Organ Symphony No. 2

on Gregorian Easter Chants

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Alexander Kirsch

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Organ Symphony No. 2 on Gregorian Easter Chants

A preface by the composer.

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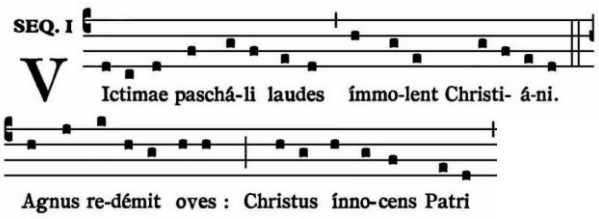
This latest instalment in the development of single-movement sonata forms has most of its thematic material in common with the tenth, and last, of Charles Marie Widor's great organ symphonies, the "Symphonie Romane", op. 73. However, as is generally the case with the late romantic French organ symphonies, Widor's piece is more akin to the Baroque suite than to the symphonic formal principles of the Classical age and beyond, as there is little connection across its four movements (Moderato; Choral; Cantilène; Finale), nor are these movements in any way related to the traditional symphonic arrangement (Sonata Allegro; Andante/Adagio; Minuet/Scherzo; Finale).

The author's *Organ Symphony No. 2 on Gregorian Easter Chants*, on the other hand, can be understood as a four movement symphony (Sonata movement; Scherzo; Slow movement; Rondo-Finale) which is contained within a traditional sonata form (Exposition with 1st & 2nd Subject groups; Development; Recapitulation and Coda), and it should be relatively easy to perceive this duality when listening to the work.[1]

The Gregorian chorales chosen as the main thematic material in this Organ Symphony No. 2, as well as in Widor's "Symphonie Romane" - and amongst numerous other works from the Middle Ages until today -, are some of the most popular tunes indeed which formed part of the monastic liturgies of both the Holy Week and the Easter Holidays.[2] Here, in the Organ Symphony No. 2, they are initially being presented in the following, distinct manners:

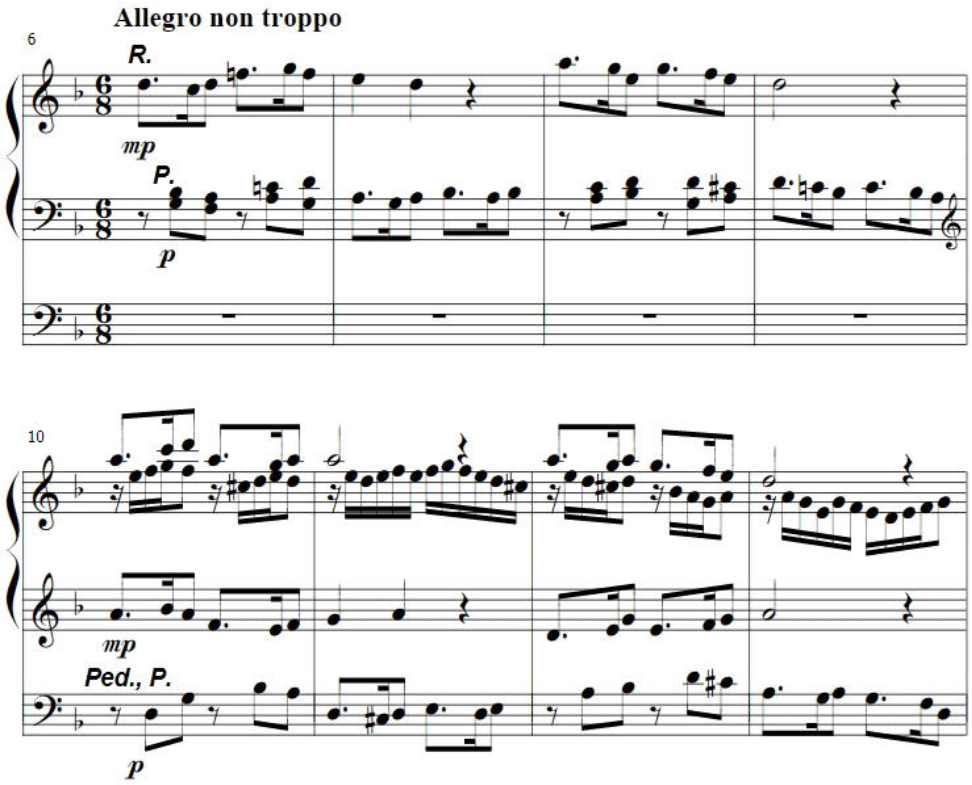
- ***Victimae Paschalis Laudes***



appears in the style of a ***Siciliano:***

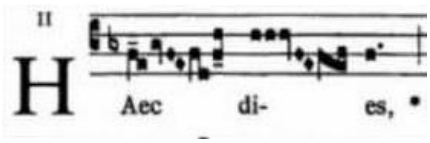
[1] For a more detailed essay on the genesis - and the problematic - of the single-movement sonata form, past and present, visit this blog post by the author: Developing the Single-movement Sonata Form

[2] Several of the Gregorian chants have been, following the Reformation, incorporated into the Protestant Hymn books, such as *Victimae Paschalis Laudes* which has become, albeit in a much altered form, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, by Martin Luther in 1524.

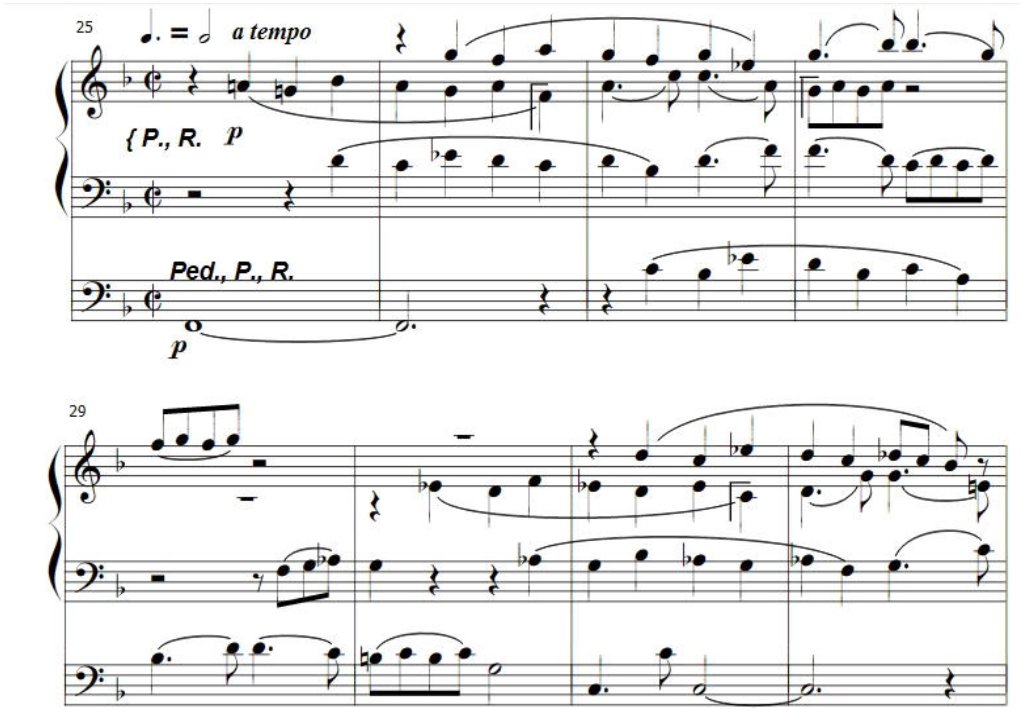


* * *

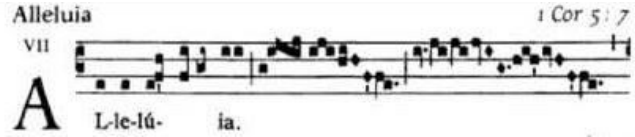
- ***Haec Dies***



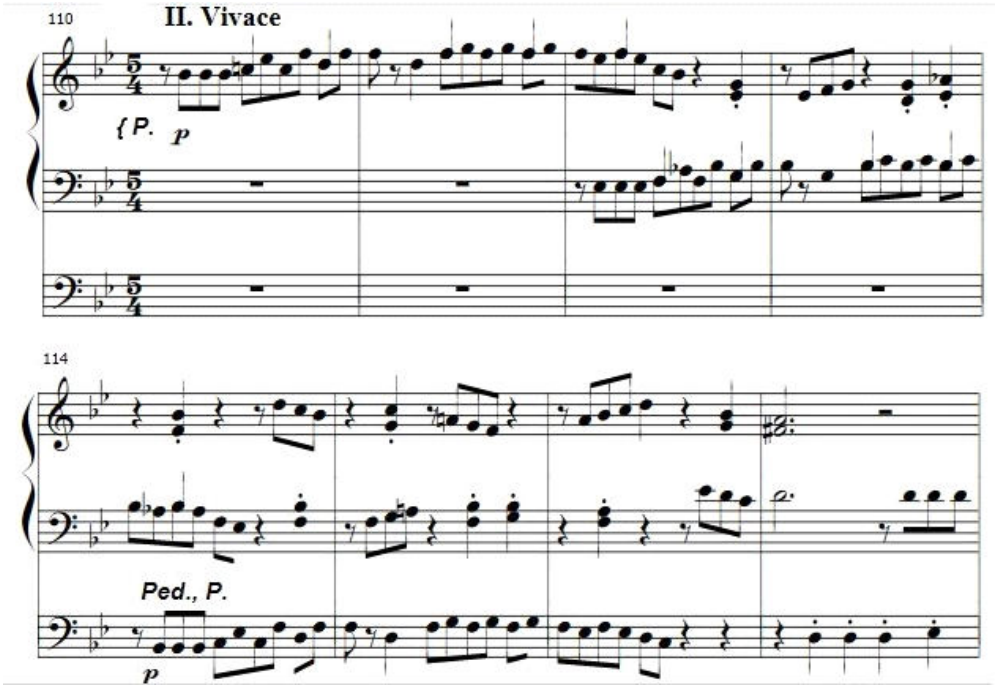
as a ***Ricercare:***



- ***Alleluia Pascha Nostrum***

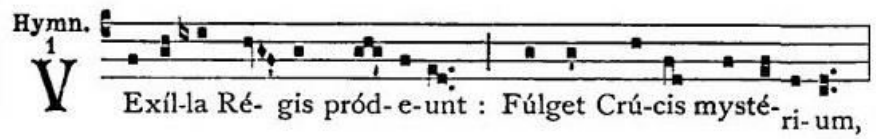


as a ***Fuga:***

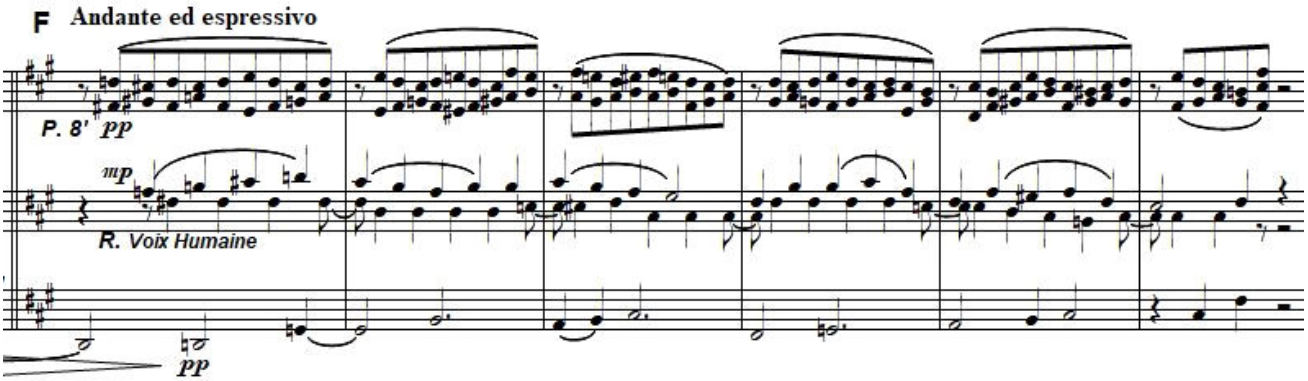


* * *

- ***Vexilla Regis***



as an ***Arioso*** *(in the Tenor):*



* * *

The diagram below serves to illustrate - in place of a full verbal analysis - the formal sections of the Organ Symphony No. 2 and how the themes fit into its general scheme: [3]

I. Sonata movement	**II. Scherzo**	**III. Slow movement**	**IV. Rondo-Finale - Coda**	
Exposition		***Development***	***Recapitulation***	***Coda***
1st Subject Group	2nd Subject Group			
d Minor bar: 1	*Bb Major* 110	*a Minor/modulatory* 208	*d Minor* 260	*D Major* 444
Exposition: Motto* 1. Subj. *Victimae Paschalis* - **d** 2. Subj. *Haec Dies*/Codetta - **F** Motto/Development/Motto Recapitulation: 1. Subj. - **d** 2. Subj - **D** Motto/Codetta/Transition	**Fuga** *Alleluia Pascha* - ***Bb*** **Trio** *Vexilla Regis* - ***f#*** Fuga - **Bb** Trio - **d** Fuga - **Bb** Motto/Codetta/Transition	A (*all themes*) B (Development) A' Re-transition	Motto 1. Subj. - **d** 2. Subj. - **D** 1. Subj./Motto - **d** **Fuga** (Development)/*Vexilla Regis* - **F** Motto/1. Subj - **D/g** 2. Subj. - **D** Interlude (1. Subj. *Lento*/Motto) - **D**	**Toccata - D** (*all themes*) Motto

*Motto: The first six notes of *Victimae Paschalis* (beginning of the first phrase), followed by a cadential figure (end of the second phrase).[4]

The Organ Symphony No. 2 shows much improvement in respect of the overall flow and coherence of the individual sections, as well as the way the themes are being juxtaposed and combined. With just under 20 minutes of performing time, or 479 bars of music, it is also a fair bit shorter than its predecessor.

For a colour-coded explanation of the contrapuntal connections throughout all of this work, which are quintessential to the thematic development on one side, and the understanding of the formal logic on the other, the author has prepared this YouTube video:

Organ Symphony No 2 on Gregorian Easter Chants (A. Kirsch) - MIDI - YouTube

Alexander Kirsch

Blackpool, in December 2020

[3] see above footnote [1]; also the preface to the *Organ Symphony No.1 - on Lutheran Christmas Chorales*

[4] Interestingly, notes 1-3 form at the same time their retrograde; notes 4-6 the inversion, as well as the retrograde inversion, of notes 1-3. This matter is being of some importance throughout the polyphonic settings of the Organ Symphony No. 2.

Duration: approx. 19'30''

Sections:

I. Maestoso p. 1

II. Vivace p. 9

III. Molto adagio p. 18

IV. Tempo I p. 23

Organ Symphony No. 2

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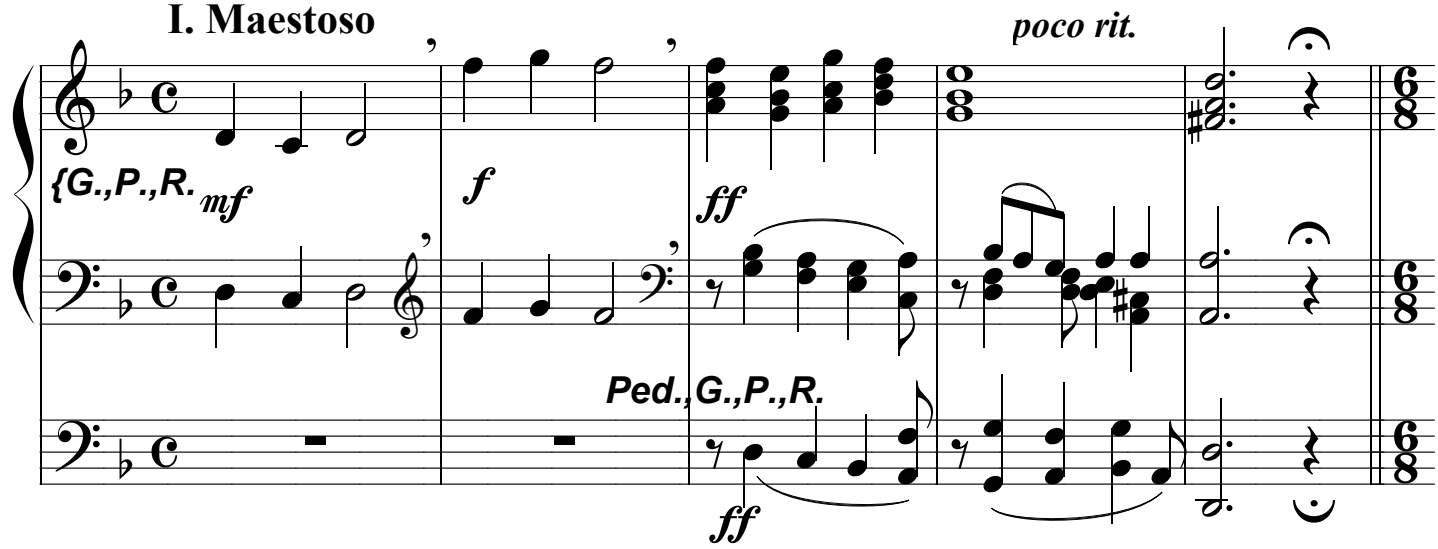
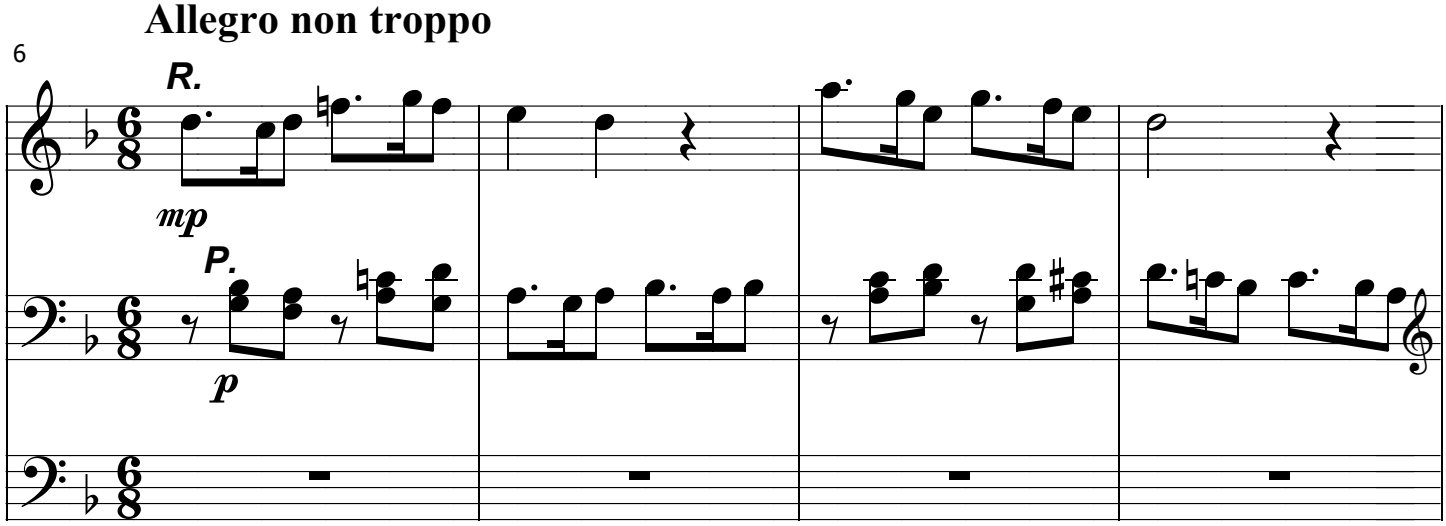
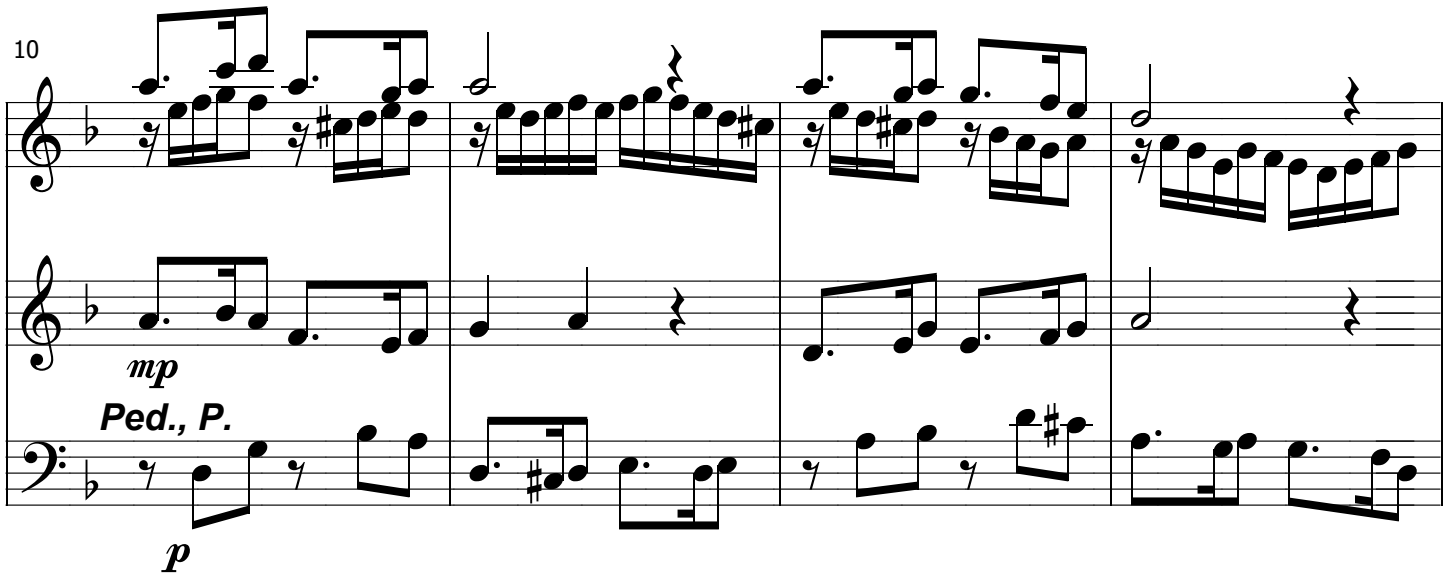
Alexander Kirsch

P. 8,4' - R. 8,4' - G. 16,8,4' - Ped. 16,8'







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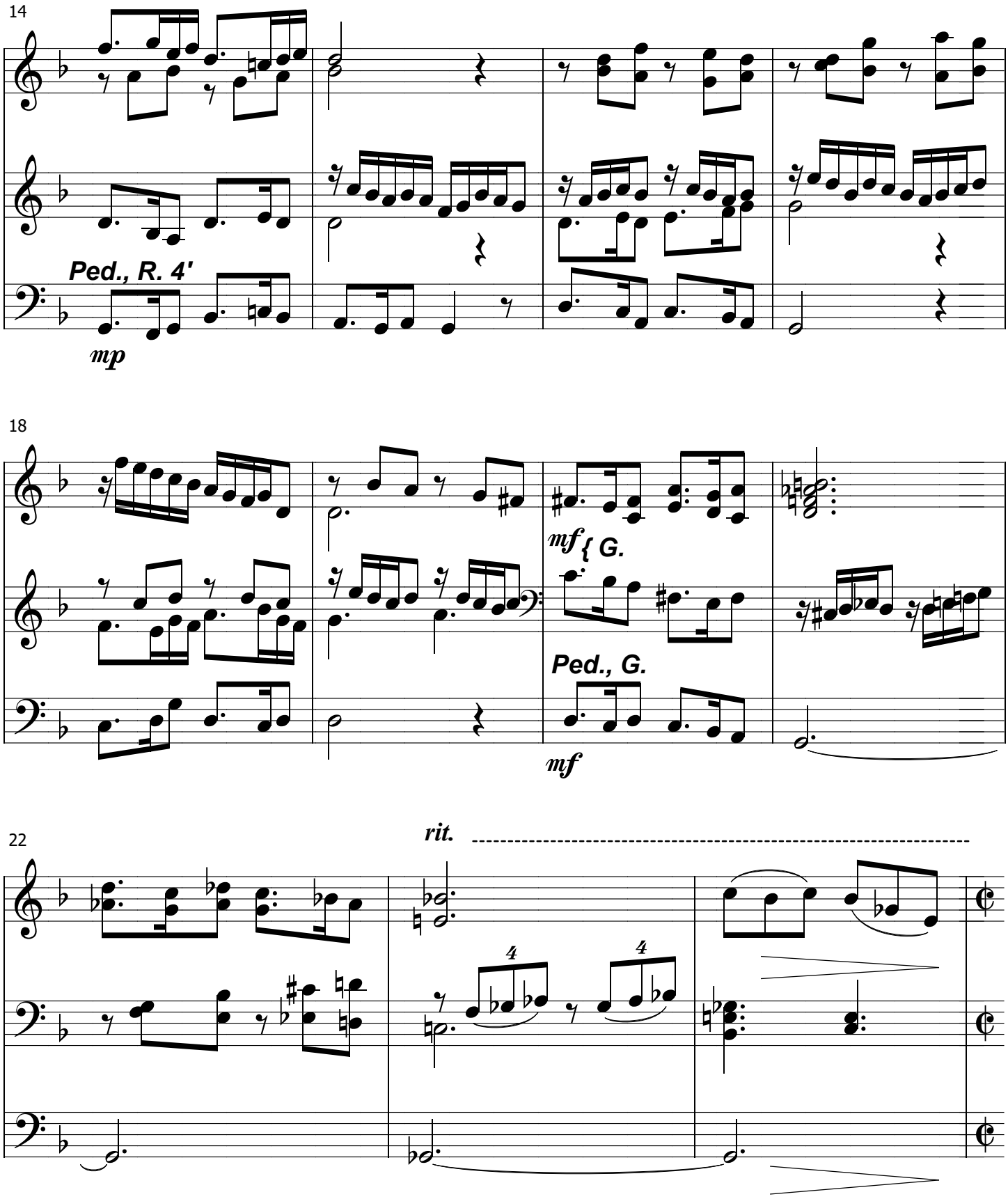
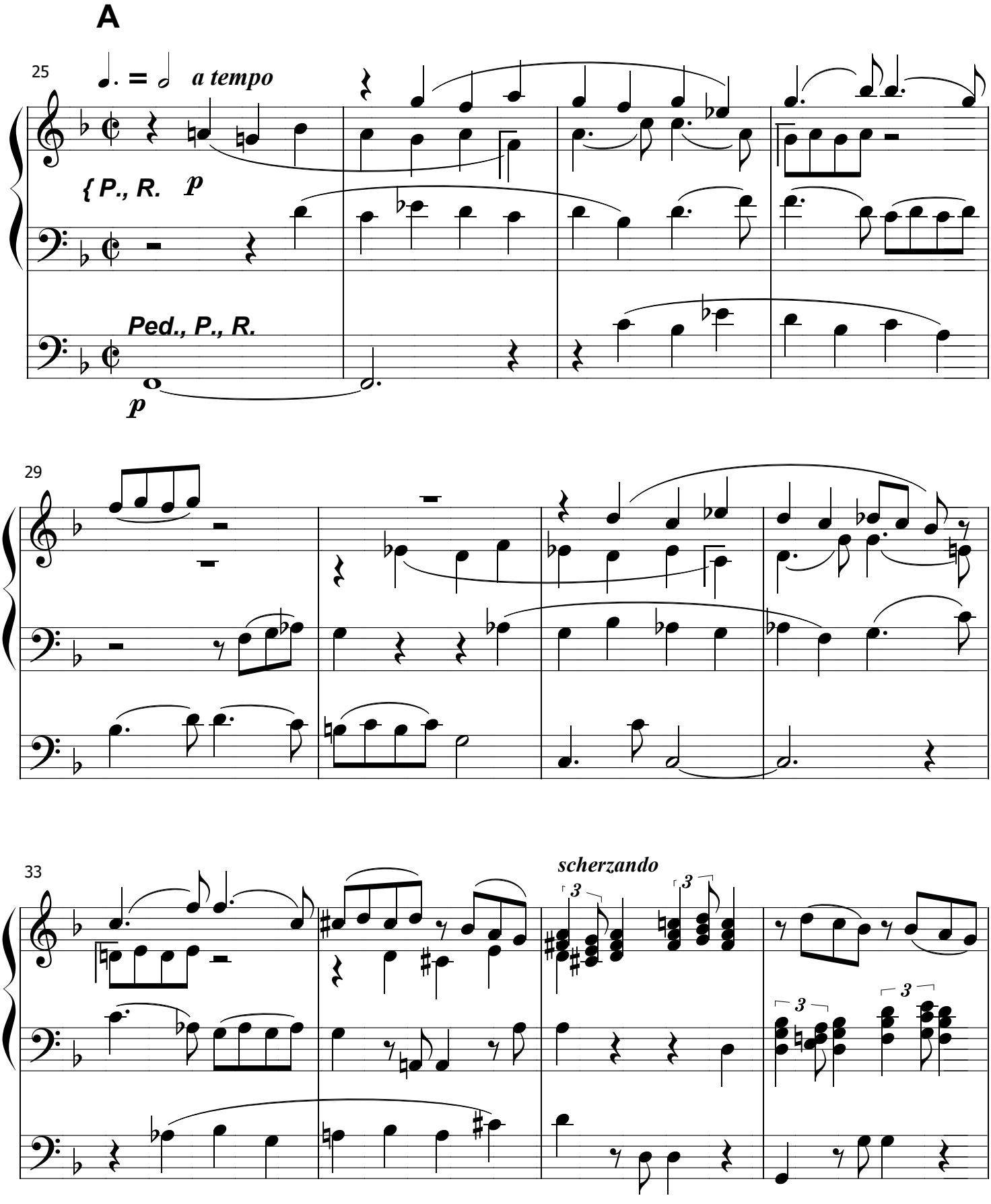
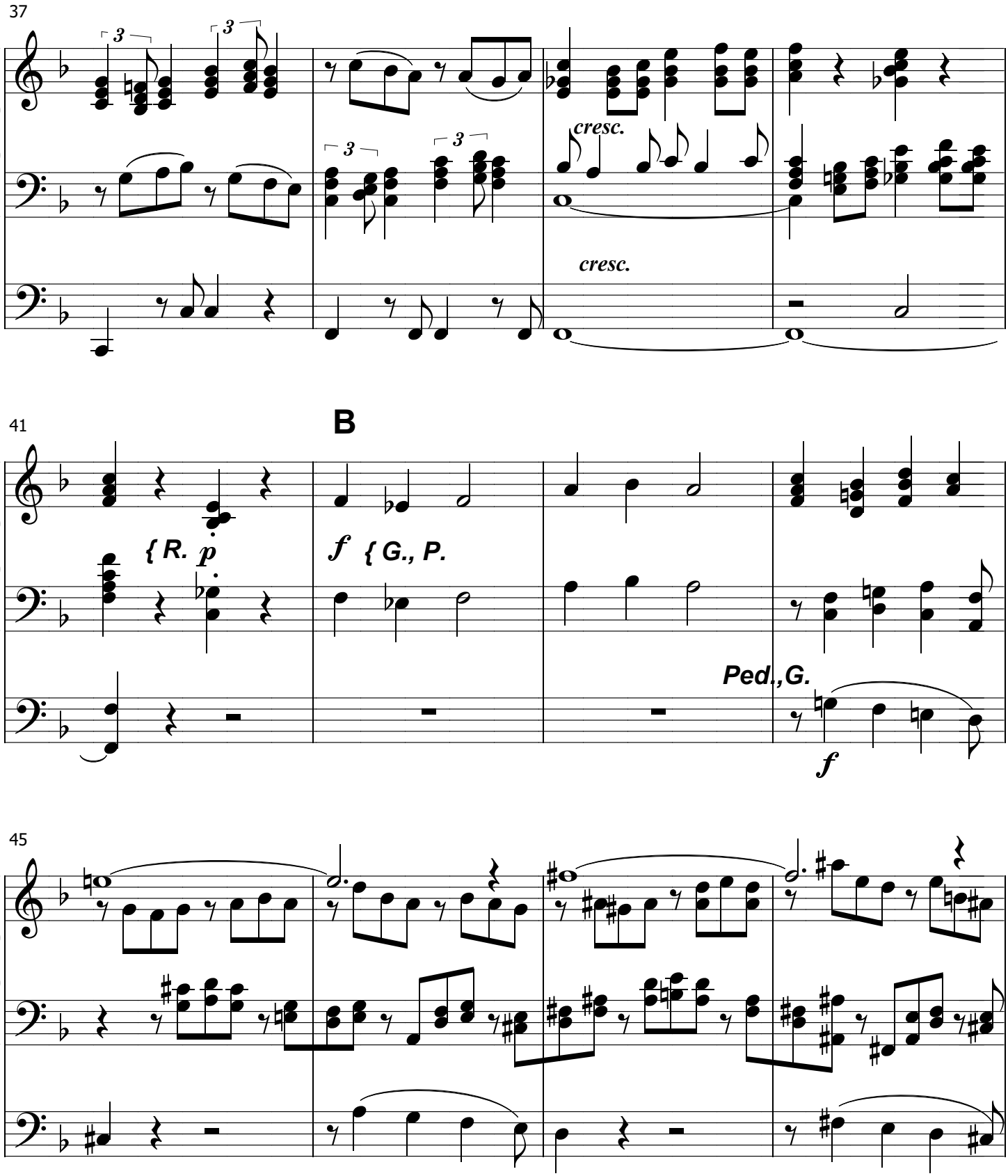
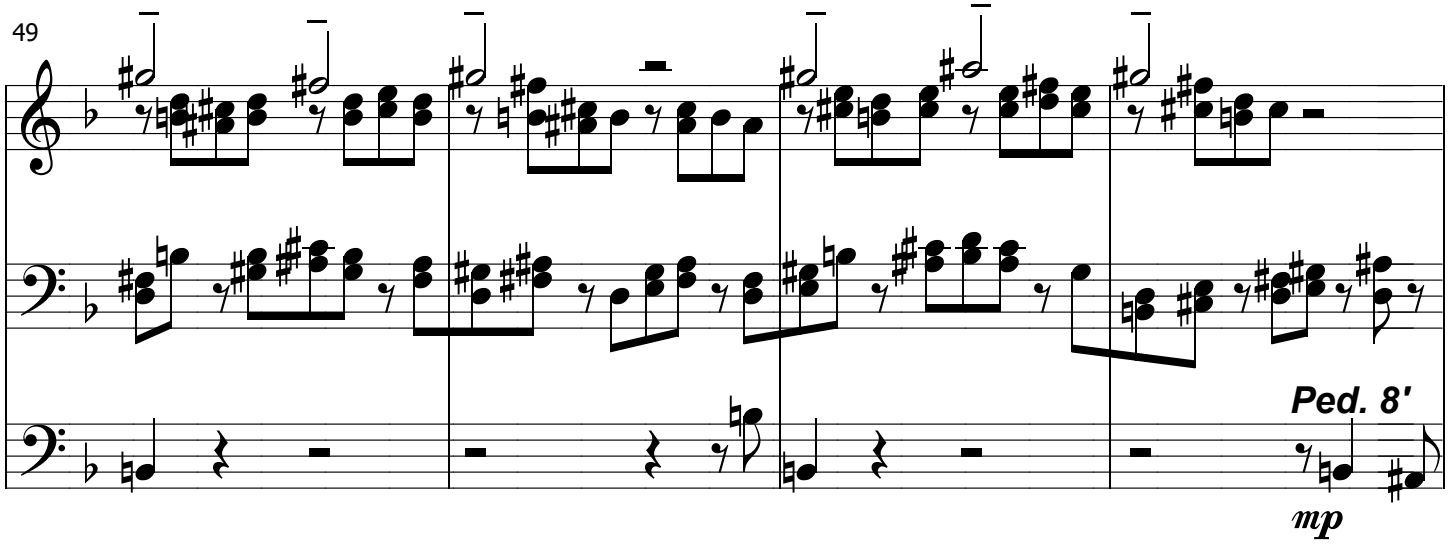
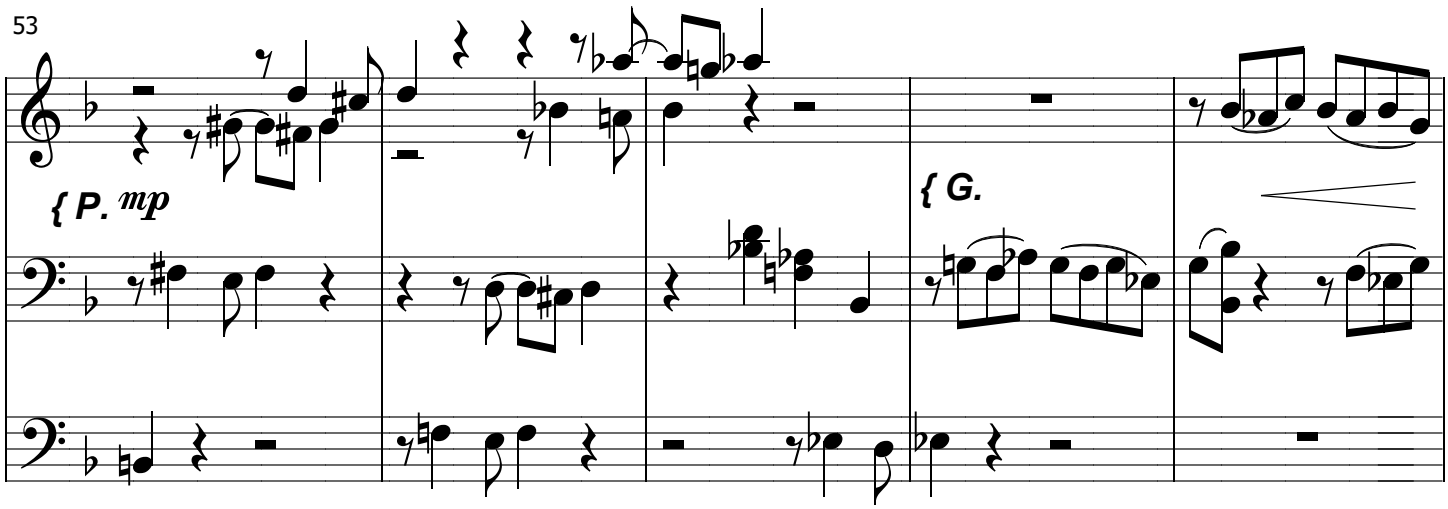
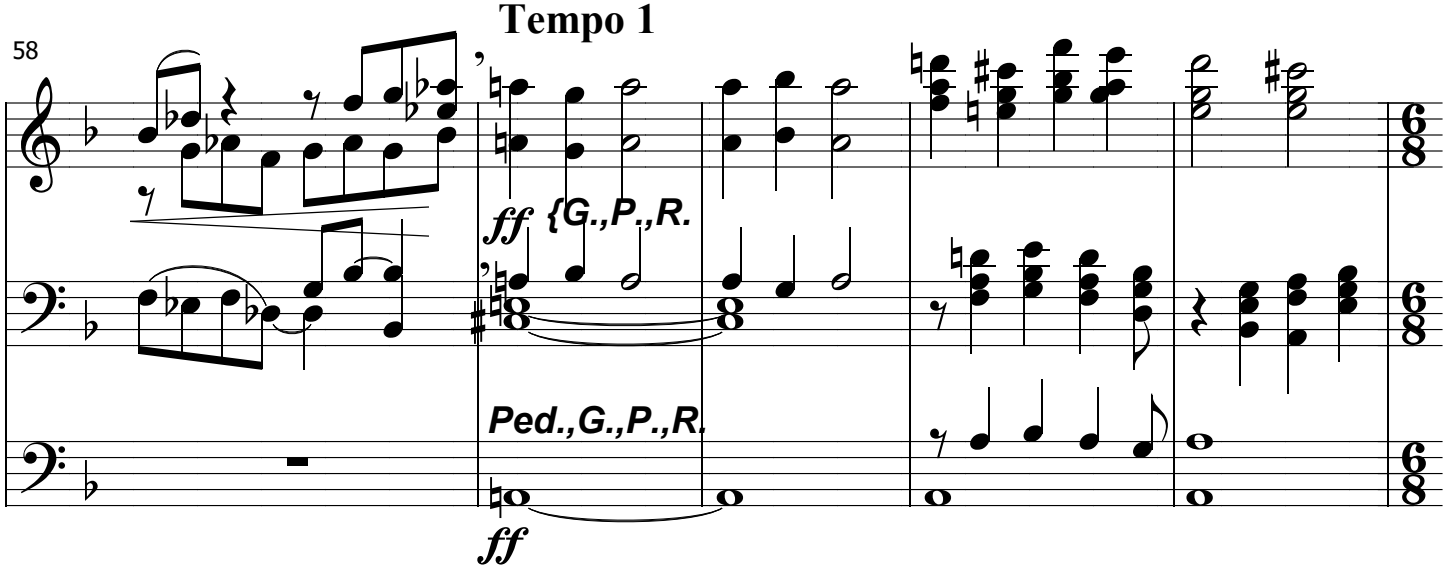

14
Ped., R. 4'
mp
18
mf
{ G.
Ped., G.
mf
22
rit.

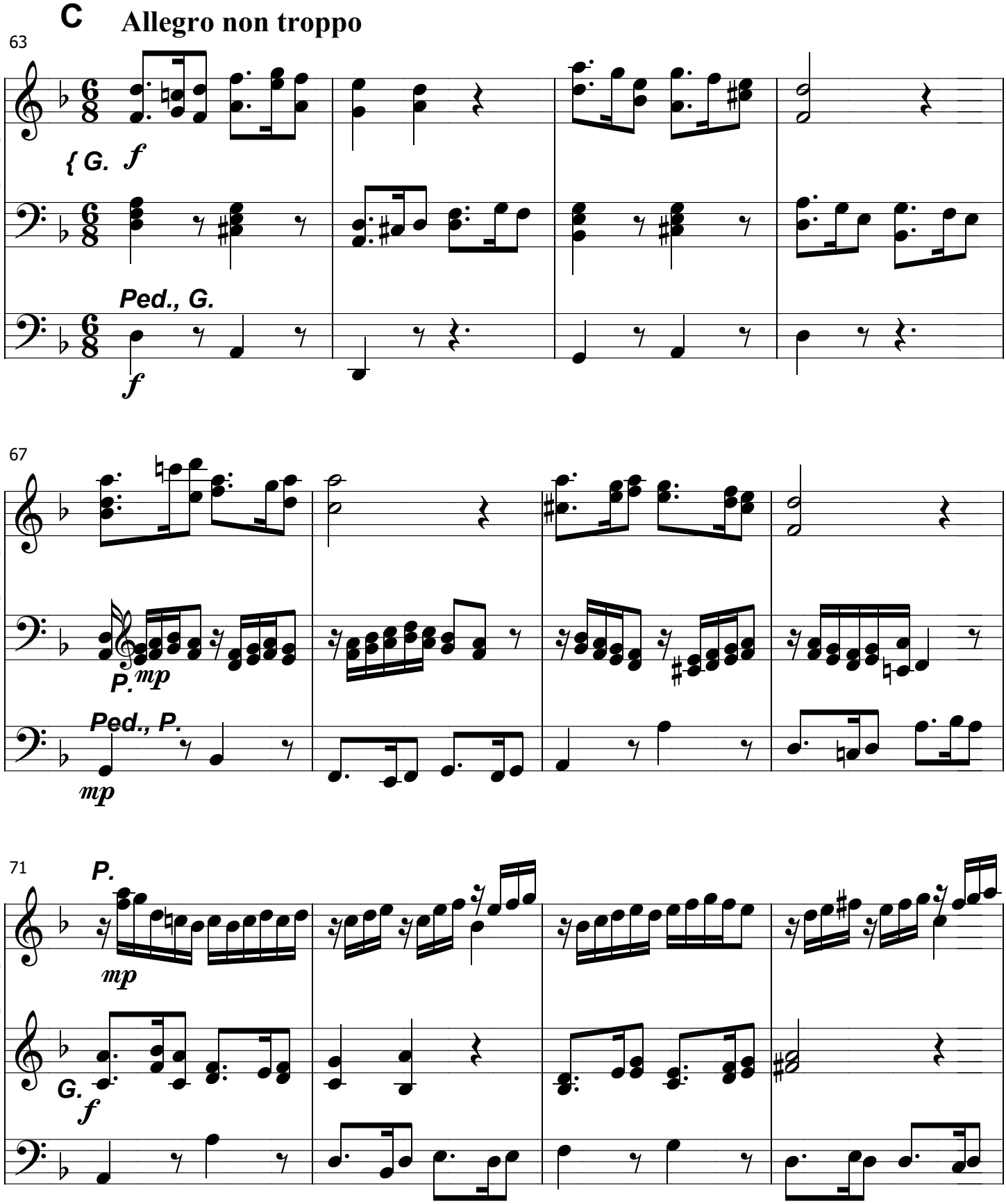

A
25
a tempo
{ P., R.
p
Ped., P., R.
p
29
33
scherzando
3
3
3
3

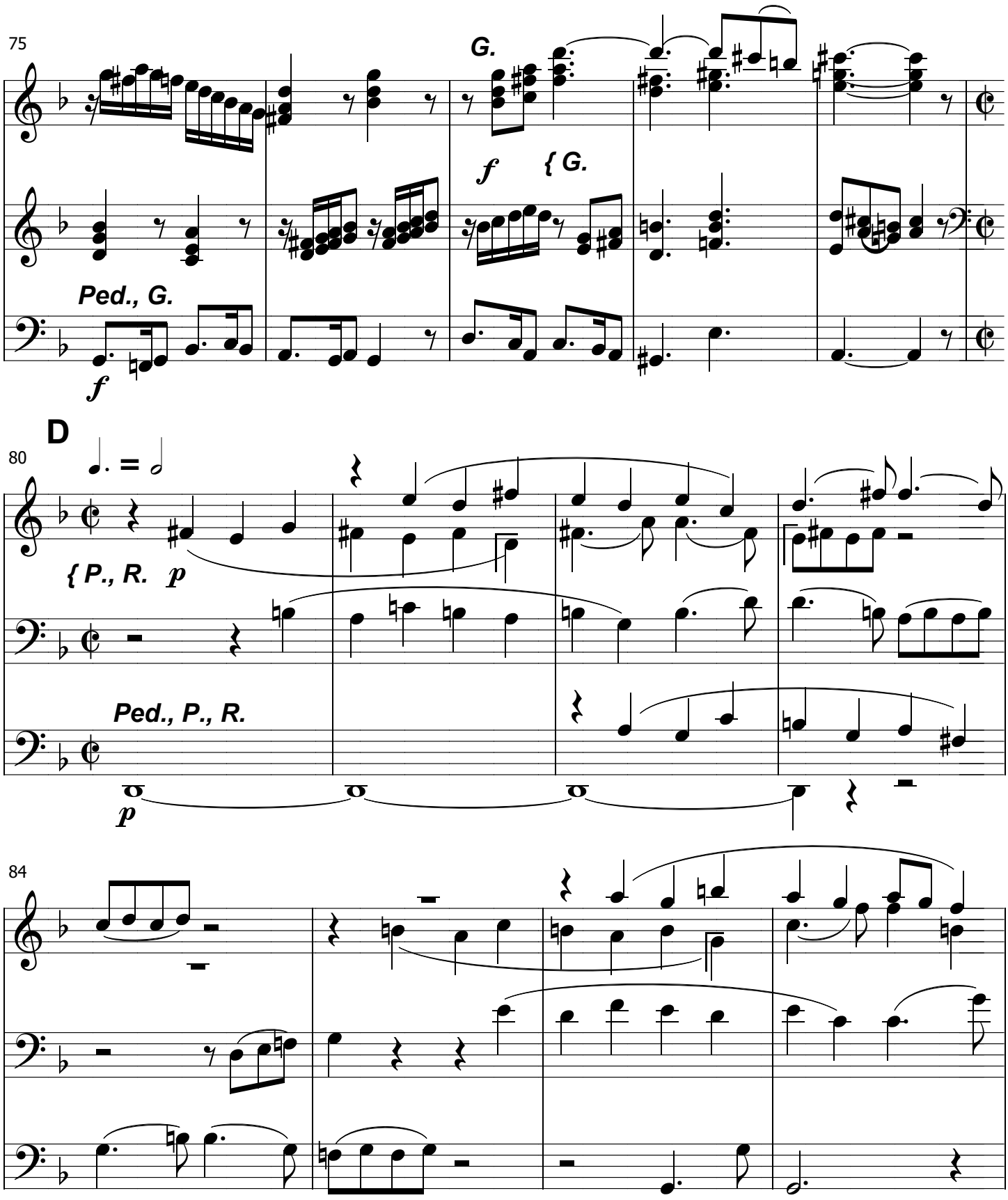

37
3
3
cresc.
3
3
cresc.
41
B
{ R. p
f { G., P.
Ped.,G.
f
45

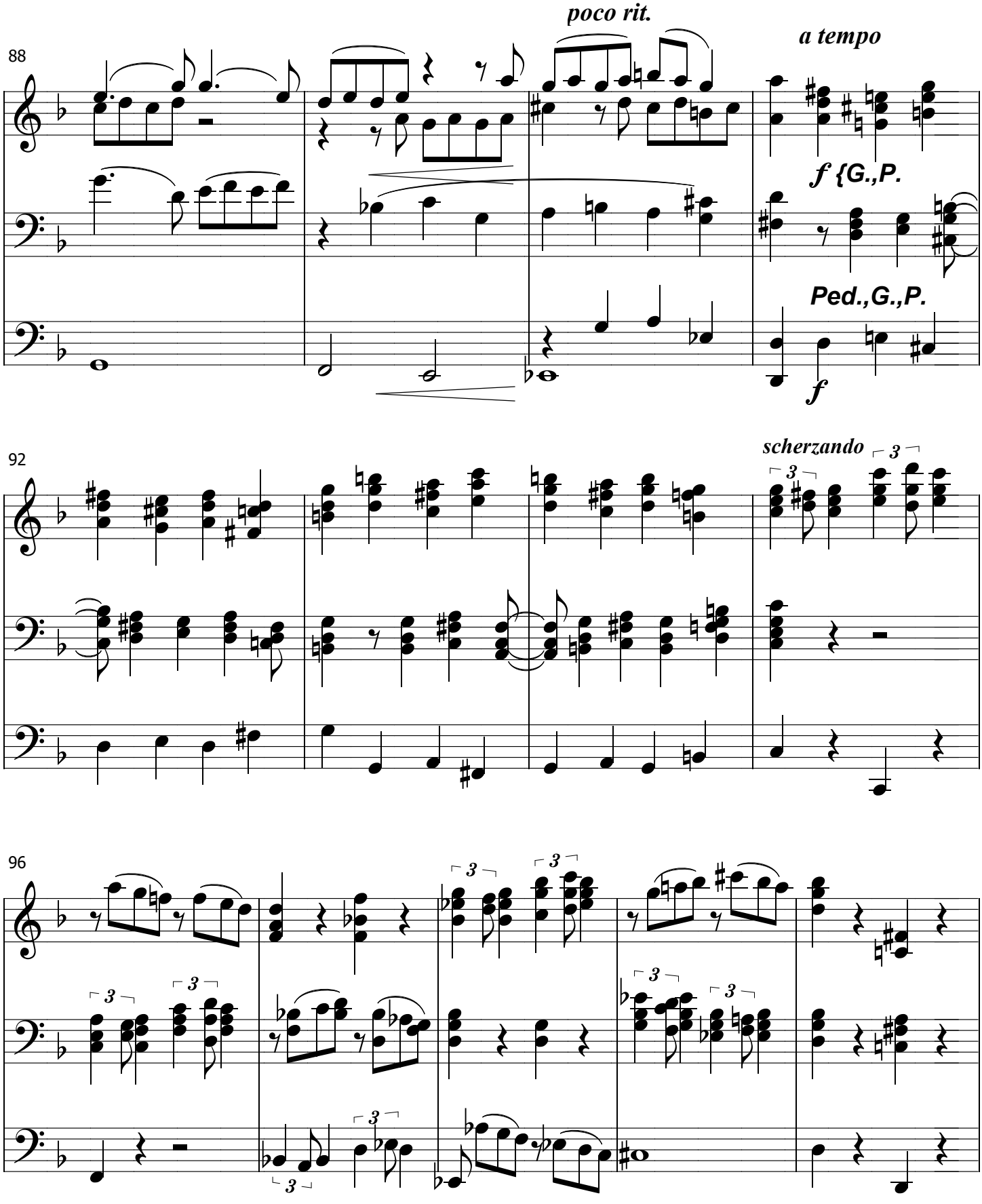

49
Ped. 8'
mp

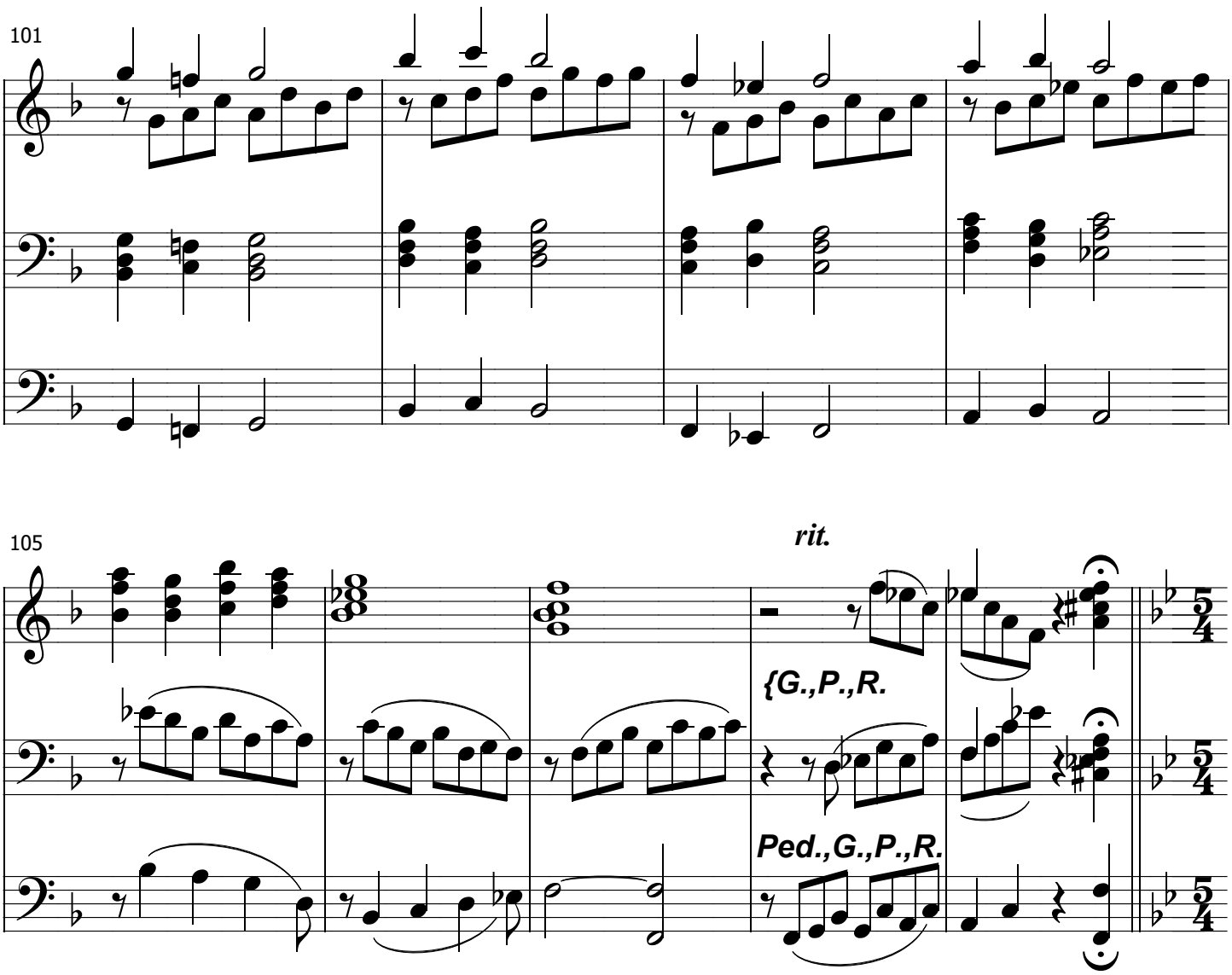

53
{ P. mp
{ G.


Tempo 1
58
ff {G.,P.,R.
Ped.,G.,P.,R.
ff

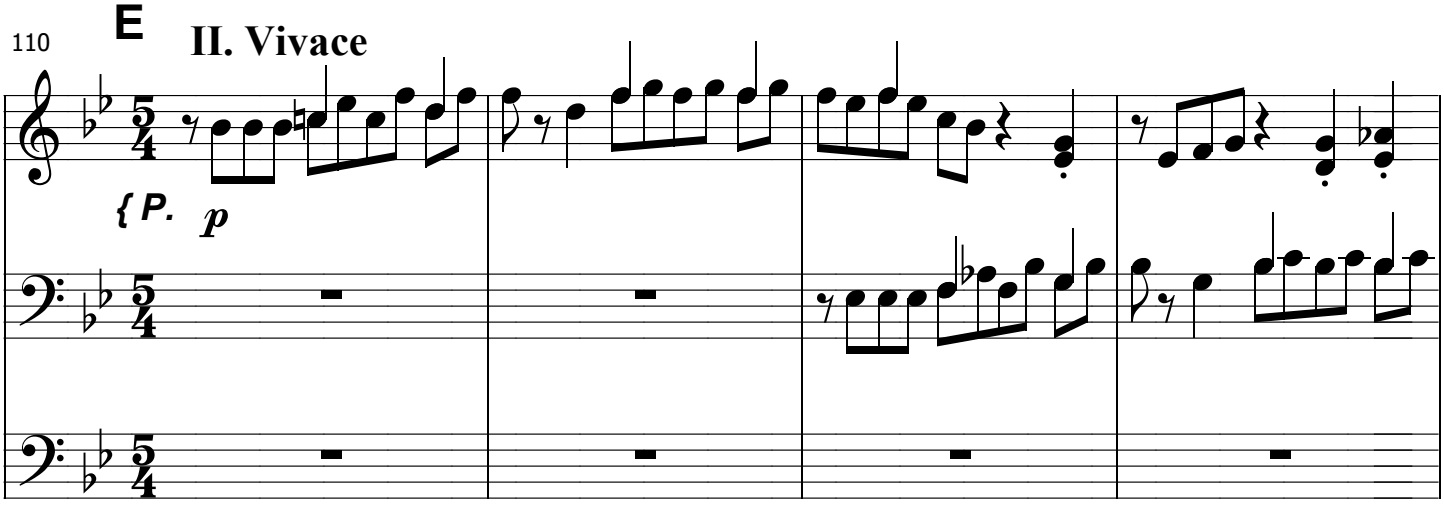

C
Allegro non troppo
63
{ G.
f
Ped., G.
f
67
P.
mp
Ped., P.
mp
71
P.
mp
G.
f

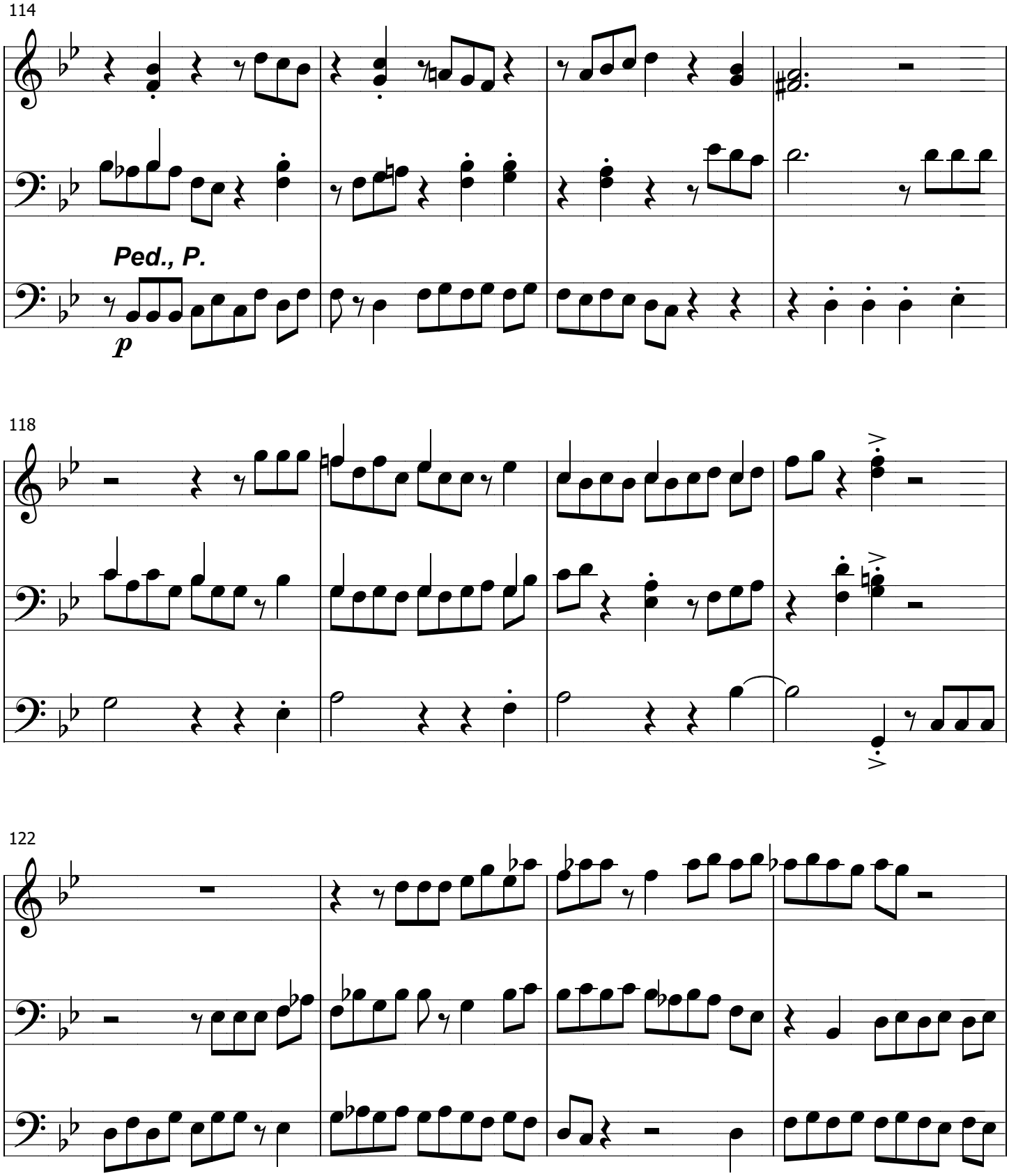

75
G.
f
{ G.
Ped., G.
f
D
80
{ P., R. p
Ped., P., R.
p
84

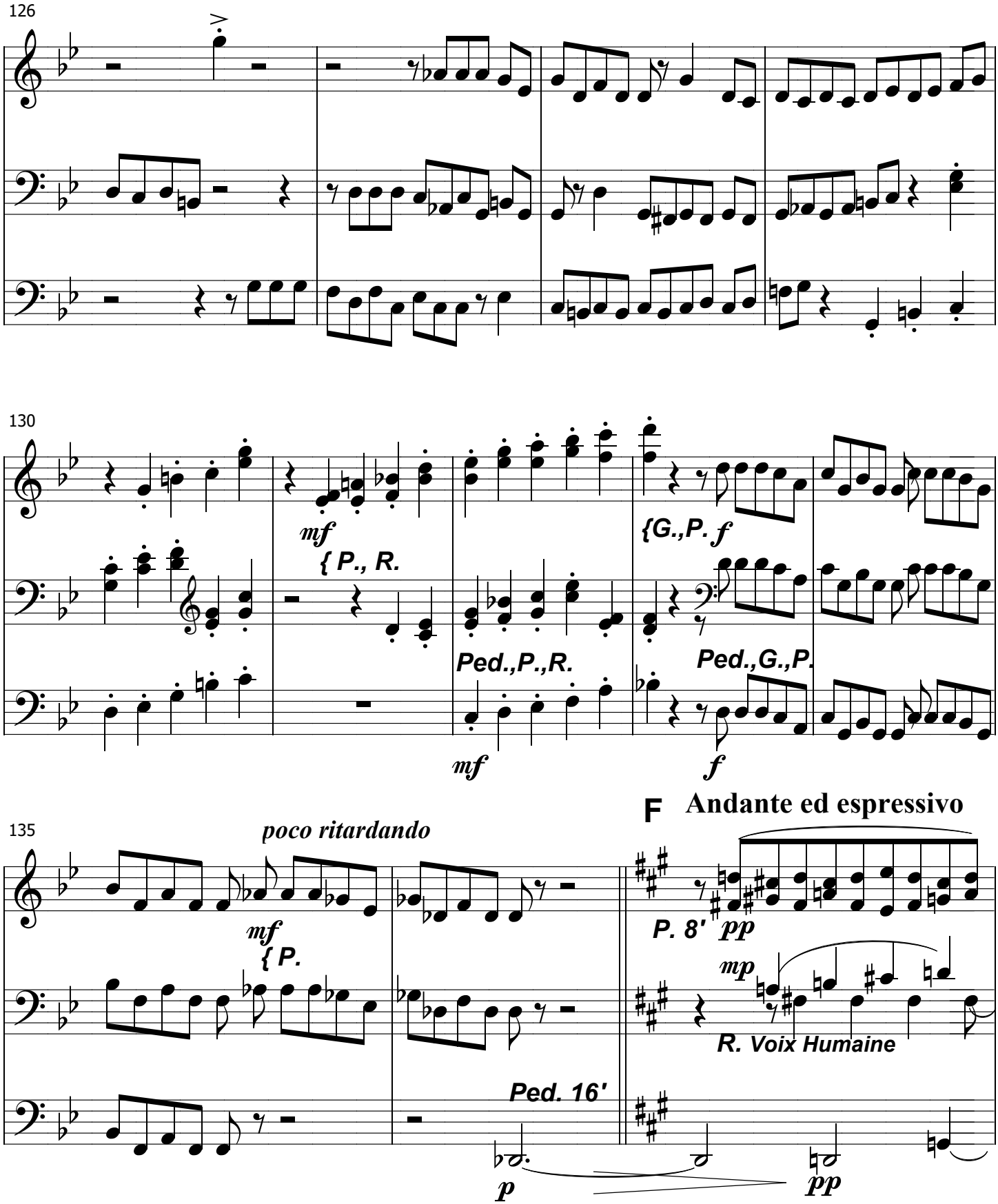

88
poco rit.
a tempo
f {G.,P.
Ped.,G.,P.
f
92
scherzando
3
96
3

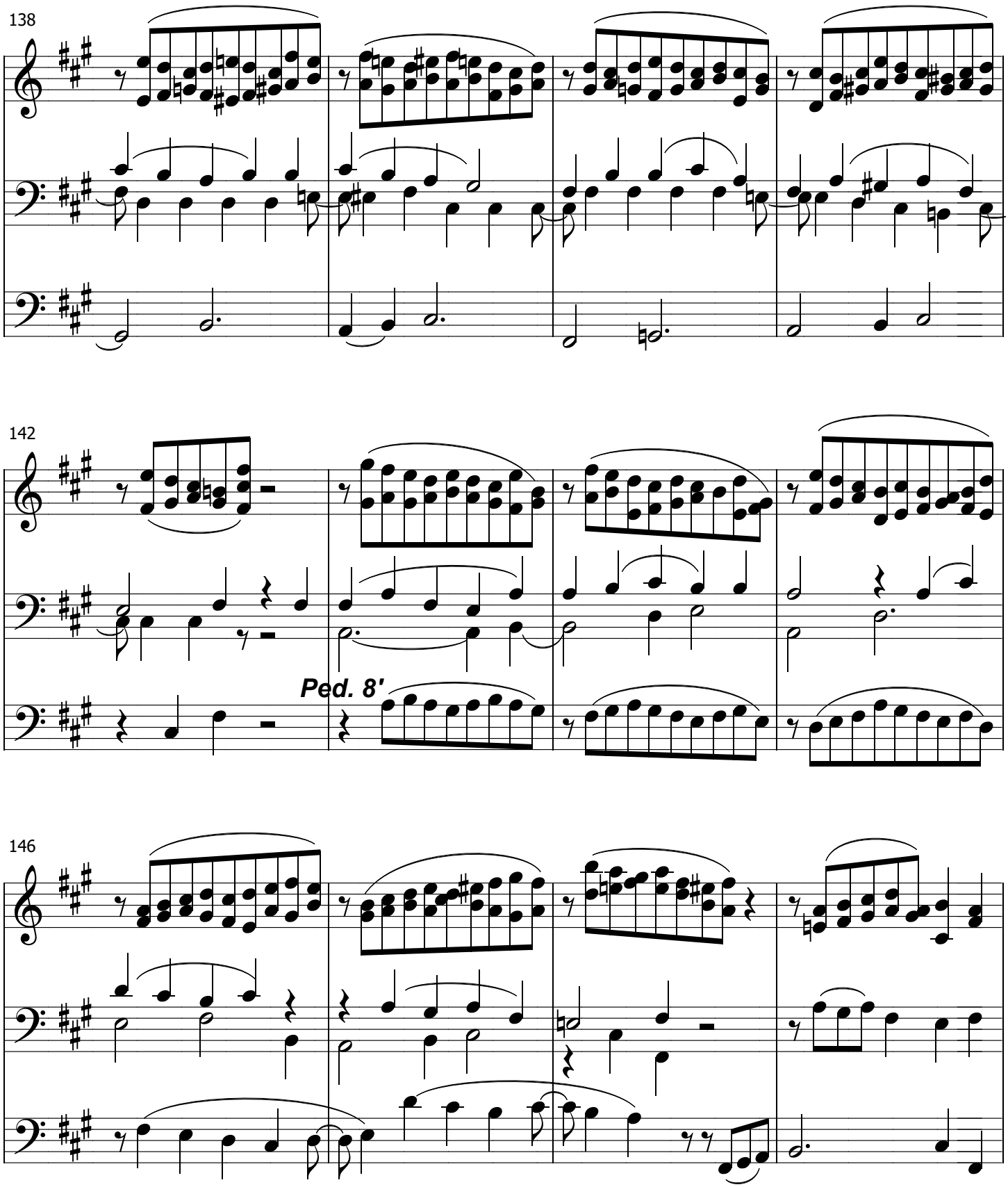


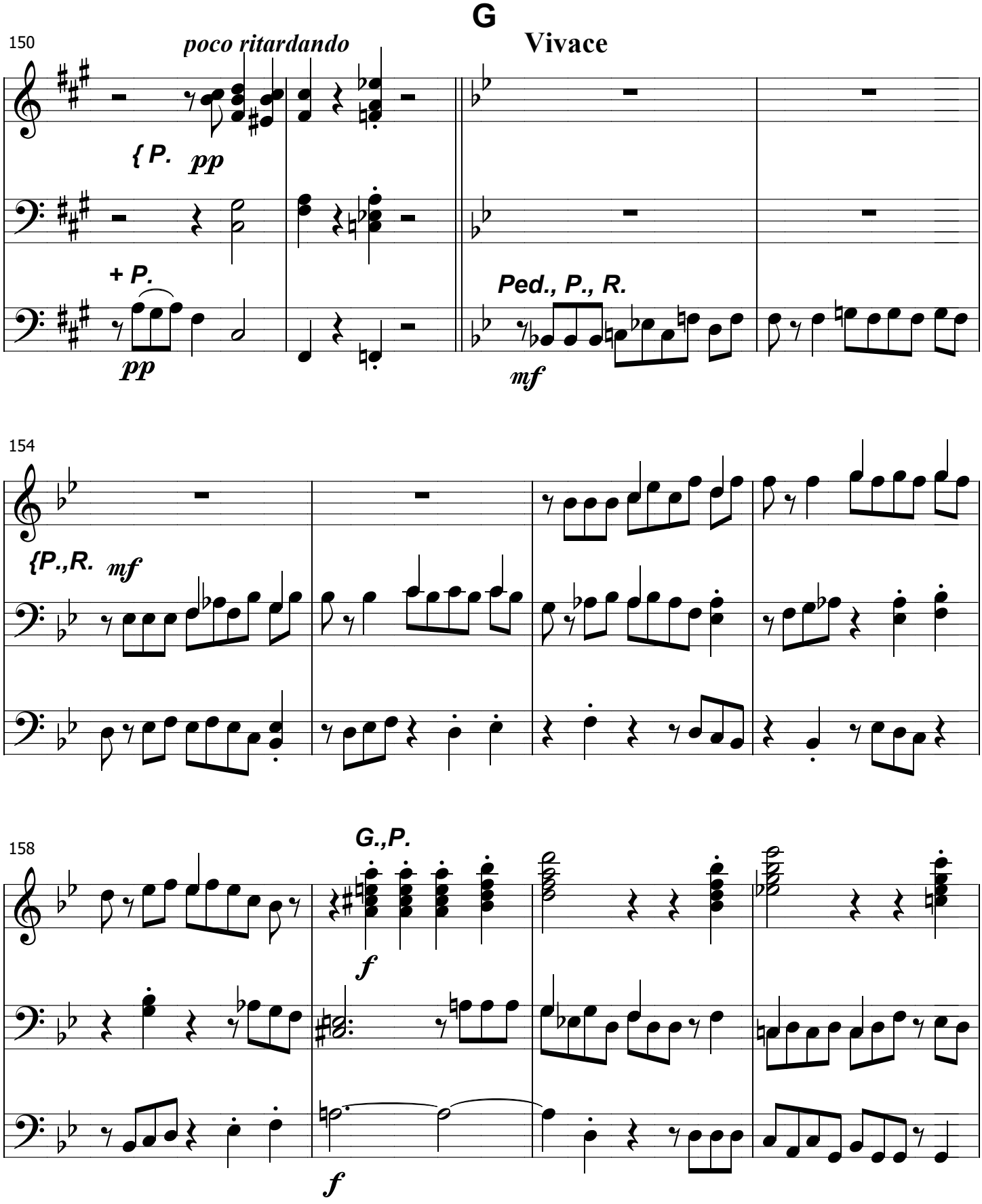
P. 8,4' - R. 8,4' / Voix Humaine - G. 16,8,4' - Ped. 16,8'

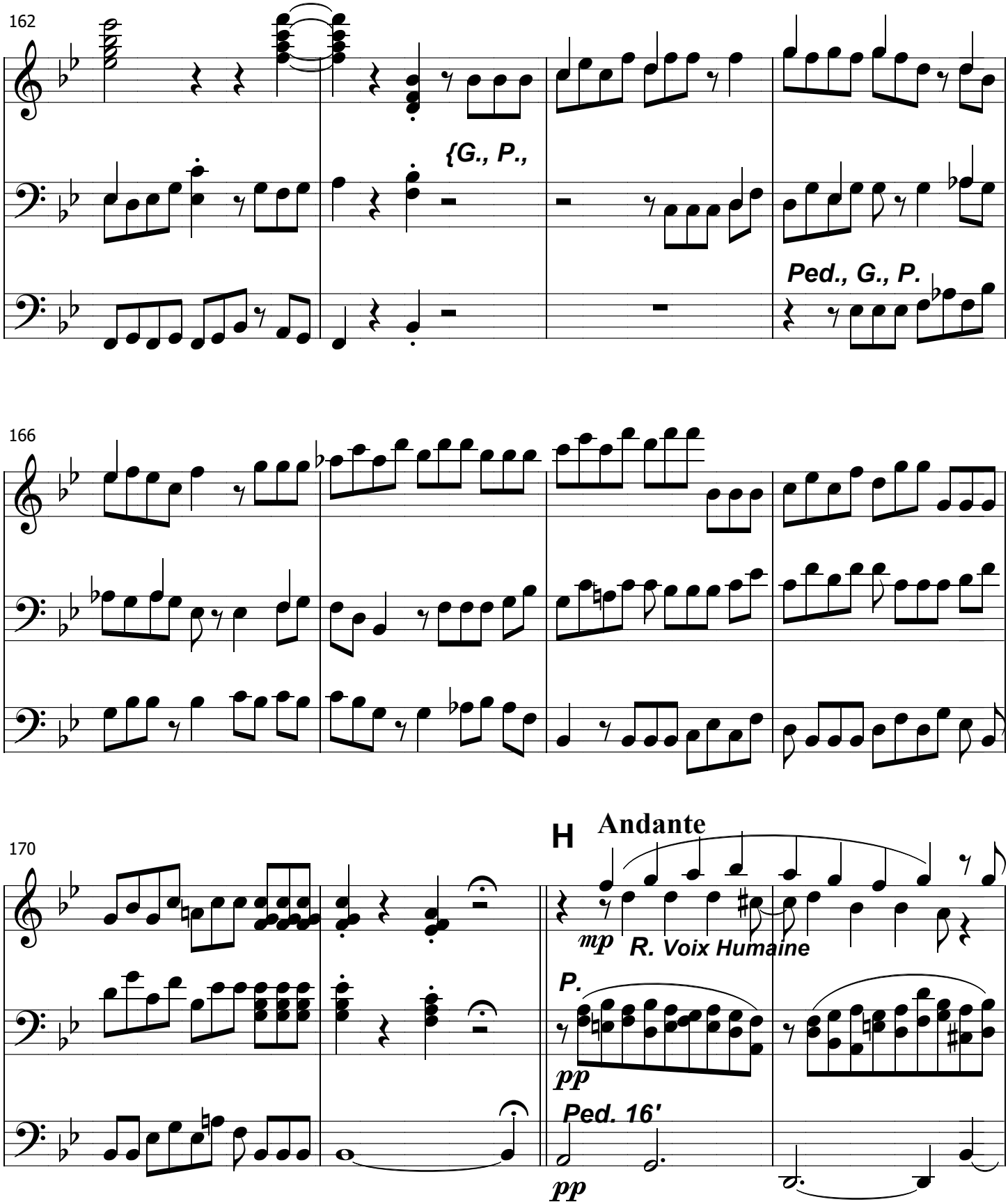


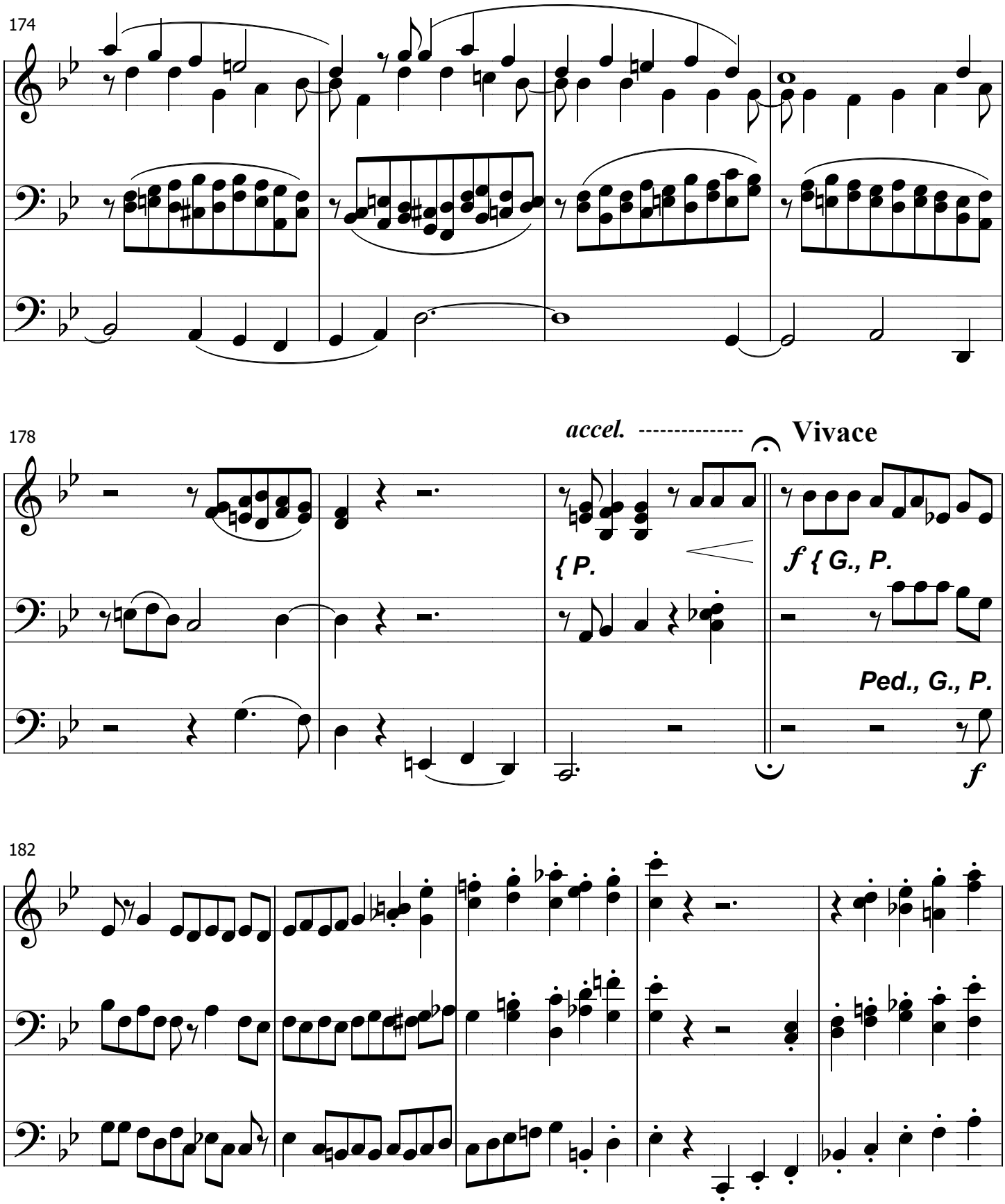

114
Ped., P.
p
118
122

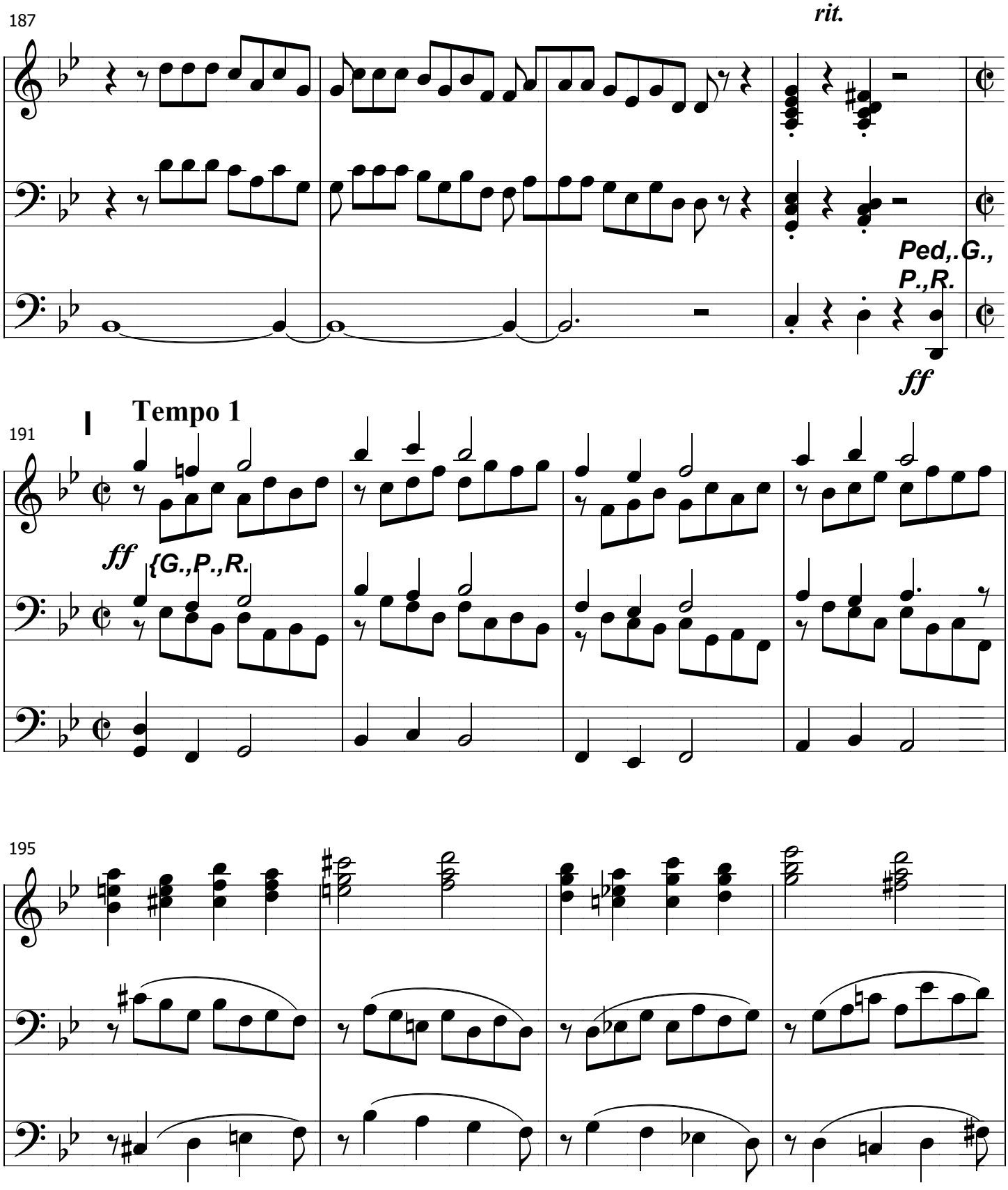

126
130
mf
{ P., R.
Ped.,P.,R.
mf
{G.,P. f
Ped.,G.,P.
f
F Andante ed espressivo
135
poco ritardando
mf
{ P.
Ped. 16'
p
P. 8' pp
mp
R. Voix Humaine
pp

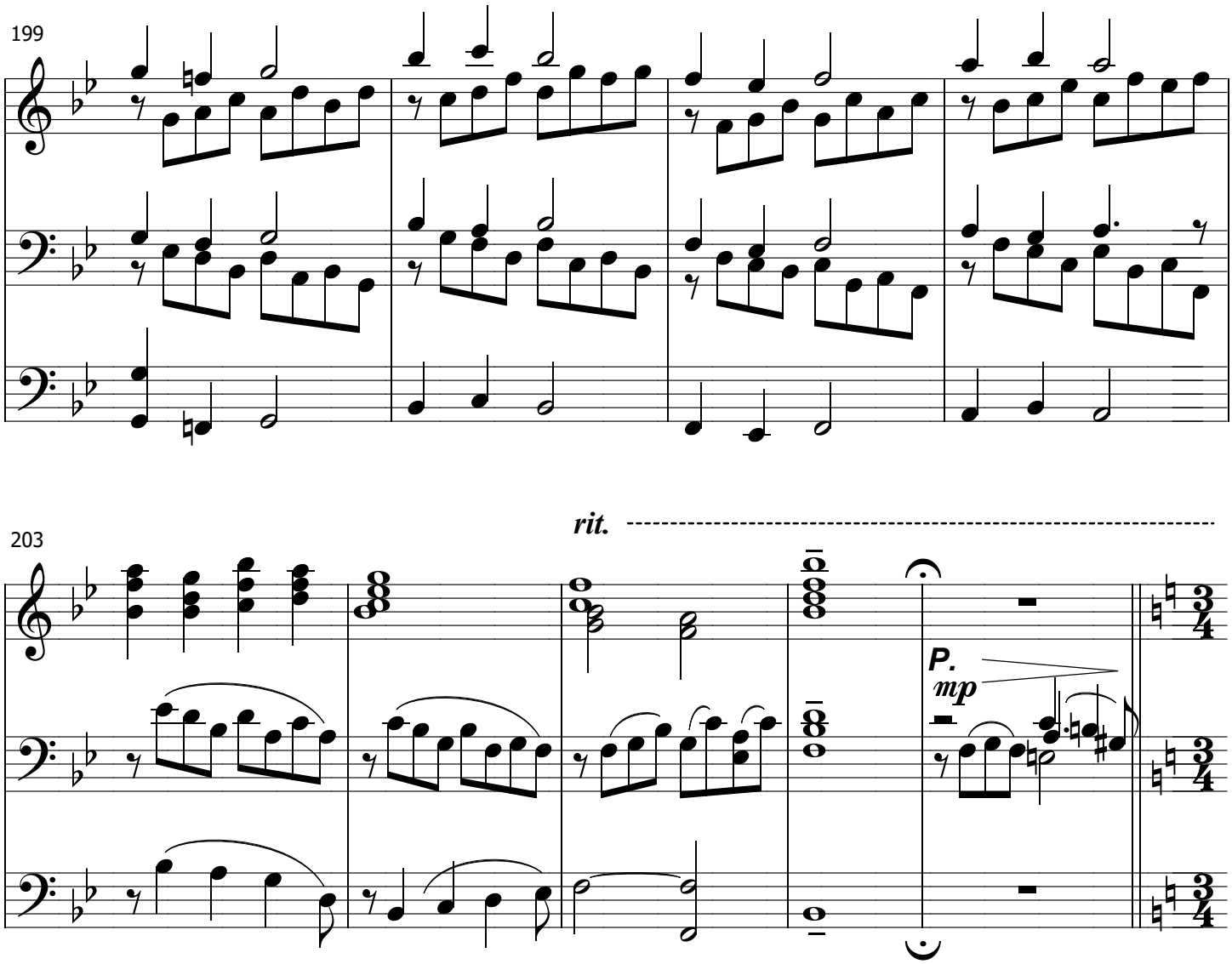

138
142
Ped. 8'
146


G
150
poco ritardando
Vivace
{ P.
pp
+ P.
pp
Ped., P., R.
mf
154
{P.,R.
mf
158
G.,P.
f
f


162
{G., P.,
Ped., G., P.
166
170
H
Andante
mp
R. Voix Humaine
P.
pp
Ped. 16'
pp


174
178
accel. ----------
Vivace
{ P.
f { G., P.
Ped., G., P.
f
182


187
rit.
Ped,.G.,
P.,R.
ff
191
Tempo 1
ff
{G.,P.,R.
195


199
203
rit.
P.
mp

P. 8,4' - R. 8,4' / Gemshorn - G. 16,8,4' - Ped. 16,8'

J

III. Molto adagio

208

{P. Flute 8'

pp

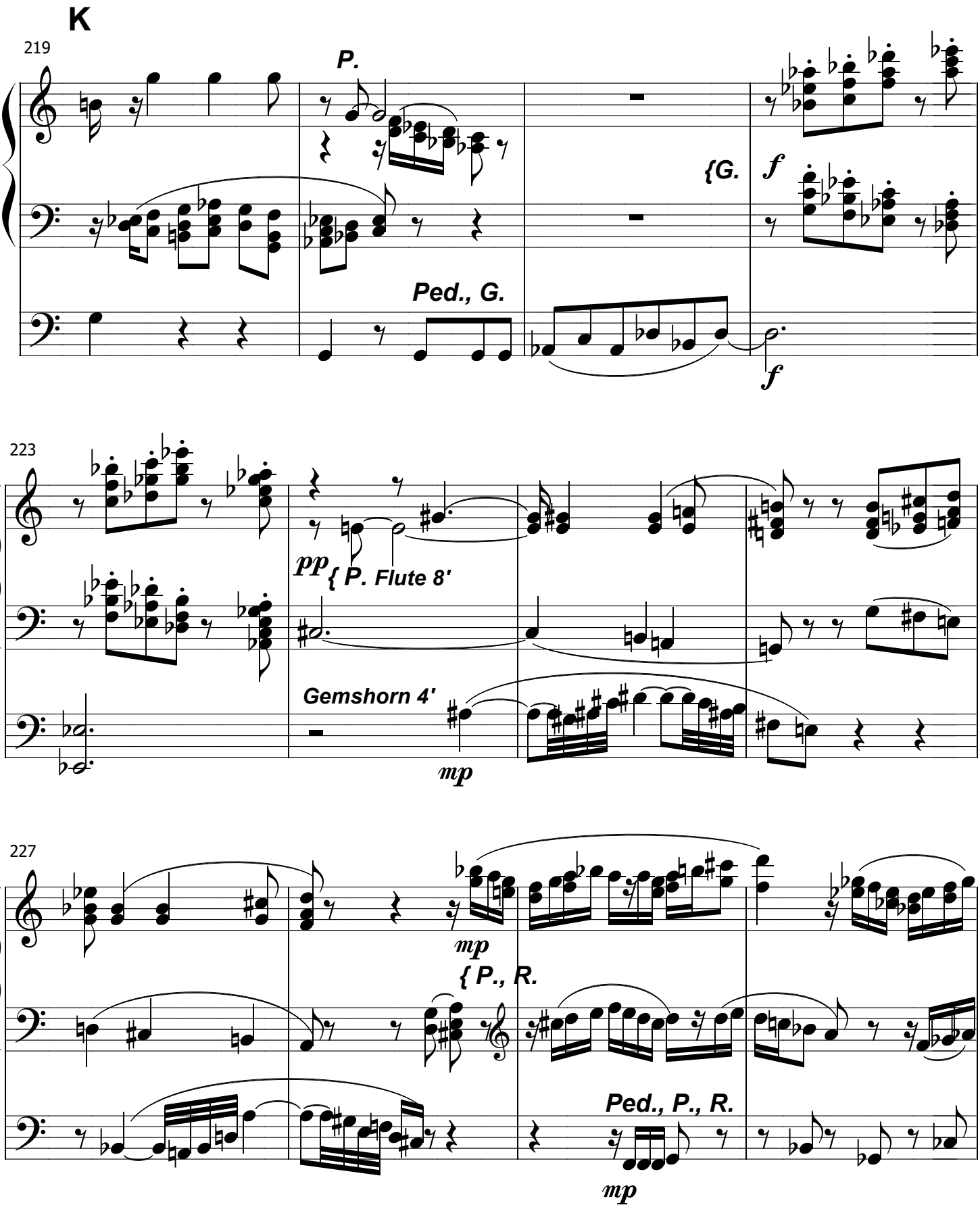
Ped. 16'

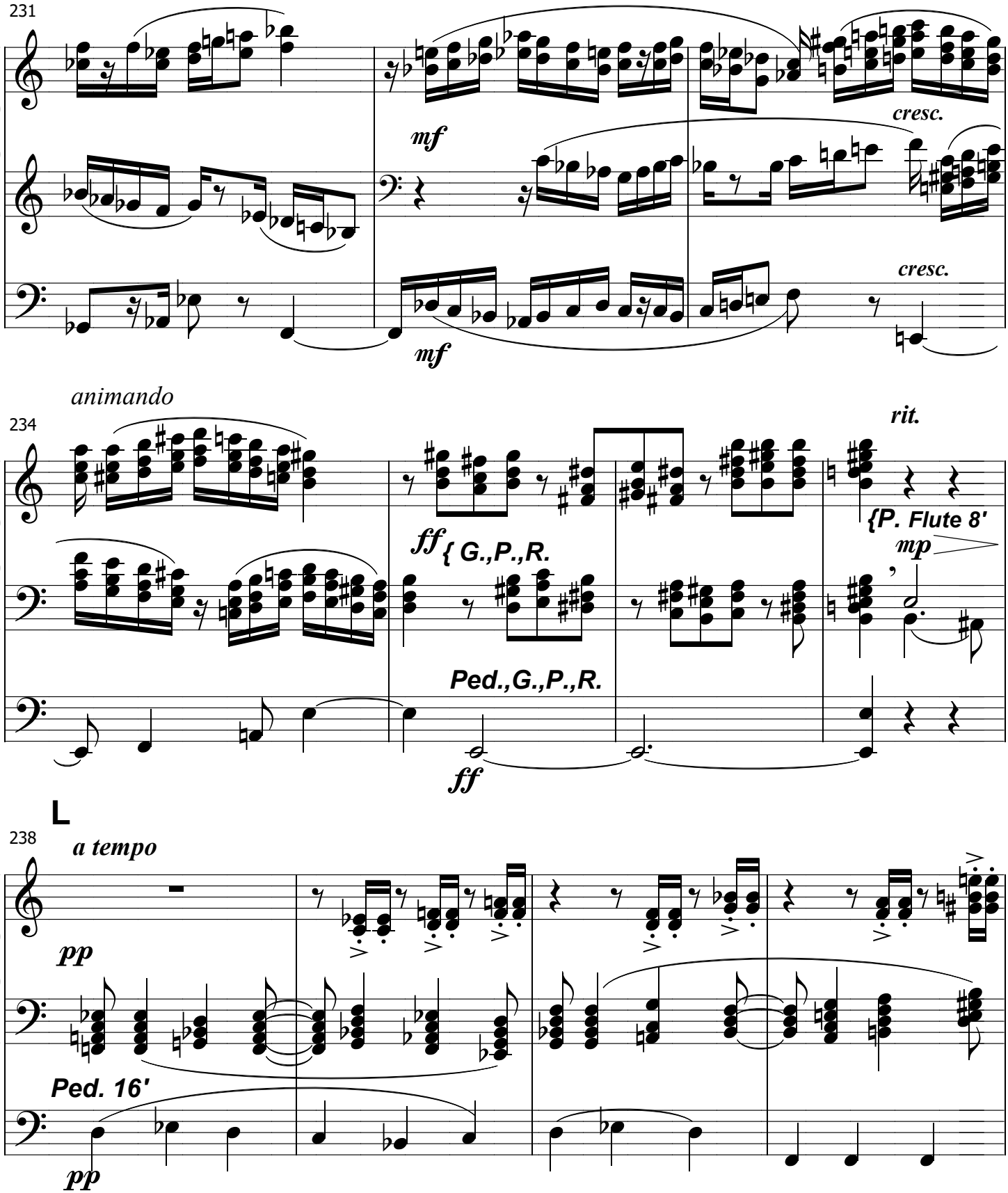
pp

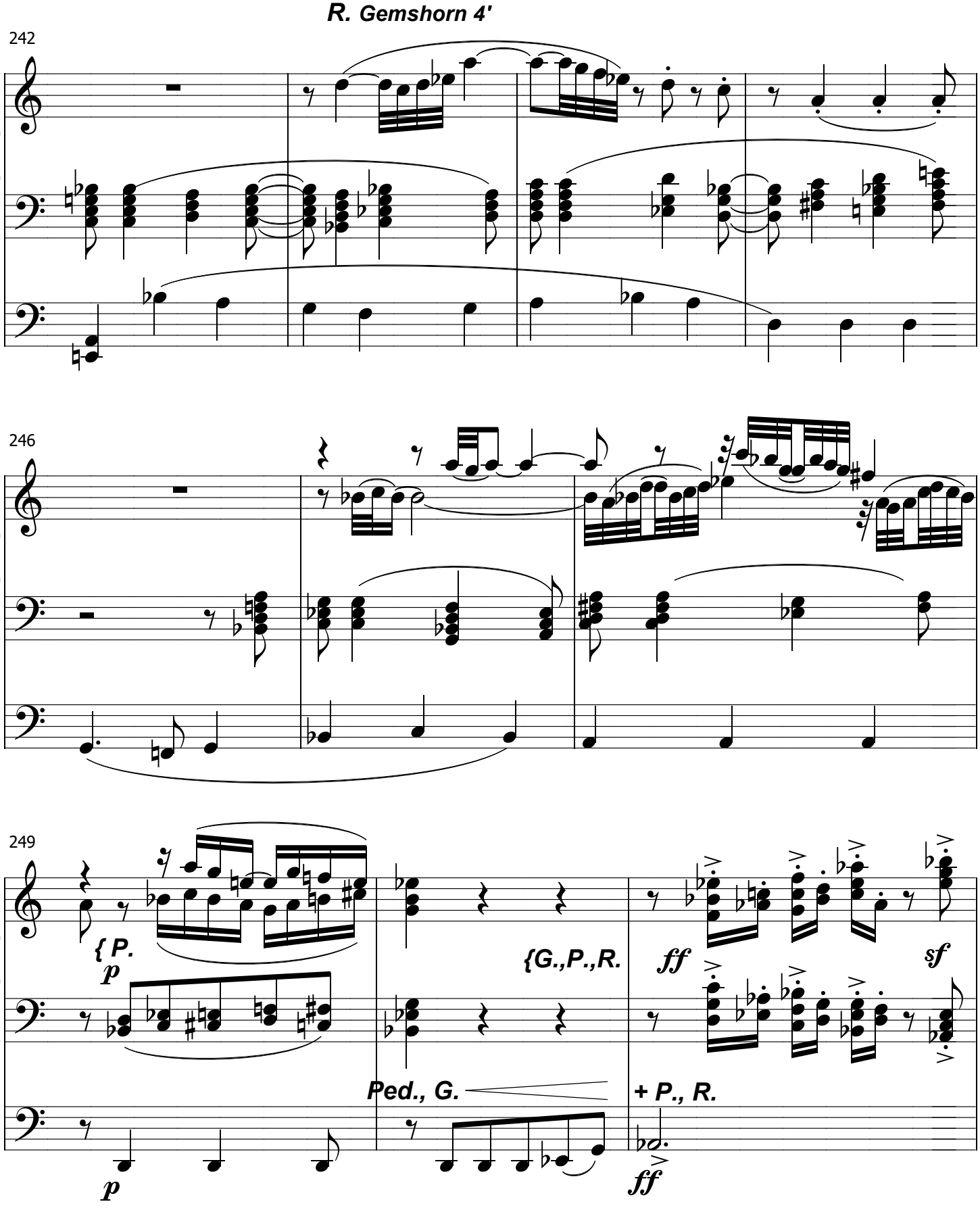
R. Gemshorn 4'

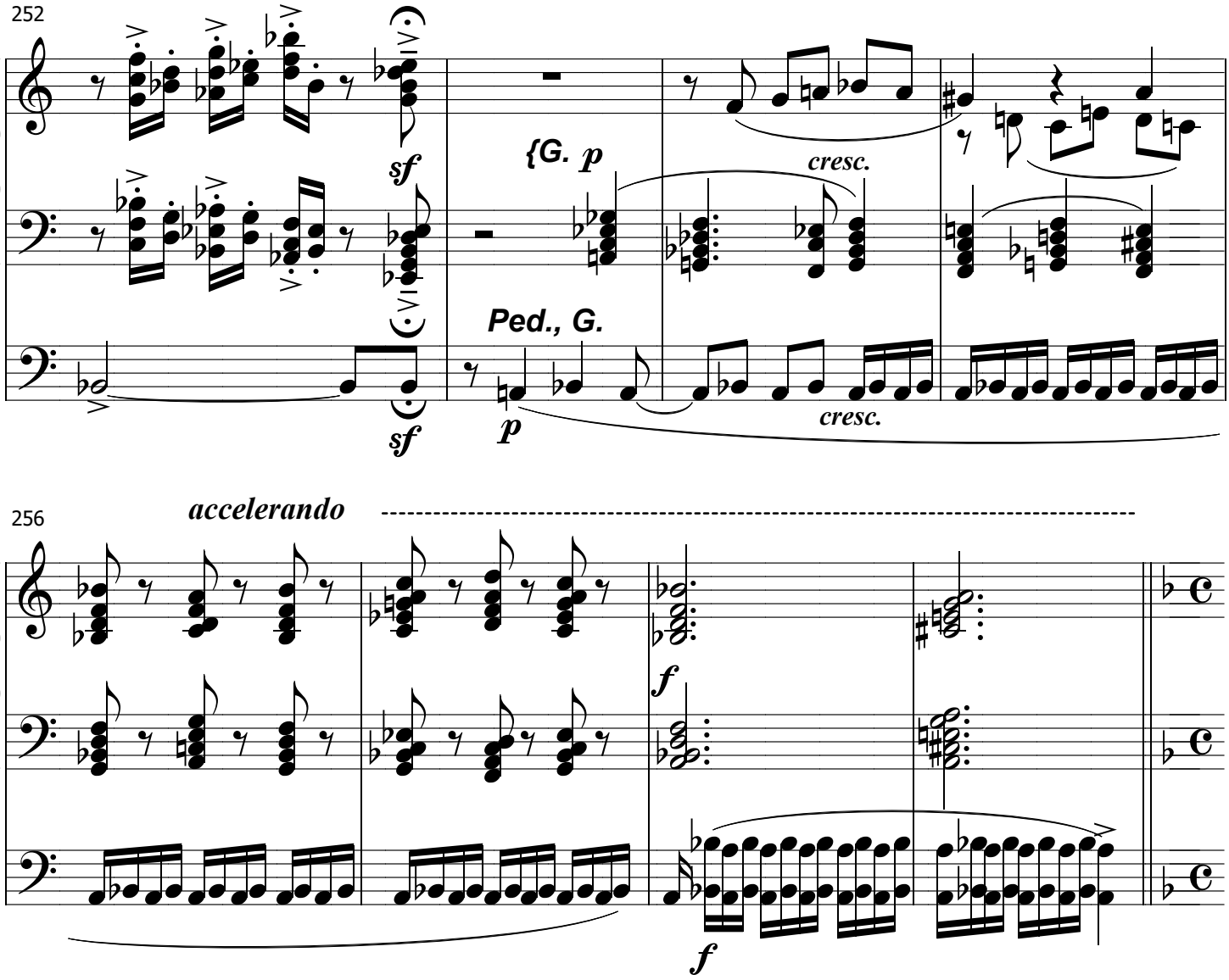
212

216


K
219
P.
{G.
f
Ped., G.
f
223
pp
{ P. Flute 8'
Gemshorn 4'
mp
227
mp
{ P., R.
Ped., P., R.
mp


231
mf
cresc.
mf
cresc.
animando
234
rit.
ff
{ G.,P.,R.
{P. Flute 8'
mp
Ped.,G.,P.,R.
ff
L
238
a tempo
pp
Ped. 16'
pp


R. Gemshorn 4'
242
246
249
{ P.
p
{G.,P.,R.
ff
sf
Ped., G.
+ P., R.
p
ff


252
sf
{G. p
cresc.
Ped., G.
sf
p
cresc.
256
accelerando
f
f

P. 8,4' - R. 8,4' - G. 16,8,4' - Ped. 16,8'

M **IV. Tempo 1**

260

poco rit.

ff

{G.,P.,R.

Ped.,G.,P.R.

ff

265

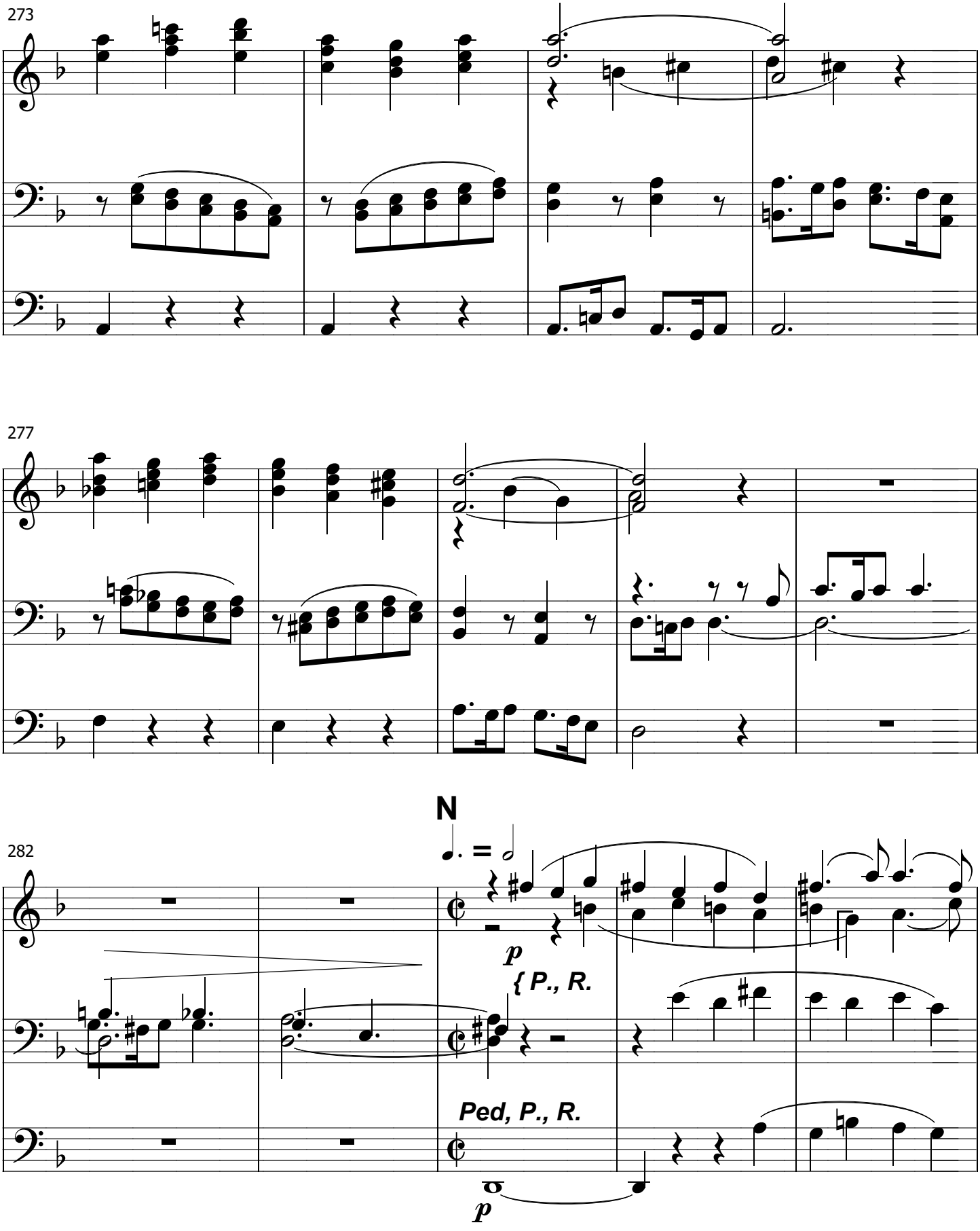
Allegro non troppo

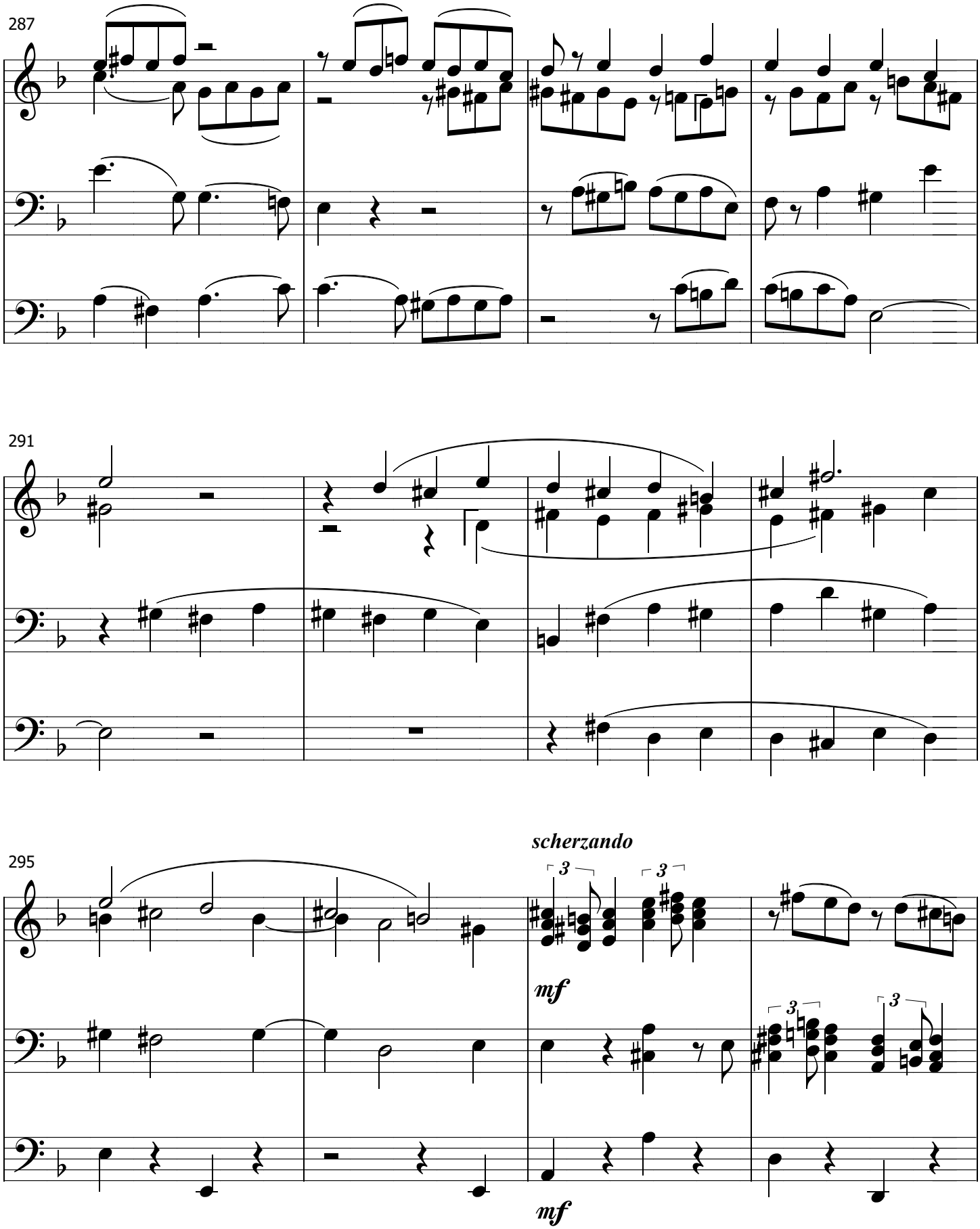
{ G. *f*

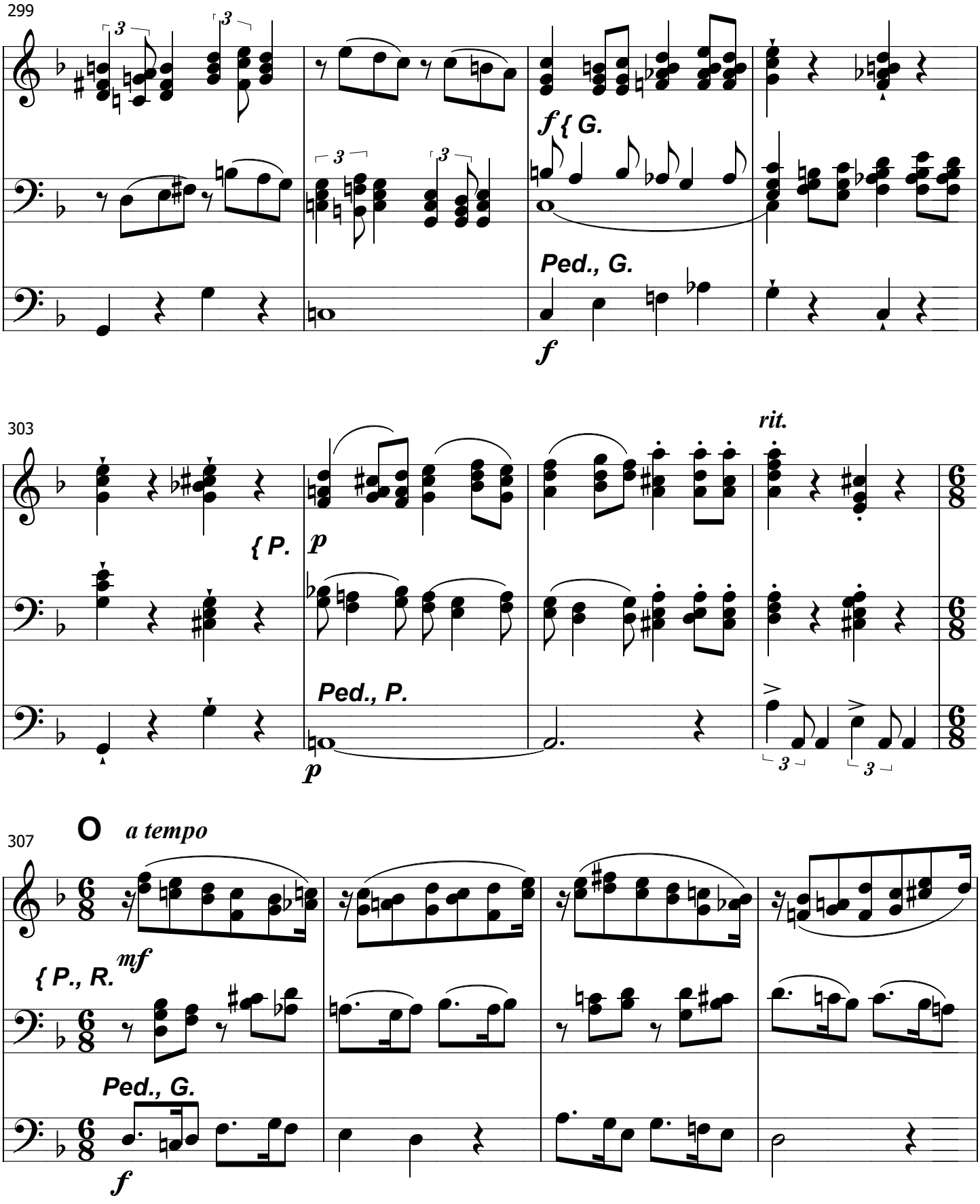
Ped., G.

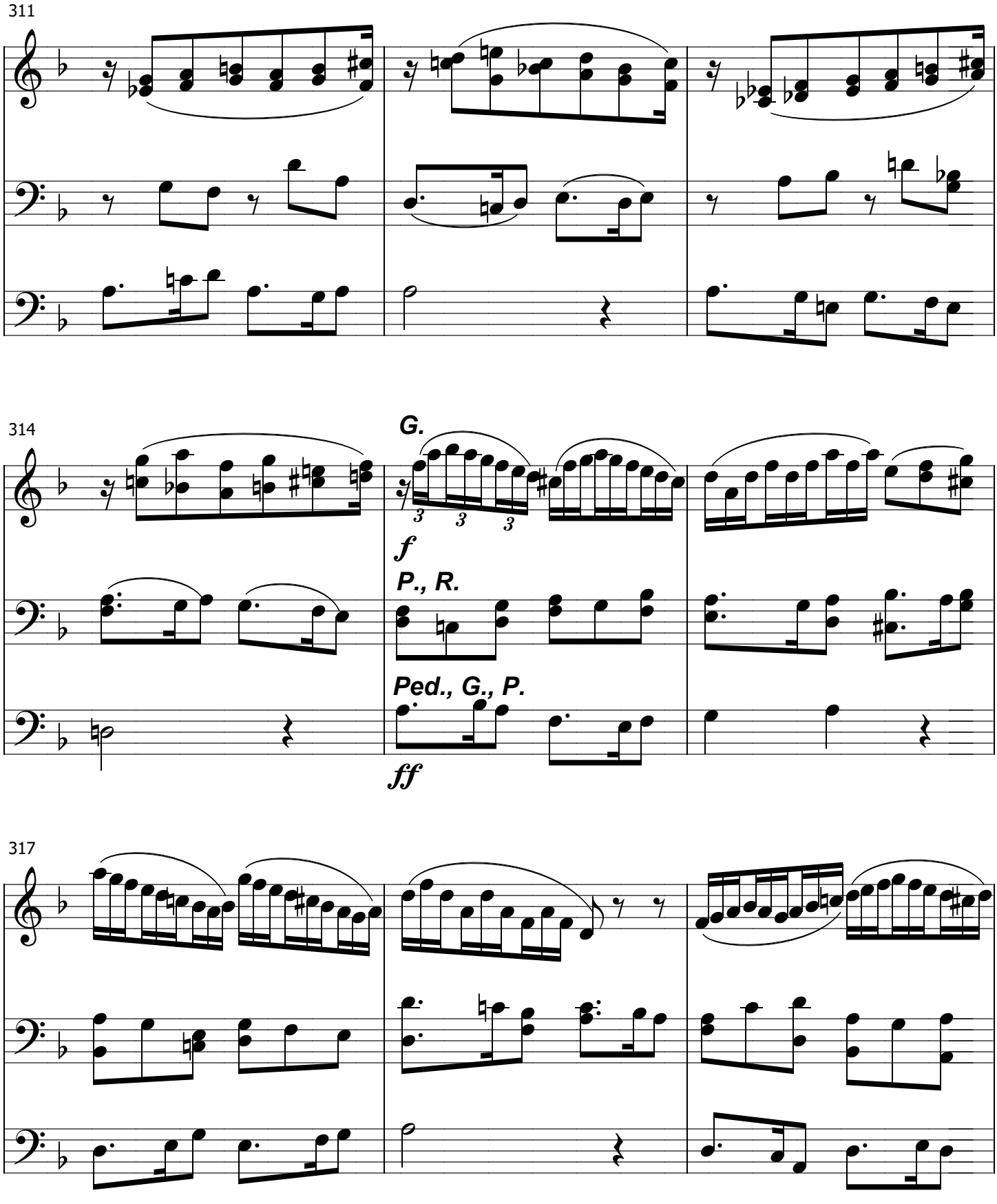
f

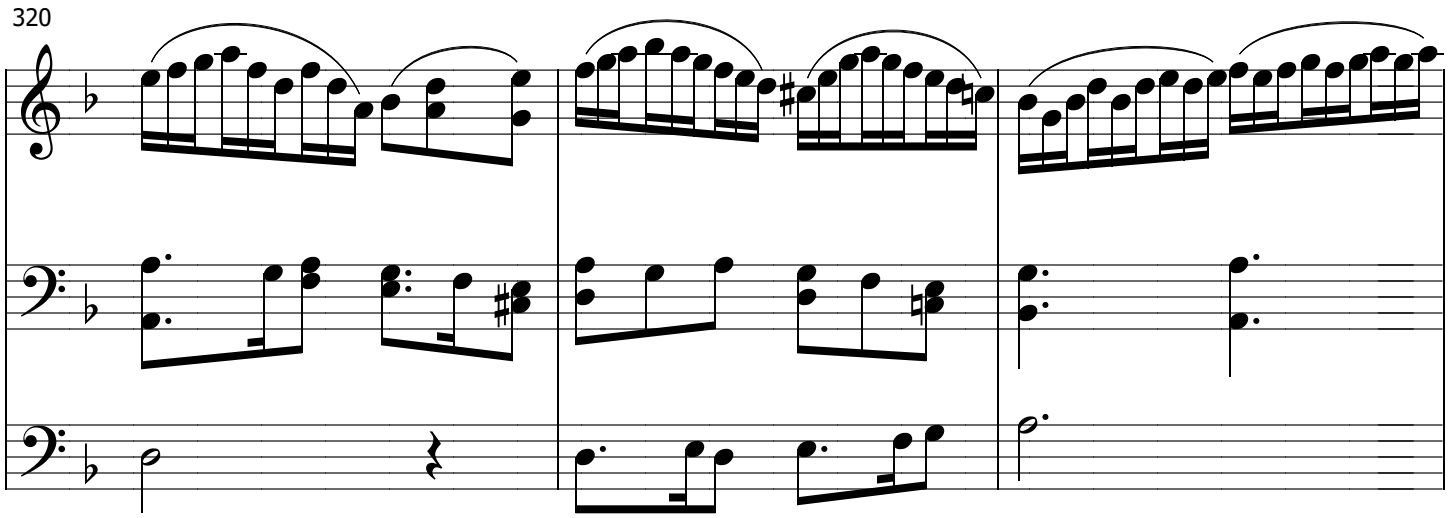
269

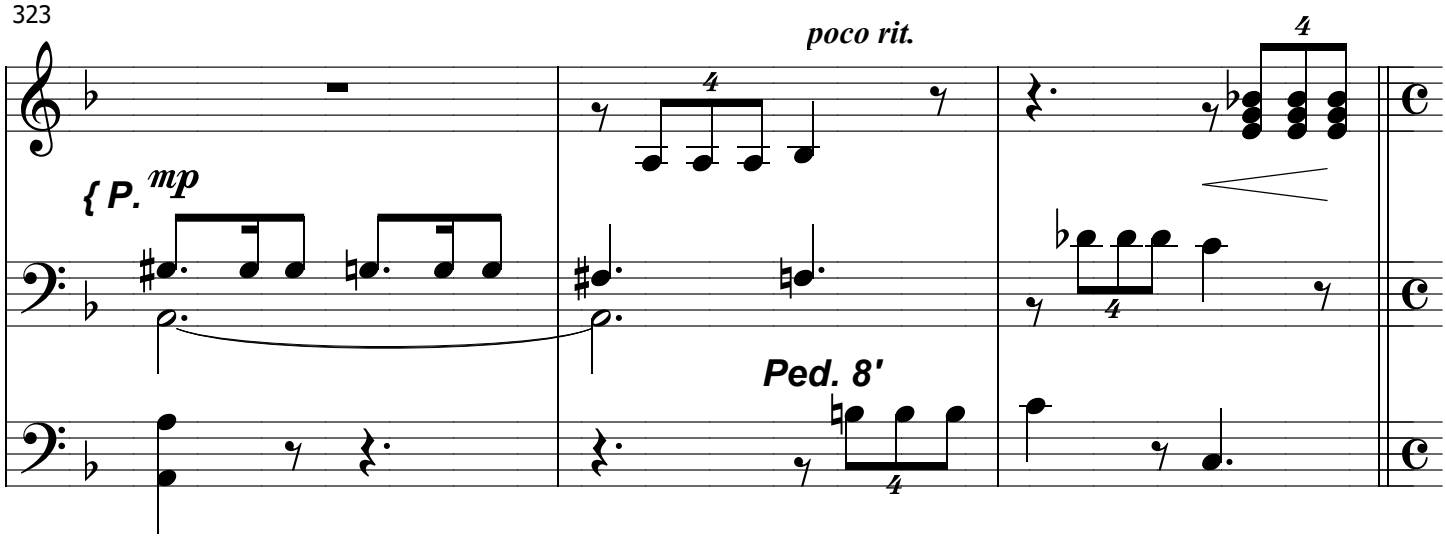

273
277
N
282
p
{ P., R.
Ped, P., R.
p

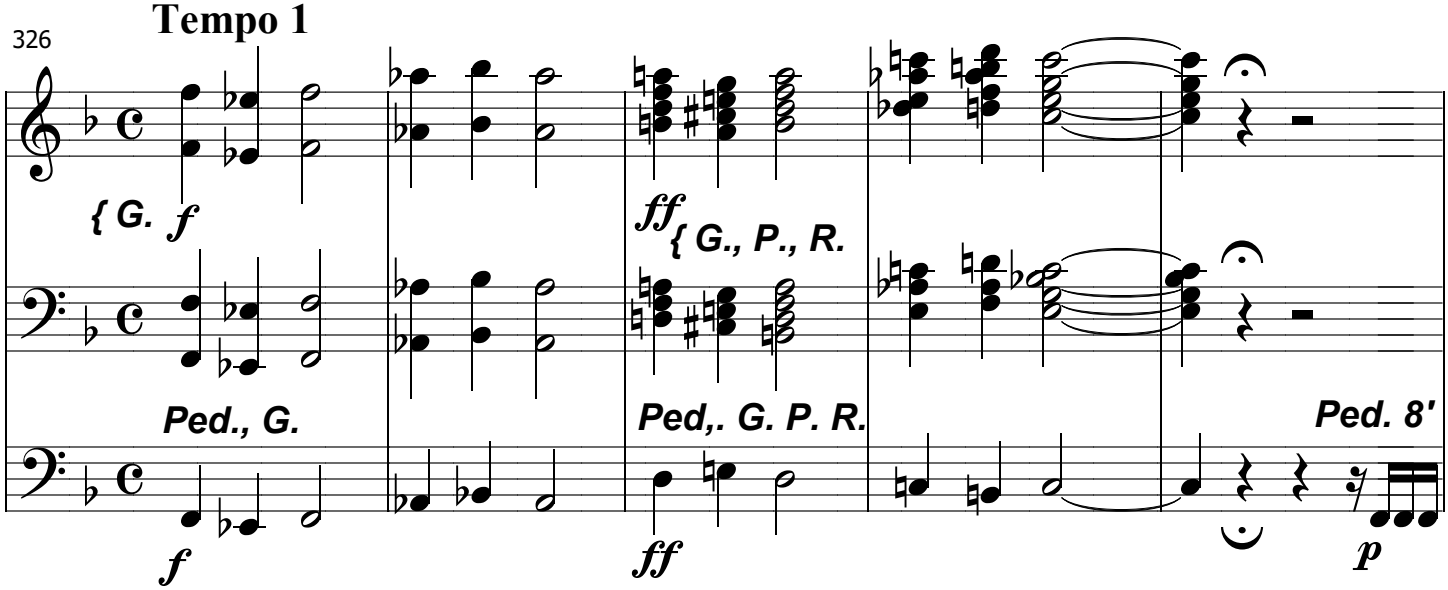

287
291
295
scherzando
3
3
mf
3
3
mf

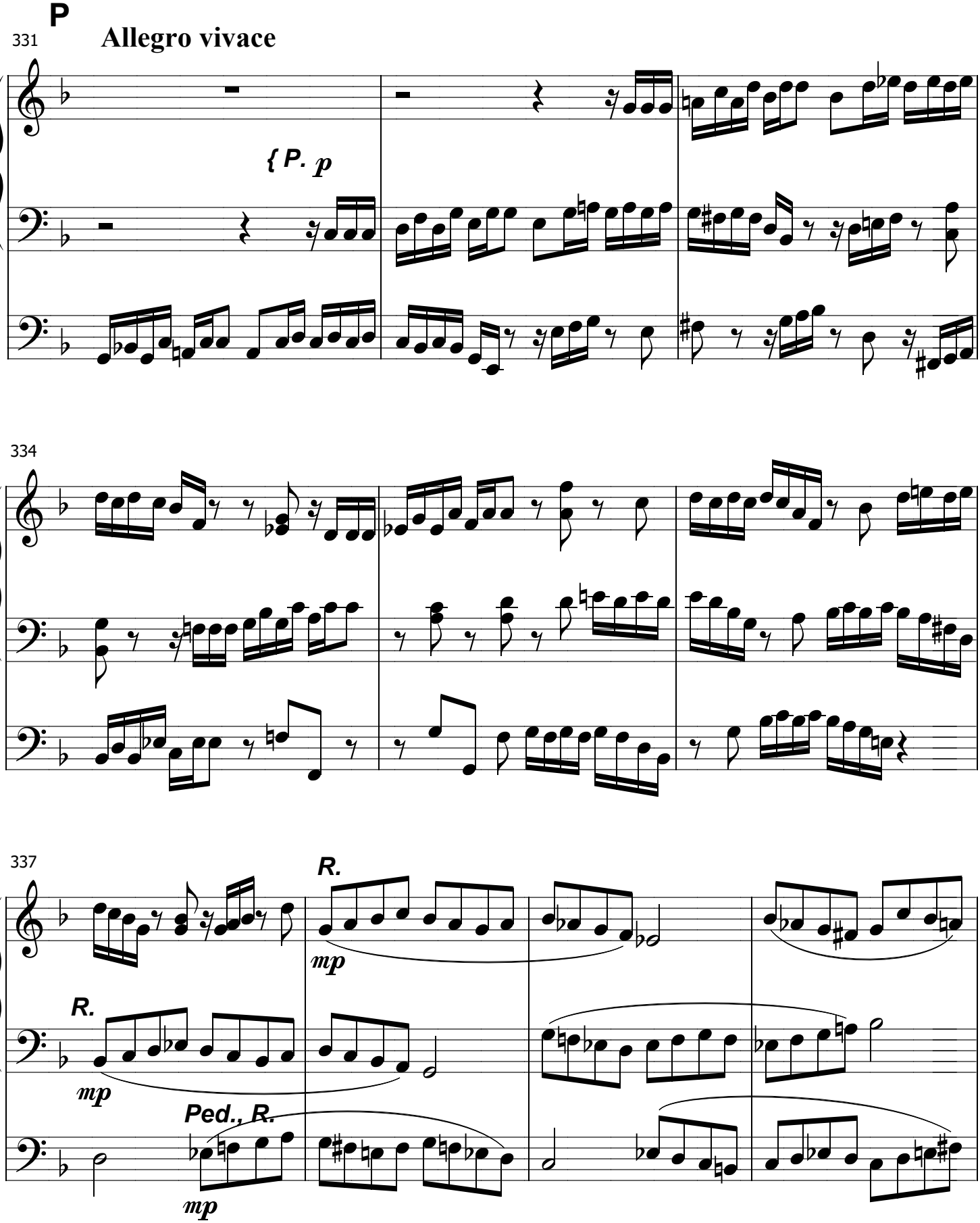

299
f { G.
Ped., G.
f
303
rit.
{ P.
p
Ped., P.
p
307
O a tempo
mf
{ P., R.
Ped., G.
f

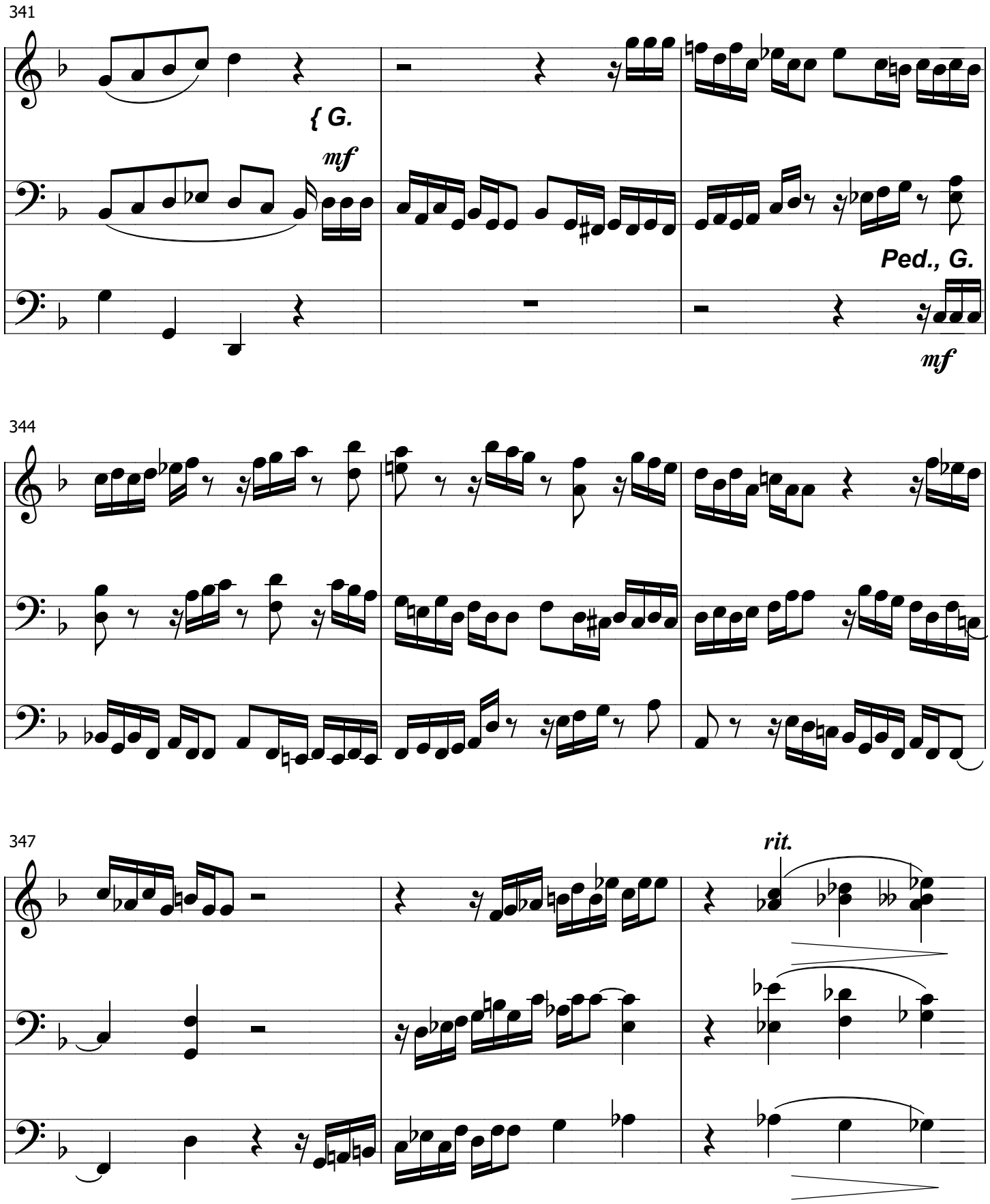

311
314
G.
f
P., R.
Ped., G., P.
ff
317

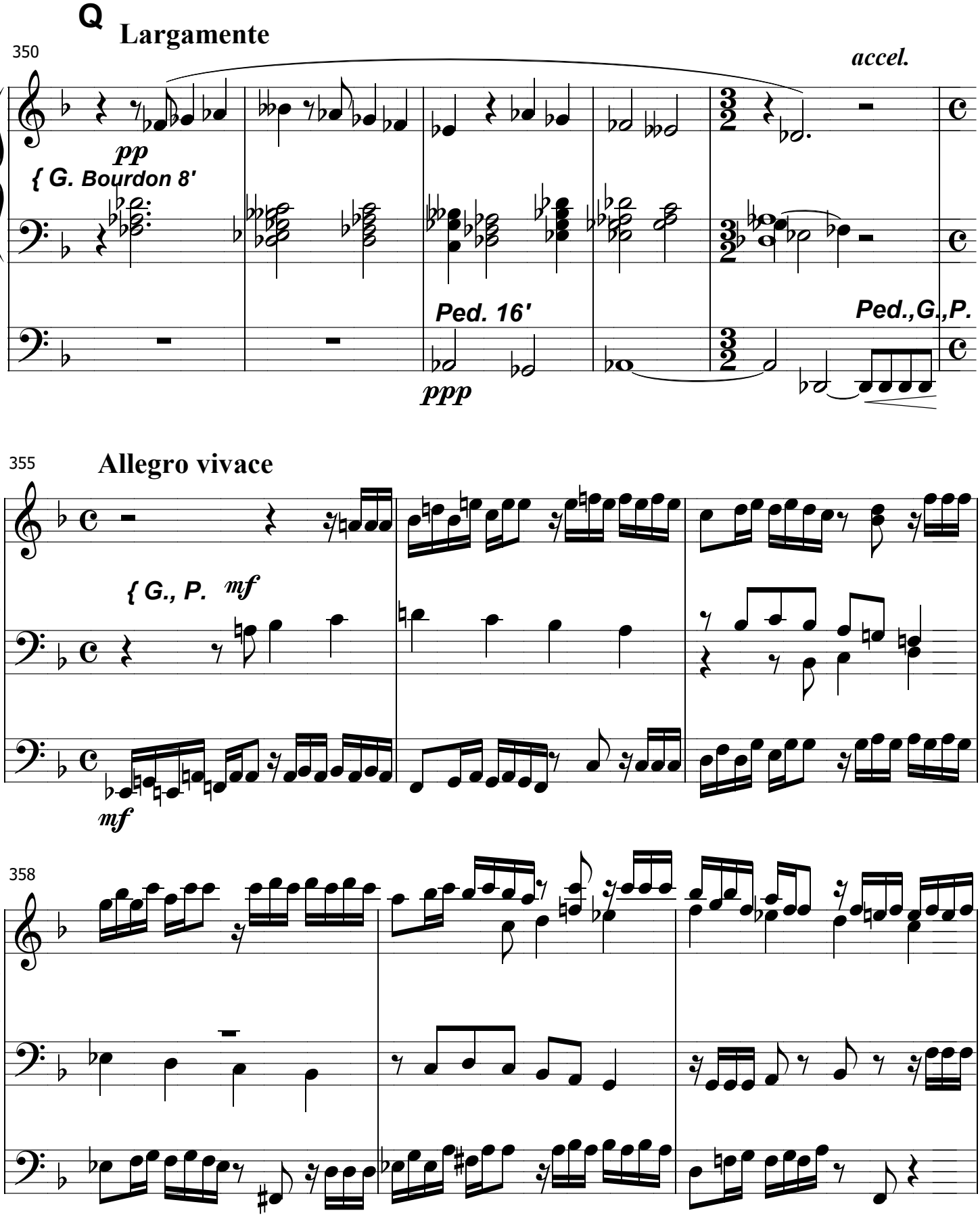

320

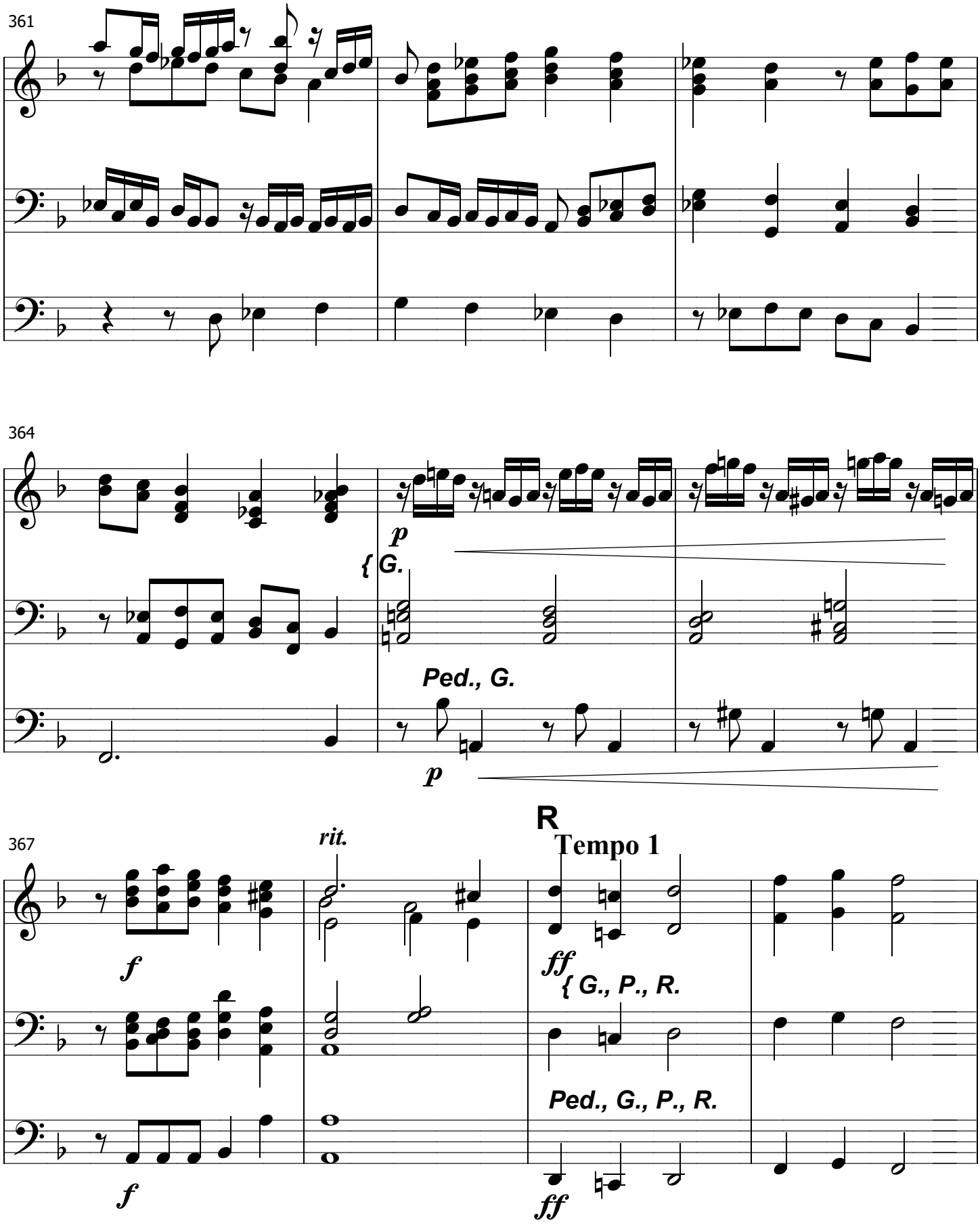

323
poco rit.
{ P.
mp
Ped. 8'

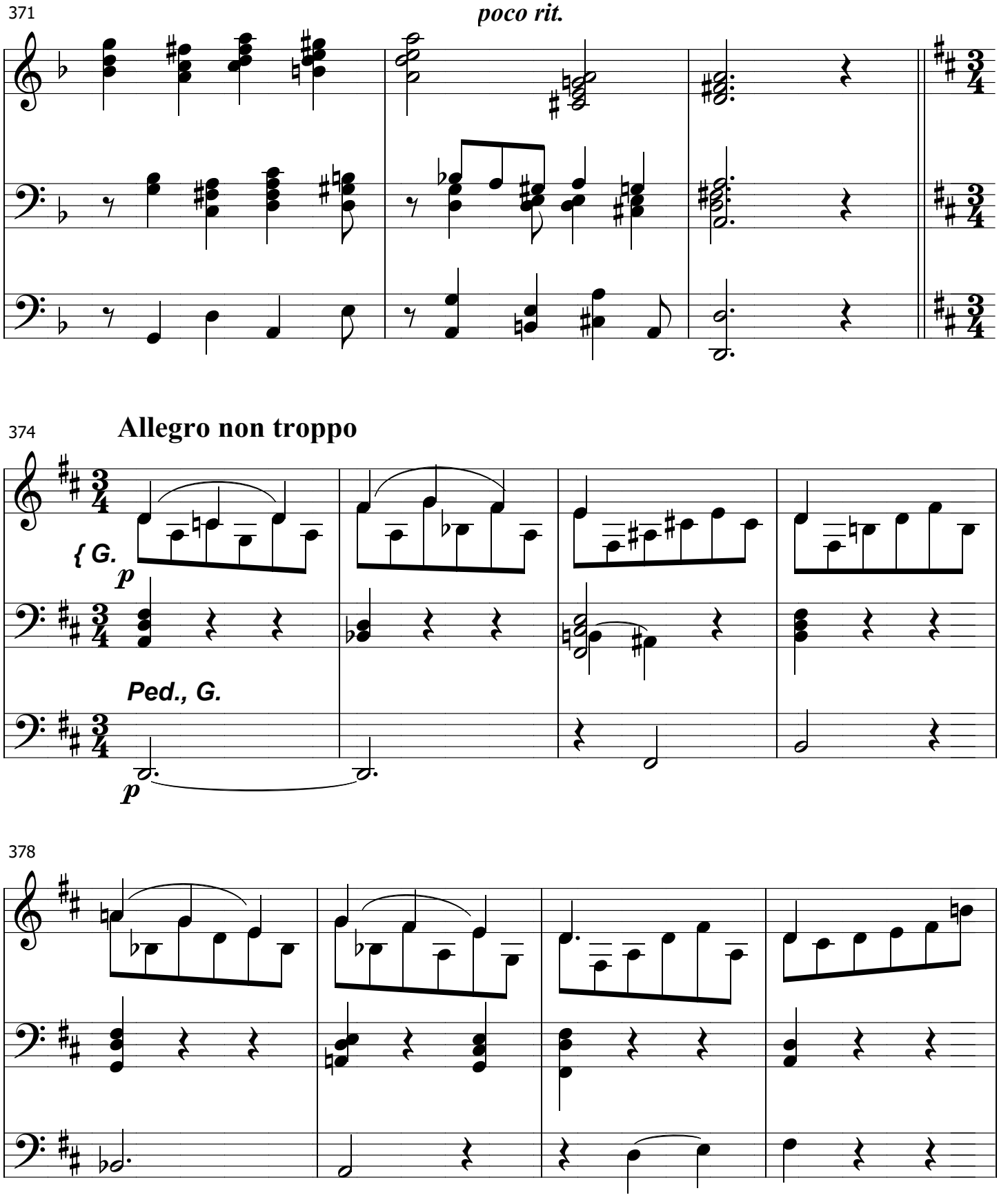

Tempo 1
326
{ G.
f
ff
{ G., P., R.
Ped., G.
Ped,. G. P. R.
Ped. 8'
f
ff
p

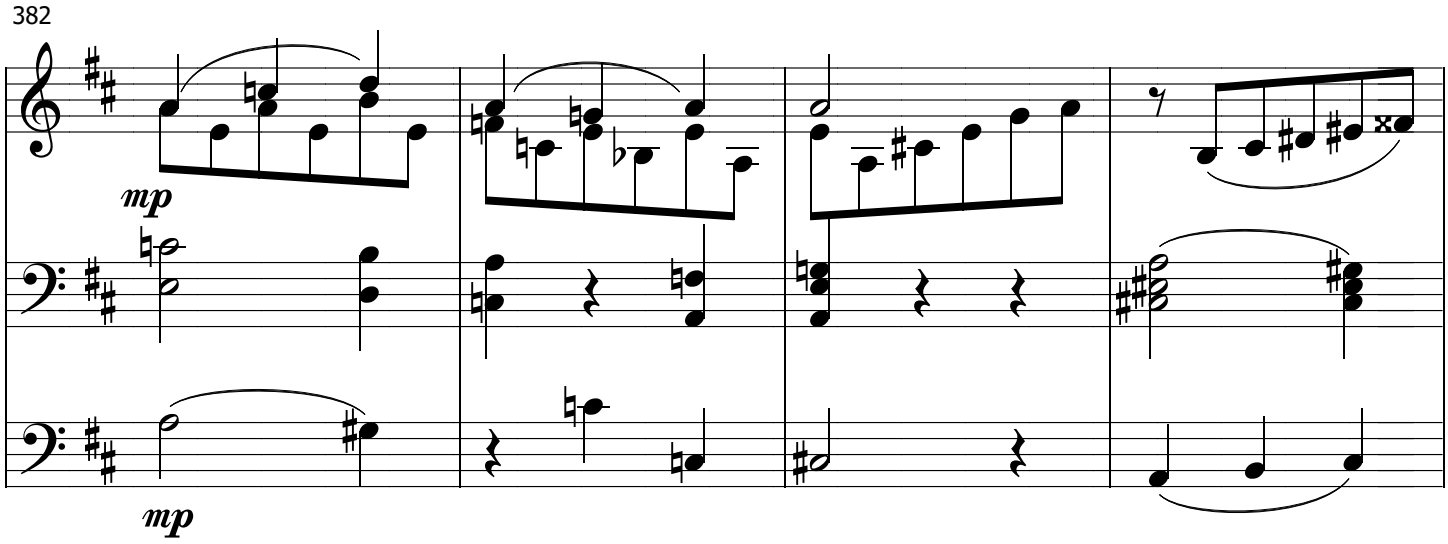

P
Allegro vivace
331
{ P. p
334
337
R.
mp
R.
mp
Ped., R.
mp

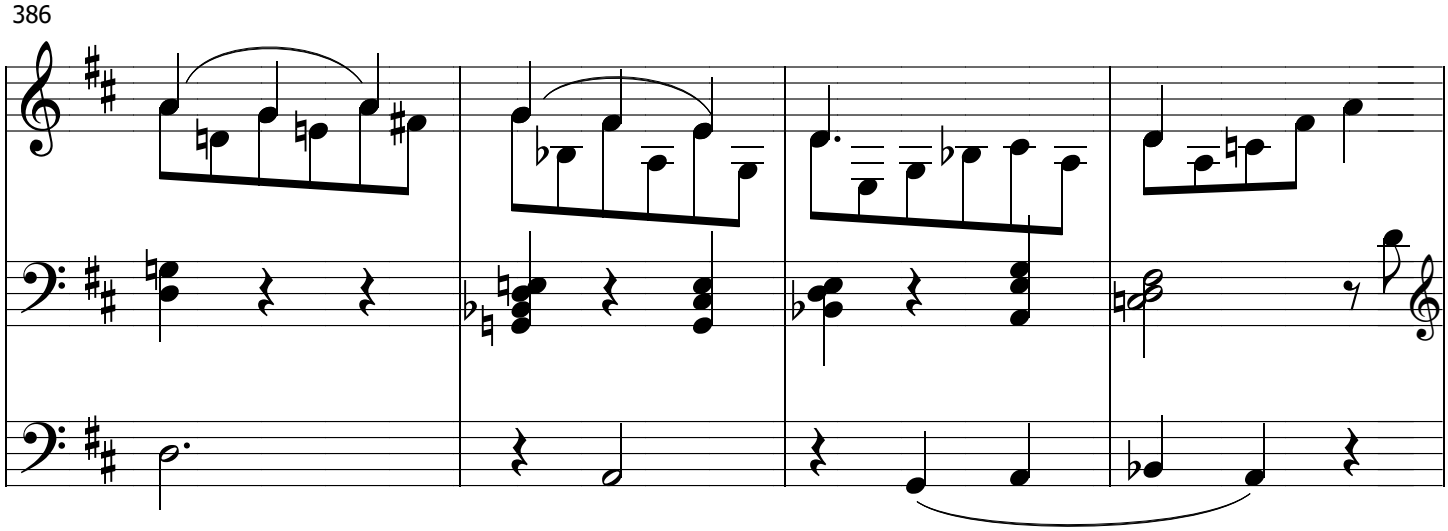

341
{ G.
mf
Ped., G.
mf
344
347
rit.

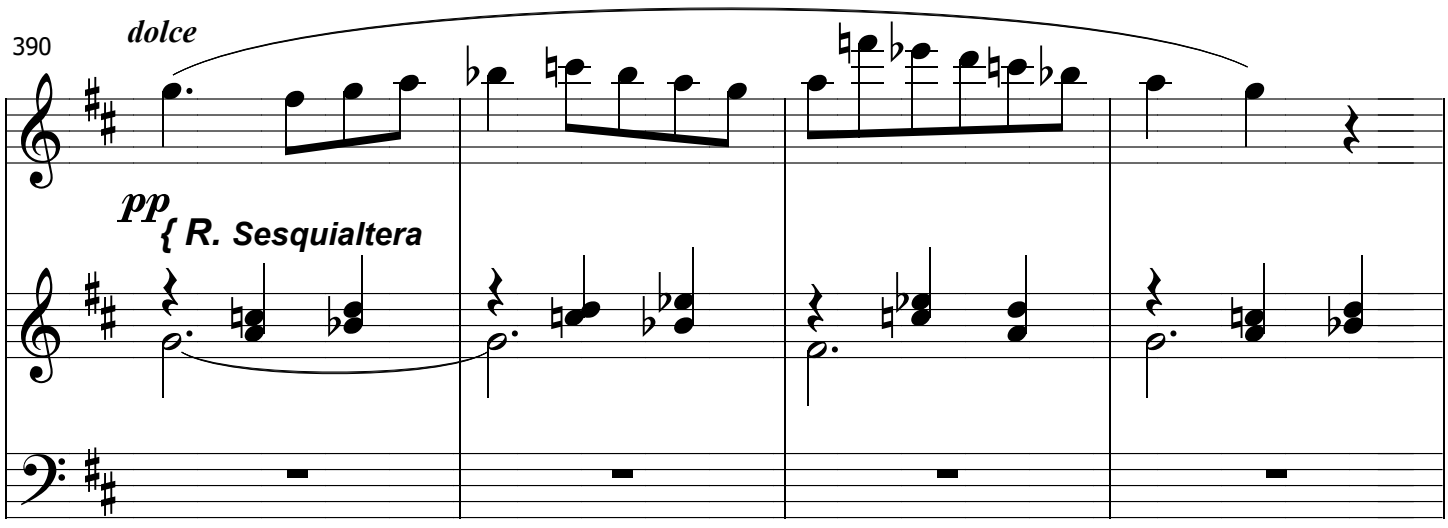

Q
Largamente
350
accel.
pp
{ G. Bourdon 8'
Ped. 16'
ppp
Ped.,G.,P.
355
Allegro vivace
{ G., P.
mf
mf
358

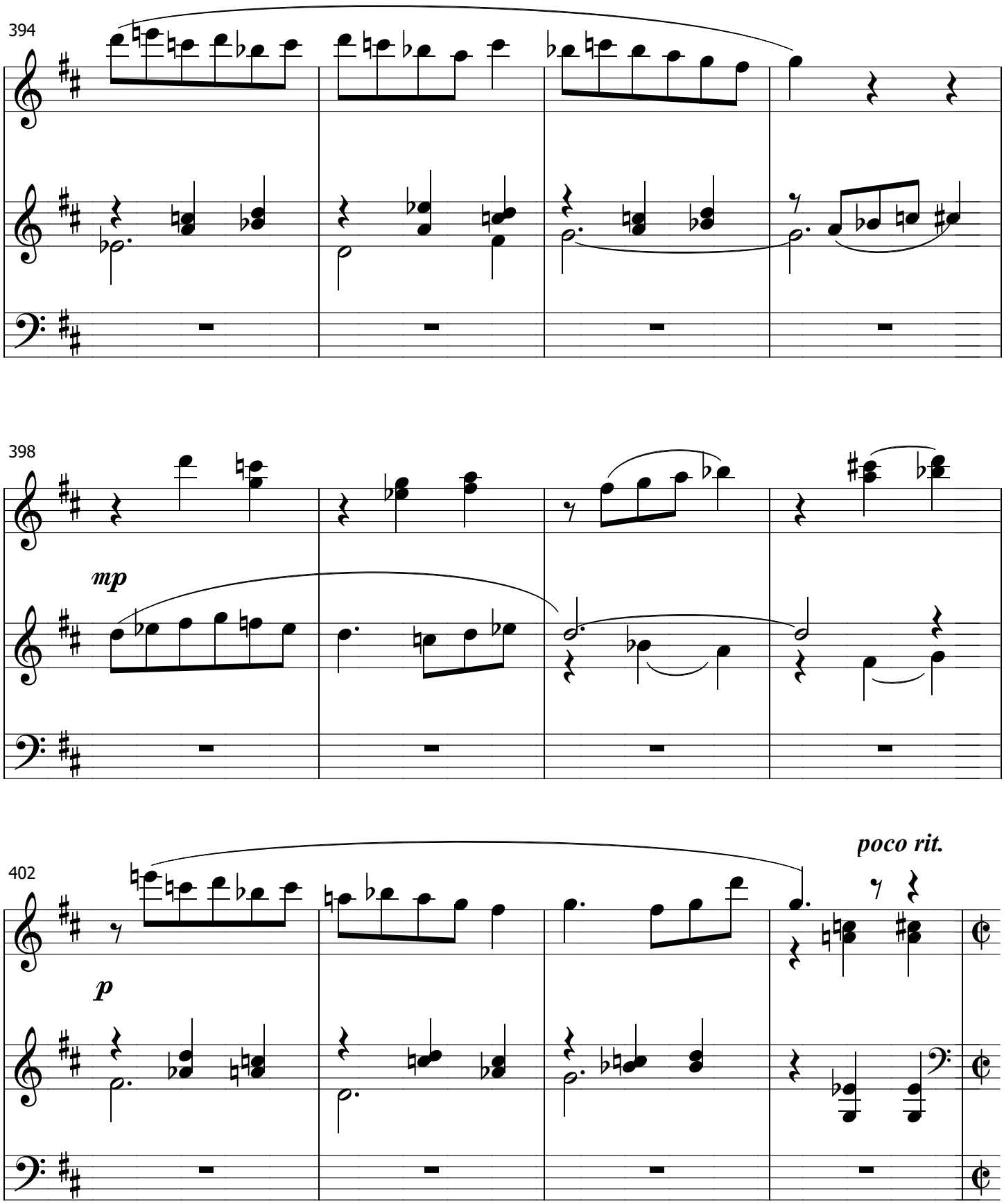

361
364
p
{ G.
Ped., G.
p
R
Tempo 1
367
rit.
f
ff
{ G., P., R.
Ped., G., P., R.
f
ff

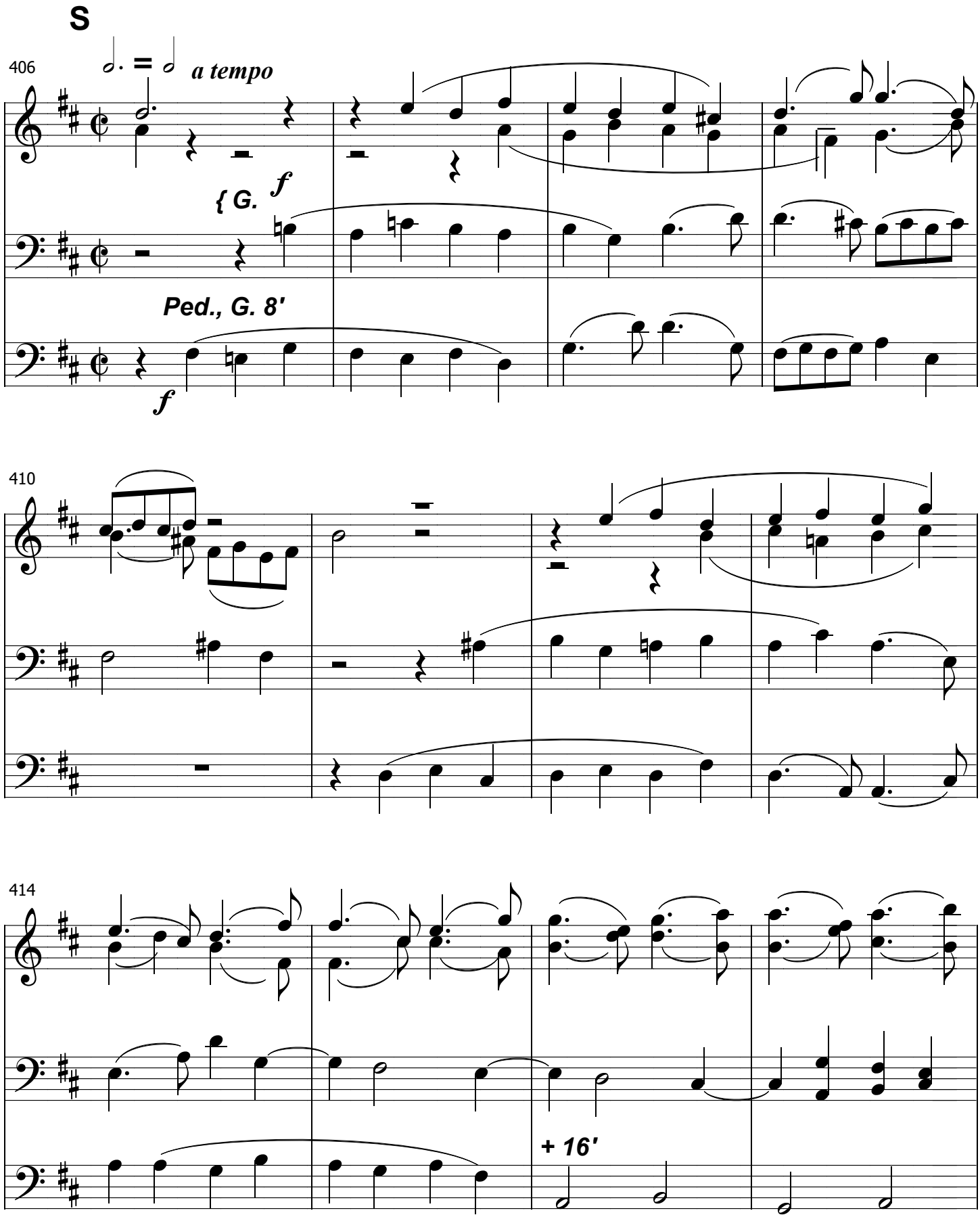

371
poco rit.
374
Allegro non troppo
{ G.
p
Ped., G.
p
378

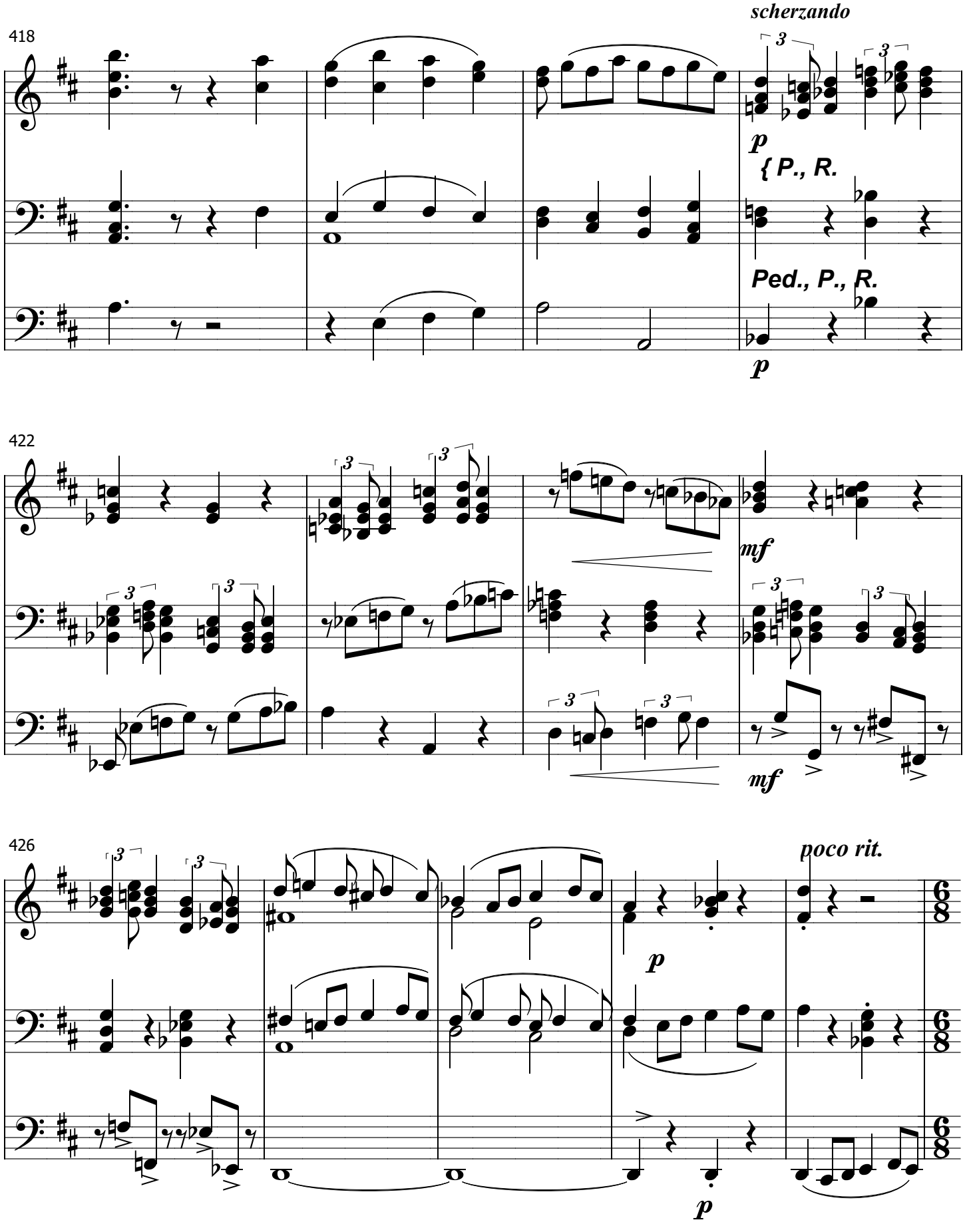

382
mp
mp

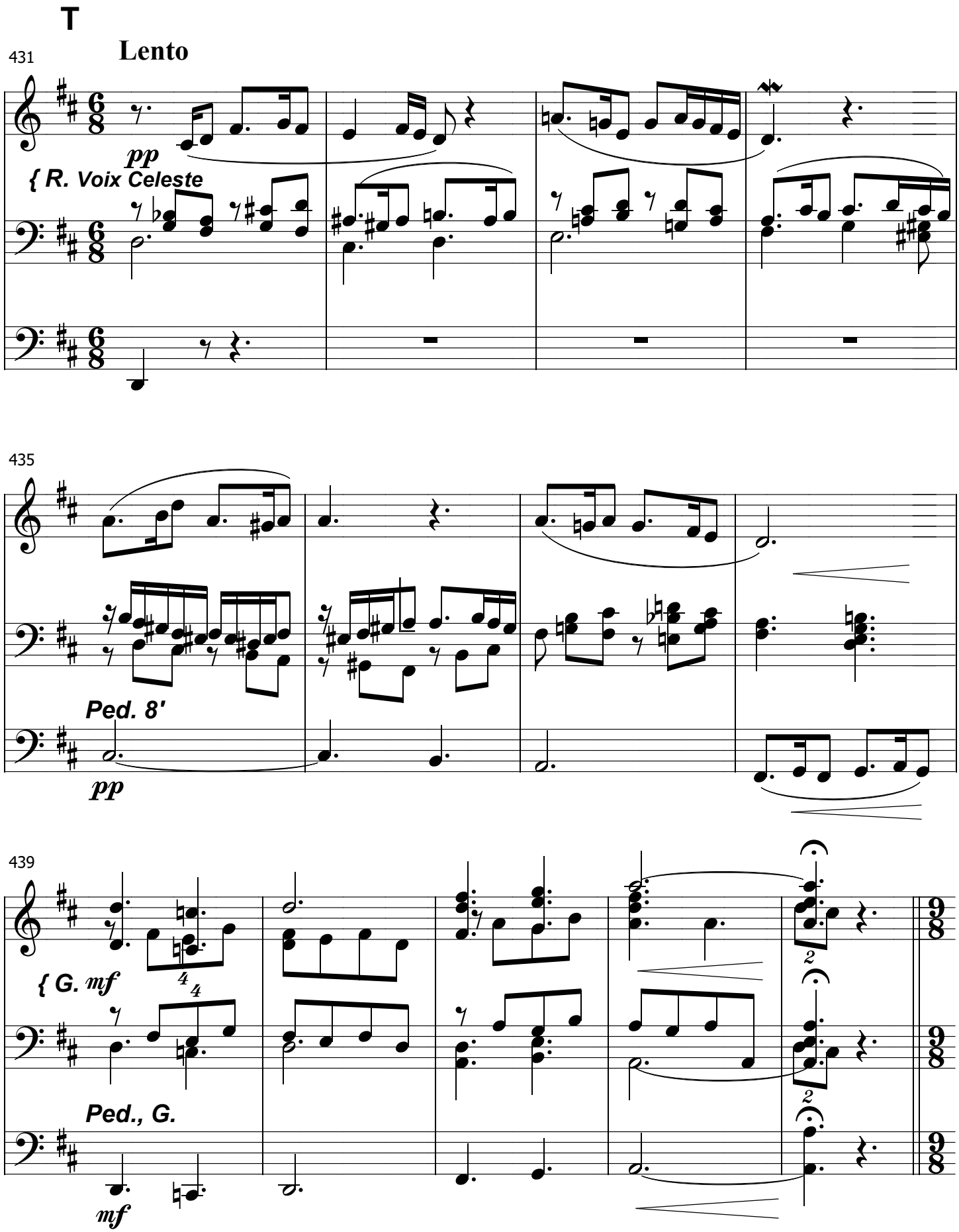

386

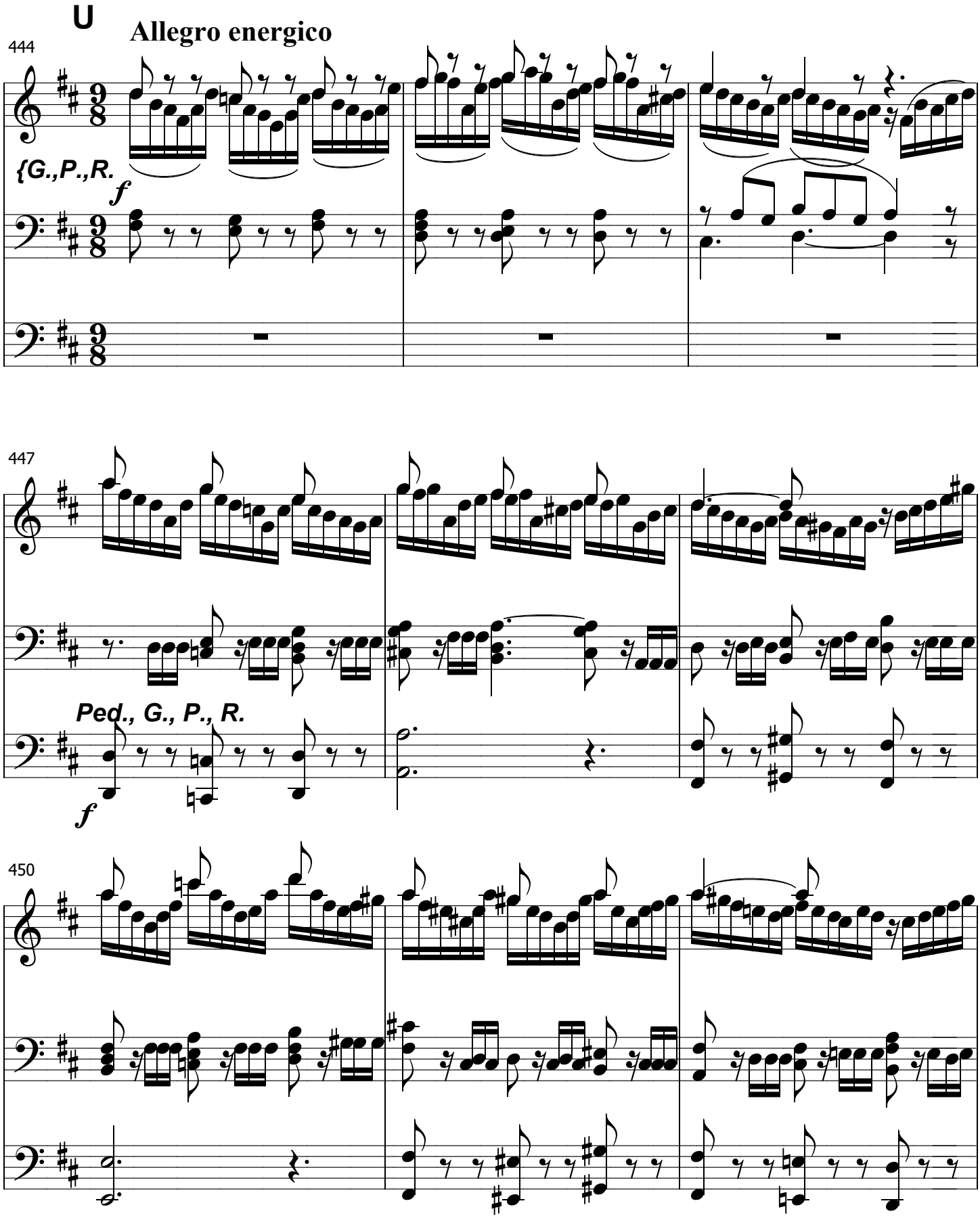

390
dolce
pp
{ R. Sesquialtera

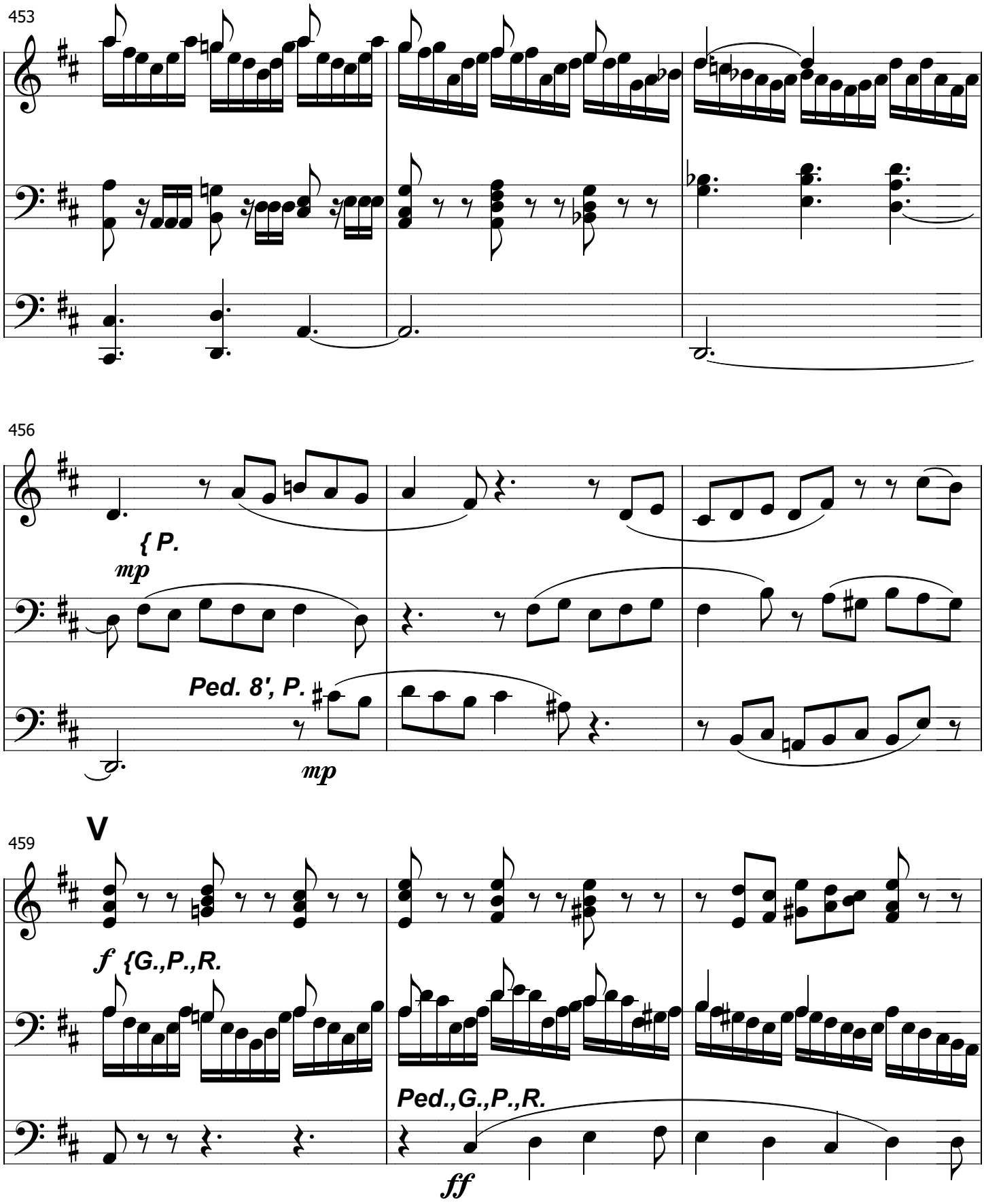

394
398
mp
402
p
poco rit.

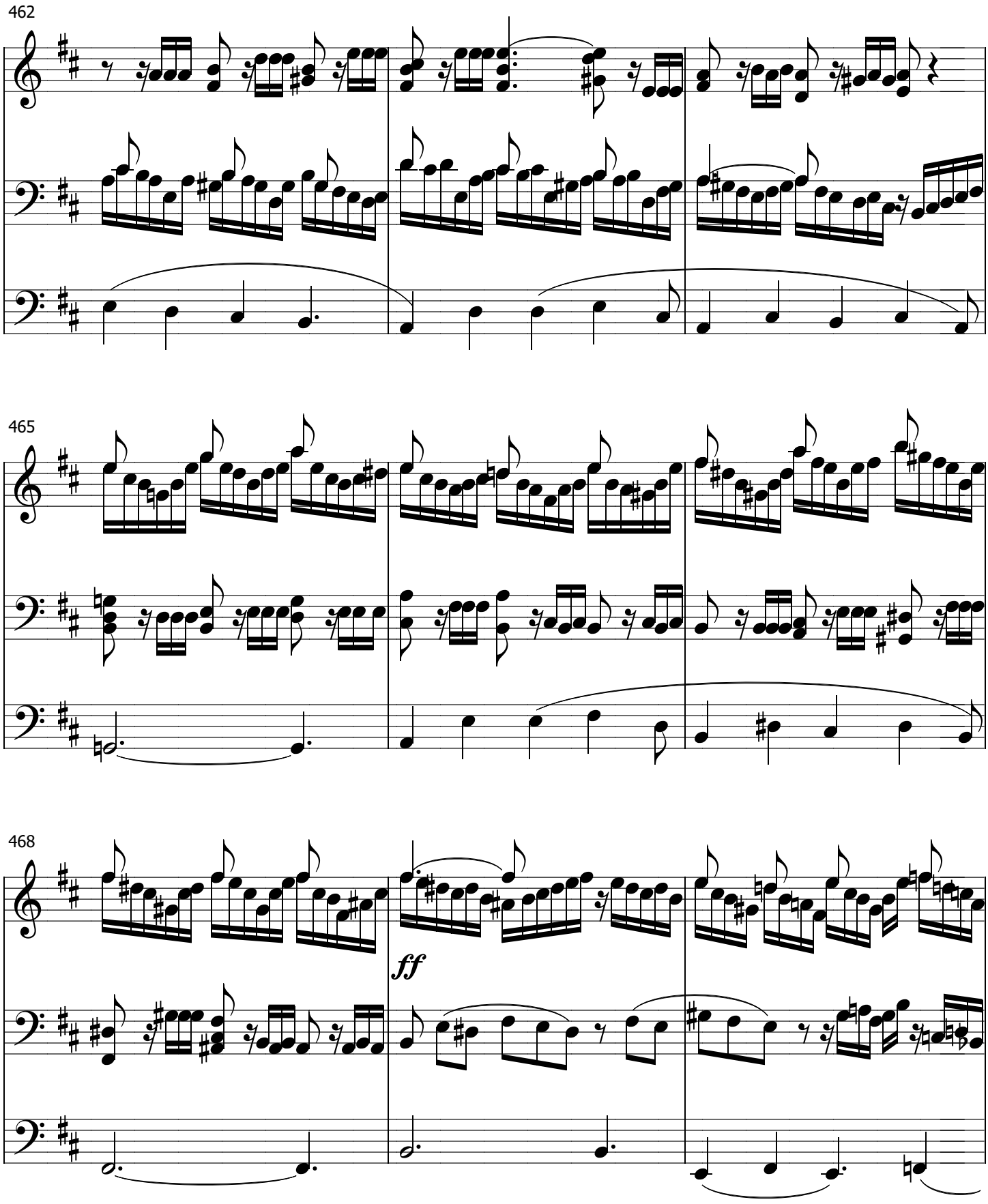

S
406
a tempo
{ G.
f
Ped., G. 8'
f
410
414
+ 16'

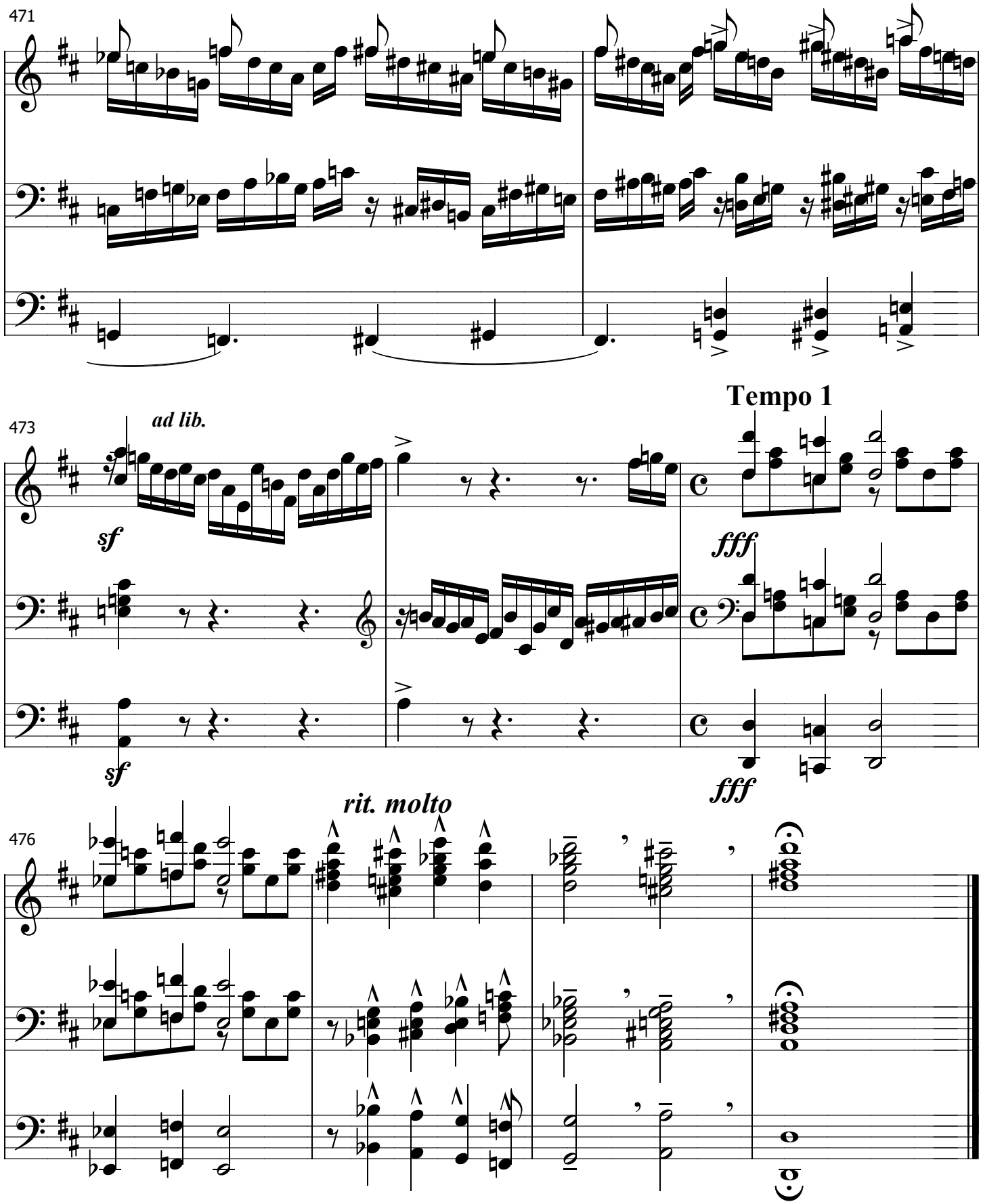

scherzando
418
p
{ P., R.
Ped., P., R.
p
422
mf
mf
426
poco rit.
p
p


T
Lento
431
pp
{ R. Voix Celeste
435
Ped. 8'
pp
439
{ G. mf
Ped., G.
mf


U
Allegro energico
444
{G.,P.,R.
f
447
Ped., G., P., R.
f
450


453
456
{ P.
mp
Ped. 8', P.
mp
459
V
f {G.,P.,R.
Ped.,G.,P.,R.
ff


462
465
468
ff


471
473
ad lib.
sf
sf
Tempo 1
fff
fff
476
rit. molto