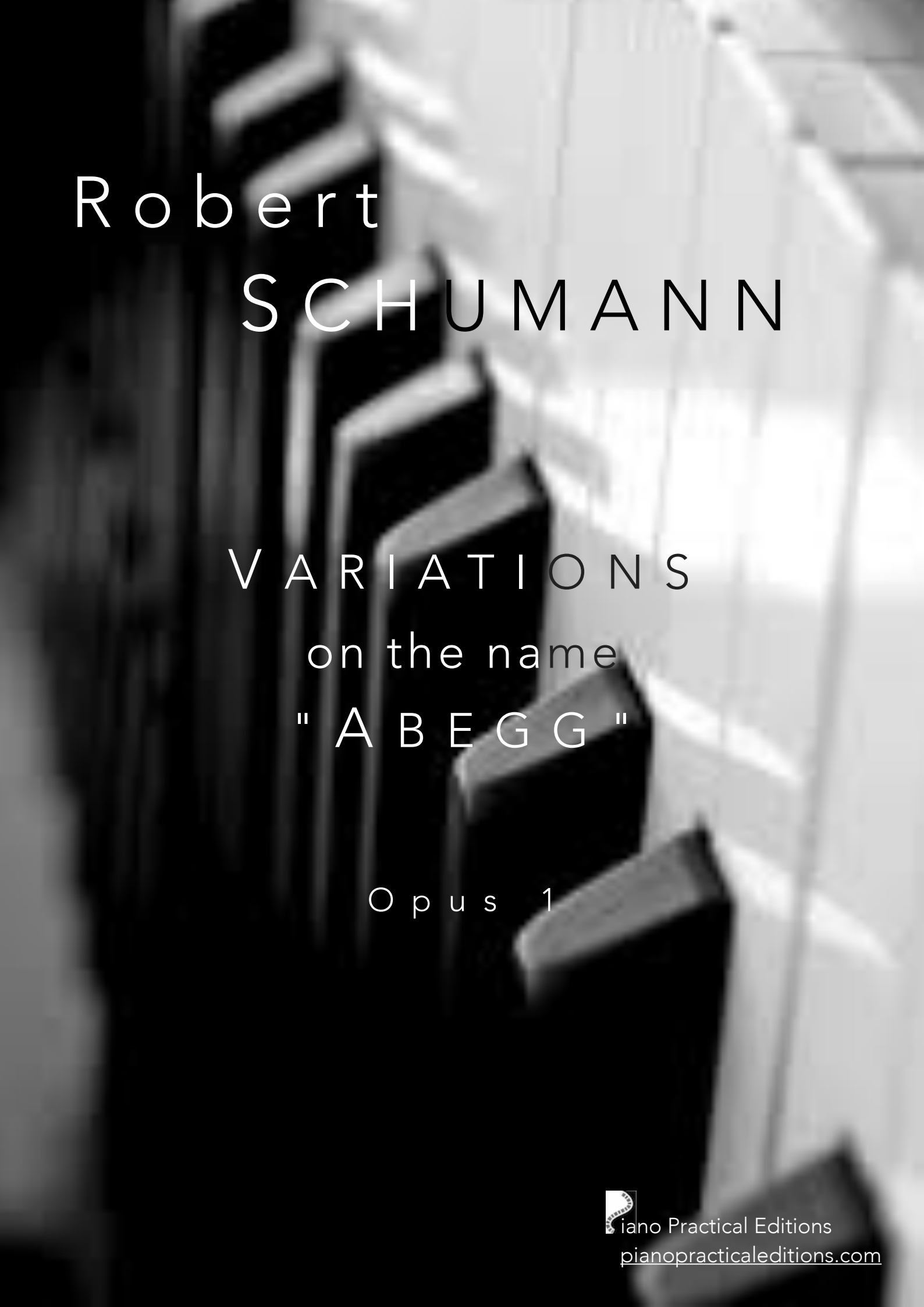


Robert SCHUMANN

VARIATIONS on the name "ABEGG"

Opus 1

Piano Practical Editions
pianopracticaleditions.com

iano Practical Editions

Musical Health Warning : please be aware that these editions are definitely not urtext and should be consulted together with a traditional version. They have been devised purely to help solve musical and technical problems at the piano.

Please send comments and error reports to
Ray Alston contact@pianopracticaleditions.com

Robert SCHUMANN 1810 - 1856

VARIATIONS on the name "ABEGG" Opus 1

The number one opus establishes a critical moment in a composer's life and makes two statements: "I am eager to be taken seriously and have found a professional publisher". Schumann, in spite of having promised his mother to read law in Leipzig, had hitherto written eight polonaises for duet, some songs, a piano quartet and early drafts for *Papillons* Op 2, and others. A romantic scenario describes the composer meeting a young pianist named Meta Abegg at a masked ball in Mannheim, but the reality was equally the surnames of two fellow students from Heidelberg, August and Otto Abegg, providing motivation for the subject. It is possible that they were related to the Schumann family.

This type of composition, tending towards virtuoso display was fashionable with pianist composers and most chose to base their themes on popular operatic arias. However, the name ABEGG was easy to encode into the language of music (German B = B flat), a predilection and stimulus which he would further develop over the next 10 years.

To add gravitas to the work's presentation Schumann chose to ennoble his dedicatee; thus was a mere *fräulein* elevated to *Mademoiselle la Comtesse Pauline d'Abegg*. You may be wondering why the elaborate title (see the original edition cover below) appeared entirely in French. Paris was acknowledged as the centre of the pianistic world and the likes of Chopin, Liszt, Kalkbrenner Hiller, Marie Pleyel, Moscheles, Thalberg, and Herz had adopted the city as their own. Later publications of the variations were entirely in German.

Completed soon after his 20th birthday and unashamedly confident, opus one was finally published in November 1831.* Early reviews were enthusiastic: Ludwig Rellstab (responsible for Beethoven's ill-chosen sobriquet *Clair de Lune*) wrote: "The variations of an accomplished pianist and as rewarding and brilliant as those of Czerny or Herz, for which reason deserving of equal recognition". The *Wiener Zeitung* was even more glowing: "The artist that we encounter here for the first time is probably still young and unusually does not belong to any school, drawing inspiration

from within and unaffected by the 'feathers' of his peers; this 'rewarding and sparkling piece' makes many technical demands, and is distinguished by a youthful freshness and ingenious virtuosity.

The theme owes much to Schubert; Schumann had expressed his admiration for the songs and was also introduced to the four-hand works for piano. He later requested from his teacher Friedrich Wieck the complete Schubert Waltzes and played them "beautifully and whenever he had the chance".

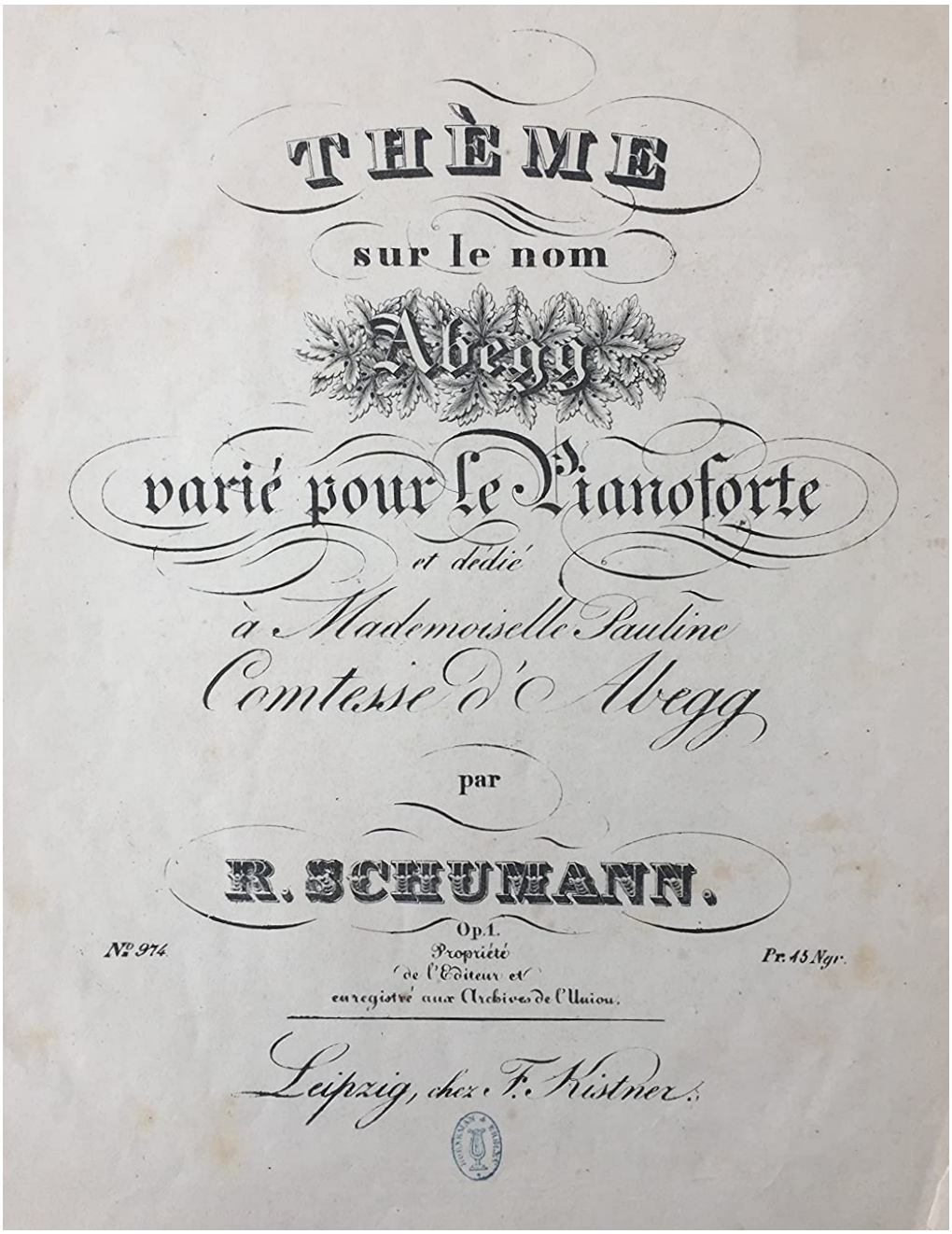
Biographer Eric Jensen writes that "it is clear that Schumann intended the variations to be comparatively conventional, entertaining, and pleasing – goals that, as time passed, increasingly he abandoned." However, the music is anything but easy to play, and was not destined for amateurs.

Ray Alston *May 2022*

* An extract from Schumann's diary dated 7th of November 1831 :

> Heute erschein' ich zum erstenmal in der großen Welt mit den Variationen! Möge dies ein Abschnitt seyn an Kraft und innerer Besserung –

Today I appear for the first time in the great world with the variations! May this establish a period of energy and inner improvement —



Cover from the first edition by Kistner of Leipzig

Piano Practical Editions

Devised to be used in conjunction with traditional scores, the Abegg Variations have been completely and audaciously re-drafted; using modern editing technology, radical and original solutions are proposed, always keeping to the spirit of the composer's original intentions.

These editions reflect an entirely personal interpretation and do not always exactly follow original texts, particularly in regard to dynamics and accentuation. Modifications are made to accommodate the timbre of modern instruments and are based on long experience, analysis and intuition; changes to notation, ties, phrasing and accentuation are marked with an asterisk and sometimes refer to the notes below.

Clara's (Breitkopf) metronome speeds are included for reference, and pedalling only indicated when its use might not be evident. It can be most instructive to experiment with acciaccaturas, arpeggiated chords, grace notes etc. played on or before the beat.

Beaming has been significantly edited to underline particular rhythmic interest and the use of different size notation is entirely editorial.

Theme page **1**

10 - **16** & **26** - **32** arpeggiation missing from Breitkopf and Augener. It is suggested that the thumb plays on the beat.

17 editorial crotchet

30 Breitkopf (Clara) continues with A flat

Variation I page **3**

13 & **14** editorial ties

16 repeat sign omitted – its inclusion probably an oversight in early editions

Variation II pages **5** & **20**

An alternative editorial version in 2/2 can be found on page 20

Variation III page **7**

16 1st beat one octave lower

24 one octave higher

IV non troppo lento page **10**

this section without reference is an improvised introduction to the Finale

10 editorial modification to notation and phrasing

Finale page **12**

6 editorial tenor voice

8 modification – probably an error (see **82**)

19 Peters gives a B flat here, probably in error

42 editorial modification

48 Litolff and Augener insert quaver A as in **49**

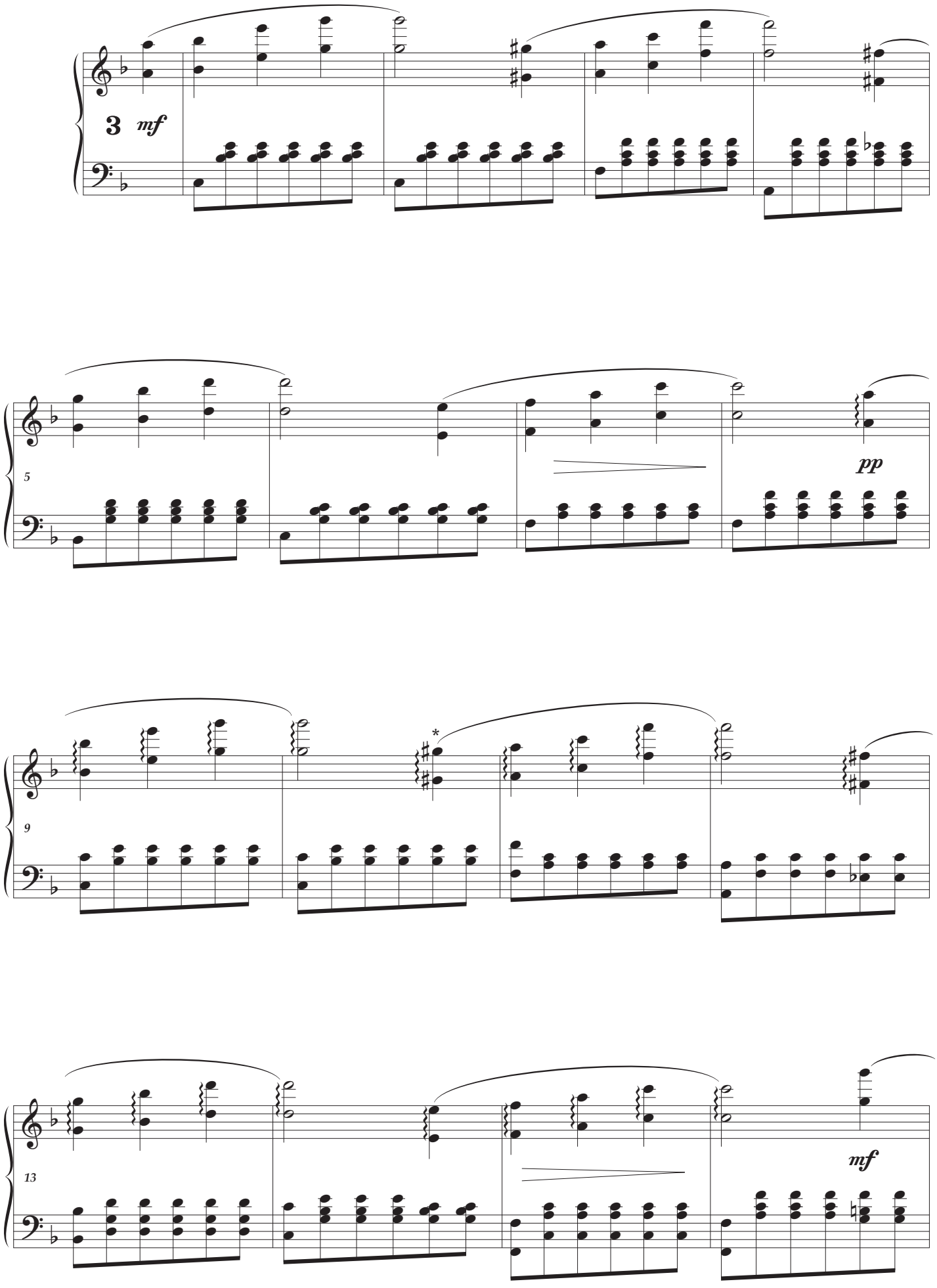
64 & **66** editorial modifications

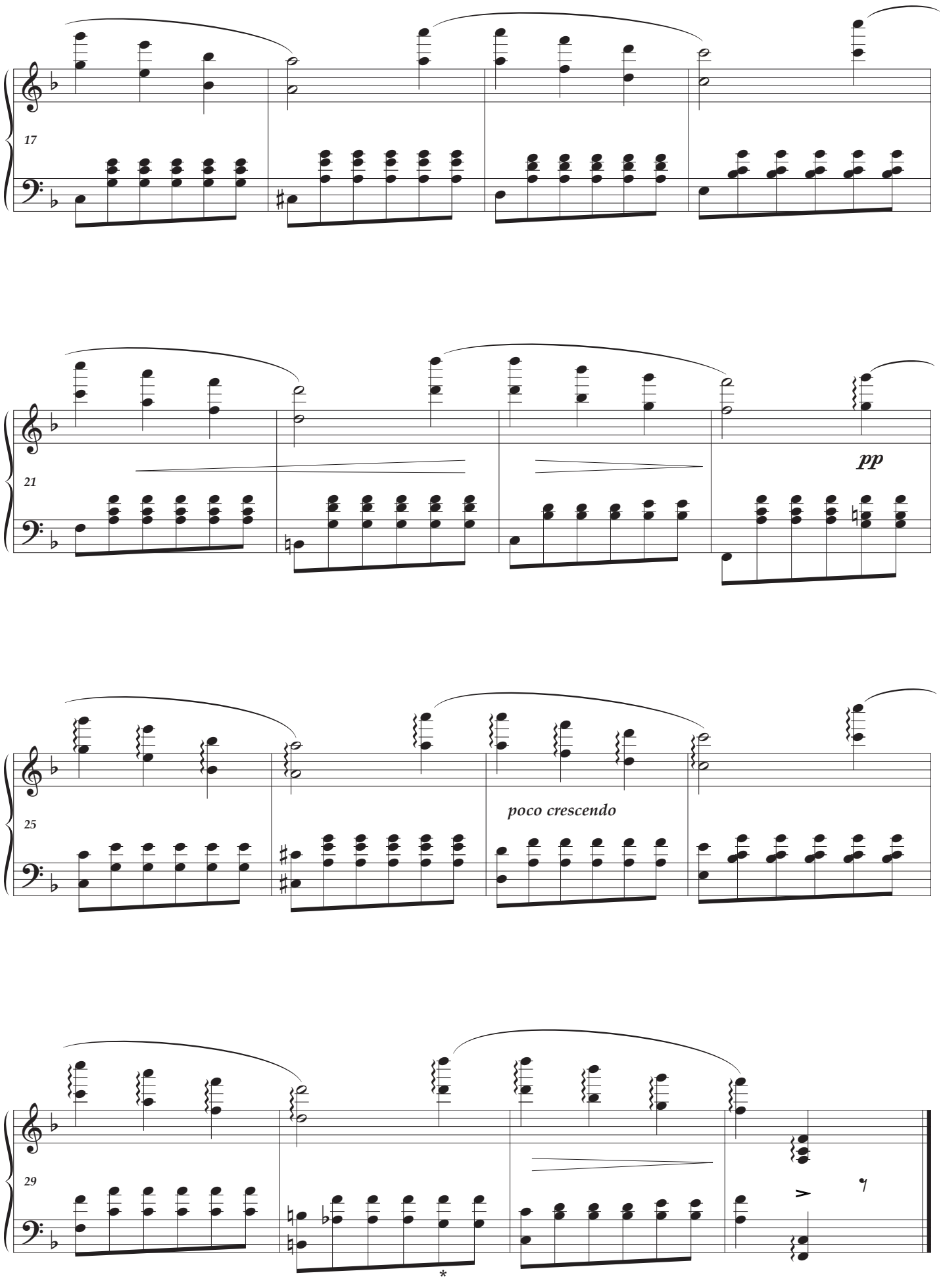
73 ossia (preferred) from the original Kistner edition

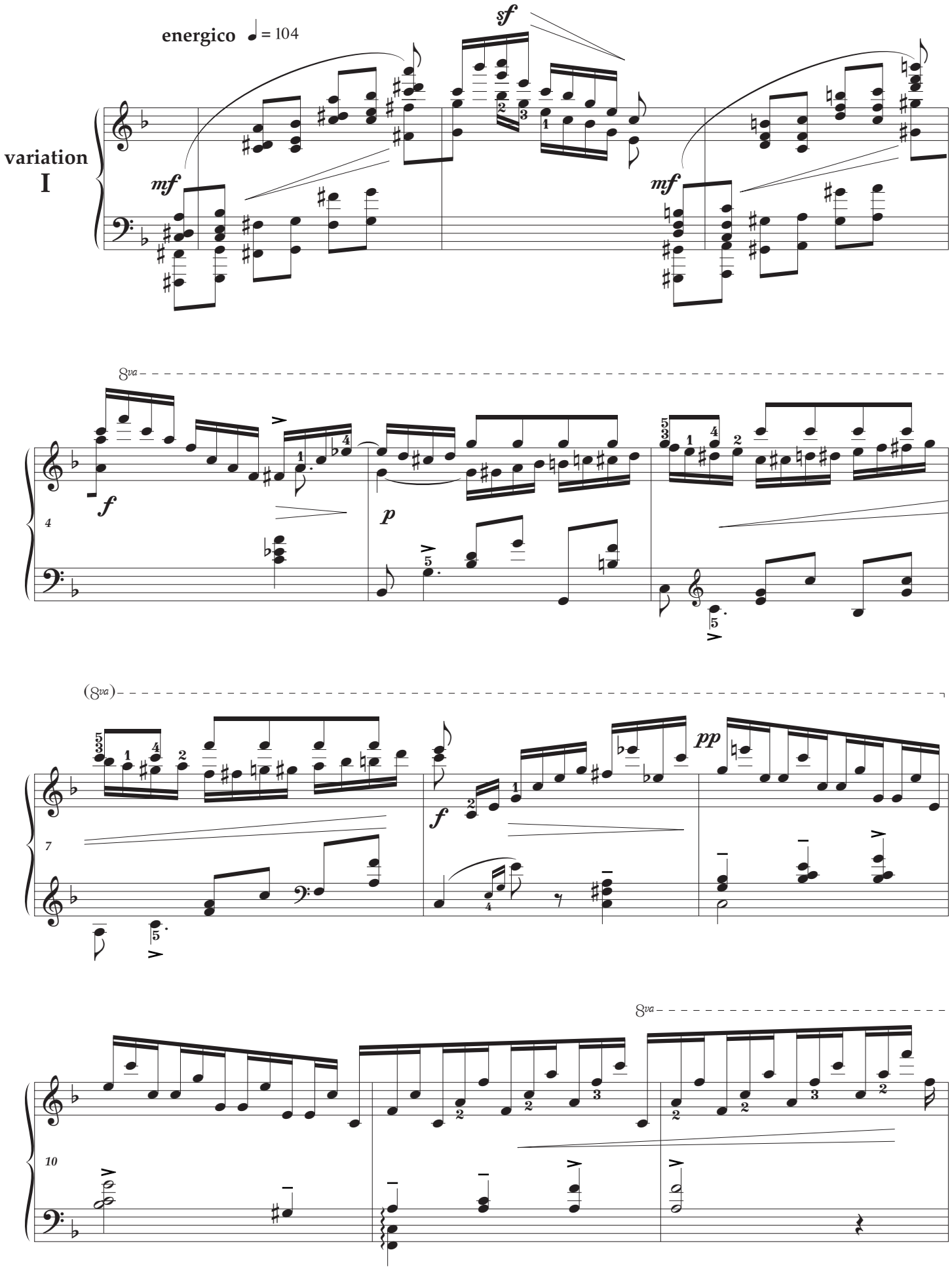
100 editorial modification

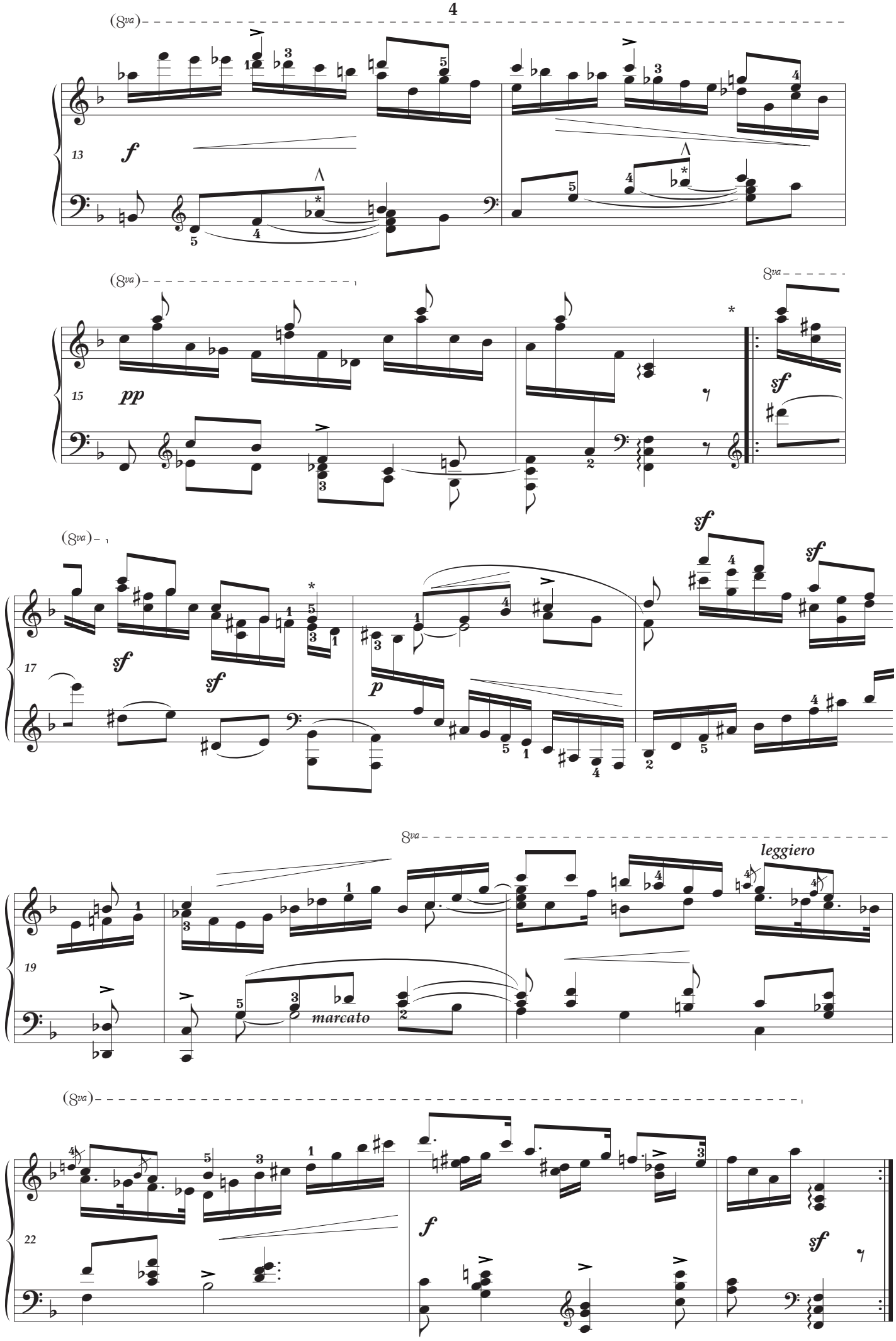
104 tie removed

THEMA **animato** ♩ = 108

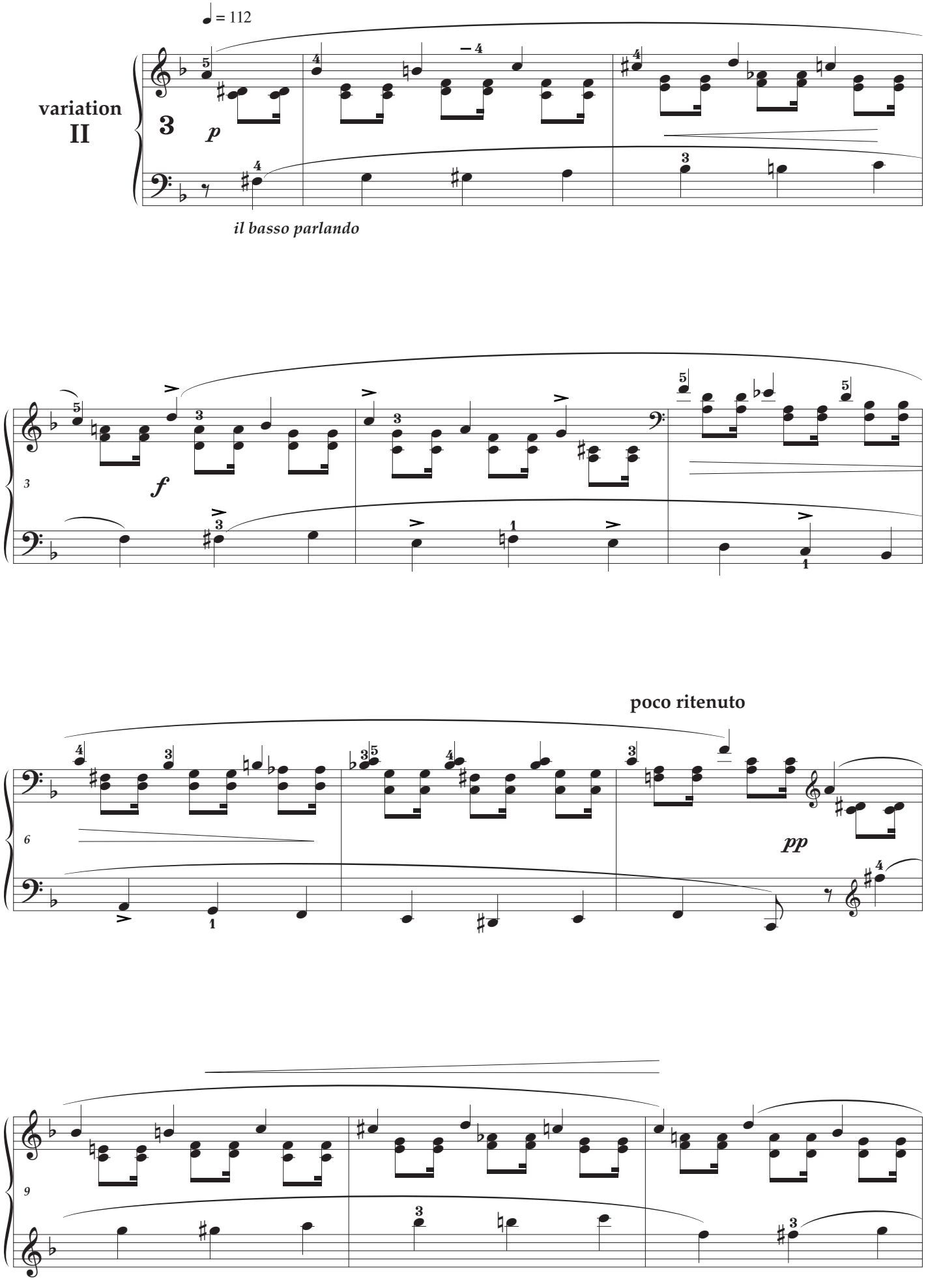


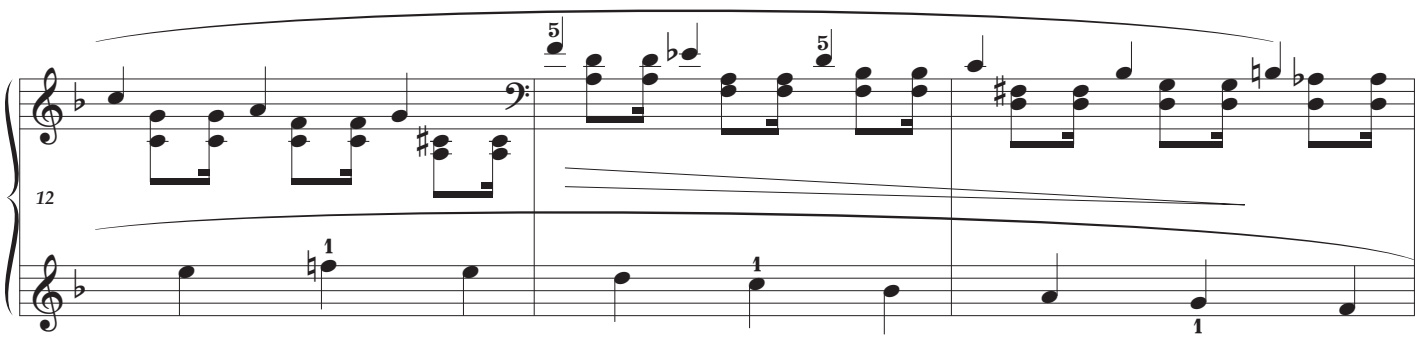

17
21
pp
25
poco crescendo
29
*


energico ♩ = 104
variation I
sf
mf
mf
8va
f
p
4
(8va)
pp
f
7
8va
10

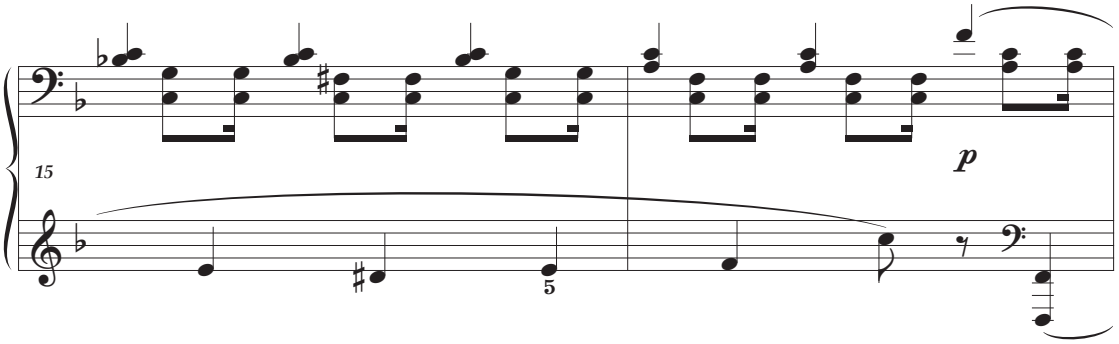

(8va)
13
f
(8va)
15
pp
8va
sf
(8va)
17
sf
sf
sf
p
8va
19
leggiero
marcato
(8va)
22
f
sf

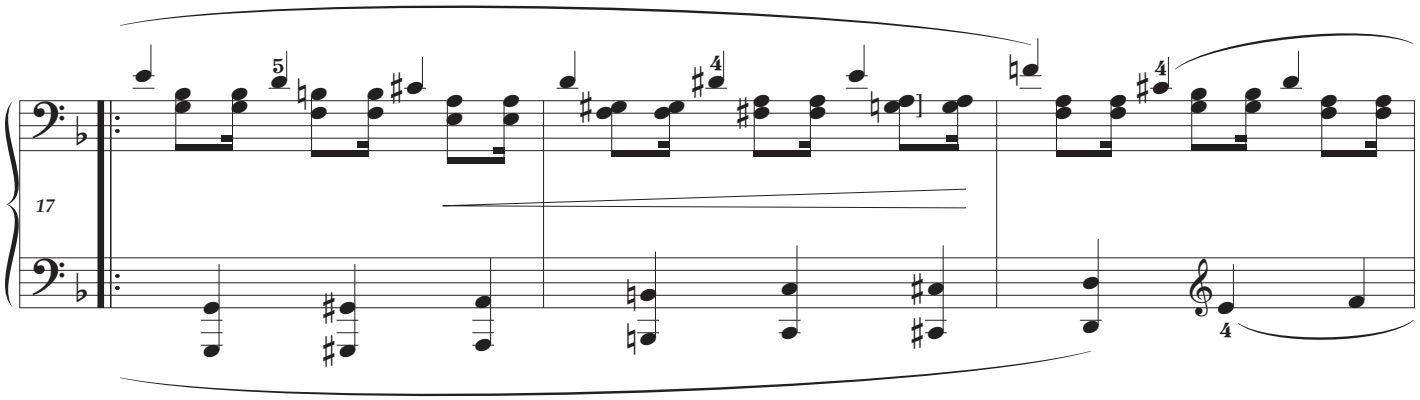
an editorial alternative version in 2/2 can be found on page 20

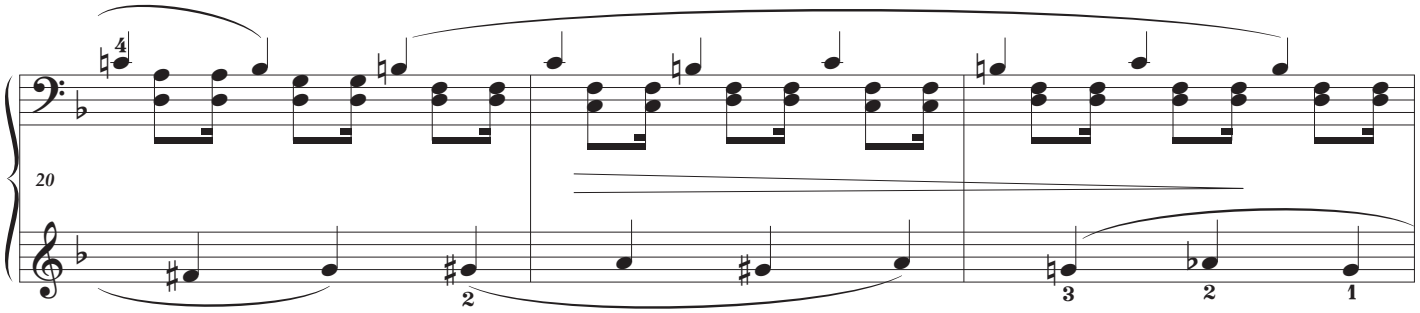


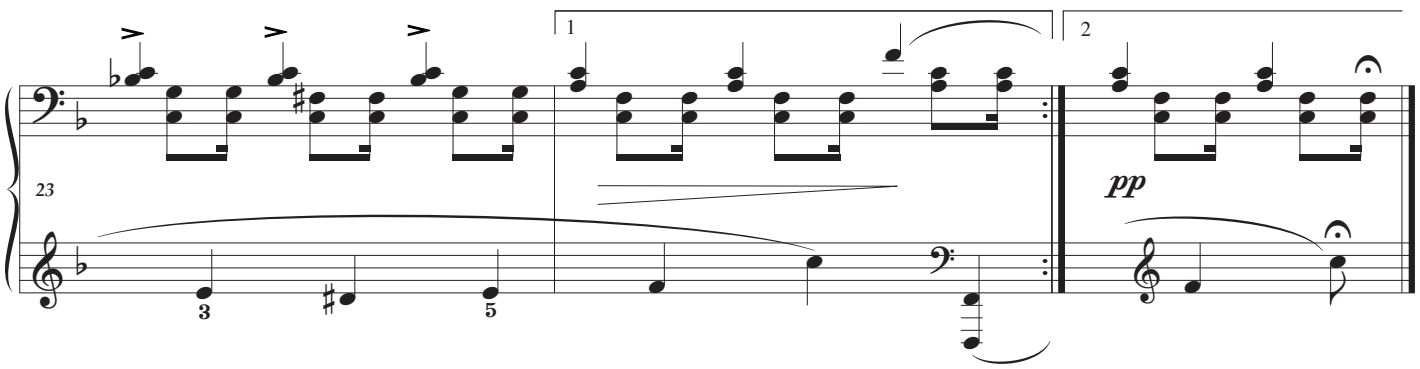


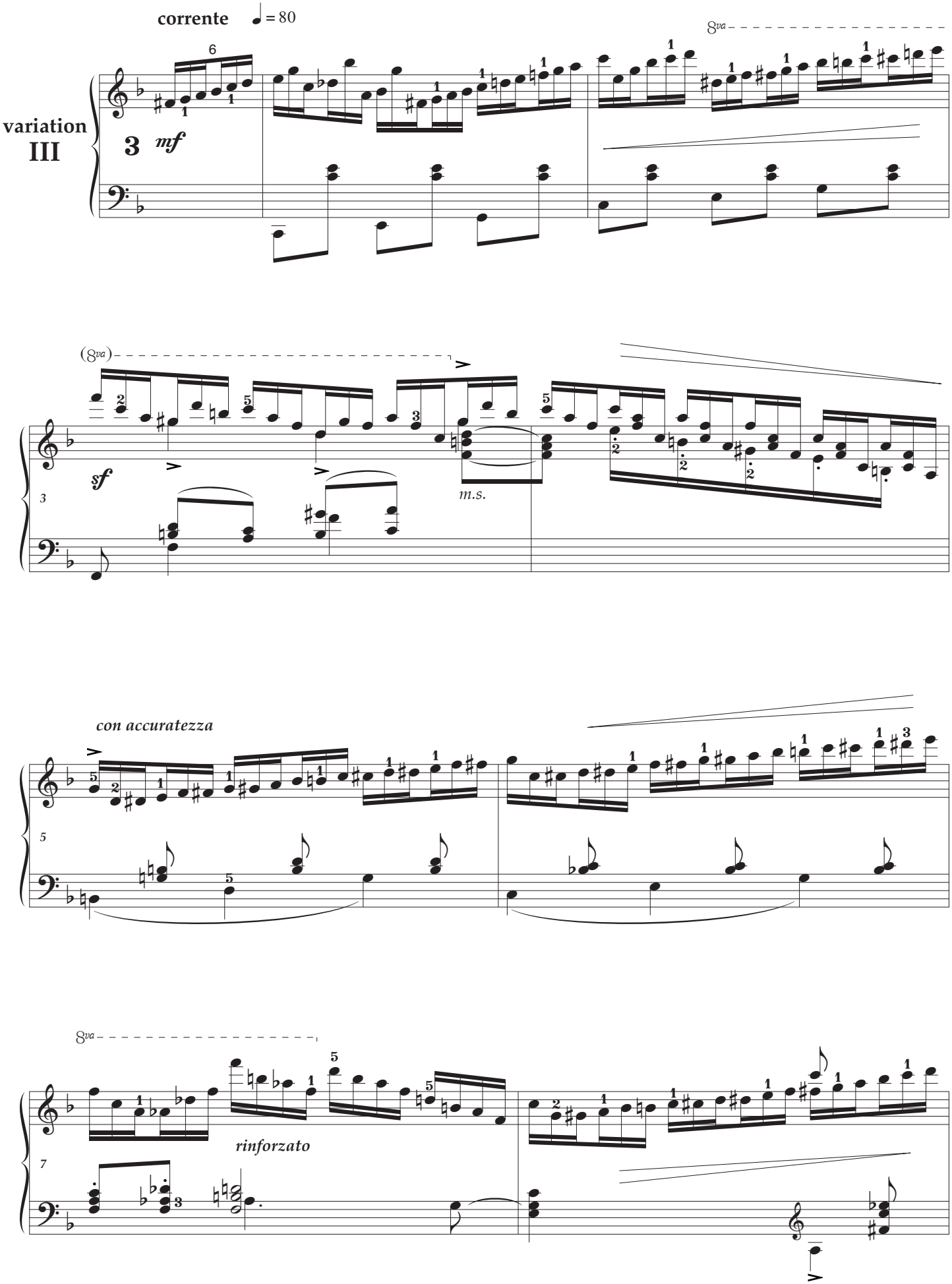
poco ritenuto

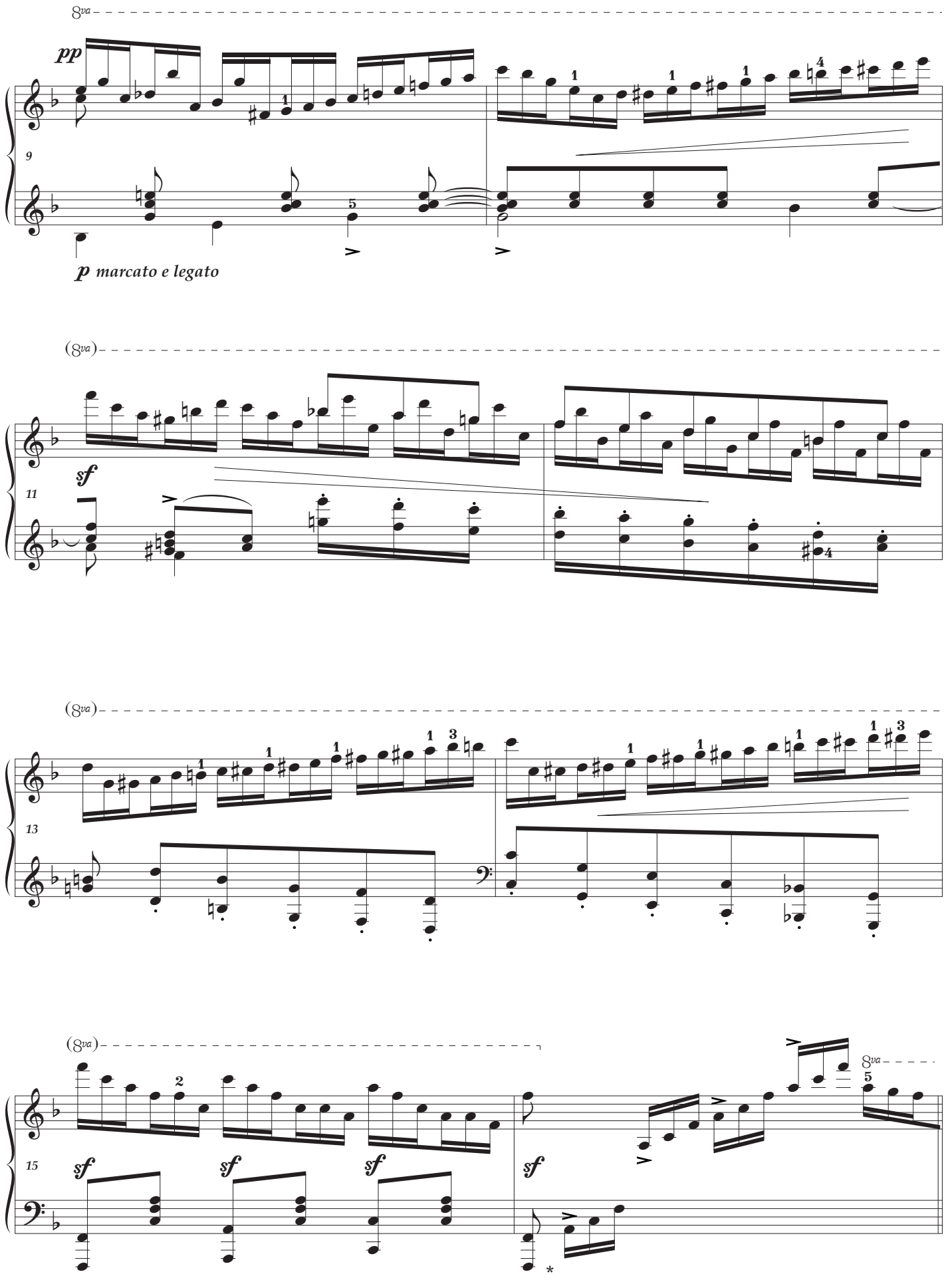


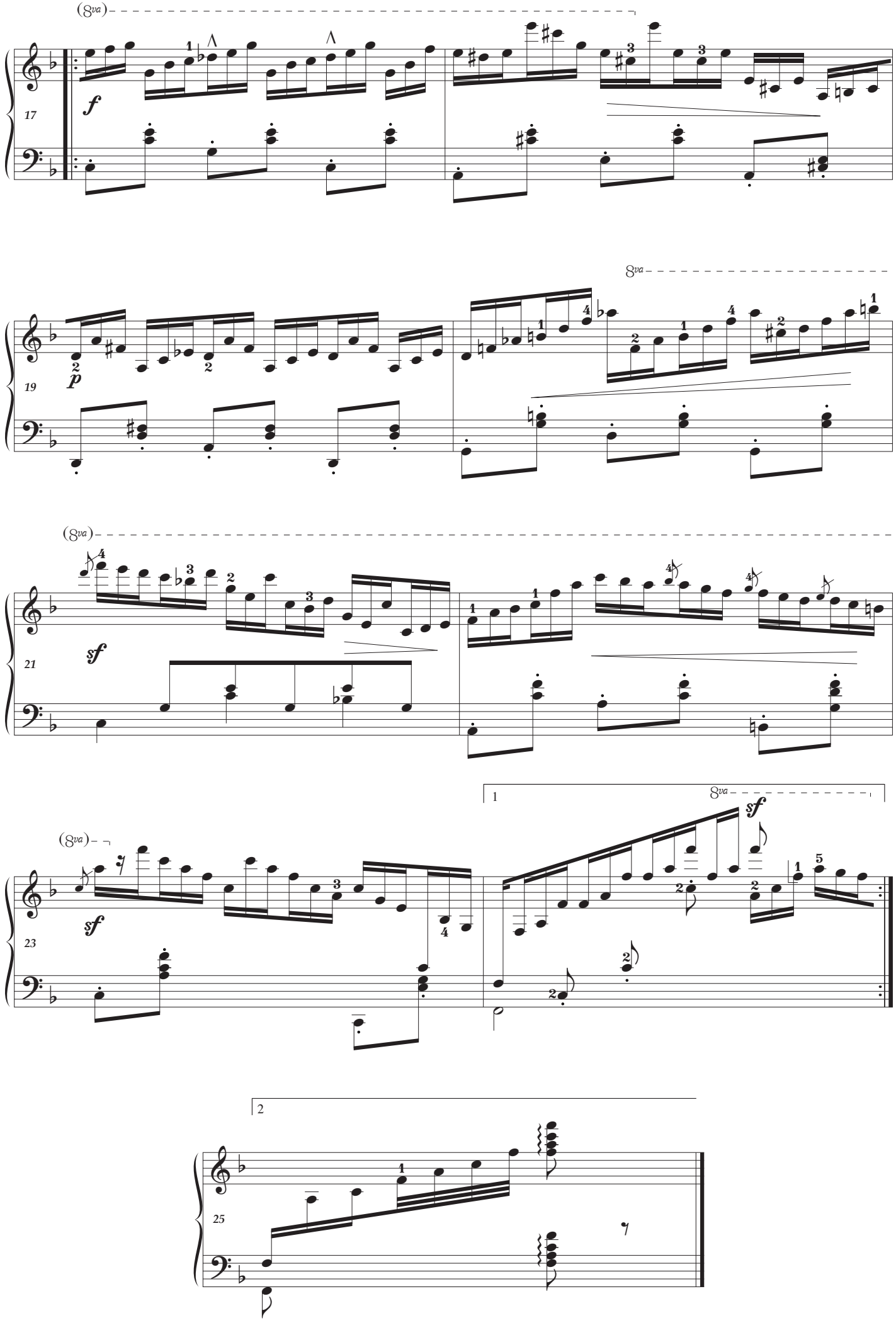


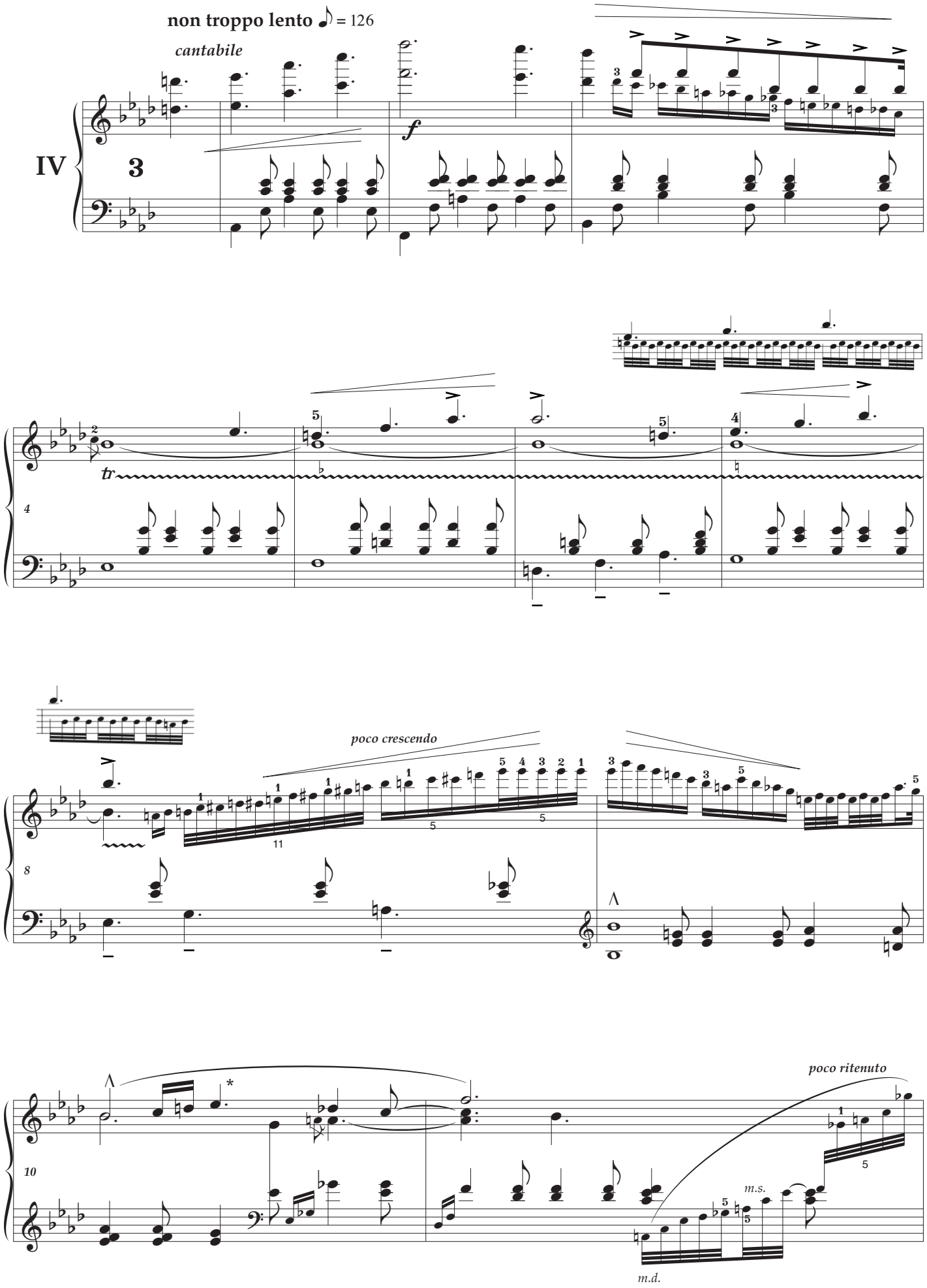


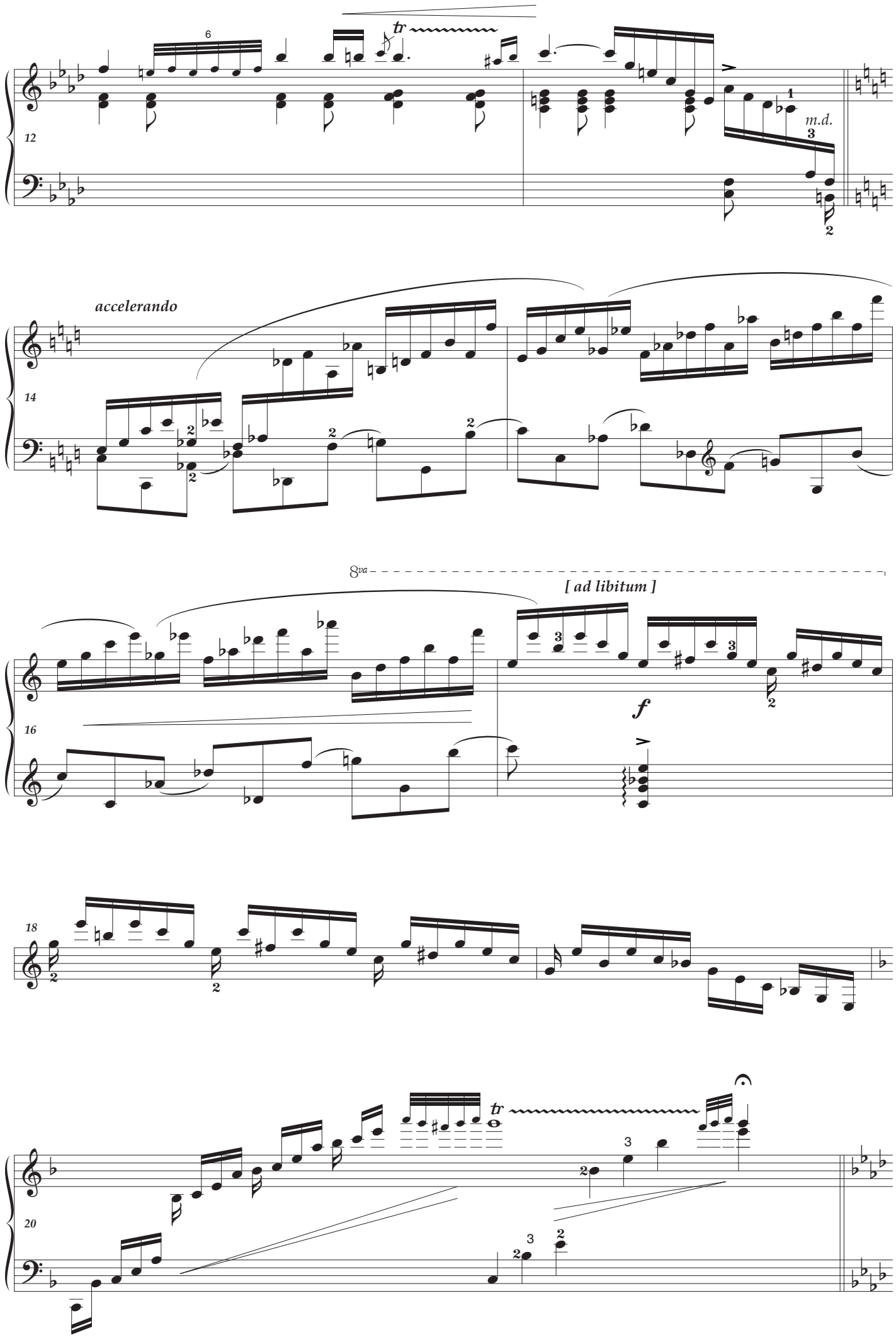


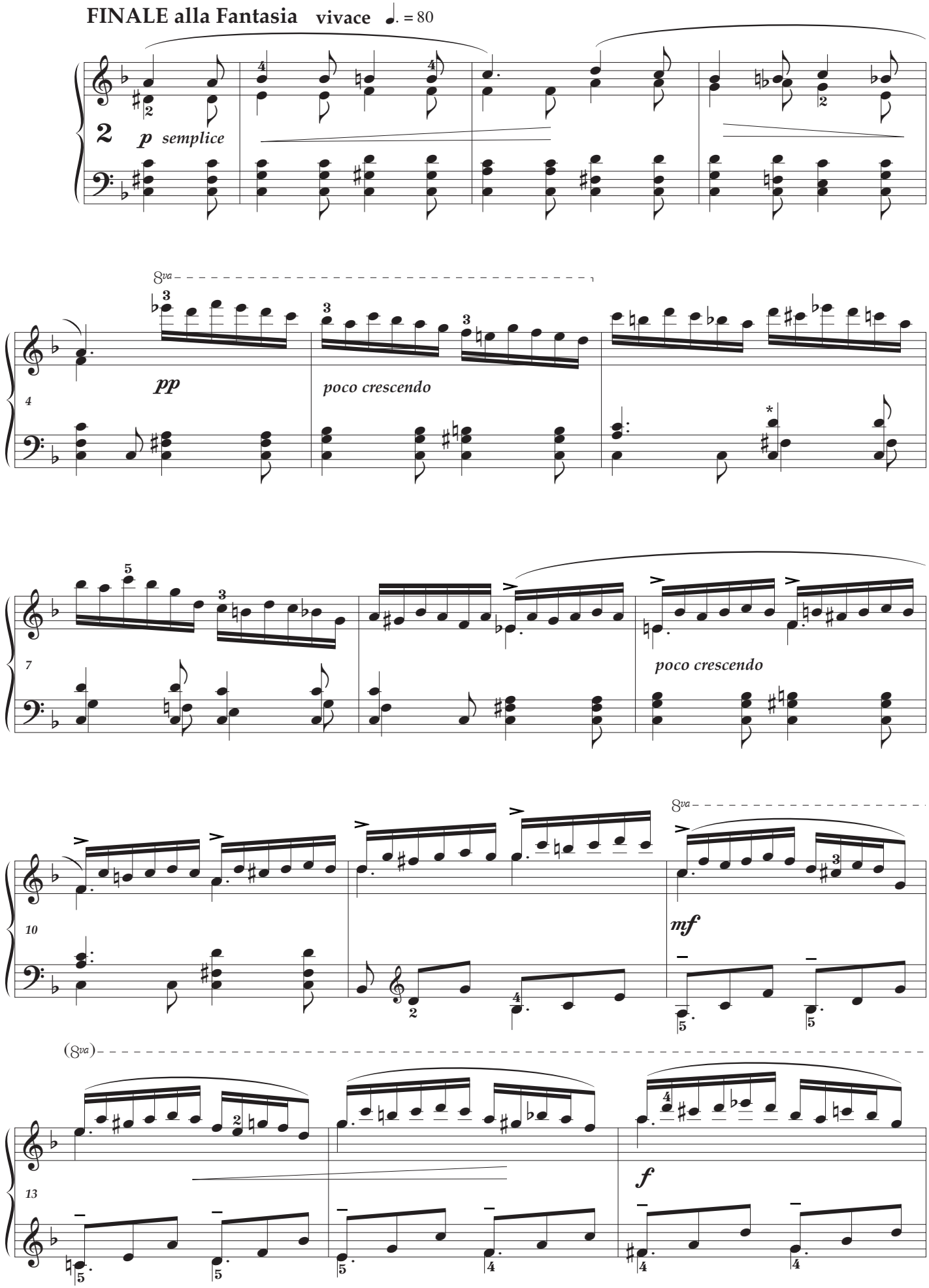

corrente
♩ = 80
variation
III
mf
8va
(8va)
sf
m.s.
con accuratezza
rinforzato

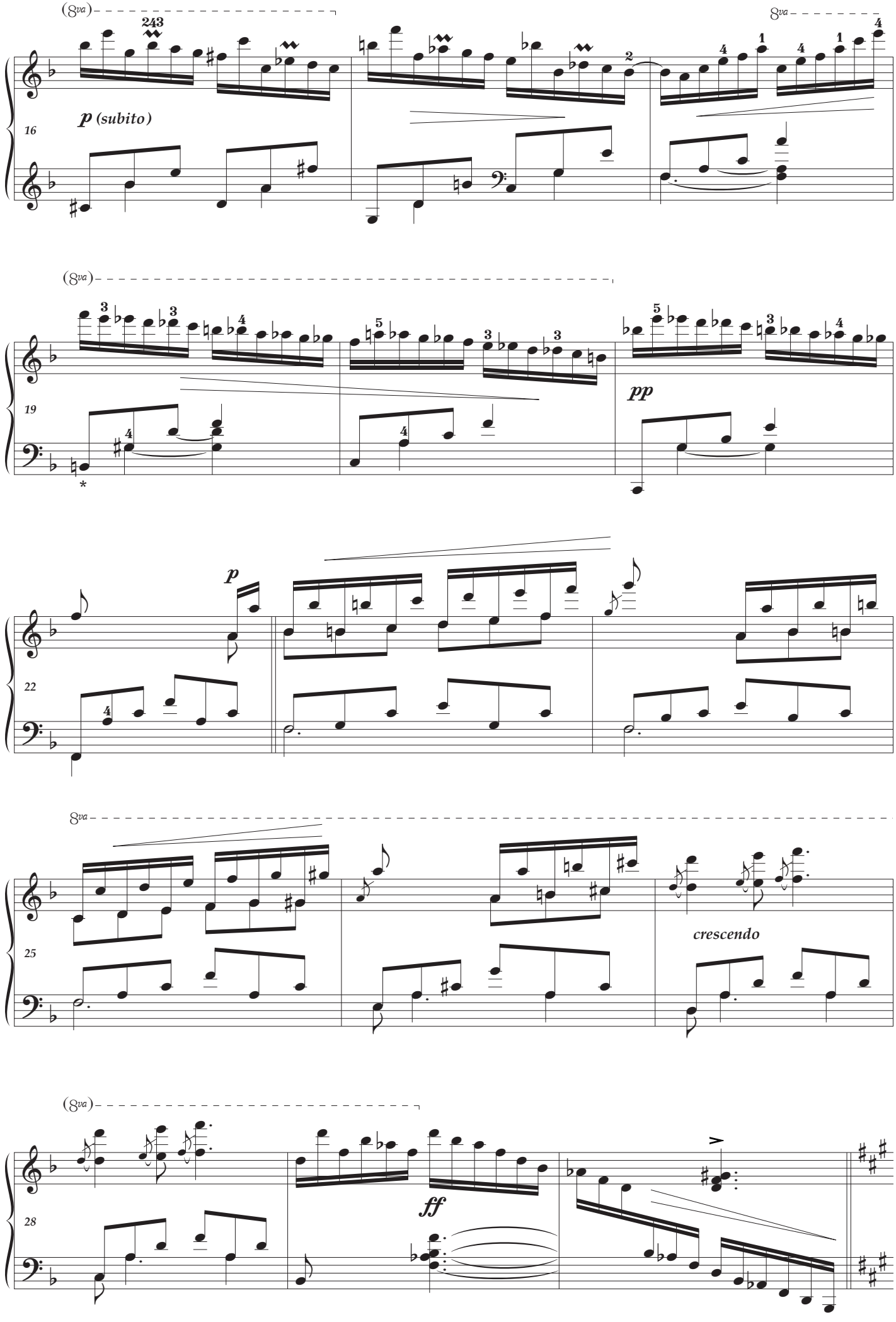

8va
pp
9
p marcato e legato
(8va)
sf
11
(8va)
13
(8va)
sf
sf
sf
15
sf
8va
*

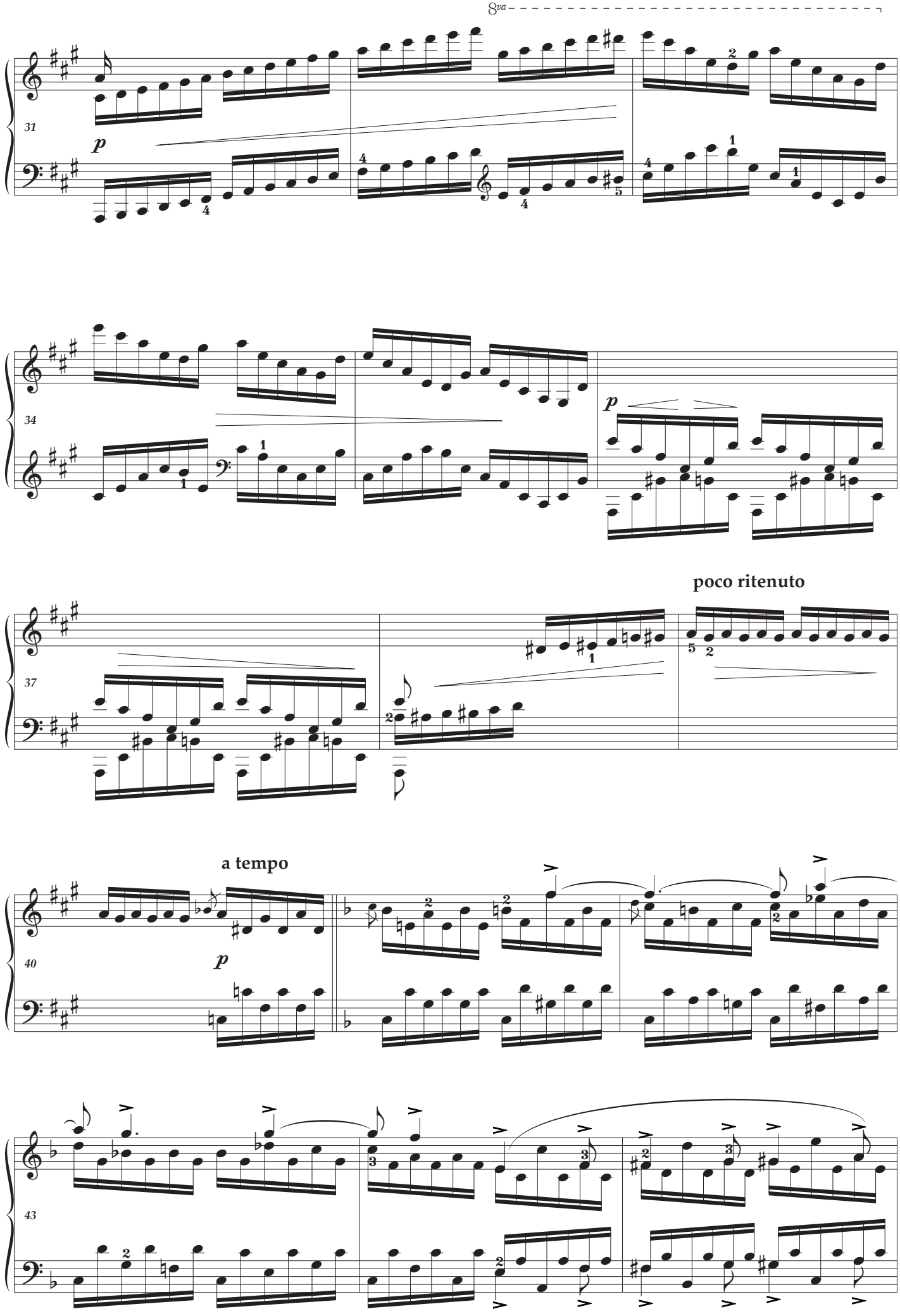

(8va)
17
f
8va
19
p
(8va)
21
sf
1
8va
sf
(8va)
23
sf
2
25

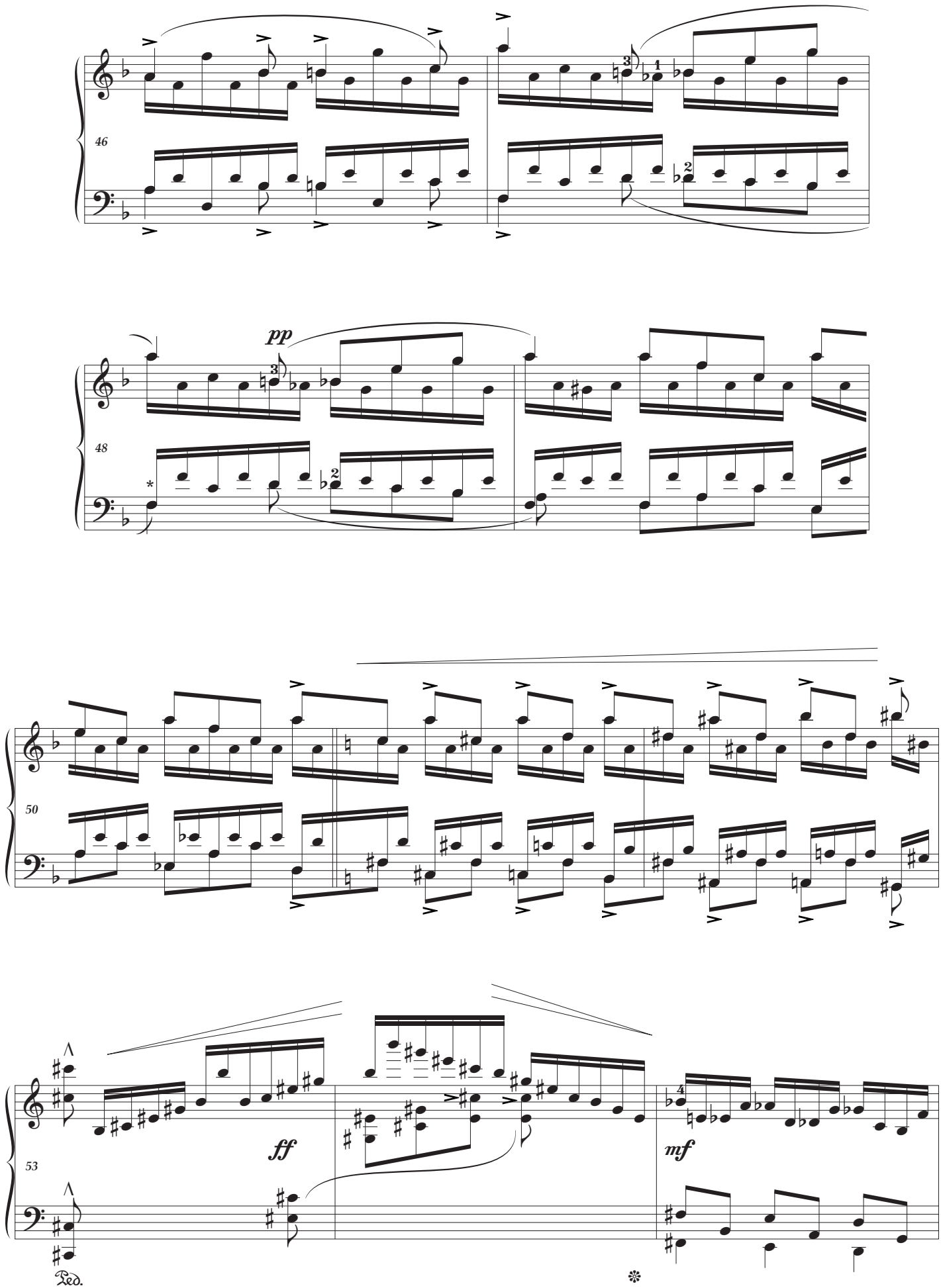

non troppo lento ♪ = 126
cantabile
IV
3
f
tr
poco crescendo
poco ritenuto
m.s.
m.d.

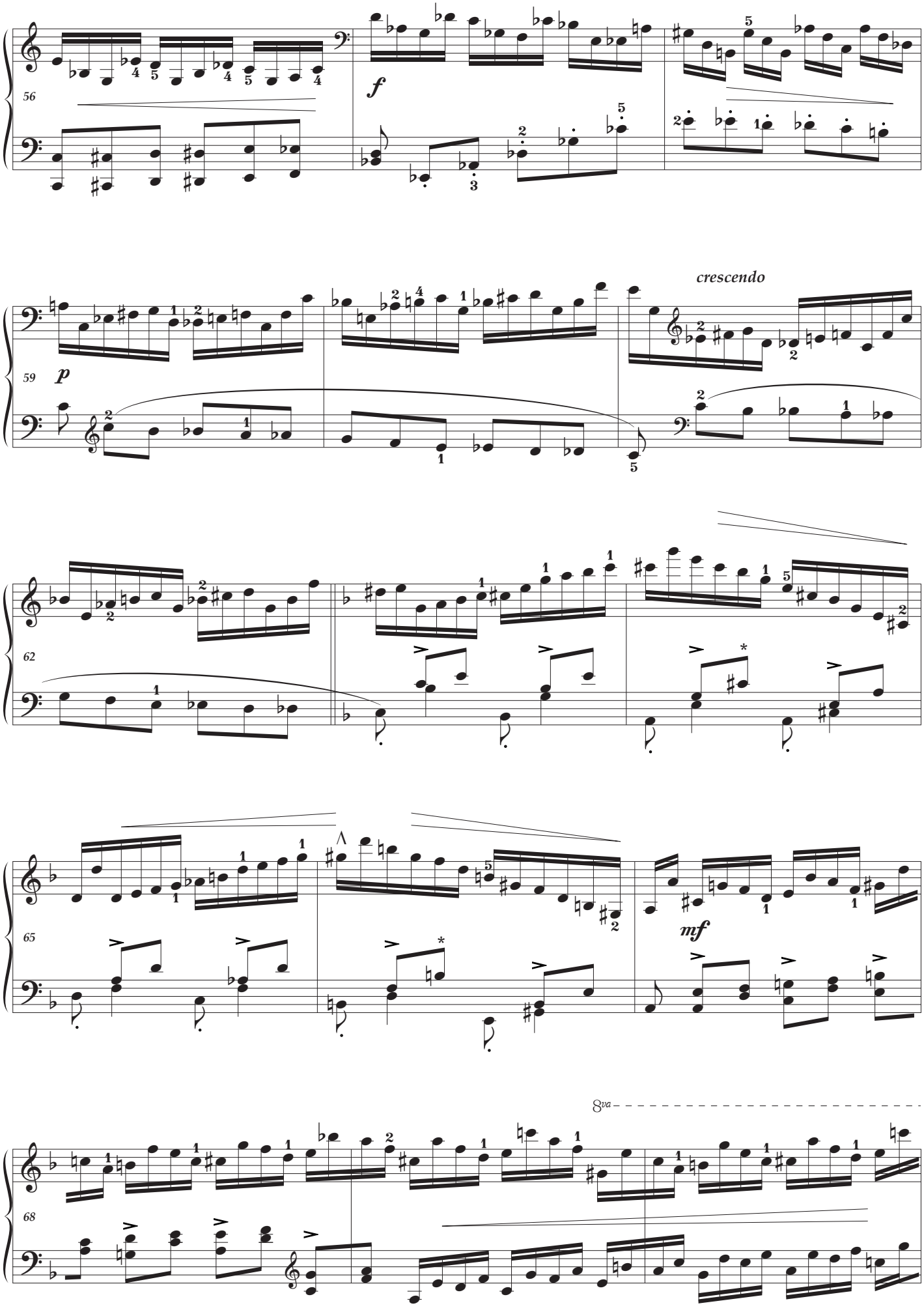

12
m.d.
14
accelerando
16
8va
[ad libitum]
f
18
20

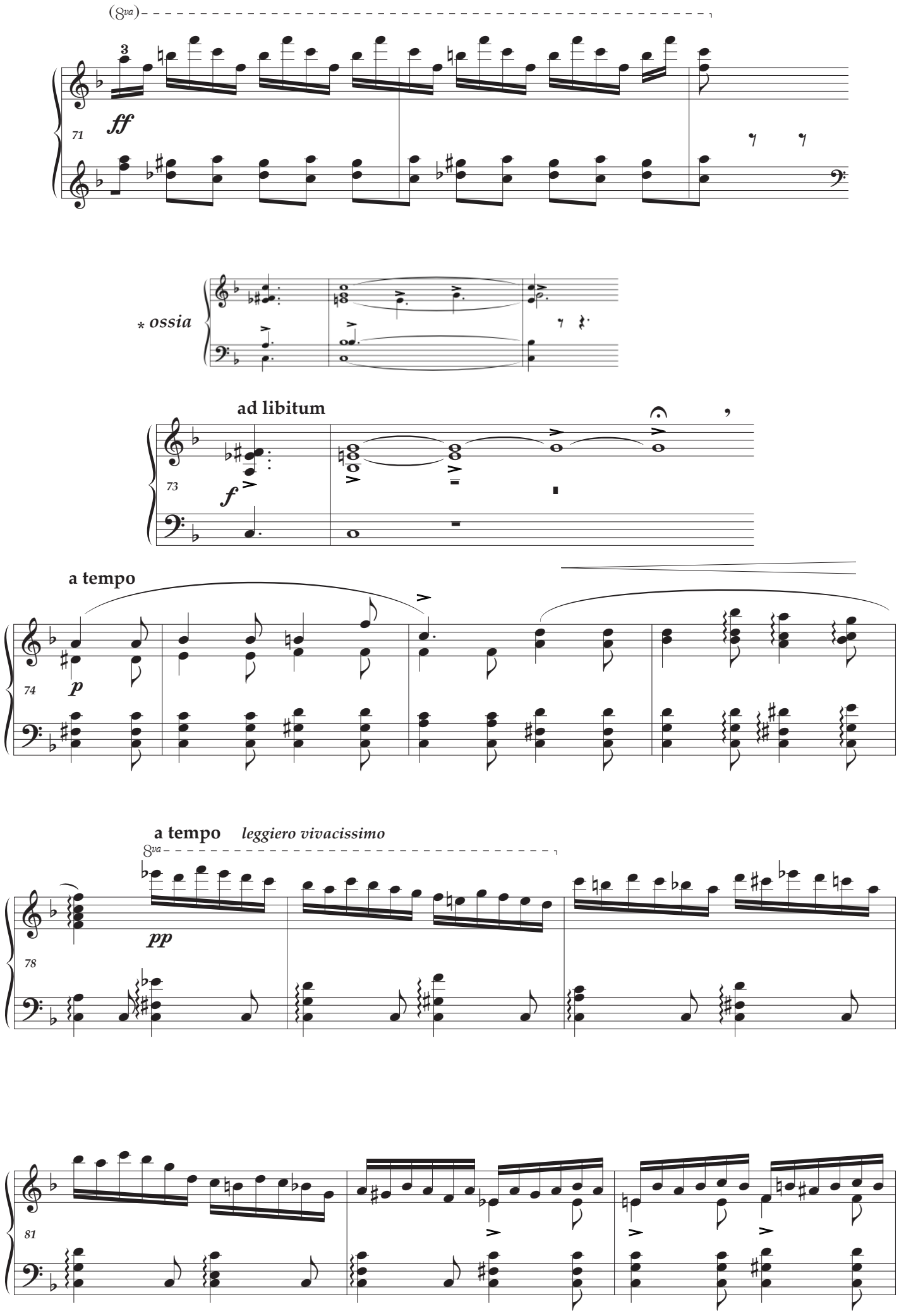

FINALE alla Fantasia
vivace
♩. = 80
p semplice
8va
pp
poco crescendo
poco crescendo
8va
mf
(8va)
f

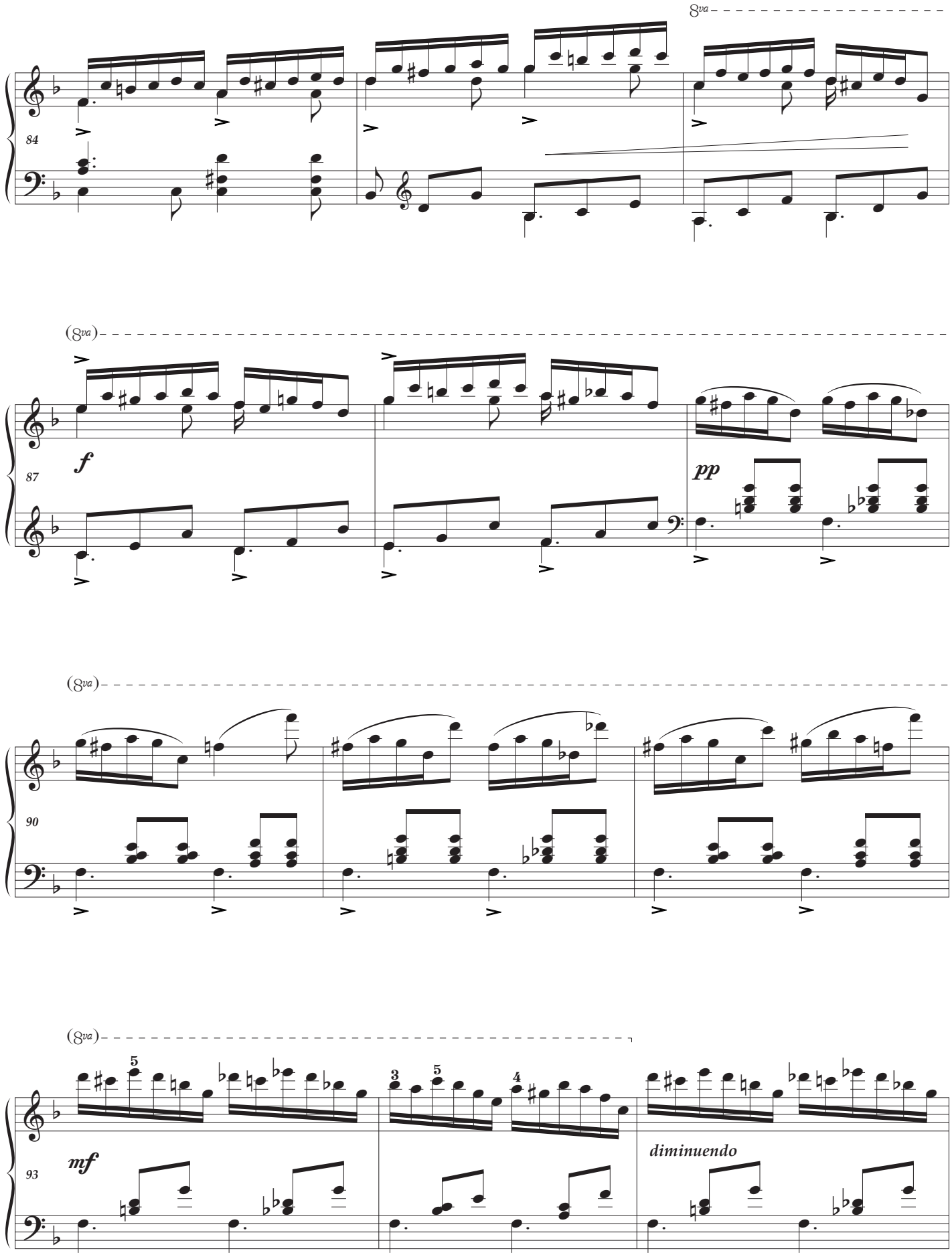

(8va)
8va
16
p (subito)
(8va)
19
pp
p
22
8va
25
crescendo
(8va)
28
ff

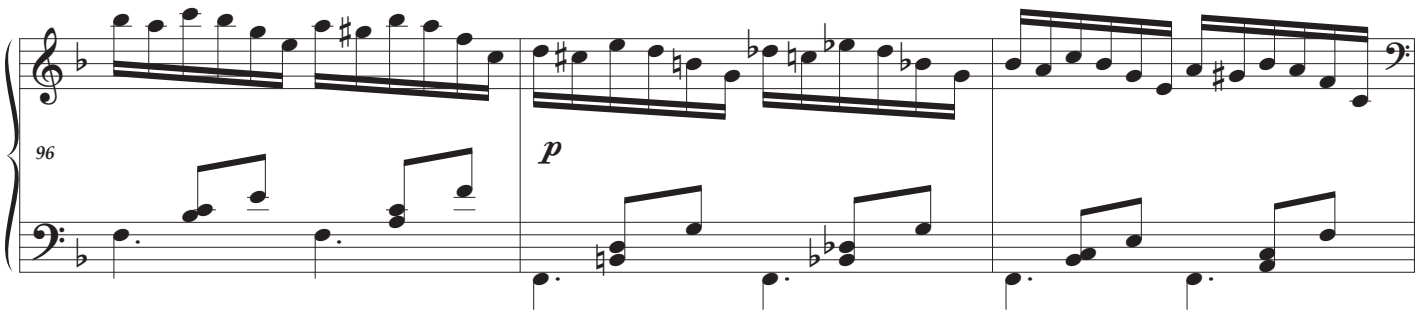

8va
31
p
34
p
poco ritenuto
37
a tempo
40
p
43

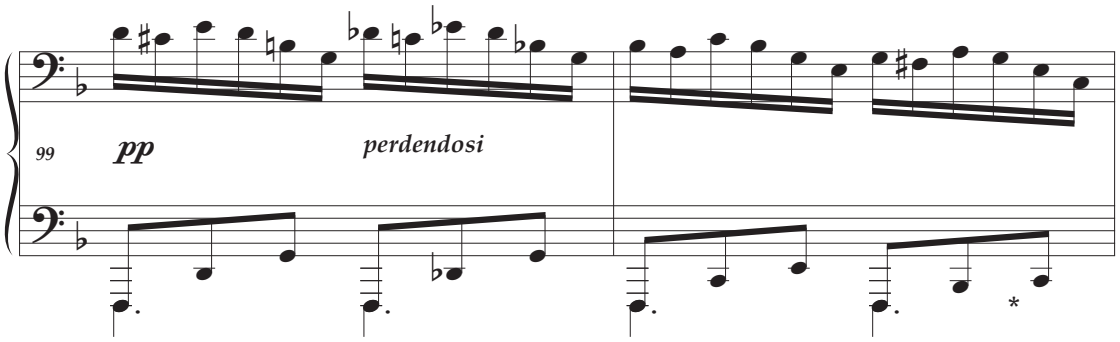

46
pp
48
50
ff
mf
53
Ped.

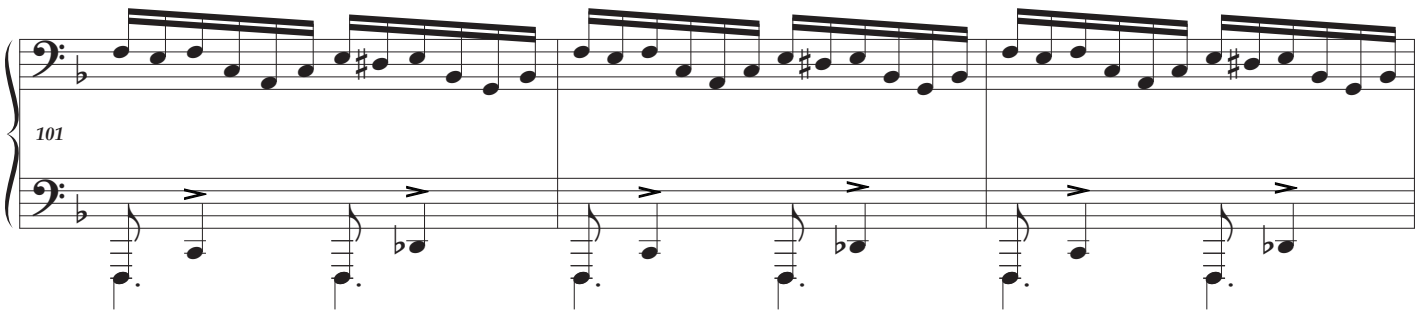

56
f
59
p
crescendo
62
65
mf
68
8va

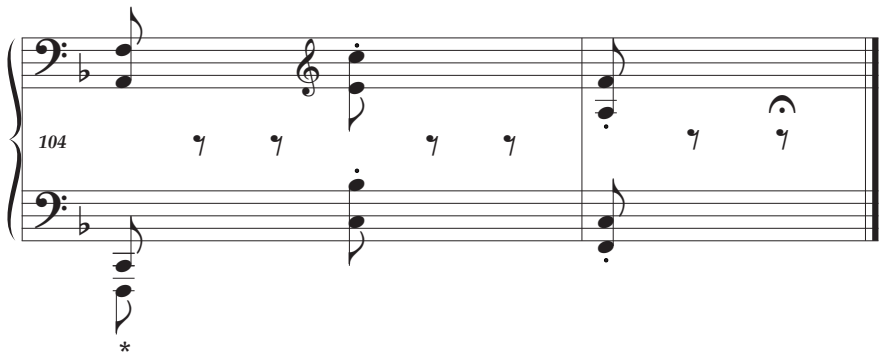

(8va)
3
ff
71
* ossia
ad libitum
73
f
a tempo
74
p
a tempo
leggiero vivacissimo
8va
pp
78
81

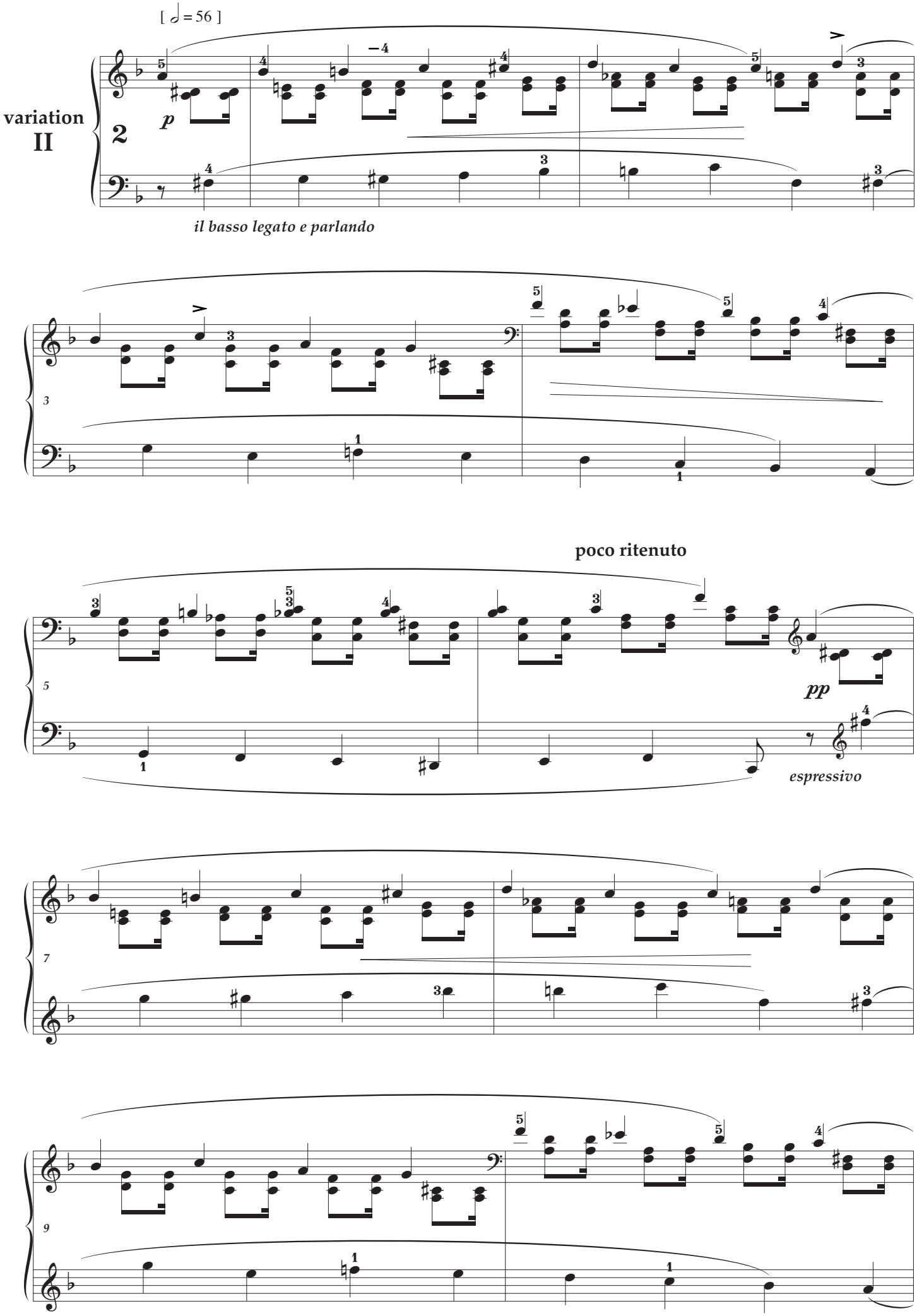

8va
84
(8va)
f
87
pp
(8va)
90
(8va)
mf
93
diminuendo


96
p

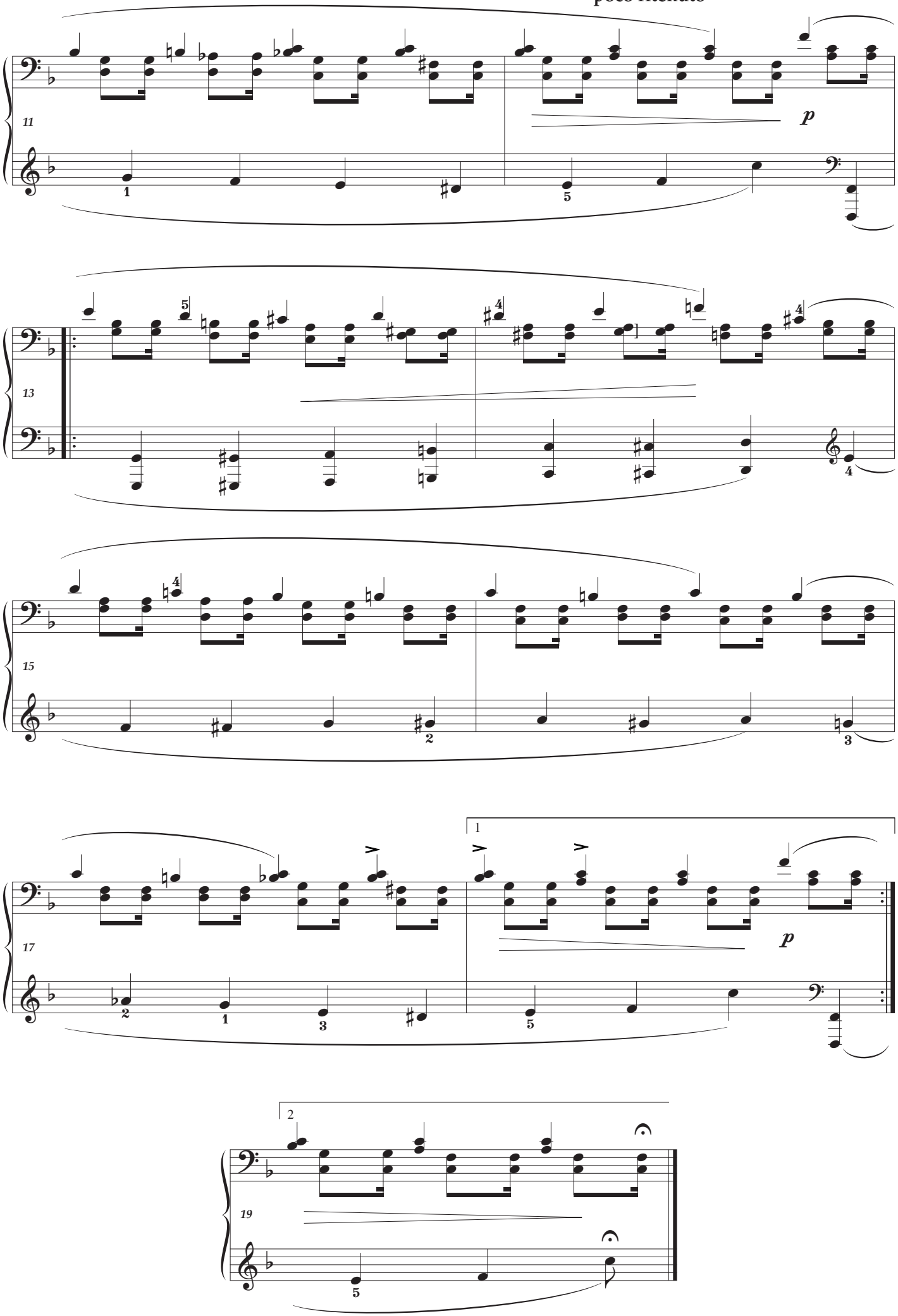

99
pp
perdendosi


101


104


[𝅗𝅥 = 56]
variation
II
2
p
il basso legato e parlando
3
poco ritenuto
5
pp
espressivo
7
9

poco ritenuto



S C H U M A N N

T h è m e V a r i é s u r l e n o m A B E G G

O p u s 1

p u b l i s h e d J u n e 2 0 2 2

Please send comments and error reports to
Ray Alston : contact@pianopracticaleditions.com

Piano Practical Editions
pianopracticaleditions.com