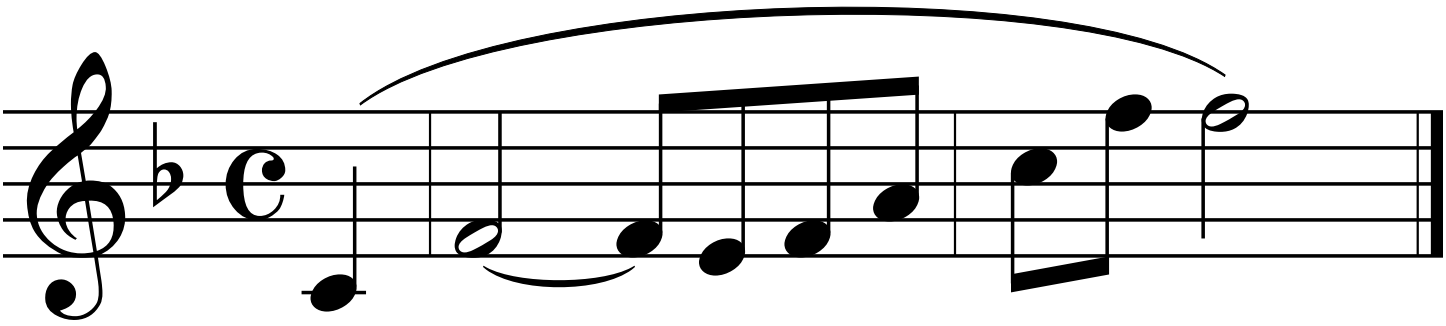
Volume 1

Oboe

Studies in Musical Expression

from the works of Verroust

edited by
William R. Higgins



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Camp Hill, PA 17011

The Study of Musical Expression

Performing with expression (musicianship) is often believed to be "a gift" rather than a learned technique. If this were true, music would be performed by only a select few and everyone else would miss out on the joy of making music. Statements such as the following quote from Barrett's method for the oboe are far too general and wrongly imply that expressive performance can not be learned.

> "Expression, unlike those musical attributes which may be acquired by study, is only exhibited where nature has bestowed a favourable organisation (sic). Upon those who have not this gift, *no practice, no study,* will ever confer it. - - Nevertheless, the habit of playing good music, and listening to the best artists, will give a notion of what is meant by it; and by taking the latter as models, one can in some measure supply the place of real expression."
>
> Apollon Marie Rose Barret (1804-1897) - *Oboe Method*

There is an element of truth in Barret's statement. Artistry indeed is a "gift" but we could not agree that the study of musicianship is a poor substitute for such a gift. With good pedagogy, expressive playing is well within the capabilities of even an average student. Understandably, the art of musicianship can be elusive and more difficult to grasp than the fundamental skills involving the production of pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and fingerings. A performer can be well schooled in the technical fundamentals of music making and still not understand the musical shaping of a line or the finer nuances that separate great performances from mediocre ones.

Musical Expression

Expression in music refers primarily to the creation of a mood or emotional state in the listener brought about by the performer's regulation of stress and release within the musical line. While all music has at least some degree of emotion, *cantilena* or song music generates the greatest amount of expression. *Bravura* music such as marches, all types of dance music, and popular music is of a more stylistic nature and intended to accompany a physical activity as opposed to conveying an emotional state or meaning. Musical expression, therefore, should not be confused with musical style.

Deterrents to Expressive Performance in Printed Music

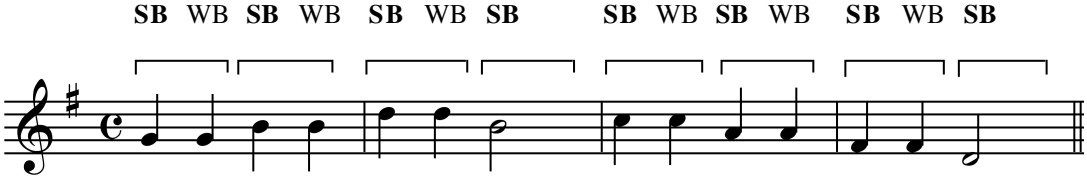
The primary obstacles to expressive performance in music are: the barline, notes grouped by metrical beat, and slurs taken literally as note groupings and articulations. Of these, the greatest deterrent is the barline. Barlines came into existence in the late 16th century as a means of helping performers stay together in ensemble performance. With the exception of stylized music such as dances, the presence of the barline provides no assistance in performing musically, in fact, it frequently has the opposite effect.

Note Grouping

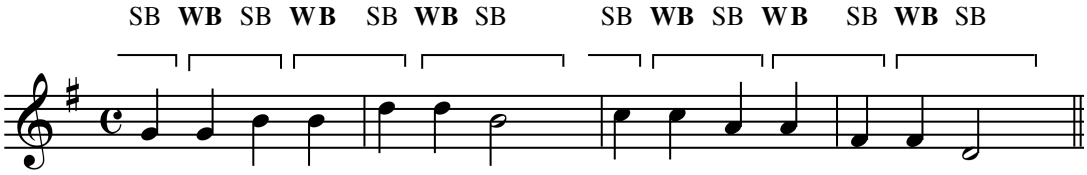
Contemporary notational practices dictate that notes are to be barred in relationship to the meter of the piece's duple or ternary divisions. While mechanical subdivisions aid in the counting of music and assist in ensemble unity, they interfere with the underlying musical grouping of the notes. Whereas young students must rely upon artificial groupings for a sense of pulse and meter, more advanced students should concern themselves with musical note grouping as the primary guide to expression.

The goal of musical expression is to create motion in music. Motion infuses the musical line with life and thereby gives it an expressive quality. The creation of this motion inherently lies with the treatment of the anacrusis or upbeat. If the upbeat is stressed and the downbeat is de-emphasized, motion will occur. In printed music, notational practices visually give emphasis to the beat. Students should learn to look *between the beats*, to the notes that move the music forward.

Example of **unexpressive grouping** which is standard in printed music. Note that the grouping is from the strong beat to the weak beat



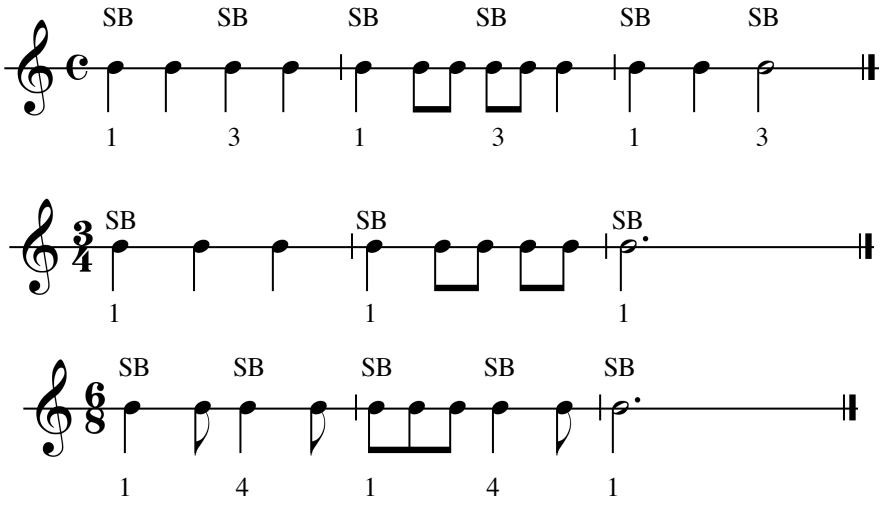
Example of **expressive grouping**. In this more musical grouping, note that the weak beat, not the strong beat, is at the beginning of the group.



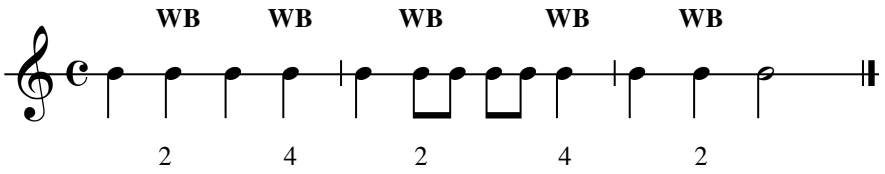
Bracketing Notes in Groups

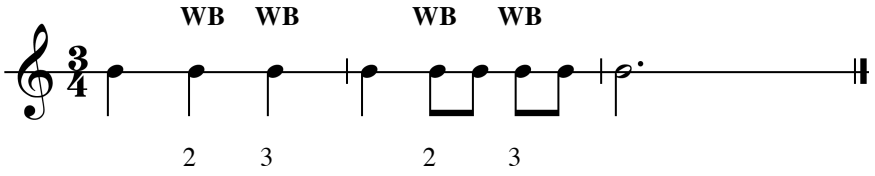
Grouping the *upbeat to downbeat* (weak beat to strong beat) rather than vise versa reduces the emphasis on strong beats and emphasizes the inherent, natural movement of a composition. Placement of the brackets will, in part, depend upon the tempo of the selection and the basic meter of the piece binary (2's) or ternary (3's). At faster *tempi*, the brackets are placed *from the weak beat to the strong beat*. At slower *tempi*, the brackets are placed *from the weak <u>part</u> of the beat to the strong part of the beat*.

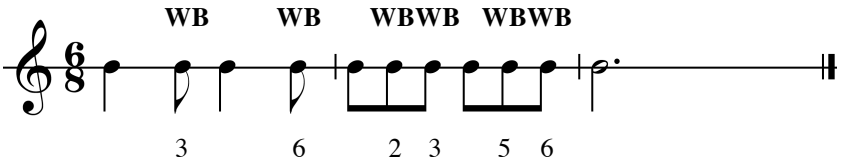
Legend: SB = Strong Beat. (beats 1 and 3 in duple meter; beat 1 in triple meter, beats 1 and 4 in compound meter.)



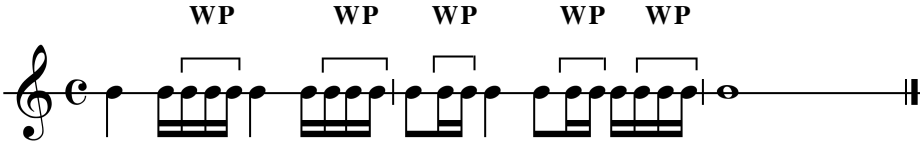
WB = Weak Beat. (beats 2 and 4 in duple meter; beats 2 and 3 in triple meter, beats 2, 3, and 5, 6 in compound meter)





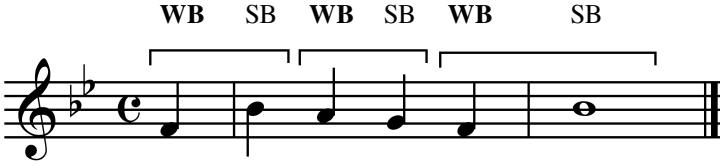


WP = Weak Part of the beat. (any notes falling between beats)

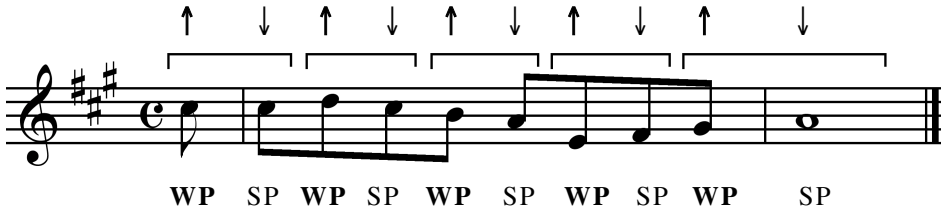


Simple Duple Meter (in 2s) - $\frac{2}{8}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{4}{8}$ etc.

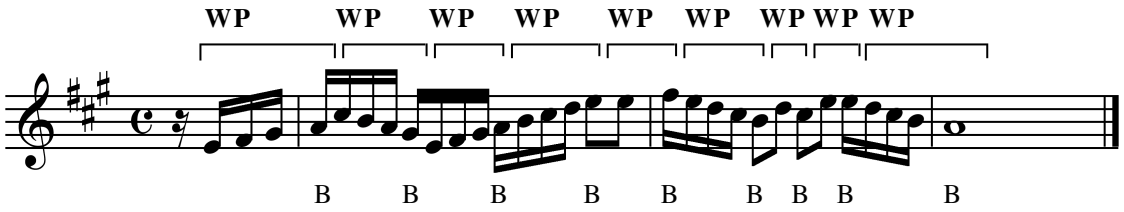
Example of a **W**eak **B**eat to **S**trong **B**eat movement:



Example of a **W**eak **P**art of a beat to a strong part of a beat: (**Up**beat to **Down**beat movement)



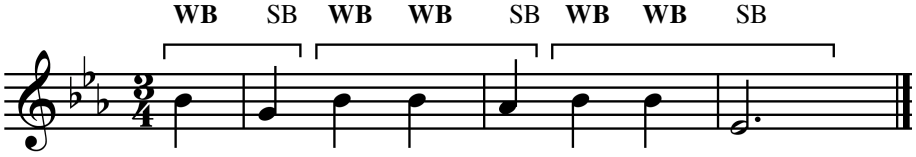
Example of **W**eak **P**arts of a beat to a **B**eat: (**extended Up**beat to **Down**beat movement)



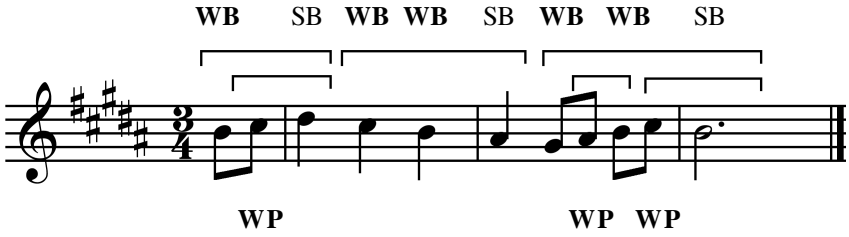
Simple Triple Meter (in 3s) - $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{2}$ etc.

Triple meters flow in a (SB-**WB**-**WB**) pattern. The two weak beats move toward the strong beat.

Examples of simple triple meter:

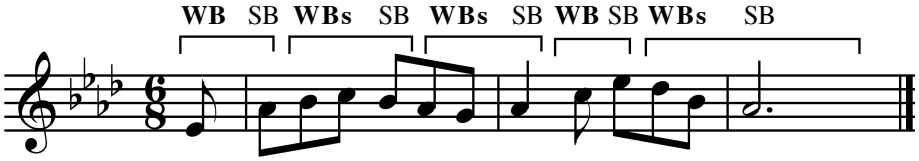


Example of two levels: (1) weak beats to strong beats and (2) weak parts of the beat to the beat

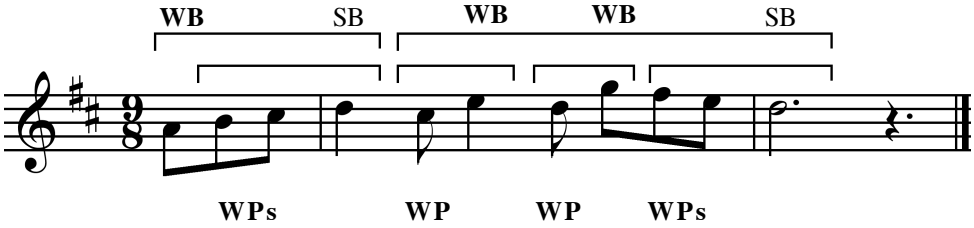


Compound Duple Meter (grouped in 2s and 3s) - $\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{12}{8}$ $\frac{6}{4}$ $\frac{12}{4}$ etc.

At a fast tempo, $\frac{6}{8}$ flows in two beats to a measure. At slower tempi, $\frac{6}{8}$ flows in two groups of three notes acting like both a duple and a triple meter at the same time. Since most expressive music is at a slower tempo, a combination of 2s and 3s is most common.



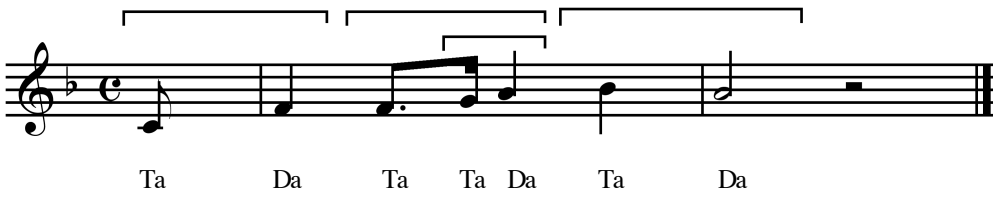
Compound Triple Meter (grouped in 2s and 3s) - $\frac{9}{8}$ etc.



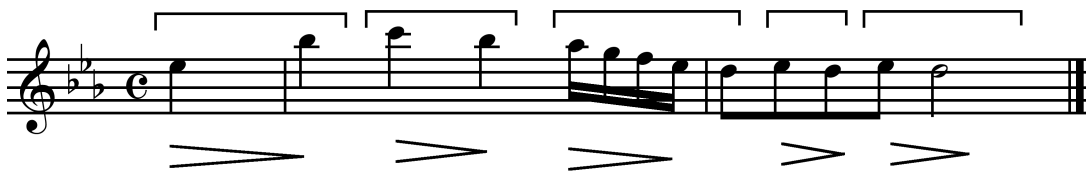
Applying emphasis to note groups

Emphasis is applied to note groupings in six different ways, through: (1) articulation, (2) dynamics, (3) duration, (4) accentuation, (5) tone, and (6) tempo. Several of these modes of emphasis may be in use at the same time. The choice of emphasis modes along with the note grouping greatly contributes to a musical performance.

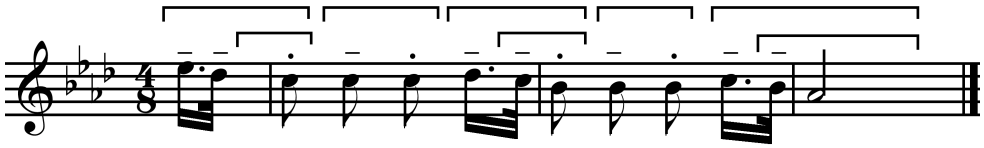
Articulation



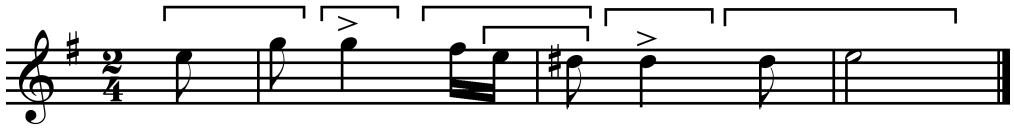
Dynamics



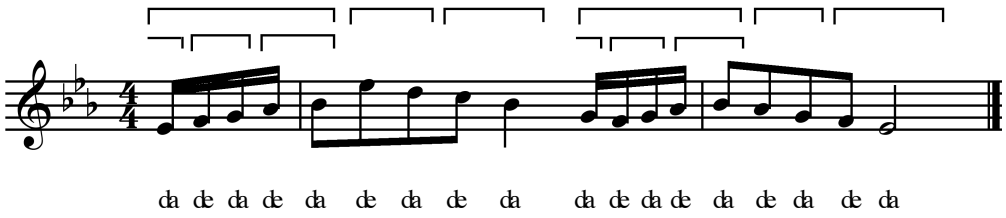
Duration



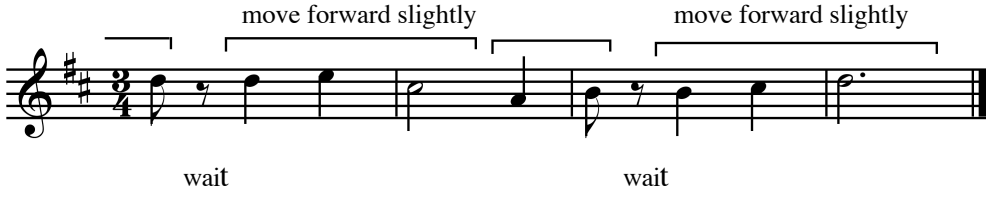
Accentuation



Tone



Tempo



Teaching the Note Grouping Approach

One approach for building musical expression in students is to have them: (1) decide the mood of the piece - *feeling*; (2) decide the balance of the piece - *form*; (3) decide the approach to producing the mood - *texture*; (4) group the notes for musical flow - *brackets*; (5) decide the mode of emphasis for the note groups; (6) practice the note groupings separately, and (7) apply the techniques to the piece in a seamless, continuous manner.

While overemphasis of the note groups facilitates learning, the student is warned that, after a reasonable time with small group patterns, gross over-emphasis is inappropriate. The advanced player does not look at the smaller groups of notes but at groups that relate to the direction and shape of the entire phrase.

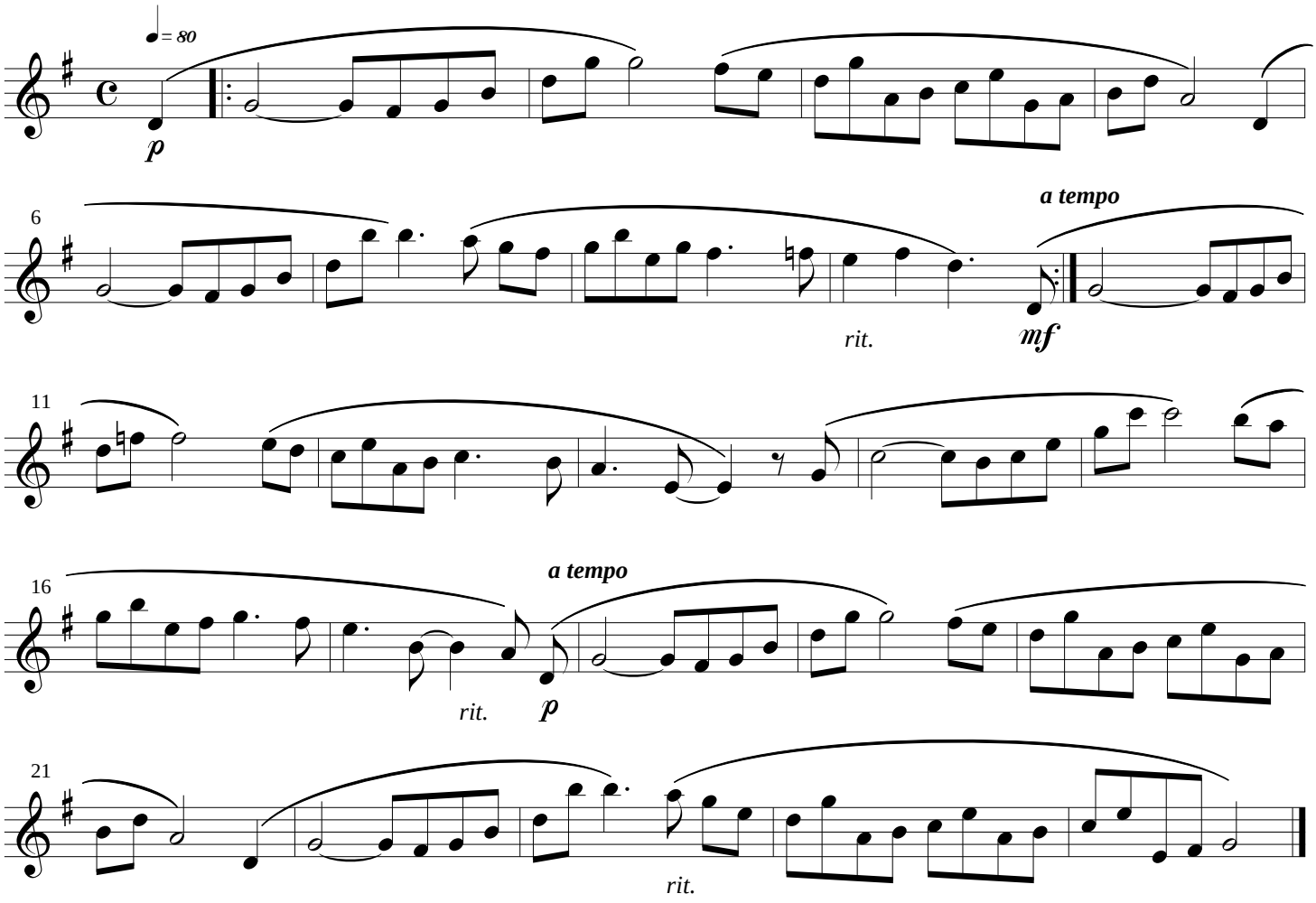
The Study of the Note Grouping Approach

The approach to musical expression presented here is based on the work of James Morgan Thurmond *Note Grouping: A Method for Achieving Expression and Style in Musical Performance.* (ISBN 0-942782-00-3) Ft. Lauderdale, Fl: Meredith Music Publications, 1982. It is recommended that the teacher and advanced student procure this text and study it thoroughly.

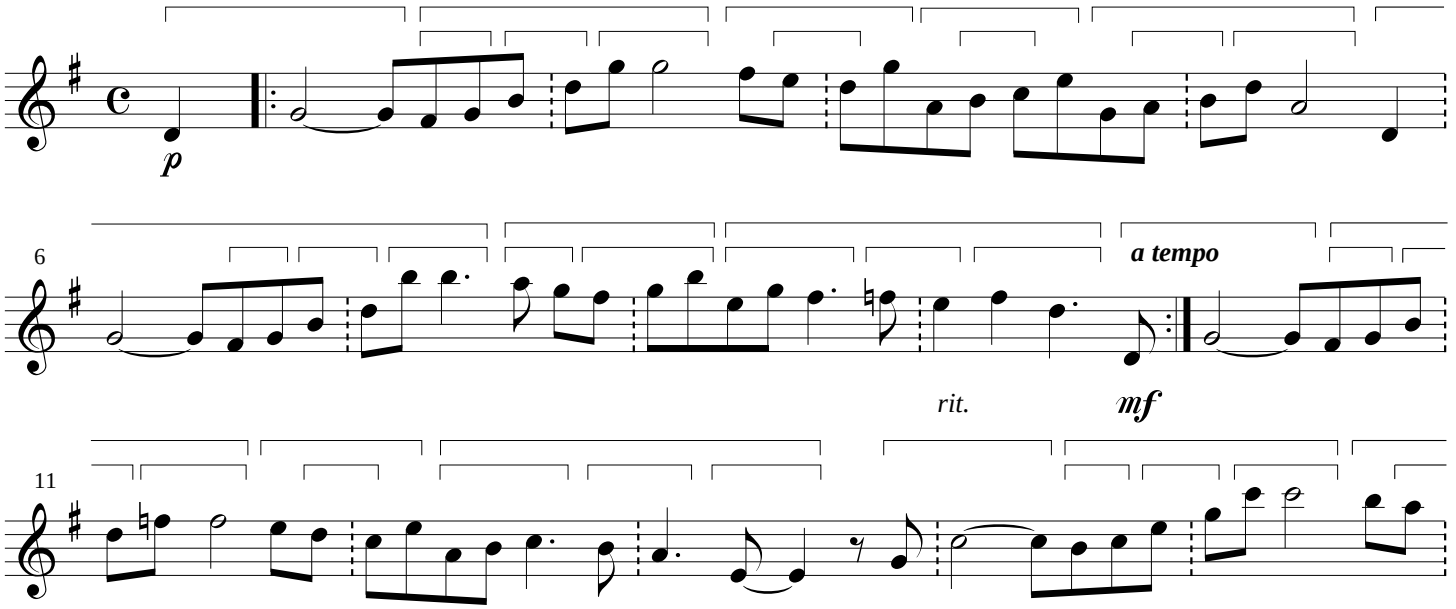
Example of the Note-Grouping Approach

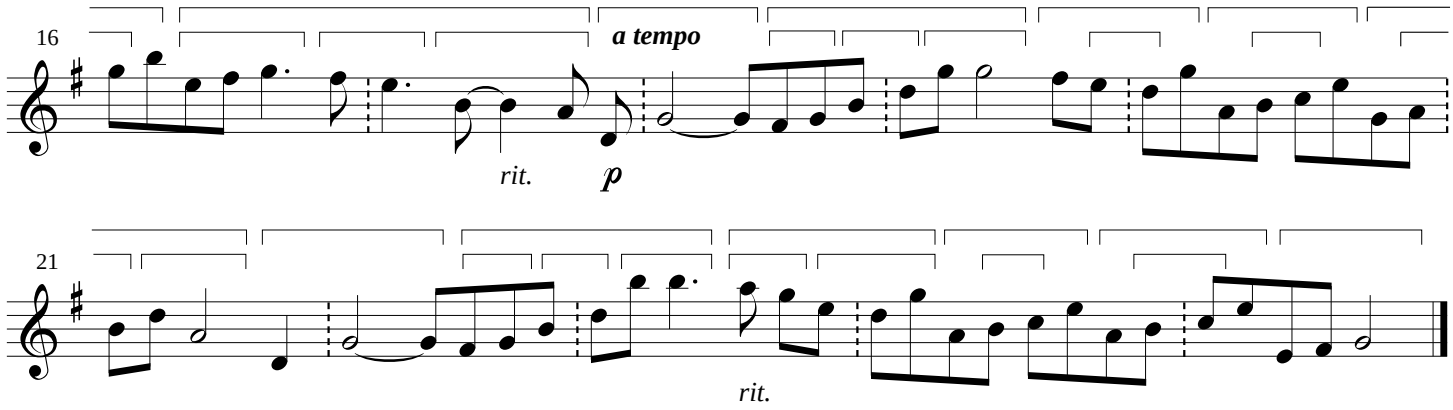
On the following pages are three versions of Robert Schumann's (1810-1856) *Traumerei*. Compare the traditional notation with the expressive note grouping and finally with the example that prints the note groups musically instead of conforming to standard notation. In each note-group and each extended note group, press the movement forward to a repose by using appropriate emphasis in the form of articulation, dynamics, duration, accentuation, tone, and tempo. Each group is to have some form of expressive emphasis at the beginning of the group and less at the end. By regrouping the printed music, the student becomes aware of the expressive flow of the composition.

Traumerei from Kinderscenen, Opus 15, No. 7 - **Original Notation** **Robert Schumann**

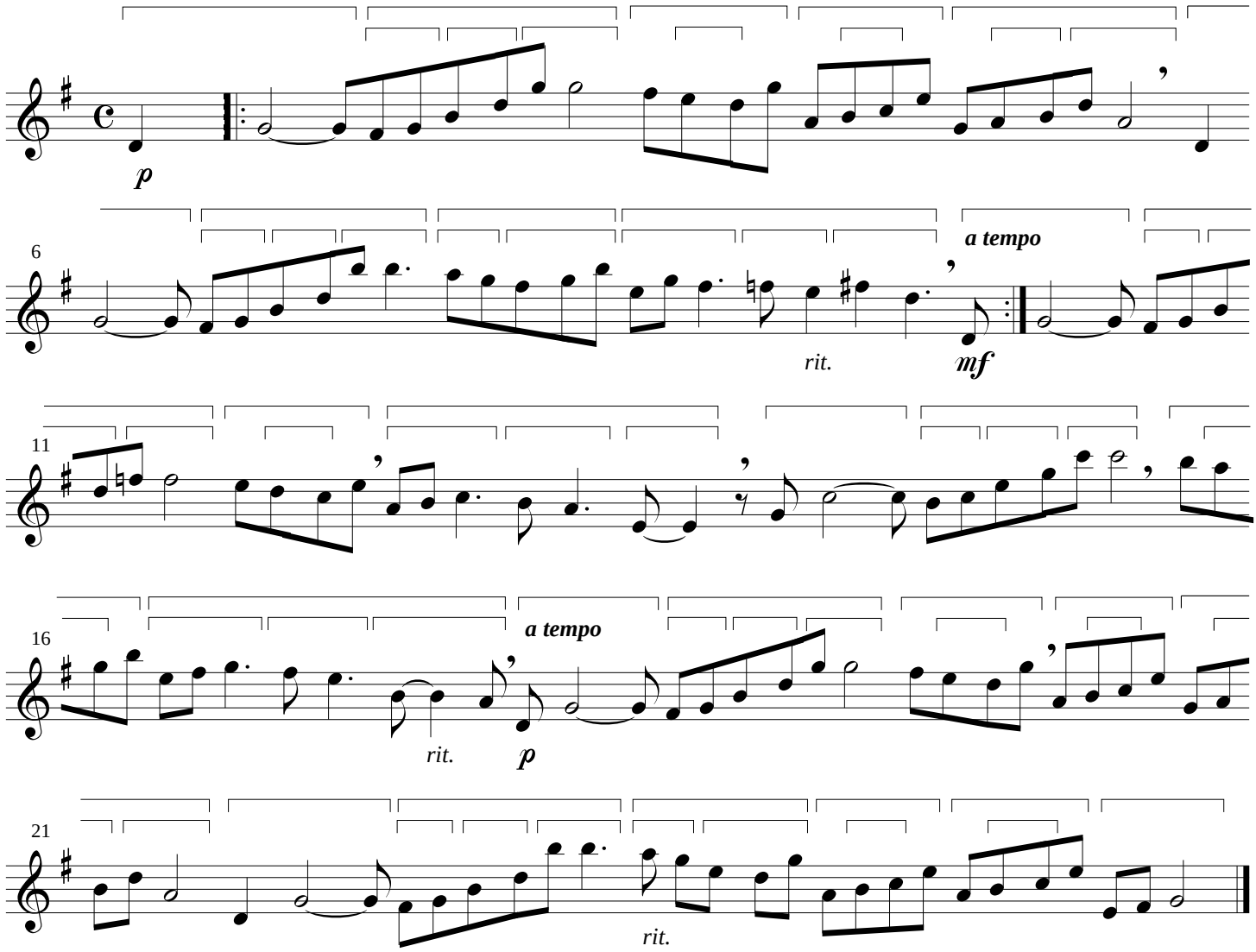


Traumerei from Kinderscenen, Opus 15, No. 7 - **In Note Grouping Style**





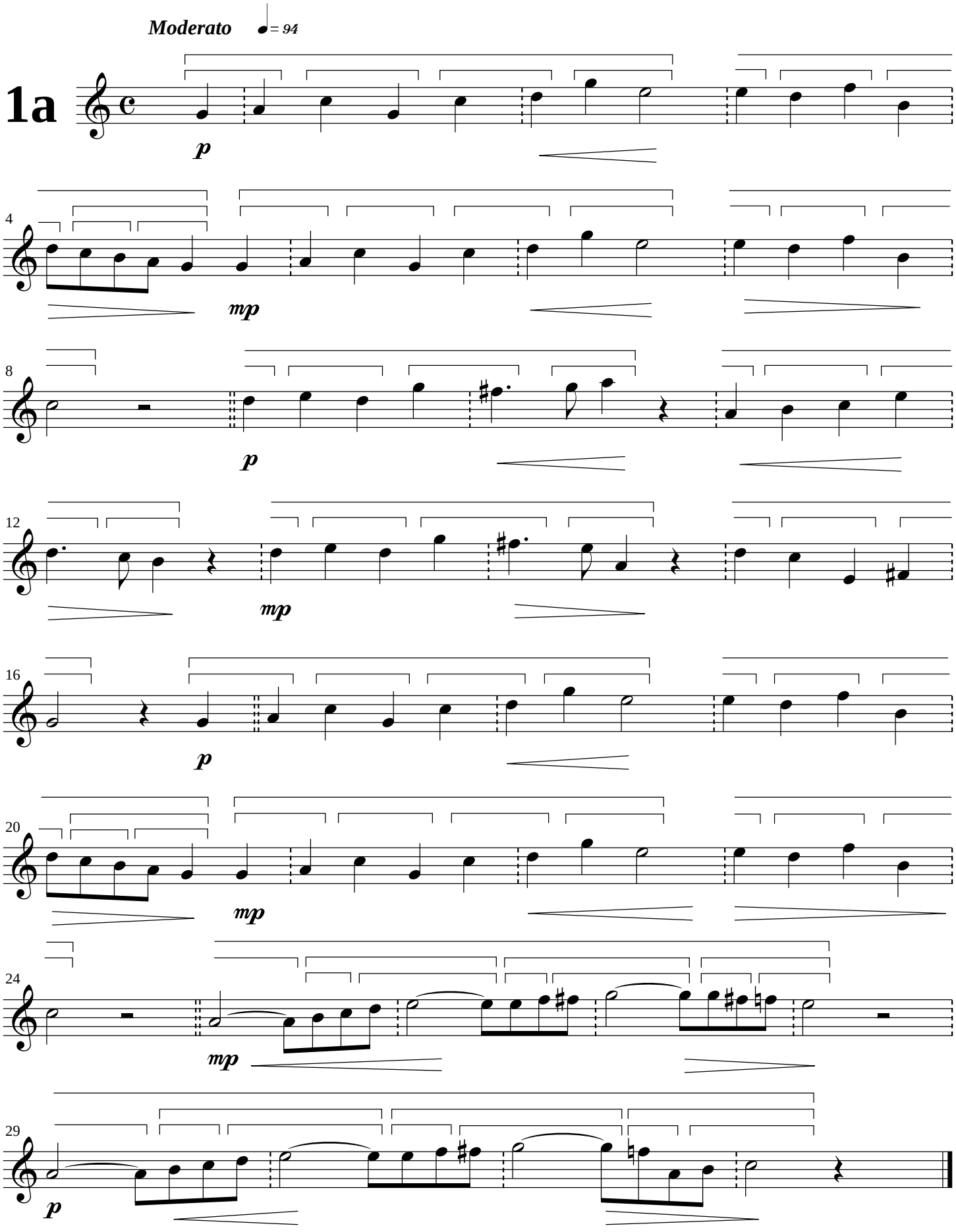
Traumerei from Kinderscenen, Opus 15, No. 7 **- In Expressively Grouped Notation, with barlines removed.**



Stanislas Louis Xavier Verroust (1814-1863)

1a

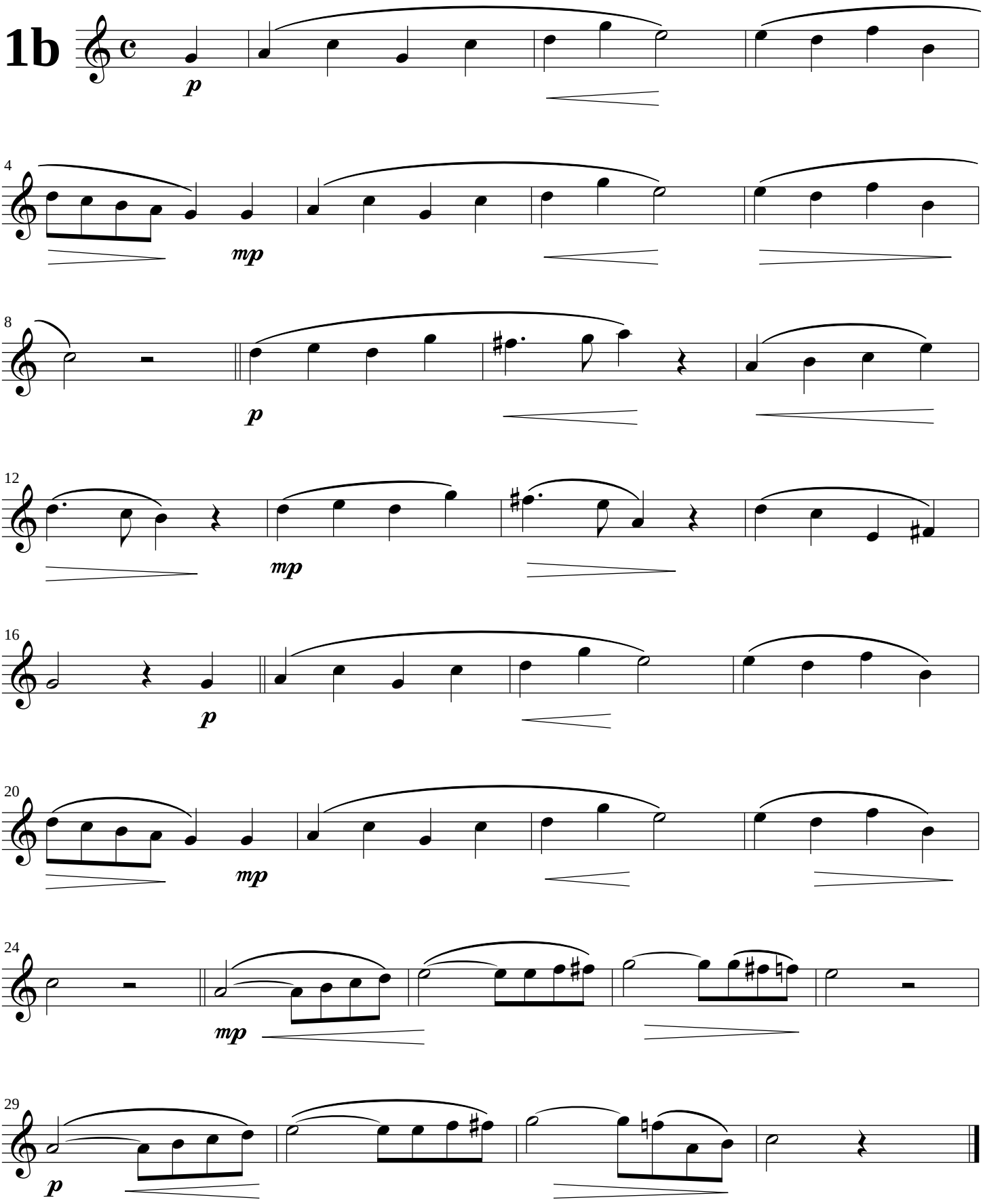
Moderato ♩ = 94

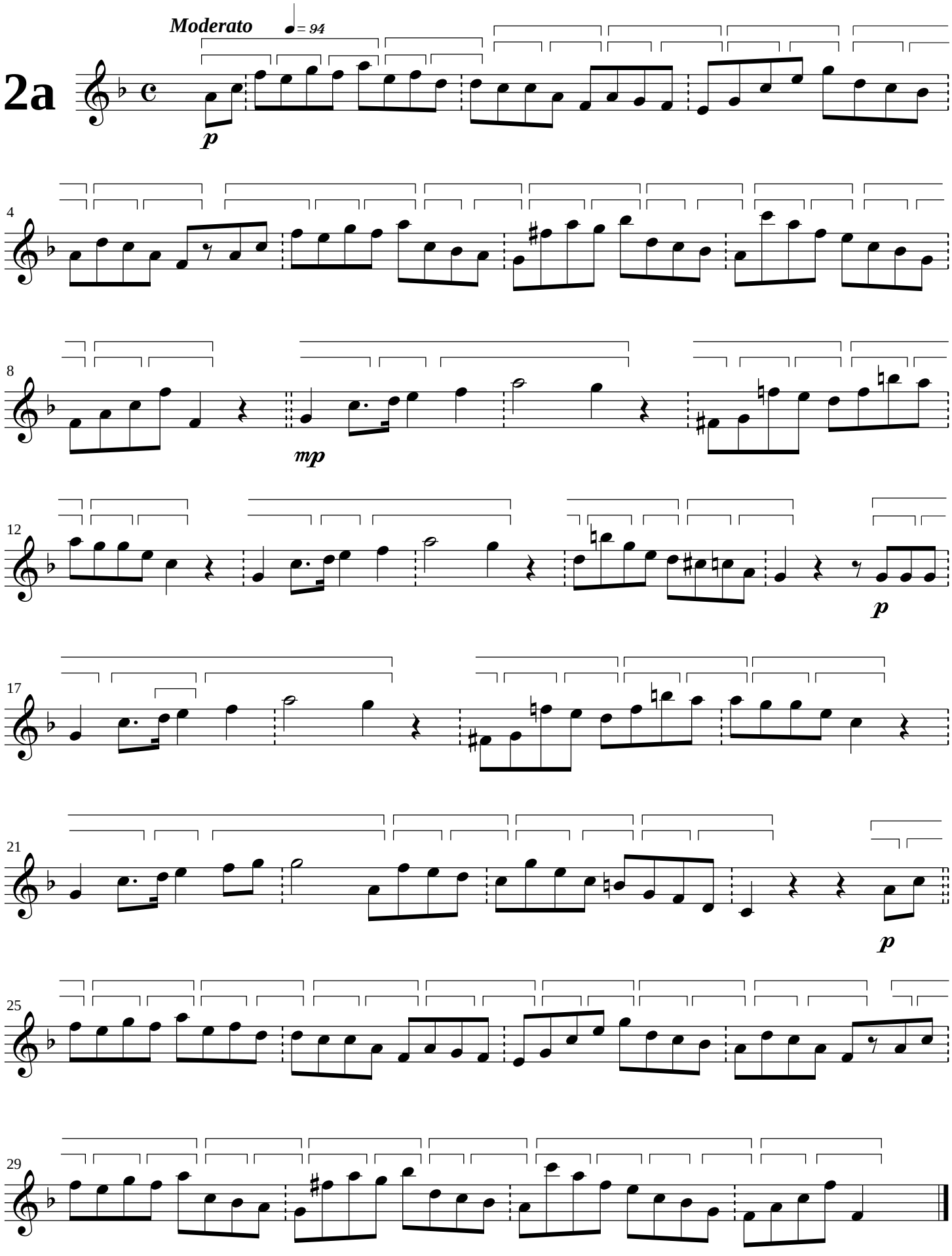


Stanislas Louis Xavier Verroust (1814-1863)

1b

Moderato ♩ = 94

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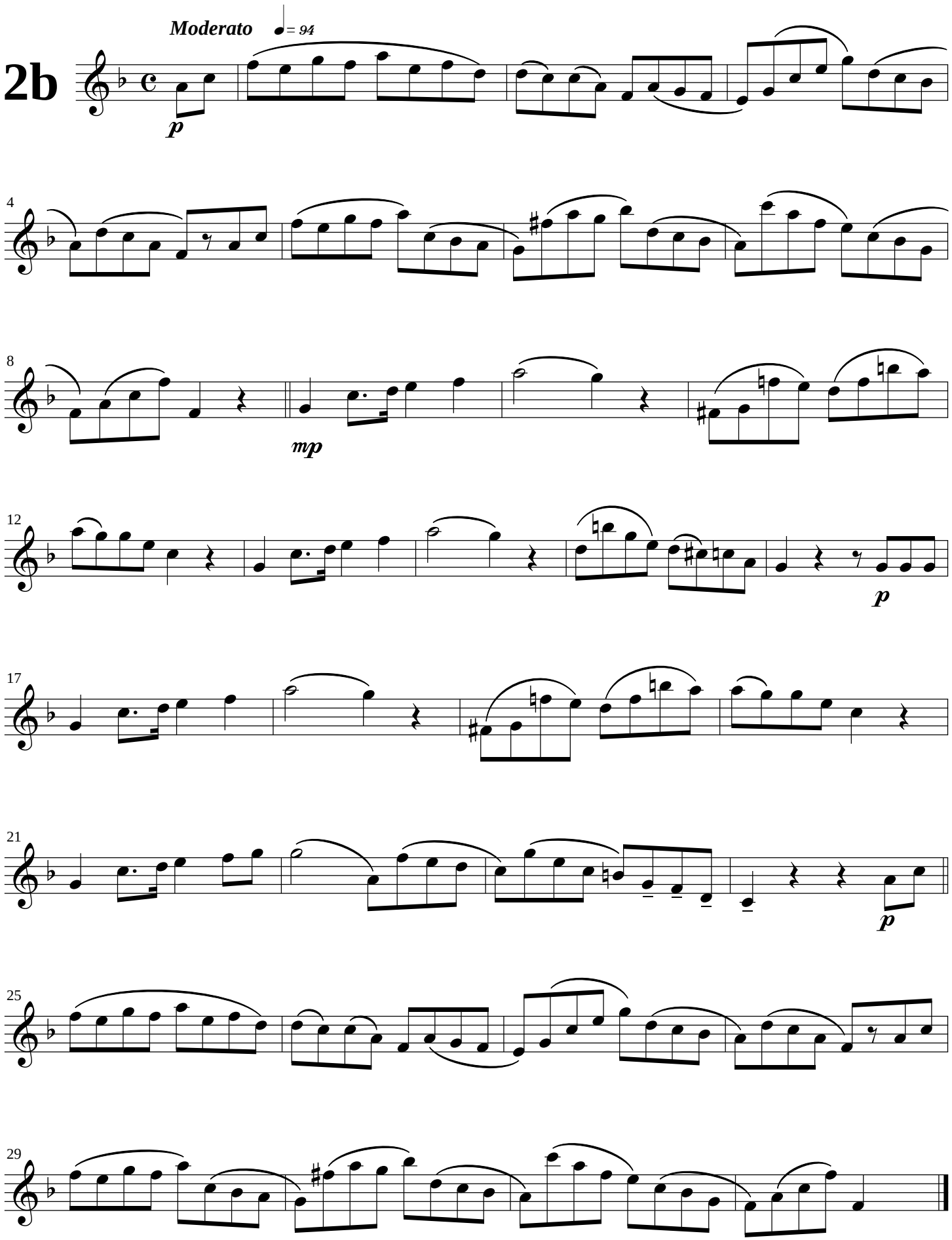
Moderato
♩ = 94
p
4
8
mp
12
p
17
21
p
25
29


2b
Moderato
♩= 94
p
4
8
mp
12
p
17
21
p
25
29

3a

Andante ♩= 66

mf

5

9

dolce

13

17

21

rall.

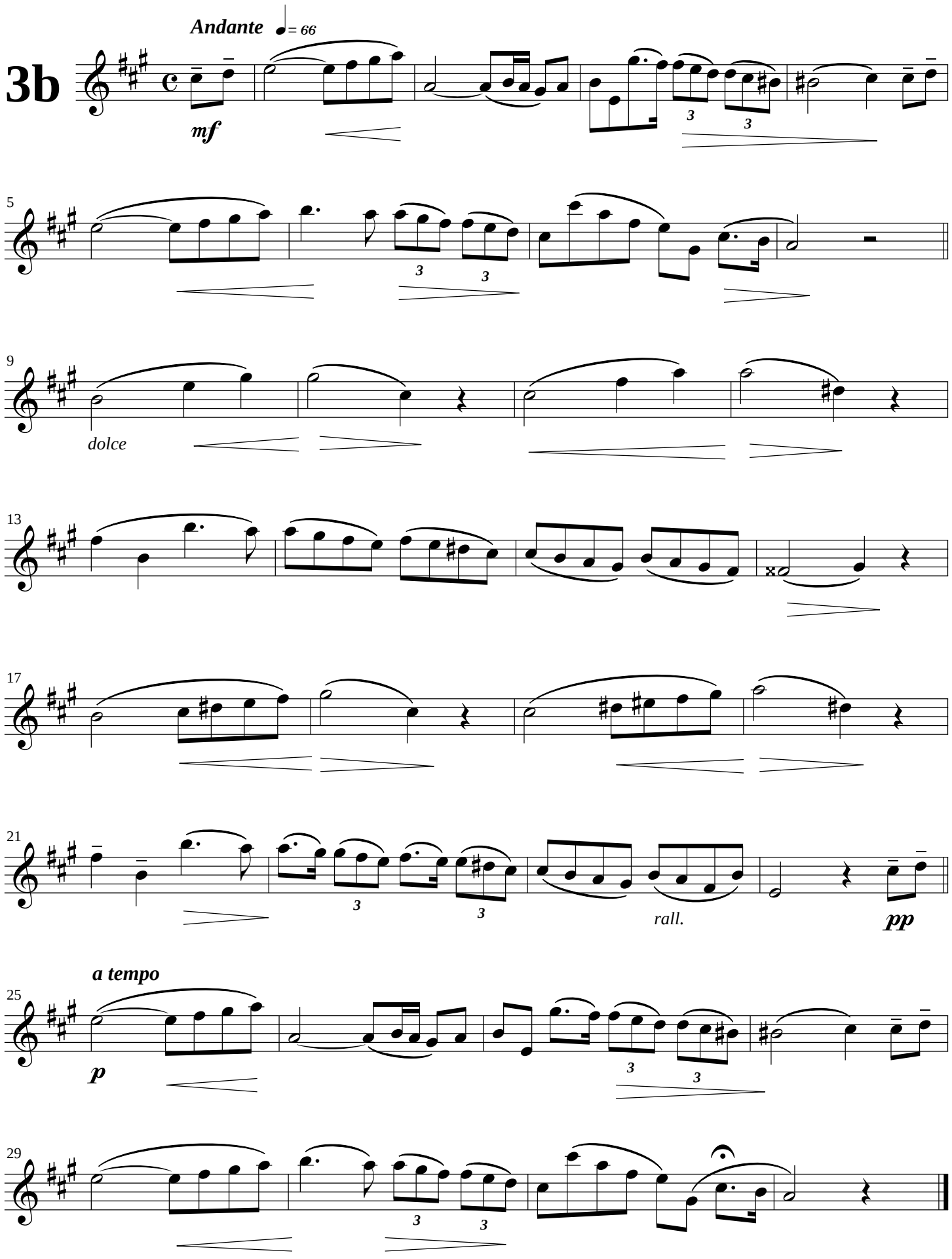
pp

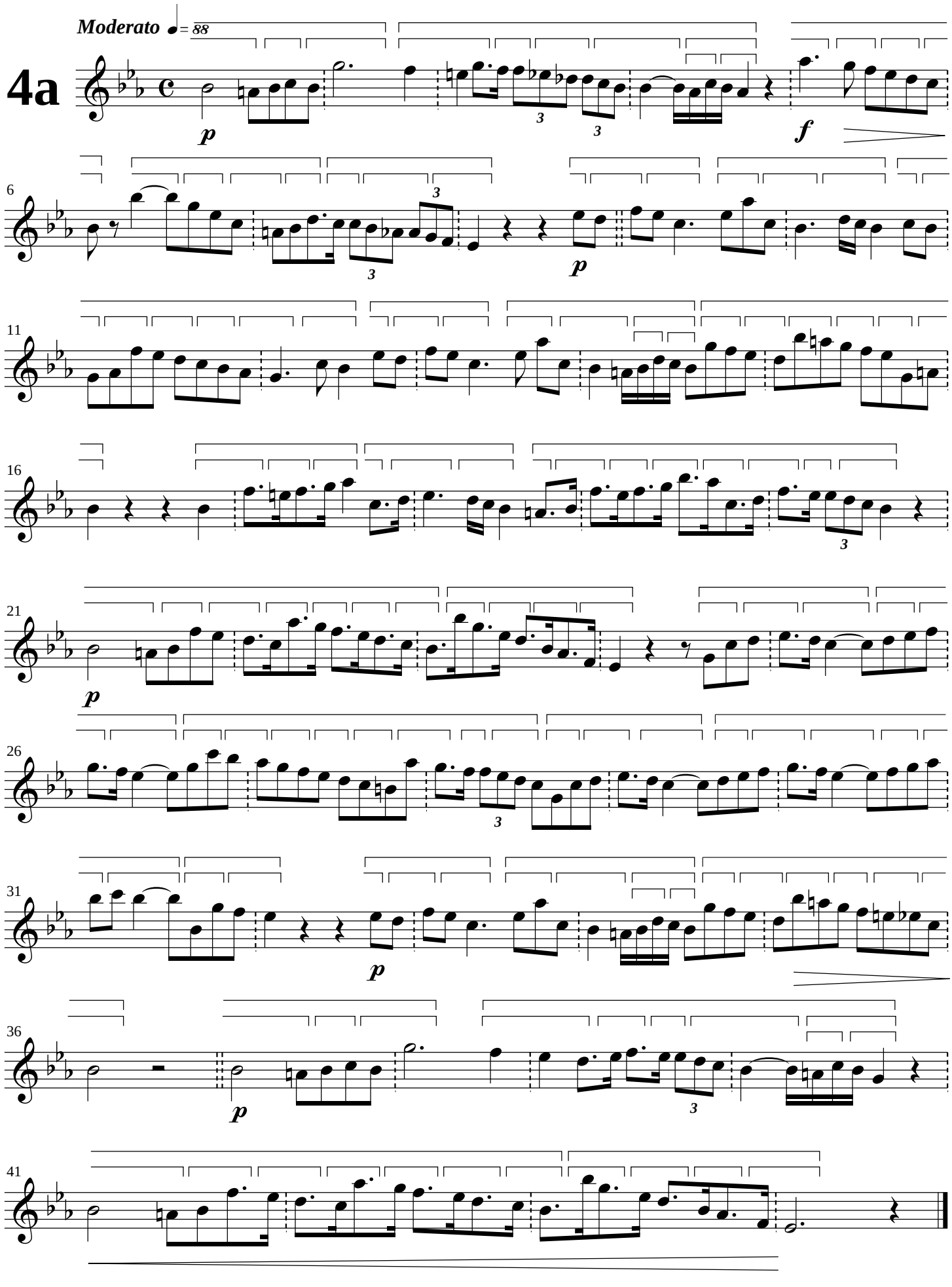
a tempo

25

p

29


3b
Andante
= 66
mf
5
9
dolce
13
17
21
rall.
pp
a tempo
25
p
29


Moderato ♩= 88
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f
6
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3
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p
26
3
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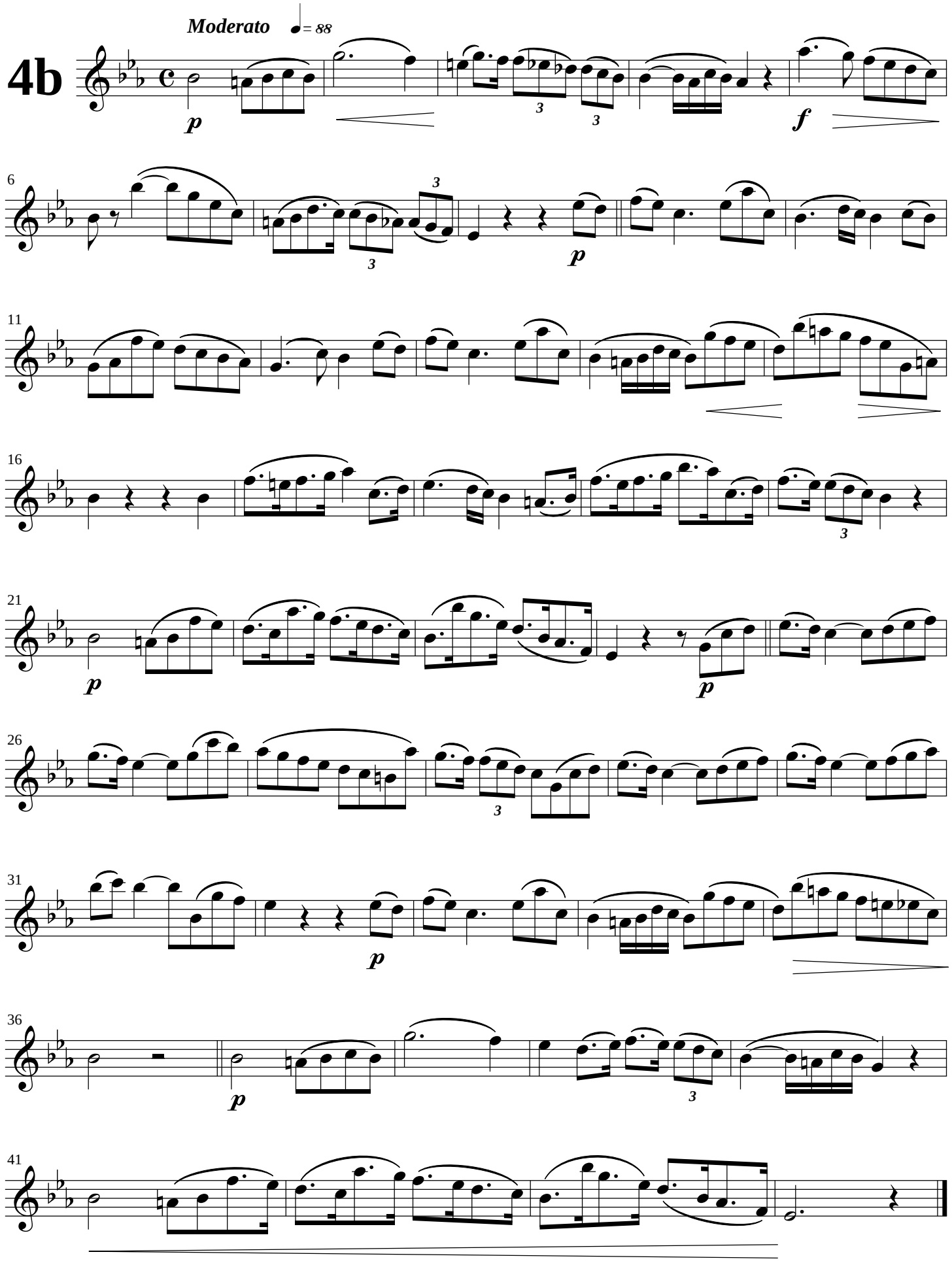
p
36
p
3
41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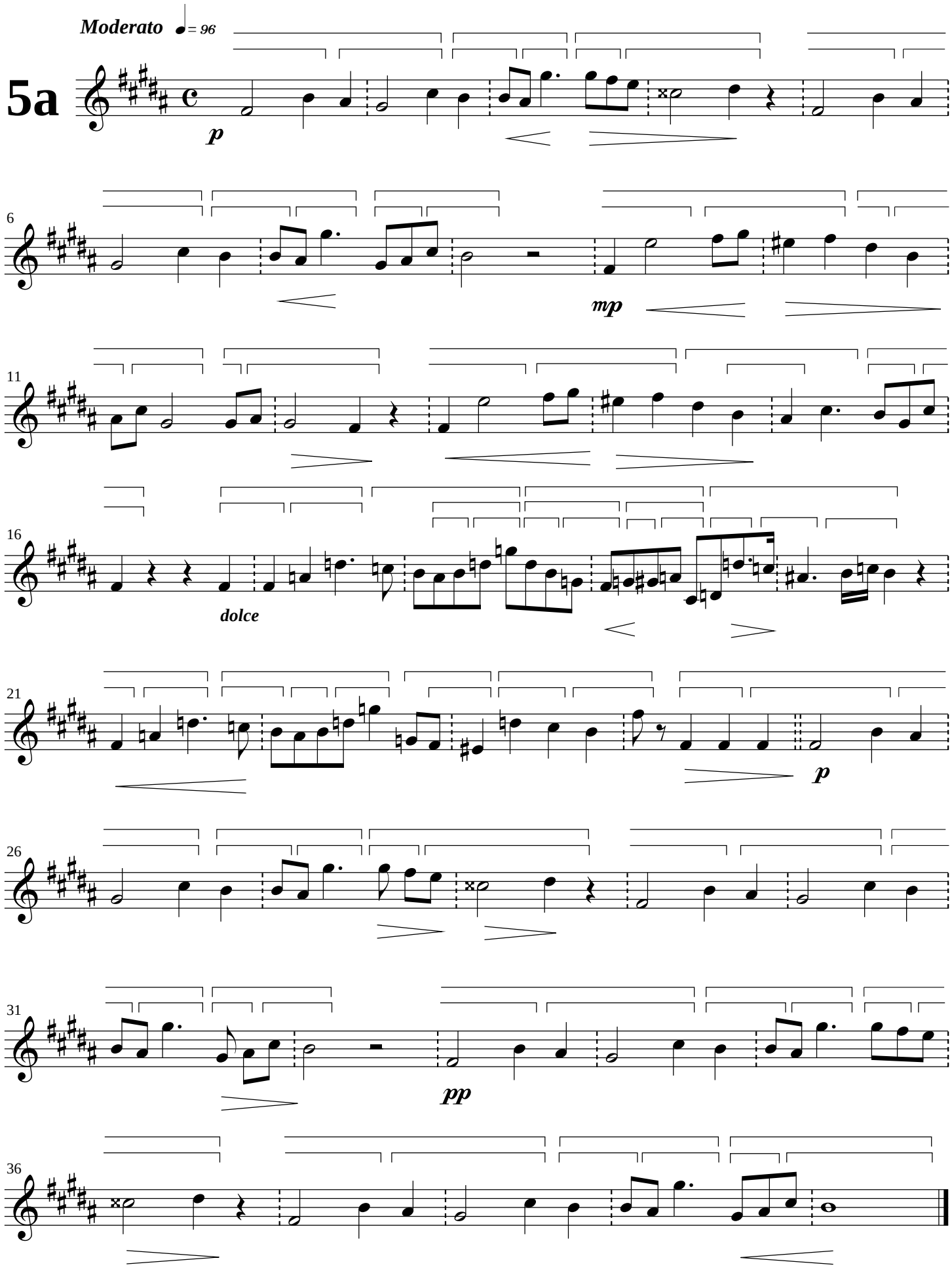
Moderato
♩= 88
p
f
p
p
p
p
p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mp
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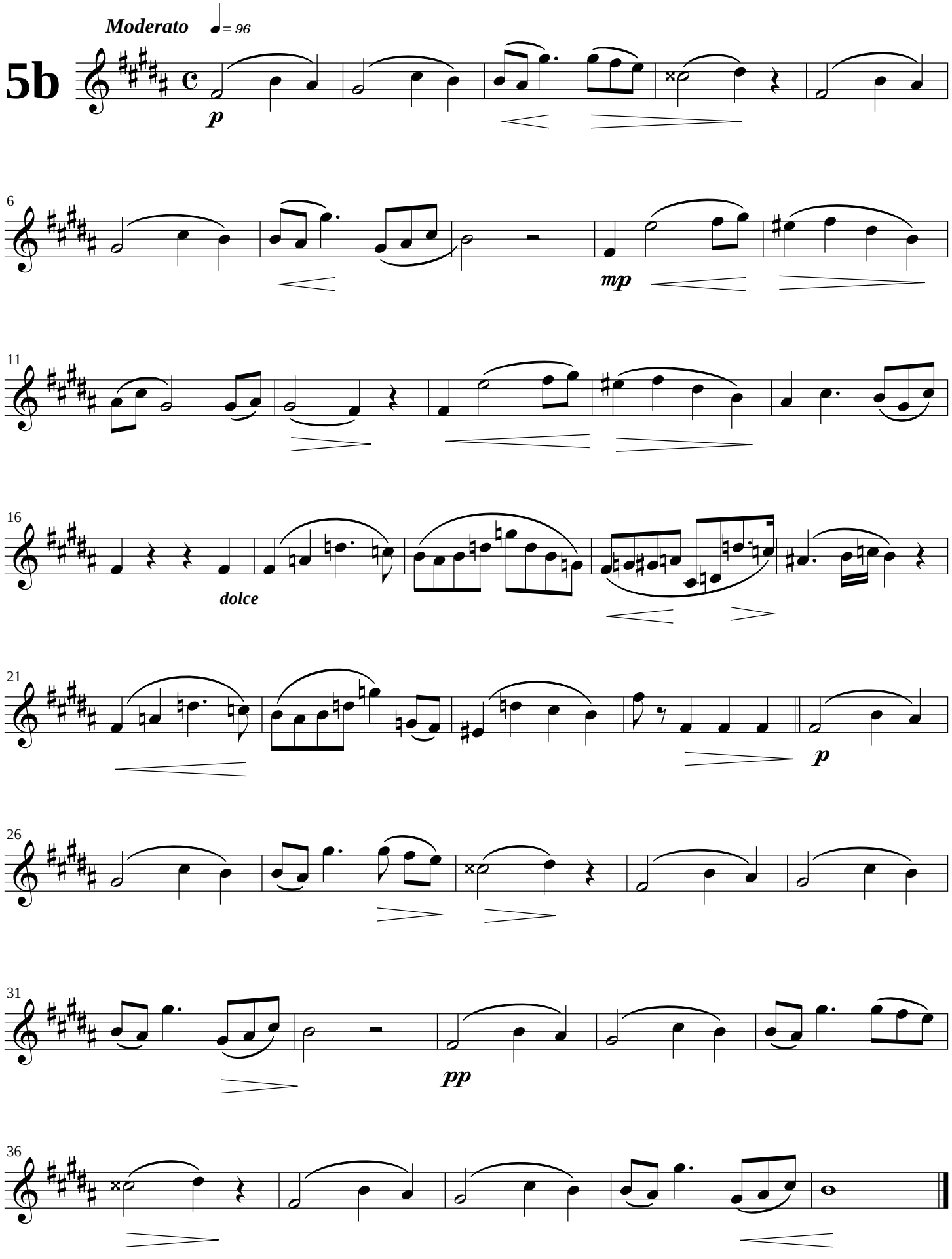
dolce
21
p
26
31
pp
36


Moderato
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5b
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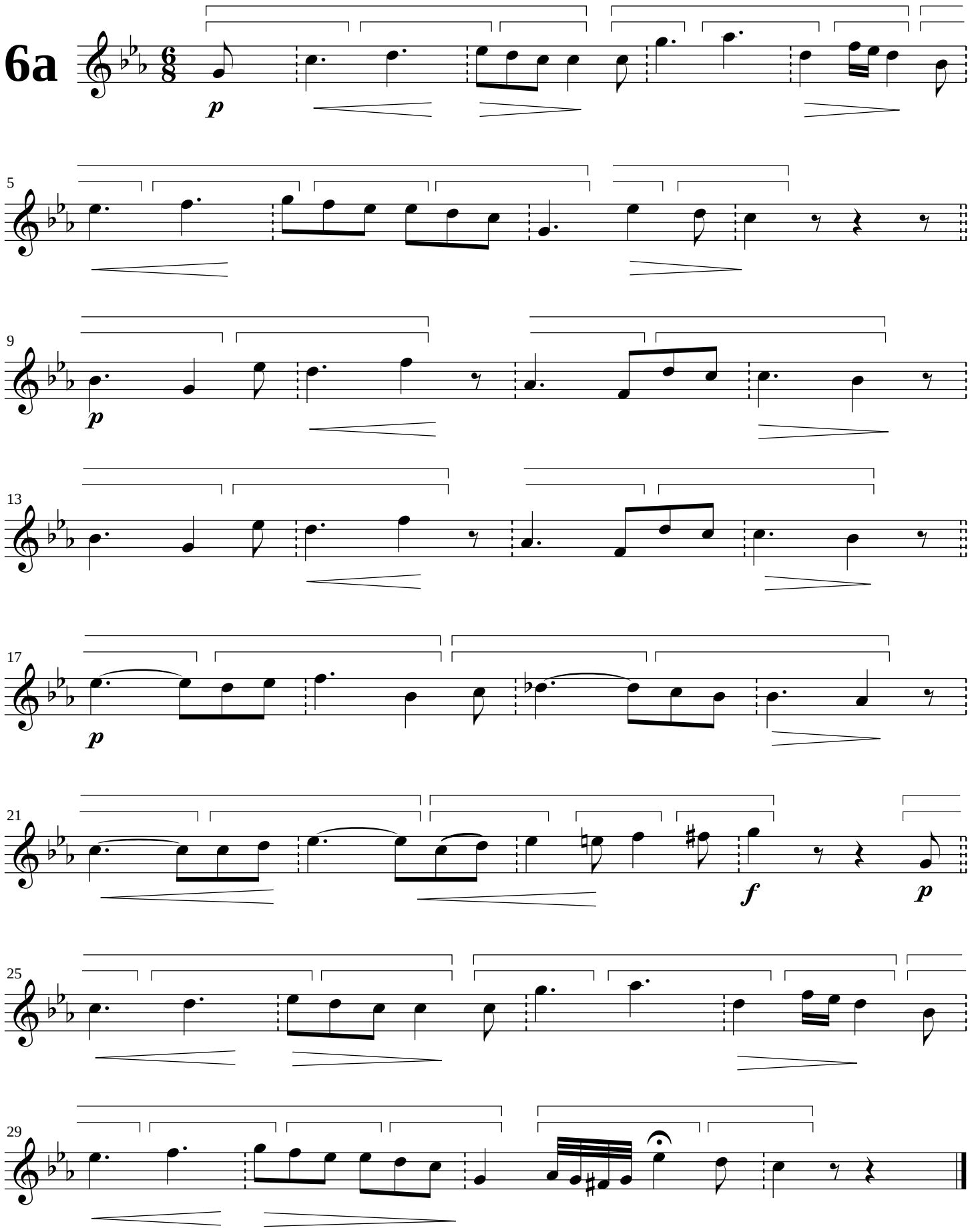
mp
11
16
dolce
21
p
26
31
pp
36

6a

Andantino ♩. = 54



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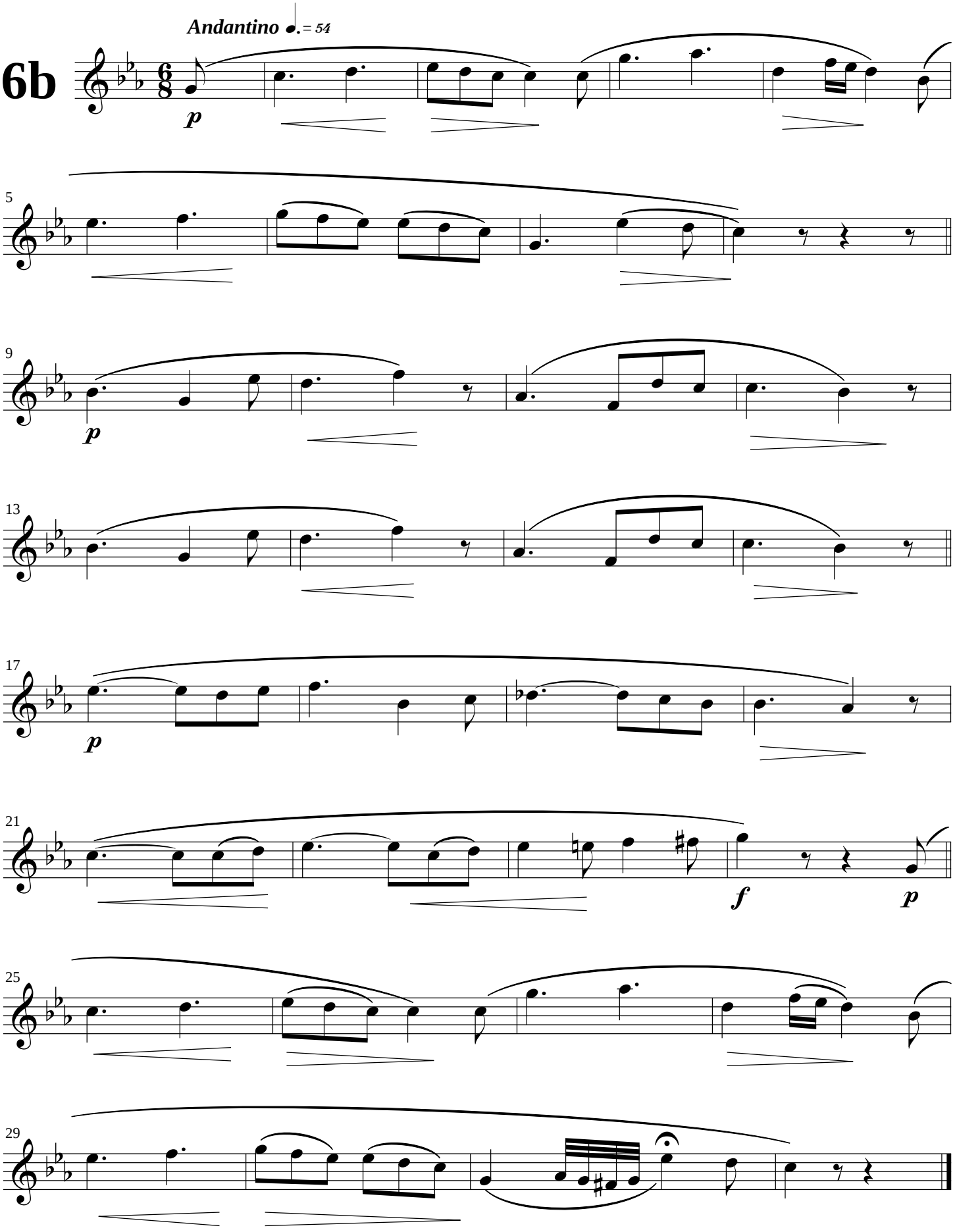

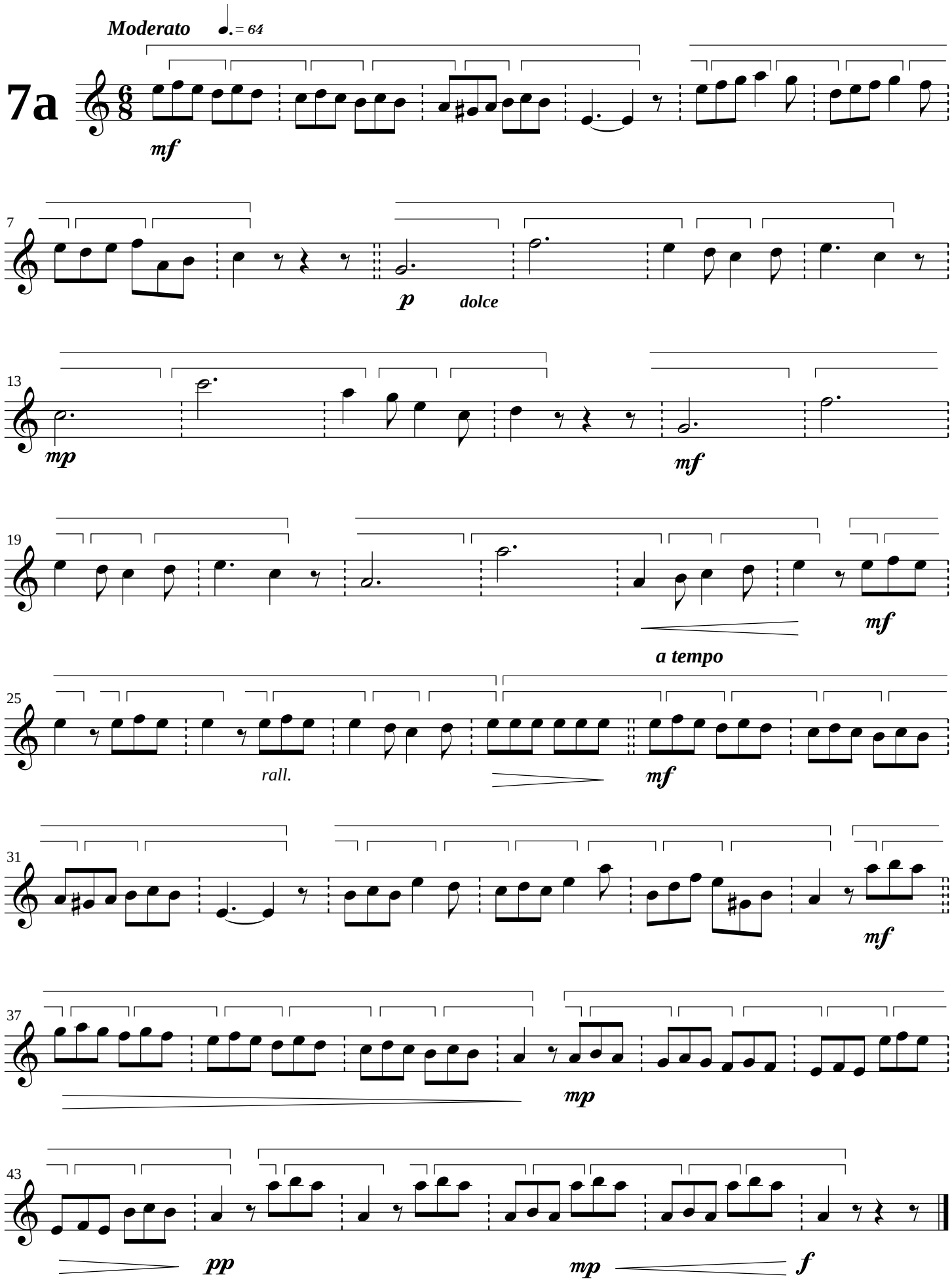
Moderato
♩. = 64
7a
mf
7
p
dolce
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mp
mf
19
mf
a tempo
25
rall.
mf
31
mf
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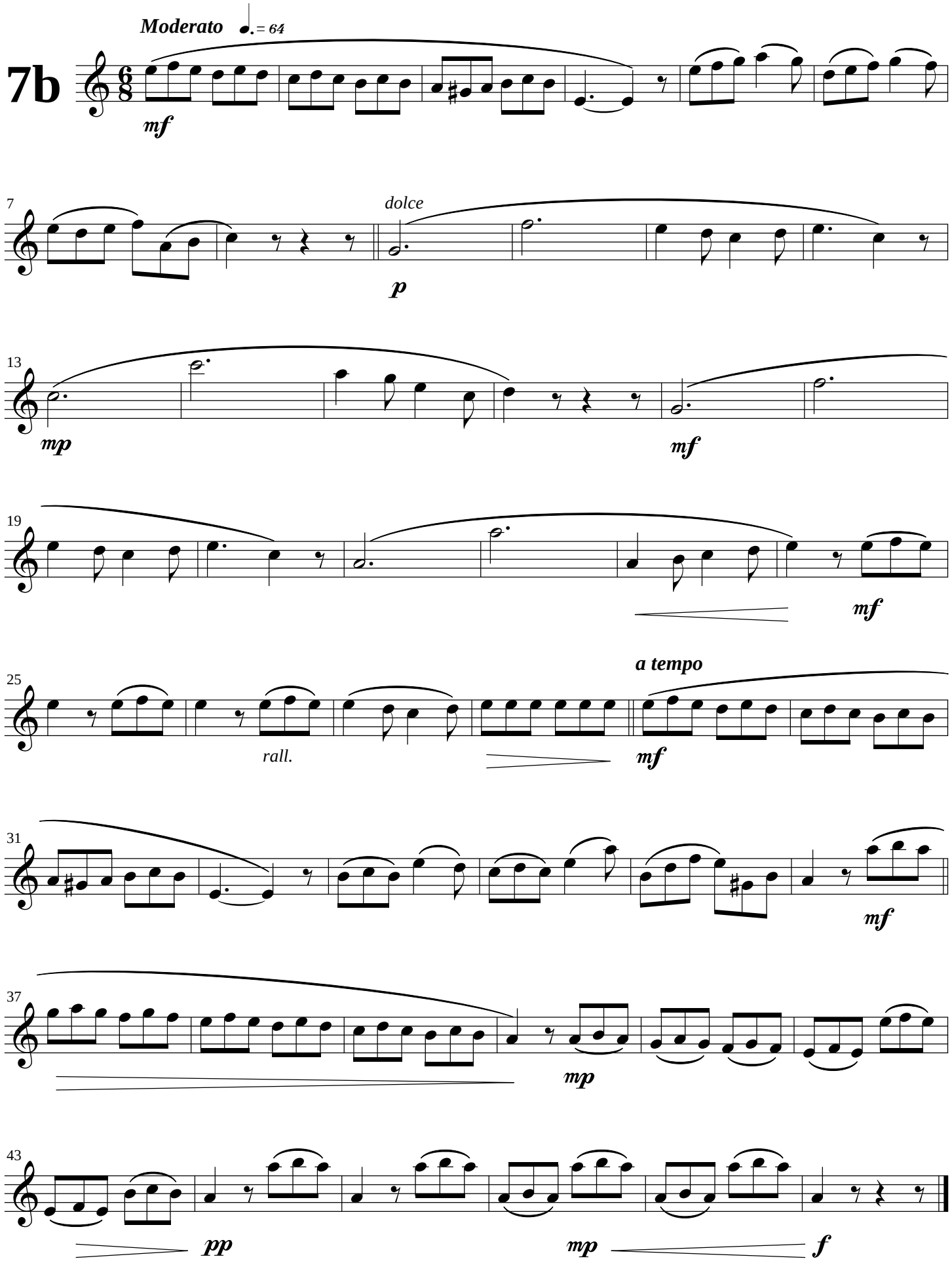
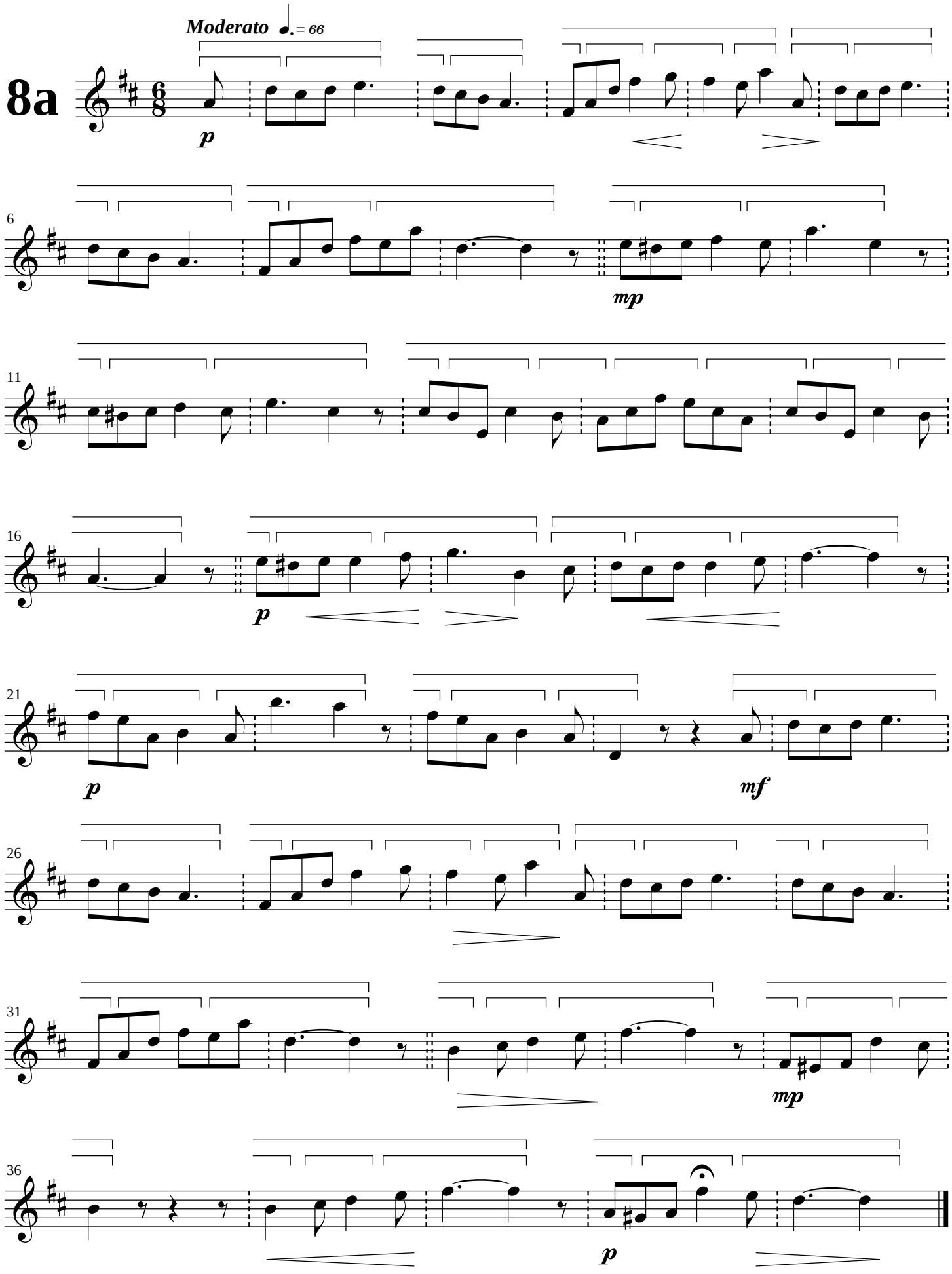
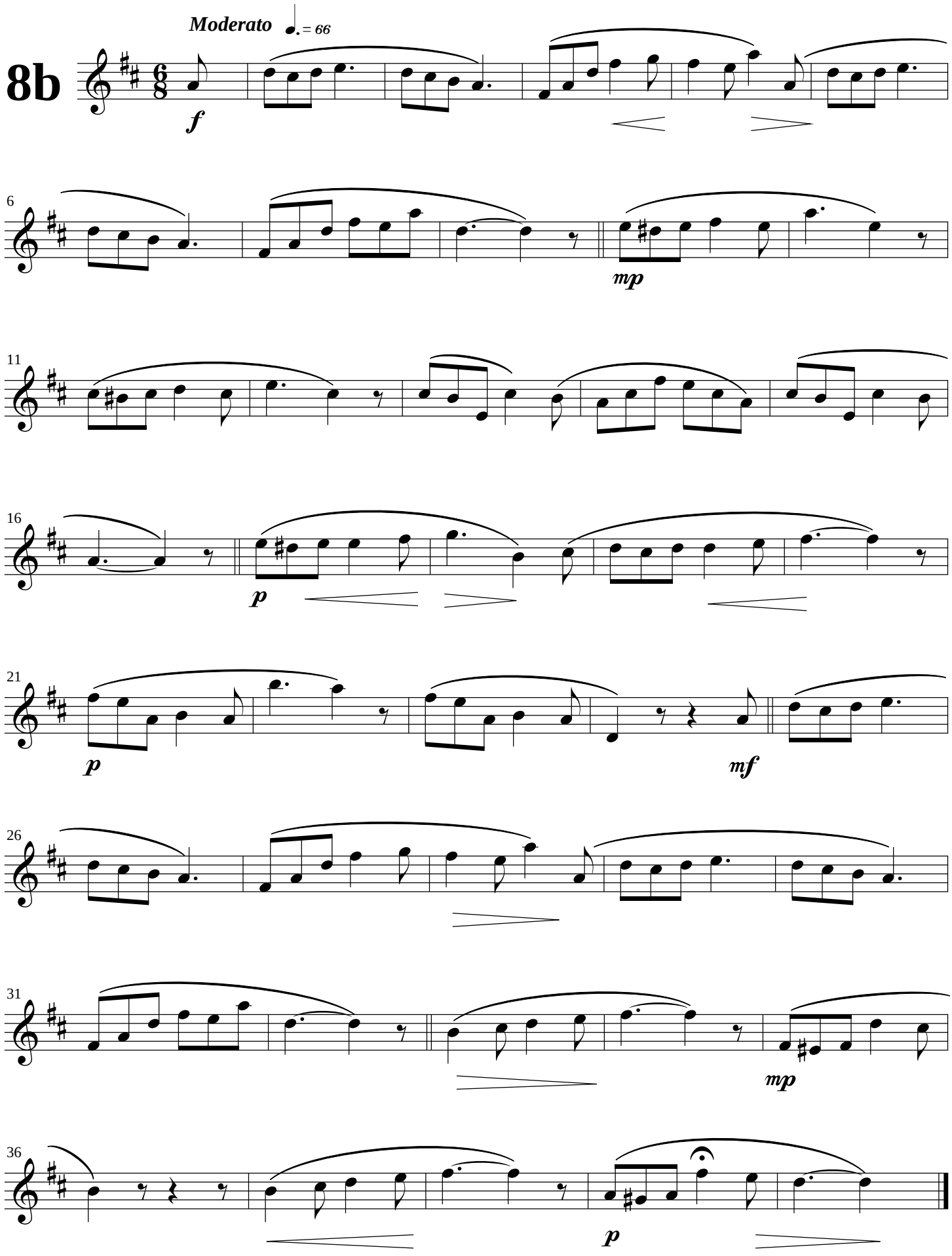
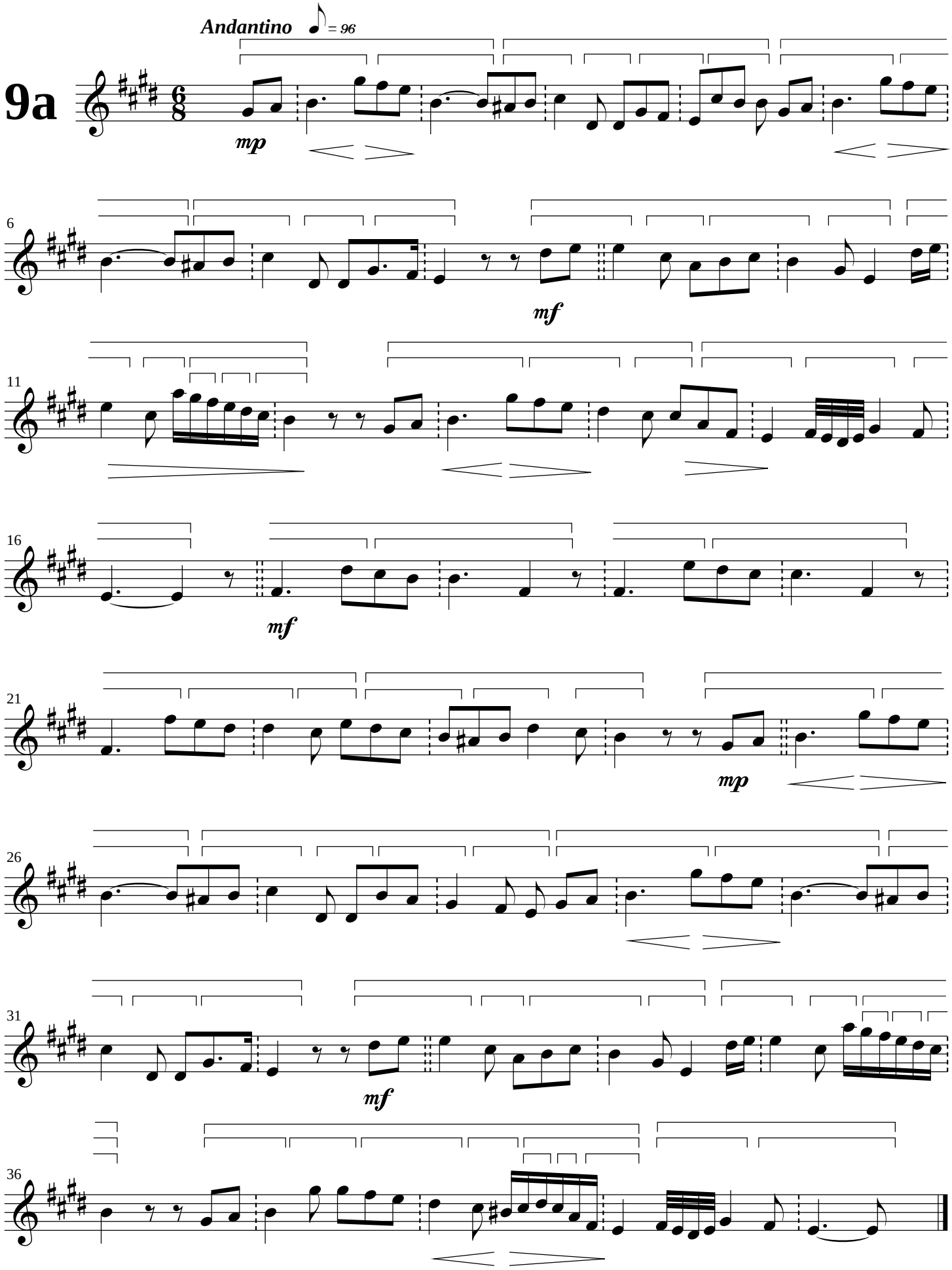
pp
mp
f


7b
Moderato
♩. = 64
mf
7
dolce
p
13
mp
mf
19
mf
25
a tempo
rall.
mf
31
mf
37
mp
43
pp
mp
f

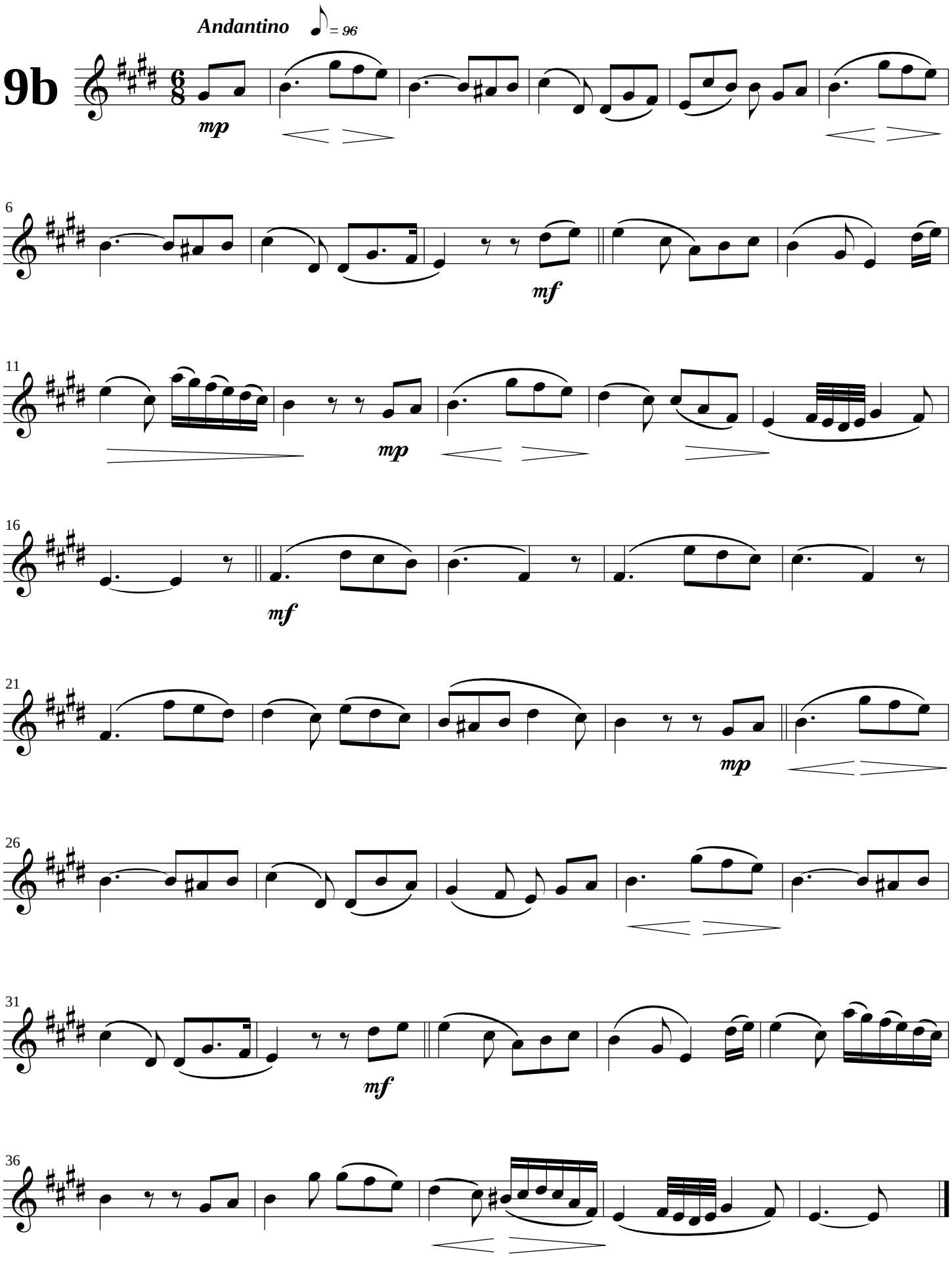

8a
Moderato ♩. = 66
p
6
mp
11
16
p
21
p
mf
26
31
mp
36
p

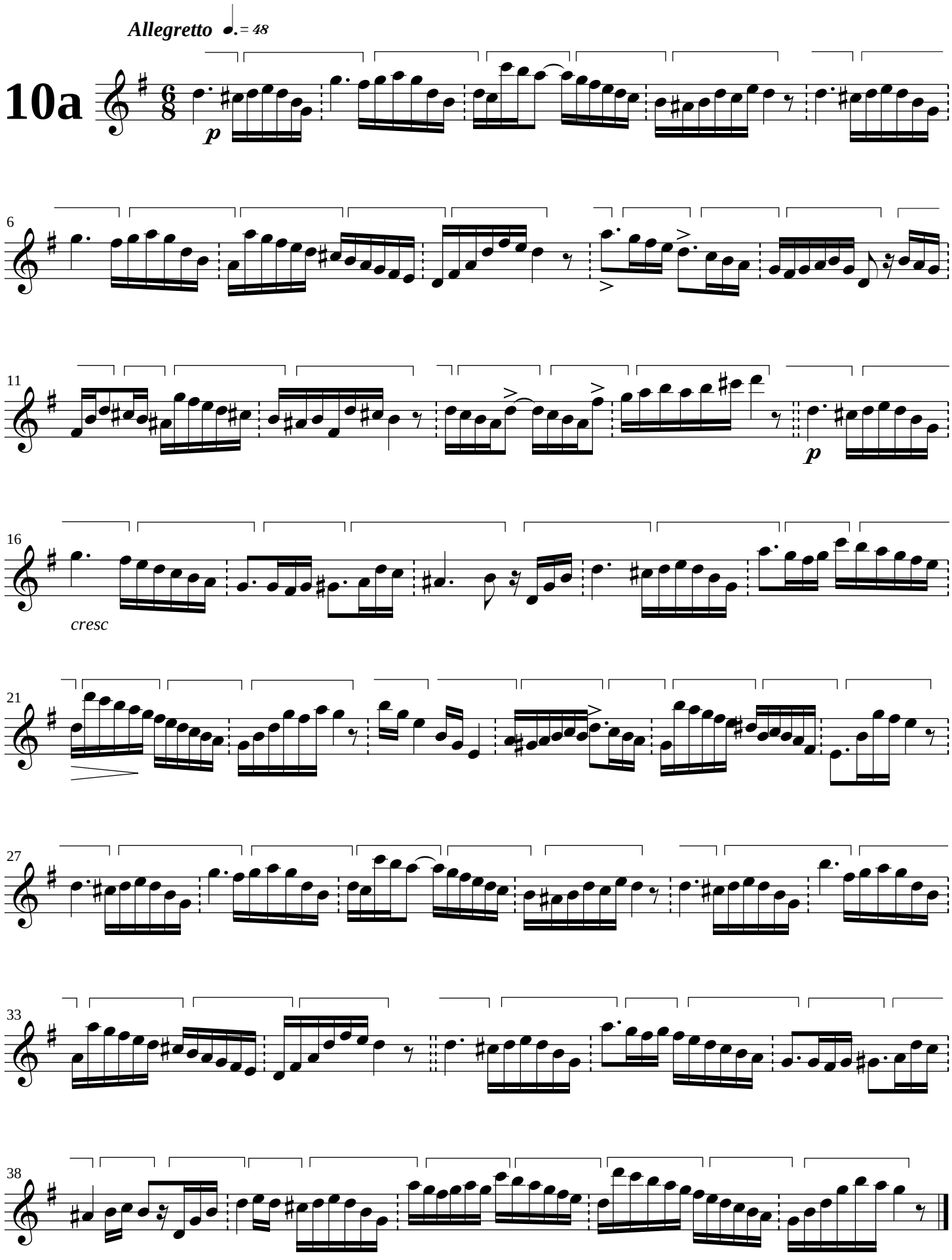

8b
Moderato
♩. = 66
f
6
mp
11
16
p
21
p
mf
26
31
mp
36
p


Andantino
= 96
9a
mp
6
mf
11
16
mf
21
mp
26
31
mf
36

9b

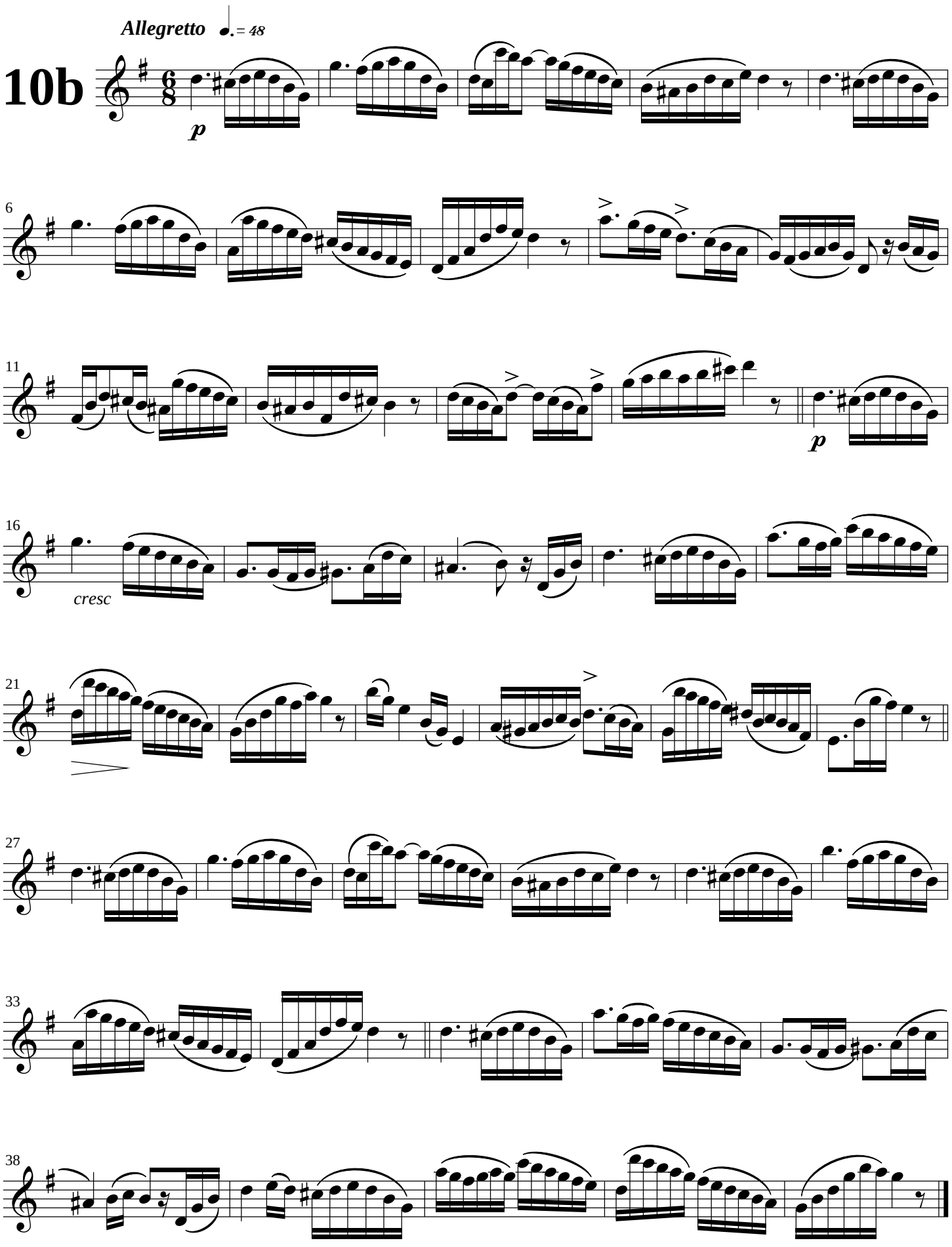
Andantino ♪ = 96

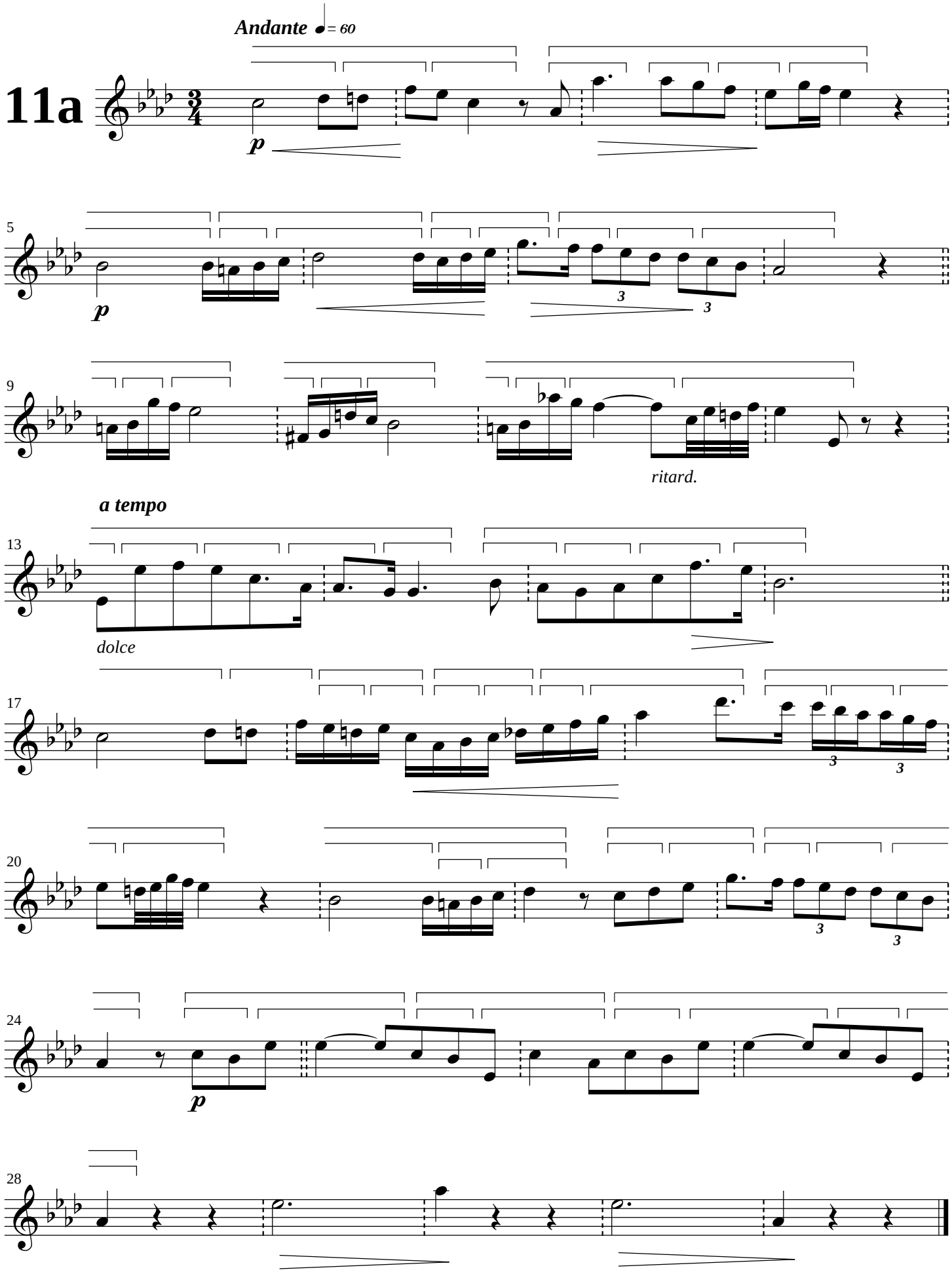



Allegretto ♩. = 48
10a
p
6
11
p
16
cresc
21
27
33
38

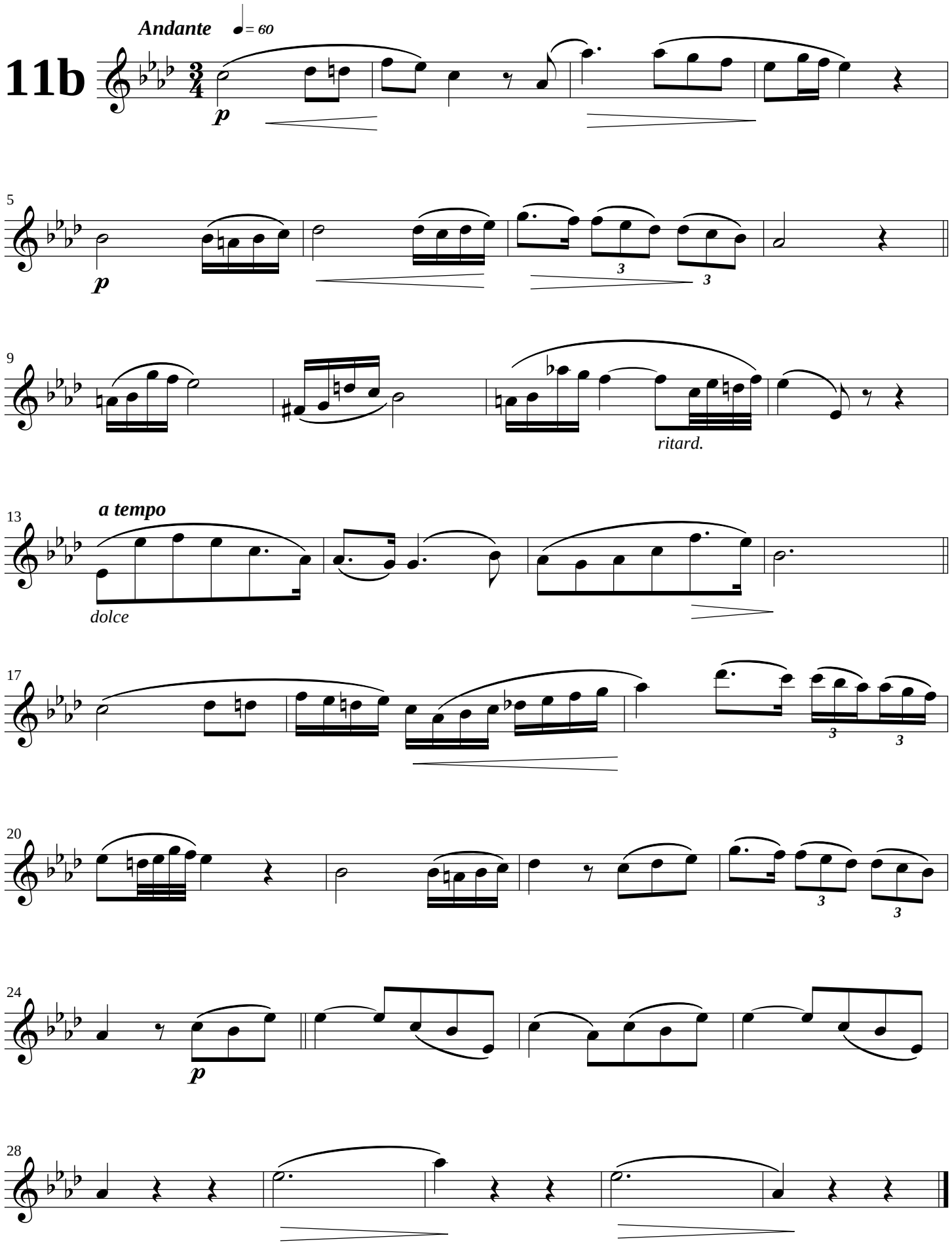
10b

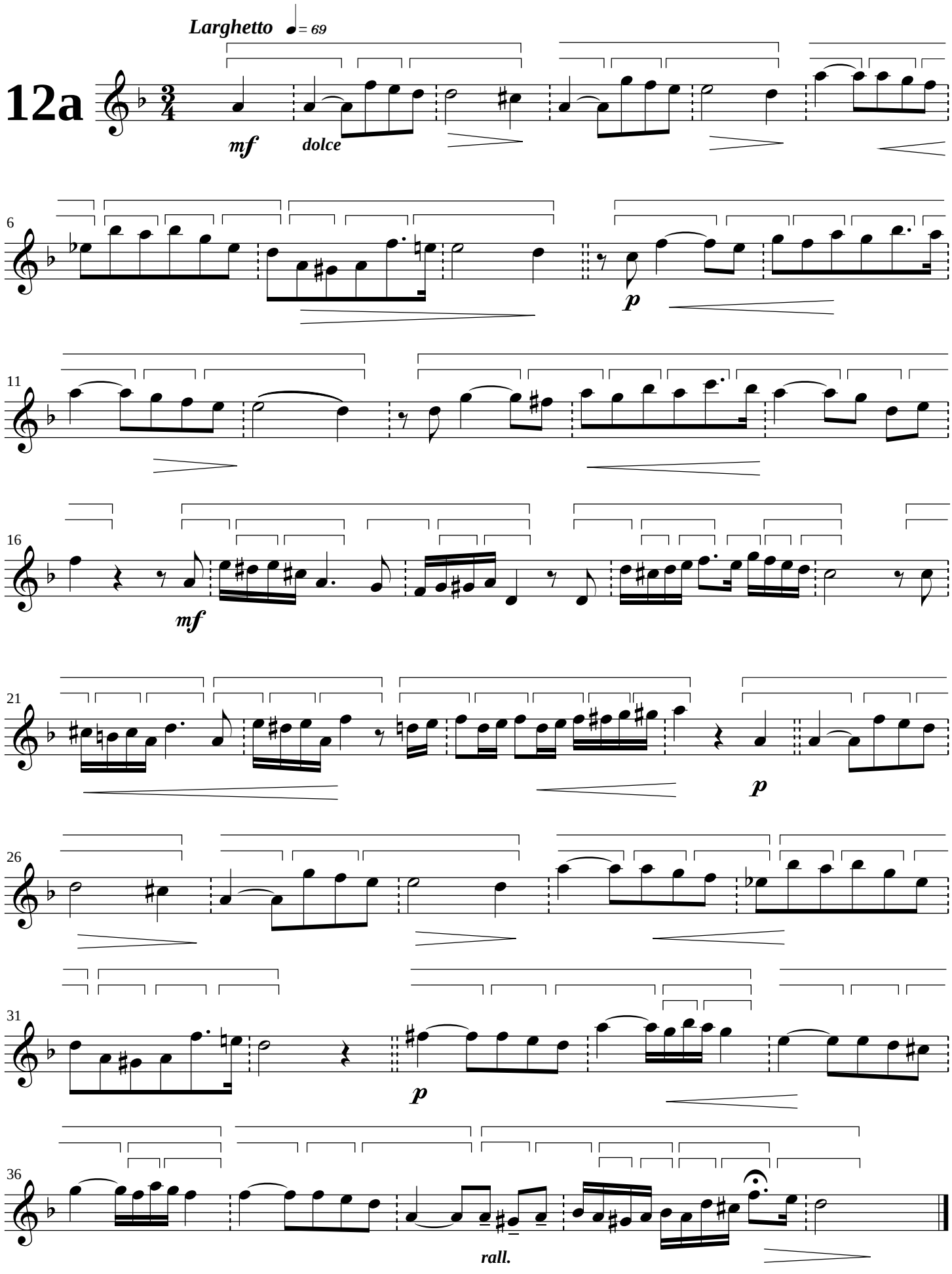
Allegretto ♩. = 48




11a
Andante ♩= 60
p
5
p
3
3
9
ritard.
a tempo
13
dolce
17
3
3
20
3
3
24
p
28

11b




12a
Larghetto
= 69
mf
dolce
6
p
11
16
mf
21
p
26
31
p
36
rall.

12b

Larghetto ♩= 69

mf *dolce*

6

p

11

16

mf

21

p

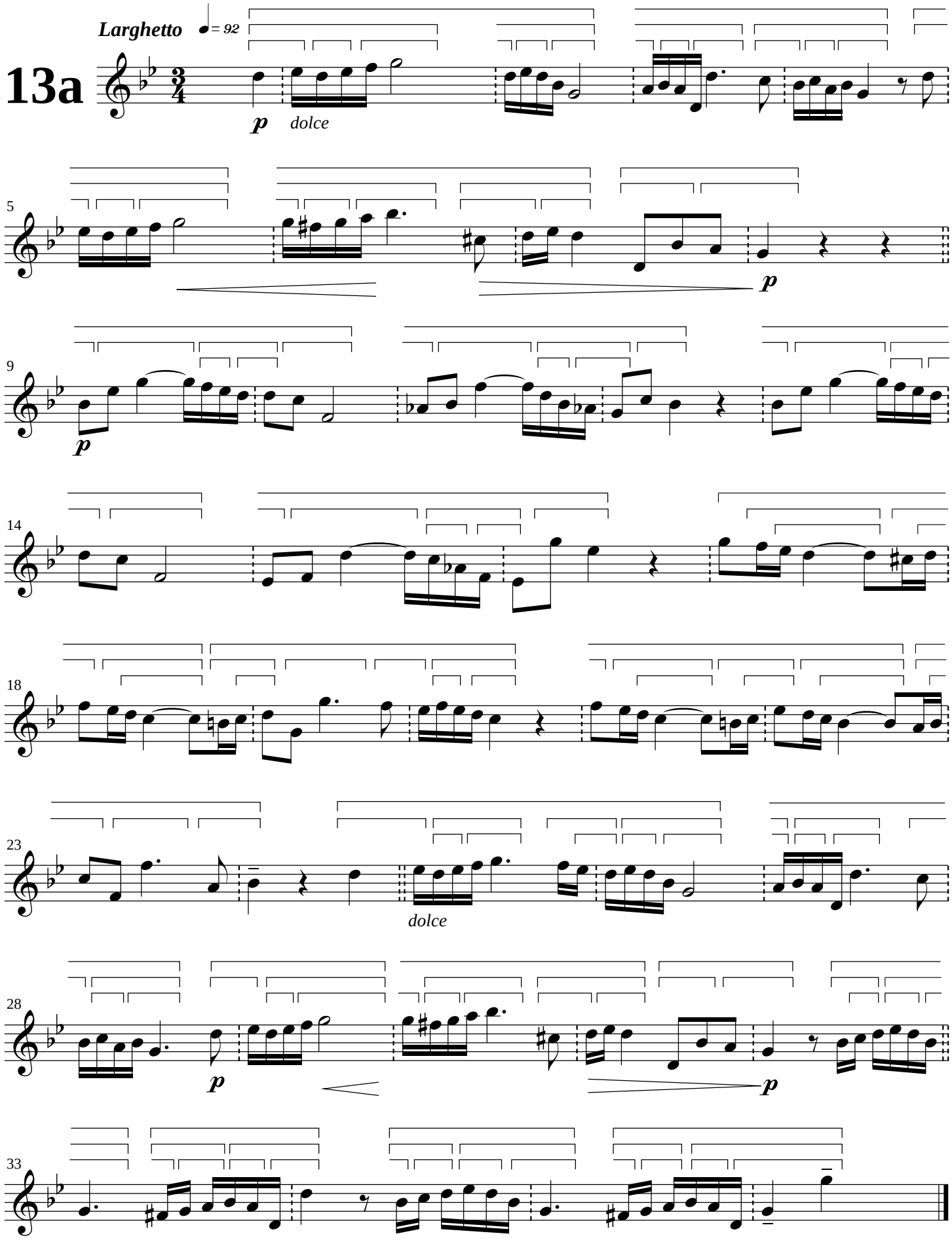
26

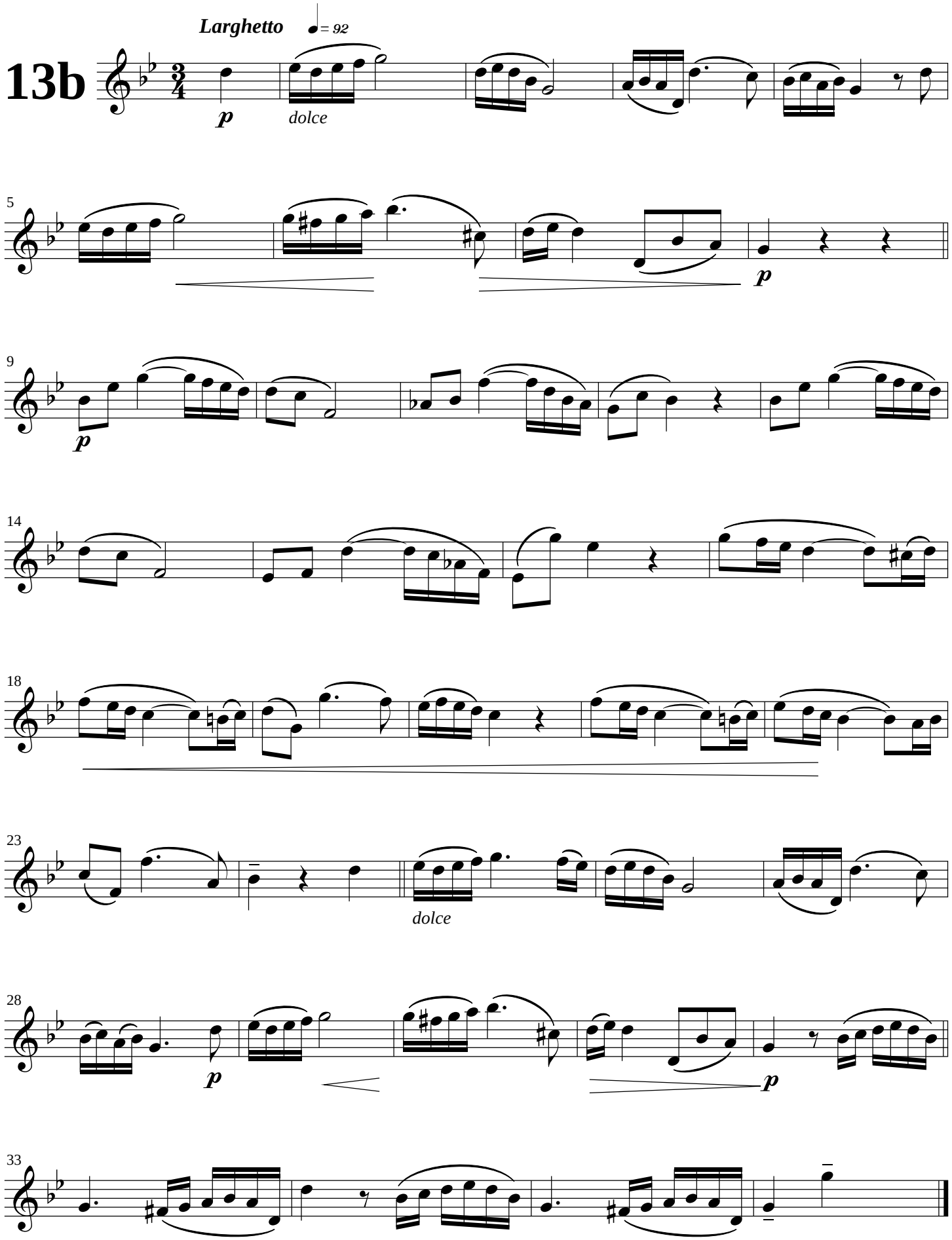
31

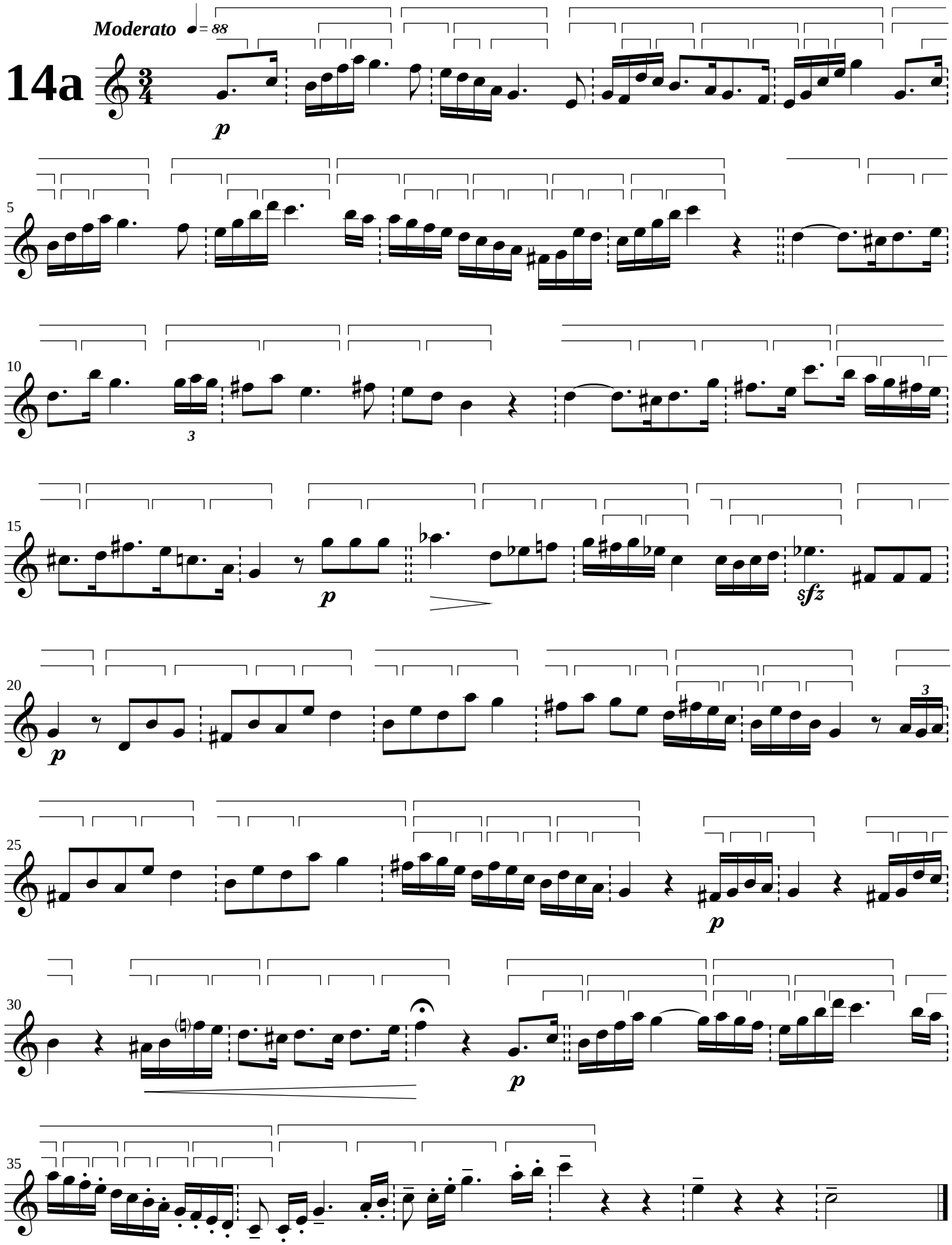
p

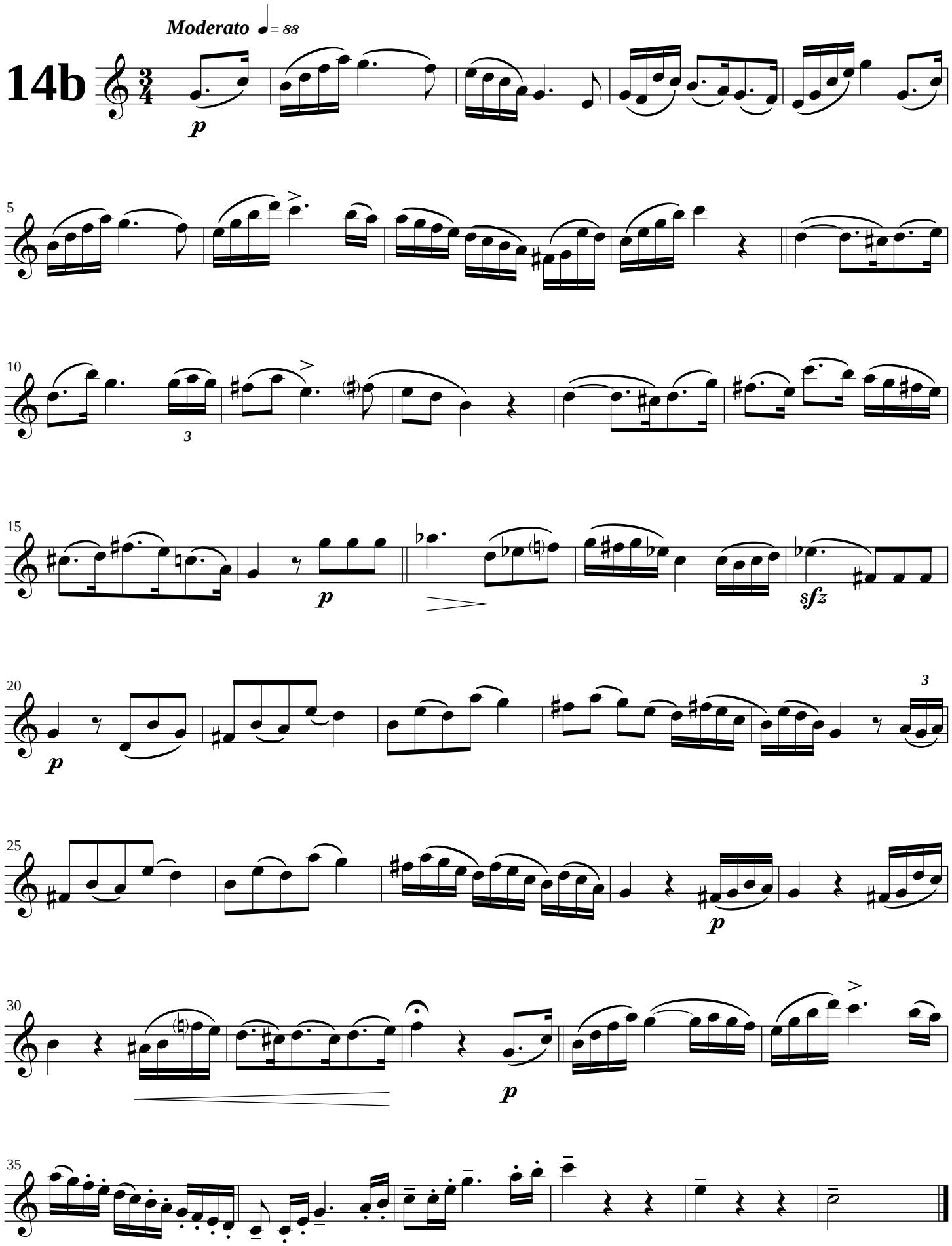
36

rall.


13a
Larghetto
= 92
p
dolce
5
p
9
p
14
18
23
dolce
28
p
p
33

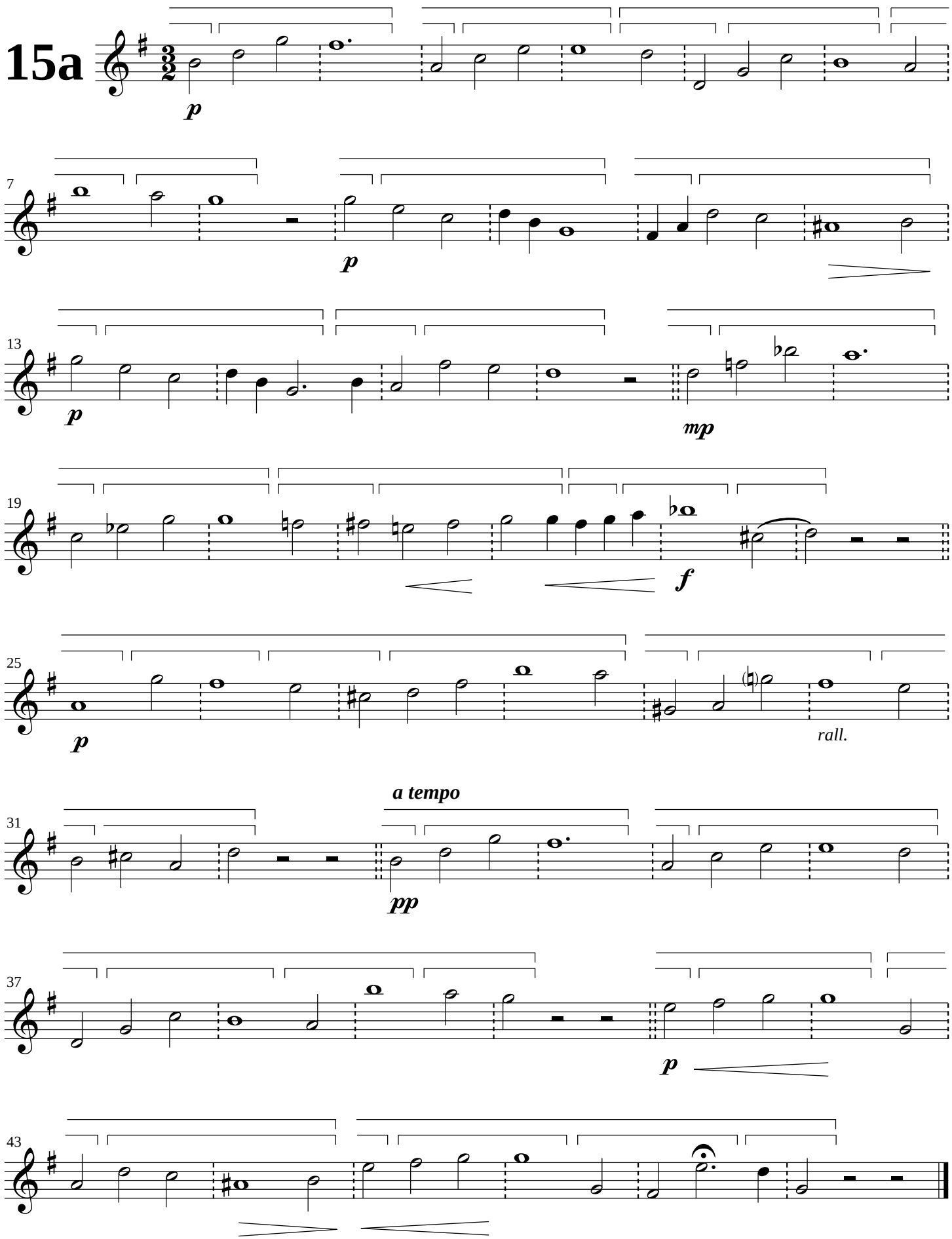

13b
Larghetto
= 92
p
dolce
5
p
9
p
14
18
23
dolce
28
p
p
33

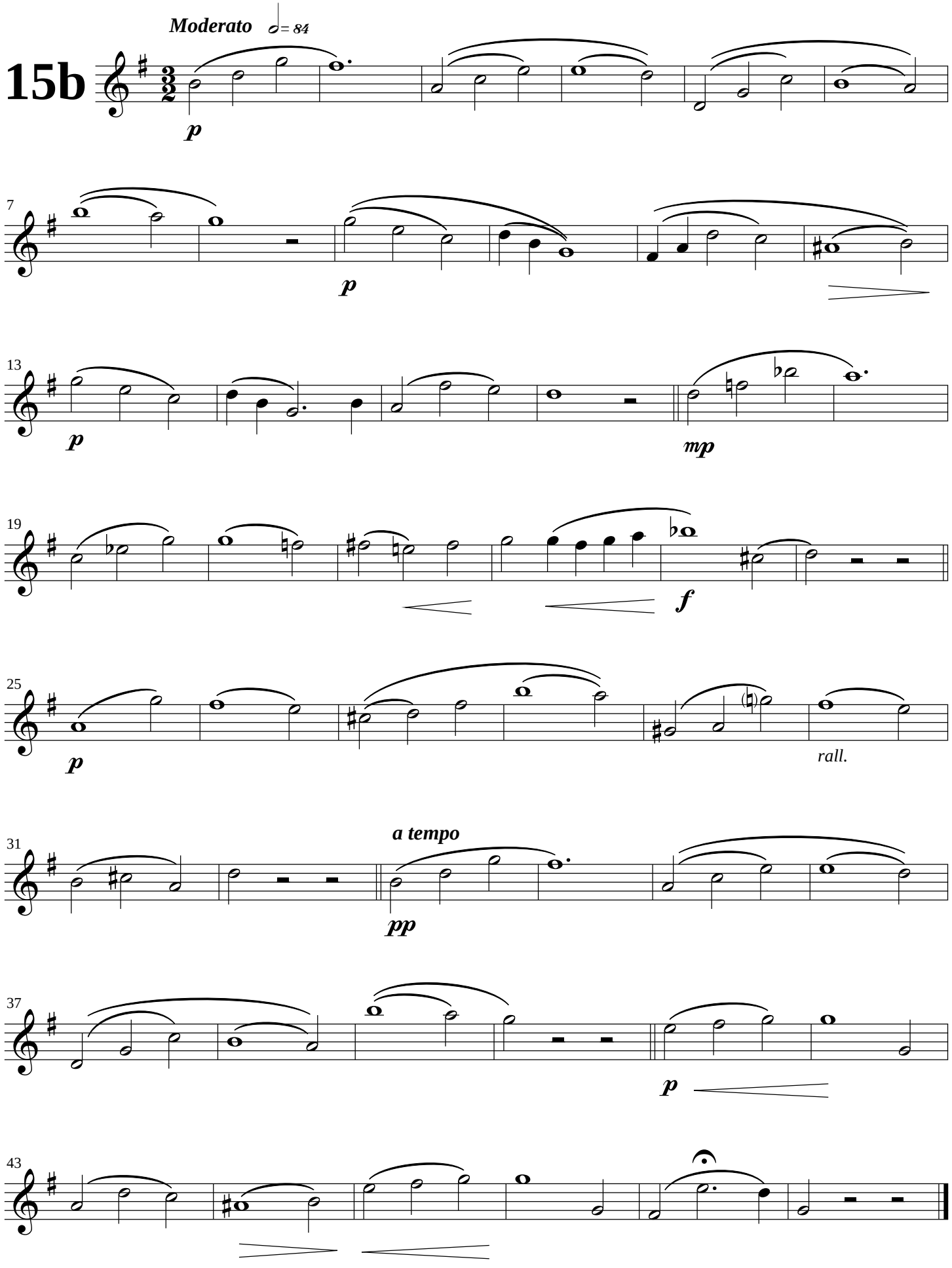

14a
Moderato ♩= 88
p
5
10
3
15
p
sfz
20
p
3
25
p
30
p
35

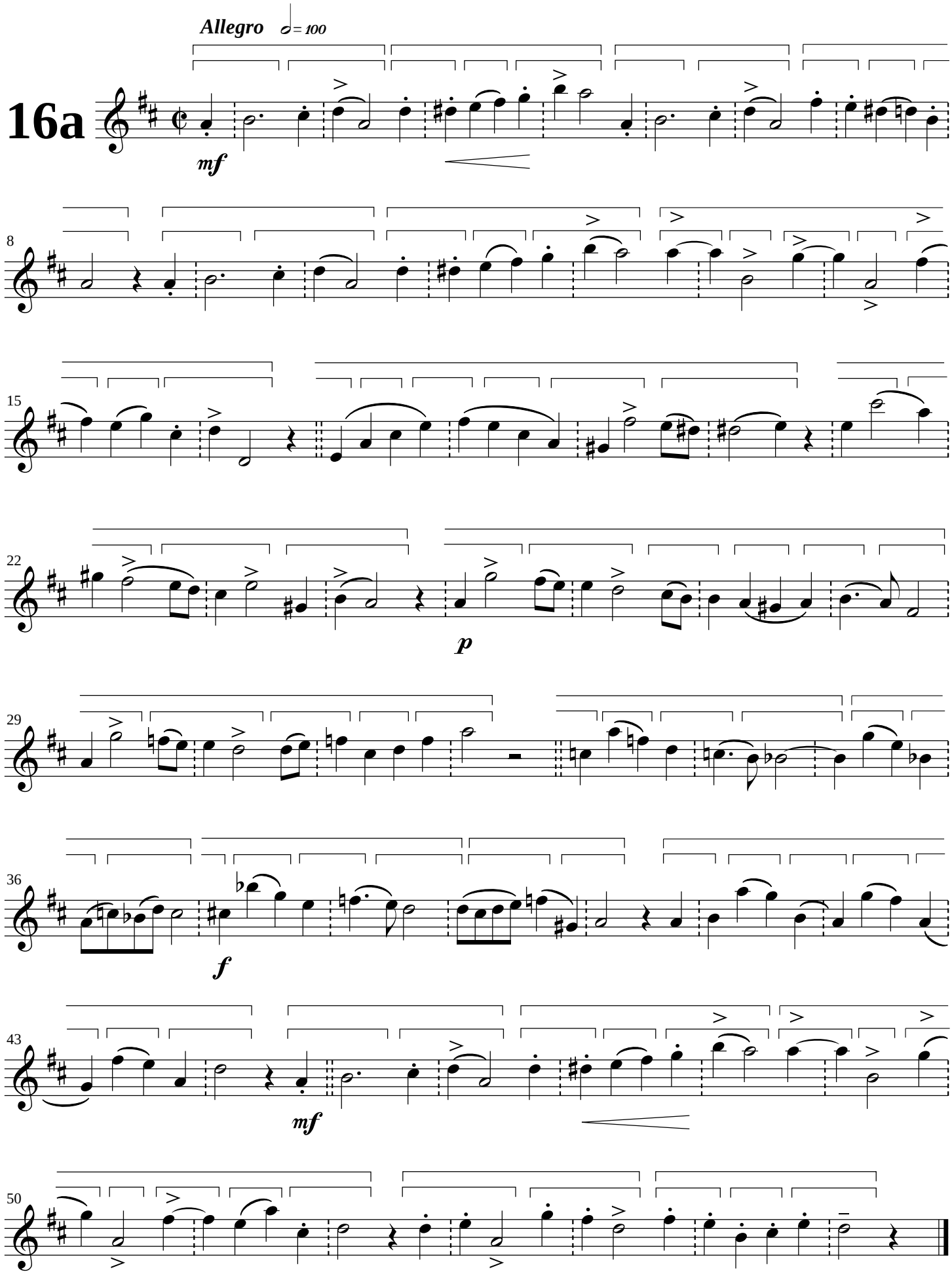

Moderato ♩= 88
14b
p
5
10
3
15
p
sfz
20
p
3
25
p
30
p
35

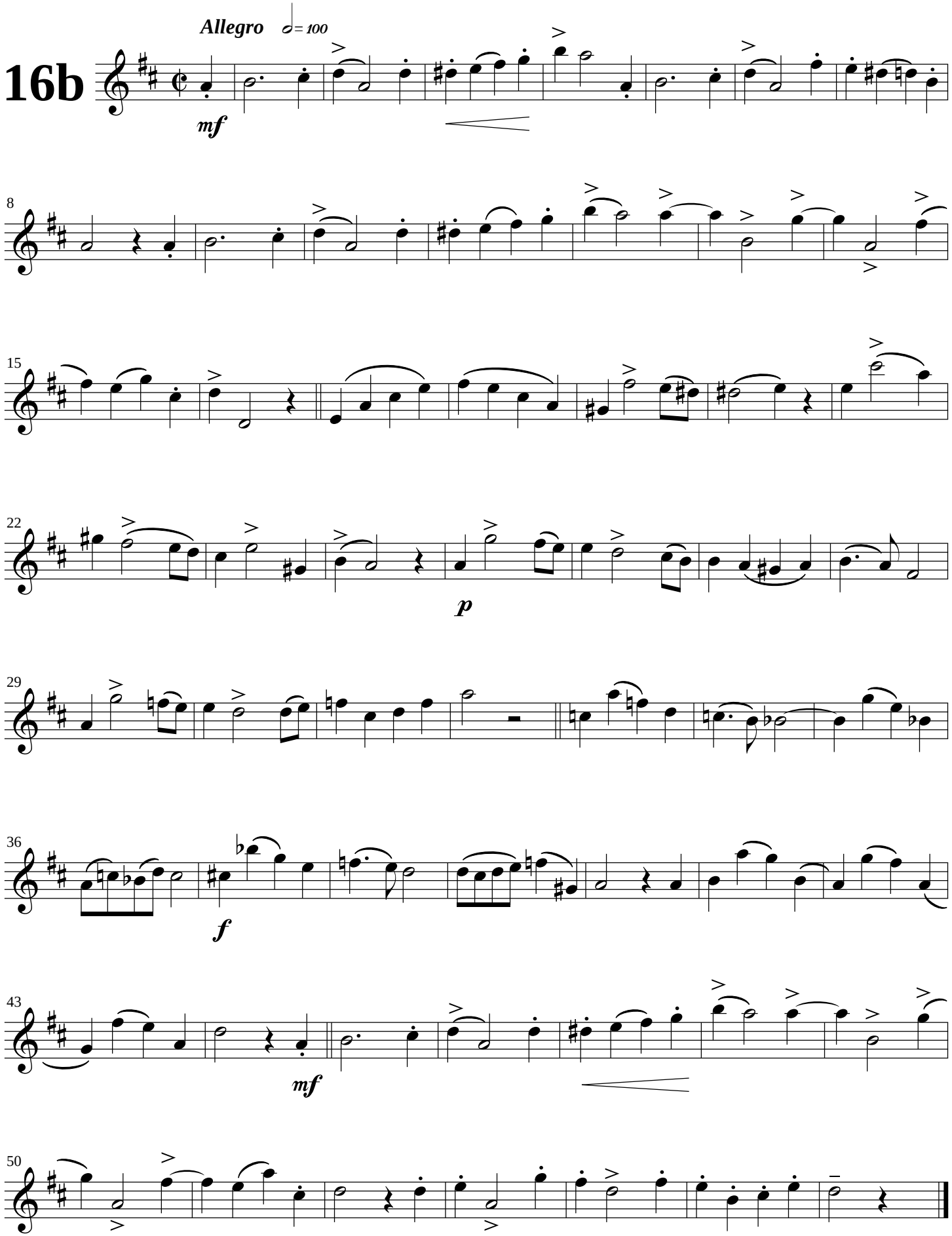
15a

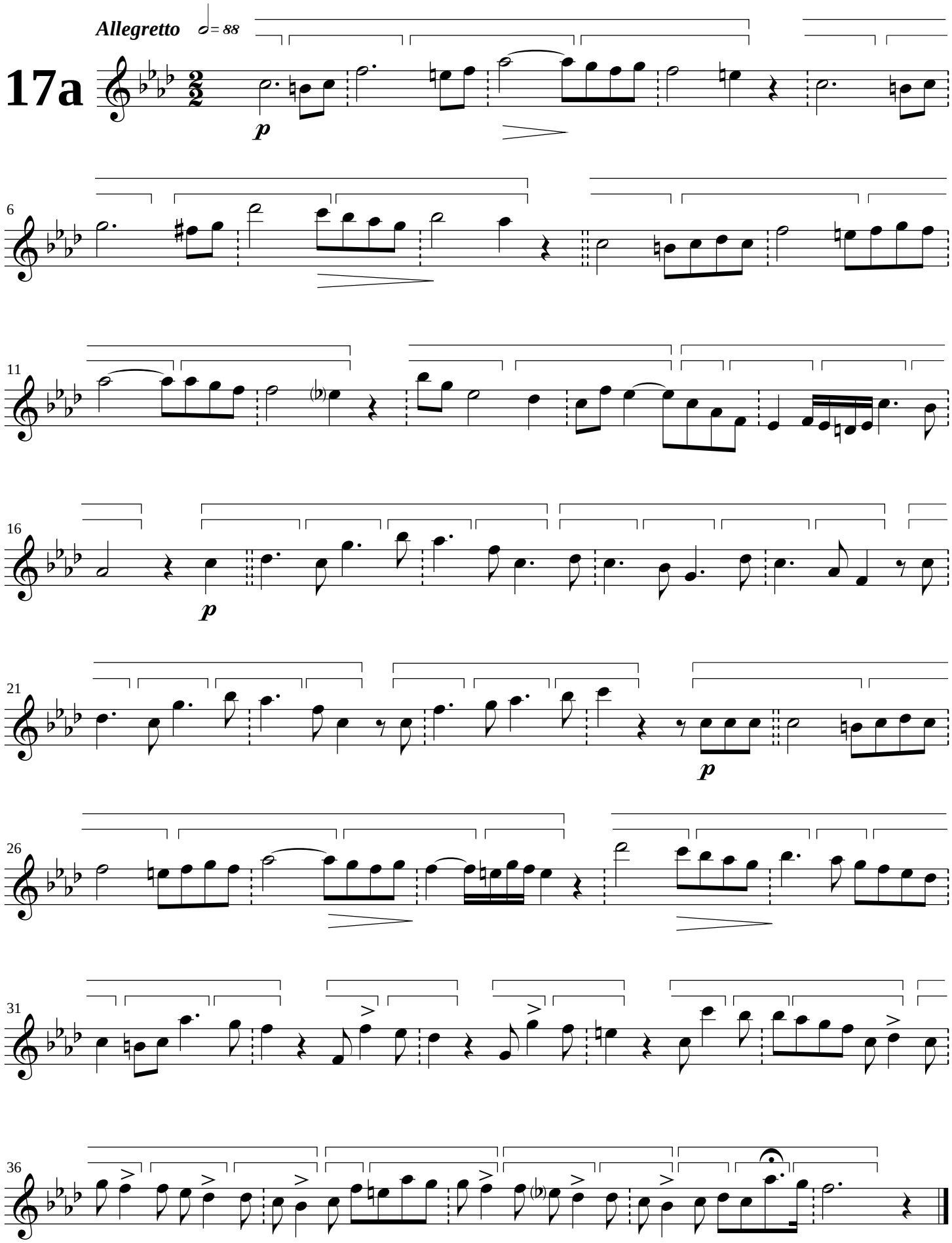
Moderato ♩= 84




15b
Moderato
= 84
p
7
p
13
p
mp
19
f
25
p
rall.
31
a tempo
pp
37
p
43

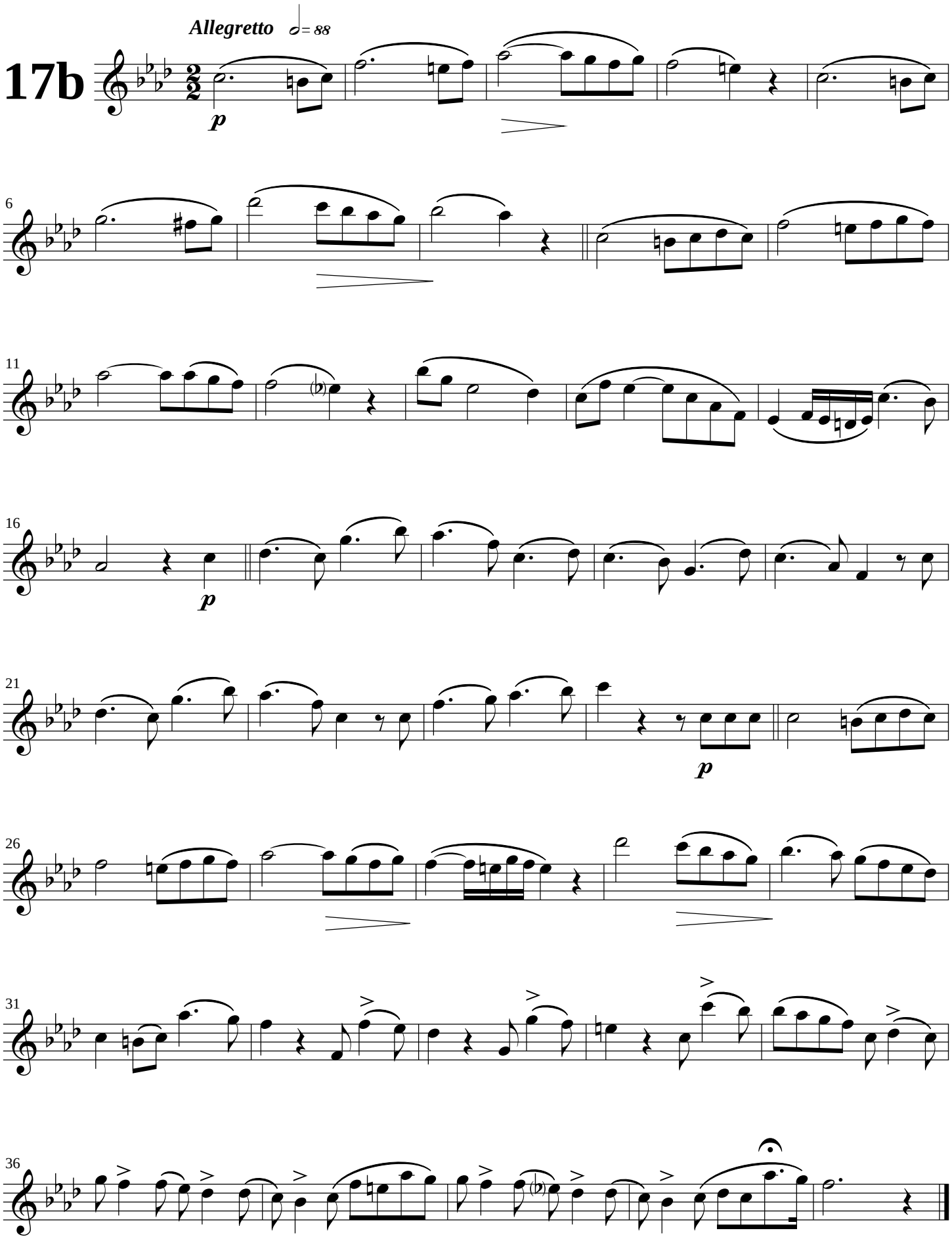

Allegro
♩= 100
16a
mf
8
15
22
p
29
36
f
43
mf
50

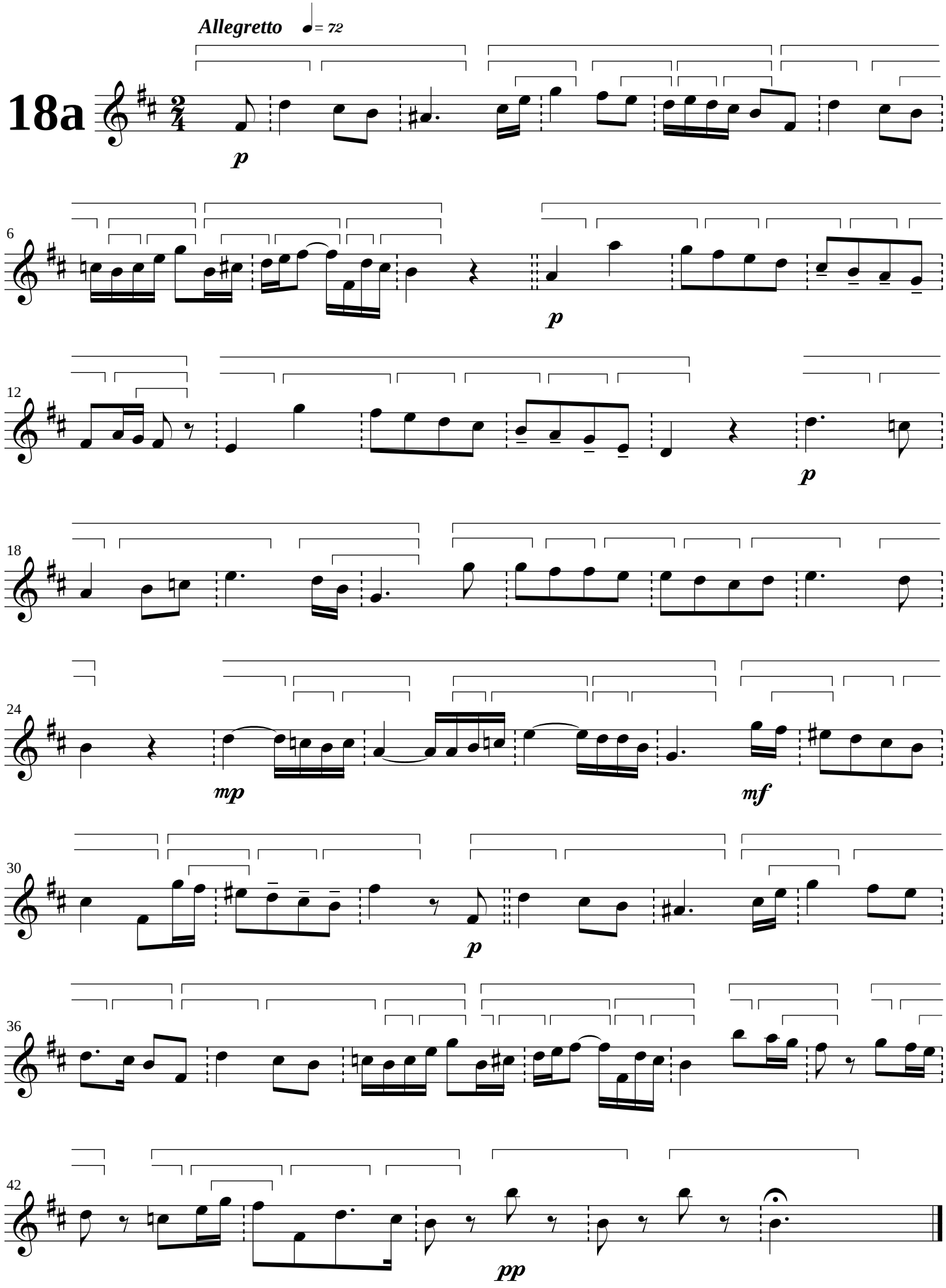

16b
Allegro
♩= 100
mf
8
15
22
p
29
36
f
43
mf
50

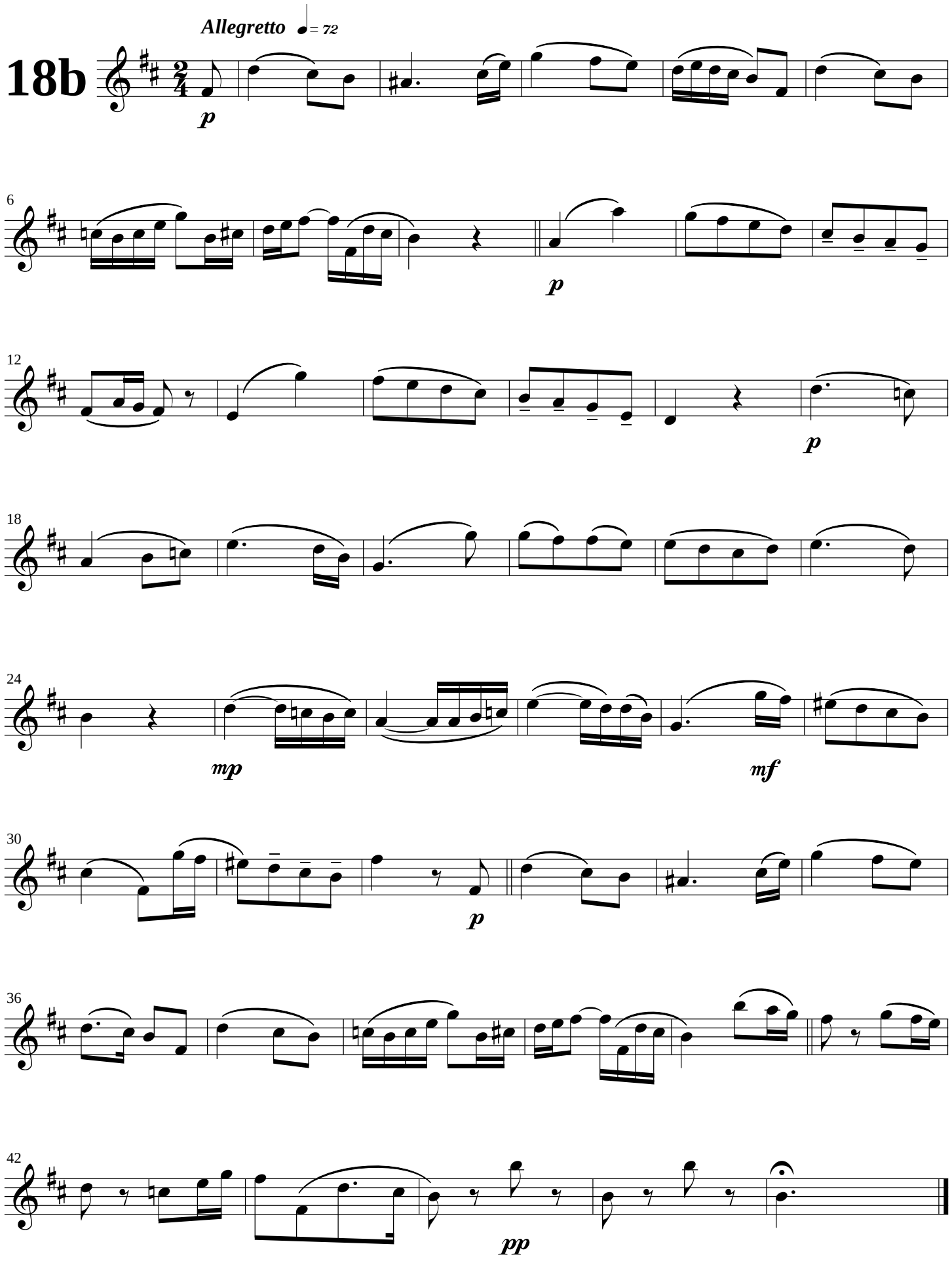

Allegretto
♩= 88
17a
p
6
11
16
p
21
p
26
31
36

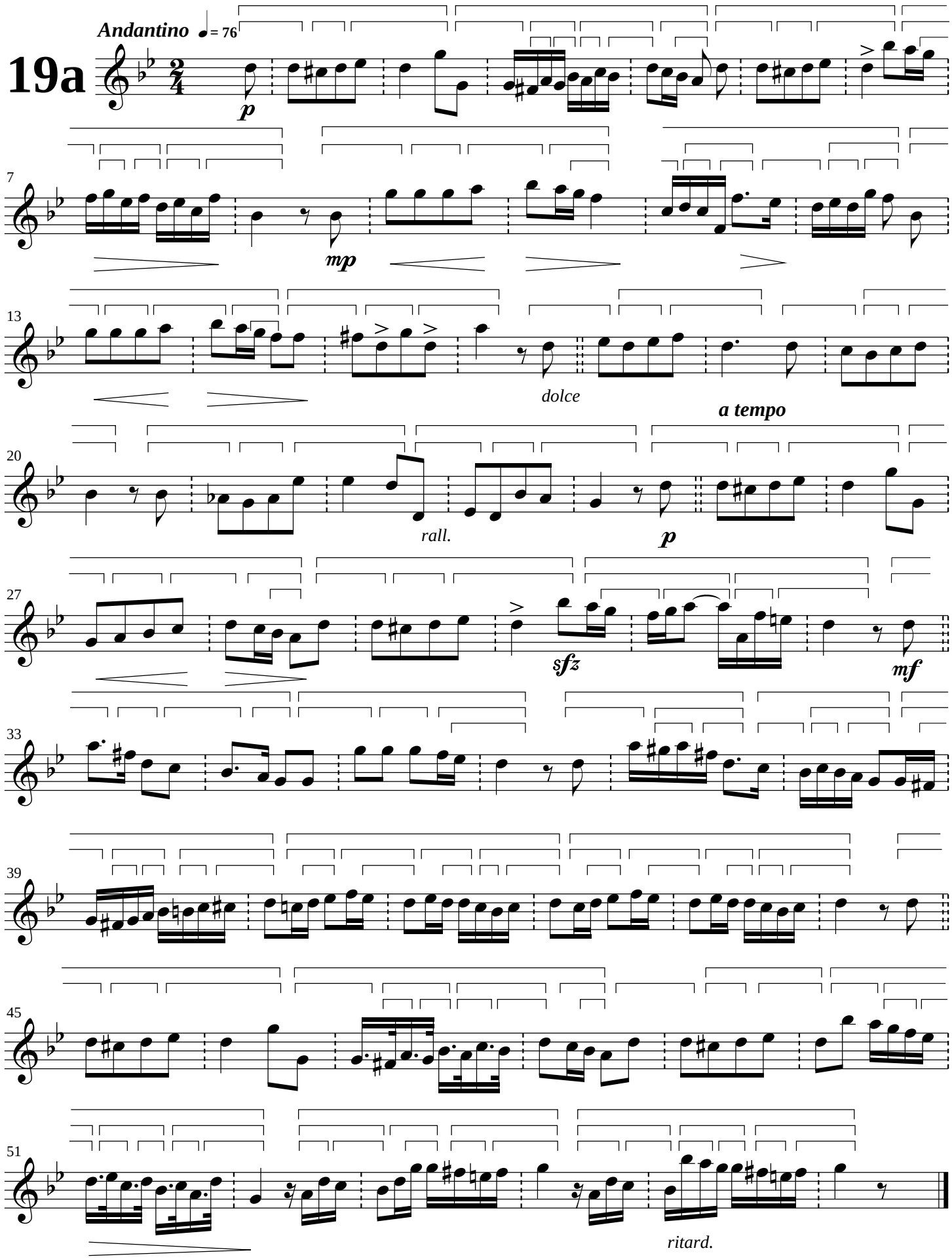
17b

Allegretto ♩= 88



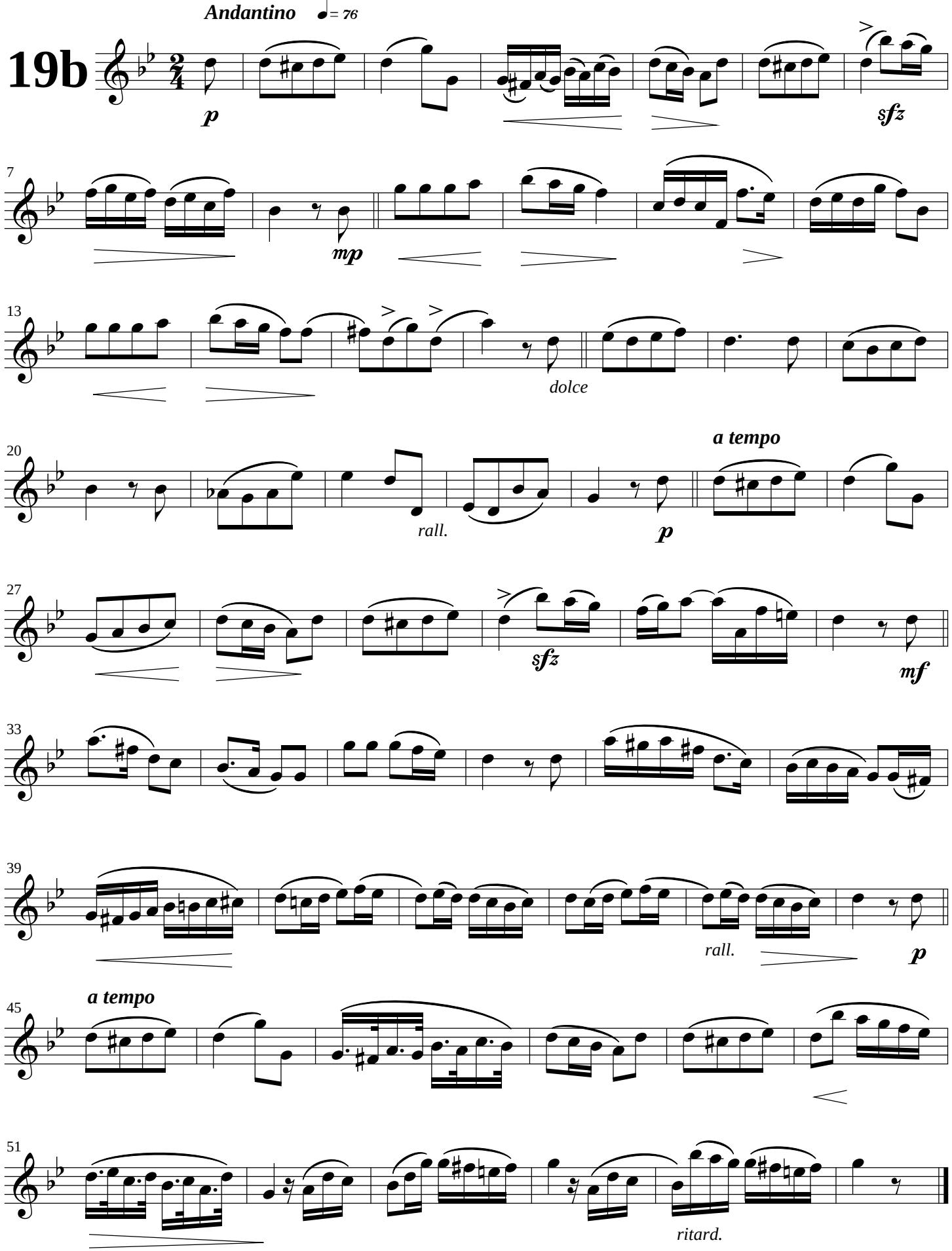

Allegretto
♩= 72
18a
p
6
p
12
p
18
24
mp
mf
30
p
36
42
pp


18b
Allegretto ♩= 72
p
6
p
12
p
18
24
mp
mf
30
p
36
42
pp


19a
Andantino ♩= 76
p
7
mp
13
dolce
a tempo
20
rall.
p
27
sfz
mf
33
39
45
51
ritard.

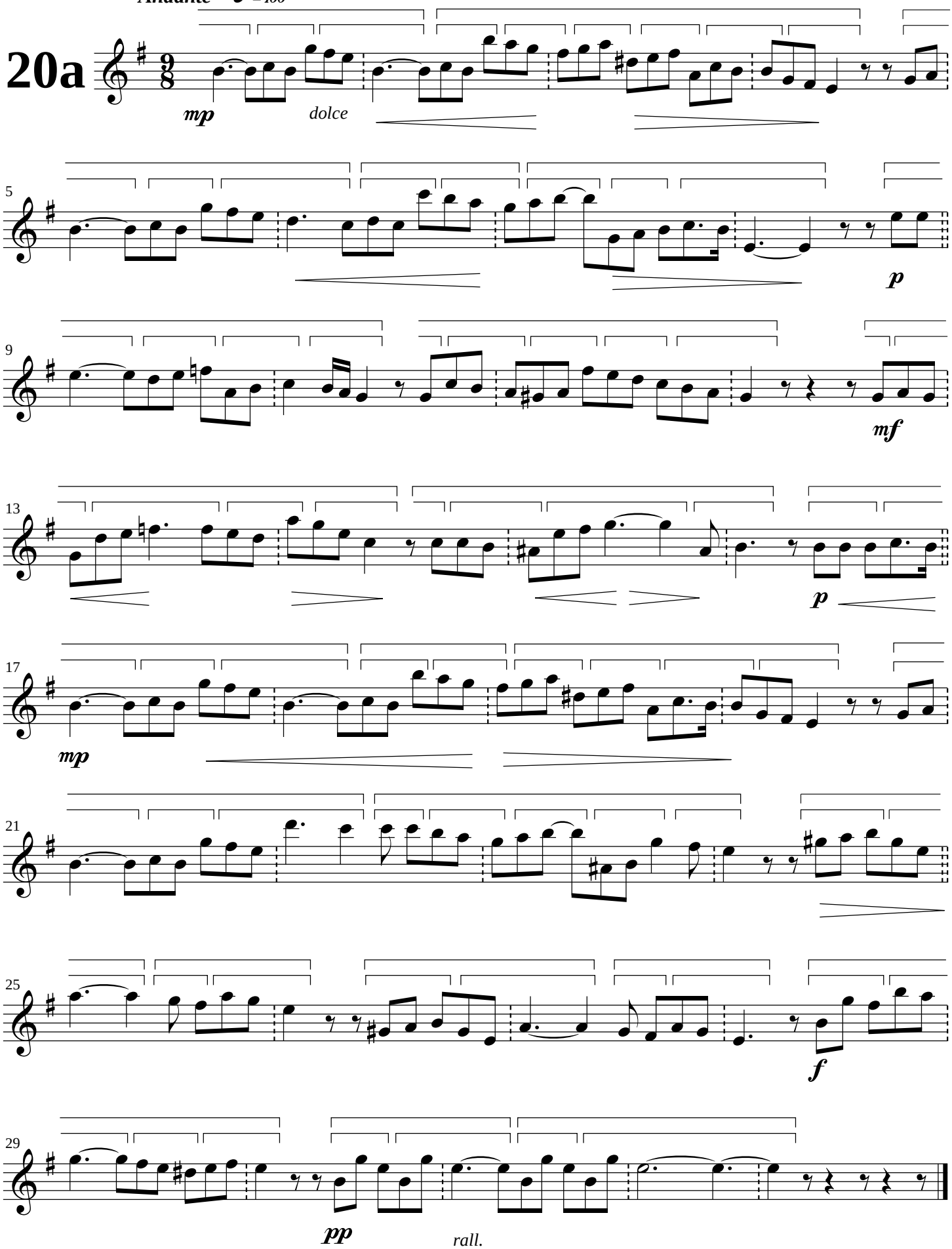
19b

Andantino ♩= 76



20a

Andante ♪ = 100



20b

Andante ♪ = 100

mp *dolce*

5

p

9

mf

13

p

17

mp

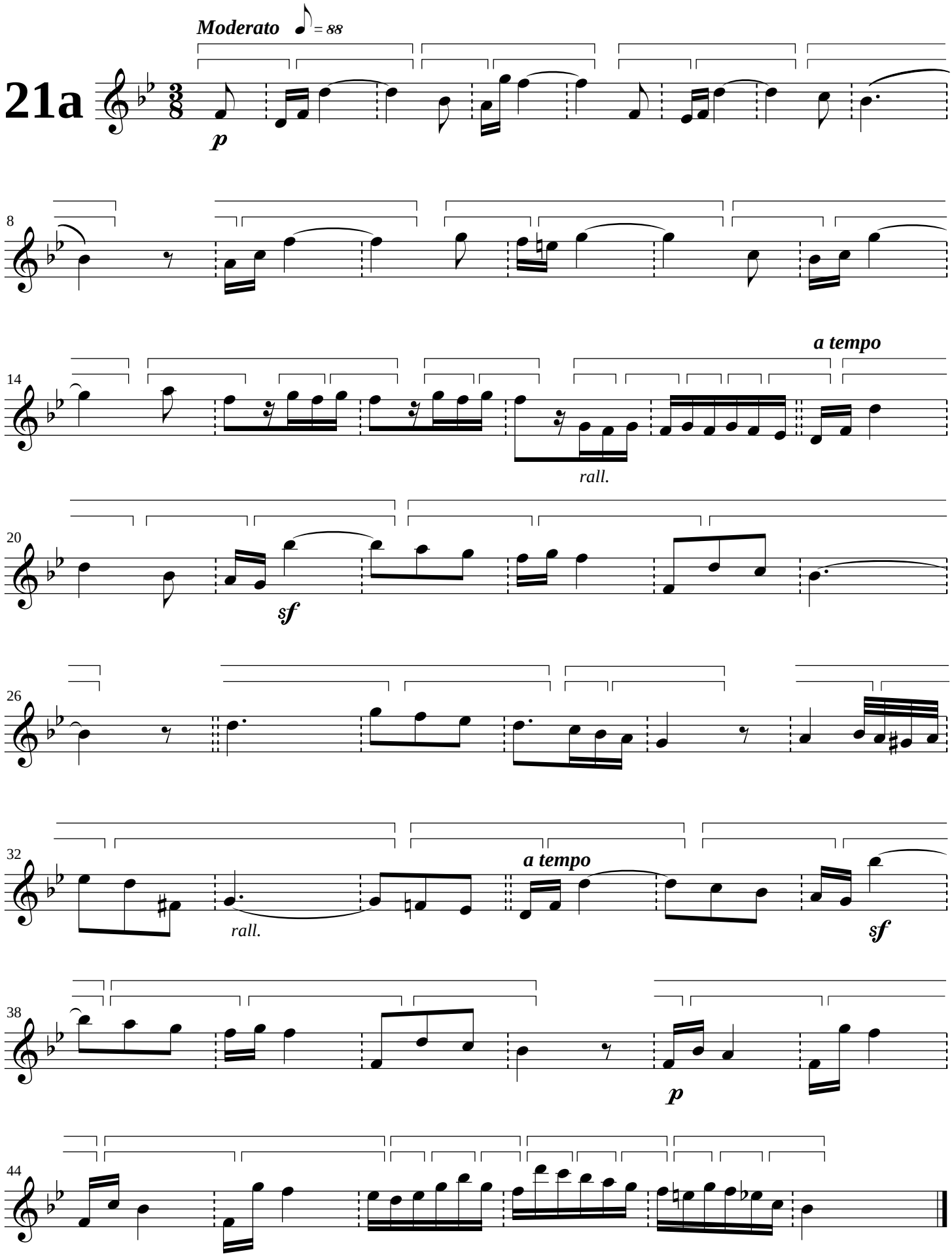
21

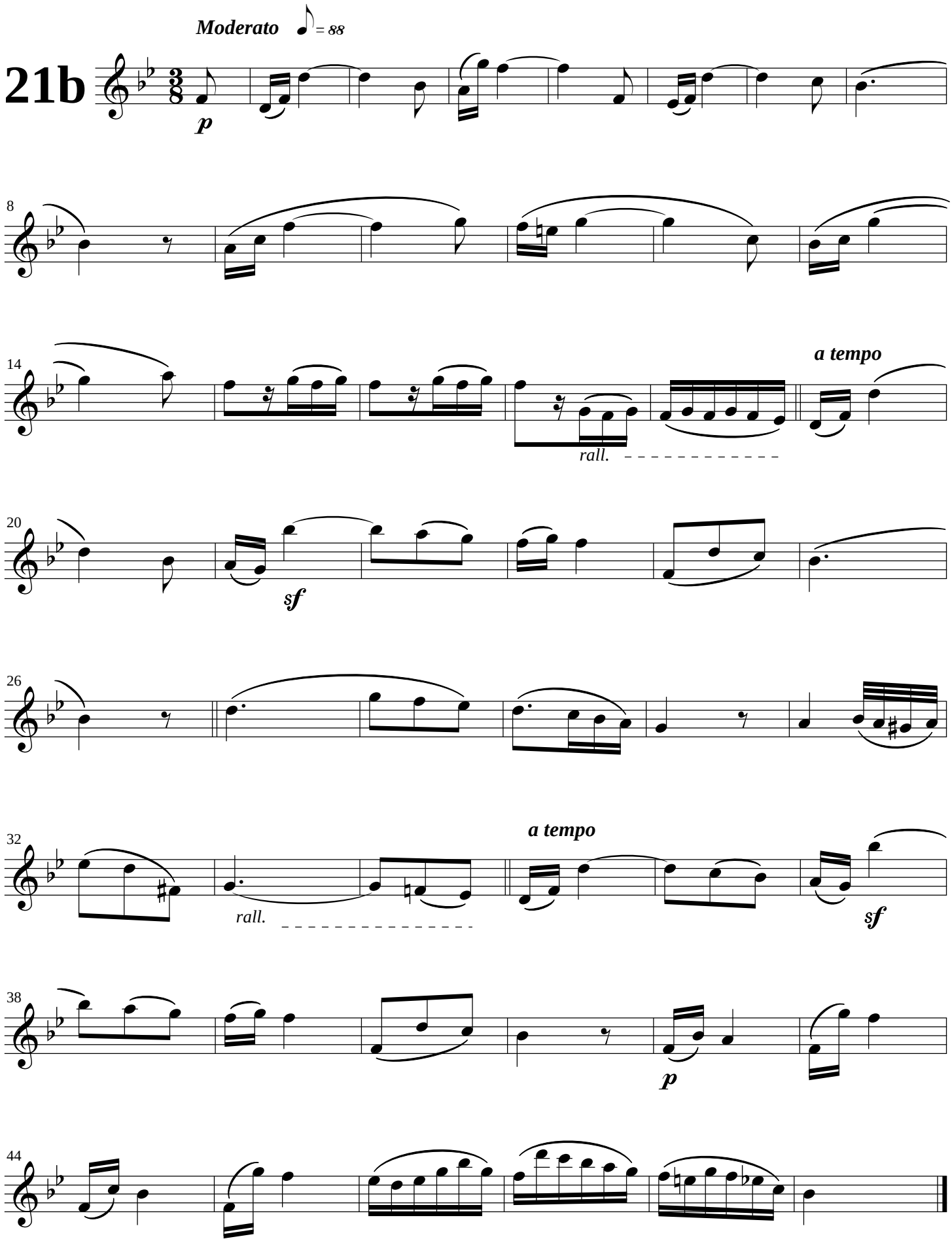
25

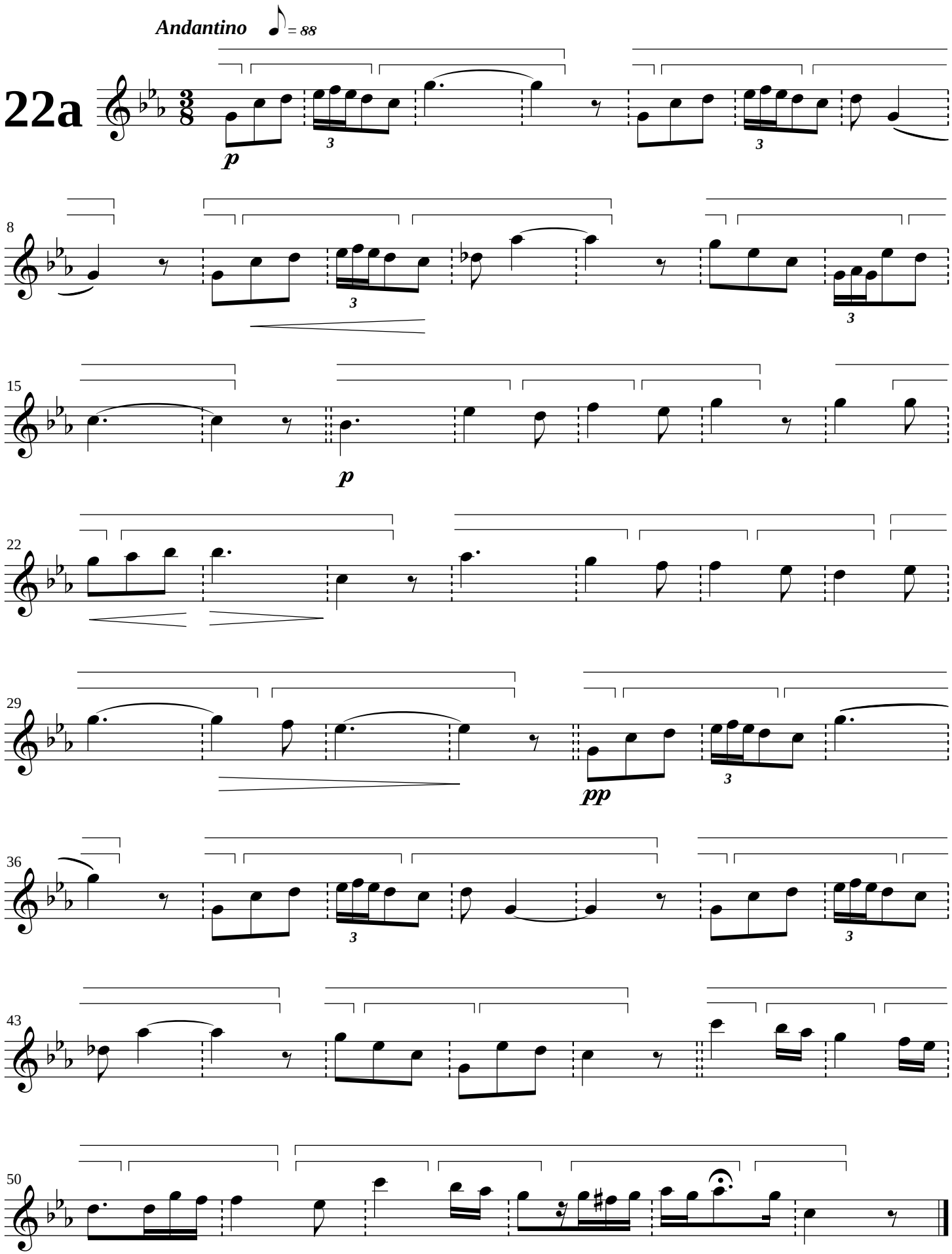
f

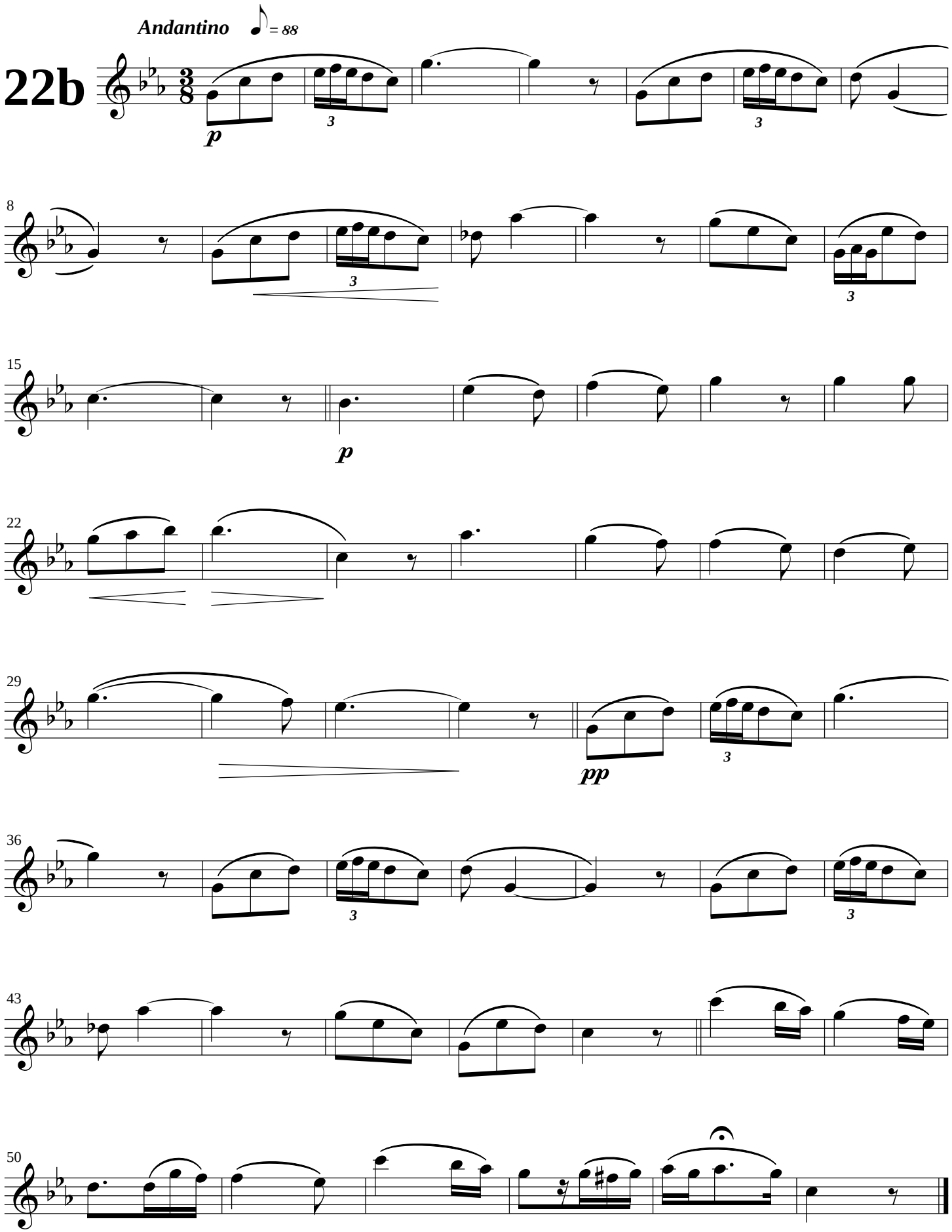
29

pp *rall.*


21a
Moderato
= 88
p
8
14
a tempo
rall.
20
sf
26
32
a tempo
rall.
sf
38
p
44


Moderato
= 88
21b
p
8
14
a tempo
rall.
20
sf
26
32
a tempo
rall.
sf
38
p
44


Andantino
= 88
22a
p
3
8
15
p
22
29
pp
36
43
50


Andantino
= 88
22b
p
8
15
p
22
29
pp
36
43
50

23a

Andantino ♪ = 94

p

5

9

13

p

17

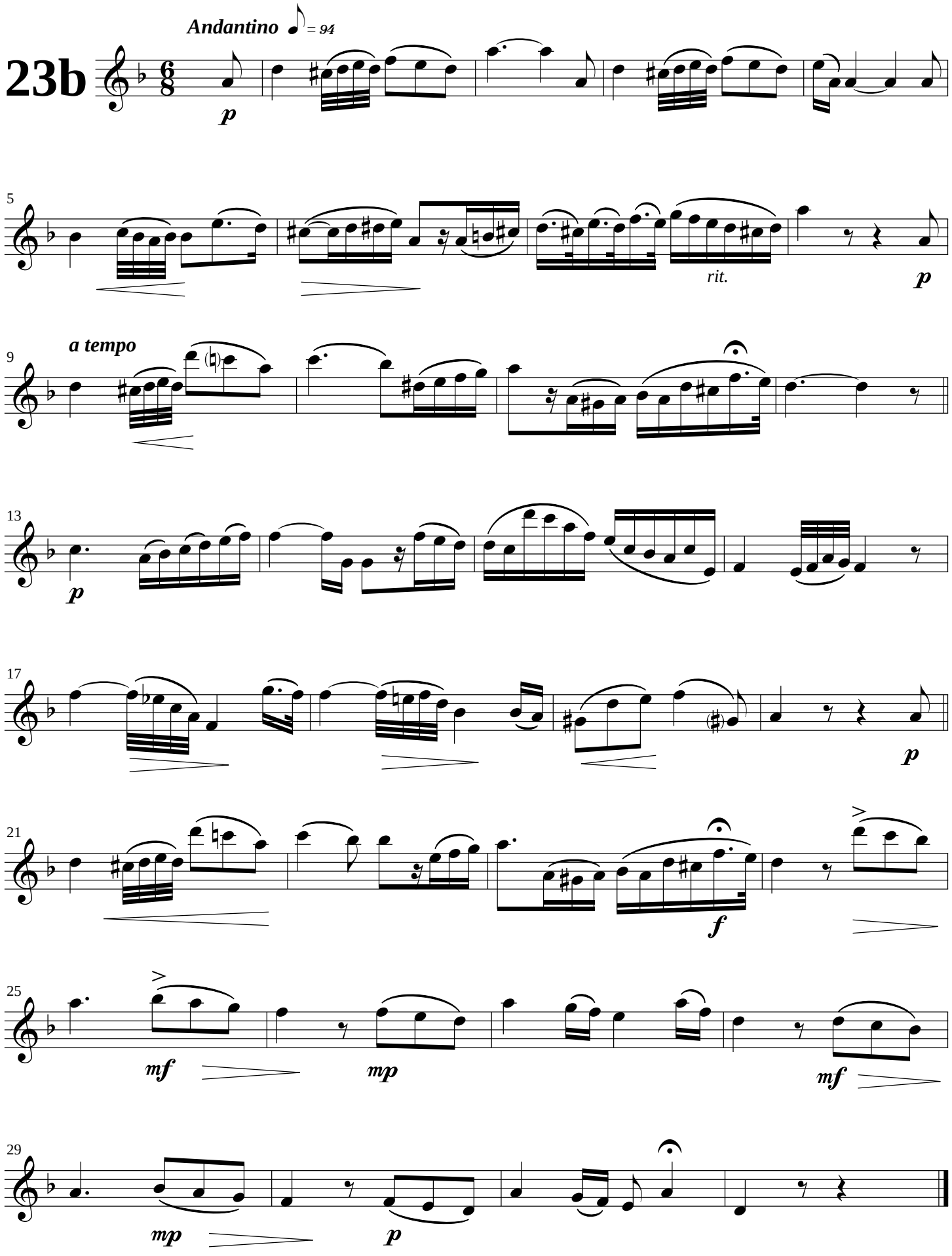
21

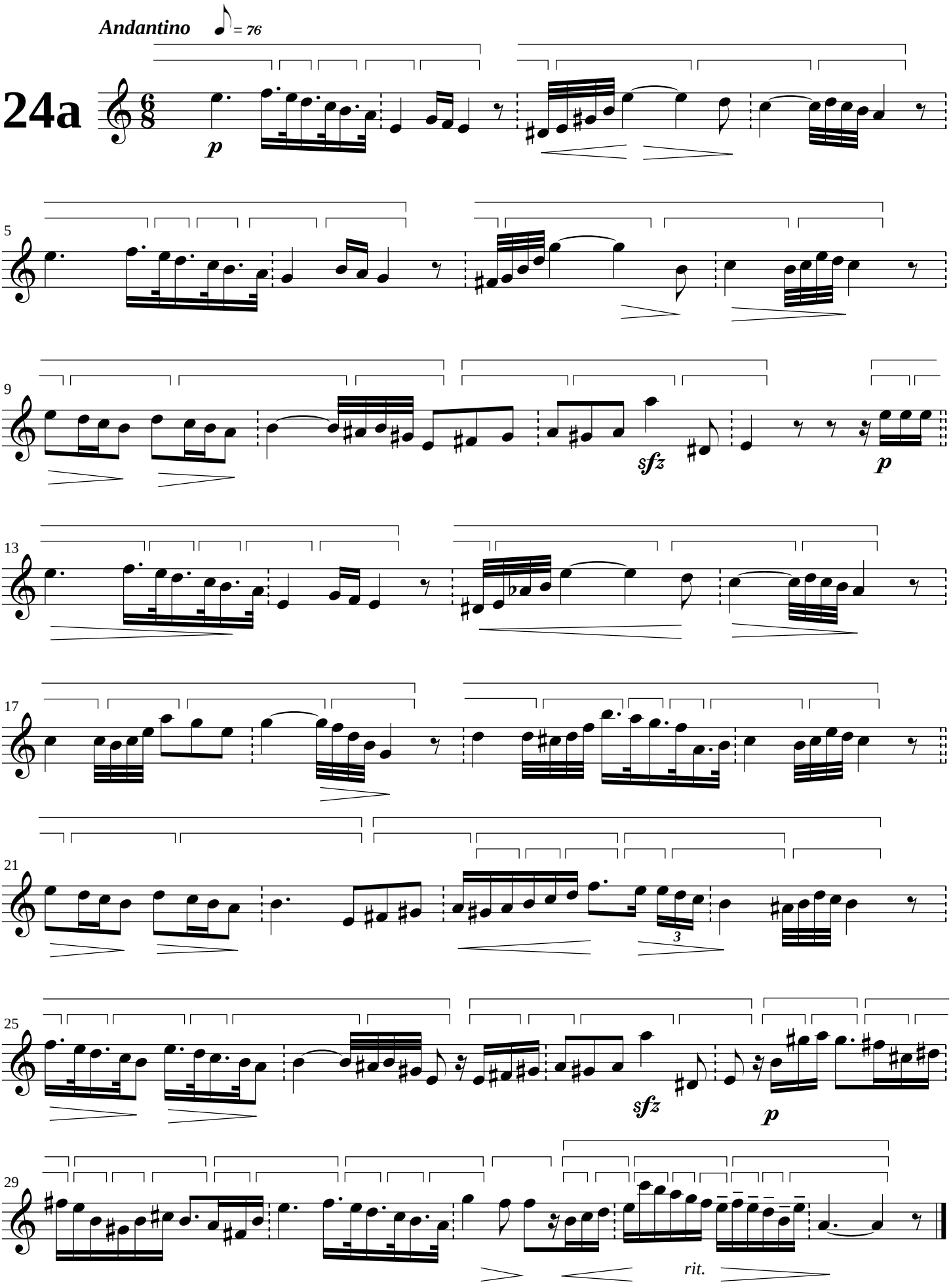
25

mf *mp* *mf*

29

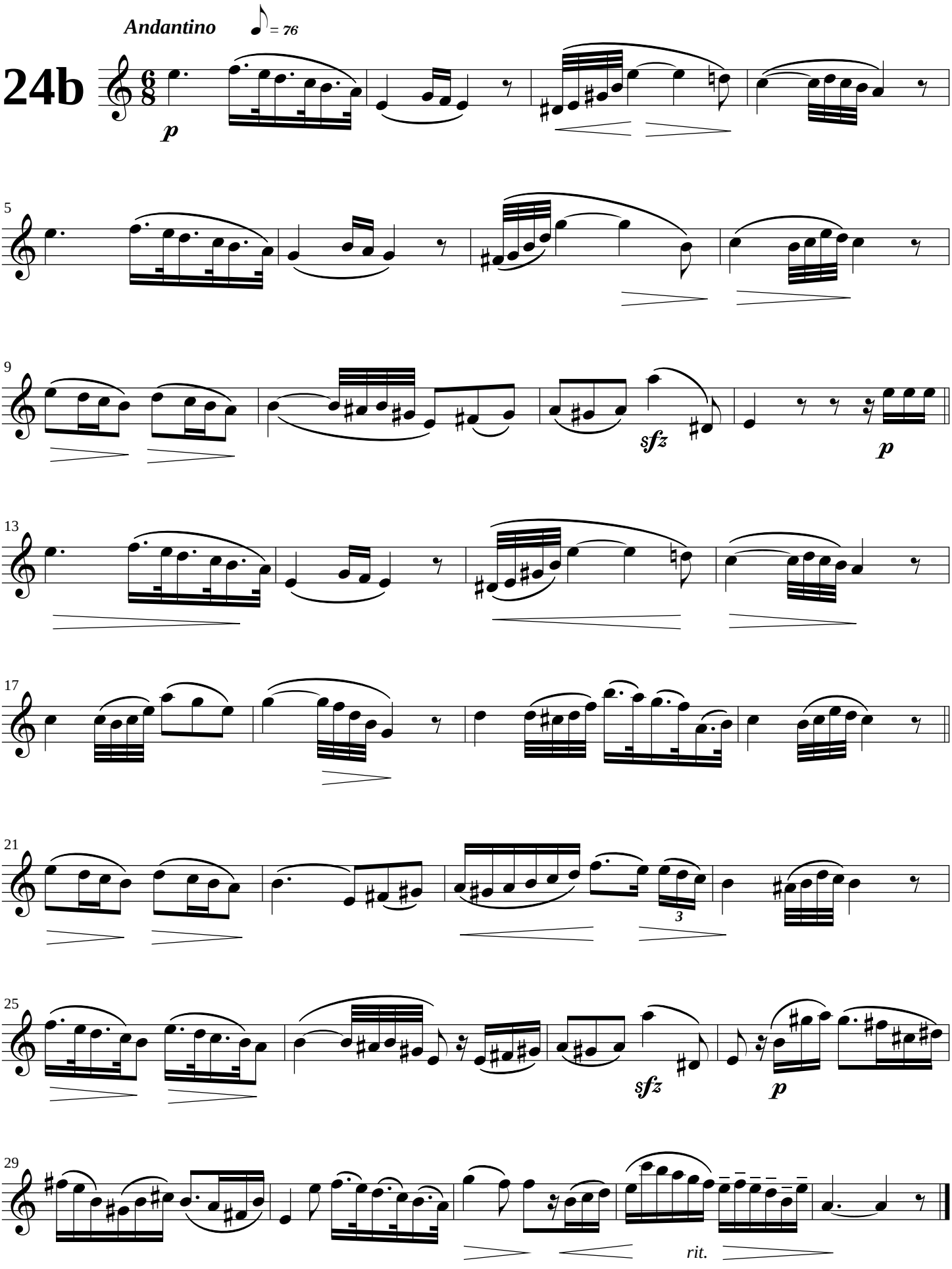
mp *p*


23b
Andantino ♪ = 94
p
5
rit.
p
9
a tempo
13
p
17
p
21
f
25
mf
mp
mf
29
mp
p


Andantino
= 76
24a
p
5
9
sfz
p
13
17
21
3
25
sfz
p
29
rit.

24b

Andantino ♪ = 76



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