# BACH

## For the Clarinet

*Selected Movements from Unaccompanied Sonatas, Partitas, and Suites by J.S. Bach*

Transcribed and Edited by Ronald L. Caravan

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## For the Clarinet

### *Selected Movements from Unaccompanied Sonatas, Partitas, and Suites by J.S. Bach*

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# BACH
## for the Clarinet

### Selected Movements from Unaccompanied Sonatas, Partitas, and Suites by J.S. Bach [1685-1750]

Transcribed and Edited by Ronald L. Caravan

### *Introduction*

The movements taken from the unaccompanied solo instrumental works by Johann Sebastian Bach selected for this volume come from the Sonatas and Partitas for violin (BWV 1001-1006), the Suites for cello (BWV 1007-1012), and the Sonata (Partita) in A minor for flute (BWV 1013). This material has been adapted for clarinet because of its extraordinary potential value for developing phrasing, a sense of style, and overall musicianship, as well as advancing facility and technique, all while playing great music by one of history's greatest masters.

Movements selected from the violin and cello works are those that seem to transcribe most successfully for a wind instrument. Most have been transposed to accommodate range and *tessitura*, with uniformity of keys and key relationships within each separate piece retained in the interest of providing a more authentic overall tonal orientation.

Some movements are thoroughly impractical for transcription due to extensive use of double stops and/or contrapuntal textures; other movements are less practical for transcription where Bach's writing is perfectly characteristic for the string instrument in other respects, but awkward when attempted on a wind instrument.

In playing the transcribed string movements on clarinet, the most productive approach will probably be to make them sound as convincing as possible as unaccompanied woodwind music, rather than attempting to mimic the violin or cello.

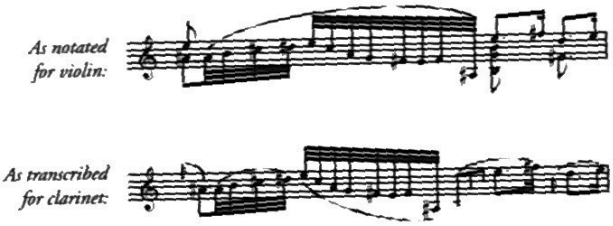
### *Wind Instrument application*

In approaching this music on a wind instrument, one of the foremost challenges is phrasing as it relates to the practical necessity of breathing. Bach obviously did not have to accommodate this in his unaccompanied music for violin and cello, and evidently approached the unaccompanied flute piece in a similar manner (assuming the piece was originally conceived for flute, which some authorities acknowledge is inconclusive). In order for the clarinetist to play this music with the greatest measure of melodic sensitivity, style, and continuity, then, the wisest approach is probably to incorporate sufficient rubato at phrase endings to minimize the sense of disruption that breathing tends to create.

The most musically satisfying results will come from selecting the least disruptive locations for breathing. In that regard, it is important to observe elements of musical structure such as phrases, patterns, texture changes, and cadences. A fundamental principle that should be observed throughout is that of musical momentum across the bar line to the down beat (hence, it will often be inappropriate to phrase at a bar line).

Toward assisting with the often perplexing matter of determining breathing points in this music, markings are included in many of the selections that might be useful and might also assist in guiding decisions elsewhere. Comma-style phrasing marks in this edition should be regarded as recommended breathing points. Such marks surrounded by parentheses should be considered suggestions for placing breaths in passages where there may be no ideal alternative.

Even in most of the movements that transcribe well from the violin and cello pieces, double stops and chords occur. Such passages are transcribed for the wind instrument using the conventional substitution of grace notes. Although one option is to omit the grace notes, thereby sidestepping the double stops altogether, significant harmonic elements (as well as occasional contrapuntal elements) would be sacrificed. The following example, from the Grave of Violin Partita No. 2 (selection no. 9 in this collection), demonstrates how harmonic writing for the string instrument is accommodated for the wind:




In playing the grace-note substitutions for double stops and chords, the grace notes should generally be placed on the beat (or directly on the relevant subdivision) rather than before it. And, although the grace notes should not be played so slowly as to create an obvious impression of rhythmic subdivision, neither should they be rushed.

### *Articulation*

In the violin and cello pieces, slurs not only enhance melodic groupings, they also determine bowing. Because articulation (separation) of successive notes on a reed instrument is accomplished with the tongue touching the reed rather than a bow changing direction on a string, the sound, and therefore the musical effect, will be quite different. On the reed instrument, it is generally not advisable, musically or technically, to have excessively long passages of detached notes (absence of slurs).

There are certain conventions for applying slurs, understood to be widely accepted performance practices of the 18th century, that can be applied appropriately to this transcribed music from Bach. (See, for example, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* by Johann Joachim Quantz.) Among these practices was the tendency to avoid slurring wide intervals (wider than a fifth). While this convention is, for the most part, reflected by the editing in this edition, there are some passages where slurs over wider intervals are retained from common string instrument application in order to preserve harmonic character, such as in the following excerpt from the Gigue movement of the Violin Partita No. 2 (selection no. 14 in this collection):

Among conventions from the period, it also appears that there needed to be a compelling melodic reason to slur into a down beat. Otherwise, metric strong points are generally articulated.

Also, a dotted note is generally slurred to its companion note (or notes).

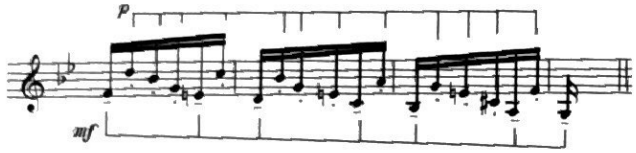
In adapting the unaccompanied string music for the wind instrument, however, this dotted-note convention is occasionally sacrificed in order to create breathing points.

Another common Baroque period convention is to slur the three-note figure created by a "neighboring tone."

For the wind player, beyond common practices such as these, the most important factor for determining placement of slurs is probably the effect slurs can have on determining agogic accents (emphases that result from longer relative duration). Although it is advisable for the clarinetist to use a somewhat less "crisp" staccato style in the faster textures of this music (compared with how we customarily approach rapid tonguing in classical-period works), a note played in a detached manner will obviously sound for less than the full value of the rhythmic unit notated. Hence, in a passage of uniform rhythm, a note that is connected to the next by a slur will reflect a subtle agogic emphasis because it receives the full value.

Understanding this, the wind player should avoid making superficial subjective decisions about placing slurs in music such as this, but rather base such decisions on objective observations about the composer's melodic and/or harmonic writing. Often, this will be fairly straightforward, such as in the excerpt that follows from the opening of the second Double from the Violin Partita No. 1 (selection no. 5). In the first measure, the initial agogic accent is furnished by the composer with the eighth-note D (tonic). The added slurs, which coordinate well with the composer's line, perhaps more significantly render agogic emphases to the fifth and third, respectively, of the tonic triad. In the second measure, the added slurs similarly enhance the dominant harmony.

Varying the lengths of articulated notes, as well as making dynamic shadings, can also reinforce the implied counterpoint of passages such as exemplified by the following sequence from the Presto movement of Violin Sonata No. 1 (selection no. 2):




In addition to creating agogic emphases, slurs can be used judiciously in this music to highlight texture changes and reinforce patterns (the most obvious manifestation being to apply articulations in a uniform manner in sequential passages).

Throughout this volume, any added articulations have been determined by applying the criteria outlined in the preceding paragraphs. Also, where no inconsistency for the wind player was created, many slurs commonly used by violinists and cellists were carried over into these transcriptions. Nevertheless, the clarinetist who wishes to alter these markings should feel free to do so. The flute-sonata movements are presented in unedited form. It is suggested that the individual clarinetist, after working substantially through the other material, try adding slurs to these movements that would be stylistically appropriate and would enhance the composer's melodic writing.

## *Trills and mordents*

Consistent with common Baroque interpretation, trills and mordents should be placed directly on the beat (or rhythmic subdivision as notated) and should not be "anticipated" in the manner of classical-period grace notes. Also, trills should begin on the upper note, not the lower (notated) pitch as in later styles.

## *Other elements of this edition*

While tempo markings are reasonably consistent with how string players would approach this music, some of the faster movements may be marked a bit slower in consideration of the special challenges the clarinetist faces in string transcriptions such as these. Within reason, the clarinetist is encouraged to adjust tempos downward as necessary to achieve technical and musical continuity in order to gain the most from studying this music.

Consistent with manuscripts of the period, Bach provided little in the way of dynamic markings for this solo music. In the interest of providing an edition that refrains from asserting undue influence in this parameter, dynamic markings are modestly notated, and most reflect traditional approaches as found in numerous violin and cello editions. Ascertaining and applying appropriate dynamics, however, is one of the greatest benefits to be gained from studying and playing this music. As the clarinetist discovers the rise and fall, tension and release, and other elements of Bach's writing that reveal melodic direction, dynamic sensitivity will develop and the music will come to life in more special ways.

## *Practical use of this collection*

In the interest of acquainting the clarinetist with the movements from Bach's unaccompanied violin and cello music in an authentic manner, the music is presented here in the order as it appears in its original setting (minus the untranscribed movements, of course). This order will probably seldom be the most advantageous sequencing of the material in a studio-lesson situation. The teacher will probably want to customize the order of selections to fit the technical capabilities of and educational objectives for the individual student.

With respect to performance of this material, the wind player should approach that issue with great caution. While achieving maturity with Bach's unaccompanied string music will doubtlessly help the clarinetist come to musical maturity in the broader sense, using this music on a formal recital might be considered controversial for many musicians because of how far wind-instrument performance would take the music from its original character. While professional performers may make different individual decisions about that, teachers are encouraged to view this material as appropriate for auditions, examinations, and studio-class presentations, if not degree-recital performance.

*-Ronald L. Caravan*
*(June, 1998)*

*Respectfully dedicated to Stanley Hasty (1920-2011), Eastman School of Music, Rochester, N.Y., U.S.A. (1955-1985)*
*Consumate artist, clarinetist, and teacher*

# BACH
## for the Clarinet

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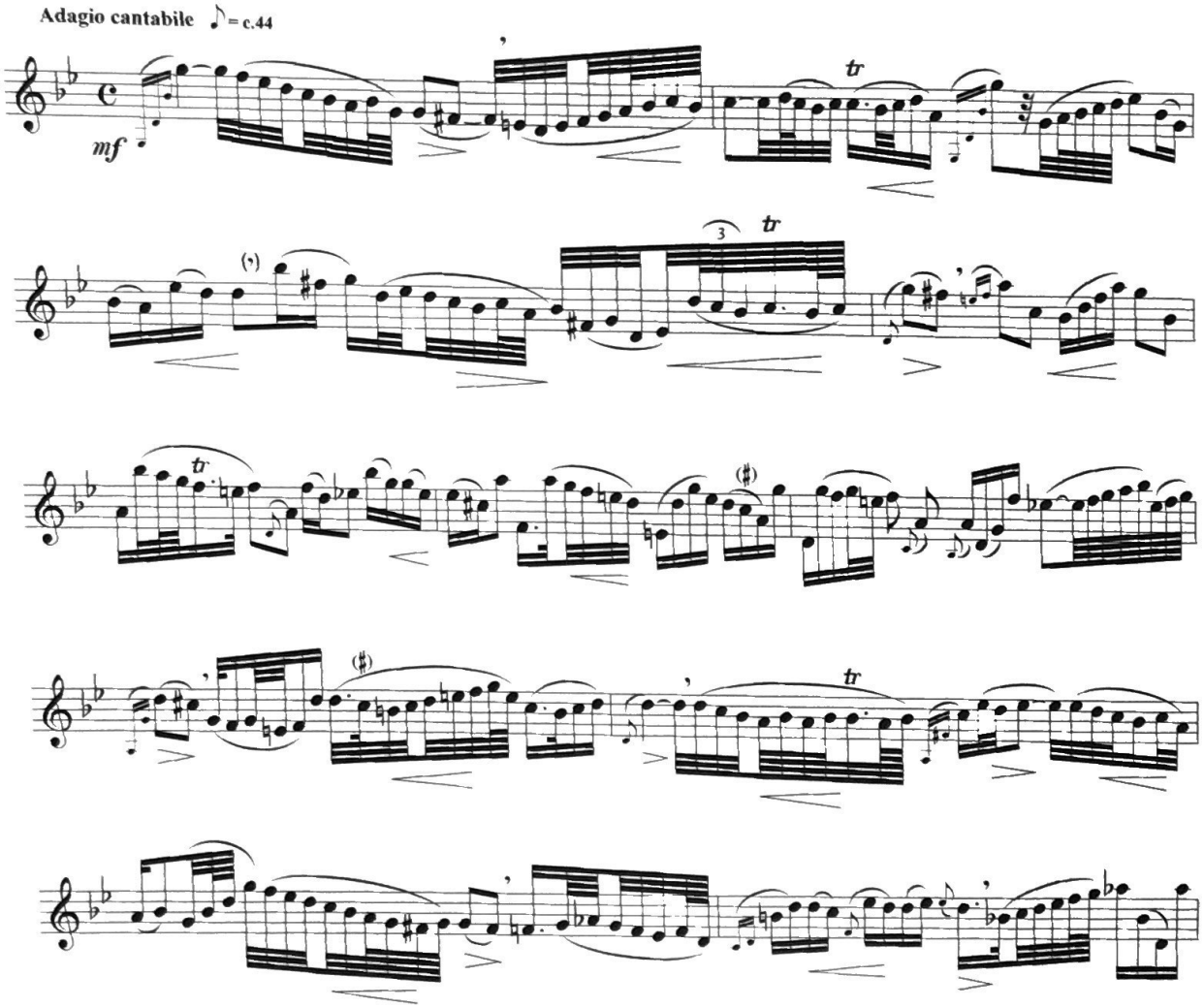
### 1. *from* Sonata No. 1 in G minor, *for violin*

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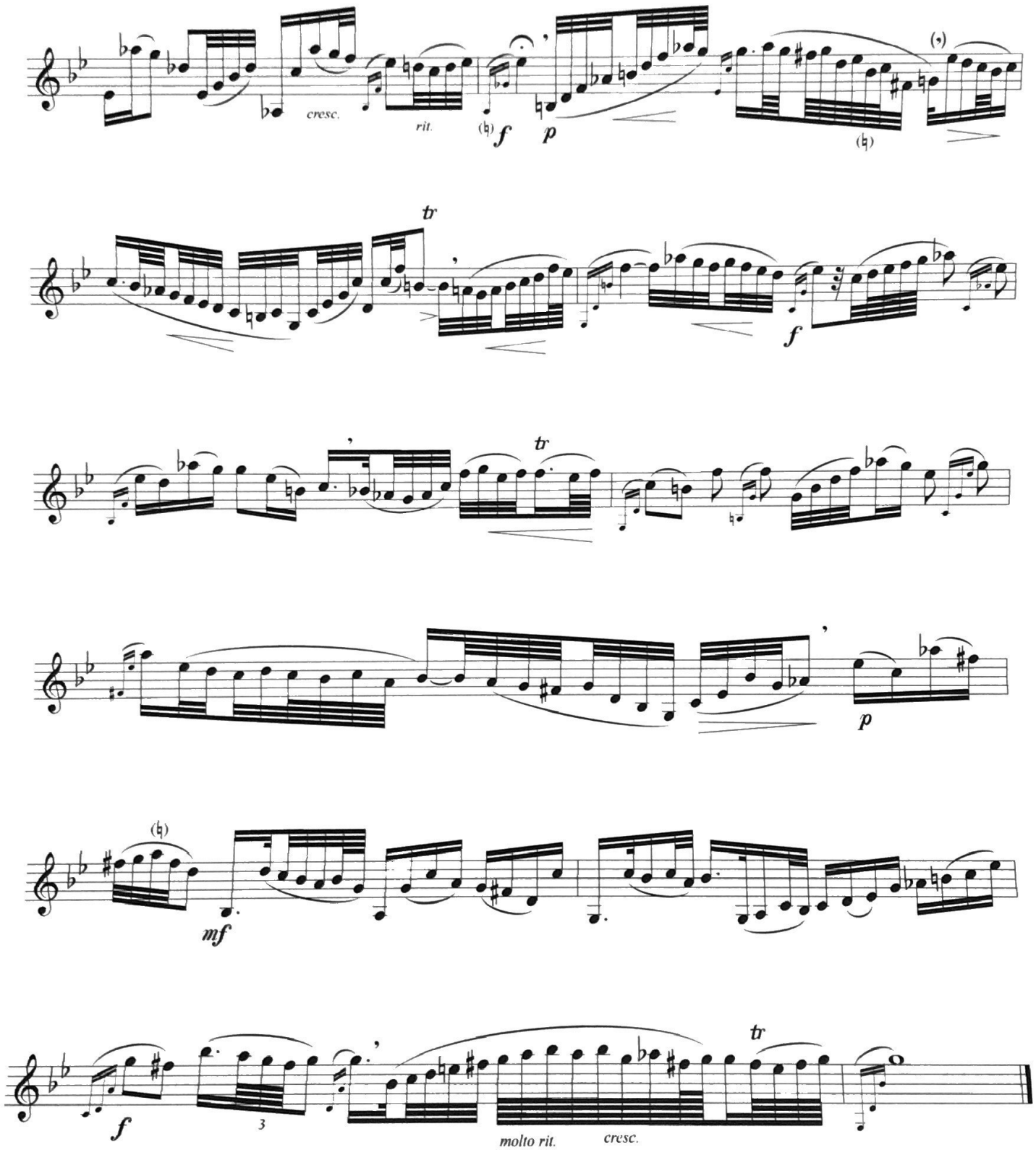
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rit.
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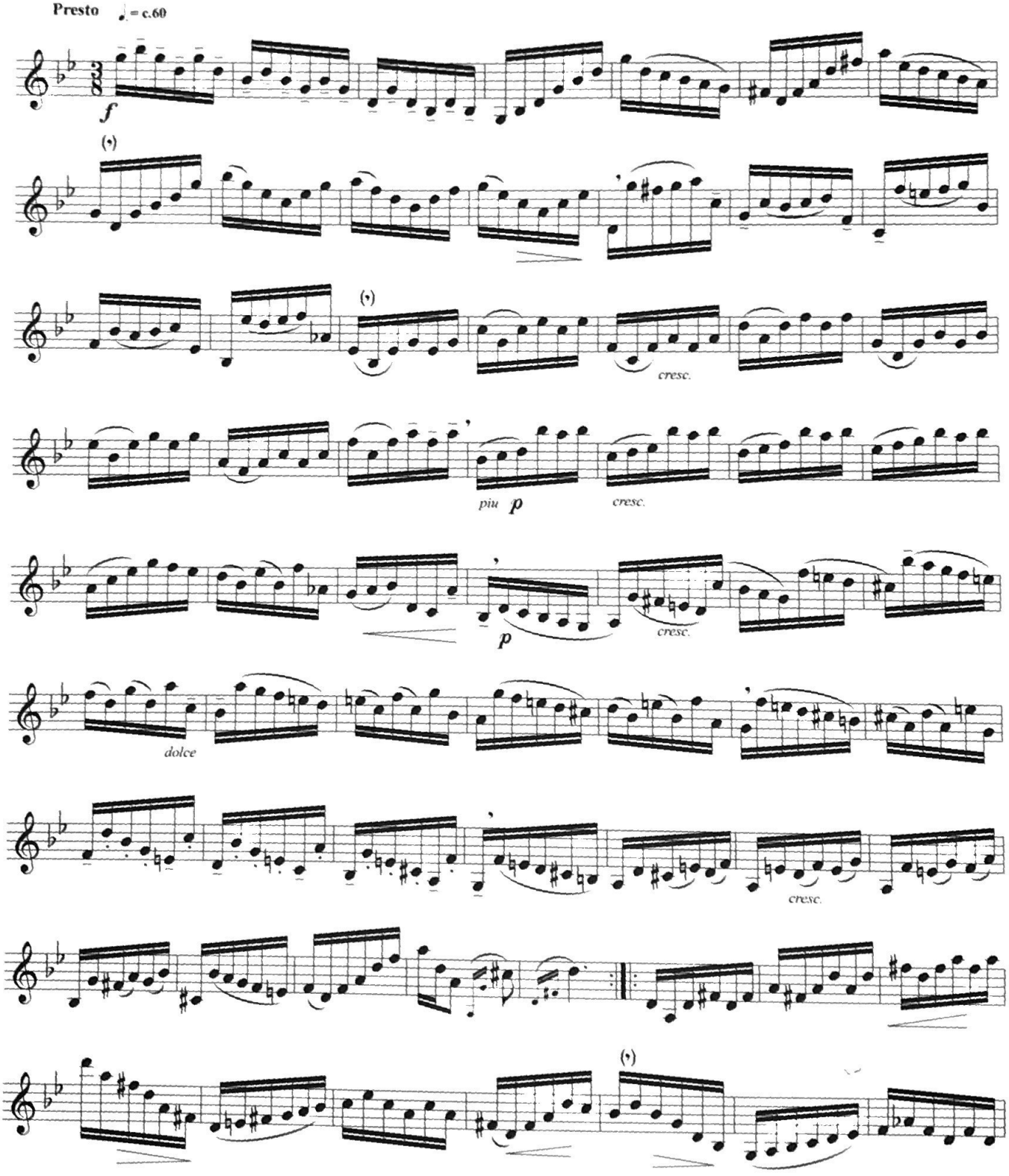
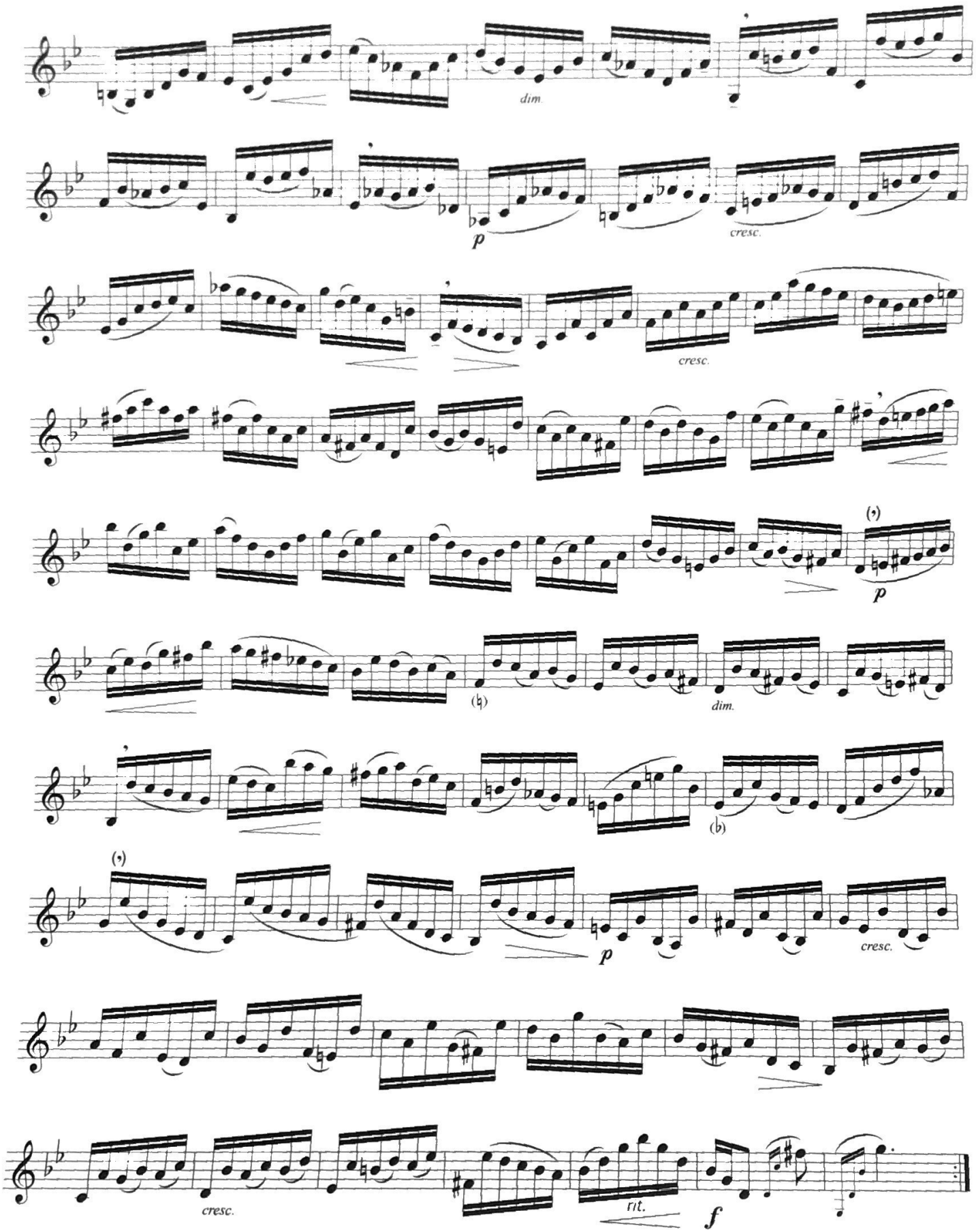
p
tr
f
tr
p
mf
f
3
molto rit.
cresc.
tr

6. CLARINET

NYSSMA VI 2012
#2, 10, 35

2.




dim.
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cresc.
cresc.
(♭)
dim.
(b)
p
cresc.
cresc.
rit.
f

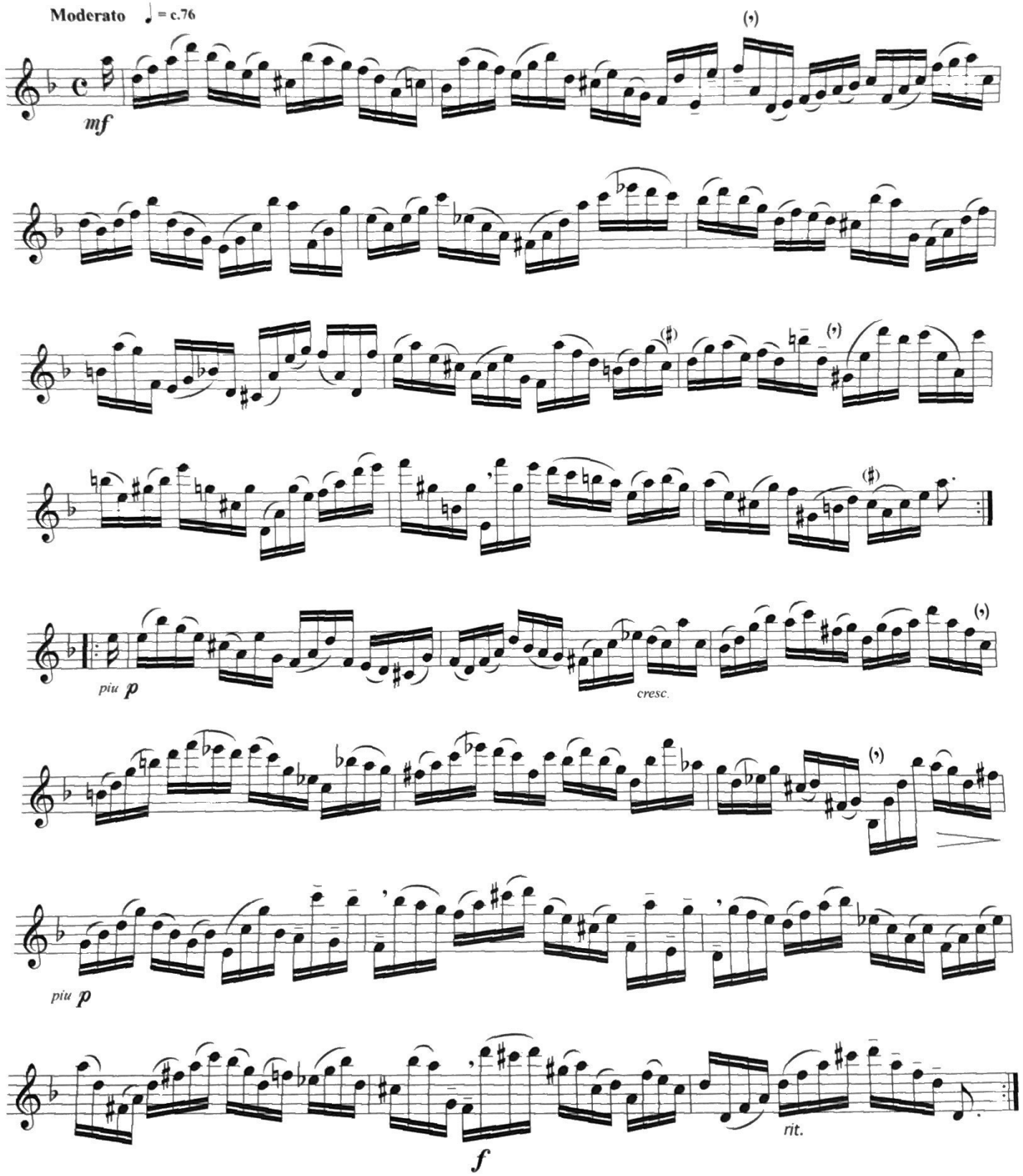
8.

CLARINET

NYSSMA V 2012
#3, 20 + 30

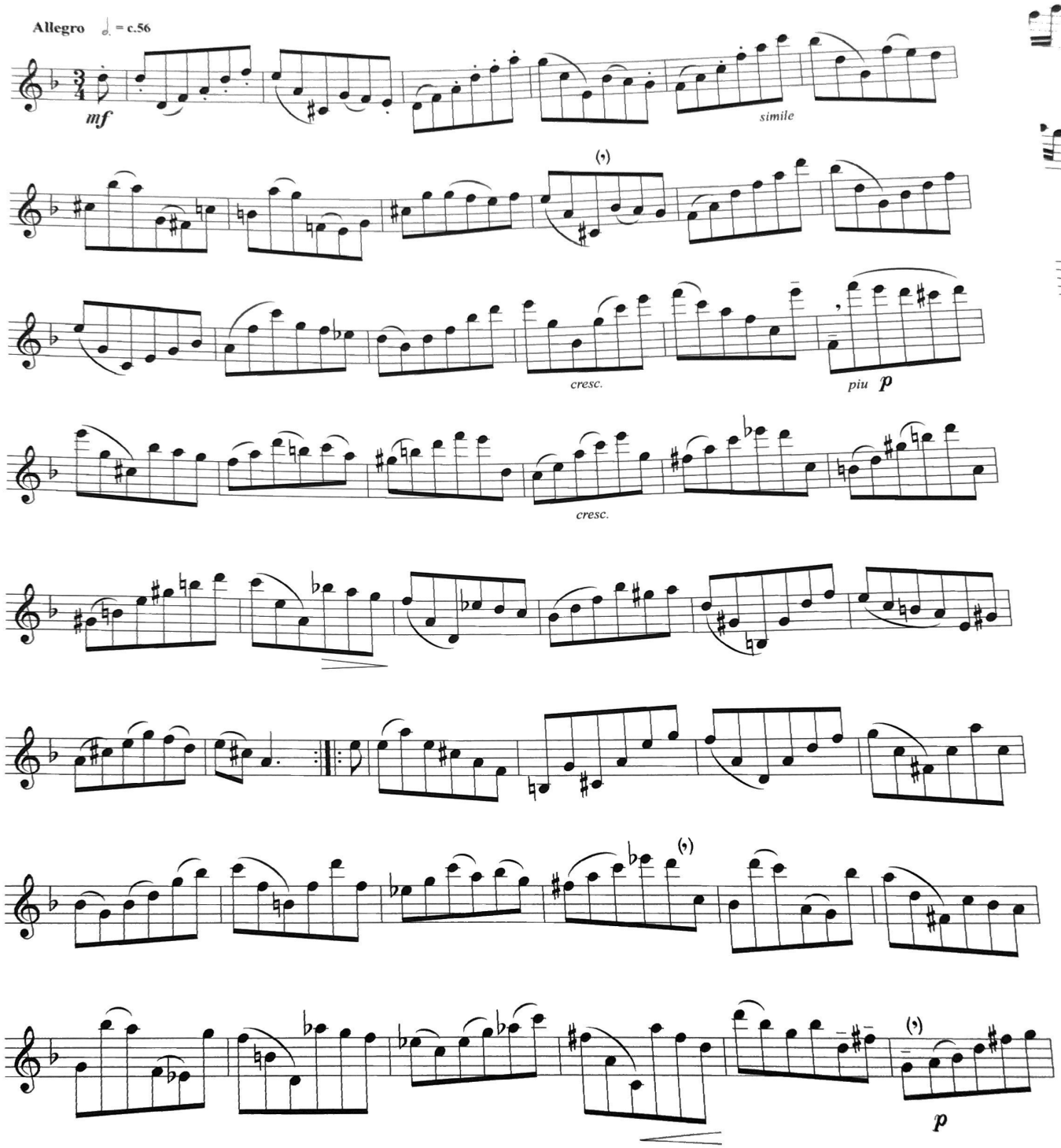
## 3. *from* Partita No. 1 in B minor, *for violin*

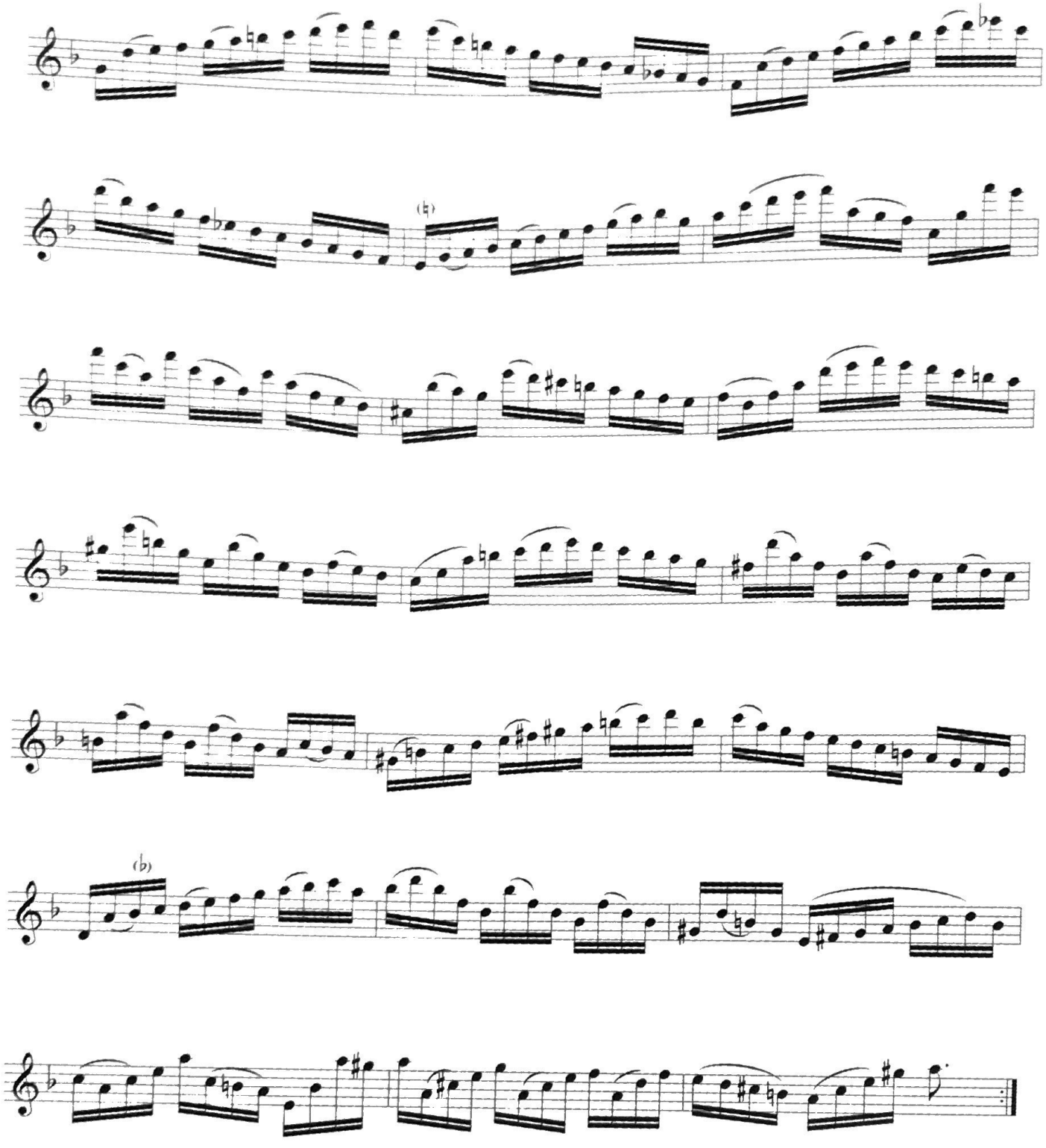
Double

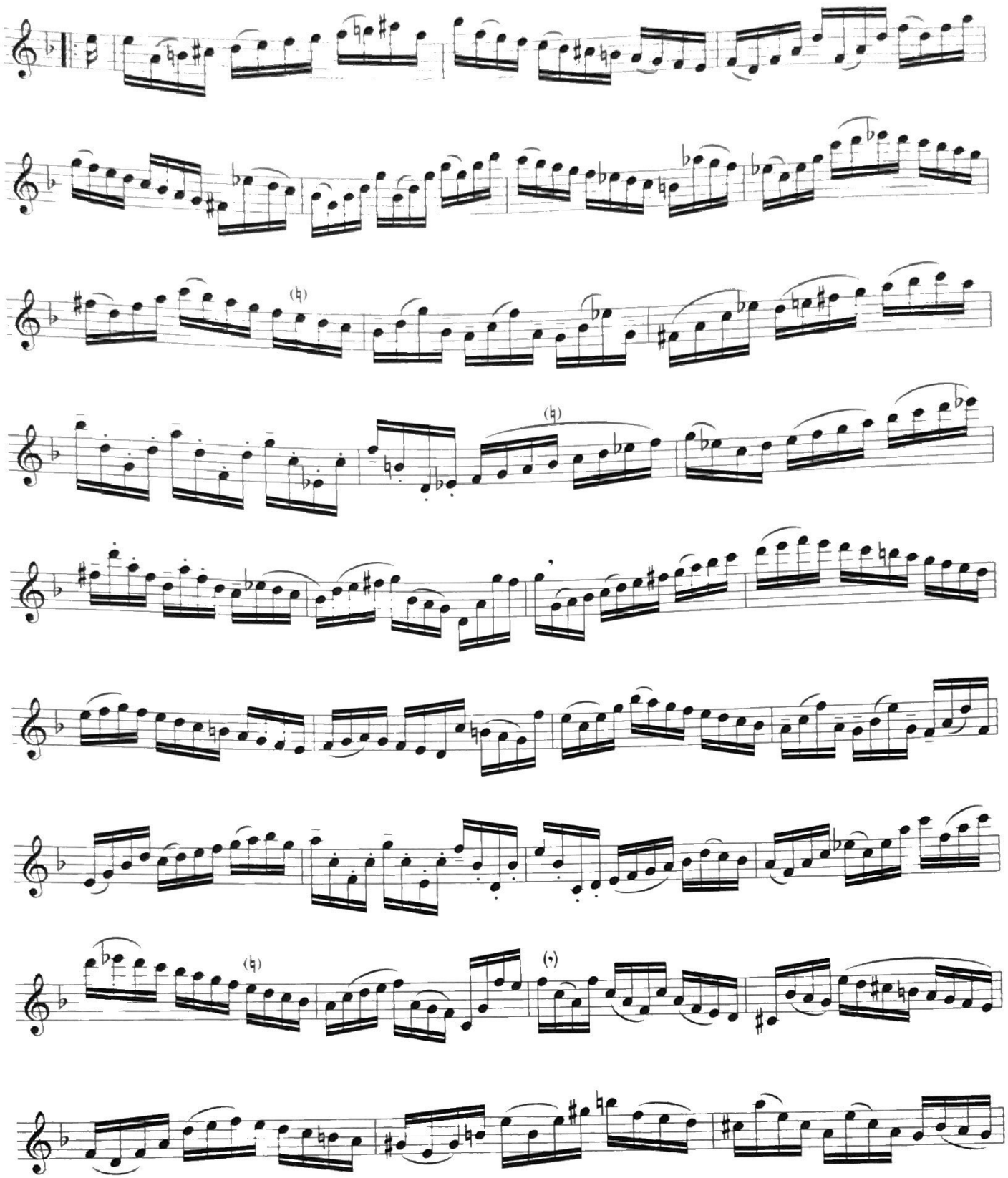


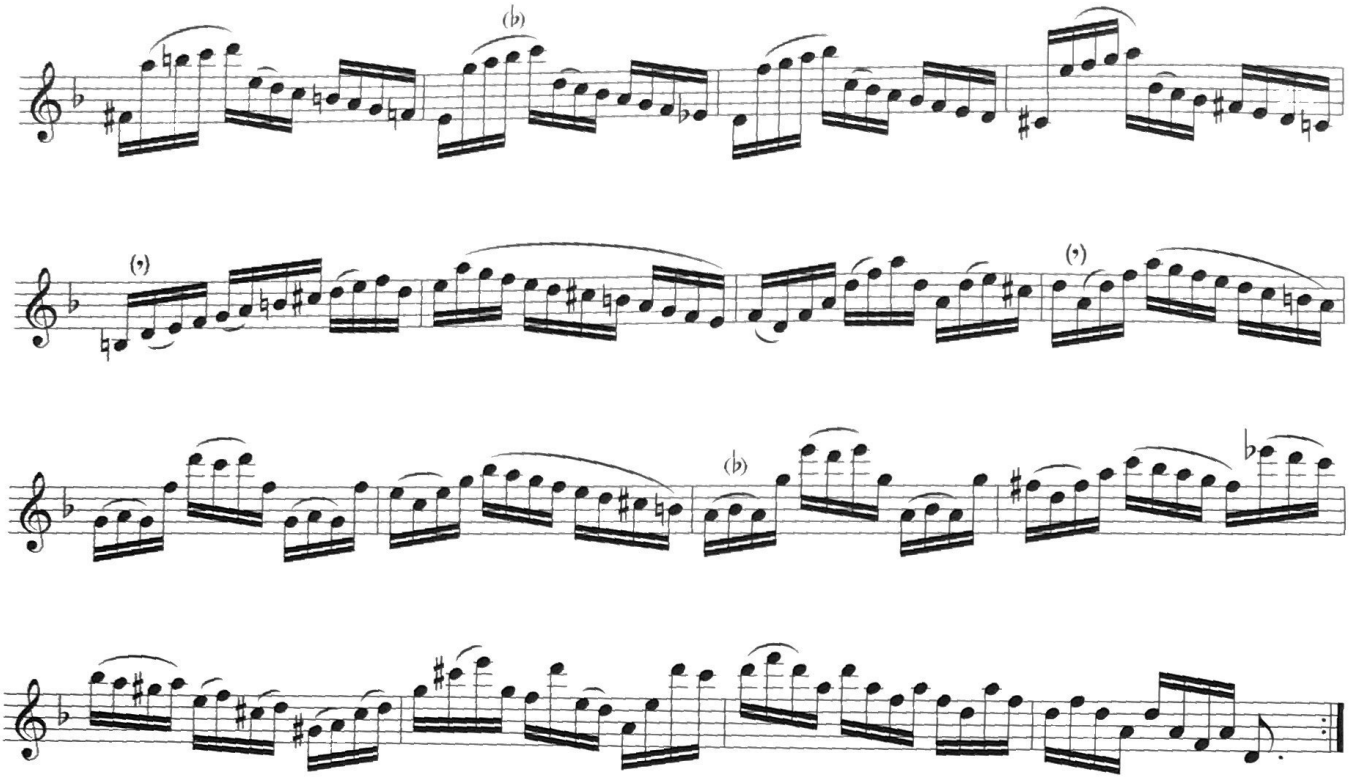
# 4.

Corrente



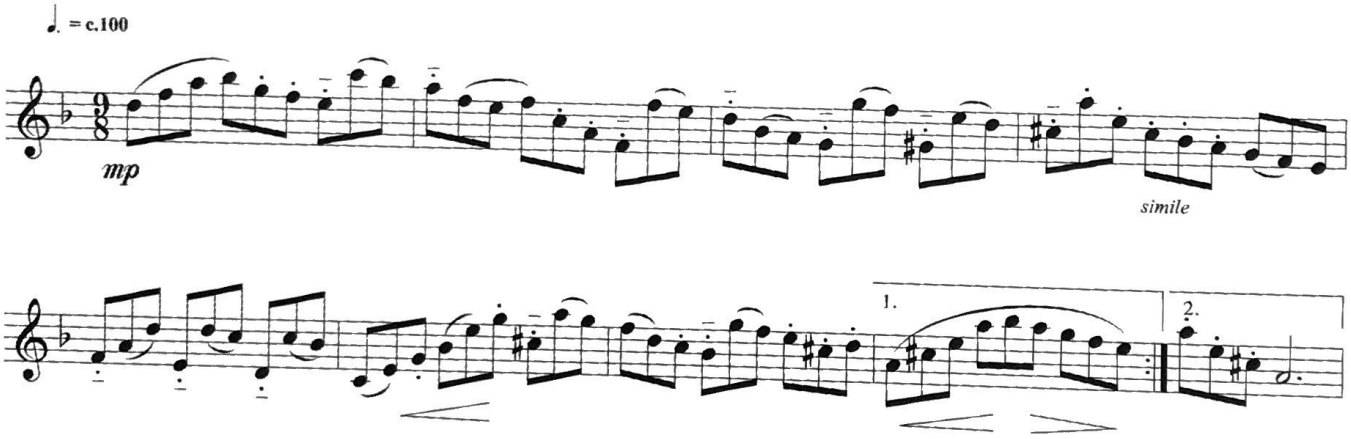


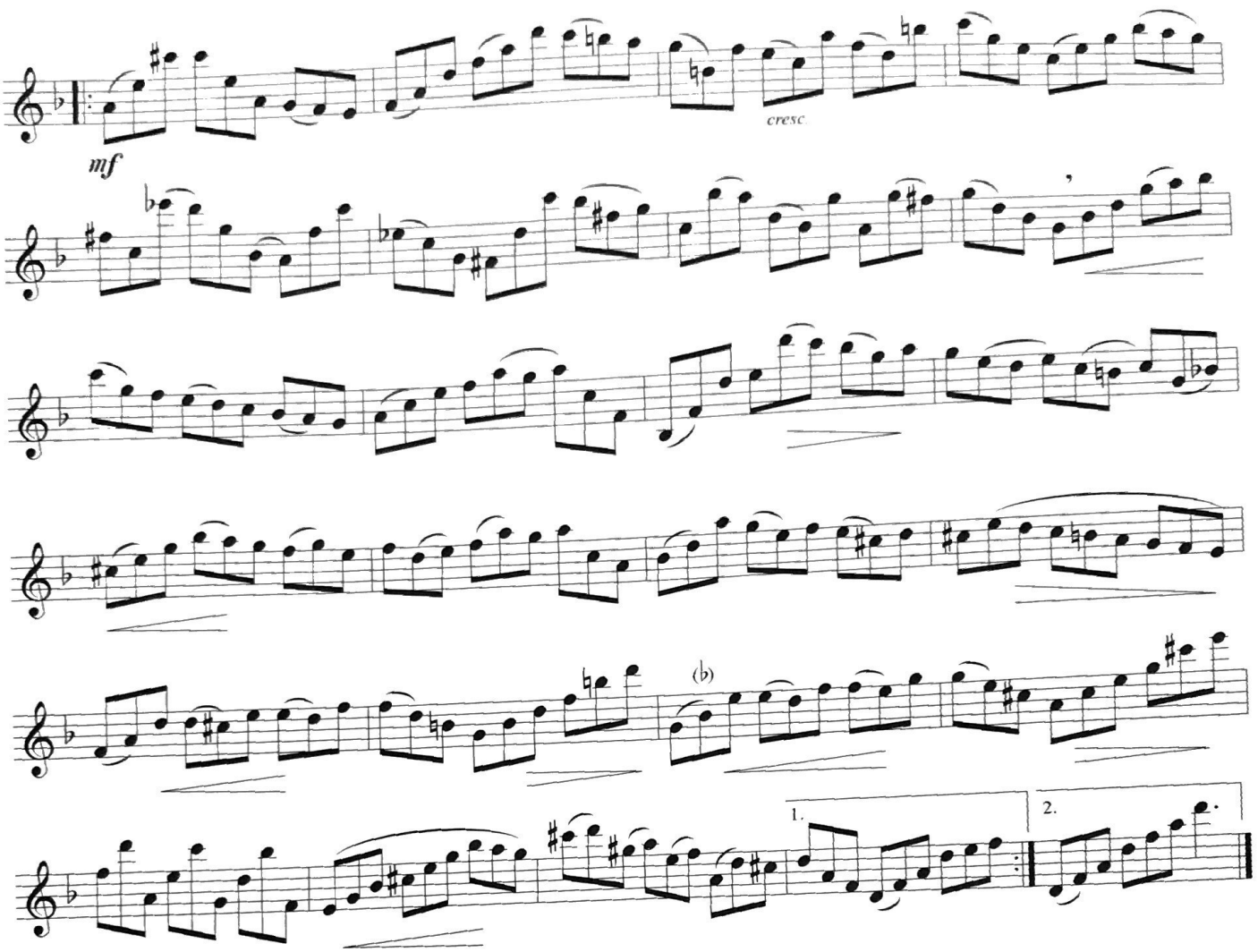




## 6.

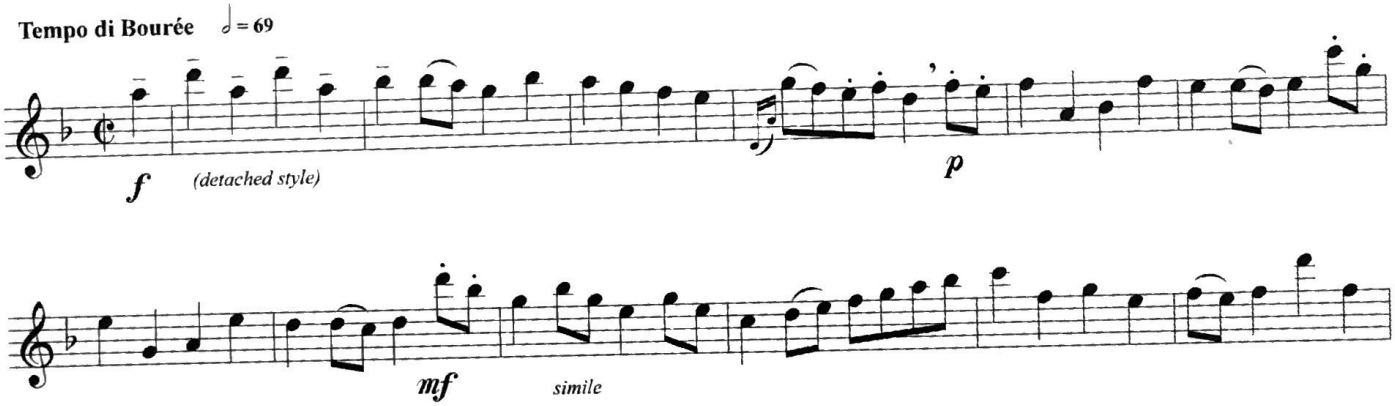
Double

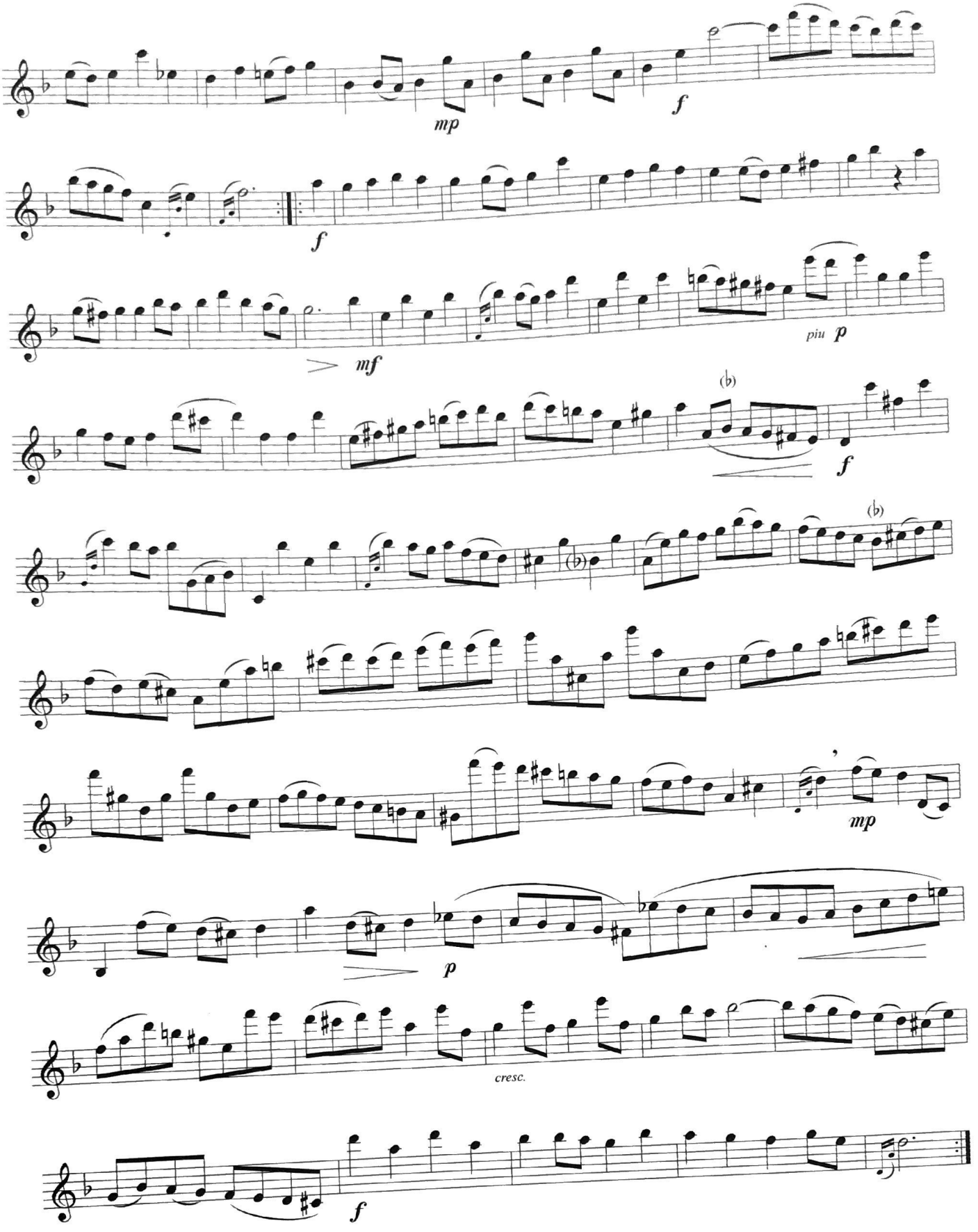





## 7.

Bourée



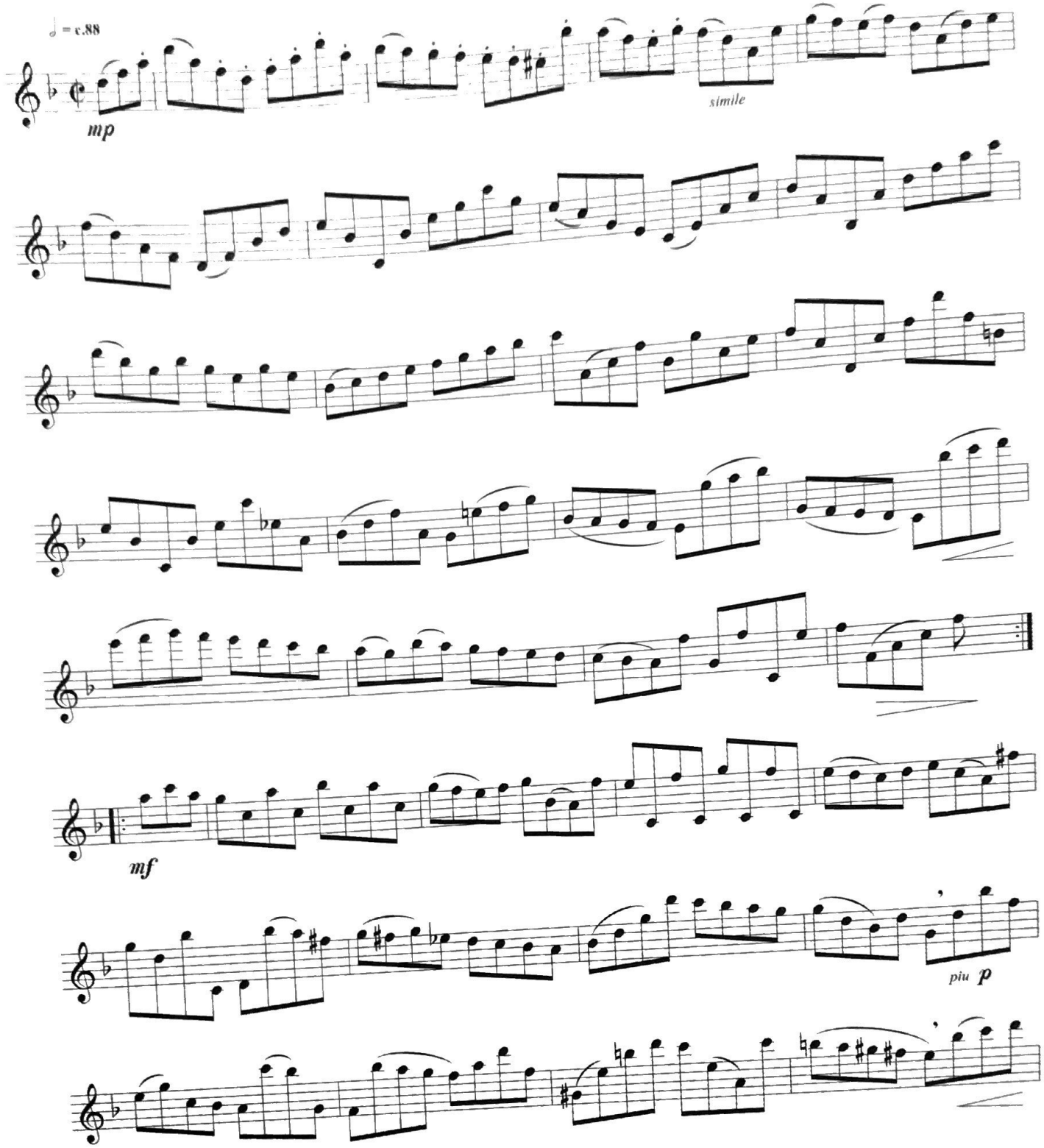

mp
f
f
mf
piu p
(♭)
f
(♭)
mp
p
cresc.
f

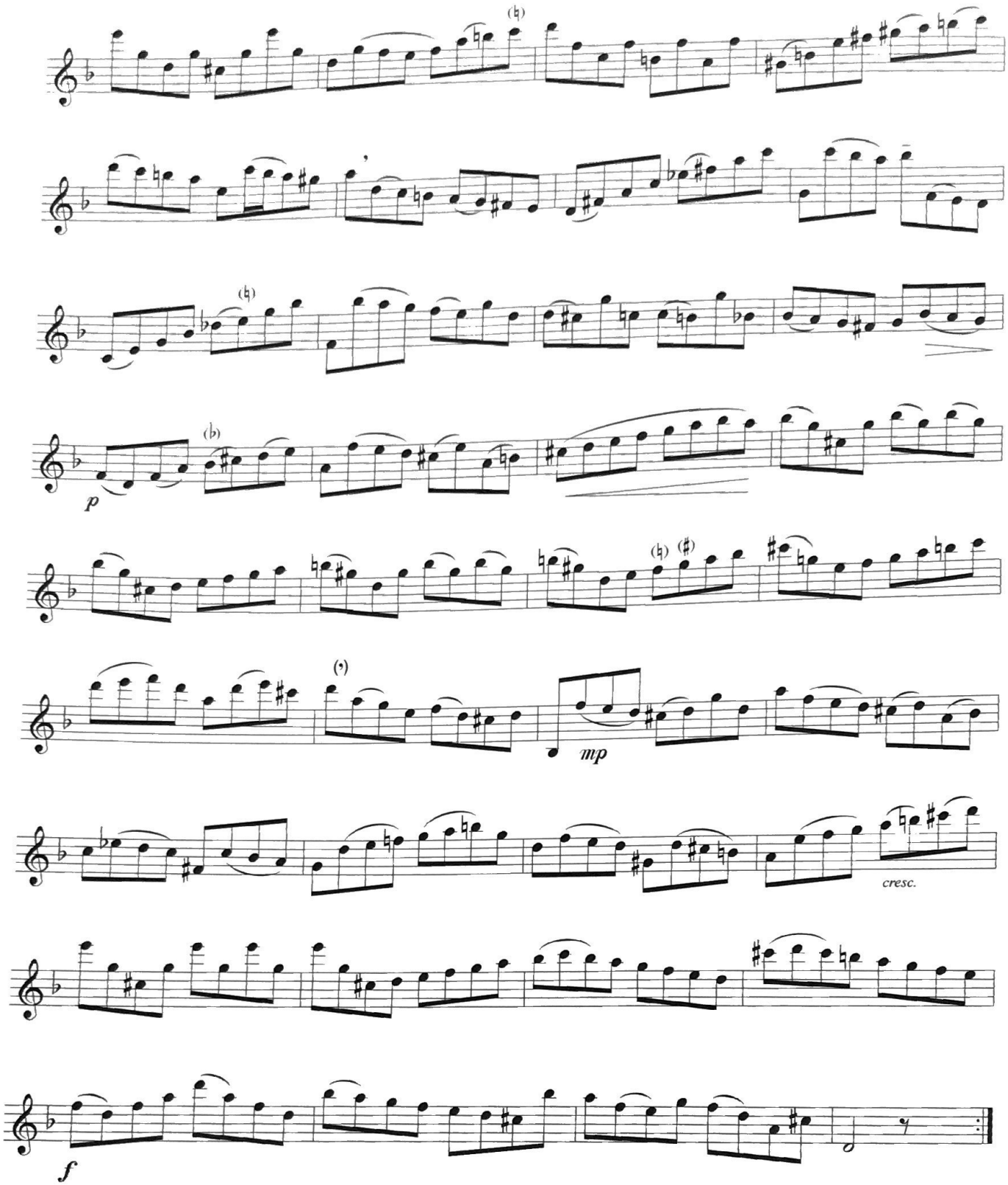
NYSSMA V 2012
#8, 27, 30

CLARINET

8.

Double

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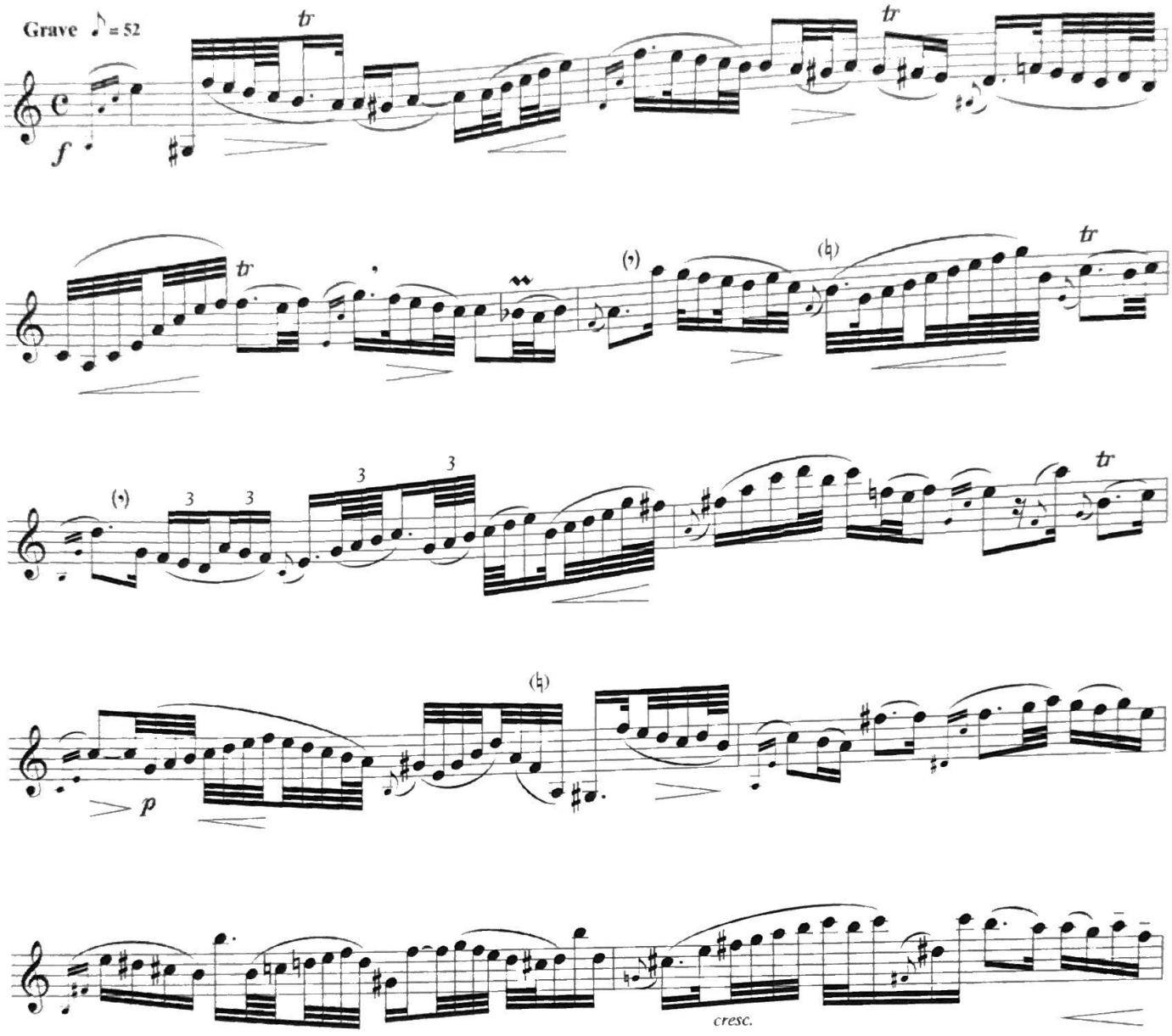
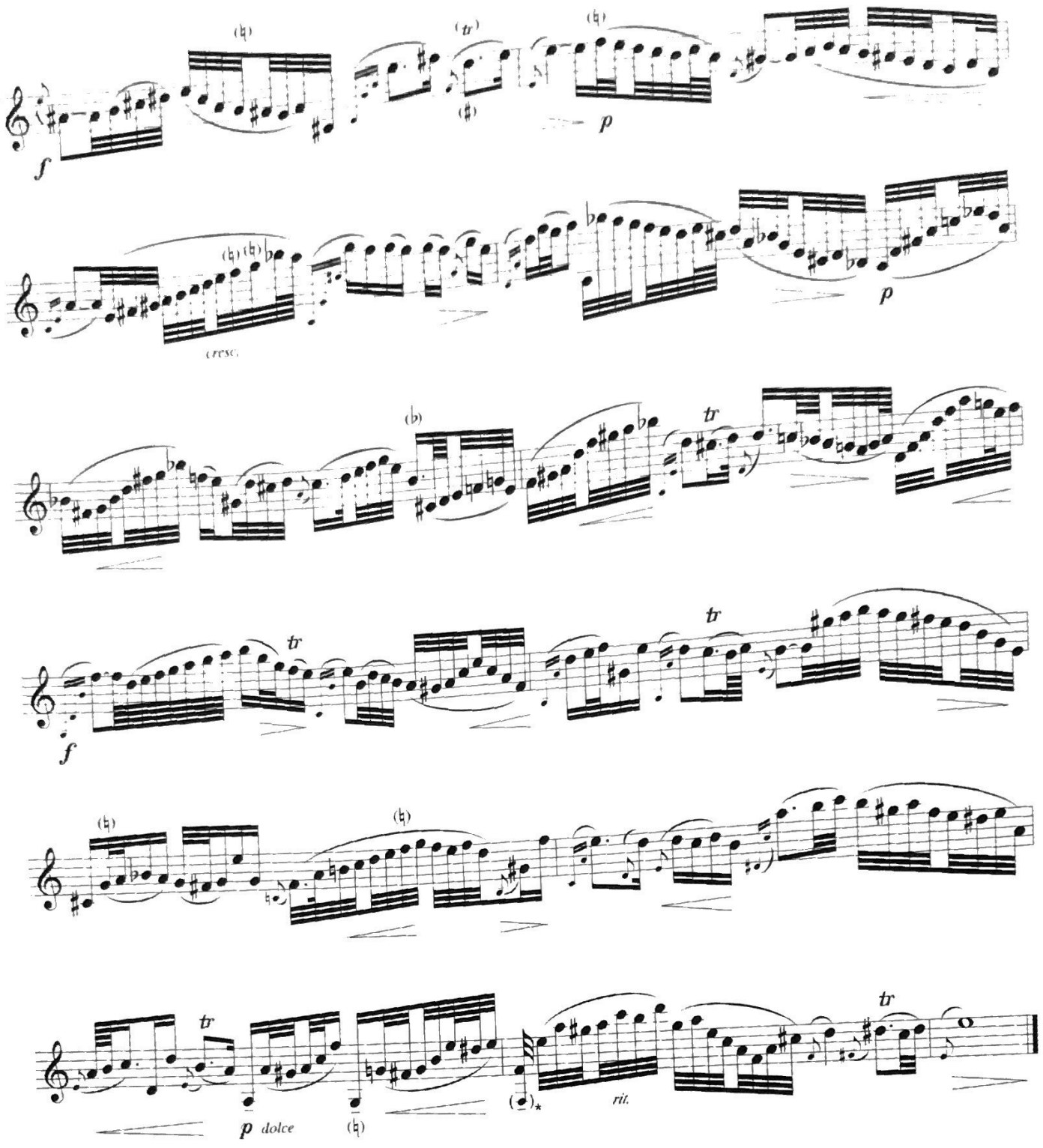
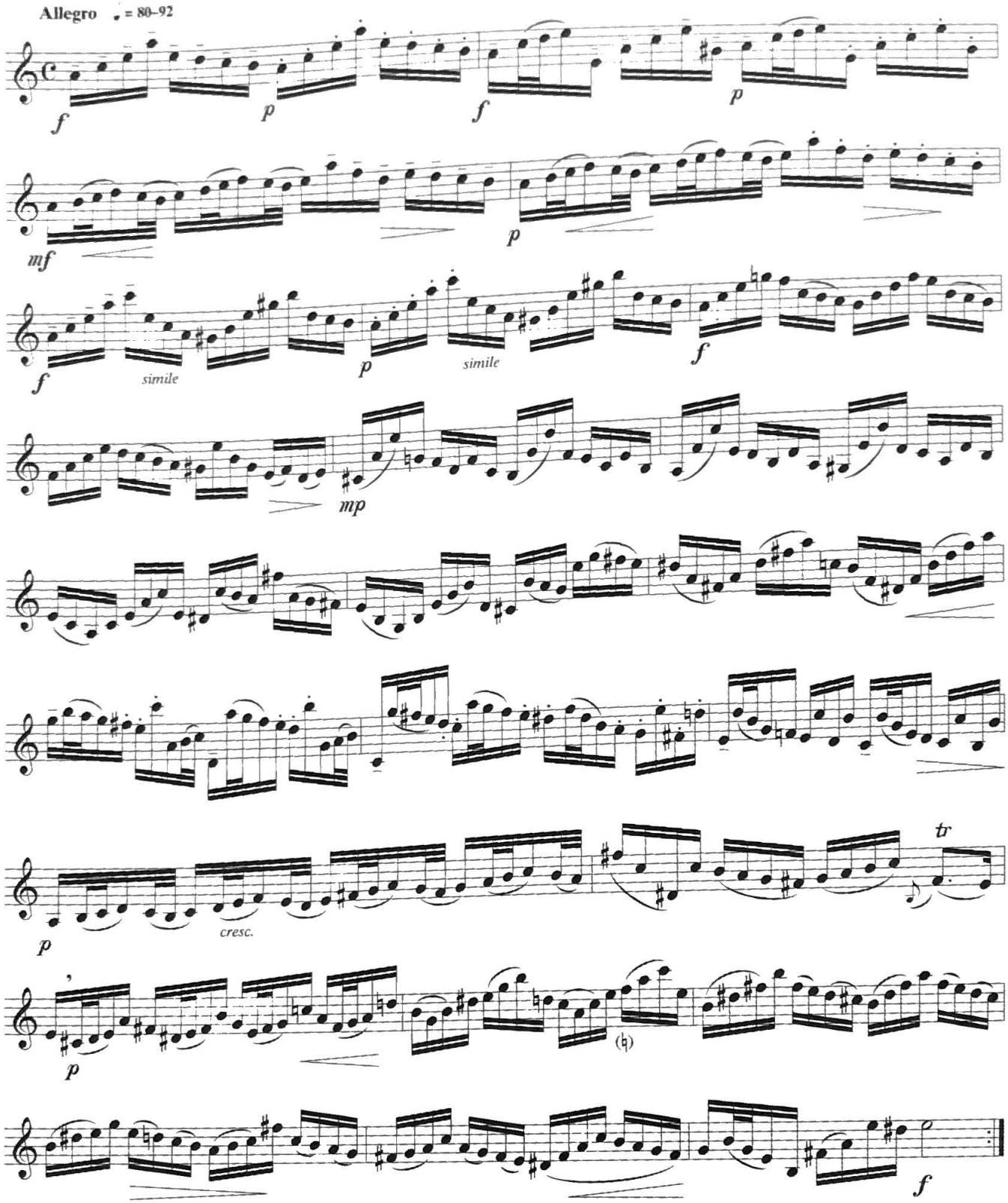
## 9. *trans* Sonata No. 2 in A minor, *for violin*

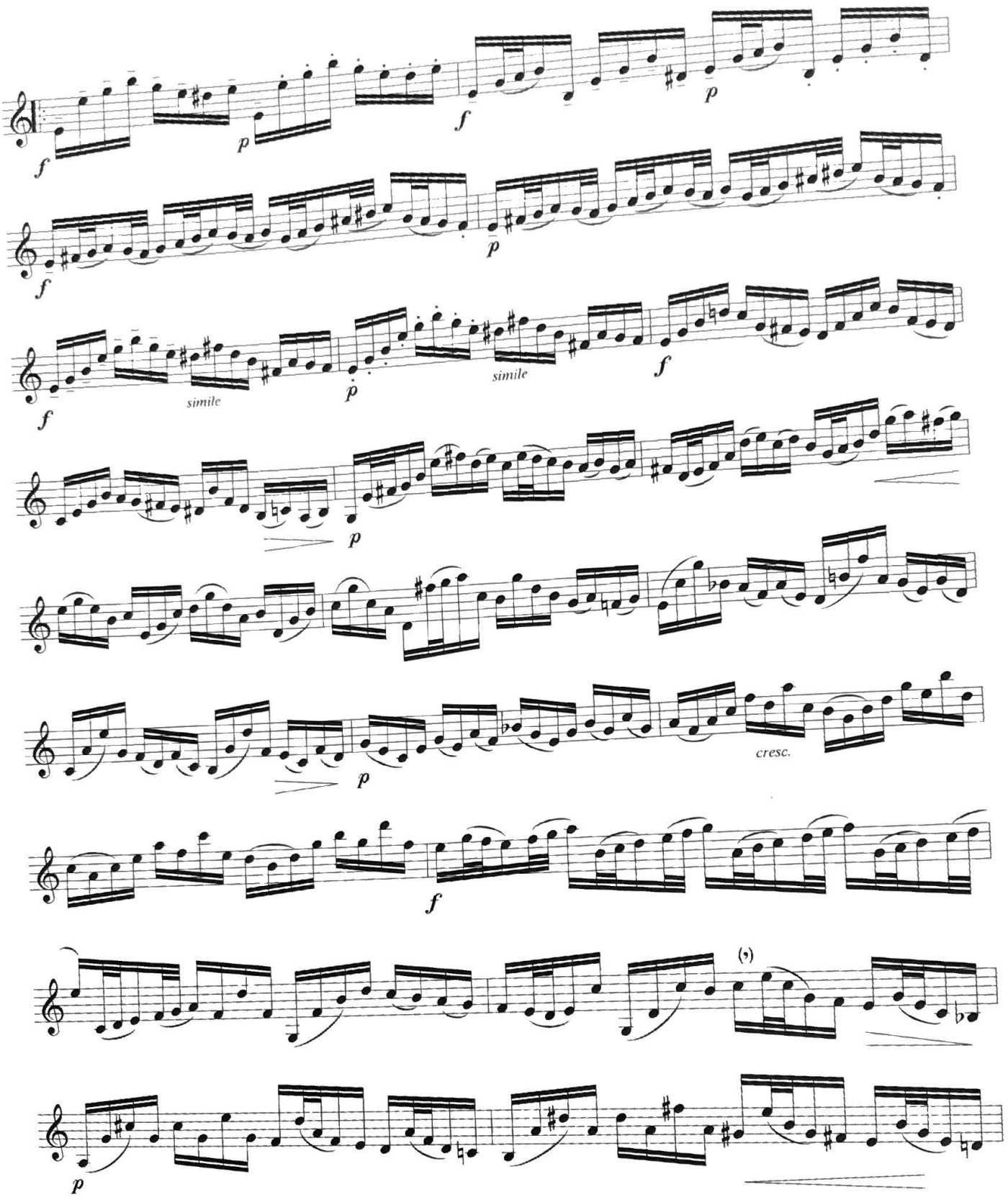





*As the movements from Sonata No. 2 in A minor are rendererd for the clarinet in the original key, it is evident at a glance that Bach most likely would have written the lower F here, completing the downward melodic progression from the low A in the previous measure, if the violin could reach that tone (the low F being a whole step below the violin's lowest open string, G). Although the note is not available to the violinist, the clarinetist can take advantage of the clarinet's low F to finish the downward stepwise line.

# 10.




f
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simile
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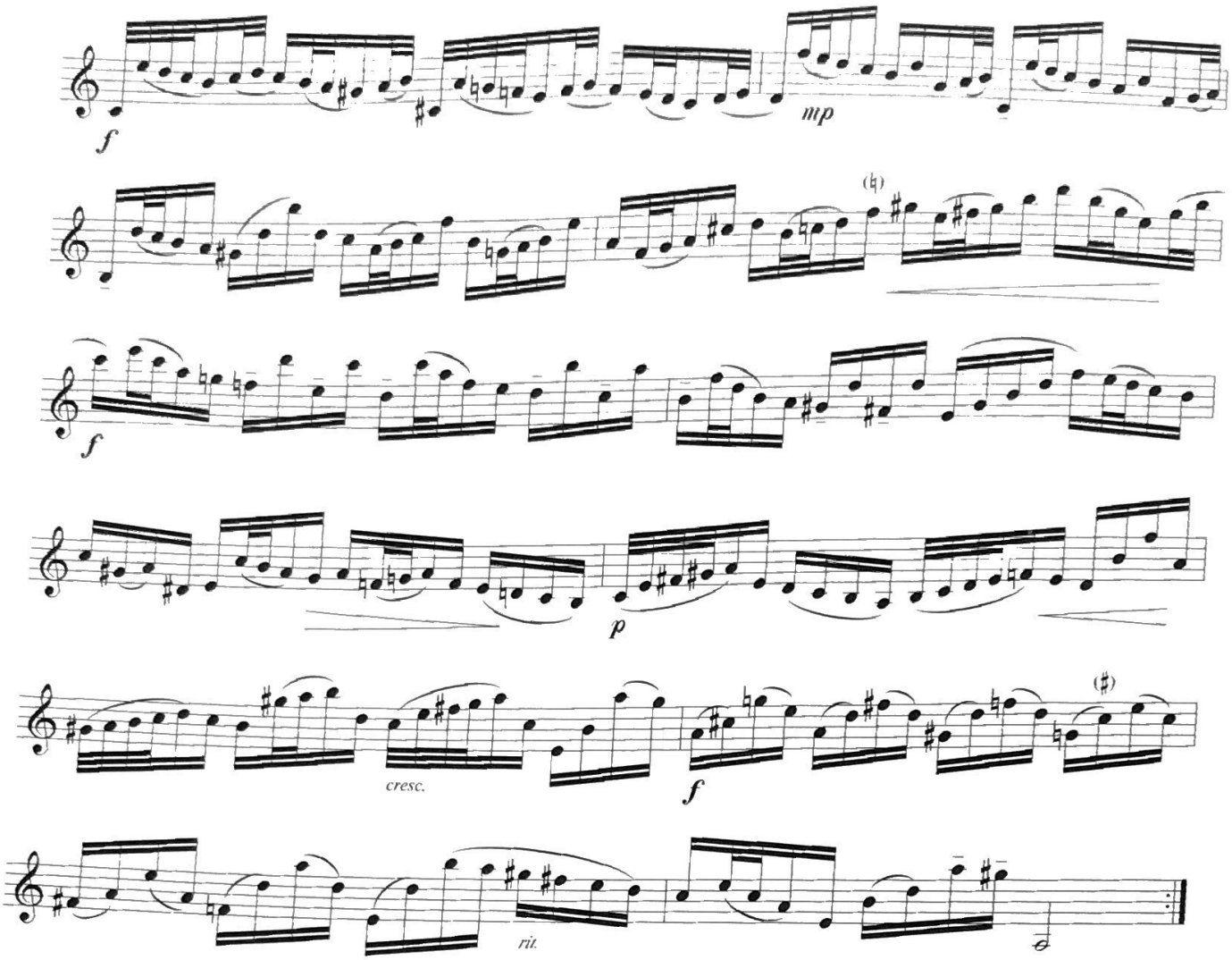
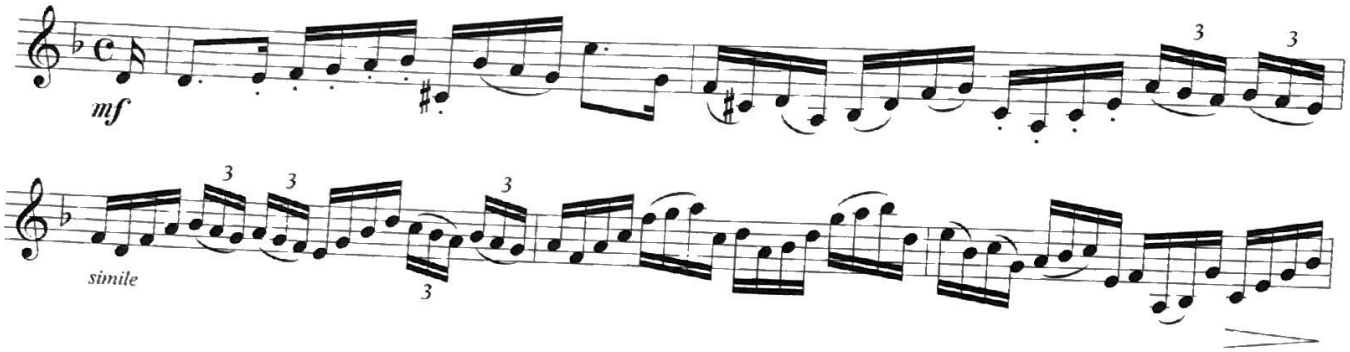
cresc.
f
(♭)
p

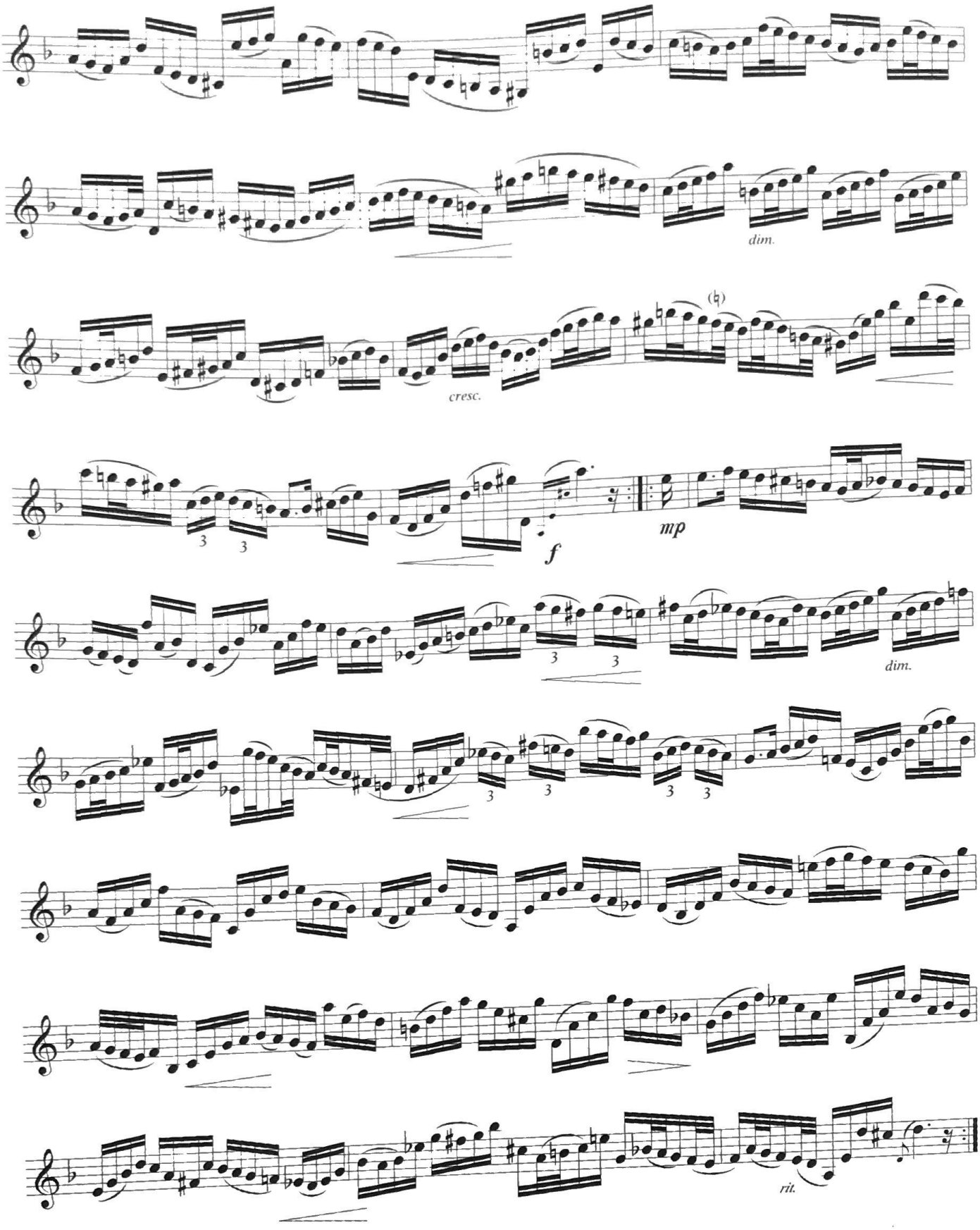



## 11. *from* Partita No. 2 in D minor, *for violin*

Allemande

♩ = c.76




dim.
(♮)
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3
dim.
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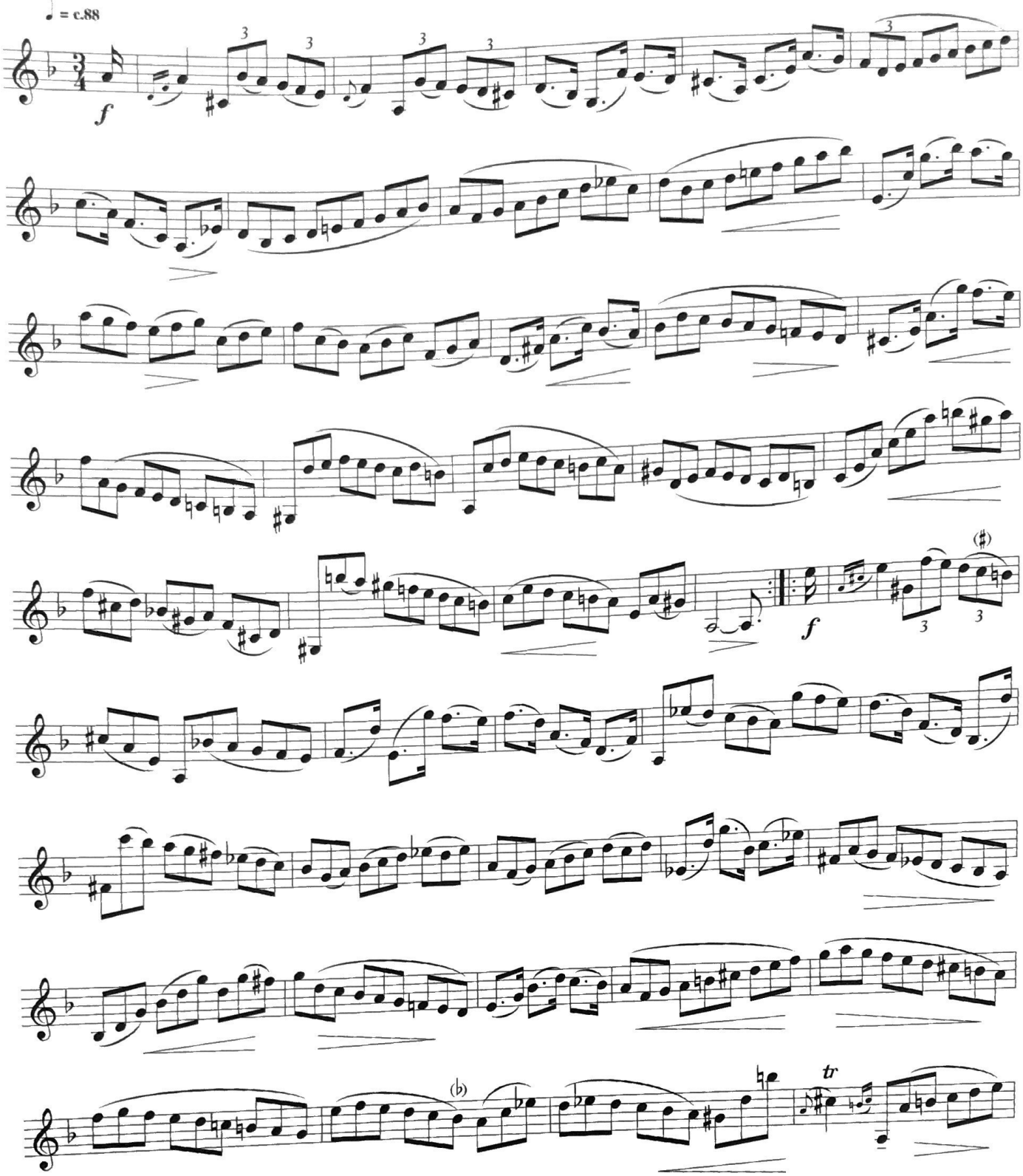
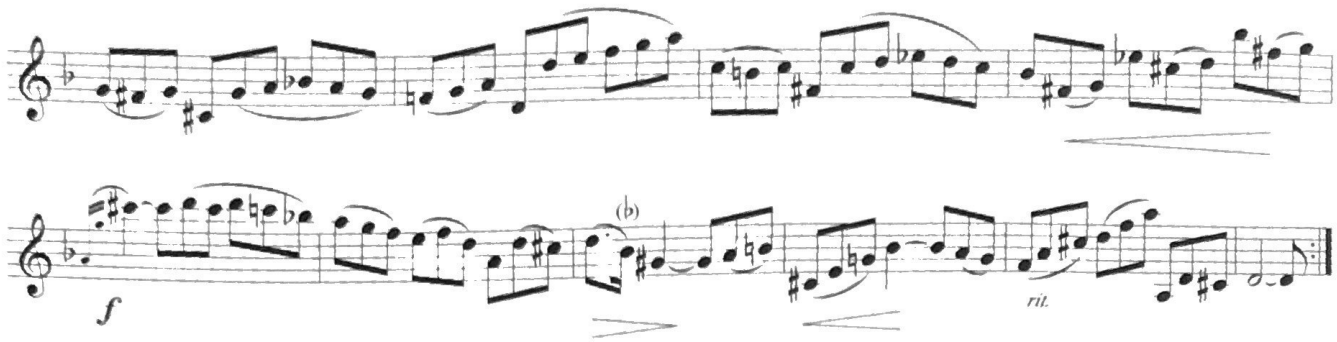
rit.

# 12.

Corrente






## 13. CLARINET

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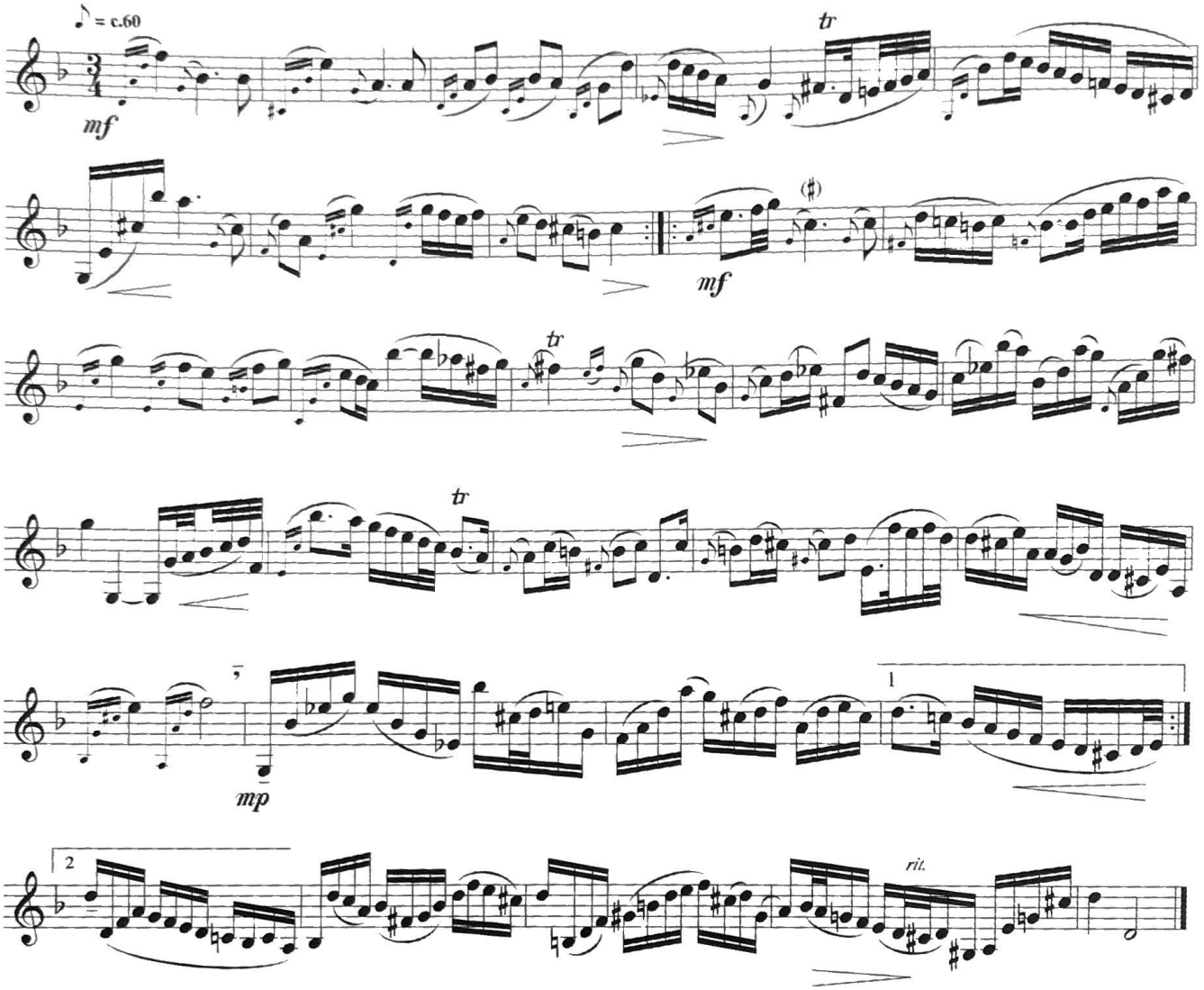
#13, 16, 39

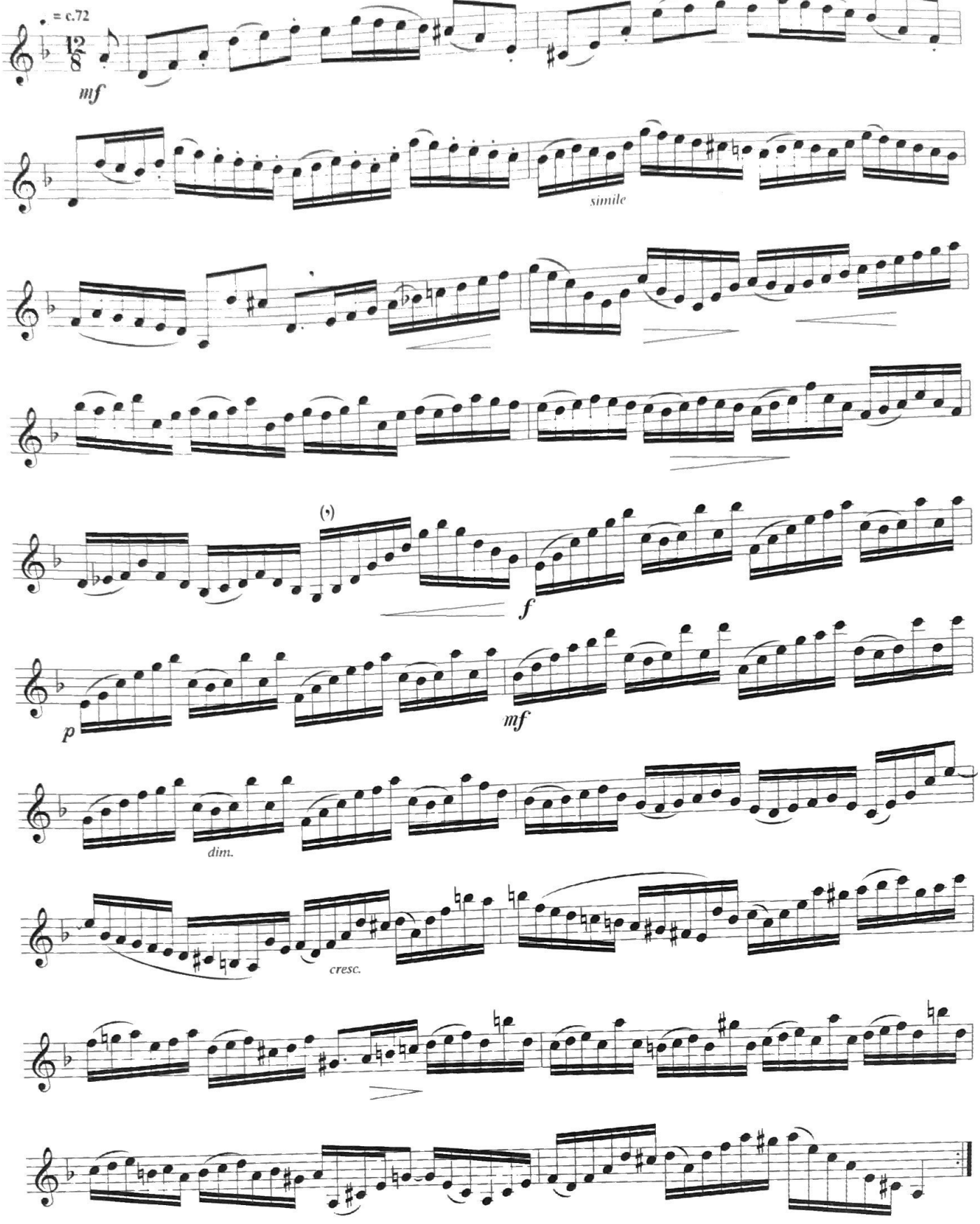
Sarabande



CLARINET

NYSSMA VI 2012
#14, 15 +33

## 14. Gigue



*mf*

*f*

*p*

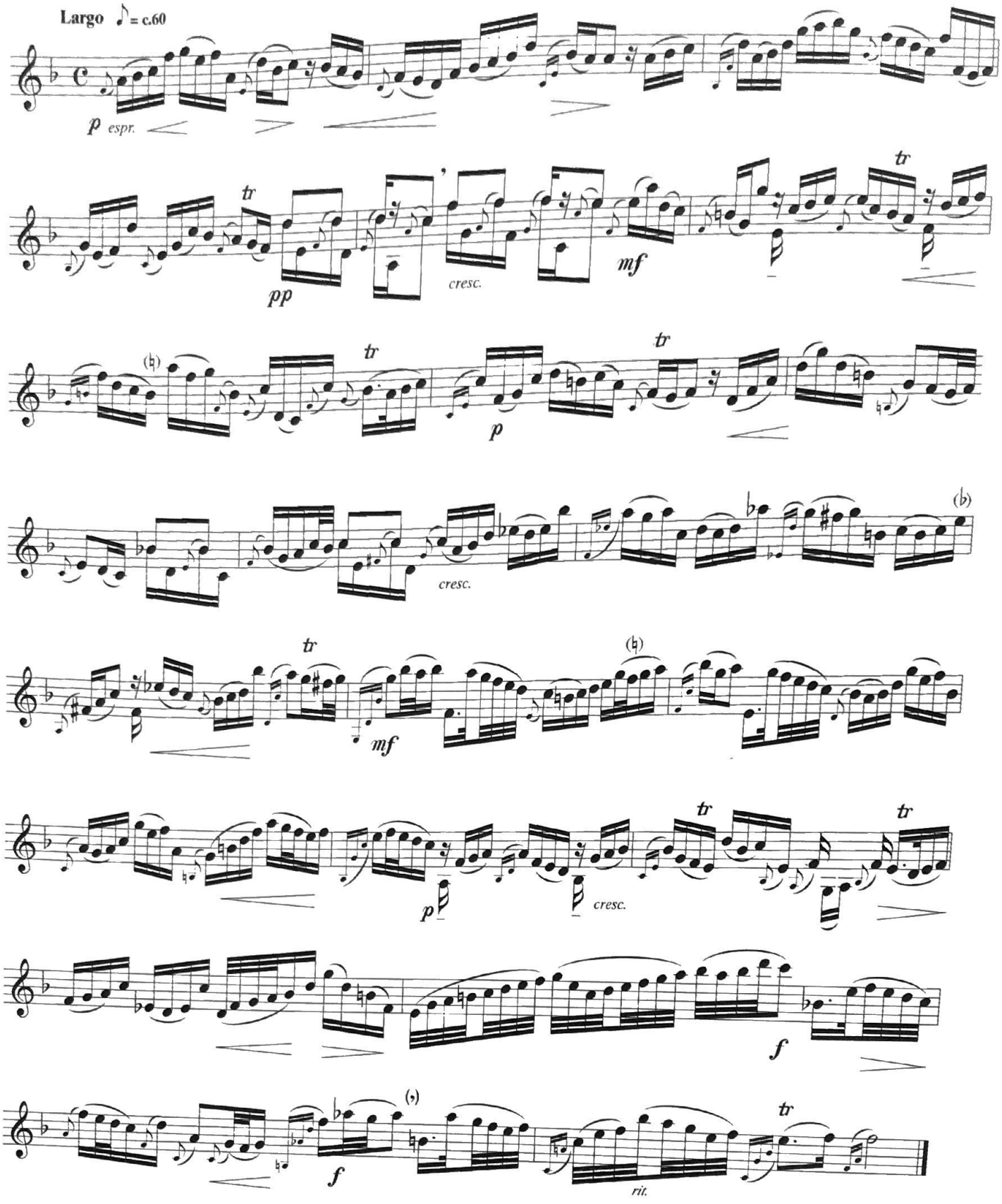
*mf*

*mp*

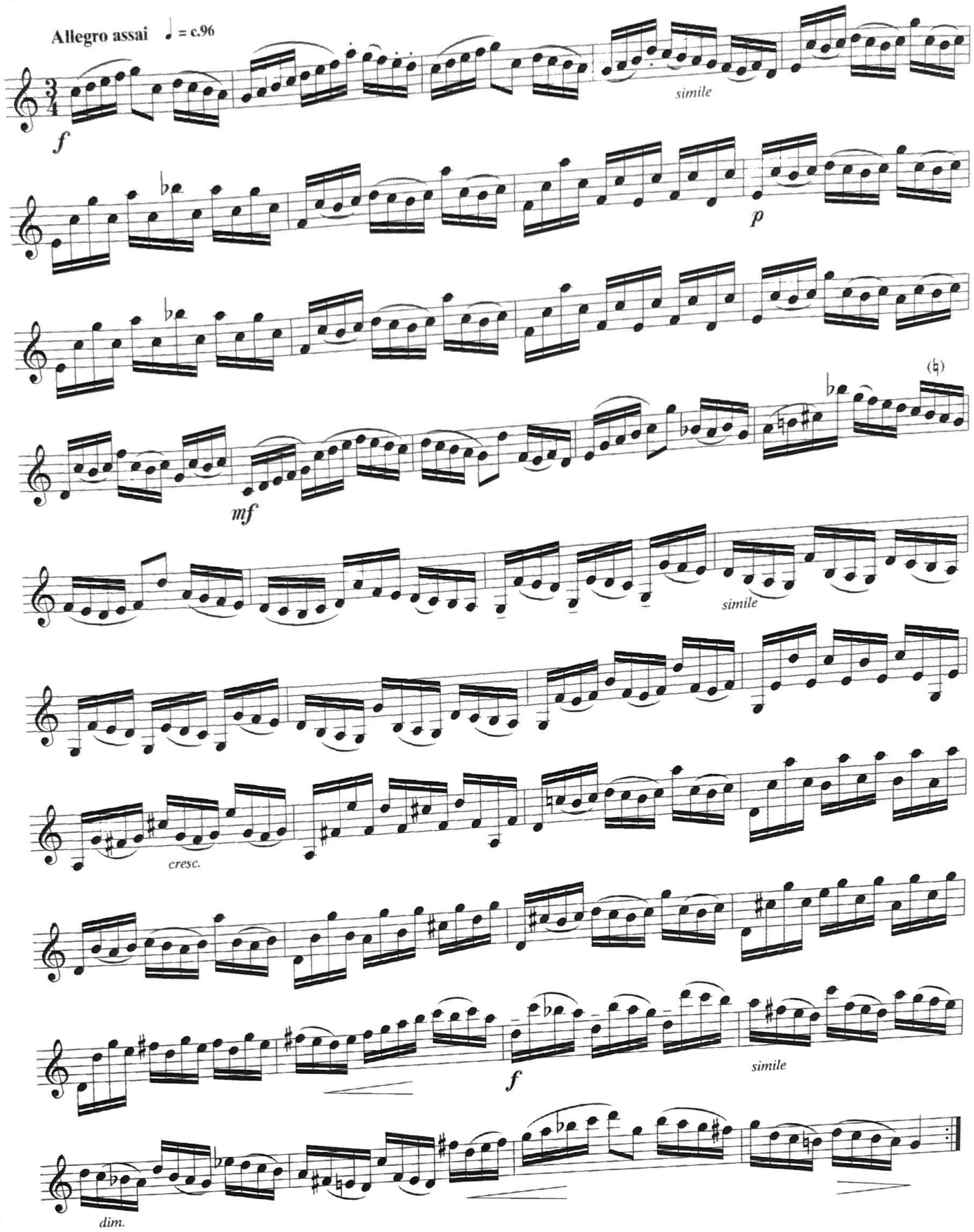
*dolce*

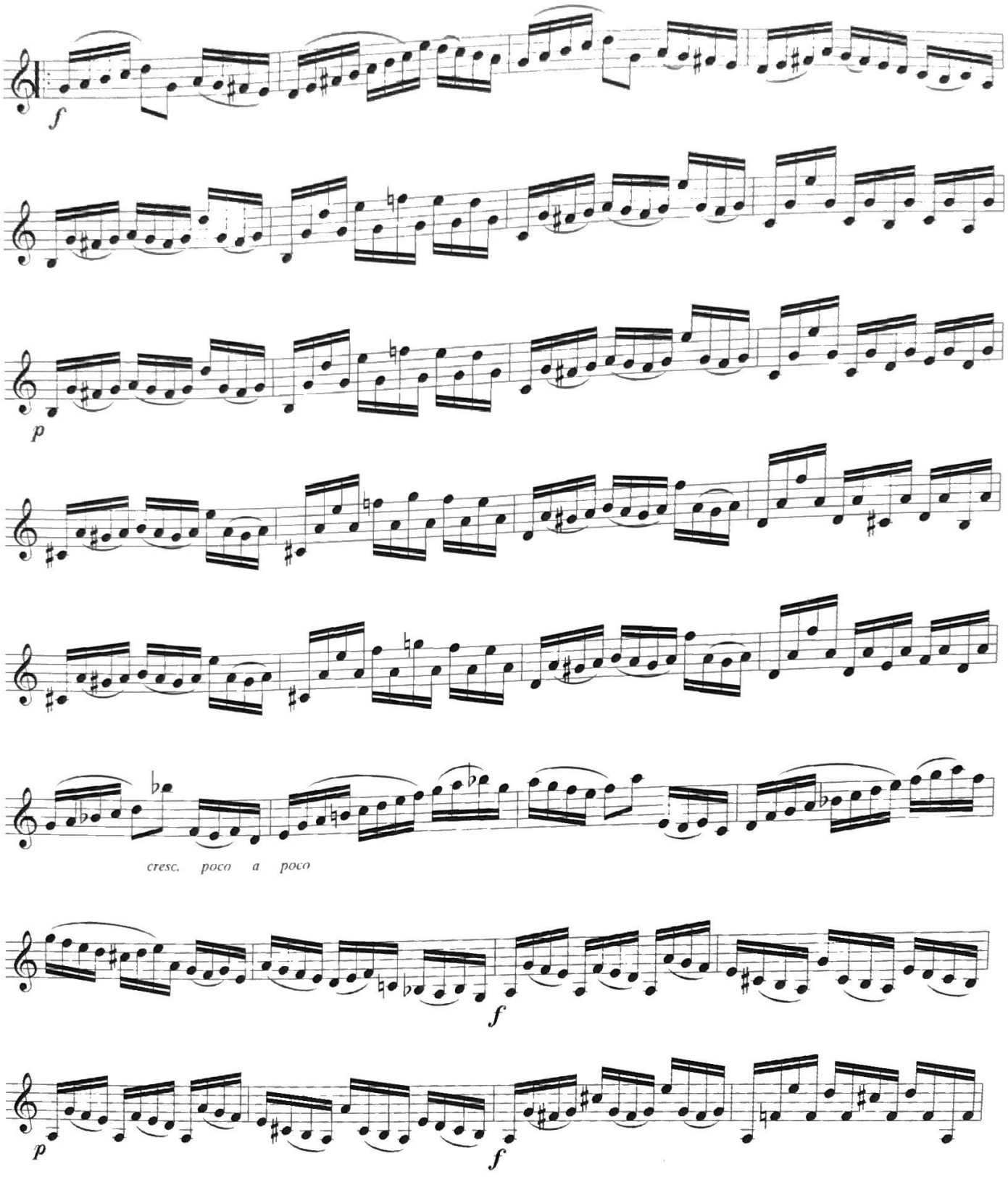
*rit.*

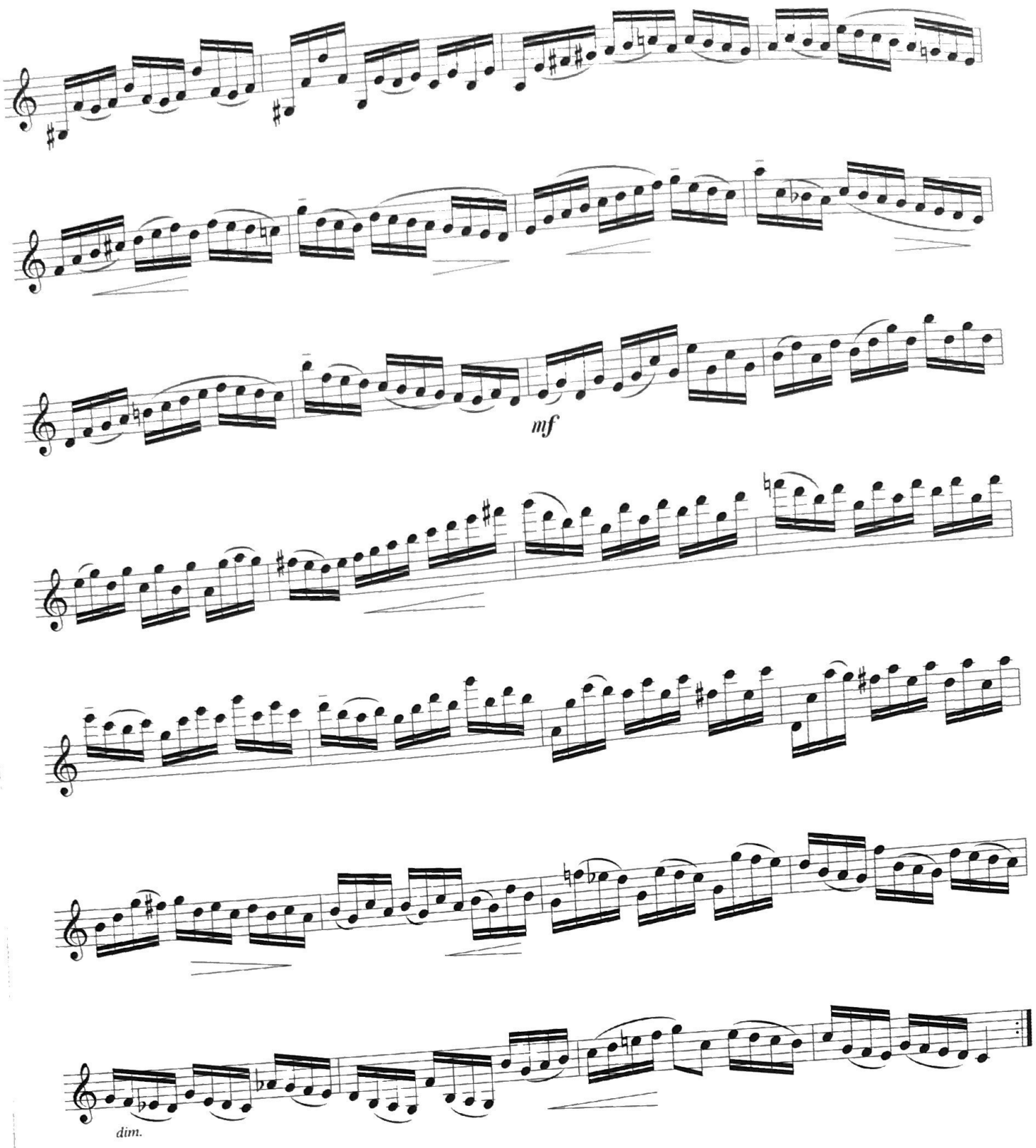
# 15. *from* Sonata No. 3 in C, *for violin*



# 16.

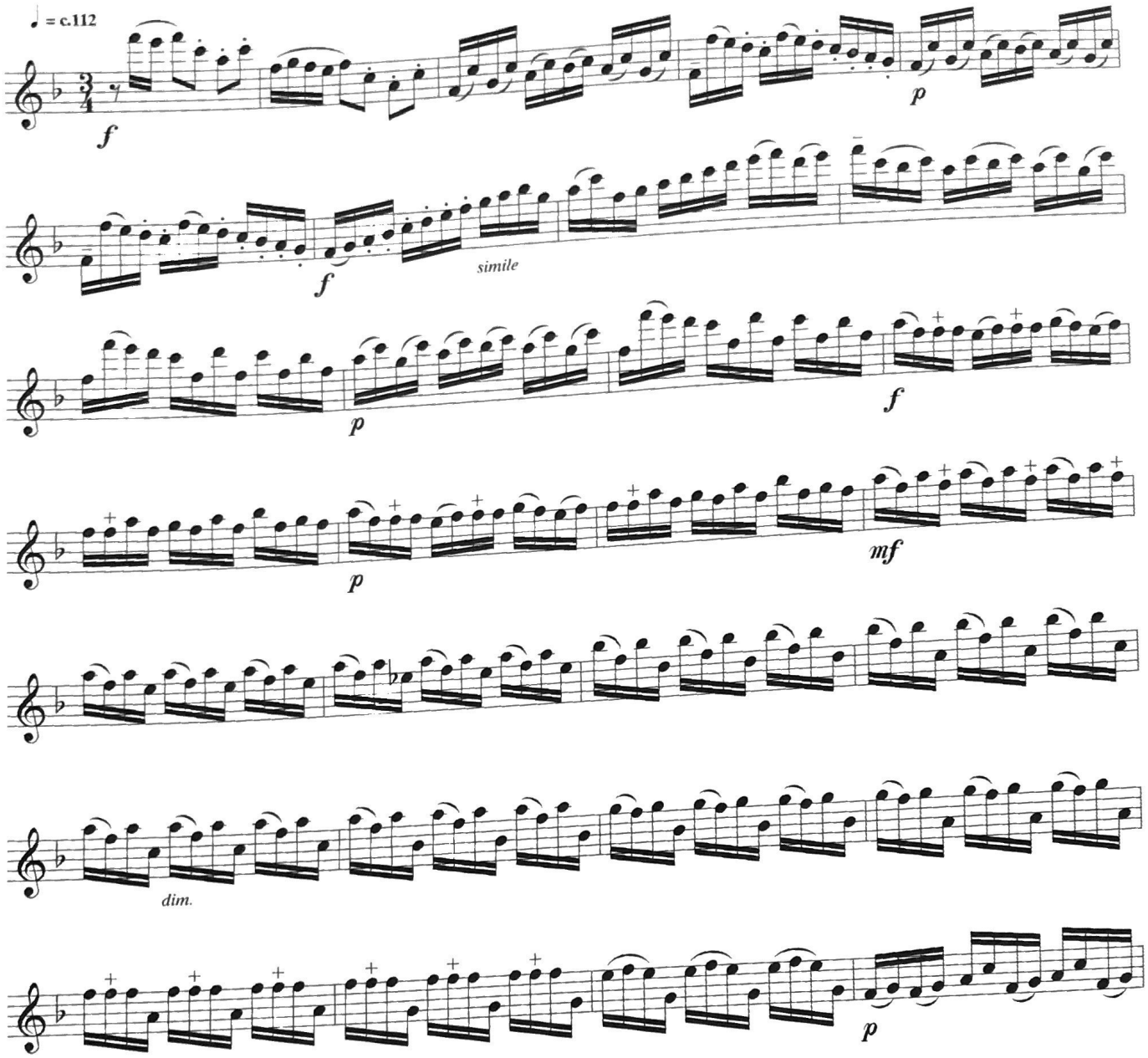



f
p
cresc. poco a poco
f
p
f

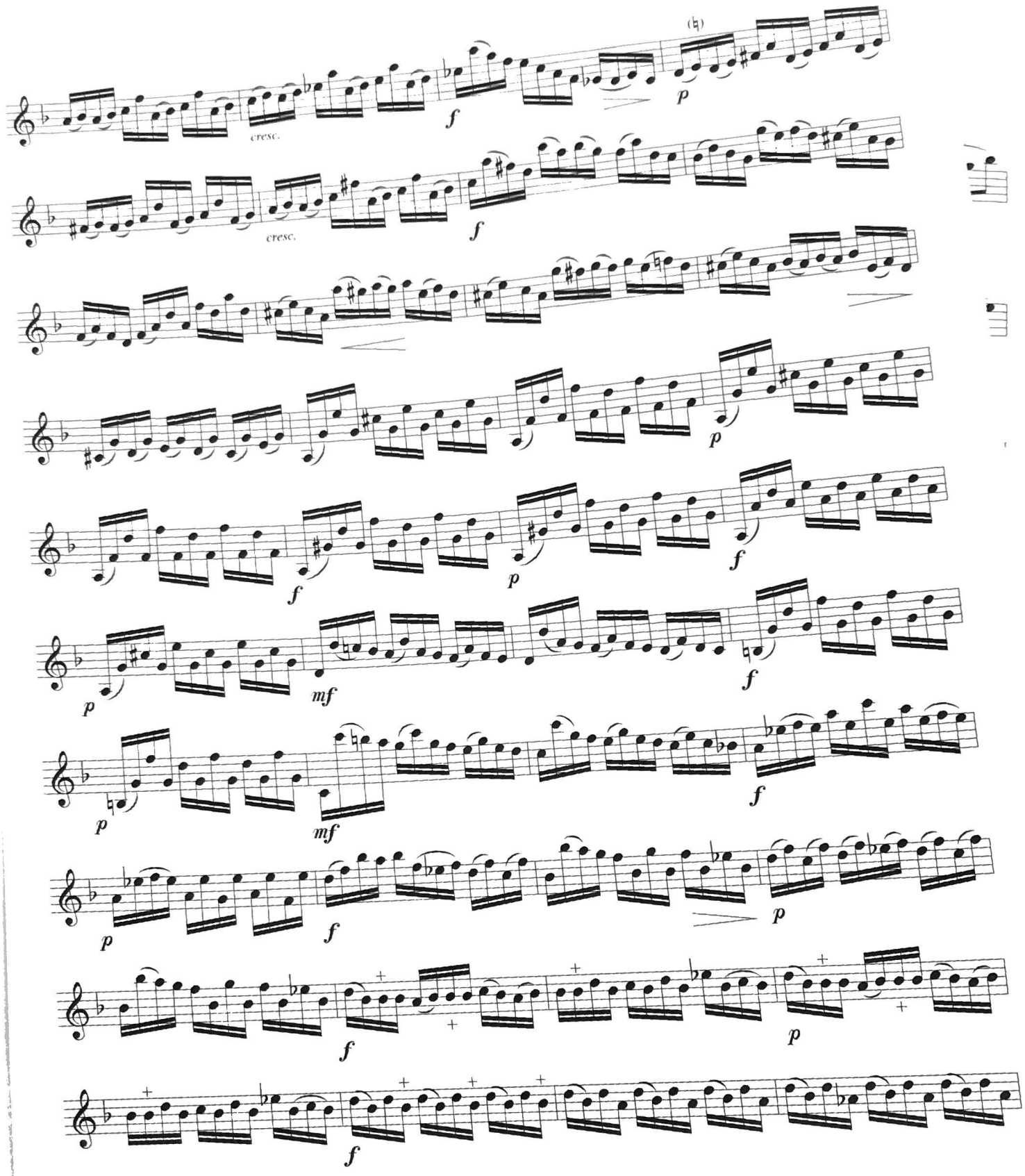

mf
dim.

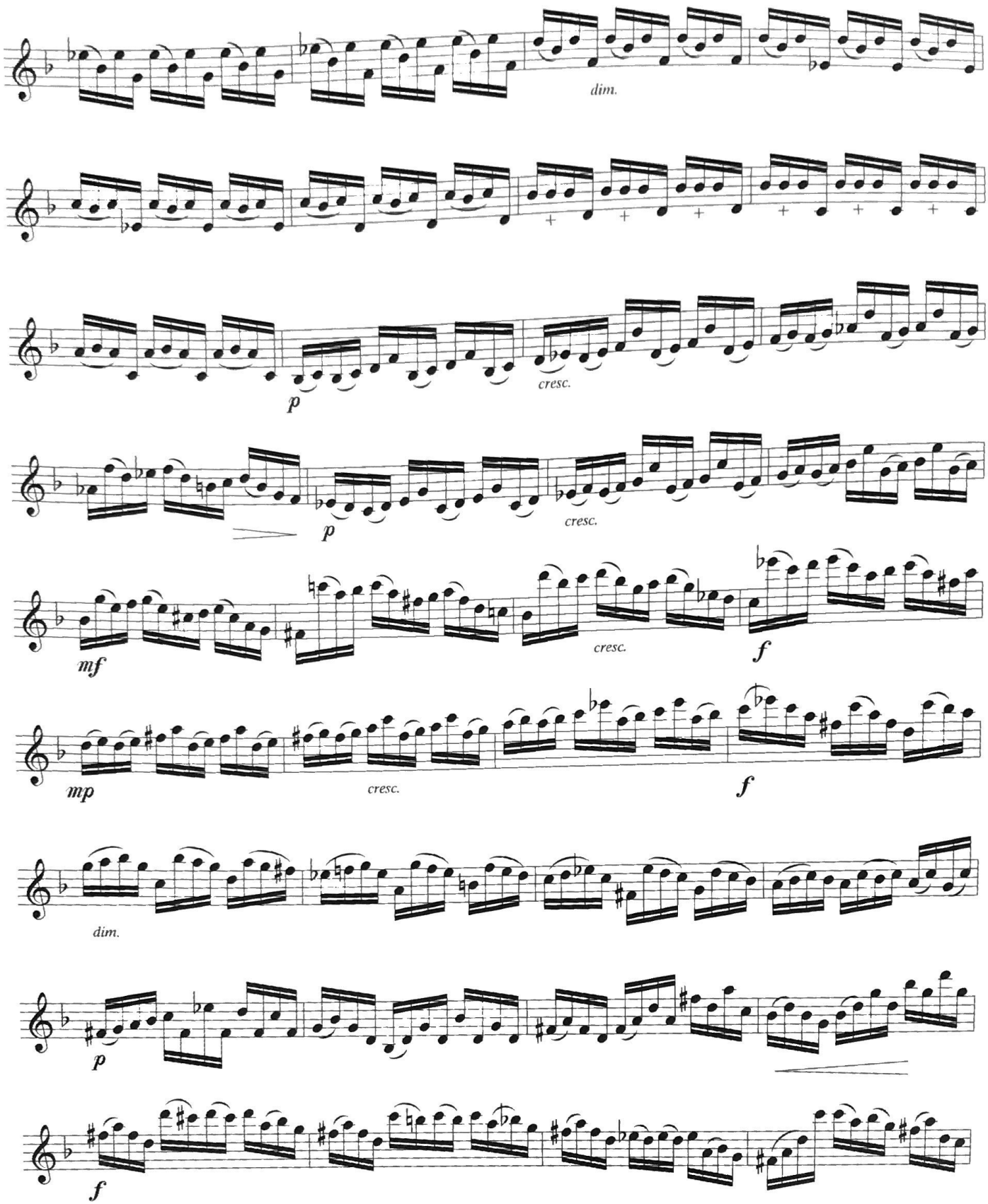
# 17. *from* Partita No. 3 in E, *for violin*

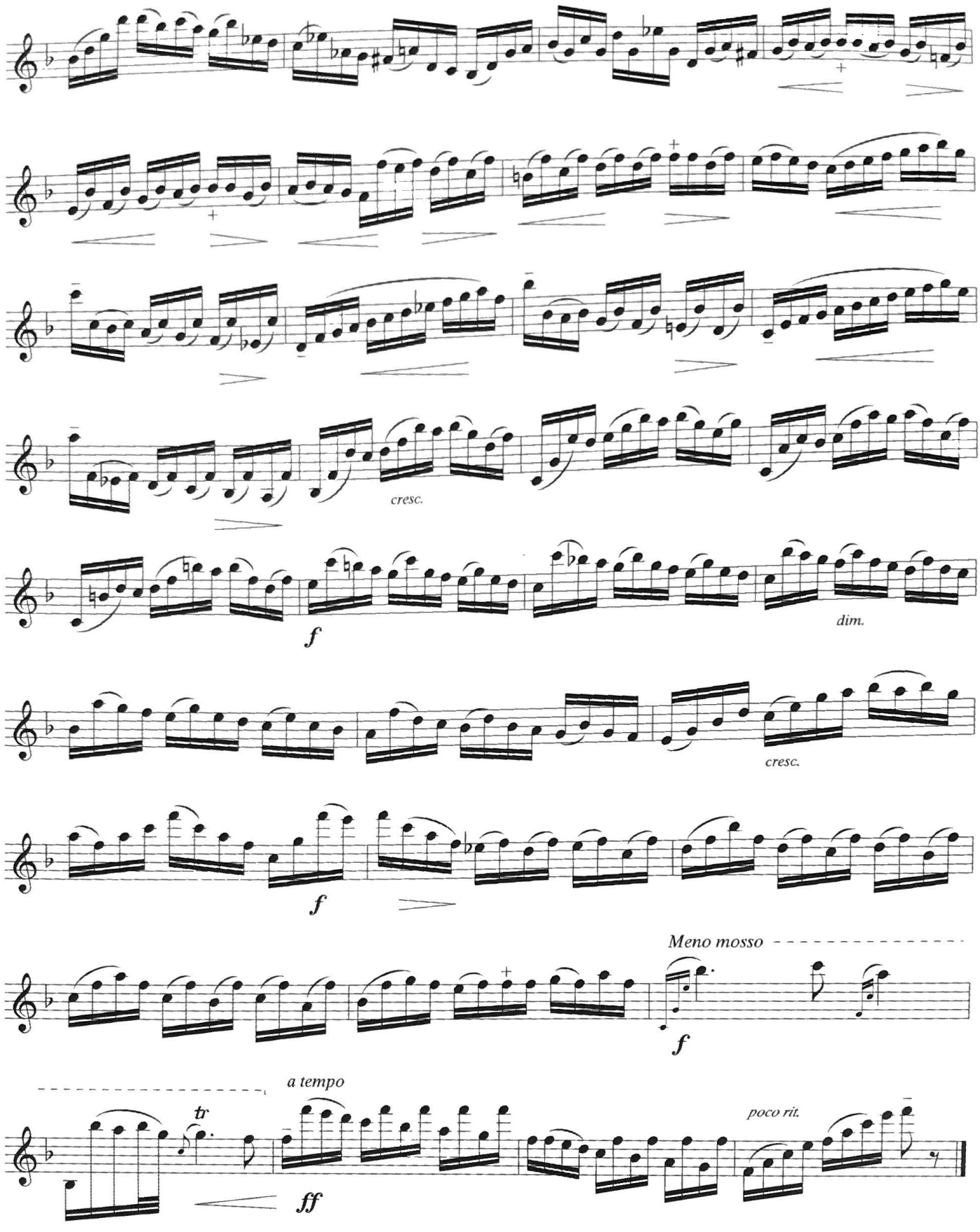
Prelude




NOTE: In several passages in this Prelude, the violinist produces a subtle tone color change by playing the alternating repeated tones on separate strings (for example, in the last line of this page, in the original key of E major, the repeated tones might be played E on the open E string, followed by a fingered E on the A string, then back to the open string). The clarinetist who would like to experiment with incorporating this effect into these passages might try using alternate fingerings for the notes marked with a + sign. Suggestions for this could include adding the low-F# key to the fourth-line F, or, on the next page, alternating a different "resonanace fingering" on the throat-tone Bb (or eliminating the resonance fingering at the + marking if it is customarily used as the "normal" Bb fingering).


cresc.
f
p
cresc.
f
p
f
p
f
mf
f
p
mf
f
p
f
p
f
p


dim.
p
cresc.
p
cresc.
mf
cresc.
f
mp
cresc.
f
dim.
p
f


cresc.
f
dim.
cresc.
f
Meno mosso
f
a tempo
tr
ff
poco rit.

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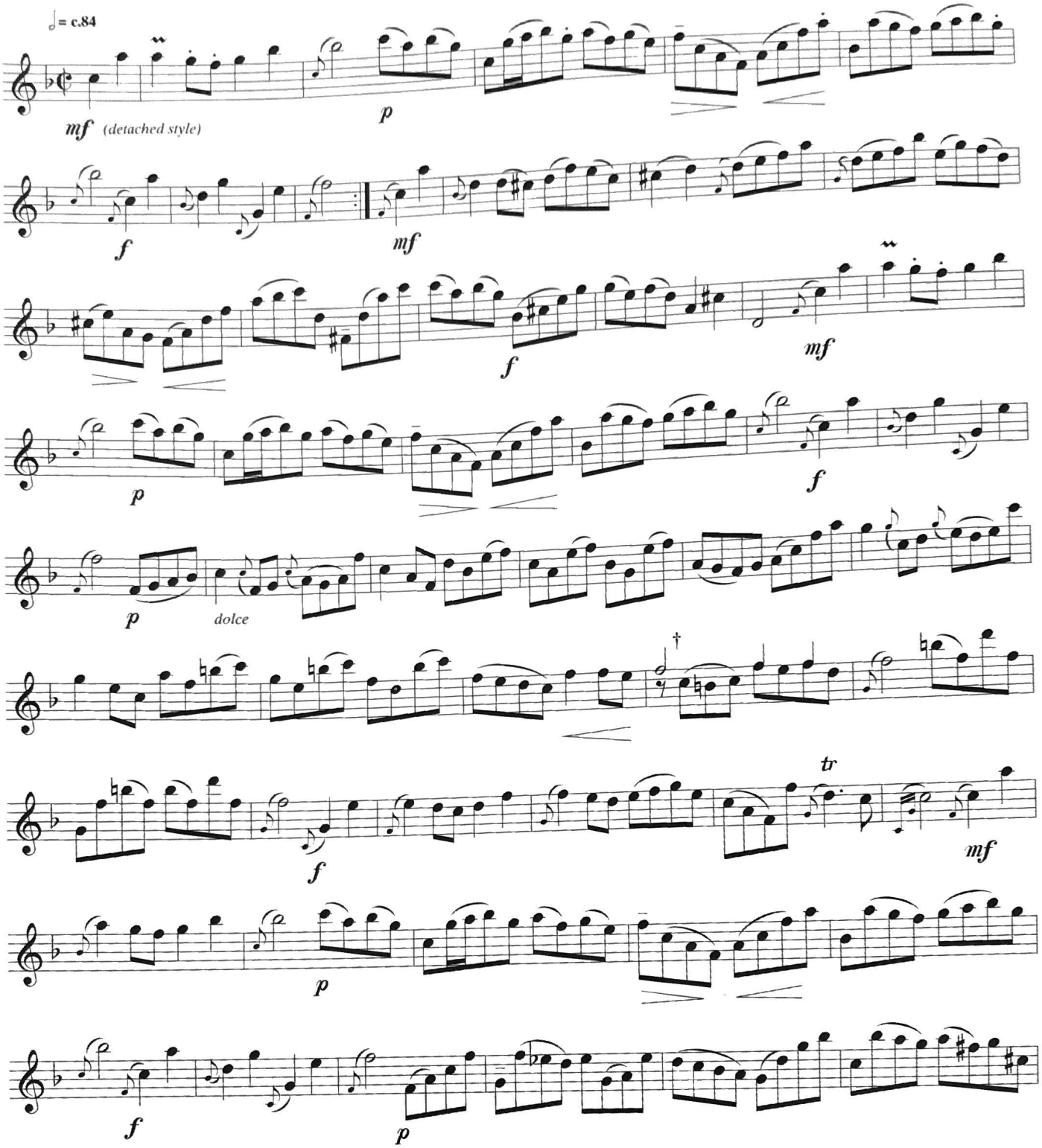
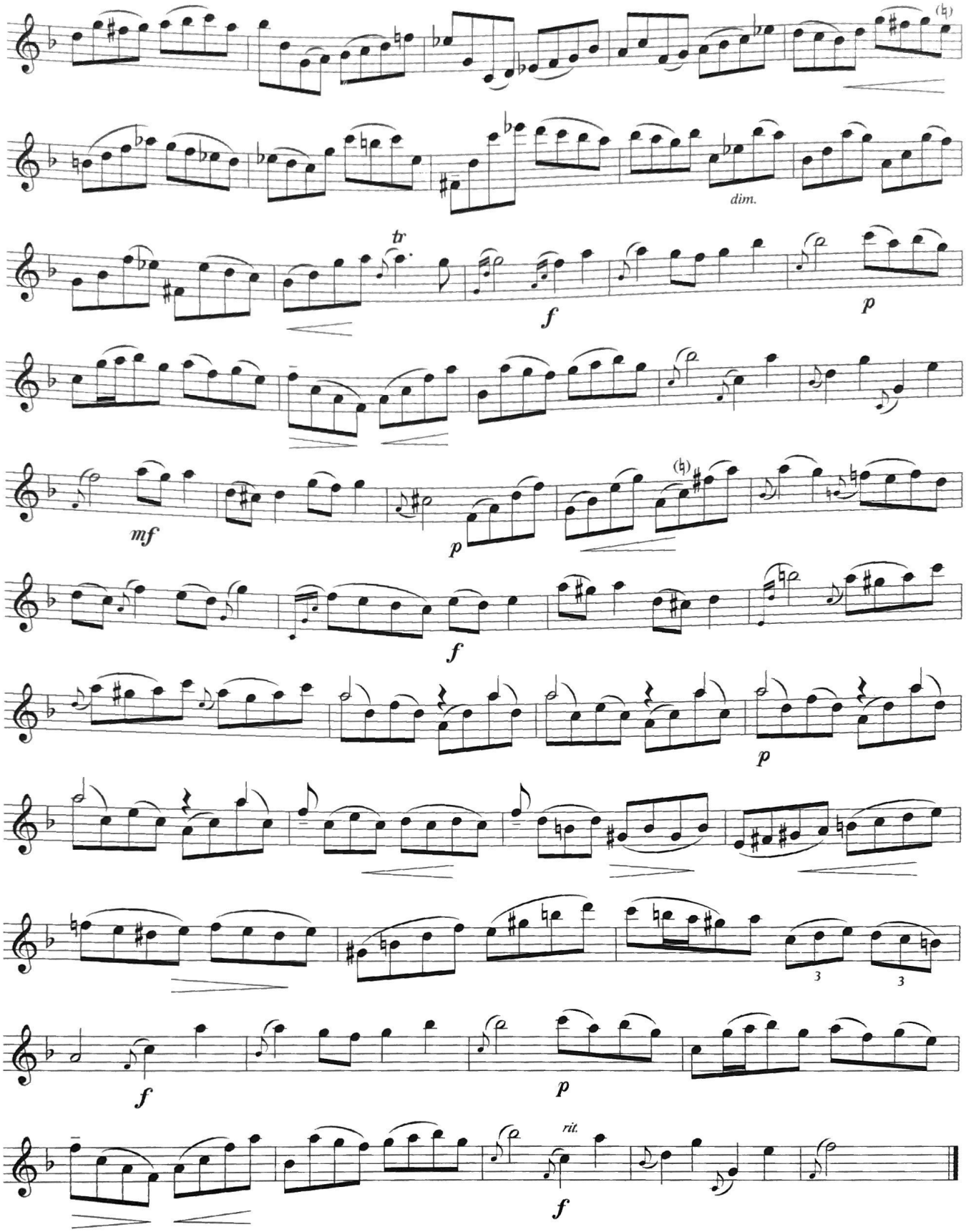
# 18.

Gavotte en Rondeau

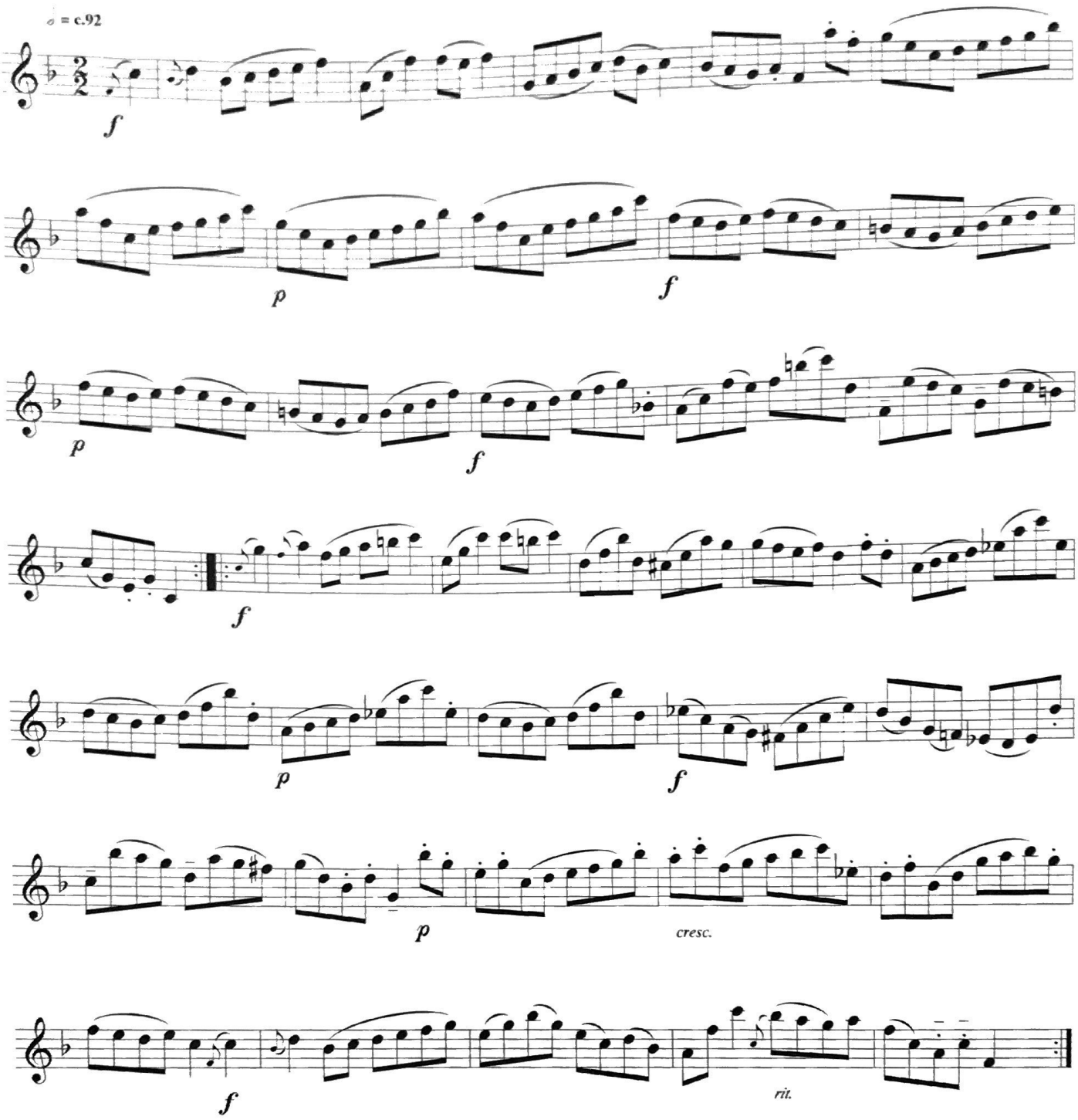



† Notation as rendered for the violin, which plays on two strings simultaneously. Clarinetist should play F on the downbeat then the eighth notes, while perhaps giving the F's an exaggerated tenuto to set them apart slightly.


dim.
tr
f
p
mf
p
f
p
3
3
f
p
rit.
f

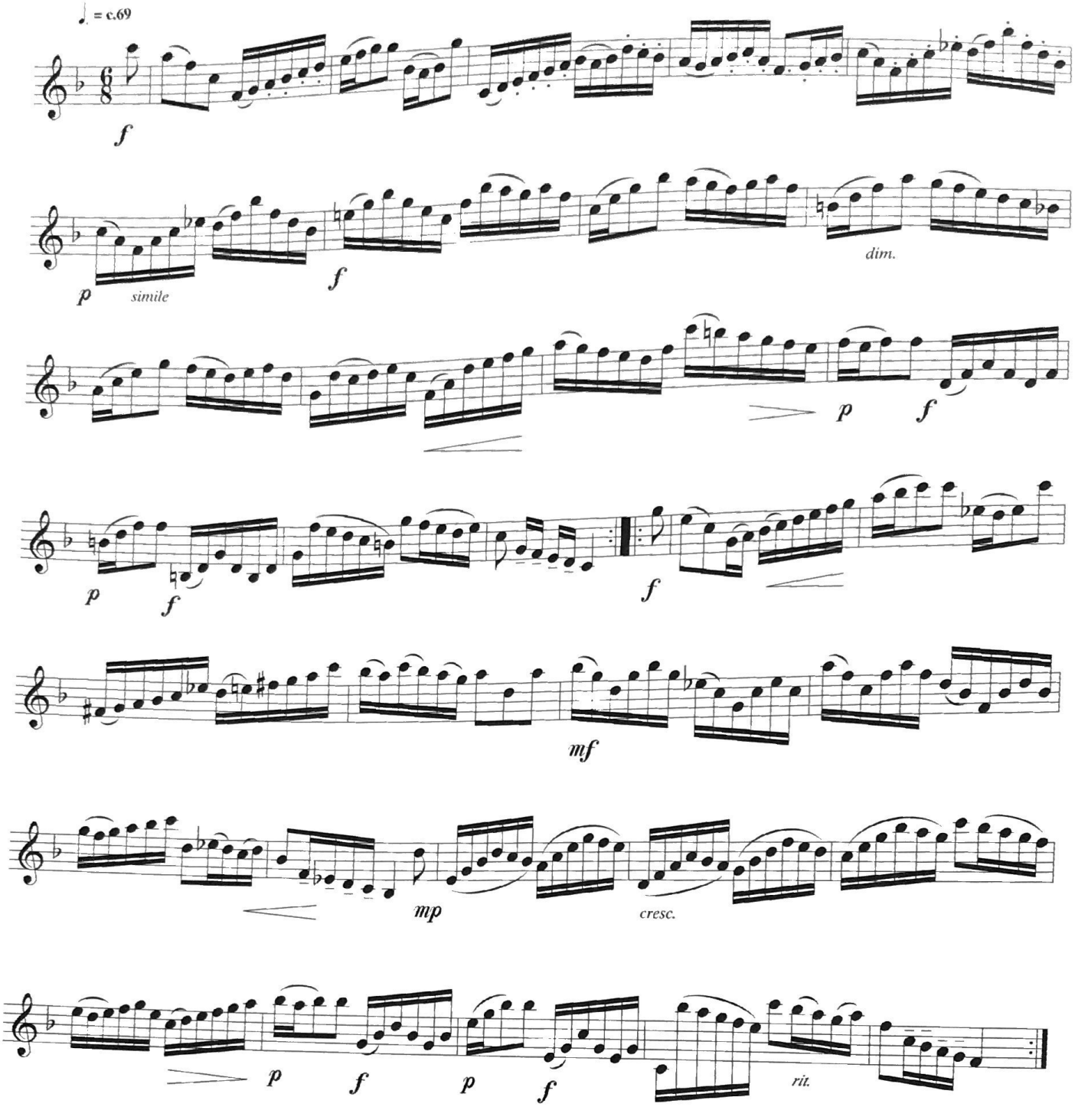
# 19.

Bourée



# 20.

Gigue



CLARINET

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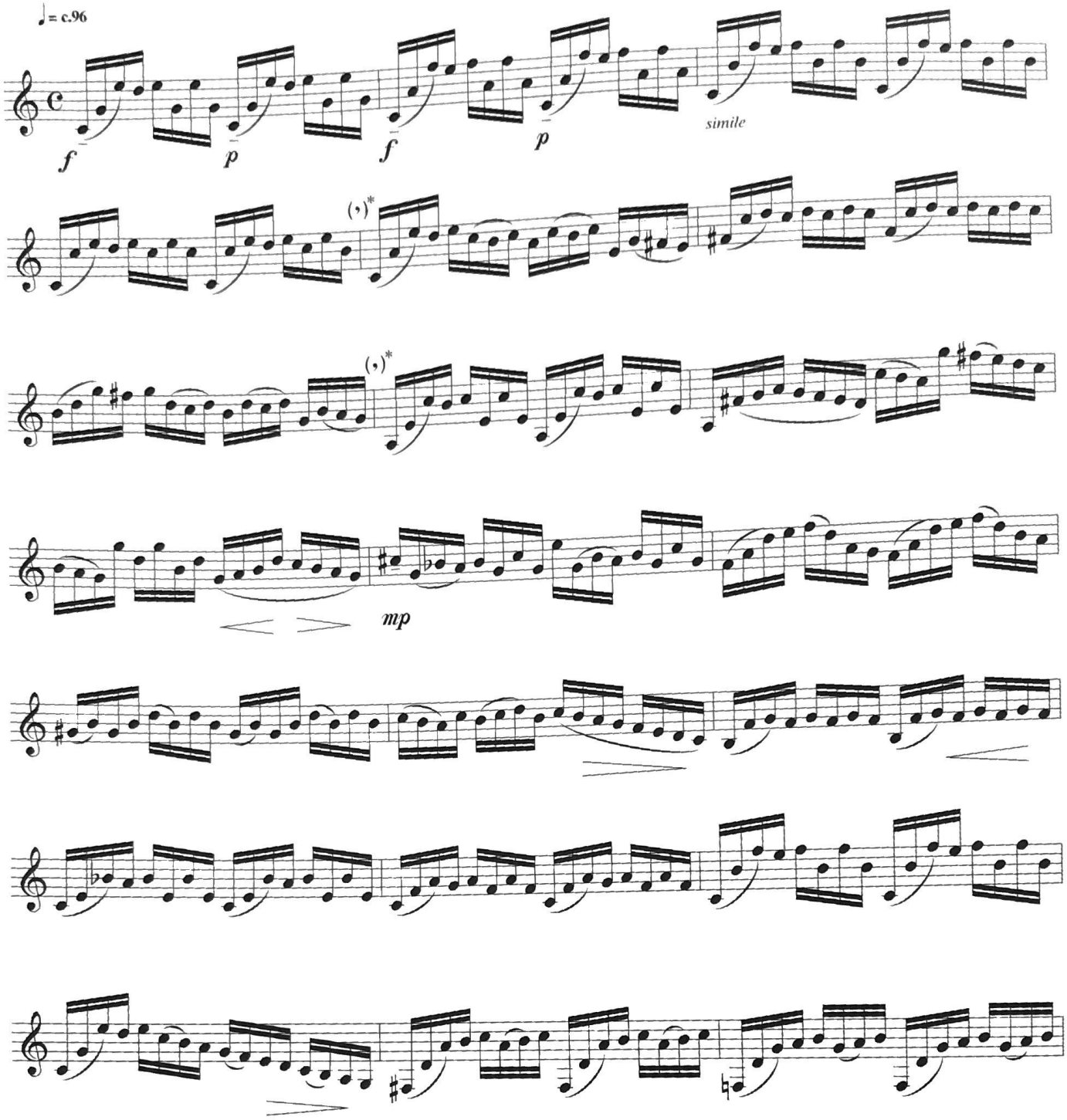
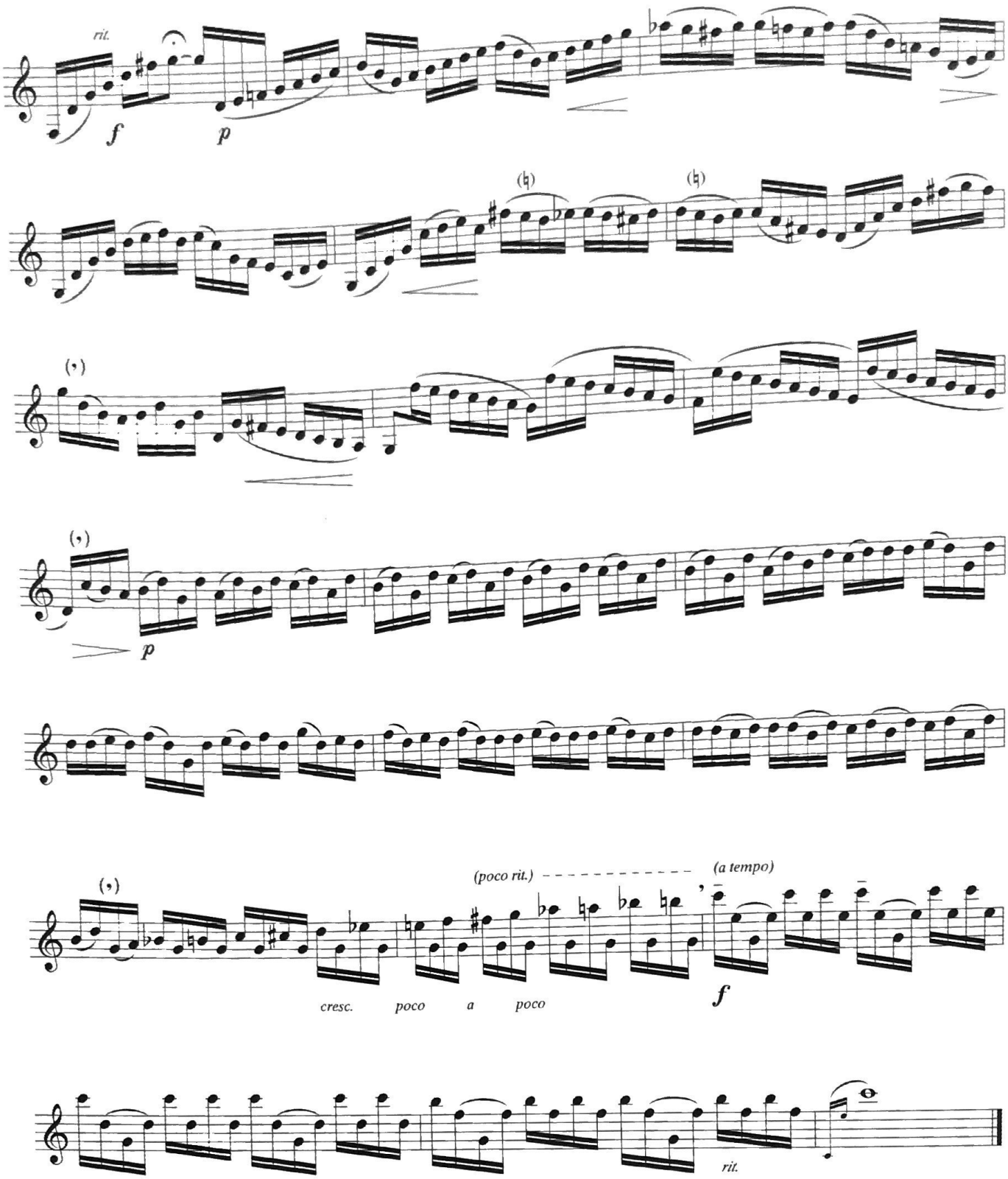
## 21. Suite No. 1 in G, *for cello*

Prelude



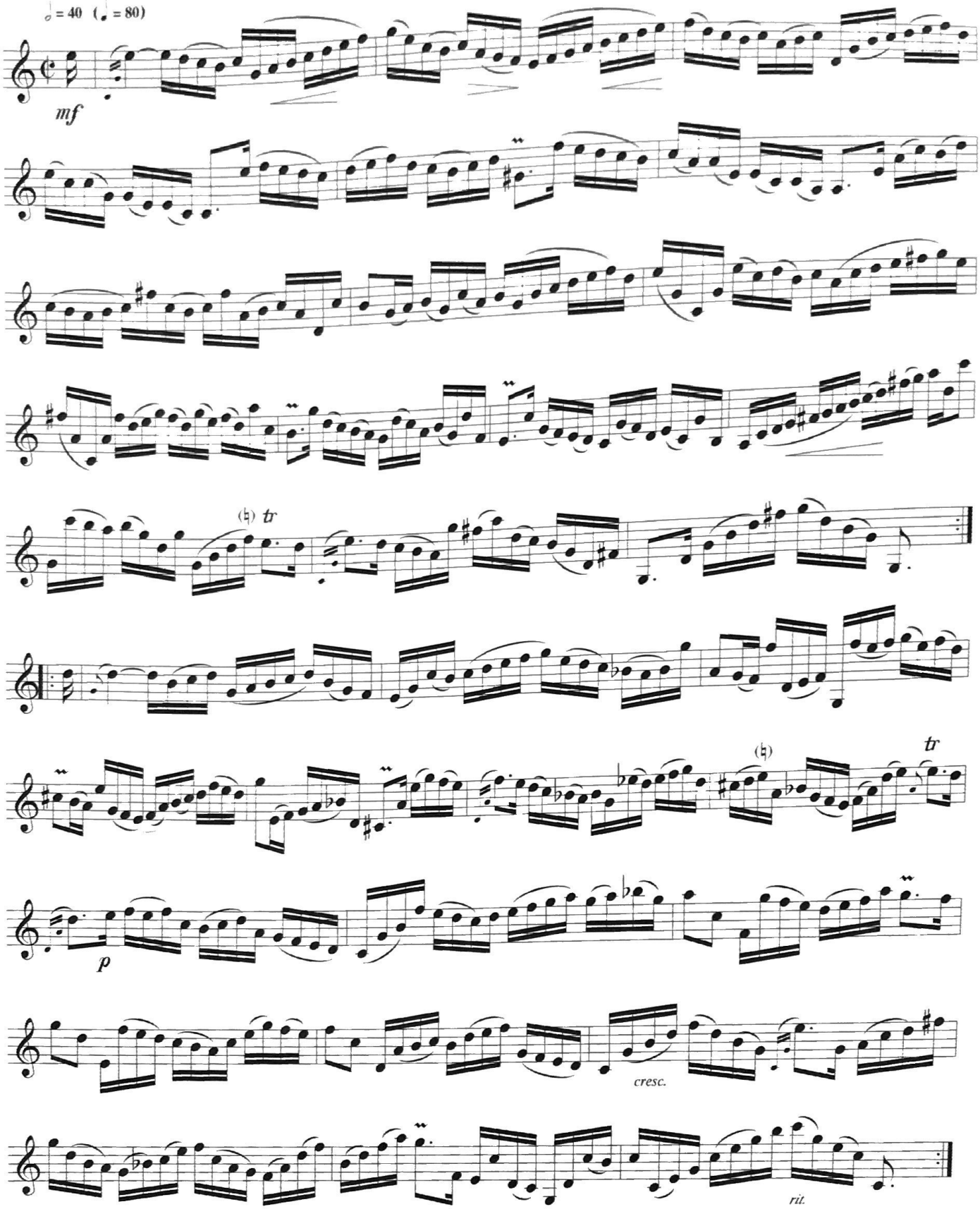

* *"Catch breaths" taken quickly at certain bar lines may be preferable for much of this movement.*


rit.
f
p
(♮)
(♮)
(𝄾)
(𝄾)
p
(𝄾)
(poco rit.)
(a tempo)
cresc. poco a poco
f
rit.

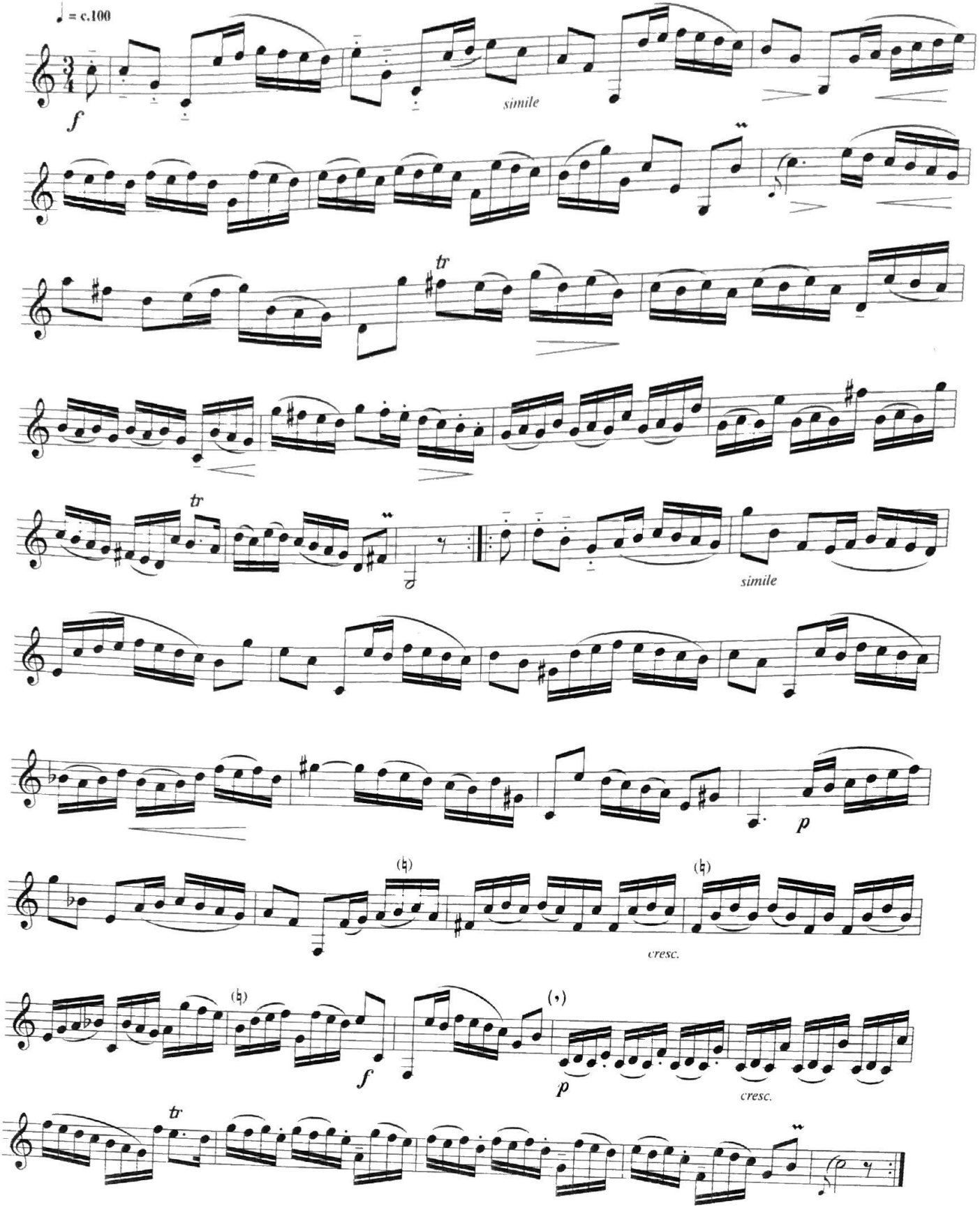
#22, 29 + 34
NYSSMA V
2012

CLARINET

## 22. Allemande

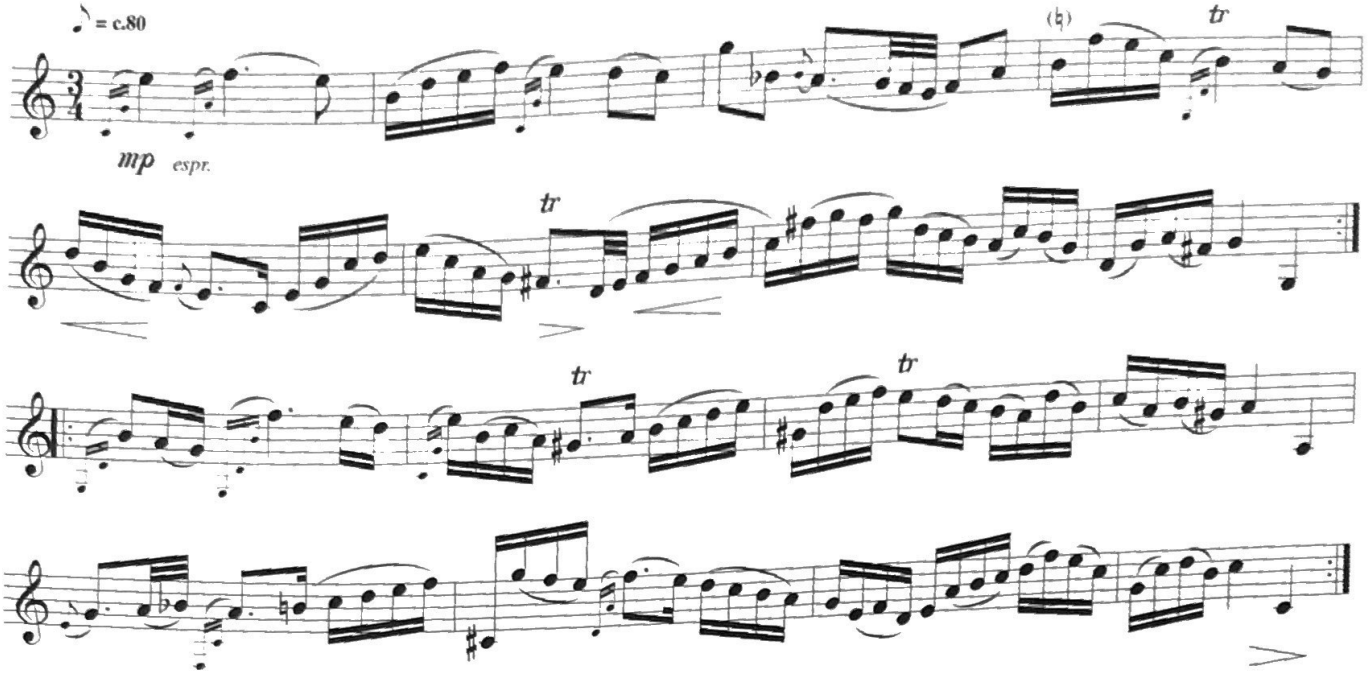


# 23. Courante



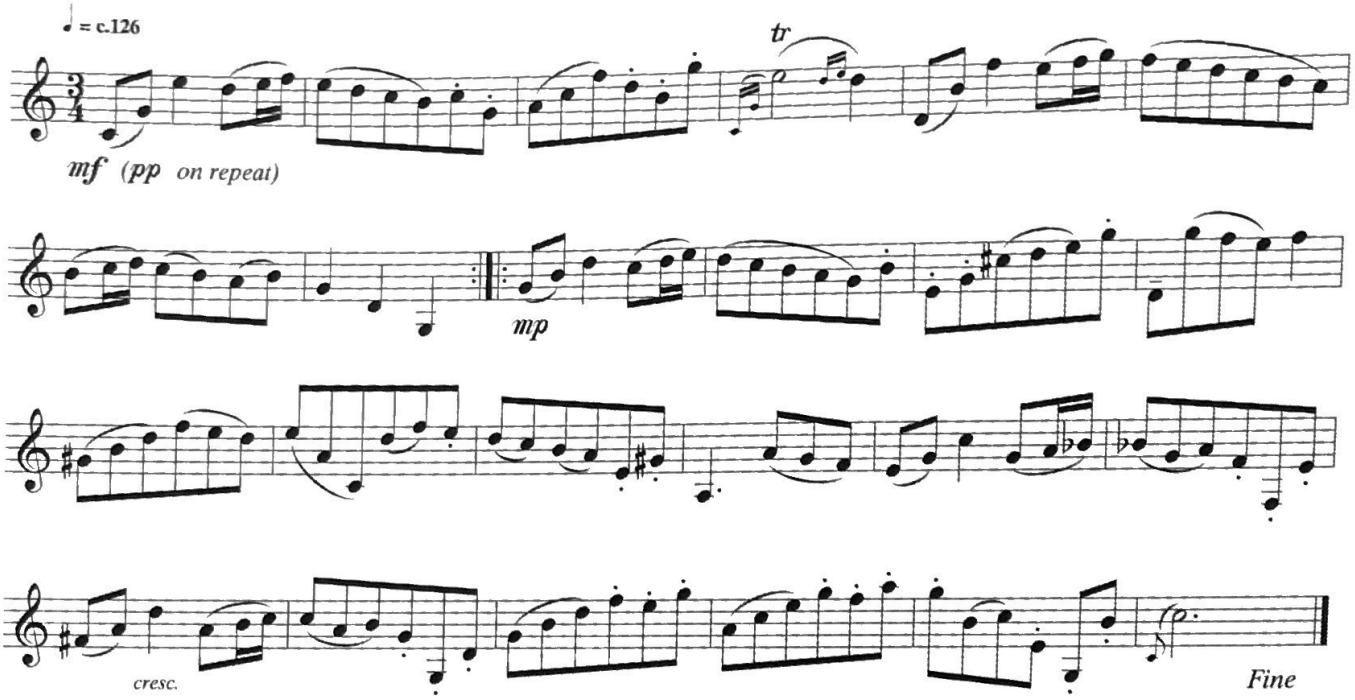
# 24.

Sarabande

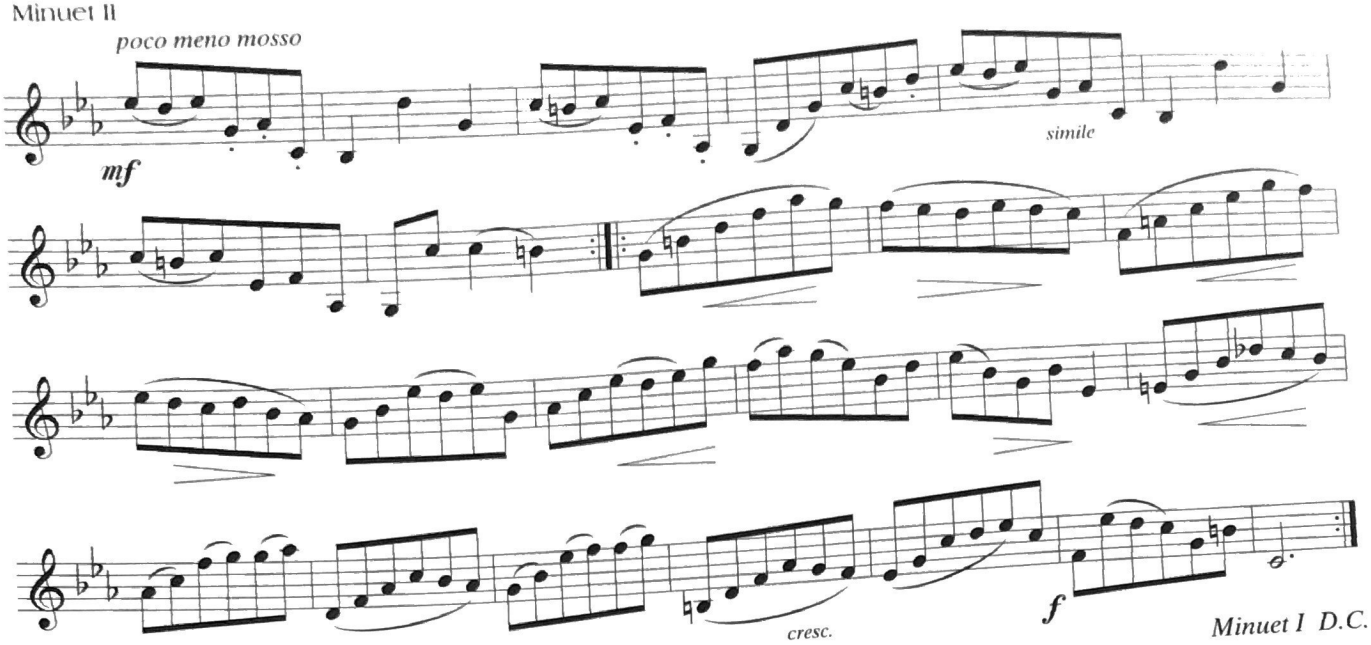



# 25.

Minuet 1

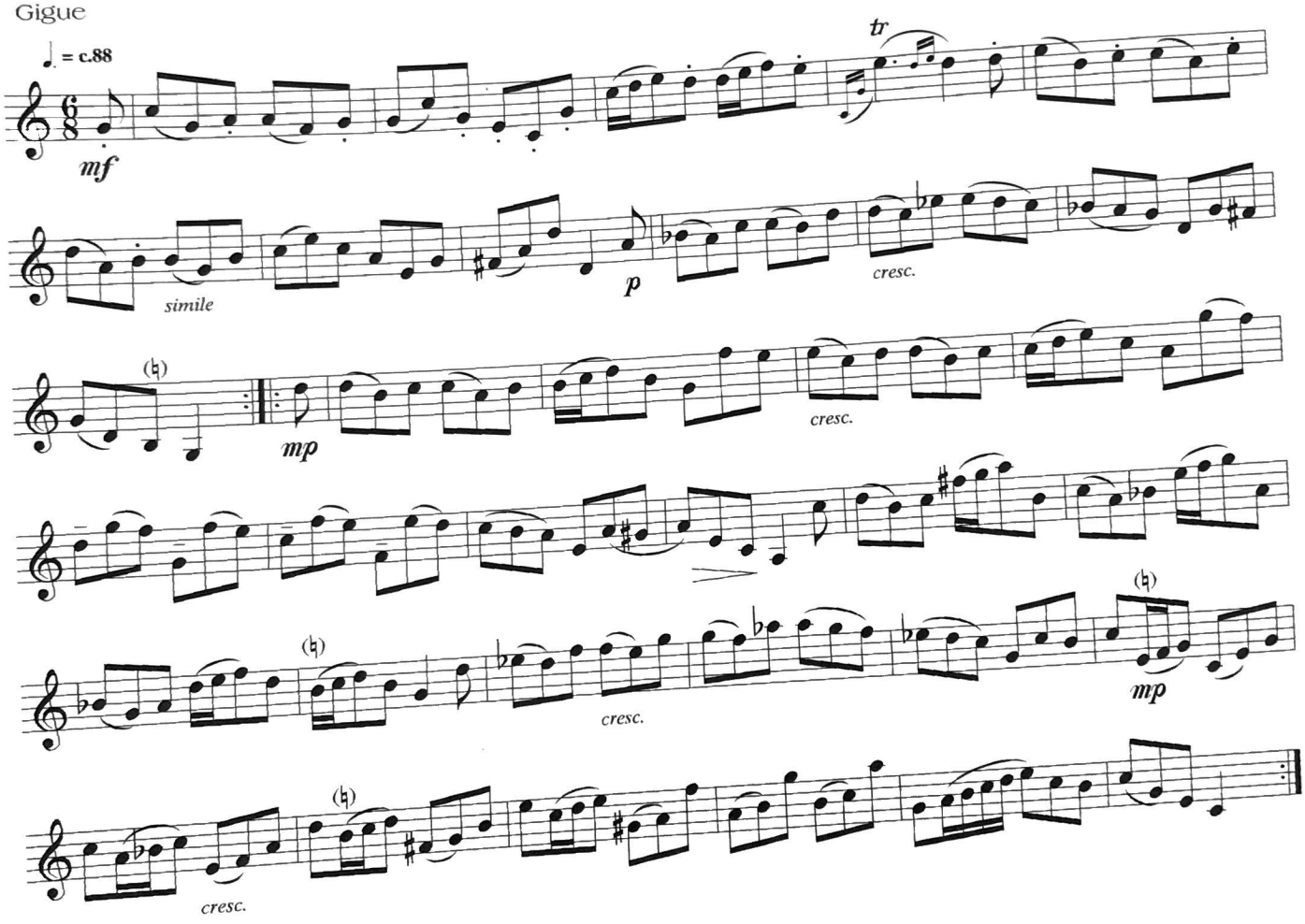


Minuet II



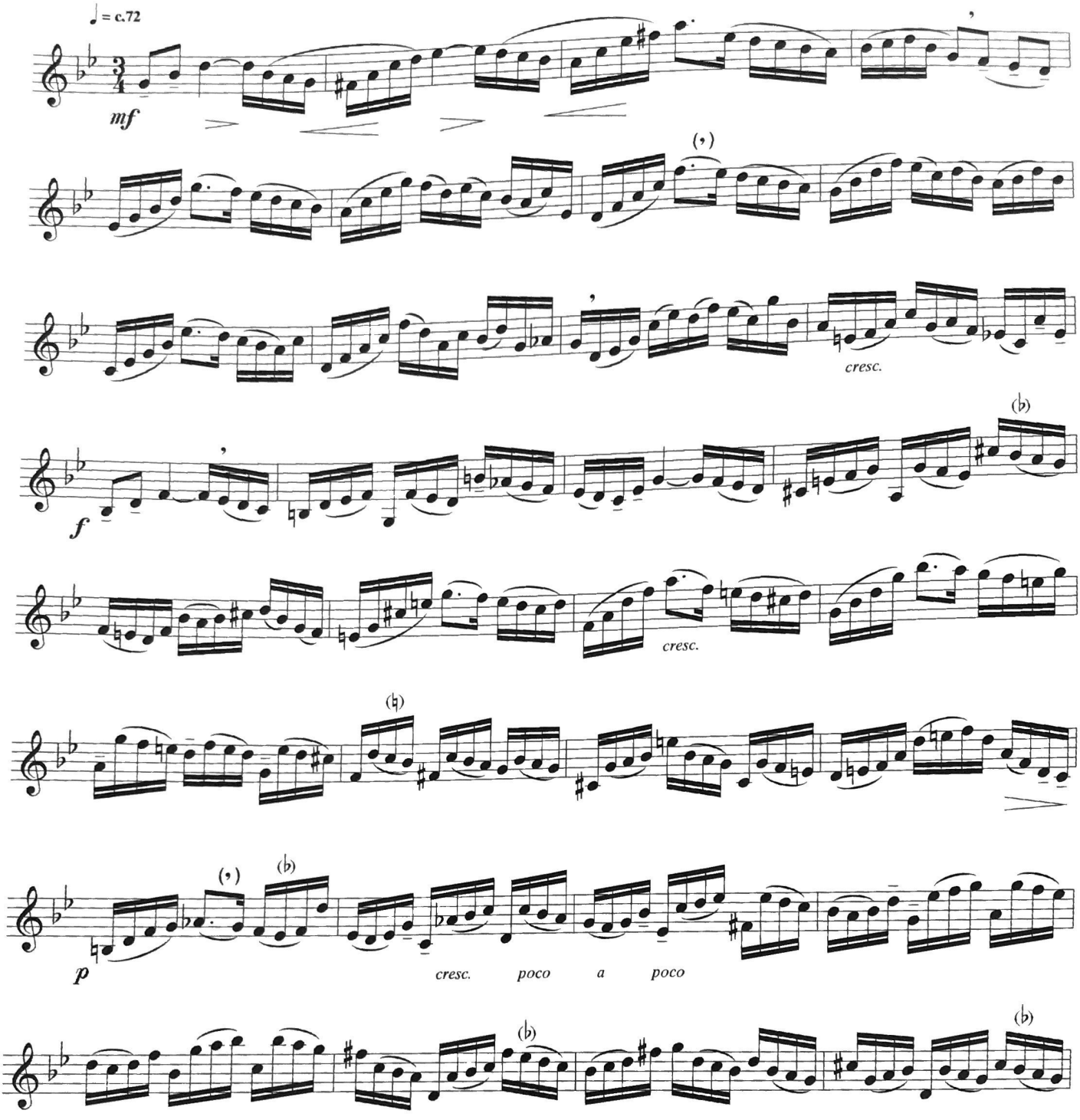

## 26.

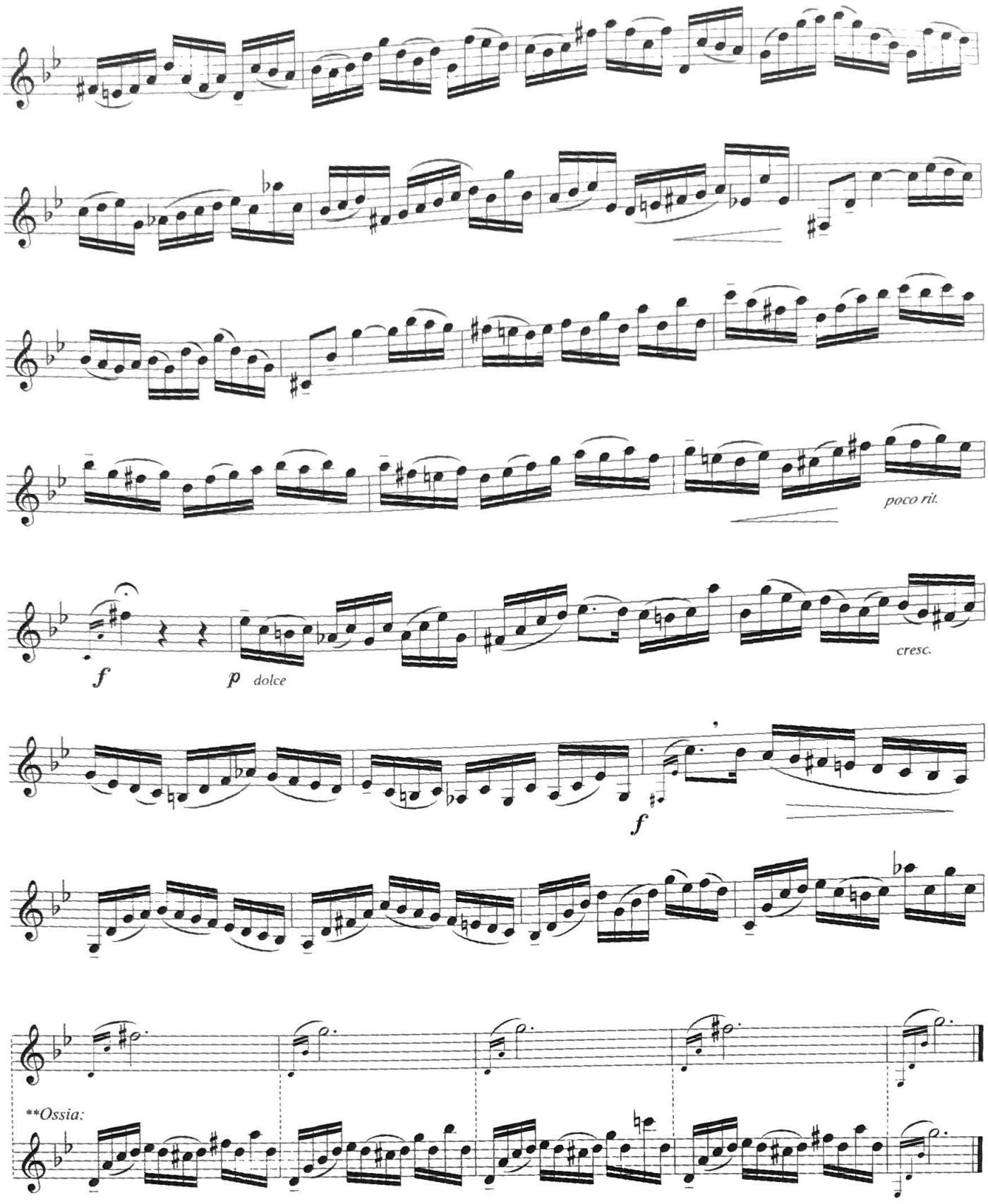
Gigue



# 27. Suite No. 2 in D minor, *for cello*

## Prelude

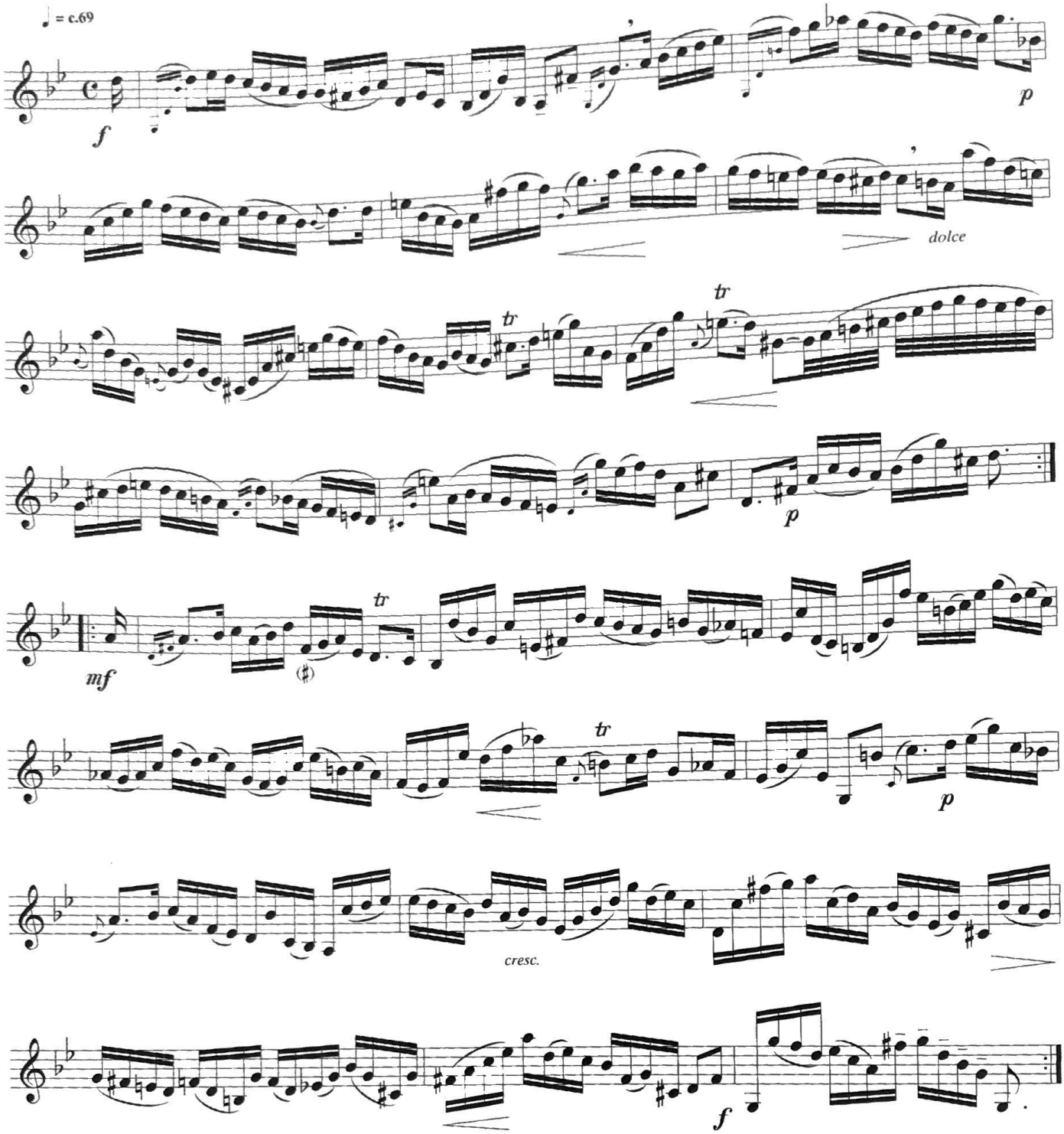





**Cellists often play a variation in these final measures, such as the Ossia provided here, in a manner common to Baroque performance practice.

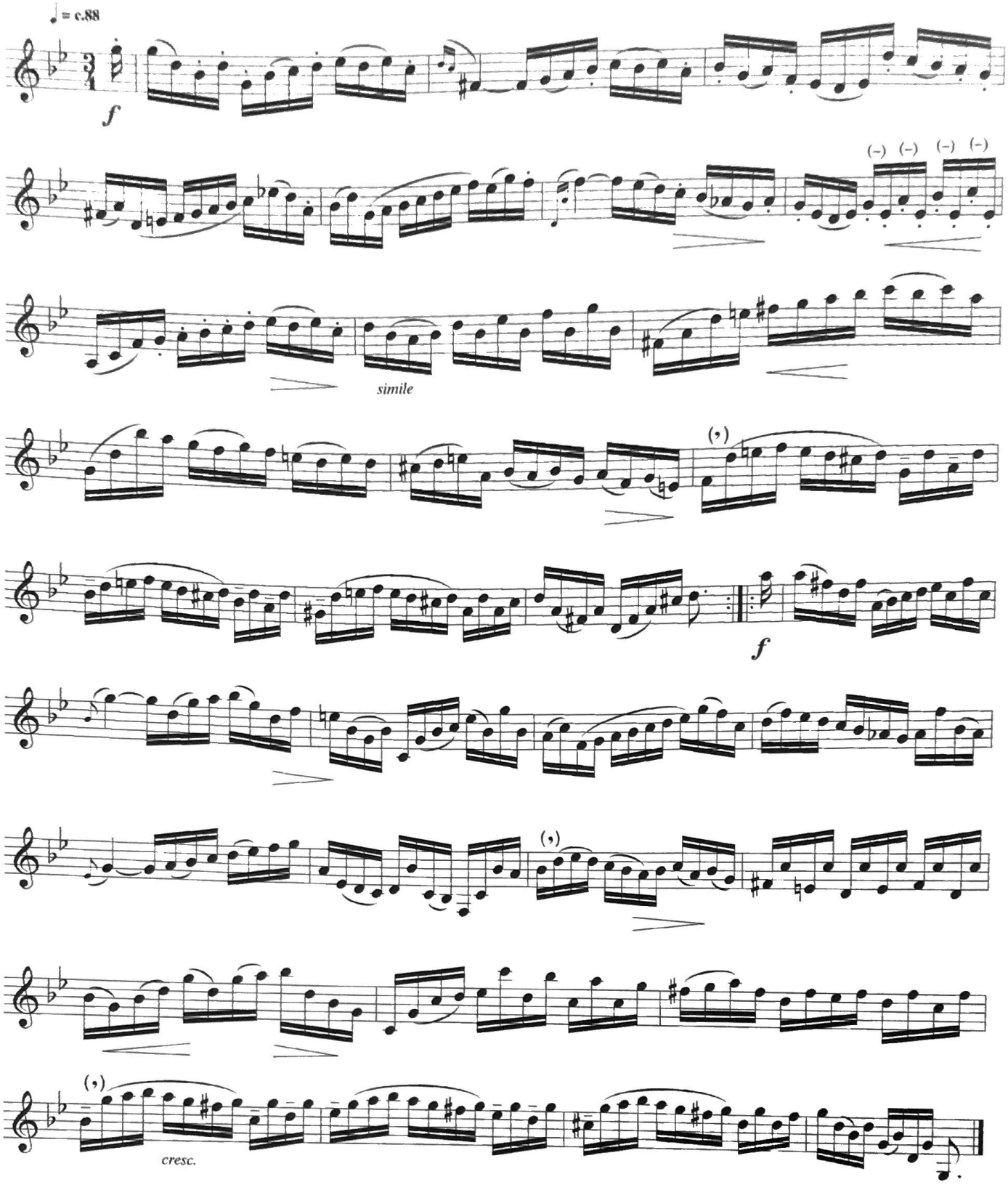
# 28.

Allemande



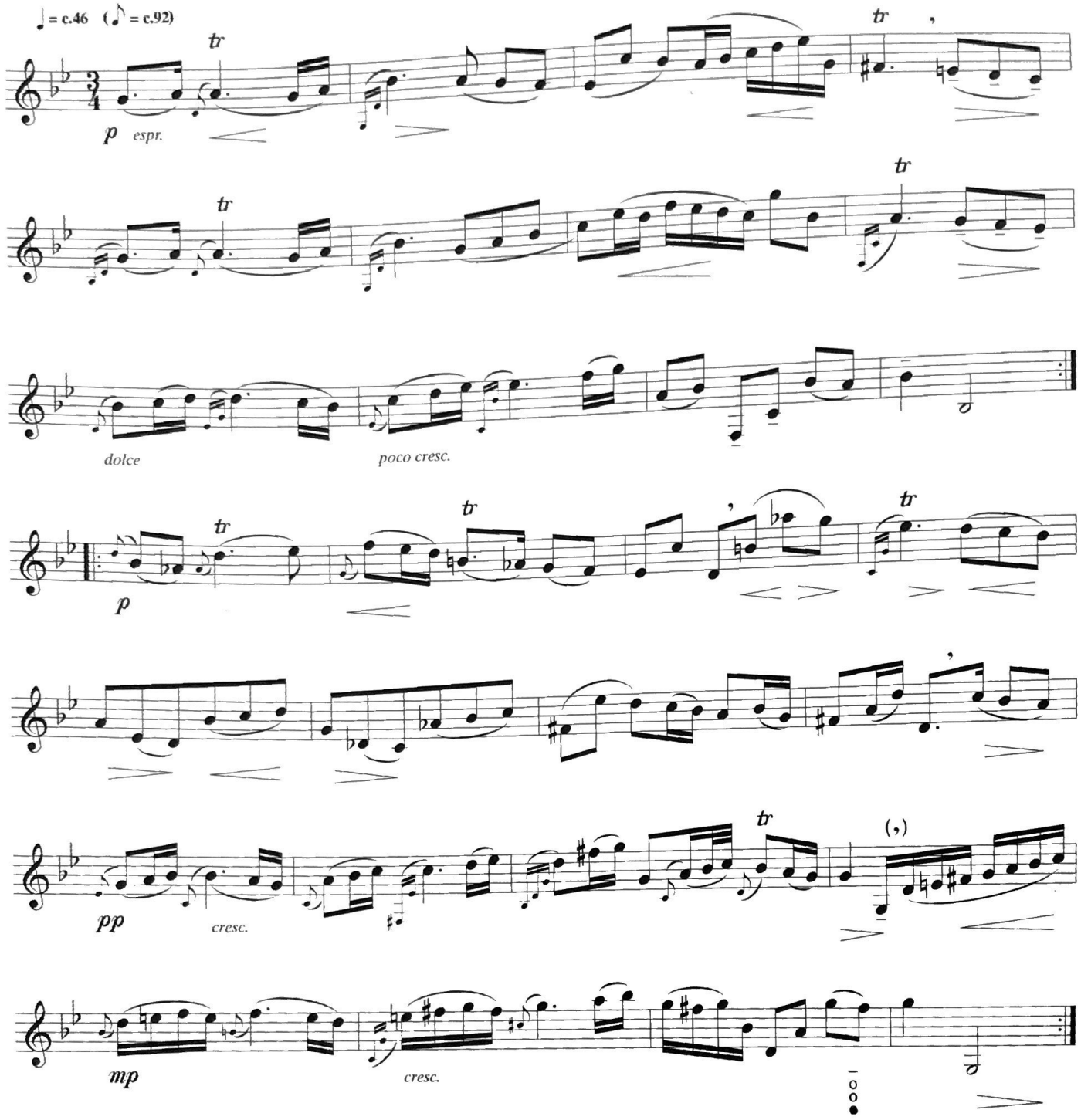
# 29.

Courante



# 30.

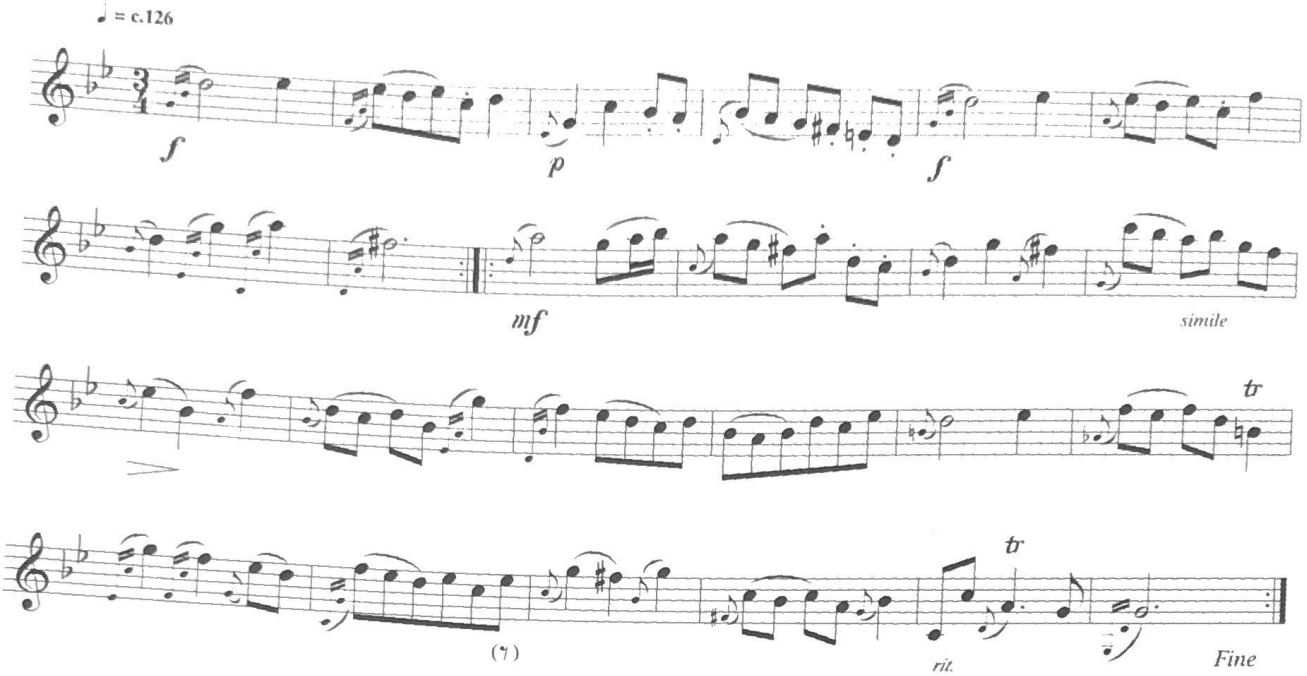
Sarabande



# 31.

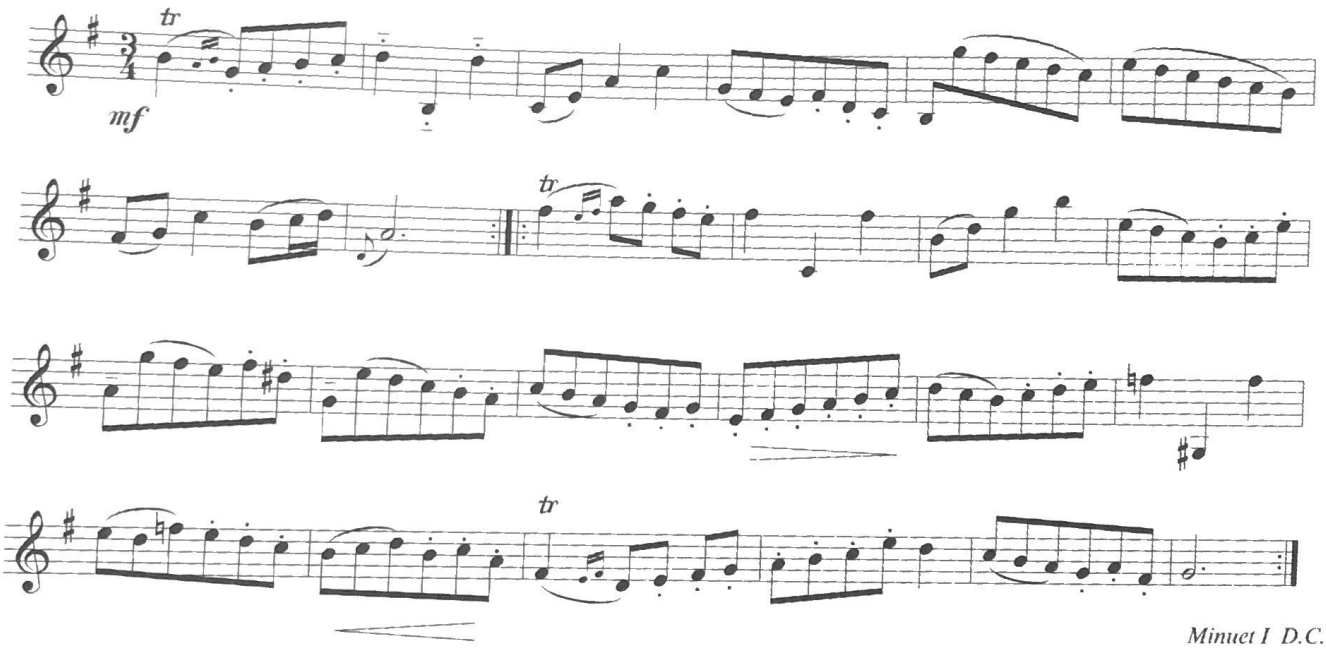
Minuet I

♩ = c.126



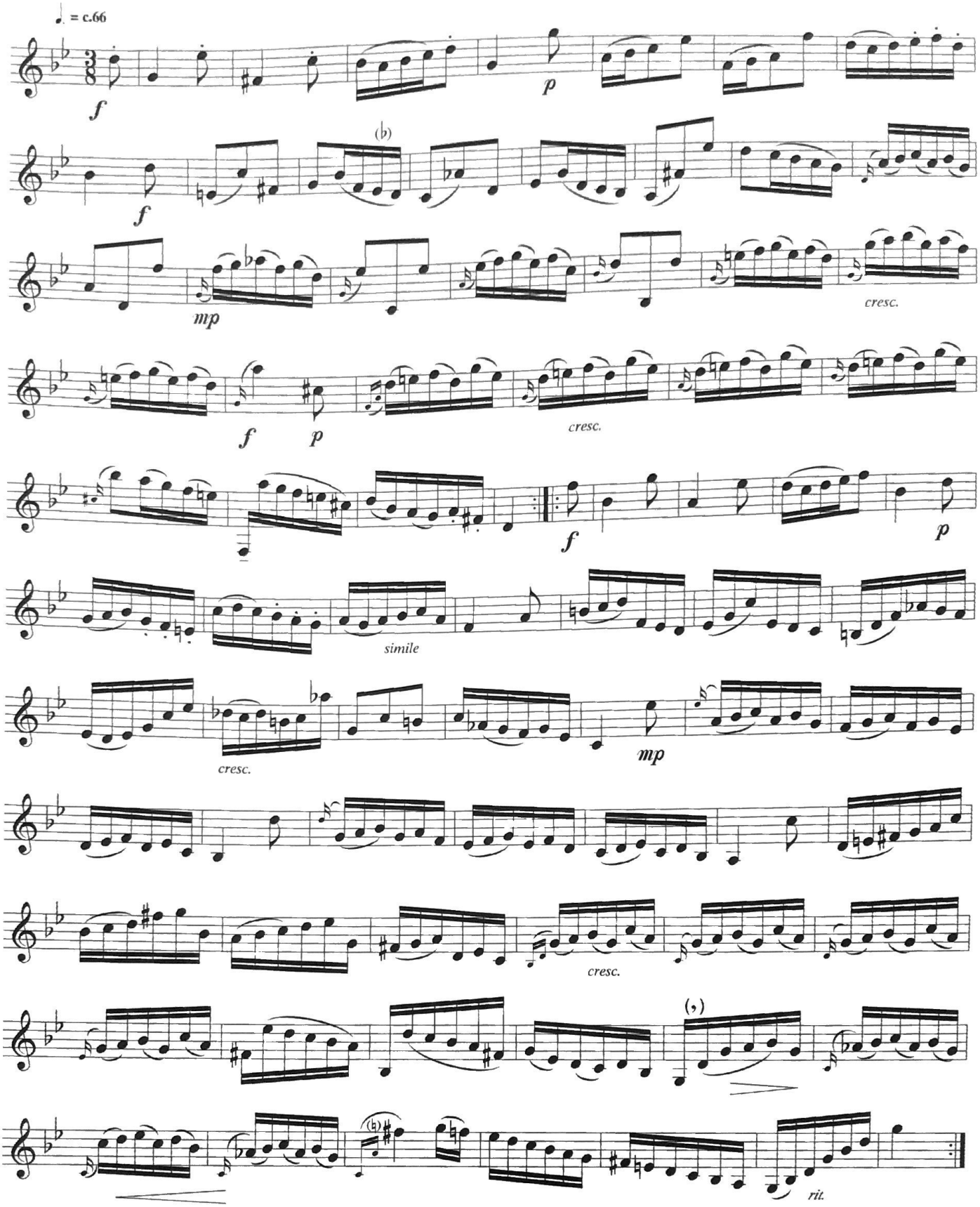

Minuet II

*poco piu mosso*



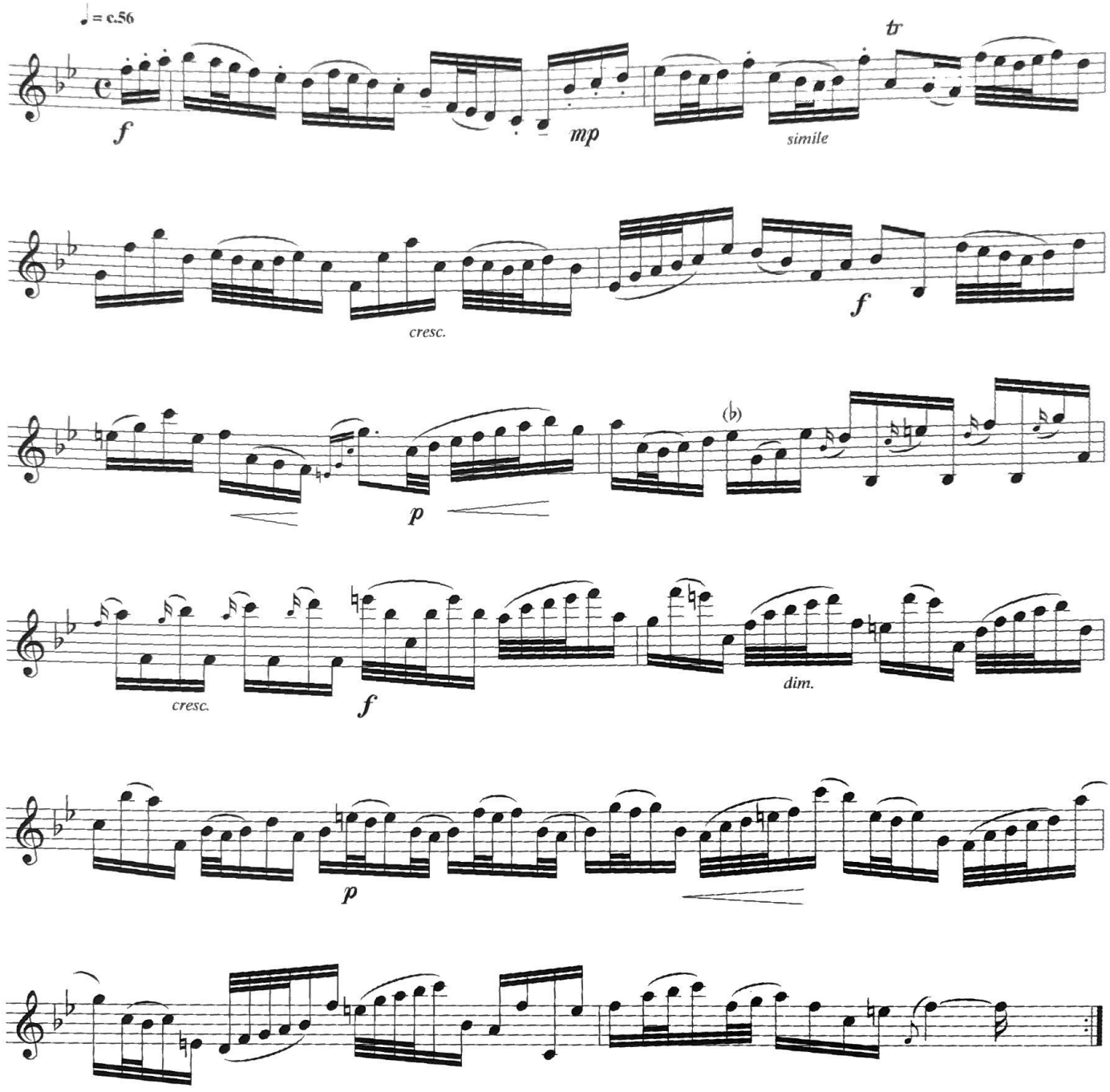

*Minuet I D.C.*

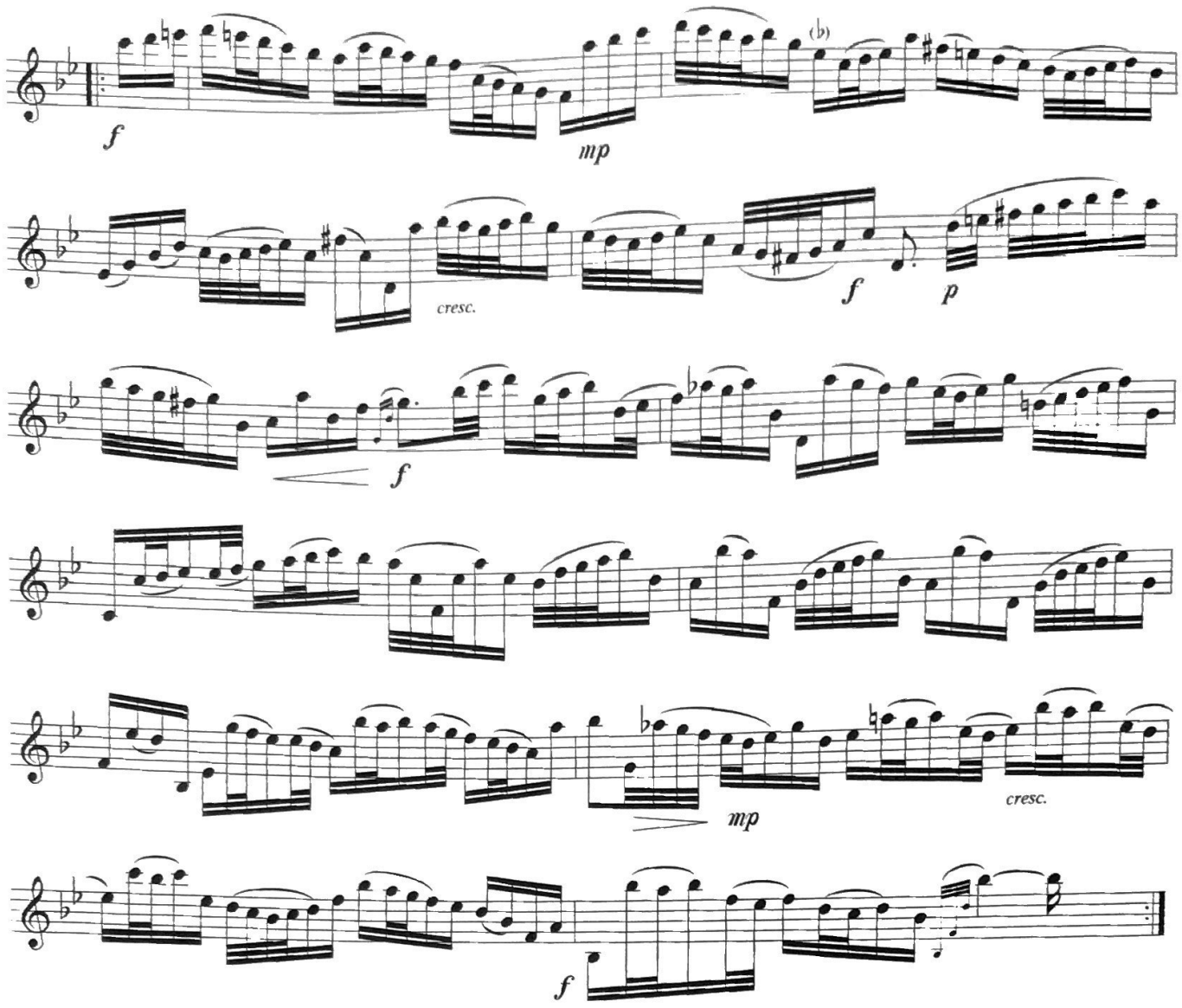
# 32. Gigue



# 33. *from* Suite No. 3 in C, *for cello*

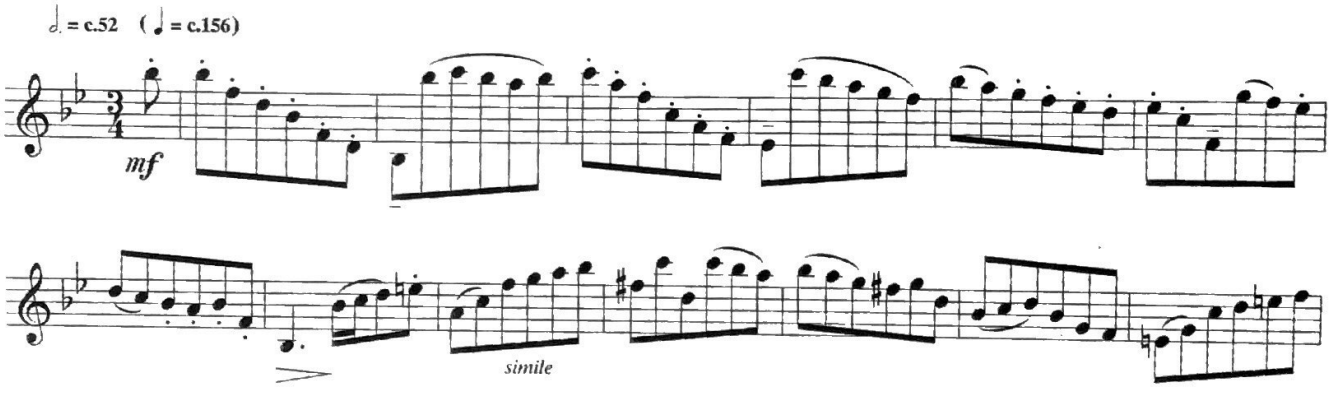
Allemande

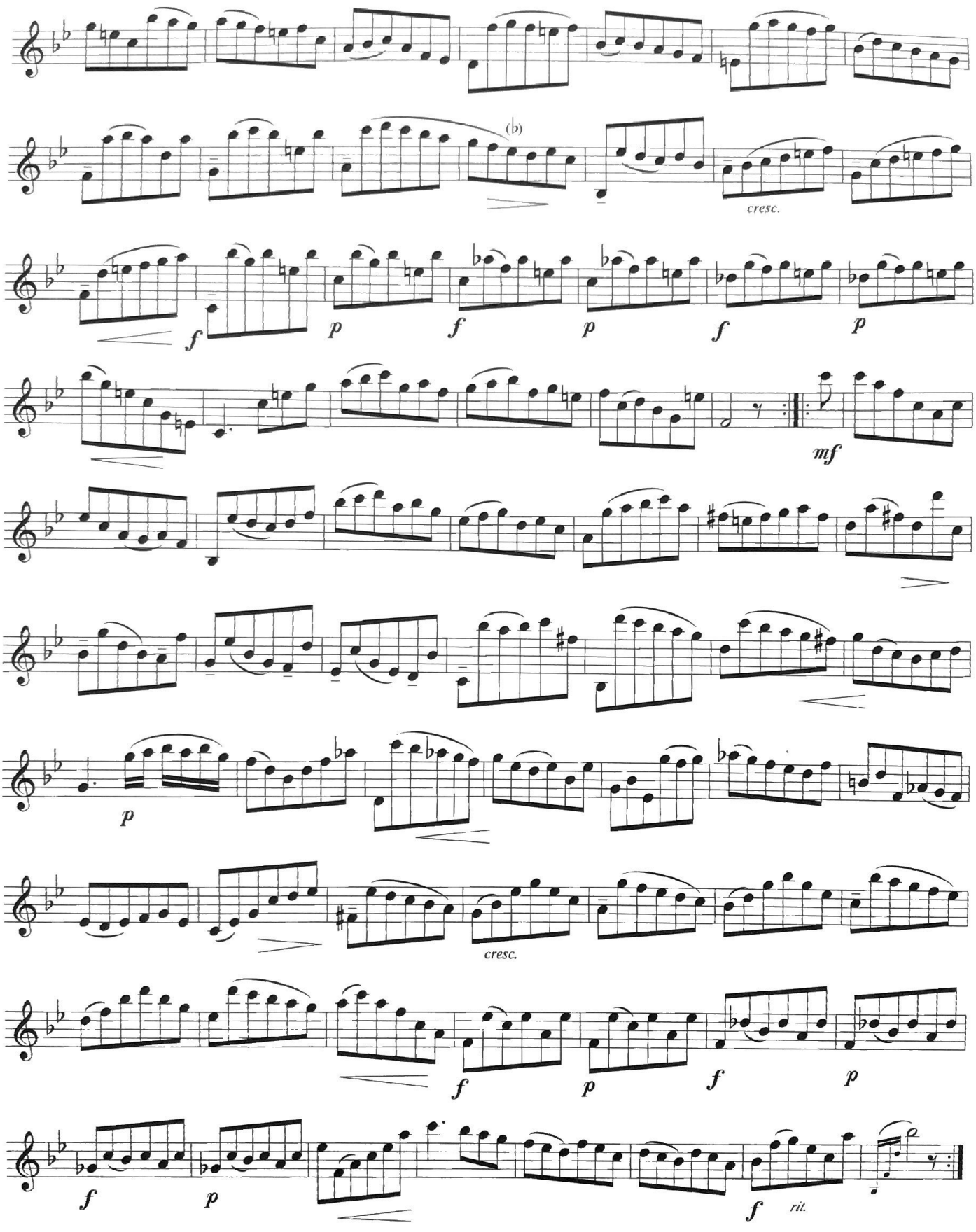





## 34.

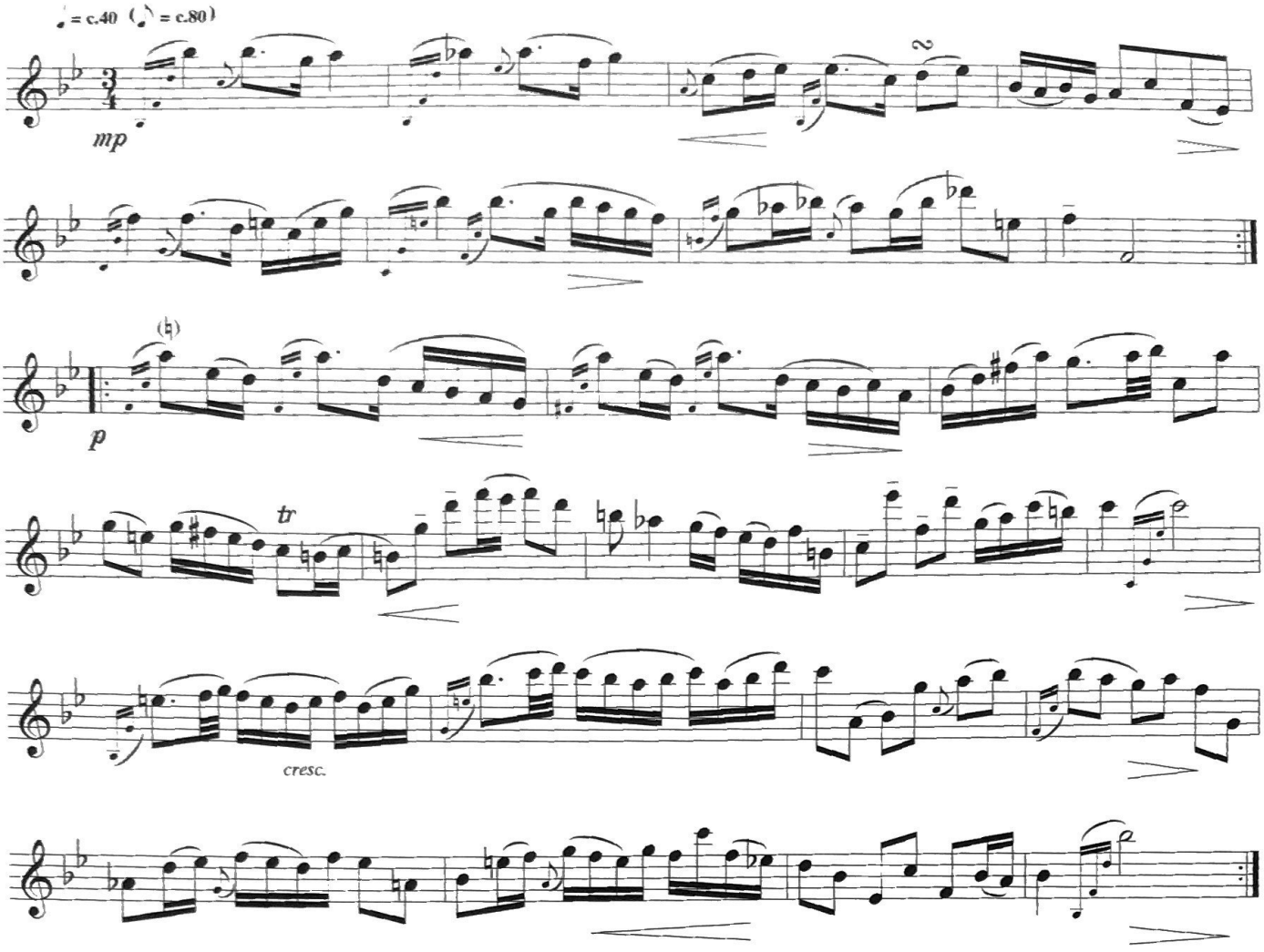
Courante




(b)
cresc.
f
p
f
p
f
p
mf
p
cresc.
f
p
f
p
f
rit.

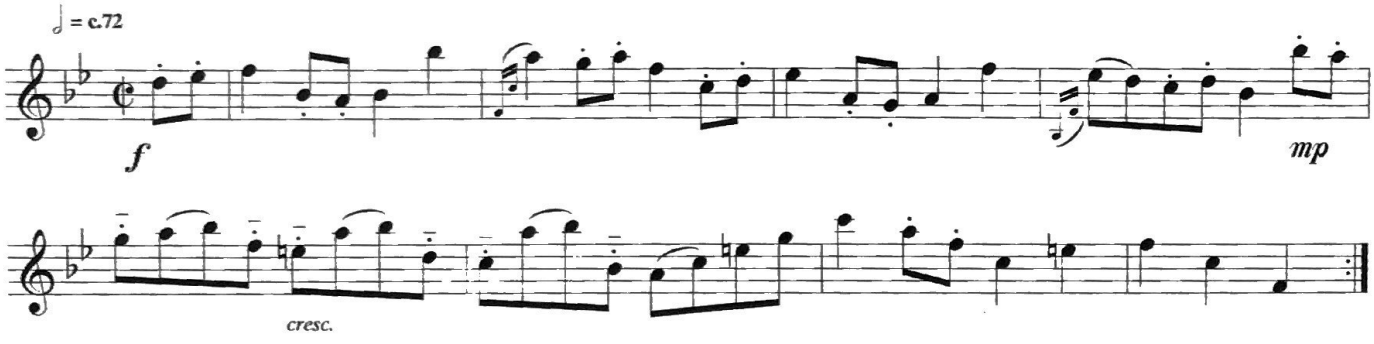
# 35.

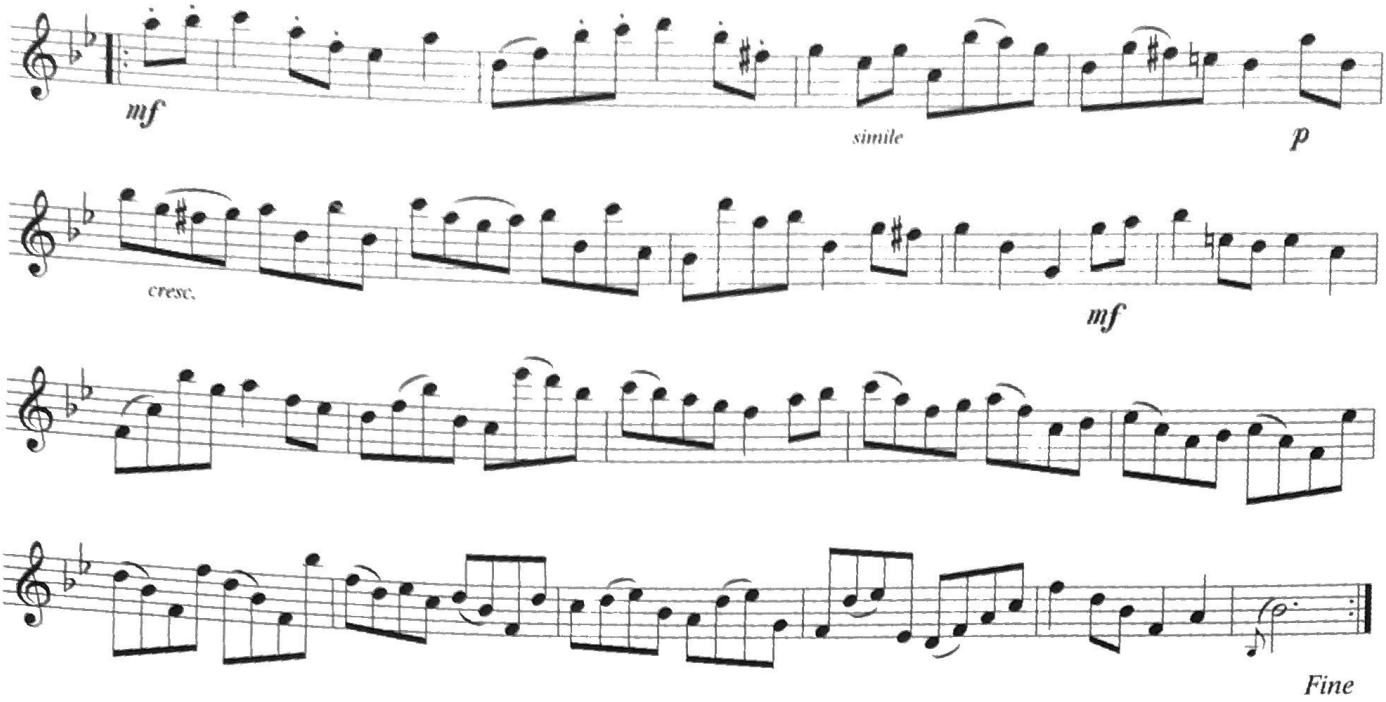
Sarabande



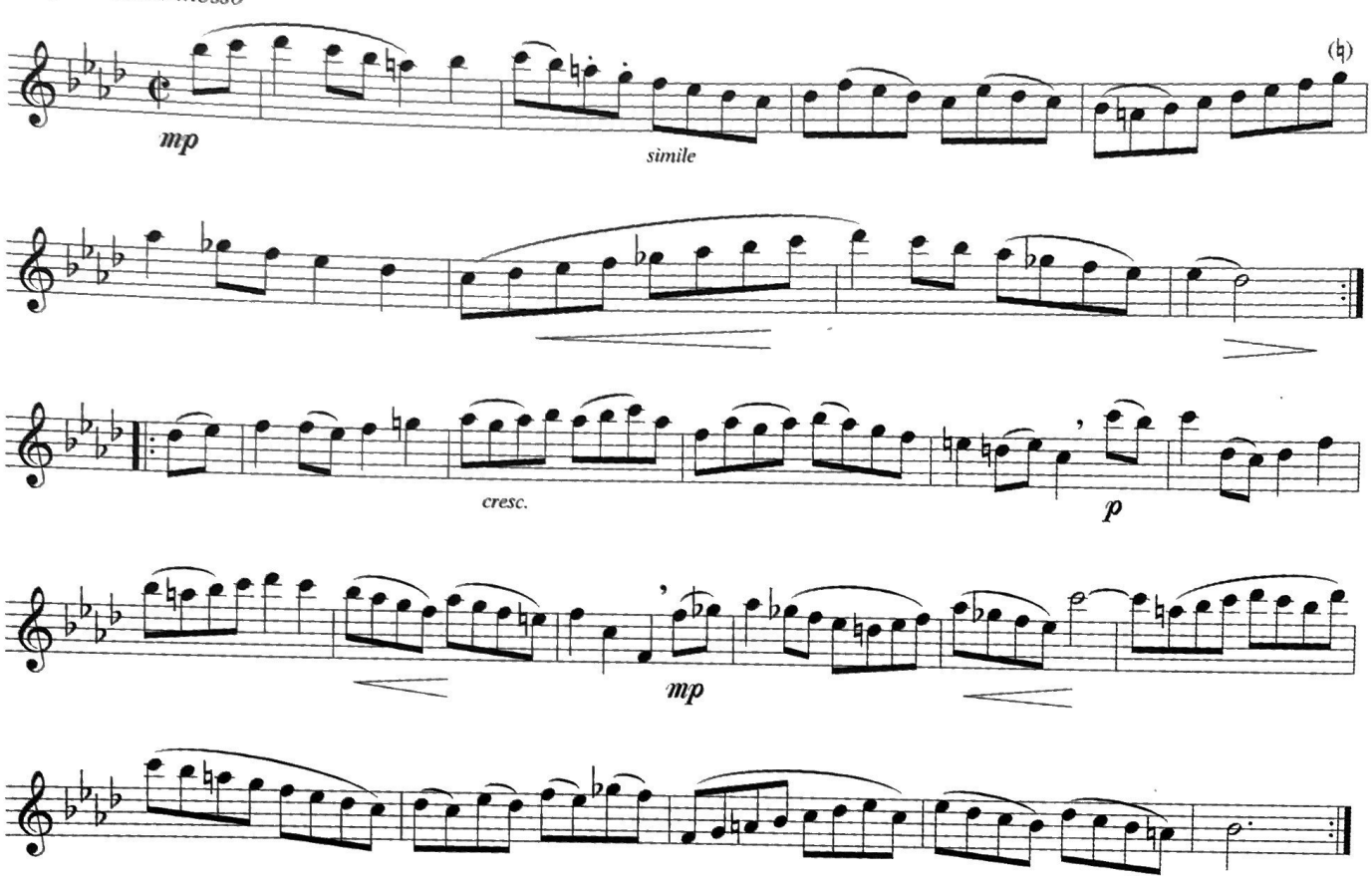

# 36.

Bourée I




mf
simile
p
cresc.
mf
Fine

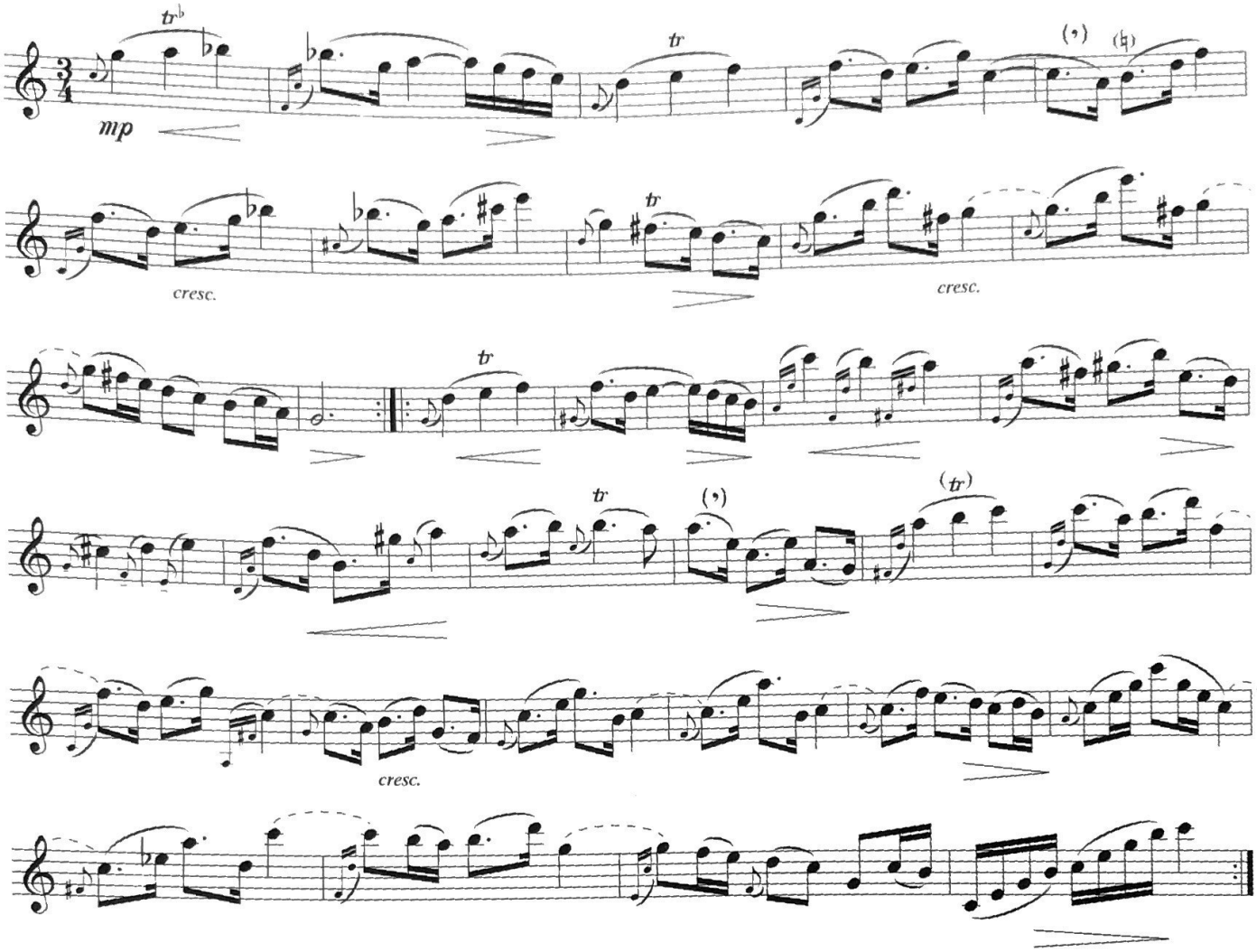
Bourée II


poco meno mosso
mp
simile
cresc.
p
mp
Bourée I D.C.

# 37. *from* Suite No. 4 in Eb, *for cello*

Sarabande

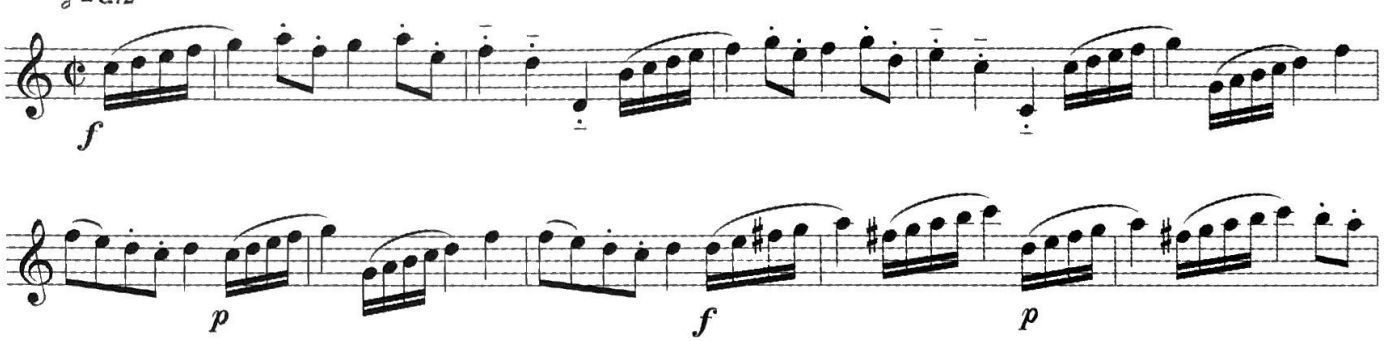
♩ = c.50 (♪ = c.100)

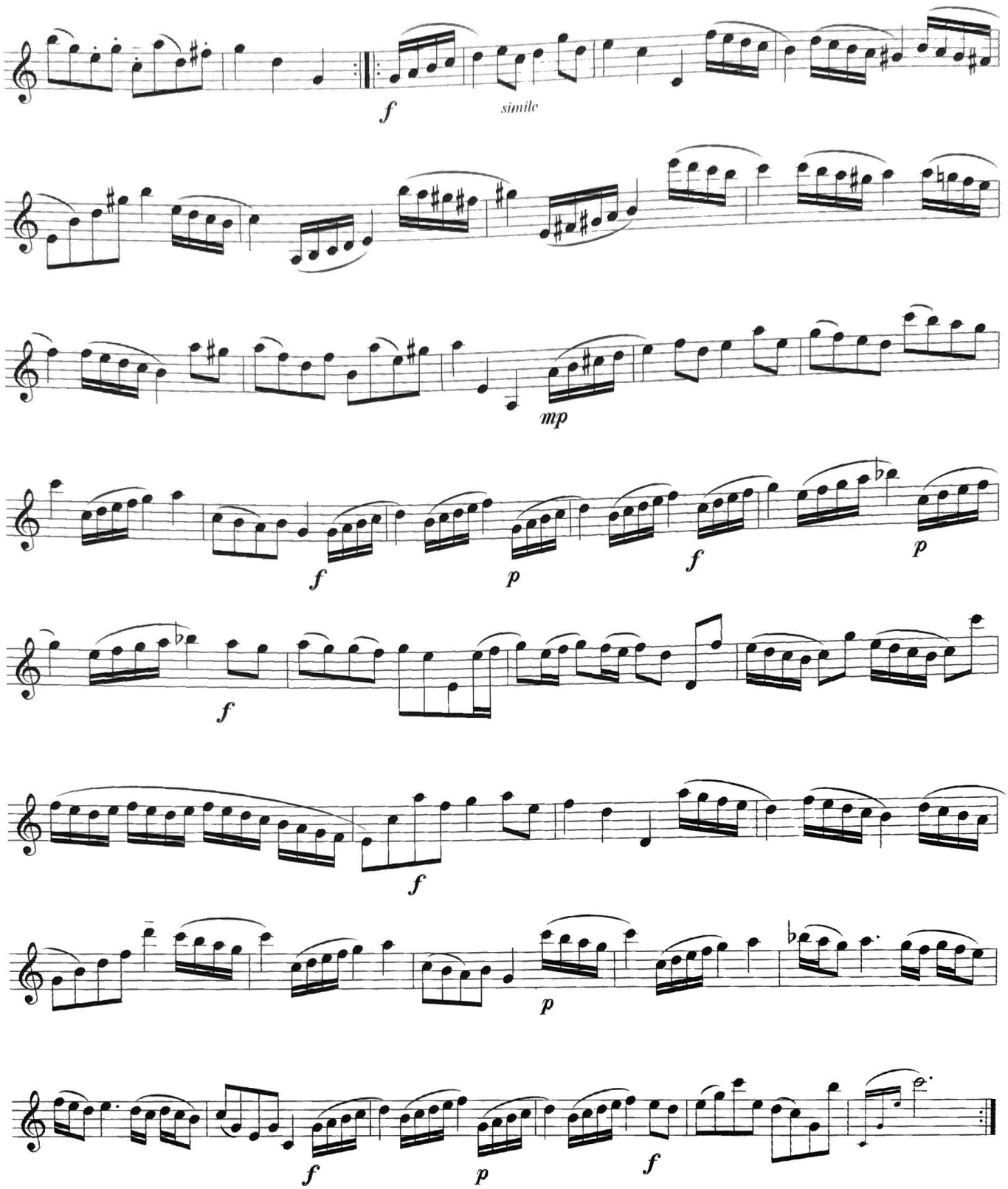



# 38.

Bourée I

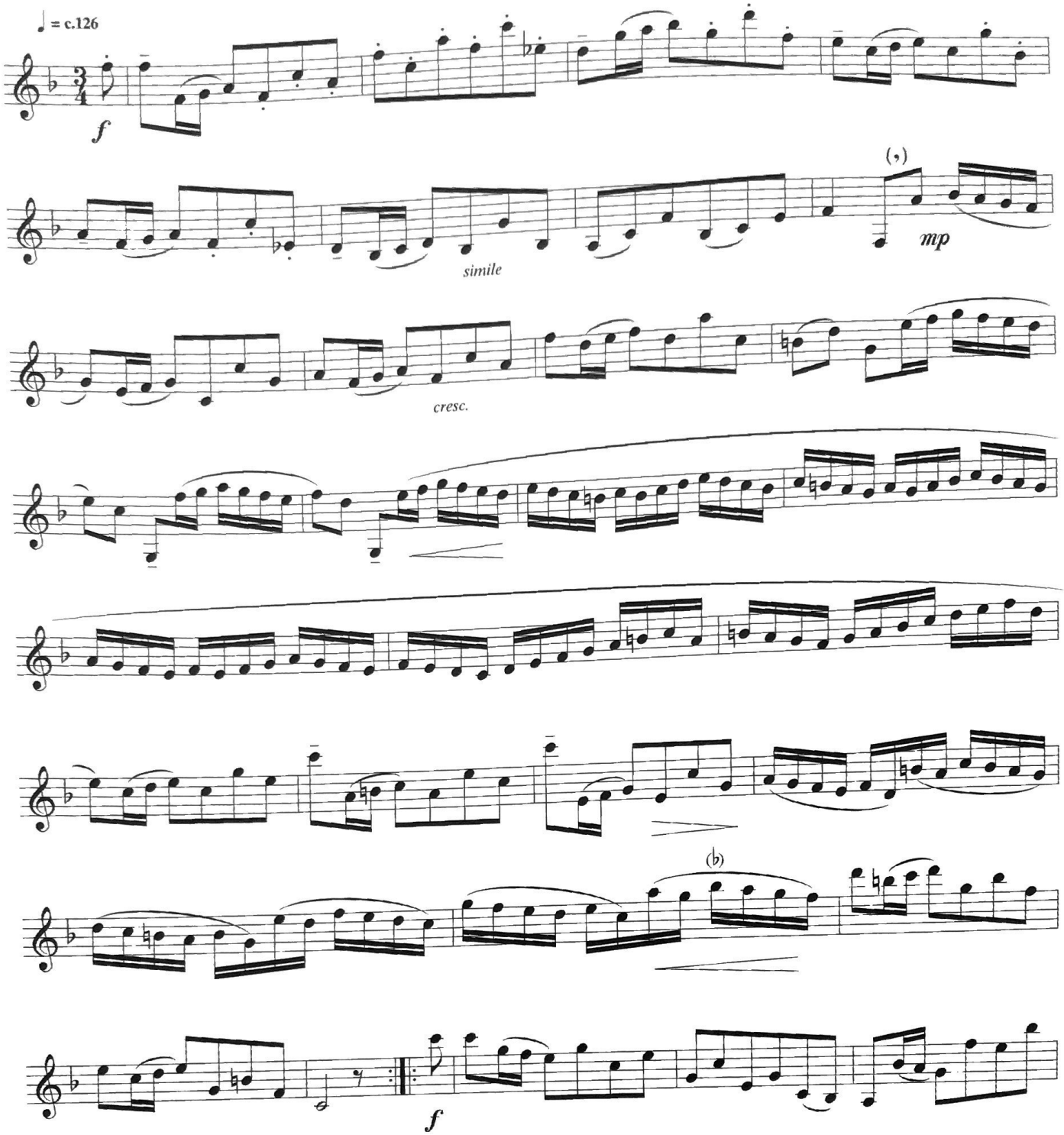
♩ = c.72

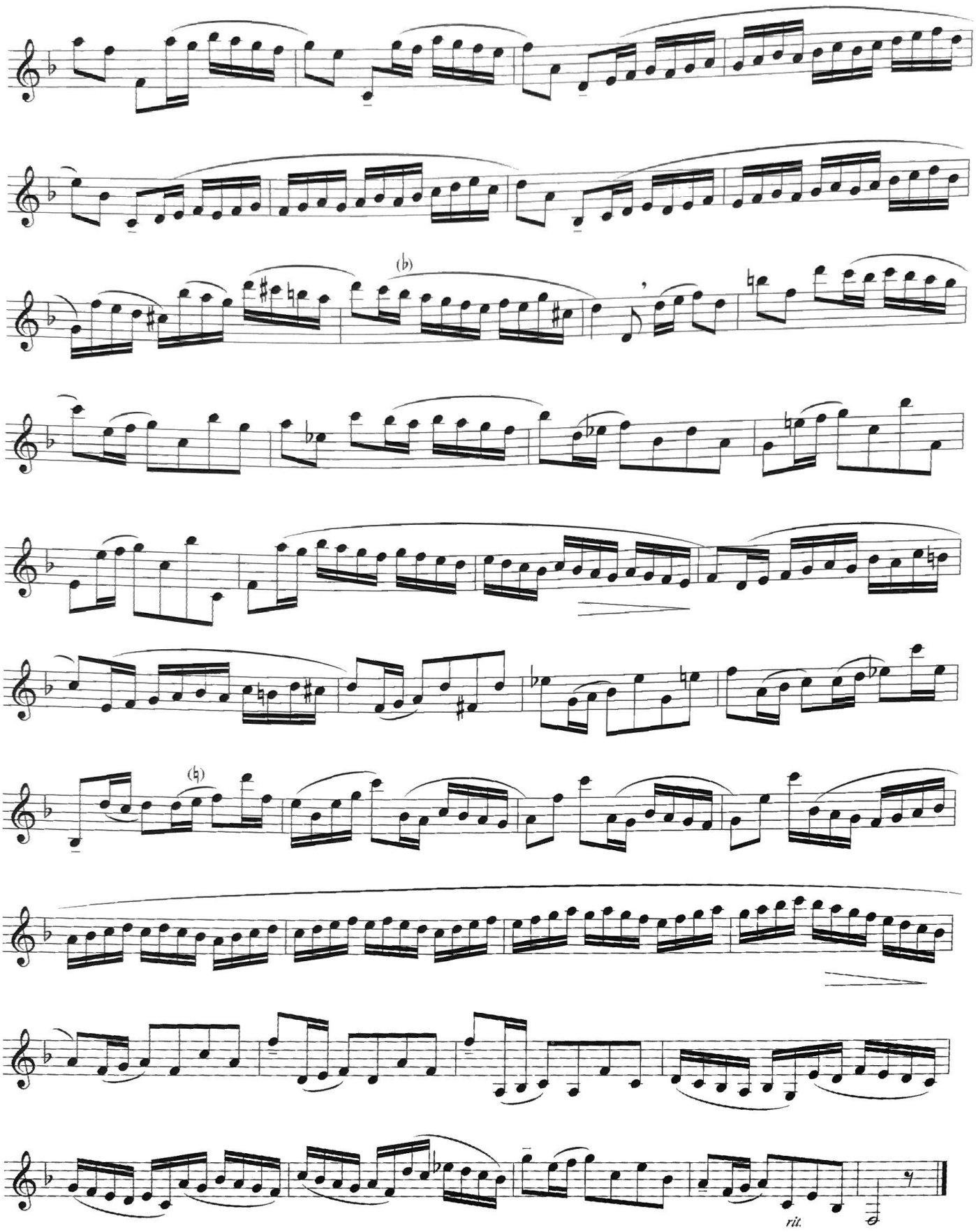



f
simile
mp
f
p
f
p
f
f
p
f
p
f

# 39. *from* Suite No. 6 in D, *for cello*

Courante




(♭)
(♮)
rit.

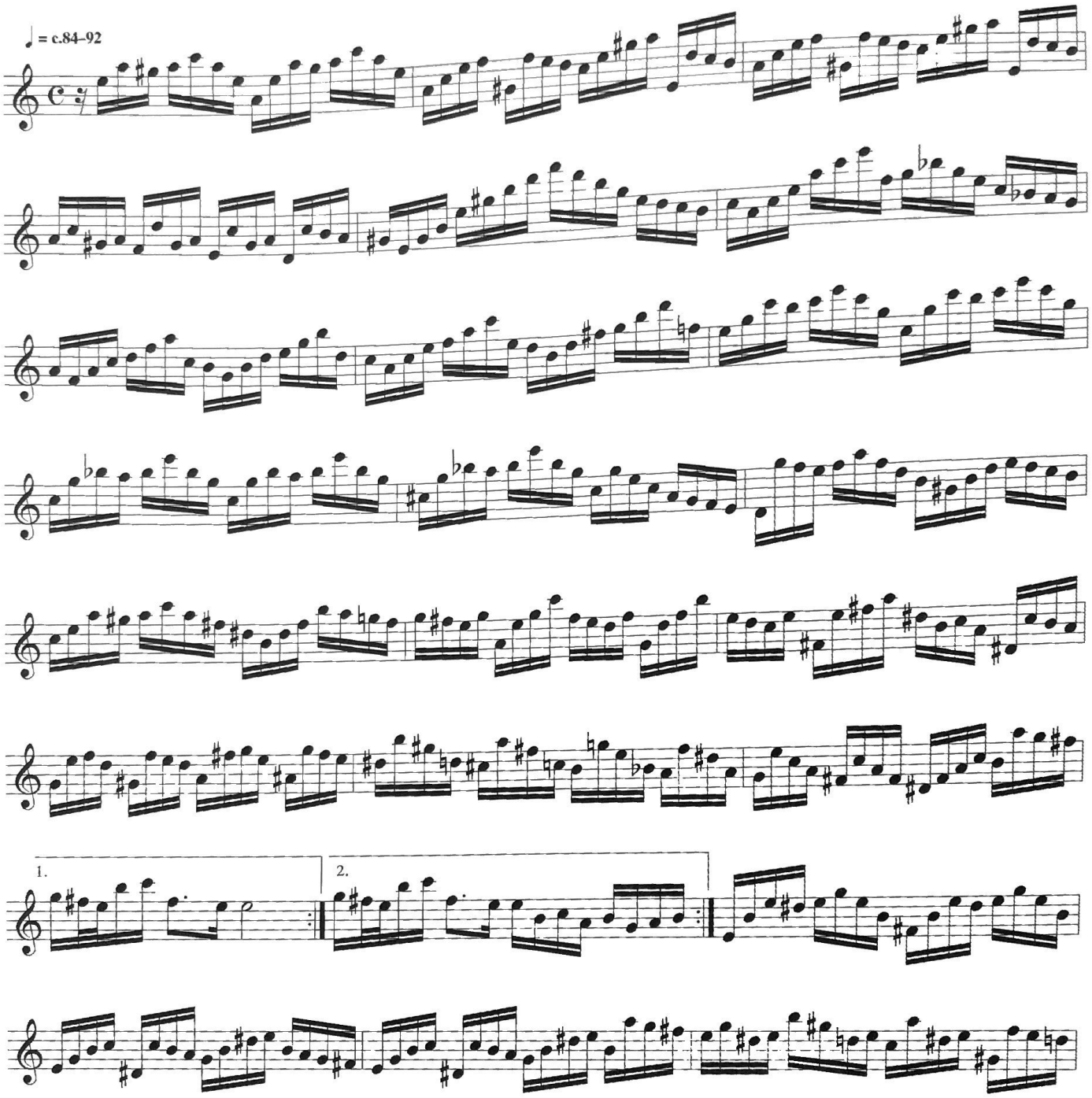
CLARINET

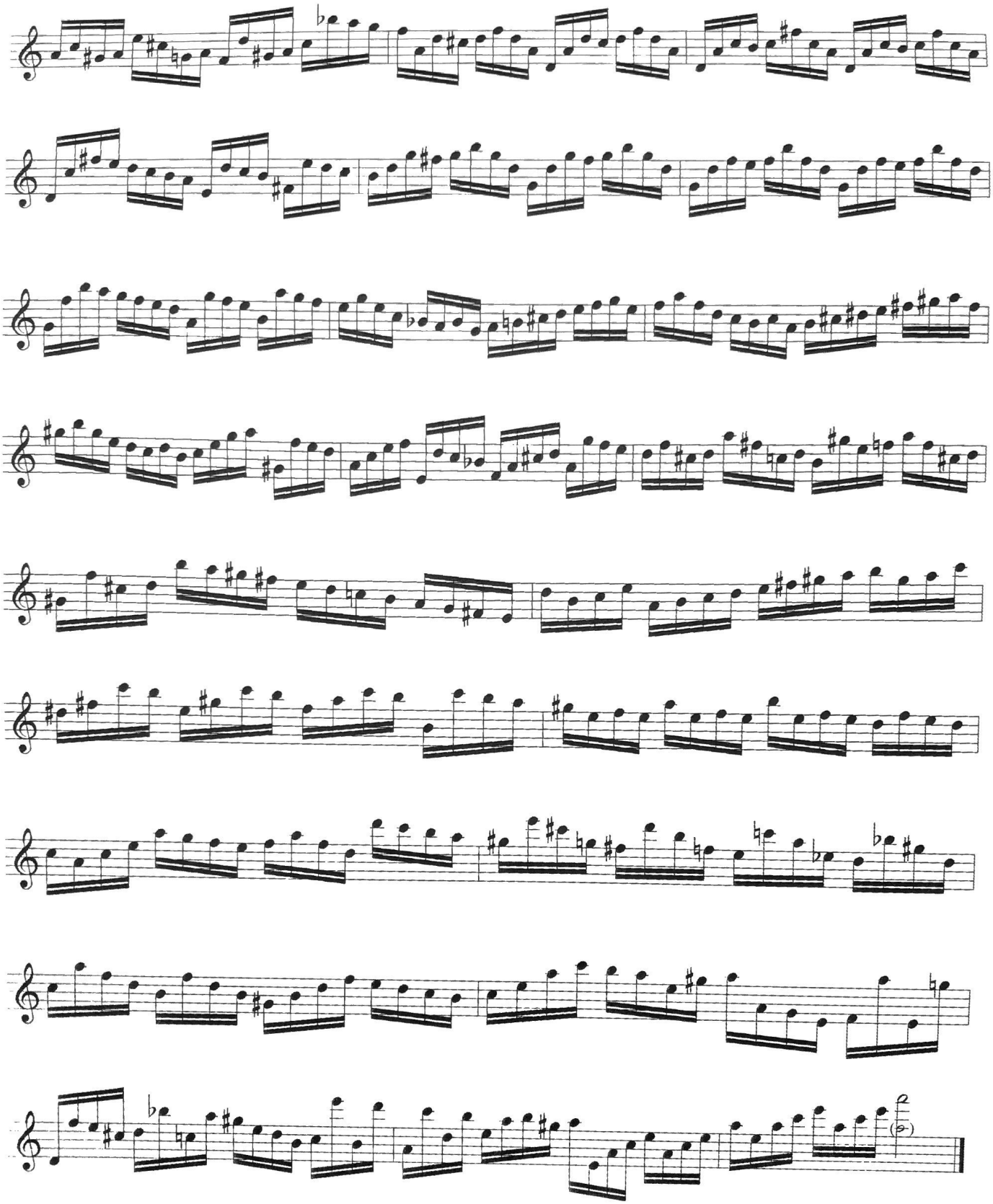
NYSSMA VI 2012
#40, 41, 42

## 40. Sonata (Partita) in A minor, *for flute*

*Bach's four-movement unaccompanied flute sonata (also known as a partita) is presented here with no articulation, dynamic, or phrase markings added to the music as it appears in manuscript. Applying stylistic insights gleaned from earlier in this book and/or from other sources, the clarinetist is advised to add slurs, dynamics, and breathing points appropriate for projecting the composer's melodic patterns and groupings. (Tonguing long stretches of notes is not likely to result in the most musical rendition of the piece.)*

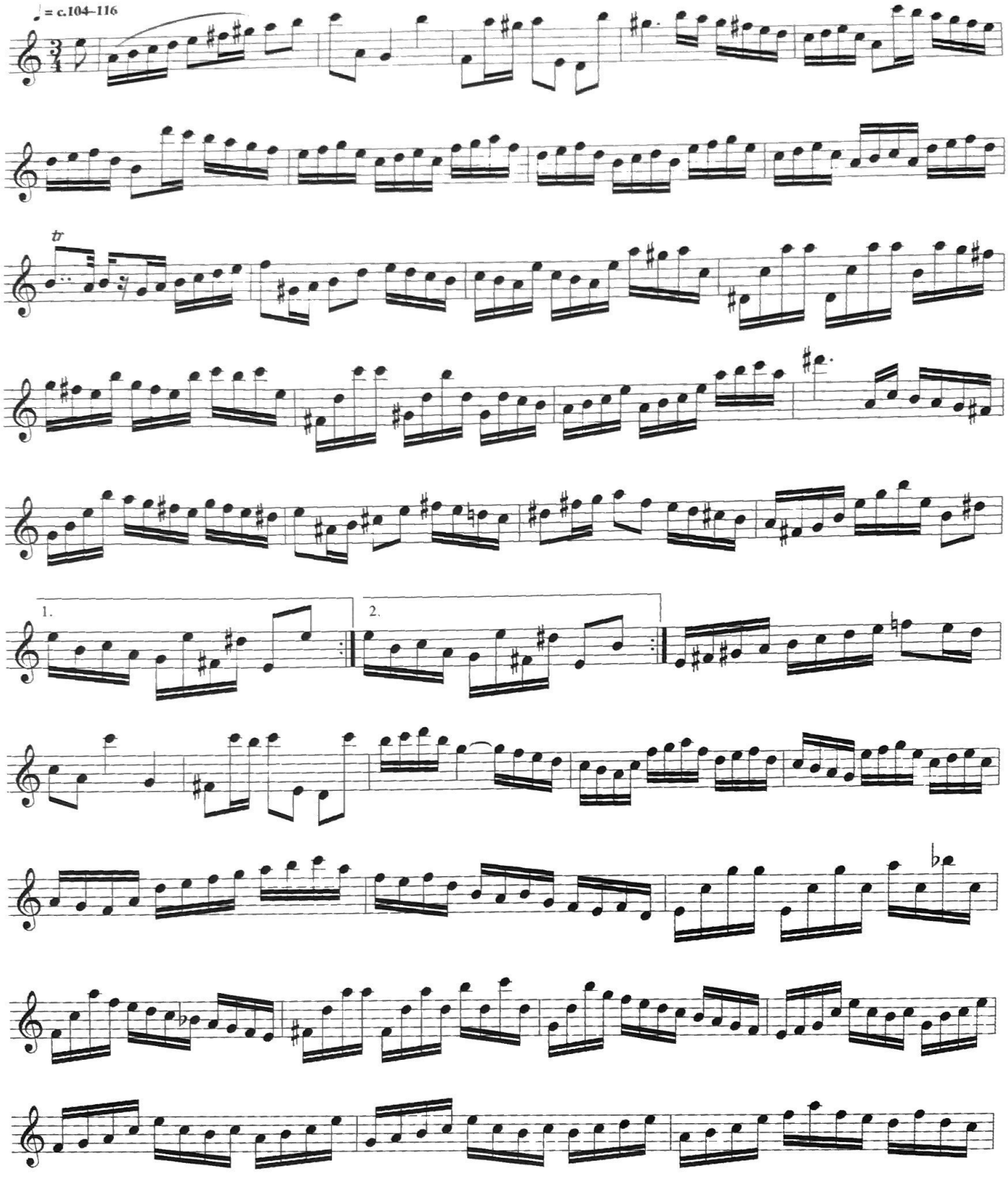
Allemande

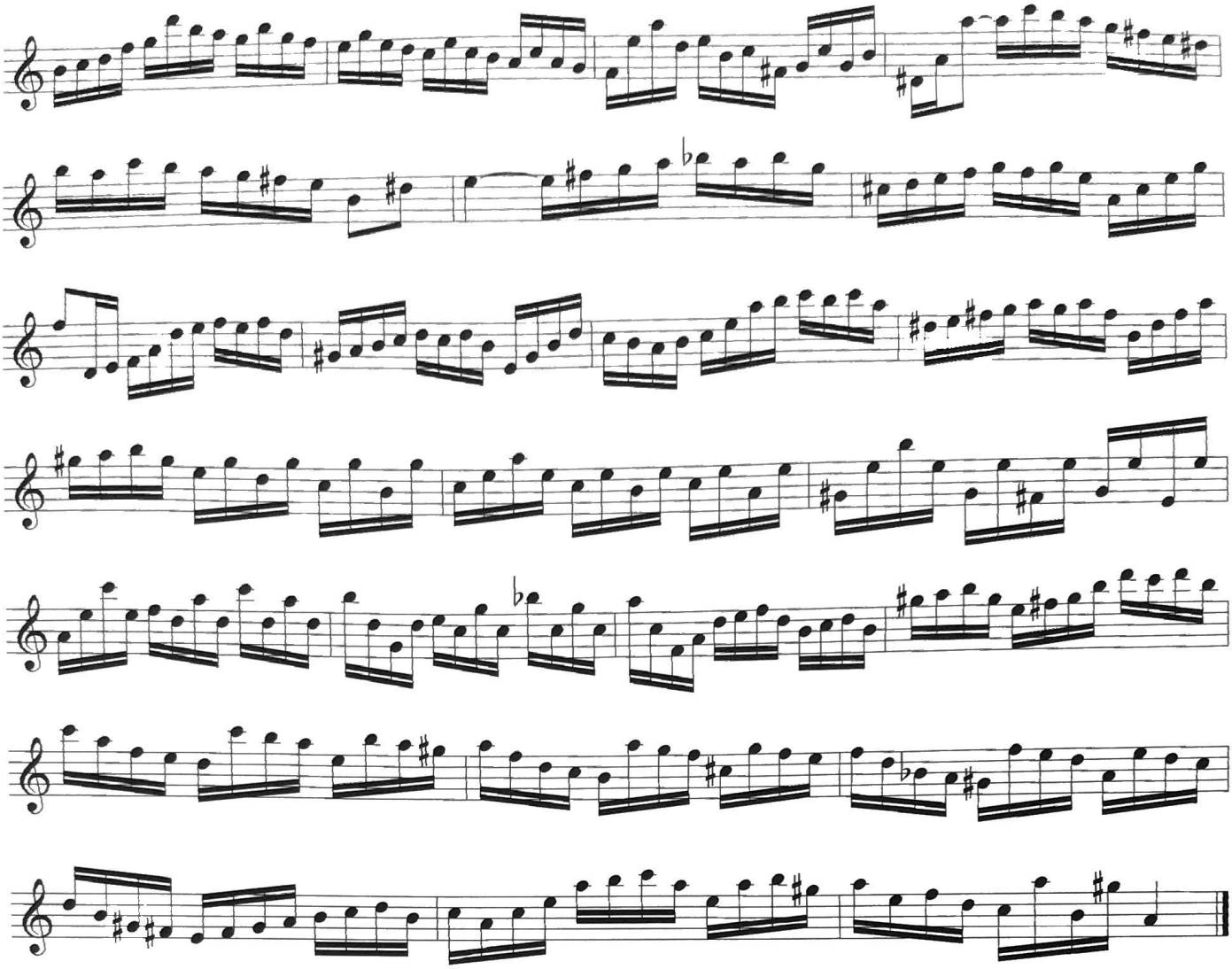




# 41.

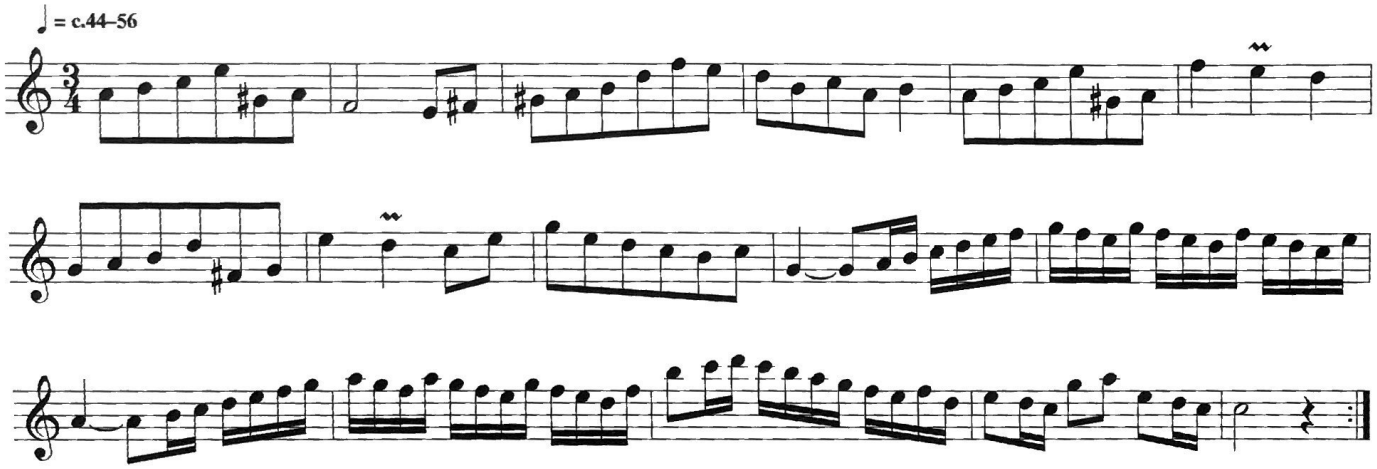
Corrente

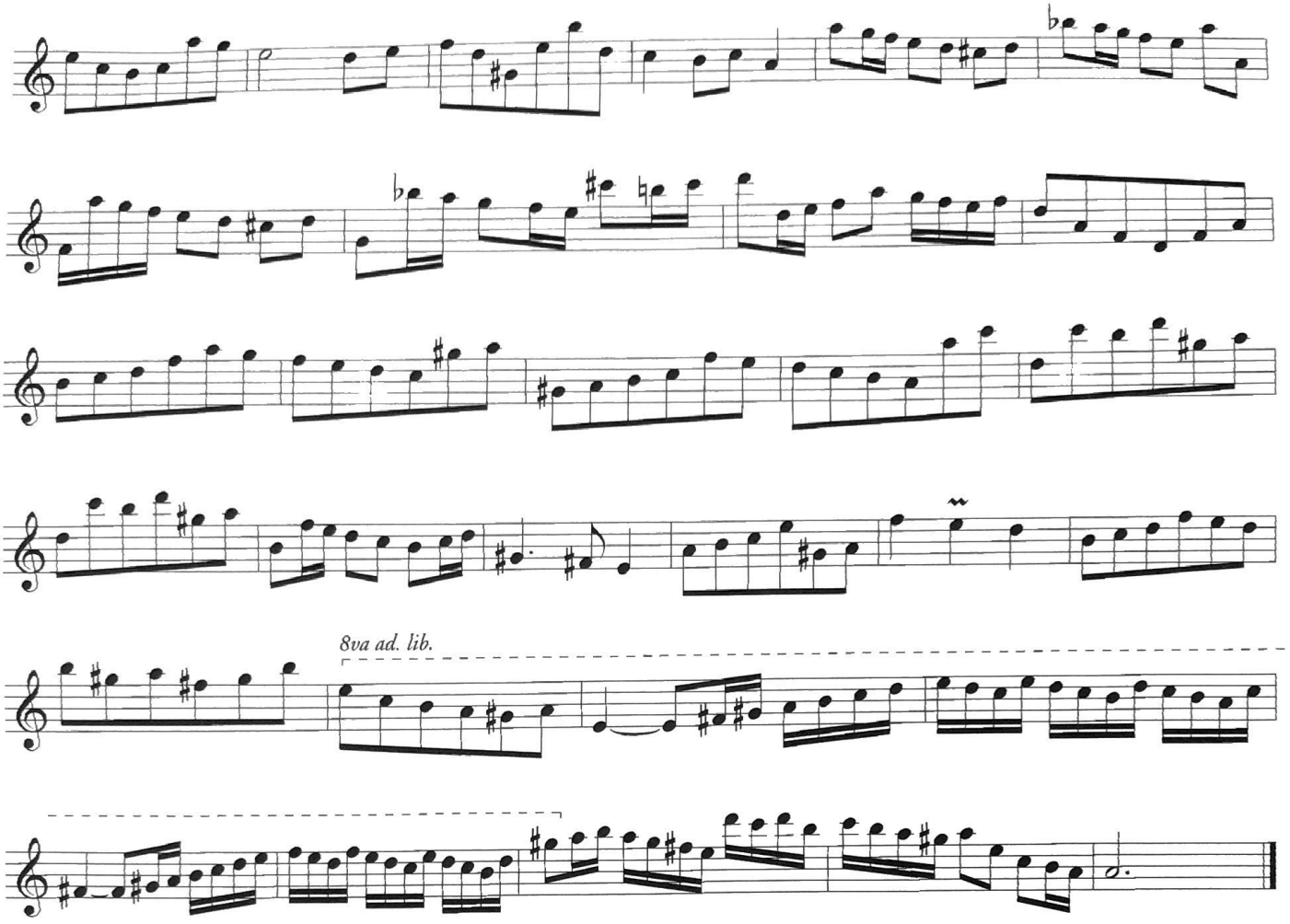




## 42.

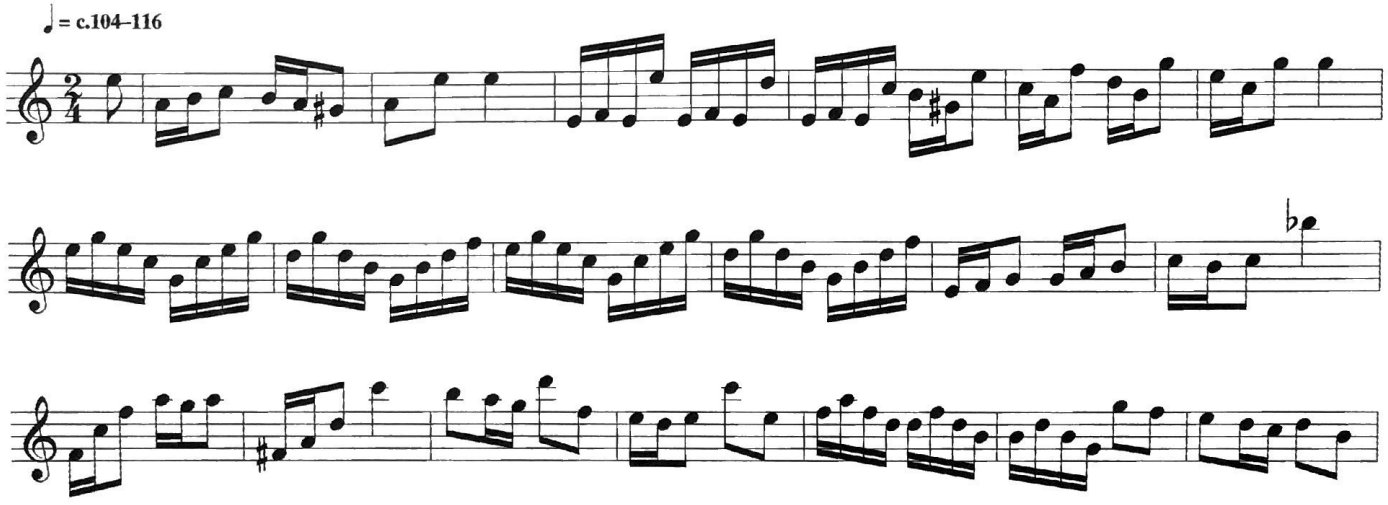
Sarabande

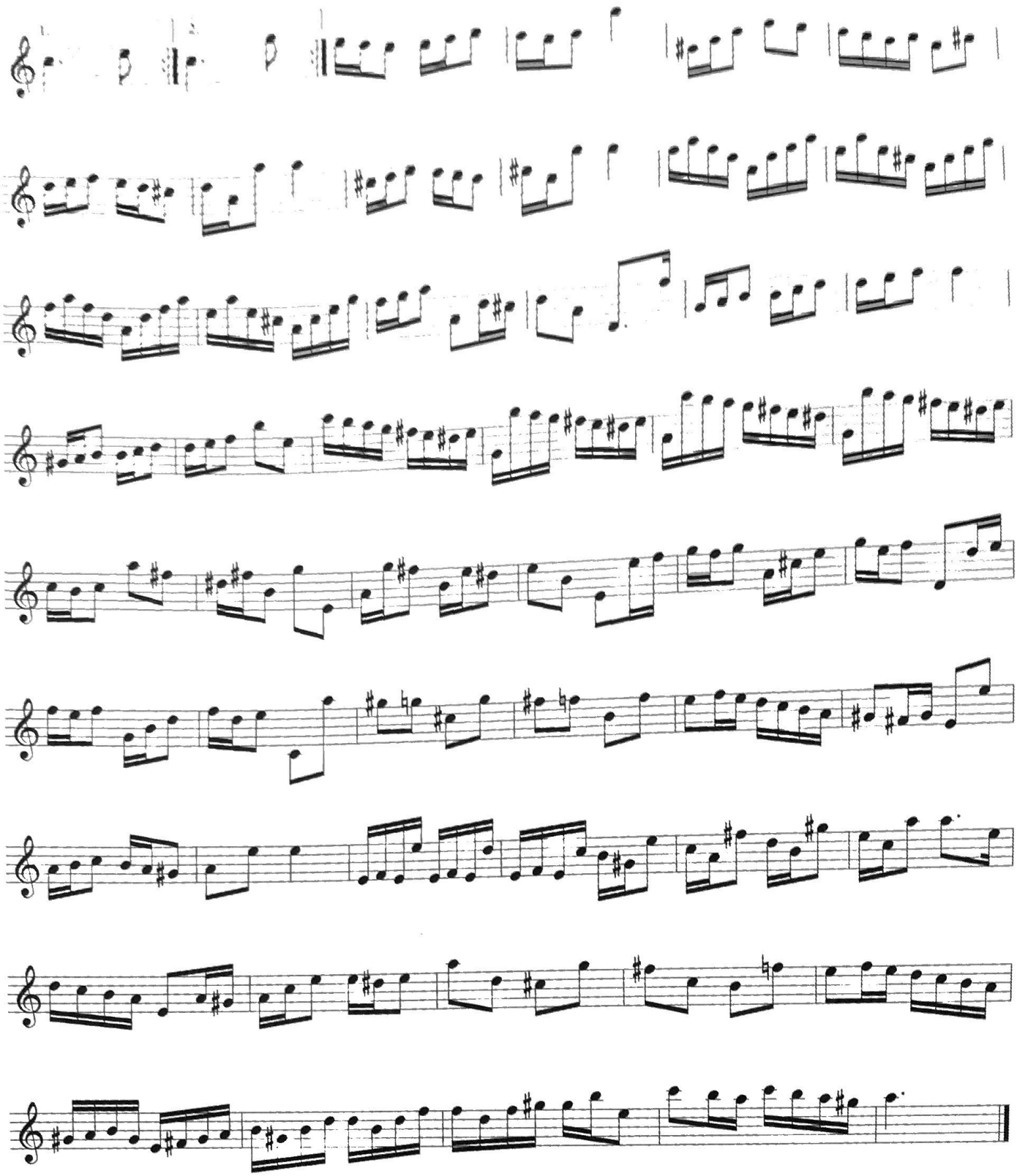





## 43.

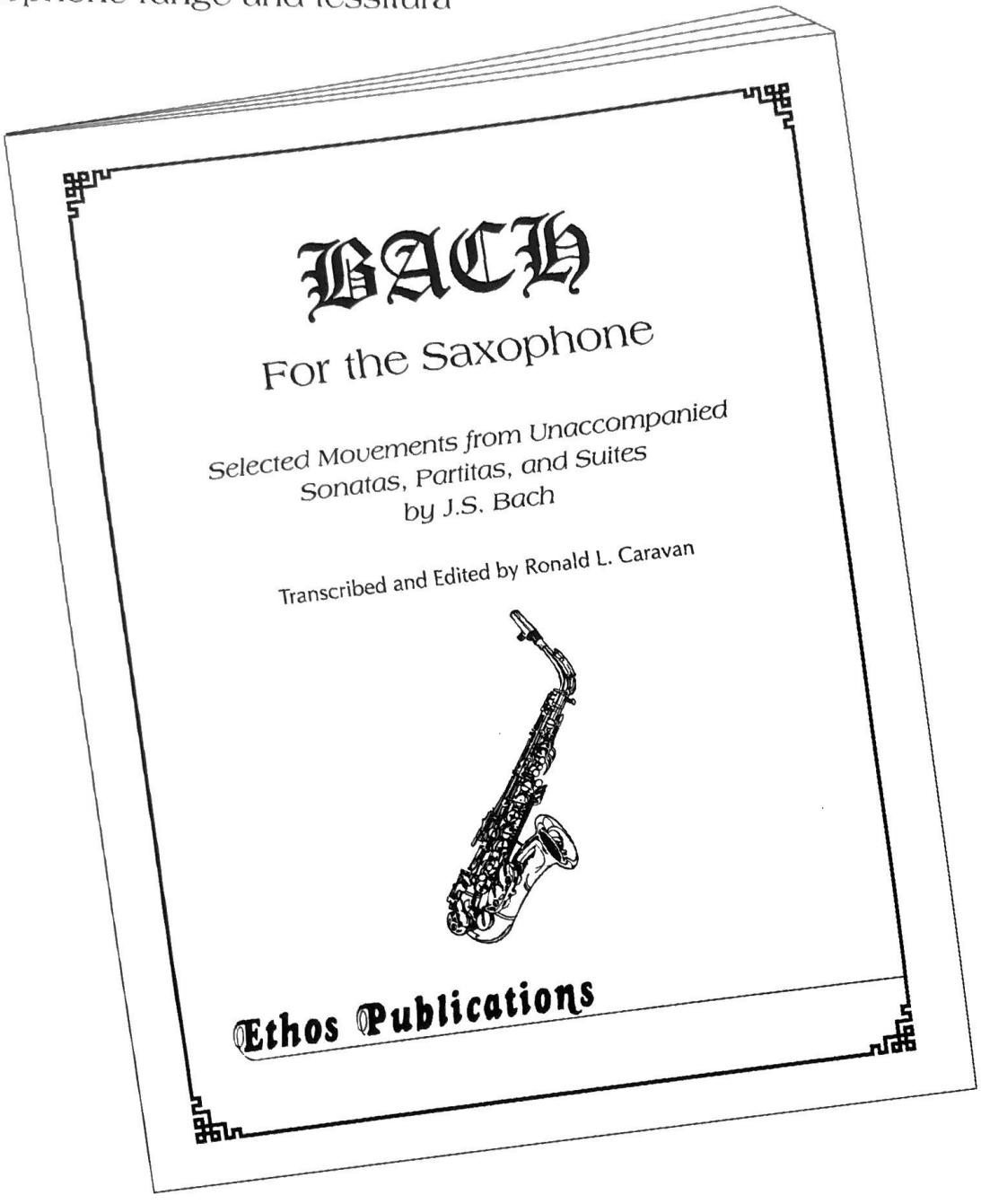
Bourée Anglaise





# *Companion volume for saxophone! . . .*

Contains the same material as "Bach for the Clarinet" transposed appropriately to accommodate saxophone range and tessitura

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