Claude DEBUSSY

CENTENARY EDITION 2018

TROIS MORCEAUX

1903-1904

MASQUES

...d'un CAHIER d'ESQUISSES

L'ISLE JOYEUSE

Piano Practical Editions
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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.

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Ray Alston : contact@pianopracticaleditions.com

Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

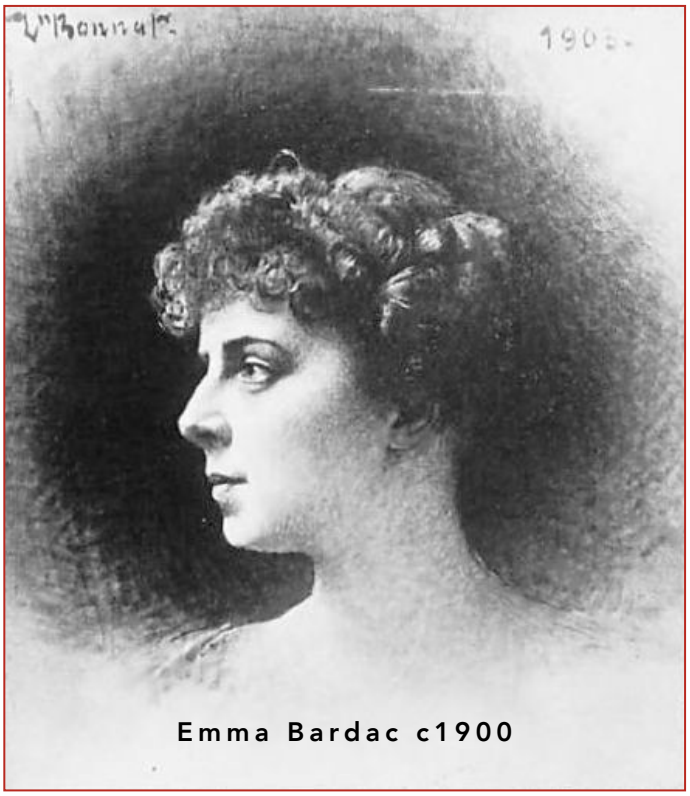
Trois Morceaux 1903-04

I MASQUES page 4
II ...d'un CAHIER d'ESQUISSES page 24
III l'ISLE JOYEUSE page 30

These three pieces published separately in 1903-04 are united here in one volume, possibly for the first time, where their interconnection as a group can be readily appreciated.

By 1890 Debussy was deeply involved in the poetry of Verlaine — "*charmant masques et bergamasques quasi tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques*"*. *Masques* and *l'Isle Joyeuse* were almost certainly drafted at this time, twinned and generally seen to be heavily influenced by personal dramas in the composer's life. Following the attempted suicide of his first wife Lilly Texier, *Masques* might represent anguish at the *Isle — Joyeuse* describing the elopement and love of the second, Emma Bardac.

Roy Howat advances a plausible argument that Debussy may have planned these three pieces to form a suite similar to *Images* or *Estampes*; the first and third performed as a pair by Ricardo Viñes in February 1905. While it is possible that a sarabande was destined for the interlude, *d'un Cahier d'Esquisses* (from a sketchbook)



Emma Bardac c1900

serves just as well to complete this "second *Suite Bergamasque*".

In addition to thematic and rhythmic connections between the outer movements, they share the same tonal centre, with *Masque's* final mediant (C♯) mutating

naturally to the dominant of *d'un Cahier d'Esquisses*; listen in particular to its final treble tonic and the magical way the opening trill of *l'Isle Joyeuse* emerges and develops into a cadenza.

I *Masques* — Debussy once confided to Marguerite Long: « it is not the *comédie italienne*, but the tragic expression of existence. » Like Schumann, he was fired with enthusiasm for the masked players of the *Commedia dell'arte*. Masks occur throughout Debussy's *œuvre* with clowns, blackface minstrels and *voiles*, but most of all the mask permanently presented to hide emotions. Or perhaps those which must be dropped to achieve true emotion. Like Schumann's journalistic alter egos *Eusebius*, *Florestan* and *Meister Raro*, Debussy wrote much criticism under the masked name of *Monsieur Croche, antidilettante* : « *L'art est le plus beau des mensonges…. Mais, sacristi, la musique ! c'est du rêve dont on écarte les voiles !* »*

The introductory open fifths remind me of *Fêtes* (the second nocturne for orchestra) which was written around the same time… and I must mention two wonderfully original and evocative passages : **236 - 269** and the final coda on page **23**.

II *… d'un Cahier d'Esquisses* — It is unusual for Debussy to compose without a significant or literary title; might "from a scrapbook" or "sketchbook" mean that the work is to provide a link between two others? The exquisite whole tone passage from **19 - 28** reminds me of *Hommage à Rameau* from the first book of *Images*. Commissioned and published by the magazine *Paris illustré* in February 1904, it was first performed in Paris on 20th April 1910, for the *Société musicale indépendante,* by no less a celebrity than Maurice Ravel. A slow and sensuous prelude, so well does it precede the following "Isle of Joy".

III *L'Isle joyeuse* — Unmistakably erotic, the opening flute solo cadenza is worthy of *l'après-midi d'un faune.* Inspired by an eighteenth century painting — Watteau *Le Pèlerinage à l'île de Cythère,* a work of art so special that the artist produced no less than three versions; the second can be admired in the *Louvre*. They were named *pèlerinage* and later *embarquement*, although the subject more probably depicts a departure from the island of Cythera, the birthplace of Venus, featuring besotted couples visiting a shrine to the goddess of love. Much of Debussy's music is sensual and exotic and this work expresses euphoria enjoyed by the French aristocracy. Seldom has his music reached such ecstatic and triumphal lyricism. Without subtlety, the winged cupids can leave us in no doubt — these French aristocrats have found desire, love and joy on a sultry Greek island, and Debussy leaves us in no doubt that he too has found passion on his romantic island — the music speaks for itself.

"I believe more and more that music in its essence is not a thing that can be poured into a rigorous and traditional mould. It is made of colours and rhythmical beats. Music is a mysterious mathematical process whose elements partake of infinity, capturing mysterious relations between nature and the imagination".

— Claude Debussy

Watteau *"l'Embarquement pour Cythère"* 1717

The strong influence of French piano music is surely identified with Chopin and Debussy who share a unique position as masters of an exceptional instrument; through an extensive affinity with the sustaining pedal they each created a personal language conceived to communicate their work with the greatest authenticity.

During the centenary year *Piano Practical Editions* became a creative and critical publication; with a possible improvement in the text layout, several modifications have been made to the text and are marked by an asterisk — appendix page **49.**

Here is an apt quotation by the composer :"Absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, negating musicians' perverse desire to completely dismiss the composer's (and editor's), and thereby vindicating words of eternal wisdom: 'If you want something done well, do it yourself'. Let us seek our own fingering!"

« Il n'y a pas de théorie, le plaisir est la règle. » — There is no such thing as theory, pleasure is the only rule"

— Claude Debussy

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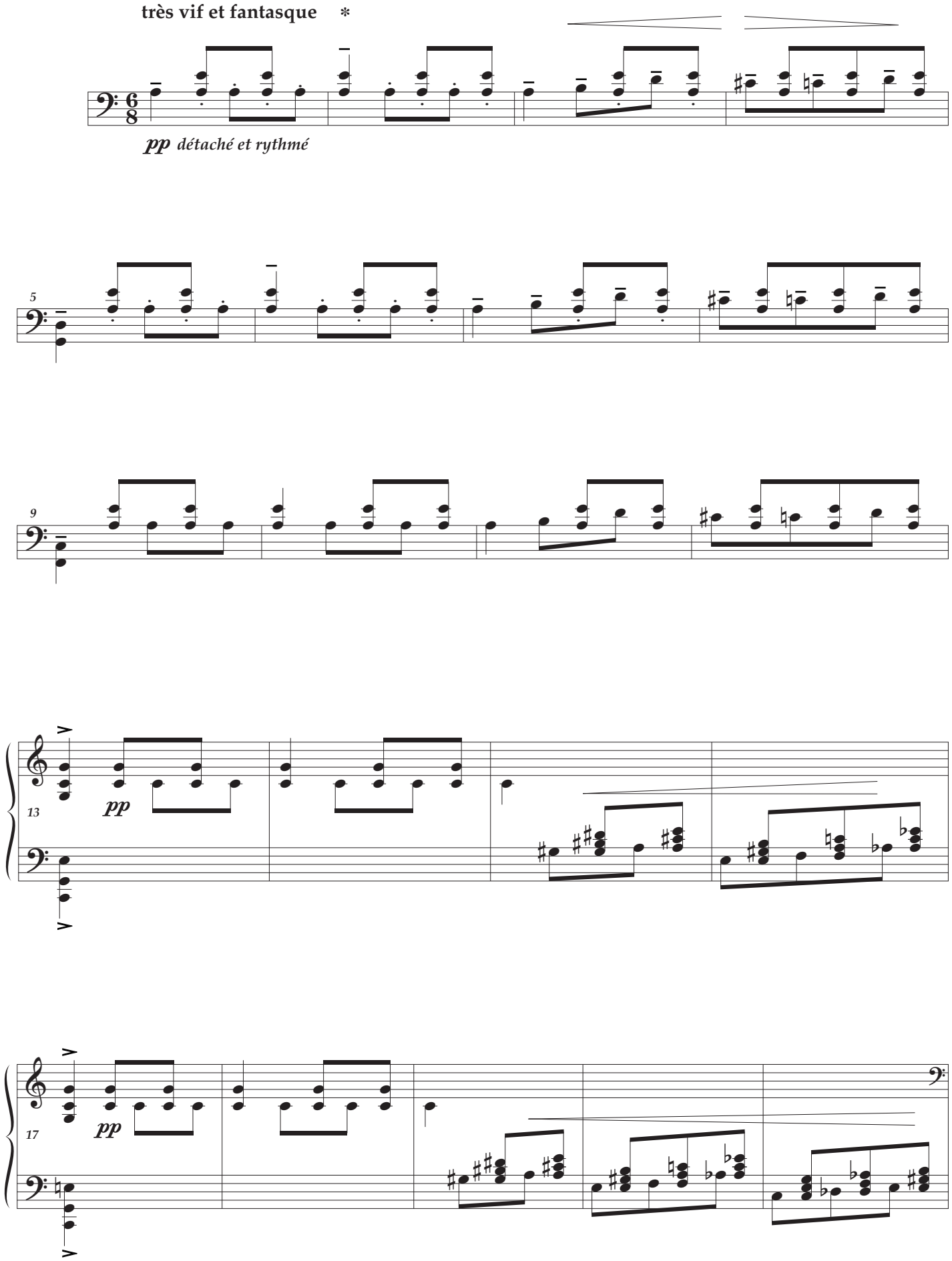
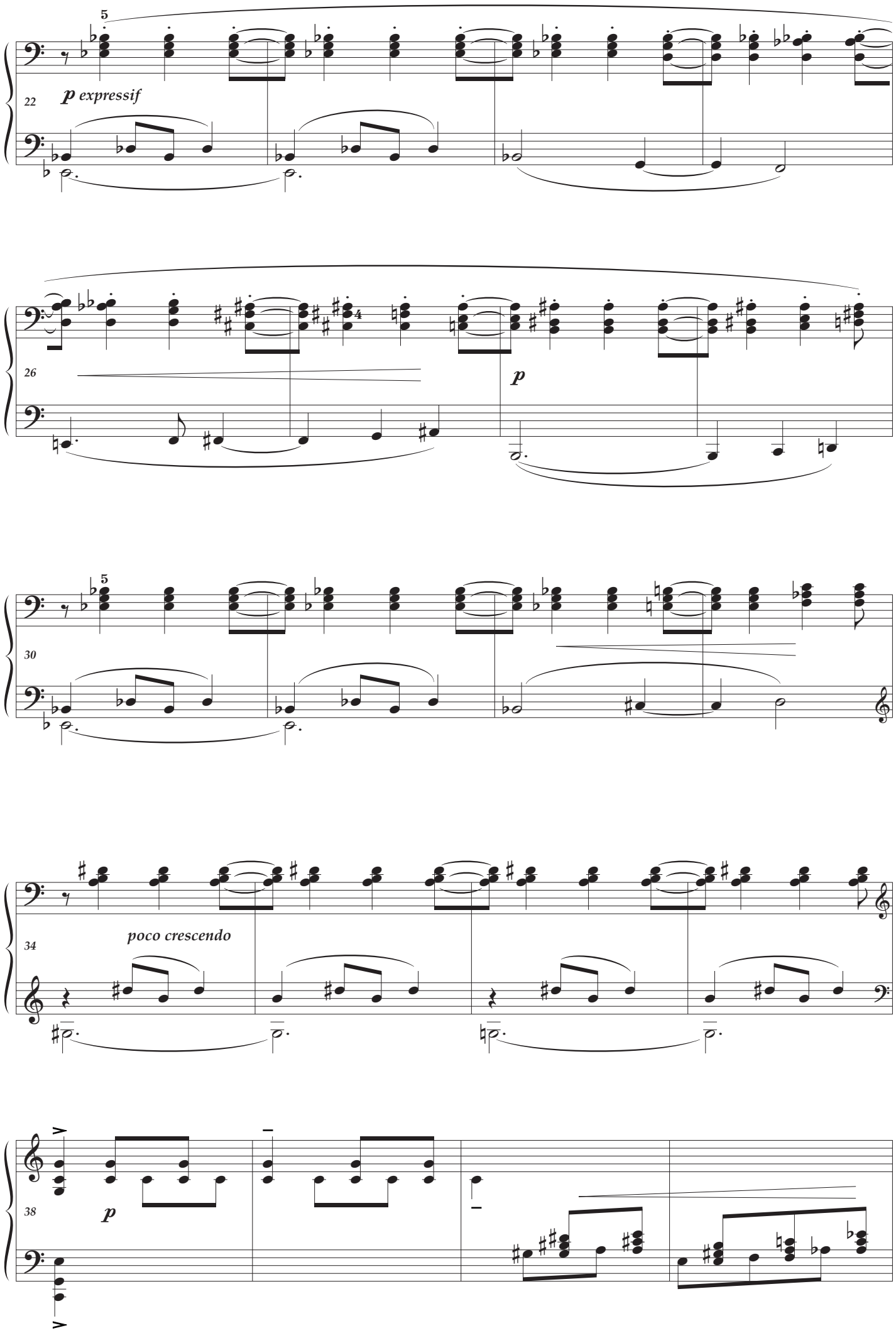
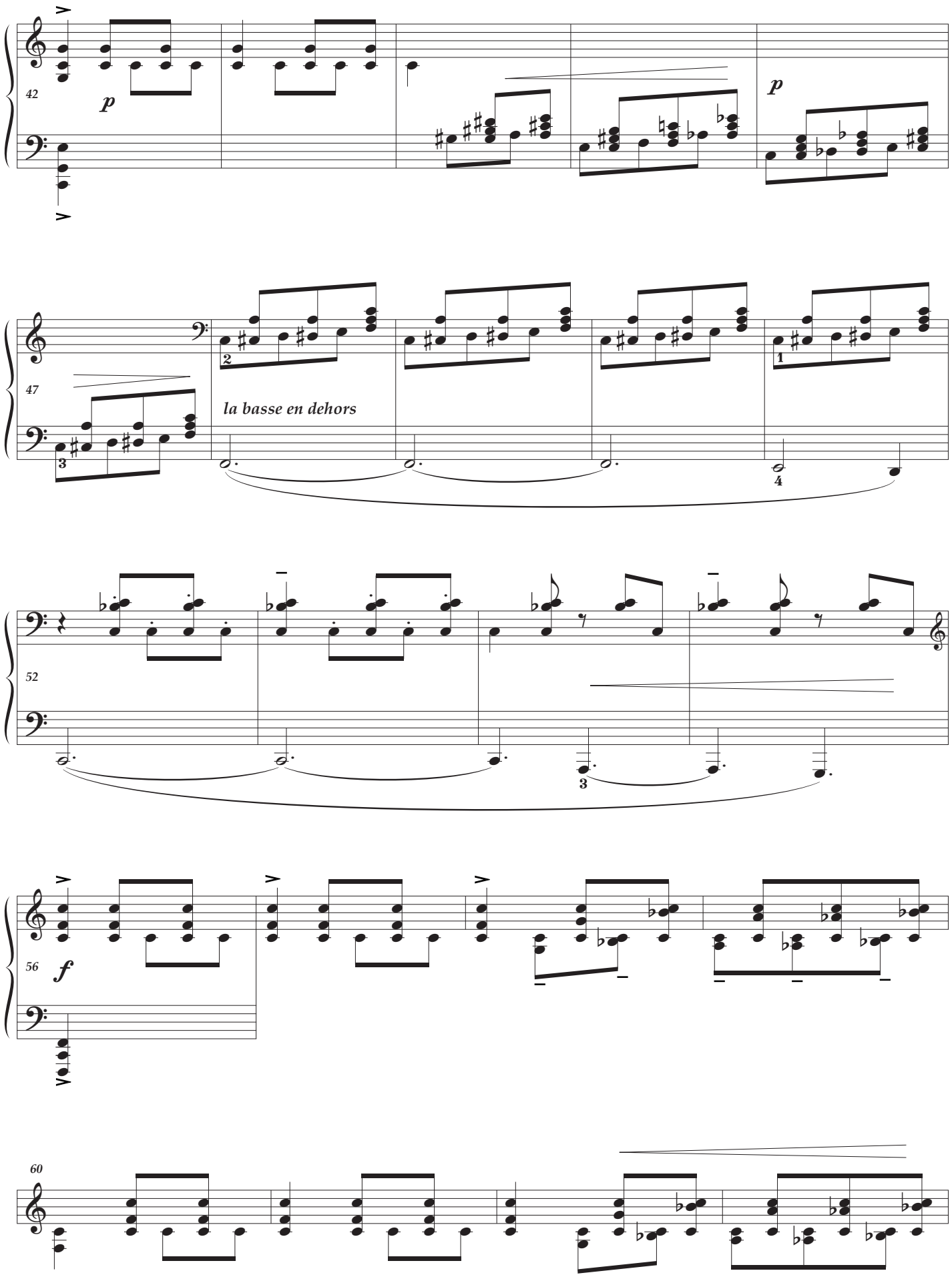
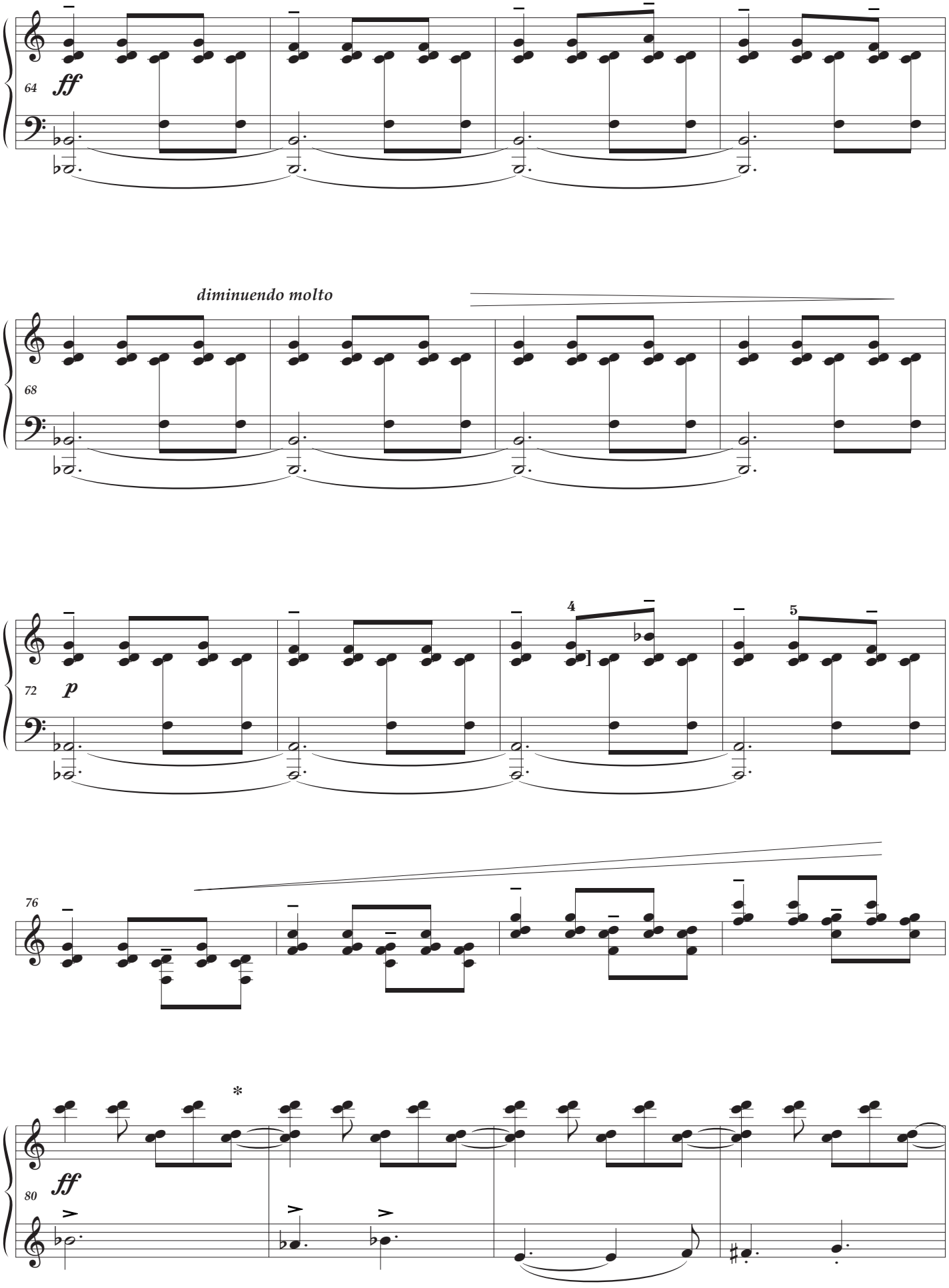
* beguiling masks and bergamasks feigning sorrow beneath their whimsical disguises
* art is the most beautiful falsehood
* But good grief, music is the dream from which the veil is lifted!

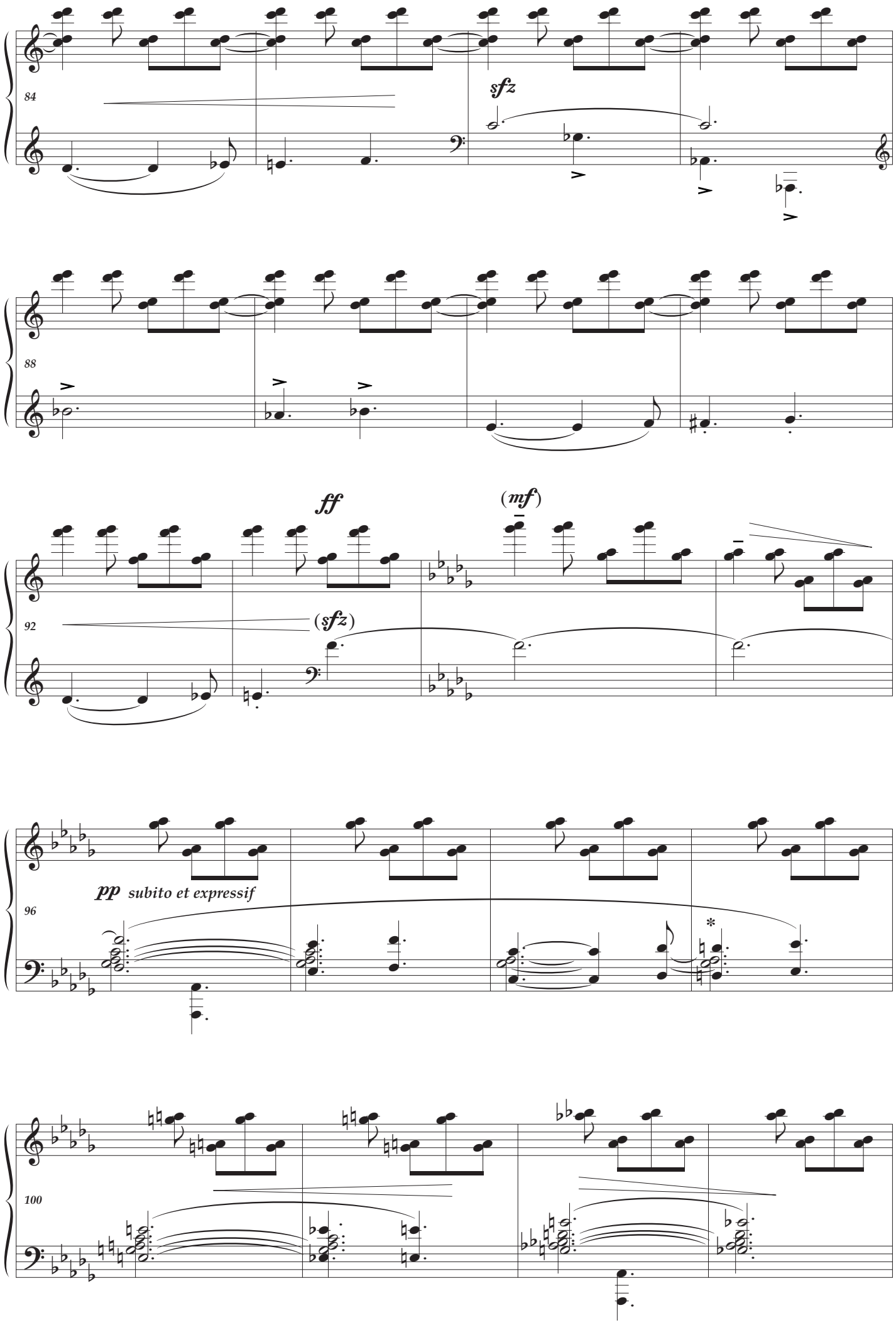
MASQUES

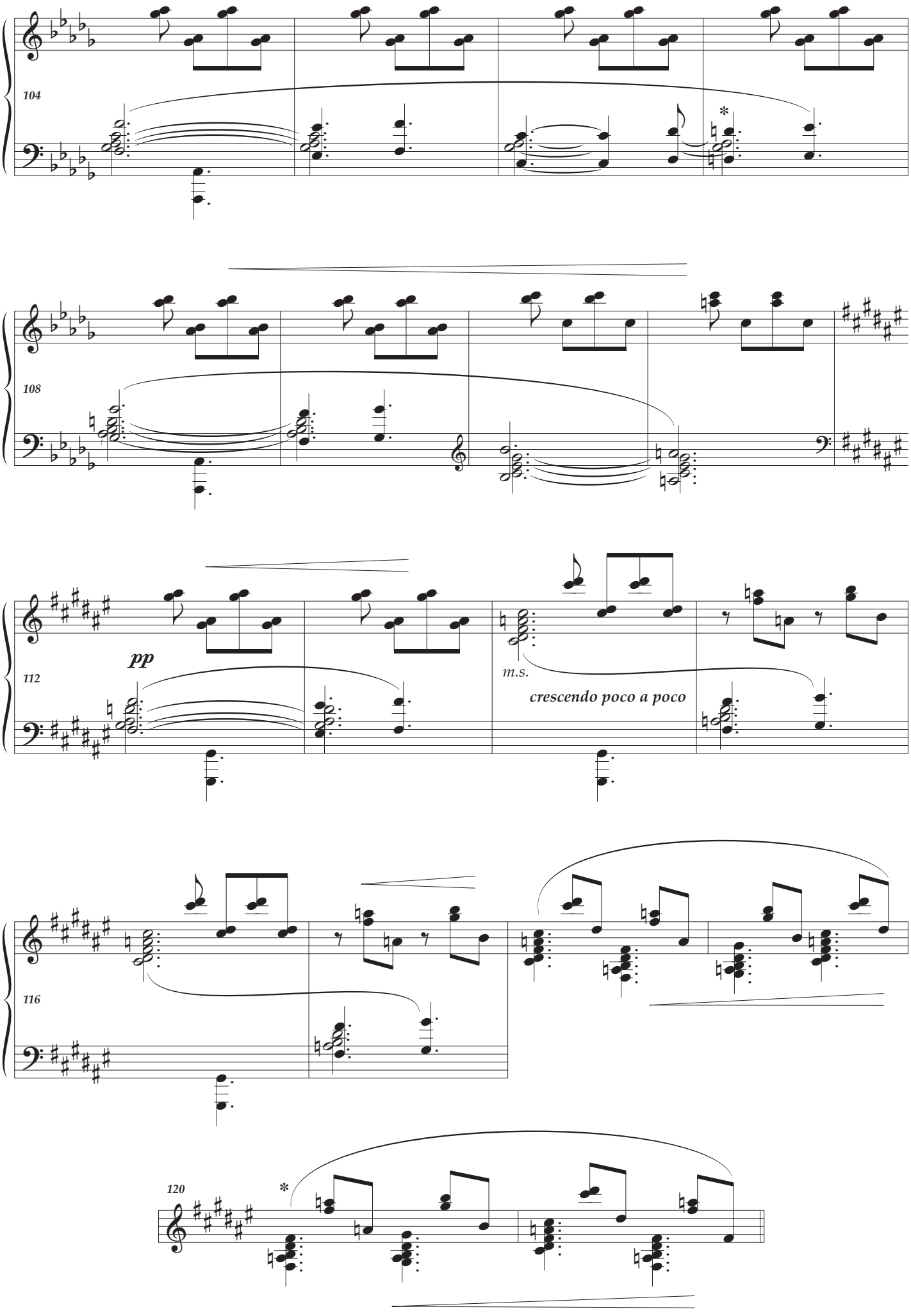


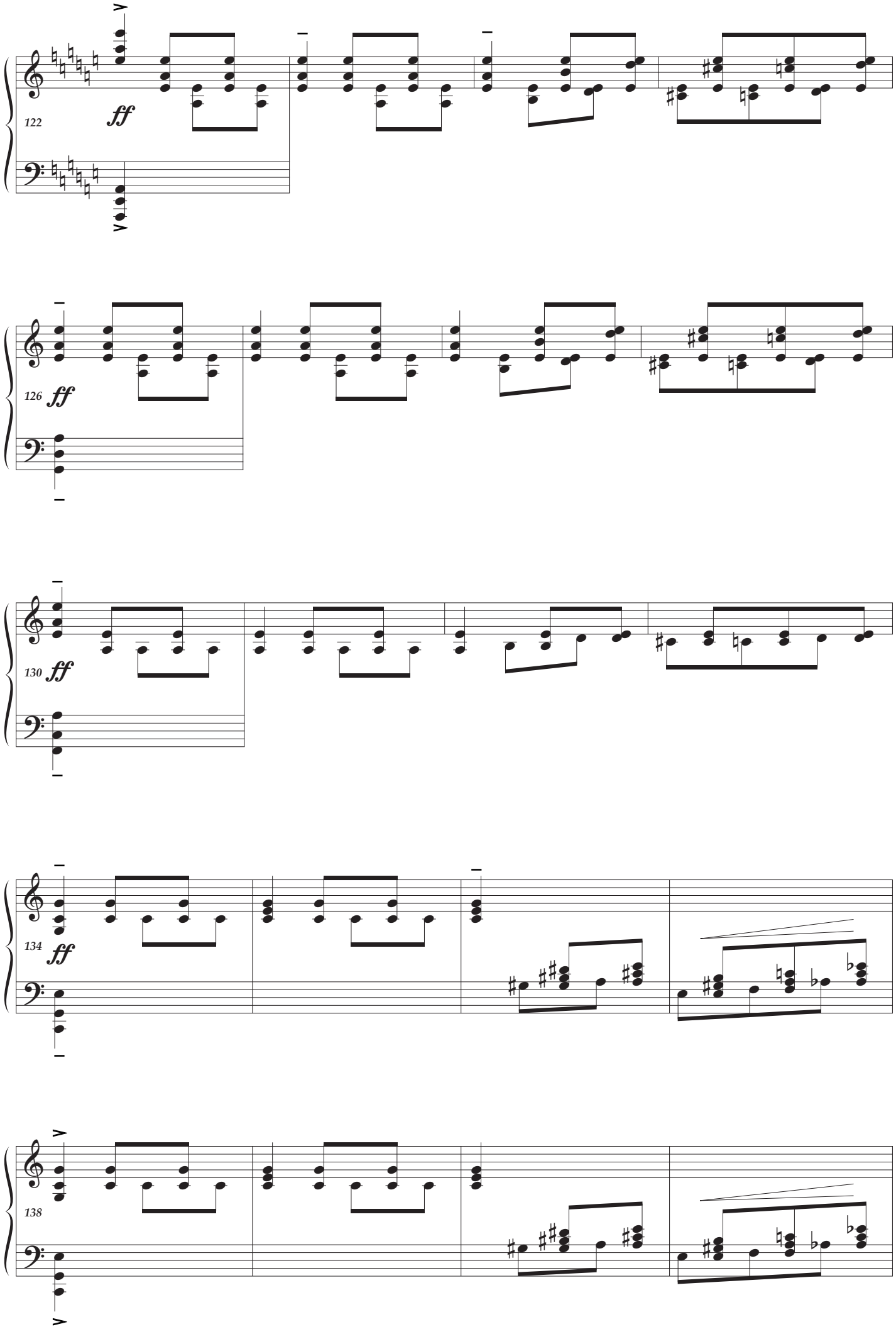

22
p expressif
26
p
30
34
poco crescendo
38
p

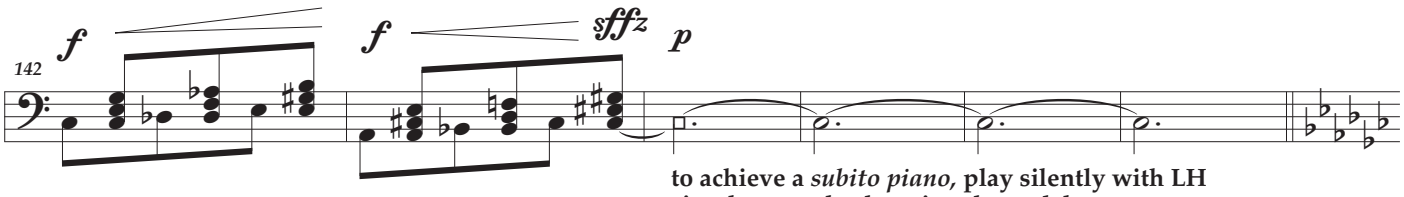

42
p
p
47
la basse en dehors
52
56
f
60


64
ff
diminuendo molto
68
72
p
4
5
76
80
ff
*


84
sfz
88
ff
(mf)
92
(sfz)
pp subito et expressif
96
*
100

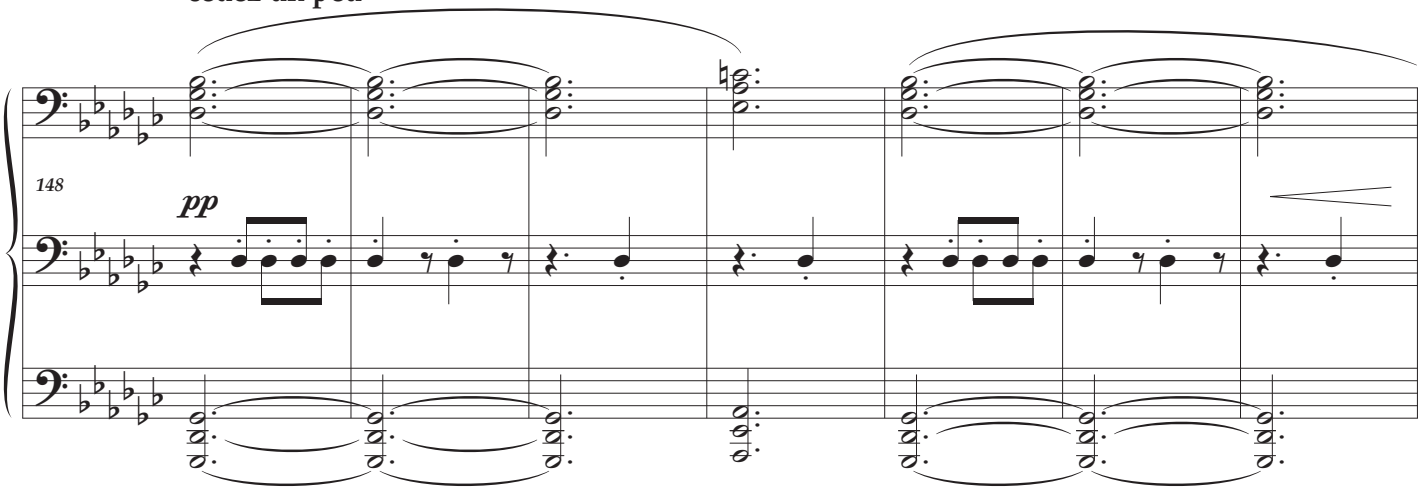

104
108
112
pp
m.s.
crescendo poco a poco
116
120

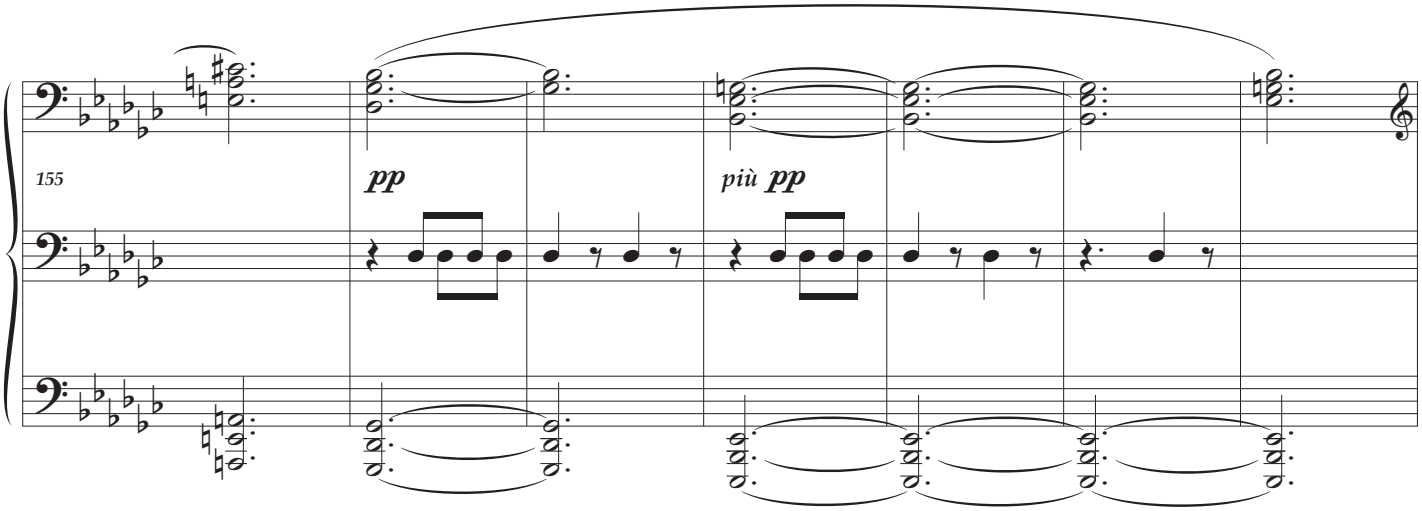

122
ff
126
ff
130
ff
134
ff
138

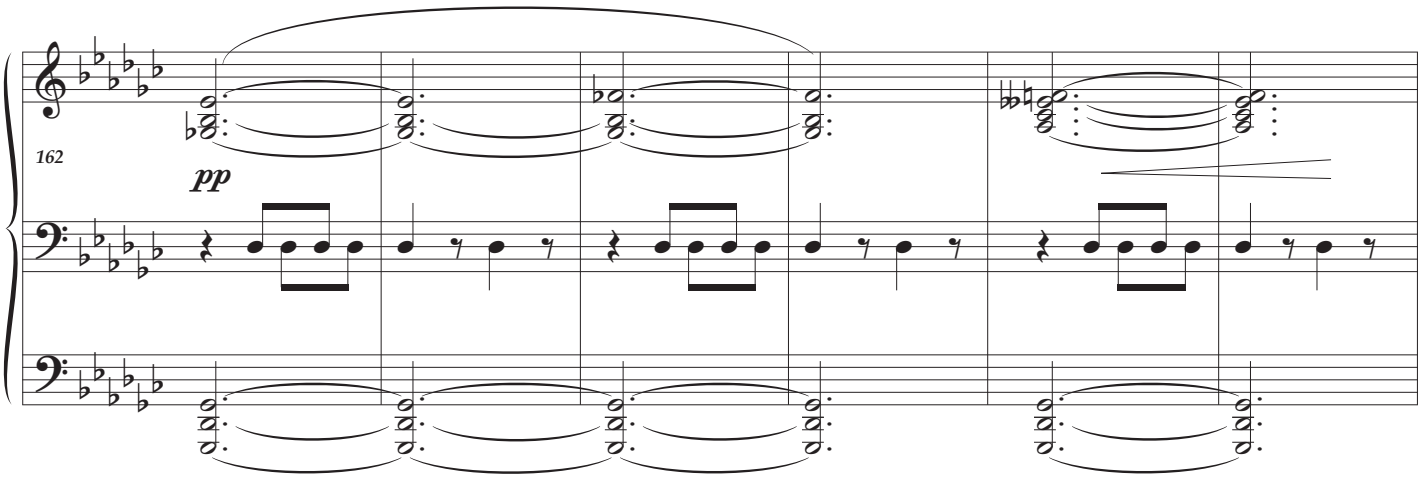


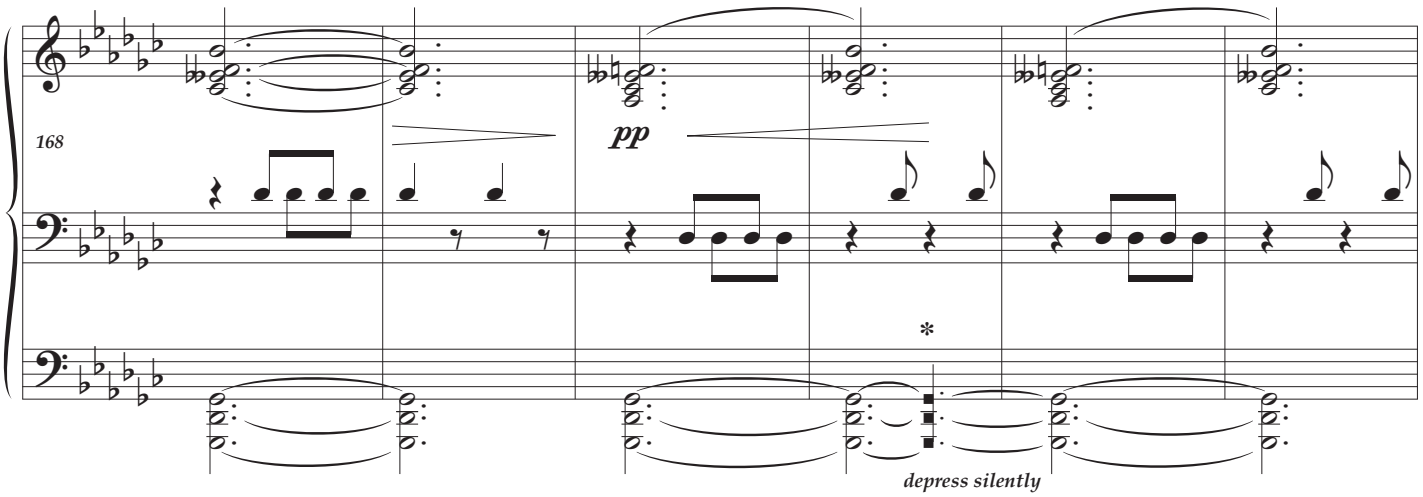
to achieve a *subito piano,* play silently with LH simultaneously changing the pedal

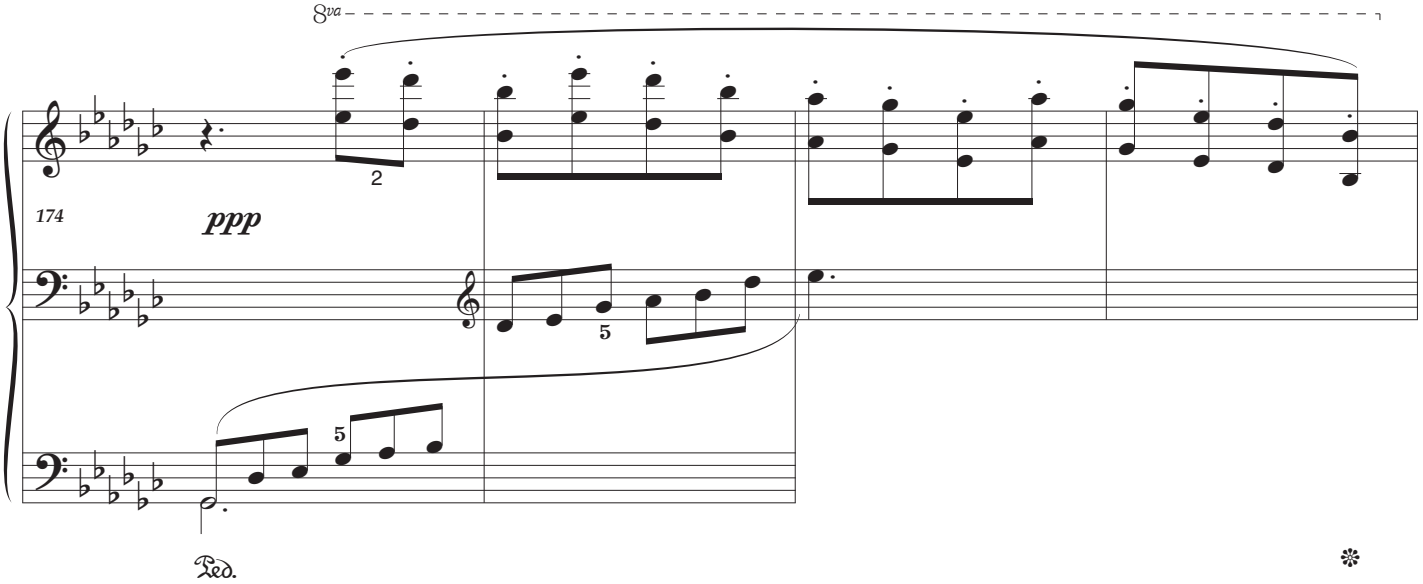
cédez un peu

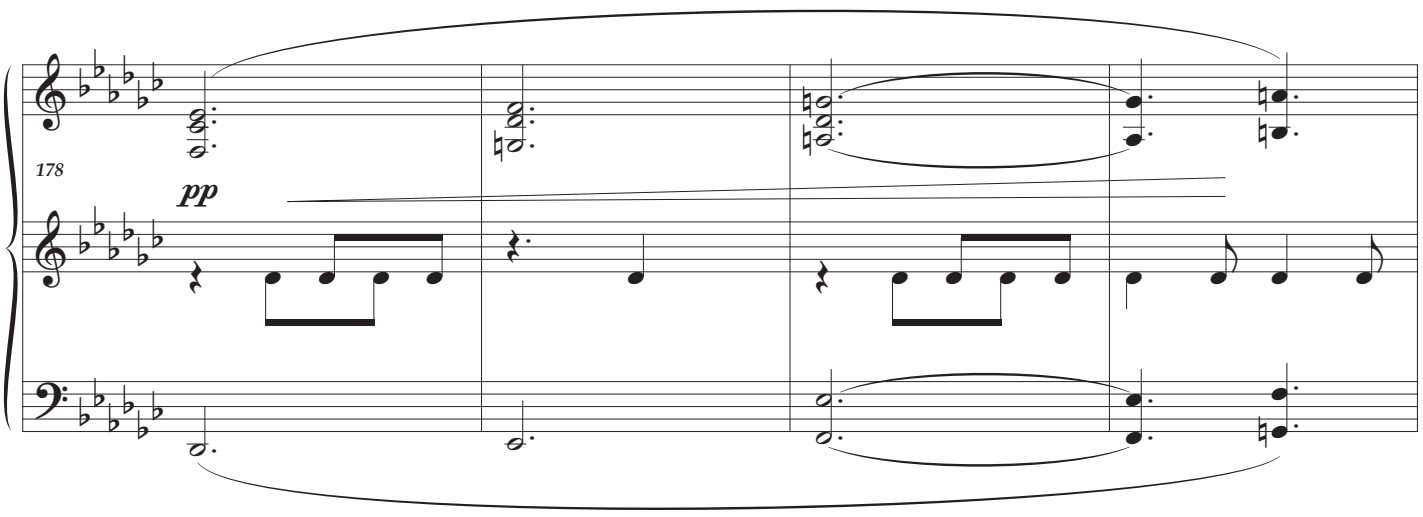







168
pp
depress silently


8va
174
ppp
2
5
5
Ped.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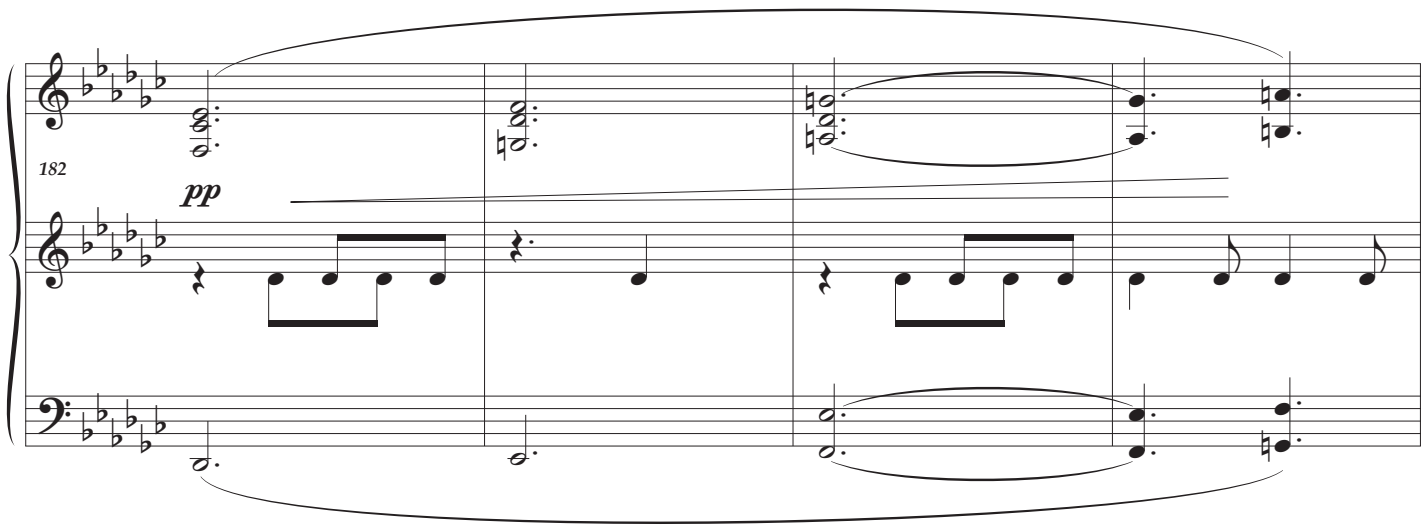
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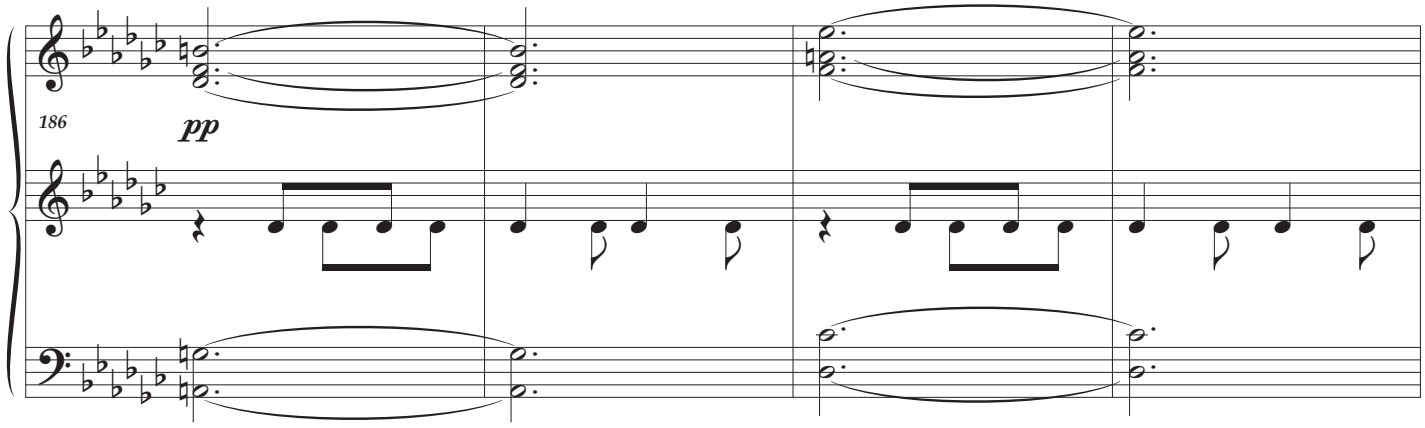
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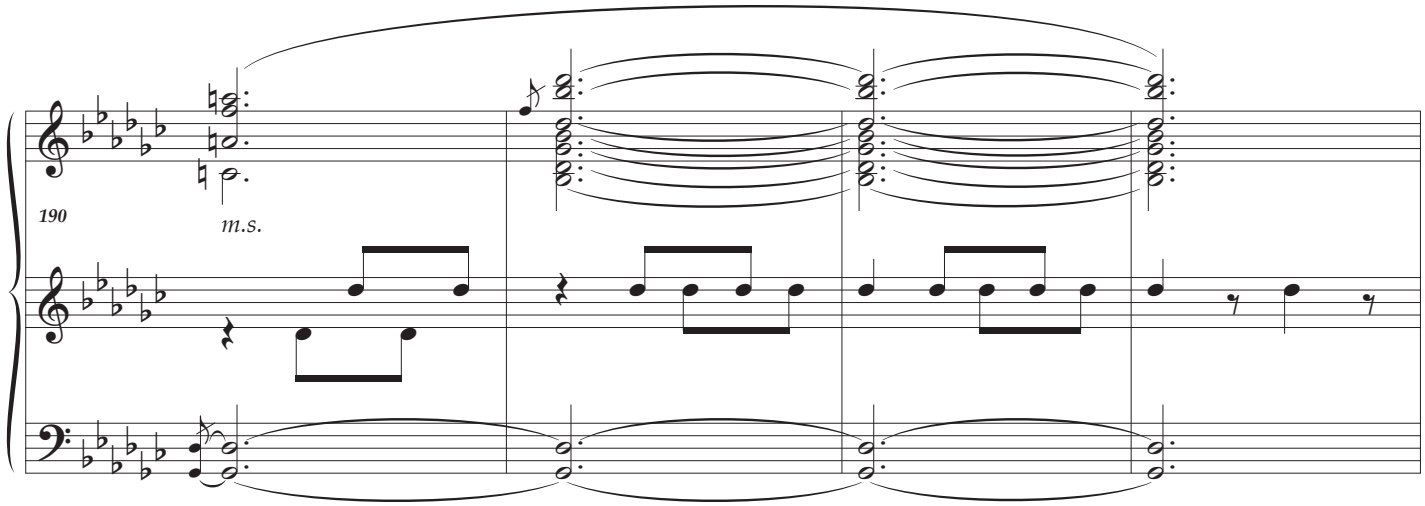
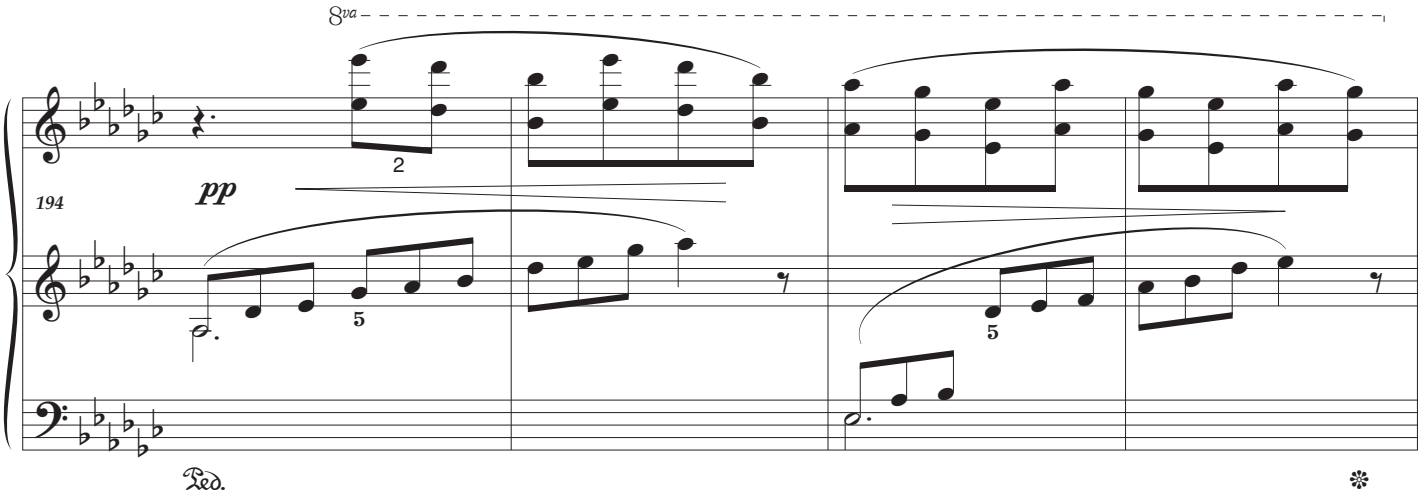
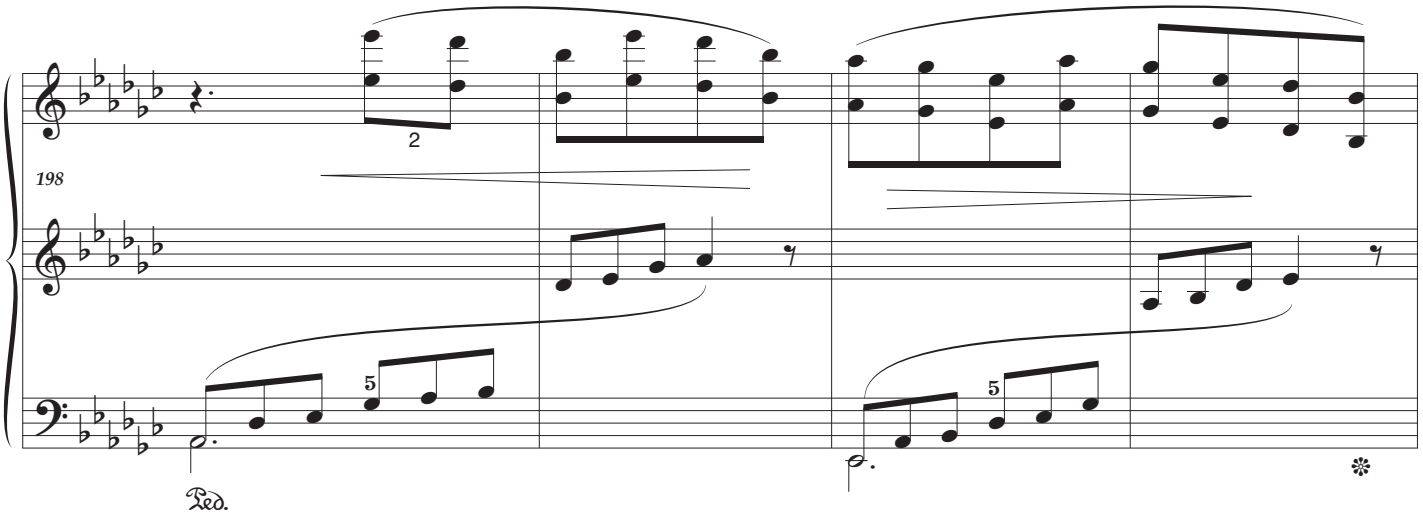
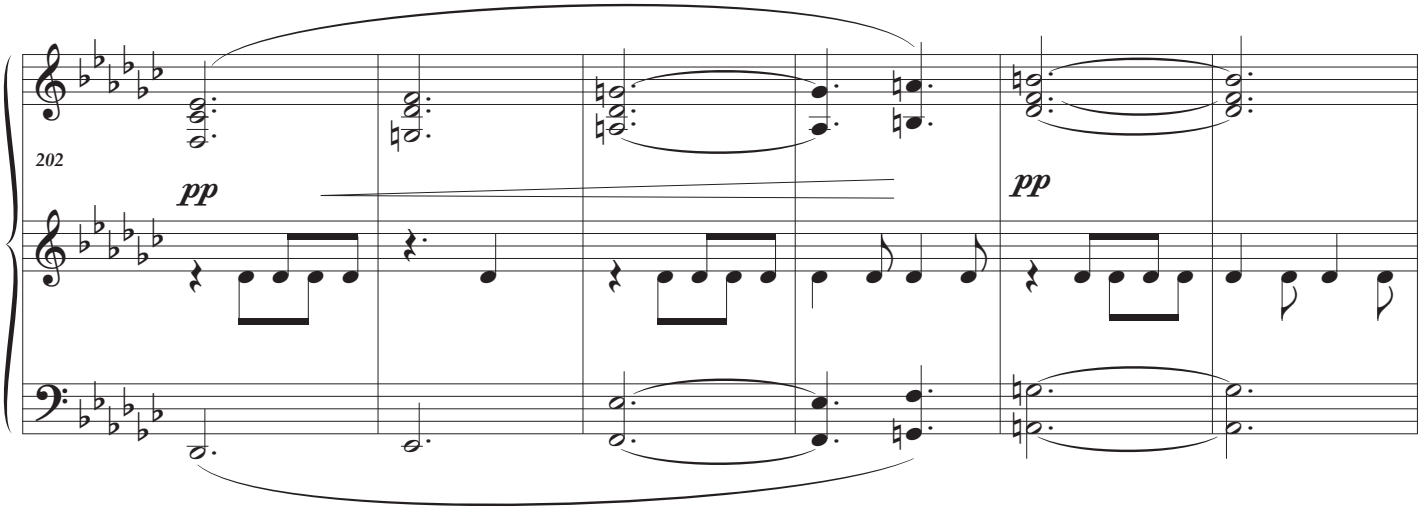
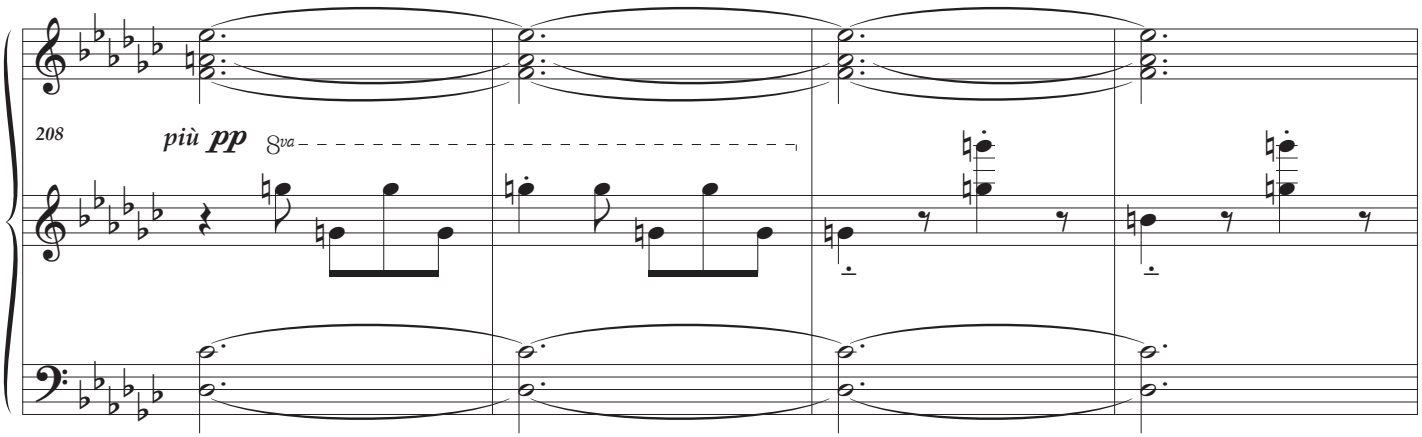
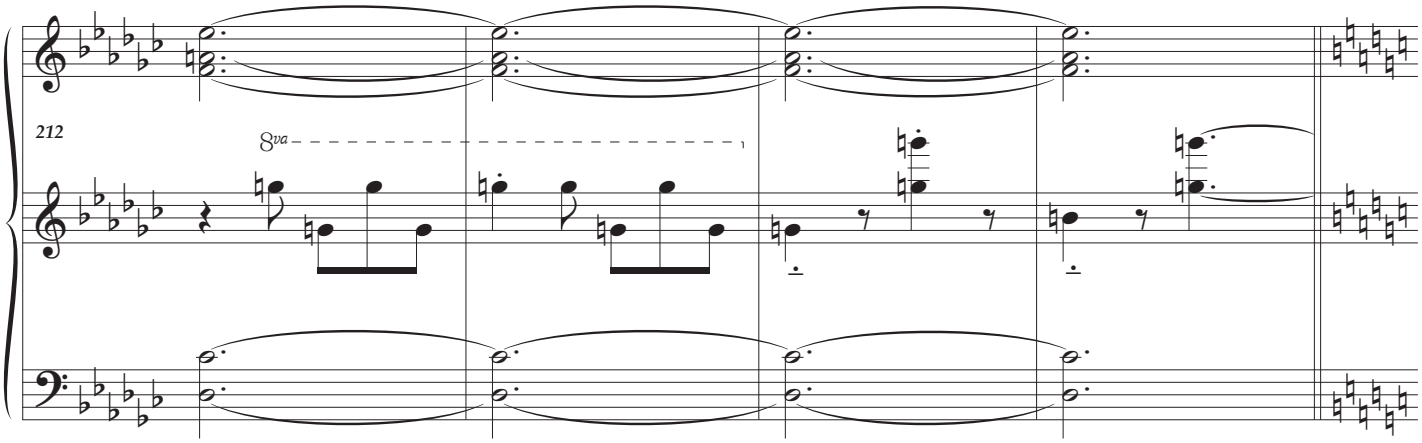

190
m.s.
Sost. Ped


8va
194
pp
2
5
5
Ped.
*

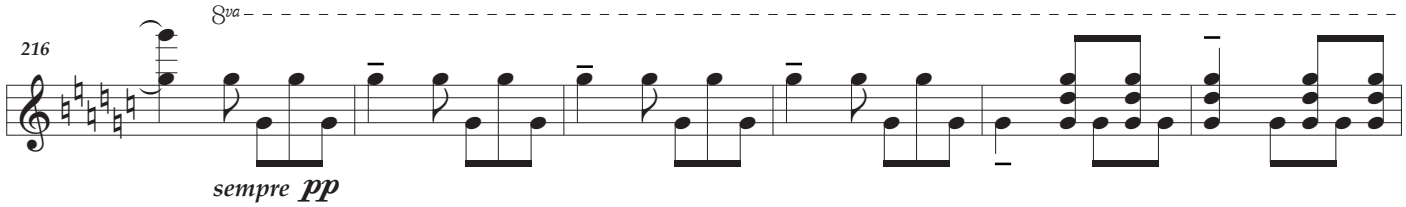

198
2
5
5
Ped.
*

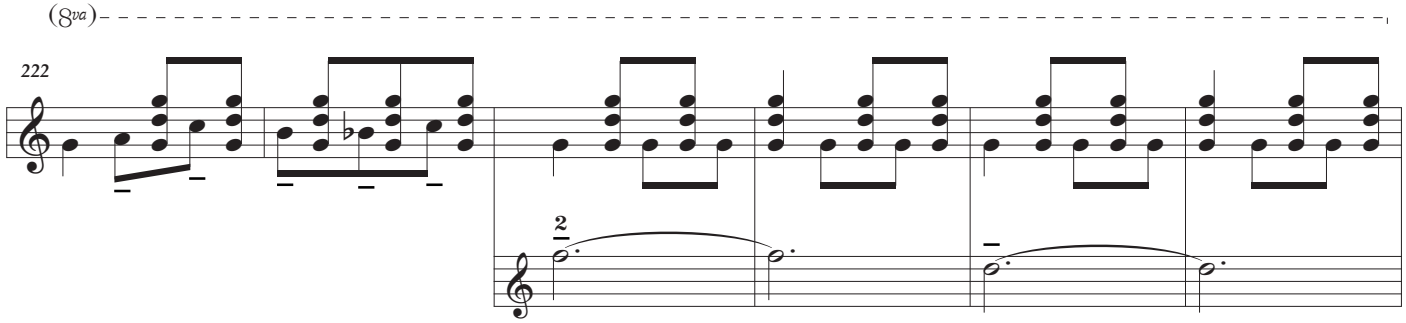

202
pp
pp

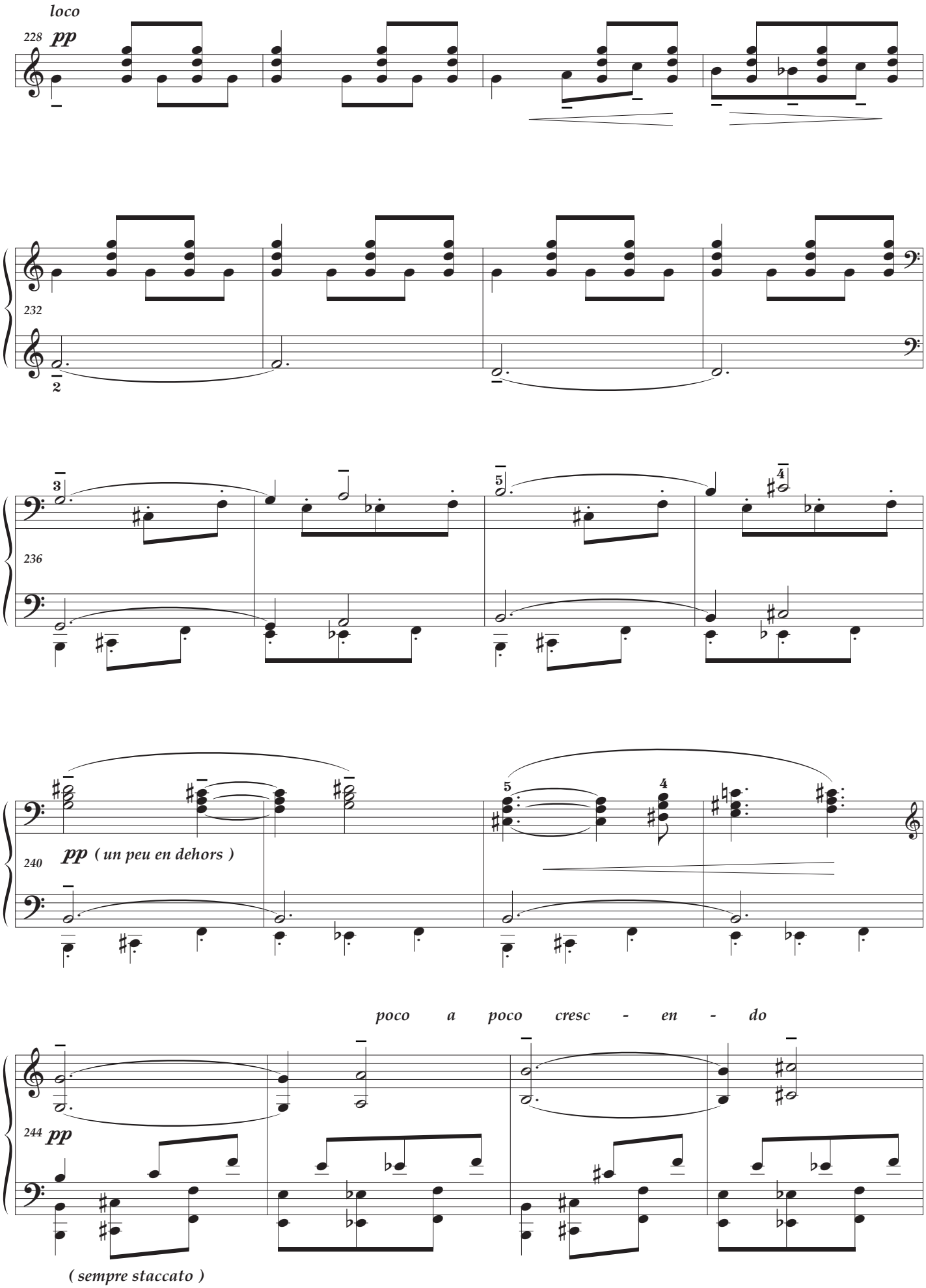


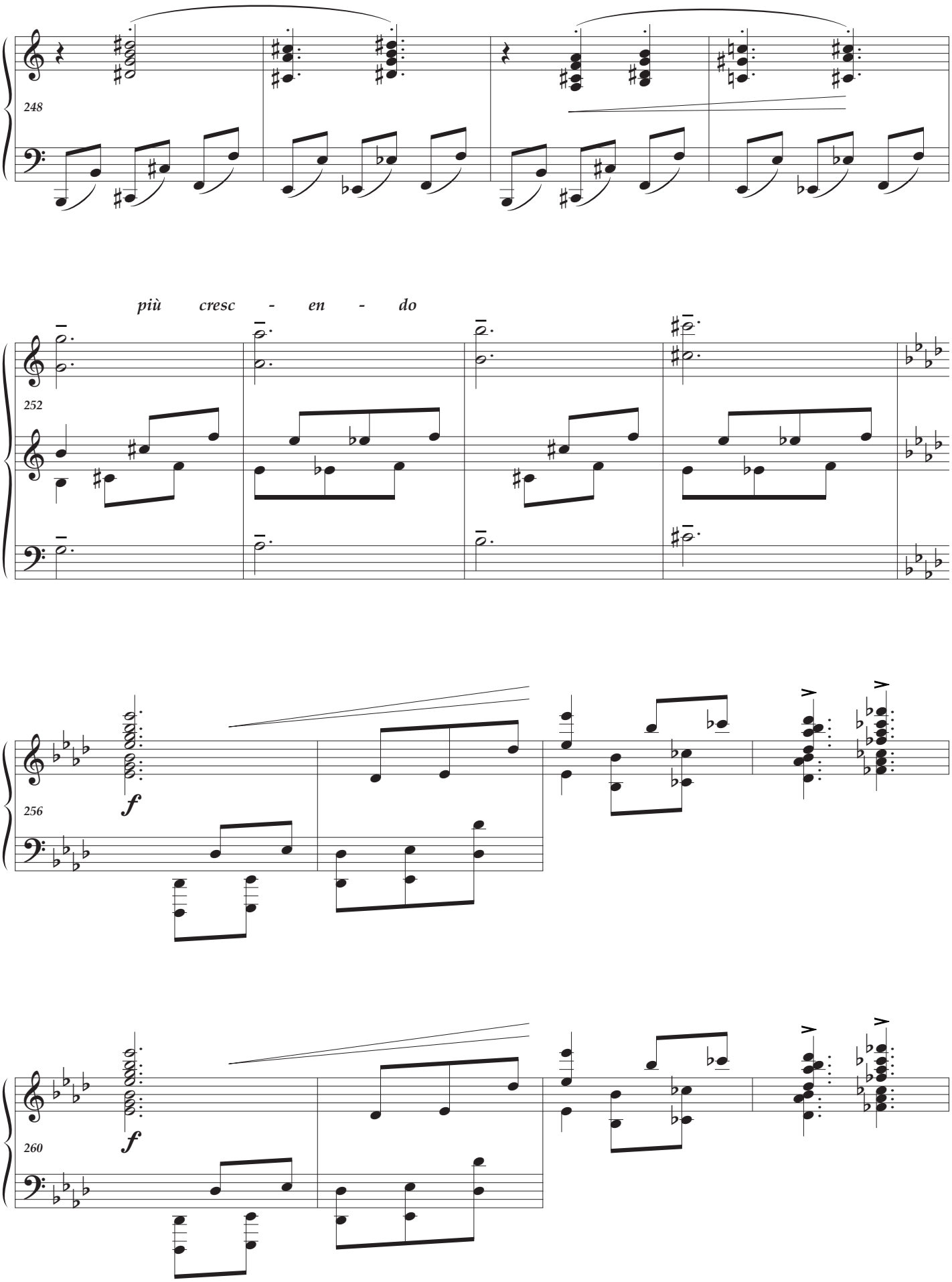


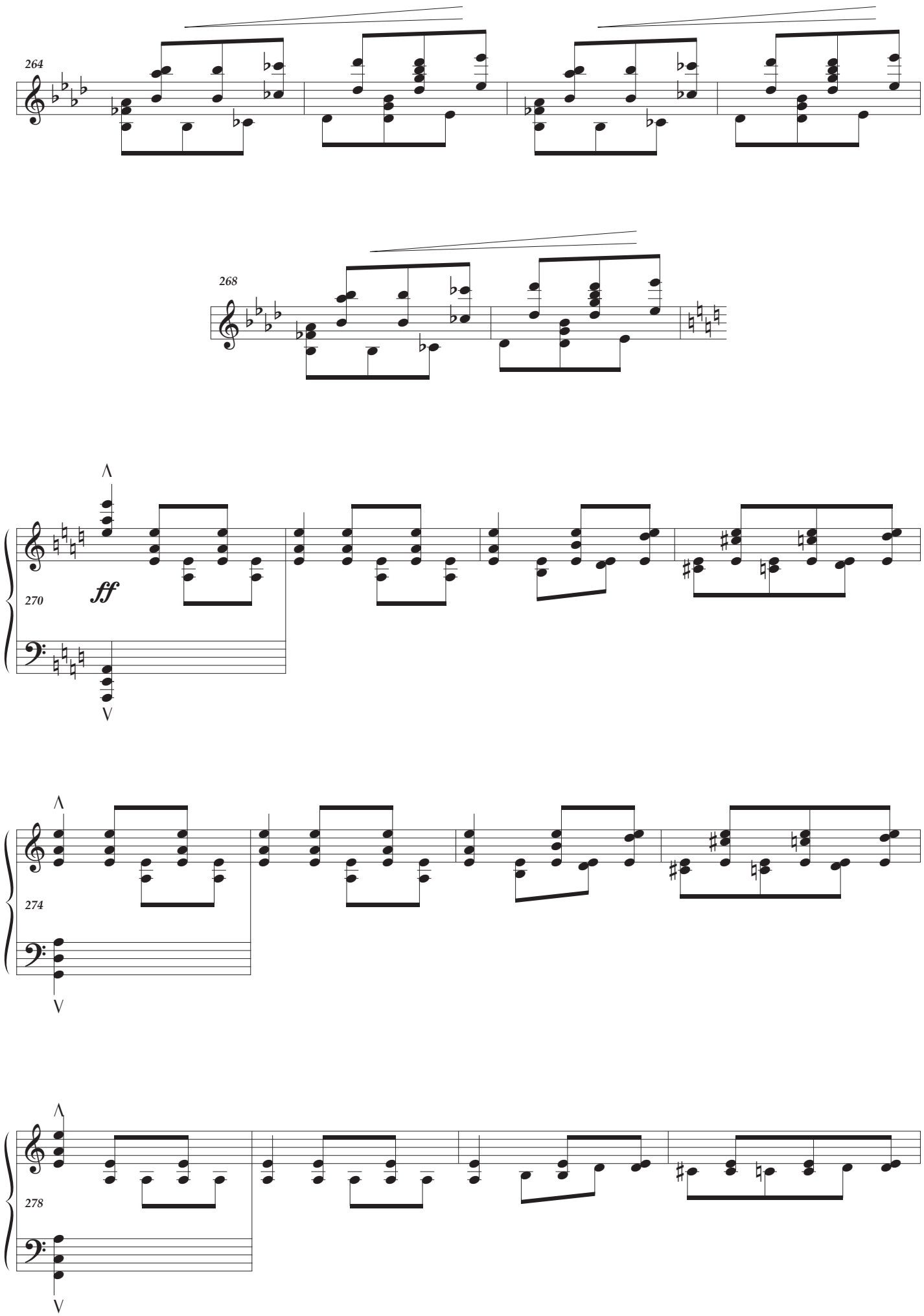
tempo primo

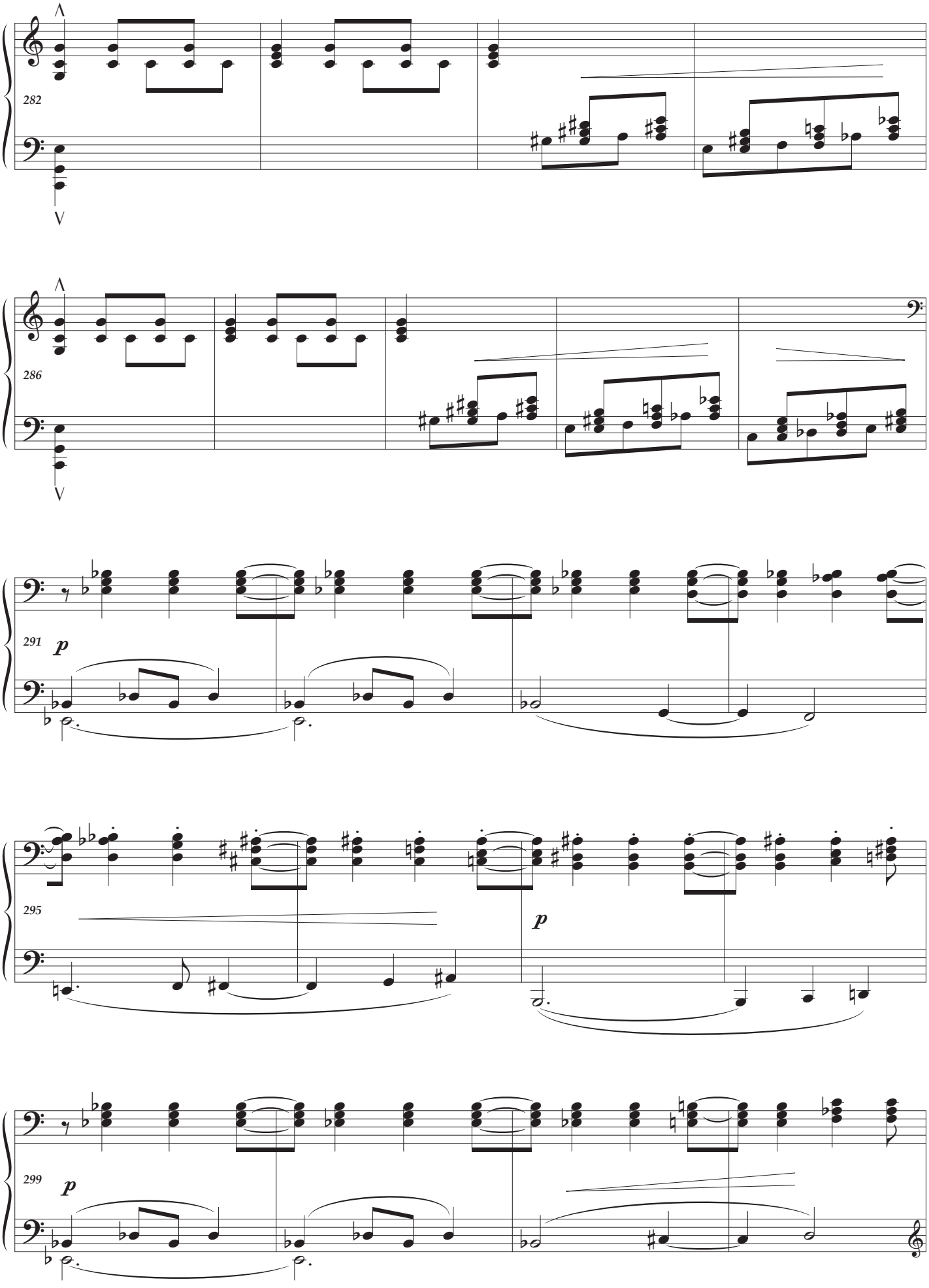


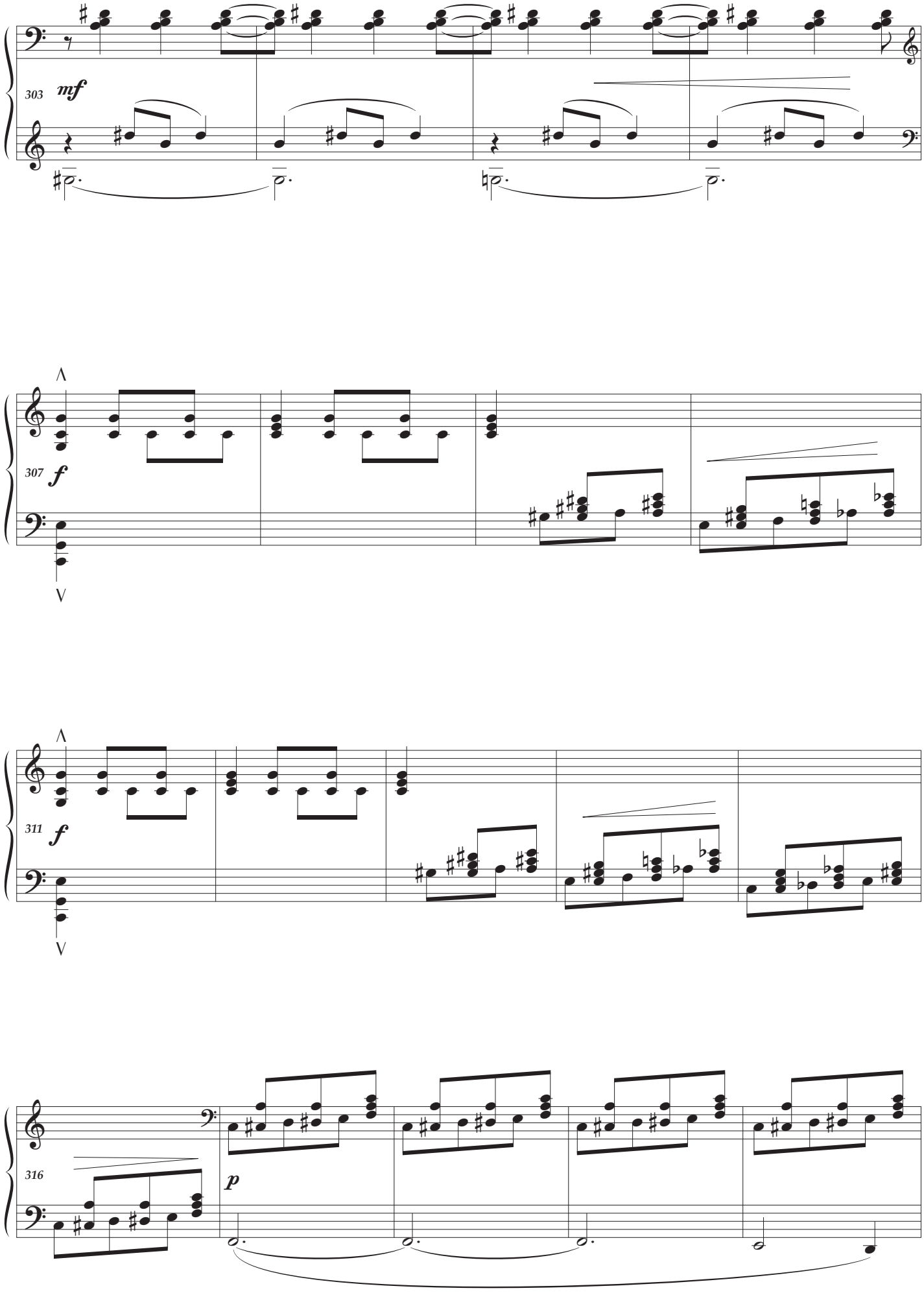



loco
228
pp
232
236
240
pp (un peu en dehors)
poco a poco cresc - en - do
244
pp
(sempre staccato)


248
più cresc - en - do
252
f
256
f
260


264
268
270
ff
274
278


282
286
291
p
295
p
299
p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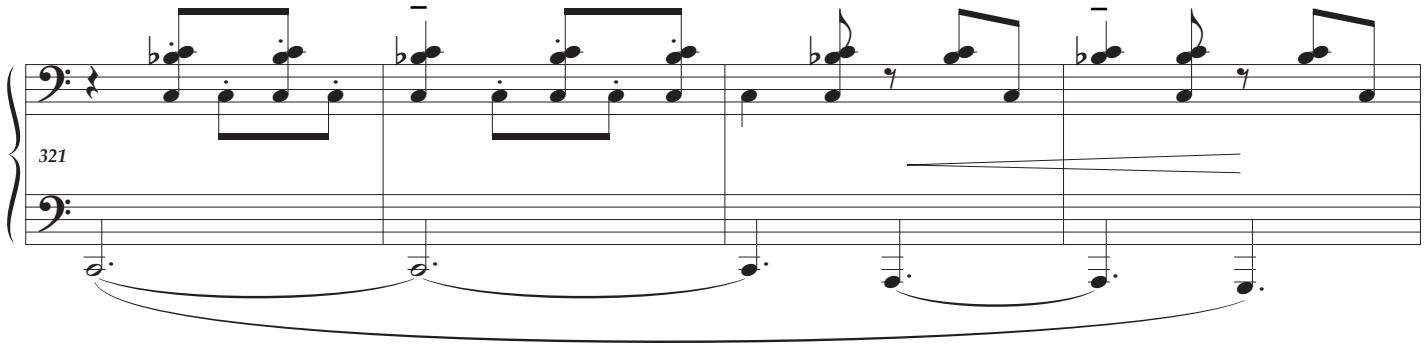
mf
307
f
311
f
316
p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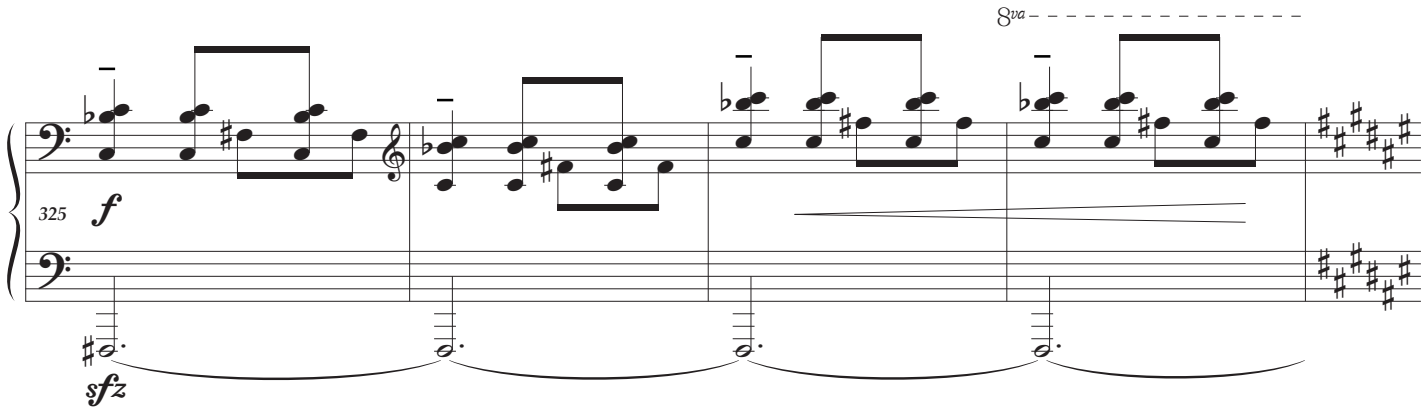
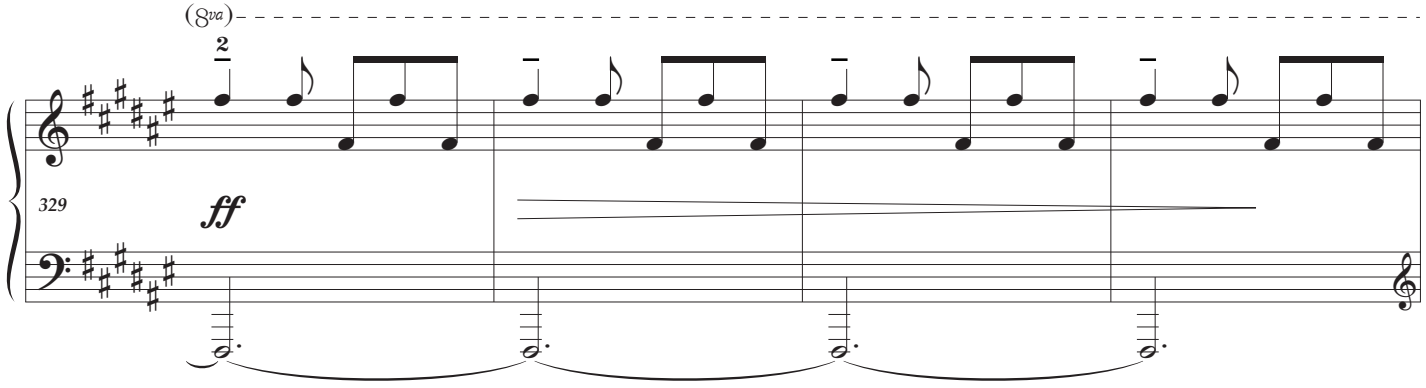
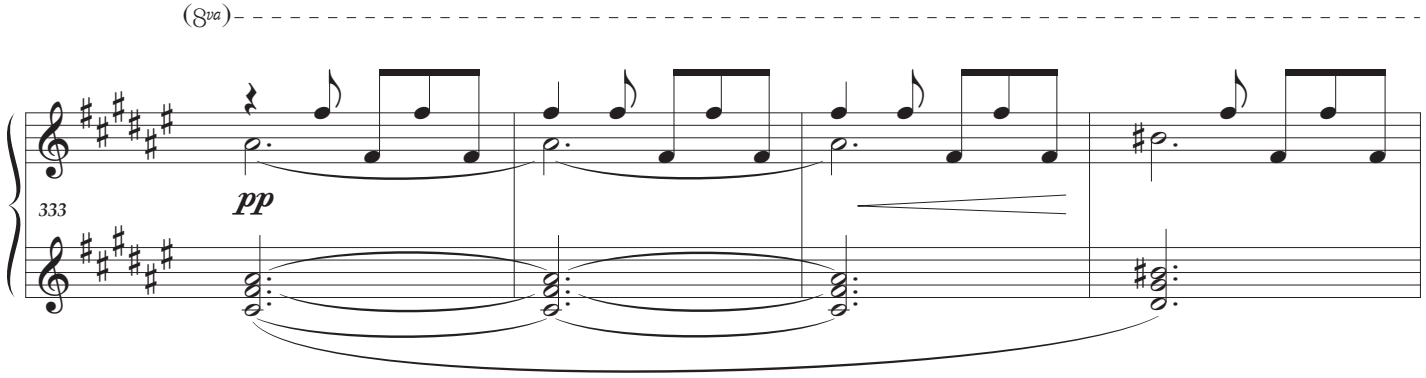
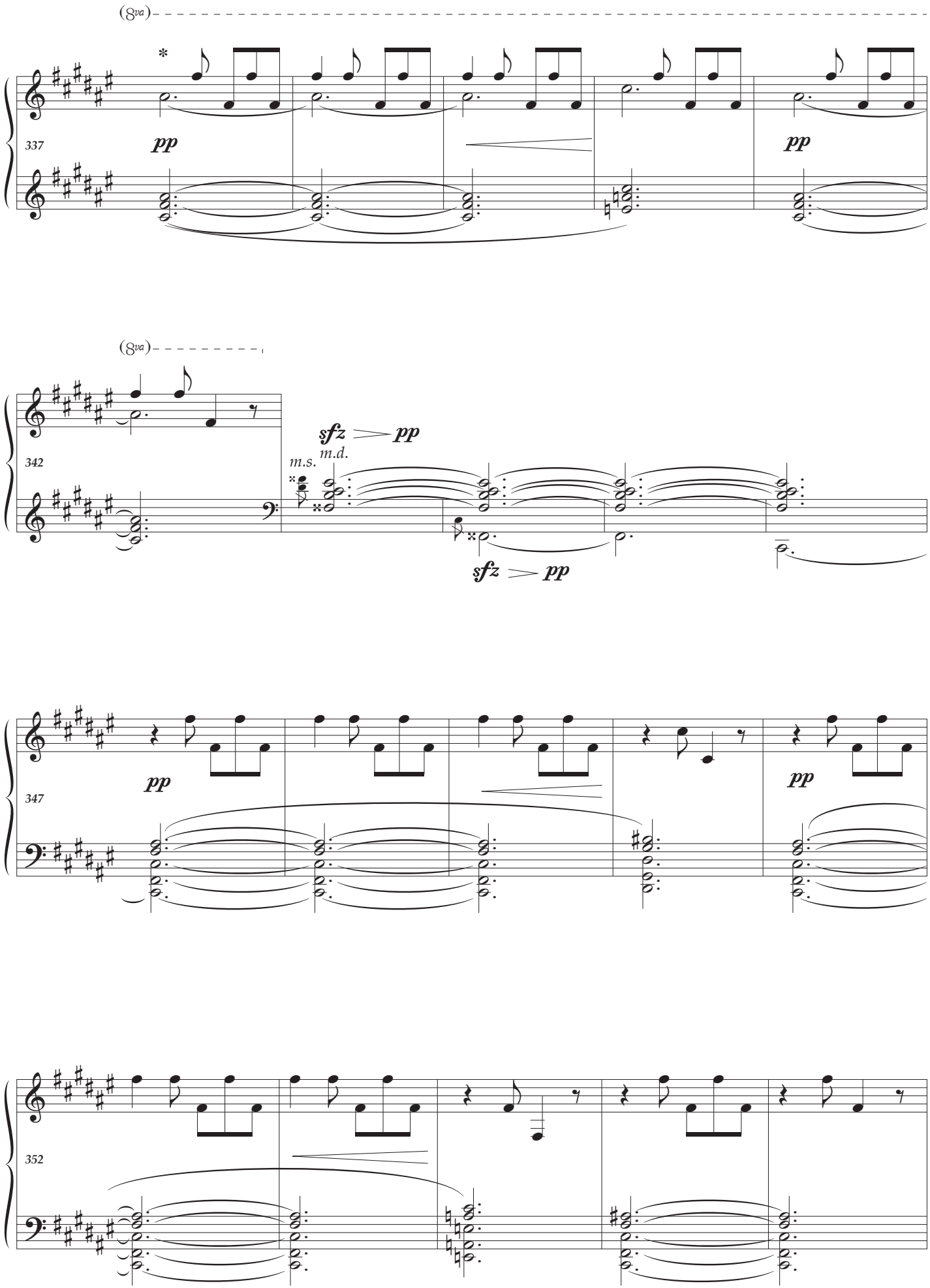
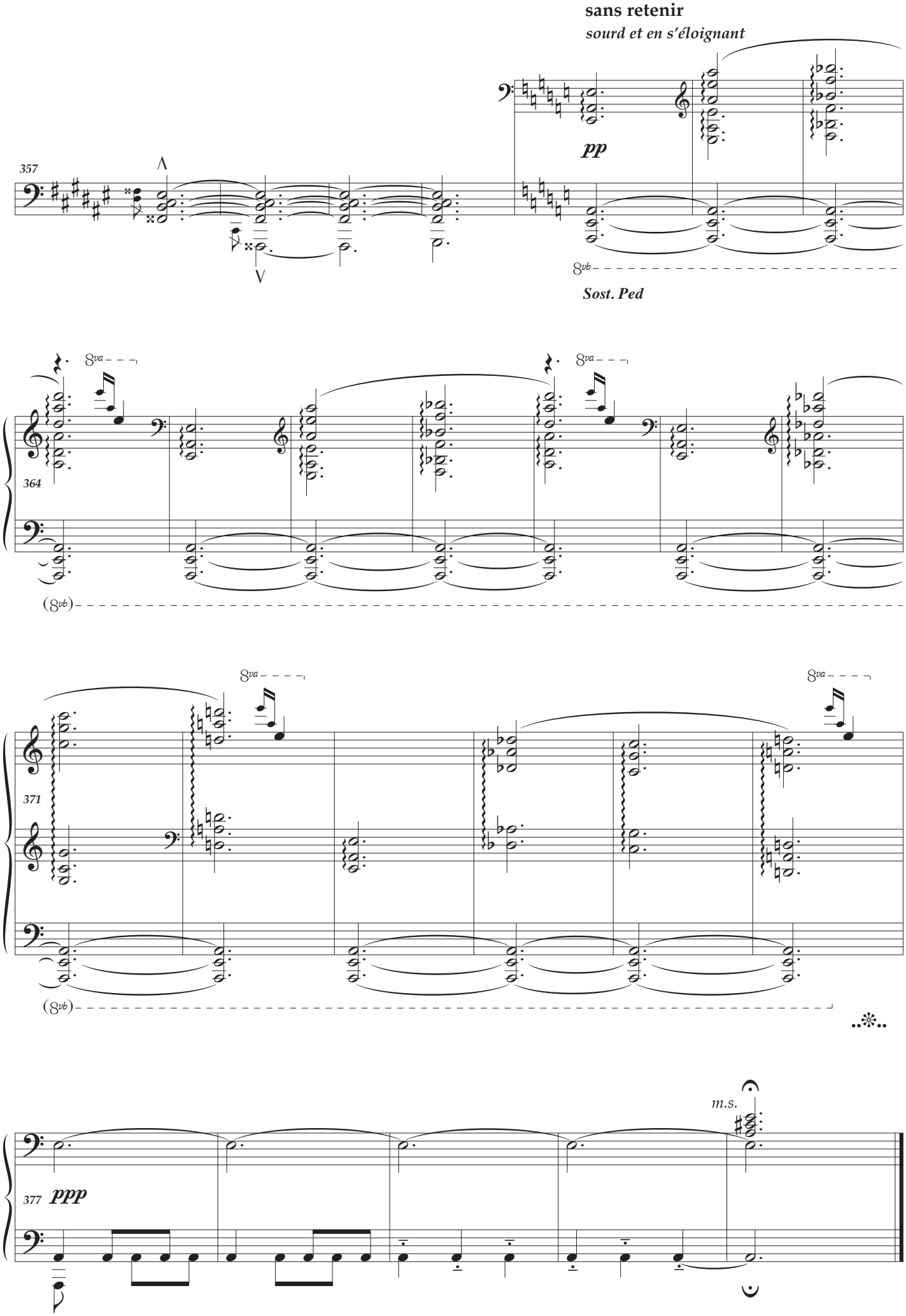

8va
325
f
sfz


(8va)
2
329
ff

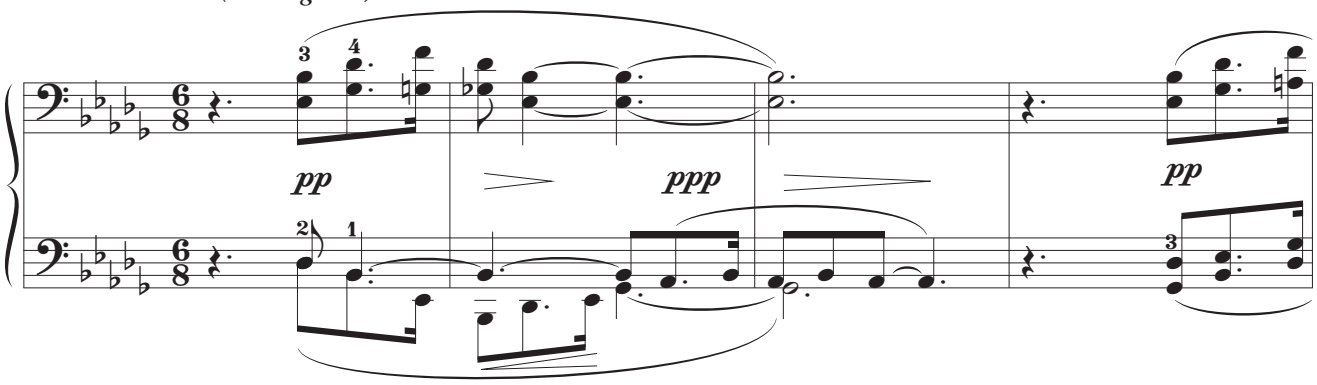

(8va)
333
pp

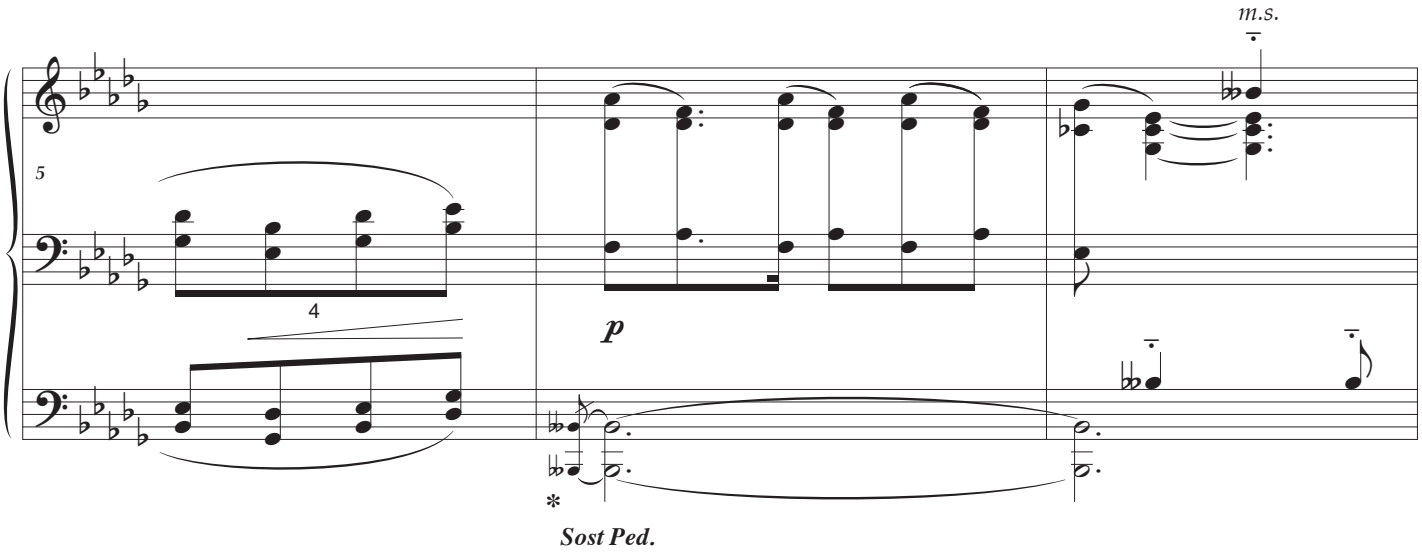

(8va)
337
pp
pp
(8va)
342
sfz
pp
m.d.
m.s.
sfz
pp
347
pp
pp
352


sans retenir
sourd et en s'éloignant
pp
357
8vb
Sost. Ped
8va
364
(8vb)
371
m.s.
377
ppp

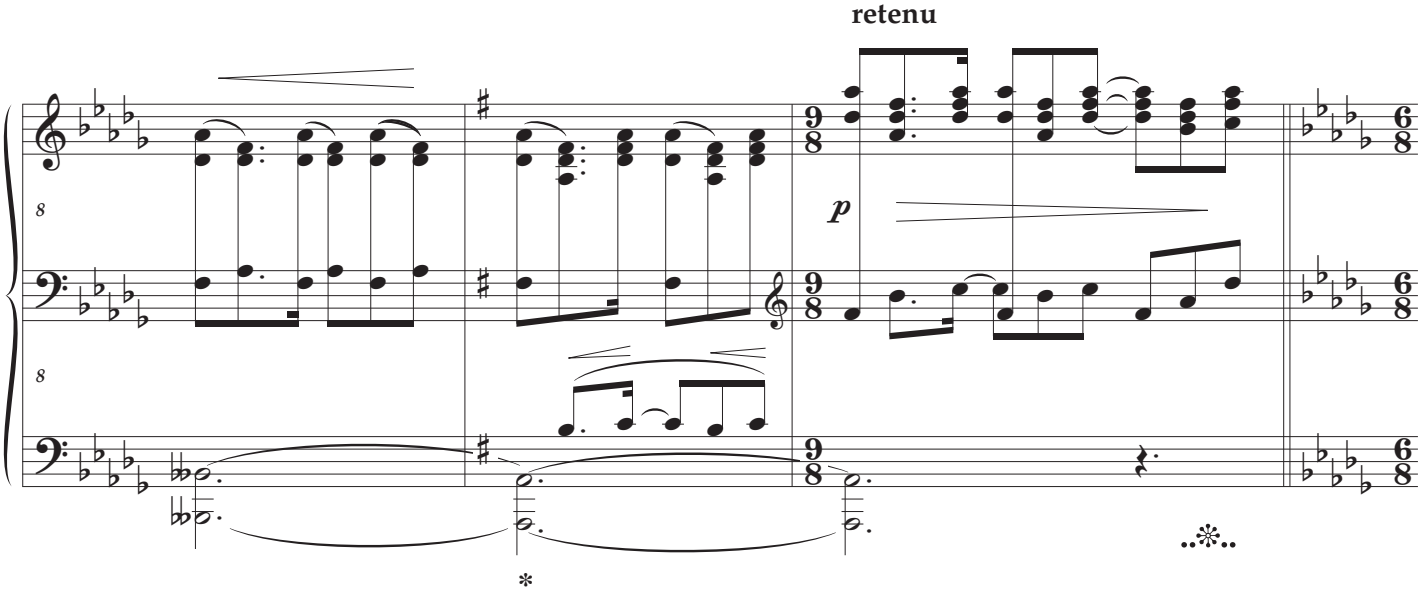
... d'un Cahier d'Esquisses

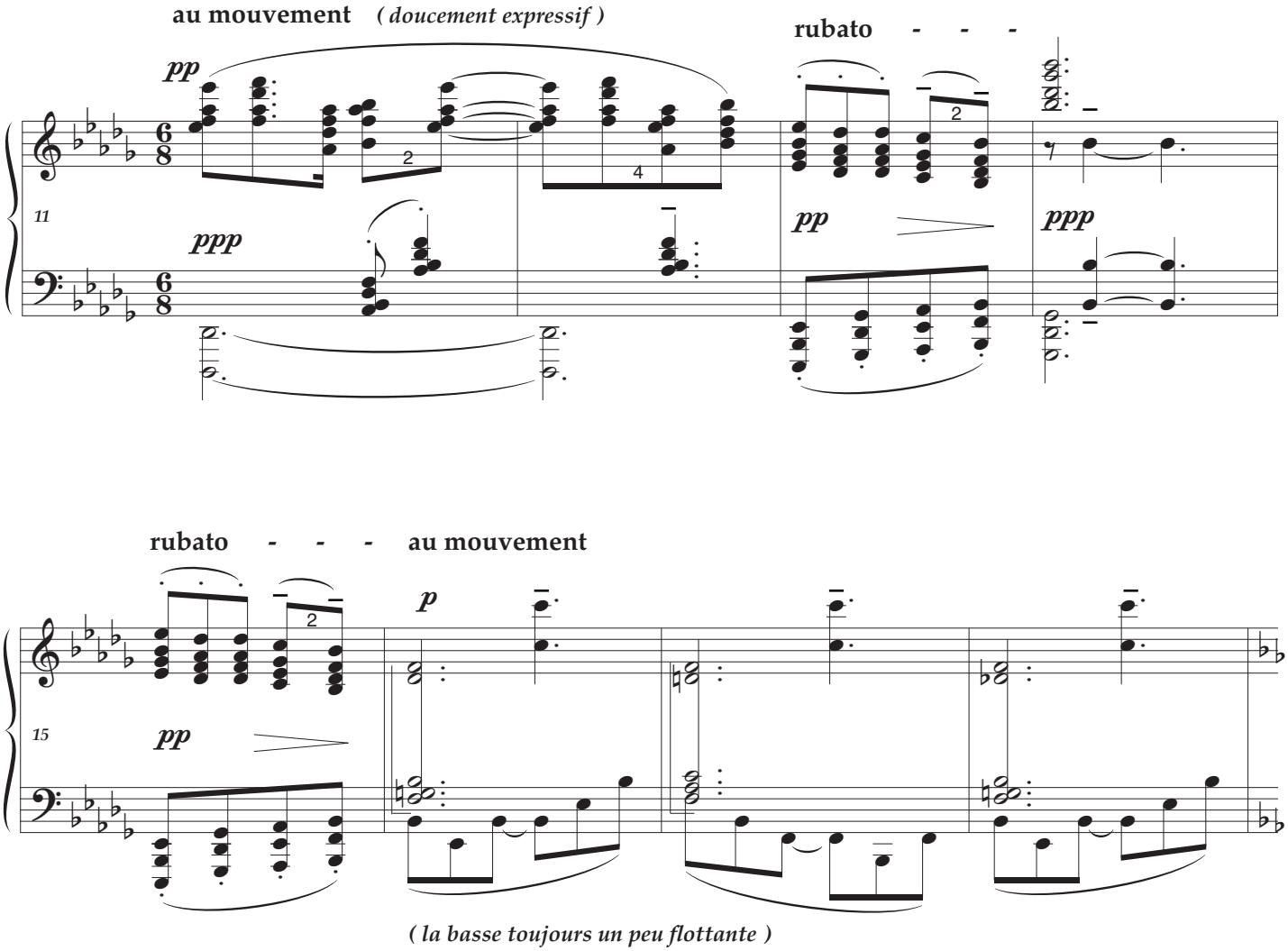
très lent *(sans rigueur)*



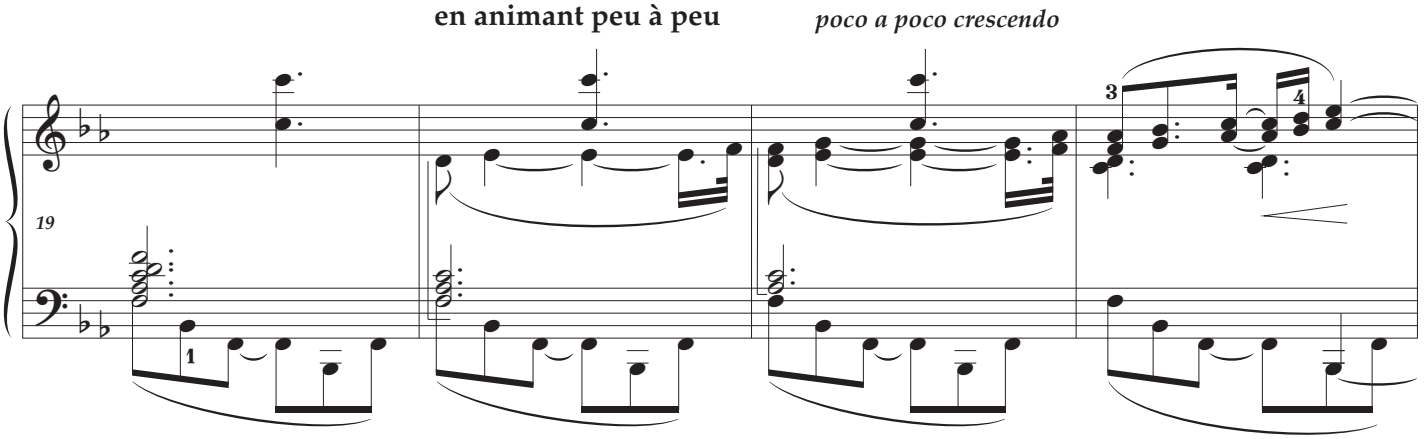


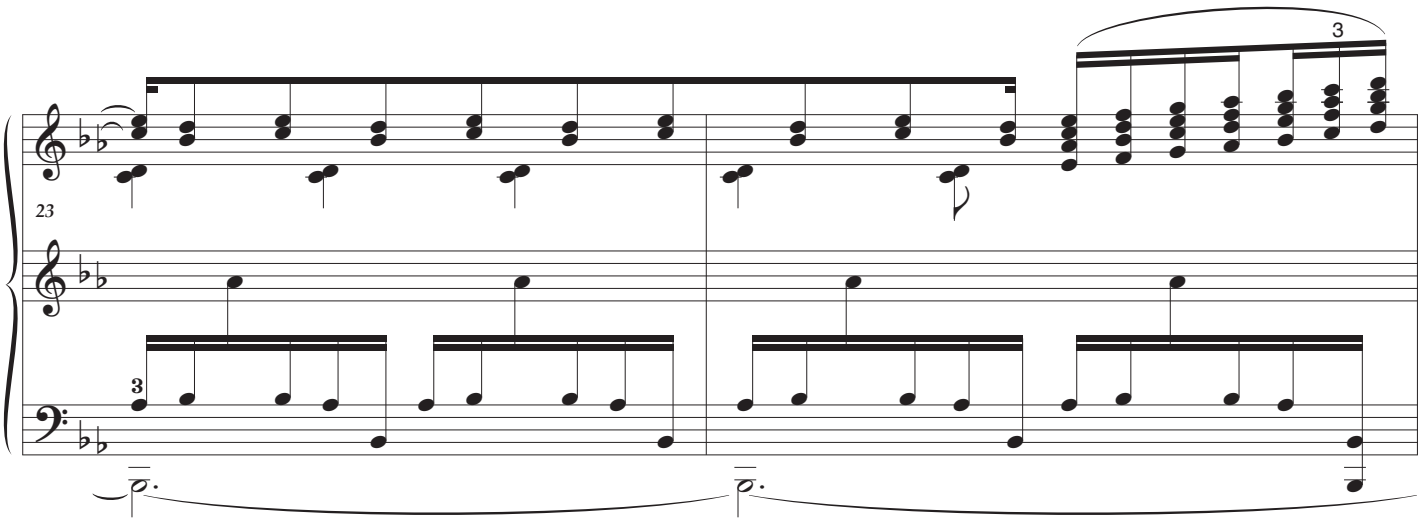
retenu

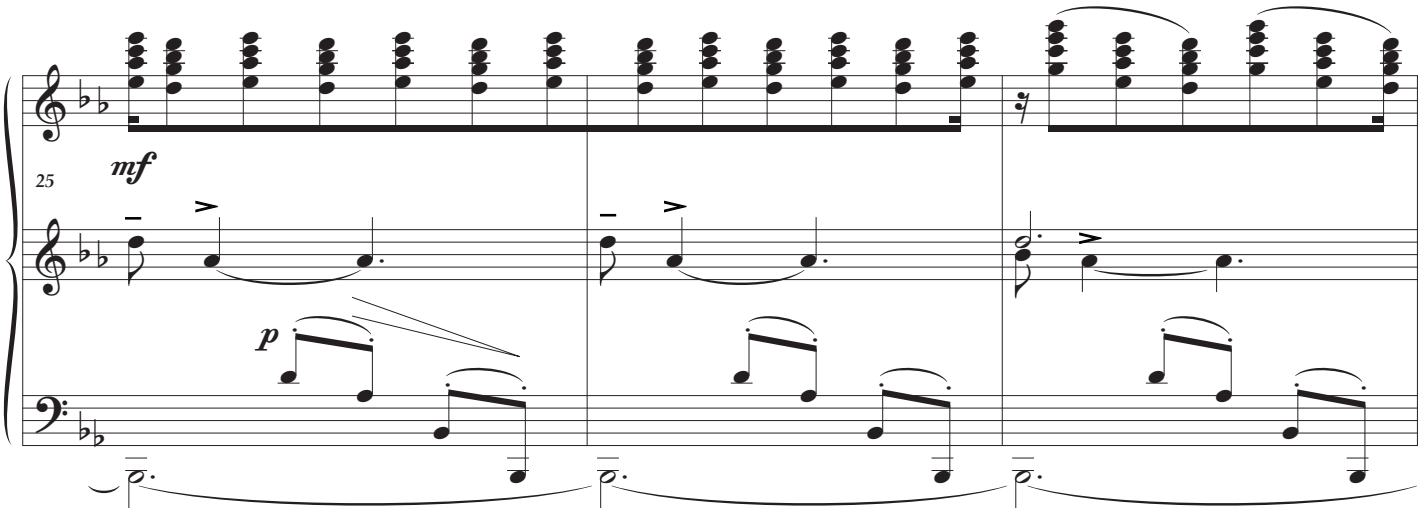


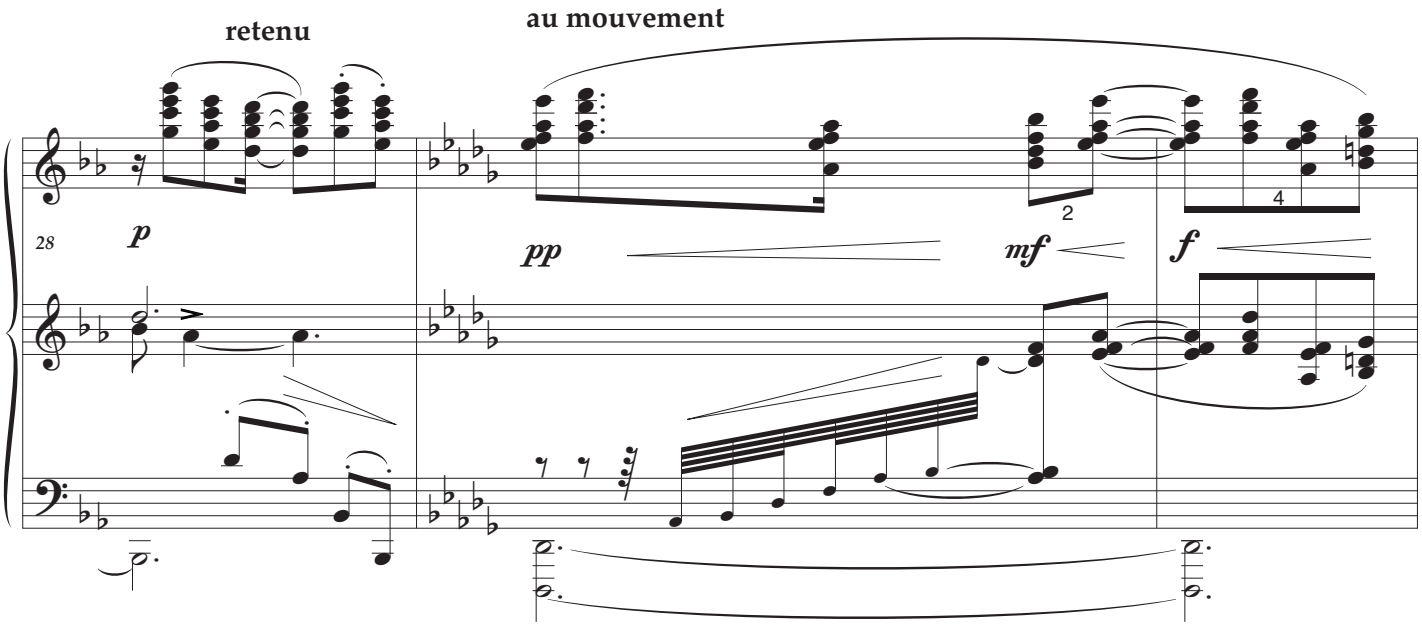


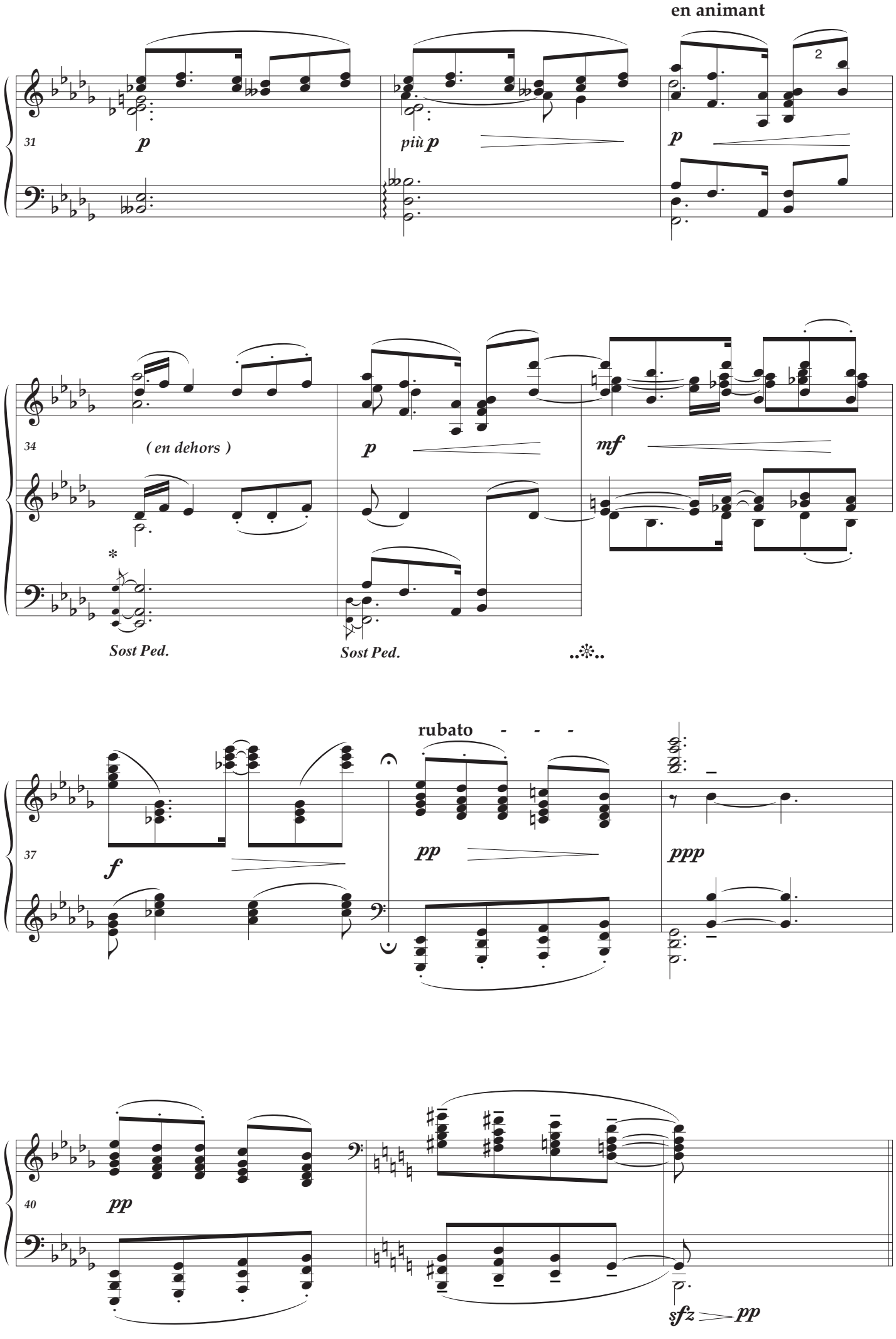
(la basse toujours un peu flottante)

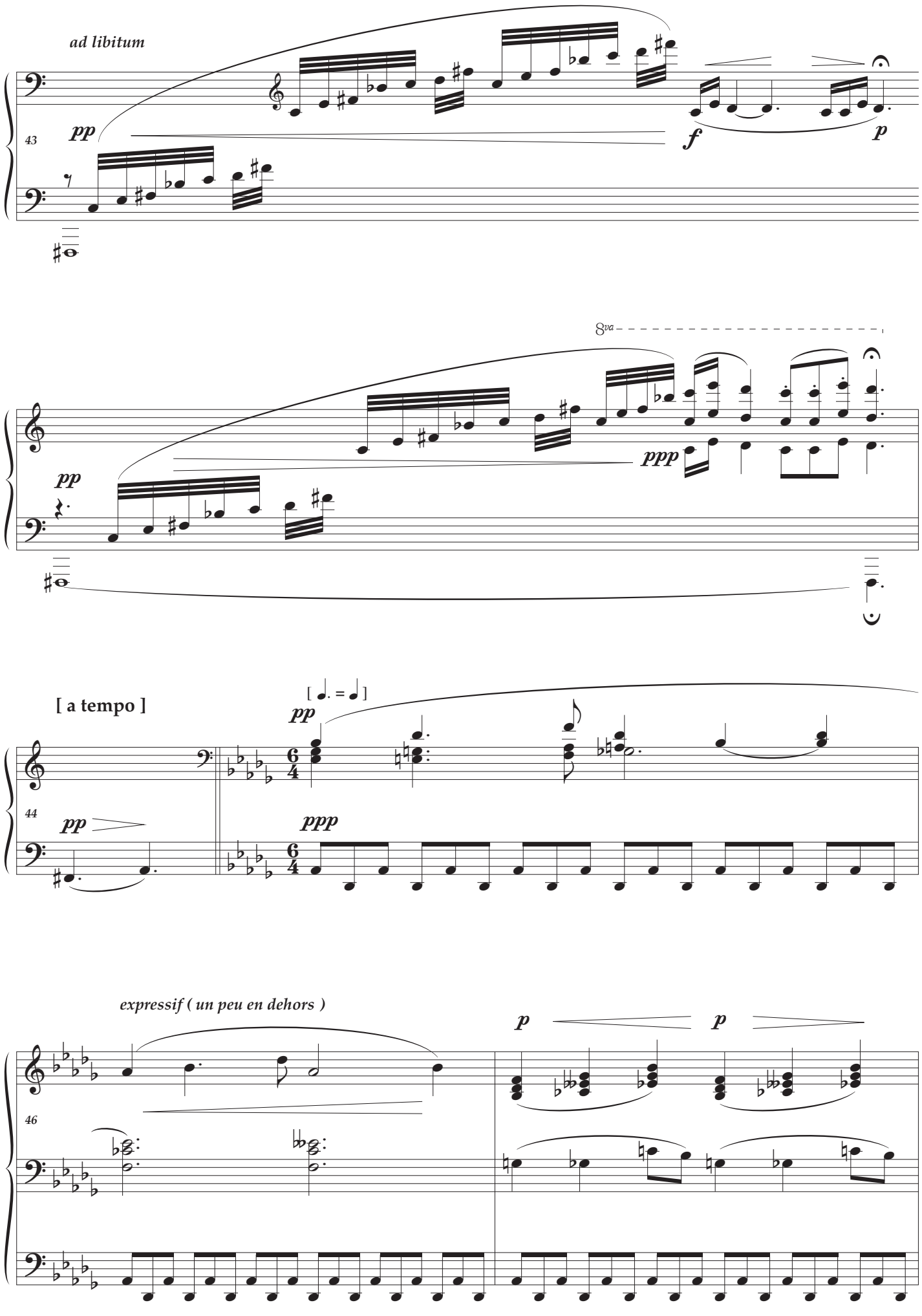


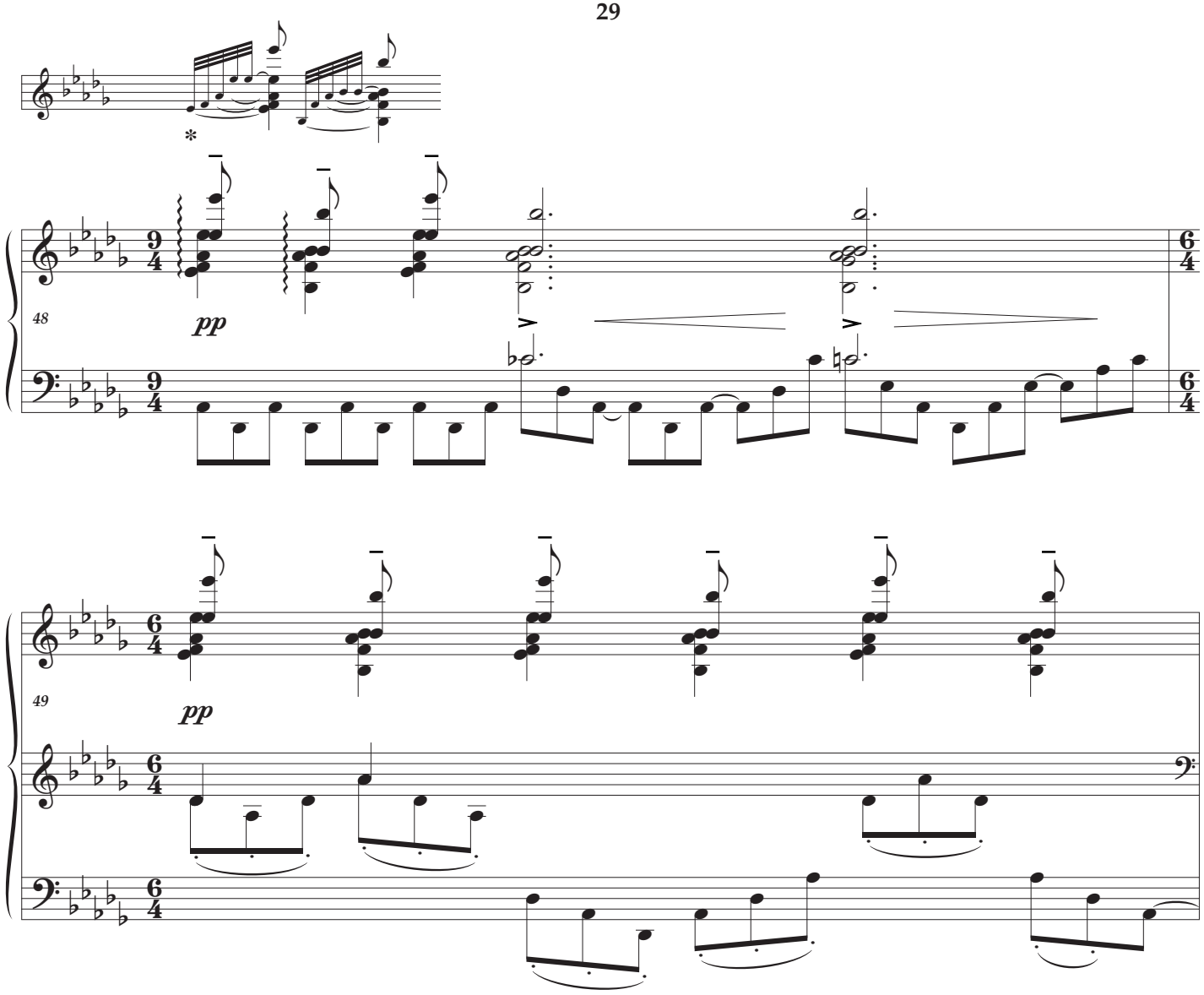

23
3
3


25
mf
p


retenu
au mouvement
28
p
pp
mf
f
2
4


en animant
31
p
più p
p
2
34
(en dehors)
p
mf
*
Sost Ped.
Sost Ped.
37
f
pp
rubato - - -
ppp
40
pp
sfz
pp

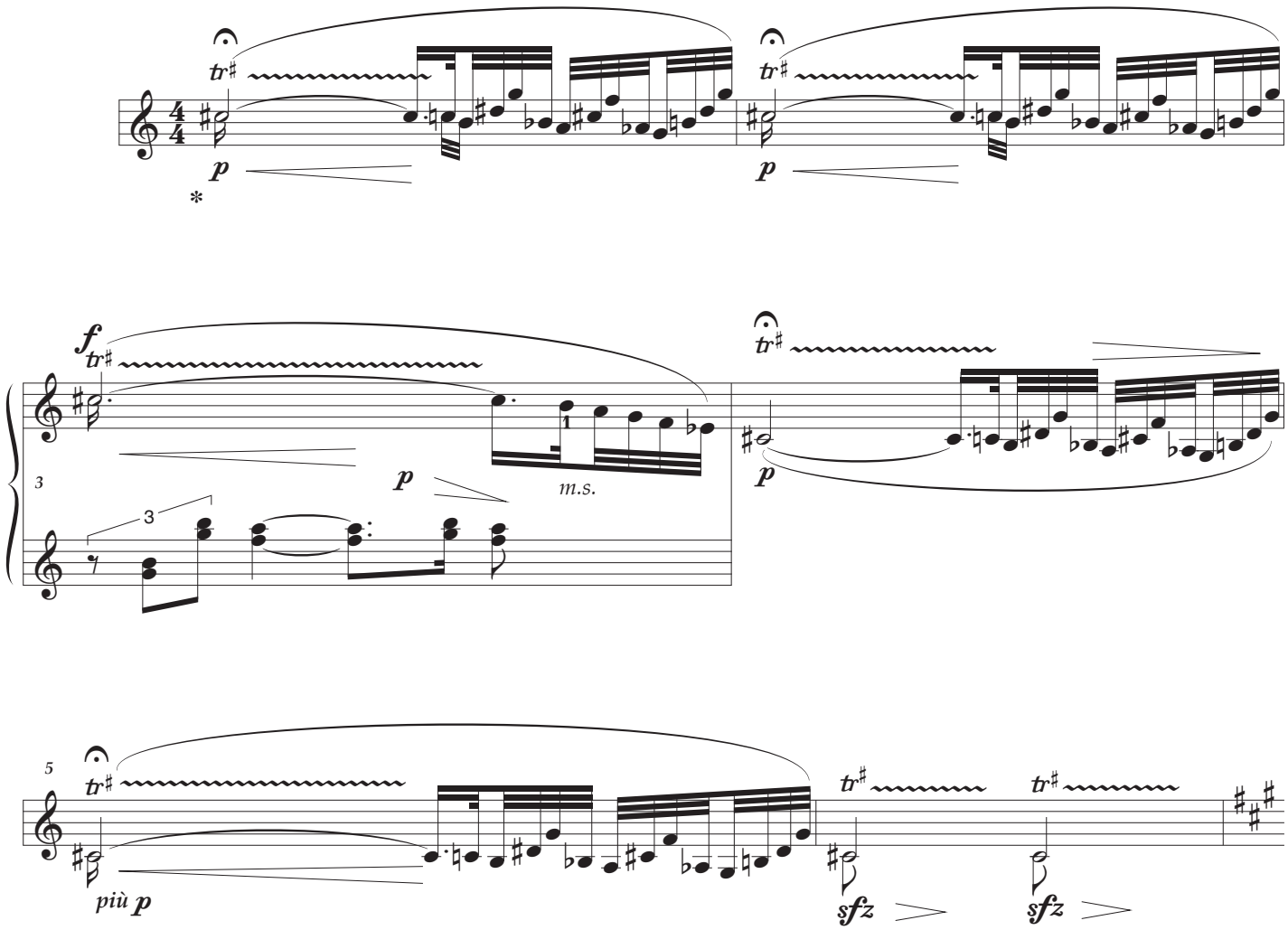

ad libitum
43
pp
f
p
8va
ppp
[a tempo]
[♩. = ♩]
44
expressif (un peu en dehors)
46



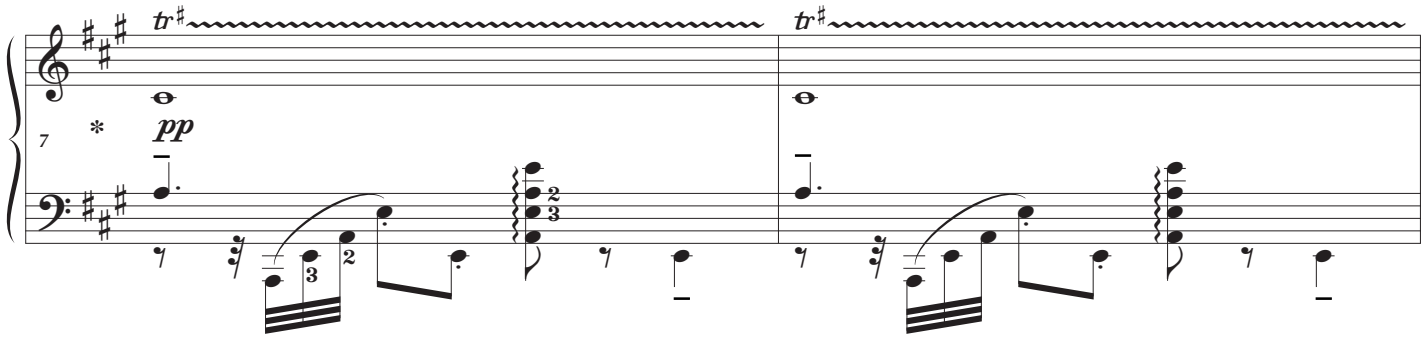
encore plus lent et plus lointain

L'ISLE JOYEUSE

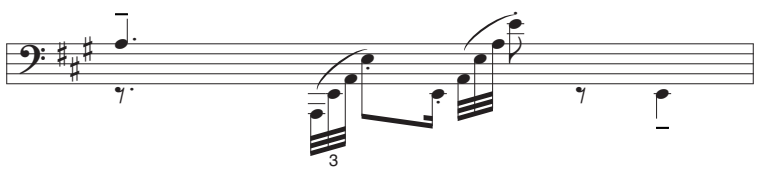
Quasi una cadenza

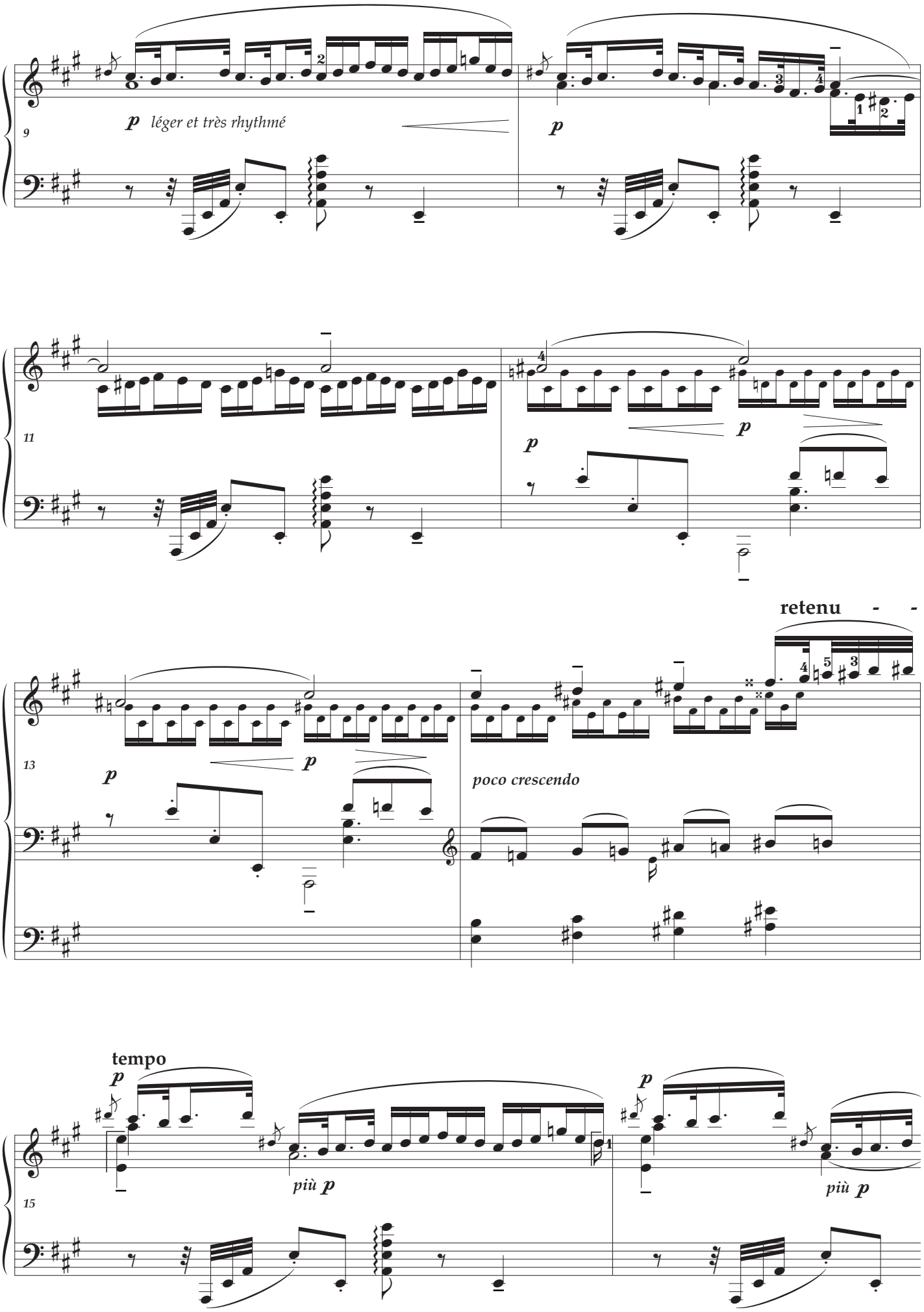


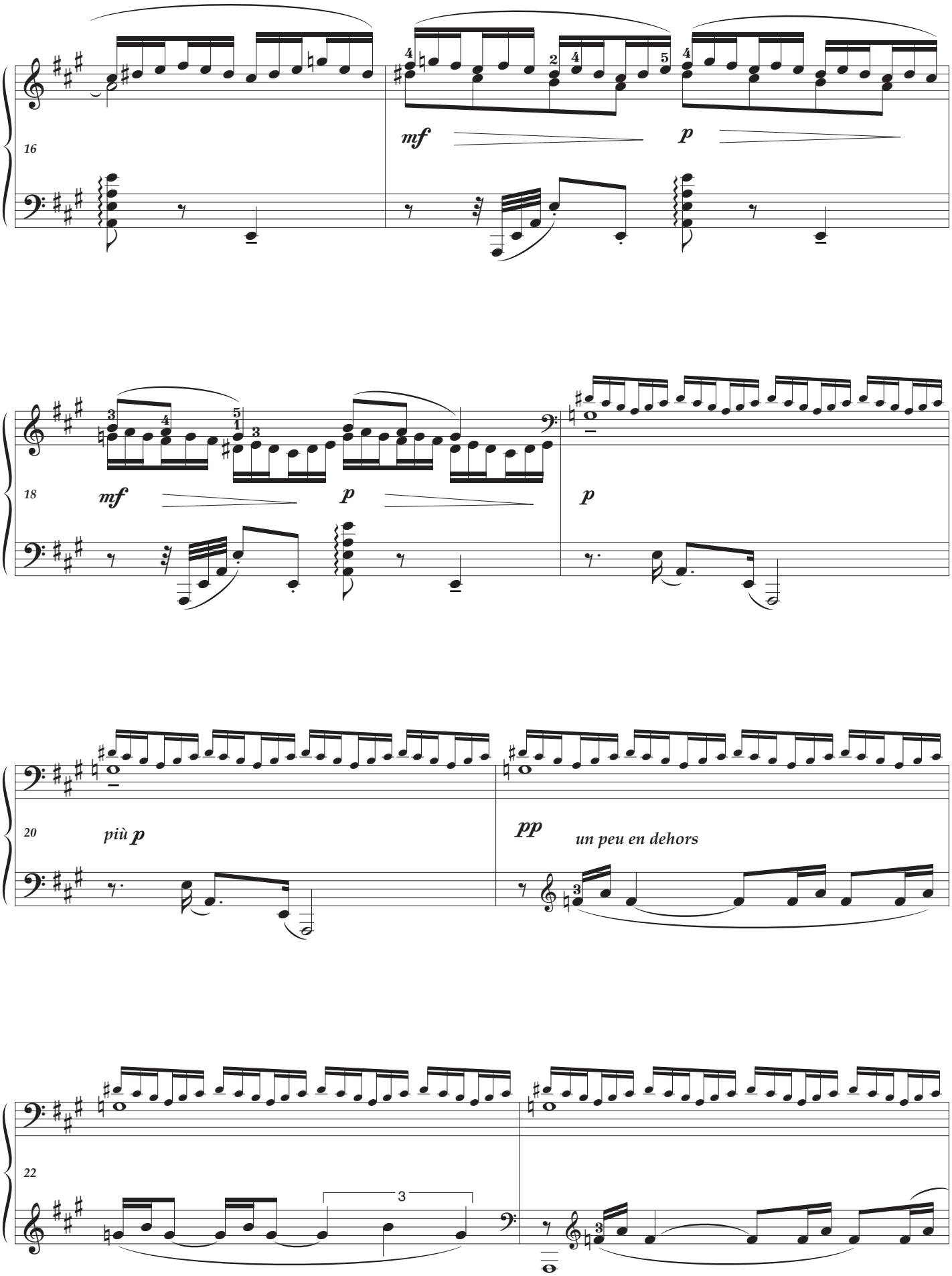
tempo : modéré et très souple

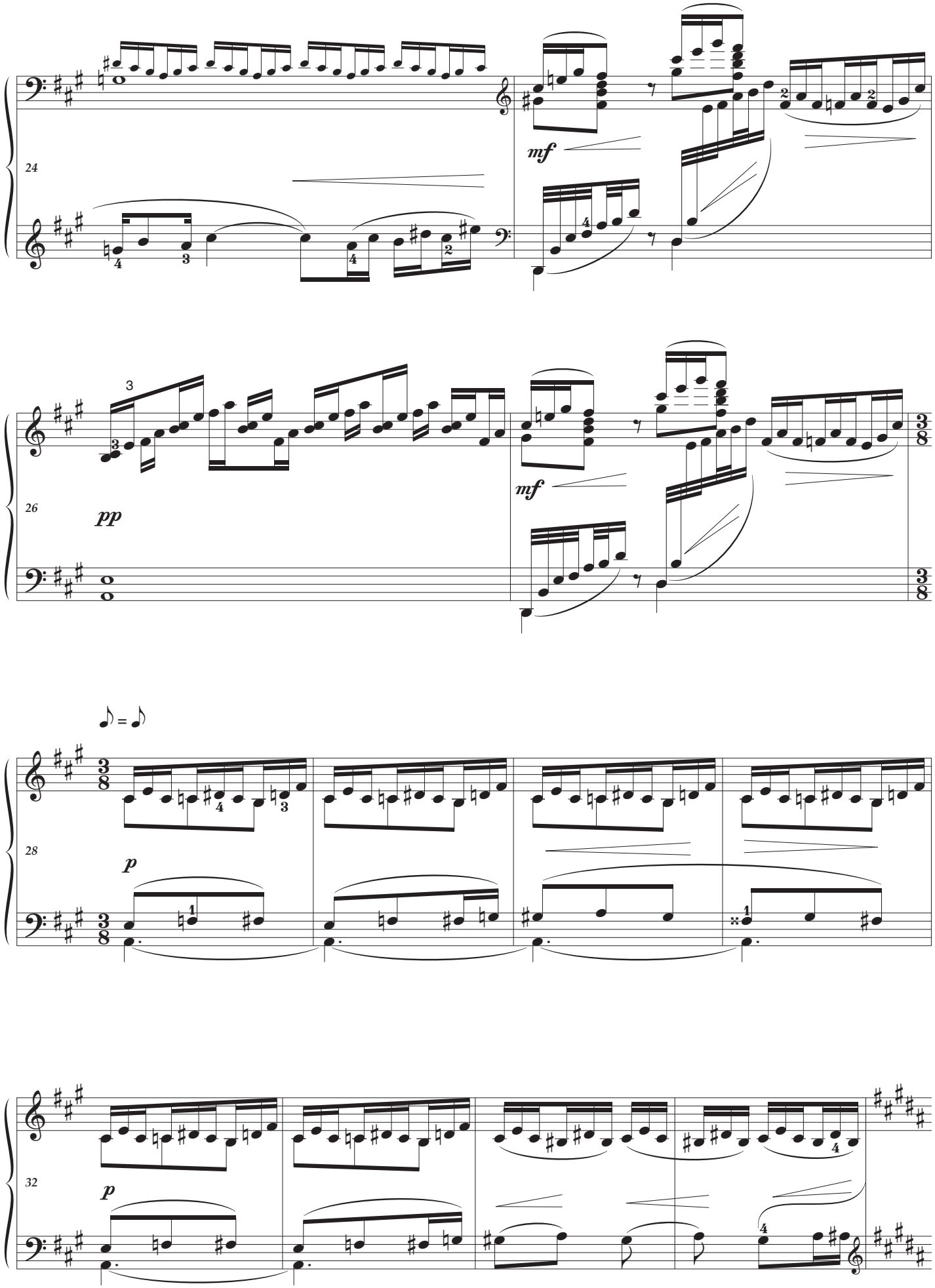


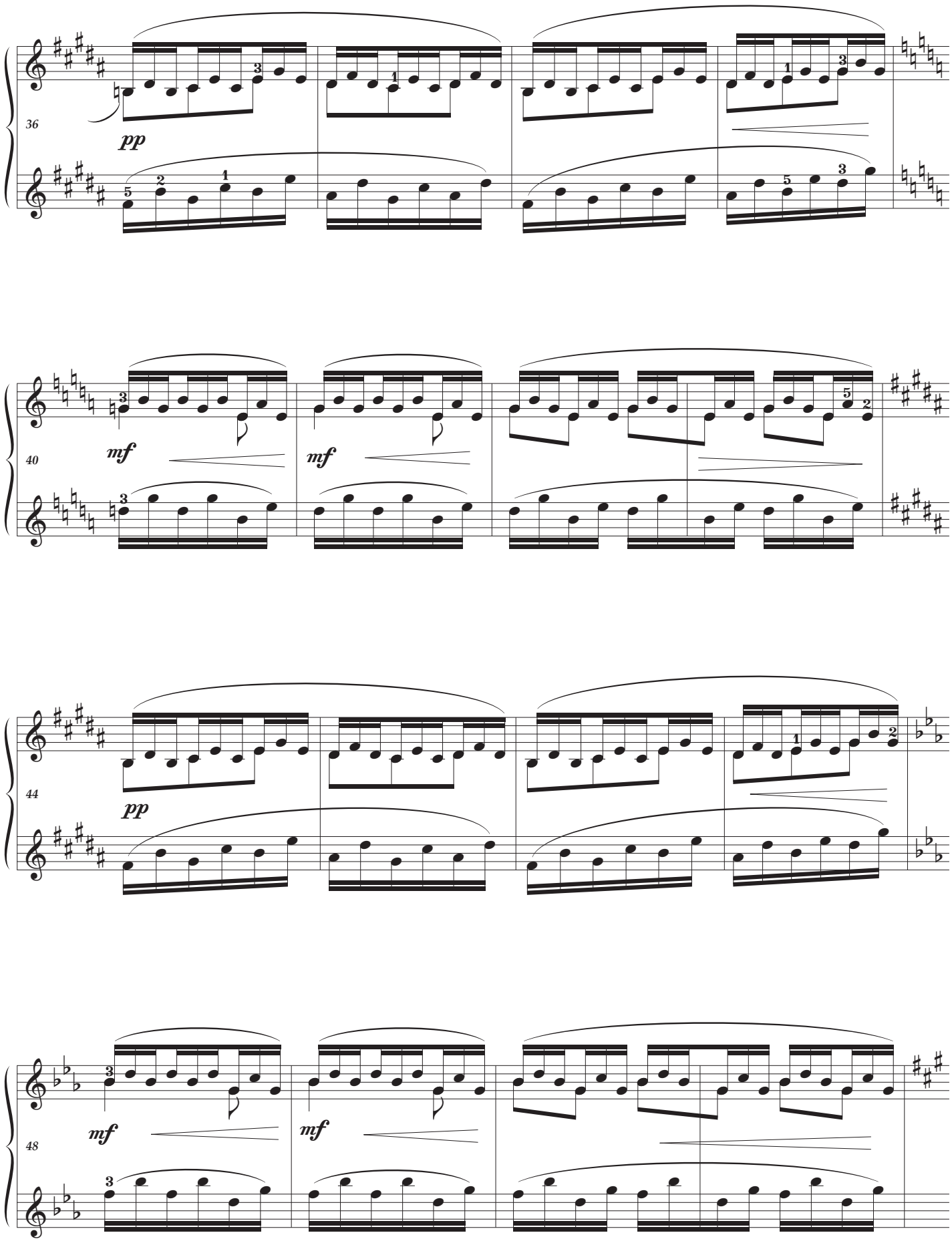
editorial realisation

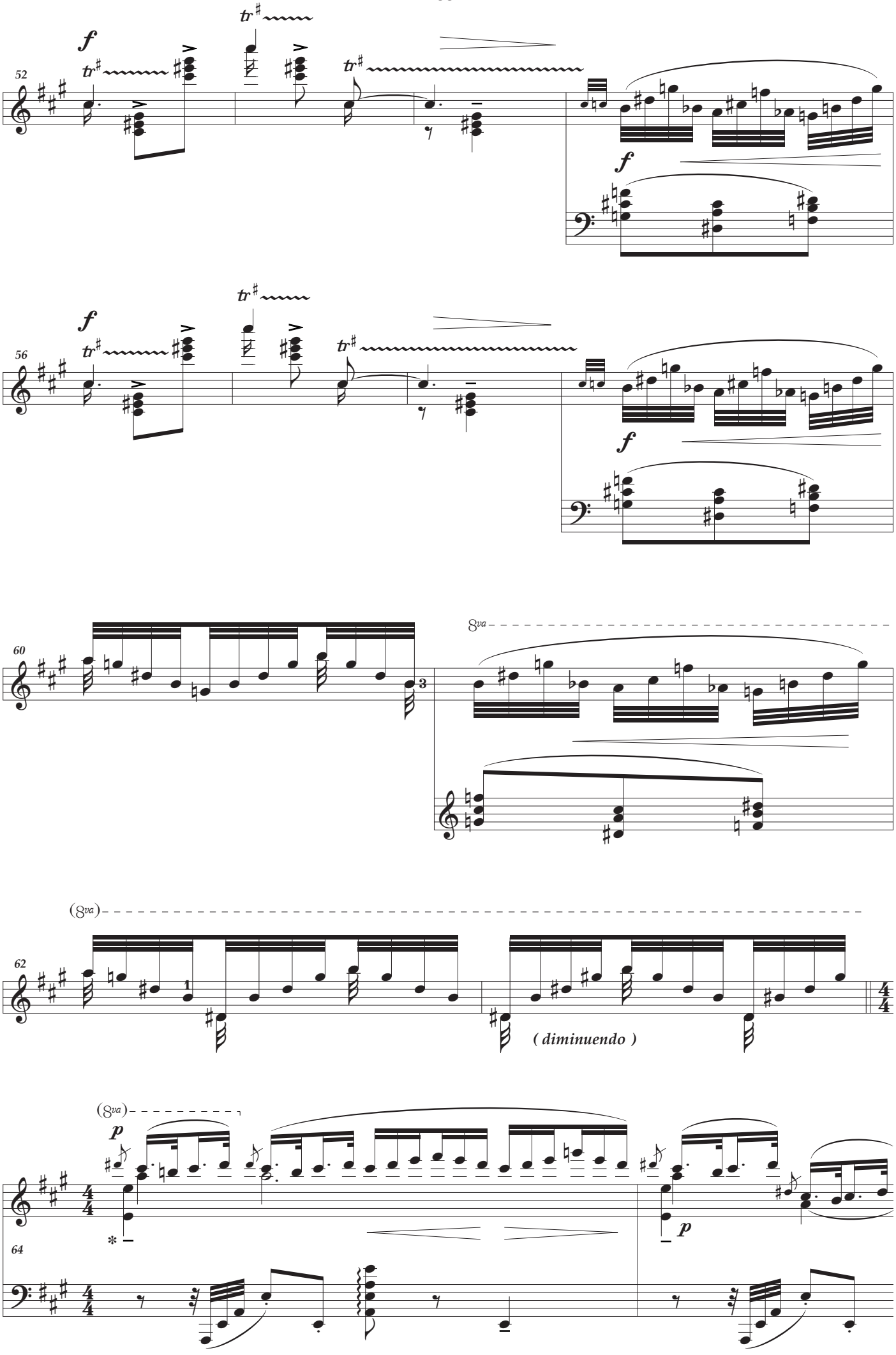


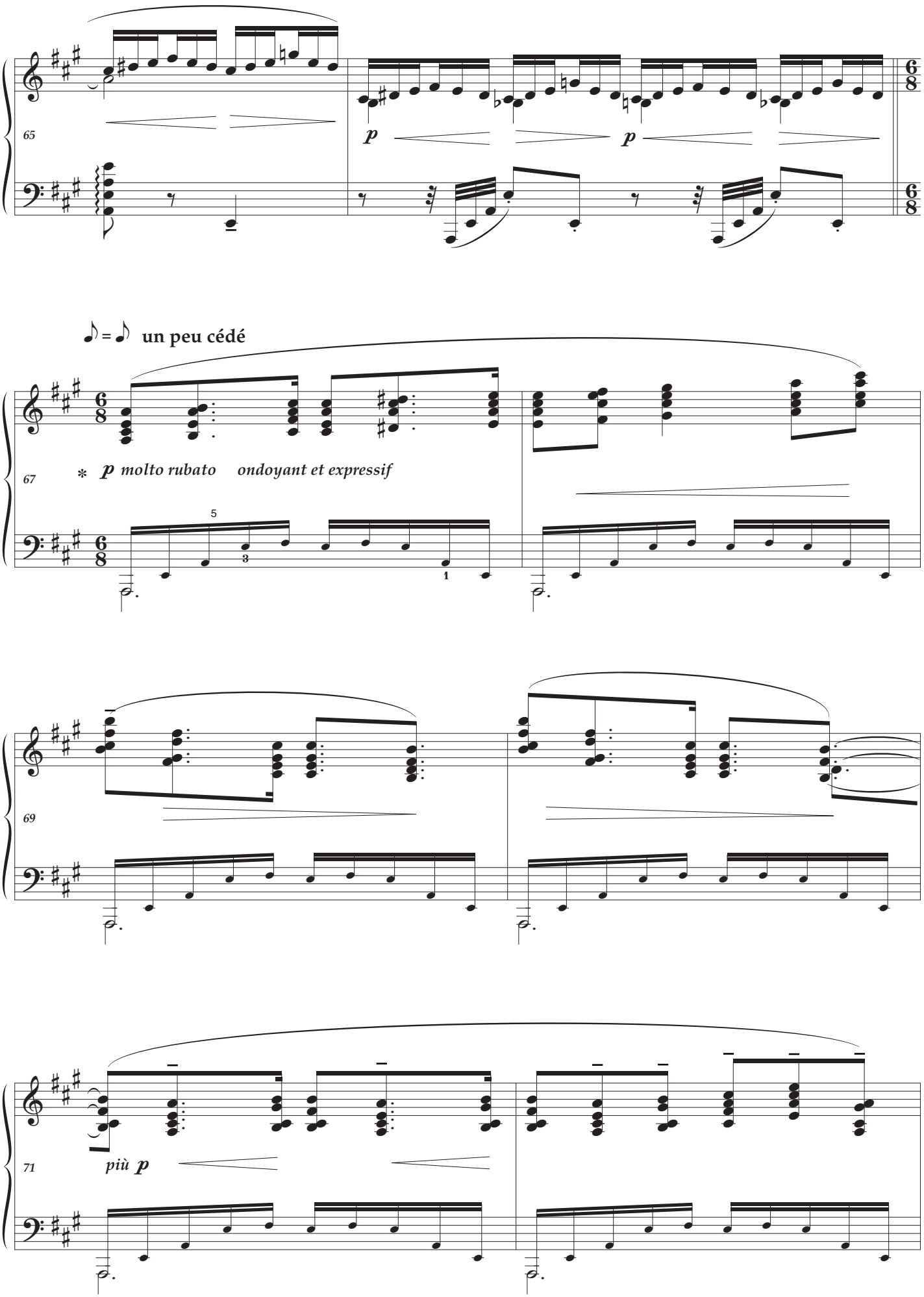

9
p léger et très rhythmé
p
11
p
p
13
p
p
poco crescendo
retenu - -
15
tempo
p
più p
p
più p

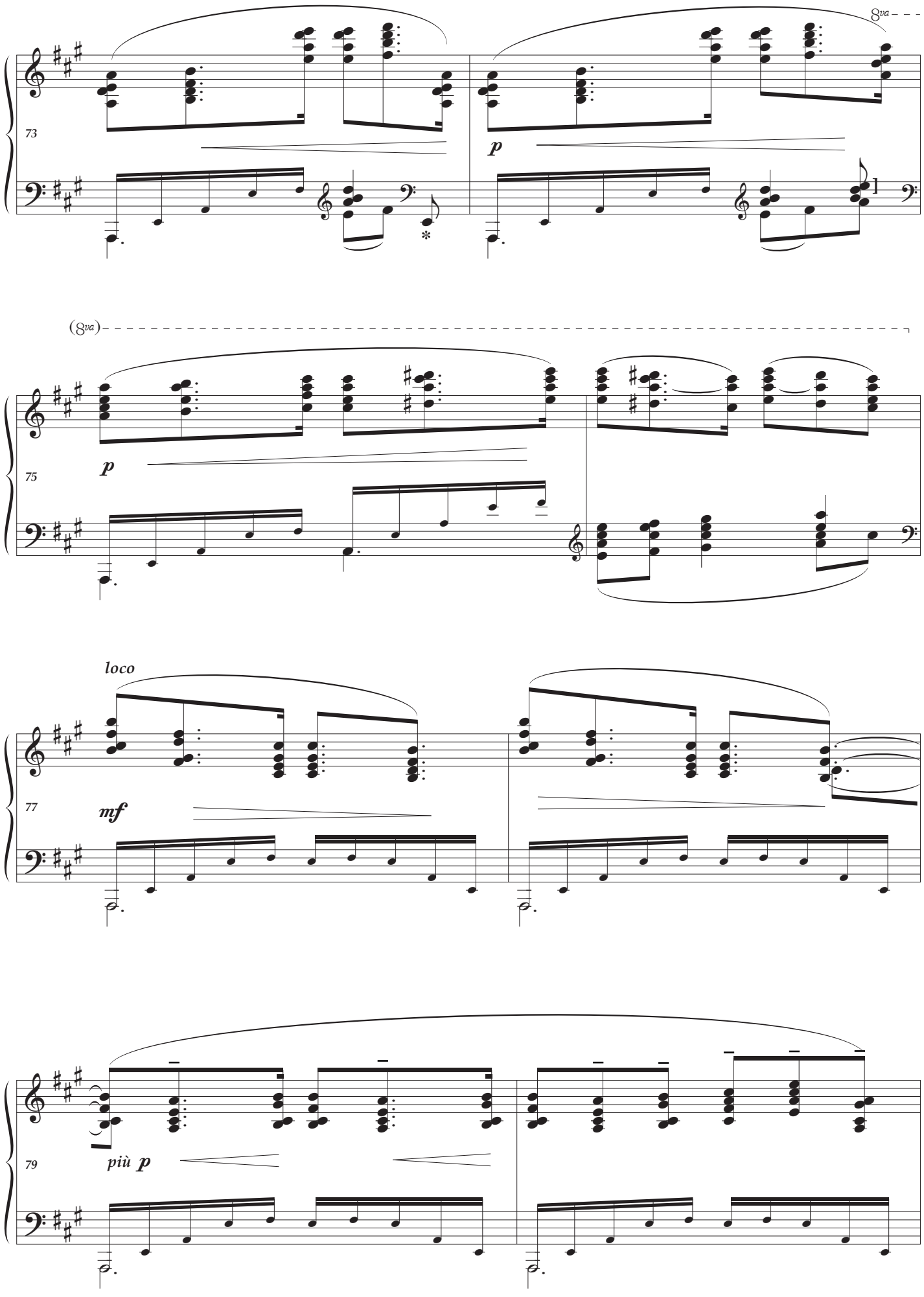

16
mf
p
18
mf
p
p
20
più p
pp
un peu en dehors
22
3

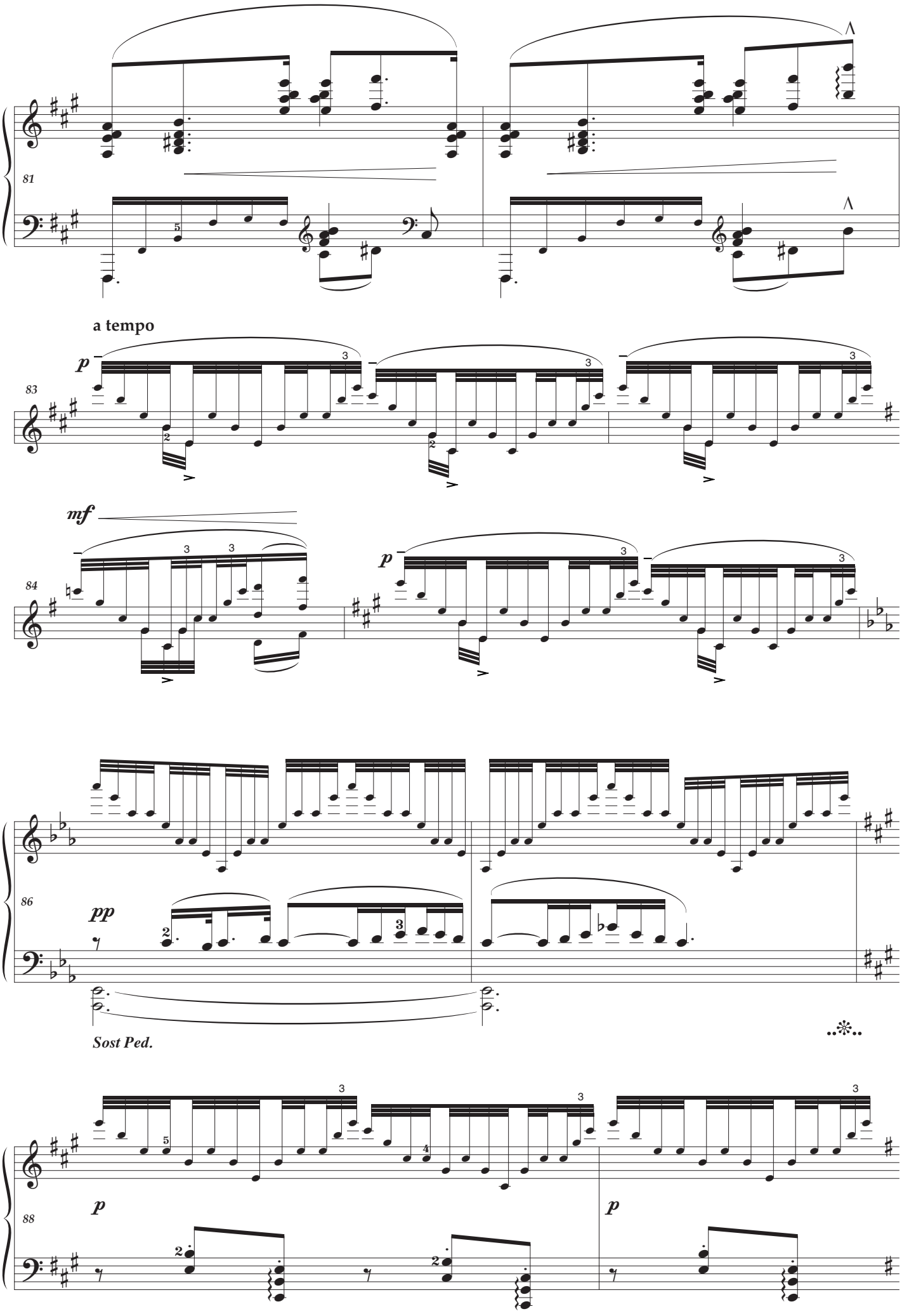

24
mf
26
pp
mf
28
p
32
p

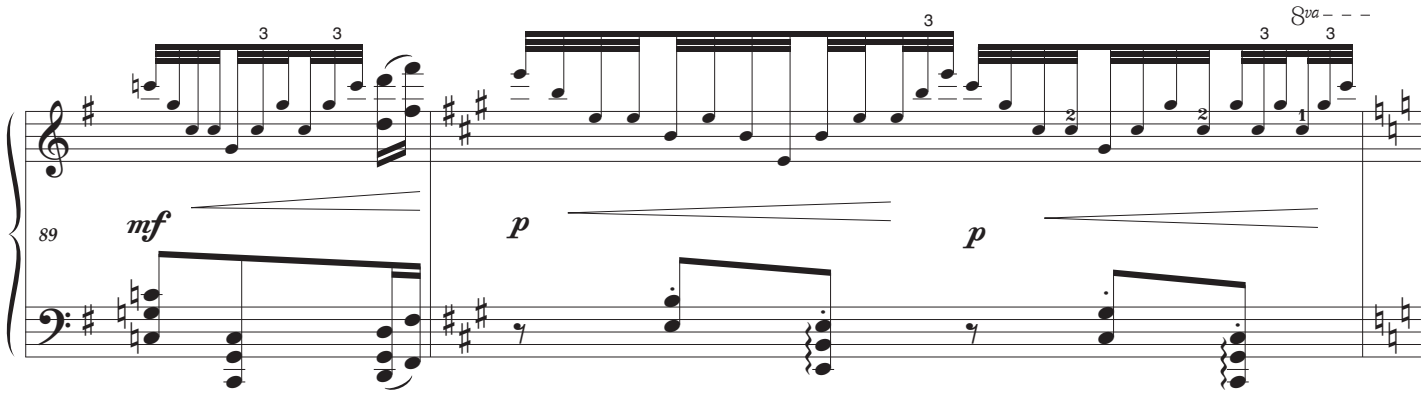

36
pp
40
mf
mf
44
pp
48
mf
mf

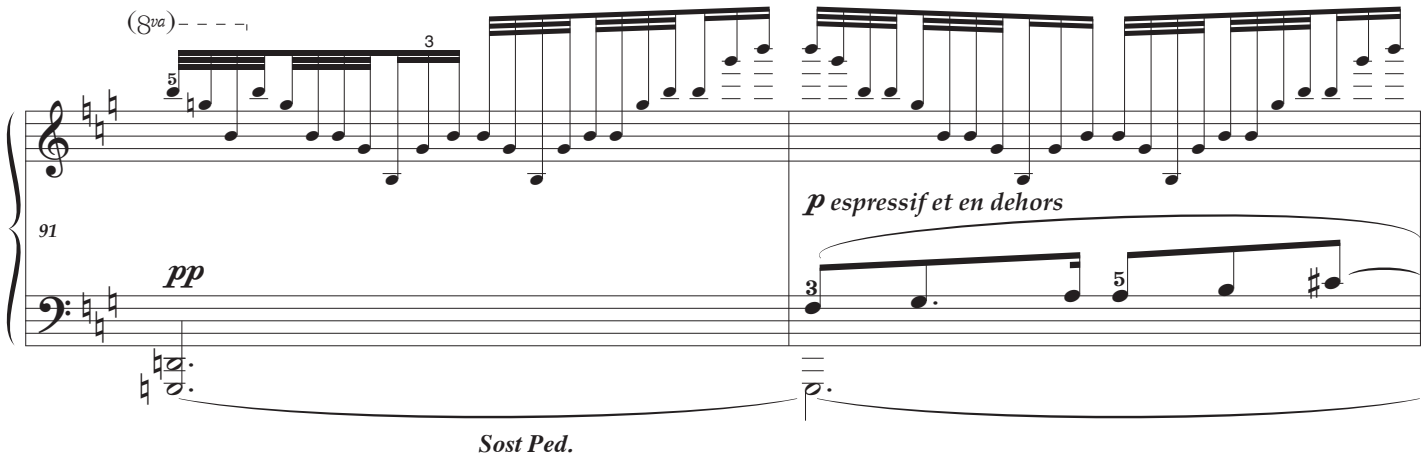

52
f
tr
f
56
f
tr
f
60
3
8va
62
(8va)
1
(diminuendo)
4/4
(8va)
p
64
*
p

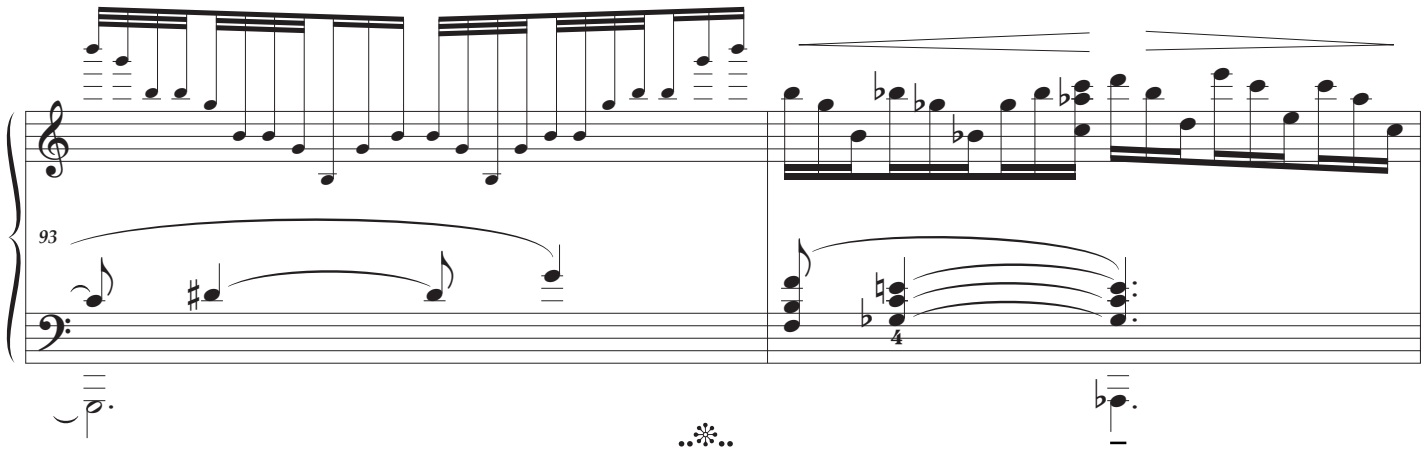

65
p
p
6
8
un peu cédé
67
p molto rubato ondoyant et expressif
5
3
1
69
71
più p

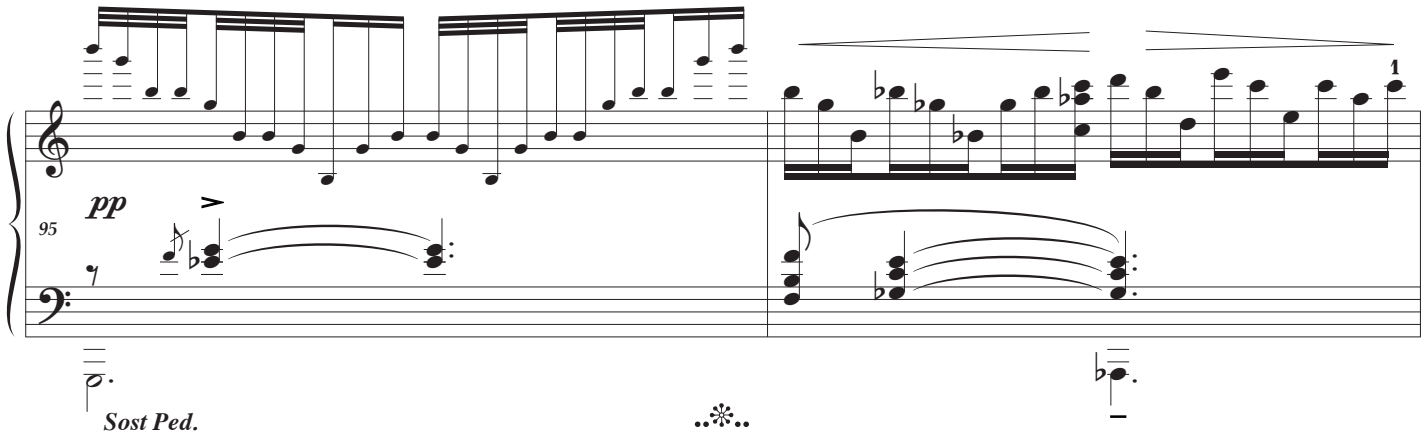

8va
73
p
(8va)
75
p
loco
77
mf
79
più p

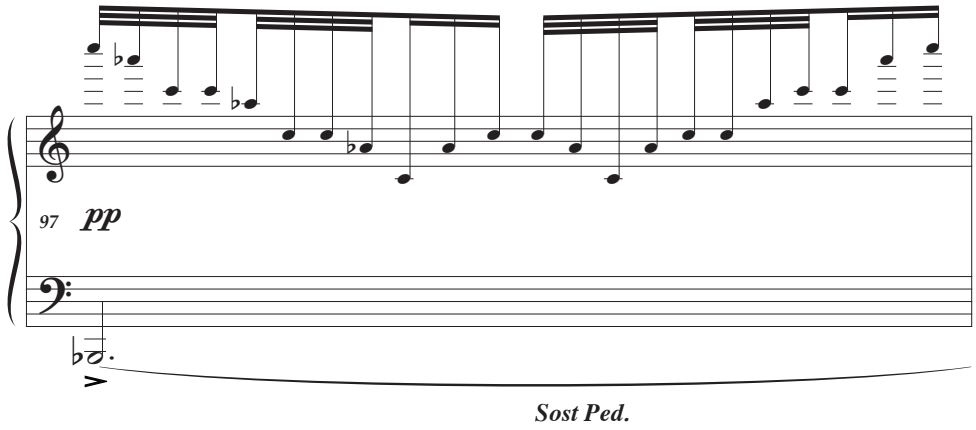

81
a tempo
p
83
mf
84
p
86
pp
Sost Ped.
88
p
p

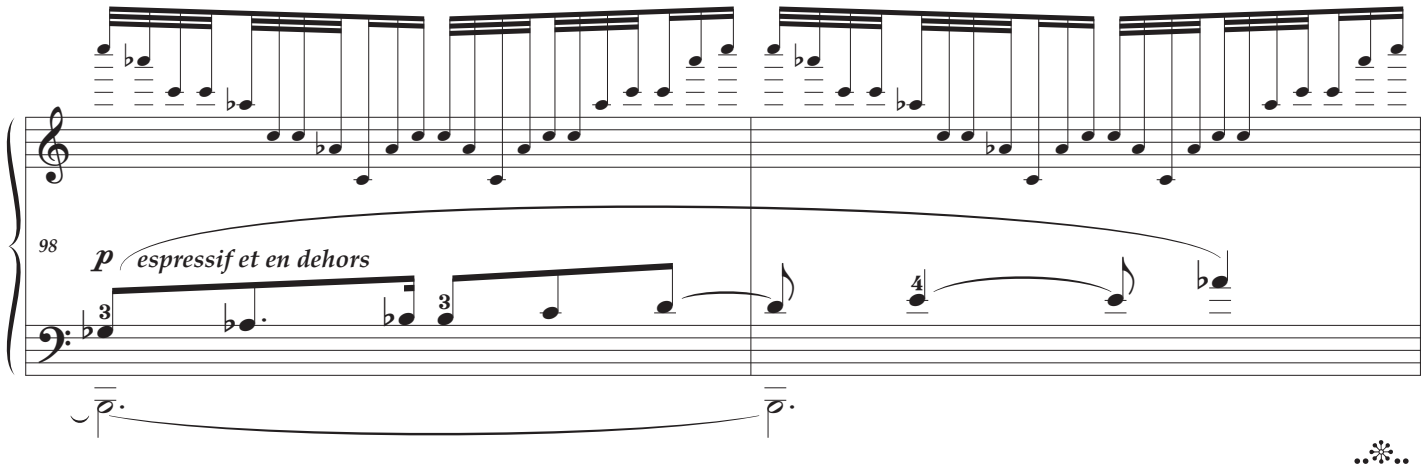

8va
89
mf
p
p

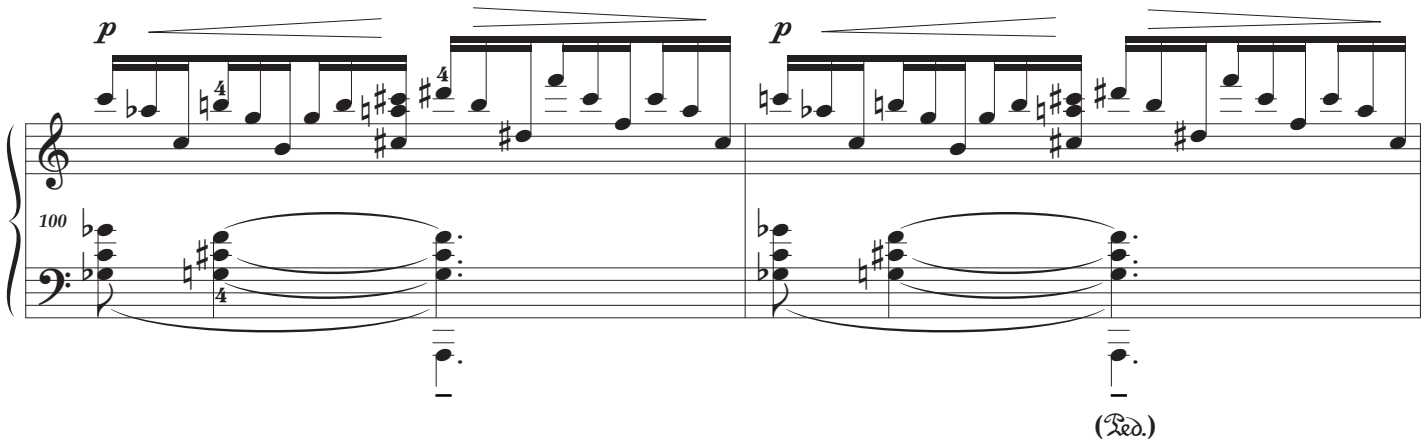

(8va)
91
pp
p espressif et en dehors
Sost Ped.

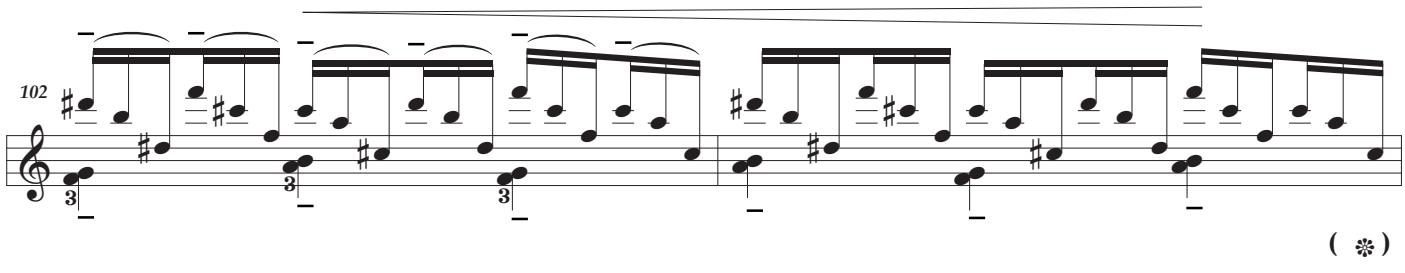

93

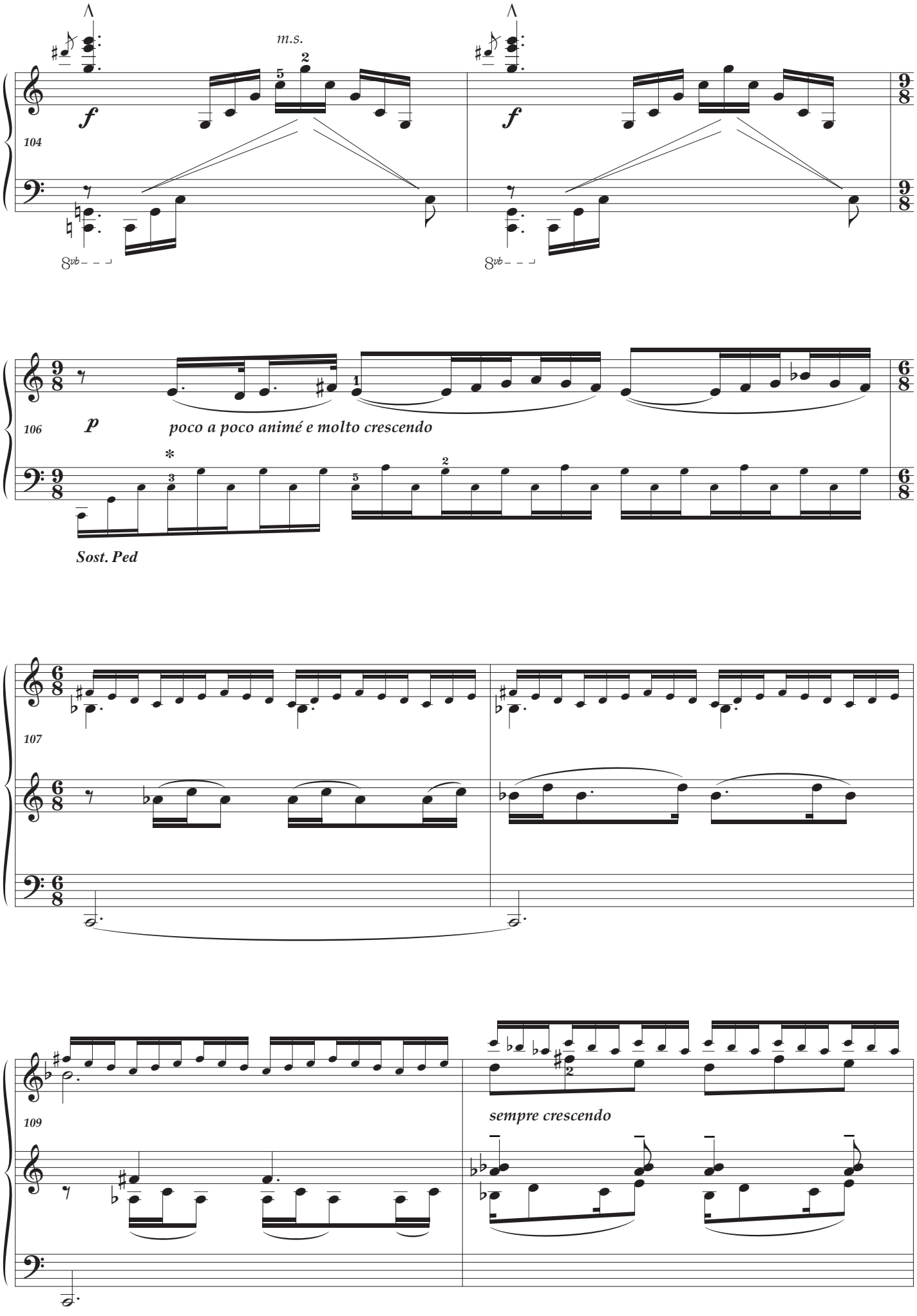

95
pp
Sost Ped.

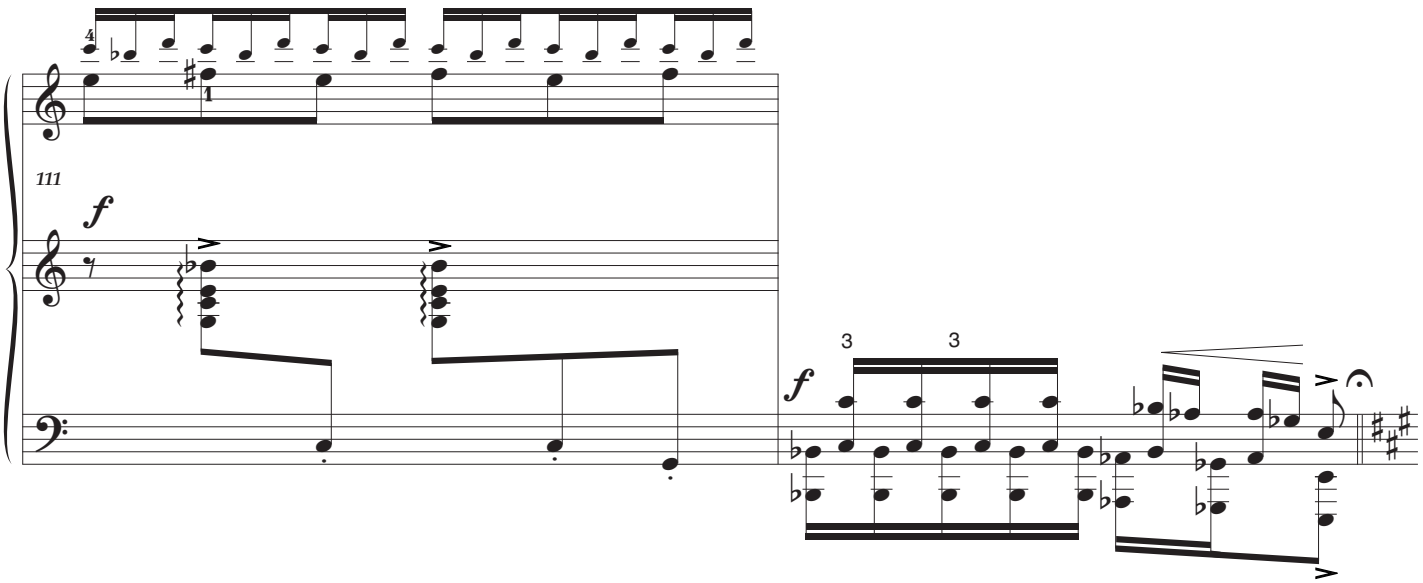

97
pp
Sost Ped.

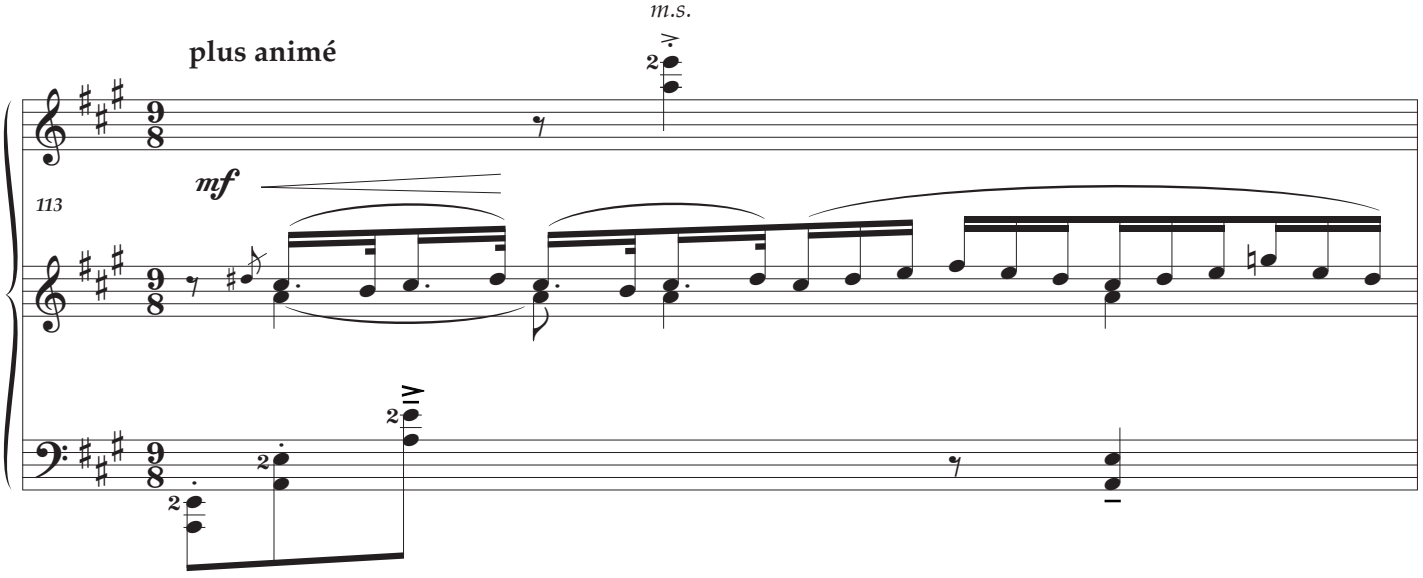

98
p espressif et en dehors

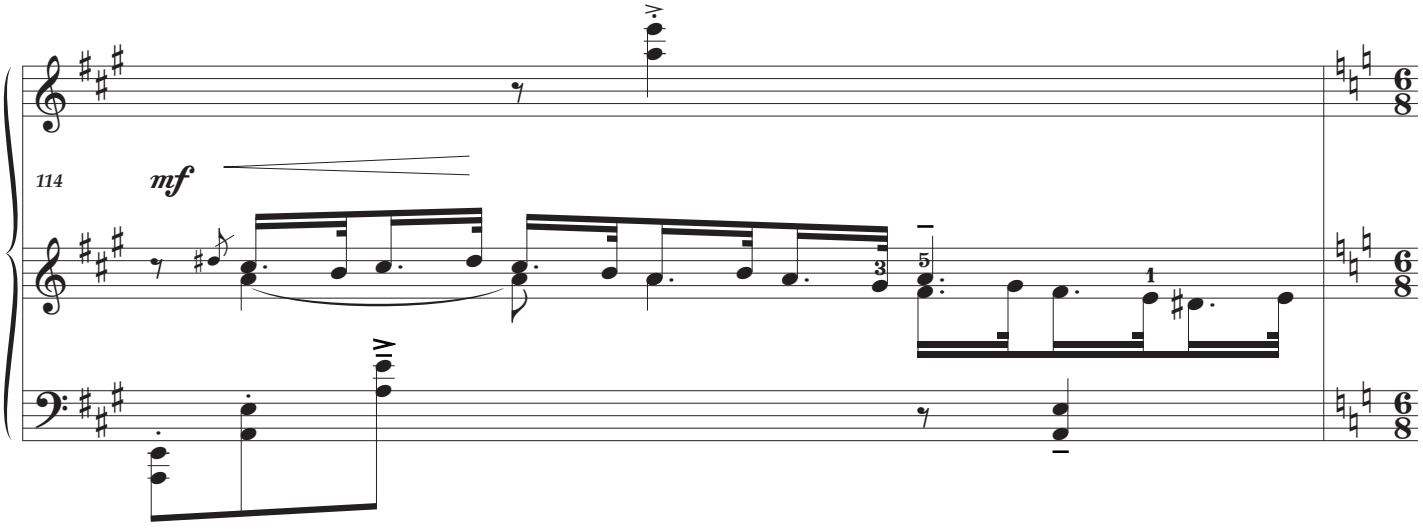

100
p
p
(Ped.)

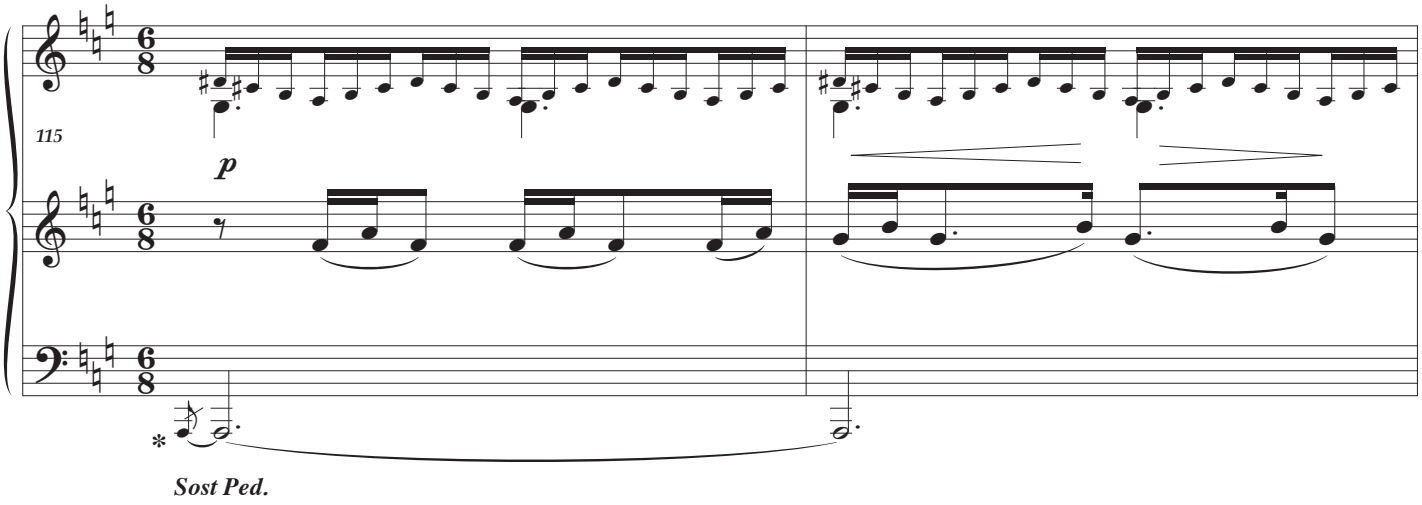

102
( )

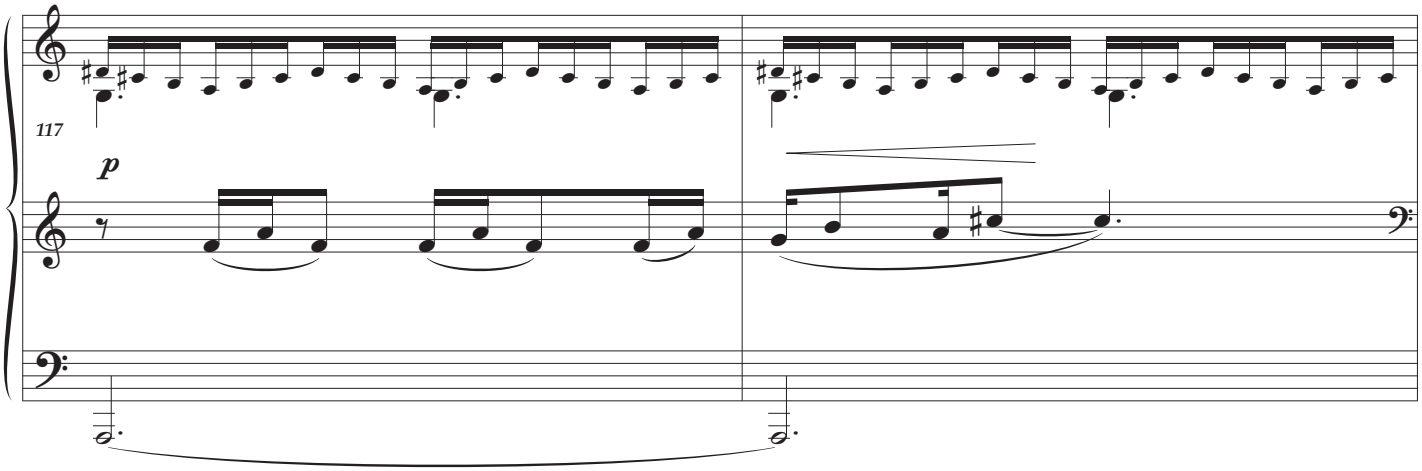

m.s.
104
106
poco a poco animé e molto crescendo
Sost. Ped
107
109
sempre crescendo

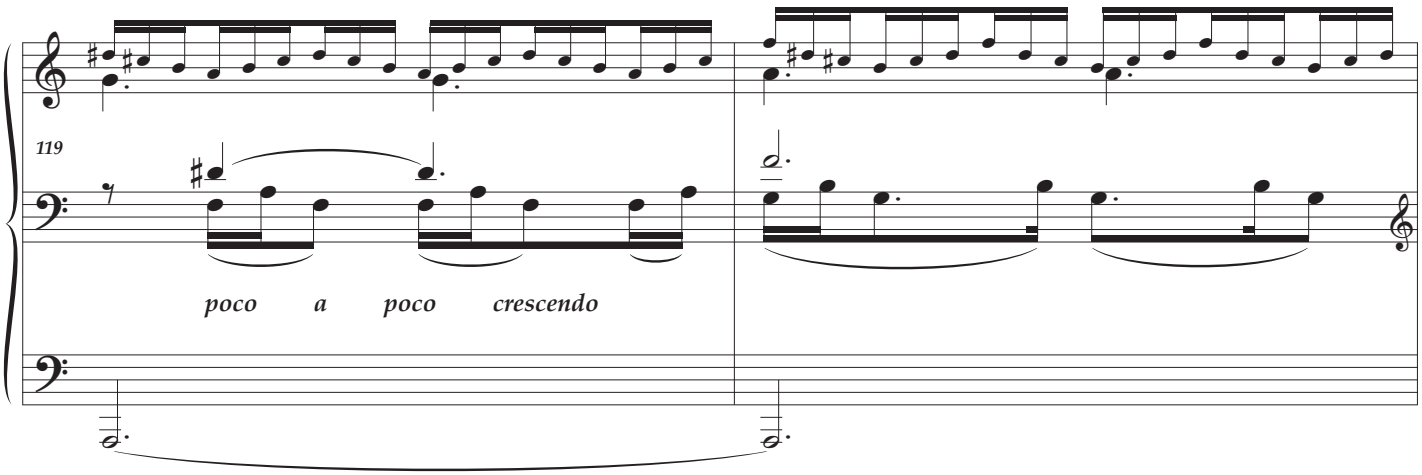

111
f
f

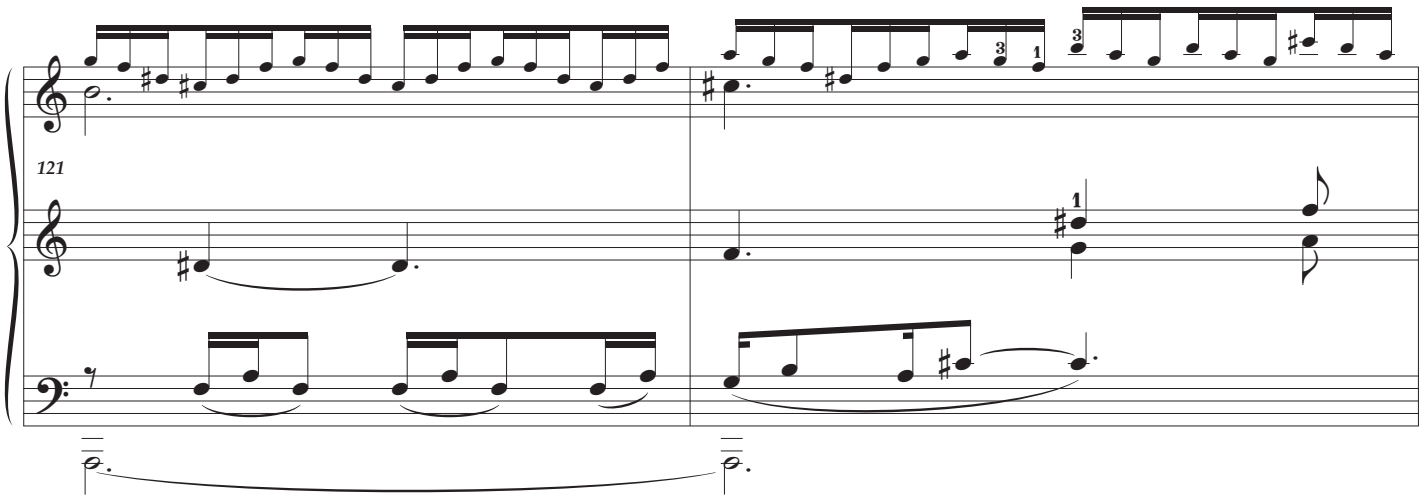

m.s.
plus animé
113
mf


114
mf

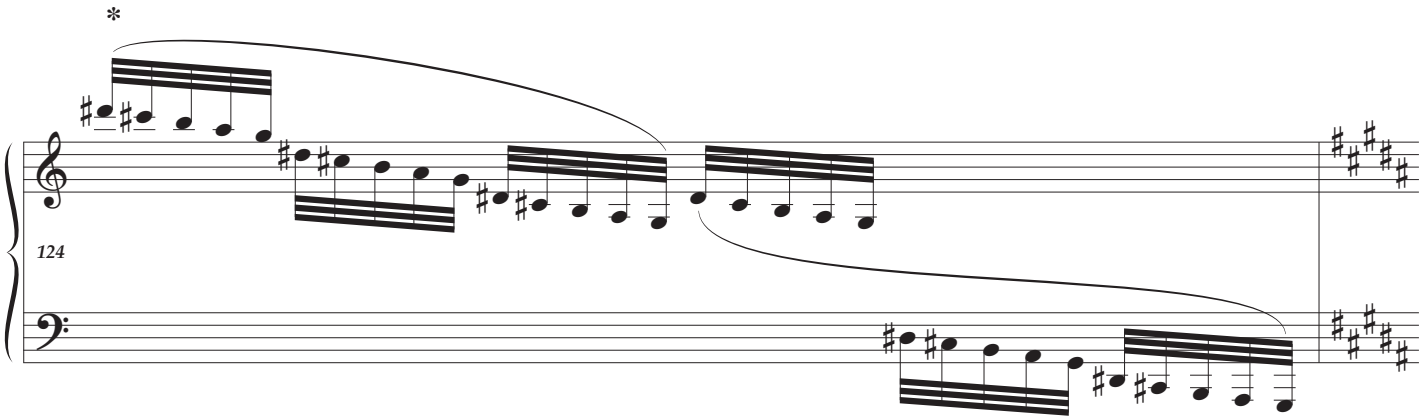

115
p
Sost Ped.

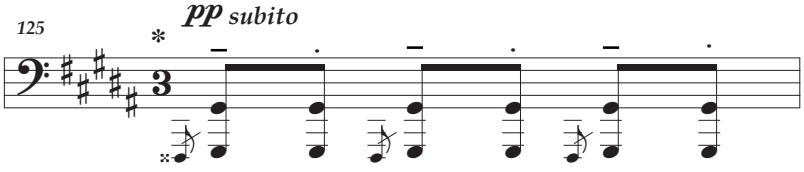

117
p

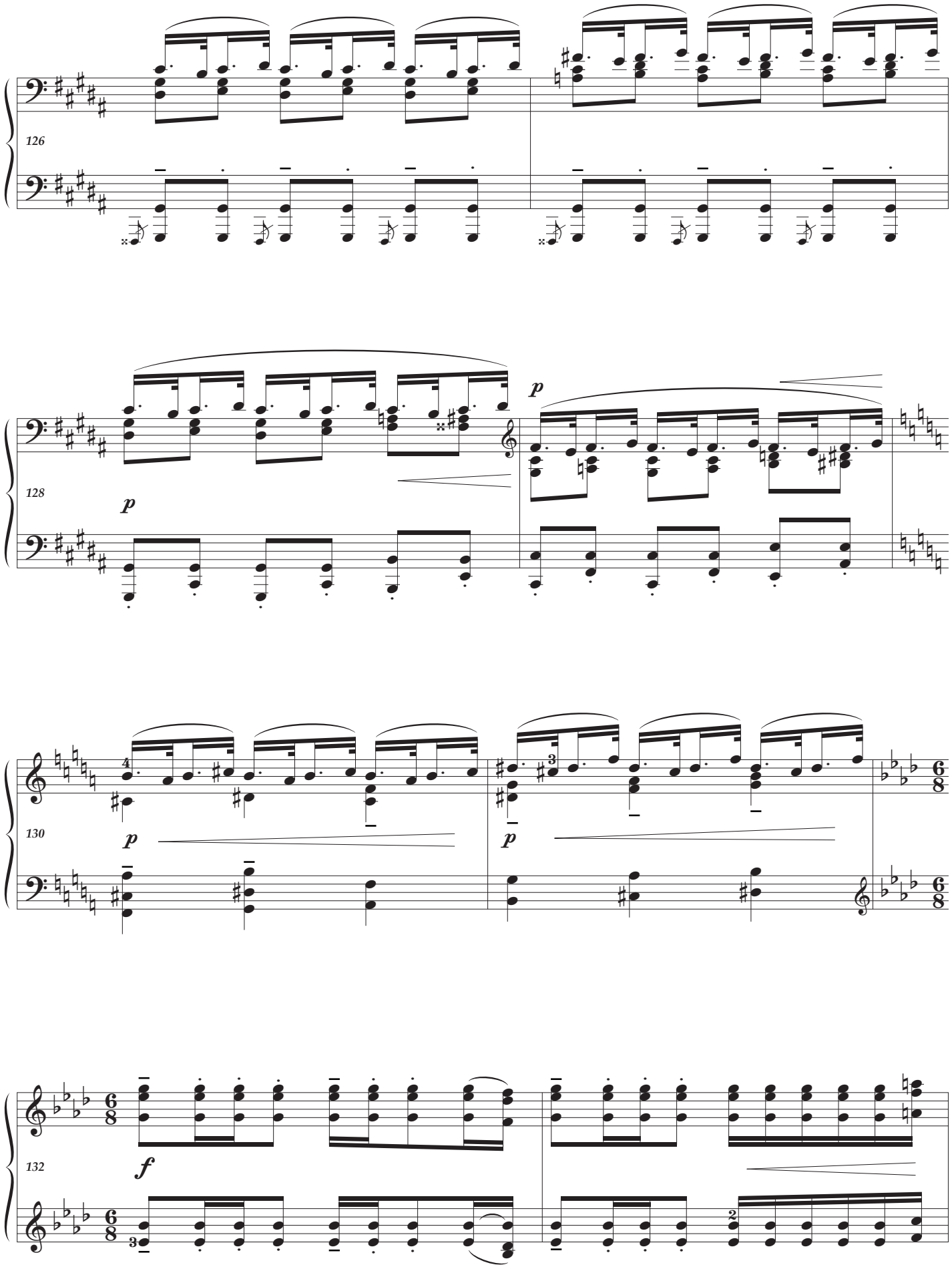

119
poco a poco crescendo

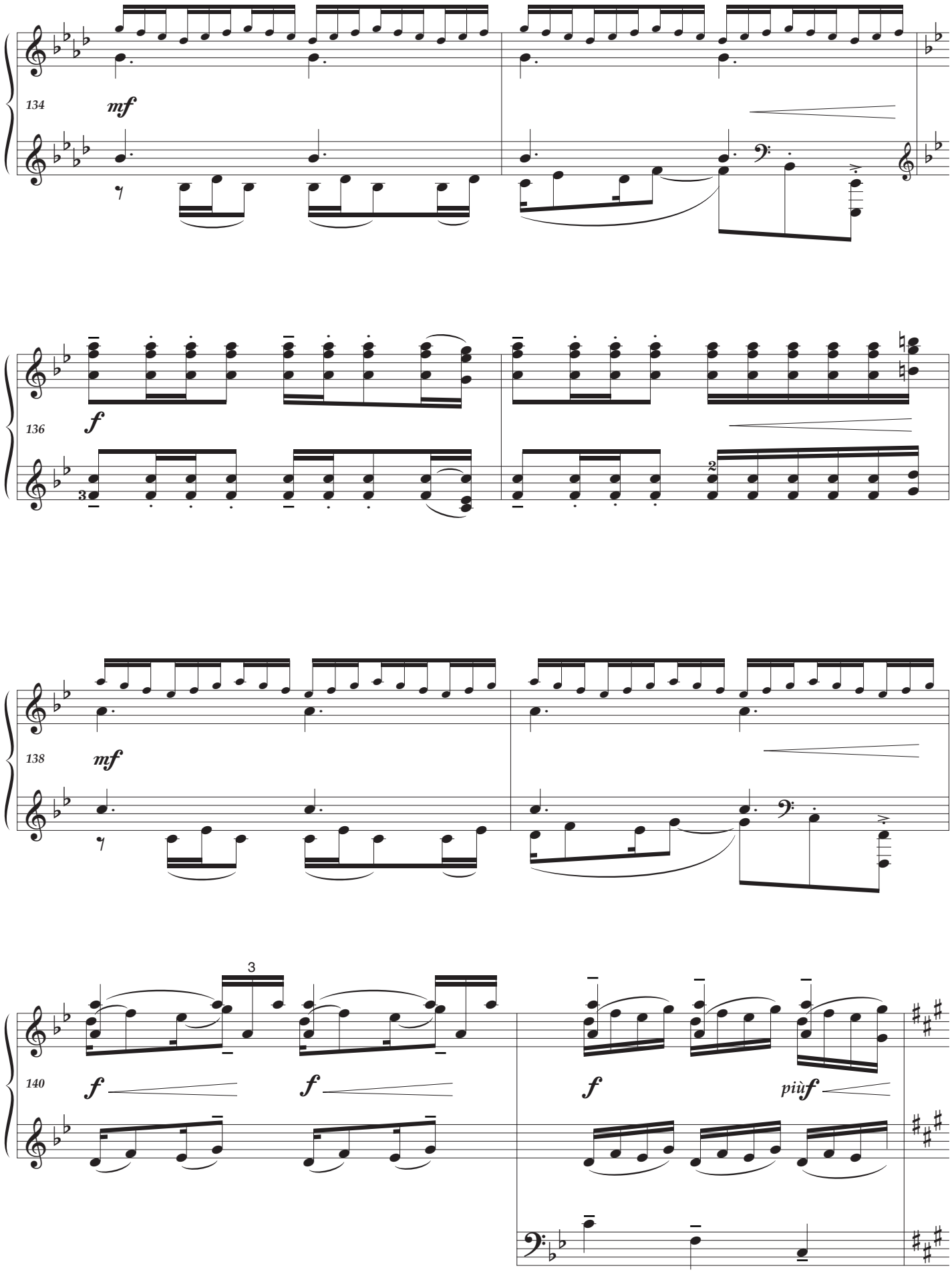

121

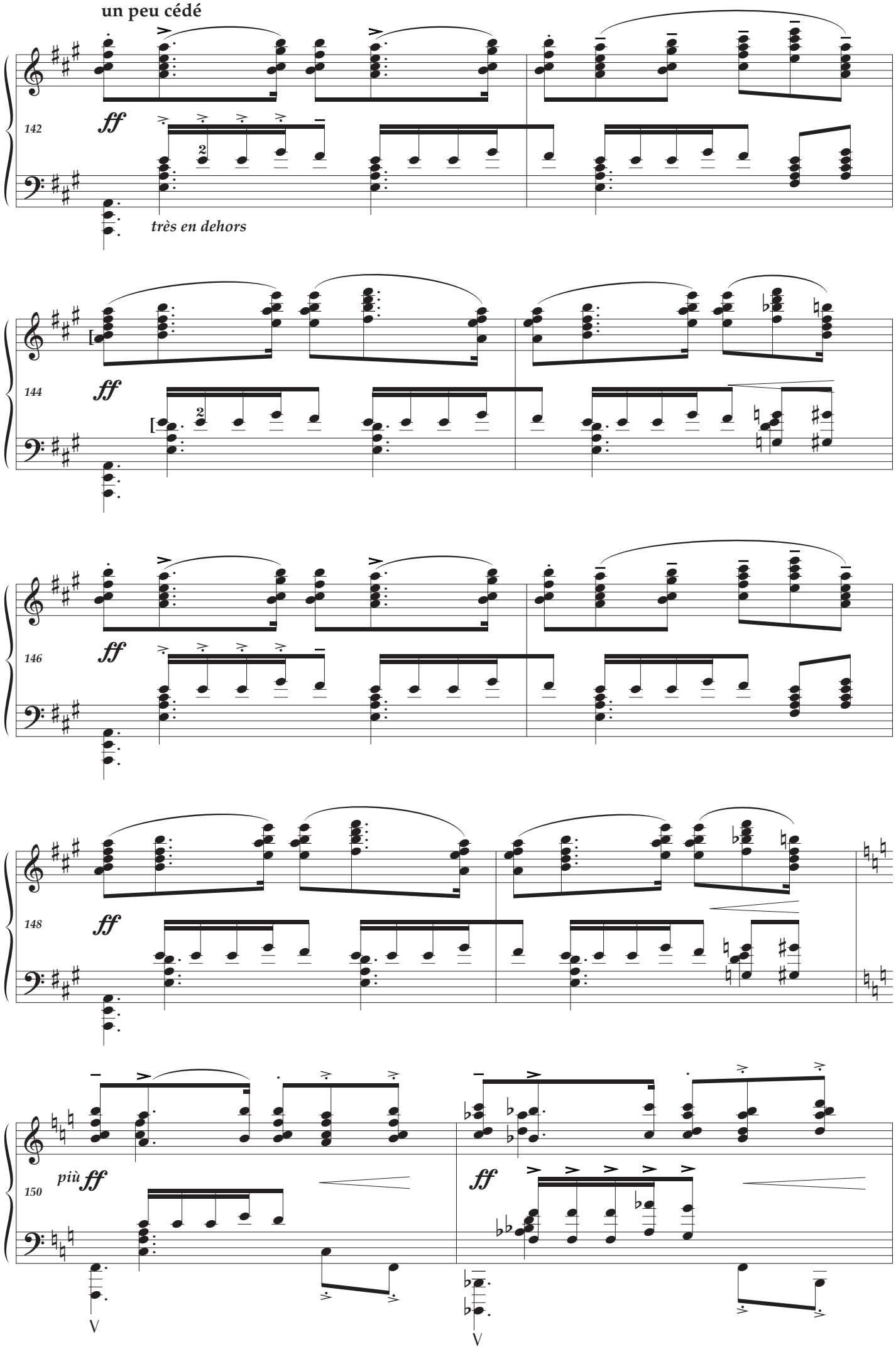
f
123

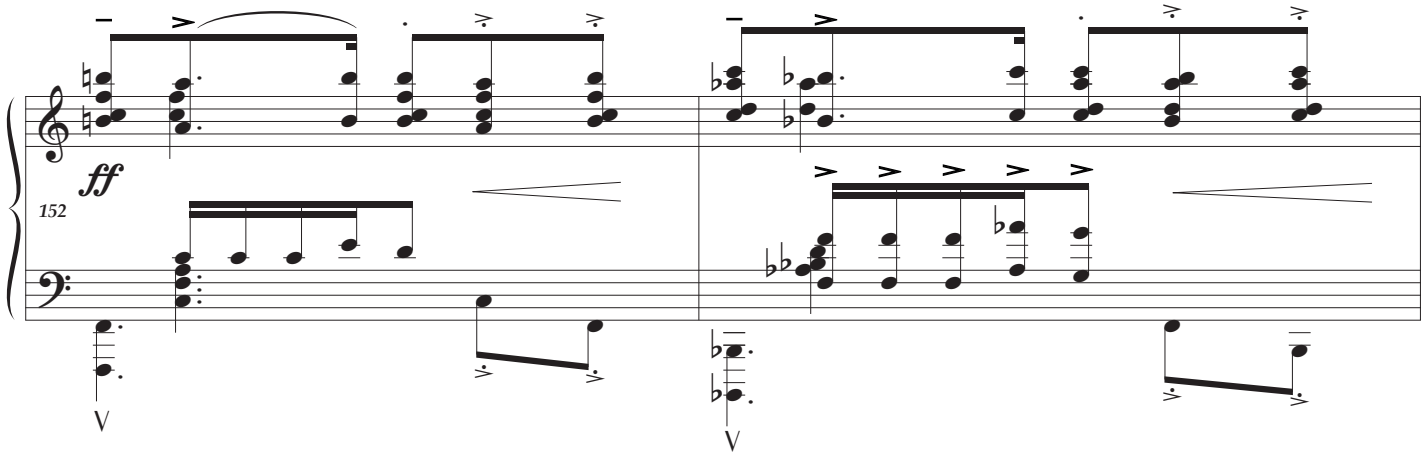

124


125
pp subito

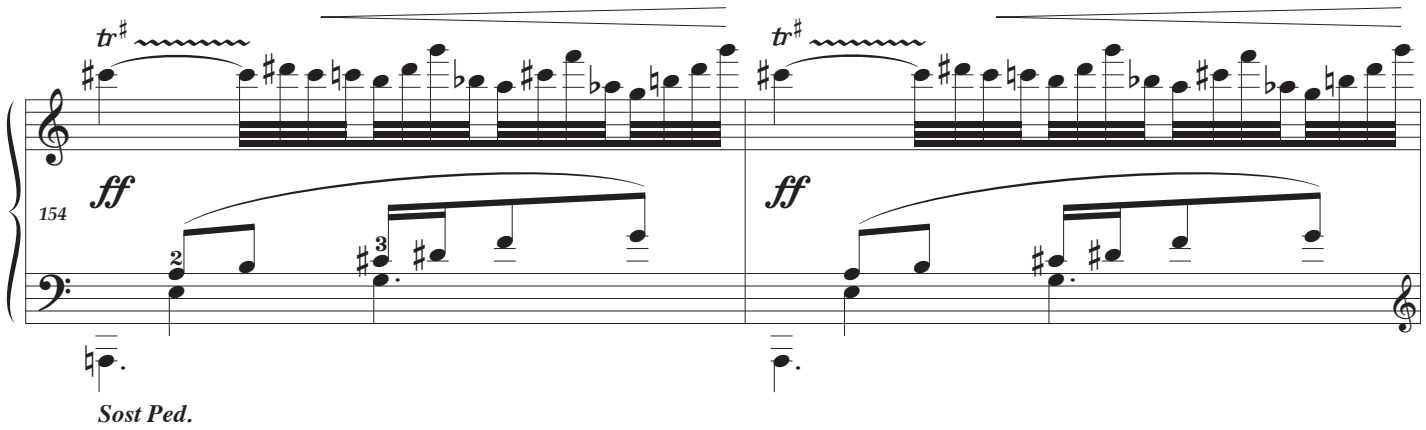

126
128
p
p
130
p
p
6/8
6/8
132
f
6/8
6/8

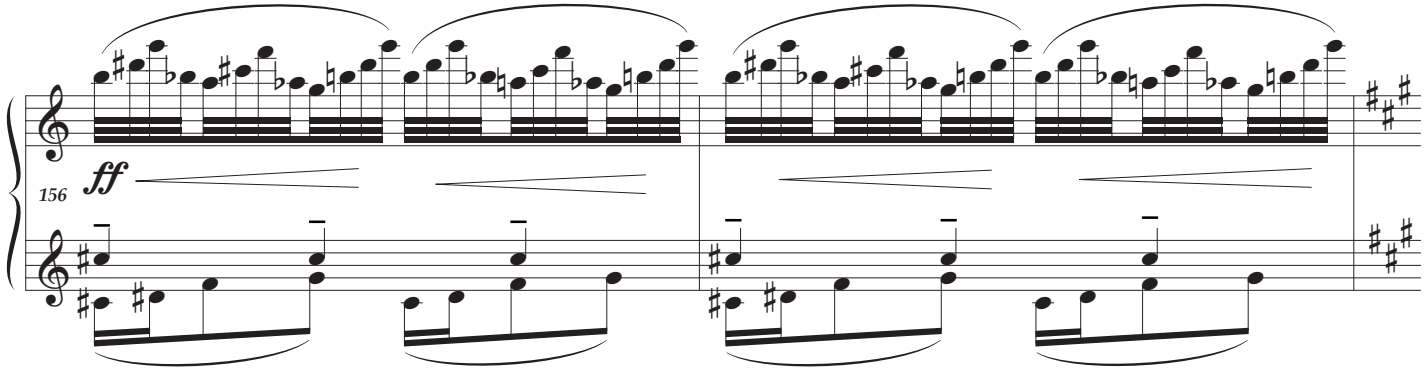

134
mf
136
f
138
mf
140
f
f
f
più f

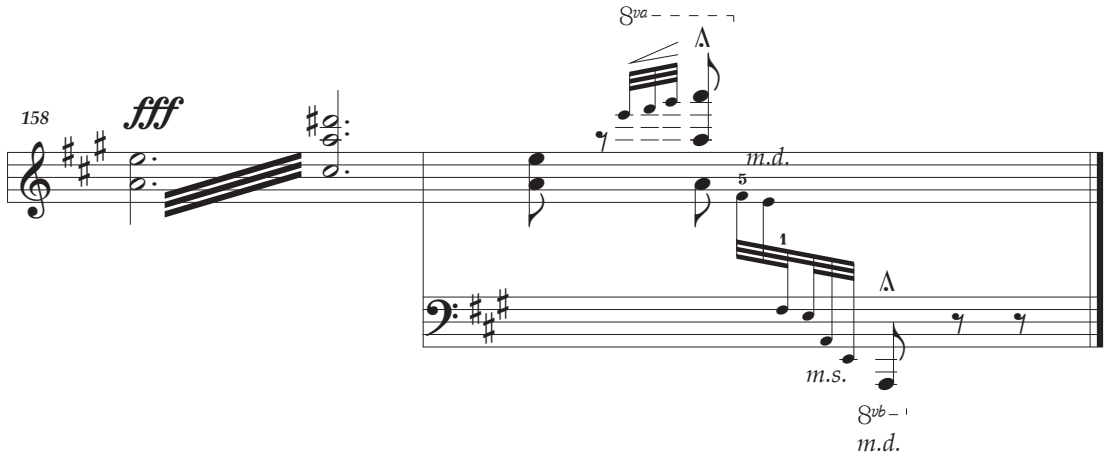

un peu cédé
142
ff
très en dehors
144
ff
146
ff
148
ff
150
più ff
ff



tempo : très animé jusqu'à la fin







Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & French vocabulary

- In the first book of Preludes, the composer indicated some metronome speeds in brackets, and once wrote: *"as a rose which might only last for one morning, a metronome speed might only work for one bar."* This explains why there are so few metronome speeds in Debussy's music.
- "*Pedalling cannot be written down*", Debussy explained — *"It varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another"*. Combined with the sustaining pedal, it is possible, even desirable, to use the sostenuto** pedal effectively, although this is entirely editorial.

Masques (page **4**) Duration: **5'15**

- According to Roy Howat, an erroneous metronome speed was indicated in some editions and many pianists play this piece extremely fast. The final page marked *sans retenir* can provide a sensible tempo to establish rhythmic stability.
- **80-91** RH editorial ties
- **99** & **107** LH ties omitted, possibly in error
- **120-121** editorial addition LH & RH chords to match **118-119**
- **171** editorial *subito* 𝆏 — silently replay the LH tied C♯ allowing a pedal change
- **337** RH editorial modification to match **333**

… d'un Cahier d'Esquisses (page **24**) Duration**: 4'30** (Debussy*)

- **6, 34-35** LH editorial acciaccaturas
- **9** replay the bass octave A if the sostenuto pedal is not used **
- **43** Bass tie (F♯) omitted *
- **48-49** I believe these arpeggiated chords should begin on the beat

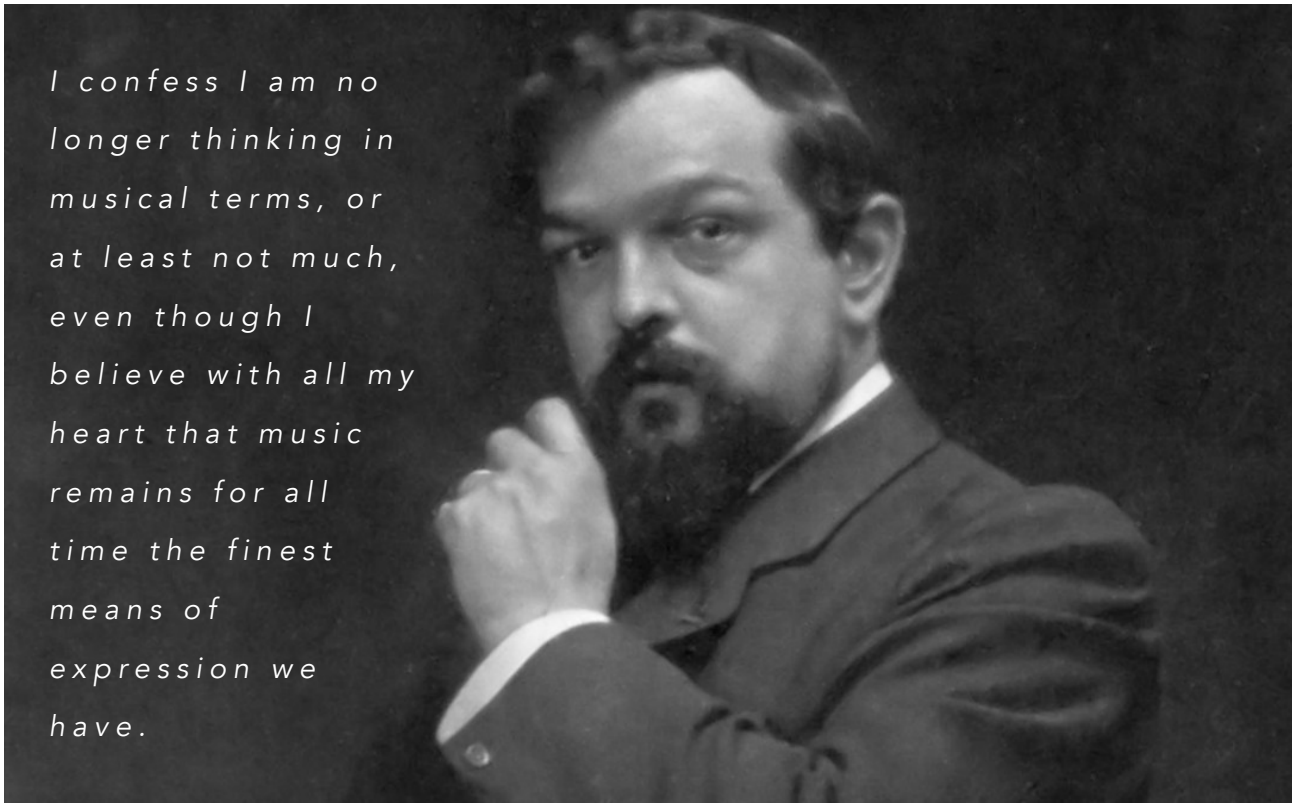
l'Isle Joyeuse (page **30**) Duration**: 6'25**

- editorial reduced font sometimes to show alternative hand distribution
- **1, 36, 40, 44, 48, 84, 86, 89, 115, 125, 130, 132, 136, 150** modification of key-signatures
- **7 —** a moderate *tempo di habanera* — it would seem sensible to choose a speed which will allow a meaningful and realisable *plus animé* at 113
- **52-57** as in the opening bars, try playing the first note of these trills with LH
- **64** & **65** octave E originally a semibreve (see **15**)
- **67 to the end** 3/8 has been modified to 6/8 9/8 or 3/4
- **73** Durand : E tied to an omitted semiquaver
- **106** bass accompaniment editorial modification
- **115** bass editorial acciaccatura for the sostenuto pedal
- **124** the first two quintuplets have been raised an octave

* Welte piano roll recording of the composer in 1913

très vif et fantasque	*very lively and capricious*
détaché et rythmé	*detached and rhythmic*
expressif	*expressive*
la basse en dehors	*bring out the bass*
sans rigueur	*with rhythmic freedom*
sans retenir	*without slowing down*
sourd et en s'éloignant	*muted and receding*
retenu	*tempo held back*
doucement expressif	*gently expressive*
la basse toujours un peu flottante	*the bass always floating a little*
en animant peu à peu	*gradually more and more lively*
en dehors	*in relief*
plus lointain	*even more distant*
modéré et très souple	*moderate and very free*
léger	*light*
plus animé	*more lively*
un peu cédé	*a slightly slower tempo*
ondoyant	*swaying*
jusqu'à la fin	*until the end*

** The sostenuto pedal was first shown in Paris at the Industrial Exposition of 1844. The idea was not immediately taken up by piano builders, but in 1874, is was perfected and patented by Steinway, soon to be fitted on all their grands and better uprights. One obvious commercial reason for not including the sostenuto pedal in musical scores must have been the thought of excluding buyers whose pianos didn't provide it. Debussy and Ravel certainly played a Steinway sostenuto grand *chez* Madame de Saint Marceaux and another bought by Winnaretta de Polignac in 1906. One could say that it took over 100 years for it to become commonplace.



D E B U S S Y

3 M O R C E A U X (1903- 1904)

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