ERNST KRENEK

EIGHT PIANO PIECES (1946)

1. Etude
2. Invention
3. Scherzo
4. Toccata
5. Nocturne
6. Waltz
7. Air
8. Rondo

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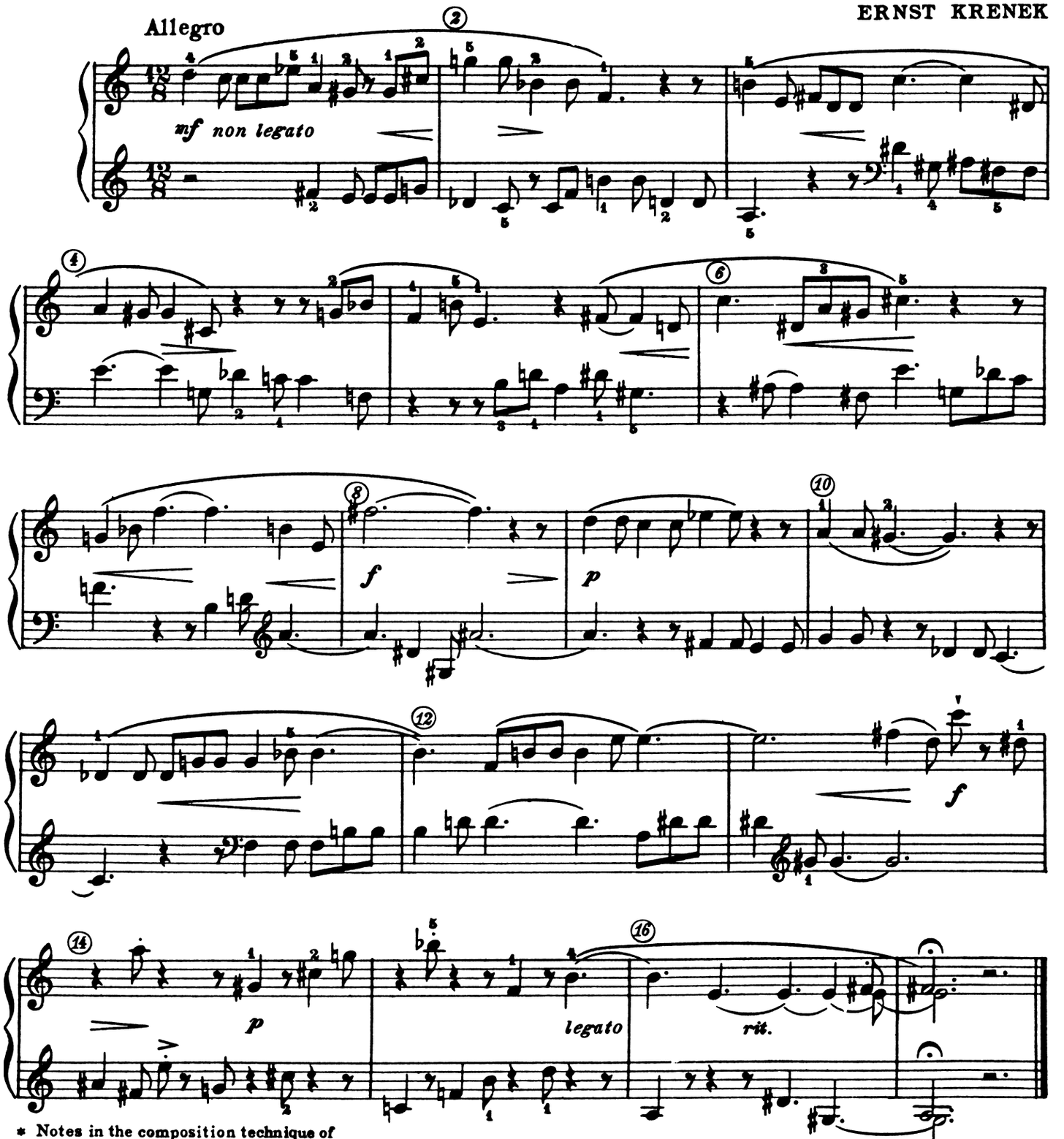
EIGHT PIANO PIECES

*1. Etude

ERNST KRENEK



* Notes in the composition technique of these pieces will be found on pages 11-12.

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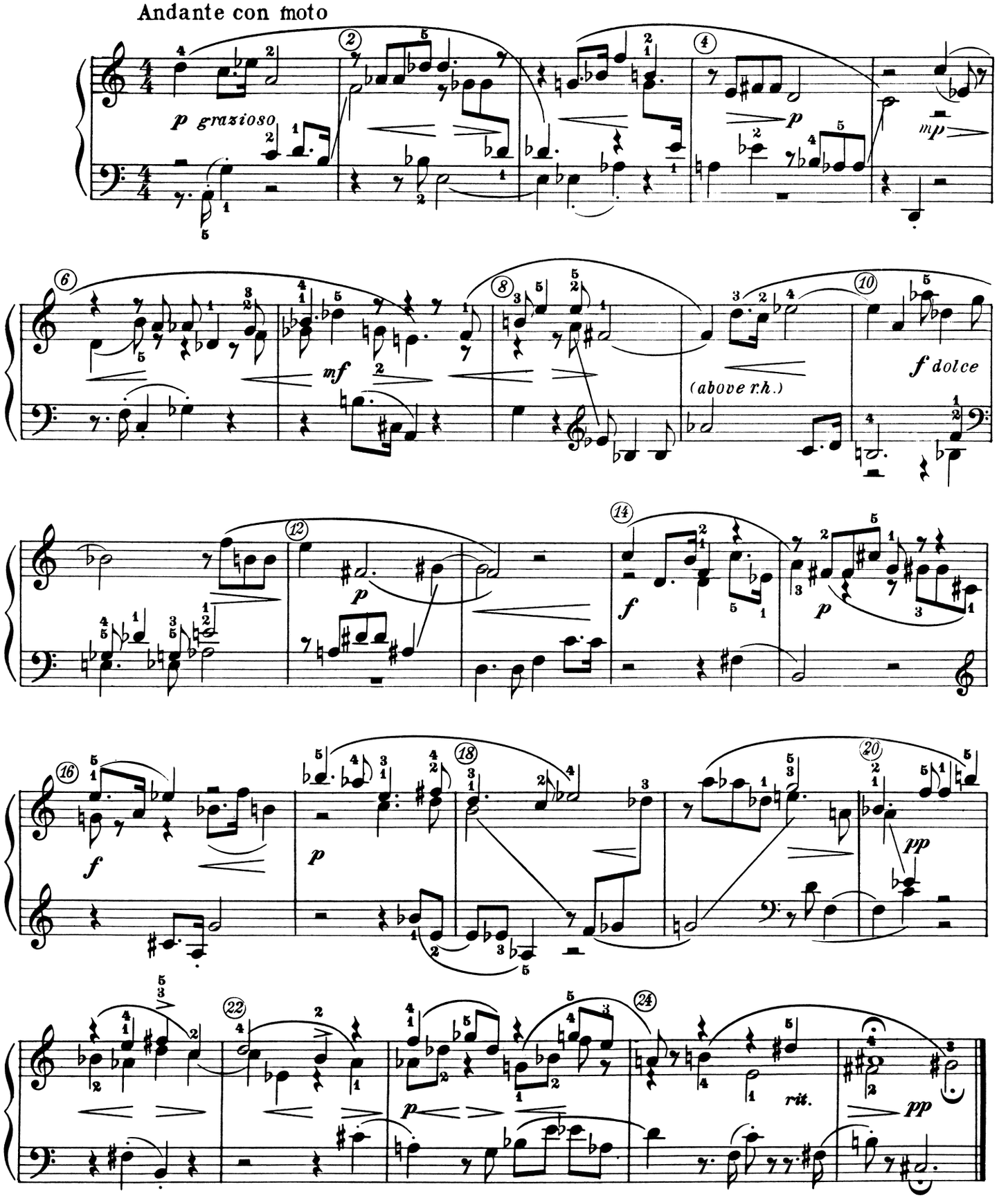
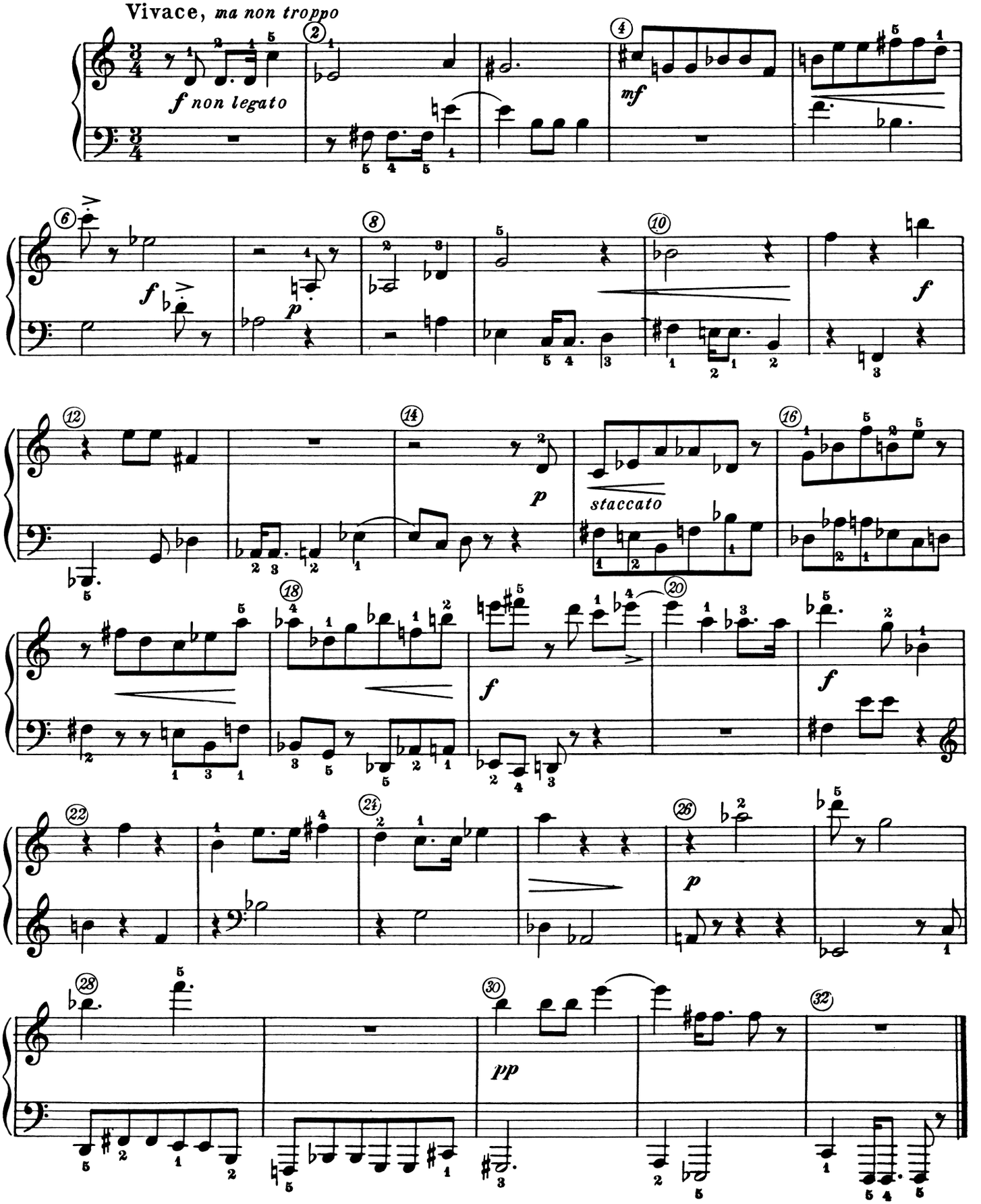
St. Paul, Minn. May 11, 1946.

2. Invention

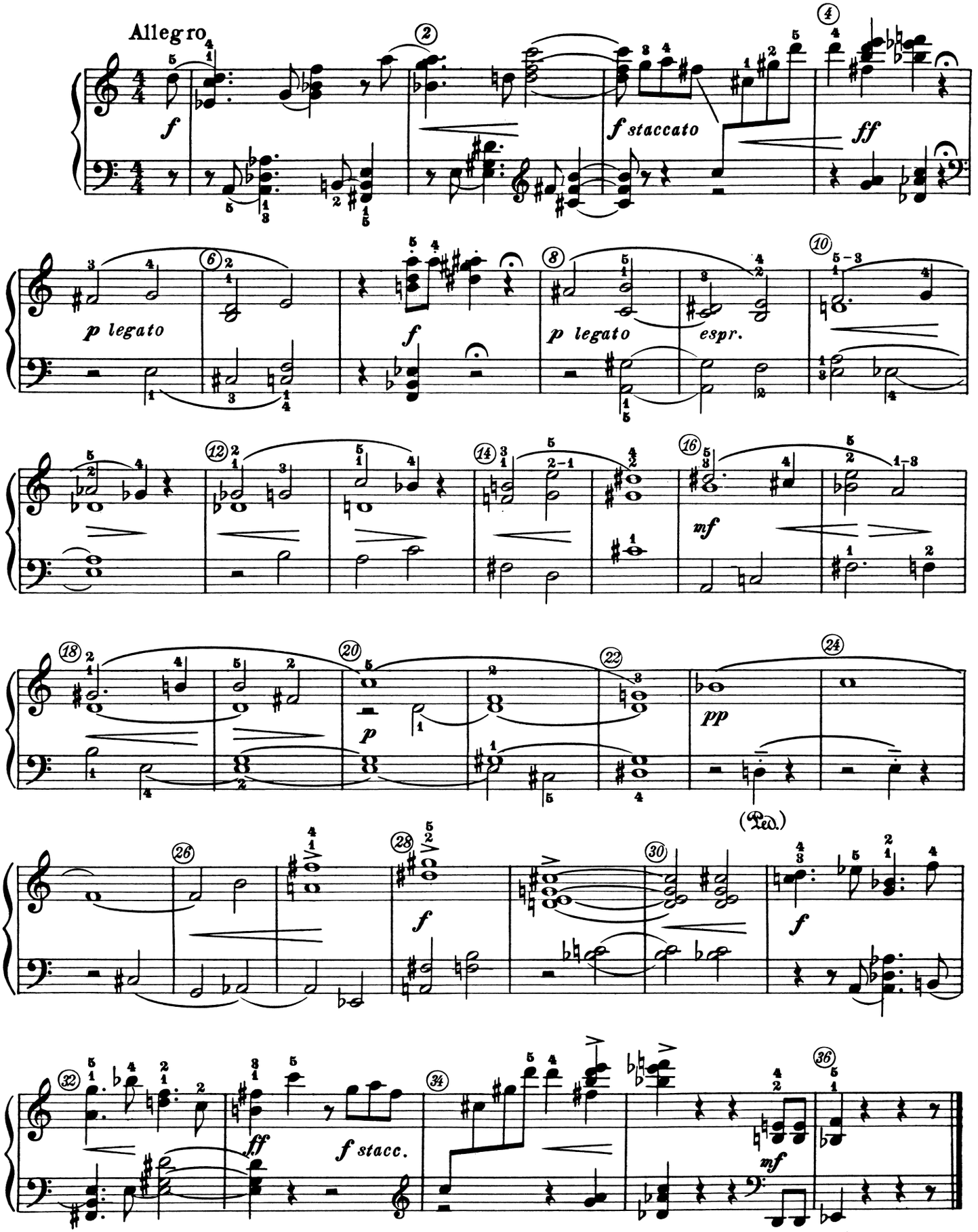
Andante con moto



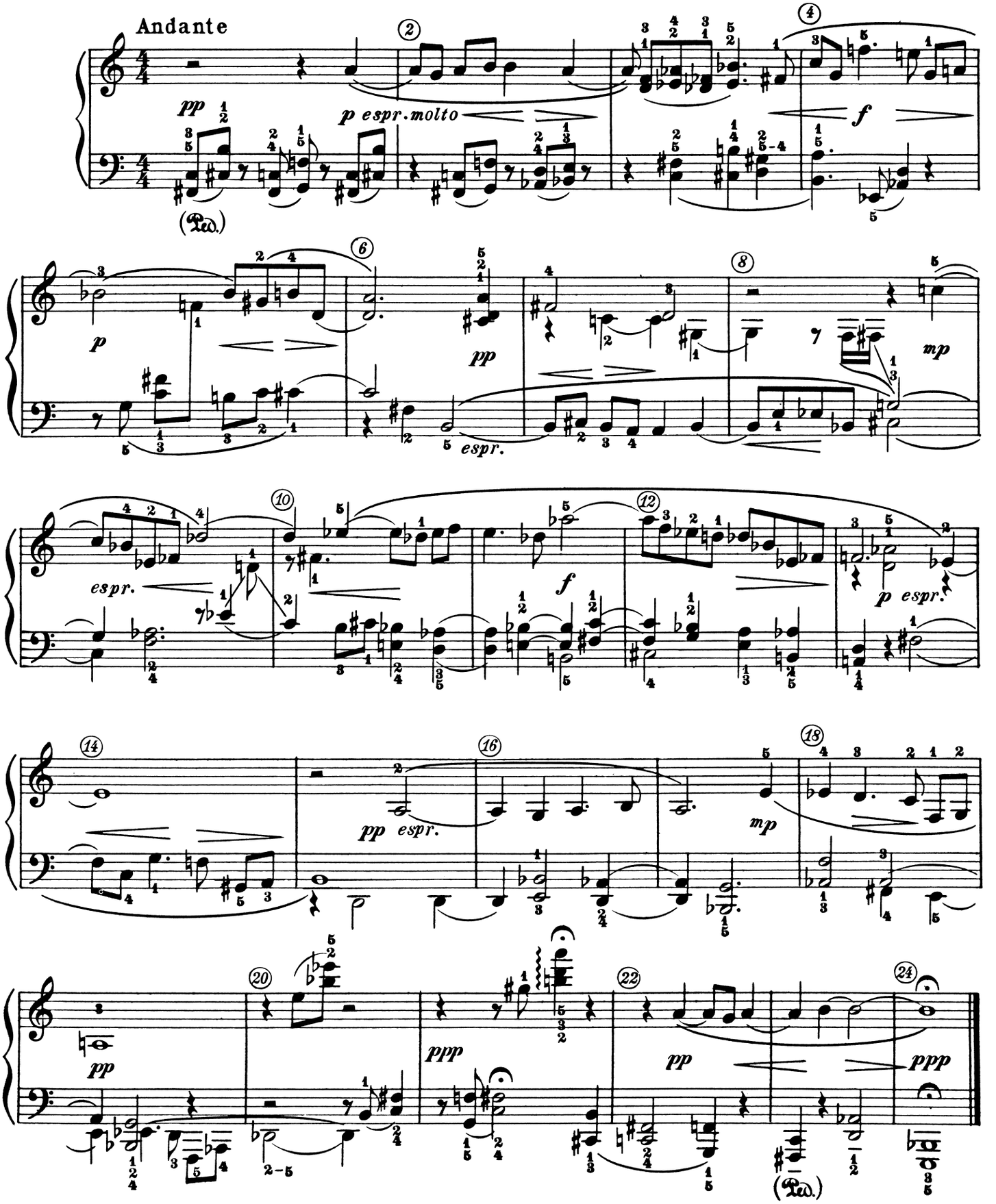
3. Scherzo



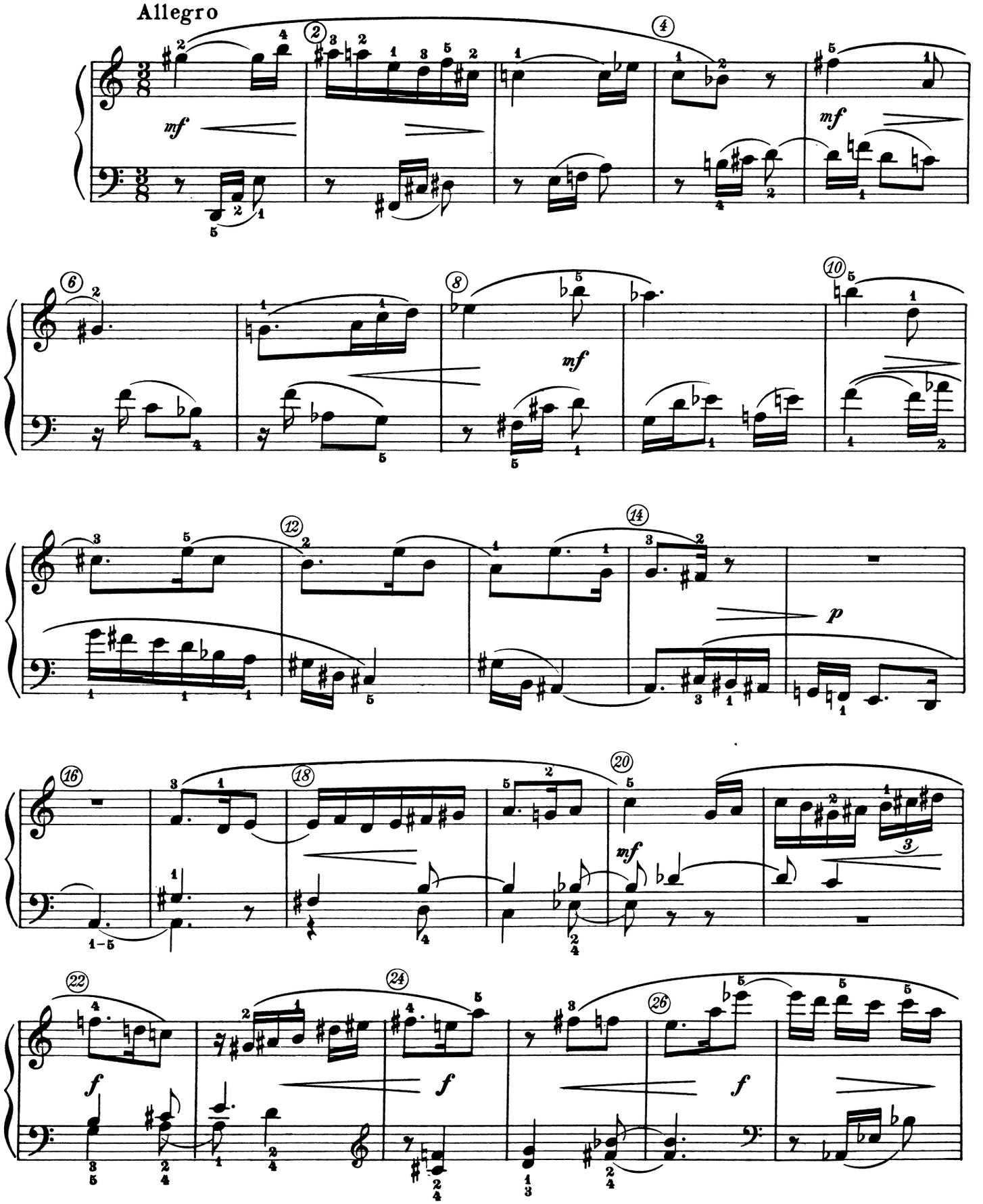
4. Toccata

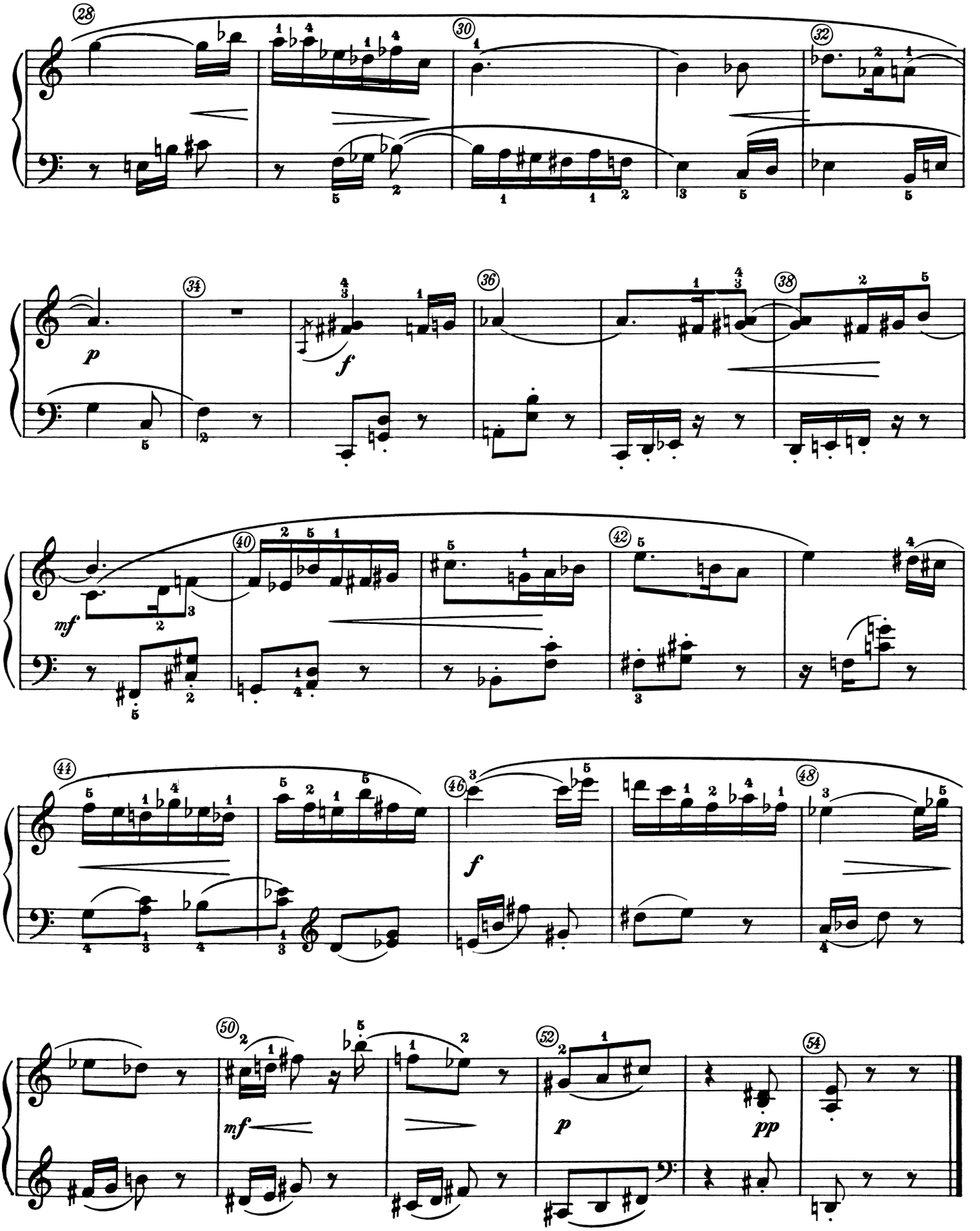

Allegro
f
f staccato
ff
p legato
f
p legato
espr.
mf
p
pp
(Ped.)
f
f
ff
f stacc.
mf

5. Nocturne


Andante
pp
p espr. molto
f
p
pp
espr.
mp
espr.
f
p espr.
pp espr.
mp
pp
ppp
pp
ppp

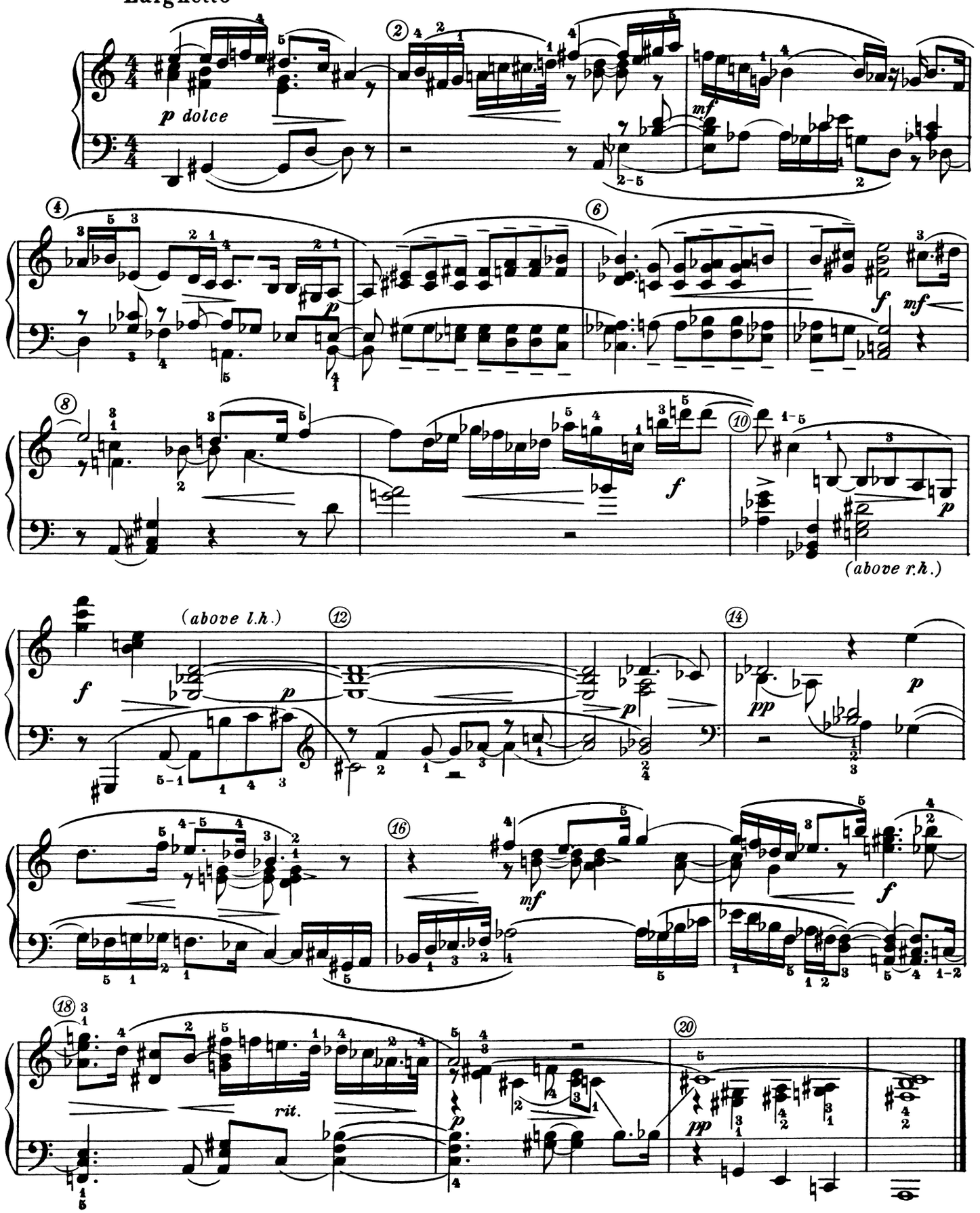
6. Waltz



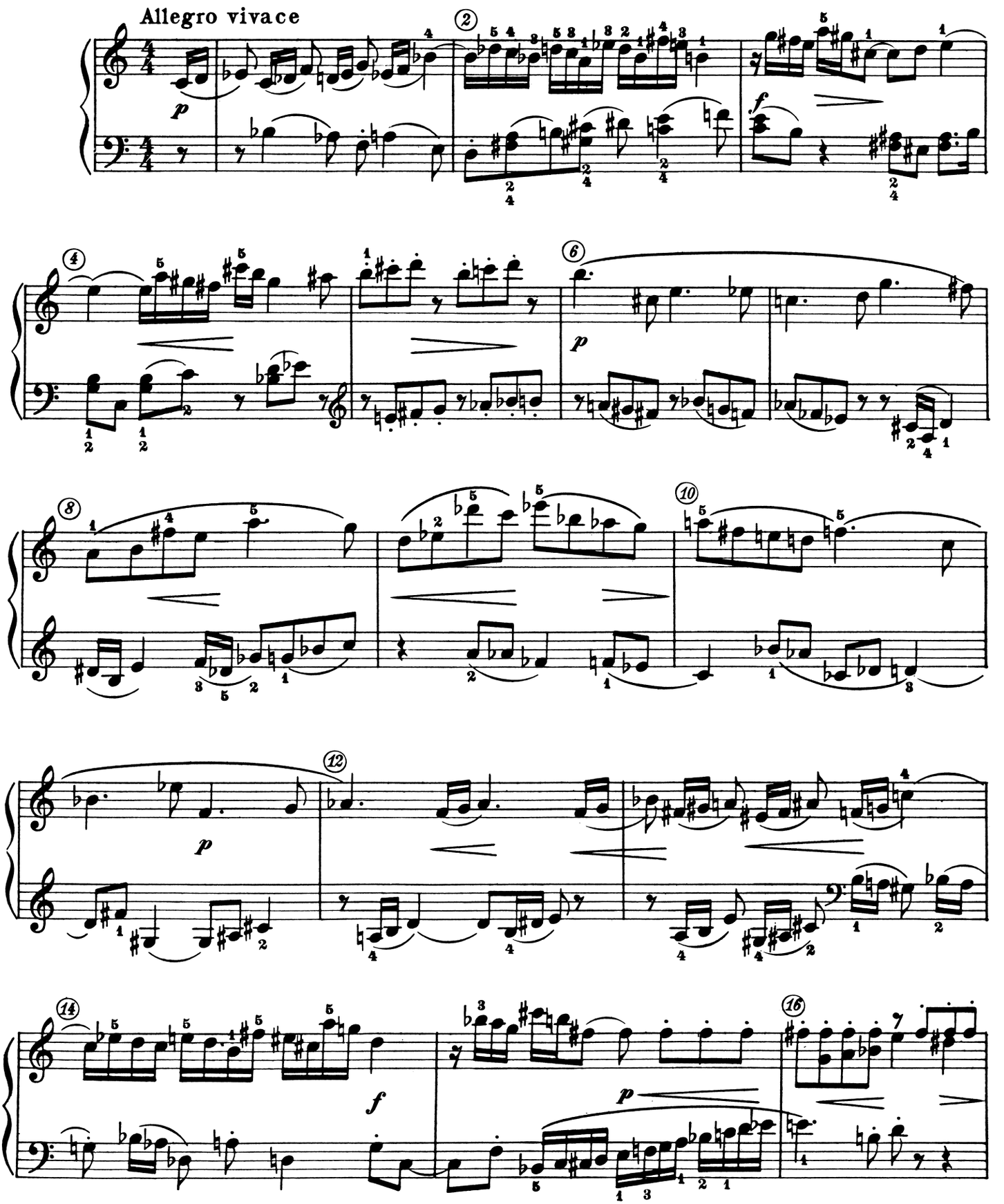

28
30
32
p
34
f
36
38
mf
40
42
44
f
46
48
mf
50
p
pp
52
54

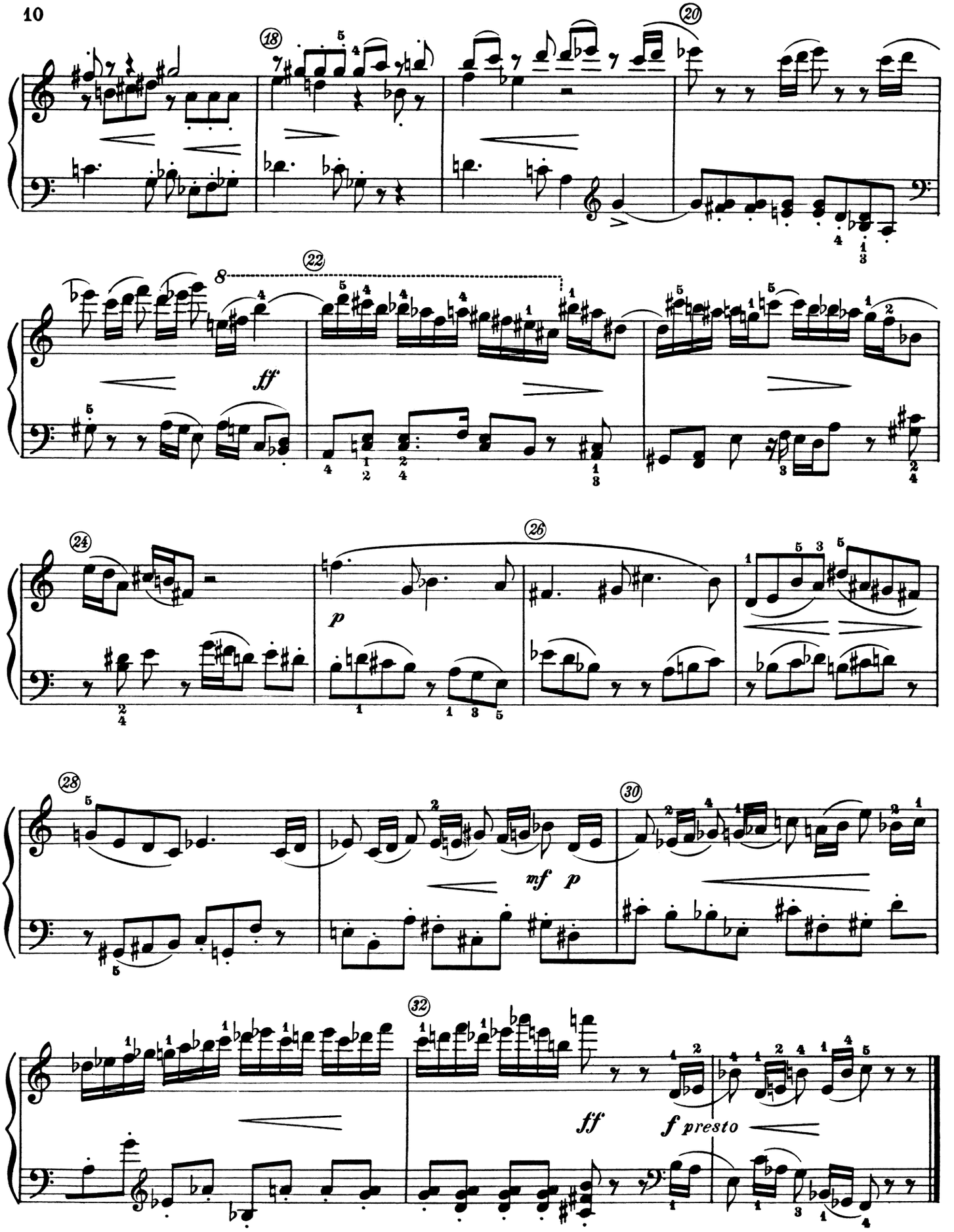
7. Air

Larghetto



8. Rondo





St. Paul, Minn. May 28, 1946

ERNST KRENEK — EIGHT PIANO PIECES

NOTES ON THE COMPOSITION TECHNIQUE

The Eight Piano Pieces are built on the following arrangement of the twelve tones of the chromatic, or twelve-tone scale:

I. D-C-E♭-A-G#-C#-G-B♭-F-B-E-F#.

Sharps and flats are used interchangeably, so that for instance the third tone may read D# instead of E♭, the fifth A♭ instead of G#. The tones of this series are used in various octave registers, but always in the same succession, which lends unity to the design of the composition. The listener does not have to observe consciously the presence of the twelve-tone series in order to become aware of a certain characteristic regularity of the design.

No. 1. Etude. The series of twelve tones shown above appears five times in the right hand. The left hand carries a canonic imitation, a minor sixth lower, beginning on F#.

No. 2. Invention. The top part (right hand) has the same twelve-tone series as in the first piece, six times. The middle part carries a canonic imitation by inversion, beginning on C. The inversion of the twelve-tone series reads:

II. C-D-B-F-G♭-D♭-G-E-A-E♭-B♭-A♭.

The lowest part has no imitation. It presents the original series in a transposition, beginning on A. The transposed series reads:

III. A-G-B♭-E-E♭-A♭-D-F-C-G♭-B-C#.

It appears four times.

No. 3. Scherzo. Canon by retrogression. The upper part has the original twelve-tone series, six times. The lower part uses the series read backwards, as follows:

IV. F#-E-B-F-B♭-G-C#-G#-A-E♭-C-D.

From the second eighth note of measure 17 the upper part repeats what the lower part has presented so far, running backwards. The lower part begins on the third eighth of measure 17 to repeat backwards what was played in the first sixteen measures by the upper part.

No. 4. Toccata. Various transpositions of the original series and its inversion are used. Furthermore, several consecutive tones of the series are occasionally sounded together. In the beginning the first three tones of the original series appear in the right hand, the second three tones in the left hand and so forth. On the last eighth note of measure 1 the right hand has a transposition of the series beginning on A (see III). The configuration of the tones is the same as in measure 1. In measure 3 a transposition of the inverted series begins on G:

V. G-A-F#-C-C#-G#-D-B-E-B♭-F-E♭.

The first six tones of this series appear again in measure 4 (l.h.: G-A, r.h.: F#, l.h.: C-D♭-A♭). The remaining six tones are placed in measures 6 (r.h.: D-B-E) and 7 (l.h.: B♭-F-E♭). In the meantime another transposition of the original series begins in measure 5 (F#-E-G), continues in measure 6 (l.h.: C#-C-F) and is completed in measure 7 (r.h.: B-D-A-D#-G#-A#). The remainder of the piece is designed according to these principles.

In the subsequent four pieces the basic tone row is used in different, less rigid ways, showing more recent developments of the twelve-tone technique.

No. 5. Nocturne. The row is divided into three groups of four tones each, and these groups are used as independent units of design. Each group is treated like the original row, by inversion and retrogression. Furthermore, the succession of the tones inside of a group is occasionally changed.

The last four tones of the row III (see above) are C-G♭-B-C#. They appear in the first two eighth beats of No. 5 (C-F#-C#-B). The last four notes of the row (original transposed to begin on E♭):

VI. E♭-D♭-E-B♭-A-D-A♭-B-F#-C-F-G.

appear on the fourth and fifth eighth beats of No. 5 (l.h.). On the last quarter

beat of measure one the r.h. begins the first four-tone group of row III, presenting the first two tones (A-G). The group is completed with E-B♭ on the seventh eighth beat of measure 2 (l.h.). In measure 2, second quarter beat, the r.h. begins the first four-tone group of the inverted row beginning on A:

VII. A-B-G#-D-D#-A#-E-C#-F#-C-G-F

with A-B. The group is completed by the l.h. on the sixth eighth beat of measure 2 (A♭-D). This principle of design governs the remainder of the piece.

No. 6. Waltz. Here as well as in No. 7 and No. 8 the row is divided into four three-tone groups. The first three tones of the r.h. correspond to the first group of the original row transposed to begin on A# (A#-G#-B). The succession of the tones is changed into G#-B-A#. The first three tones of the l.h. correspond to the last three tones of the original row transposed to begin on C:

VIII. C-B♭-D♭-G-F#-B-F-A♭-E♭-A-D-E,

and so forth. The same principle applies to

No. 7. Air. The first three tones in the top voice are the first group of an original row beginning on E (E-D-F). The chord below the first quarter E (D-A-C#) is the second group of the inverted row beginning on A♭:

IX. A♭-B♭-G-C#-D-A-E♭-C-F-B-F#-E.

No. 8. Rondo. Observation of three-tone groups in melody and harmony will show that the same principle of design is applied. Form of the Rondo: Theme A, meas. 1-4. Transition, meas. 5. Theme B, meas. 6-11. Trans., meas. 12. Theme A, meas. 13-15. Theme C, meas. 16-20. Theme A, meas. 21-24. Theme B, meas. 25-28. Theme A and Coda, meas. 29-33.

Since the design of the pieces is held together by the consistent use of a few basic motivic patterns and their variations, the harmonic processes may not be analyzed in terms of the chord relationships of tonal harmony. These processes are controlled by the desire of creating a lively and expressive alternation of tension and release through proper manipulation of interval combinations of higher and lower tension (less exactly known as "dissonances" and "consonances").

NOTES ON THE INTERPRETATION

Observe phrasing and dynamic markings with utmost care. More than any other type of music, the style of these pieces requires accurate and eloquent articulation, because the chord relationships and cadences that bring out the structure of tonal music even without much effort on the part of the interpreter are missing in non-tonal music.

In the contrapuntal pieces the resonance pedal should be used very sparingly. Short pedals may occasionally aid the *legato*, or in lyrical pieces such as No. 2 make the tone mellow and round. Somewhat more pedal may be used in the homophonic passages of No. 5 and No. 7, but these pedals ought to be short too.

The left pedal may be used frequently to support pp.

Special remarks:

No. 2, measures 21 and 22: observe most carefully the <> and the accents on the third beats. The two measures are "answering" each other, the progression F#-C in 21 corresponding to B-A in 22.

No. 3, measures 6, 7, and 8: Observe f, p and accent signs. A-A♭ in the r.h is a sort of echo in relation to D♭-A♭ in the l.h.

No. 4: Bring out the contrast between the agitated character of measures 1-4, 7, 31-36 and the sustained legato of the other measures. The agitated passages may be a trifle faster than the rest.

No. 6: Phrasing and dynamics are particularly important.

No. 7: Measures 5 and 6 broadly, with short pedals. Measure 9, very slight accelerando. Measure 10 broadly. Measure 12-13, no pedal, very *legato*, quiet and soft.

No. 8: Bring out the motive in the l.h., measures 3-4 and 22.

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