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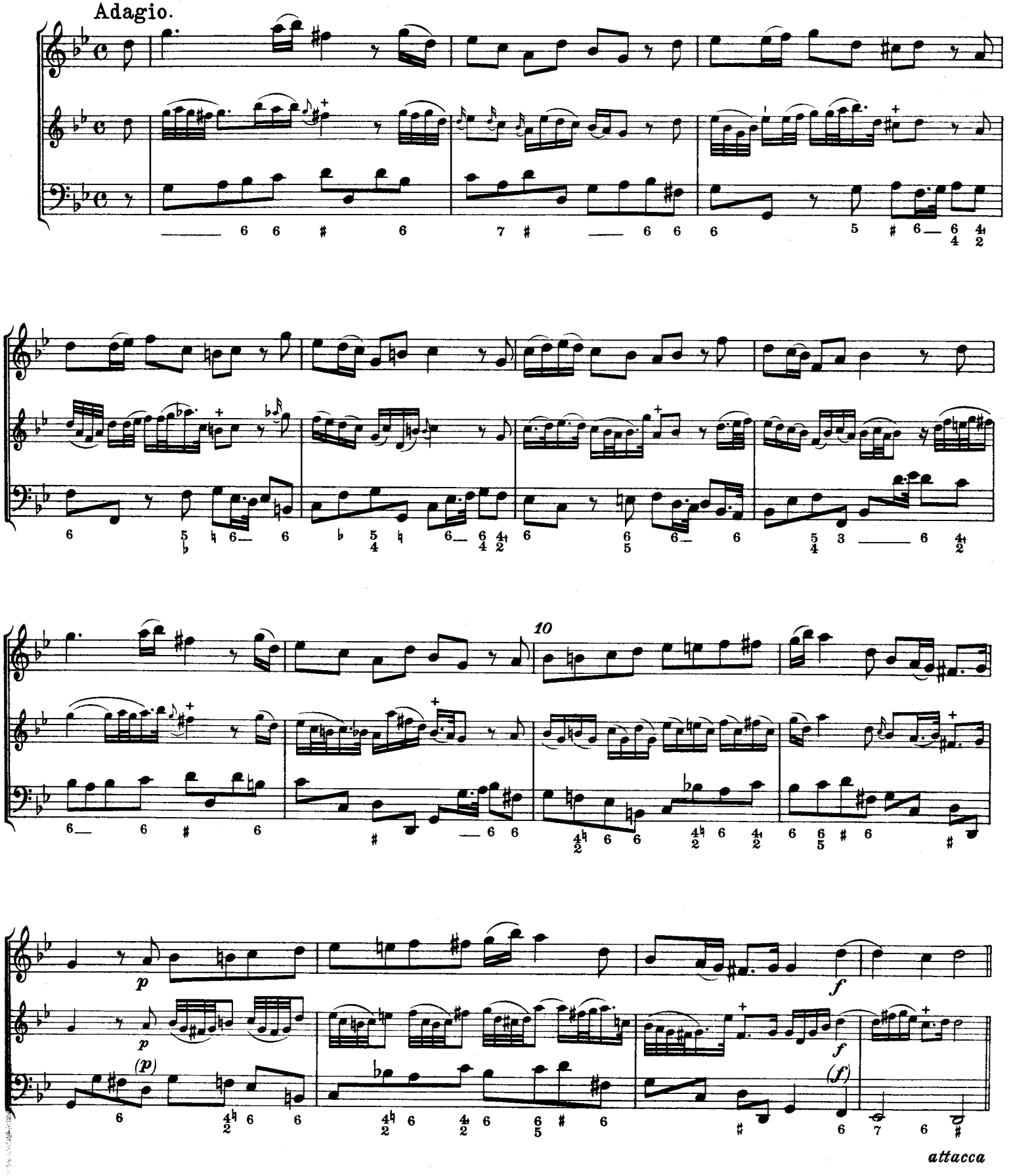
SONATE G-MOLL



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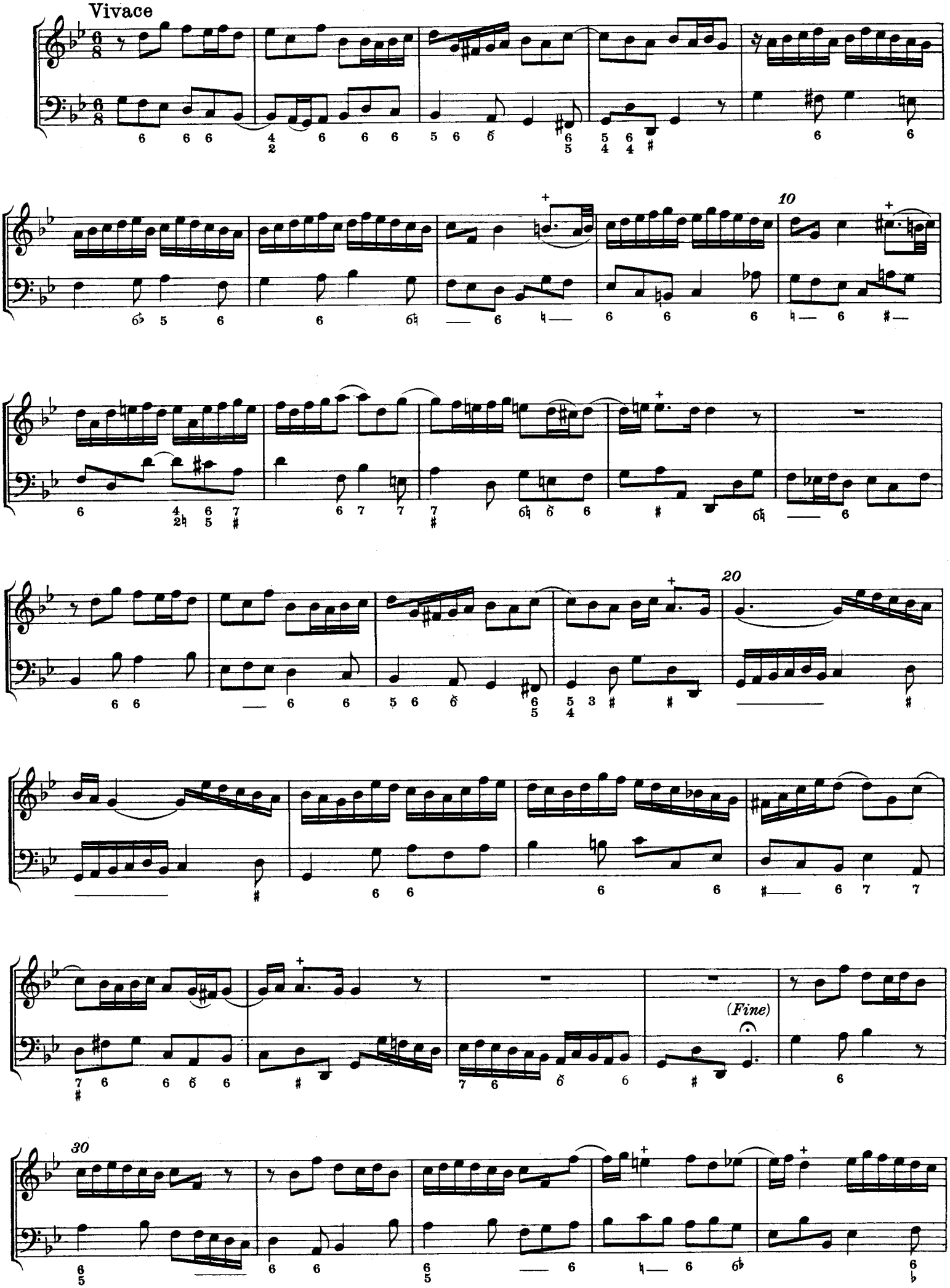
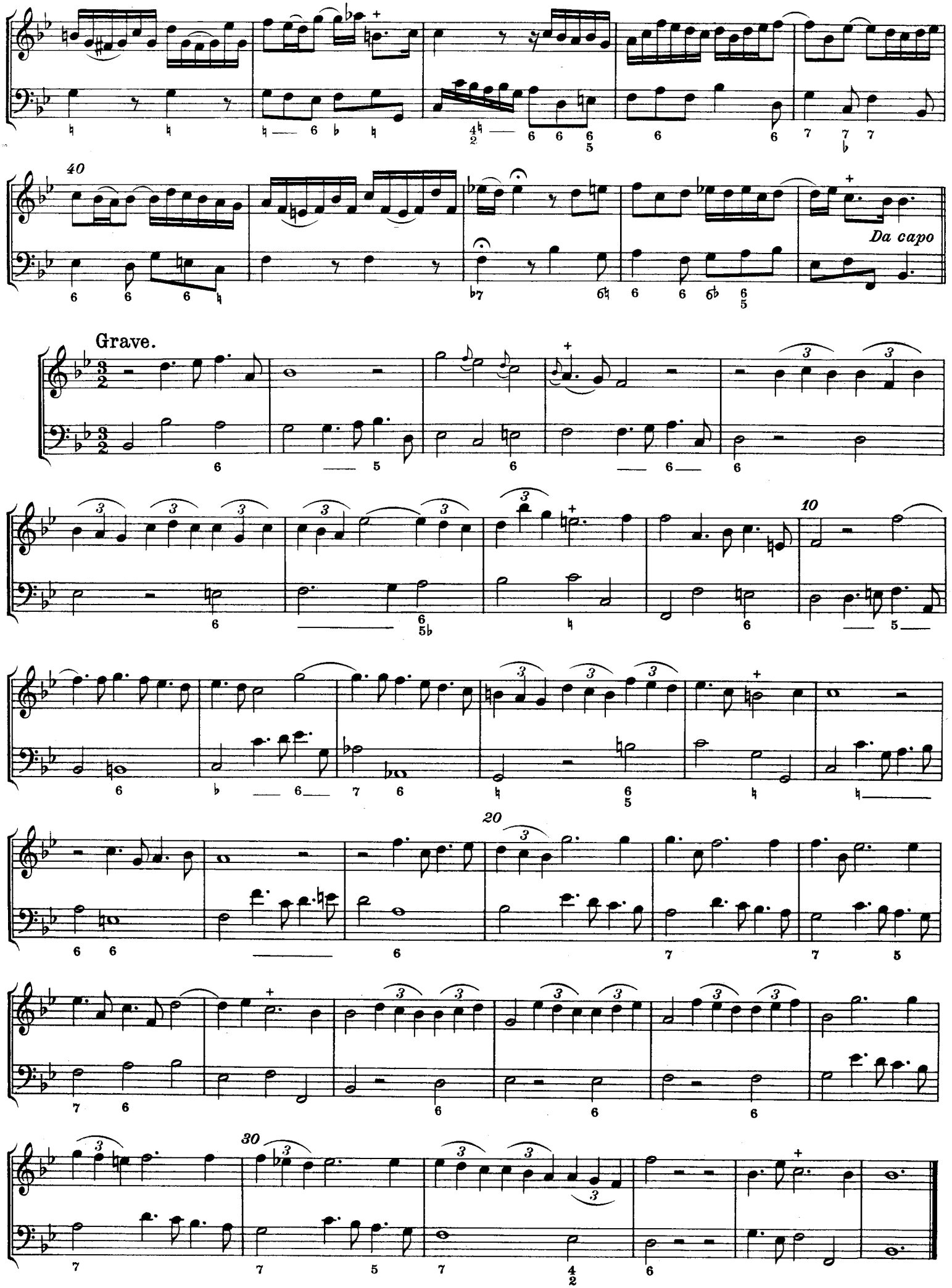
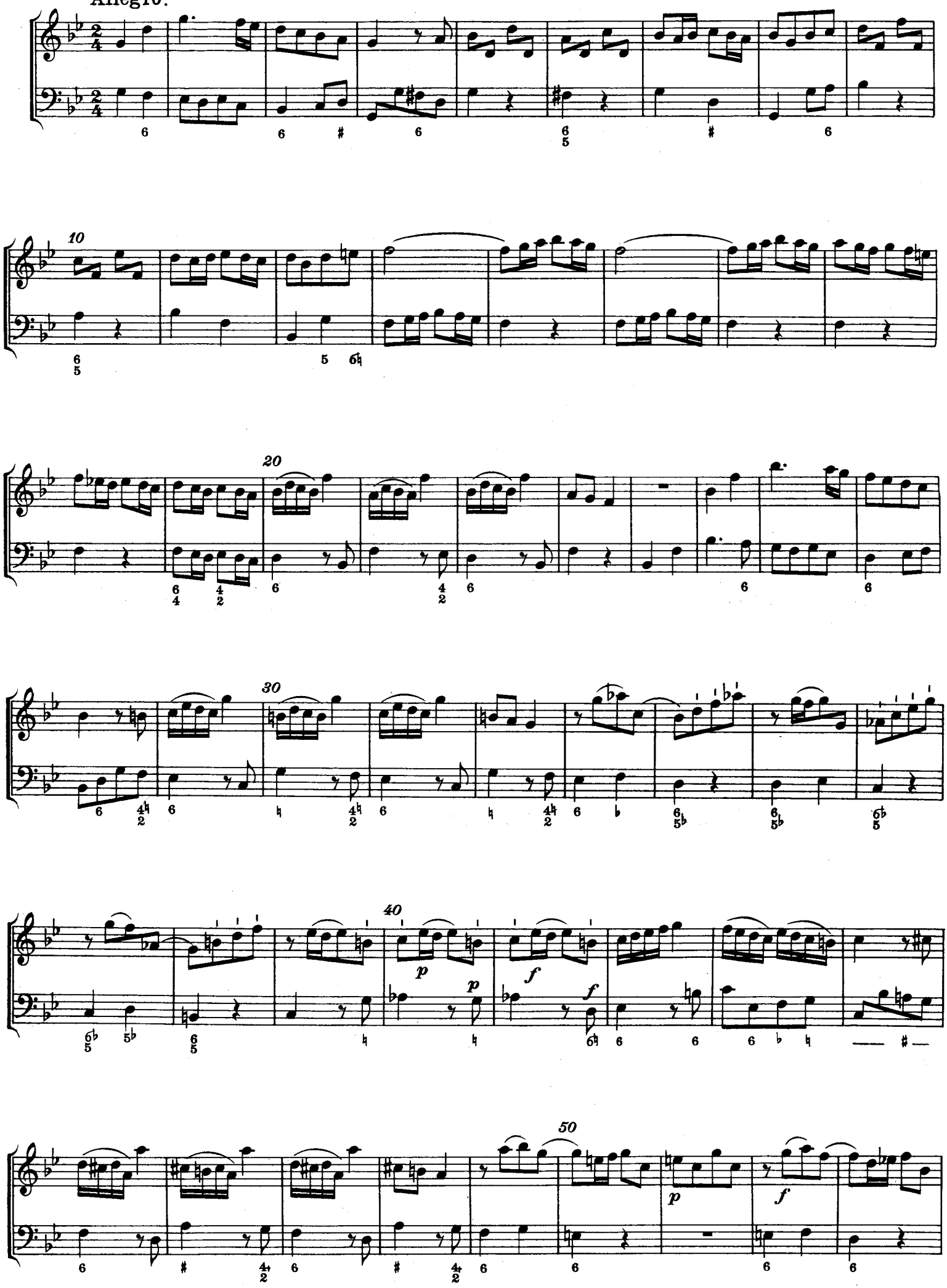
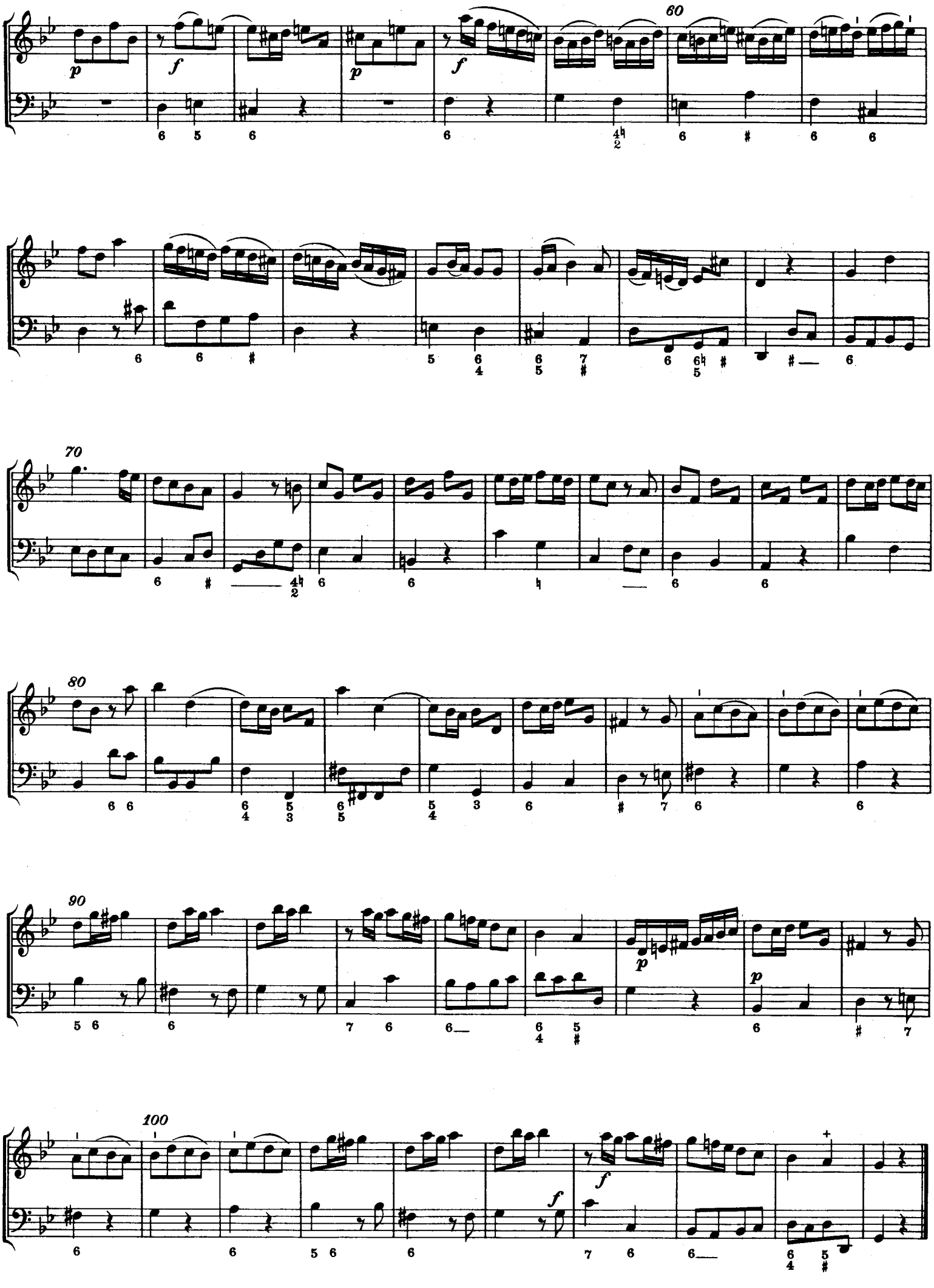
Vivace




40
Da capo
Grave.
10
20
30

Allegro.

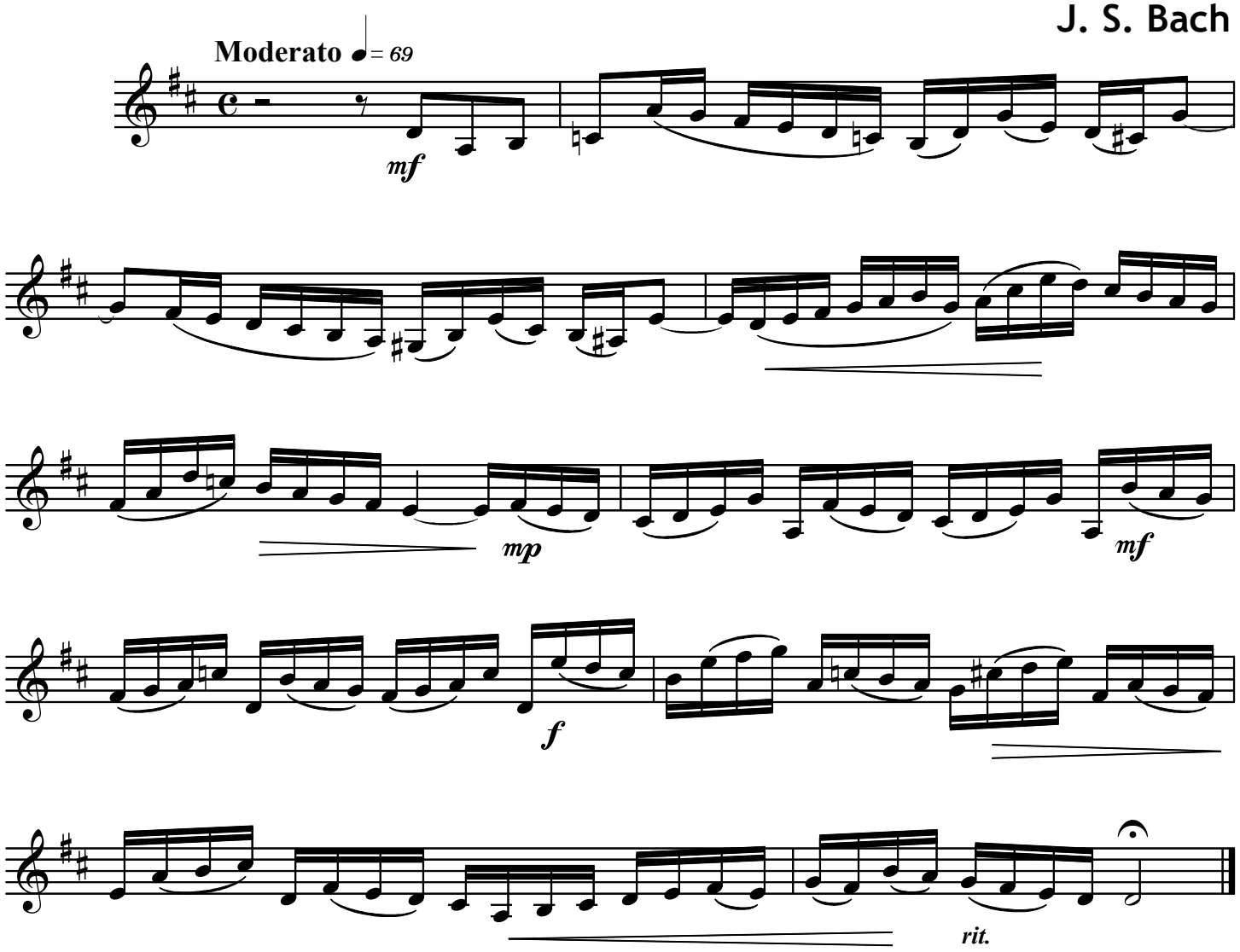



60
70
80
90
100

Christe eleison

from the B Minor Mass

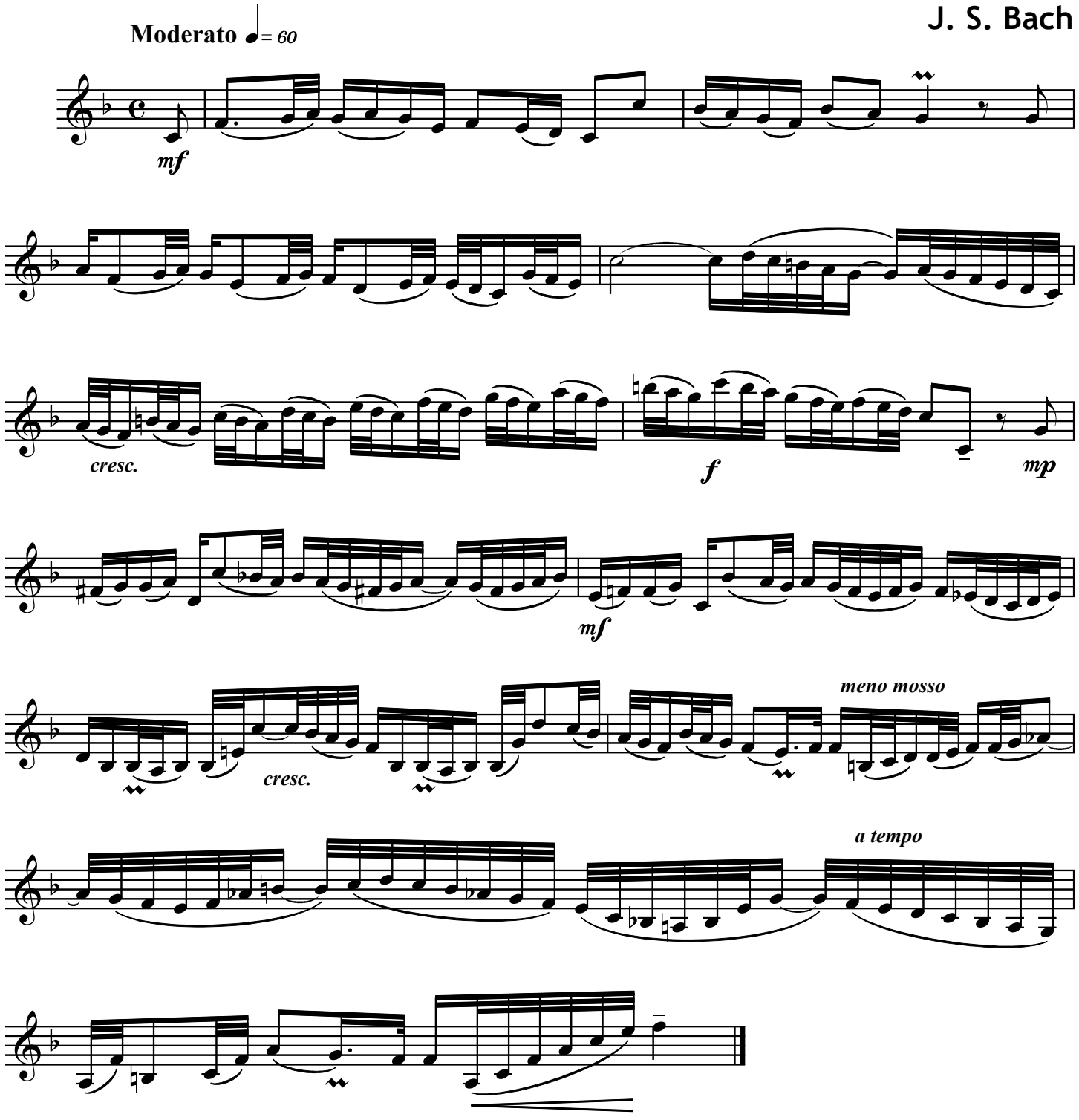
J. S. Bach



Laudamus te

from the B Minor Mass

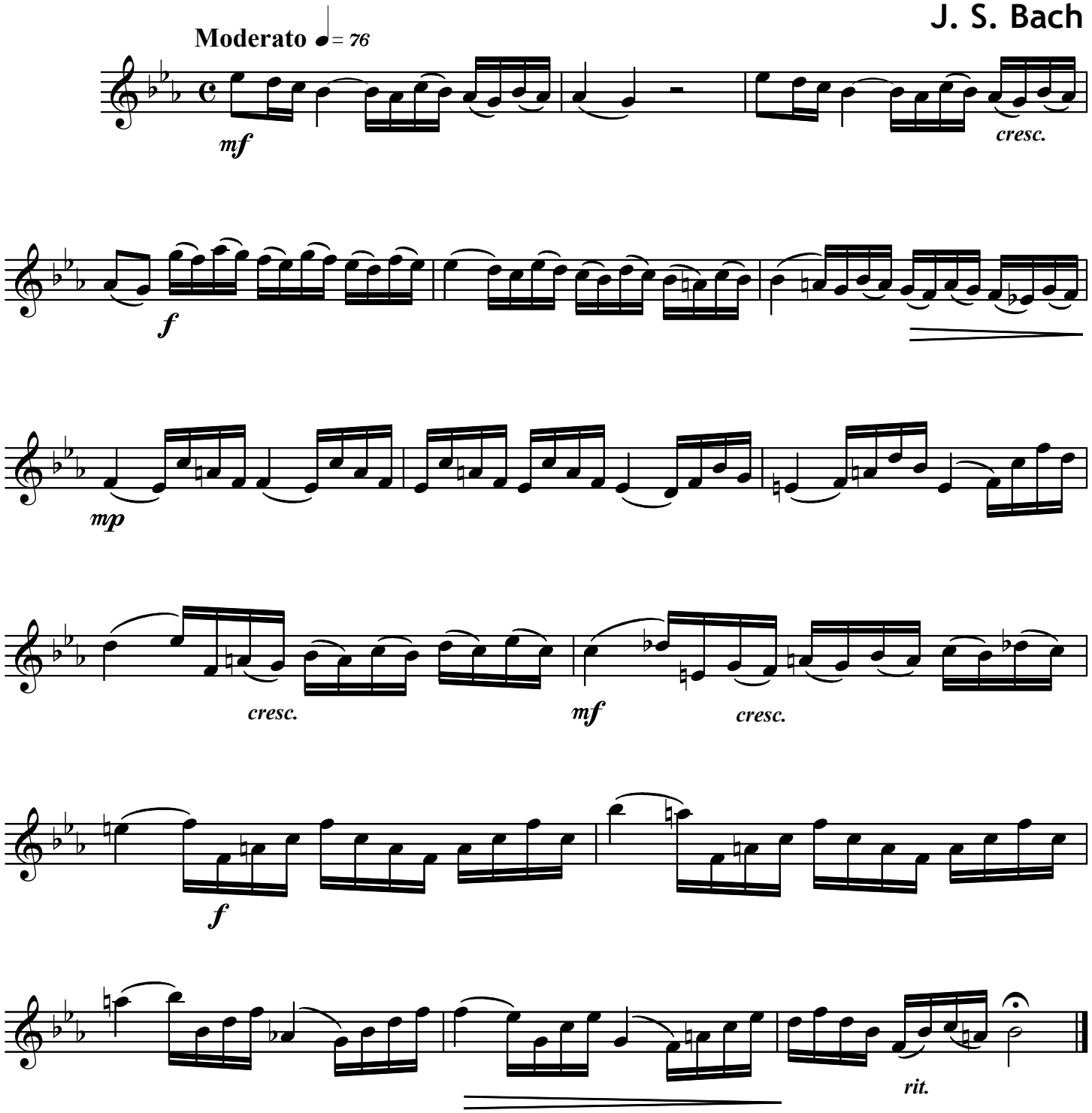
J. S. Bach



Domine Deus

from the B Minor Mass

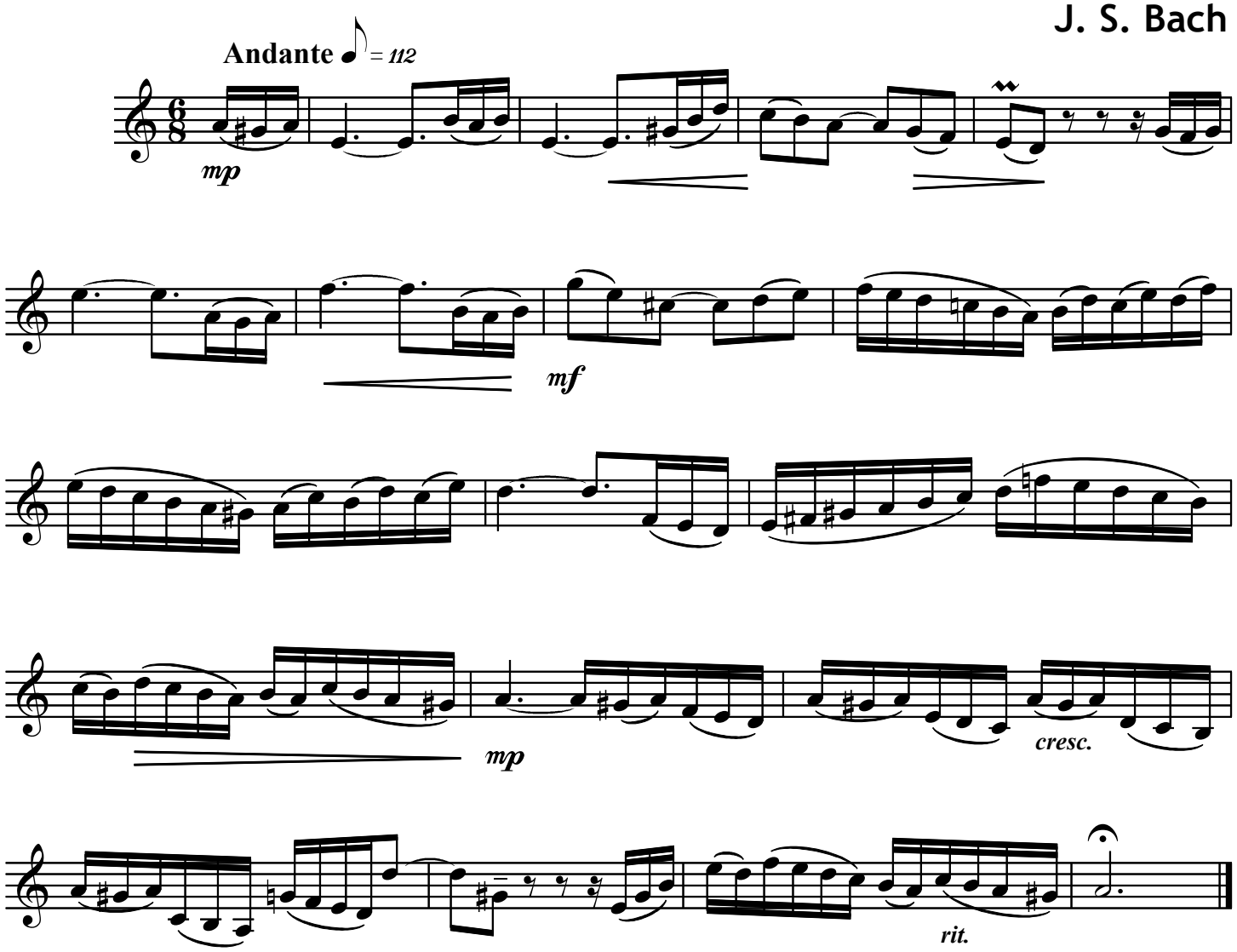
J. S. Bach



Qui sedes

from the B Minor Mass

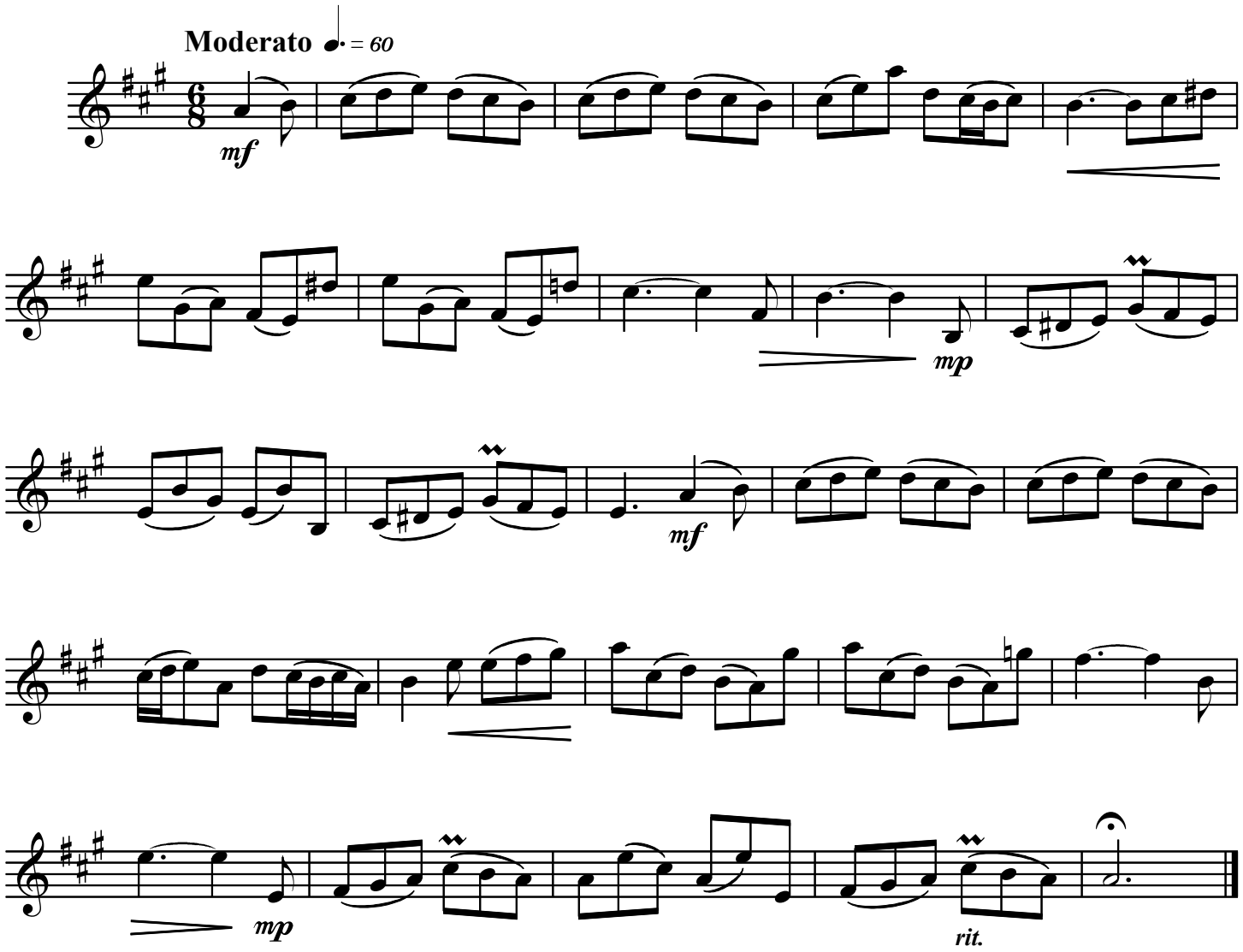
J. S. Bach



Et in Spiritum Sanctum

from the B Minor Mass

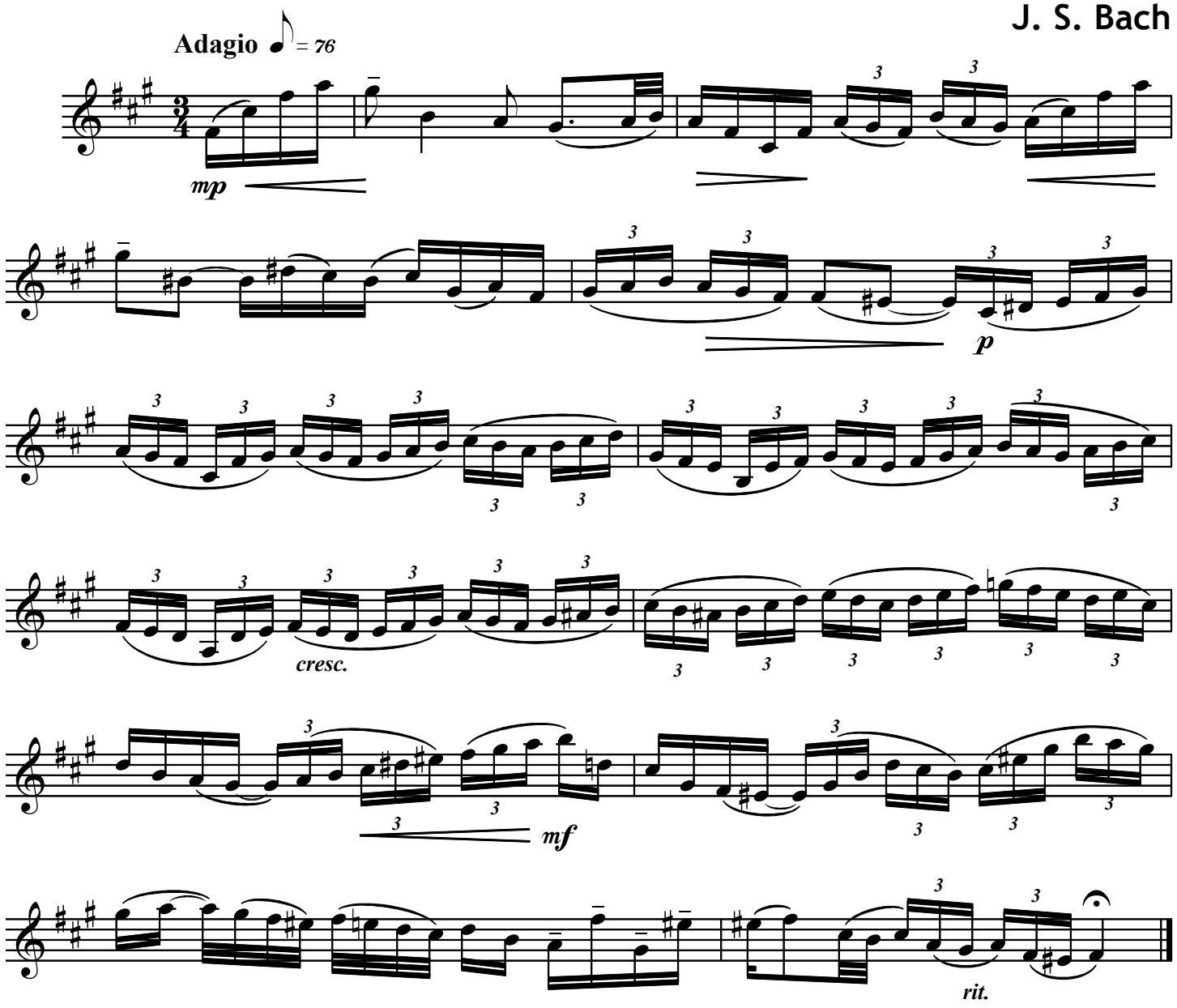
J. S. Bach



Benedictus

from the B Minor Mass

J. S. Bach



«Performance Considerations of the Baroque»

by Thomas Rüedi

PREFACE

As musicians, we might be familiar with the music of the Baroque era to various degrees. For obvious reasons, the euphonium is not called for in Baroque music and it's hardly surprising that perhaps not only purists would find it bewildering if this music is played on a euphonium (or any other instrument outside the Baroque period for that matter). This point is debatable and the modern ear is all too often exposed to (not to say 'polluted' with) watered down performances or even 'jingles' using stereotype musical fragments of e.g. Bach, Vivaldi or Mozart. Much has to be said for the strong and growing movement of historically authentic performances (as far as possible) with period instruments and historically informed interpretations exemplified by **Nikolaus Harnoncourt** or **John Eliot Gardiner**, to name just two.

Such performances are not only a good listen they are an absolute necessity in terms of giving us a true insight into this music.

But does this mean that we 'outsiders' should not even take a glimpse at this perhaps most thrilling period in the entire history of music? Of course we should!

Playing a historically 'correct' instrument is by no means a guarantee alone for an authentic performance. As with any styles of music, the basis of a successful performance lies in a sincere involvement of the style, the period and its culture as well as an eagerness to listen and discover. Keeping this in mind, perhaps a Baroque performance with a 'period alien' such as the euphonium can also make this music shine as it was intended by its creators.

BAROQUE STYLE - AFFECTS

In Baroque times, composers and performers felt that their music was serving a much higher purpose than just to entertain. They wanted to deeply move and perhaps even instruct their audiences by the doctrine of the affections (after the German *Affektenlehre*). The French philosopher and mathematician **René Descartes** discusses in his 1649 treatise «Les passions de I'âme» *(The Passions of the Soul)* the six primary passions:

- *Admiration* (admiration)
- *Amour* (love)
- *Haine* (hatred)
- *Désir* (desire)
- *Joie* (joy)
- *Tristesse* (sorrow)

For composers of the Baroque era, the musical expression of affections was a primary objective.

BAROQUE ORNAMENTATION

Unlike today, the composers of the Baroque era did not really write any performance instructions in their music. It was assumed that the performers themselves would know the best choice of tempi, dynamics, articulation, phrasing and nuances of tonal colours. The same applied for ornamentation, which was simply assumed to be a part of the musical expression. Depending on the 'affect' of the music, the performer would freely apply ornamentation that enhanced the melodic line in the best possible way and taste. Therefore, in lyrical music the performer would perhaps enhance the melodic expression with smooth and slow ornaments and 'arpeggi', and fast and exciting movements would be embellished with brilliant and virtuosic trills and runs. Music that seemed already complete in its unity and spirit would have very little ornamentation apart from essential trills at a cadence.

STANDARD EMBELLISHMENTS

Trills

Trills, mordents, turns and appoggiaturas etc. can be listed as standard embellishments. Trills are usually added at all major cadences unless some other indications are made or the music calls for sparse ornamentation. Trills predominantly start from the upper note. The upper note should be slightly stressed (leaned on) and slurred into the following notes of the trill, thus creating a slight diminuendo from the starting note. Trills should end with either a 'Nachschlag' (a turn smoothly resolving the trill into the next note), or with an anticipation. [*fig. 1 and 2*]

The slow and smooth anticipation works beautifully in lyrical music. It's debatable whether the anticipated note should be shortened and detached from the resolving note. I personally like to do just that, so the notes are not 'baked together', leaving a nice tension before the resolution. In fast or rhythmically exciting music using dotted rhythms, it's customary to shorten the note before the anticipation, thus leaving a gap before the anticipation is played. This is referred to as 'silence of anticipation' [*fig.3*]

Trills can also be added quite freely on notes not belonging to a cadence. They can be either long as in a cadence trill, or quick and short as a 'half trill'. Half trills begin on the upper note and end on the primary note [*fig.4*].

Appoggiaturas

Appoggiaturas are also essential ornaments of the Baroque style. They can be used in many places and with their dissonance add interest and charm to the music. The word 'appoggiatura' derives from the Italian 'appoggiare' meaning 'to lean'. This leaning on the note works best on strong beats, i.e. on beats one and three in duple time, or beat one in triple time. Appoggiaturas always slur and slightly diminuendo (ease) into the resolving note. *Fig.5-7* shows examples of how the appoggiaturas

can be played. Also short appoggiaturas (acciaccaturas) are used. Here, the first note is played very quickly and snappy and is played on the beat.

Other basic ornaments are mordents and turns [*fig. 8/9*]. The mordent (from *modere* meaning 'bite') is played quite rapidly. **C.P.E. Bach** states in his «Essay»:*«The mordent is an essential ornament which connects notes, fills them out, and makes them brilliant»*

On the execution of turns, C.P.E. Bach remarks further in his treatise that the turn

«…is almost always performed rapidly […] this would mean that at slower tempos the first notes of the turn may be played more rapidly, coming to rest on the principal note»

All embellishments discussed above are very elementary ornamentations of Baroque music. To perform Baroque music without such ornamentations would be out of style. However, I suggest that you start using ornaments in a simple way and as you feel more comfortable, you can explore these beautiful embellishments more freely. I find it easiest to sing the ornaments first and to really understand the rhythmical structure and the style of the ornament I'm playing. It's basically a combination of intellectual consideration and intuition. It's also important to study the bass line very carefully; ornaments may create bad counterpoint such as parallel fifth, octaves or seconds.

It should be mentioned that performance practice was never totally uniform and these 'rules' should be understood as guidance only.

FREE EMBELLISHMENTS

Let's now talk about the more advanced art of adding ornaments freely to a piece of music. The challenge is to find notes that work melodically and harmonically and enhance the melodic line with great taste. Some beautiful examples of the fine art of embellishing was handed down by **Georg Friedrich Telemann** (1681-1767) in his «Twelve Methodical Sonatas». These wonderful works provide excellent study material and are a true source of inspiration [*fig. 10/11*]

Another great source is **Johann Joachim Quantz**' (1697-1773) «On Playing the Flute». This comprehensive book gives insight into the style of the Baroque era, as well as extensive content on ornamentation, phrasing and cadenzas.

Expanding melodic lines

An easy approach to expanding melodic lines is by filling intervals. Some suggestions of how to apply this technique is shown from fig. 12 onward.

Once you have extracted some basic ideas, it's necessary to check the harmony! Also, the ornamentation should always follow the general shape of the composer's melodic line and, of course, maintain the affect of the music. In movements with repetitions, it is good practice to ornament the repetition more elaborately, keeping it quite simple the first time through. Trills at cadences or basic ornaments indicated by the composer are usually played both times.

On a last note, I would like to quote the acclaimed oboe virtuoso Ronald Roseman (1933-2000) on the subject of Baroque ornamentations:

«Baroque music is never a set of coded instructions to be followed to the letter. At that time there was not even a metronome. Articulation, phrasing, dynamics and ornamentations were all considered to be within the province of the performer. Above all else, you should be free and expressive with the music. I don't mean undisciplined, but your performance in all its aspects should be an expression of your love and understanding of the piece and of your personality as a player. This is perhaps why playing baroque music is such as inexhaustible, rich and joyful experience.»

Recommended reading:

- Robert Donington «A Performance Guide to Baroque Music»
- Johann Joachim Quantz «On Playing the Flute»
- Georg Freidrich Telemann «Twelve Methodical Sonatas»