Twelve Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman,"

K. 300e (265)

This set is one of Mozart's most popular works. So far as we know there is no proof that the popular tune was composed by Nicolas Dezède, who composed some 20 pastorales and light operas for the Paris Comédie-Italienne during Mozart's lifetime. Mozart may have met Dezède in 1778 in Paris, but by that time, when these variations were composed, the song had long been popular beyond France as a nursery tune. Many pianists are probably acquainted with Dohnanyi's treatment of it. Mozart's set was composed in Paris in the early summer of 1778 where the tune was familiar and was popular; it was published in 1785. In the United States this tune is known as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." This work is a rarity among Mozart's variations in that the autograph manuscript is still available, at least as a fragment.

Theme Should be played ***p***, ***pp*** in the repeat; second section ***p***, *più* ***f*** from measure 13; ***mf*** in the repeat, ***p*** from measure 13; still more quiet (*diminuendo*) to the end.

Variation 1 The same tempo should continue as in the theme, and a good finger *legato* of classical technique in the right hand is necessary; possibly play ***pp*** *non-legato* in the repeats.

Variation 2 The first section should be played *poco* ***f***, repeat this section ***p***; the second section ***pp***, ***p*** to ***mp*** from measure 65; ***p*** in the repeat, ***mp*** from measure 61, *più* ***f*** from measure 65.

Variation 3 The first section should be played ***f***, repeated ***p***; the second section ***pp***, then ***p***, from measure 85, ***mp*** from measure 89; ***mf*** in the repeat, ***p*** from measure 85, ***mf*** from measure 89.

Variation 4 The first section should be played ***f***, repeated ***p***; second section ***pp***, ***mp*** from measure 109, ***mf*** to ***f*** from measure 113, repeat ***mf***, ***pp*** from measure 109, ***mf*** to ***f*** from measure 113; final measure should have a *poco ritard.* Short break!

Variation 5 Should be played very lightly and with great delicacy; the dynamics should be similar to that in the preceding variations, but basically a little gentler here.

Variation 6 Should not be loud, even if a little more brilliant; play the sixteenths—particularly in the left hand—very clearly (*non-legato*).

Variation 7 Should be played with a sparkling virtuosity; the echo (e.g. measure 181–184) should be performed with a springy *non-legato* touch; use a *poco ritard* in measures 191 and 192 for the repeat. Short pause!

Variation 8 Should be simple, *cantabile*, between ***mp*** and ***pp***; the editor recommends the use of *legato* throughout with the exception of a few obviously original *staccato* dots.

Variation 9 Should not be loud although the final two measures of each section should be played ***mf*** or even ***f***.

Variation 10 Should be performed with virtuosity, between ***p*** and ***f***; *poco ritard*, at the close of the second section in the repeats.

Variation 11 Should be played with much feeling, and flexible dynamics.

Variation 12 This final dance should be very high-spirited; it should sound virtuosic without using a powerful sound, reaching ***f*** clear and spritely in rhythm.

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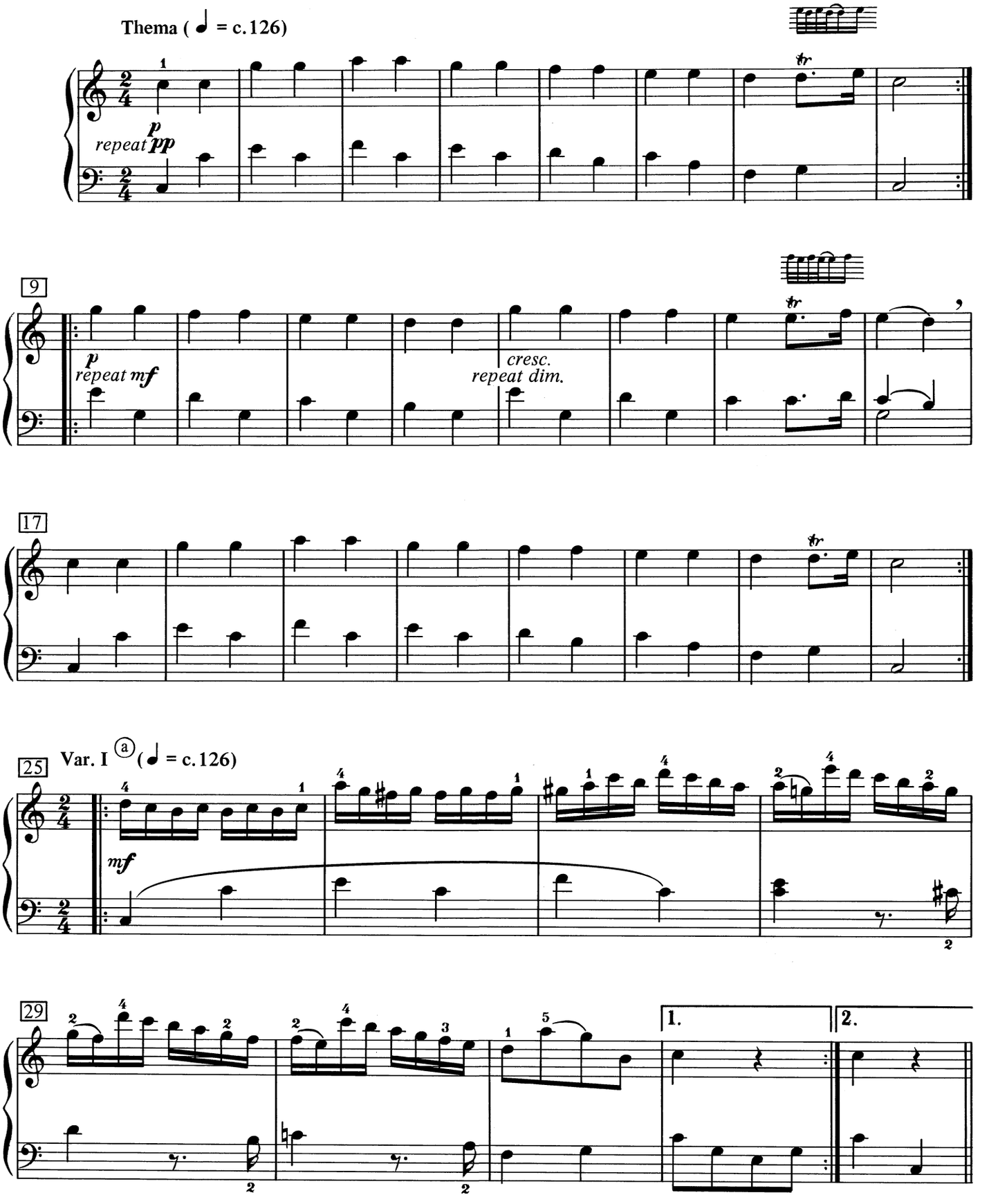

ⓐ We suggest *pp* non legato in the repeats.