Louise Farrenc
(1804-1875)

Louise Farrenc, born Jeanne-Louise Dumont in Paris on May 31, 1804, was descended from a long line of successful sculptors: Pierre Dumont (1660-1737), Louise's great-great-grandfather; François Dumont (1687-1726), her great-grandfather; Edmé Dumont (1720-1775), her grandfather; and Jacques-Edmé Dumont (1761-1844), her father.

Jacques-Edmé was the winner of many prestigious awards, including the *Prix de Rome* in 1788. Two of his sculptures are still on display in the Louvre. Despite his outstanding ability he was the only Dumont denied membership to the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture,* perhaps because of his unpopular political views. Jacques-Edmé fathered three children: Auguste (1801-1884), a gifted artist and respected teacher; Louise (1804-1875); and Constance (1808-1893), a talented amateur artist.

In the tradition of her ancestors, Louise began to show exceptional talent in the visual arts when she was very young. By the age of nine she also displayed near-professional ability at the piano. With encouragement from her first teacher, Anne-Elisabeth Cécile Soria, Louise began to concentrate solely on music. In addition to her pianistic skills, Louise exhibited a keen understanding of music theory. She began to study composition with Anton Reicha at the Paris Conservatory when she was fifteen years old. [1]

While playing a concert at a community event, Louise Dumont met flutist Aristide Farrenc (1794-1865); the two were married in 1821. Aristide, a flutist of moderate ability and only an average composer, became an important music publisher. His business became quite well known in Paris and other major centers abroad. Although the marriage temporarily interrupted Louise's musical training she resumed studies with Reicha in 1825.

Between 1825 and 1840, with the exception of two orchestral overtures (one unpublished and one recently published by the Hildegard Publishing Company), the majority of Louise's compositions were for the piano. They received rave reviews from leading critics of the time. Robert Schumann, in his article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* reviewing Farrenc's *Air russe varié* (Piano Variations) writes:

> Were a young composer to submit to me variations such as these by L. Farrenc, I would praise him highly for the auspicious talent and fine training everywhere reflected in them. I soon learned the identity of the author - rather, authoress - the wife of the renowned music publisher in Paris, and I am distressed because it is hardly likely that she will ever hear of these encouraging lines. Small, neat, succinct studies they are, written perhaps still under the eye of her teacher, but so sure in outline, so logical in development - in a word, so finished - that one must fall under their charm, especially since a subtle aroma of romanticism hovers over them. As is well known, themes which lend themselves to imitation are most suited for variation and so the composer[ess] utilizes this for all kinds of delightful games. She even

manages to carry off a fugue - with inversions, diminutions, and augmentation - and all this she handles with ease and songfulness. Only in the finale would I have wished the calm mood I expected after what had preceded it.[2]

The following decade was a very productive time for Louise Farrenc. In addition to the great works of chamber music which she composed in this period[3] she was appointed to the Paris Conservatory as Professor of Piano, the only woman to hold this prestigious position in the nineteenth century.

Upon the death of her daughter, Victorine (b. 1826), in 1859, Louise withdrew from the world. she gave no public performances for several years and ceased to compose. Those pieces dated after the death of Victorine are believed to have been written prior to 1859 and were published later.

In the early 1860s Louise began to emerge from her grief over Victorine's death and she collaborated with her husband to complete *Le Trésor des pianistes* (a historical anthology of piano works). Aristide saw only eight of the twenty-three volumes published before he died. Fifteen were completed in the next ten years by Louise alone before her death in 1875.

The *Trio in E minor for Flute (Violin), Cello and Piano*, Op. 45 was published in 1862 by Alphonse Leduc. Although thought by some to be written for Aristide Farrenc, the original published score bears the dedication to the first performer of the flute part, Louis Dorus (1813-1896).[4] Dorus won first prize at the Paris Conservatory as a student in 1828, and was subsequently Professor of Flute there from 1860-1868. He is well known for his experiments with the "G#" key on the old style flute (pre-Boehm system) and for imposing the use of the Boehm flute on his students (after which the use of the old flute declined rapidly).[5]

The premiere of the trio took place at the home of Mme Pierson in 1857 (five years prior to publication). Pierson, one of Mme Farrenc's former pupils, was the pianist at this performance; Dorus was the flutist; the cellist's name is unknown.[6]

The *Trio* is a four movement work based on classical forms, in some ways reminiscent of Beethoven in their expanded style. In the first movement,*Allegro deciso*, in sonata form, Farrenc distributes the thematic material equally among the three instruments. The second movement, *Andante*, is a theme and variations. The third movement, *Scherzo: Vivace*, expands the prevailing notions of classical tonality by combining elements of both scherzo and trio in the scherzo's return. The *Finale: Presto*, returns to sonata form, although Farrenc again expands the "tonal journey" with unusual modulations.

There was a great decrease in the number of conpositions written for the flute in the Romantic era. This may be attributed to the expanding size of the orchestra and the ever increasing power of individual instruments. Nancy Toff best describes the flutist's dilemma: "... quite simply, the flute did not, by itself, have the capacity

to produce the power and variety of tone that were the vehicles of romantic musical expression."[7] The flute was, in Miss Toff's description, an important member of the orchestra but had been "reduced to a chirping vehicle for virtuosic display and programmatic symbolism."[8]

Farrenc's *Trio in Eminor for Flute, Cello and Piano,* Op. 45 is a rare gem in the literature of flute music. Not only does it help to fill the void of Romantic flute music but it also represents the high quality of music composed by women in an era when their creativity went unrecognized. This work certainly stands the test of time, and will perhaps lead to exploration of works of other forgotten female composers.

This edition is a reprint of the first publication by Alphonse Leduc, Paris 1862.

Andreas P. Tischhauser

NOTES

1. Stanley Sadie, ed. the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 1980, ed., s.v. Farrenc, Louise," by Bea Friedland. 6:408.
2. Robert Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik,* vol. 5 (1836): 73, quoted in Bea Friedland, *Louise Farrenc, 1804-1875; Composer, Performer, Scholar* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980), 19.
3. These works include two piano quintets, four trios, three sonatas, six pieces for flute, two violin pieces, a cello sonata, a string quintet, and a nonet for winds and strings. Some of these works were written in the decade between 1850-1860 but the majority of the compositions were from the previous decade.
4. Bea Friedland, *Louise Farrenc, 1804-1875: Composer, Performer, Scholar* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1980) 147.
5. Claude Dorgeuille, *The French Flute School 1860-1950,* trans. Edward Blakeman (London: Tony Bingham, 1986), 14.
6. Bea Friedland, 48.
7. Nancy Toff, *The Flute Book: a complete guide for students and performers,* 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 241.
8. Toff, 241.

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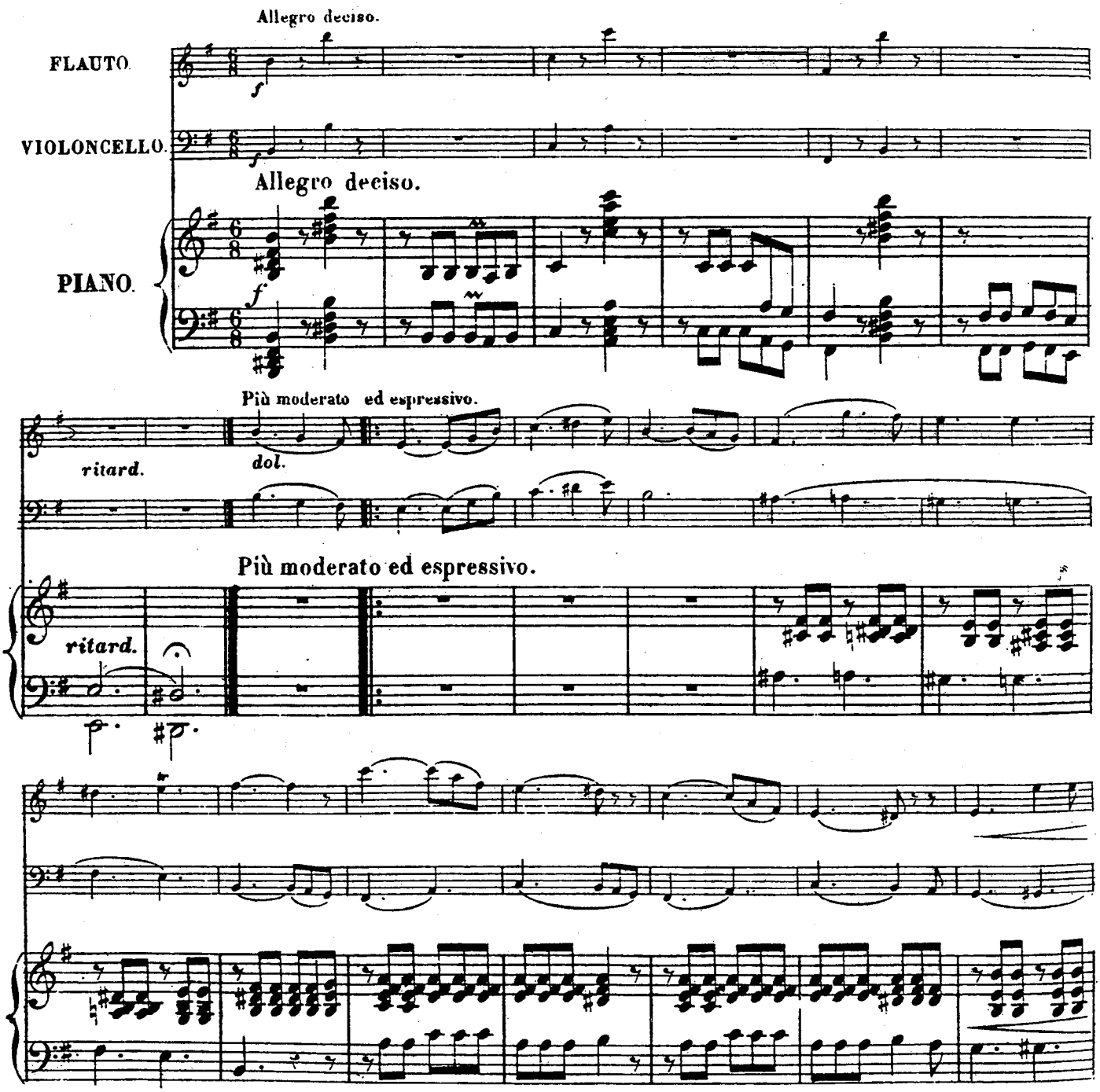
TRIO

pour Piano Flûte ou Violon et Violoncelle.

à Mr Louis DORUS.

L. FARRENC, Op. 45.



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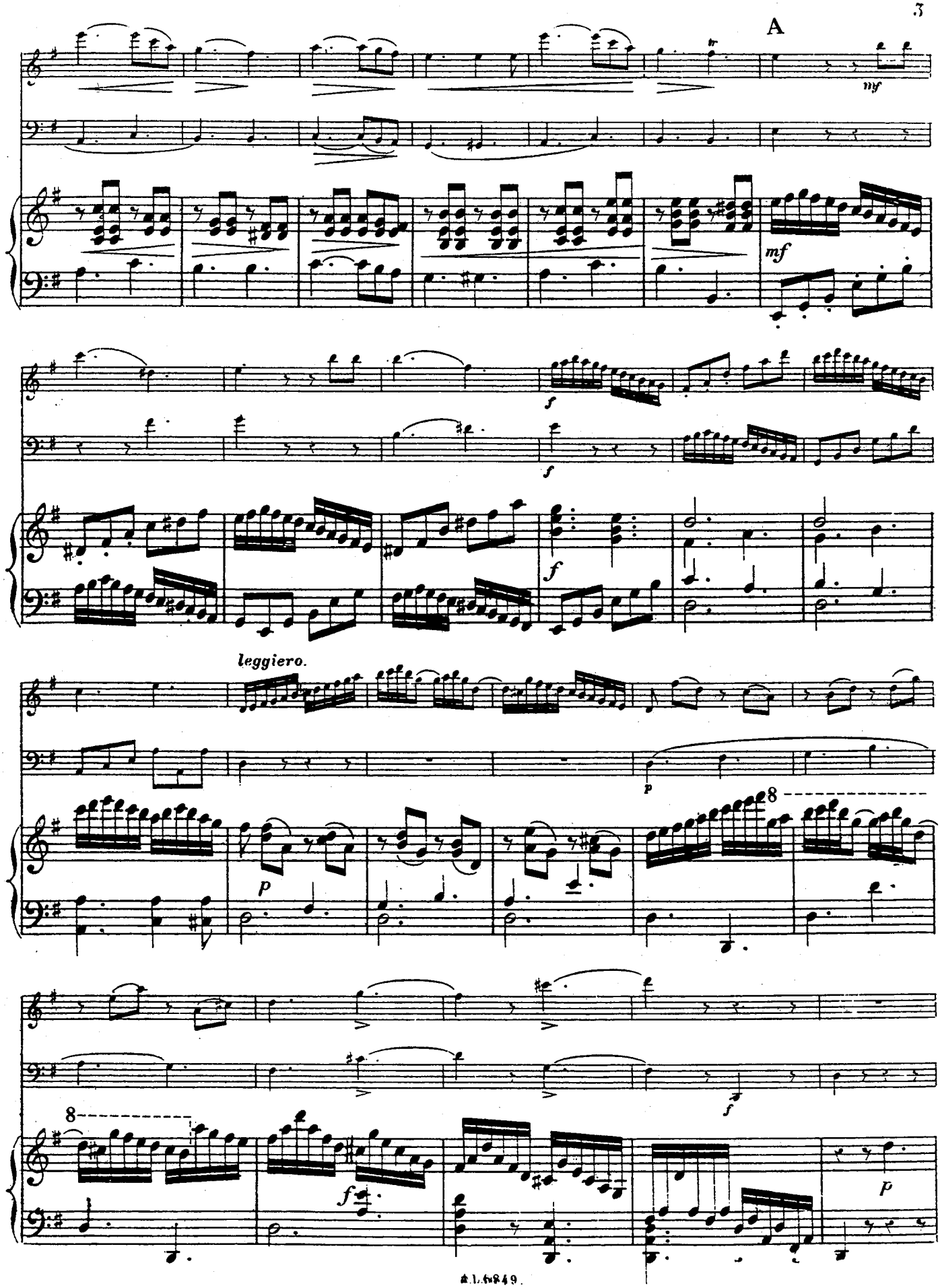
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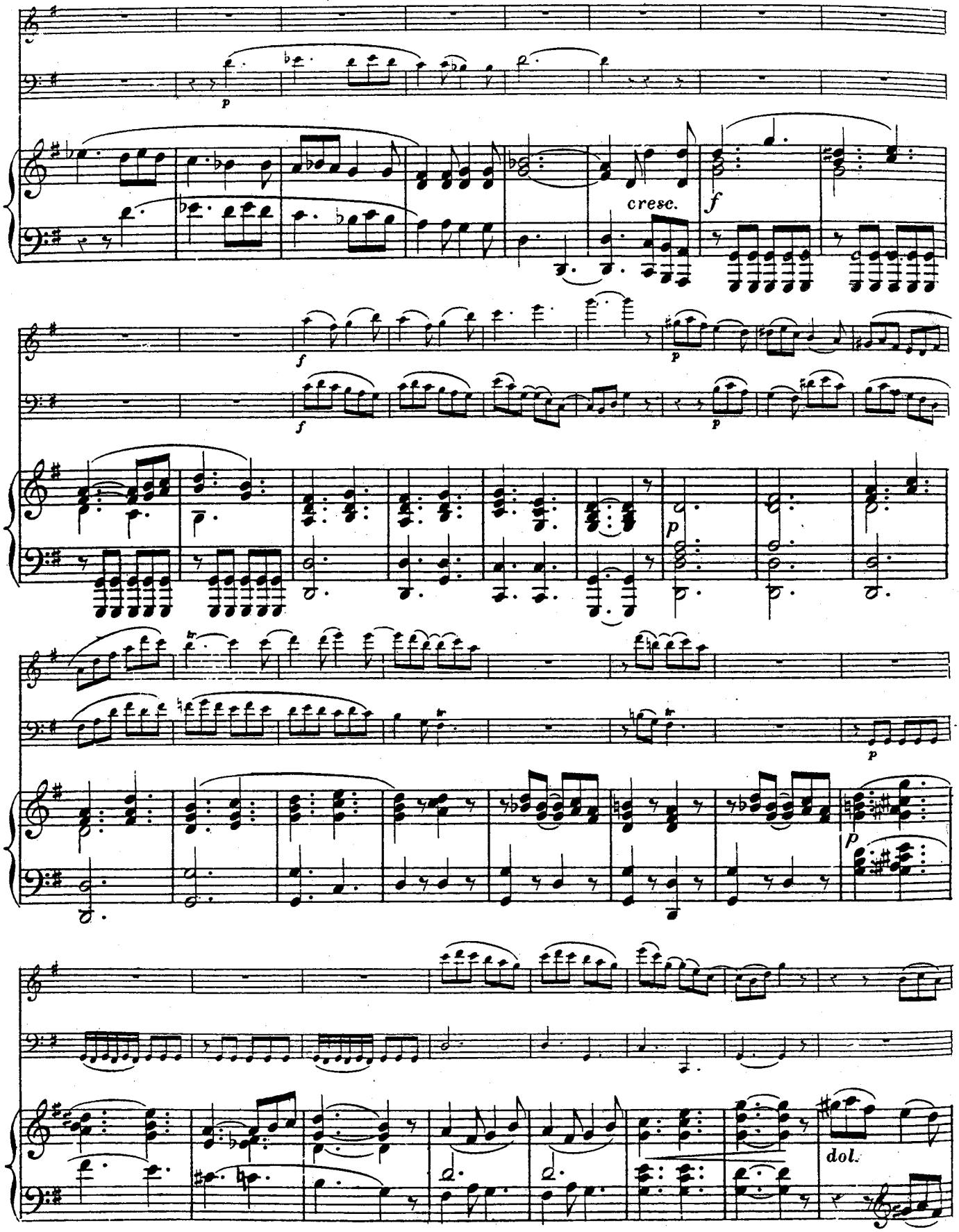

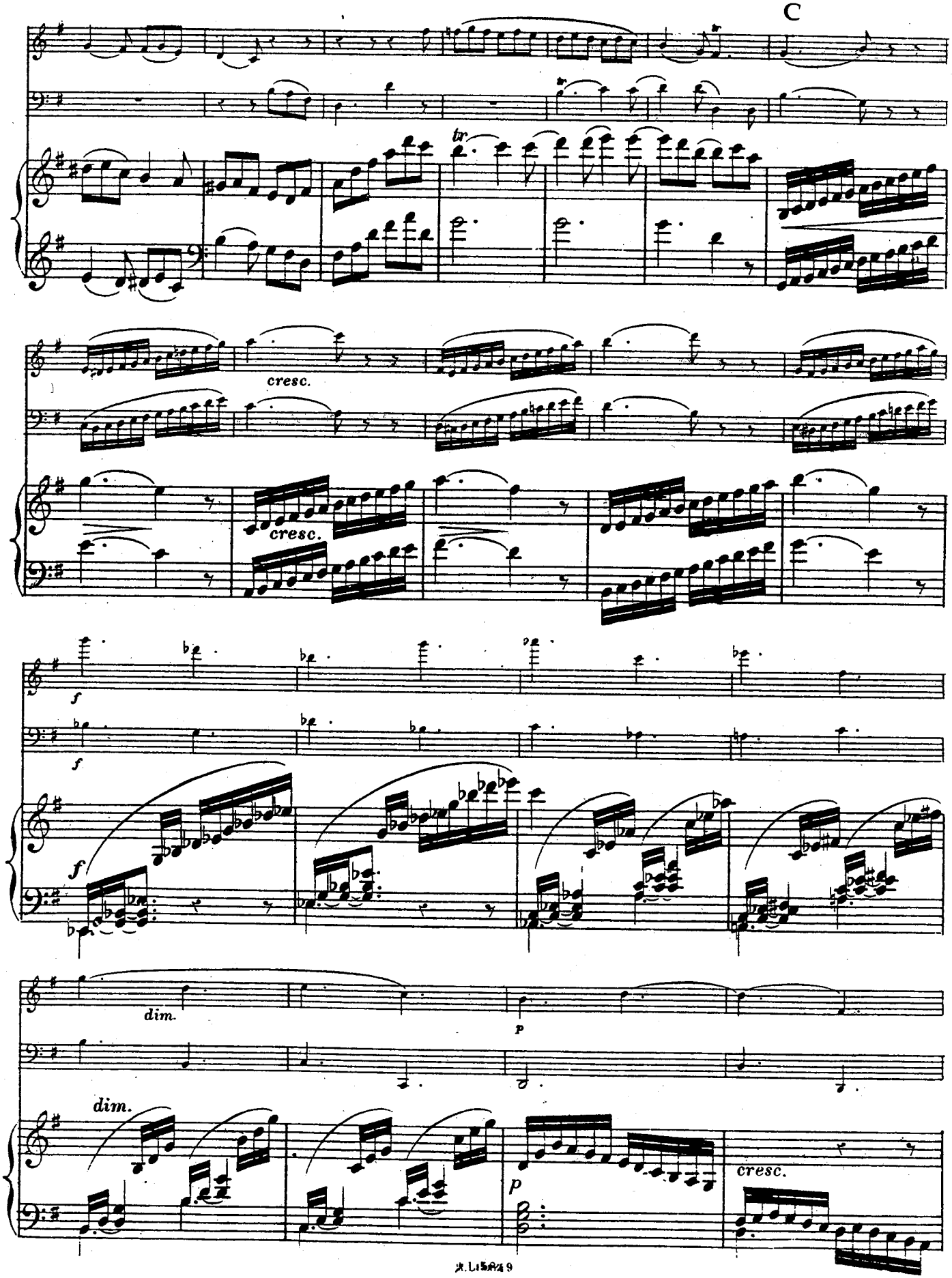
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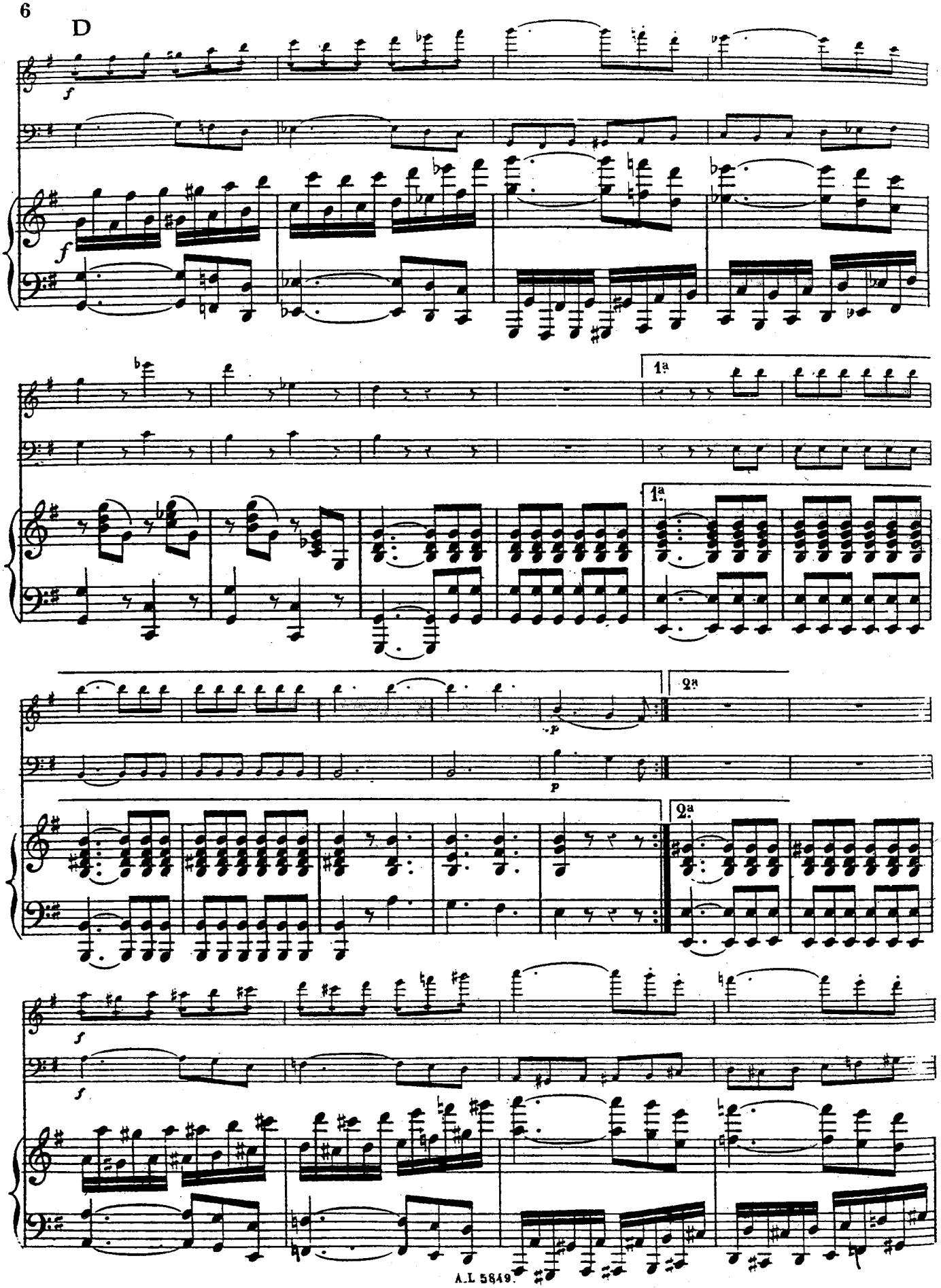
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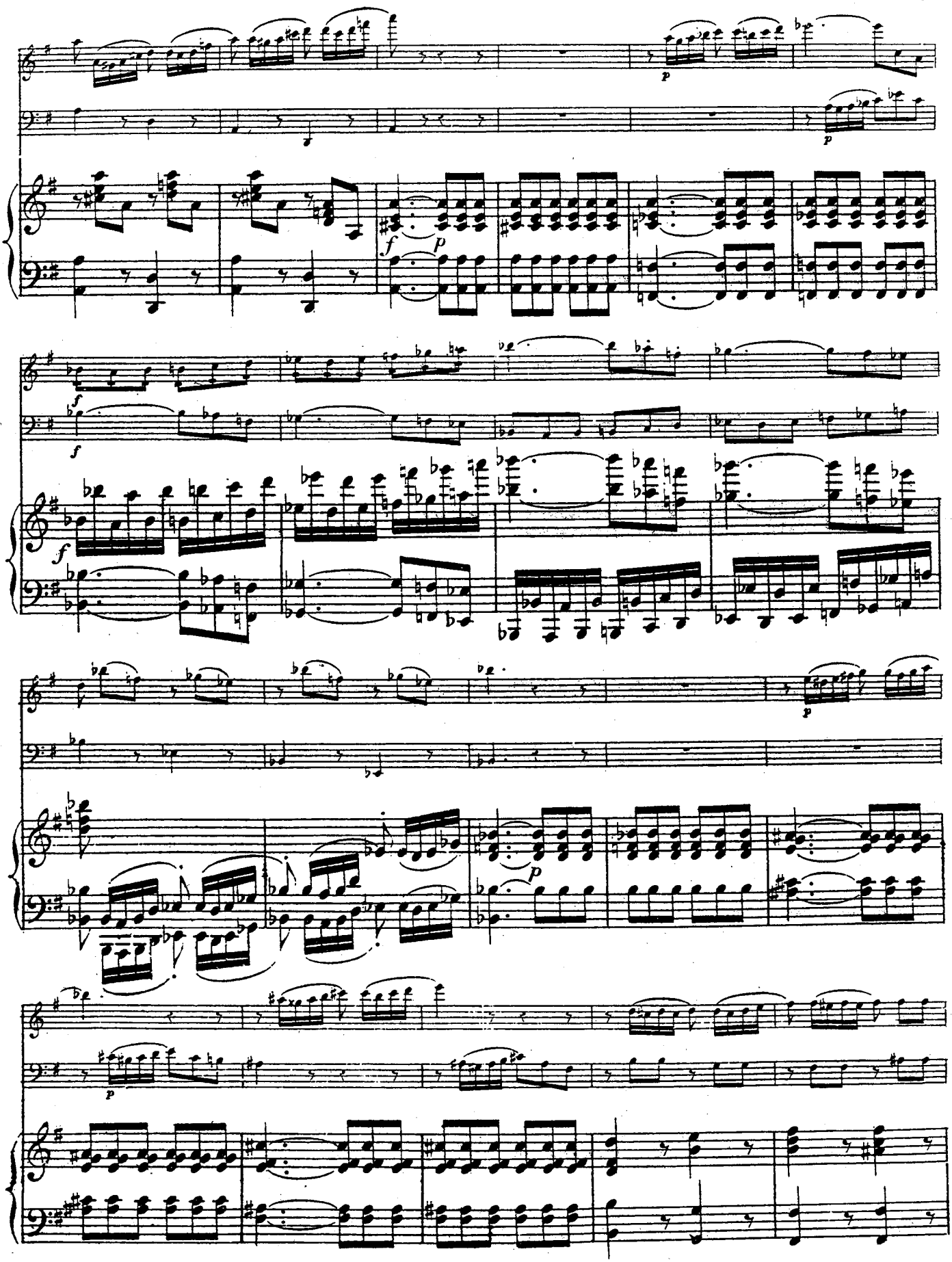

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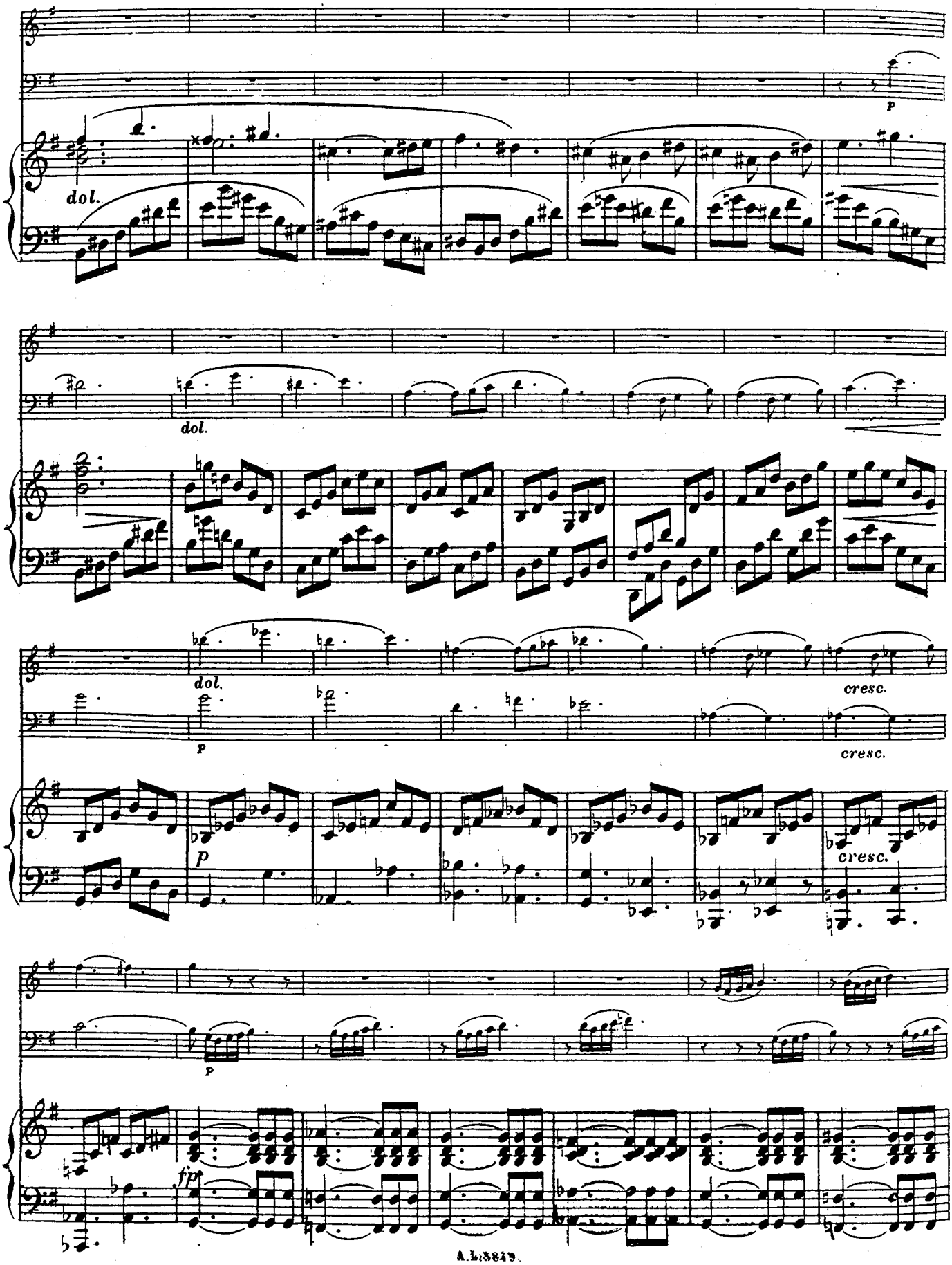

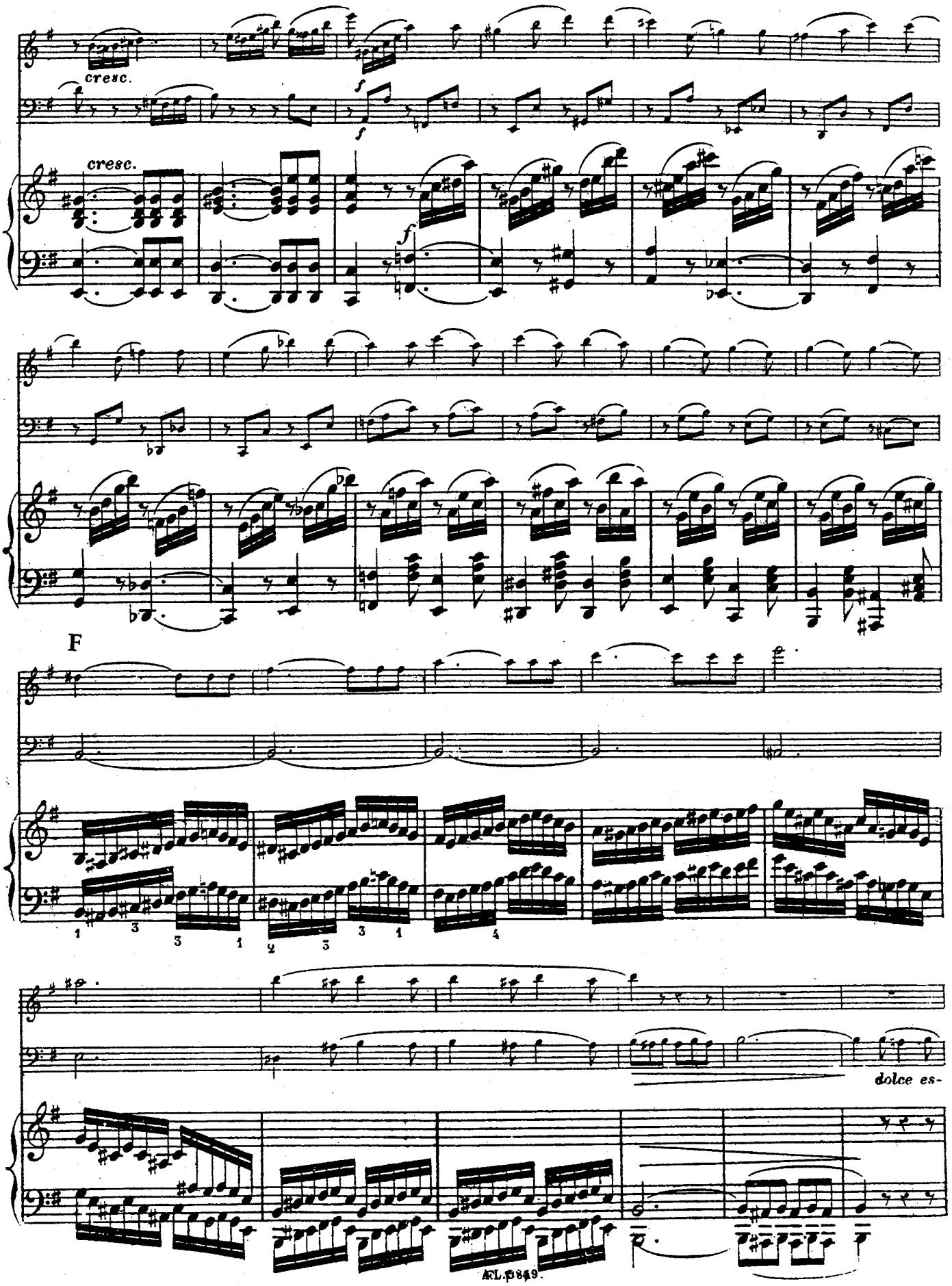
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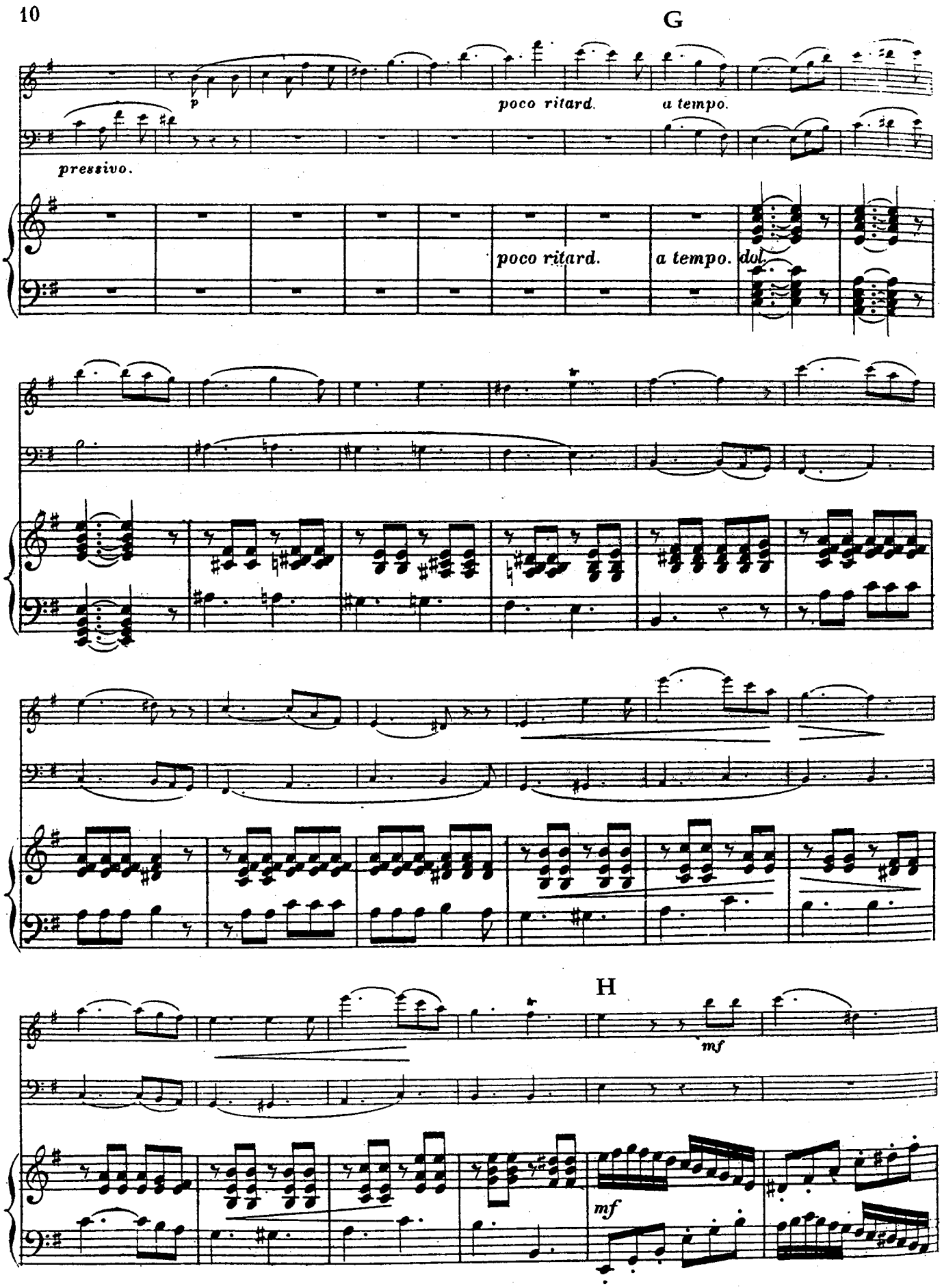
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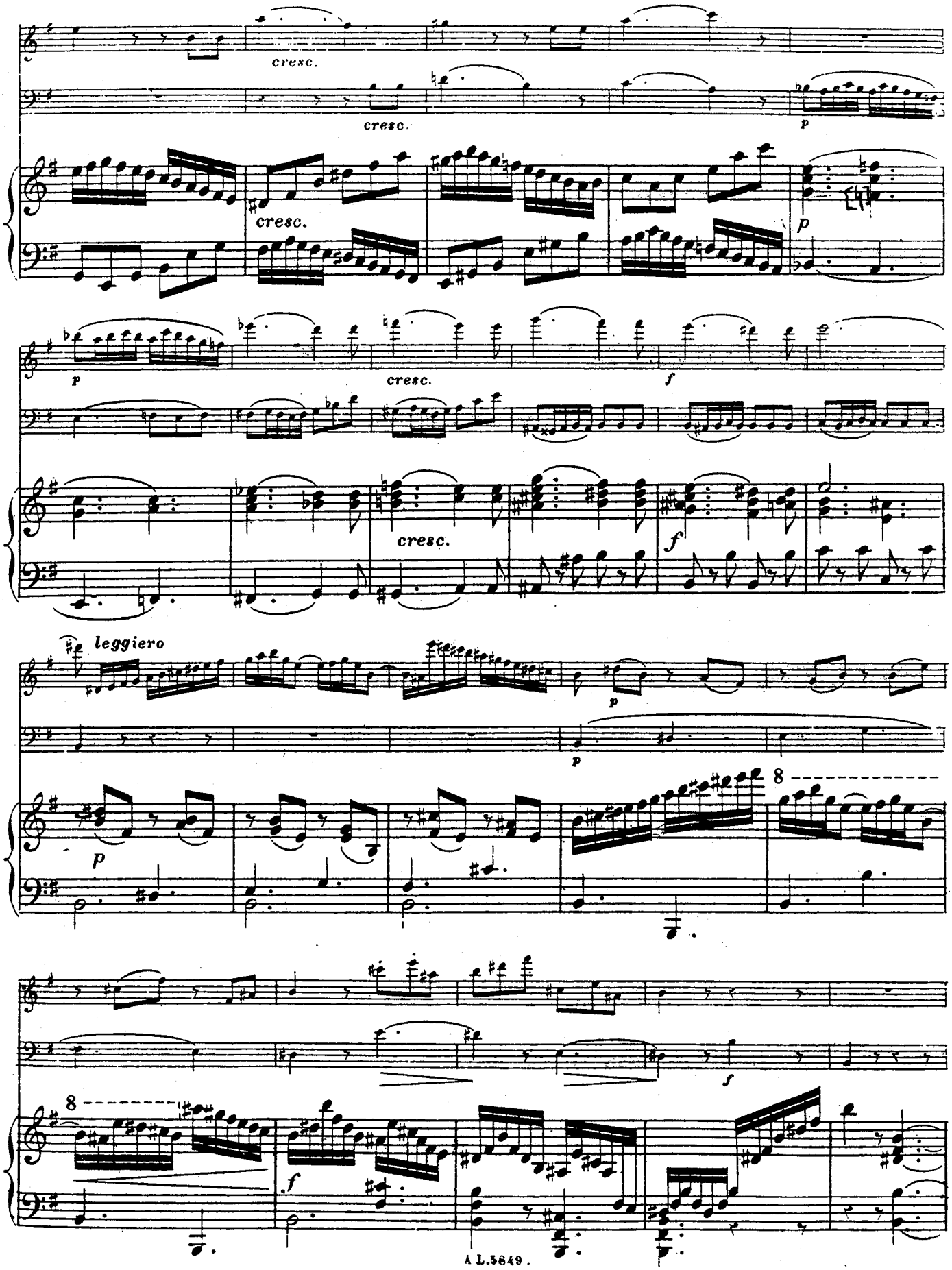
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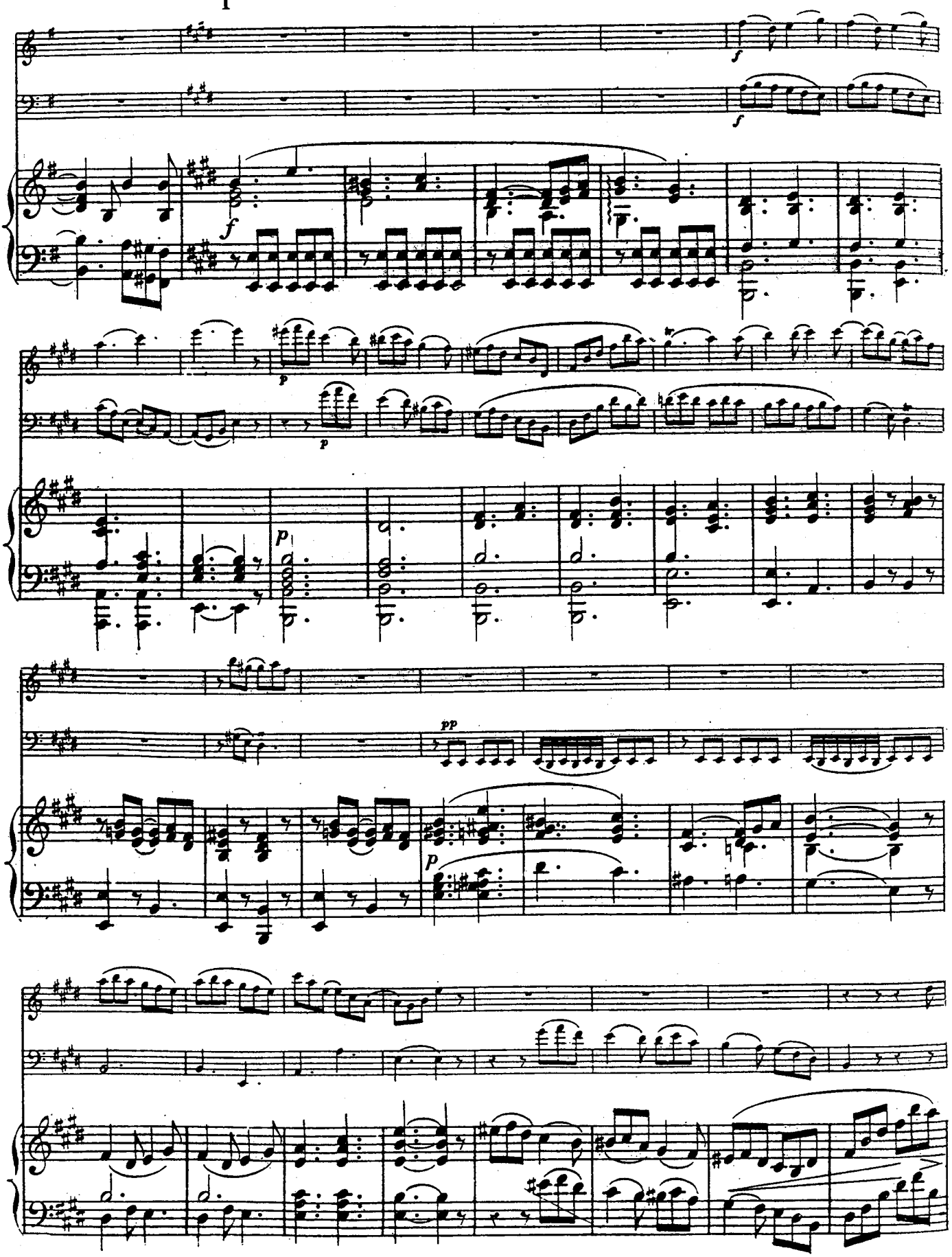

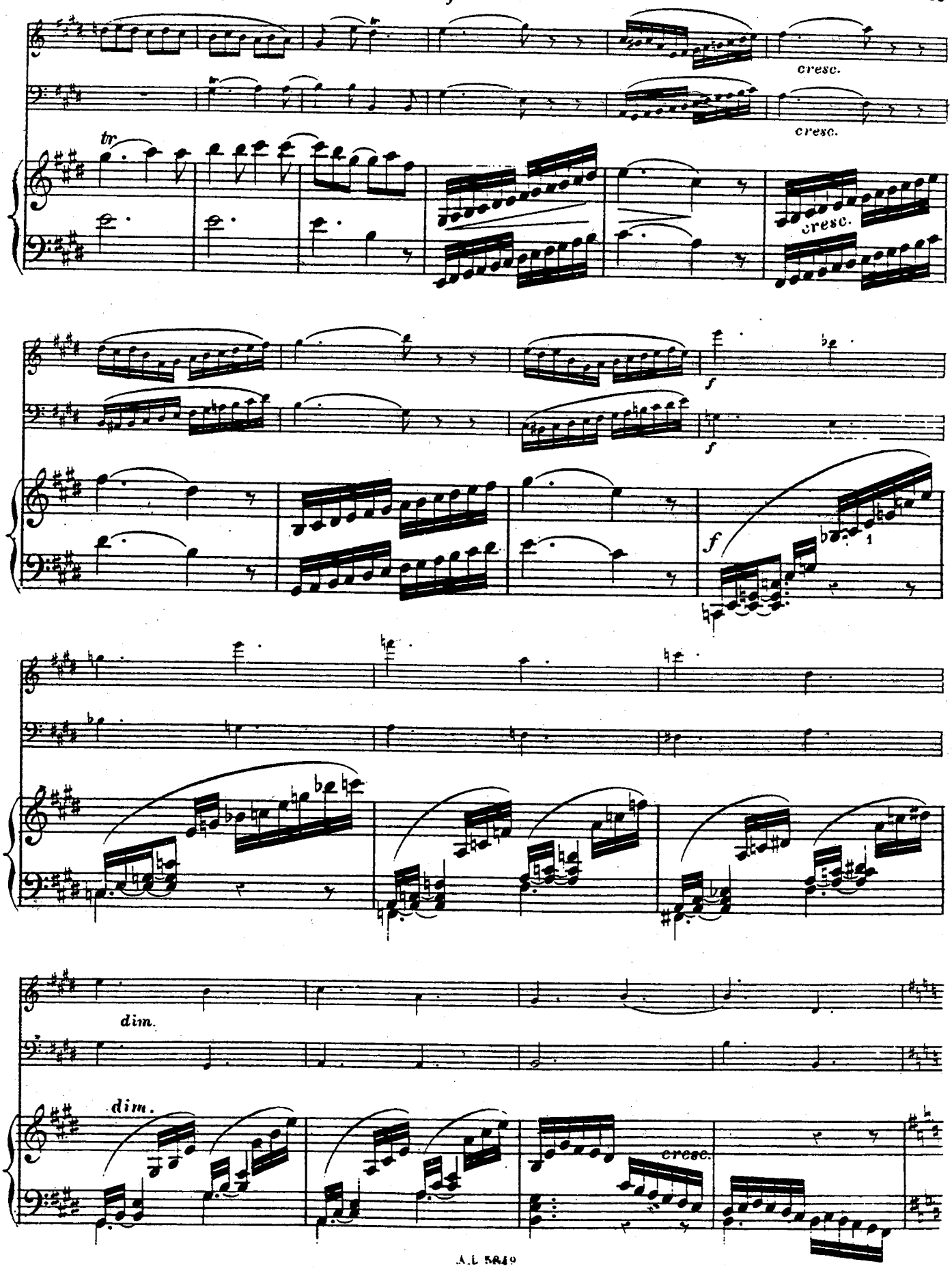
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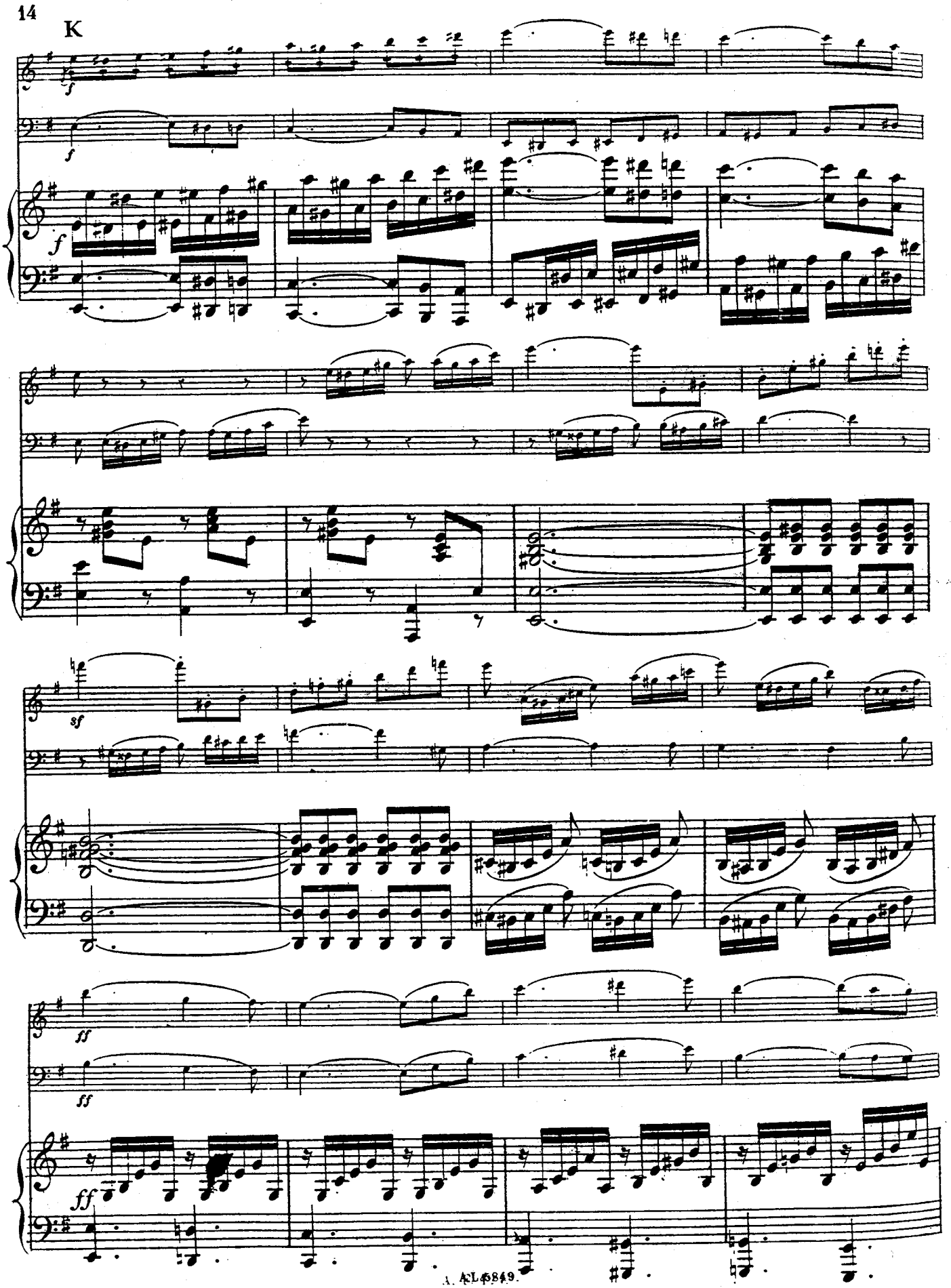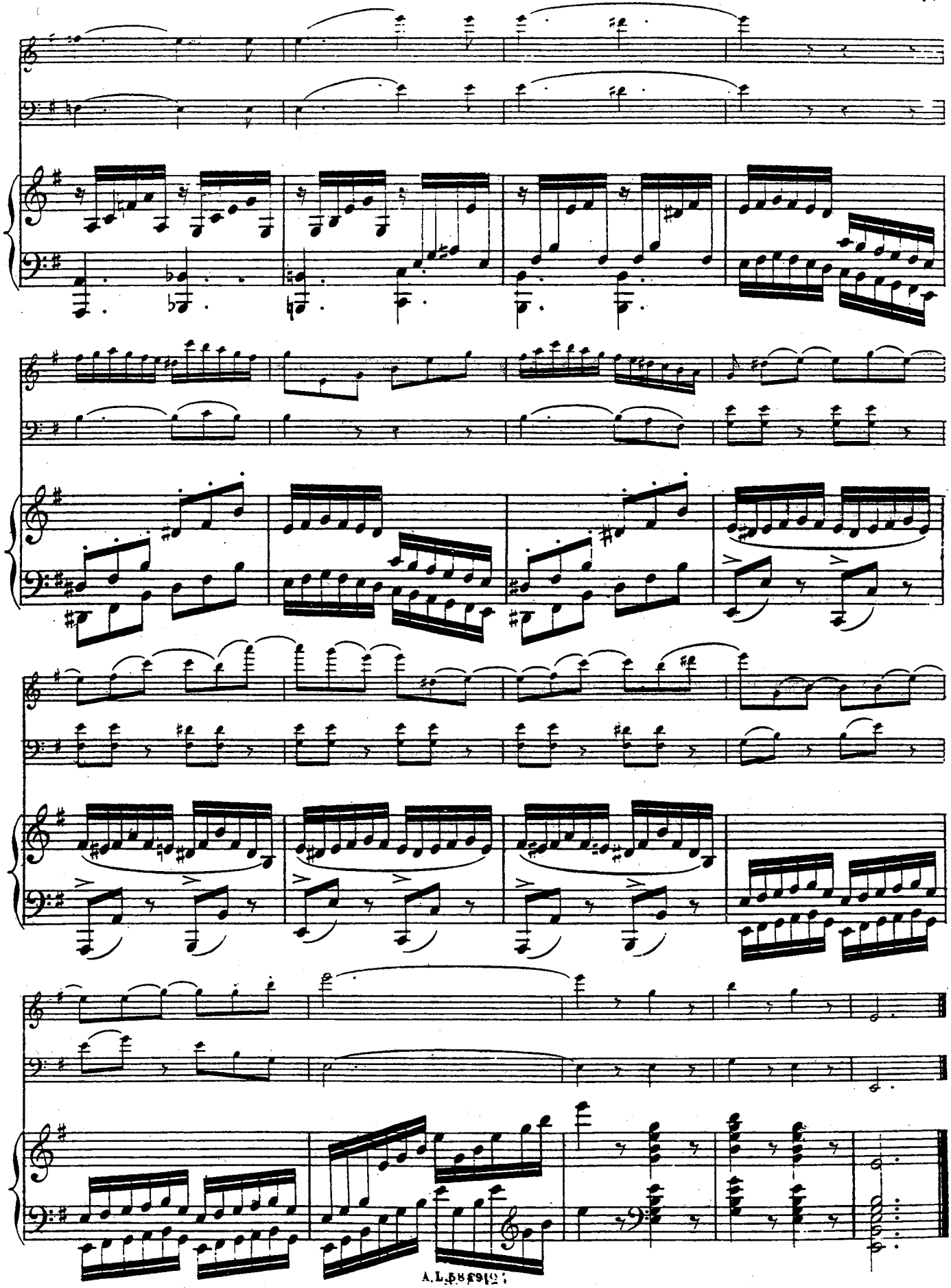
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