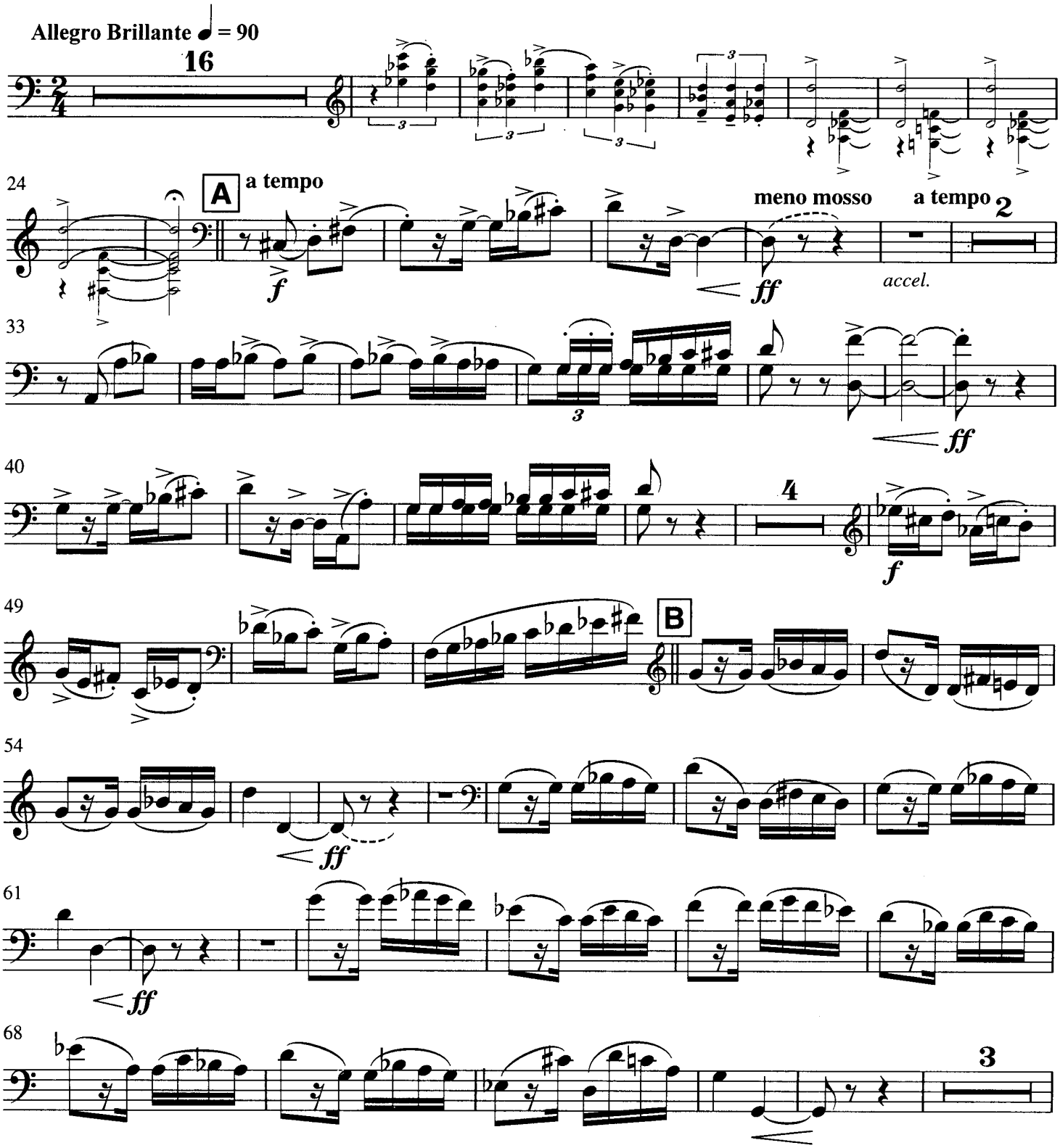
Solo Double Bass*

for François

Nine Variants on Paganini

for Double Bass and Piano

Frank Proto



* *Solo or Orchestra Tuning may be used.*

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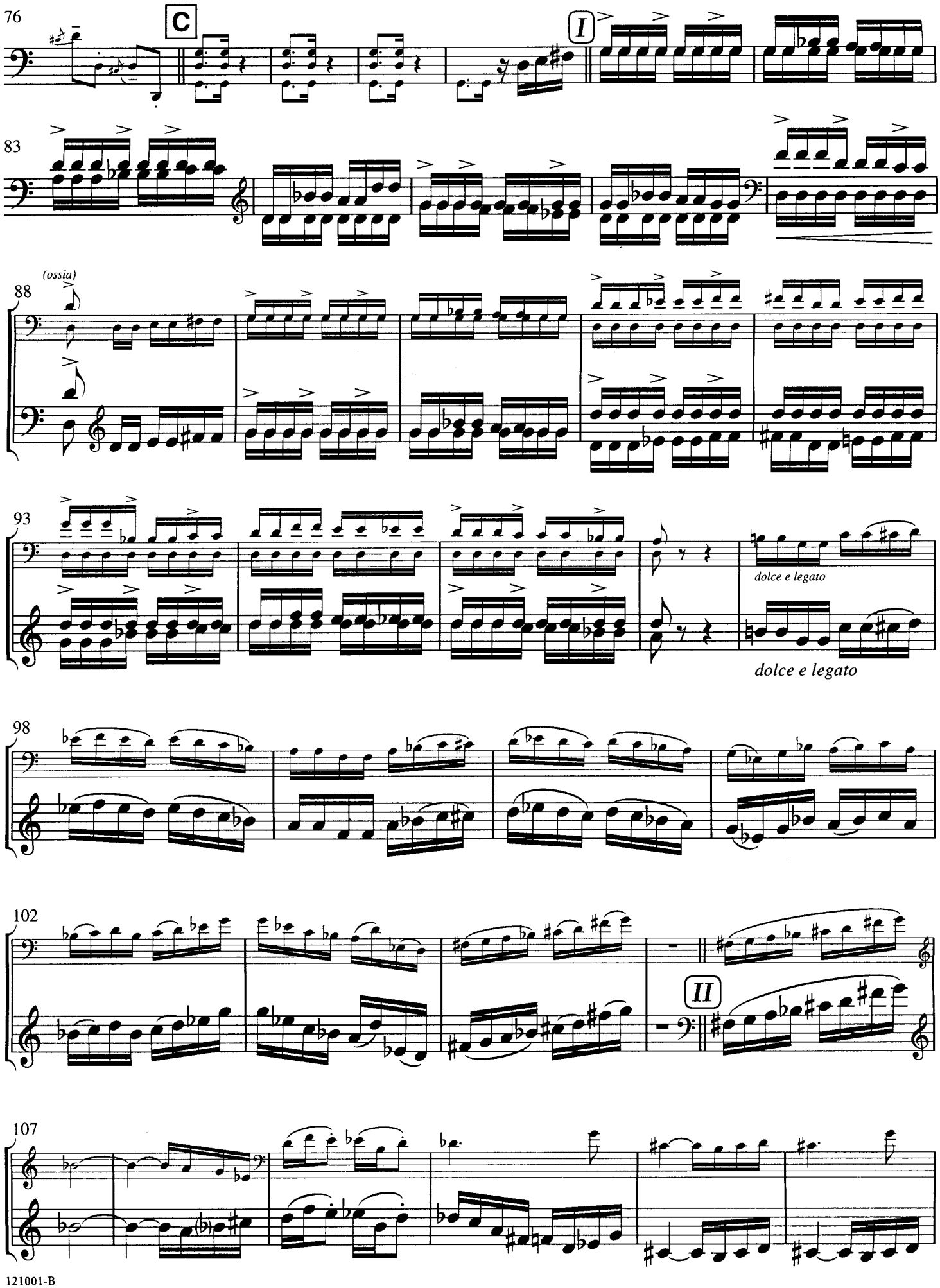
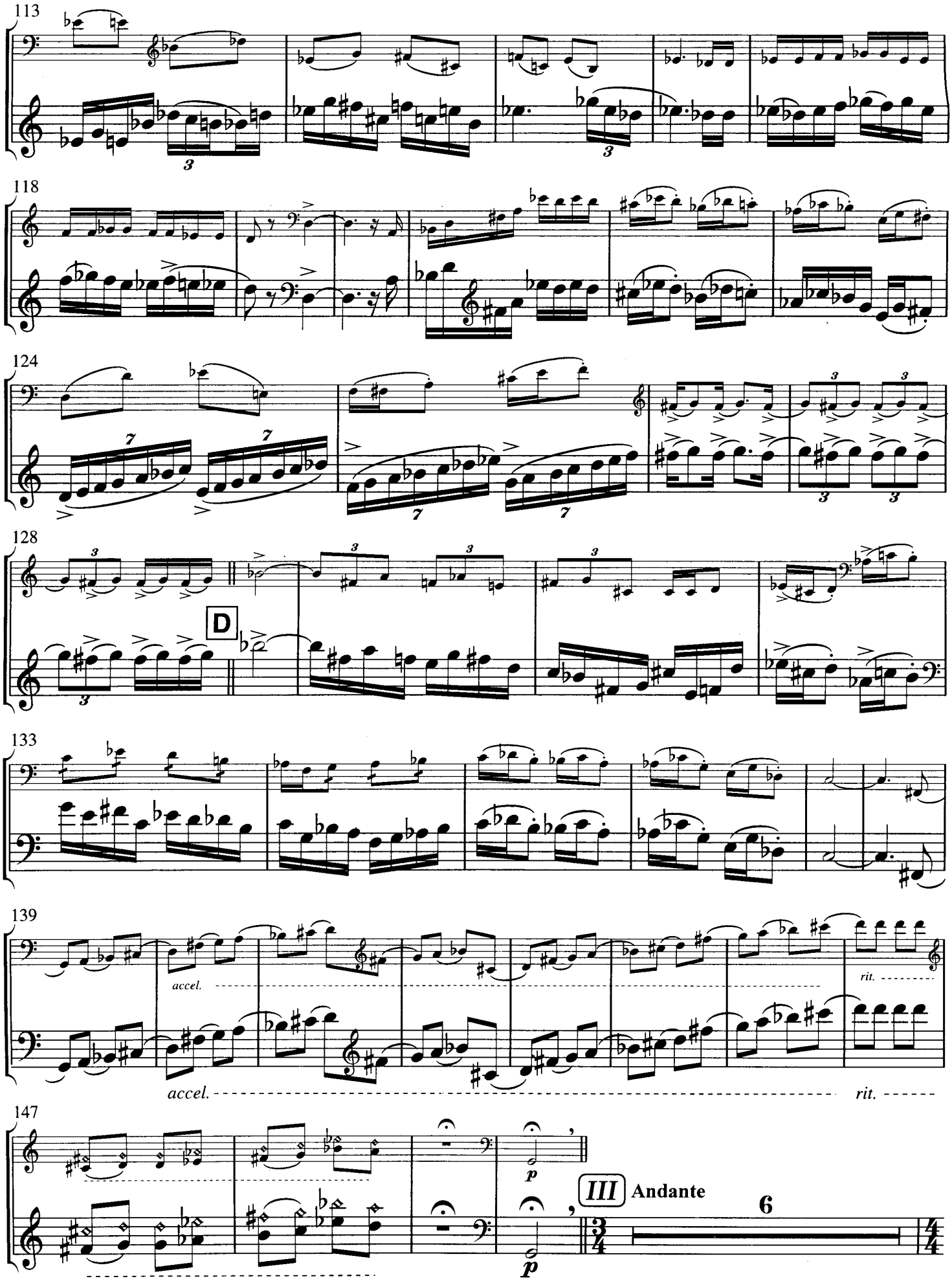
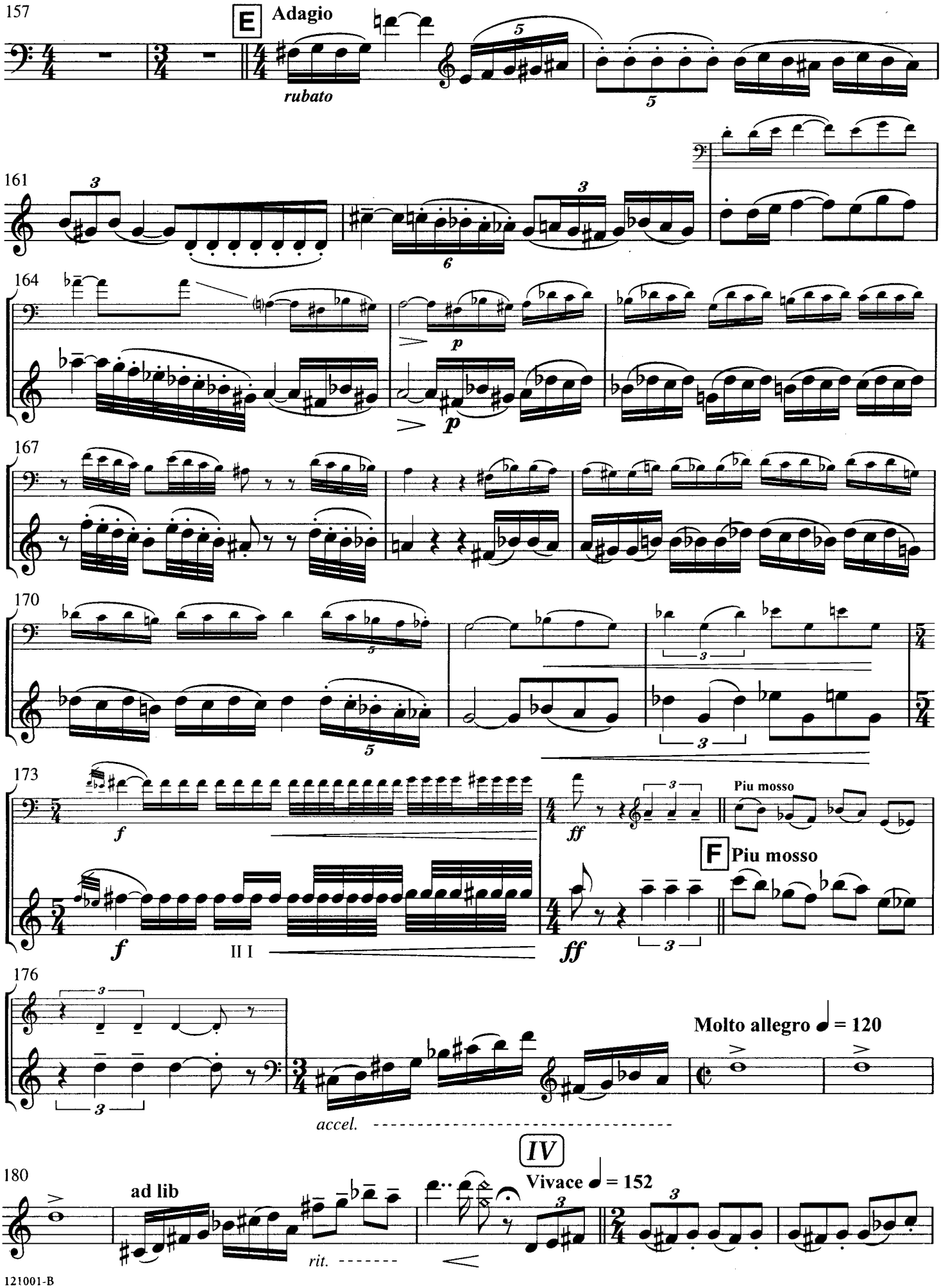
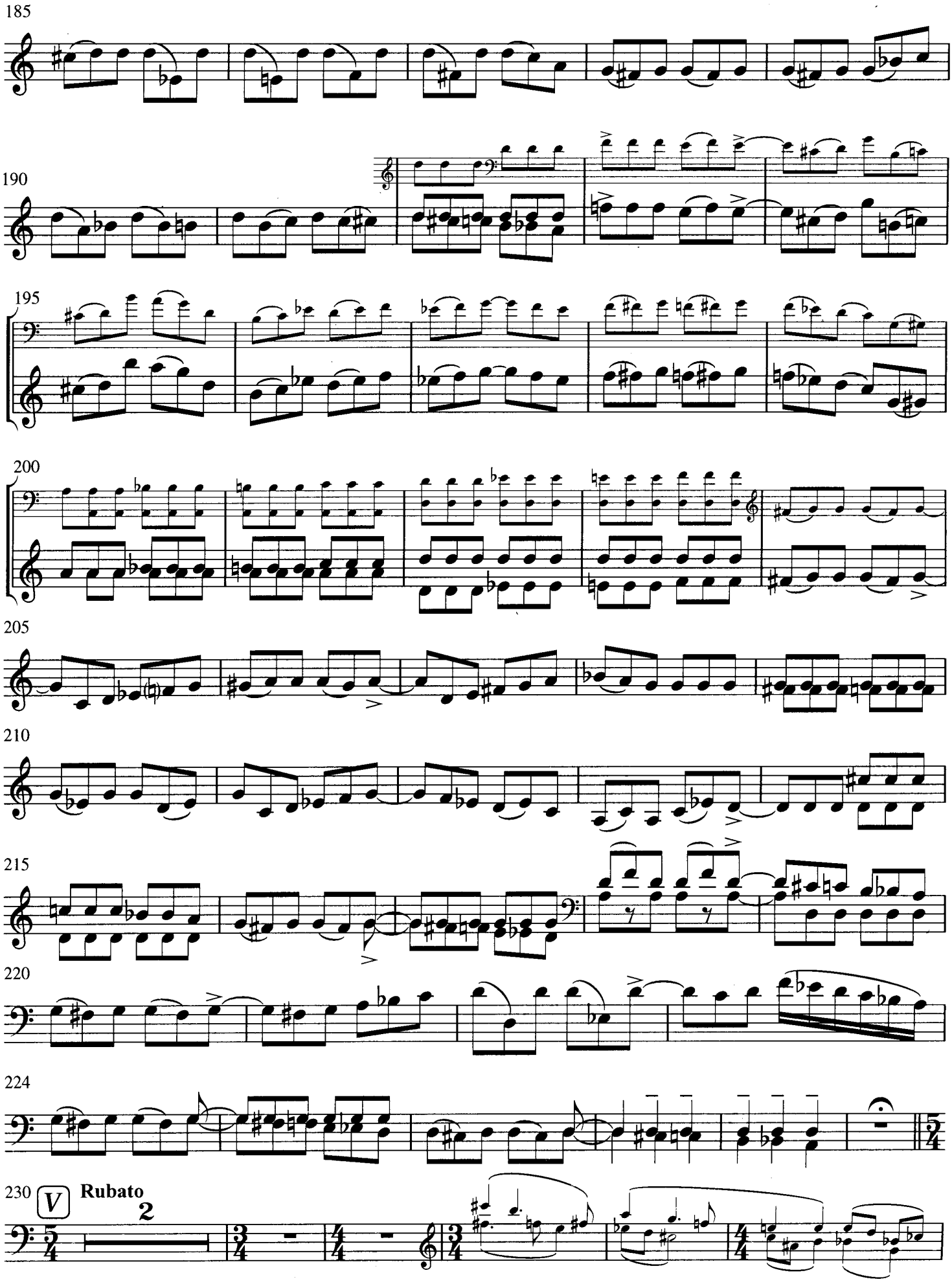
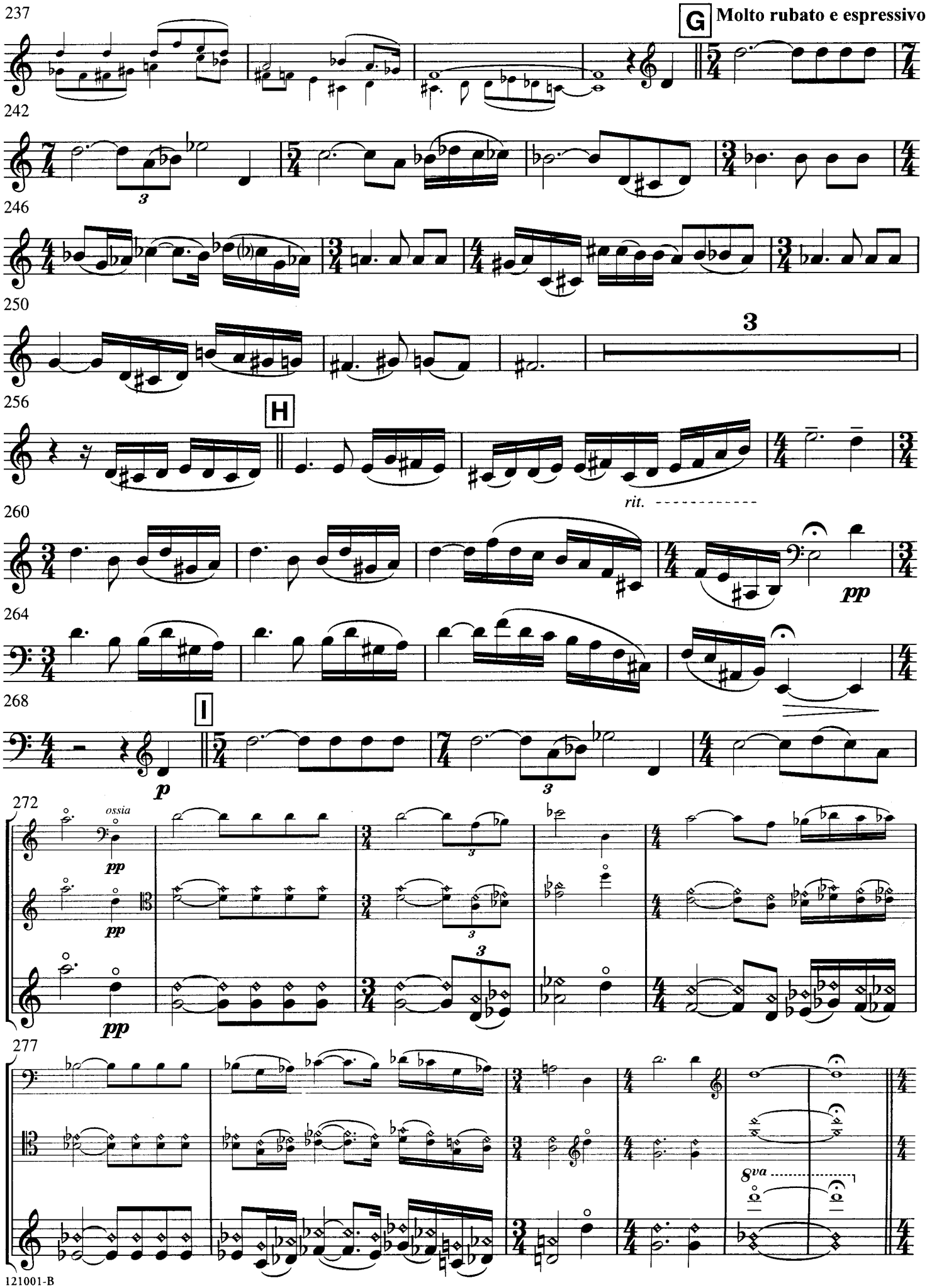
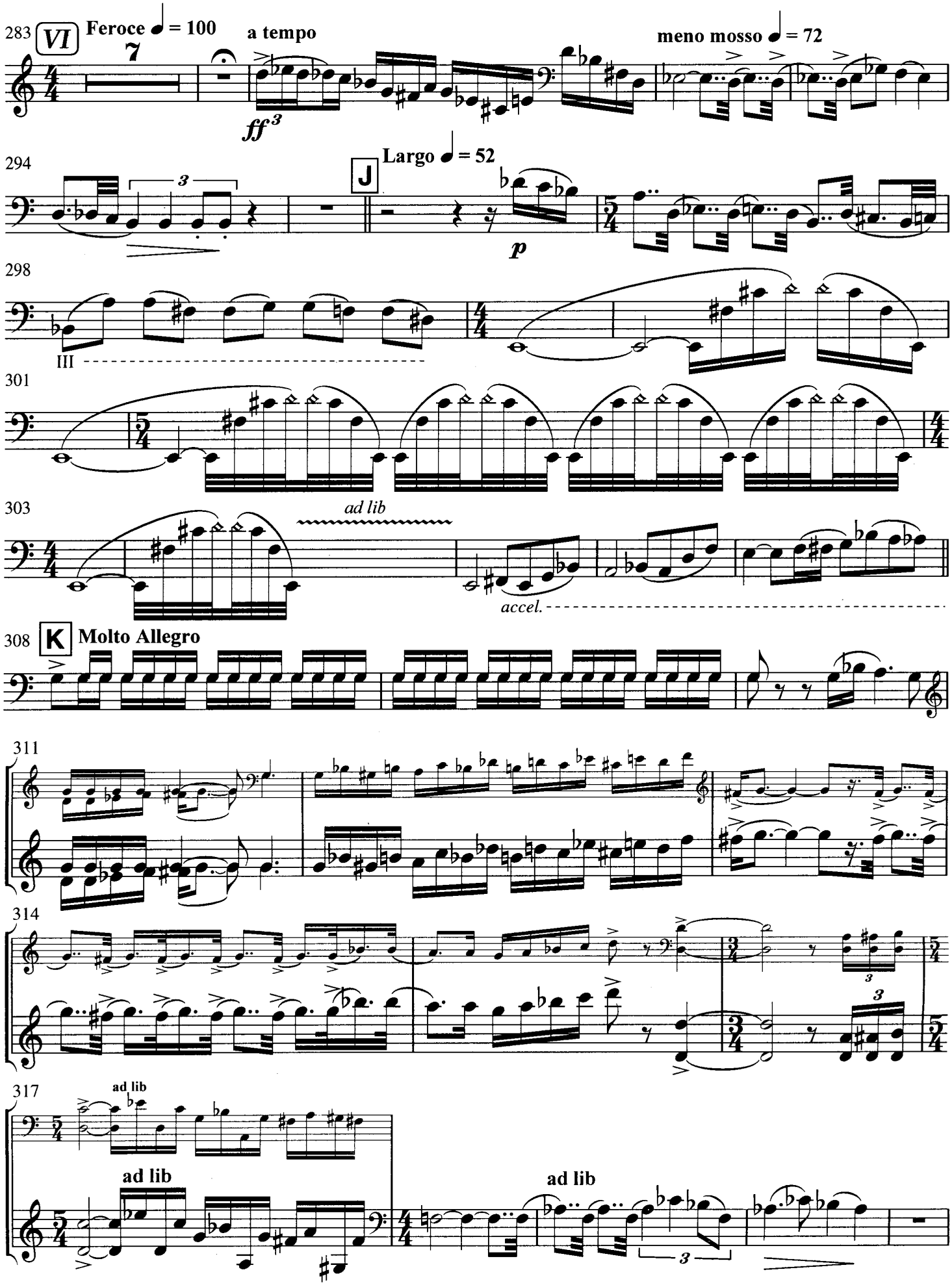

76
C
I
83
(ossia)
88
93
dolce e legato
dolce e legato
98
102
II
107

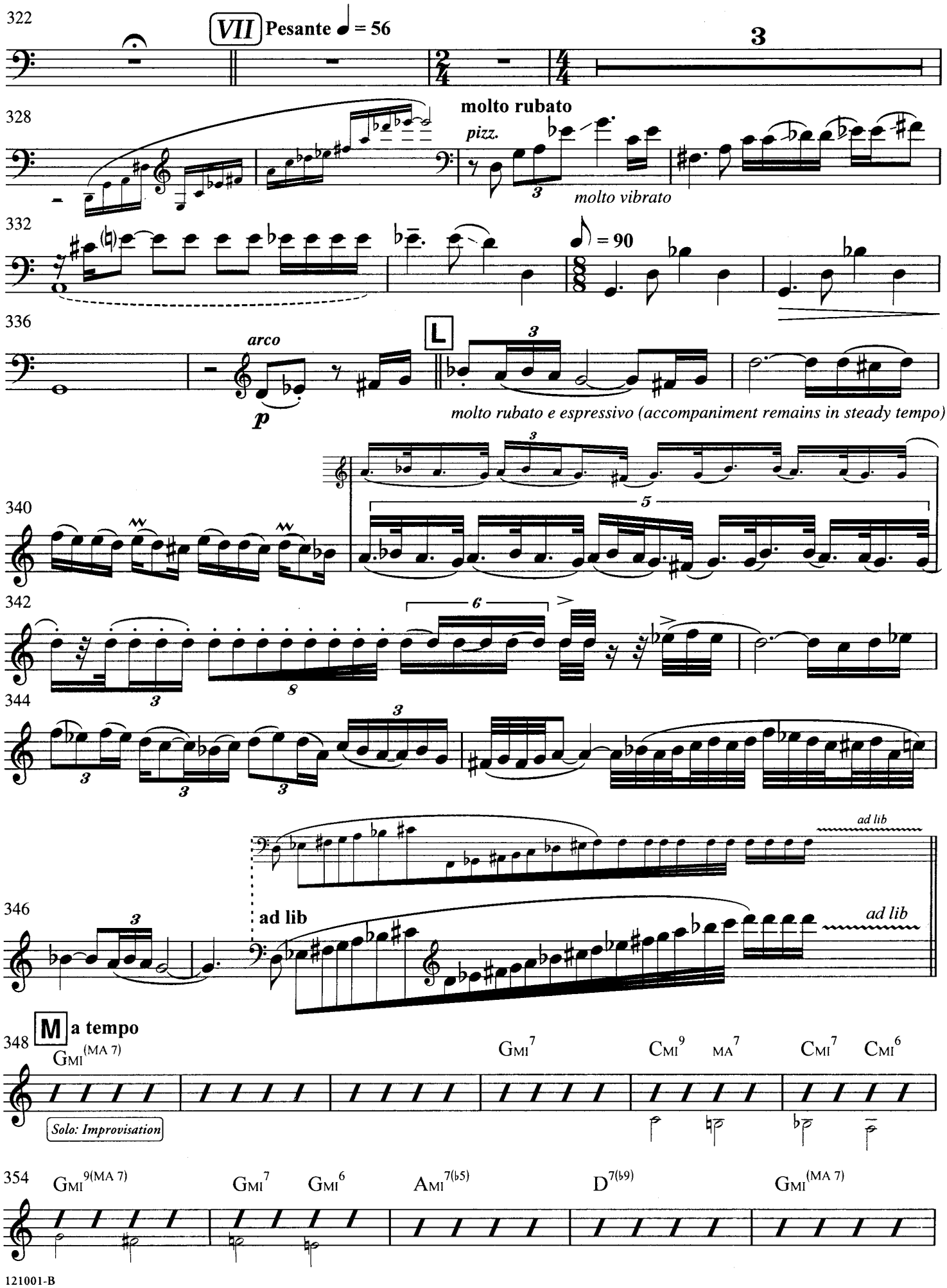

113
118
124
128
D
133
139
accel.
rit.
accel.
rit.
147
p
III Andante
6
p

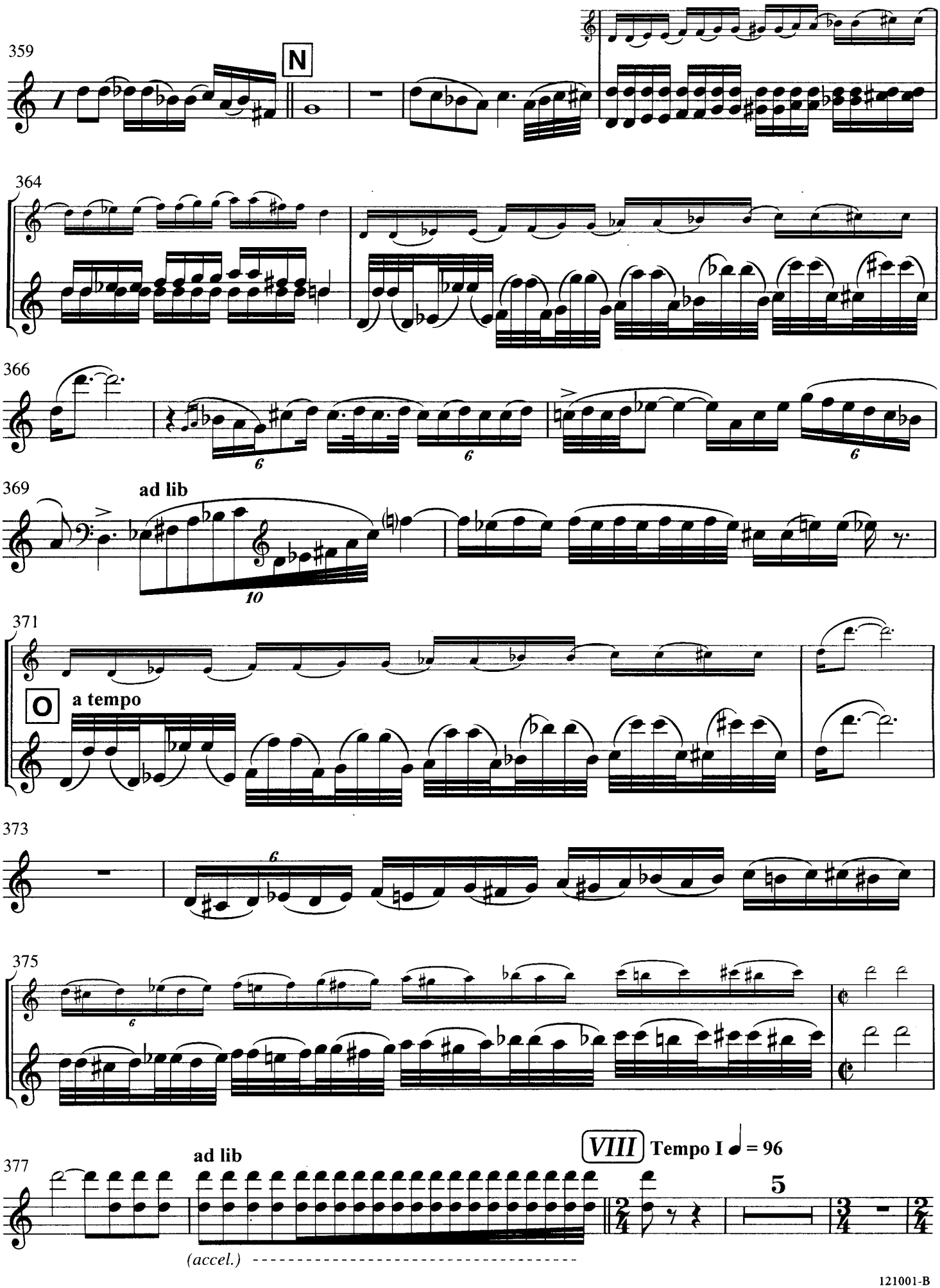

157
E
Adagio
rubato
161
164
p
167
170
173
f
ff
Piu mosso
F
Piu mosso
II I
176
Molto allegro ♩ = 120
accel.
IV
180
ad lib
rit.
Vivace ♩ = 152

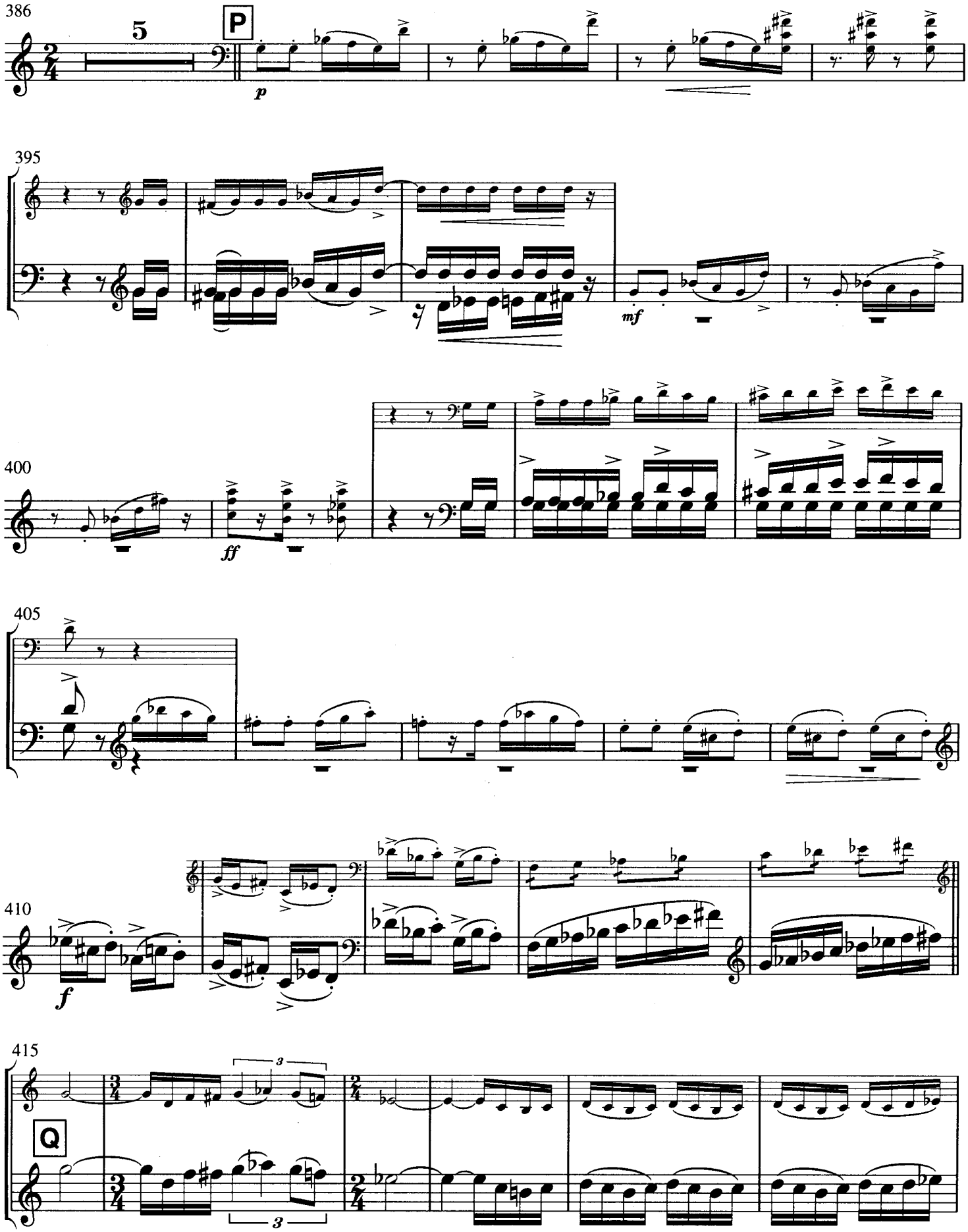

185
190
195
200
205
210
215
220
224
230
V
Rubato
2

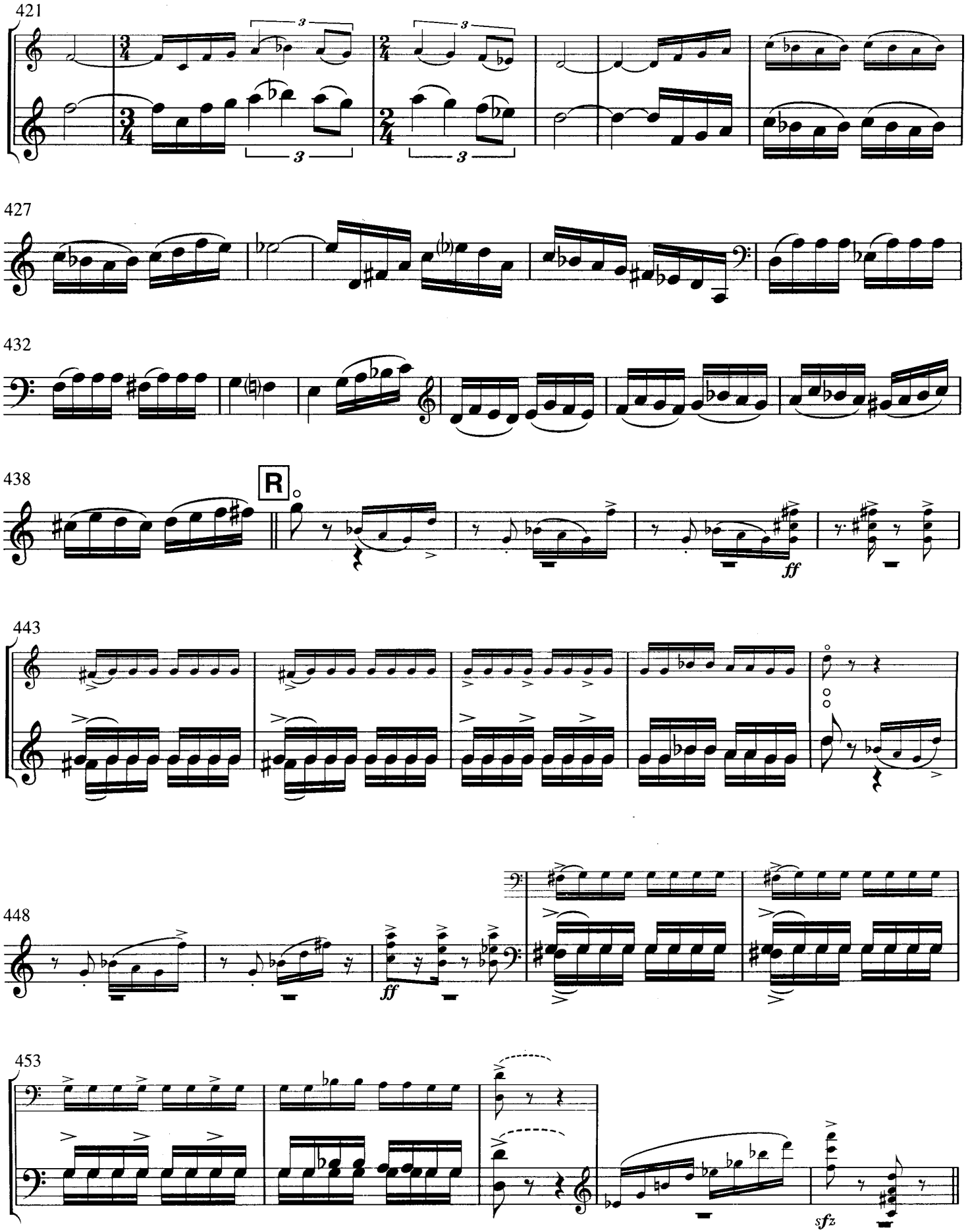

237
G
Molto rubato e espressivo
242
246
250
3
256
H
260
rit.
pp
264
268
I
p
272
ossia
pp
277
8va


283
VI
Feroce ♩ = 100
7
a tempo
ff 3
meno mosso ♩ = 72
294
J
Largo ♩ = 52
p
298
III
301
303
ad lib
accel.
308
K
Molto Allegro
311
314
317
ad lib
ad lib
ad lib


322
VII Pesante ♩ = 56
3
328
molto rubato
pizz.
molto vibrato
332
♪ = 90
336
arco
L
p
molto rubato e espressivo (accompaniment remains in steady tempo)
340
342
344
346
ad lib
ad lib
ad lib
348
M a tempo
GMI(MA 7)
GMI7
CMI9 MA7
CMI7
CMI6
Solo: Improvisation
354
GMI9(MA 7)
GMI7
GMI6
AMI7(♭5)
D7(♭9)
GMI(MA 7)


359
N
364
366
6
6
6
369
ad lib
10
371
O
a tempo
373
6
375
6
377
ad lib
VIII
Tempo I ♩ = 96
5
(accel.)


386
5
P
p
395
mf
400
ff
405
410
f
415
Q
3
3


421
427
432
438
R
ff
443
448
ff
453
sfz

458

IX

* Cadenza

end of cadenza

Presto

ff

462 S

467

473

477

481

molto rit.

p

a tempo

ff

ad lib

molto rit.

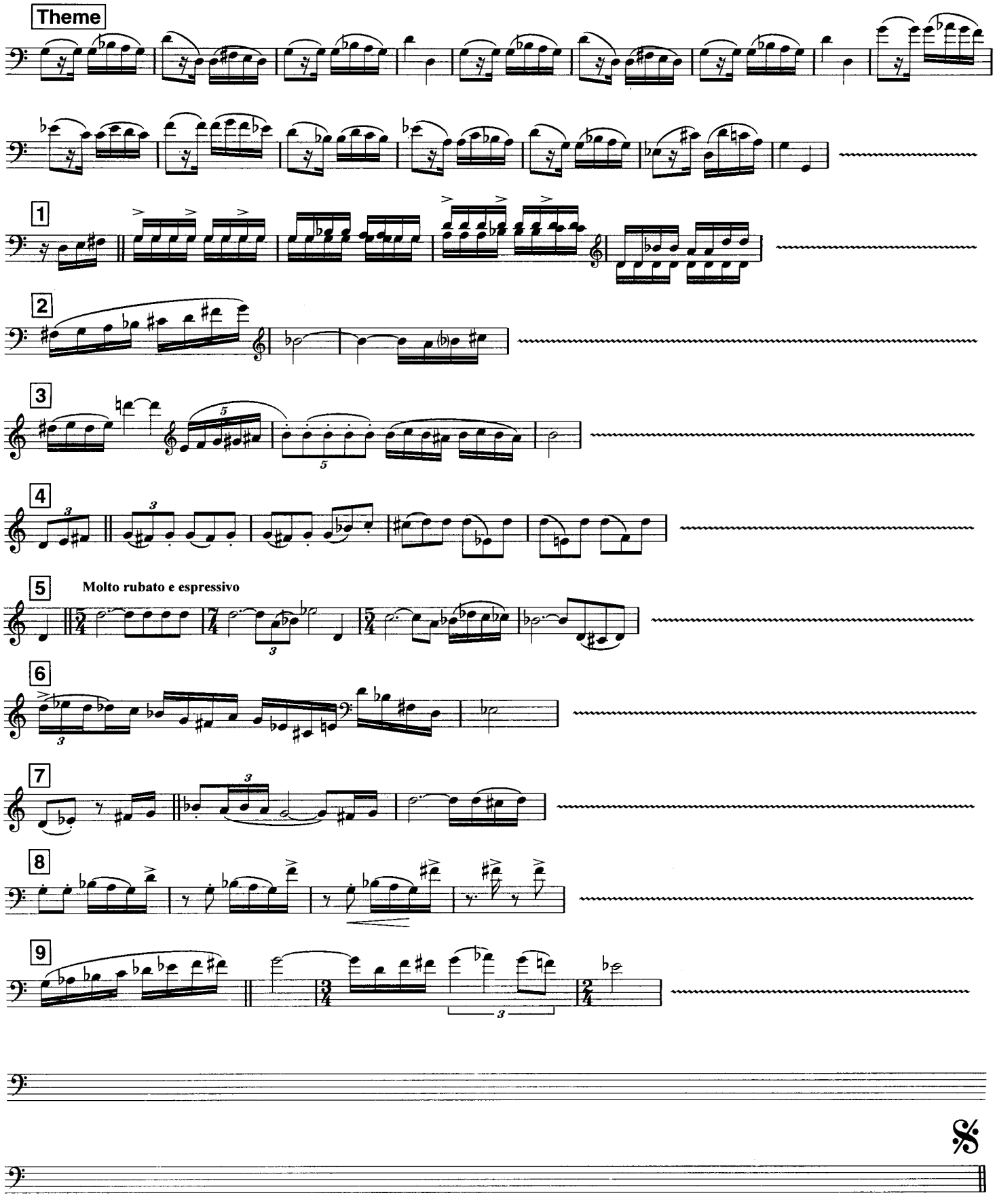
p

a tempo

ff

* *See Notes - Page 14 and 15.*

Ingredients



To Cadenza or not to Cadenza

I have not composed a *cadenza* for the Nine Variants because I believe that at some point in any concerto-like work the soloist should be free to bring his own conception, personality, thoughts and ideas into the performance. Ideally the *cadenza* should be an improvised reflection on the written elements of the piece, singularly created for each performance. While this type of improvisation is alive and well in jazz, various kinds of ethnic or folk music and even in some styles of popular music, it is virtually non-existent in most *classical* music today.

I am writing these words in an age where most performances of the great concerti in the standard repertoire strive mightily to sound the same. Playing fast movements at break-neck speed or languishing over slow movements is not really the essence of inspired musical thought. Yet performers who do dare to stray outside the accepted boundaries of today's expectations are clobbered with accusations of being crude, uncultivated or tacky and are attacked with any number of other venomous denunciations. Of course there are many instances where nasty incriminations are probably more than justified. However, wouldn't it be exciting to go to a performance wondering what the soloist was going to do with all of the musical materials that the composer has provided him when that spot known as ***The Cadenza*** arrives in the music? Better still - how about hearing that same artist the next evening, the next week or the next year playing the same work, realizing a totally different *cadenza* (or would it be an *improvisation?*) and mulling over the differences of each performance with some friends?

To help achieve this goal I've given you a list of elements or *ingredients* taken from the body of the piece. They are the *theme* and the beginning of each *variation.* Following are a few hints on how you might make use of them:

- Refer to them as *reminders* of the various materials that make up the piece.
- Refer to them as a jazz musician refers to the *chord changes* to remind him of the underlying harmonic structure of a piece.
- Take only three or four ingredients and develop them exhaustively.
- Make a collage using minute elements of many of them.
- Work them out in a different order each time you use them.
- Ignore them and work out a free improvisation from memory based loosely on any elements of the piece that suit you at the moment.
- At the bottom of the page there are two blank staves. Use them to make notes to remind yourself of any other motifs, elements, ornaments, patterns or figures that you might want to use.

If you are not accustomed to improvising, composing and/or arranging don't be afraid to try. Even great improvisers will tell you *it doesn't always work.* Superb jazz musicians, avant-garde performers, song stylists or even gypsy fiddle players will be happy with their improvisations only a small percentage of the time. But audiences - especially attentive ones - love the element of surprise and can, under the right circumstances, help performers to go beyond what even they believe might be their limitations.

Program Notes

Niccolo Paganini's 24th Violin Caprice has inspired composers for many generations. The simple 16-measure tune lends itself both melodically and harmonically to a myriad of treatments from styles classical to the avant-garde. If there were such a thing as *repertoire for composers* this little melody would certainly occupy a prominent spot. Whether writing short variations on the melody or developing longer *songs* or *movement-like* segments using mainly its harmonic underpinnings, it is one of those challenges that - *when all's said & done* - is just plain fun.

Working with the 24th Caprice though usually implies more than just *fun.* Paganini (1782-1840) is still regarded as one of the greatest violinists of all time. Though ill for much of his life, he managed to transform the technique of the violin both as a performer and a composer, influencing giants such as Robert Schumann, Berlioz, Brahms, Rachmaninov, Liszt and Lutoslawski. If there is one word that comes to mind when thinking of Paganini that word has to be *virtuoso.* So here is where we want to have some great fun. But here is where we also run into a bit of trouble, because for the performer it is not *easy* fun – although *easy* is the way it has to appear to the audience.

All ages have their virtuosi and ours is no exception. For us double bassists, through the efforts of some exceptional performers and teachers, the past 40 years or so have also seen a great advancement in the playing technique of our instrument. One of these performers is François Rabbath whom I've had the pleasure of collaborating with for the past 25 years. Rabbath (born in 1931) has helped to transform the playing technique of the instrument both through his performing and more importantly, by documenting his very unique technique in his multi-volume method: *Nouvelle Technique de la Contrebasse (A New Technique for the Double Bass).* He possesses an astounding, Paganini-like technique and is one of those virtuosi who have the ability to make the extremely difficult sound easy. The *Nine Variants* was composed for and dedicated to him.

François Rabbath performed the world premiere performance of the *Nine Variants on Paganini for Double Bass and Orchestra* with the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra on March 31, 2002.

Frank Proto
February, 2002