# ESSENTIAL KEYBOARD DUETS, VOLUME 4

## 7 Transcriptions for Late Intermediate to Early Advanced Pianists

**Selected and Edited by Lucy Mauro and Scott Beard**

### Historical Background

The transcription—an adaptation of a work from one medium to another—has long been a part of the Western music tradition. While the words "transcription" and "arrangement" are sometimes used interchangeably, a transcription more often implies a greater fidelity to the original score. An arrangement suggests more alteration of the original work, perhaps through simplification or even development in a more elaborate manner.

Some of the earliest transcriptions and arrangements are those of vocal works adapted for keyboard, lute or vihuela. The earliest extant arrangements for keyboard date from the 14th century and are found in the *Robertsbridge Codex*. The *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* from the early 17th century also includes several keyboard arrangements of vocal works. In the Baroque period, with the increase of instrumental literature, transcribing works from one instrumental medium to another became common practice. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) frequently transcribed his own works, as well as those of other composers. During the 18th century, the practice of transcribing and arranging works continued. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) transcribed Bach fugues for string trio and quartet and re-orchestrated several works by George Frideric Handel (1685–1759), including *Messiah* and *Acis and Galatea*.

In the 19th century, with the rise of the piano as the principal medium for music in the home, transcriptions for solo piano and piano duet became a natural means for experiencing the popular works of the day. Indeed, transcriptions and arrangements became an integral part of the developing piano repertoire. Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) and Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) made outstanding transcriptions of their own works, as did Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) and Claude Debussy (1862–1918), who also transcribed works by other composers. In a letter to his friend Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), the great violinist, Brahms said:

> *The last few days, I have arranged my second Serenade for four hands. Don't laugh! It gives me great joy. Seldom have I written music with greater delight; the sounds appeared to me so sweetly and softly, that I was completely on cloud nine. However, I can honestly say that my happiness was not increased by the knowledge that I was the creator. It's ridiculous, all the same.*[1]

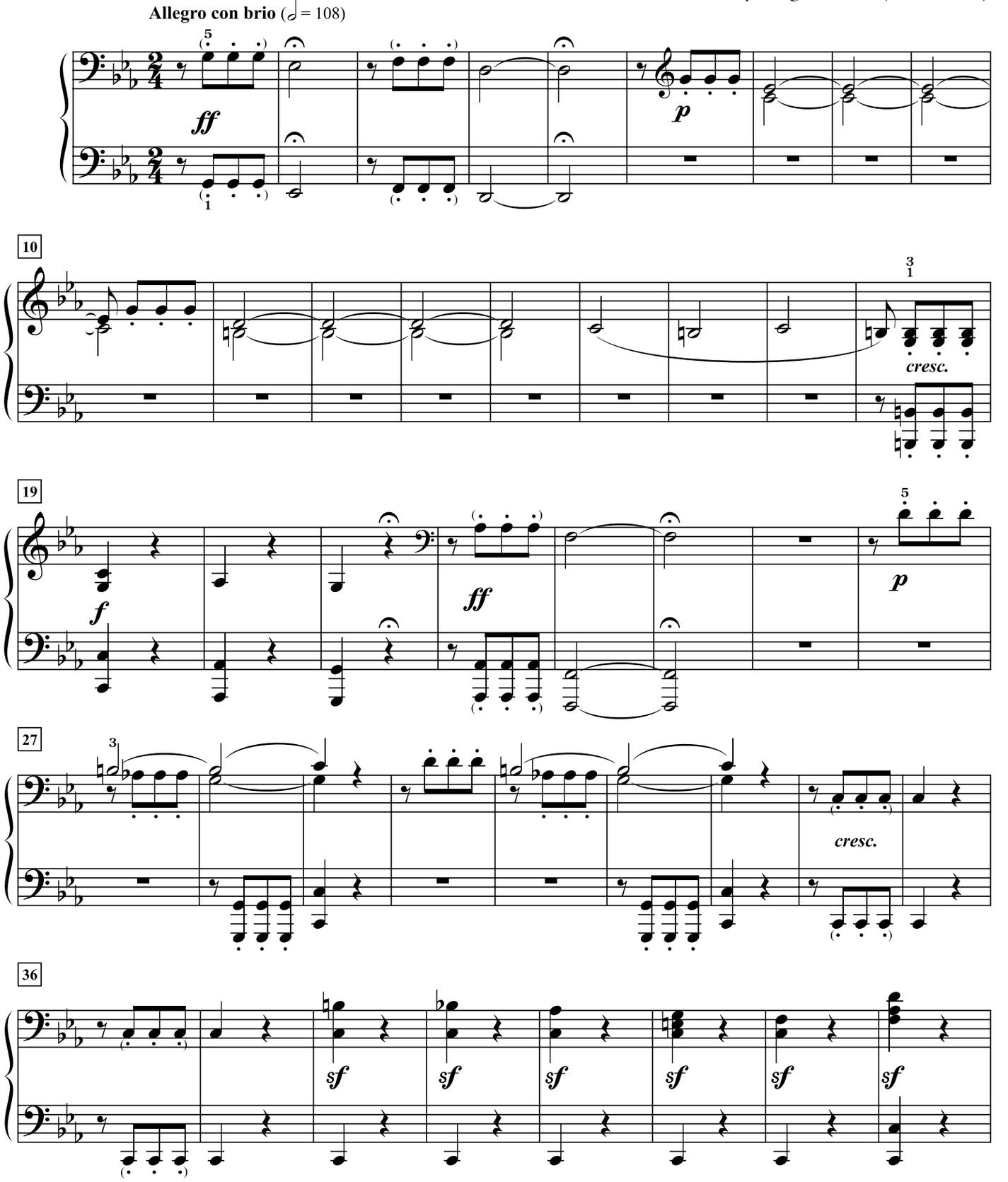
It was Franz Liszt (1811–1886), however, who made some of the most important contributions to the genre. Liszt coined the terms "transcription"—an authentic re-creation of a work—and "paraphrase"—a free, improvisatory-like adaptation. He used the term "paraphrase" for his embellished operatic adaptations, and "transcription" for the numerous songs, symphonies, arias, and other works that he adapted for solo piano, piano duet, and two pianos.

There are several reasons for the popularity of transcriptions and arrangements over the past seven centuries. Before the time of radio and recorded music, the arrangement was the predominant way of enjoying popular works. Arrangements and transcriptions were also (and continue to be) an important tool for composers to study one another's works. They also may be written as a tribute to another composer (such as the many transcriptions of the works of J. S. Bach at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries), or to increase the repertoire for a given instrument, as in the many Baroque works that were transcribed for the saxophone in the 20th century. Further, the simplification of works allows musicians of different abilities to study and enjoy a variety of literature. Today, transcriptions and arrangements of a wide range of classical works and popular songs are in great demand, continuing this long-standing and vital musical tradition.

[1] Andreas Moser, ed., *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Joseph Joachim*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1912), p. 267.

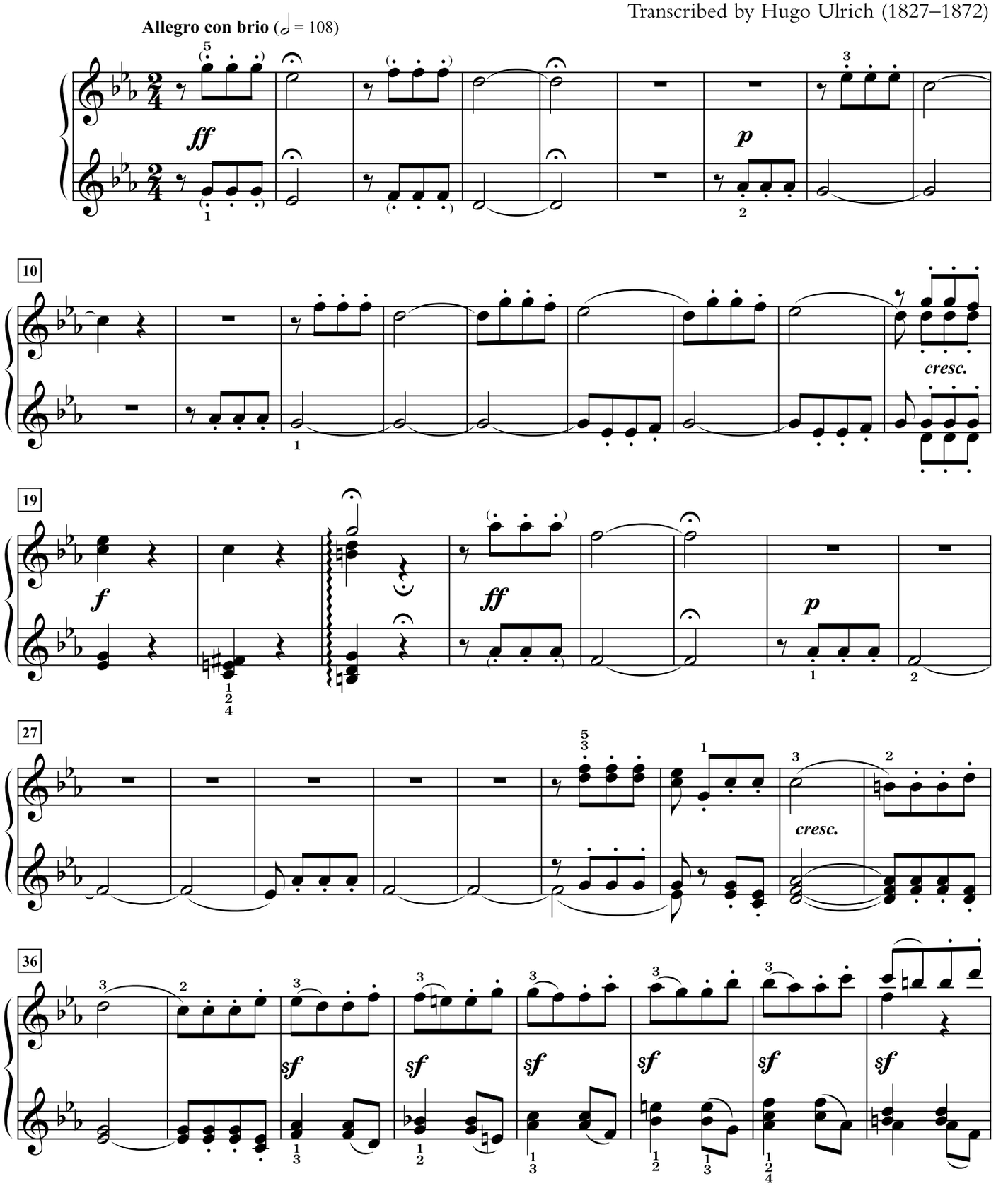
# Allegro con brio
## from *Symphony No. 5*
### SECONDO

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Transcribed by Hugo Ulrich (1827–1872)



# Allegro con brio
## from *Symphony No. 5*
### PRIMO

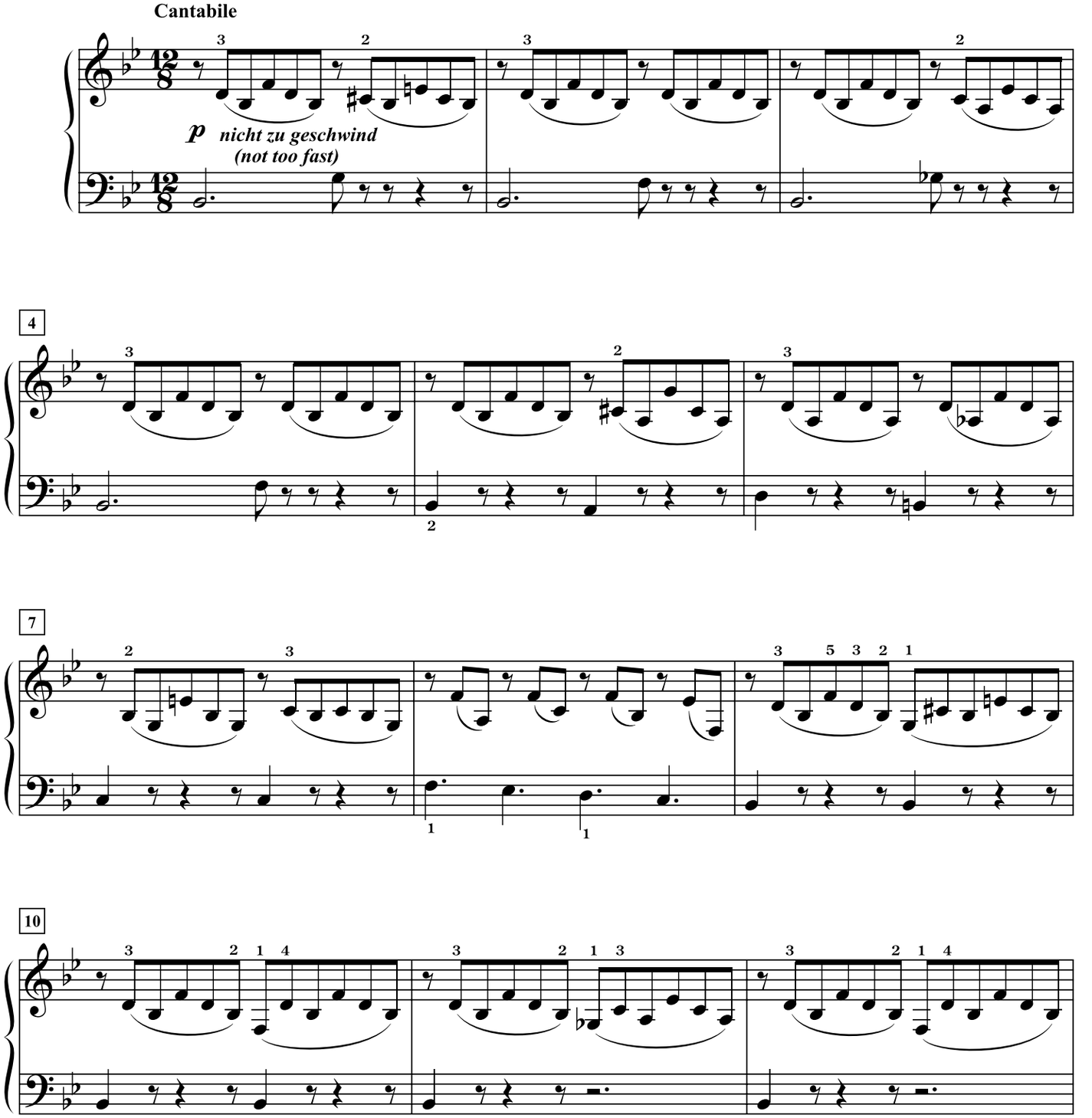
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Transcribed by Hugo Ulrich (1827–1872)



# Nocturne No. 5

## SECONDO

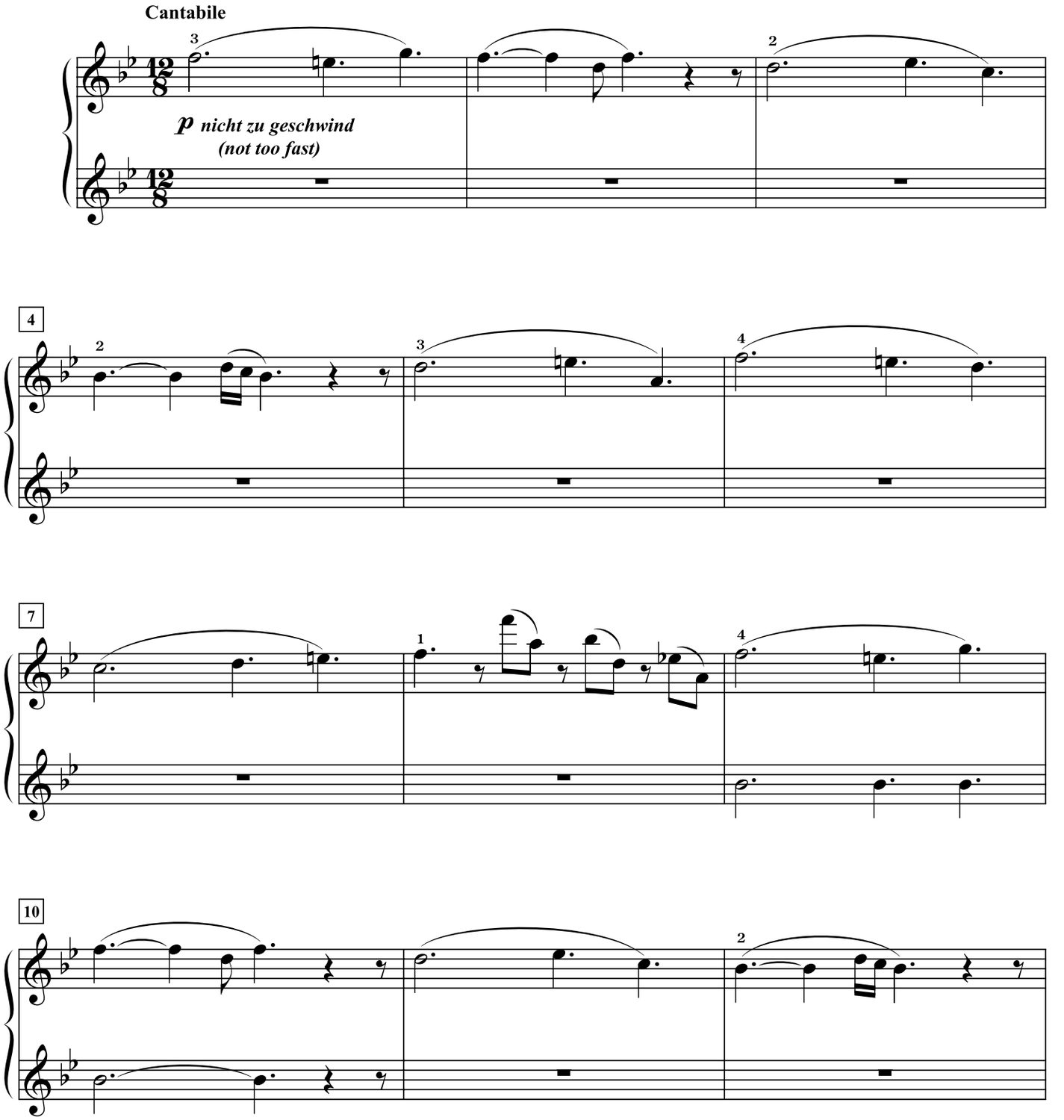
John Field (1782–1837)
Transcribed by Franz Liszt (1811–1886)



# Nocturne No. 5

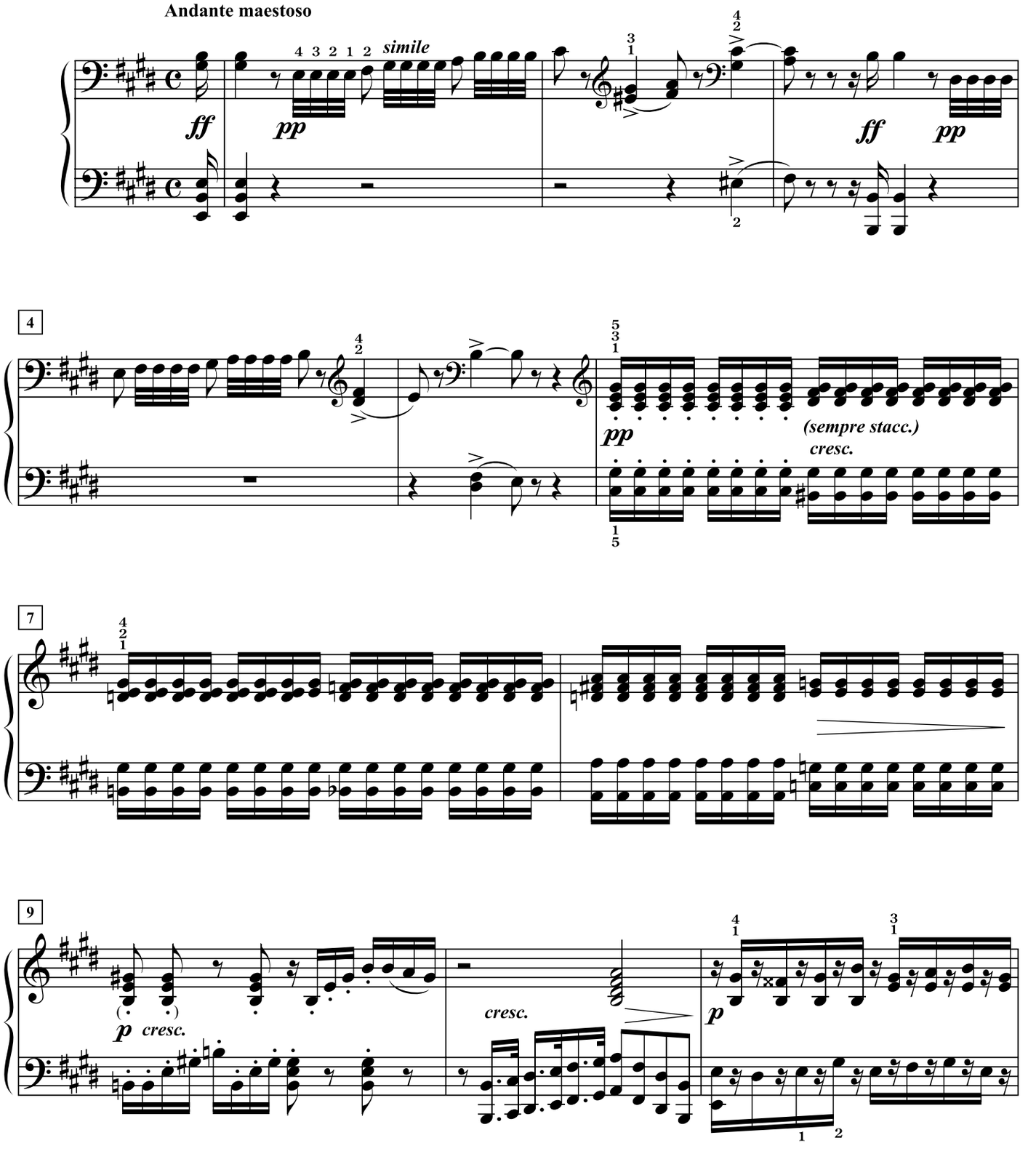
PRIMO

John Field (1782–1837)
Transcribed by Franz Liszt (1811–1886)



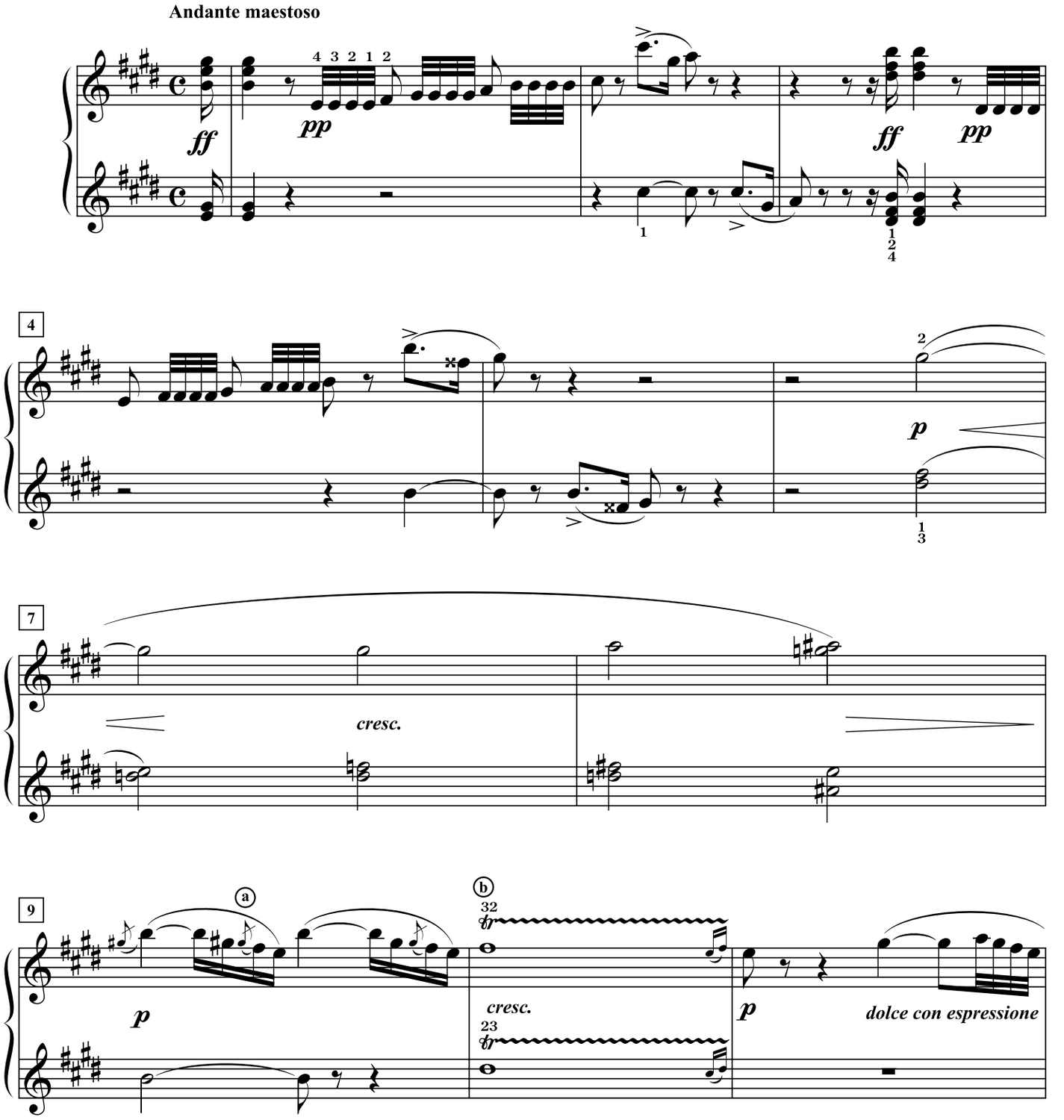
# Overture
## from *The Barber of Seville*
### SECONDO

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1808)
Transcribed by Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)



# Overture
## from *The Barber of Seville*
### PRIMO

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1808)
Transcribed by Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)




a Play the grace note on the beat, almost simultaneously with the main note.

b Play an unmeasured trill beginning on the upper note.

## About the Composers, Transcribers and Music

**Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685–1750), the great German composer and organist, was from a family of several generations of musicians, spanning some 250 years. Bach's music represents the culmination of the Baroque period. His command of the contrapuntal texture and the harmonic and rhythmic language of the time was unequalled. Bach composed more than a thousand choral, orchestral, chamber, and solo instrumental works. His best-known works include the *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, the two volumes of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Goldberg Variations*, and the *Brandenburg Concertos*.

The *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, BWV 565 is one of the most famous works for organ and one of the most recognizable pieces of classical music. Written some time before 1708, some musicologists suggest that Bach may have transcribed it from an organ improvisation, one that he would use to test the sound of an instrument. The toccata, which is improvisatory in nature, makes dramatic and effective use of the key of D minor and unusual designated tempo changes. The fugue in four voices uses an extended 16th-note subject followed by one of the most famous examples of a real answer (the second statement of the subject with the exact intervals and rhythms of the motive).

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770–1827) was a German composer and pianist. One of the greatest and most influential composers of all time, Beethoven's musical style reflects the traditions of the Viennese classicists combined with a profoundly personal expression and ingenious craftsmanship. To describe his approach to composition, Beethoven preferred the term *Tondichter* ("tone poet"). With over 130 opus numbers, his many compositions include orchestral, chamber, vocal, and solo piano works.

Beethoven composed the *Symphony No. 5 in C Minor*, Op. 67 in 1807–1808, a period in which he wrote many of his monumental works. The first movement, "Allegro con brio," is in traditional sonata form. The movement is one of the most famous examples of thematic unity. The initial four-note motive provides the basis for the material of the entire movement and is found in some form in almost every measure. Beethoven develops the opening motive through such techniques as repetition, extension, and rhythmic augmentation. In this brilliant movement, he also makes dramatic use of silence as well as great contrasts in dynamics and articulation.

**John Field** (1782–1837) was an Irish composer and pianist. One of the finest concert pianists of his time, Field was known for his beautiful tone and exceptional musicality. He was from a family of professional musicians—his father was a violinist and his grandfather, an organist. Field's first public concerts were in Dublin in 1792. The following year, the family moved to London, where he continued performing and became an apprentice of Muzio Clementi (1752–1832). Field's piano compositions, with their expanded use of the keyboard, characteristic widely spaced accompaniments, and original keyboard figurations, had a significant influence on the development of 19th-century piano literature.

Field is best known for his development of the nocturne, a single-movement piano composition that predominantly features a legato, cantabile melody over an arpeggiated bass. The main theme, upon repetition, usually becomes more elaborate. The *Nocturne in B-flat* Major dates from 1817 and is one of Field's most familiar works.

**Joseph Haydn** (1732–1809) was an Austrian composer and pianist. One of the most eminent musicians of his time, Haydn's works epitomize the Classical style. For many years, Haydn served as the court musician for the Esterházy family, a position that allowed him to develop his talent as a composer. With chamber groups and an orchestra at his disposal, Haydn developed the string quartet, composed numerous symphonies, and refined sonata-allegro form. Haydn's compositions include keyboard, choral, chamber and orchestral works.

The second movement of Haydn's *Symphony No. 94* uses the form of theme and variations. The movement contains many characteristics associated with the Classical style: simple melodies that emphasize the tonic and dominant, symmetrical phrase structure, and clear textures. The symphony takes its nickname, "Surprise," from the sudden, loud chord that appears at measure 16. Throughout the movement, Haydn makes great use of contrasts in dynamics, articulation and instrumentation. His sense of humor and admittedly good nature permeate the work.

**Franz Liszt** (1811–1886) was a Hungarian virtuoso pianist and composer. He studied with Carl Czerny (1791–1857) and spent most of his early adulthood touring throughout Europe. Liszt essentially invented the solo piano recital and his unabashed virtuosity, unparalleled sight-reading, and innovative piano writing make him a pivotal figure in the history of pianism. Liszt withdrew from the concert stage by 1850 and devoted the remainder of his life to teaching and composing. Along with Theodore Leschetizky (1830–1915), he became one of the most important piano teachers of the 19th century. Liszt was a prolific composer, and many of his compositions, paraphrases, and transcriptions of operas, symphonies, and other