Bohuslav Martinů (8. 12. 1890 - 28. 8. 1959) has left us a total amount of five Sonatas for Violin and Piano. Up to now only the three last ones were generally known and available in print. They were numbered by the composer himself: Nr. 1 (in G minor), written in 1929 (Ed. Leduc, Paris) is a strongly rhapsodic work, with clear jazz influences; Nr. 2 (1931, Ed. Deiss, Paris) on the contrary a concentrated, very classical piece, one of the most accomplished testimonies of Martinů's "French" style; Nr. 3, lastly (1944, A. M. P., New York), the best-known and weightiest of the three, a major landmark in his American period. On the other hand the two early Sonatas have remained unknown. Whereas the fourmovement Sonata in C major of 1919 (dedicated to Stanislav Novák and Karel Šolc, autograph in private hand in Prague), notwithstanding many excellent ideas, must be considered an immature, unequal and overlong piece, which should only be published, as a document, in a future complete edition of Martinů's works, the present Sonata in D minor proves to be a most valuable composition, which we would like to rank even higher than the so-called "first" Sonata of 1929.

The present writer found the original manuscript of this work in Mrs. Charlotte Martinů's house, at Vieux-Moulin (Oise, France), together with some other important compositions which had remained hitherto ignored and unperformed. The Sonata was composed in February 1926, thus between the Ballets "Vzpoura" ("The Revolt", completed on the 1. 11. 1925) and "Motýl, který dupal" ("The Butterfly, that stamped", after Kipling, completed on the 9. 3. 1926). Other neighbour works are the first Piano concerto and the second String quartet on the one hand (October 1925), the orchestral piece "La Bagarre" ("The Scuffle") on the other hand (May 1926). The Sonata is definitely in the same class as the three latter pieces, which belong to the composer's acknowledged masterworks.

The formal outline, instrumental writing and tonal scheme of this Sonata are purely classical, to a degree seldom to be found again in Martinů's output. It seems as if the composer went through a short "neoclassical" phase around 1925-26, whose main outcome, apart from our Sonata, would be the first Piano Concerto, already mentioned, and the slightly posterior Concertino for the left hand (first planned as a Divertimento). Not only do these works show a tonal unity most uncommon for Martinů, but their contrapuntal writing is remarkably strict: the last movement of the present Sonata opens with a regular fugue expositon, a rarity in Martinů's production!

The beautiful, very tense and finely equipoised work expresses noble lyricism, but sometimes reaches high-strung climaxes of passion, as in the development section of the opening movement.

This *Allegro moderato* (D minor, 4/4) introduces its main theme at bar 8 after a short piano introduction. The piano background to this idea is of major thematic significance. The second subject (bar 34, G major) is closely related to the first, while its piano accompaniment amounts to a variant in the major mode of that of the first subject. The opening motive of theme one dominantes the whole movement. At bar 55 (Poco Allegro) the piano plays a new, third theme, evolved from the accompaniments of the two first ones. The ensuing development abandons the hitherto quiet and classical atmosphere for very lively progressions, the instrumental writing becoming more "concertant" and even brilliantly virtuosic. After an impressive climax, a gradual calming down leads to the recapitulation (bar 141), which dispenses with the third subject. The very animated coda (Allegro vivo, bars 182-198) closes with powerful fortissimo chords.

The *Andante moderato* (G major, 3/4) opens with a long piano solo, which introduces the very melodic main theme. The violin soon takes it over (bar 17). Although the whole piece is conceived as a true Aria, that is, as a single great melodic curve, a second theme may be recognized at bar 31, whose second period (bar 40) increases the expression, coming to a short cadenza of the solo violin. A small transition brings back the main theme in E flat major (bar 58), the plucked violin accompanying the piano. However, at bar 64, a new element appears, and this rules the field up to the end, being interrupted only once by a brief but passionate outburst in C minor (bars 74-80). The quiet conclusion is in the home key of G major.

The closing *Allegro* (D major, 2/4), opens, as mentioned above, with a quite orthodox fugue exposition. Even after the fugal texture has been abandoned, the style remains unusually contrapuntal. A vigorous piano solo (bar 24) develops the elements of the fugal theme, especially its initial motive. When the violin returns (bar 67) it introduces a quieter episode in G major, out of which the actual second subject asserts itself in the form of a gay and graceful polka (bar 70). This is reminiscent of the Finale of the 2nd String quartet, written a few months before. A most effective and virtuoso progression, full of rhytmical intricacies, leads to the recapitulation of the first theme (bar 130) in the main key of D major. But it has forsaken its fugal guises for the merry dancing mood of the second subject. Both themes coalesce, until the violin plays the augmentation of one element of the second (C major, bar 171). The brilliant, fiery peroration (Vivo, bars 194-206) brings a last apotheosis of the fugal theme's opening motive.

This splendid Sonata, which from now on shall integrate itself in the stately series of Bohuslav Martinů's 70 chamber music works, holding an important place therein, had its first performance at the Prague Radio on the 30th March 1963. It was played by Nora Grumlíková, violin, and Jaroslav Kolář, piano.

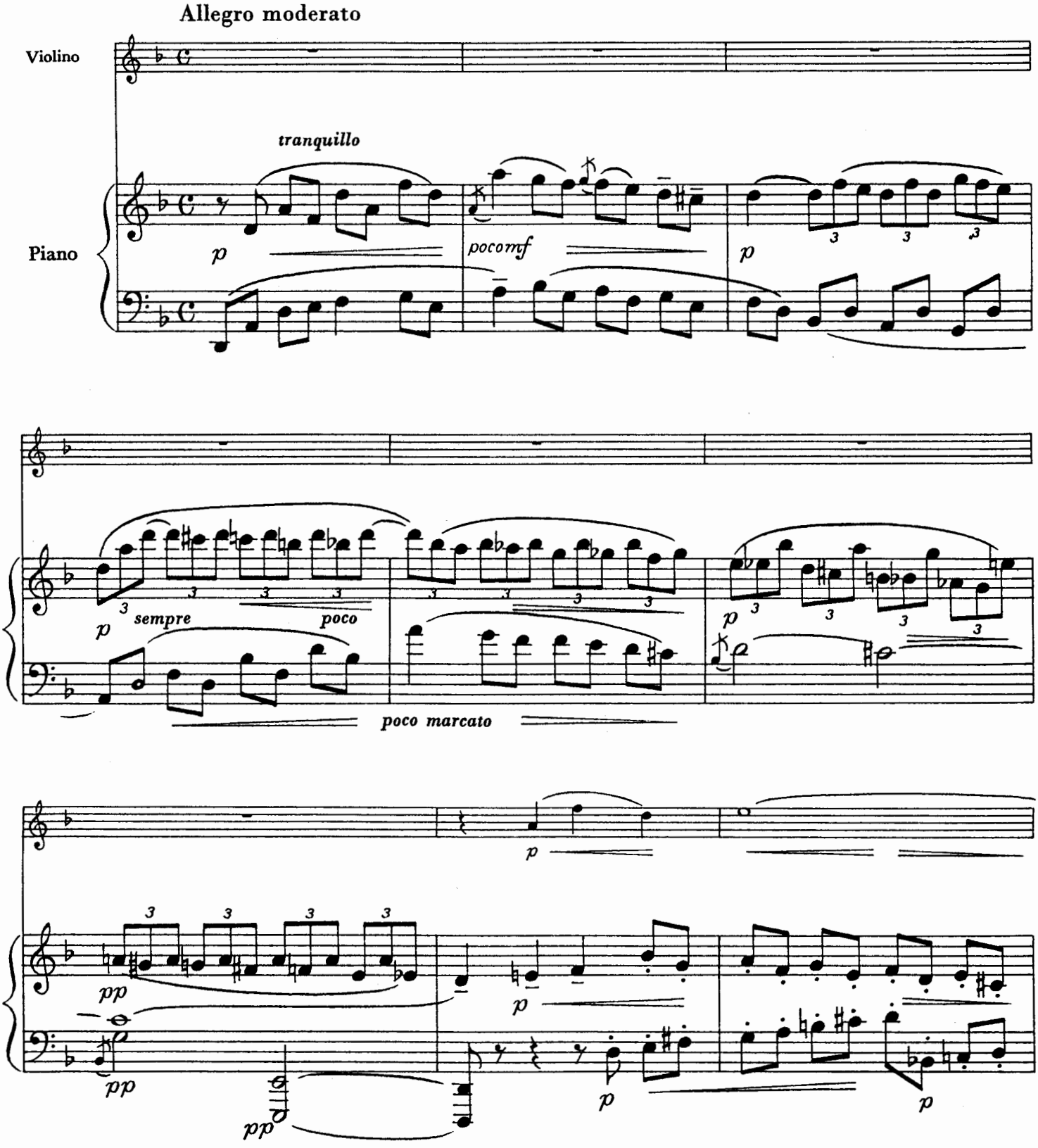
Harry Halbreich

SONÁTA D MOLL

pro housle a klavír

I

Bohuslav Martinů
1890–1959



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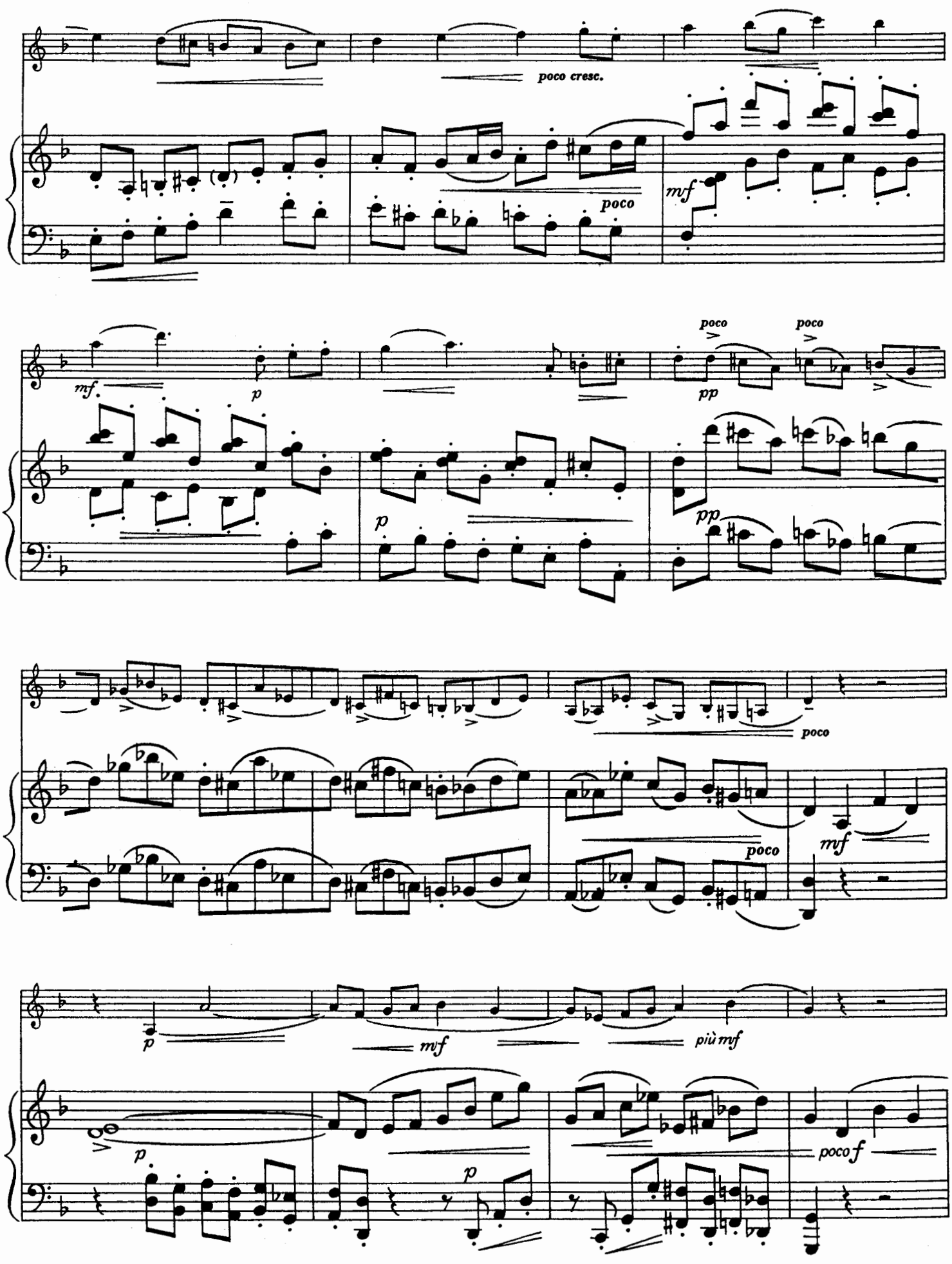
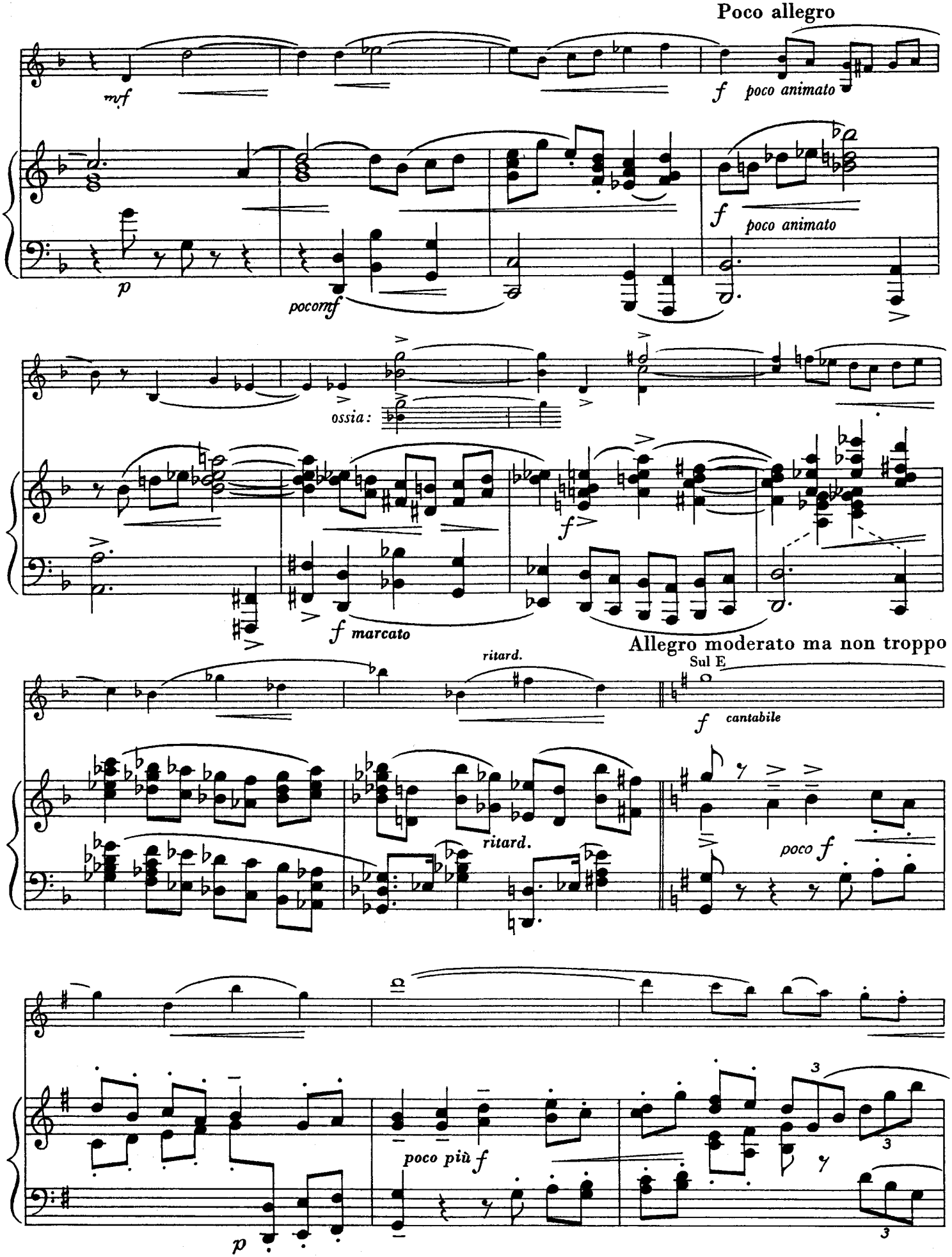
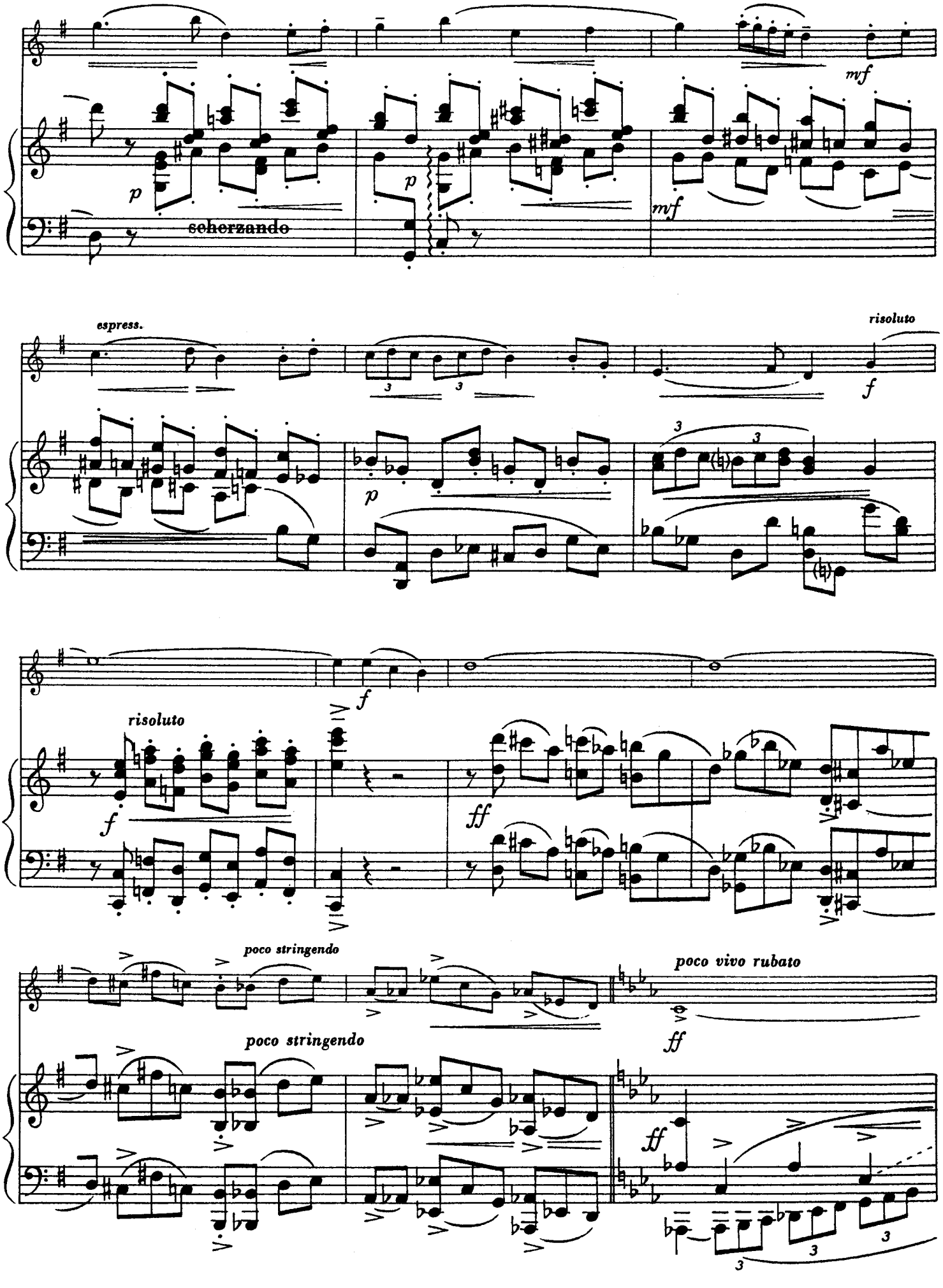
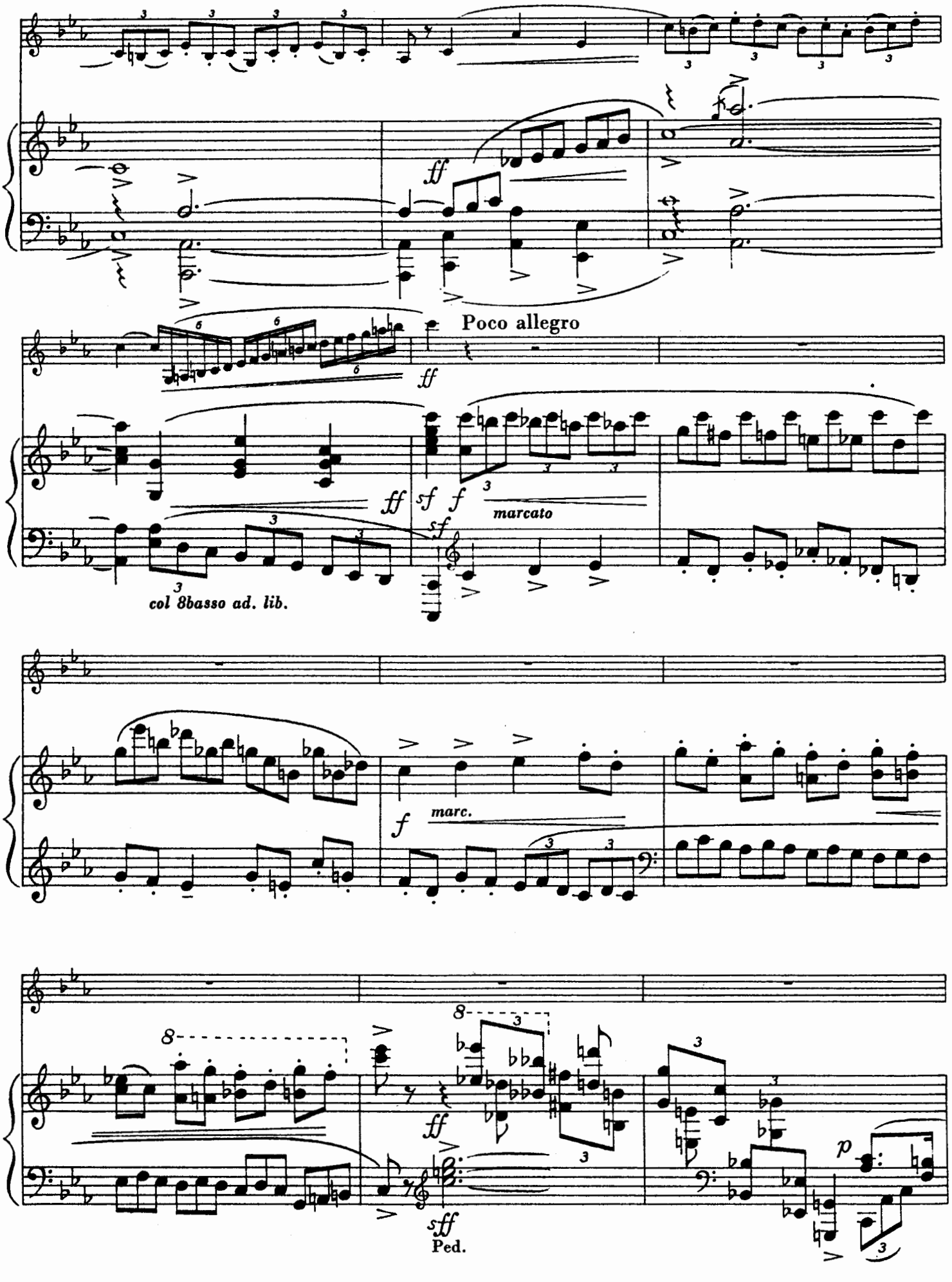
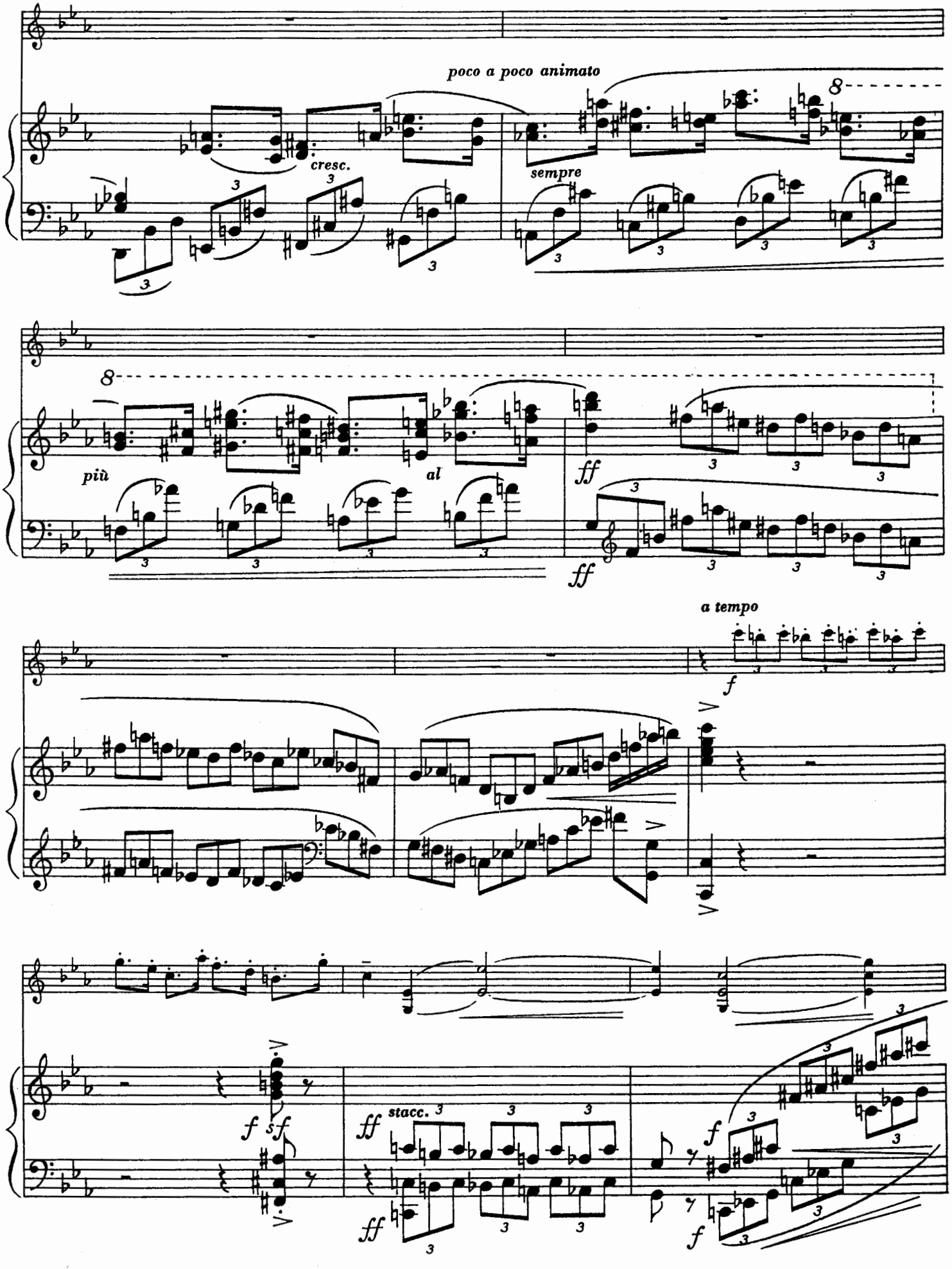
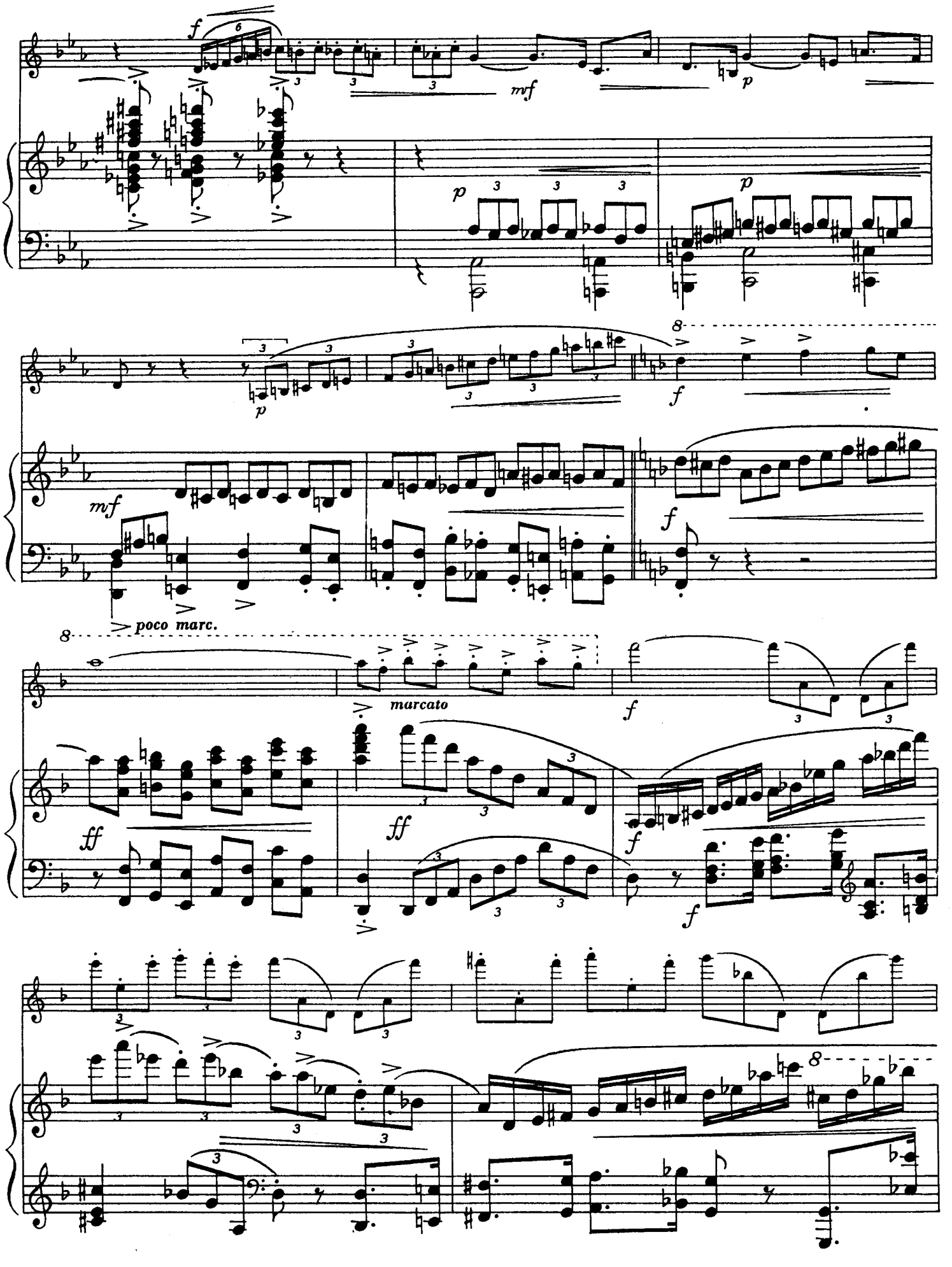

poco cresc.
poco
mf
mf
p
poco
poco
pp
p
pp
poco
poco
mf
p
mf
più mf
p
p
poco f

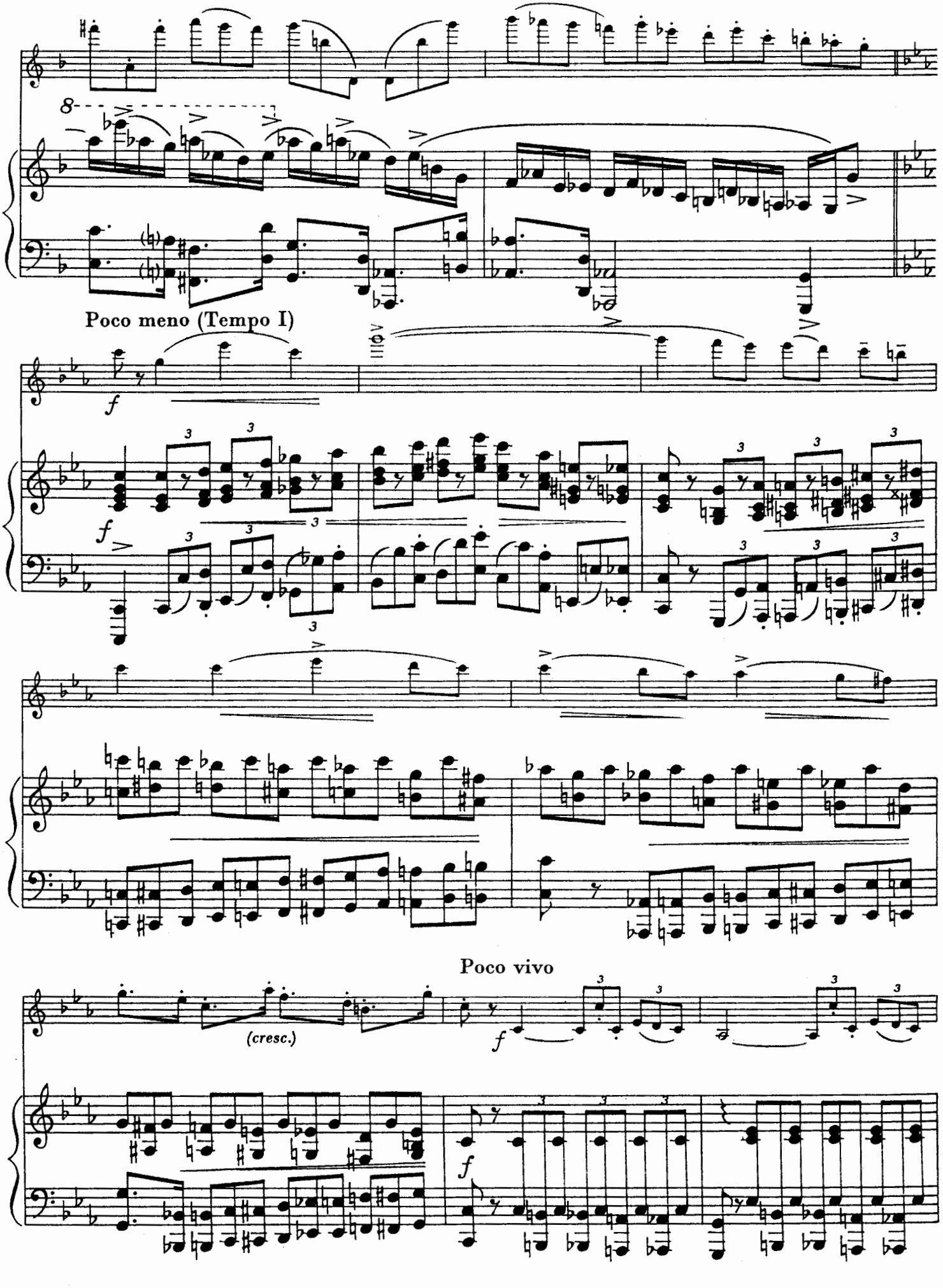

Poco allegro
mf
f poco animato
p
pocomf
f poco animato
ossia:
f
f marcato
Allegro moderato ma non troppo
ritard.
Sul E
f cantabile
ritard.
poco f
poco più f
p

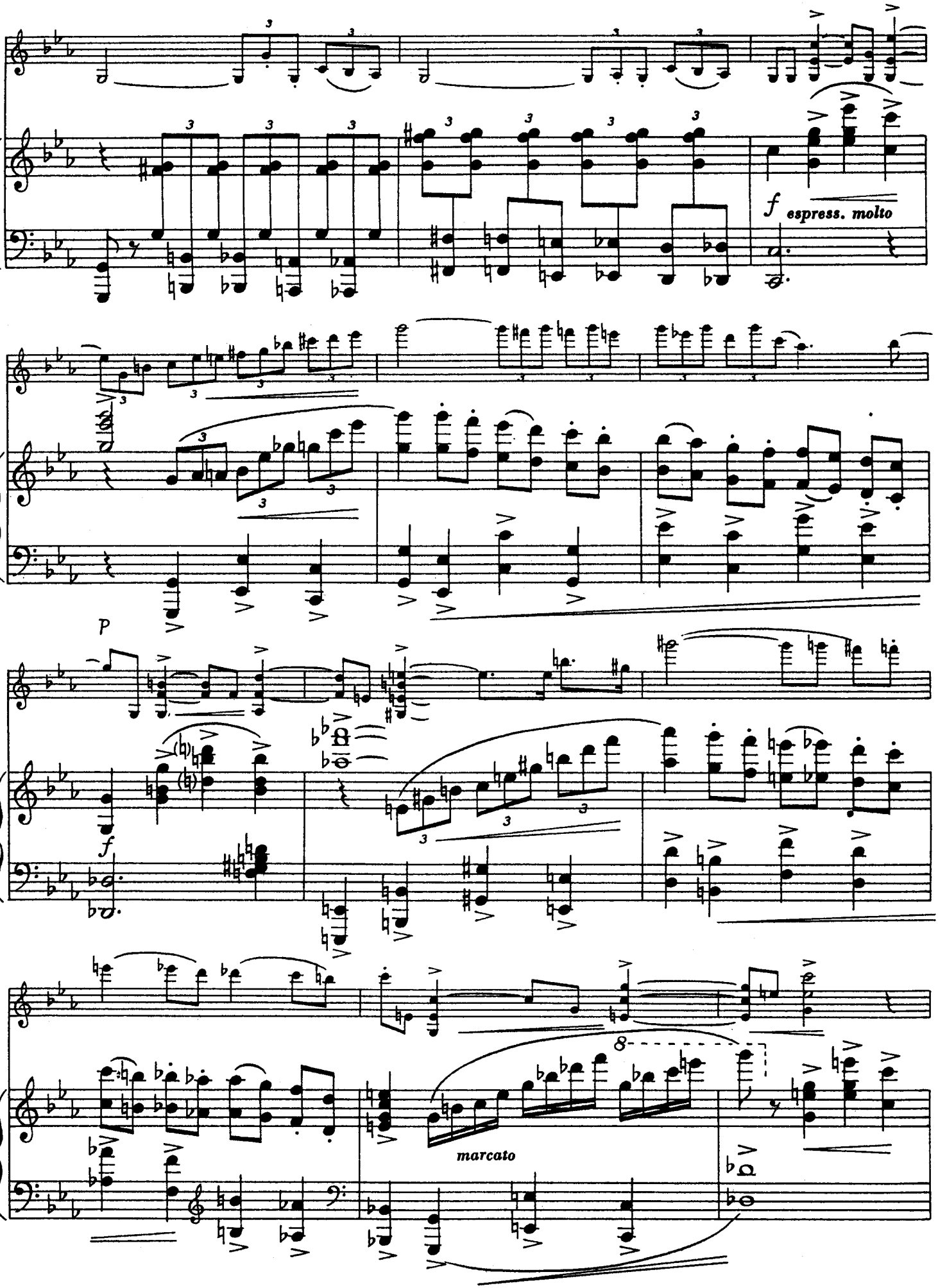

mvf
p
scherzando
p
mvf
espress.
risoluto
f
p
3
3
3
3
risoluto
f
f
ff
poco stringendo
poco vivo rubato
ff
poco stringendo
ff
3
3
3

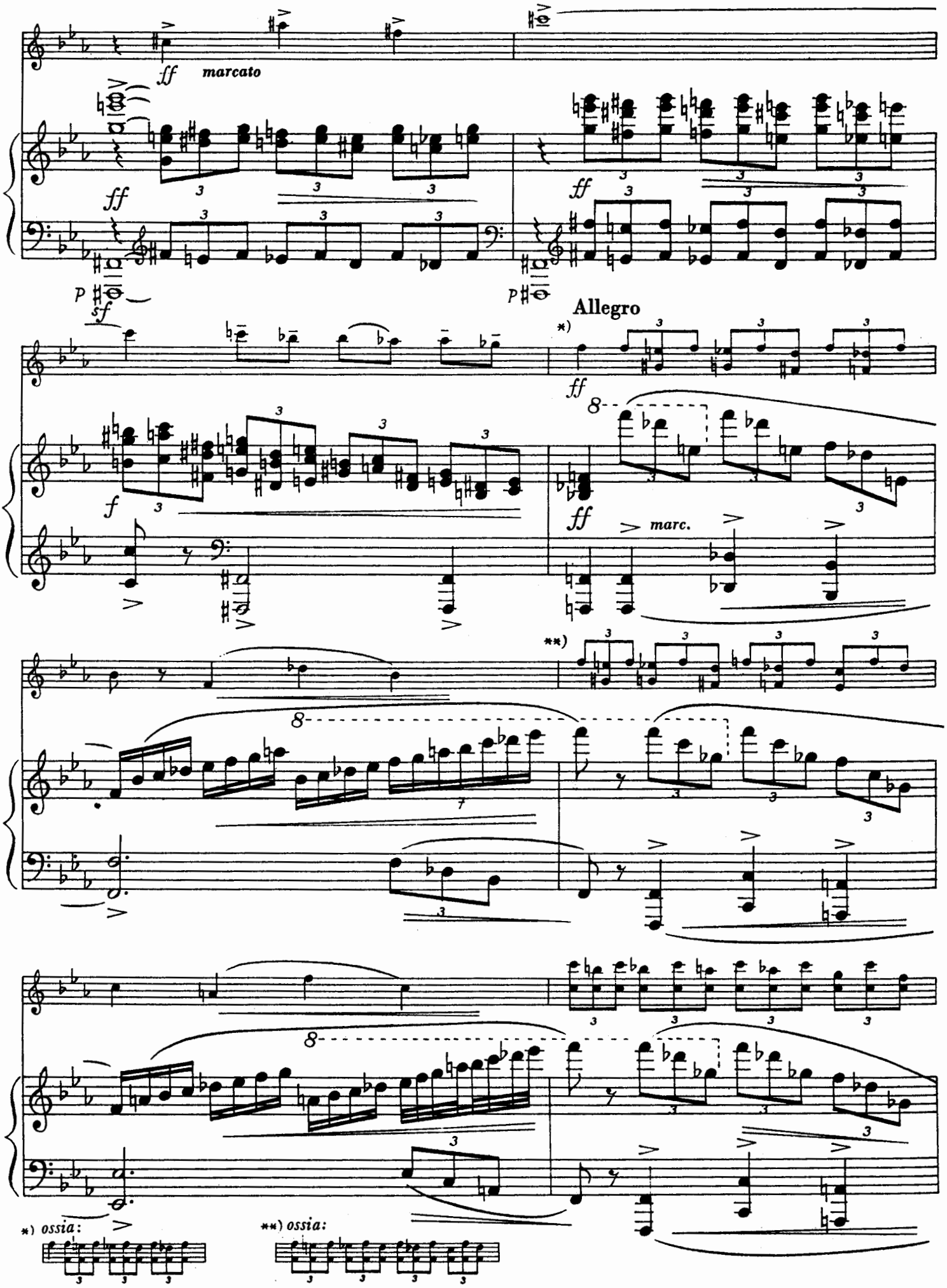

Poco allegro
marcato
col 8basso ad. lib.
marc.
Ped.

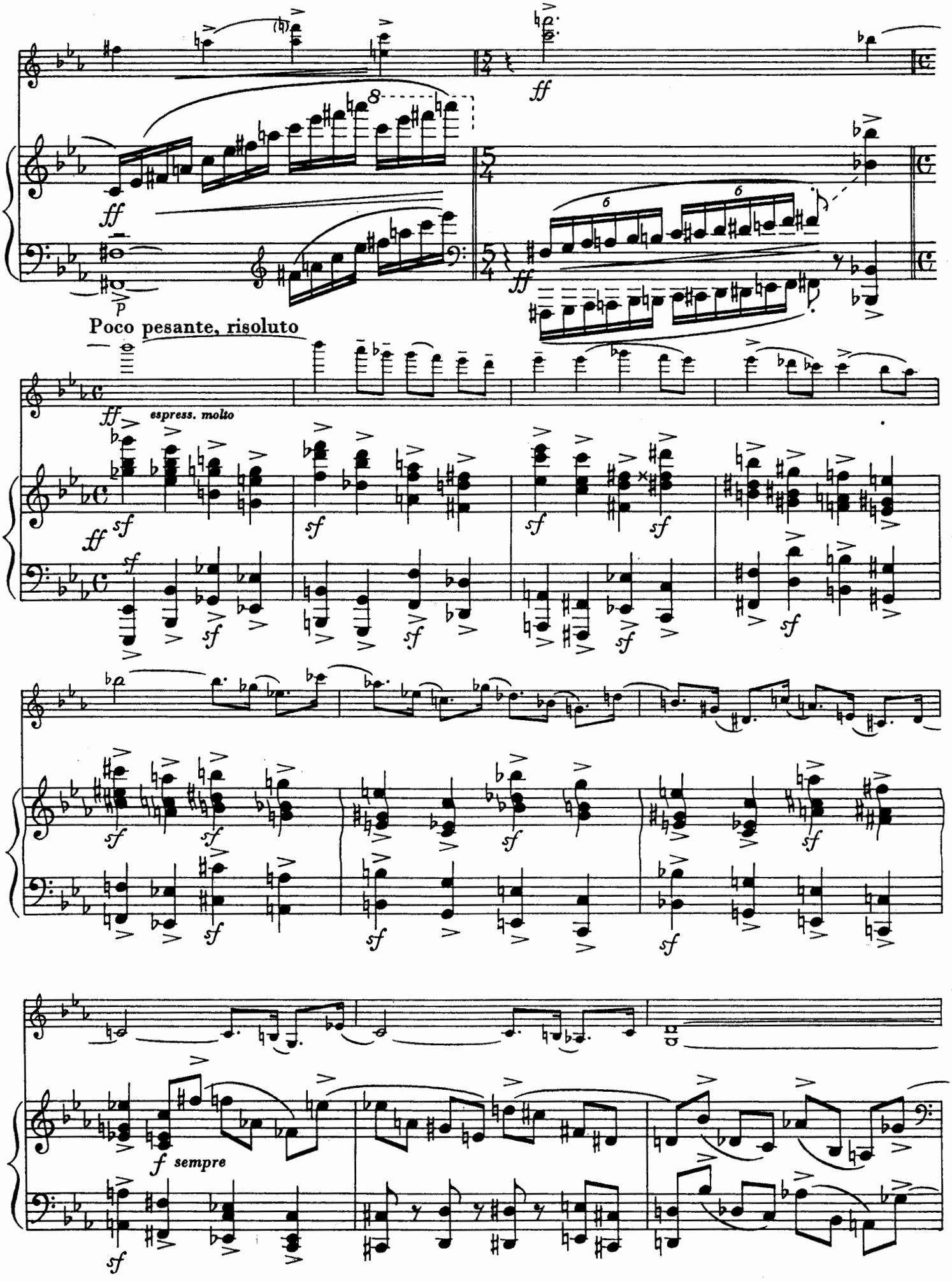

poco a poco animato
cresc.
sempre
più
al
ff
a tempo
f
stacc.

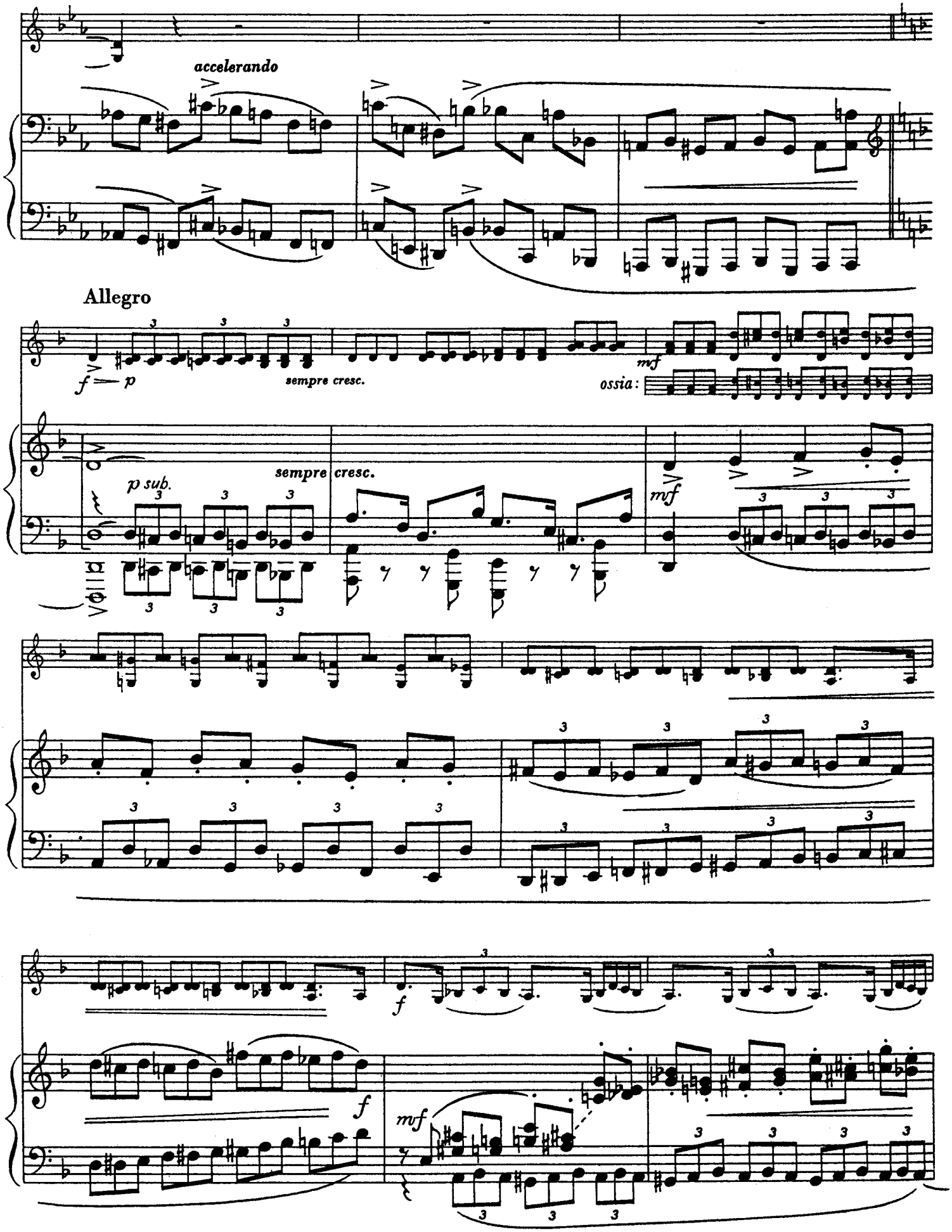

f
mf
p
p
p
f
mf
poco marc.
f
marcato
f
ff
ff
f
f
8
8

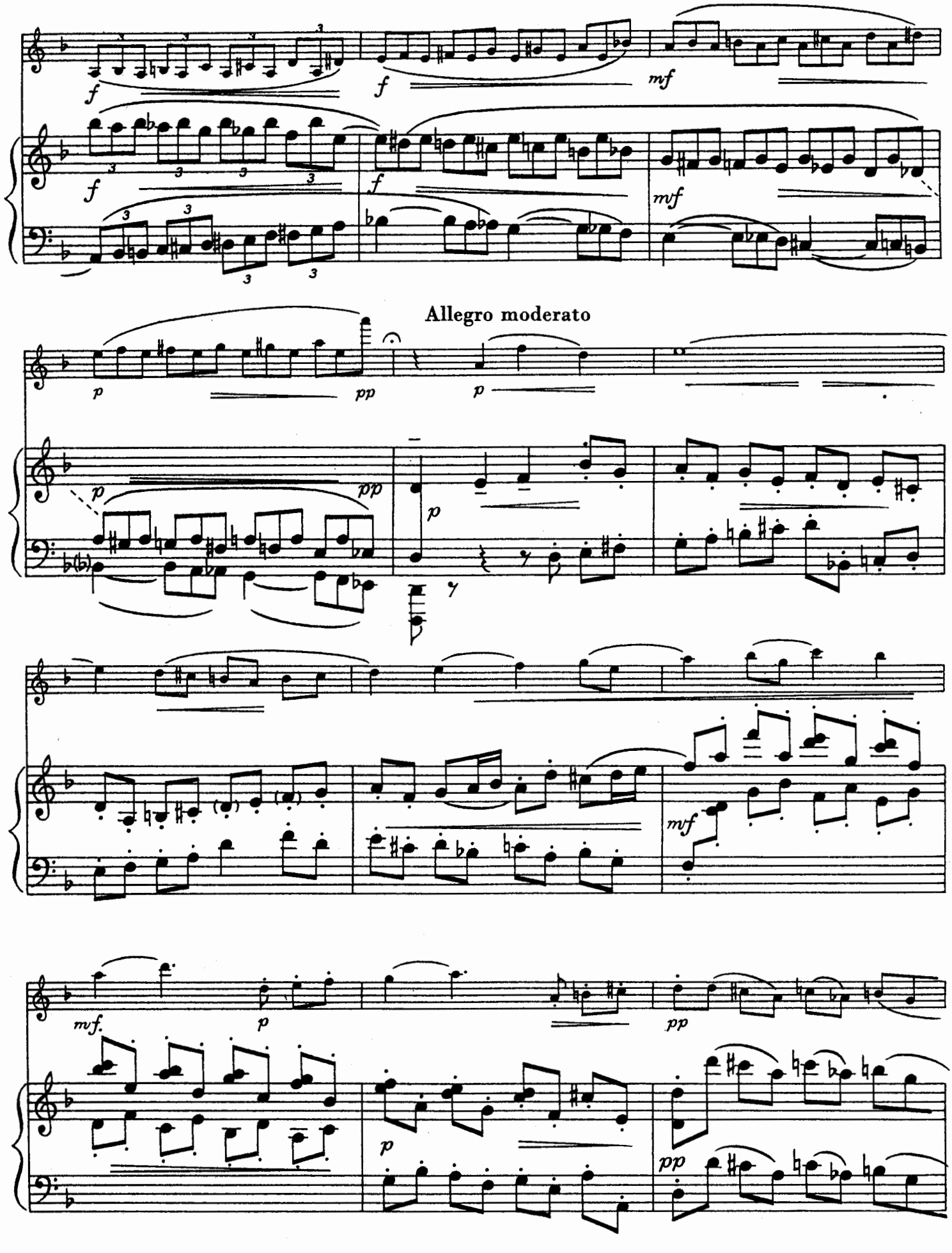

Poco meno (Tempo I)
Poco vivo
(cresc.)

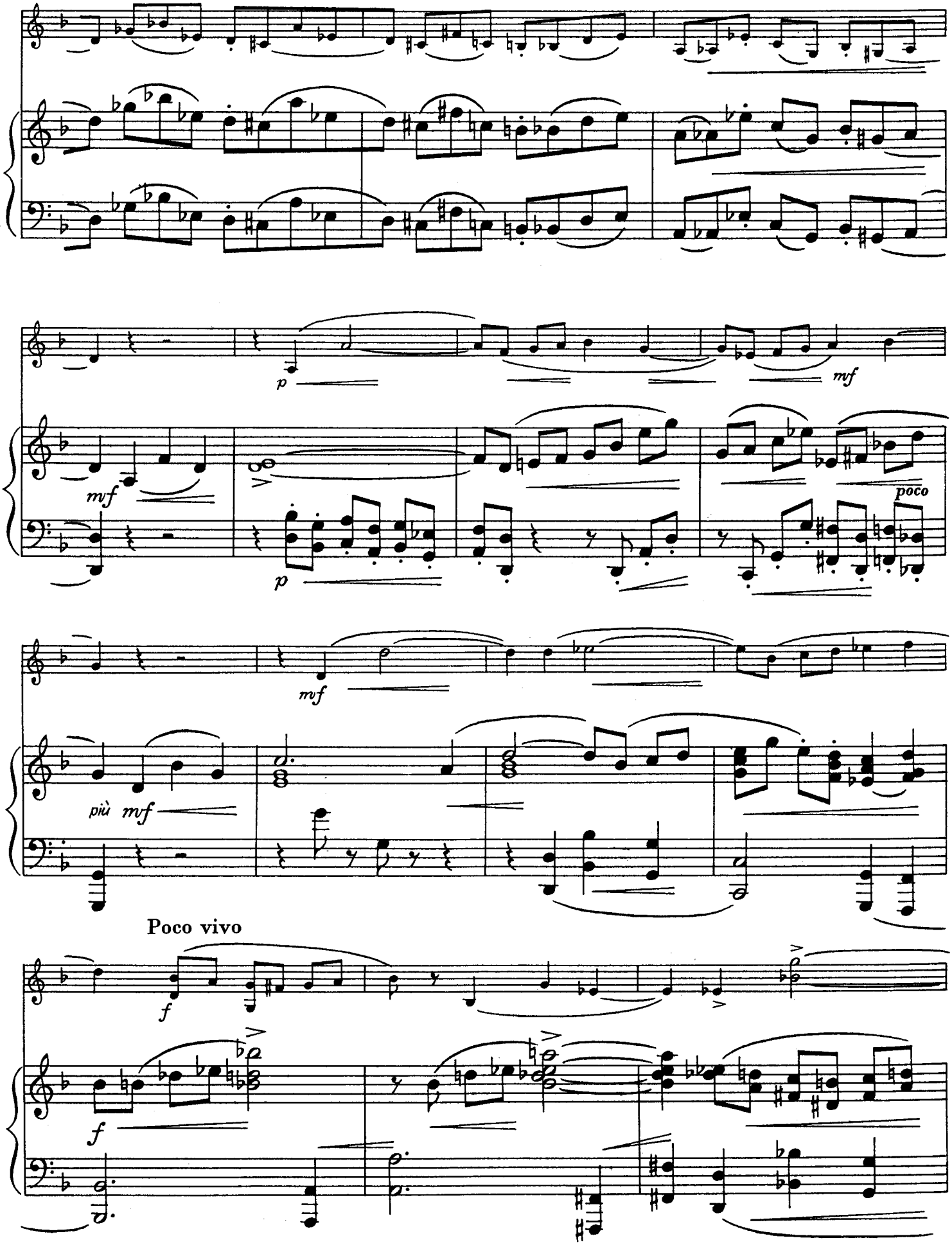

f espress. molto
P
f
marcato

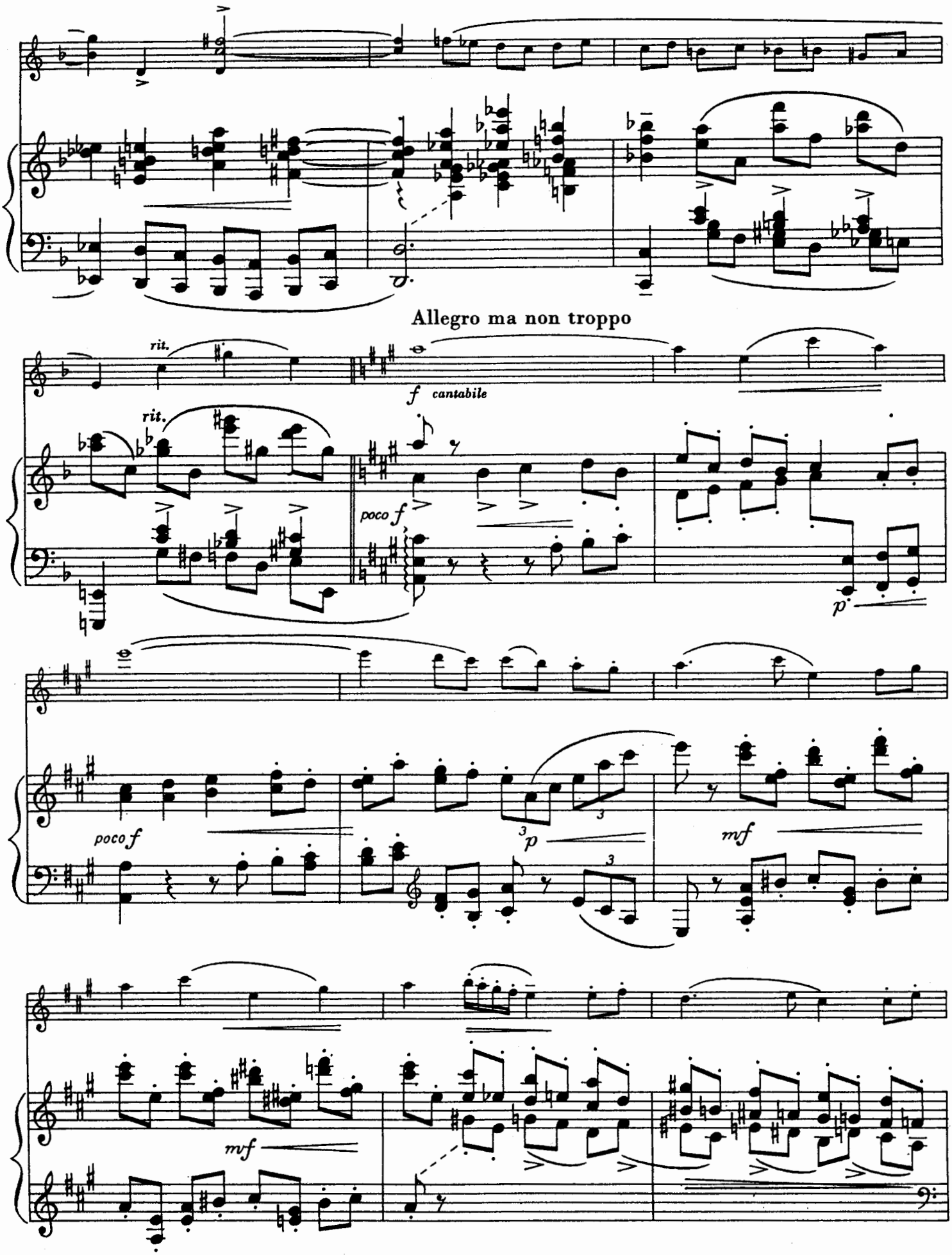

ff marcato
ff
P
P
sf
Allegro
*)
ff
f
ff marc.
**)
*) ossia:
**) ossia:

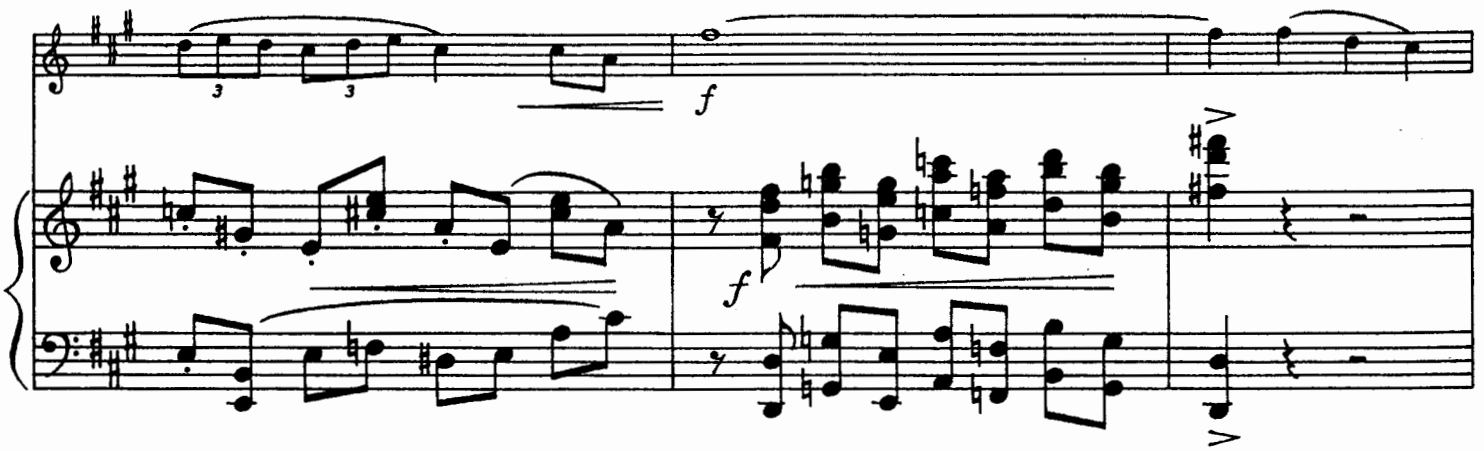

Poco pesante, risoluto
espress. molto
f sempre

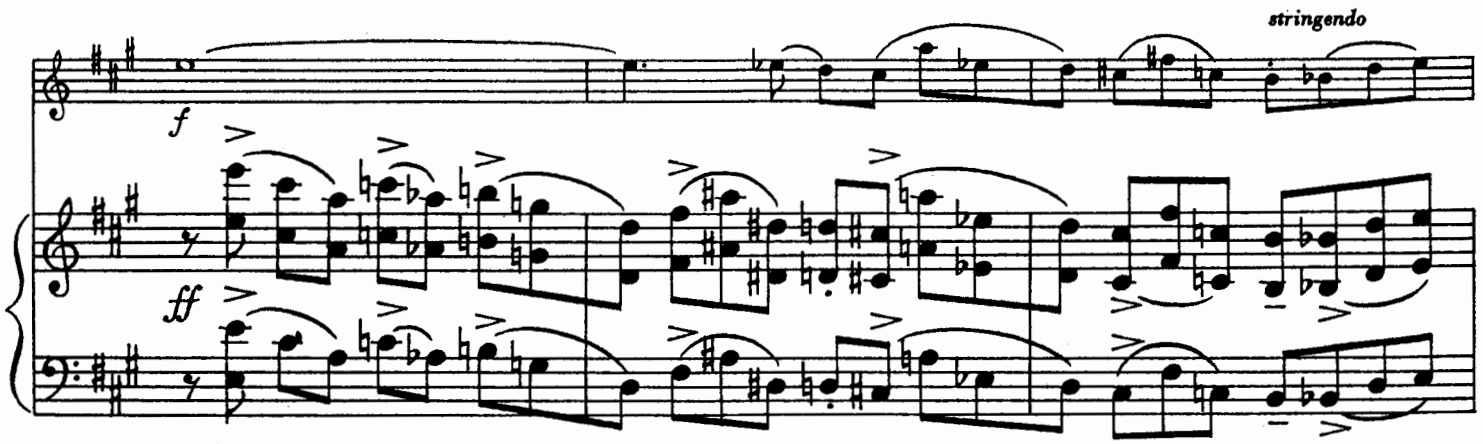

accelerando
Allegro
f — p
sempre cresc.
mf
ossia:
p sub.
sempre cresc.
mf
f
f
mf


Allegro moderato

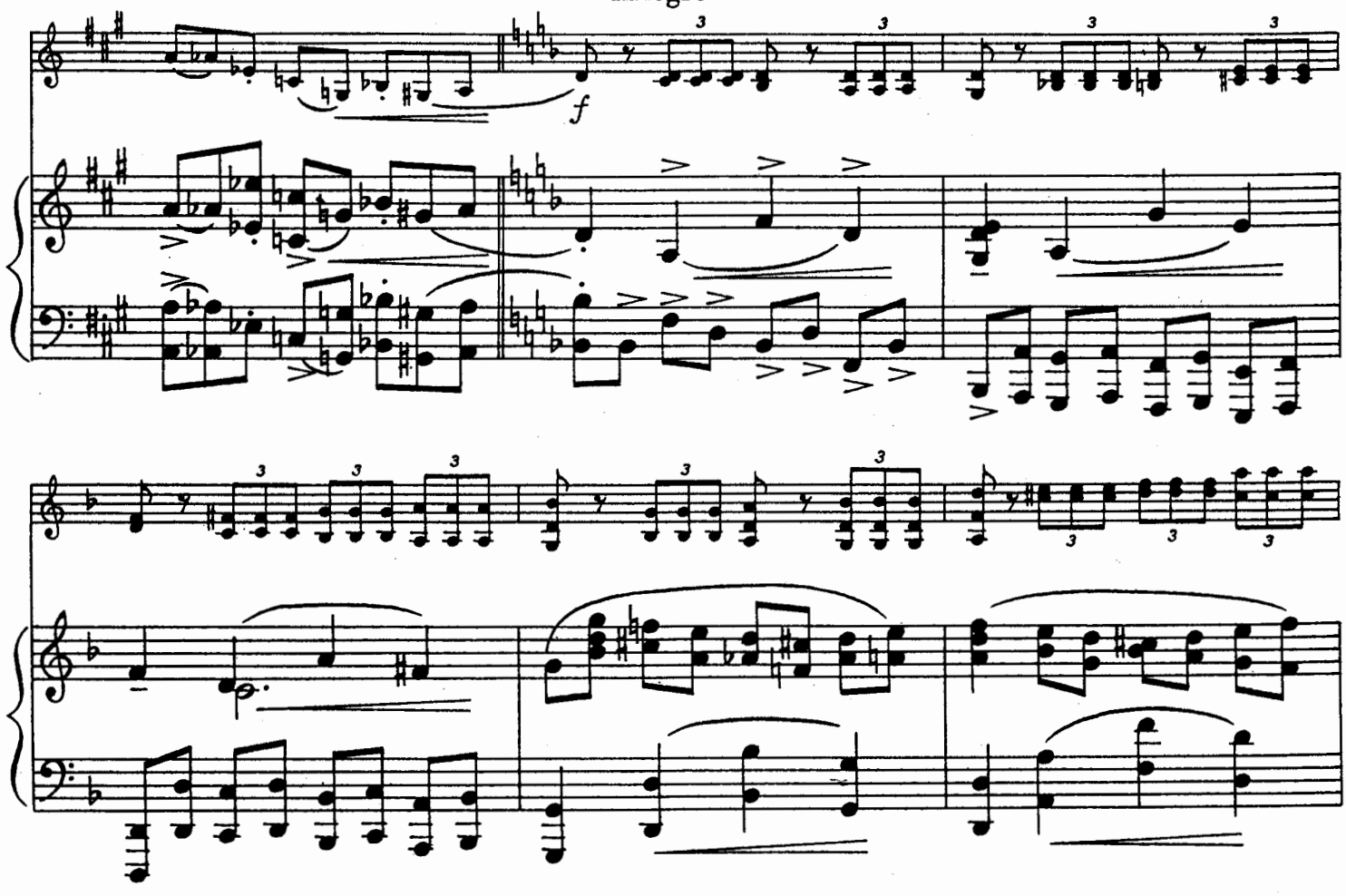

p
mf
mf
poco
p
mf
più mf
Poco vivo
f
f

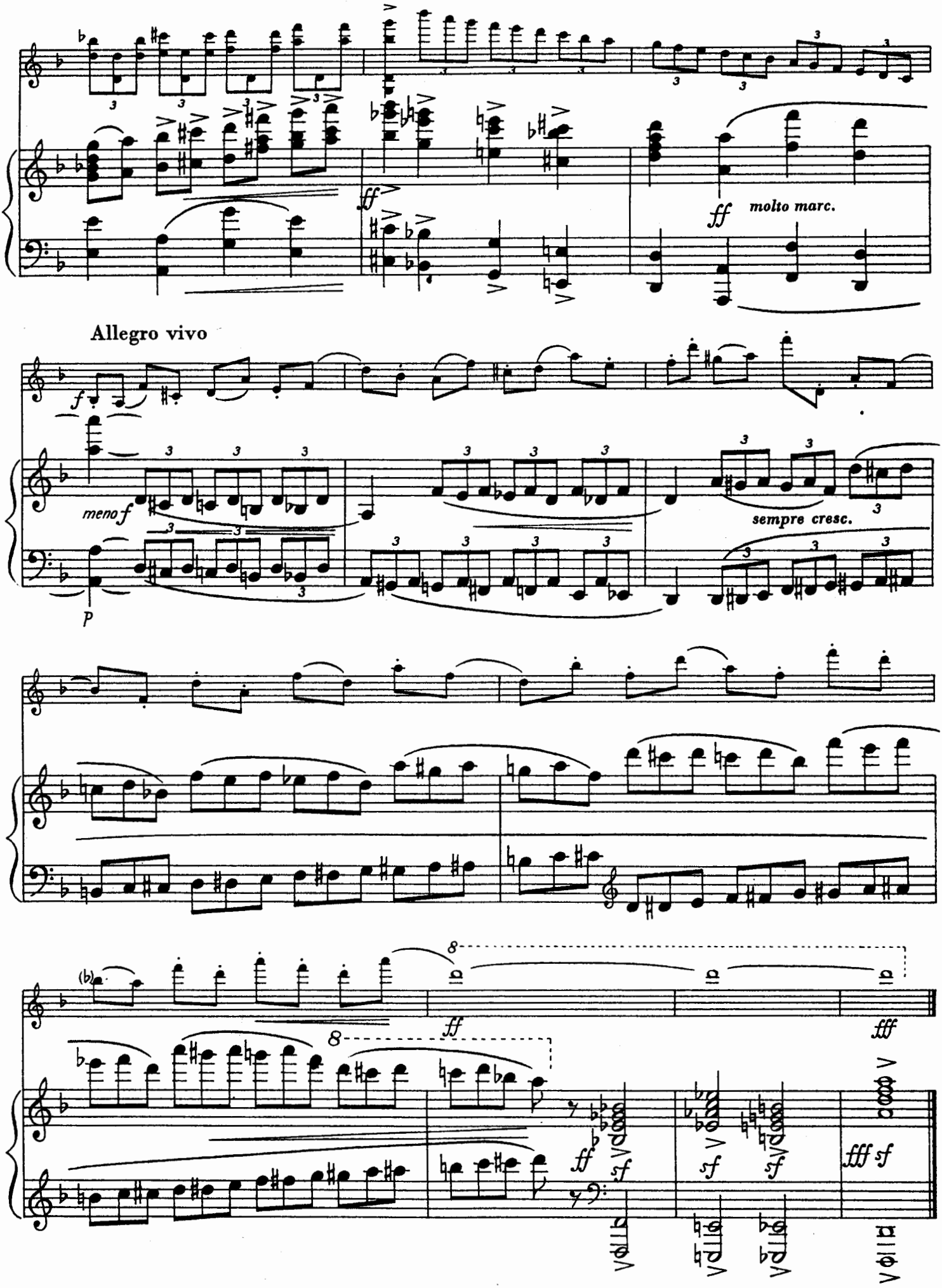

Allegro ma non troppo
rit.
rit.
f cantabile
poco f
p
poco f
3
p
mf
mf





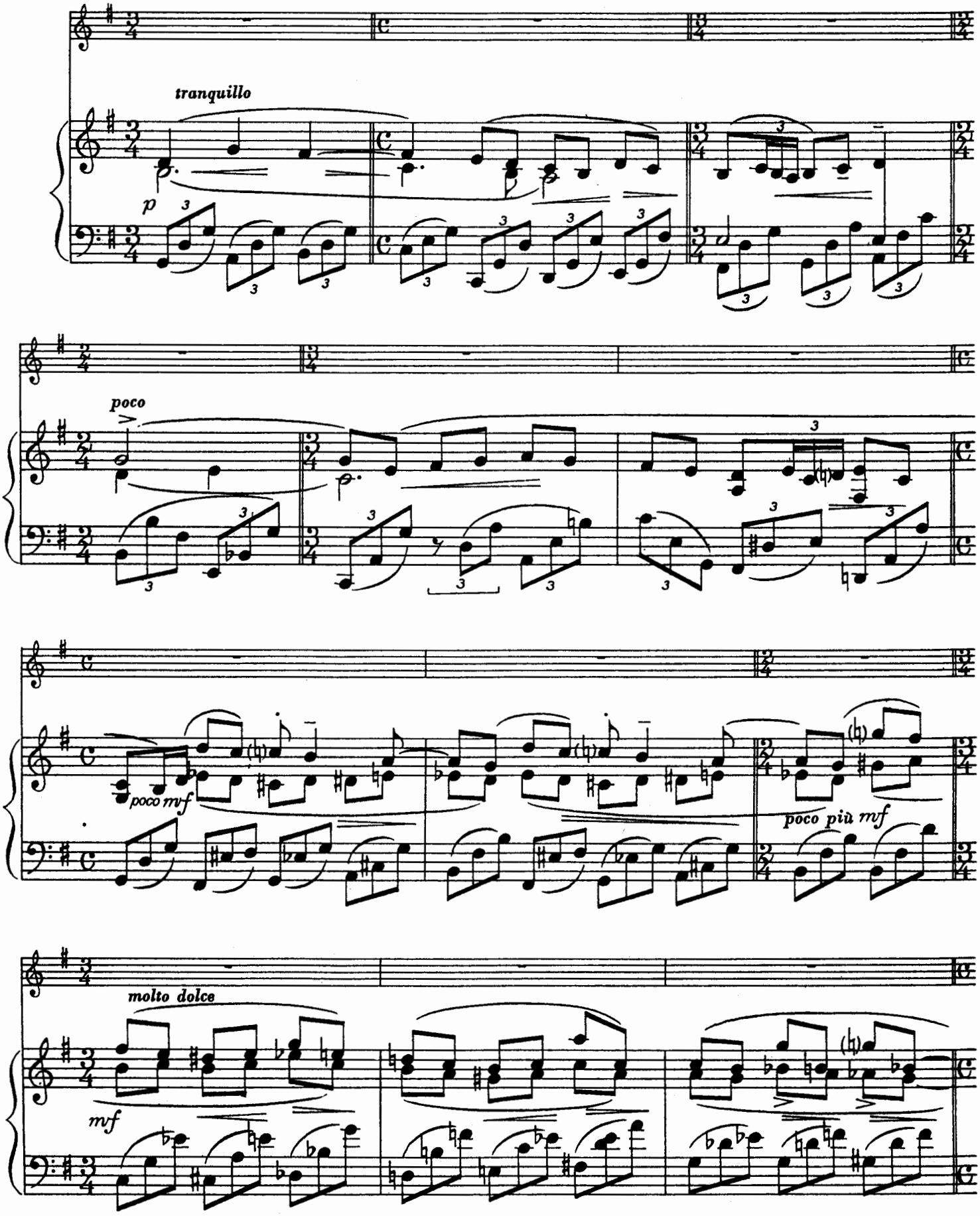
Allegro

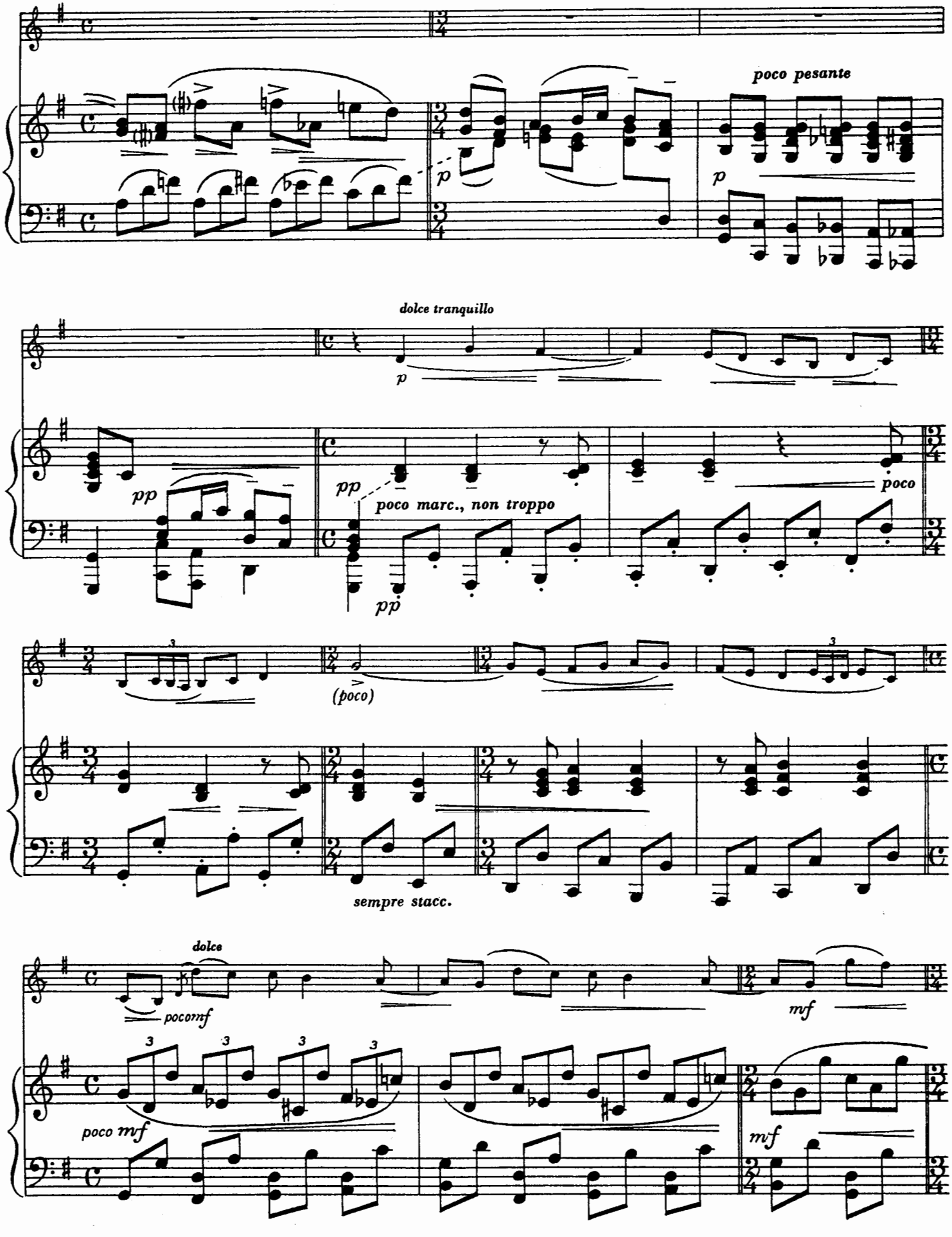


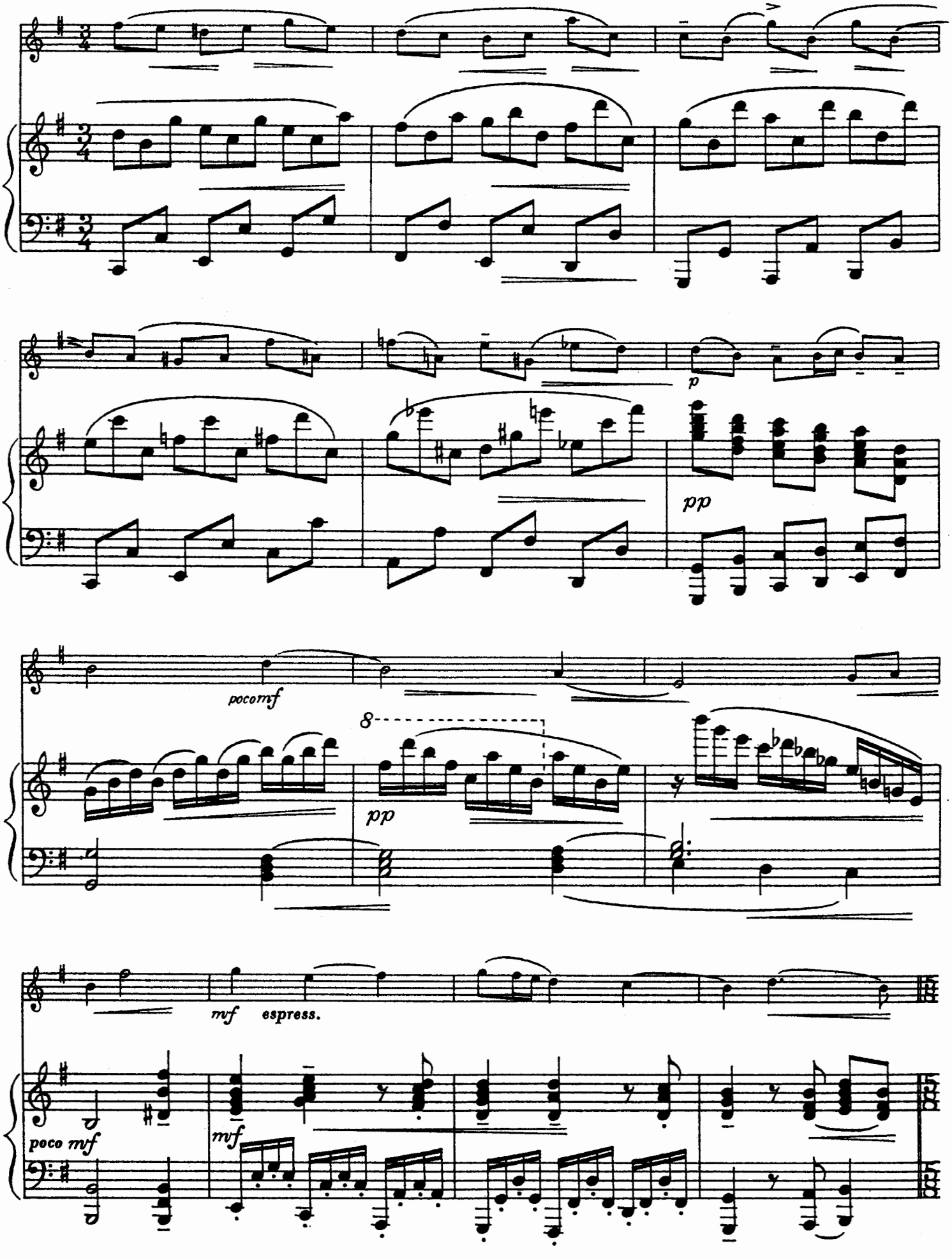

ff
ff
molto marc.
Allegro vivo
f
meno f
p
sempre cresc.
ff
ff
sf
sf
sf
fff
fff sf

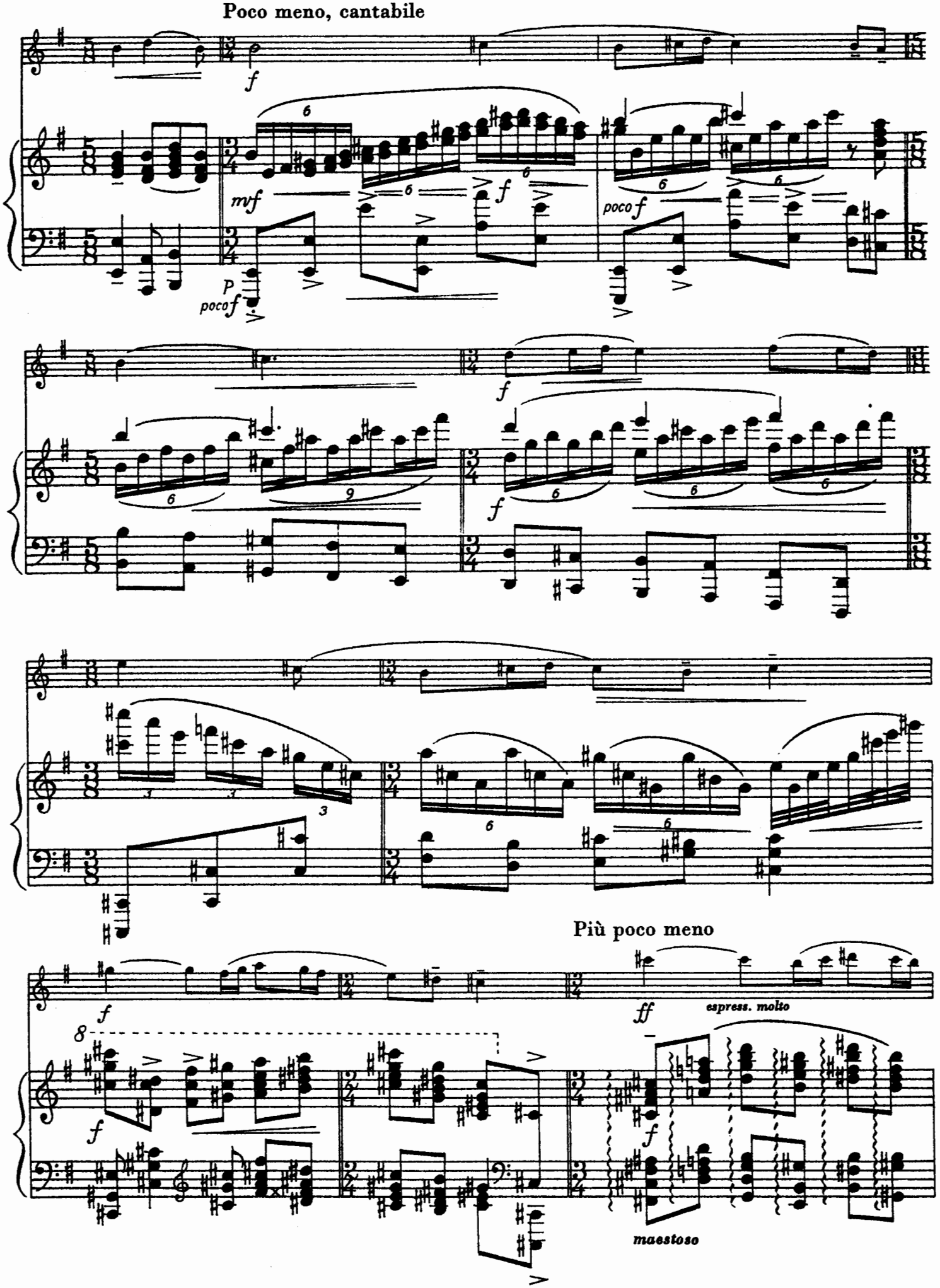
II

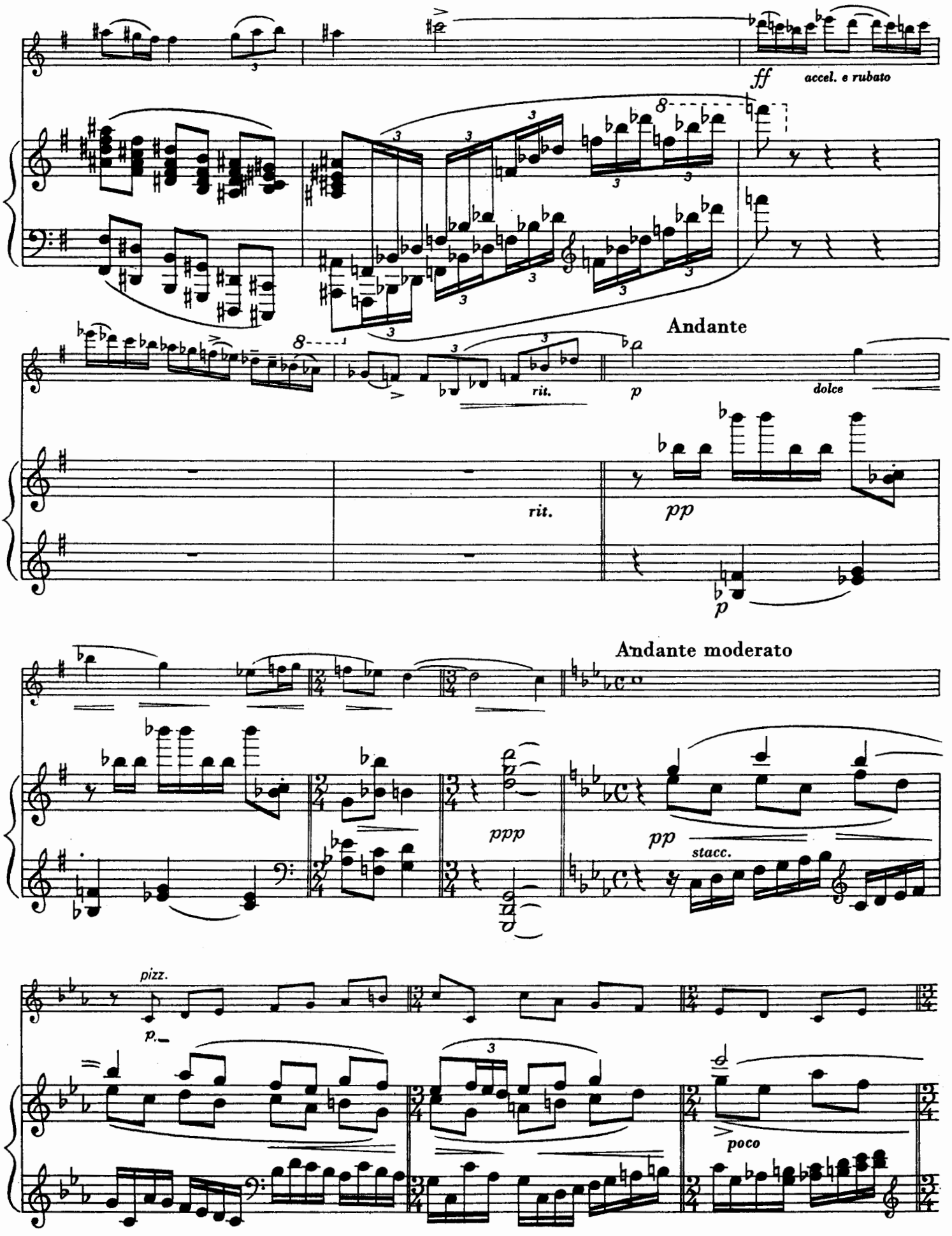
Andante moderato (Andantino)

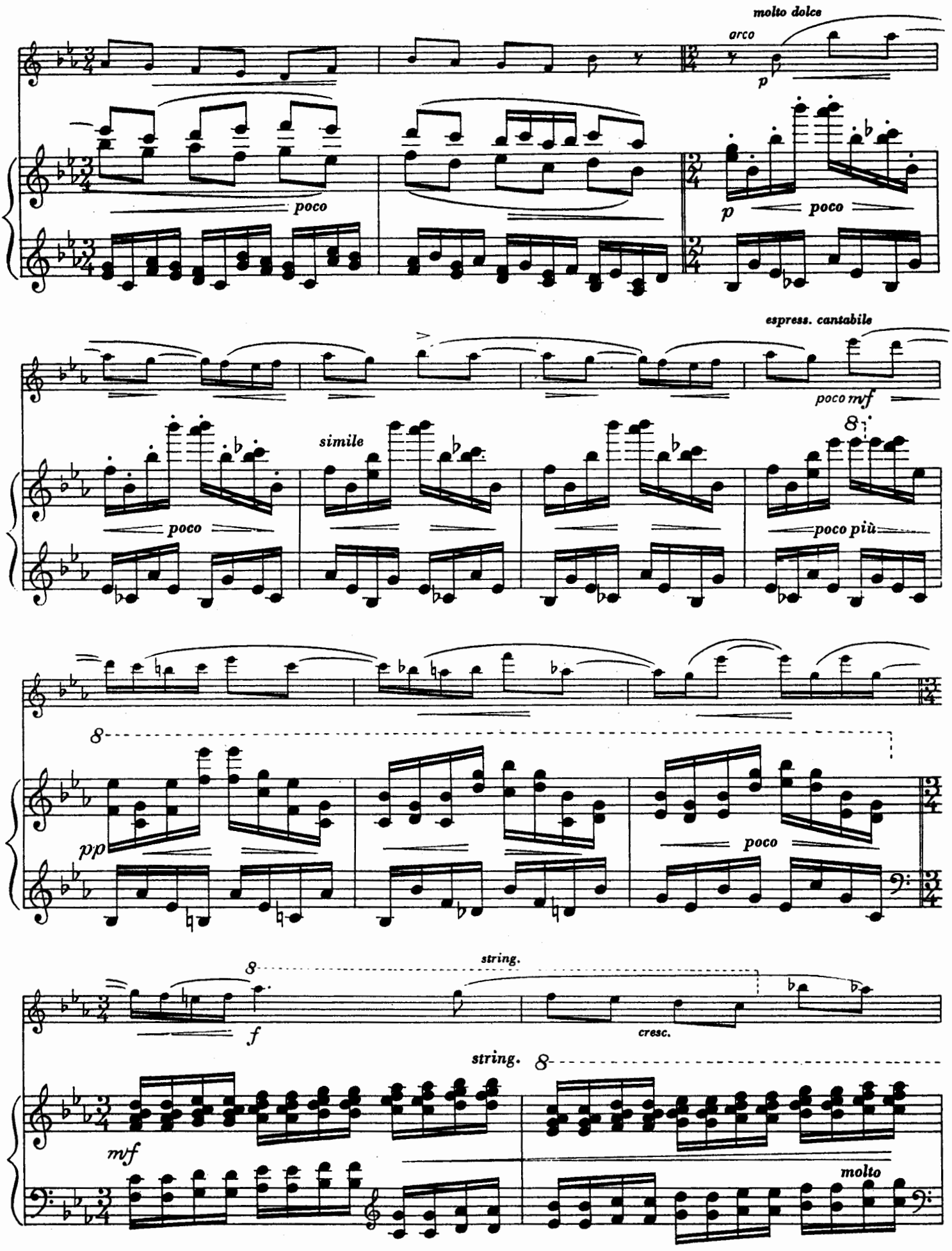


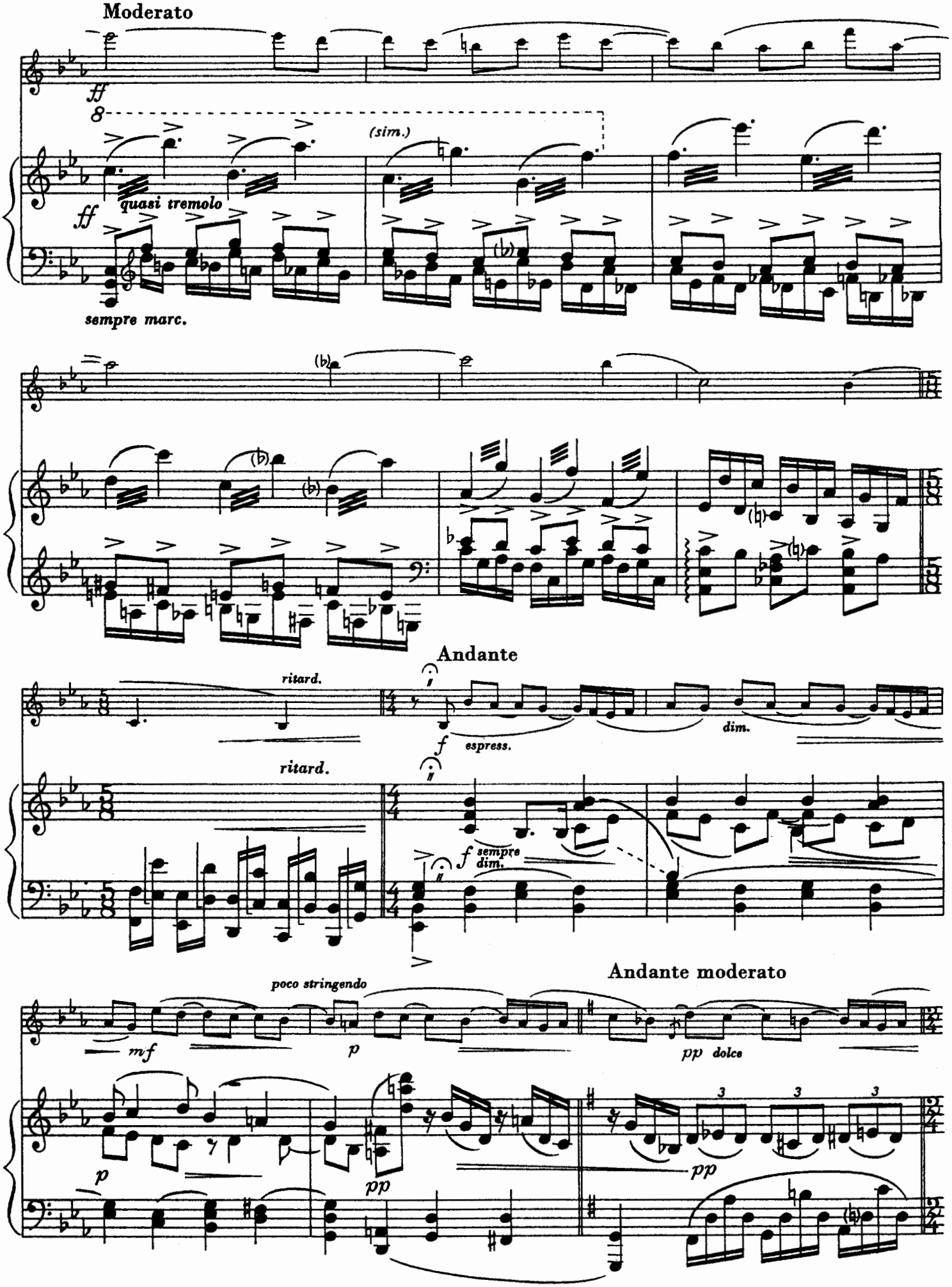

poco pesante
p
p
dolce tranquillo
p
pp
pp
poco marc., non troppo
poco
pp
(poco)
sempre stacc.
dolce
pocomf
mf
poco mf
mf

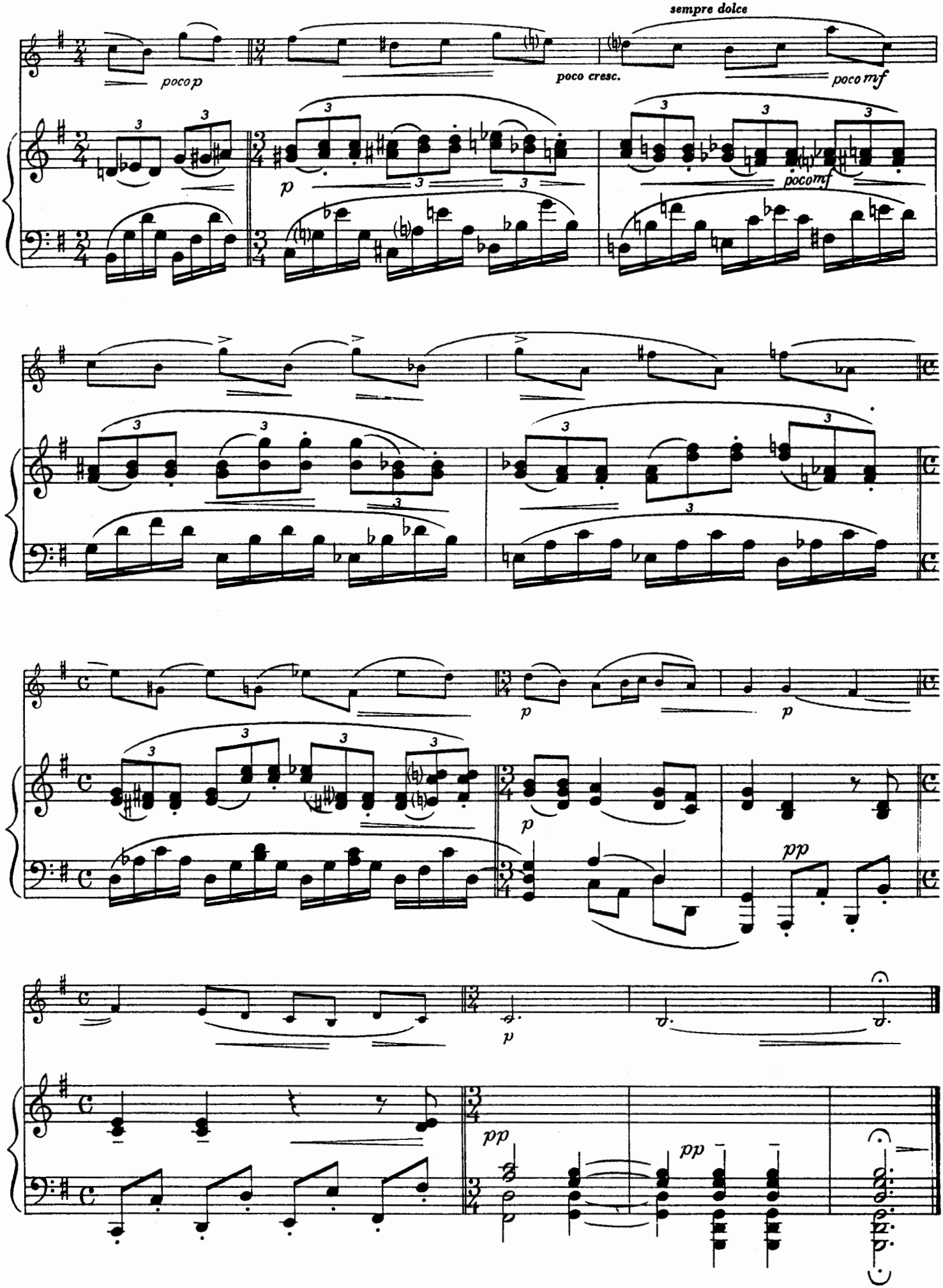

p
pp
pocomf
8
pp
mf espress.
poco mf
mf


Poco meno, cantabile
Più poco meno
espress. molto
maestoso


ff
accel. e rubato
Andante
rit.
p
dolce
rit.
pp
p
Andante moderato
ppp
pp
stacc.
pizz.
p
poco

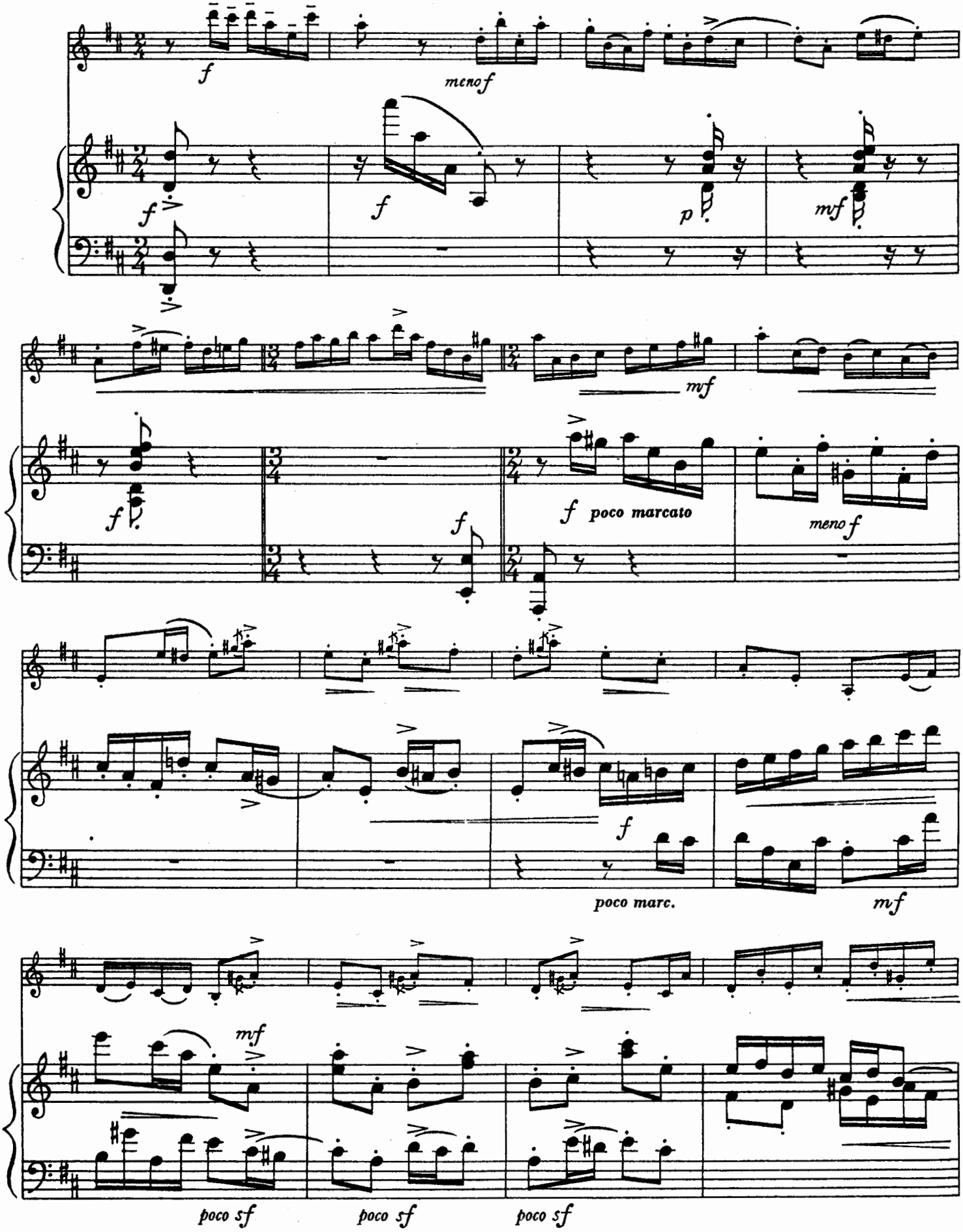

molto dolce
arco
p
poco
p
poco
espress. cantabile
poco mf
simile
poco
poco più
pp
poco
string.
f
cresc.
string.
mf
molto

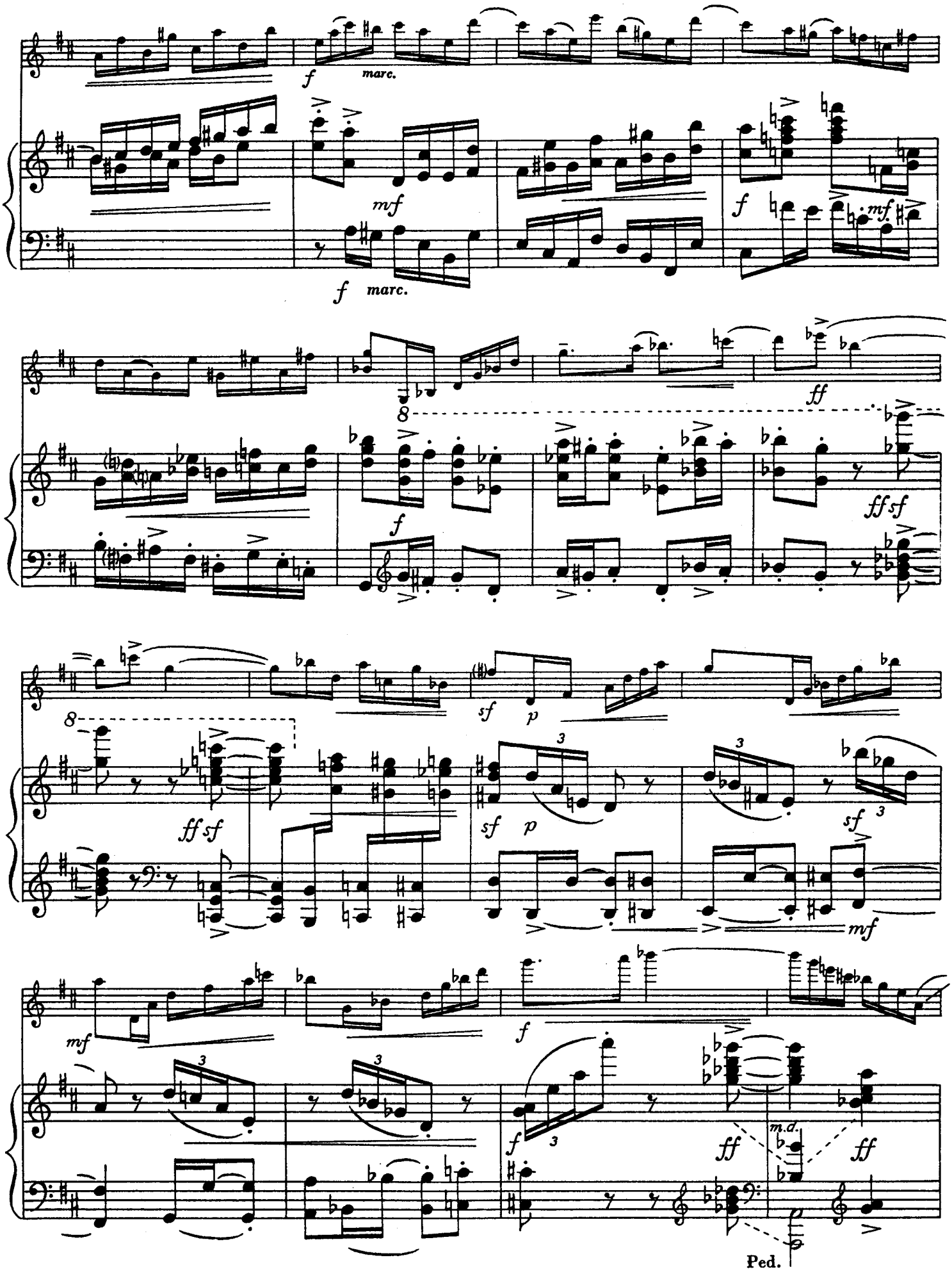

Moderato
ff
8
(sim.)
quasi tremolo
ff
sempre marc.
Andante
ritard.
f espress.
dim.
ritard.
f sempre dim.
poco stringendo
mf
p
Andante moderato
pp dolce
p
pp
pp

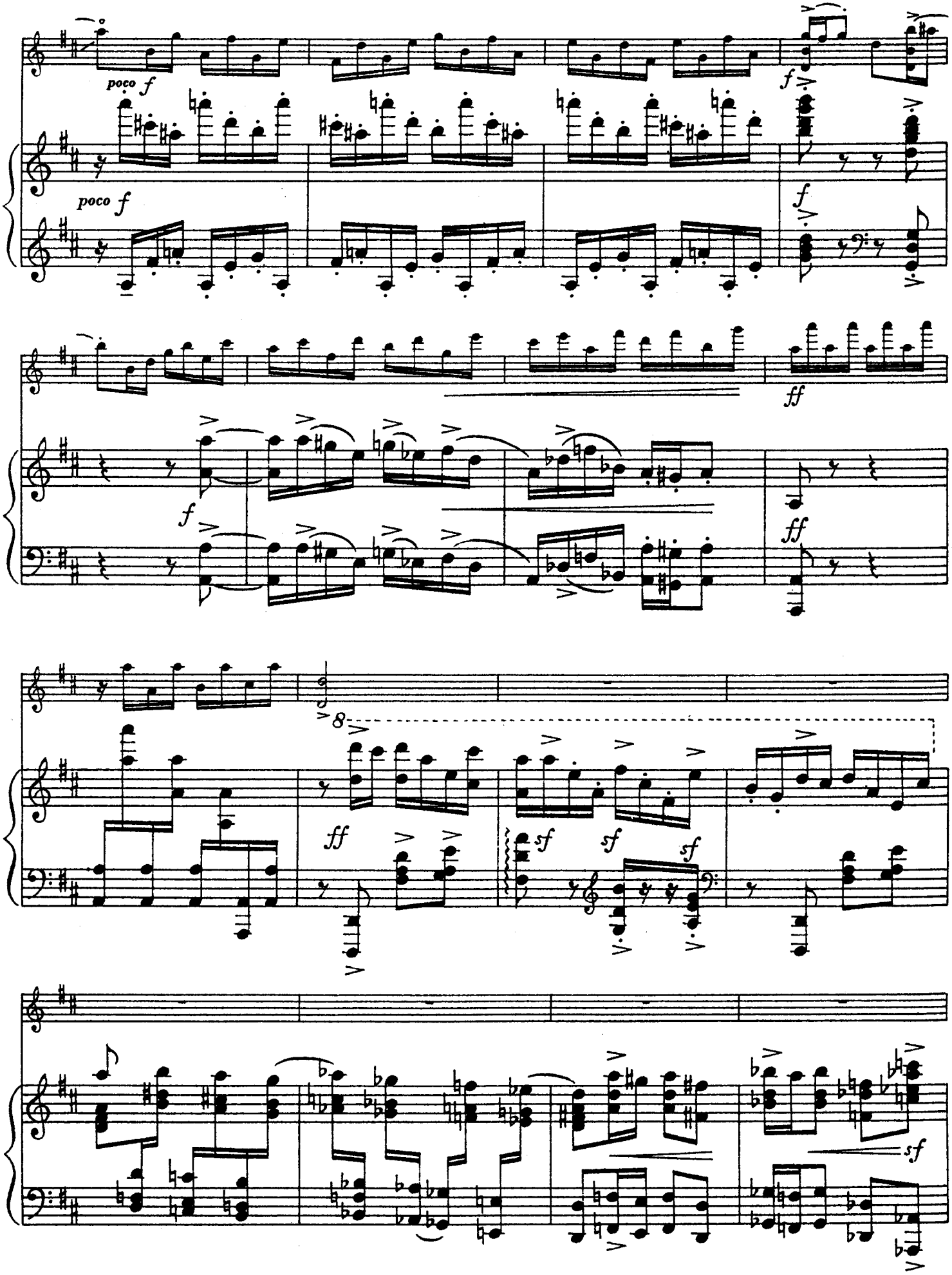

sempre dolce
poco p
poco cresc.
poco mf
p
poco mf
p
p
p
pp
p
pp
pp

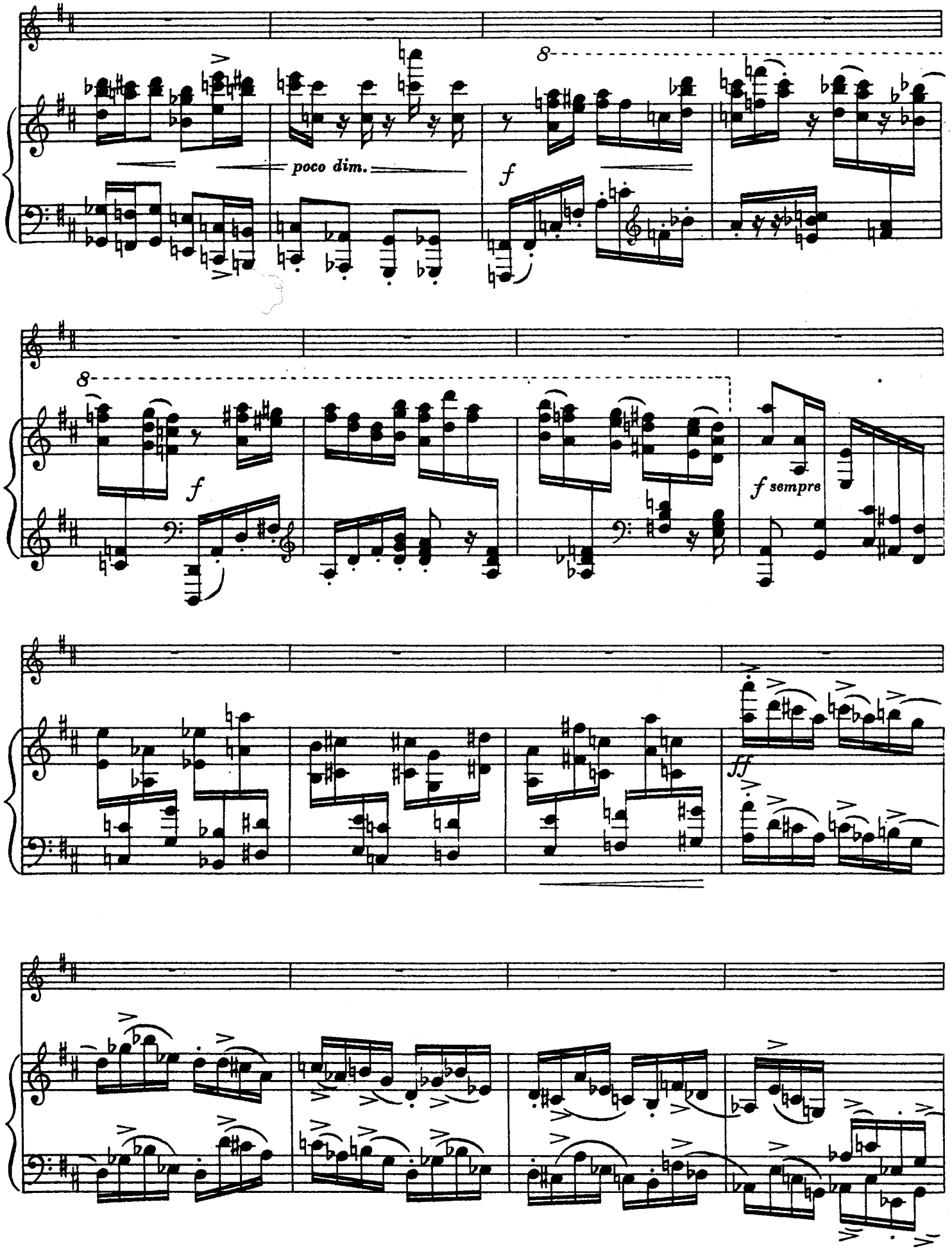
III

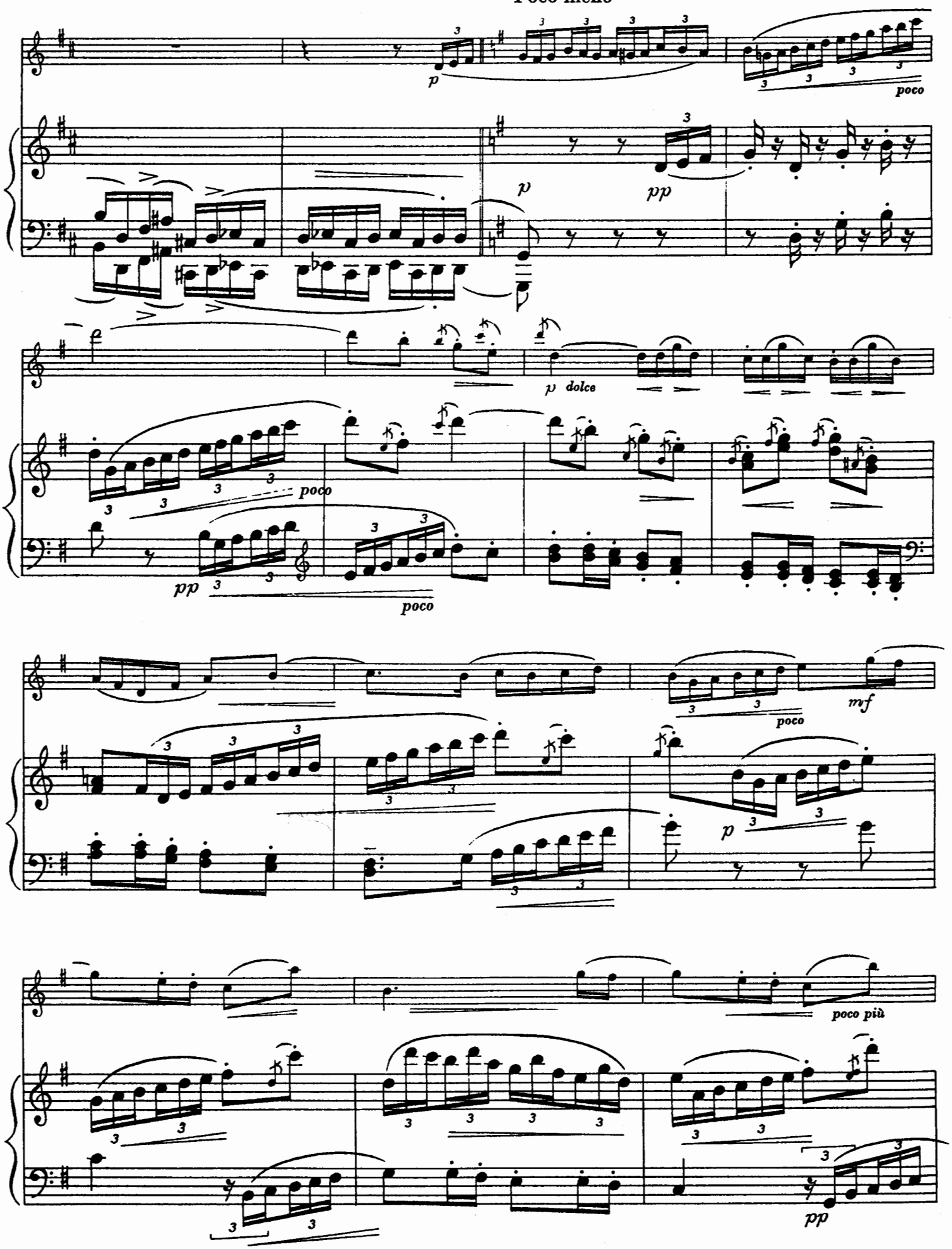
Allegro

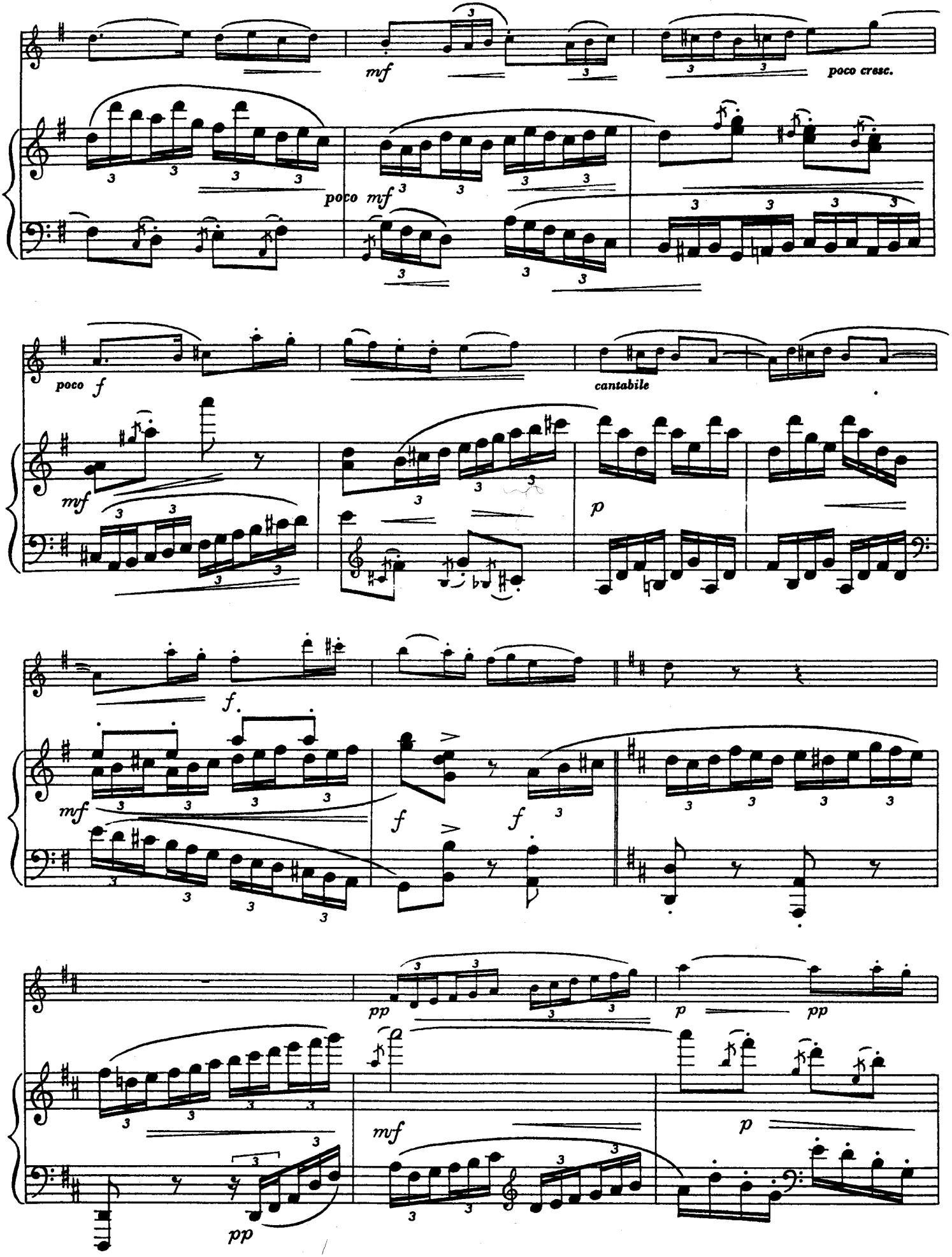

f
meno f
f
f
p
mf
mf
f
f
f
poco marcato
meno f
f
poco marc.
mf
mf
poco sf
poco sf
poco sf

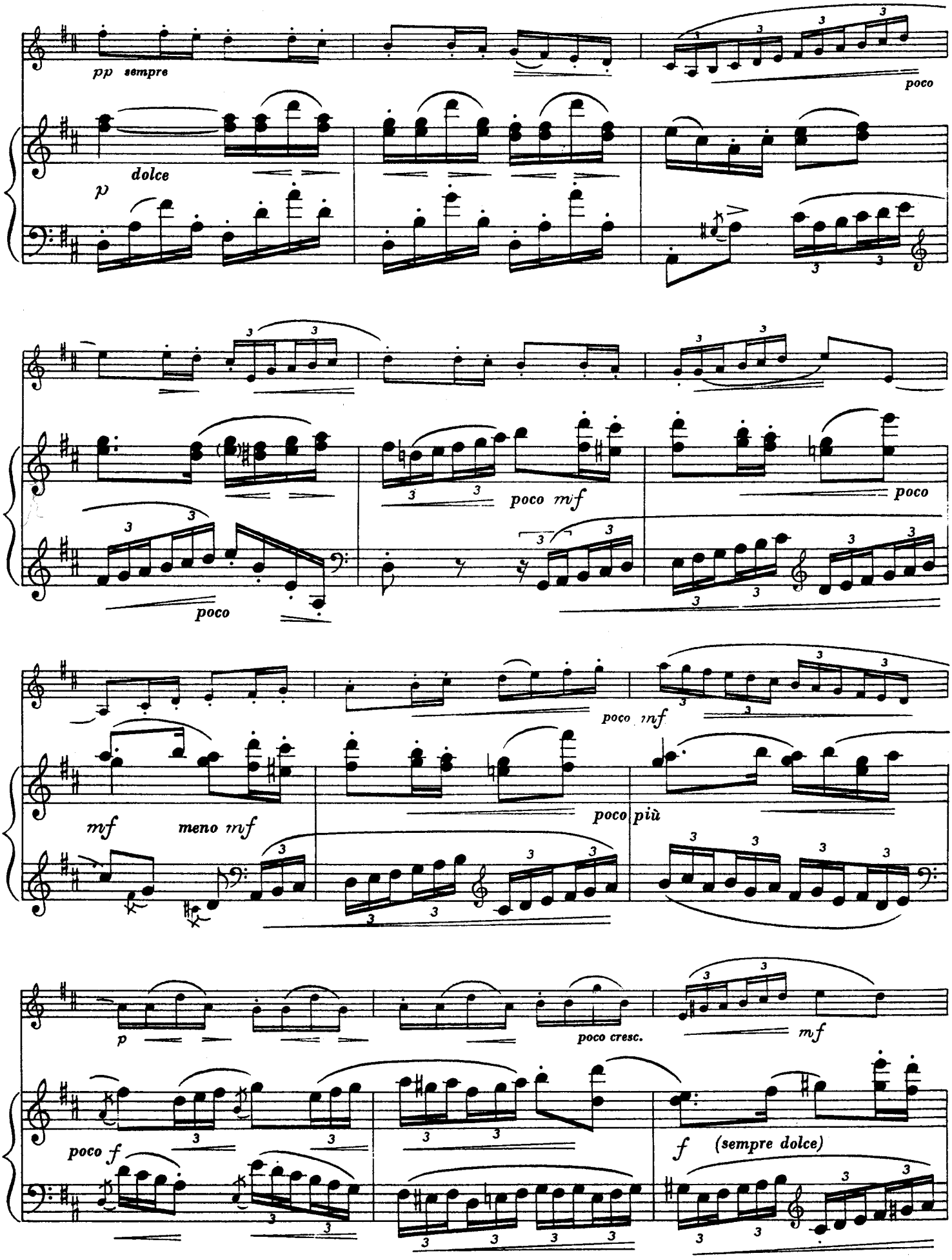

f
marc.
mf
f
marc.
f
mf
ff
8
f
ff sf
8
ff sf
sf
p
sf
p
sf
mf
mf
f
f
ff
m.d.
ff
Ped.

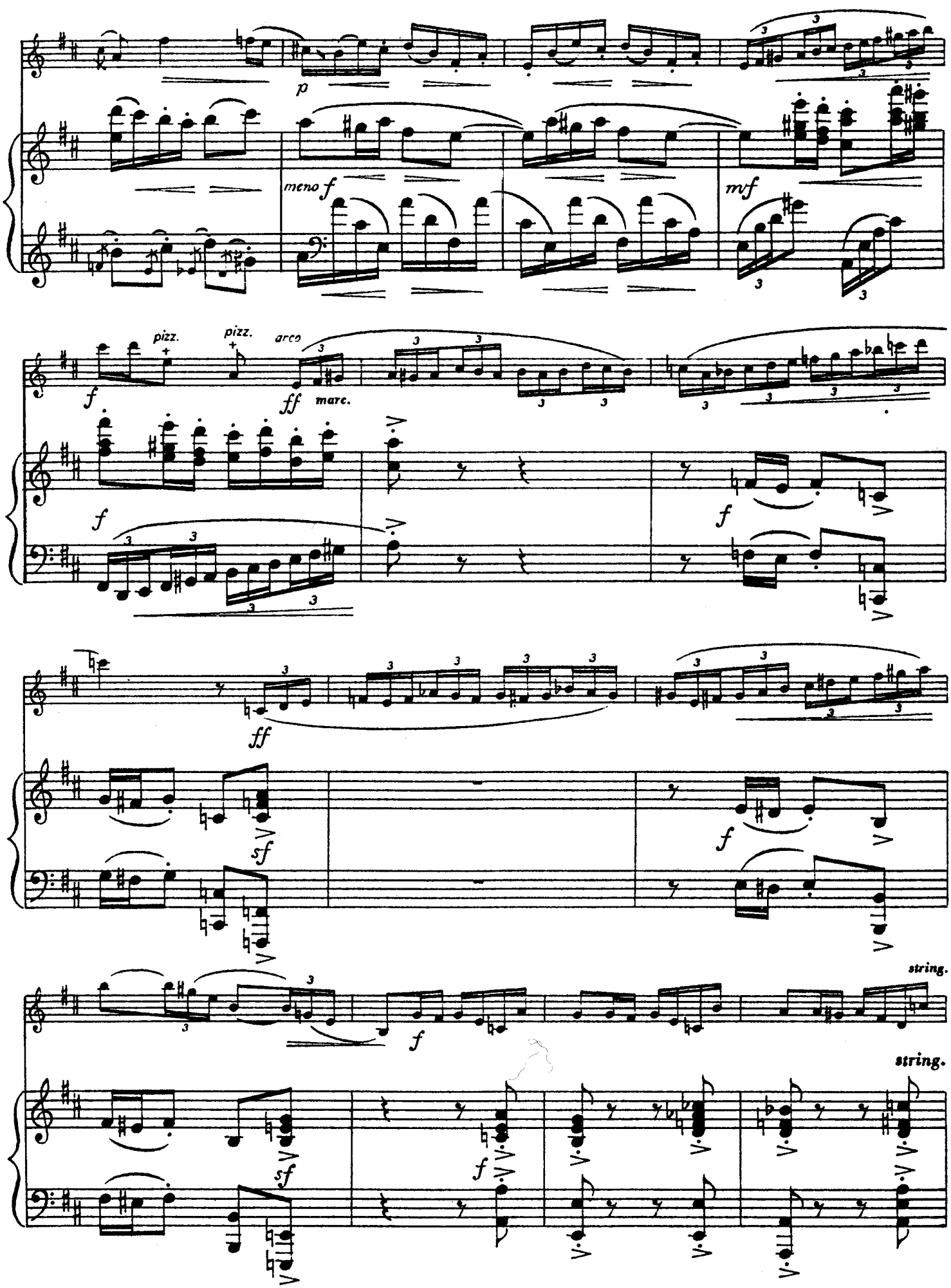

poco f
poco f
f
f
f
ff
f
ff
8
ff
sf
sf
sf
sf

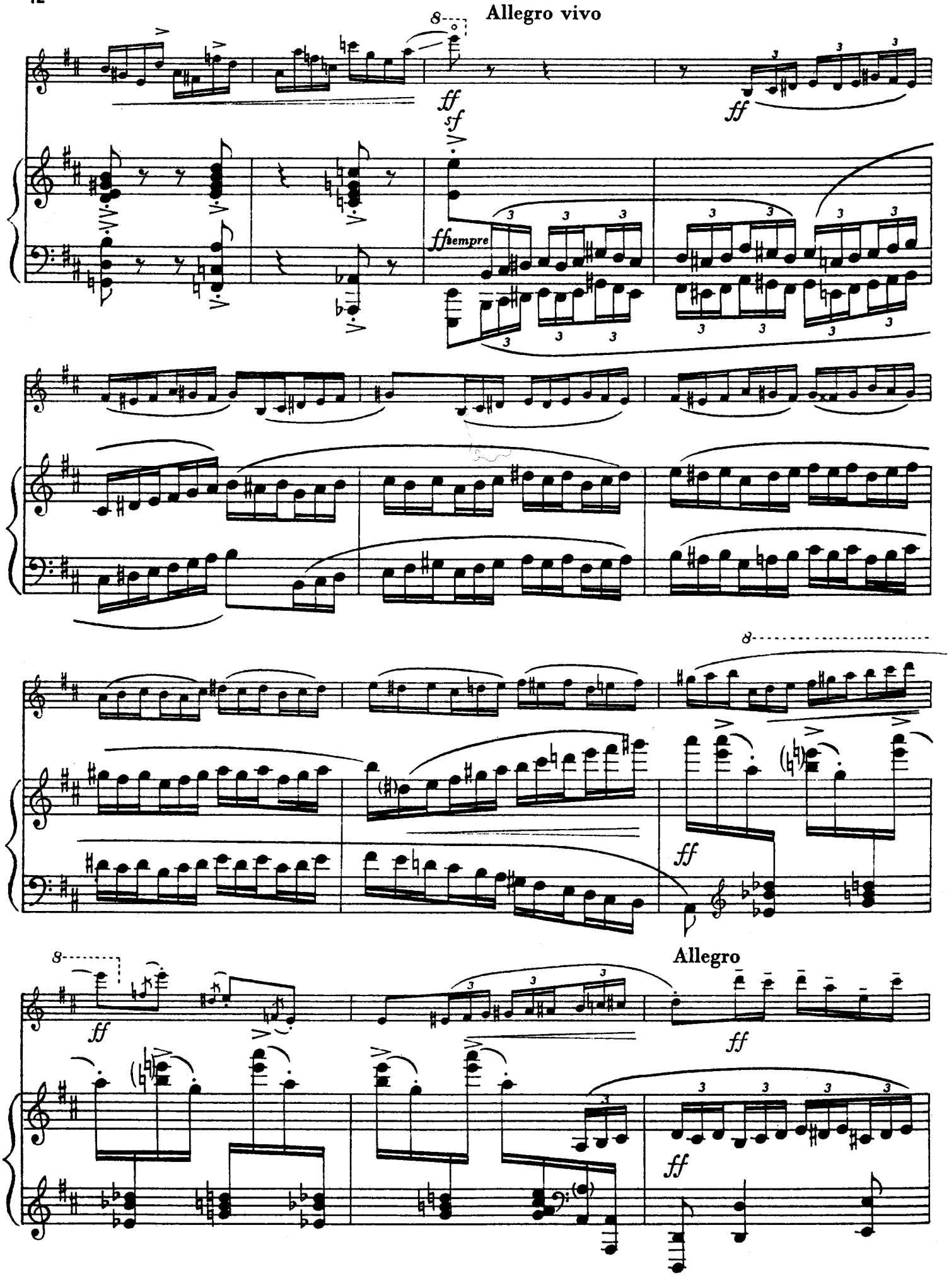

poco dim.
f
8
f
f sempre
ff


Poco meno
p
poco
p
pp
p dolce
poco
pp
poco
mf
poco
p
poco più
pp


mf
poco cresc.
poco mf
poco f
cantabile
mf
p
f.
mf
f
f
pp
p
pp
mf
p
pp


pp sempre
poco
dolce
p
poco mf
poco
poco
poco mf
mf
meno mf
poco più
p
poco cresc.
mf
poco f
f
(sempre dolce)


p
meno f
mf
pizz.
pizz.
arco
f
ff
marc.
sf
string.
string.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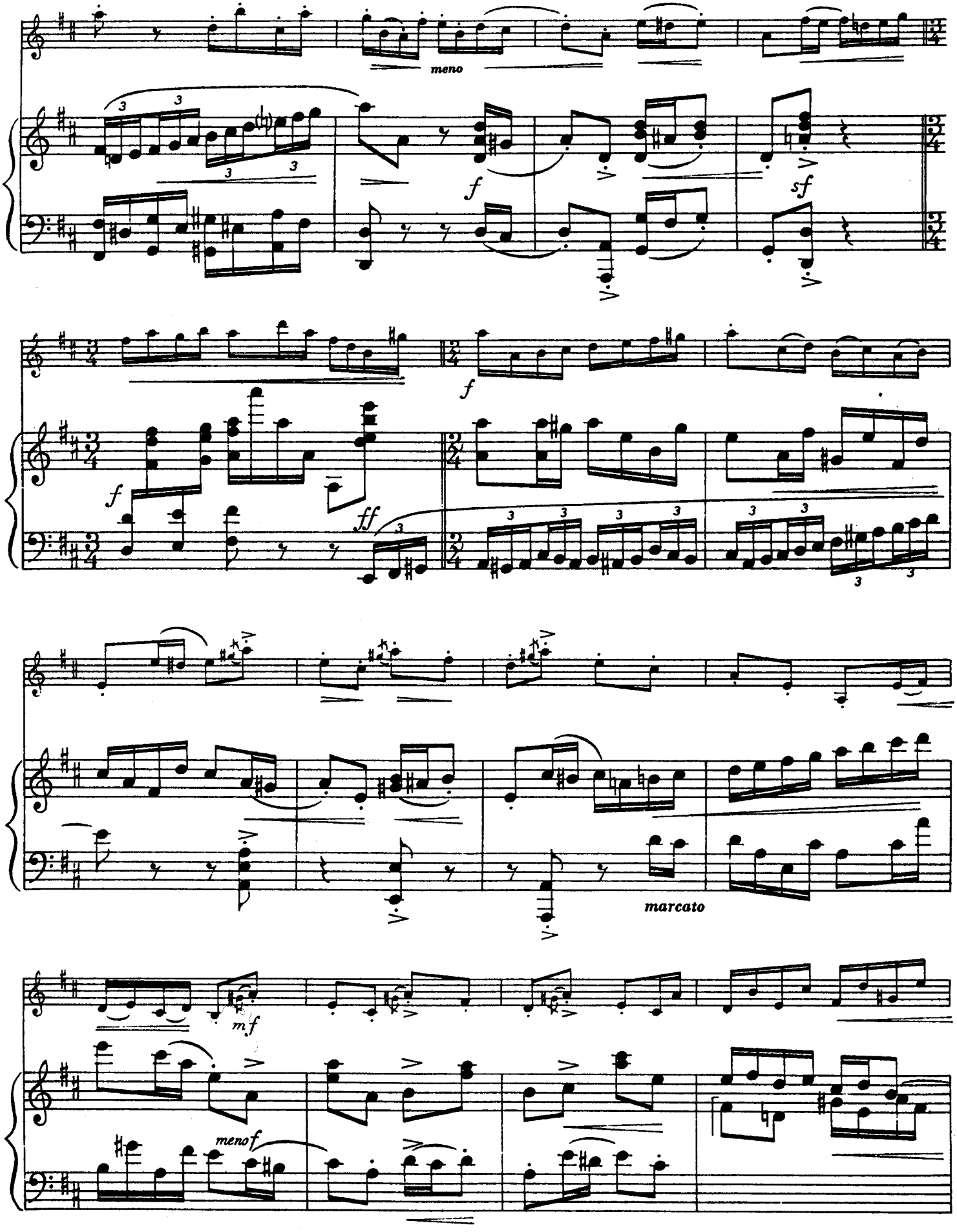
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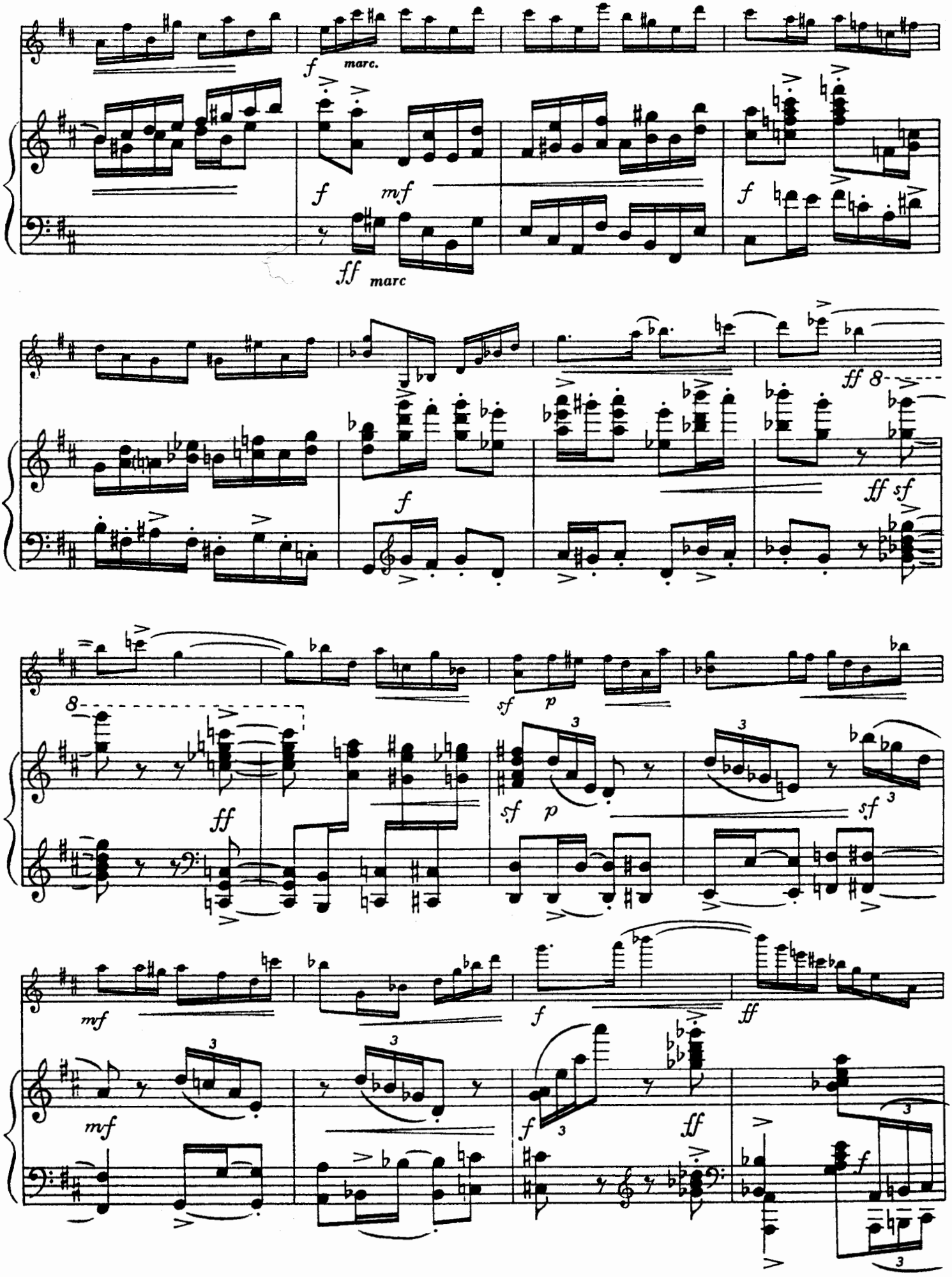
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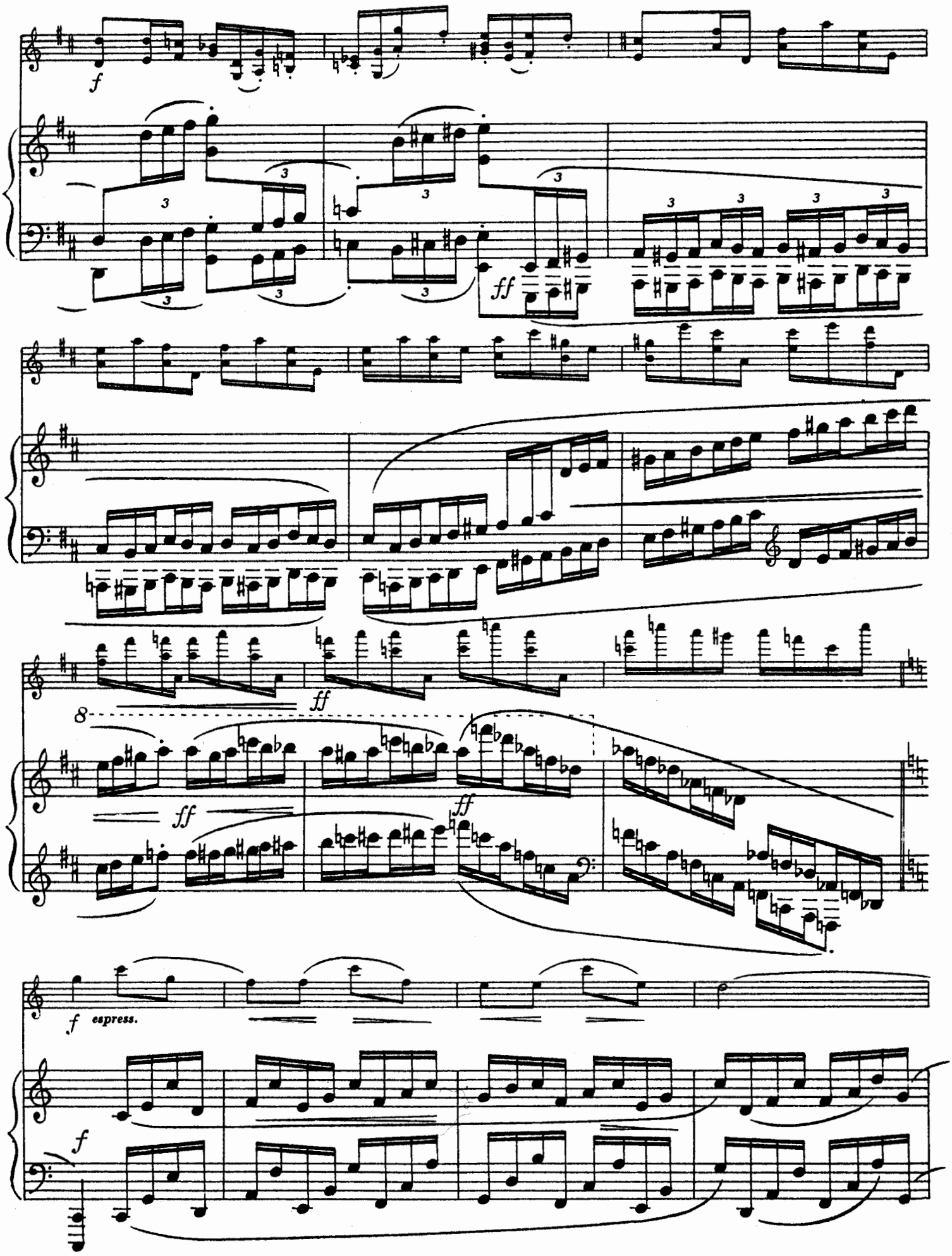
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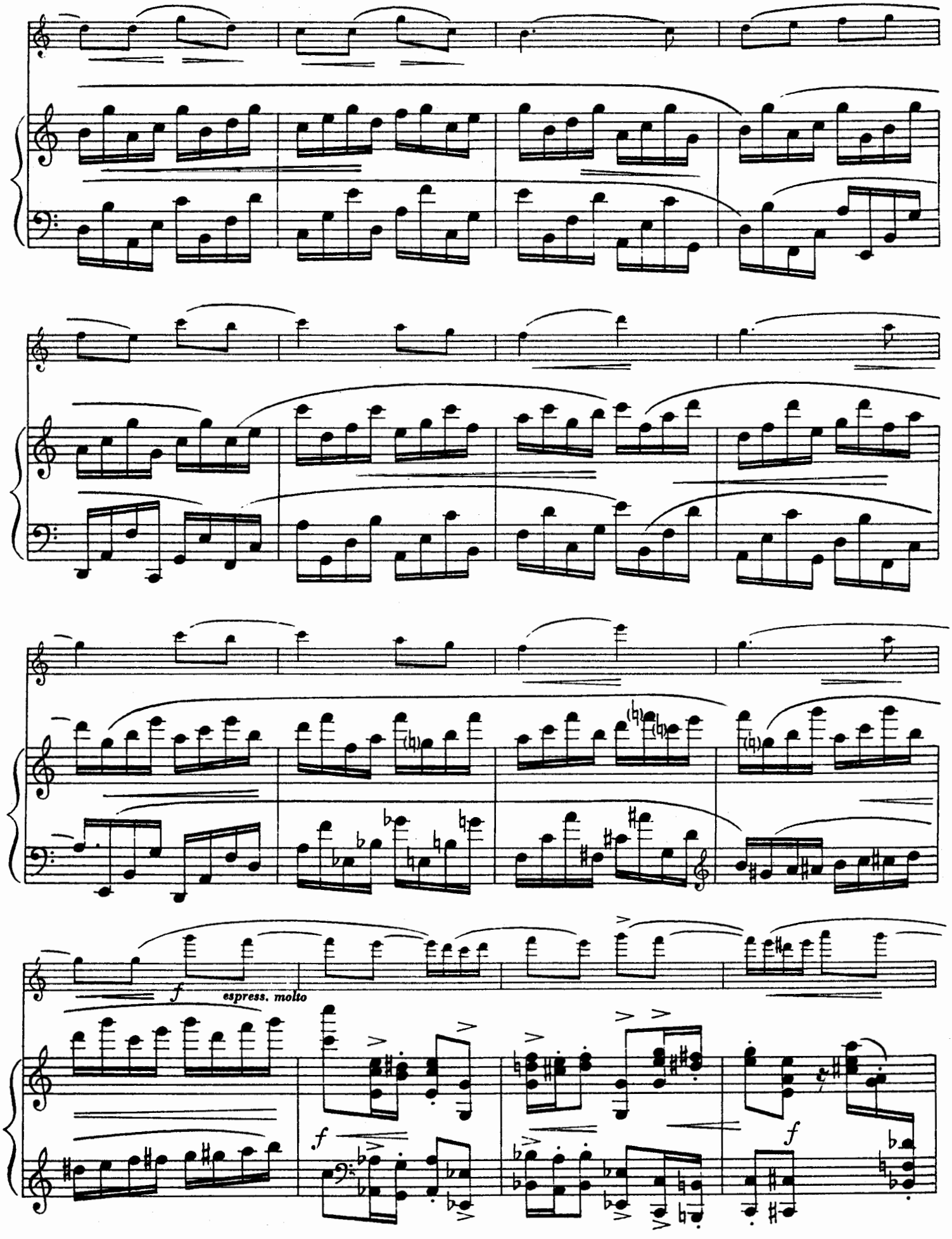
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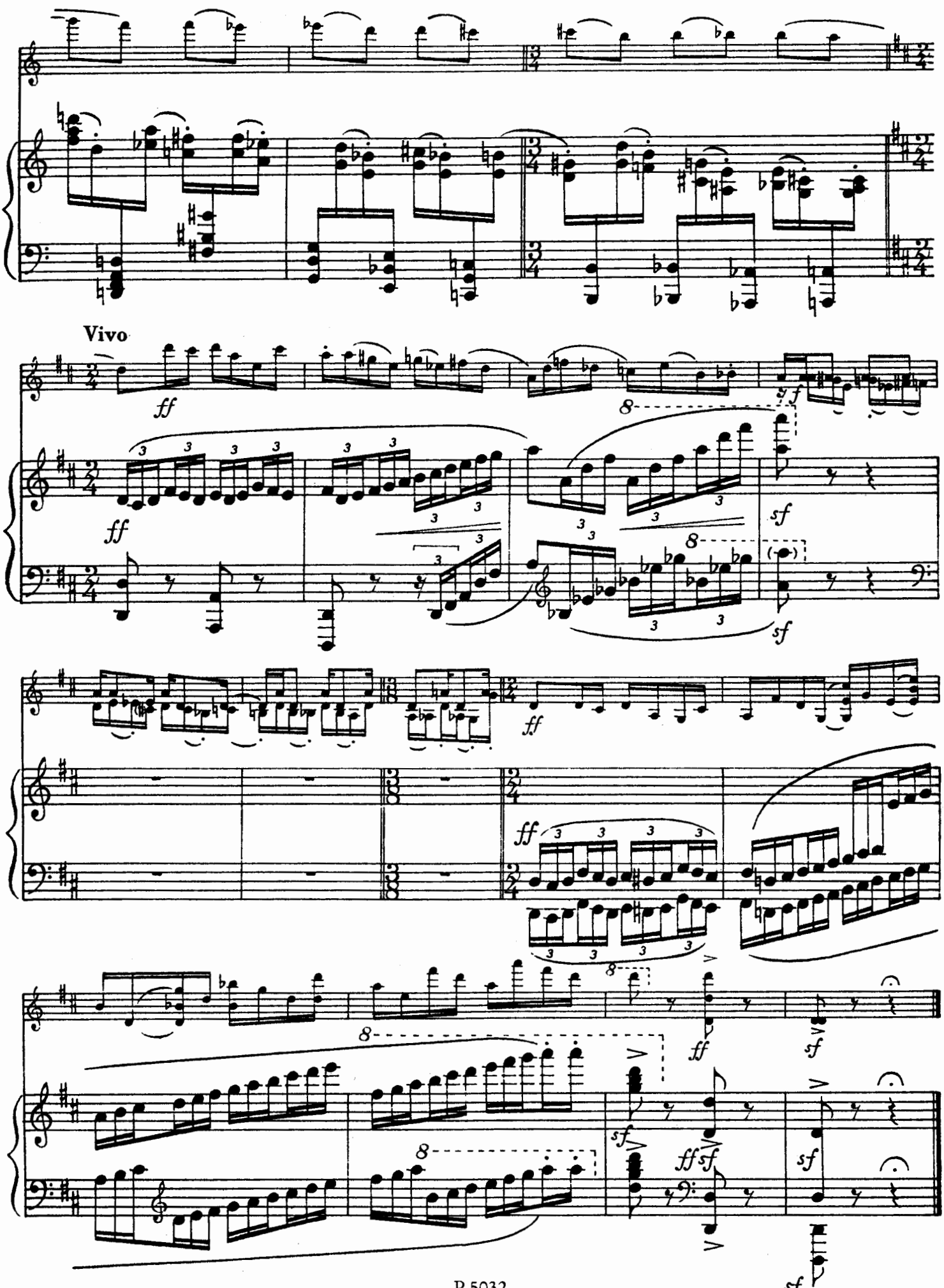
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