DITSON EDITION

No. 231 .60

BACH

TWO-VOICE INVENTIONS

(PROUT AND GOETSCHIUS)

MADE IN THE U. S. A.

F.G. HALE

DITSON EDITION

Johann Sebastian Bach

VOLUME I

FIFTEEN TWO-VOICE INVENTIONS
FIFTEEN THREE-VOICE INVENTIONS

IN TWO VOLUMES

(Also complete in one volume)

EDITED BY
DR. EBENEZER PROUT

INTRODUCTION BY
DR. PERCY GOETSCHIUS

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THE PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE INVENTIONS

The so-called Inventions of Bach were not originally designed as two separate books, distinguished by the number of contrapuntal parts employed, but as one continuous book in which the two-voice and three-voice styles appeared in regular alternation, in corresponding keys. Each two-voice number bore the title *Inventio*, and served apparently as a prelude to the corresponding three-voice number, called *Sinfonia*.

In this respect the complete work exhibits a certain analogy with the *Well-tempered Clavichord*, the difference being that each volume of the latter consists of Preludes and Fugues, and embraces all twenty-four major and minor keys, while here only fifteen keys are represented, — exclusive of all keys beyond the four-sharp and four-flat signatures.

For this reason, and in consequence of much greater simplicity of treatment, the two books of Inventions (as they are now collectively called) do not attain quite the same degree of artistic dignity and eminence as that which characterizes the *Well-tempered Clavichord*, and assigns it such an unchallenged rank among the noblest and most masterly products of musical creation. But on this very account the Inventions possess a singular degree of usefulness for teacher and student; they lie somewhat less remote from the ordinary students' powers of musical apprehension, and therefore secure earlier appreciation and sympathy than the austere beauty and power of the *Well-tempered Clavichord* arouse; and their comparative technical simplicity places the majority of the Inventions well within the reach of the medium advanced student.

The *Inventions and Sinfonias* were intended for technical exercise, and their use for this purpose cannot be too strongly urged upon every teacher, inasmuch as their value in every fundamental respect (only excepting the item of sheer velocity) is simply unequaled in technical literature; and surely, the expanding mind of the musical student can find no better nourishment than in daily contact with these perfect gems of absolute music.

The style, as usual with Bach, is the so-called imitatory or contrapuntal. Each number has its *Motive*, — sometimes very brief, as in the first Invention; sometimes considerably longer, as in the second one. This motive is intonated first in one part and then in another, in a great variety of methods and always with effective contrapuntal accompaniment; it thus becomes the "thematic" basis of the entire texture, and demonstrates its identity as the "subject," whose development and evolution constitute the artistic purpose of the composition.

That such a process of pure thematic re-announcement in more or less regular succession from beginning to end may be, and often is, conducted in a mechanical manner, with skill and ingenuity, but without real musical fervor, is undeniable. This imminent risk is infallibly avoided by Bach, however, because with him the contrapuntal devices are never anything more than the means to an end; the motives appear as incidents, only, in a complete musical picture, whose melodic lines, harmonic and modulatory colors, and structural proportions are replete with true beauty, and not only admit of the closest scrutiny, but reveal with each succeeding analysis new evidences of this great master's marvelously keen sense of tone-relation. In such compositions as the seventh, eleventh, and twelfth of the three-voice Inventions one wholly forgets the rigorous technical processes, the severe conditions of logic, that were necessary in their making; no odor of the workshop clings to them.

As to the structural design of the Inventions, some of them are very genuine examples of the two-part song form (with a distinct cadence near the centre), and a few add to these parts the "return to the beginning," which distinguishes the three-part song form (the design upon which nearly all of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* are based). For example, see the three-voice Invention, No. 6 (two-part form) and No. 7 (three-part form). But the greater number of them have a kind of "sectional form," akin to the song forms, but differing from the latter in that the "sections" are optional in number, are less definite in form, and less distinctly individualized than the "parts." Each section terminates with a cadence, — often so brief as to be rather implied than expressed; and, generally, each section has its individual contents, though it is a foregone conclusion that a master like Bach could not fail to provide many points of agreement between the several sections.

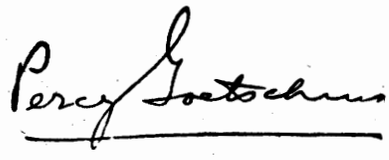
This element of corroboration, — the particular sign of masterly musical construction, — is one of the most striking features of these Inventions. A certain parallelism between the sections, while sometimes so modified or concealed as to escape the notice of the ordinary student, is nevertheless invariably present, and sufficiently accounts for the fact

that the Inventions (when understood and properly interpreted) do *not* create the impression of formless and purposeless motive-evolution, which would seem to be justly expected of music of this continuous polyphonic character.

One of the best illustrations of this perfection of "form" is found in the very first two-voice Invention, which it is well worth our while to analyze with reference to its structural details: In measure 1 the motive (C major) appears first in the upper part, and is imitated an octave below in the lower part; in measure 2 the motive is transferred to the dominant, appearing first in the upper, and then in the lower part. Thus, the first measure constitutes a tiny "period" (question and answer), and the two measures together a larger "period." In measures 3 and 4 the motive appears four times in succession in the upper part, in so-called contrary motion ("upside down"); measures 5 and 6 are devoted to the necessary change of key, and at the beginning of measure 7 a fairly strong cadence is made in G major, closing the first section. In measures 7 and 8 the process of measures 1 and 2 is repeated, — but here the lower part begins; measures 9 and 10 repeat the process, but now the motives are in contrary motion; so here we find the tiny period in measure 7, the larger period in measures 7 and 8, and another still larger period, in which measures 9 and 10 respond to measures 7 and 8. In measures 11 and 12 the motive appears four times in succession, — this time in the lower part, in contrary motion; these measures, therefore, balance measures 3 and 4, but are inverted (the upper and lower parts changing places); and, similarly, the following measures 13 and 14 correspond to measures 5 and 6, and the second section closes with a cadence at the beginning of measure 15. In measure 15 the motive appears in the upper part and is imitated in the lower, — as in the very first measure, — but it is now in contrary motion; in measure 16 the motive appears in its original direction, in the upper part, and is imitated in the lower; these two measures are reproduced in "sequence" in the following two; so here again we have the tiny period in measure 15, the larger one in 15 and 16, and the still larger one in which measures 17 and 18 answer to 15 and 16, — precisely as at the beginning of the second section, but in a new form. In measures 19 and 20 there is a corroboration of measures 3–4 and 11–12, but here the master resorts to the only means of variety left, — he places the motives again in the upper part, as at first, but adopts the original direction instead of the contrary motion. Measures 21 and 22 prepare for and consummate the final cadence.

Surely no design could be more perfect, not only in the balance of its smaller particles and the corroboration of its larger sections, but also in the never-failing variety it exhibits.

Similar perfection of "form" will be found in nearly every one of these Inventions; and the discoveries which the earnest student is certain to make, in carefully analyzing these little masterpieces, will richly reward him for his pains.



New York City, March, 1908.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

1685 – 1750

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH was born at Eisenach on March 21, 1685. He received his first instruction in music from his father, Johann Ambrosius Bach. In his ninth year he lost his mother, Elizabeth, followed the next year by his father, who died in January, 1695. The orphan boy was then entrusted to the care of his eldest brother, Johann Christoph, who was fourteen years his senior and organist of the principal church in Ohrdruf.

In 1700 he was thrown on his own resources, as his brother's increasing family rendered it no longer possible for Sebastian to remain a member of the household. He was fortunate enough to obtain admission to the school of the Convent of St. Michael at Lüneberg, where he sang in the choir until his voice broke, and also played violin, clavier, and organ. Here he remained for three years, taking the opportunity from time to time to make journeys on foot to Hamburg, to hear the famous organist there, Johann Adam Reinken. In 1703 he was appointed *Hofmusikus* (Court Musician) at Weimar, as violinist in the private band of Prince Johann Ernst of Saxony; but he held this post for only a few months, as he accepted an invitation to become organist at the new church at Arnstadt.

At Easter of the year 1707 he was appointed organist at the Church of St. Blasius, Mühlhausen. In October of the same year he married his cousin, Maria Barbara, daughter of Johann Michael Bach, organist at Gehren. The post at Mühlhausen did not prove to be very comfortable; in 1708 Bach went to Weimar, as organist and *Kammermusikus* to the duke. The nine years of his residence there are described by his biographer, Spitta, as "the golden period" of his organ compositions; it was at this time that he wrote a large number of the chorale arrangements for the organ, and of the great preludes and fugues for the same instrument. It was in Weimar also that he developed his genius as a composer of sacred music.

In 1717 Bach accepted a position as director of the music to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. This post differed entirely in its character and the duties which it involved from those which he had previously held. Up to this time he had been chiefly engaged in organ playing and the direction of a choir; here he had neither to discharge the one duty nor the other, but to occupy himself with orchestral and chamber music. Consequently we find him producing very little but instrumental works during his residence in Cöthen. It is not easy to fix with certainty the exact date of the composition of Bach's works. We are, however, able to assign to this period three most important works for the clavier, which rank among Bach's finest compositions; these are the *Fifteen Inventions and Symphonies*, the *French Suites*, and the first part of the *Well-tempered Clavichord*.

Among his duties was that of accompanying the prince on his journeys; Leopold, who was devoted to music, was in the habit of taking some of the members of his band with him. In May, 1720, Bach went with his patron to Carlsbad; on his return home in July he was met with the terrible news that his wife, whom he had left in perfect health, had been buried on the 7th of that month. He had had seven children by her, of whom four grew up, among them being the two most distinguished of his sons, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel.

On December 3, 1721, Bach married again. His second wife, Anna Magdalena, was the youngest daughter of the court trumpeter, J. C. Wülken, and was twenty-one years of age. She was very musical, an excellent singer, and assisted her husband greatly by copying his music for him. During their twenty-eight years of married life she bore him thirteen children, six sons and seven daughters; so that in all Bach was the father of no fewer than twenty children.

In 1723 Bach left Cöthen for Leipsic, to undertake the post of cantor of the Thomasschule in that city, an appointment which he retained till his death. Here he had far larger scope for his genius than would ever have been possible to him at Cöthen. In sacred music he was far more prolific than in any previous period of his career. Not less important, though less numerous than his vocal works, were the instrumental compositions of the Leipsic period.

In 1747 Bach, at the request of Frederick the Great, who was an enthusiastic amateur, paid a visit to Potsdam, where he excited the greatest admiration on the part of the monarch, more especially by his extemporizations.

In the winter of 1749–50 Bach, like his great contemporary Handel, became totally blind. Operations on the eyes were tried without success, and the medical treatment connected with these undermined his powerful constitution. On July 18, 1750, he had an apoplectic stroke, and died on the 28th of the same month, at the age of sixty-five.

Bach's personal character was most estimable. He was deeply religious, a most excellent husband and father, and, though one of the first performers of his age both on the organ and the clavier, was free from the least tinge of affectation or conceit. He lived a quiet life in the bosom of his family, and, unlike Handel, never traveled beyond the boundaries of his native land. He was an admirable teacher, as is shown not only by the works that he wrote for the education of his own sons, — among which may be specially named the *Inventions*, and the first part of the *Well-tempered Clavichord*, — but also by the fact that many of the most distinguished organists and composers of the latter half of the eighteenth century were his pupils.

Fifteen Inventions and Symphonies. These pieces are, with the exception of the second Sinfonia, found in their earliest form in the *Clavierbüchlein* for his son, Friedemann Bach. As they are found in the latter part of that book, their date is probably 1721 or 1722. Bach here calls the Inventions "Præambulum," and the Symphonies "Fantasia." In 1723 he revised them, and worked them into a collection, to which he gave a title of which the following is a translation: "An honest guide, wherewith a clear way is shown to lovers of the *clavier*, but especially to those who desire to learn, not only (1) to learn to play clearly in two parts, but also in further *progress* (2) to proceed correctly and well with three *obbligato parts*, and at the same time not only to obtain good *inventiones*, but also to perform them well; but most of all to attain to a *cantabile* style of playing, and at the same time to acquire a strong taste for *composition*." (The italics are Bach's own.) It will be seen from this title that the aim of these pieces was primarily educational, as indeed is shown by their being written at first in Friedemann's instruction book. It would nevertheless be a great mistake to regard them merely as exercises; in their musical value and interest they are quite worthy to compare with the other clavier works (the French Suites and the first part of the *Well-tempered Clavichord*), written at about the same time at Cöthen.

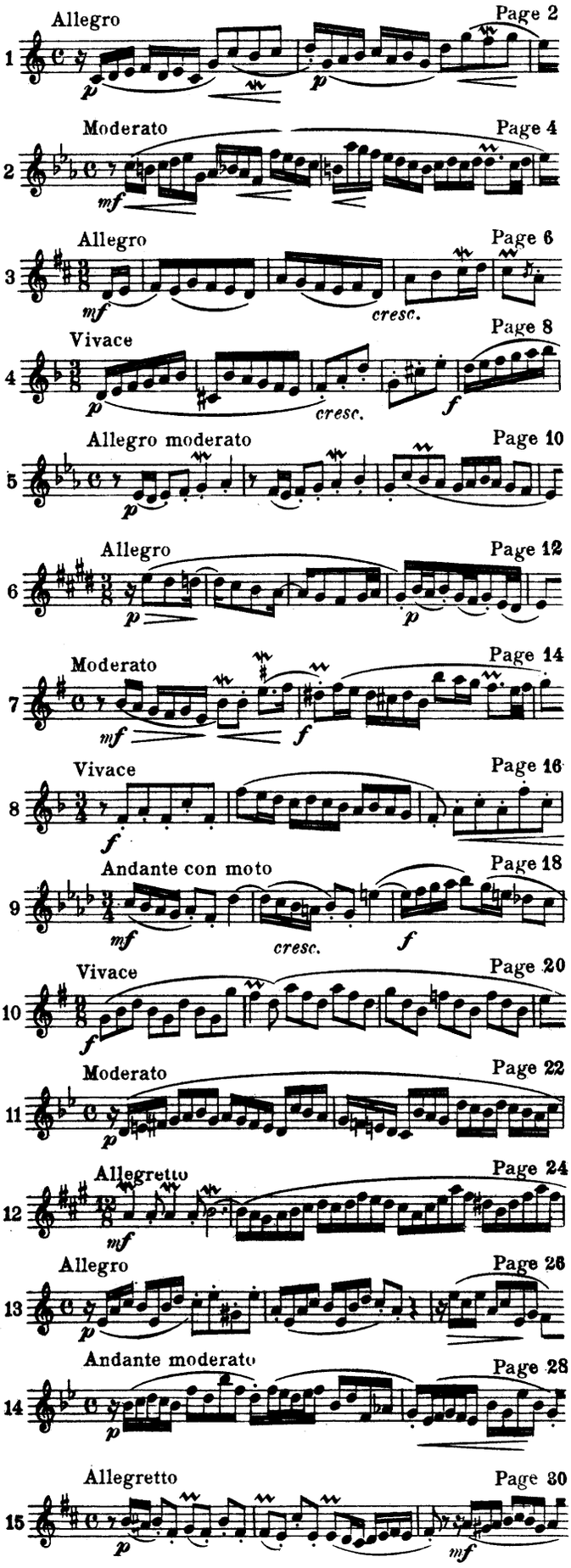
In most editions all the Inventions are placed first, and the Symphonies afterwards; but the fact that the order of keys is exactly the same in the two sets shows that there was intended to be a connection between them; as a matter of fact, the Inventions bear to the Symphonies very much the same relation as do the Preludes to the Fugues in the *Well-tempered Clavichord*. Further, in one of Bach's autographs each Invention is followed by the corresponding Symphony. The editor has therefore had no hesitation in following this arrangement, and recommends that Inventions and Symphonies should be played together. But inasmuch as the latter, being in three parts, are considerably more difficult than the former, it is advisable that those students who come to this volume without a preliminary acquaintance with Bach's works should practice the Inventions first before working at the Symphonies.

Ebenezer Prout.

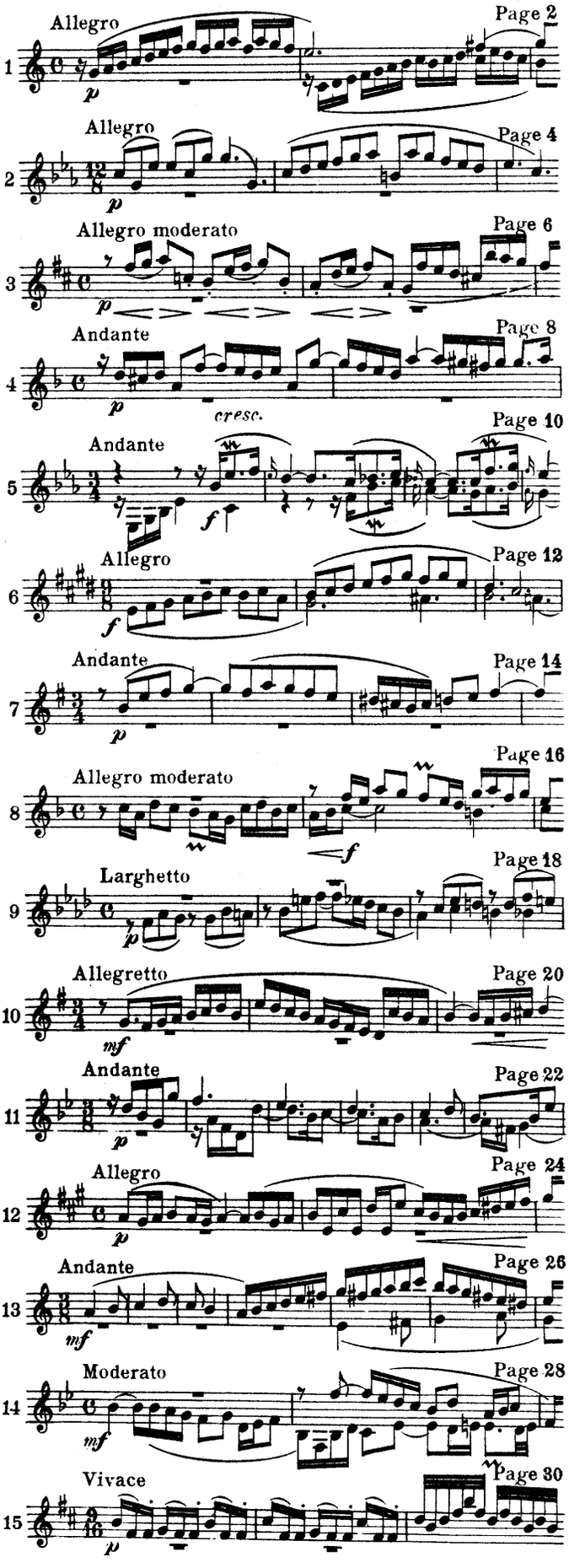
N.B. — For a full account of the composer and his work, see *Piano Compositions of J. S. Bach*, Vol. I: *Shorter Compositions*, edited by Ebenezer Prout in the Musicians Library.

THEMATIC INDEX

15 TWO-VOICE INVENTIONS



15 THREE-VOICE INVENTIONS OR SYMPHONIES

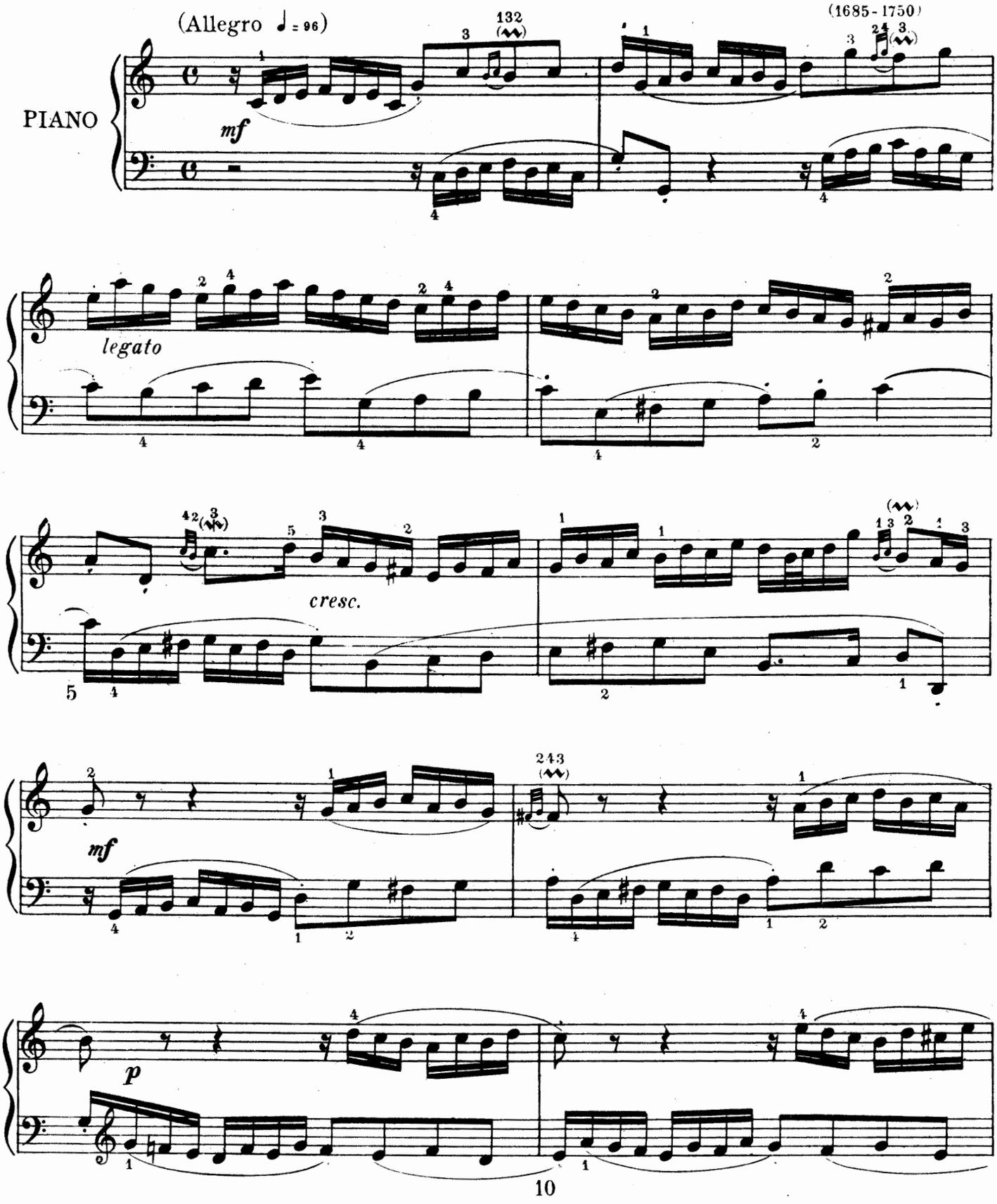


FIFTEEN TWO-VOICE INVENTIONS

INVENTION I, in C major

Edited by Ebenezer Prout

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685-1750)



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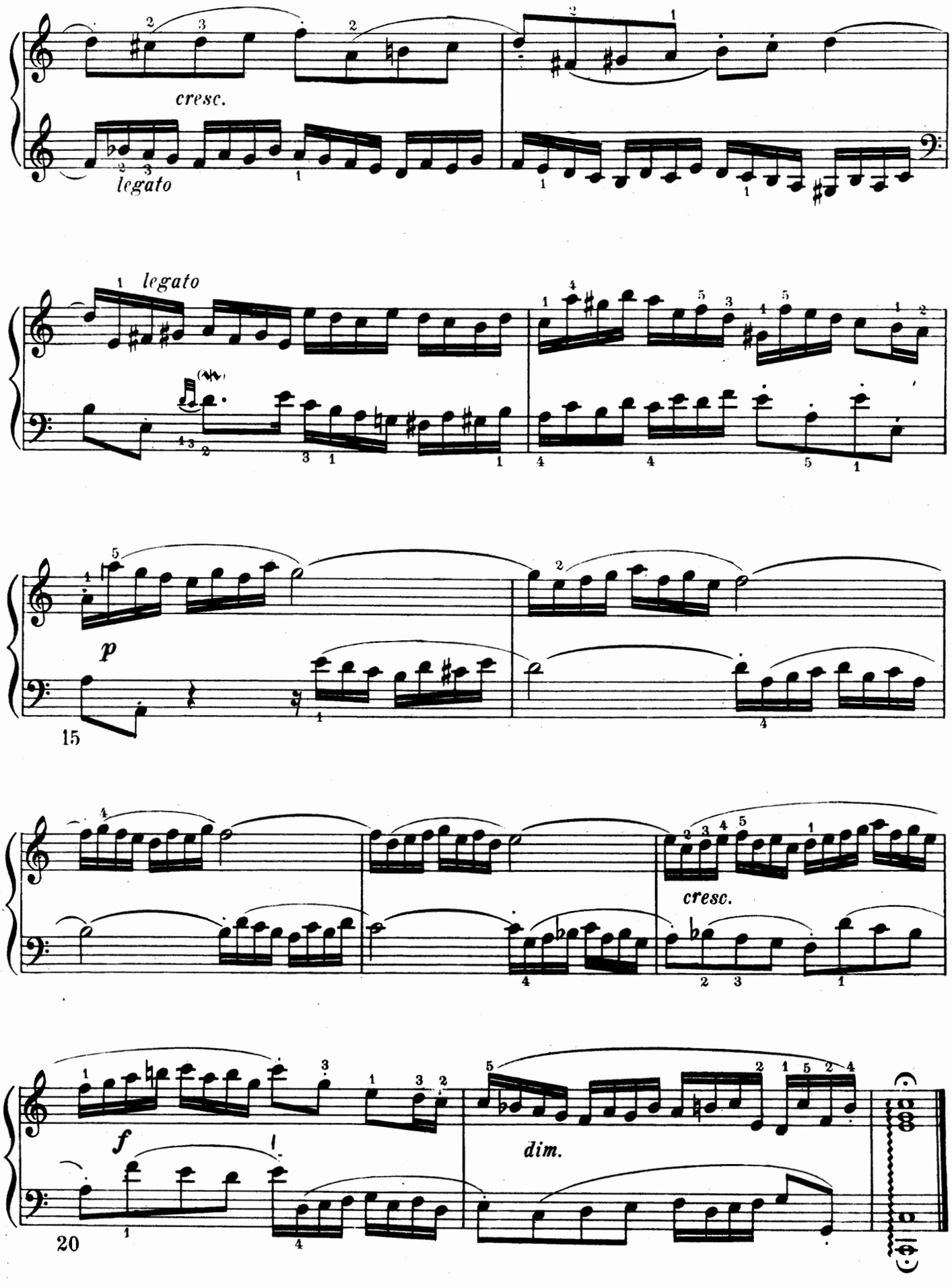
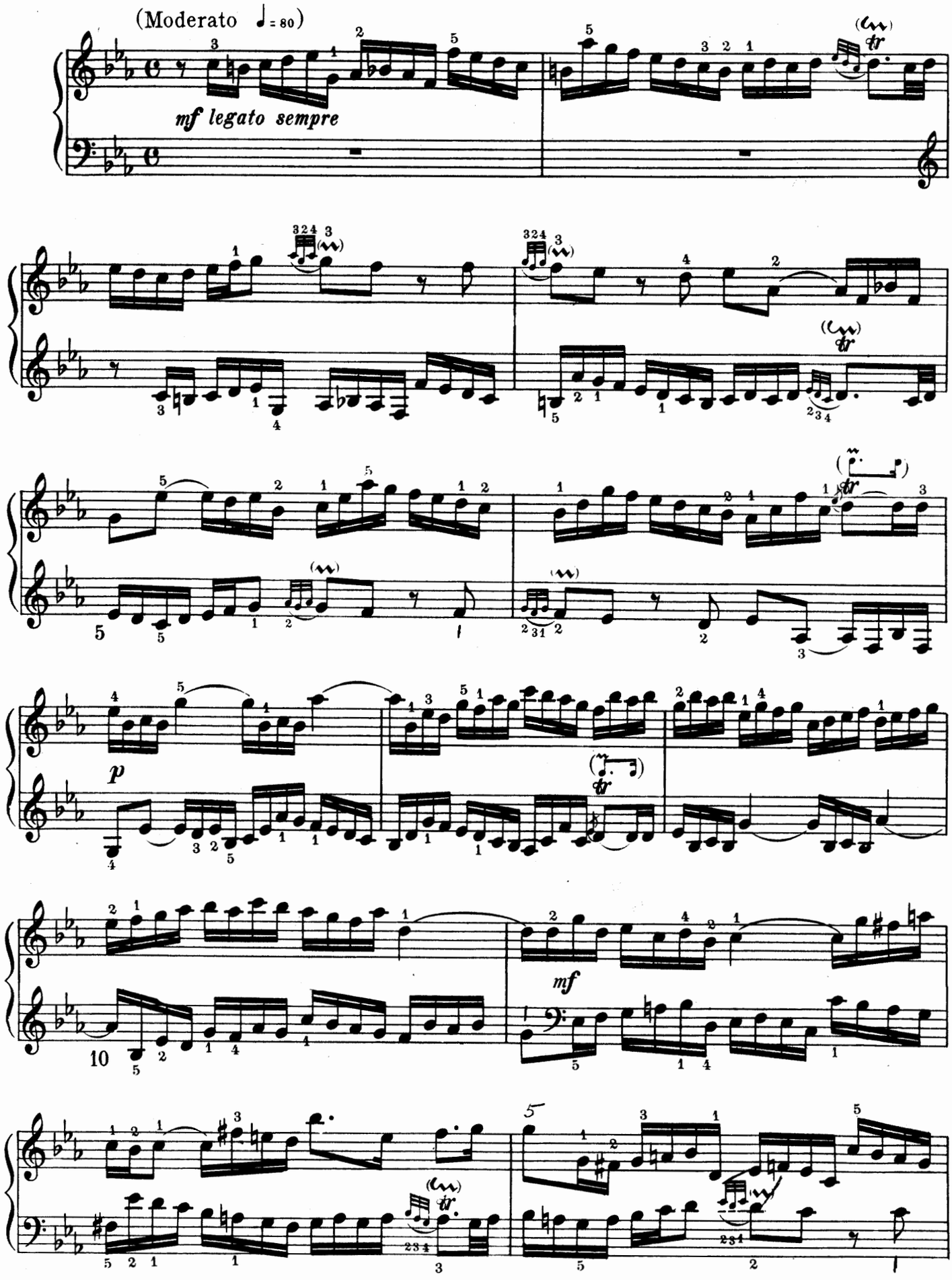
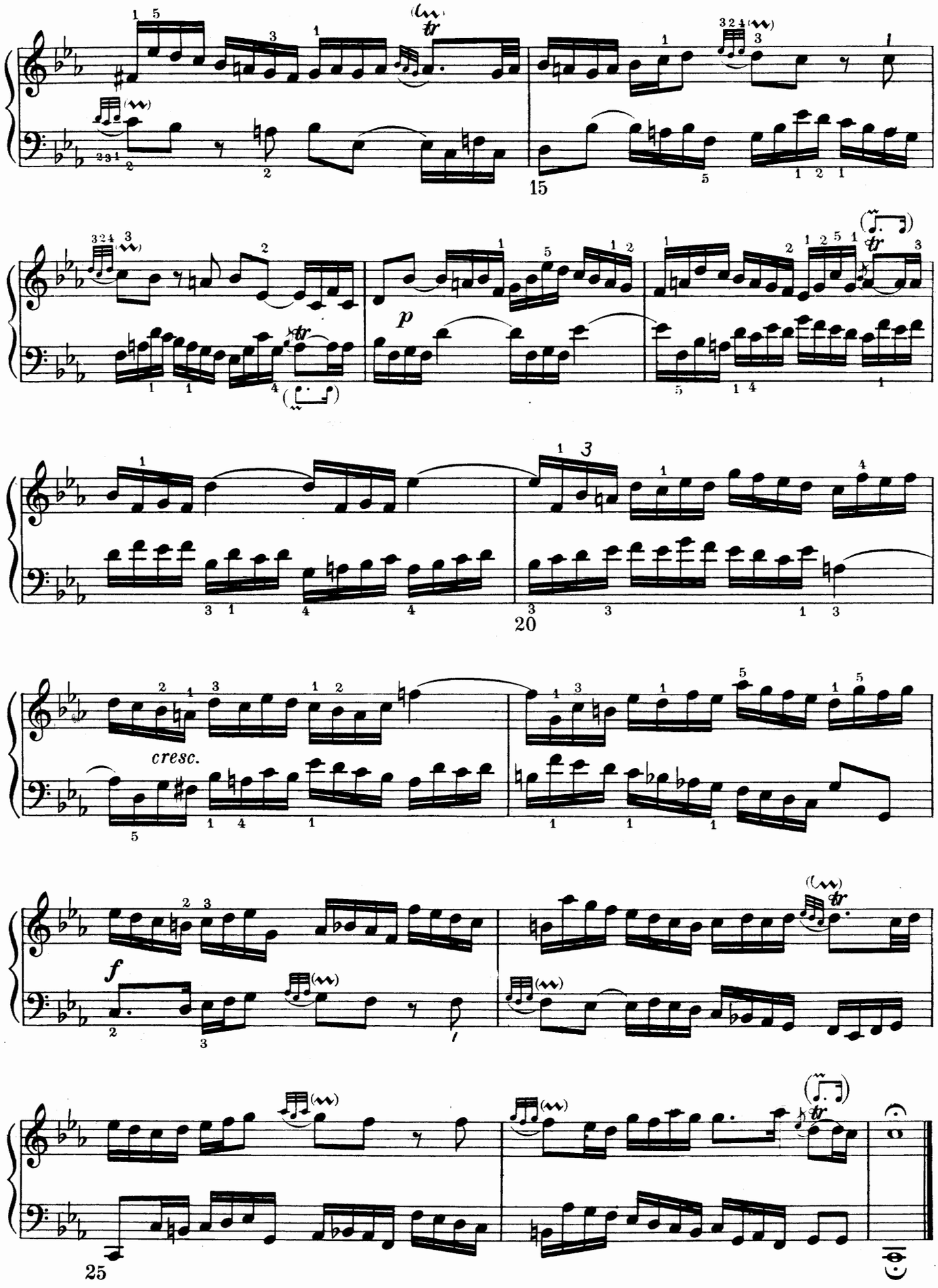
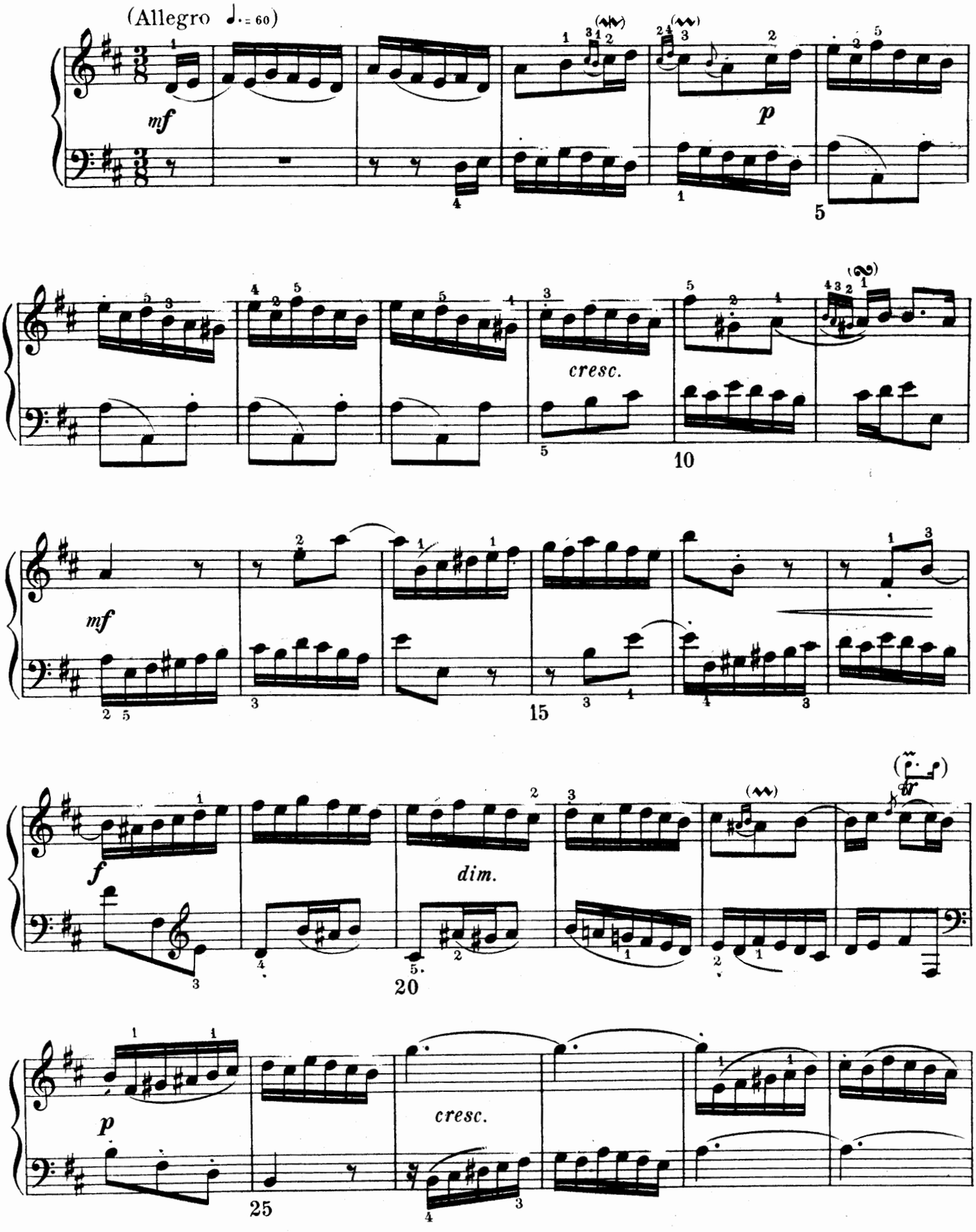

cresc.
legato
legato
p
15
cresc.
f
dim.
20

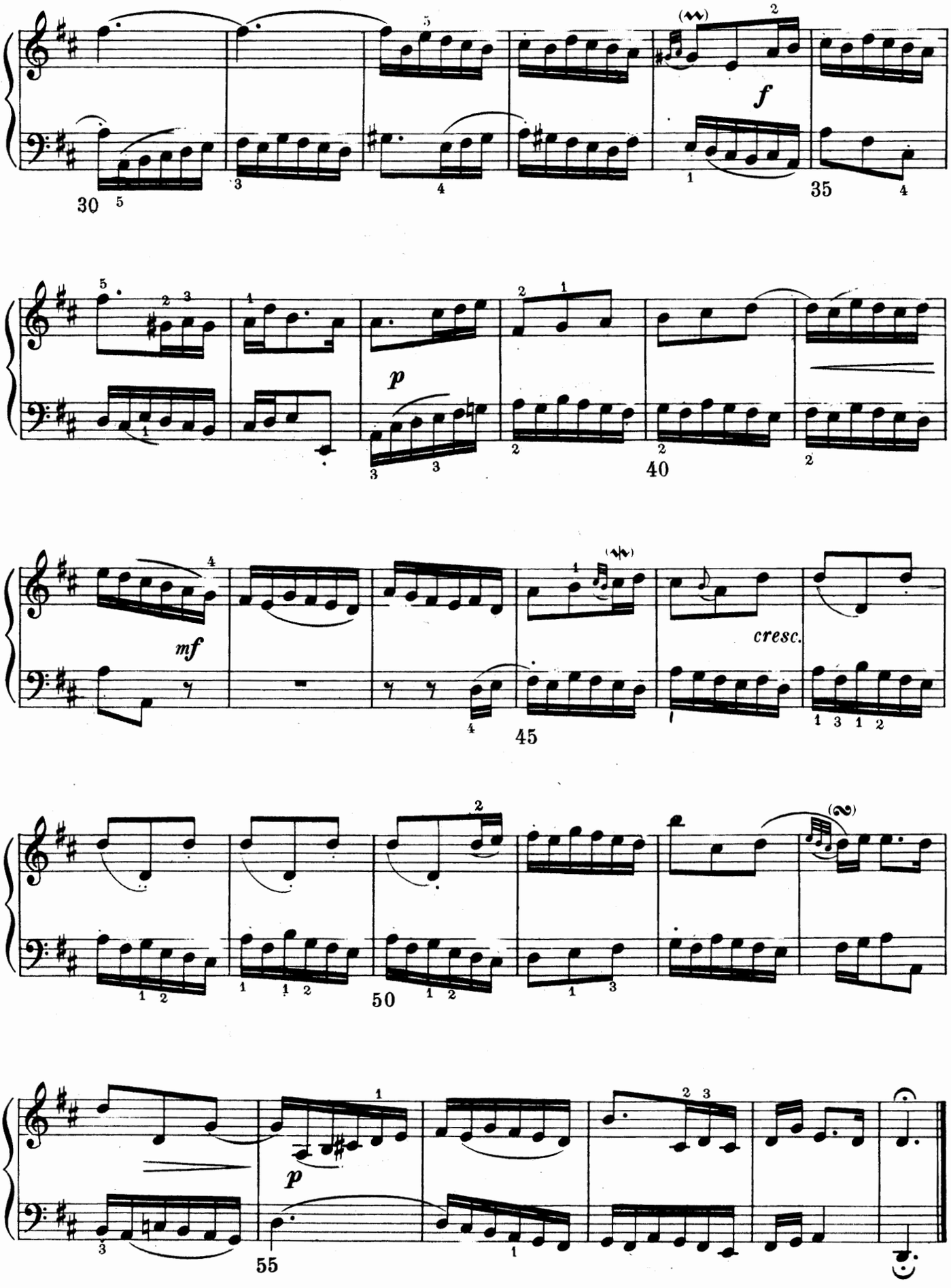
INVENTION II, in C minor



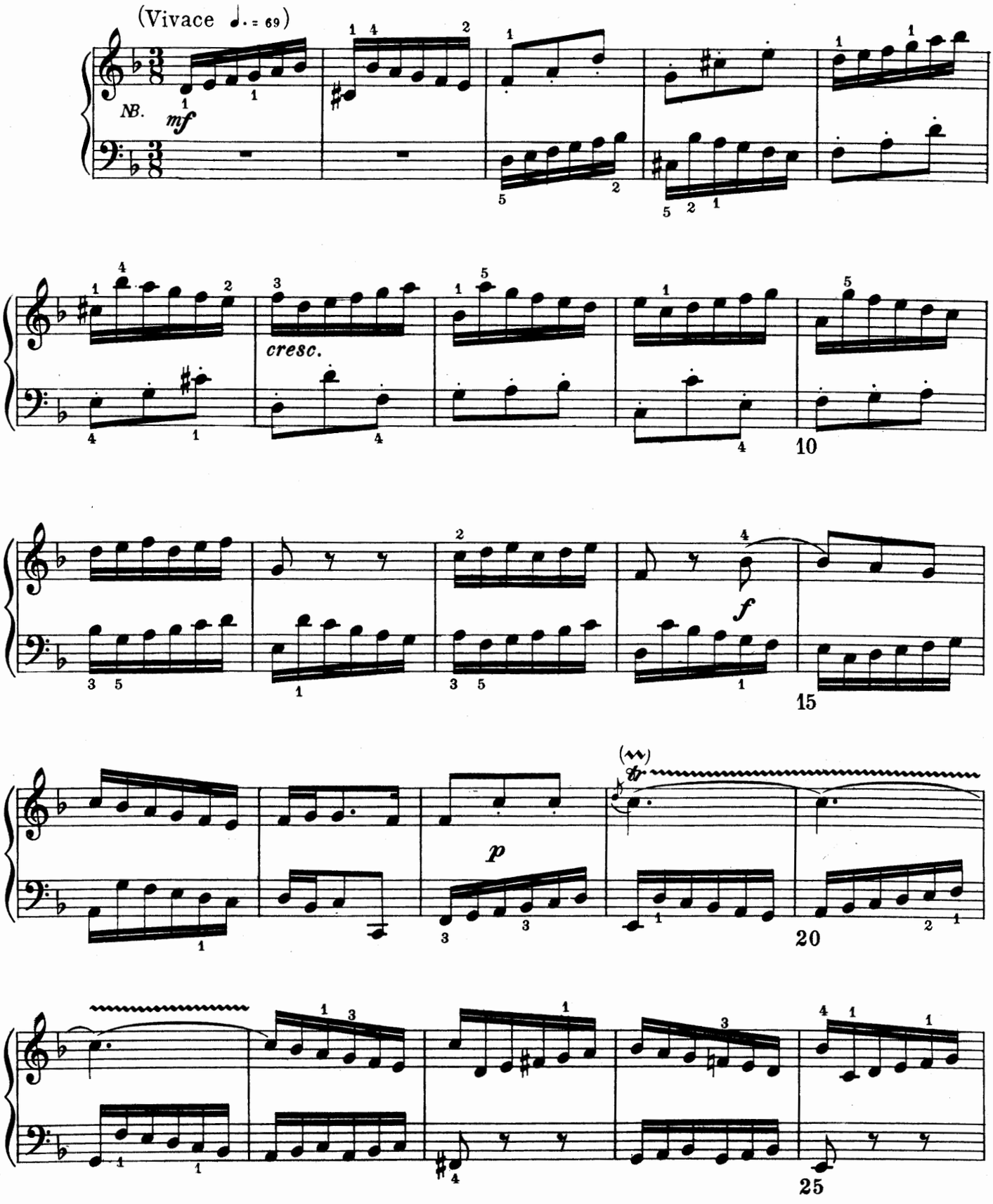

15
p
20
cresc.
f
25

INVENTION III, in D major

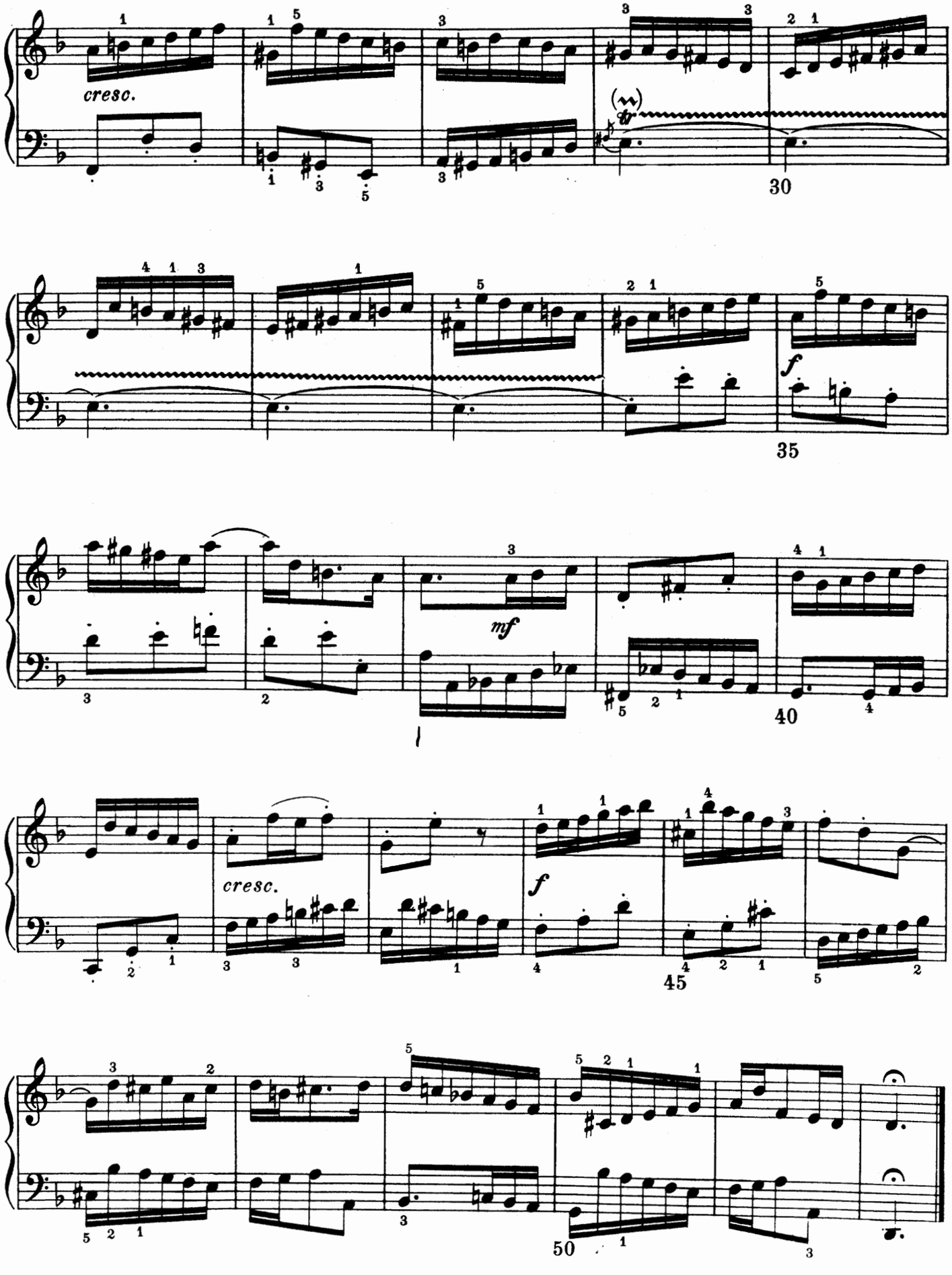



30
35
40
45
50
55
f
p
mf
cresc.

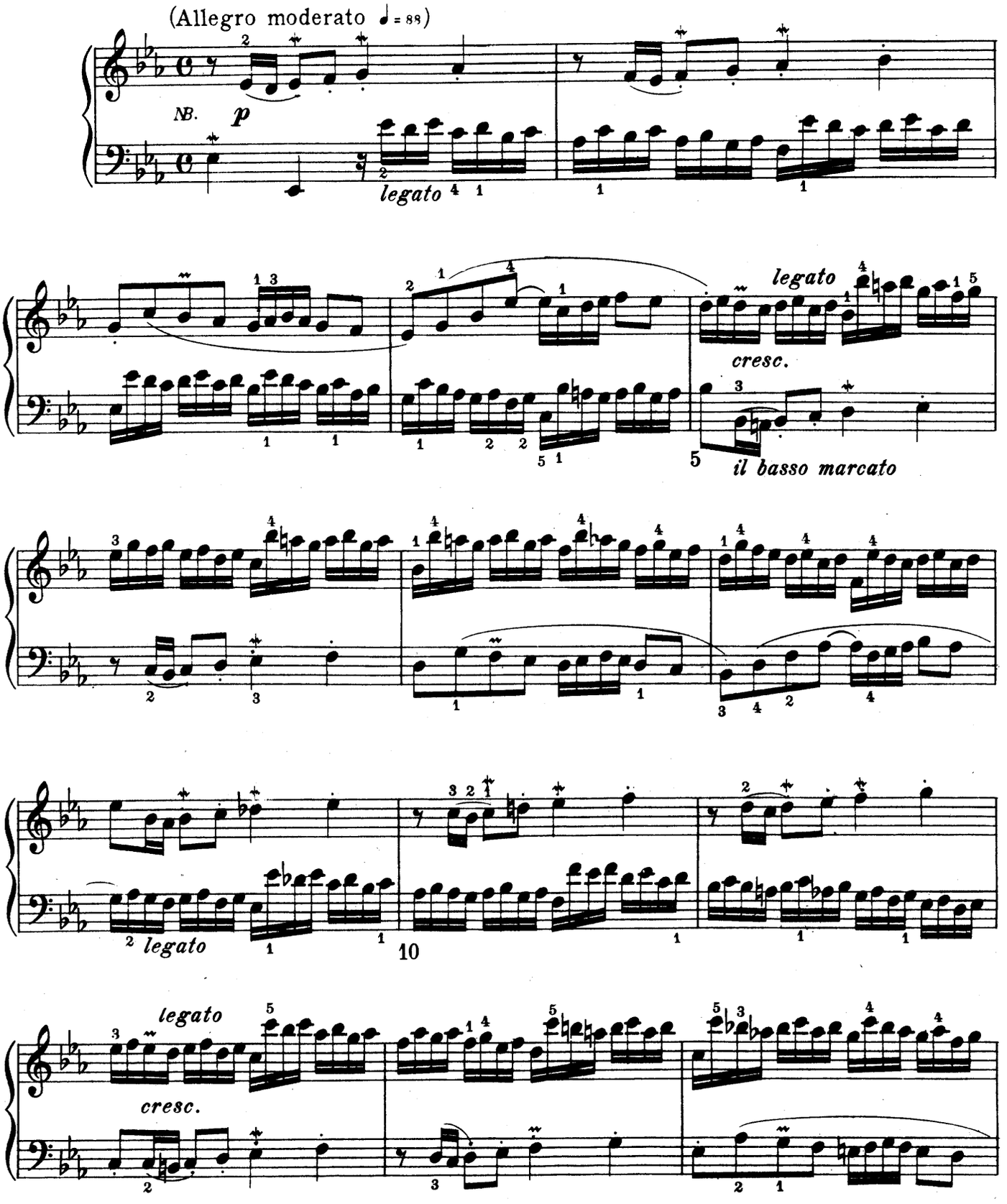
INVENTION IV, in D minor



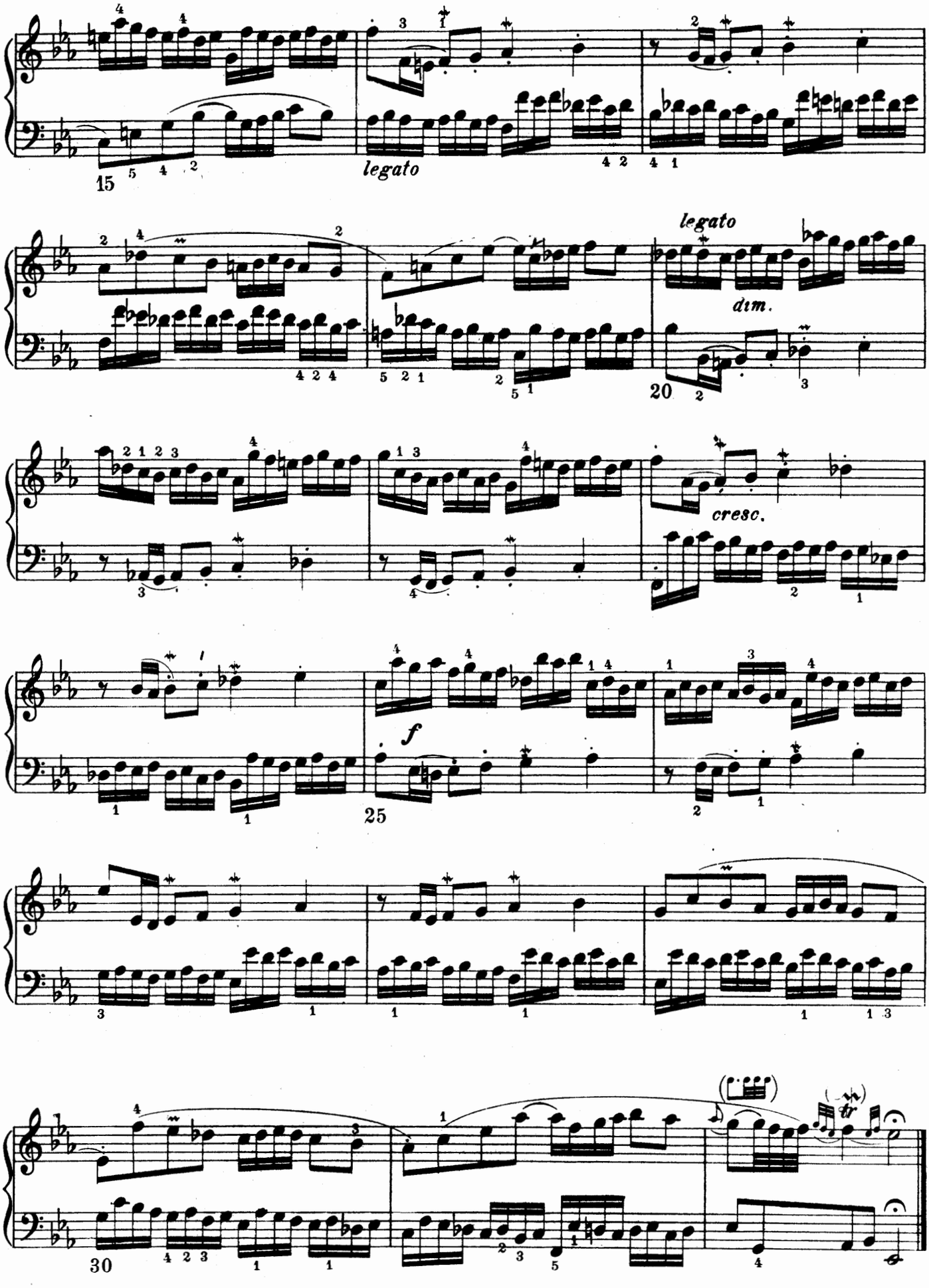
NB. The whole of this movement, except where otherwise marked to be played legato. (Ed.)


cresc.
30
35
mf
40
cresc.
f
45
50

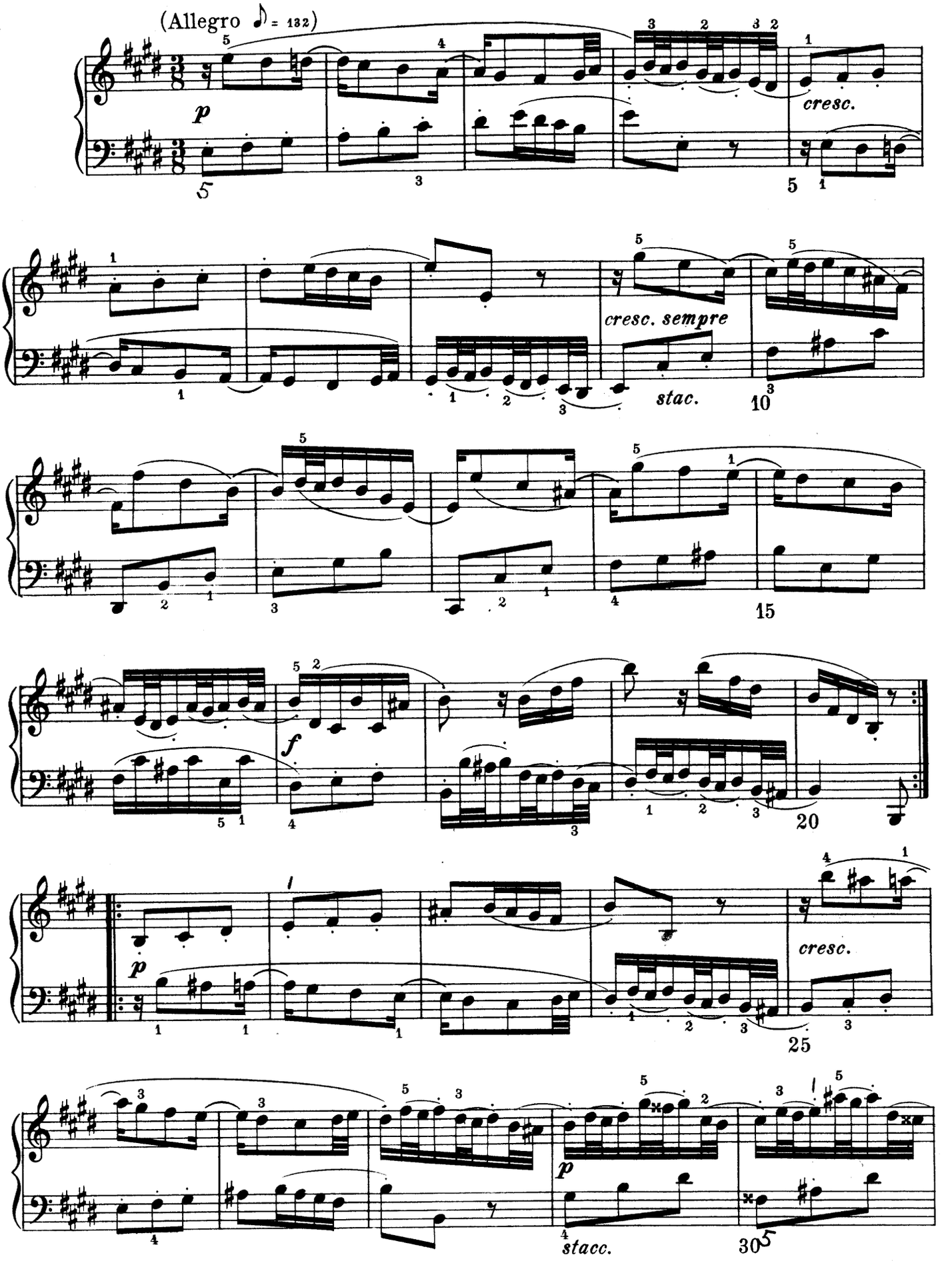
INVENTION V, in Eb major

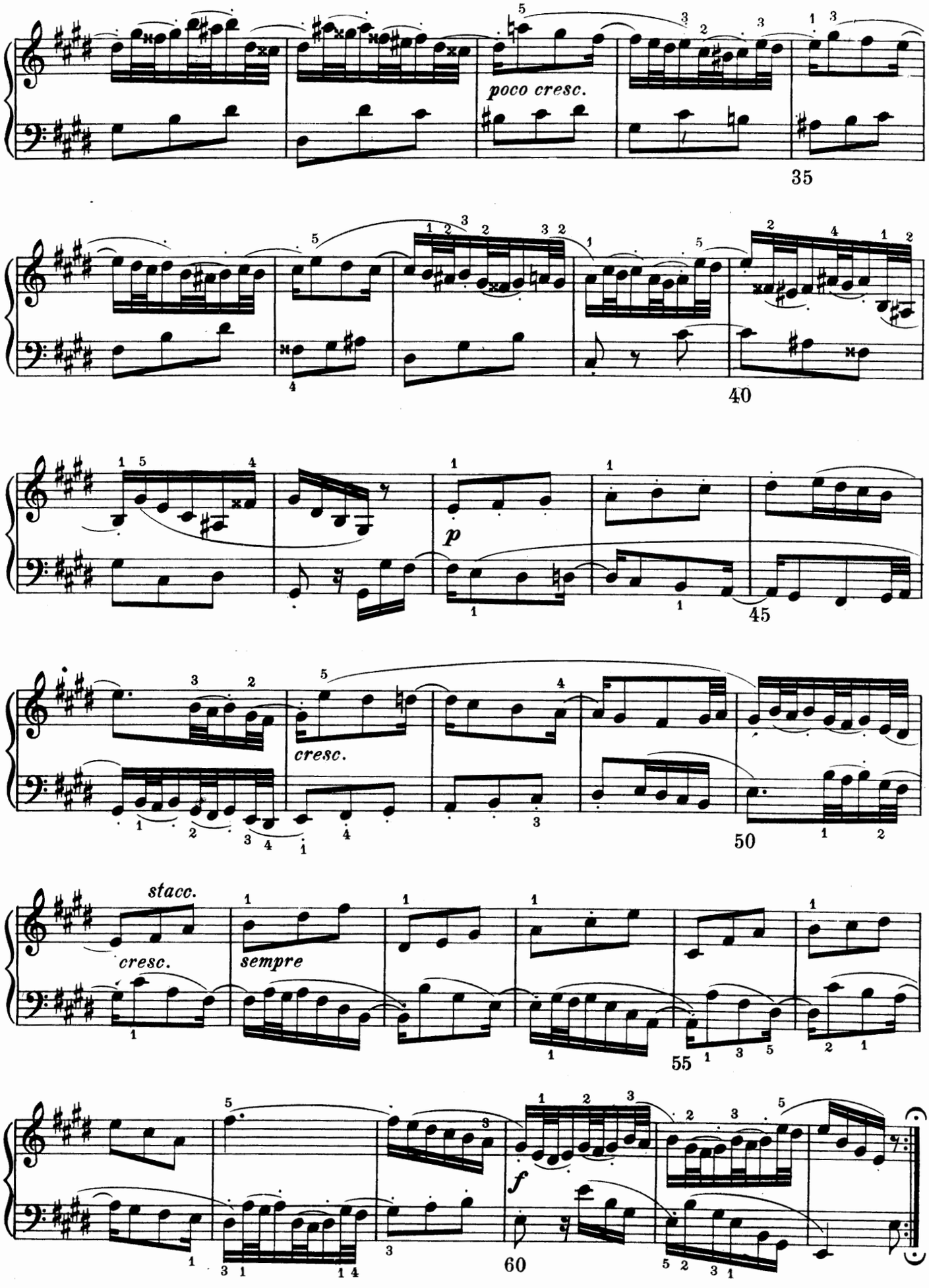


NB. The small ~ are only found in one autograph; the others have as the only ornament the shake in the last bar. The editor recommends the omission of all the others, which are inserted in smaller type for the sake of completeness.

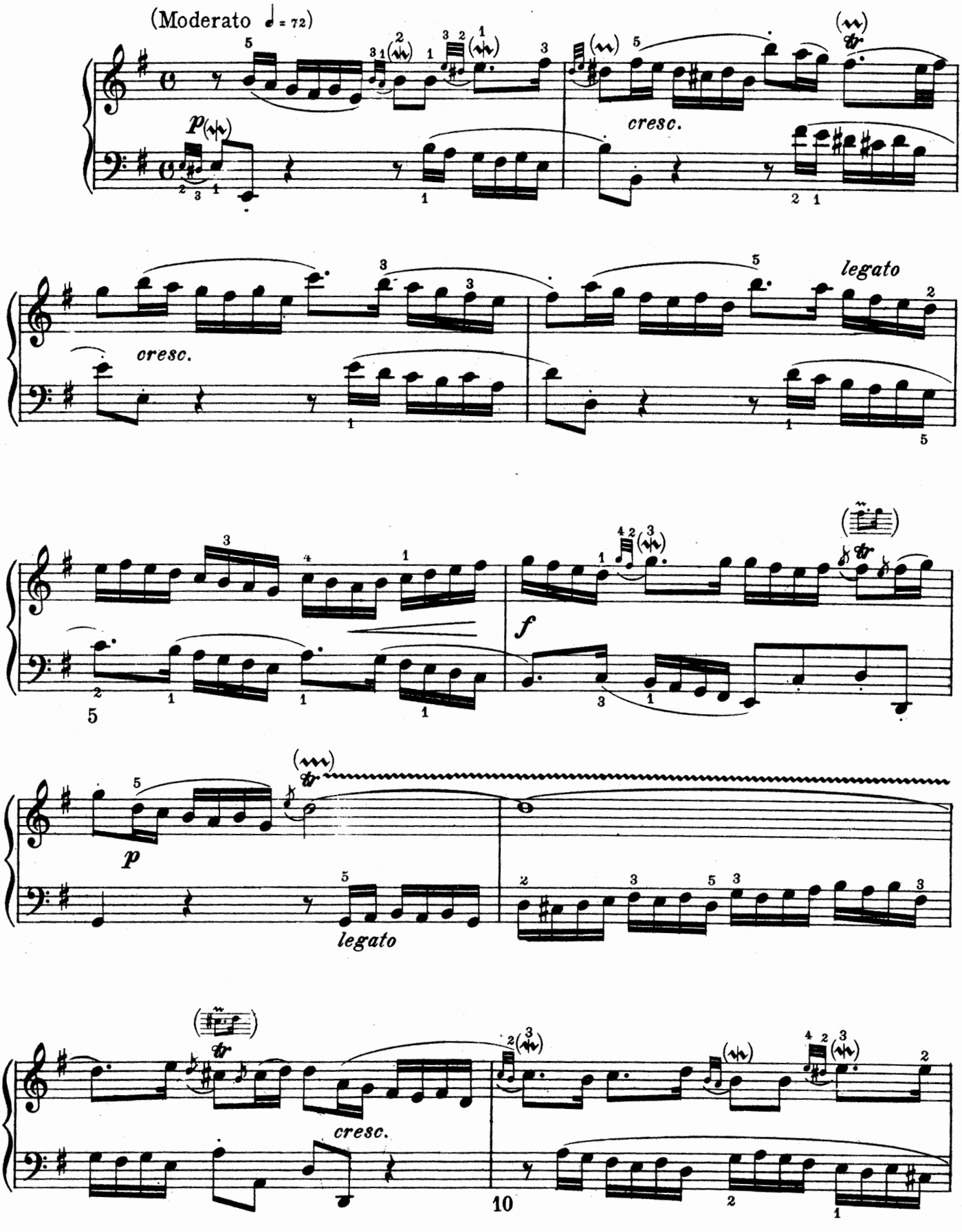

15
legato
20
legato
dim.
cresc.
25
f
30

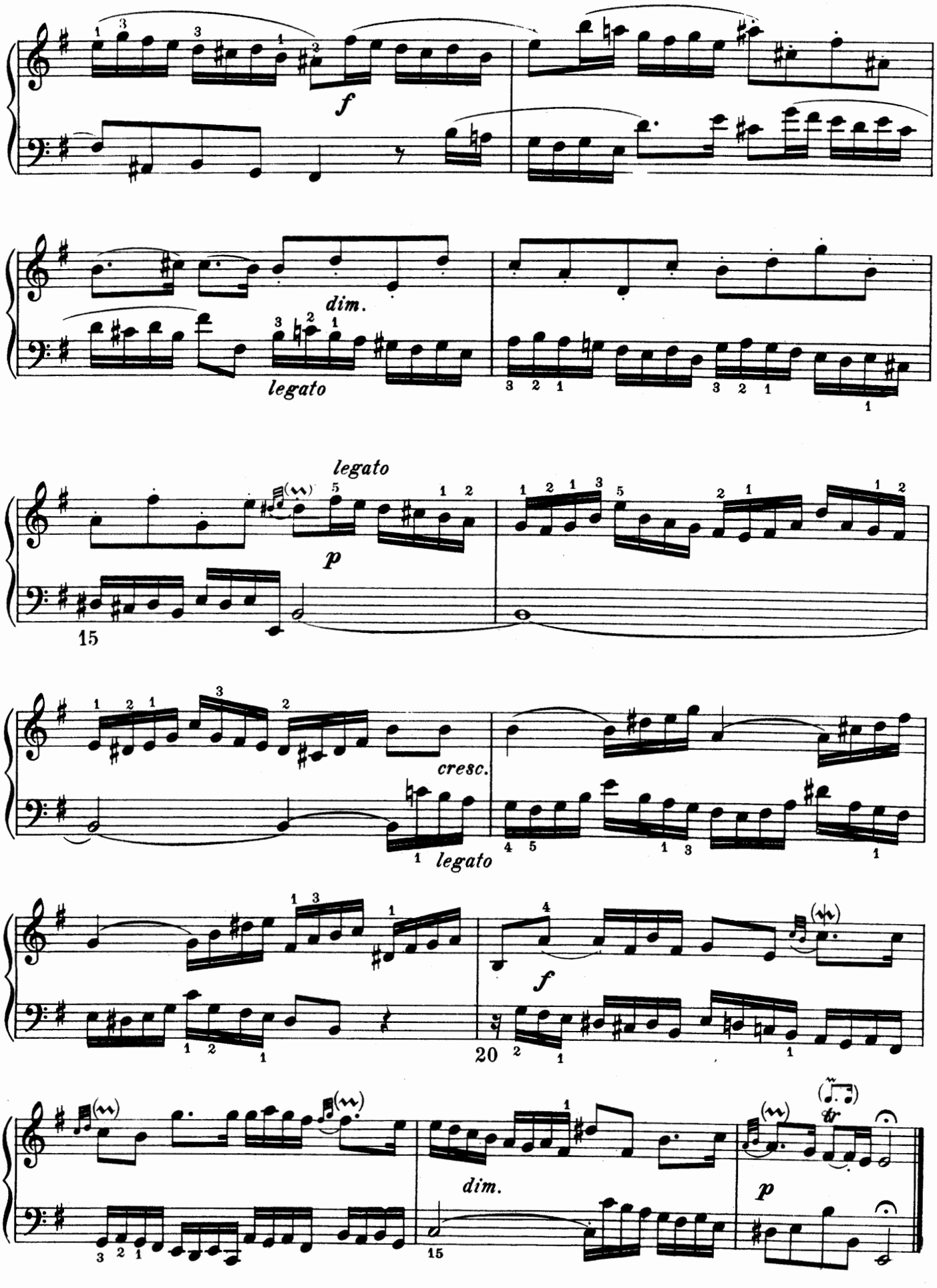
INVENTION VI, in E major




poco cresc.
35
40
p
45
cresc.
50
stacc.
cresc.
sempre
55
f
60

INVENTION VII, in E minor

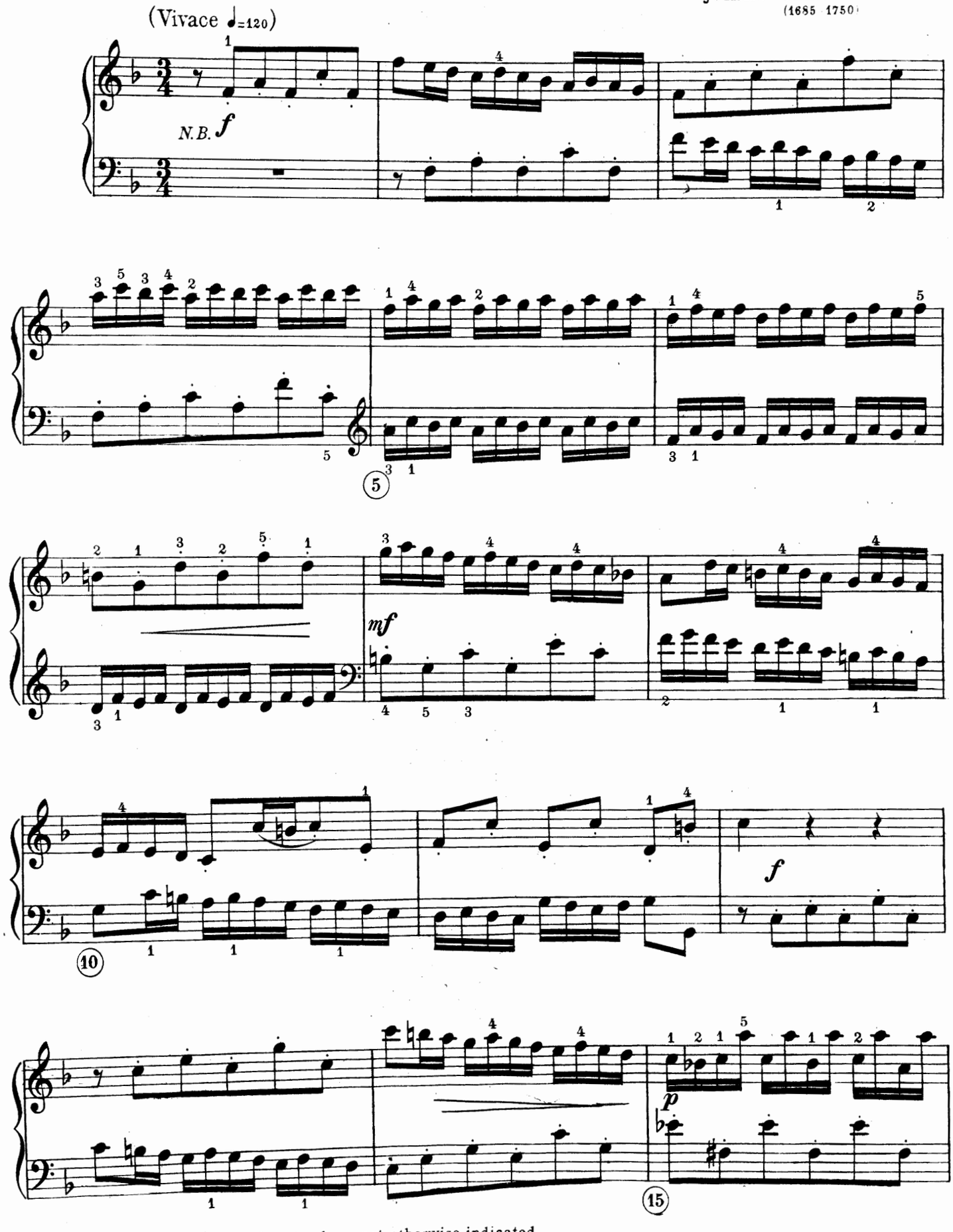



f
dim.
legato
legato
p
15
cresc.
1 legato
f
20
dim.
15
p
tr

INVENTION VIII, in F major.

Edited by Ebenezer Prout

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685 1750)



N.B. The whole of this piece *legato* where not otherwise indicated.

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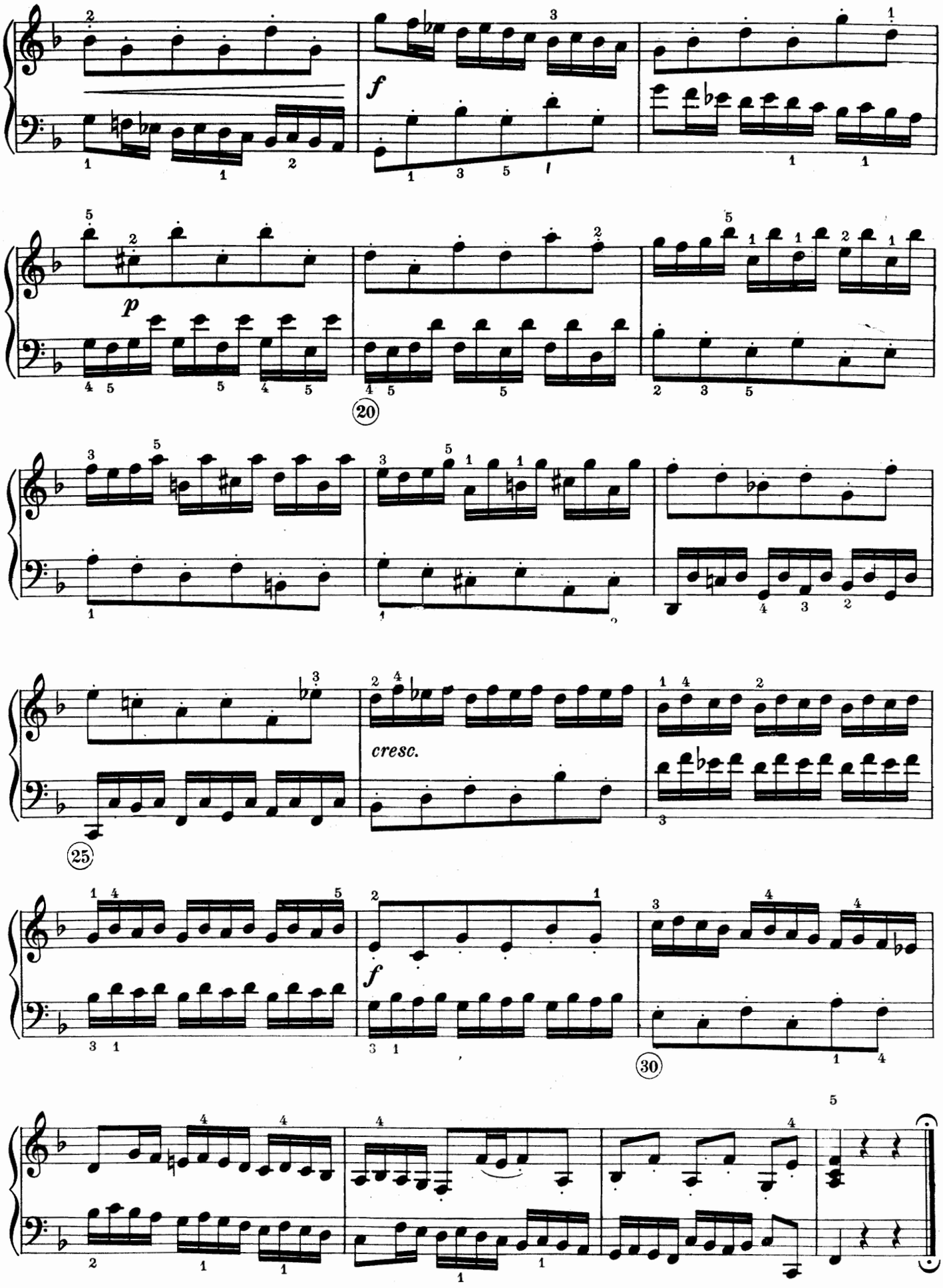
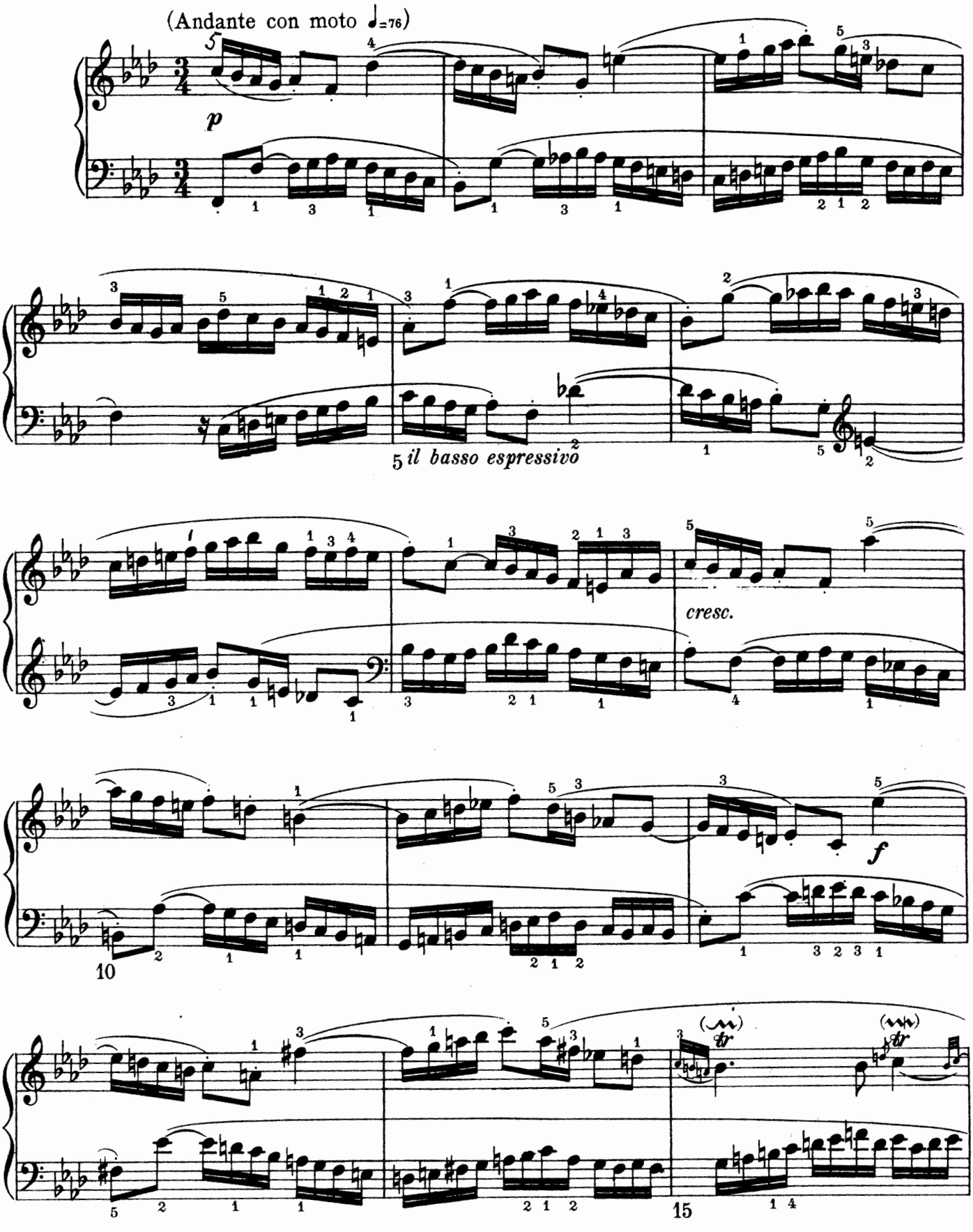
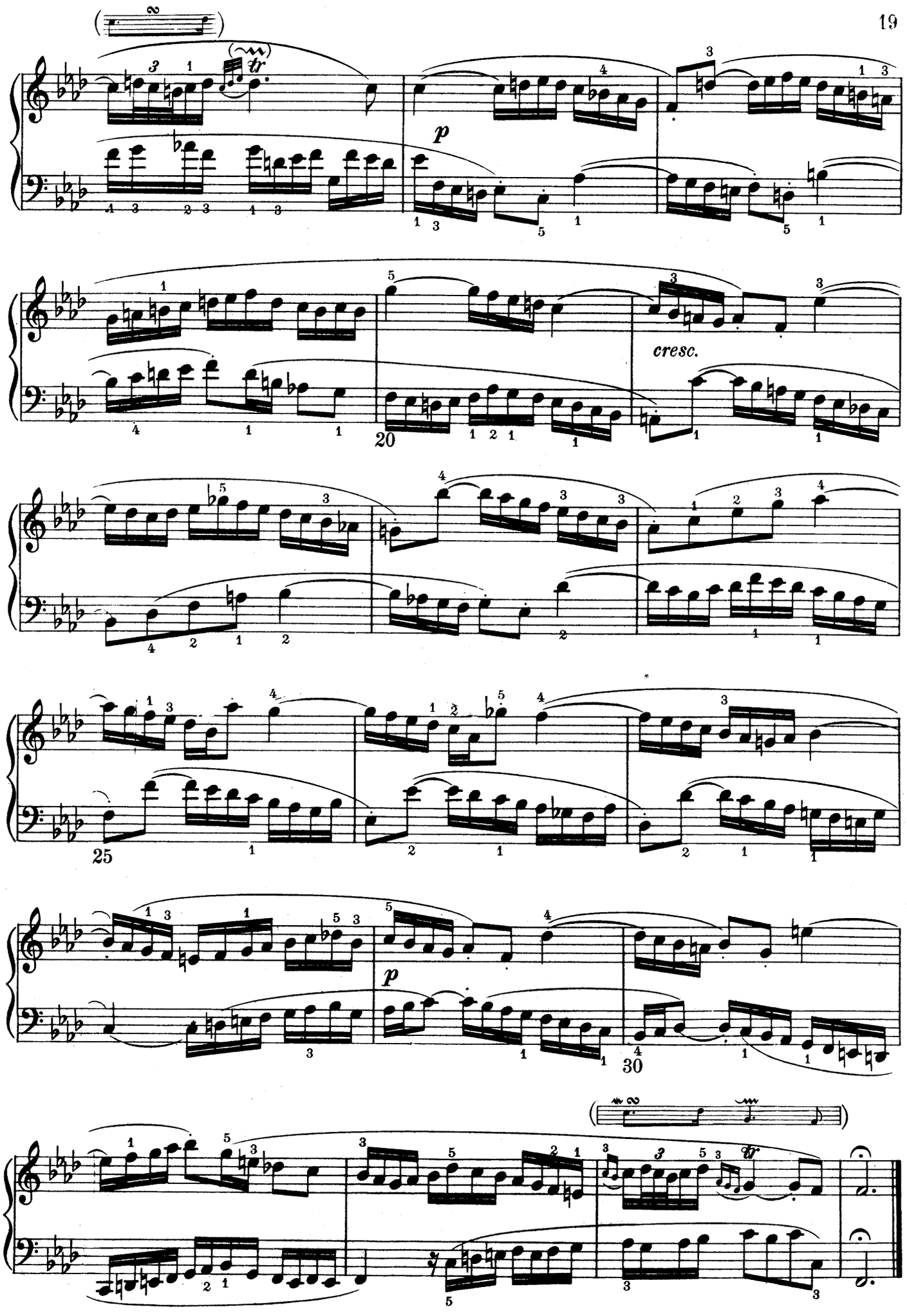
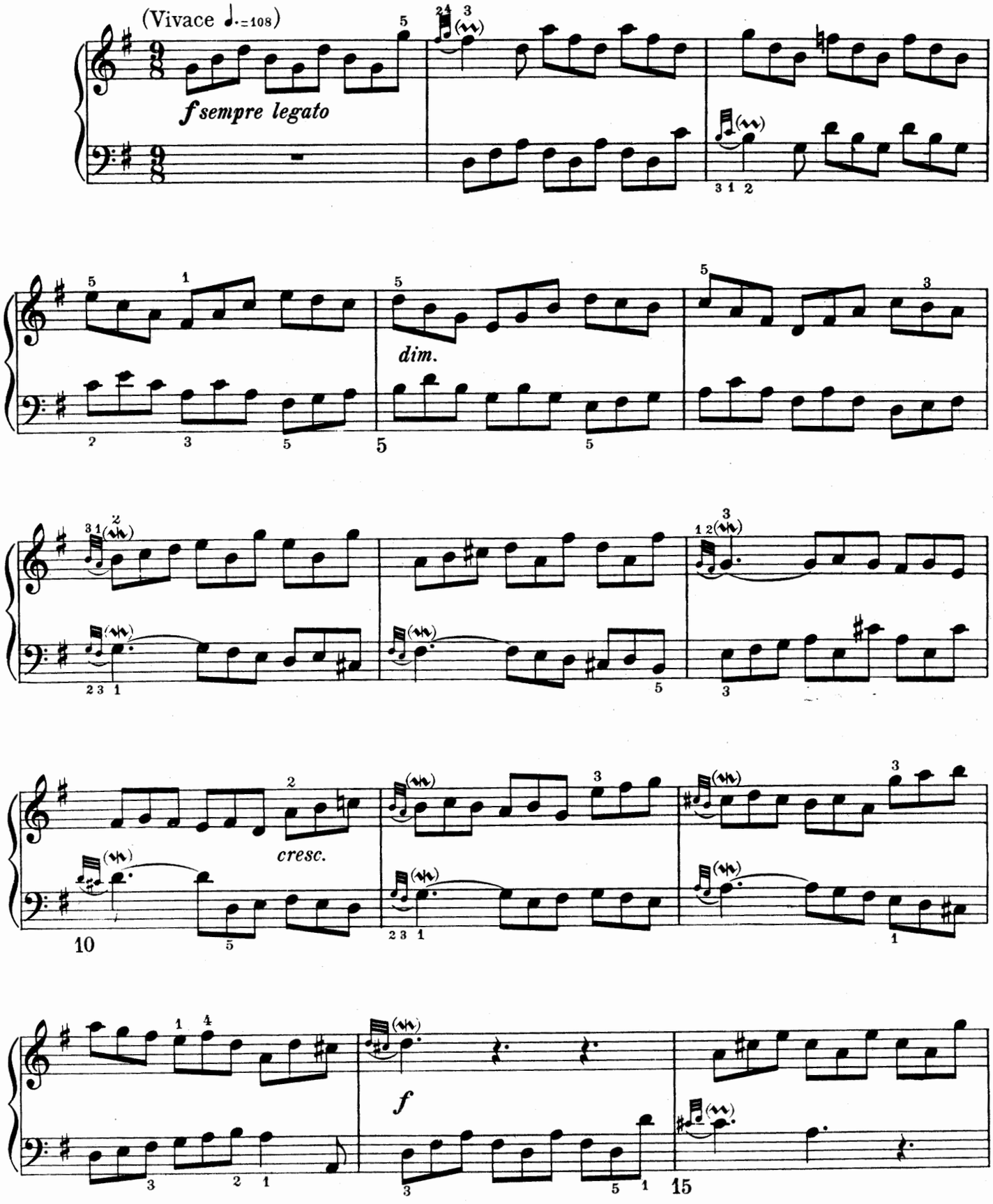

f
p
20
cresc.
25
f
30

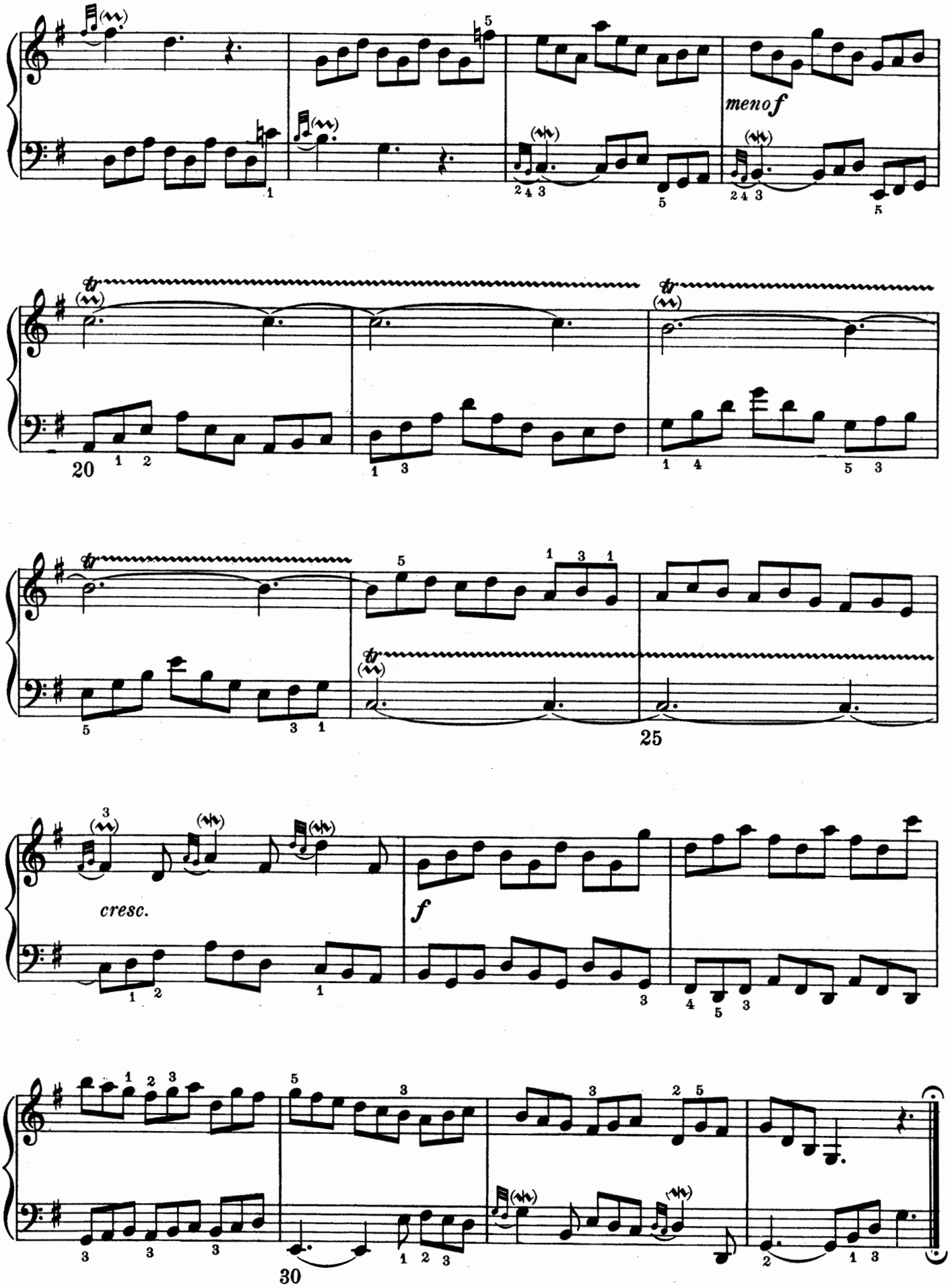
INVENTION IX, in F minor



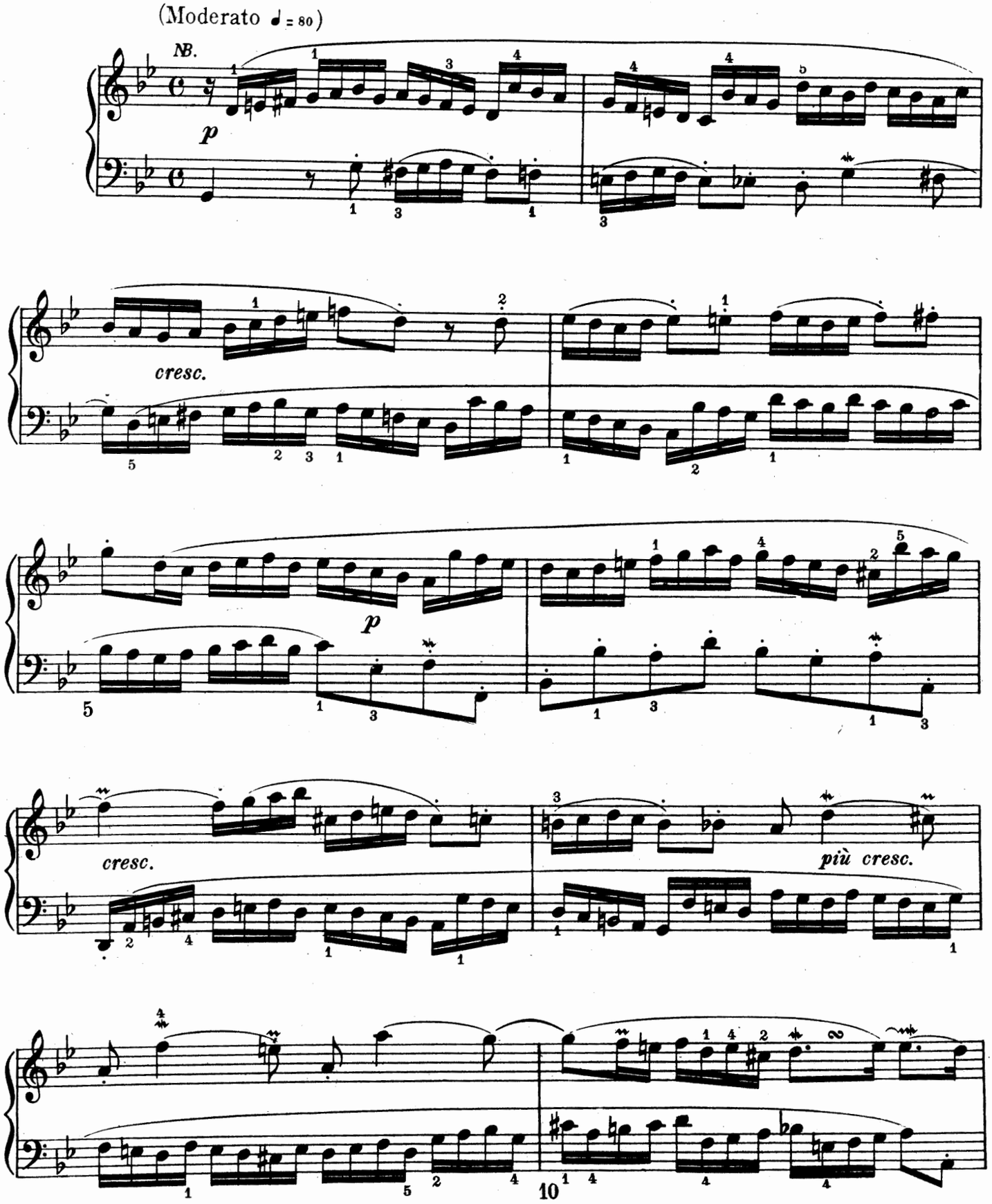

p
cresc.
20
25
p
30

INVENTION X, in G major

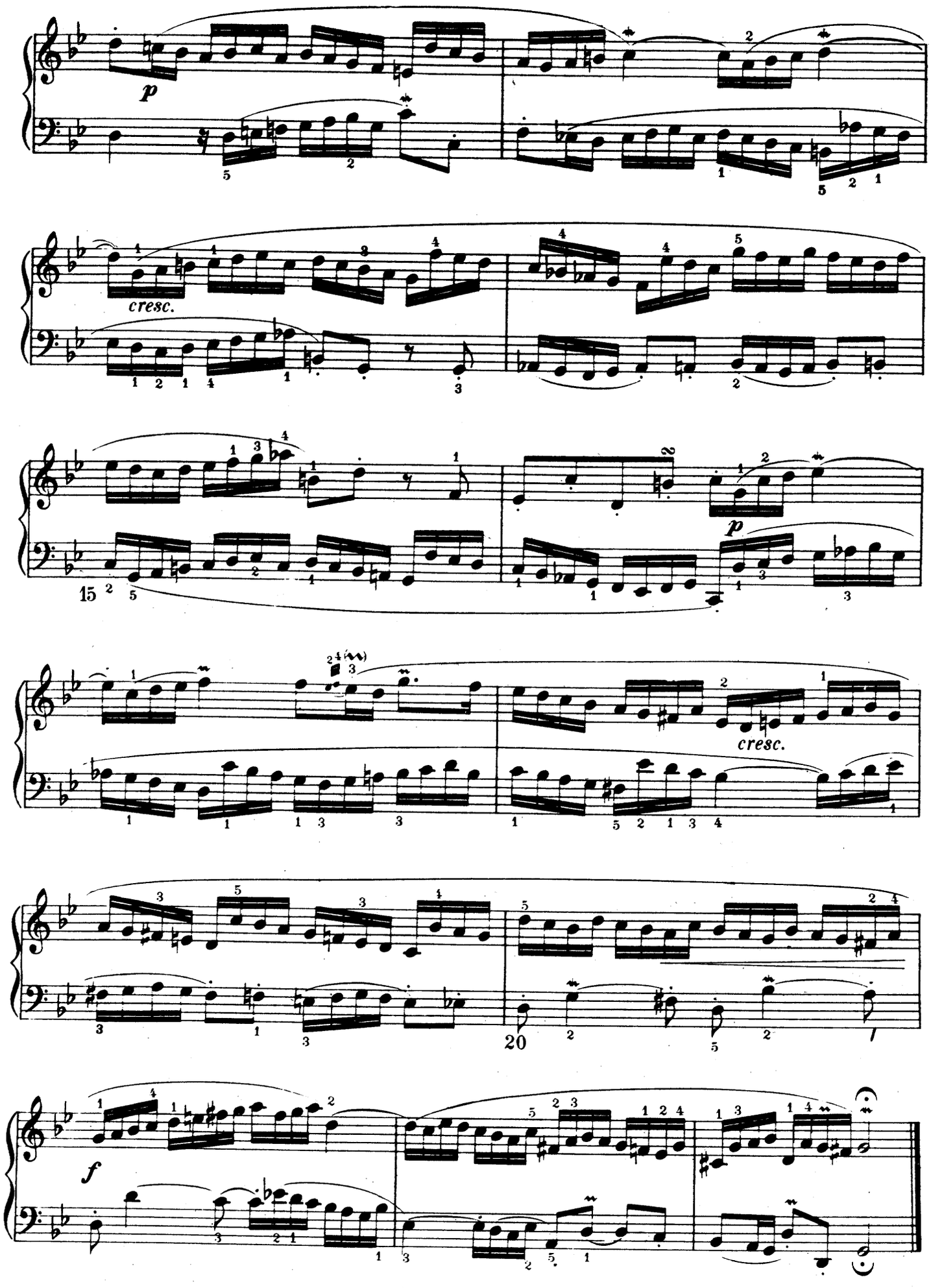



meno f
20
25
cresc.
f
30

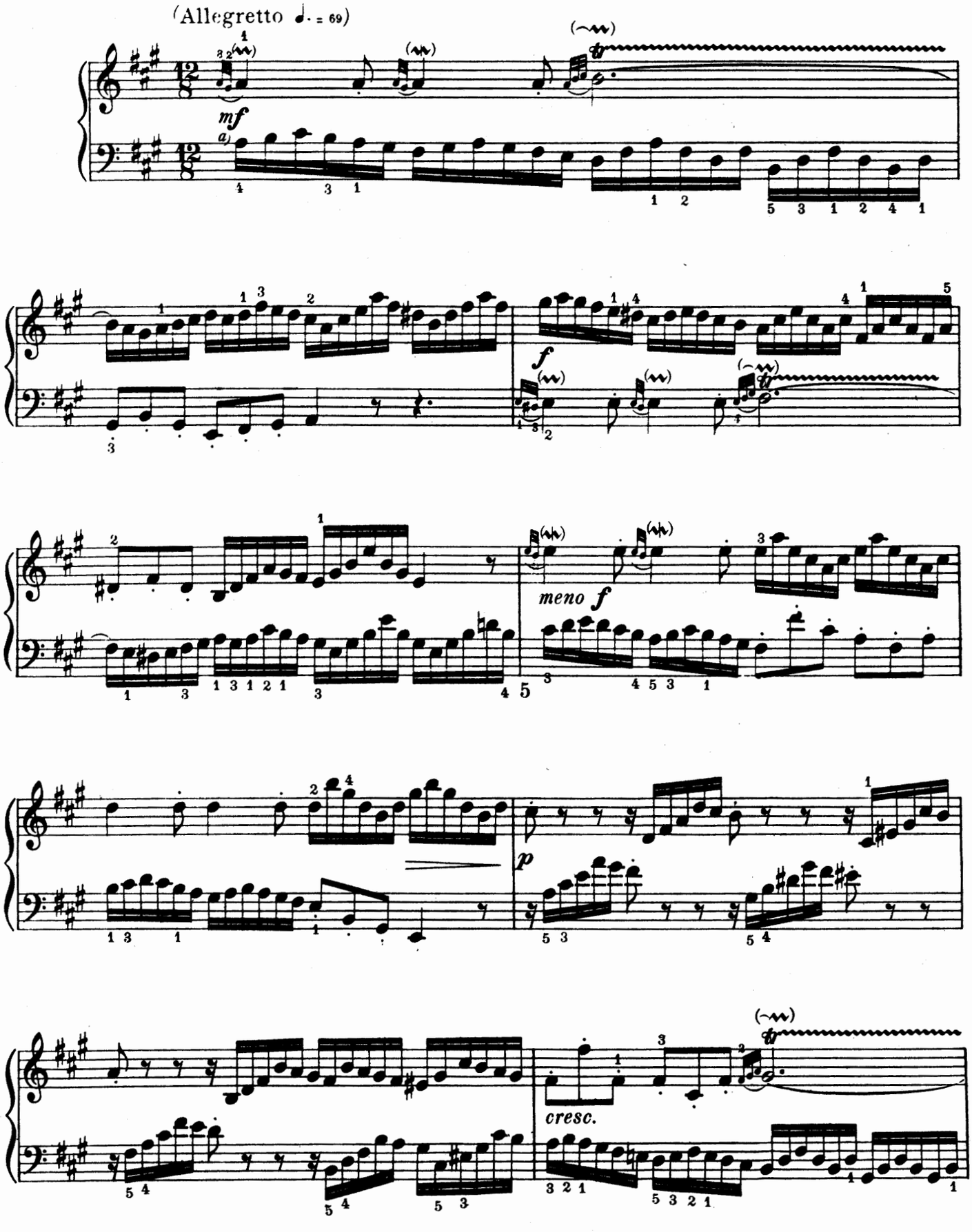
INVENTION XI, in G minor.



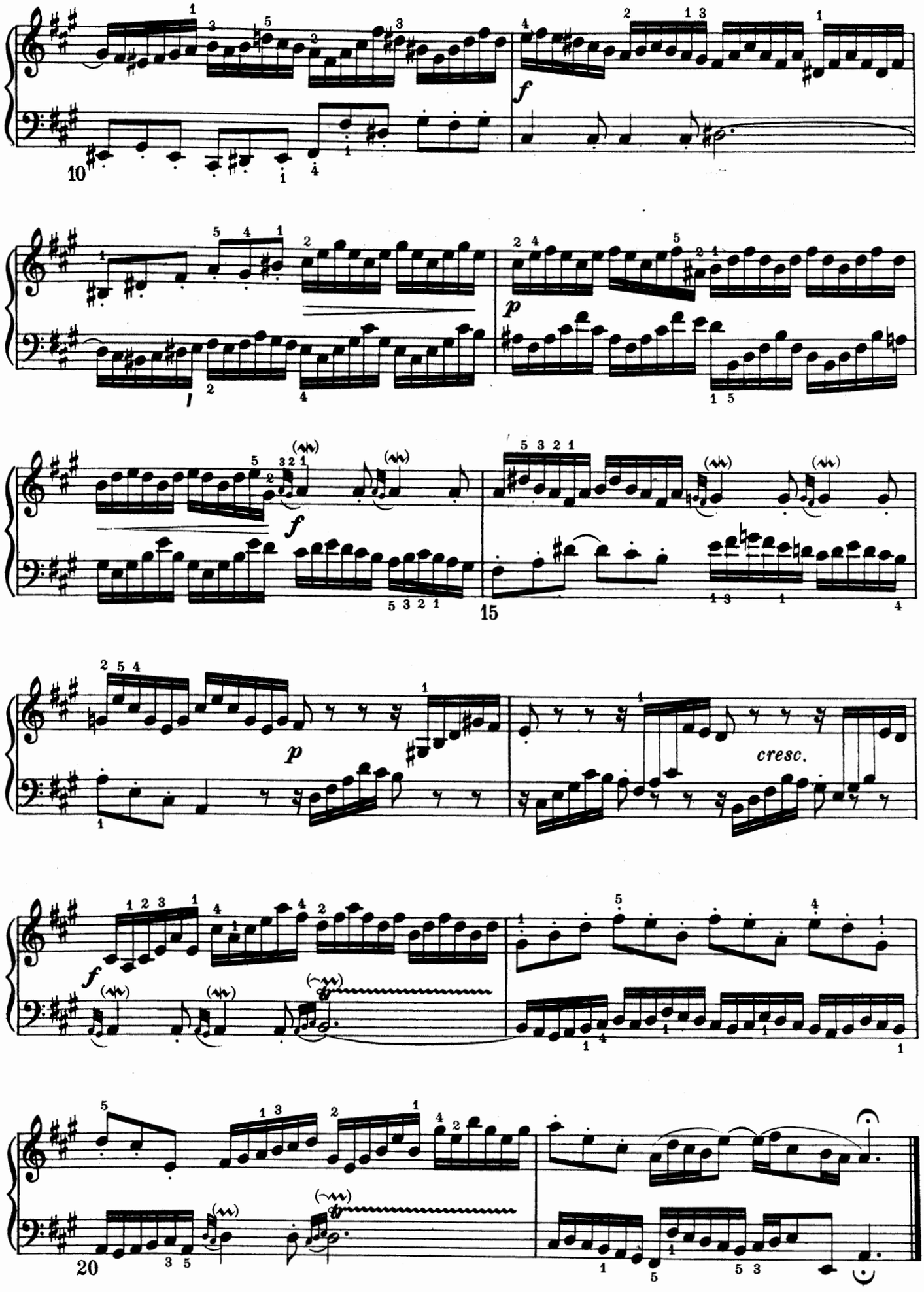
NB. The ornaments printed small are not found in all the MS. and can be played or omitted at the discretion of the performer: they are therefore not printed out in full in the text.


p
cresc.
15
p
cresc.
20
f

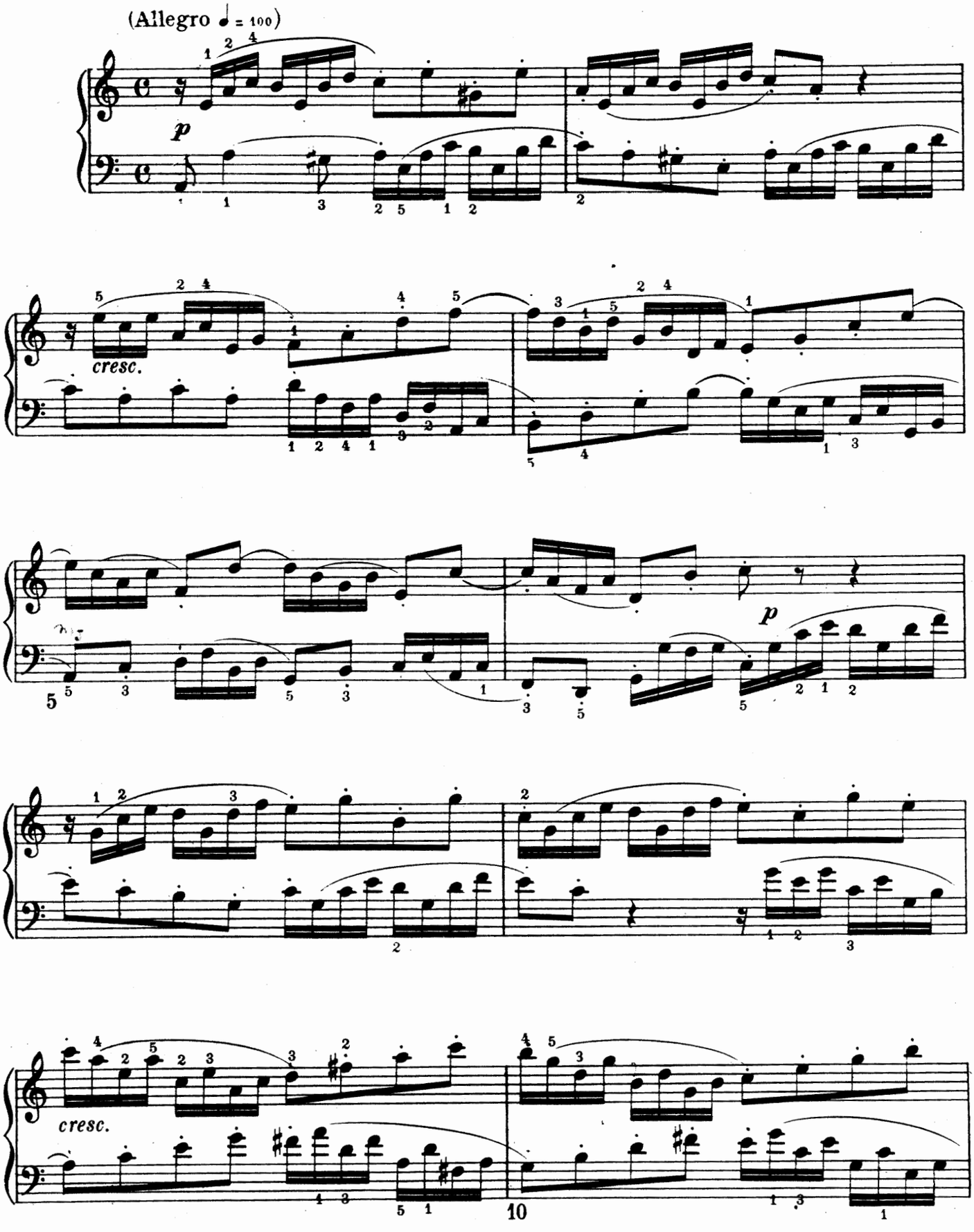
INVENTION XII, in A major

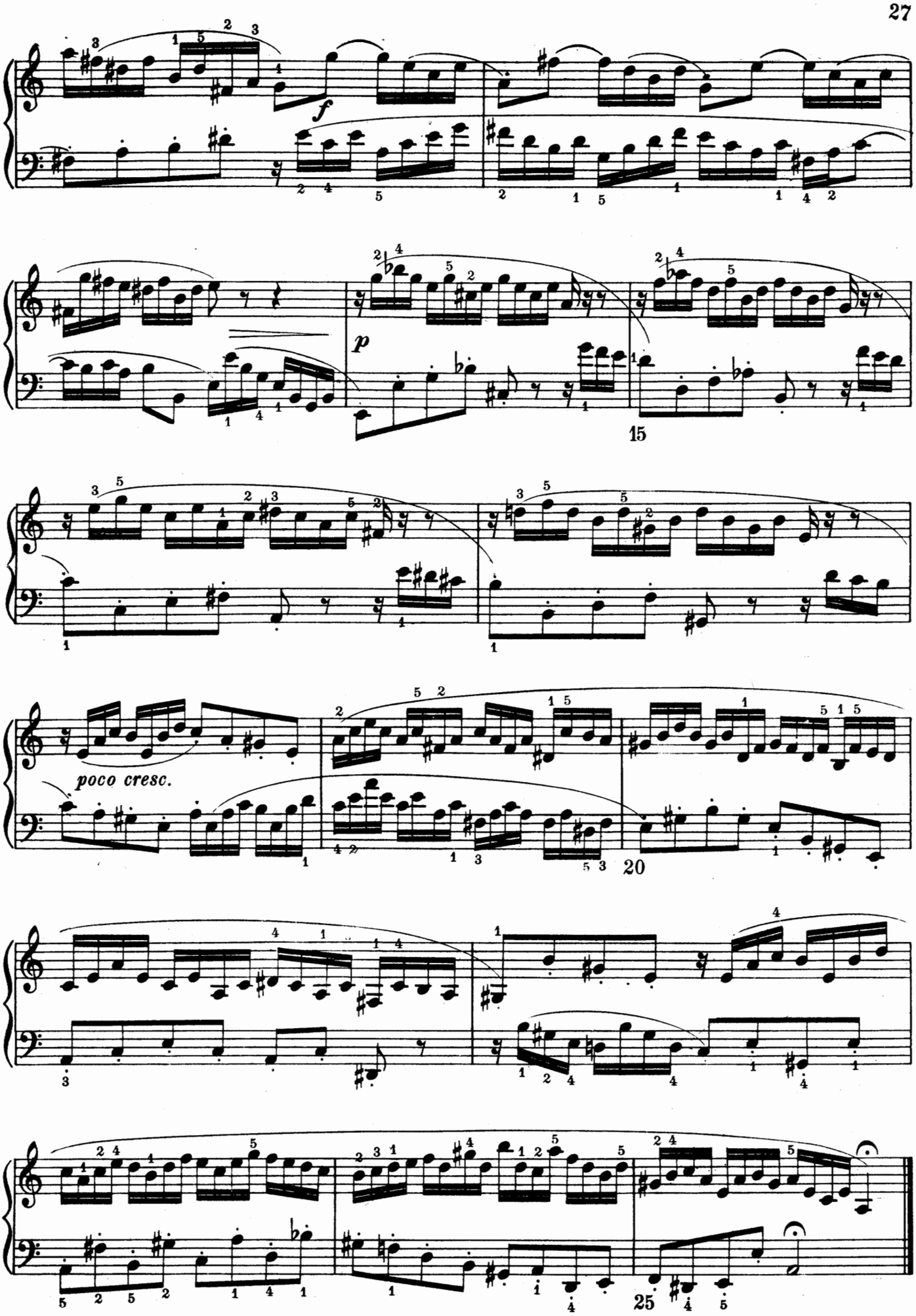


a) The whole movement legato, where not otherwise indicated.

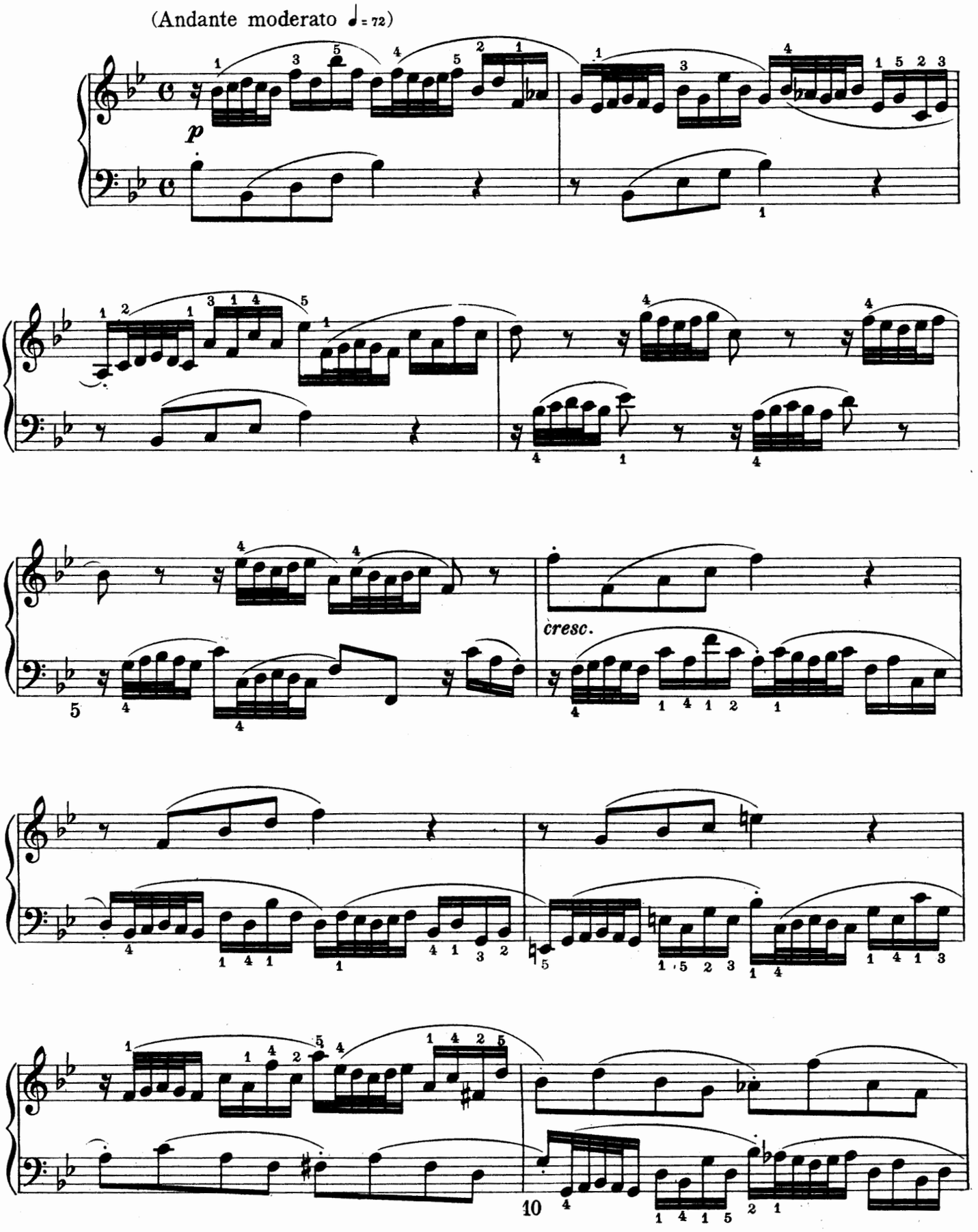

10
f
p
f
15
p
cresc.
f
20

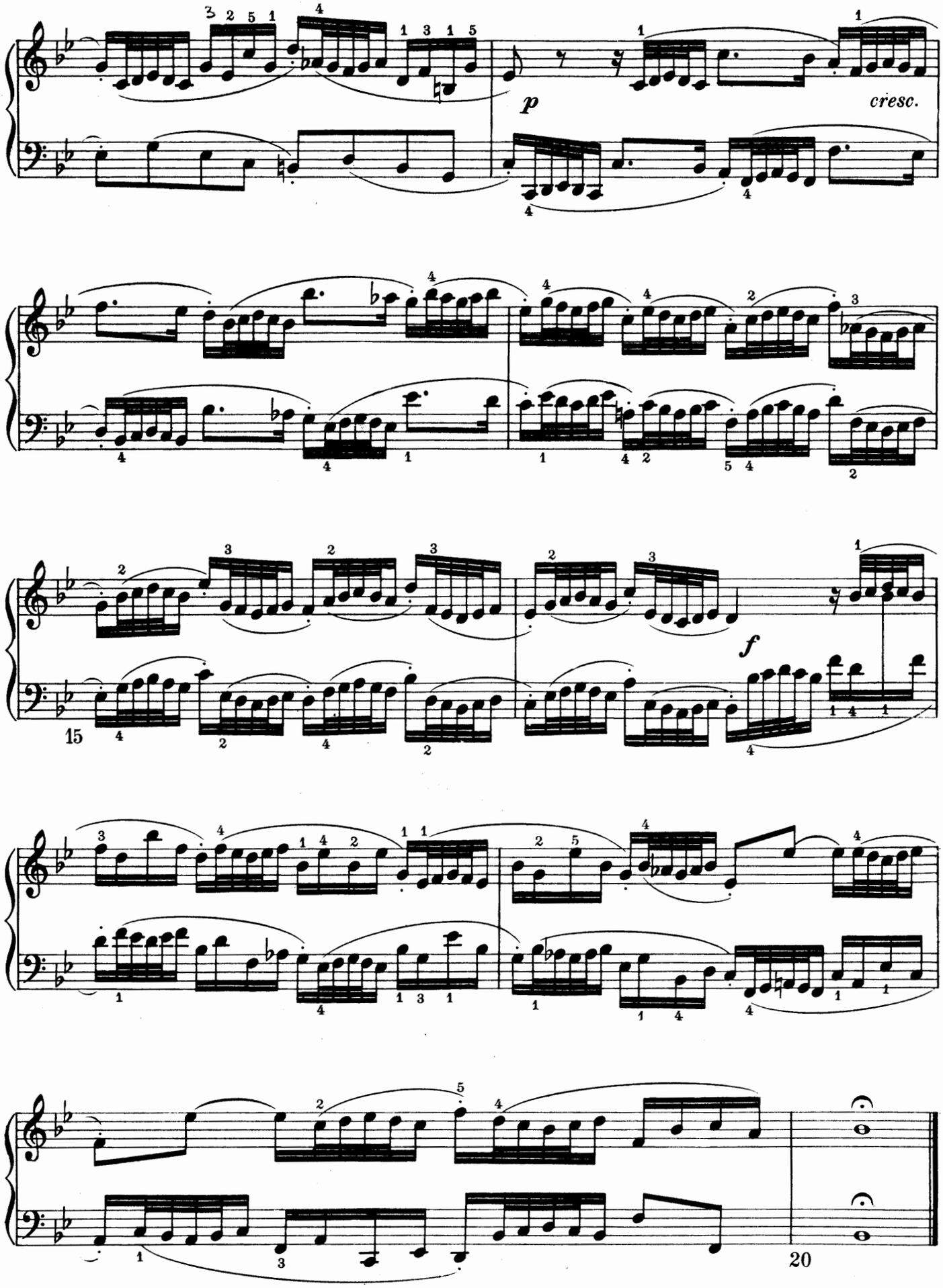
INVENTION XIII, in A minor



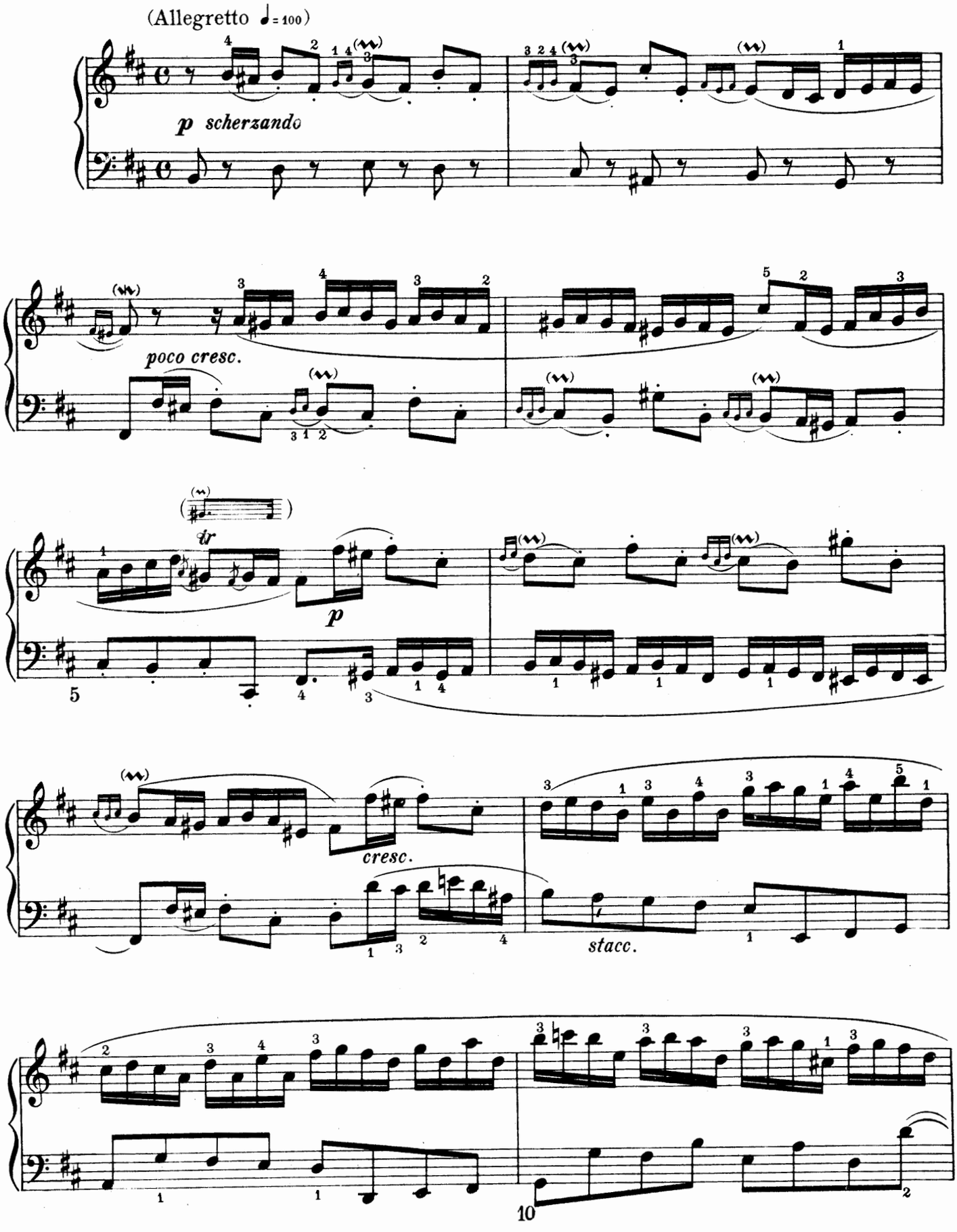

f
p
poco cresc.
15
20
25

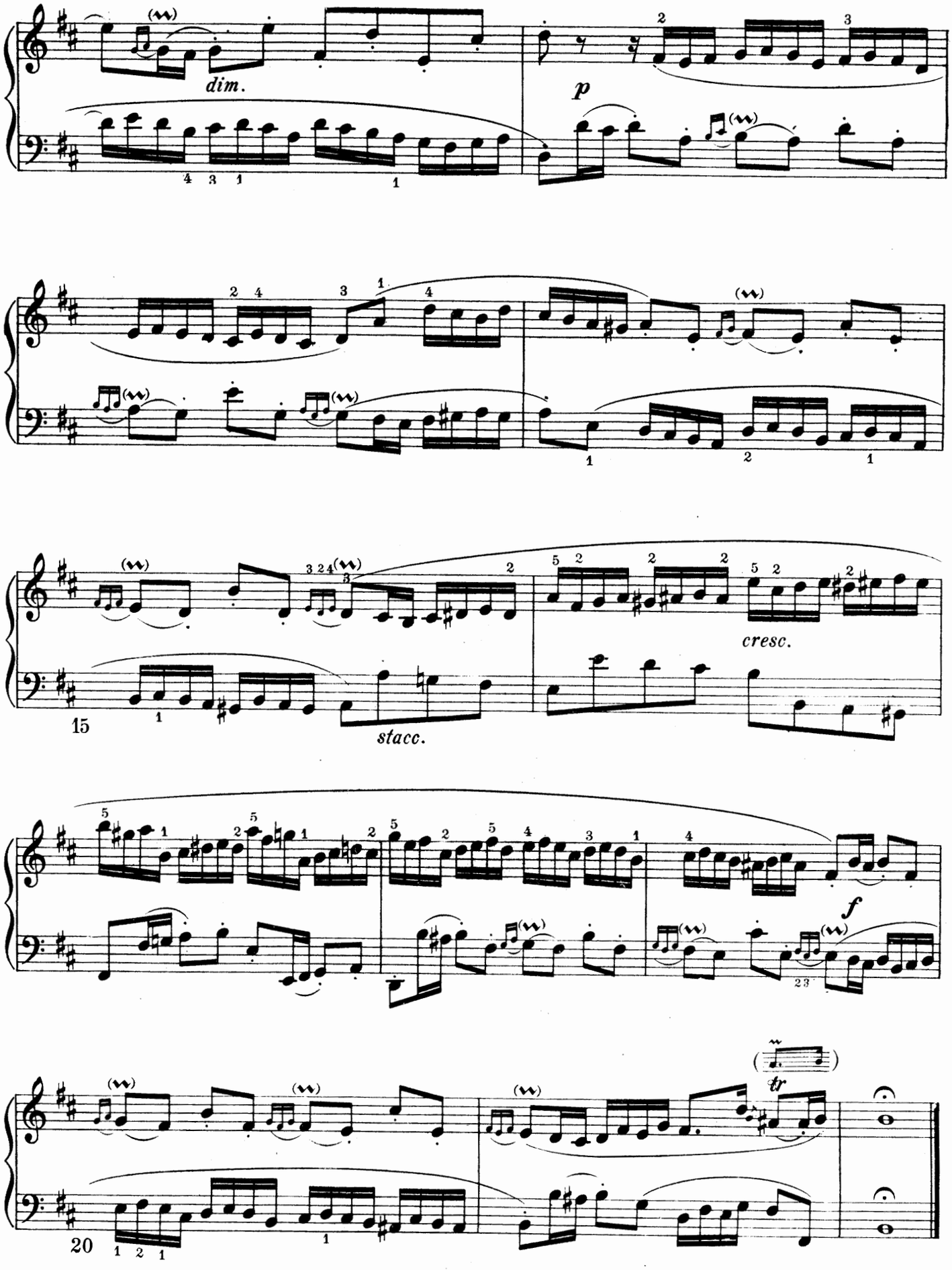
INVENTION XIV, in B♭ major




p
cresc.
15
f
20

INVENTION XV, in B minor




dim.
p
cresc.
15
stacc.
f
tr
20

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