PIANO SONATA, 1948
by
GEORGE ANTHEIL
MY FOURTH PIANO SONATA

Although "sonatas" are usually classed as chamber music, the modern piano sonata is, I believe, an exception; it is invariably more demanding than the modern violin-piano sonata, or any other combination of piano and stringed or wind instrument. This is difficult to understand, as violin piano sonatas, in particular, are invariably played by the most accomplished players, capable of the utmost virtuosity in solving technical details. Yet, a violin-piano sonata which is too demanding invariably makes the impression of a violin concerto reduced, unhappily, for a chamber concert stage upon which it does not rightly belong.

On the other hand, the modern piano sonata, from Chopin-Liszt onwards, very often approaches the piano concerto medium: its material, perhaps, is a little more weighty than the piano concerto, yet it is essentially demanding, exploring the limits of the modern keyboard, as well as the limits of the composer's invention in the purely musical sense. It is my hope, therefore, that my Fourth Piano Sonata fulfills this difficult requirement.

Aesthetically, the work represents the fusing together of many of the elements of my earlier music together with that of the recent symphonies, particularly the Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. Although I hope that my musical expression has many sides (for I believe that the composer of today must attempt, at least, to round out his musical expression, and not be a composer of one or two moods; or of a system, or of some single new style — which then, all too often, quickly passes out of style) still, undoubtedly, one of the elements of my expression which is most often commented upon is that it has the iron ring of modern civilization: the sound of this kind of music—which I've expressed as early as my Ballet Mecanique in 1923—may be heard again in the first, and particularly the last movements of this sonata. The furious, sometimes gleeful, sometimes horrific march of modern civilization may, I think, be heard in these movements. It has also been pointed out by several eminent critics, that my music has a strong satirical and ironic sense: in the first movement of this sonata one may hear, if one chooses, a certain gleeful burlesquing of a Chopinesque passage, or a caricature of something which has amused me in the past: these passages are fleeting, but, I hope, colorful.

The middle movement is conceived as a slow movement to contrast with the two outer movements which are rather aggressive. But it is more than that; it is also the expression of a neo-romanticism which, in this age of steel, I feel to be more and more a part of the dreams and ideals of the world which threatens to become submerged in grim reality. I wanted to endow this movement with a sense of personal tragedy—and romance too. It works out a new sort of lyricism which I hope will be expressive of this sort of humanity, and even tenderness.

Formally, the first movement is strictly sonata-allegro, with a well-defined first theme, second theme, development section, and rather foreshortened recapitulation. Commencing with several steely introductory chords (which signal the whole mood of the sonata to come) it plunges immediately into a gleeful first theme, not unrelated to—but also not derived from—the whole world of Chopin-Liszt, to which our entire modern piano literature must make some bow, at one time or another. The mood of the first theme is satirical. The second theme, on the other hand, is lyrical and expressive of the modern age, its poetry, its longing. The development is rather extended, and goes the gamut of "feroce" expression. The recapitulation, arriving at the end of a long dramatic retransition, is short: I like my recapitulations to be sum-ups, rather than extended restatements.

The second movement is not strictly any form, although, in its long retransition to the first theme (at the end of the movement) it seems to have been intended as a quasi-sonata-allegro movement. It is, more accurately, a sort of trio song-form, but with development in its central section. Like the sonata-allegro form, its "exposition", or "A" section has two themes, the second theme having definitely the character of such. Yet there is no real development section, or transition to it: development commences almost from the beginning of the movement. My main objective, herein, was to present a series of long well-rounded out lyrical lines which pressed on and on to the "recapitulation".

The third movement is essentially a toccata; a rhythm is estabished and retained until the inevitable end.

The movements are: Allegro giocoso, Andante, Vivo.

The 4th Piano Sonata was specifically written for Frederick Marvin, who gave its first performance at Carnegie Hall in 1948, and it is dedicated to my lifelong friend, Virgil Thomson.

GEORGE ANTHEIL

(Recorded by Frederick Marvin on ALCO LP #1107)

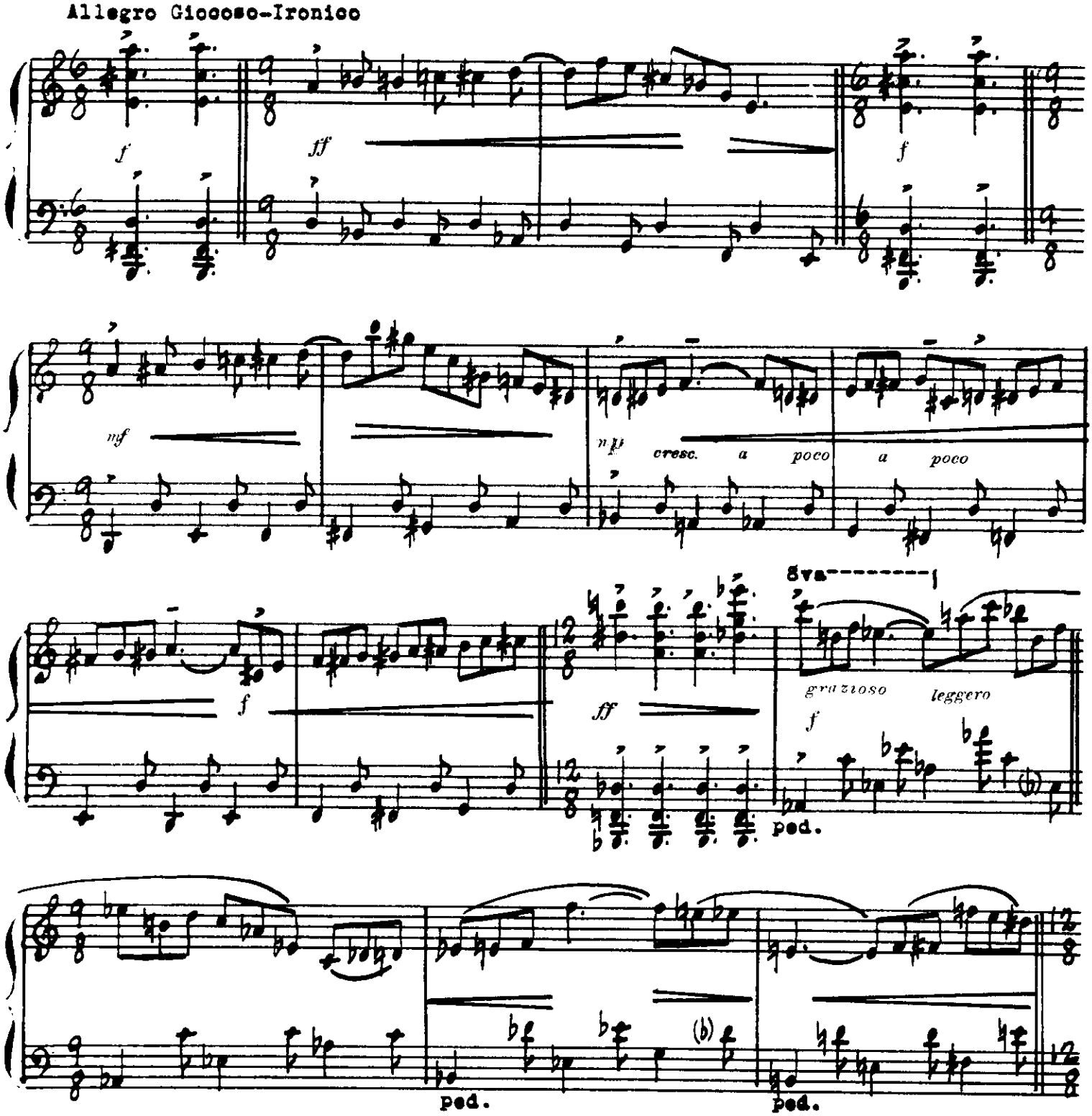
to Virgil Thomson

SONATA No. 4

1

George Antheil

Allegro Giocoso-Ironico



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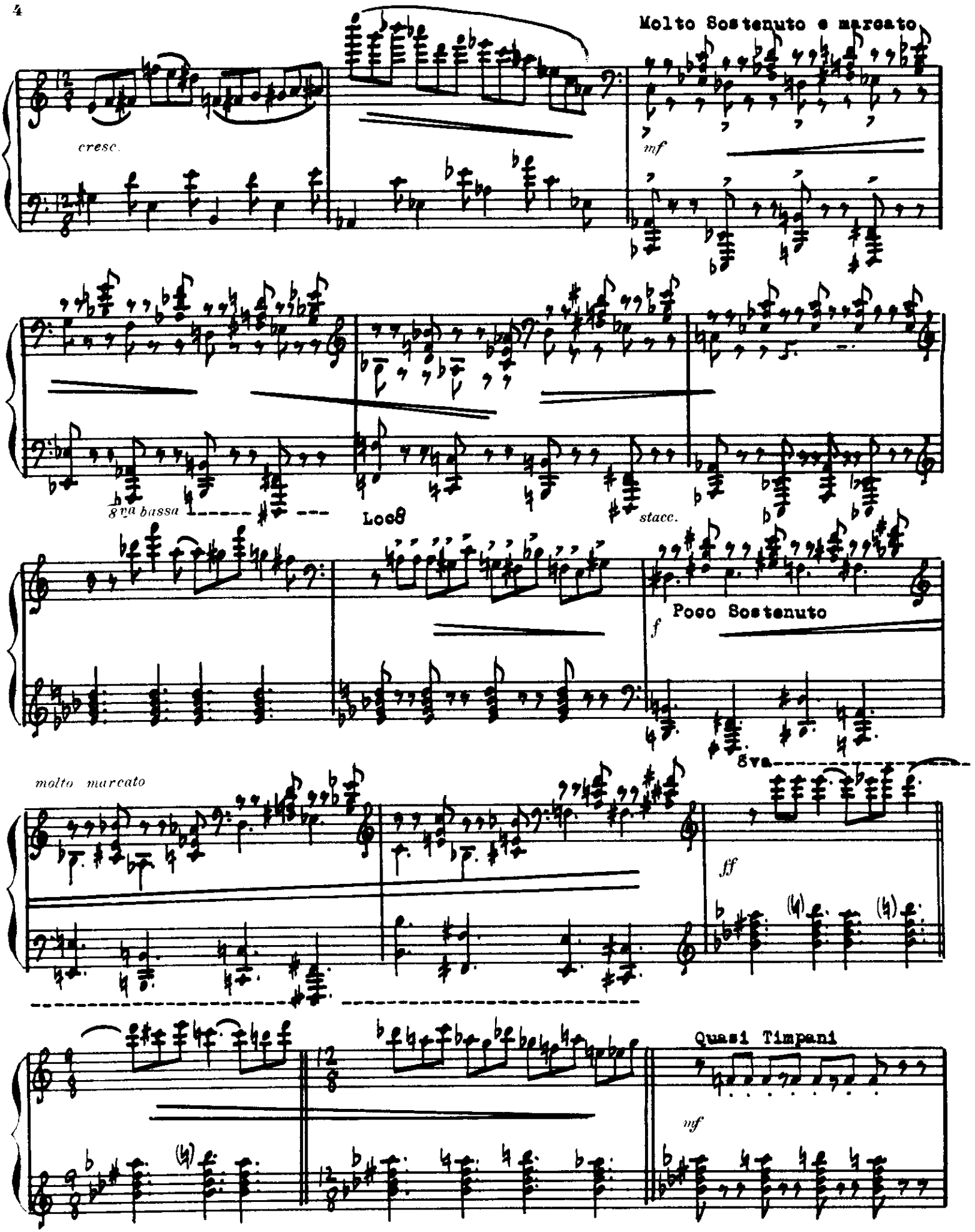
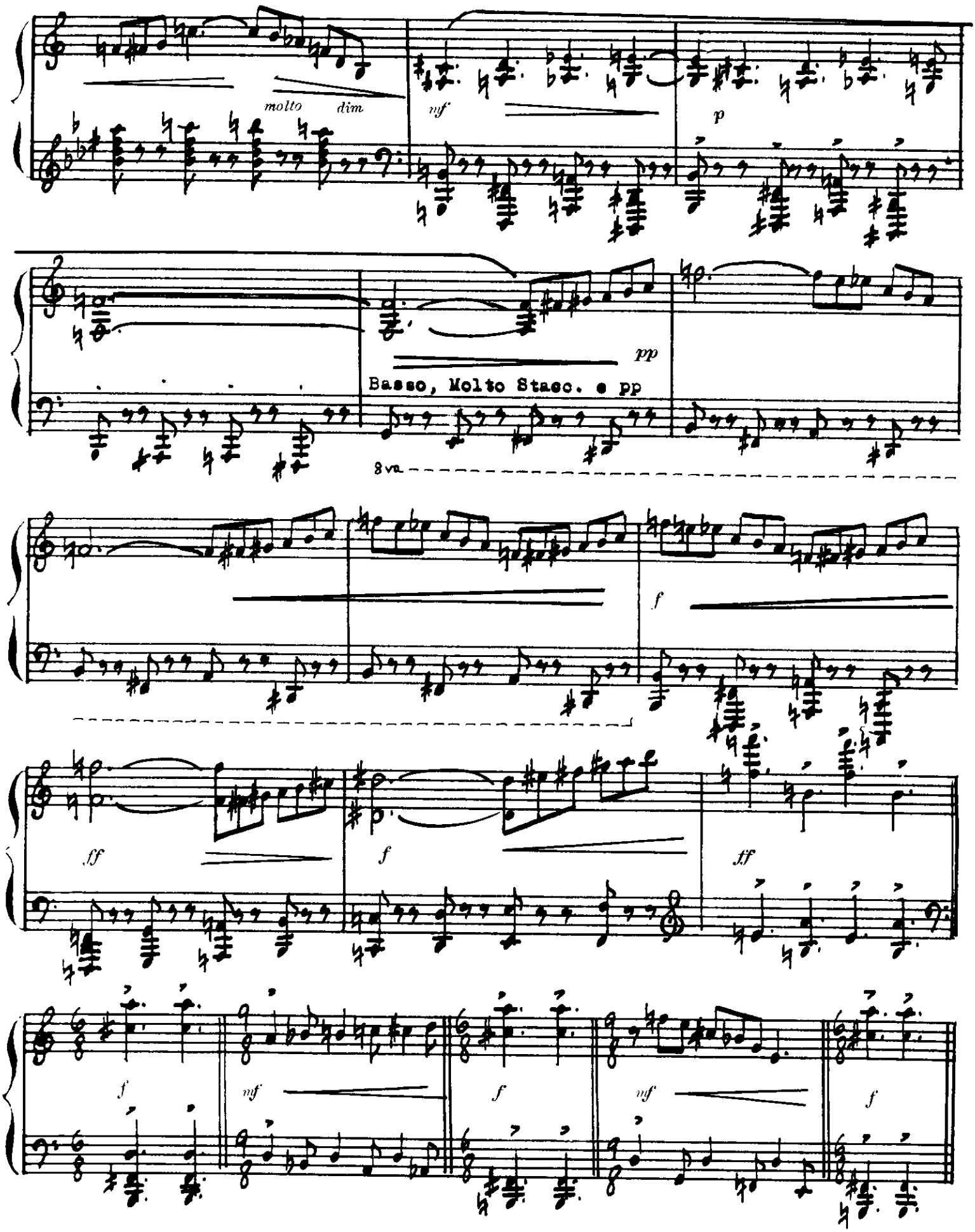
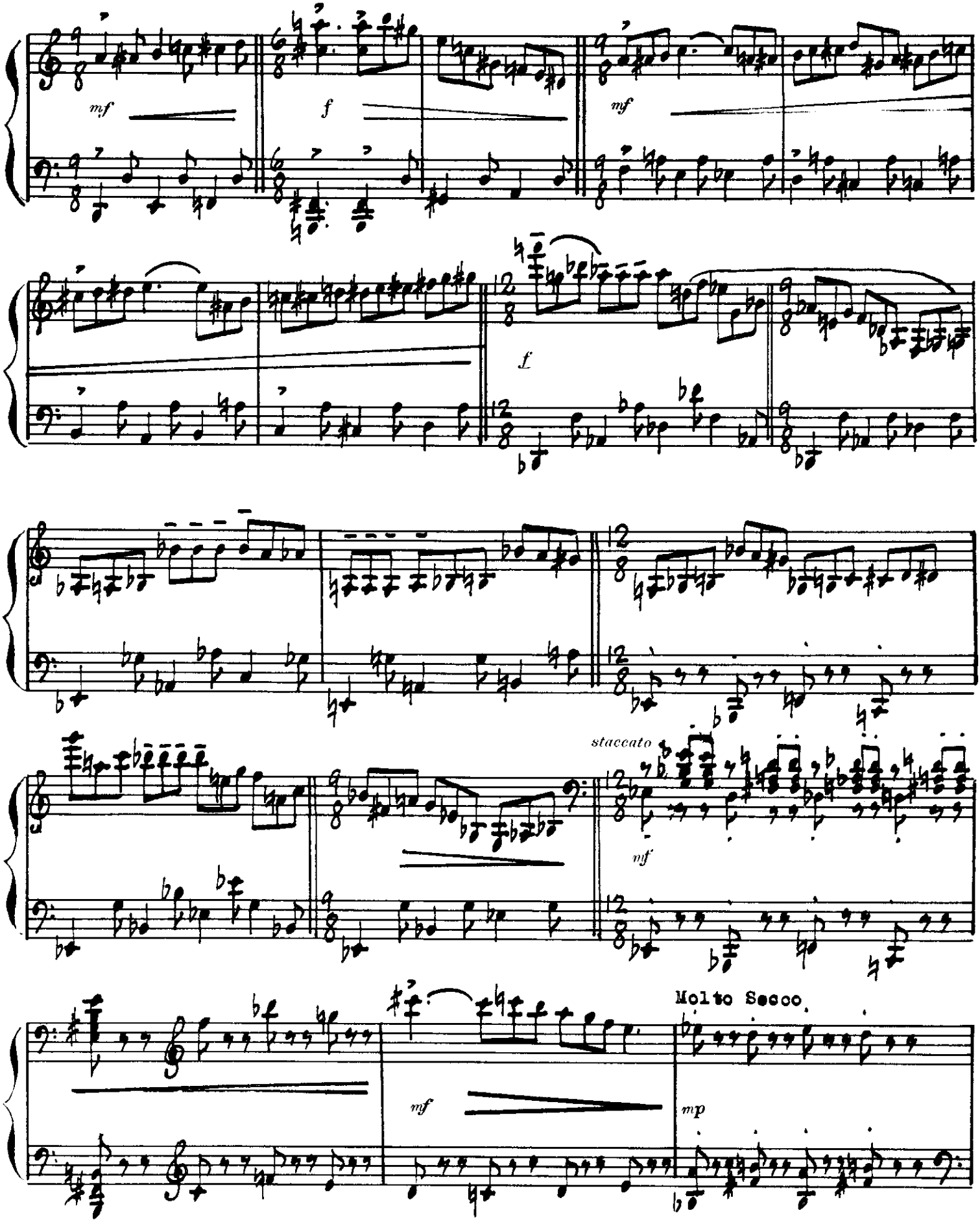
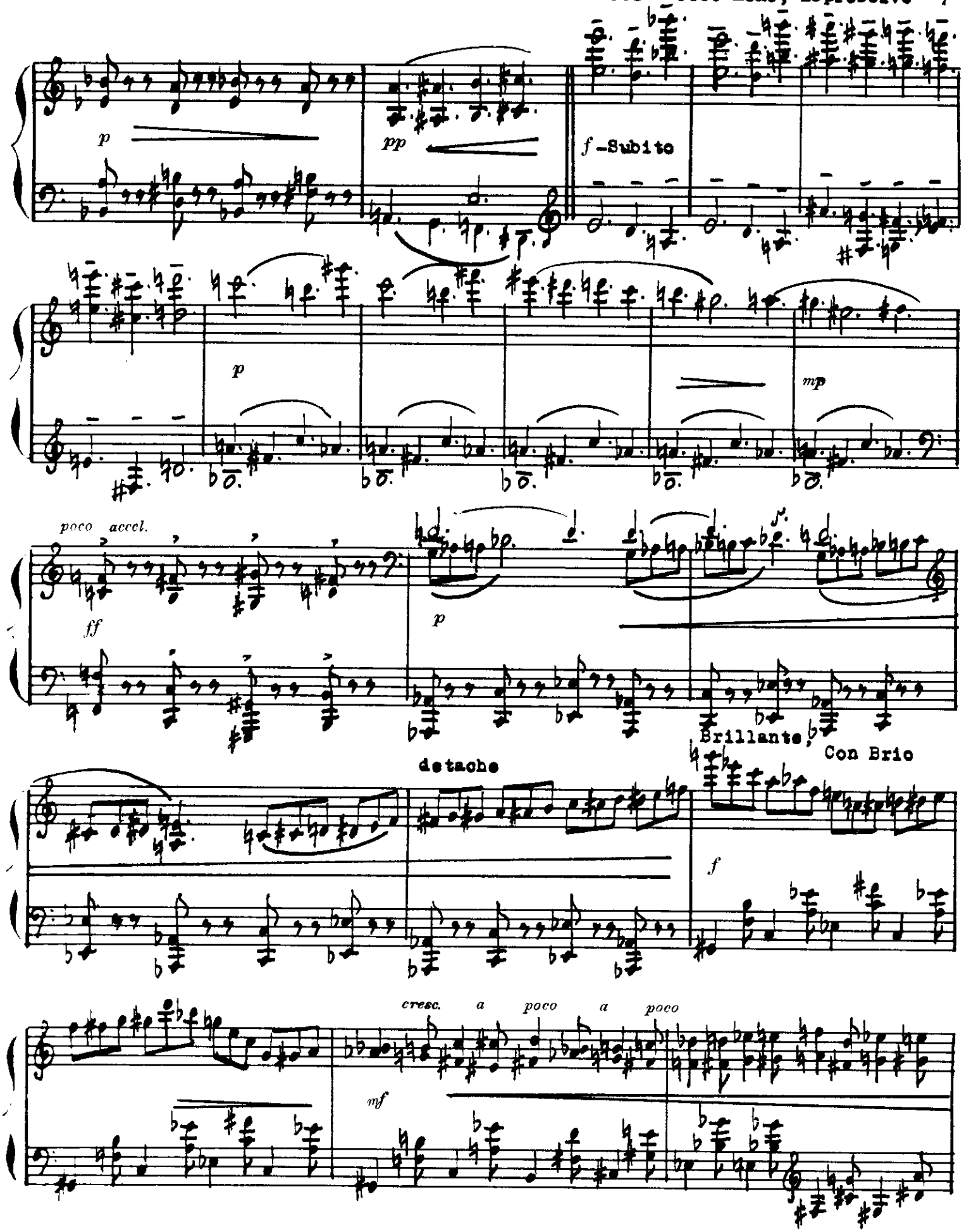
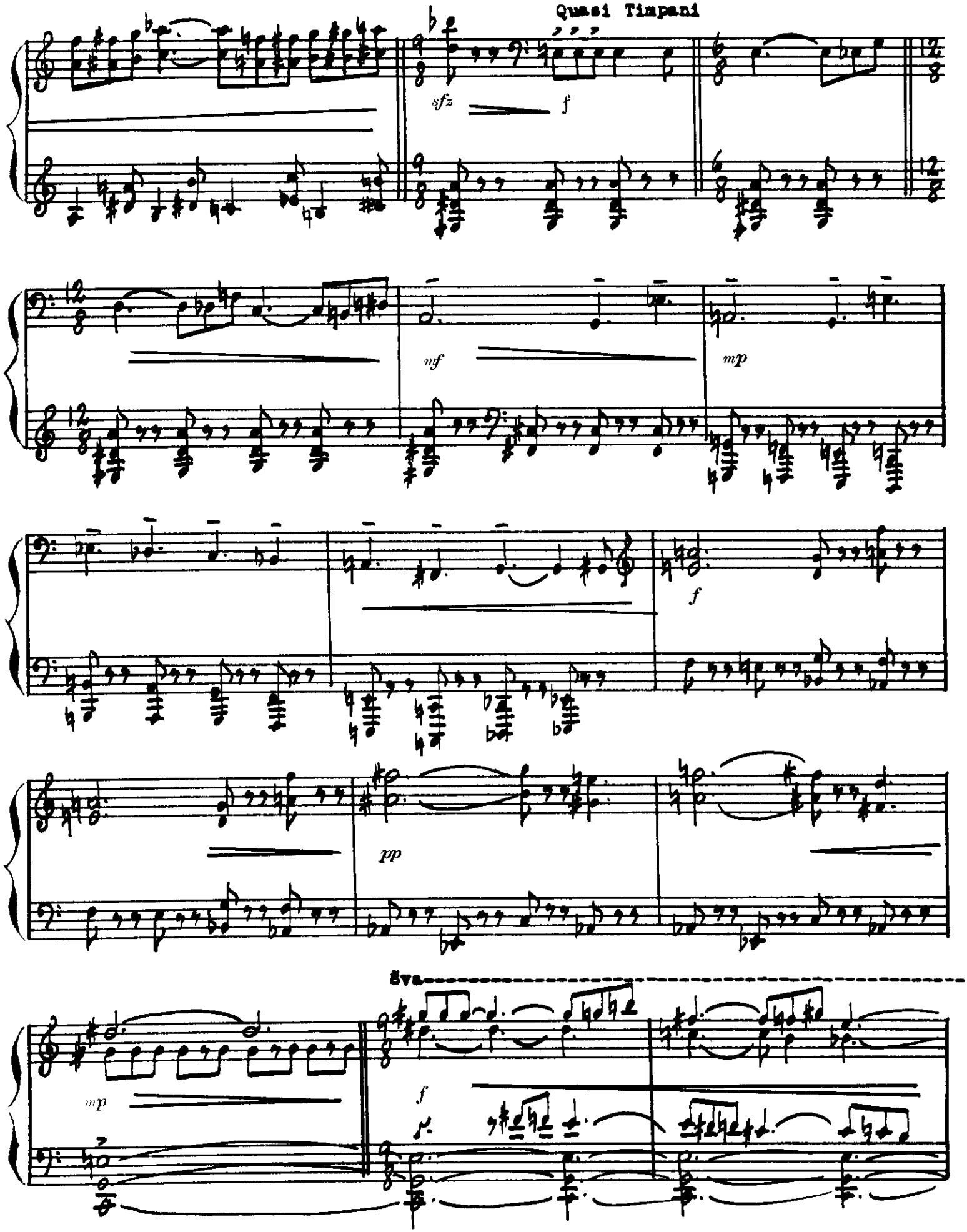

Molto Sostenuto e marcato
cresc.
mf
8va bassa
Loco
stacc.
Poco Sostenuto
f
molto marcato
8va
fff
Quasi Timpani
mf

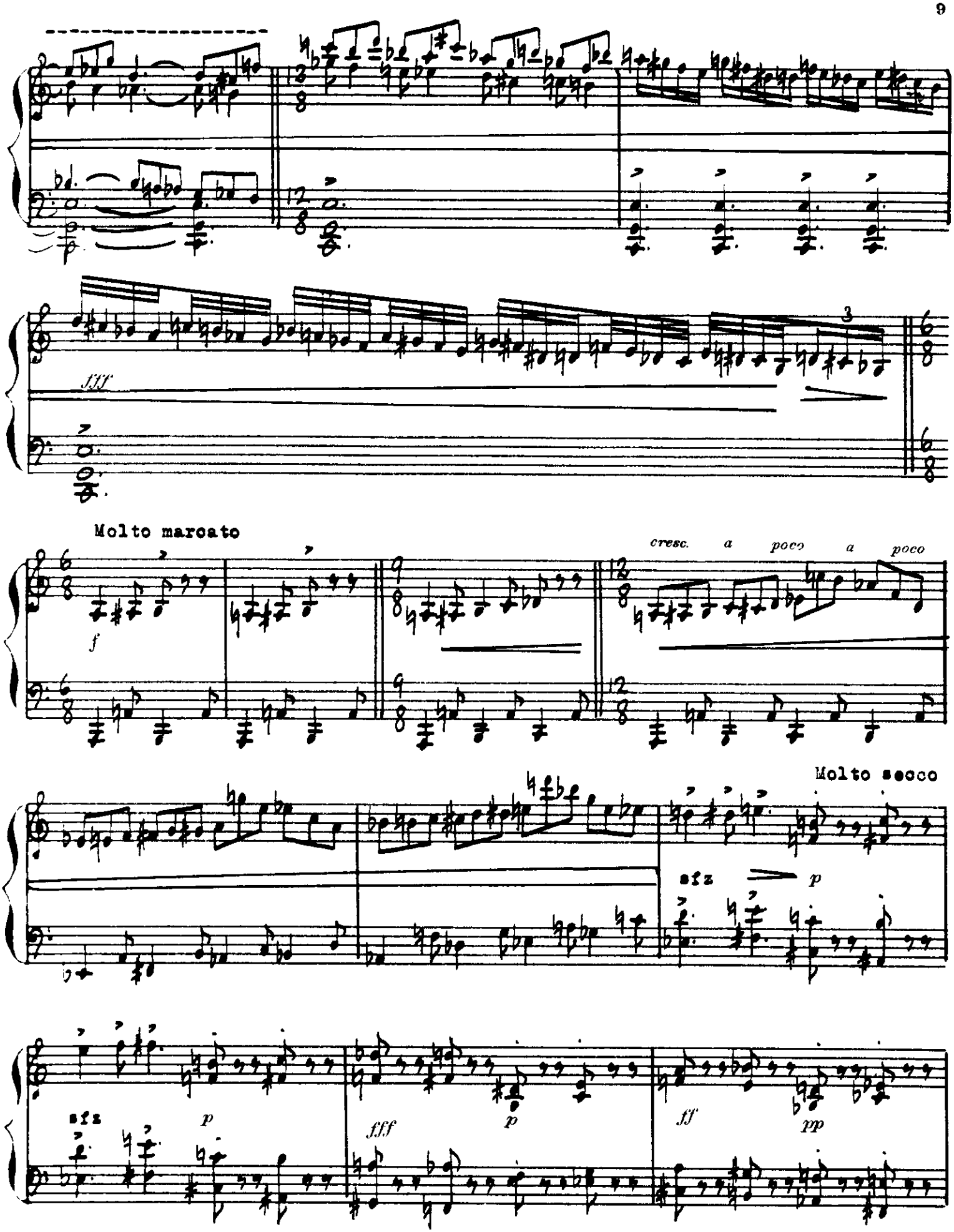

molto dim
mf
p
pp
Basso, Molto Stacc. e pp
8va
f
ff
f
ff
f
mf
f
mf
f

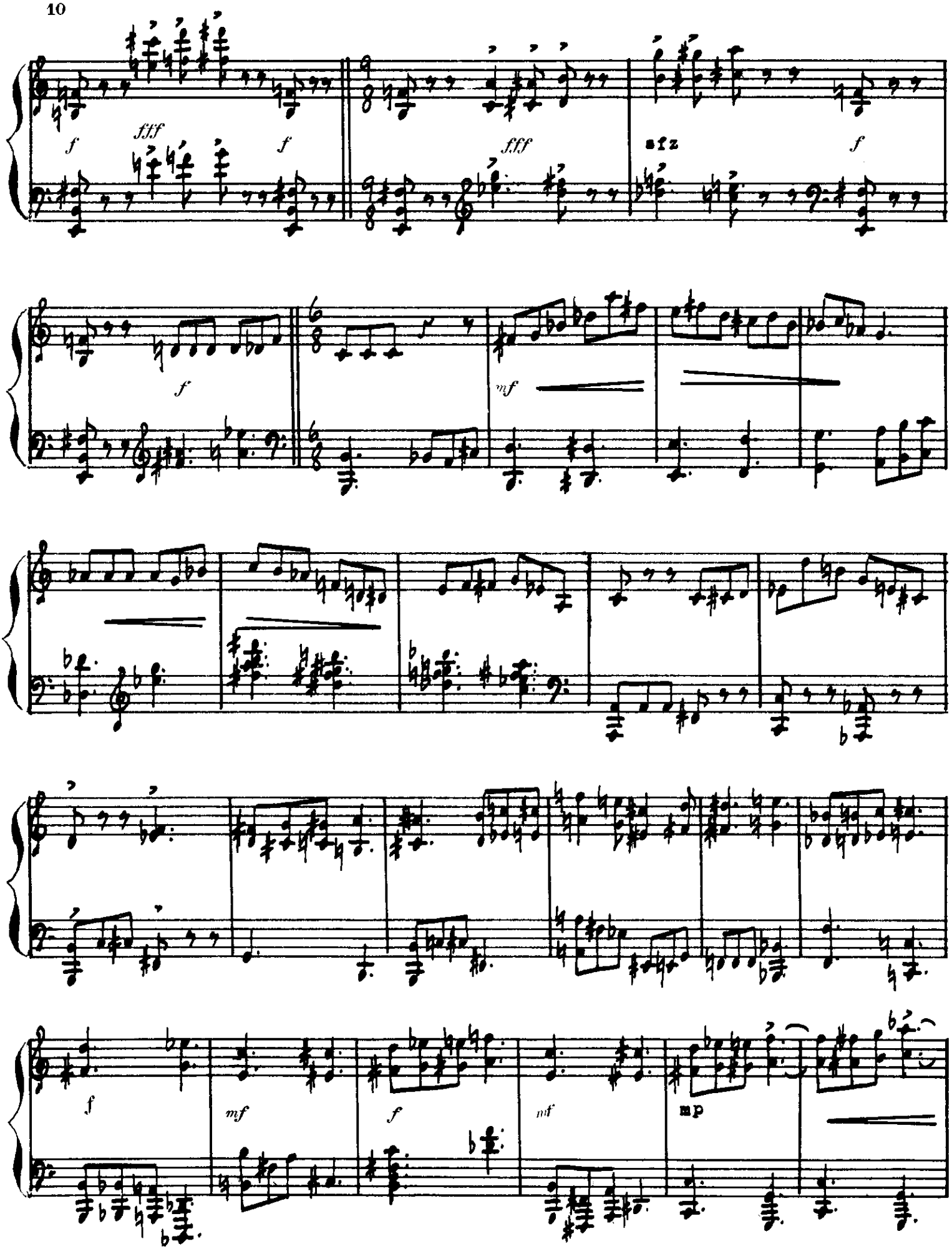

mf
f
mf
f
staccato
mf
Molto Secco.
mf
mp

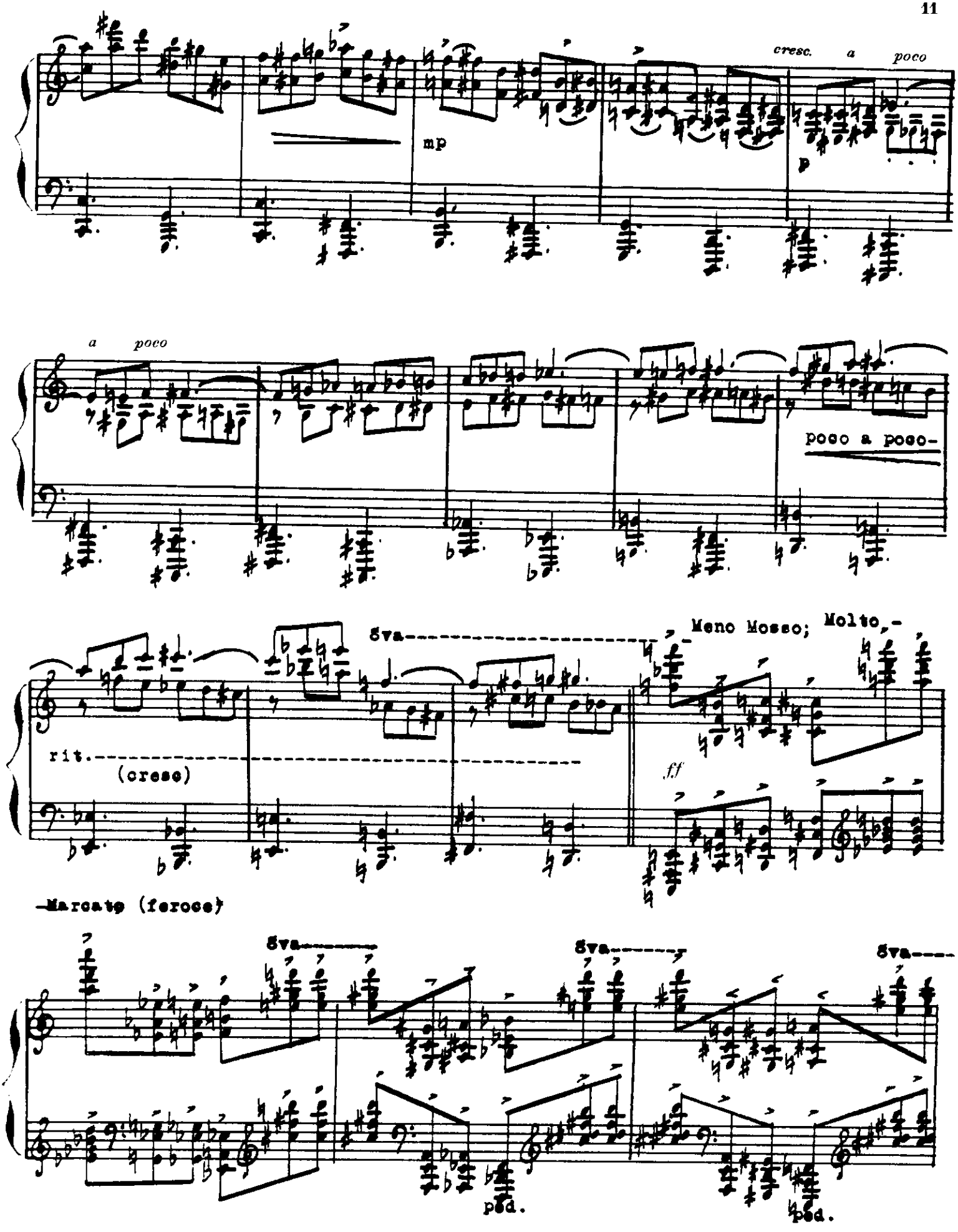
Poco a Poco Meno, Espressivo

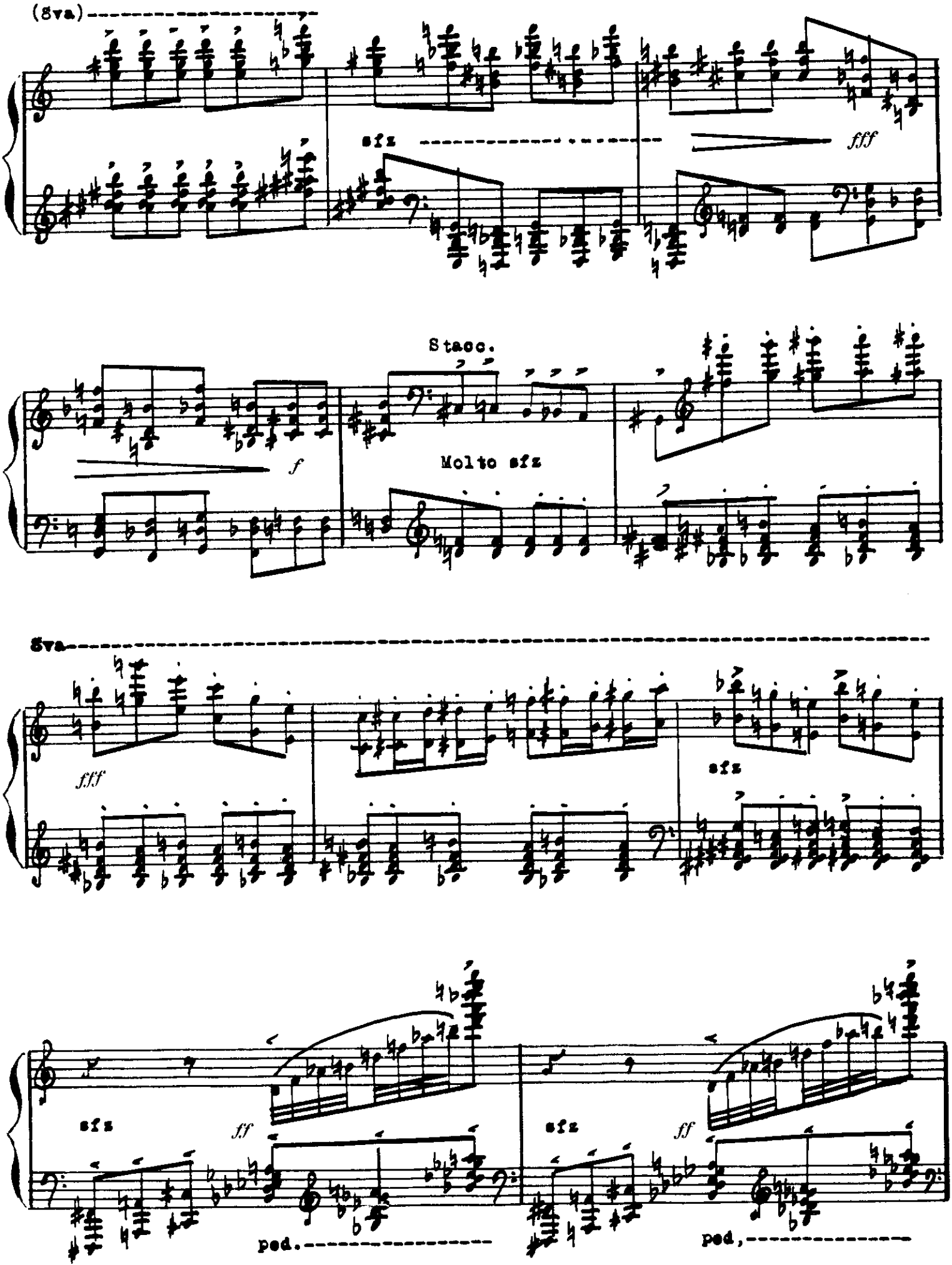


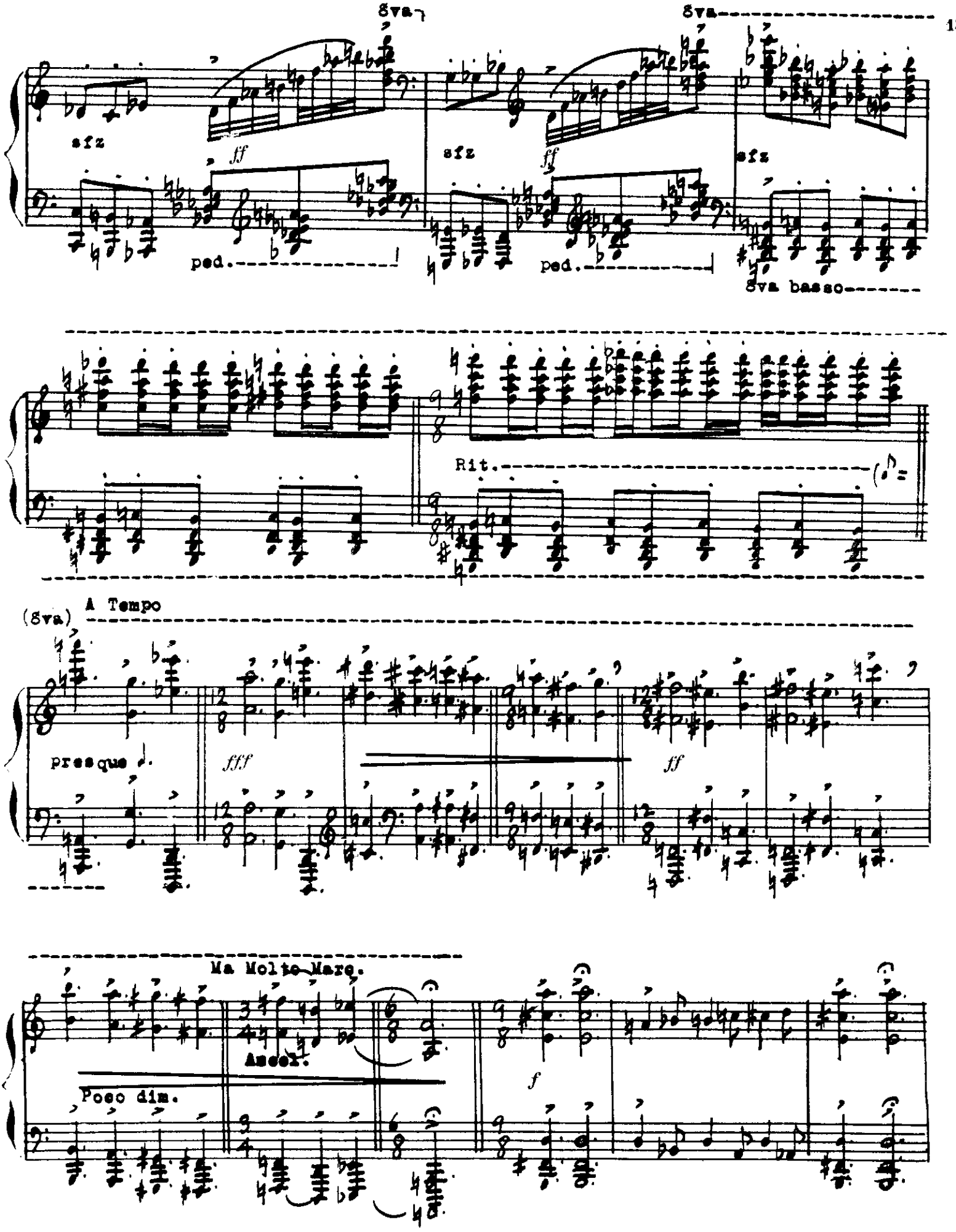

Quasi Timpani
sfz
f
mf
mp
f
pp
mp
8va
f

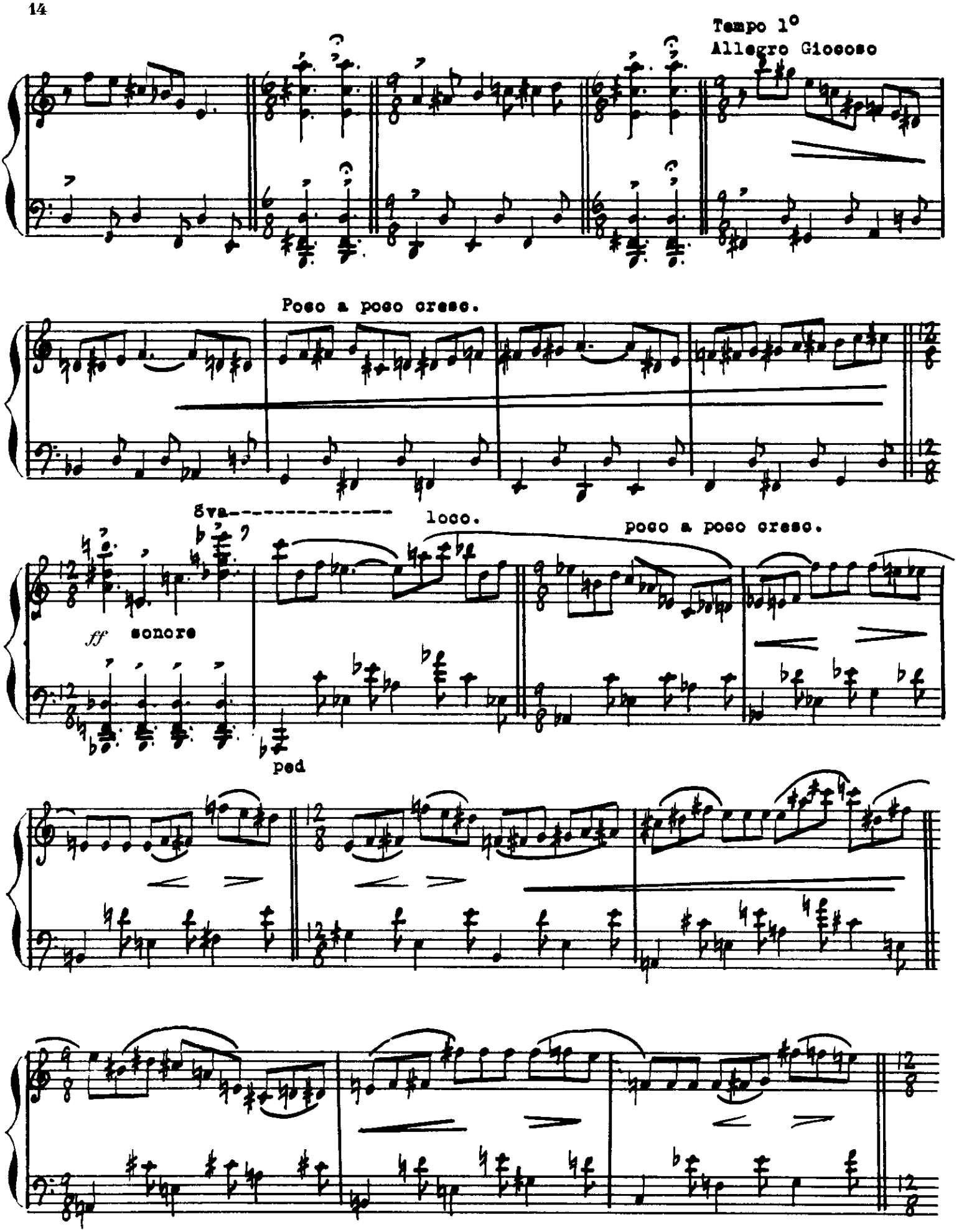

fff
3
Molto marcato
f
cresc. a poco a poco
Molto secco
sfz
p
sfz
p
fff
p
ff
pp

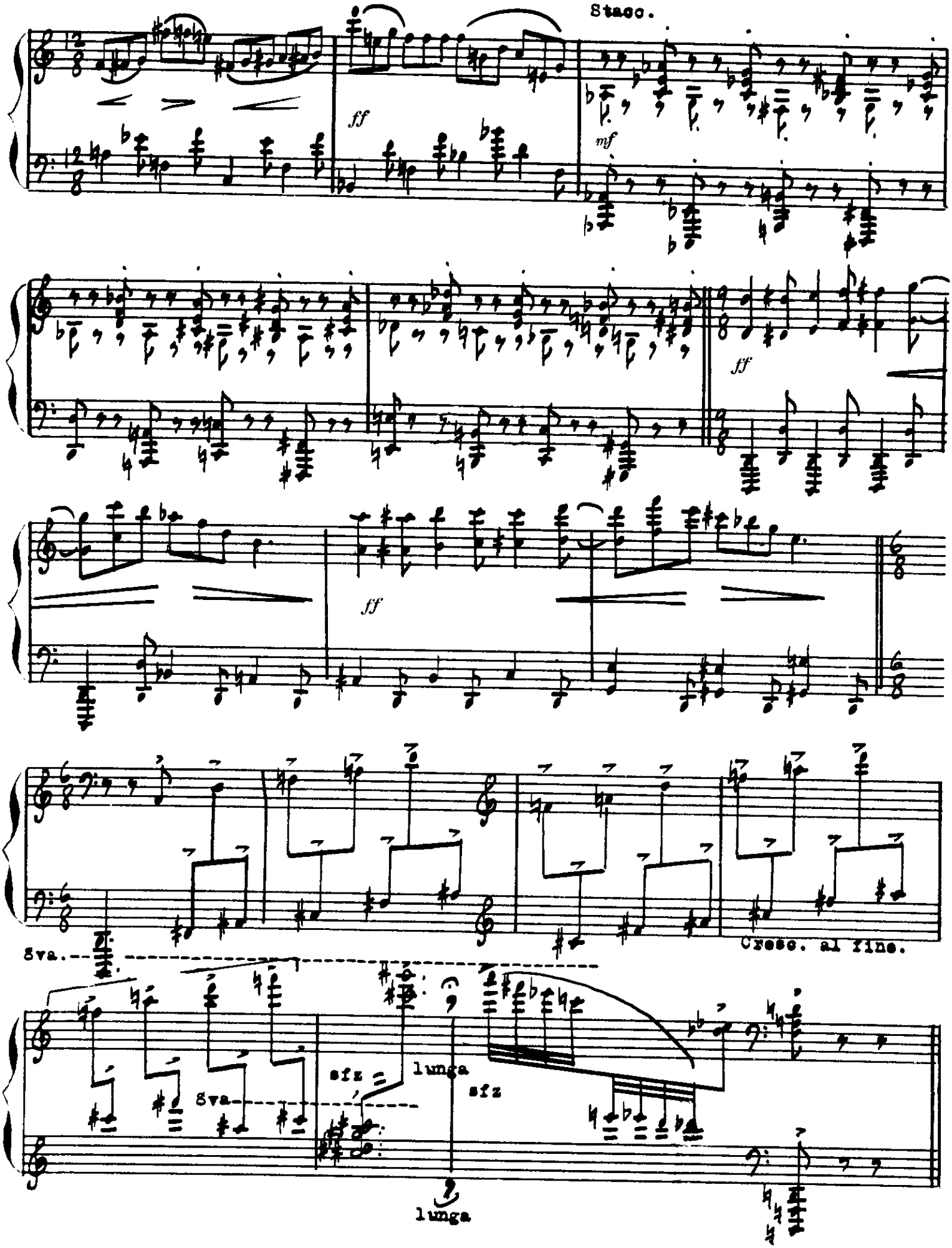

f
fff
f
fff
sfz
f
f
mf
f
mf
f
mf
mp


cresc. a poco
mp
p
a poco
poco a poco-
8va
Meno Mosso; Molto,-
rit.
(cresc)
ff
-Marcato (feroce)
8va
8va
8va
ped.
ped.

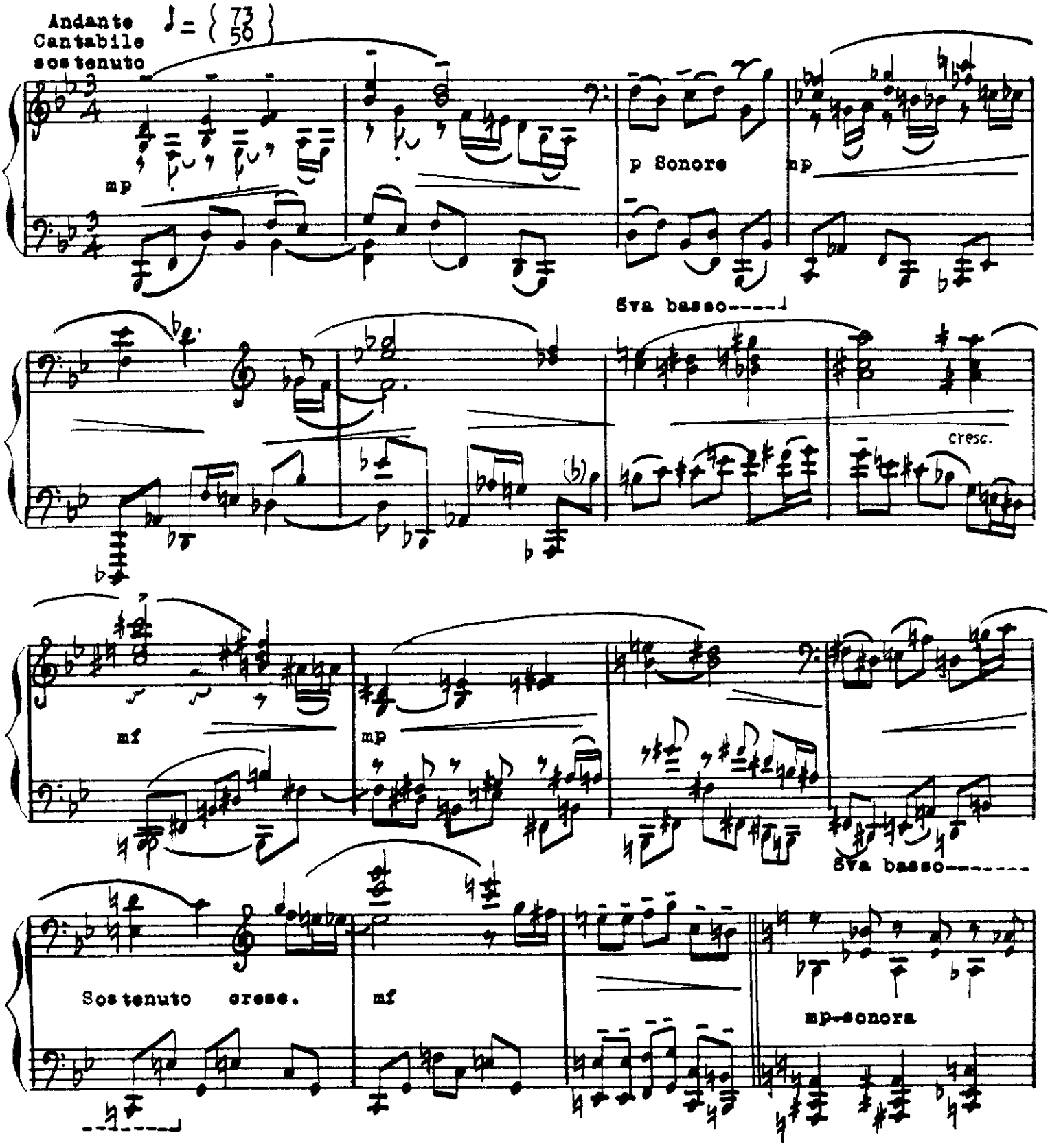

(8va)
sfz
fff
Stacc.
f
Molto sfz
8va
fff
sfz
sfz
ff
sfz
ff
ped.
ped.

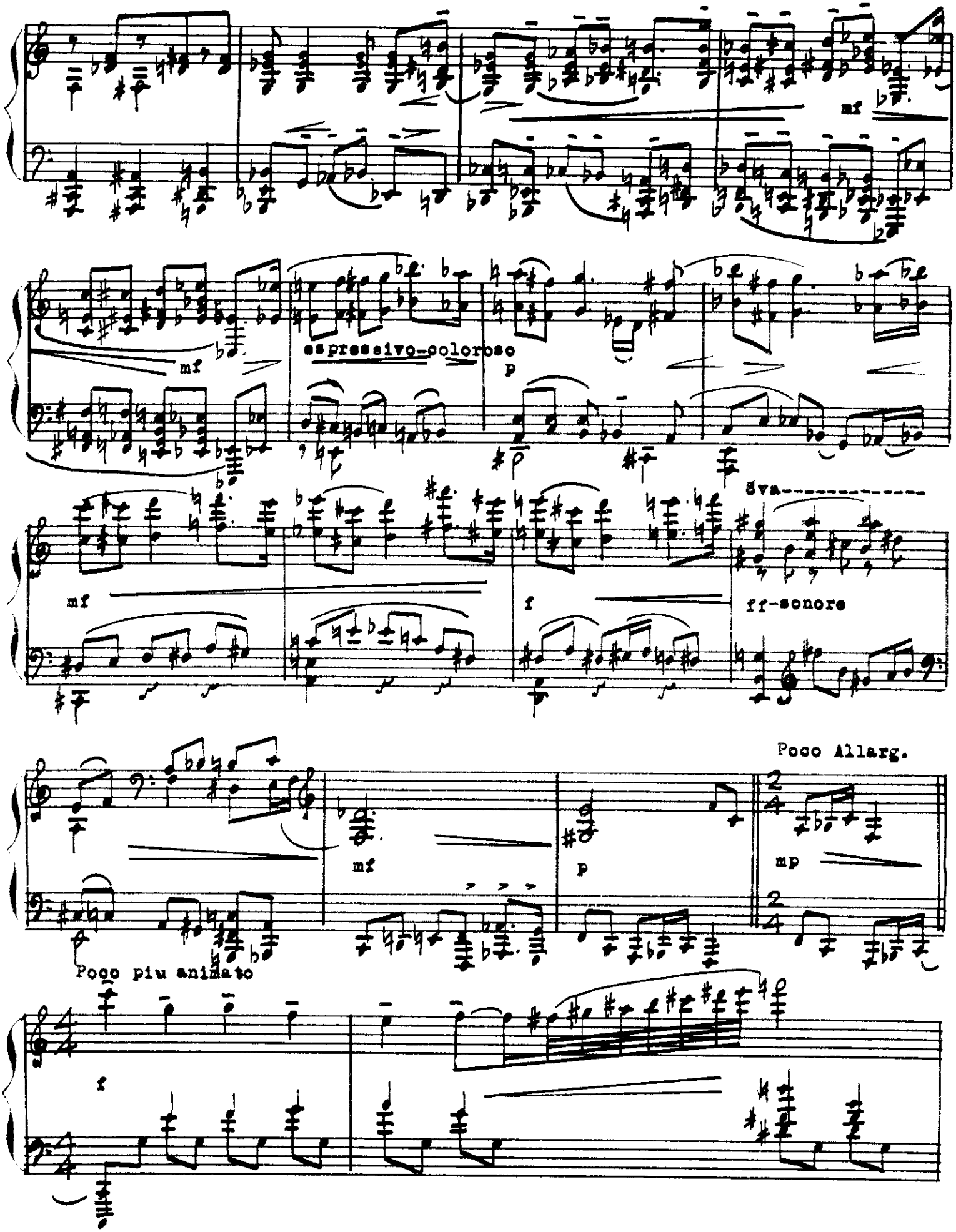

8va
8va
sfz
ff
sfz
ff
sfz
ped.
ped.
8va basso
Rit.
A Tempo
(8va)
presque
fff
ff
Ma Molto Marc.
Accel.
Poco dim.
f

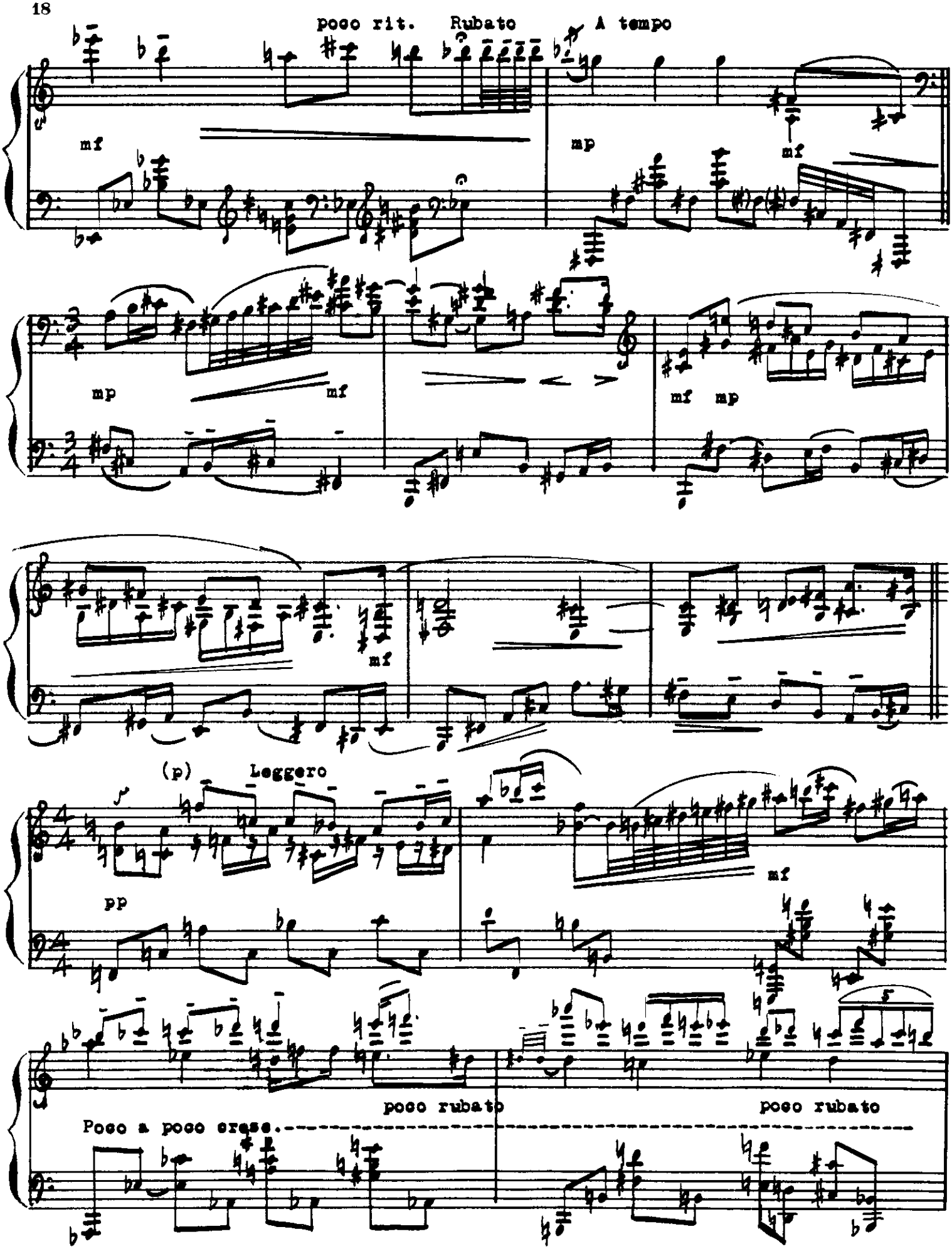

Tempo 1°
Allegro Giocoso
Poco a poco cresc.
8va
loco.
poco a poco cresc.
ff sonore
ped

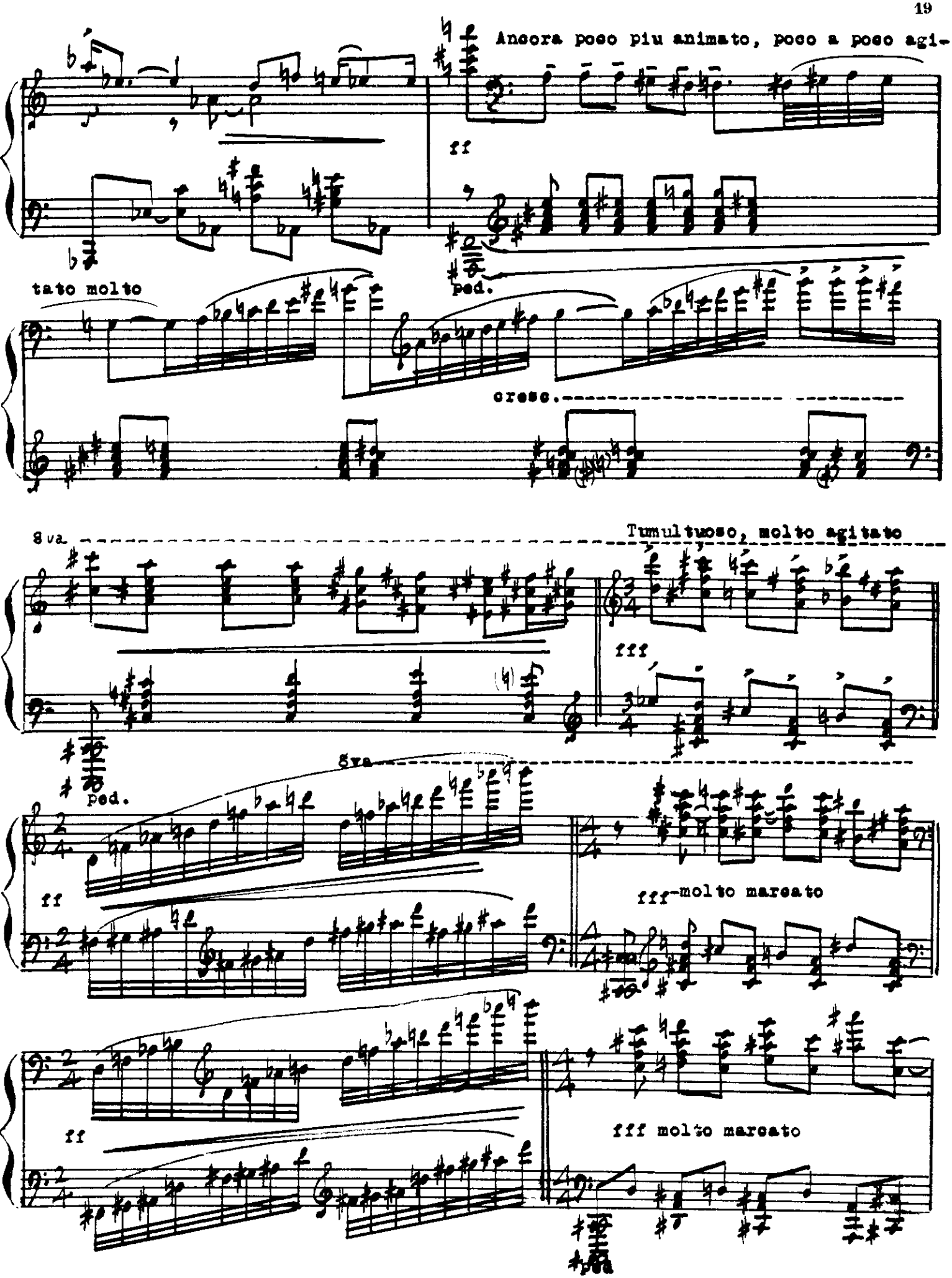

Staco.
ff
mf
ff
ff
8va
Cresc. al fine.
8va
sfz
lunga
sfz
lunga

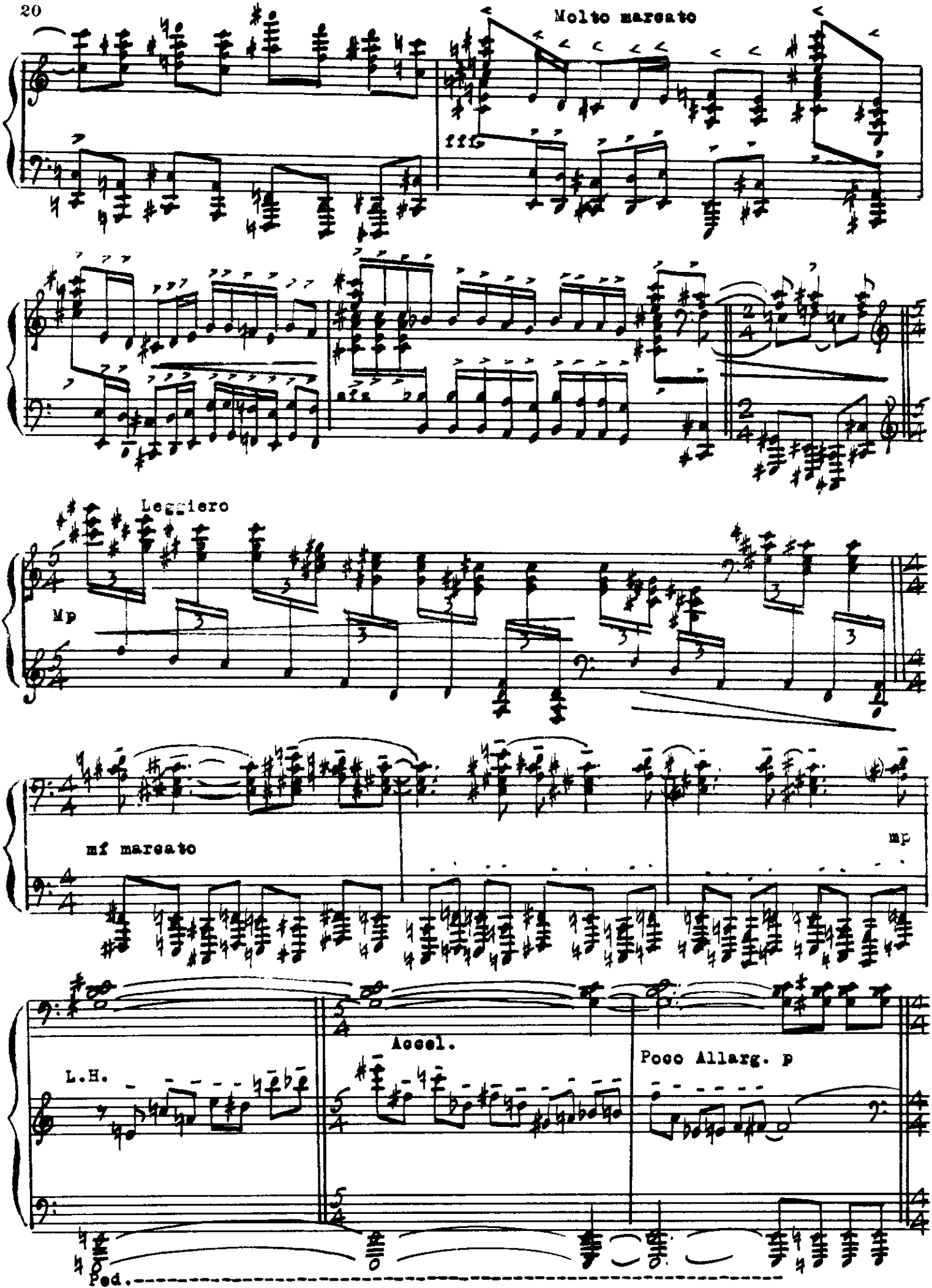
2

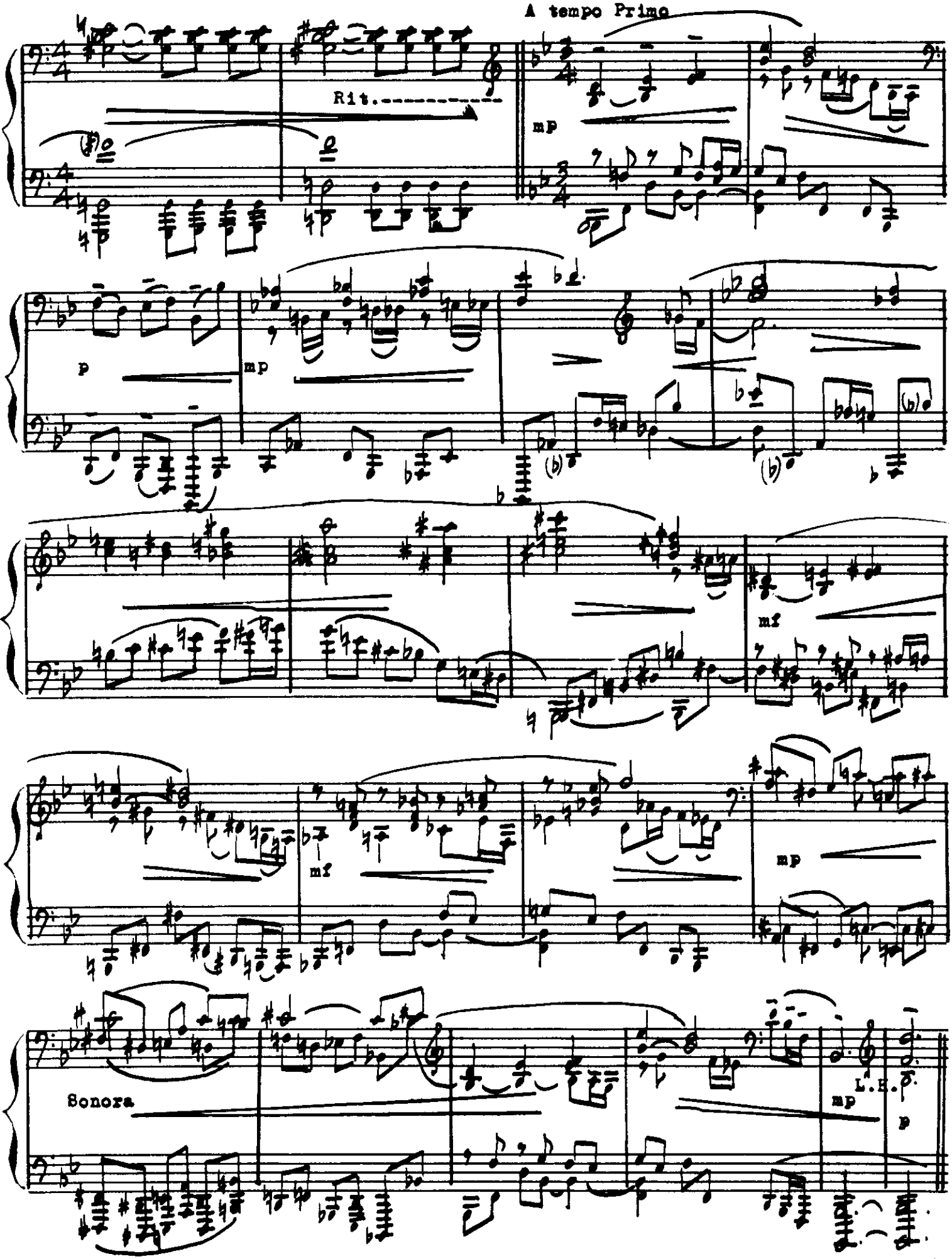

Andante
Cantabile
sostenuto
mp
p Sonore
mp
8va basso
cresc.
mf
mp
8va basso
Sostenuto cresc.
mf
mp-sonora


mf
mf
espressivo-doloroso
p
8va
mf
f
ff-sonore
Poco Allarg.
mf
p
mp
Poco piu animato
f

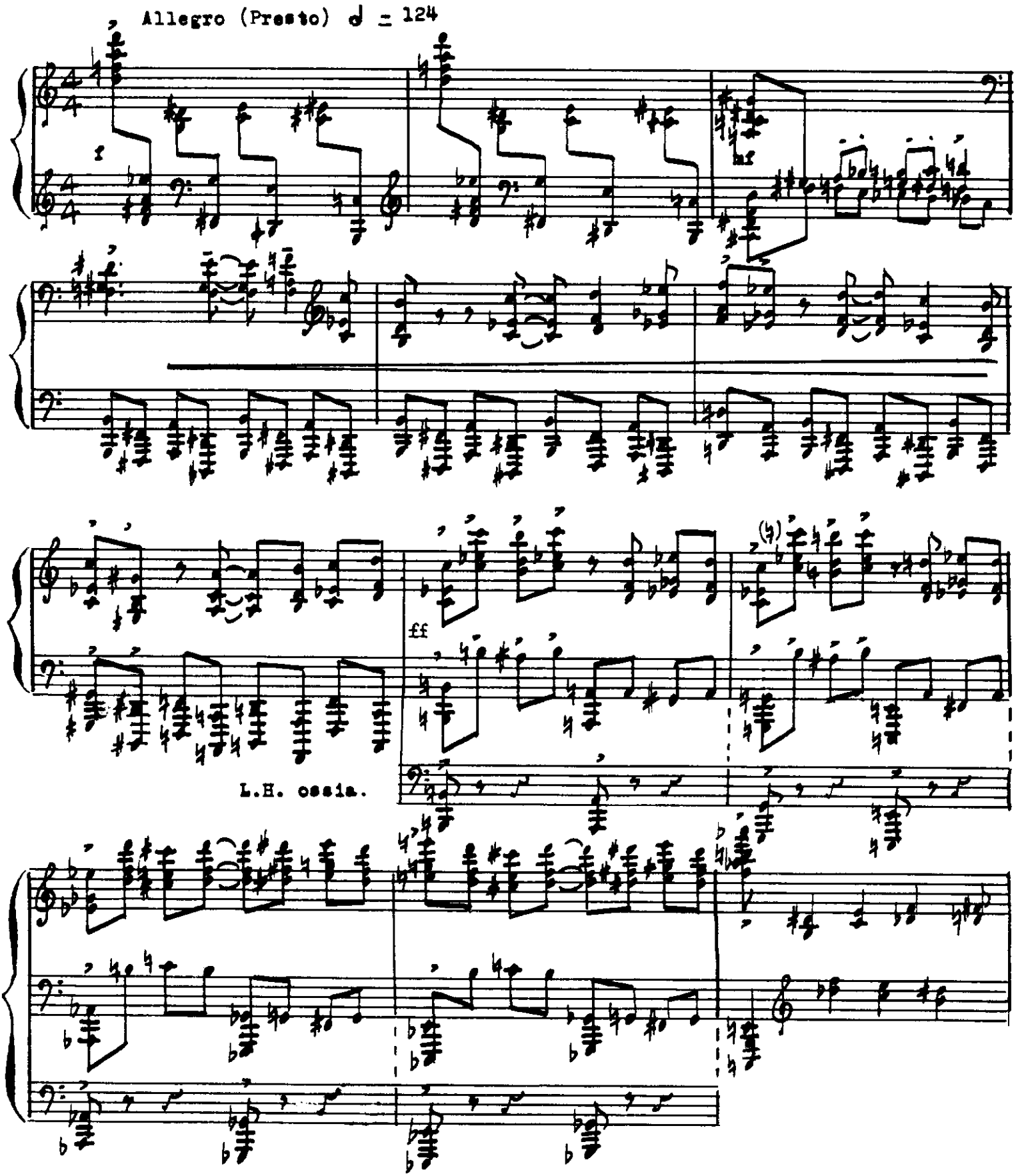

poco rit.
Rubato
A tempo
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
mf
mp
mf
mf
mp
mf
(p)
Leggero
pp
mf
poco rubato
poco rubato
Poco a poco cresc.

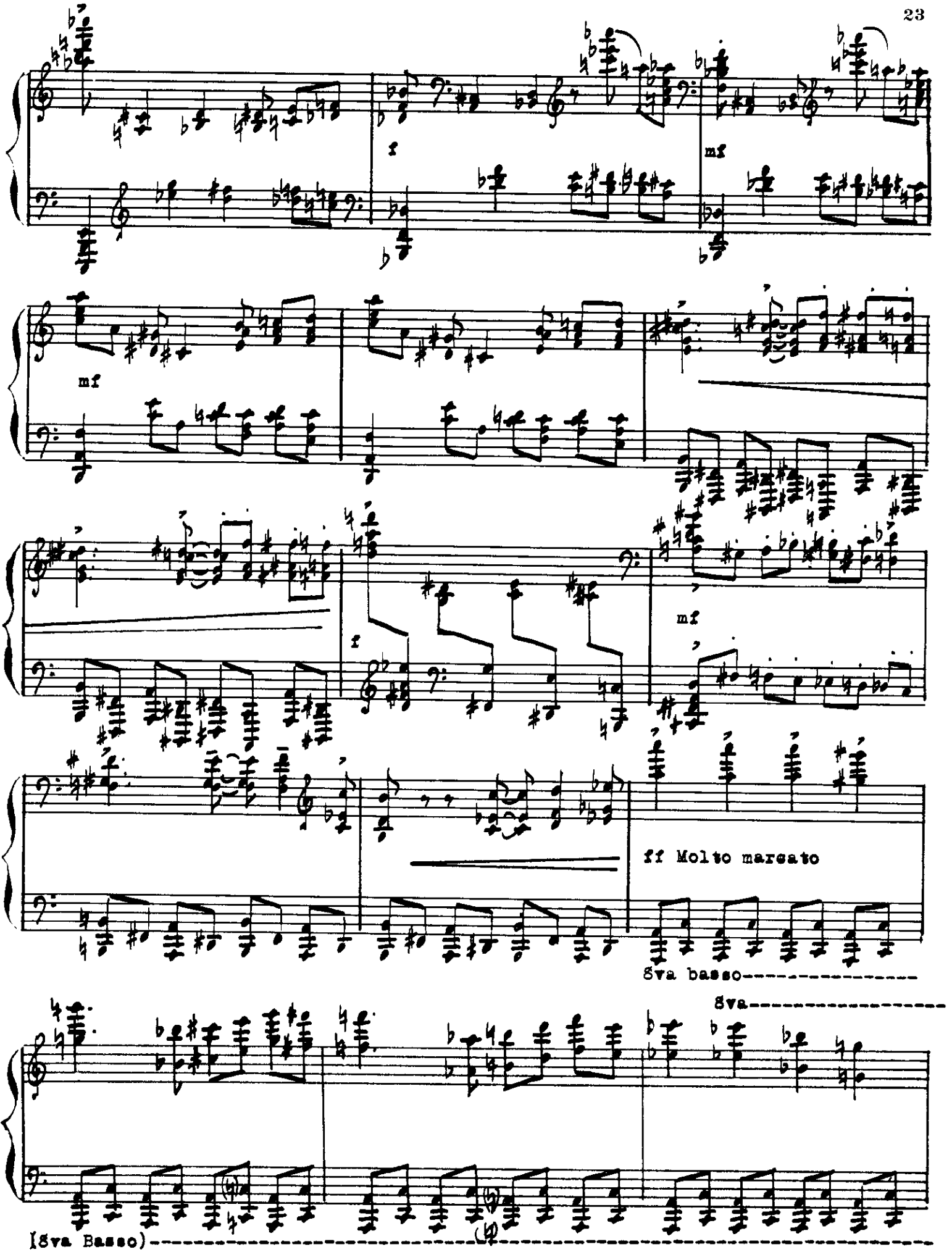

Ancora poco piu animato, poco a poco agi-
ff
ped.
tato molto
cresc.
8va
Tumultuoso, molto agitato
fff
ped.
8va
ff
fff molto marcato
ff
fff molto marcato

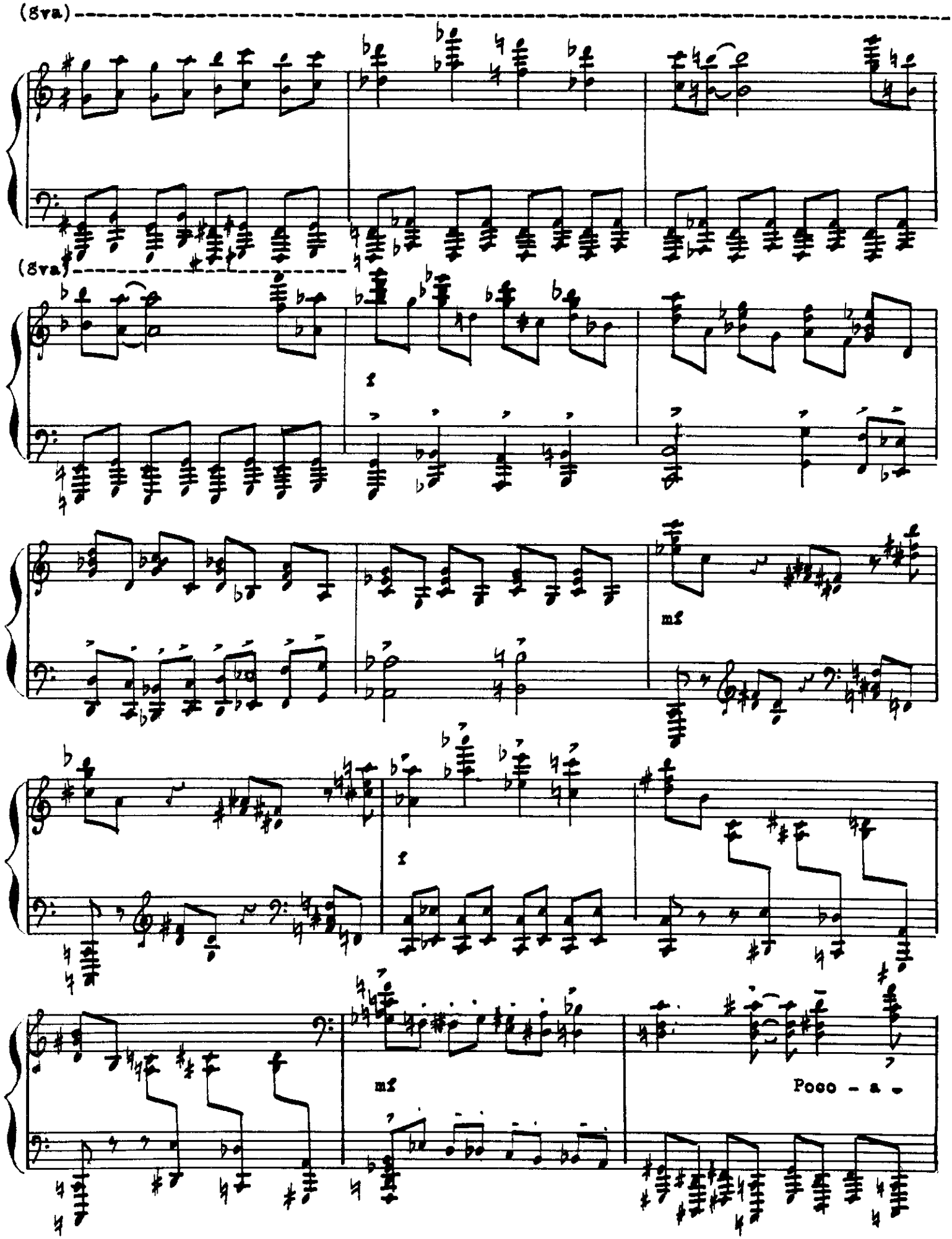

Molto marcato
Leggiero
Mp
mf marcato
mp
L.H.
Accel.
Poco Allarg. p
Ped.

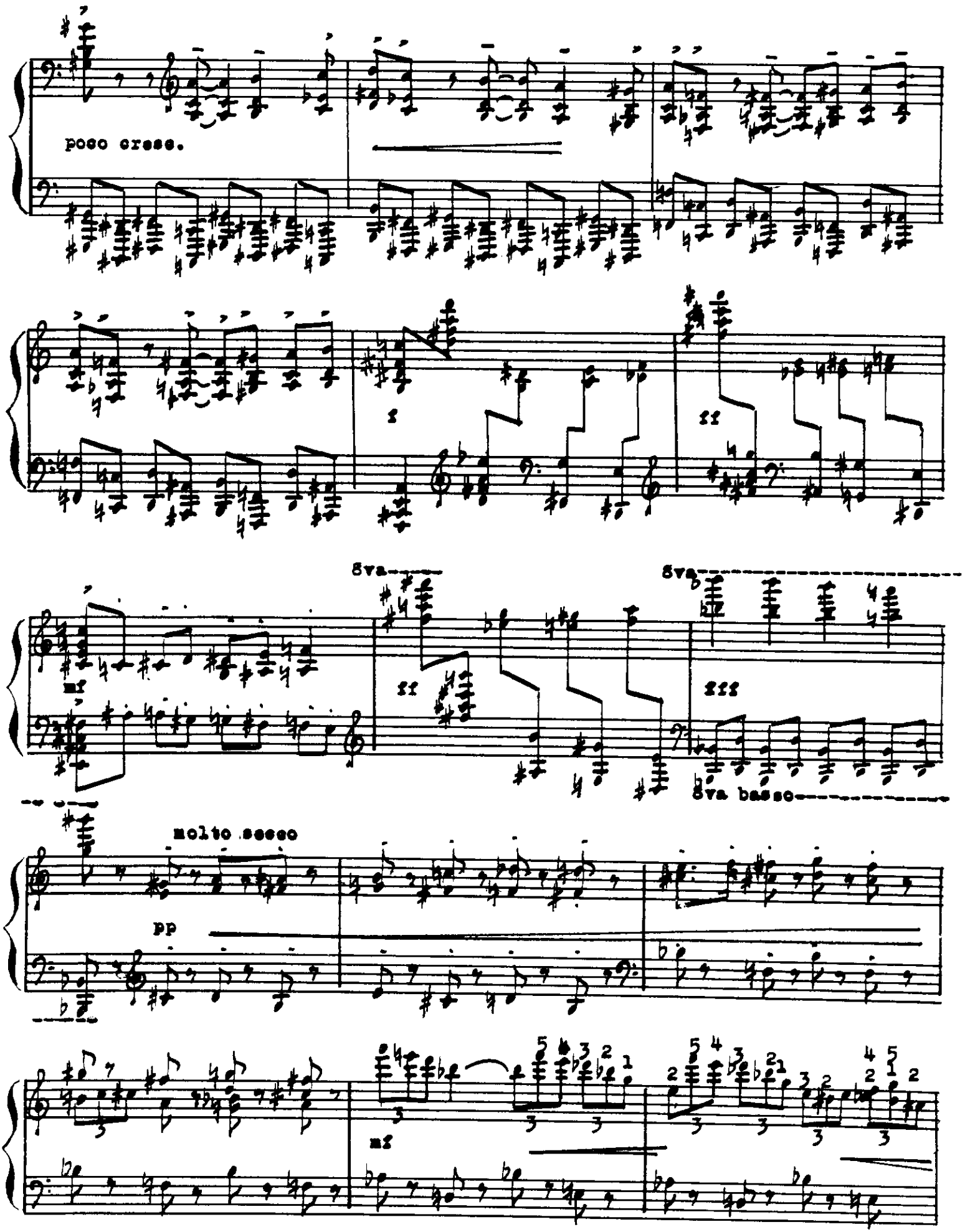

A tempo Primo
Rit.
mp
p
mp
mf
mf
mp
Sonora
mp
L.H.
p

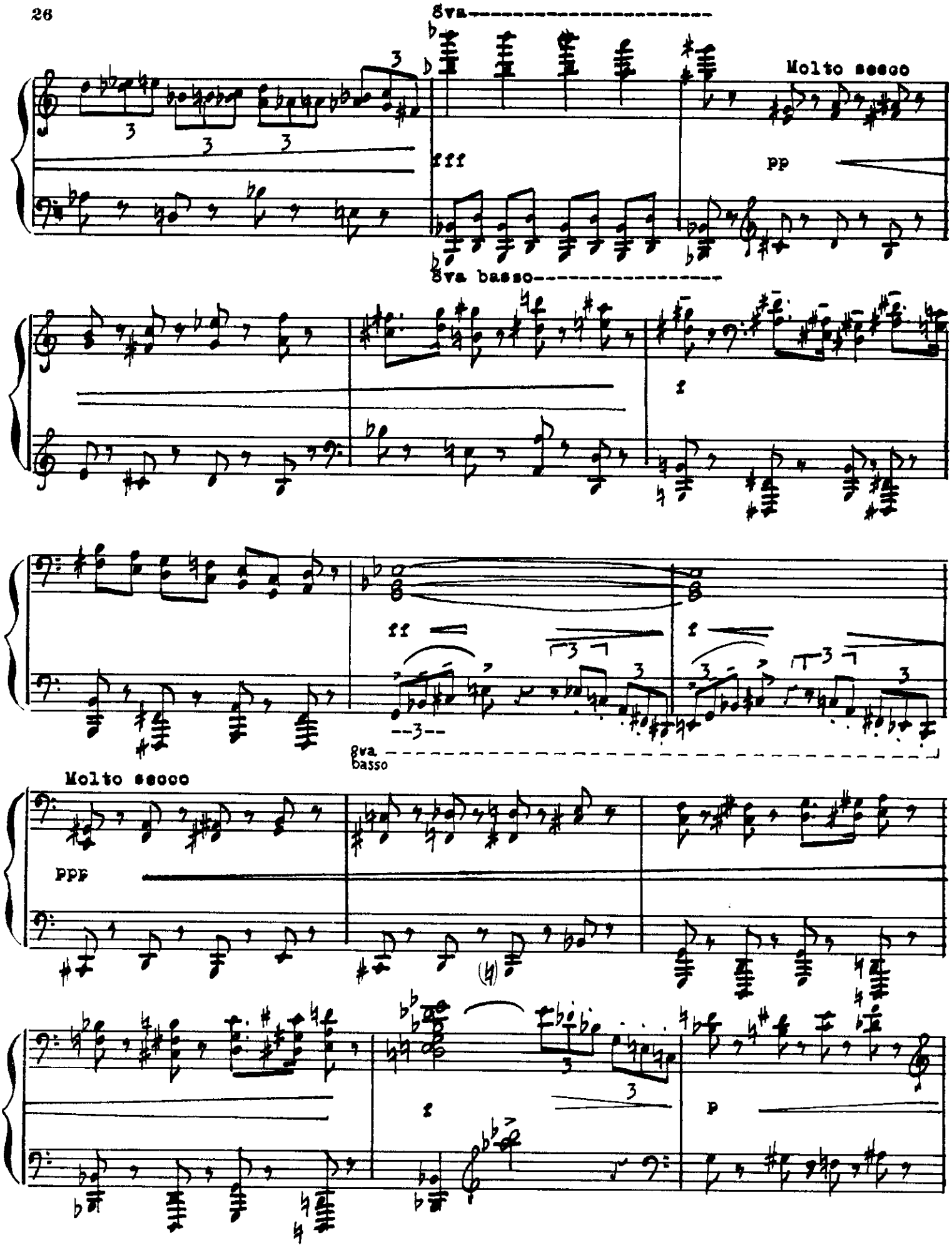
3

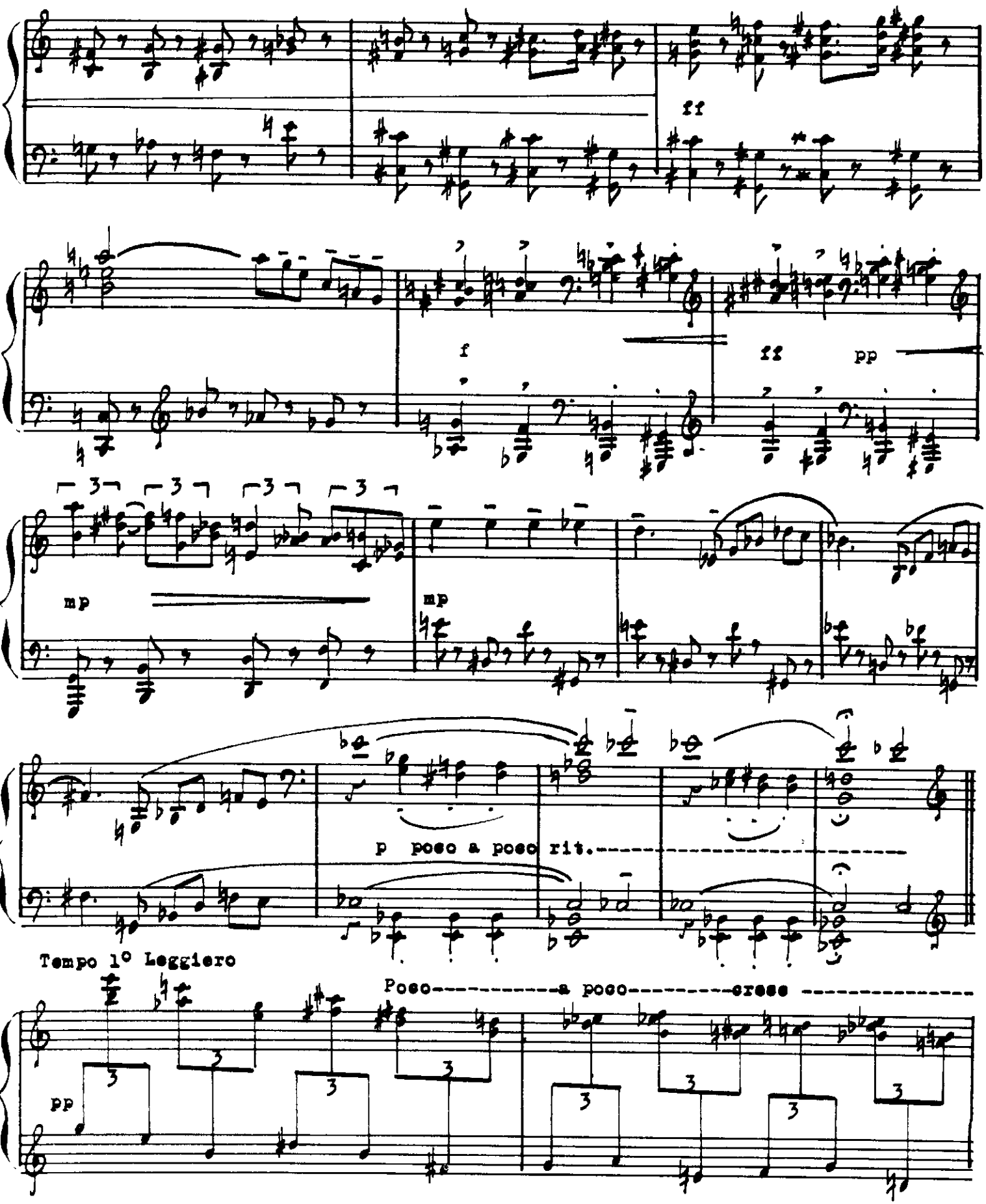


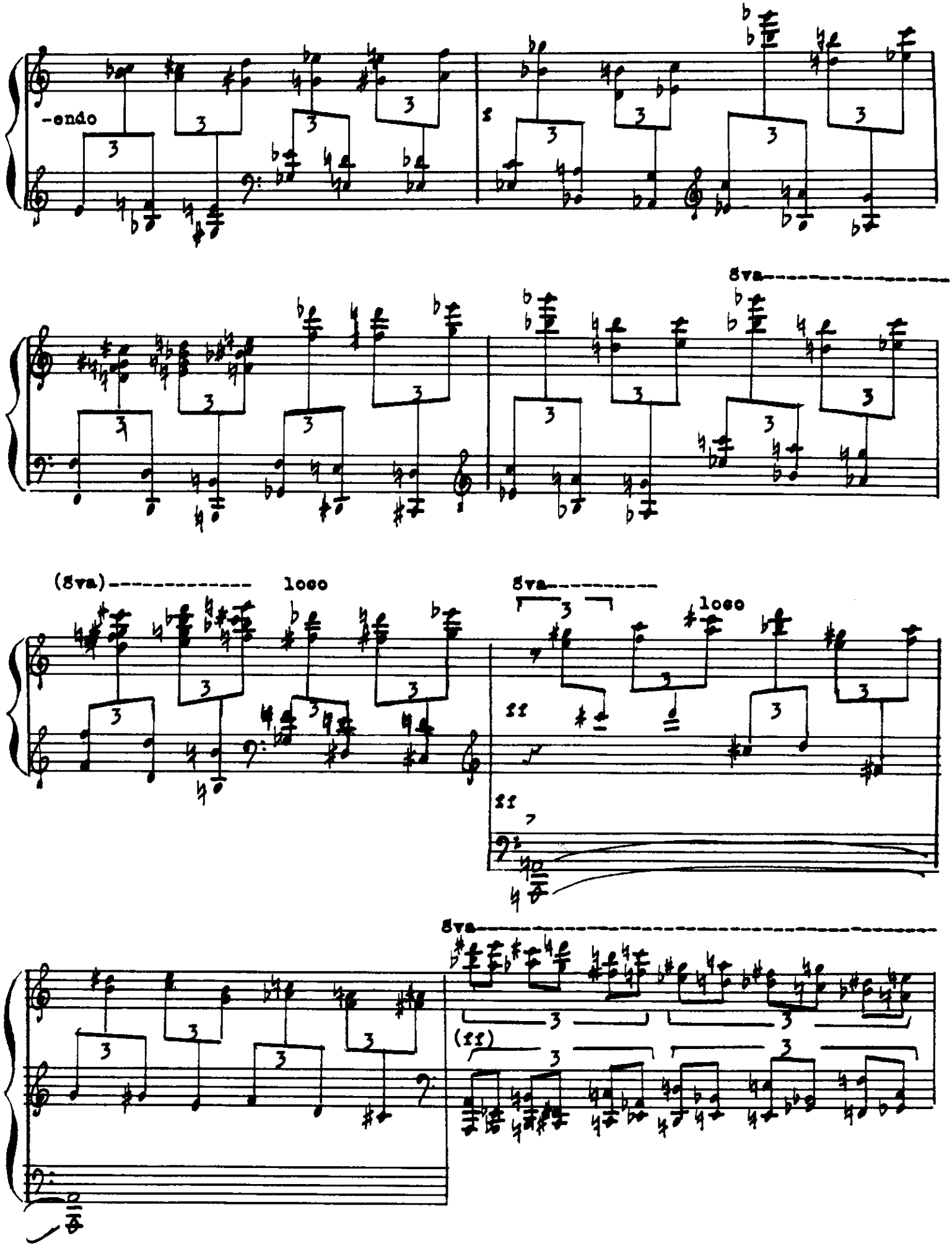

f
mf
mf
mf
f
mf
ff Molto marcato
8va basso
8va
(8va Basso)


(8va)
(8va)
mf
mf
Poco - a -


poco cresc.
8va
8va
8va basso
molto secco
pp
mf
mf


8va
Molto secco
fff
pp
8va basso
ff
8va basso
Molto secco
ppp
p


ff
f
ff
pp
mp
mp
p poco a poco rit.
Tempo 1° Leggiero
Poco a poco cresc
pp


-endo
8va
(8va)
loco
8va
loco
8va
(ff)

8va

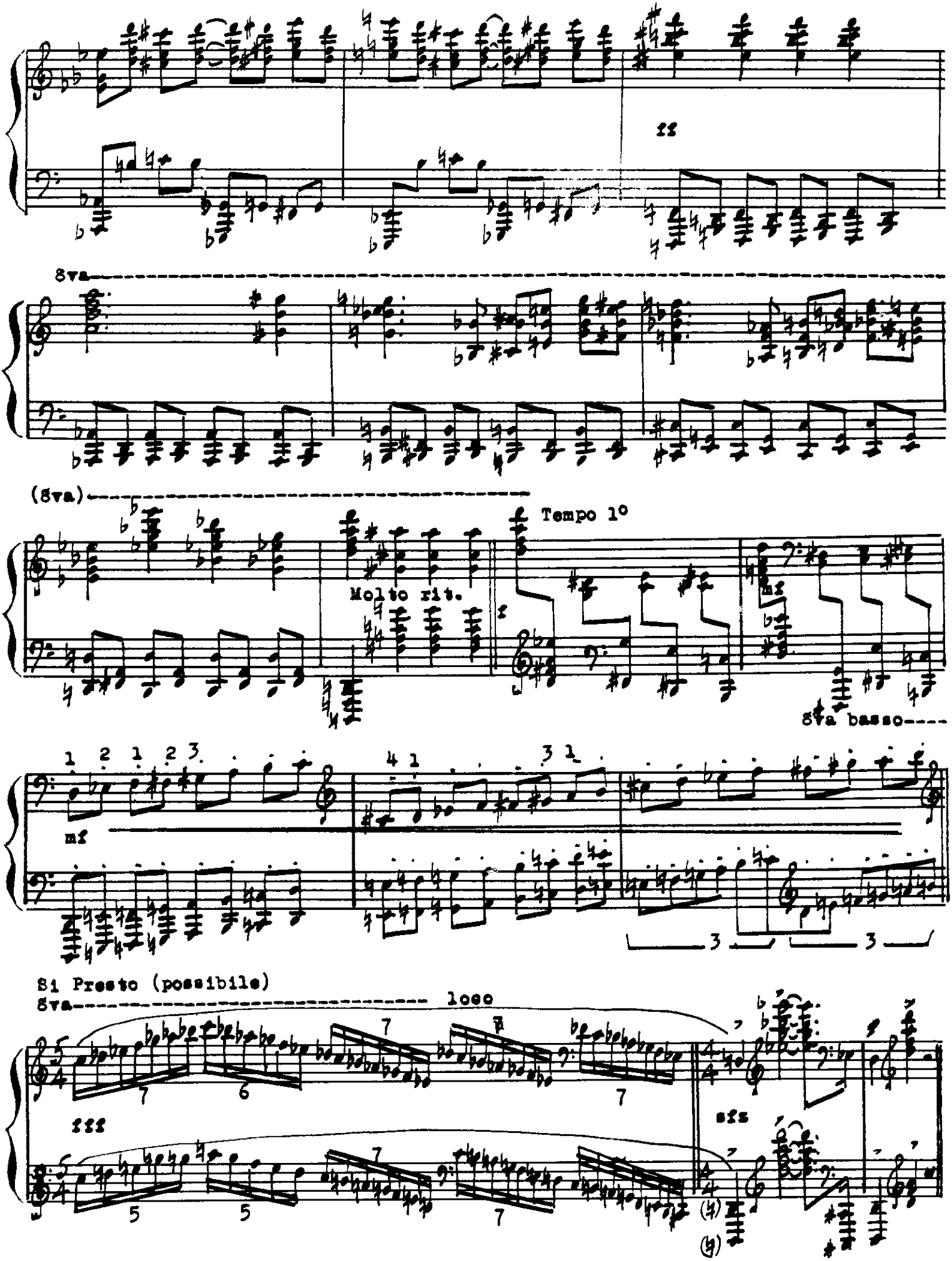
(8va)

Rit---ard.

cresc.

Tempo 1° - feroce

8va basso


ff
8va
(8va)
Molto rit.
Tempo 1°
mf
8va basso
mf
Si Presto (possibile)
8va
loco
fff
sfz