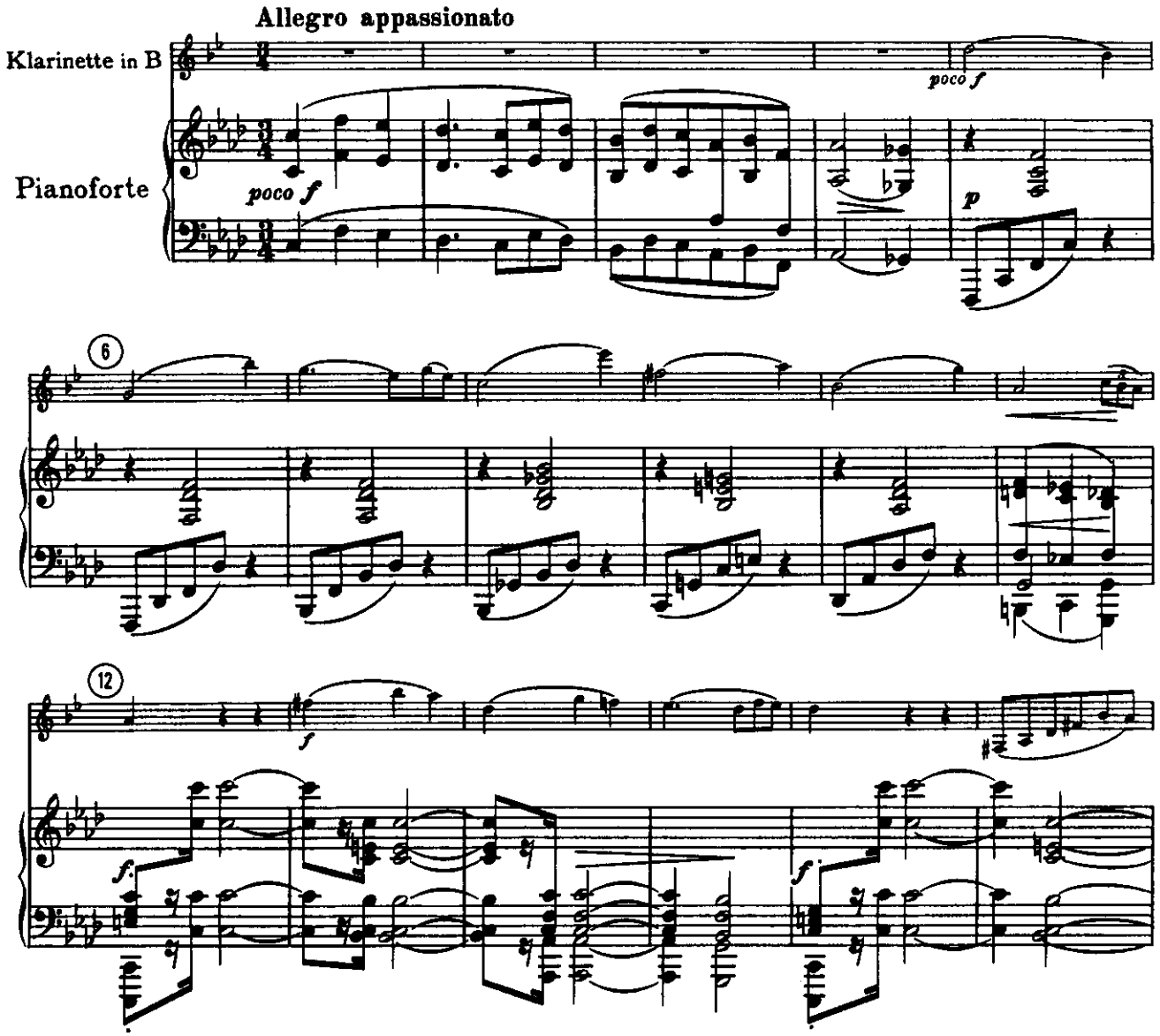
SONATA in F MINOR for CLARINET and PIANO

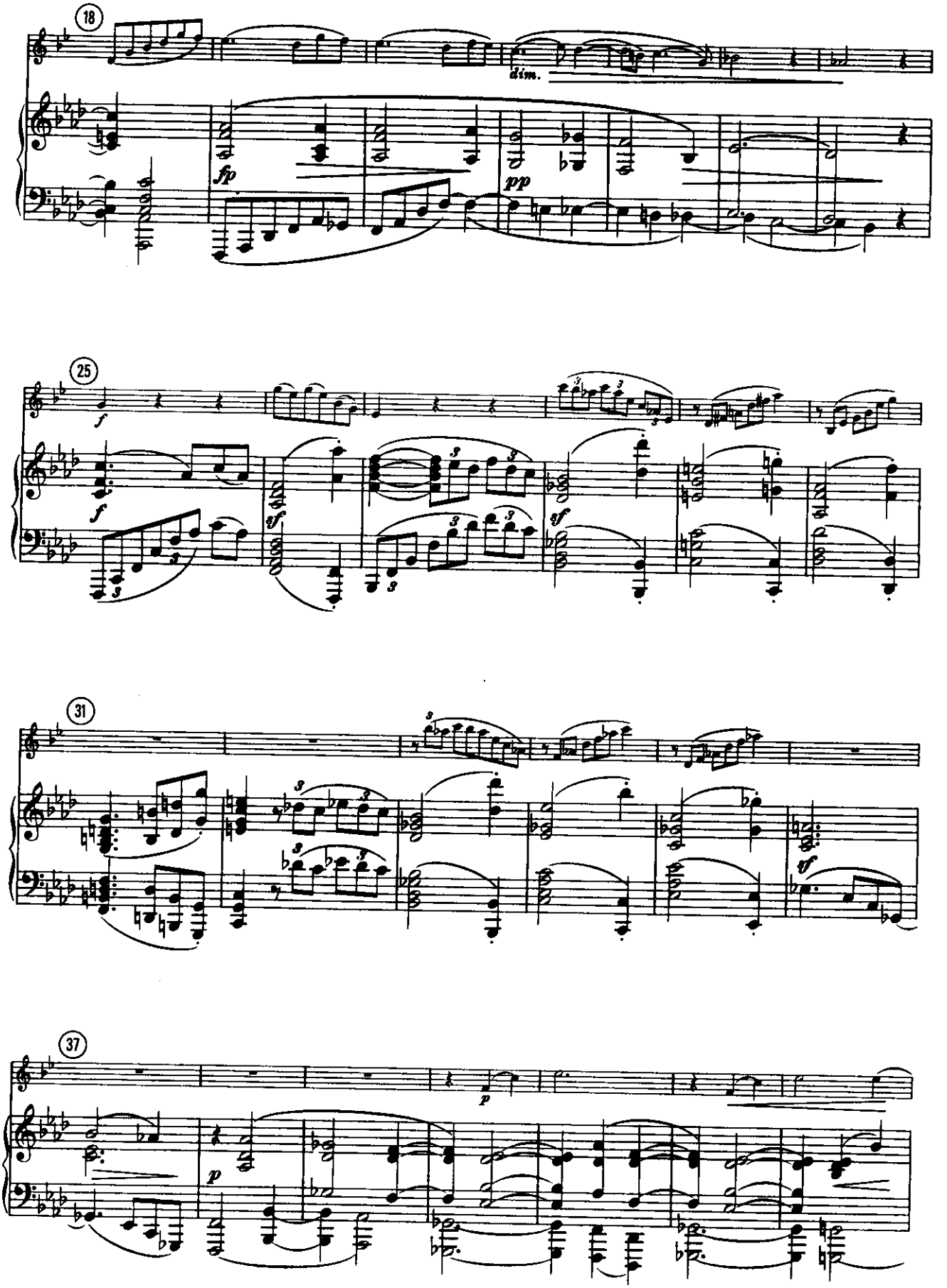
Op. 120, No. 1 (1894), first movement

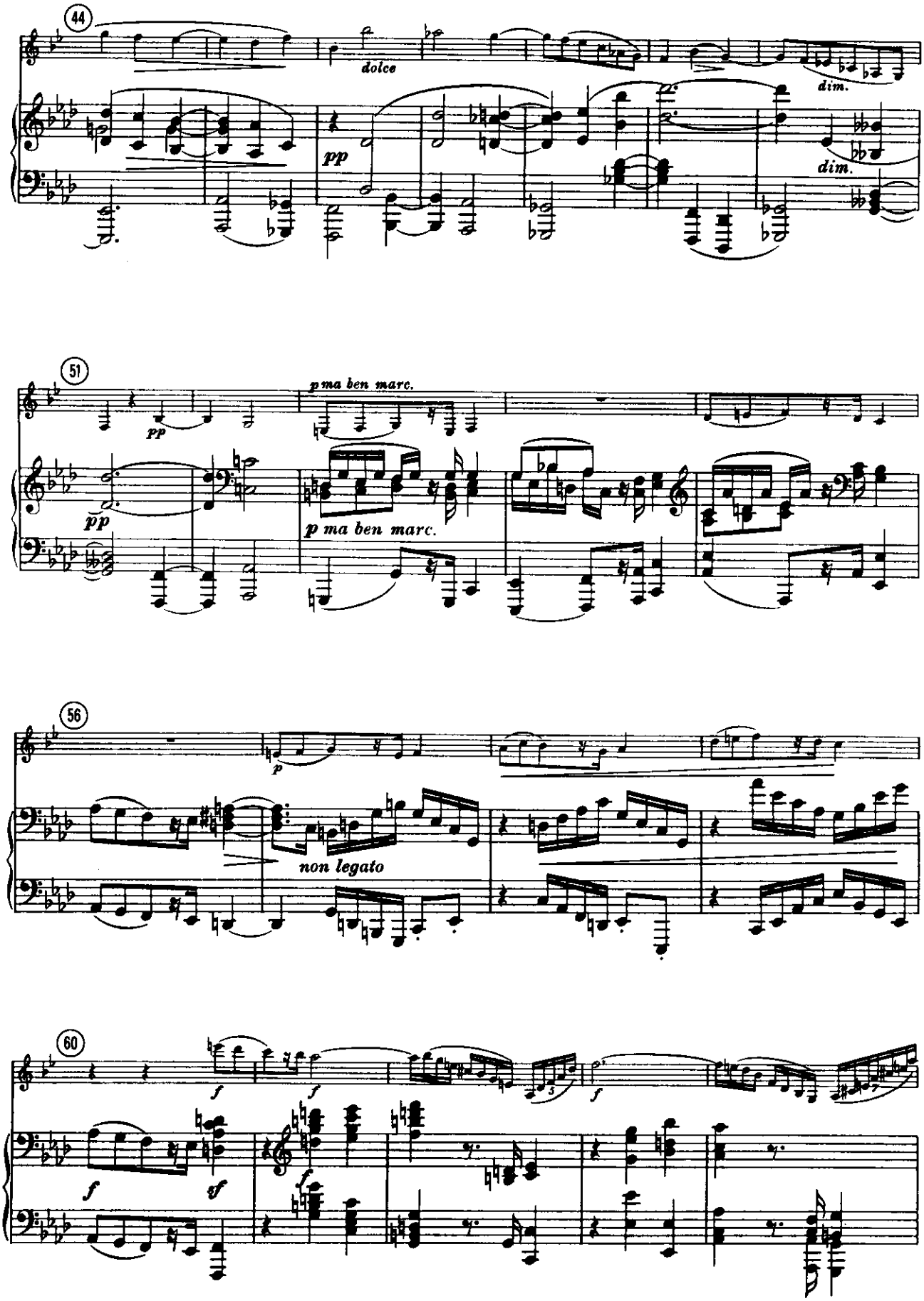
Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

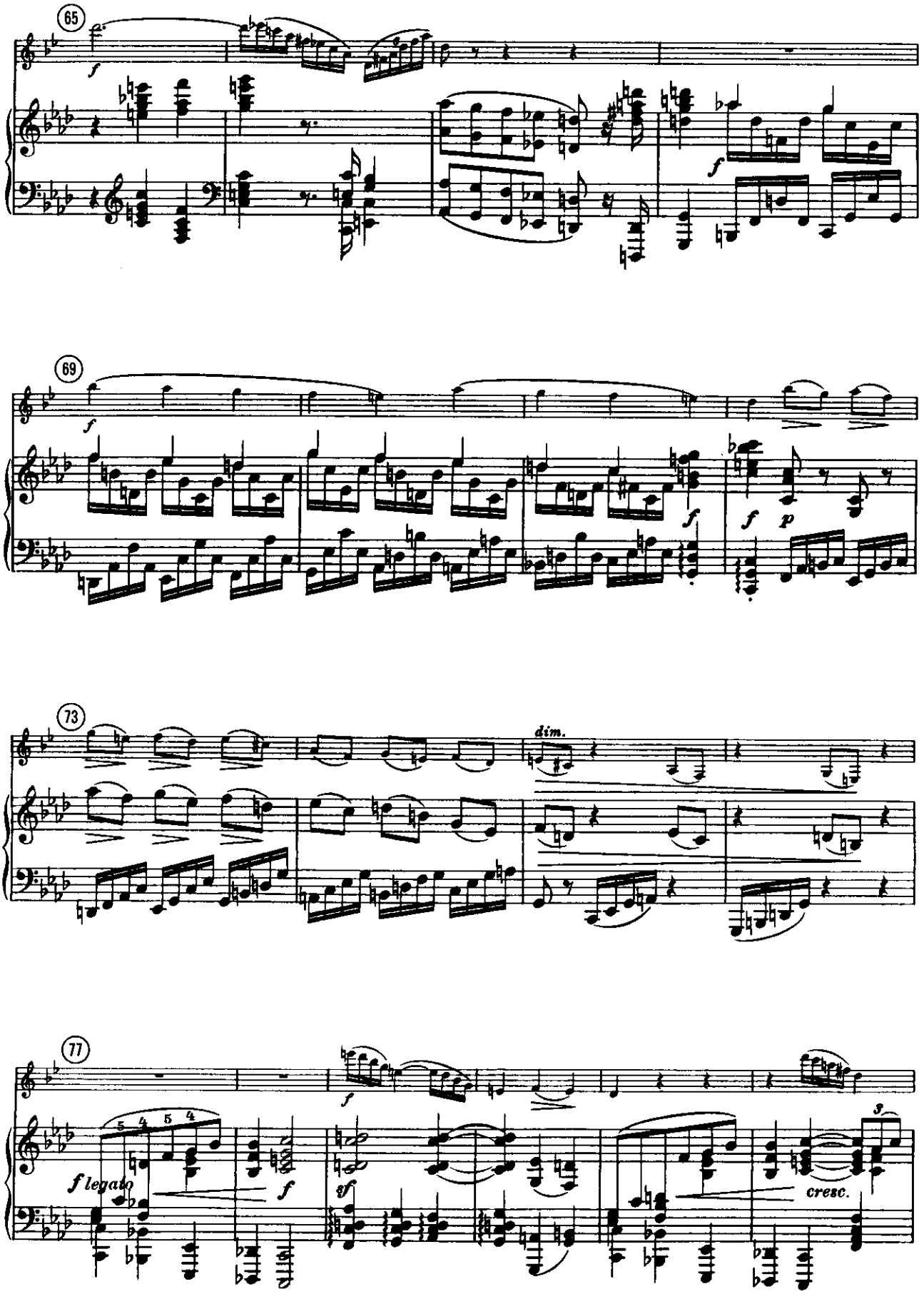
Late in his career, his friendship with the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld inspired Brahms to compose several important chamber works using that instrument. In the elegiac movement given here, compare the opening eight notes with their reappearance starting in bar 90. Such "motivic transformation," prevalent throughout this piece, is typical of much of Brahms's late work. How does this technique seem to point to future developments in the history of music?[9] This movement's form, though rooted in tradition, also reveals typically Brahmsian characteristics. What is happening begining at bar 53? At the recapitulation, how is the opening key regained? Finally, a composer of an equal-partner duo must take care not to allow either instrument to assume a merely accompanimental role for too long. Go through the movement noting how Brahms distributes the material—both the main and the subordinate lines—between the two instruments.

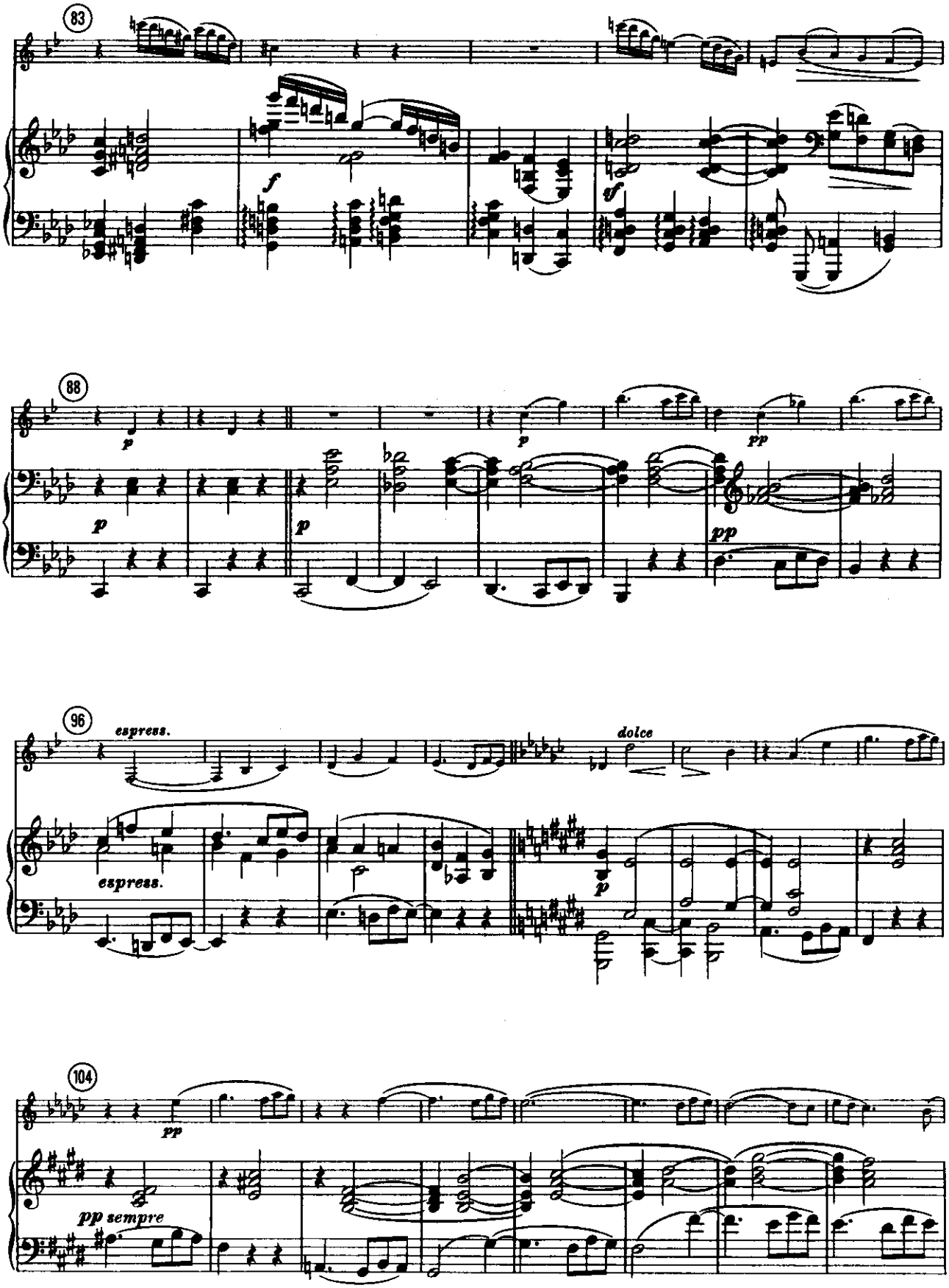


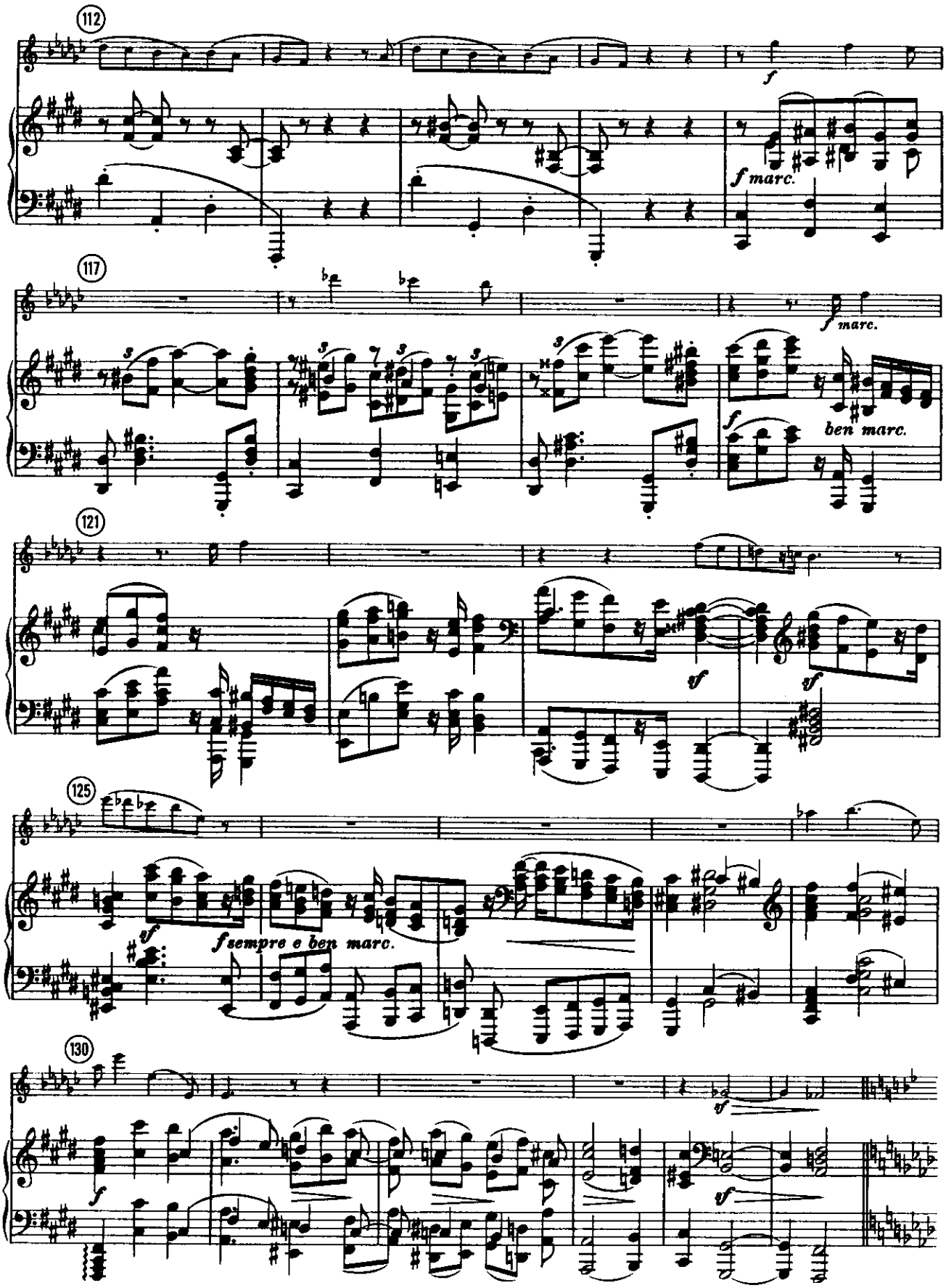
[9] An interesting essay in this connection is Arnold Schoenberg's "Brahms the Progressive," in *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950); expanded edition, Leonard Stein, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975). See also Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984), pp. 147–151.

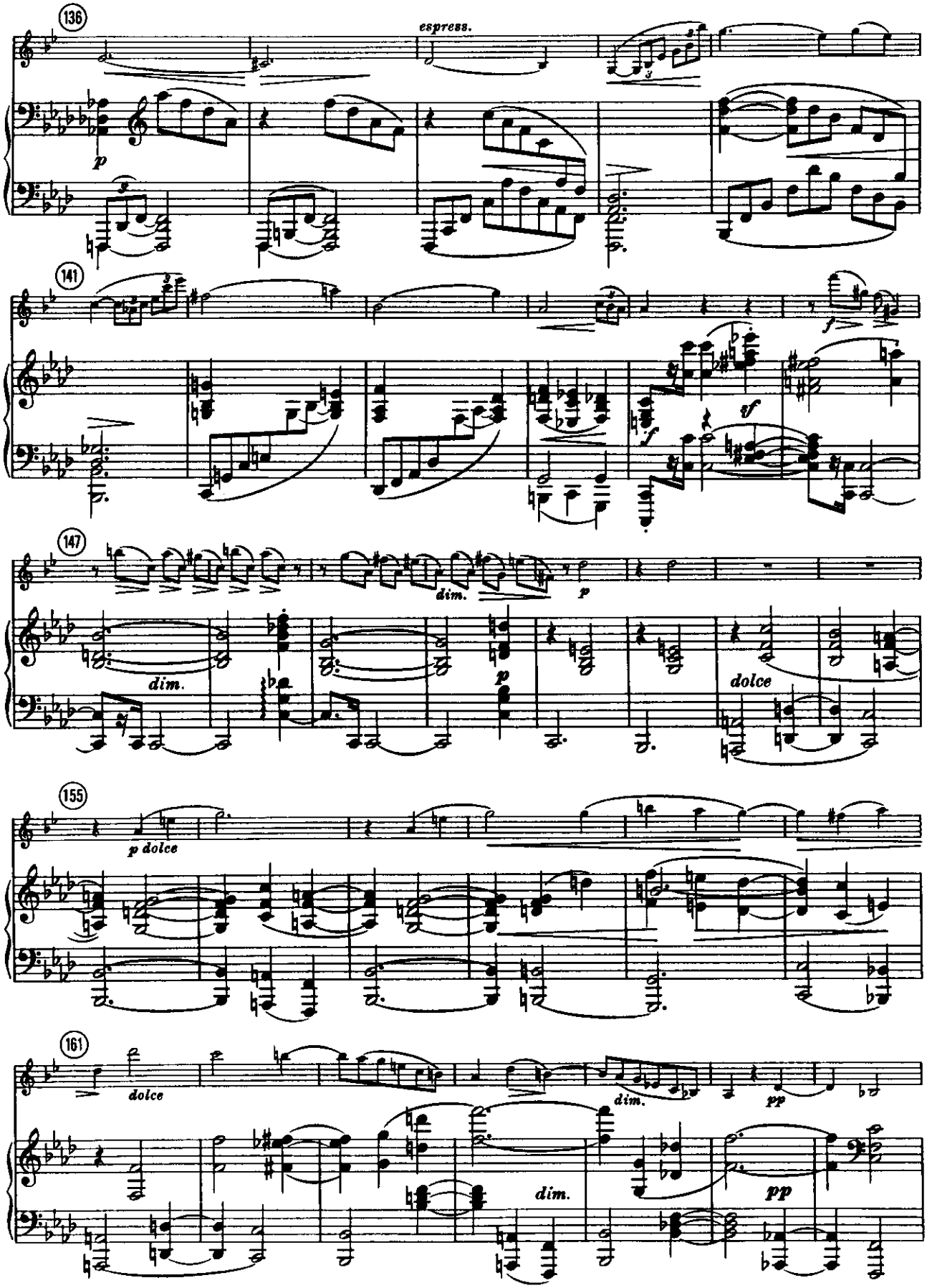

18
dim.
fp
pp
25
f
f
sf
sf
31
sf
37
p
p

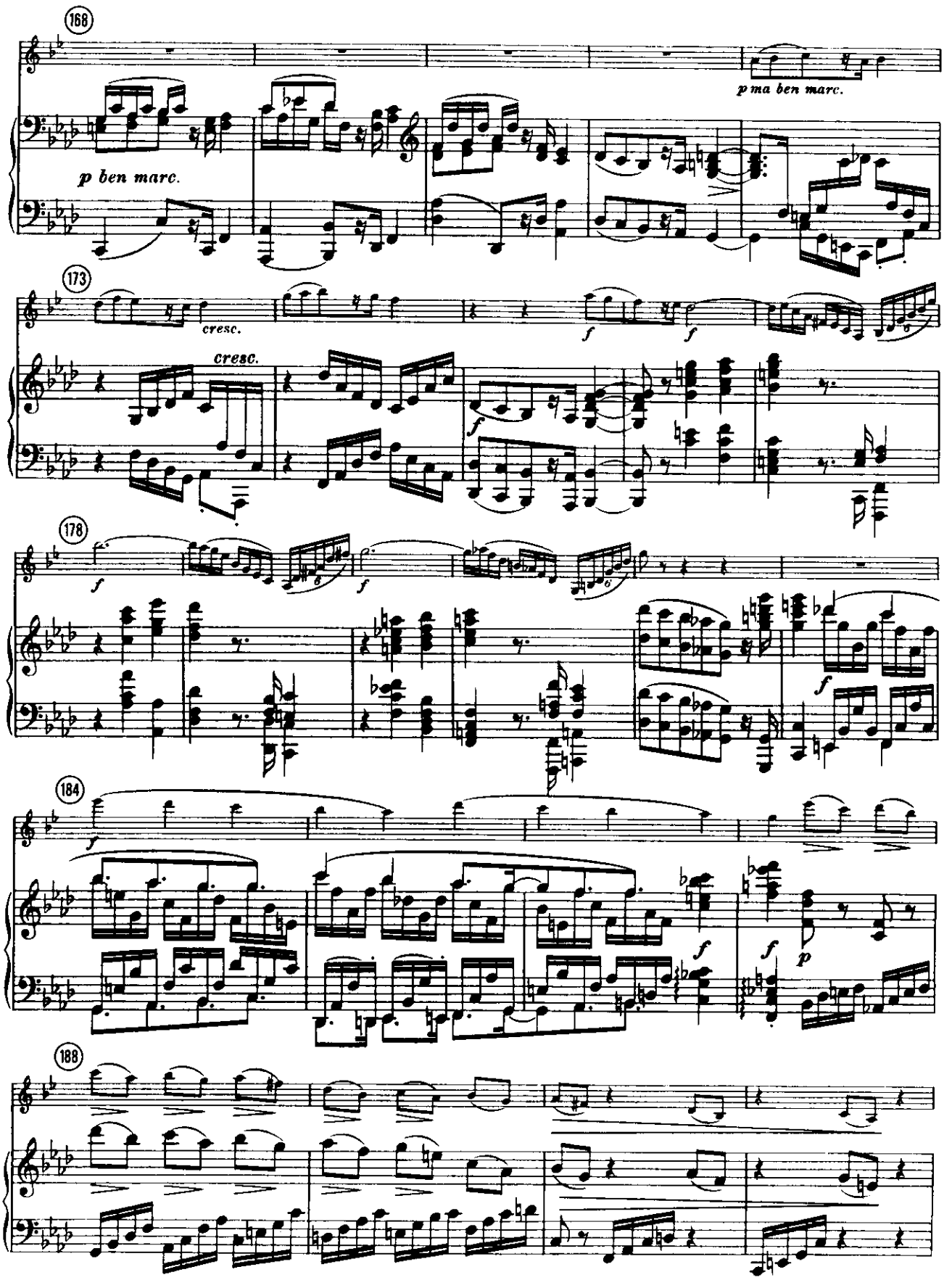

44
dolce
dim.
pp
dim.
51
p ma ben marc.
pp
pp
p ma ben marc.
56
p
non legato
60
f
f
f
sf
f
f

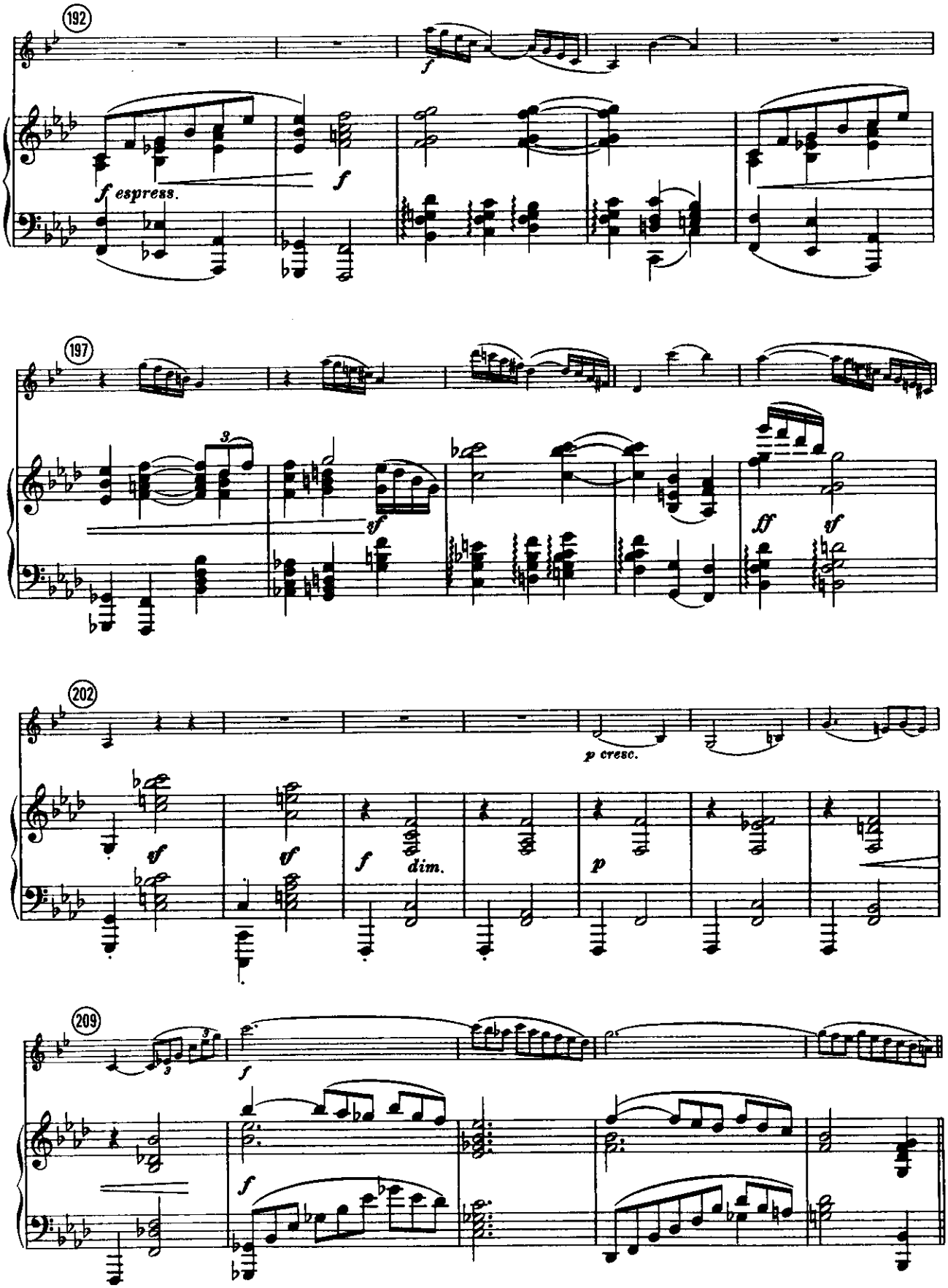

65
f
f
69
f
f
f
p
73
dim.
77
f
f legato
f
sf
cresc.

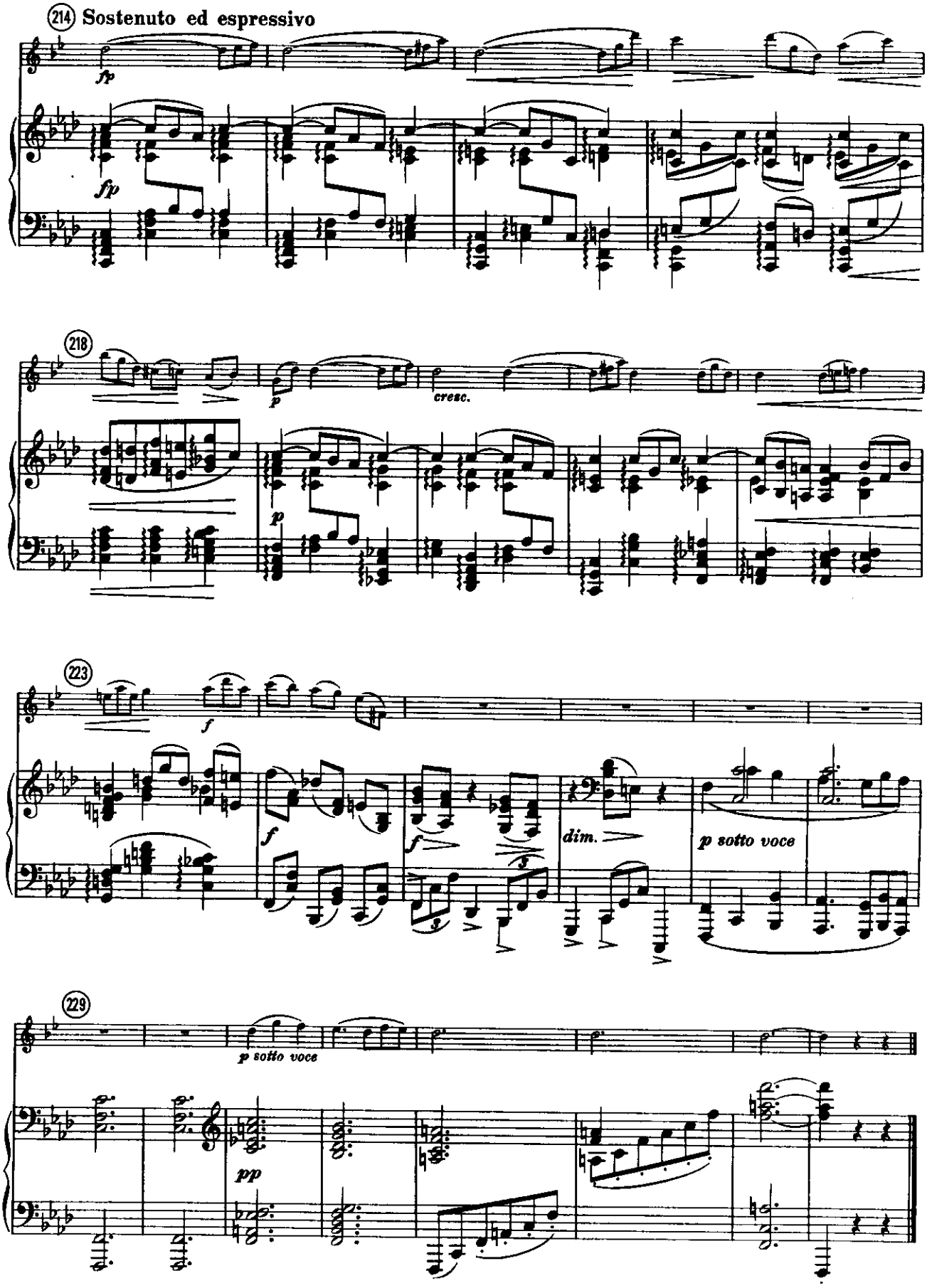

83
f
sf
88
p
p
p
pp
pp
96
espress.
espress.
dolce
p
104
pp
pp sempre


112
f
f marc.
117
f marc.
f
ben marc.
121
vf
vf
125
vf
f sempre e ben marc.
130
f
vf
vf


136
espress.
p
141
f
tf
147
dim.
p
dim.
p
dolce
155
p dolce
161
dolce
dim.
pp
dim.
pp


168
p ma ben marc.
p ben marc.
173
cresc.
cresc.
f
f
f
178
f
f
f
184
f
f
f
p
188


192
f
f espress.
f
197
3
sf
ff
sf
202
p cresc.
sf
sf
f
dim.
p
209
3
f
f


214
Sostenuto ed espressivo
fp
fp
218
p
cresc.
p
223
f
f
f
dim.
p sotto voce
229
p sotto voce
pp