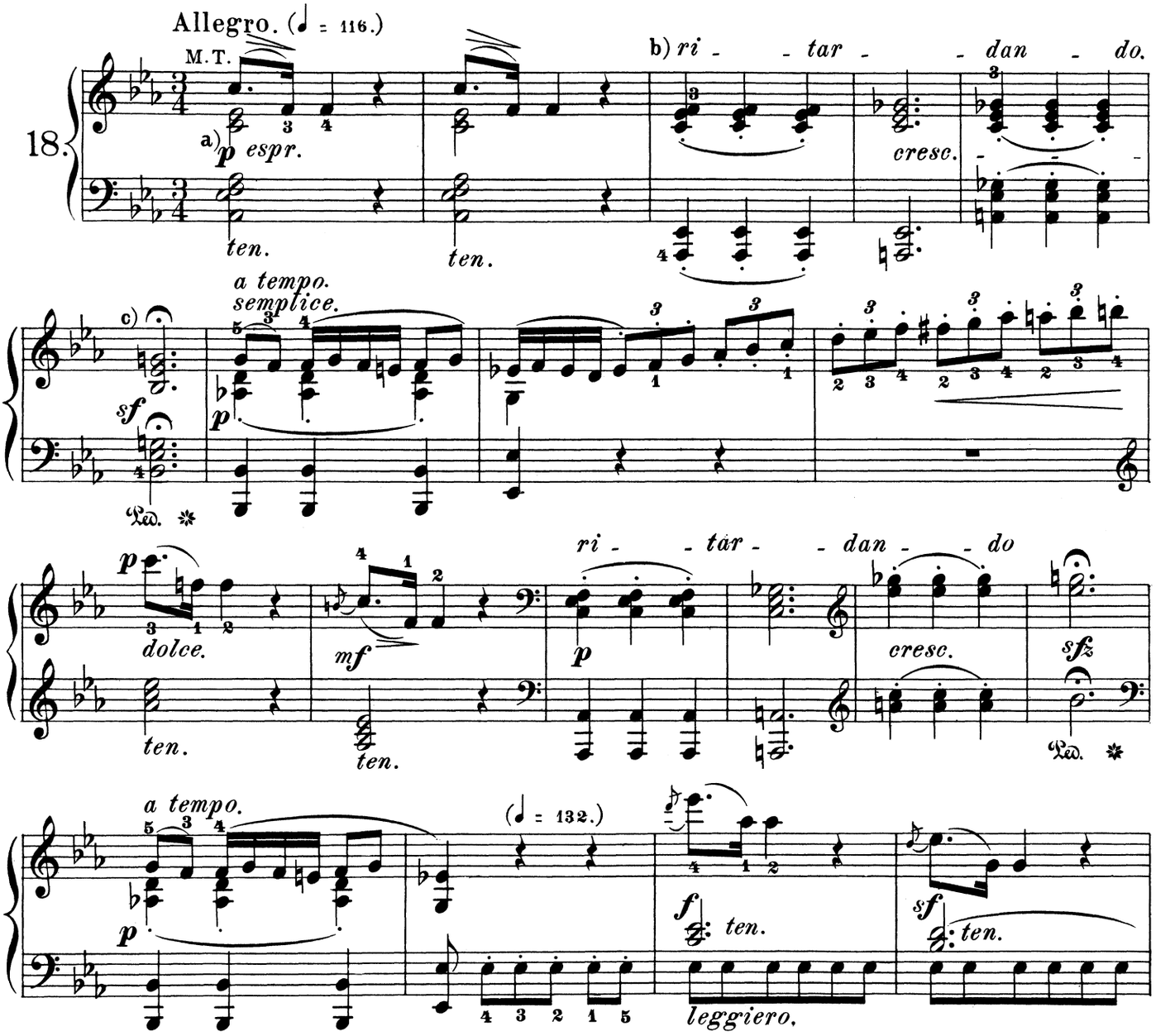
SONATA

in E-flat Major

Ludwig van Beethoven

Op. 31, No. 3

*) Abbreviations: M. T. signifies Main Theme, S.T., Sub-Theme; Cl. T., Closing Theme; D.G., Development-group; R., Return; Tr., Transition; Md.T., Mid-Theme; Ep., Episode.

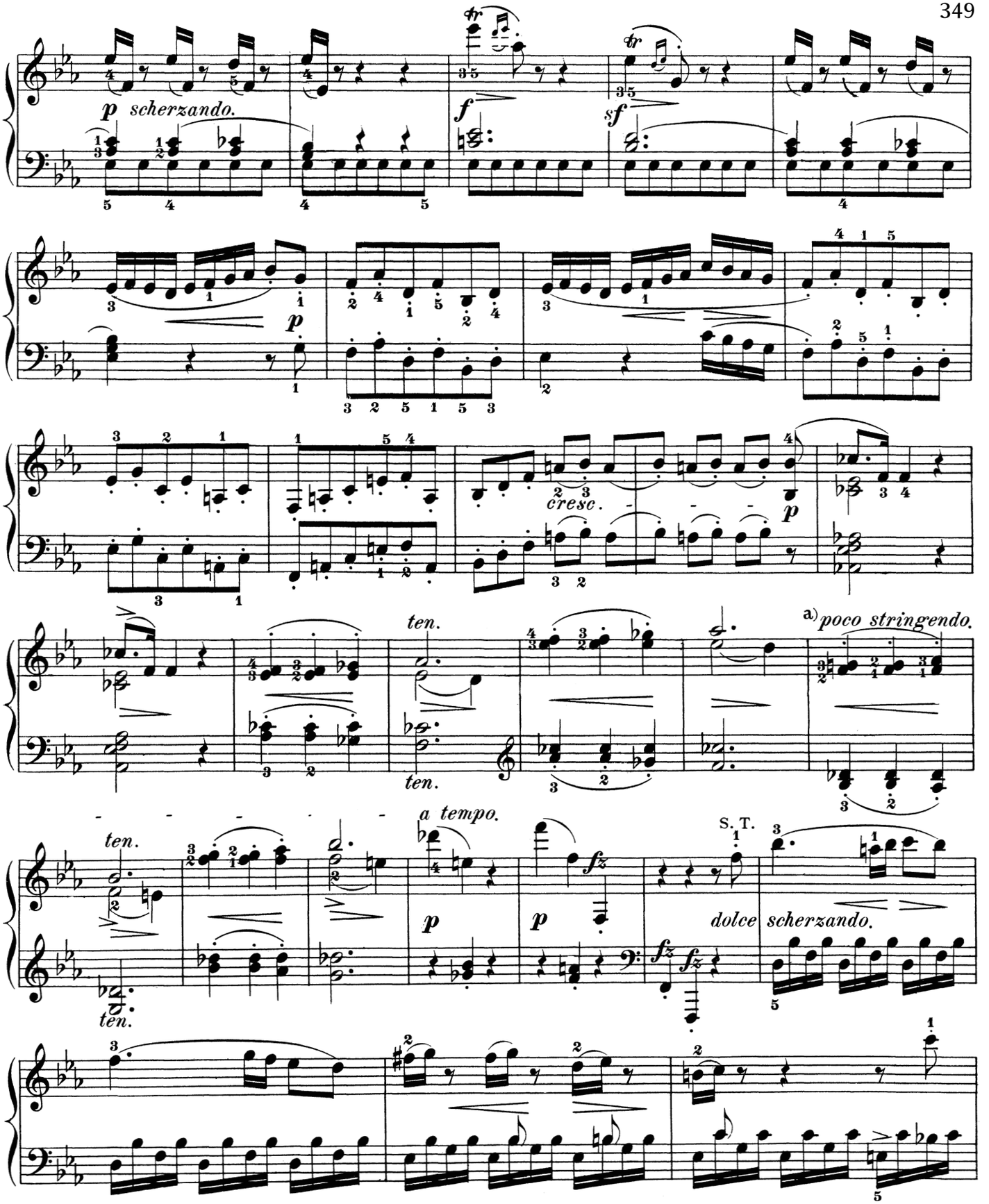


a) This pregnant introductory measure—in a sense the principal motive, the germ, or we might even say the flower, of the whole movement—may be played in various ways, this variety being referable, in particular, to its relation to the repetition in the next measure. In the latter a *crescendo* or *diminuendo* is equally appropriate; the motive may be accented as a question or an exclamation, or may be sung with yearning or even resigned expression (the last would seem best suited to measures 33-4), provided that the reading does not overstep the limits of unaffected grace. The refined and emotional rendering of this one measure is a wellnigh decisive touchstone for the innate taste and musical talent of the player.

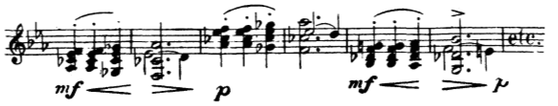
b) *Ritardando,* a gradual, progressive retardation of the tempo, and not a sudden change to a slower rate, like *Ritenuto.*

c) The hold sustained *a piacere,* only that the following measure must have the effect of concluding the entire period.

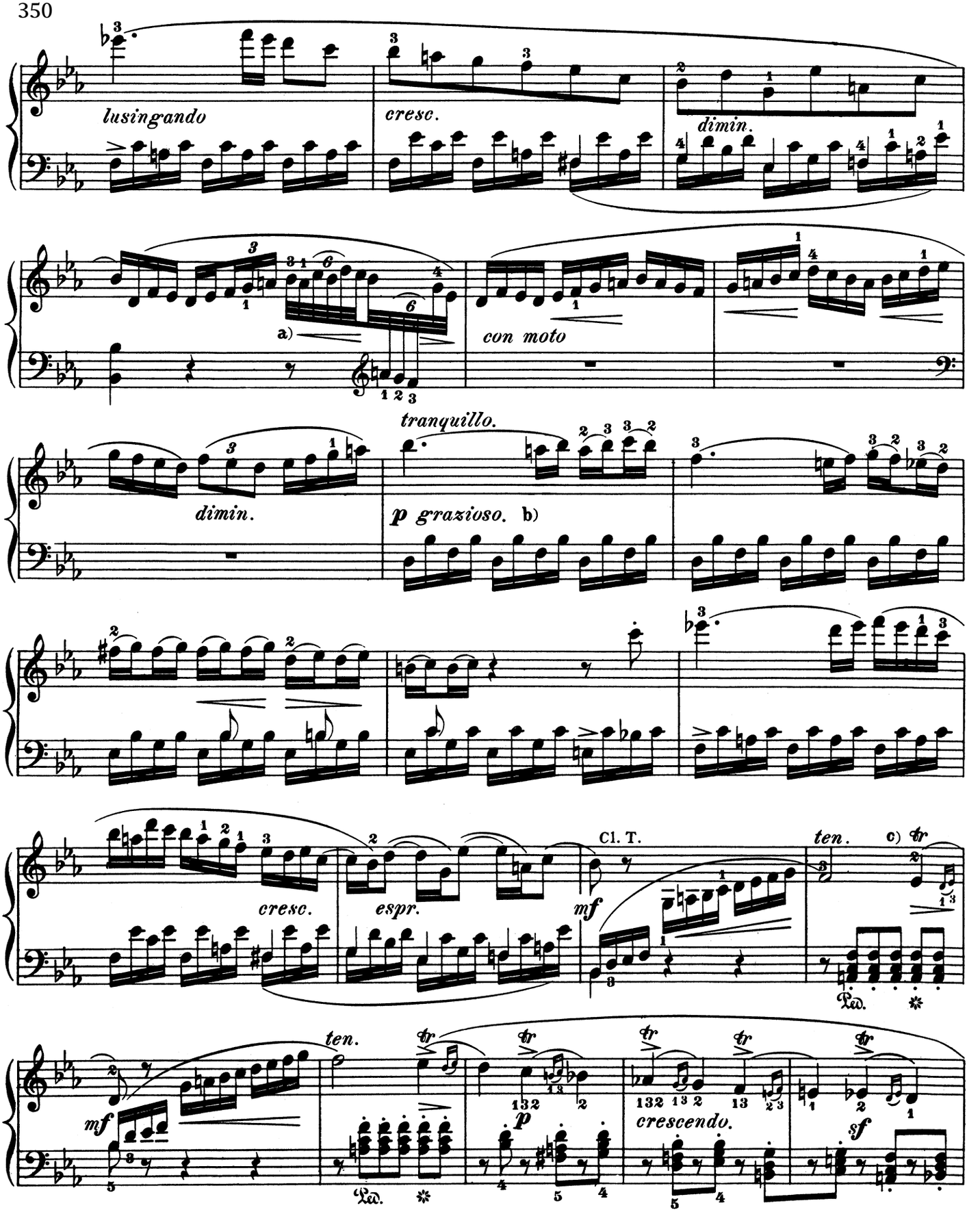
*) German equivalents: M. T., Hauptsatz; S. T., Seitensatz; Cl. T., Schlusssatz; D.G., Durchführungssatz; R., Rückgang; Tr., Übergang; Md.T., Mittelsatz; Ep., Zwischensatz; Coda, Anhang.



a) To avoid monotony, these 4 measures may be played in a somewhat livelier manner than the similar group just preceding; or a certain variety may be introduced into the shading, for which the traditional repetition of the first division (still admissible in comparatively short movements) offers additional opportunity; e.g.



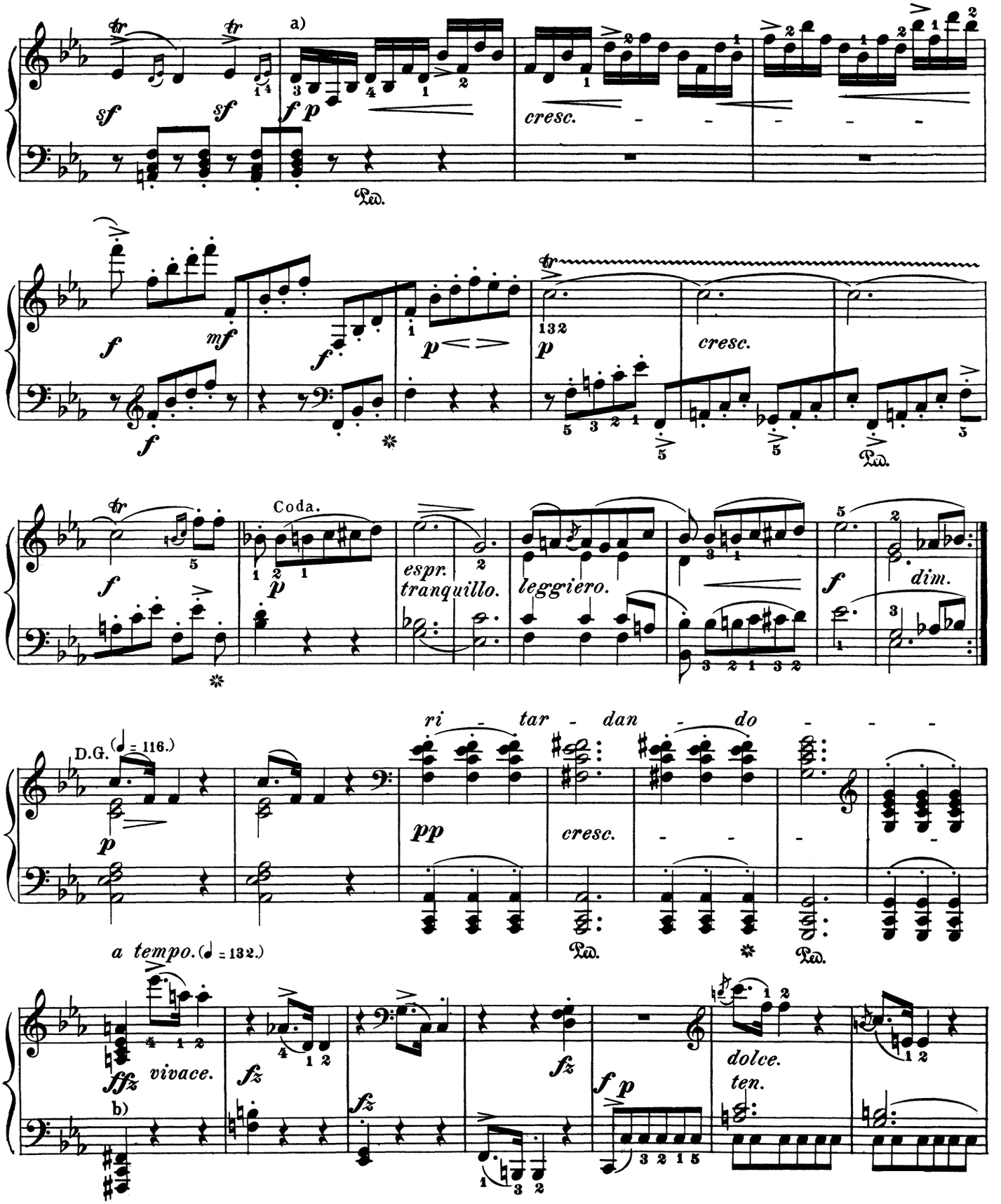
or conversely.



a) In our opinion the execution of this graceful ornament, without haste and without disturbing the rhythm by unduly prolonging the measure, is materially facilitated by the brief intervention of the left hand.

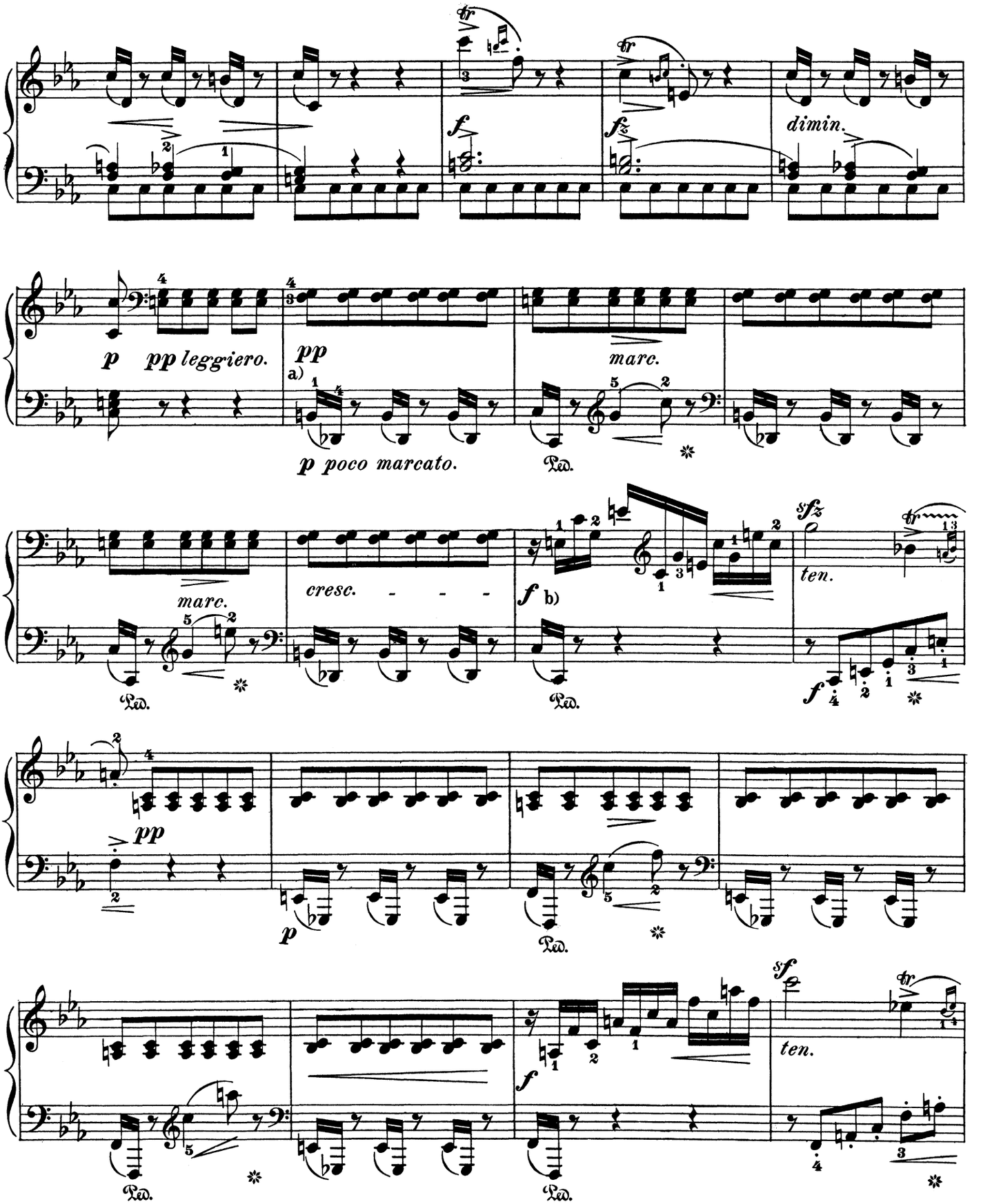
b) For separating small groups of notes without conspicuously accenting the notes on which they begin, there is no more effective device than to take the first note of each with the finger that has just played the last note of the preceding group.

c) Including the after-beat, seven notes suffice for this and the following trills, 3 on the fifth eighth-note and 4 on the sixth.

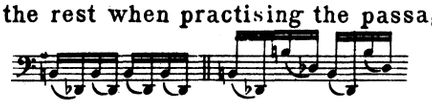


a) The execution of this passage calls for nearly perfect technical finish. In practising, extend it by adding an octave, phrasing throughout in groups of two quarter-notes.

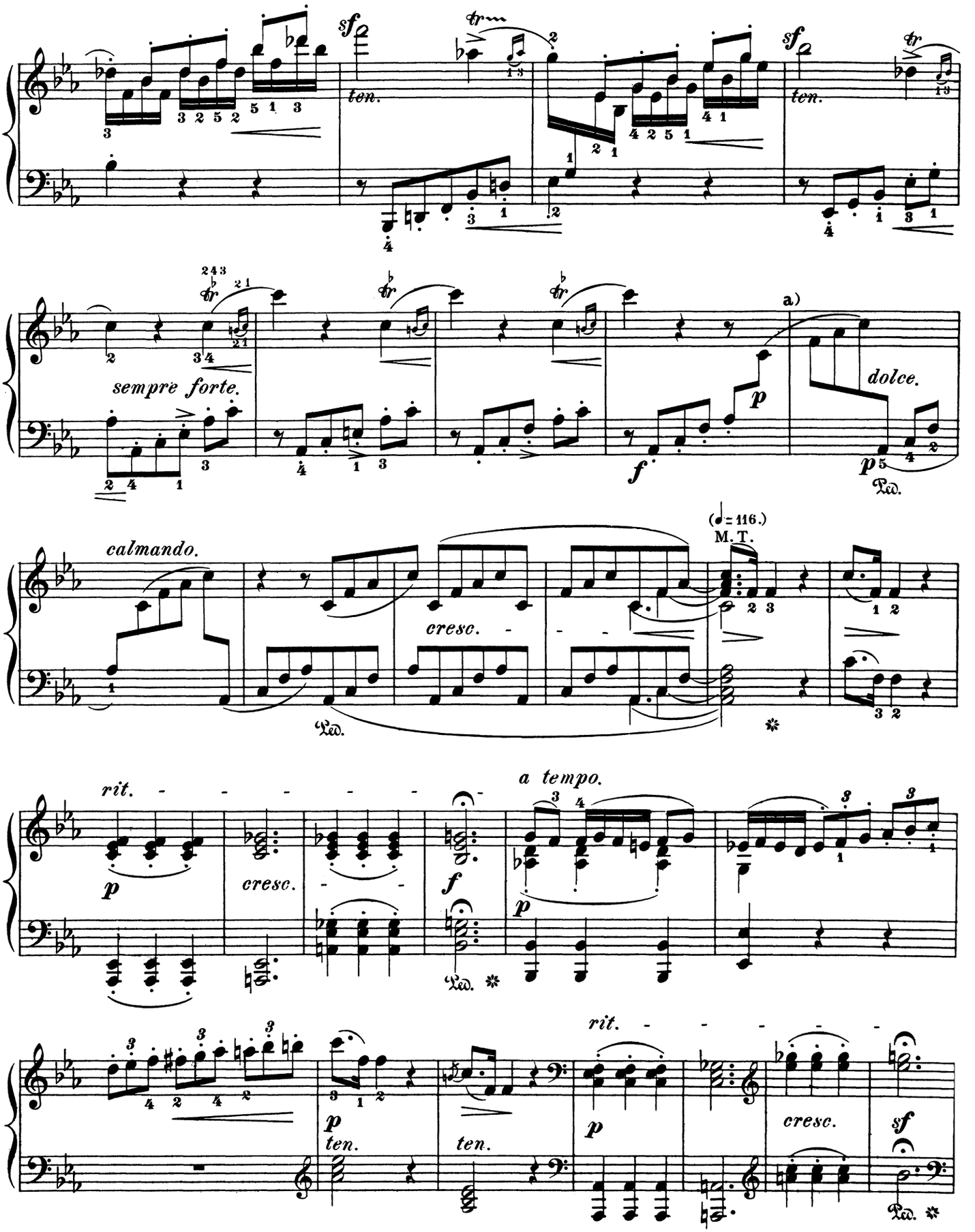
b) The so-called "development" commencing here is to be played in a rather agitated and vehement style, yet the humorous element must never be wholly overshadowed by the pathetic; to this end appropriate use may be made of the tranquilizing episodes.



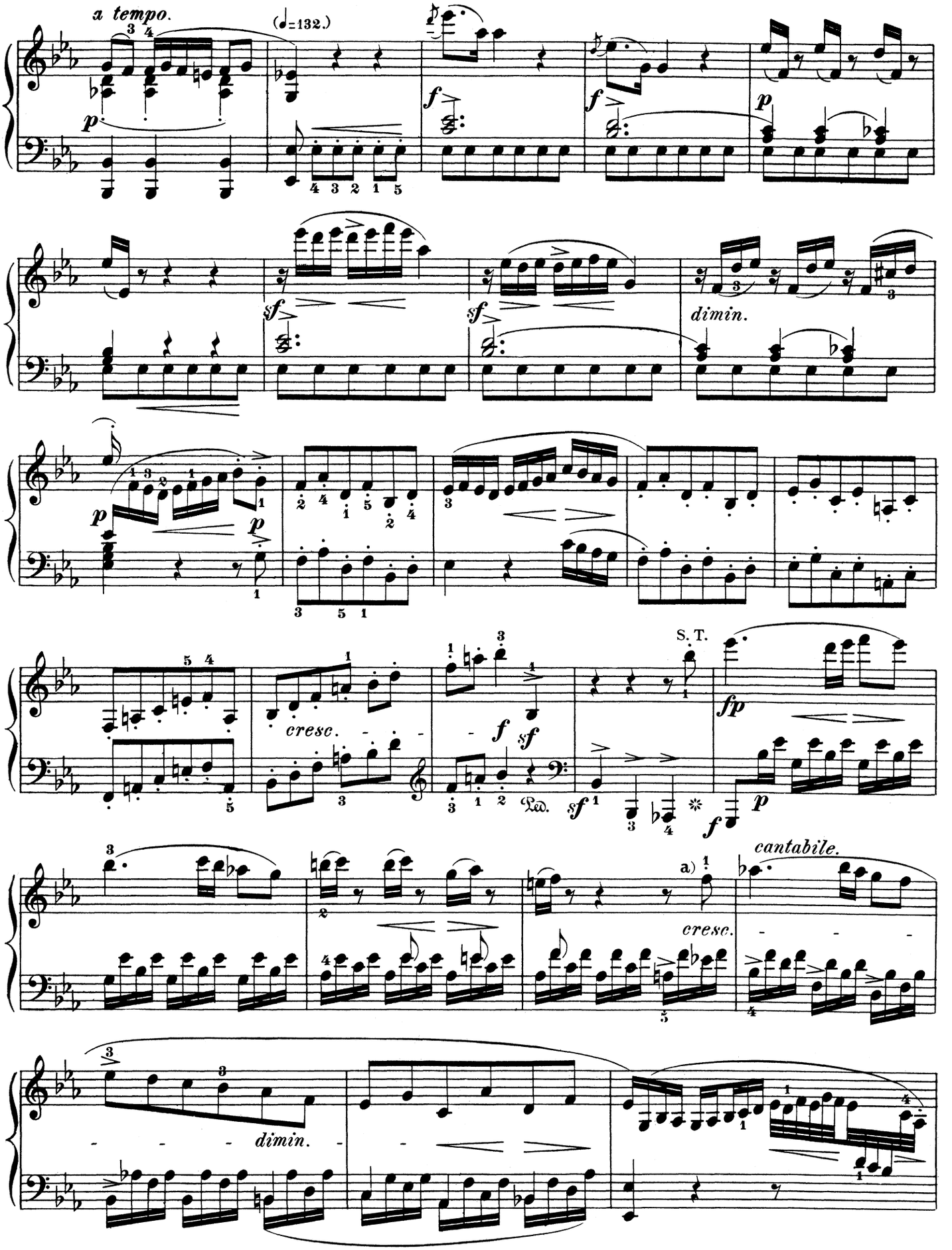
a) Awkward left hands will do well to fill out the rest when practising the passage, sufficiently accenting the first note until the correct rhythm is learned:



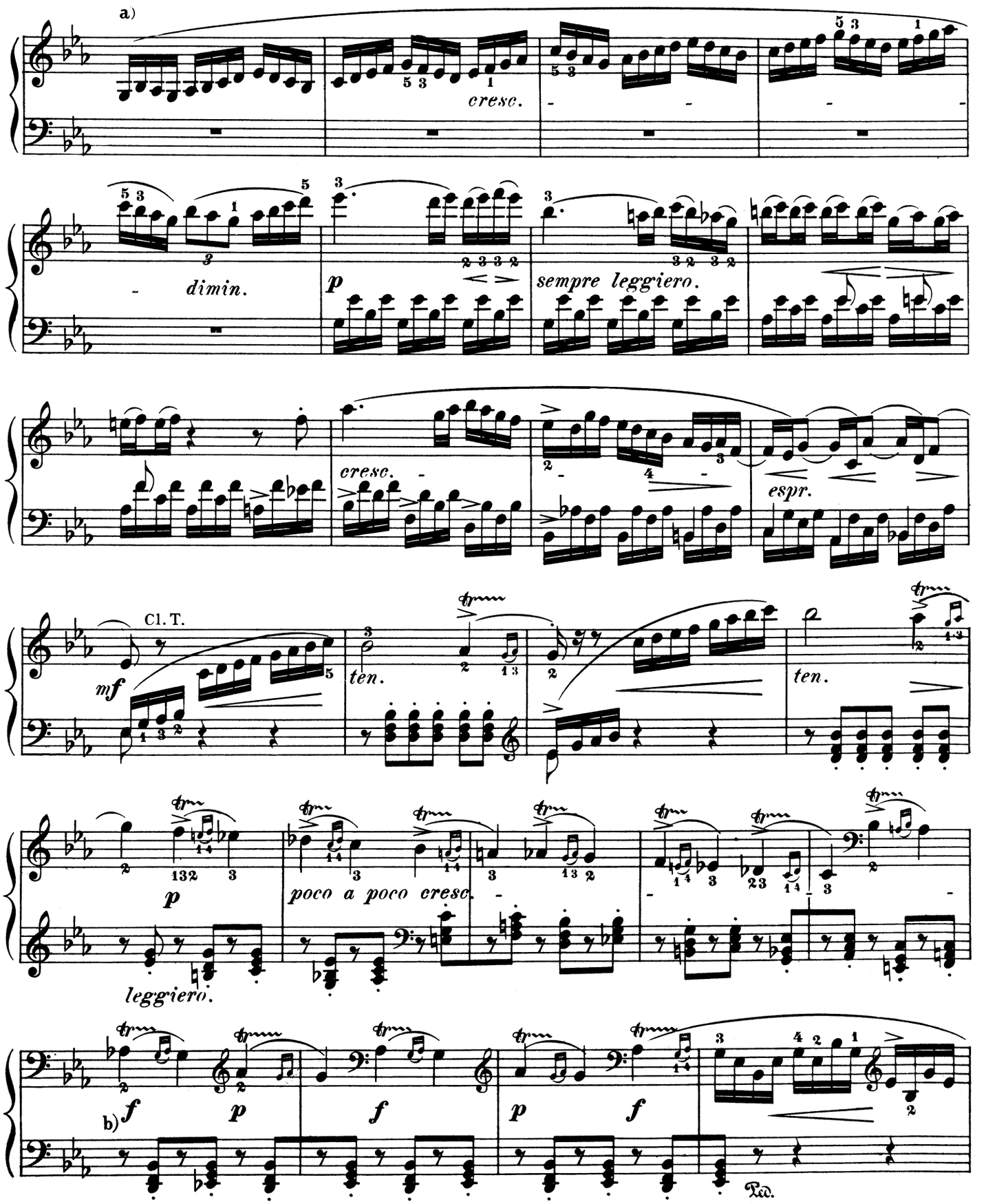
b) Always play this recurrent passage *non legato*, with energetic and independent finger-action.



a) This abrupt *piano* commences simultaneously with the *legato*, i.e., in the right hand; whereas the slackening in the tempo must at first come on very gradually.

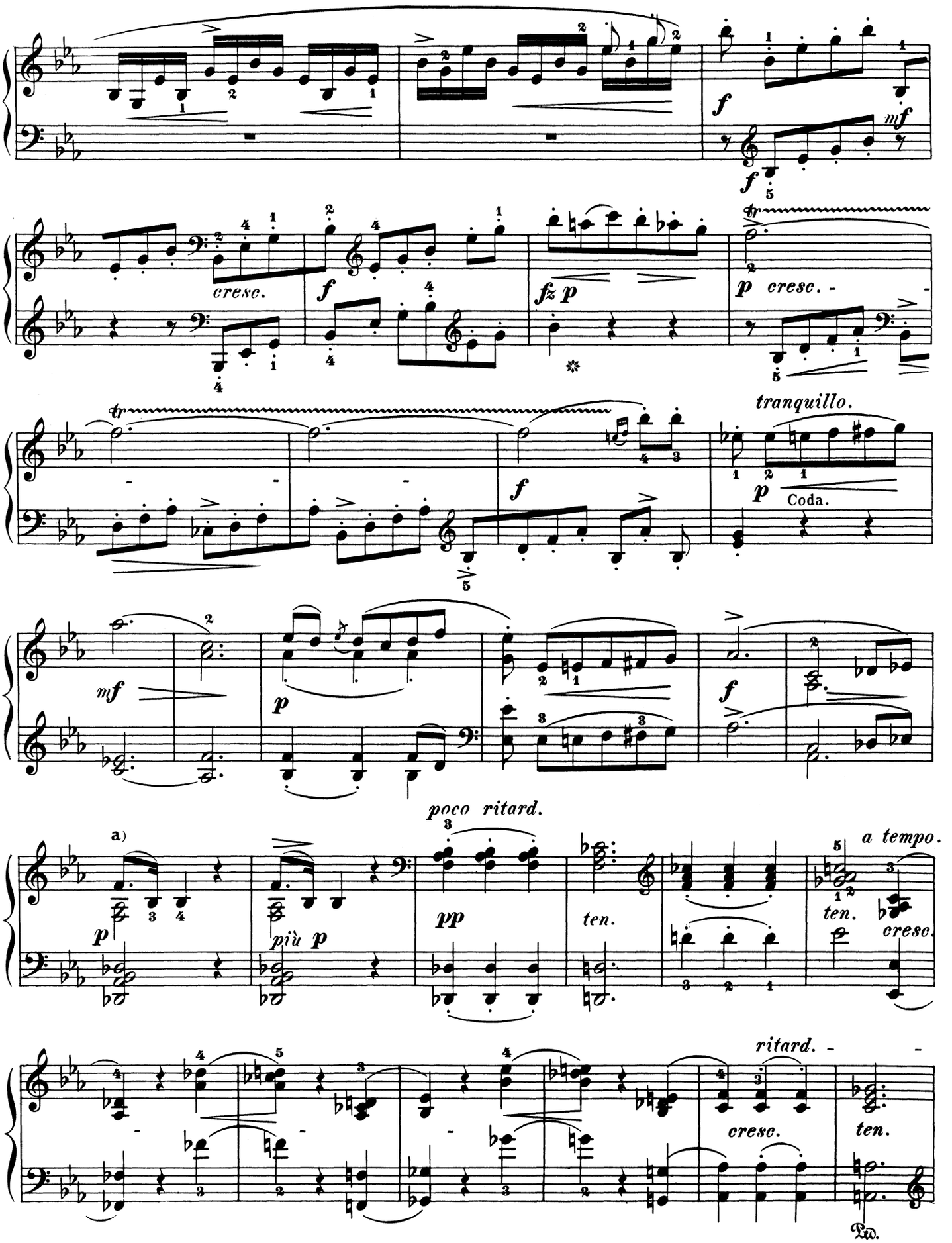


a) Here the *crescendo* must begin a measure sooner than in the parallel passage in the first division, both on account of the lower position and the considerable descent in the bass.

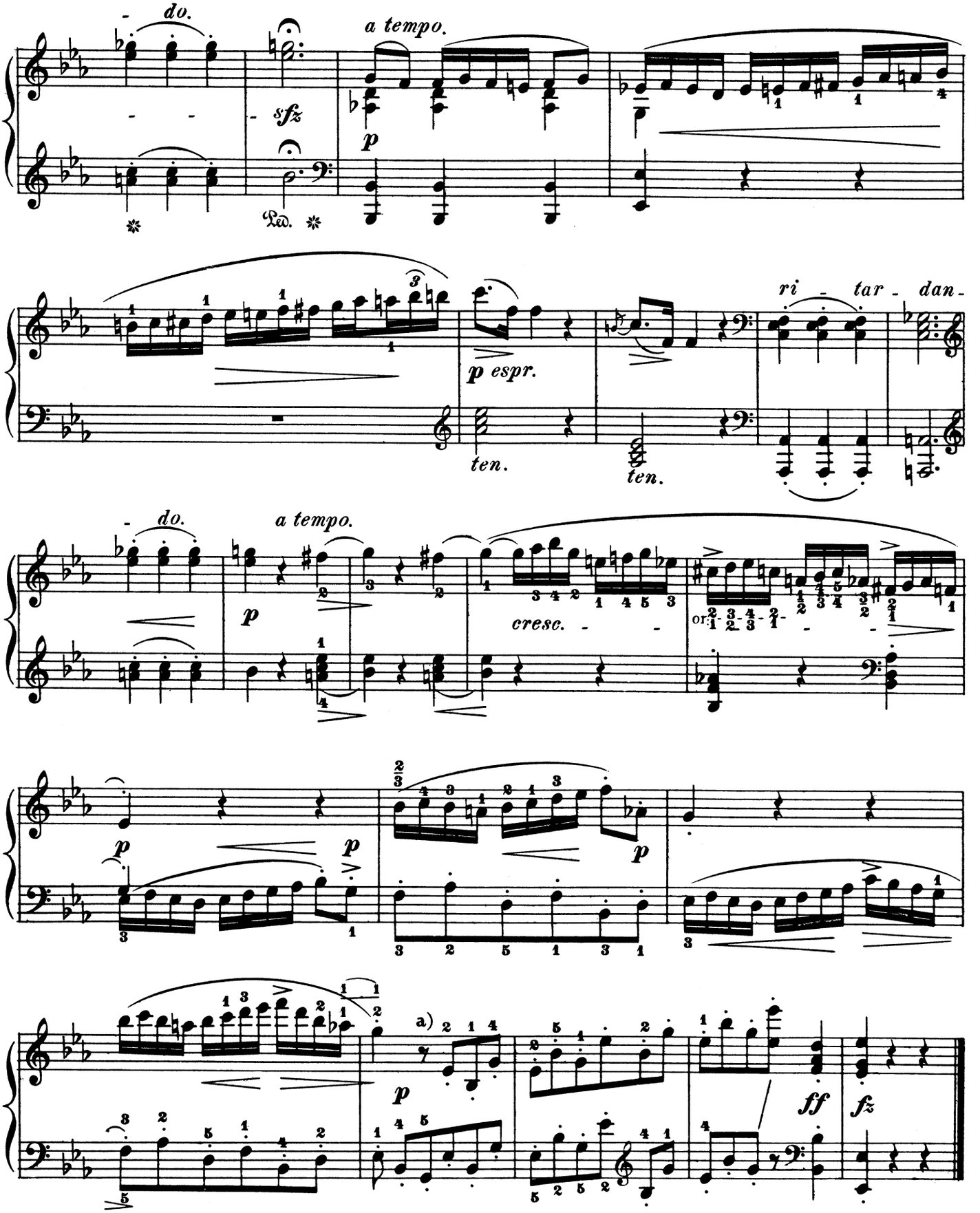


a) The ascending lines of this passage may regularly take a moderate *crescendo*, the descending ones a *diminuendo*, while observing a general *crescendo* of the whole passage. There should be no lack of animated color in any movement of this sonata.

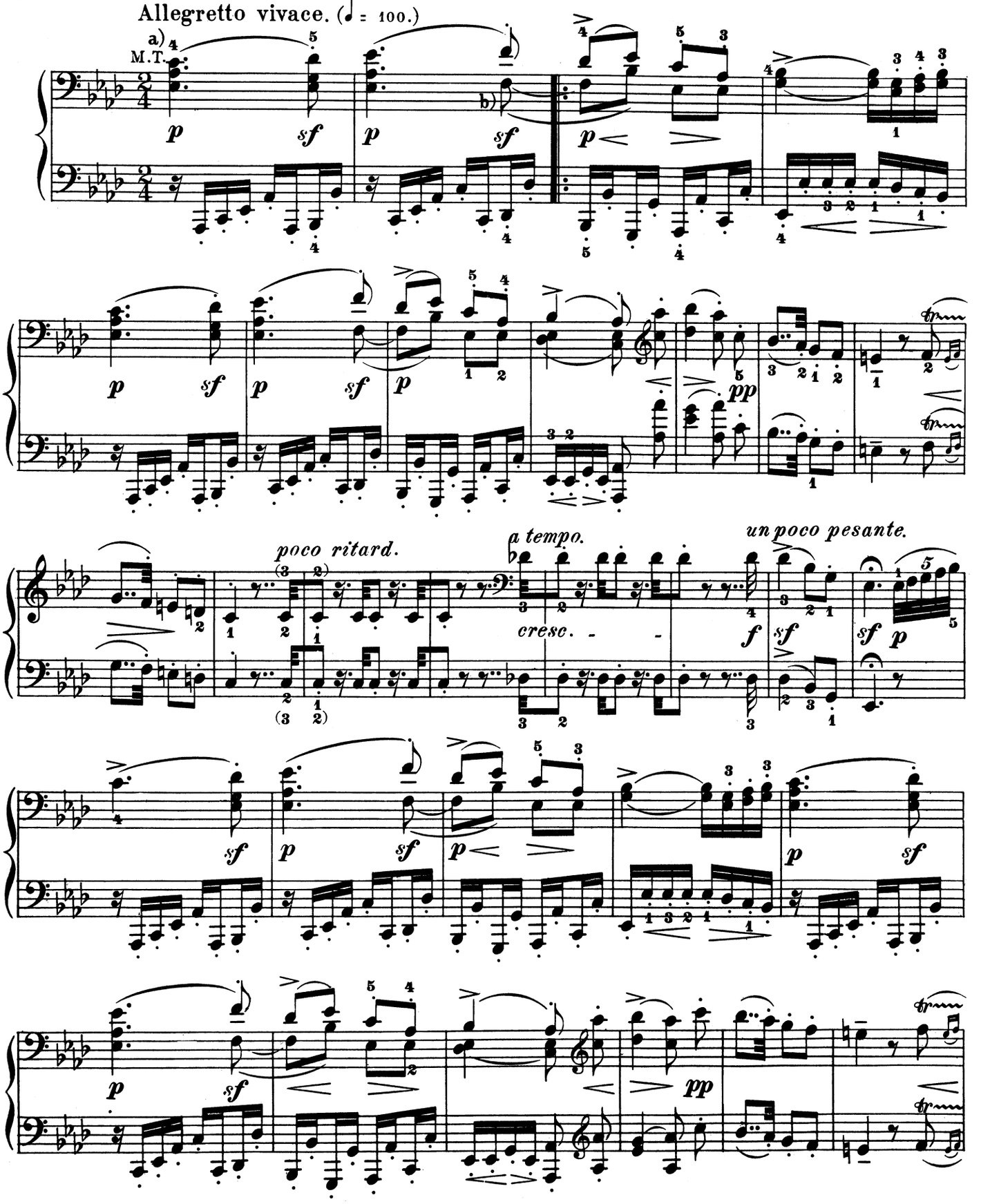
b) In the alternations of *forte* and *piano* the bass must of course take its share.



a) From this point the tempo must be frequently modified, for the characteristic expression of the grave and the gay, which continually succeed each other.

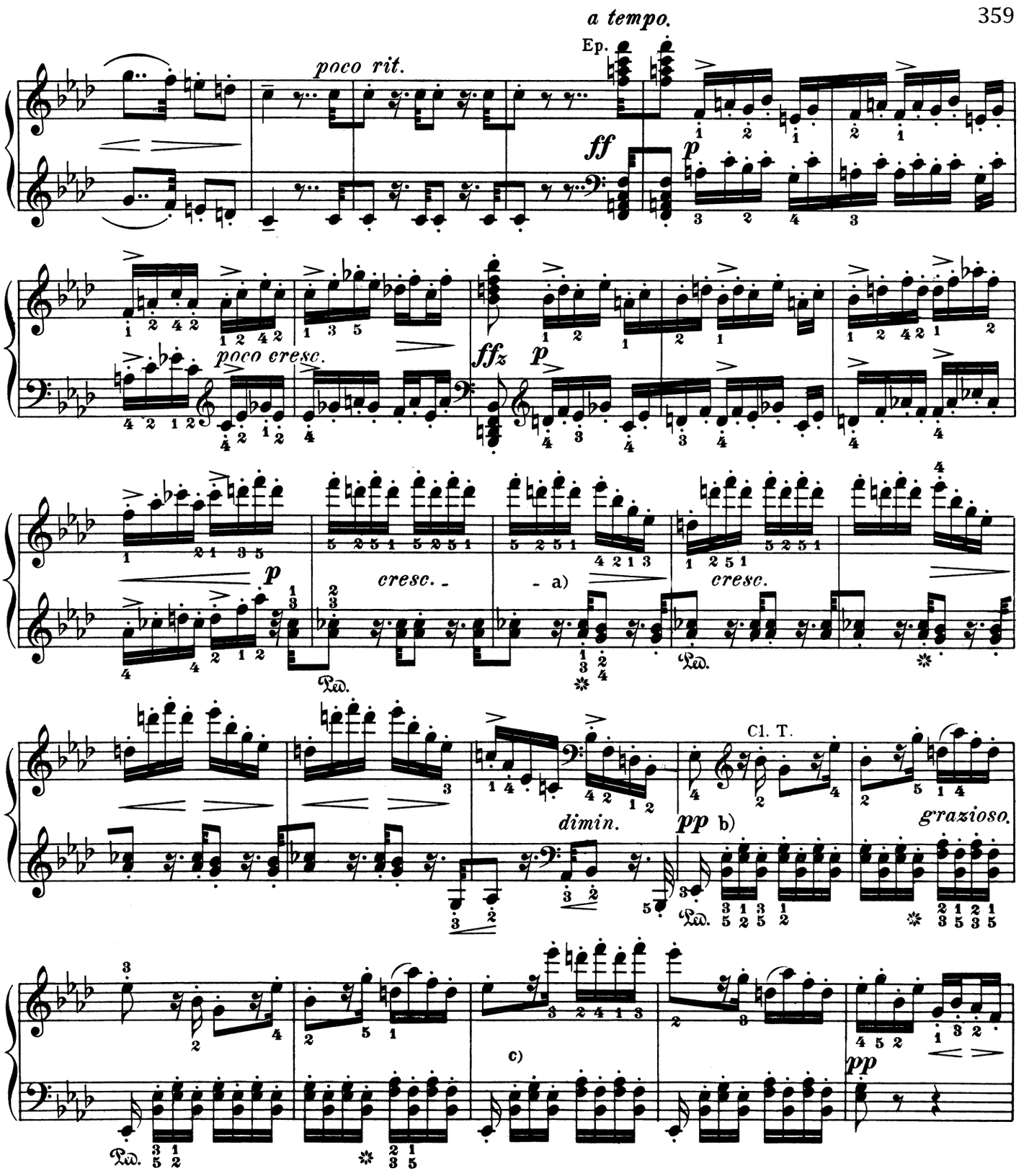


a) Like the four preceding measures of the Coda, despite all their animation, this closing *staccato* passage admits of no acceleration. A *stringendo* and *crescendo,* such as the Stuttgart edition requires, appear un-Beethovenish, and neutralize, at all events, the incisiveness of the two final chords.



a) *Allegretto,* as the qualification *vivace* shows, signifies in this case not *poco allegro,* as usual, but a short Allegro movement. The modern superscription would be *Intermezzo.* This case is as unique in sonata-literature as the slower, but likewise highly humorous *Allegretto scherzando* of the Eighth Symphony among the symphonies.

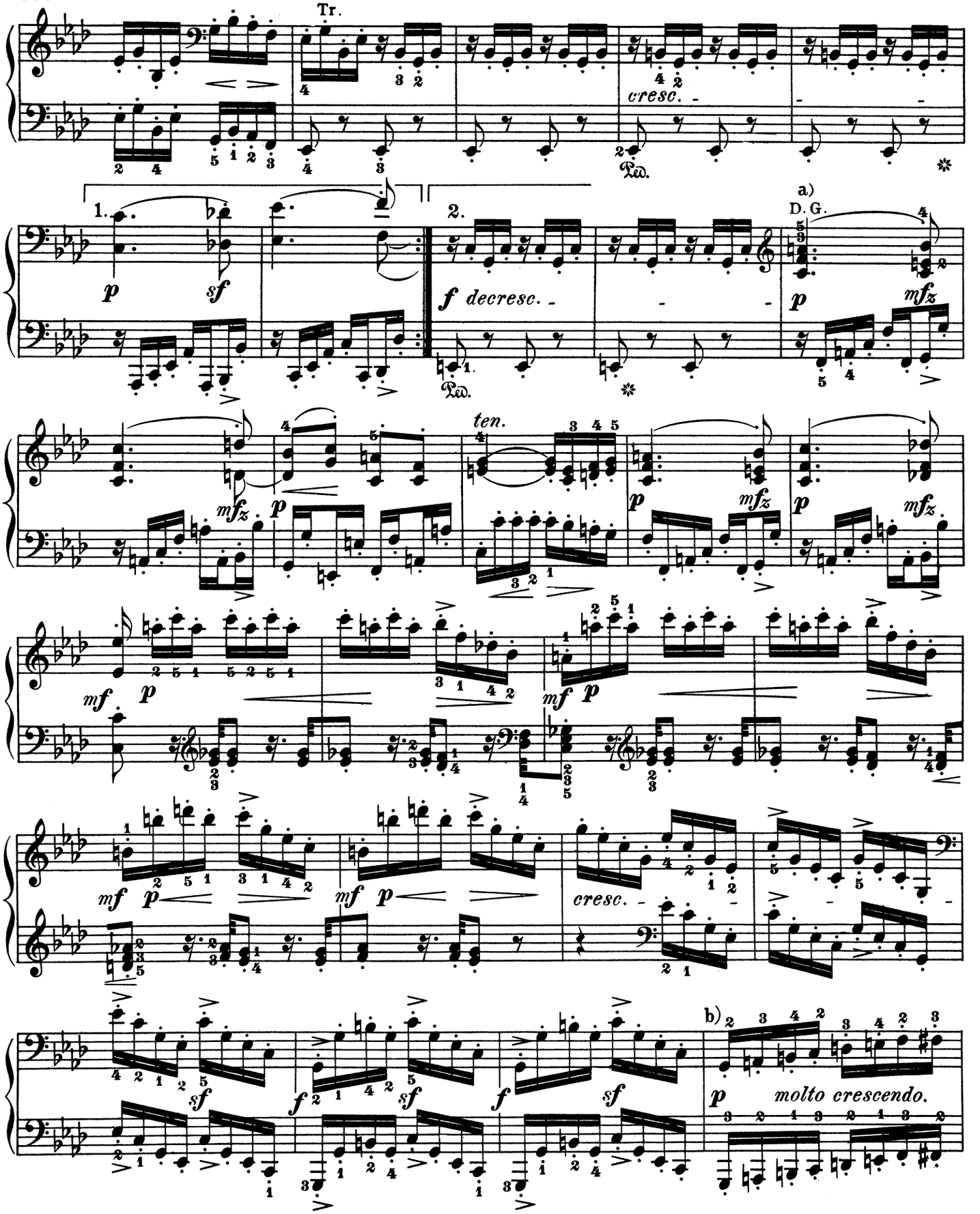
b) **The player should carefully observe the difference in rhythmic and melodic significance between the higher and lower F's in this octave.**



a) The player must never forget that this division calls for a rigorous and consistent observance of the *staccato* throughout. Whoever lacks the necessary facility, has now the best opportunity for acquiring it by practice—of thoroughly emancipating himself from the habit of anxiously clinging to the keyboard. Rhythmical precision is an equally important requisite; the unaccented 32nd-notes in the left hand must follow in strict time the last note of each group of 16th-notes in the right.

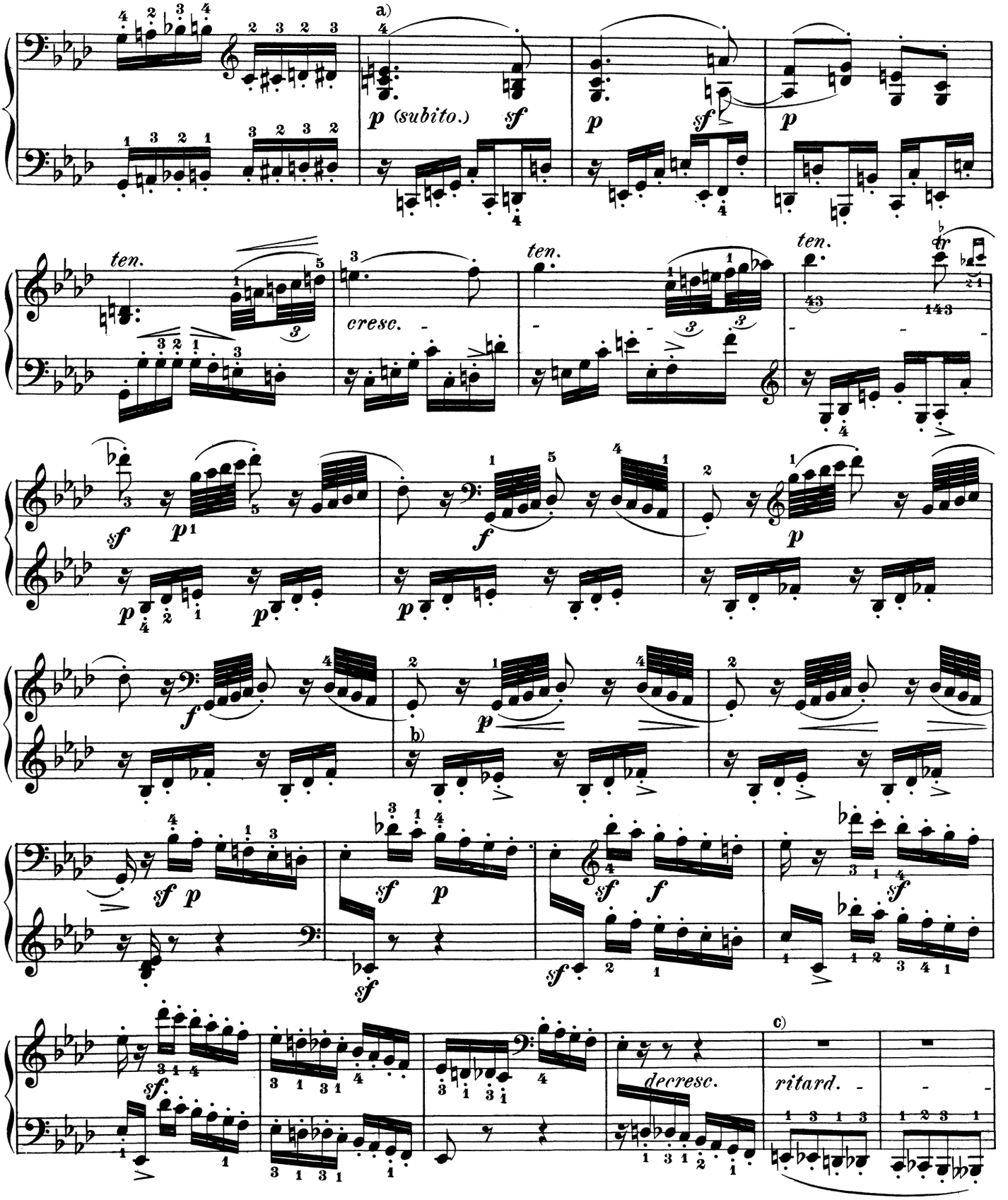
b) This fingering is inconvenient, but the only one practicable on our modern grand pianos for insuring a distinct repetition of the note by both finger and key.

c) The narrow compass of the contemporary keyboard obliged the composer to compress this phrase; nevertheless, it is best to abstain from improving it, for the melisma (properly so-called) contained in the preceding and following measures would not sound particularly elegant in the higher octave.



a) A slight delaying, i. e., a pause equivalent to about an eighth-note, will render the reprise of the theme more piquant, fresh, and humorous in effect.

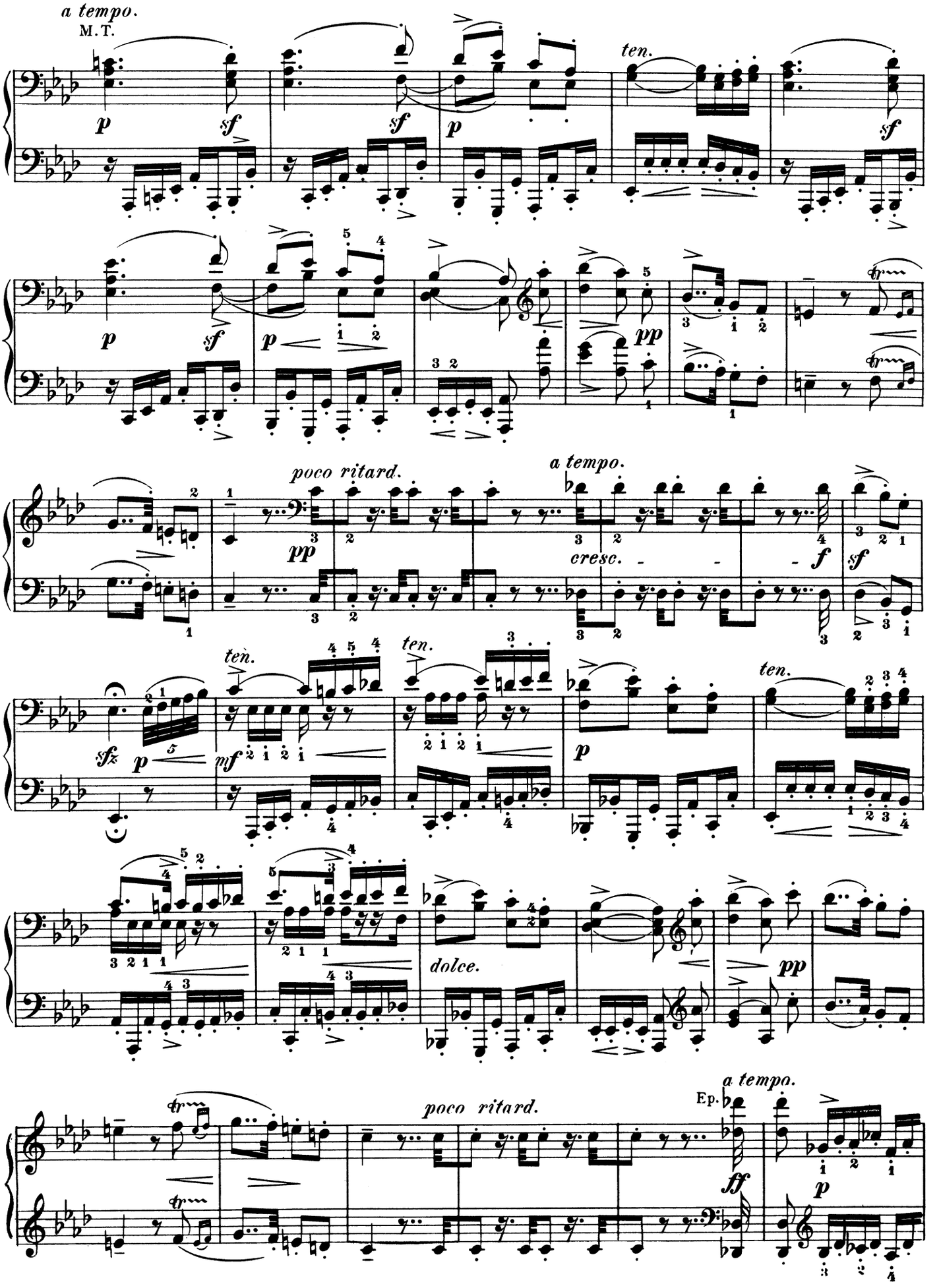
b) The best fingering for *staccato* is one which presents the greatest possible contrast to that for *legato,* and, in consequence, renders a *legato* execution almost impracticable. For this reason it is well to use the thumb only where absolutely essential, and even to economize in the use of the fingers. A similar grouping of the passage in both hands makes it easier to practise with them together.

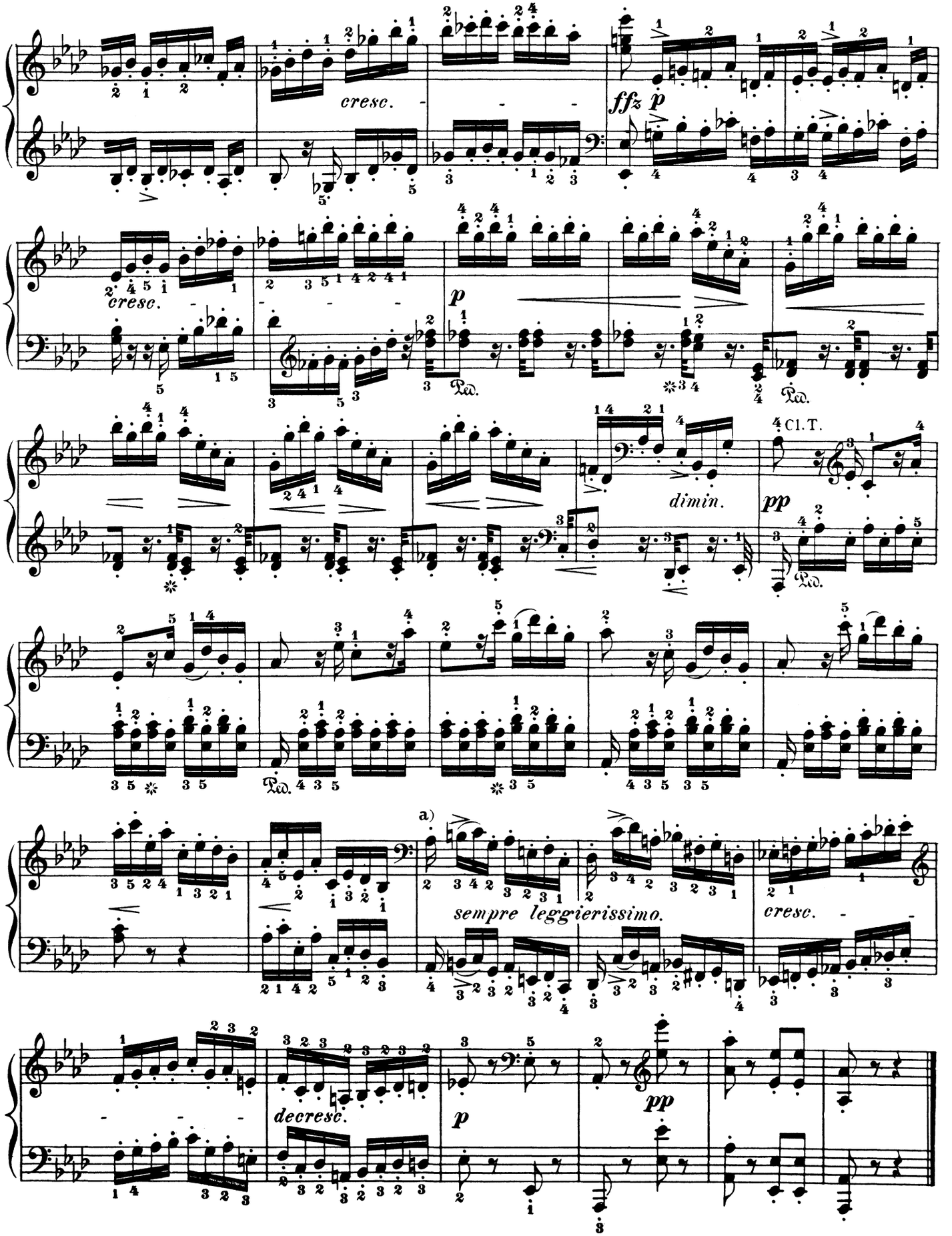


a) Before the entrance of the theme in C-major a rest of half a measure may be interpolated — a manner of presentation which is, at all events, preferable to the antiquated device of the *ritardando* (see Note a), page 360).

b) The alternation of *Eb* and *Fb* is of harmonic importance, and therefore to be marked very distinctly; the subsequent *sforzatos* must be struck in strict time and very incisively.

c) In the combination of *diminuendo* with *ritardando,* good taste must be especially watchful to guard against exaggeration; players are at best very apt to let the *quantitative* decrease (in rapidity) keep pace with the *qualitative* (dynamic), and *vice versa,* which is certainly tedious to their hearers, whose interest consequently flags.

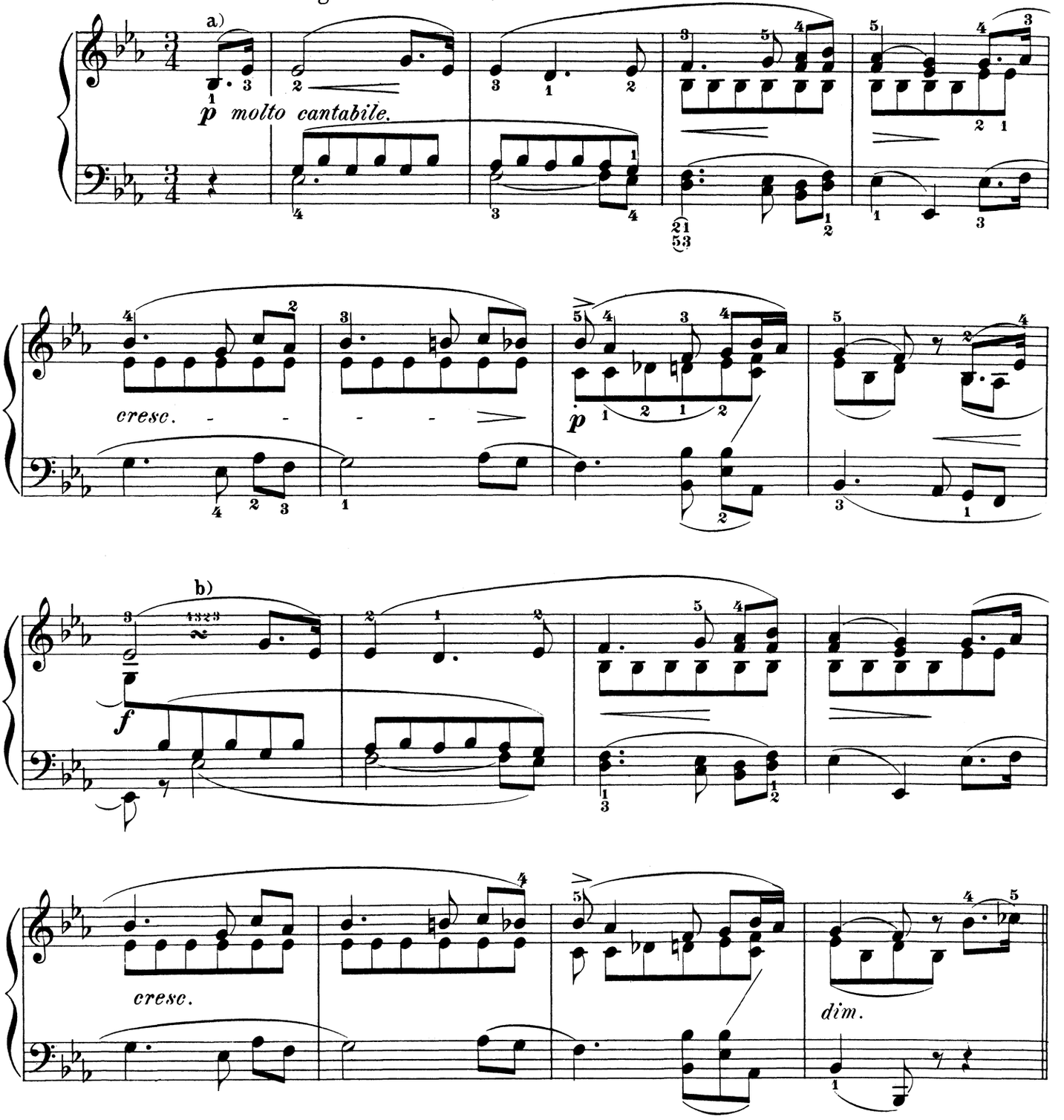

a tempo.
M.T.
ten.
poco ritard.
a tempo.
cresc.
ten.
ten.
dolce.
poco ritard.
a tempo.
Ep.



a) Excepting the two slurred notes in this measure and the next, the *staccatissimo* must be kept up inexorably, so to speak, to the close. Any *ritardando* would mar the effect – a uniform *accelerando* would be preferable.

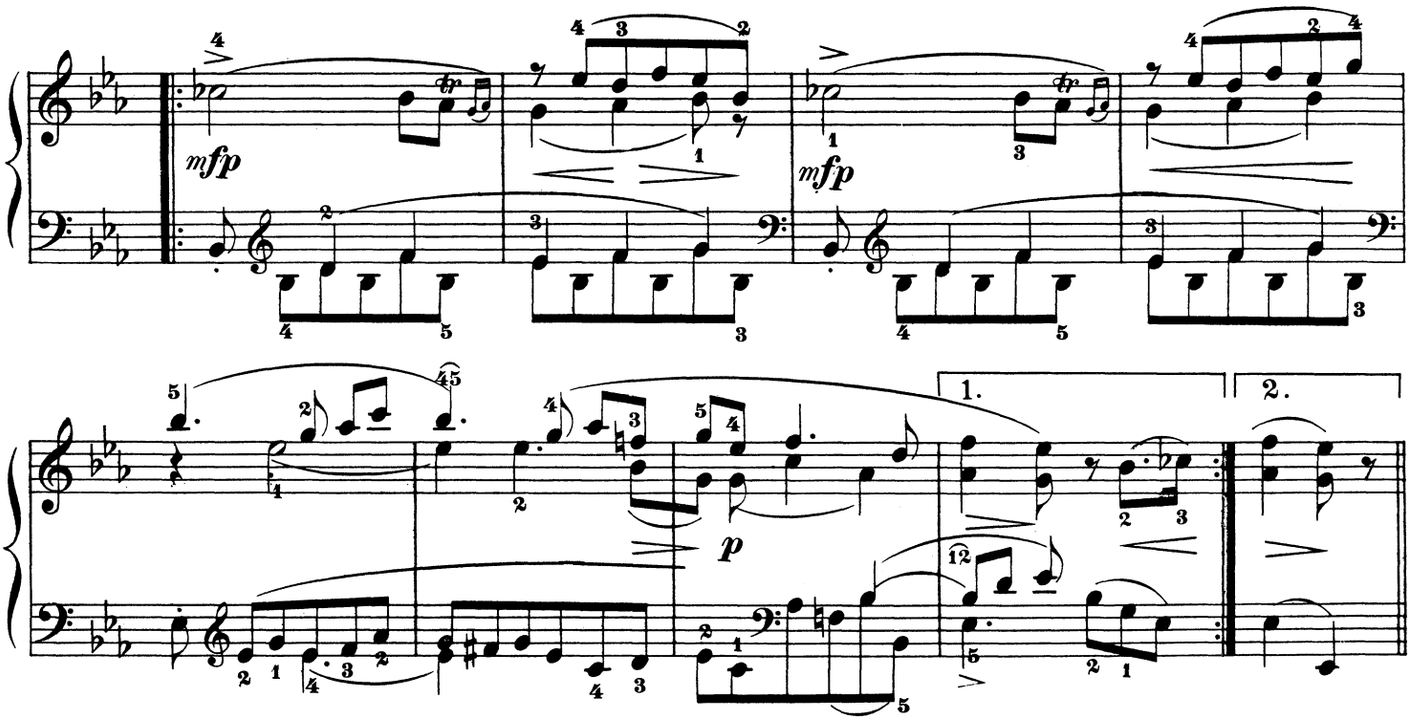
Minuetto.

Moderato e grazioso. (♩= 88.)

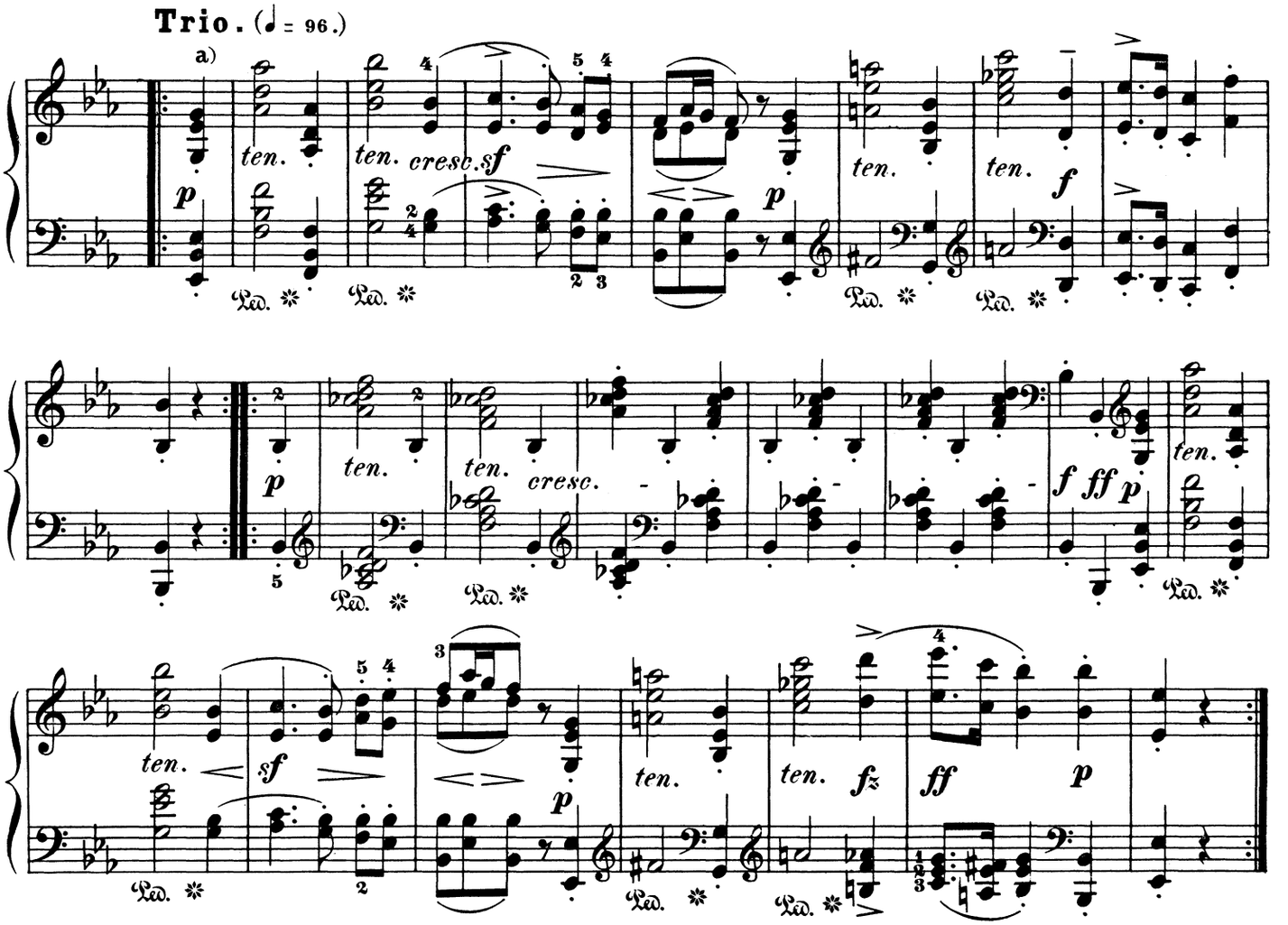


a) The slow Minuet is substituted here (as in the Eighth Symphony, to which occasion offered in the second movement to draw a striking parallel (see Page 358 Note a) for the Andante or Adagio — for the specifically lyrical movement, in a word, and is peculiarly adapted for displaying the entire scale of deep and tender emotions. The player should avail himself of this opportunity to the utmost, of course without degenerating into unrhythmical sentimentality, and should imbue each individual part with a songful *legato*.

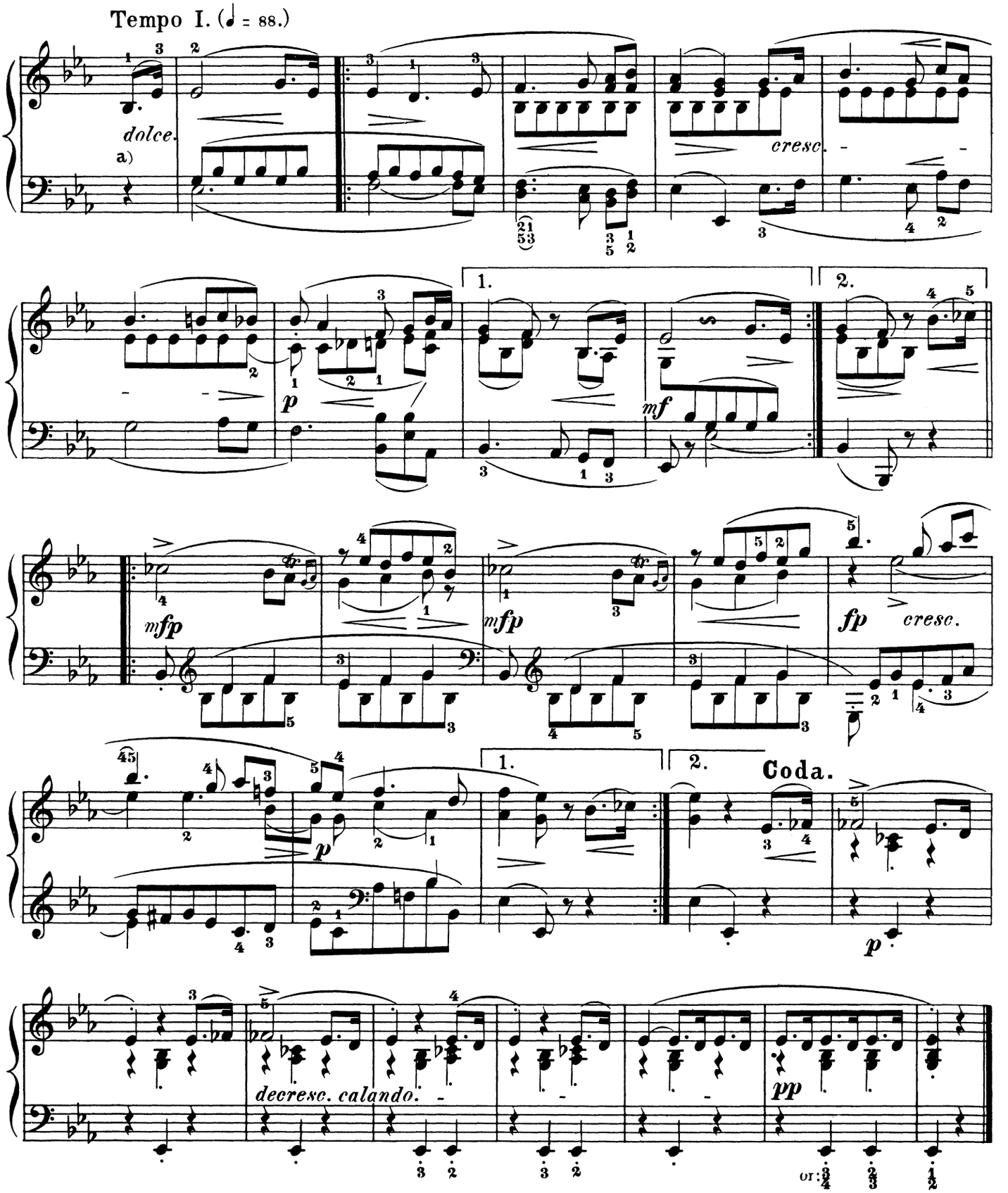
b) The 4 notes of the turn must be played strictly within the value of the fourth eighth-note.



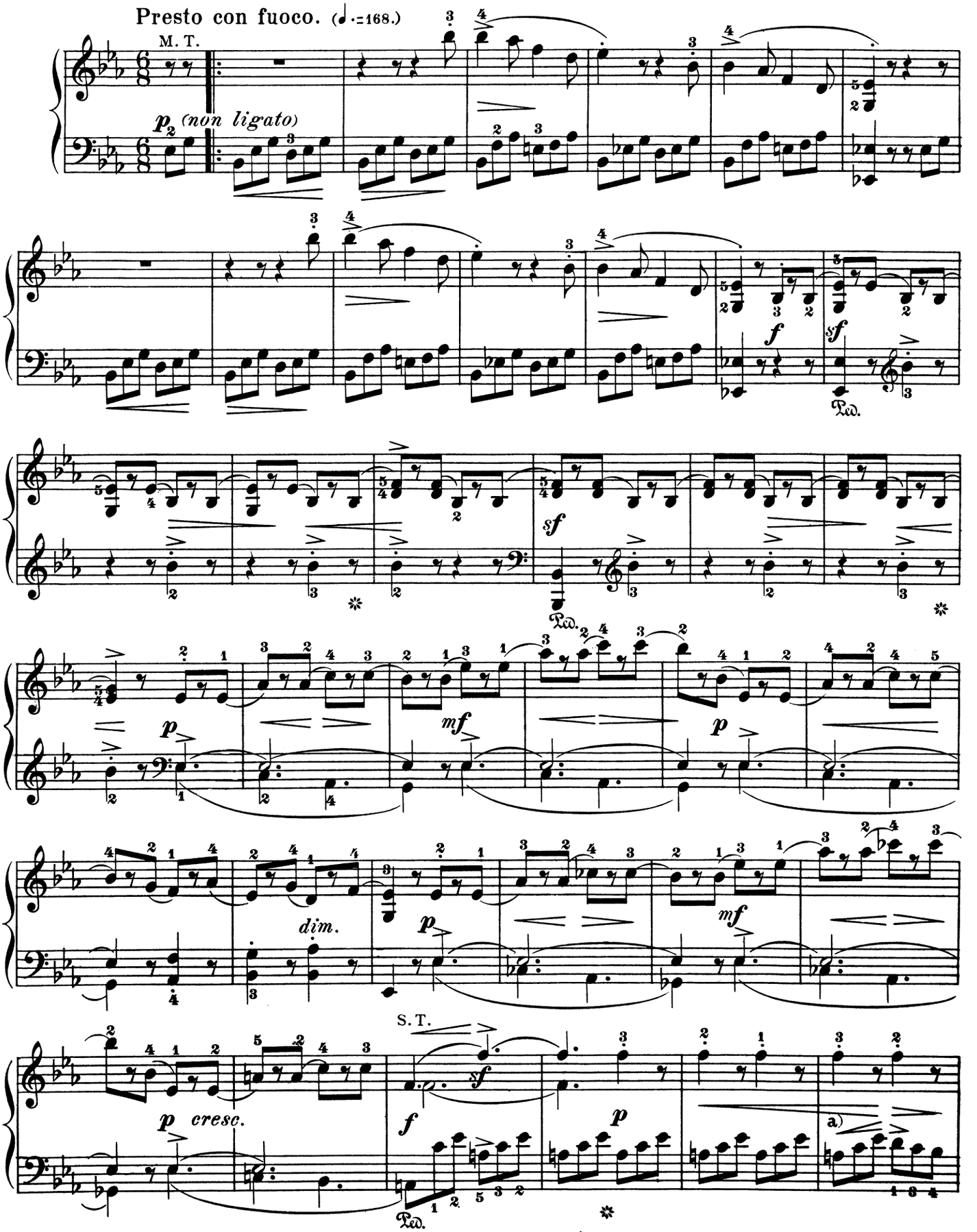
Trio. (♩ = 96.)



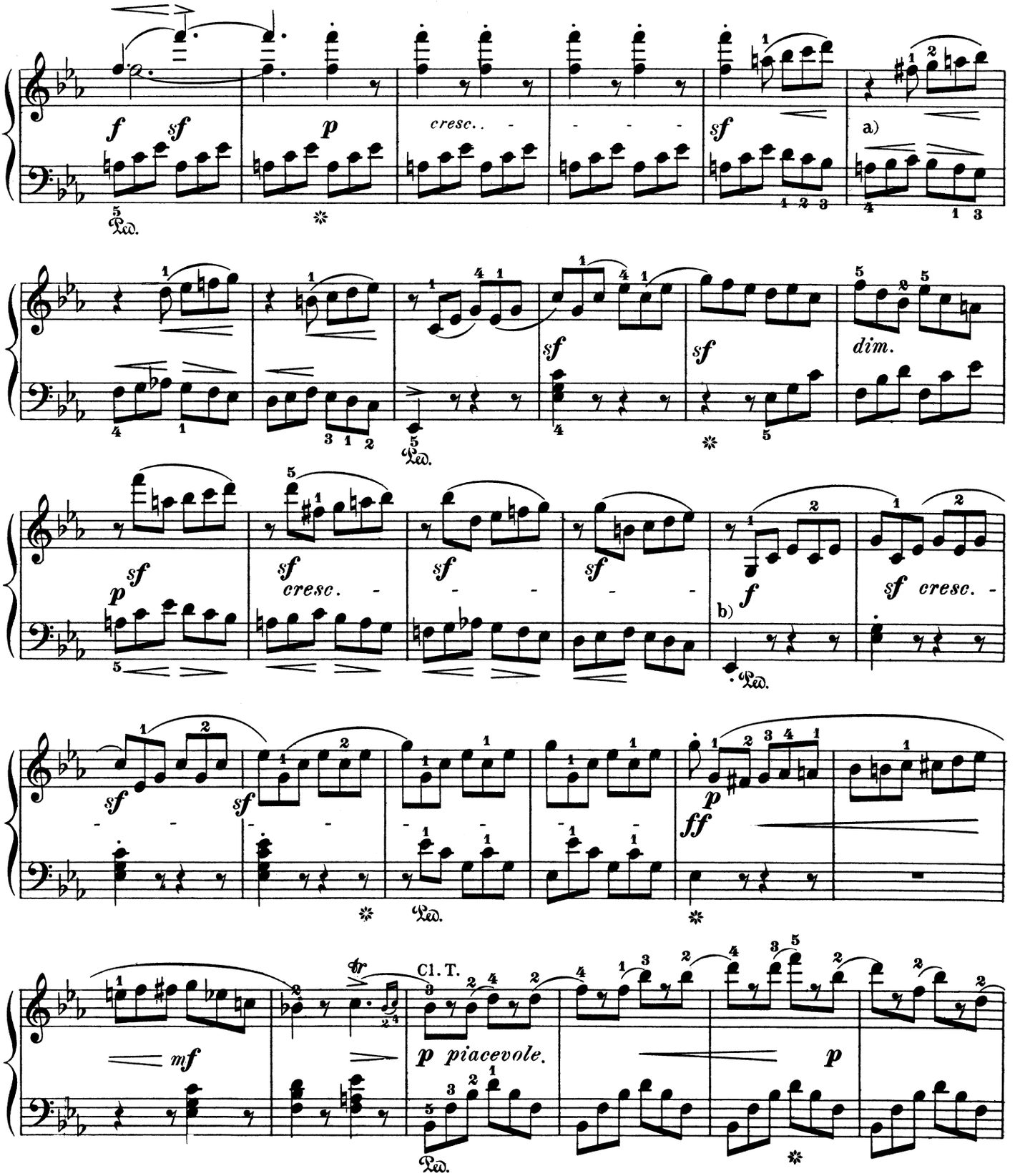
a) The Trio (Alternativo) must be taken a trifle faster, and colored — instrumented, as it were — as effectively as possible. Think of a *pizzicato* on the stringed instruments when playing the *staccato* quarter-notes on the weak beat, and let the following half-notes sound as if breathed by the soft-toned wood-wind.



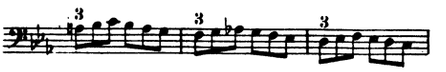
a) To lend new interest to the repetition of the first movement, there may be a very gradual intensification in the delivery up to the middle (i.e., the beginning of the second reprise), followed thence to the Coda by an equally gradual anti-climax. The Coda is an epilogue of decided melancholy, the pronounced character of which is calculated to avert a lively, toying conception of the entire movement. The *calando* of the last four measures may be pushed to the extreme limits of audibility.



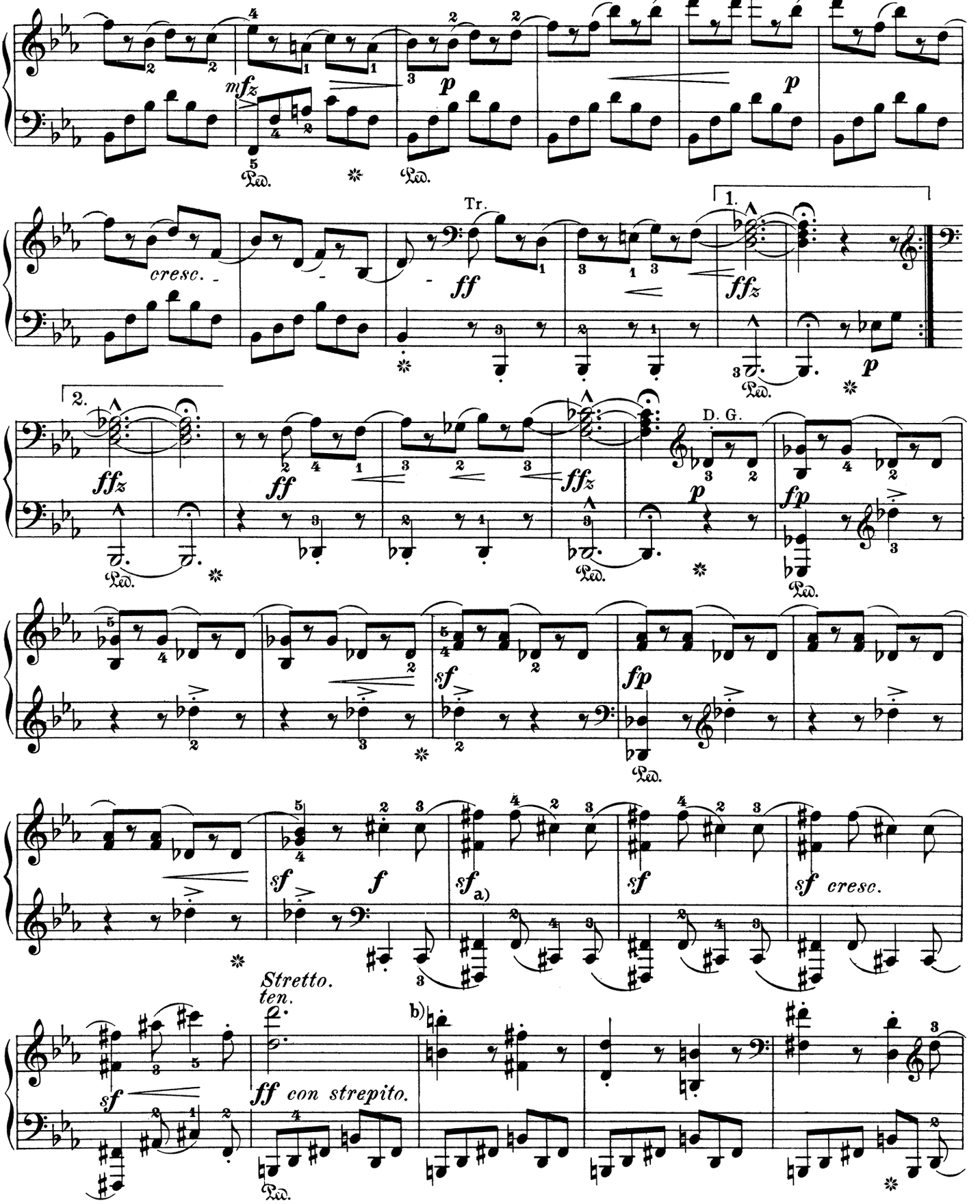
a) In the second half of this measure the harmony of the tonic (B♭ major) is to be kept in mind, and its third, D, consequently emphasized quite forcibly in the left hand; otherwise the whole phrase would sound very insipid. Hence it becomes necessary to interpose a *piano* two measures before, as a preparation for the *crescendo*.



a) The prevailing style of touch in this movement having to be *"non ligato"* (midway between *legato* and *staccato*), fingerings may accordingly be chosen which facilitate independent action of the fingers; e.g.

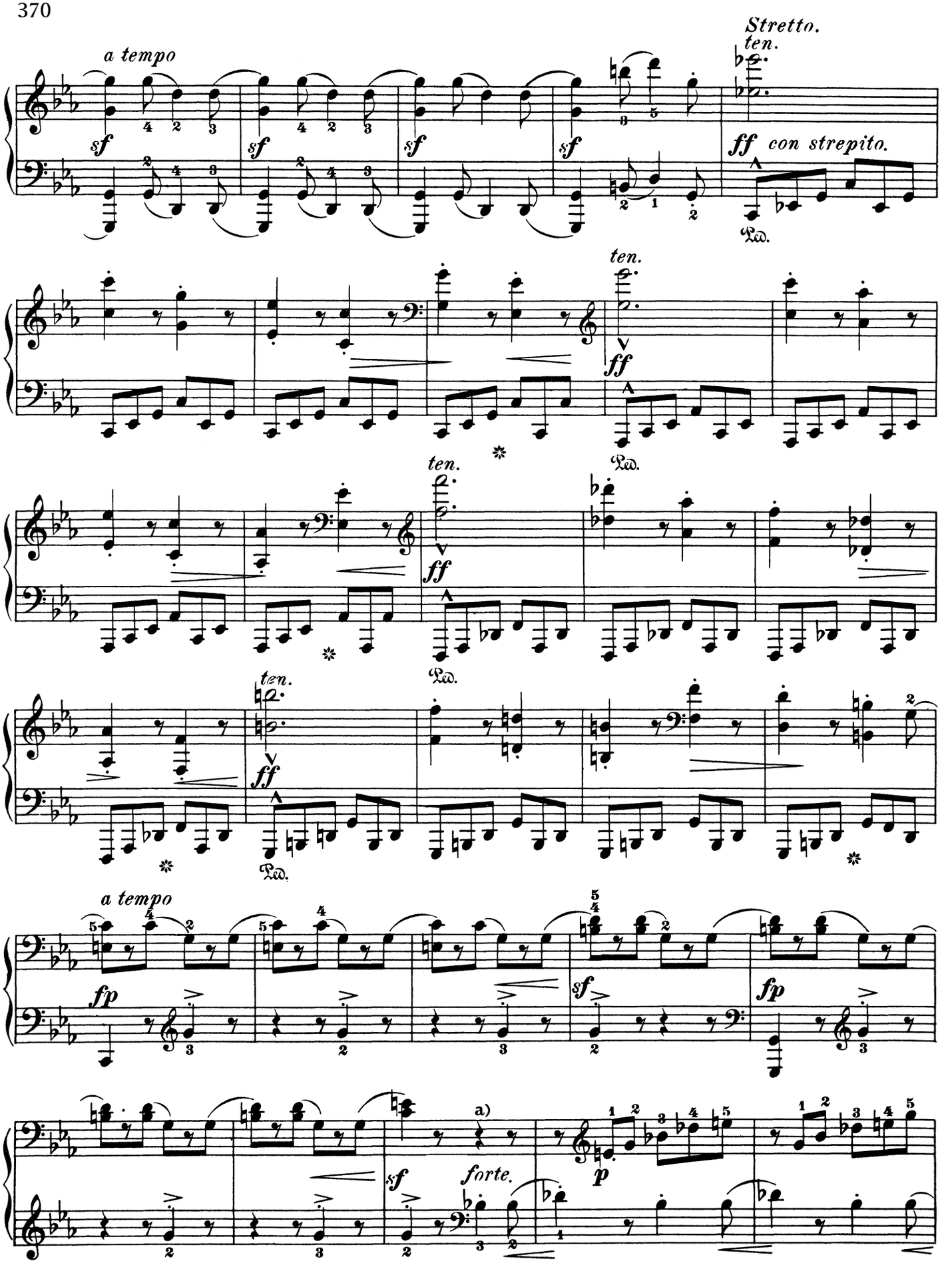


b) As indicated by the fingering, the notes should here be grouped by sixes; whereas 4 measures further they are grouped by threes, with a resulting increase of liveliness.

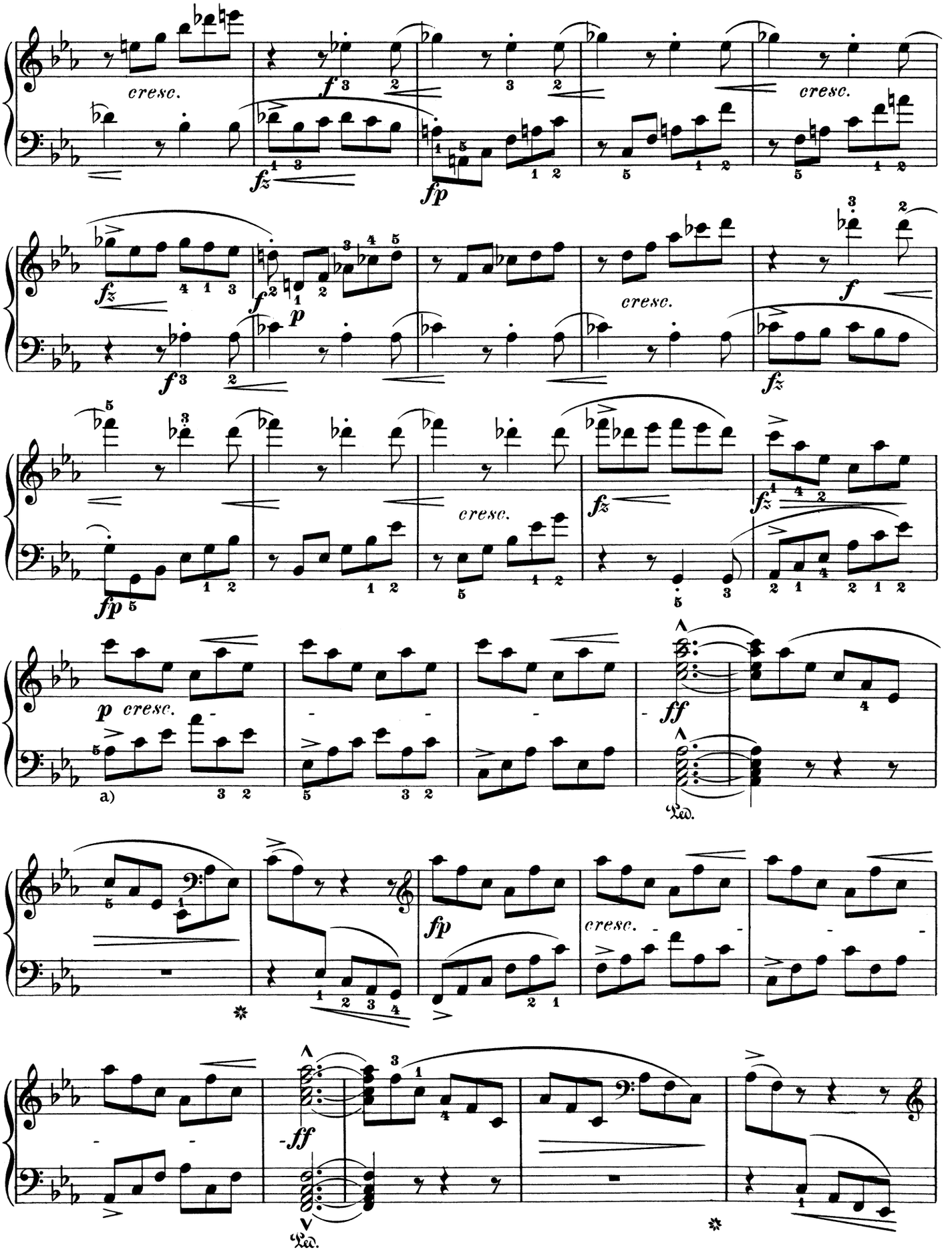


a) The change of fingers here marked facilitates correct execution, by making careless playing more difficult.

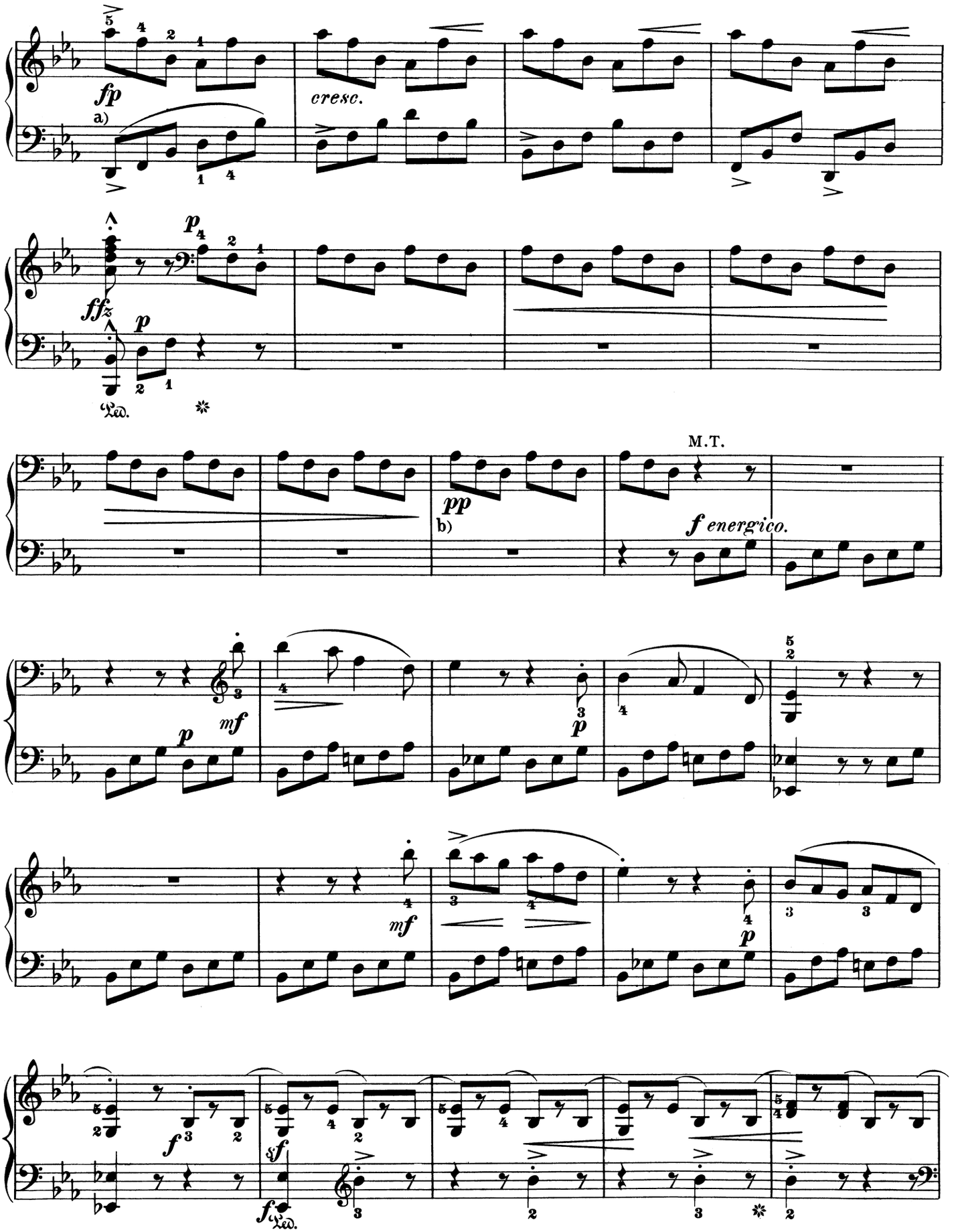
b) This phrase, like its subsequent repetitions, is of mere constructive importance, so to speak; without an acceleration in the tempo it would sound stiff and bald. In the bass, only the first note in every four measures should be accented, care being taken to phrase the figure distinctly, in doing which the fifth eighth-note is of special importance.



a) Here the left hand must play decidedly louder than the accompanying right. Four measures beyond, the case is reversed.

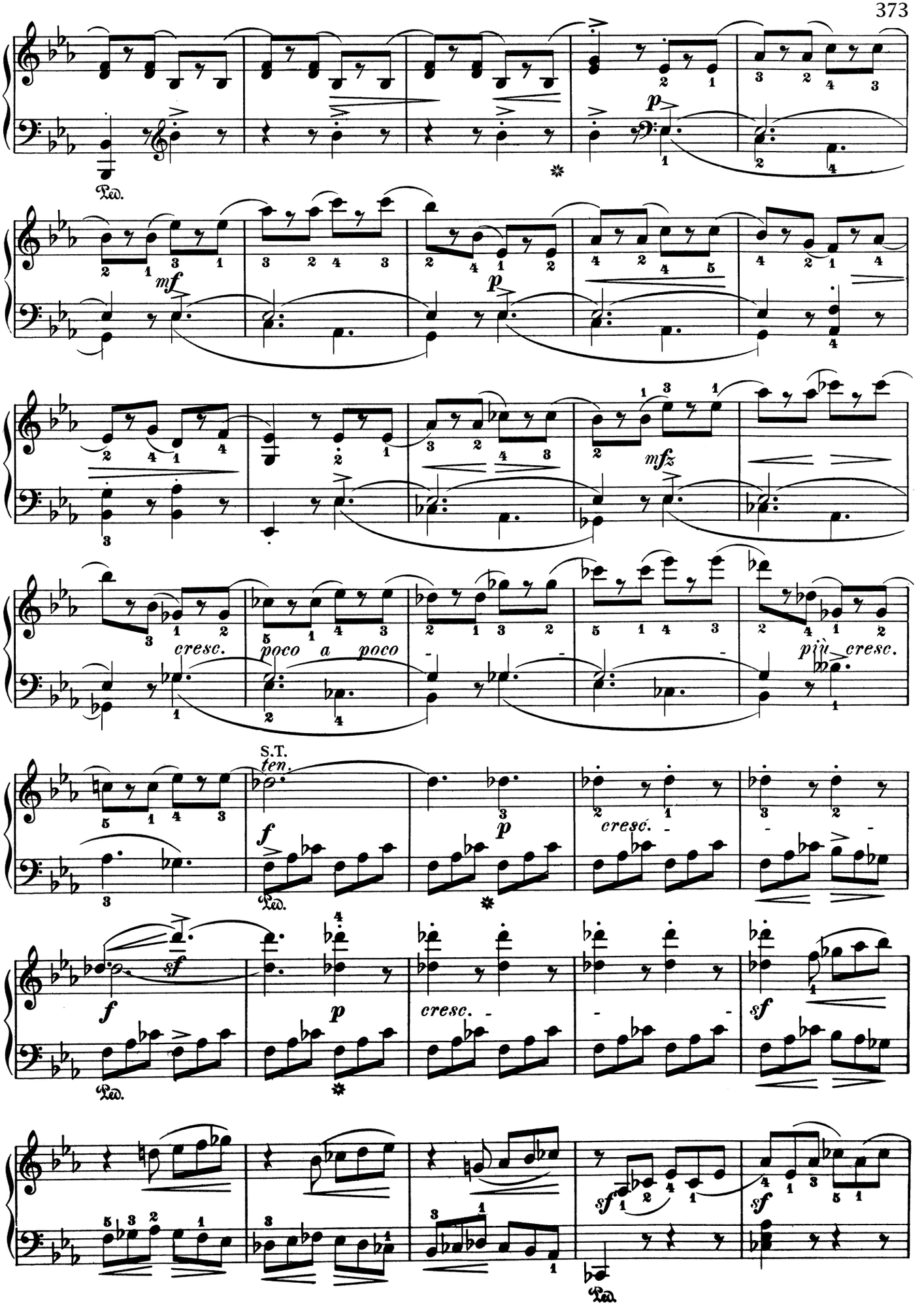


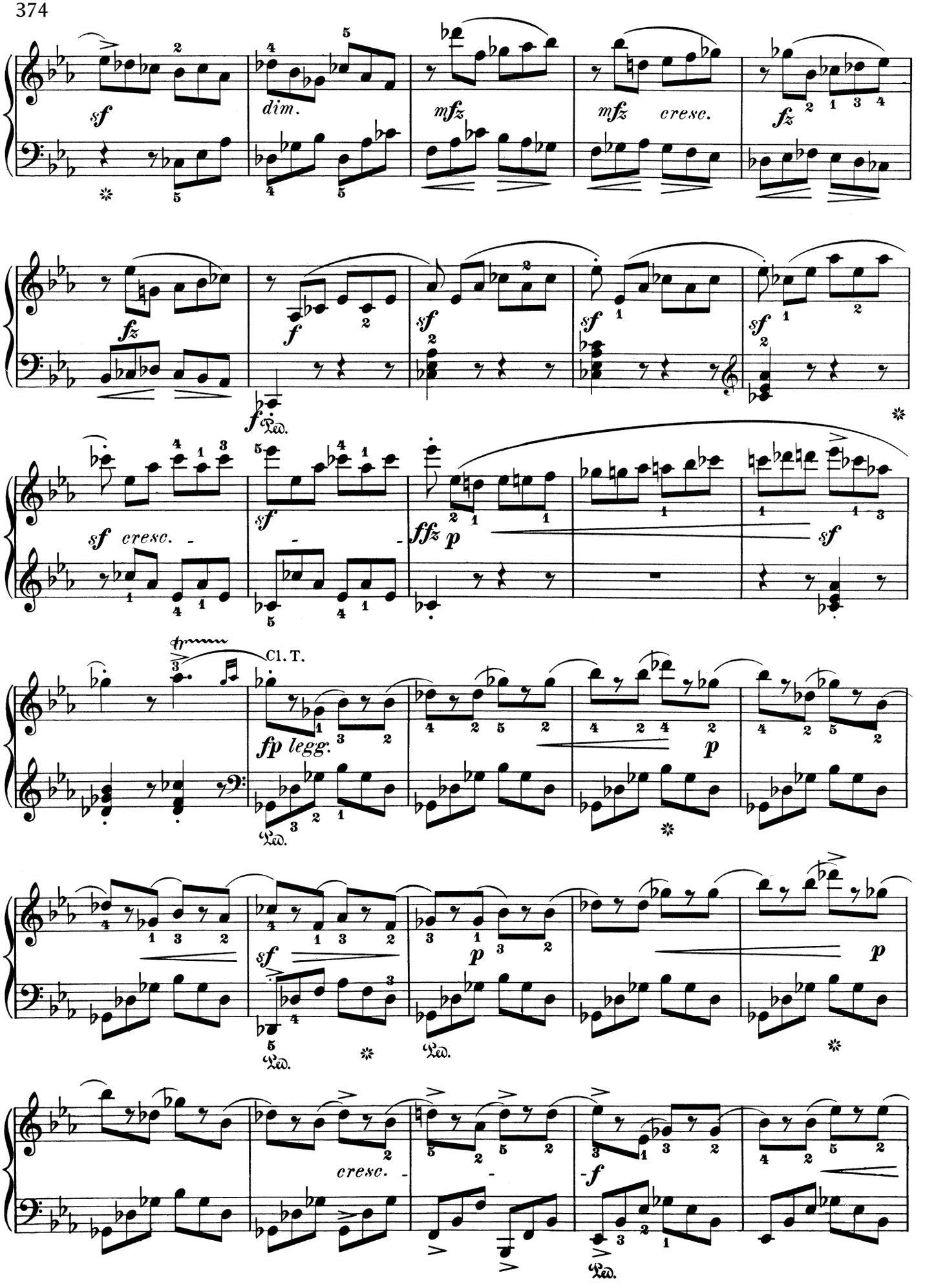
a) With the leap necessitated by the fingering 3 2 for the last two eighth-notes, the left hand will mark the first eighth-note of each measure better than if the fingering were 2 1 instead.



a) For hands unable to stretch far — a drawback commonly outweighed by the advantage of greater mobility — the following fingering of the higher part may be tried:

b) A *ritardando* would be the more superfluous here as being embodied, so to say, in the movement itself


Ped.
p
mf
p
mfz
cresc.
poco a poco
più cresc.
S.T.
ten.
f
p
cresc.
sf
f
p
cresc.
sf
sf
sf
Ped.


sf
dim.
mfz
mfz cresc.
fz
fz
f
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sf cresc.
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fffz p
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Cl. T.
fp legg.
p
sf
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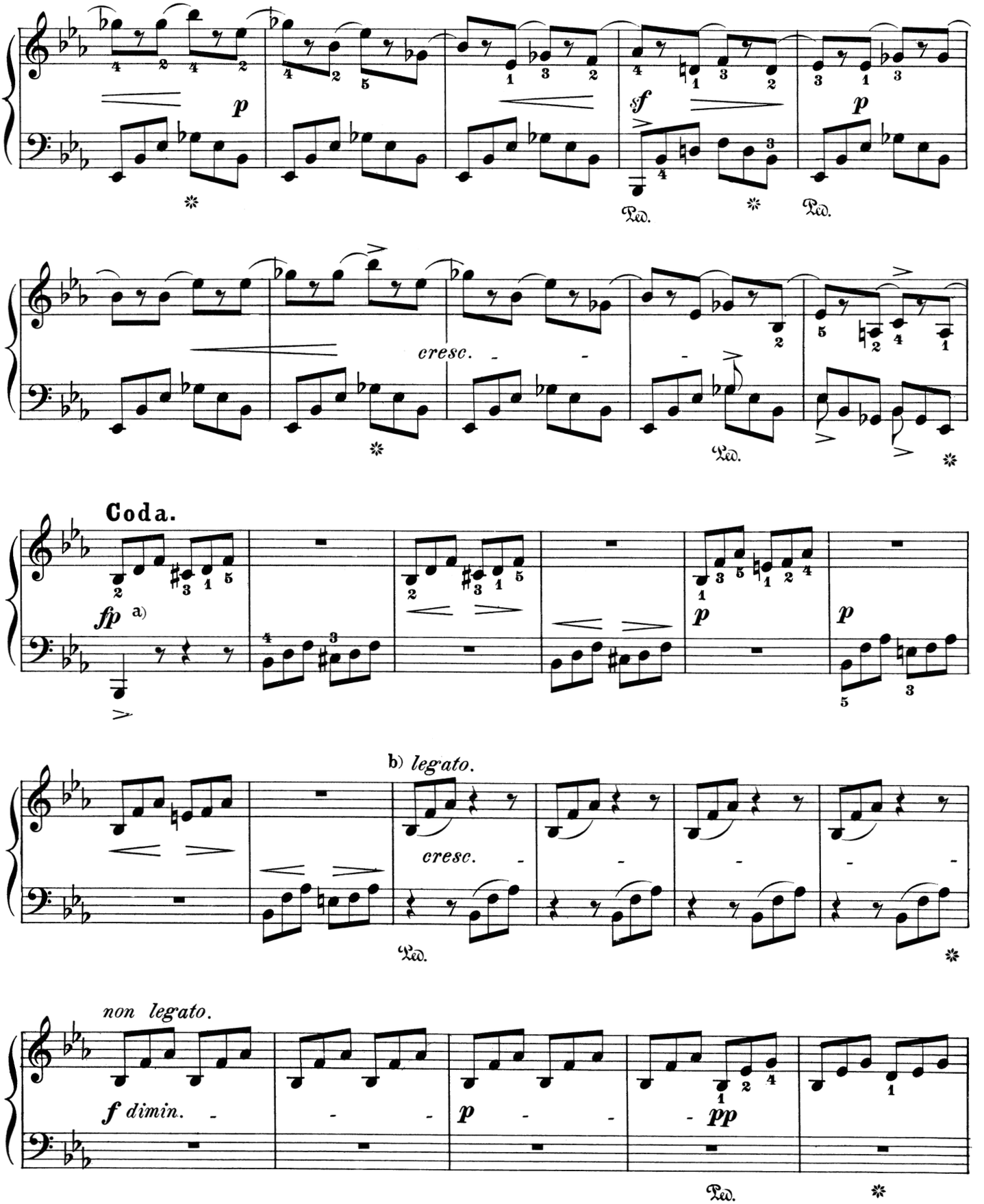
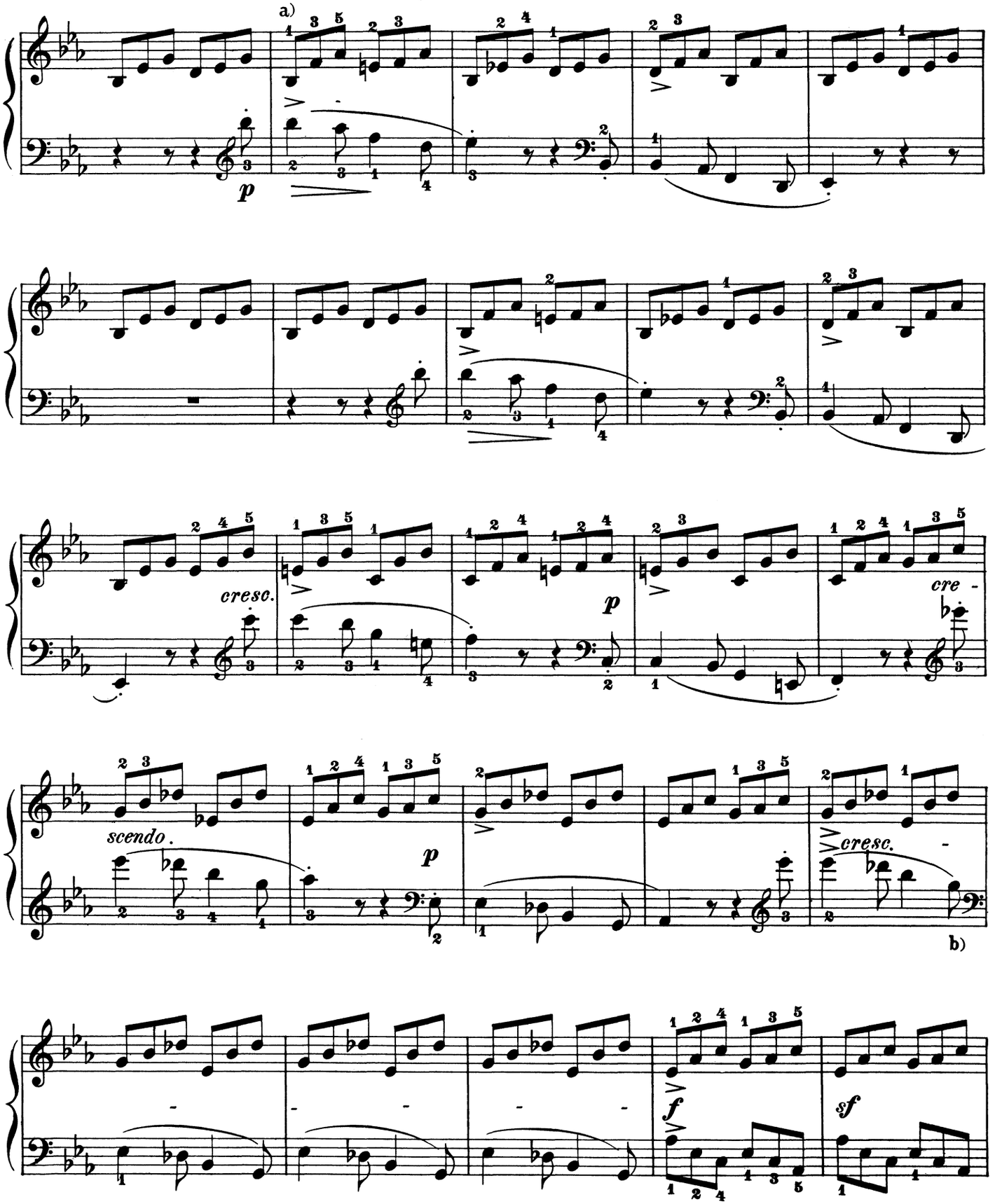
p
cresc.
f



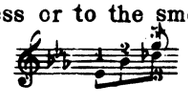
a) In the eight measures following, the right and left hands might be contrasted, the former playing lightly, the latter firmly; the interpretation of the Master's many humorous conceits must be left to the taste of the educated player, and may properly vary with the individual mood.

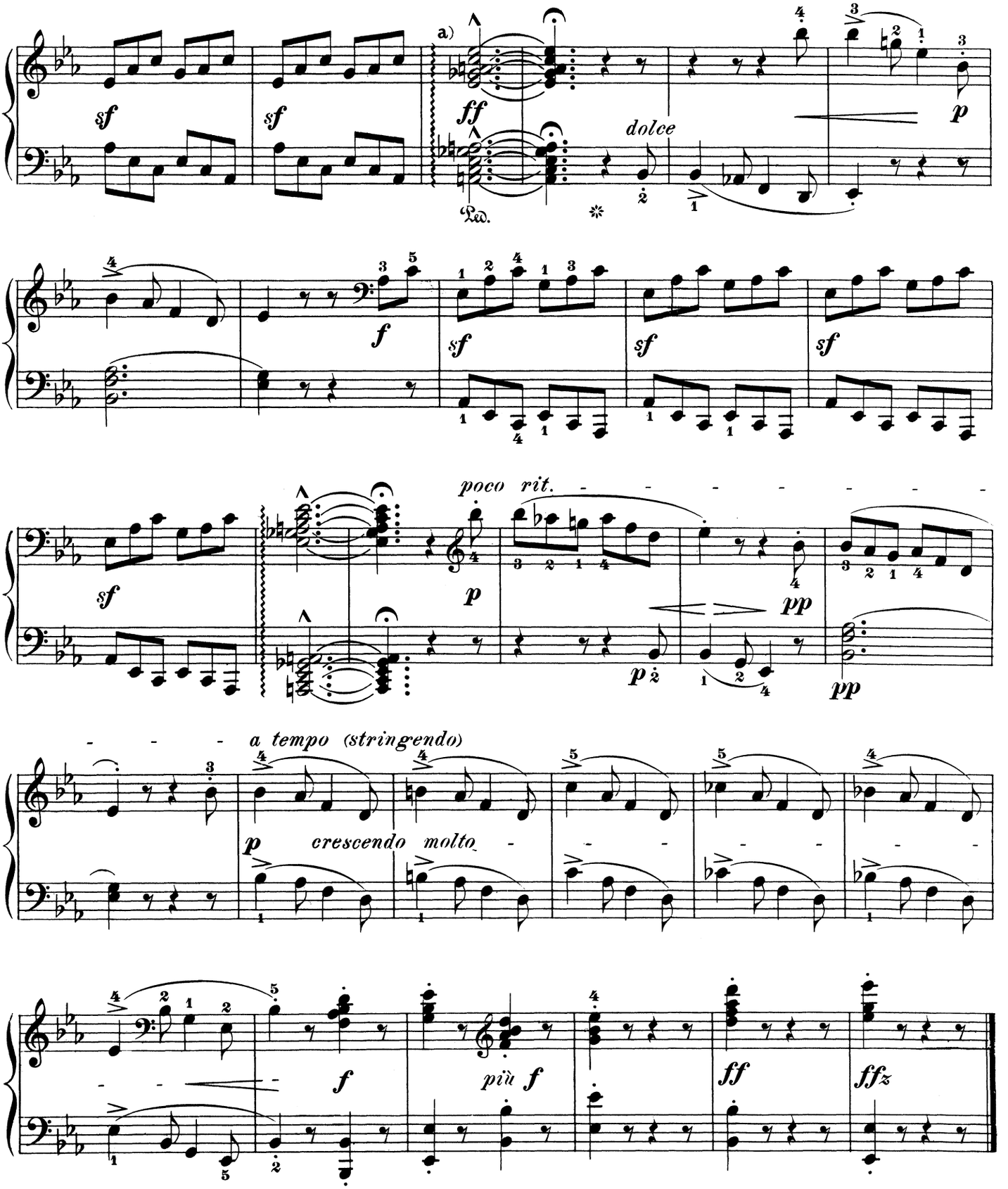
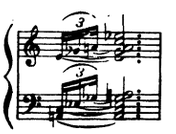
b) The *legato* and the quickly following *non legato* are expressly directed in the original. *Varietas delectat.*



a) The player should carefully follow the variations in the thematic accompaniment (which should be studied by itself), according as the left hand crosses the right or stays in its natural position.

b) In case the left hand is unable to execute the sudden long leap back to the bass side without prejudice to distinctness or to the smoothness of the movement, the right hand may take the "ticklish" last eighth-note, in this wise:





a) As the arpeggio'd chord must sound, above all things, very loud and penetrative, the following execution with both hands at once is recommended: