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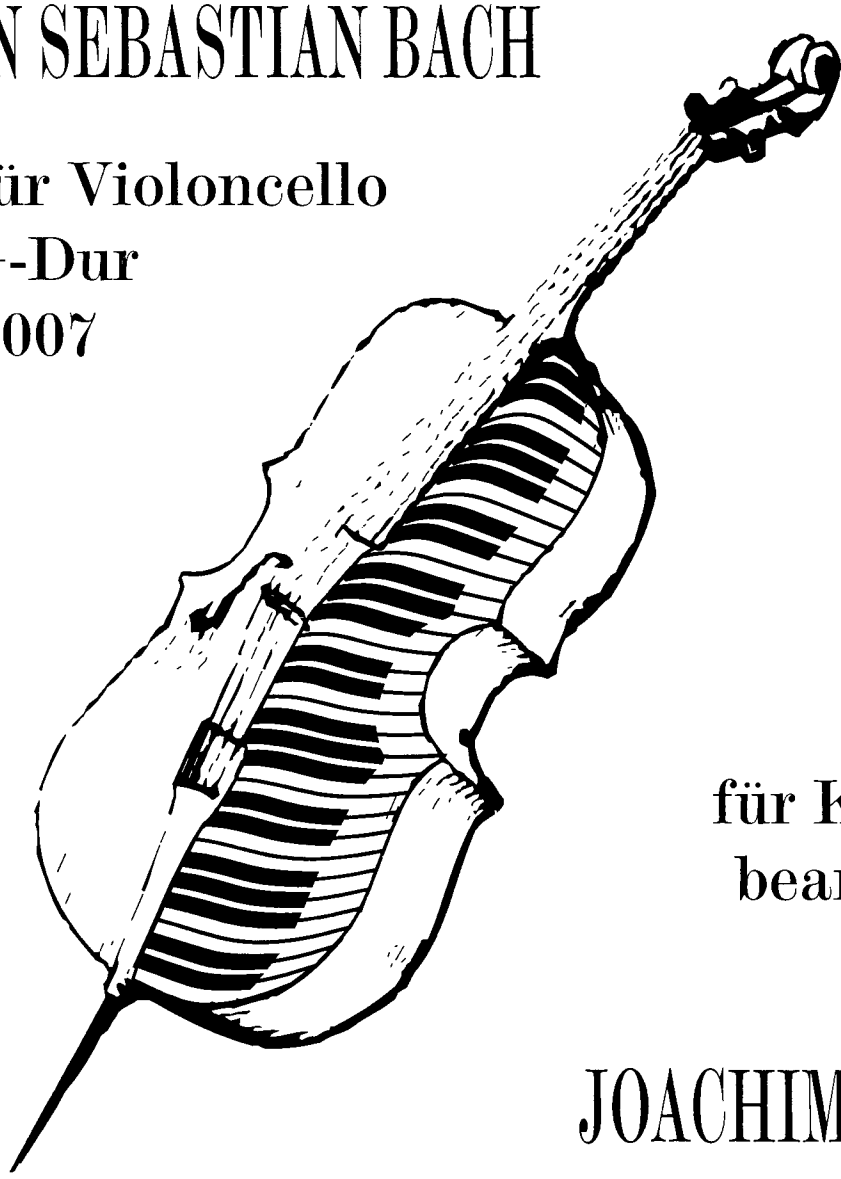
Edition Nordstern

Raff Werke Band V/1a

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Suite für Violoncello
Nr.1, G-Dur
BWV 1007



für Klavier
bearbeitet
von

JOACHIM RAFF

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Suite für Violoncello Nr.1, G-Dur, BWV 1007

für Klavier bearbeitet von

JOACHIM RAFF

erstmals erschienen im Jahre 1869 unter dem Titel

Sechs Sonaten für Violoncell von J.S.Bach
für das Pianoforte bearbeitet
Sonate I in G-dur

nach der Ausgabe von Rieter-Biedermann
neu herausgegeben von
Volker Tosta

Edition Nordstern
Musikverlag

Joachim Raff's interest in the works of Johann Sebastian Bach and the inspiration he drew from them is unmatched by any of the other major composers in the second half of the 19th century. One could speculate that Raff's partiality for polyphonic writing originates from his studies of Bach's works - the identification of "influenced by Bach" with "Polyphony" is a popular idea but is often questionable in terms of scientific correctness. Raff wrote numerous original compositions in polyphonic style and used musical forms of the baroque period. However, he also created a relatively large number of arrangements and transcriptions of works by Bach. Obviously, Bach's music exerted a strong attraction on Raff that went further than plain admiration. Looking at Raff's arrangements one can easily detect his particular interest in those works by Bach that could be supplemented by another composer. Upon these models Raff could fit his reverence for the musical past as well as exploit his never tiring interest in the technical aspects of the art of composition.

One of the few statements we have by Raff about the basics of his art reveal his concept of how to attach supplements to works by Bach. Raff wrote about his orchestral arrangement of Bach's **Ciaconna** in d minor for solo violin: *"Everybody who has studied J.S. Bach's compositions for solo violin more closely knows that they are rich in polyphony. It could even be assumed that for the greater part they were not conceived for the solo violin originally ... There is no doubt that this is the case with the Ciaconna; the piece contains numerous rudiments and mutilations that are easily noticeable, giving way to the assumption that the piece must have existed in a different version previously of which the current version is only an arrangement. The present arrangement is an attempt to recover the polyphonic contents of this lost version of the Ciaconna and to adapt it to the modern orchestra. It proclaims no other merit than being the first attempt of this kind."*

It is Raff's intention to fill in these gaps with material that fits in seamlessly with the style of the original source. It is more like a trip into the world of Bach than a transformation of Bach's musical material into Raff's own world. His piano arrangements of Bach's suites for solo cello are even closer stylistically to Bach's original than this is the case with the Ciaconna. Raff hardly 'modernizes' the original music in the sense of his own romantic period, he transfers it to a modern instrument and only occasionally uses contemporary playing techniques. In contrast to Bach arrangements by Liszt or Busoni, Raff does not write a virtuoso-type piano music using the achievements of harmony of his time but stays more or less within the limits of Bach's own means of composition. The arrangements are less technically demanding than most of his original compositions for piano. The result is not truly pure in style, but it fits in very well with the original and treats it respectfully even if additions are to be made in the process of transferring a work from the cello to the piano. Raff starts off with considerable imagination and integrates the single part source, depending on its character, into his multi part arrangements using different techniques.

In case the original consists mainly of sequences of broken chords Raff uses them as an accompaniment for an attractive tune invented by him. For an example, see the *Prélude* from the first suite. It looks as if Raff attempted to reconstruct the melody that got lost and detached from its remaining accompaniment. The same method was used by Charles Gounod in his **Ave Maria,** however, Raff avoids sentimentality and achieves a more homogeneous integration of the original and the supplement.
In case Raff considers the original to be a tune that could stand on its own he adds an accompaniment that heightens the original's expressiveness but does not distract from it. Polyphonic rudiments of the cello part are fully expanded. Here, Raff takes advantage of the far better conditions for polyphonic playing on the piano.
In general, he treats the notes of the source with high respect and uses them almost without any change. There are only a few alterations that Raff applies for the sake of fitting the material to another instrument. For instance, he changes the rhythm of *Gigue* of the first suite by tying together notes that have the same pitch. Thus he avoids successions of repetitive notes which are sometimes problematic when played on the piano. But he achieves even more; the result is less stiff and more vivid and sparkling than the original cello version.

Raff created his arrangements in 1868 in Wiesbaden. They were published in two volumes in 1869 and 1871 by the Leipzig firm Rieter-Biedermann. With some certainty he used as a source the edition of Bach's cello suites by Justus Johann Friederich Dotzauer that were published in 1826 by Breitkopf und Haertel. Here we find the suites titled as sonatas which is the same term that Raff also used. Apparently, he was not the only composer who arranged Bach's cello suites. The New Edition of Bach's Works (Neue Bachausgabe) lists arrangements by Robert Schumann, W. Stade, and Carl P. Graedener. However, these have been written for cello with piano accompaniment. Arrangements for solo piano, including Raff's work, are ignored in the Bach edition.

Raff's arrangements of Bach's suites for solo cello are rich in musical inventiveness and accomplished in style.
I am happy to make them available again.

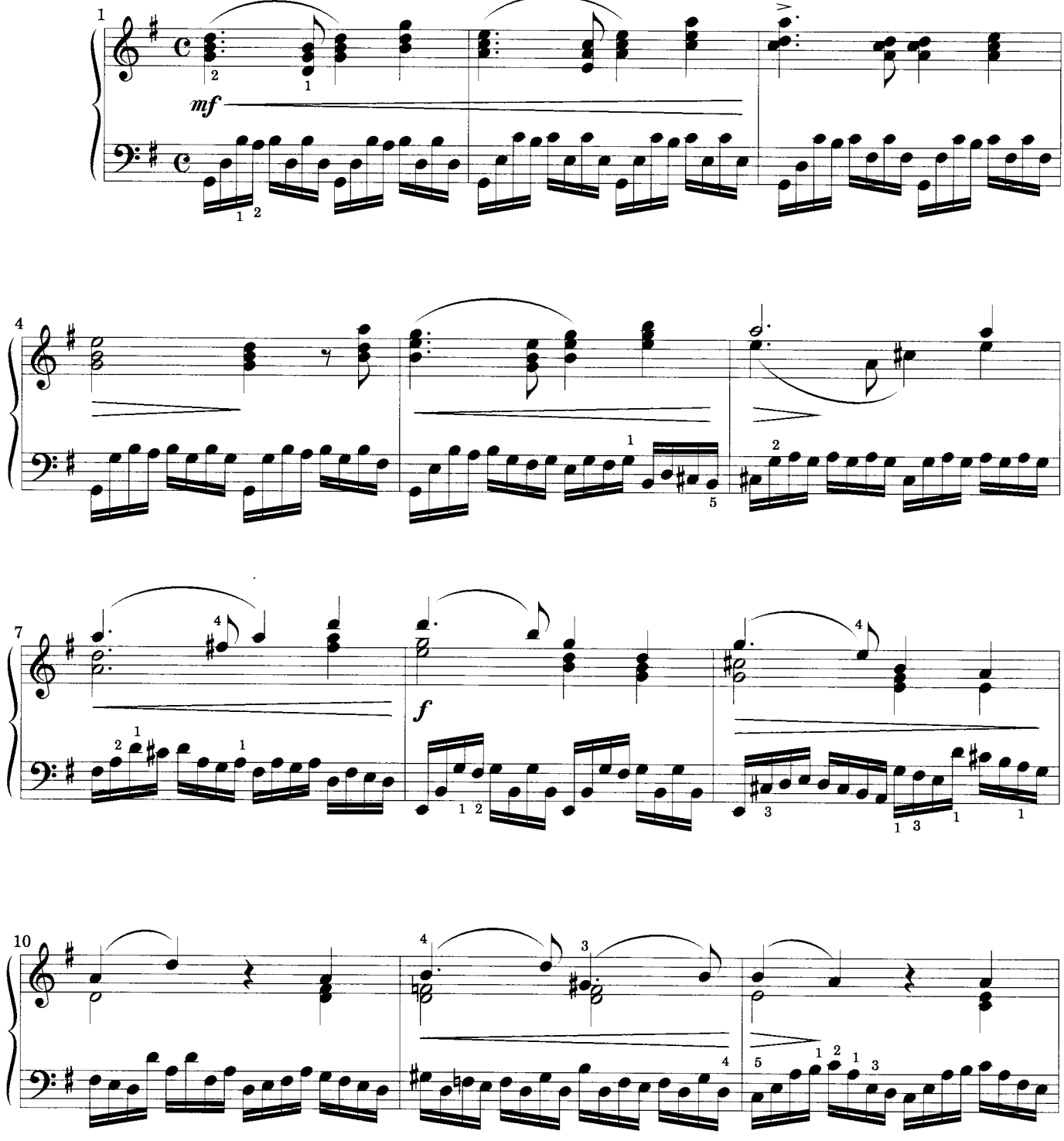
Stuttgart, November 1995, revised in January 1997
Volker Tosta

SUITE Nr. 1

Prélude

Allegro moderato

Joachim Raff nach J.S. Bach



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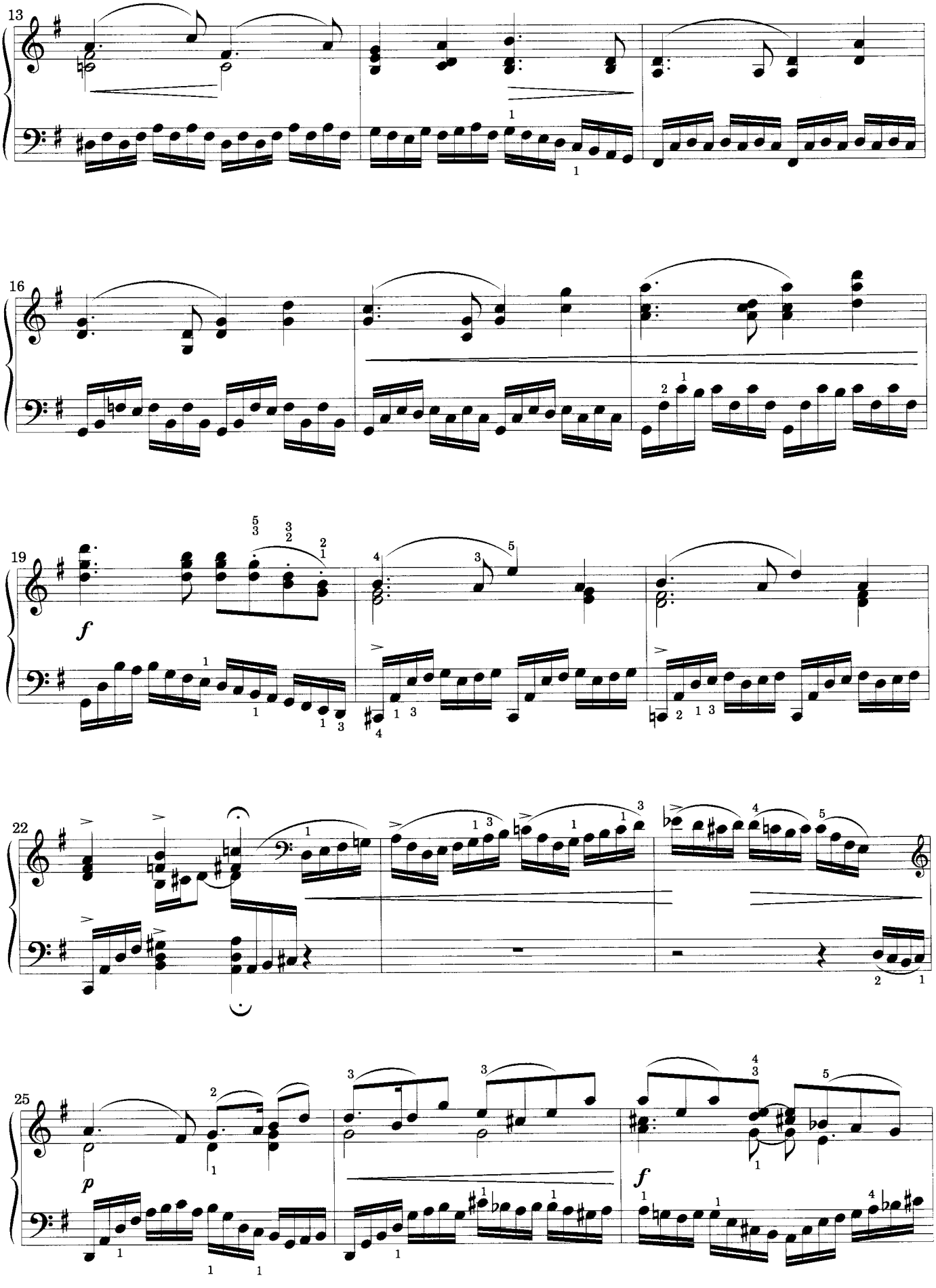
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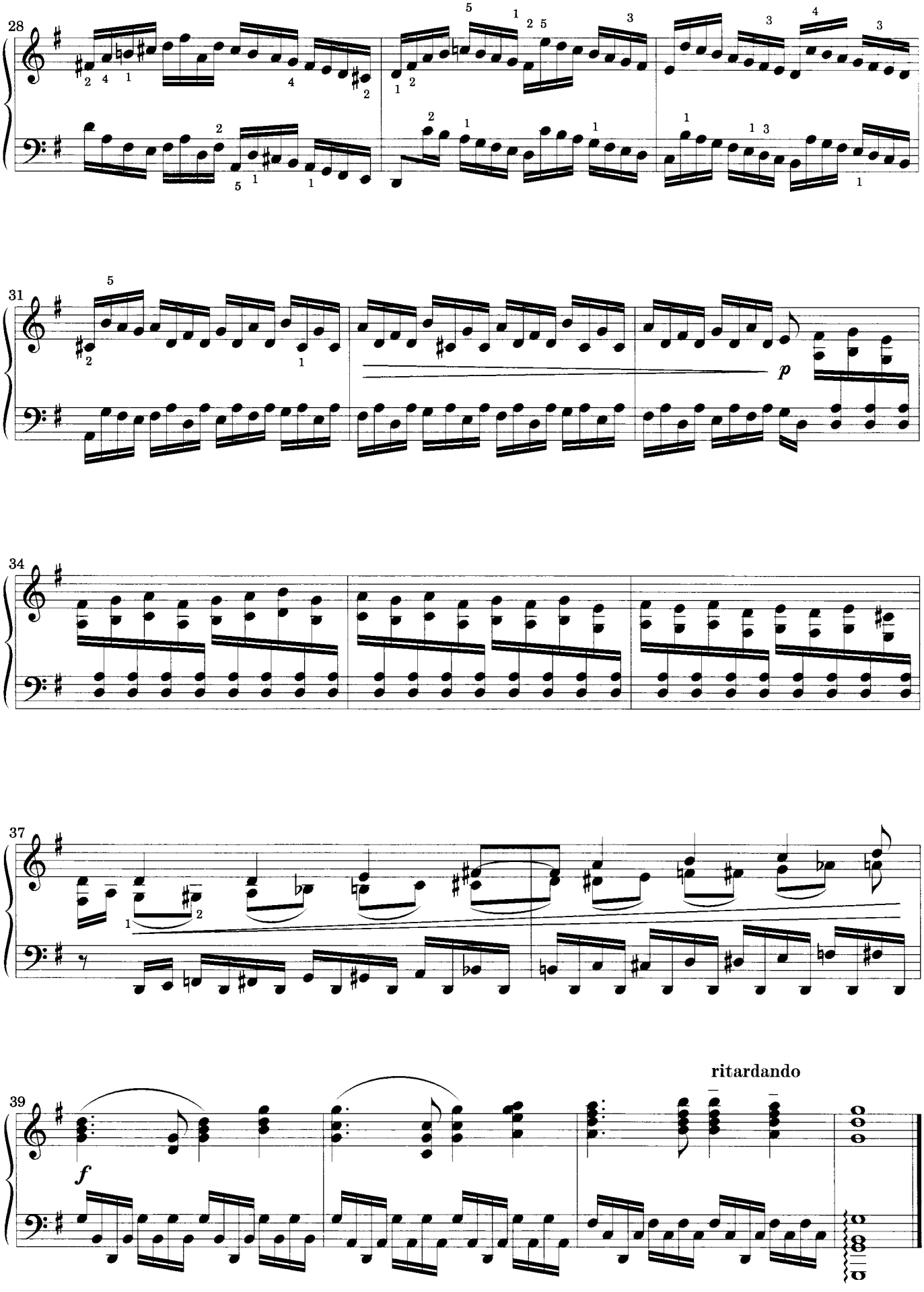
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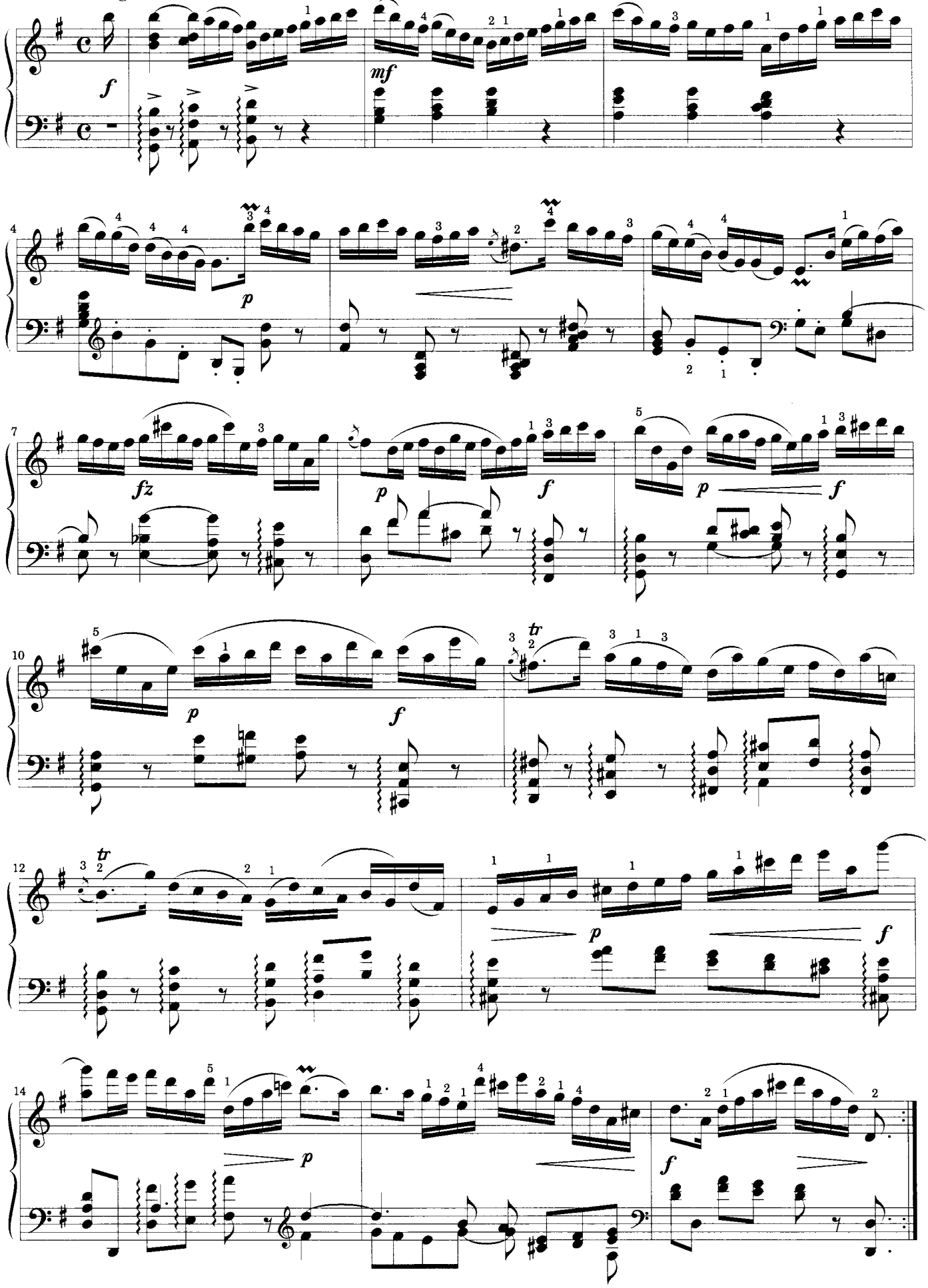
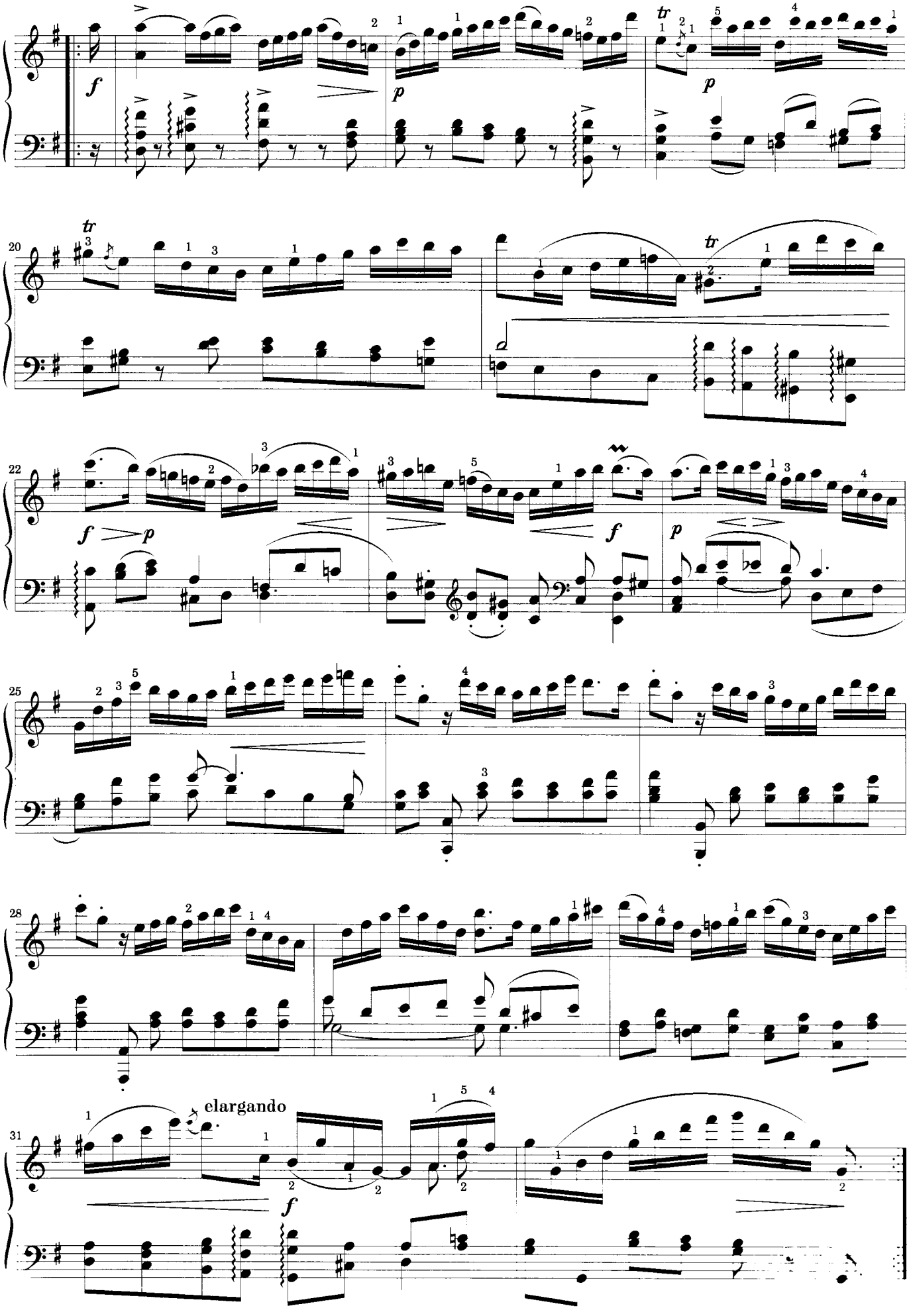
Allemande

Allegro moderato

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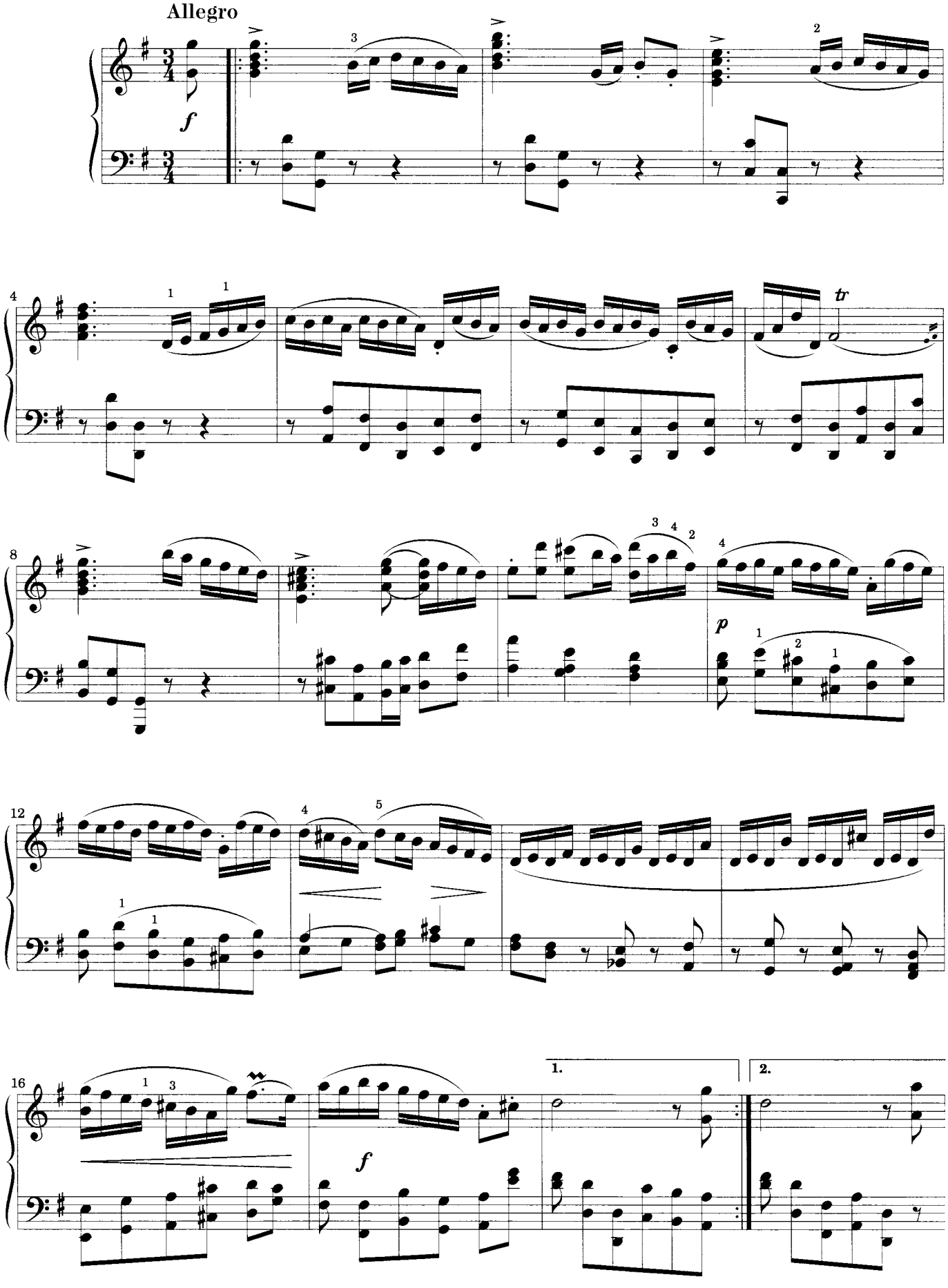
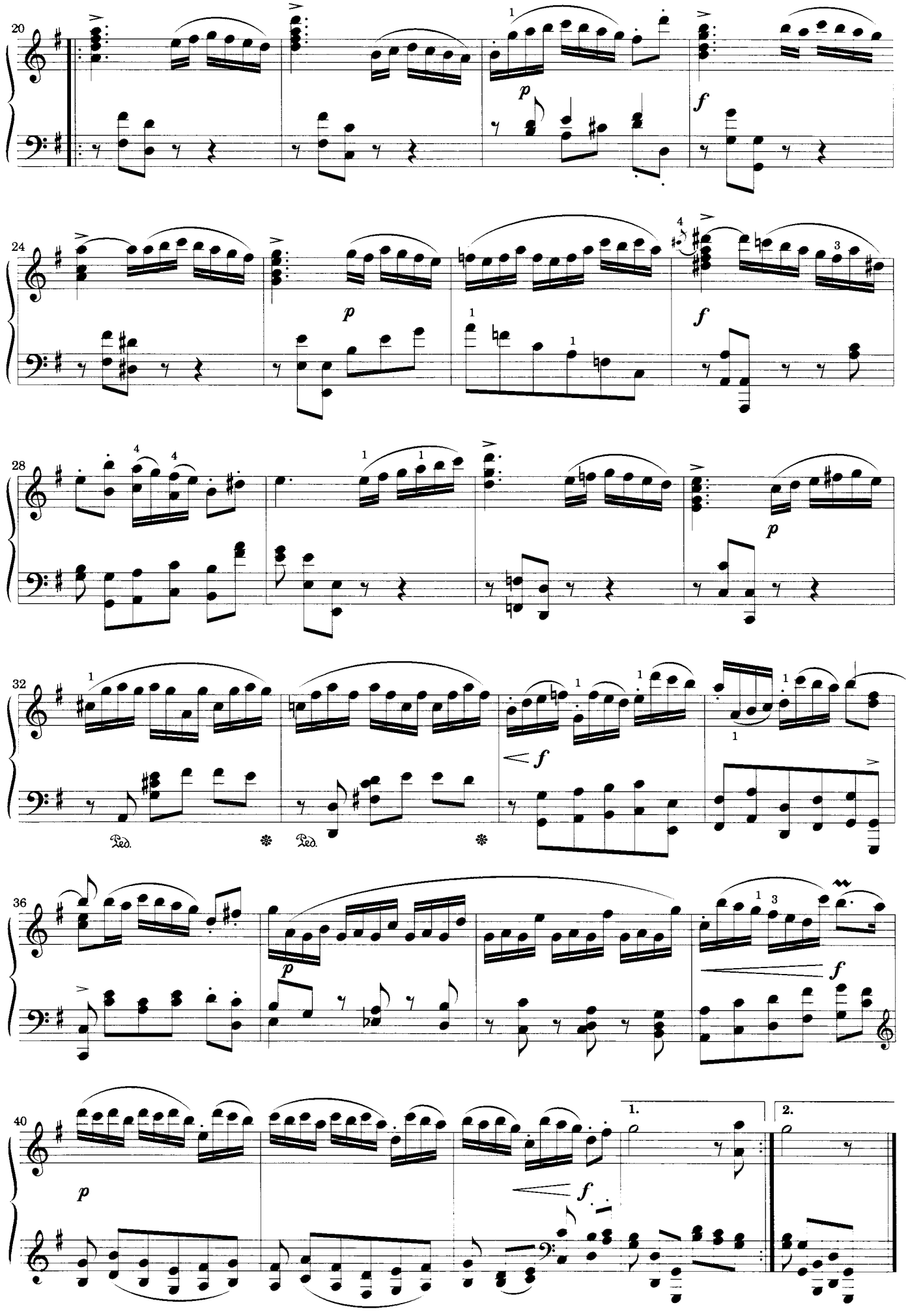
Courante

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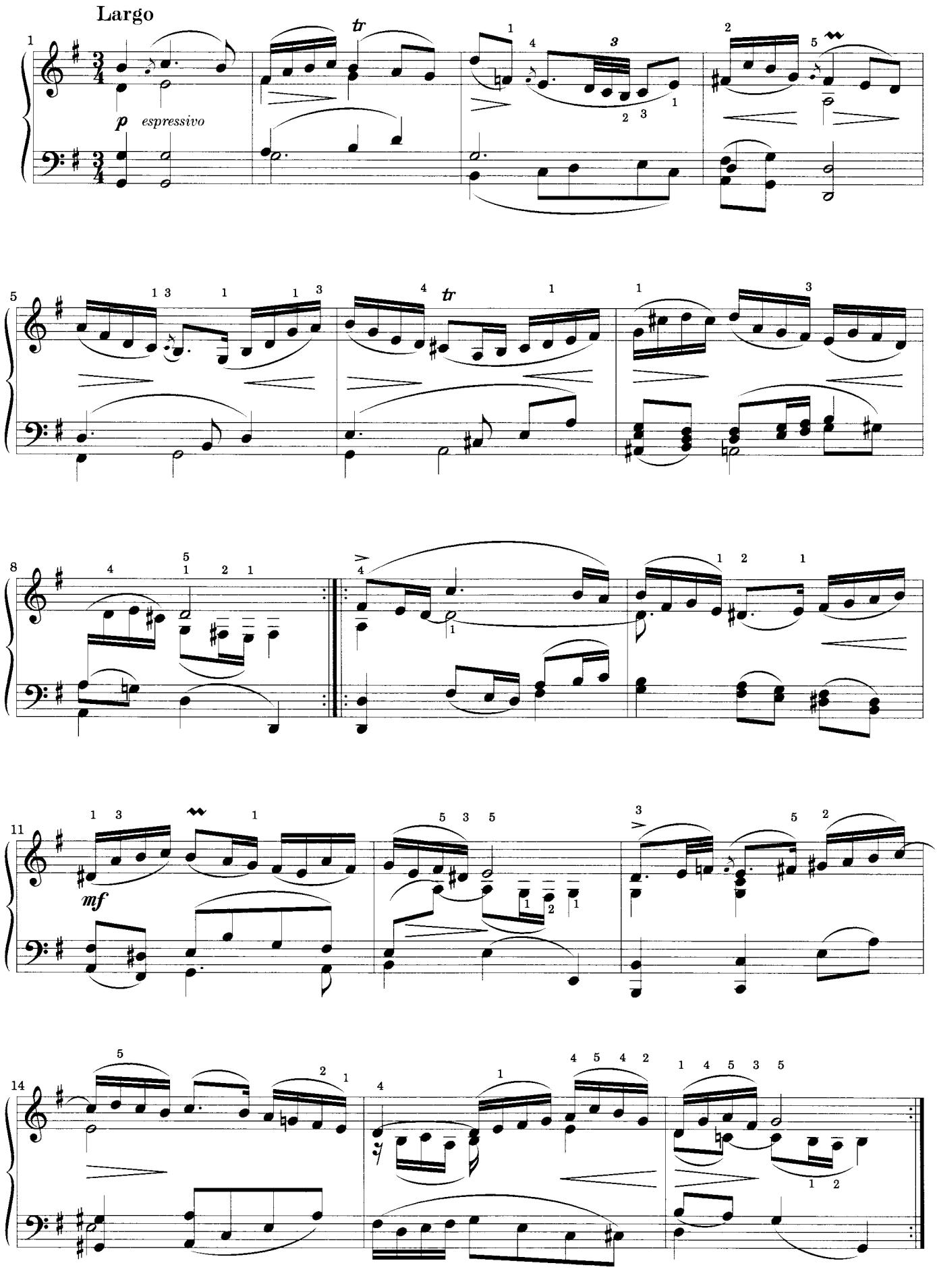
Sarabande



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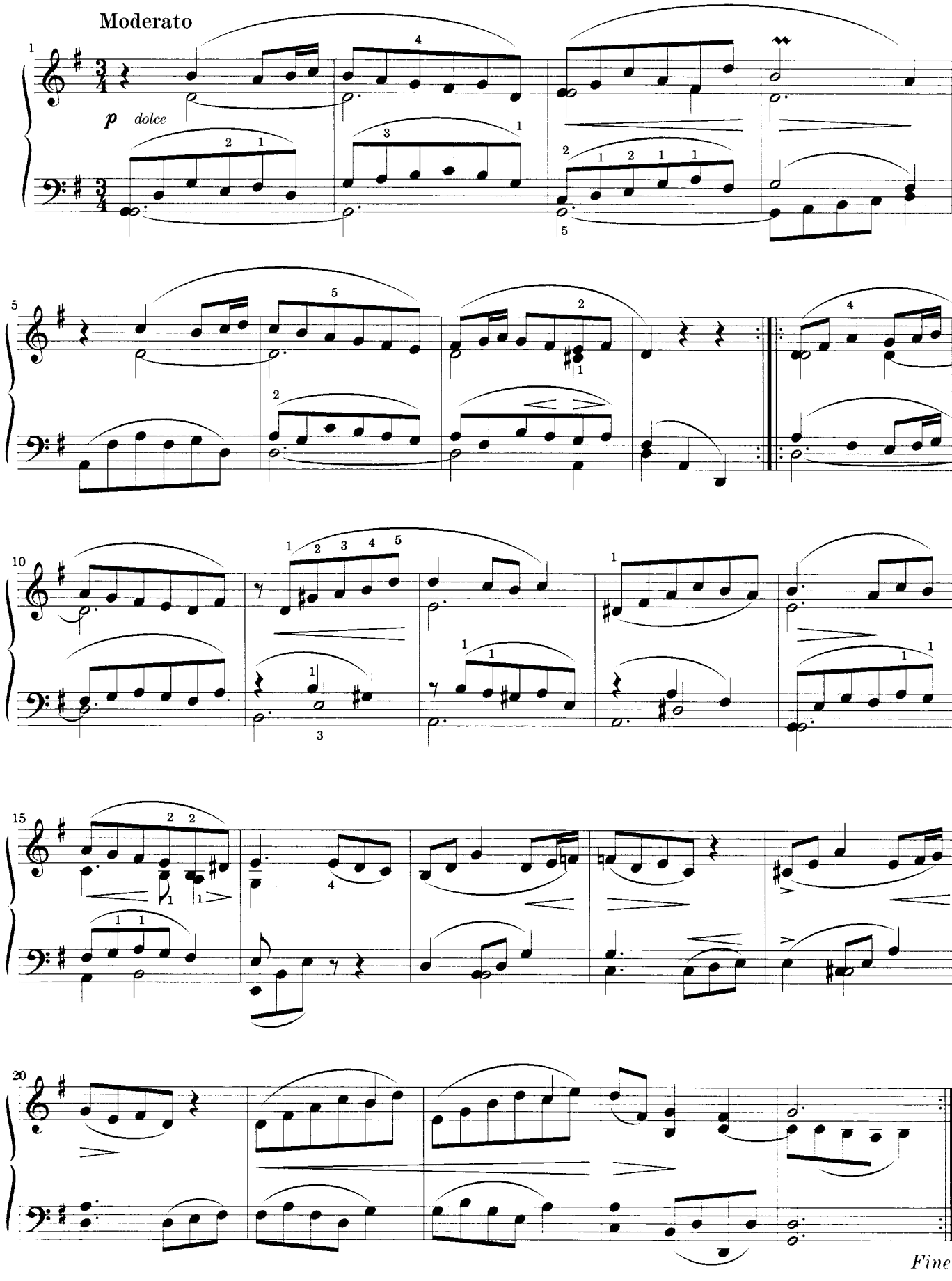
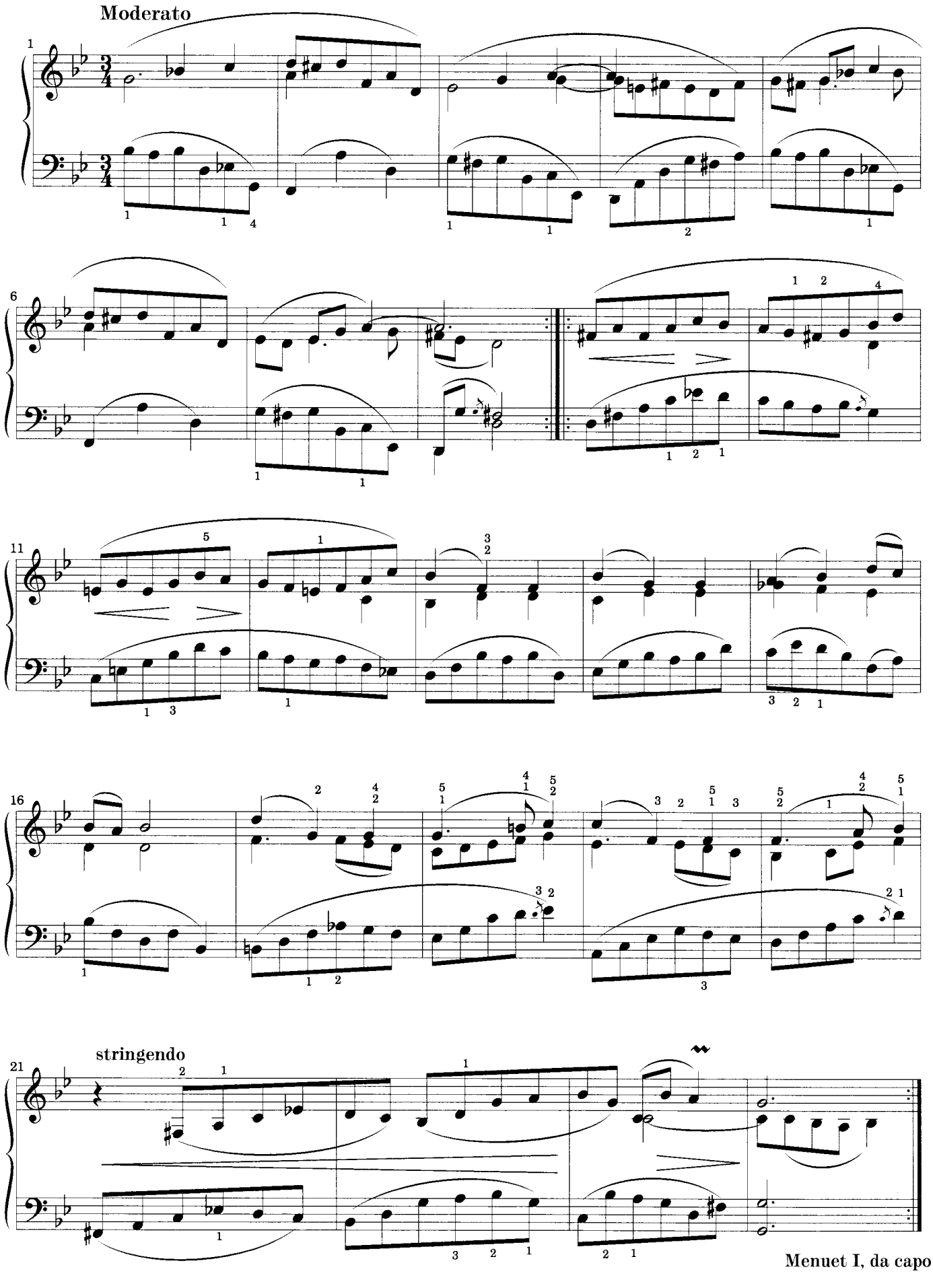
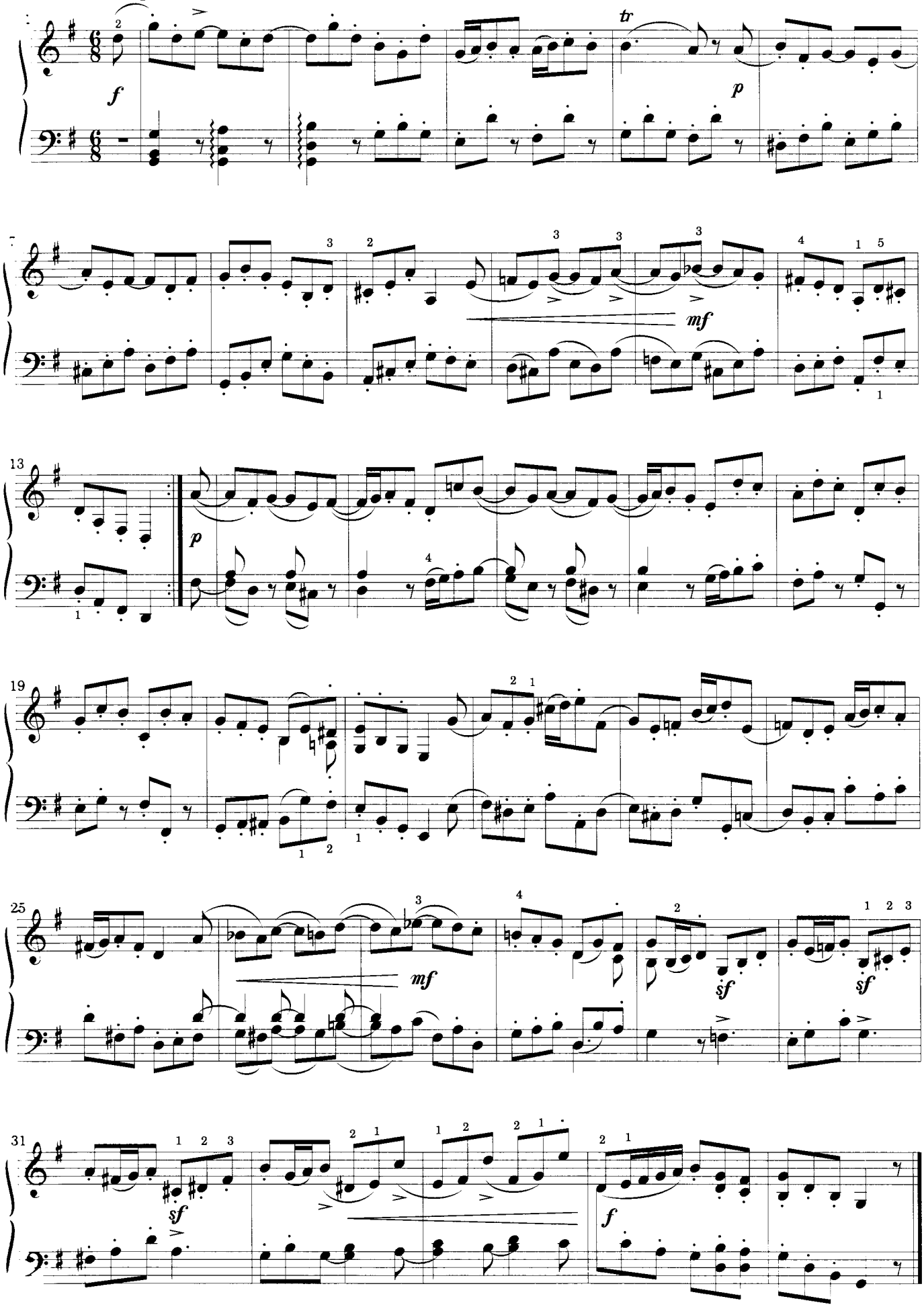


Menuet II



Gigue

Allegro