June, 1834), is built on a national dance in two-four time, which originated in Cracovia. It is a simplified Polonaise, danced by the peasants with lusty abandon. Its accentual life is usually manifested on an unaccented part of the bar, especially at the end of a section or phrase.

Chopin's very Slavic version of this dance is spirited enough, though the virtuoso predominates. There is lustiness in ornamentation and a bold merriment informs every page. The orchestral accompaniment is conventional.

The E flat Polonaise, opus 22, was composed in 1830 and published in July, 1836. It has an orchestral accompaniment for which Chopin, so runs the rumour, cannot be held responsible. But it is much oftener played as a solo piece and, in reality, sounds more characteristic. It is preceded by an *Andante spianato* in G, six-eight time, and unaccompanied. This is a charming, liquid-toned, nocturne-like composition; Chopin in his most suave, his most placid moods. A Barcarolle in quality, scarcely a ripple disturbs the mirrored calm of this musical lake. After sixteen bars of a rather crudely harmonized *tutti* the Polonaise enters in the widely remote key of E flat. It is brilliant, every note a telling one, the figuration rich and novel, the entire movement spirited and flowing. Perhaps it is too long and lacks relief, although the theme at each re-entrance is ornamentally varied. The second theme in C minor has a Polish ring; the *coda* is effective. This opus is vivacious, though not characterized by great depth. Crystalline, gracious and refined, the piece is stamped "Paris," the elegant Paris of 1830. Chopin introduced it there at a Conservatoire concert for the benefit of the conductor Habeneck, April 26th, 1835. This, according to Niecks, was the only time he played the Polonaise with orchestral accompaniment. Xaver Scharwenka devised a new instrumentation which is discreet and well-sounding. With tact he has managed the added accompaniment to the Introduction, giving some thematic work of the slightest texture to the strings, and in the *coda* to the woodwind. A delicate allusion is made by the horns to the second theme of the Nocturne in G; there are even five faint taps of the triangle, and the idyllic atmosphere is not disturbed. Scharwenka first played this arrangement at a Seidl memorial concert in old Chickering Hall, New York, April, 1898. But I fancy Chopin students will prefer the original orchestration, or the Polonaise as a solo, for it is eminently a salon piece.

James Huneker

(40150)

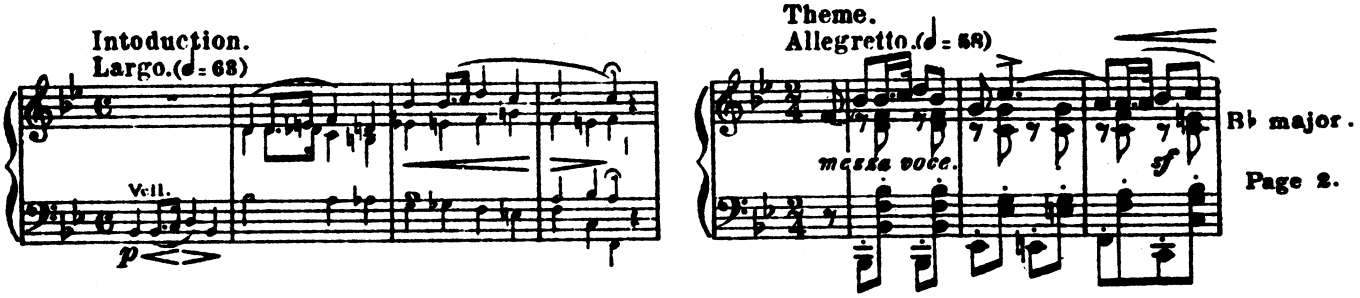
Morceaux de Concert.

La ci darem la mano.

Variations

(avec accompagnement d'Orchestre.)

Op. 2.



B♭ major.

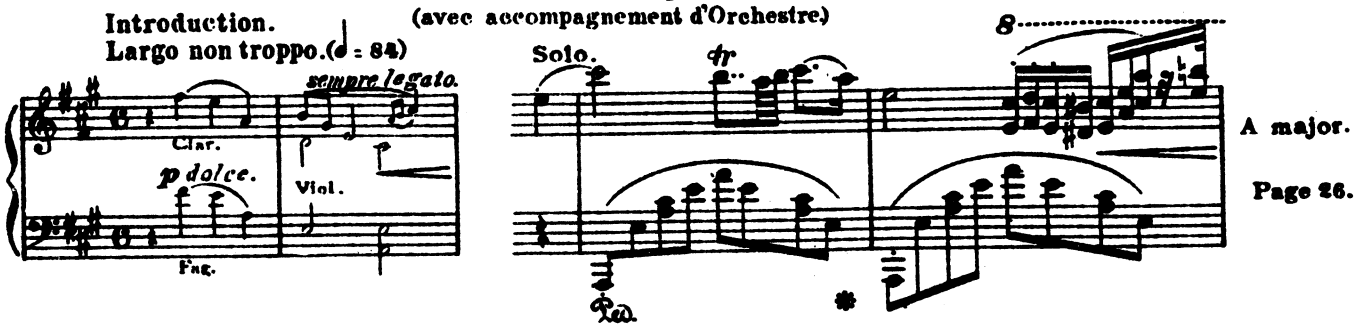
Page 2.

Grande Fantaisie

sur des Thèmes polonais

(avec accompagnement d'Orchestre.)

Op. 13.



A major.

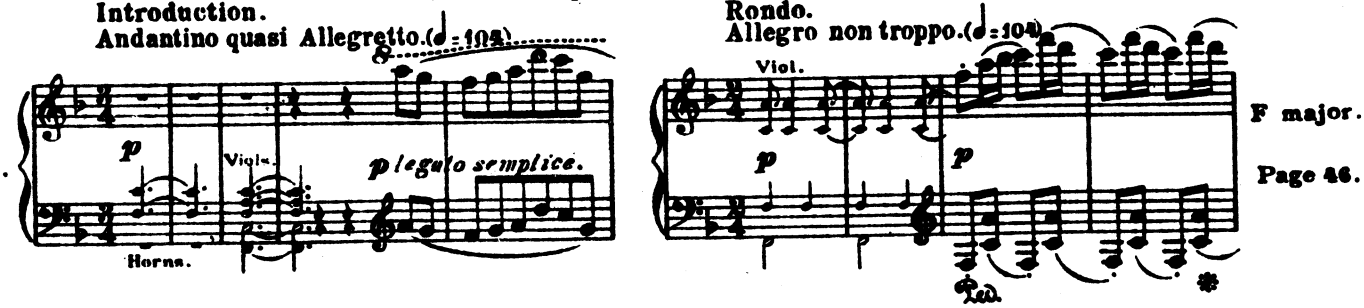
Page 26.

Krakowiak.

Grand Rondo de Concert

(avec accompagnement d'Orchestre.)

Op. 14.



F major.

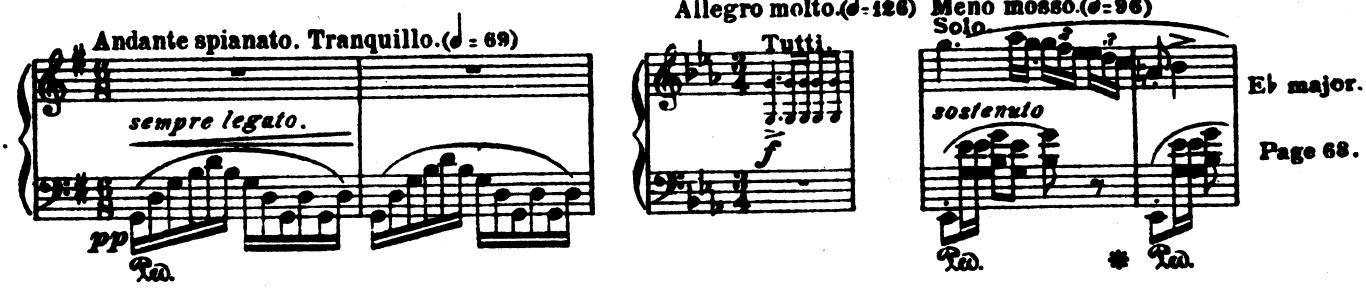
Page 46.

Grande Polonaise brillante.

(avec accompagnement d'Orchestre.)

Précédée d'un Andante spianato.

Op. 22.



E♭ major.

Page 68.

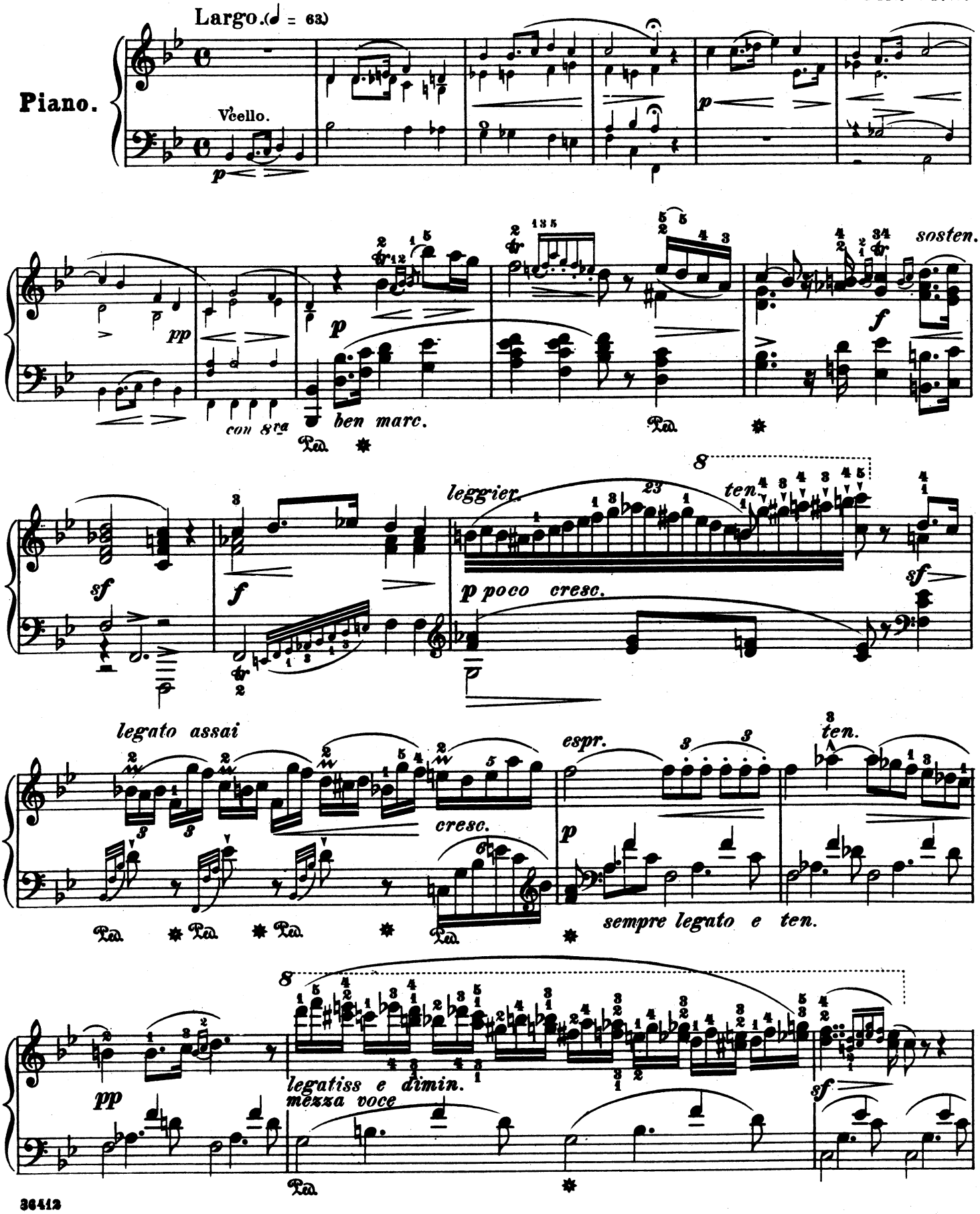
La ci darem la mano.

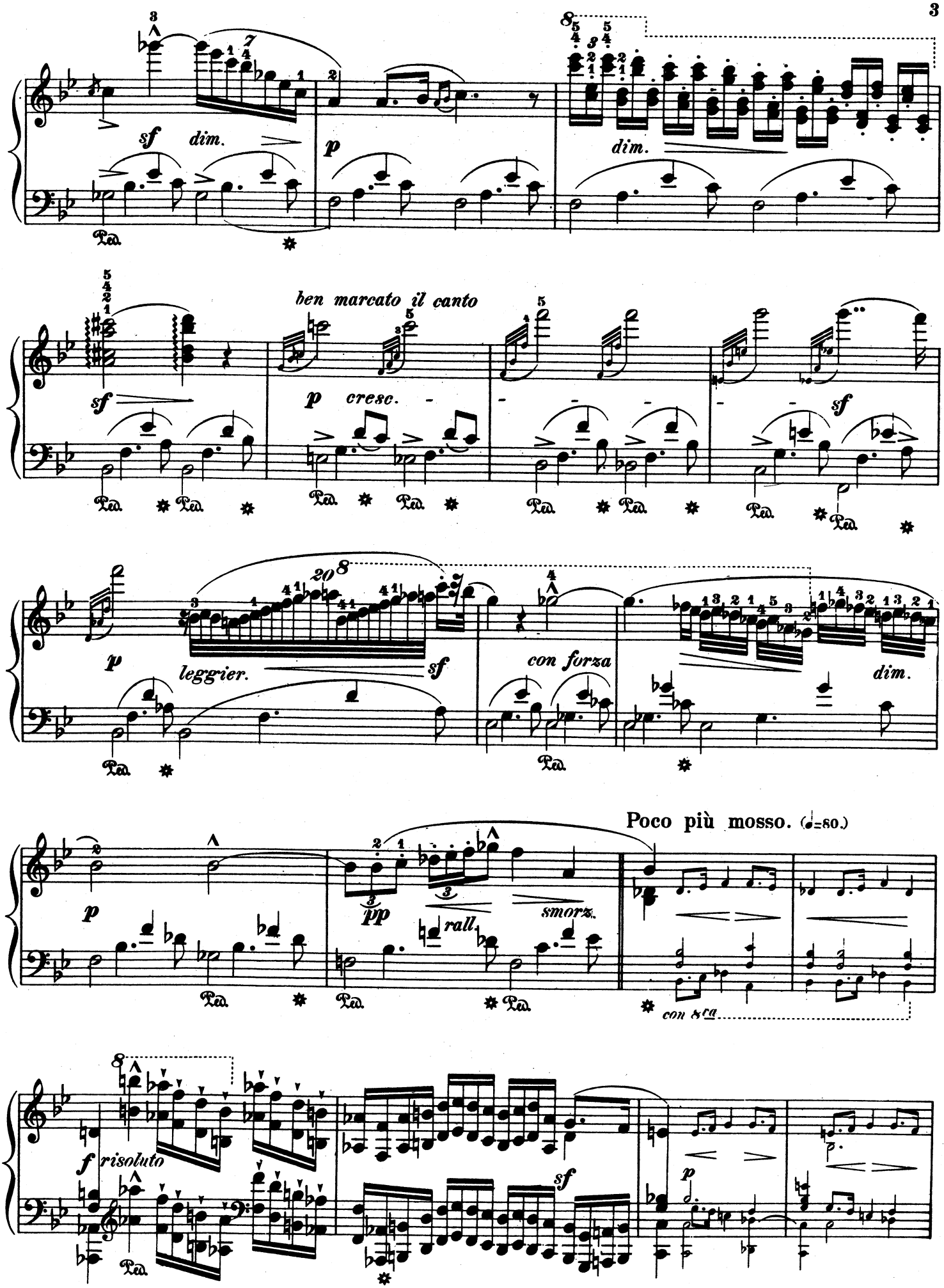
Variations.

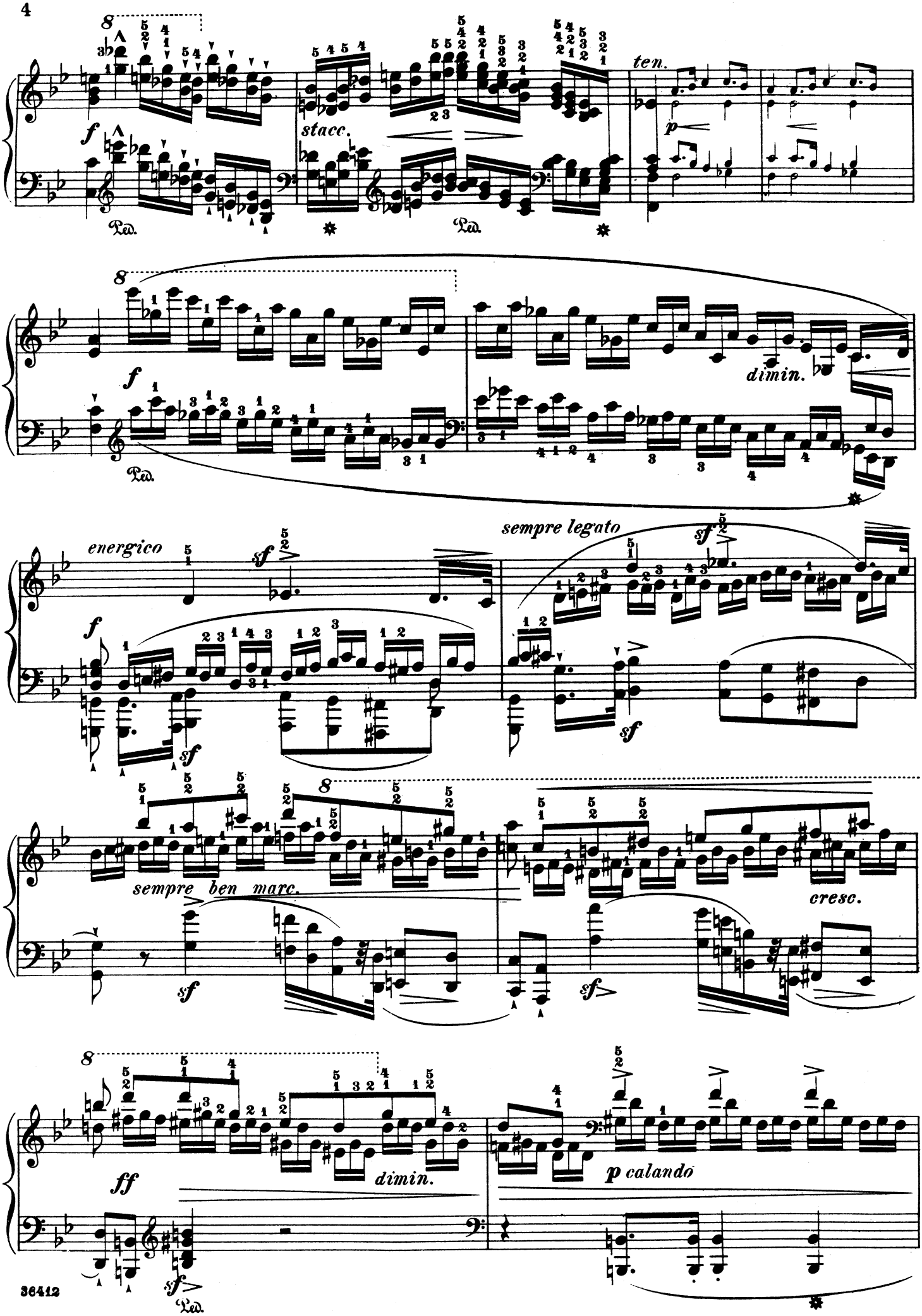
à Titus Woyciechowski. (avec accompagnement d'Orchestre.)

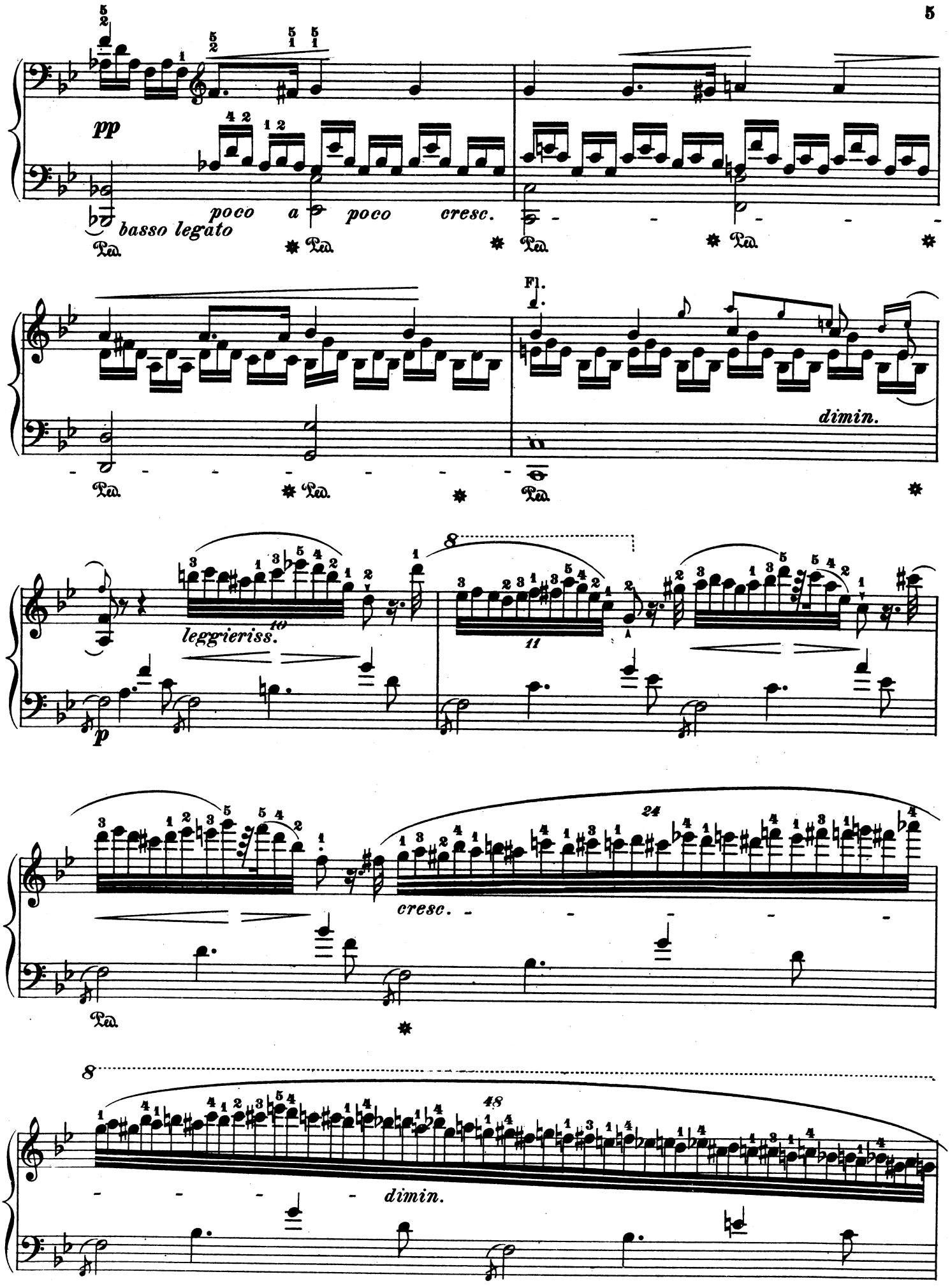
Introduction.

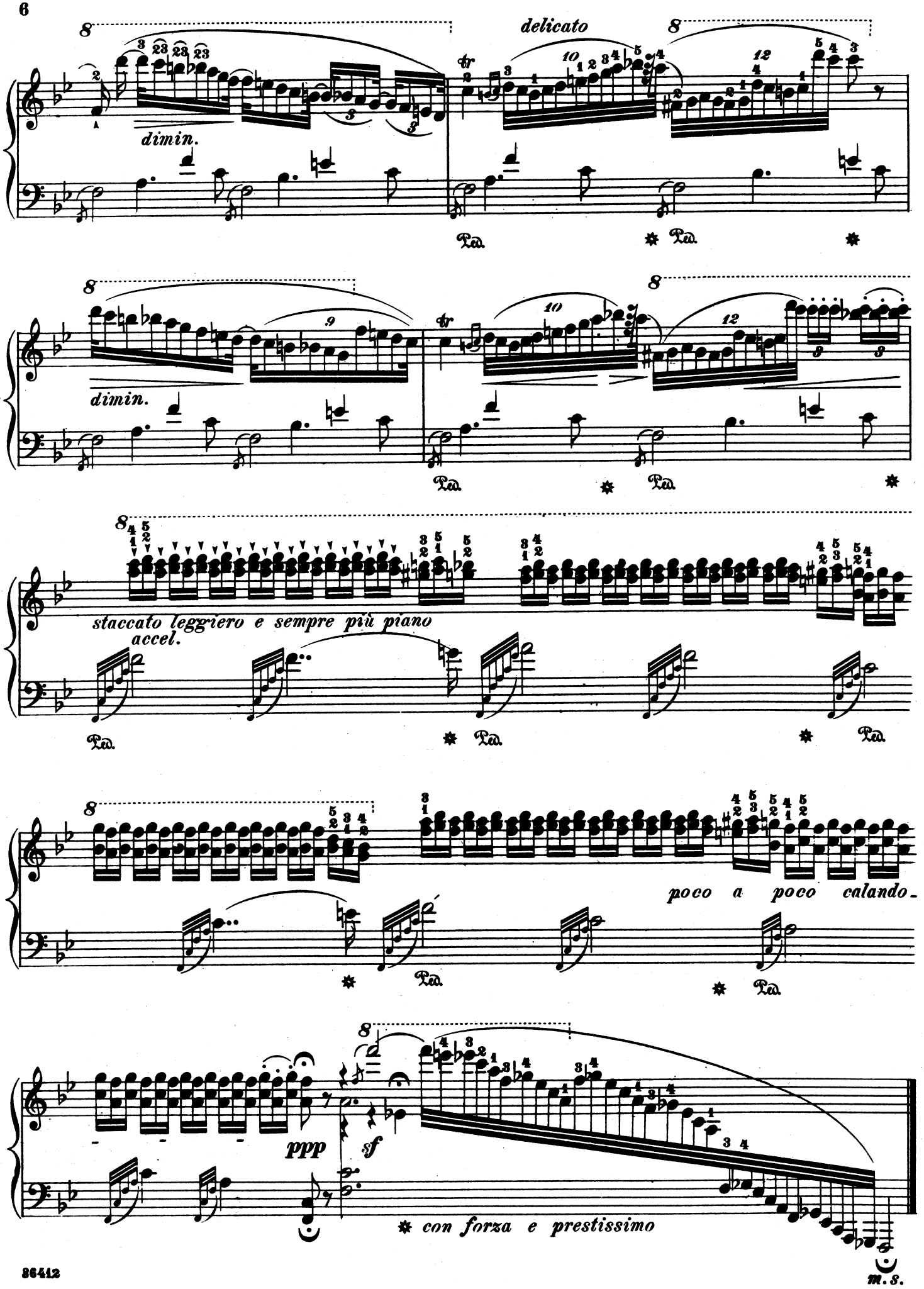
F. CHOPIN. Op. 2.




sf dim.
p
dim.
ben marcato il canto
sf
p cresc.
sf
p
leggier.
sf
con forza
dim.
Poco più mosso. (♩=80.)
p
pp
rall.
smorz.
con 8va
f risoluto
sf
p


8
f
Ped.
stacc.
ten.
p
8
f
dimin.
energico
sf
sempre legato
sempre ben marc.
cresc.
ff
p calando

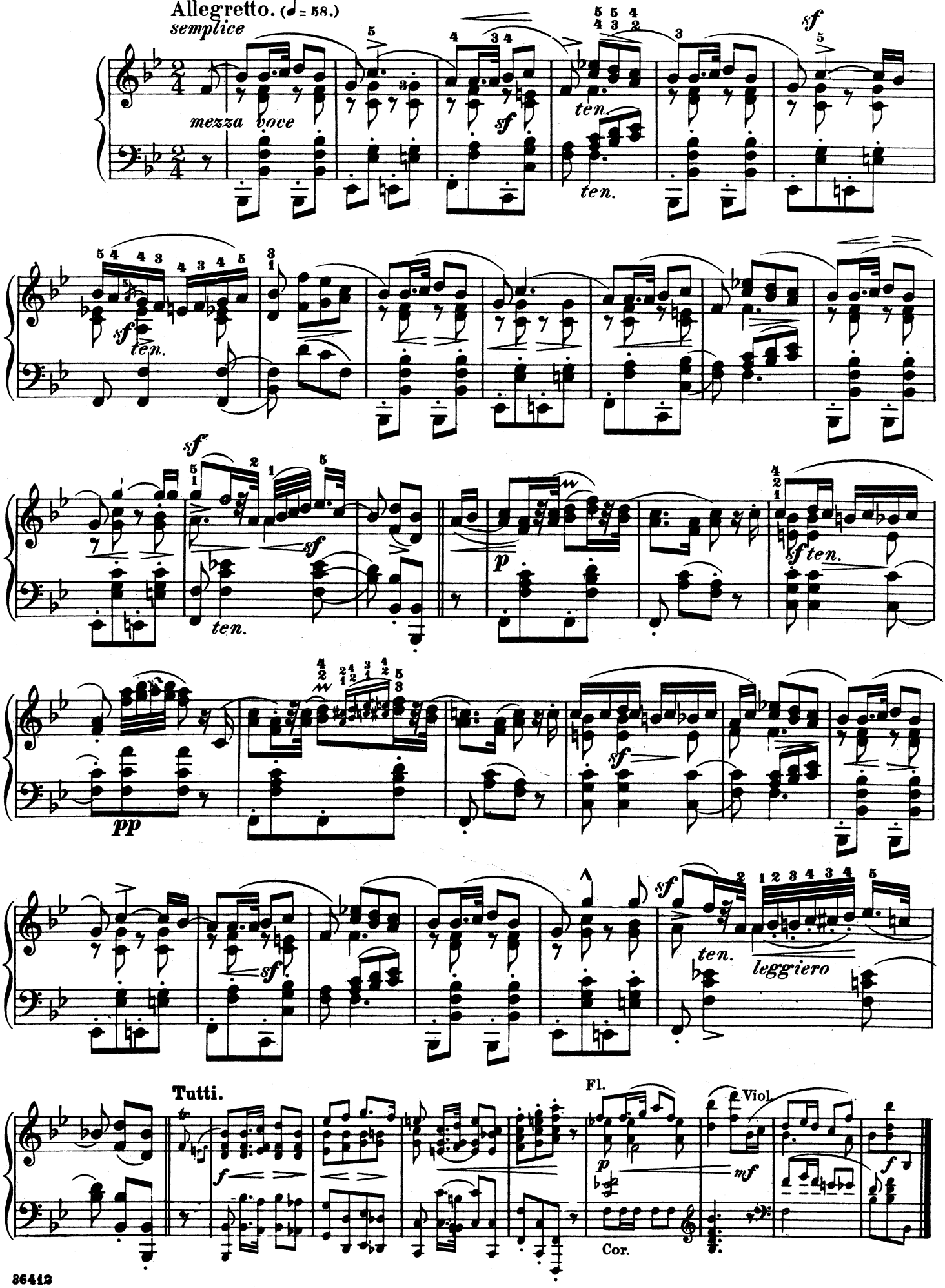

pp
basso legato
poco a poco cresc.
Ped.
Fl.
dimin.
leggieriss.
10
11
p
24
cresc.
48
dimin.

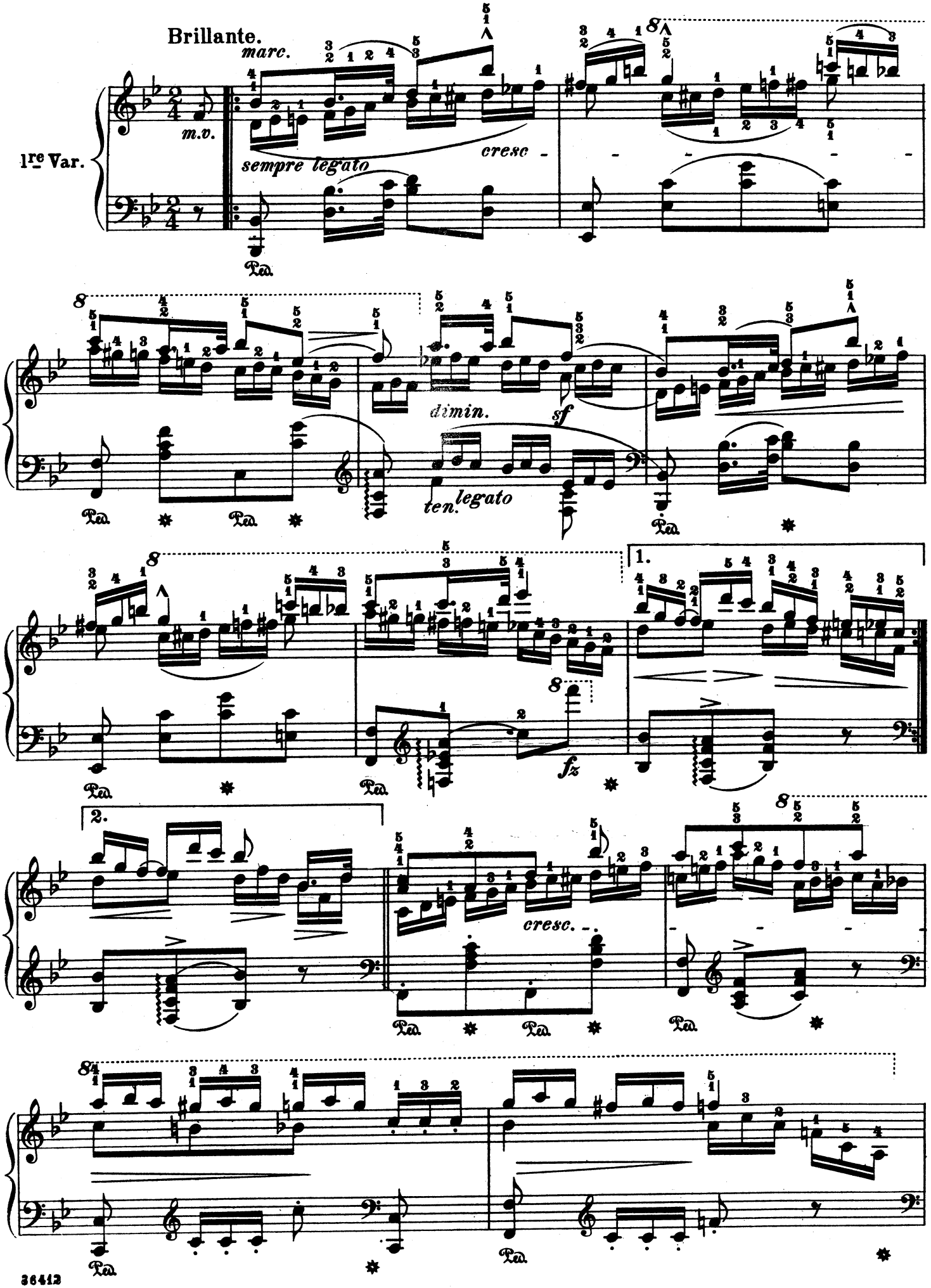

delicato
dimin.
dimin.
staccato leggiero e sempre più piano
accel.
poco a poco calando
ppp
sf
con forza e prestissimo
m.s.

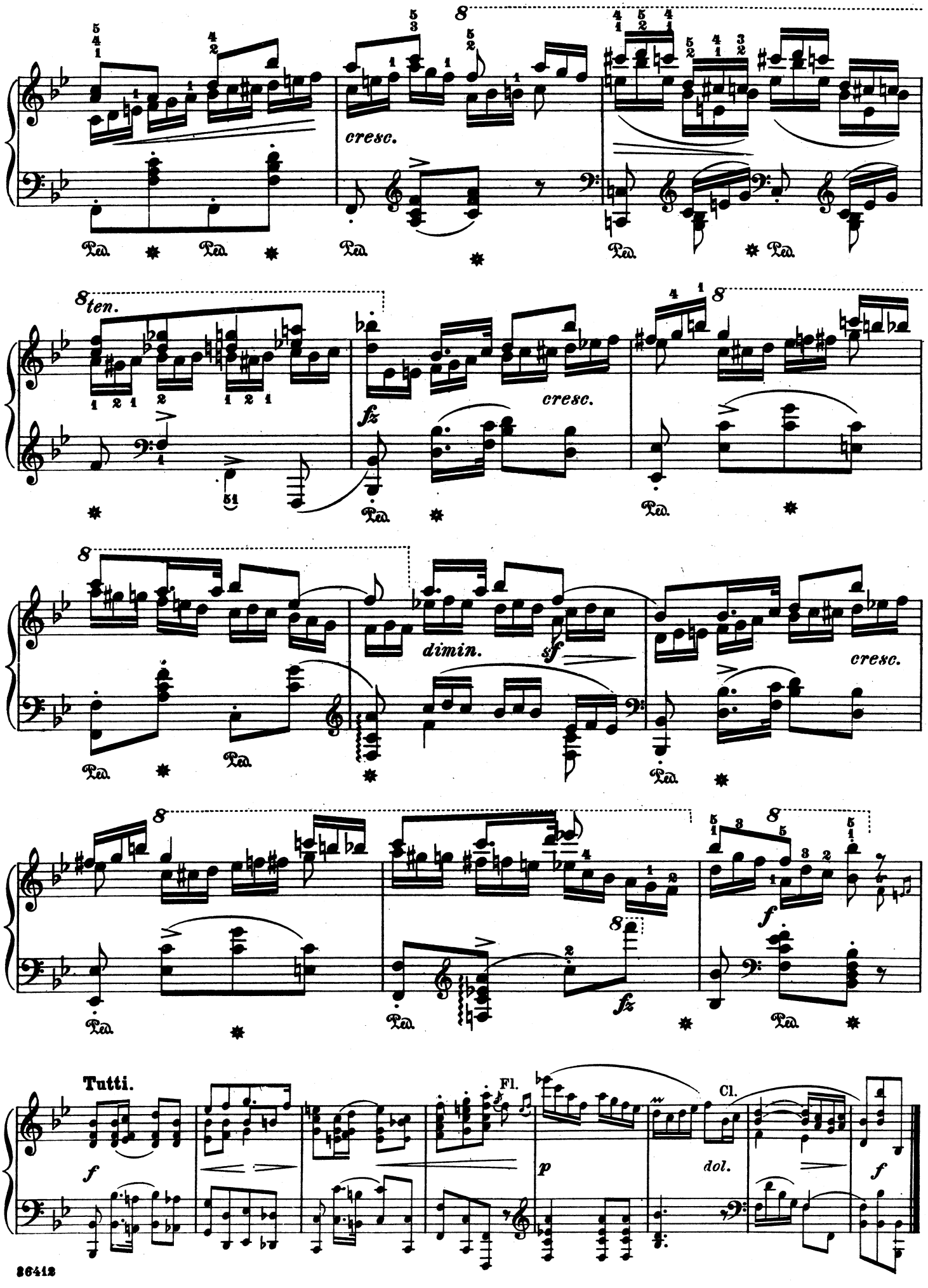
Thème.

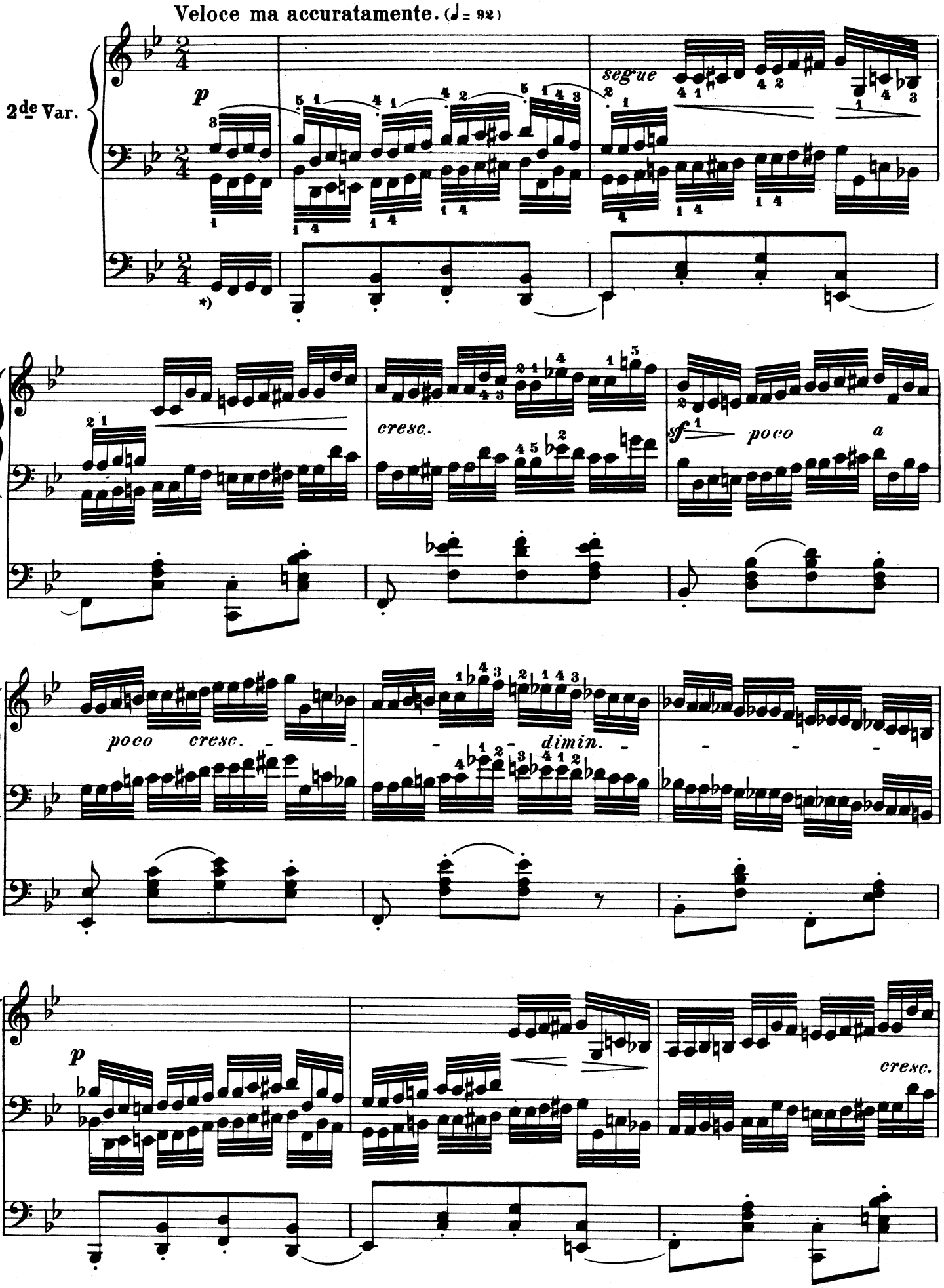
Allegretto. (♩= 58.)

semplice

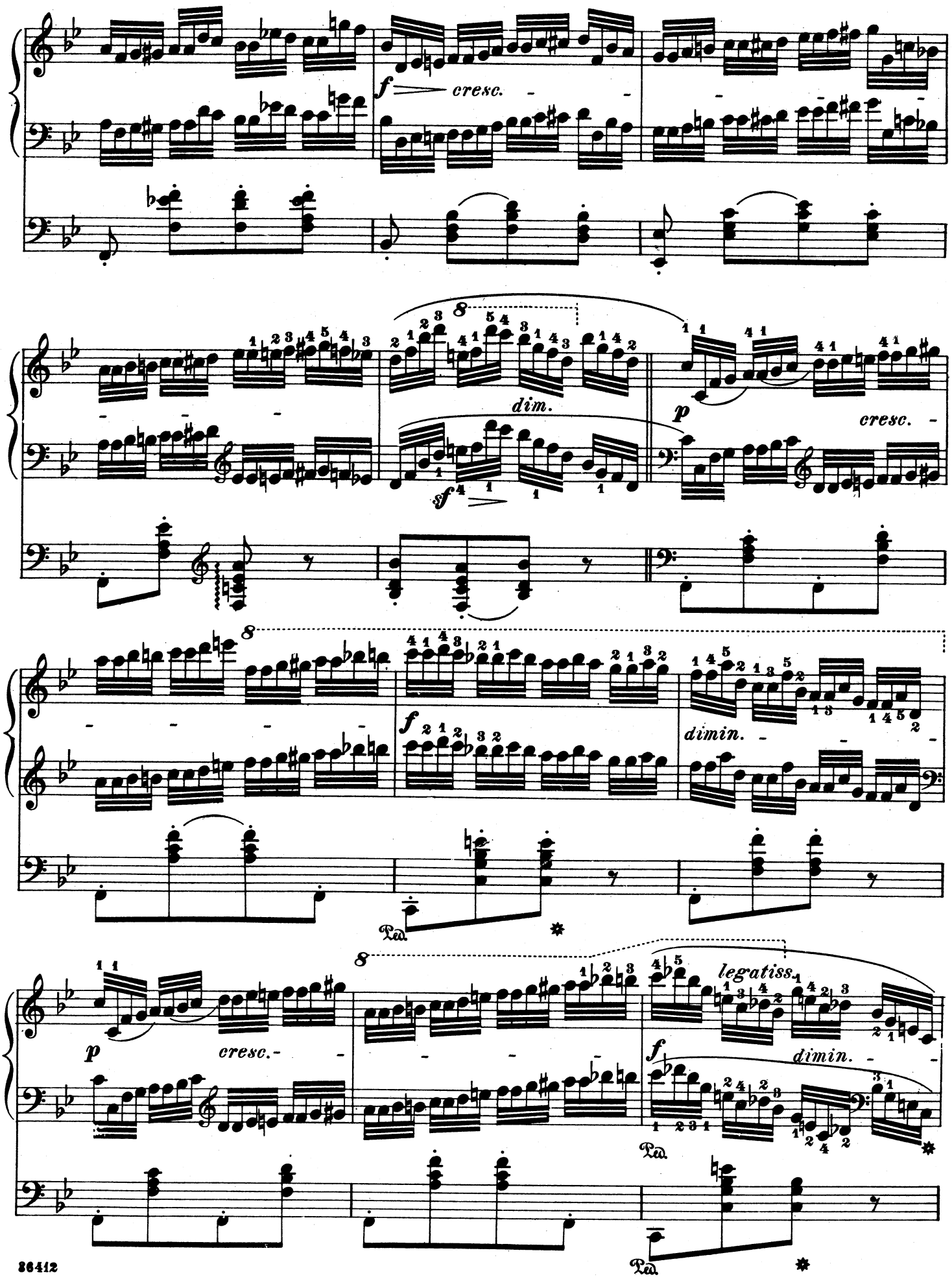


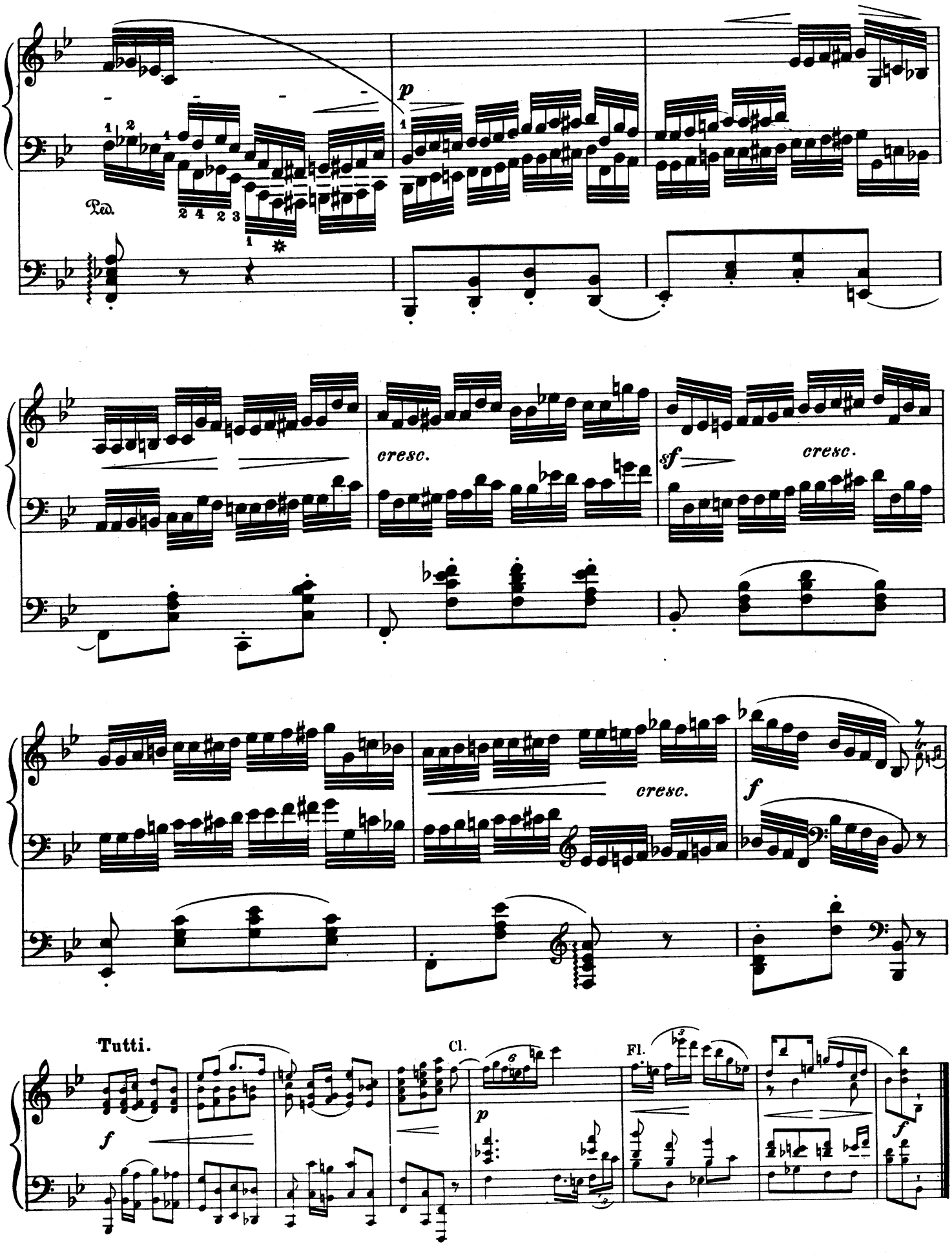

Brillante.
marc.
m.v.
1re Var.
sempre legato
cresc
dimin.
sf
ten.
legato
fz
1.
2.
cresc.

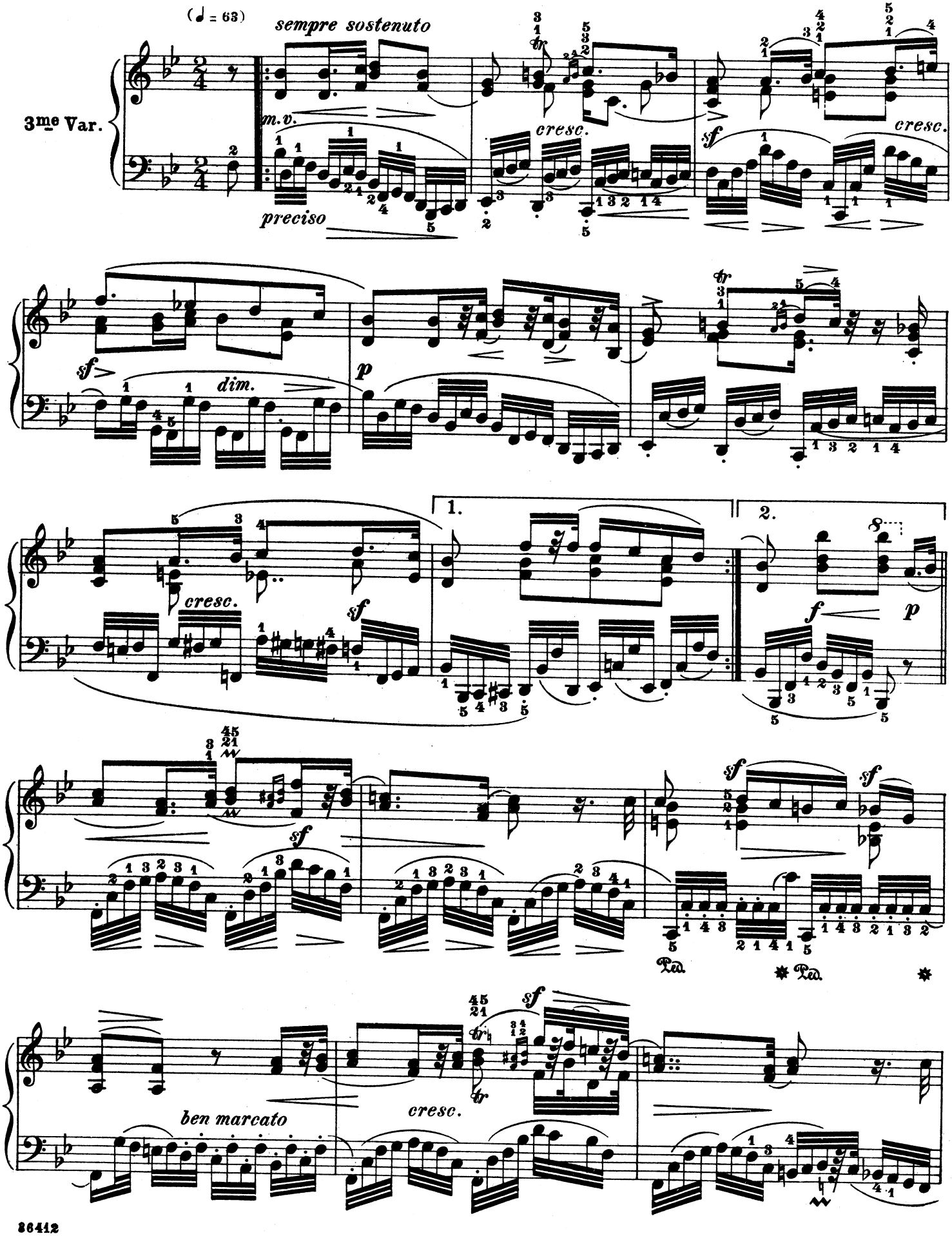

cresc.
Ped.
8ten.
fz
cresc.
dimin.
sf
cresc.
f
fz
Tutti.
f
Fl.
p
Cl.
dol.
f

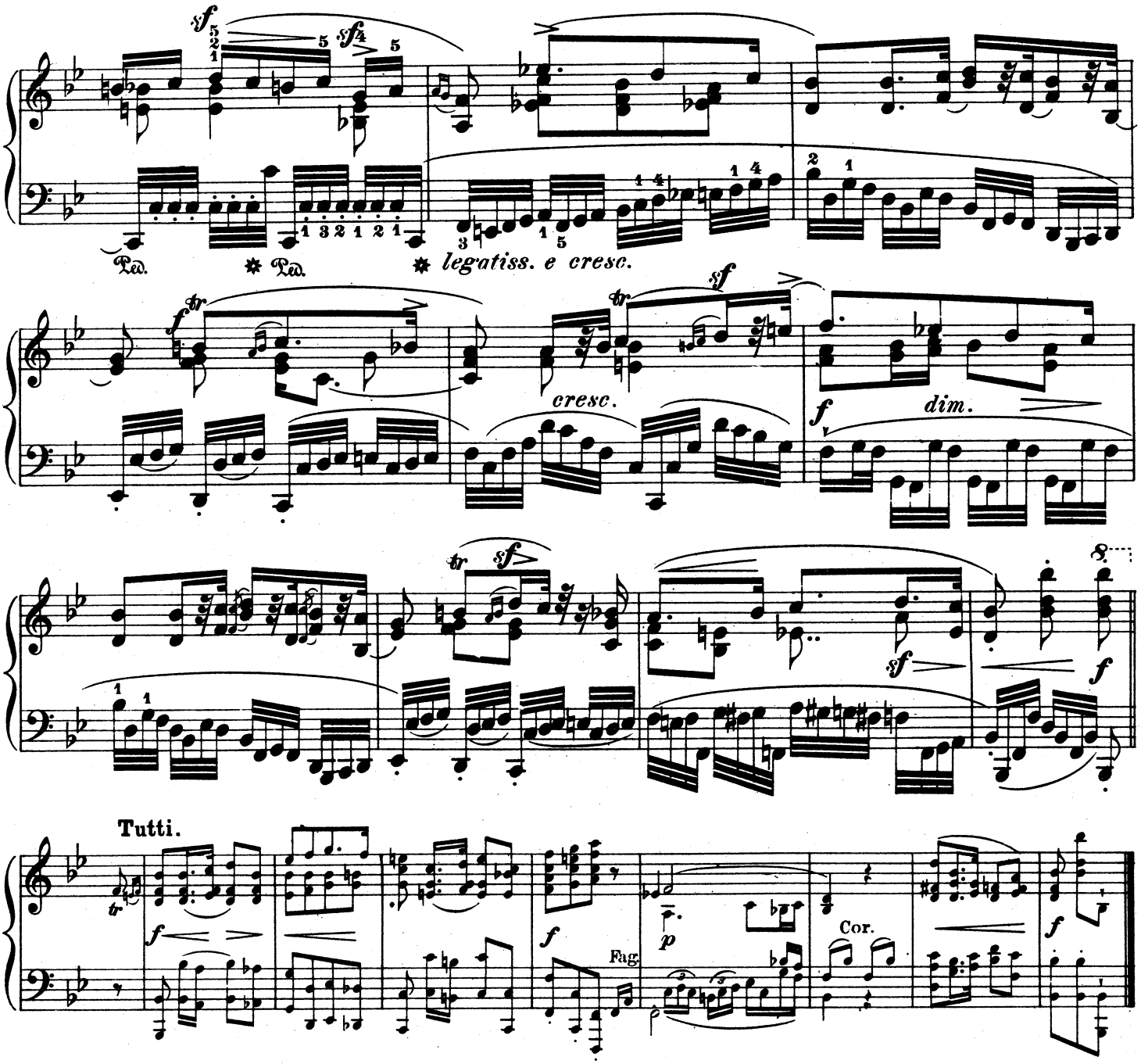


*) Use this Bass in playing without accompaniment, the right hand to play the top-line.


f
cresc.
8
dim.
sf
p
cresc.
8
f
dimin.
Ped.
8
p
cresc.
legatiss.
f
dimin.
Ped.
Ped.


p
Ped.
cresc.
sf
cresc.
cresc.
f
Tutti.
f
Cl.
p
Fl.
f

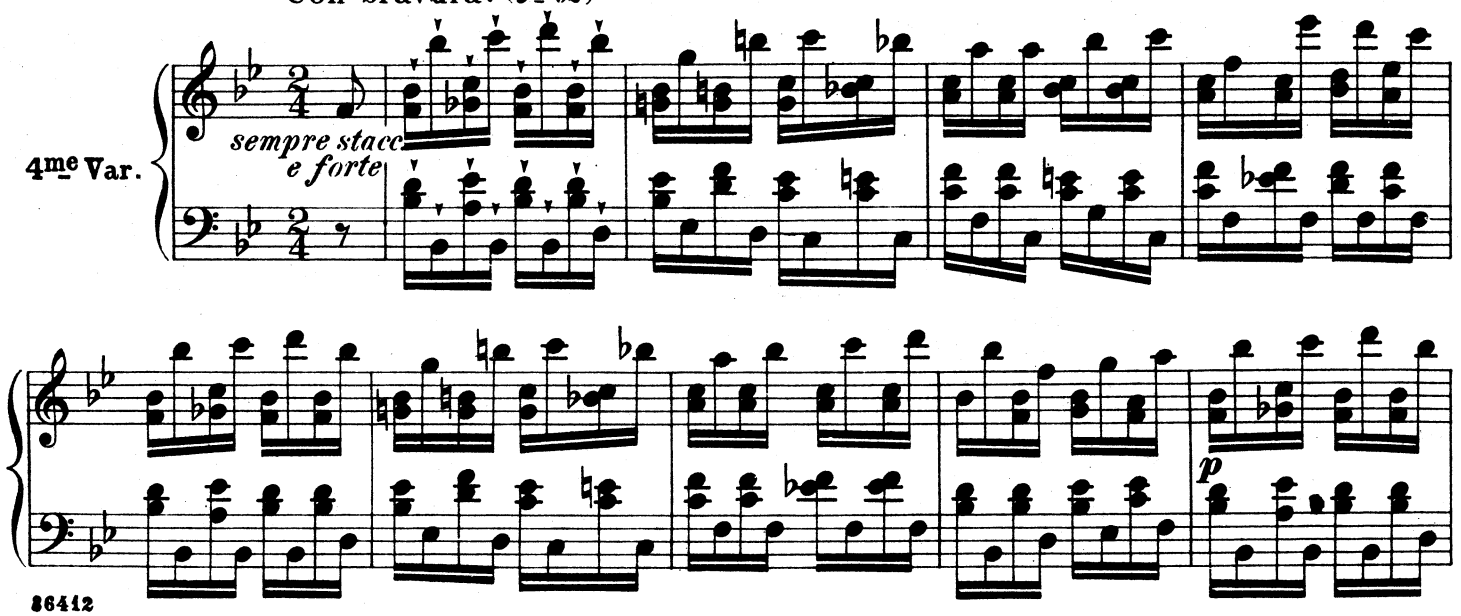

(♩ = 63)
sempre sostenuto
3me Var.
m.v.
preciso
cresc.
sf
cresc.
sf
dim.
p
cresc.
sf
1.
2.
f
p
sf
sf
sf
Ped.
Ped.
sf
cresc.
ben marcato

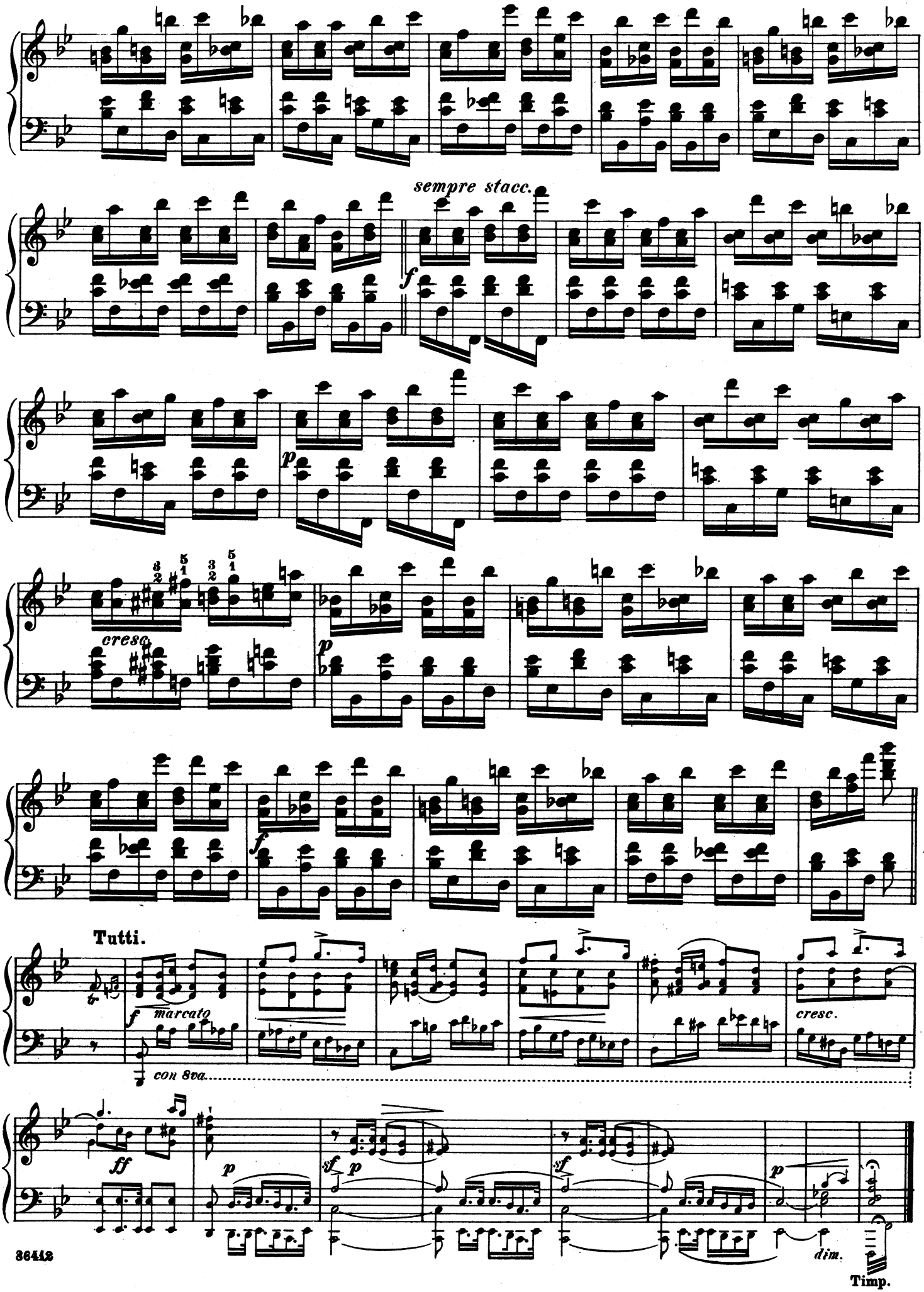


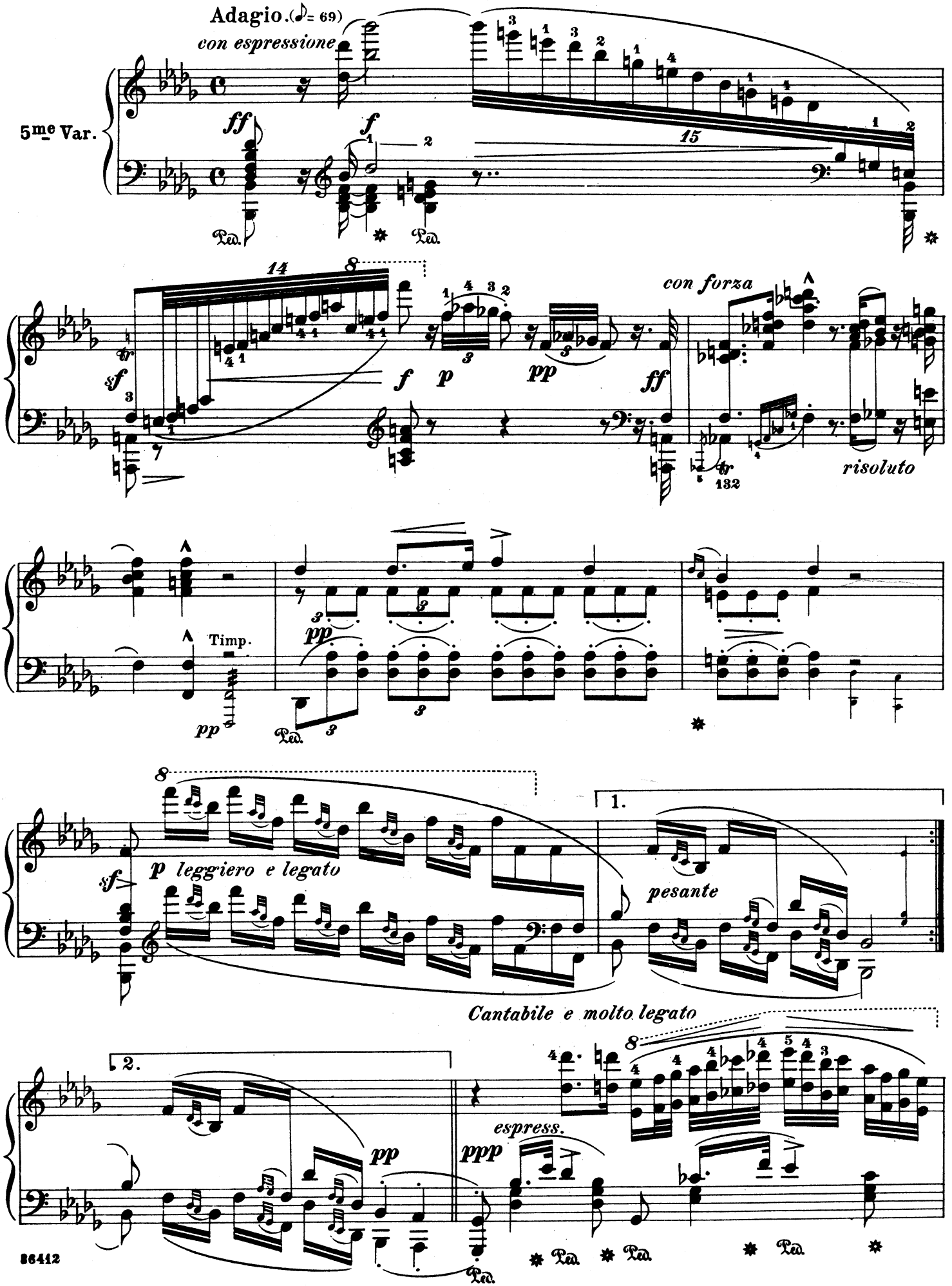
Tutti.

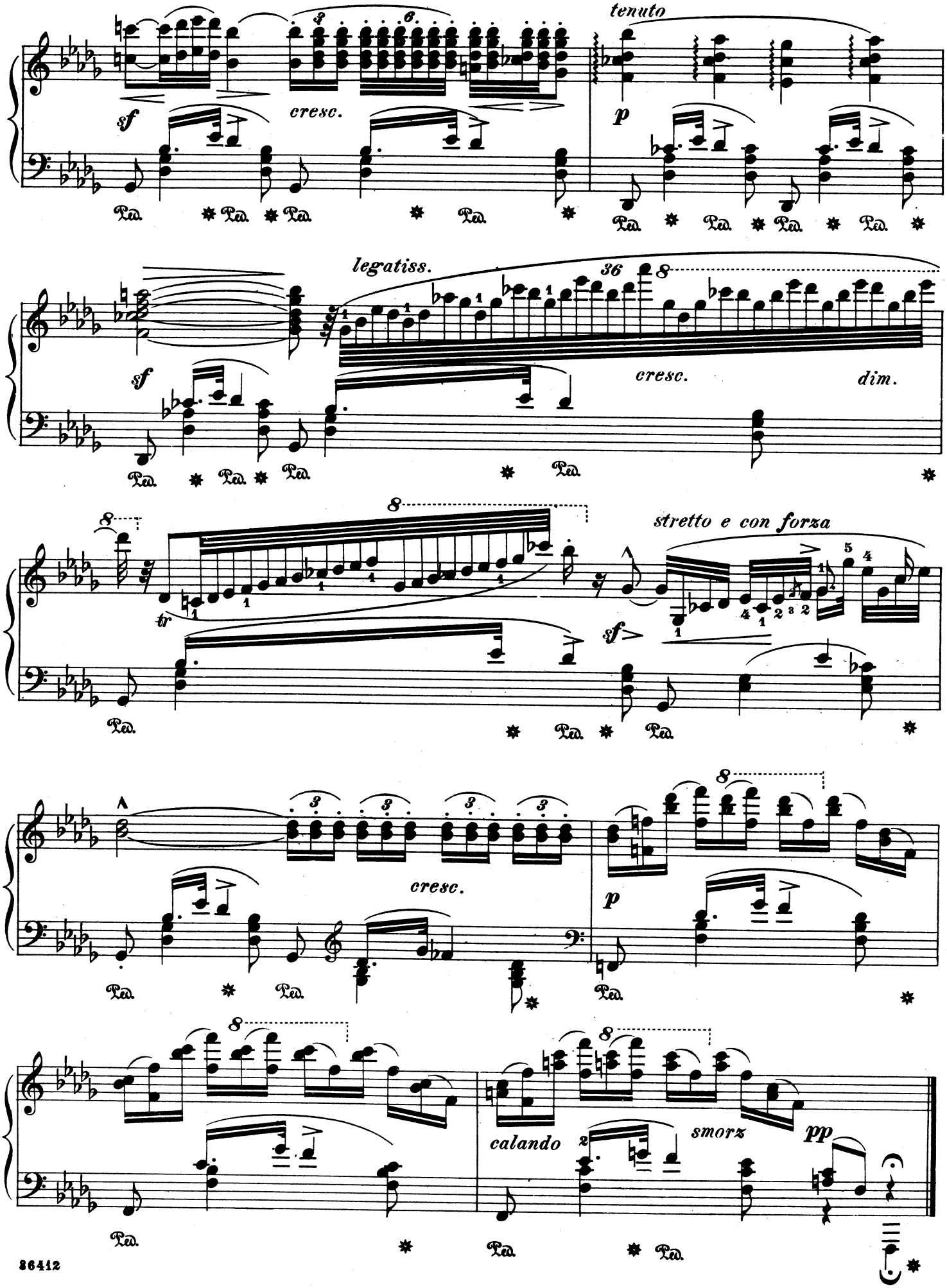
Con bravura. (♩= 92)

4me Var.




sempre stacc.
cresc.
Tutti.
marcato
con 8va
cresc.
dim.
Timp.


Adagio. (♪ = 69)
con espressione
5me Var.
ff
f
15
14
8
sf
f
p
pp
ff
con forza
risoluto
132
Timp.
pp
sf
p leggiero e legato
1.
pesante
Cantabile e molto legato
2.
espress.
ppp
Ped.


tenuto
sf
cresc.
p
Ped.
legatiss.
36
sf
cresc.
dim.
stretto e con forza
tr
sf
cresc.
p
calando
smorz
pp

Alla Polacca. (♩ = 96.)

Tutti.

f *sf*

'Cello.

cresc.

sf *p* *sf*

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

scherz.

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

con 8

f

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

8

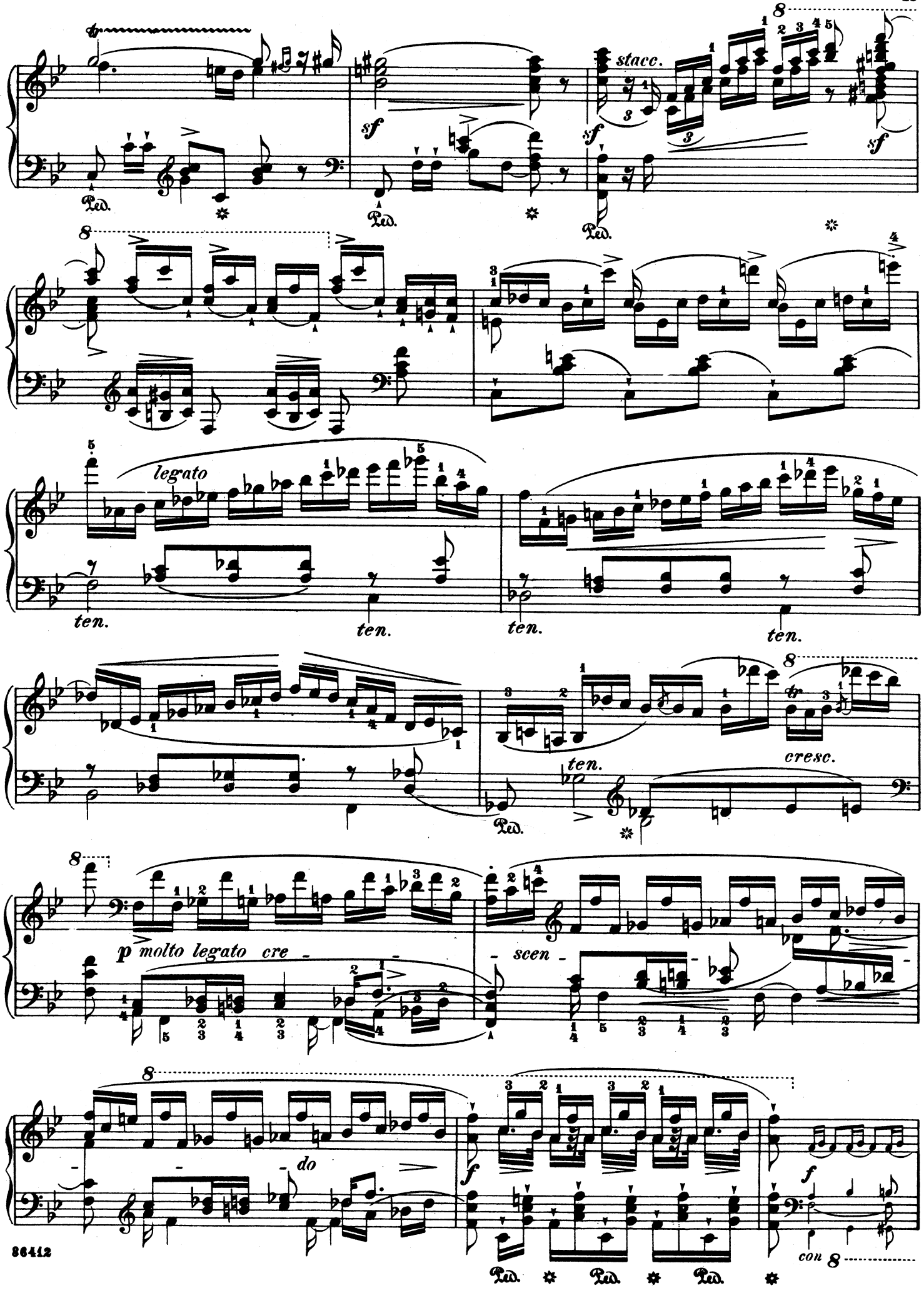
cresc.

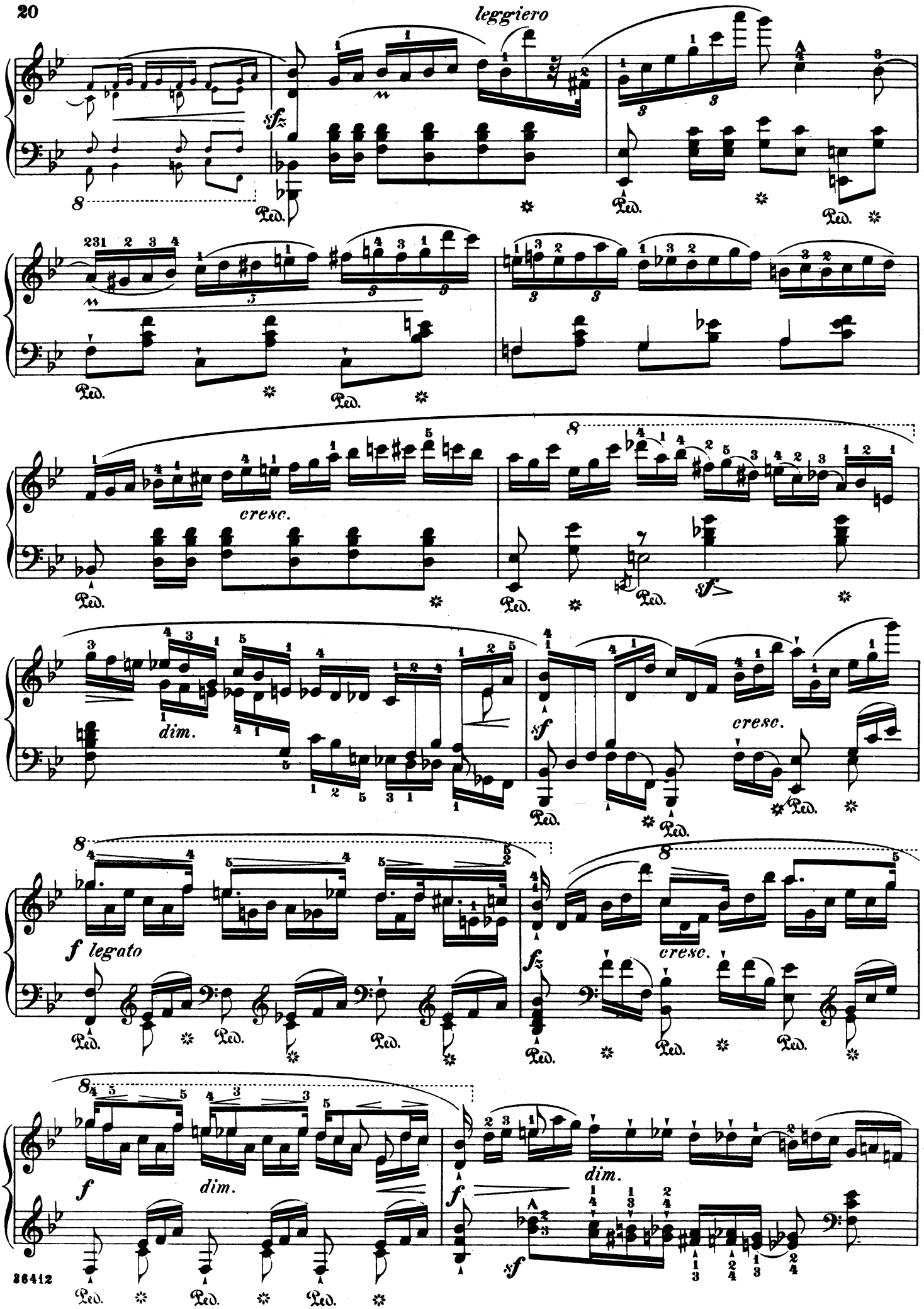
8

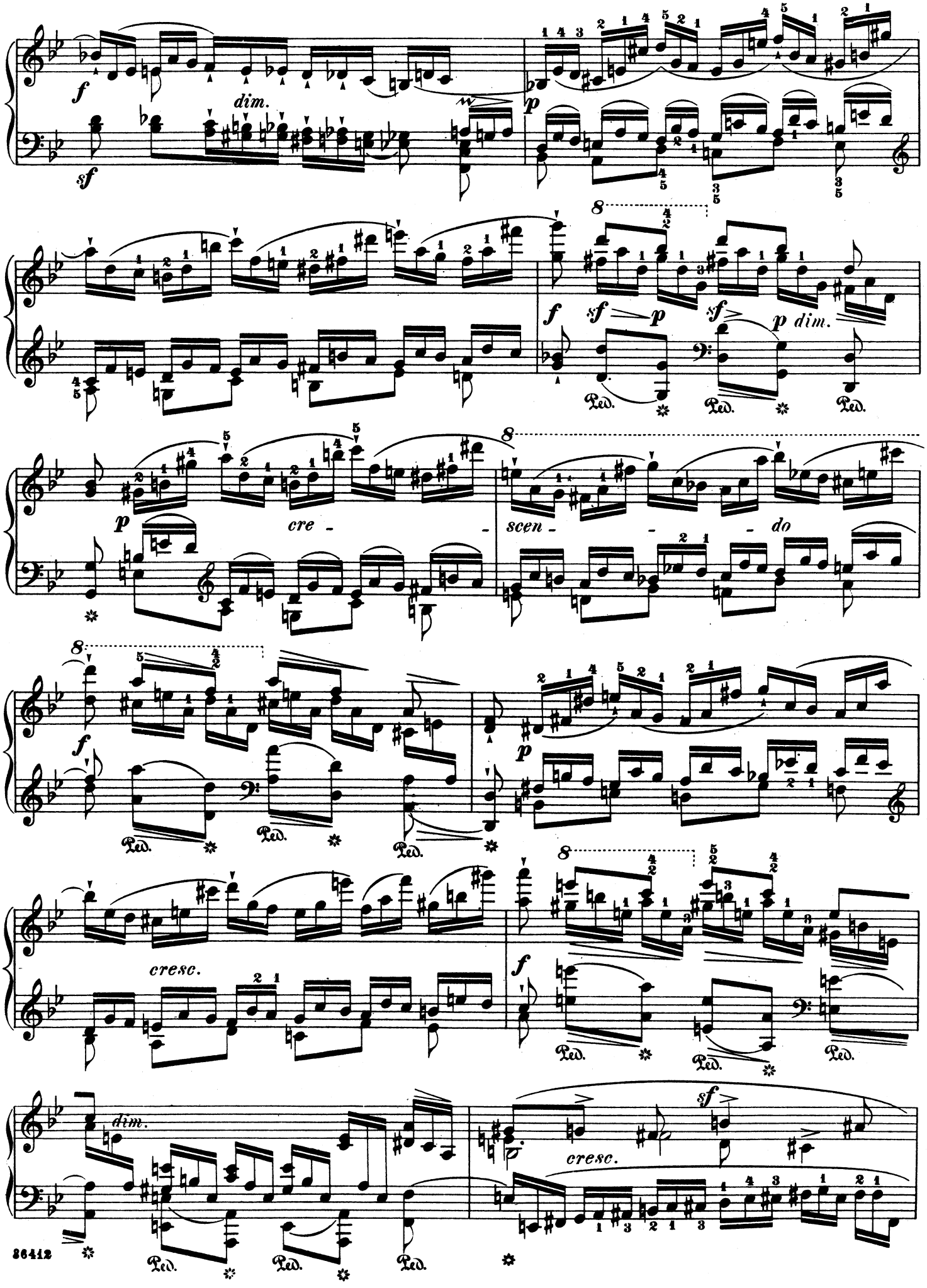
f

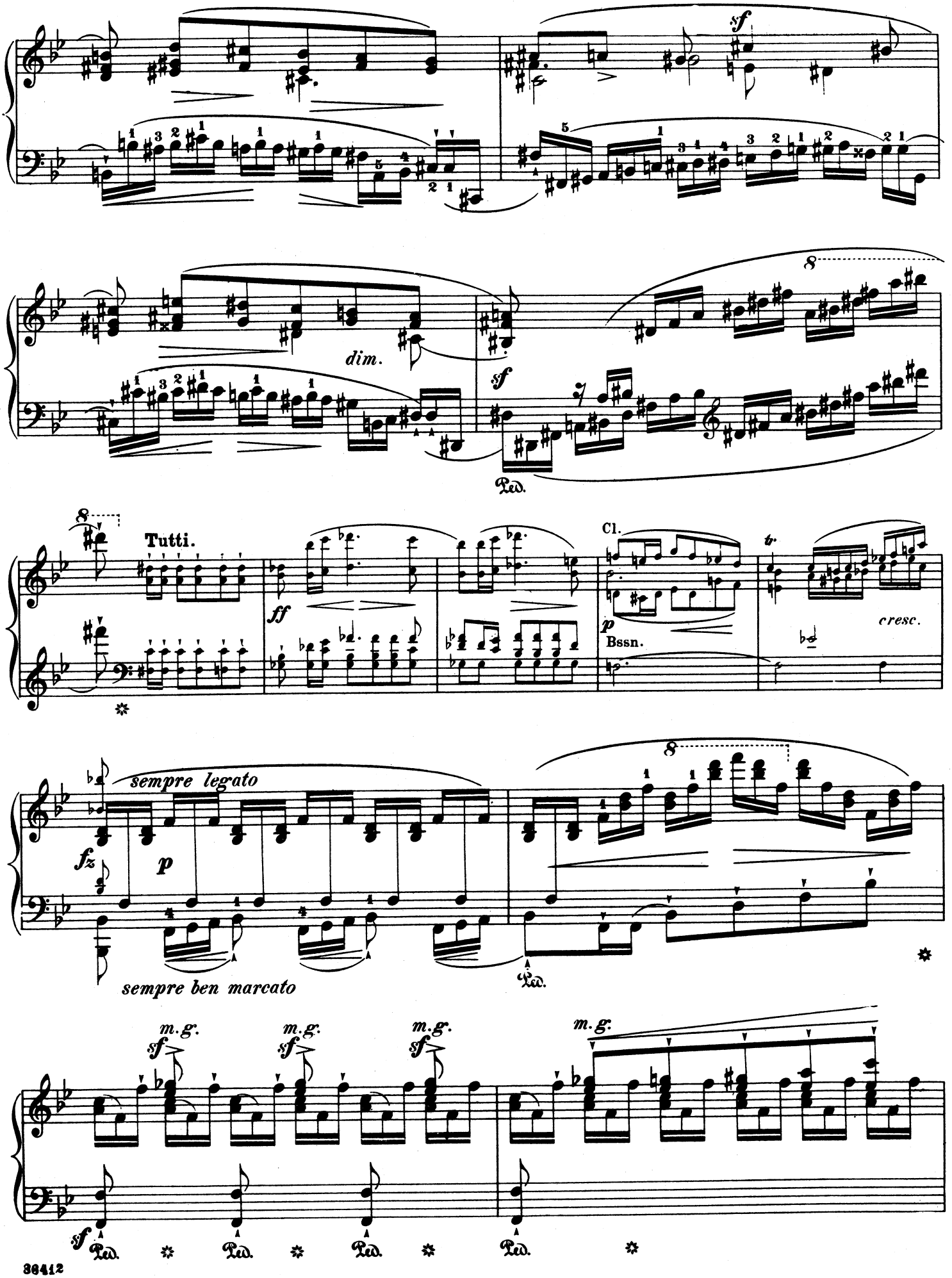
legato

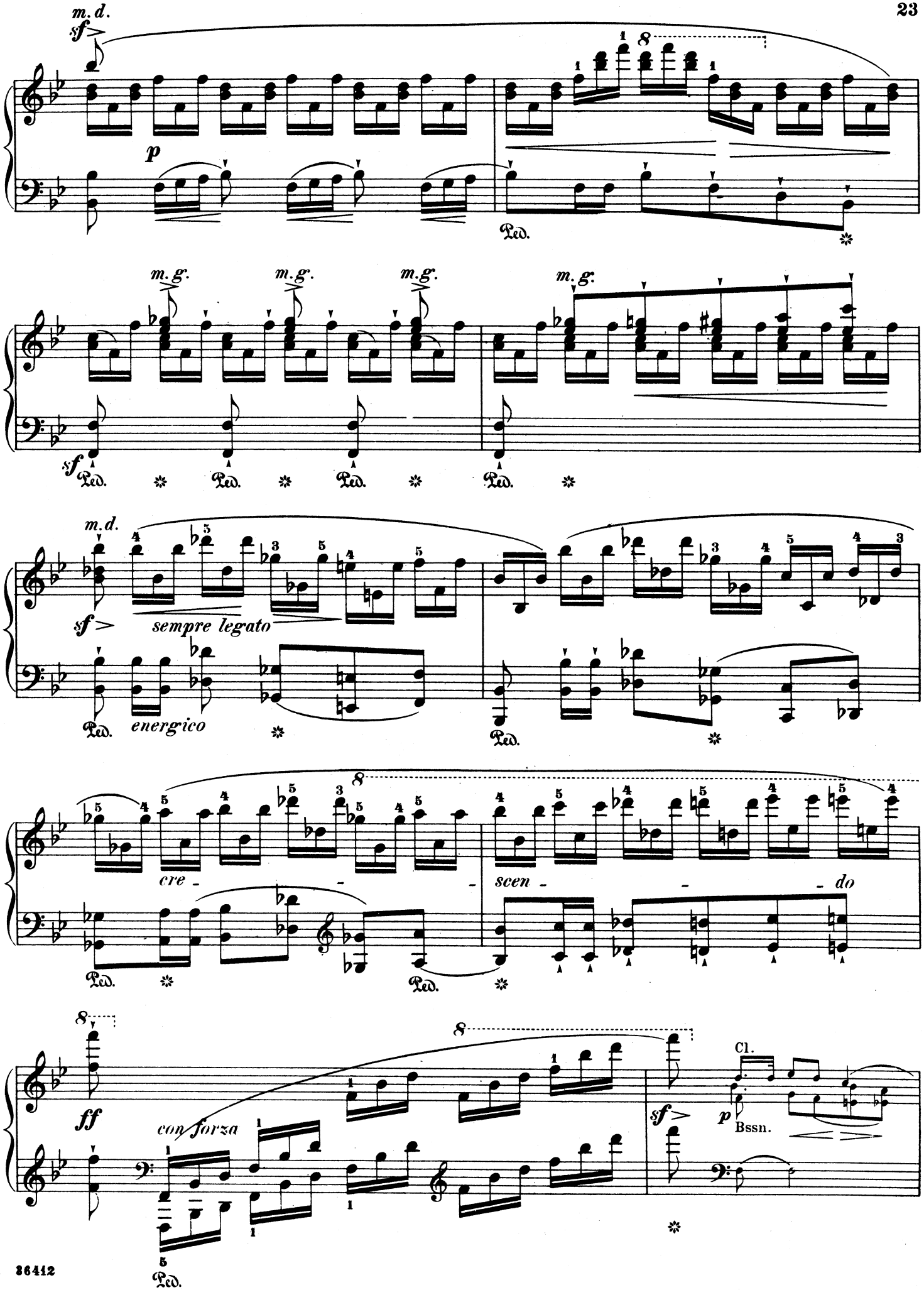
Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

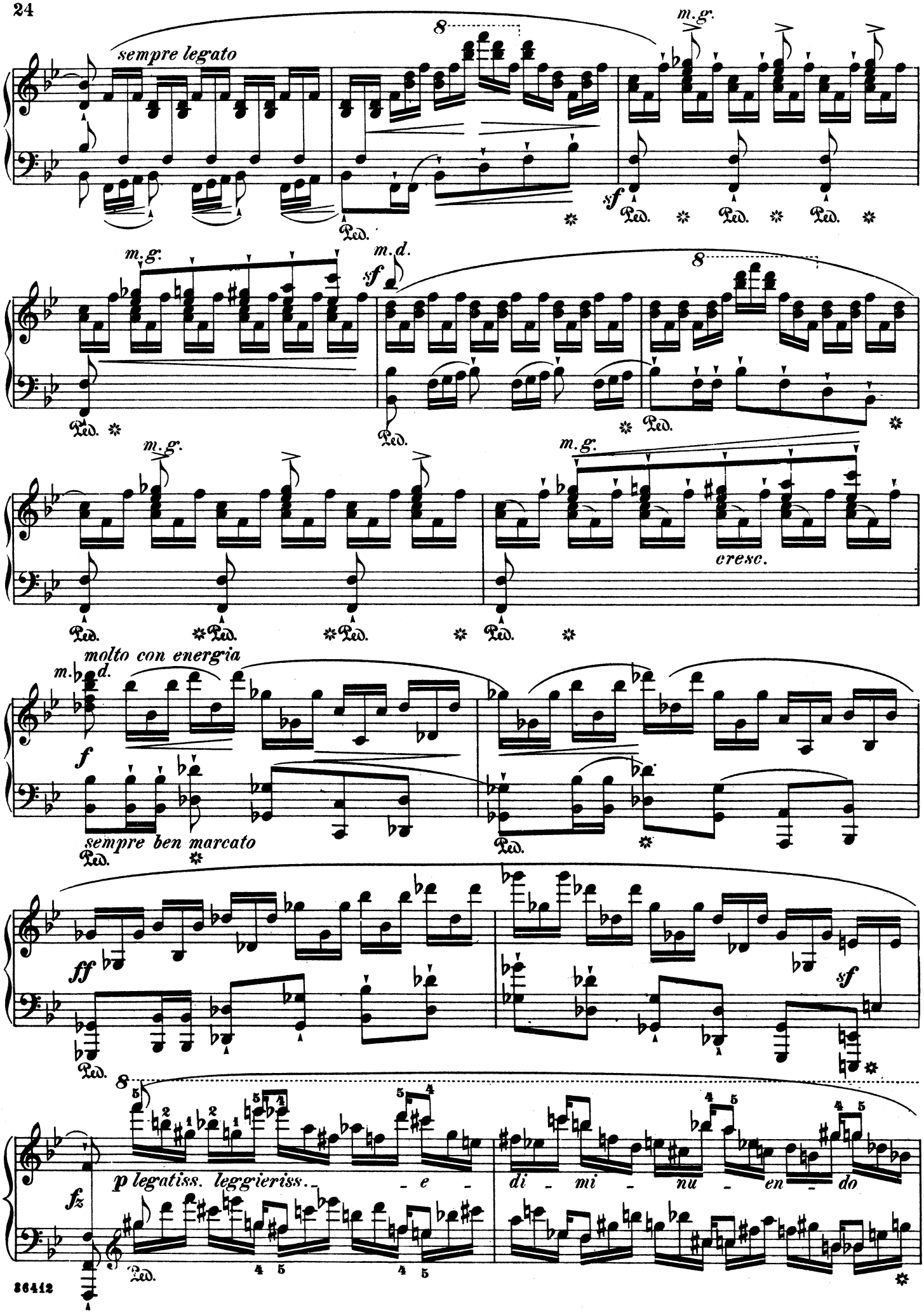

stacc.
sf
Ped.
legato
ten.
cresc.
p molto legato cre - scen -
do
f
con 8

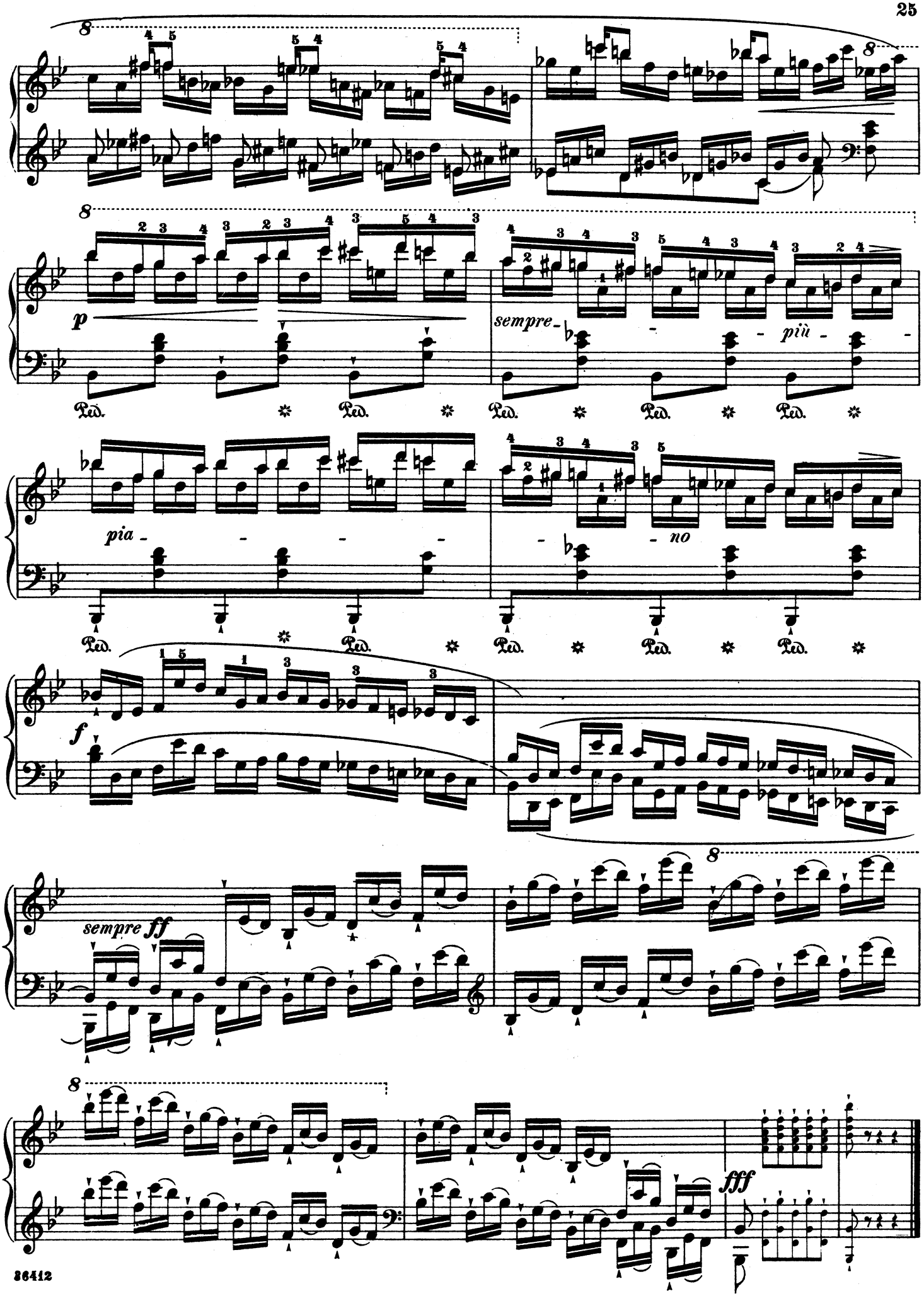

leggiero
sfz
cresc.
dim.
sf
cresc.
f legato
fz
cresc.
f
dim.
f
dim.
sf


dim.
cre - scen - do
cresc.
dim.
cresc.


sf
dim.
sf
Ped.
8
Tutti.
ff
Cl.
p
Bssn.
cresc.
sempre legato
fz
p
sempre ben marcato
Ped.
m.g.
sf
m.g.
sf
m.g.
sf
m.g.
sf
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


m. d.
sf
p
Ped.
m. g.
m. g.
m. g.
m. g.
sf
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
m. d.
sf
sempre legato
Ped.
energico
Ped.
cre - - -
scen - - - do
Ped.
Ped.
ff
con forza
Ped.
sf
p
Cl.
Bssn.


sempre legato
m.g.
sf
Ped.
m.g.
m.d.
sf
cresc.
molto con energia
f
sempre ben marcato
ff
sf
fz
p legatiss. leggieriss.
e
di - mi - nu - en - do


p
sempre
più
pia
no
f
sempre ff
fff