Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Fantasy in D minor

K. 397

About

Mozart's D minor Fantasy is an incredibly rewarding piece to play. In terms of technique, it is a work that can be mastered by intermediate or moderately advanced pianists - the improvisational character of the music makes it shift a lot from page to page, but within the different sections, there are many recurring, relatively easy patterns. However, in terms of musical interpretation, it is a considerable challenge even to the most advanced and experienced musician.

The Fantasy was only published after Mozart's death, and the manuscript is lost. In the first edition, the piece ended at the fermata in bar 97. Whether Mozart had indended to continue the Fantasy or attach it to a Sonata or Fugue remains unclear. In the Breitkopf & Härtel edition that appeared a few years later, ten concluding bars in D major, probably composed by the editor, appeared. This ending has been republished in practically every edition ever since, and are included in the vast majority of recordings of the piece. Mitsuko Uchida was probably the first recording artist to provide an alternative ending, returning to D minor and the arpeggiated chords of the beginning. The Piano Street Edition offers a shorter version based on that same idea.

About the pedal: Many performers make quite generous use of the sustaining pedal in the slow section, and the Piano Street Edition has pedal markings throughout the score. The pedal creates richer and more colorful sounds, but it is perfectly possible to play the Fantasia with much less or even entirely without pedal. Do all preparatory exercises without the pedal, and continue practicing like that now and then even when you have learnt the piece. This is applicable to all Classical repertoire, where careful articulation is of the essence.

Preparatory Questions

1. There are five different tempo markings in the score (such as Andante, Presto, Tempo Primo). Can you find all five and translate them?

2. In which bar is the first "forte" marked in the score? .....

3. The Fantasy's unique mood is created partly by Mozart's use of chromaticism - half tone steps are among the most expressive intervals. On the first page, can you name a few bars which feature chromatic steps? .....

4. The fantasy-character is underlined by the many silences and fermatas. On the first two pages:
a) How many fermatas can you find? .....
b) How many silences of one quarter rest or more (include the fermatas)?.....

5. Listen to recordings of the Fantasy while studying the score. Try to think of words which describe the character of each part of the work. Write them into your score where you think there is a change of mood. Suggested bars: 1, 12, 16, 20, 23 and so on.

Mastering the Piece

- Clear articulation (execution of slurs - 'sighs')
- Balance and voicing
- Contrast of moods and dynamics
- Even and controlled scales in presto passages
- Flowing left hand Alberti accompaniment

Practice Plan

☐ Session 1: Exercises 1-3, bars 1-19
☐ Session 2: Exercises 4-6, bars 20-33 & 35-43
☐ Session 3: Exercise 7, bars 34-54
☐ Session 4: Exercise 8-9, bars 55-85
☐ Session 5: Exercise 10, bars 86-107 (110)

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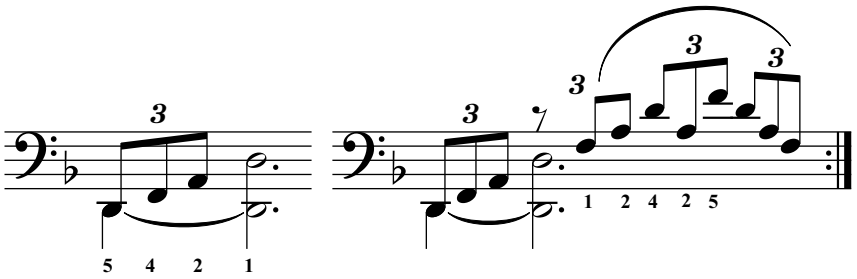
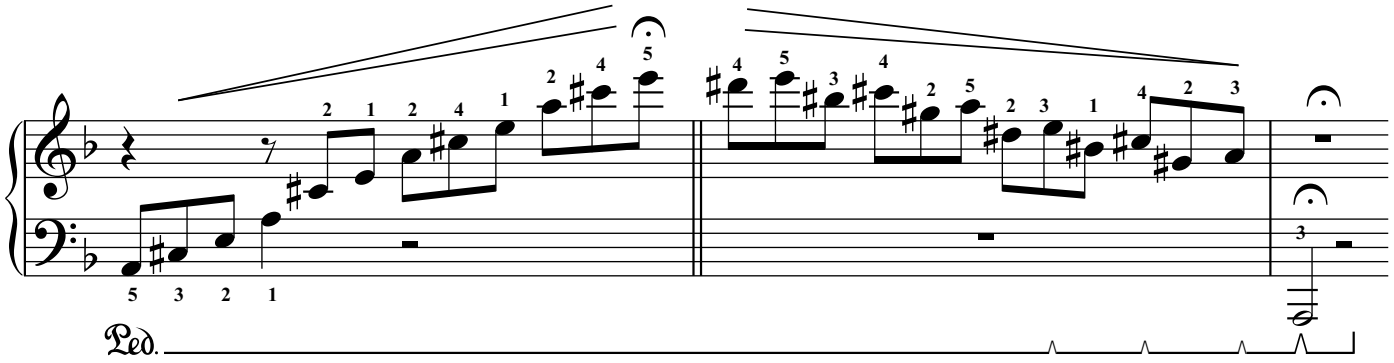
Preparatory Exercises

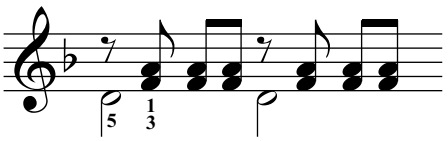
1. Introduction, bars 1-6: Practice one chord at a time without pedal, repeating each arpeggio at least four times. Play calmly and flowingly. Make sure you hold the D:s in the left hand with your fifth finger and thumb.



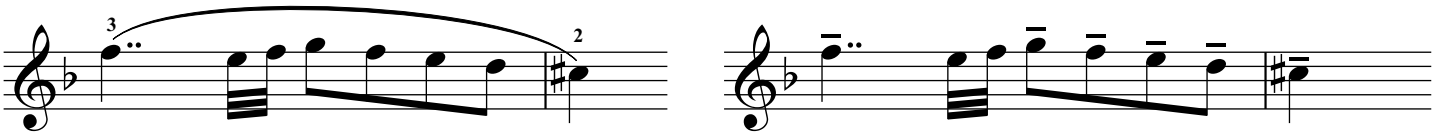
2. Introduction, bars 9-11: Play the first bar with the sustaining pedal fully down, and make a crescendo to the top. Stay there and listen to the rich A major chord. Keep holding the pedal down when you play the next bar, making a diminuendo. Half pedal changes on E, C sharp and A in the last half of the second bar: raise the pedal enough to avoid a complete blur, but try to keep something of the chordal sound.



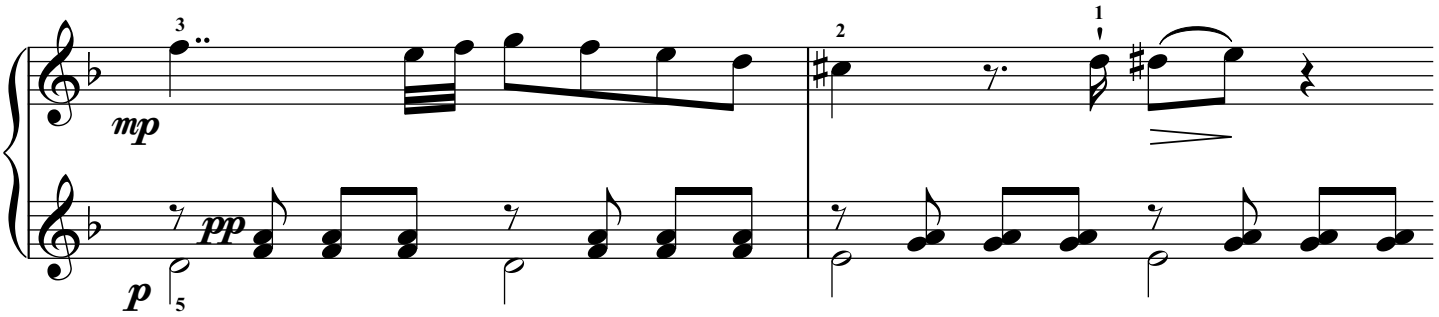
3. Adagio, bars 12-15 etc: Start by practicing the left hand on its own, very slowly. Use a light arm for the repeated thirds, making sure they are exactly simultaneous and very soft.



Then practice the right hand. There are no articulation marks in the score, which means that Mozart probably intended a detached style. But practicing them legato at first could help you find the right singing sound and to give the phrase a forward direction. Then change into playing portato, lifting a tiny bit between notes but giving each note an expressive 'legato' quality.



Now play the first phrase hands together. Balance the different layers - bass, melody and chords - by giving them different touches and dynamics. Emphasize the expressive D sharp in the second bar.



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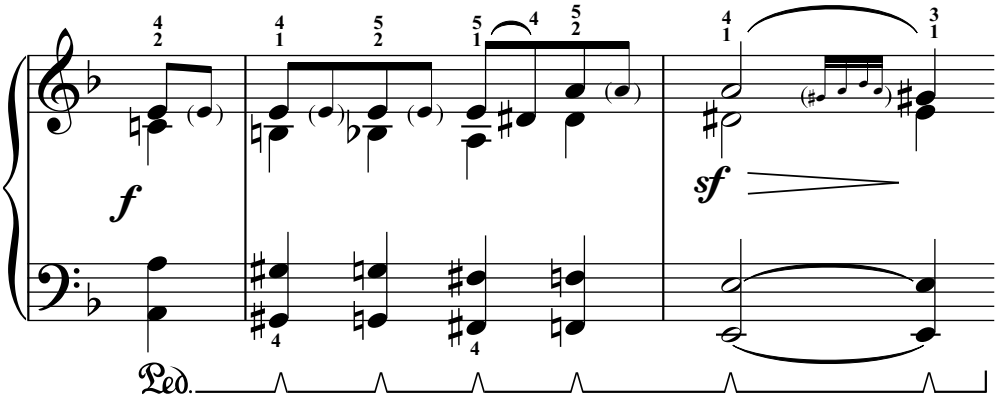
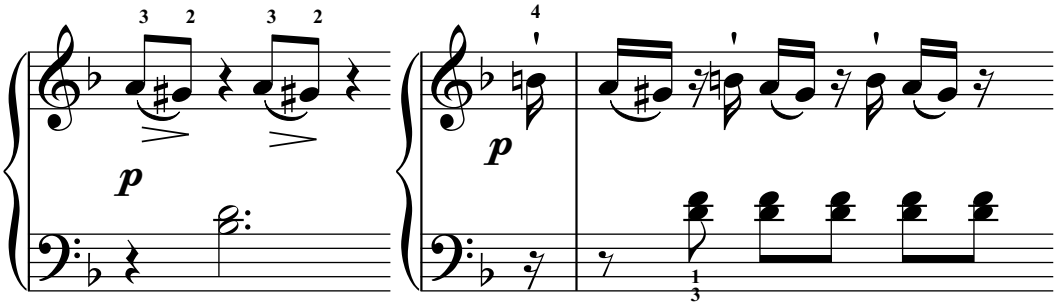
4. Forte chords, bars 20-22
Start practicing without the notes in parenthesis. Relax your hands and lift your arm between each chord.

Make the chord marked ***sf*** the heaviest. Play the 32nds calmly and with a diminuendo.

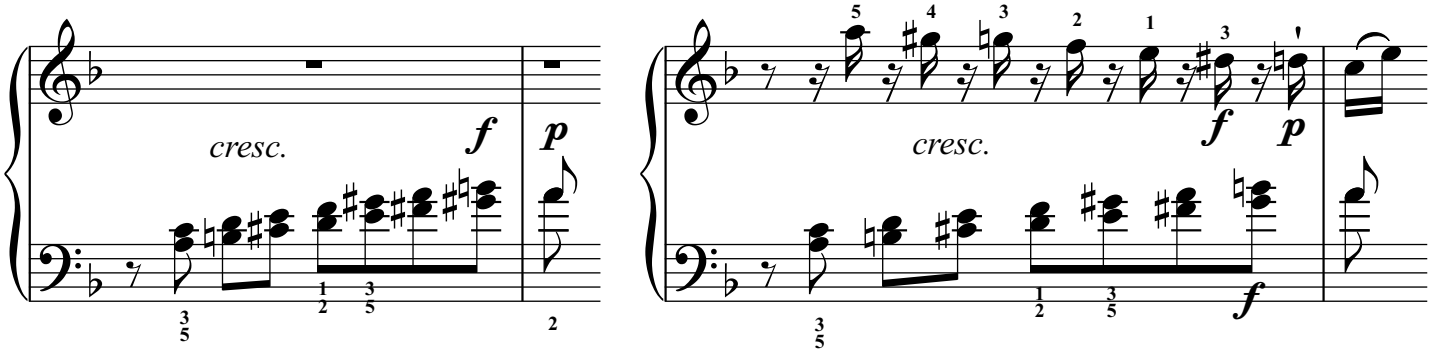


Wrist movement: ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

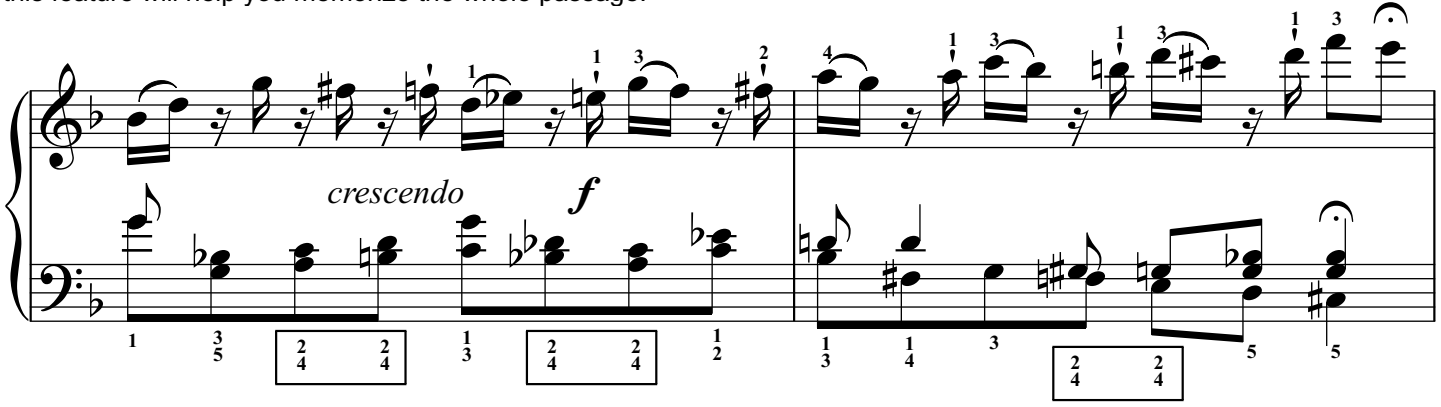
5. "Sighs", bars 23-27
First practice the two-note slurs on their own, putting the stress on the first note of the slur. Let the wrist drop on the A and then float up when you play the G sharp.



Practice the scale in thirds (bars 26-27) separately. Make a crescendo to forte and then a sudden drop to piano on the last sixteenth. Make the eighth notes in the bass detached but longer than the sixteenths in the treble (portato).



6. Bars 42 and 43: These bars will need extra practice. Practice one hand at a time and observe the fingerings. With the suggested left hand fingering you will frequently use the second and fourth finger to play parallel thirds. Focusing on this feature will help you memorize the whole passage.



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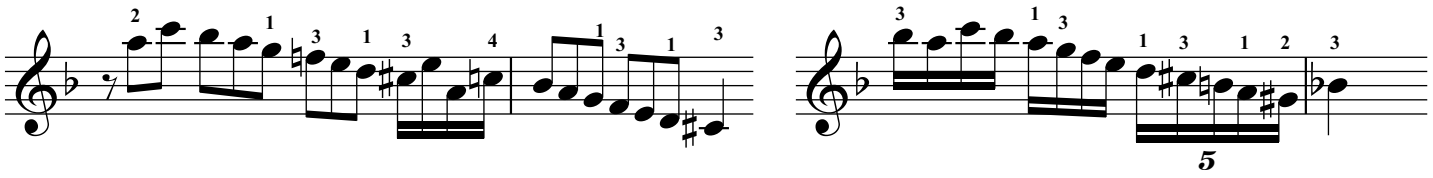
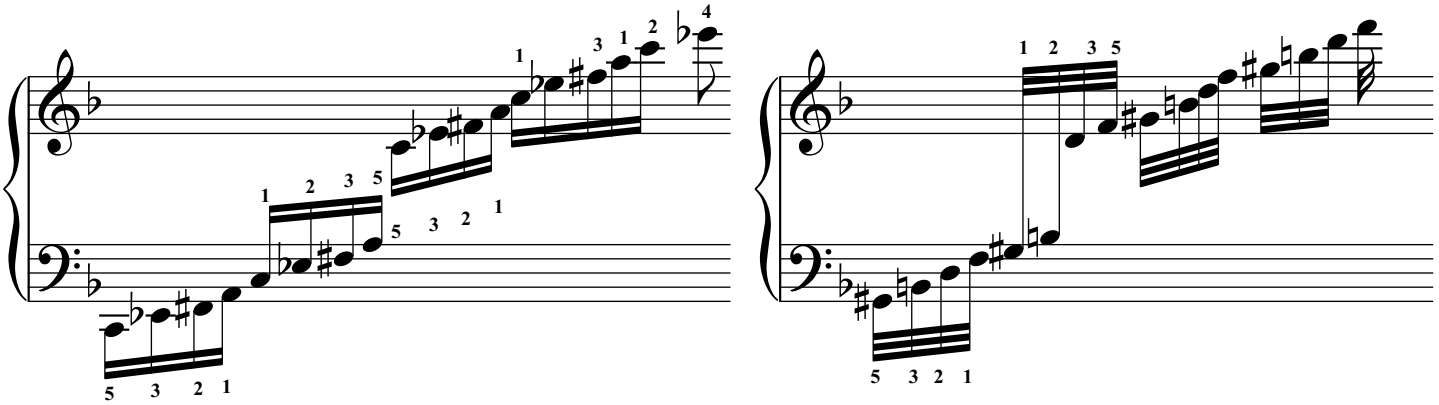
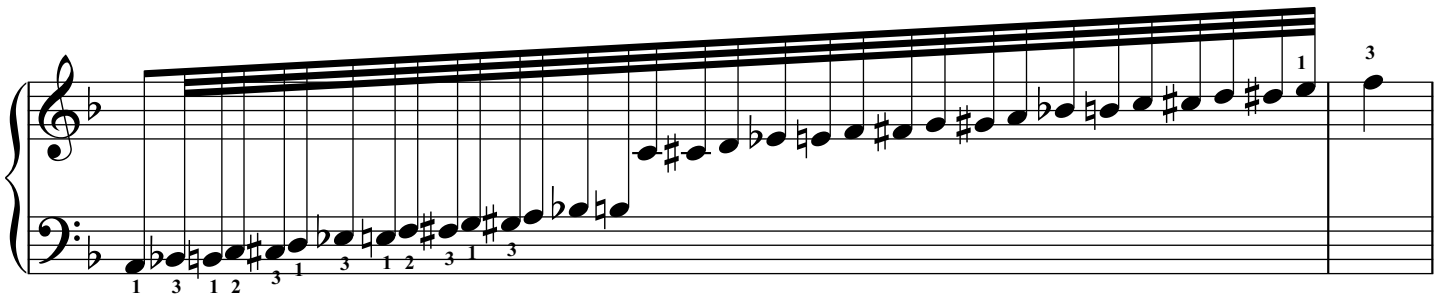
7. Presto runs and arpeggios, bars 34, 44 & 53: Practice the runs in bars 34 and 44 slowly, with a light arm. Begin with the portions selected below, which are then repeated in lower registers when you play the complete section. The added rhythmizations are only to make the shape of the run clearer. They don't imply any accents, and don't have to be followed slavishly.



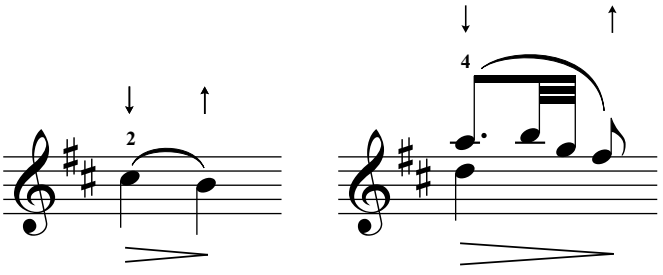
In the diminished chord arpeggios, the left hand travels over the right and the right hand goes under the left. When a hand has finished its four notes, move it immediately to the next position.



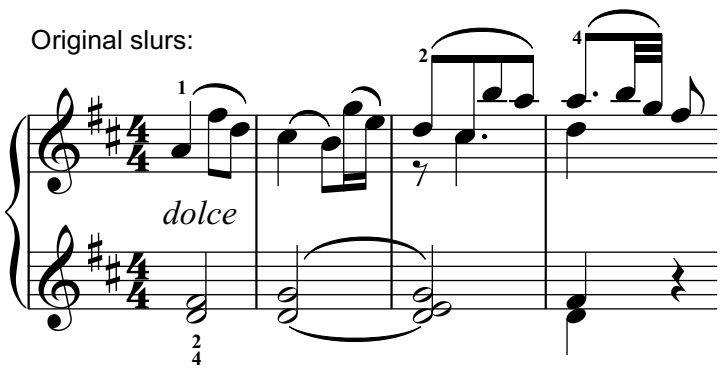
Practice the chromatic scale in bar 44 slowly. When you begin, lean to the left and make sure there is space between your right arm and your body. Play with a light arm and keep the elbow out as you move to an upright position.



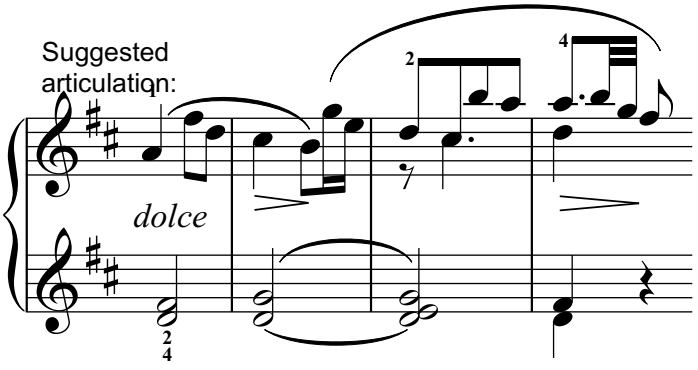
8. Allegretto, bars 55-69: In Mozart's time, it was unusual to write slurs across barlines. This doesn't necessarily mean that you have to make a noticeable lift at the end of every bar.
But Mozart's slurs also give clues about which notes are emphasized, which is why it still makes sense practicing bar by bar observing Mozart's articulation markings. Begin by practicing the right hand of bars 56 and 58 using the same "sighing" or "drop-and-float" technique as in exercise 5.



Original slurs:



Suggested articulation:



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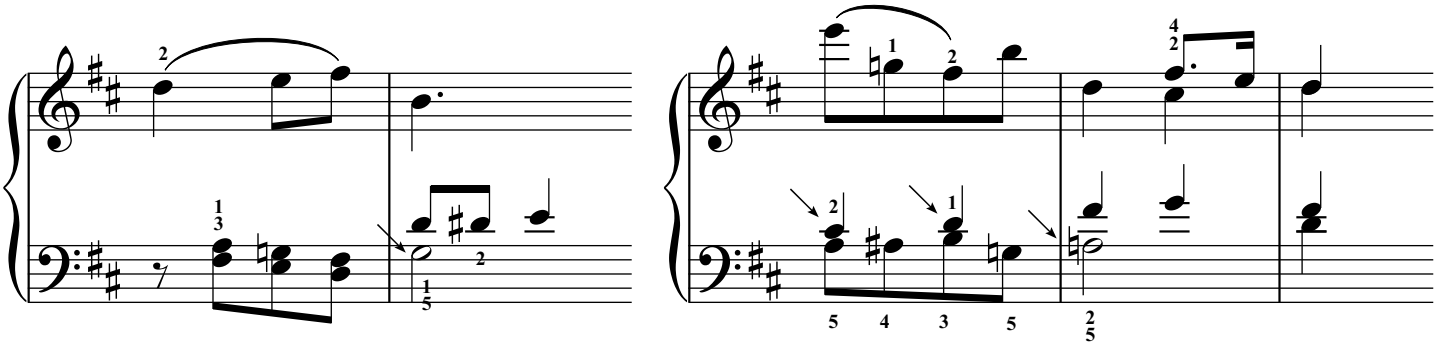
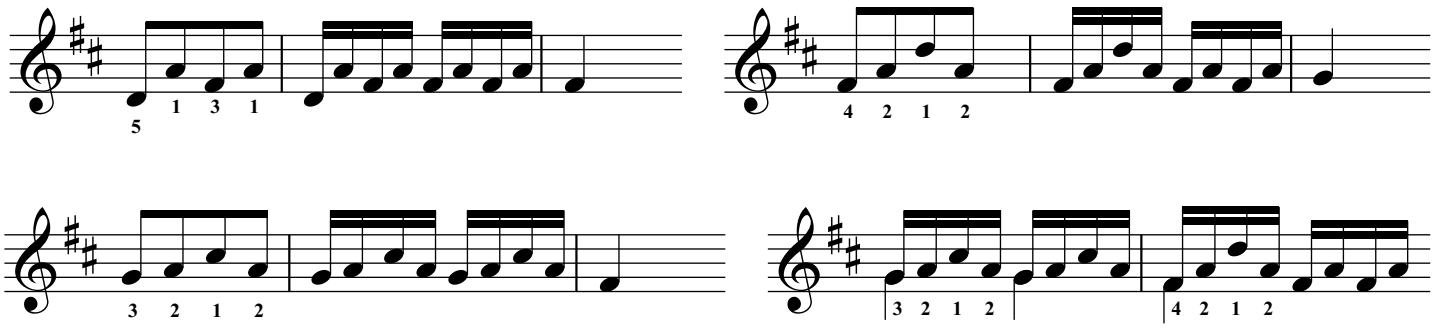
In the examples below, **pay special attention to the left hand and practice it separately**. Note the fingerings carefully and make sure you hold quarter notes and half notes for their full duration (arrows).

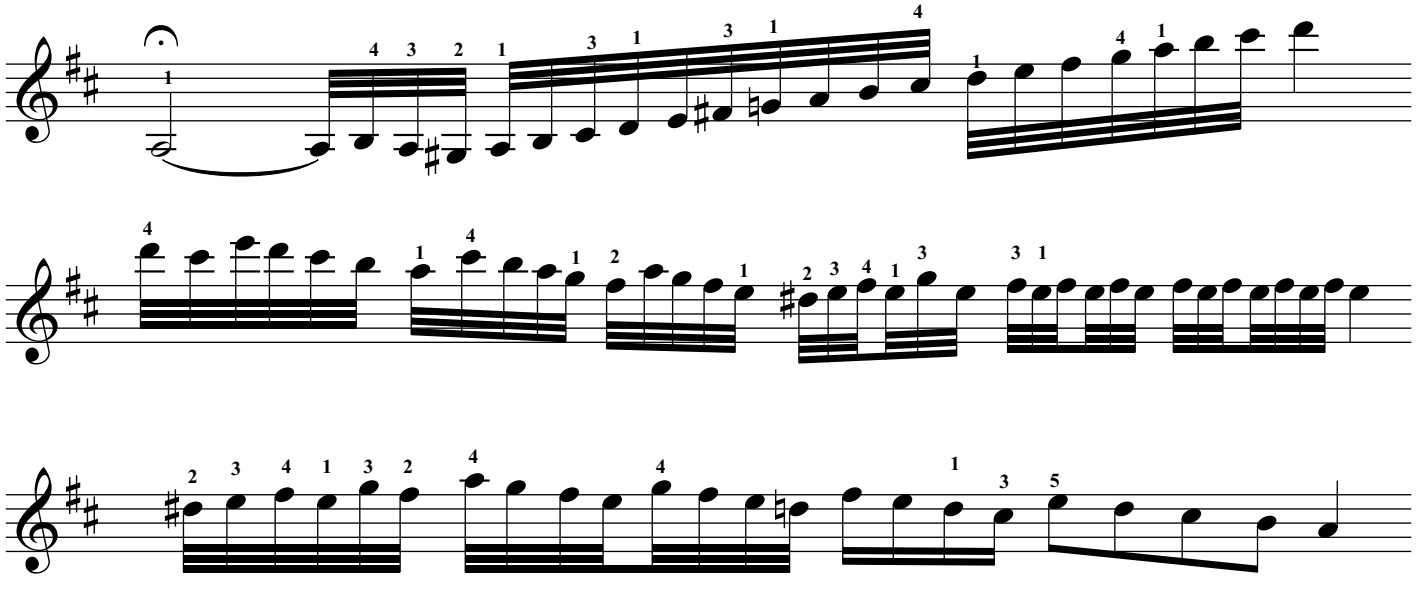


9. Left hand accompaniment, bars 70-83: Practice the left hand on its own. Begin slowly, letting the hand move freely in all directions. When you increase the speed, remain loose at the wrist but use smaller movements.



Add some finger pedal by holding on to the G:s and F-sharp:s, prolonging them to quarter notes where possible.

10. Cadenza, bar 86: Divide the cadenza into three parts. Practice each part slowly at least four times before adding them together and increasing the speed.



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Fantasia

K. 397

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
PS Practice Score

Andante In the introduction, feel free to use some rubato to establish the Fantasy character.

p

Hold the left hand D:s with the fingers.

Ped.

Many performers make quite generous use of the sustaining pedal in the slow section, and therefore this Practice Score includes pedal markings. The sustaining pedal creates richer and more colorful sounds, but it is perfectly possible to play the Fantasia with much less or even entirely without pedal.

4

Hold the quarter note over the pedal change.

Bring out the bass line.

8

Note the extra pedal change.

Half pedal changes.

12 **Adagio** Slower than the Andante section, but still in Alla breve (two slow beats in each bar). Play this section in strict time. Use a heavy touch in the right hand to make the top voice sing.

p

Calm 32nds.

Extremely soft.

Emphasize the expressive D sharp.

Play the sixteenth-note in exact time (don't delay).

Listen to how this 2-bar phrase answers the previous one.

15

Always play the rests! Release both key and pedal in places such as these.

f Softer in the left hand.

p

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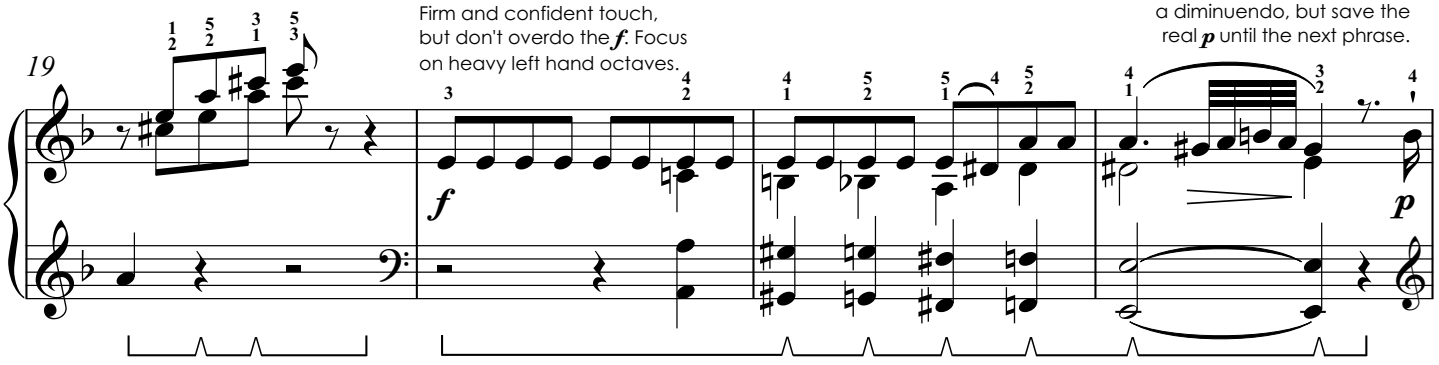
19

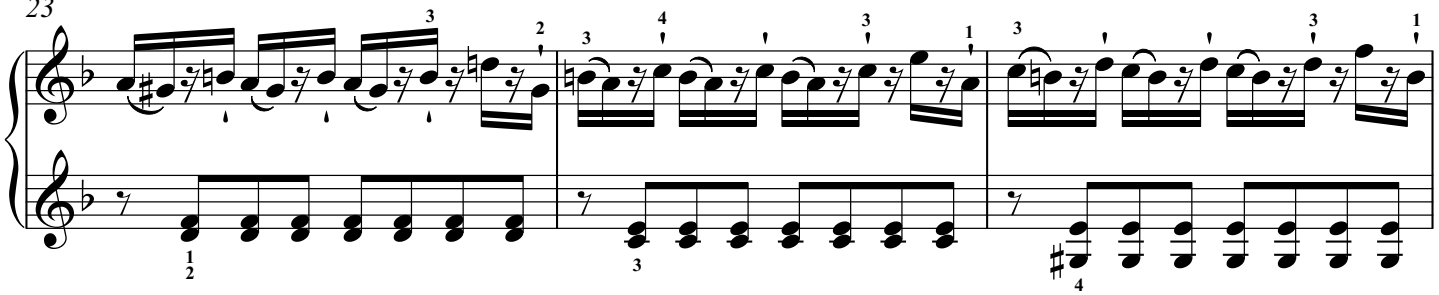
Firm and confident touch, but don't overdo the *f*. Focus on heavy left hand octaves.

Play the 32nds calmly and with a diminuendo, but save the real *p* until the next phrase.



23

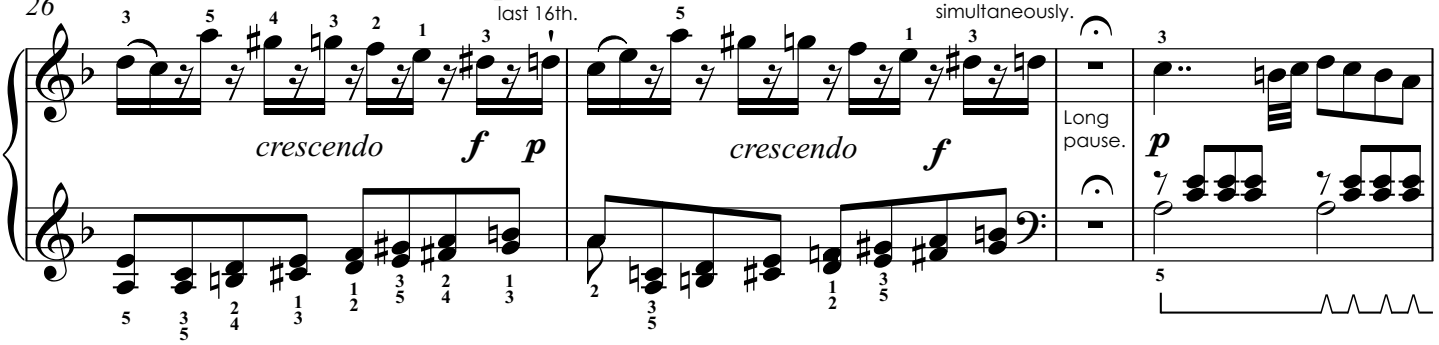
Use a lighter touch here. You may also want to play slightly faster, to bring out the restless character of the music.



26

Try for a sudden *p* on the very last 16th.

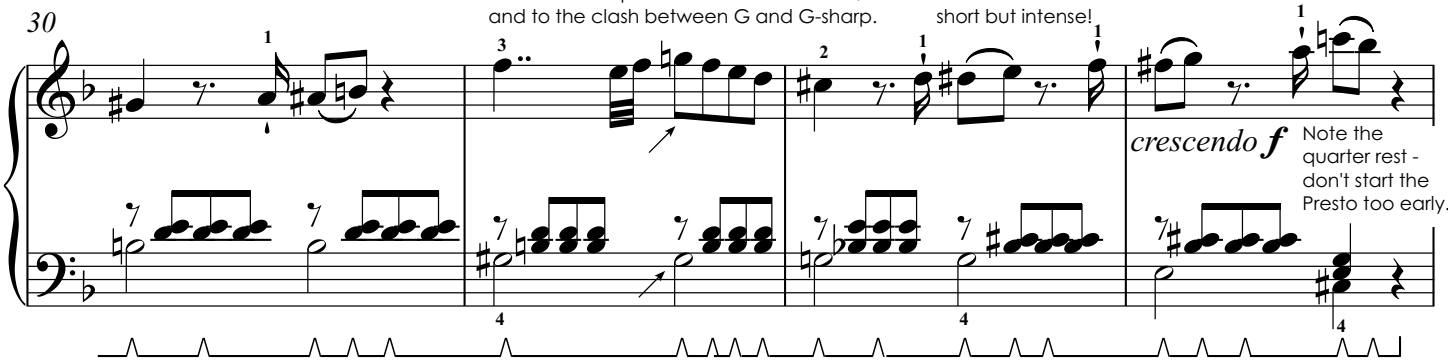
Stop abruptly, releasing the hands simultaneously.



30

This phrase intensifies the anguished feeling - listen to the expressive diminished chord, and to the clash between G and G-sharp.

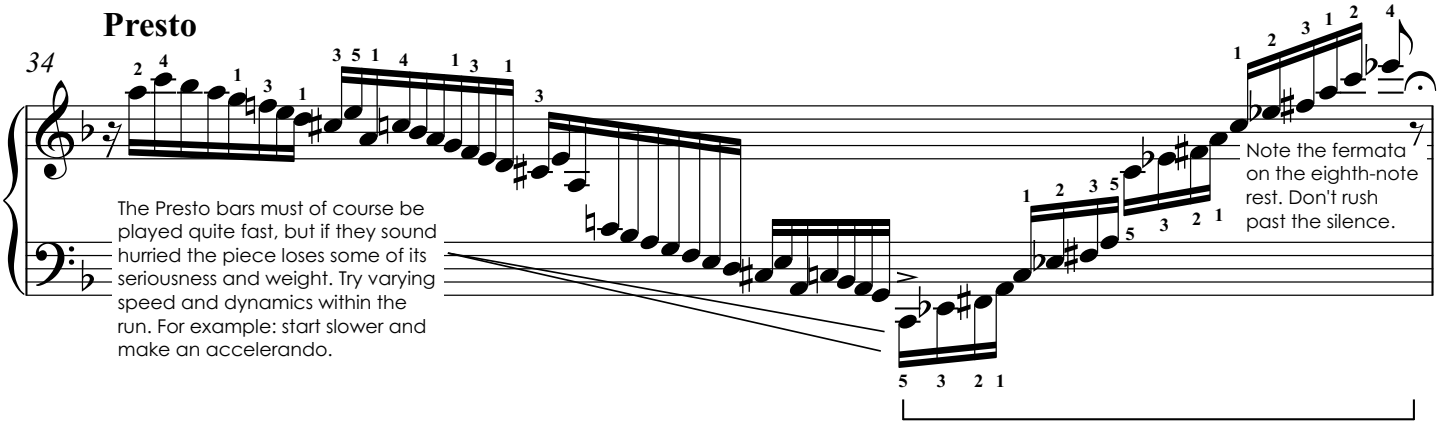
Don't start the crescendo until bar 33 - it should be short but intense!



Note the quarter rest - don't start the Presto too early.

Presto

34



The Presto bars must of course be played quite fast, but if they sound hurried the piece loses some of its seriousness and weight. Try varying speed and dynamics within the run. For example: start slower and make an accelerando.

Note the fermata on the eighth-note rest. Don't rush past the silence.

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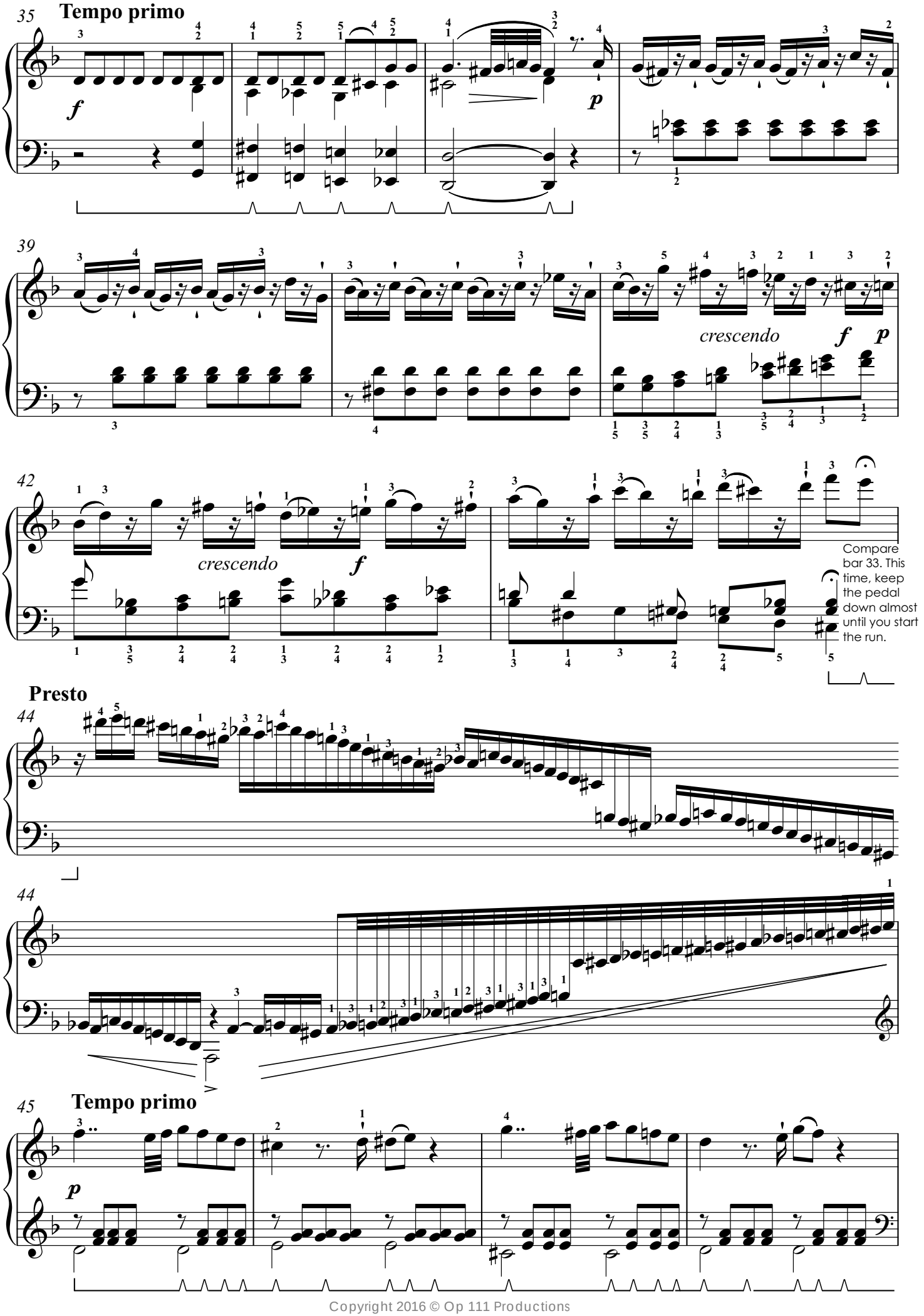

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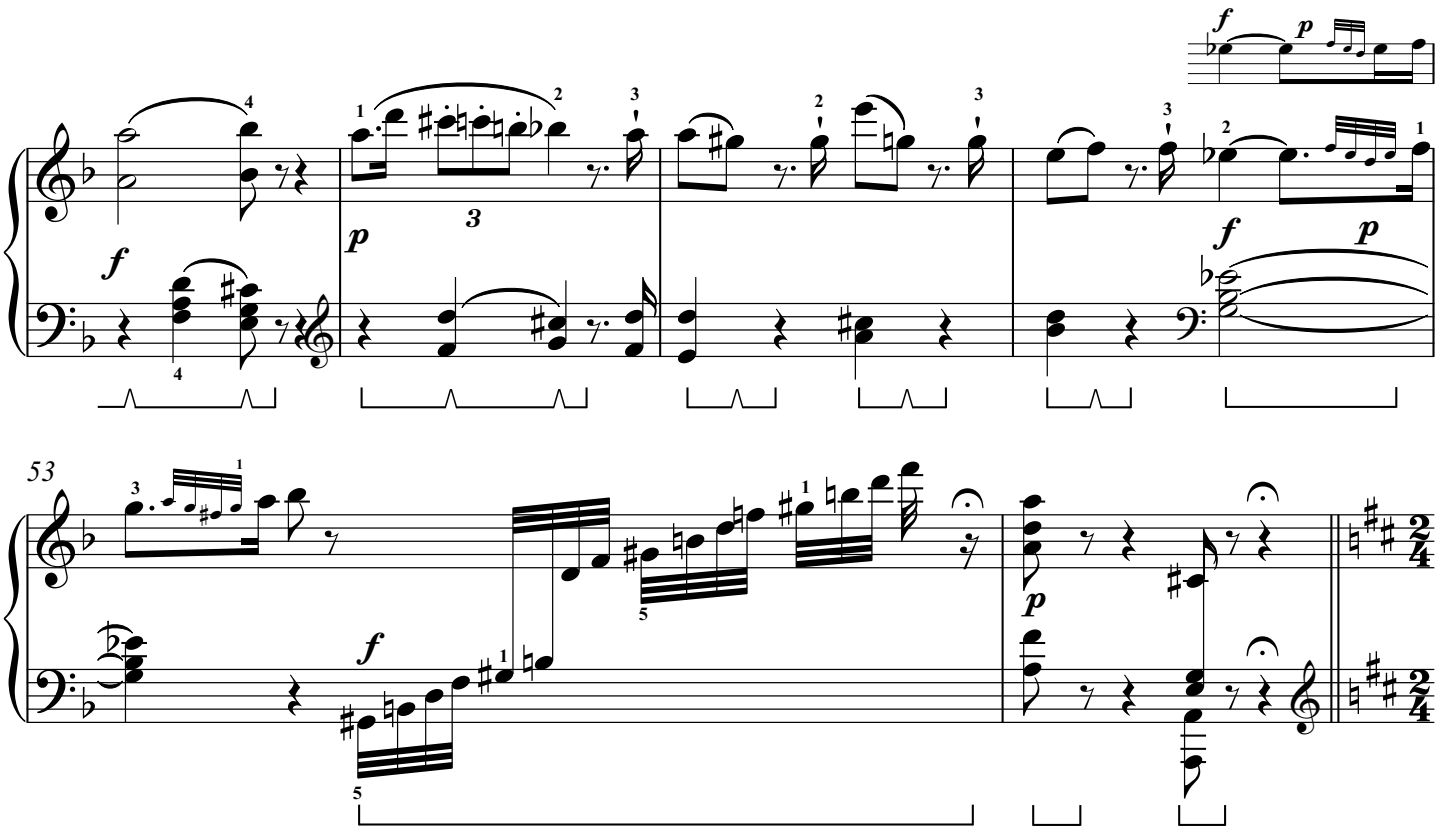
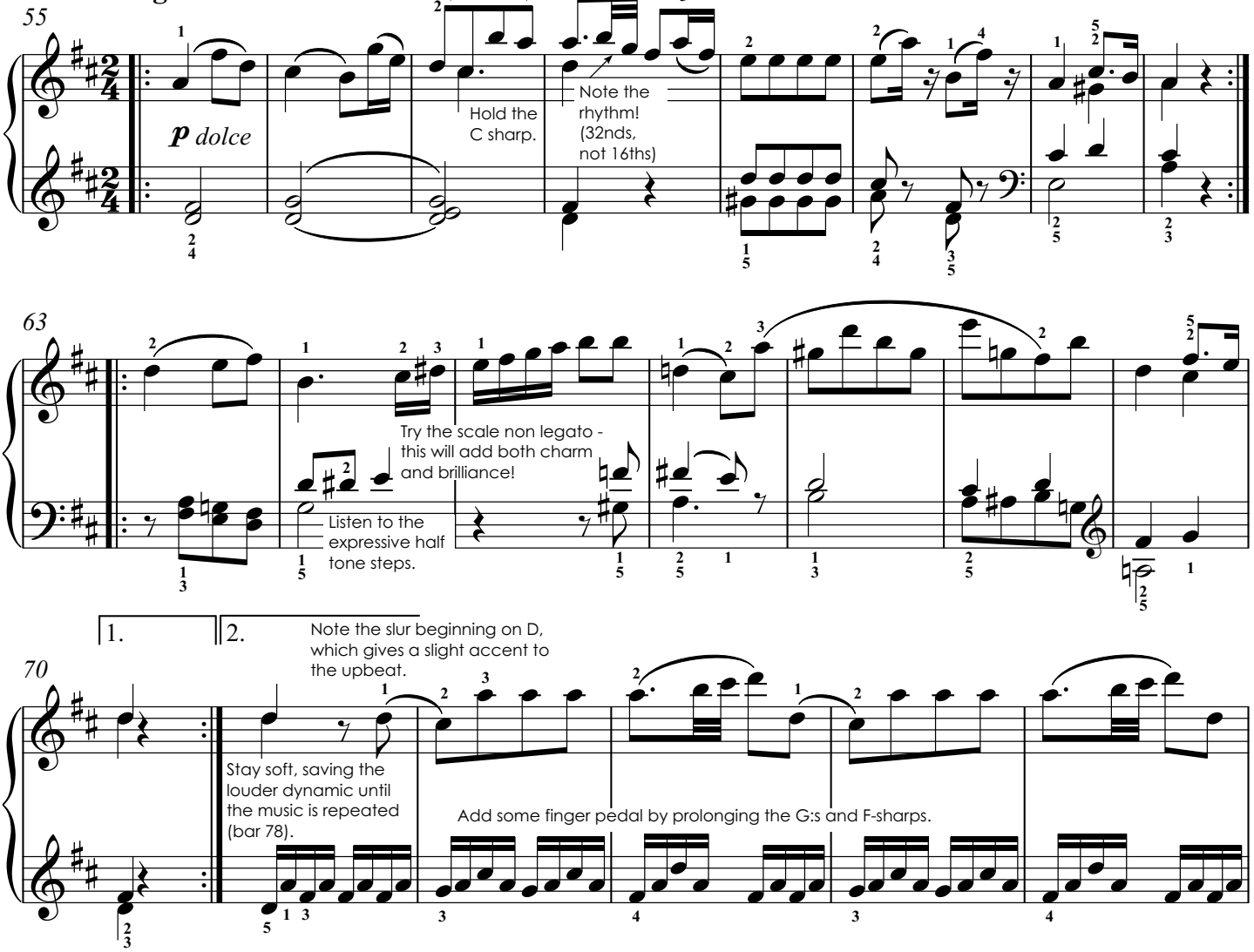


"Allegretto" suggests a moderately fast tempo. Focus on lightness and grace and keep the speed comfortable.
These are Mozart's original slurs, but most pianists continue the legato across barlines. See Practice Guide, exercise 8 for tips on articulation.

Allegretto



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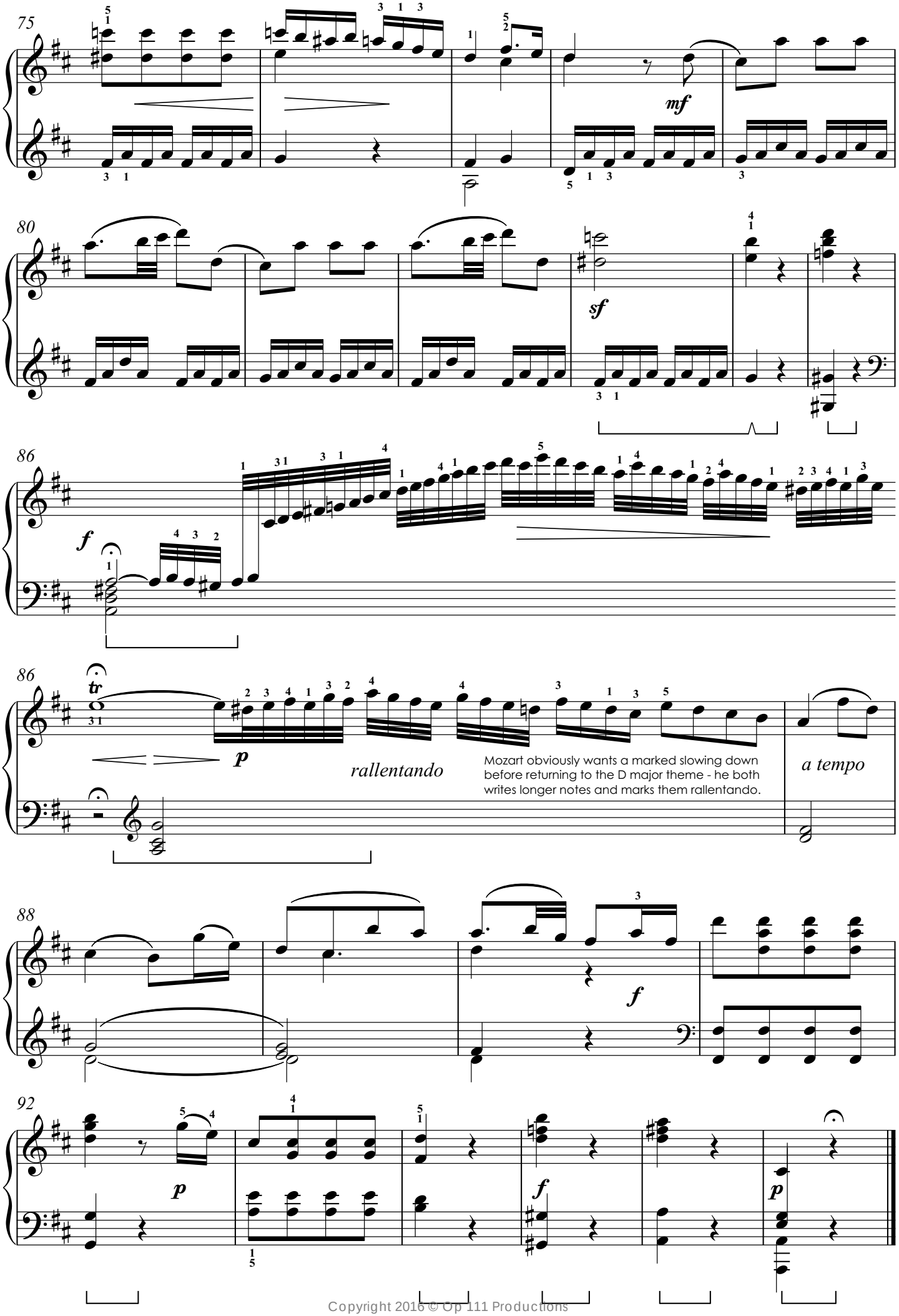

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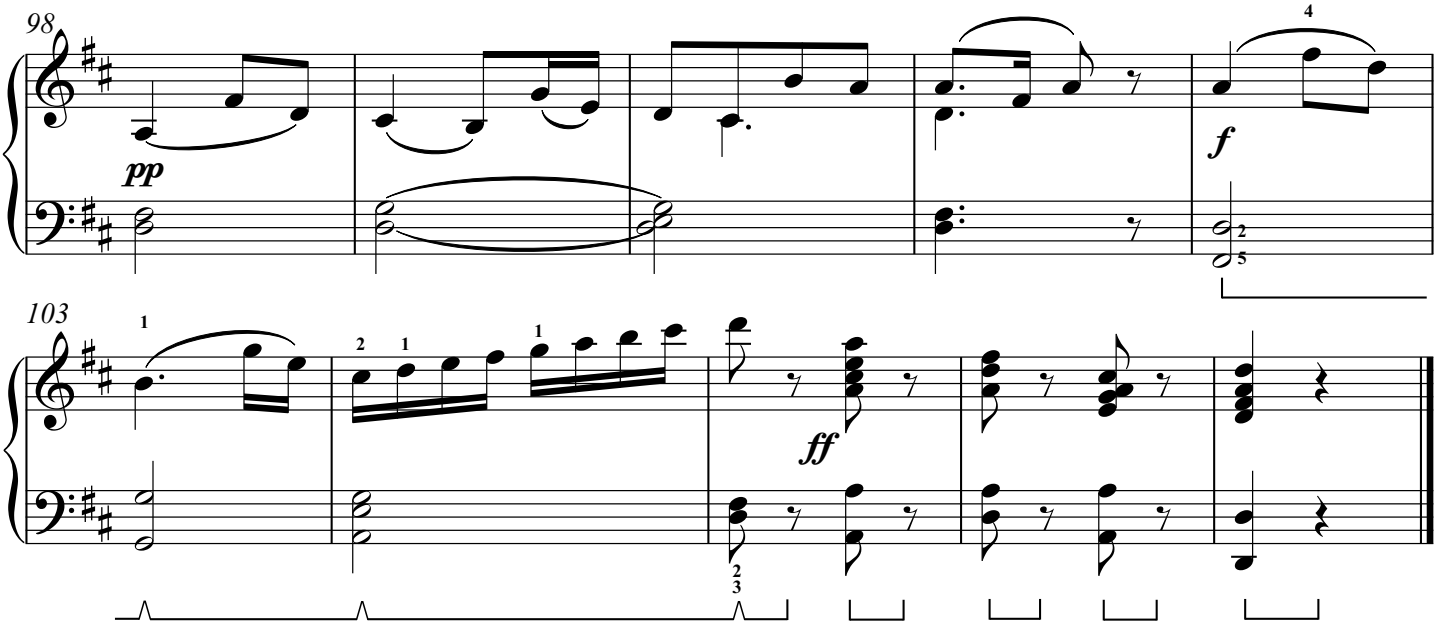
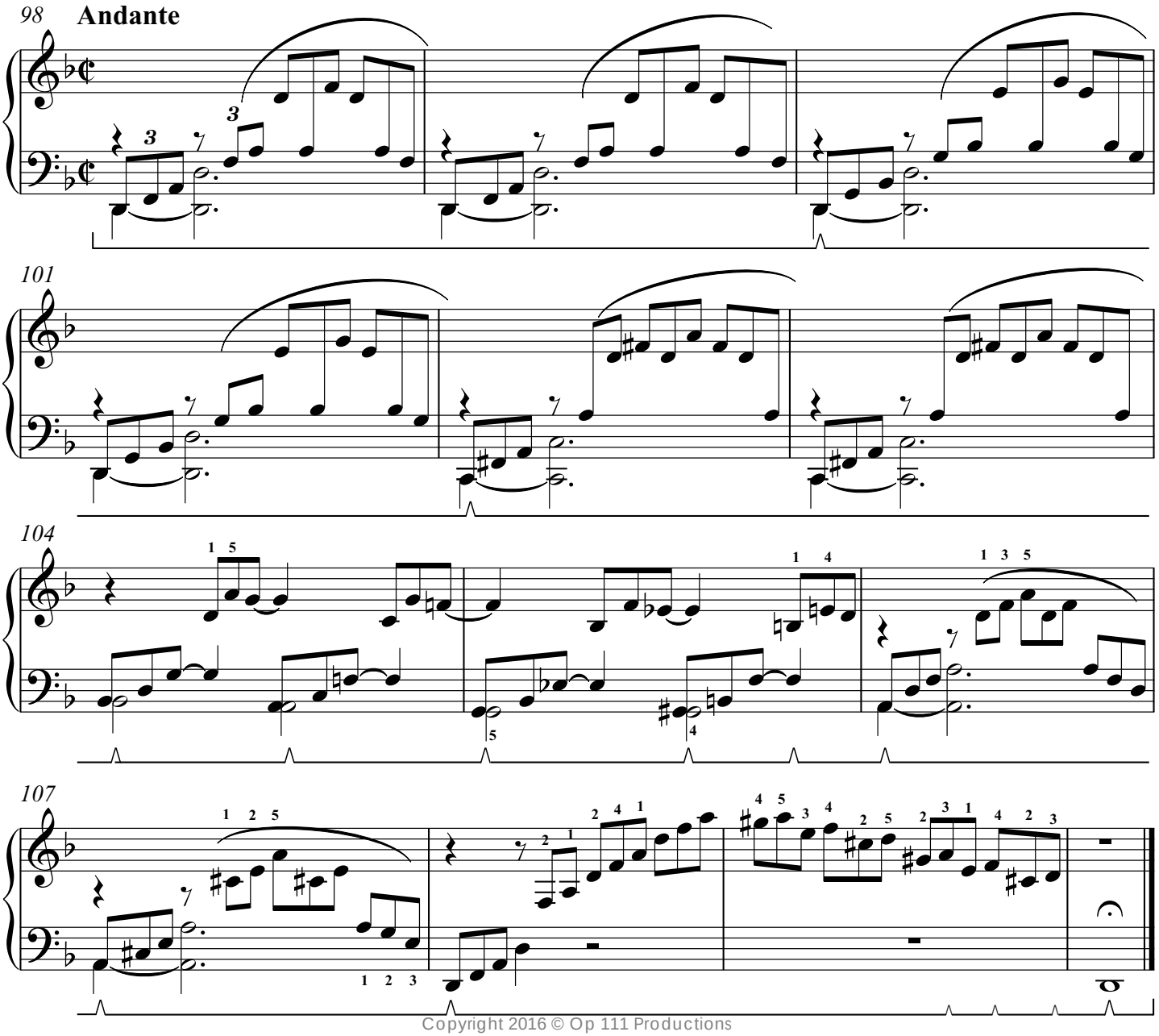
Traditional ending: Probably composed by August Eberhard Müller, first printed by Breitkopf & Härtel 1804.



Alternative ending: Several pianists and scholars have suggested ending the Fantasy by returning to D minor and the arpeggiated chords of the beginning. This example shows how to do this in a very simple fashion. Feel free to add more notes or to compose your own version!



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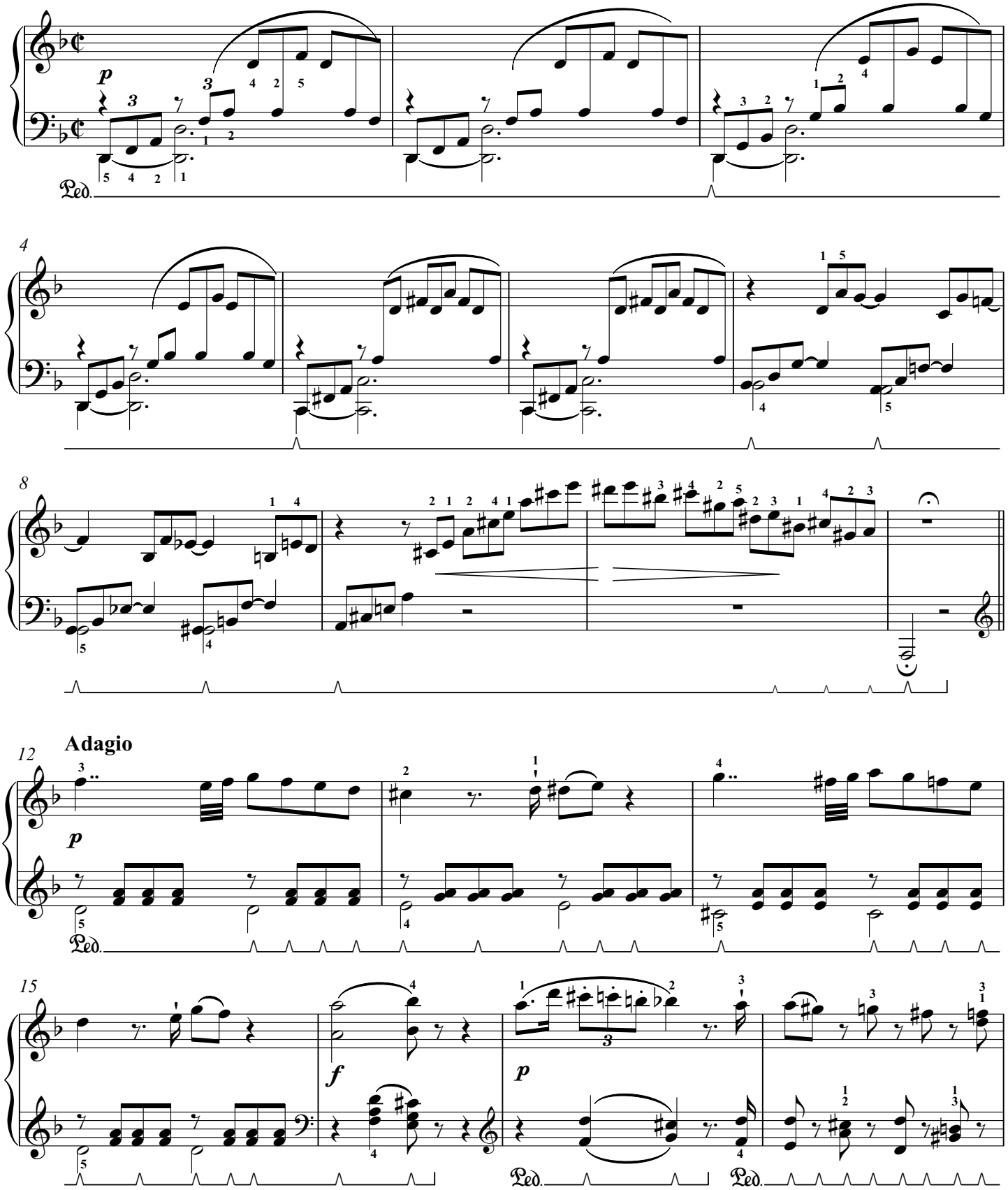
FANTASIA

K. 397

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Piano Street Edition

Andante



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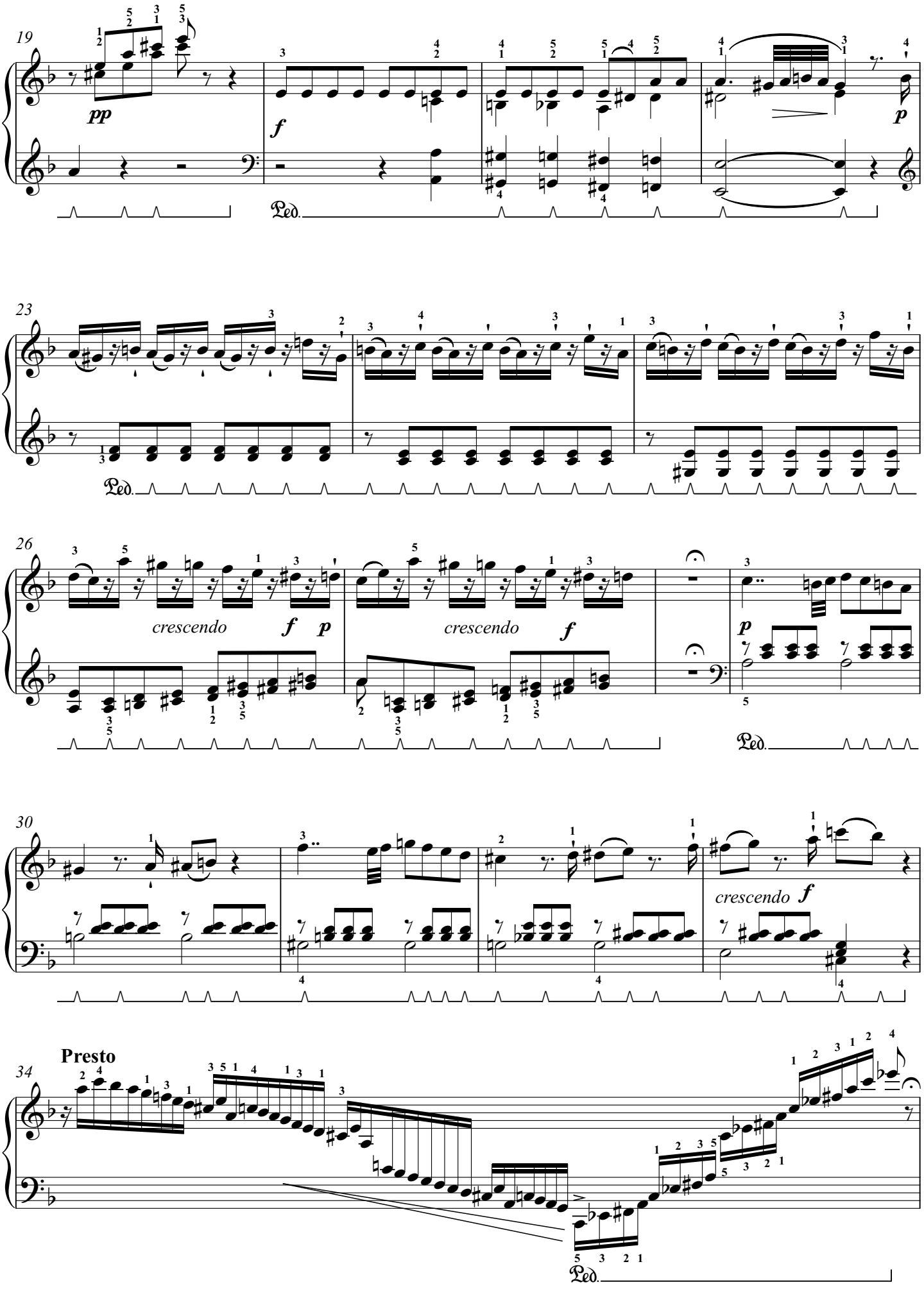

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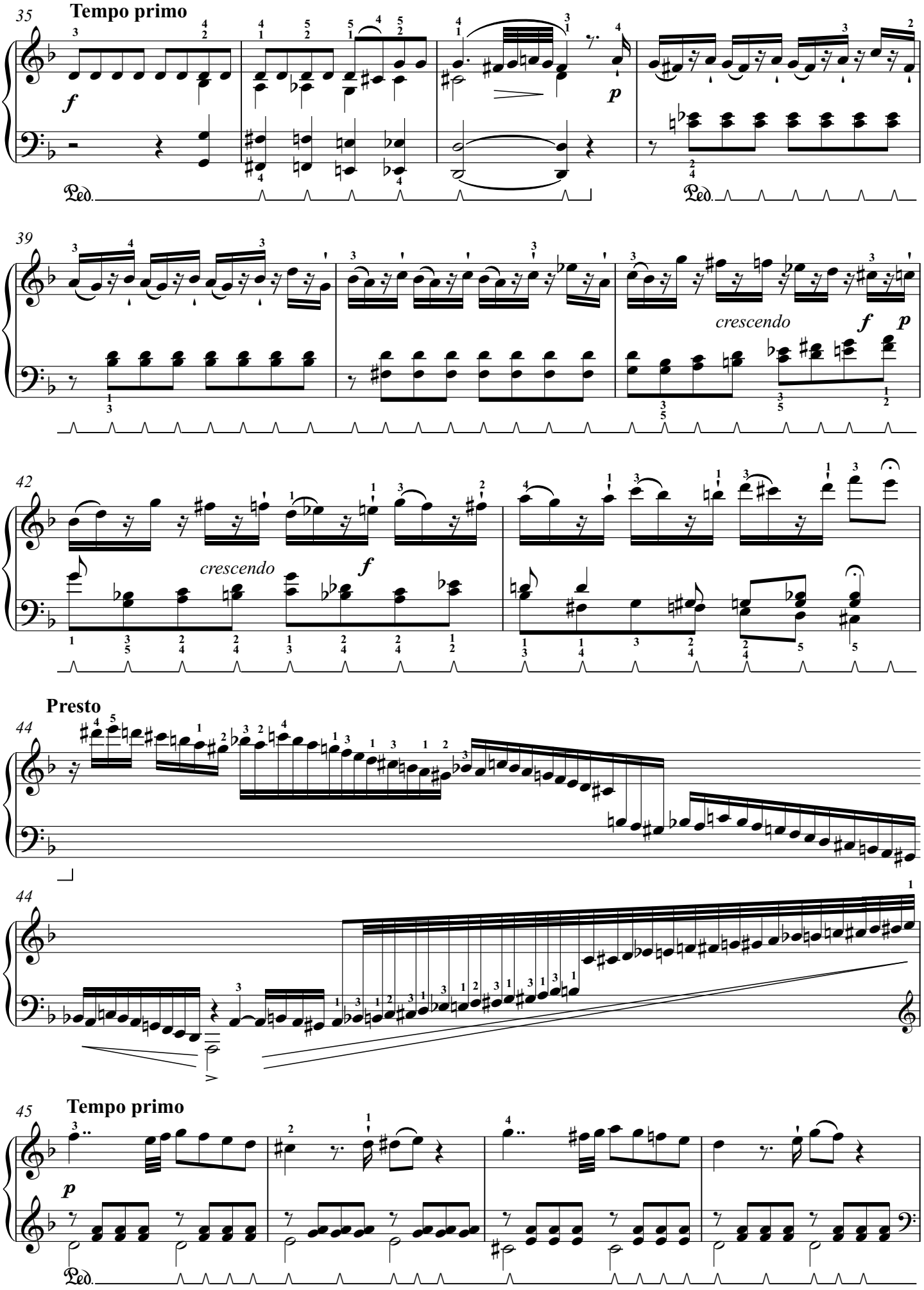

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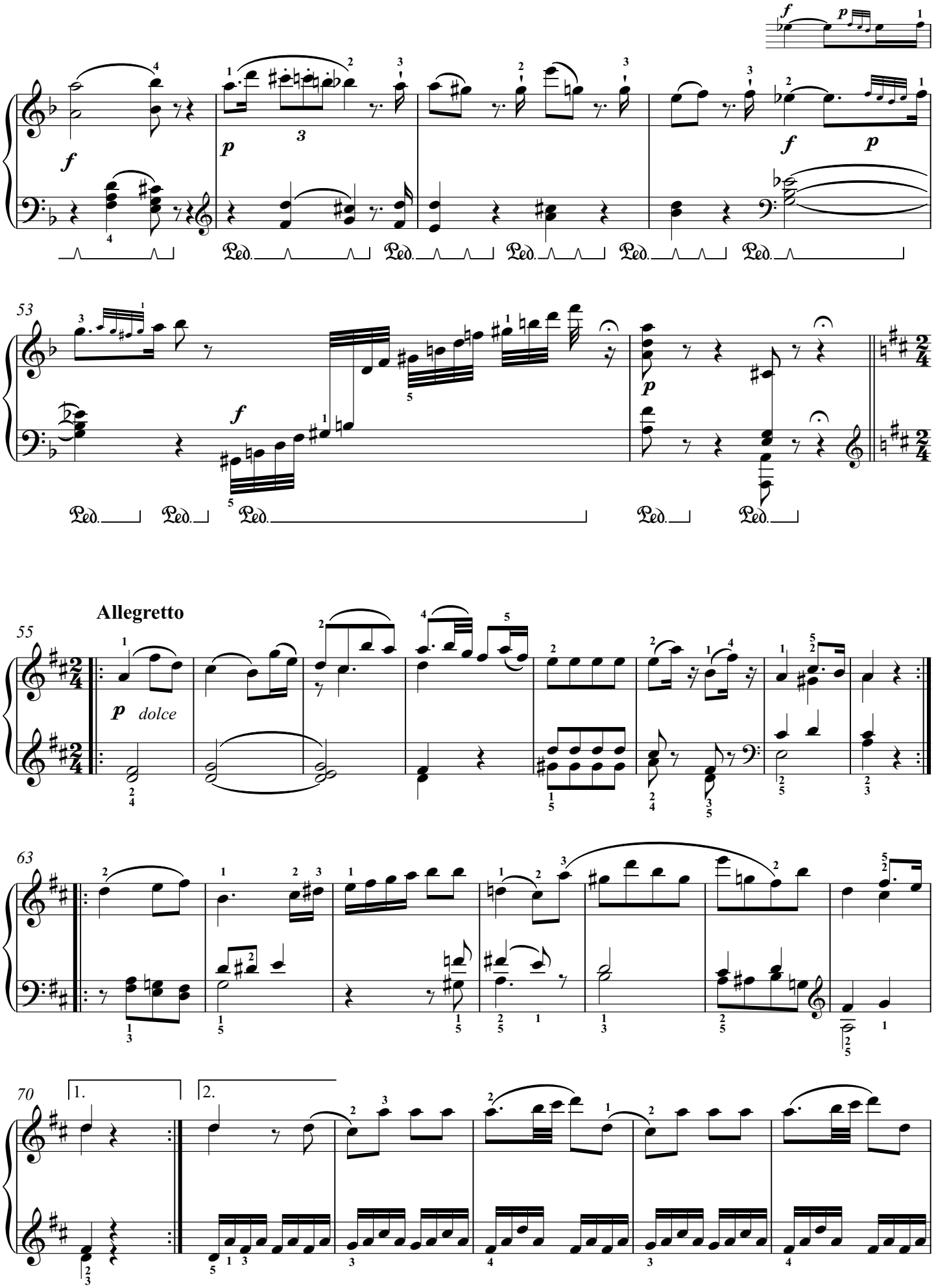

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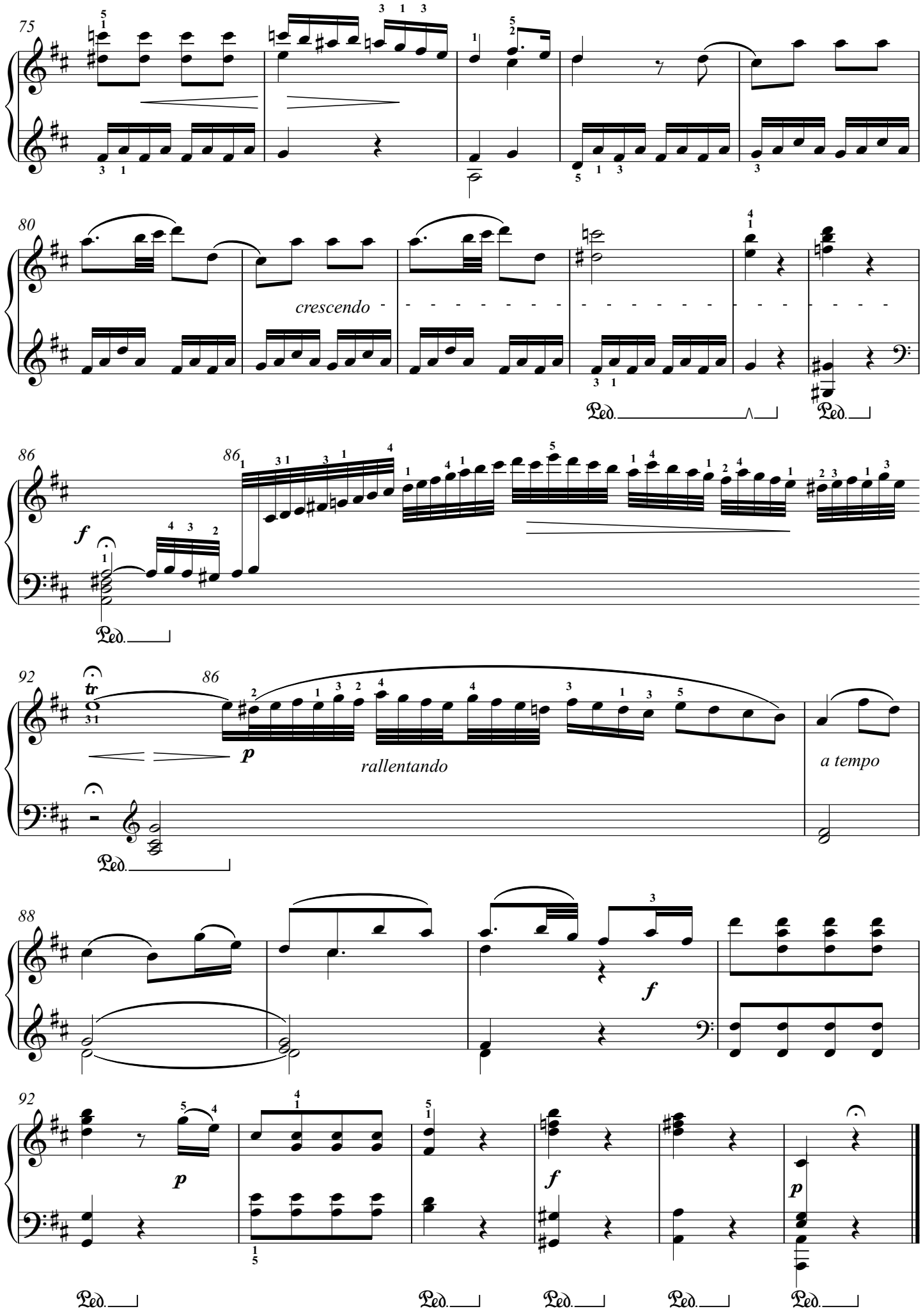

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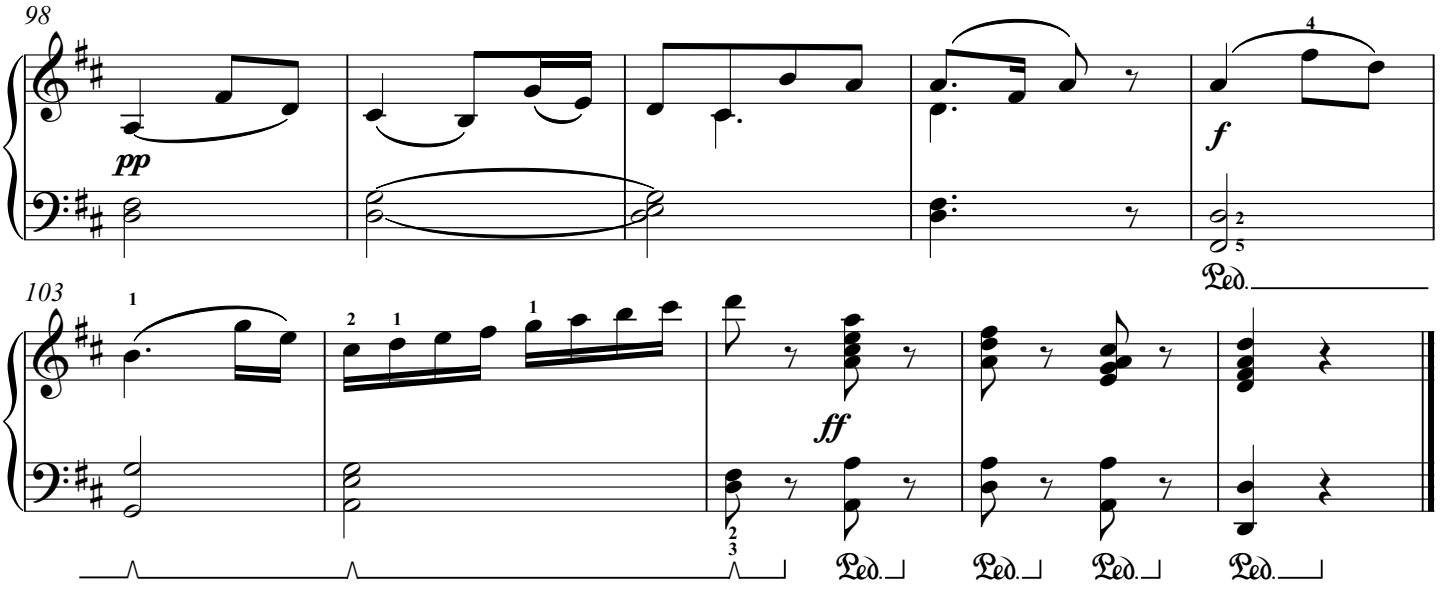
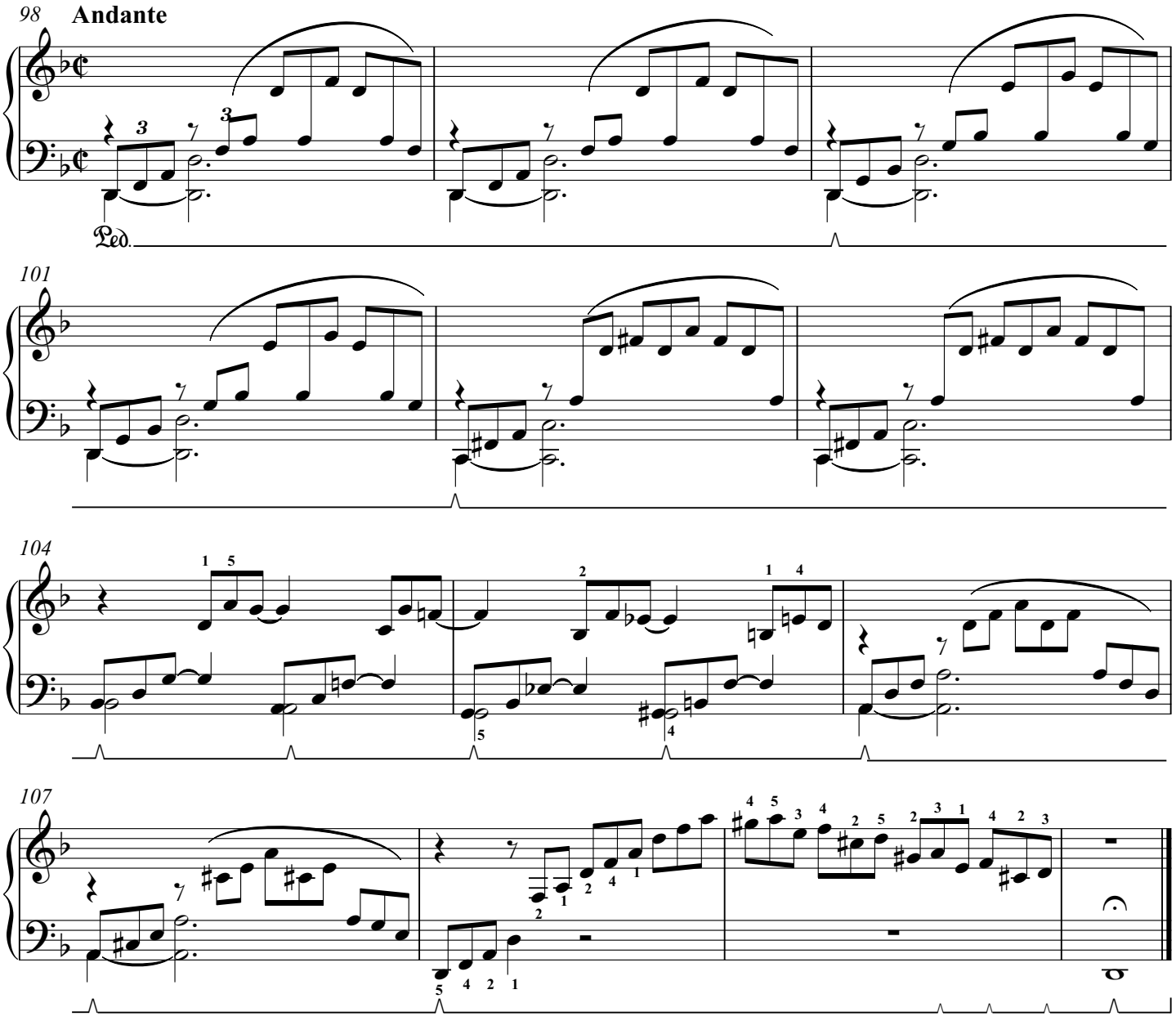


Alternative ending:

In recent years, a number of pianists and scholars have suggested ending the Fantasy by returning to D minor and the arpeggiated chords of the beginning. Our version shows how to do this in the simplest way possible. Feel free to add more notes or to compose your own ending!



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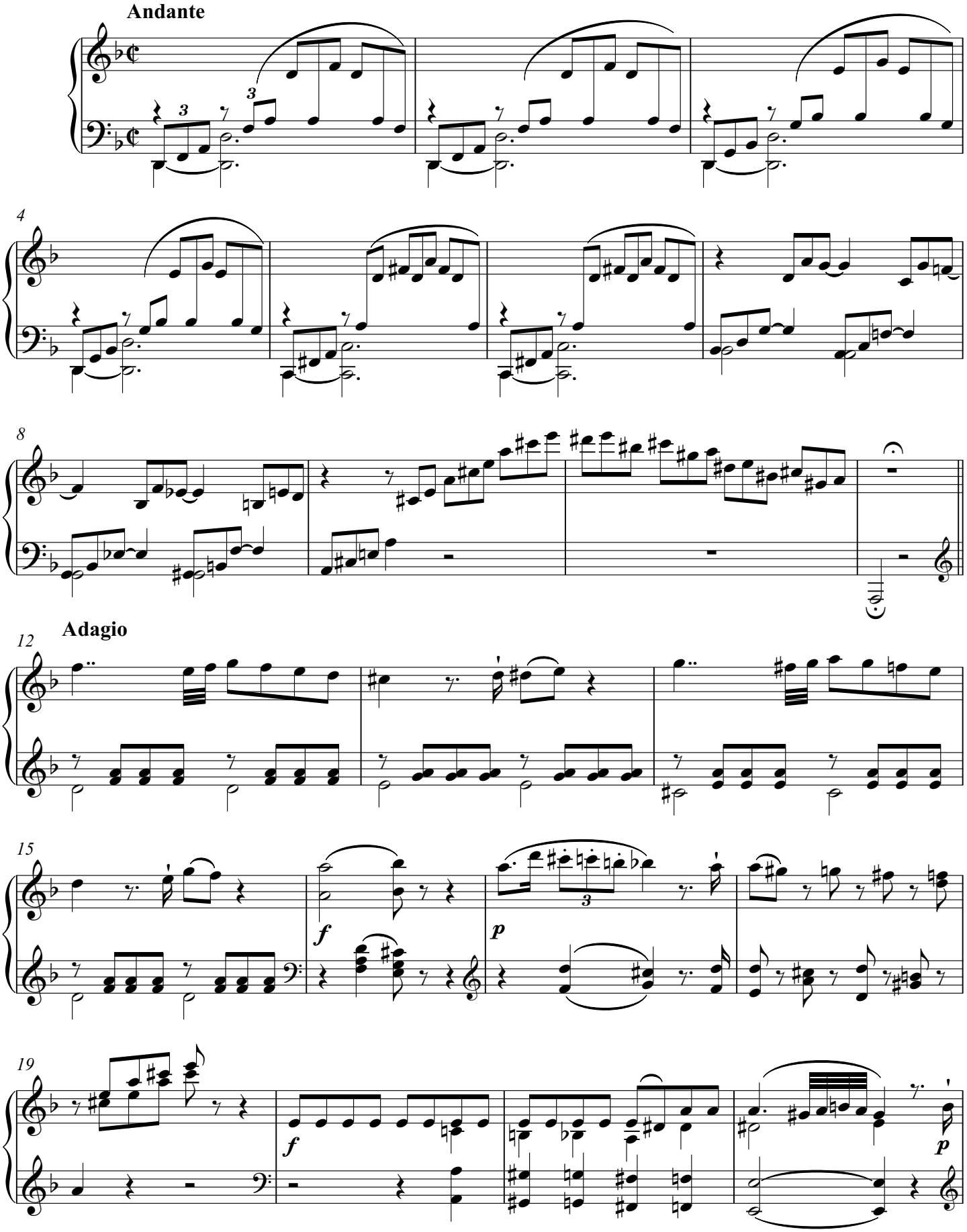
FANTASIA

K. 397

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Piano Street Urtext



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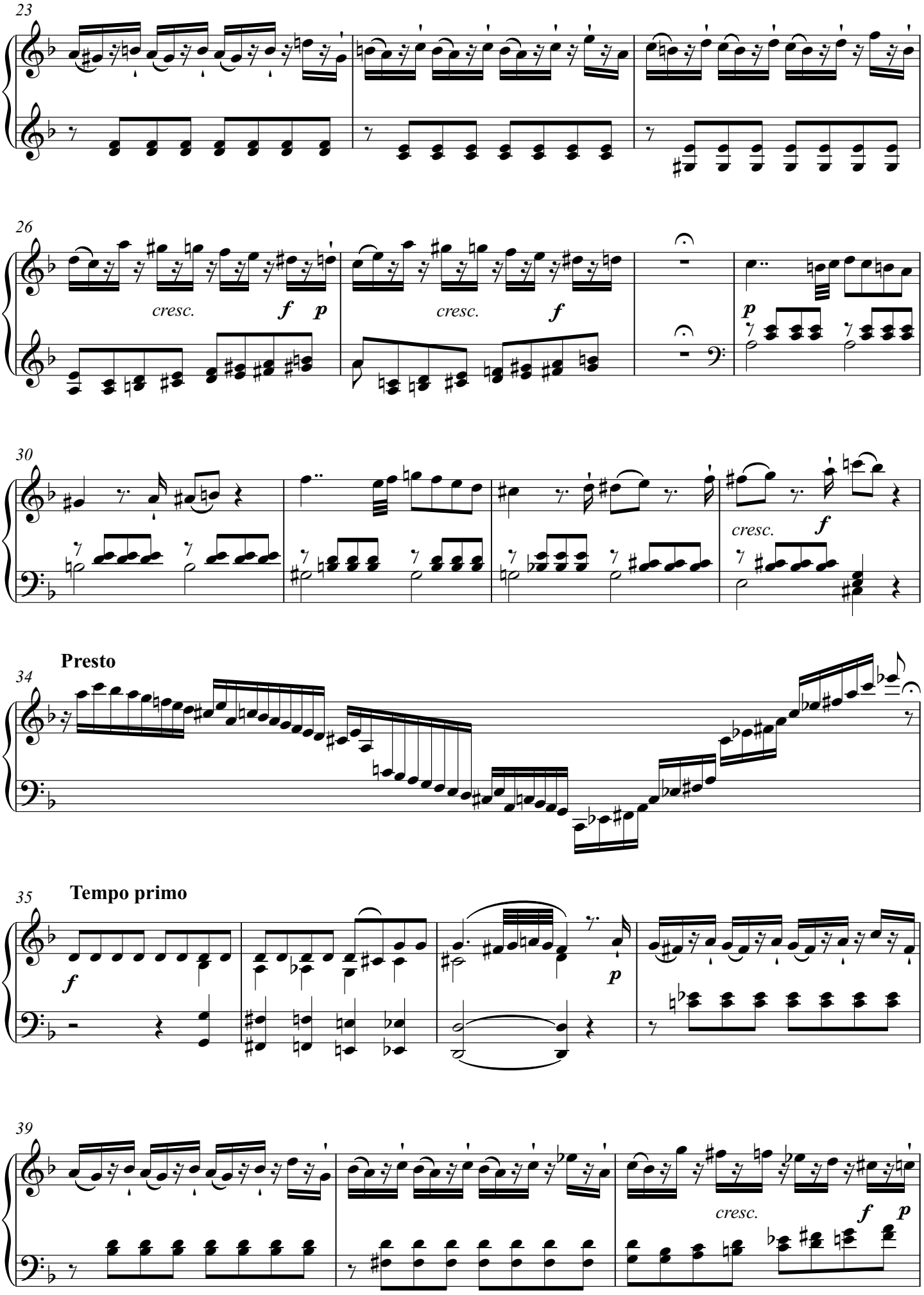

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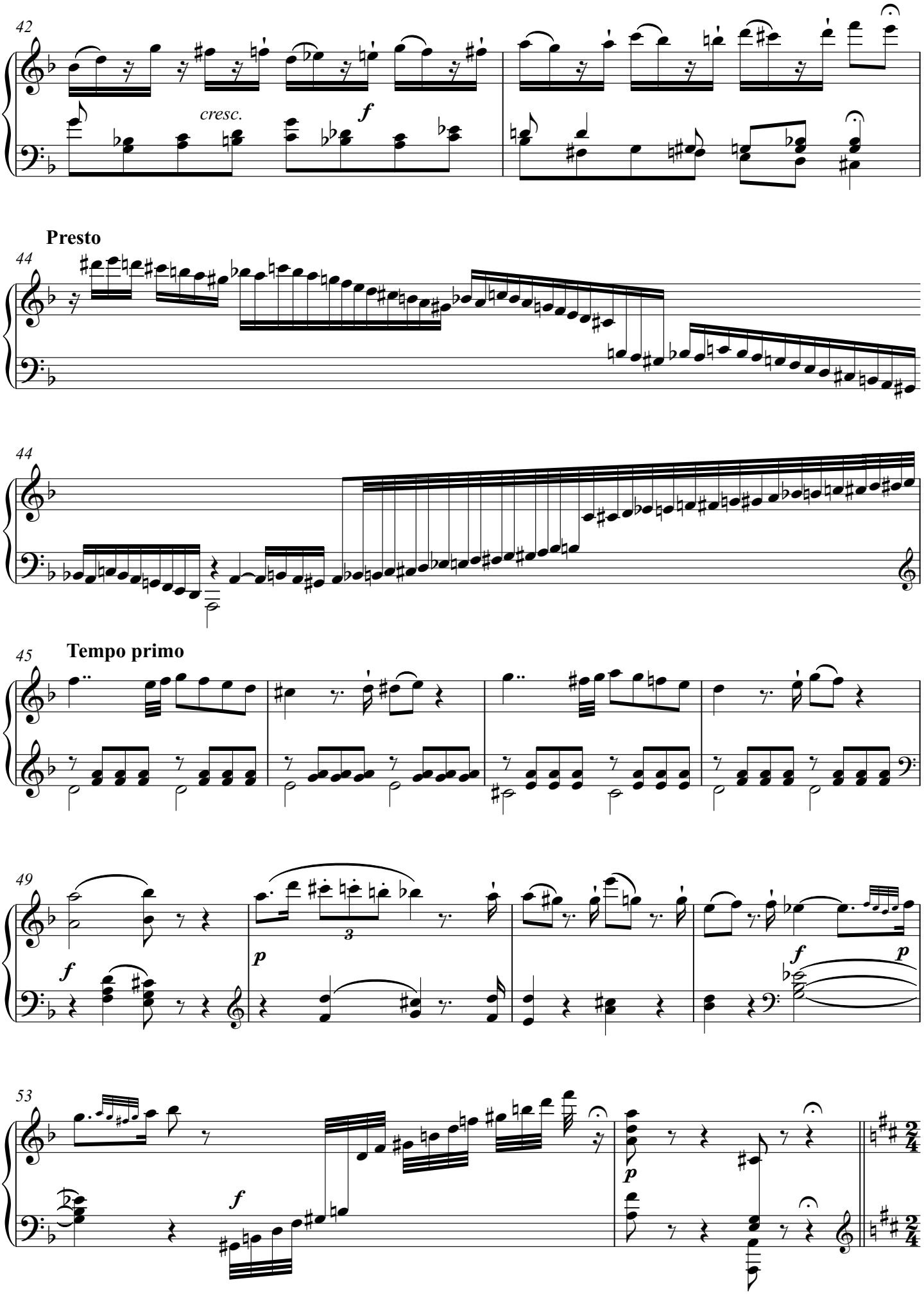

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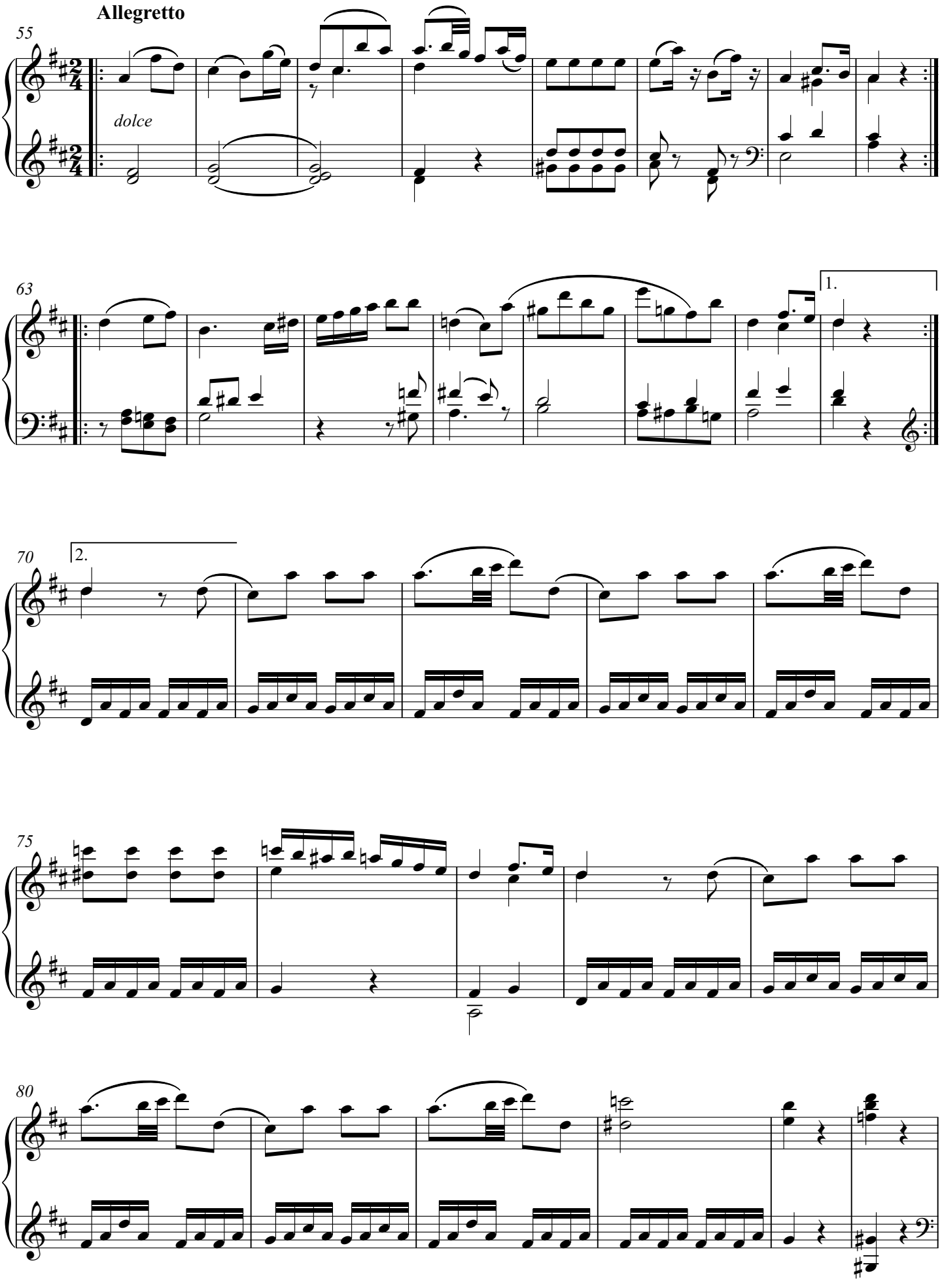

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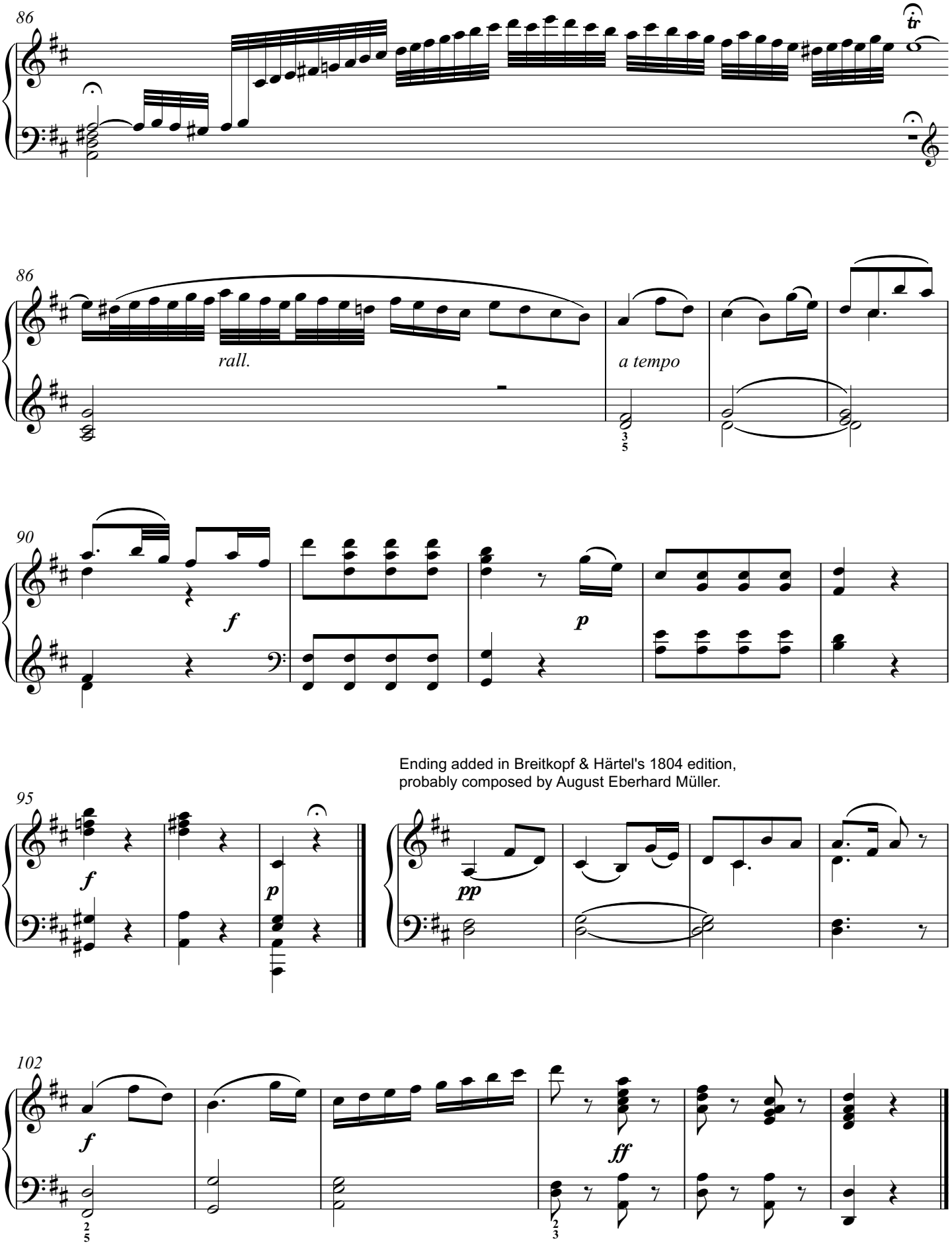

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