STORYTELLING IN THE ROMANTIC AGE:
THE LANGUAGE OF SCHUMANN & MEDTNER

A Lecture Recital by Luke Ratcliffe

NIKOLAI MEDTNER (1879-1951)

Introduction to Medtner's Life

Mixed Ethnicity - Different "Streams"

- Robust Education
- Early Exposure
- Musical Style and Relevance

"MOSCOW... HOW MANY STRAINS ARE FUSING IN THAT ONE SOUND, FOR RUSSIAN HEARTS! WHAT STORE OF RICHES IT IMPARTS?"
~ ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

A RICH TRADITION

Characteristics of Russian Skazki:

- Magical
- Everyday
- Animal
- Moral

SKAZKA IN G-SHARP MINOR, OP.31 NO.3

- Dedicated to the late Alexei Stanchinsky
- Twilight theme, arpeggio
- Narrative elements
- Evocative terminology

SKAŻKA IN B-FLAT MINOR, OP.20 NO.1

- An Outpouring of Worldly Sorrow
- Overwhelming Climax
- Constant Downward Movement

"The Bell"

SKAZKA IN B MINOR, OP.20 NO.2

- The Art of Repetition
- Dense Textures
- Rigid Tempo
- Forward Thinking Harmony

SKAŻKA IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP.26 NO.1

- Open Sound
- Repeated Left Hand Figure
- Overlapping Hands
- Bird Calls and Laughter
- Creative Harmonic Development

SKAZKA IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP.26 NO.2

- Syncopated Rhythm
- Feet Stomping
- Dance-like, Graceful, yet Boisterous and Physical
- Capturing Different Aspects of Skazki Theme: Speech, Movement, Vernacular

SKAZKA IN F MINOR, OP.26 NO.3

- Simpler, Delineated Texture
- Dialogue Between Hands & Registers
- Narrative
- Tempo
- Pauses
- Evaporation

SKAZKA IN F-SHARP MINOR, OP.26 NO.4

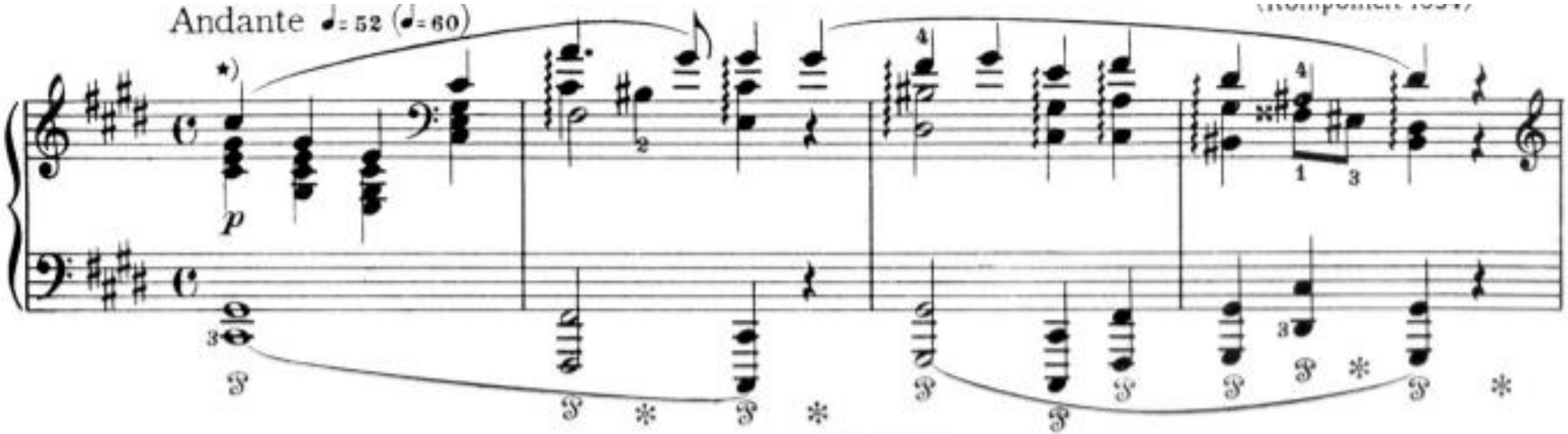
- Bringing it all together
- Persistent
- Odd Transitions
- Rhythm
- Impish

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

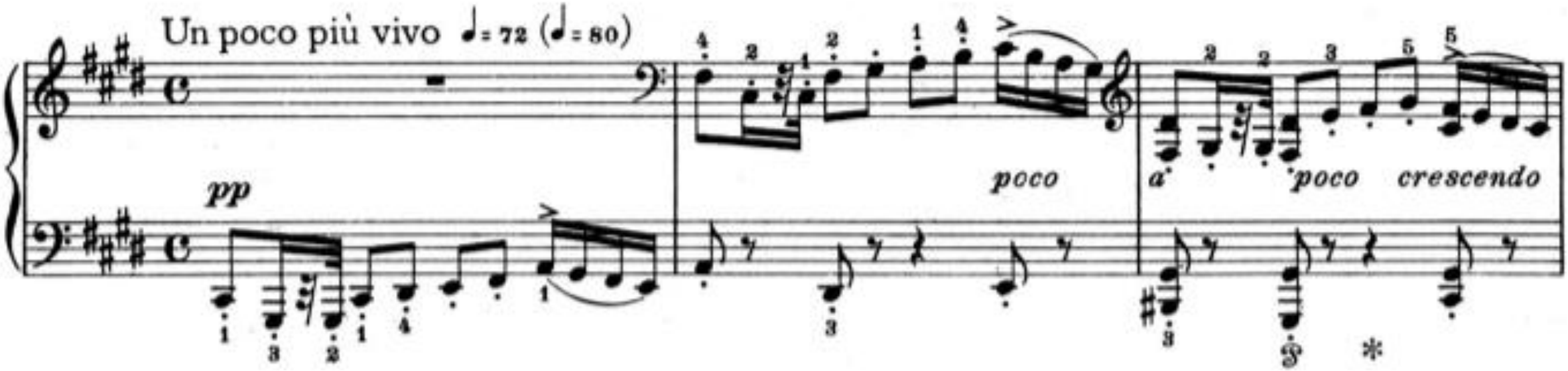
- Early Life
- Musical Style
- Breadth of Works
- Unique Voice

SYMPHONIC ETUDES, OP.13

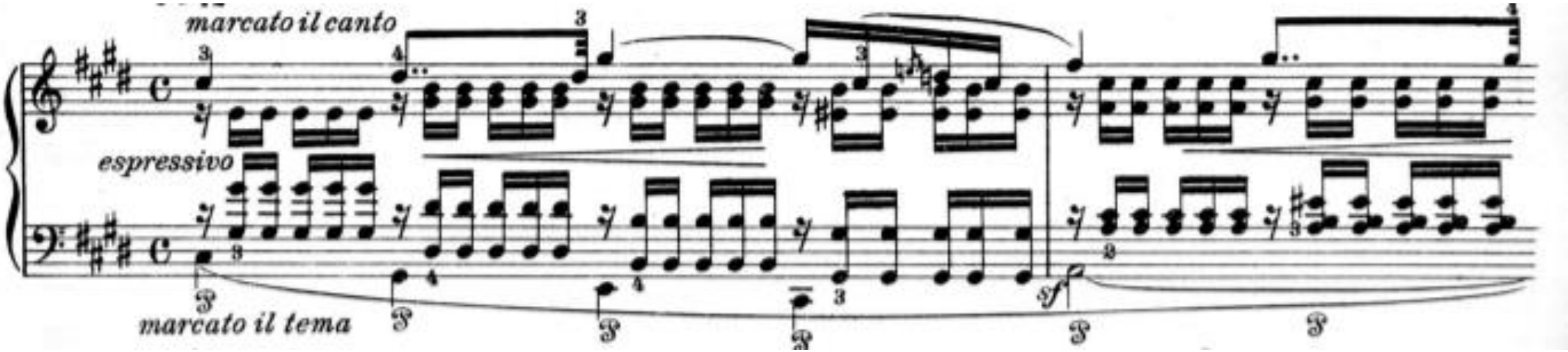
MOVEMENT I: THEME



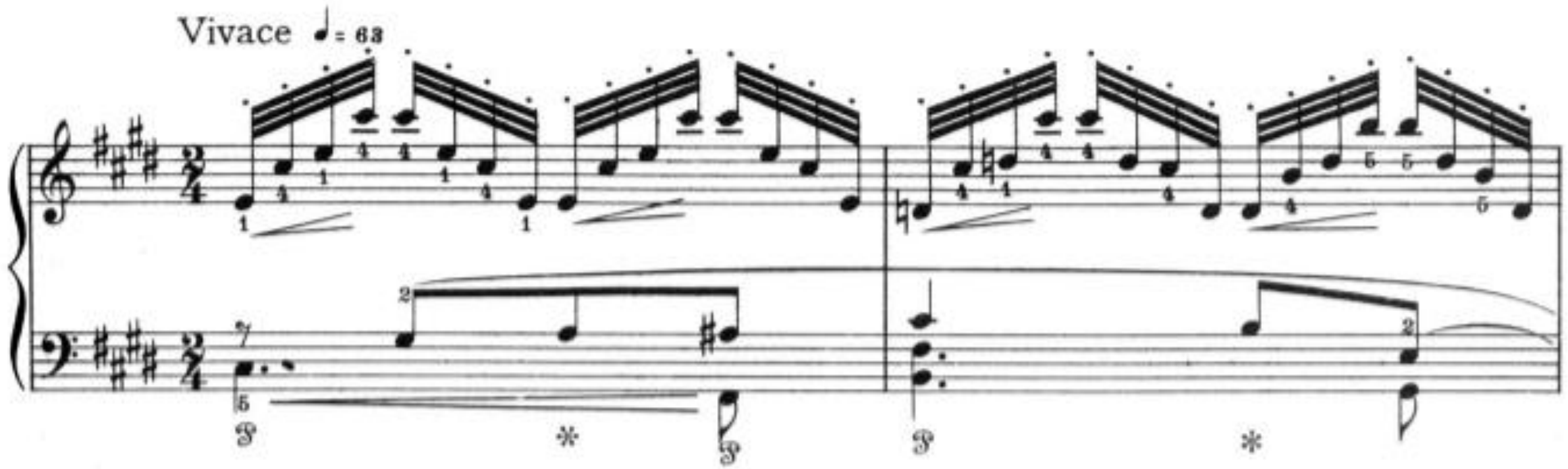
VARIATION I "UN POCO PIU VIVO"



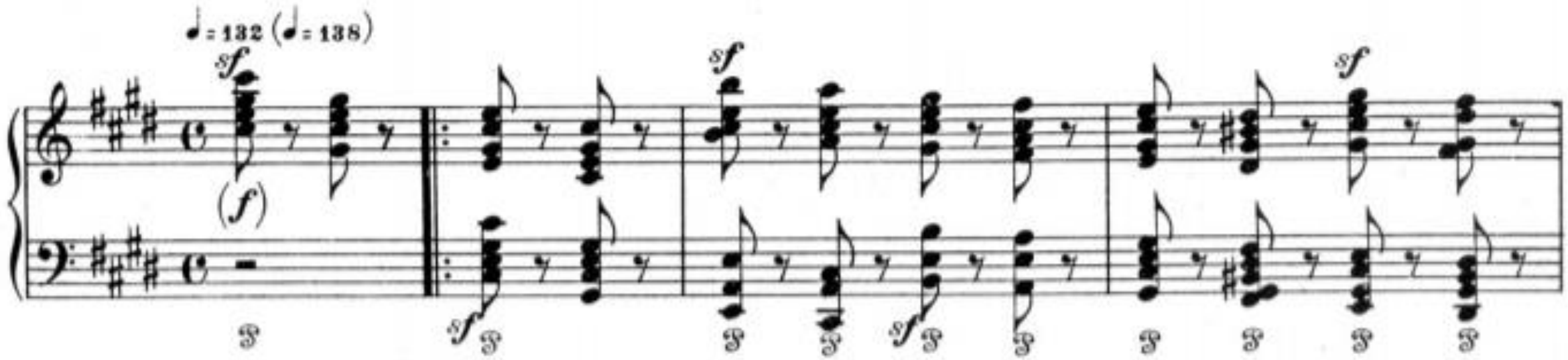
VARIATION II "MARCATO IL CANTO"



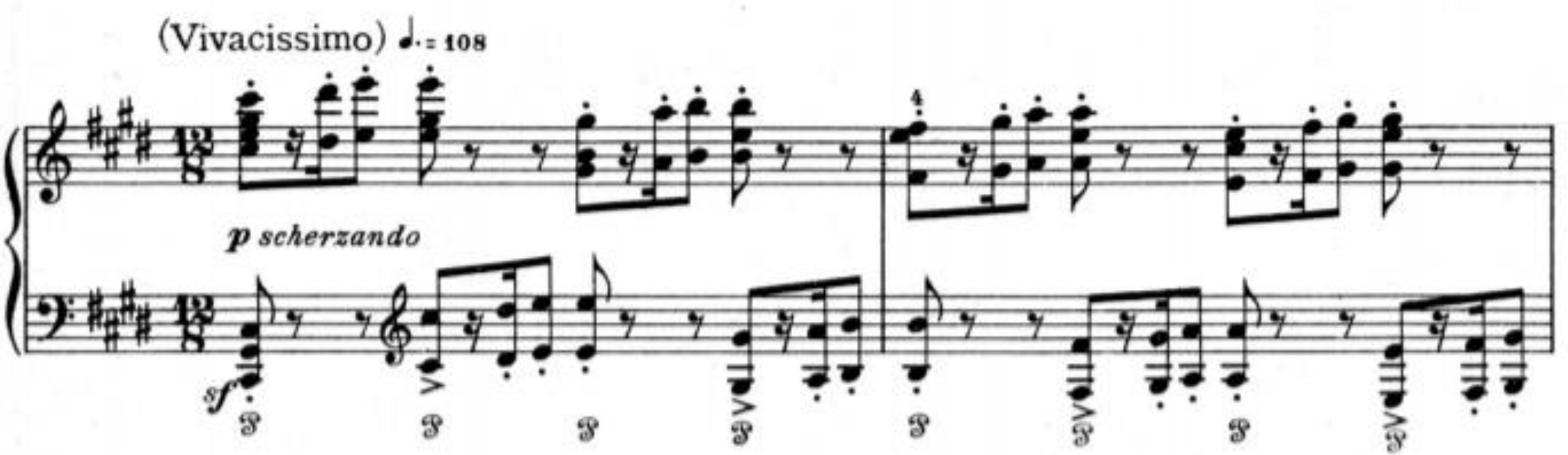
VARIATION III "VIVACE"



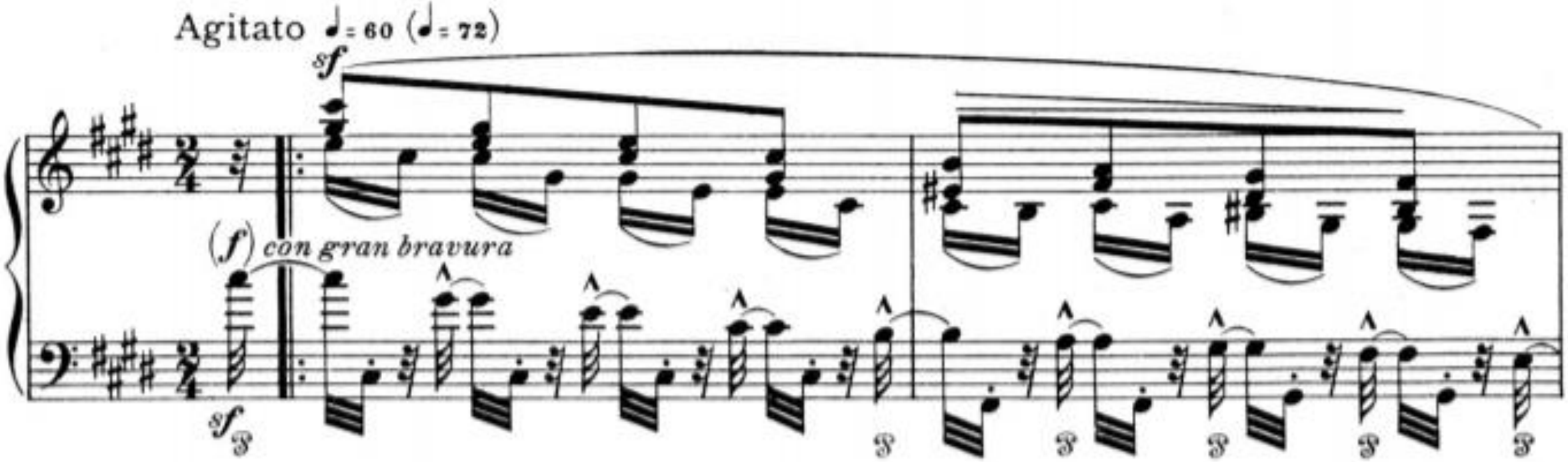
VARIATION IV



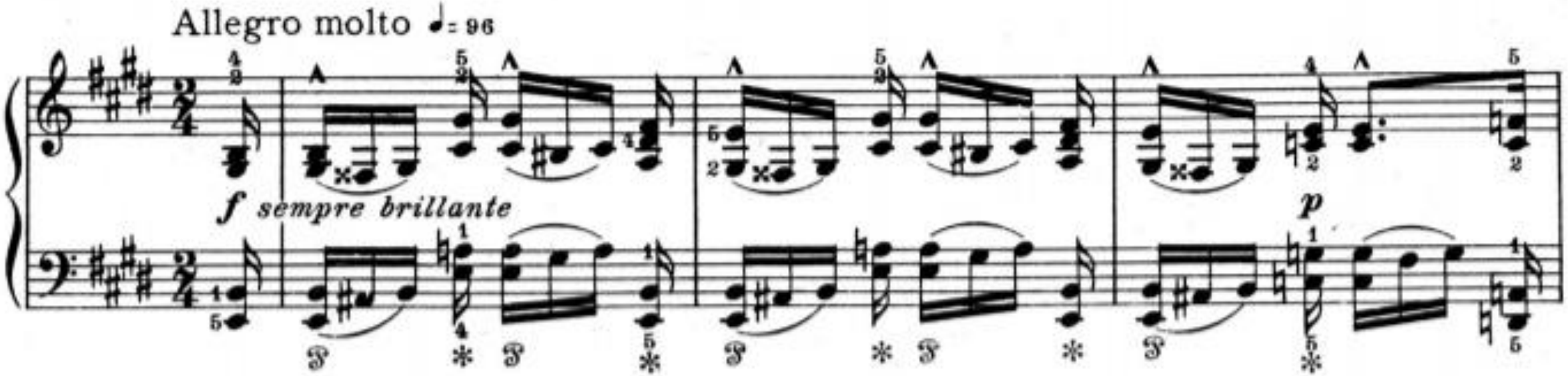
VARIATION V "VIVACISSIMO"



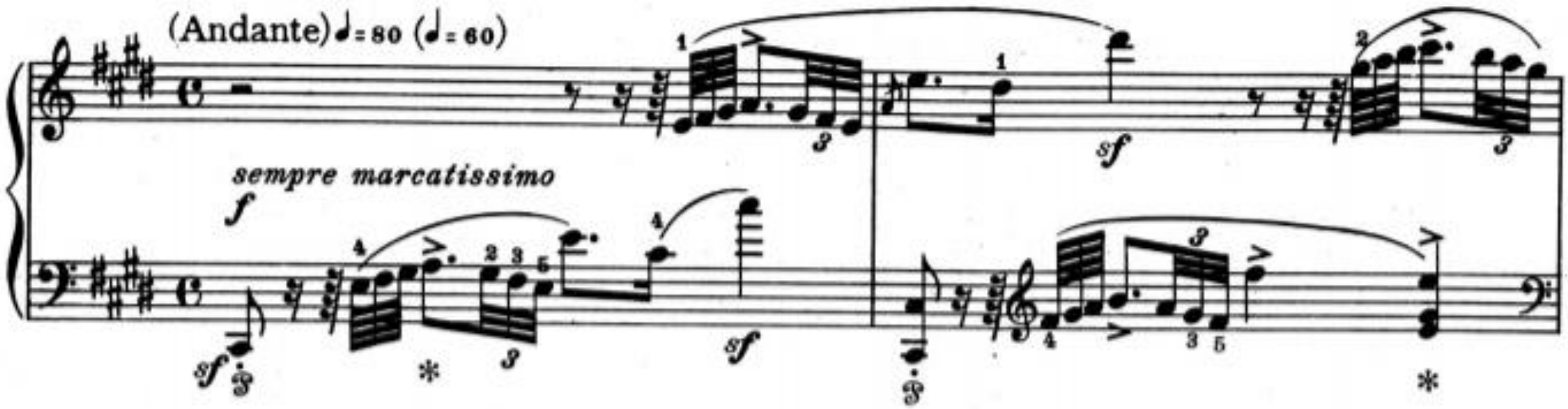
VARIATION VI "AGITATO"



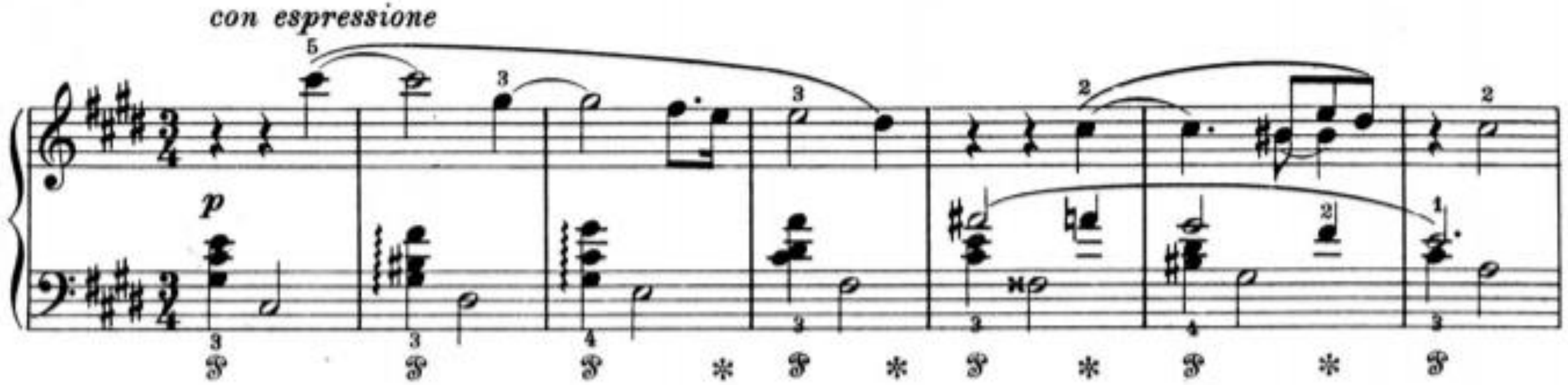
VARIATION VII "ALLEGRO MOLTO"



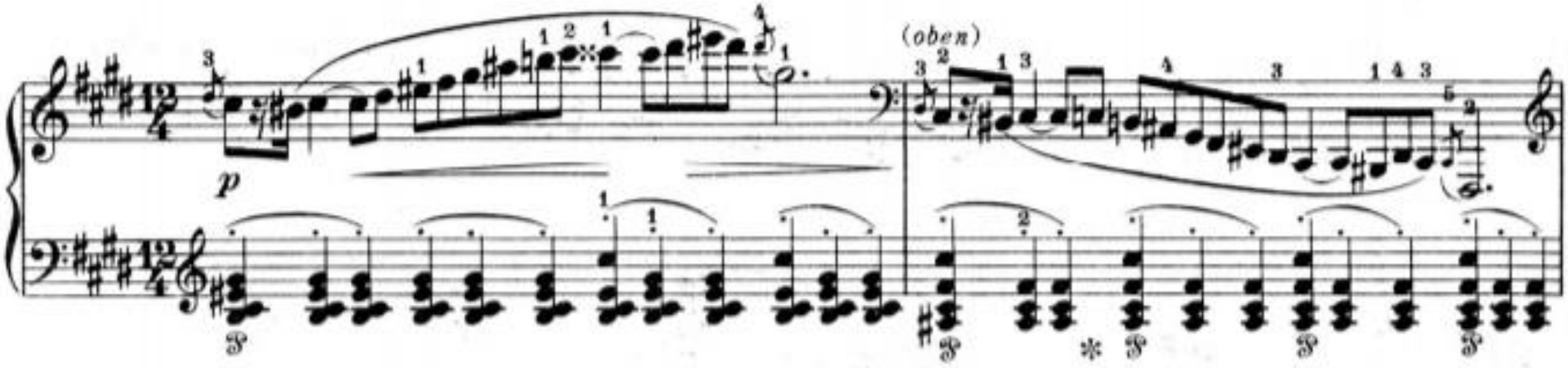
VARIATION VIII "ANDANTE - SEMPRE MARCATISSIMO"



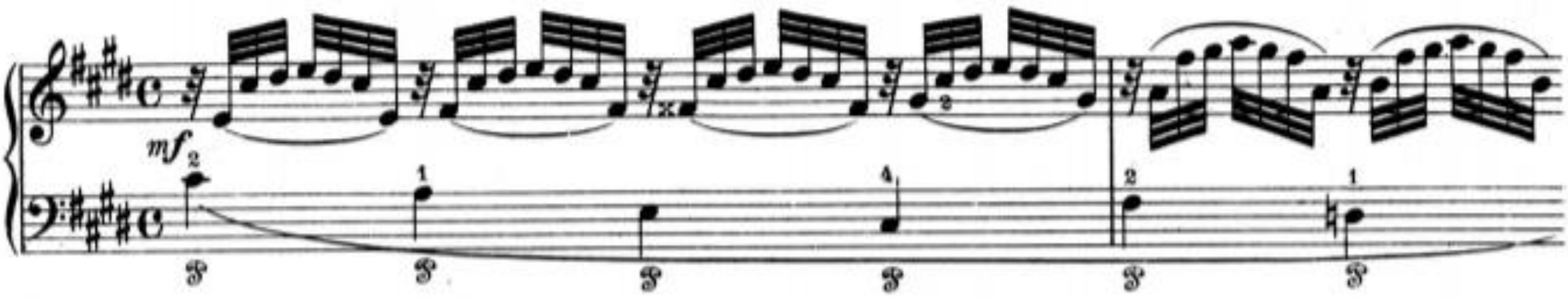
MOVEMENT II: POSTHUMOUS ETUDE IV



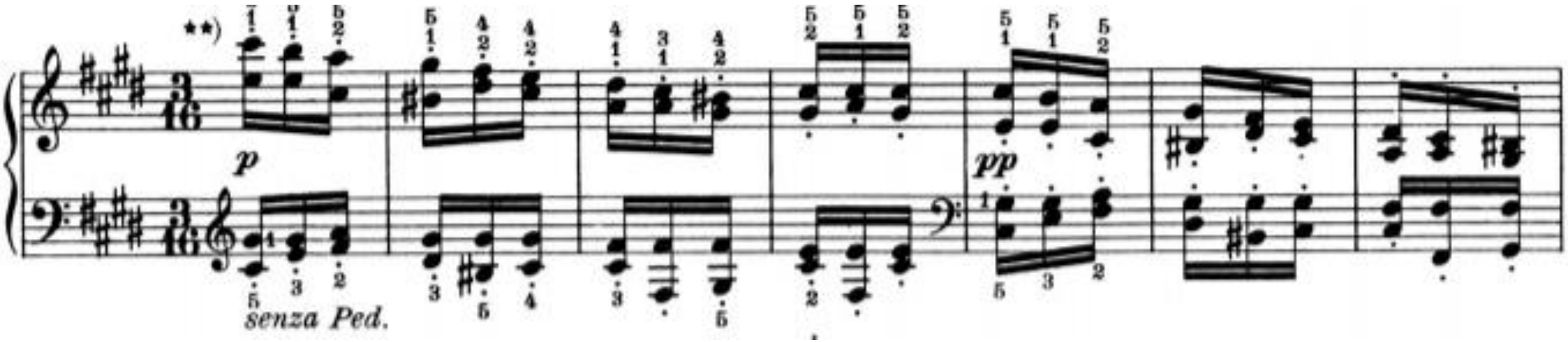
POSTHUMOUS ETUDE II



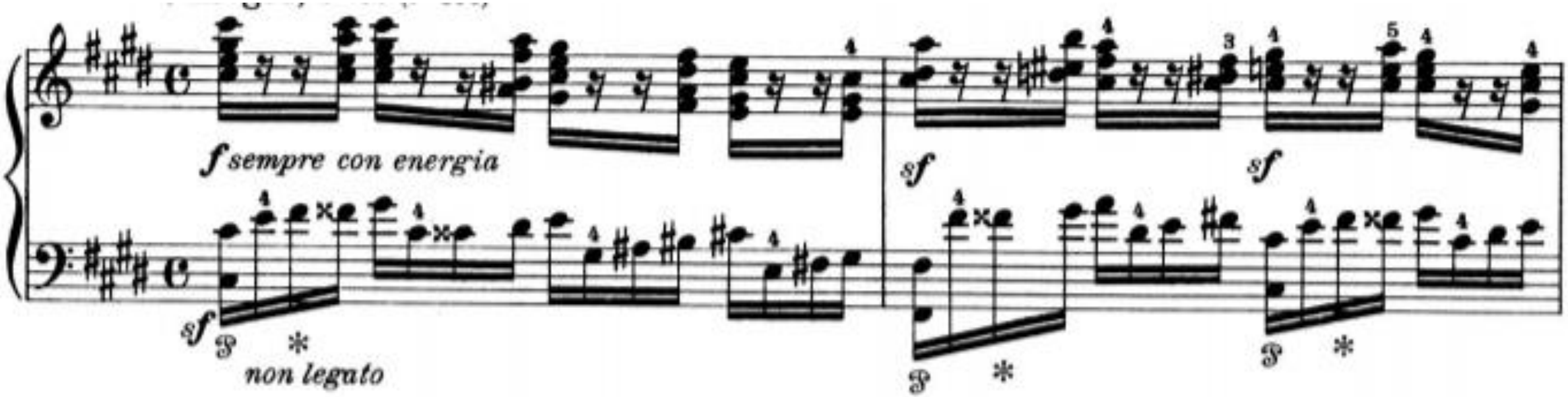
POSTHUMOUS ETUDE I



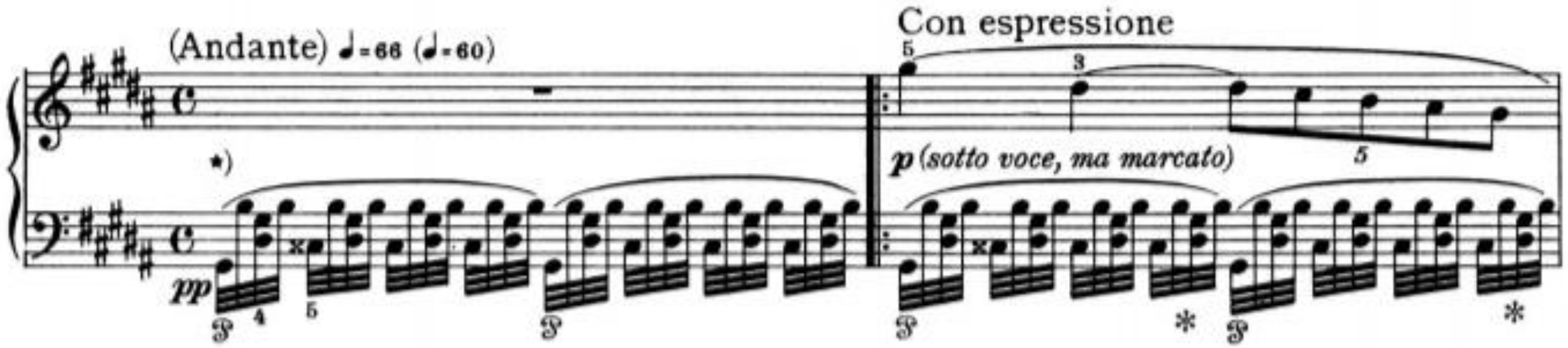
VARIATION IX "PRESTO POSSIBILE"



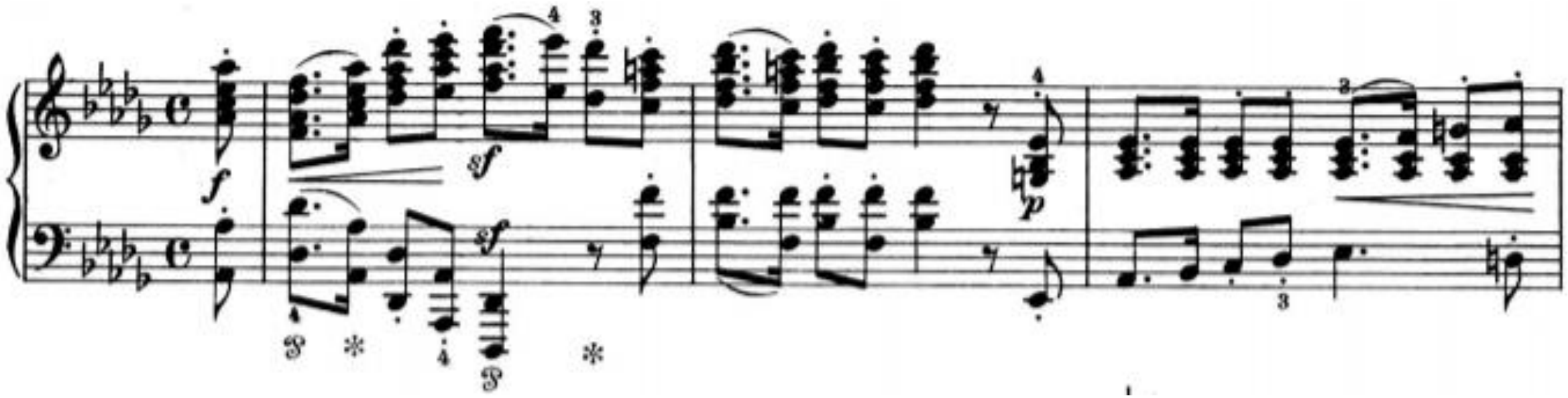
VARIATION X "ALLEGRO - SEMPRE CON ENERGIA"



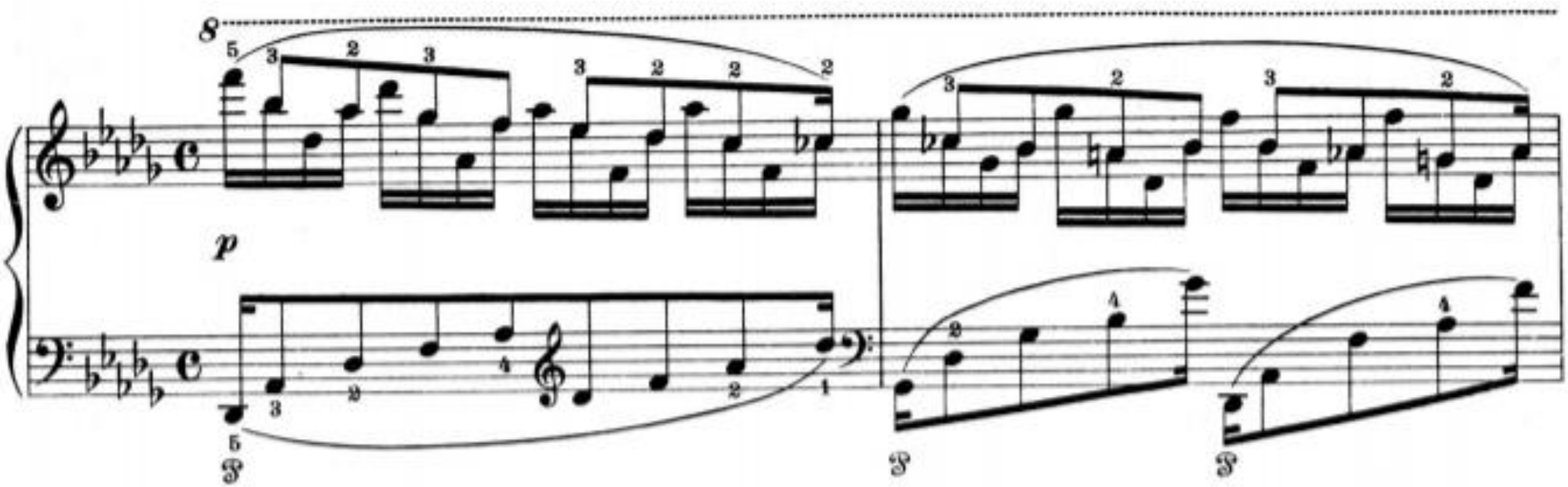
VARIATION XI "ANDANTE - CON ESPRESSIONE"



MOVEMENT 3: VARIATION XII (FINALE) "ALLEGRO BRILLANTE"



CODA - POSTHUMOUS ETUDE V



FINAL POINTS

The relationship between these two story-telling composers

Their similarities in interest and genre.

Medtner drew on his culture's folk tales and poetry

Schumann drew on Germanic poetry and innovated the design of the Op.13

The role of literature and its influence on music in the Romantic Age

"To send light into the darkness of men's souls -
such is the duty of the artist"
- Robert Schumann

Q&A

"Inspiration comes, where thought is
saturated in emotions, and emotion is
imbued with sense."
- Nikolai Medtner