FANTASIA

for the

Harp,

Op. 35.

&

VARIATIONS

pour la Harpe

sur l'air

"JE SUIS ENCORE DANS MON PRINTEMPS"

Op. 36.

Composed by

L. SPOHR.

EDITED
by

DAVID WATKINS

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Clive Morley Collection

Harpists are fortunate that Louis Spohr wrote so many important pieces for the harp. There are several 'Grand' sonatas for violin and harp, two concertantes for violin, harp and orchestra, a trio for violin, cello and harp and amongst the solo pieces this 'Fantasia' in C minor (opus 35) and the 'Variations' (opus 36).

Mozart was Spohr's musical 'God' so that his earliest compositions are very much under the influence of Mozart's classicism. The 'Fantasia' is still very much in this 'classical' mould but the 'Variations' show several glimpses of a more flexible and romantic style. Both pieces are so important in our repertoire of original music for the harp that all harpists should know them and they should always be included in competition programmes.

The first time that Louis Spohr met Dorette Scheidler, he was captivated by her harp playing. They married on 2nd Febuary 1806, and even on their honeymoon, Louis started to enthusiastically study the technique of the harp as he had some compostions in mind. He was thrilled with the combination of violin and harp and hit upon the idea of tuning the harp a semitone below the violin. "Two things are gained", he wrote in his autobiography. "The violin is at its most brilliant in sharp keys, the harp in flat keys when the pedals aren't used. I therefore decided that the most effective and happiest keys for the violin were D and G and for the harp, E flat and A flat, so I wrote all further compositions for harp and violin in these keys. A second advantage was that strings would break less frequently".

The 'Fantasia' and 'Variations' were completed in 1807 and published by Simrock of Berlin in 1816.

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Louis Spohr

Louis Spohr was born in Brunswick (Germany) in 1784 quickly becoming a renowned violin virtuoso. His compositions were considered greater than Beethoven's so it is strange that with his large output of symphonies, operas and oratorios, few people know his compositions today. He was also leader of the orchestra of the Duke of Gotha and of the "Theater an der Wein" in Vienna. Whilst in Vienna he became friends with Beethoven and his autobiography is worth reading for the descriptions of their meetings. He was also Musical Director for the Elector of Hesse-Kassel. He died in 1859.

Interpretation.

It is important to remember that both these pieces were written for the lighter strung single action harp (the double action harp was patented by Erard in 1810). The strings were also closer together, so that the enormous stretches at the end of the 'Variations' would not have seemed so difficult. Dorette Spohr found it very difficult to adapt to the new double action harp, so much so, that she gave her last public performance in London on the 18th June 1820 and for the rest of life played only the piano in public.

Both pieces must be played with elegance and flexibility but the main problem in the 'Fantasia' is the choice of tempo for the Alegretto sections. If the whole section is played at one speed, the opening Alegretto sounds too slow and the second part (with triplet accompaniment) too rushed. So, start with an elegant Alegretto Tempo and after the descending scales, settle into a more relaxed speed. For the final Alegretto and coda, I suggest a slightly faster speed so that work ends brilliantly without sagging. The decorations must be sensitive and flexible. In Bar 6, for instance, start the turn on the second beat (and not before) so that the decoration becomes more melodic. The Cadenzas should be played with 'fantasy' the two main cadenzas being divided into three groups - each group to be played faster than the previous one so as to add to the accumulative excitement. Here I have suggested enharmonic pedalling so that the technical flight and ease achieved by more comfortable spacing far outweighs the problem of extra pedals. I decided to omit fingerings as size of hands and different schools of playing preclude hard and fast rules.

The theme "Je suis encore dans mon printemps" (I still feel young) is from an oprea by E Mehul (1763-1817). This delicious melody, harmonized with a clever harmonic structure, really caught Spohr's imagination and he produced a set of variations which are as ingenious and delightful as one could ever imagine.

At the end of the second last variation (at the beginning of the Cadenza) the first two left hand chords sound better an octave above (as in Wilhelm Posse's edition of 1913). Each variation must not be played in a slavish metronomic way. There must always be poetry and flexibility. It is also obvious that the final 'Rondo' plays itself naturally at a faster speed.

David Watkins

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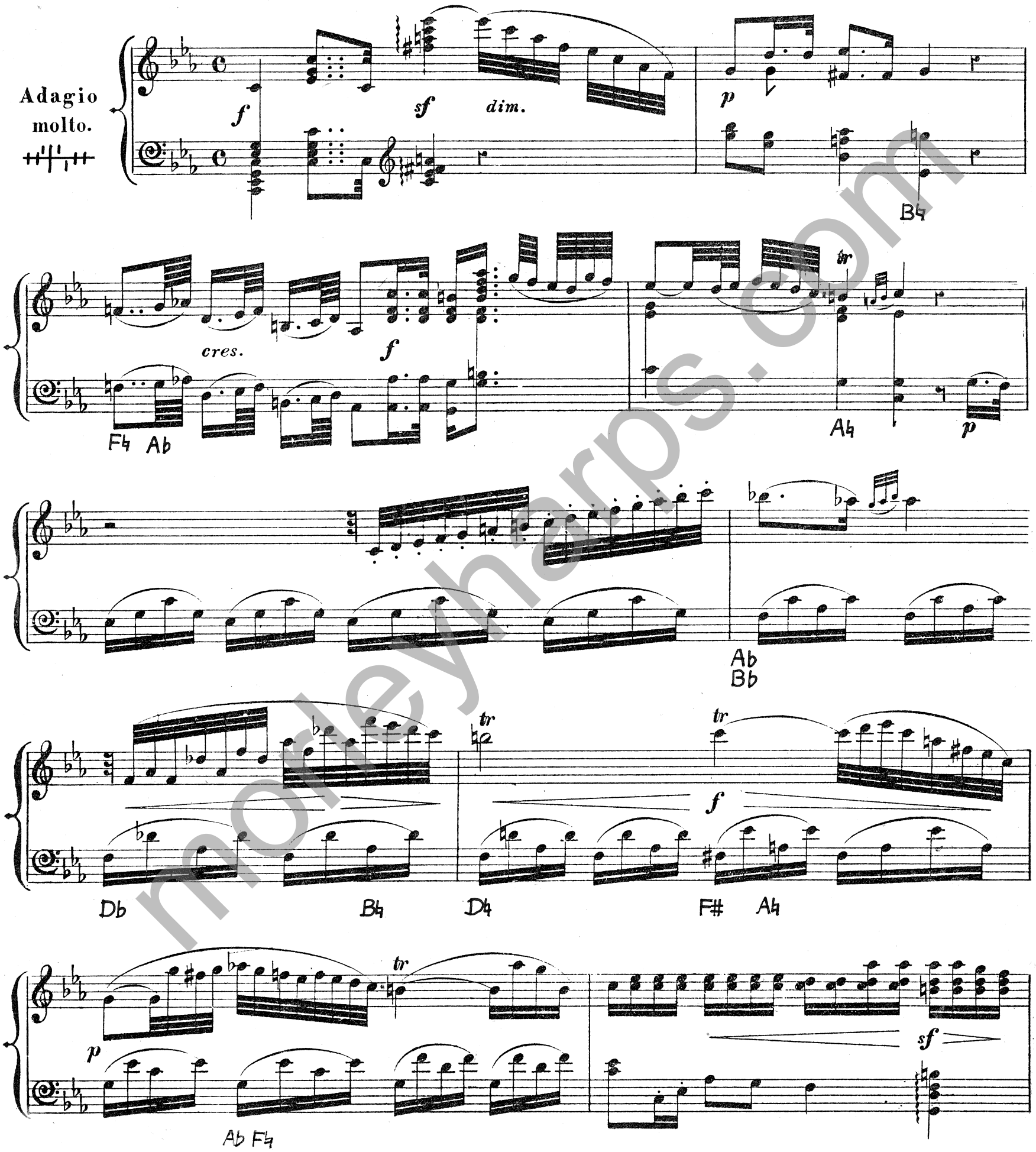
FANTASIA
FOR THE
HARP.

L. SPOHR.



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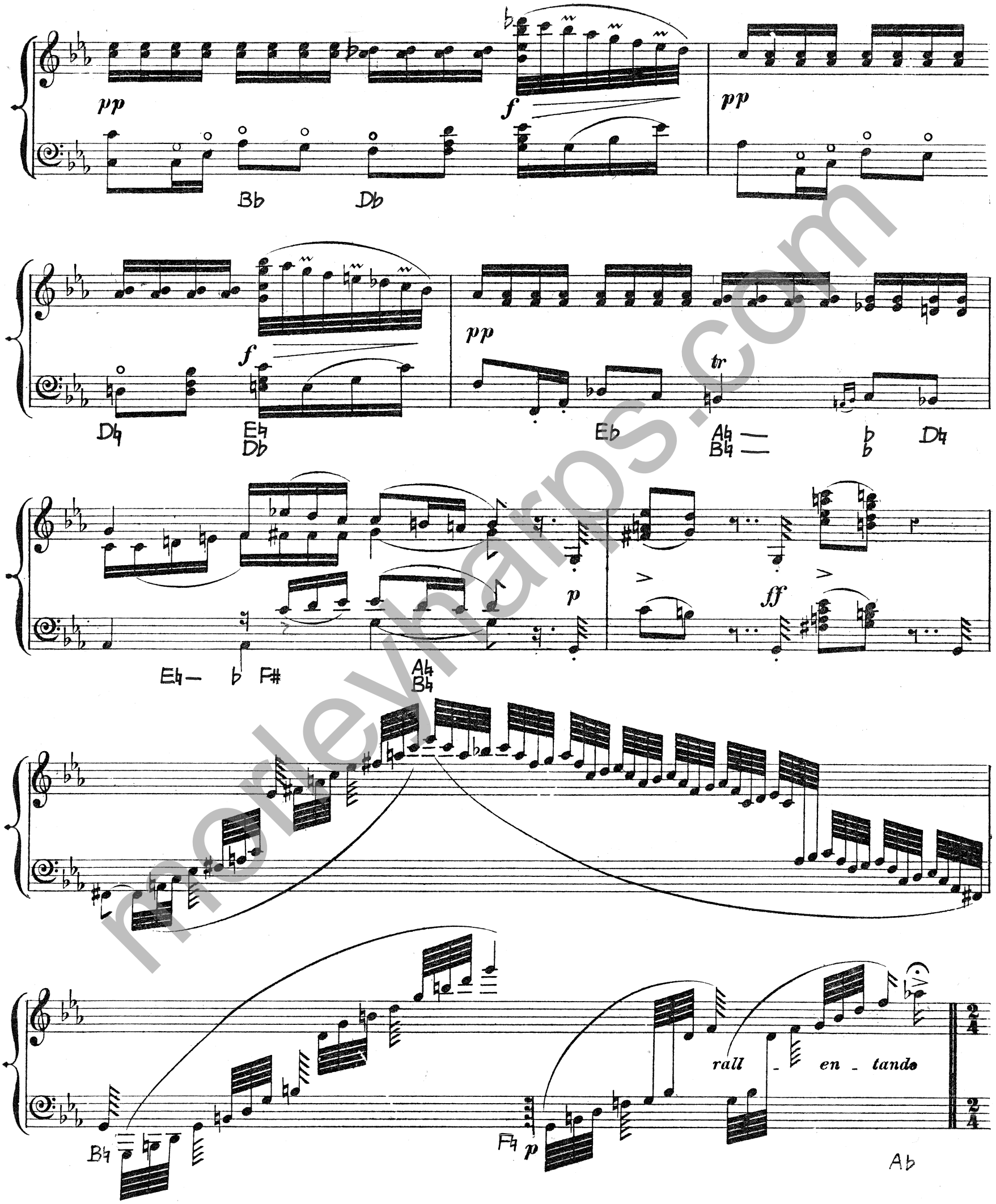

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Allegretto.

p dolce

sf

sf

sf

pp

tr

sf *p*

cres.

f

norleyna

di - min - u - en - do

Ab

p sf

Gb Cb

sf sf

Ab Cb Gb Ab

sf sf p sf p

Bb sf Eb Bb sf Eb

sf dim.

Bb b F# Fb Bb F# Bb Ab

sf dim. ri - tar - dan - do pp

Ab Bb Fb Bb Bb Ab Bb Fb

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Allegro.

Fb *f* Ab

pp

cres - cen - do

Gb Cb

Fb Db

f Gb Bb

pp

cres - cen - do

Gb

Fb Cb

Ab *f*

pp

cres - cen - do

Gb

ff Ab Db

Allegretto.

p

p Ab

f Ab Bb

p

p

f

Bb Db

p

Db

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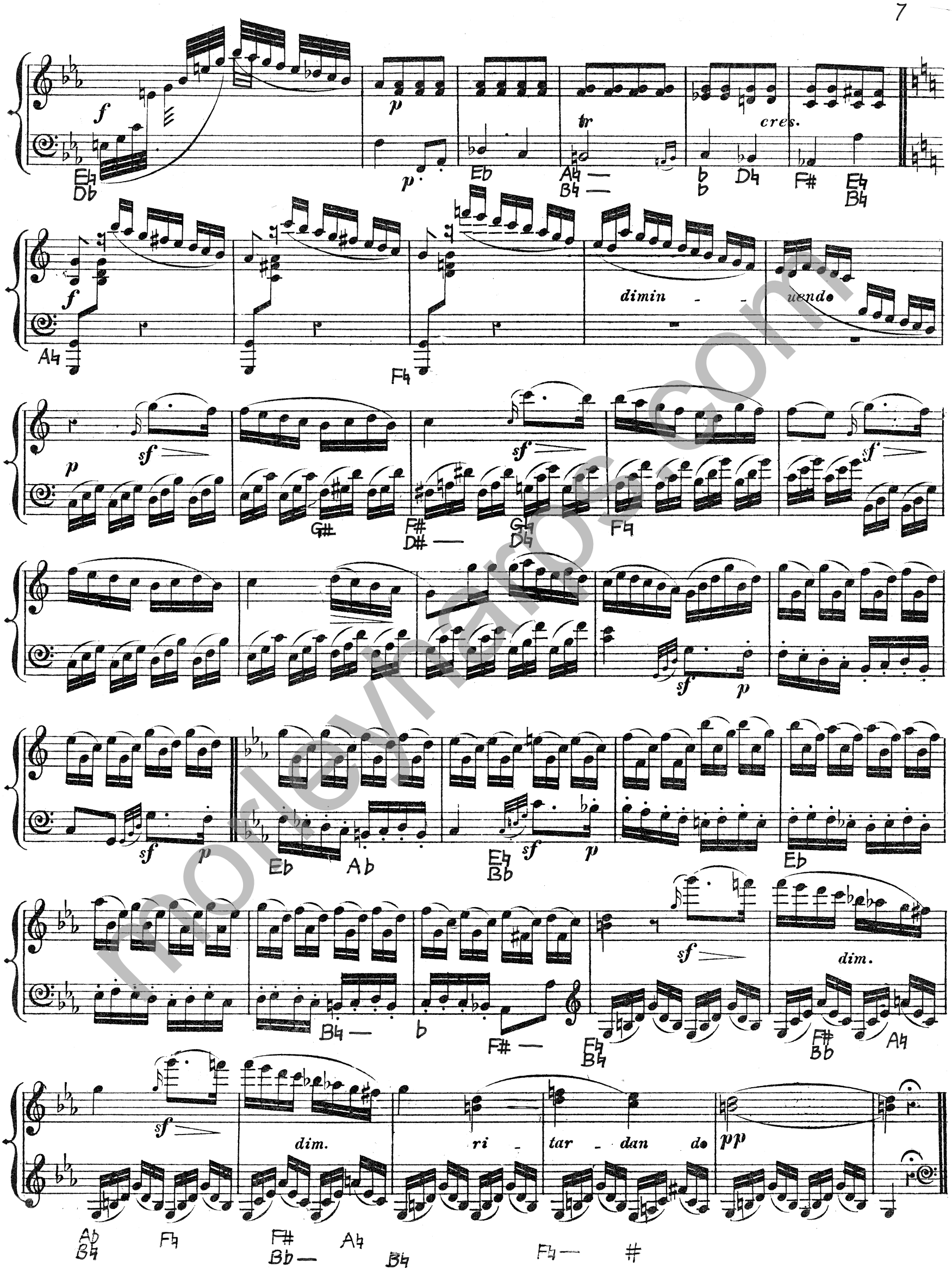

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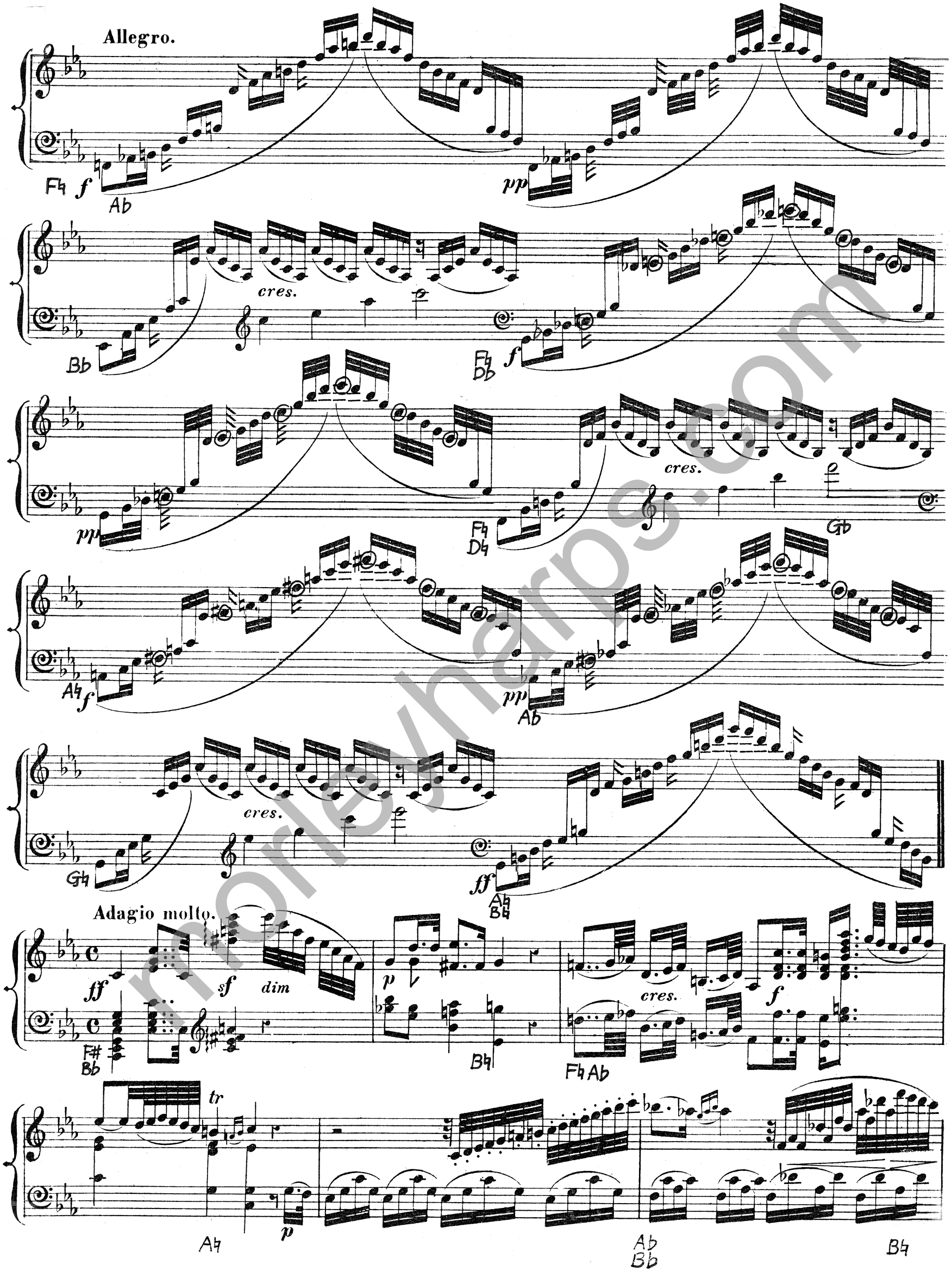

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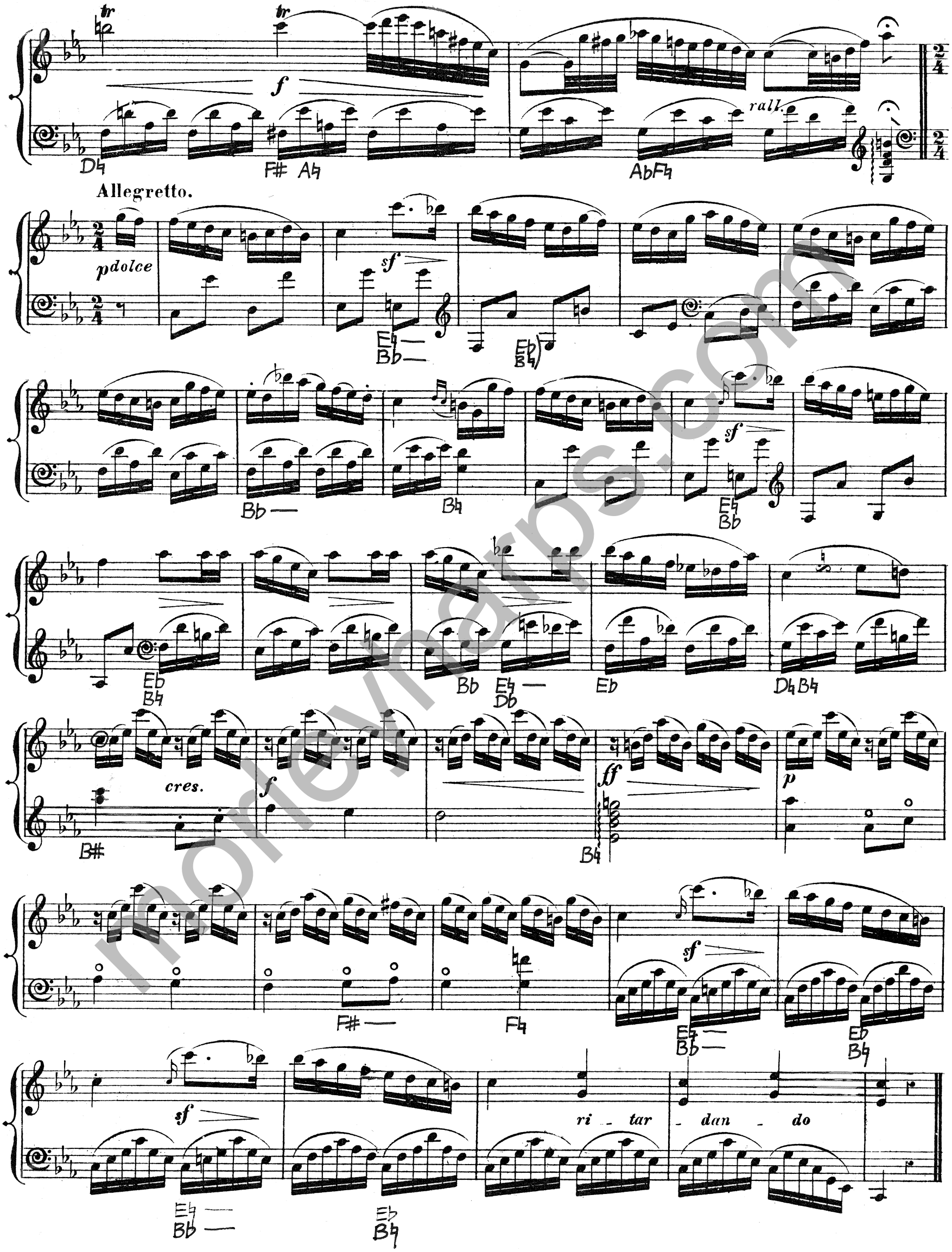

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VARIATIONS

pour la **HARPE**

sur l'air:

"JE SUIS ENCORE DANS MON PRINTEMPS."

Op. 36.

Composées par
LOUIS SPOHR.

Allegretto.

p

cres.

sf

tr

dim.

Ab Bb Eb Ab Eb Bb Ab Db Bb —

Bb Bb — Bb Ab Db

VAR. I.

p

A# — Ab

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cres.

Ab

Eb
Bb

f

dim.

p

Db

Db

Eb
Bb

Bb

Bb

Bb

Ab
Db

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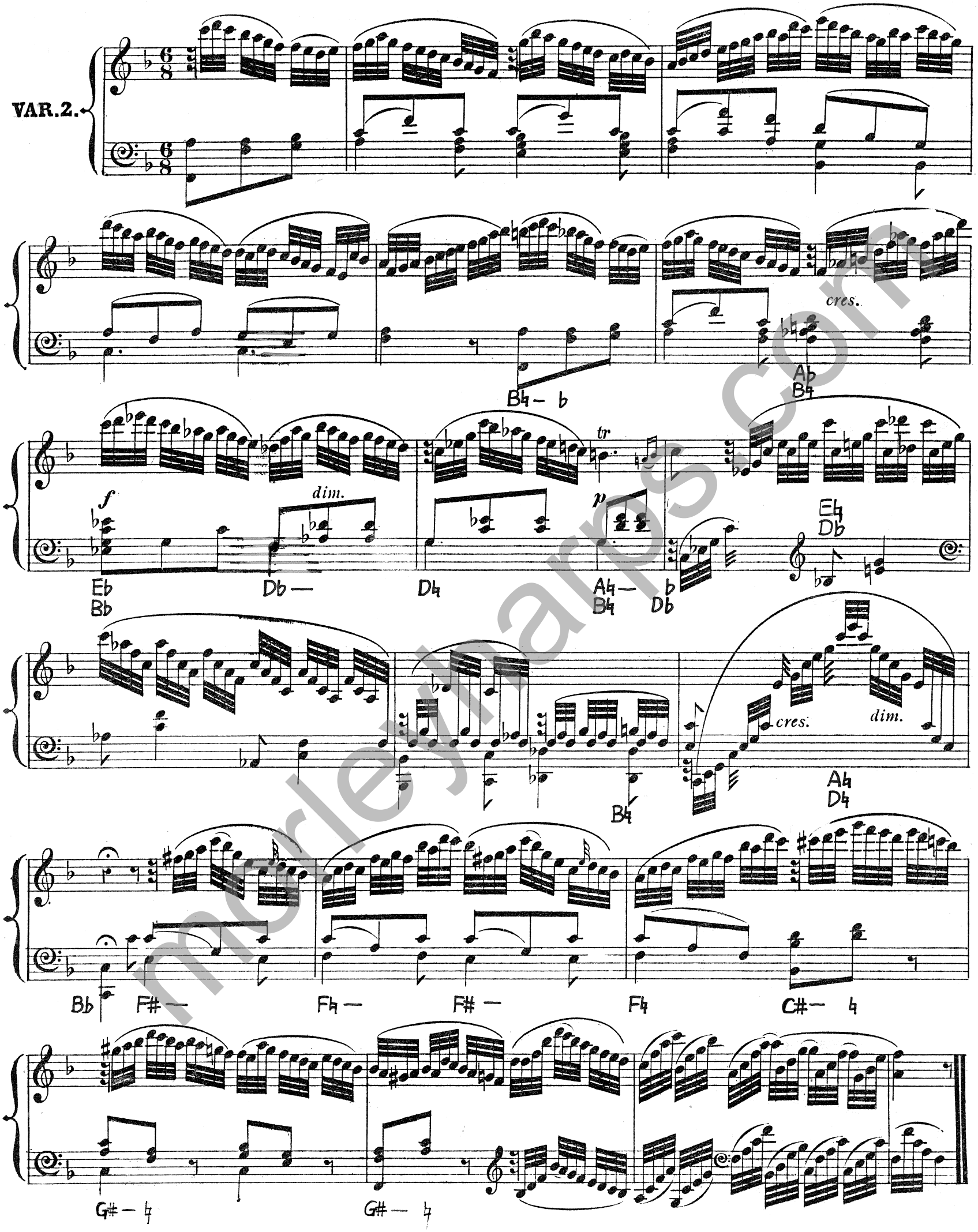

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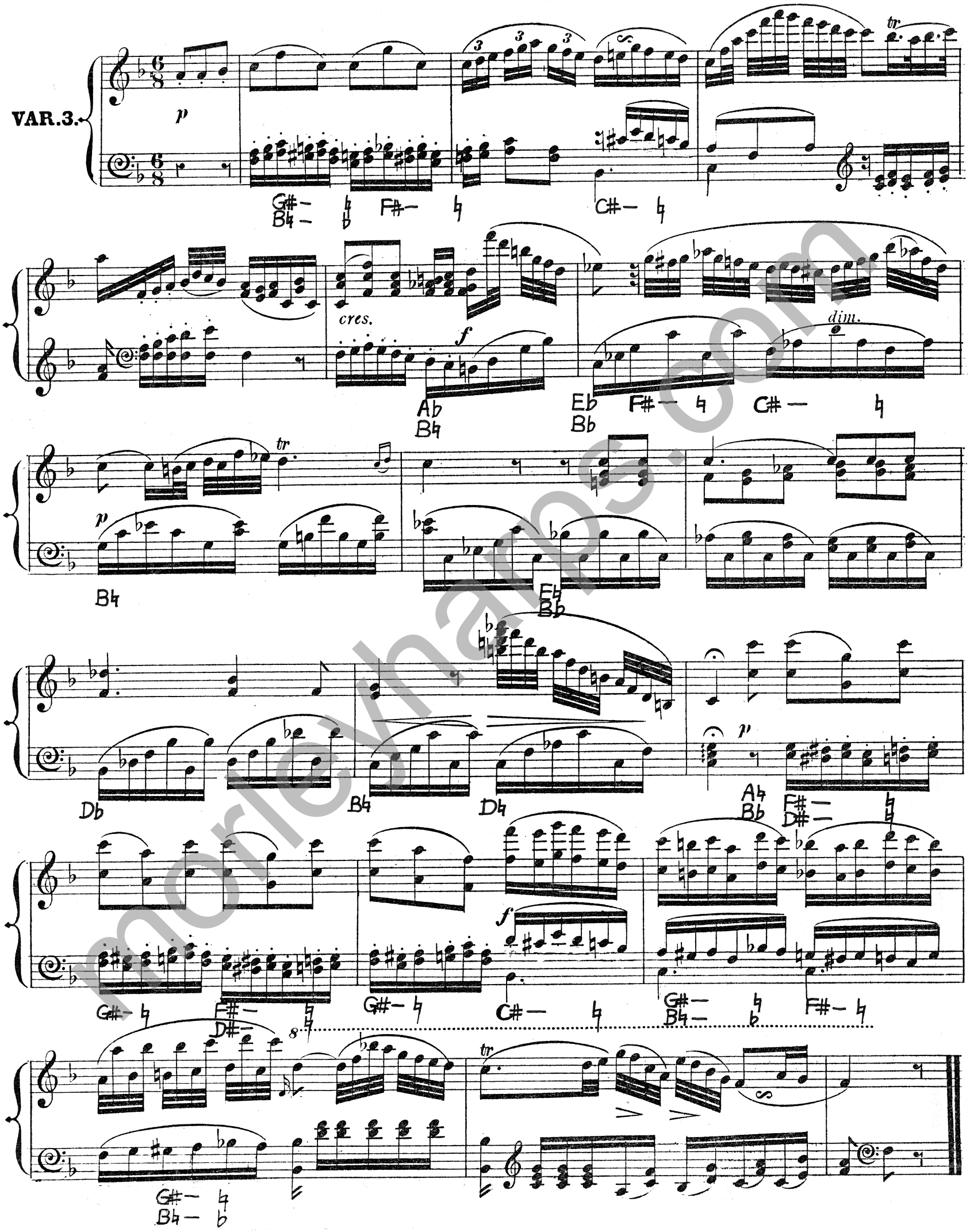

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VAR.4.

p

Eb

F# —

cres - cen -

Eb

do

f

di - mi - nu - en - do

Ab

Eb
Bb

Db

Db

p

cres.

f

Eb
Bb

p

cres.

f

Db

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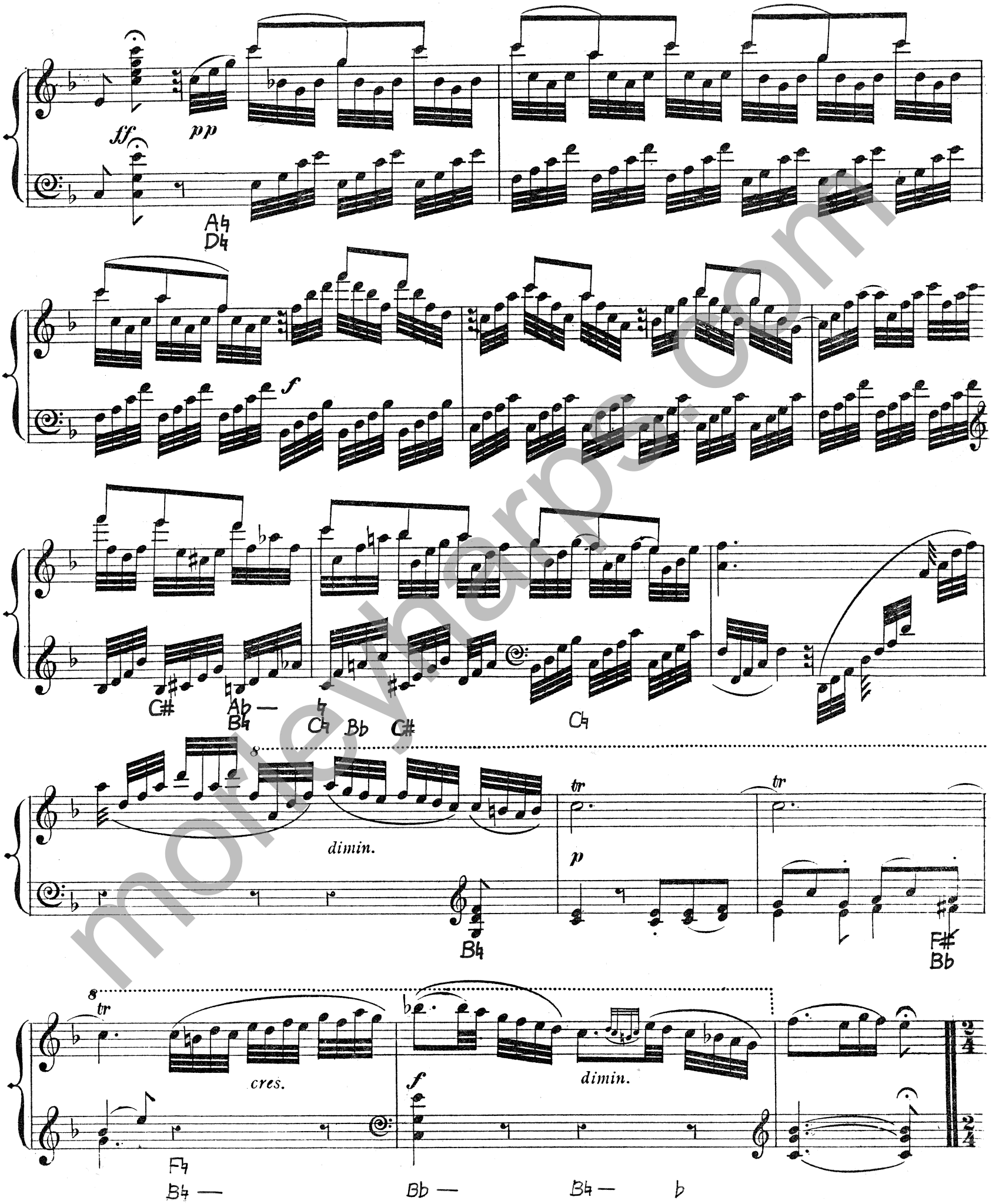

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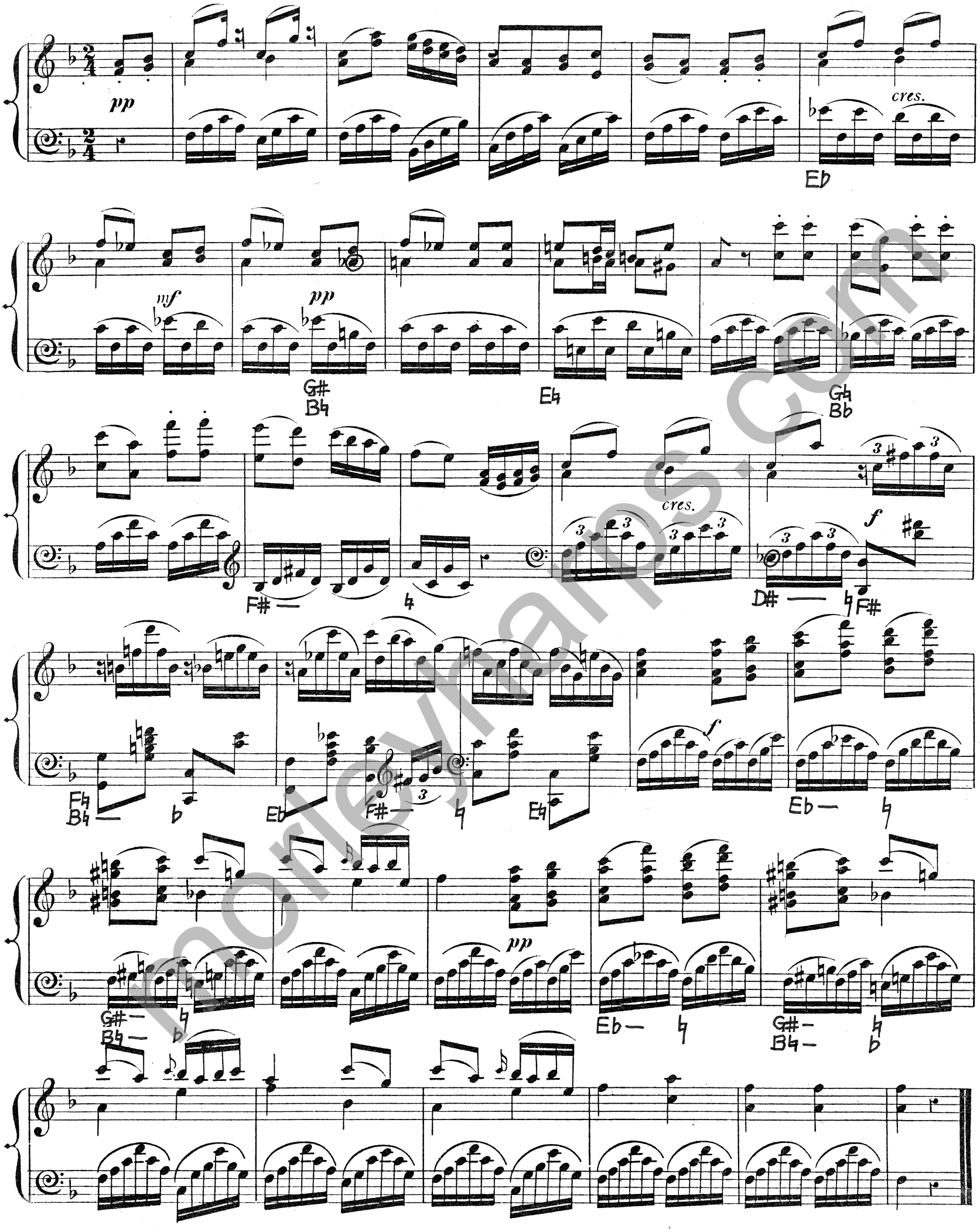

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