Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges: Sonata No. 1 in B-flat major for harpsichord or fortepiano with obbligato violin accompaniment Op. 1a No. 1

ed. Benjamin Shute & Anastasia Abu Bakar, June 2020

Background

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745-1799) is widely regarded as the first composer of African heritage in the European classical tradition. An astonishingly accomplished man, he was music director to Marie Antoinette, an influential composer, an acclaimed violinist, a champion fencer, the first colonel of color in the French army, and an abolitionist activist.

This sonata is the first of three presumed to be written around 1770 and published without date by LeDuc in 1781. The surface texture of these sonatas, as notated, is somewhat plainer than is typical of a composer such as Mozart, especially in the violin part; but that is doubtless because performers were expected to add their own ornamentation. Indeed, Bologne himself would presumably have played the violin part and would certainly have been adept at ornamenting, having no need to spell out the variable fine points on paper.

Note on the edition

There is one source for these sonatas, the LeDuc edition of 1781, consisting of a full score and separate violin part that almost exactly reproduces the violin line of the full score. The edition contains multiple typographical errors that render it less than ideal for performance. The present edition notes these errors and corrects them, also offering simple suggestions for bowing, articulation, and ornamentation where their omission would be unidiomatic. These should be taken as only the bare minimum, and performers should be encouraged to add a great deal more historically informed ornamentation and bowing variations, especially in repeated material or in certain series of long notes.

This edition uses as its foundation the 2014 typeset by Tim Willis (Creative Commons 4.0). The editorial changes described above have been made to the 2014 typeset using a PDF editor.

In all subsequent notes, “FE” refers to the first edition (LeDuc, 1781).

Editorial policy

Dotted slurs are used when no slurs are present in the FE but a) are present in corresponding passages, or b) specifically to the violin, style and/or context suggest separate bowing was likely not intended.

Ornaments not present in the FE but whose inclusion seems especially idiomatic are supplied in brackets.

Grace notes after bracketed trills are all editorial suggestions informed by performance practice but not present in the FE. Lack of editorially supplied grace notes does not necessarily indicate that their presence would be unidiomatic.

Notation of accidentals has been modernized.

Accidentals notated above their respective pitches are not present in the FE but possibly intended, though not beyond question.

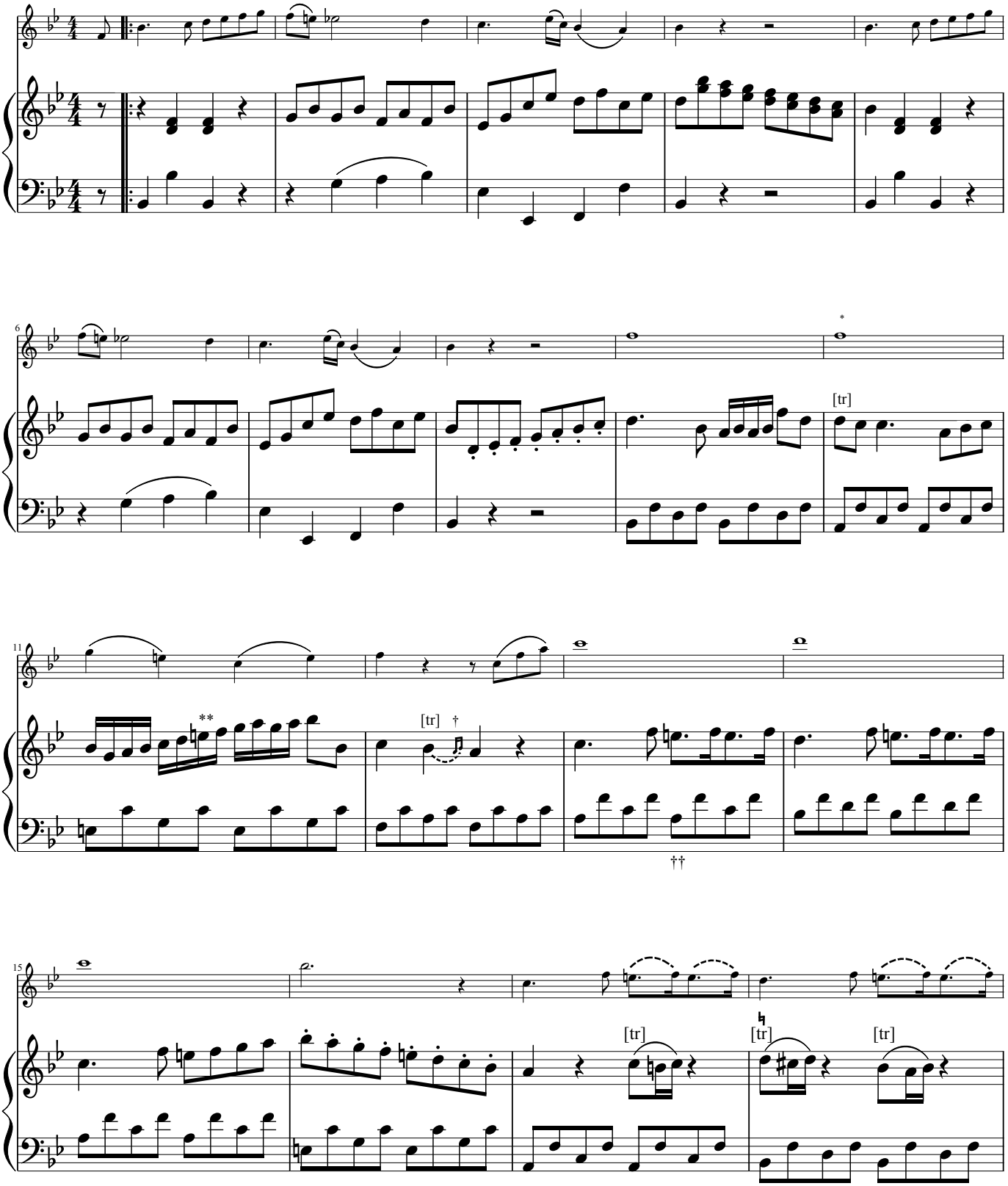
Modern repeat signs are not present in the FE. Places where repeats would conventionally be taken are indicated by double bars. However, not every section bounded by double bars represents a workable repeat. The editors have inserted repeat signs where deemed appropriate.

SONATA I

Pour Le Clavecin ou Forté Piano
avec accompagnement de Violon Obligé

Allegro

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de St.-Georges

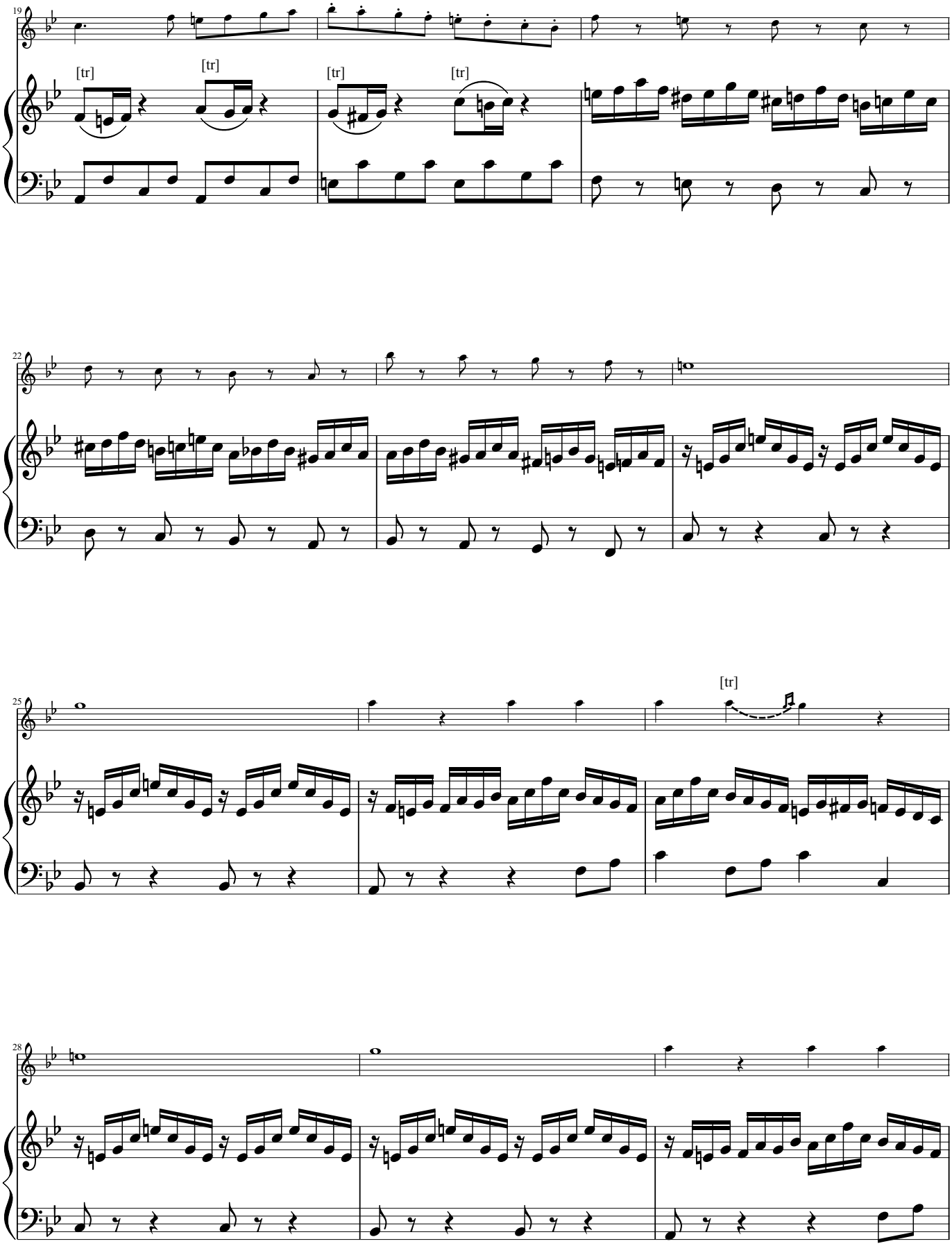


* The notation of whole notes tied across the bar line is not found in this sonata, but this need not suggest that connectedness is not meant. The intended effect is likely similar to a single sustained note in a wind instrument, but allowing for bow change on the bar line. Adding a trill to the second note is an option with many parallels from the period.

** natural omitted in FE

†Throughout this edition, all grace notes after bracketed trills are editorial suggestions informed by performance practice but not present in FE

†† f in FE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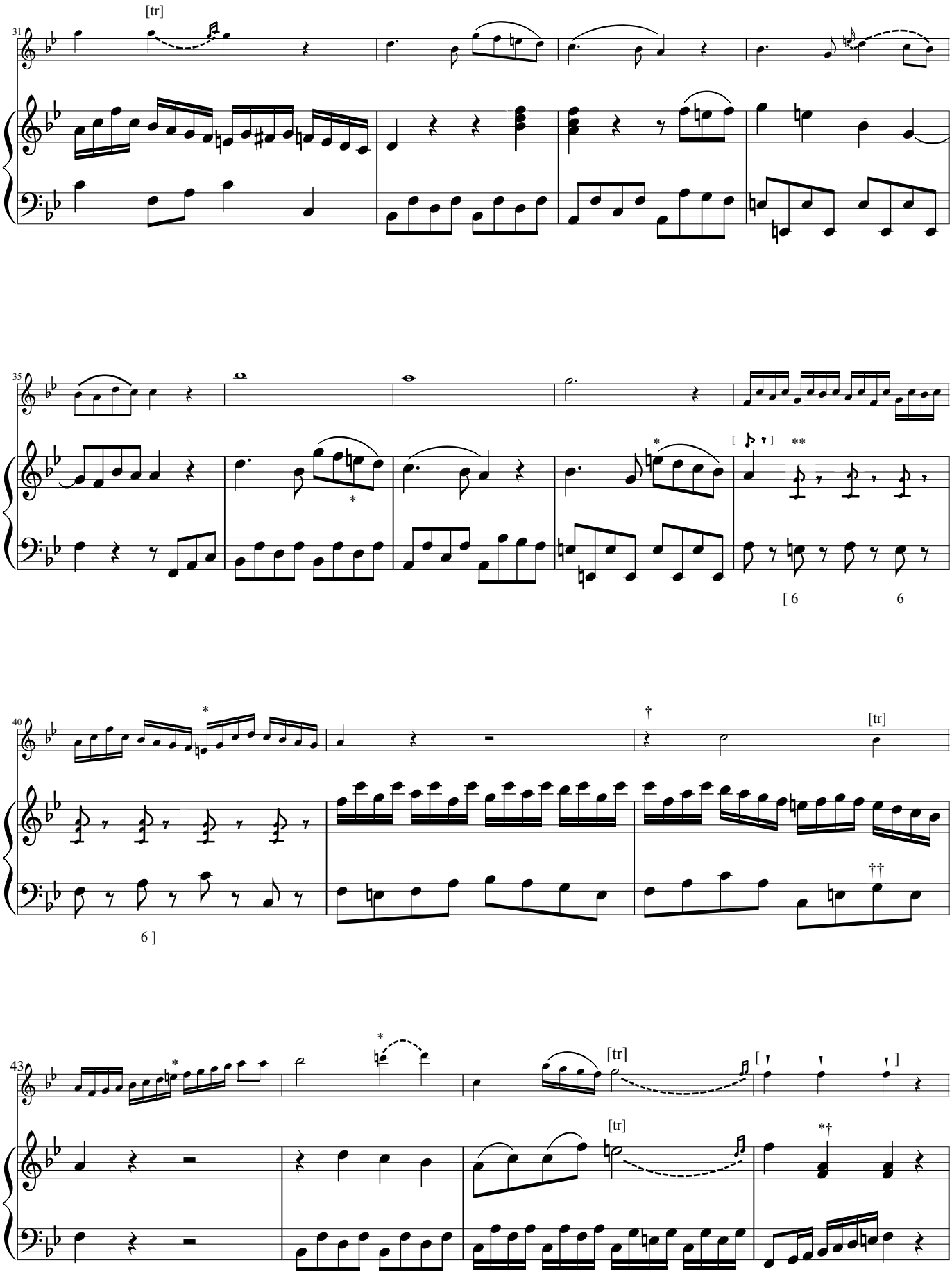
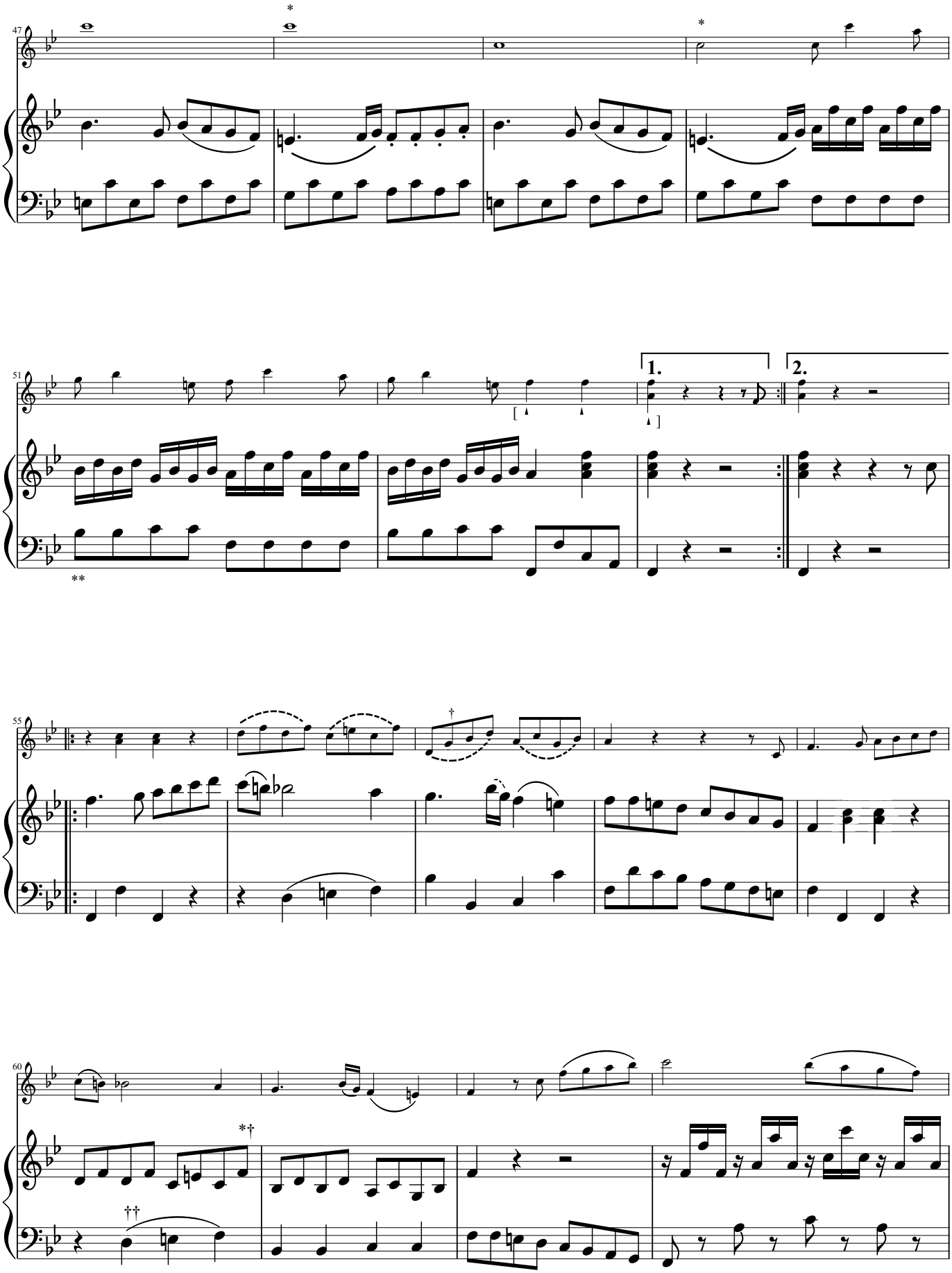


* natural omitted in FE

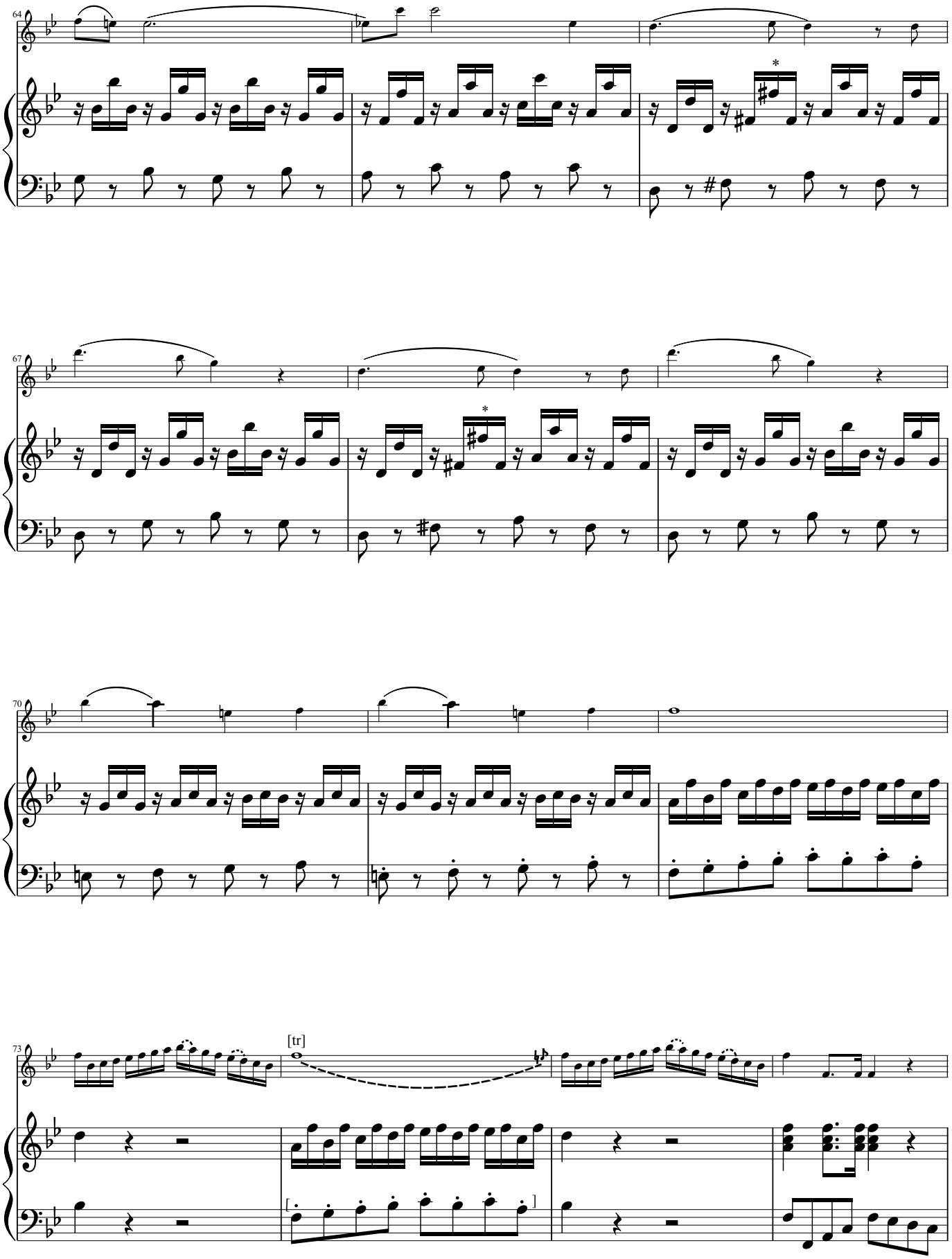
** In mm. 39-40 in FE, right hand contains rests after the downbeat of m. 39. The keyboard was likely expected to supply simple continuo-style chords.

† rest omitted in FE †† a in FE

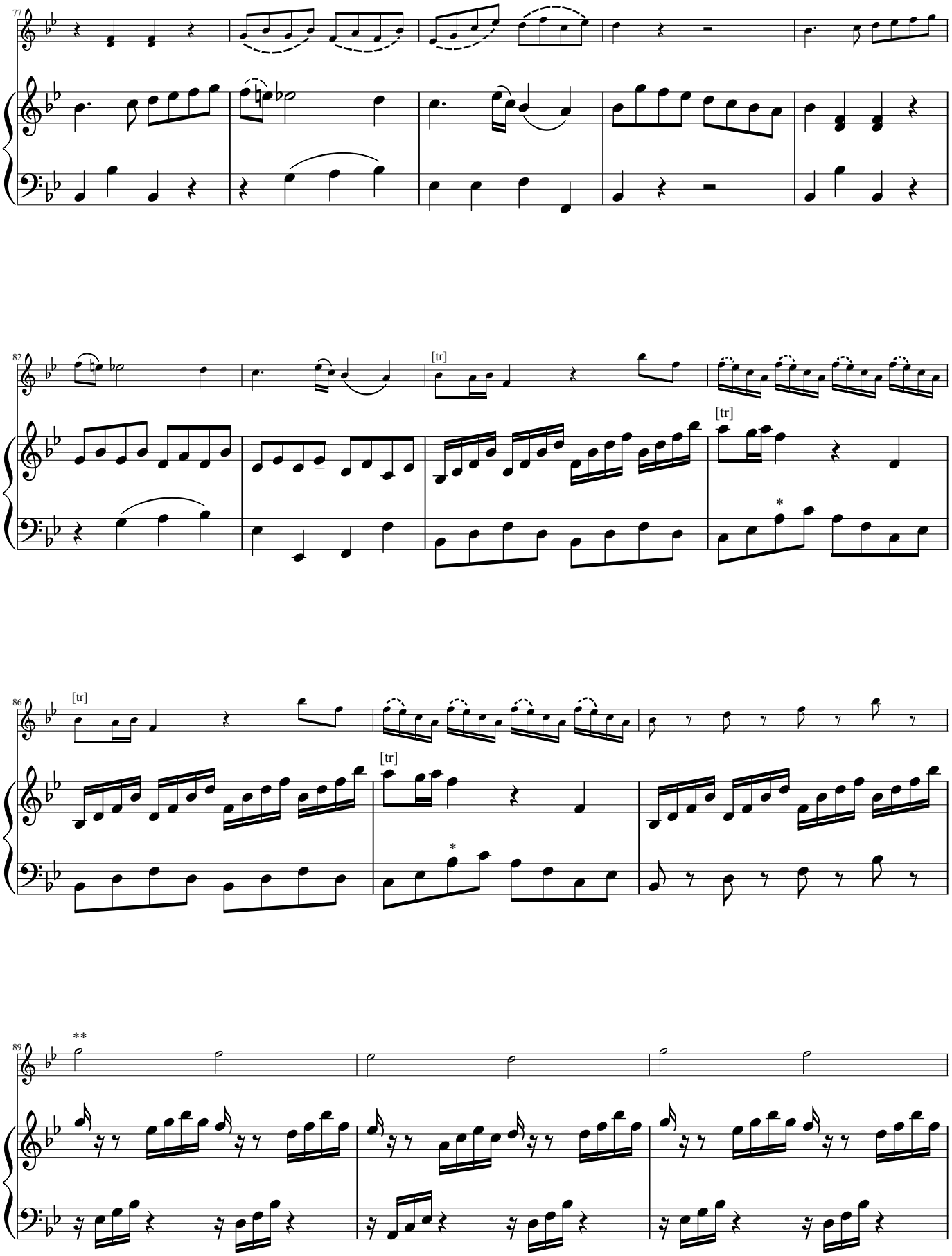


* See note * at m. 10 ** 1st 2 notes c' in FE † f' in FE. It is also possible that the first 4 notes should be b-flat, d', g', b-flat'

†† e-flat in FE *† e-natural' in FE



* sharp omitted in FE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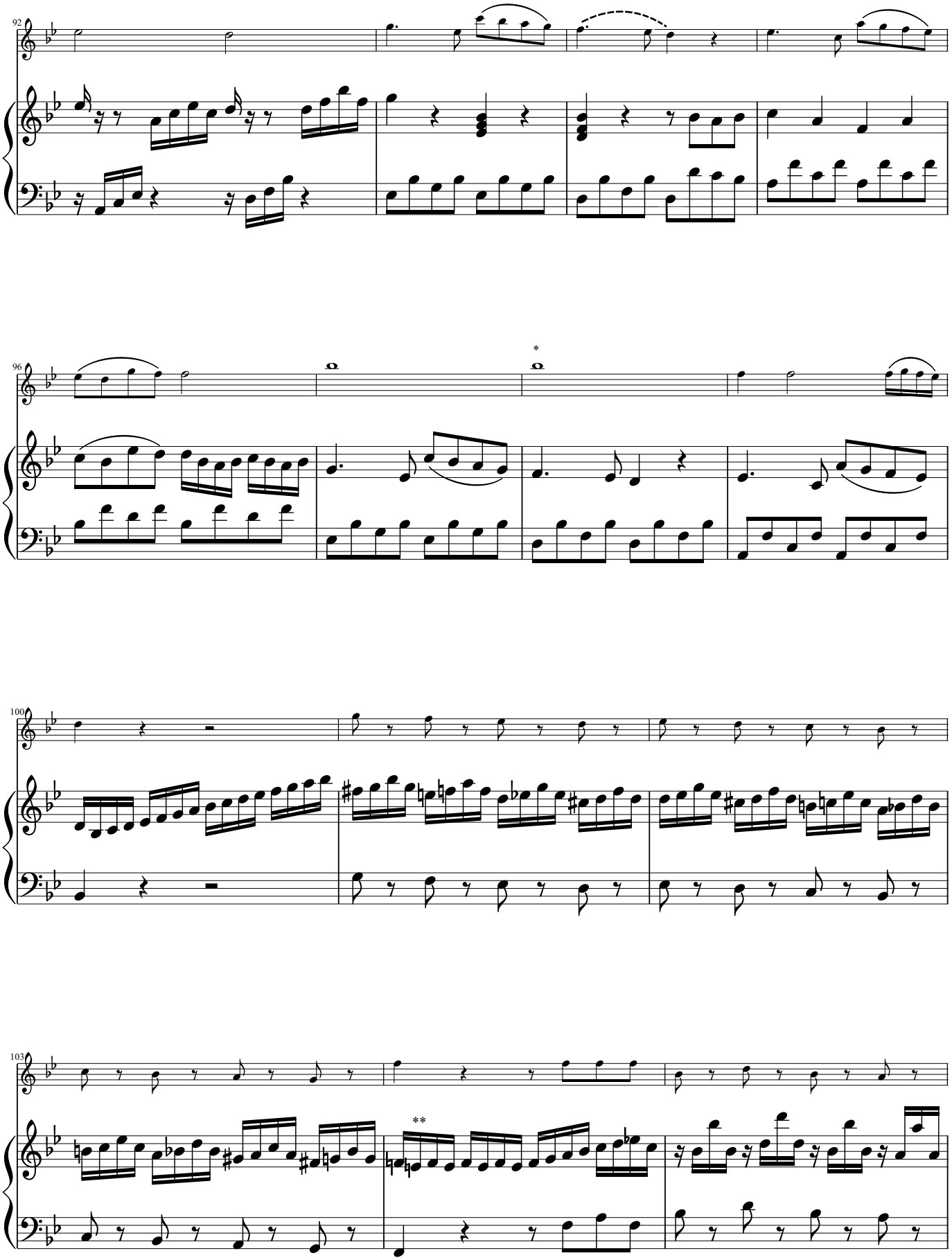
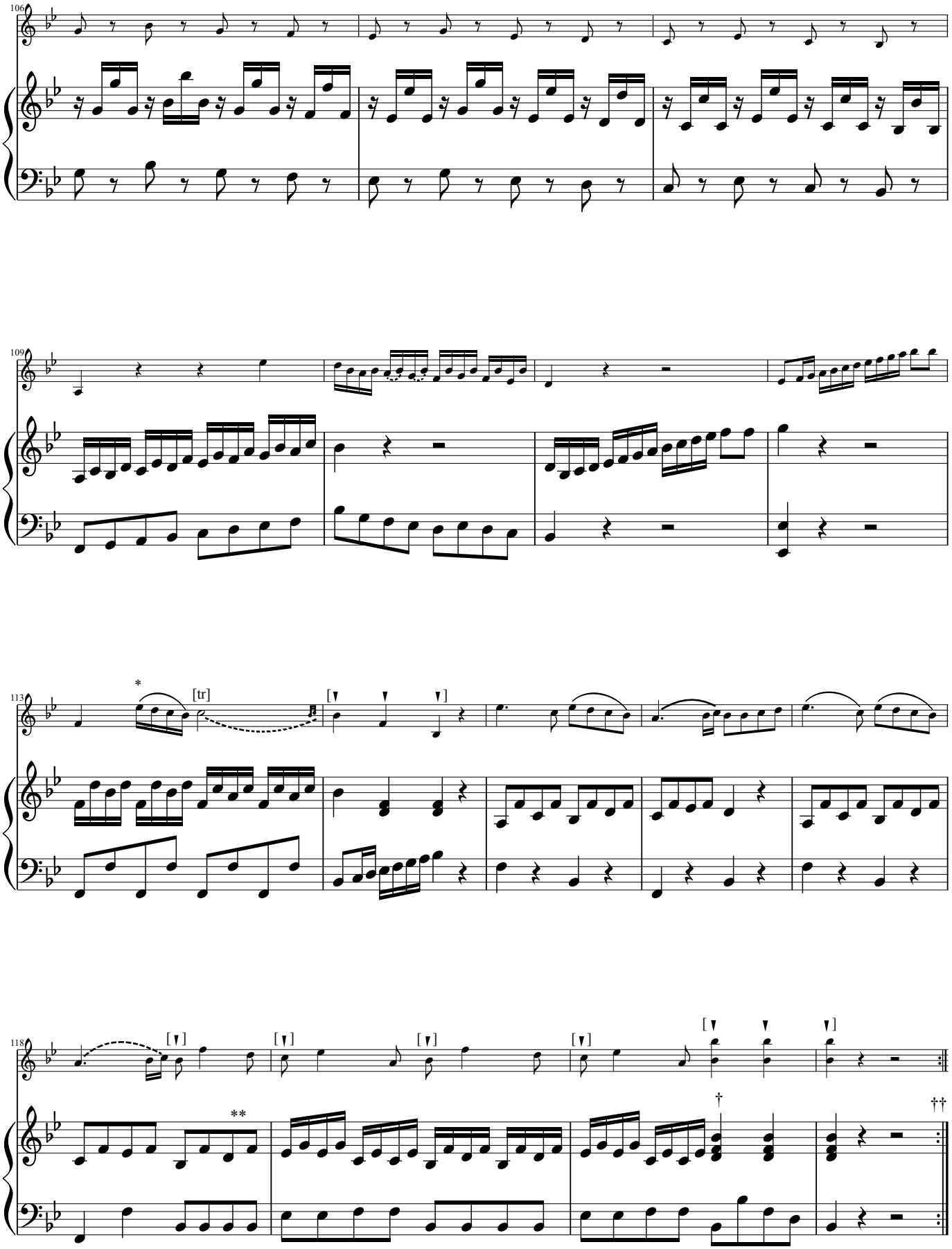
**
*
*
* g in FE
** a” in FE



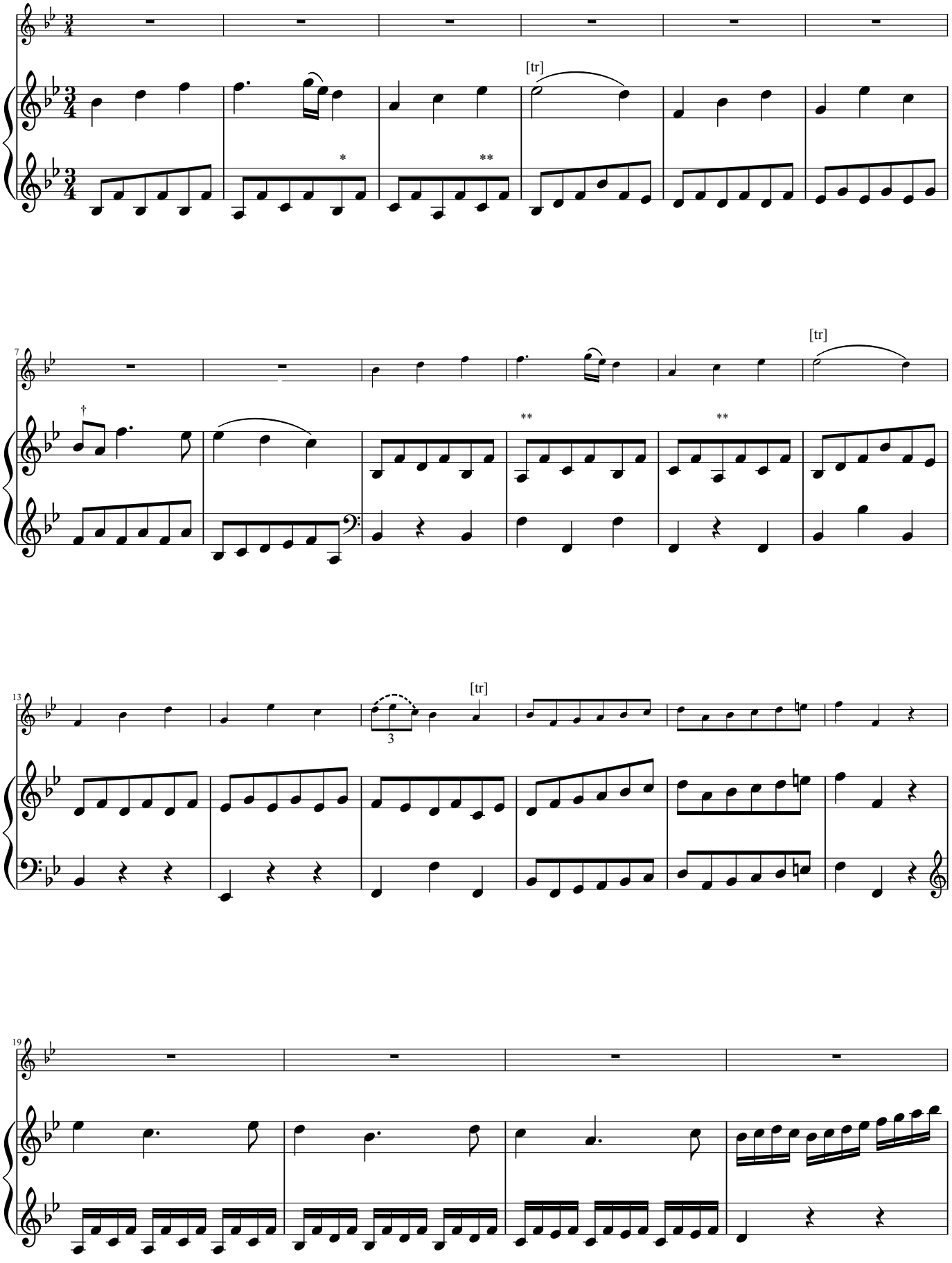
* See note * at m. 10 ** natural absent in FE but is stylistically likely



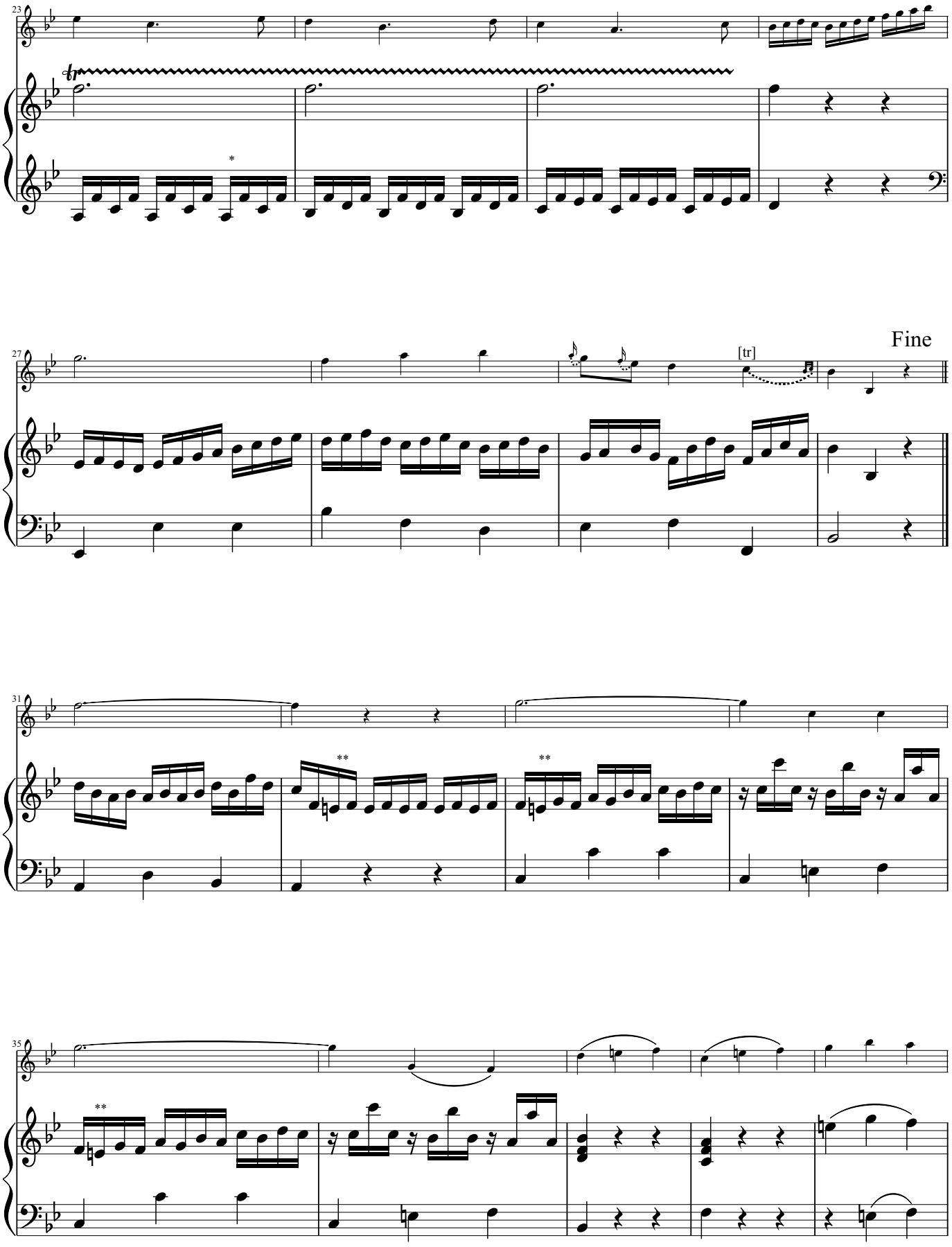
* Notes 2-5 shown as 8ths in FE **e-flat' in FE † middle note of the chords on beats 3 & 4 is g' in FE

†† In taking the repeat, the upbeat to m. 54 should be played at the end of m. 121

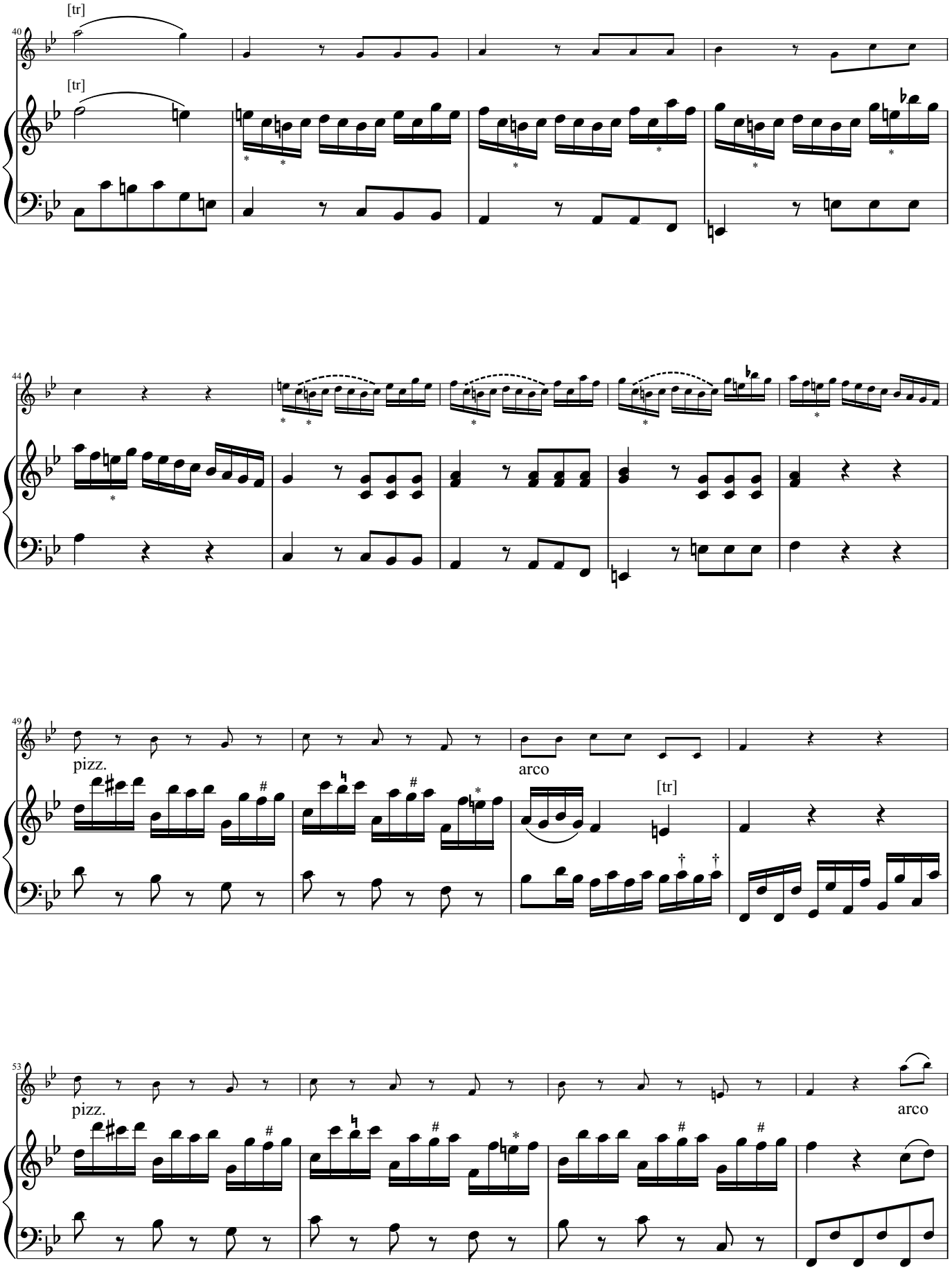
Tempo di Minuetto



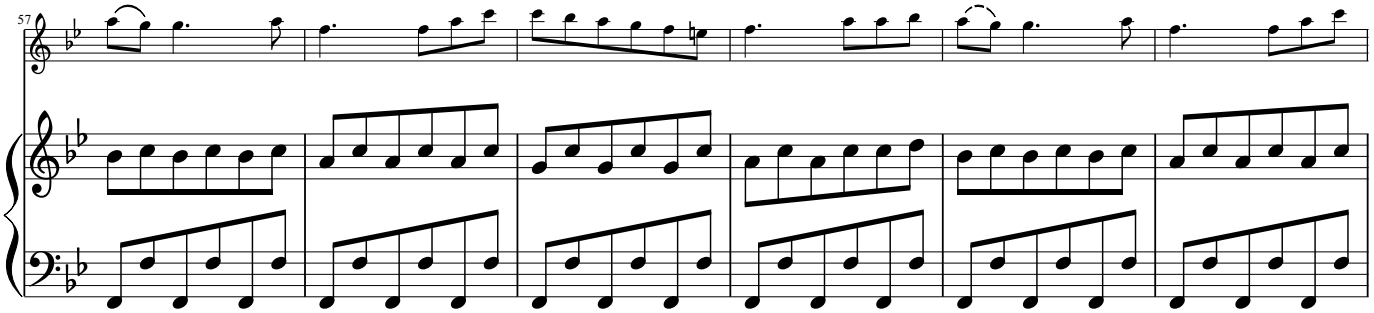
* a in FE ** b-flat in FE † 1st 2 notes shown as 16ths in FE

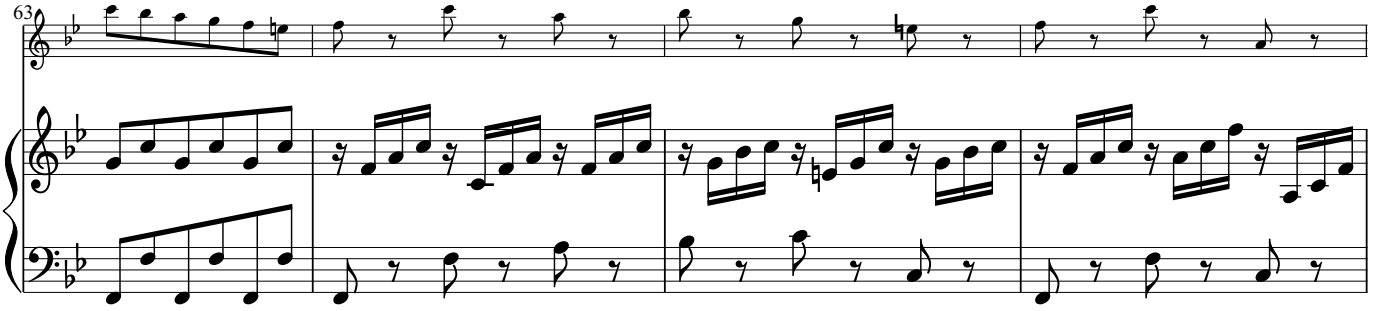


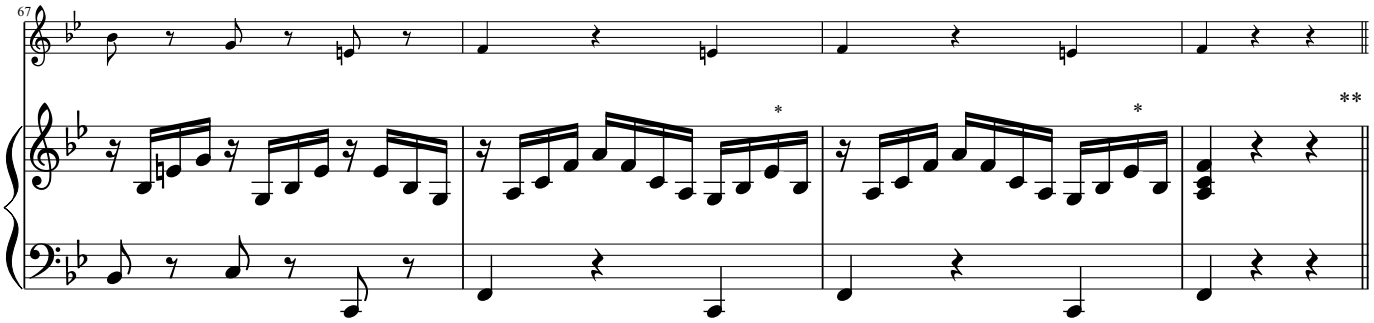
* b-flat in FE ** natural absent in FE but stylistically likely (compare m. 31)

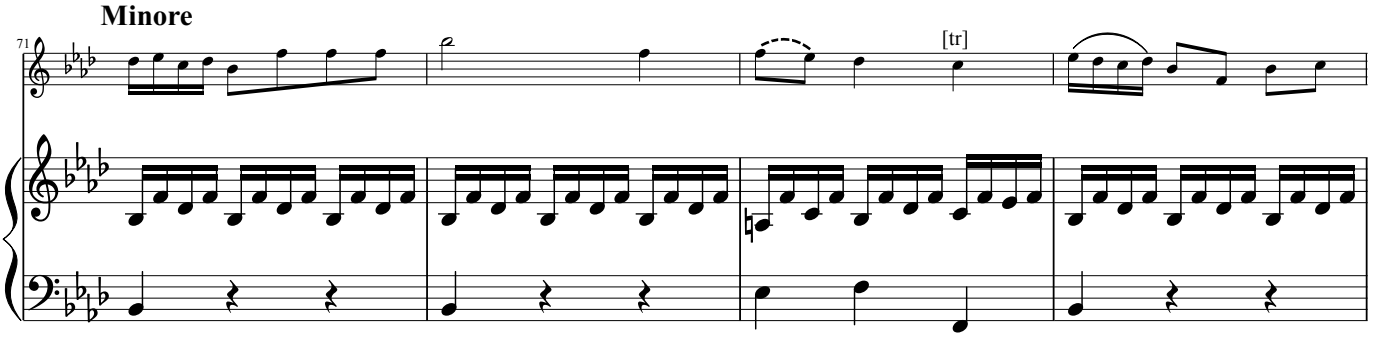


* natural omitted in FE ** g” in FE † d’ in FE



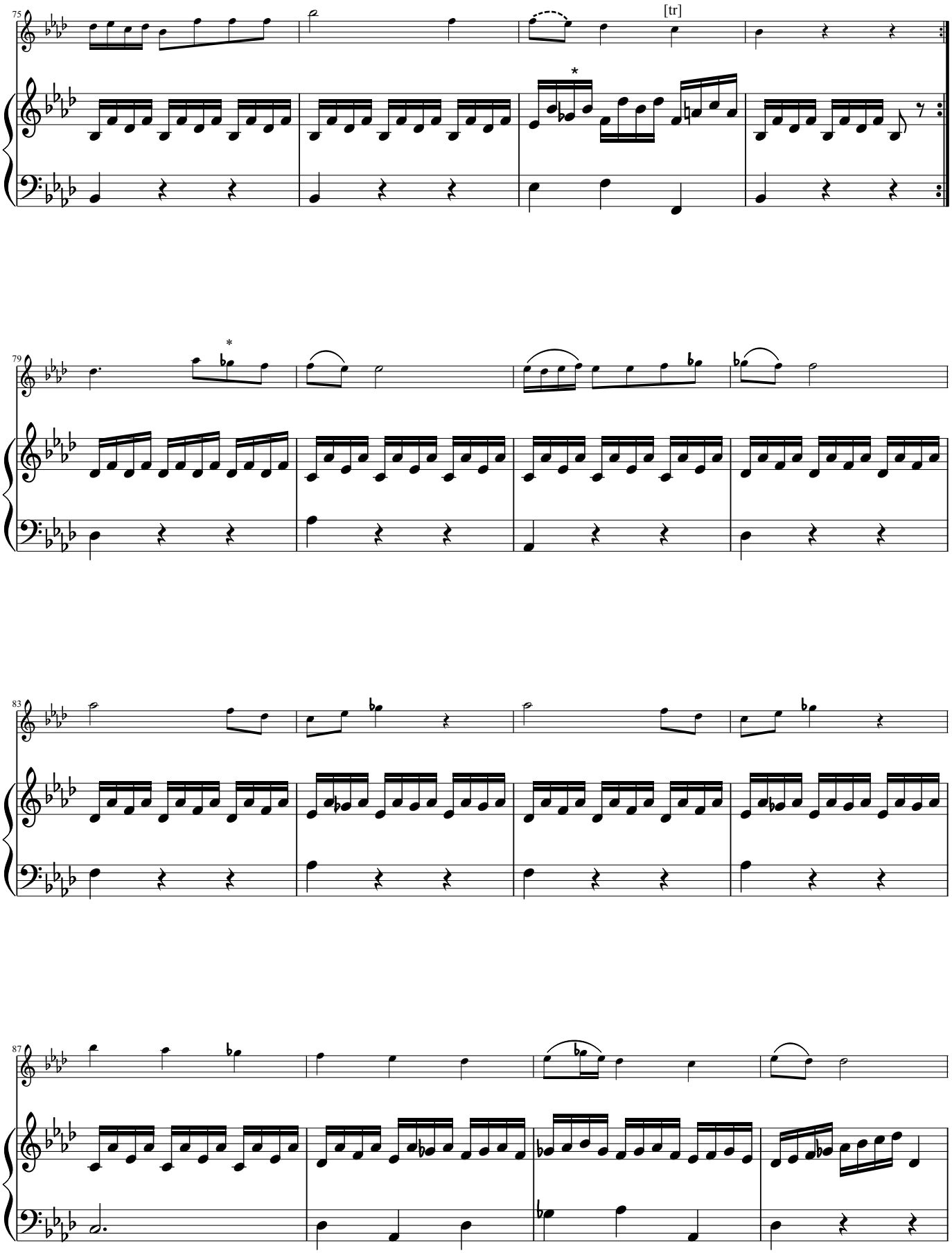




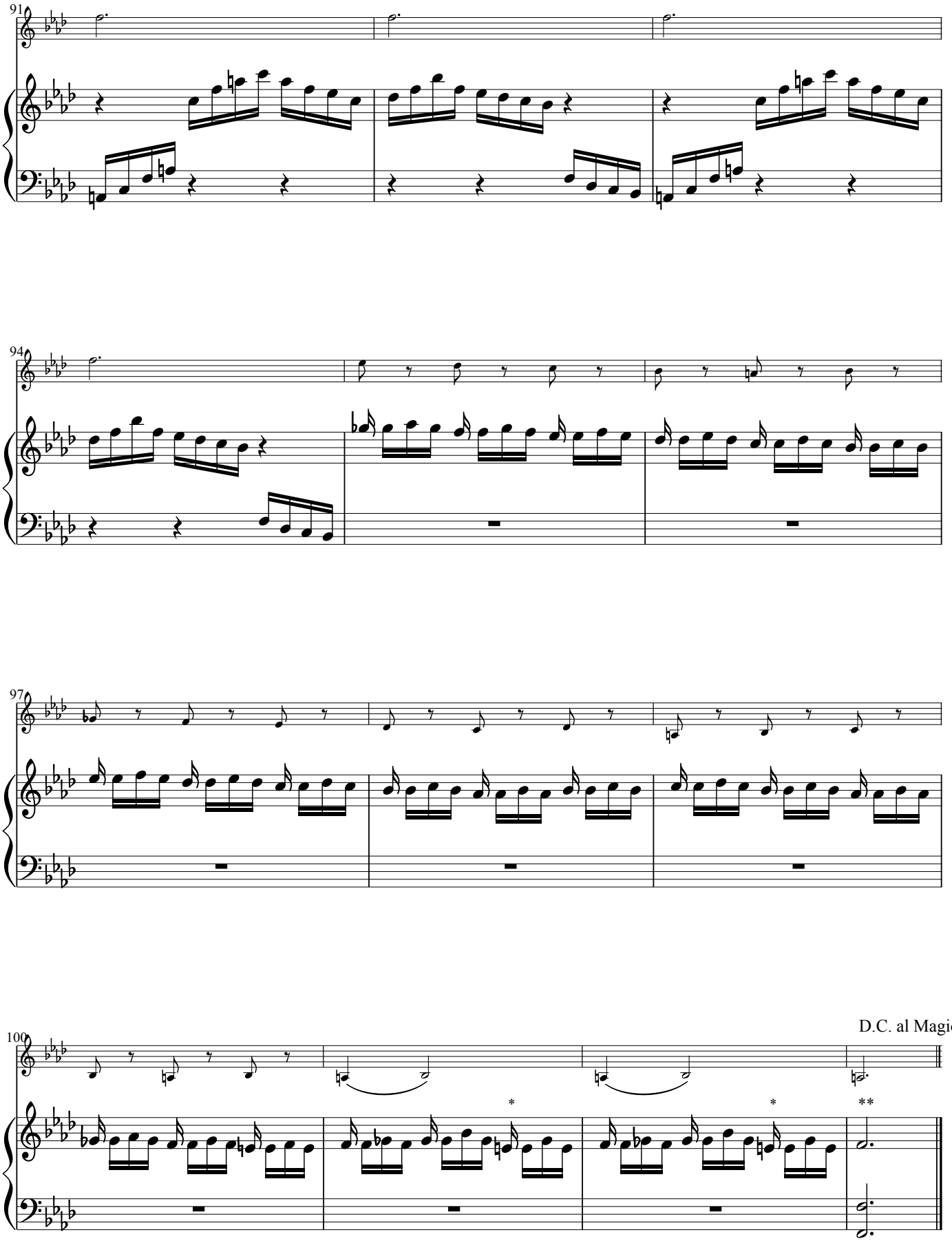


* d' in FE

** It is possible to play da Capo at this point and proceed from the Fine at m. 30 directly to m. 71. That would match the rondo structure of similar Tempo di minuetto movements from the period (e.g., Mozart KV 219, III) as well as the final movement of the third sonata in this collection. If a 'da Capo' is taken, it may be desirable to insert a short, improvisatory lead-in (Eingang) by the keyboard.



* all g-flats in this passage lack flat signs in FE



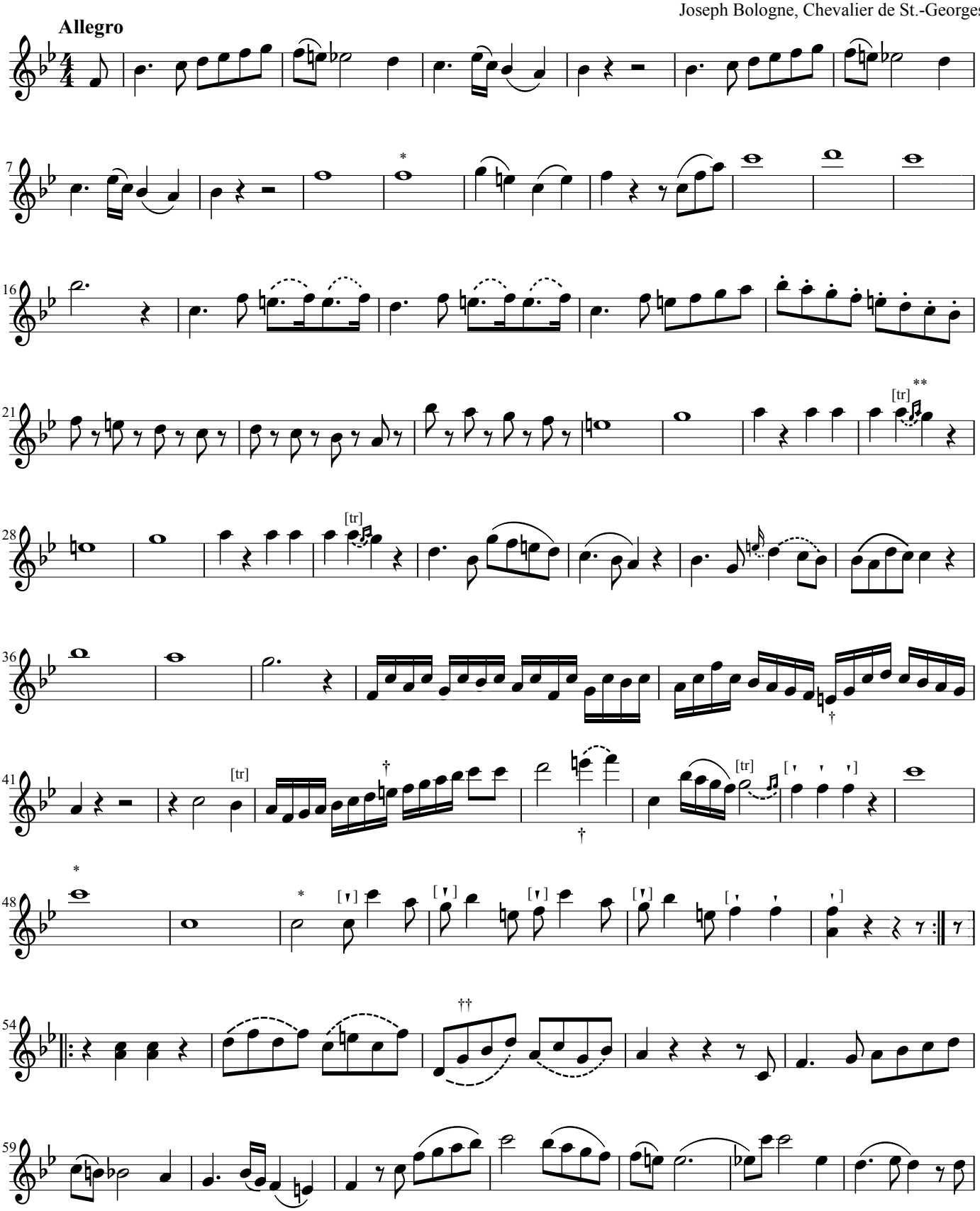
* natural signs omitted in FE

** Here it is appropriate for the keyboardist to insert short, improvisational connecting material (Eingang). The sudden presence of the low F/f could suggest that the improvised material is expected to begin in the left hand.

SONATA I

Pour Le Clavecin Ou Forté Piano
avec accompagnement de Violon Obligé

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de St.-Georges



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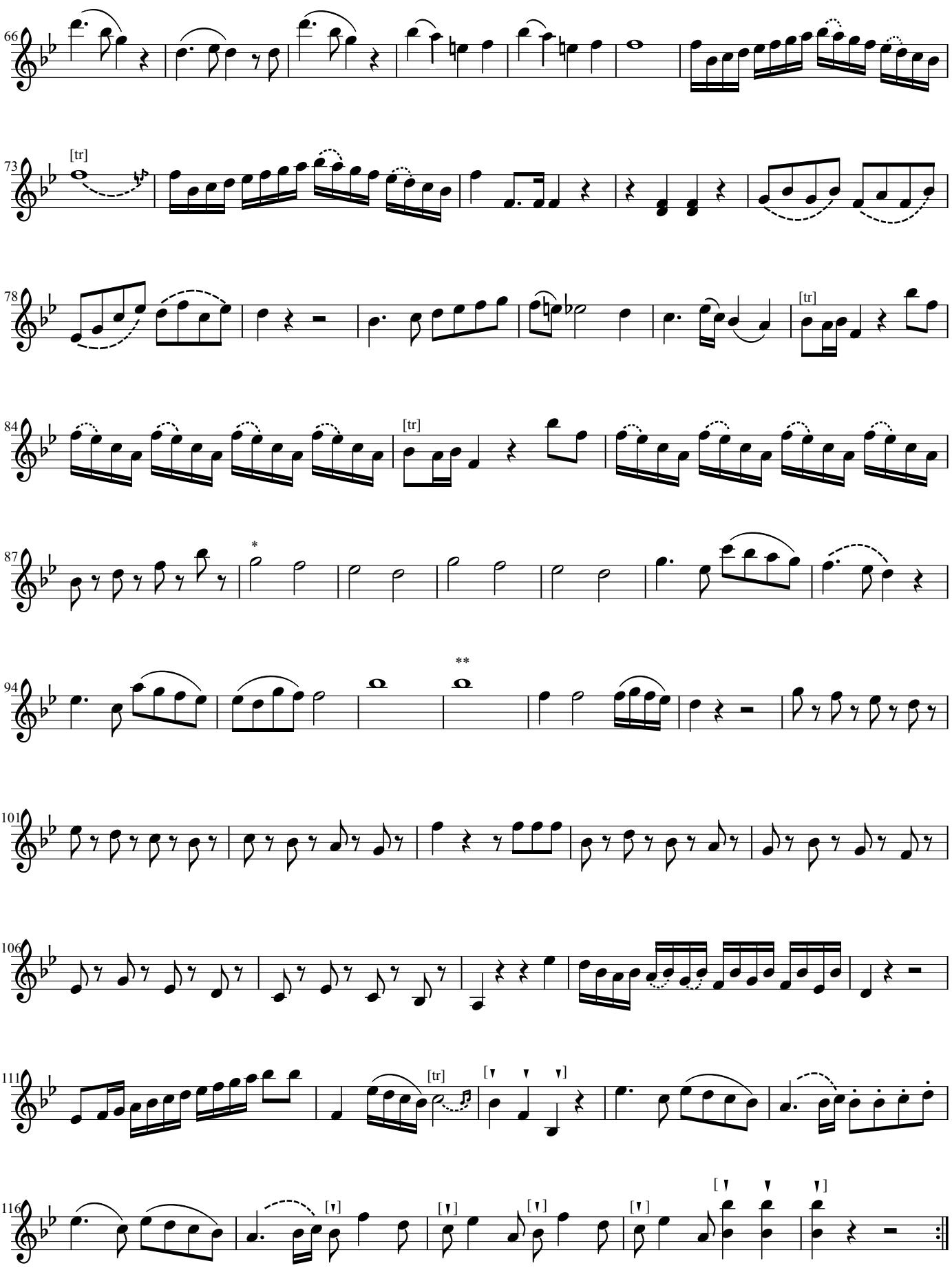
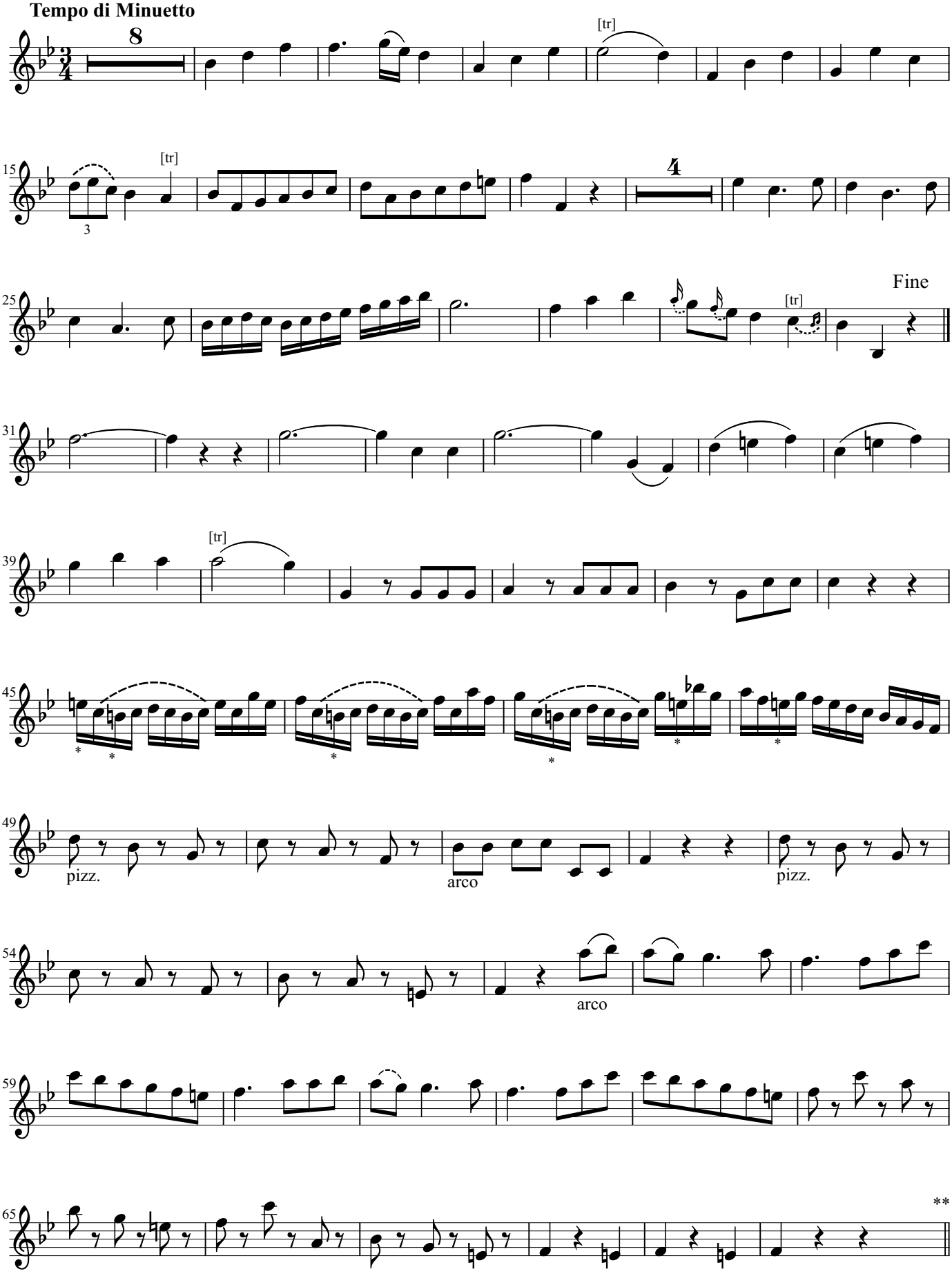


* a" in FE ** See note * at m. 10



* natural sign omitted in FE

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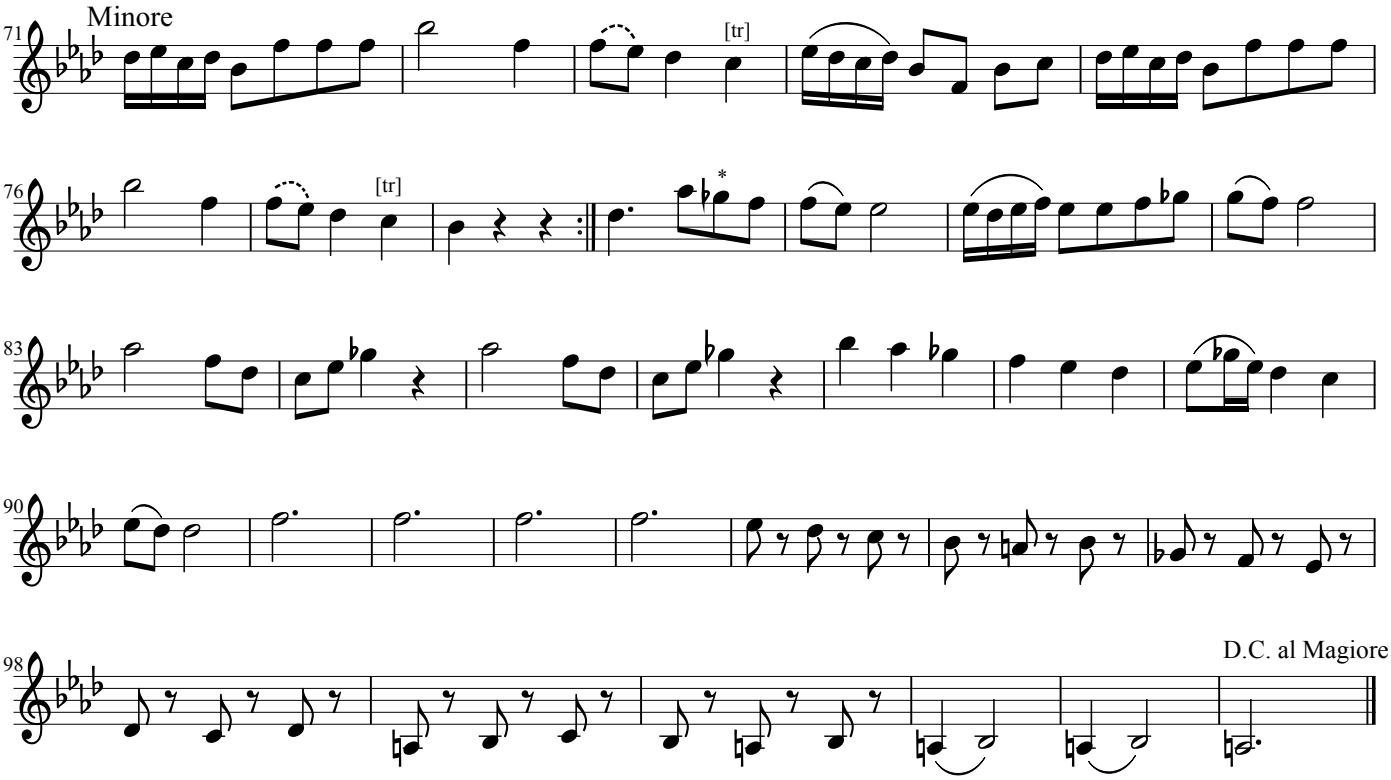

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