View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by University of Birmingham Research Portal

University of Birmingham Research at Birmingham

Clementi's Minor-Mode Keyboard Music and the Rhetoric of 'Ancient Style'

Riley, Matthew

License:
None: All rights reserved

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):
Riley, M 2018, Clementi's Minor-Mode Keyboard Music and the Rhetoric of 'Ancient Style'. in L Levi Sala & RS MacDonald (eds), *Muzio Clementi and British Musical Culture: Sources, Performance Practice and Style.* Routledge.

Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal

General rights
Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy
While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Download date: 01. Mar. 2020

Clementi’s minor-mode keyboard music and the rhetoric of ‘ancient style’

Matthew Riley
University of Birmingham

British musicians of Clementi’s era were fully attuned to the distinction between ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ music, the former concept hardening into ideology at this time. In an era when most music performed, practised and bought was no more than a few years old, the Concert of Ancient Music, run mainly by peers, celebrated past masters with solemn ceremonies and a reverential aura, taking a moral stand against commercialism and, as they saw it, frivolous contemporary taste. The Handel Commemoration Festival held in Westminster Abbey in 1784 under royal patronage, and its five subsequent iterations, amounted, according to William Weber, to a ‘political ritual’ of the British establishment in uncertain times, shaped around monumental performances of early-eighteenth-century choral works.[1] Clementi’s activities as a scholar, manuscript collector, publisher, promoter and editor of old keyboard music demonstrate his esteem for the best music of the past, albeit in his case mainly keyboard music rather than the vocal genres favoured by the public advocates of ancient music. Part of Clementi was an academic and antiquarian, and his lifelong fascination for fugue and canon is obvious from his works and from the old manuscripts he collected during his European travels and published in the formidably learned four-volume *Selection of Practical Harmony* (1801–1814).[2] In his compositions, ancient / modern stylistic distinctions are often sharply drawn—his juxtaposition of the styles has been called ‘the most radical among classical-era composers’[3]—especially when he writes in the minor mode. As a composer, then, Clementi’s interest in ancient style lies principally in its rhetorical possibilities within the modern genre of the piano sonata.[4] Indeed, as a touring virtuoso and self-made businessman who was deeply entangled in the commercial and material aspects of music publishing and instrument manufacture and in the fast-moving world of wealth creation in early industrial Britain, Clementi should not be identified with the patrician values of the ancient-music party. William Crotch’s choice of pieces from *Gradus ad*

---

[1] William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual, and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1992), 143–67, 223–42.

[2] See Leon Plantinga, *Clementi: His Life and Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 157.

[3] W. Dean Sutcliffe, ‘Chopin’s Counterpoint: The Largo from the Cello Sonata, Opus 65’, *Musical Quarterly* 83/1 (1999), 114–133, p. 115.

Parnassum in lectures designed to illustrate his theory of contemporary musical renewal through the rapprochement of ancient and modern styles points to a better understanding of Clementi's position.[5]

Clementi's minor-mode practice is unique in the keyboard music of his era. By late eighteenth-century standards a high proportion of his output is in the minor mode, and the choice of the minor calls forth from him distinctive compositional approaches and expressive effects. The minor mode is the focus of a special, highly expressive syntactic field, in which the major/minor modal opposition is aligned with various syntactic oppositions. Thus in minor we find chromatic or especially supple harmony, fluid, two-part textures, rhythmic discontinuity, *tempo rubato*, passionate outbursts and stormy textures. Above all, old-fashioned syntax in minor is set against 'modern' idioms in major-key passages. The minor mode is often coordinated with conspicuously contrapuntal textures, including canon, the double-dotted rhythms of the French overture, and allusions to the keyboard styles of Domenico Scarlatti and Johann Sebastian Bach, styles with which Clementi had been acquainted at least since his studies at the house of his boyhood patron Peter Beckford.[6] Minor-mode movements tend to avoid the brilliant octave passages, block chords, Alberti-bass accompaniment figuration, and galant-style ornamentation that are found in many of Clementi's major-mode movements. Clementi seems to have revelled in the possibilities of the minor-mode complex, and his biographer Leon Plantinga considers that the best pieces from every stage of his career were in minor.[7] Clementi's practice runs parallel with that of Austrian and Bohemian composers of symphonies. In Viennese instrumental music of the late eighteenth century the relatively few minor-mode compositions are often highly distinctive in their stormy character, with prominent allusions to 'ancient' idioms that elsewhere I have termed 'untimely rhetoric'.[8]

At a broader formal level, Clementi employs distinctive strategies when working with this complex, which revive procedures from Italian Baroque keyboard and chamber music and couple them with contemporary keyboard idioms and sonata-form procedures in distinctive ways. His use of minor is characteristically insistent, on several levels. He takes his sonata expositions to the minor dominant (v) more often than most composers of the time. Even when he does close the exposition in the mediant (III), Clementi often touches on the minor version of that key (iii) with expressive emphasis, and this insecurity of the major may be dramatized. In his sonatas Clementi avoids the growing trend for modal reversal in minor-key instrumental movements, exemplified by Haydn's instrumental compositions of the 1780s and 1790s. Indeed Clementi's recapitulations underline the transformation of the exposition's major-mode material when it reappears in minor, sometimes by means of elaborate re-composition. Clementi has four sonatas with all their movements in minor, which in some ways recall the layout of the Baroque *sonata da chiesa*.

---

[5] Among the pieces Crotch played in these lectures were Nos. 38 and 42 (the latter, in F minor, is discussed below). Howard Irving, *Ancients and Moderns: William Crotch and the Development of Classical Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 217.

[6] Along with Scarlatti and J. S. Bach, Clementi probably studied Corelli, Handel, C. P. E. Bach and Paradies at Beckford's home. Leon Plantinga, 'Clementi, Virtuosity, and the "German Manner"', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 25/3 (1972), 303–330 (p. 328); Plantinga, *Clementi*, 5–6.

[7] Plantinga, *Clementi*, 98, 169. Writings on Clementi's compositional style tend to select the minor-key sonata movements for critical attention more often than major-key pieces from the same groups of works. For instance, the single minor-key sonatas from Opp. 7, 8, 13 and 25 are referred to much more often than any of the other pieces from those sets.

[8] Matthew Riley, *The Viennese Minor-Key Symphony in the Age of Haydn and Mozart* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 36.

Untimely rhetoric

There is no hard-and-fast rule in Clementi's keyboard music about the syntactic patterns that may appear in major and minor respectively. There is merely a general tendency for old-fashioned idioms to appear in minor, and, especially, for local modal opposition to be reinforced by stylistic contrasts. A clear example of the coordination of modal and syntactic contrasts is found in the finale of the Sonata in C Op. 9 No. 2. The *minore* episode of this rondo is an expressive, *tempo rubato* passage with rhythmic syncopation, contrasting sharply with the tuneful, major-key rondo refrain that precedes and follows it, the latter organized as a regular Classical period of the standard eight-bar length.[9] The minor-key slow movement, marked 'Adagio sostenuto e patetico', of the otherwise major-mode Sonata in A major Op. 50 No. 1 alludes at its opening to the Sarabande from Bach's English Suite in A minor and thereafter develops a melodically florid, intensively dissonant, 'Baroque' idiom that achieves a deliberately jarring contrast with the up-to-date 'Allegro maestoso e con sentimento' that precedes it and the 'Allegro vivace' that follows.[10] The Sonata in D major Op. 40 No. 3 opens with an archaic slow introduction in D minor, foregrounding French-overture-style double-dotted rhythms and chromatic harmony, including a characteristic chromatically descending approach to the dominant in the bass (bars 9–10), and an equally characteristic inner-part 7–6 suspension (bars 7–8). The transition to the Allegro in D major is marked by a transformation to ‘modern’ or ‘Classical’ syntax: a 12-bar ‘theme’ in a standard *Formenlehre* sense with a well-defined opening ‘idea’ and a clear sense of ‘continuation’ function starting in its fifth bar (bar 18) before an unambiguous ‘conclusion’ with a perfect authentic cadence (bars 24–5).[11] This much is not unique to Clementi—a similar syntactic opposition is found at the opening of Mozart’s ‘Dissonance’ Quartet K. 465—but he reinforces it in the finale, a rondo in which the *minore* episode takes the form of a canon within another cheerful movement with otherwise conventionally ‘Classical’ syntax. Nevertheless the emphasis here is on local rhetorical opposition rather than a strict correlation of style and mode; the second-movement Adagio, for instance, is also in D minor, but has no D major internal section and is not as obviously old-fashioned in style as the other D-minor passages. The finale’s canon is only one of many in Clementi’s keyboard sonatas, most of which are in major—including the central section of the Bachian Adagio of Op. 50 No. 1.

---

[9] William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 49. For further comments on this episode, see Plantinga, *Clementi*, 91.

[10] For further discussion, see Sutcliffe, 'Chopin's Counterpoint', 115; and Rohan H. Stewart-MacDonald, *New Perspectives on the Keyboard Sonatas of Muzio Clementi* (Bologna: Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2006), 283–94.

The same principle is applied more subtly and more densely in the first movement of the Sonata in F minor Op. 13 No. 6. Here subtle adjustments of syntax, dynamics and texture are coordinated with full or partial alterations of mode. The soft F-minor opening recalls Scarlatti in his intimate mode with its two-part texture and hesitations, pauses and repetitions (Ex. 12.1(i)).[12] After reaching the dominant chord of the mediant key (V/III), Clementi introduces F flats and C flats to indicate the mediant minor (iii, A flat minor), with further repetitions (Ex. 12.1(ii)). When the expected major version of the mediant (A flat major), is finally confirmed for the subordinate theme, Clementi offers a ‘modern’ transformation of the original melodic figure above a homophonic texture with a tonic bass pedal and first-beat attacks in all parts (Ex. 12.1(ii), bars 20ff). This theme grows in dynamics, energy and assurance, confidently cadencing in A-flat major. After the cadence, however, the F flats return—a hint of the minor mode—while simultaneously the repetitive tendencies resume and the dynamic drops to ***pp*** (Ex. 12.1(iii)). The exposition ends with a single melodic line doubled in octaves that dies away in a low register, again in the manner of Scarlatti. Here the coordination of mode and style is flexible and allusive, lending the exposition an almost narrative quality: the music draws itself out of the melancholy past and builds confidence before partially falling back with the fateful return of minor-mode elements and older keyboard style. This technique of ‘minor-mode interpolation’ within the major-mode context of the subordinate key (III) again has parallels in Mozart, for instance in the first movement of the Piano Concerto in C minor K. 491, albeit on a much grander scale.[13]

---

[11] According to William E. Caplin’s system, the theme would be a ‘hybrid’ of the form ‘compound basic idea + continuation’, with the continuation phrase halted by a deceptive cadence before being repeated and ending conclusively with a perfect authentic cadence. Caplin, *Classical Form*, 61.

[12] Elsewhere, Clementi imitated or, better, transformed the brilliant figuration of Scarlatti too, mainly, though, in major-key sonatas. See Plantinga, *Clementi*, 49–50.

Clementi may have absorbed something of the Viennese practice following his stay in Vienna in 1781–82, before either of the Mozart works alluded to here were composed, however. The two early G-minor sonatas that he wrote at that time stand out from the others in their sets for their artistic ambition and eschewal of octaves and flashy virtuosity. Distinctive treatment of the minor mode is already apparent to some degree in Op. 8 No. 1, where an introspective, private keyboard style appears in minor in the first movement, and more modern, extrovert idioms in association with major passages. Clementi had used the minor mode before in his keyboard music—of the six early fugues composed in 1780 and 1781, four are in minor—but never in sonatas. It is only from the Vienna period that the minor becomes available as a key for sonatas as well, and thus also for rhetorical exploitation. Clementi does not share all the techniques of the Viennese composers, though. In particular he does not favour the contrapuntal minor-key minuet as they do; his only contrapuntal minuet—a fully canonic one in the Sonata in G Op. 40 No. 1—is in major.[14]

Form and tonality

In sonata cycles Clementi’s distinctive formal and tonal strategies in the minor-mode complex include the shaping of narrative or ‘plot’ across whole movements or even multi-movement compositions. Clementi’s use of minor is characteristically insistent, on at least three levels. First, he often takes the expositions of his sonata-form movements to the dominant minor (v) rather than the mediant (III), the favoured option for most composers of the late eighteenth century (Table 12.1). In their influential book ‘Elements of Sonata Theory’, James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy would call III a ‘first-level default’ and v a ‘second-level default’, but this distinction hardly applies to Clementi, at least in statistical terms.[15] Sometimes the move to v happens only after the music has touched on or even cadenced in III, a tonal structure that is rare in eighteenth-century instrumental music after 1770. Clementi might have known instances in the minor-key sonatas of Scarlatti, who sometimes drifts to III before moving to v, especially when writing in a 'learned' vein.[16] In the first movement of the Sonata in F sharp minor Op. 25 No. 5 the move from III to v is effected via a passage of *tempo rubato* syncopations that contrast sharply with the preceding harmonically and metrically stable passage that leads to the major-key cadence in III (Ex. 12.2; compare bars 41–48 with bars 36–40). The finale of the Sonata in G minor Op. 34 No. 2 initially seems to effect a decisive modulation to III with a perfect authentic cadence in that key (Ex. 12.3, bars 66–68). However, a dramatic move from III to v (bars 69–80) prepares the soft entrance in v of the basic idea of the movement's main theme (bars 84–85), now, as before, in minor, suggesting a fateful return akin to that in the exposition of Op. 13 No. 6 (Ex. 12.3, bars 84–87). Even when he does close the exposition in III, Clementi sometimes touches, or even dwells, on the minor version of that key with expressive emphasis, an echo of the movement's original minor mode, as in Op. 13 No. 6 (Table 12.2).

---

[13] Rey M. Longyear, ‘The Minor Mode in Eighteenth-Century Sonata Form’, *Journal of Music Theory* 15/1–2 (1971), 182–229 (pp. 203–08).

[14] On the contrapuntal minor-key minuet, see Riley, *The Viennese Minor-Key Symphony*, 102–11.

The insistence on minor is underlined by Clementi's avoidance of the trend for modal reversal in minor-key sonata-form instrumental movements, exemplified by, though not restricted to, Haydn's compositions of the 1780s and 1790s, in which fast sonata-form movements turn to the tonic major just before or during the recapitulation, and end there. Like Mozart, Clementi prefers to end large-scale instrumental movements in minor. His recapitulations may dramatize and expressively heighten the transformation of the exposition's major-mode material when it reappears in minor, often as part of an elaborate re-composition of the exposition. The principle is well illustrated once again by the first movement of Op. 13 No. 6, the recapitulation of which is thoroughly recast. The major-key, subordinate-theme music begins, as in the exposition, in A flat major. This time it does not build confidence or reach its cadence, but is curtailed and diverted back to the F minor tonic, where the following two-part and single-line textures are more fully coordinated with minor, now that the third as well as the sixth scales degrees are lowered.

---

[15] James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 312–17.

[16] Stewart-MacDonald, *New Perspectives,* 103–104. Of the Scarlatti sonatas known to have circulated in print or manuscript in England before 1791, however, only K. 18 does this. See the data in Todd Decker, '"Scarlattino, the Wonder of his Time": Domenico Scarlatti's Absent Presence in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2/2 (2005), 273–98 (p. 275). The first movement of Haydn's 'Farewell' Symphony is a rare instance of a Viennese exposition that touches on III before moving to v.

Finally, Clementi arranges four of his sonatas with all movements in minor keys (Table 12.3). In Op. 13 No. 6, the C-minor slow movement, in the dominant key of the sonata's overall tonic, F minor, itself tonicizes its own dominant (G minor) as its secondary key: an unremitting emphasis on minor. Op. 40 No. 2 and Op. 50 No. 3 have each of their respective three movements in the tonic minor. This insistence on tonic note as well as minor mode suggests a dark or melancholic mood that is difficult to shift, surely exemplified in the figure of 'Didone abbandonata', referenced by the title of Op. 50 No. 3. Minor-key cycles with all movements in minor are not unprecedented in this era,[17] but the use of the tonic minor for all the movements of a cycle is very unusual. It is found in Haydn's Symphony No. 49 in F minor ('La Passione'), which, because of its key and associations with Passion music, must be counted as one of the darkest instrumental compositions of the time.

Haydn's 'La Passione' is connected in another significant way with Clementi's minor-key sonatas, concerning the order of its movements. It is a symphony with a slow first movement, an Austrian subgenre that H. C. Robbins Landon called the 'sonata da chiesa symphony'.[18] Such compositions tend to have the same tonic for all four movements, a very slow movement—an Adagio or Lento rather than Andante—placed first, and sometimes a more elevated, serious tone than usual. In some ways three of Clementi's single-tonic sonatas (Table 12.4) are even closer to the *sonata da chiesa* model than Haydn's 'La Passione'. Each of these pieces has a slow introduction preceding the first movement, ending on dominant harmony, while the slow inner movement likewise ends on the dominant, something rarely found elsewhere in Haydn's works or in Austrian symphonies generally. This results in a pattern of two pairs of linked sections, slow-fast, slow-fast, all sections having the same tonic. Clementi's Capriccio in E minor Op. 47 No. 1 is organized similarly, although the second slow movement is not in the tonic, and the finale turns to the tonic major.

Gradus ad Parnassum (1817–1826) reveals a variety of strategies in minor-mode composition, some of which depart from the practices found in the sonatas. Whether this is principally an issue of genre or chronology is debatable, as many of the pieces were written much earlier than their publication dates. Some minor-key pieces are finger exercises or modern piano 'etudes', a new genre that appears to be equally available in either mode. Some of the pieces are grouped in sets or suites, usually with a common tonic. Here we sometimes find modal reversal within the suites. The very first suite (Nos. 25–27) breaks with earlier practice by ending with a movement in major, although it preserves the coordination of untimely rhetoric with the minor mode. It begins with an old-fashioned slow introduction and a fugue, followed by a canon, all in B minor. The B-major finale is a homophonic, etude-like piece without any obviously retrospective aspects. In later suites, however, the new trend for modal reversal is no longer underlined by a change to modern syntax. One group (Nos. 56–58) begins with an 'Adagio patetico' in B flat minor before moving to a fugue and a presto finale, both in B flat major. Here the 'untimely rhetoric' is not restricted to minor but distributed across minor- and major-key movements (the first and second). In another suite of four pieces (Nos. 60–63), two pieces entitled 'Introduzione', placed first and third, are in minor keys (E flat minor and C minor), while three fast movements, including a final canon, are in E flat major. Something of the *sonata da chiesa* pattern is preserved in this set, but without full coordination of mode and style. No. 98 in F sharp minor is a three-part invention that perhaps draws closer to the style of Scarlatti than ever before in Clementi with its swirling figuration, repetition of short phrases and characteristic ornamentation in fast passages.

---

[17] An example is Vaňhal's Symphony in C minor, Bryan c2. All three movements of Boccherini's Symphony in D minor ('La Casa del diavolo') begin in minor.

[18] H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works, vol. 2, Haydn at Eszterháza, 1766–1790* (London: Thames and Hundson, 1978), 290.

Recapitulatory re-writing

Two of Clementi's finest minor-key sonata movements are marked by extensive re-writing of the recapitulation of a kind conventionally regarded by music historians—if not by Clementi scholars —as uniquely characteristic of Haydn. Here the selection and reordering of material from the exposition and indeed the introduction of new material in the recapitulation contributes to the rhetorical heightening of a long stretch of tonic minor. The first movement of the Sonata in G minor Op. 34 No. 2 is exceptionally complex in form and motivic processes. The opening Largo is a free fugato (Plantiga compares it with the subject of the D major fugue from Book 2 of the Well-Tempered Clavier),[19] austere in its sparse textures, bare dissonances, intensive chromaticismand suspensions. It prepares an Allegro con fuoco that is based throughout on a few figures of pathos (appoggiaturas, nervous gestures, short, repeated units) and driving rhythms, which are worked into a dense set of variants. Its rushing figuration several times interrupts major-key passages, turning them back to minor. This is seen in the second half of the exposition, which has the overall tonal structure i–III–iii with only a *tièrce de picardie* at the close taking it back to III. The only stable passage in major in the whole movement is found in the middle of the development, when the Largo returns in C major, transformed into an aria-like passage with florid melodic embellishments; but this music too is swept away before it can cadence by another return of the rushing figuration.

---

[19] Plantinga, 'Clementi, Virtuosity, and the "German Manner"', 329.

The recapitulation of Op. 34 No. 2/i holds many surprises, including a good deal of new material in rhetorically heightened guise, such as a new version of the subordinate theme's presentation phrase, now *dolce*. The subordinate theme's original ideas are themselves related to those of the main theme—, establishing it as an alternative to the first variant (compare bars 11–14, 37–47 and 224–227; see Exs. 12.4(i-iii)). The movement's unyielding energy here seems to generate an abundance of new material—most unusual in a Classical sonata recapitulation, especially given the negative mood prevailing here. Thus the expected close is delayed and the recapitulation is lengthened relative to the exposition. In particular, several continuation phrases are extended in elaborate ways, sometimes suggesting fantasia-like digressions or a distracted state of mind, before reality is dramatically asserted again by the pressing figuration. The main theme's continuation draws on material from its expositional counterpart, but introduces new ideas and types of figuration, including a soft, high-register, chromatic passage in two-part writing with metrical grouping and displacement conflicts (bars 208–14),[20] which is then dramatically swept away by ***ff*** interjections, thick punctuating chords and rushing scales (Ex. 12.5). The subordinate theme's continuation has some of the same dramatic events in another re-worked continuation, but also material from the very end of the exposition (bars 228–35), suggesting that the end of the movement is near. But the conclusion is delayed by another surprise: the new version of the subordinate theme's basic idea initially in VI (E flat major; bar 241). A third continuation again implies an imminent close, before new, pathos-filled material (bars 256–64) leads back to the new two-part chromatic figures. A final new figure appears for the post-cadential closing section, grimly and emphatically confirming G minor. As Rohan H. Stewart-MacDonald points out, the rhetoric of closure itself joins in the extended process of generation in these hectic final pages.[21]

A final extraordinary aspect of this movement is that all these recapitulation events follow a 'dry run' version of the recapitulation that sticks quite closely to the events of the exposition, up to the moment when III turned to iii, but begins in iv (C minor) and modulates to VI (E flat major) for the subordinate theme. The collapse from the exposition's conventional III to the minor iii is thus extended here to a wholesale transformation of the recapitulation in the tonic minor. The true recapitulation rejects or replaces the more orthodox arrangement of the trial version, substituting alternative versions of the main material and new, dramatic and elaborate continuations, all the while remaining in the tonic minor. The intricate coordination of mode, rhetoric and formal processes in this movement arguably exceeds anything in the Viennese instrumental repertory at this time.

---

[20] Terminology developed by Harald Krebs in *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[21] Stewart-MacDonald, *New Perspectives*, 141; for further discussion of this movement see pp. 131–41.

Gradus ad Parnassum No. 42 in F minor, marked Allegro con energia, passione e fuoco, is another long sonata movement—the only one in the *Gradus* in a minor key—with an especially convoluted development section that dwells on distant keys and points ahead to nineteenth-century practice in its combination of contrasting ideas from the exposition in sequence as if 'brought into conflict' (bars 70–85). Indeed the listener's first impression is that Clementi has developed a new approach to minor-mode fast sonata-form movements. The piece begins with a 'murky' bass, and later combines it with parallel rising thirds and sixths in the right-hand part in a manner that closely anticipates Beethoven's 'Pathetique' Sonata (bars 65–69). Melodic material is presented in right-hand octaves and in textures with broken chords in the inner parts (bars 13–16, 53–56), new departures for Clementi's fast minor-key movements. Unusually for Clementi, the exposition spends much more time in major (III) than in minor (49 bars to 16). Scarlatti-type textures are not in evidence, nor the running, swirling two-part textures that we often find in these movements.

Yet the recapitulation of No. 42 signals a return to Clementi's earlier approach to minor-key sonata form. Again, it is longer than the exposition, thoroughly re-cast in the manner of Haydn, re-working the exposition's tight motivic web, and increasing its continuity (another Haydnesque trait). These alterations rhetorically highlight the consistent F-minor tonality, which stands out in this movement given the exposition's unusual emphasis on major. Dramatic accents and dissonances such as 7–6 suspensions appear that were entirely absent from the exposition (bars 179, 181, 196 and 199; for the first two see Ex. 12.6). The murky bass is less prominent, as are the lyrical phrases with inner-part broken chords, whereas the running, two-part textures are extended, including, after a pause (bar 184; see Ex. 12.6), a Scarlatti-like passage that recalls the first movement of the F-minor sonata Op. 13 No. 6. The recapitulation opens with a very long span of minor-mode music: the main theme moves to a 'secondary development',[22] and then arrives at the start of the subordinate theme without a cadence, the new basic idea expressing continuation (medial function) rather than presentation (initiating function) through the avoidance of root position harmonies (bars 165–66). The chromatic approach to the cadence of the exposition's main theme (bars 202–211) is reserved for the end of this section and is extended, replacing the lyrical, modern textures at that point. This effects a dramatic change of idiom at a crucial moment. As in Op. 34 No. 2/i, a limited set of materials are given alternative realizations in different parts of the movement in various styles, the emphasis on modern or ancient styles being coordinated with major and minor mode for rhetorical effect and, ultimately, a tragic outcome.

---

[22] Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* rev. edn (New York: Norton, 1988), 289–93.

Conclusion

Sir John Hawkins, that fierce proponent of 'ancient music', religious moralist and author of the five-volume *General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (1776), lamented in 1788 in the introduction to an edition of sacred music by William Boyce that 'We hear no more the solemn and pathetic Adagio, the artful and well-studied Fugue, or the sweet modulation of the keys with the minor third'.[23] The tendency of some late eighteenth-century composers to combine ancient style and minor mode may have arisen from nothing more than the fact that, as modern instrumental music was overwhelming in major keys, when the minor mode was heard at all it was in the context of historical revivals and old-fashioned sacred music, and the association remained in their ears. Hawkins would presumably have approved of Clementi's activities in collecting and publishing old keyboard music and of his cultivation of the 'internal' traditions of compositional craft in his many published fugues and canons. However, Clementi's compositional habits when coordinating the minor mode with ancient style are subtle and intricate, and do not translate into Hawkins's dichotomy of ancient wholesomeness and modern decadence. William Crotch selected No. 42 in F minor from *Gradus ad Parnassum* to play at some of his lectures in the 1820s as evidence for his thesis that music had enjoyed a phase of renewal since 1780 and that the great ancient/modern divide had been overcome.[24] The *Gradus* presents pieces in ancient, modern and 'mixed' styles side-by-side, as does *Introduction to the Art of Playing the Pianoforte* (1801), which ranges from Handel, Corelli, J. S. Bach, Scarlatti and Couperin to Mozart, Pleyel, Beethoven and Cramer. All, it is implied, should be under the fingers of the aspirant contemporary pianist.

---

[23] William Boyce, *Cathedral Music*, 2nd ed. (London: John Ashley, 1788), cited in Percy Young, *A History of British Music* (London: Benn, 1963), 343, and in Daniel Heartz, *Music in European Capitals: The Galant Style, 1720–1780* (New York: Norton, 2003, 905. On Hawkins as an ideologist, see Weber, *Musical Classics*, 201–13.

[24] Irving, *Ancients and Moderns*, 217.

Clementi’s treatment of the minor mode places him centrally within wider international trends in instrumental composition of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by composers such as Vaňhal, Dittersdorf, Haydn, Mozart and Koželuch within the Viennese orbit, along with J. C. Bach, Boccherini and others. Clementi developed the possibilities of untimely rhetoric in instrumental music perhaps further than any other composer, certainly in keyboard music. Beethoven in his late style was the last major figure to explore the minor mode / ancient style complex—albeit within a much wider field of contrapuntal and retrospective allusions—in the ‘Passion music’ of the finale of the Piano Sonata in A flat Op. 110, parts of the Credo of the *Missa Solemnis* in F# minor and the related F# minor idiom of the Adagio of the ‘Hammerklavier’ Sonata Op. 106, along with the fugue from the String Quartet in C# minor Op. 131 and the ‘pathotype’ figure running through that work and the String Quartets in A minor Op. 132 and in B flat Op. 130. Clementi thus epitomizes a certain kind of compositional response to contemporary stylistic and aesthetic developments, which found parallel realizations in most major European musical centres.

Example captions

Ex. 12.1(i) Sonata in F minor Op. 13 No. 6/i, bars 1–6

Ex. 12.1(ii) Sonata in F minor Op. 13 No. 6/i, bars 15–24

Ex. 12.1(iii) Sonata in F minor Op. 13 No. 6/i, bars 29–32

Ex. 12.2 Sonata in F sharp minor Op. 25 No. 5/i, bars 36–48

Ex. 12.3 Sonata in G minor Op. 34 No. 2/iii, bars 64–87

Ex. 12.4(i) Sonata in G minor Op. 34 No. 2/i, bars 11–14

Ex. 12.4(ii) Sonata in G minor Op. 34 No. 2/i, bars 37–47

Ex. 12.4(iii) Sonata in G minor Op. 34 No. 2/i, bars 223–26

Ex. 12.5 Sonata in G minor Op. 34 No. 2/i, bars 207–19

Ex. 12.6 *Gradus ad Parnassum* No. 42, bars 178–88

Table 12.1 Minor-key sonata-movement expositions by Clementi that finish in v

Op. 8 No. 1/iii	G minor
Op. 13 No. 6/ii	F minor (mvt ii in C minor)
Op. 25 No. 5/i	F# minor
Op. 34 No. 2/iii	G minor
Op. 40 No. 2/i	B minor
Op. 50 No. 2/iii	D minor
Op. 50 No. 3/i	G minor
Op. 50 No. 3/iii	G minor

Table. 12.2 Minor-key sonata-movement expositions by Clementi that finish in III but touch on its minor mode

Op. 13 No. 6/i	F minor
Op. 34 No. 2/i	G minor
Op. 50 No. 2/i	D minor

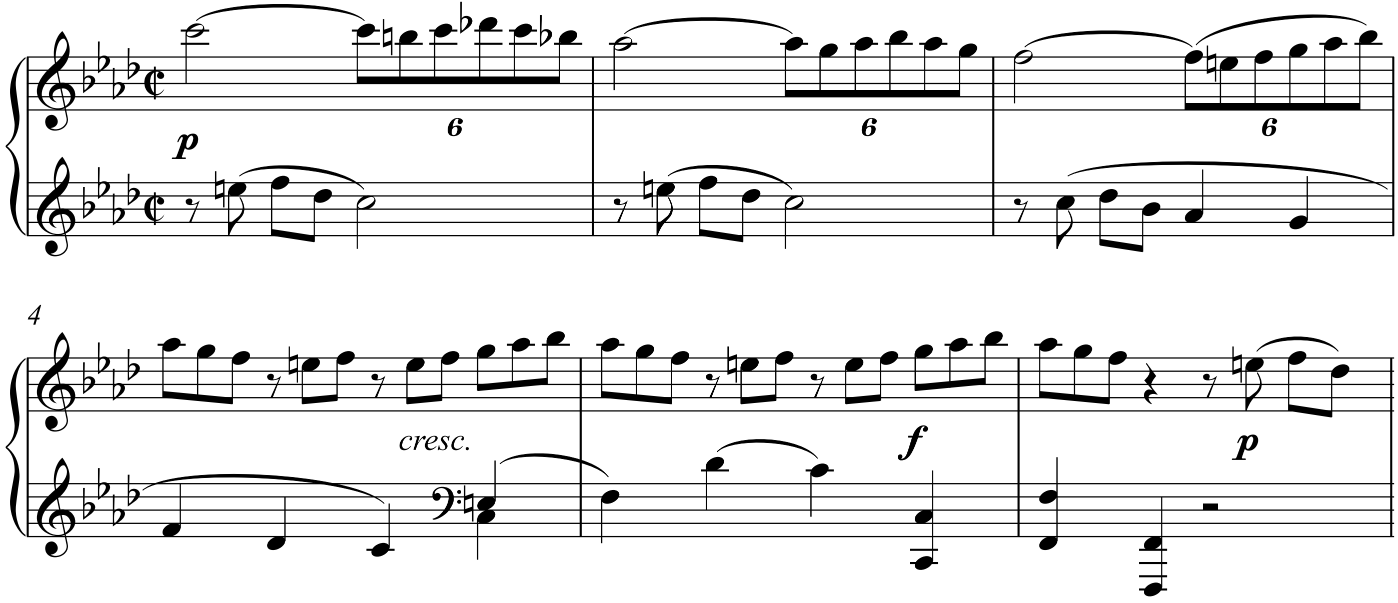
Table 12.3 Sonatas by Clementi with all movements in minor

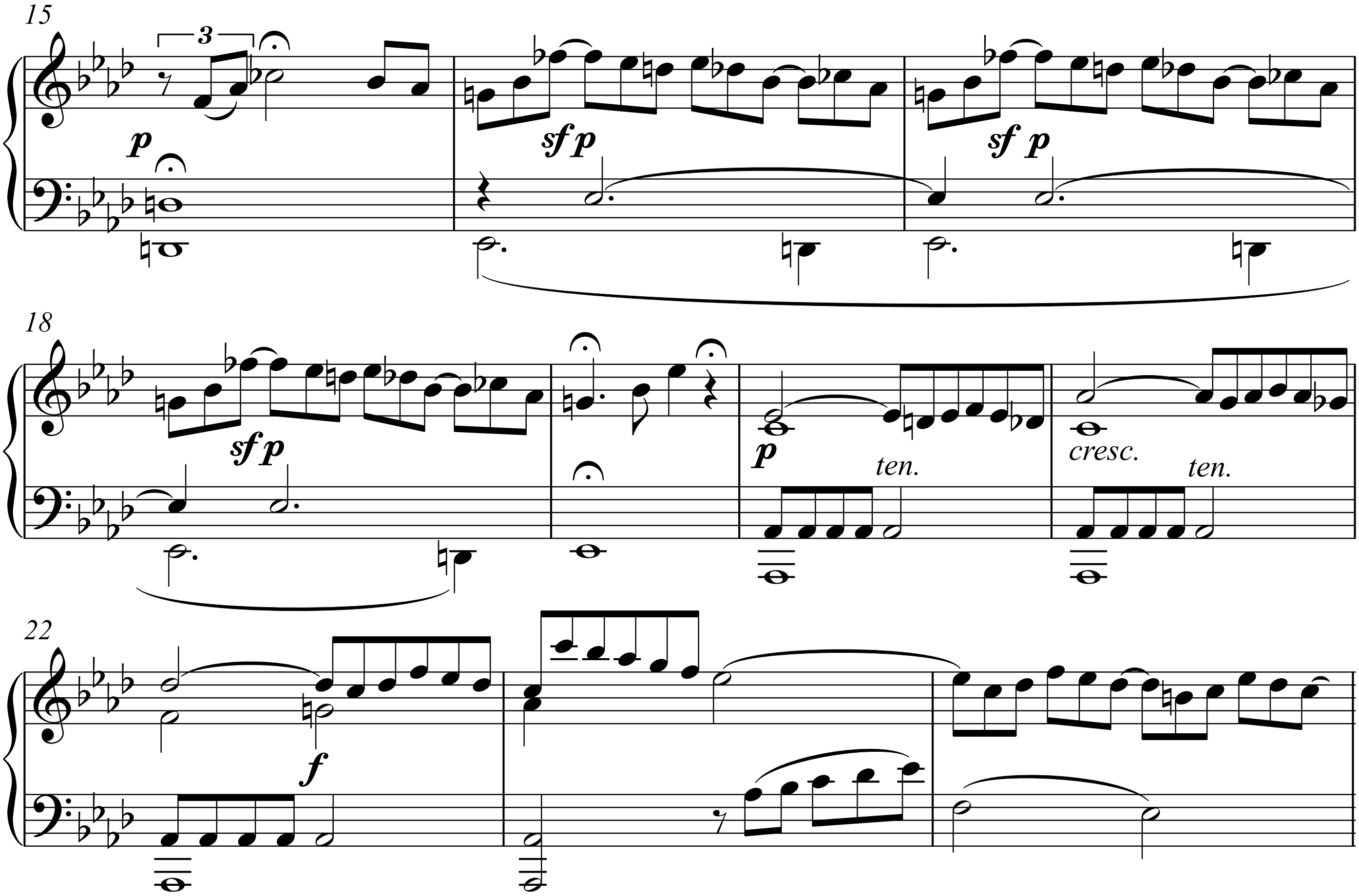
Op. 13 No. 6	F minor	i, v, i
Op. 25 No. 5	F# minor	i, iv, i
Op. 40 No. 2	B minor	i, i, i,
Op. 50 No. 3	G minor	i, i, i

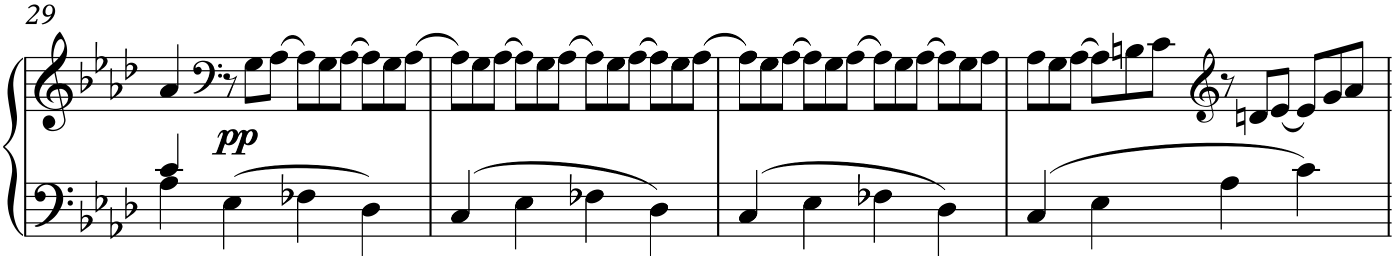
Table 12.4 Multi-movement pieces by Clementi on the *sonata da chiesa* model

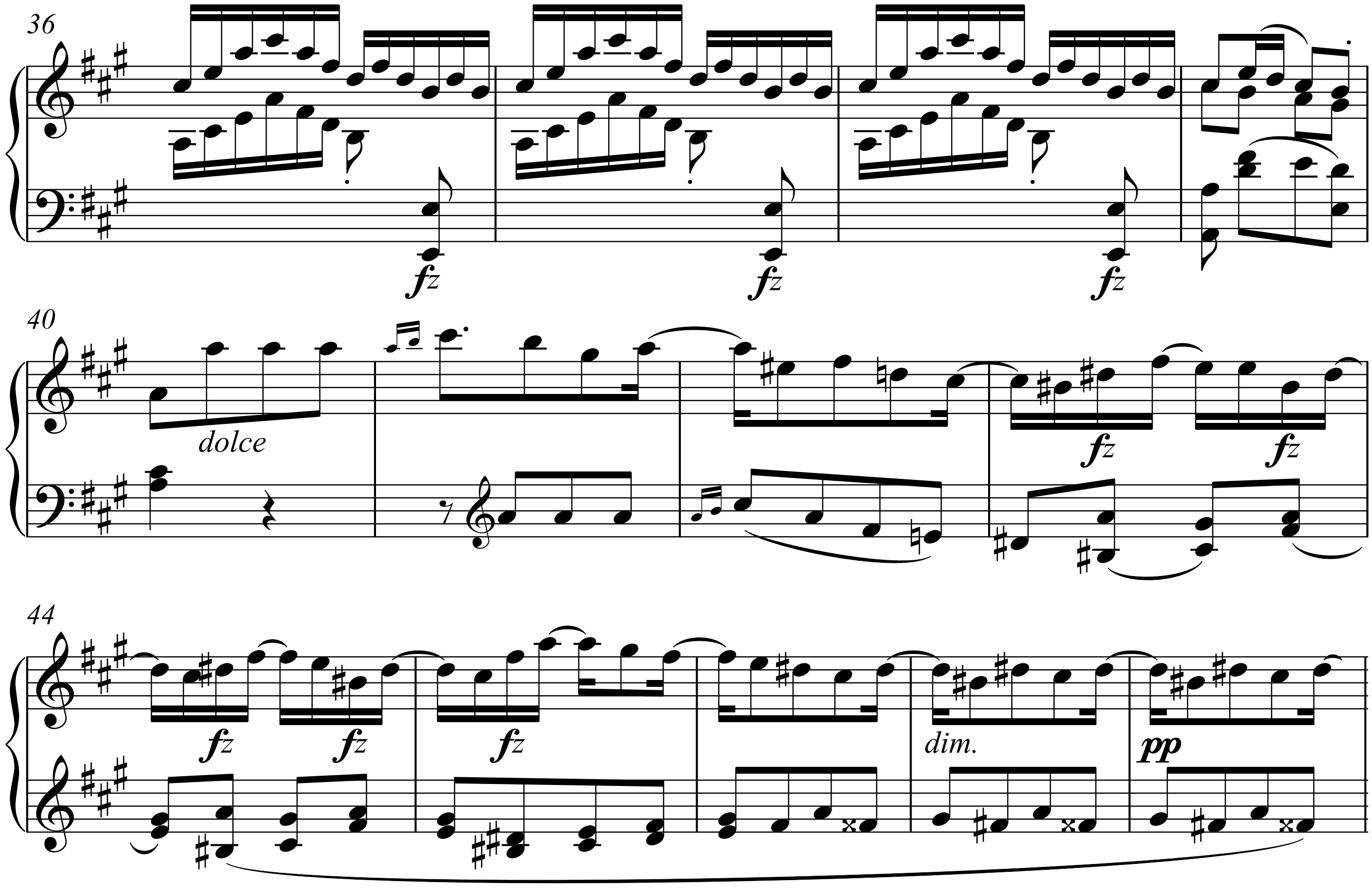
Op. 40 No. 2	B minor
Op. 40 No. 3	D minor / D major
Op. 50 No. 3	G minor
Capriccio Op. 47 No. 1	E minor / E major

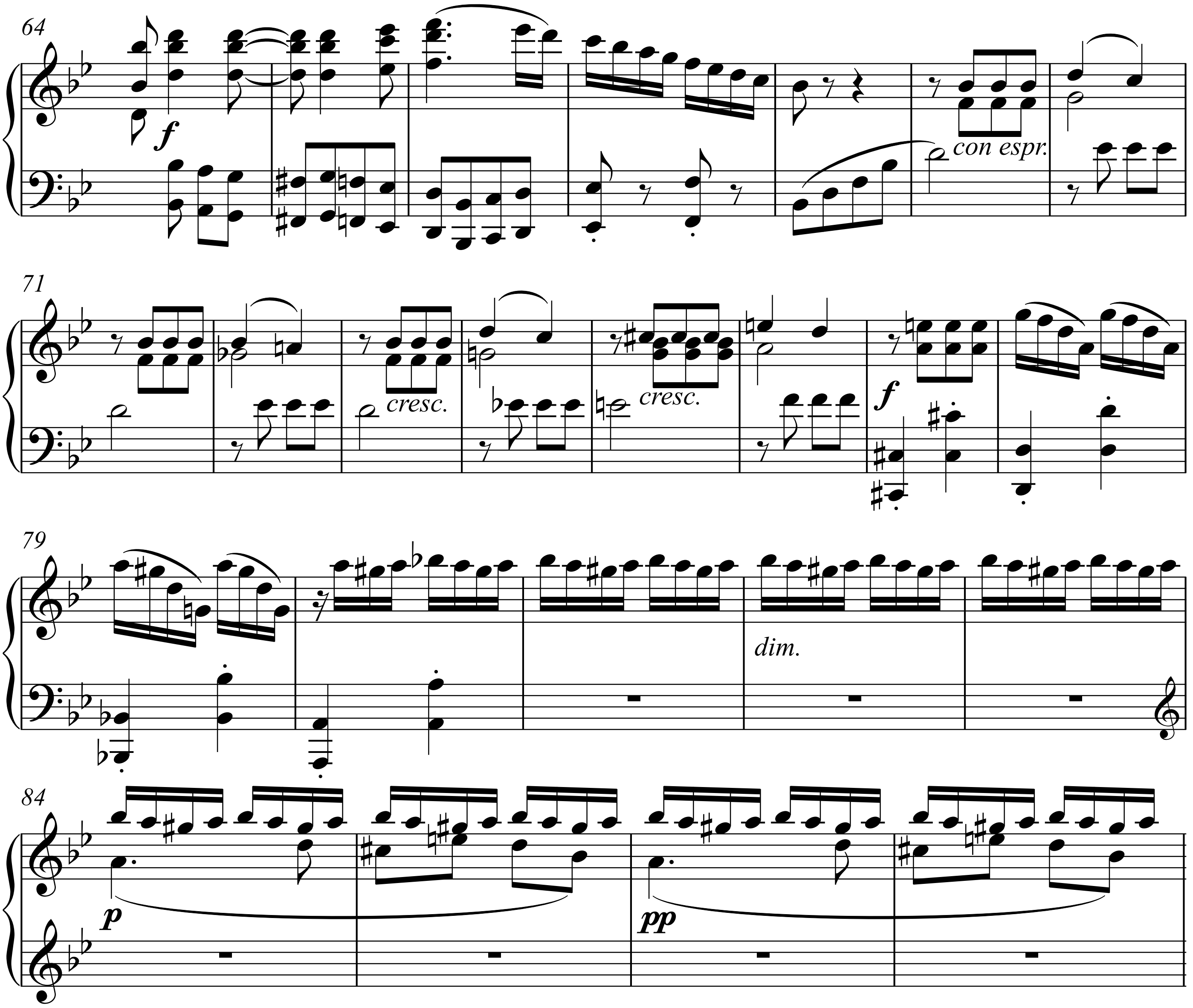
Allegro agitato


p
6
6
6
4
cresc.
f
p

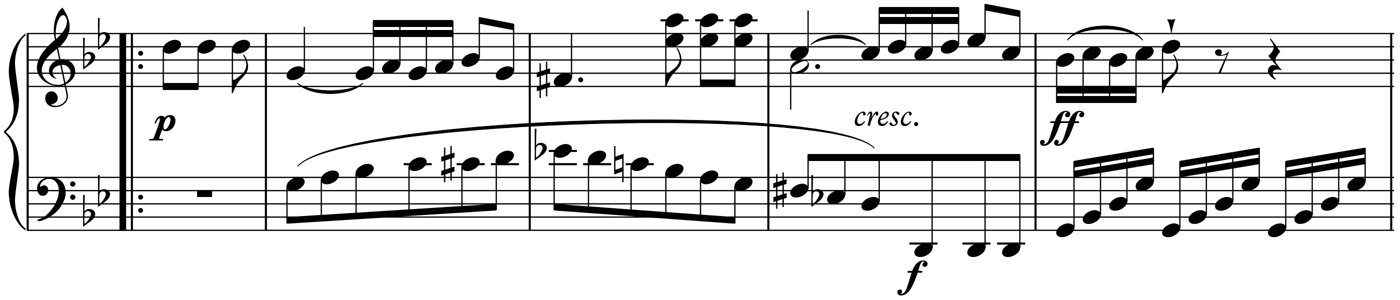

15
3
p
sf p
sf p
18
sf p
p
ten.
cresc.
ten.
22
f

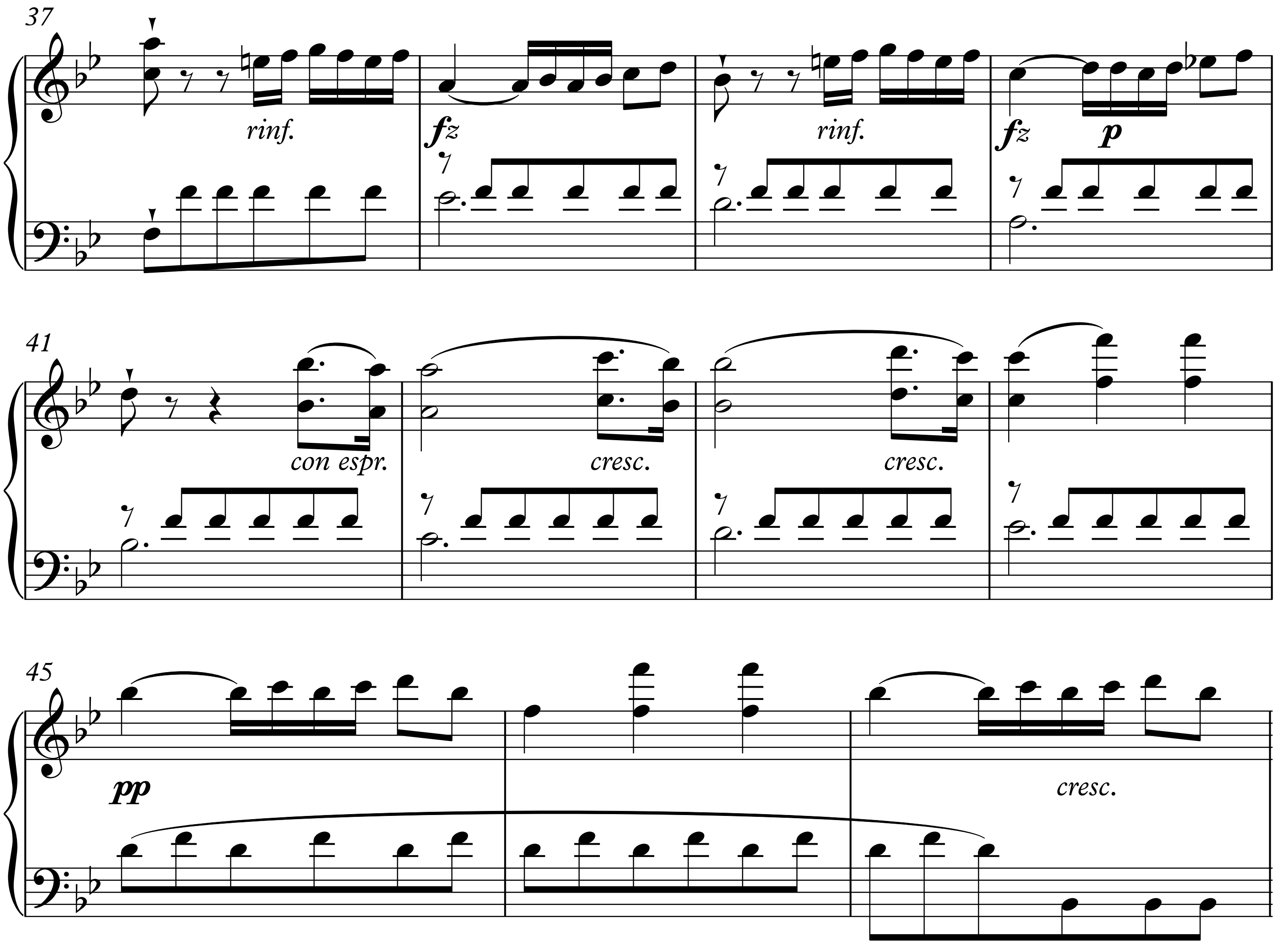

29
pp

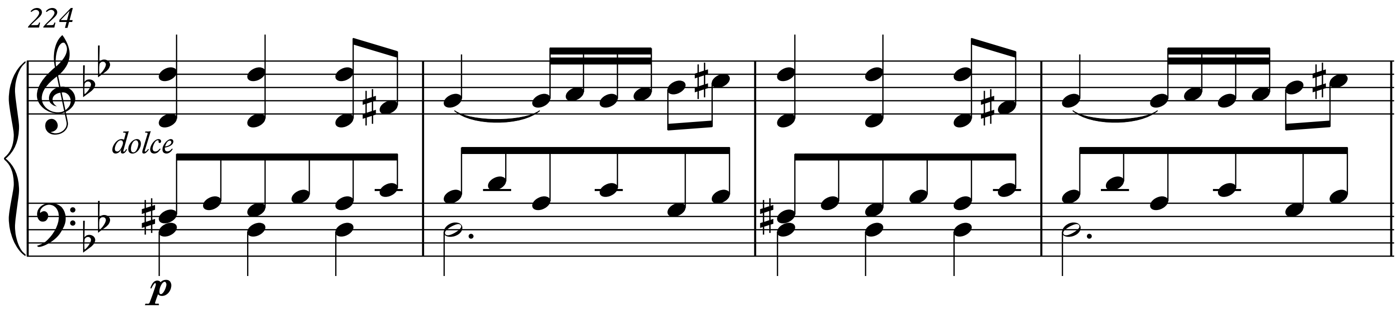

36
fz
fz
fz
40
dolce
fz
fz
44
fz
fz
fz
dim.
pp

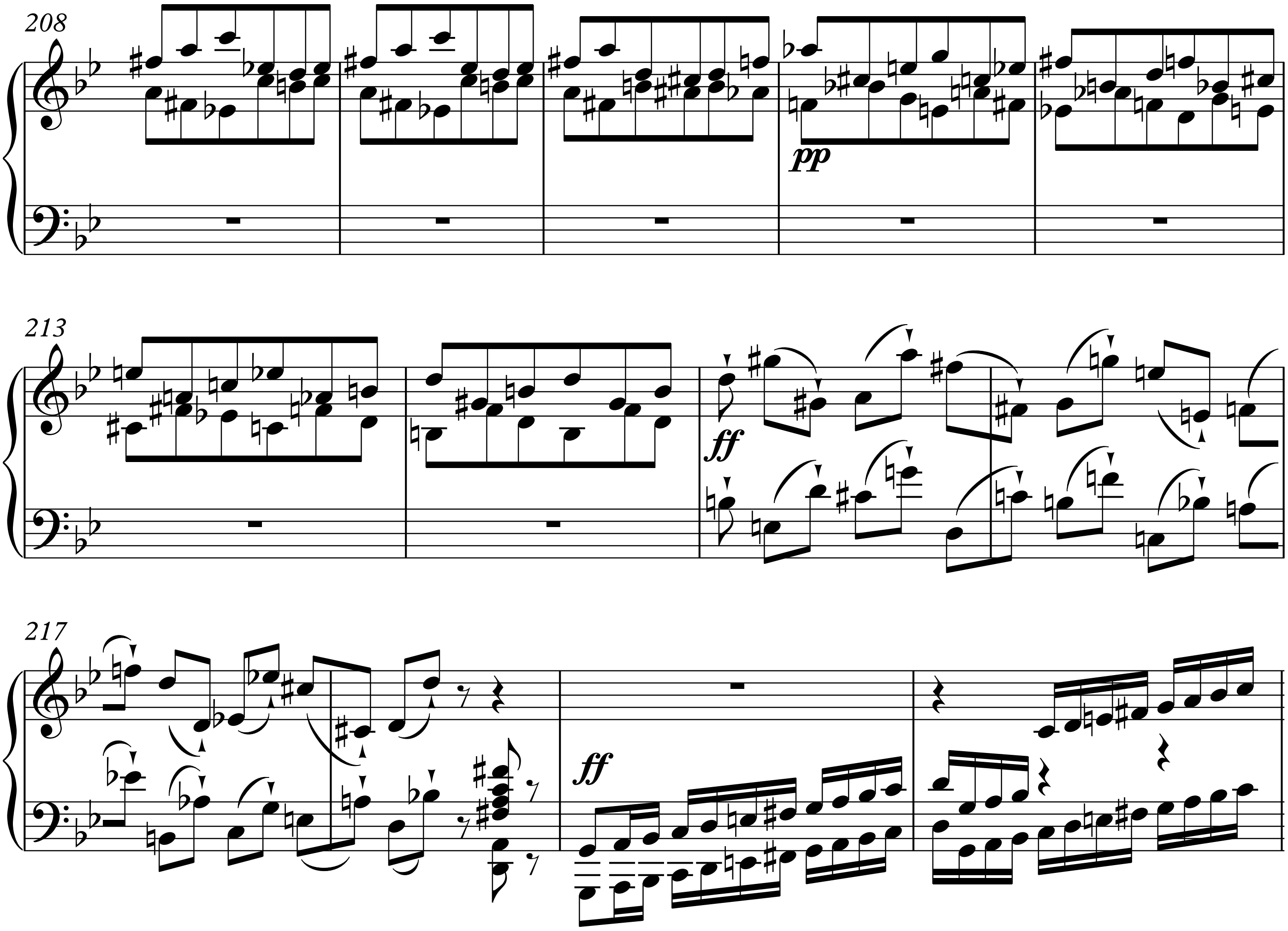

64
f
con espr.
71
cresc.
cresc.
f
79
dim.
84
p
pp

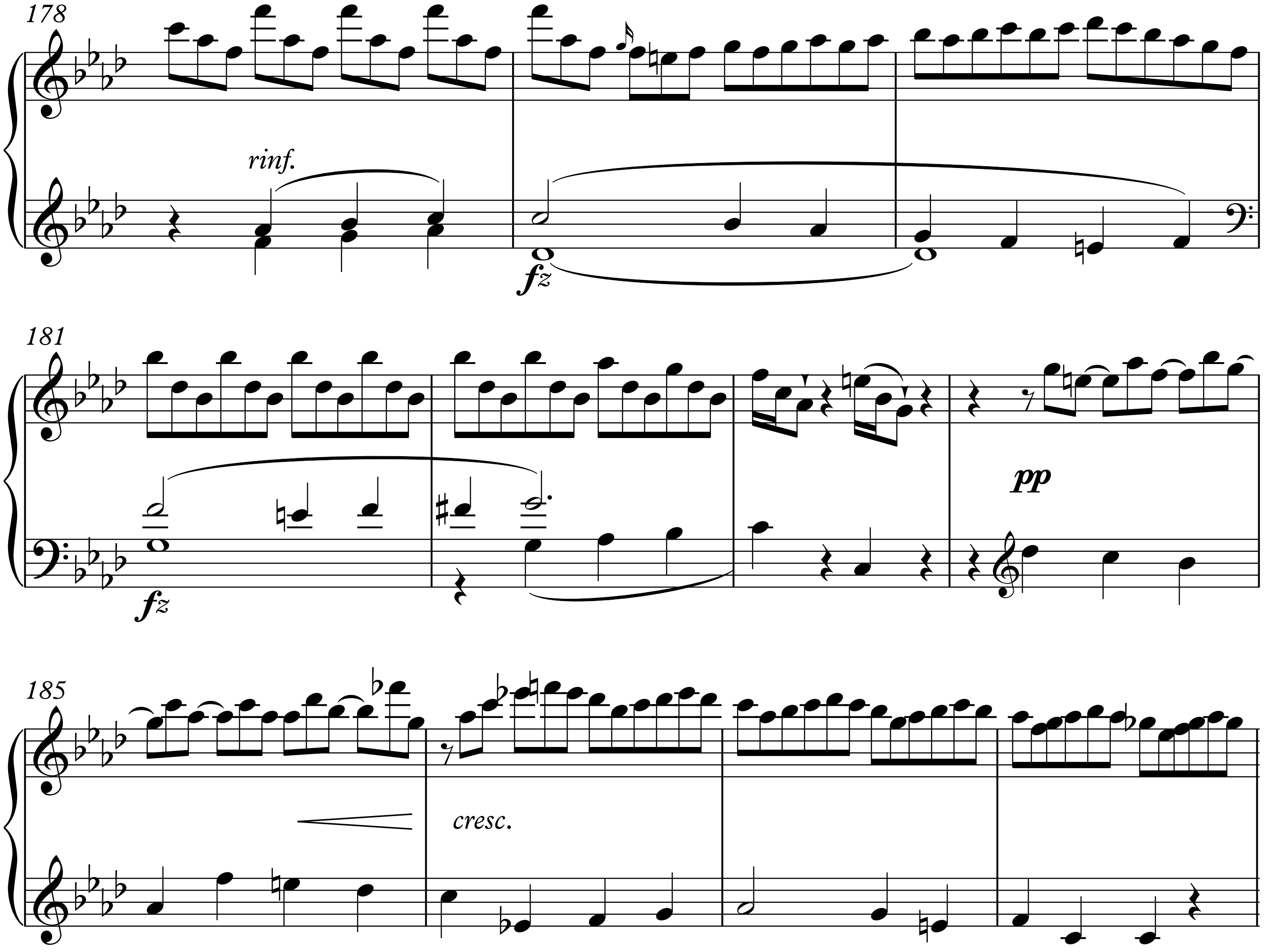
Allegro con fuoco




37
rinf.
fz
rinf.
fz
p
41
con espr.
cresc.
cresc.
45
pp
cresc.


224
dolce
p


208
pp
213
ff
217
ff


178
rinf.
fz
181
fz
pp
185
cresc.