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Three Romances: Homage to Clara Schumann

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Author

Blessinger, Martin

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Three Romances:
Homage to Clara Schumann

for Violin and Piano

(2020)

Jointly commissioned by the Texas Music Teachers Association
and the Music Teachers National Association



Program Note: Clara Schumann (1819-1896) was a remarkable woman by any measure. As a preeminent pianist, gifted composer, pedagogue, and curator of her husband Robert's music, Schumann distinguished herself as a superlative artist in an era which at best begrudgingly accepted the creative contributions of women as a curiosity, and at worst actively worked to squelch their voices. While she was able to cultivate a world-class virtuosity at the piano (one of the precious few musical pathways available to women of the 19th century) and an international concertizing career rivaling any of her male contemporaries, there is little more than the promise of what could have been in her regrettably small oeuvre.

For Schumann, writing music was a constant internal tug-of-war—a guilty pleasure in a life which knew few. On the one hand, she expressed the joy which came with her creative endeavors. "Composing gives me great pleasure," she wrote. "There is nothing that surpasses the joy of creation… when one lives in a world of sound." On the other hand, culturally-reinforced misgivings ("…a woman must not desire to compose—there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?"), the demands of managing a household of seven children, and balancing careers with her loving but mercurial husband slowed her compositional output to a crawl. After Roberts's death in 1856, Schumann lived another four decades but all but stopped composing.

Clara Schumann's 23 opuses and various unpublished works demonstrate flashes of genius that ache for a proper airing. The best of Schumann's works, those written in the latter years of her creative period, are absolute gems of the mid-century Romantic style, worthy of the increased musical and scholarly attention they have received, particularly in connection with the composer's recent bicentennial. It was, in fact, Schumann's 200th birthday in 2019 that drew me into her life and works. I decided to dedicate much of my pedagogical and creative energies during the 2019-20 academic year to an exploration of her creative output. This took form in the restructuring of familiar classes I taught at my home institution, Texas Christian University, the creation of new courses at TCU, and in arrangement and composition projects like this one positioned in dialogue with some of my favorites of her pieces.
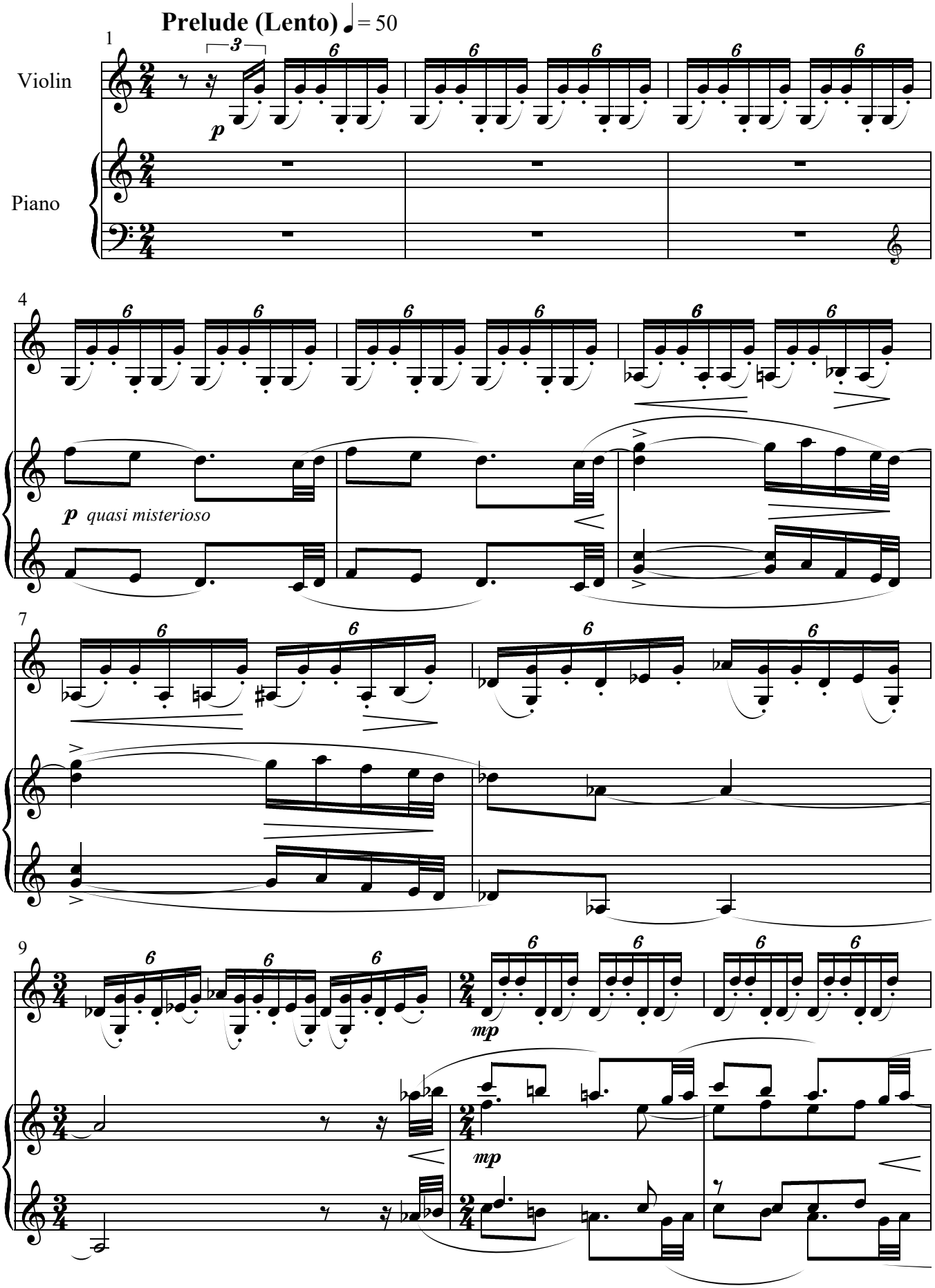
Among these are her *3 Romances for Violin and Piano*, op. 22. These three short movements, sadly the only she composed for the solo violin, are gorgeous, expressive character pieces that exemplify her "mature" style—composed at the ripe old age of 34. My own *3 Romances for Violin and Piano – Homage to Clara Schumann* are not straightforward imitations of these pieces specifically, or her style in general, but rather an echo of them. They fuse the harmonic tensions and melodic lyricism of the Romantic era with my own American- and French-inflected language. The first Romance begins with a prelude in my most natural, personal style. From there I imagined a sort of time warp into the 19th century, as a buoyant C-major *Allegretto Giocoso* (reminiscent of the middle section of Schumann's second romance) bubbles up from the more chromatic opening. Romance No. 2 is a lyrical movement, the middle section of which represents a reemergence of my own compositional voice. The final movement, Romance No. 3 is full of the turbulent, dramatic minor-mode tropes of the 19th century and recalls Schumann's Scherzo No. 2 in C minor, op. 14—itself derived from her song *Er ist gekommen in Sturm und Regen.*
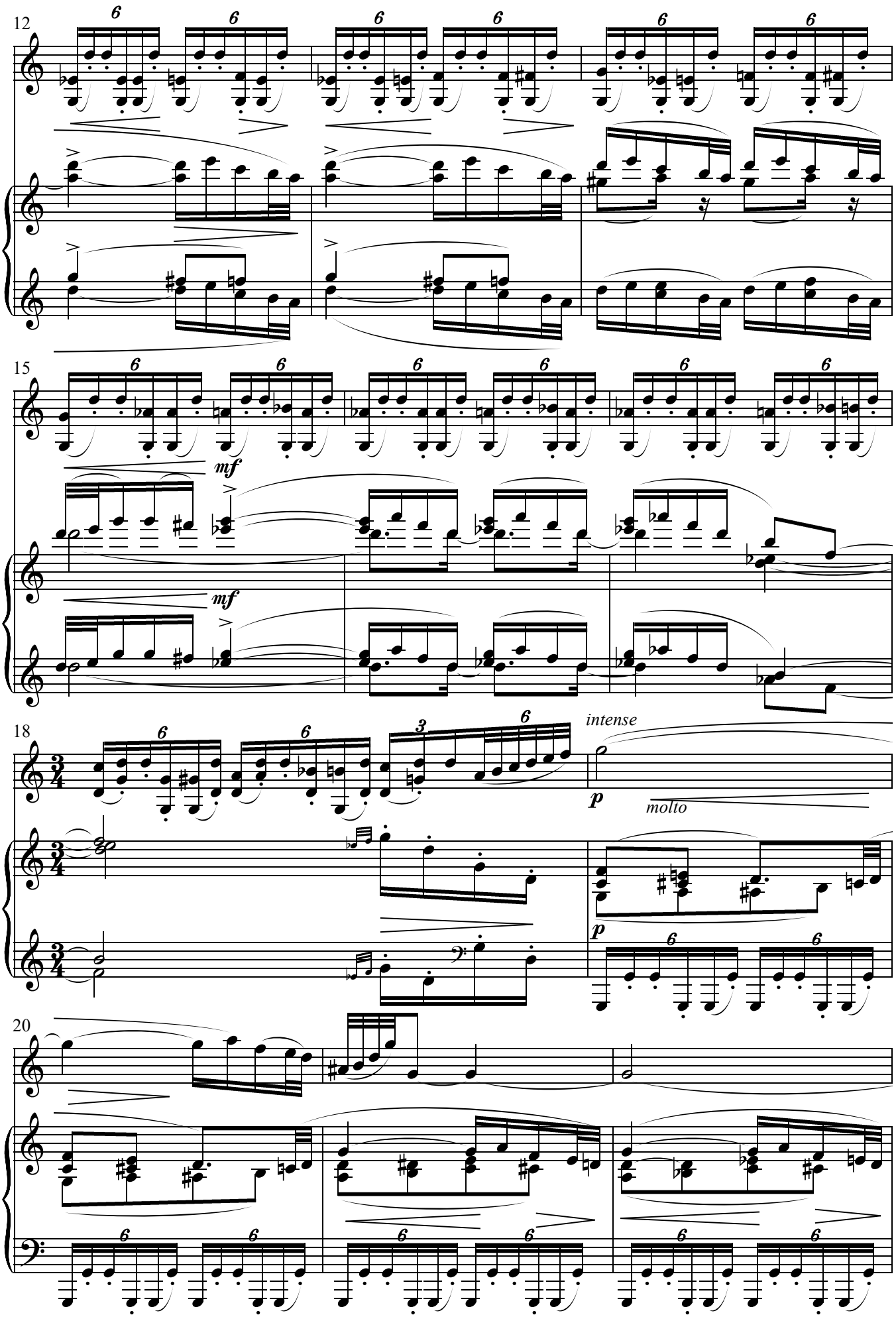
3 Romances for Violin and Piano – Homage to Clara Schumann was jointly commissioned by the Texas Music Teachers Association and the Music Teachers National Association. The piece is dedicated to Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, a woman whose gracious teaching contributed greatly to my understanding of music, an excellent violinist herself, and composer of her own wonderful *Romance for Violin and Piano.*
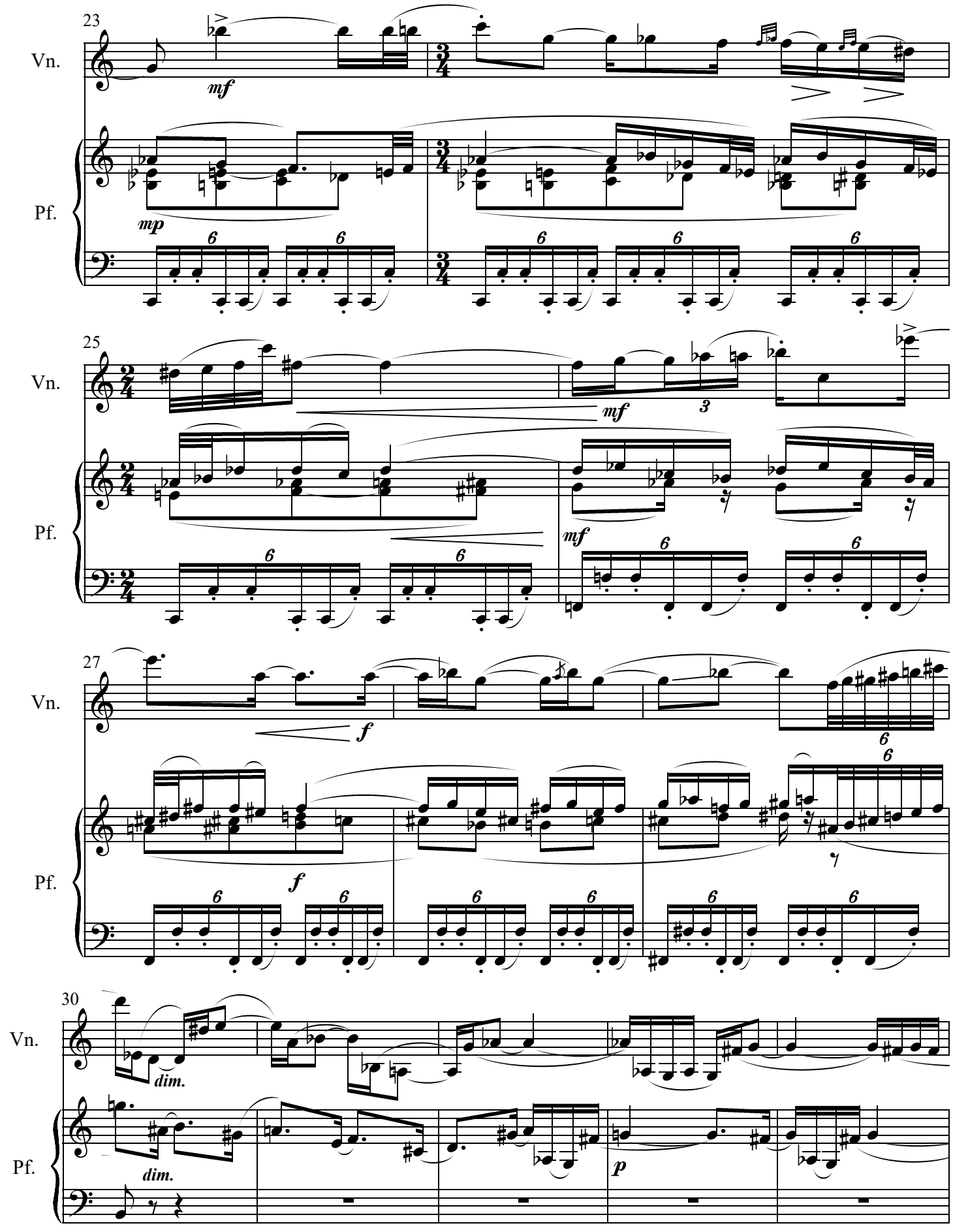
for Ellen Taaffe Zwilich
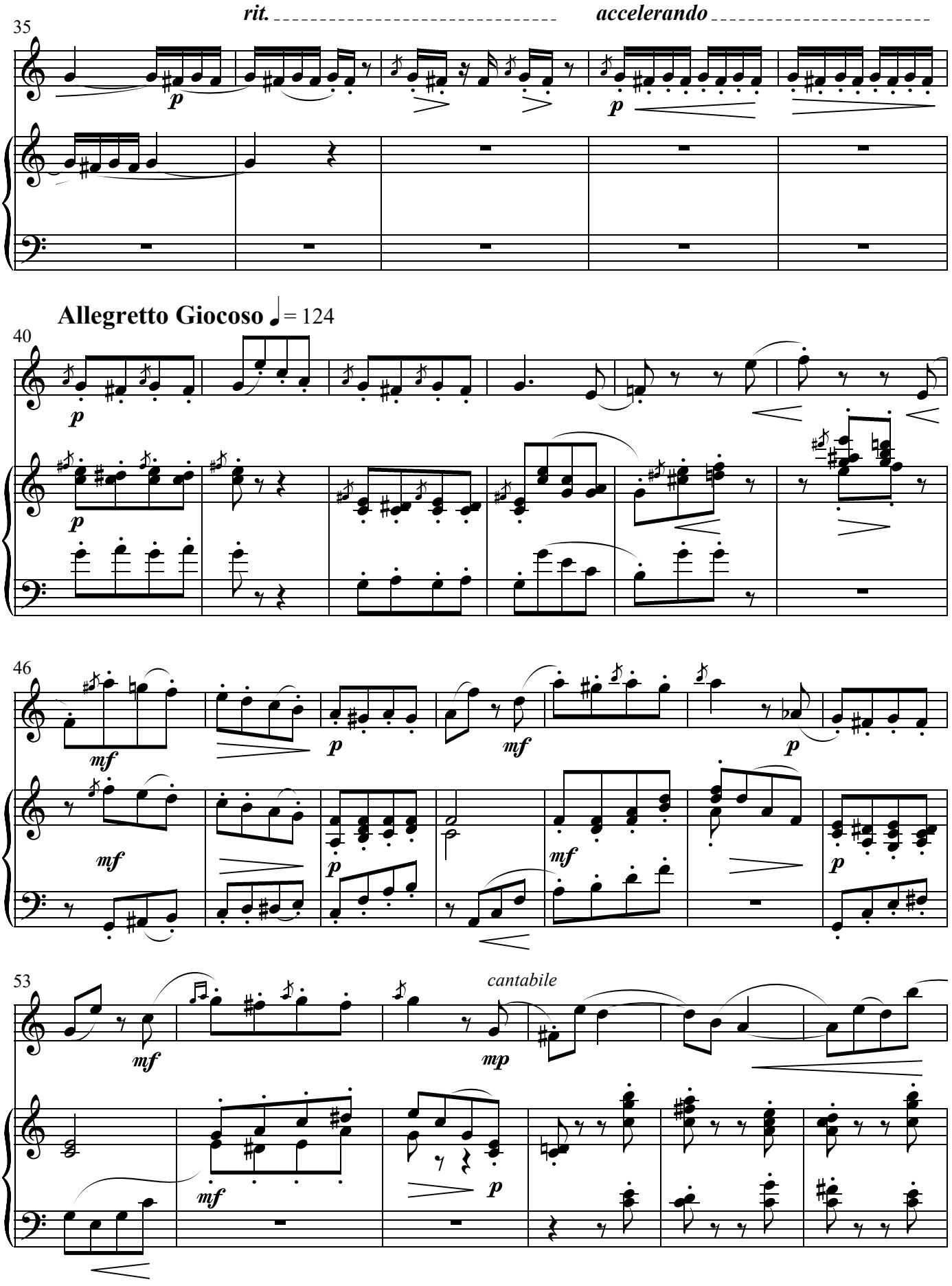
Romance No. 1
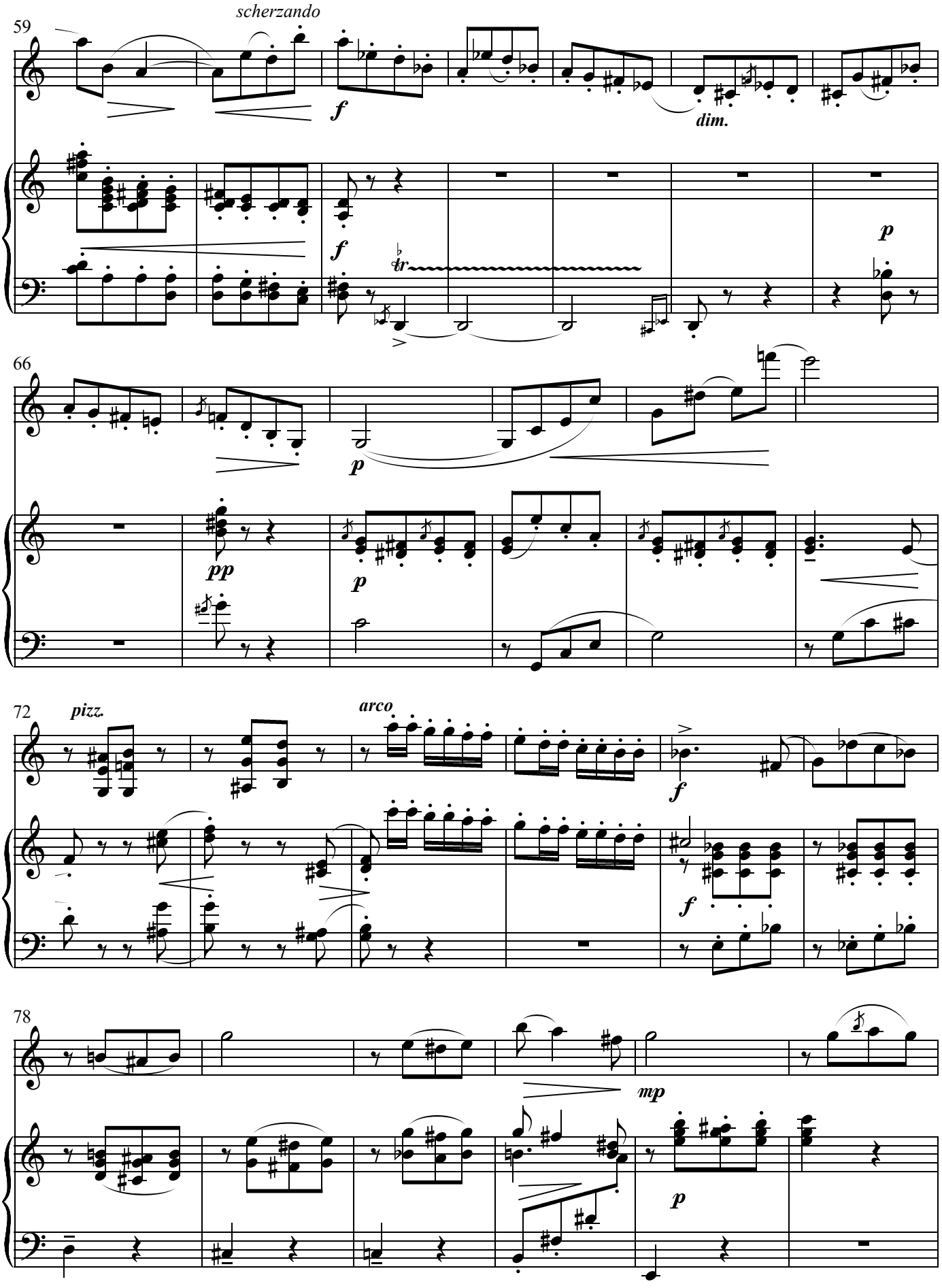
for Violin and Piano
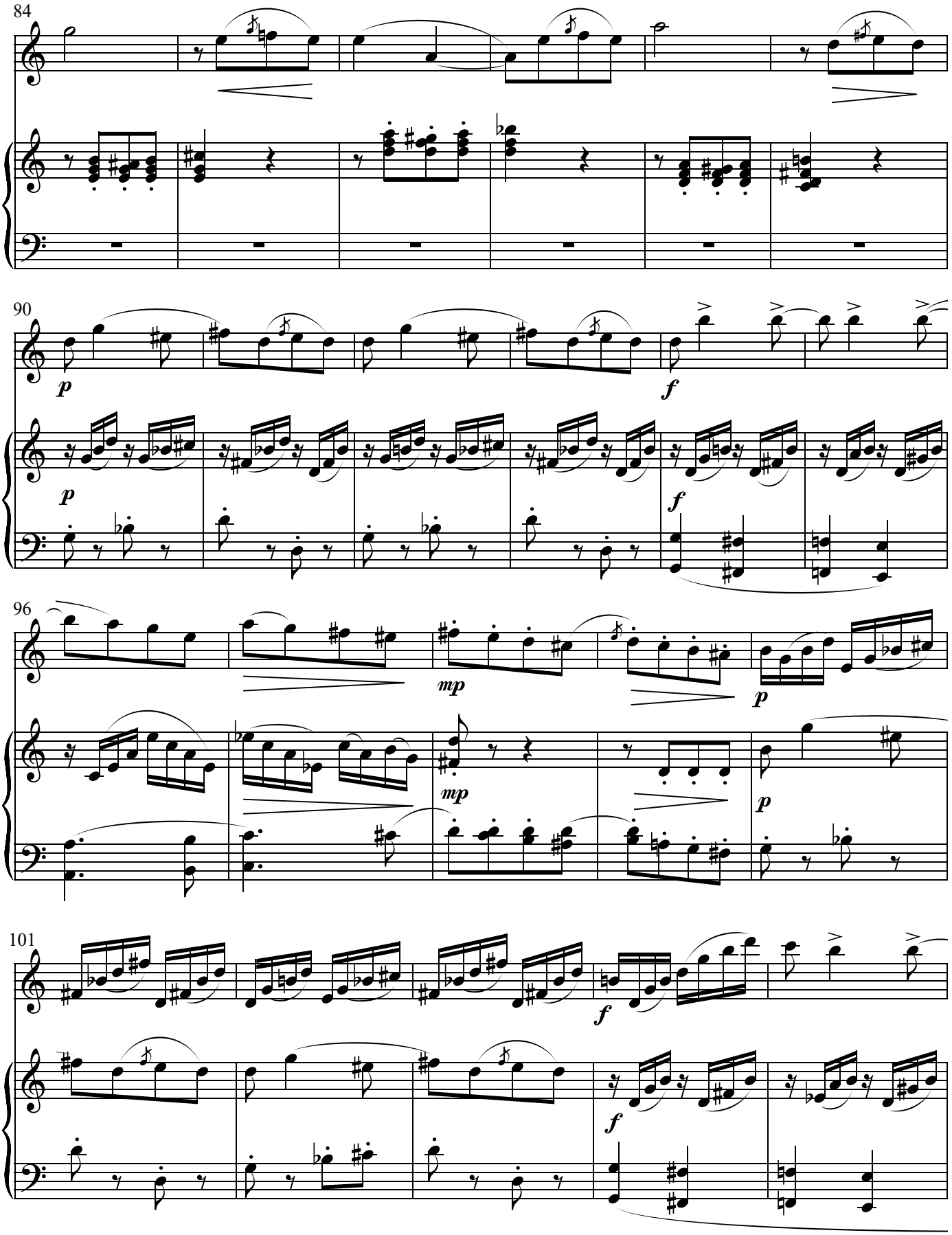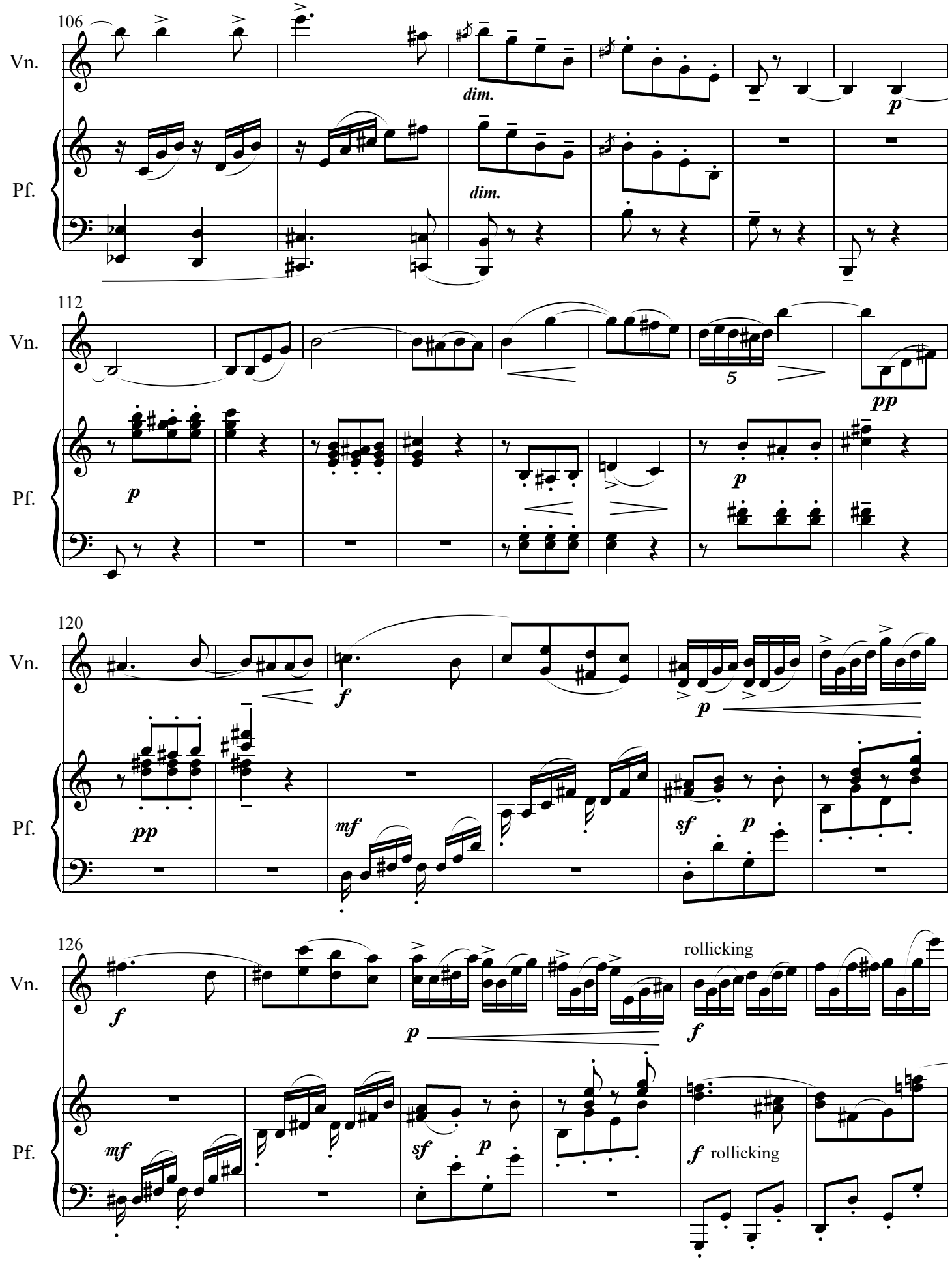



12
Vn.
Pf.
15
Vn.
mf
Pf.
mf
18
Vn.
intense
p
molto
Pf.
p
20
Vn.
Pf.
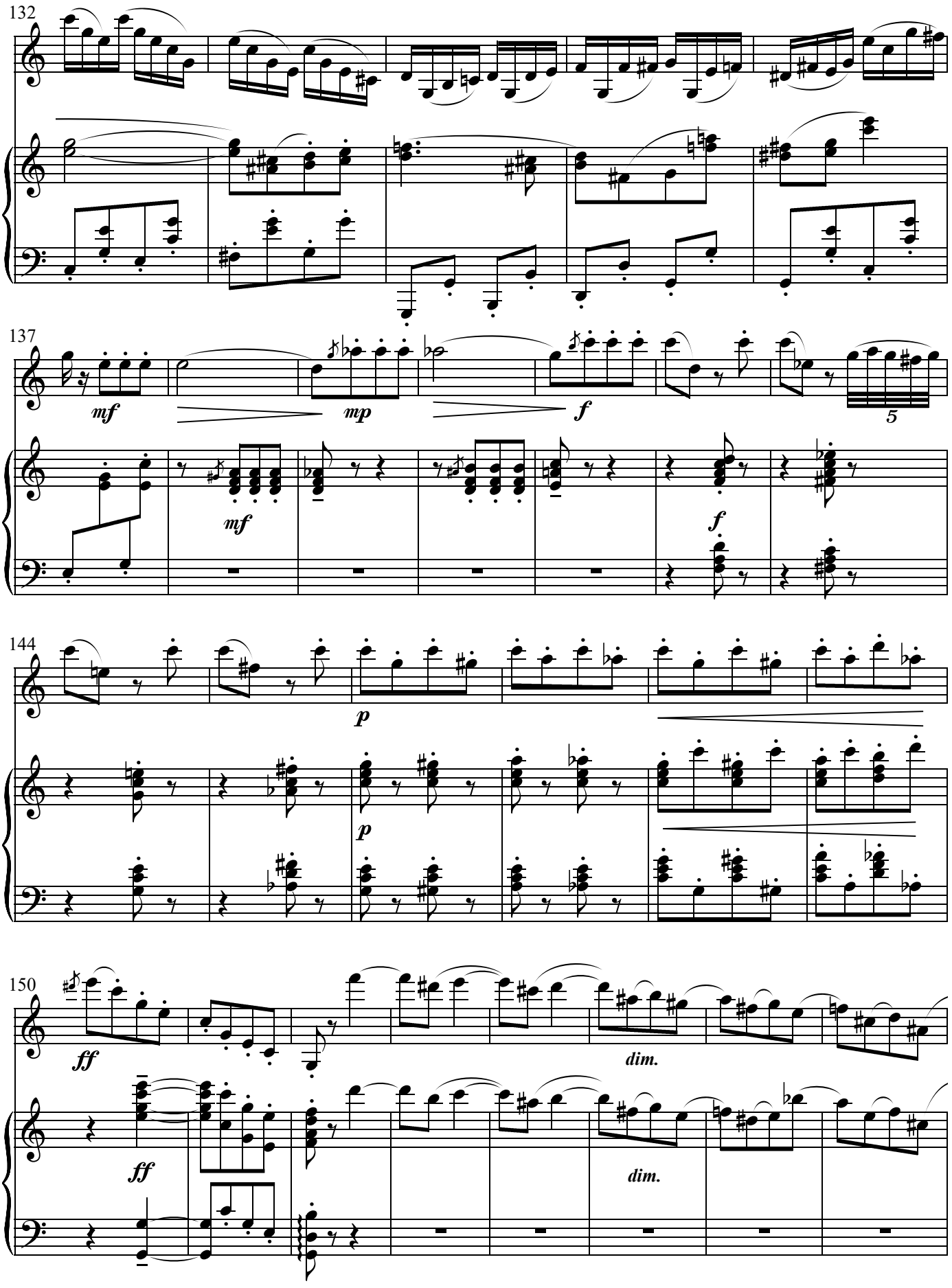

23
Vn.
mf
Pf.
mp
6
25
Vn.
mf
3
Pf.
mf
6
27
Vn.
f
Pf.
f
6
30
Vn.
dim.
Pf.
dim.
p
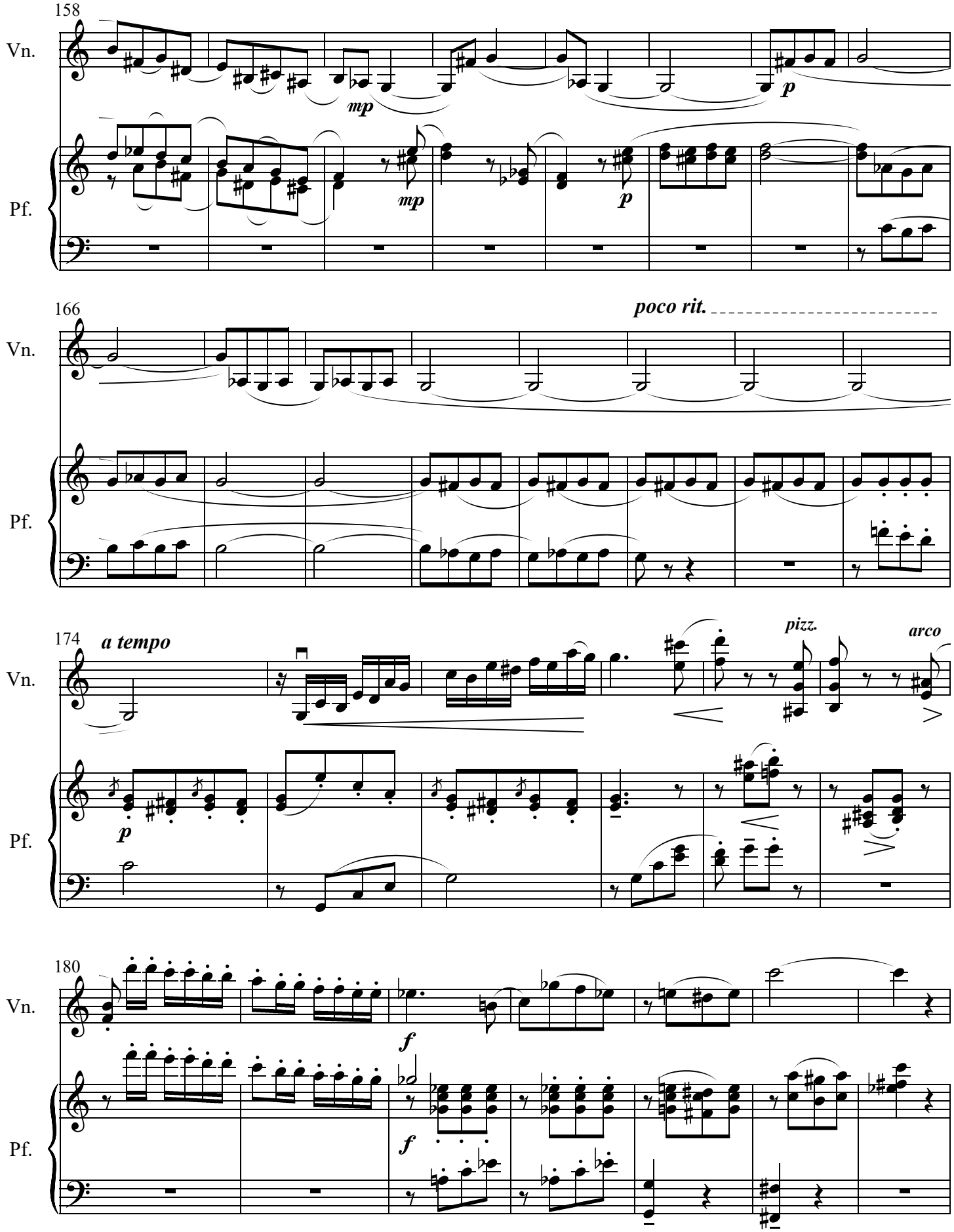

rit.
accelerando
35
Vn.
Pf.
Allegretto Giocoso ♩= 124
40
46
53
cantabile
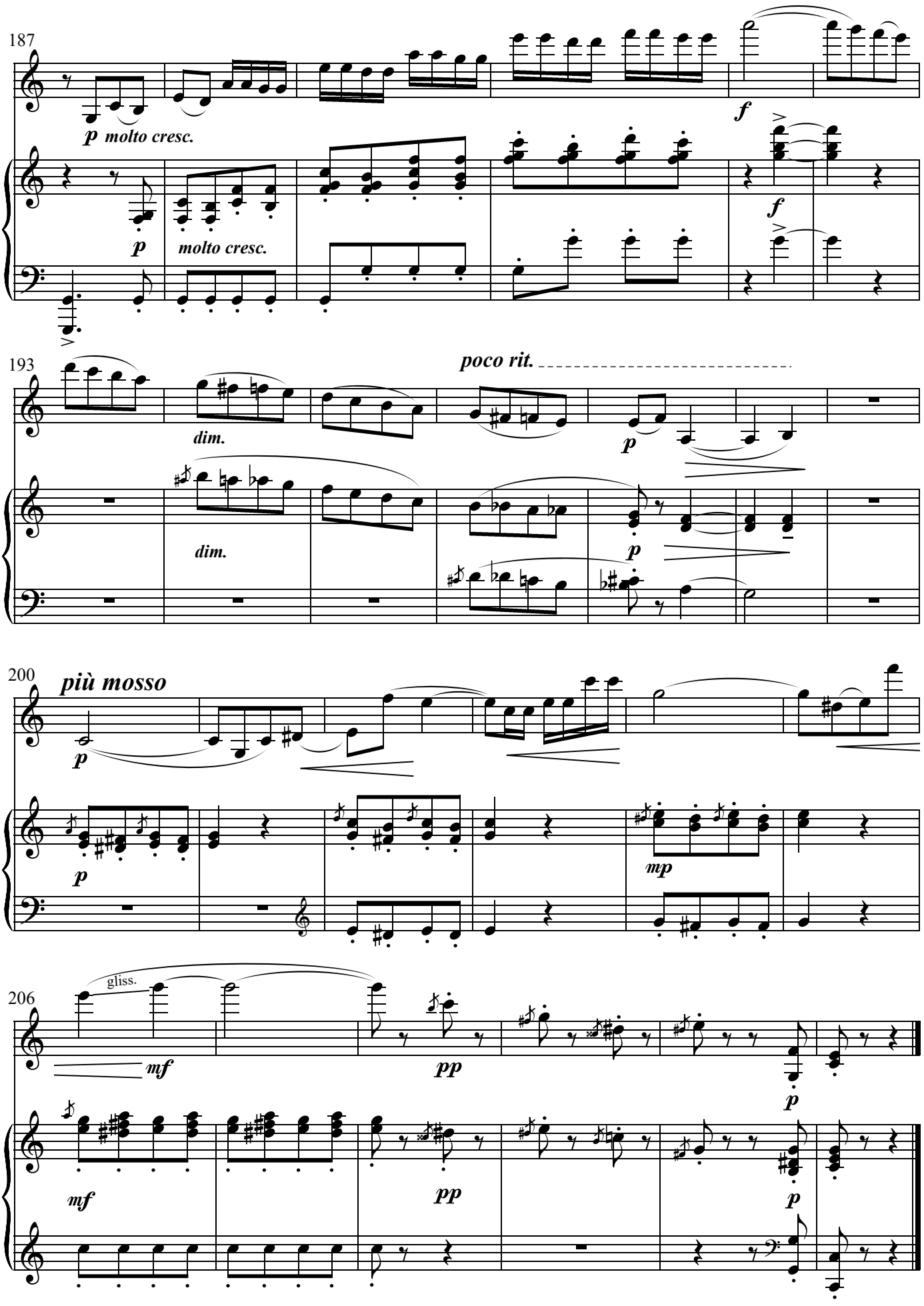

59
scherzando
Vn.
f
dim.
Pf.
f
p
66
Vn.
p
pp
p
Pf.
72
pizz.
arco
Vn.
f
Pf.
f
78
Vn.
mp
Pf.
p


84
Vn.
Pf.
90
Vn.
Pf.
p
f
96
Vn.
Pf.
mp
p
101
Vn.
Pf.
f


106
Vn.
Pf.
dim.
dim.
p
112
Vn.
Pf.
5
pp
p
p
120
Vn.
Pf.
f
p
pp
mf
sf
p
126
Vn.
Pf.
f
p
rollicking
f
mf
sf
p
f rollicking


132
Vn.
Pf.
137
Vn.
mf
mp
f
Pf.
mf
f
144
Vn.
p
Pf.
p
150
Vn.
ff
dim.
Pf.
ff
dim.
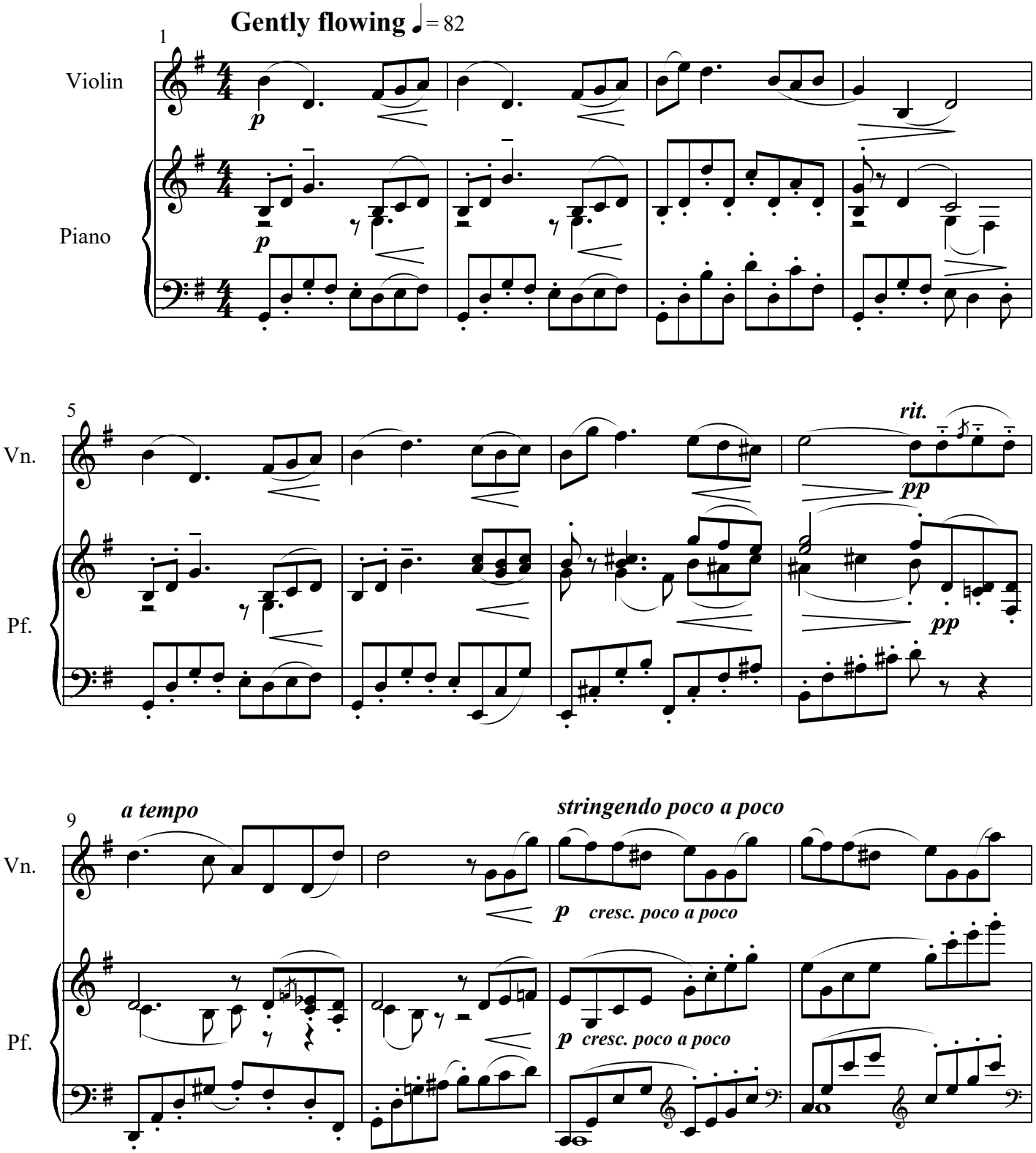

158
Vn.
Pf.
mp
mp
p
p
166
poco rit.
Vn.
Pf.
174
a tempo
pizz.
arco
Vn.
Pf.
p
180
Vn.
Pf.
f
f
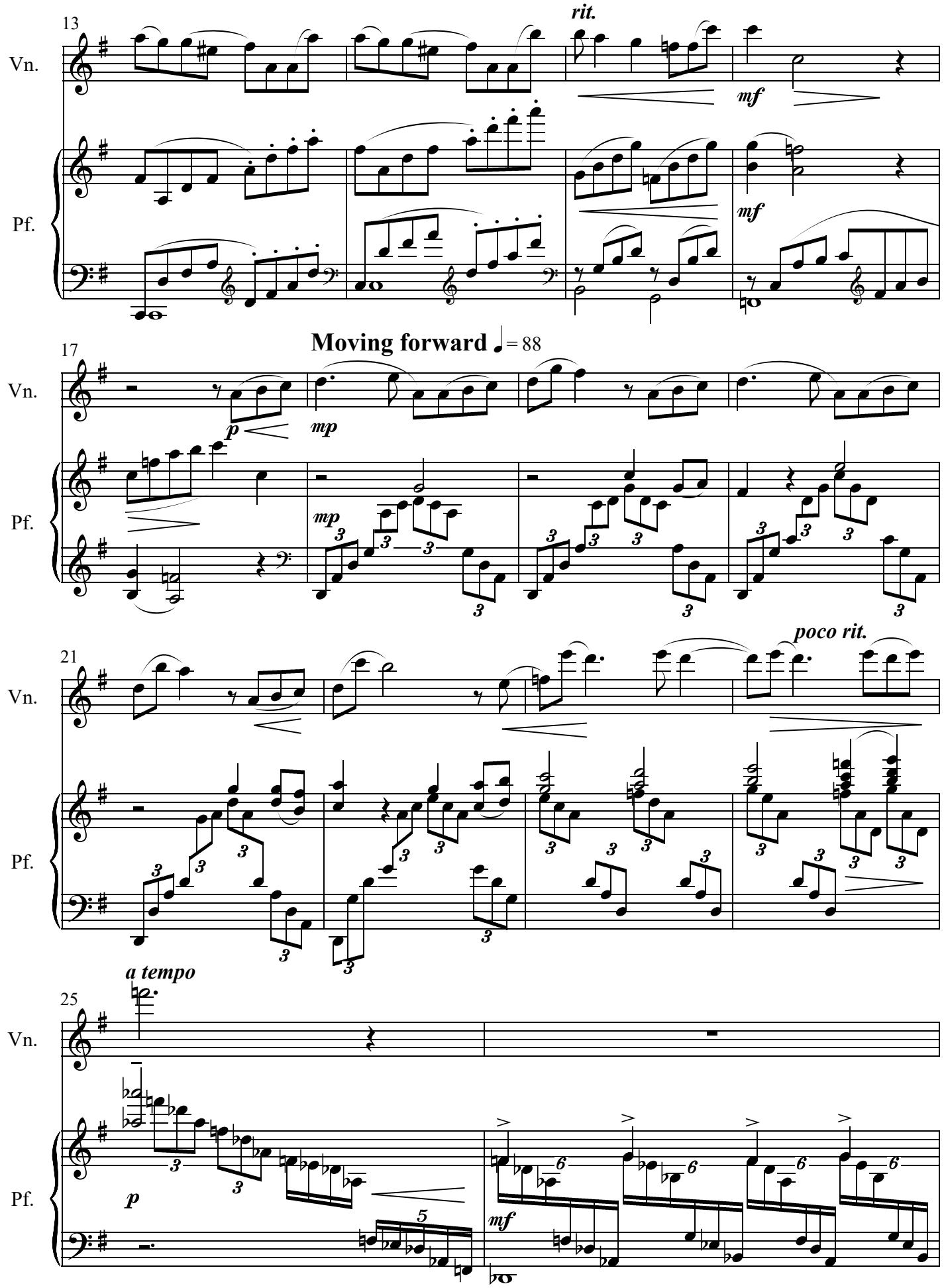

187
Vn.
p molto cresc.
f
Pf.
p
molto cresc.
f
193
poco rit.
Vn.
dim.
p
Pf.
dim.
p
200
più mosso
Vn.
p
Pf.
p
mp
206
gliss.
Vn.
mf
pp
p
Pf.
mf
pp
p
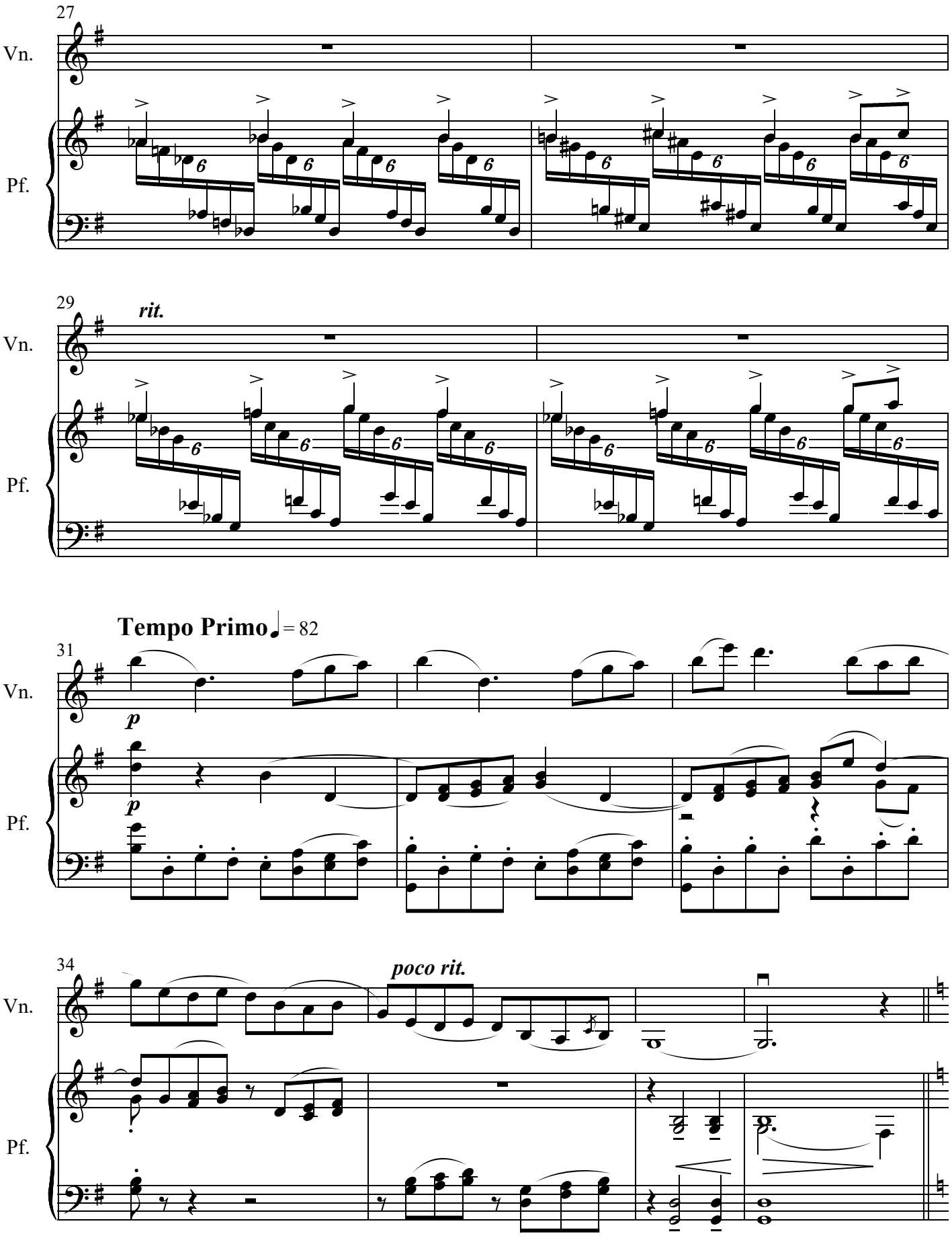
for Ellen Taaffe Zwilich
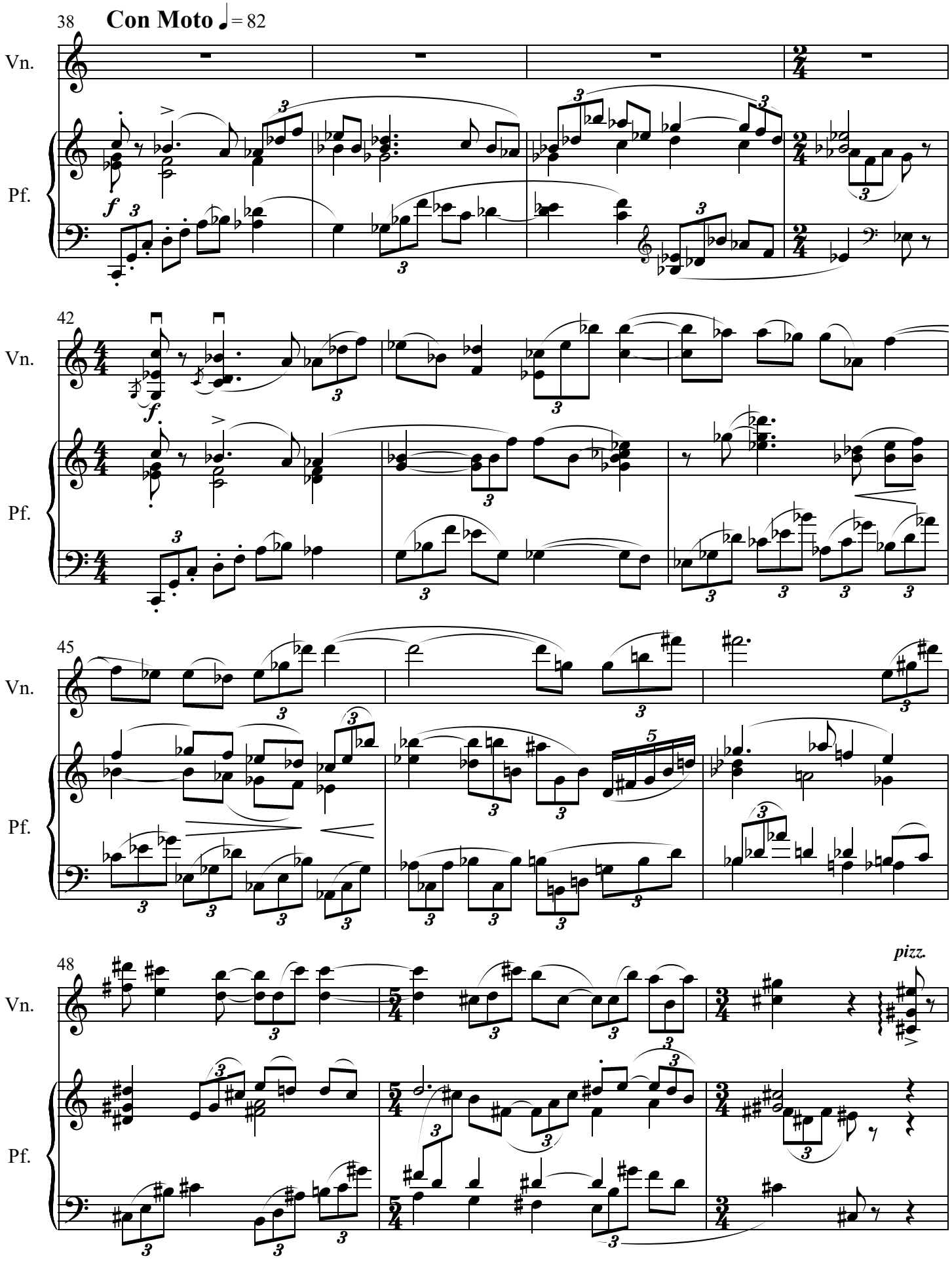
Romance No. 2
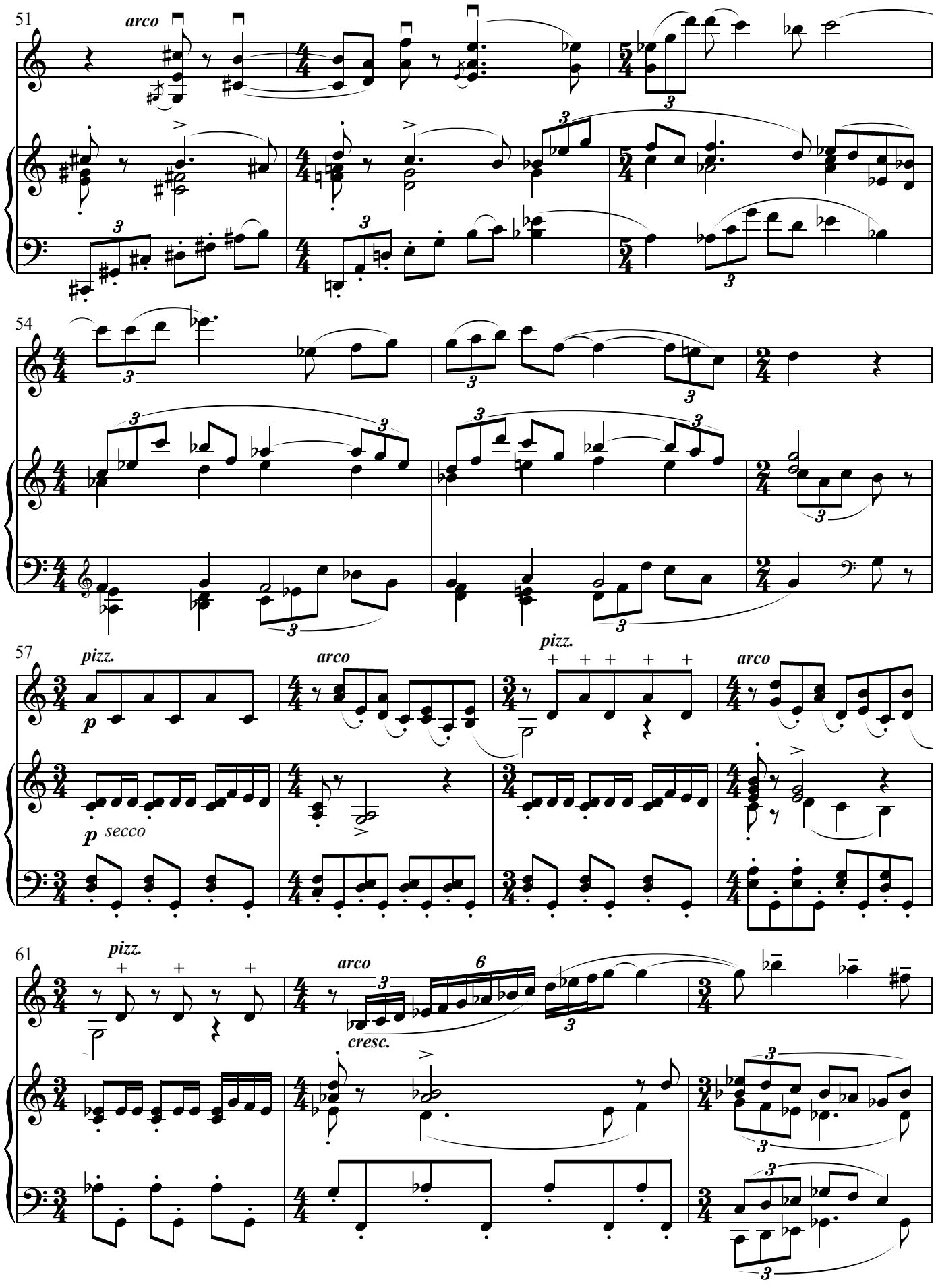
for Violin and Piano
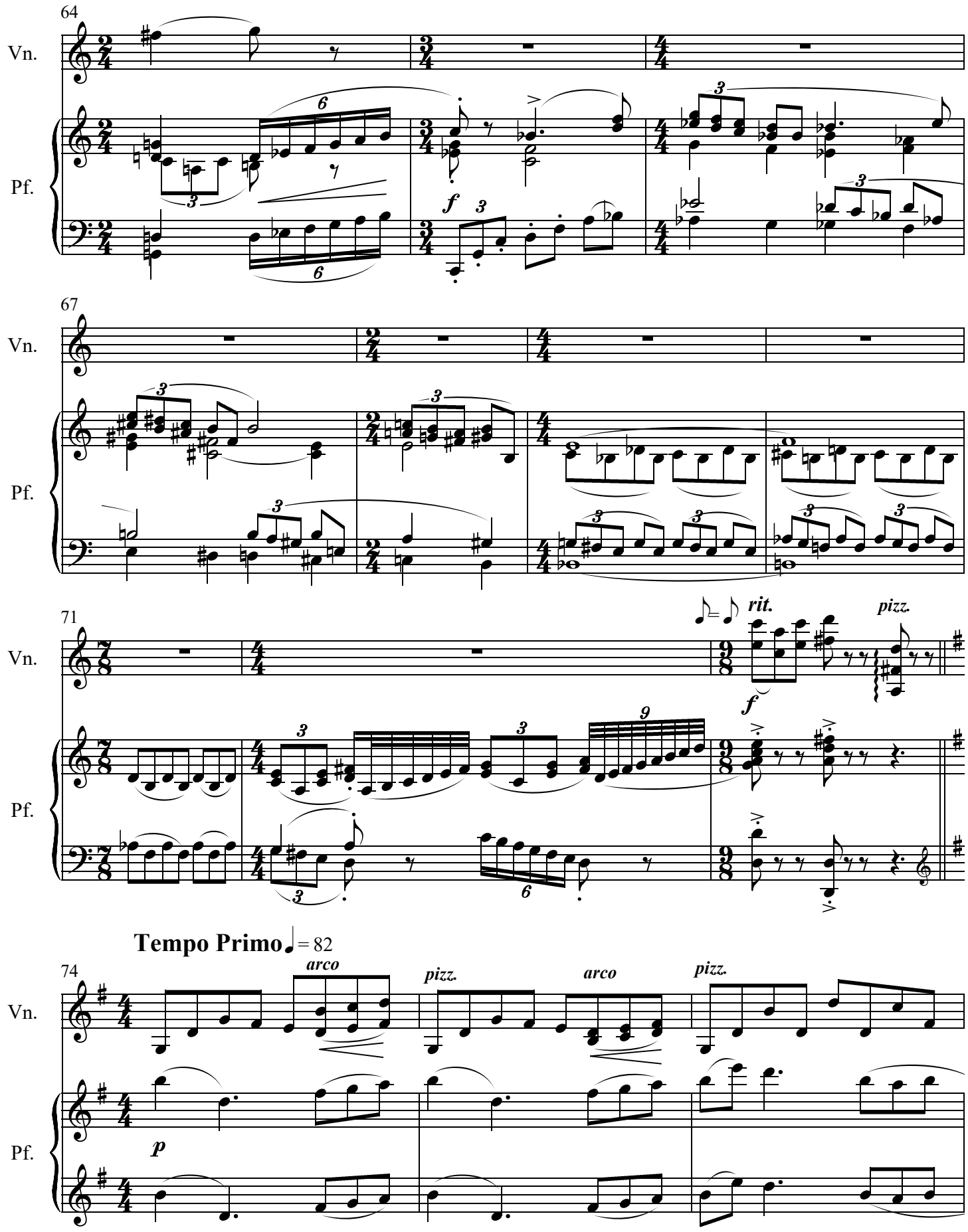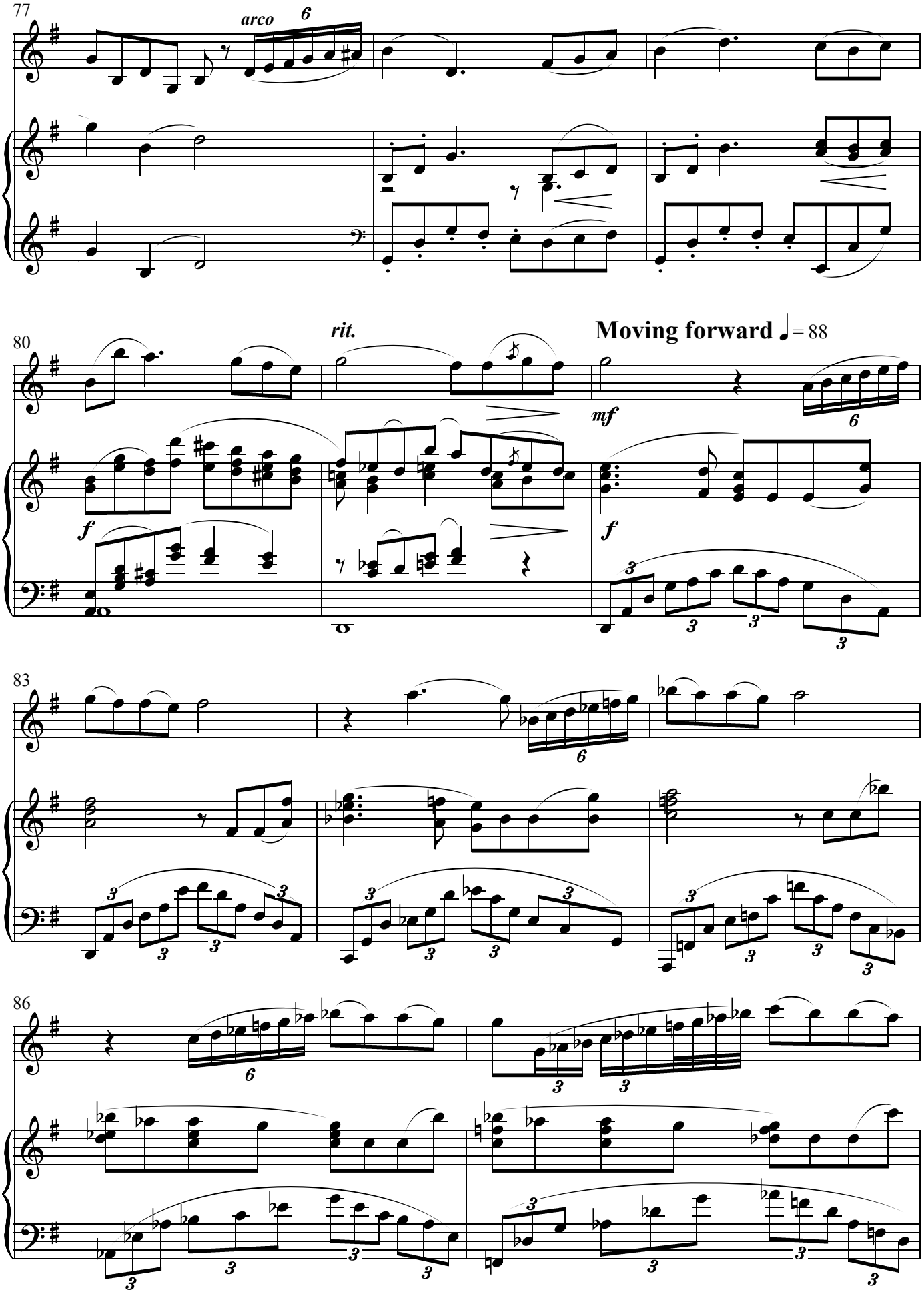



13
rit.
Vn.
mf
Pf.
mf
17
Moving forward ♩= 88
Vn.
p
mp
Pf.
mp
21
poco rit.
Vn.
Pf.
a tempo
25
Vn.
Pf.
p
mf
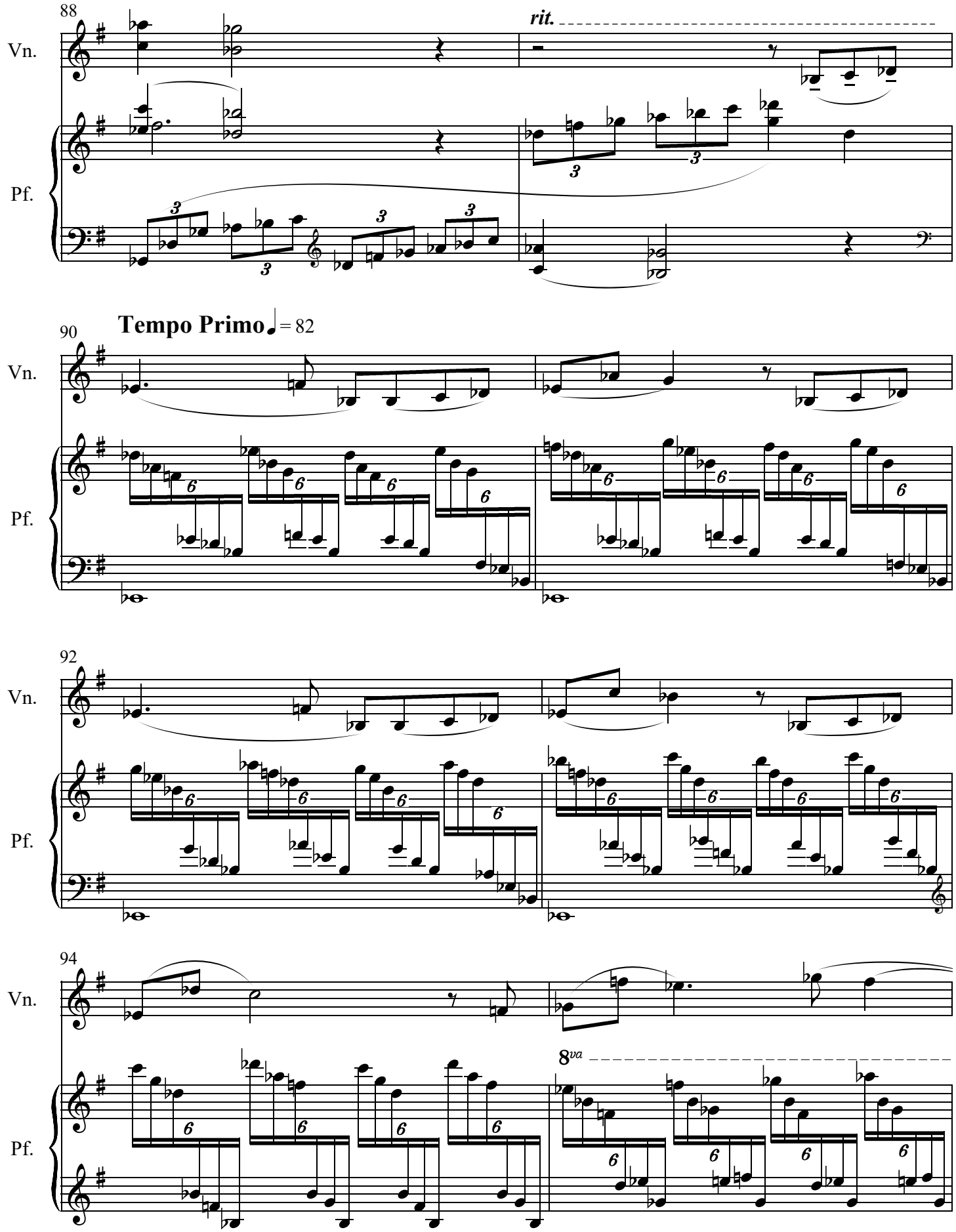

27
Vn.
Pf.
29
rit.
Vn.
Pf.
Tempo Primo ♩= 82
31
Vn.
p
Pf.
p
34
poco rit.
Vn.
Pf.
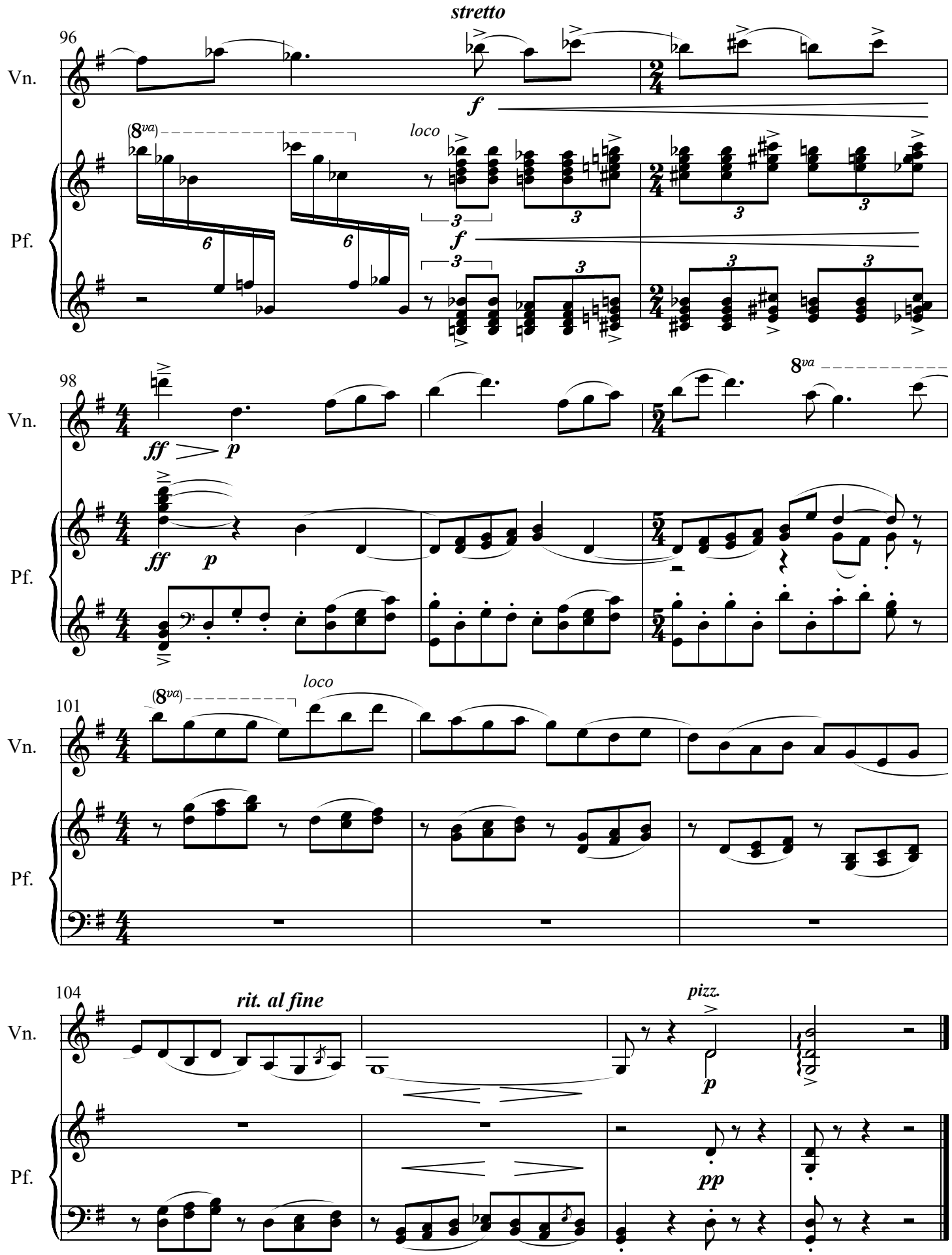

38
Con Moto ♩= 82
Vn.
Pf.
42
45
48
pizz.


51
arco
Vn.
Pf.
54
Vn.
Pf.
57
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
Vn.
p
p secco
Pf.
61
pizz.
arco
cresc.
Vn.
Pf.


64
Vn.
Pf.
f
67
Vn.
Pf.
71
Vn.
Pf.
rit.
pizz.
f
Tempo Primo ♩= 82
74
Vn.
Pf.
arco
pizz.
arco
pizz.
p


77
Vn.
arco
6
Pf.
80
Vn.
rit.
Moving forward ♩= 88
mf
Pf.
f
f
83
Vn.
Pf.
86
Vn.
Pf.
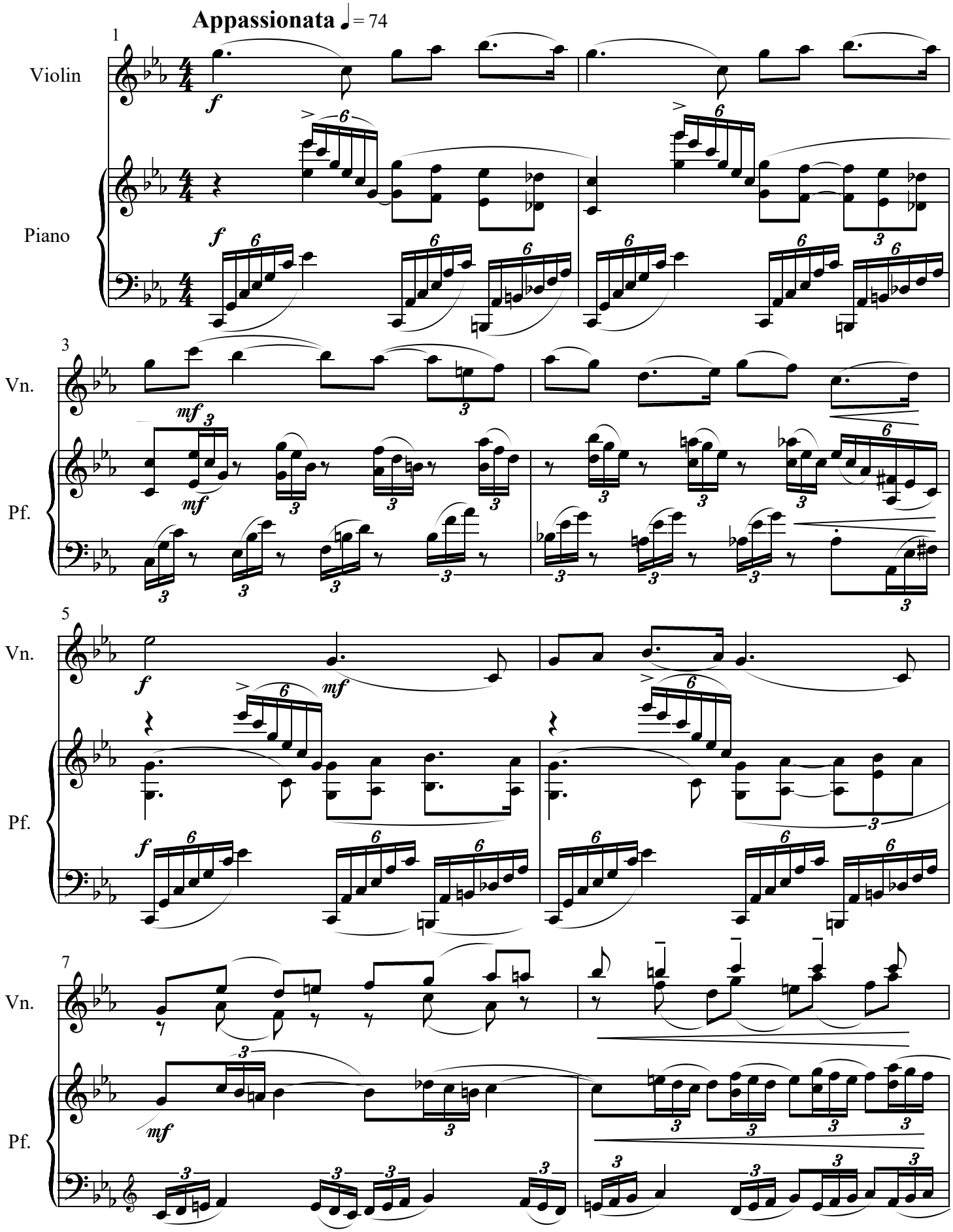

88
rit.
Vn.
Pf.
90
Tempo Primo ♩= 82
Vn.
Pf.
92
Vn.
Pf.
94
Vn.
8va
Pf.
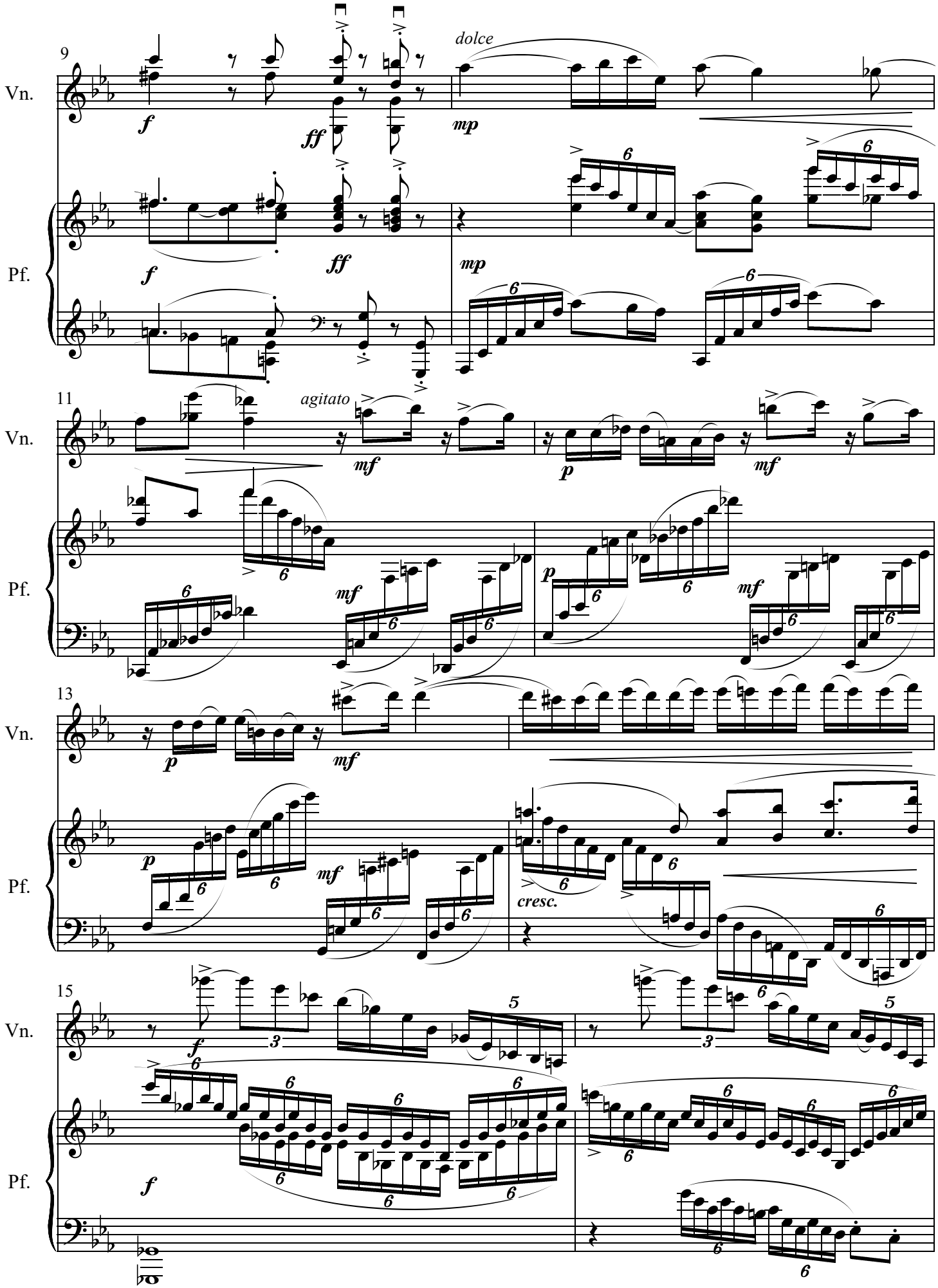

stretto
96
Vn.
Pf.
f
(8va)
loco
6
3
98
ff
p
8va
101
rit. al fine
104
pizz.
pp
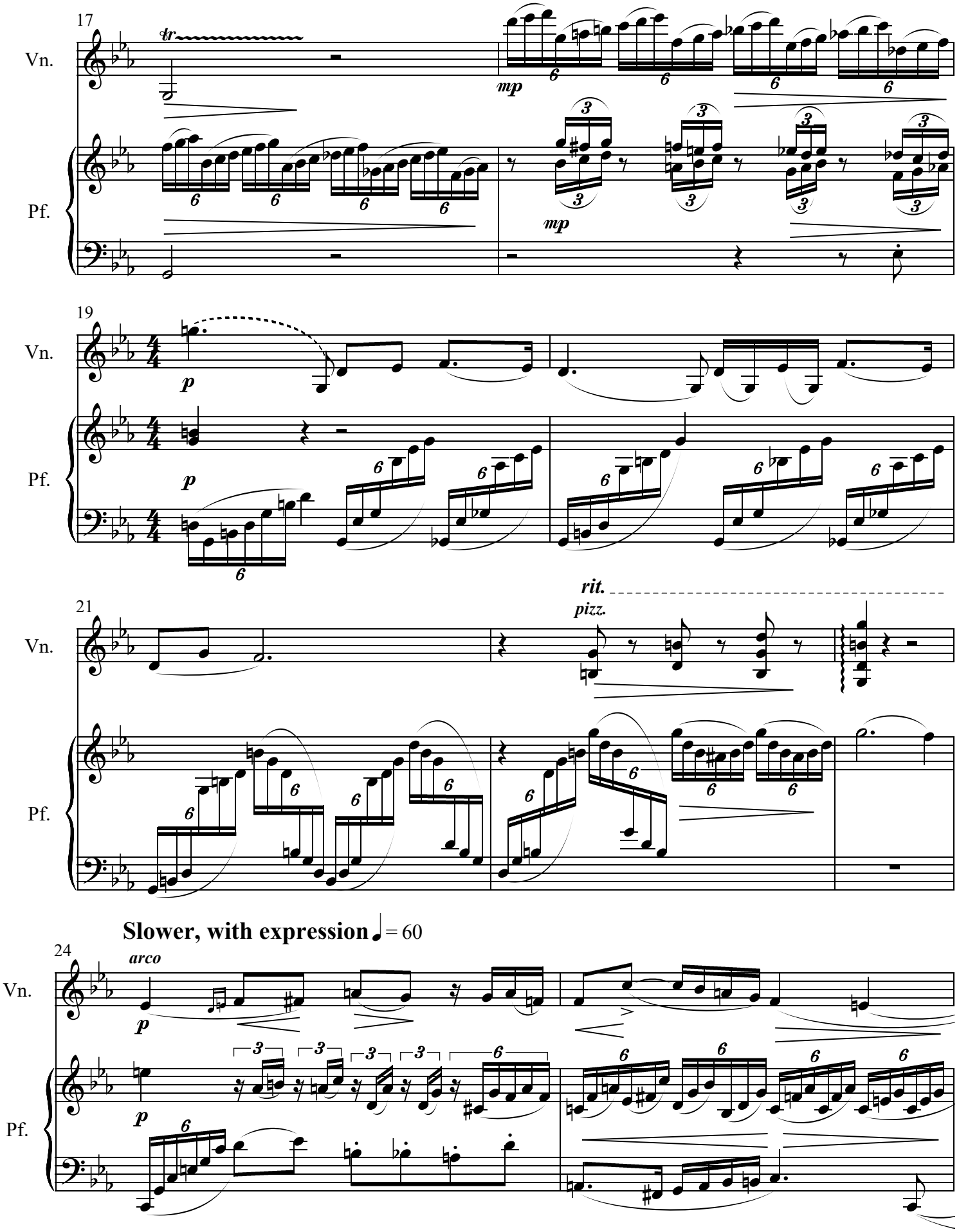
for Ellen Taaffe Zwilich
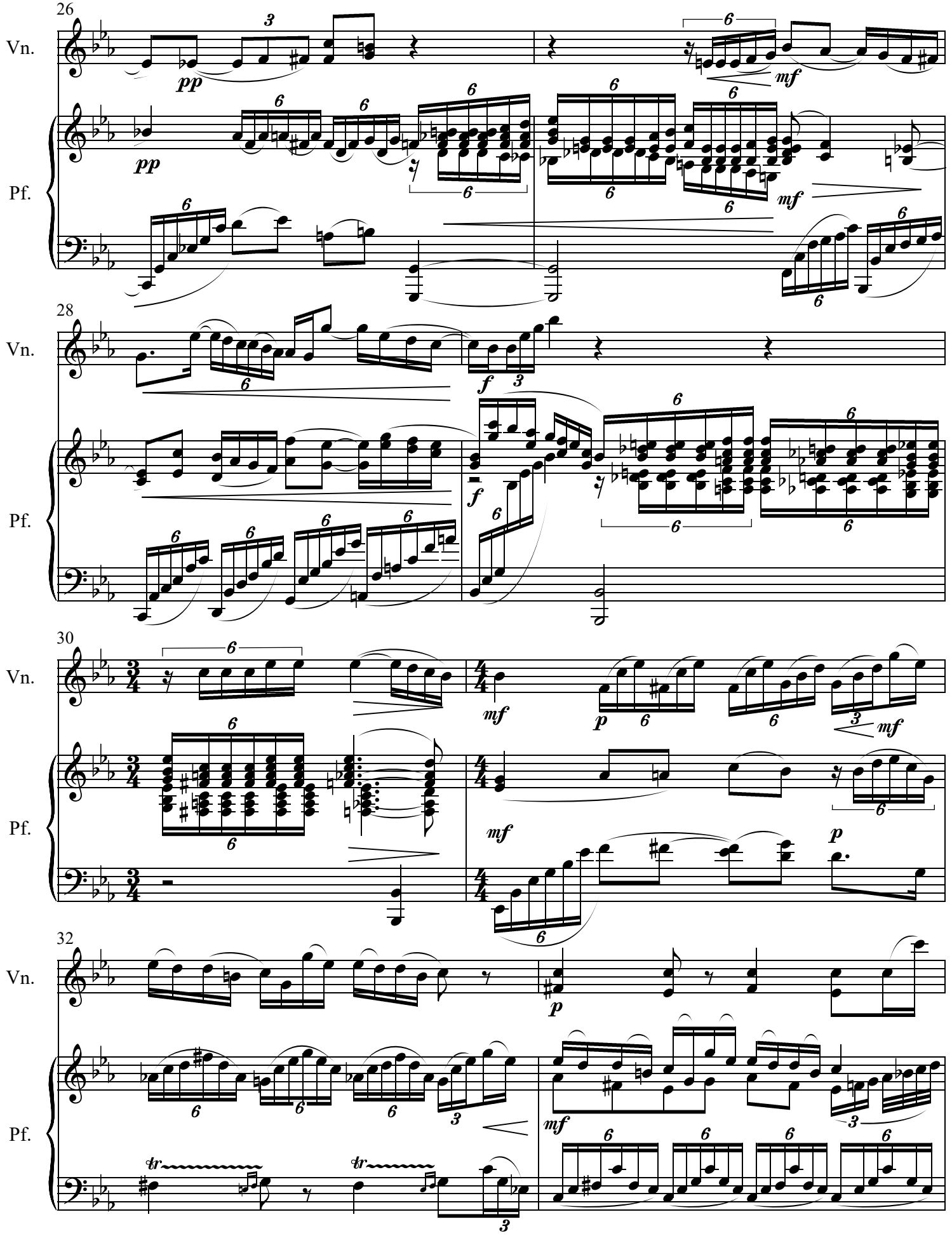
Romance No. 3
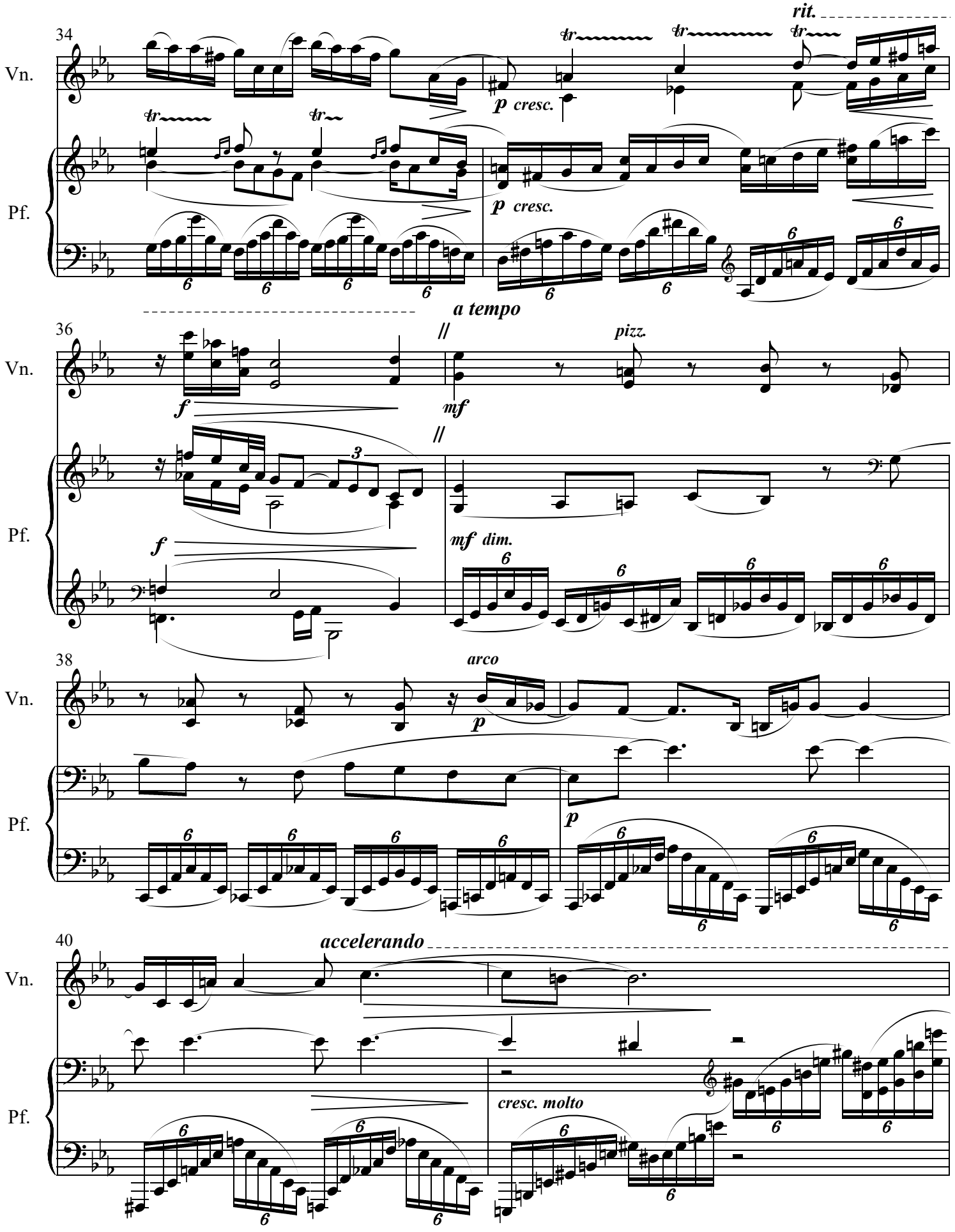
for Violin and Piano
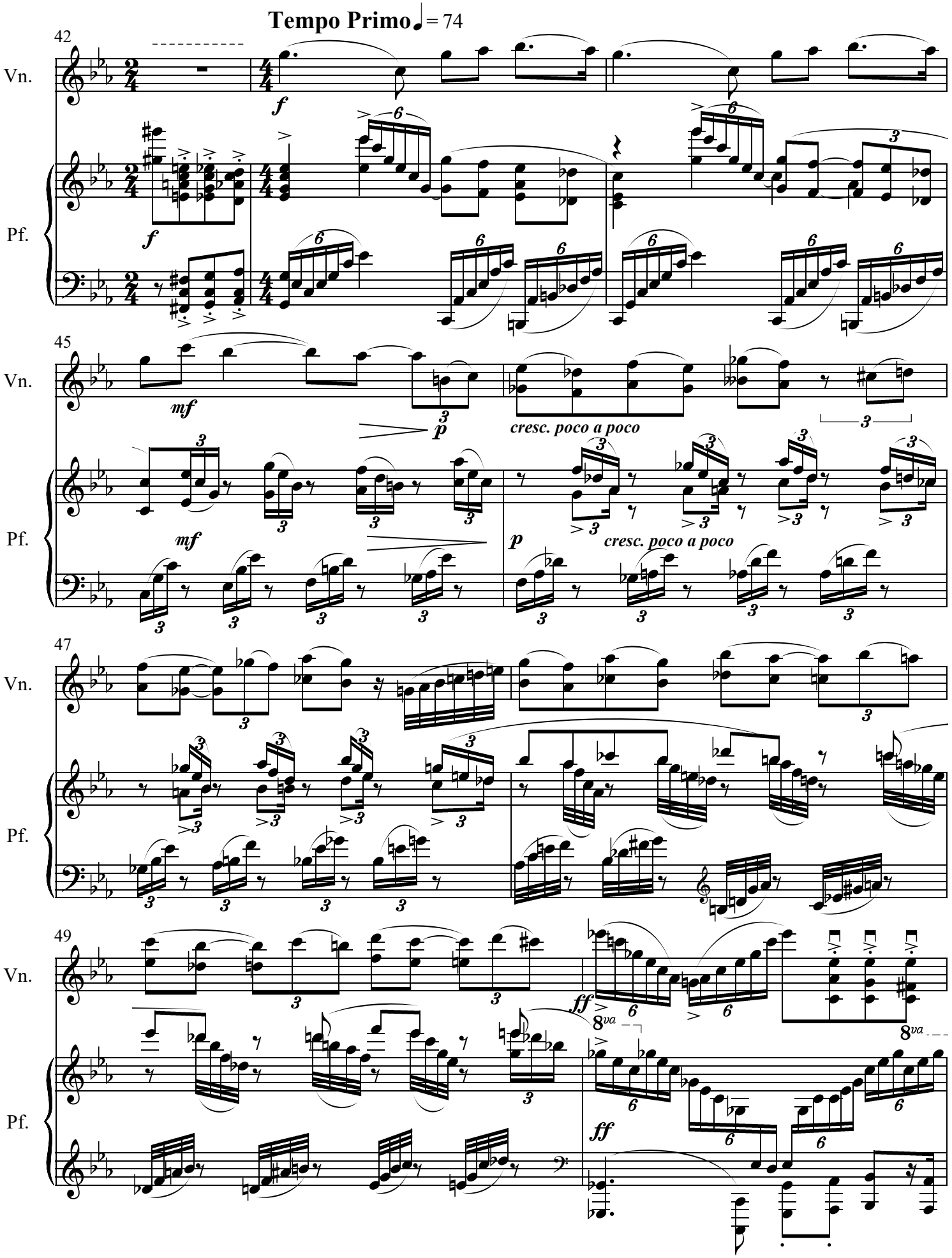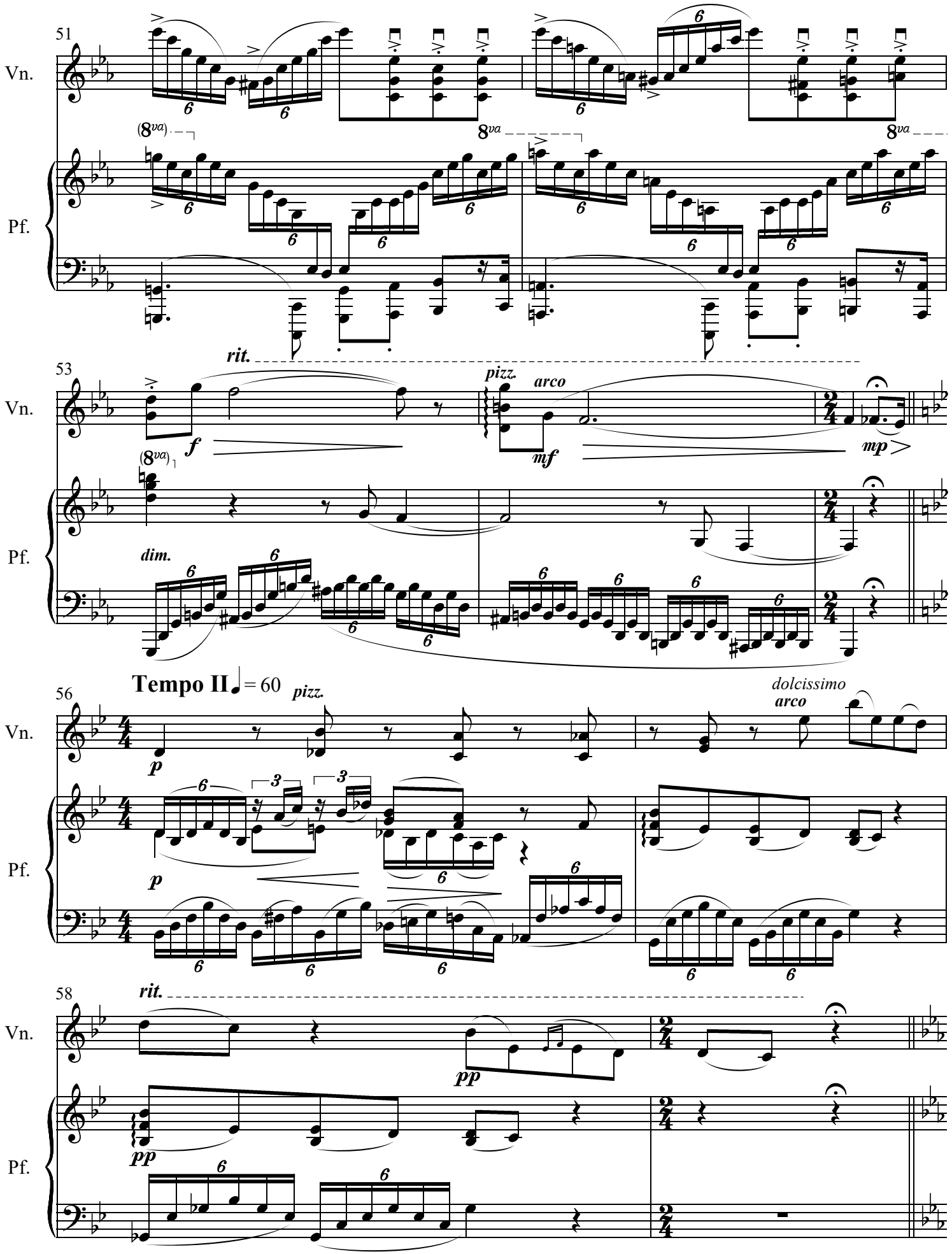



9
Vn.
Pf.
dolce
11
agitato
13
15
cresc.
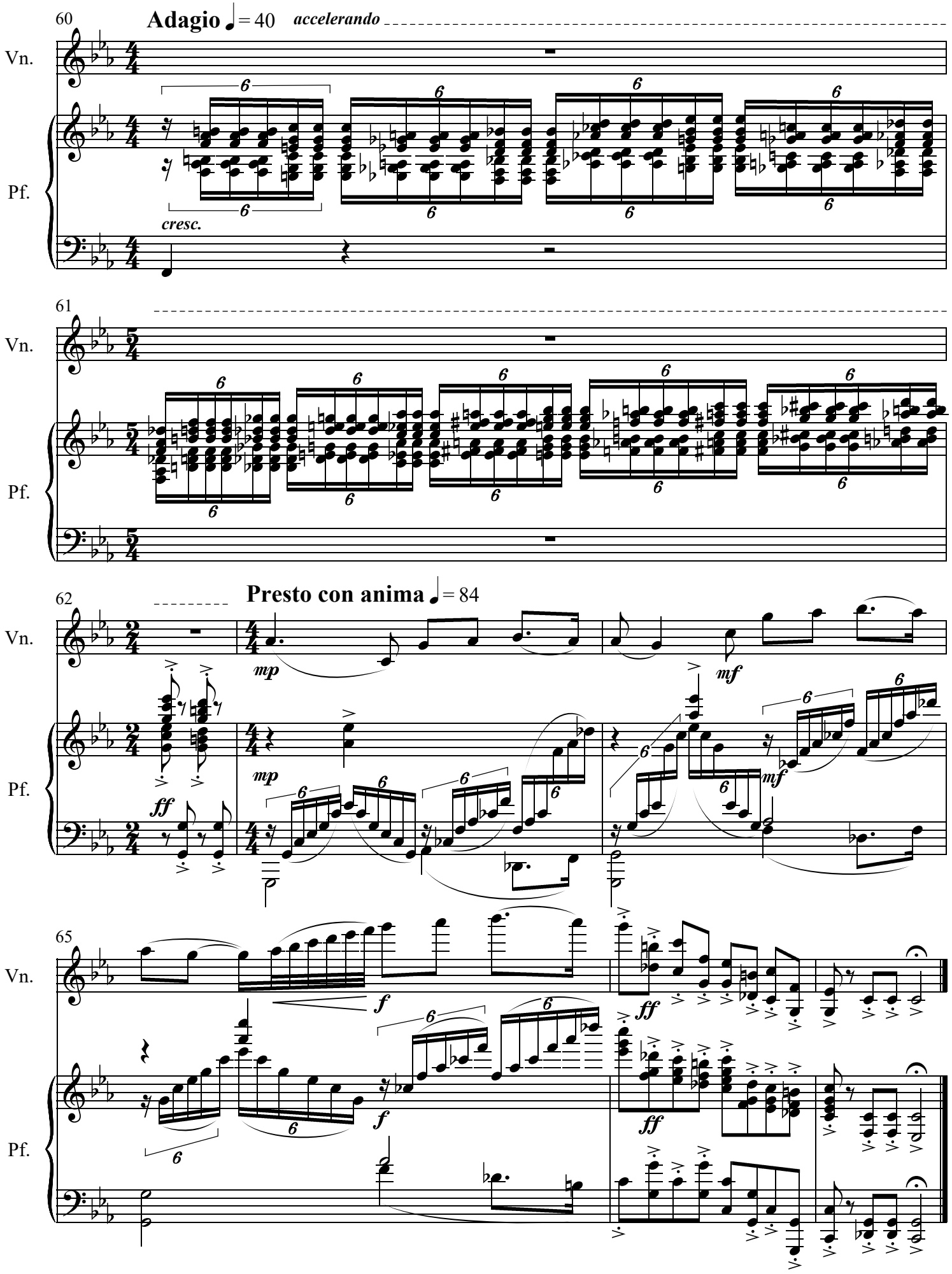

17
Vn.
Pf.
tr
mp
mp
19
Vn.
Pf.
p
p
21
Vn.
Pf.
rit.
pizz.
Slower, with expression ♩= 60
24
Vn.
Pf.
arco
p
p


26
Vn.
Pf.
pp
mf
28
f
30
p
32
tr


34
rit.
Vn.
tr
tr
tr
p cresc.
Pf.
tr
tr
p cresc.
6
a tempo
36
Vn.
f
mf
pizz.
Pf.
3
f
mf dim.
6
38
Vn.
arco
p
Pf.
p
6
40
accelerando
Vn.
Pf.
cresc. molto
6


Tempo Primo ♩= 74
42
Vn.
Pf.
f
45
mf
p
cresc. poco a poco
47
49
ff
8va


51
Vn.
Pf.
(8va)
8va
8va
rit.
53
Vn.
Pf.
f
pizz.
arco
mf
mp
(8va)
dim.
Tempo II ♩= 60
56
Vn.
Pf.
p
pizz.
dolcissimo
arco
p
58
rit.
Vn.
Pf.
pp
pp


60
Adagio ♩= 40
accelerando
Vn.
Pf.
cresc.
61
Vn.
Pf.
62
Presto con anima ♩= 84
Vn.
Pf.
mp
mf
ff
65
Vn.
Pf.
f
ff