FOURTEENTH-CENTURY DANCES

for

VIOLA ALONE

edited by
Thomas Hall

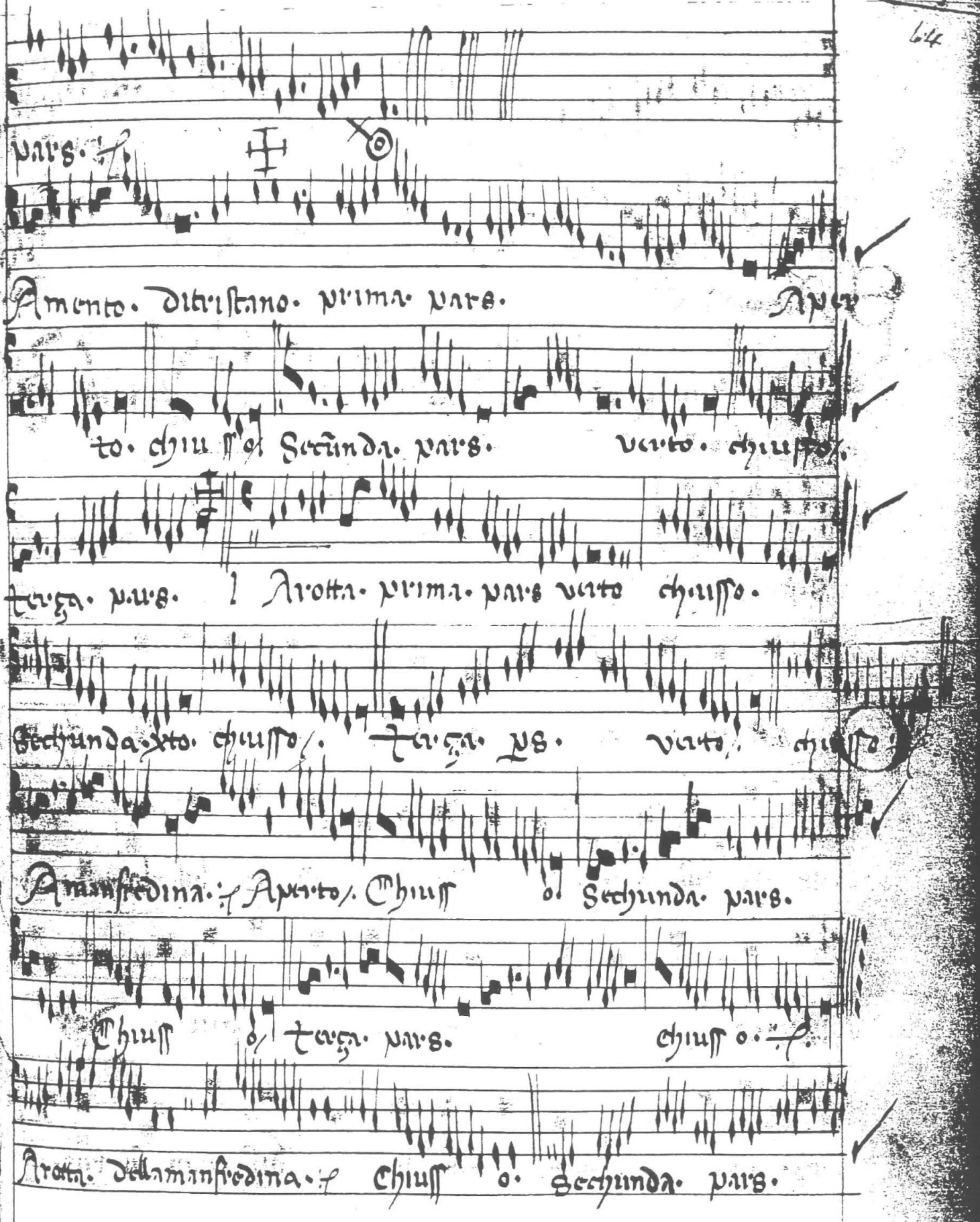
Editor's Note

This is a performance edition of dances found in a fourteenth-century Italian manuscript, held by the British Library, called Additional Manuscript 29987 on pages 64r, 64v, and 65r. Dances II, III and IV are found transcribed in anthology format in *Geschichte Der Music in Beispielen,* Arnold Schering (editor), (Breitkopf & Härtel Musikverlag, Leipzig, 1931), pp. 20, 21. Dances I and II are found in similar format *in Historical Anthology of Music (Volume I)* by Archibald T. Davison and Willi Apel, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1954), p. 63. Page 64v of Additional Manuscript 29987 is given here as a sample of the manuscript notation, with the kind permission of the British Library.

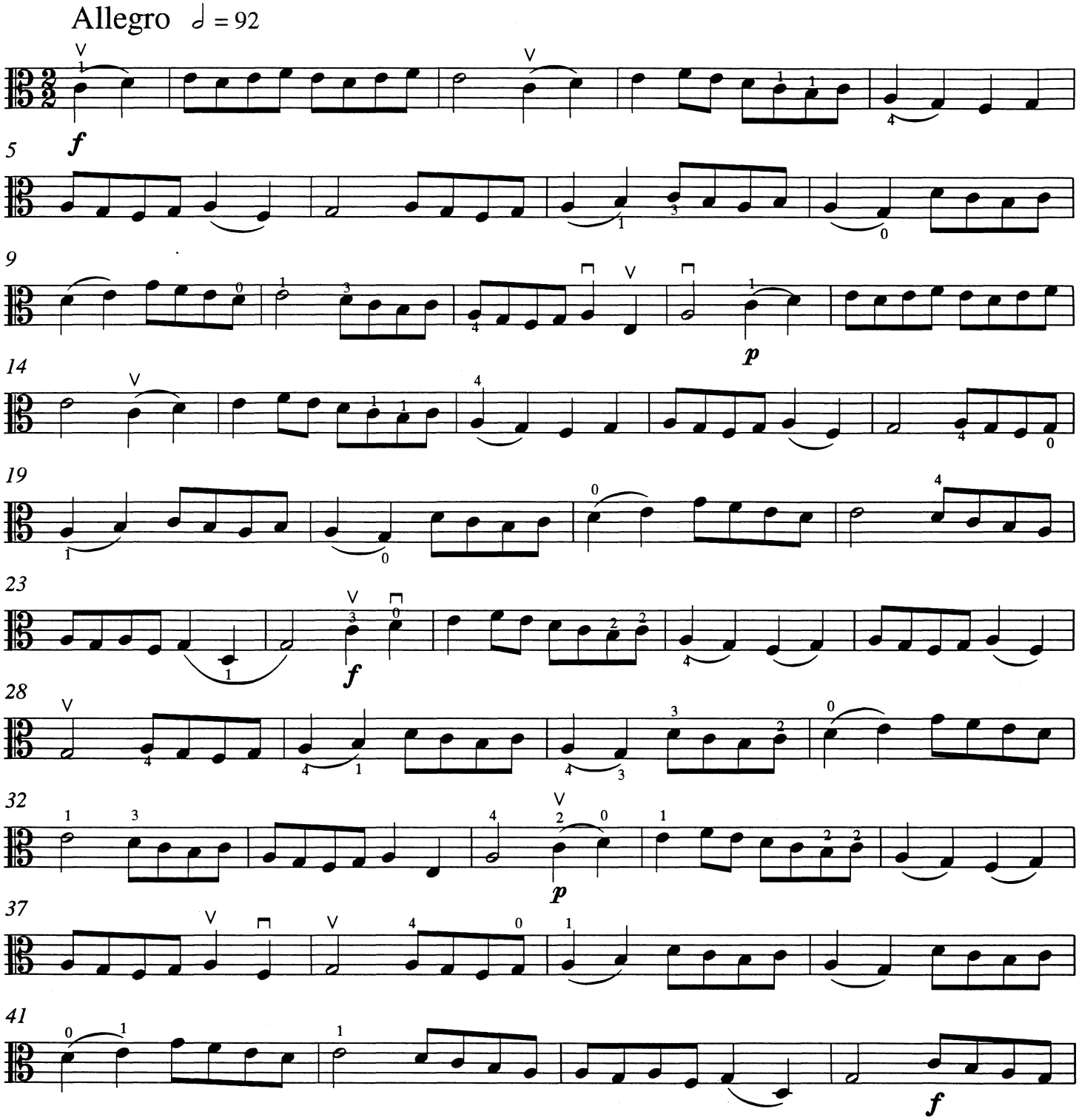
The form of these dances makes them *estampies.* Each phrase is repeated literally, but with open and closed endings, a form derived from the much earlier and vocal monophonic sequence. The number of phrases in each estampie may vary, as well as the meter. The character of a dance may be determined by its title and internal evidence, such as leaps, length of phrase, pauses, motive style. The *Lamento di Tristano* and *La Manfredina* have *Rottas*, or after-dances, which provide a vigorous contrast to the more lyrical beginnings. The order of the estampies in this edition is that found in the manuscript, and foreshadows the fast-slow-moderate-fast pattern found in so much later literature. This is not to imply that these dances were intended as a unit in the fourteenth century, but they do compliment each other when so presented.

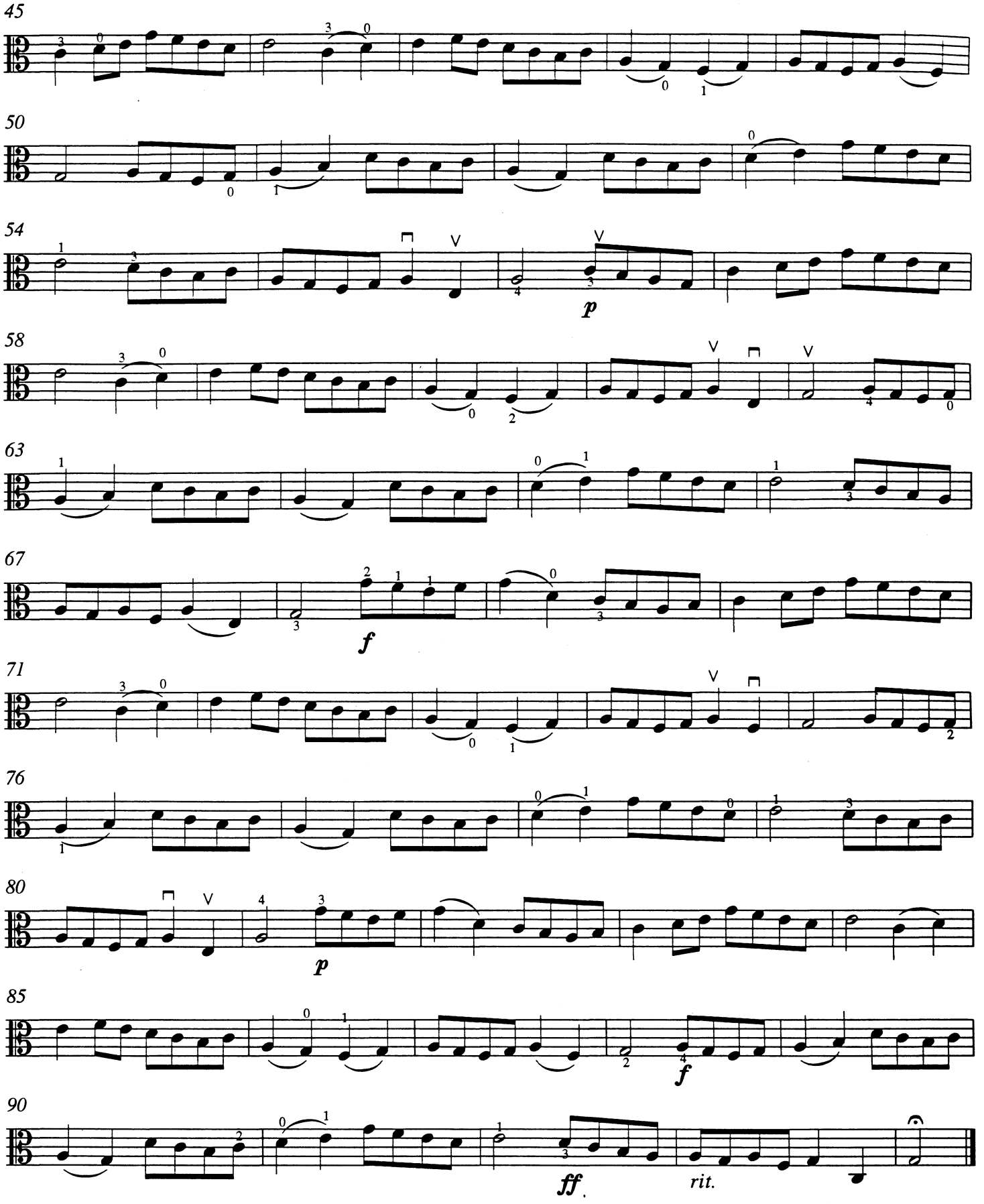
The purpose here is to make available to the contemporary violist these fine examples of early anonymous string literature. Probably the dances were intended to be performed by whatever instrument was available, most commonly, some sort of viol. Certainly a bowed stringed instrument is strongly implied because of internal evidence, including the narrow range of motives, phrasing, including the presence of repeated notes, and lack of breathing places. Although the viola as we know it today would not make its appearance for at least two-hundred years, an instrument in the viola range is indicated by the clefs and tessitura used in the manuscript. It should be noted that *I Saltarello,* has been transposed up a fifth, to mixolydian mode. This accommodates its somewhat greater range and solves some musica ficta problems.

These dances make modest technical demands, which makes them available to inexperienced players. The editing has been done with this in mind, so that a minimum of teacher-student time will be necessary for satisfying results. Further, the second position has not been avoided, with the hope that these estampies might help with the mastery of that sometimes-avoided expedient.



I
Saltarello

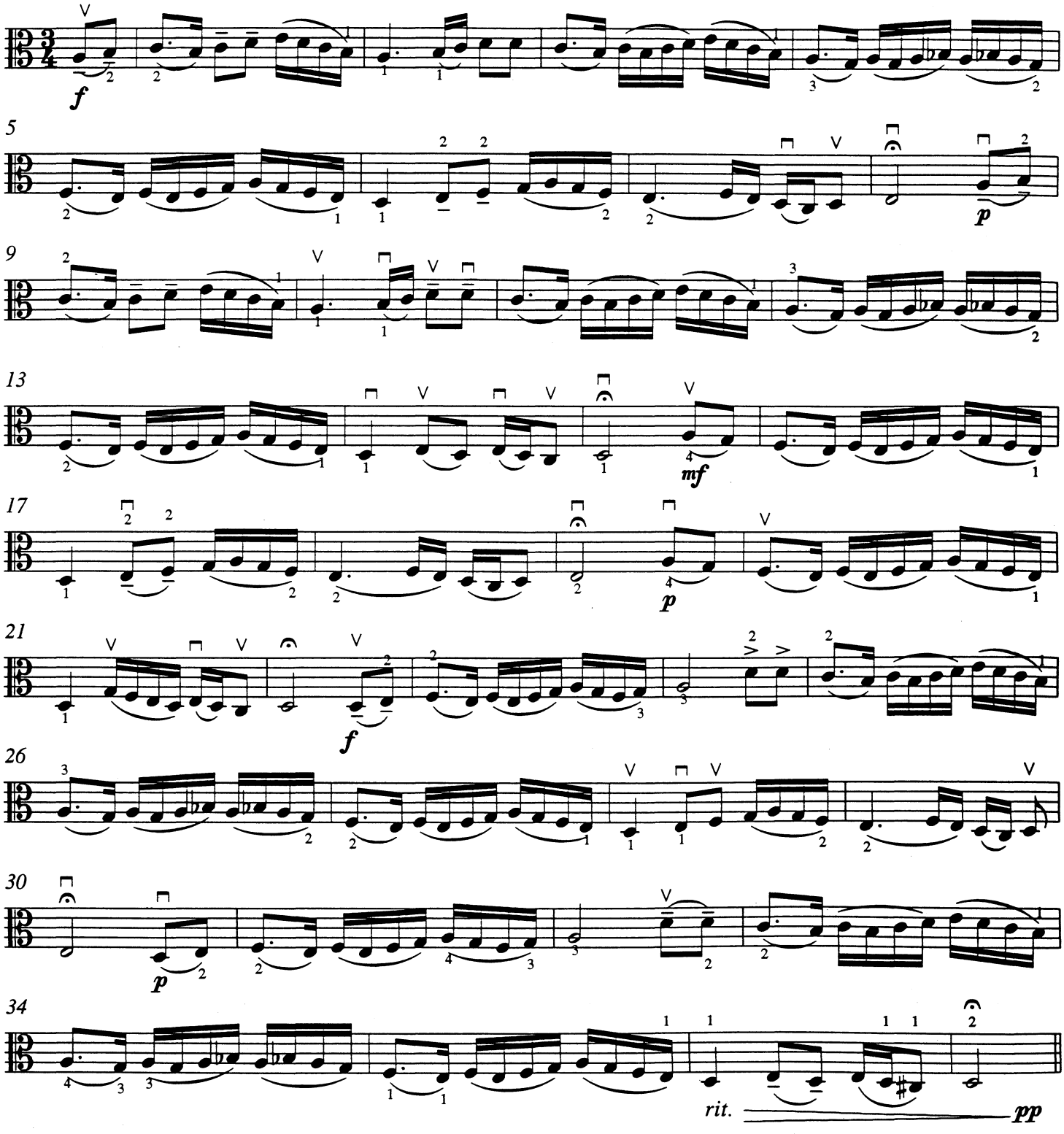


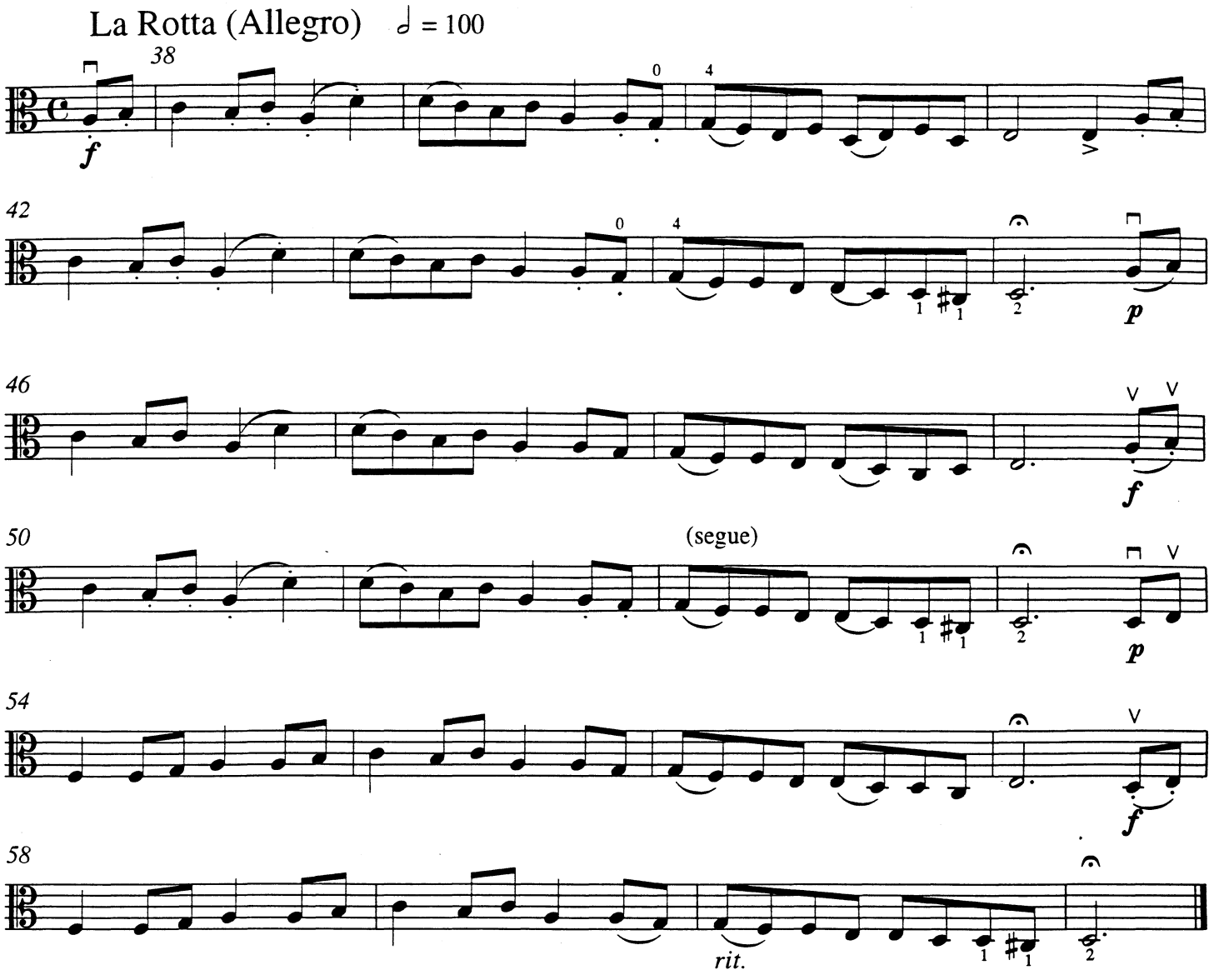

45
50
54
p
58
63
67
f
71
76
80
p
85
f
90
ff
rit.

II

Lamento di Tristano

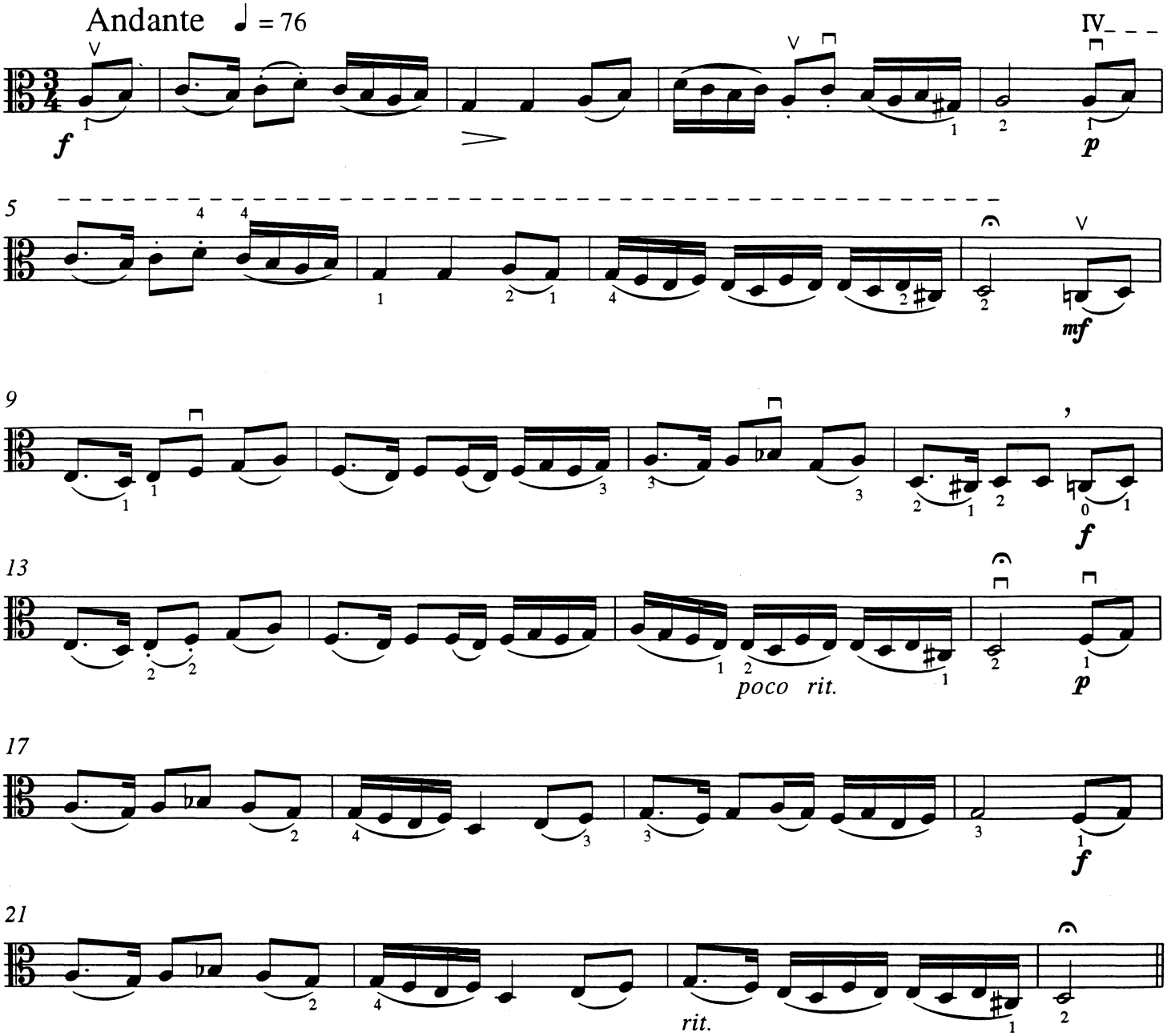
Largo Espressivo ♩ = 50



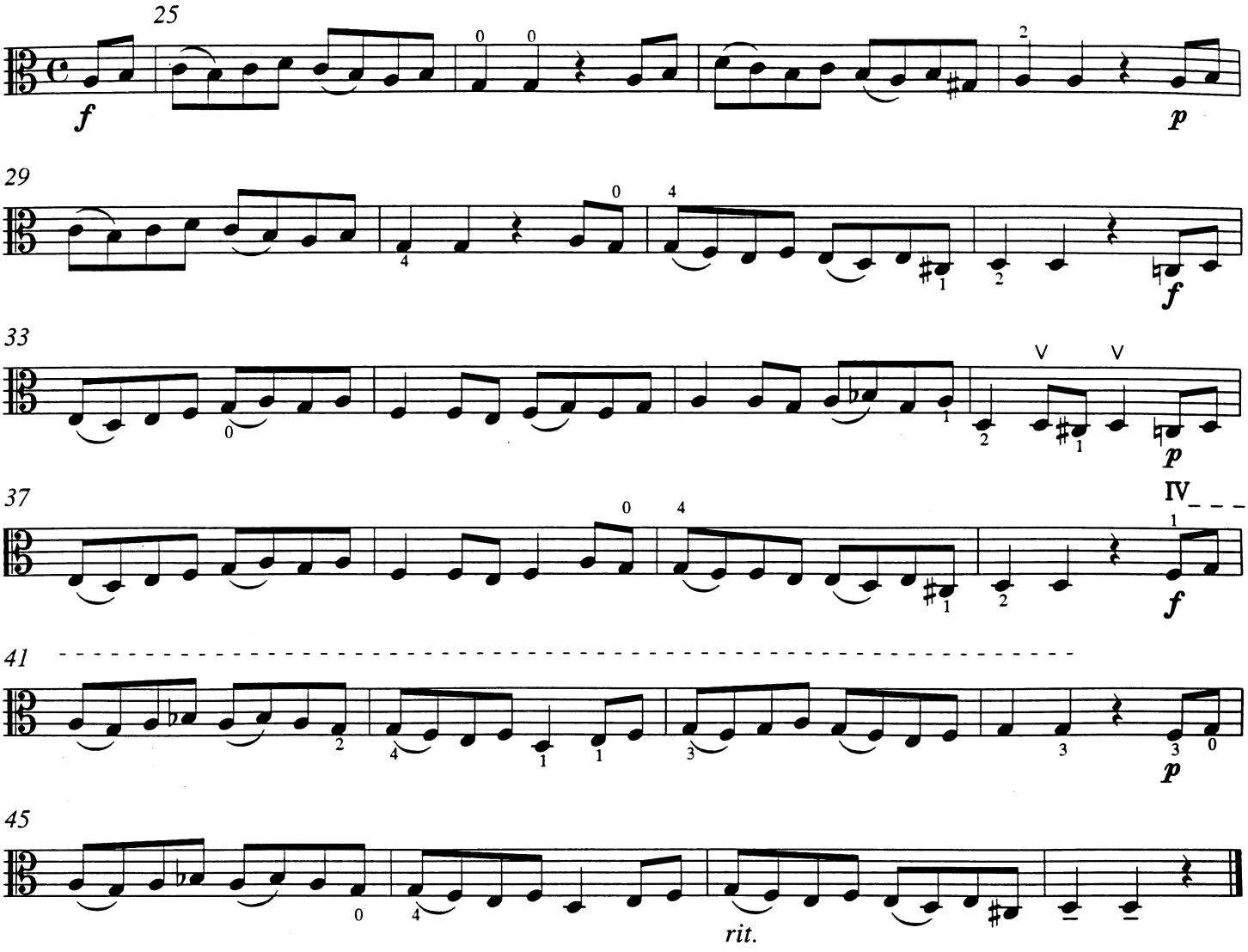

La Rotta (Allegro) ♩ = 100
38
f
42
p
46
f
50
(segue)
p
54
f
58
rit.

III

La Manfredina

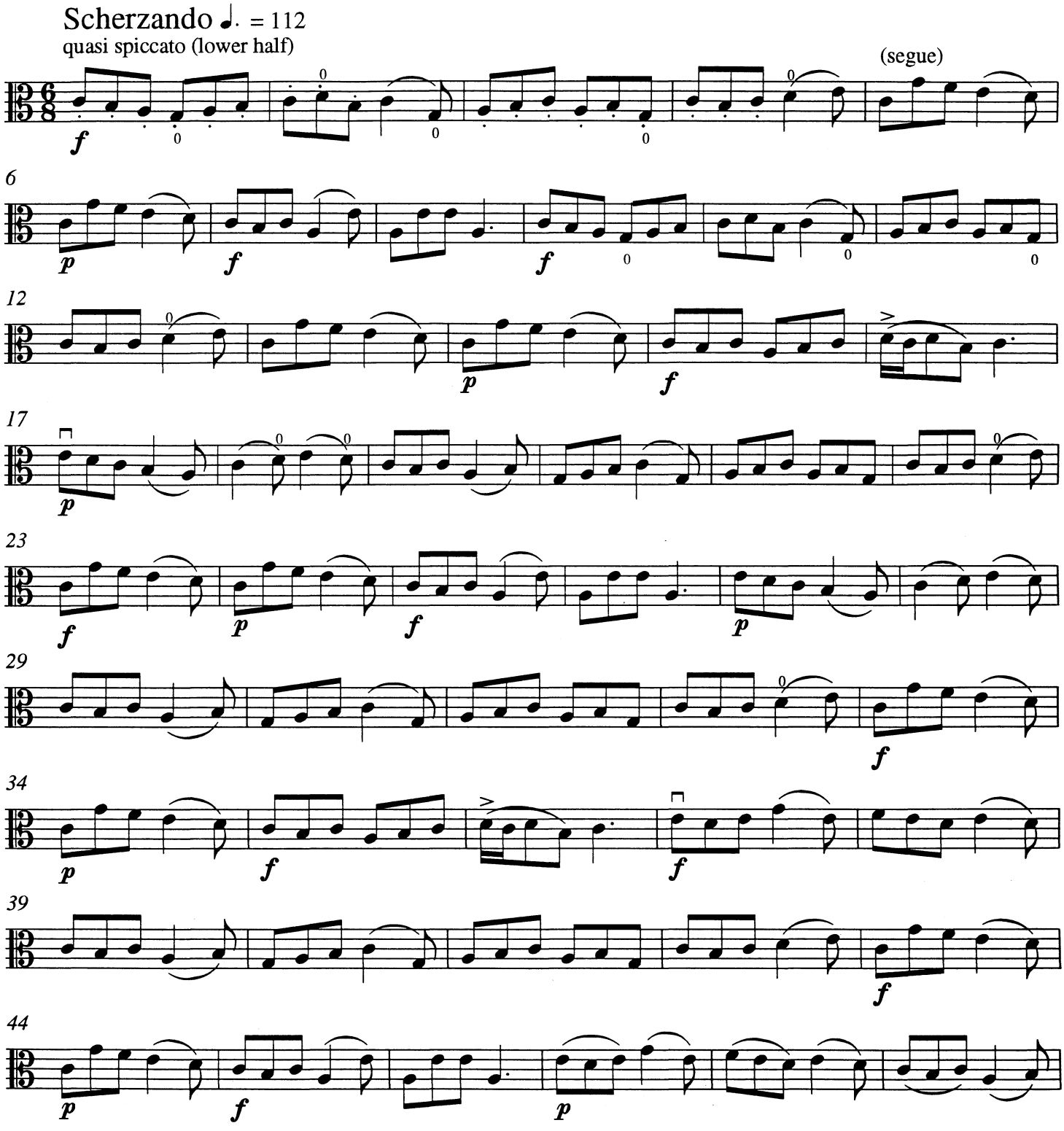


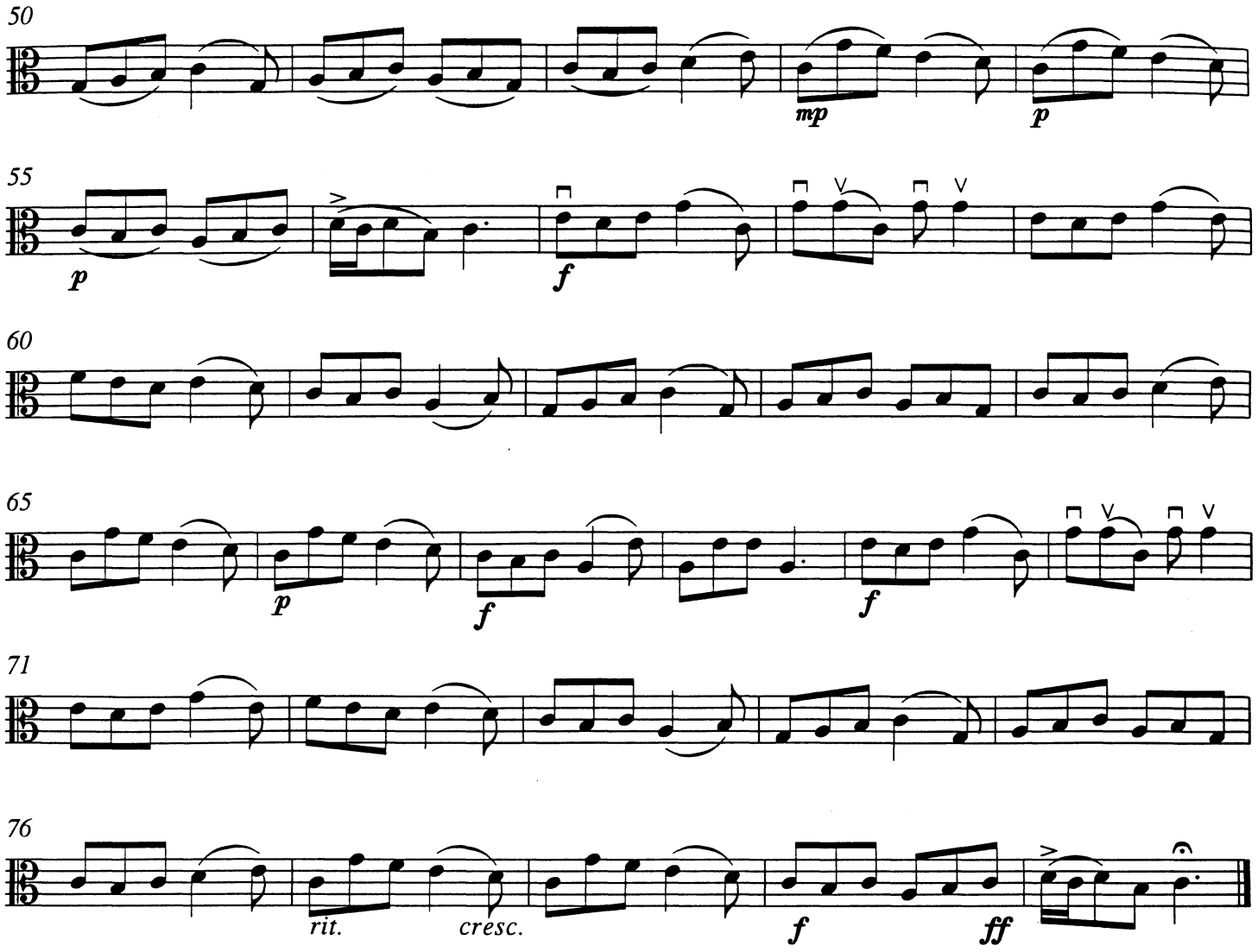
La Rotta (Allegro) 𝅗𝅥 = 80



IV

Saltarello




50
mp
p
55
p
f
60
65
p
f
f
71
76
rit.
cresc.
f
ff

The Blagrave Press
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MM