ROBERT SCHUMANN

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54

for Piano Solo and Orchestra (Arranged for Second Piano)

Edited by Thomas Labé

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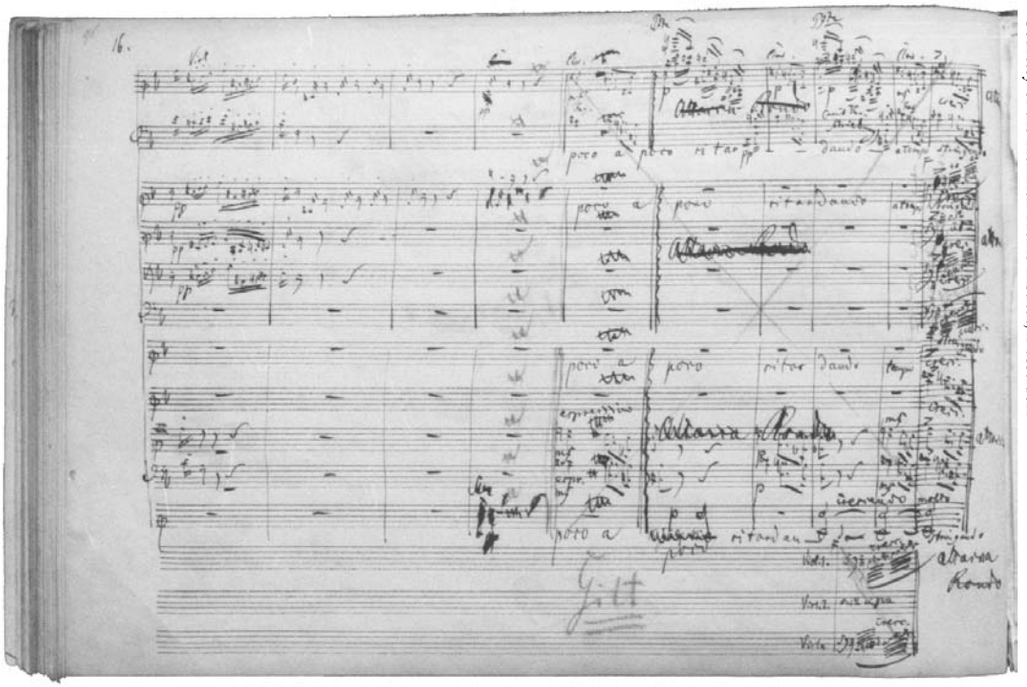
Analysis and Interpretation

When Schumann returned to the prior composed fantasy intent on placing it within a larger structure he posed himself a considerable architectural challenge. As the influential Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904) pointed out in his 1858 appraisal of the work, the concerto's first movement, with its succession of contrasting tempi, established of itself a "miniature representation of a concerto."[82] Such a state of affairs would make it necessary for Schumann to find the means not only of integrating the fantasy within a larger context but of countering its weight in the concerto's complementary movements.

Schumann's apt solution was to effect a seamless transition between the second and third movements, in effect creating a two-part structure of appropriate length and emphasis to balance the tripartite impression given by the first movement. For Schumann, the finished concerto had two movements, and he was clearly concerned that it be perceived as such when he wrote to Mendelssohn (shortly before the Leipzig premiere) that "my concerto is divided into *Allegro affettuoso*, *Andantino* and *Rondo*—the last two are elided—perhaps you could note that on the program."[83] The evidence provided by the autograph manuscript makes clear that the connection between the *Andantino* and *Rondo* was a trying exercise for the composer.[84]

Schumann's original conception, still visible in the autograph, involved a single E (measure 102) sustained in the first violins, followed by a general pause and a double bar. Although a somewhat curious ending for a movement in F major, it did serve to establish a tonal relationship to the A major Finale, to which the inscription *Attaca Rondo* (later crossed out) directed a close link. Apparently not satisfied (the date of "July 16, 1845" given for completion of the movement can also be seen struck out beneath the horn part), Schumann then conceived a new six measure transition (measures 103–108). A bold "**X**" scrawled in crayon over the new material served temporarily to restore the original conception. Some time later, attempted erasure of the crayon marking and placement of the word "Gilt" (stet), underlined twice, indicated a further change of heart.



Courtesy of the Heinrich-Heine-Institut, Düsseldorf

This remarkable page from the autograph manuscript speaks to the difficulty Schumann experienced in creating the magical transition from the Intermezzo to the Finale. The large cross (drawn in red/brown crayon, which Schumann later tried unsuccessfully to erase) is still visible and reveals one of several changes of mind.

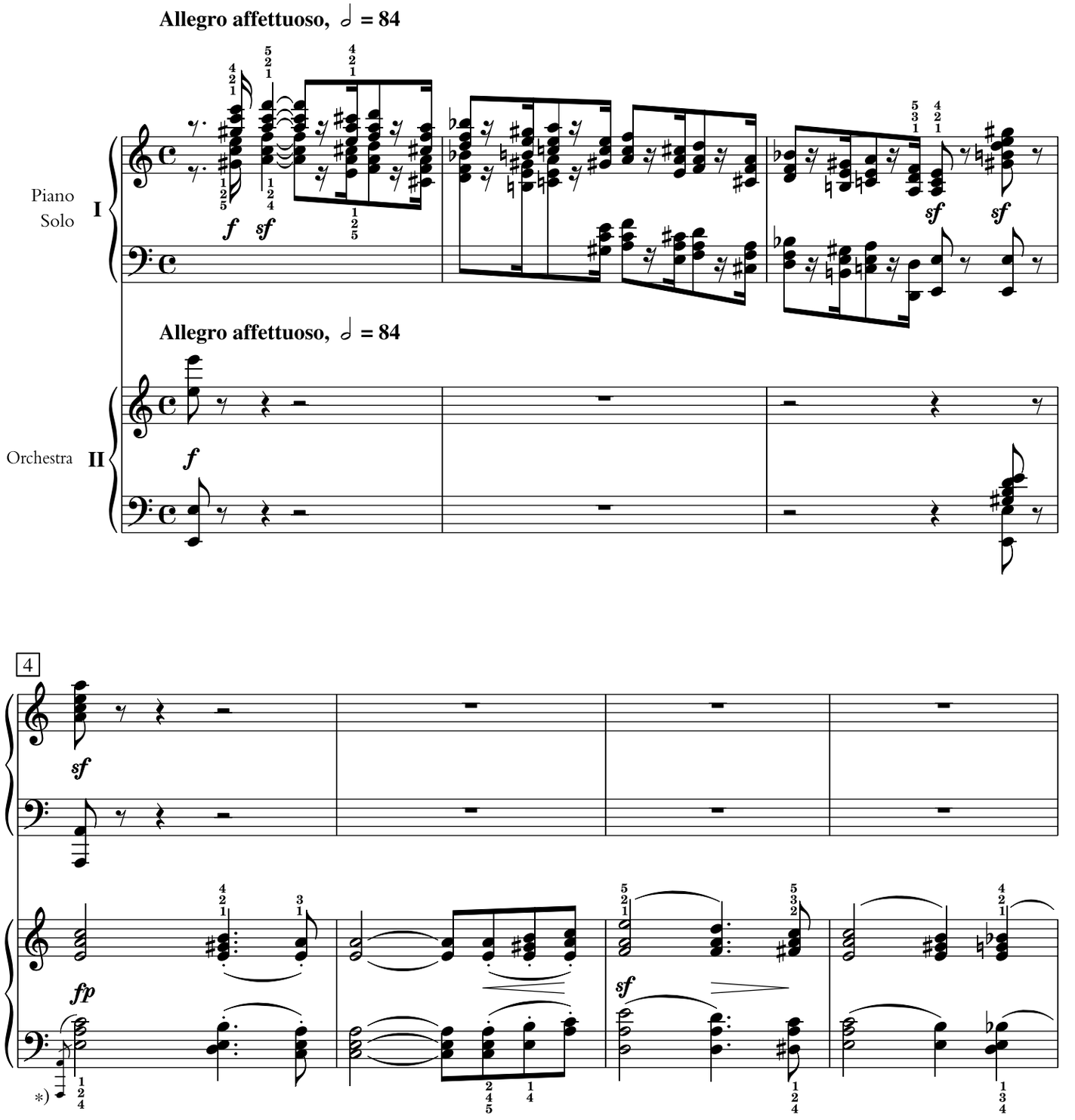
Dedicated in Friendship to Ferdinand Hiller

PIANO CONCERTO IN A MINOR

for Piano Solo and Orchestra (Arranged for Second Piano)

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Op. 54



*) All grace notes are played before the beat unless otherwise indicated.

Cadenza

Die ♩ wie vorher die 𝅗𝅥

(♩ = 𝅗𝅥 of the last movement)

402

espressivo

406

poco a poco più stringendo e cresc.

410

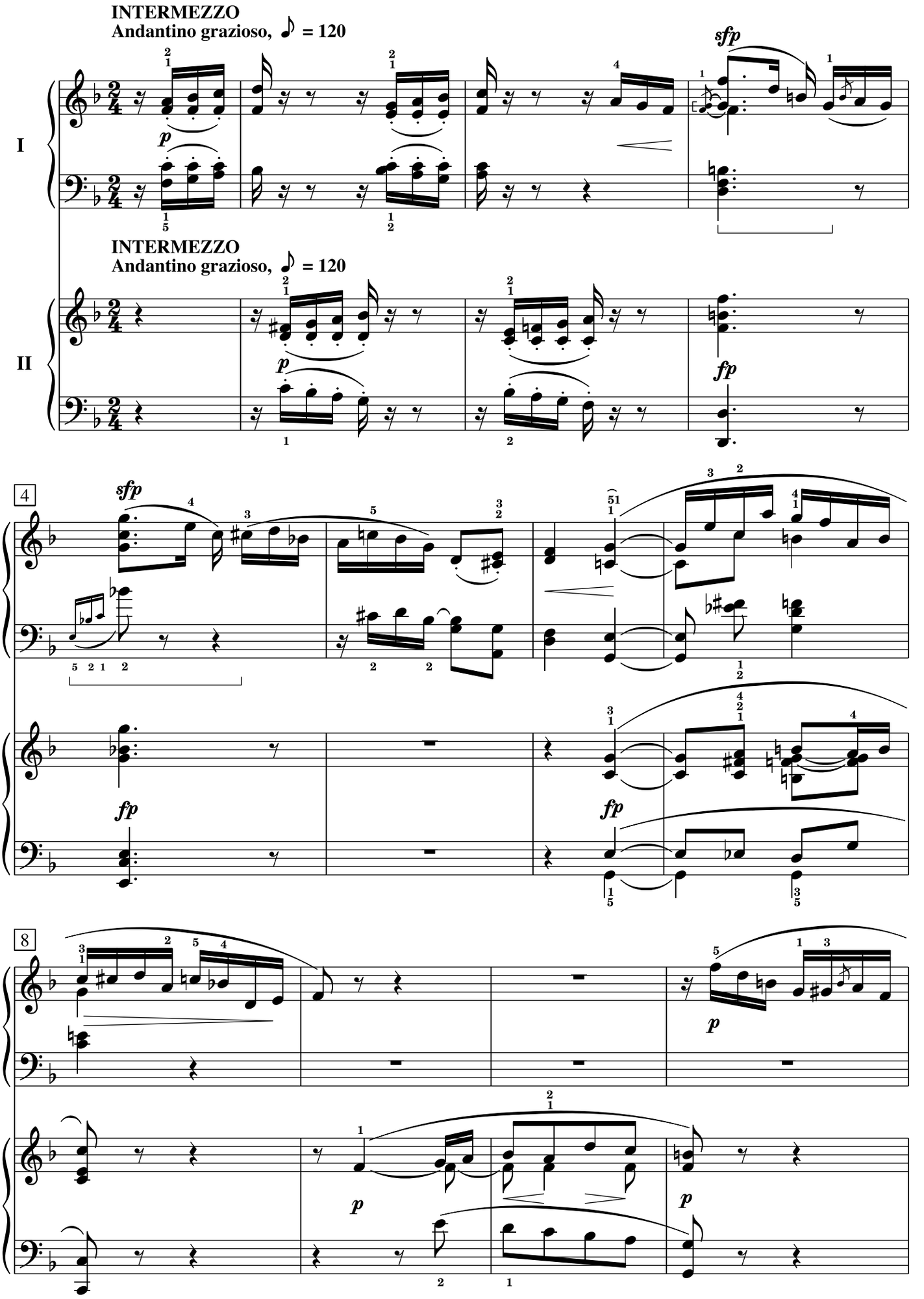
414

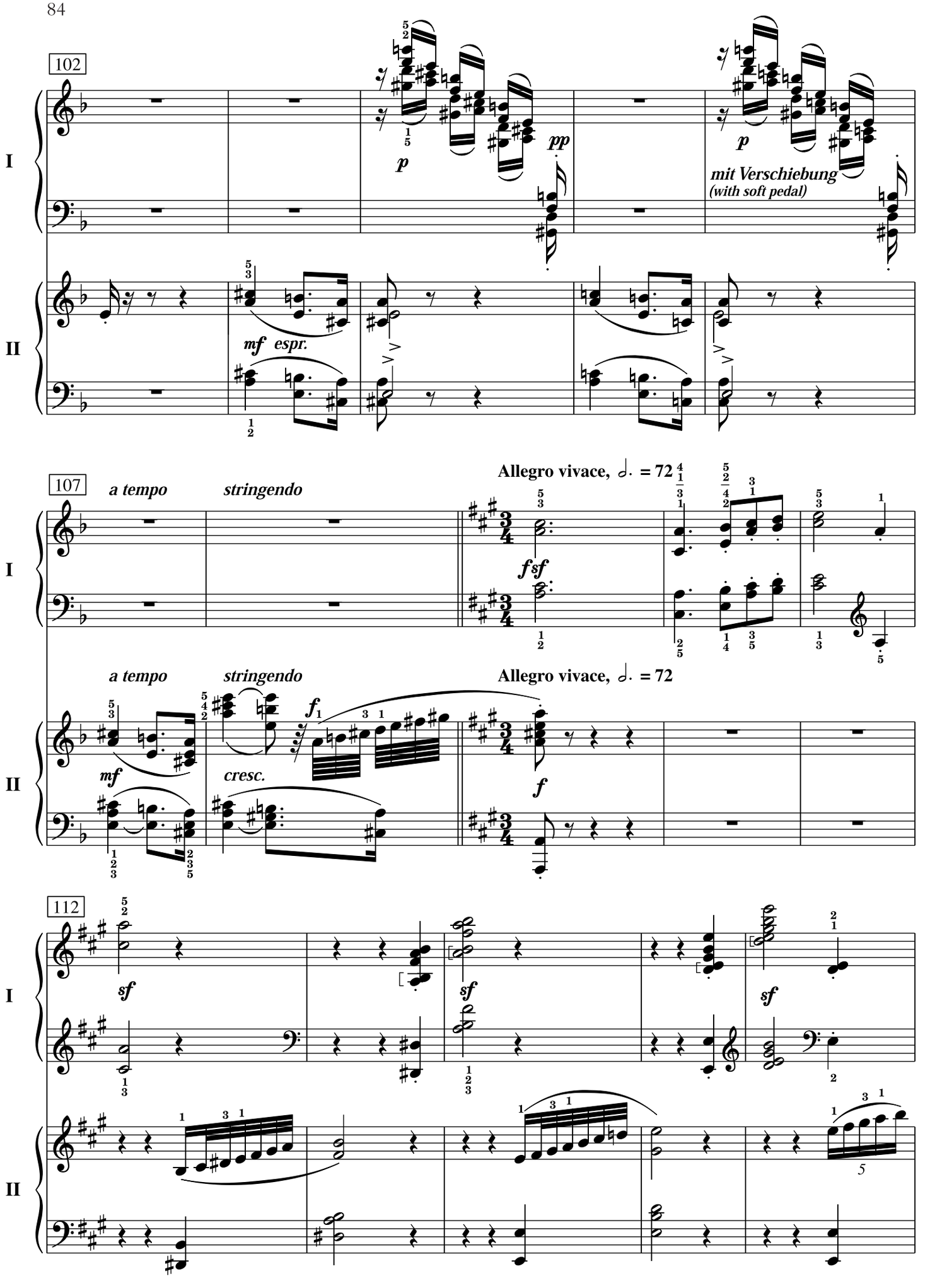
sf

418

f

sf


INTERMEZZO
Andantino grazioso, ♪ = 120
I
II
sfp
p
fp
4
8


102
I
II
p
pp
p
mit Verschiebung
(with soft pedal)
mf espr.
107
a tempo
stringendo
Allegro vivace, 𝅗𝅥. = 72
fsf
a tempo
stringendo
Allegro vivace, 𝅗𝅥. = 72
mf
f1
cresc.
f
112
sf
sf
sf
5