Principles of Music

by Apollon Marie-Rose Barret

Editors note: The following are extracts from the front matter of the Barret Oboe Method. Most of Barret's idiosyncratic punctuation and capitalization have been preserved except in cases where the readability of the passage could be improved by small changes in punctuation. These short articles provide a fascinating glimpse into the musical scene and stylistic customs of the time.

THE OBOE

The Oboe, as a solo instrument, possesses the finest qualities, combining delicacy and force with sweetness and flexibility of tone, thus rendering it more capable than any other of embodying feeling with every shade and variety of expression.

In the orchestra it is indispensable, and the peculiarity of its tone, which is distinctly heard above all others, participates both of the stringed and wind instruments.

In the manufacture of this instrument, various experiments have been made to discover the wood best adapted to produce a good tone; experience has clearly proved that Boxwood and Rosewood claim the preference. I recommend Rosewood, having found that wood far superior in producing a full body of tone, which can be modified in the softest and most delicate manner: the lower notes especially are of a finer quality than in instruments manufactured of other woods.

Many endeavours also have been made to improve the tone and fingering of the Oboe. Boehm's system prevailed for some time, but the great inconvenience of that system, which diminishes the compass and changes entirely the quality of the tone, has induced me to make new researches. The Oboe, in its present improved state, is a very perfect instrument, and the modifications applied to its mechanism have preserved the fine quality of its tone in its natural state. (Barret states in a footnote that these improved oboes will bear marks from either "Triebert—Paris" or "Barret—London.")

The compass of this instrument ranges from B♭ to G alt: it has fourteen keys, two of which, having additional branches, increase the number to sixteen; from the greater length of the bell (a late improvement) the instrument derives a certainty of tone throughout, which enables the performer to produce the upper notes, such as E and F above the lines, with greater certainty. (Barret writes in a footnote that those studies including a low B-flat have been provided with alternatives for instruments not having that note.)

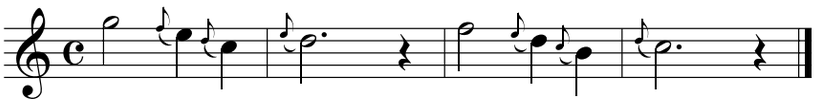
I would advise those persons who require an instrument to look more in point of economy to utility than to external beauty taking care it has the full complement of keys, otherwise bad habits of fingering are engendered, and which are difficult to eradicate.

In the selection or exchange of instruments, pupils should have the advice of a master, or some other competent person, as they are unable of themselves to appreciate a good instrument, or to detect an indifferent one.

ON SMALL NOTES, TRILLS, AND GROUPETTES

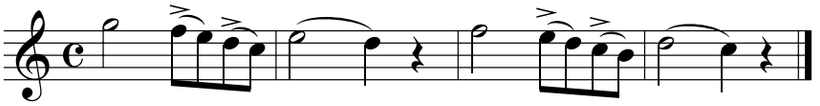
No fixed rules have been written on "small notes."

Their execution is entirely left to the taste and caprice of the player. This is so true, that a passage written thus *(Example 1)*:



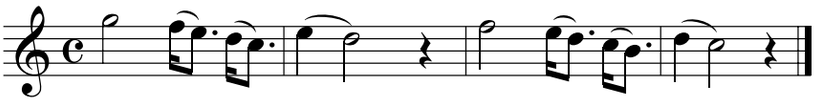
Example 1

Can be executed as follows by one artist *(Example 2)*:



Example 2

And in this manner by another *(Example 3)*:

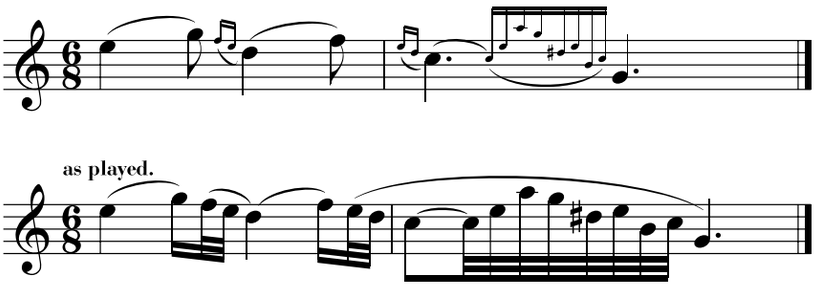


Example 3

And be equally good one way or the other: only Ex. 2 is more in the modern taste than Ex. 3 and of course preferable.

In our days, small notes are only employed as means of abbreviation, and in passages in which the player is in the impossibility of changing the intention of the composer, for, if there is any doubt, all the notes of the passage are written.

A point in which everybody agrees in the manner of executing small notes, is when there are several before a principal note; they must then be slurred quickly on that note in order to arrive in time on the principal note *(Example 4)*.



Example 4

Forty Progressive Melodies

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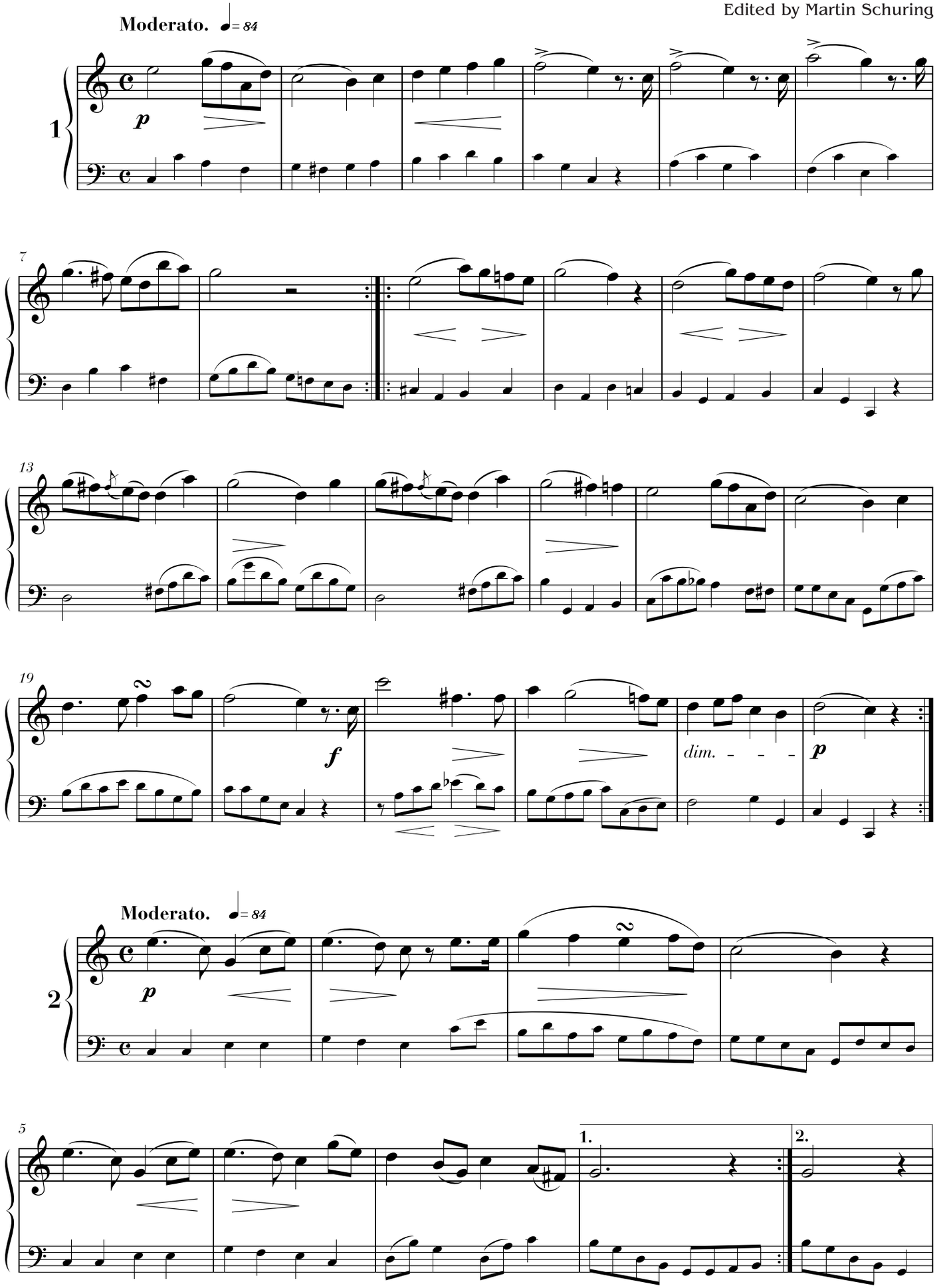

Four Sonatas

Sonata No. 1

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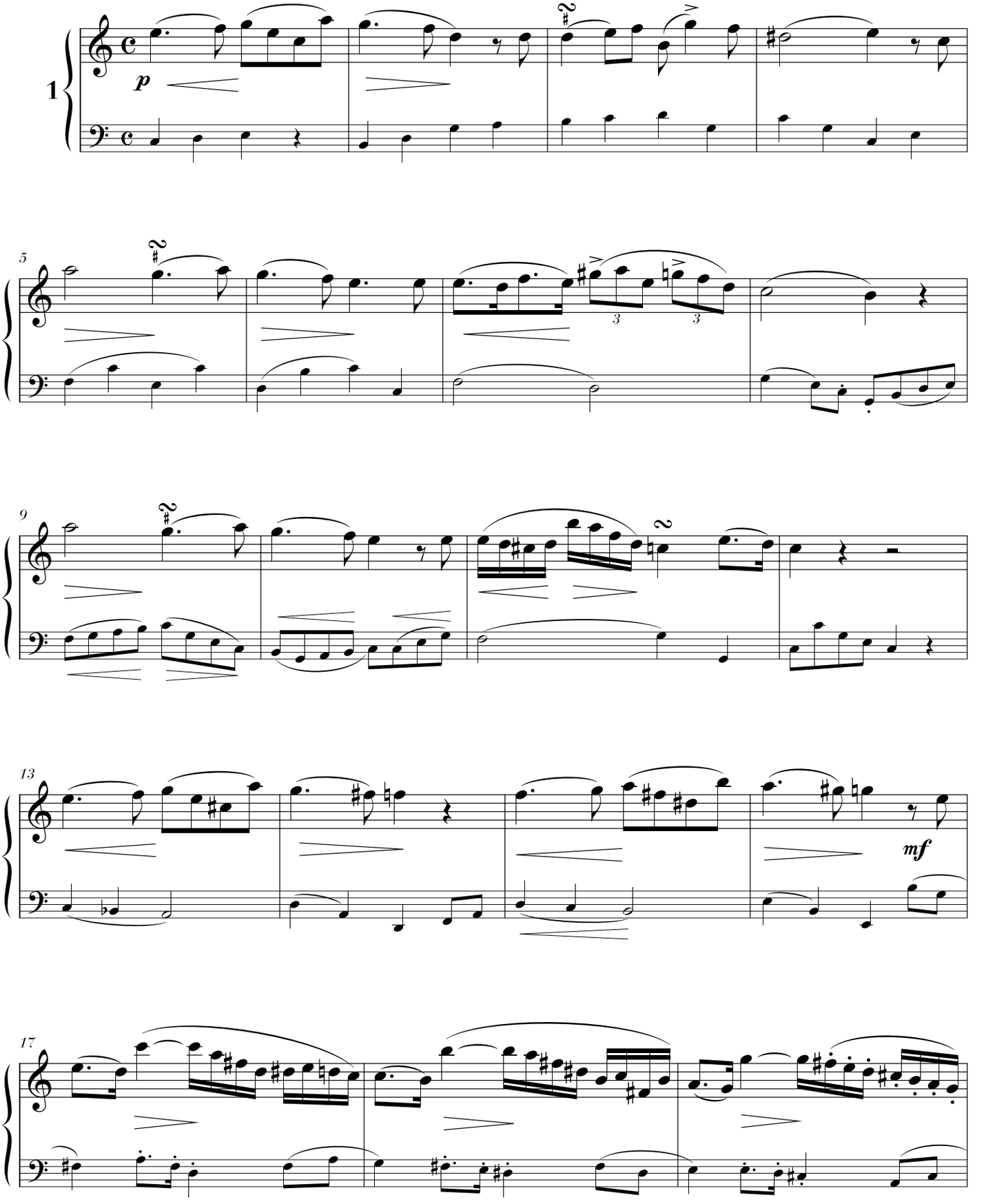
Allegro moderato. ♩= 96



Sixteen Grand Studies

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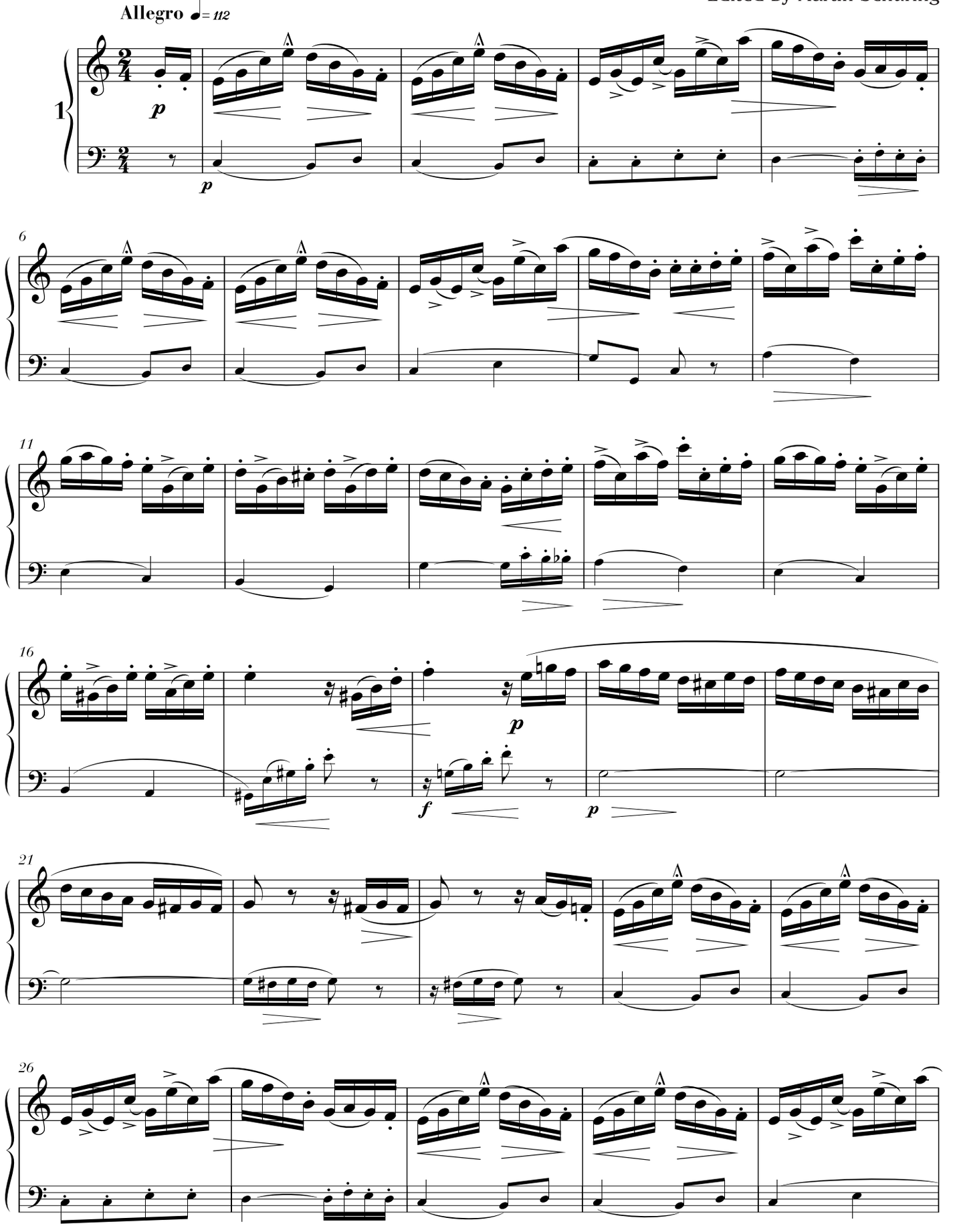

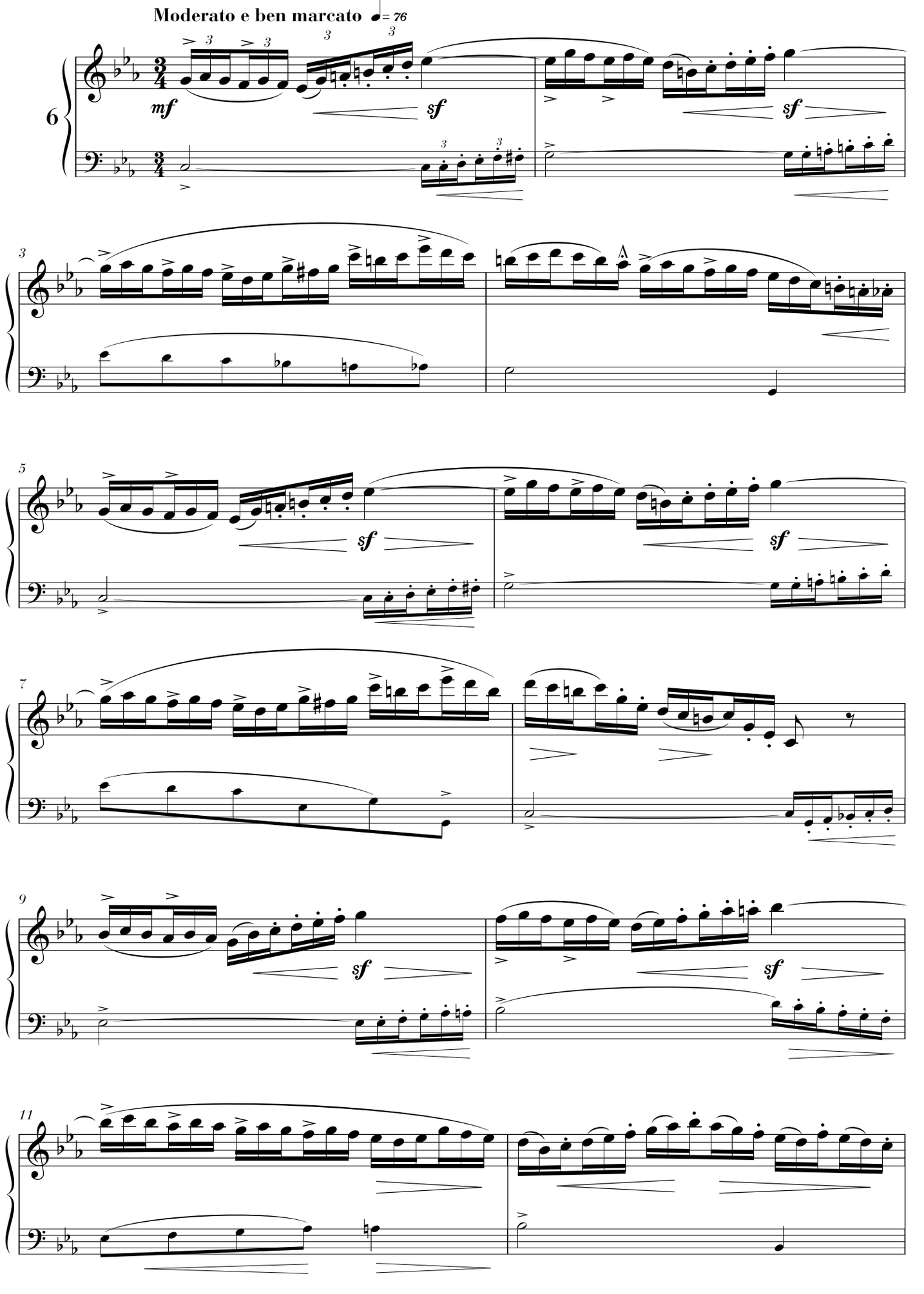
Moderato e ben marcato ♩= 76
mf
sf
sf
6
3
5
7
9
11