Passacaglia and Fugue

J. S. Bach

BWV 582

Arranged by Peter Billam

For Piano Four Hands

© Peter J Billam, 2002

This score may be freely photocopied, and redistributed
in paper form. It may be freely performed to live audiences;
performing rights are waived. It may not be redistributed in
electronic form, and all other rights, such as those of recording
and broadcast, remain reserved by the composer, Peter Billam,
GPO Box 669, Hobart TAS 7001, Australia.

This edition 3 November 2006.

http://www.pjb.com.au

Passacaglia and Fugue in c minor

The *Passacaglia et Thema Fugatum* in c minor, BWV 582, is one of the first fruits of Bach's early mastery. Probably written at Arnstadt, where Bach was from 1703 to 1708, it sythesises its models, Buxtehude, Reinken, and the French style, but far surpasses them in dramatic intensity, in vigour, in its ability to affect and excite.

Johann Sebastian Bach was appointed in 1703 as organist of the new Wender organ in the *Neue Kirche* (now called the *Bachkirche*), giving him for the first time in his life free access to a fine modern organ. It would have been tuned at about A = 465, a semitone above modern concert pitch, probably in Werckmeister temperament.

The passacaglia owes debts to Buxtehude's ostinato works, notably to his Passacaglia in d minor BuxWV 161. In mid-October 1705 Bach walked the 400 kilometers from Arnstadt to Lübeck to visit Buxtehude, then 68 years old; he only had permission to be absent for four weeks, but he stayed sixteen weeks, probably returning during January 1706. Probably Bach wrote his Passacaglia and Fugue afterwards, as he absorbed his experience. The Passacaglia has twenty variations. The cantus firmus moves to the soprano voice in bar 88, becomes florid at bar 104, dissolves at bar 112 and returns in triumph at bar 128.

For the fugue, the passacaglia theme is divided into two halves, the first half of which enters in the alto, and the second of which, set in quavers, is its contersubject in the tenor. The fugue borrows Reinken's "permutation fugue" idea, in which each voice enters with the same series of subjects and countersubjects. So when the soprano enters in g minor in bar 174, the alto moves to the first countersubject in quavers and the tenor to a second countersubject in semiquavers; when the bass enters in c minor in bar 181, the tenor becomes free counterpoint. The voices rotate themes again at bar 186 in g minor and bar 192 in c minor.

The Passacaglia and Fugue is a summit of the organ repertoire; but there is also an important tradition of playing it on stringed keyboard instruments. The manuscript, which according to Albert Schweizer vanished in the mid-1800's, was apparently headed *Cembalo e pedale*, and Schweizer opined that it was *in erster Linie für das Cembalo mit Pedal und erst in zweiter für die Orgel geschrieben* (in Ernest Newman's translation, "was written in the first place for the cembalo with pedal, and later arranged for the organ"). Such instruments are rare these days, but Jakob Adlung, in *Musica Mechanica Organoedi* (1768), describes clavichords and harpsichords with pedals like an organ pedal-board. They would have been used mainly for practising organ pieces. Bach did possess three of these, and according to Forkel, Bach "like to improvise on a two-manual clavier with pedal".

Marcel Dupré suggests 60 crochets per minute for both the Passacaglia and the Fugue. The american organist E. Power Biggs has recorded the Passacaglia on a harpsichord with pedals (made by John Challis); he suggests "The music seems equally at home in the sonority of strings or pipes, and it assumes a different individuality in each. The harpsichord, perhaps, allows greater rhythmic suppleness and more tempo contrasts between variations". He takes the Fugue at about 76 crochets per minute, and most of the Passacaglia around 66; the variations at bars 40, 72, 96, 112 and 120 he takes around 52, that at bar 144 slower still at around 44, and the running variations at 80 and 88 much faster at around 100 crochets per minute. He uses *inégale* quavers from bar 24 and semiquavers from bars 40 and 112. In addition, each variation is shaped with its own arc, moving fastest around its fifth or sixth bar.

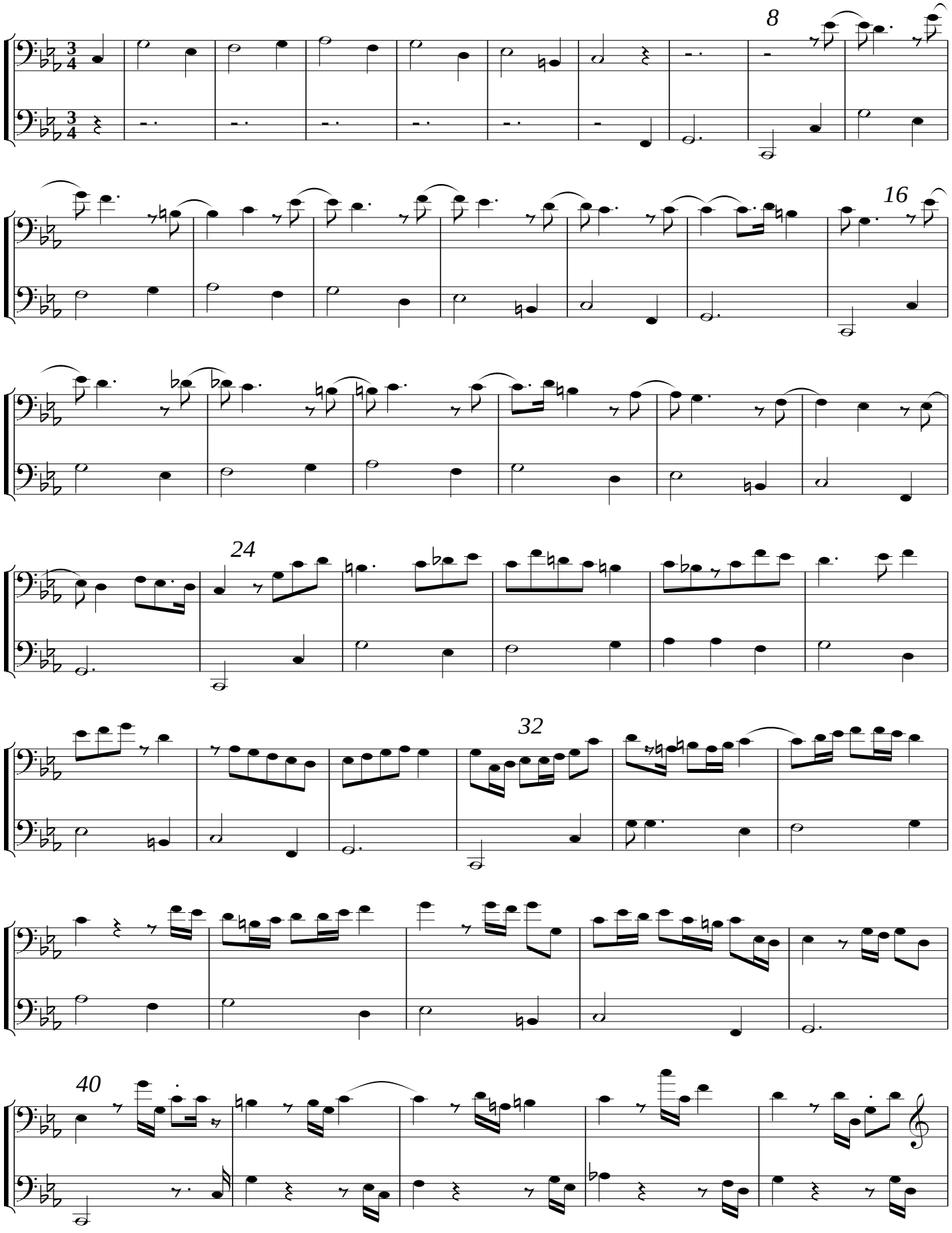
The last quaver in bar 164 is usually granted a fermata and followed by a dramatic pause. Bach writes the upbeat to the Fugue, the middle C in bar 168, into the final chord of the Passacaglia; this note is often re-taken, in the tempo of the Fugue, after the end of the chord.

The aim of this arrangement for piano four hands is to make this music available to piano players, and to make it as practical to sight-read as possible, to minimise the time spent in working out details. The typical four-part texture is shared with two parts to each player; this divides the organ manual parts between the two players. Sometimes this makes the voice-leading less clear, but the original for organ can always be consulted. Some thought has been given to feasible page turns. Some registration decisions, such as adding octaves, have been made, and conflicts between parts have been resolved.

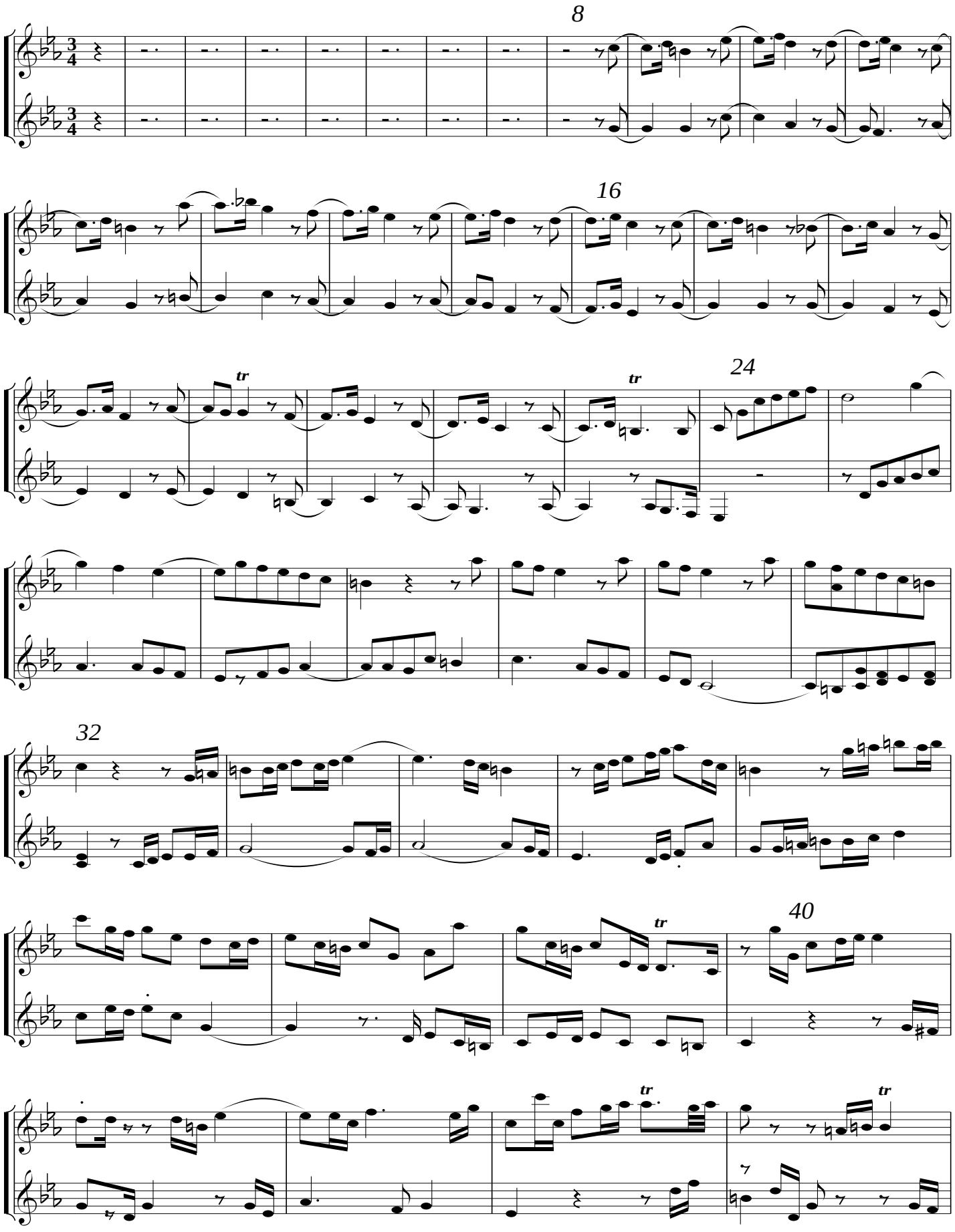
Peter J Billam, *www.pjb.com.au*

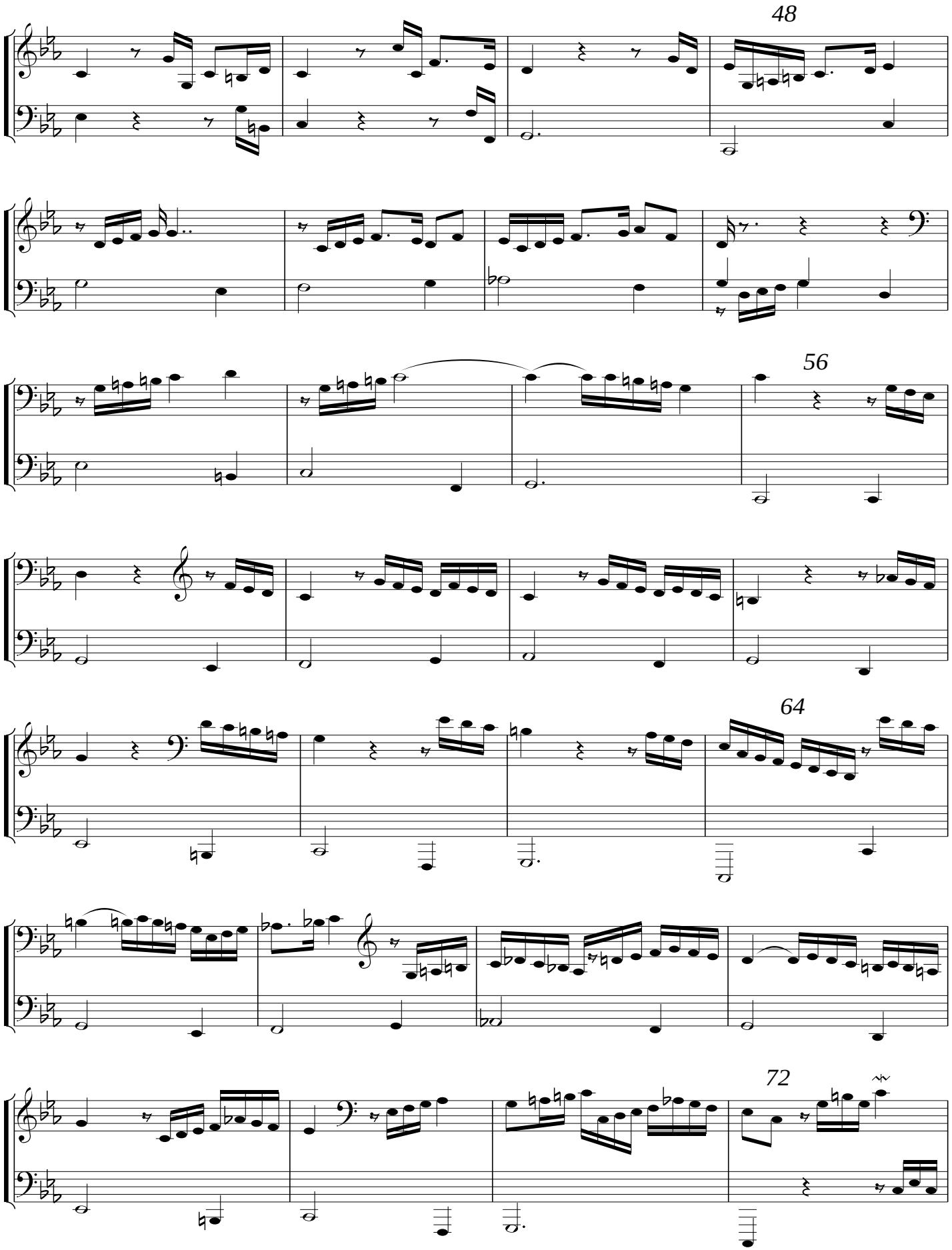
J. S. Bach

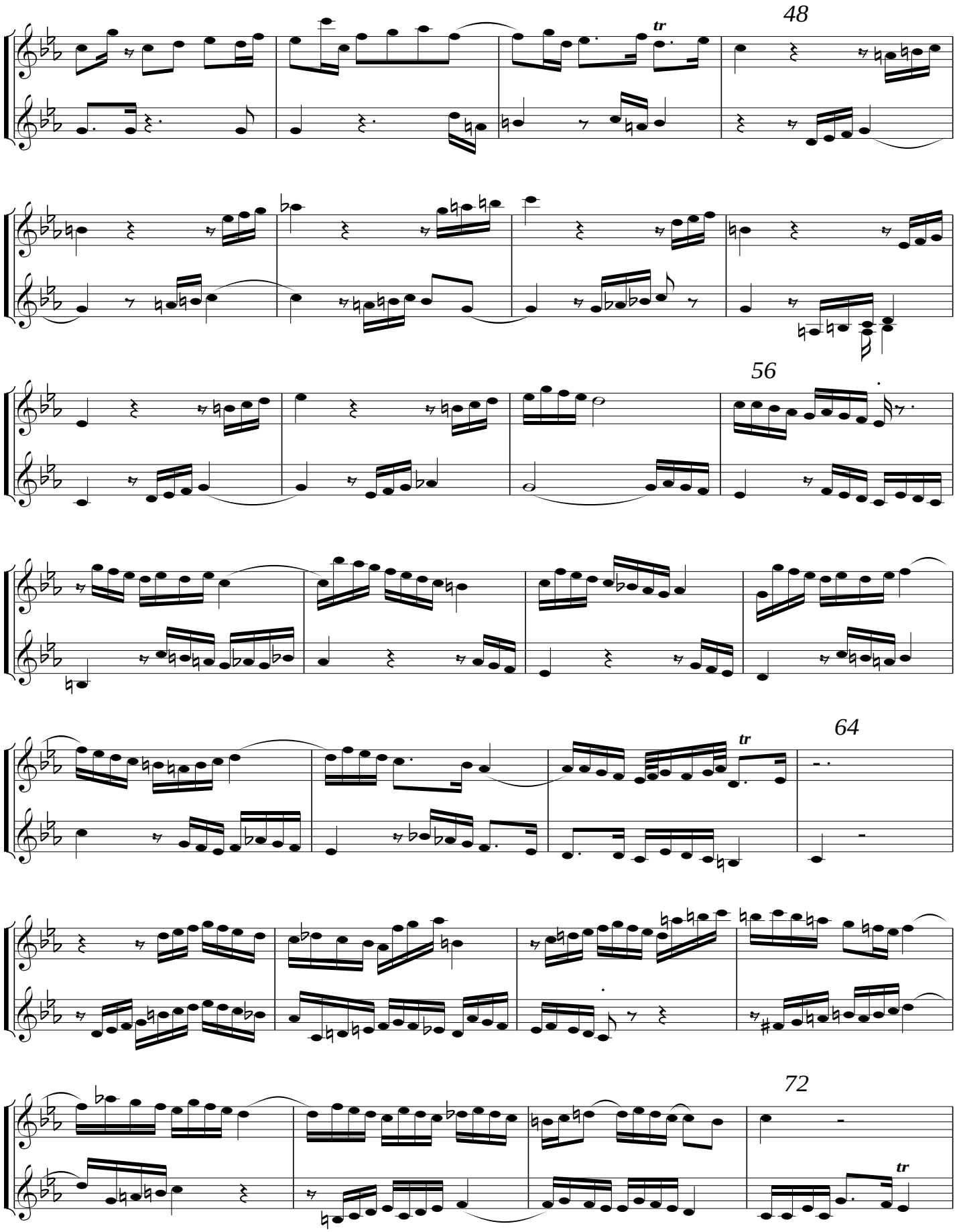
Passacaglia and Fugue

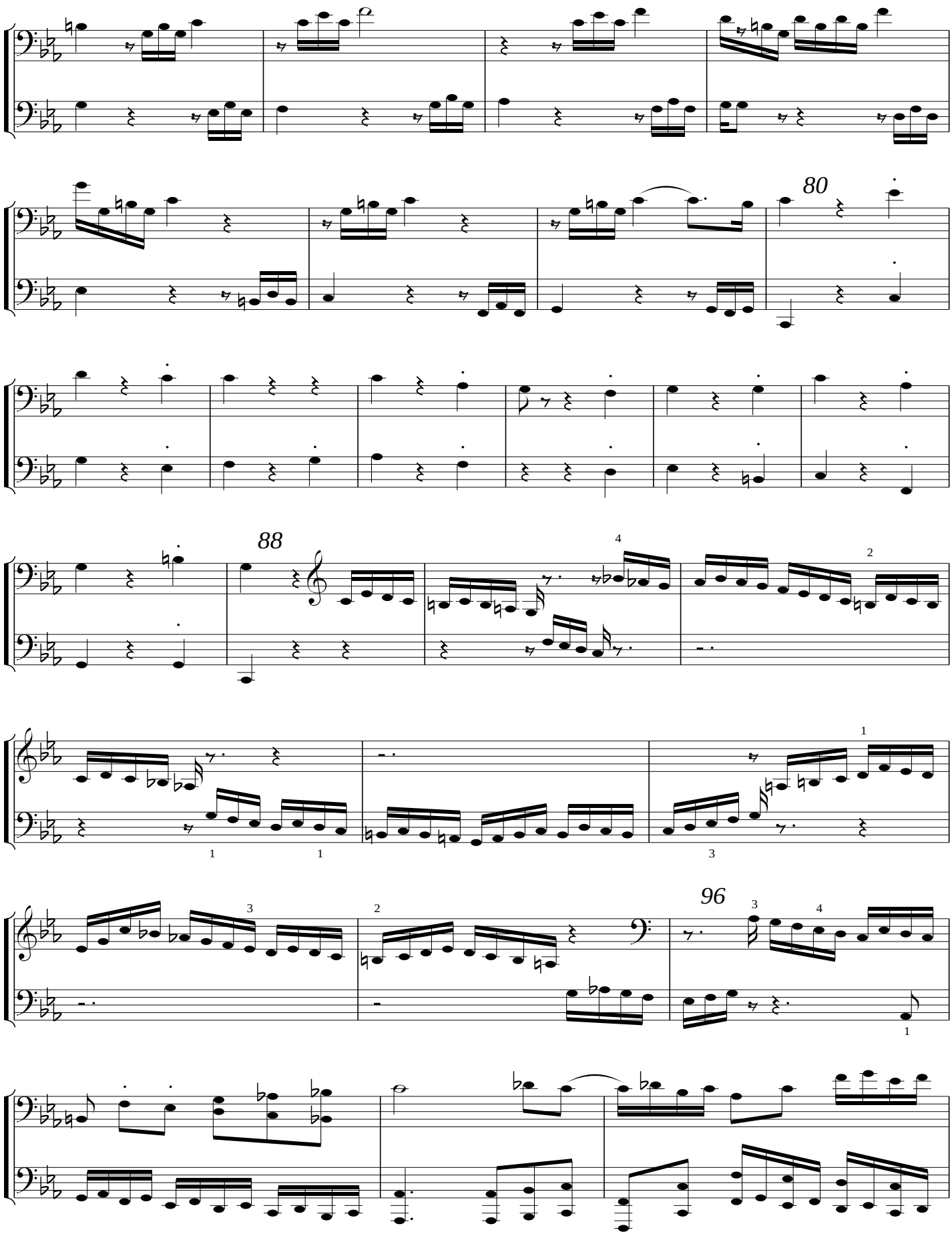


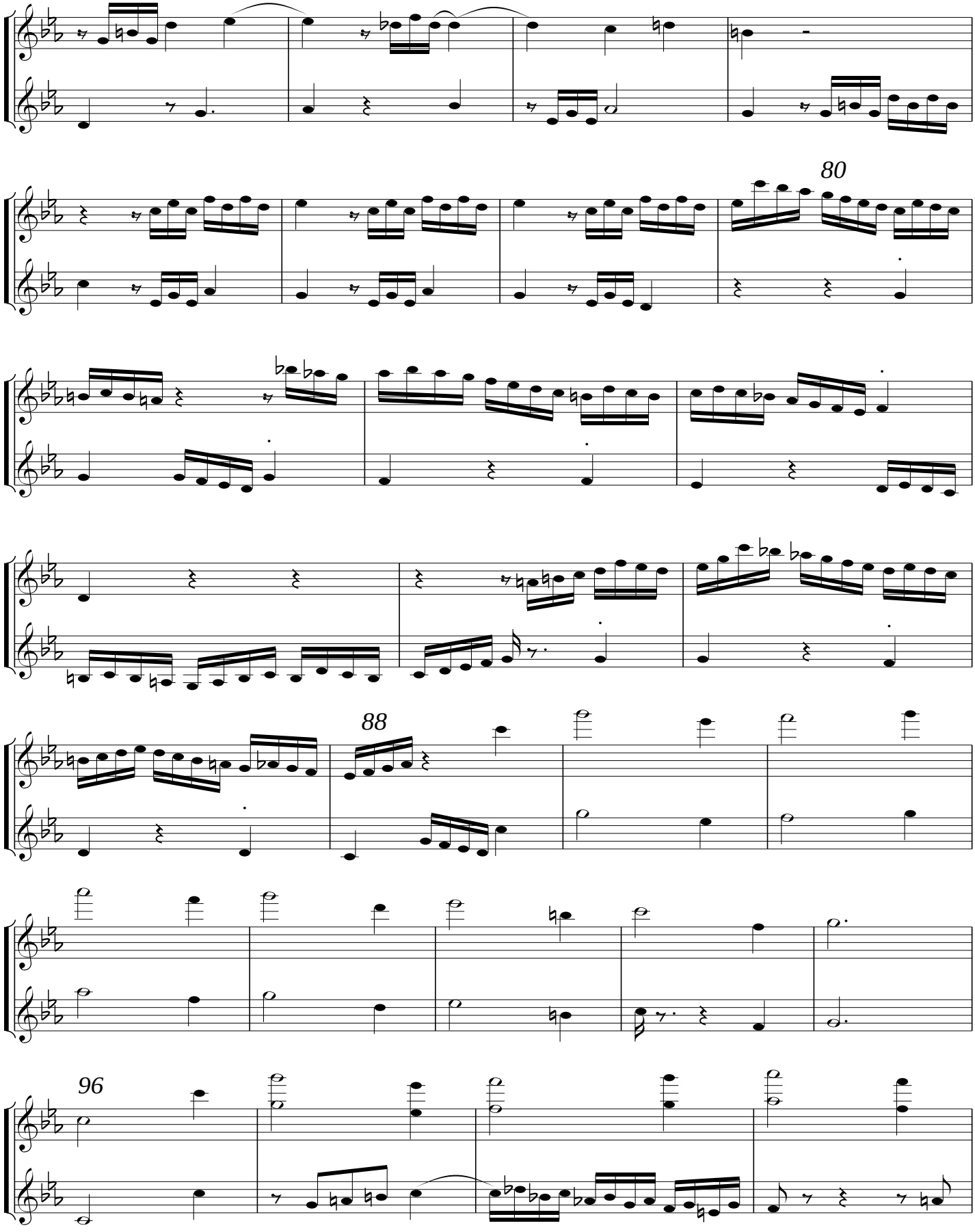
Passacaglia and Fugue

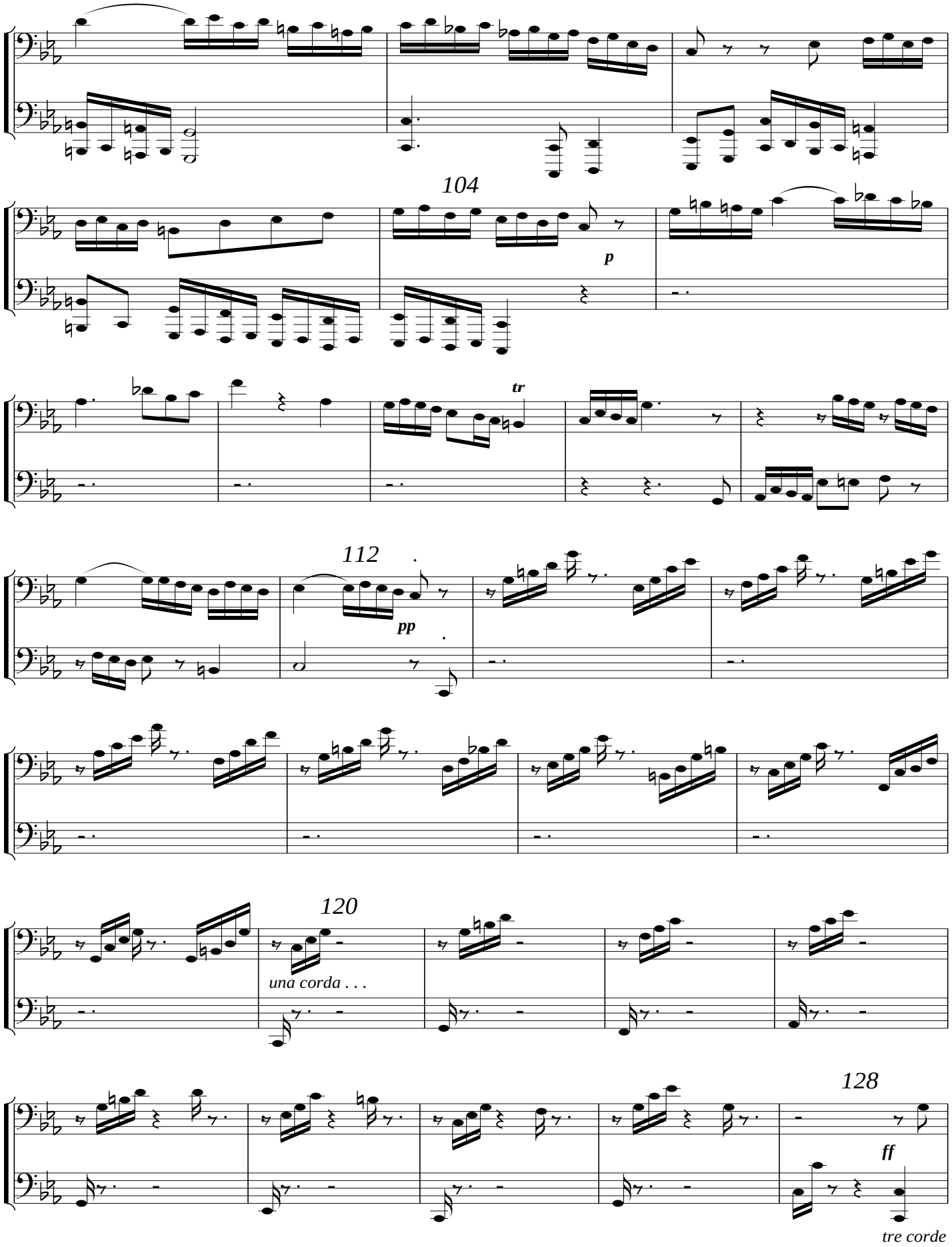


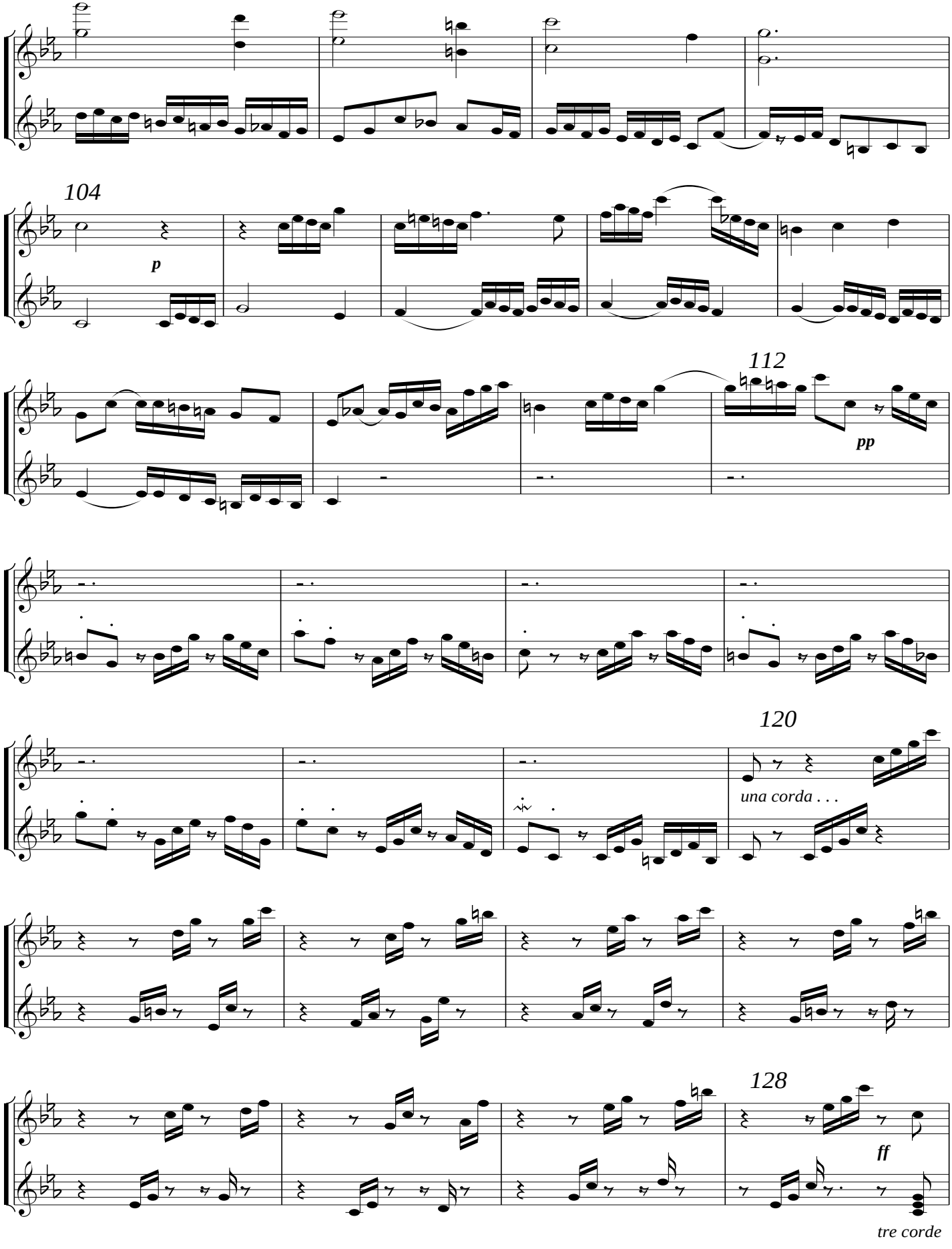

48
56
64
72

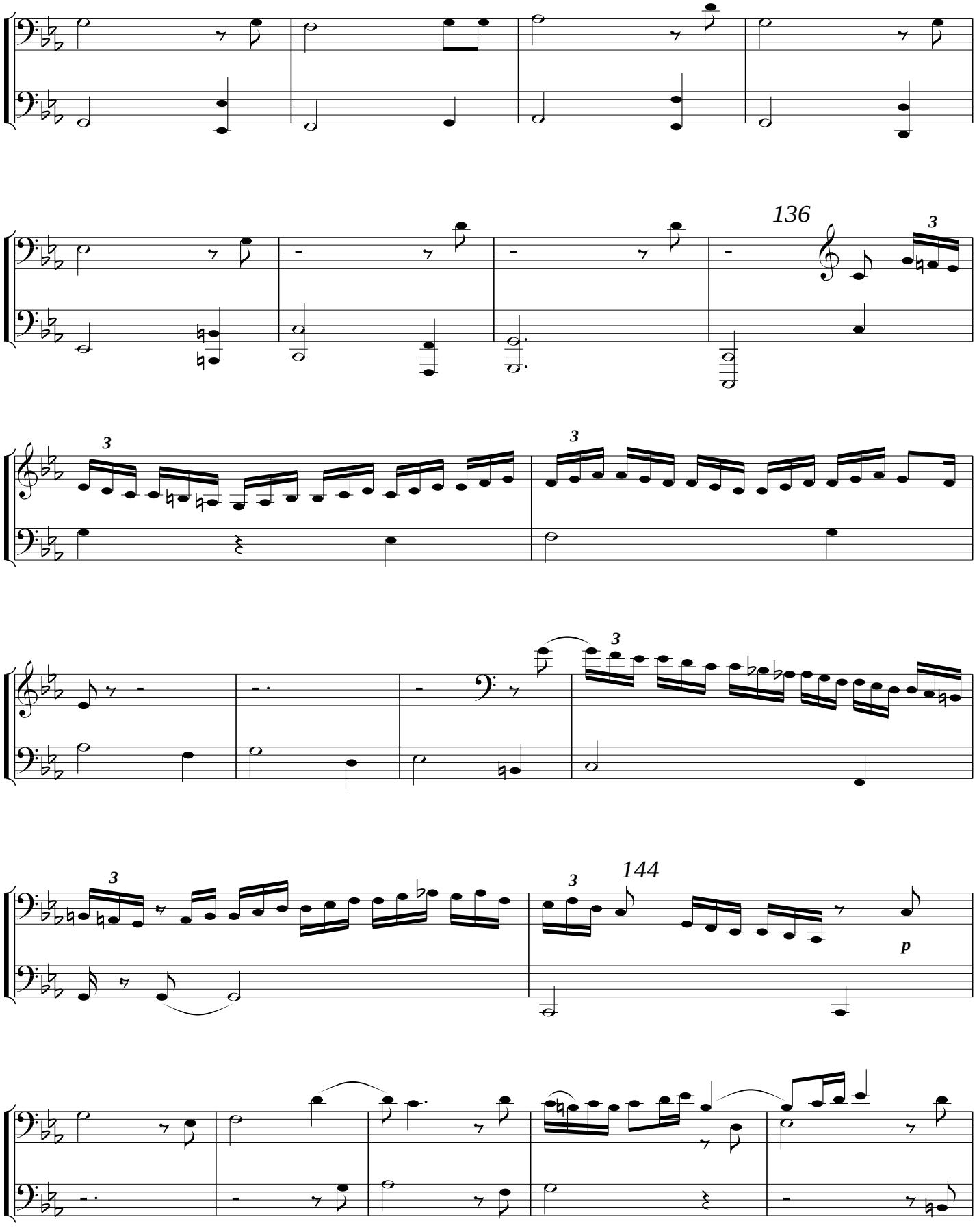

48
tr
56
64
tr
72
tr

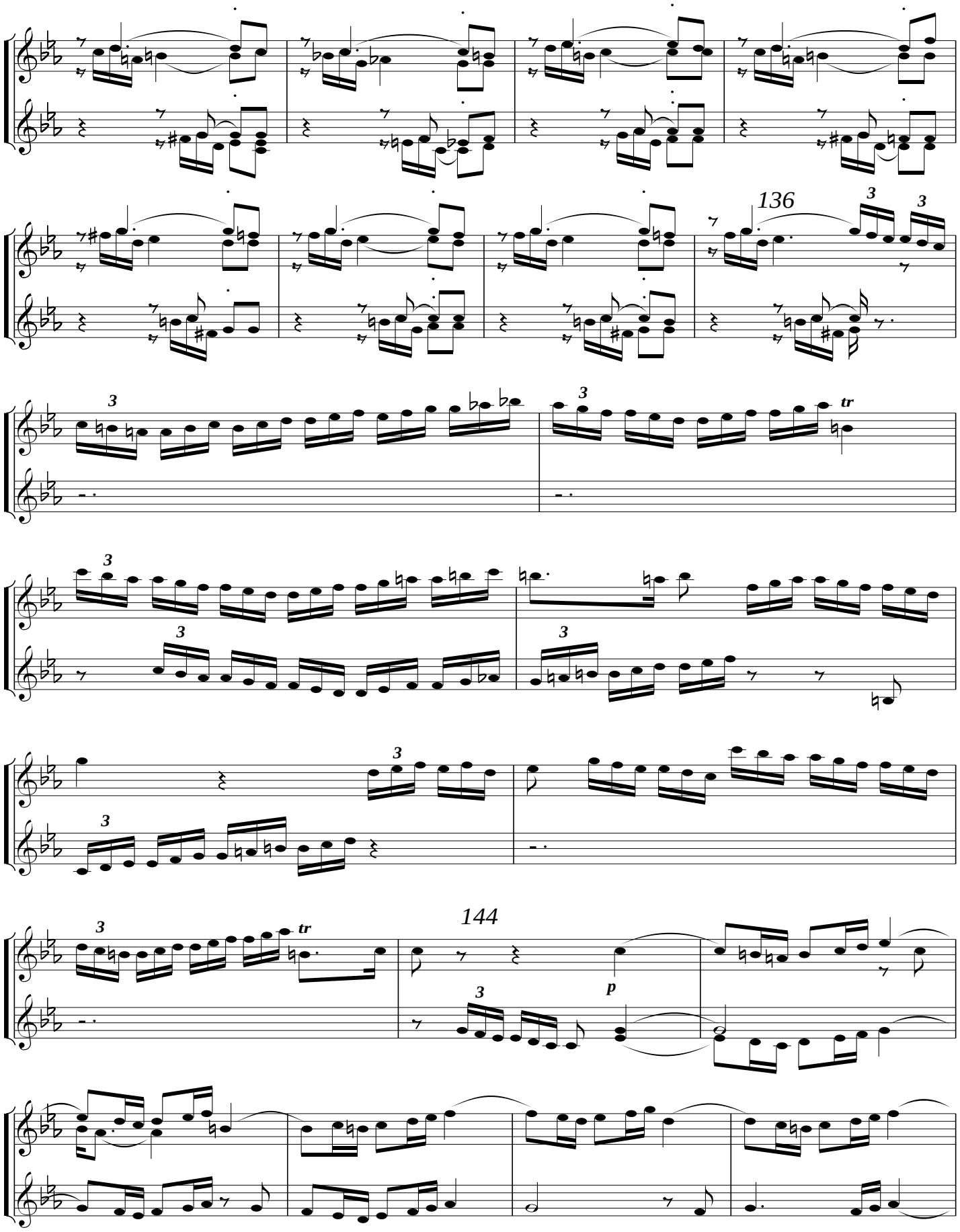

80
88
96

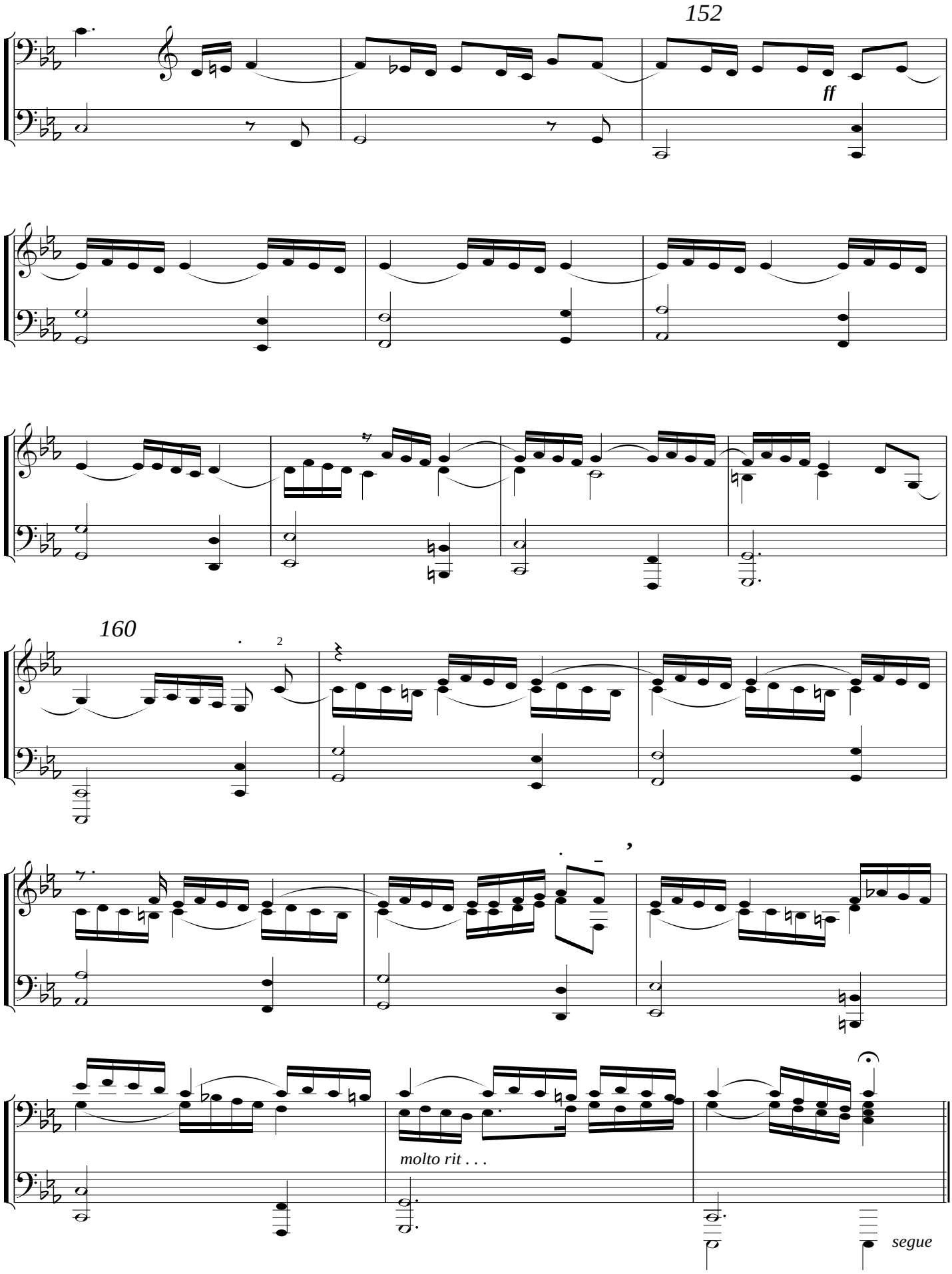

80
88
96

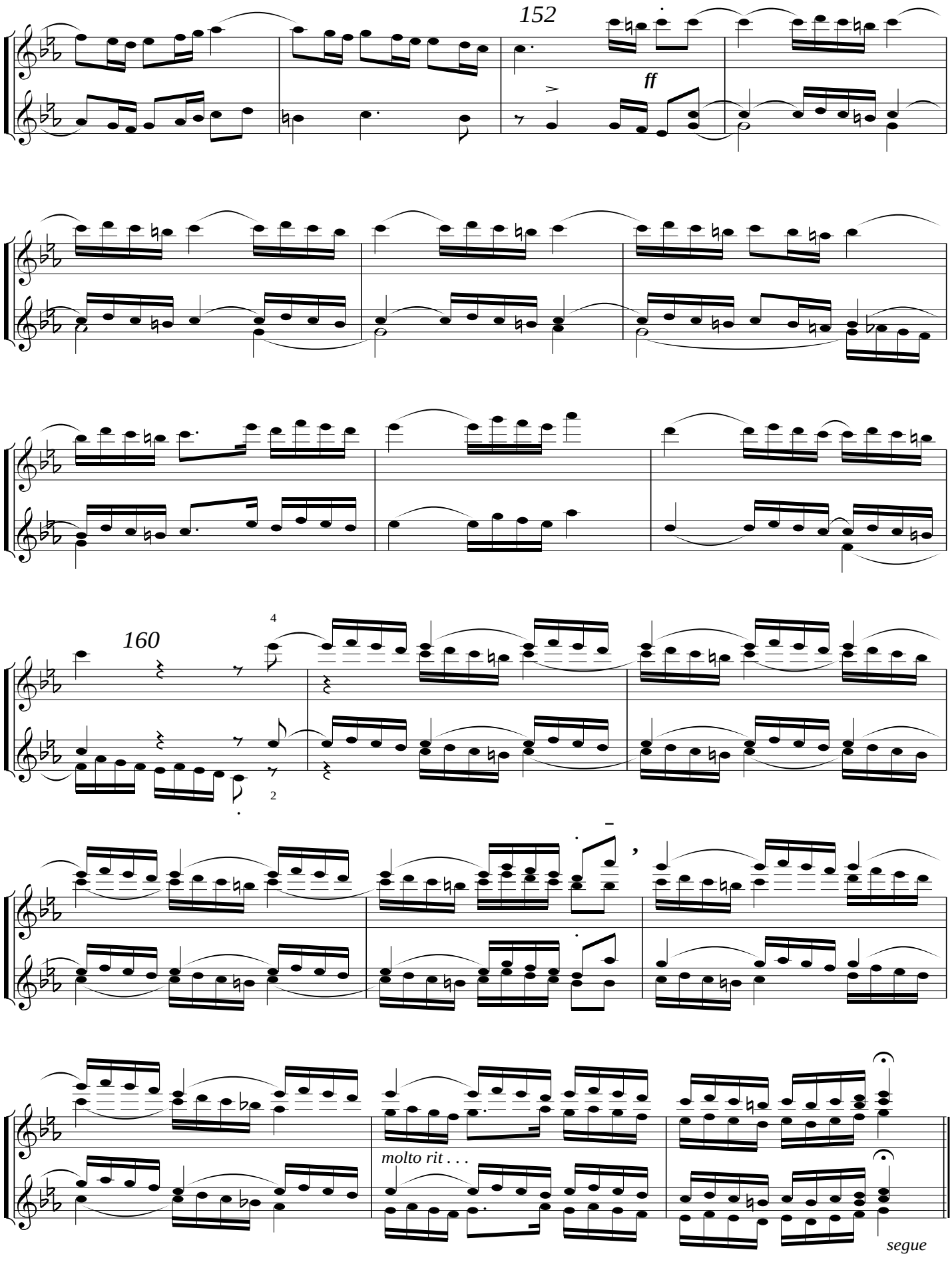

104
p
tr
112
pp
120
una corda . . .
128
ff
tre corde

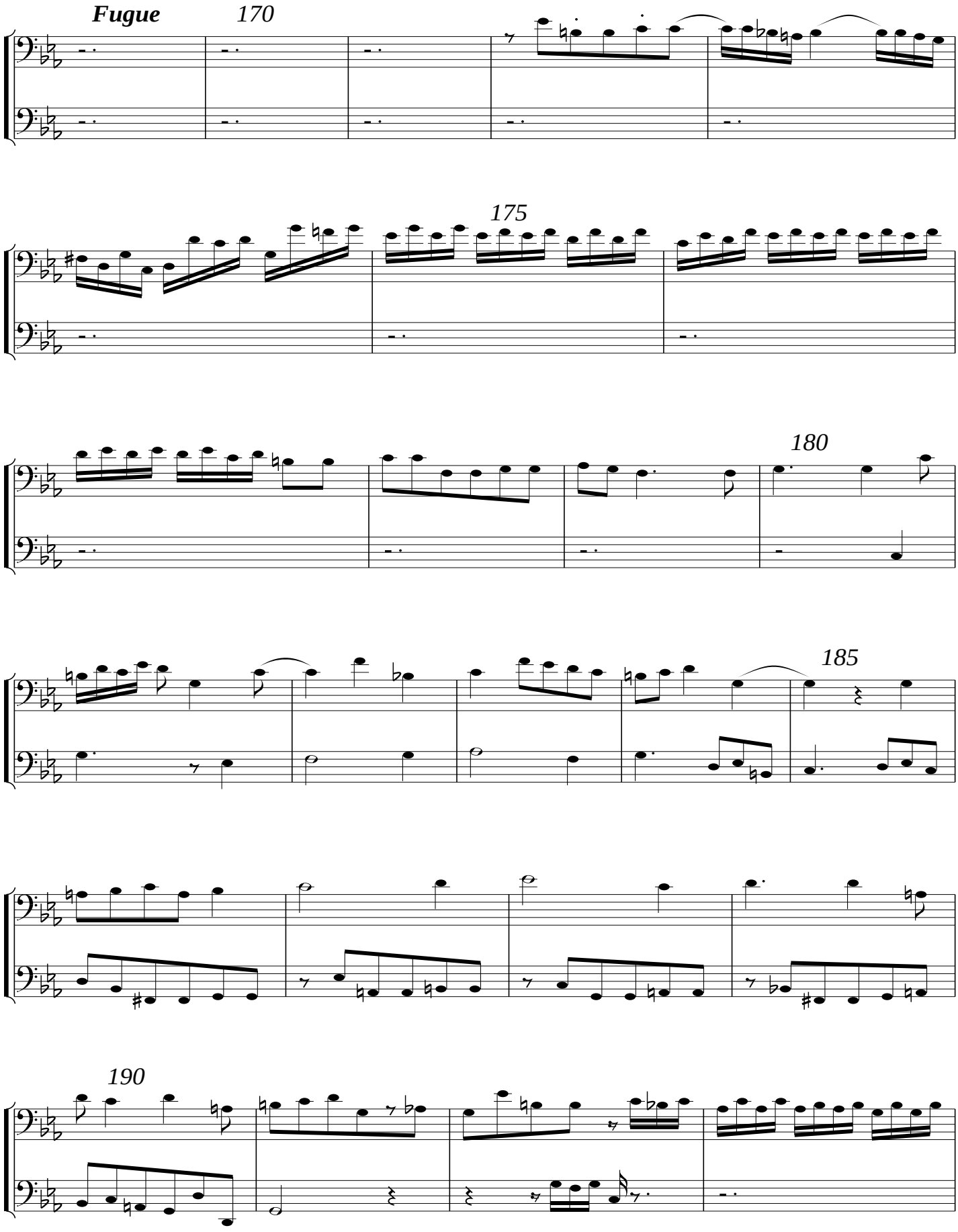

104
p
112
pp
120
una corda . . .
128
ff
tre corde

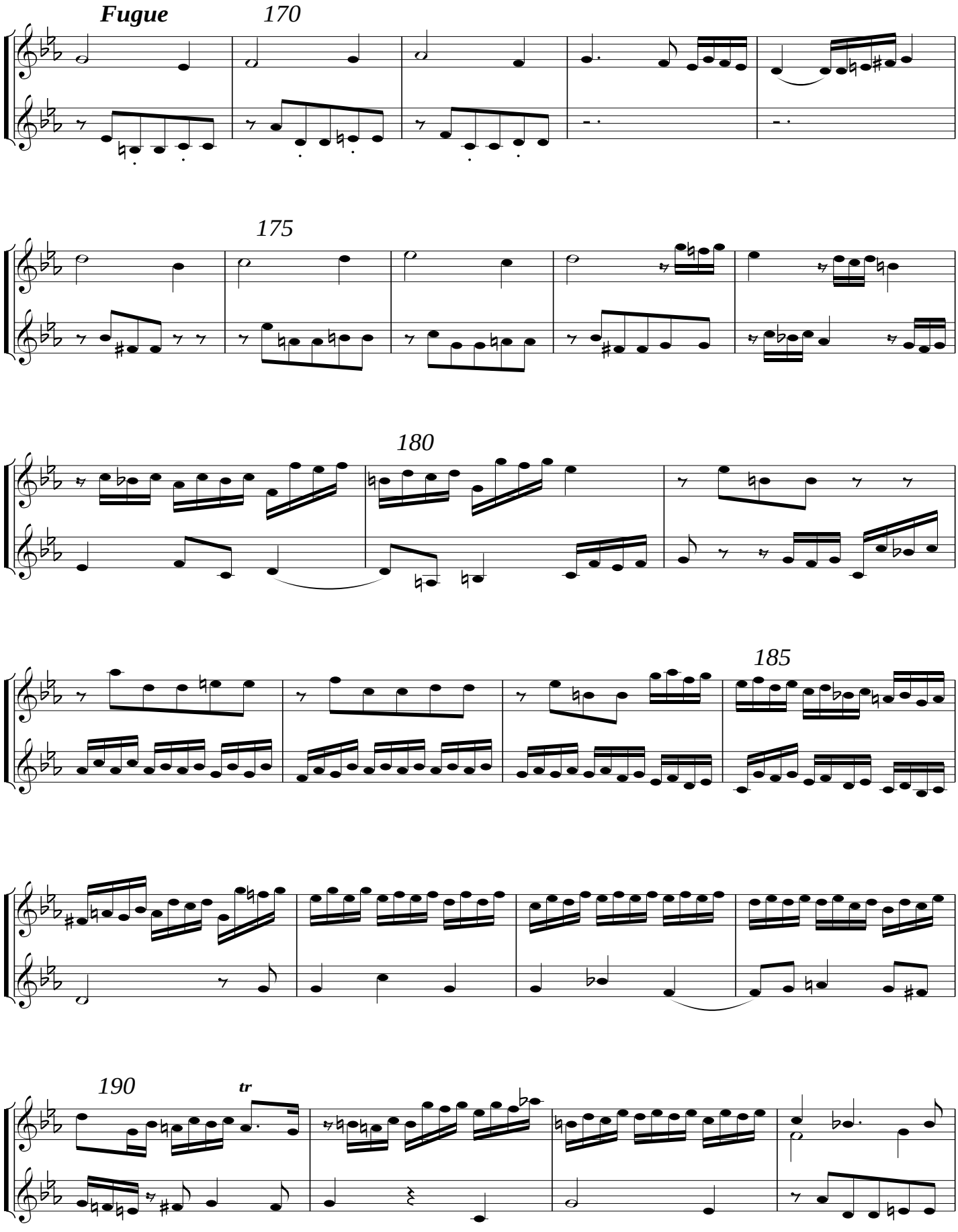

136
144
p

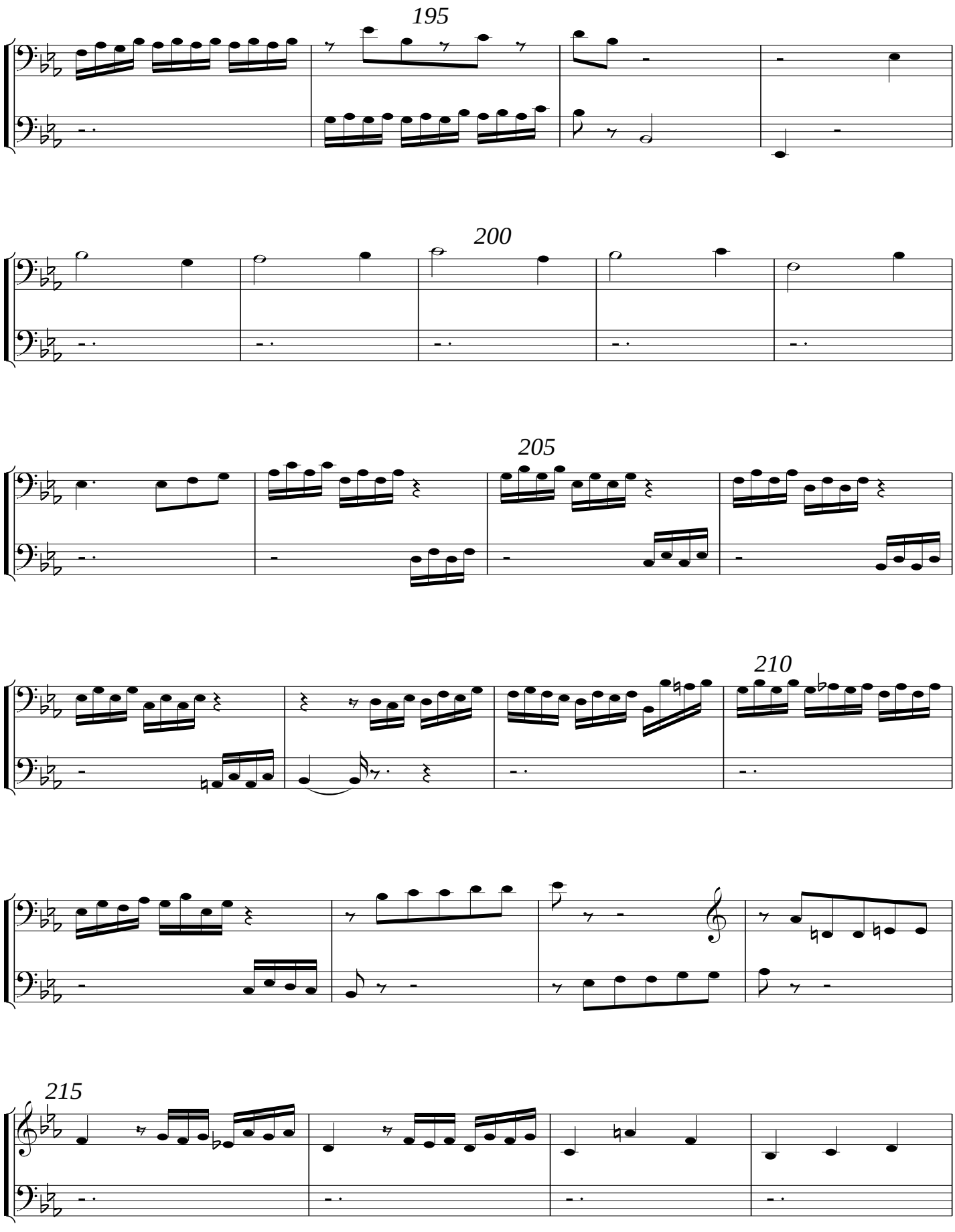

136
144
p

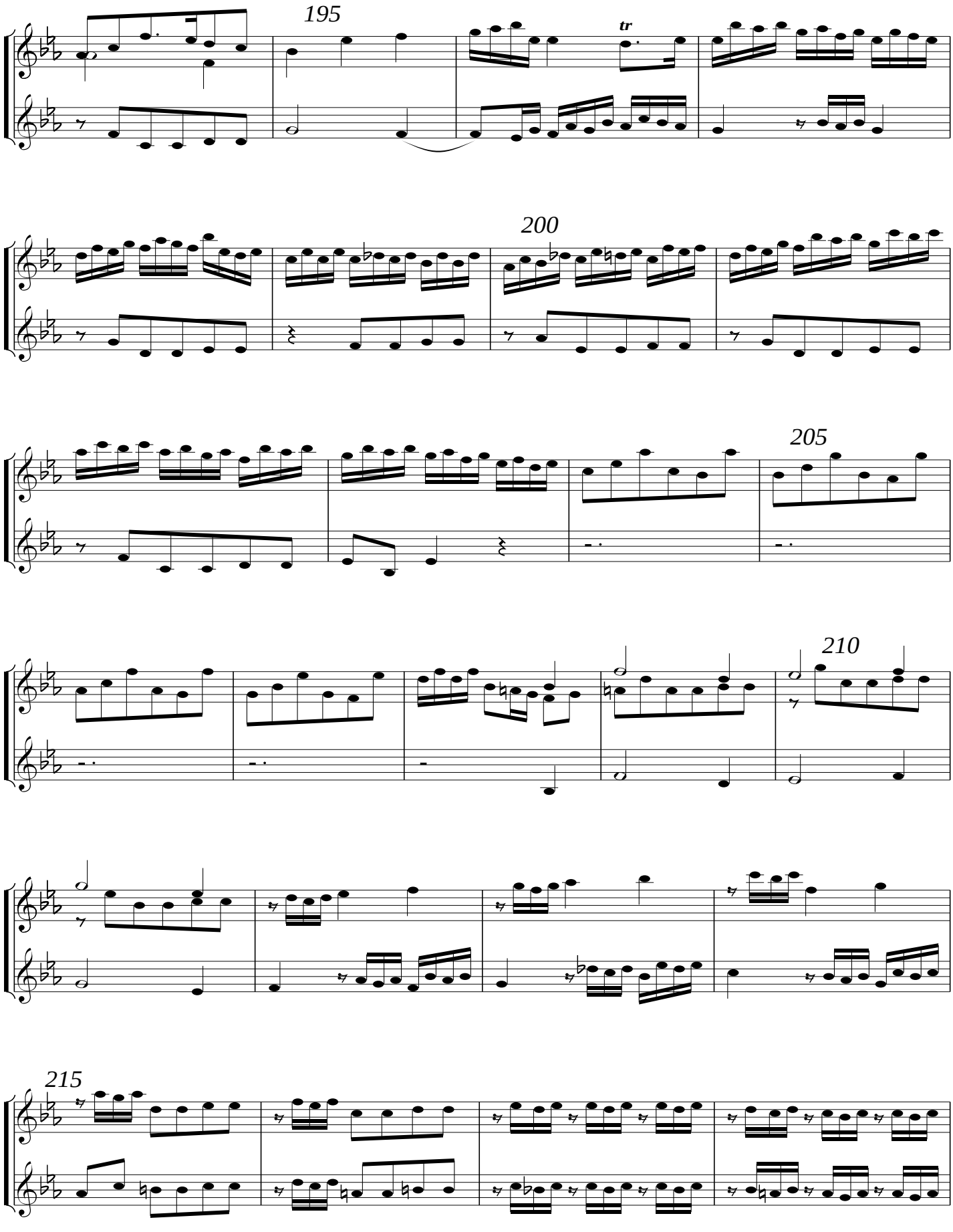

152
ff
160
molto rit . . .
segue

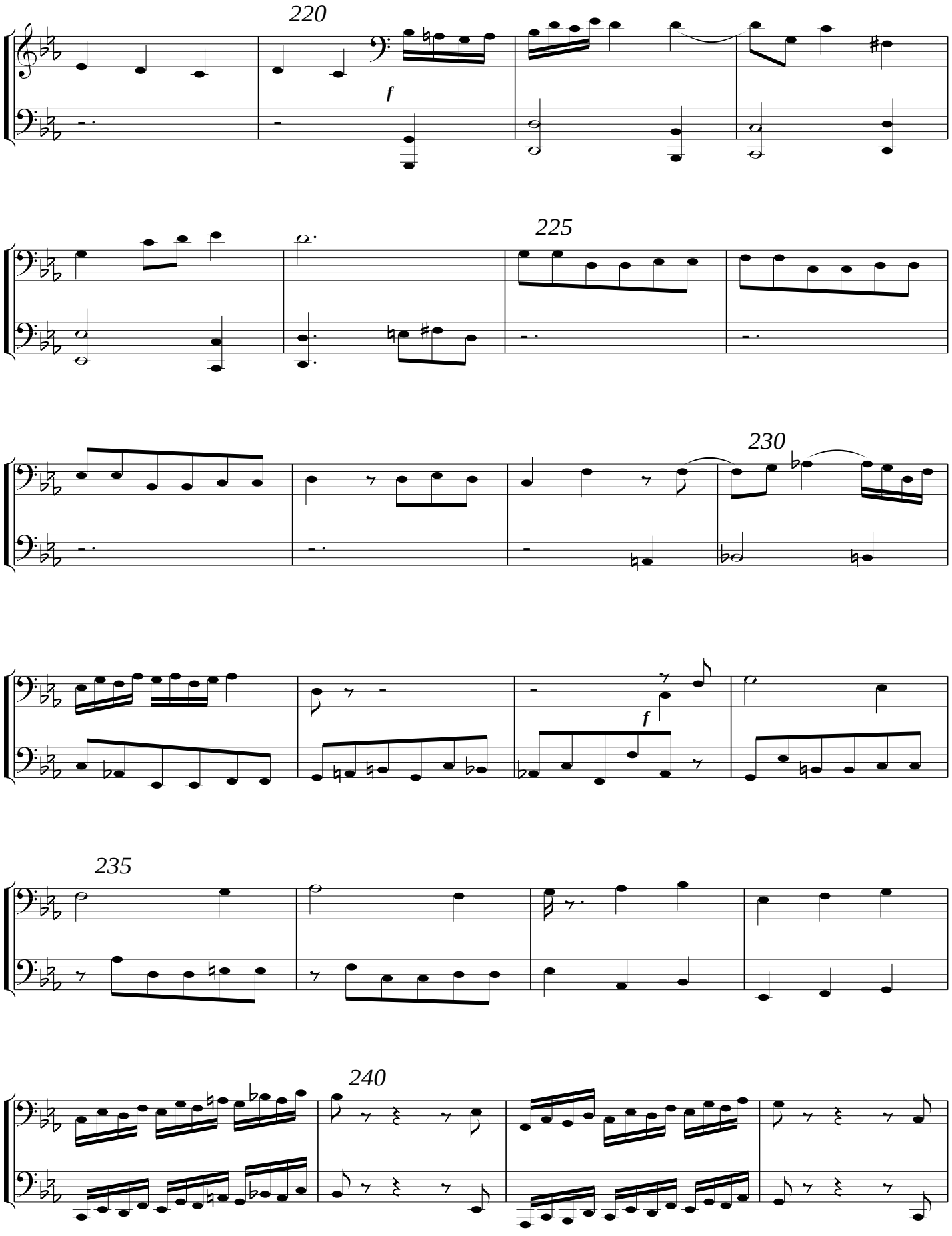

152
ff
160
4
2
molto rit . . .
segue

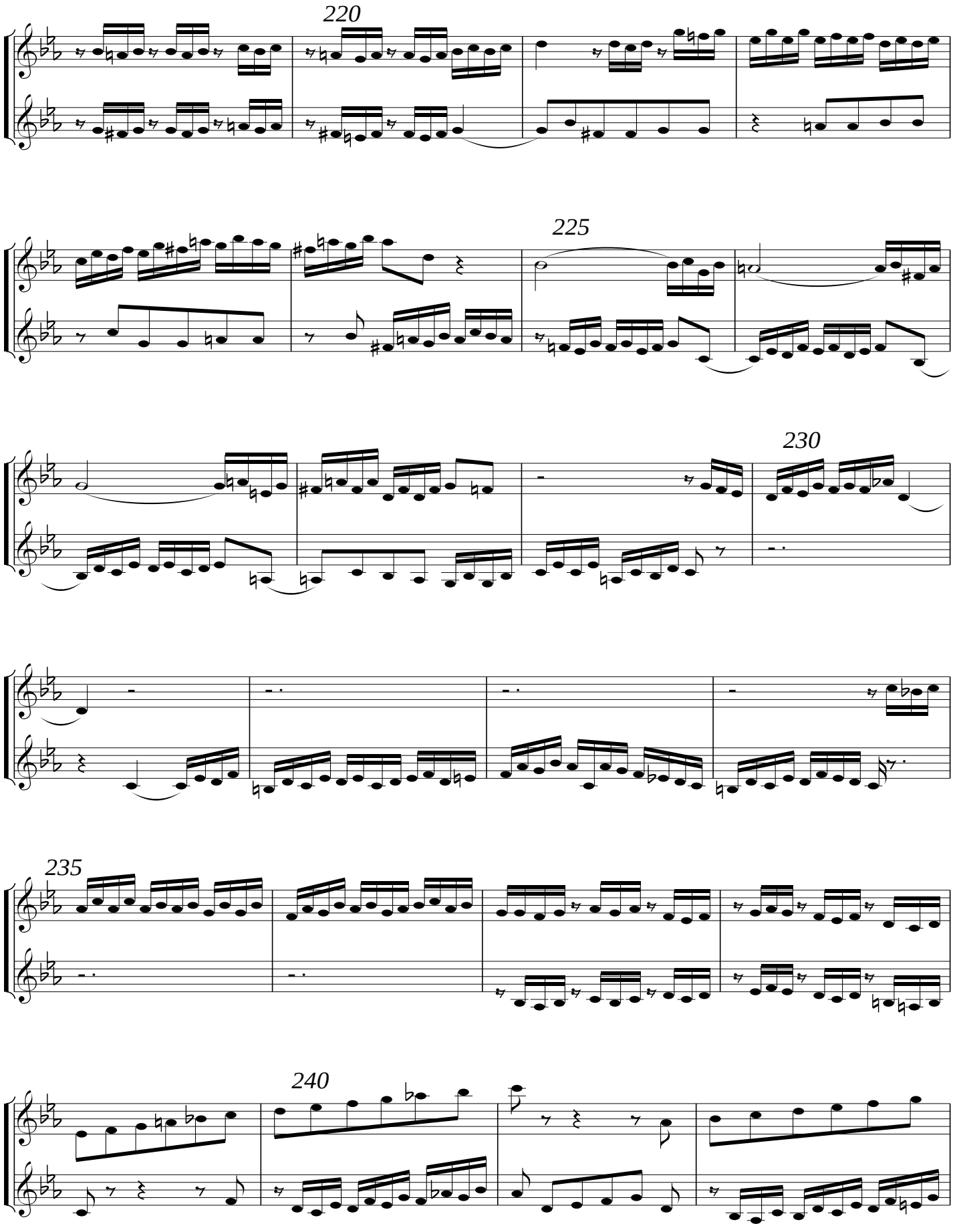

Fugue
170
175
180
185
190

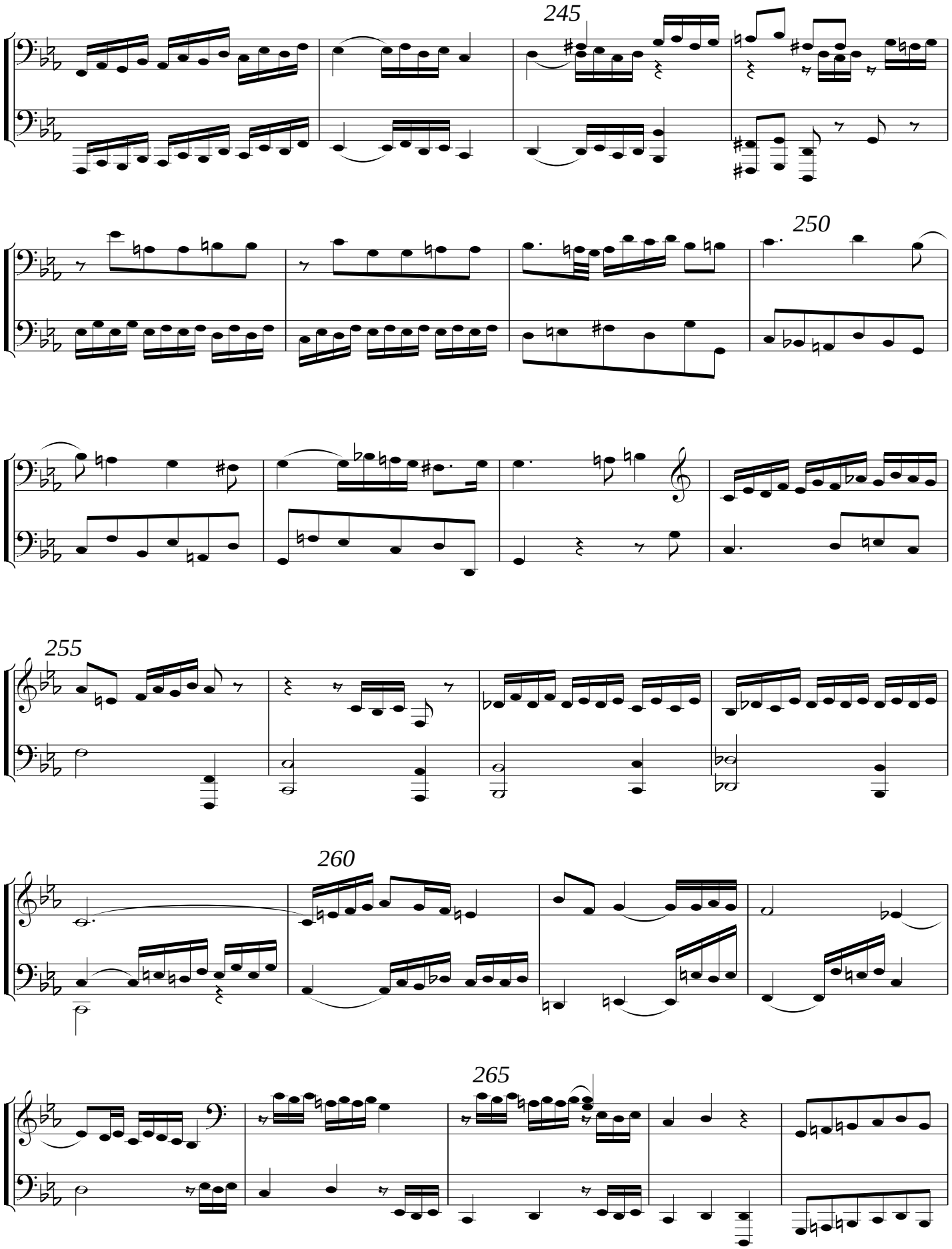

Fugue
170
175
180
185
190
tr

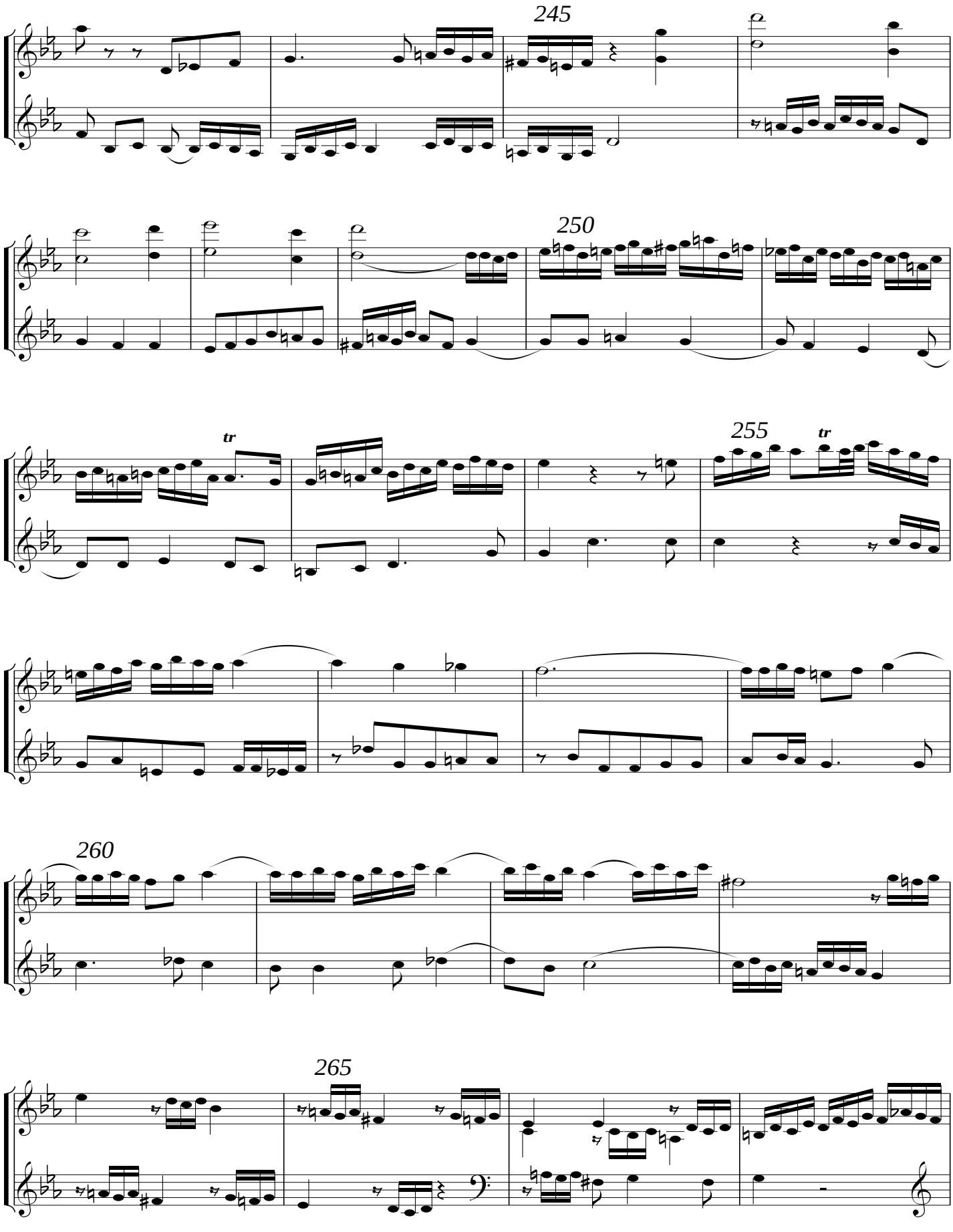

195
200
205
210
215

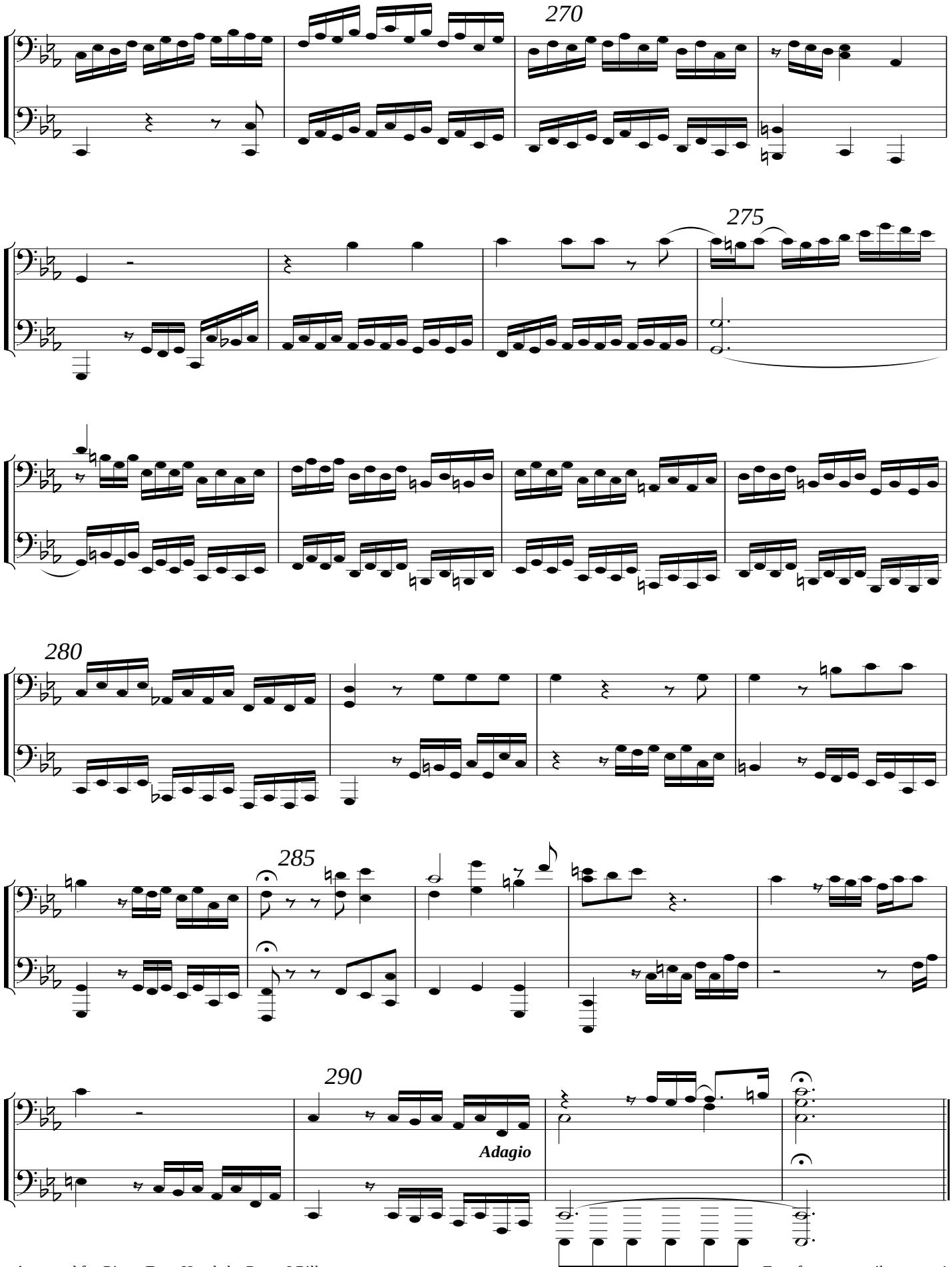

195
tr
200
205
210
215

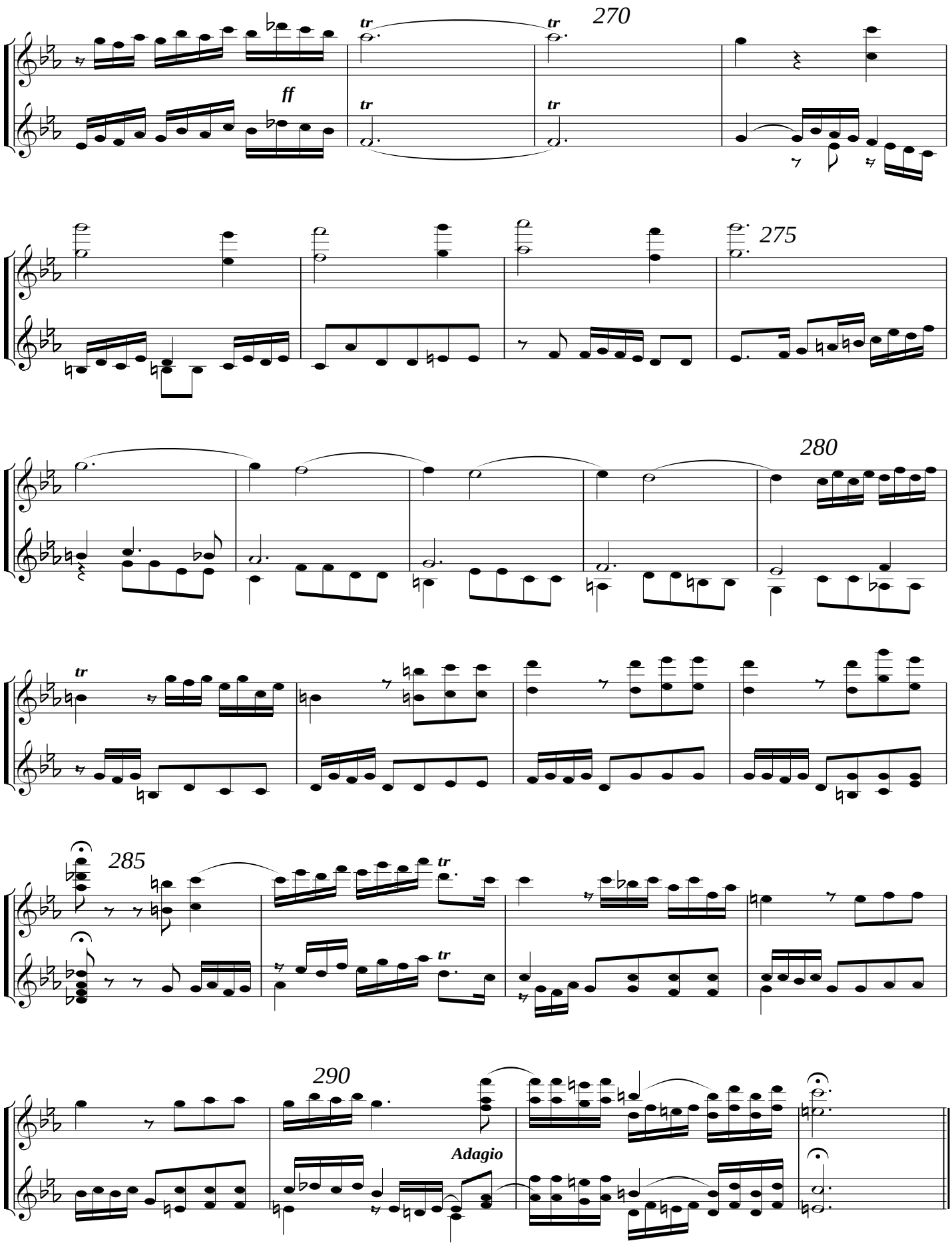

220
f
225
230
f
235
240


220
225
230
235
240


245
250
255
260
265


245
250
tr
255
tr
260
265


270
275
280
285
290
Adagio


270
ff
tr
275
280
285
290
Adagio

Peter Billam was born in London in 1948, studied piano, and lived in Switzerland from 1973 to 1983, where he studied composition, classical guitar, flute and voice, worked as Musical Director of the *Théâtre Populaire Romand,* and as recording engineer, record producer and computer programmer. He moved to Tasmania in 1983, lectured in composition at the Conservatorium, conducted recorder ensembles and choirs, studied recorder, voice and harpsichord. He founded **www.pjb.com.au**, becoming the first composer to sell scores on-line, with on-line delivery, taking scores from Composer to Performer in one immediate step. *Www.pjb.com.au* offers new approaches to funding composers and to music publishing. In a special offer to promote the opera **November at the Carousel**, all the pieces are currently being offered free ! These pieces are **written to be read, made to be played !**

Compositions at *www.pjb.com.au* include: *Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute and guitar, 1980; *Three Violin Duets*, 1987; *Fable*, for piano, 1987; *To Erich Jantsch*, SAATTB recorders, 1988; *A Suite of Curves*, trombone (or horn) and piano, 1990; *Two Recorder Duets*, alto recorders, or other melody instruments, 1991; *Trombone Quintet*, trombone, flute, piano, bass, and percussion, 1994; *Three Songs*, on poems by Jack Kerouac, Vikram Seth and Dylan Thomas, voice and piano (only the first and third of these songs are available), 1994; *Piano Study*, piano, 1994; *Four Dances*, various ensembles including recorder quartet, string quartet, 1995; *The Poet in the Clouds*, on a poem by S. T. Coleridge, SATB choir, 1995; *Tres Casidas del Diván del Tamarit*, on poems by Federico García Lorca, voice and piano, 1997; *Three Suites*, for the solo line, piano, and piano and a solo line, 2000; *Die Zeiten*, on poems by Kästner, Bachman and Jünger, choir (only the second and third of these songs are available), 2000; *Three Duets* for flutes, 2001; *For Four Hands* for piano four hands, 2002; *Three Preludes* for piano, 2003. *Second Solo Suite* for flute, violin, viola or cello, 2003. *Guitar Duet* for two guitars, 2006.

Arrangements include: By J. S. Bach: *Trio BWV 655*, piano and flute; *Vor deinen Thron BWV 668*, piano; *Fugue in F minor BWV 689*, SATB recorders; *Flute Sonata BWV 1031* transposed into G major for alto recorder and keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1032* completed by Peter Billam for flute and keyboard, also in C major for alto recorder, and in G major for descant; *Ricercare a 3, from the Musikalisches Opfer* for keyboard; *Ricercare a 6*, for sSATBG recorders, or strings, or two keyboards; *Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente* for keyboard and melody instrument; *Contrapunctus 14, from the Art of Fugue* as completed by D. F. Tovey, for keyboard, or for SATB recorders, or for strings; *Passacaglia and Fugue in c* for piano four hands; *Chorales with Descant* for melody instrument and piano; *Cello Suite I* for flute or alto recorder, *Forty Chorales* for piano, *Der Geist hilft* for SATB-SATB recorders. By Johannes Brahms: *Fugue in Ab minor for organ*, for SATB recorders and gamba, in A minor; *Choralvorspiele for organ* with previous settings by Isaac, Bach, Praetorius, recorders. By Franz Schubert: *Four Songs*, voice and guitar; *Schubert Dances*, recorders and guitar, *Schubert Dances*, piano 4 hands. By other composers: *G. F. Händel, Concerto Grosso in A minor* op 6 no 4, harpsichord and recorders; *Claudio Monteverdi, Ecco Mormorar l'Onde*, SSATB recorders; *Twelve Italian Songs*, voice and guitar; *John Wilbye, Draw on sweet Night*, SSATTB recorders, and for flute choir; *Telemann, Twelve Flute Fantasias*, recorder; *John Carr, Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute or recorder and guitar; *Fourteen Folk Dance Tunes*, recorder and guitar; *Easy Classical Pieces*, Bb trumpet and piano.

Www.pjb.com.au offers innovative and unusually **generous and useful licensing conditions**:

- You may not redistribute the piece in electronic form
- You may print out or photocopy as many copies as you wish
- You may give these copies to whoever you want
- You may freely perform the piece to live audiences; performing rights are waived

These are extremely practical and generous copyright conditions, and have been devised so as to be as useful to you as possible. Feel free to visit . . .

http://www.pjb.com.au