First Aid for Collaborative Pianists with Small Hands:

Suggestions and Solutions for Awkward Passages

from the Standard Repertoire.

by

Hae Ju Choi

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Andrew Campbell, Chair
David Britton
Rodney Rogers

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ABSTRACT

There are many passages in the standard collaborative piano repertoire that are best executed with average to larger hands, such as densely voiced chords, fast octave passages, spans of 9ths or 10ths, legato lines with wide ranges, or extended arpeggiated passages. As a petite Asian woman with smaller hands, I am frequently engaged to rehearse and perform such works. Such engagements involve a greater amount of practice and preparation, as I spend time determining how to negotiate passages or avoid mistakes that larger hands could easily solve. Nevertheless, despite my best efforts, it is not always possible for one with smaller hands to play exactly what is written by the composer, and one may end up becoming injured by too much stretching of the fingers or hands, which can lead to stress and tension on the arms. This paper will be discussed certain passages from frequently-performed pieces that can be difficult for smaller hands, what makes each passage so awkward or uncomfortable, and provide several solutions that yield musical results without compromising the composer's original intentions. This paper will not only examine orchestral reductions such as concerti, in which the reductions are a mere representation of the composer's true intentions and therefore easier to adjust, but also repertoire originally written for the piano. Three methods will be offered that, while occasionally straying from the printed score, stay as true as possible to the composer's artistic intensions, all the while allowing these collaborative pianists the possibility to approach this repertoire in a realistic fashion.

DEDICATION

To my parents

I could not do anything without your love and prayer for me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, many thanks to my mentor and teacher, Dr. Andrew Campbell. I would never have gotten through my degree without his continued encouragement and support. I have learned a lot from him during my time at ASU, and become not just a better musician but a better person. I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. David Britton. When I had ups and downs, he was always there for me and cheered me up with endless support. I would also like to thank to Dr. Rodney Rogers for his help and support for this paper. To my parents, I cannot express enough how blessed I am to have parents like them. I could not do anything without their support and prayer. To my good friend, Dongfang Zhang, many thanks for his help with the Finale program, without him, I could not finish this paper. I would also like to express deepest appreciation for my two American moms, Peg Anderson and Barbara-Ann Gulotta. I never felt alone in this country because of my two mom′s endless love and taking care of me. I am so blessed to have three moms. And finally, I would like to thank God, my good Father for everything he has done for me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I was a younger pianist, I used to love listening to famous pianists' live performances and recordings, and wanted to emulate them and play like them. I practiced very hard as a student, and at times I struggled with some technical passages. It took me a while to discover that many prominent pianists have big hands; Sergei Rachmaninoff, Anton Rubinstein, Sviatoslav Richter, and Lang Lang all have at least a 12^{th} interval range of hand span. Having wider hands does not mean automatically good technique; however, the two are related. Rapid arpeggios, repeated and extensive octaves passages, and chords larger than an octave span, all of which are regularly found in both solo and collaborative repertoires, can be handled with greater ease by larger hands.

According to the 19^{th} century American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "music is the universal language of mankind." Music from any age, from any country, far different people can share the same music. Among all the international historical music, Western art music has many standard repertoires which are required learning while pursuing academic degrees and therefore frequently played. Many well-known works of Western art music were composed by Europeans and Russians such as Brahms, Schumann, Rachmaninoff, and Prokofiev. Many of them were pianists as well as composers, so they wrote their works that they could perform later.

Compare to these Western people, Asians have smaller bodies and hands. The research paper "Pianist Hand Spans: Gender and Ethnic Differences and Implications for

Piano Playing" by Boyle, R., Boyle, R. & Booker, E., demonstrates this concept of nationality, gender and hand size.

A: Very small – 1-5 span less than 7.6 inches
B: Small – 1-5 span from 7.6 to <8.5 inches
C: Large – 1-5 span from 8.5 to <9.4 inches
D: Very large – 1-5 span of 9.4 inches and above

Proportions of adult pianists with 'small' or 'large' hands		
	'Small' hands: 1-5 spans less than 8.5''	'Large' hands: 1-5 spans 8.5'' or more
All males*	23.8%	76.2%
All females*	87.1%	12.9%
Caucasian males	20.2%	79.8%
Caucasian females	82.3%	17.7%
Asian males	29.9%	70.1%
Asian females	94.0%	6.0%

*Based on the ethnic mix in this particular sample of Adult Pianists[1]

While many prominent pianists have larger hands, there are also prominent pianists who had smaller hands, including Hans von Bulow, Leopold Godowsky, Alicia de Larrocha and Josef Hoffmann. Hoffmann, a Polish-American virtuoso pianist from late 19th century who was known for his wonderful technique, was offered a customized piano built by Steinway with narrower-sized keys, an indication that he also had some struggles with his small hands. Perhaps due to his smaller hand size, he refused to play Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, an exceptionally difficult work that requires bigger hands, despite being the work's dedicatee.

[1] Boyle, R., Boyle, R. & Booker, E. (2015). Pianist Hand Spans: Gender and Ethnic Differences and Implications for Piano Playing, *Proceedings of the 12th Australasian Piano Pedagogy Conference, Beyond the Black and White,* Melbourne, July 2015. (http://www.appca.com.au/2015proceedings.php) http://www.smallpianokeyboards.org/how-many-pianists-have-small-hands.html

While there are some reduced-size keys or customized smaller pianos available by certain companies, most of modern piano keyboards have white keys of 23.5mm wide at the base.

> I would suggest that the reduced-sized keyboard finally evens the playing field. Until now, the combination of small and delicately boned hands is seen only rarely in first class performing artists. Those at that level must possess truly extraordinary facility, flexibility and coordination to overcome difficulties.[2]

> Hopefully all pianists would eventually agree that an ergonomic intervention to compensate for hand size is feasible and essential, just like adjusting the height of a piano bench to compensate for leg length and body height.[3]

Unfortunately, only a few very exclusive pianists have the luxury to bring their own customized piano to their various performances. So, an unfair circumstance exists for pianists with small-hands pianists who are expected to play the standard repertoires on the standard size piano.

As an Asian collaborative pianist, my right hand can reach an octave comfortably, and my left hand can reach a 9th. It did not bother me much when I focused on solo performance, because I was able to choose what I wanted to work on. The repertoire that I chose had my physical comfort and natural abilities in mind, and despite various challenges, I could practice and conquer it eventually. In other words, I could avoid the pieces that I could not play with my small hands; despite my best efforts, performing such works could yield poor performances, due to unreachable notes that were either missed or eliminated, or fatigue and injuries caused by too much stretching of the fingers

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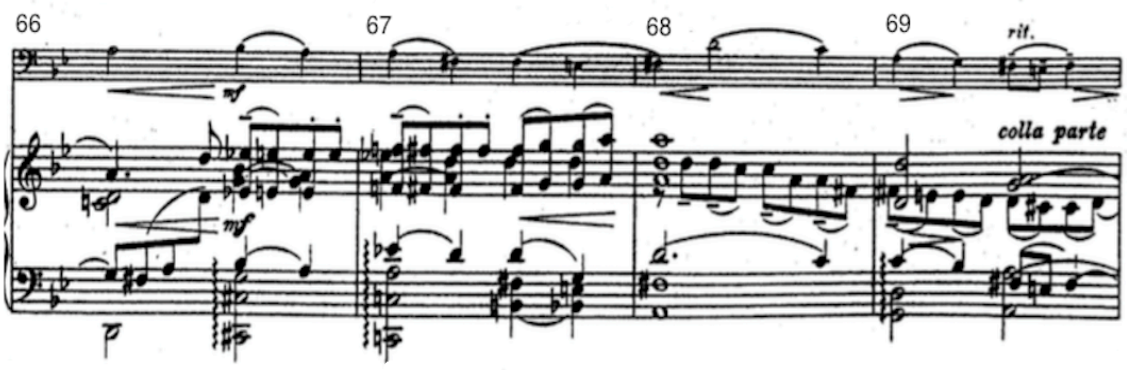
[2] Dr. Carol Leone, Chair of Keyboard Studies, Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, USA 2003, p 29.

[3] Dr. Eri Yoshimura & Dr. Kris Chesky, Texas Center for Music & Medicine, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, USA, 2009, p 11

or hands. However, after I switched my major and career to collaborative piano, I no longer had the luxury of choosing my own repertoire. Many times, I need to engage with partners, collaborating and supporting them on the works that are chosen by them. The hand range required by this repertoire expanded, as works such as instrumental concerto reductions or Romantic-era duo sonatas form the foundation of much of our collaborative repertoire, and frequently feature thick chords, spans of 9^{th} or 10th, fast octave passages, legato lines with wide ranges, or extended arpeggiated passages.

Should all collaborative pianists who have small hands like me be excluded from such repertoire, potentially jeopardizing their careers? Can they rehearse and perform such works while avoiding injuries? How should these pianists deal with the standard repertoires that require bigger hands? In this paper, I will discuss certain passages from frequently-performed pieces that can be difficult for smaller hands, what makes each passage so awkward or uncomfortable, and offer potential solutions that allow professional collaborative pianists with smaller hands to perform such repertoire with technical and musical success. Two short introductory examples will provide an idea of the major issues facing collaborative pianists.

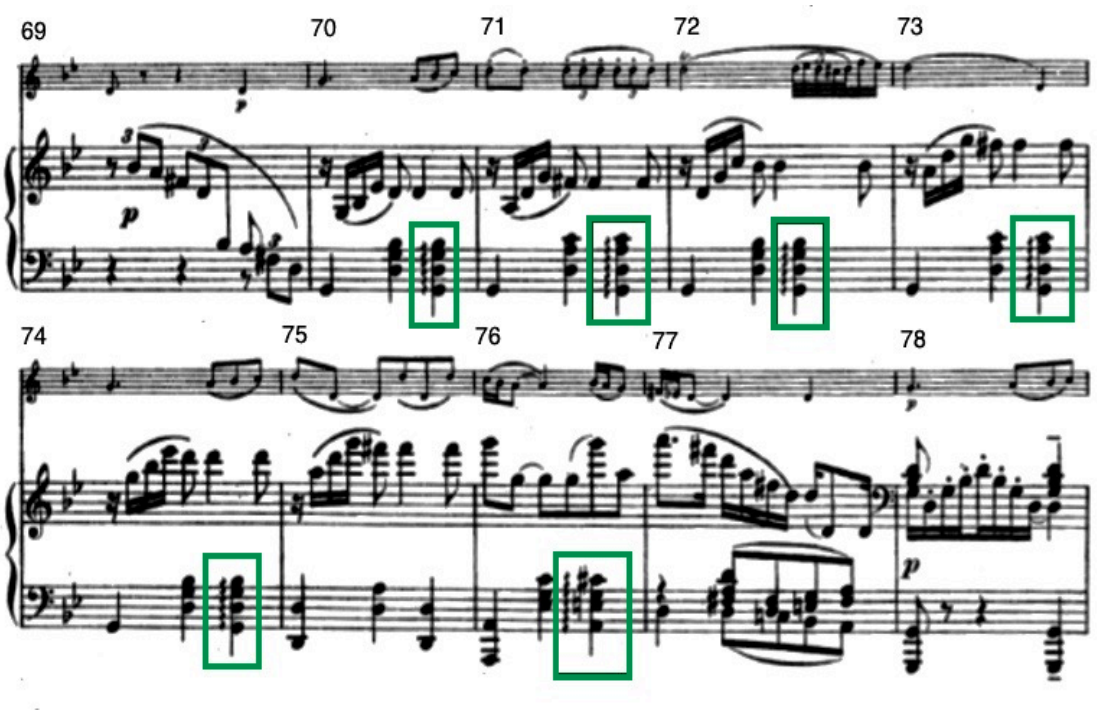
The following example is a part of the first movement from the Sonata for cello and piano in g minor, Op.19, by Sergei Rachmaninoff. Rachmaninoff was a virtuoso pianist who wrote many piano works specifically for his own performing, and most of them have entered the standard repertoire, including this major work of the cello/piano literature.



Example 1: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, first movement, measures 66-69.

Rachmaninoff was an exceptionally large man, known for his 6'6" height and his legendary hand size that could reach a 12th, so it is understandable that his works have unusually wide-spaced chords. In Example 1, some chords are not even possible to be played by pianists with average hand size. This is one of the most popular sonatas for cello and piano, so it is hard to avoid in the performance career of a collaborative pianist. In m.68, the first chord of left hand has huge span, and one cannot leave out or miss any notes, since the bottom note needs to sustain for the whole measure, and the top note has a melodic line.

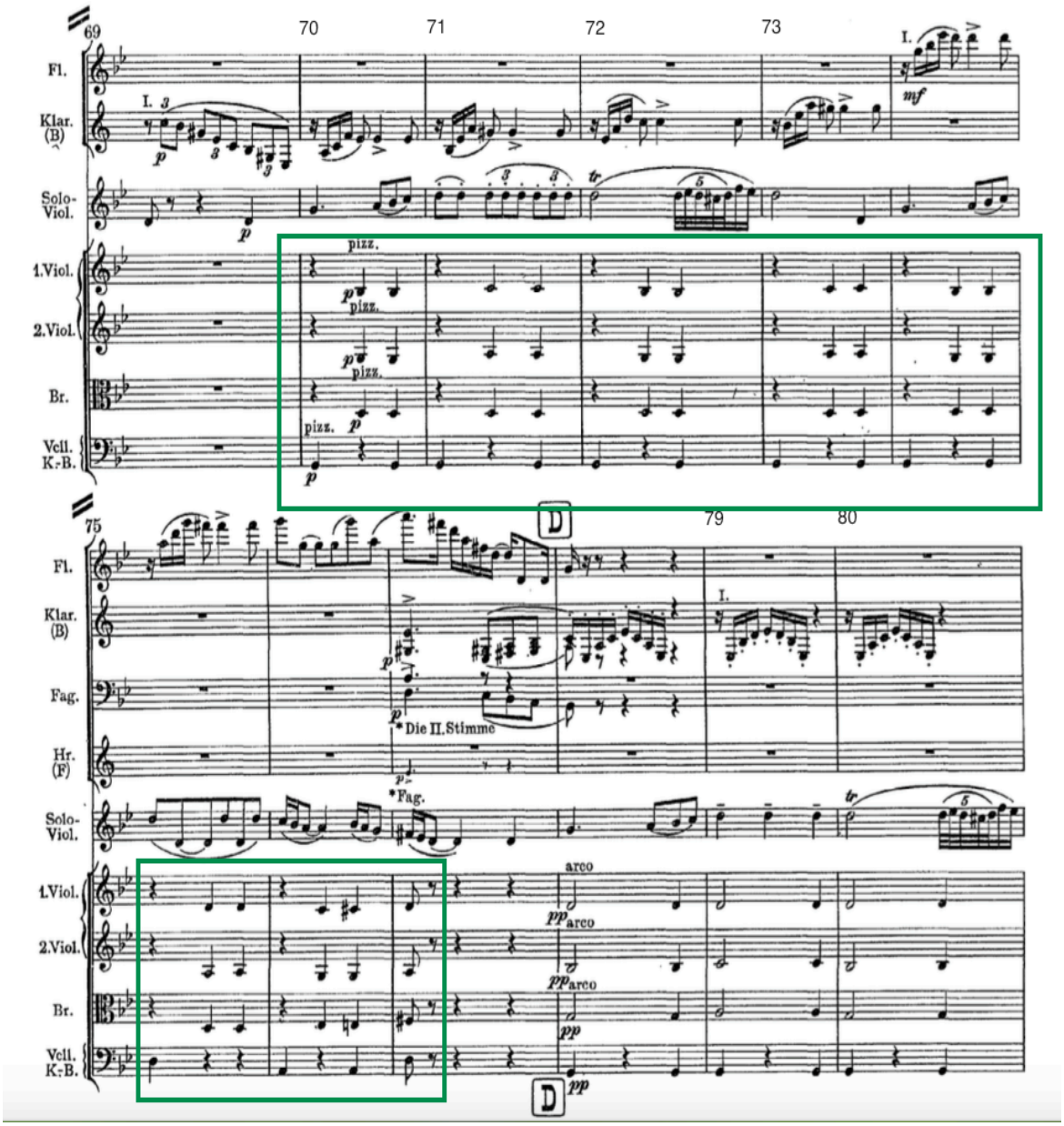
Another example comes from C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, Op.35, second movement, measures 69-78.



Example 2: C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, Op.35 in D Major, second movement, measures 69-78.

Piano reductions of instrumental concerti are a major part of any collaborative pianist's repertoire, and yet these reductions are not only rarely by the composer, but they are also often by anonymous editors who may not make the most fully informed decisions. When the chords in orchestral reductions are wide or unreachable, one often sees roll marks on the chords by arrangers or editors to make them playable. However, rolling the chords should not be encouraged unless it is imitating a harp part, as a rolled chord has a very different sonority both rhythmically and musically than a solid, blocked

orchestral chord. Rolling these chords as indicated is inaccurate musically, and therefore not a solution to this problem.



Example 3: Breitkopf und Härtel publisher, edited by Fritz Hoffmann, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto Op.35 in D Major, second movement, measures 69-80.

Since this example is not a harp part, but rather unified pizzicato string chords, any chords should not be rolled; the pianist needs to find a way to play this section correctly without rolling the chords. Only the pianist who has a 11^{th} hand span will have no problem playing this excerpt without rolling the chords.

In next chapters, I will provide several solutions to these and other problems that yield musical results without compromising the composer's original intentions. It will not only examine orchestral reductions such as concerti, in which the reductions are a mere representation of the composer's true intentions and therefore easier to adjust, but also repertoire originally written for the piano.

CHAPTER 2

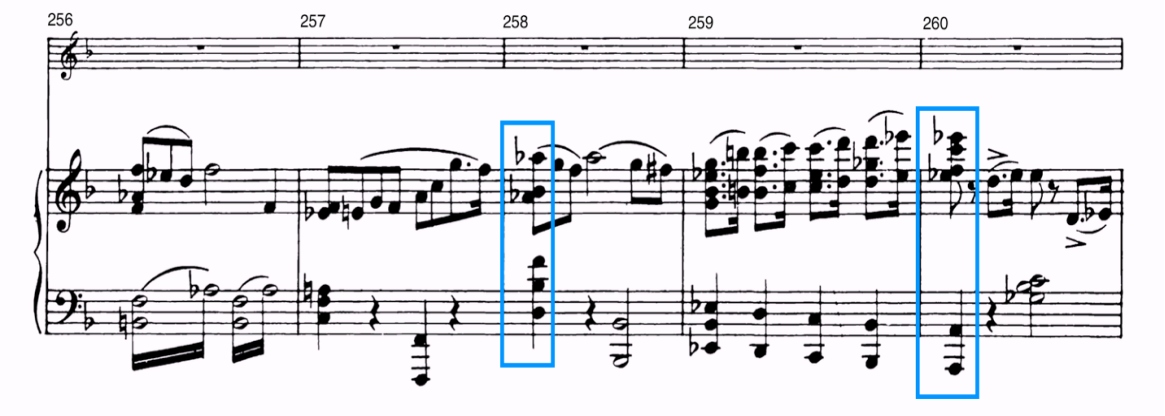
METHODS

This paper will examine three main methods developed for pianists with smaller hands that will allow them to rehearse and perform the widest possible repertoire in a musically effective and healthy way. Those methods are:

1. Re-voicing the notes of widely-spaced chords (indicated with blue).
2. Taking advantage of both hands wisely (indicated with green)
3. How to avoid possible injuries in passages in which are reachable by a pianist with a smaller hands span, but can cause too much stretching due to a fast tempo or frequent repetitions (indicated with red).

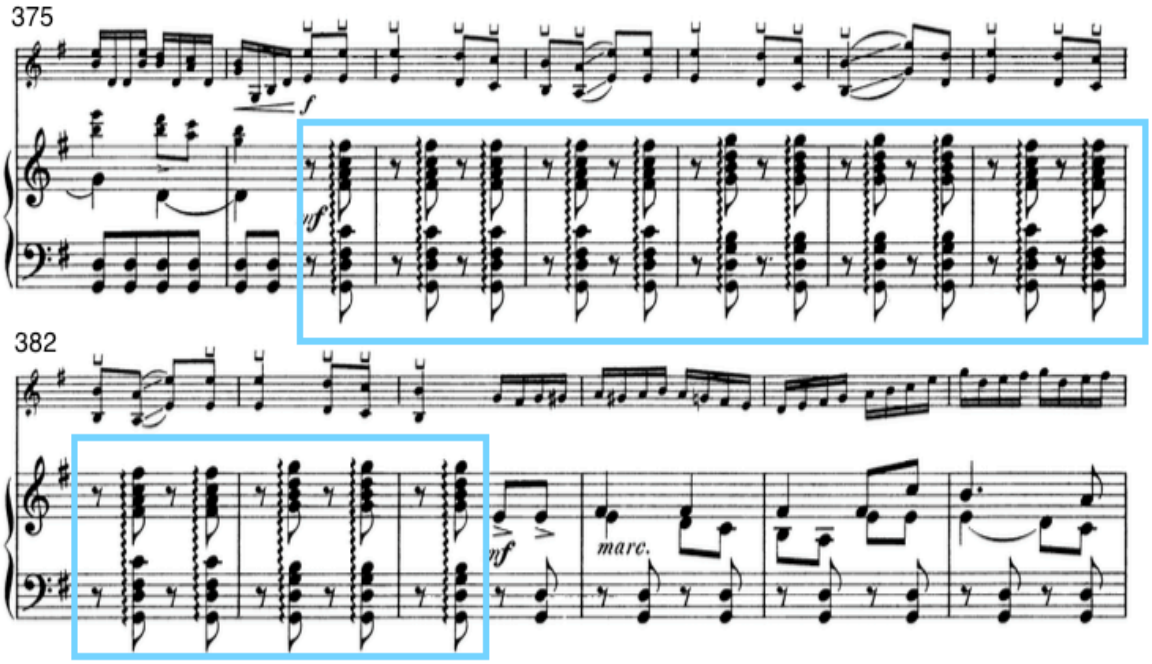
Playing piano reductions originally written for orchestra is one of the main jobs for collaborative pianists. It is a big challenge to express the original sound that is written for as small as a string quartet to the whole orchestra on one piano. A full-size orchestra can be over one hundred instruments, so it can be understandable that some piano reductions have unplayable passages for only ten fingers, as editors or arrangers did not want to miss any important notes in the orchestra.

Following are some examples from the standard violin concerti literature. The first excerpt comes from the Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, first movement, measures 256-260.



Example 4: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, first movement, measures 256-260.

The following excerpt comes from the C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto Op.35 in D Major, first movement, measures 375-387.



Example 5: C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto Op.35 in D Major, first movement, measures 375-387.

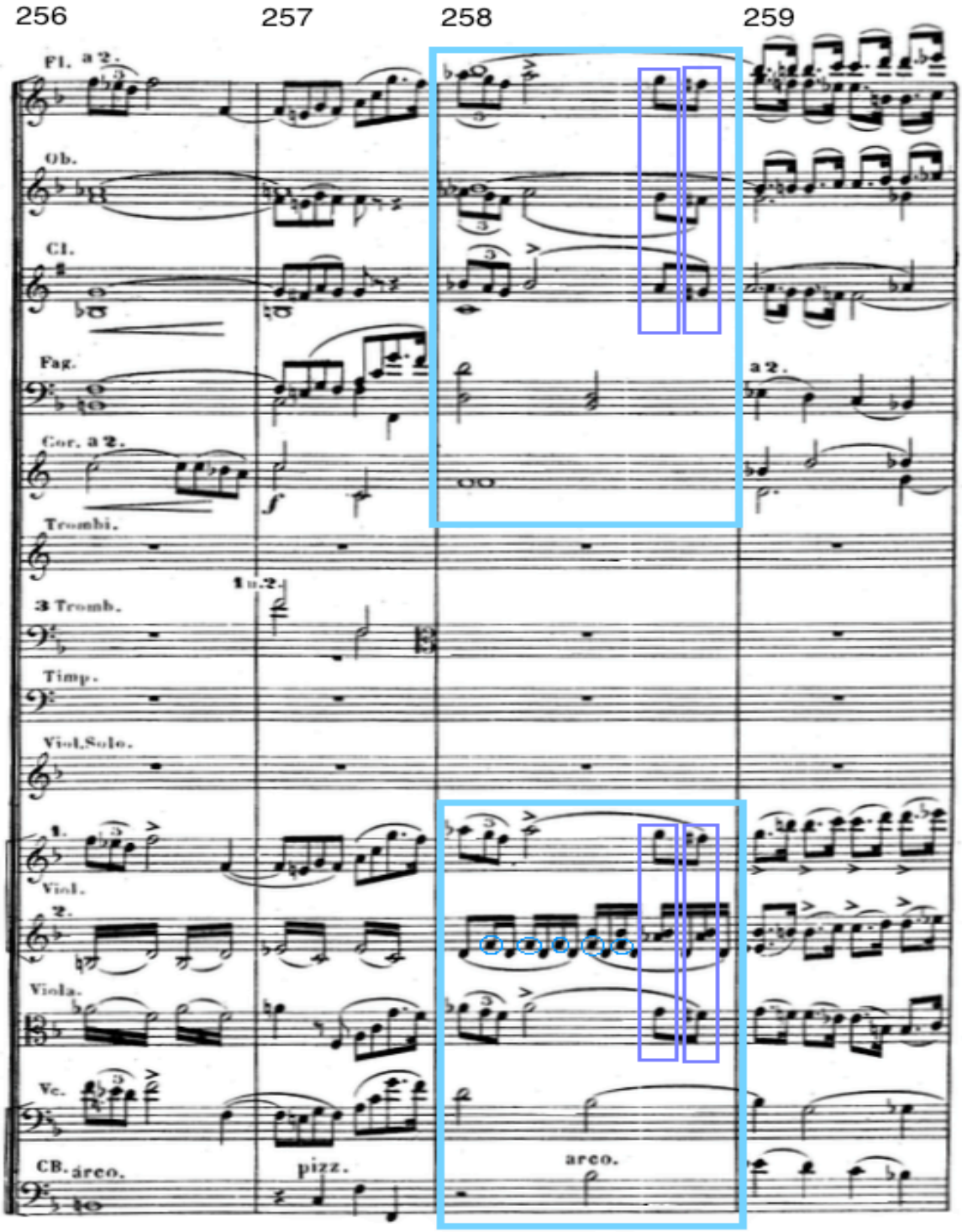
As shown above, when there are widely spaced chords, they are either not reachable or rolled, which is often suggested by the editor. In Example 4, a pianist with small hands might normally roll the chords, even without any suggestion, simply to avoid missing any notes, although an experienced collaborative pianist would not roll, as they would know this is not rolled in the orchestra. Example 5 has rolled marks on each chord, which are editorial suggestions and different from the full score, so then every chord becomes playable in this fast passage. However, when the chord is rolled (in other words, when it is played as a broken chord), it sounds totally different from the original, in which the orchestra plays all the notes at the same time. When this chord is rolled on the piano, it sounds bigger and longer, with a totally different articulation. With the exception of the harp section playing arpeggios and broken chords in the orchestra, any orchestral chords should not be played rolled.

So, for this type of widely-spaced chords, my first method is re-voicing the notes.

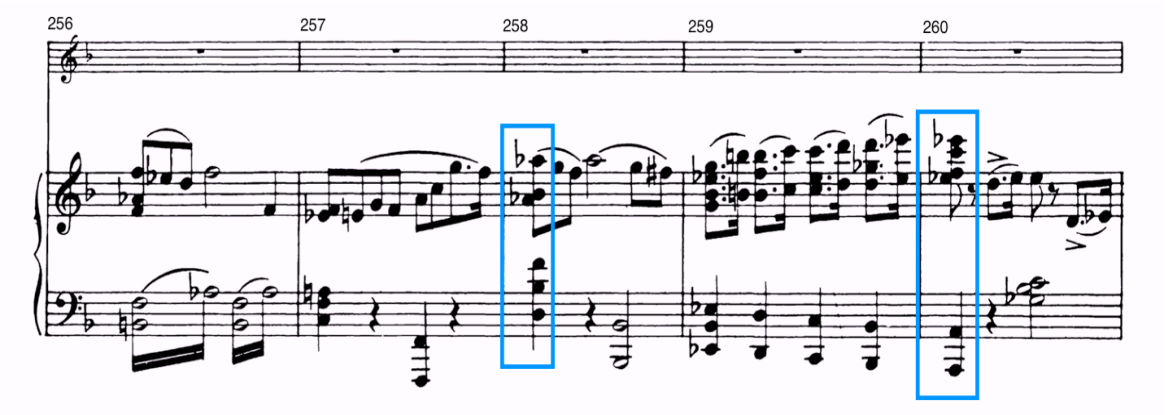
This first method will have blue color for the examples to be shown in Chapter 3 and 4.[4]

The following Example 6 is the orchestra score for the Example 4 from the B. Schott's Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, first movement, measures 256-259.

[4] Rolling marks that are discussed and added later in this chapter will be a blue straight line.


256
257
258
259
Fl. a 2.
Ob.
Cl.
Fag.
Cor. a 2.
Trombi.
1 u. 2.
3 Tromb.
Timp.
Viol. Solo.
1.
Viol.
2.
Viola.
Vc.
CB. arco.
pizz.
arco.
a 2.

Example 6: B. Schott's Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, first movement, measures 256-259.

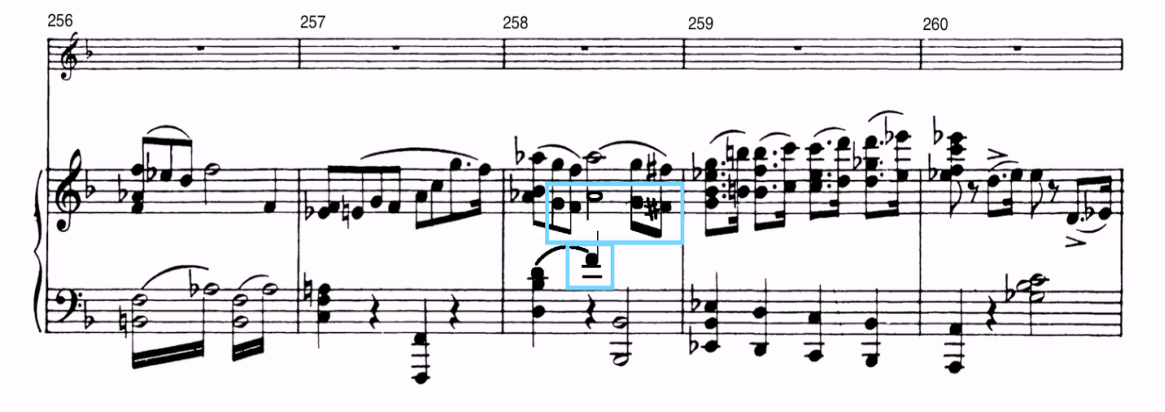


Example 4: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, first movement, measures 256-260.

The unreachable note from Example 4 is the tenor note F4 on left hand in measure 258. From the full score Example 6, the 'F' does not happen at the same beat, in fact it is not in a blocked chord. The 'F' note comes in other beats in the same measure, so the editor put the note 'F' on the same beat to make it easier for pianists. However, this works only for pianists but who have large hands. Pianists with small hands need not feel guilty about missing the top note if they check the full score.

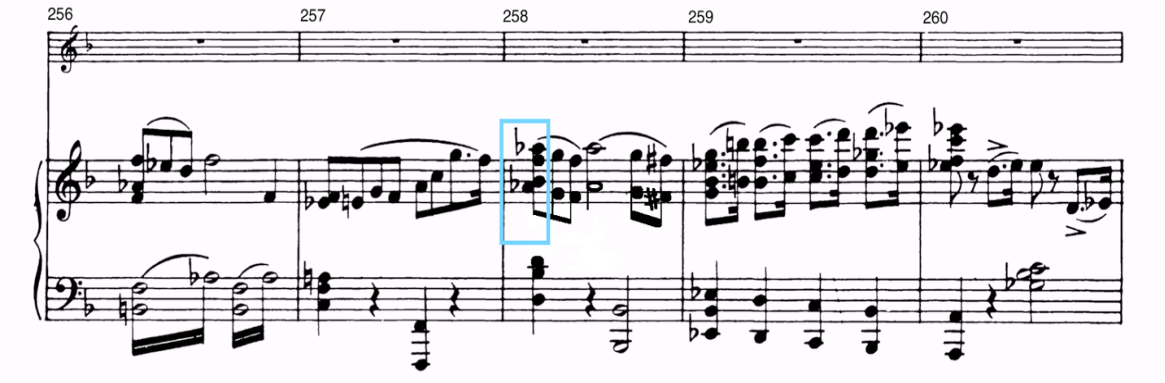
In this case, there are two alternative ways to play those big chords by relocating notes. The first is putting the F4 at the second beat. In the full score, the F is played by the second violins every eighth note from the second eighth of the bar through the end of the third beat. Since the first beat passes quickly, playing F4 on second beat will help the

chord sustaining until third beat. Also, two connected notes in purple box are missing in a piano reduction, so adding the two notes will also help for smooth melodic line.

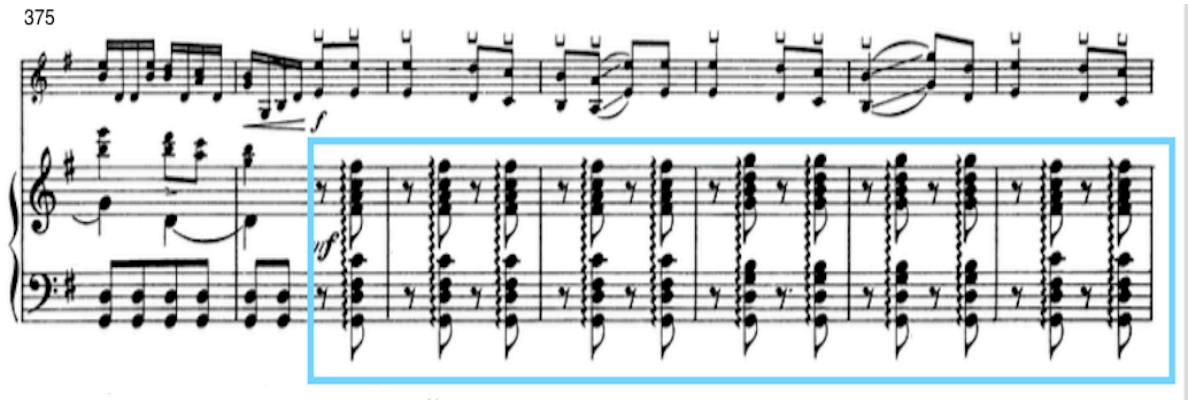


Example 7: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, first movement, measures 256-260 (edited by Choi).

The second solution keeps the blocked chord on same beat, but moves F4 to F5 the soprano register on right hand. In this way, the editor's idea is still there and it will be playable for anyone.



Example 8: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, first movement, measures 256-260 (edited by Choi).

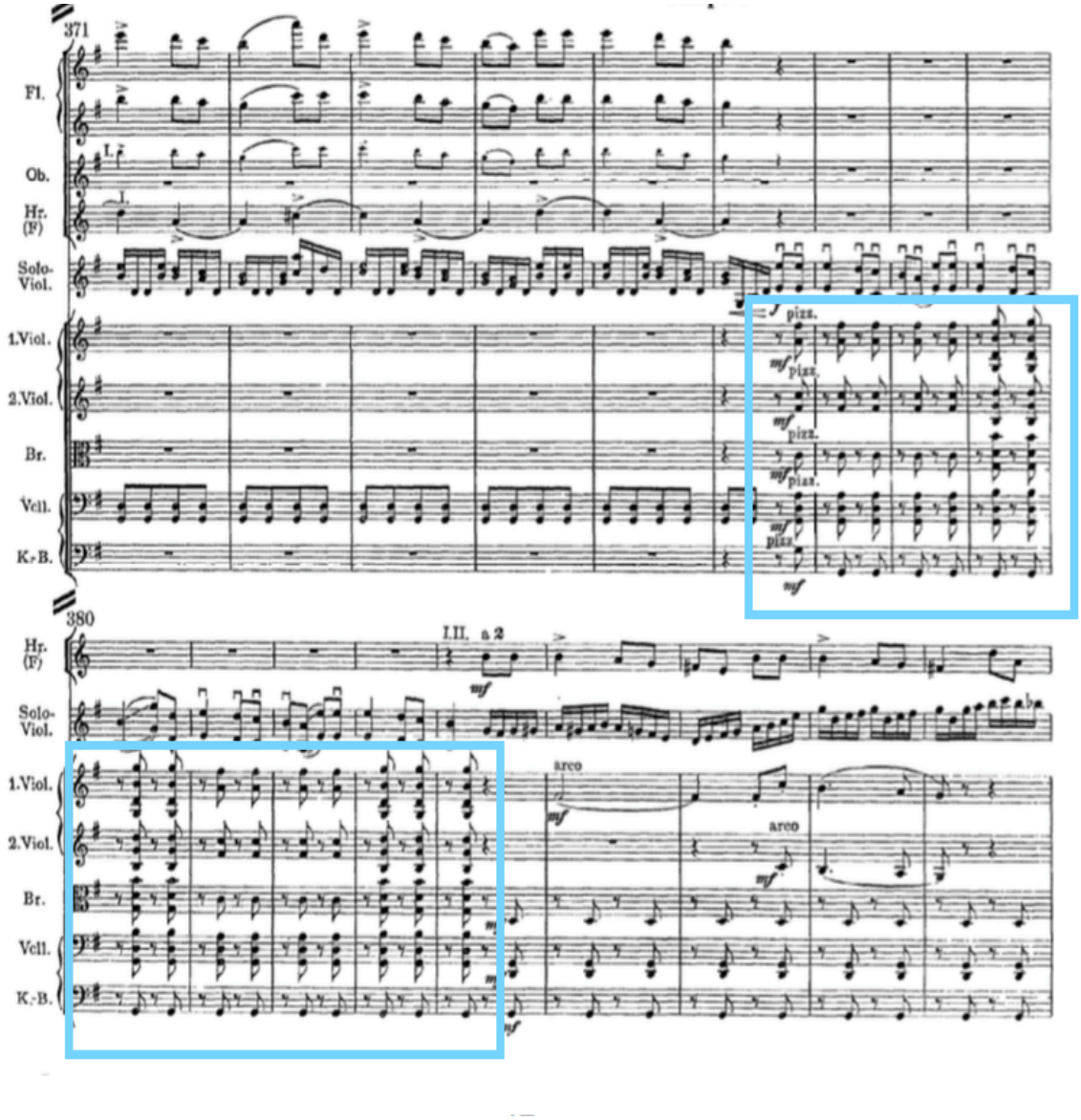


Example 5: C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto Op.35 in D Major, third movement, measures 375-381.

Back to Example 5 from the Violin Concerto by Tchaikovsky. Since it is very standard repertoire for violinists, there are many editions available. However, this excerpt shows no difference between the various editions[5], which brings the important issue. All the rolled chords in this passage of the piano reduction represent string pizzicatos.

Pizzicatos are shown in the full score of the Example 5 from the P. Jurgenson Edition of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto Op. 35, first movement, measures 371-388.

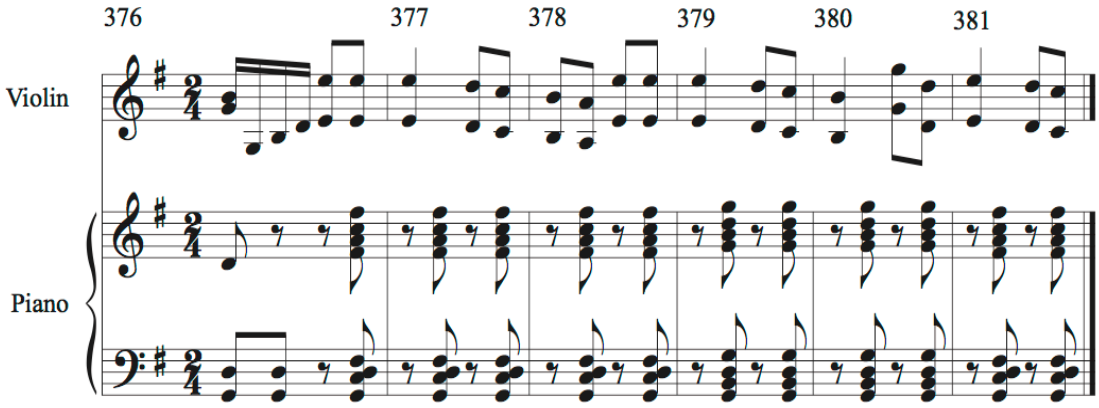
[5] Editions of **D. Rahter**: Hamburg, **Eulenburg**: Leipzig, **Steingräber Verlag**: Leipzig, **C.F.Peters**: Leipzig, **G.Schirmer**: New York, **Henry Litolff's Verlag**: Braunschweig, **D.Rahter**: Leipzig; from imslp.org.



Example 9: P. Jurgenson Edition of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto Op. 35, first movement, measures 371-388.

This pizzicato section may have some resonance, since more than twenty strings are plucked at the same time. Pizzicatos are supposed to be very short, so rolling the chords are not the right idea for a piano reduction.

There are two types of rolling marks. One shows separate rolling marks for the right and left hands. The other is a long-connected rolling mark for both hands. The first rolling mark may reduce the time of sound resonance with the right pedaling, but the second type produces a long resonance with full chord even without any pedaling. All the piano reductions listed in footnote #5 employ the second type of rolling marks, which will produce a long and loud sound, a completely different sonority from the off-beat pizzicati of the strings. If there are no rolling marks on these chords, most pianists cannot play them since it requires a span of 11th interval. So, if the top C4 (middle C) note on left hand is placed down the octave to C3, then left hand can handle the chord without a big stretch. By relocating the note, the register for the 'C' will have a different sound. But these pizzicatos are short, so the sound will not be too different, and be much closer to the original orchestra sound with shorter chords, rather than rolled.



Example 10: C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto Op.35 in D Major, third movement (edited by Choi).

Except for the harp parts, playing rolled chords is not recommended for piano reductions of orchestral works, as it changes the character, rhythmic timing and texture of the original. However, it can be very useful for small hands on pieces that were originally written for piano, because the goal is not to imitate the sound of the original orchestral version. Although rolling unreachable chords may be different from what the composer intended, it is preferred to leaving out or missing notes. Re-voicing notes is not always possible, and the composer's design may be ruined. While some performers may object to these kinds of alterations, it can be a viable way for those with smaller hands to approach this repertoire. In older styles of playing from the late 19th through early 20th centuries, pianists often rolled large chords as a fashion. At that time rolling the chords, especially for a pizzicato section, reflected this popular style, and was recognized as the right idea for the sound, despite the fact that it sounds quite different from an orchestral pizzicato section. In noted recordings from that time, some chords from pieces originally written for piano solo, which do not have roll marks, and with a reachable span or notes, are often still rolled as a style for greater expression of rubato.[6] On original piano pieces that were written in Romantic era, which is often where we find larger and thicker chords, rolling chords can fit in the style and is a viable option.

We now return to the following excerpt from the A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, first movement, measures 66-69.

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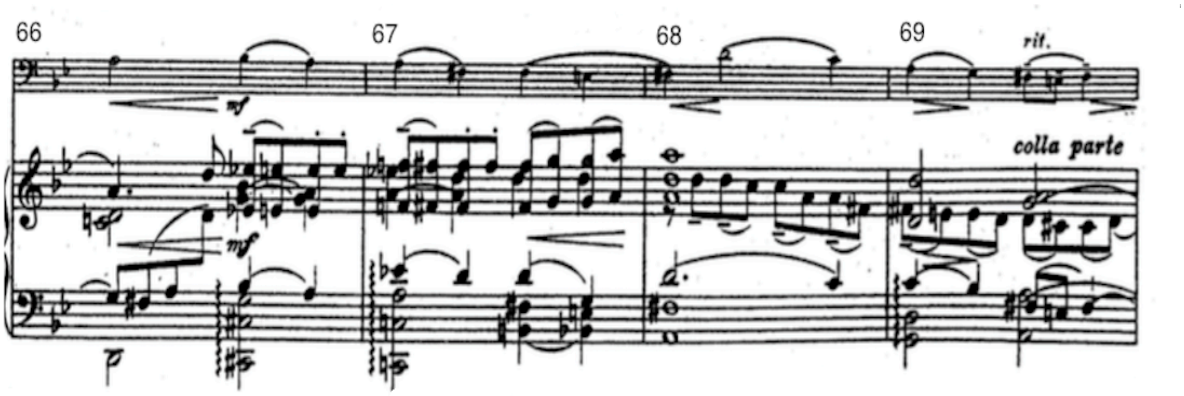
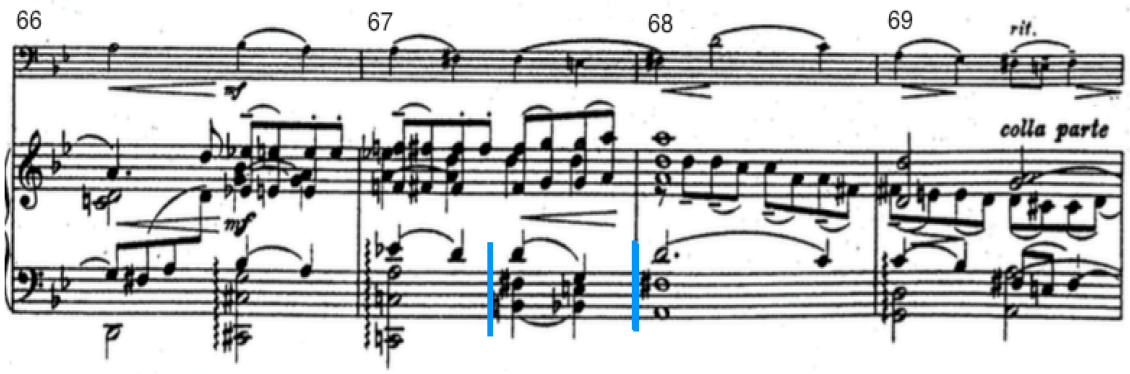
[6] Chopin, Frederic. *Great Recording of the Century, CHOPIN Preludes- Impromptus- Barcarolle- Berceuse,* Perf. Alfred Cortot, EMI Classics/Angel Records, 2006. CD.



Example 11: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, first movement, measures 66-69.

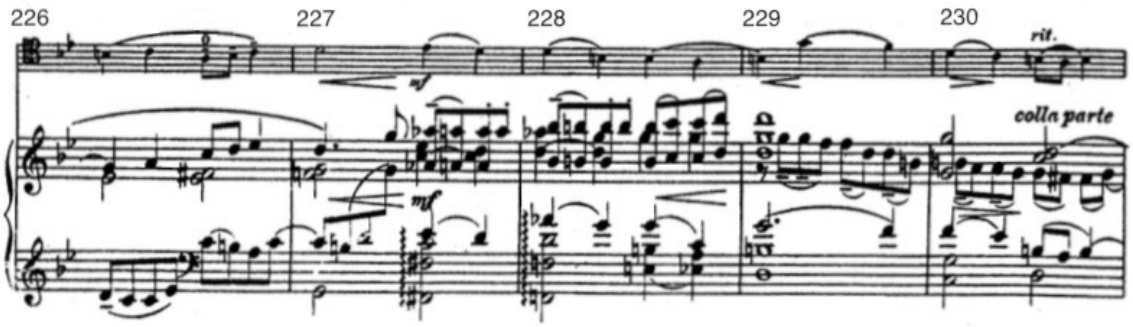
Even with a quick glance, this piece shows many large chords with and without rolling marks. Rachmaninoff had a 13th interval hand span so it was not a problem for him to play the big chords that have no rolling marks.

In many cases, collaborative pianists need to play pieces at sight, even sometimes with a piece of this high level of difficulty. When sight-reading is necessary, there is normally not enough time to think carefully before fingers touch the notes. When rolling marks are not written in unplayable passages, it results in missing notes. Even when the pianist has more time or is not sight-reading, visible rolling marks on unreachable chord will help lead to a better performance. Rolling wide chords that do not have rolling marks will not ruin the composer's design since it follows the original compositional style in this excerpt.

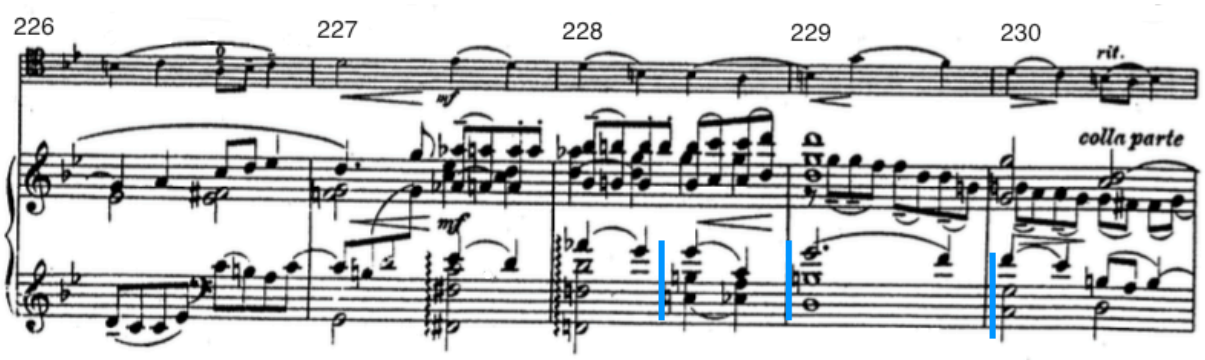


Example 12: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, first movement, measures 66-69 (The blue straight line indicates the rolling technique edited by Choi).

The same technique can be employed for this following passage.

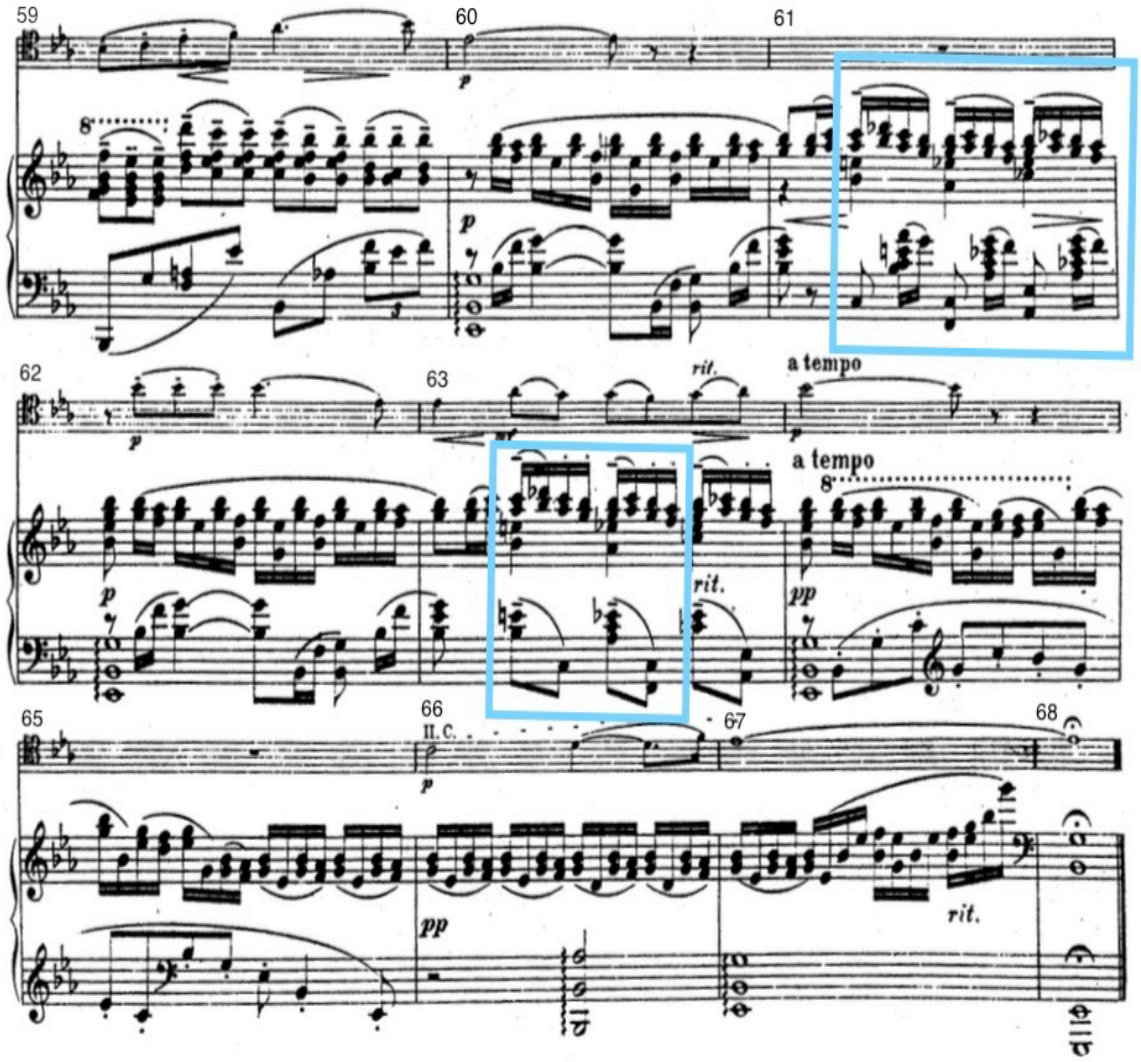


Example 13: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, first movement, measures 226-230.

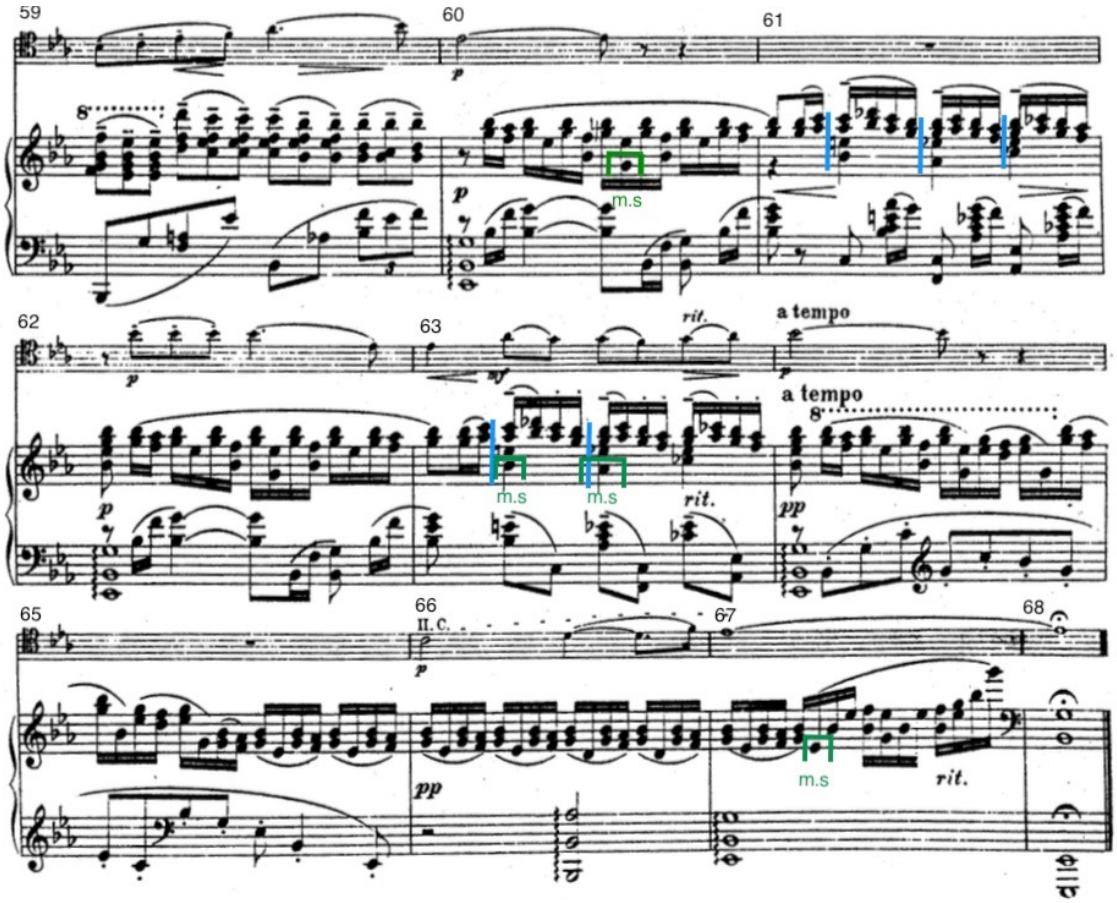


Example 14: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, first movement, measures 226-230 (edited by Choi).

The following passage, which comes from the third movement of the Rachmaninoff cello sonata measures 59-68, can employ two methods for success; putting rolling marks on wide chords, or a new method, detailed below. This new method will be indicated by the color green.



Example 15: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, third movement, measures 59-68.



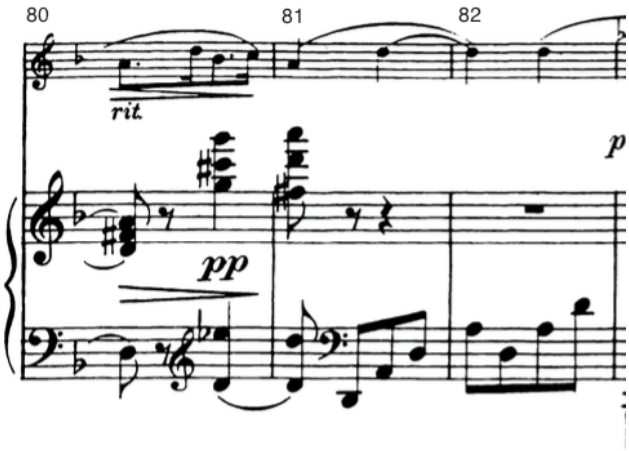
Example 16: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, third movement, measures 59-68 (edited by Choi).

In Measure 63, the wide chords in the right hand can be played by rolling with one hand (the first method), or can be divided between right hand[7] and left hand[8] (the second method), and played as blocked chords.

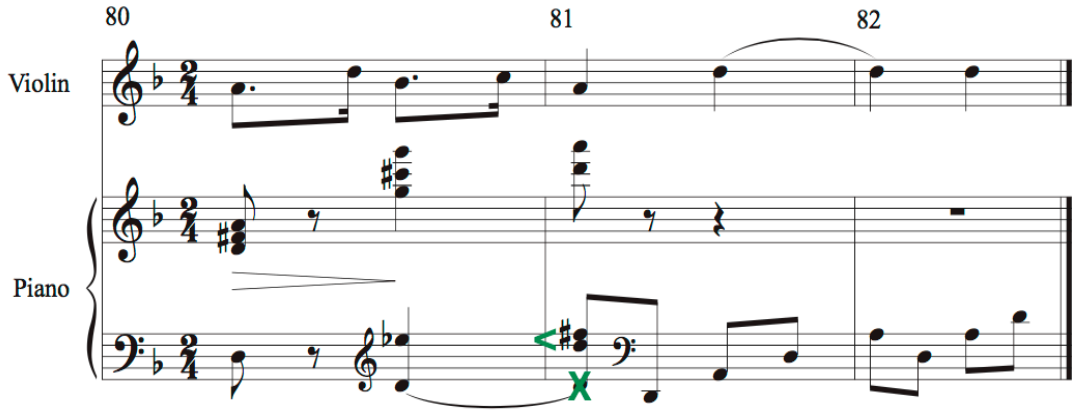
[7] Right hand part indicated in examples as m.d (mano destra in Italian).

[8] Left hand indicated as m.s (mano sinistra in Italian).

Second method: taking advantage of both hands wisely. When one hand has a big chord, and the other hand is available to help, the chord can be played by both hands. This second method will be indicated in green color in examples to be shown in Chapter 3 and 4.

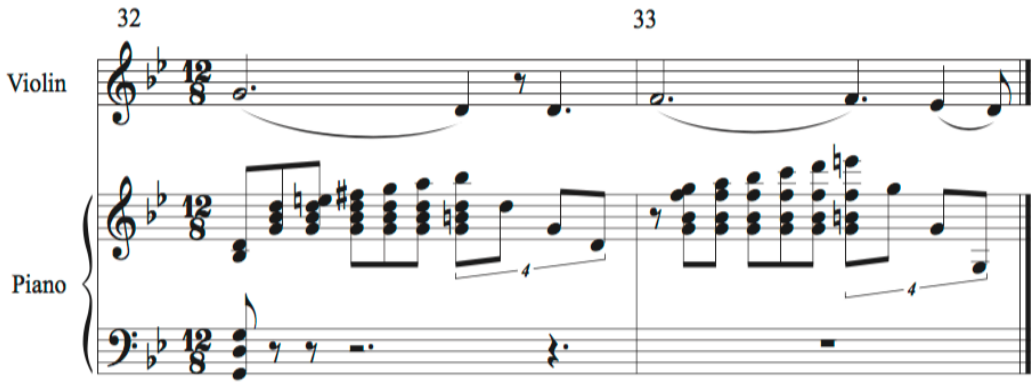


Example 17: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, third movement, measures 80-82.



Example 18: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, third movement, measures 80-82 (edited by Choi).

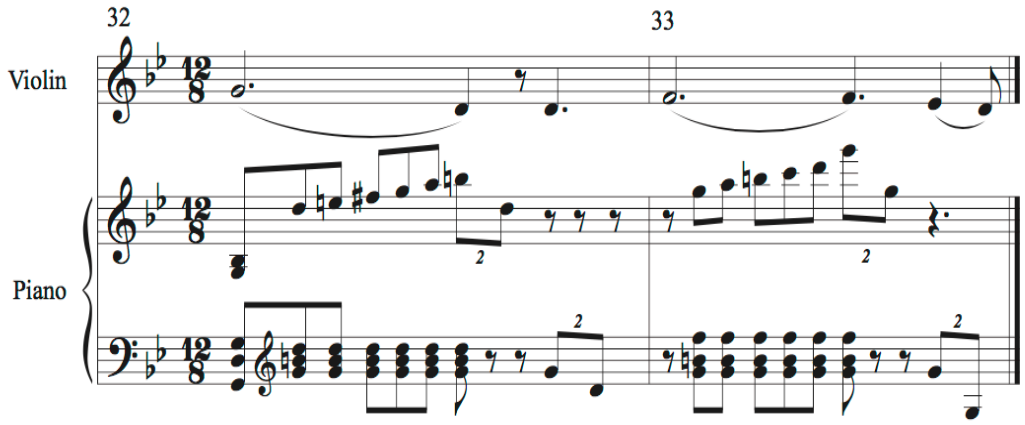
This short passage is from the third movement of violin concerto op. 22 no.2 by Wieniawski. Without reading it carefully, two chords look pretty expanded to play for both hands until you find out that register of these chords are very close to each other. Also, there is tie on left hand, which makes this passage playable with proper pedaling. If the left hand plays the alto note F#5, the chord will be completed, even by small hands (Example 18).



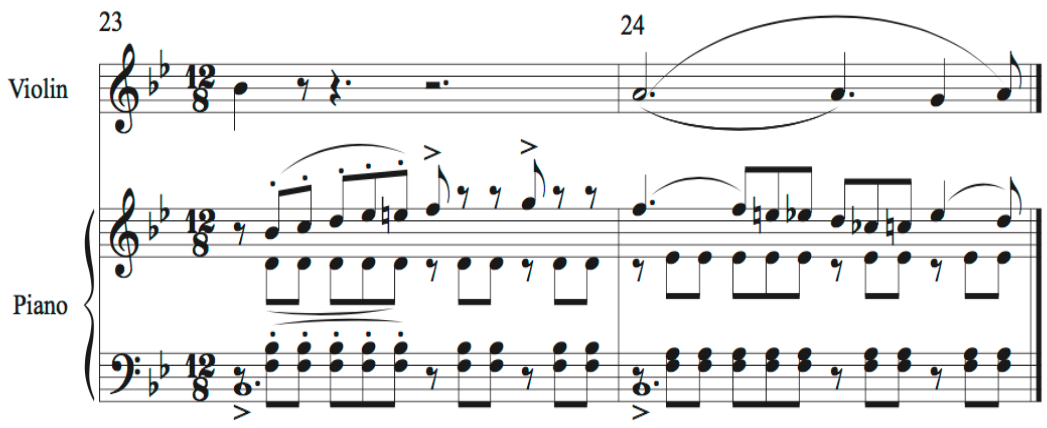
Example 19: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, second movement, measures 32-33 (edited on Finale).

Here is another example from second movement of Wieniawski violin concerto. Unfortunately, this type of problem is very commonly faced by pianists, and takes time to figure out how best to play these passages. At first, the pianist may try to play it with only right hand, as it seems be written this way. Playing these chords with only right hand can cause the wide expand of the pinky finger and many pianists with small hands will have hard time reaching the notes or miss important melodic lines.

However, if the left hand plays the bottom three notes, there will be no problem missing any notes, and the pianist will find it much easier to play. Although a very experienced collaborative pianist can figure out how to play these passages with both hands quickly, rearranging the register can save time and enable every pianist, even one who is less experienced, to play this kind of passage well.

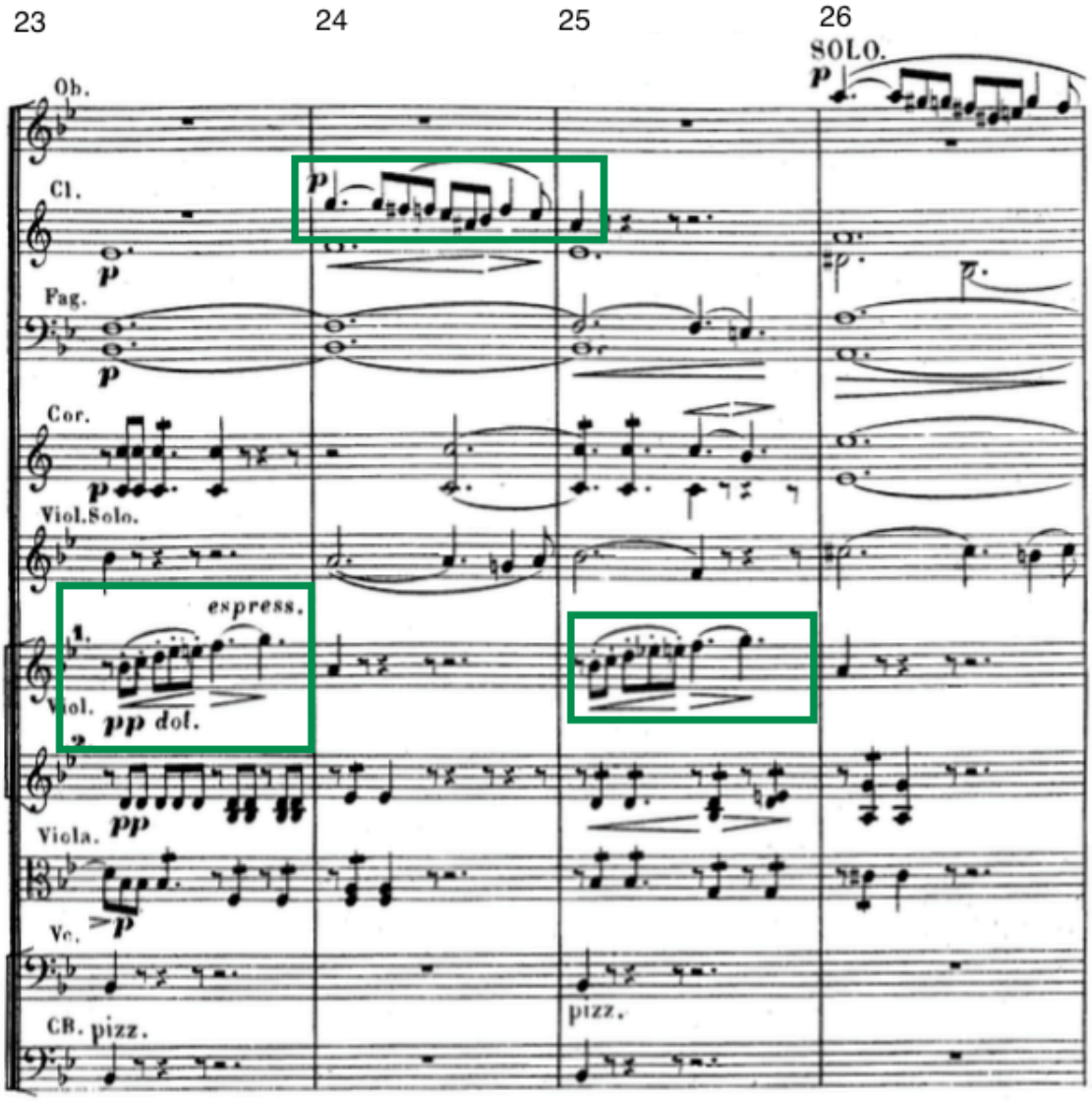


Example 20: Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, second movement (edited by Choi).



Example 21: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, second movement, measures 23-24.

This similar passage is from the same movement of Wieniawski Violin Concerto. If Example 19 was easy to determine how to play with both hands and avoid injury or inaccuracy, this one is a little trickier. It can be played by both hands separately as is written, but this causes a large stretch for right hand. Not only would this prove impossible for those with smaller hands, but also it will be harder to bring out the important melodic voicing of the top line.

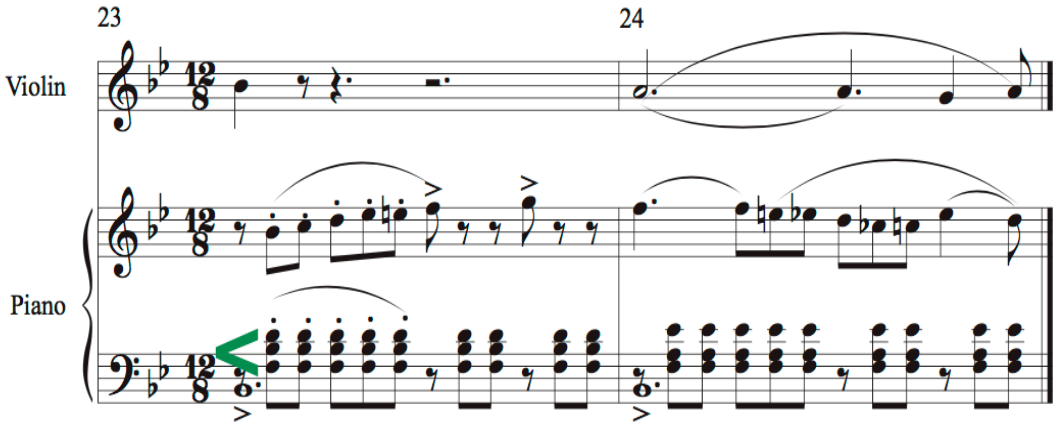


Example 22: B. Schott's Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, second movement, measures 23-26.

According to the full score of the B. Schott's Edition, the first violin has a melody line marked *espressivo,* which it passes to the clarinet, then back to the first violin.

Meanwhile, the other instruments are accompanying the melodic line. Therefore, in Example 21, the top line of right hand should be brought out. If it is played as written, the wide range between soprano and alto part for right hand will cause a stretch and make it difficult to voice and phrase this beautiful melody.

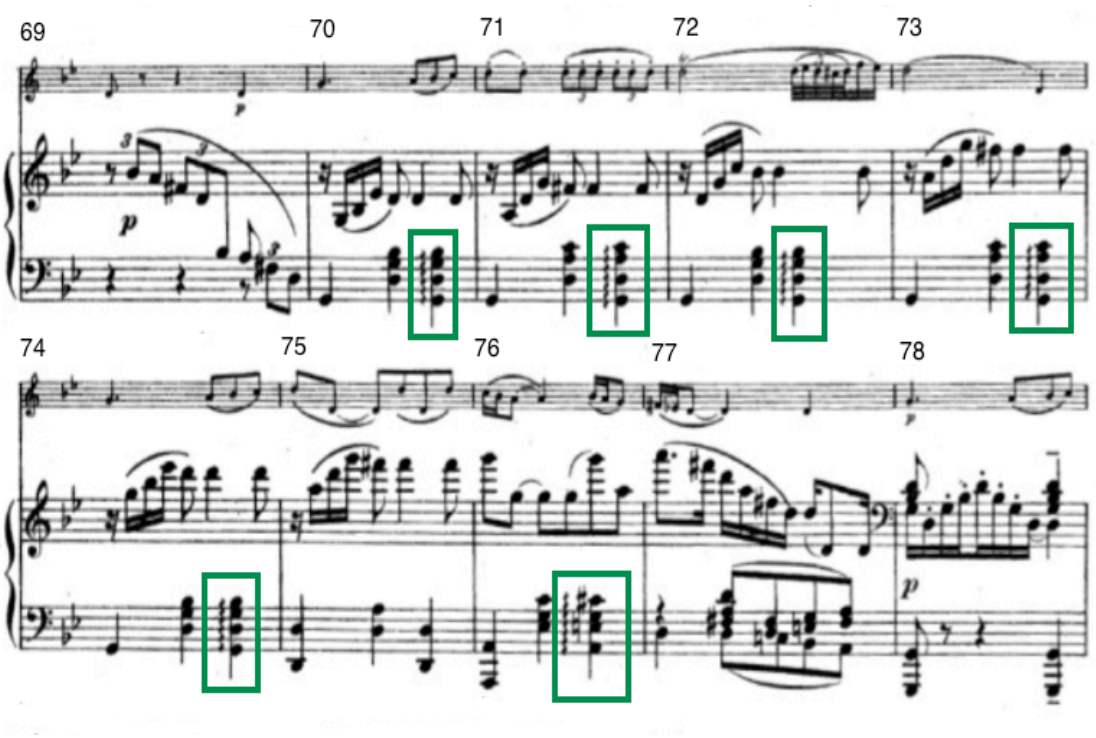
So, the solution is similar to the technique used in Example 17: the left hand plays the entire accompaniment part, including the alto notes of right hand. Even the pianist who has big hands can use this technique to play this passage, and easily balance the sound between orchestral melody and accompaniment.



Example 23: Schirmer Edition of Wieniawski's Violin Concerto Op.22 No.2, second movement, measures 23-24 (edited by Choi).

Now we return to the following excerpt from the C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, Op.35, second movement, measures 69-78. It has two issues: the first one is rolling marks, which are pizzicatos by strings and not played by

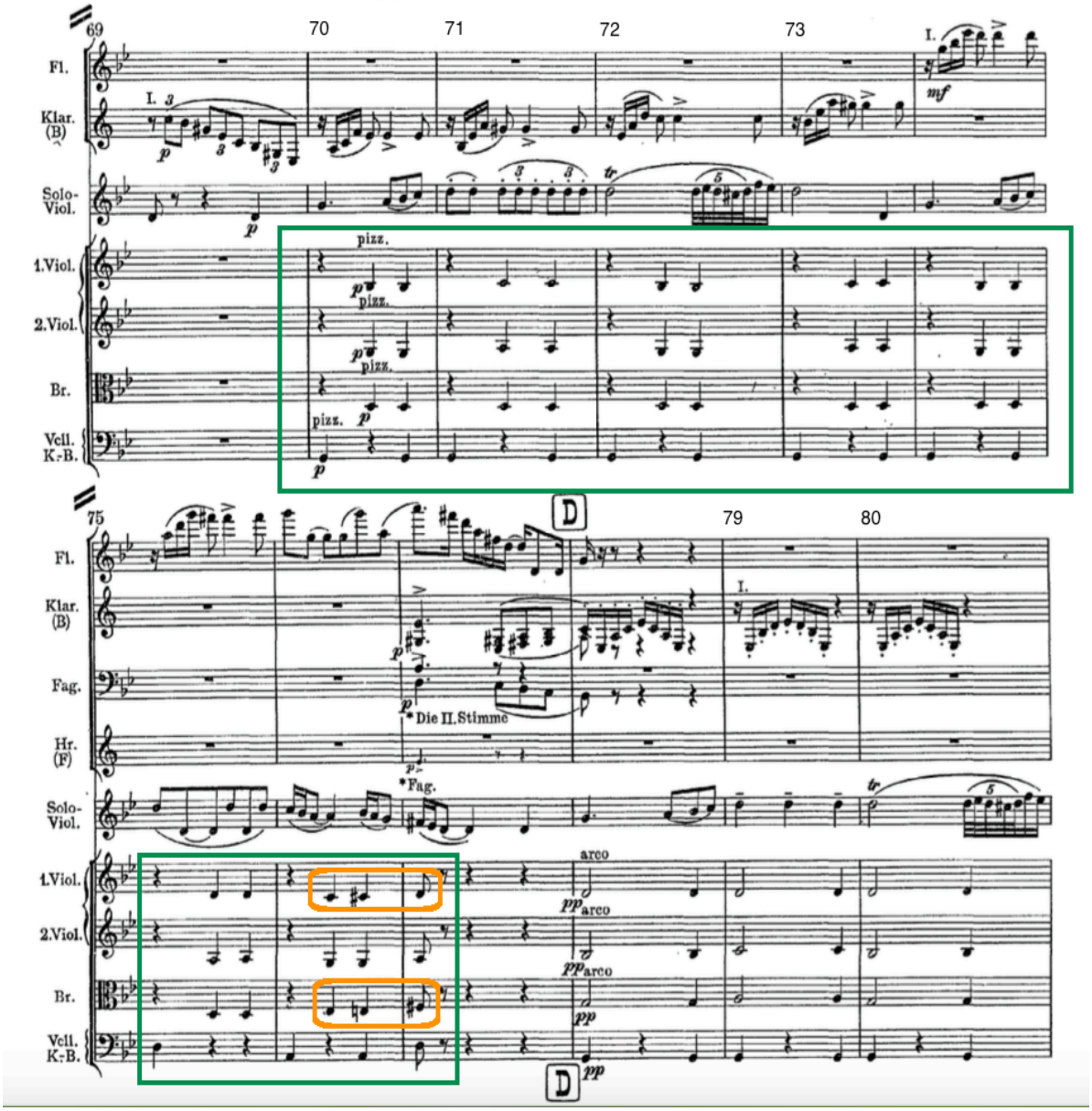
harp in the orchestra. The second issue is unreachable chords, which explains the rolling marks by editors.



Example 24: C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, Op.35 in D Major, second movement, measures 69-78.

As mentioned before on the first method, chords in a piano reduction should not be rolled unless it represents a harp section. Many reductions have rolled chords indicated by editors as a way to play wide chords.

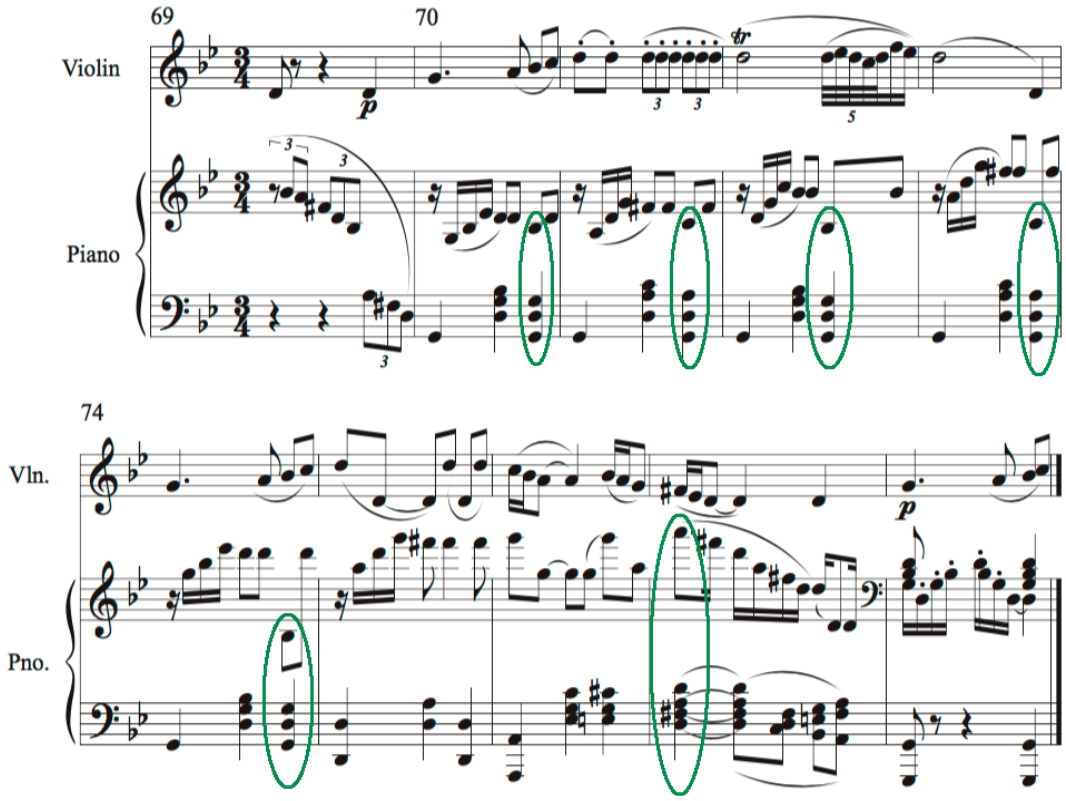
From the reduction above, both of the left-hand chords are pizzicato string chords, yet only last chord of each measure has rolled marks.



Example 25: Breitkopf und Härtel publisher, edited by Fritz Hoffmann, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto Op.35 in D Major, second movement, measures 69-80.

Pizzicatos are supposed to be short and played same length each time, however according to the piano reduction, only last chord of each measure has longer and louder chord by rolling marks. Luckily when the big chord happens each time in measure 70-74,

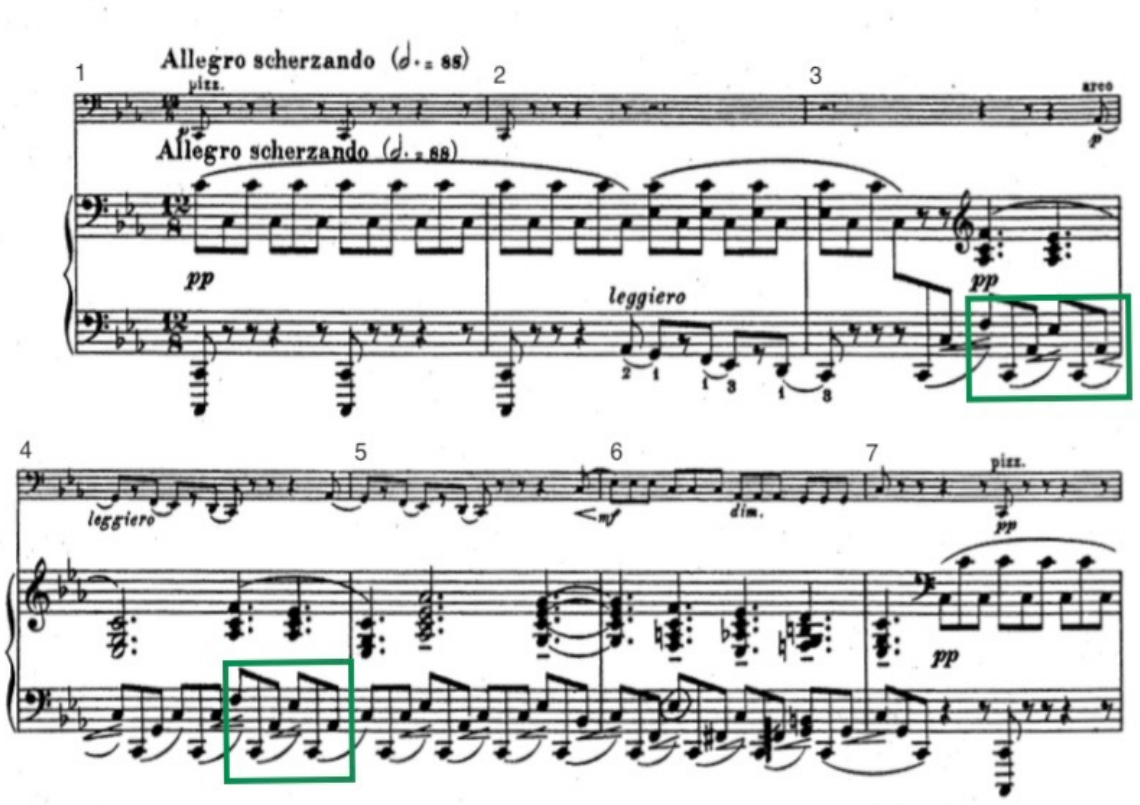
the right hand is free to help. So, the top one or two upper notes can be played by right hand. However, the last chord cannot be covered by right hand in measure 76, since right hand part also has its own melodic line to play at the same time. Until the last measure of pizzicato parts in measure 75, chords of pizzicato-chords are not changing on every measure. Only the last one has a chord progression to the final D Major chord. So, the top note C#4 on left hand in measure 76 should not be eliminated nor re-voiced (as one of the solution of the first method on earlier of this chapter). Also, from the observation of full score, the final D Major chord happens right on downbeat of measure 77. However, on piano reductions in Example 19, D Major chord happens on second beat, which is very different from original sound. It can be very confusing to violinist who rehearses a great deal with piano before the concert with an orchestra. So, my solution for this part is getting rid of the low bass note on the last chord, play the top three chords for a chord progression and then play the final D chord on downbeat.



Example 26: C.F. Peters Edition of Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, Op.35 in D Major, second movement, measures 69-78 (edited by Choi).

This method of taking advantage of both hands wisely can also be adopted to a piece that was originally written for piano.

This following excerpt is from the A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, second movement, measures 1-7.

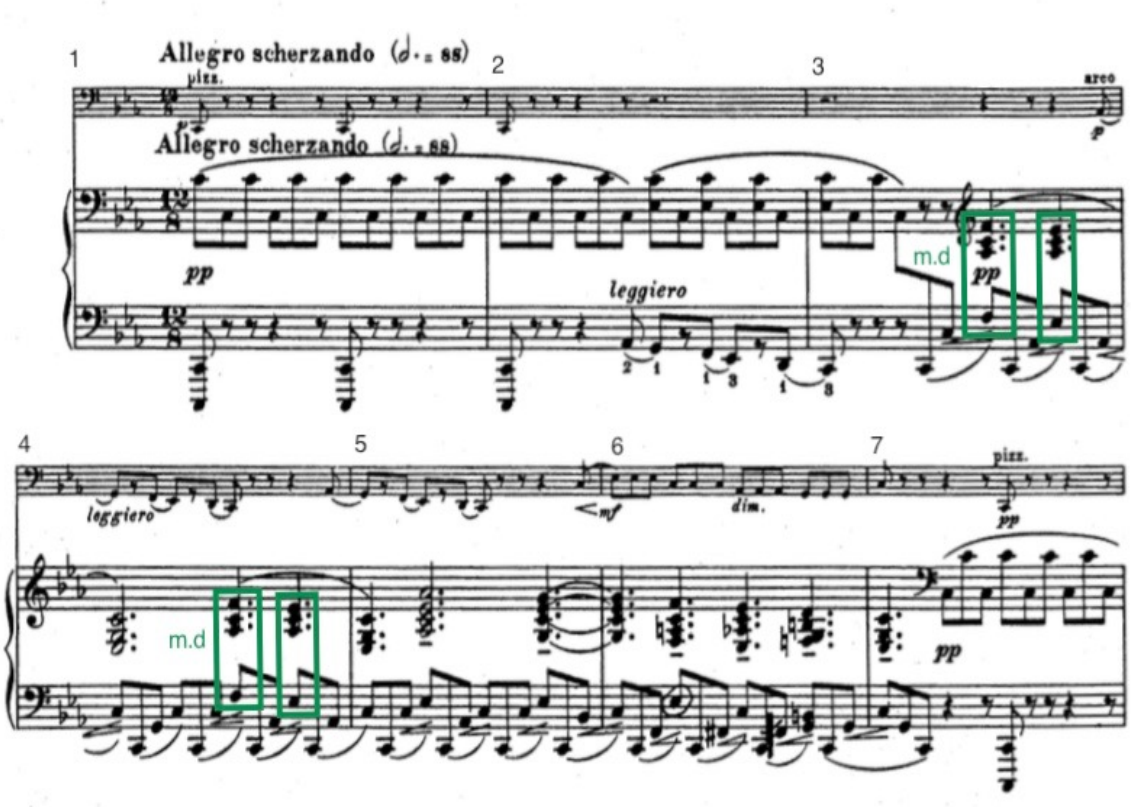


Example 27: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, second movement, measures 1-7.

This movement is in the fast tempo *Allegro scherzando,* and this entire excerpt is in *pp.* When there are huge jumps for small hands in measure 3 or 4, it is difficult to play softly. Due to the fast tempo, the left hand may get some injuries by trying to play these passages as soft as possible with the big stretch. However, if right hand plays the top note of the left hand, it will be a lot easier to control the tempo and dynamics, and even the melodic line, which will go smoother.

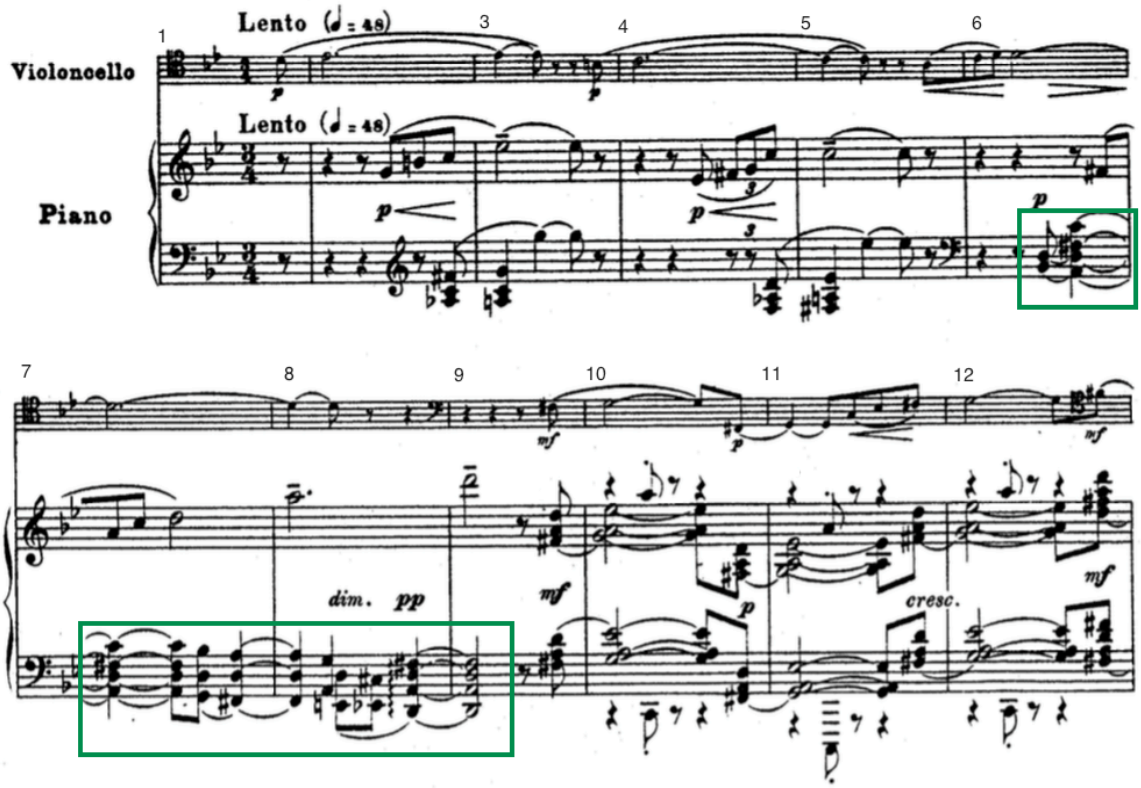
Similar patterns are shown in measure 5 and 6; however, covering these patterns with the both hands-method does not work in these measures, since the right hand has a

full chord to play. Whenever there is a chance to avoid the big stretch, use this technique if at all possible. By taking this method in measure 3 and 4, the left hand will have less tension, rather than playing all four measures in a row with big stretch.



Example 28: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, second movement, measures 1-7 (edited by Choi).

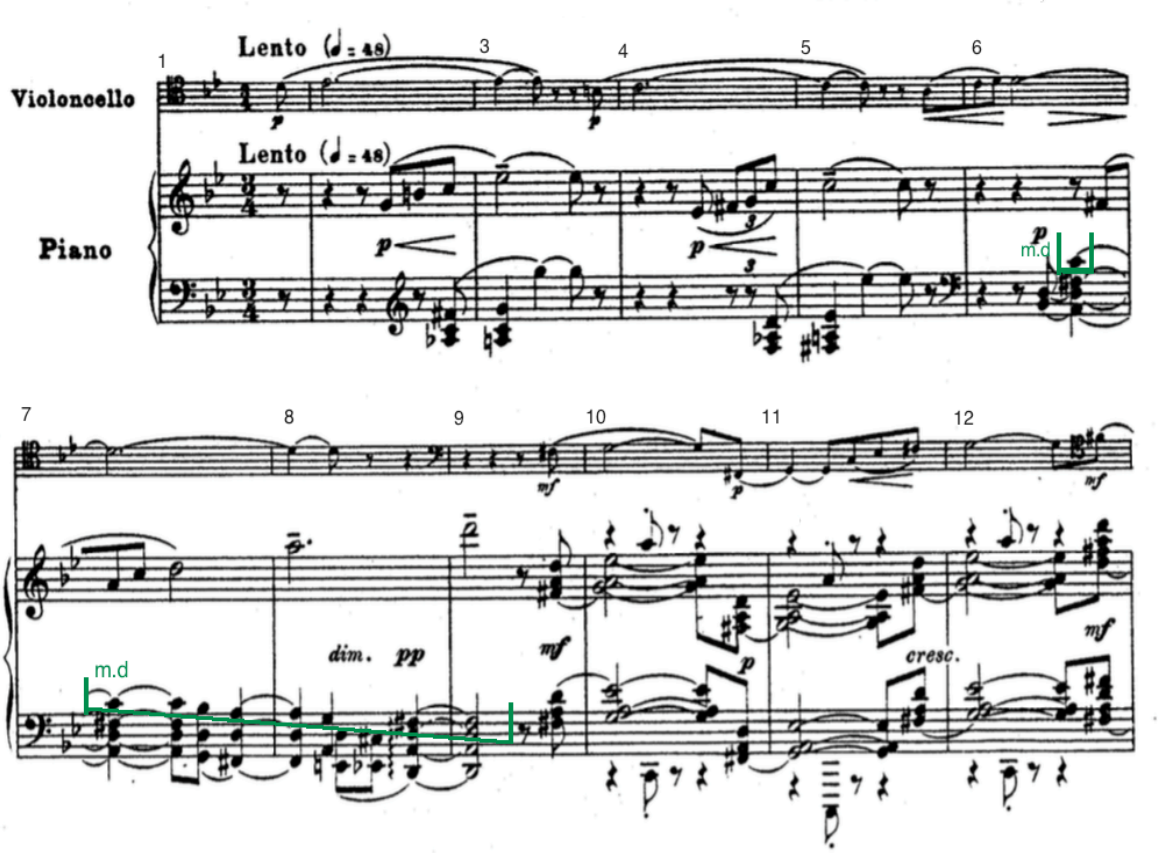
Here is another example from the Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op.19, first movement.



Example 29: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, first movement, measures 1-12.

This is the very beginning of this lengthy work. Even when the introduction is not fully revealed yet from measure 6 to 9, the small-handed pianist can panic to see all the large-span chords with important harmonic and melodic lines. Normally, a small hands pianist could roll these chords whenever it is not reachable, since it is not an orchestral reduction; however, the mysterious atmosphere in this passage may be ruined by rolling the chords, and the voice leading might suffer. This is another passage that can benefit from the second method, using both hands to play the same passage.

Since the right hand is available to cover the top notes of left hand, the harmonic progression will be connected, as well as shaped melodically. With this method, it will be a lot easier to create the mysterious atmosphere.

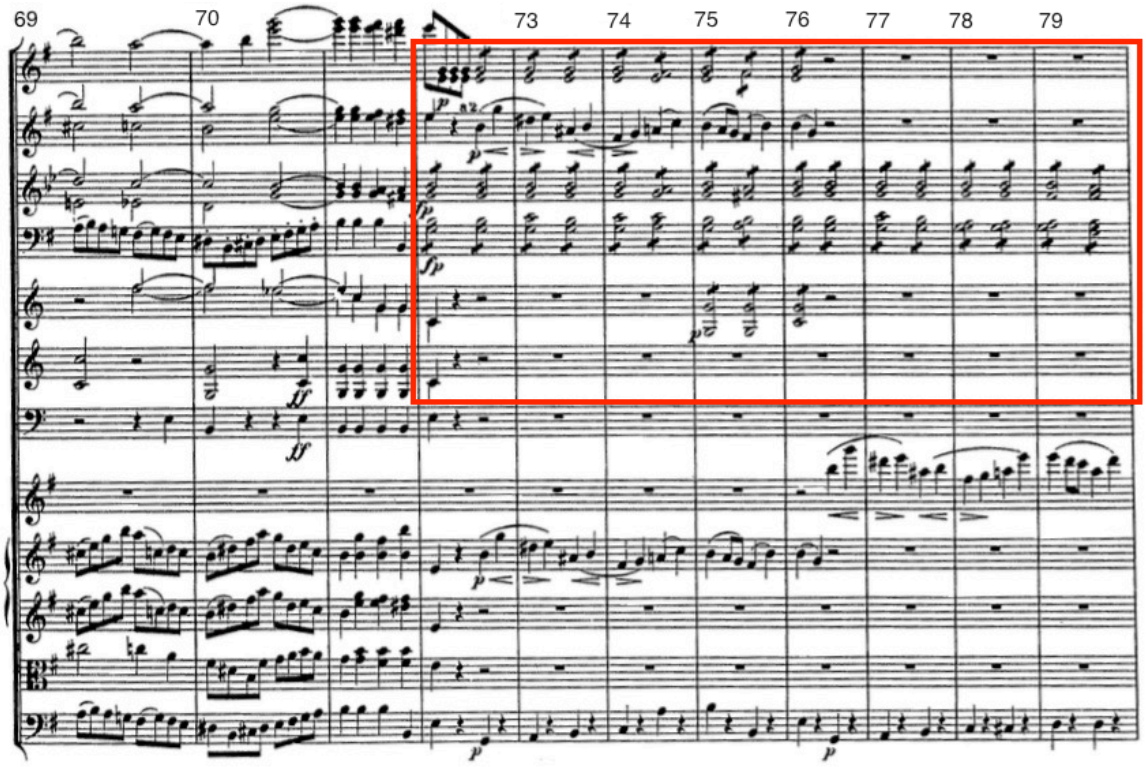


Example 30: A. Gutheil Edition of Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata Op. 19, first movement, measures 1-12 (edited by Choi).

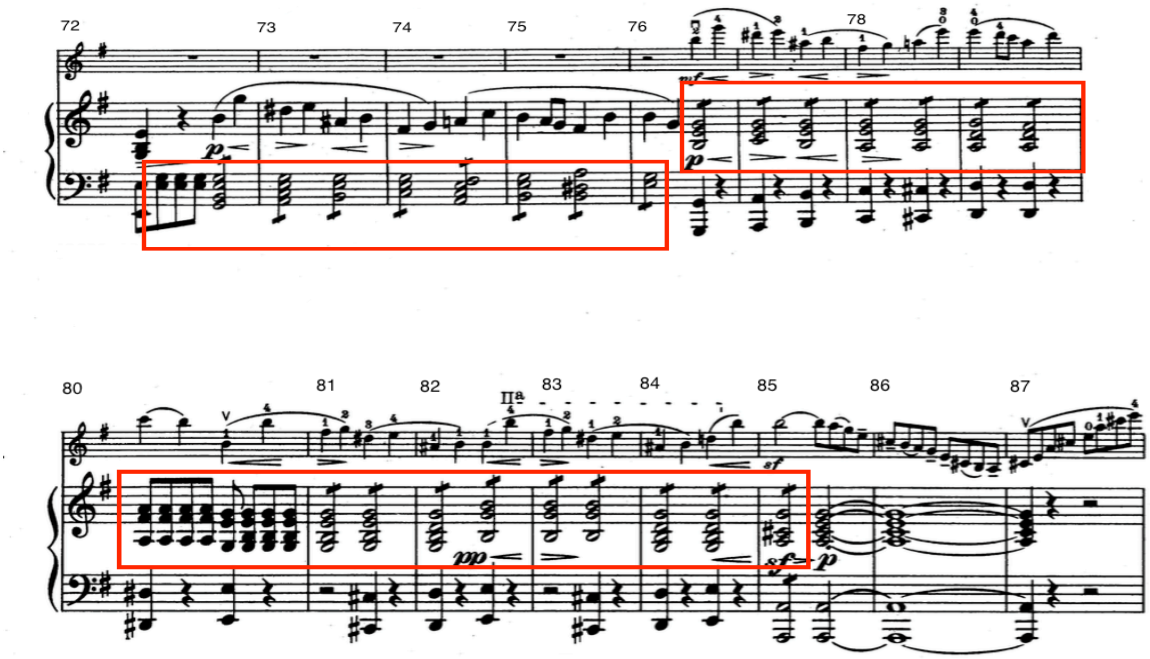
A third method will demonstrate how to avoid possible injuries from passages in which are reachable by a pianist with small hands span, but can cause too much stretching by fast tempo or repetitions. This method will have color of red to indicate the examples in Chapter 3 and 4.

Some passages that even a small hands pianist can play may lead to stretching without any warning, which can be more dangerous, as there is no visible evidence of impending injury that comes with large, unreachable chords. When the chords or melodic lines are in a wide range, it gives the small hands pianist a warning of big stretching; however, some passages that will be discussed below do not give a such a warning, and since the chords appear reachable, one may try to play as it is, and may end up hurting the small hands.

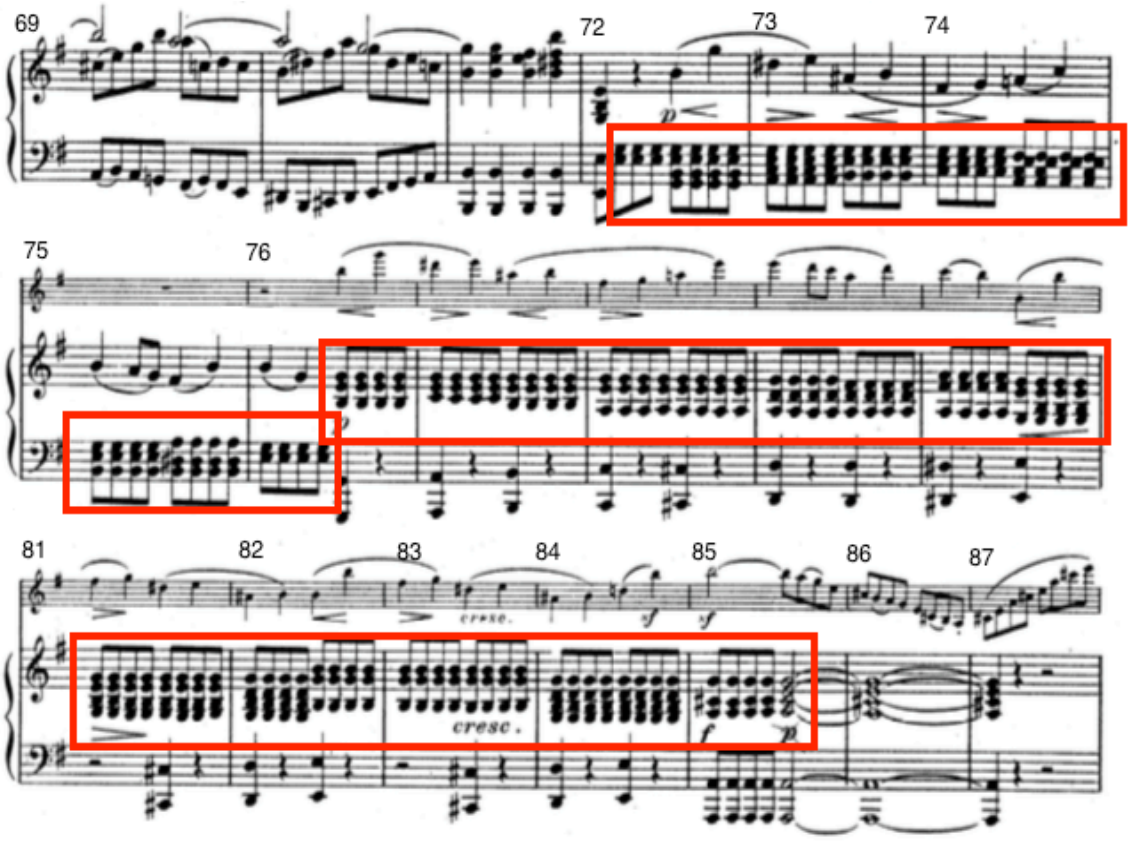
The following three excerpts are from the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto Op.64, first movement in various editions.



Example 31: Breitkopf und Härtel edition of Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, Op.64, first movement, measures 69-79.



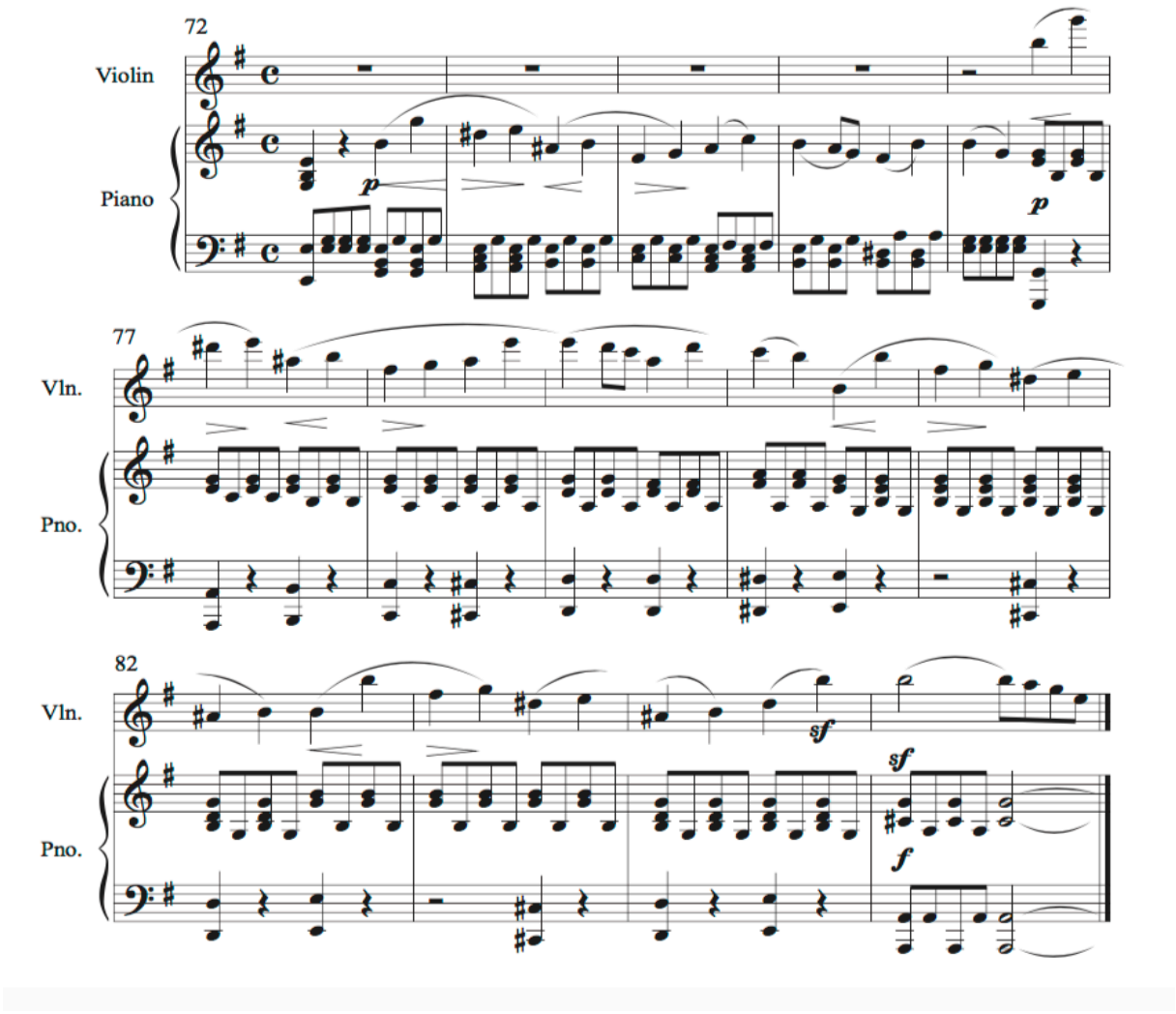
Example 32: Carl Fischer Edition of Mendelssohn Violin Concerto Op.64, first movement, measures 72-87.



Example 33: Durand Edition of Mendelssohn Violin Concerto Op.64, first movement, measures 69-87.

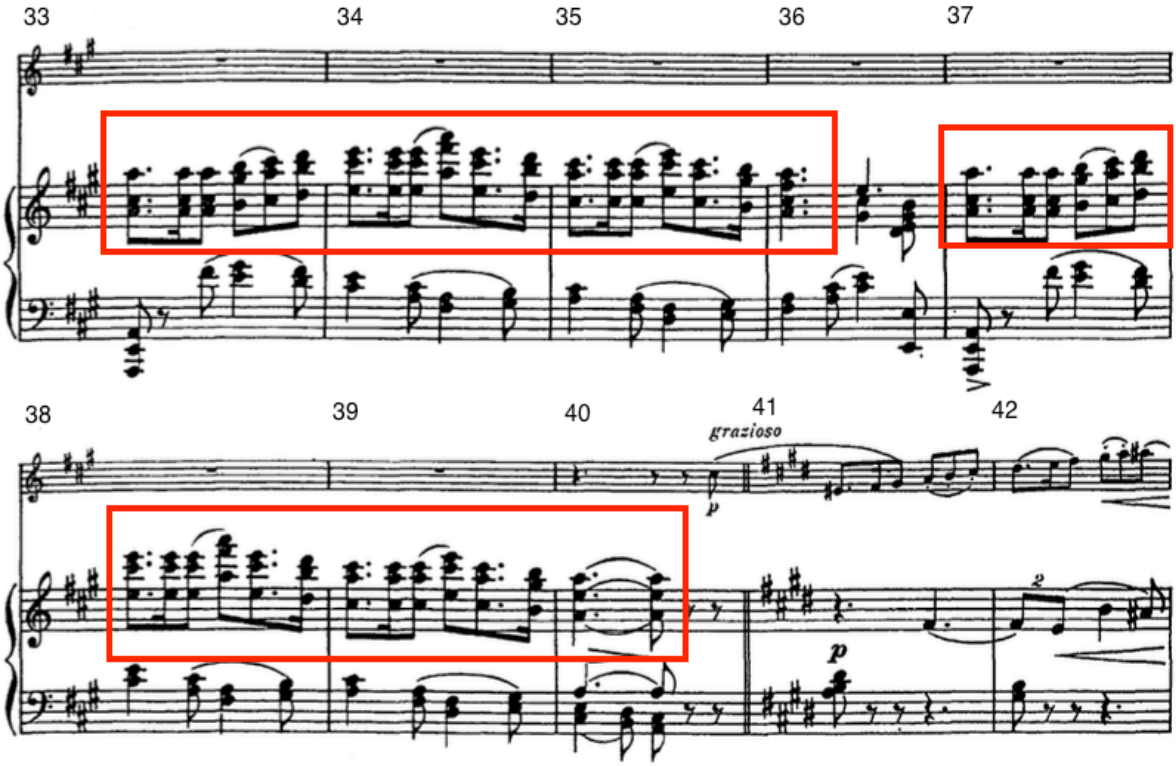
Compared to the original full score of Example 28, the piano reduction in Example 29 has exact same notation from the full score, and Example 30 has more detailed notation that shows how to play this section correctly. From the repeated chords, the biggest spans are octaves, so pianists with small hands can reach all the notes with no problem. However, if this octave-locked hand position keeps going fast and repeats, as seen in measures 80- 84, pianists with small hands may experience fatigue, great tension on pinky, and eventually, severe injury. All the repeated chords are played by

woodwinds, and are all accompanying only the first violins and later solo violinist. So, when woodwinds are repeating all those notes, they must play softly in this *p* section, to not to cover the melodic line. When a pianist plays all these full chords repeatedly, it can be loud with some dangerous tension on hands. So, my method for this passage is getting rid of repeated full chords in every other beat in each measure. Instead of full chords, put minimal notes for consistency of sound. Pedaling is very tricky in this passage. Too much pedaling can cover the melodic line of the right hand, or the solo violinist, and it will sound totally different from the original. Without pedaling, it will be too articulated with all the repeated notes, and when right hand plays the melody, the sound will be too dry. So, some pedaling is needed and will help the consistency of the chords sound with my revised method. With my revision, it will sound soft and consistent with some pedaling in fast tempo, even without all the notes, and it will not hurt the hands.



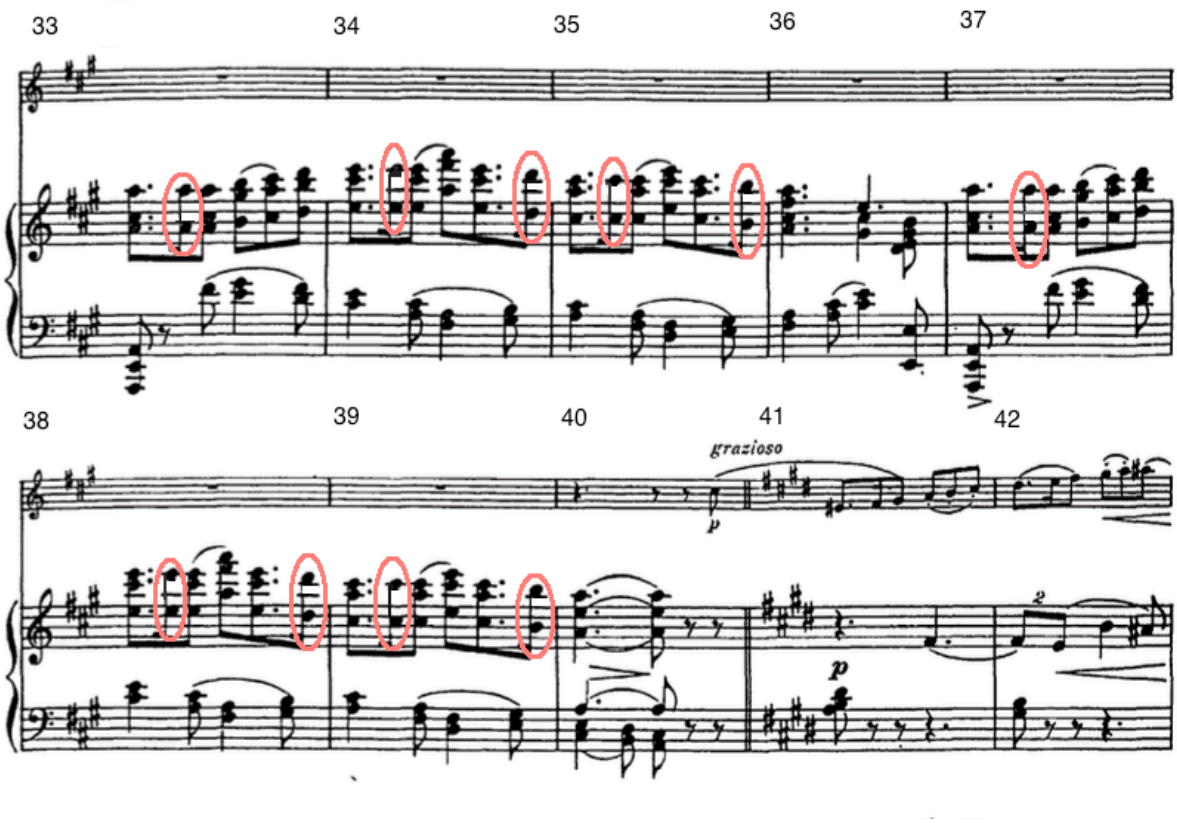
Example 34: Durand Edition of Mendelssohn Violin Concerto Op.64, first movement (edited by Choi).

The following example is from the M.P. Belaieff Edition of A. Glazunov Violin Concerto, Op.82, fourth movement, measures 33- 42.



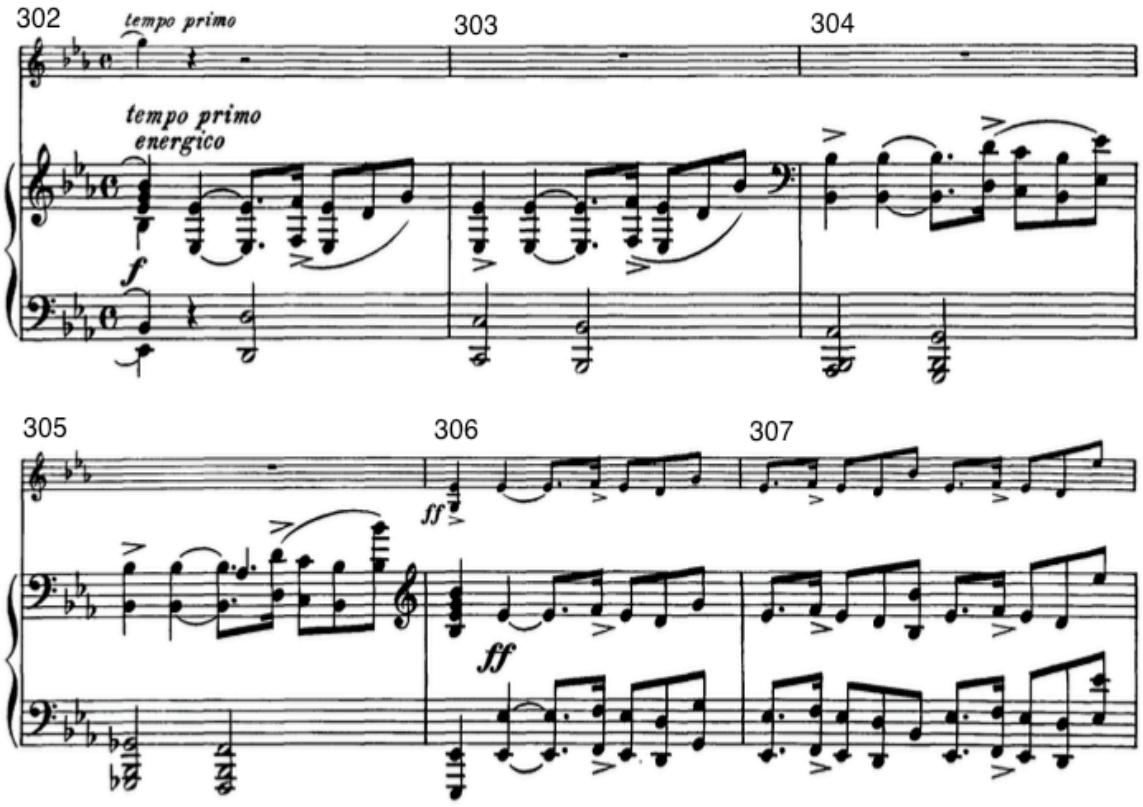
Example 35: M.P. Belaieff Edition of A. Glazunov Violin Concerto, Op.82, fourth movement, measures 33-42.

This excerpt is marked *Allegro*. At this fast tempo, such an extended passaged of octaves filled in with an inner voice may fatigue or even hurt pianists with small hands. My solution shown below is very simple, but the audience may not notice the difference between the sound of piano reduction in Example 32 and the revised one; the revision has eliminated the inner voice on selected chords, reducing it to a simple octave, so the pianist has the opportunity to rest the hand, without affecting the sound in a noticeable way. More importantly, pianists with small hands will have less tension.



Example 36: M.P. Belaieff Edition of A. Glazunov Violin Concerto, Op.82, fourth movement, measures 33-42 (edited by Choi).

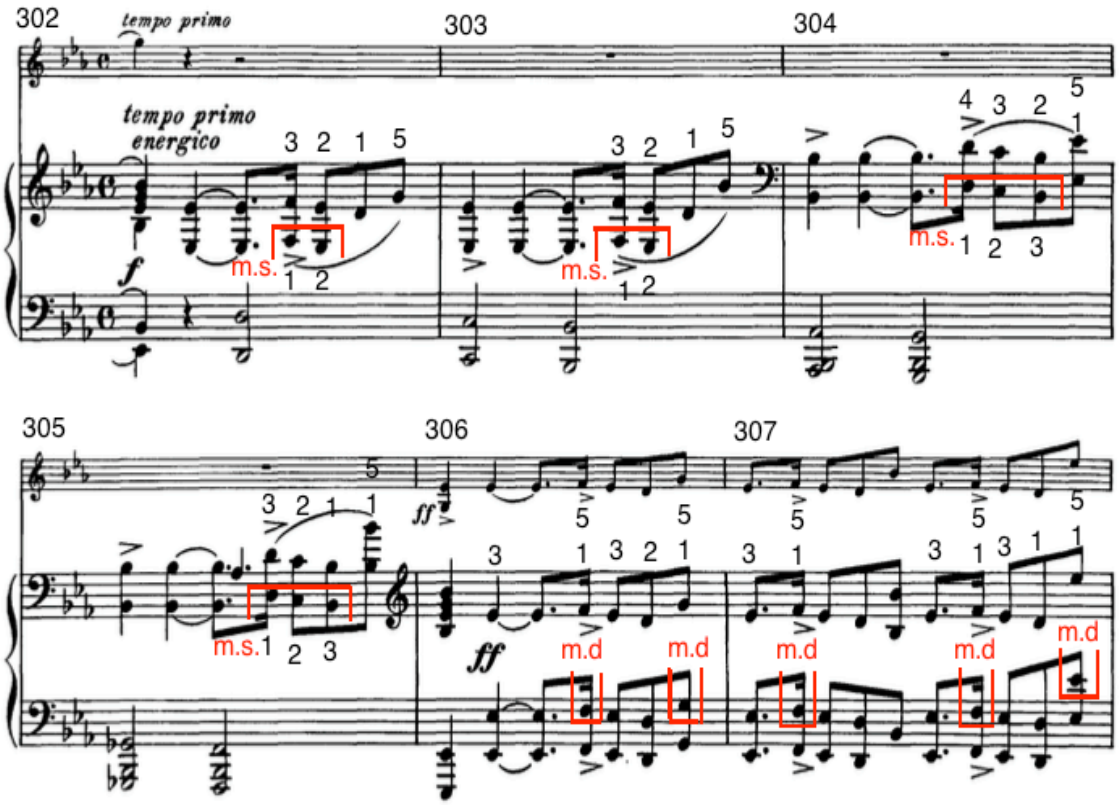
The following example combines the second and third methods to make the piece more realistically playable and performable for pianists with small hands.



Example 37: Universal Edition of R. Strauss Violin Sonata in Eb Major, Op.18, first movement 302-307.

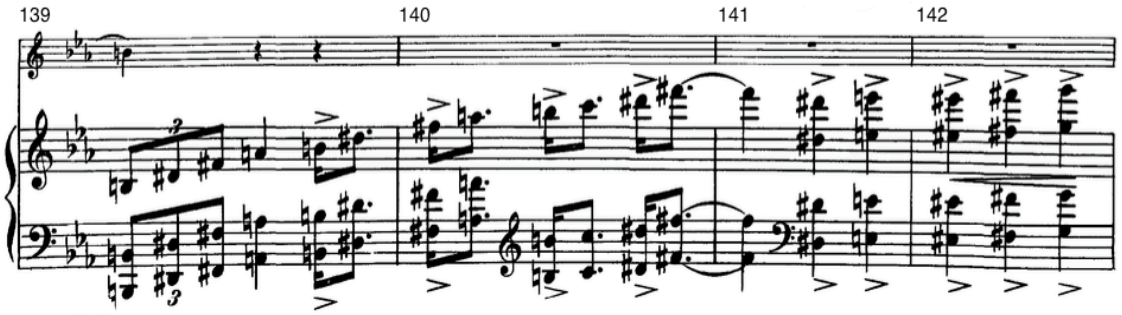
In measures 302-305, although the parts are not impossible for pianists with small hands, the second method can be adopted here to make it better and easier, and thus save energy for this long and demanding work. The second method, which takes advantage of both hands wisely, perfectly fits in these measures, since left hand is available to cover the right-hand parts. In addition, this technique will highlight the accents marked *energico*. When left hand helps the bottom notes, it is much more effective to make the accents, as well as the slur lines, than when the right-hand plays as written.

On the other hand, measures 306-307 demonstrate a different issue. Both hands are busy, and in fact both hands and the violin have unison melody. As written, the left hand has all the pressure of playing octaves, accents and accurate jumping for this unison line. My solution for these two measure incorporates the second method by alternating different hand for the octaves, so the left hand gets less octave-jumping, and the combination of the hands make a perfect unison a lot easier. Suggested fingering will help to understand this solution.

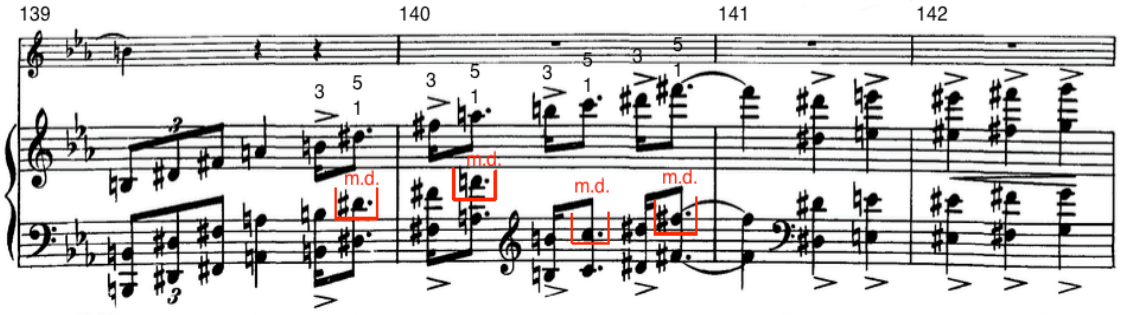


Example 38: Universal Edition of R. Strauss Violin Sonata in Eb Major, Op.18, first movement 302-307 (edited by Choi).

Following is another example of how alternating octaves between the two hands can be used to prevent left hand injury from fast, accented octaves that involve a great deal of jumping.

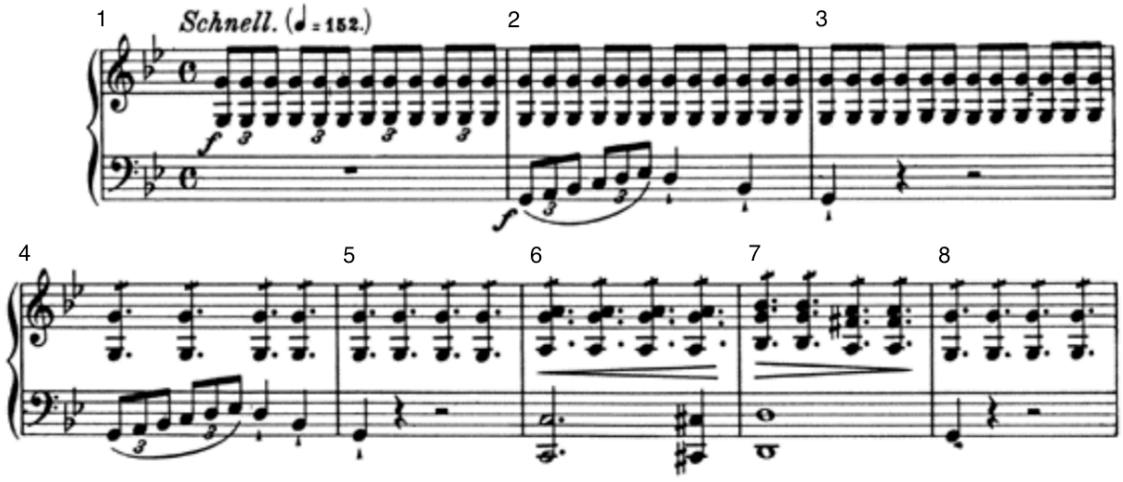


Example 39: Universal Edition of R. Strauss Violin Sonata in Eb Major, Op.18, third movement 139-142.



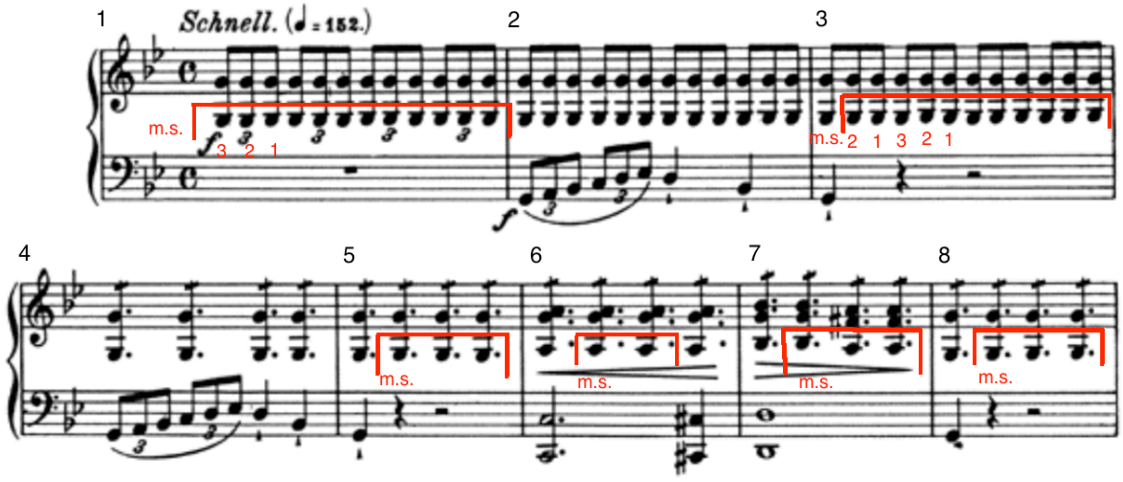
Example 40: Universal Edition of R. Strauss Violin Sonata in Eb Major, Op.18, third movement 139-142 (edited by Choi).

The last example is Schubert's masterpiece Erlkönig, a work that requires an exceptional technique for pianists. Throughout this work, Schubert uses perpetual motion repeating octaves and larger chords. Having relaxed arms is the key to performing (or surviving!) this incredible song.



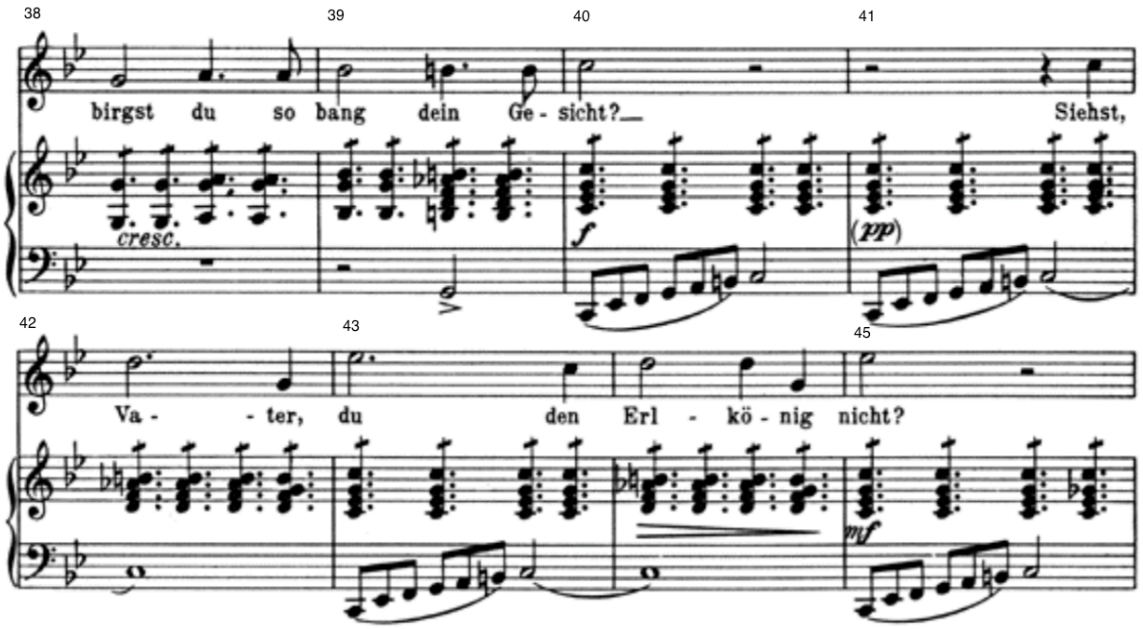
Example 41: C. F. Peters Edition of Erlkönig, D.328 by Franz Schubert, measures 1-8.

From the very beginning, Schubert employs perpetual motion octaves. Although these octaves are reachable for pianists with small hands, the constant repetition over time can be especially fatiguing for those with smaller hands, and one should adopt the second method to relax the arms and hands. As is seen below, the left hand has many rests, and can therefore cover the bottom notes in many measures, including 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8.



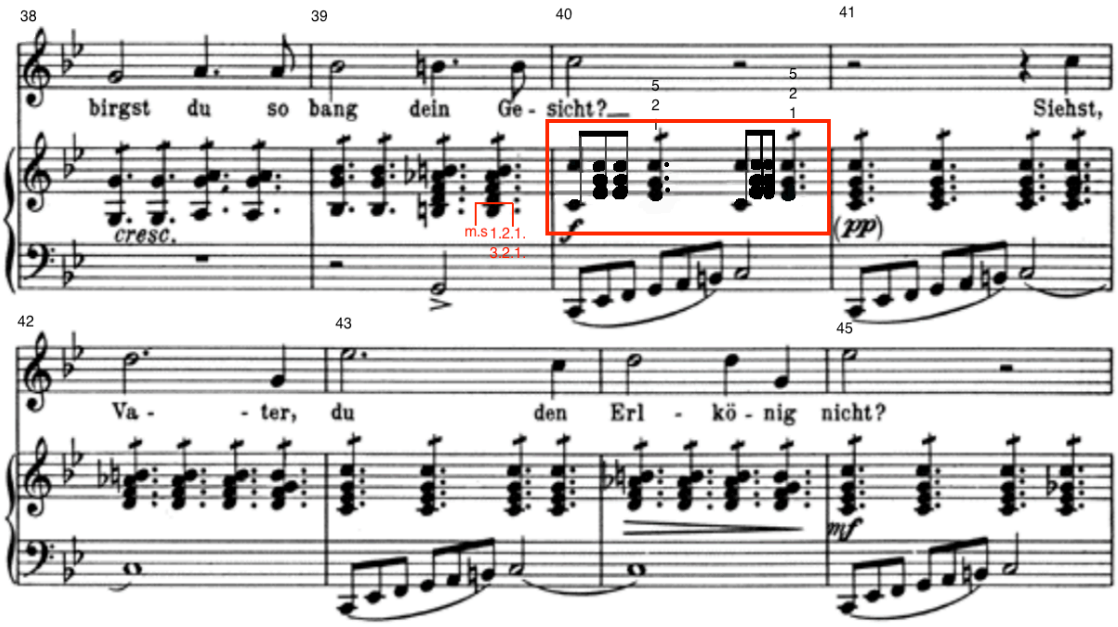
Example 42: C. F. Peters Edition of Erlkönig, D.328 by Franz Schubert, measures 1-8 (edited by Choi).

Other than managing tension in the arm, wrists and hands, the biggest problem is shown in this following excerpt.



Example 43: C. F. Peters Edition of Erlkönig, D.328 by Franz Schubert, measures 38-45.

Fast repetitions of full chords, especially the thick five note chords in measure 39, can cause huge problems for pianists with a small hand span. The wide stretching required, and repeating chords in crescendo *f*, then *subito pp*, which is edited not by the composer, but for the performance guide for a better balance between the voice and the accompaniment, is difficult even for pianists who have big hands, which can create problems due to a stretched, locked hand position.



Example 44: C. F. Peters Edition of Erlkönig, D.328 by Franz Schubert, measures 38-45 (edited by Choi).

Since the tempo is marked *Schnell,* cautious and discreet pedaling is required throughout the piece, or the sound will become extremely muddy. With the proper pedaling, the revised chords in measure 40 sound similar to the original notes. The first octave chord will sustain the bottom note C4 with pedaling. When the right hand plays the octave on first beat and the third beat, the arm can be relaxed if it bounces from octave to chords, and the suggested fingering for smaller chords will not hurt pianists with small hands. This method can be adopted in similar measures, such as 41, 43 and 45. The entire work of Erlkönig will presented in Chapter 4.

These are but a few of the many passages that are unplayable for pianists with small hands. While it is not possible to fix every single problem in the standard collaborative piano repertoire, all three methods presented here can be used in other pieces that are not discussed in this paper. With these thee three methods as a cornerstone, further methods can be developed and applied in other problematic passages.

CHAPTER 3

FRANCK VIOLIN SONATA IN A MAJOR

Muzyka Edition of Violin Sonata in A Major by César Franck, first and second movement (edited by Choi).

The sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano by César Franck is considered to be one of his finest chamber works, and has become one of the most standard works in the duo repertoire. In addition to being perhaps the most often performed sonata for violin and piano, it is often a required piece for most collaborative piano or chamber music auditions. A professional collaborative pianist specializing in the string repertoire can't avoid this piece if they wish to be successful. In this chapter I will demonstrate how my techniques will allow those with smaller hands to play this work effectively and musically.

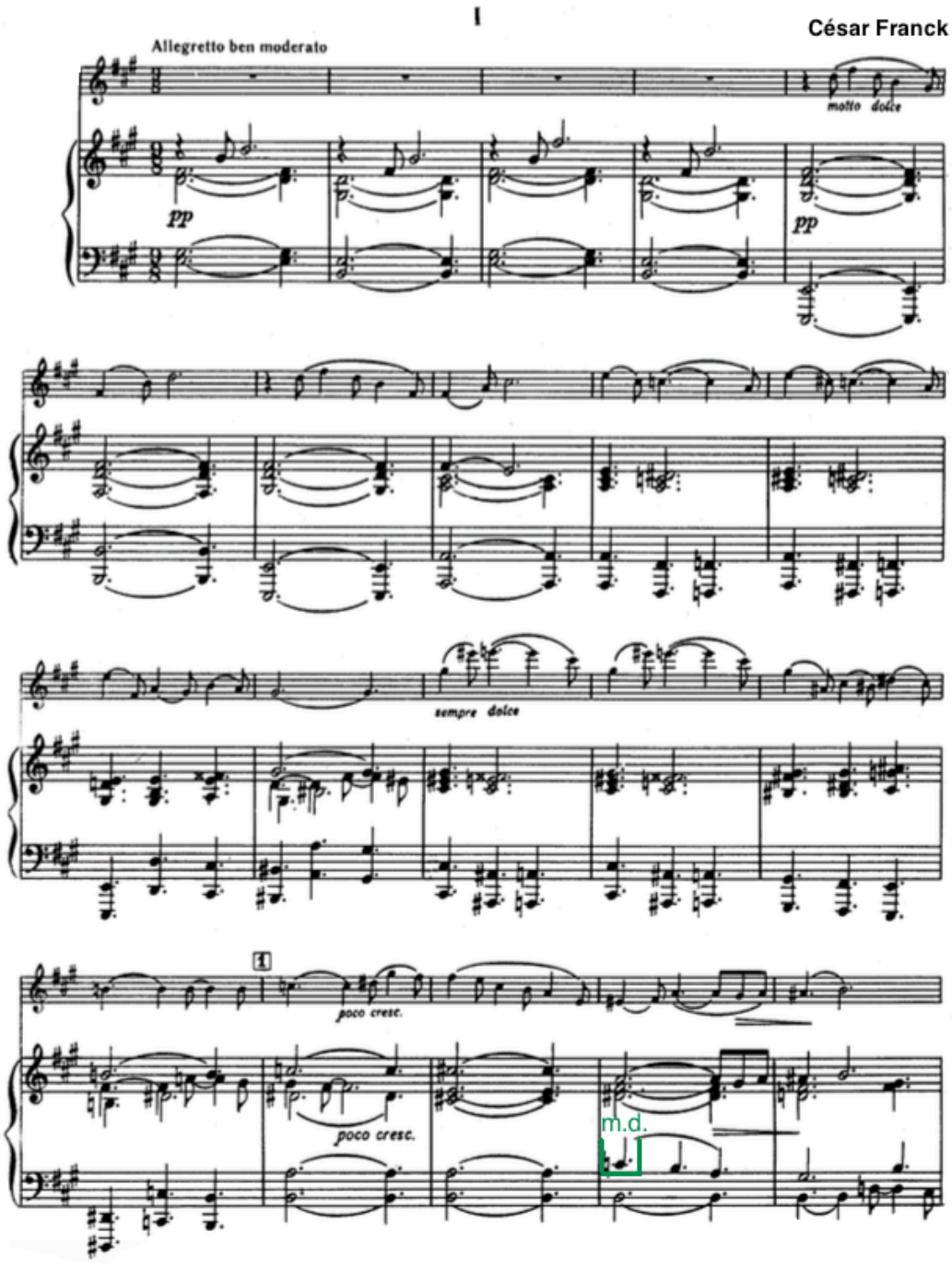
There are three colors indicate the different methods what have been referred in the previous chapter:

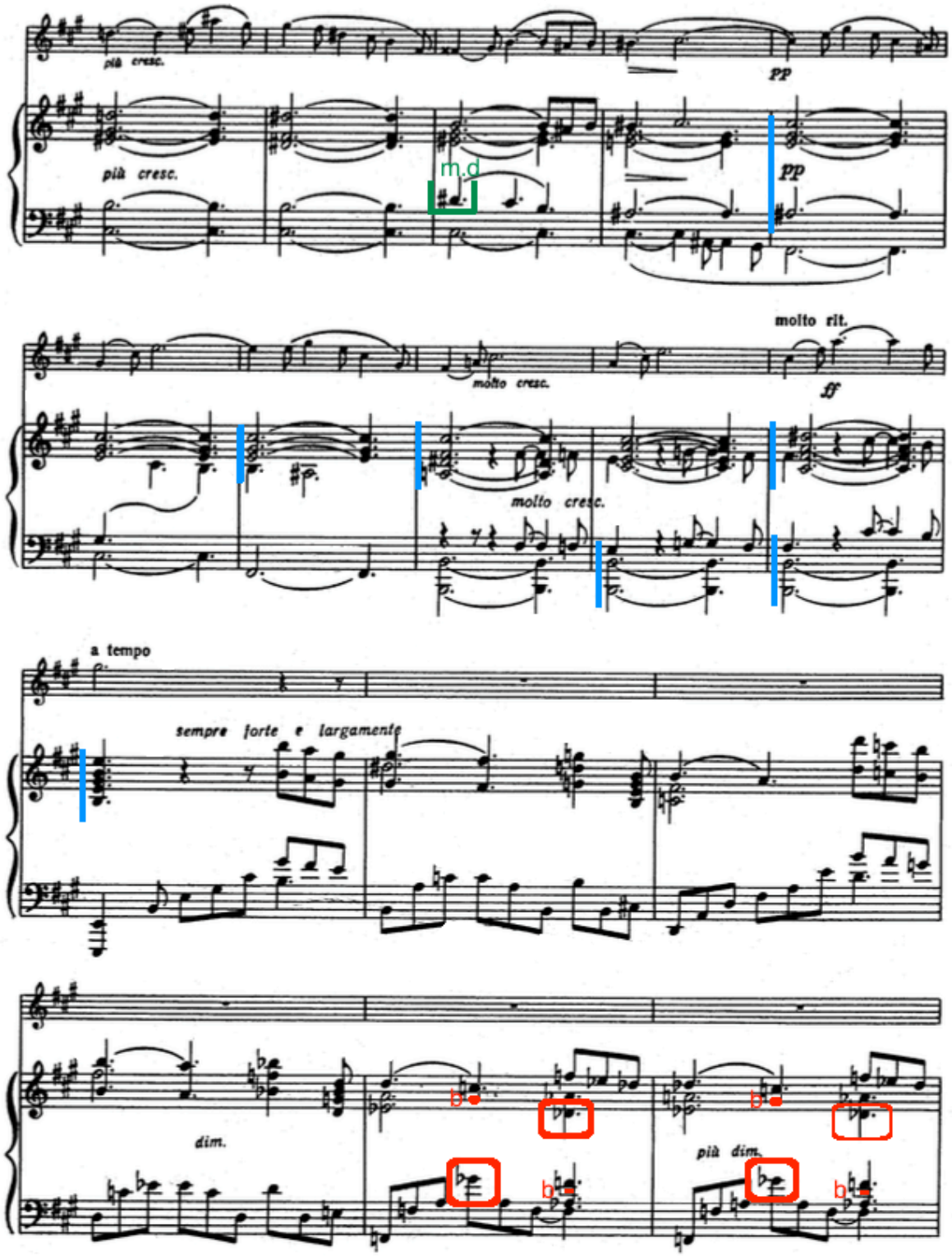
Blue color for re-voicing the notes in large chords and rolling marks (blue straight line).

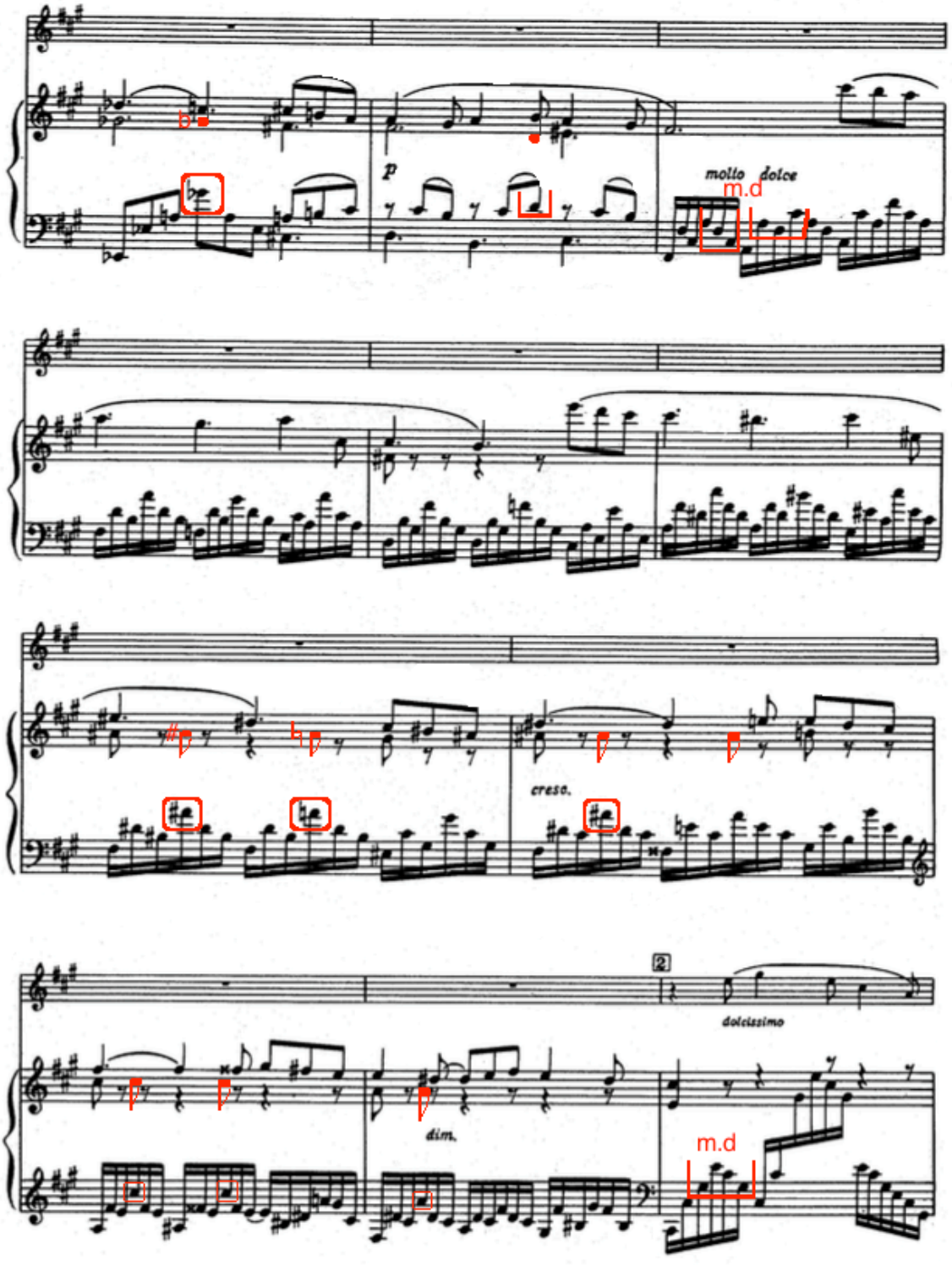
Green color for using both hands for the section that was originally written for one hand.

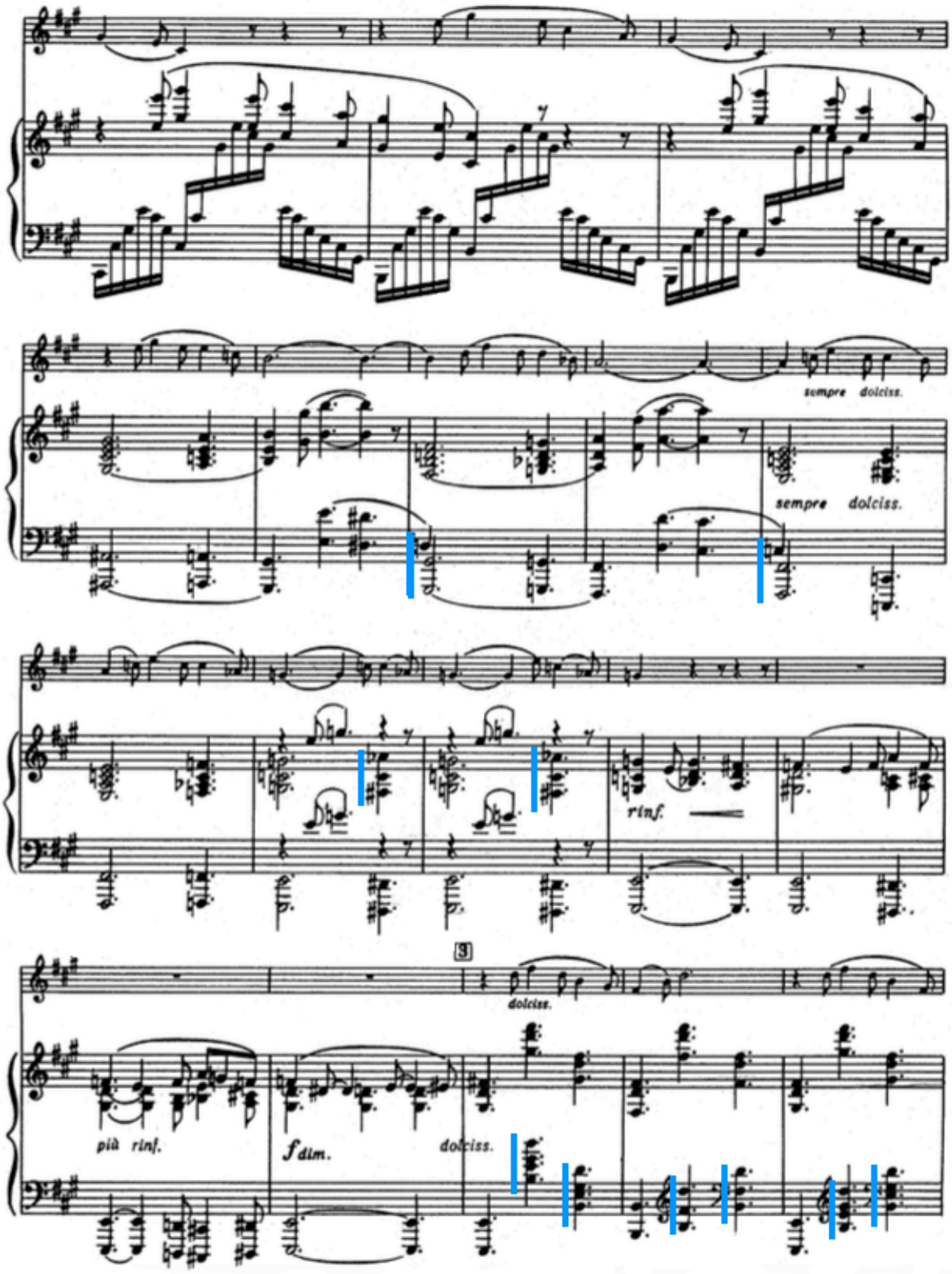
Red color for avoiding possible injuries from the passages that are reachable for small hands, but can cause too much stretching due to fast repetition.

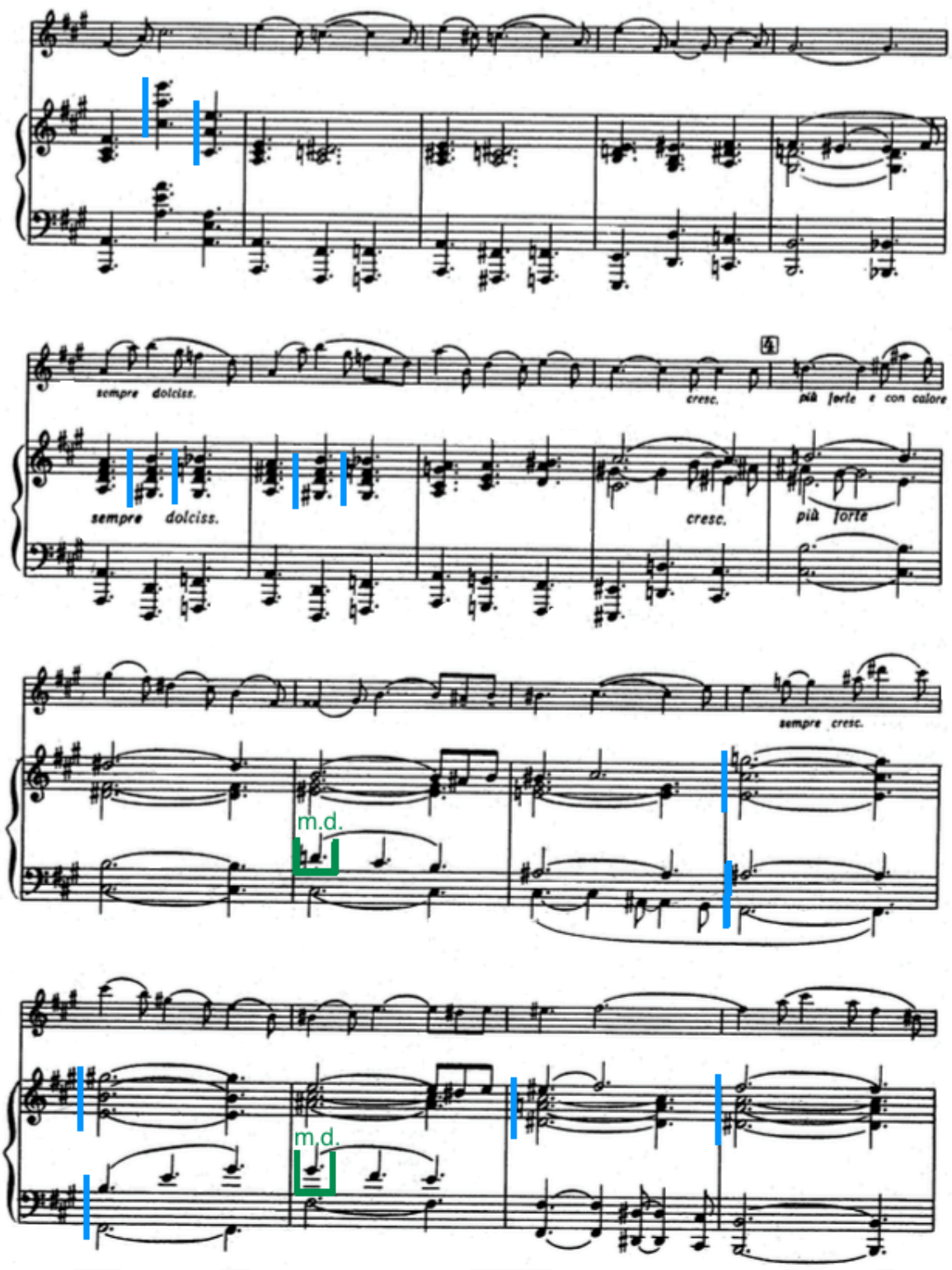
Sonata in A Major

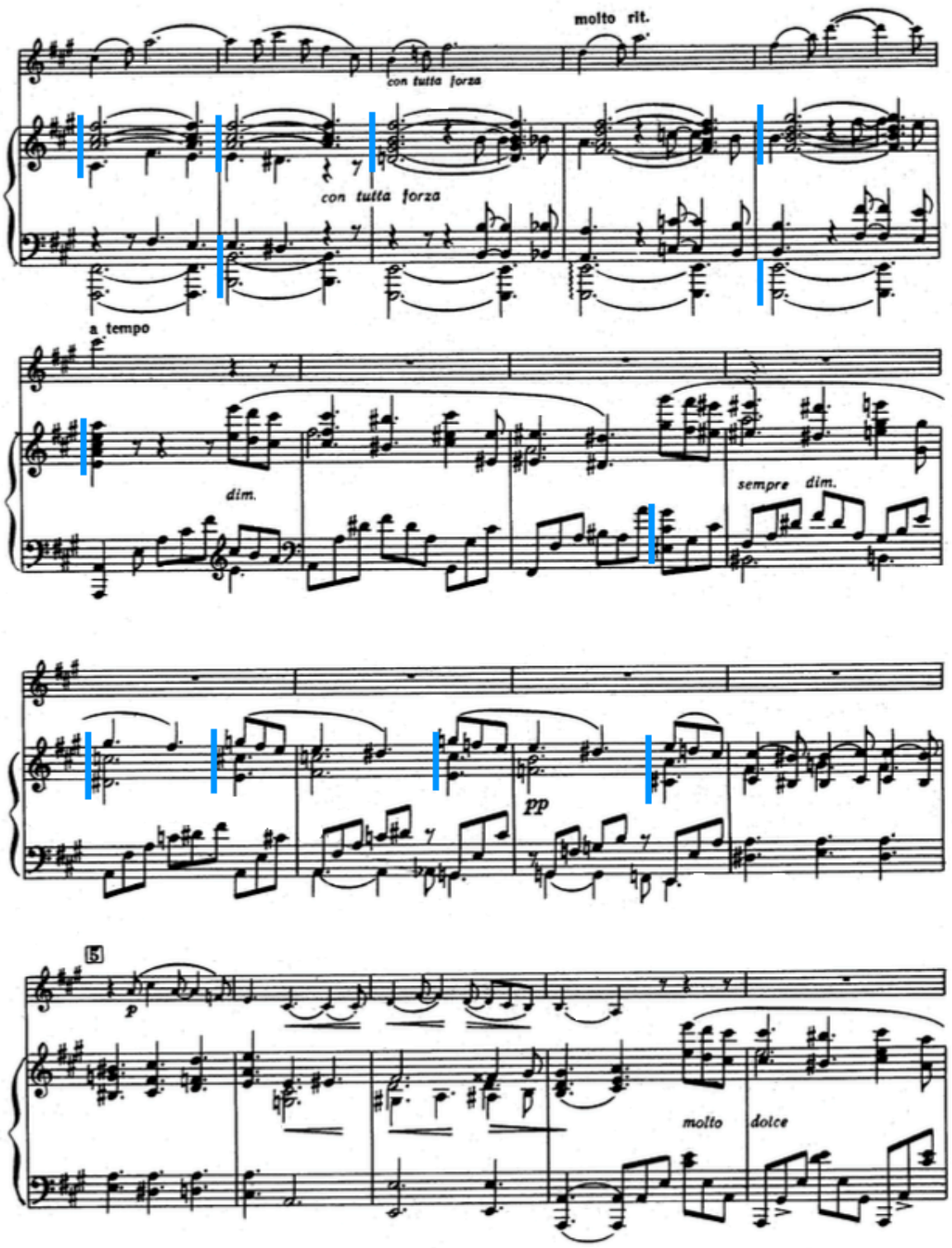


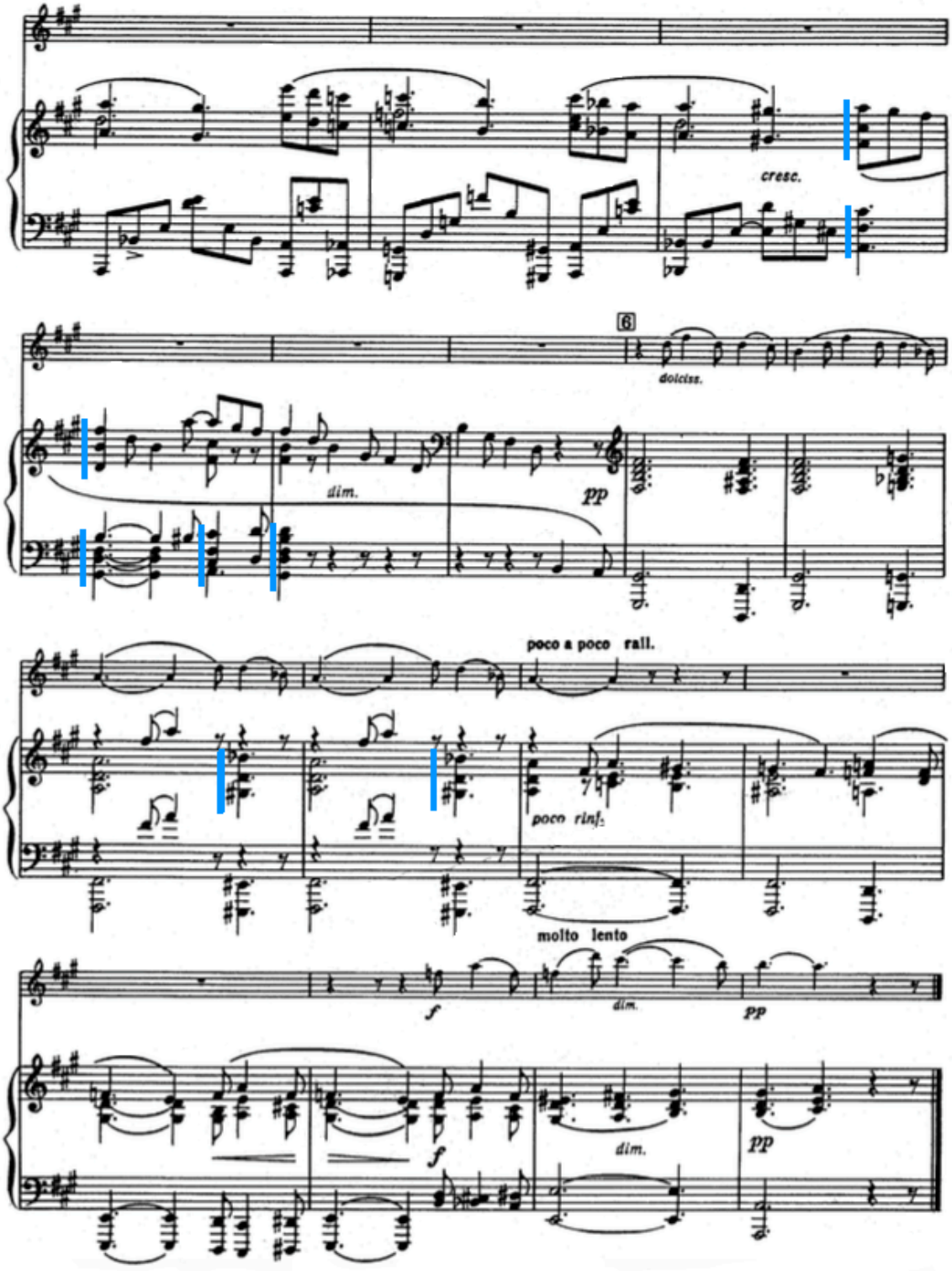

più cresc.
più cresc.
m.d
pp
pp
molto rit.
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
ff
a tempo
sempre forte e largamente
dim.
più dim.


p
molto dolce
m.d
cresc.
2
dolcissimo
dim.
m.d

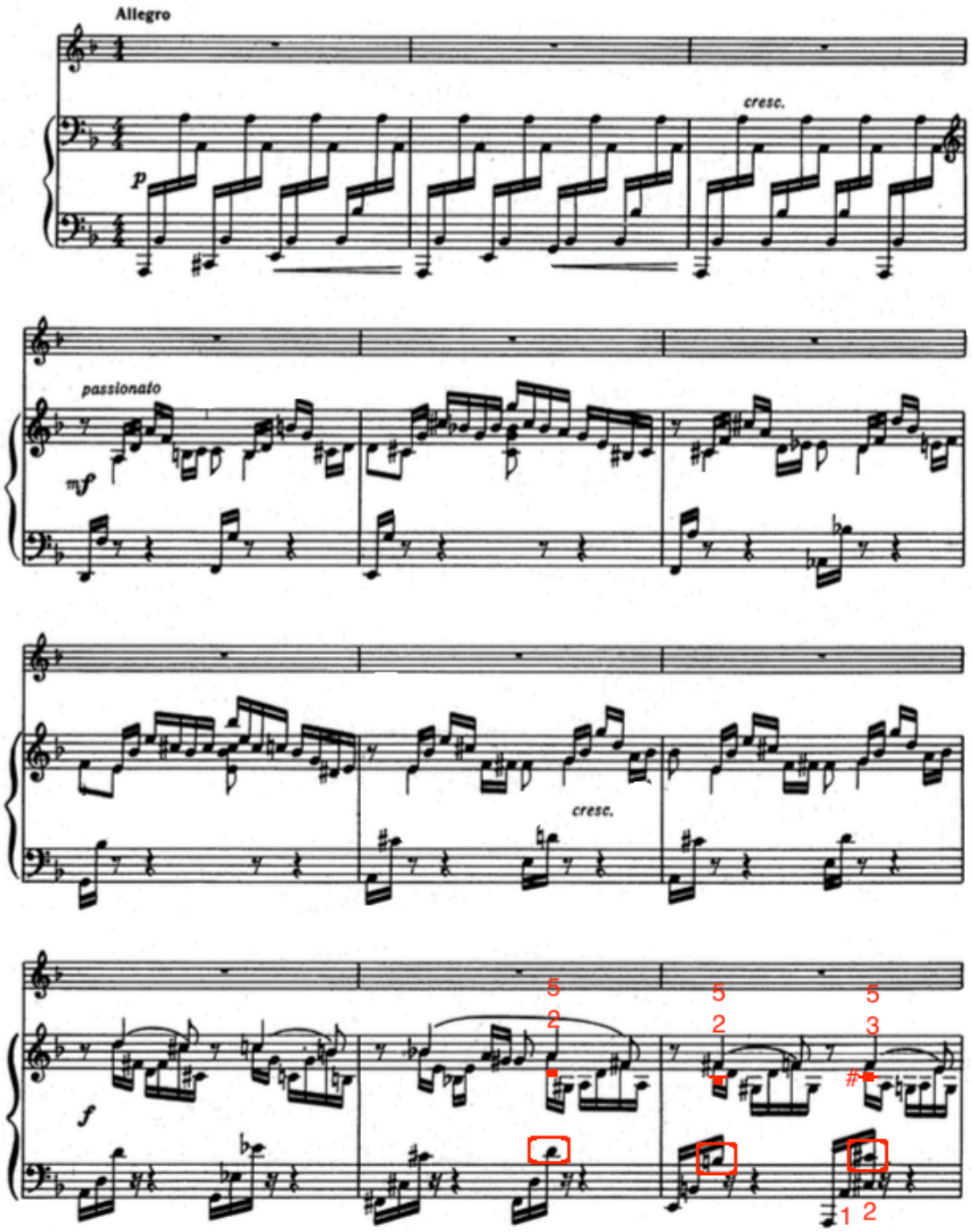

sempre dolciss.
sempre dolciss.
rinf.
3
dolciss.
più rinf.
f dim.
dolciss.

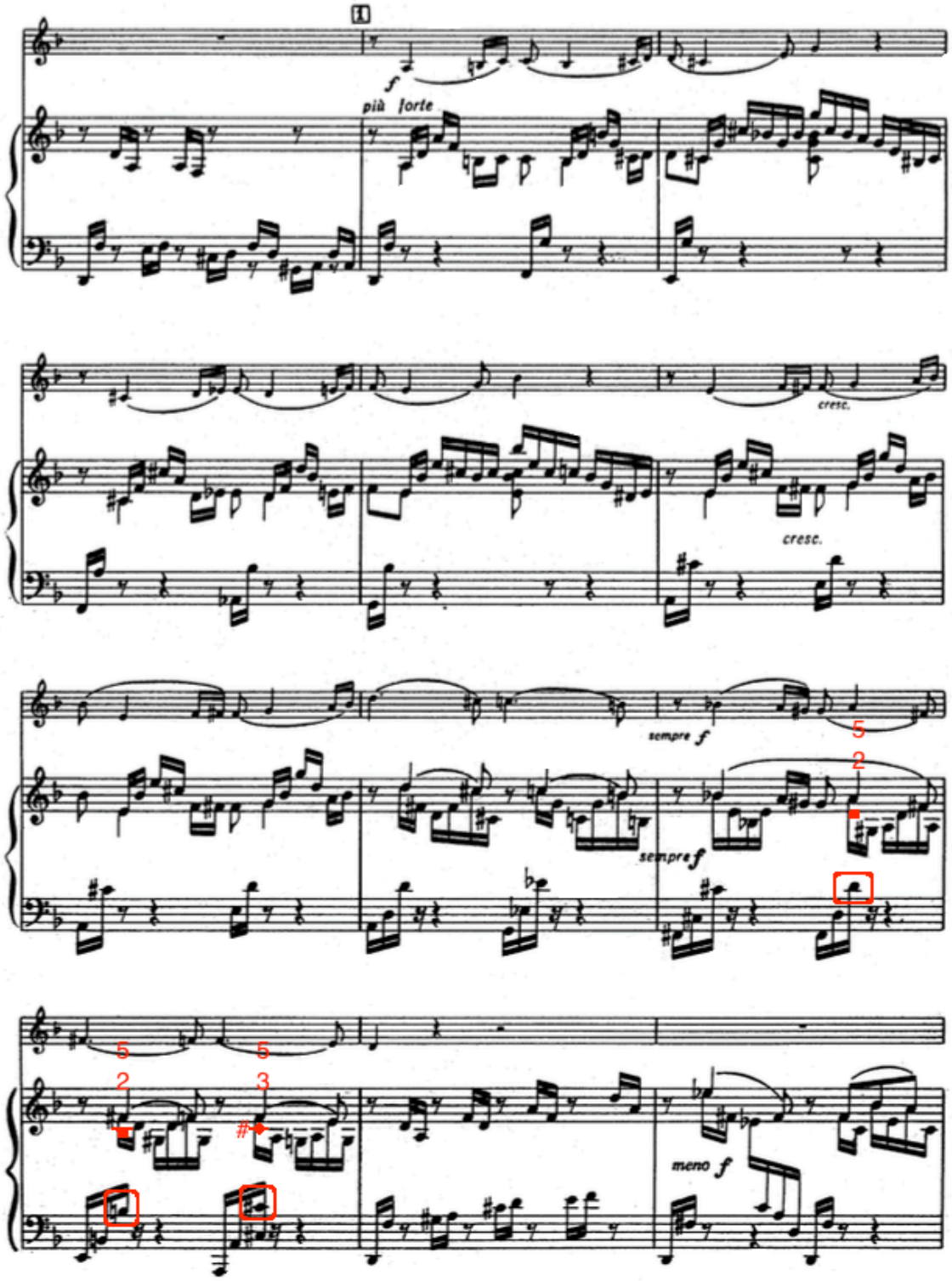

sempre dolciss.
cresc.
più forte e con calore
sempre dolciss.
cresc.
più forte
sempre cresc.
m.d.
m.d.

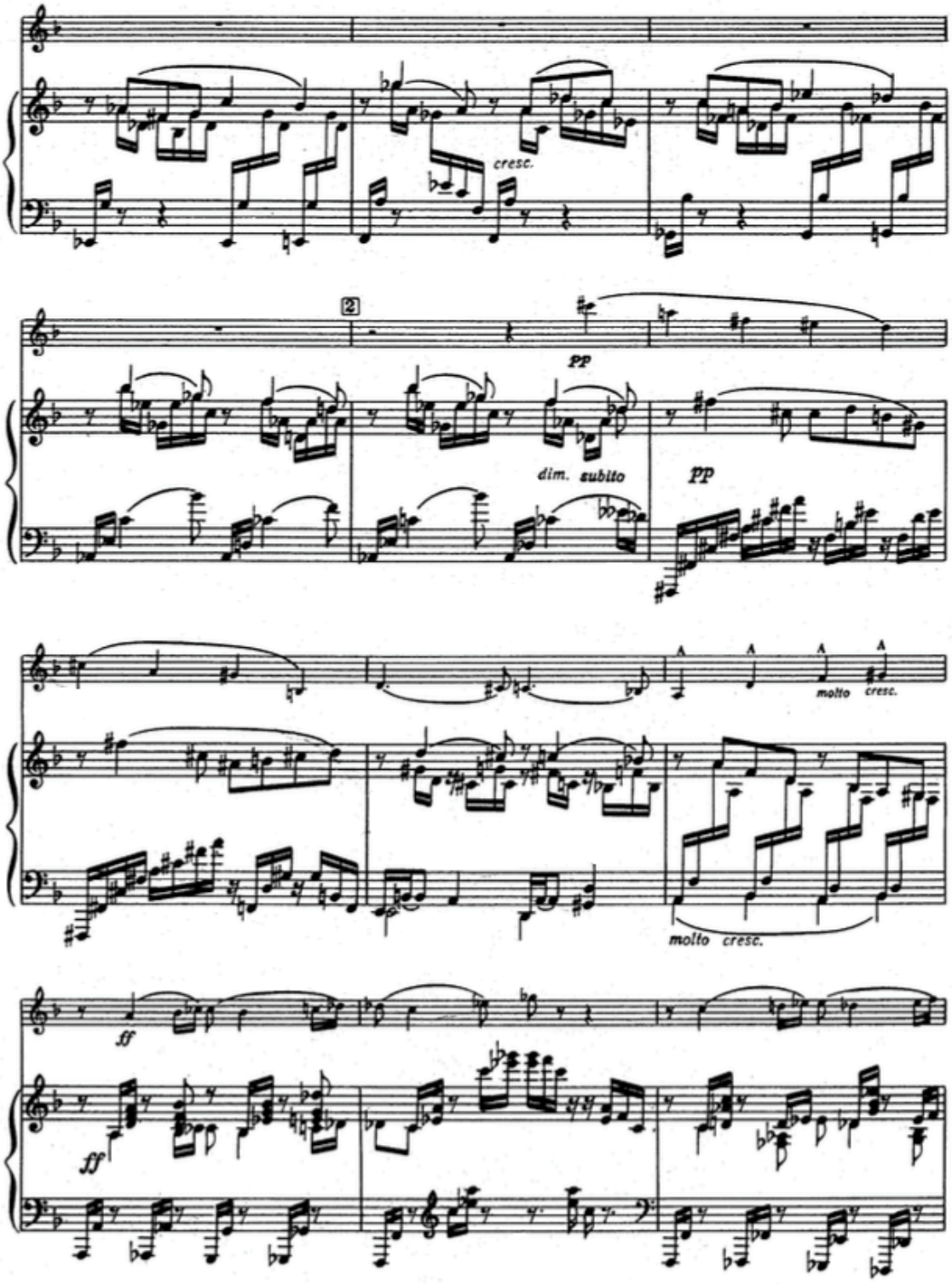

molto rit.
con tutta forza
con tutta forza
a tempo
dim.
sempre dim.
pp
5
p
molto
dolce

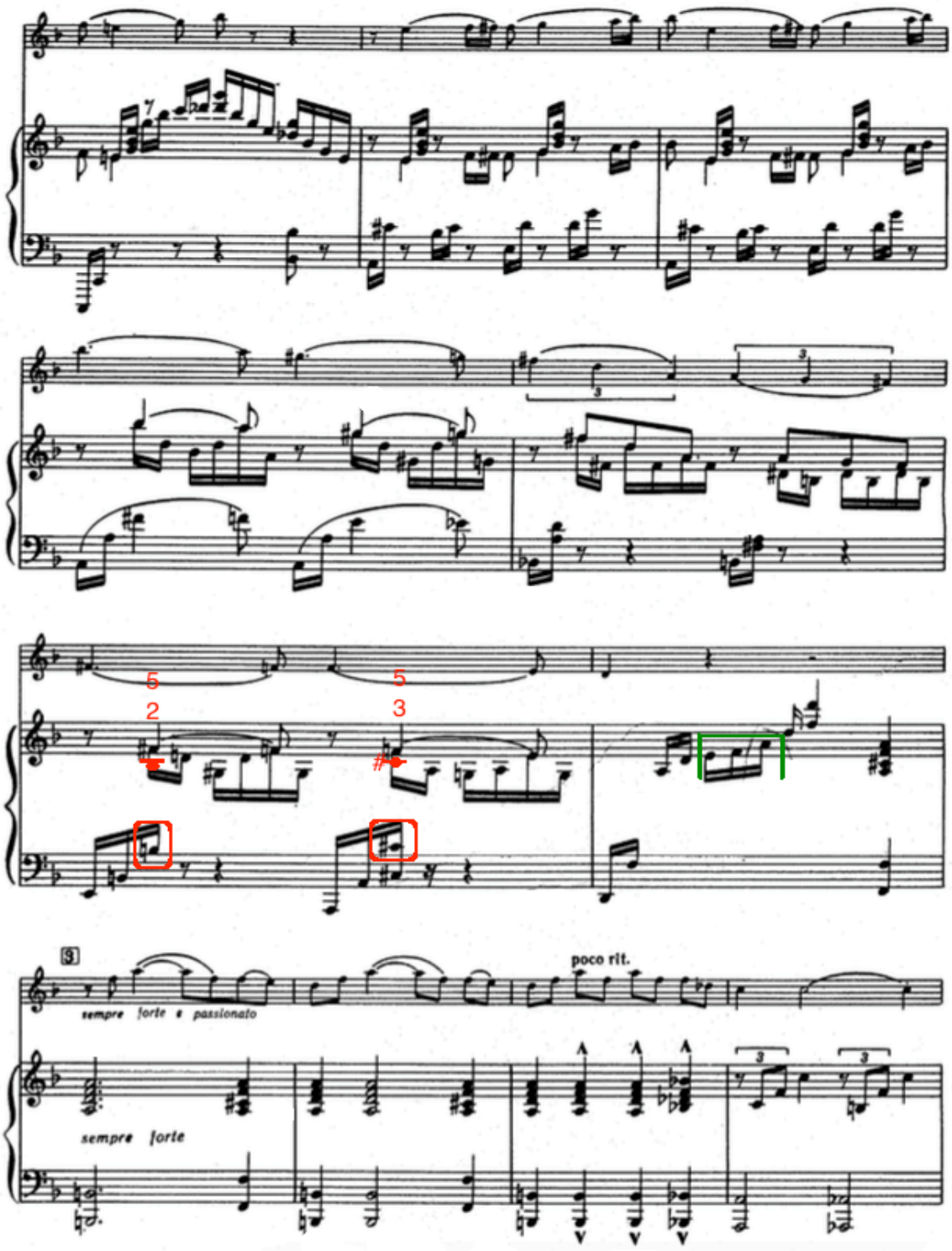

cresc.
6
dolciss.
dim.
pp
poco a poco rall.
poco rinf.
molto lento
f
dim.
pp
f
dim.
pp

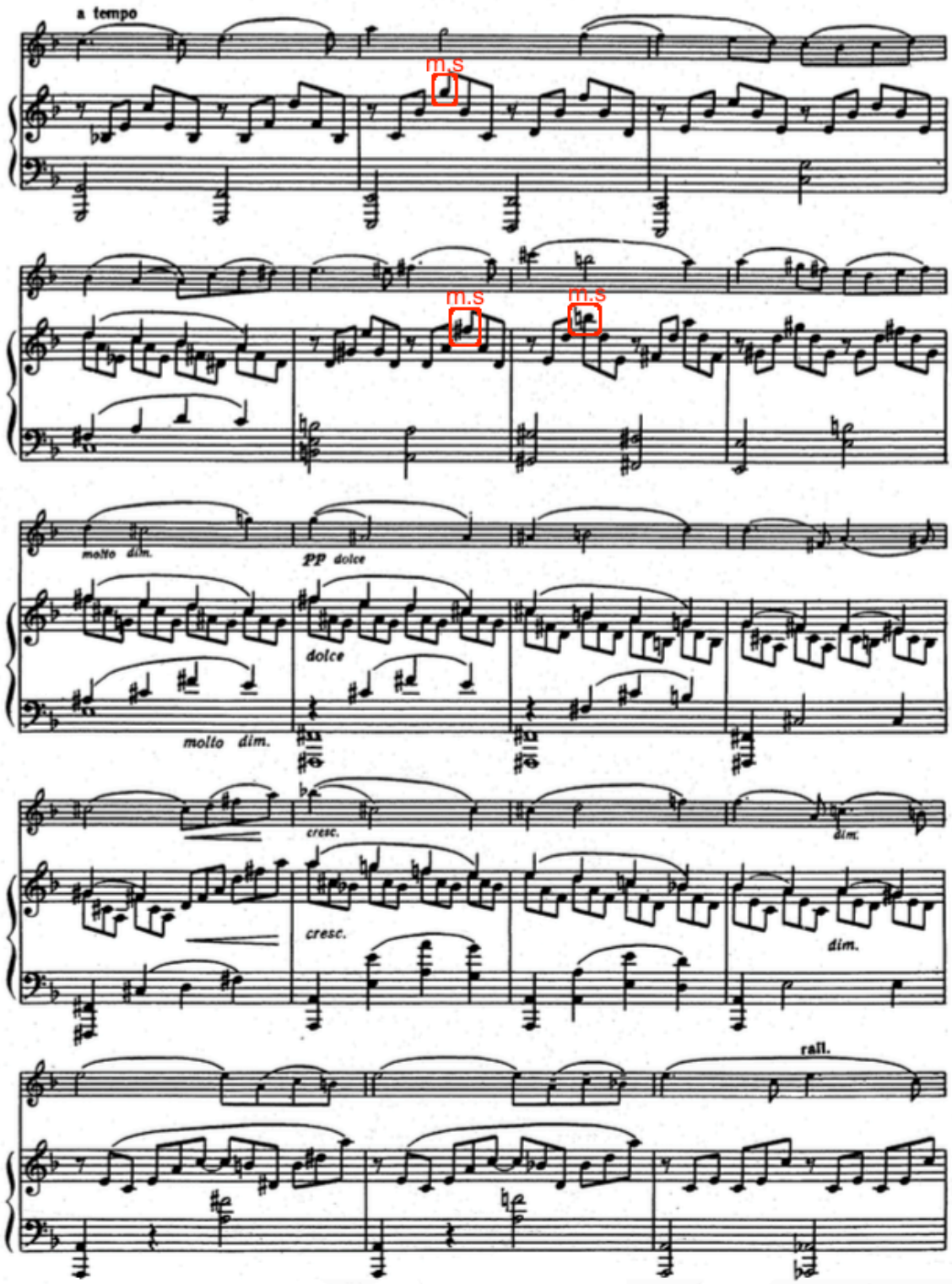
II

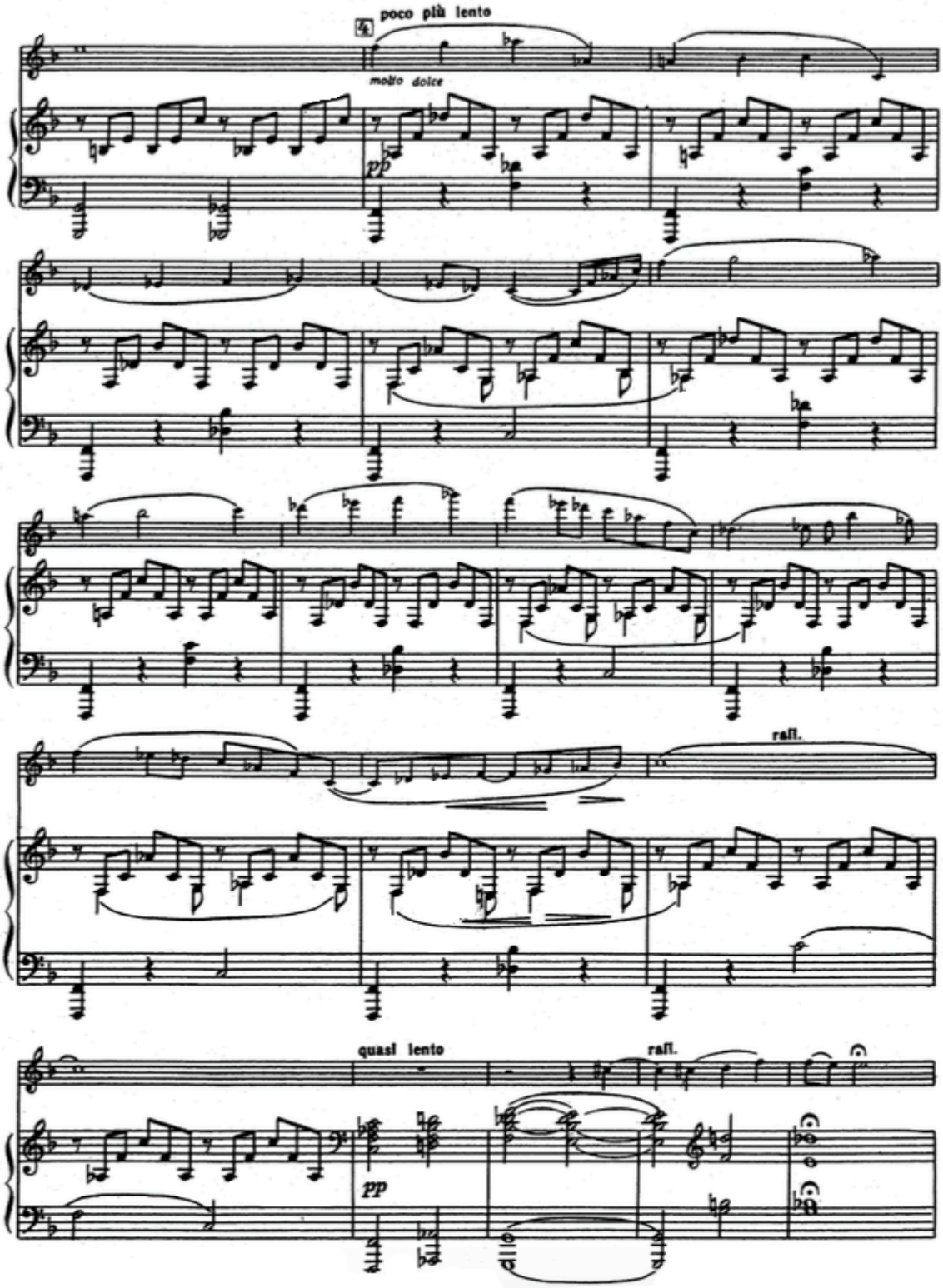


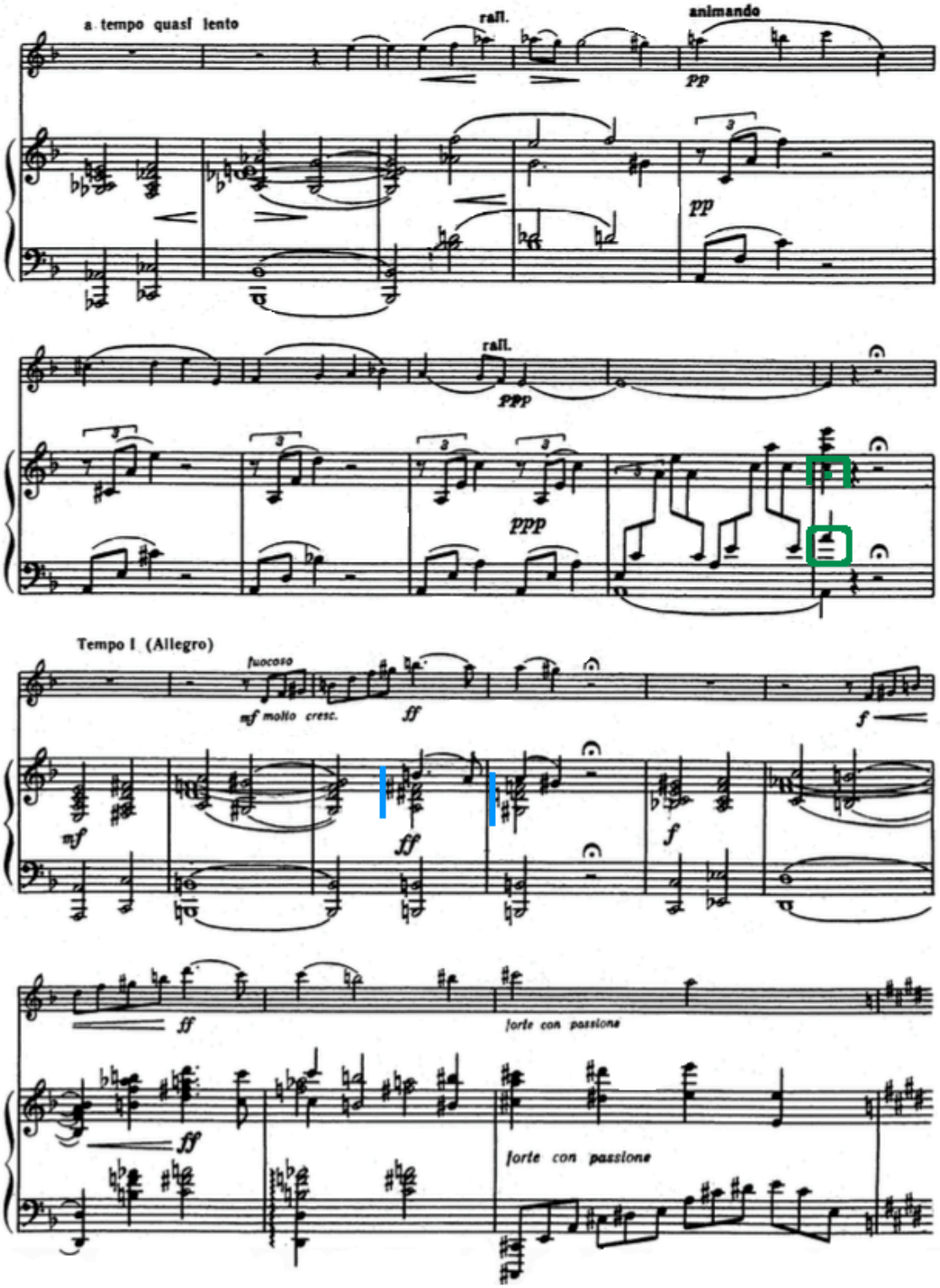

A
f
più forte
cresc.
cresc.
sempre f
sempre f
5
2
5
2
5
3
meno f

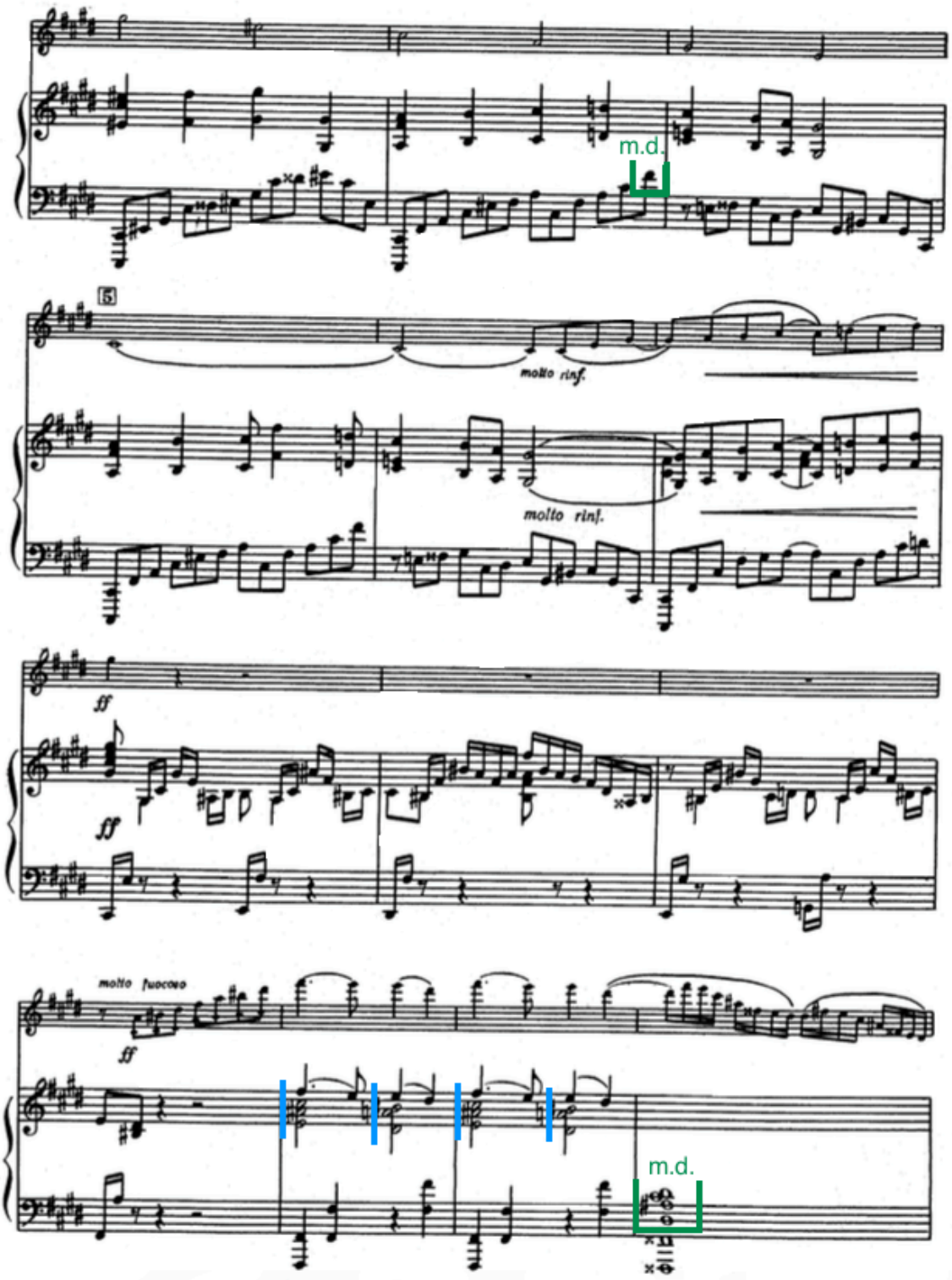

cresc.
2
pp
dim. subito
pp
molto cresc.
molto cresc.
ff
ff

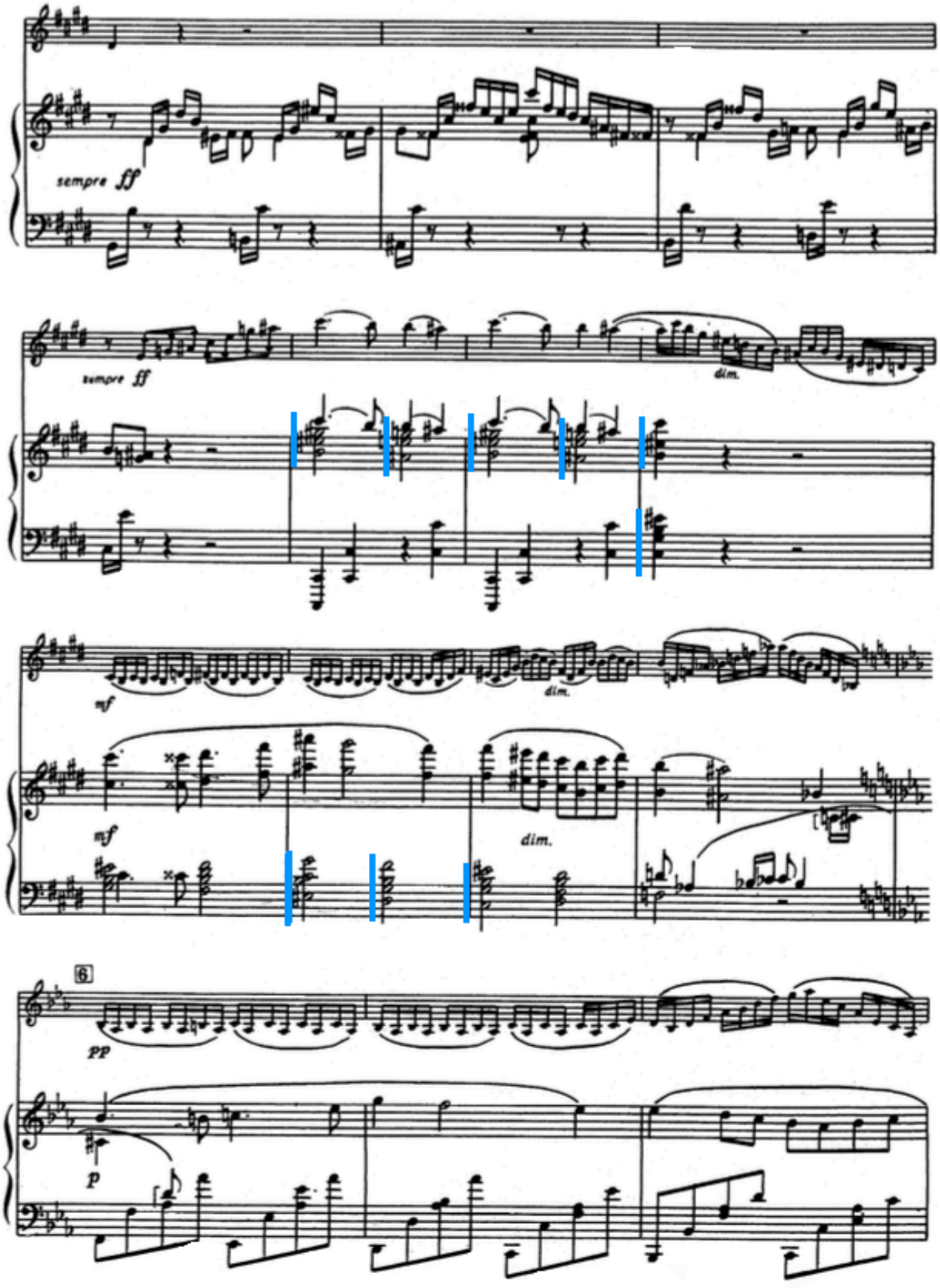

5
2
5
3
3
sempre forte e passionato
poco rit.
sempre forte

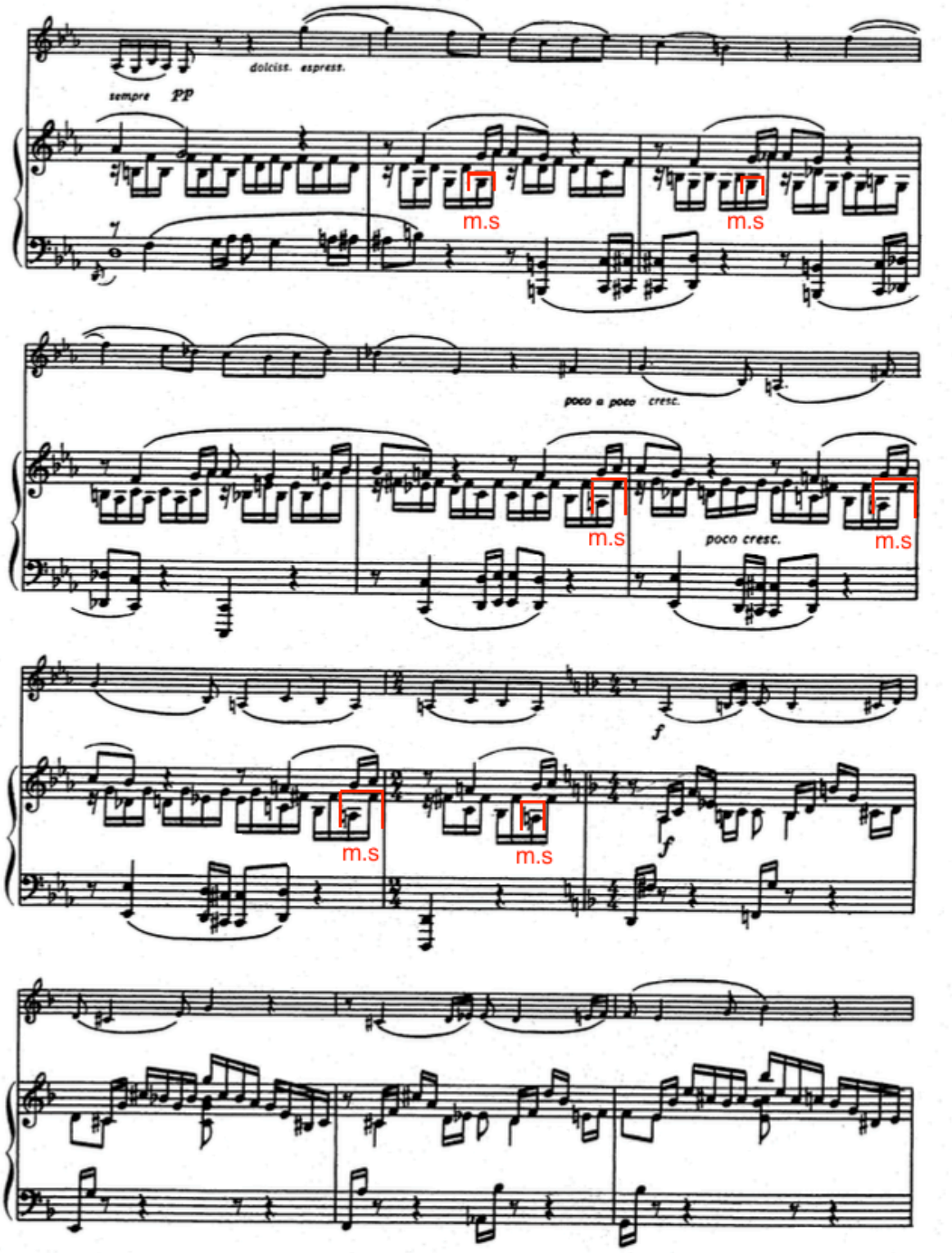

a tempo
m.s
m.s
m.s
molto dim.
pp dolce
dolce
molto dim.
cresc.
dim.
cresc.
dim.
rall.

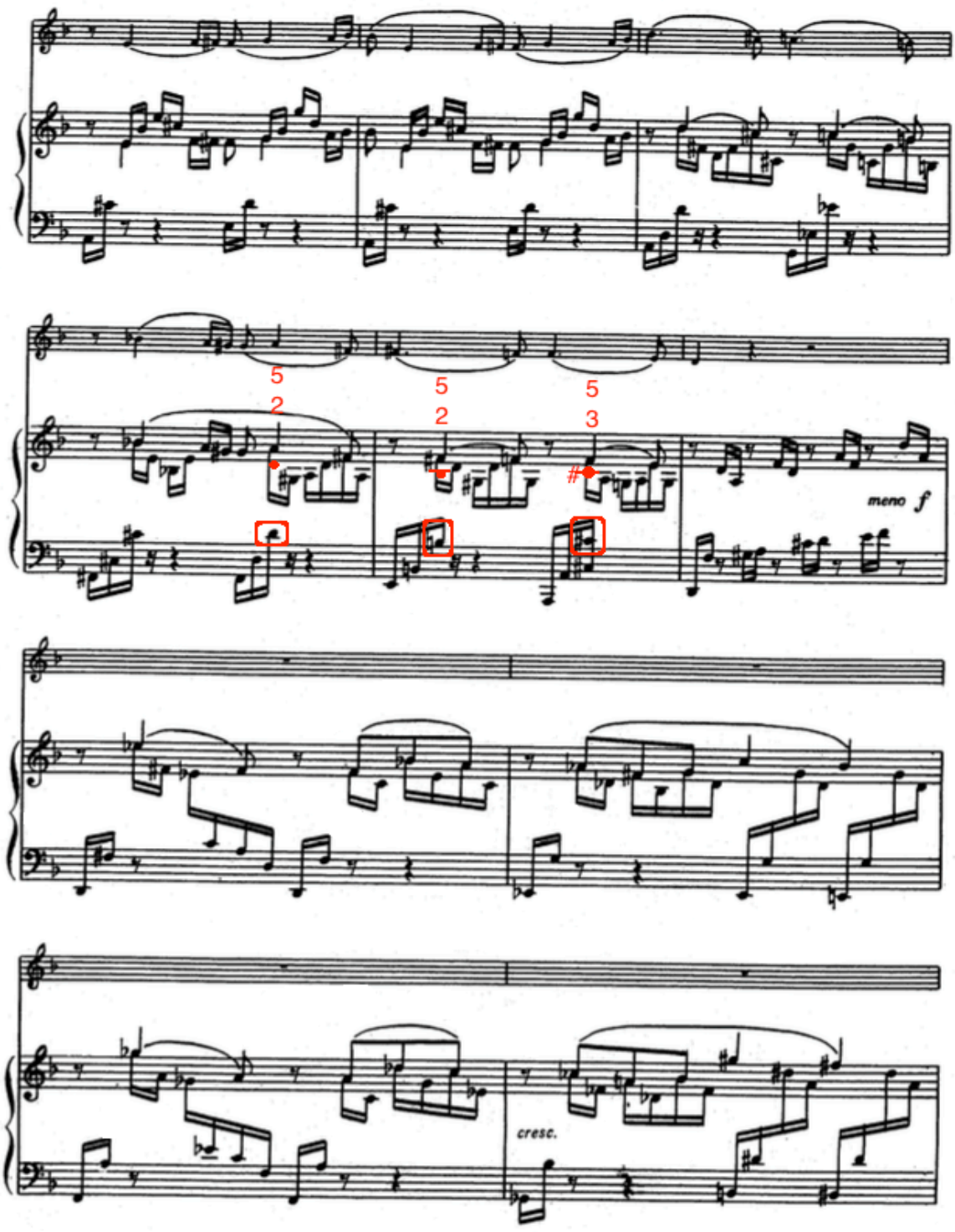

4
poco più lento
molto dolce
pp
rall.
quasi lento
rall.
pp

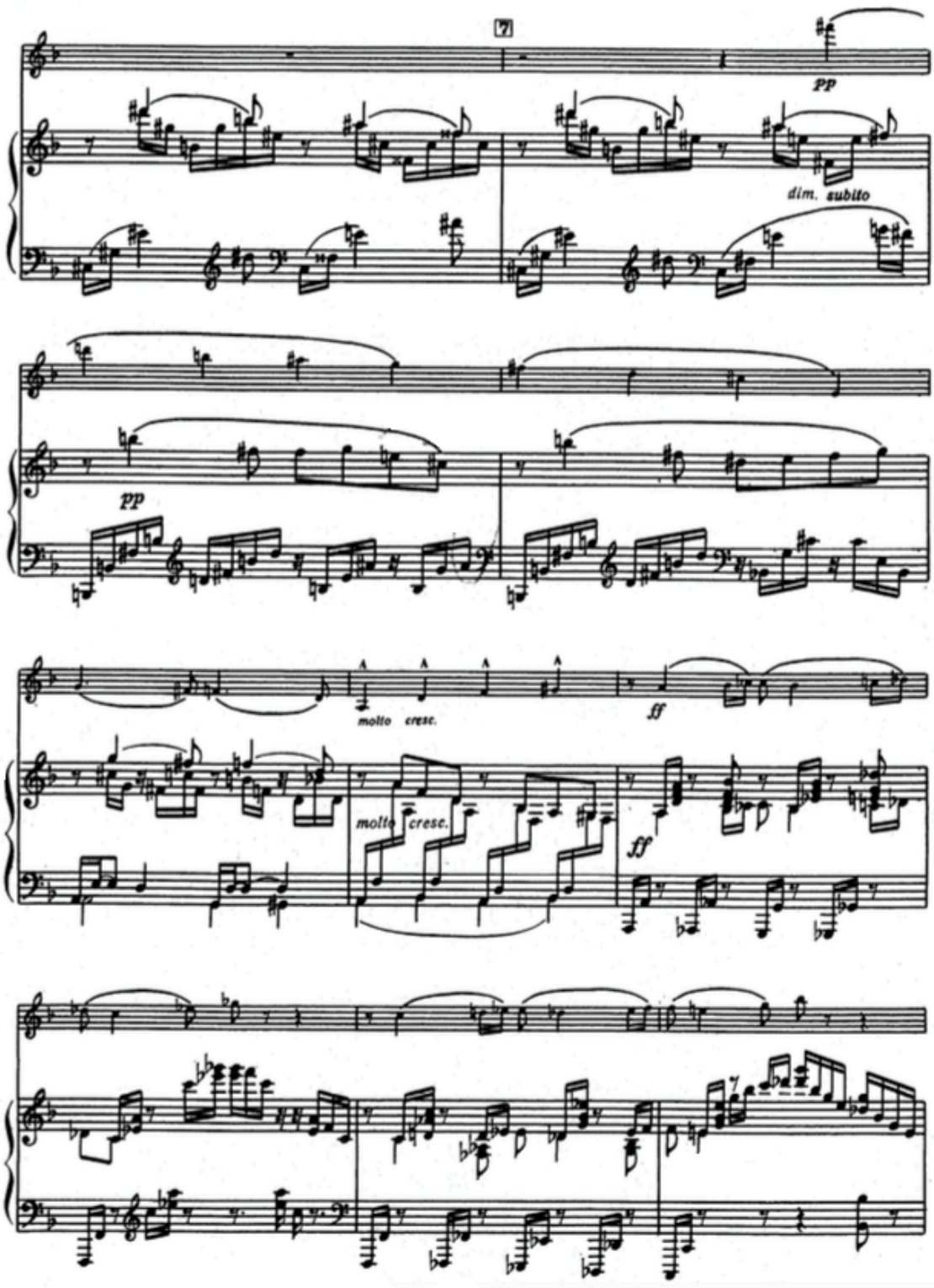

a tempo quasi lento
rall.
animando
pp
pp
rall.
ppp
ppp
Tempo I (Allegro)
fuocoso
mf molto cresc.
ff
f
mf
ff
f
ff
forte con passione
ff
forte con passione

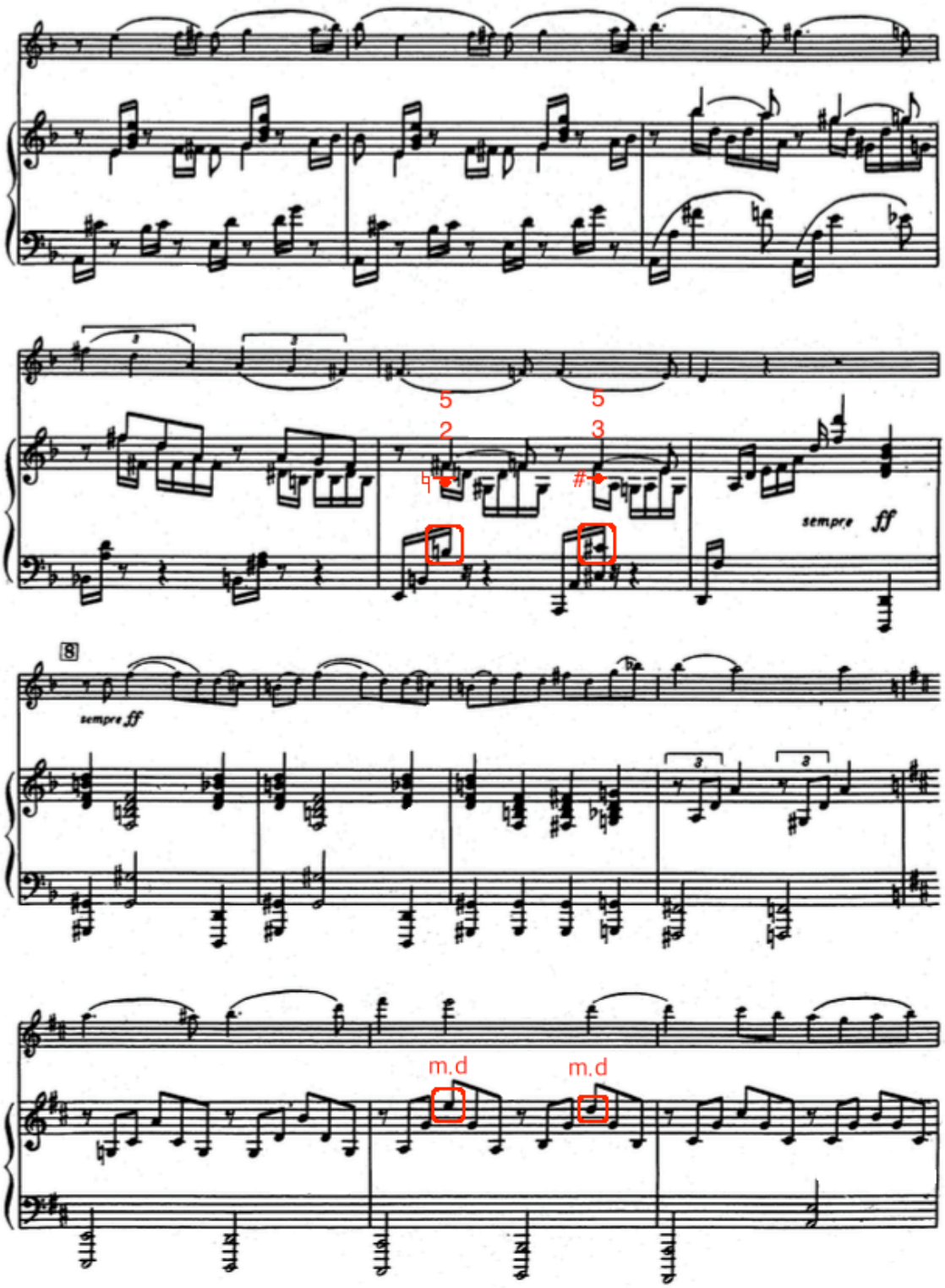

m.d.
5
molto rinf.
molto rinf.
ff
ff
molto fuocoso
ff
m.d.

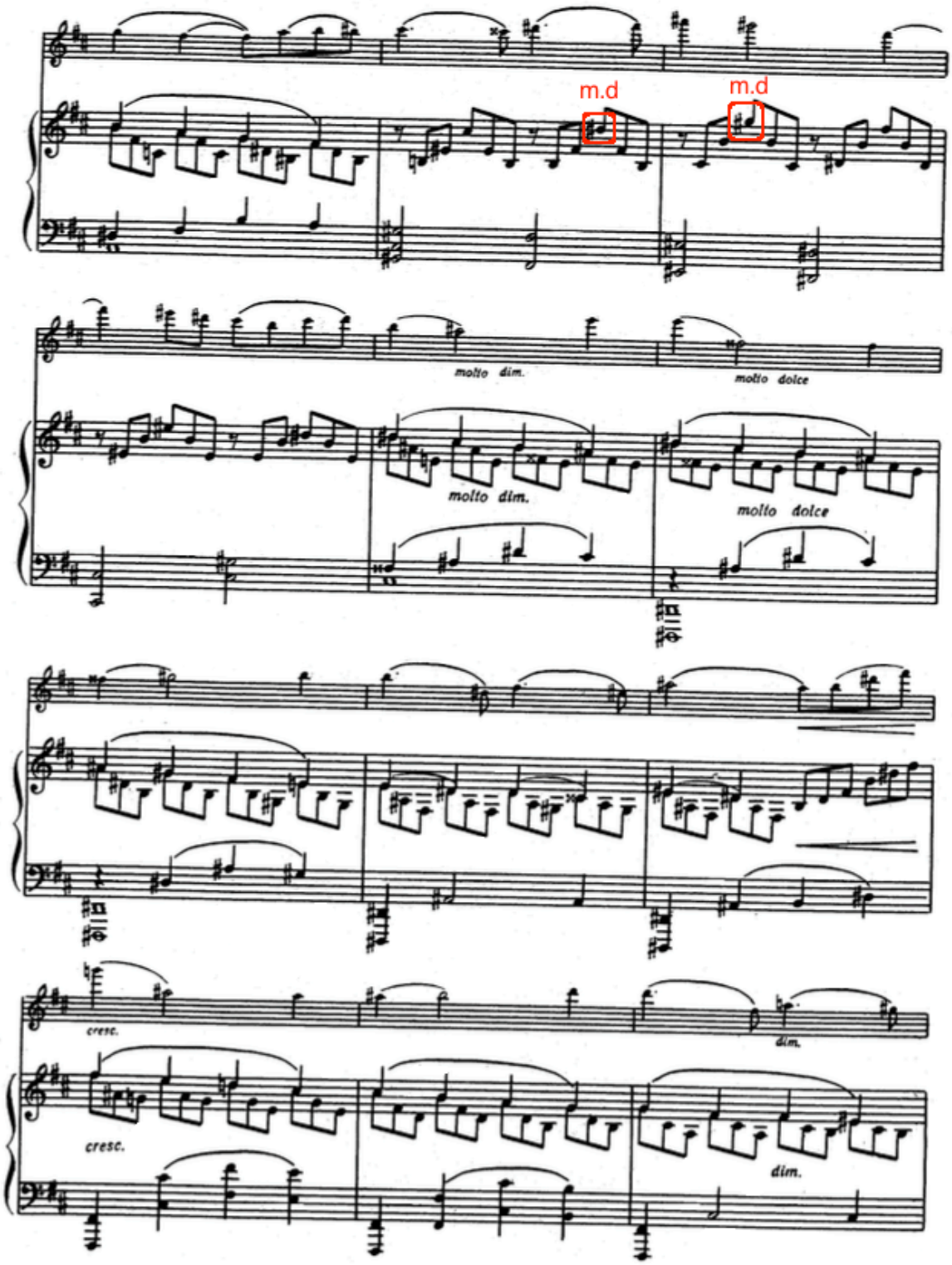

sempre ff
sempre ff
dim.
mf
dim.
mf
dim.
6
pp
p

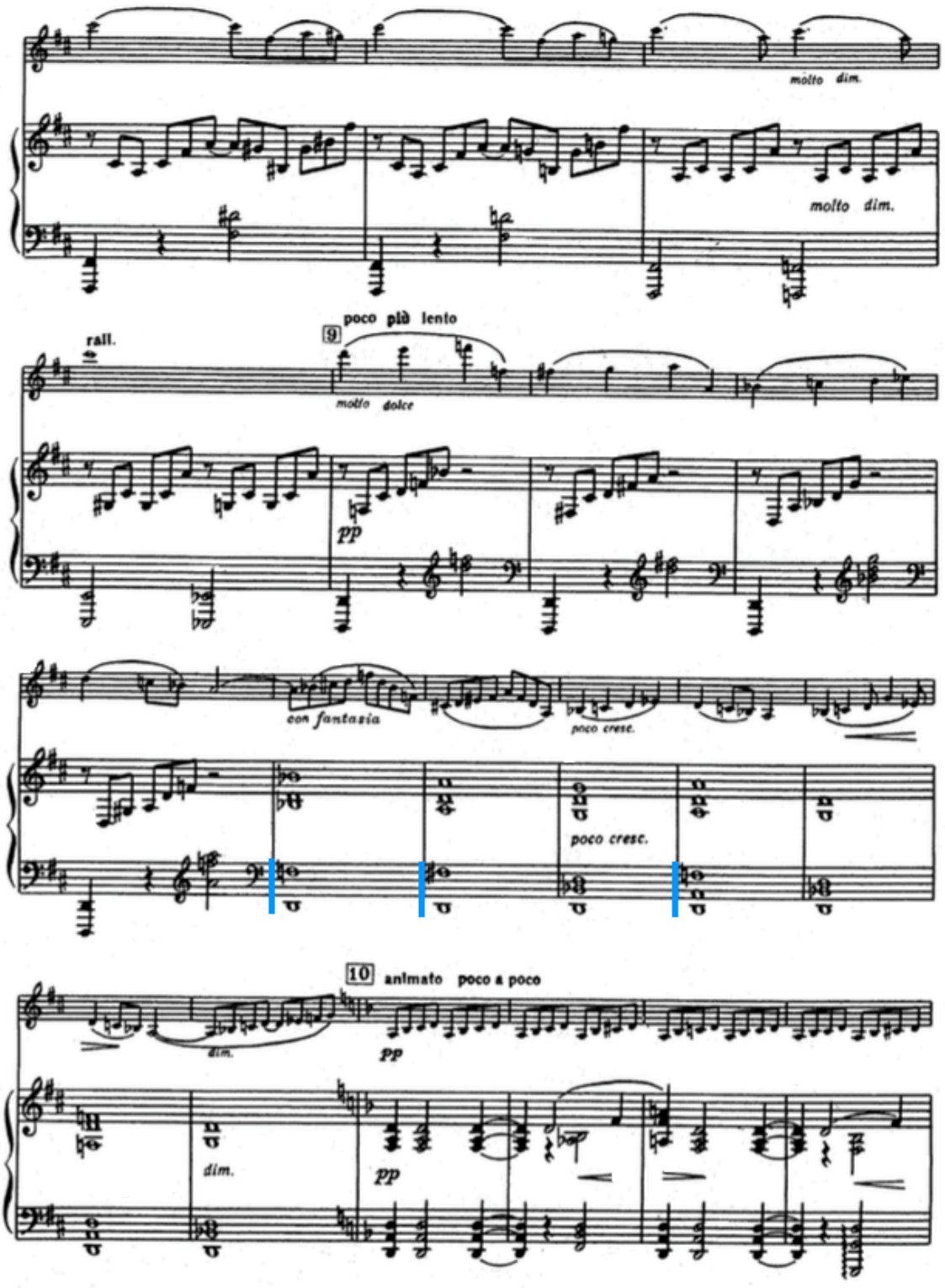

dolciss. espress.
sempre pp
m.s
m.s
poco a poco cresc.
m.s
poco cresc.
m.s
f
m.s
m.s
f

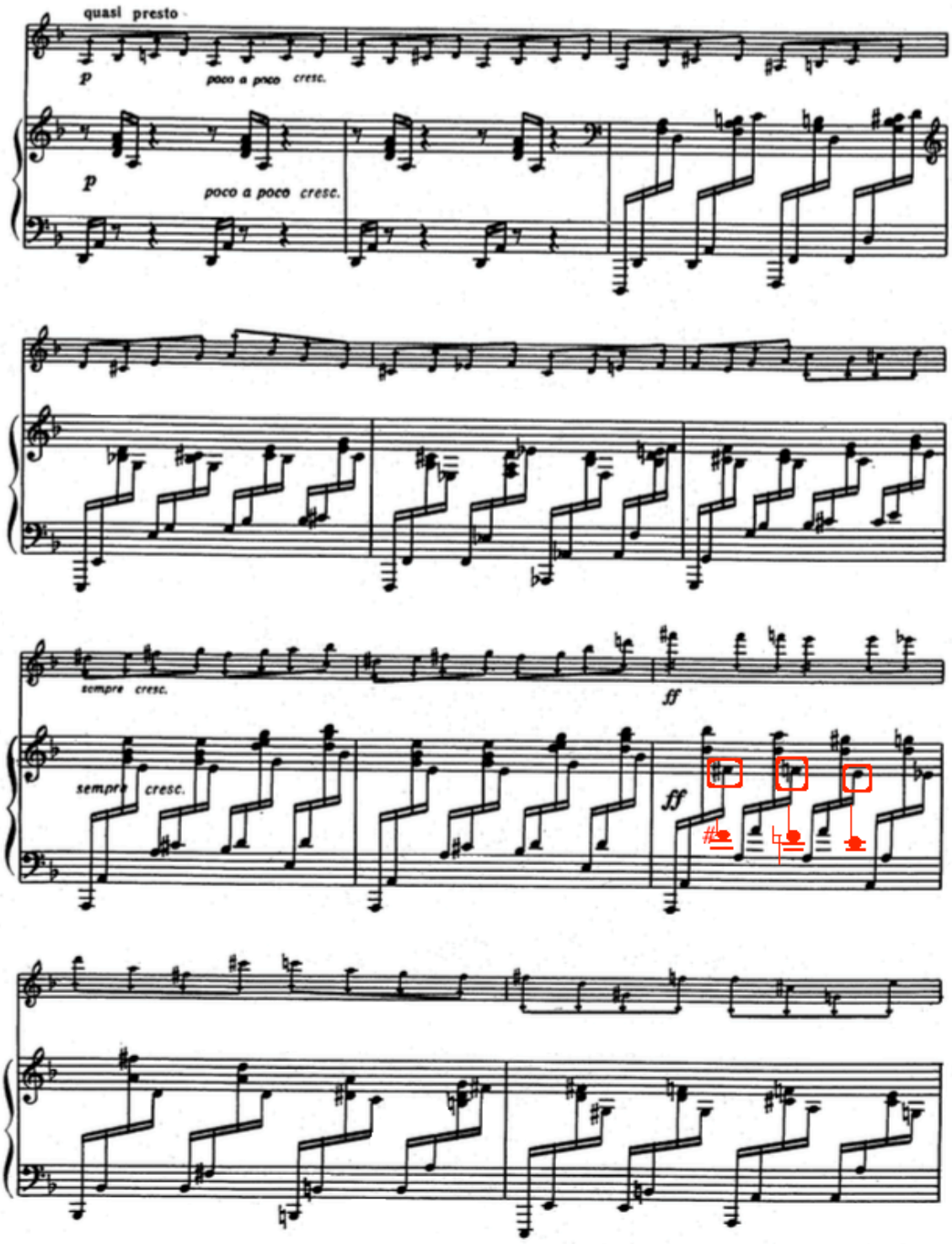

5
2
5
2
5
3
meno f
cresc.

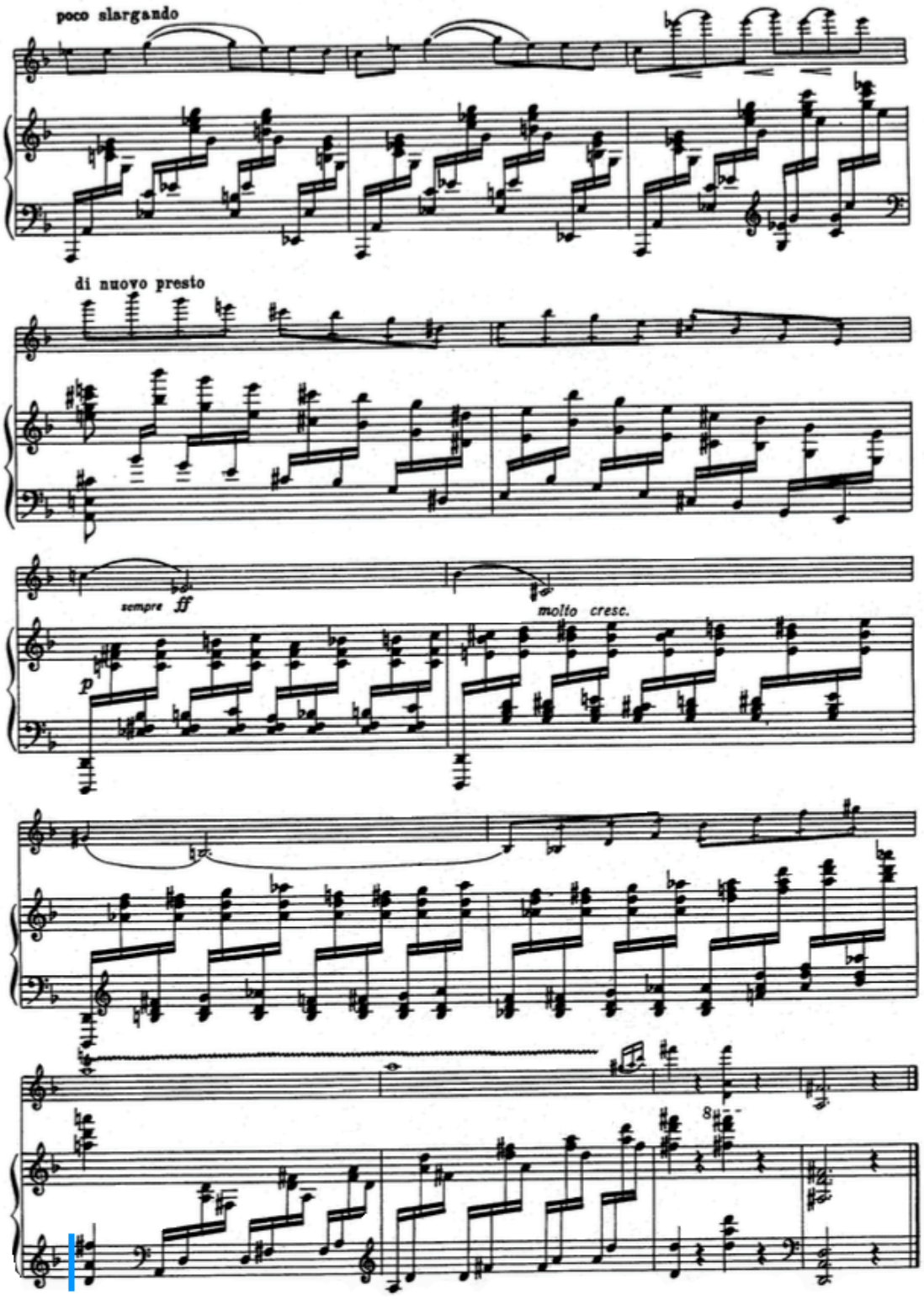

7
pp
dim. subito
pp
molto cresc.
ff
molto cresc.
ff


5
2
5
3
sempre ff
8
sempre ff
m.d
m.d


m.d
m.d
molto dim.
molto dolce
molto dim.
molto dolce
cresc.
dim.
cresc.
dim.


molto dim.
molto dim.
rall.
9
poco più lento
molto dolce
pp
con fantasia
poco cresc.
poco cresc.
10
animato poco a poco
dim.
pp
dim.
pp


quasi presto
p
poco a poco cresc.
p
poco a poco cresc.
sempre cresc.
ff
sempre cresc.
ff


poco slargando
di nuovo presto
sempre ff
molto cresc.
p

CHAPTER 4

ERLKÖNIG

C. F. Peters Edition of Erlkönig, D.328 by Franz Schubert (edited by Choi).

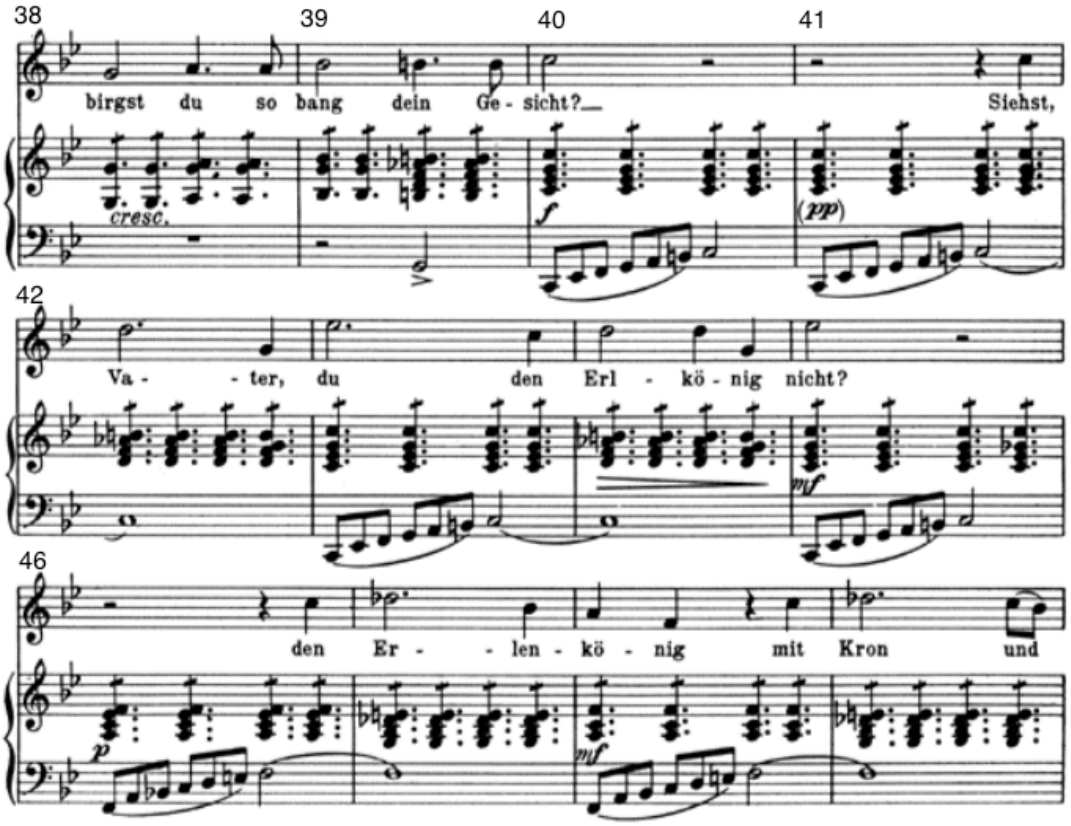
Erlkönig (Erlking) is a poem from a *Singspiel* entitled *Die Fischerin* (The Fisherwoman, 1782) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Among the versions of this poem set to music, the most popular one was composed by Franz Schubert, and has become a staple of the art song literature.

German	English
Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind? Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind; Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm, Er faßt ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.	Who's riding so late where winds blow wild It is the father grasping his child; He holds the boy embraced in his arm, He clasps him snugly, he keeps him warm.
Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht? - Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht? Den Erlenkönig mit Kron und Schweif? - Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif. -	"My son, why cover your face in such fear?" "You see the elf-king, father? He's near! The king of the elves with crown and train!" "My son, the mist is on the plain."
"Du liebes Kind, komm, geh mit mir! Gar schöne Spiele spiel ich mit dir; Manch bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand, Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand."	'Sweet lad, o come and join me, do! Such pretty games I will play with you; On the shore gay flowers their color unfold, My mother has many garments of gold.'
Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht, Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht? - Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind; In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind. -	"My father, my father, and can you not hear The promise the elf-king breathes in my ear?" "Be calm, stay calm, my child, lie low: In withered leaves the night-winds blow."
"Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehn?	

Meine Töchter sollen dich warten schön; Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn, Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein."	'Will you, sweet lad, come along with me? My daughters shall care for you tenderly; In the night my daughters their revelry keep, They'll rock you and dance you and sing you to sleep.'
Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort? - Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau: Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau. -	"My father, my father, o can you not trace The elf-king's daughters in that gloomy place?" "My son, my son, I see it clear How grey the ancient willows appear."
"Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt; Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt." Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an! Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan! -	'I love you, your comeliness charms me, my boy! And if you're not willing, my force I'll employ.' "Now father, now father, he's seizing my arm. Elf-king has done me a cruel harm."
Dem Vater grausets, er reitet geschwind, Er hält in Armen das ächzende Kind, Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not; In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.	The father shudders, his ride is wild, In his arms he's holding the groaning child, Reaches the court with toil and dread. - The child he held in his arms was dead.

The repeated triplet figure is obviously a technical challenge. In this piece, most of the time the triplet figure occurs the right hand. Schubert expresses the feeling of a galloping horse, or the atmosphere of urgency (according to the text above) by using this figure throughout the entire piece. The challenge in performing this work is that the triplet figure is not written in a flowing passage, but in repeated octaves or thick chords, at a fast tempo (*Schnell)*. Because of the consistency of playing this figure in a fast

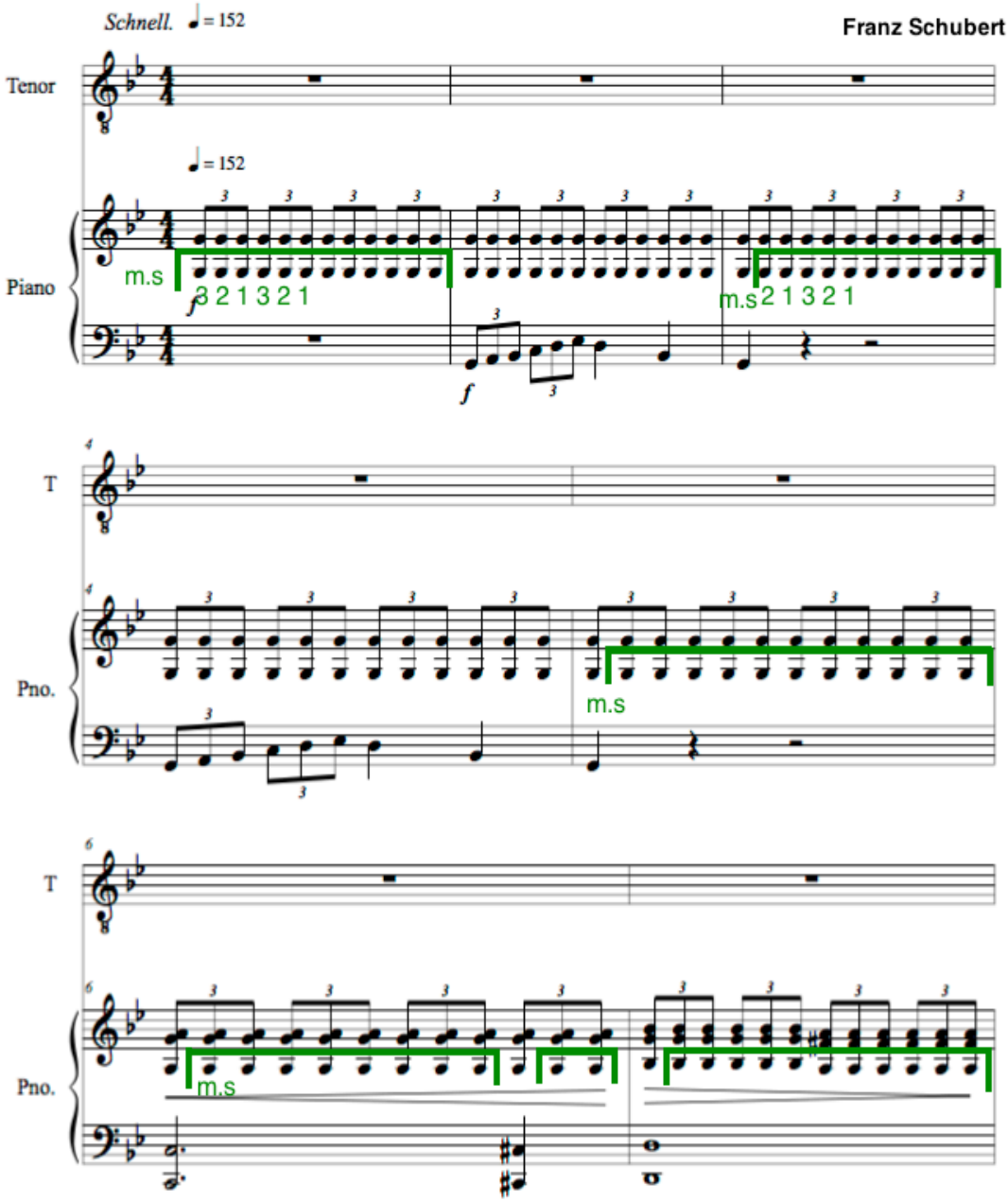
tempo, hands and arms can easily become very tired, even for the pianist who has big hands. The example below shows the chords that have three, four, or even five notes. (measure 38-49).

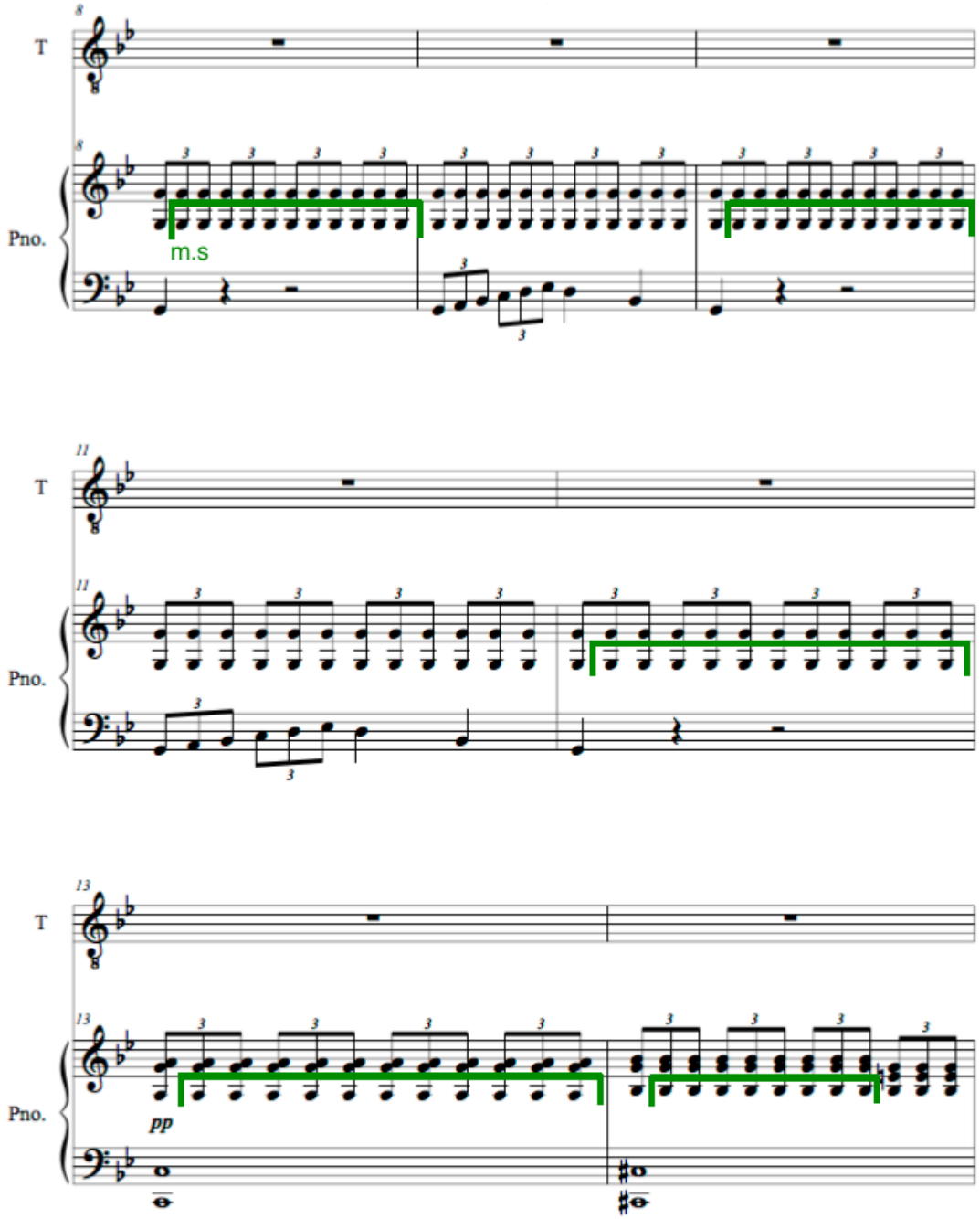


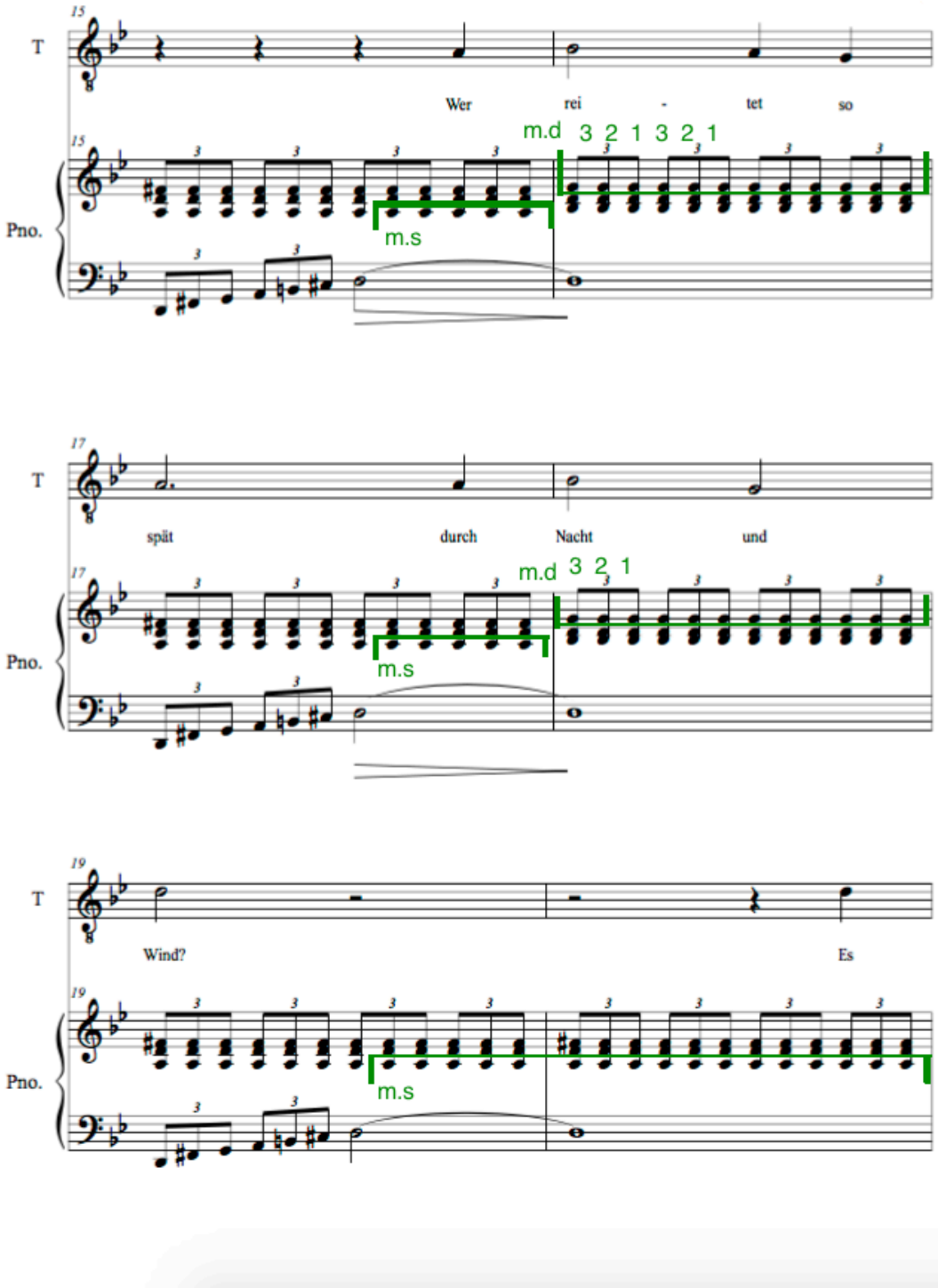
Example 45: C. F. Peters Edition of Erlkönig, D.328 by Franz Schubert, measures 38-49.

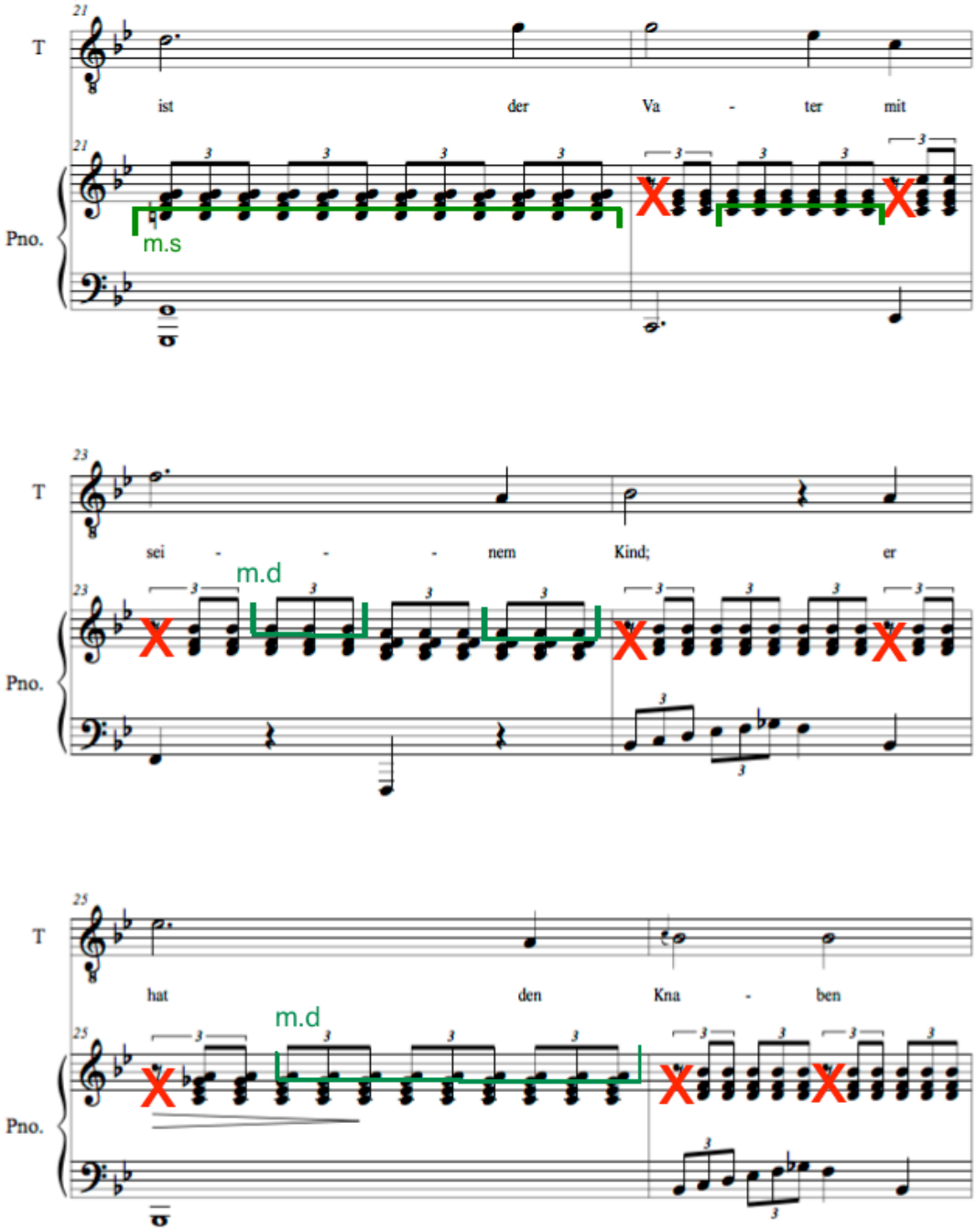
As a frequently performed piece, small-hands pianists need to create a way to play this song without a severe injury by too much stretching. In this chapter I will demonstrate how my techniques will allow those with smaller hands to play this work effectively and musically.

Erlkönig

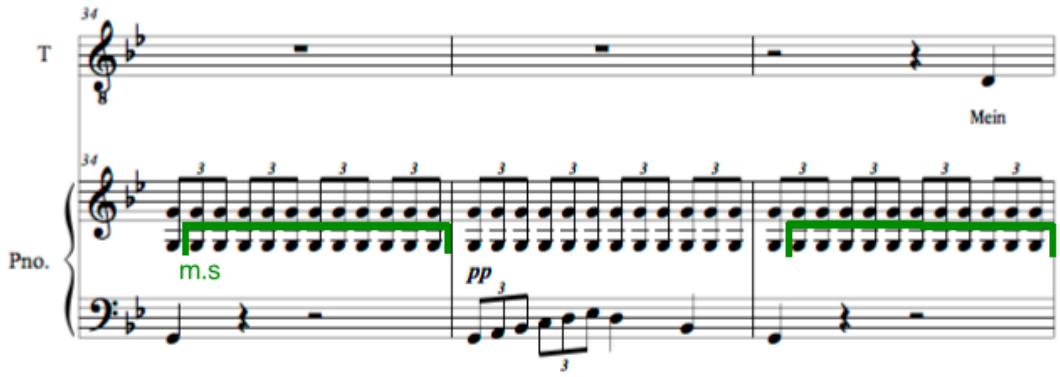

Schnell. ♩= 152
Franz Schubert
Tenor
♩= 152
Piano
m.s
f 3 2 1 3 2 1
m.s 2 1 3 2 1
f
T
Pno.
m.s
T
Pno.
m.s

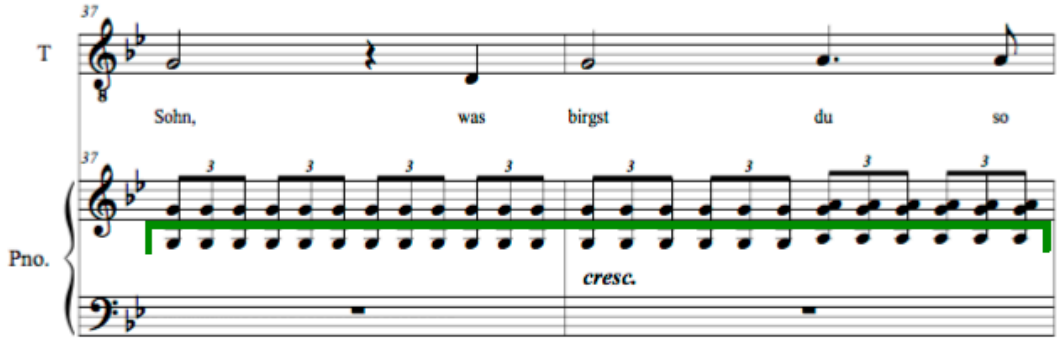

8
T
8
Pno.
m.s
11
T
11
Pno.
13
T
13
Pno.
pp

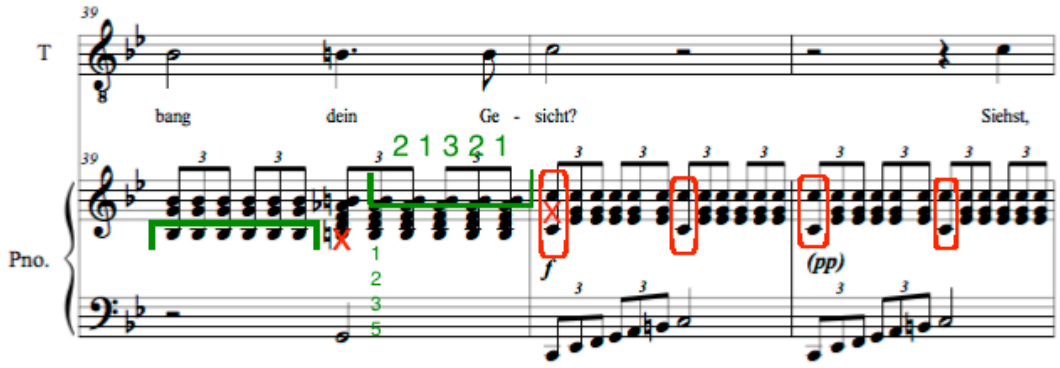

15
T
Wer rei - tet so
15
Pno.
m.d 3 2 1 3 2 1
m.s
17
T
spät durch Nacht und
17
Pno.
m.d 3 2 1
m.s
19
T
Wind? Es
19
Pno.
m.s

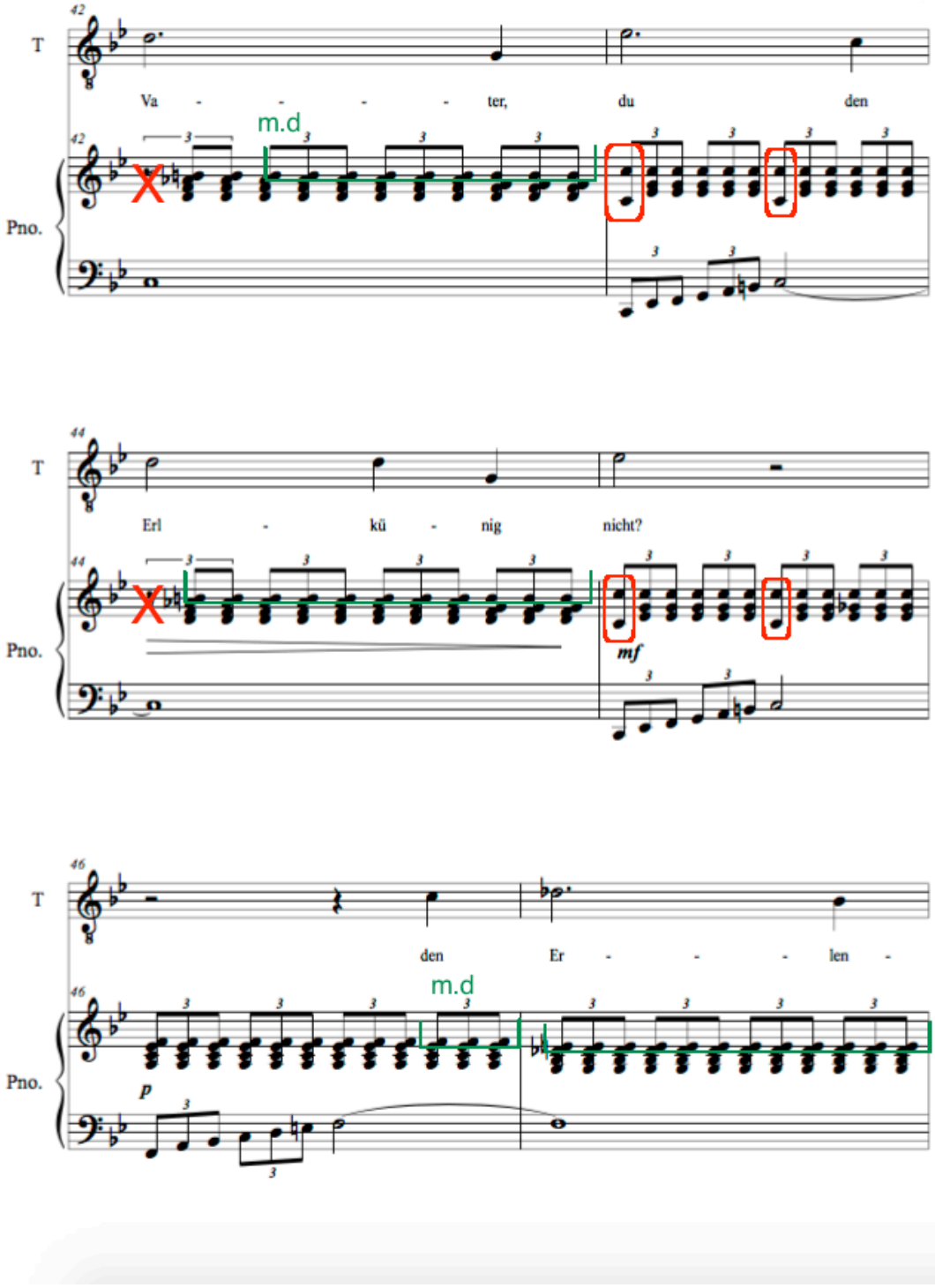

T
ist der Va - ter mit
Pno.
m.s
T
sei - - - nem Kind; er
m.d
Pno.
T
hat den Kna - ben
m.d
Pno.

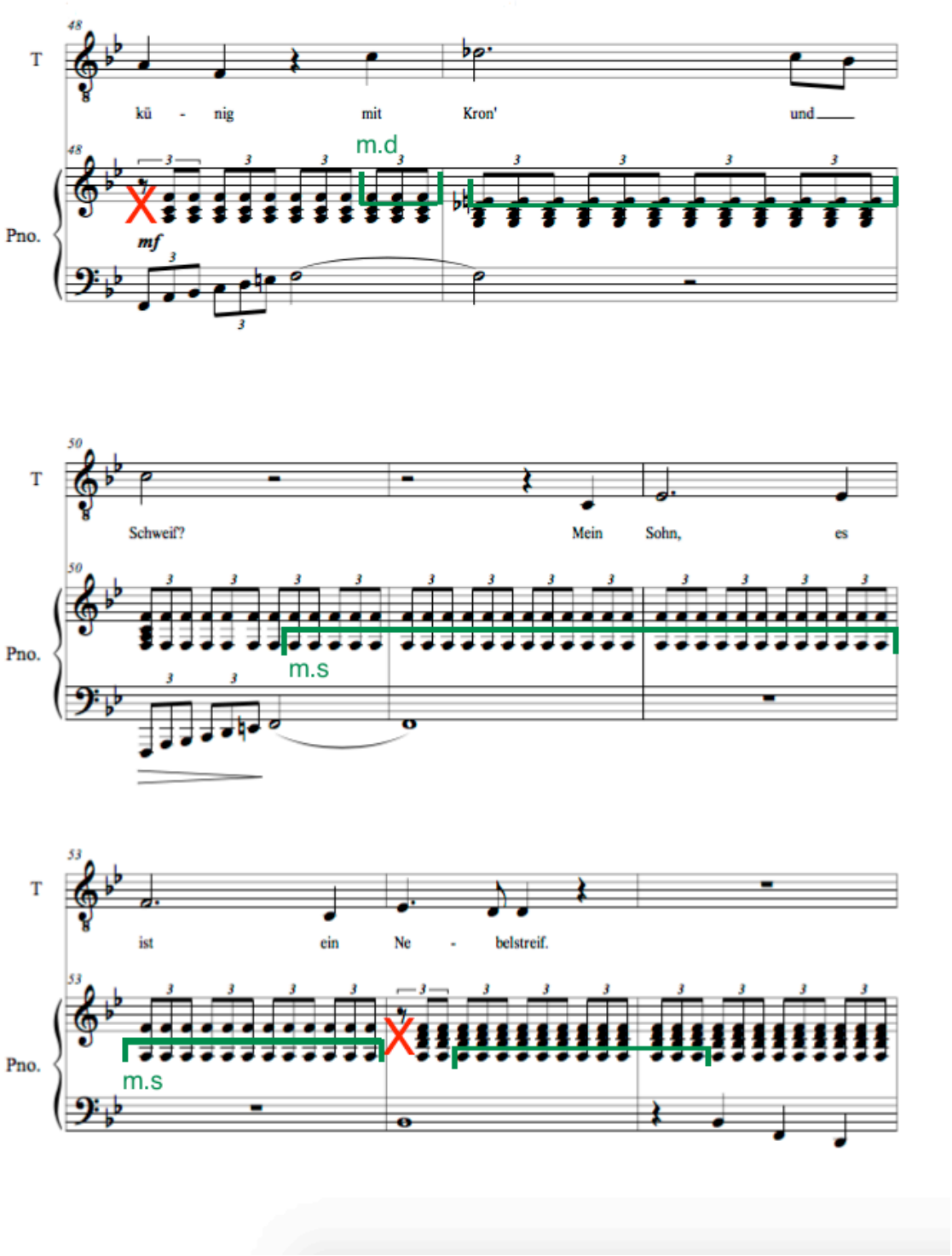
T
wohl in dem Arm, er
m.d
Pno.
T
fasst ihn si - cher, er
m.d
m.s
Pno.
T
hält ihn warm.
Pno.
f

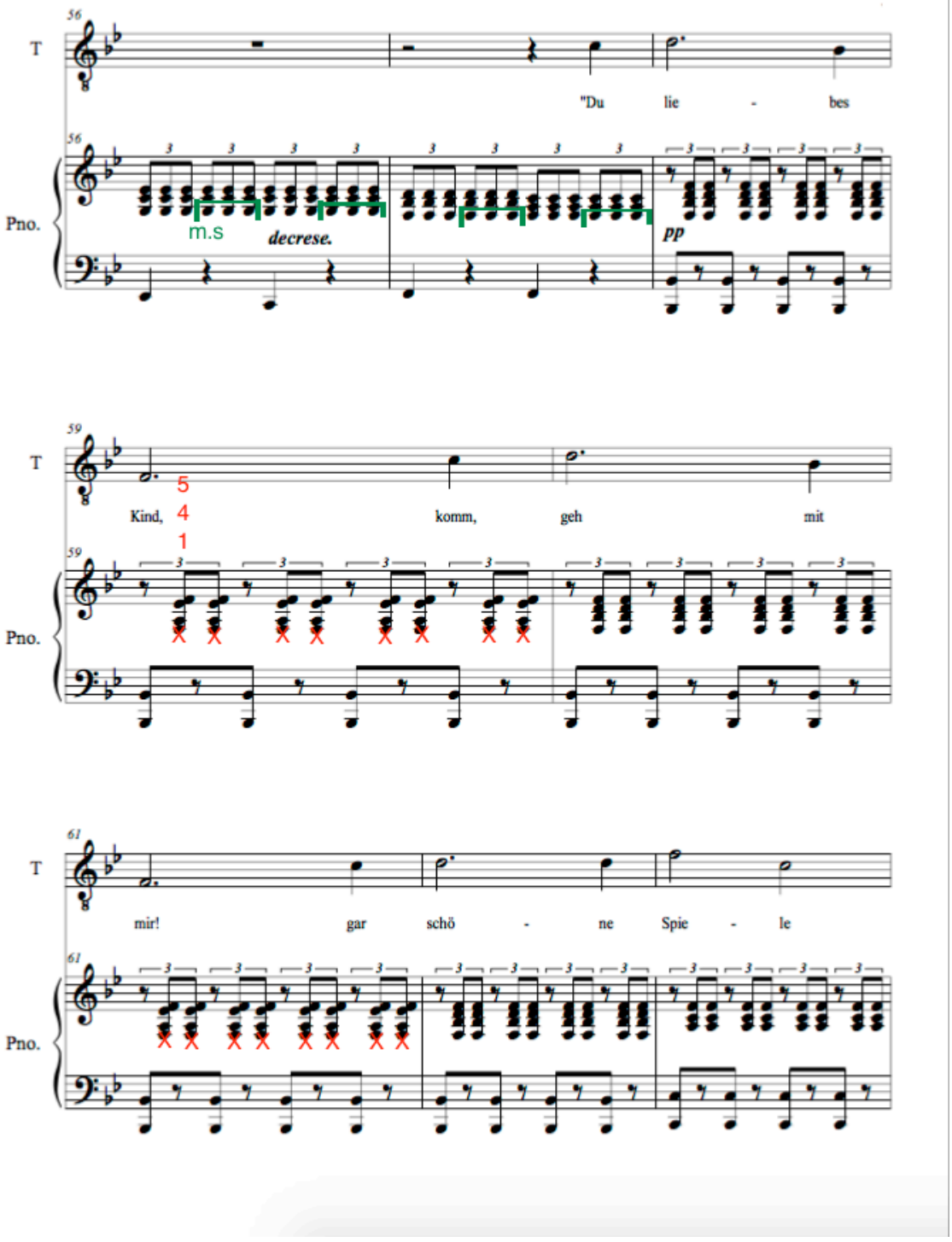

34
T
Mein
34
Pno.
m.s
pp
3

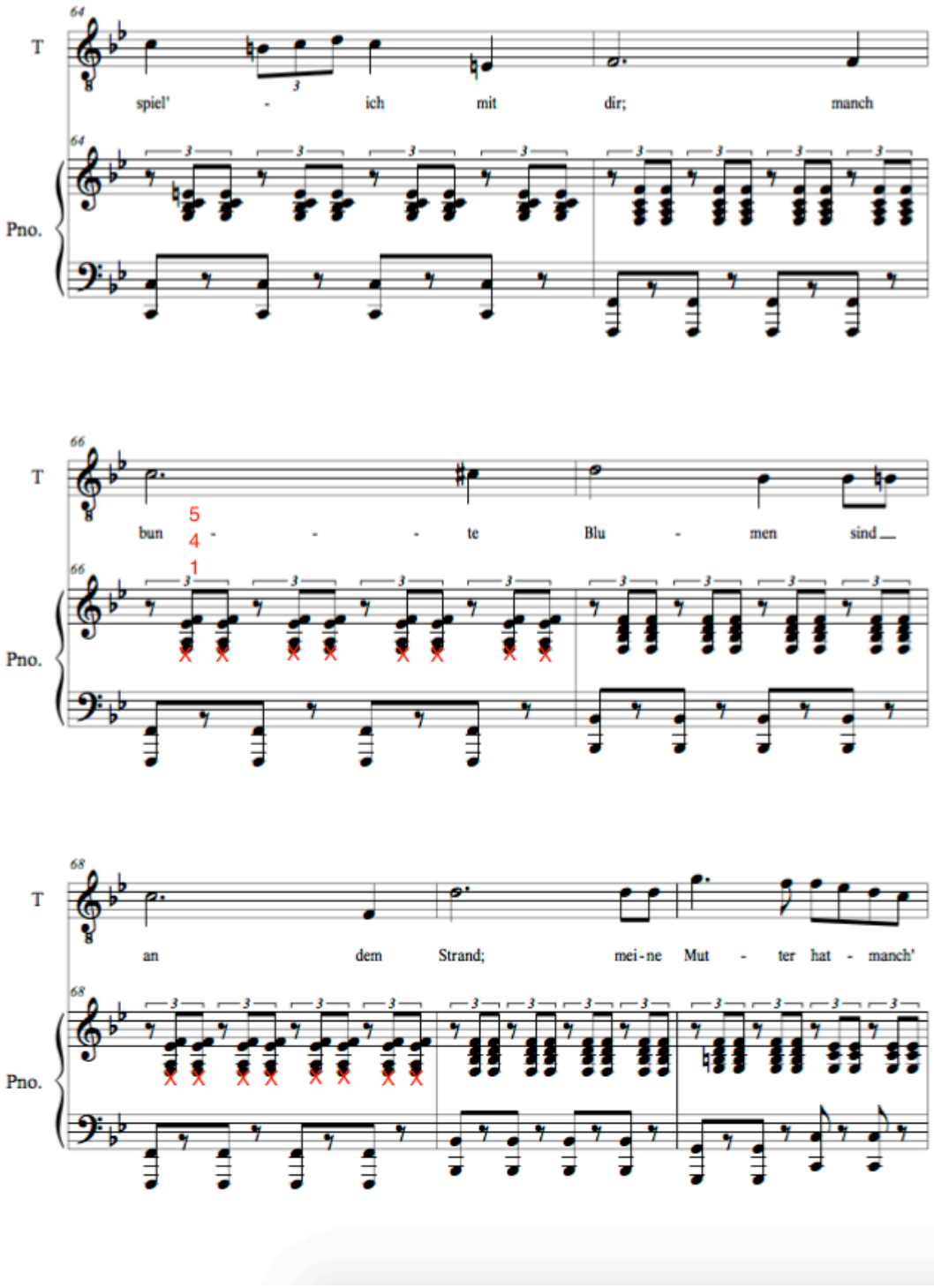

37
T
Sohn,
was
birgst
du
so
37
Pno.
cresc.

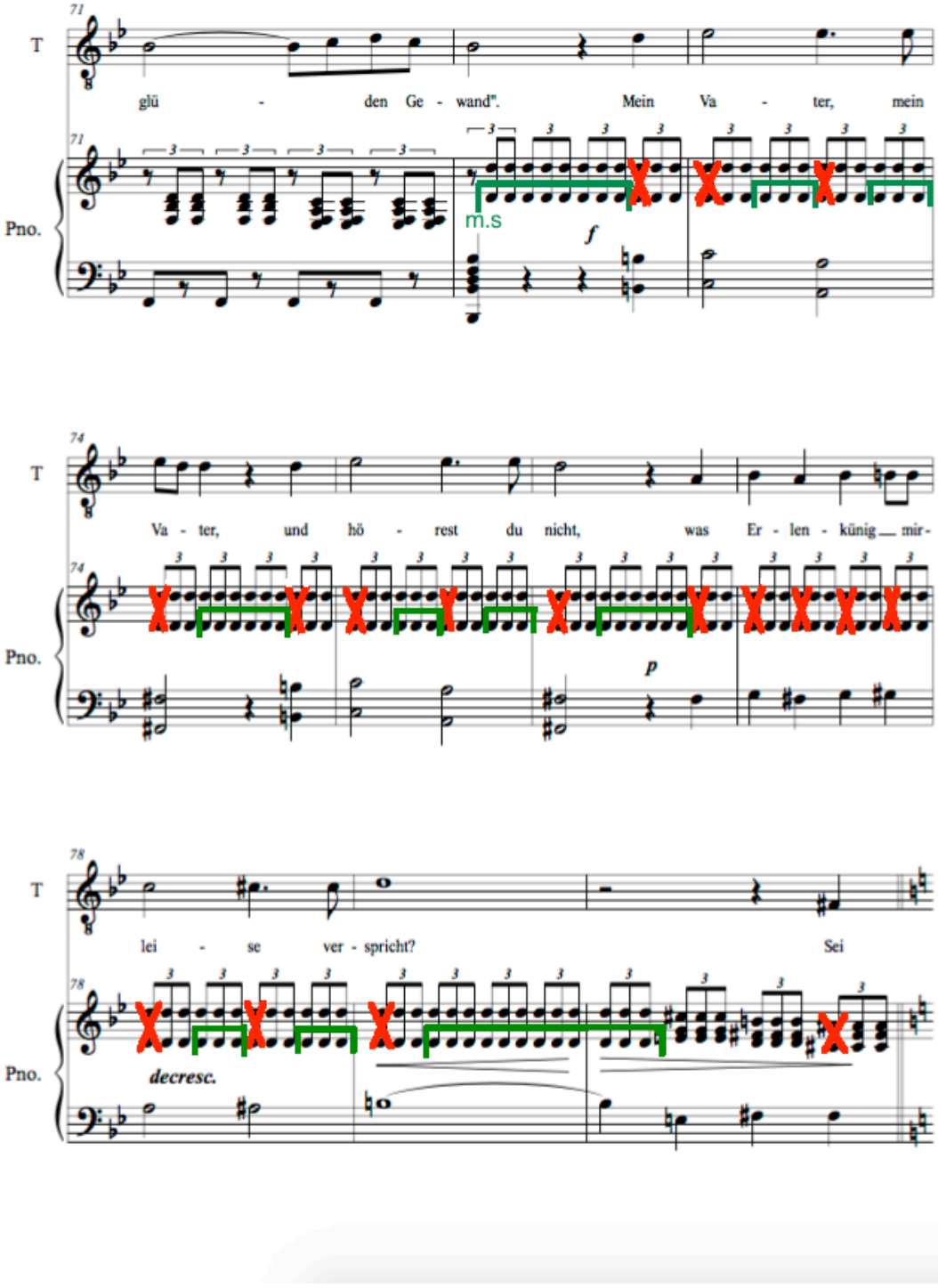

39
T
bang
dein
Ge - sicht?
Siehst,
39
2 1 3 2 1
Pno.
1
2
3
5
f
(pp)

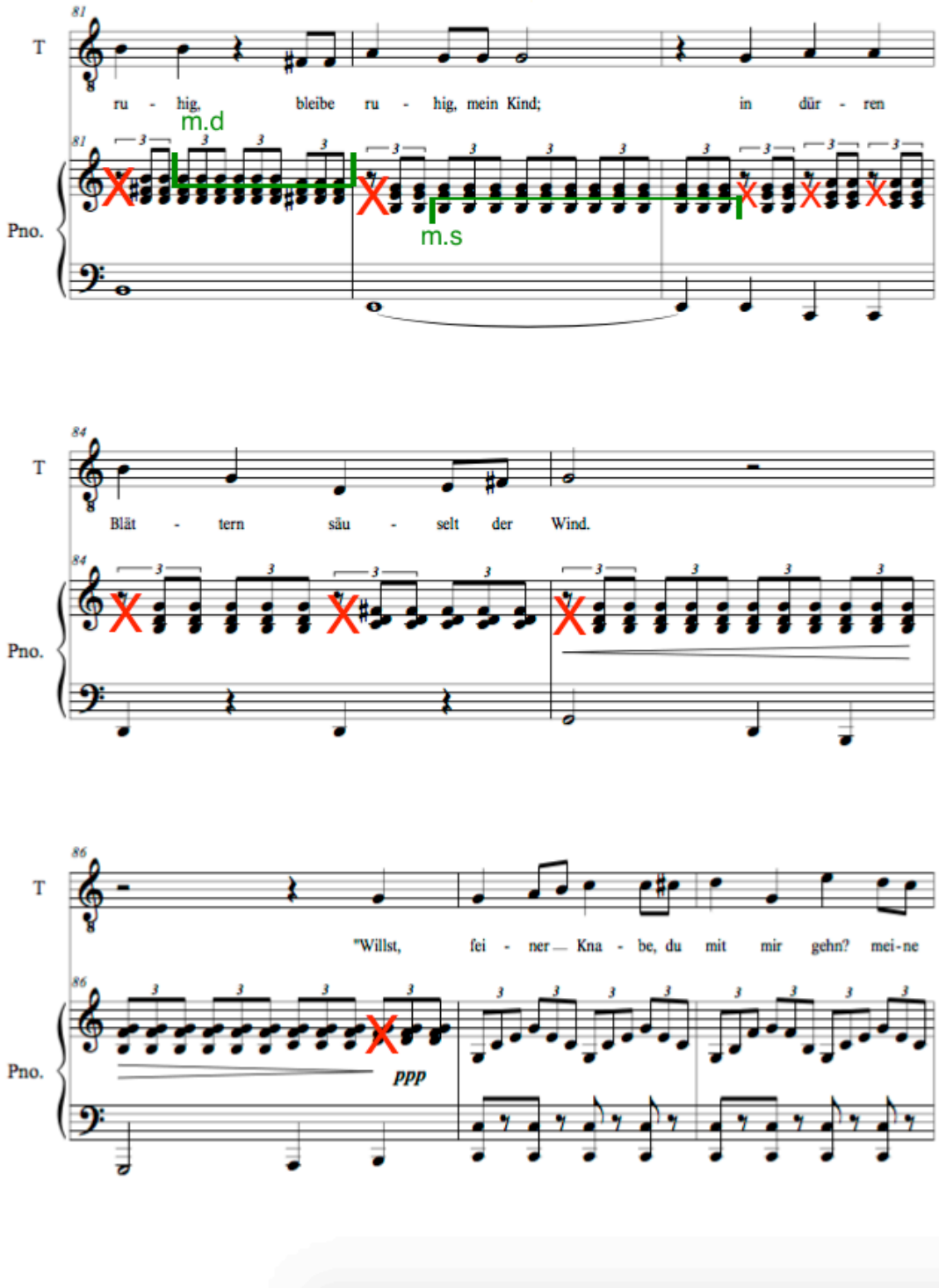

T
Va - - - - ter, du den
m.d
Pno.
T
Erl - kü - nig nicht?
mf
Pno.
T
den Er - - - len -
m.d
Pno.
p

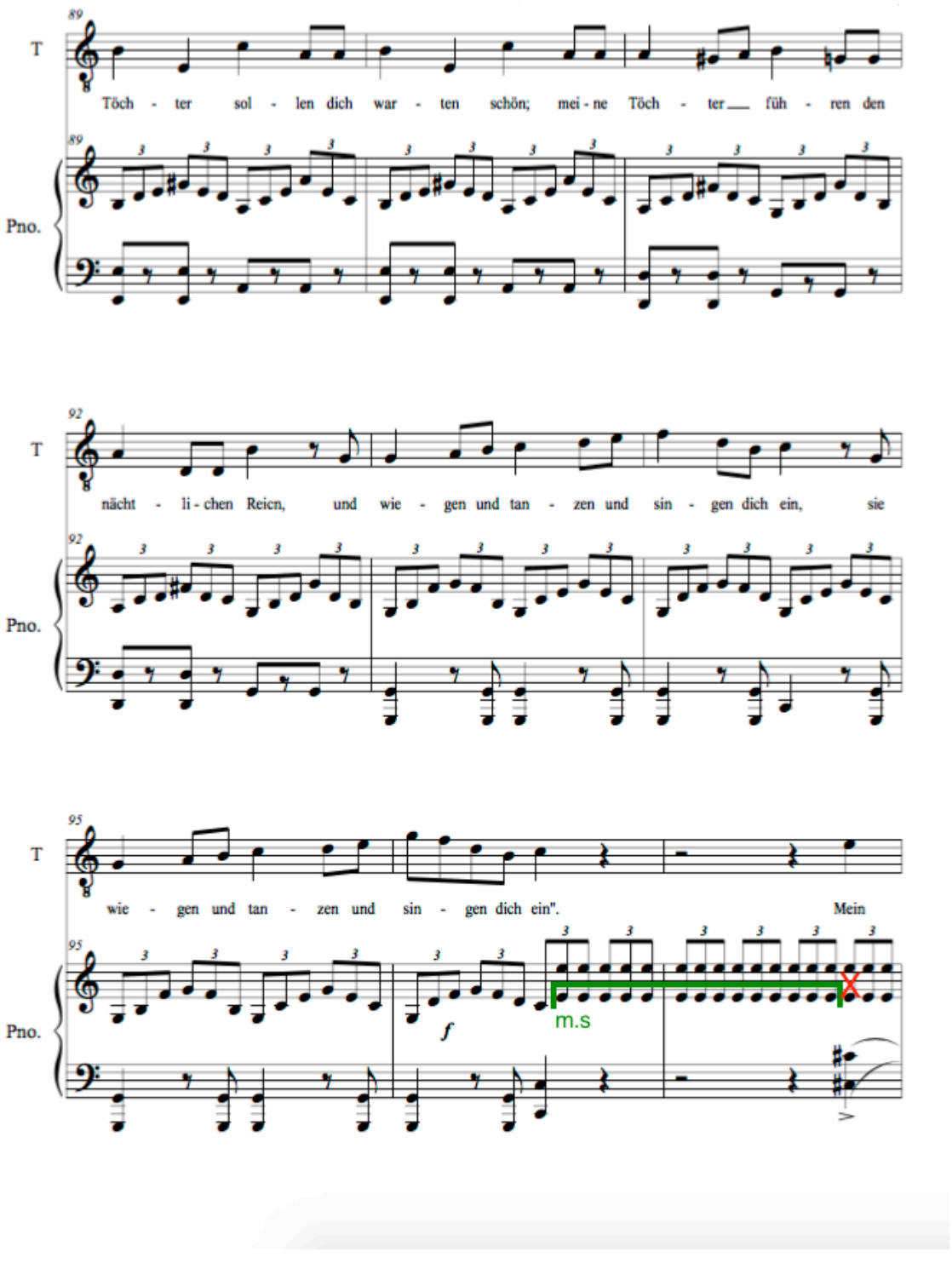

48
T
kü - nig mit Kron' und
48
m.d
Pno.
mf
50
T
Schweif? Mein Sohn, es
50
Pno.
m.s
53
T
ist ein Ne - belstreif.
53
Pno.
m.s

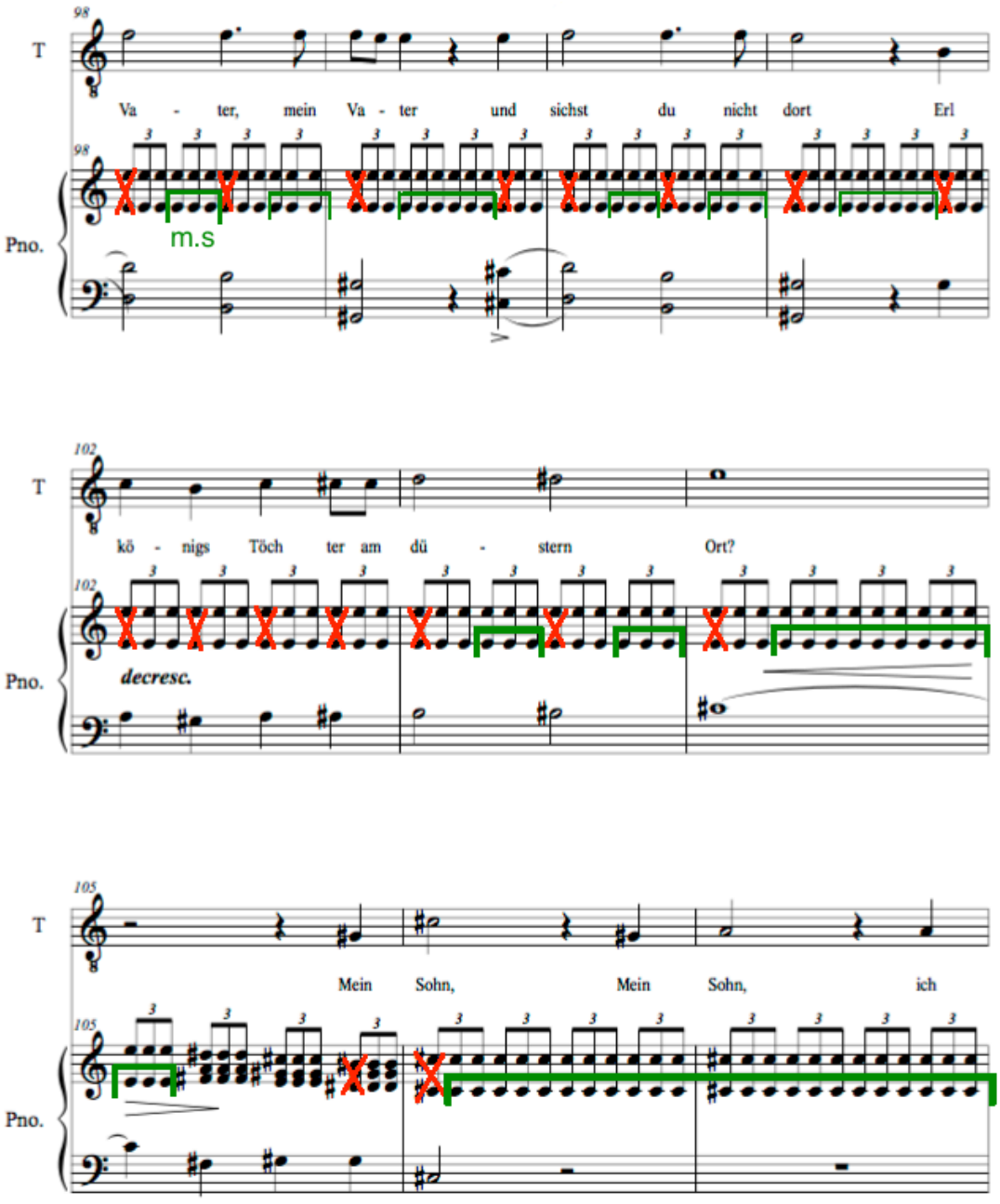

56
T
"Du lie - bes
56
Pno.
m.s
decrese.
pp
59
T
5
4
1
Kind, komm, geh mit
59
Pno.
61
T
mir! gar schö - ne Spie - le
61
Pno.

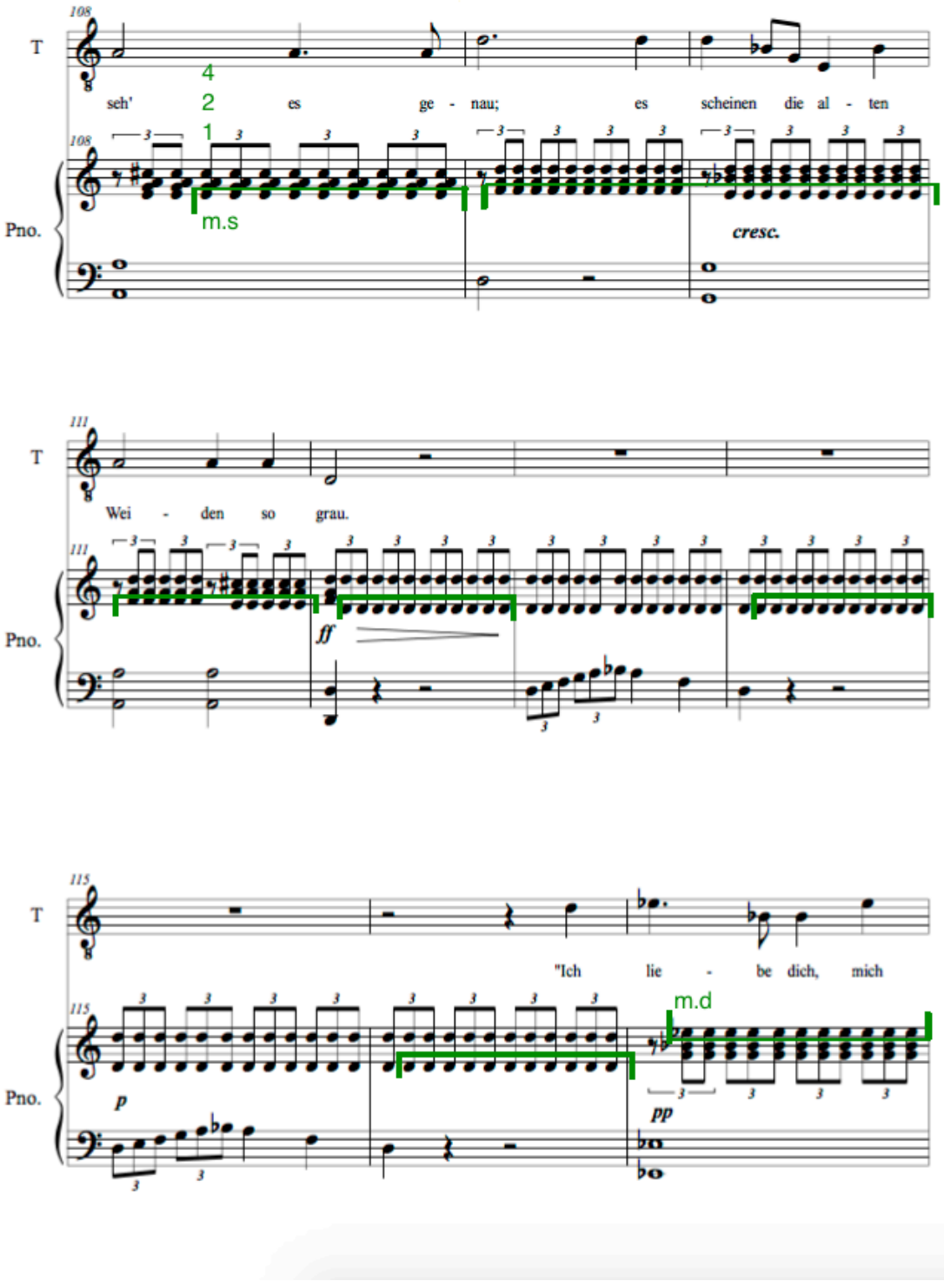

64
T
spiel' - ich mit dir; manch
64
Pno.
66
T
bun - - - te Blu - men sind
5
4
1
66
Pno.
68
T
an dem Strand; mei-ne Mut - ter hat - manch'
68
Pno.

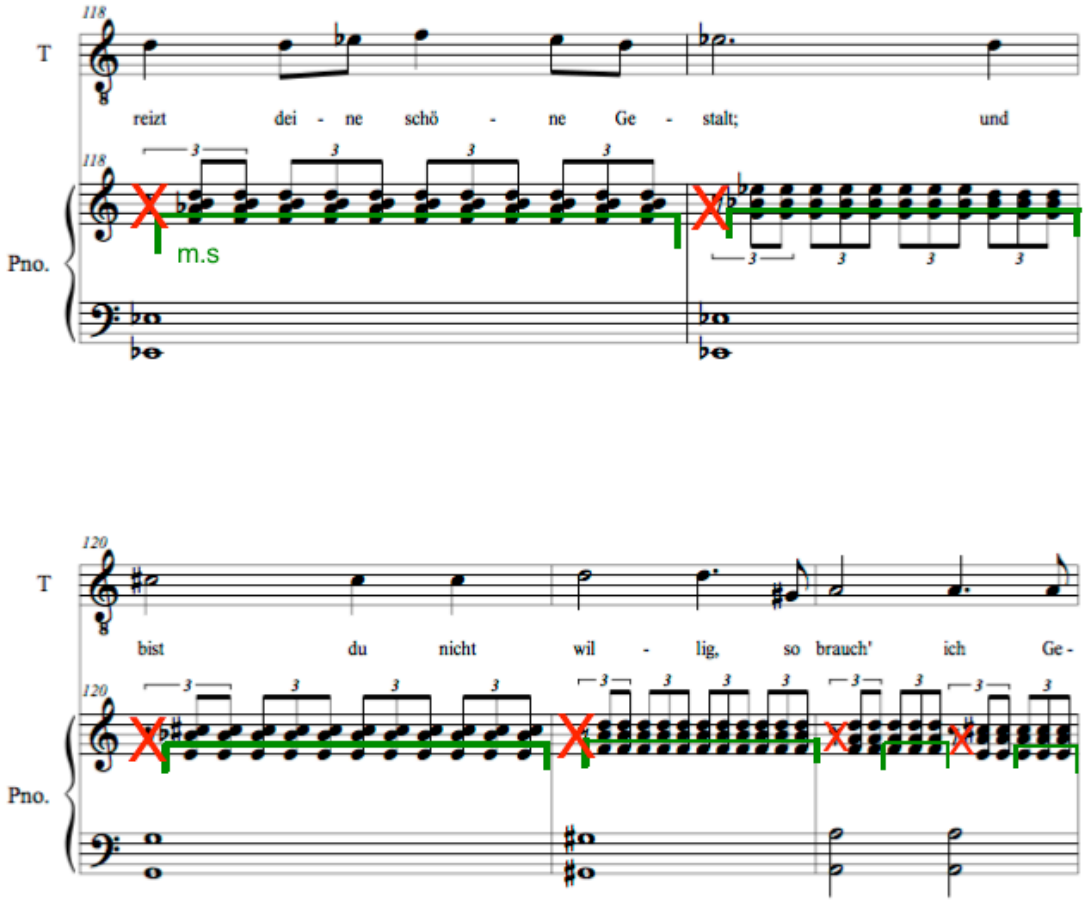

T
glü - den Ge - wand". Mein Va - ter, mein
Pno.
m.s
f
T
Va - ter, und hö - rest du nicht, was Er - len - künig mir -
Pno.
p
T
lei - se ver - spricht? Sei
Pno.
decresc.

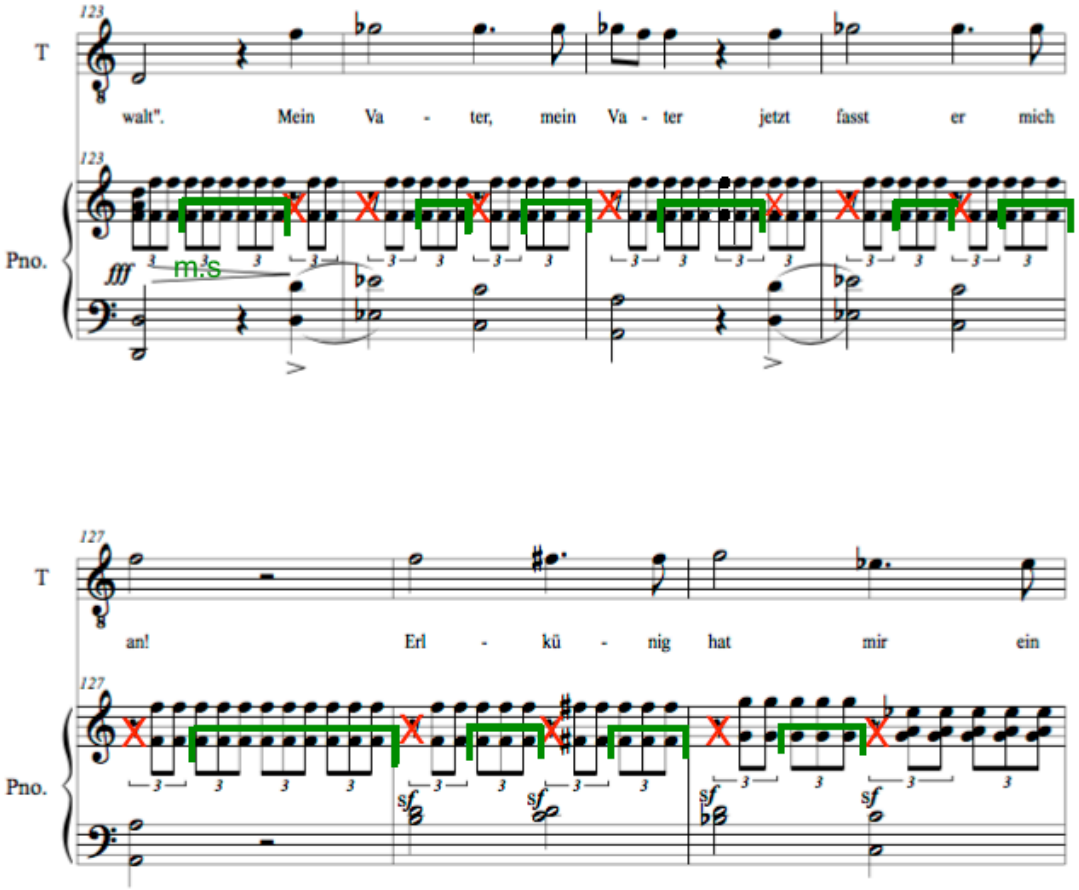

81
T
ru - hig, bleibe ru - hig, mein Kind; in dür - ren
m.d
m.s
81
Pno.
84
T
Blät - tern säu - selt der Wind.
84
Pno.
86
T
"Willst, fei - ner Kna - be, du mit mir gehn? mei - ne
86
Pno.
ppp


89
T
Töch - ter sol - len dich war - ten schön; mei - ne Töch - ter füh - ren den
89
Pno.
92
T
nächt - li - chen Reicn, und wie - gen und tan - zen und sin - gen dich ein, sie
92
Pno.
95
T
wie - gen und tan - zen und sin - gen dich ein". Mein
95
Pno.
f
m.s

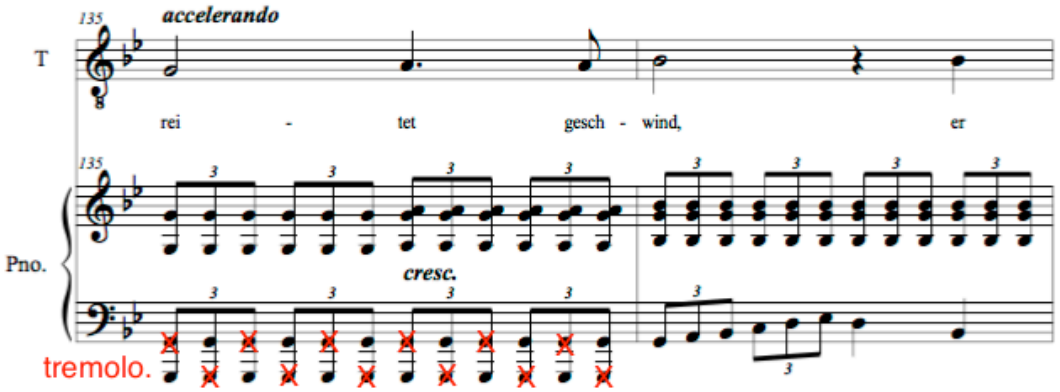

98
T
Va - ter, mein Va - ter und sichst du nicht dort Erl
98
Pno.
m.s
102
T
kö - nigs Töch ter am dü - stern Ort?
102
Pno.
decresc.
105
T
Mein Sohn, Mein Sohn, ich
105
Pno.

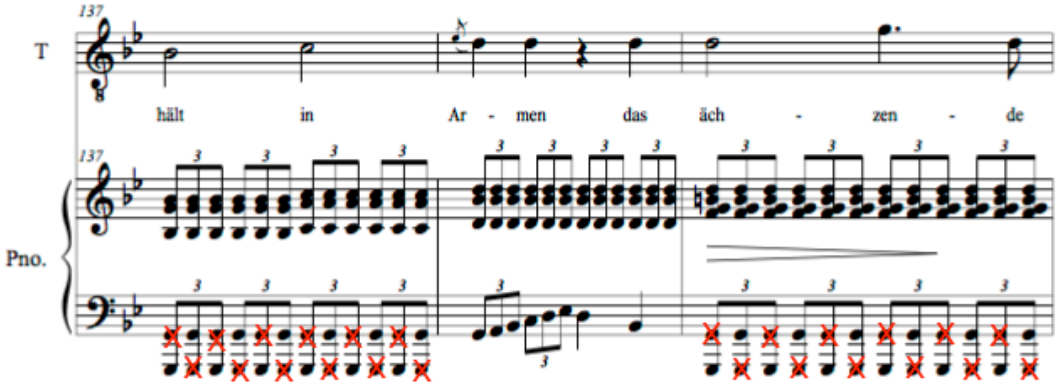

T
Pno.
seh' es ge - nau; es scheinen die al - ten
4
2
1
m.s
cresc.
Wei - den so grau.
ff
"Ich lie - be dich, mich
m.d
p
pp


118
T
reizt dei - ne schö - ne Ge - stalt; und
118
Pno.
m.s
120
T
bist du nicht wil - lig, so brauch' ich Ge -
120
Pno.

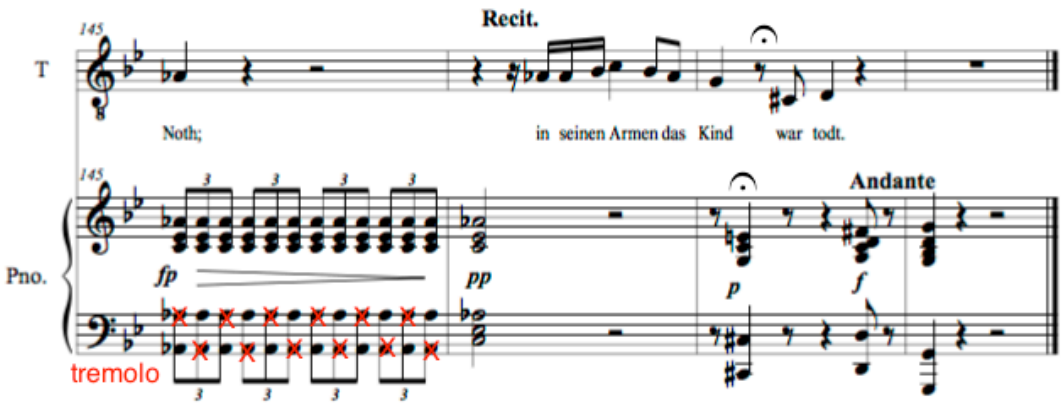

123
T
walt". Mein Va - ter, mein Va - ter jetzt fasst er mich
123
Pno.
fff
m.s
127
T
an! Erl - kü - nig hat mir ein
127
Pno.
sf
sf
sf
sf

130
T
Leids ge than! Dem
m.d 3 2 1
Pno.
sf sf
133
Va - - - ter grau - set's, er


135
accelerando
T
rei - tet gesch - wind, er
135
Pno.
cresc.
tremolo.


137
T
hält in Ar - men das äch - zen - de
137
Pno.

140
T
Kind,
3 2 1
er -
140
Pno.
ff
143
T
reicht
den
Hof
mit
Müh'
und
143
Pno.
sf
sf
tremolo


Recit.
145
T
Noth;
in seinen Armen das Kind war todt.
145
Andante
Pno.
fp
pp
p
f
tremolo

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As a professional collaborative pianist with small sized hands, I was often confronted with pieces that require large sized hands. Some of these pieces were standard repertoire and often performed, so I could not avoid these works if I want to maximize my career opportunities. Playing pieces that had densely voiced chords or fast chords that stretching my hands repeatedly demanded a greater amount of preparation and practice. Nevertheless, despite my best efforts, it was not always possible for one with smaller hands like me to play exactly what was written by the composer, and such passages often led to injuries or an imperfect performance. When I was preparing concerto competitions with string or woodwind colleagues, I realized the concerto reductions were often quite different than the original full score, and would include large and densely voiced chords, or suggestions to roll chords that were not an accurate representation of the orchestration. Adjusting these passages were easier, as the specific notes were not written by the composer, but by an arranger. Approaching repertoire originally written for the piano revealed similar issues, and required greater creativity on my part to make the passages playable for smaller hands while remaining as true as possible to the composer's original intentions.

The three methods that have been provided in this paper are mainly what I discovered from my practical experience. The examples supporting these three methods are excerpts or longer passages from frequently performed music, thus demonstrating the techniques in repertoire familiar to most collaborative pianists. Using the three methods

will certainly relieve the danger of playing passages that stretch smaller hands or call for repeating thick chords in a relatively fast tempo. In this way, small handed pianists will be capable to play such passages more comfortably without hurting themselves while respecting the musical intentions of the composer.

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