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Vol. 173

ADOLF HENSELT

SELECTED PIECES

FOR

PIANOFORTE

With a

Biographical Sketch of the Author by

PHILIP HALE

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1896

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22
H52

ADOLF HENSELT was born May 12, 1814, at Schwabach, Bavaria. His father was a manufacturer of printed calicoes. The family moved to Munich, where Adolf studied the violin, which he abandoned for the piano. His first piano-teacher was Lasser. He then studied under Mrs. von Fladt, an amateur who had been a pupil of Meyerbeer and Weber. When he was about seventeen, befriended by Ludwig I., he took lessons of Hummel, at Weimar. In 1832 he went to Vienna, where he studied composition under Sechter, and applied himself so foolishly to finger-exercises that his health suffered. He went to Berlin in 1836, and there his playing in concert and in salons made a profound sensation. Yet the strange timidity that soon afterward took possession of him and prevented his appearance in public the rest of his life, interfered, in a measure, with the full recognition of his rare talent as a virtuoso. From Berlin he went to Dresden and to Weimar. His health was still feeble, but he needed money, and therefore gave concerts. In 1837 he was married at Breslau to a woman of a fine mind. In 1838 he made his home at St. Petersburg, and he left this city only for trips to German towns, London (1852, 1867), and Paris ; trips chiefly of pleasure, for he seldom played the piano on these occasions, except to a few friends. When he first went to St. Petersburg his concerts were so brilliantly successful that he was appointed teacher to the children of the Tsarina, court-pianist, and Music-Inspector of the Imperial Russian Female Seminaries. He was also ennobled. Death found this shy pianist at Warmbrünn, October 10, 1889.

Von Lenz says that Henselt was an ideal German when he first appeared in St. Petersburg. "In his air there was a suggestion of Siegfried ; in his speaking, deep-piercing eyes there was something of the Nibelungen". When Ferdinand Hiller met Henselt in the same city in 1870, he found him without the Russo-Gallic elegance that so vexed the soul of Turgenieff. Hiller describes him as "truly German,—simple, honest, exceedingly independent". Outside of his official duties, Henselt lived a most retired life. "It is as difficult to see him as it is to hear him", was the answer made to strangers who desired to meet this great pianist who did not play.

The chief works of Henselt are: the piano-concerto in Fminor, op. 16; Concert Études, op. 2, and op. 13; Poème d'Amour, op. 3 ; Frühlingslied, op. 15 ; Impromptu, op. 17; Ballade, op. 31. He wrote many finely wrought piano-pieces, concert-paraphrases, etc. (39 works bear an opus-number and 15 are not numbered); a trio, a second piano-part to selected studies by Cramer. He also edited an edition of Weber's compositions for the piano.

They that heard Henselt play, praise passionately the peculiar elegance of his performance. Thus they say he was master of "full-toned pianissimo", a phrase that is best explained by reminding the reader of Joseffy. Henselt gained this strength in elegance and beauty of tone by legato touch, quiet but strong fingers, rather than by use of wrists and pedals. Some have thought that his method was needlessly cumbrous, entailing a constant straining of the muscles. Mr. Dannreuther, for instance, declares that Henselt's way of holding the keys down as much as possible with the fingers does not seem the most practical. Mendelssohn bears testimony that in 1838 Henselt's specialty was playing widespread chords, "and that he went on all day stretching his fingers over arpeggios played prestissimo". But each pianist is a law unto himself. The question is not "How does he gain effects?" The question is this: "Does he satisfy the judgment and move the soul?" This question was answered by those who heard Henselt—and they were trained as well as temperamental judges—with a loud affirmative. We are told that he studied diligently the fugues of Bach on a muted piano, while at the same time he read a Bible placed on the rack ; that he practised finger-exercises on a dumb knee-piano even between the times of his appearances at a concert. But in his playing in public there was nothing of the pedagogue or the eccentric. When someone in St. Petersburg told Liszt that Henselt had made great progress, he answered: "An artist like Henselt does not make progress". The tenderness of his song in cantabile passages was bewitching, irresistible, and the brilliancy displayed in bravura passages was dazzling. His sentiment was never sentimentalism ; in stormiest measures he never forced tone. He was romantic in performance, as well as in composition ; but his romanticism rested on sane and enduring musical foundations ; it was free from caprice, affectation, or any exhibition of self-worship.

The piano-pieces of Henselt have been neglected of late years. Occasionally a pianist like Emil Sauer plays his concerto, but to modern audiences Henselt is known chiefly by his "Si j'étais un oiseau", which serves as a machine for exhibiting a speed that robs the piece of its beauty. Some may think, with Hanslick, that the concerto is interesting only on account of the extreme beauty of certain episodes ; that works of breadth built on a grand scale were foreign to his nature and beyond his reach. All sensitive lovers of music will for years to come admire the delicate, poetic thought, and the chaste, warm elegance of the expression of thought in his short pieces. The études, by their brilliant technical demands and romantic feeling, are of close kin to the immortal etudes of Chopin. The musical thought of Henselt is not so abstract as is that of Schumann, nor is it ever tortured in its speculation. It has a peculiarly German feeling and expression ; there is no trace of the exotic melancholy that is the perfume of Chopin. And yet Henselt suggests a Chopin who never lived in Paris, knew not the feverish atmosphere of the salon, and never fell under the spell of George Sand; a Chopin, who, having left his fatherland, found rest in some quiet German village. Henselt has been called a painter of miniatures, and perhaps with justice. But how admirable the motif of each miniature ! How exquisite the workmanship ! How unerring the choice of nuances ! What art ! And, above all, what spontaneity !

PHILIP HALE.

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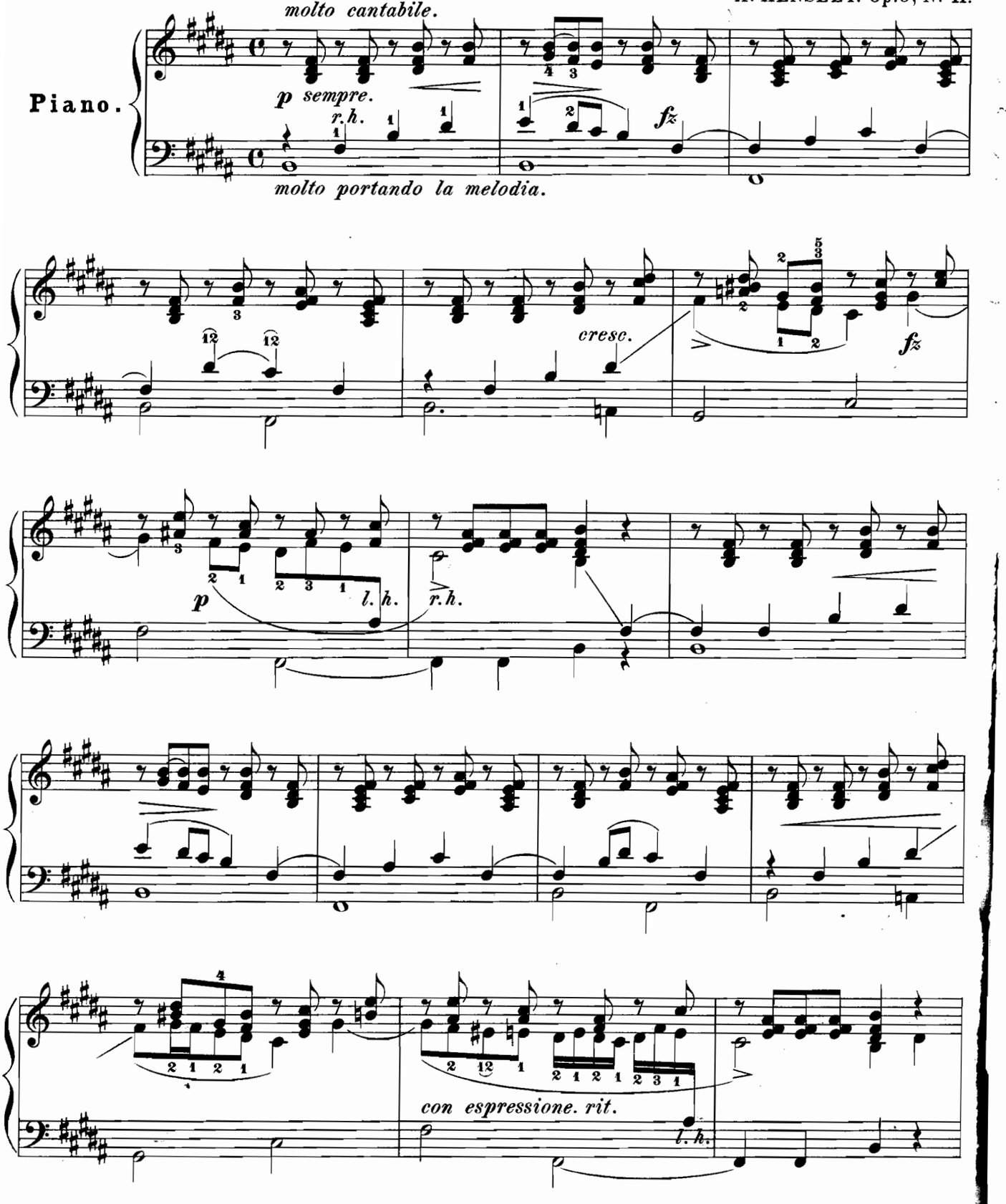
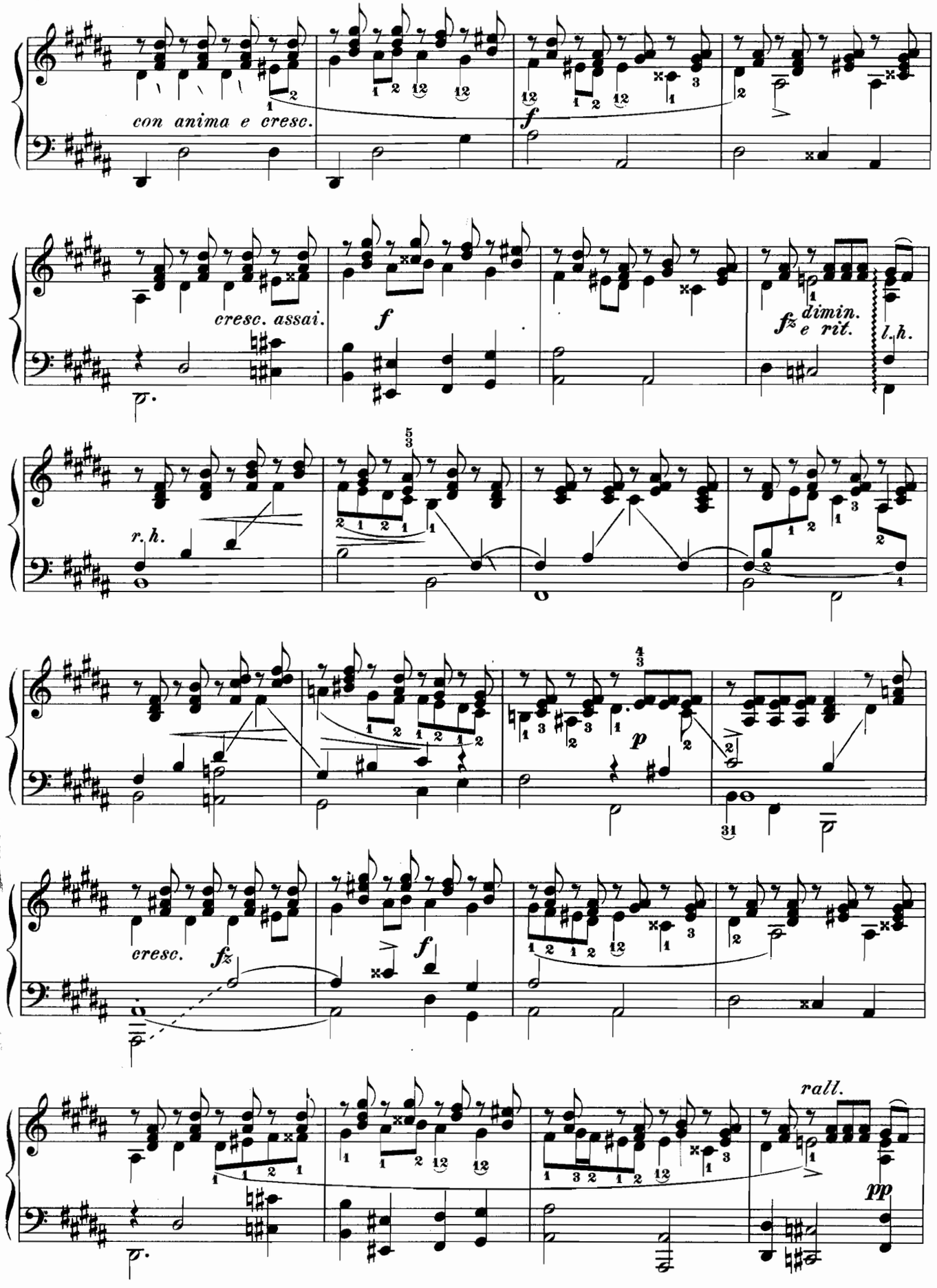
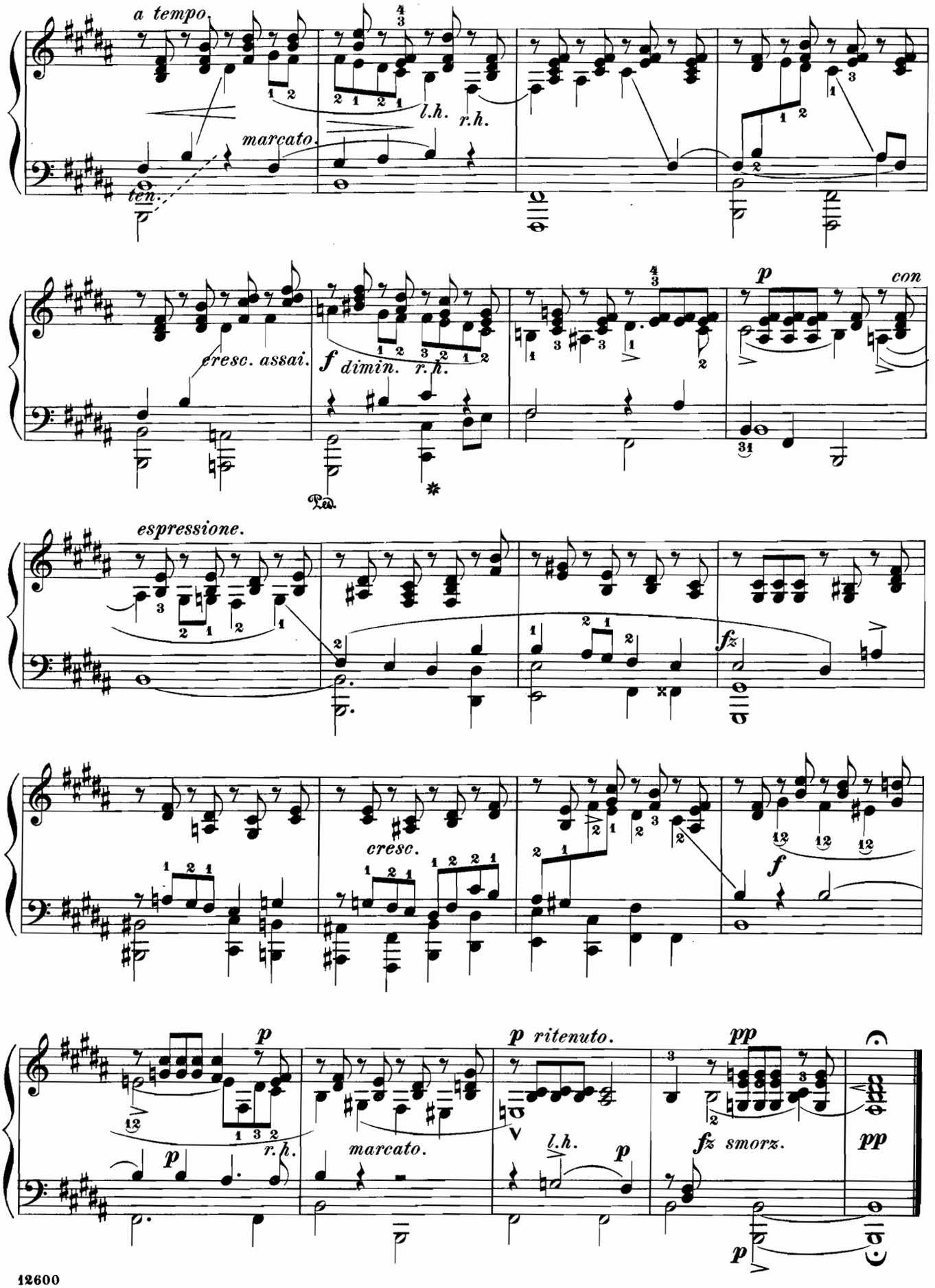
Chanson d'amour.
(LIEBESLIED.)

Allegretto sostenuto ed amoroso.

A. HENSELT. Op. 5, № 11.




con anima e cresc.
f
cresc. assai.
f
fz dimin. e rit.
l.h.
r.h.
p
cresc.
fz
f
rall.
pp


a tempo.
ten.
marcato.
l.h.
r.h.
cresc. assai.
f dimin. r.h.
p
con
espressione.
fz
cresc.
f
p
r.h.
marcato.
p ritenuto.
l.h.
p
pp
fz smorz.
pp
p

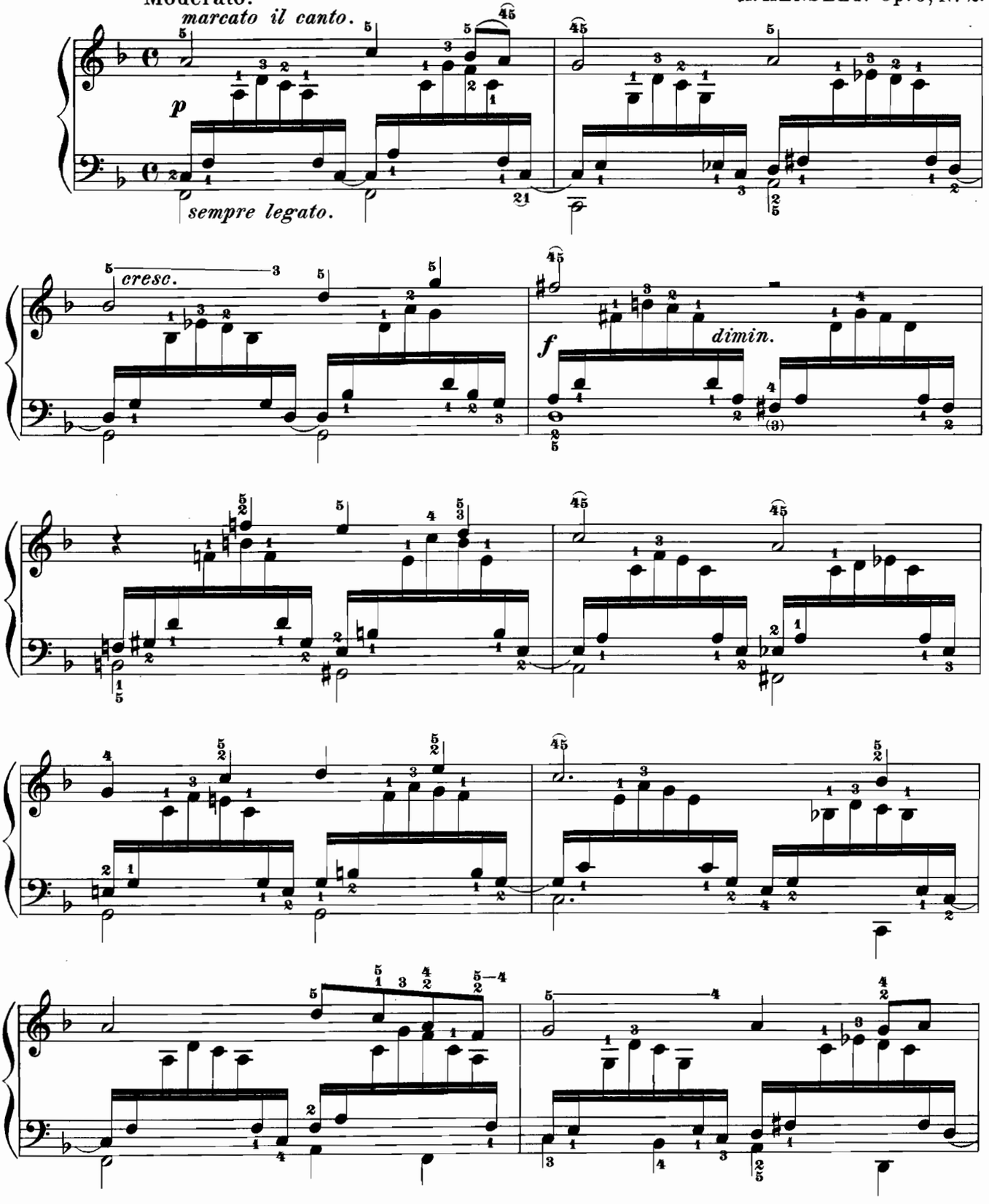
La Fontaine.

NOCTURNE.

Edited and fingered by
W. K. BASSFORD.

Moderato.

A. HENSELT. Op. 6, № 2.



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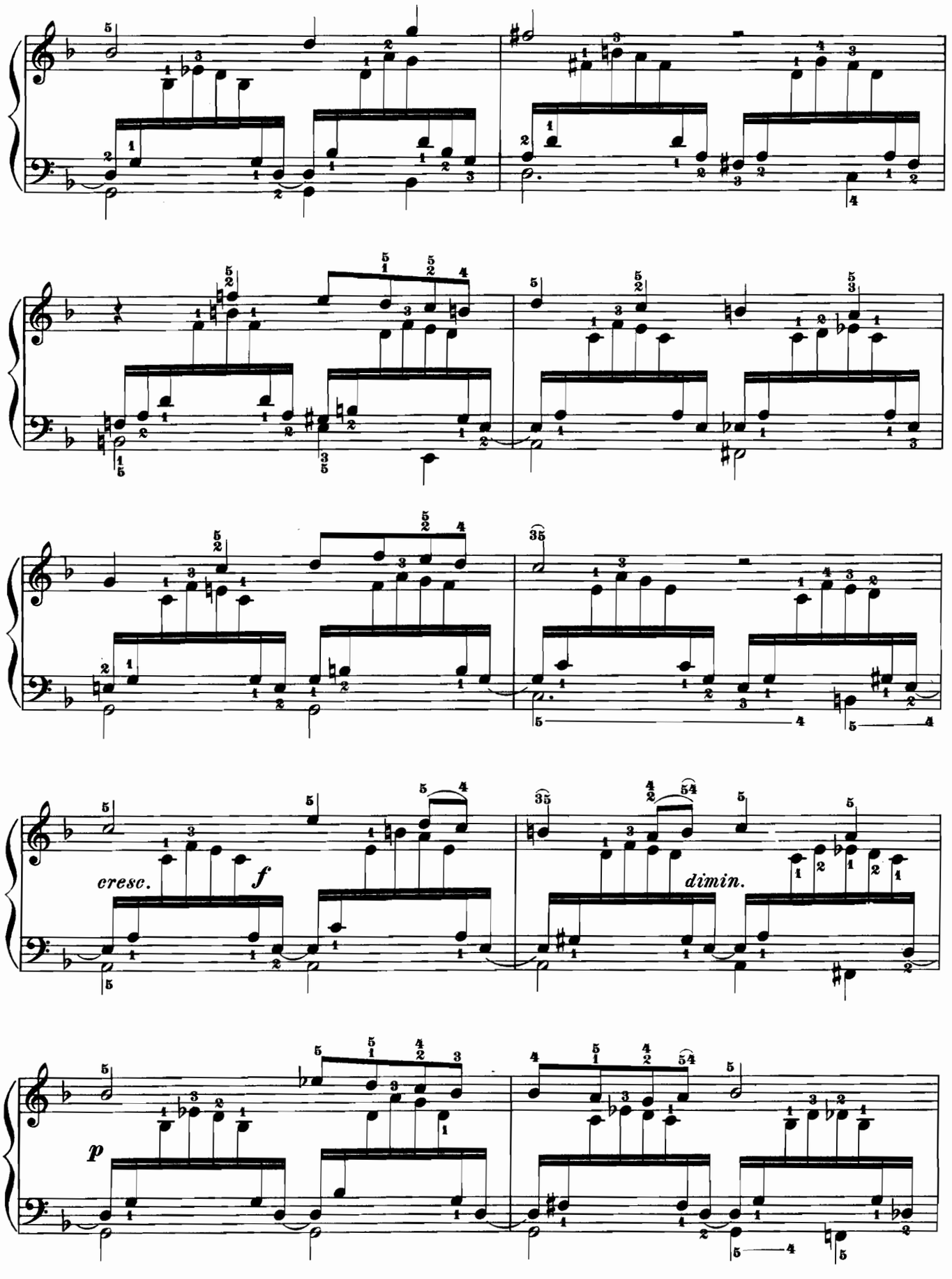
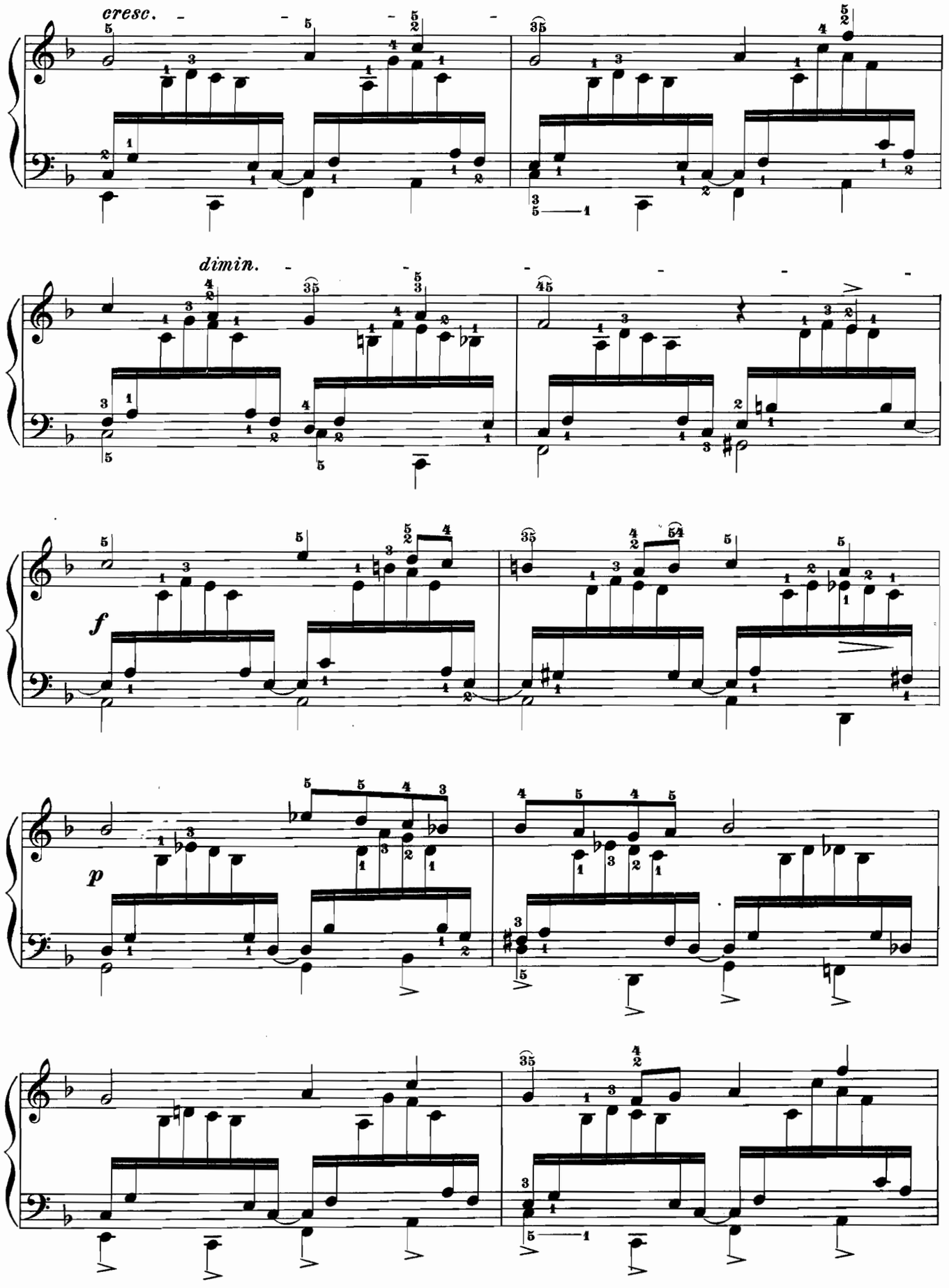
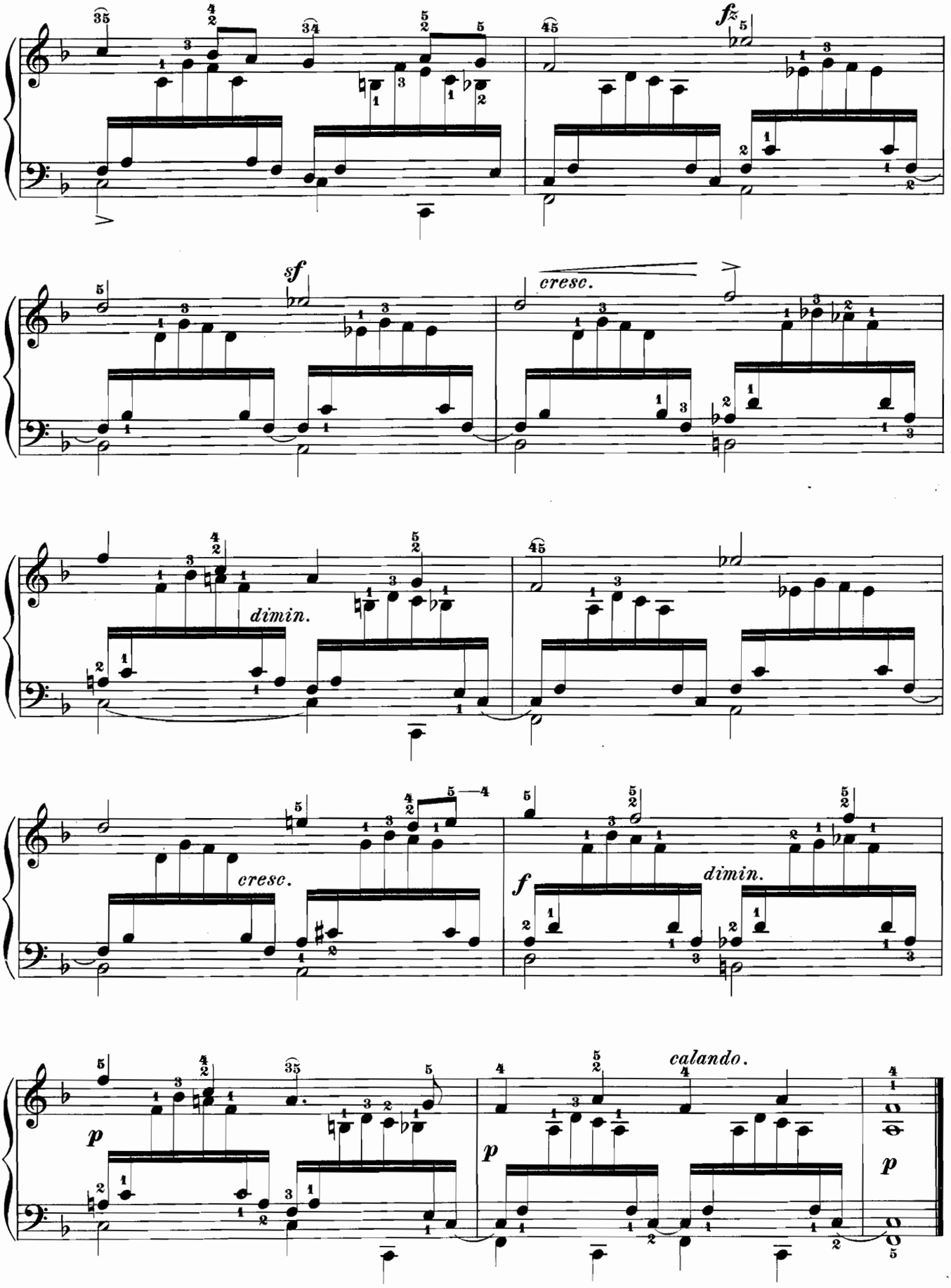

cresc.
f
dimin.
p


cresc.
dimin.
f
p


fz
sf
cresc.
dimin.
cresc.
f
dimin.
p
calando.
p
p

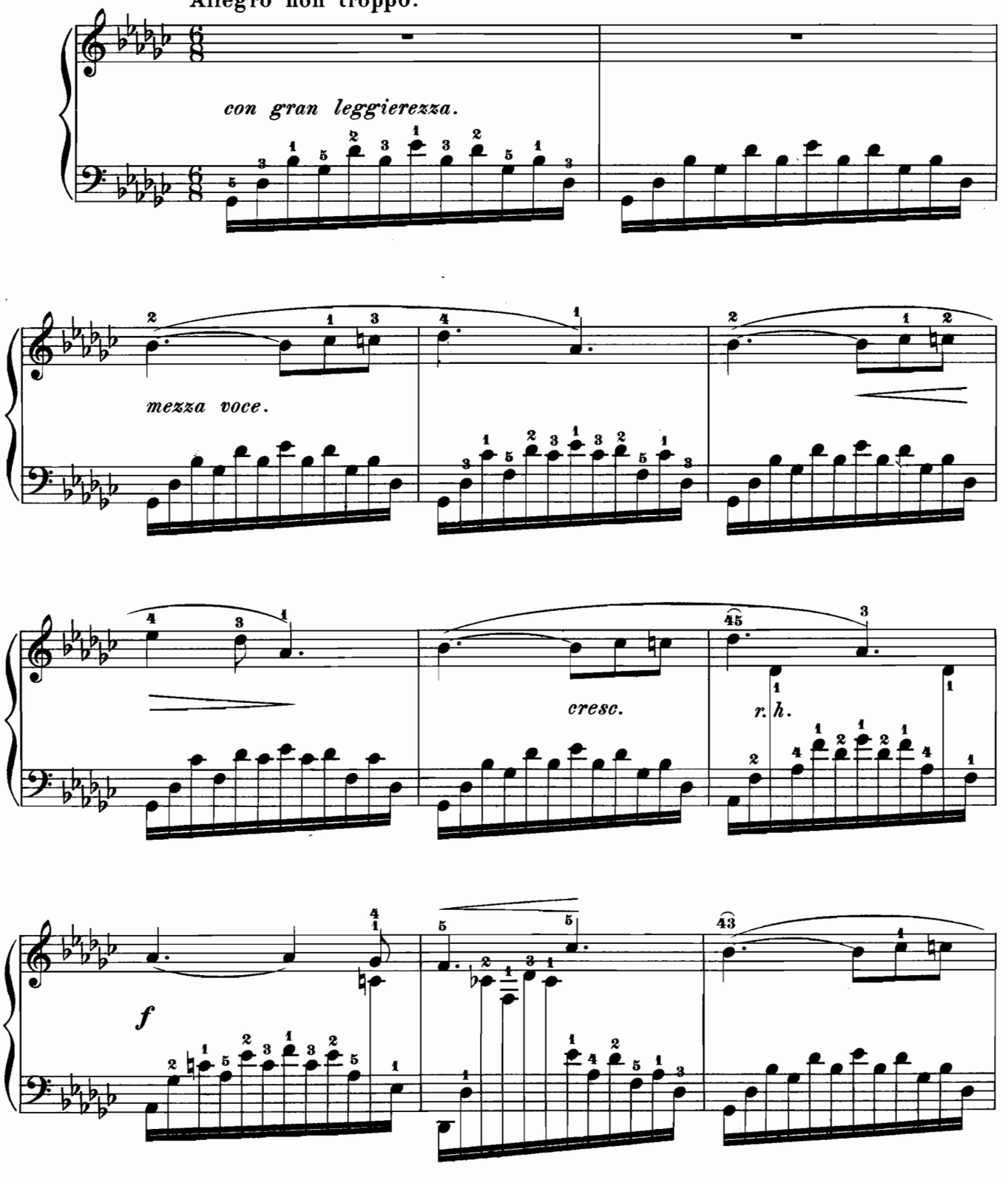
La Gondola.

ÉTUDE.

Edited and fingered by
W. K. BASSFORD.

A. HENSELT. Op. 13, №2.

Allegro non troppo.



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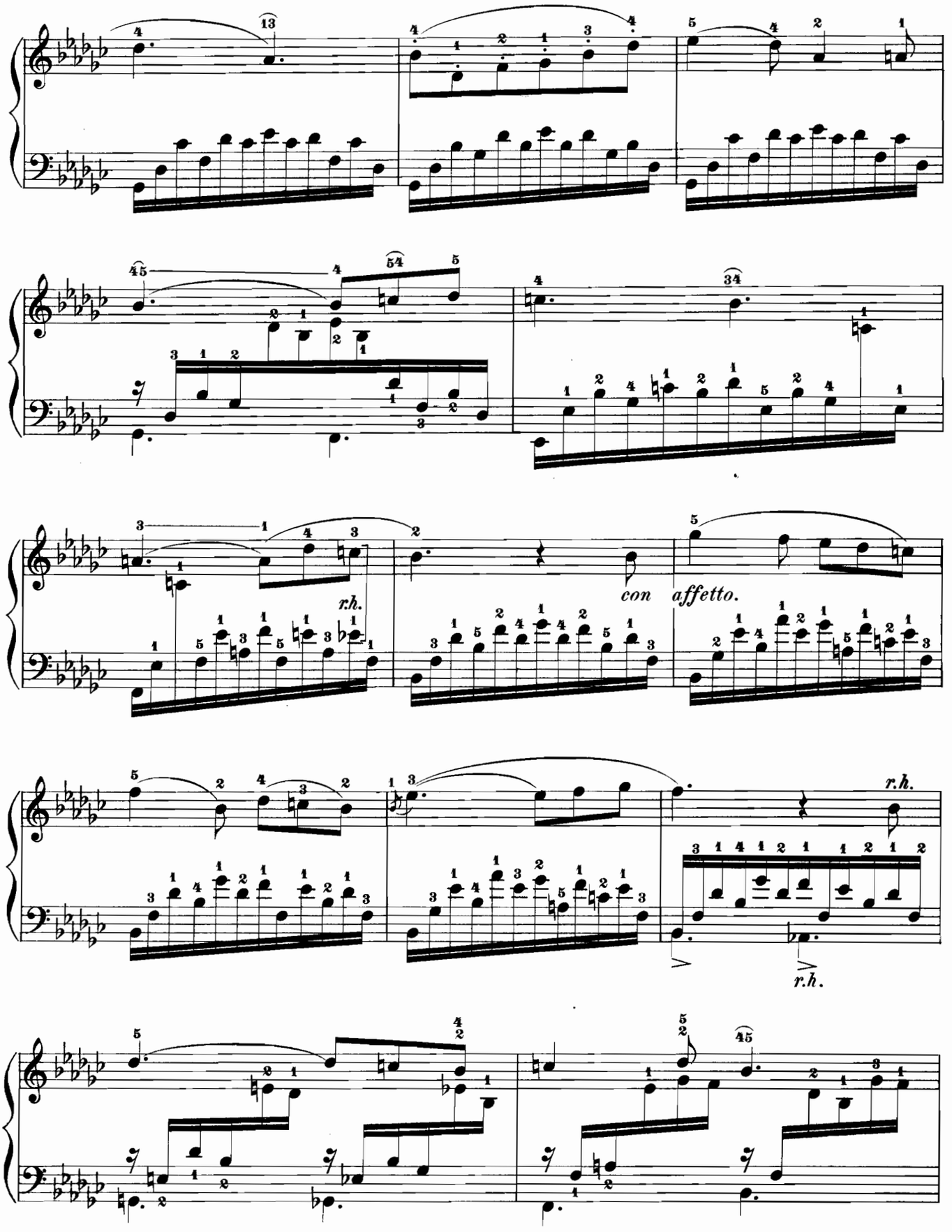
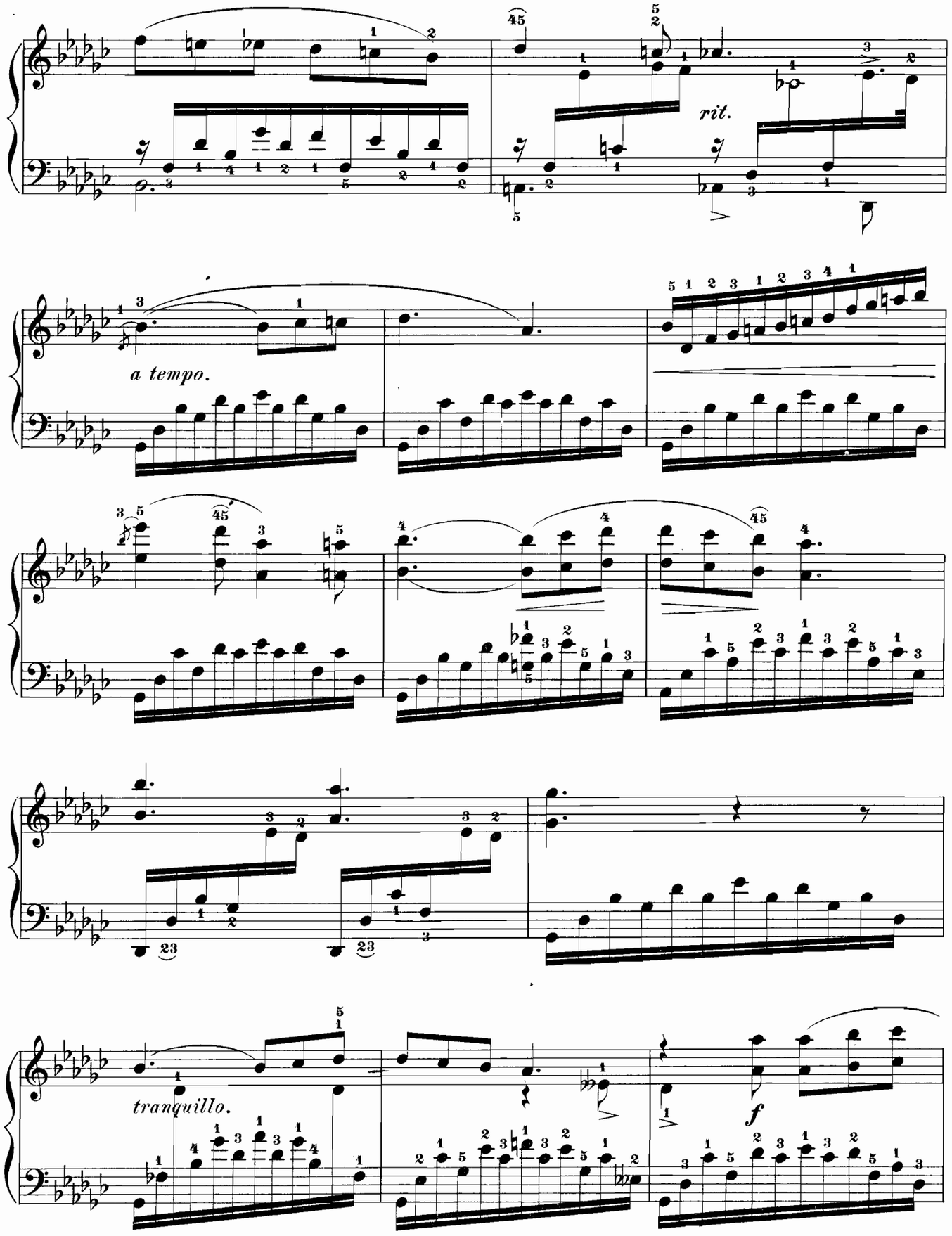
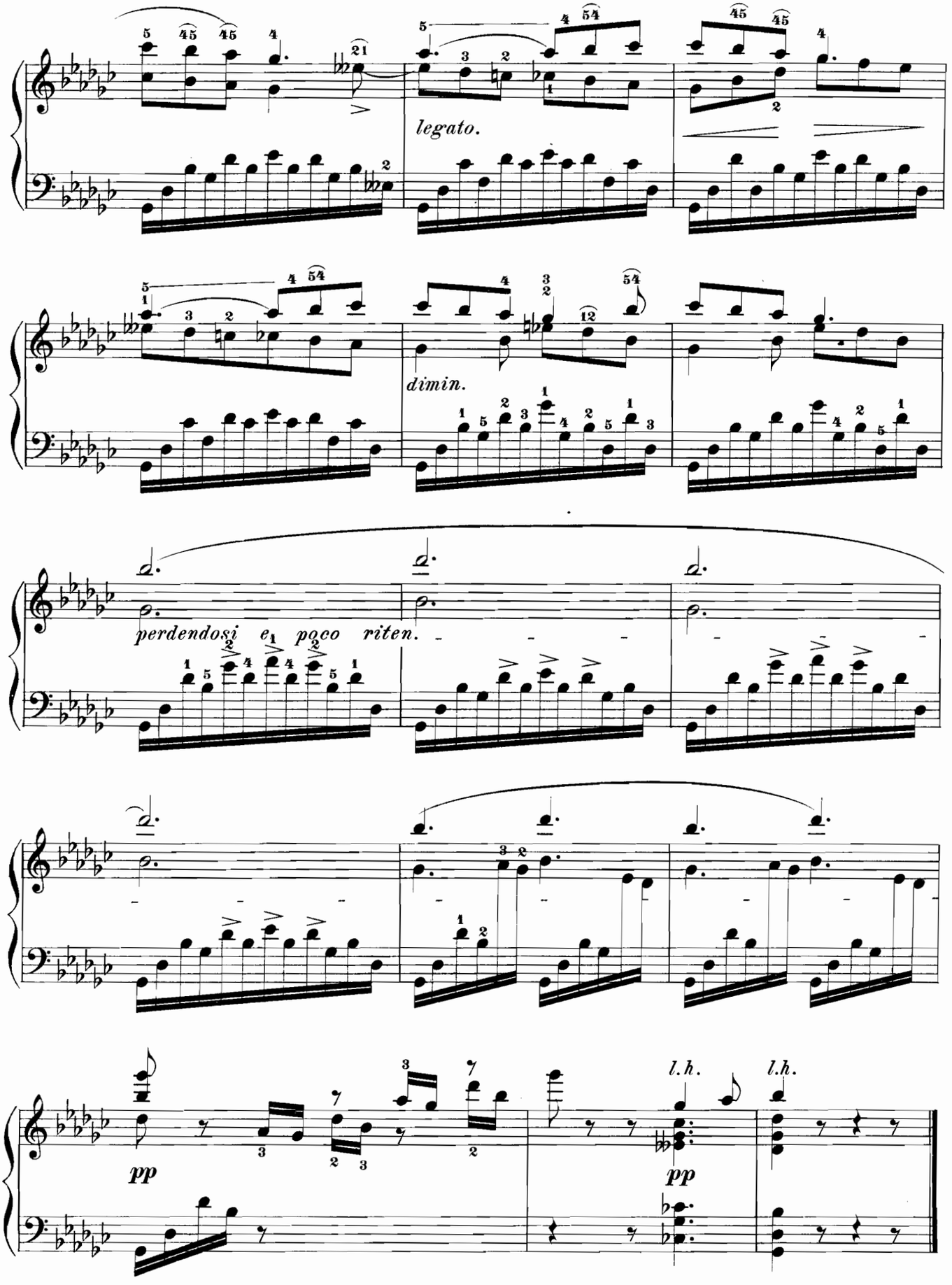

r.h.
con affetto.
r.h.
r.h.


rit.
a tempo.
tranquillo.
f

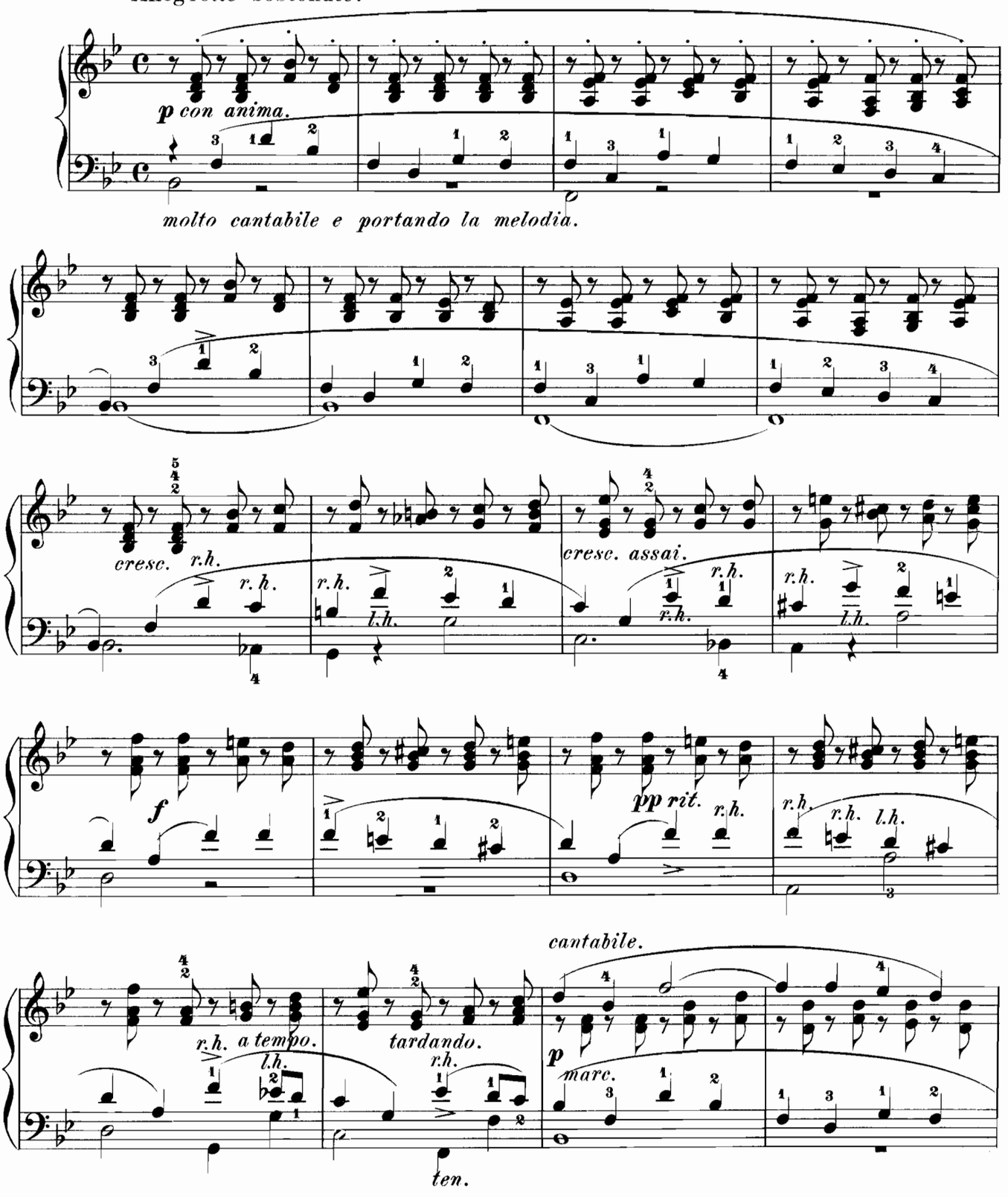

legato.
dimin.
perdendosi e poco riten.
pp
l.h.
pp
l.h.

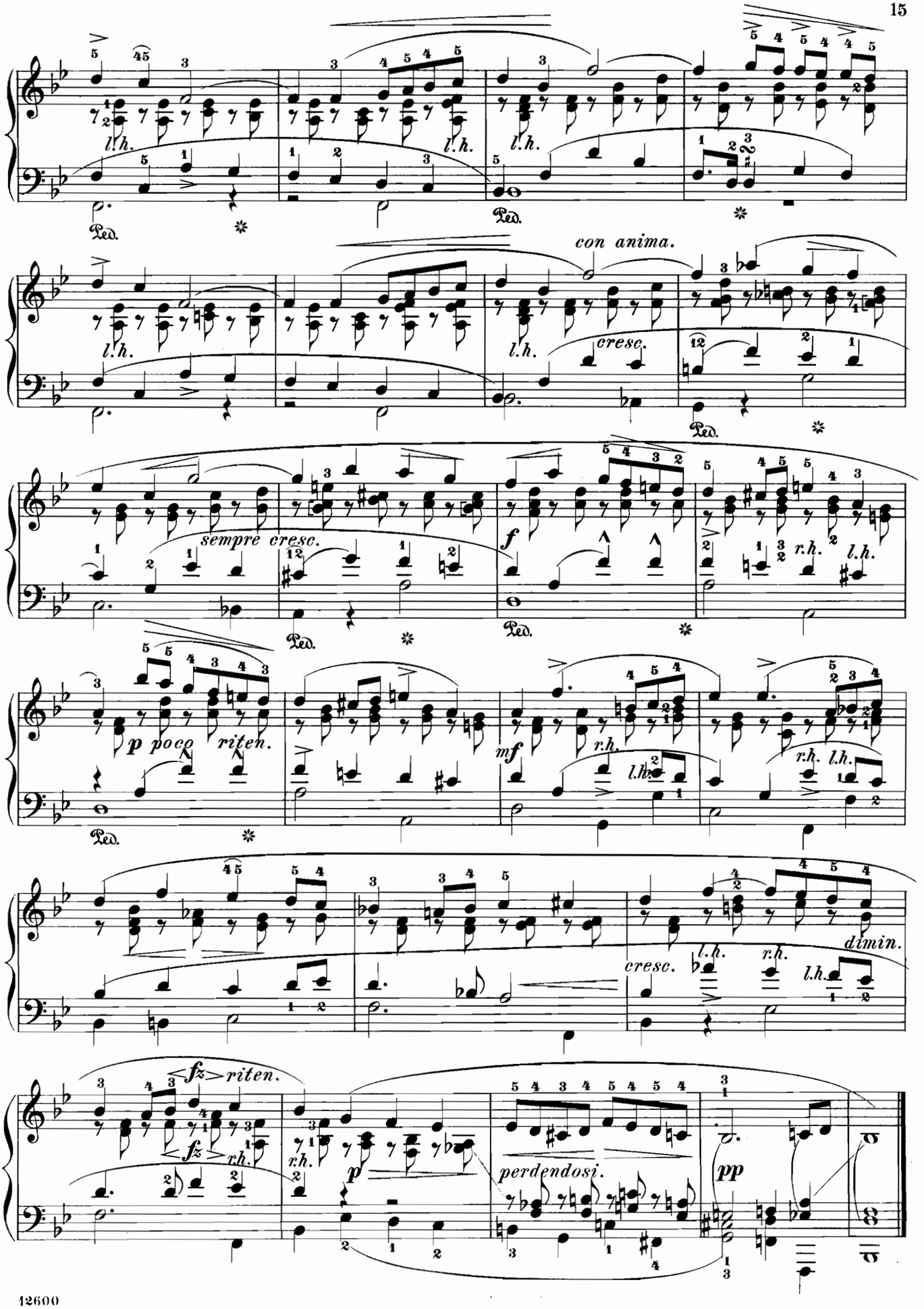
Repos d'amour.

DUO.

Allegretto sostenuto.

A. HENSELT. Op. 2, Nº 4.

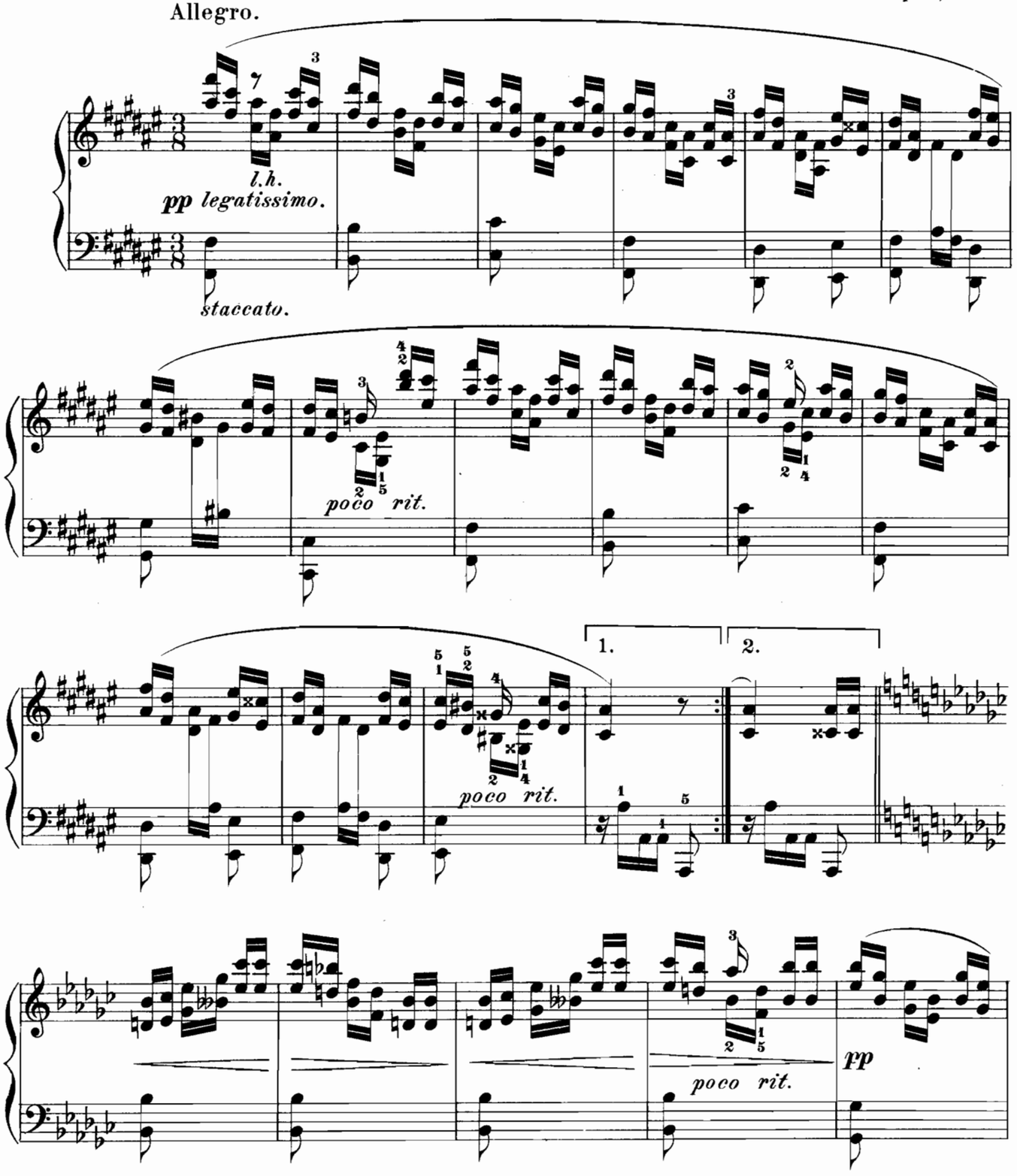


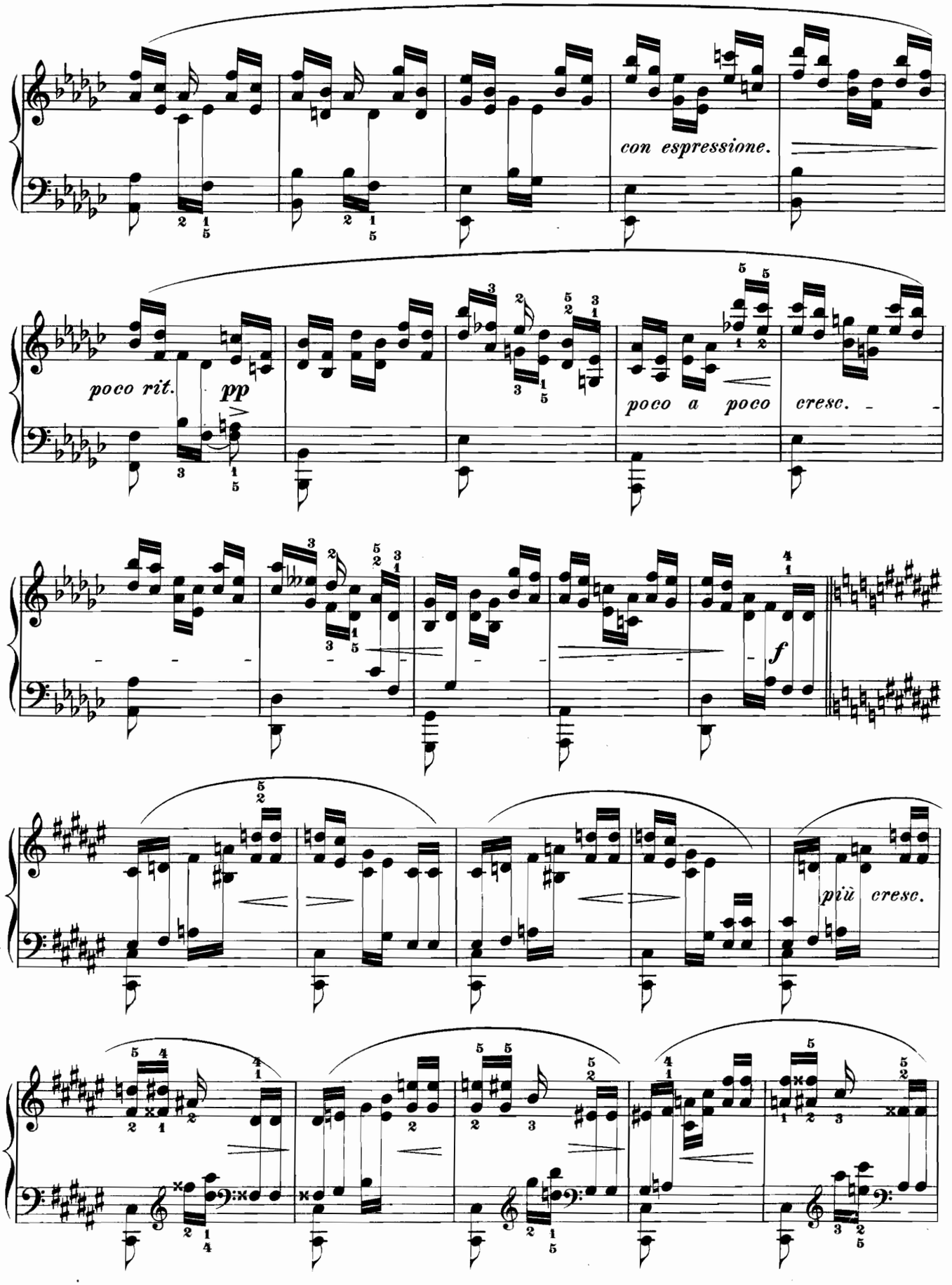

l.h.
Ped.
con anima.
cresc.
sempre cresc.
f
r.h.
l.h.
p poco riten.
mf
dimin.
fz riten.
p
perdendosi.
pp

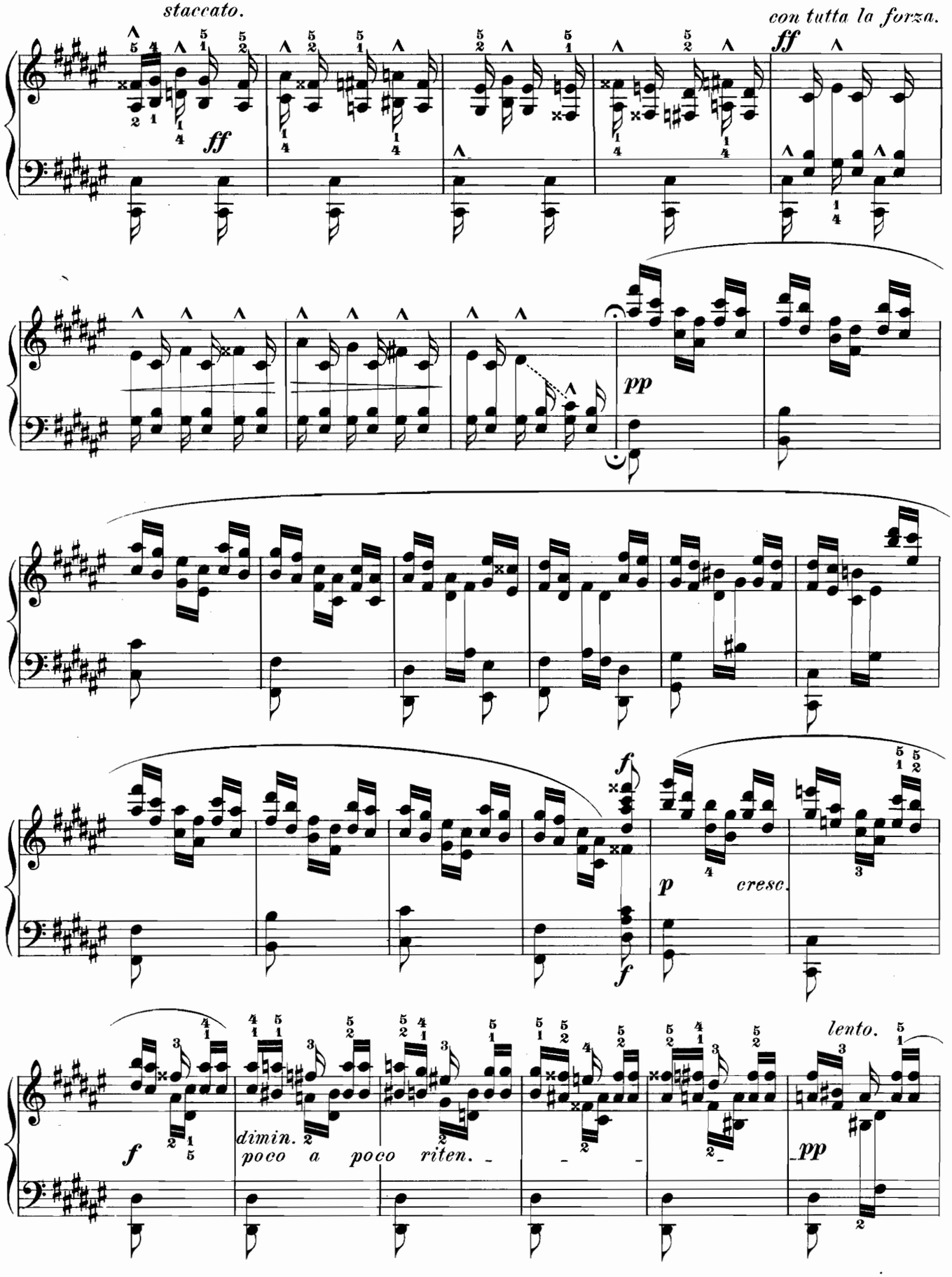
Étude.

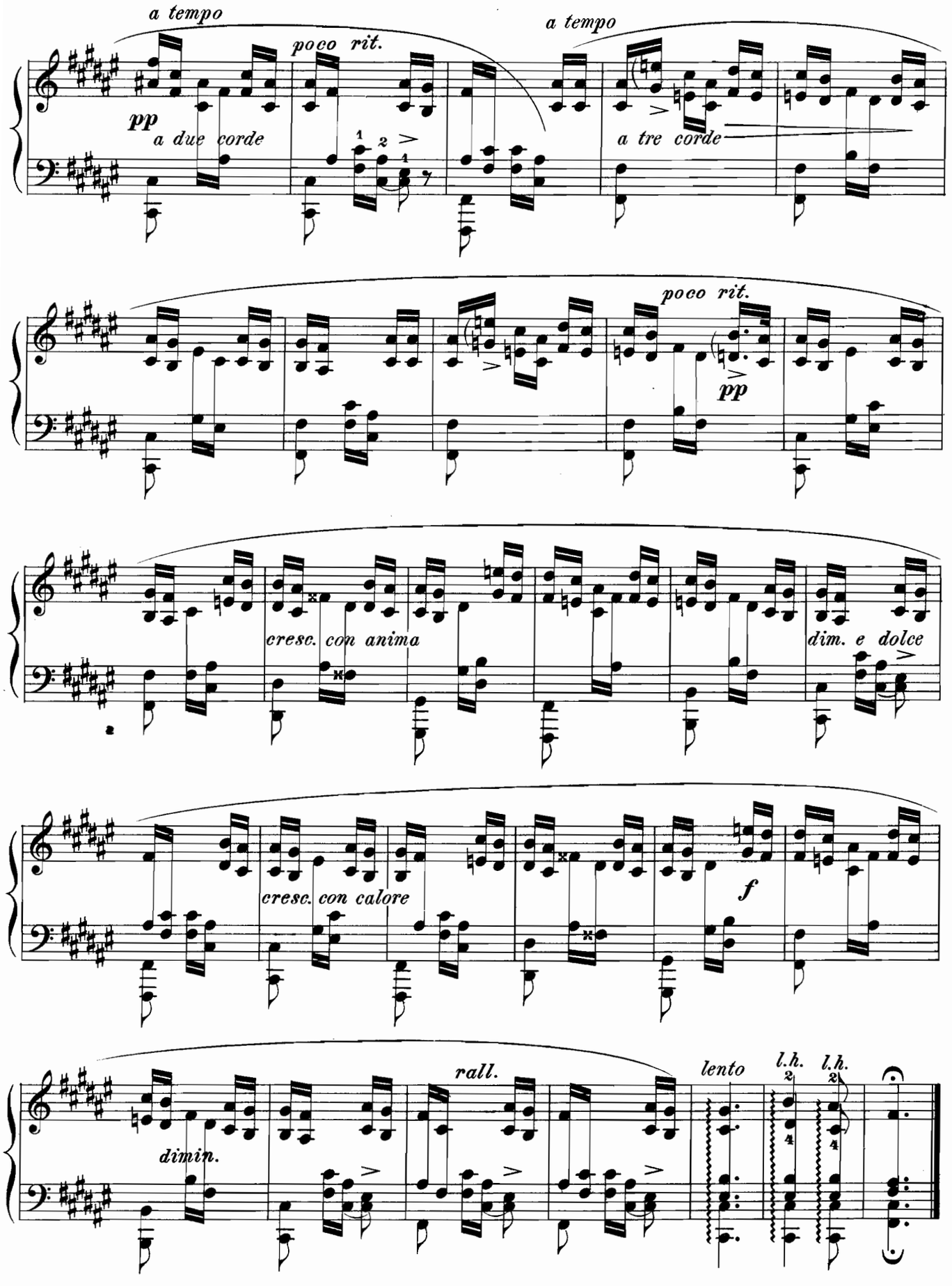
"Si oiseau j'étais,
À toi je volerais!"

A. HENSELT. Op. 2, Nº 6.




con espressione.
poco rit.
pp
poco a poco cresc.
f
più cresc.


staccato.
ff
con tutta la forza.
ff
pp
f
p
cresc.
f
lento.
f
dimin.
poco a poco riten.
pp

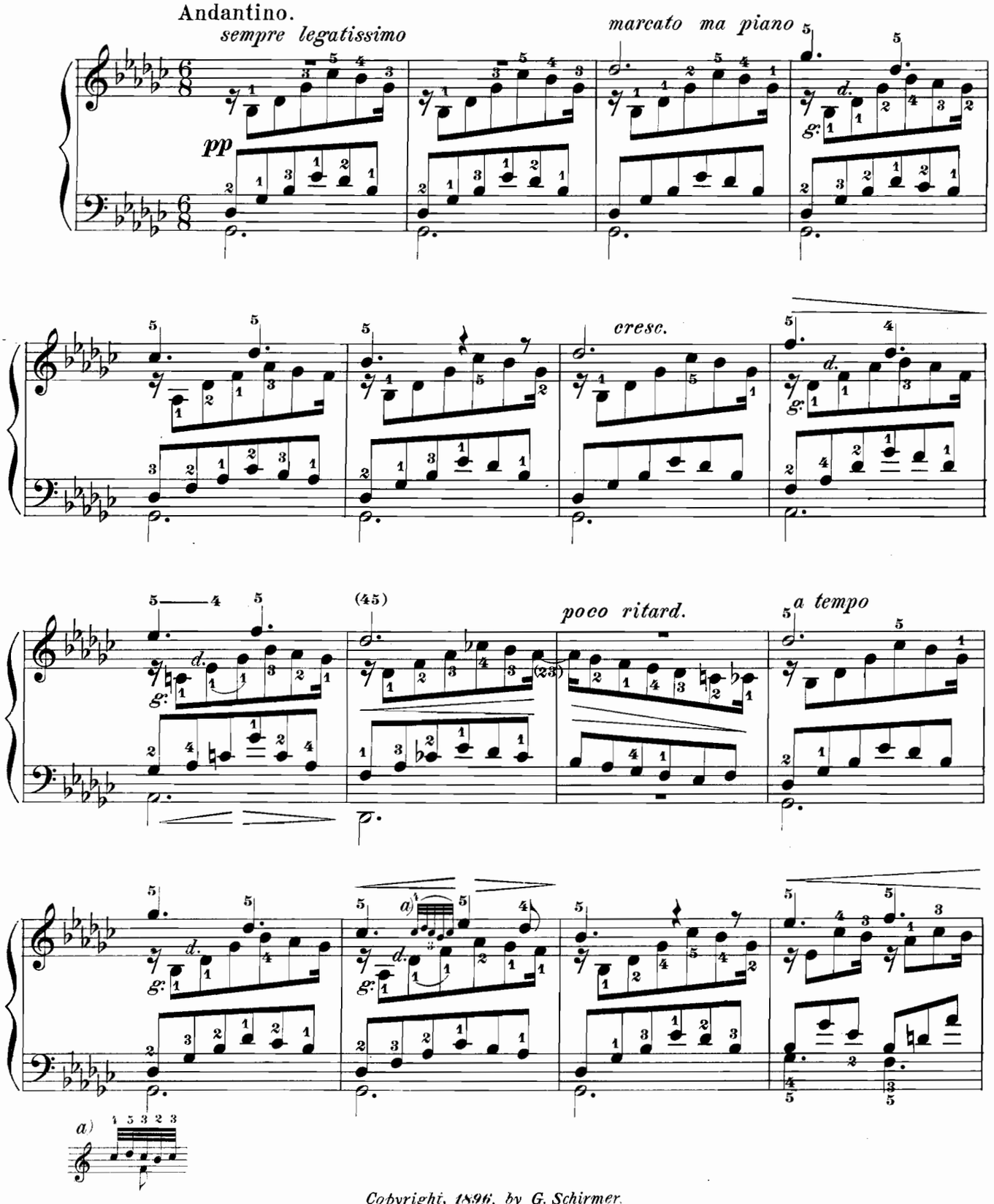

a tempo
poco rit.
pp
a due corde
a tempo
a tre corde
poco rit.
pp
cresc. con anima
dim. e dolce
cresc. con calore
f
dimin.
rall.
lento
l.h.
l.h.

Berceuse.

(WIEGENLIED.)

Edited and fingered by
W. K. BASSFORD.

A. HENSELT.



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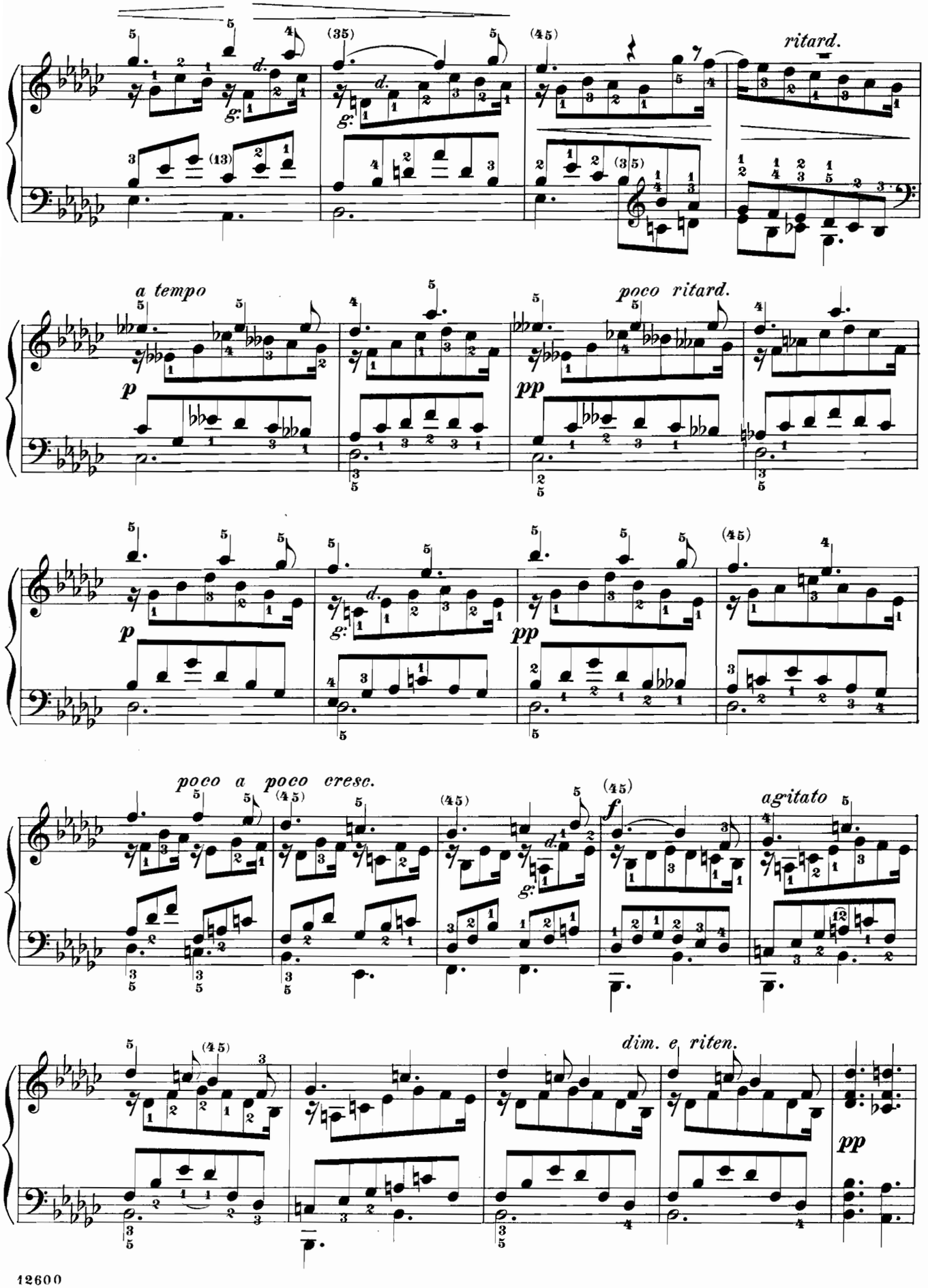
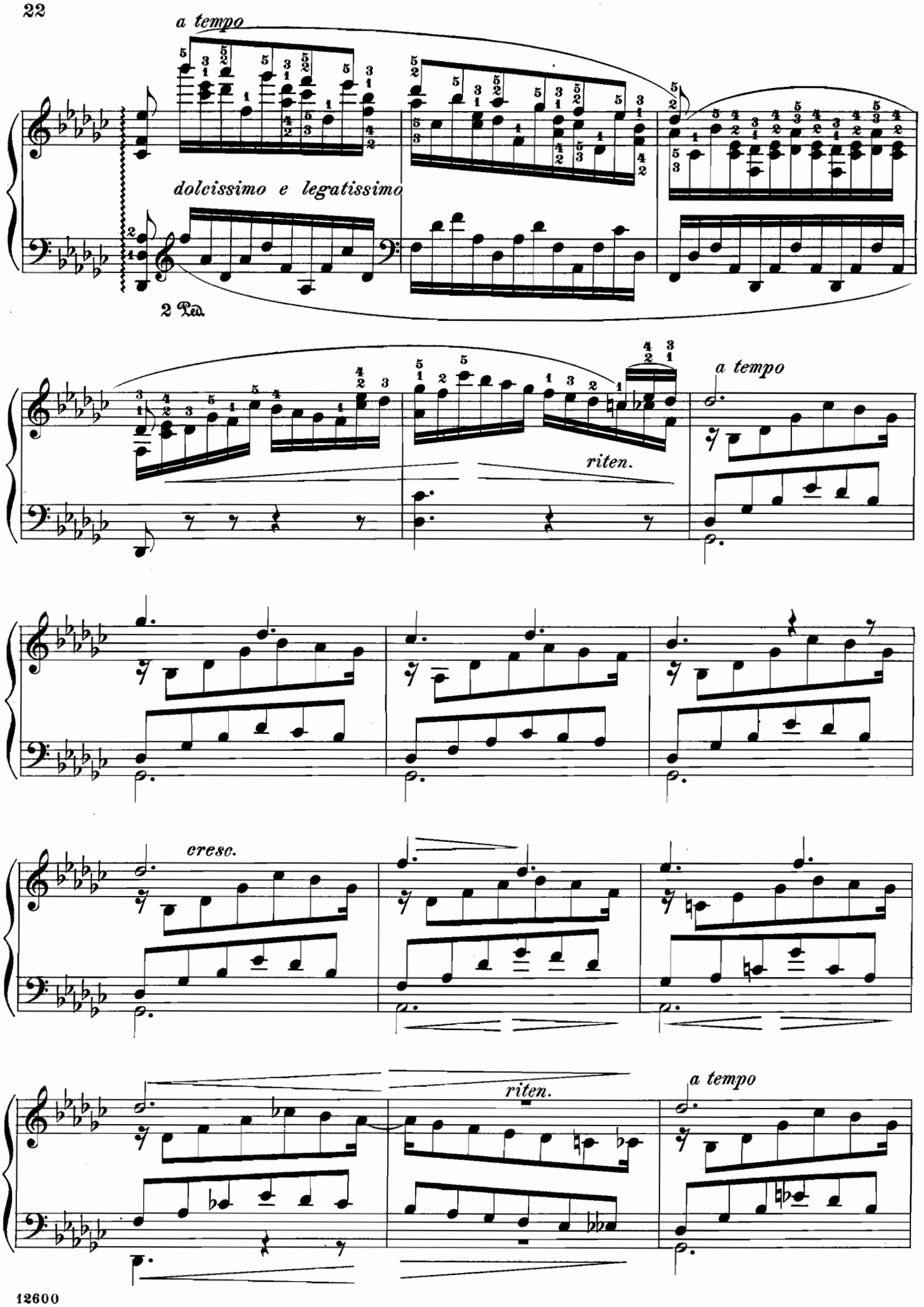
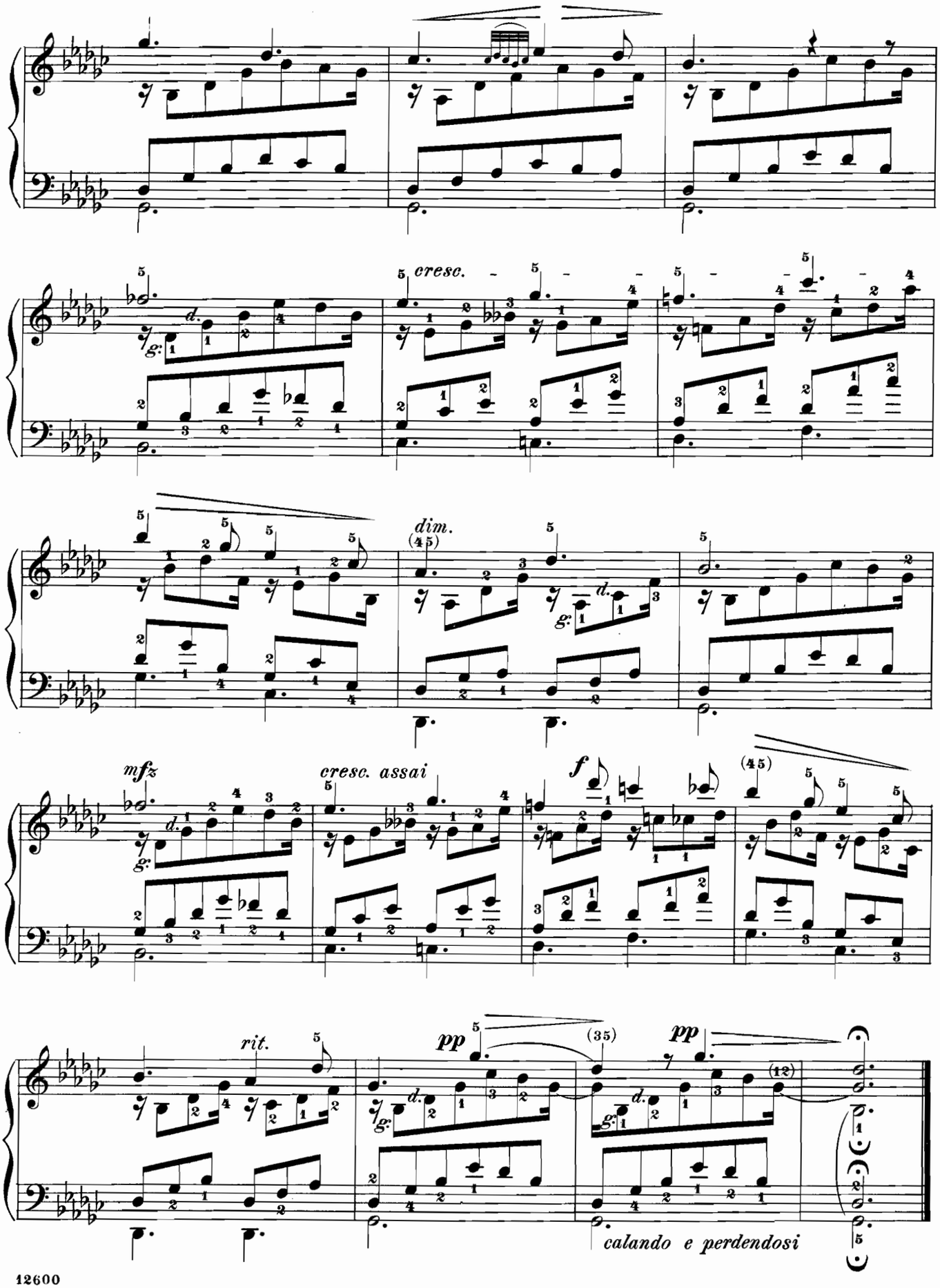

ritard.
a tempo
poco ritard.
poco a poco cresc.
agitato
dim. e riten.

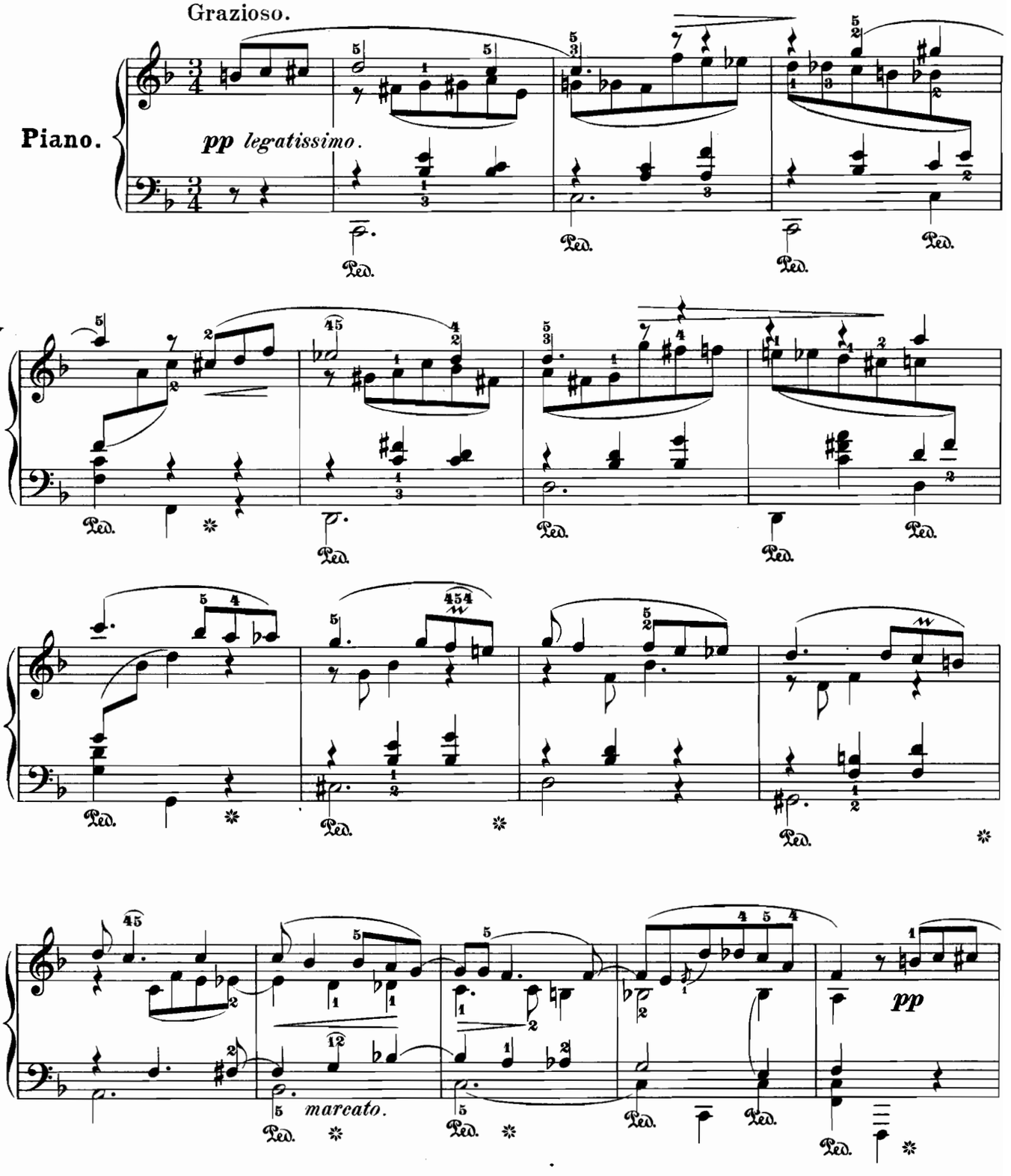

a tempo
dolcissimo e legatissimo
2 Ped.
riten.
a tempo
cresc.
riten.
a tempo


cresc.
dim.
mfz
cresc. assai
f
rit.
pp
pp
calando e perdendosi

Petite Valse.

Edited and fingered by
Louis Oesterle.

A. HENSELT. Op. 28. № 1.



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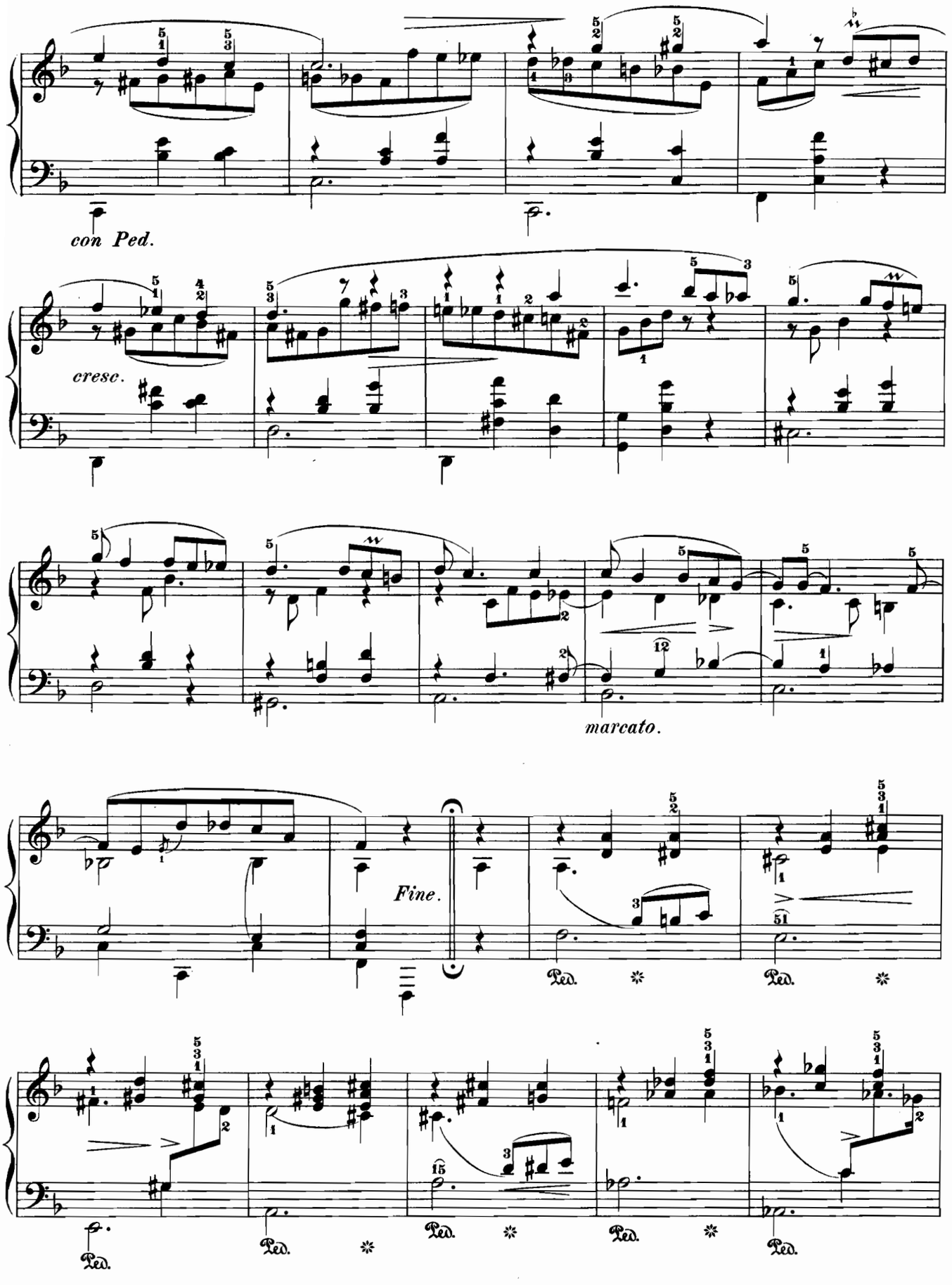
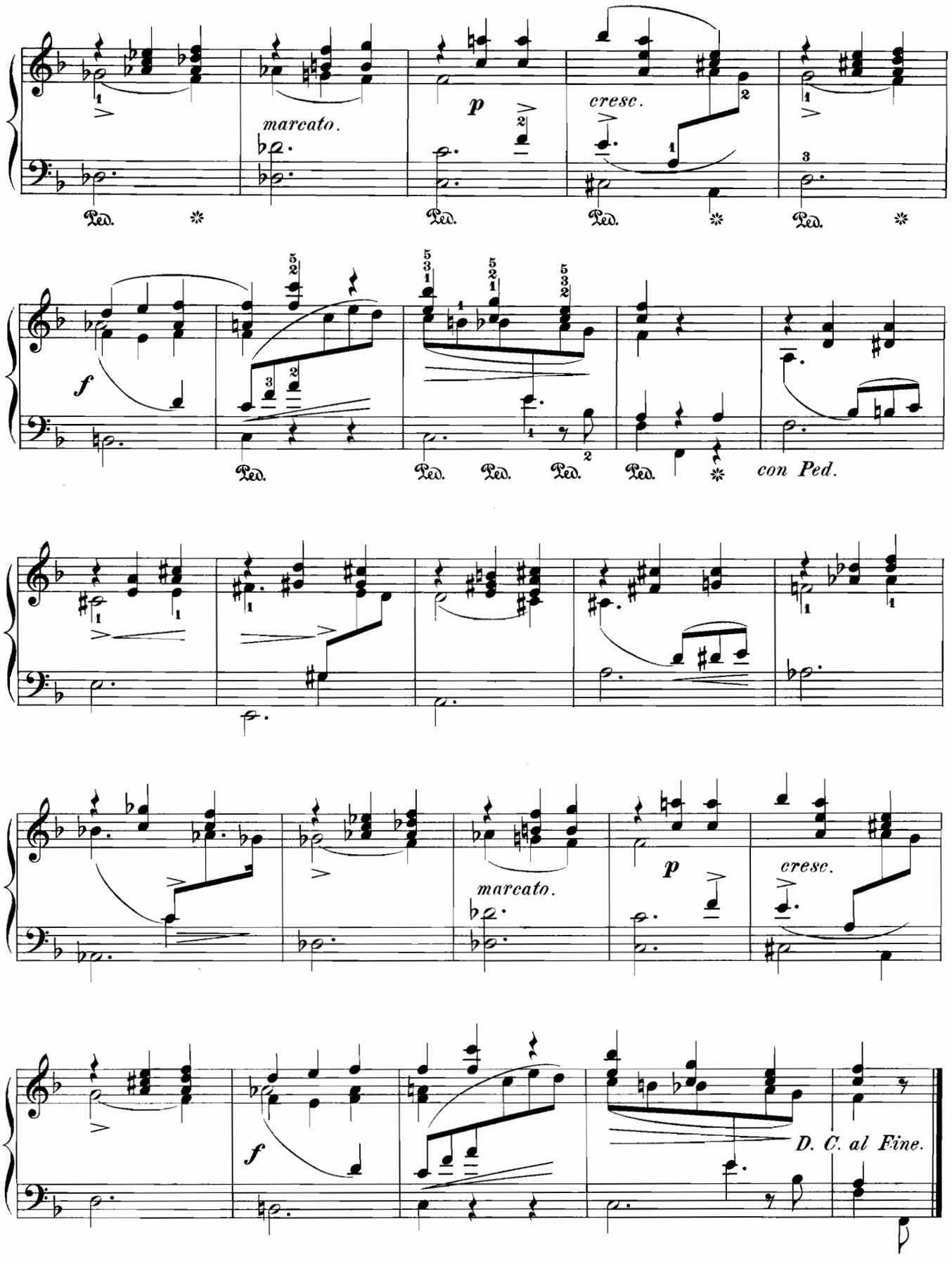
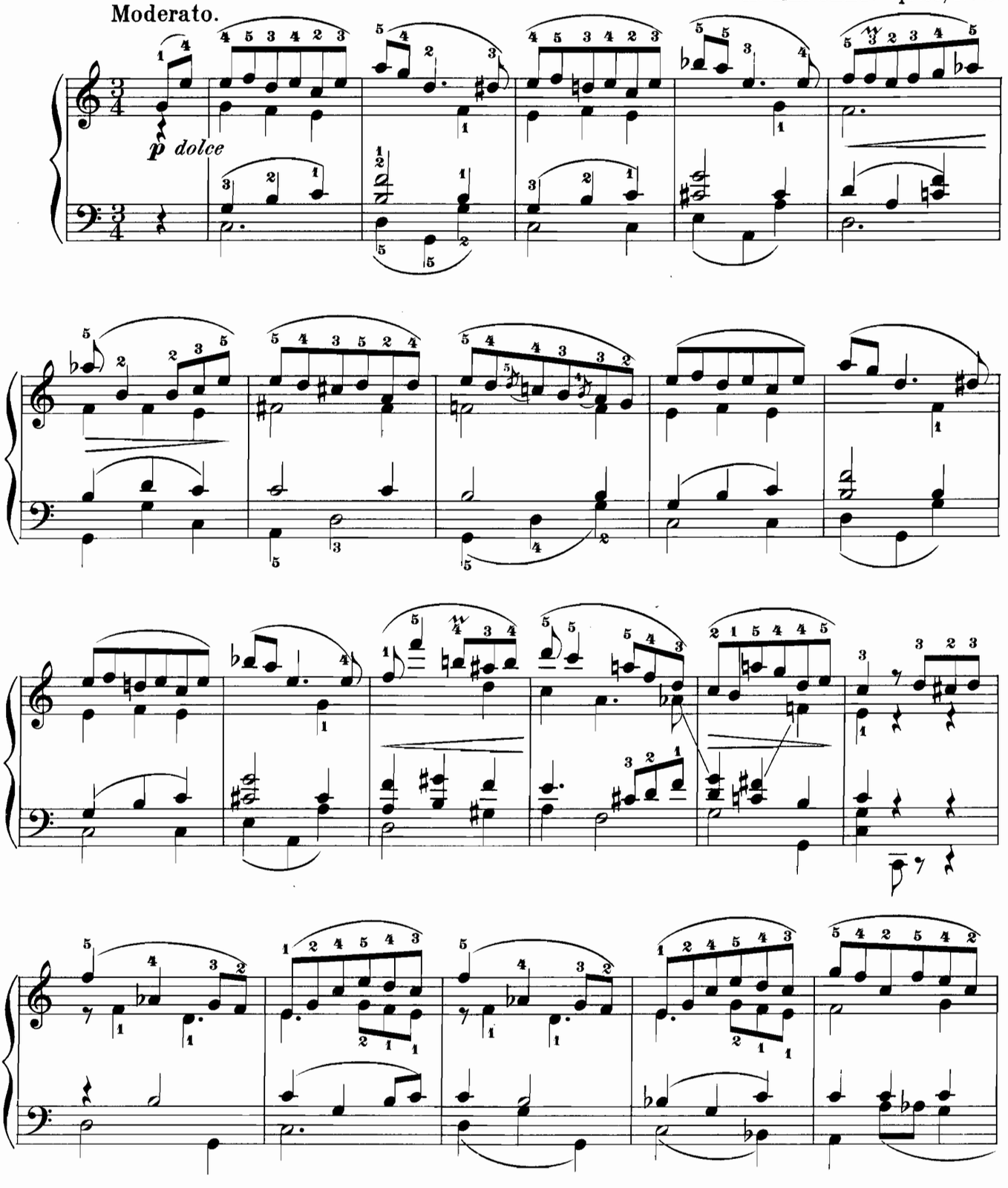
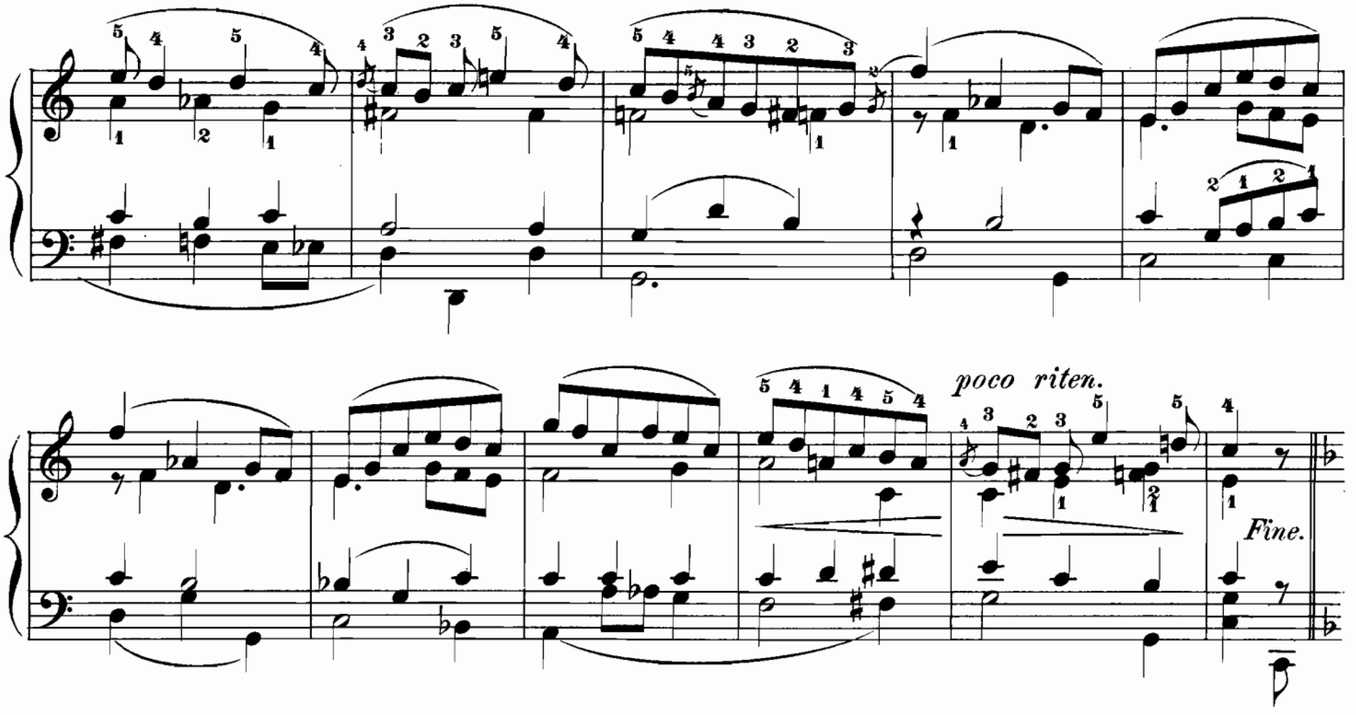

con Ped.
cresc.
marcato.
Fine.
Ped.


marcato.
p
cresc.
Ped.
f
con Ped.
marcato.
p
cresc.
f
D. C. al Fine.

Petite Valse.

A. HENSELT. Op. 28, Nº 2.



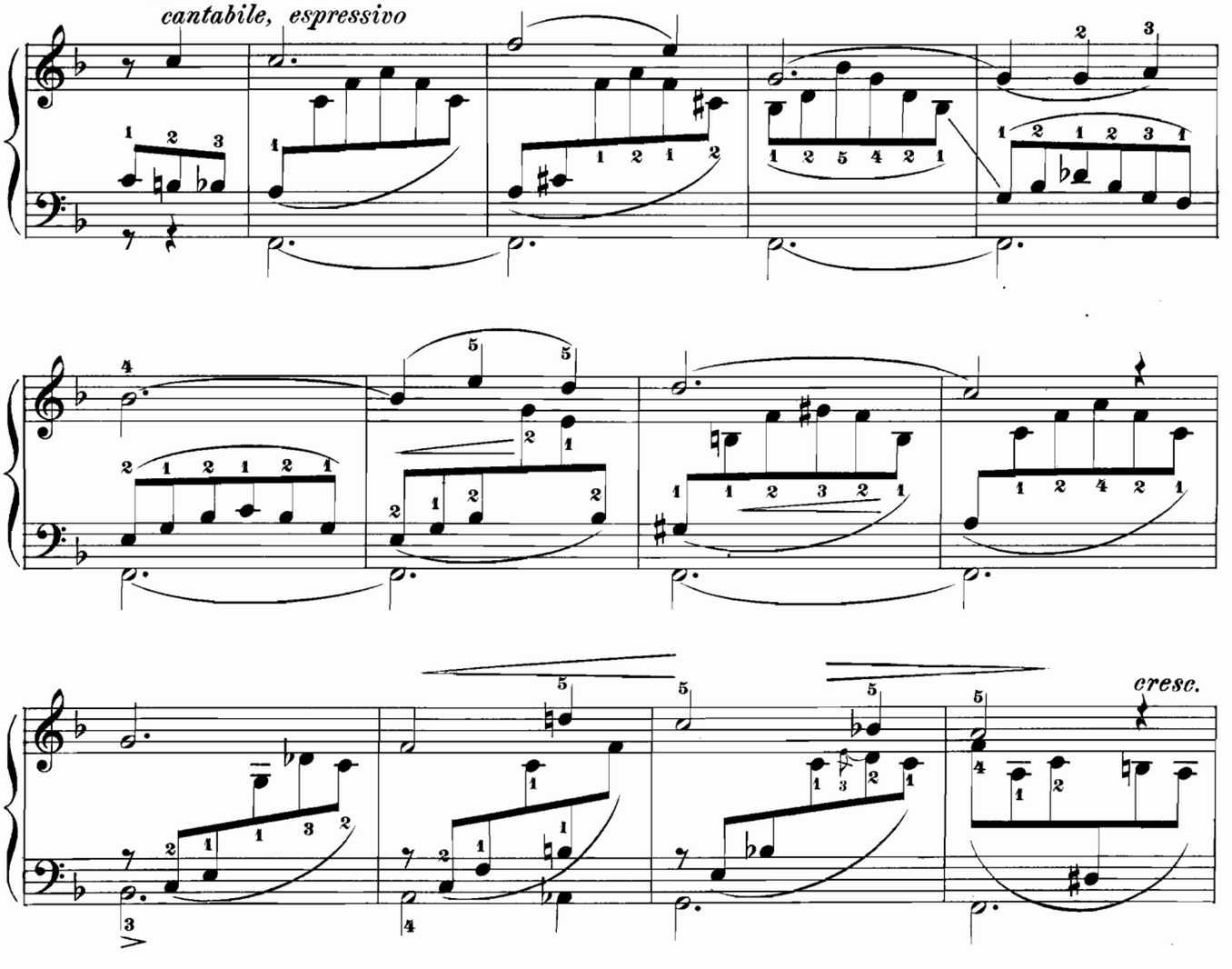


poco riten.

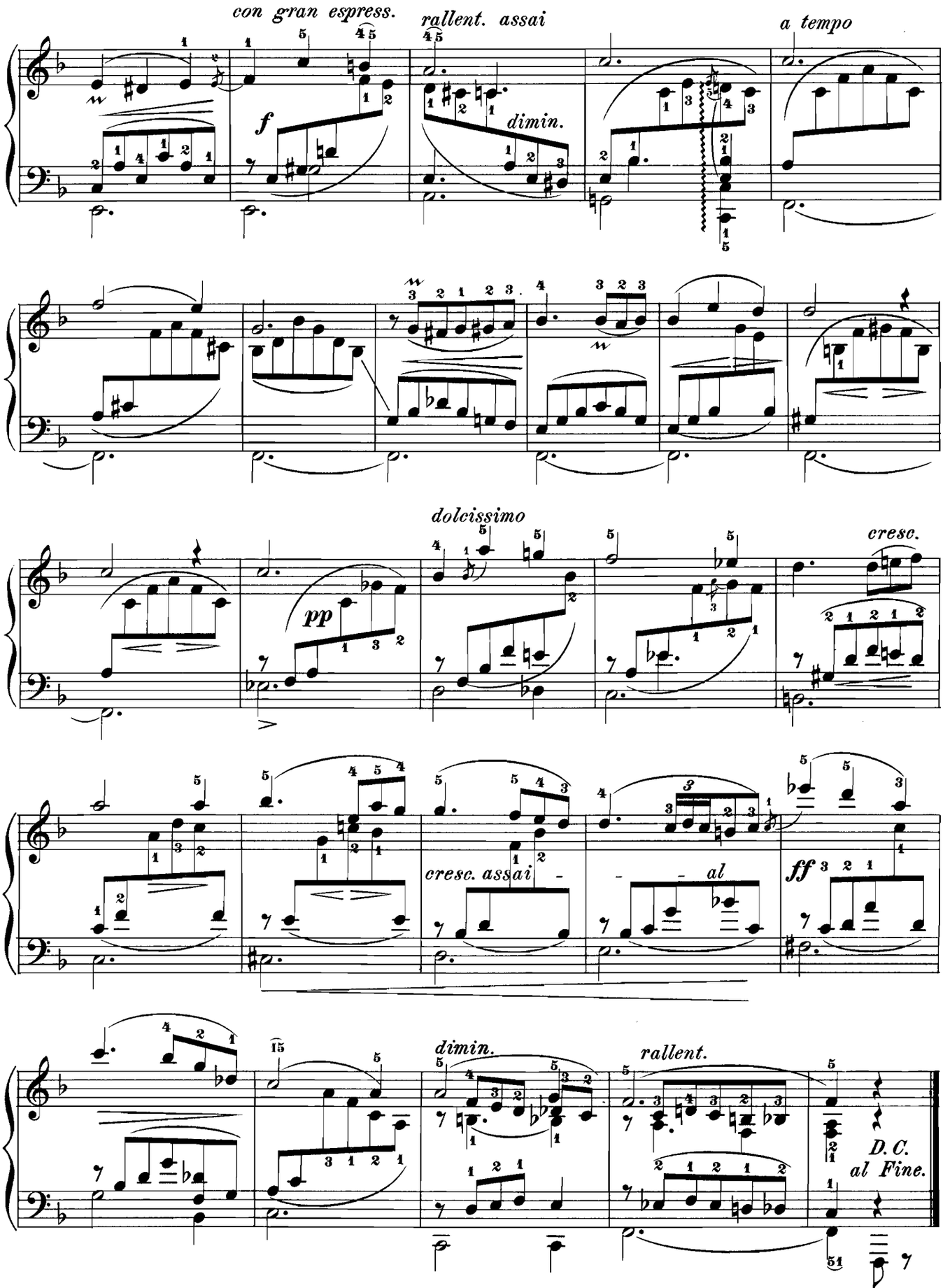
Fine.

Trio.

cantabile, espressivo

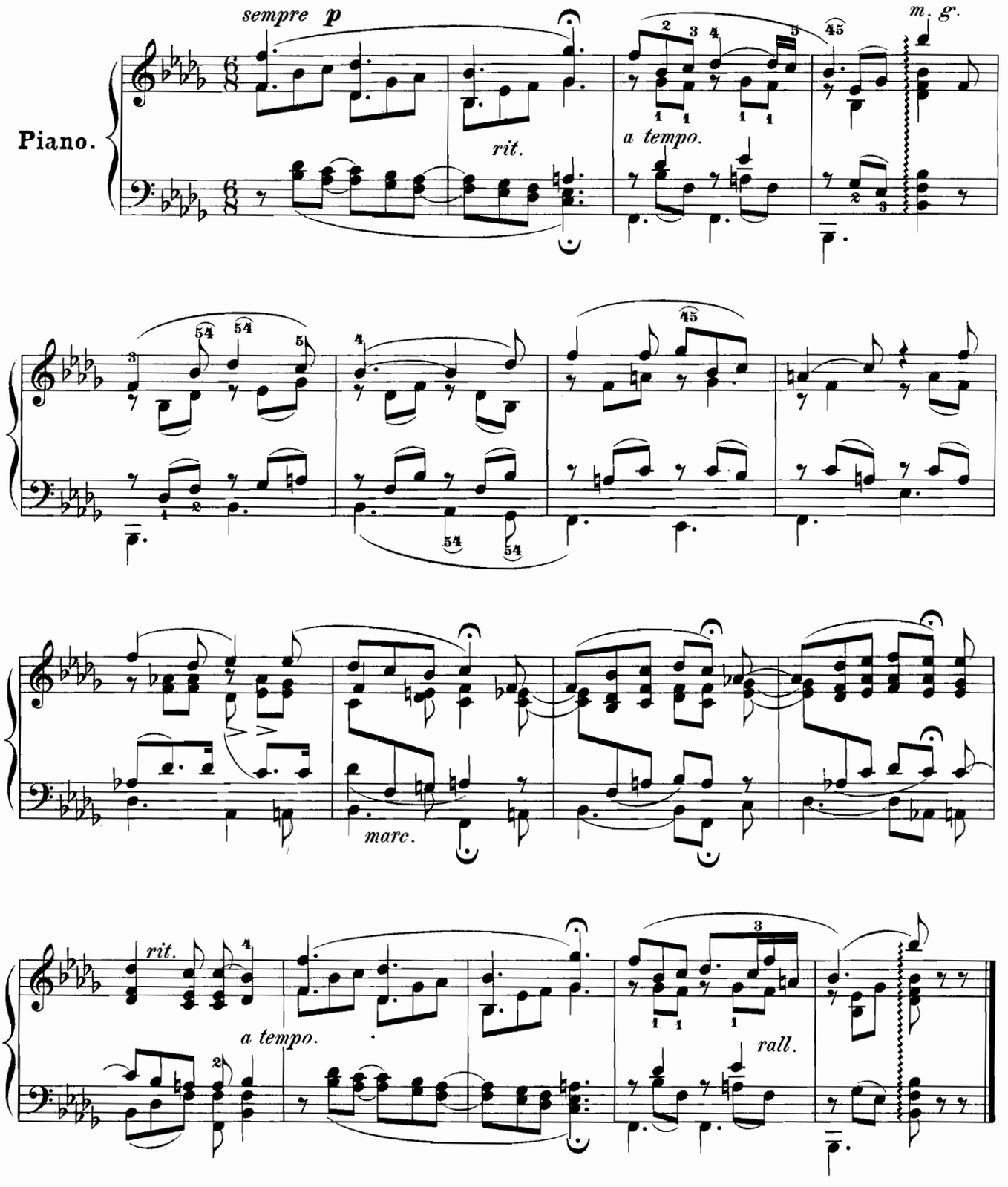


cresc.


con gran espress.
rallent. assai
a tempo
f
dimin.
dolcissimo
pp
cresc.
cresc. assai
al
ff
dimin.
rallent.
D. C.
al Fine.

Petite Romance.

A. HENSELT.

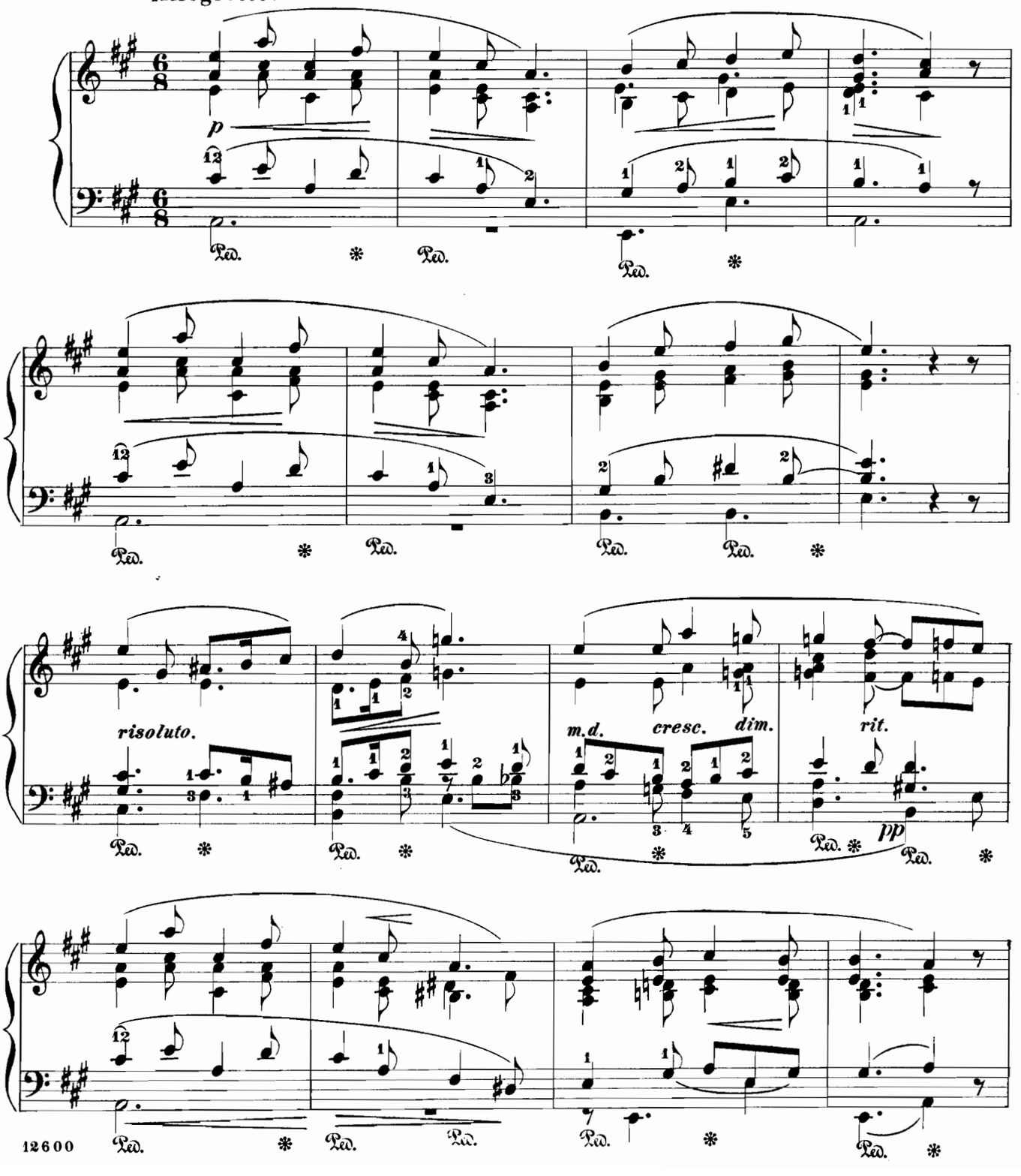


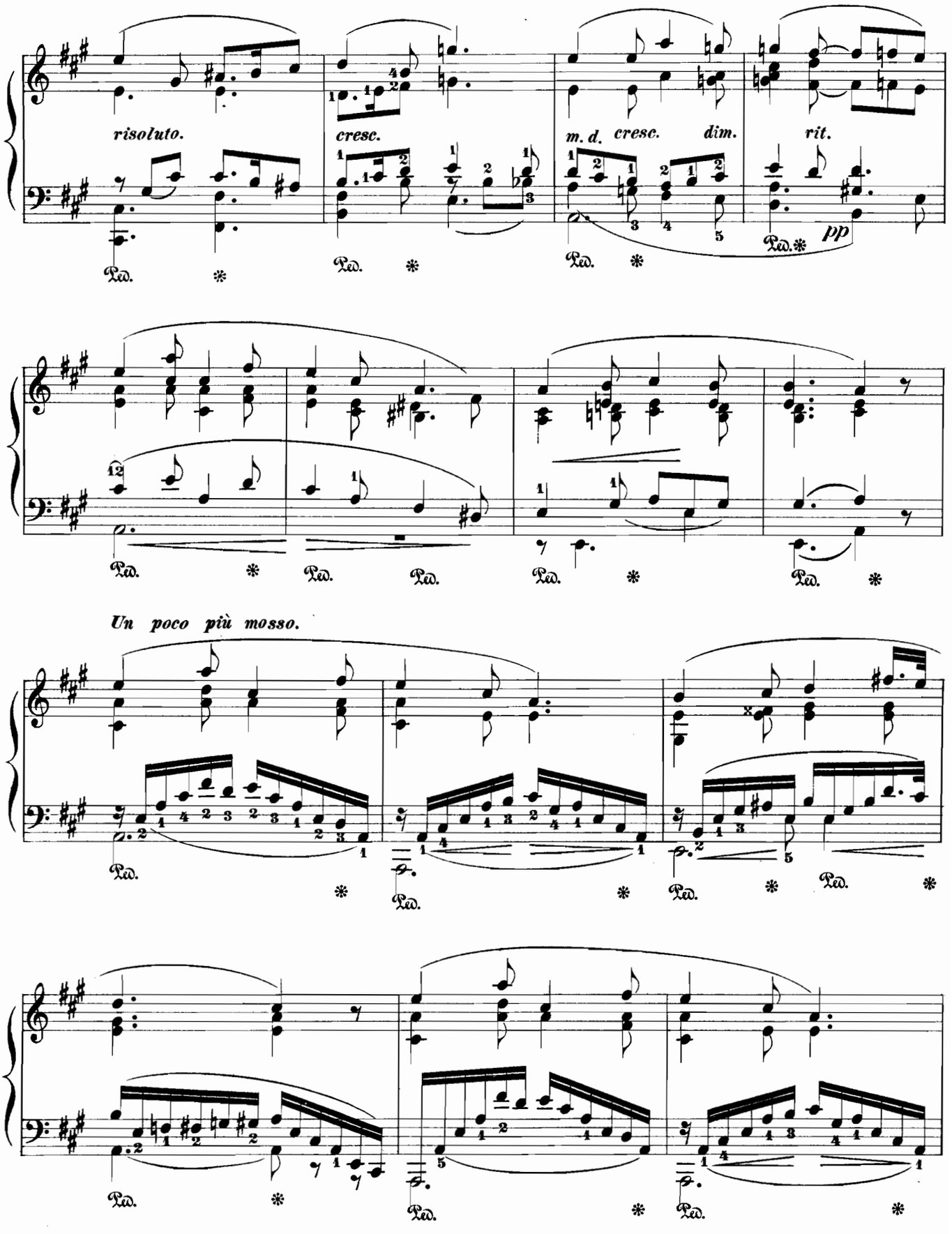
Chanson de Printemps.

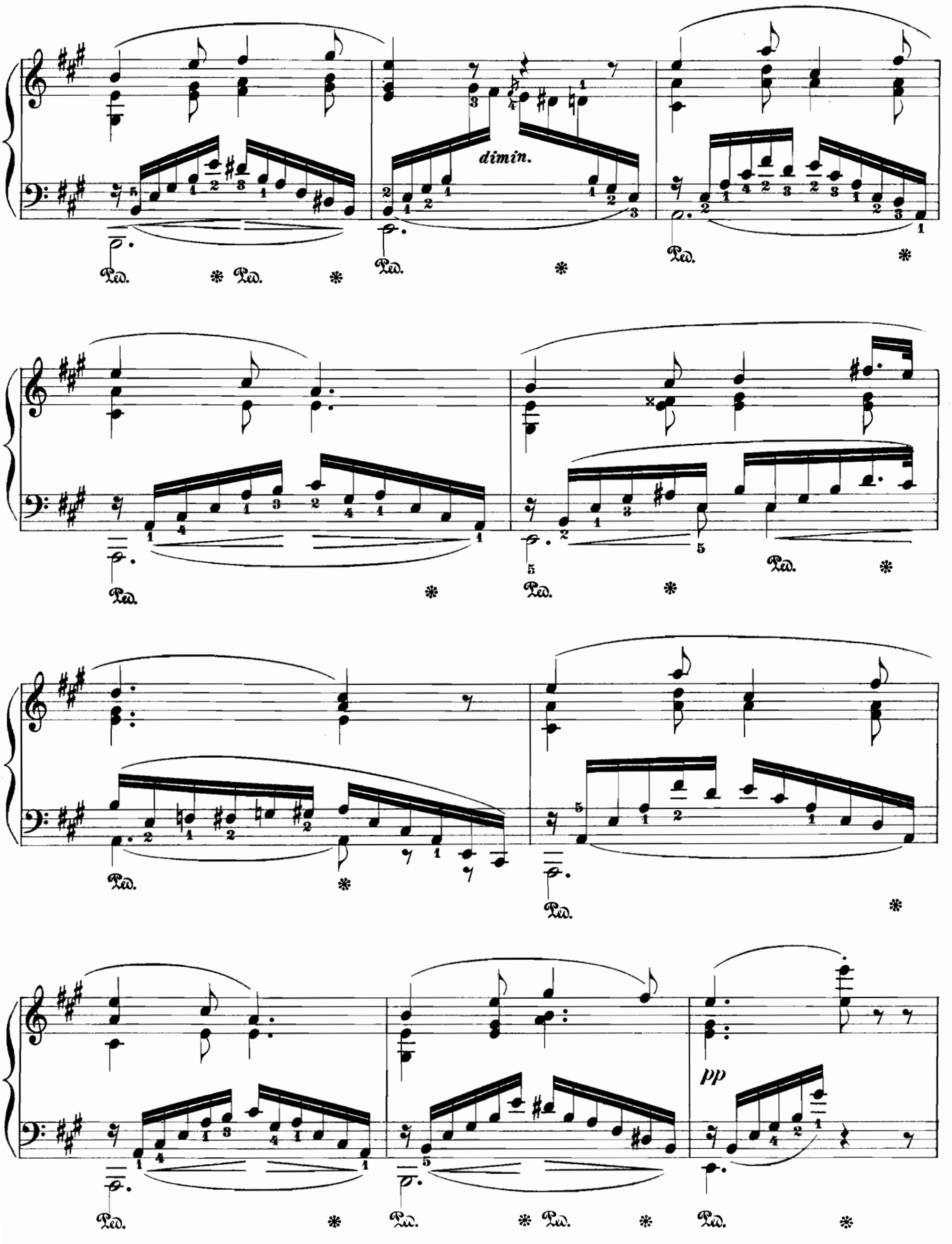
Frühlingslied. Spring Song.

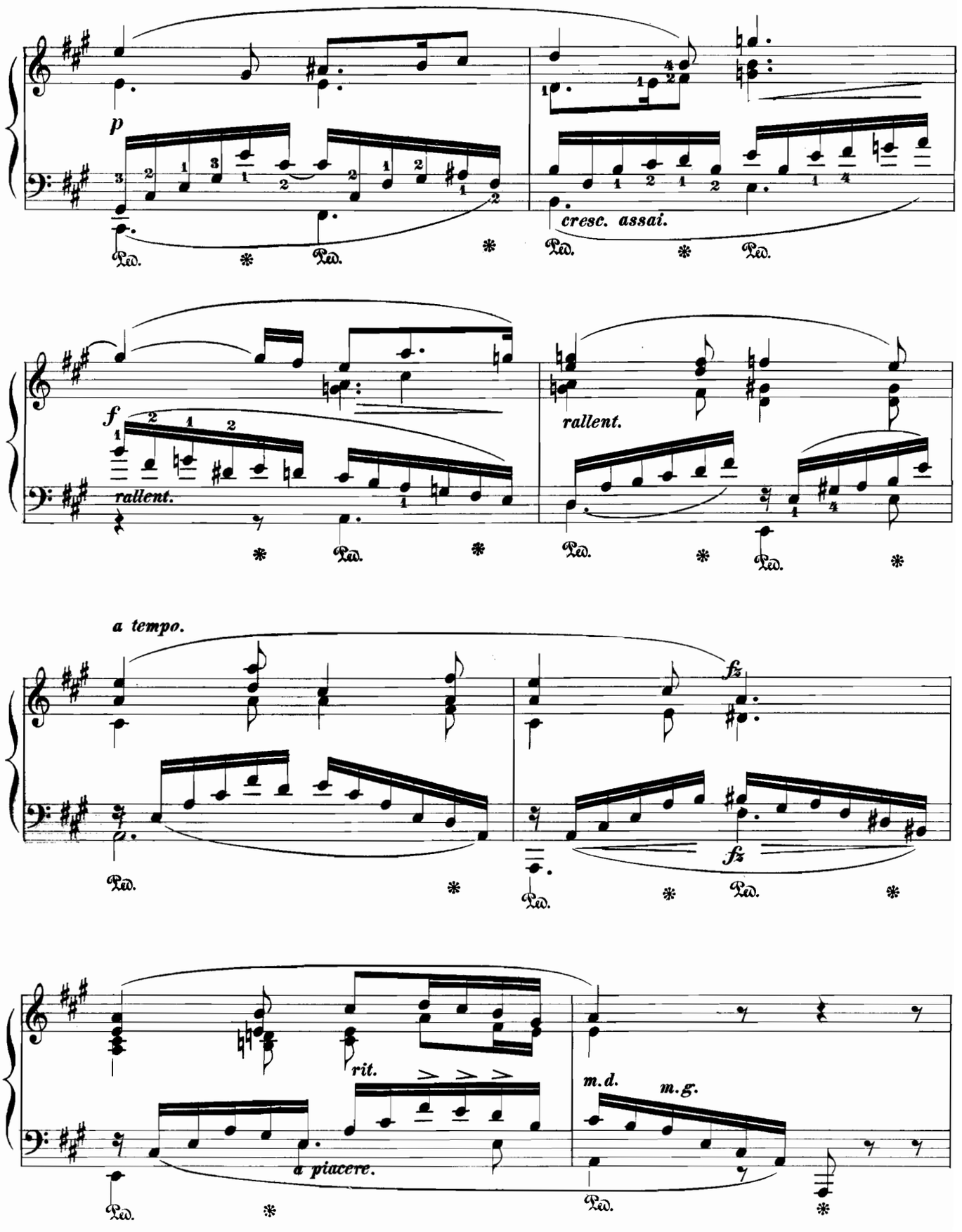
A. Henselt, Op. 15.

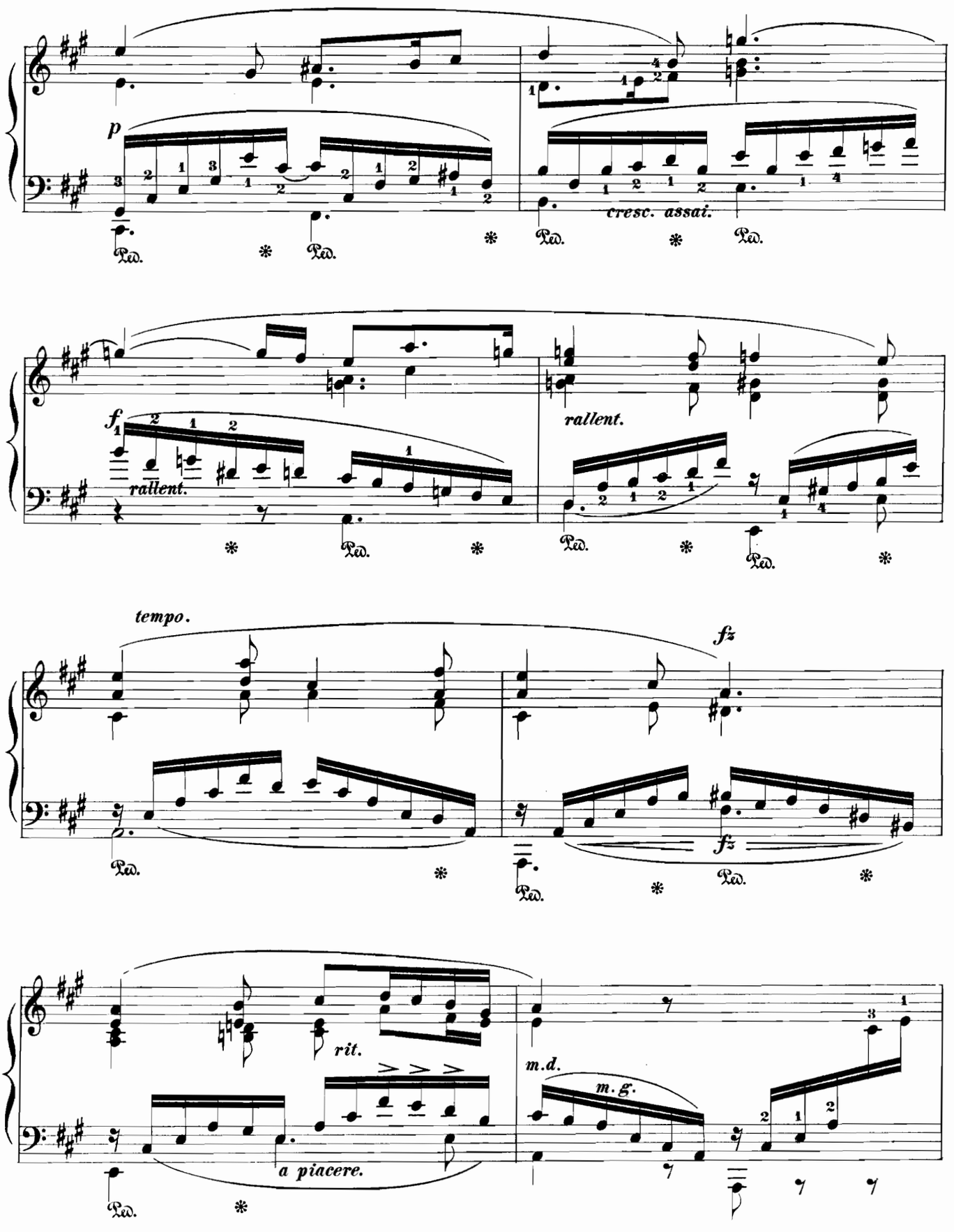
Allegretto.

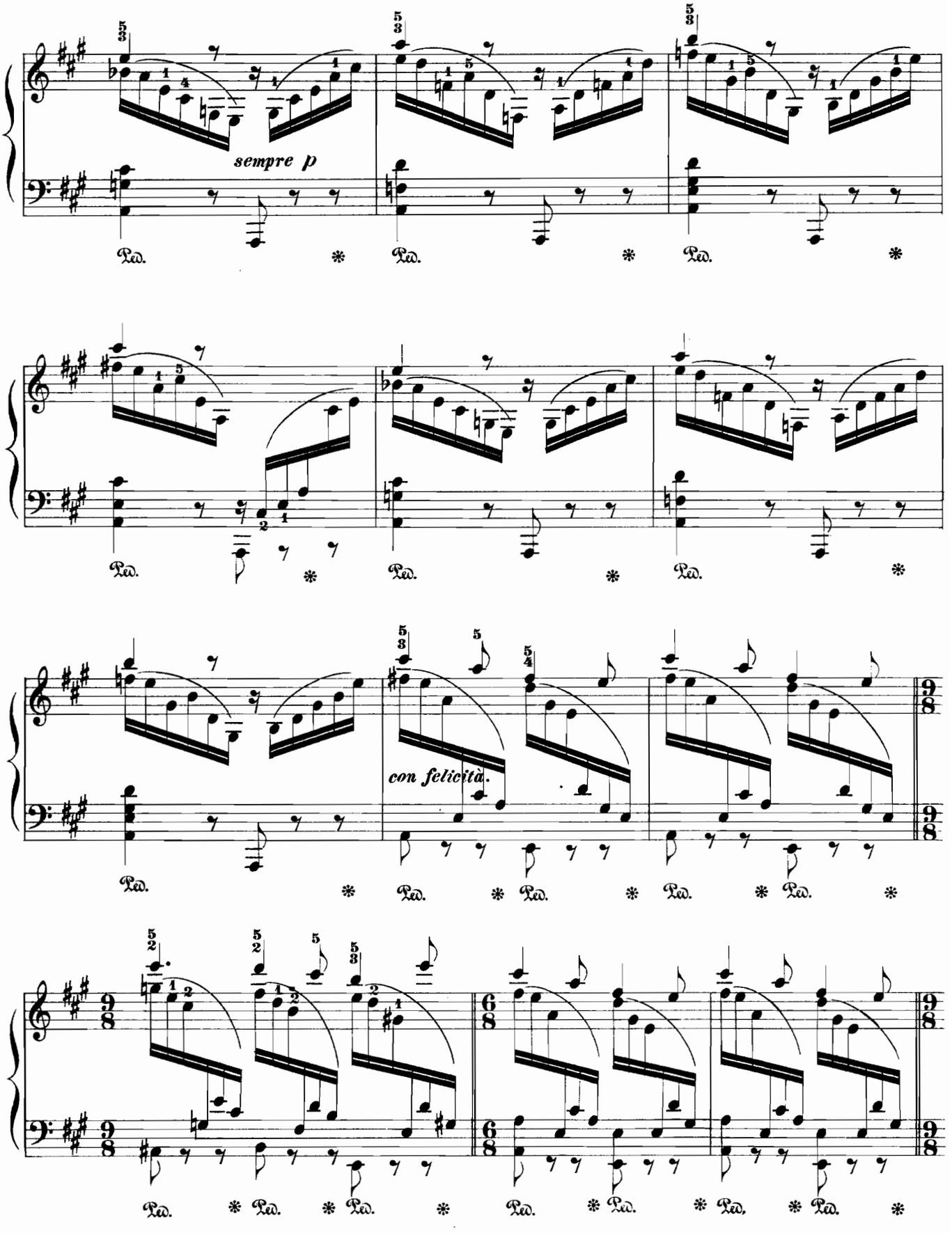



risoluto.
cresc.
m. d.
cresc.
dim.
rit.
pp
Ped.
Un poco più mosso.


dimin.
pp


p
cresc. assai.
f
rallent.
rallent.
a tempo.
fz
fz
rit.
a piacere.
m.d.
m.g.


p
cresc. assai.
rallent.
f
rallent.
tempo.
fz
fz
fz
rit.
a piacere.
m.d.
m.g.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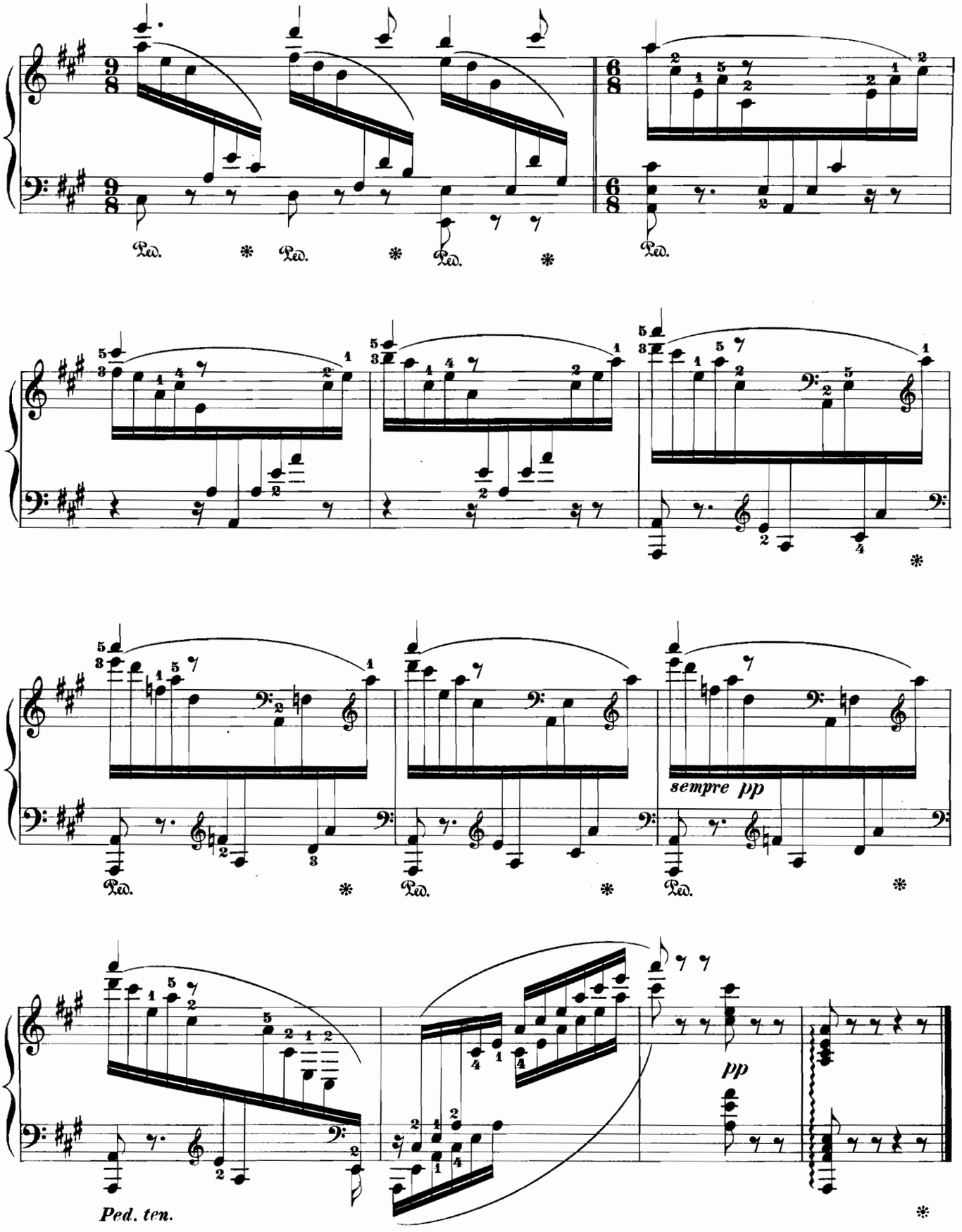
Ped.
sempre pp
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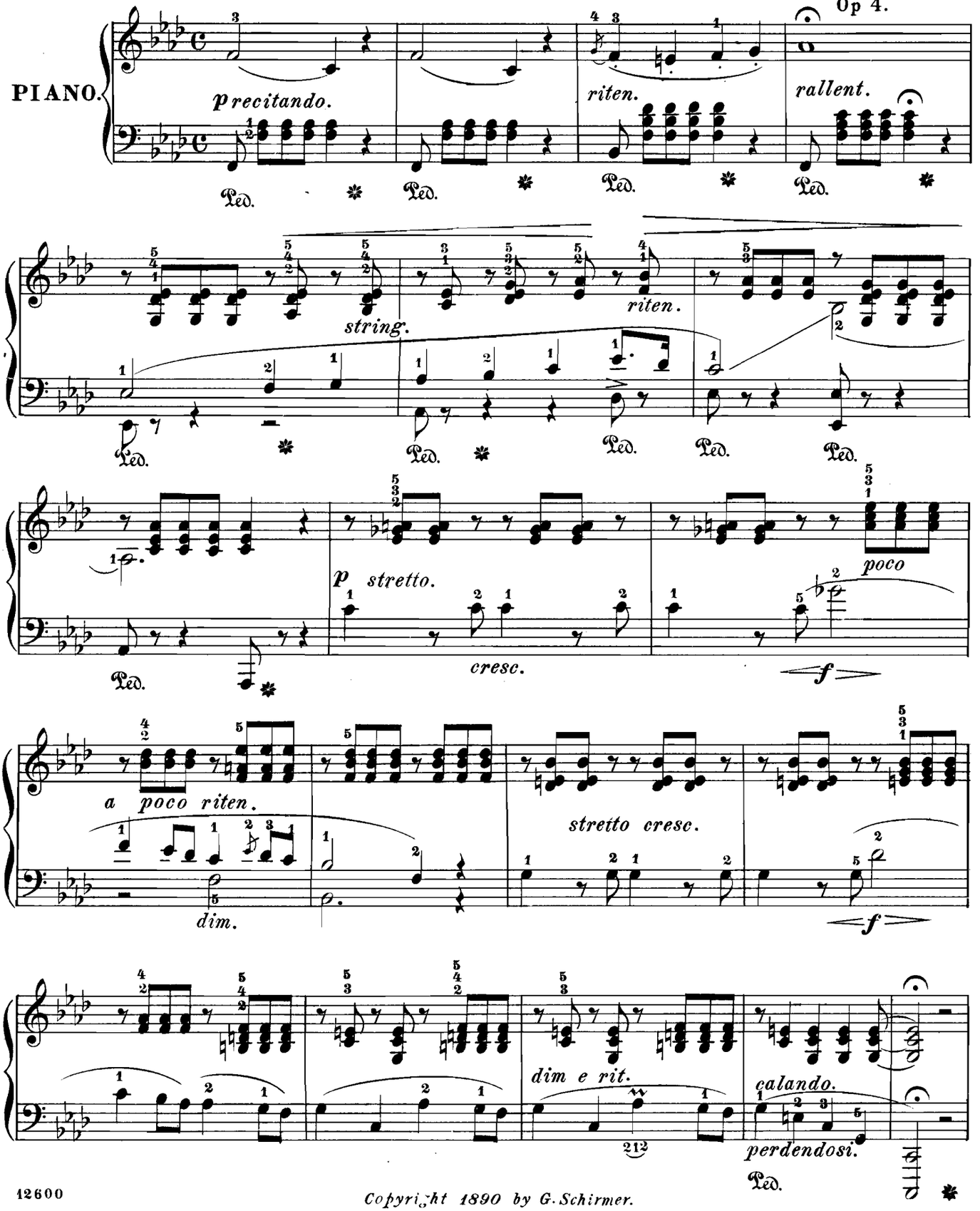
Edited and fingered by
Wm Scharfenberg.

Rhapsodie.

Moderato.

ADOLPHE HENSELT.
Op 4.



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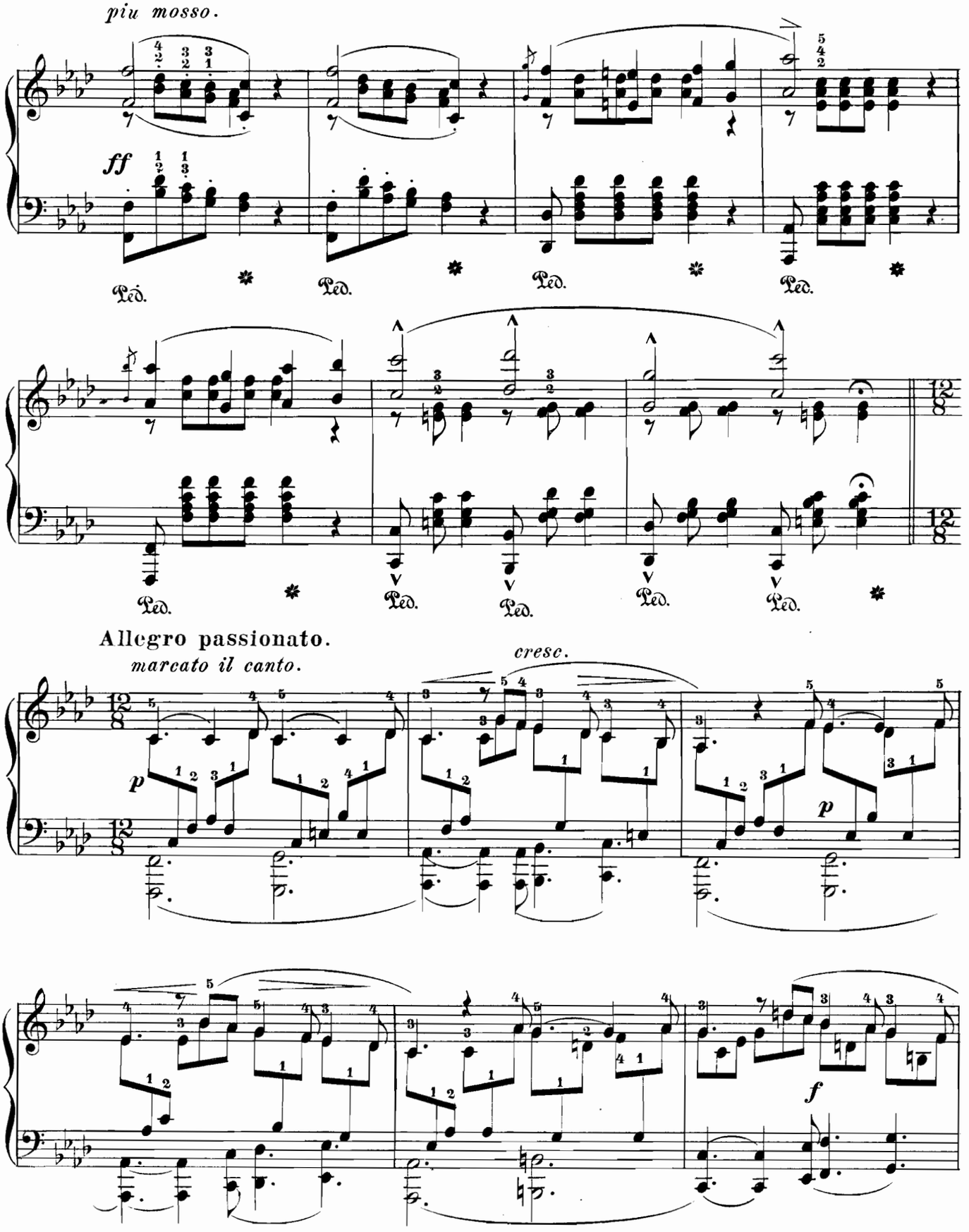
piu mosso.
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Allegro passionato.
marcato il canto.
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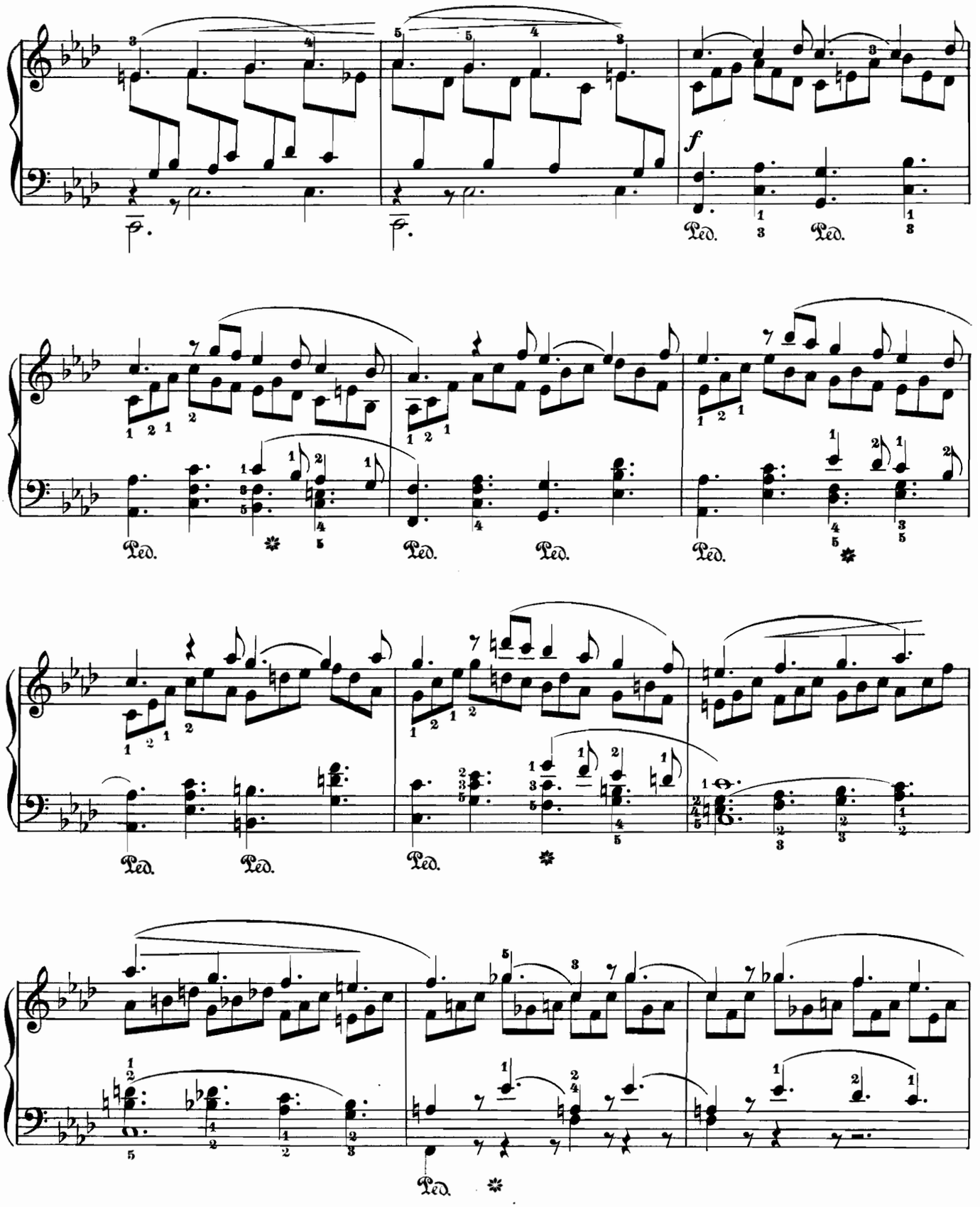
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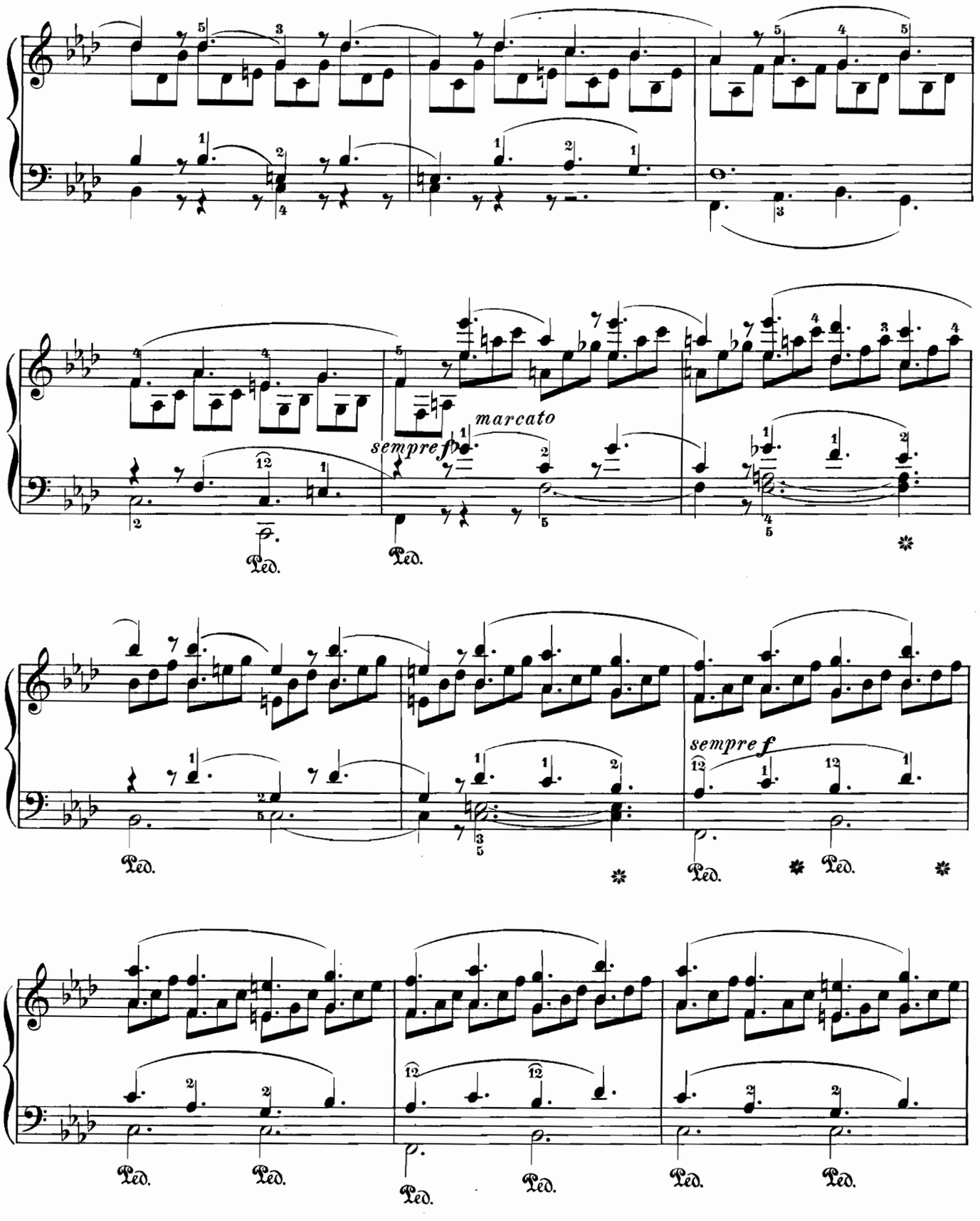
marcato
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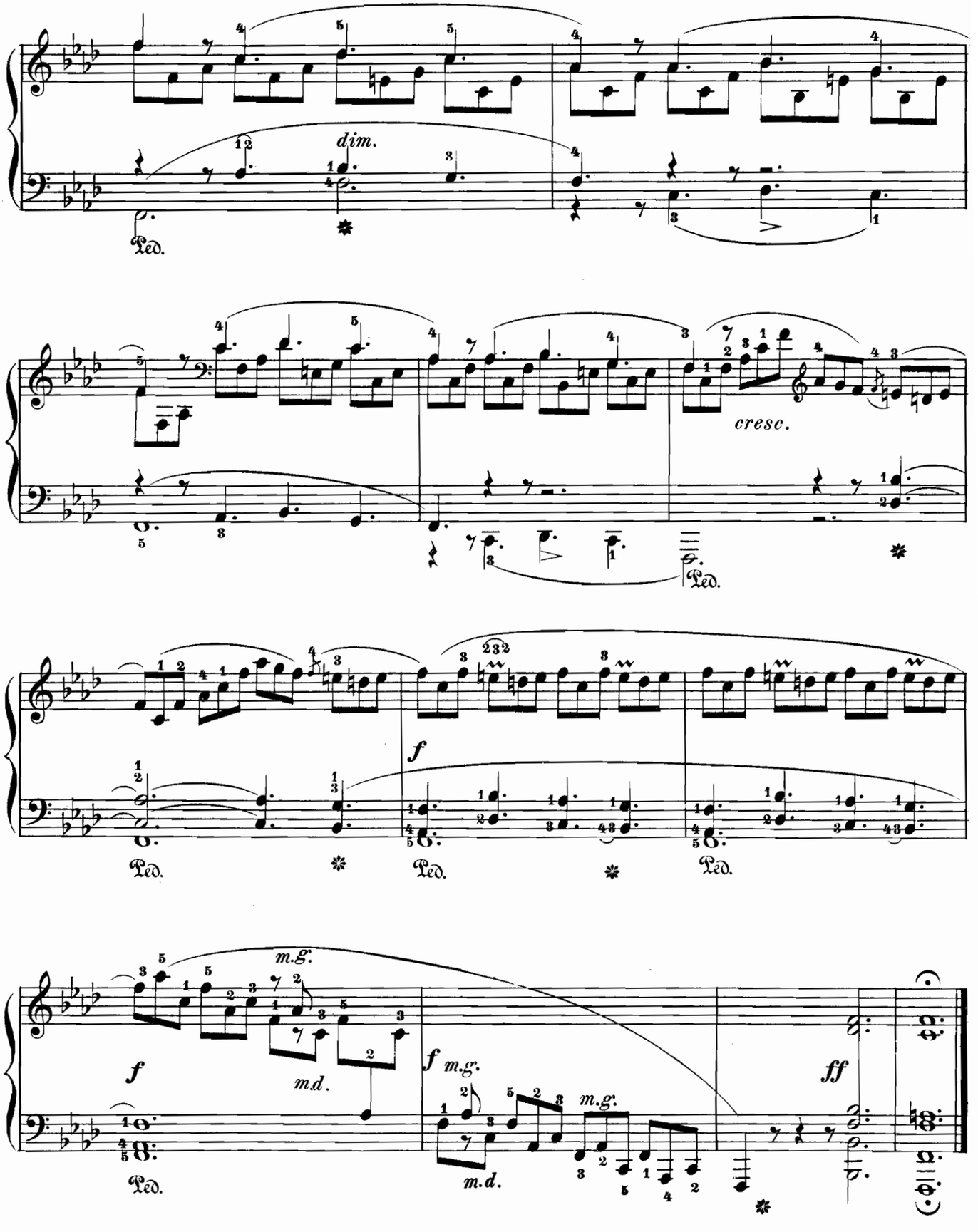
Ped.
sempre f


dim.
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