J.S. BACH

Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor

BWV 1004

Educational Edition

With technical indications and comments by Georges Enescu

Collected and edited by Serge Blanc

More information at www.sergeblanc.com

J.S. BACH

Sonata & Partita
for Solo Violin

With technical indications and comments by Georges Enescu, collected and edited by Serge Blanc.

During the years of instruction he received from Maestro Georges Enescu, Serge Blanc noted and collected technical and interpretive indications for what Enescu called "The Himalayas of violinists": the Sonatas & Partitas for solo violin by Johann Sebastian Bach.

This exceptional document brings together these notes which concern sonority, phrasing, tempo, fingering, and expression. It is the culmination of the life's work of a master considered as one of the greatest interpreters of this work.

After having taught his own students for more than half a century, Serge Blanc wished to pass on to future generations of violinists the valuable guidance of Georges Enescu by collecting and commenting on his notes.

The complete document including Sonatas & Partitas BWV 1001 to BWV 1006, as well as Serge Blanc's recordings with Enescu, are available for free download at www.sergeblanc.com

Preface

It is common knowledge that the **Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin of JS Bach** were the daily bread of George Enescu, as they are for any musician who recognizes their value and necessity to their culture.

He considered these masterpieces as «the Himalayas of violinists» of which he was one of the greatest of the twentieth century!

He studied and taught this music all his life, both as a great performer with his reflection on all the technical problems posed by these particularly difficult works, but especially from the point of view of the brilliant composer that he was, understanding as well what this music expressed from the greatest musician of all time: JS Bach!

It was first and foremost necessary for Georges Enescu to transmit to future generations the wealth of his research, artistic, cultural and technical, that he had carried out and tested through his own magnificent career as a violinist alongside the career which mattered most to him, composer.

Once Georges Enescu returned to France in 1947 and decided to give lessons again, I had the opportunity to take them for five years, after which he offered me the unique opportunity to give a recital of the Sonatas with him at the piano! It was the chance of a lifetime.

During those five years, I had collected an enormous amount of his teachings, especially regarding what he considered the essential of musical culture: JS Bach!

I could not imagine at the time that the treasure he had passed to me, and to all his students (whom he modestly called his «colleagues»!), would serve me all my life as a musician... because it is only through experience that we understand what is contained in these works essential to the culture of any musician who plays a string instrument (violin, viola or cello).

It is no coincidence that all the great artists playing these instruments have spent their lives studying and playing these pieces throughout their careers... indeed reediting them in their own manner. But though Georges Enescu played, taught, and recorded them often... there is unfortunately no edition revealing his precise indications and his abundant comments!

One should be aware of the hardships that faced him at the time; he was over sixty years old and suffered from a serious disease of the spinal column, and he had lost at the same time all his possesions and his beloved homeland: Romania!

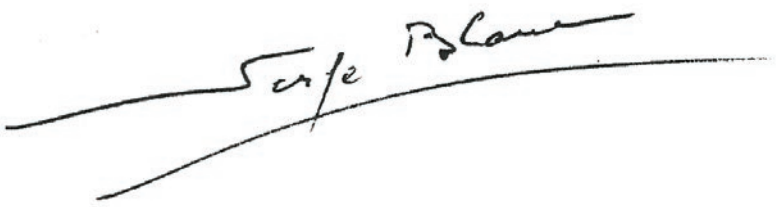
During the 55 years that followed, I continued thinking about the precious fruits of the education that I had received from this great master, learning how to pass on in my turn what I had received, passing on to each of my students the information that he had generously given to me in order to help them understand and interpret these pieces.

Proper tone, phrasing, musicality expressed in an artistic or intimate way, are the results obtained through a strict application of information and commentary gathered by patience and fierce determination!

For example concerning tempi advised by Enescu and shown at the beginning of each piece in this edition, he established these according to the indications given by the hand of JS Bach.

This single indication is essential... but is not in any edition. But when a young student (or teacher!) approaches these works for the first time, they cannot have this knowledge innately... Only later experience will eventually allow them to make their own interpretation and personal changes, having first understood the essential foundation thanks to proven sources.

It is the precious inheritance received by George Enescu that justifies the title **Educational Edition** that I have chosen.



Serge Blanc

Partita II
BWV 1004

ALLEMANDE

♩ = 66

Unlike the **Allemande** of the first **Partita** in B minor, this one is more melodic than polyphonic.

We must therefore follow the upward or downward gestures with levels of dynamic and phrasing that match.

We must also take into account its inner divisions to reveal the phrasing.

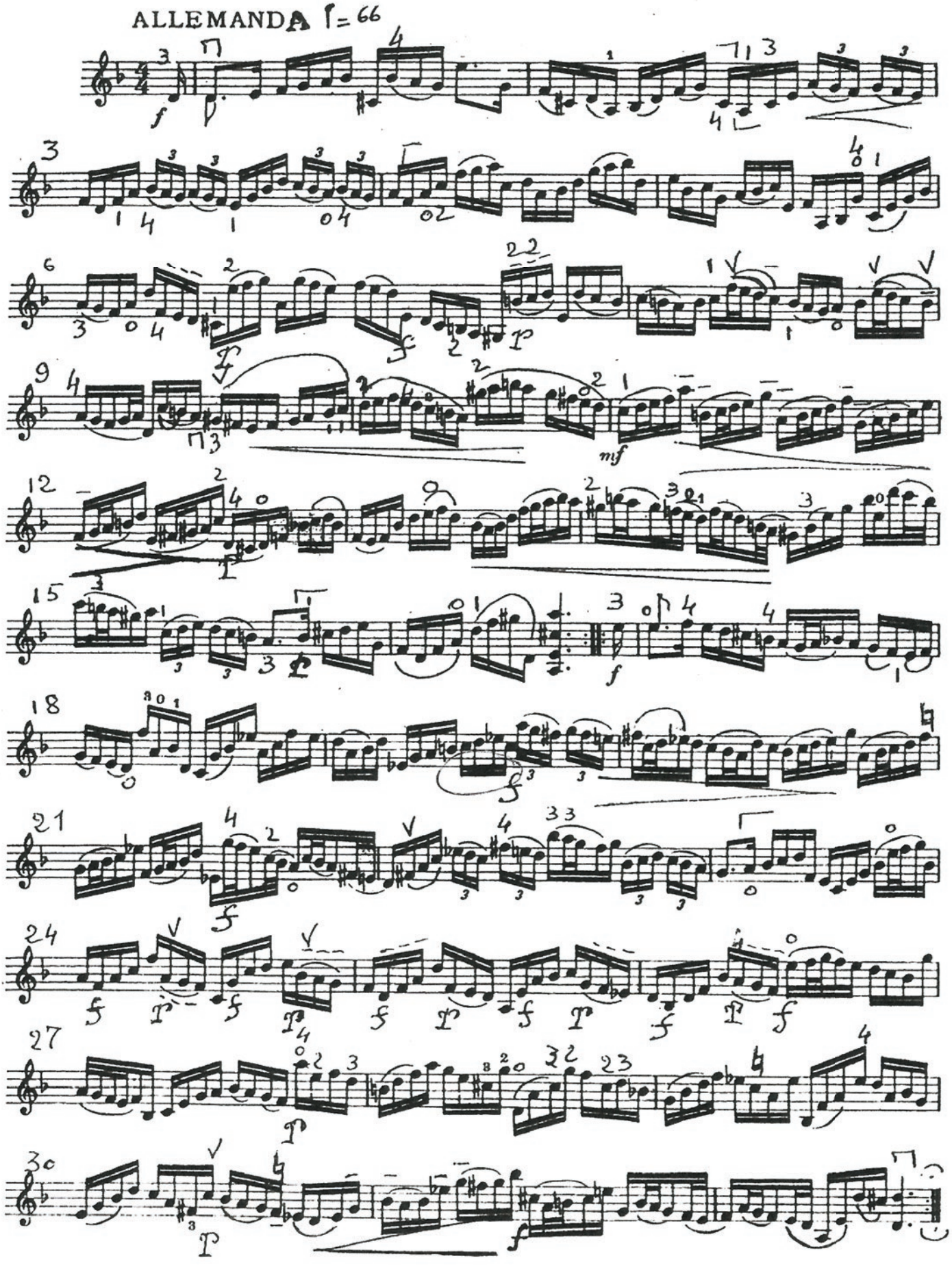
Being the opening of such an important Suite as it contains the **Chaconne**, considered the « Everest » of violinists, it must be given the appropriate scope by adopting from the start a large sonority in terms of volume and phrasing, that is to say, a present but discreet vibrato on every note and long bow strokes « à la corde ».

Follow the dynamics indicated by Enescu.

Keep to his tempo evenly : ♩ = 66

Partita II

BWV 1004



Partita II
BWV 1004

COURANTE

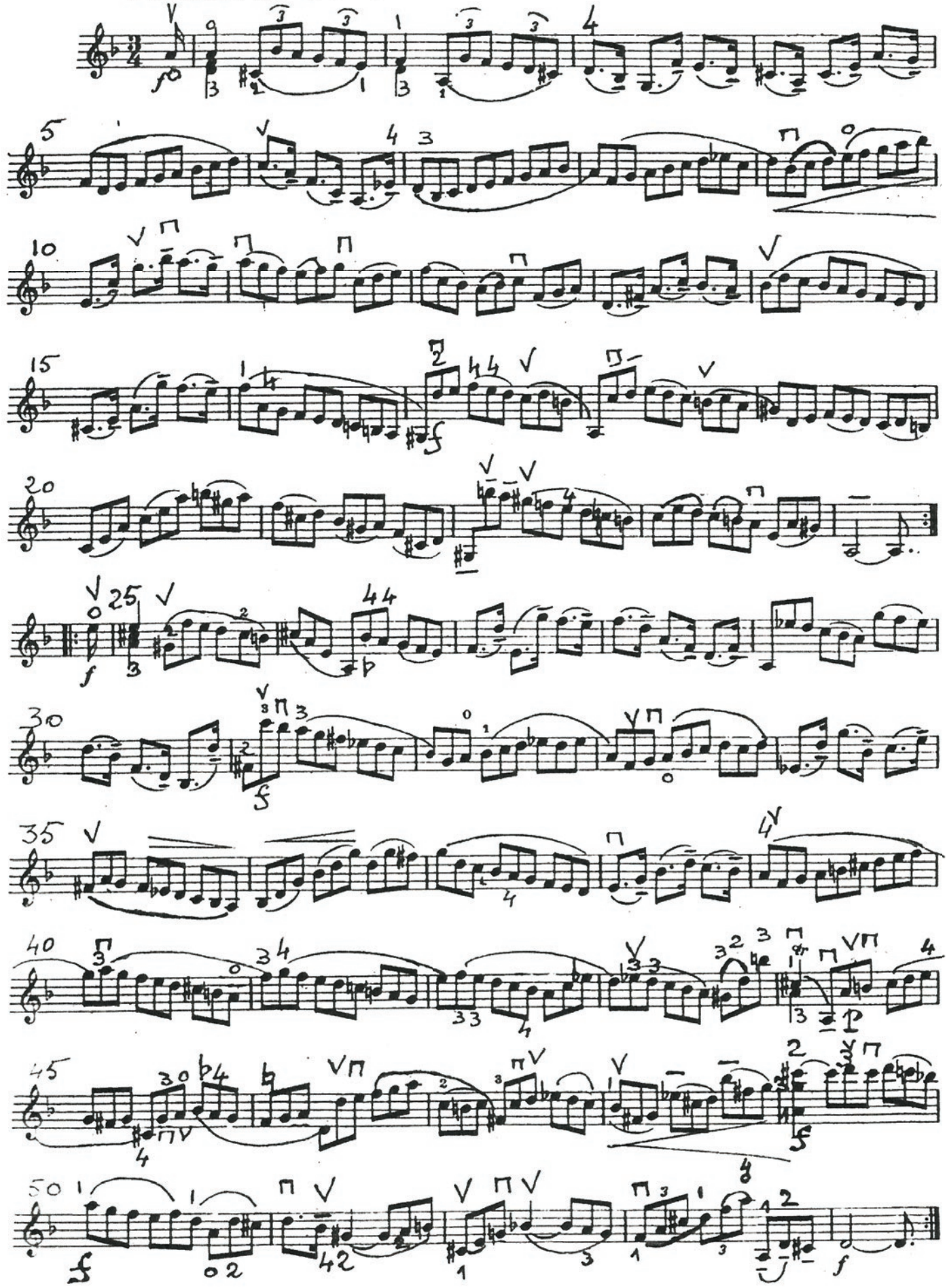
♩. = 112

This brisk Italian dance should be played at ♩. = 112, with a lively bow since we alternate between passages of legato eight note triplets and dotted eights – sixteenth notes separated by a slight pause of the bow.

Be precise with the sixteenth note anacrusis of each section, playing it short but with great energy.

Maintain the tempo from start to finish.

COURANTE ♩ : 112



Partita II
BWV 1004

SARABANDE

♩ = 44

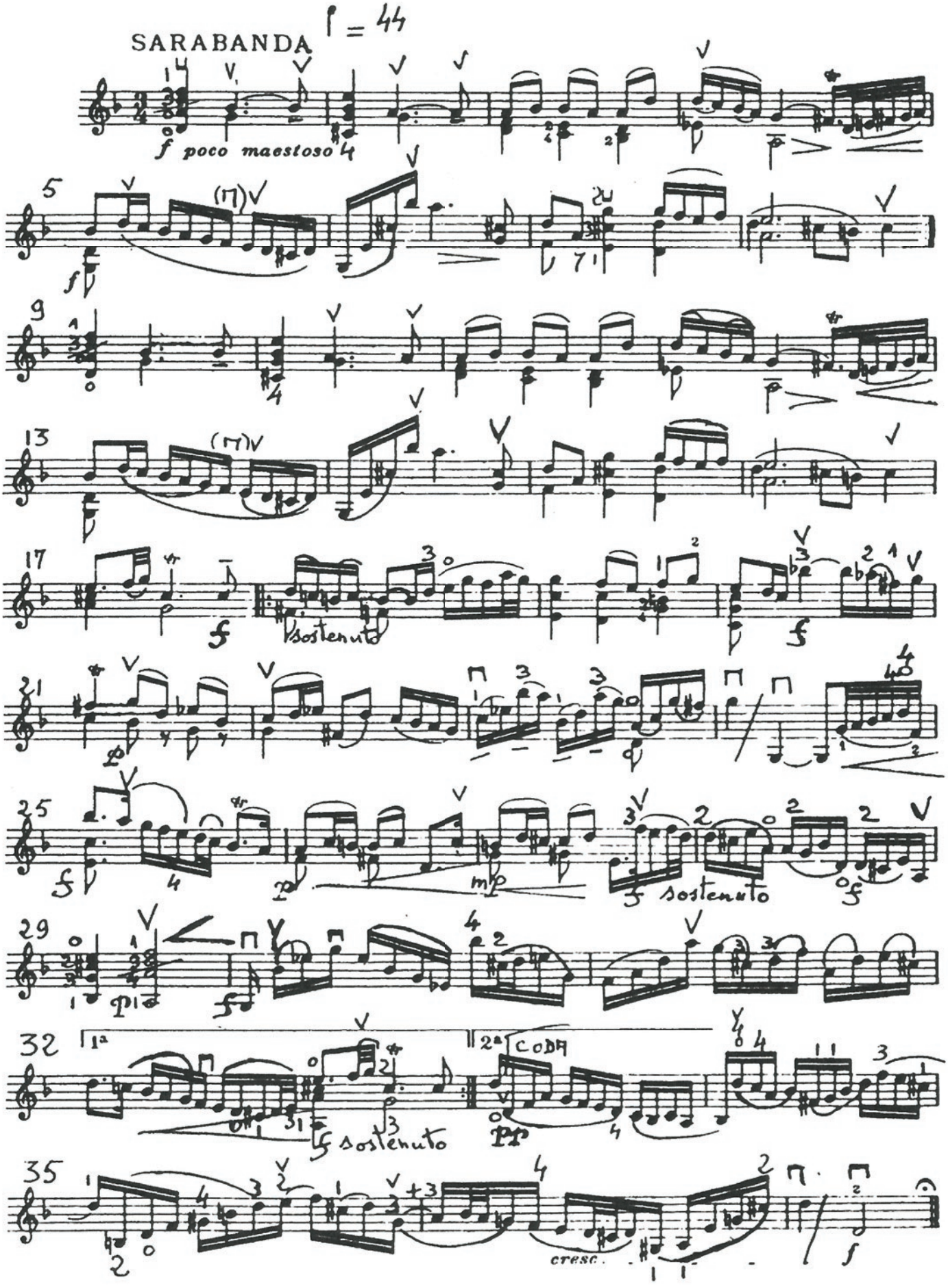
This **Sarabande** is one of Bach's most compulsory pieces for all competitions due to the technical and musical difficulties that must be solved.

First its tempo – rather slow – requires a compromise that does not make us forget that this is, as its title suggests, a **dance** in which one must feel the rhythm and not an **Adagio** or even a **Largo** as we hear too often.

Thus ♩ = 44 is what Enesco advises to keep steadily throughout, and precisely resume after the end of each phrase.

The melodic line, which stays on top throughout, should appear seamless, especially after the chords (for example at the beginning between the first and second beats), but also during the changes of bow direction that must be inaudible so as not to interrupt the melody.

Finally, perfect intonation is paramount.


SARABANDA
♩ = 44
f poco maestoso
sostenuto
sostenuto
sostenuto
CODA
cresc.

Partita II
BWV 1004

GIGA

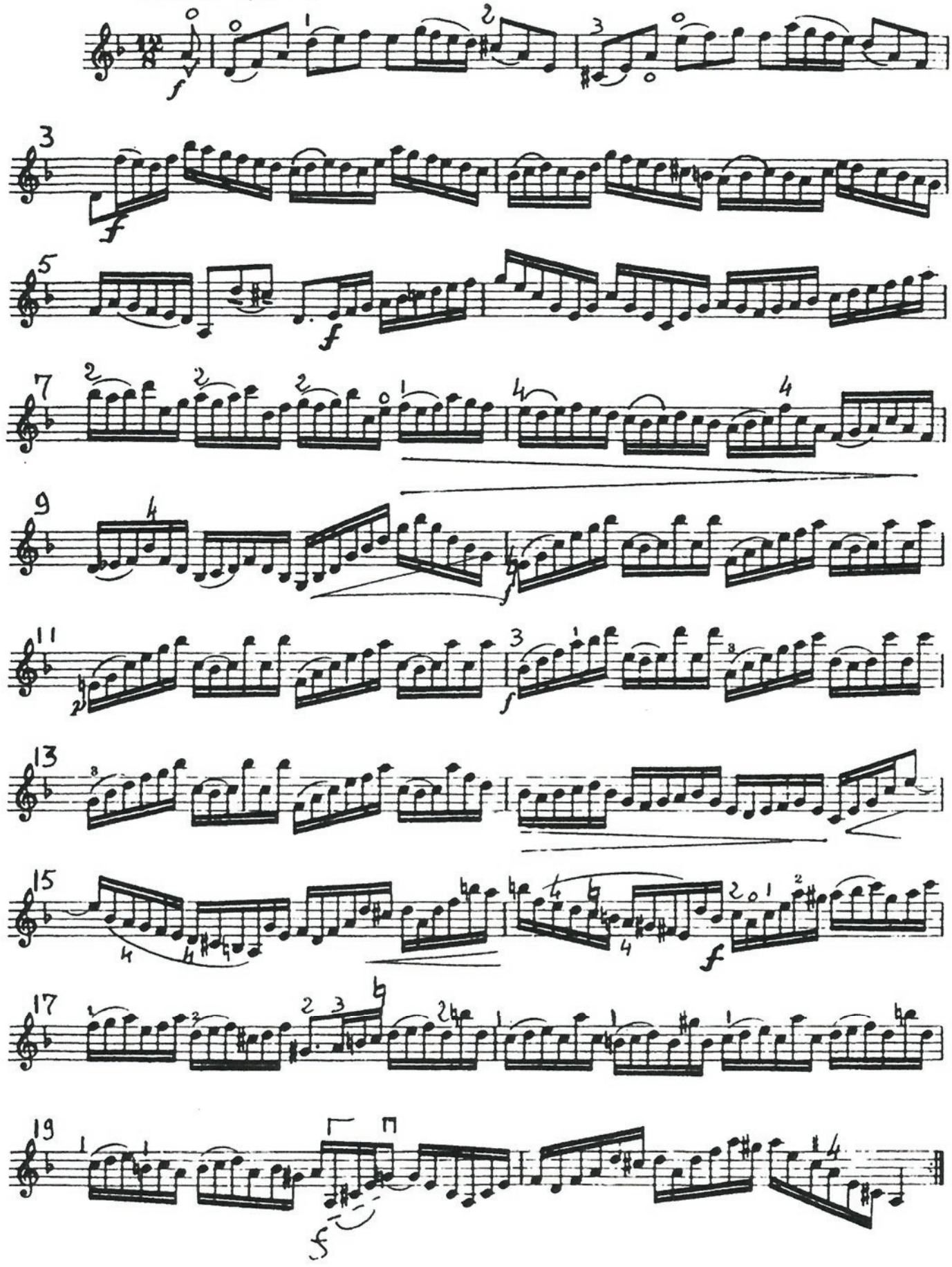
♩. = 72

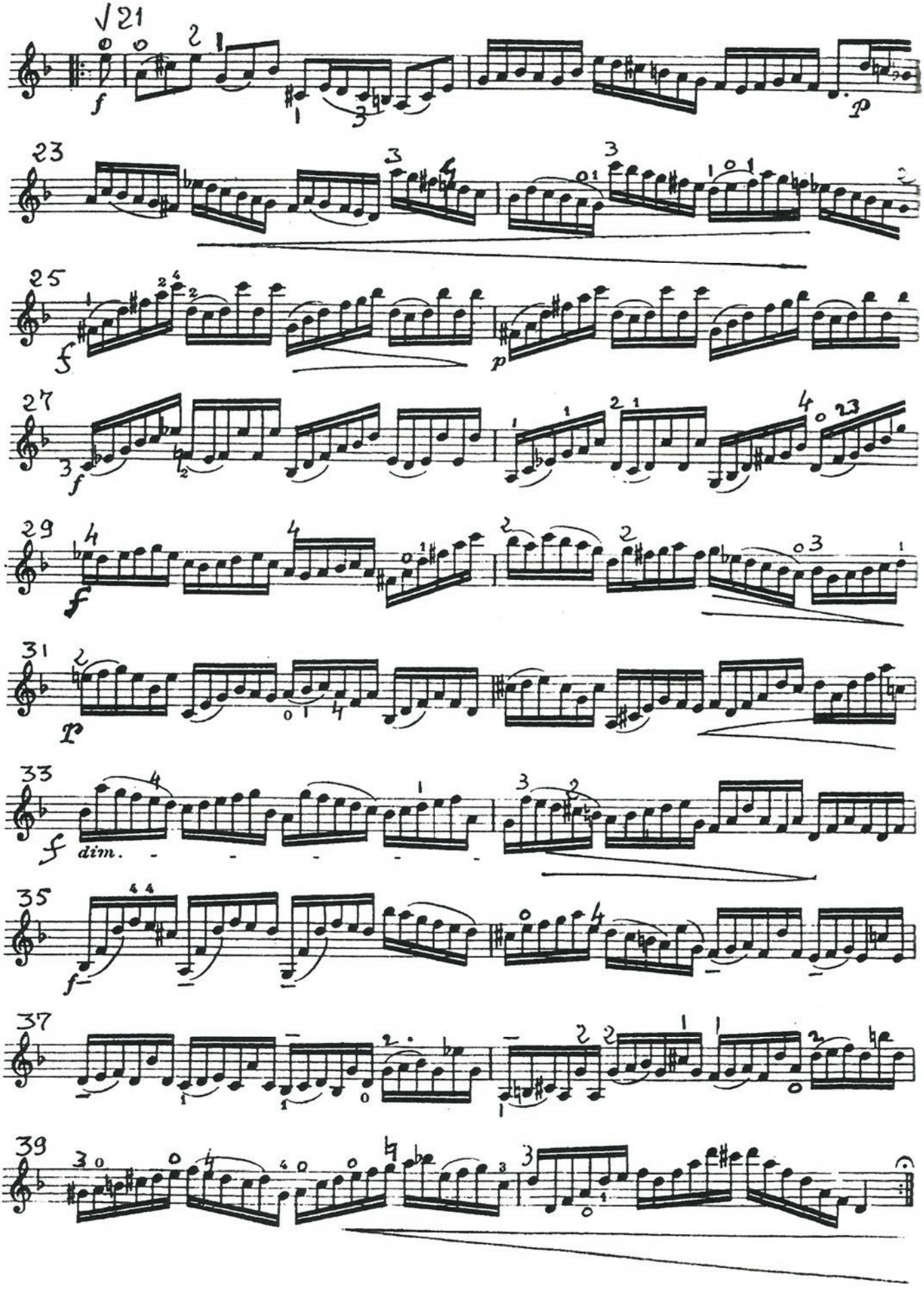
The character of this dance is simple and rustic and one can image peasants tapping their feet rapidly on the upbeat and first beat, which can be conveyed with a quick and vigorous bow (♩. = 72) using the middle of the bow « à la corde » and a supple wrist for quickness.

It is composed of a series of ascending or descending sequences of repetitive motives that can be highlighted by dynamics that follow their shape.

Constant tempo, especially in the many stepwise passages where one tends to accelerate.

GIGA 72 = 1




√21
f
p
23
25
f
p
27
f
29
f
31
p
33
f
dim.
35
f
37
39

Partita II
BWV 1004

CHACONNE
♩. = 60

Finally we arrive at the « Everest of violinists »!

A musical monument second to none that develops a 4 bar theme over a long series of varied structures, building an original musical saga in a tryptique: first part, D minor; second part D major; third part, D minor.

An Ancient dance of Spanish origin and moderate pace, the tempo advised by Enescu remains stable (♩. = 60) from beginning to end, regardless of the major technical differences between the many variations, which are linked together without respite.

In the exposition of the theme Enescu did not repeat the chord on the eighth note anacrusis, so as to differentiate the choreographic weight of the first and second beats, just as it appears in the manuscript of Bach himself.

This first exposition must be expressed with a good amount of bow and very « à la corde », giving a sense of the magnitude of what is to follow.

But the first variation that begins at measure 9 is played at a more moderate ***mf***, allowing for the possibility of the long crescendo to come.

Similarly, we will find the marking ***p*** at measure 17 for a similar gesture.

This method of beginning each variation ***p*** allows us to follow the upward curve of the musical phrasing that usually ends forte. This avoids a colorless monotony and holds the attention and emotion of the listener.

Just as changes in volume depend on the phrasing, the vibrato, which must always animate the left hand, intensifies or subsides according to the temperament that characterizes each performer. It is in this that interpretations differ.

The variation that begins at measure 25 is a more intense expression that animates its melody: lengthen the bow and vibrate on every note. The following, measure 33, begins with a division between the soprano and bass voices, which we can define through different sonorities.

It then develops melodically through various keys, and we will bring out the accidentals, sharps or flats, by slight inflections up to its conclusion in measure 48.

Here again each artist expresses himself according to his temperament. From

measure 49-57, the author, by sequences of repetitive phrases whose successive designs we will bring out through the bowing indicated by Enescu, leads us to the ornate and very rhythmic inversion of the theme.

Measure 57 begins a particularly energetic variation with a very masculine rhythm, exchanges between the bass and soprano and very dynamic arpeggios at the end.

At measure 65 the variations begin accelerating, and the alternation between legato and martelé must not alter the regularity of the tempo in the least.

Be especially careful not to speed up on the finely balanced thirty-second notes. Working progressively with the metronome is very useful! The intonation will benefit along with the clarity of the long stepwise phrases.

Measure 77 returns to a temporarily calmer section where we can, within a ***p dolce***, be more expressive, especially between 81 and 85 with their diminished and augmented intervals so dear to JS Bach (and we must respect Enescu's fingering). 85 is the beginning of a very long sequence of rapid notes of many various shapes. First are four legato almost all stepwise notes (watch out for intonation!), and from 89 bariolage in various formulas (carefully observe their bowings!).

As usual we will try to remain ***p*** as long as possible... (apart from a slight crescendo from 101 to 105 where we return to ***p***).

The true crescendo only begins at 114 and ends at 121 on dazzling (but controlled) cadenza that leads to the grandiose restatement of the theme in its original tempo!

After this exalting tempest in D minor conveyed through all kinds of arpeggiated bariolages, adorned with intervals both dramatic or calming and leading to the dazzling appearance of the opening theme, comes the second part of the D major triptych (133), reflecting the author's brilliant expertise of contrast.

Enescu visualized this episode as a ray of sunlight passing through a window, landing on the tranquil hands of an organist playing... a sweet counterpoint whose D major tonality provides a beneficent calming for both interpreter and listener!

While keeping the same tempo with a dynamic ***subito p*** the motion of the left hand suddenly stops and it is relaxed and barely undulating, providing a rest necessary... but short-lived, because from measure 141 rhythmic activity begins; a passage of ascending eighth notes still rather calm, played « ***louré dolce*** »...
At measure 149 sixteenth notes reanimate the atmosphere through various ascending and descending repetitive phrases that grow increasingly agitated and from measure 161 will bring out in an obsessive manner the note A, repeating it three times at first ***p***.

After a long crescendo that ends at 169 this A is relentlessly repeated not three but four times, and contradicted by a response in double stops, which eventually gives this variation a Mephistophelian character that we can achieve with more and more energetic accents.

This new and changing ascent leads to a very expressive episode (at 177) to be played sustained and very « à la corde », reaching out over 3 and 4 note chords with a vibrato more and more present.

Measure 201 the apotheosis of this second part of the triptych bursts with arpeggiated chords in D major! Use the entire bow, ***fff***.

After a breath, the length of which will be an agonizing suspension between the first and second beat of measure 209, we literally plunge into the D minor chord that opens the dramatic third part of this work, to which a compelling interpretation must give a Shakespearean dimension...

This D minor chord must be played ***fp*** and highly contrasted both in volume and expression which moves suddenly from the greatest exaltation, ***ff***, to the most profound despair as dark as deepest night, ***pp***.

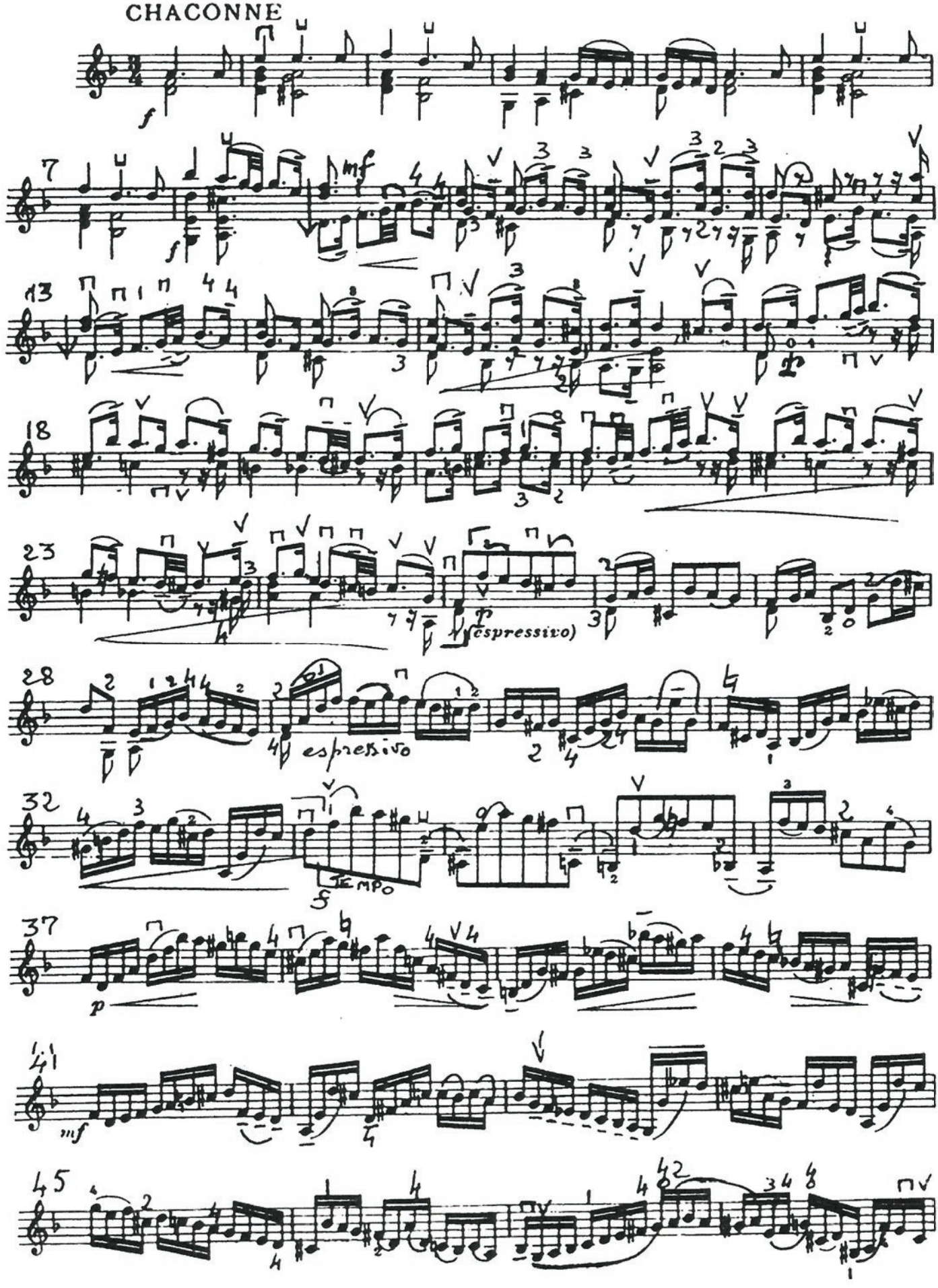
All the chords in this variation should be attacked in a supple manner and practically arpeggiated, with more vibrato and very soft.

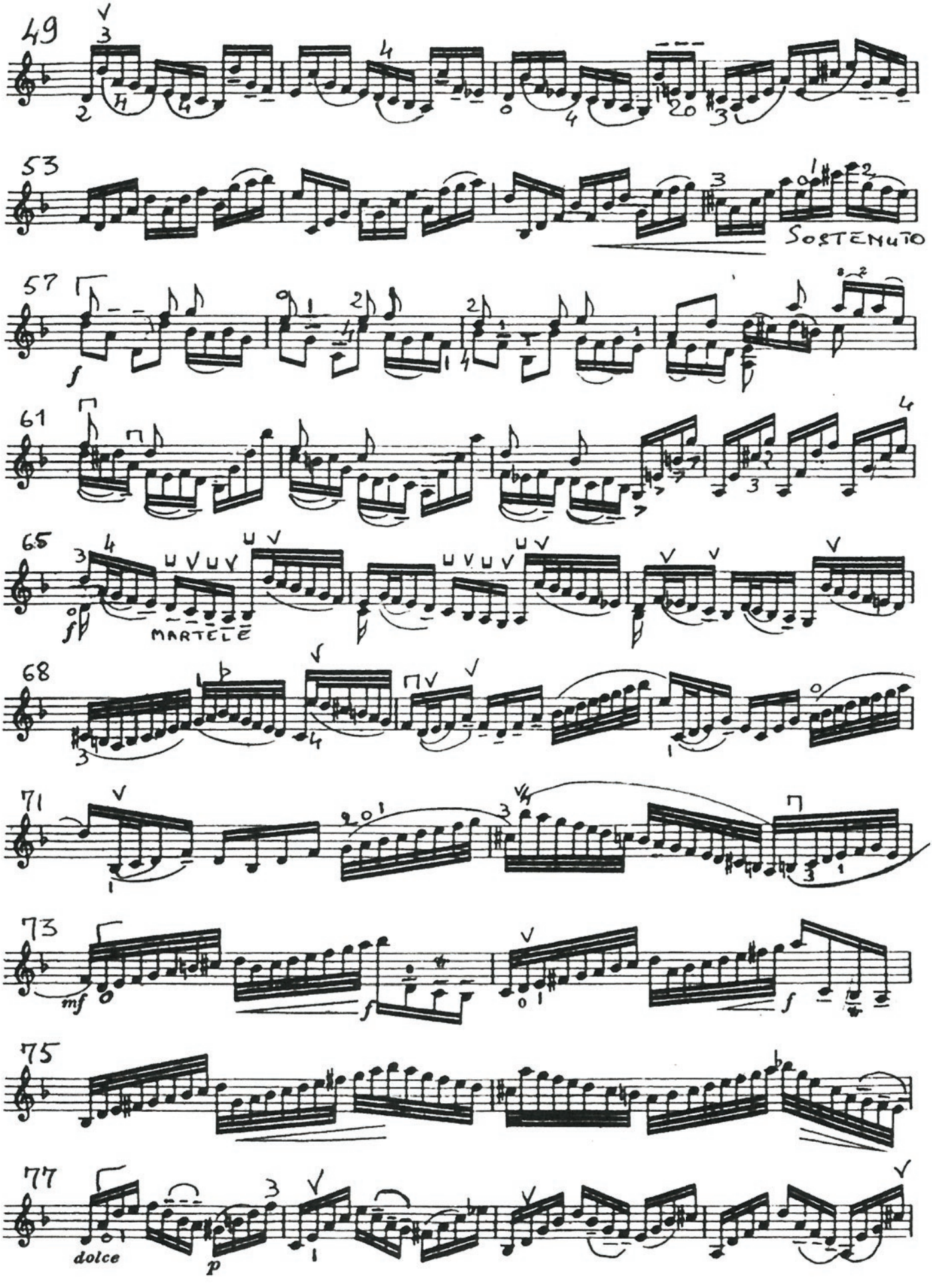
Measure 217 is the quiet beginning of a long, slow ascent through varied and increasingly expressive phrases. At measure 227 we arrive at a kind of cadential break, almost AD LIBITUM, and we find ourselves at measure 229 at the beginning of a section described by Georges Enescu as like the famous fresco by Michelangelo named «Mater Dolorosa». We will play here with similar bowing on each note of the melodic line, thinking about the especially painful aspect of this masterpiece.

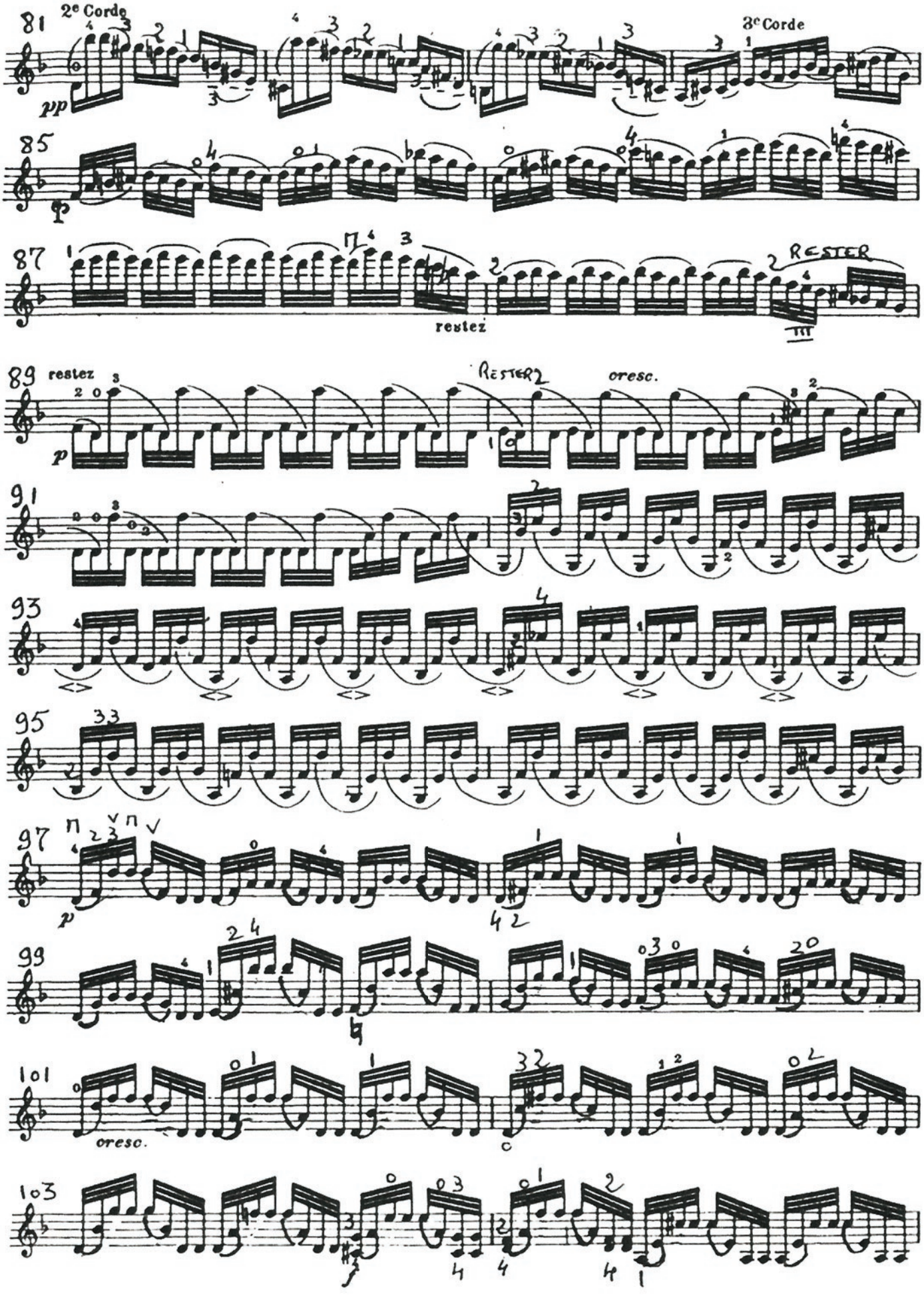
And we finally arrive at the last variation of arpeggios, a progression of increasingly thick harmony leading to the final CODA in measure 248 which itself leads to a final glorious restatement of the theme... for which we would be happy to be able to grasp another three violins and five bows to have enough force to express what we feel at such a moment !!!

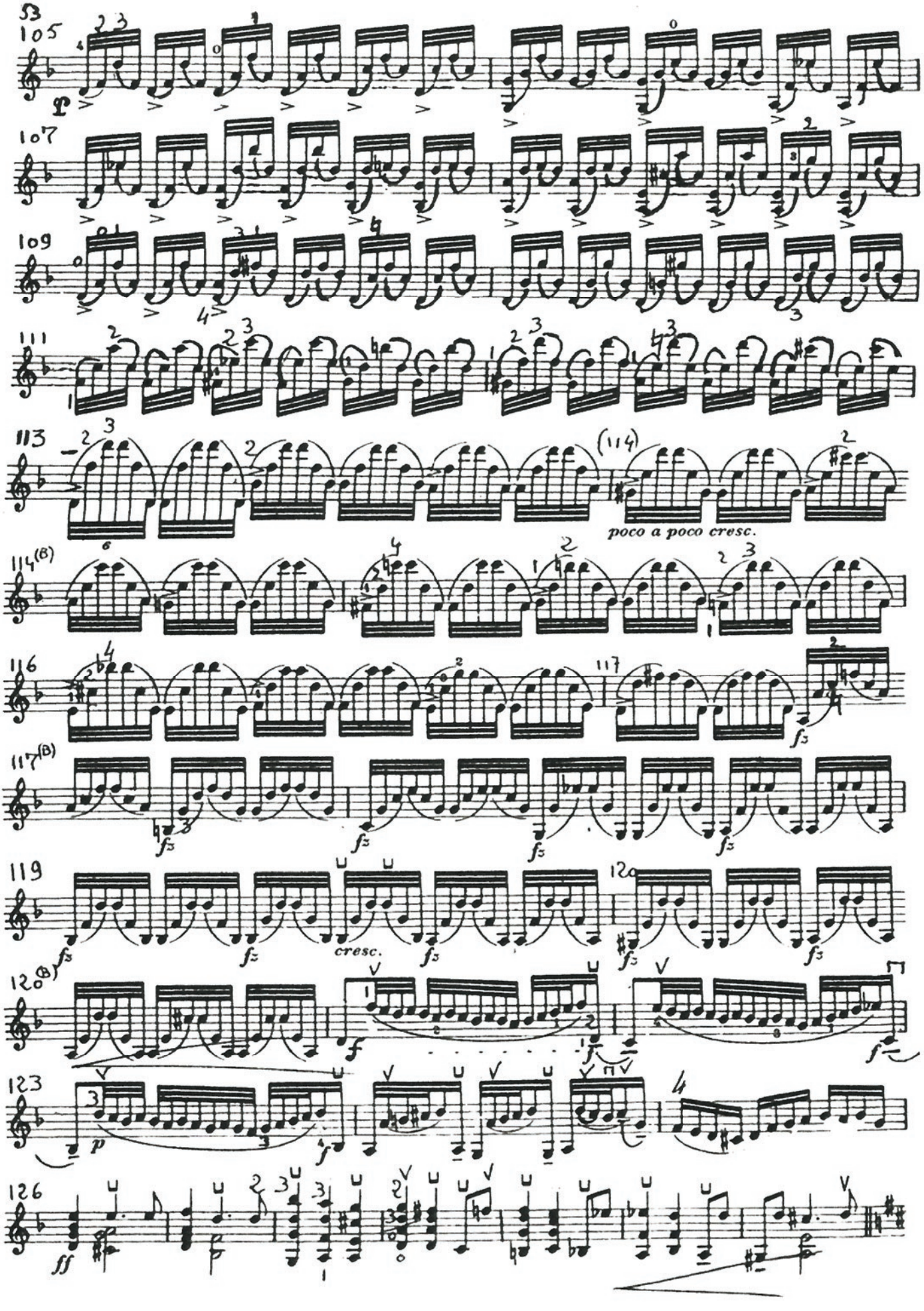
♩ = 60

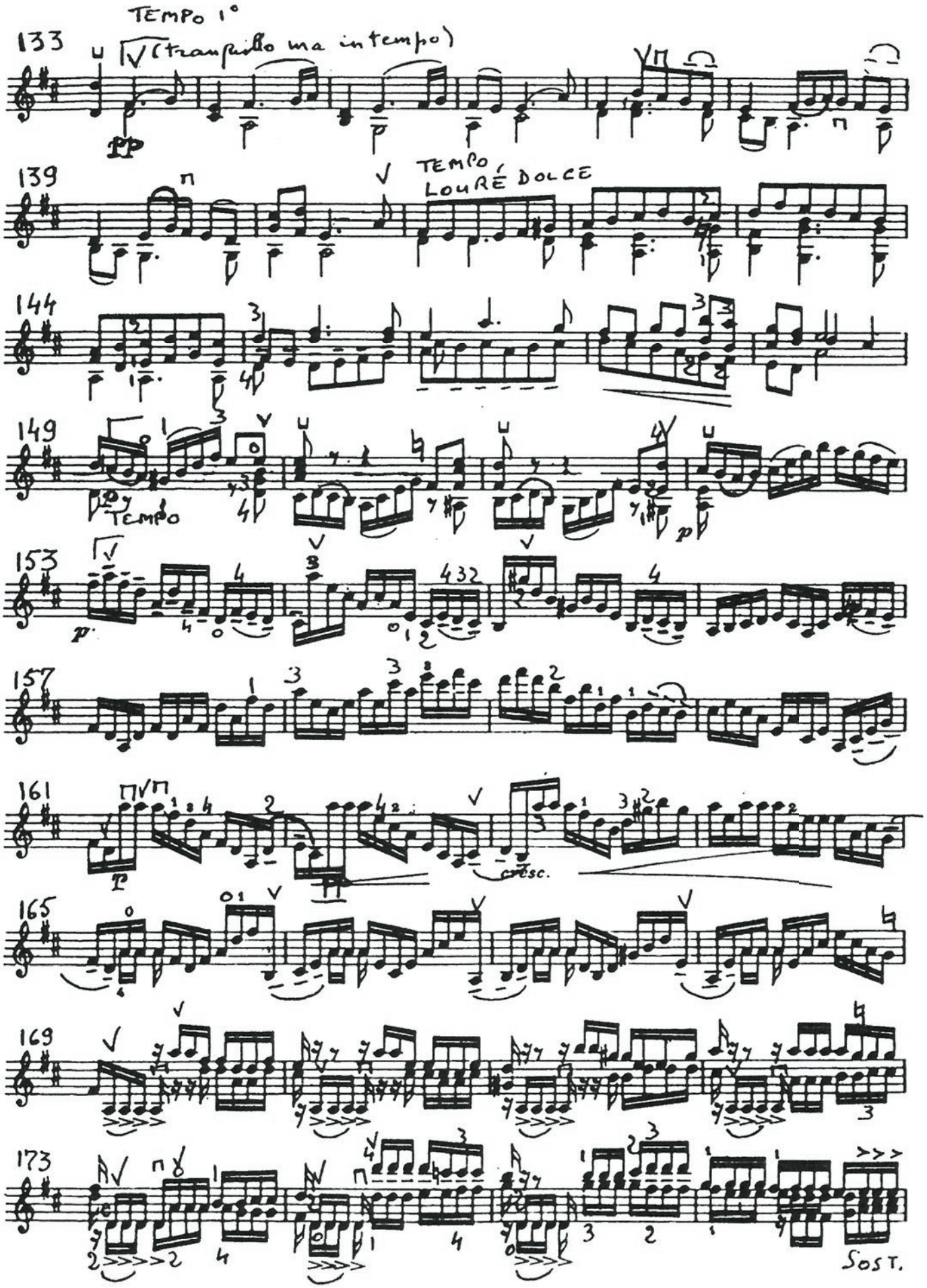
CHACONNE

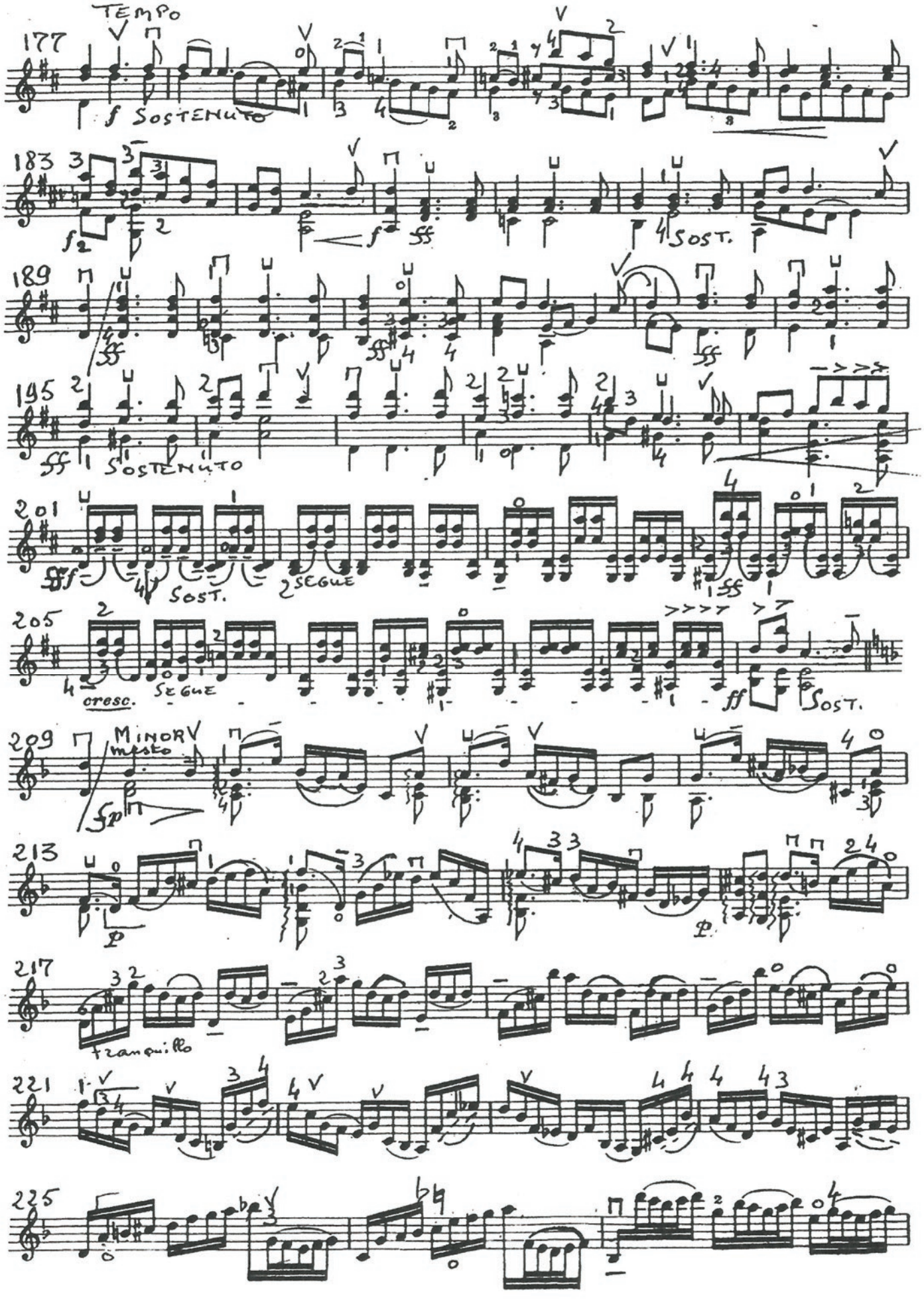


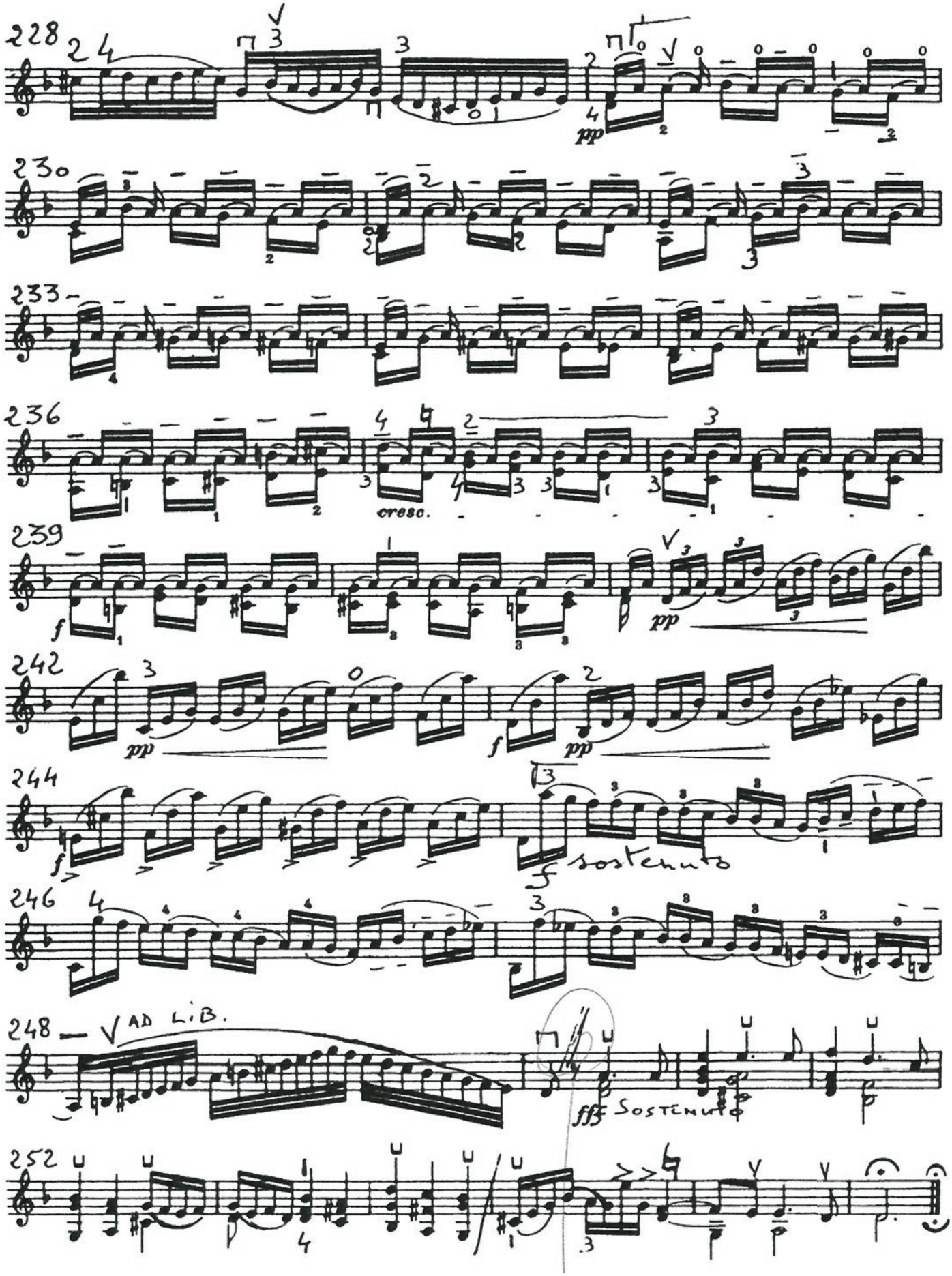

49
53
SOSTENUTO
57
f
61
65
f
MARTELÉ
68
71
73
mf
f
f
75
77
dolce
p


81
2e Corde
3e Corde
pp
85
87
RESTER
restez
III
89
restez
RESTER2
oresc.
p
91
93
95
97
p
99
101
oresc.
103


53
105
107
109
111
113
(114)
poco a poco cresc.
114(B)
116
117
117(B)
119
cresc.
120
120(B)
123
126


TEMPO 1°
133
(tranquillo ma in tempo)
pp
139
TEMPO
LOURÉ DOLCE
144
149
TEMPO
p
153
p
157
161
cresc.
165
169
173
SOST.


TEMPO
177
f SOSTENUTO
183
SOST.
189
195
SOSTENUTO
201
SOST.
SEGUE
205
cresc.
SEGUE
ff
SOST.
209
MINOR
mesto
fp
213
p
p
217
tranquillo
221
225


228
pp
230
233
236
cresc.
239
f
pp
242
pp
f
pp
244
f
f
sostenuto
246
248
AD LIB.
fff SOSTENUTO
252

Conclusion in the form of ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am fully aware of what it means to boldly approach so closely two prestigious personalities like Jean-Sebastian Bach and George Enescu.

The first has been recognized for so long and everywhere as a Demi-God-Creator of music, and the second as the greatest interpreter of the **Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin**.

Having had the exceptional good fortune to work with Enesco for 5 years I always knew that he was offering me such a precious message that I immediately wrote down even the smallest detail with care... and I studied this and passed it to my students for 60 years...

I became aware during my participation of the Symposium of Bucharest for the 50th anniversary of his death that I had a duty to future generations of violinists to share Enescu's guidance, which I had jealously preserved for so long.

Having been unable to do this himself due to circumstances, I understood it was imperative to do so in his place before the information was lost forever.

Serge Blanc and Georges Enescu bowing at the end of their concert (Paris, 1952)
(recording available on www.sergeblanc.com)

A Serge Blanc, en souvenir de sa remarquable
exécution de ma Sonate roumaine, bien
amicalement
Georges Enesco
1952

For more information :

www.sergeblanc.com

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