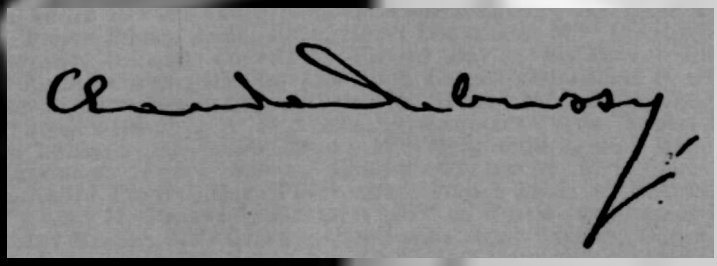
Claude DEBUSSY

CENTENARY EDITION 2018

PRÉLUDES

livre II



Piano Practical Editions
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Piano 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

Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

PRÉLUDES livre II

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Much has been written about the many sets of piano preludes which have appeared since the original and definitive works of Bach celebrating fine tuning and circular temperament. For the most part they form collections in multiples of 12* and often encompass all the major and minor keys. Debussy however formed a new genre offering diffident 'symbolist' clues to their character and content via delayed subtitles which appear bracketed at the final bars. Without the justification of tonality, the number twelve has no strict reason save almost certain deference to Chopin, whose preludes he was editing for Durand. Piano Practical Editions finally presents these master works in two volumes as the composer originally planned.

Before their publication, the bulk of the Debussy's output for piano featured descriptive exotic or catchy titles, but in 1910 he chose the generic name of *Préludes* and worked rapidly on their completion; sketches show that the project may have begun as early as 1907. Sources of inspiration for this second volume are very varied and reflect a wide range of 'world music'**; Egyptian antiquity, mortality, visual arts, dance, the natural world, folk music, poetry, literature, Dickens, legends, Spain, and an American Clown.

« Il n'y a pas de théorie : il suffit d'entendre. Le plaisir est la règle » — There is no theory : you only need to listen. Pleasure is the rule.

— Debussy

On 5 March 1913, Debussy gave the first performances of *Brouillards*, *Feuilles mortes*, and *la Puerta del Vino* at the *Salle Erard* in Paris. In recital the preludes are sometimes performed in groups of three — i.e. 1-3 which revolve around B flat, or alternatively *ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* sharing the same tonic with *la fille aux cheveux de lin* and then G flat accentuated at the opening of *la sérénade interrompue*. There are many juxtaposing contrasts: *ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* framed by *des pas sur la neige* and *la fille aux cheveux de lin* or *la cathédrale engloutie* at the centre of *la sérénade interrompue* and *la danse de Puck*.

Like all great works of art these preludes invite a lifetime of discovery and exploration; they cover a wide range of musical and pianistic demands, not always evident at first, but always rewarding the inquisitive. Rapid and light fingerwork, lightning jumps across the keyboard, the need to project several degrees of dynamics, particularly muted — these are the difficulties facing a serious musician.

Stephen Walsh : As in the second book of *Images* but not at all in the first book of Preludes, Debussy sets the music out on three staves for at least part of every piece, whether or not the music's complexity seems to require it. Just as with the *Images*, it seems that in contact with the piano Debussy could write freely, exploring the implications of his unique idiom in a completely uninhibited way, but that when it was a matter of composing for a more 'impersonal' medium and on a larger scale for orchestra, with or without voices, or for the stage — he was forced to think in a more linear, syntactical, perhaps objective manner, that raised issues of procedure he was increasingly reluctant to confront. When he had talked to Caplet about the twenty bars suffocated by tradition, he may well have meant the sort of music that, in every eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composer you could name, bore the structure along from one distinctive gesture to the next, making sense of works that might otherwise disintegrate under the sheer weight of irrepressible, disconnected inventiveness: the musical details that information theorists describe with the charming term 'redundant'. It may go against the grain to think of anything in, say, Mozart or Schubert or even Brahms as redundant. But, purely in the sense that a lot of what happens in their music is predictable, the redundant is an important, if humble, part of their language. It looks as if, at least where the House of Usher was concerned, Claude Debussy, the lifelong enemy of rules was now in rebellion against redundancy.

Much of what happened to music — and to art in general — in the twentieth century marked a break, conscious or unconscious, with the nineteenth. The past was an orphan parent, rejected by its children, despised by its grandchildren. Debussy, too, found fault with his forebears and tried to do things differently from them. But while he questioned their methods, he never doubted their fundamental intention, which was to create beauty and to share sensibilities, to communicate wonder at the richness of the world around us and the various ways our senses give us of responding to it. His music is without ideology and without doctrine. Like the world, it simply is, take it or leave it.

Debussy: A Painter in Sound (2018)

by ***Stephen Walsh***

Paul Roberts : More than 100 years after Debussy's death, it still needs stating and defending: sound, atmosphere and 'fairy-tale' charm, so characteristic of Debussy, are not finally the reasons for playing and listening to this music, for being drawn to it and possessed by it. Just as the painters of his epoch saw what had been hitherto unseen, so Debussy heard what had been unheard. His images and allusions were, paradoxically, a means of provoking an intensity of listening. In a voice that was often subdued, he distilled and communicated the essence of the external world and touched the core of human experience.

Lockspeiser & Halbreich : These preludes have a very different objective from those of Chopin, and there is no question of comparing them. For the Pole, these are striking reductions of moods, psychological snapshots suddenly illuminating the innermost self. For the Frenchman, on the other hand, they are evocations intended to express an impression, to create a state of sensitivity and awareness conducive to the identification of the chosen theme, landscape or character. From the poetic realism of the *Images*, we have moved to the more abstract plane of musical symbolism.

Roger Nichols : The late Mary Antonietti, a pianist and cousin of Gustav Holst who met Debussy when he came to London in 1909, remembered that Book II of the *Préludes* was greeted in Britain with slight disappointment. That this was general we can to some extent see from the sales figures quoted by Roy Howat: 'By Debussy's death in March 1918, Book I had been reprinted five times, making a total of 8,360 copies; Book II had been reprinted twice, making a total of 4,000 copies.' Even allowing for Book I's three-year start, the discrepancy is worth noting. But with time, the attractions of Book II have become clearer, and it seems likely that its more advanced harmonies and syntax were the cause of its relatively slow acceptance.

Harry Halbreich : The genesis of the second book is much more difficult to establish than that of the first. The pieces seem to have been composed at fairly long intervals during the three years between 1910 and 1912, but it is impossible to be more precise. We know only that *la terrasse des audiences du clair de lune* dates from December 1912. Debussy himself introduced *Canope* and *Hommage à S. Pickwick* on 19 lune 1913.

World Music **

In May 1889, a major cultural event was staged in the *Champ de Mars* in the vicinity of the recently completed Eiffel Tower. The celebrated Paris *Exposition Universelle* had already been running for three weeks by the time the 26-year-old composer attended, with countries from all over the world exhibiting the best of their art, culture and lifestyle. In the crucial weeks which followed, Debussy's experience of musical cultures from Java, Cambodia and Vietnam would make a lasting — indeed legendary — contribution to the development not just of the young composer himself, but to the history of Western music as a whole.

At this time, Debussy was no novice in what we now refer to as 'world music', and while in Russia, as a guest of Nadezhda von Meck he encountered the Russian nationalists' fascination with music of the East.

In 1895, Debussy wrote "Javanese music, which is able to express every shade of meaning, even unmentionable shades... which make our tonic and dominant seem like ghosts, for use by naughty little children". His music from 1889 onwards, and his piano works such as *Pagodes* in particular, began to develop unmistakeable traces of this new cultural influence.

— Martin Buzacott

* Bach, Chopin, Scriabin, Messiaen, Shostakovitch, Szymanowski

Recommended reading:

- Debussy: The Quiet Revolutionary *Victor Lederer*
- The Piano Music of Claude Debussy *Alfred Cortot*
- Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy *Paul Roberts*
- Debussy: A Painter in Sound *Stephen Walsh*
- Debussy, sa vie et sa pensée *Edward Lockspeiser & Harry Halbreich*
- The Art of French piano music & Debussy in proportion — a musical analysis *Roy Howat*
- The Life of Debussy & Debussy Remembered *Roger Nichols*

"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 suggest infinity, capturing inexplicable relations between nature and the imagination" — Debussy

In 2018, during the course of the centenary year ***Piano Practical Editions*** became a creative and critical working publication; in addition to suggestions of fingering, hand disposition and *sostenuto* pedal, you will find significant modifications to the general layout with alternative key signatures, staves, barlines, time- and key- signatures and varied fonts. I have also enjoyed the challenge of translating French texts, and vocabularies may be found on pages **94 - 96.**

In this second book of Preludes, metronome speeds have been virtually abandoned — he once wrote: *"as a rose which might only last for one morning, a metronome speed might only work for one bar"* — only one prelude suggests a metronome speed.

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.

Ray Alston November 2023

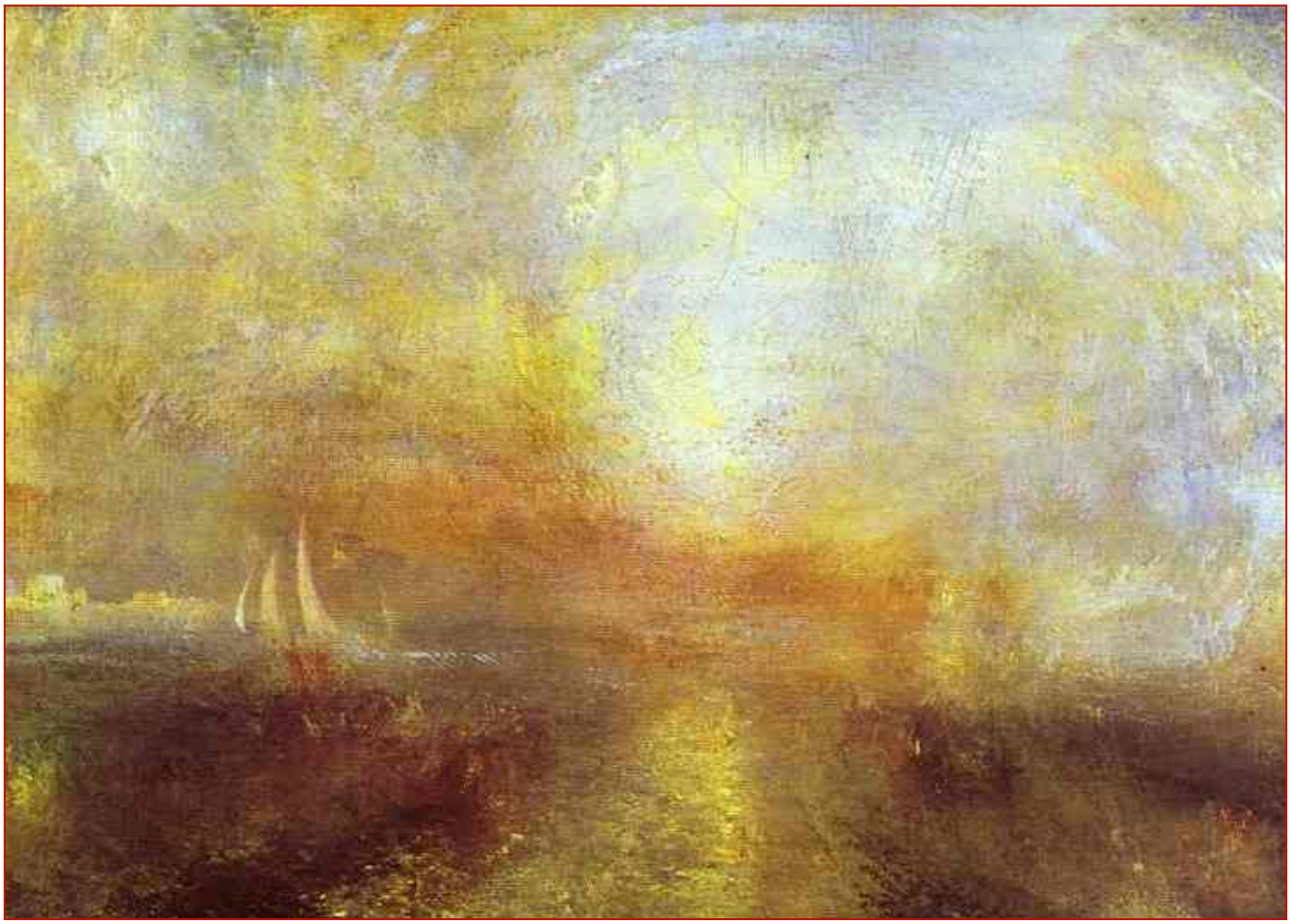
I

Improvised and intangible we discover fleeting misty images, the two hands seldom agreeing on a shared key structure, fragments of a sombre melody in octaves at widely spaced registers and a shimmering right hand accompaniment similar to *Pagodes* and *Reflets dans l'eau.* Completed in 1911, this first prelude of the set is a demanding test of creative pedalling to project an aura of mystery, a sensuous dream drifting in and out of the fog.

> *A mist of sonorities, unresolved by layering at the minor second, tonalities which inter-blend bestow a surreal, almost ghostlike impression to the melodic line from which it tries to free itself. A few brief flashes of light suppressed at once by the fog, their sudden disappearance causing even more uncertainty and ambiguity.*
>
> — *Cortot*

'Brouillards' lurks in a misty world similar to that of Voiles (Book 1), but here the fog is denser and is the subject of the piece. Vaporous, overlapping sonorities hover in the evaporating mists. Blended polytonal harmonies, short arpeggios, and unresolved cadences suggest scarves of floating mist that block out all but a few dimly discerned objects. A phantomlike phrase emerges and is soon lost in the mists of suspended harmony. A flash or two of brighter sonorities then another fragmentary motive appears and disappears. It evokes a gothic image, haunting and ghostly. The section beginning at ***32*** *is reminiscent of Ravel's great gothic fantasy 'une barque sur l'océan' from Miroirs, published in 1906.*

The two opening preludes evoke characteristically Debussyan landscapes, leaving the performer and



J.M.W. TURNER *YACHT APPROACHING THE COAST* 1835

listener in no doubt as to how to respond imaginatively. Neither title need have any special significance beyond the image evoked, yet neither is without a certain ambiguity. 'Brouillards' might refer to the dual tonality which results in aural distortion and lack of focus. In this sense the title of the opening prelude is a straightforward metaphor, alluding to tonal mists as much as to real mist, just as the closing prelude 'feux d'artifice' may be said to allude to pianistic brilliance as well as to actual fireworks.

'Feuilles Mortes' conveys a precise seasonal image, but for the French, the phrase also means the colour russet. 'Feuilles' also refers to the leaves of a book, giving the title yet another dimension. The two preludes seem to have been conceived from the start as the opening pair, sharing the same tonal centre. In performance, the transition from the one to the other creates that same trance-like intensity of mood that we saw in the transitions in the early part of Book I. 'Brouillards' does not end so much as hang in suspension, unresolved creating in the process an aural equivalent of static mist. If we continue with the same pulse, the two opening chords of 'Feuilles Mortes' will be heard as a repetition, reorchestrated and enriched, of the last two triads of 'Brouillards'.

— Paul Roberts

Three short extracts citing mists or fog
by poets who have inspired Debussy…

Ô fins d'automne, hivers, printemps trempés de boue,
Endormeuses saisons ! je vous aime et vous loue
D'envelopper ainsi mon cœur et mon cerveau
D'un linceul vaporeux et d'un brumeux tombeau.

Charles Baudelaire *Brumes et Pluies*

Brouillards, montez! versez vos cendres monotones
Avec de longs haillons de brume dans les cieux
Que noiera le marais livide des automnes
Et bâtissez un grand plafond silencieux!

Stéphane Mallarmé *l'Azur*

Les humides prairies au couchant étendues
Se voilent de vapeurs qui montent lentement
Et vont couvrir bientôt les terres disparues
Sous les brouillards bleuis qui tremblent faiblement.

Pierre Louÿs *le Soir à la Campagne*

'No theme, no development; no traditional form; no counterpoint, but neither any harmony in the usual sense of the term; no melodies, no accompaniment; no principal and secondary voices; neither diatonic nor chromatic tonality — is there even a tonality? Nothing that echoes his contemporaries i.e. Schoenberg or Mahler.

— Dieter Schnebel

The fog is depicted by the simultaneous use of white-note and black-note patterns — making grey. As in 'des pas sur la neige', melodic fragments break through the murk from time to time, but the piece ends on a complex unresolved dissonance, the only one of the Preludes to do so.

— Roger Nichols

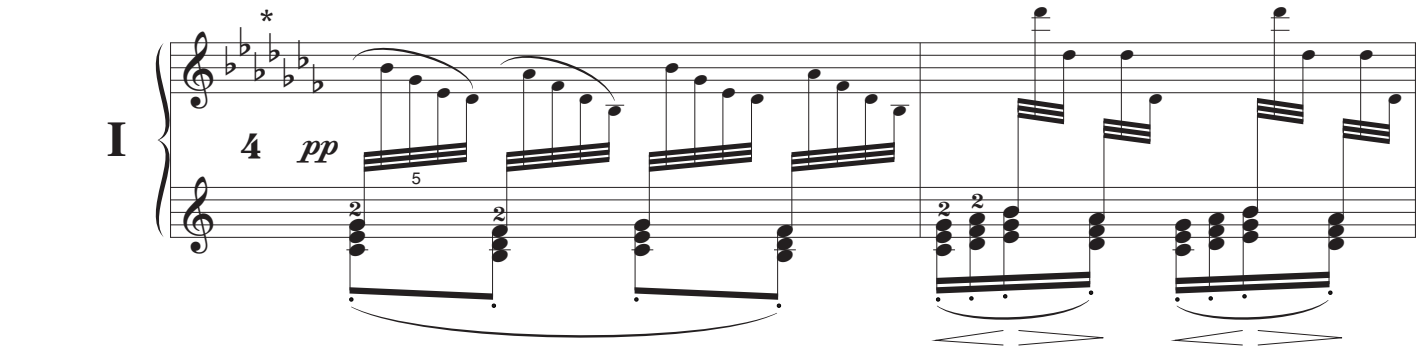
From the beginning of this second Book we see the assertion of a mastery that comes from a boldness and novelty which have lost none of their impact today. From the strangely polytonal Brouillards emerge scraps of theme, which are again stripped by procedures similar to that of cinematographic masks. When the fog finally lifts, we do not see beautiful countryside but a prosaic and damp suburb.

— Harry Halbreich

Duration: 3'45

- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- key signatures in all staves modified throughout
- **40** editorial *sostenuto* pedal to be coupled with the sustaining pedal

modéré *extrêmement égal et léger*



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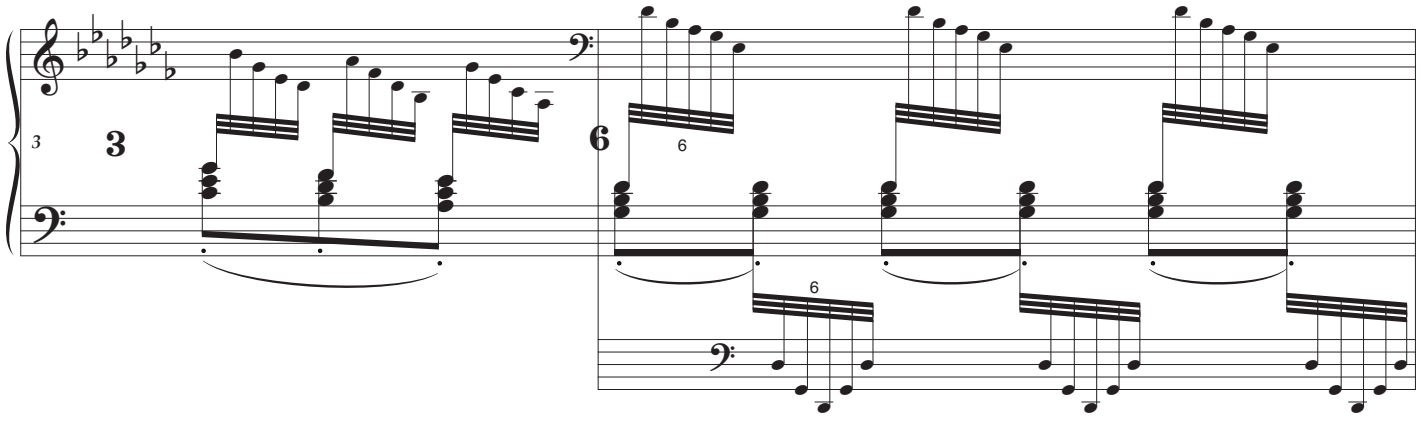

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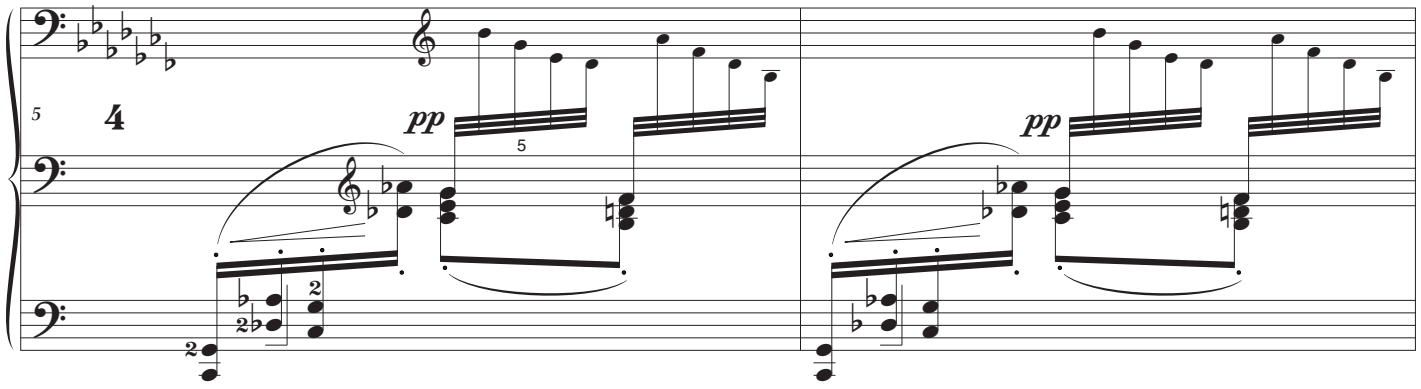

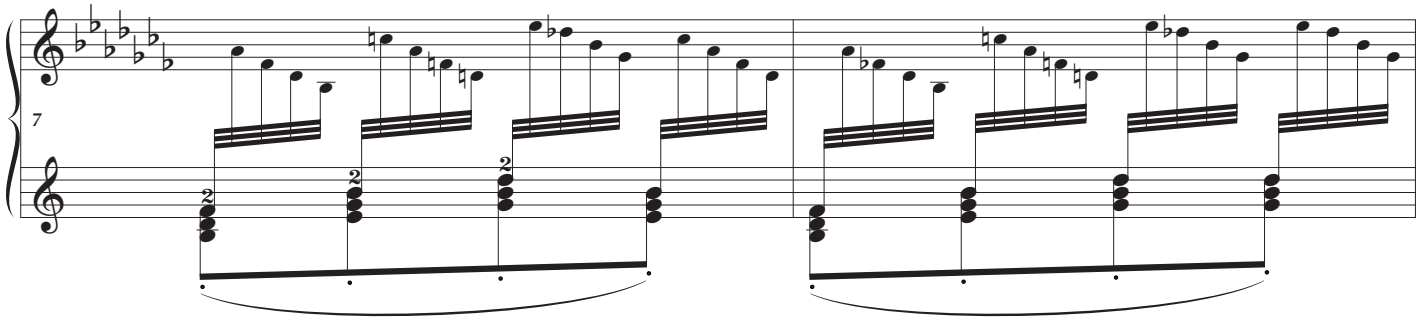

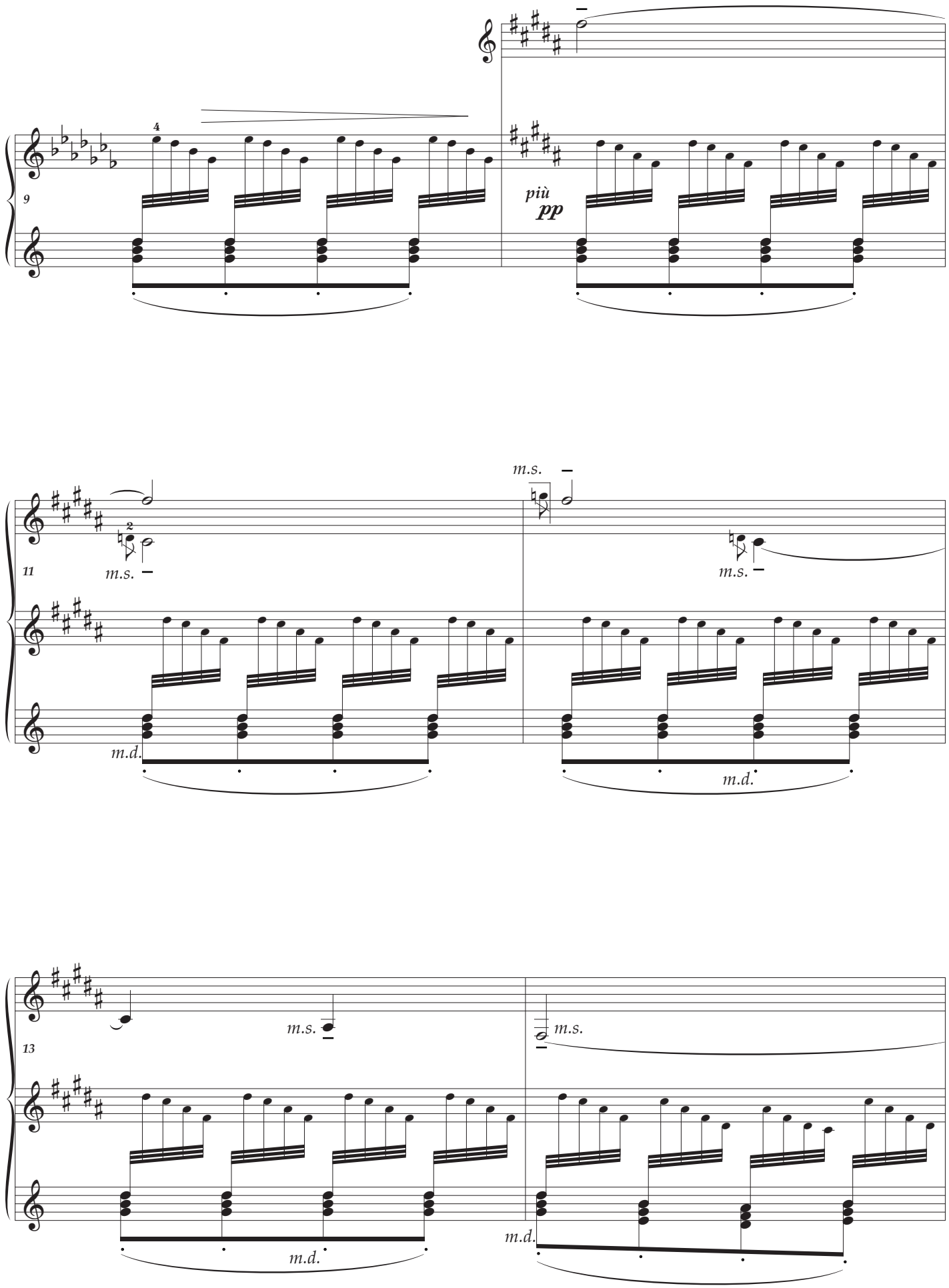
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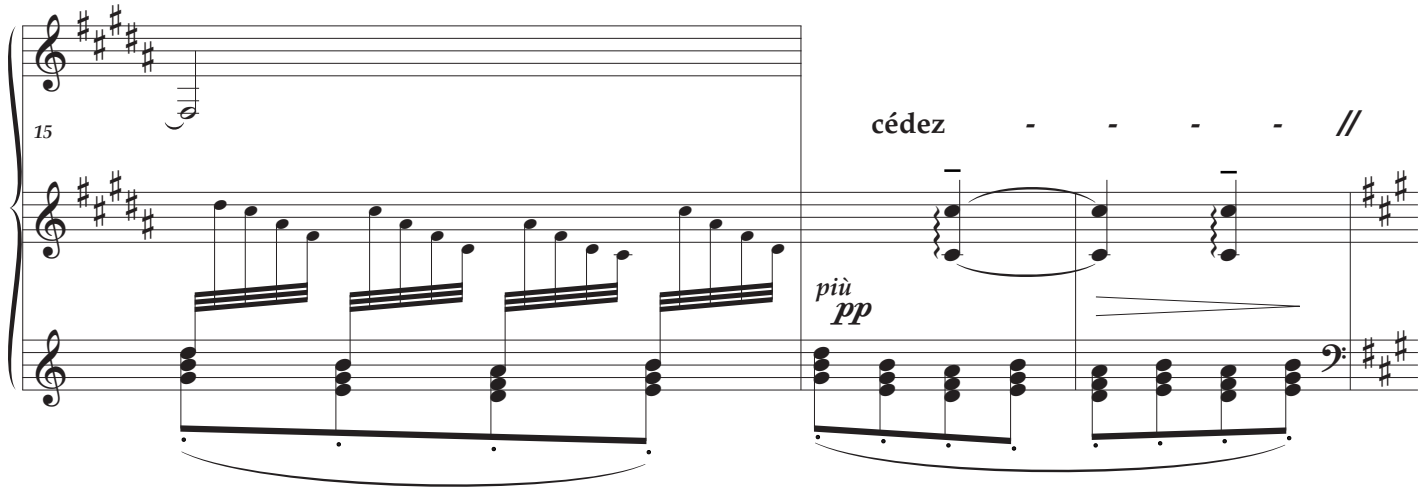

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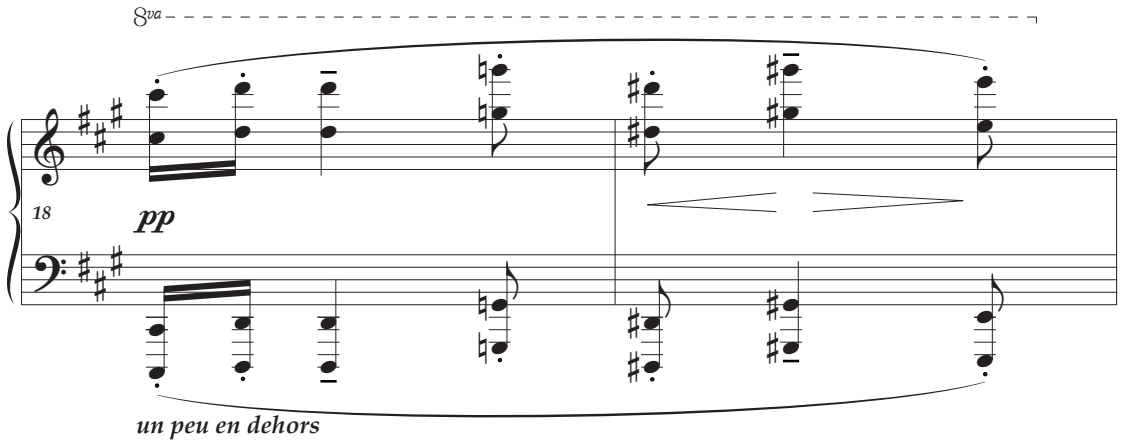

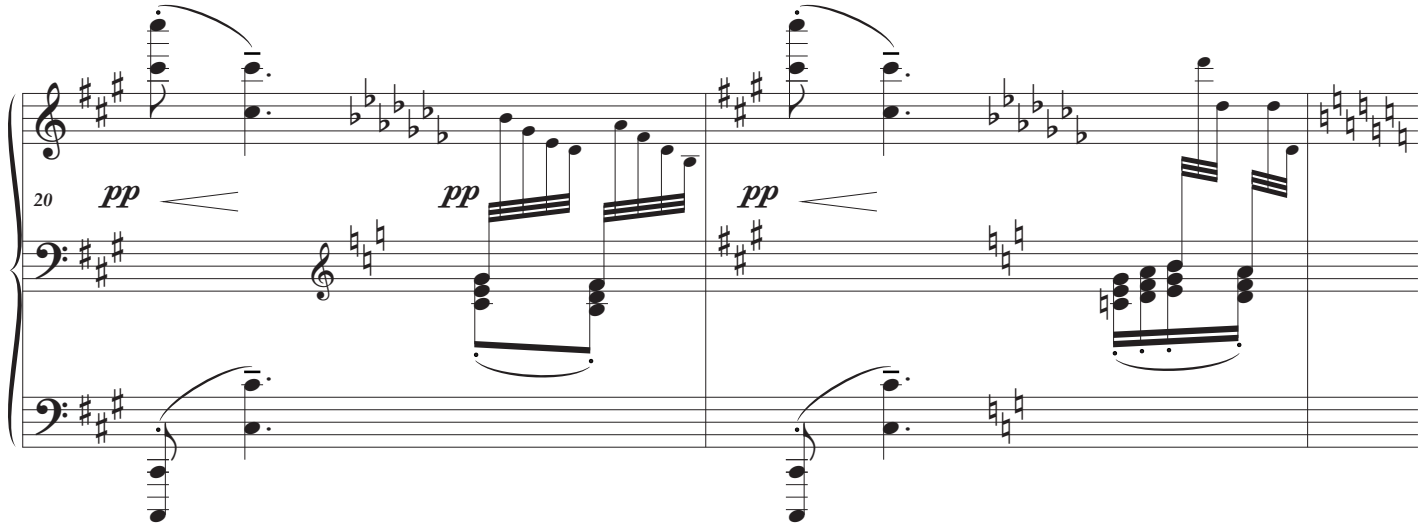

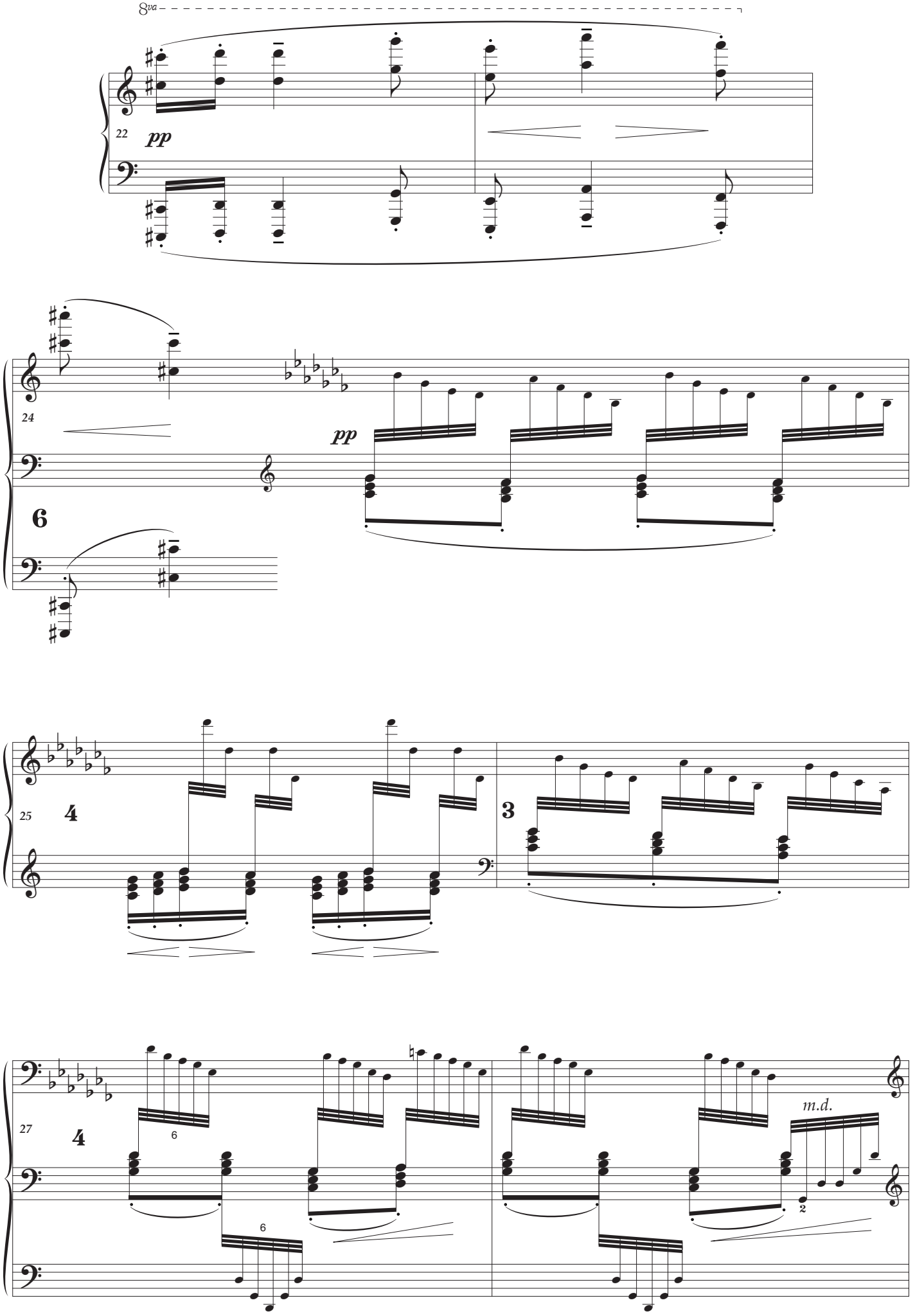
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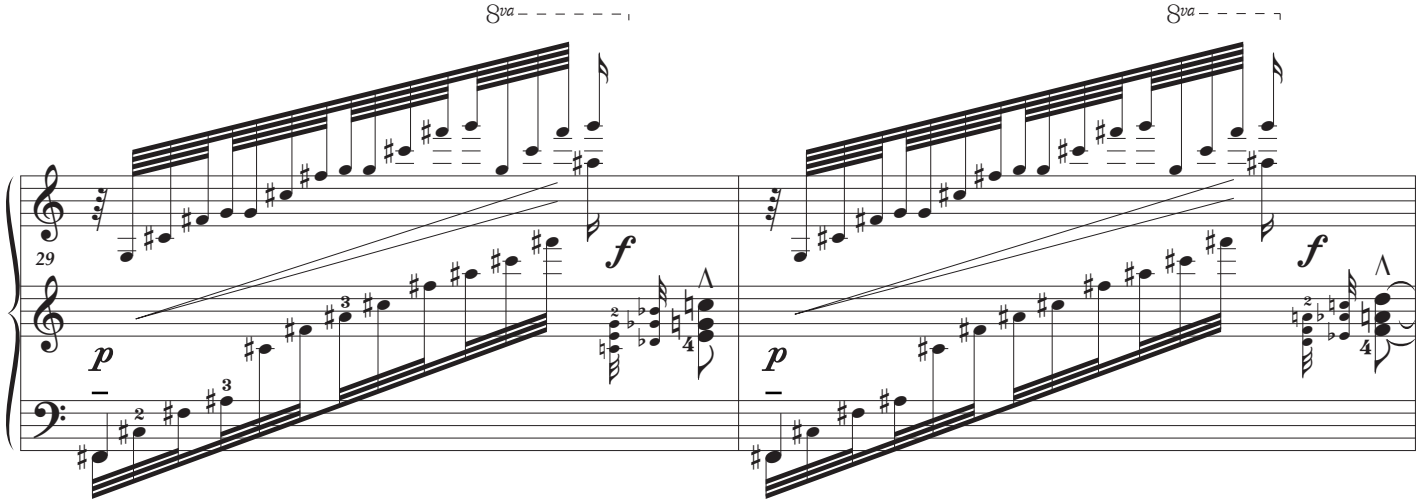
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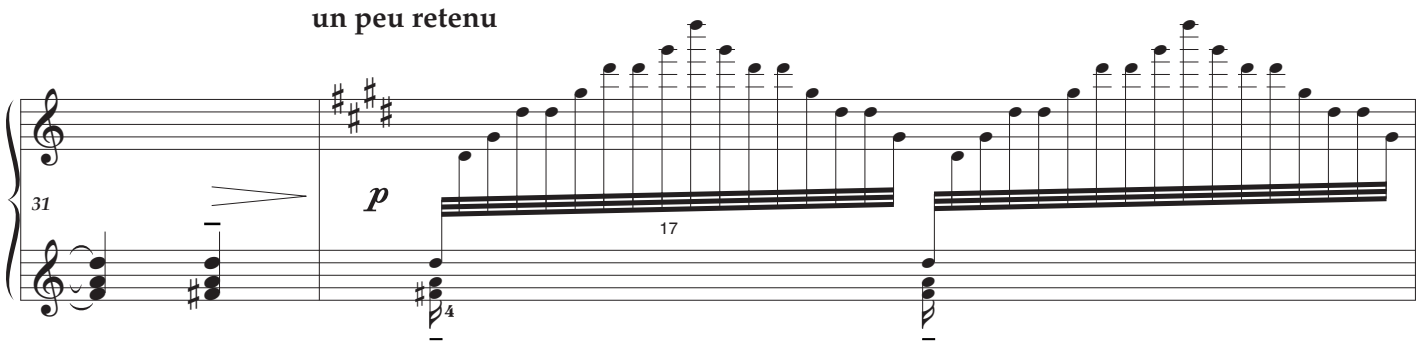
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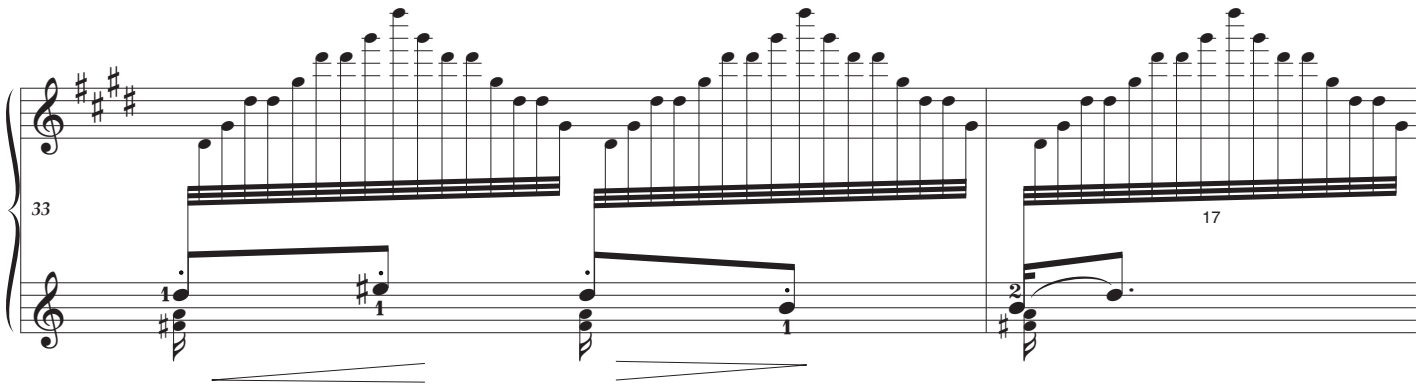
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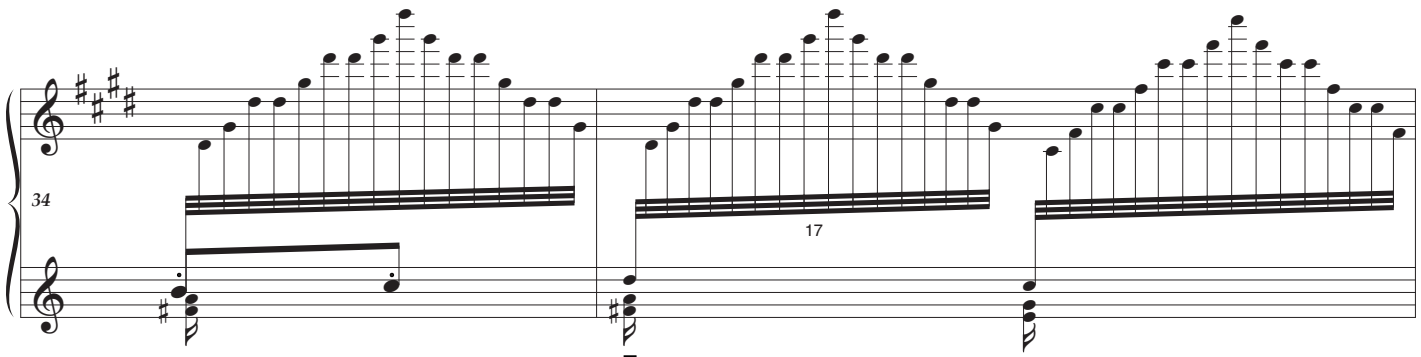
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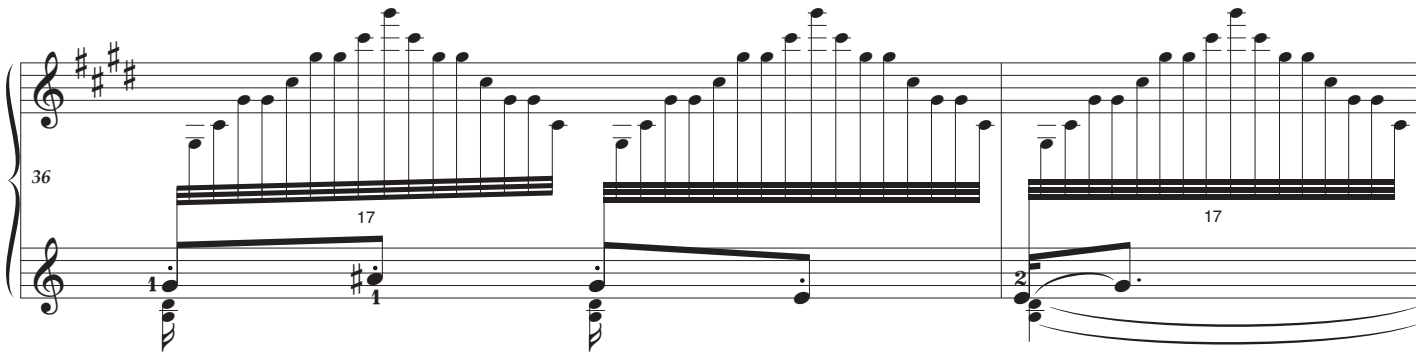
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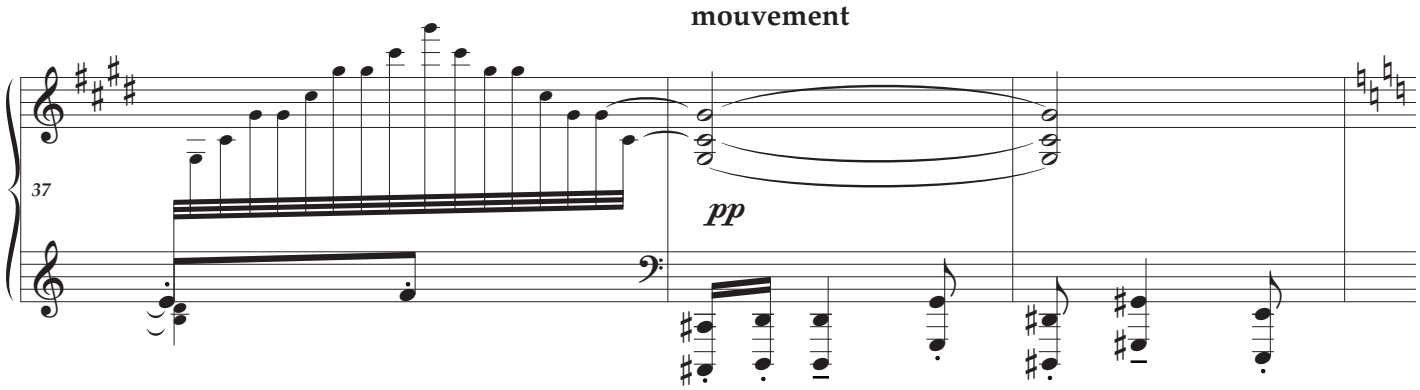
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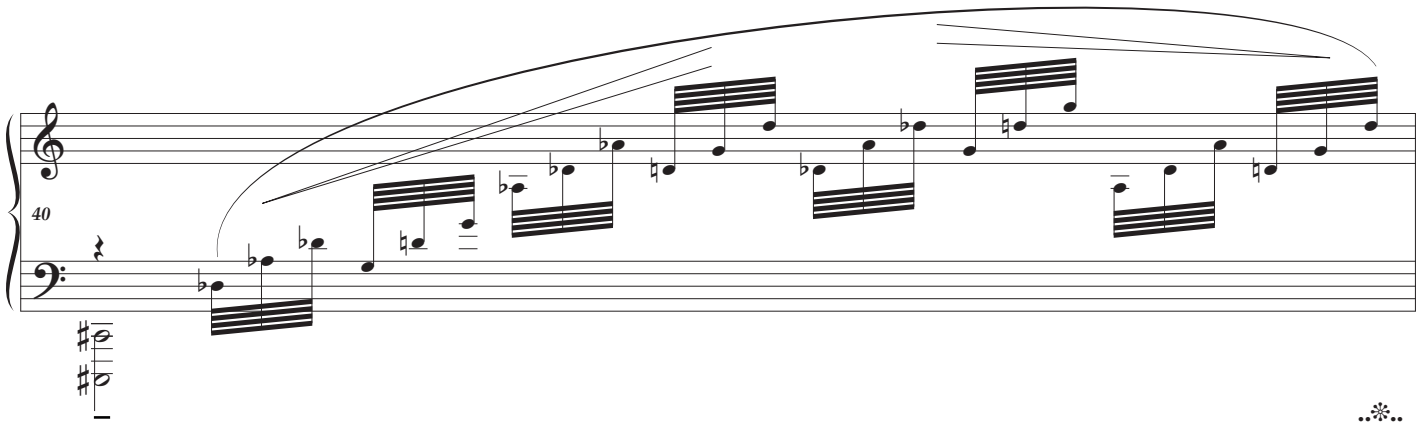
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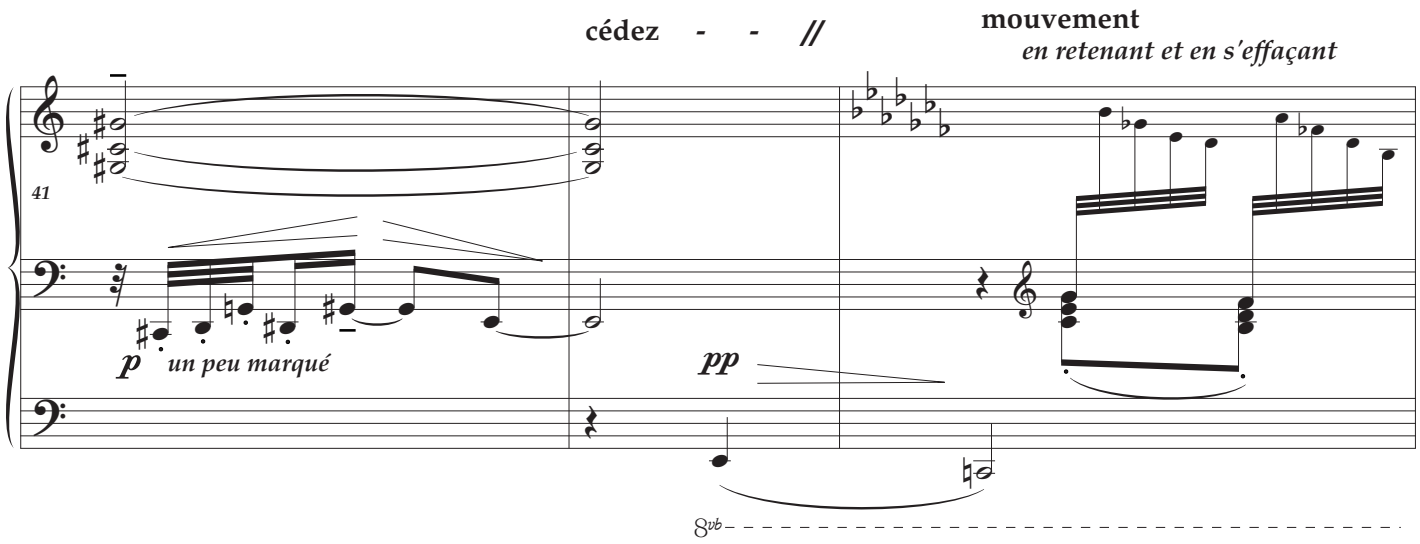
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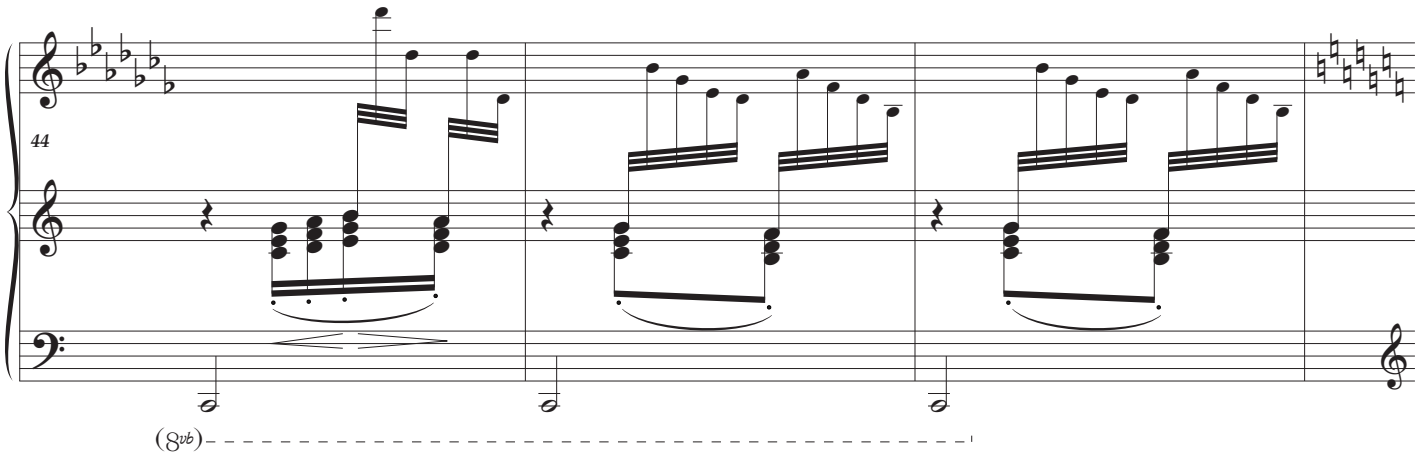

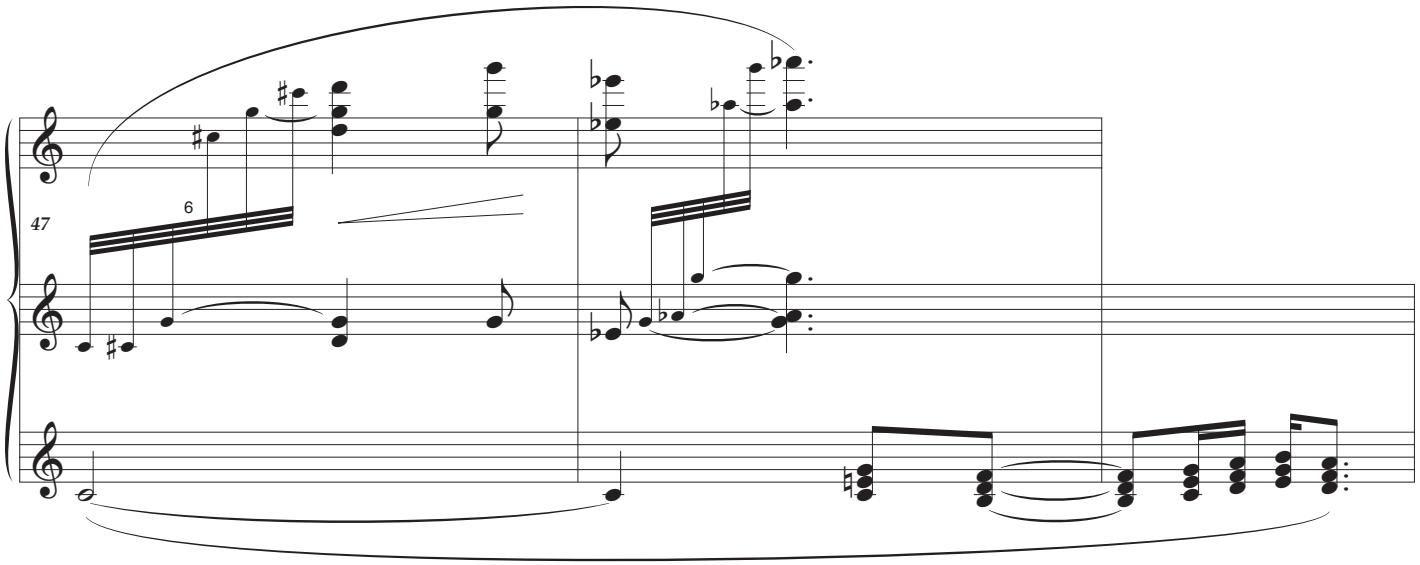

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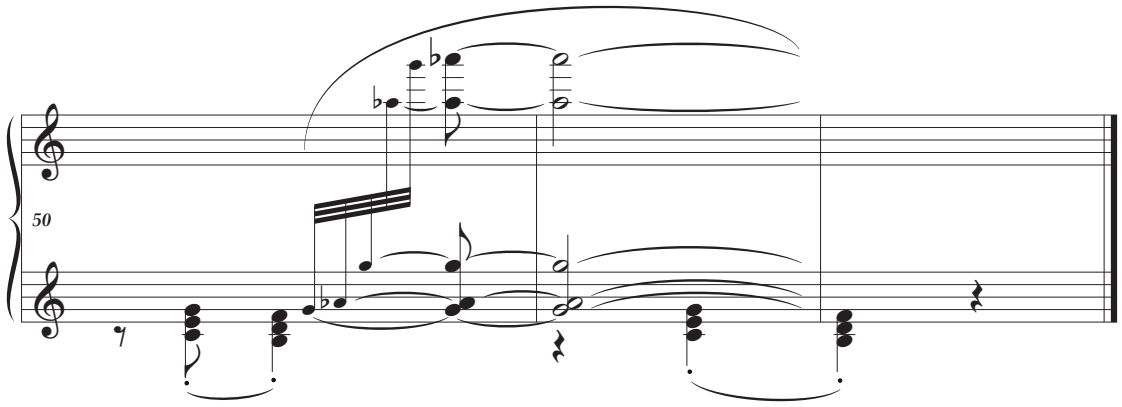


(... brouillards)

II

Inspired by the fallen leaves of autumn, there are three theories regarding the prelude's genesis: poems by either Georges Turpin or his close friend Gabriel Mourey, or the souvenir of an autumn walk with Emma Bardac, his wife. An evocative work with sensuous harmonies and an exalted but restrained climax. These evocative lines by the composer in 1901 accurately describe his innermost reflections on the season:

> *I had tarried in autumn-filled country forcibly restrained by the enchantment of ancient forests. In tribute to gloriously agonised trees, golden leaves were falling, and as the frail Angelus* bade fields take their sleep, arose a sweet persuasive voice that counselled complete oblivion.*
>
> *— Debussy*

> *The soft, slow whirling of leaves which settle noiselessly on the soil; the disconsolate splendour of an autumnal sunset which seems to bear all the emotions of a long and sad farewell.*
>
> *— Cortot*

> *Falling leaves are a signal of the suspension of life, creating a static expectancy, intense regrets of a past now so far gone, of great sadness and the poignant melancholy of autumn.*
>
> *— E. Robert Schmitz*

> *This rite of autumn is a lament that creates a mood of regret and the poignant melancholy of fall — a contemplation of slowly falling leaves.*
>
> *— Maurice Hinson*

> *'Feuilles Mortes' conveys a precise seasonal image, but for the French, the phrase also means the colour russet. 'Feuilles' also refers to the leaves of a book, giving the title yet another dimension. The delicate but firm structure is endowed with harmonies of delicate and surpassing beauty, even more so than in 'Jeux'. Everything here is based on the initial chords, typically Ravelian, of the root-augmented sixth and fifth. There is not a single non-harmonic tone that is not the distilled quintessence of a supremely concentrated harmonic thought, and yet the tonal structure is articulated around a rigorously classical ternary form, with a middle based on the dominant and sub-dominant of the principal tone. In contrast to the atonality of 'Brouillards', 'Feuilles Mortes' is an example of an inordinately broadened tonality. The rhythmic subtlety contributes to the painful splendour of this haunting autumnal vision, this 'sweet rot', as pianist Marguerite Long puts it, through which Debussy has expressed his anguished dread of death, or simply of time passing.*
>
> *— Paul Roberts*

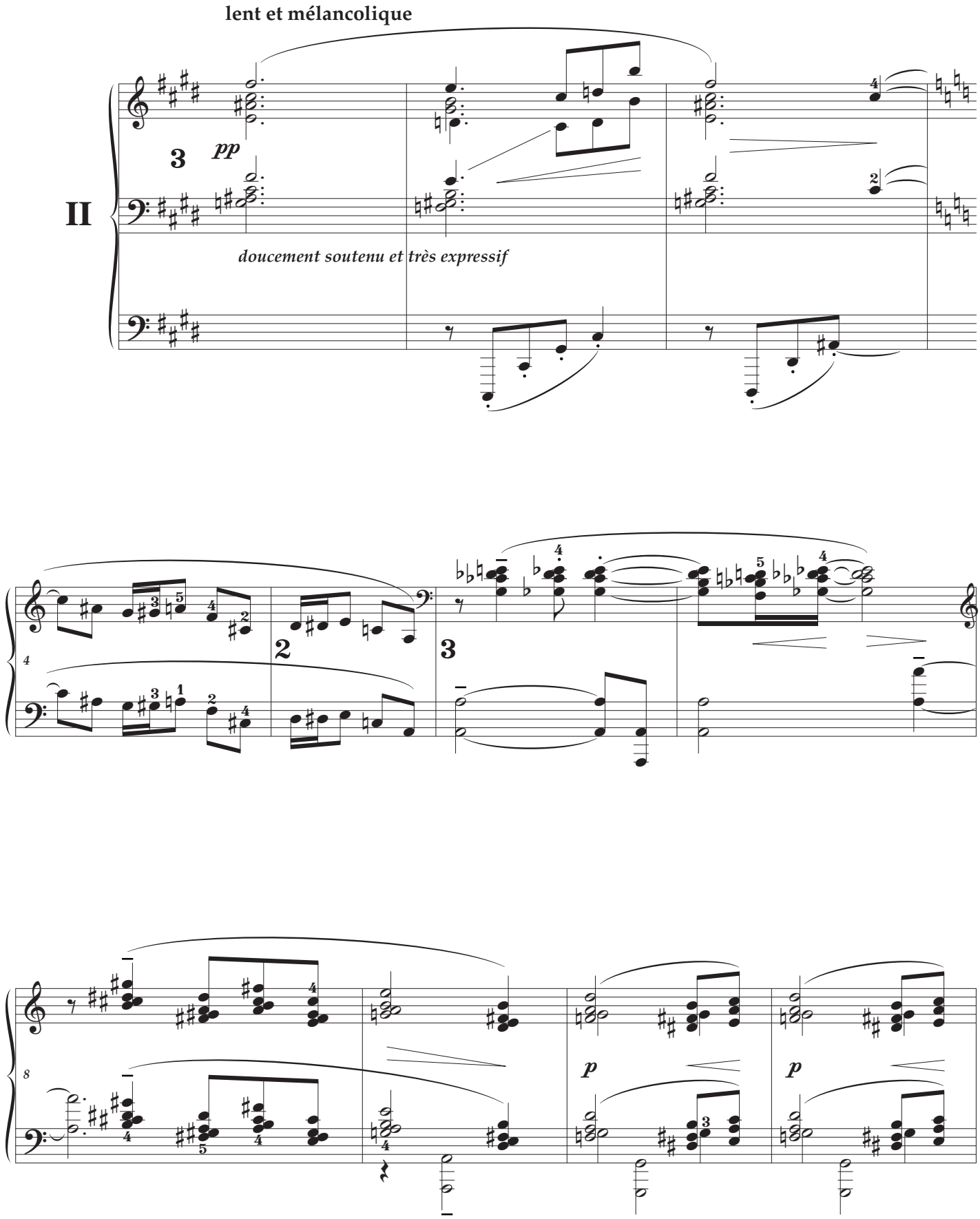
> *Another of Debussy's supreme masterpieces. The delicate but solid structure of this work is wreathed in harmonies of an almost unbearable beauty and refinement. The rhythmic subtlety contributes to the bitter, sad splendour of the throbbing autumnal scene, in which Debussy expressed all his anguished obsession with the passing of time and with death.*
>
> *— Harry Halbreich*

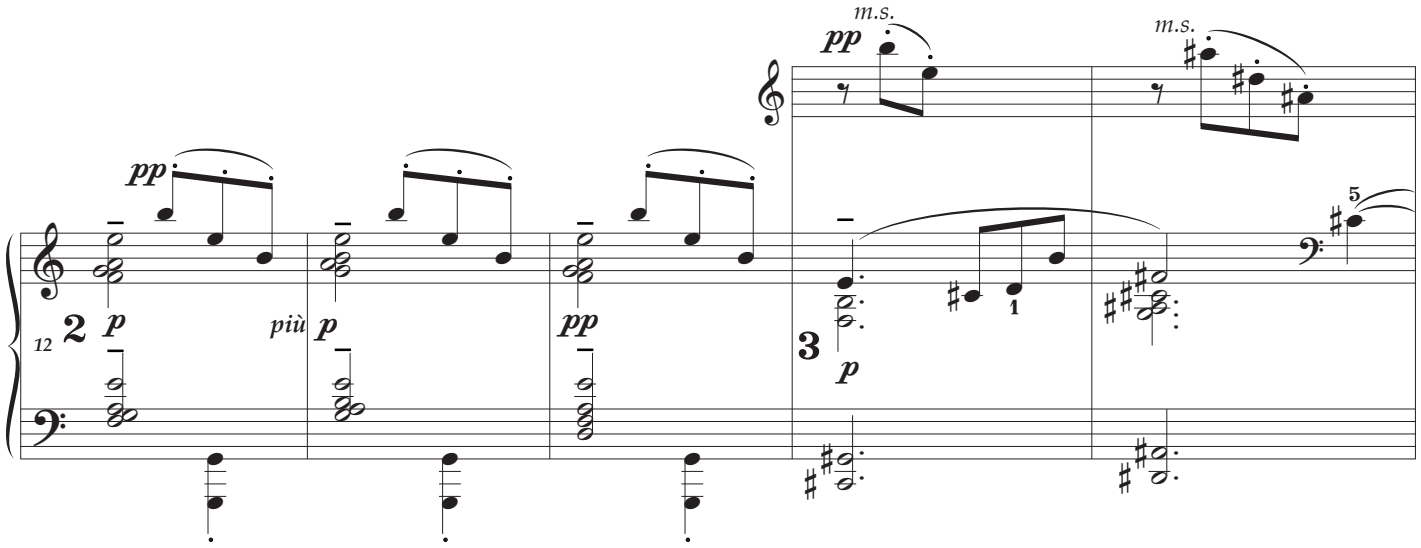
* Compline bell summoning the faithful to evening prayer; I hear it's cracked tones tolling in the distance — *grêle* literally means 'weak and high-pitched'

Duration: 3'20

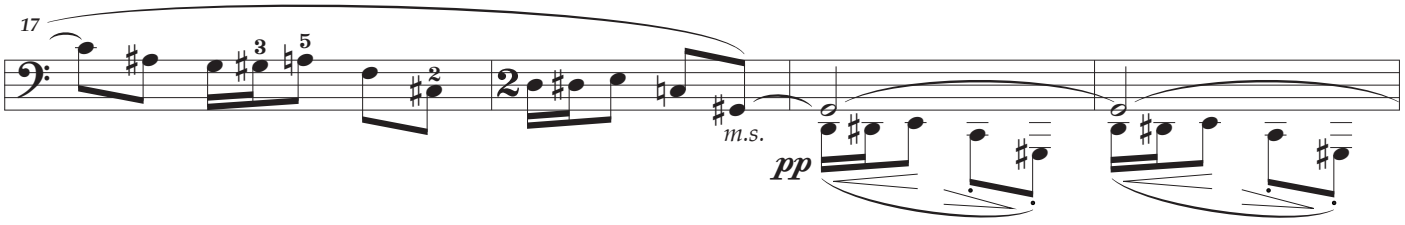
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- **4-24** & **36-40** presented with a blank key signature
- **44-52** presented with modified key signatures
- **48** editorial *sostenuto* pedal
- **50** similar to **41-43**, Debussy is decidedly particular in the length of the bass which creates a deliberately autumnal cadence, although many pianists allow the tonic to linger for another beat or two

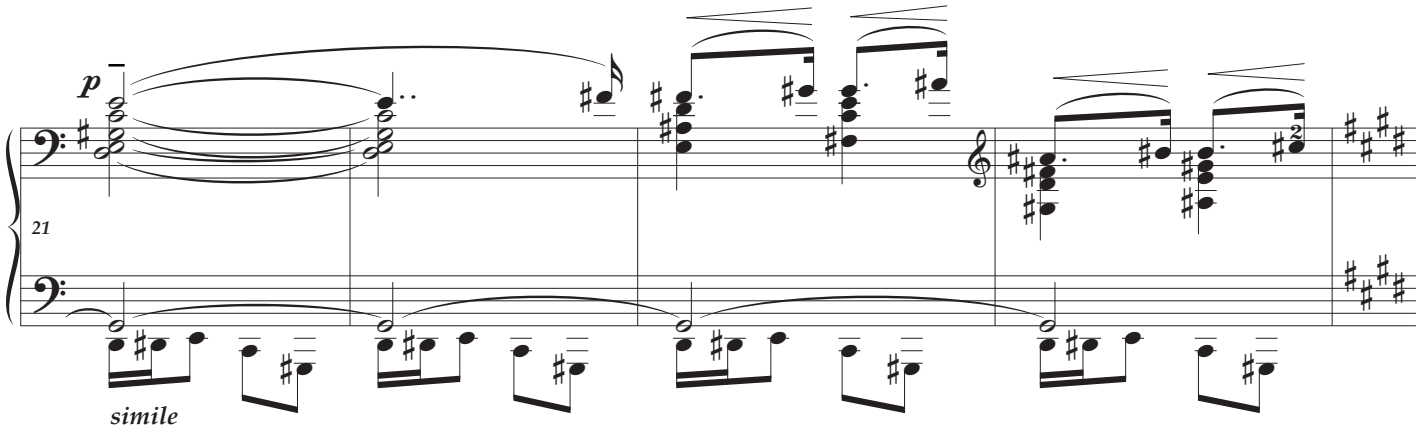
MONET *LE CHÊNE DE BODMER (DETAIL)* 1865

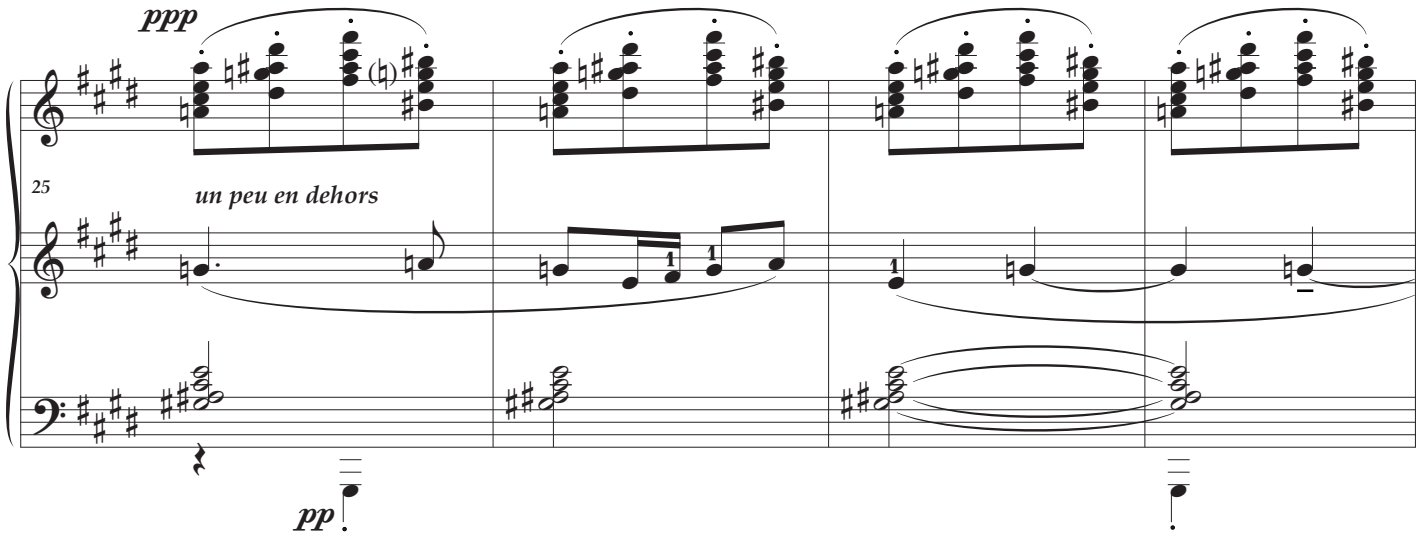

lent et mélancolique
II
pp
doucement soutenu et très expressif
p
p

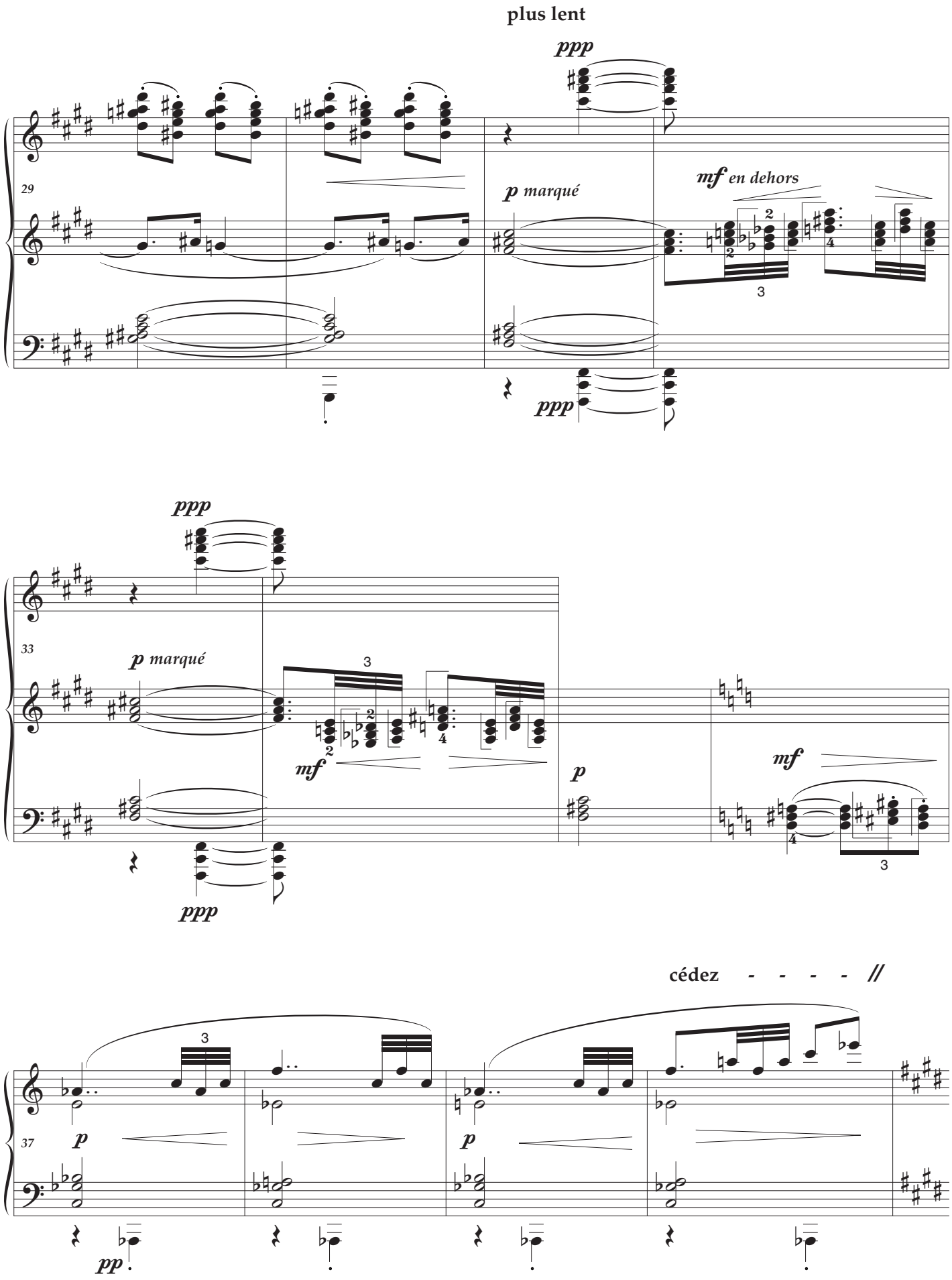


un peu plus allant et plus gravement expressif

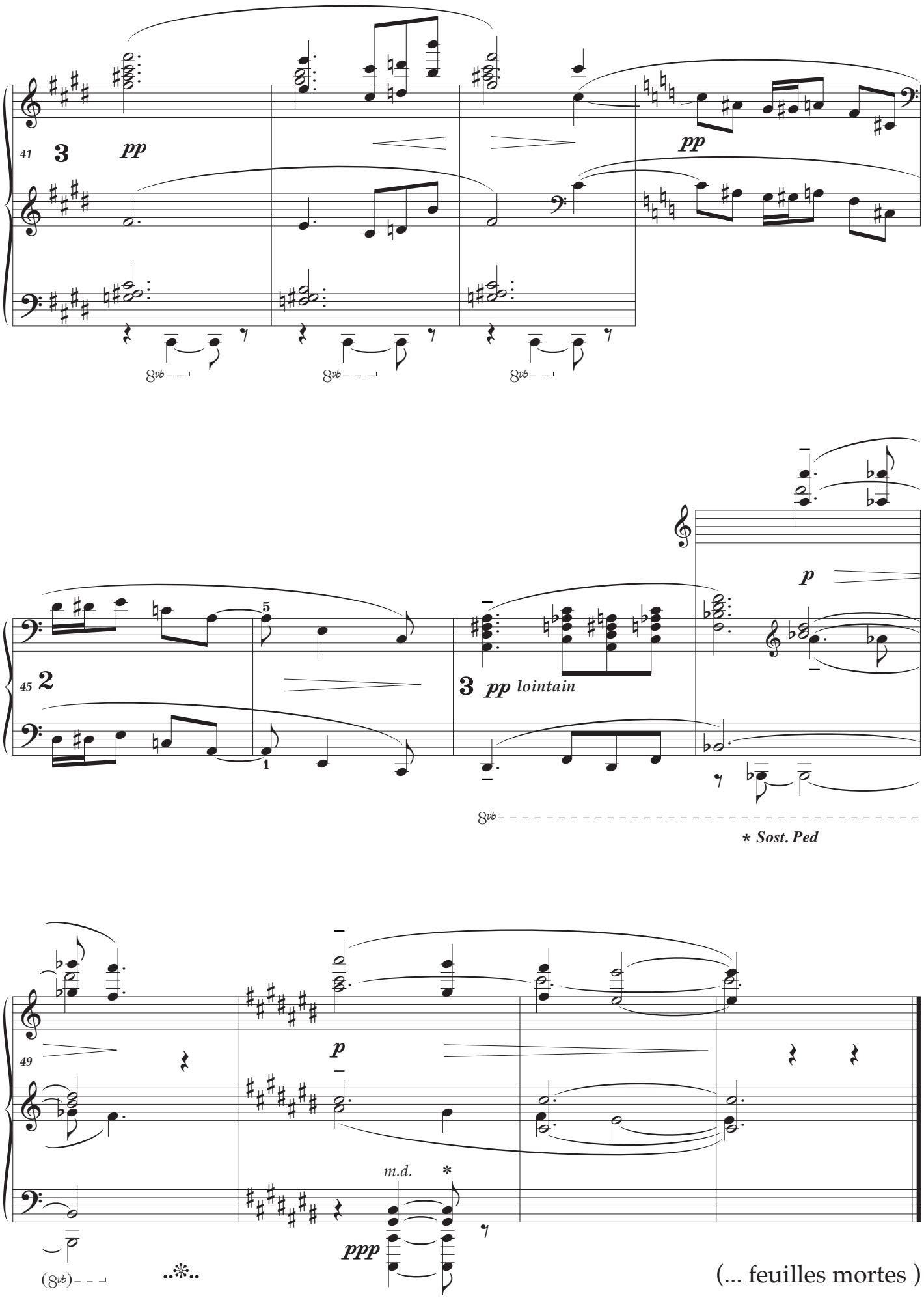







plus lent
ppp
29
p marqué
mf en dehors
ppp
ppp
33
p marqué
mf
p
mf
ppp
cédez - - - - //
37
p
p
pp

mouvement (dans le sentiment du début)



III

A postcard from Manuel de Falla of the picturesque Moorish Alhambra 'Wine Gate' in Granada provided the subtitle for this prelude. Debussy was often inspired by southern Spain* and *La Puerta del Vino* reflects the typical violent passion that Andalusian music often evokes — his instructions make this absolutely clear: '*avec de brusques oppositions d'extrême violence et de passionnée douceur*'. Expressing conflicting violence and passion, and often imitating the guitar, the habanera** is full of gorgeous themes at once mysteriously exotic, sensual and seductive, and I particularly love the totally original and deeply felt central chordal progression. (**35** to **41**).

CRISTINA DIAZ *LA PUERTA DEL VINO*

This is not a genre scene, as some have said, with majas dancing in a low dive; rather, it is another leaf from Debussy's book of solitude. Debussy wrote at the head of the piece: 'With sudden oppositions of extreme violence and passionate softness', and his hot and pungent sonorities — red ochre, burnt sienna, raw umber —set to an obsessive habanera rhythm drew from pianist Marguerite Long the following exclamation: 'It sounds like aural tannin!'. Once again, audacities of musical language occur within a formal and tonal framework of a highly effective sparsity: the summit of 'Spanish Debussy', turns out to be much closer to García Lorca's Andalusia than to the clichés of folklore.

— Harry Halbreich

*Once again, Spaniards are heard to be following two streams of thought simultaneously, leading to sudden explosions in the midst of quiet, contemplative passages. The two-note drum pattern, heard from the third bar, stays anchored on a low D flat for almost half the piece until **44** when it suddenly swoops down to a B flat; did Ravel remember this when writing Boléro fifteen years later? Finally the D flat returns and resists increasingly half-hearted attempts to dislodge it.*

— Roger Nichols

The opening in D flat provides continuity as well as a dramatic and violent invasion of the silence following Feuilles mortes. The instruction at the head of the piece, perfectly captures the fluctuating moods of Flamenco. Performers should inscribe it on their hearts.

— Paul Roberts

An impassioned and popular image set in a Spanish faubourg; a disreputable inn where muleteers hang out, and with coarse voices and dry hand clapping animate the petulant and sensual dance of a dark-haired beauty. Debussy had been so struck by the intense contrast of light and shade that he immediately undertook its transposition to music — "I'll do something with this", he said.

— Cortot

* *Lindaraja* (1901), *Soirée dans Grenade* (1903), and *La Sérénade Interrompue* (1909)

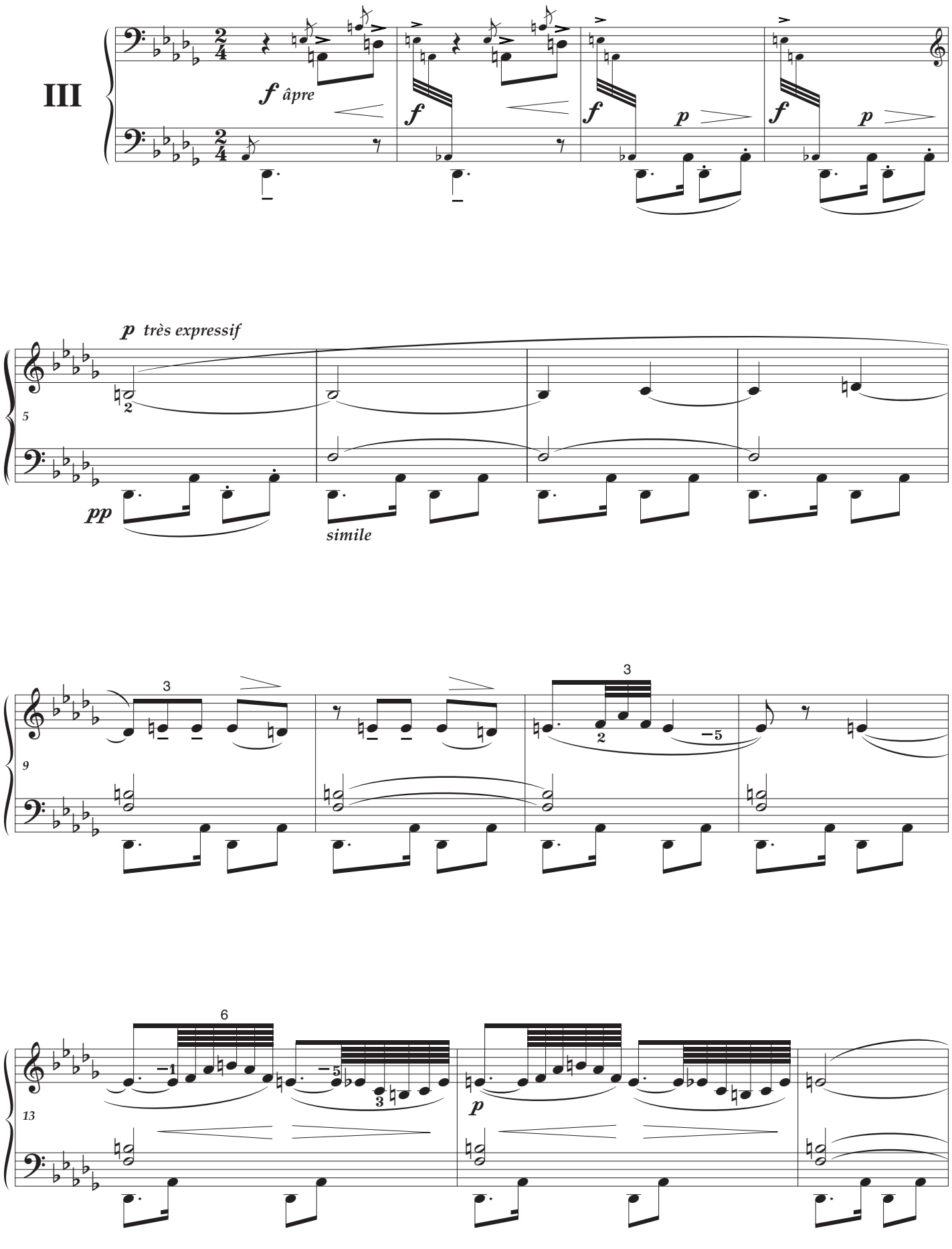
** A contradance originally from Havana (thus habanera) which travelled to Europe via Spain, becoming popular at the end of the 19th century.

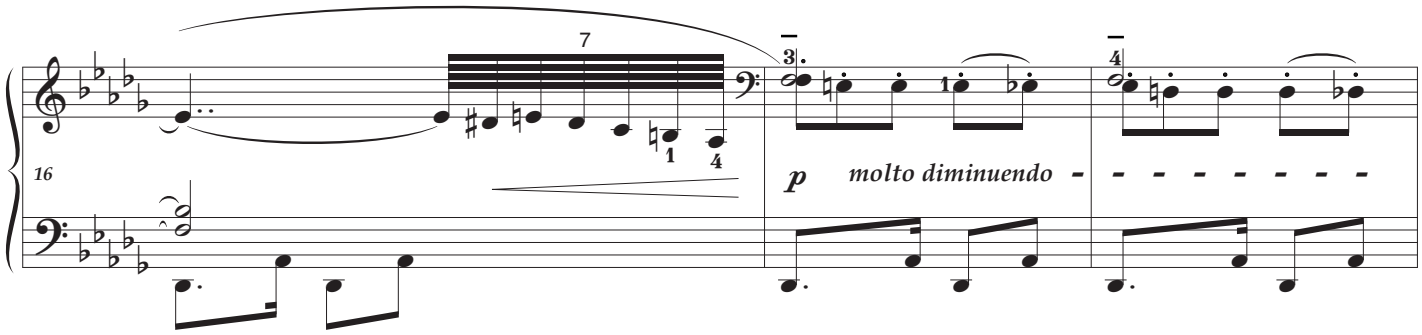
Duration: 3'35

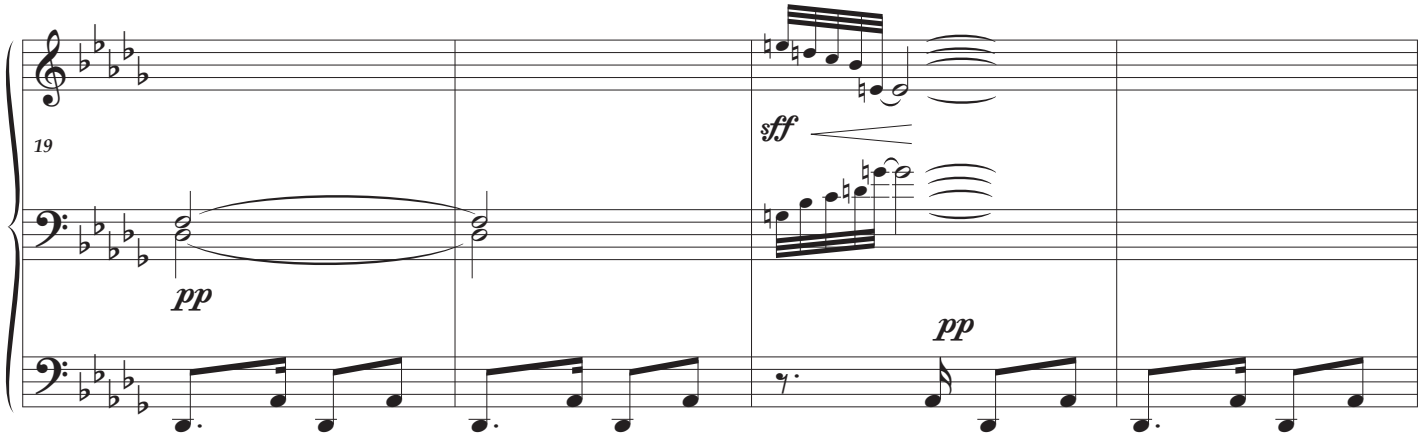
- **38** the autograph gives B𝄫 in the 2nd and 4th RH chords. Some editions and recordings omit the double flats.
- **50-51** upper voice enlarged font

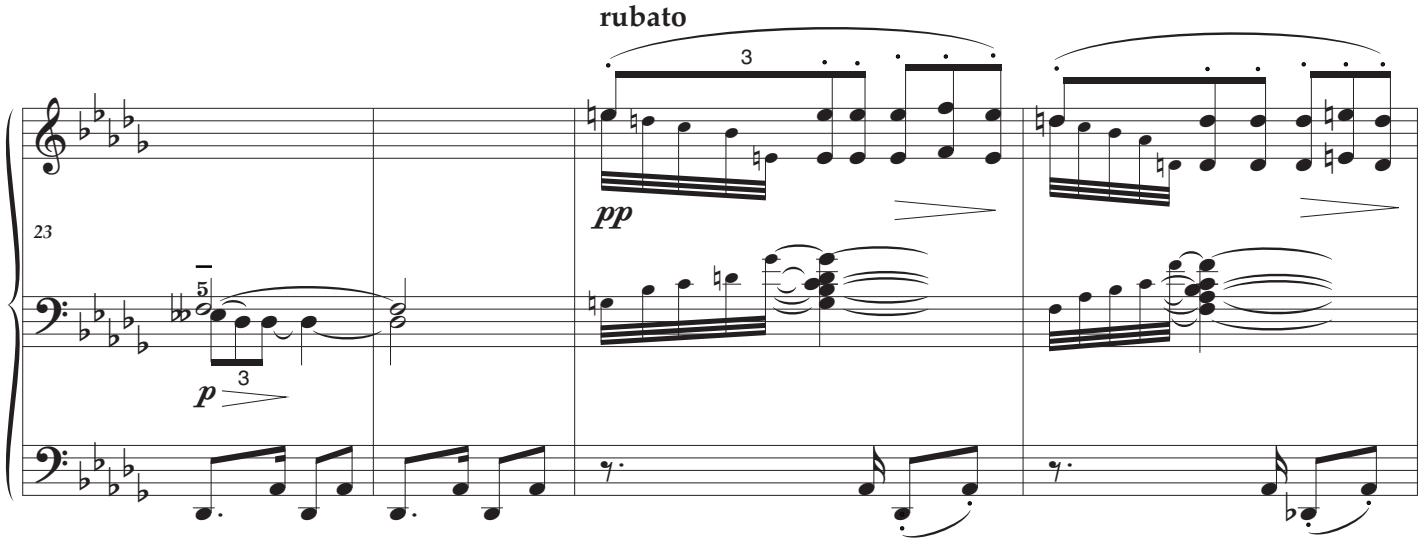
mouvement de habanera

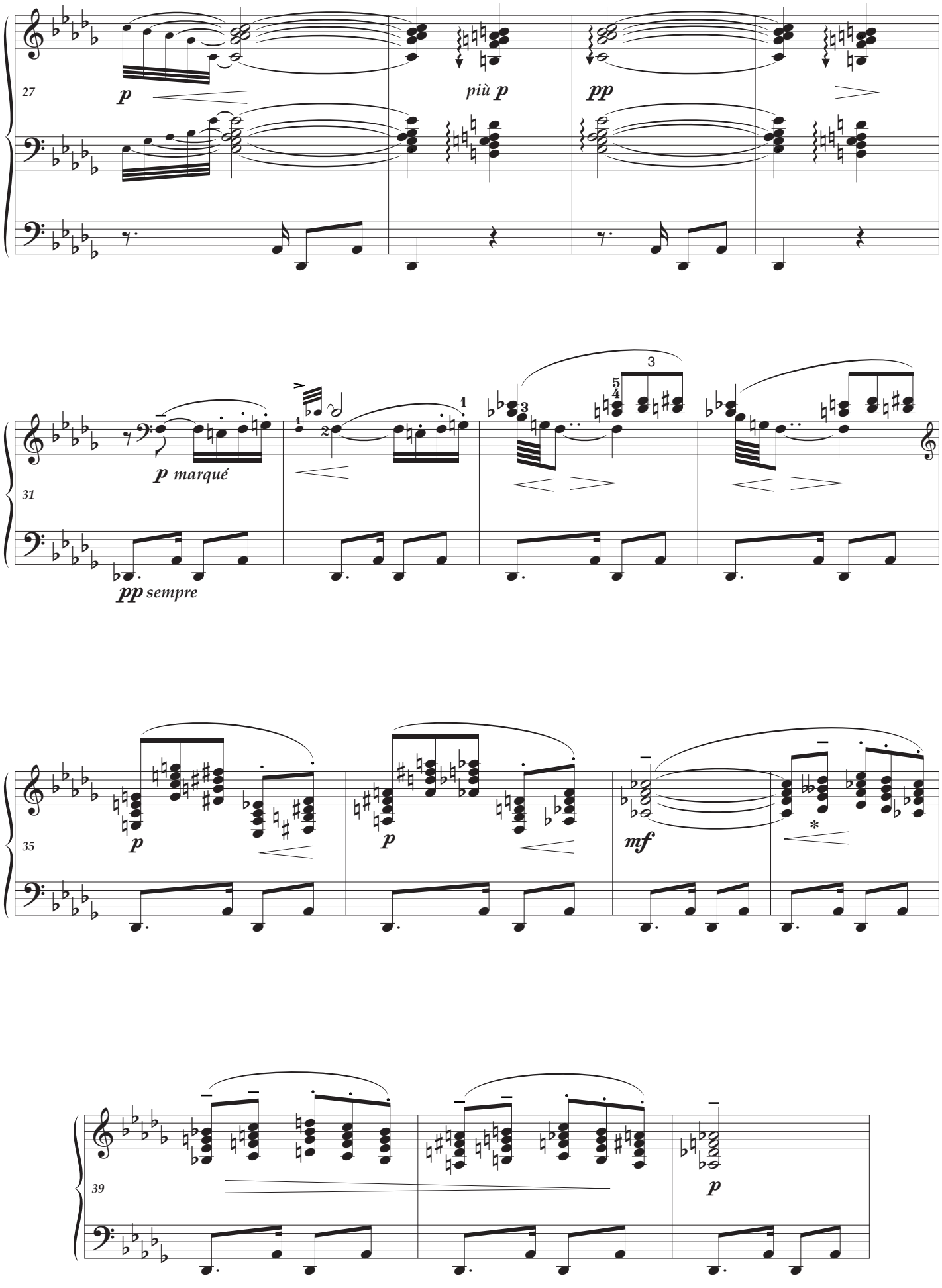
avec de brusques oppositions d'extrême violence et de passionnée douceur

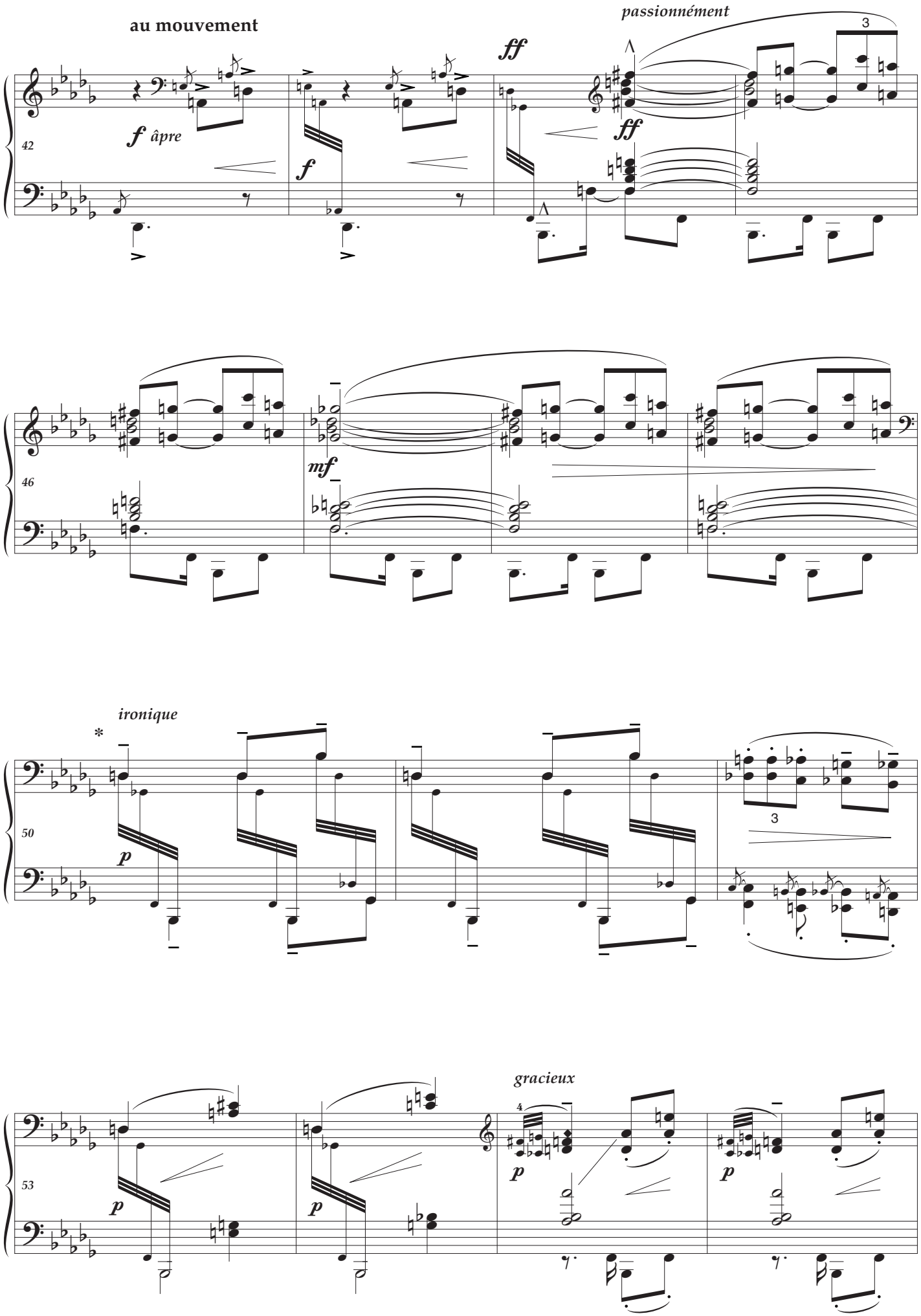


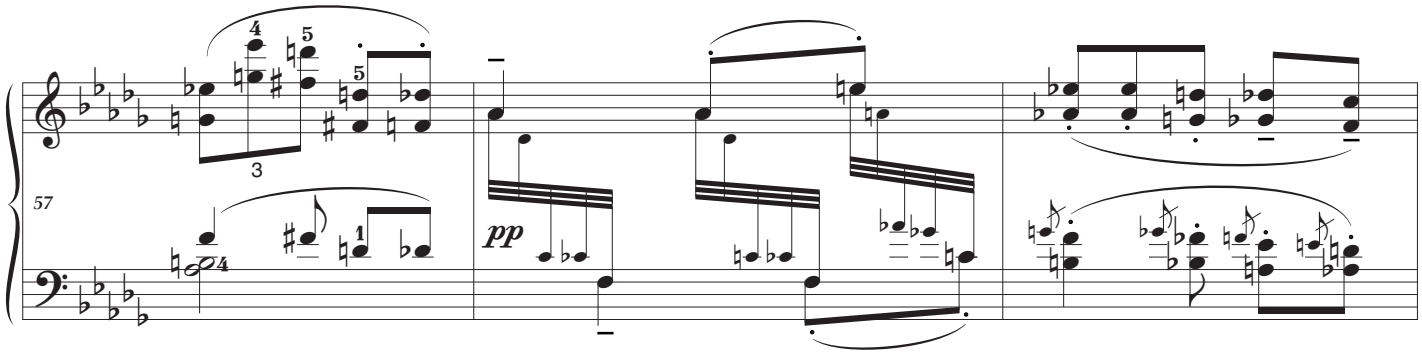

16
7
3
1
4
p
molto diminuendo
4


19
pp
sff
pp

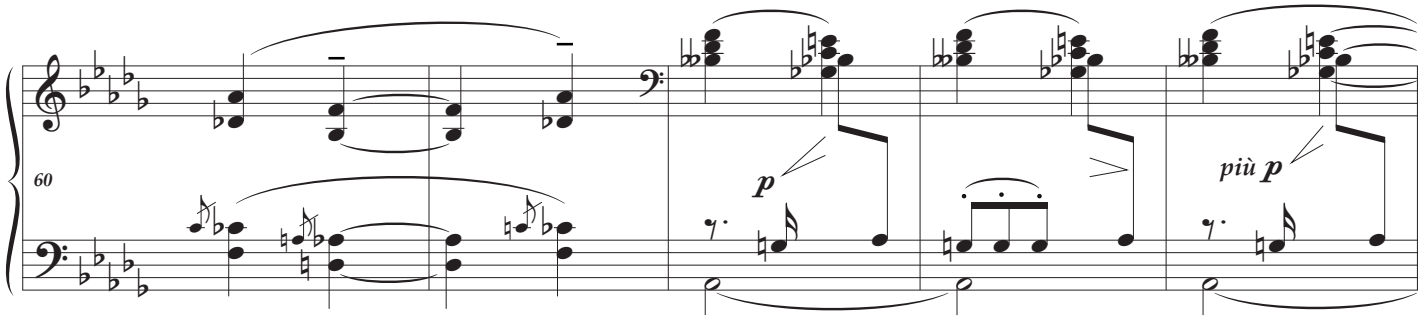

rubato
23
5
3
p
3
pp


27
p
più p
pp
31
p marqué
pp sempre
35
p
p
mf
39
p

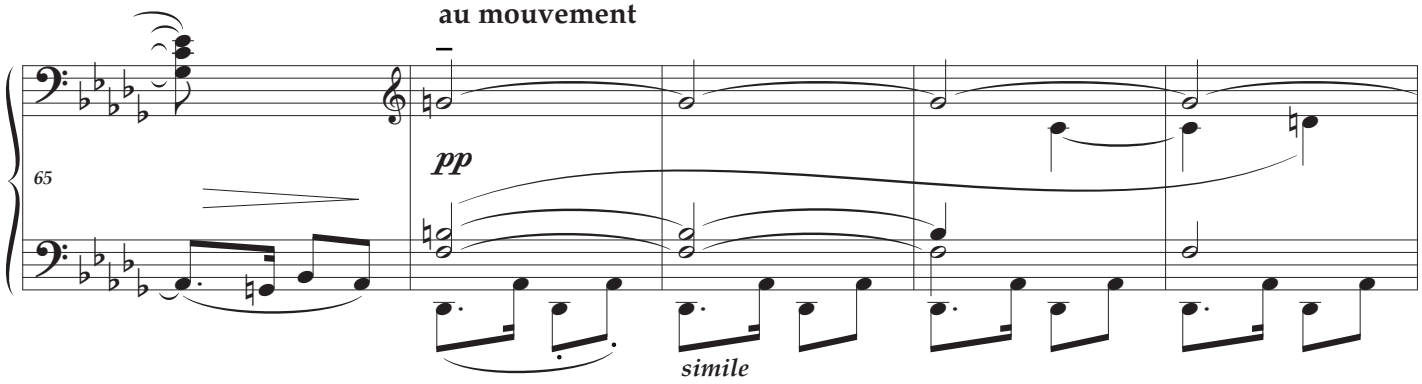

au mouvement
passionnément
ff
f âpre
f
ff
42
mf
46
ironique
*
p
50
3
gracieux
4
p
53

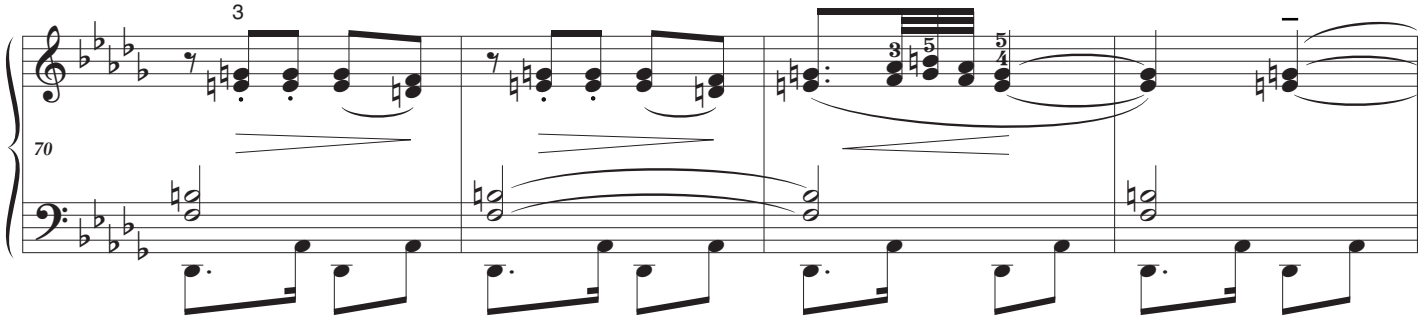


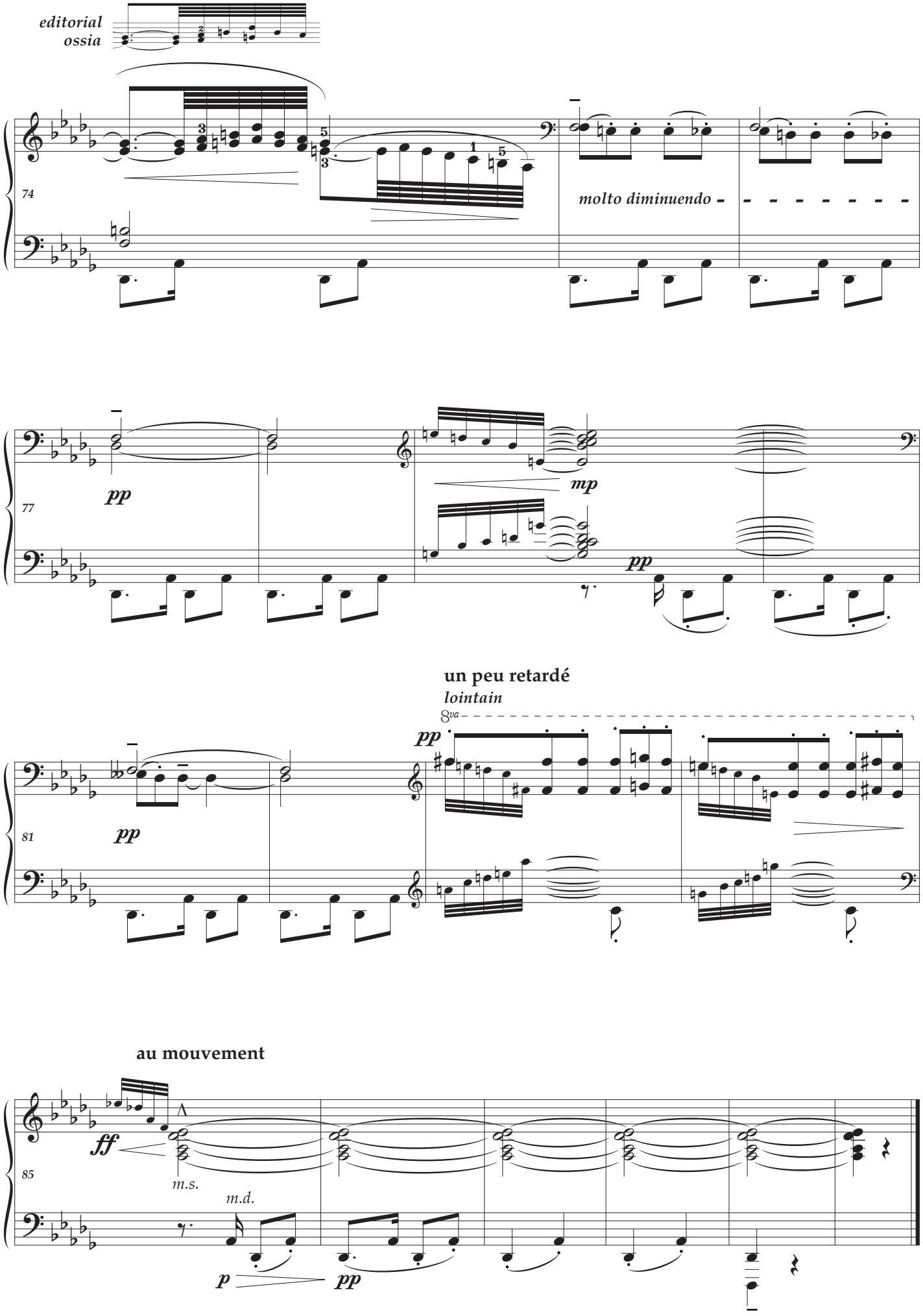
en retenant



au mouvement







(... la puerta del vino)

IV

In 1912 Debussy visited an exhibition in Paris of the famous book illustrator, Arthur Rackham; *Fairies are Exquisite Dancers* is based on one his engravings for *Peter Pan*, a book which had been offered to his daughter *Chouchou* the previous Christmas. Notice especially the bespectacled spider playing the double bass and a grasshopper the clarinet to accompany the fairy's magical dance, balancing on silk that must have been particularly strong!

After a charming, capricious and ephemeral introduction with diaphanous textures, spidery broken chords, trills and tremolos, the contrasting central section is a waltz, both expressive and *rubato*. At **71** this soft and dreamlike section is truly Scriabinesque with a Brahms waltz quotation from opus 39 N° 15, and the final bars feature a brief reference to Weber's *Oberon*.

ARTHUR RACKHAM
FAIRIES ARE EXQUISITE DANCERS

A scherzo, marvellous in its delicacy, with rhythms and sonorities as elusive as the unreal beings they evoke, unfolding in a charmingly unsettled harmonic atmosphere: the bitonal opposition between the two hands, the right on the black keys, the left on the white. After the dance of these dream creatures, which pianist Marguerite Long called 'the capricious daughters of the nymphs of l'Après-Midi d'un Faune, we hear their song. The piece then concludes with a dreamy quotation of the horn in Weber's Oberon, here a mysterious epilogue from the King of the Fairies, and not an active presence as in 'La danse de Puck'. Rackham's drawing centres around a spider's web, and Debussy's music is likewise seemingly insubstantial but strongly constructed. Amid the fairies' quicksilver antics they find time in the central section to indulge in a waltz.

— Harry Halbreich

A charming fantasy of aerial virtuosity, a lightweight flight of ethereal images, an ephemeral interplay of reflections, a spirited dancing flame, a swirling circle of smoke, everything that might dissolve from the air's caress and in the joy of light.

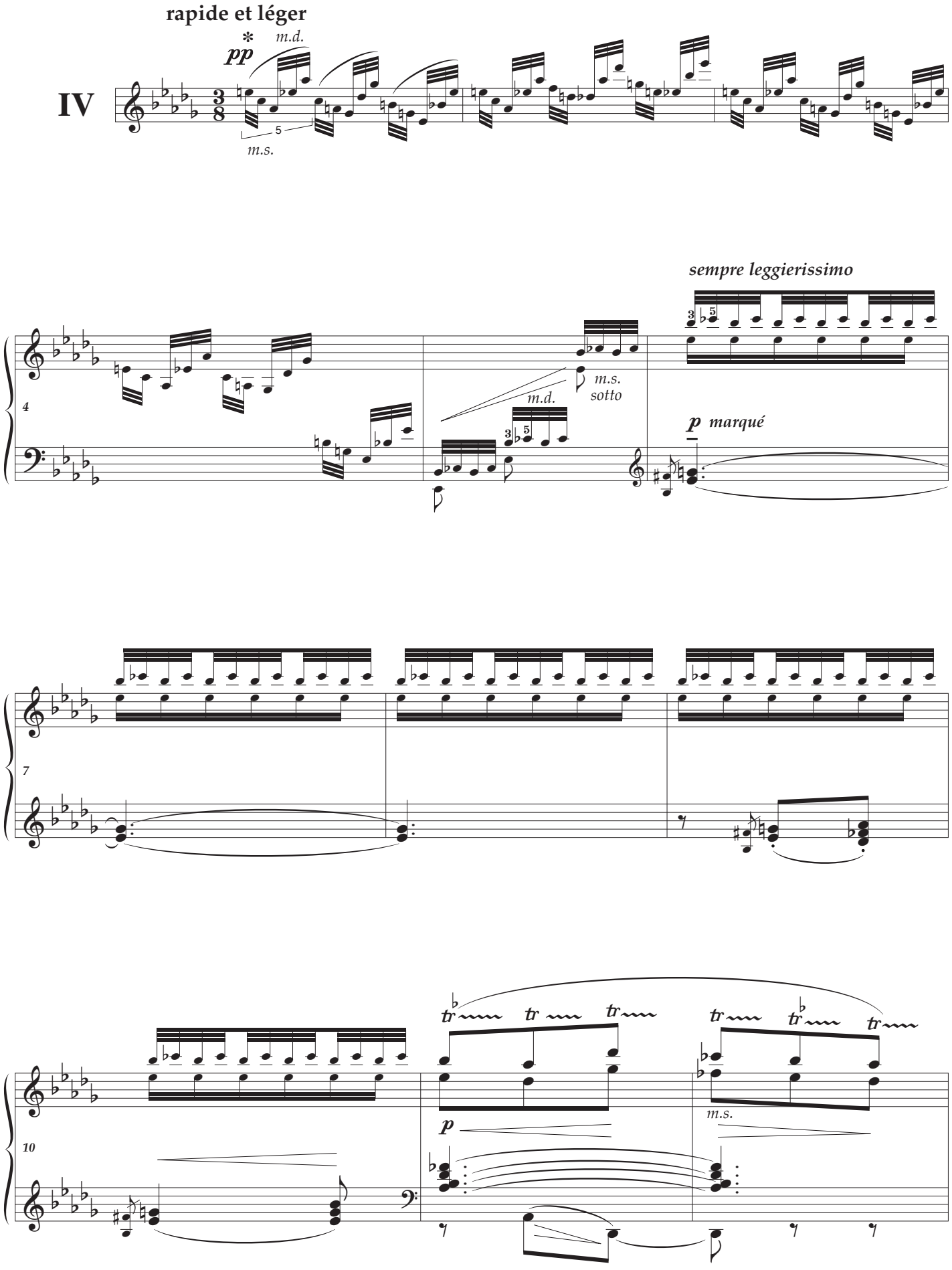
— Cortot

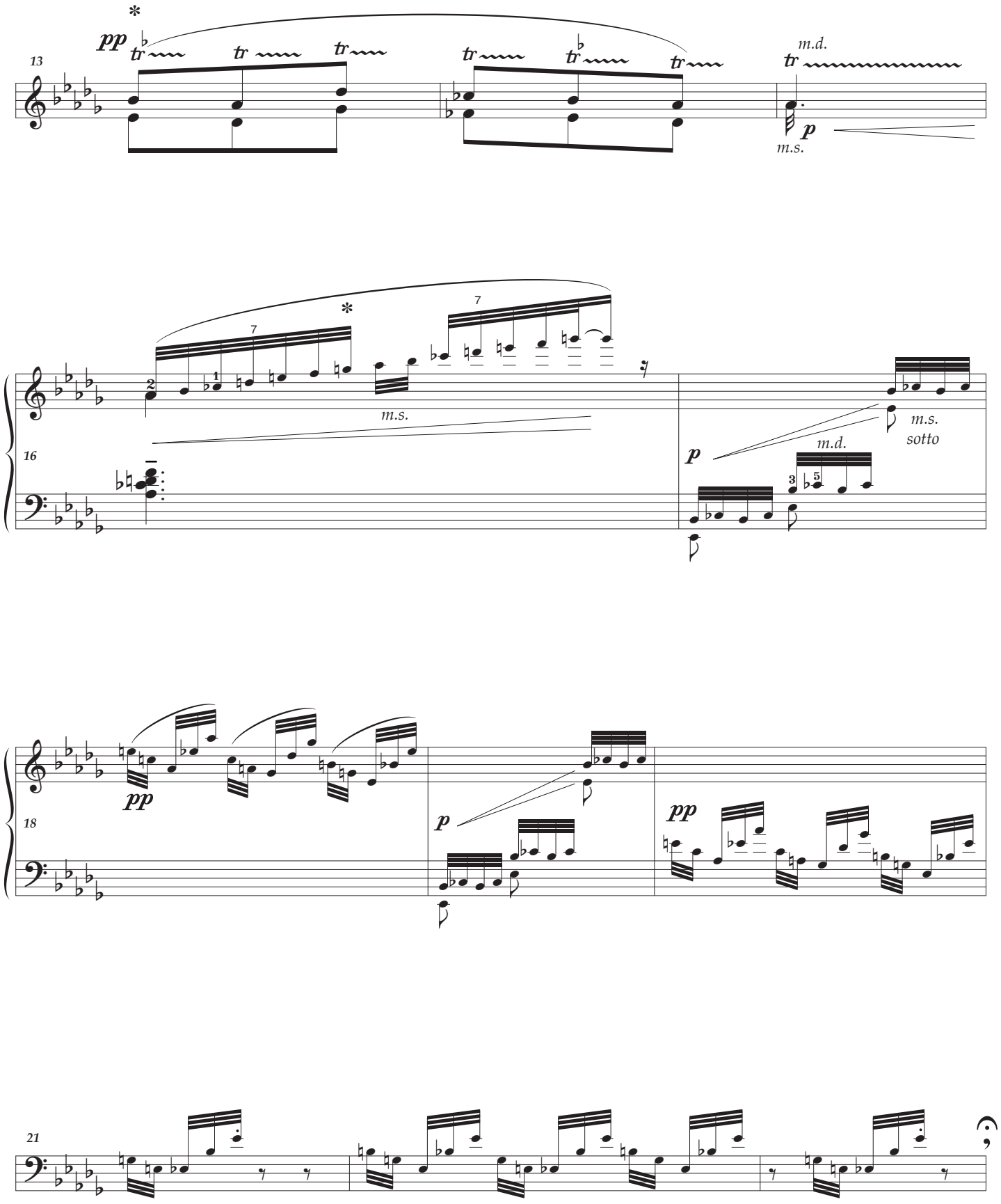
A miniature masterpiece of descriptive music. These strong ties to former styles suggest that Debussy, a composer credited with breaking new ground, is in many ways continuing and expanding upon the Romantic tradition.

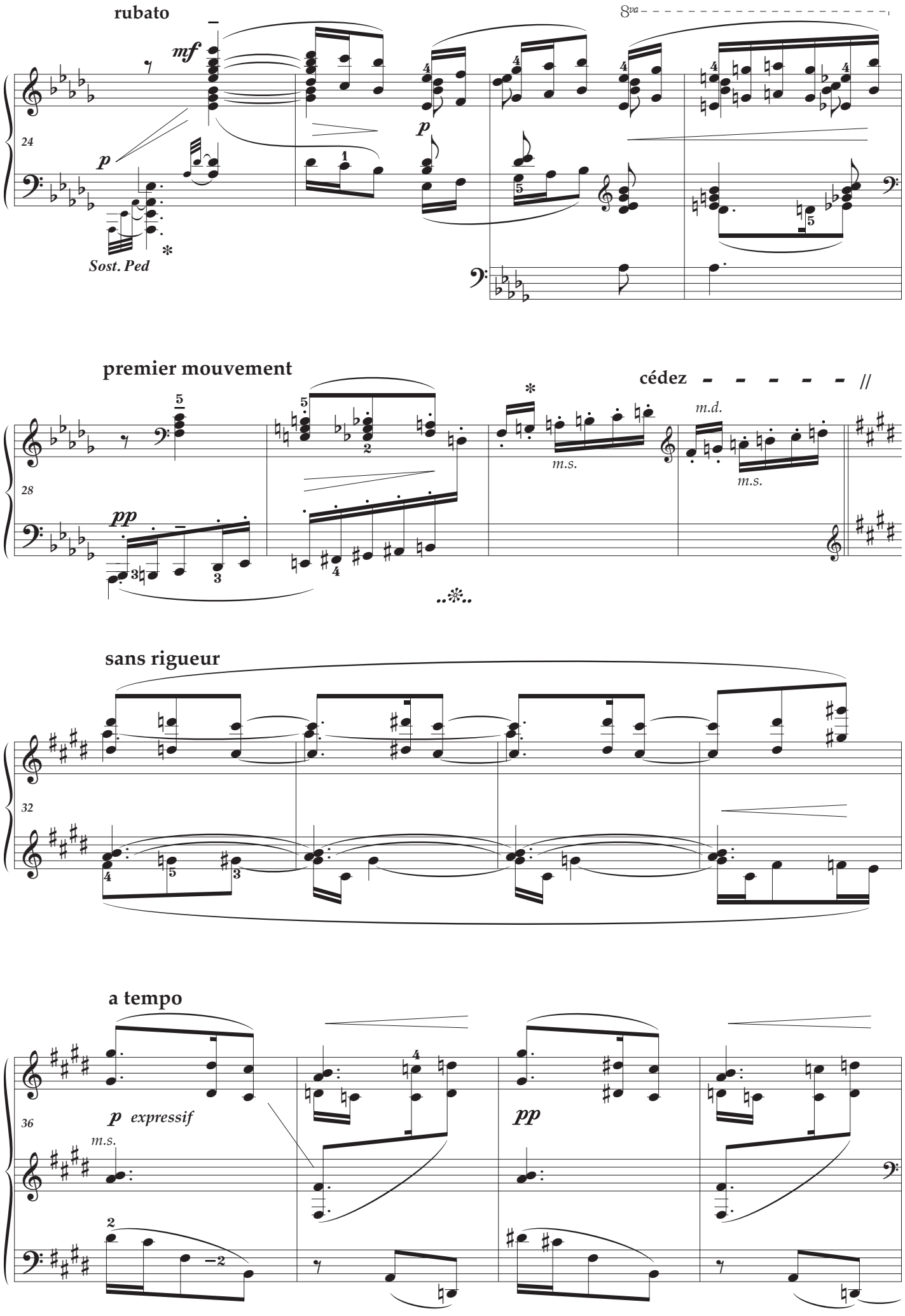
— Michael Clark

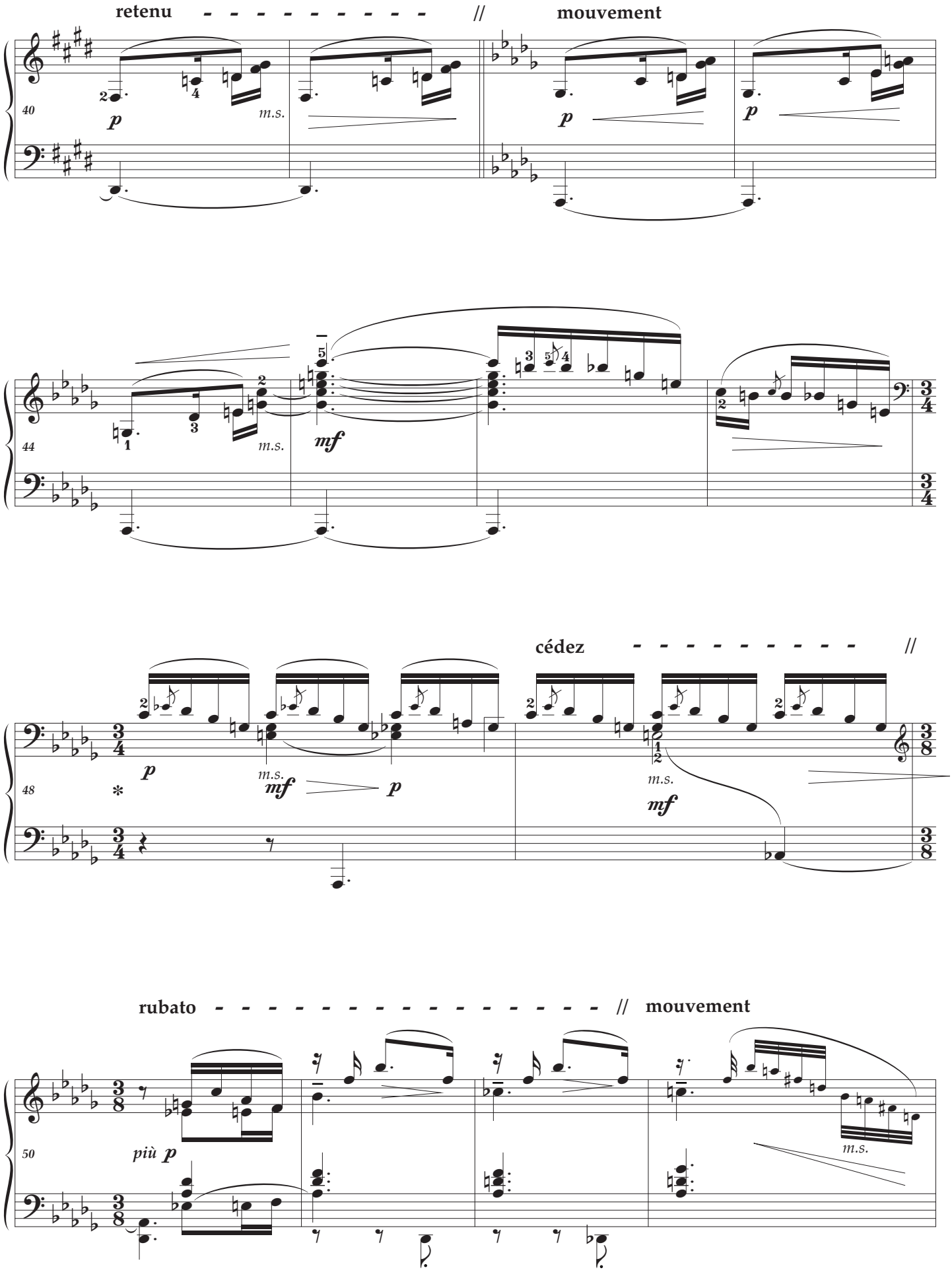
Duration: 3'20 (There is a beautiful studio recording in which Horowitz takes 3'10)

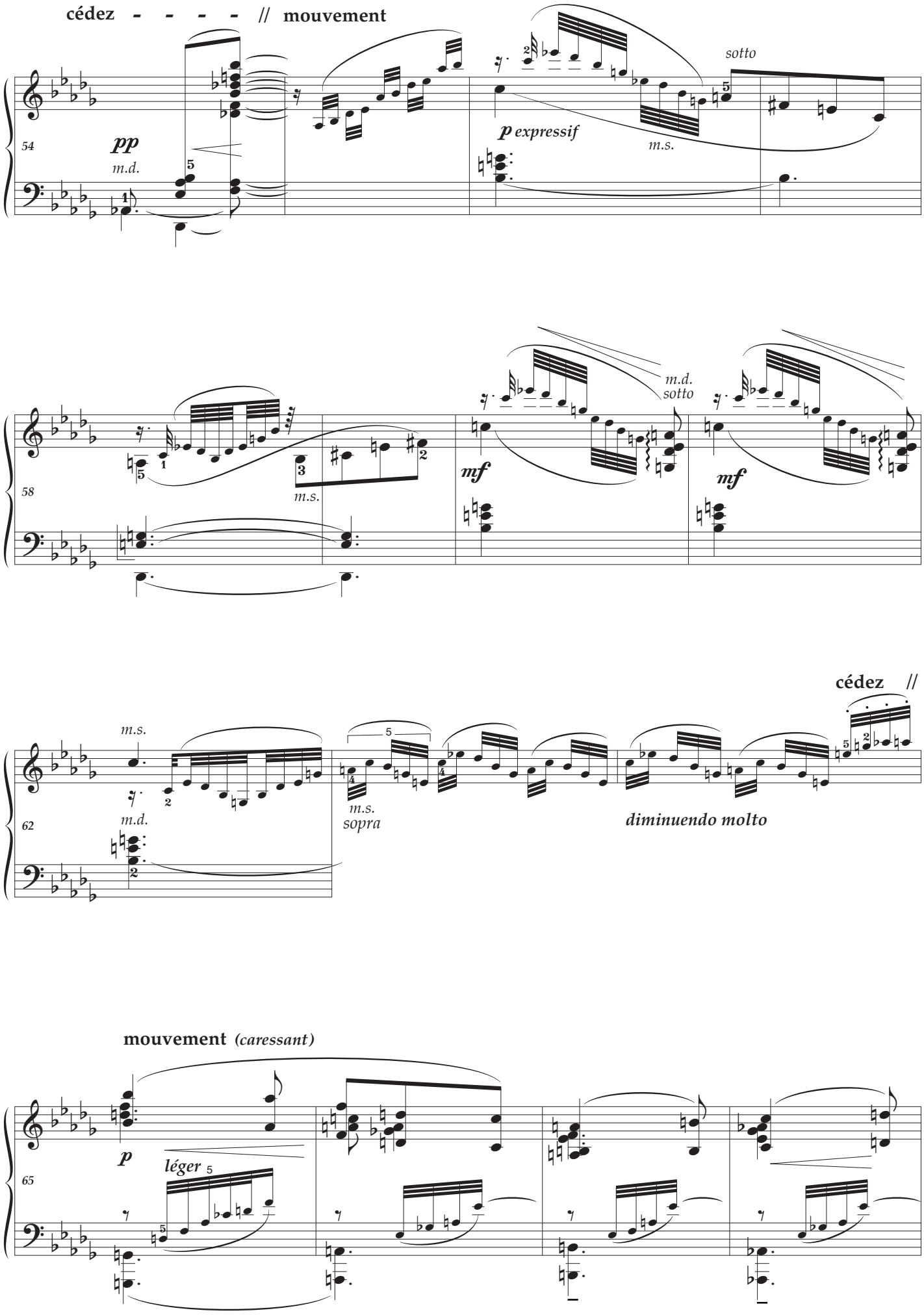
- editorial reduced font
- the opening with minimum pedal is particularly effective
- **13-14** a practical solution… if Debussy's septuplets prove impossible
- **16** G♮ missing — probable misprints
- **24-29** *sostenuto* pedal editorial suggestion, just capturing the initial bass A♭
- **30** G♮ missing — a probable misprint
- **48-49** presented in 3/4
- **107-110** presented in 3/4
- **110-115** editorial pedal suggestions

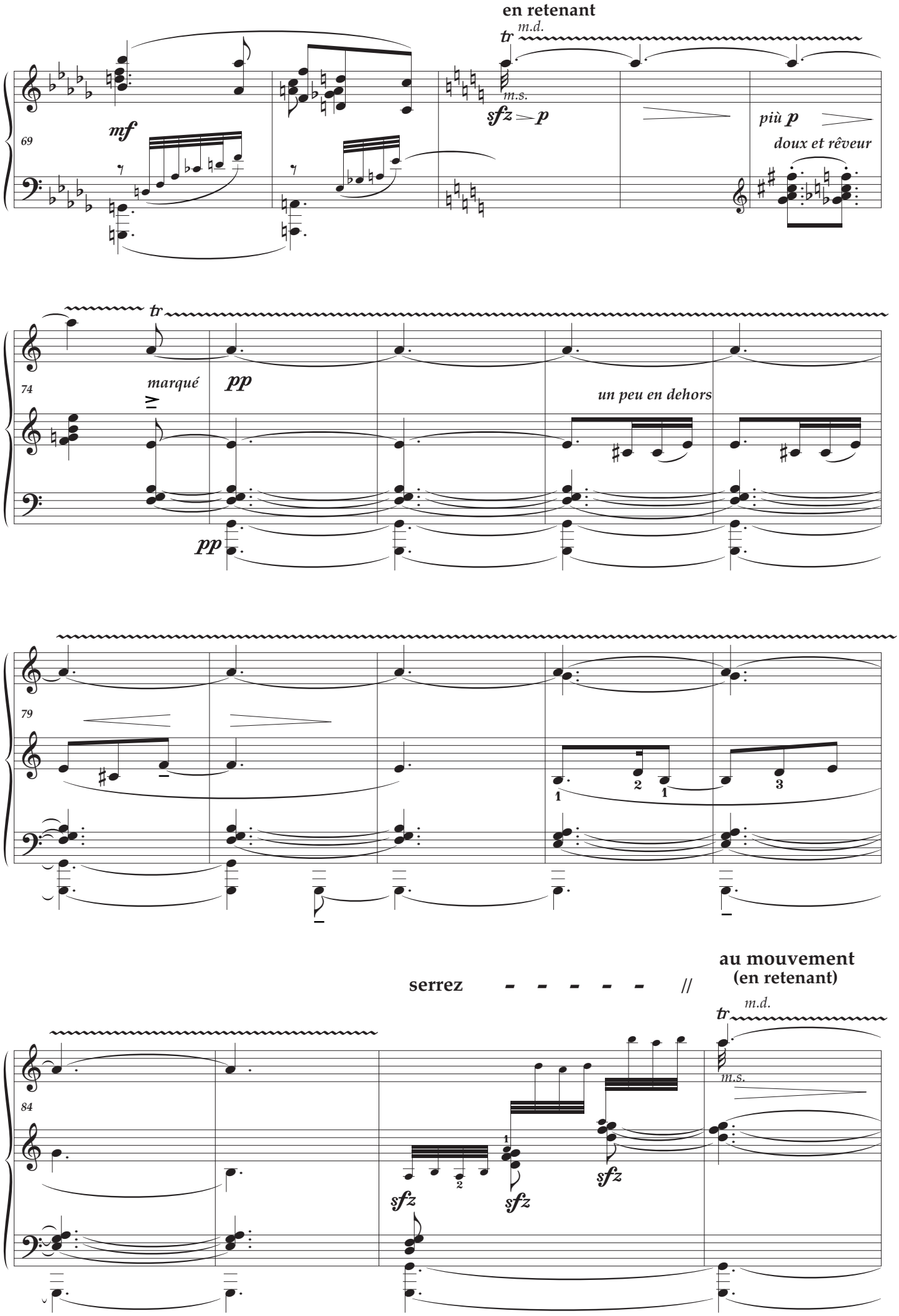

rapide et léger
IV
pp
m.d.
m.s.
5
sempre leggierissimo
4
m.s.
sotto
m.d.
p marqué
7
10
tr
p
m.s.

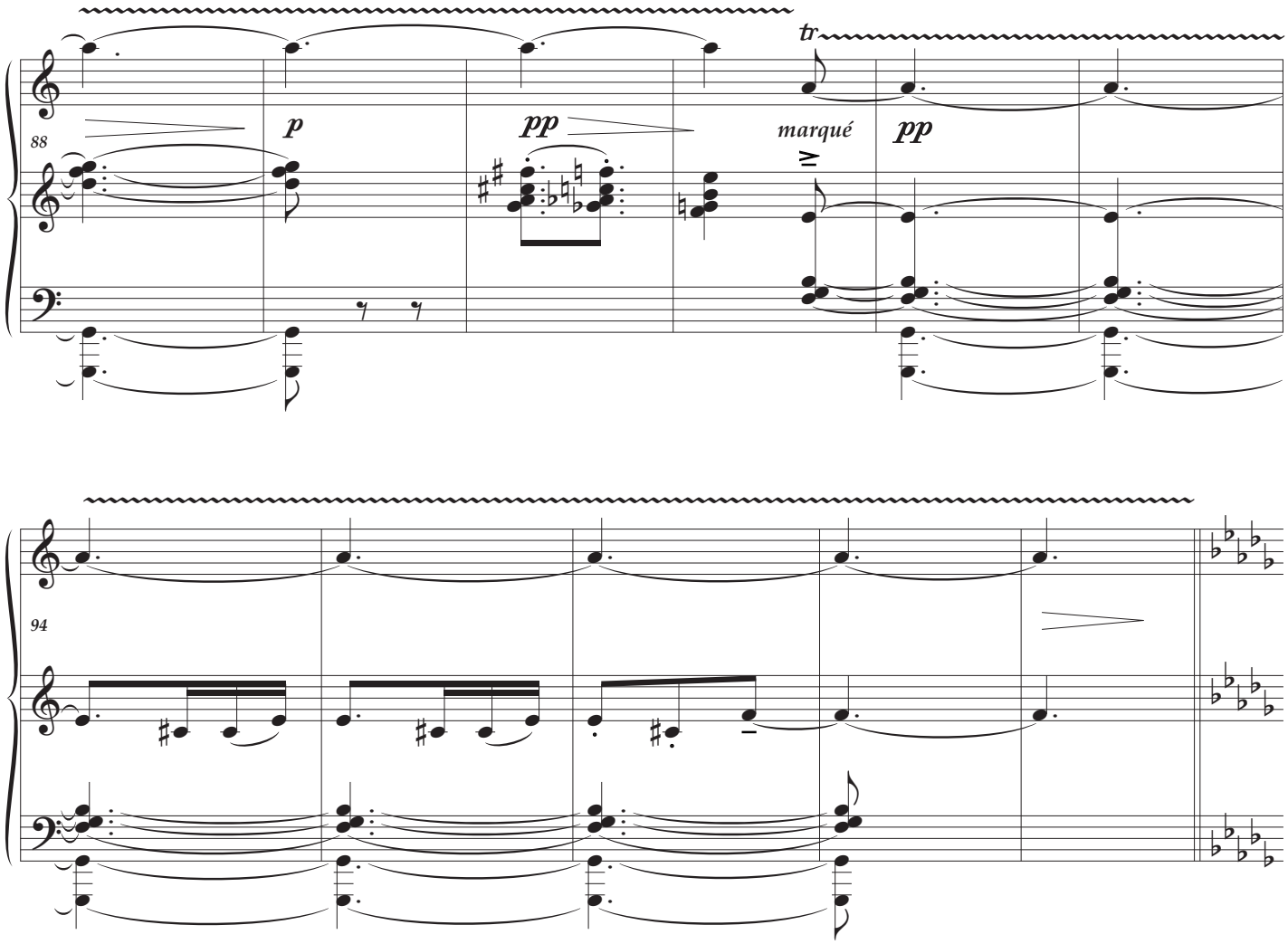

13
pp
tr
m.d.
m.s.
p
16
m.s.
m.s.
sotto
m.d.
p
18
pp
p
pp
21


rubato
8va
mf
p
24
Sost. Ped
premier mouvement
cédez
m.d.
m.s.
pp
28
sans rigueur
32
a tempo
p expressif
m.s.
pp
36

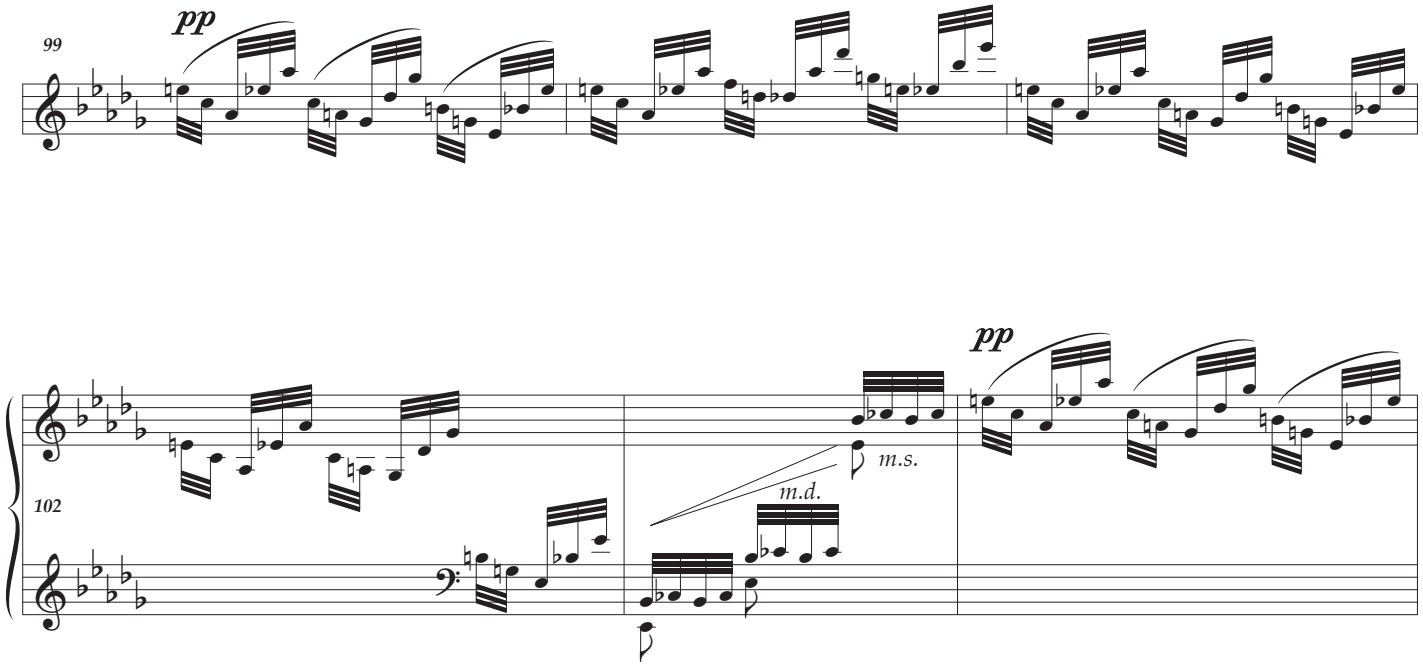

retenu
mouvement
40
p
m.s.
44
mf
cédez
48
rubato
mouvement
50
più p

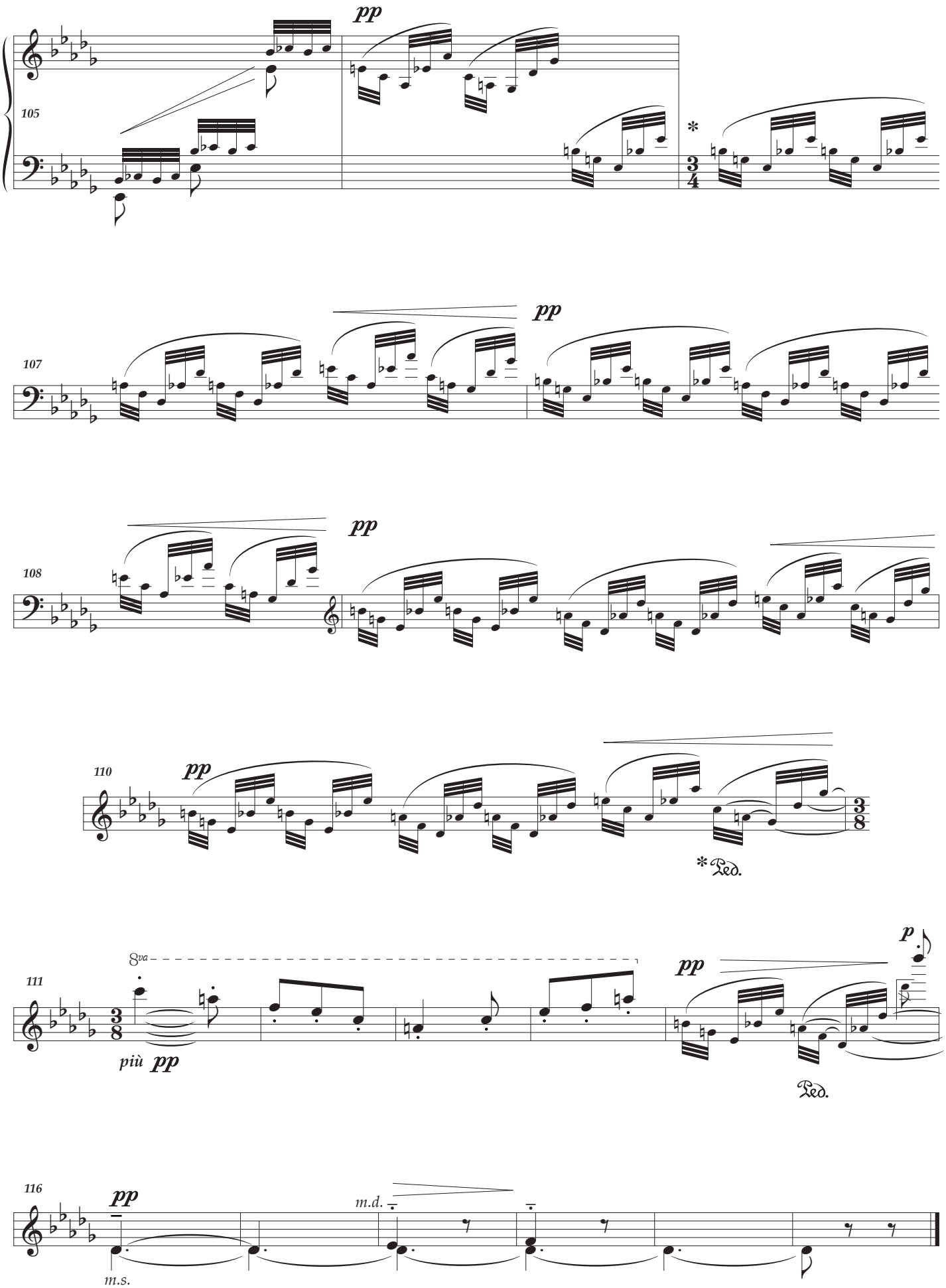

cédez - - - - // mouvement
54
pp
m.d.
p expressif
m.s.
sotto
58
m.s.
mf
m.d.
sotto
mf
62
m.s.
m.d.
m.s.
sopra
diminuendo molto
cédez //
mouvement (caressant)
65
p
léger


en retenant
tr
m.d.
m.s.
sfz p
mf
69
più p
doux et rêveur
tr
74
marqué
pp
un peu en dehors
pp
79
1
2
1
3
serrez
au mouvement
(en retenant)
tr
m.d.
m.s.
84
sfz
sfz
sfz



mouvement





(… "les fées sont d'exquises danseuses")

V

As if by magic, we are transported to heather covered heathland with a piece much reminiscent of *la Fille aux Cheveux de Lin* from book one. Nature and innocence demand a spontaneous and laidback approach to those delicate and poetic riffs to match the colour and aroma of fragrant purple shrubs. Birds may be heard calling, accompanied by the distant refrain of a shepherd's flute in this harmonious and homogeneous prelude — an admirable contrast to numbers IV and VI.

In direct connection with this prelude, Marguerite Long mentions a Debussy souvenir pairing the scent of sea mist and coastal pines, and if she is correct this would take us to Arcachon in south west France. It is possible that the young composer first went there in 1880 with the baroness Nadejda Von Meck and later in 1904 when he stayed with the uncle of Emma Bardac (née Moyse), his future bride.

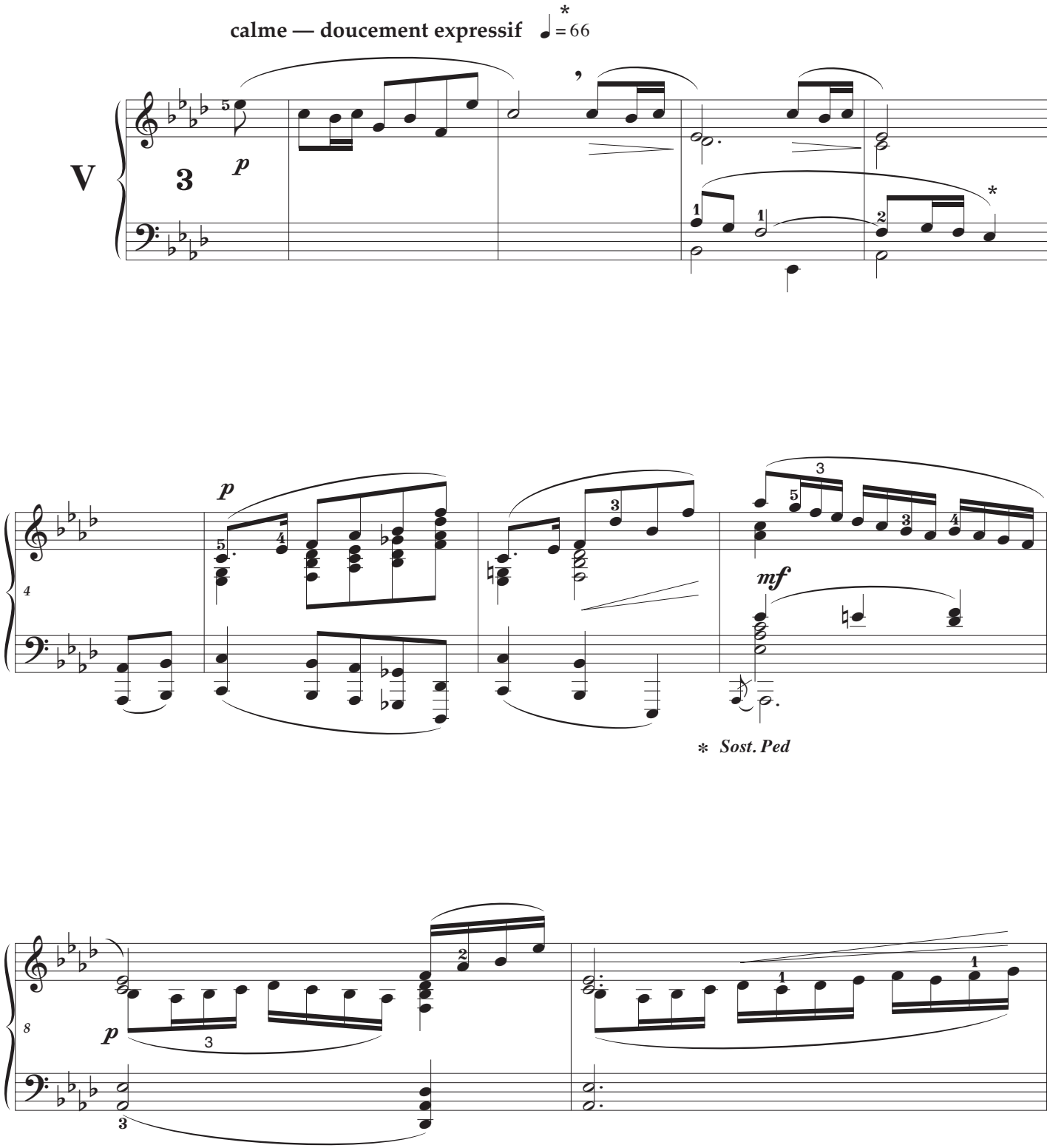
> *The pastoral and familiar poetry of a woodland scene where the earth's pervasive scent mingles with the subdued display of patches in purple.*
>
> *— Cortot*

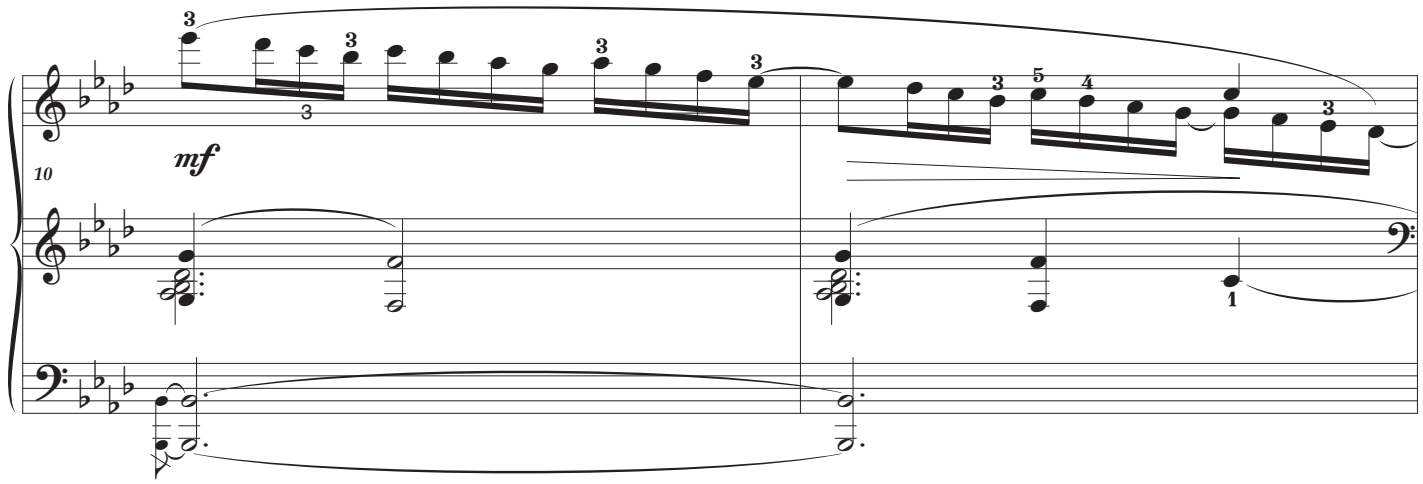
> *A peaceful melody on a shepherd's pipe, resonating on the silent moorland. With its Celtic pentatonic structure it shows that this shepherd is a distant cousin of 'la fille aux cheveux de lin'. The same calm, the same purity and the same diatonic transparency, time-signature and tempo provide a clear link.*
>
> *— Harry Halbreich*

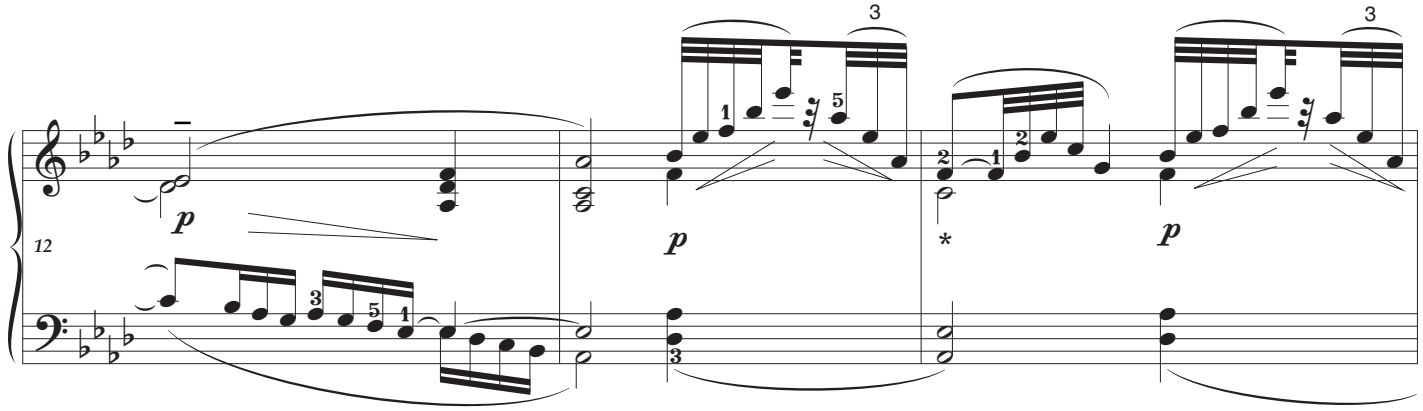
Duration: 3 minutes

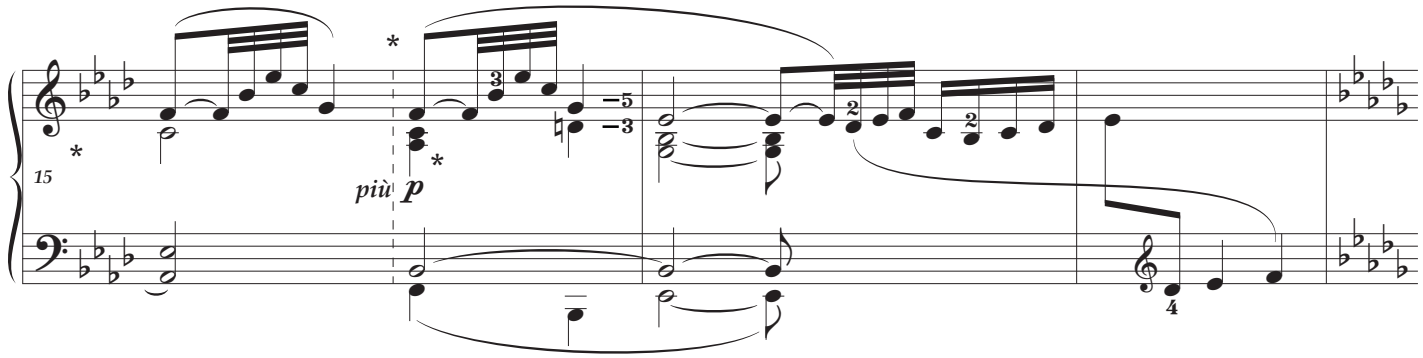
- editorial suggestions for the *sostenuto* pedal
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- the only prelude from book two with a metronome speed (identical to *La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin)* — ♩. = 60 is perhaps more realistic
- **4** originally a minim — a possible error
- **14** alto C (including B♮ if necessary) replaced silently by the LH thumb allows a pedal change at the 2nd beat
- **15-17** editorial modification of barlines and time-signature
- **16** A♭ originally equal to a minim — a possible error
- **19-22** presented in D♭
- **33** consistent with **23** etc.

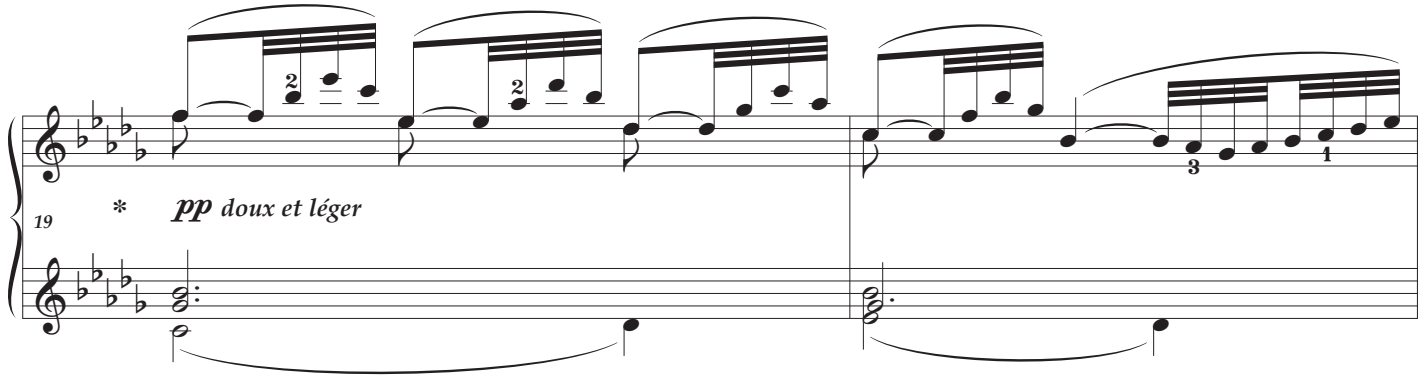
GASTON ANGLADE *LES CAMPAGNES DE BRUYÈRES*

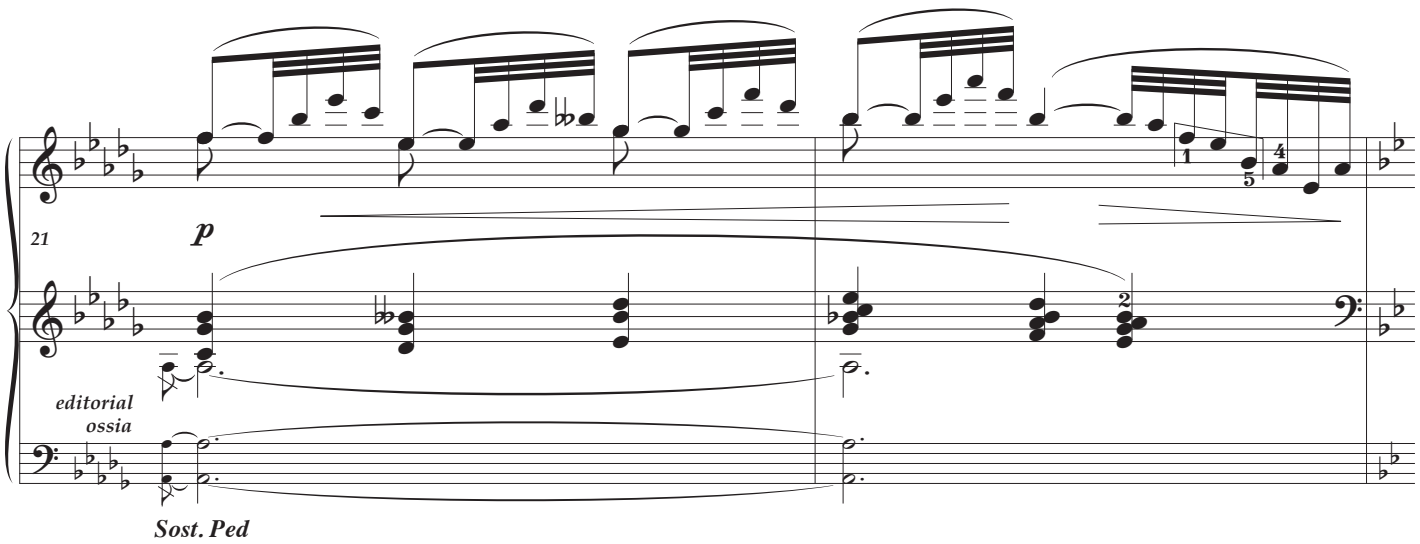

calme — doucement expressif
= 66
V
p
mf
* Sost. Ped

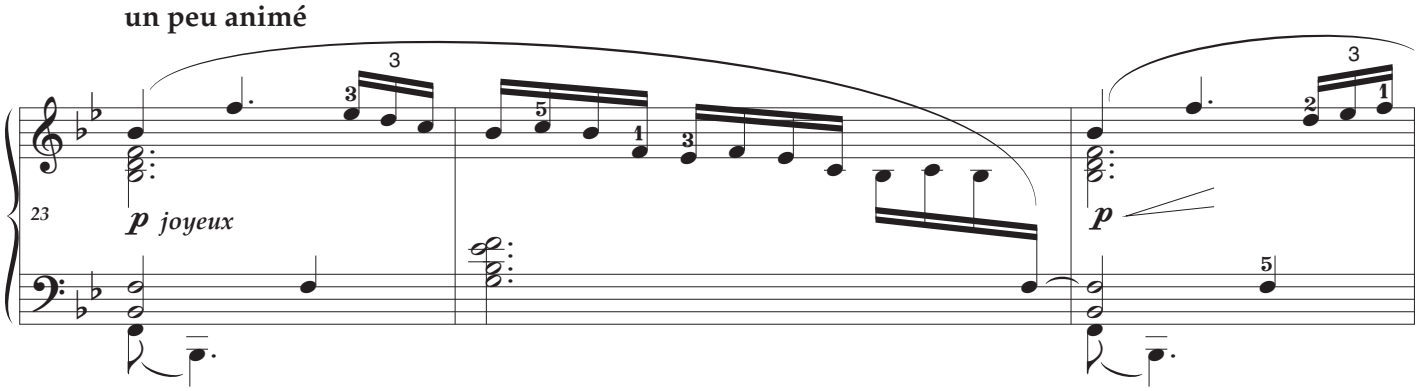

10
mf
Sost. Ped

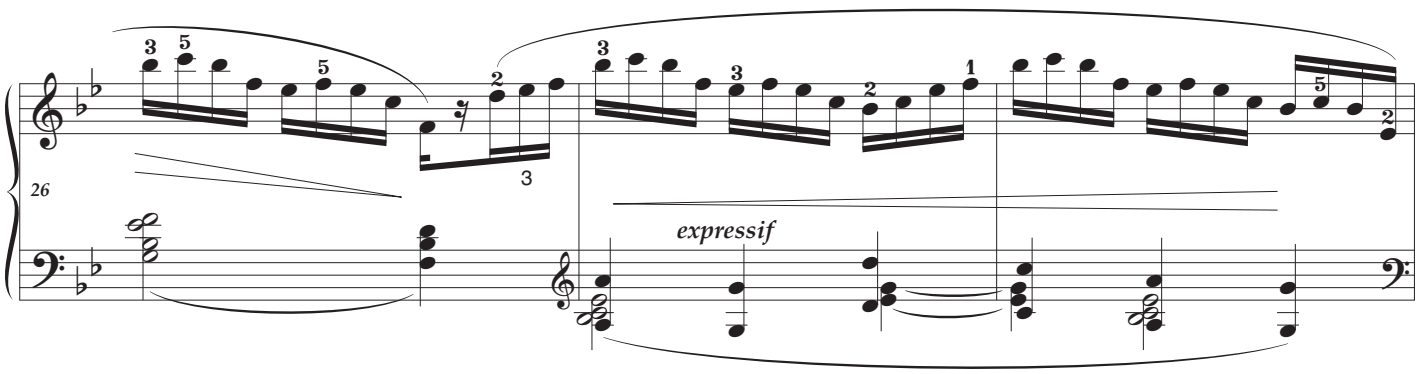

12
p
p
p


15
più
p


19
pp doux et léger


21
p
editorial
ossia
Sost. Ped


un peu animé
23
p joyeux
p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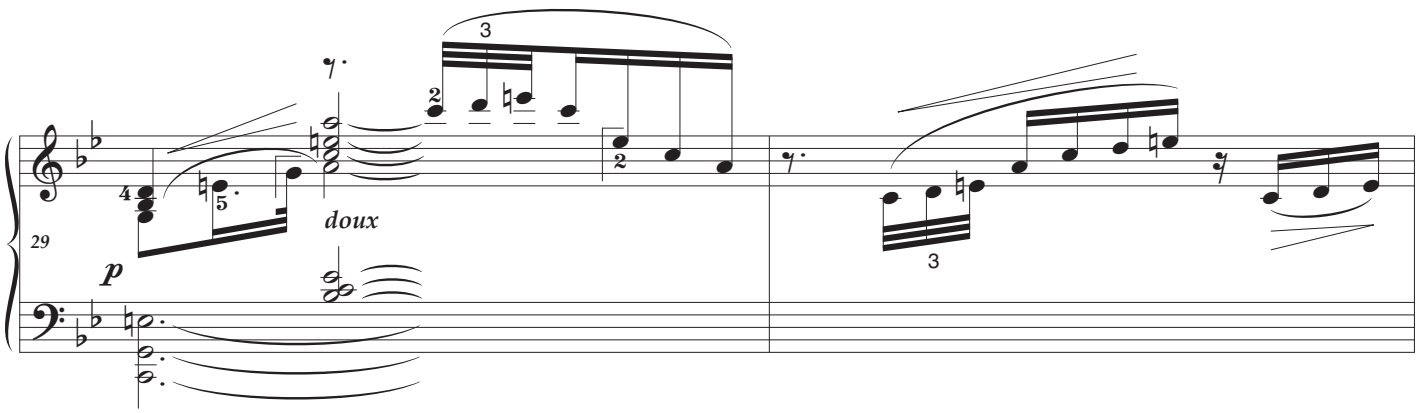
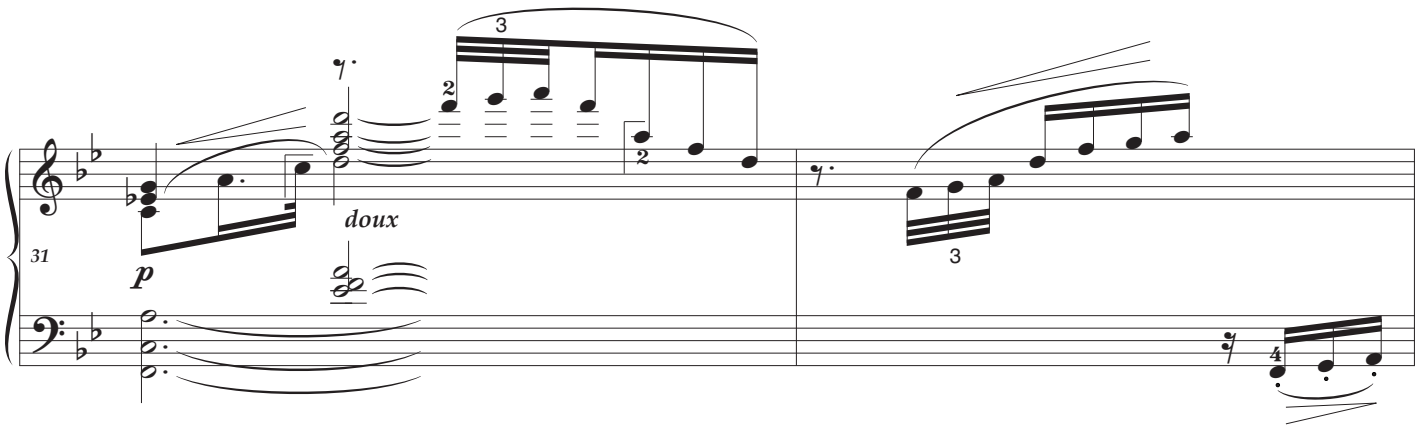
expressif


29
doux
p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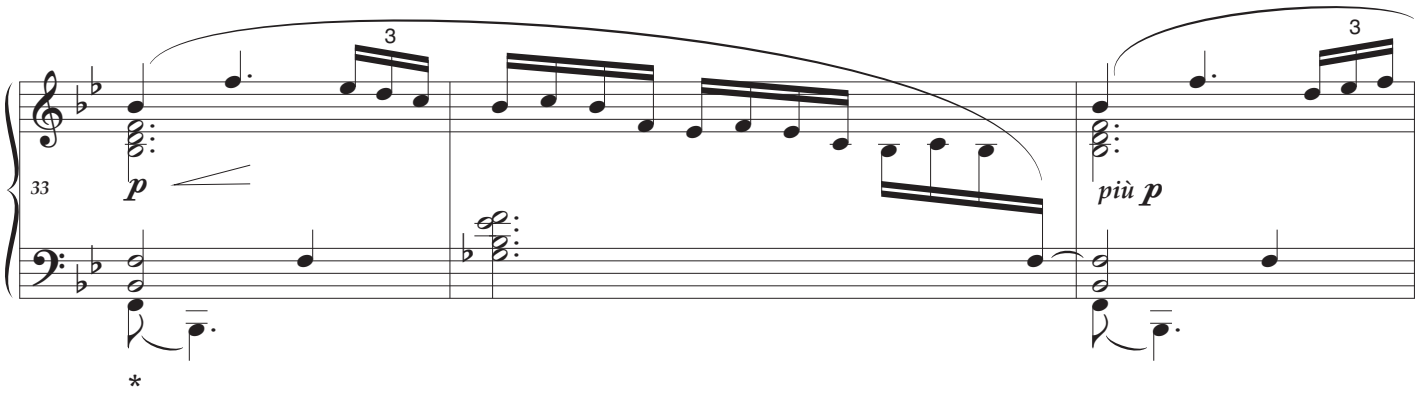
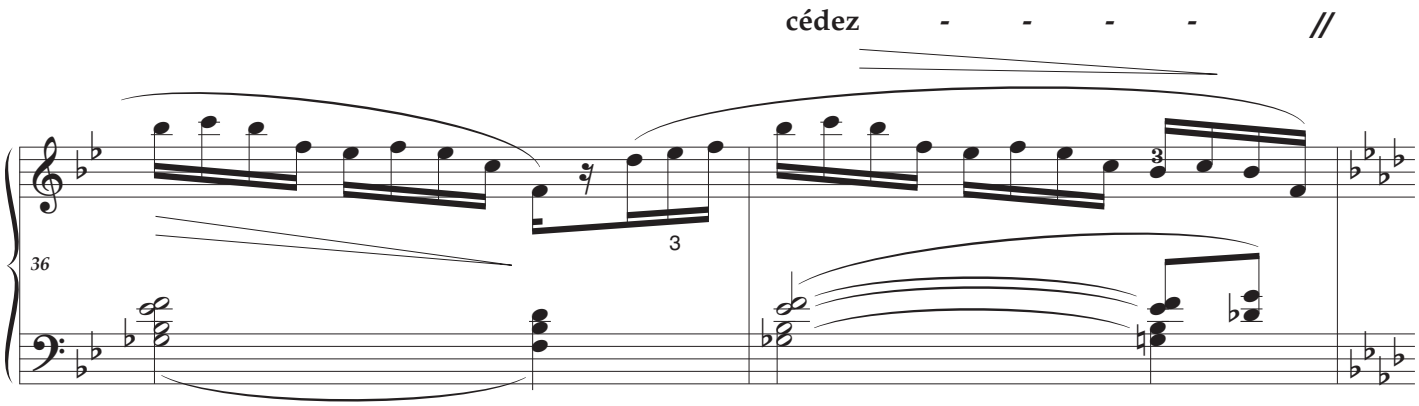
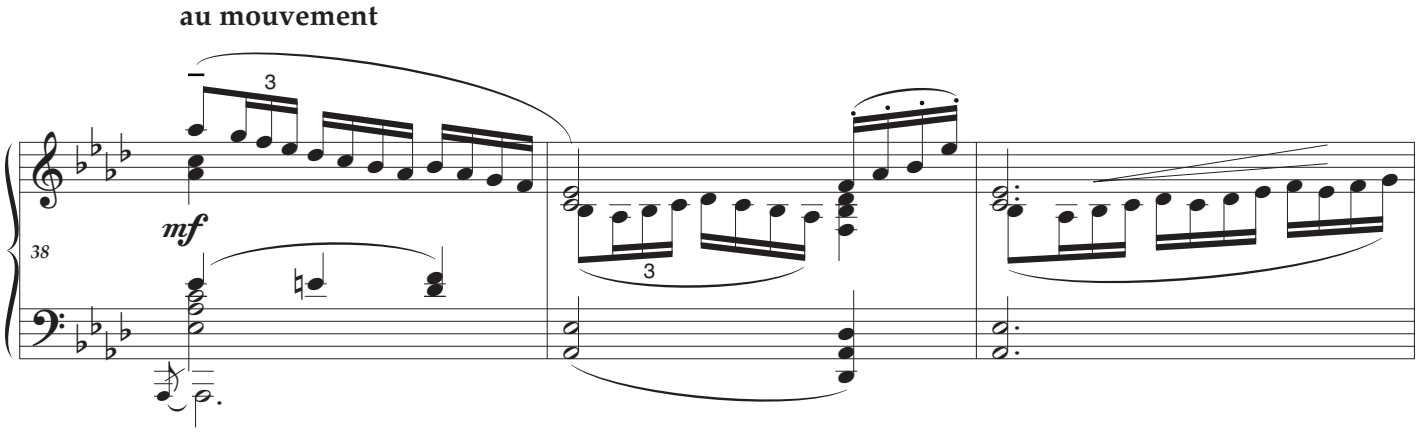
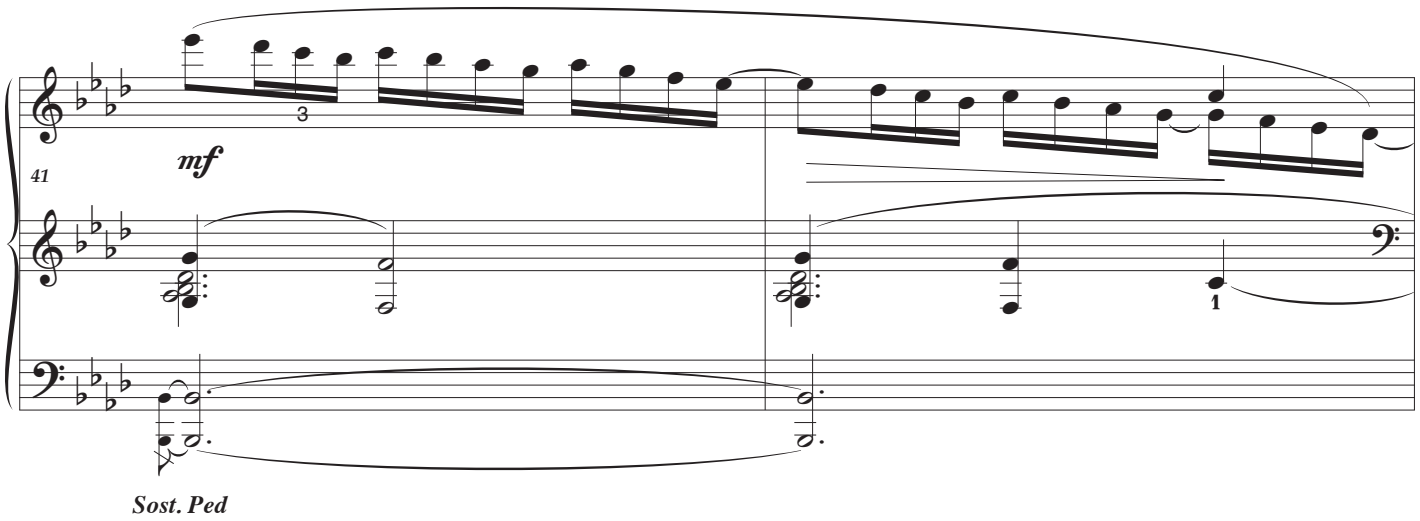
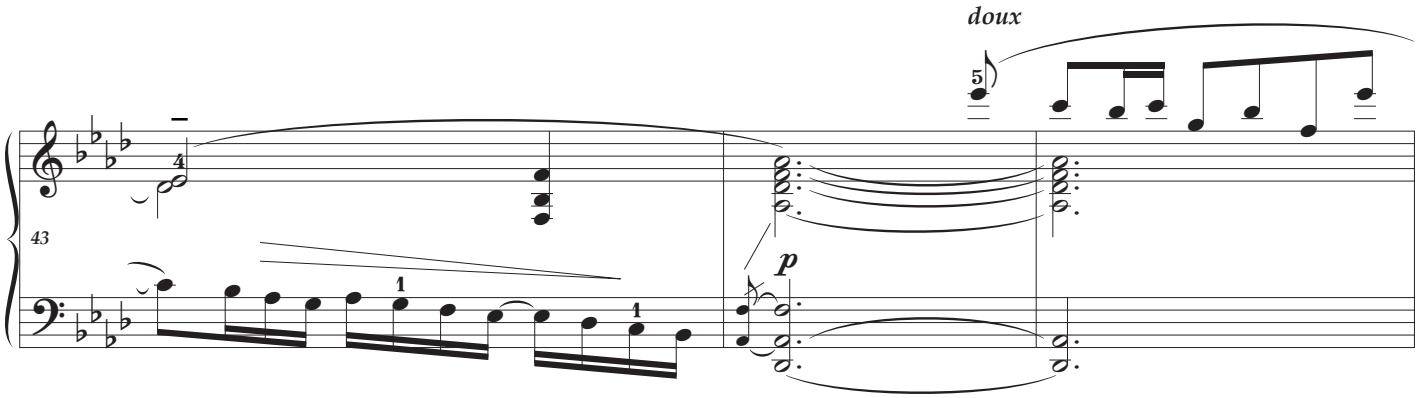
doux
p

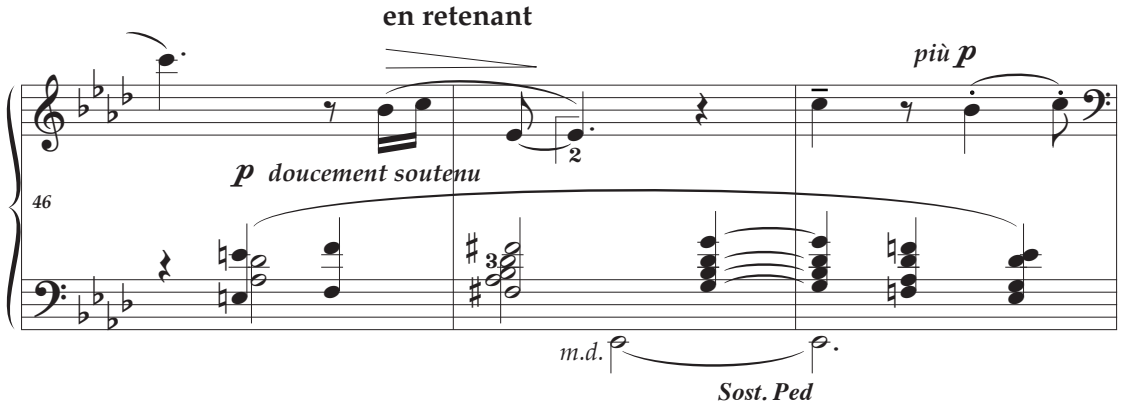

33
p
più p
*

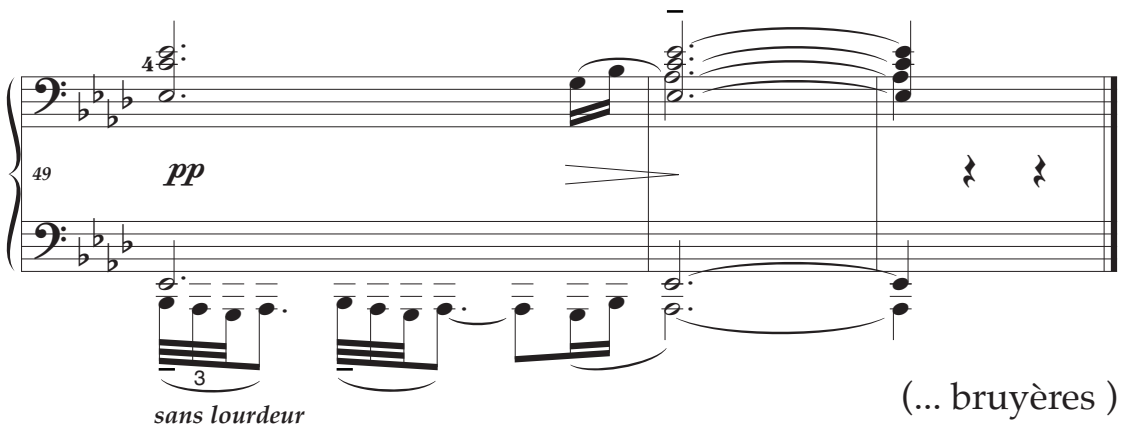

cédez - - - - //
36


au mouvement
38
mf
Sost. Ped


41
mf
Sost. Ped


doux
43
p


en retenant
più p
p doucement soutenu
46
m.d.
Sost. Ped


49
pp
sans lourdeur

(... bruyères)

VI

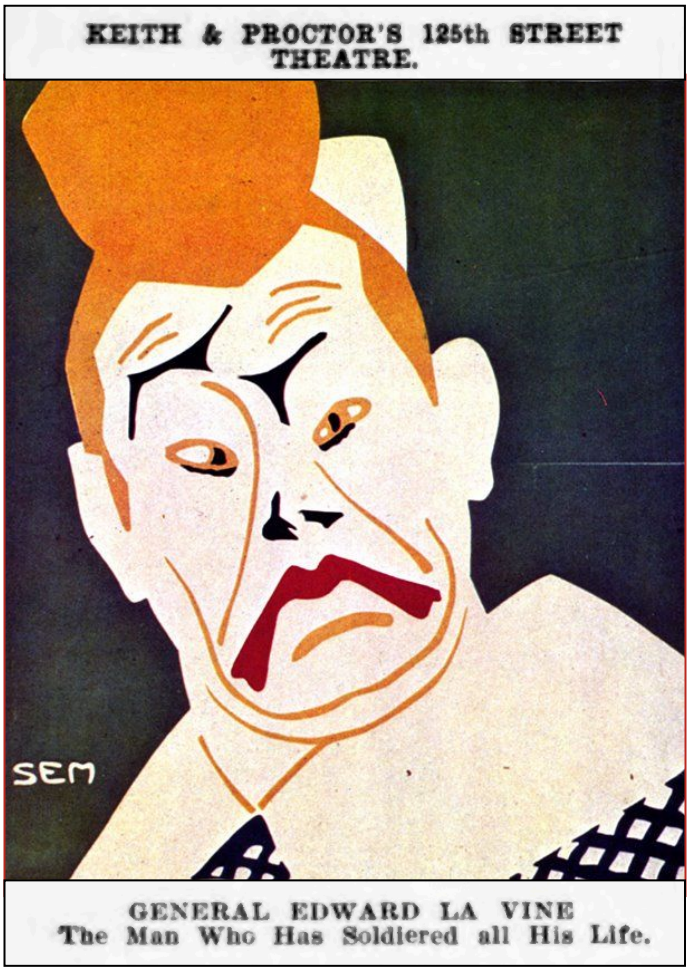
Was there really an eccentric General Lavine? Yes and no. Edward La Vine was not a general but an American juggling clown, half tramp and half warrior, who appeared, even on stilts, at the Marigny Theatre in Paris around 1910, greatly entertaining Mr Debussy. It is quite difficult to play with deliberate errors of rhythm and notation, but that is necessary here to imitate Lavine's mischievous character and marionette-like gait — one moment strutting about and the next acting a buffoonish and eccentric general on parade with a slapstick vaudeville style, playing to the gallery. Notice that the composer's subtitle was carefully written in English and according to E Robert Schmidt — 'excentric'*.

Debussy demanded mechanical rigour in the performance of this piece, and insisted it must not be played too fast. This fosters an ironic precision of burlesque pantomime, the end and death of the romantic humoresque, abruptly interrupted by the steely spring of a pirouette. The piano's resonance evokes, with great precision, those of a jazz band: after strident trumpet calls at the opening, we can easily imagine a 'witty and discreet' dance melody played on the double bass or baritone saxophone. Note that for Debussy, F major is a comical key — also to be found in 'Hommage à S. Pickwick'.

— Harry Halbreich

"General Lavine" — excentric looks back to Minstrels, and was inspired by a popular manifestation, the American clown Ed Lavine who appeared at the Marigny Theatre in 1910 and 1912 and was billed as 'the man who has soldiered all his life'. His act included juggling on a tightrope and, according to some, playing the piano with his toes, an activity possibly mirrored in the low-lying main tune.

— Roger Nichols



'The Billboard' 1908 New York theatrical magazine extract and a clown *aux Folies-Bergère*

The time signature of ragtime was usually two-four. In its least sophisticated style, the music was characterised by a strongly syncopated right-hand rhythm set against the left hand's march-like beat. This is the style Debussy reproduced unerringly in 'Golliwogg's Cake-walk' onto which he grafted his humorous sense of Chouchou's doll enacting the dance. Whether a true reflection of ragtime or not, this justly celebrated piece captures the irrepressible life of popular entertainment, of music hall and vaudeville, to which Debussy returned here and in 'Minstrels'.

— Paul Roberts

The ironic fidelity and panache of a Toulouse-Lautrec; the same marionette seen so often at the Folies-Bergère, with his extra large overcoat and the vivid wound of his mouth, split by a smile of frozen rapture. And, above all, the clumsy hop of his gait in burlesque pantomime, complicated by premeditated accidents, broken suddenly by the prodigious steely spring of a pirouette.

— Cortot

General Lavine-eccentric has moments of sounding like a second-hand Minstrels, but varies the music-hall imagery and exaggerates the montage so entertainingly that it would be rank pedantry to object.

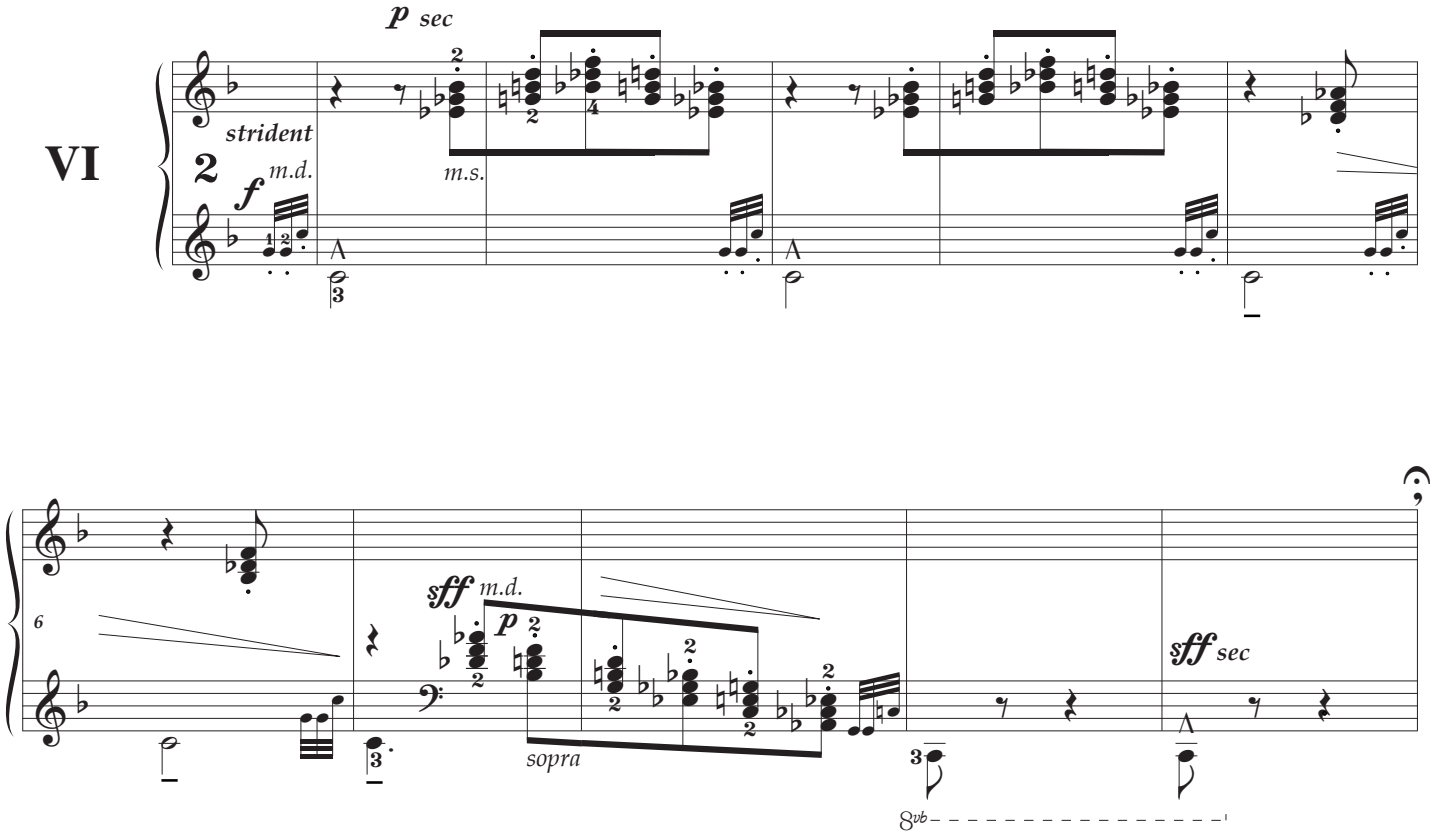
— Stephen Walsh

* a botanical term from Medieval Latin *excentricus*

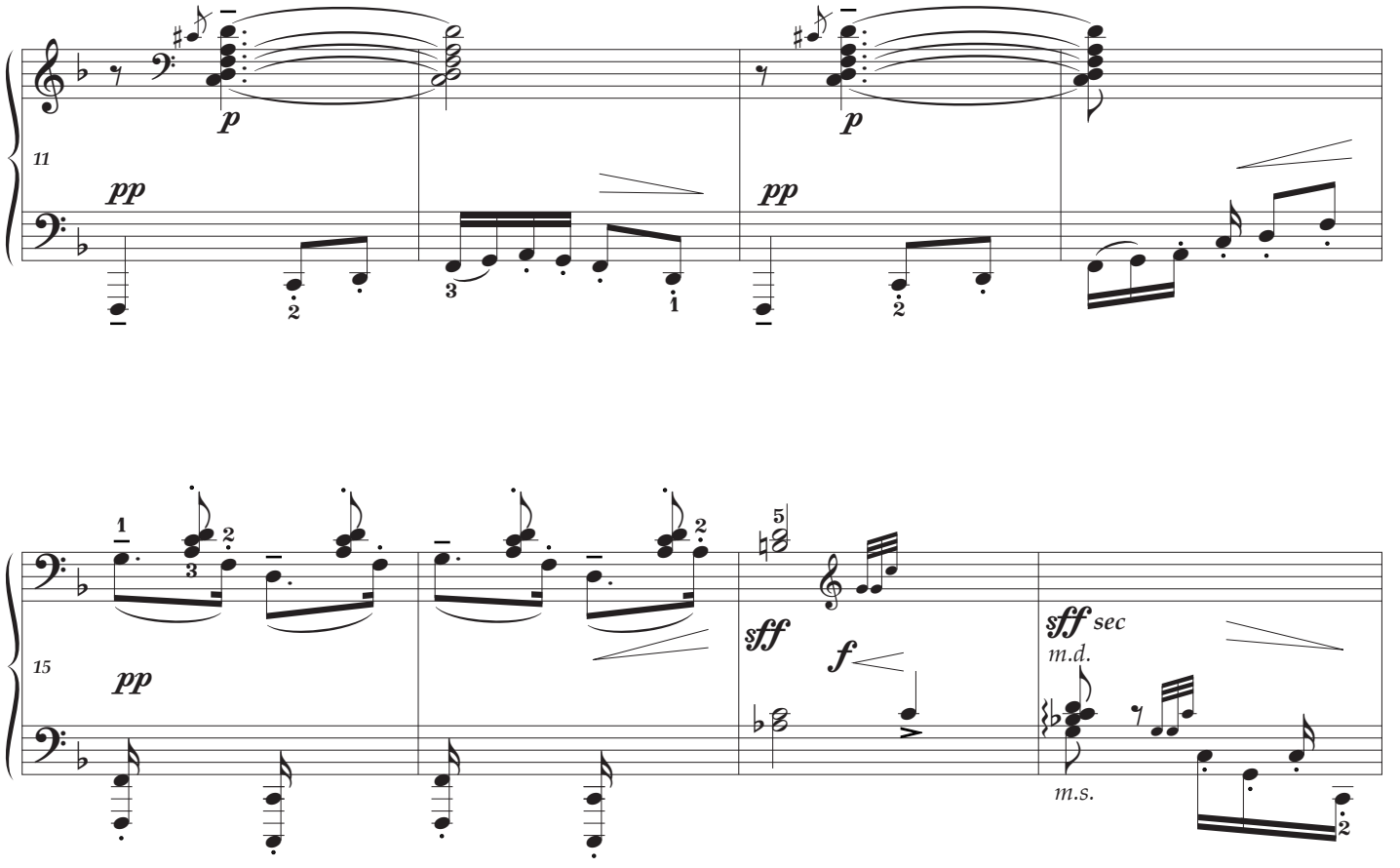
Duration: 3'

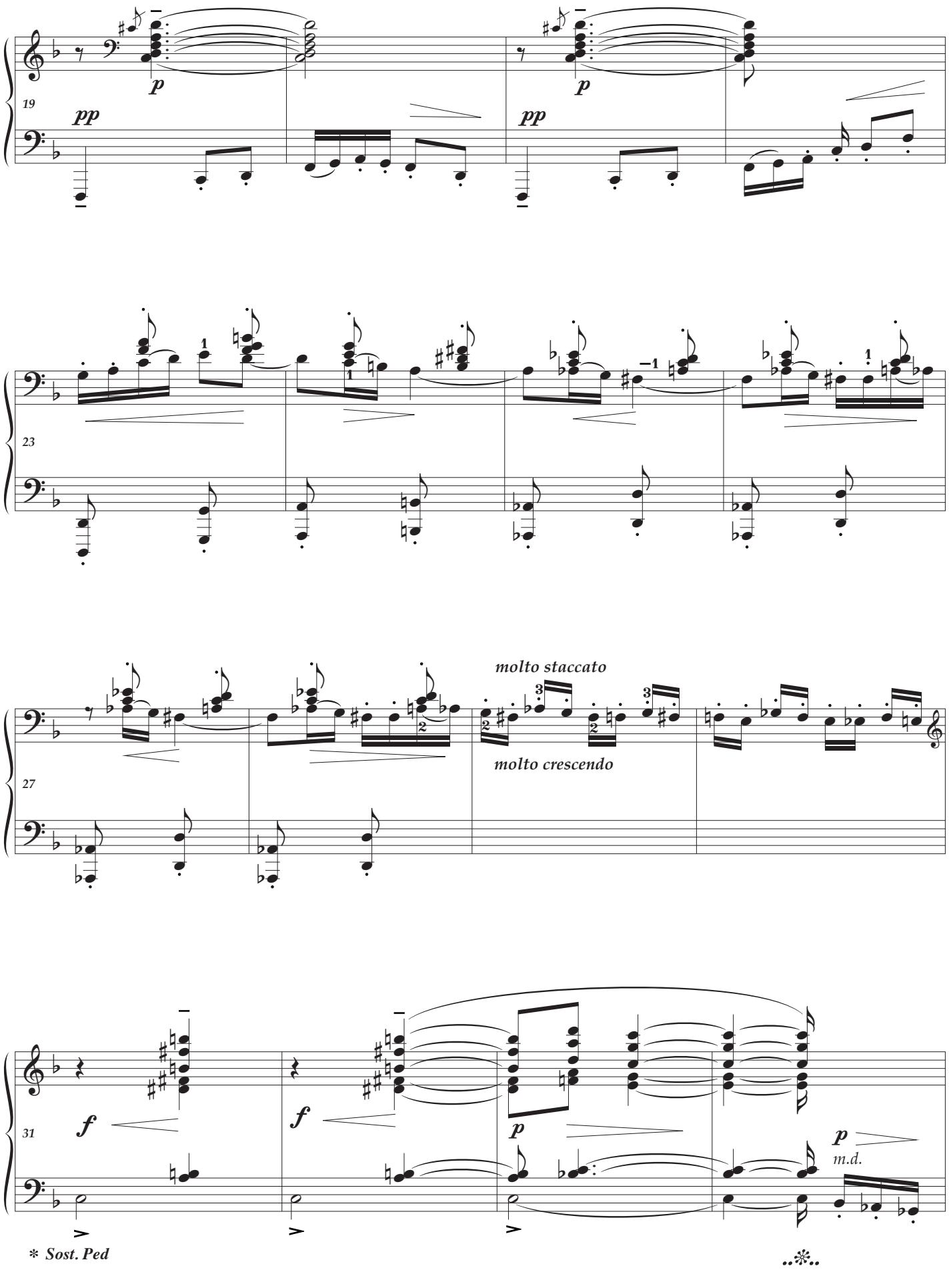
- **31** editorial *sostenuto* pedal combined with the sustaining pedal
- **100-102** absence of slurs
- **103-106** For an unusual effect, Debussy writes the dotted crotchets to be held to the end of the bar, which is possible by replaying the tied notes silently and changing the pedal at the final quaver rest.

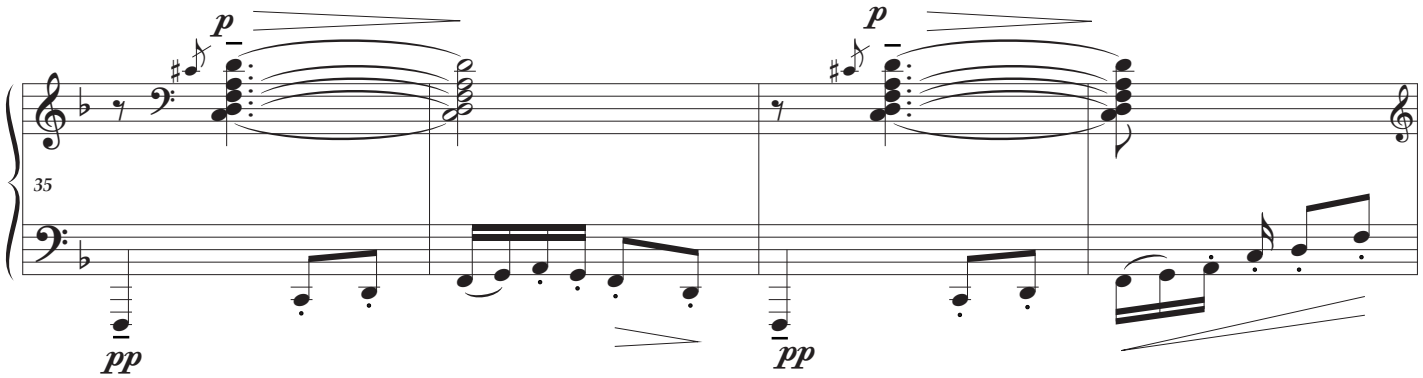
dans le style et le mouvement d'un Cake-Walk

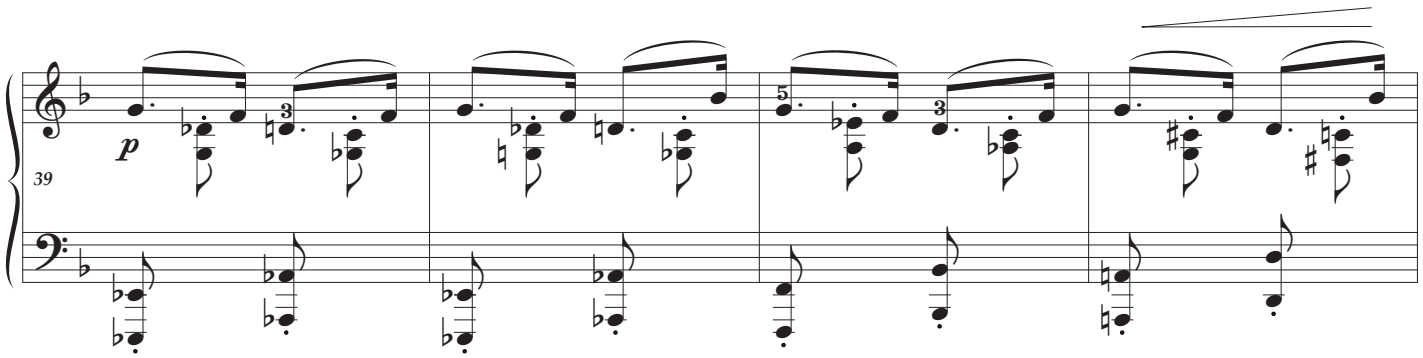


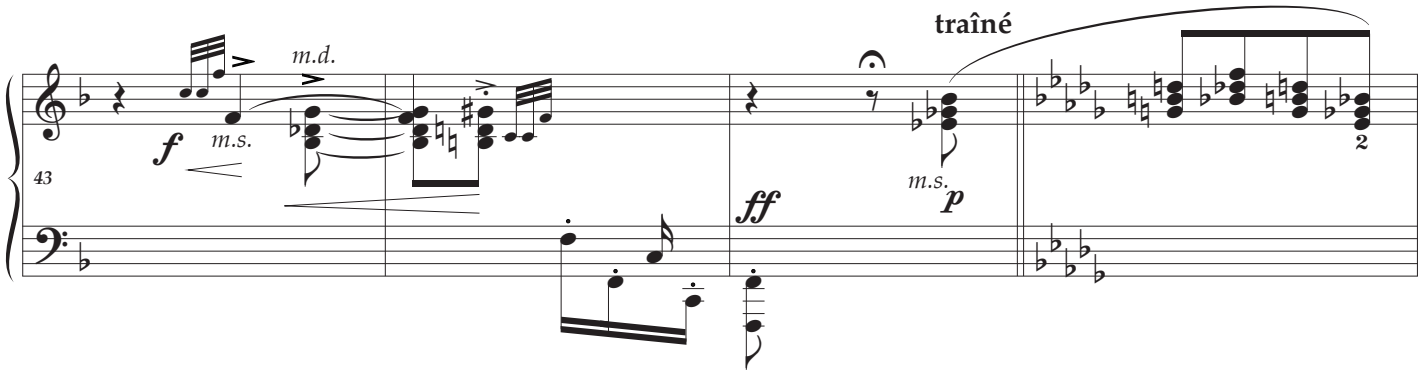
spirituel et discret

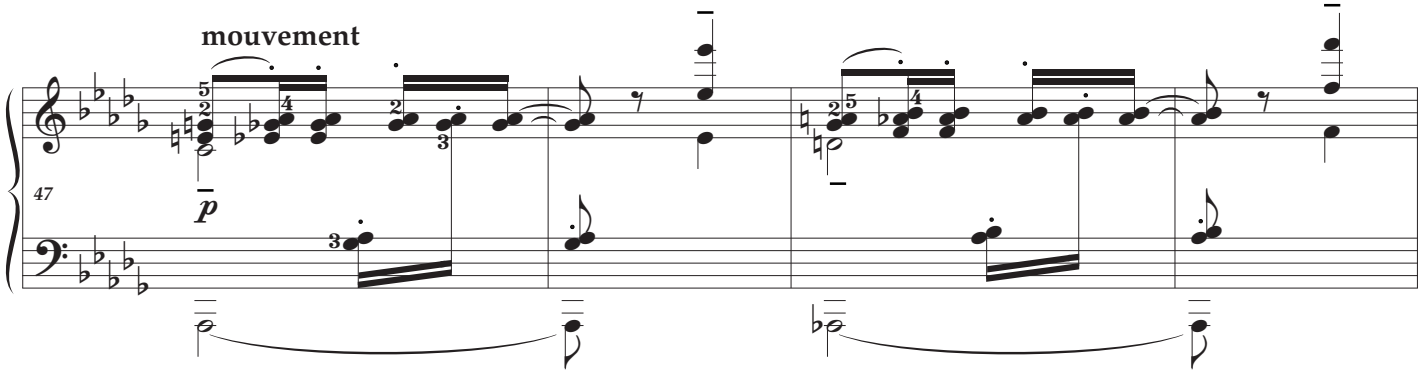


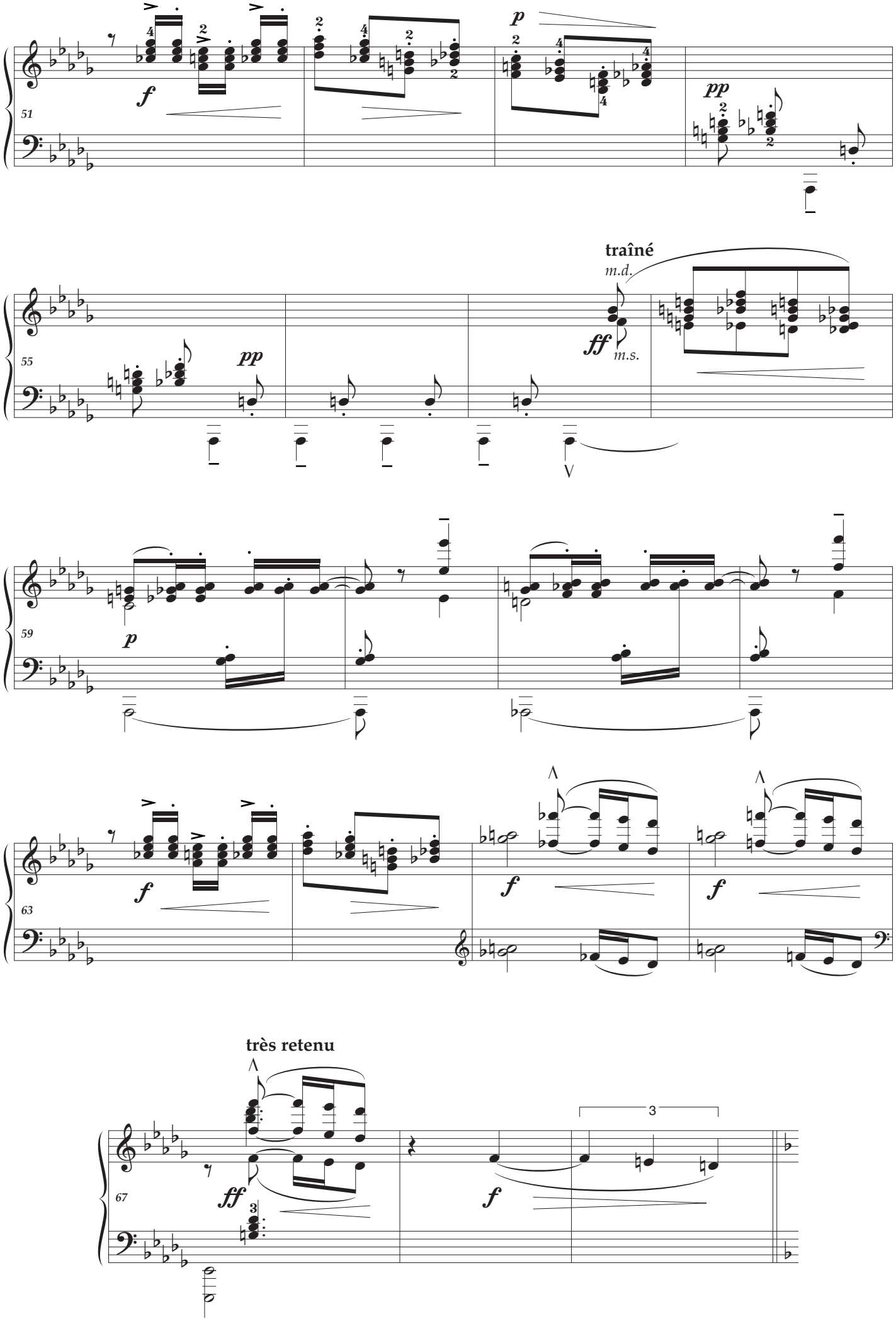

19
pp
p
pp
p
23
27
molto staccato
molto crescendo
31
f
f
p
p
m.d.
* Sost. Ped


35
p
pp
p
pp

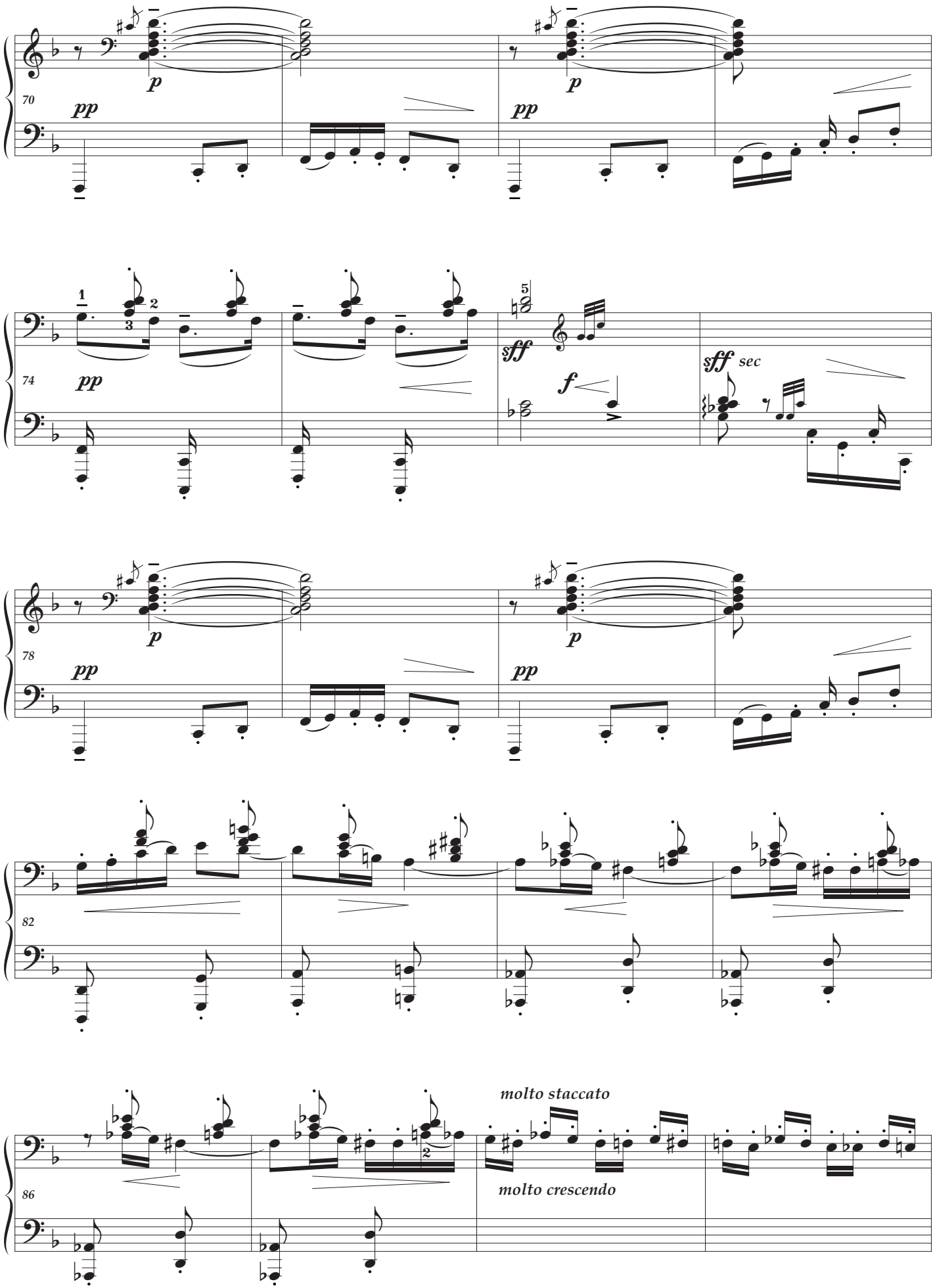

39
p

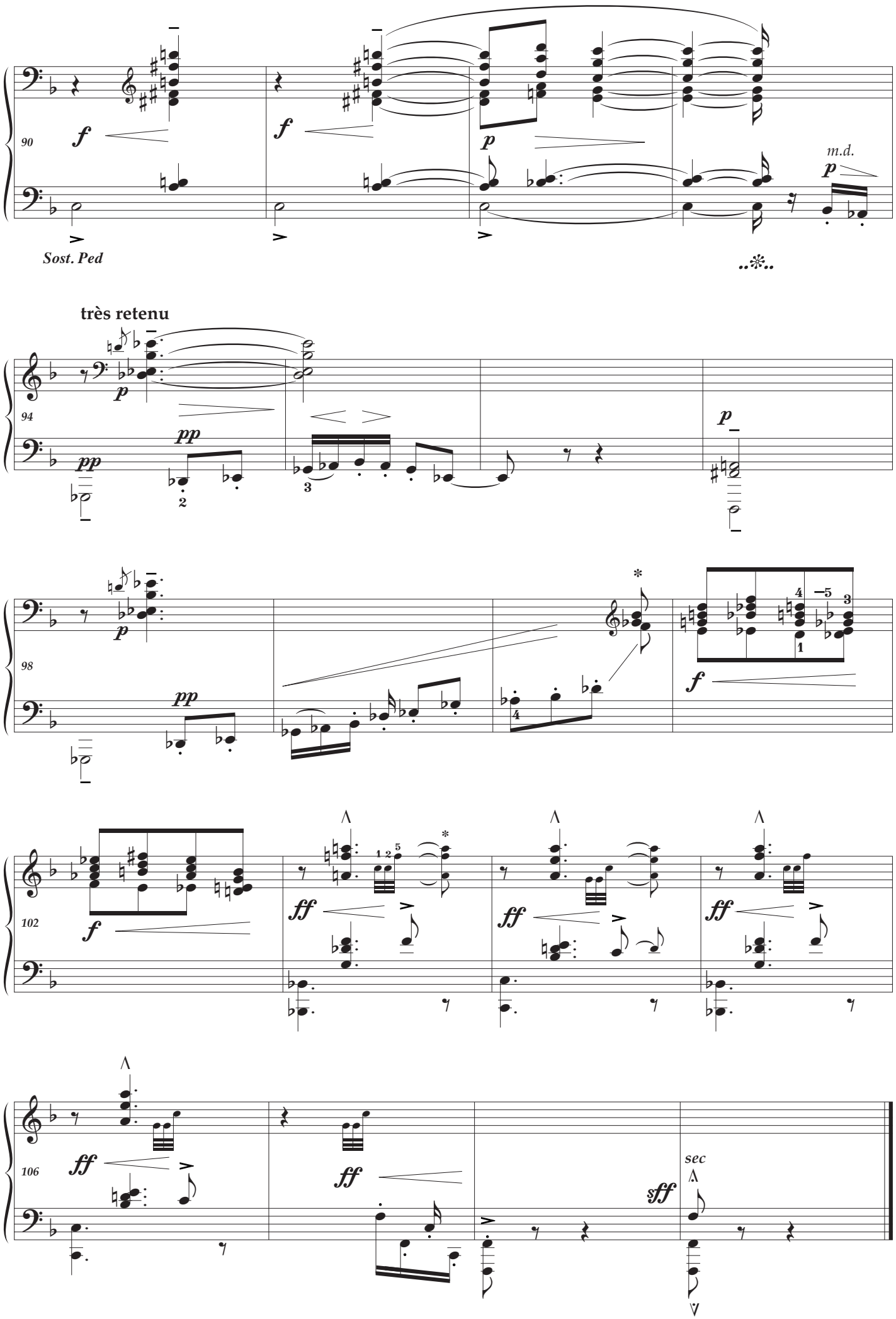

43
f
m.s.
m.d.
ff
m.s.
p
traîné


47
mouvement
p


51
f
p
pp
55
pp
traîné
m.d.
ff
m.s.
V
59
p
63
f
f
f
67
très retenu
ff
f
3

mouvement


70
pp
p
pp
p
74
pp
sff
f
sff sec
78
pp
p
pp
p
82
86
molto staccato
molto crescendo



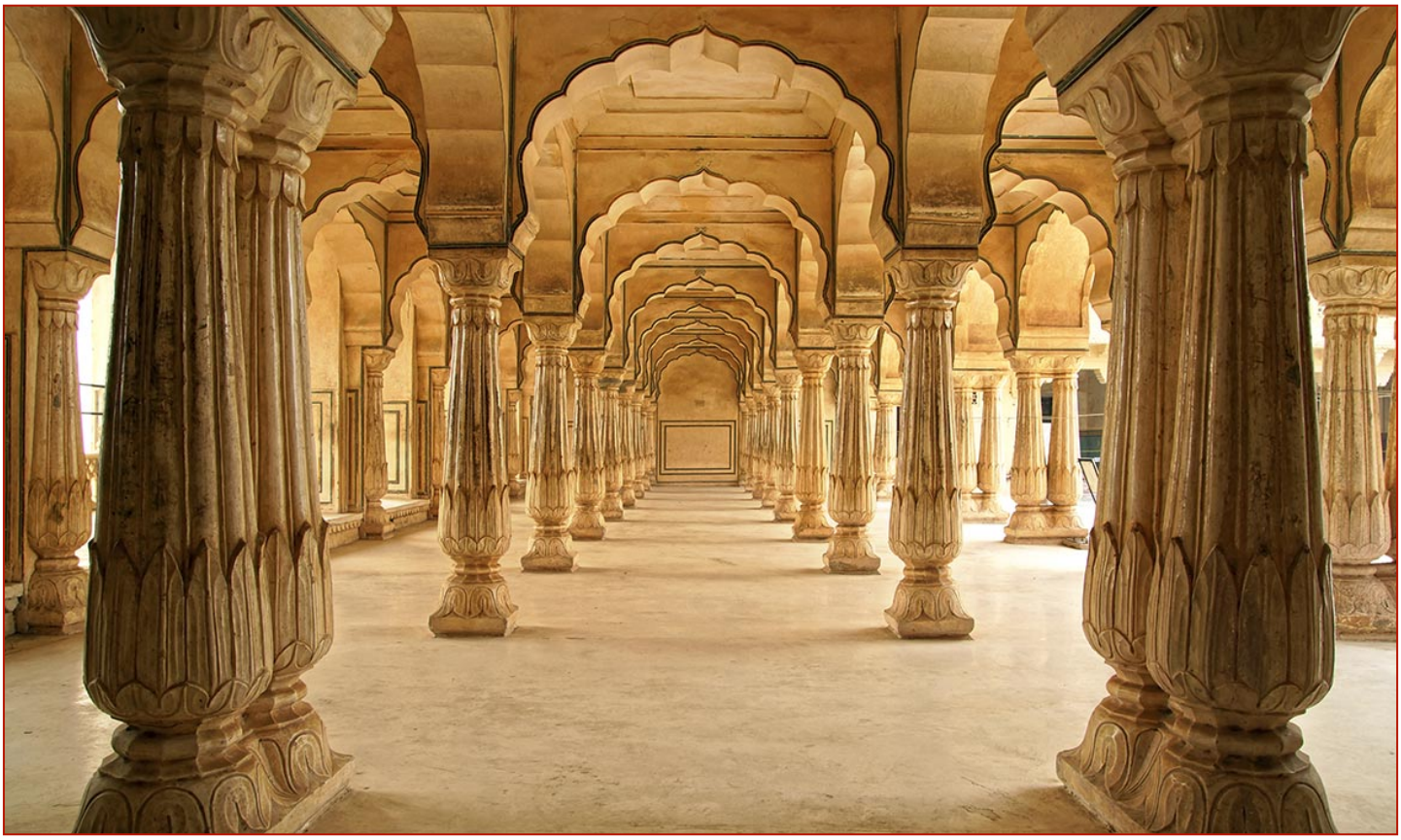
(... " General Lavine " — *eccentric* —)

VII

This rather obscure title (the Hall of Public Audience by moonlight) was discovered quite by chance in 1912 when the composer was reading an article by René Puaux in *Le Temps*. This is a lively account of a visit the writer made to the abandoned city of Amber, near Jaipur. Debussy was clearly stimulated by poetic descriptions of deserted palaces and a completely uninhabited city only recently crowded with chariots, elephants, ostlers and mahouts. Moments of exaltation evoke a distant land, shrouded in legend, saturated with exotic overtones — a subtly elusive and ethereal scene requiring great sensitivity. Bar **20** adds a rather Brahmsian dimension, recalling particularly his Intermezzo Op 118 N° 6 (1893), and **21-24** was possibly inspired by Alban Berg's sonata of 1910.

Stephen Walsh makes the point that the music might be regarded as a response to the activity of the imagination in the face of the beautiful but inexplicable relics of history. At first the eye sees and the ear hears only debris, musical fragments, then gradually some kind of picture materialises with a distinct shape, yet no clear connection with the fragments that preceded it. The visitor turns away moved by what he has seen, but still in truth mystified as to what precisely it was.

> *This prelude offers an illusory vision of India, but in contrast to the pentatonic 'Pagodes' from Estampes, it bears no trace of literal exoticism. Yet the piece, and its muted underlying tension, is indeed Oriental. (Perhaps a richer, more 'ripened' counterpart to 'Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir' of Book I.) The beginning evokes, with gentle irony, the first notes of 'au clair de la lune', poeticised by the delicate harmonisation in sevenths. Then, via a musical language of great freedom and subtlety, Debussy delivers the most magical of his nocturnes. We hear for a moment the theme superimposed on its inversion, then the rest lights up brightly before the recapitulation, inverted and subtly varied in myriad ways, takes us back to the very cold and 'lunar' final suspended chord. This sublime piece, the finest of the twenty-four Preludes, profoundly influenced Olivier Messiaen.*
>
> *— Harry Halbreich*



LA TERRASSE DES AUDIENCES — DIWAN-E-AAM —
THE HALL OF PUBLIC AUDIENCE *

The great seventh prelude stands as the central pillar of the second book. Debussy's apprehension of eastern mysticism, his evocation of a palpable sensuality that moves from extreme delicacy to awe-inspiring grandeur, has all the intensity of a poem by Baudelaire. Pianistically, as well as imaginatively, 'la terrasse des audiences du clair de lune' is one of Debussy's most demanding pieces. The sensitivity of touch required for the filigree arabesque at the opening leaves the performer exposed, while the multiple gradations of voicing required for the chordal writing that follows, crucial to achieve a translucence as well as a depth of sonority, are among the most complex in his piano music.

— Paul Roberts

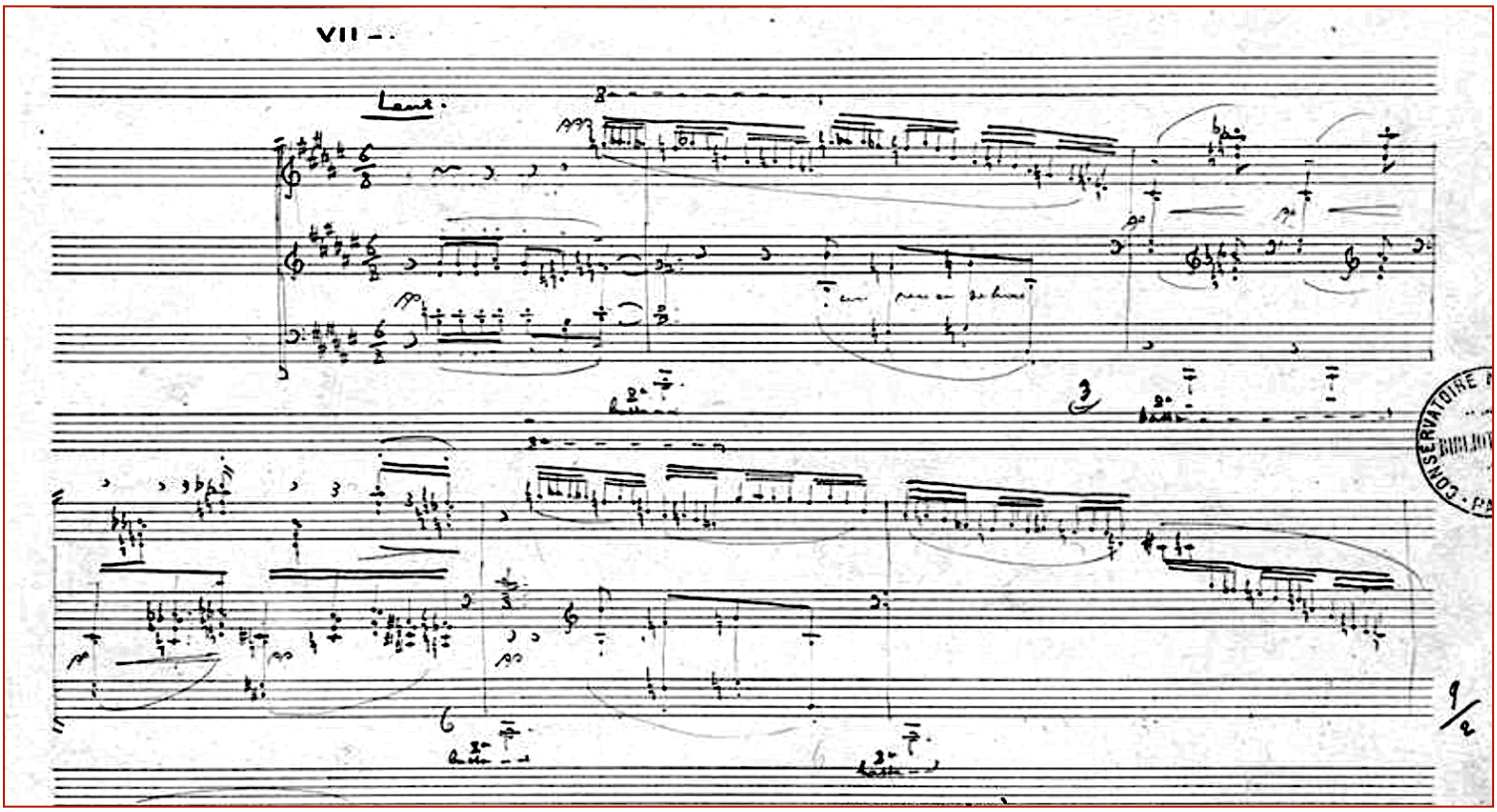
A somewhat arcane title, whose elaborate charm has the flowery grace of certain Chinese literary fantasies, reveals one of Debussy's most deeply musical and most enchantingly sensitive works. A brief quotation from the ever popular 'au clair de la lune', poetically harmonised with delicate sevenths, upon which settle lunar beams of a slow chromatic descent; the amorous infatuation of fragrant nights, and sensuous emotions.

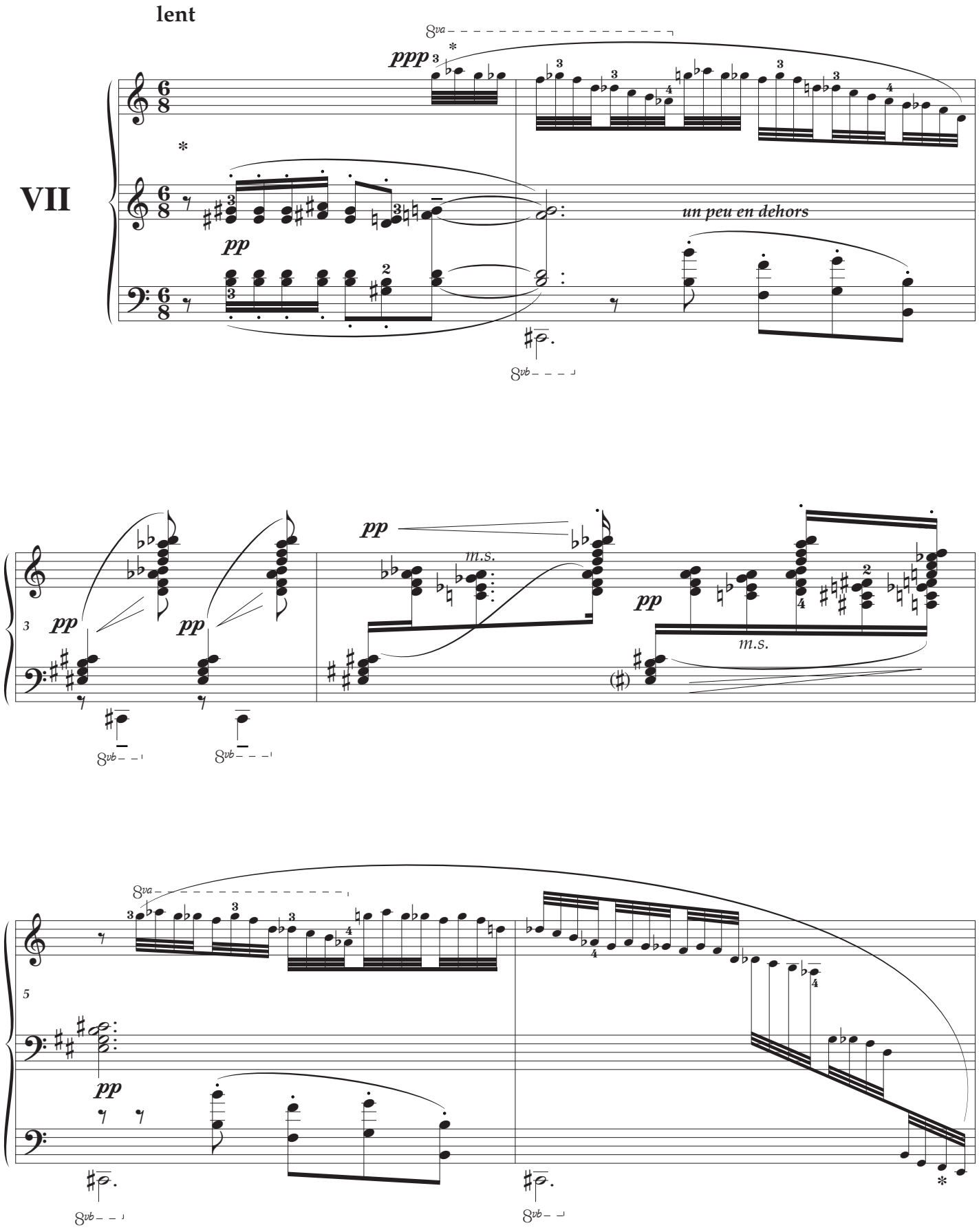
— Cortot

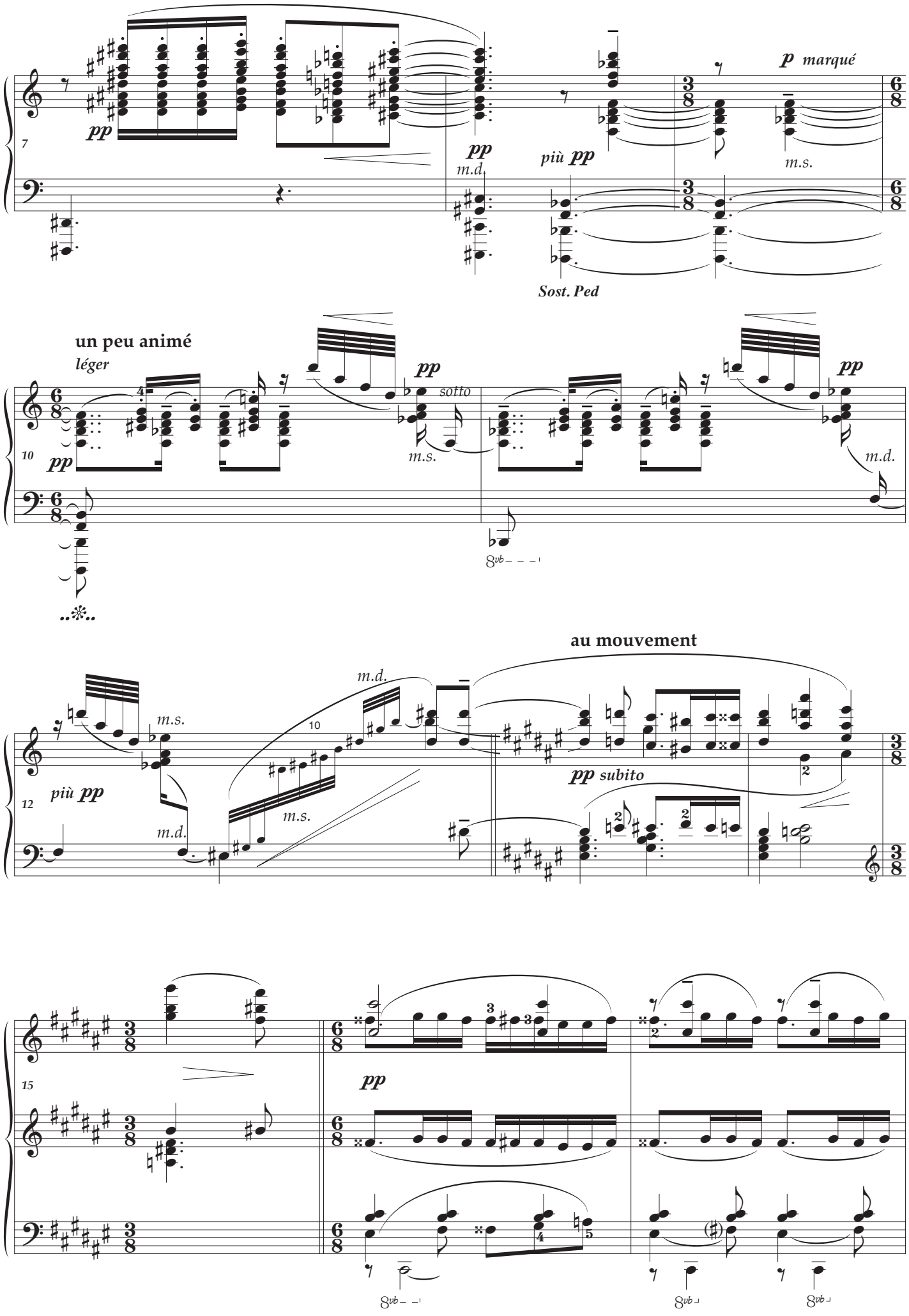
* Amber Fort, Jaipur — important state assemblies were held here in the 17th and 18th centuries. The abundant stone pillars turn this space into an optical illusion. Beneath these intricately-designed arches, Kings used to meet with citizens seeking help.

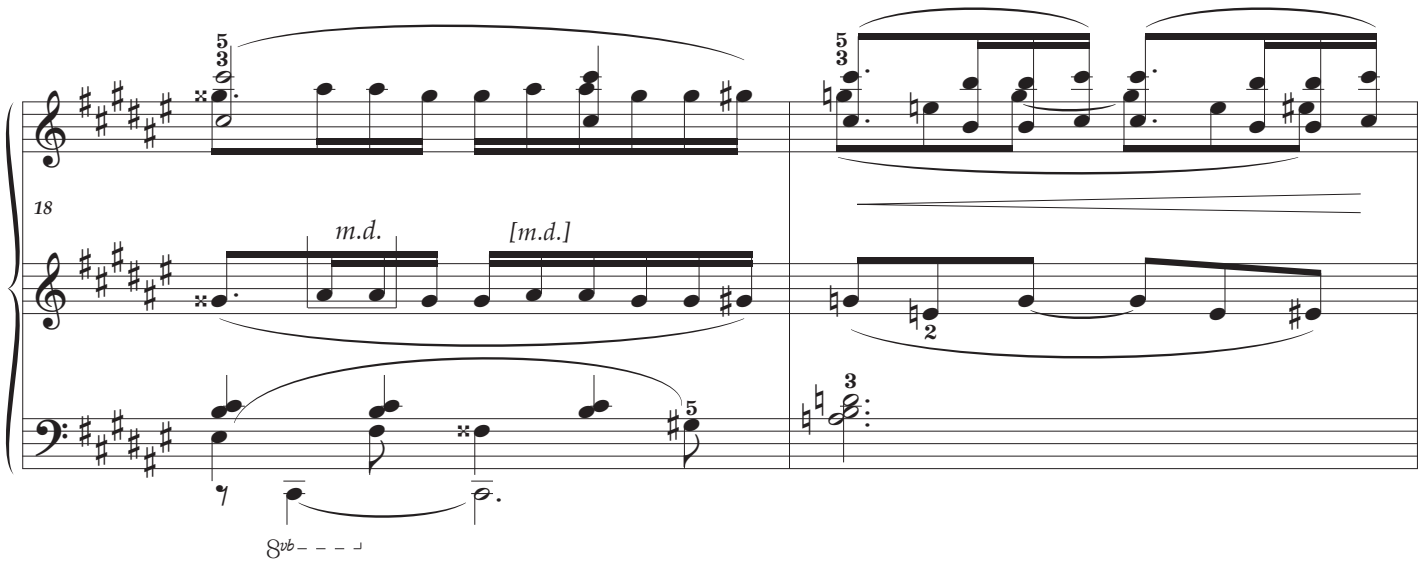
Duration: 4'40

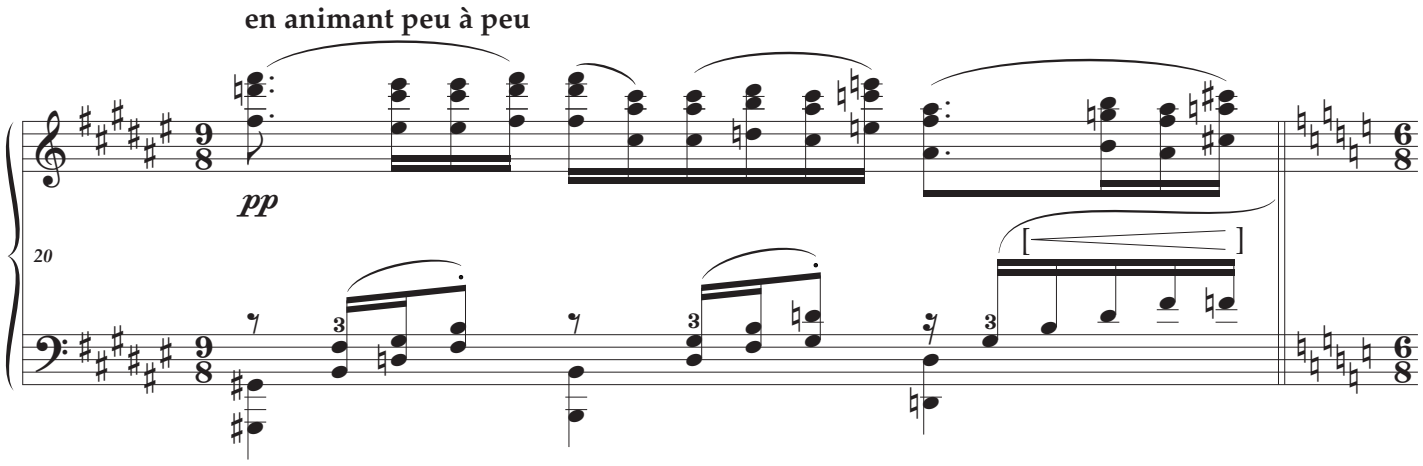
- There is a tendency to perform *La Terrace* too slowly, feeling six quaver beats. The section from **39** to the end should be even slower, so it is sensible to keep something in reserve. A dotted crotchet pulse will save the work from inevitable dragging.
- editorial reduced font
- editorial *sostenuto* pedal
- **1-12** presented with a blank key signature (original in F♯ major)
- **6** According to the new Durand Edition, F♮ from the composer's personal copy. The autograph gives F♯.
- **21-24** presented with a blank key signature
- **42-44** editorial pedal indications

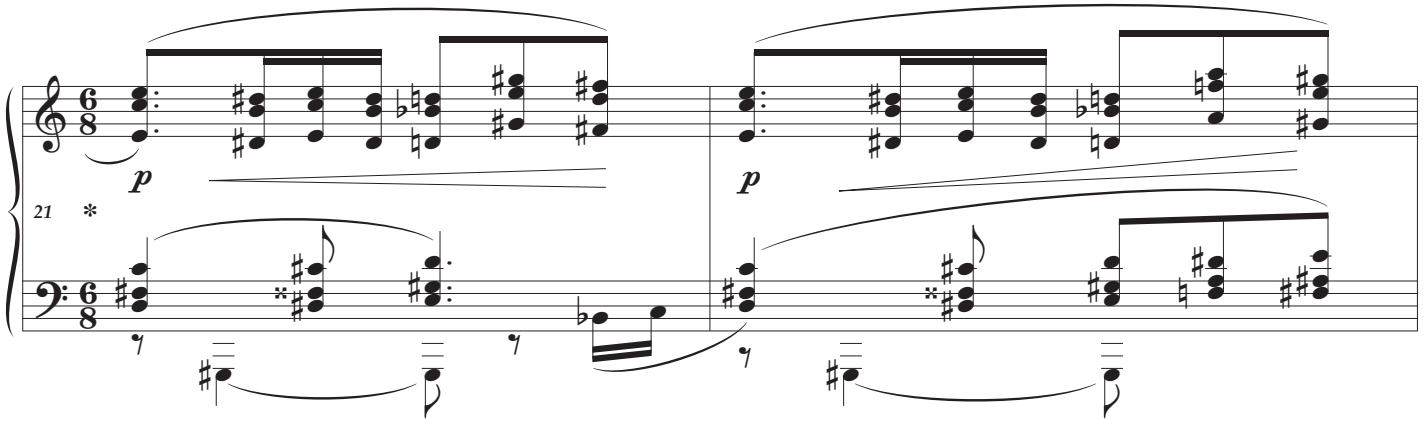


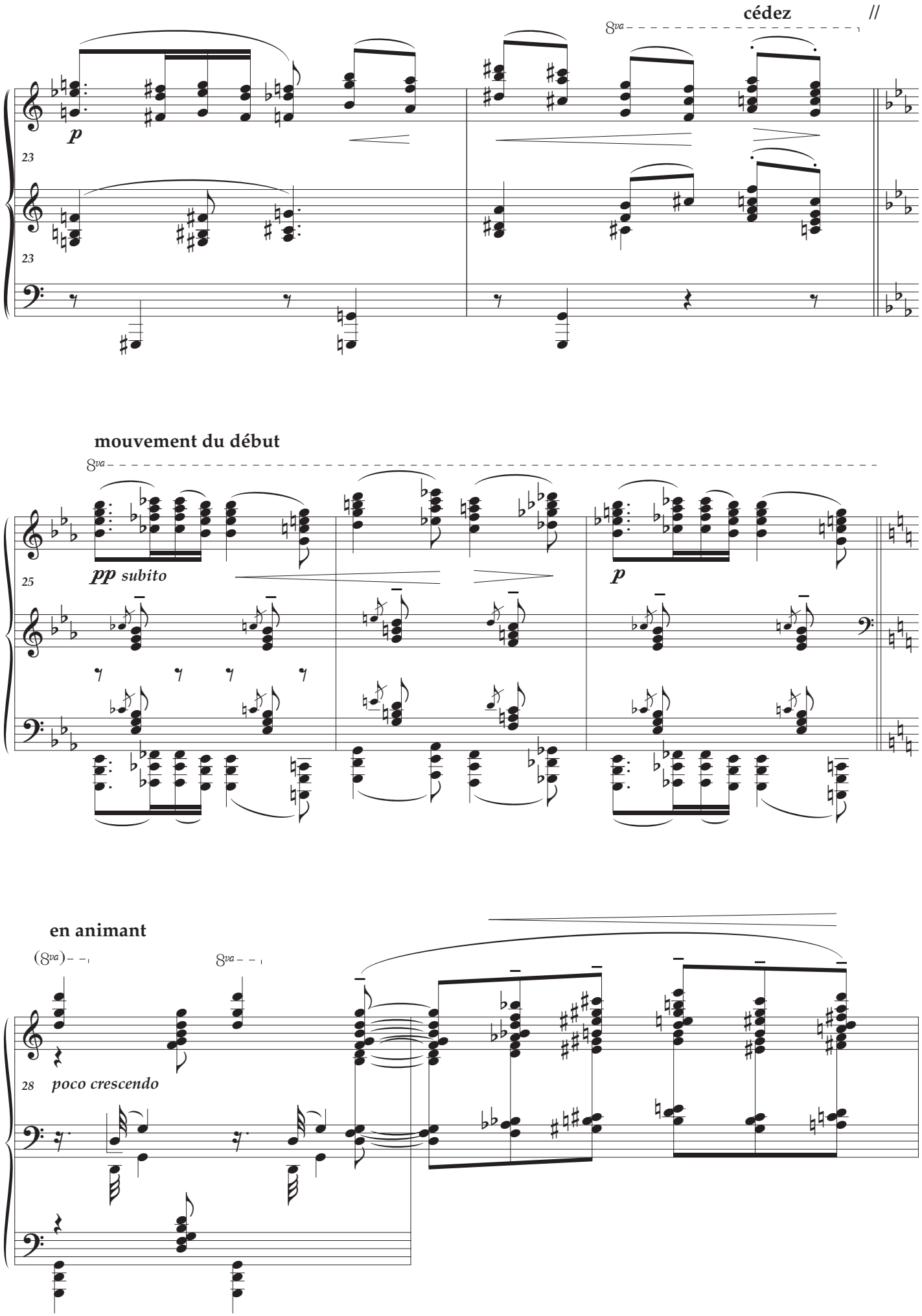

lent
VII
ppp
pp
un peu en dehors
m.s.
pp
m.s.
pp
pp
* Sost. Ped

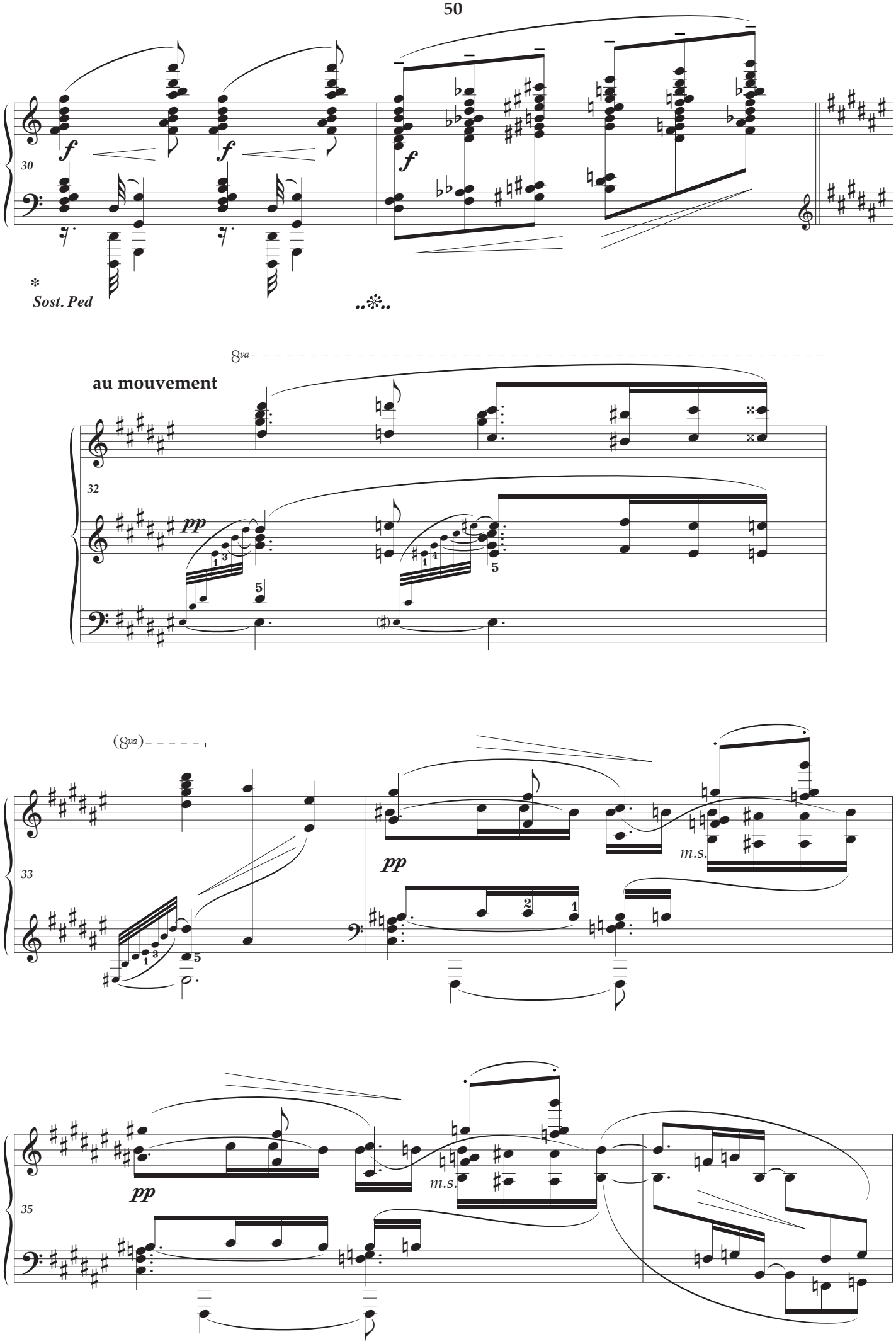

7
pp
m.d.
pp
più pp
p marqué
m.s.
Sost. Ped
un peu animé
léger
10
pp
m.s.
sotto
pp
m.d.
8vb
au mouvement
12
più pp
m.s.
m.d.
m.d.
m.s.
pp subito
15
pp
8vb
8vb
8vb

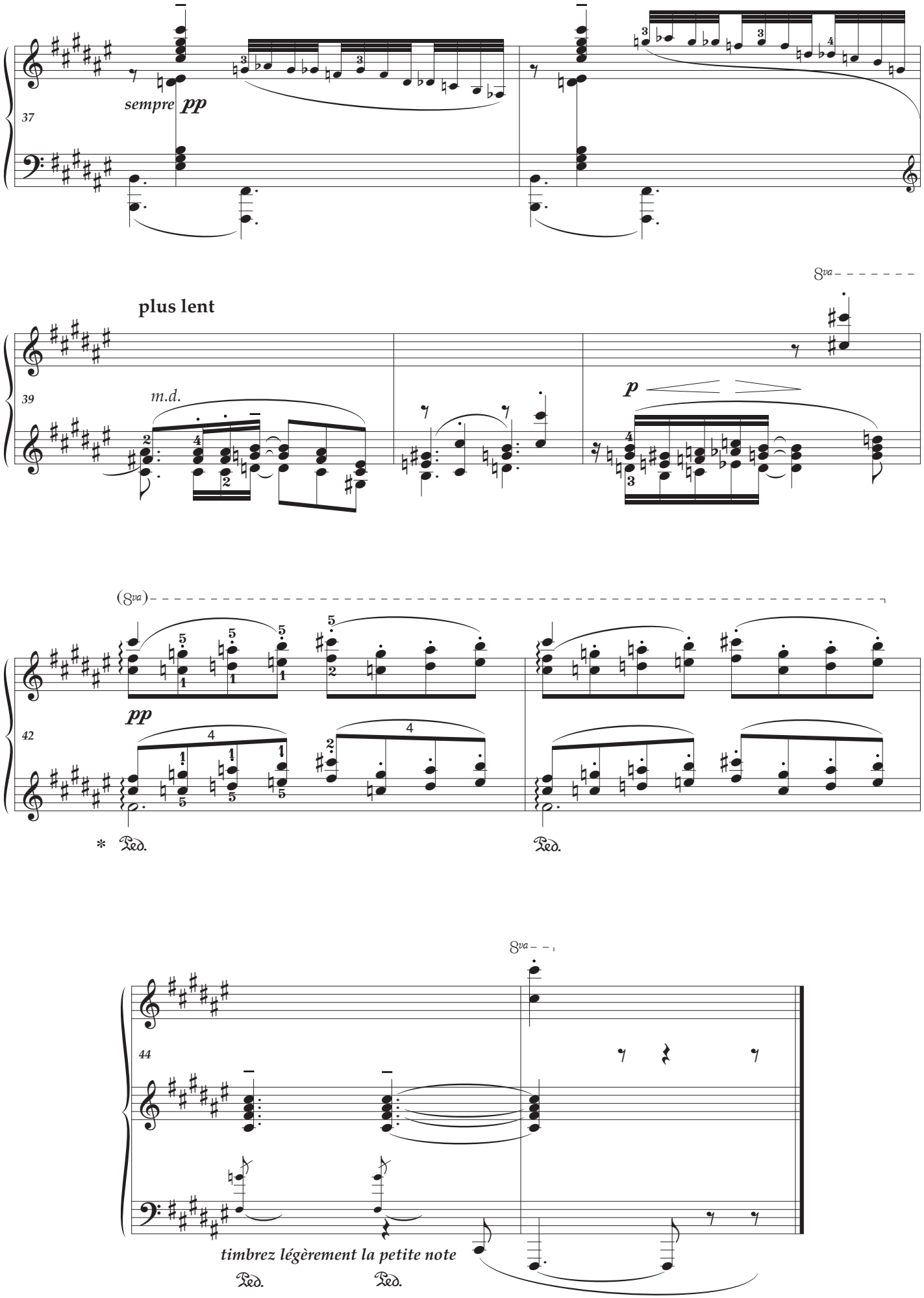

18
m.d.
[m.d.]
8vb


en animant peu à peu
pp
20


p
p
21


cédez
8va
p
23
23
mouvement du début
8va
25
pp subito
p
en animant
(8va)
8va
28
poco crescendo


30
f
f
f
*
Sost. Ped
..*..
8va
au mouvement
32
pp
(8va)
33
pp
m.s.
35
pp
m.s.



(... la terrasse des audiences du clair de lune)

VIII

Whereas Ravel in *Gaspard de la Nuit* followed almost verse by verse the pattern of Aloysius Bertrand's fluid and sensual prose poem, Debussy was inspired by a mythical nordic romance — Undine by Friedrich Heinrich Karl de la Motte, Baron Fouqué. A 1909 English translation featured 15 illustrations by Arthur Rackham*, and these formed the basis for the prelude's fanciful take on the watery temptress, hauntingly irresistible and dangerous, who lures young men to their deaths. Can any phrase be more seductive than **46-47** ?

Marked scherzando, much of this tone poem is delicate, exquisite and mysterious, its sophisticated and capricious character achieved through subtlety of harmony and texture. The central section develops some tension with darker and deeper shades, underlining the sinister nature of the water nymph's powers of alluring enchantment. An ethereal version of Ondine which has become part of a rich legacy of aquatic subjects in the composer's catalogue.

***ARTHUR RACKHAM** UNDINE ***

This unjustly neglected sister of Ravel's 'Ondine' is a mischievous nymph —shimmering, naked, voluptuous — wandering in the waves before attempting to beguile a human being. She then dreams languidly on the sand, regretting she is not mortal; the middle section theme, with its clashing seconds, expresses melancholy, but after a quite classical ascent over a dominant pedal whose wicked harshness expresses her frustration, she disappears with a pirouette, flowing into the foam. Every virtuosic feature in 'Ondine' is part and parcel of the musical substance. The hexatonic scale — E flat F sharp G A B flat D flat — cunningly eases into the tonal context of D major.

— Harry Halbreich

This may have been inspired by Rackham's illustrations for De La Motte Fouqué's Undine which appeared in 1912. But it must also surely be heard as a riposte to Ravel's 'Ondine' from Gaspard de la nuit, published in 1909. Maybe Debussy, who distrusted prolixity and technical brilliance, was saying: 'I can do just as good a water nymph as you in fewer notes.'

— Roger Nichols

For those who know how to see her, drenched, alluring and naked from the waist, she emerges from the still shimmering of cradling waves. And, for those who know how to understand her, how tempting and tender she is, the hushed voice that describes the treasures of her floating palaces and the comfort of her love.

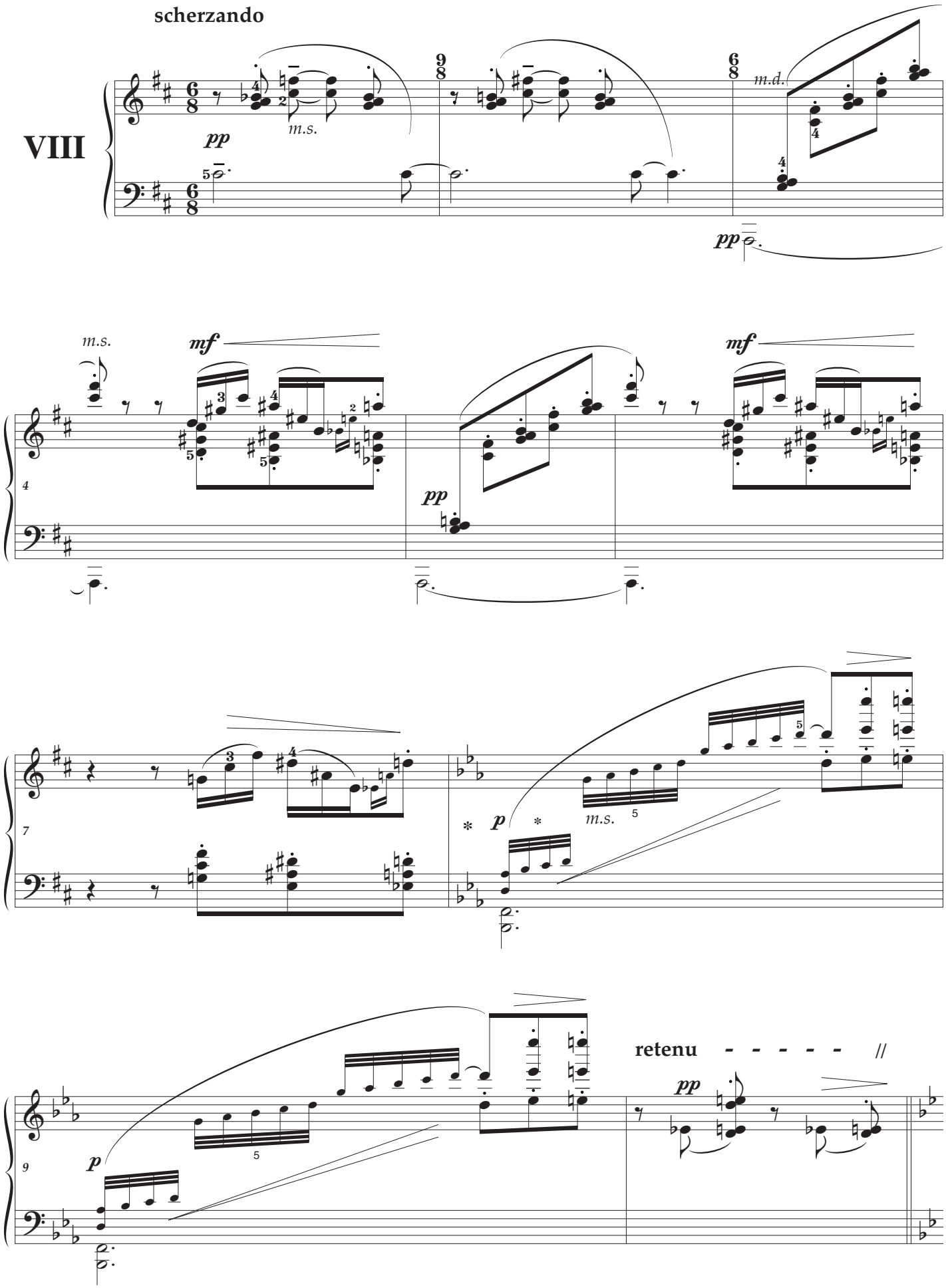
— Cortot

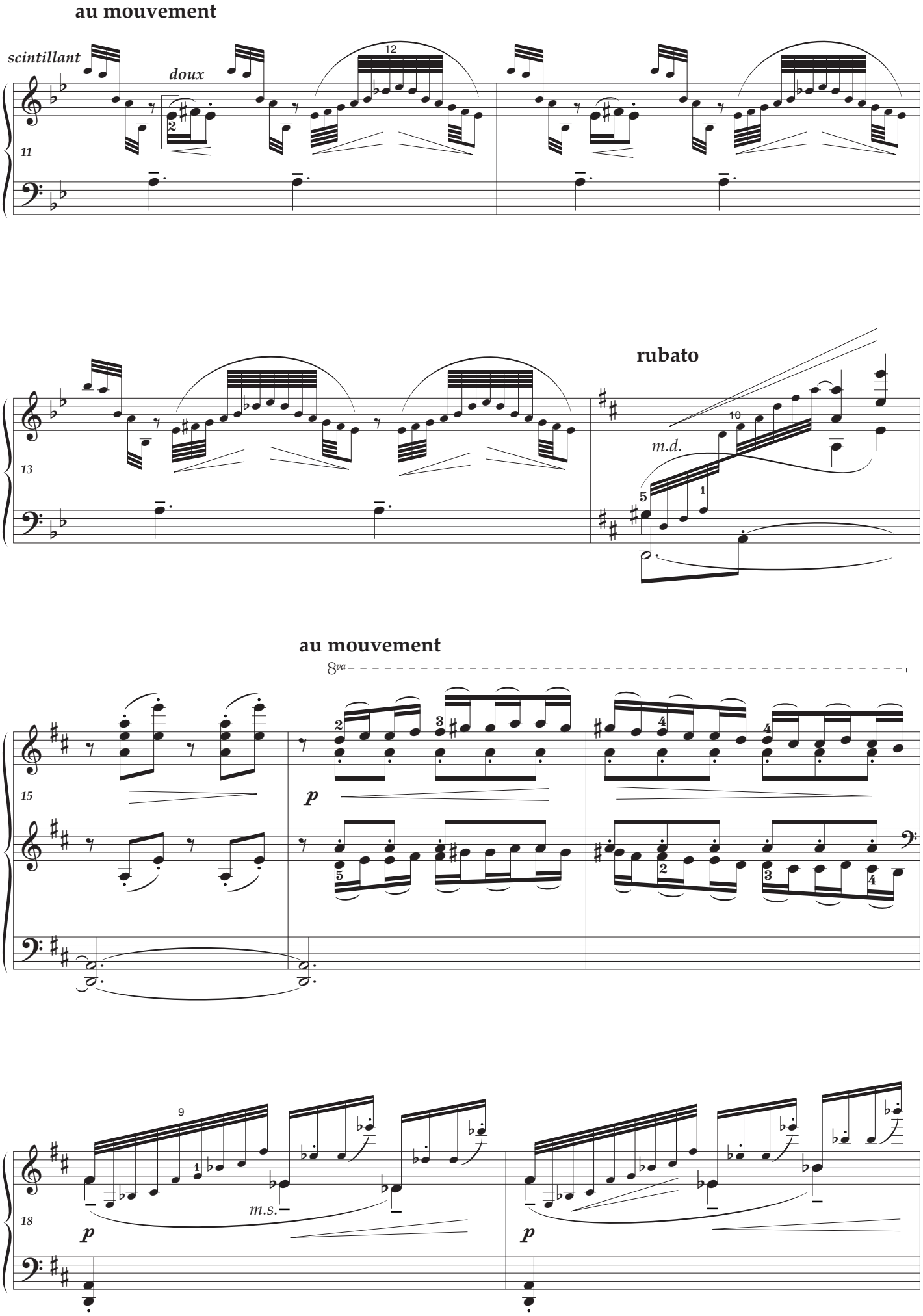
* *les fées sont d'exquises danseuses* (Book II N° 4) is another prelude inspired by a Rackham illustration for Peter Pan.

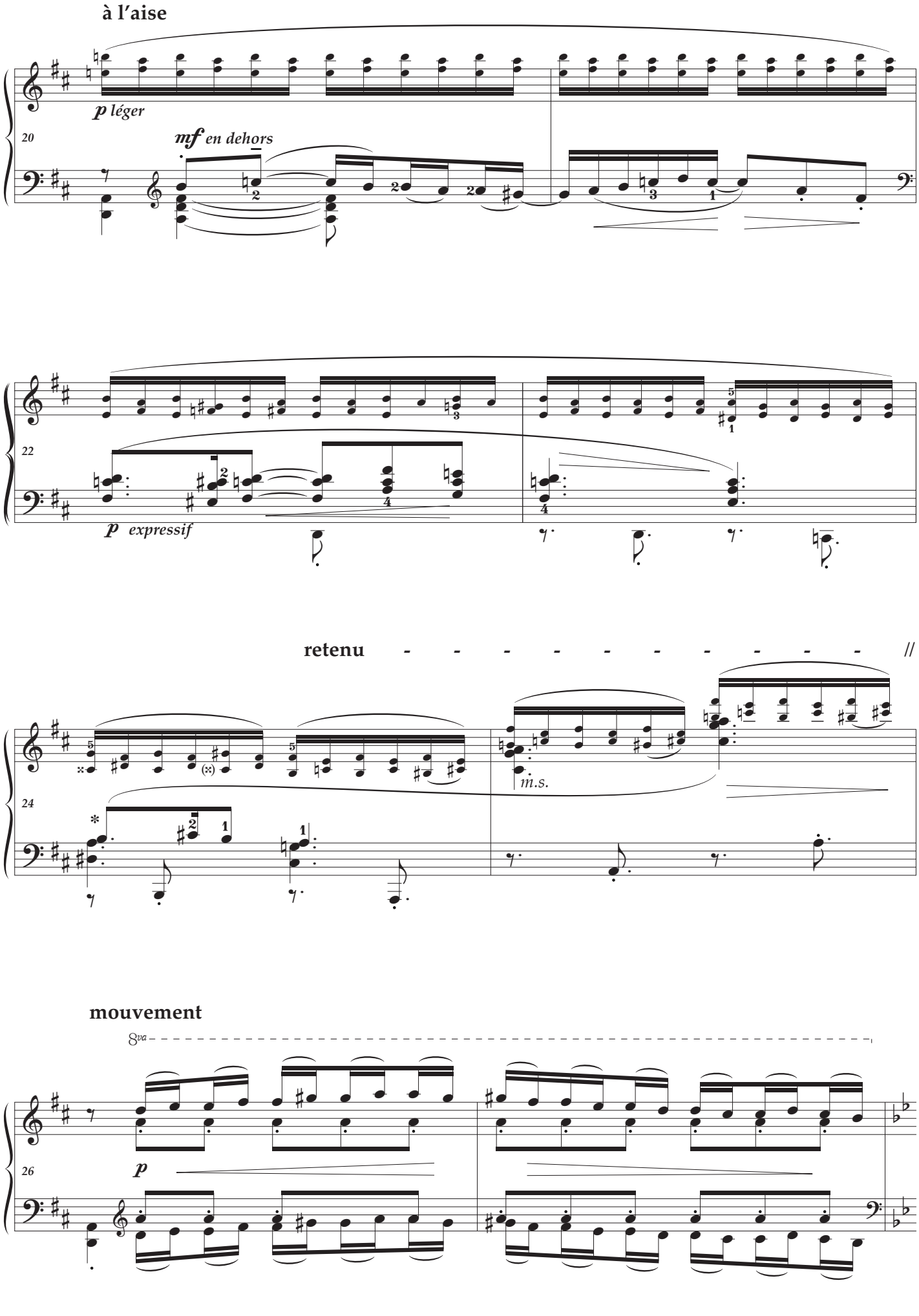
** Undine by F. H. C. de La Motte Fouqué (1909). The title refers either to *l'enfance d'Ondine* or to *Ondine devant la fenêtre.*

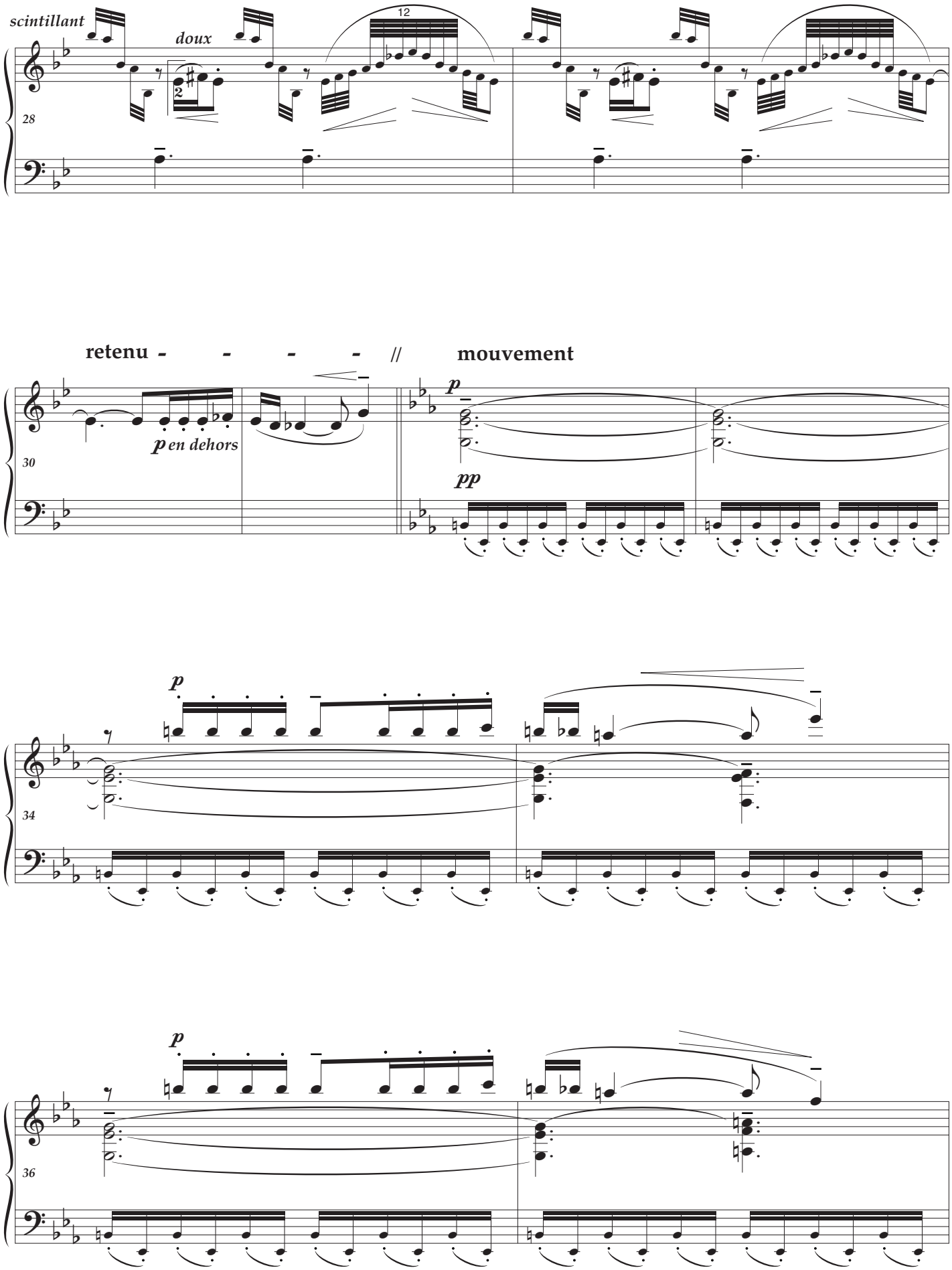
Duration: 3'45

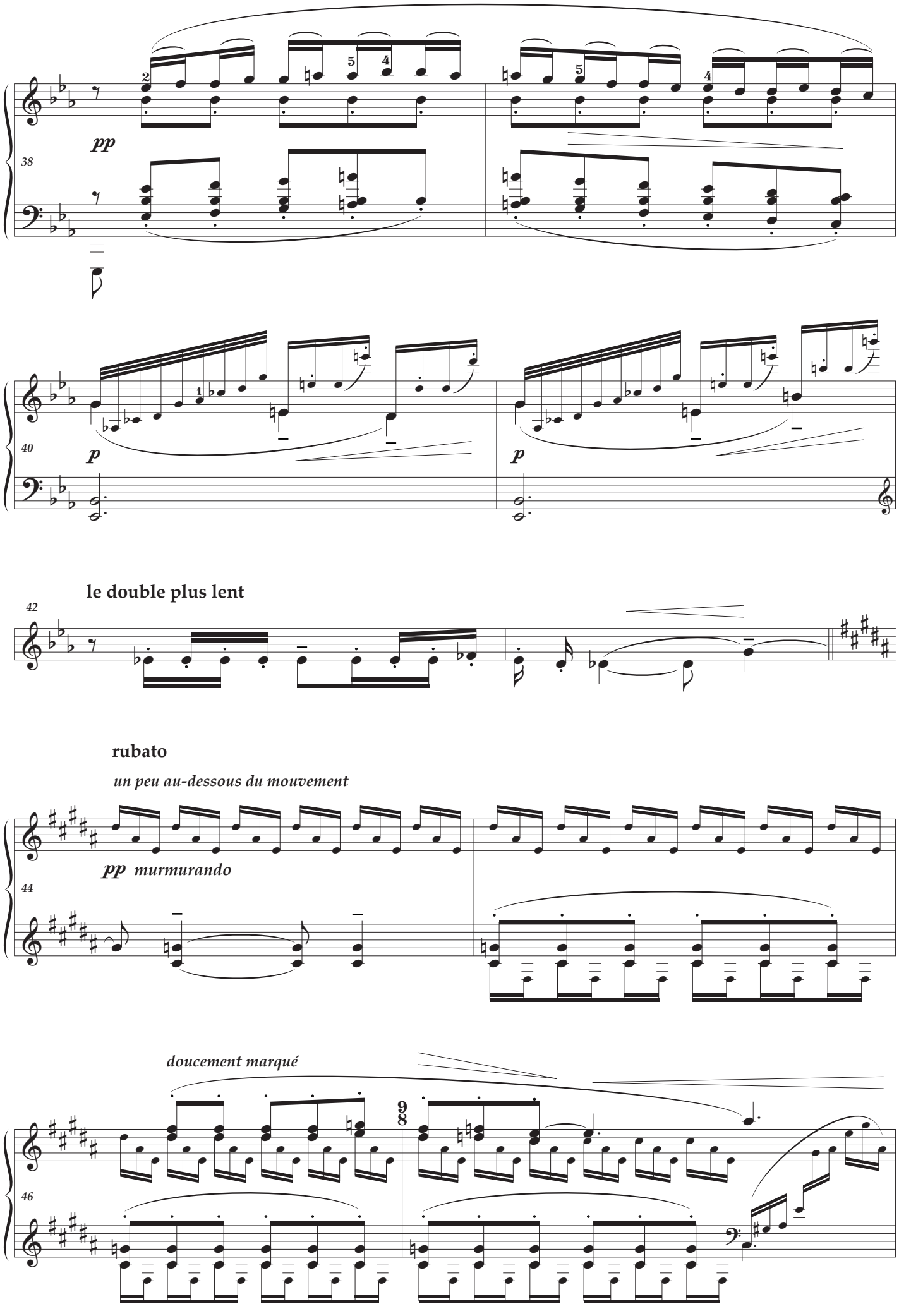
- In this piece of particularly capricious tempi, it seems a good idea to take the basic tempo from bar **16.**
- editorial reduced font
- **8-13** modified key-signatures
- **24** it can be more eloquent to play the tenor LH thumb a millisecond before the bass
- **49-64** editorial modification of key-signature
- **54-61** editorial re-beaming
- **60** A♮ tied (slurred) tenor quavers are probably an oversight
- **73** to achieve *pp* subito, an interesting effect can be obtained by silently replaying the final chord simultaneously removing the sustaining pedal

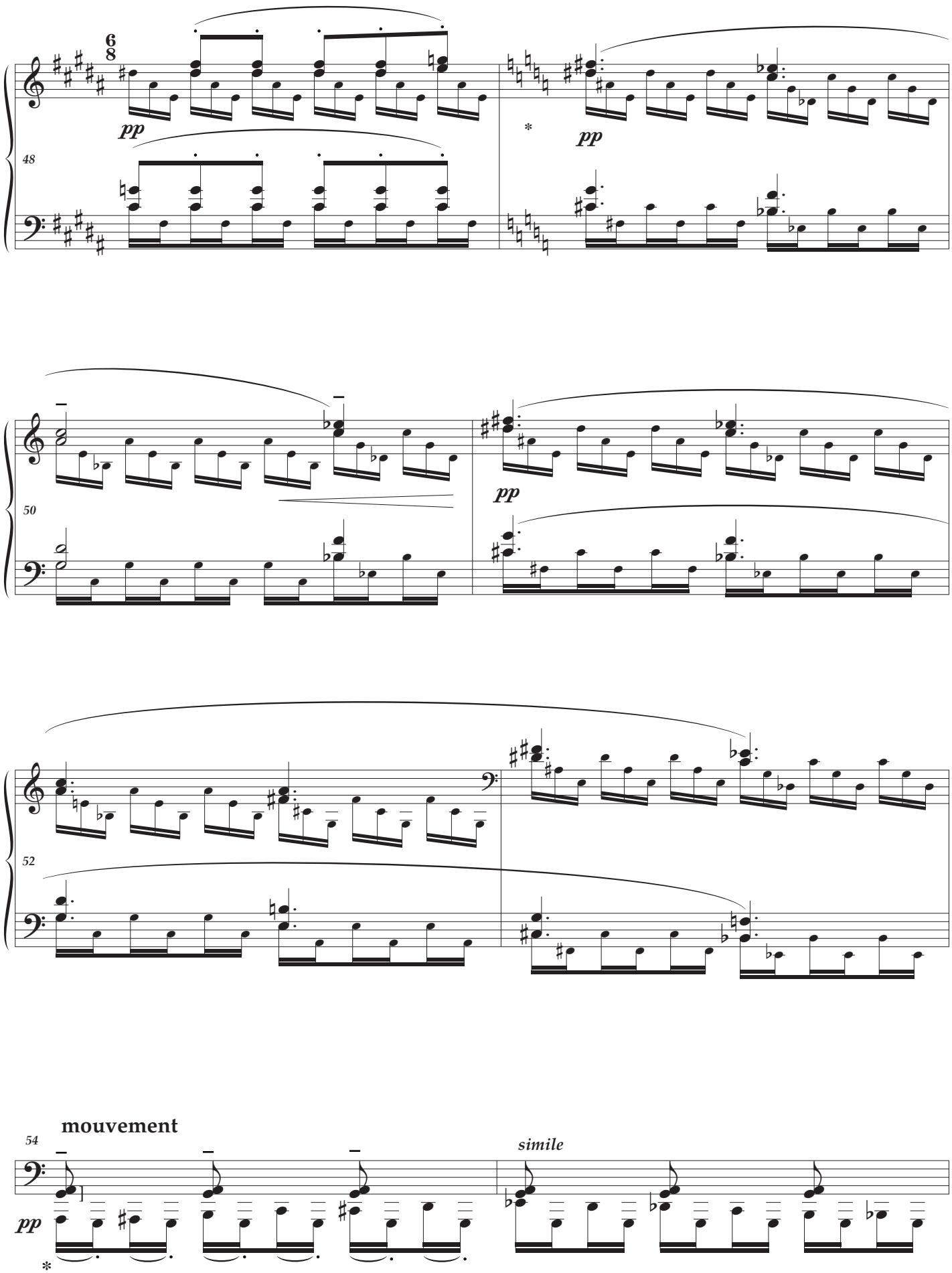

scherzando
VIII
pp
m.s.
m.d.
mf
retenu
//

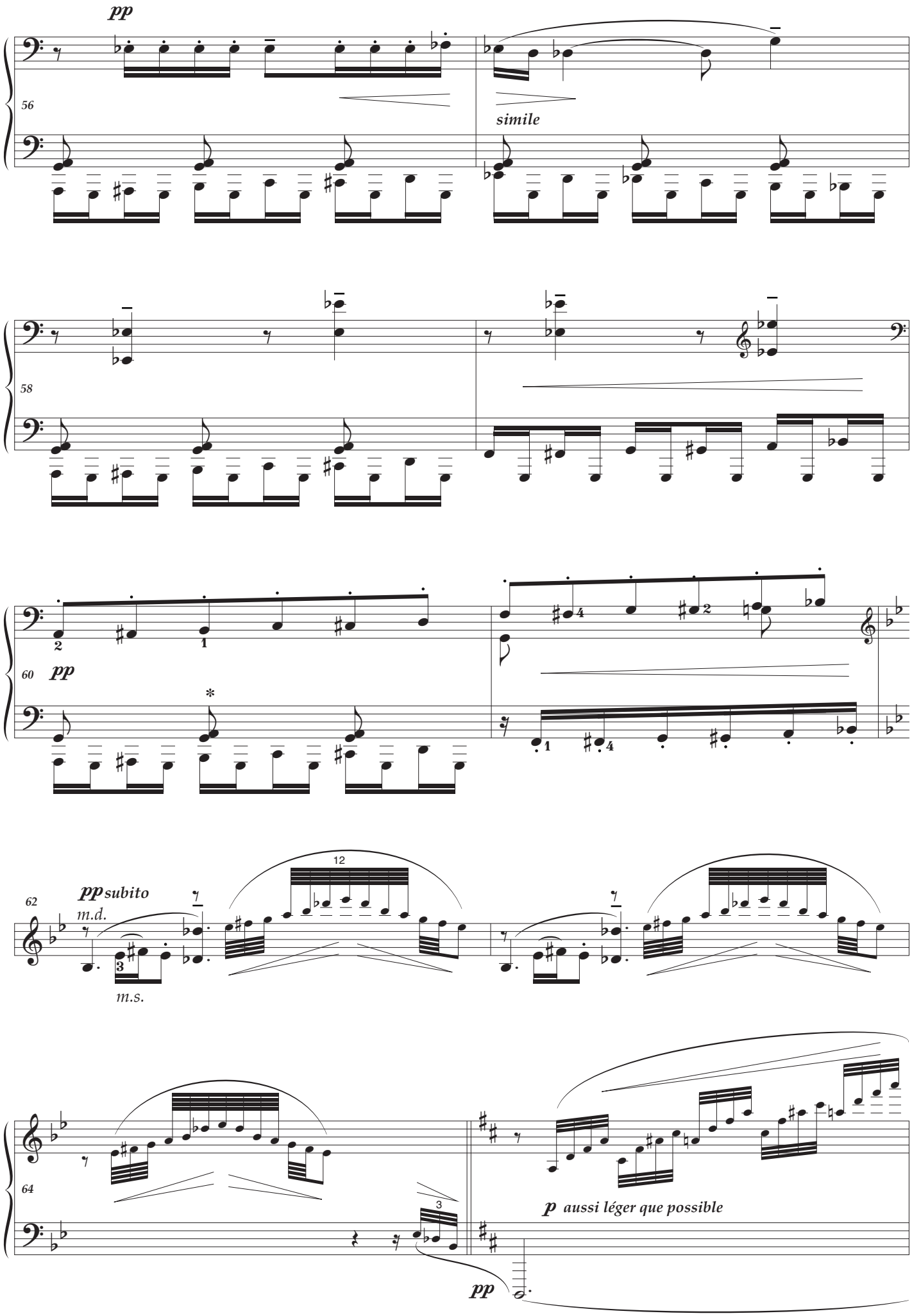

au mouvement
scintillant
doux
11
12
13
rubato
m.d.
10
5
1
au mouvement
8va
15
p
2
3
4
5
18
9
m.s.
p

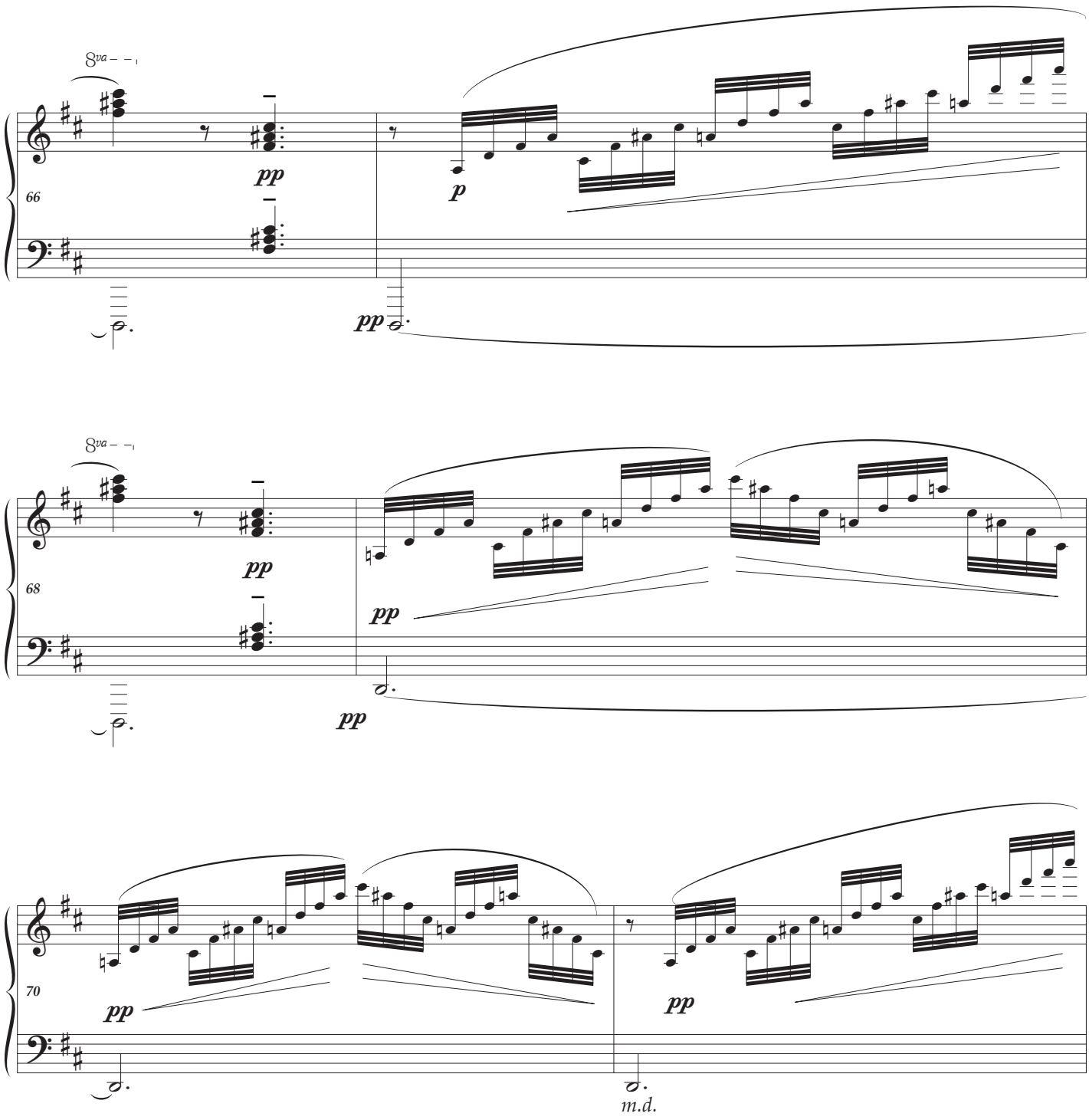

à l'aise
p léger
20
mf en dehors
22
p expressif
retenu - - - - - - - - - - //
m.s.
24
mouvement
8va
26
p

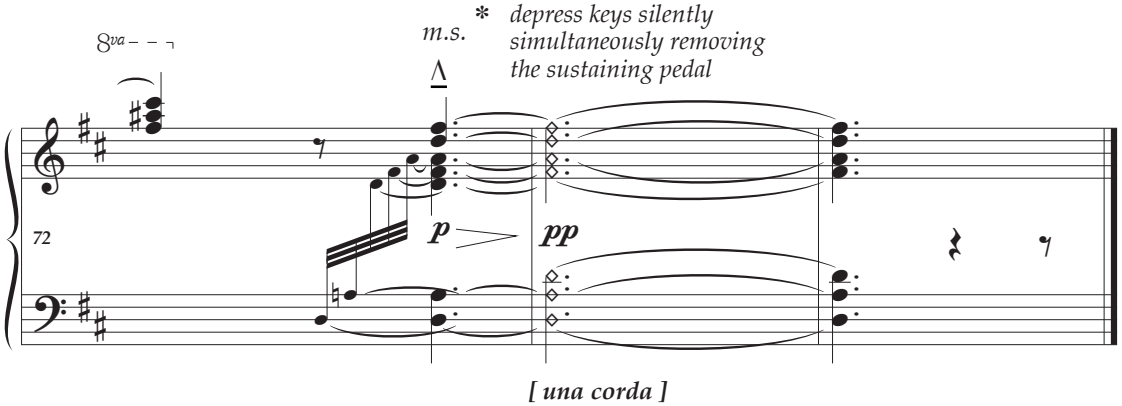

scintillant
doux
12
28
retenu - - - - //
mouvement
p
p en dehors
30
pp
p
34
p
36


38
pp
40
p
p
le double plus lent
42
rubato
un peu au-dessous du mouvement
pp murmurando
44
doucement marqué
9/8
46


6/8
pp
48
*
pp
50
pp
52
54
mouvement
simile
pp
*


pp
56
simile
58
60
pp
62
pp subito
m.d.
m.s.
12
64
p aussi léger que possible
pp



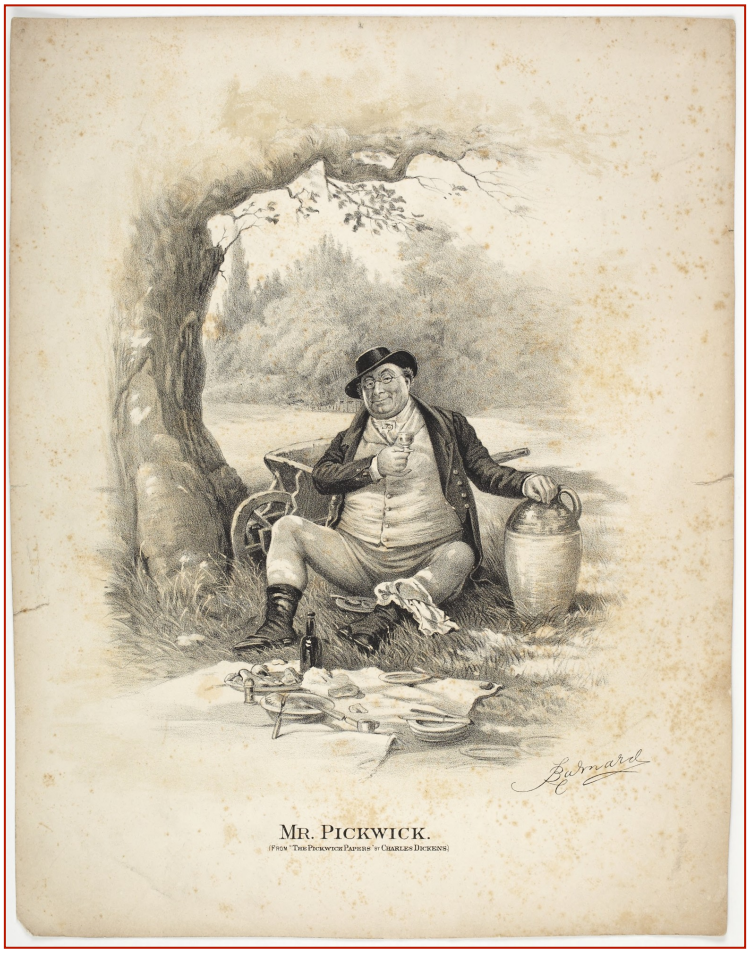


[una corda]

(… Ondine)

IX

Throughout his career, Debussy found inspiration from many far-flung and exotic places but closer to home he often turned to England, its literature and art. He was an ardent anglophile, although apparently with a limited command of English, and hired a Miss Gibbs, an English governess as nanny for his daughter. Unlike a mere tourist he extended his passion to taking strong tea for breakfast, enjoying a glass of whisky (in the evening around 10) and reading our novels (in particular Dickens which he almost certainly read in French). The author was just 24 when he penned his first serialised work, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, in short — *The Pickwick Papers*.



"I never heerd ... or read of in story-books, nor see in picters, any angel in tights and gaiters ... but ... he's a reg'lar thoroughbred angel for all that."

Pickwick was the composer's 'best and oldest companion' fitting every mood, an infallible antidote and indefatigable healer for all ills, and irritability could be cured by a swift dose.

*— René Peter **

For this observation I am indebted to **John France**: *The title given by the composer includes the initials P.P.M.P.C. which are meant to stand for 'Perpetual Vice President Member Pickwick Club'. This club was created with 'the purpose of investigating the source of the Hampstead Ponds.' However as Maurice Hinson rightly observes, English was not Debussy's strong point as the initials are a little awry. A brief look at the introductory chapter of the book reveals that it was Joseph Smiggers, Esq., who was P.V.P.M.P.C. and Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C.M.P.C 'General Chairman — Member Pickwick Club'.*

Debussy gently mocks Dickens' likeable hero, who appropriately enters the scene to the strains of 'God Save the King'. At the call of the horn, his rickety jalopy sets off down the road. The alternation of timidity, absent-mindedness, and self-satisfaction portray the character and render the caustic affability of the sketch. The piece, with its timbres evoking the orchestra, is highly coloured: an example of Debussy's wry sense of humour.

— Harry Halbreich

It is not possible to conceive of a more spirited musical adaptation, not only of the character of Dickens's hero, but of his very style. His mordant goodwill, his delectable mischief, and every measure of this piece is a detail that counts, from the seriocomic 'God Save the King' to the jaunty

whistling of the last page, while the music passes through alternations between absent-minded solemnity, timidity, and complacency which make up the humorous personality of Mr. Pickwick Esq.

— Cortot

Debussy rather admired English sangfroid but was not beyond giving it the occasional dig in the ribs, as here in his quotation of 'God Save the King'.

— Roger Nichols

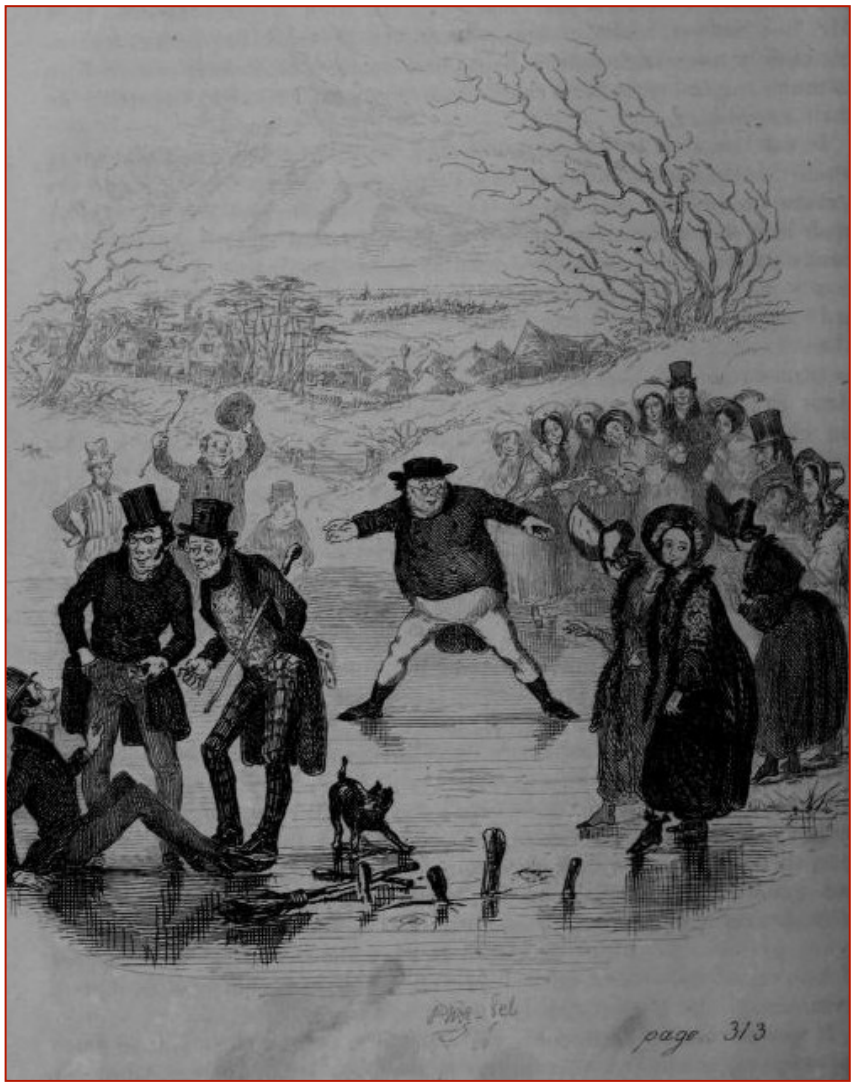
A great Hokey Cokey of eccentrics, conmen, phoney politicians, amorous widows and wily, witty servants, somehow catching an essence of what it is to be English, celebrating companionship, generosity, good nature, in the figure of Samuel Pickwick, Esq, one of the great embodiments in literature of benevolence.

— Simon Callow

Debussy was equal to the heavier, more picaresque comedy of Dickens, an author he adored. 'Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.' is like a multi-frame picture postcard from London, starting with 'God Save the King' (Union Jack T-shirt) and proceeding through what might be a series of street scenes culminating in a whistled tune straight out of the mouth of Sam Weller.

— Stephen Walsh

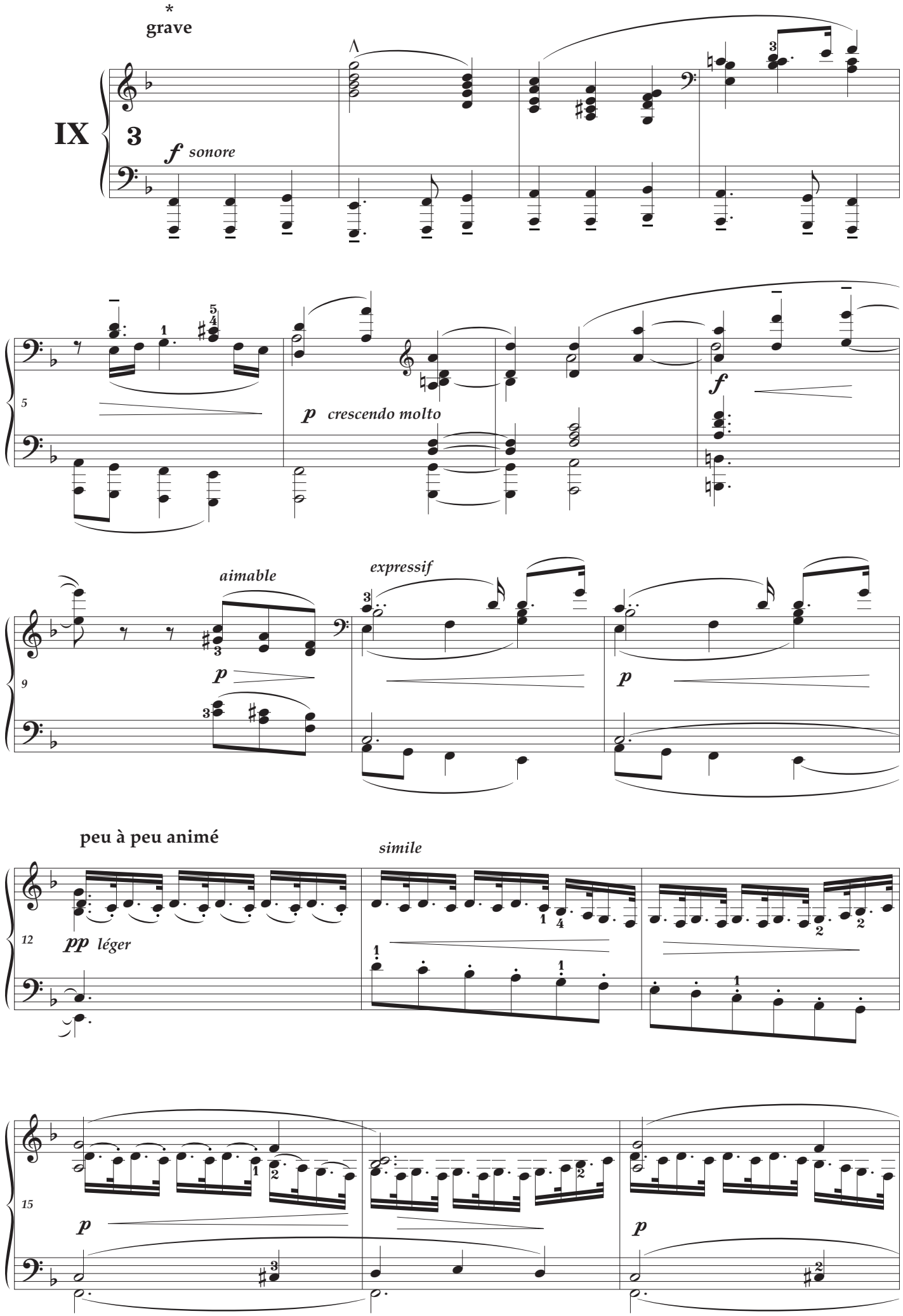
* 1872-1947 writer, author of comedies, opera librettos. Benefactor and biographer of Debussy who wrote pertinently about their long and close collaboration.

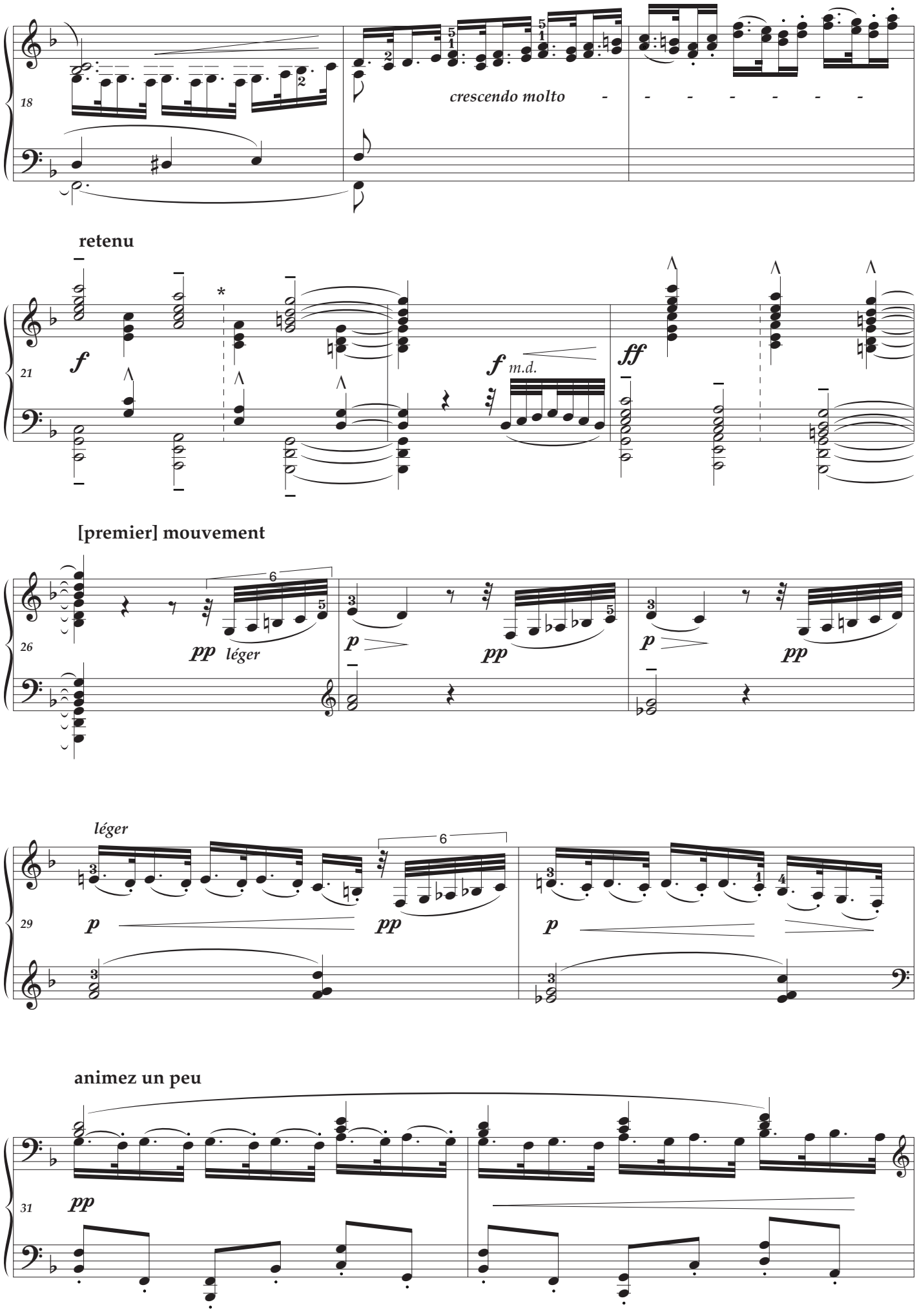


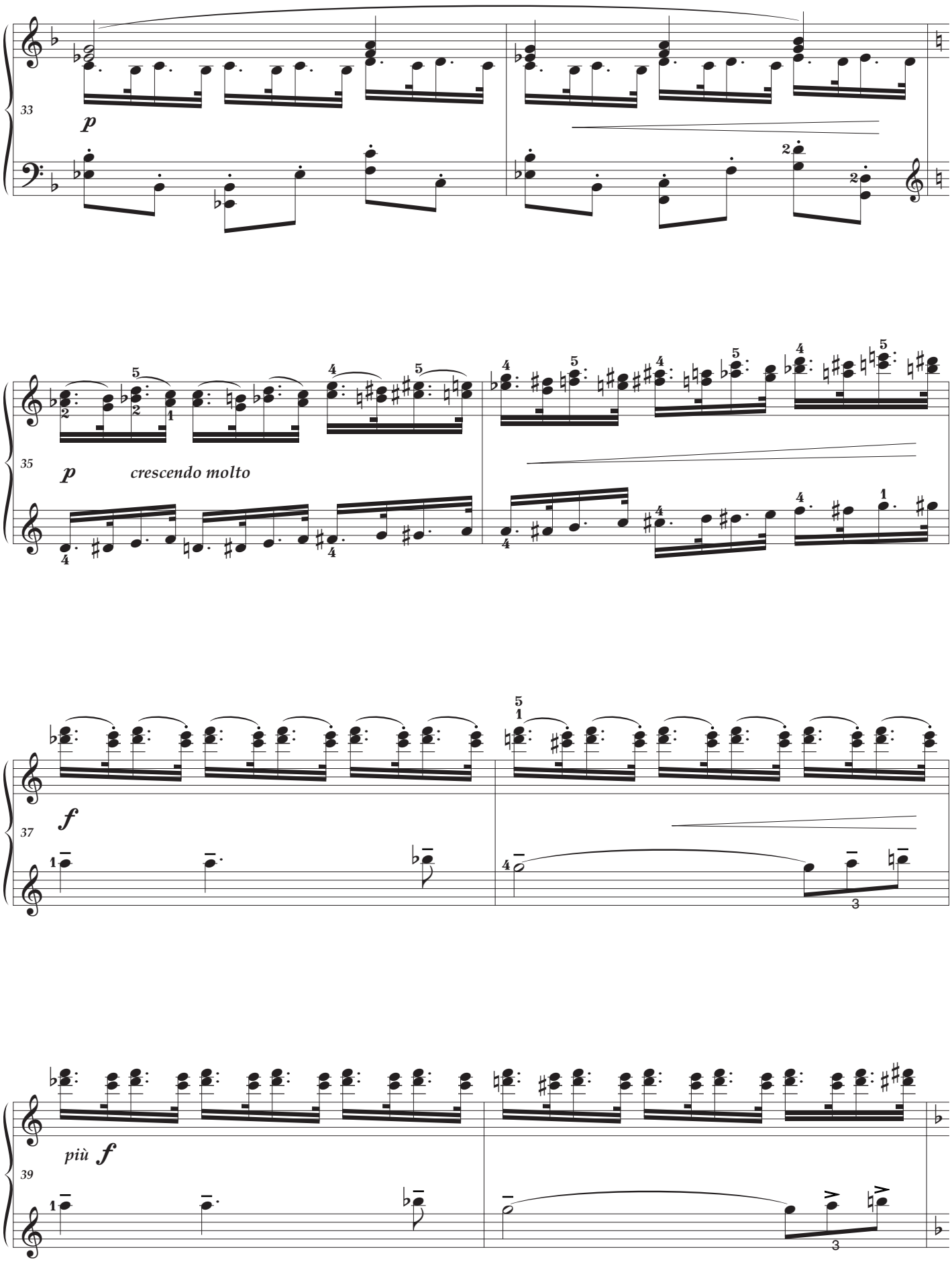
Pickwick at the slide

Duration: 2'50

- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- *grave* in French probably infers pseudo solemnity and not the traditional Italian term meaning extremely slow. I suggest choosing a suitable whistling tempo for **44-48** and keeping to something similar for the opening national anthem (i.e. *andante*)
- **21-25** editorial dotted barlines
- **44-46** editorial dotted barlines and modification of time-signature


*
grave
IX
3
f sonore
5
p crescendo molto
f
9
aimable
p
expressif
p
peu à peu animé
12
pp léger
simile
15
p
p


18
crescendo molto
retenu
21
f
f m.d.
ff
[premier] mouvement
26
pp léger
p
pp
p
pp
léger
29
p
pp
p
animez un peu
31
pp


33
p
35
p
crescendo molto
37
f
39
più f

[premier] mouvement

41

p

même mouvement

44

pp

lointain et léger

47

sfz *p* *pp*

mouvement — retenu

49

f *mf*

52

mf *m.d.* *f* *ff* *p* *p*

(... hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.)

X

A prelude inspired by Egyptology and suffused with ambiguity. Hallowed tombs beckon with the mystery of pyramids, our distant deceased, mummification, burial rites and urns. As with *Danseurs de Delphes* (book I) we are drawn back in time to contemplate art from bygone civilisations. While the after-title conjures a precise image, very little is known about the genesis of this prelude. We can only speculate on its meaning and enjoy the unusual interconnection of its suitably symbolised classical harmony.

According to **Paul Roberts**, the subject is a far more subtle evocation of eastern music and ritual than *Pagodes*. Like other pieces with an oriental background it also expresses a delicate eroticism, which for Debussy's *fin de siècle* was all part of the asian myth. Debussy recalls the gamelan music that had so entranced him six years earlier (at the 1889 Universal Exposition), 'where tonic and dominant were no more than empty phantoms for the use of naughty children' — a comment of particular relevance to *Canope*, for in the closing measures tonic and dominant are made to appear as 'empty phantoms' by being telescoped together, hence undermining traditional tonal polarity. In his words — 'the vibrant beauty of sound itself' — resolution at the end is achieved not in the final chord, which in traditional terms remains unresolved, but in the silence that follows the fading of the sounds.

A closer precedent for this profoundly mysterious piece is the chord parallels that open Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien: the same solemn, stately tread, and something of the same tendency to suggest strangeness by breaking the natural sequence of these essentially very plain, uncomplicated chords. Reflecting upon the artist who created the original urn, with sorrowful solitude Debussy seals the canopic jar bringing vestiges of the past to the present.*

— Stephen Walsh

The meditative and gentle lines of this piece have the nobility and the stately form of the antique funerary urn which serves as a symbol. This harrowing and tender chant, through the wailing sound of a yearning flute, tells the eternal love of the adolescent soul whose secret torment sleeps in these light ashes with a slumber that cannot forget.

— Cortot

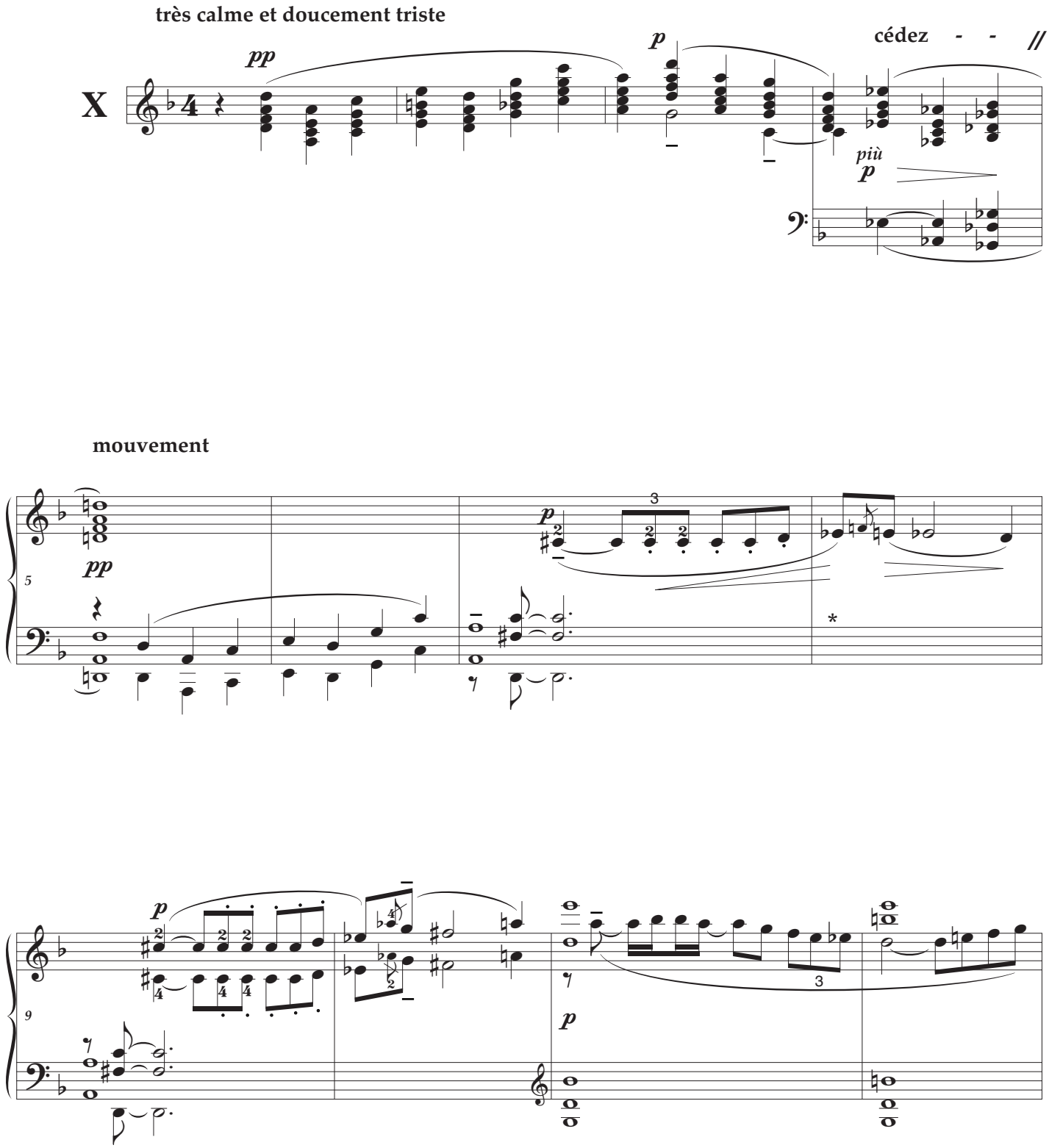
One of Debussy's most mysterious and enigmatic pieces, is also one of his most prophetic. The entire piece unfolds in a hieratic, strangely distant atmosphere, engendering a sensation of infinite solitude reinforced by a cadence that is not an ending — we remain suspended in the void. Once again, Debussy has fused space and time.

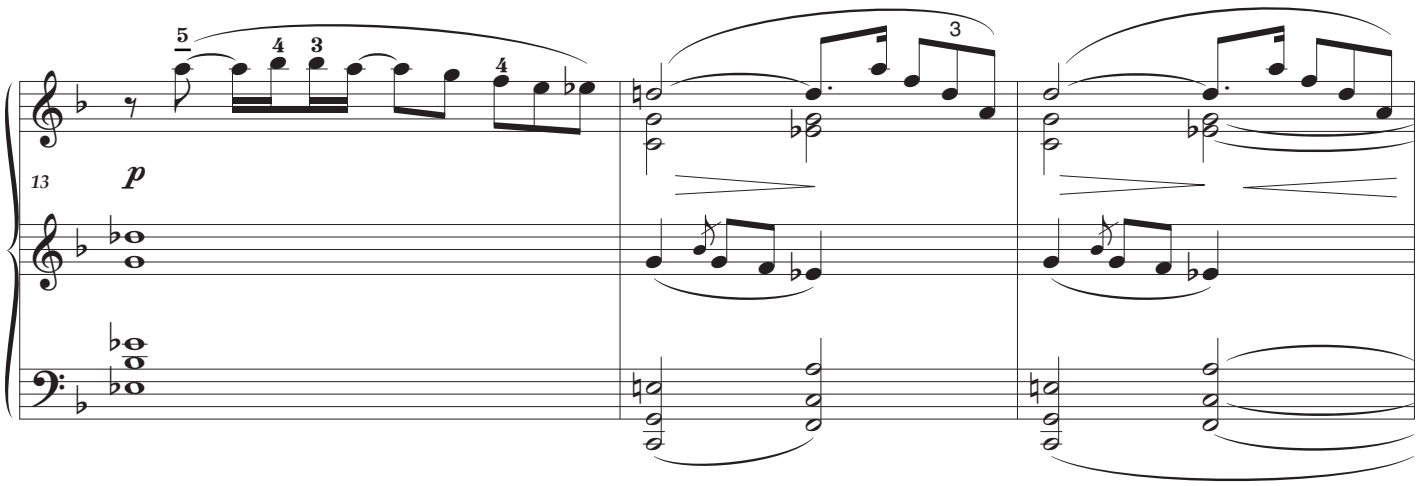
— Harry Halbreich

* used in sets of four by the ancient Egyptians as containers for the internal organs of embalmed bodies.

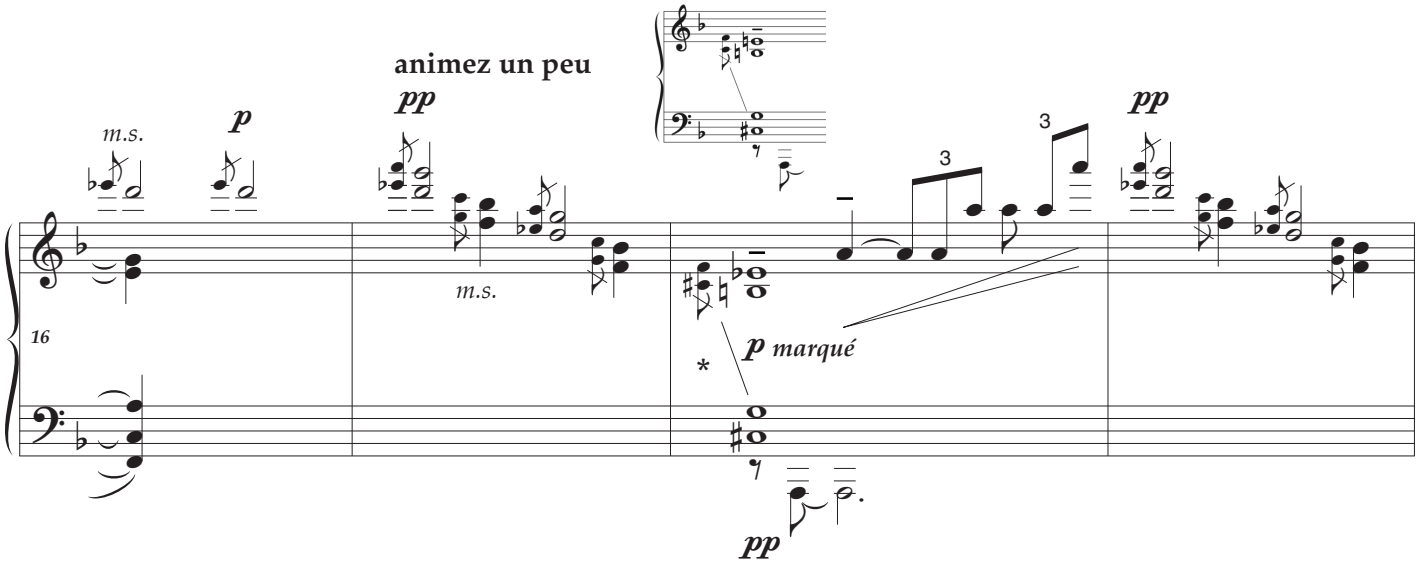
Duration: 3'15

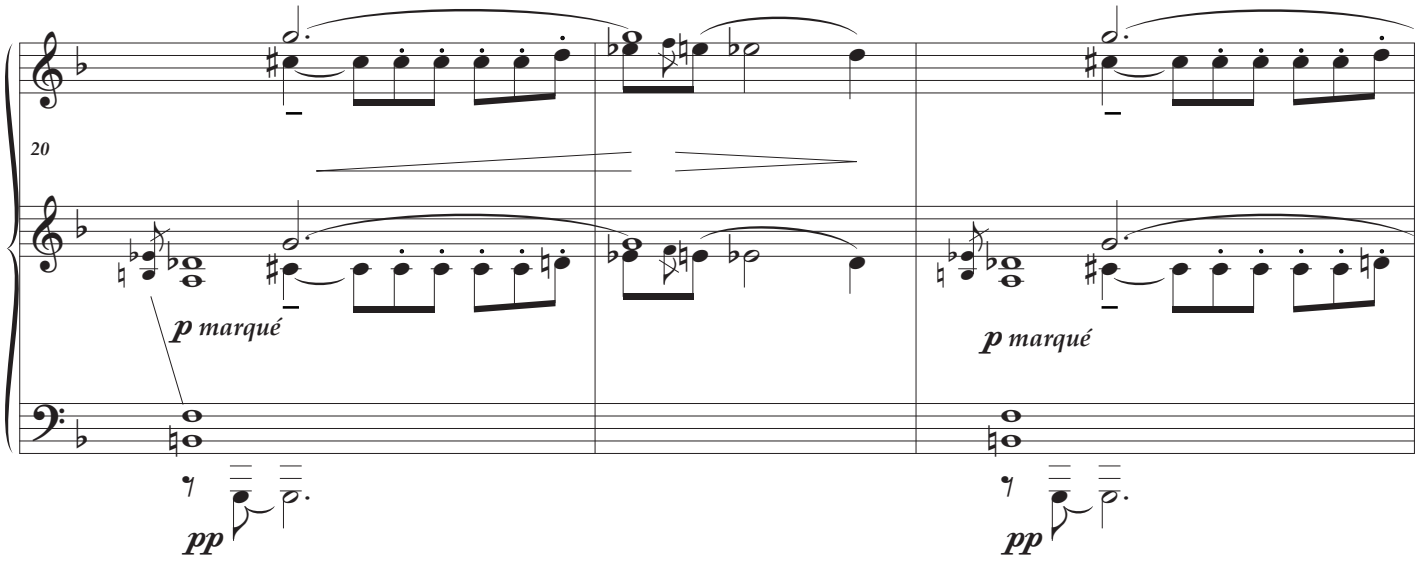
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- **8** editorial omission of left hand tied crotchet (see **10**)
- **18** this version (which mirrors **20** & **22**) is currently finding much favour
- **24** editorial pedal to create a "frisson of sound for its own sake, capturing with remarkable accuracy the jangling resonance of an oriental plucked instrument". (**Paul Roberts** The Piano Music of Debussy 2003)
- **30-33** editorial pedalling suggestions
- **33** The final 'sound' appears as a rest in the original score and of course should not be played. If one listens very attentively, without a pedal change, a tonic overtone becomes almost audible to complete the final canopic phrase, fading appropriately into silence.

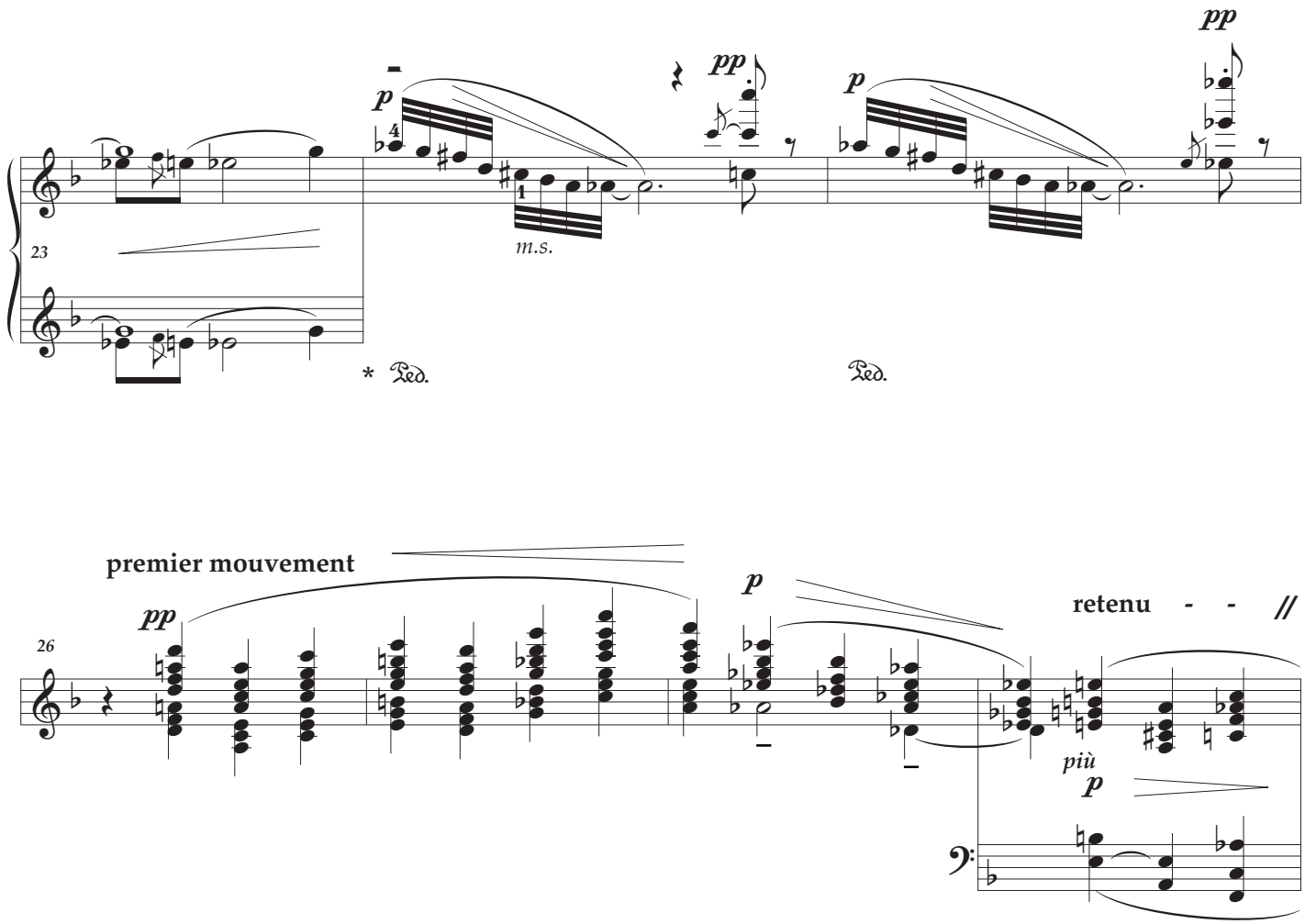

très calme et doucement triste
X
pp
p
cédez - - //
più
p
mouvement
5
pp
p
3
*
9
p
p
3


13
p

Durand


animez un peu
pp
p
m.s.
m.s.
16
p marqué
pp
pp


20
p marqué
p marqué
pp
pp


pp
p
pp
p
pp
23
m.s.
* Ped.
Ped.
premier mouvement
pp
p
retenu - - //
26
più
p
plus lent
très lent
très doux et très expressif
encore plus doux
30
pp
più
pp
Sost. Ped
*
Ped.
una corda

(... canope)

XI

As a youth on first listening to this piece, I found it somewhat elusive, and Durand's score seemed obscure and not easy to follow. Debussy was not new to the idea of writing on three staves* and often added one in this second book of preludes. For the most part the wider systems help to clearly perceive separate voicing and clarify complicated passages but for this work I long wondered how it would look on just one stave. In addition, as a consequence of the excessive number of barlines and lively speed, it was quite a challenge to memorise and keep track of the metre. And then I wondered how it would convert to 4 crotchet beats, thus making the phrasing more clear with the emergence of a few irregular bars. Here is the result of my efforts.

Number XI is the only prelude without a descriptive after-title and these admirable 'Alternating Thirds' are definitely unsexy. A particularly poetically motivated composer and master of language presents what appears to be a dry academic study. Perhaps he lacked time… or perhaps we should create our own extramusical image. I hear a *Perpetuum Mobile* with insects *sotto voce* and suggest '*la Guinguette des Cigales*' (the Cicadas' Ball). The opening bars might represent the insect band tuning up (in thirds of course) and the lyrical central section a flirtation scene. I found this appropriate extract by the artist and poet **Jules Breton****:

Dans les blés, cependant, d'intrépides cigales
Jetant leurs mille bruits, fanfare de l'été,
Ont frénétiquement et sans trêve agité
Leurs ailes sur l'airain de leurs folles cymbales.

In the wheatfield, however, adventurous cicadas
Hurling a thousand calls in summer fanfare,
Have frantically and without respite beaten
Their wings on the carillon of their insane tymbals.

Just before sending the second volume to the publisher there was a problem over which preludes to include, and it was decided to abandon "*Tomai des éléphants*," (inspired by Kipling) and substitute *les Tierces Alternées*. If one transposes the opening bars they show some similarity to Gershwin's "I got Rhythm" published some 15 years later. The alternation may refer to the thirds (major and minor), hands, or moods and images, and there are several imaginative sudden changes of key, metre and colour.

With charming ingenuity, a technique borrowed from the harpsichord gives birth to this fantasy; a pretext not only for the enjoyment of pure sound, but for the feline grace of their physical creation. Debussy juggles with thirds, like a cat with a ball of wool, makes it bounce, sends it into a corner, then, after a moment of apparent indifference, with a sudden stroke of the paw plays with it once more.

— Cortot

Debussy may be teasing us in the twenty-third prelude by asking us to guess the title. 'Bustling crowds on the Boulevard des Italiens'? 'The little train'? No; simply Les tierces alternées: 'alternating thirds'. Which they do without respite.

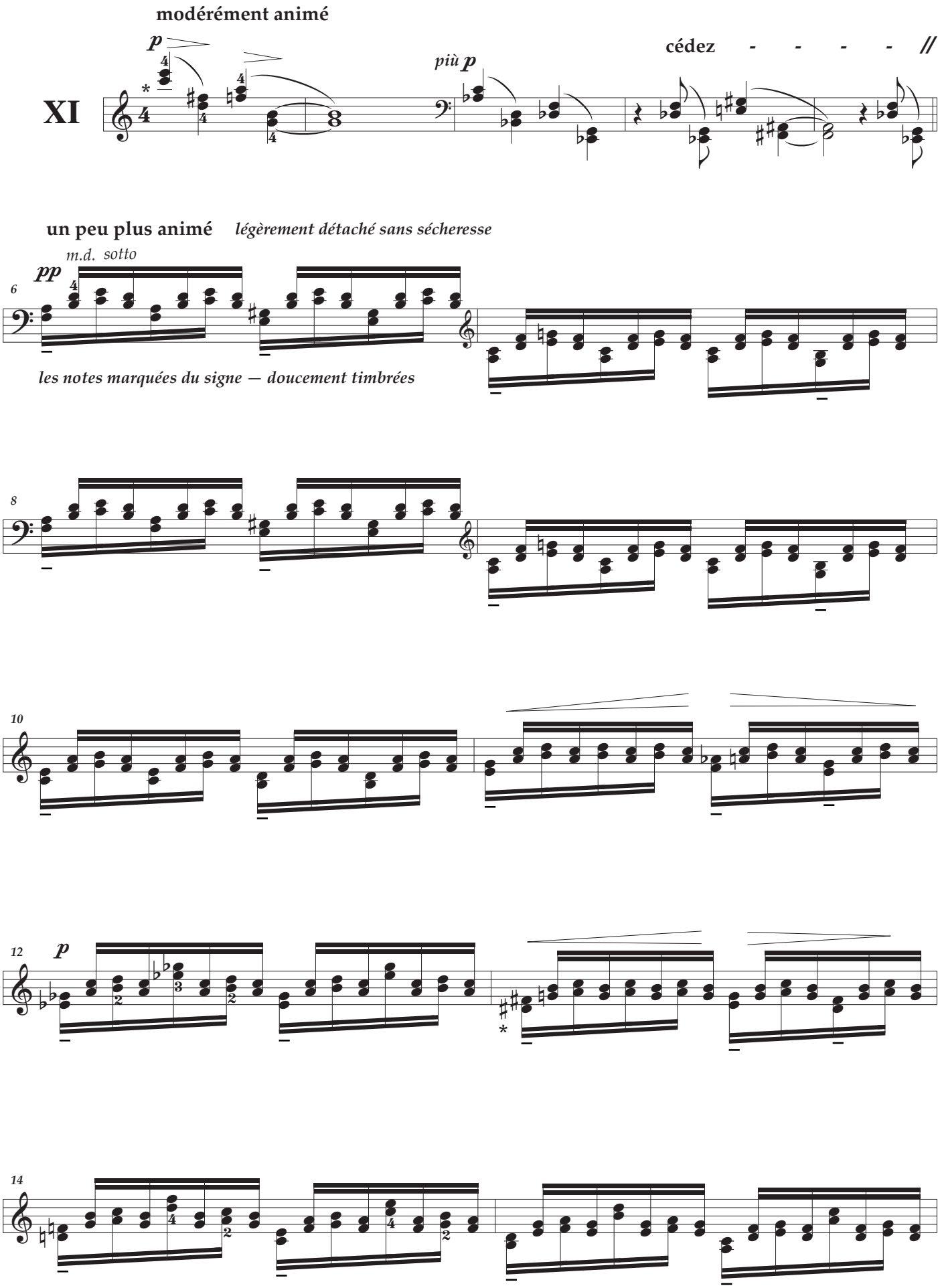
— *Roger Nichols*

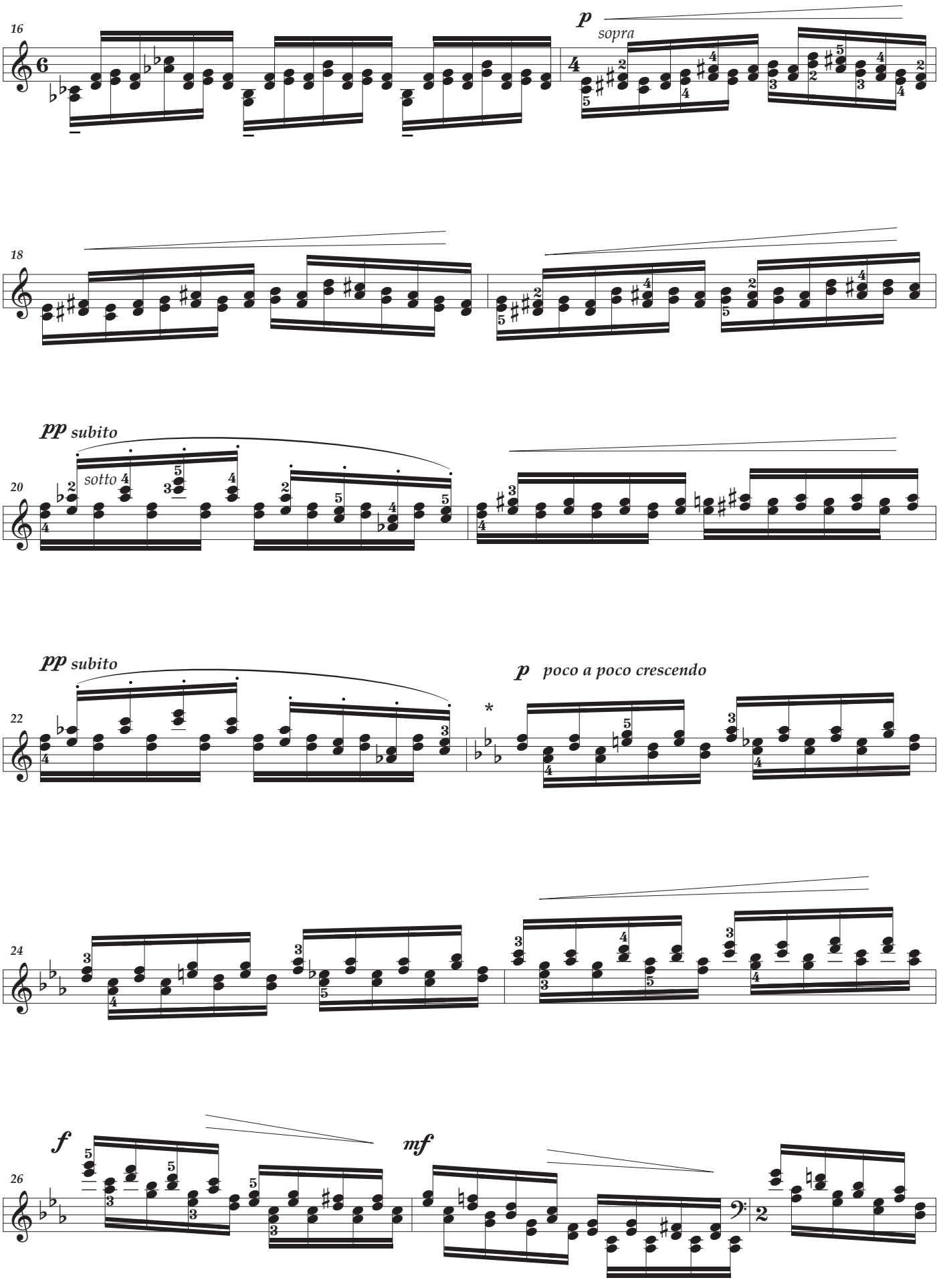
* his second book of *Images* and *La Soirée dans Grenade* (*Estampes*), **Ravel** *la Vallée des Cloches*, *Gaspard de la Nuit* and there are earlier romantic examples by **Liszt** and **Schumann.**

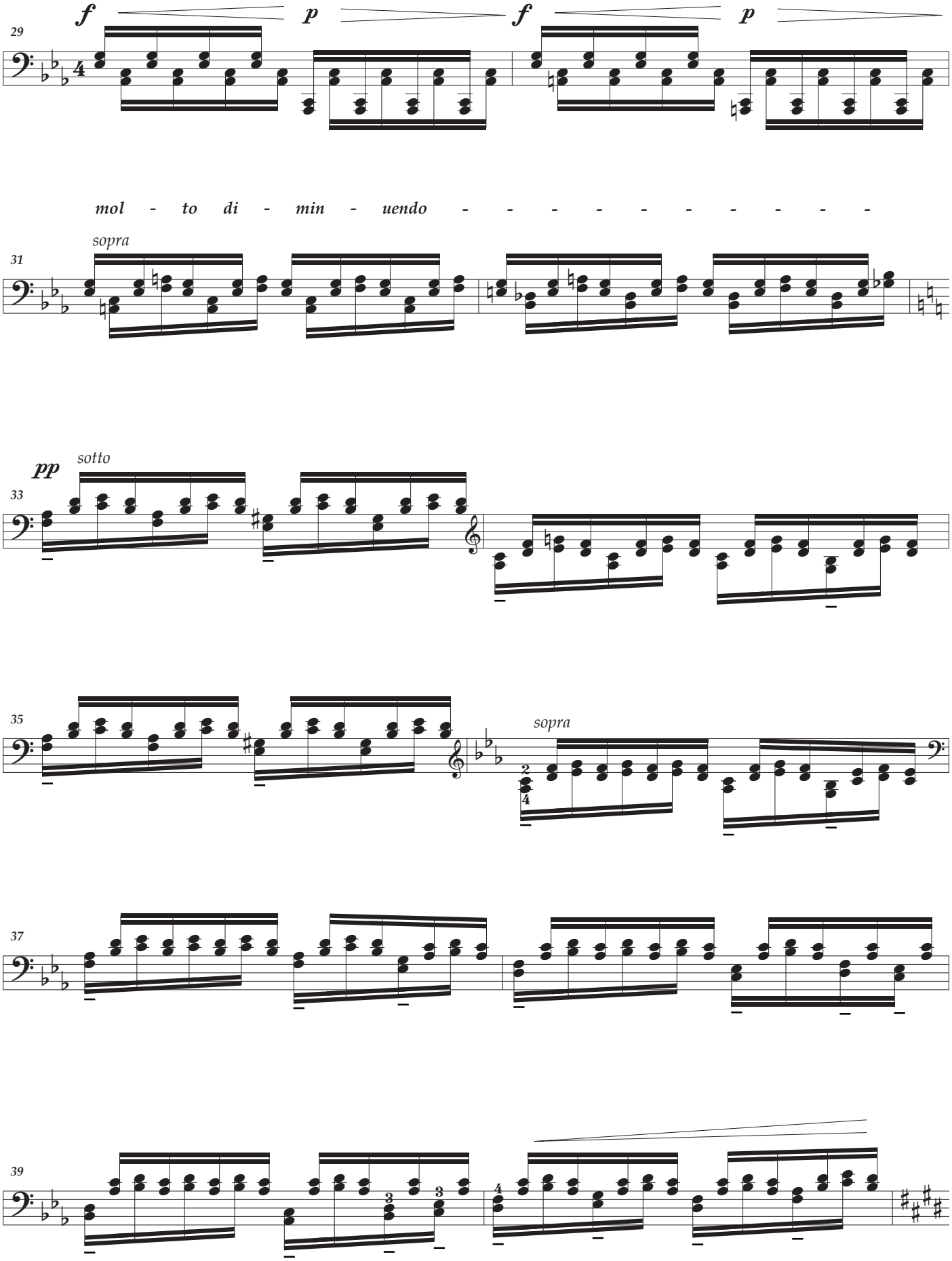
***les Champs et la Mer*

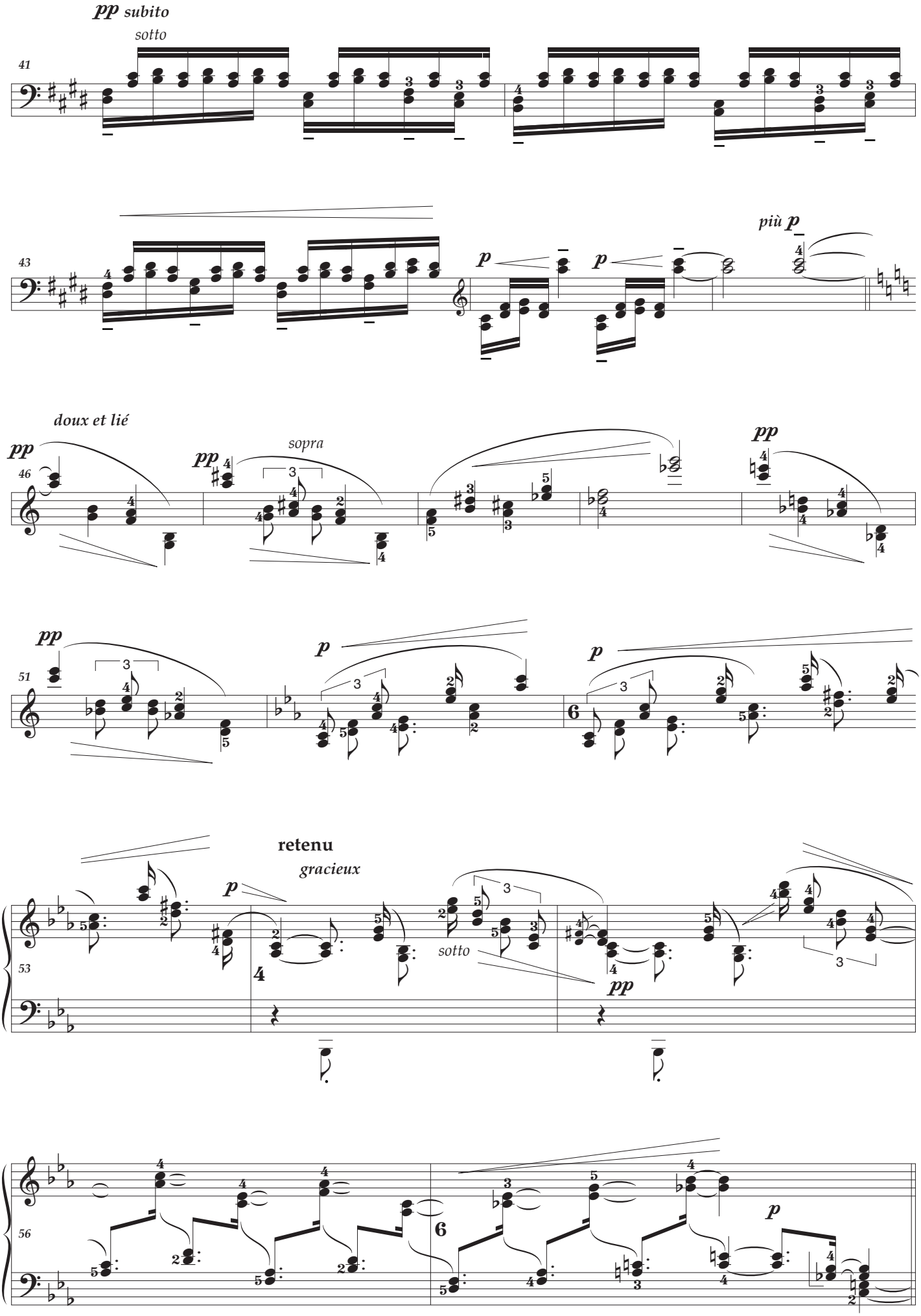
Duration: 3'15

- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- stem directions indicate right or left
- originally 2 crotchet beats throughout
- **13** D♯ according to recent observation
- **23-40, 52-53, 60-61** editorial modification of key-signatures

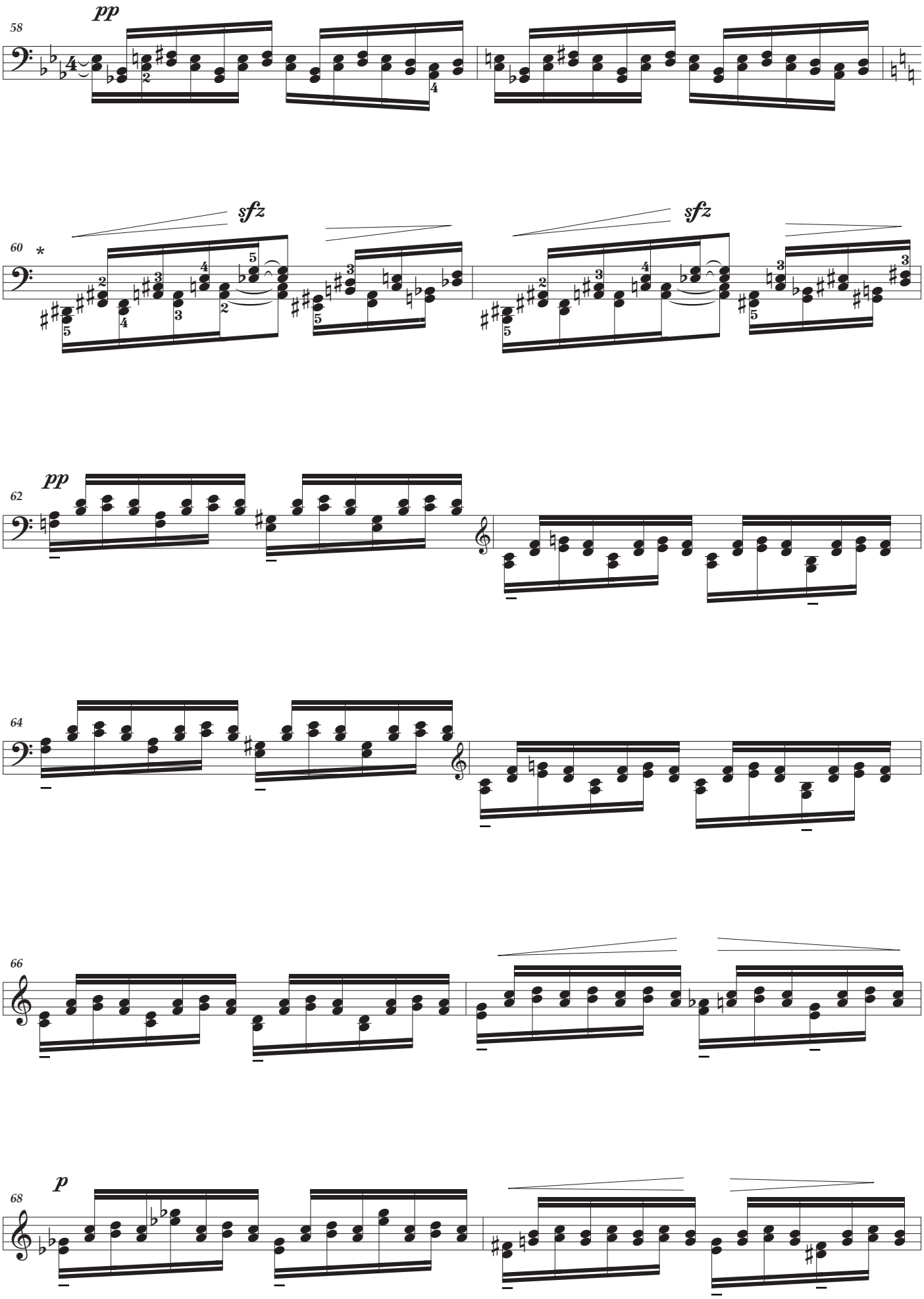

modérément animé
p
XI
più p
cédez - - - - //
un peu plus animé
légèrement détaché sans sécheresse
m.d. sotto
pp
6
les notes marquées du signe — doucement timbrées
8
10
12
p
14

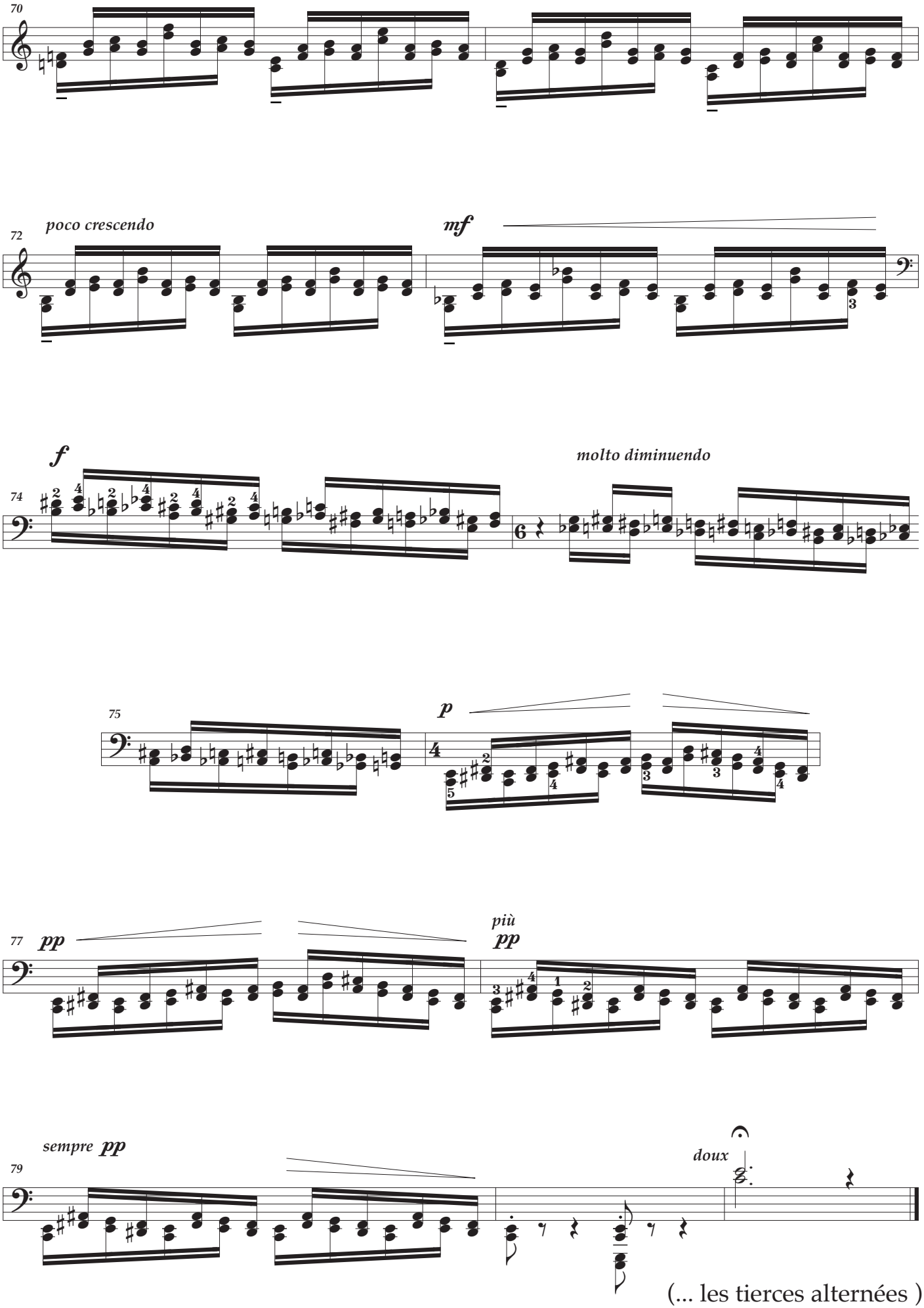

16
p
sopra
18
pp subito
sotto
20
pp subito
22
p poco a poco crescendo
*
24
f
mf
26


29
f
p
f
p
mol - to di - min - uendo - - - - - - - - - -
31
sopra
pp
sotto
33
35
sopra
37
39


pp subito
sotto
41
43
più p
p
p
doux et lié
pp
46
pp
sopra
pp
pp
51
p
p
retenu
gracieux
p
53
sotto
pp
56
p

au mouvement





(... les tierces alternées)

XII

The last of these 24 *préludes* is also the most technically challenging — fireworks over the Seine and fireworks at the keyboard. Debussy rarely tries to imitate Lisztian pyrotechnics but here he succeeds in writing a dazzling virtuoso display piece to end the collection. Bastille day revellers in Paris provide the backdrop for rockets, firecrackers, sparklers and explosions in the night sky, as the audience quietly waits in anticipation of a complex harmonic wonderworld of extreme dynamics and dissonance, giving voice to breathtaking light. The cadenza sounds as if it were inspired by Stravinsky and the prelude appropriately concludes with a soft and brief quotation from *La Marseillaise* in polyphony with a final utterance of the principal motif.

JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER NOCTURNE IN BLACK AND GOLD — THE FALLING ROCKET *

Brilliant and poetic, 'Feux d'artifice', the most extended piece of Book II, ends the collection in a shower of sparks and light. The graphic appearance of the score is Lisztian, with sequences of arpeggios, cadenzas and rare Debussyan octaves. At the outset, a confused rumbling suggests a faceless crowd, which then totally disappears. The final quotation of a hesitant and distant Marseillaise suggests a celebration for the 14 July. But as in Fêtes this ending is somewhat melancholic, as joy disappears and the playground is left deserted. Feux d'artifice is one of the most innovative works by Debussy — athematic, atonal and static. Its almost formless structure does not depend on any tonality.

— Harry Halbreich

Feux d'artifice brings us back to real life and to Paris. As Robert Schmitz reminds us: 'There is a well-established custom which prescribes that the last display shot off in a fireworks exhibit (le bouquet) should be the richest, most varied, most powerful one of the evening. Few are the connoisseurs who do not find a place on one of the many bridges over the River Seine on the evening of 14 July to witness sky and earth joined in this fiery interplay of pyrotechnics and reflections'. And as snatches of the Marseillaise fade into the distance, Debussy leaves us to ponder happily over all the marvels we have heard, and seen in our mind's eye.

— Roger Nichols

This last Prelude is a spellbinding evocation of virtuosity. Dormant smoke from Bengal Lights discharge solitary sparks, the sizzling of rockets, the slow parabola of plummeting stars, the hissing of Soleils, the dazzling bouquet of multicoloured fireworks, all that sparkles and brightly shines in the night, all the fairyland of lights is in this music. And, in the manner of an artist who with vanity adds a finishing touch to his canvas, in the final bars Debussy inserts a few notes from the Marseillaise, recalling popular poetry of bygone evenings on the 14th July.

— Cortot

Paul Roberts makes the point that 'Feux d'artifice' reminds us that Debussy could be a master of extroversion when he wished, and that pianistic brilliance is as much in his domain as are the shades of 'Canope'. He exploits harmonics and overtones which result in a sudden and exhilarating explosion of resonance (an appropriate allusion considering the title'). His purpose is to amaze and deceive us with wizardry, with compositional fireworks which may be said to allude to pianistic brilliance as well as to actual fireworks.

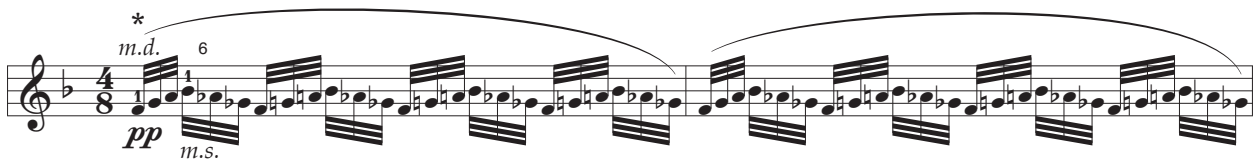
* Completed in 1875 — 'scatters stars through the impenetrable darkness of the night'. It is very probable that Debussy saw and admired this work exhibited in Paris around 1900; he was enchanted by the artist's pure style and seduced by the aesthetic of illusion, in which the exquisite becomes the evanescent.

Duration: 5'

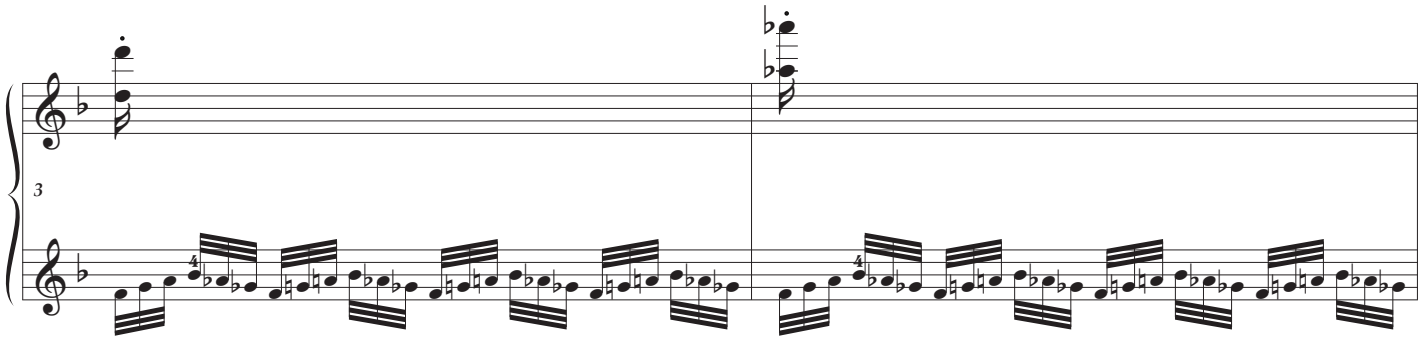
- **1-16** I have reversed the hands for this tricky opening, thereby gaining a millisecond for the impending leaps, and enabling continuity of the accompaniment in **7 & 9**
- **17** Black key glissandos can be painful… try using all four nails simultaneously (exluding the thumb); playing the first note with the left hand — the greater the nail angle, the louder it will sound. (See the article on glissando at the PPE website).
- **35-40** modified key-signature
- **37** LH accompaniment modified with editorial broken beams
- **38** the 5/8 time signature is a probable misprint
- **42-43** grace notes should probably be played before the beat
- **44** 1st beat time values rectified
- **52** with some possible confuson the LH was presented in dotted semiquavers
- **61-64** these pianissimo glissandos will respond to the technique described at **17**
- **76-80** the final LH demisemiquaver (diamond notehead) can be omitted
- **83** a new time signature is mysteriously missing here, and the value of the unique rest seems inaccurate
- **86** 2/8 seems unlikely — compare with **72**
- **98** by slightly delaying the final treble *Marseillaise* E, it is possible to keep the bass tremolo going without interruption

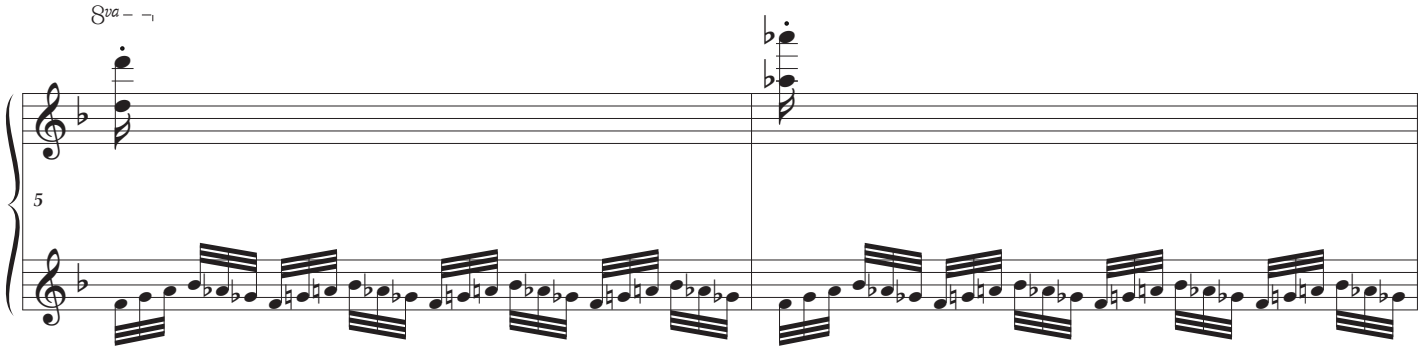
modérément animé

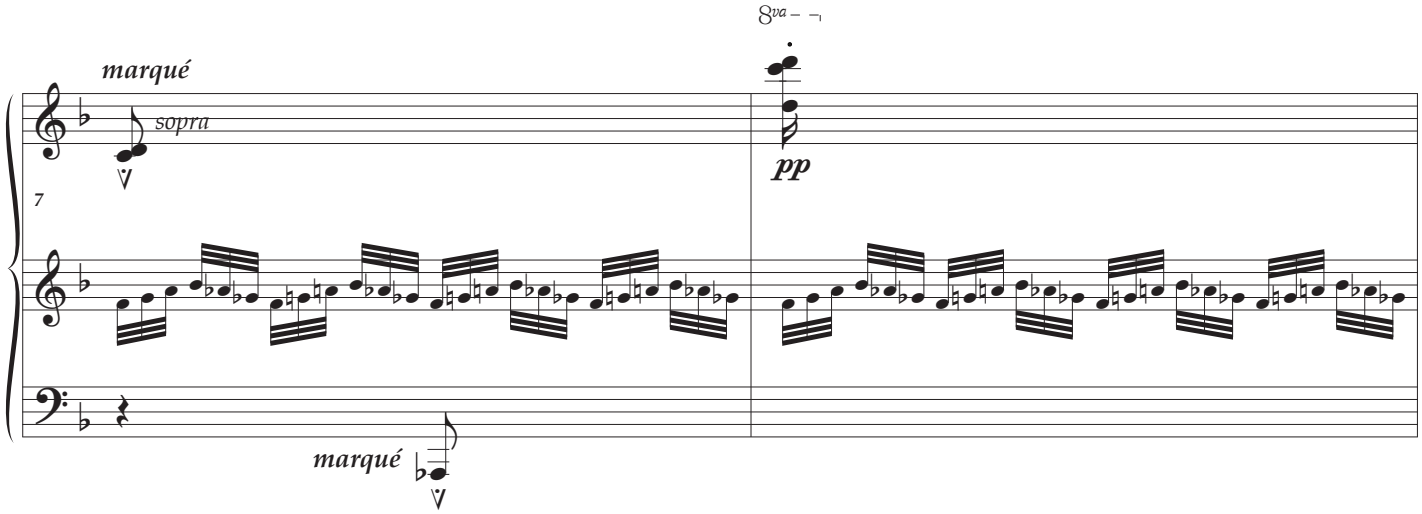
XII

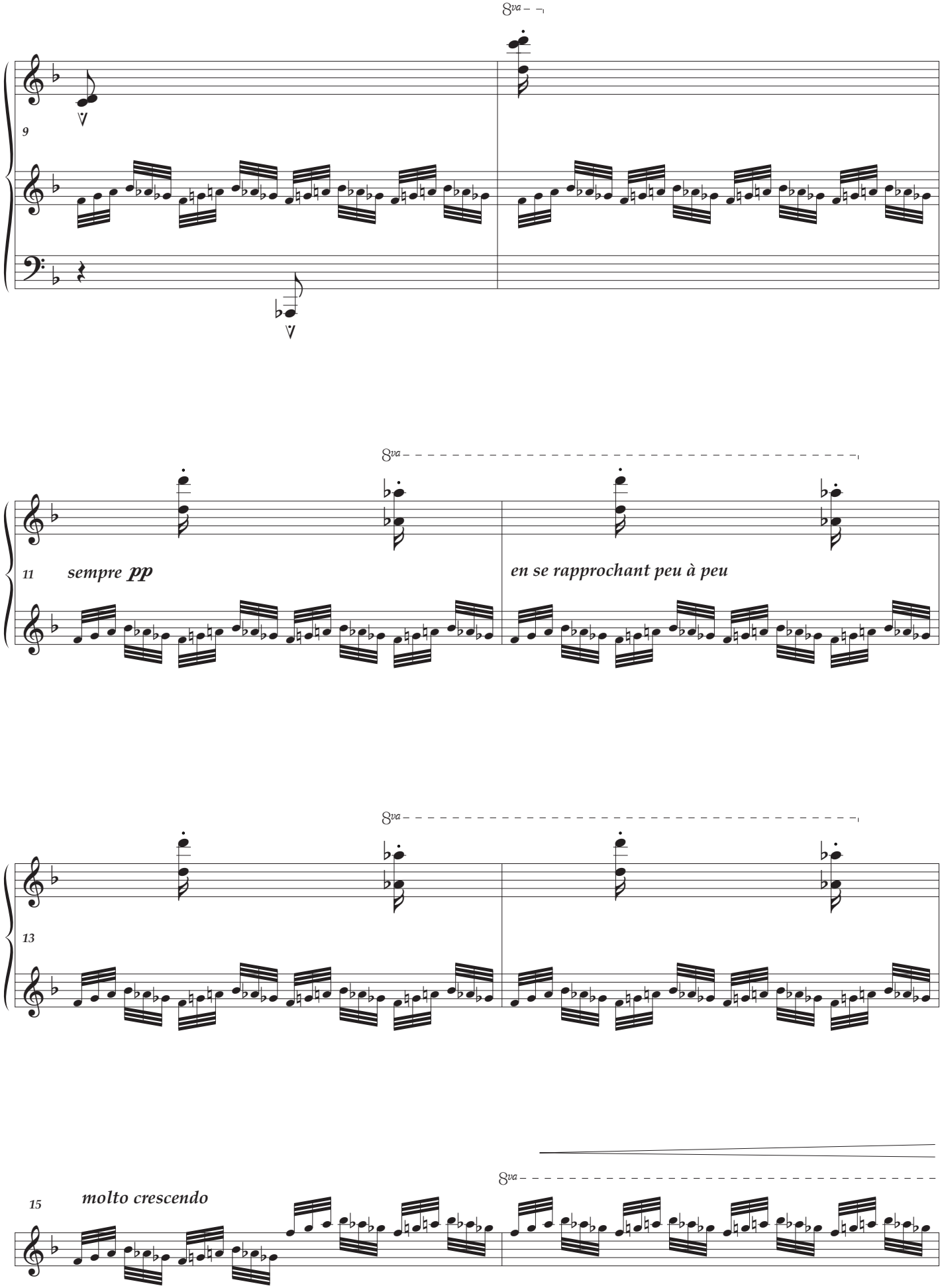


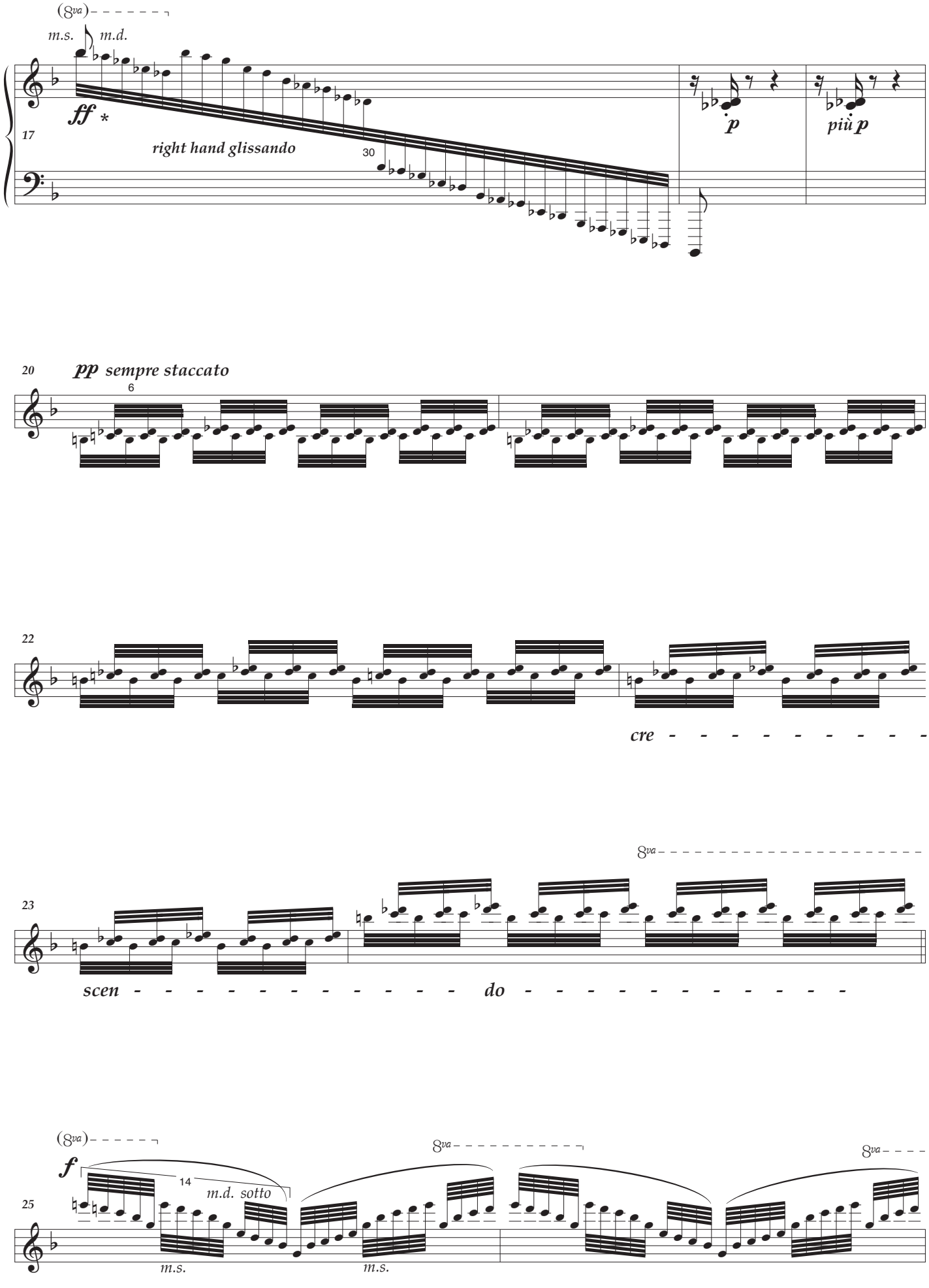
léger, égal et lointain

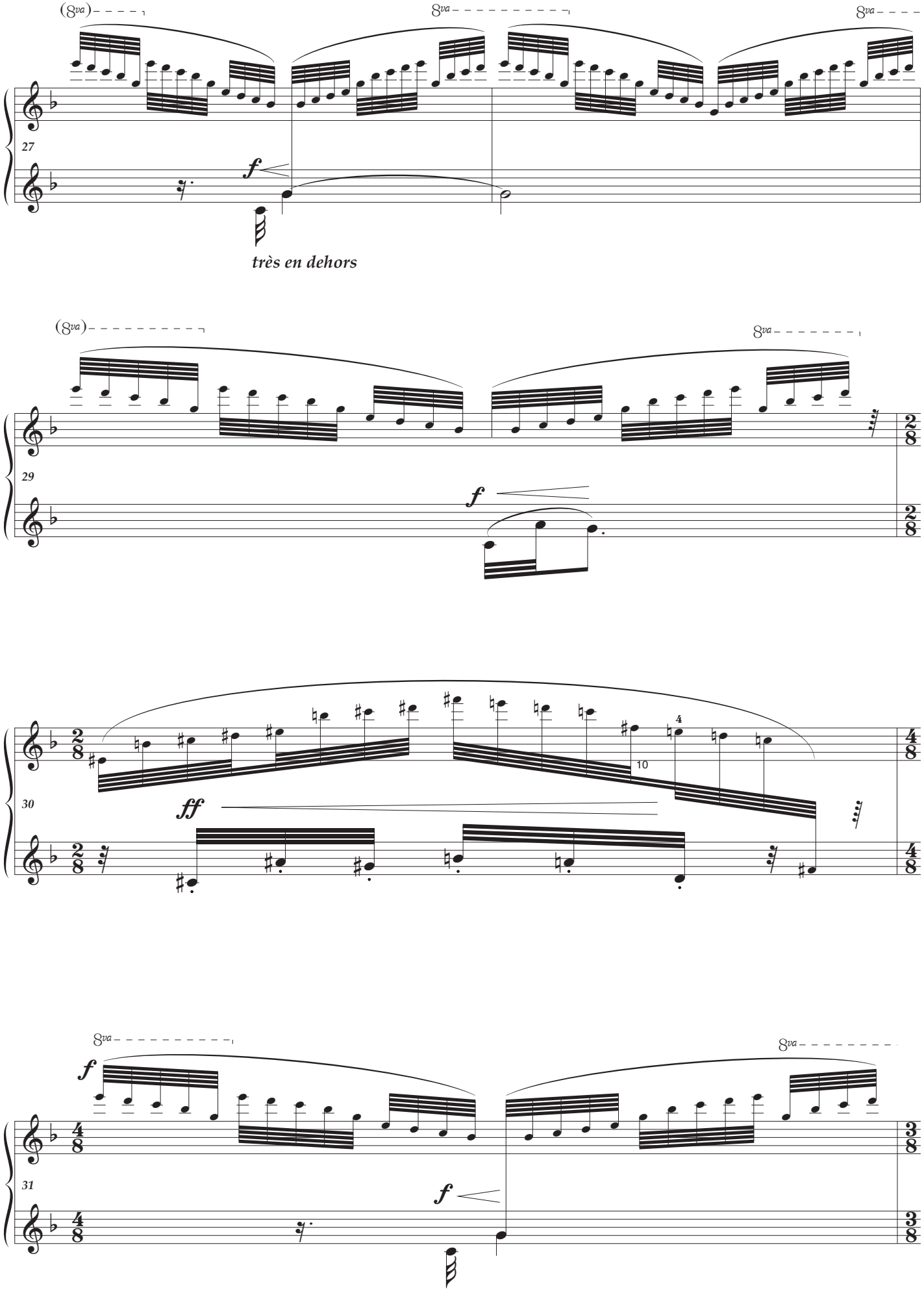


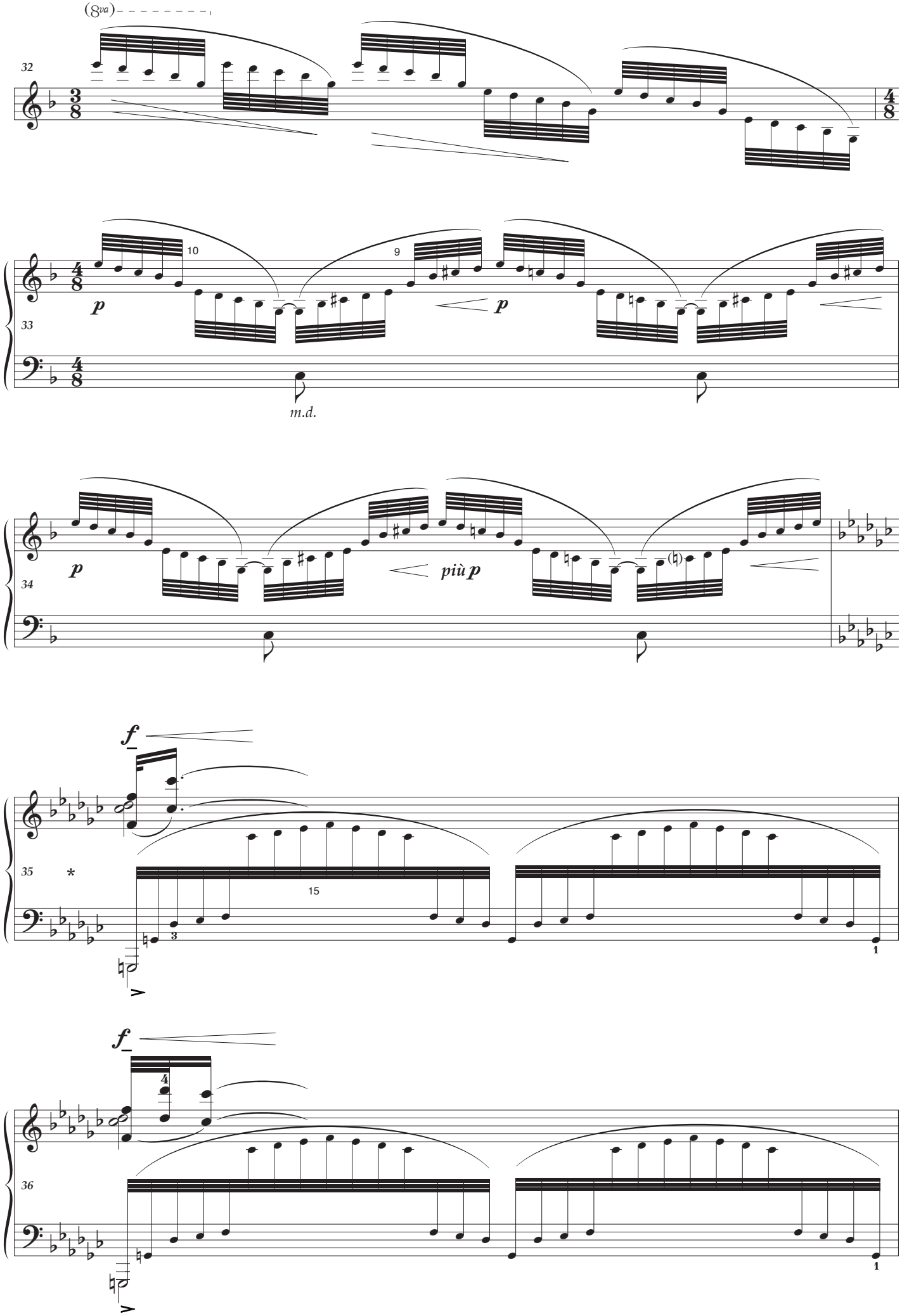


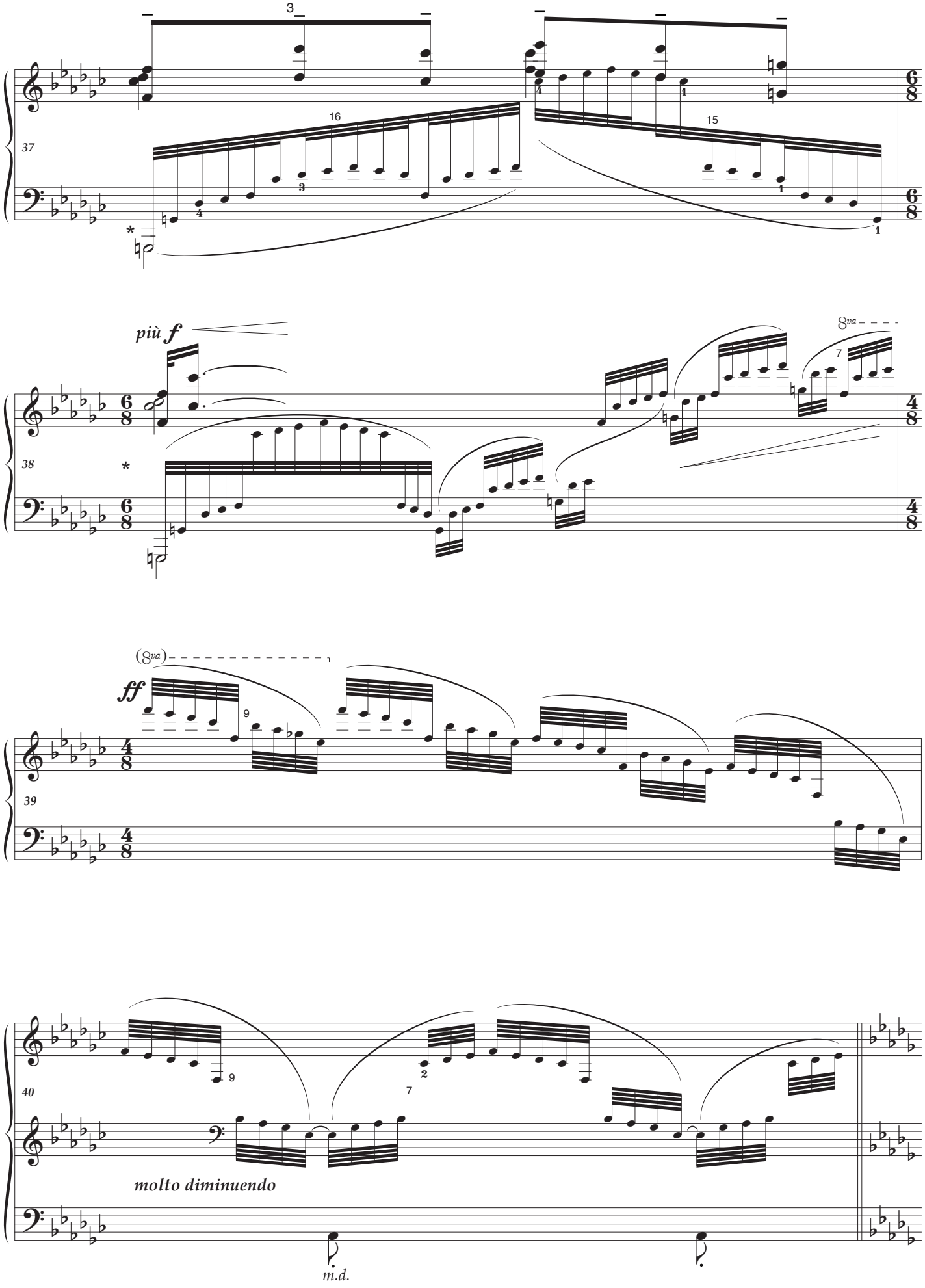


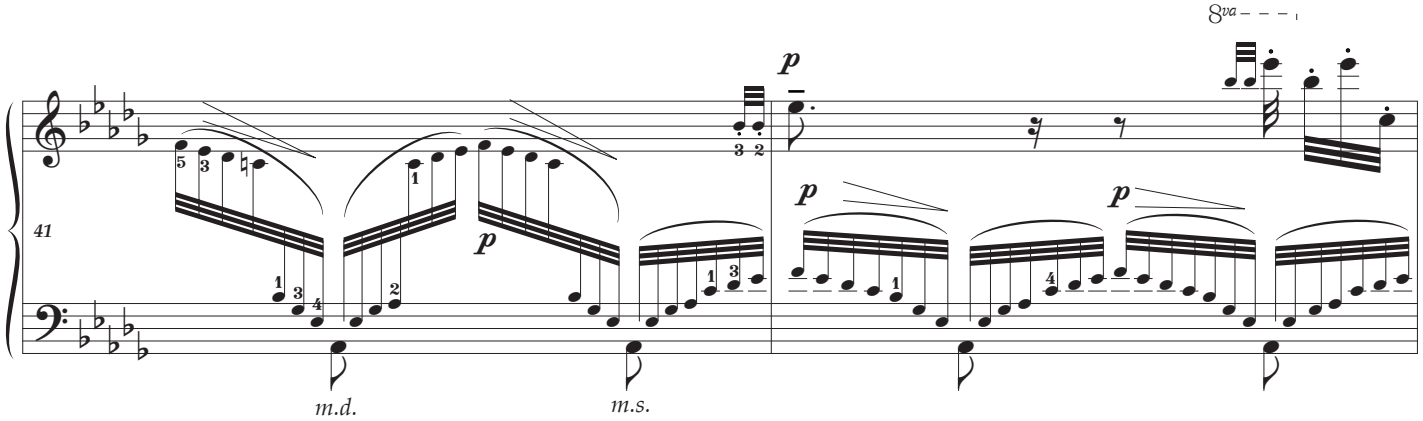

8va
9
8va
11
sempre pp
en se rapprochant peu à peu
8va
13
8va
15
molto crescendo

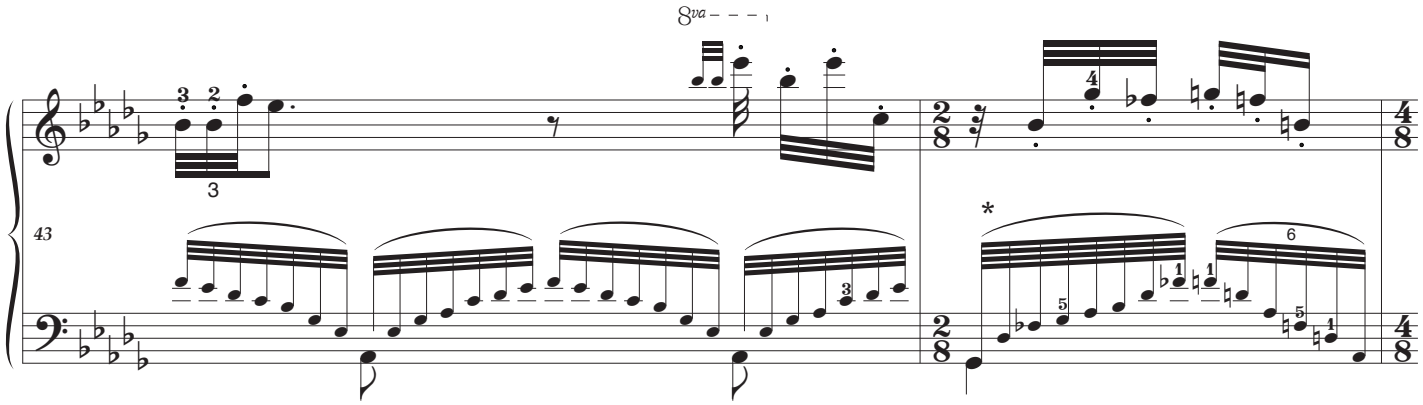

(8va)
m.s.
m.d.
ff *
17
right hand glissando
30
p
più p
20
pp sempre staccato
6
22
cre - - - - - - - - - -
8va
23
scen - - - - - - - - - - - - - do - - - - - - - - - - - -
(8va)
f
14
m.d. sotto
25
m.s.
m.s.
8va
8va

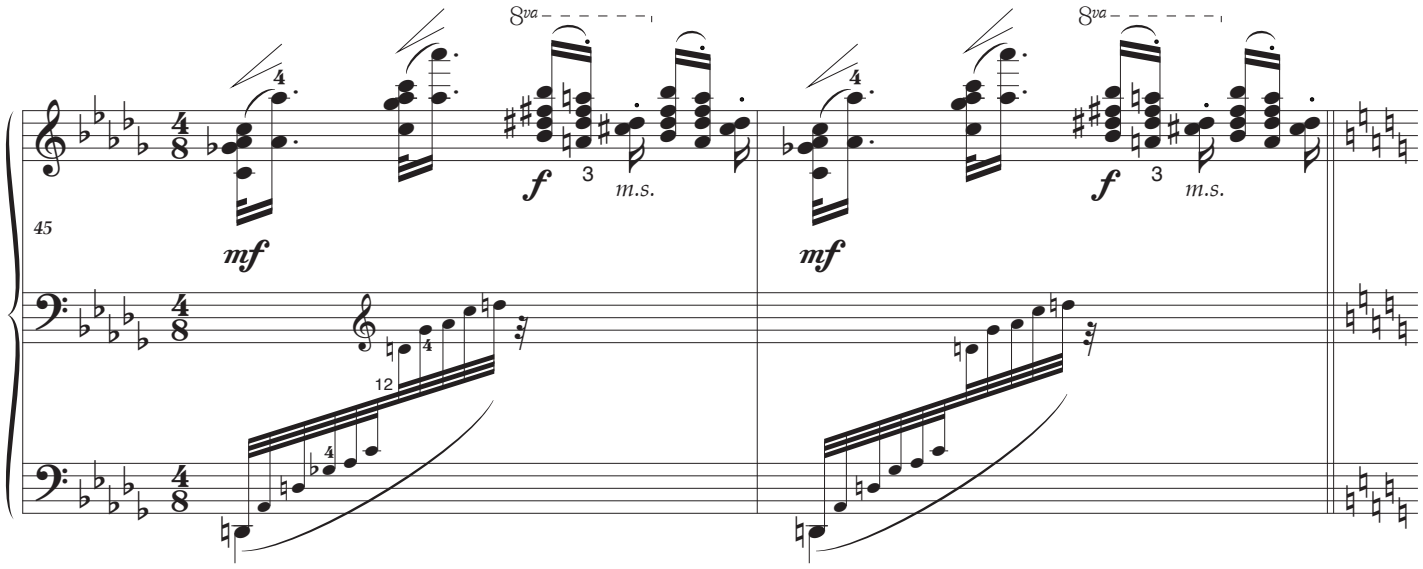

(8va)
8va
8va
27
f
très en dehors
(8va)
8va
29
f
30
ff
10
4
8va
8va
f
31
f

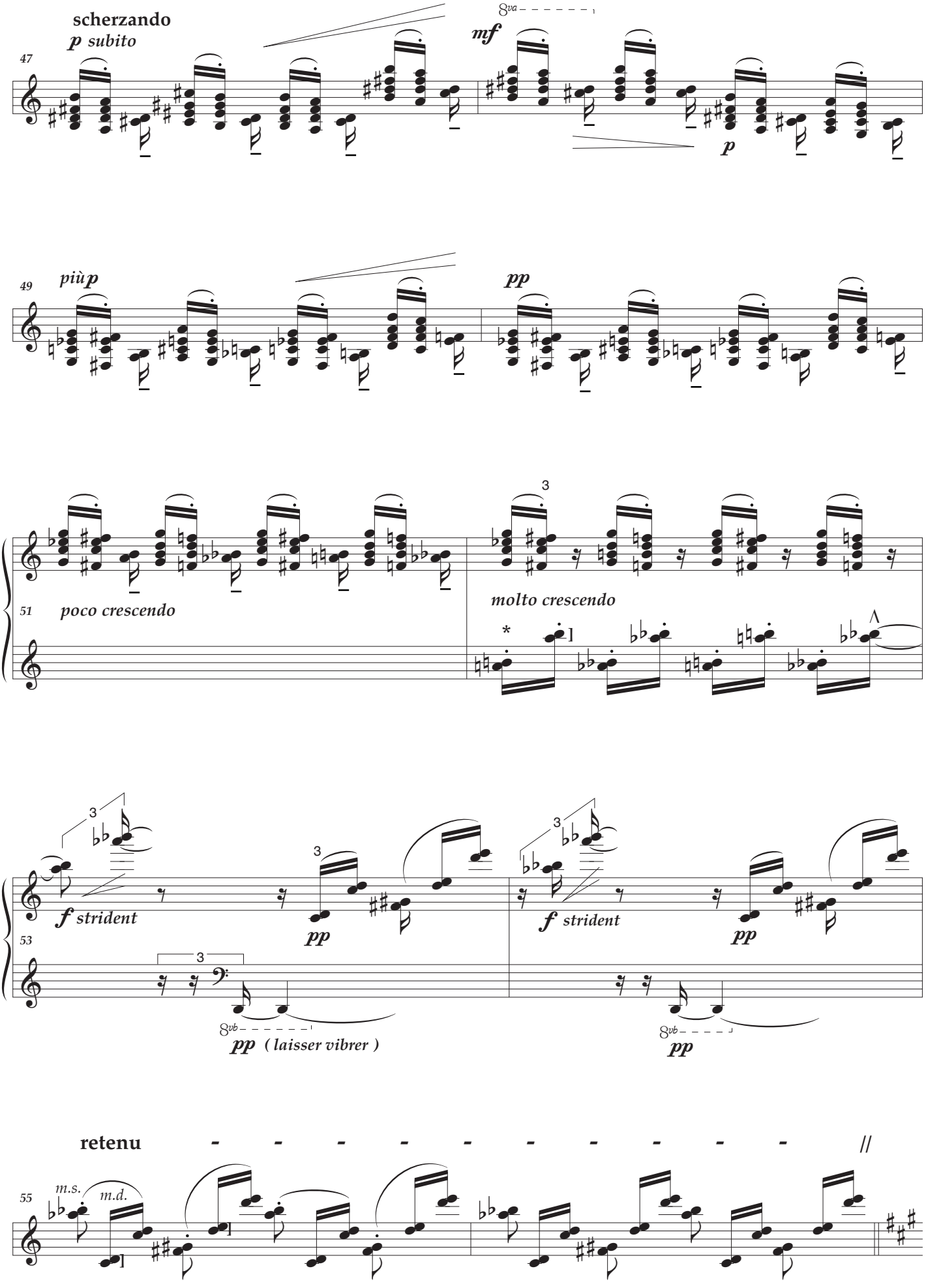

(8va)
32
3/8
4/8
10
9
p
p
33
4/8
m.d.
p
più p
34
f
35
*
15
3
1
f
4
36
1


37
38
39
40
più f
8va
ff
molto diminuendo
m.d.


41
8va
p
p
p
p
m.d.
m.s.

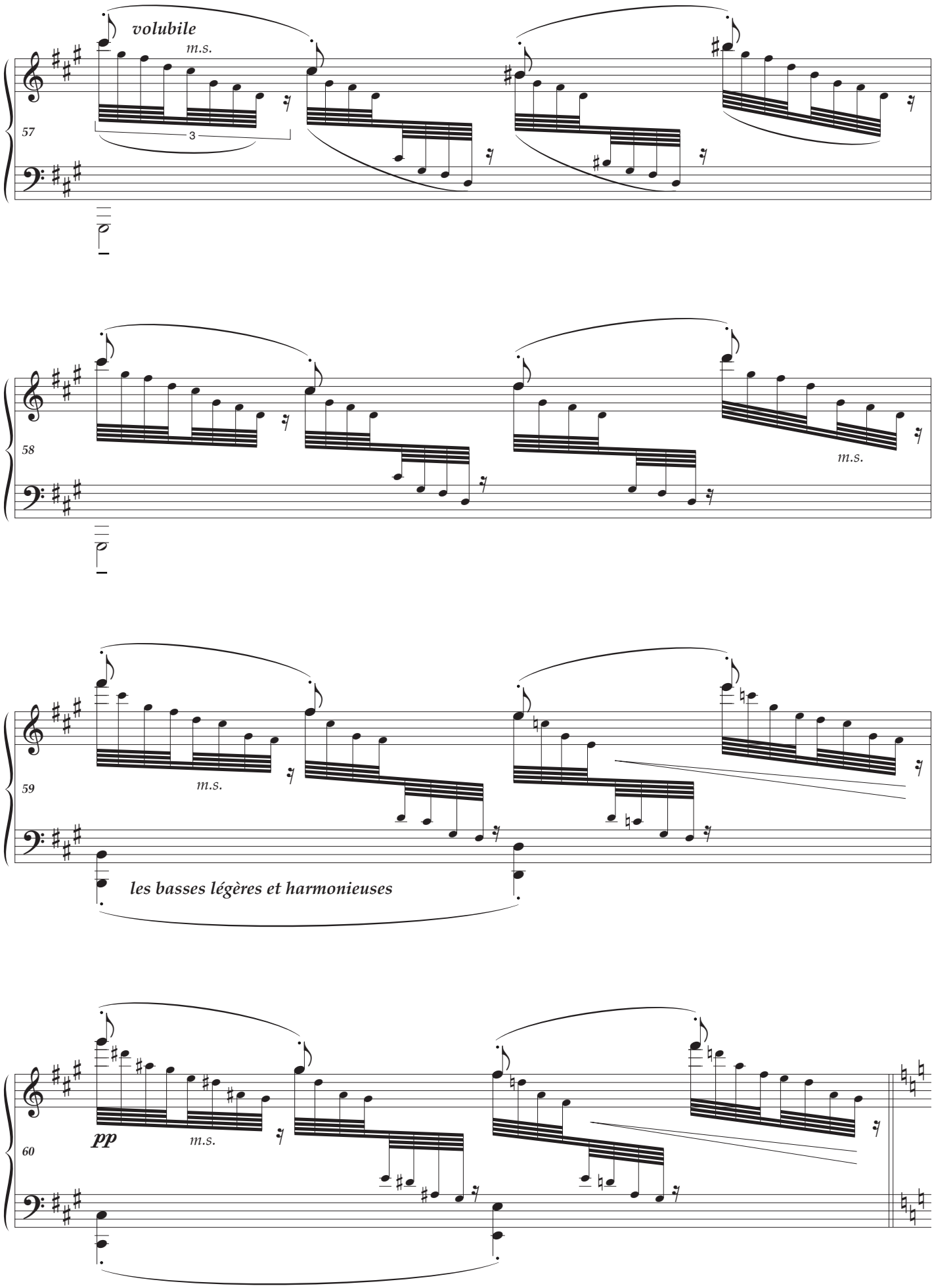

43
8va
*

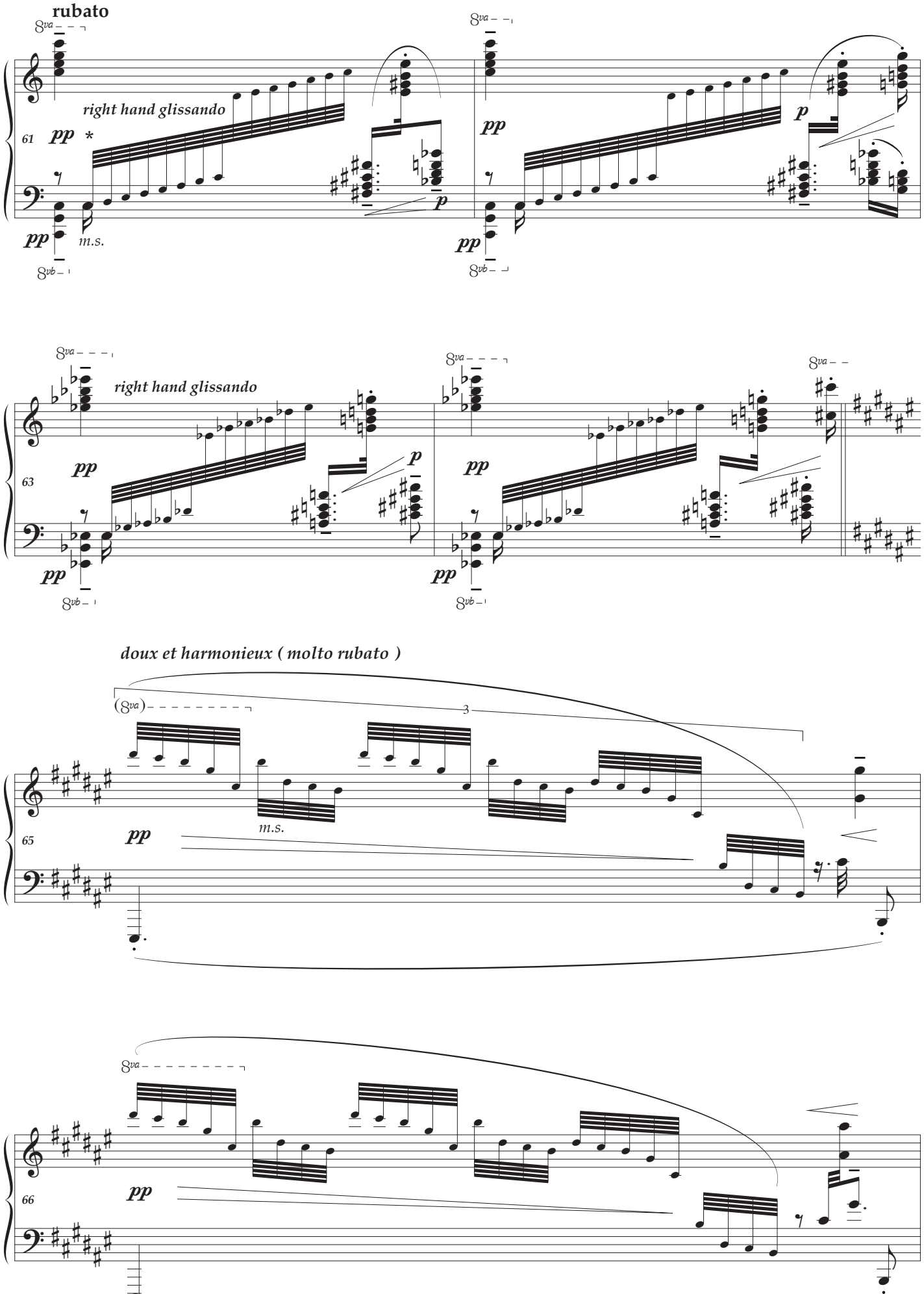

45
8va
8va
mf
f
m.s.
mf
f
m.s.

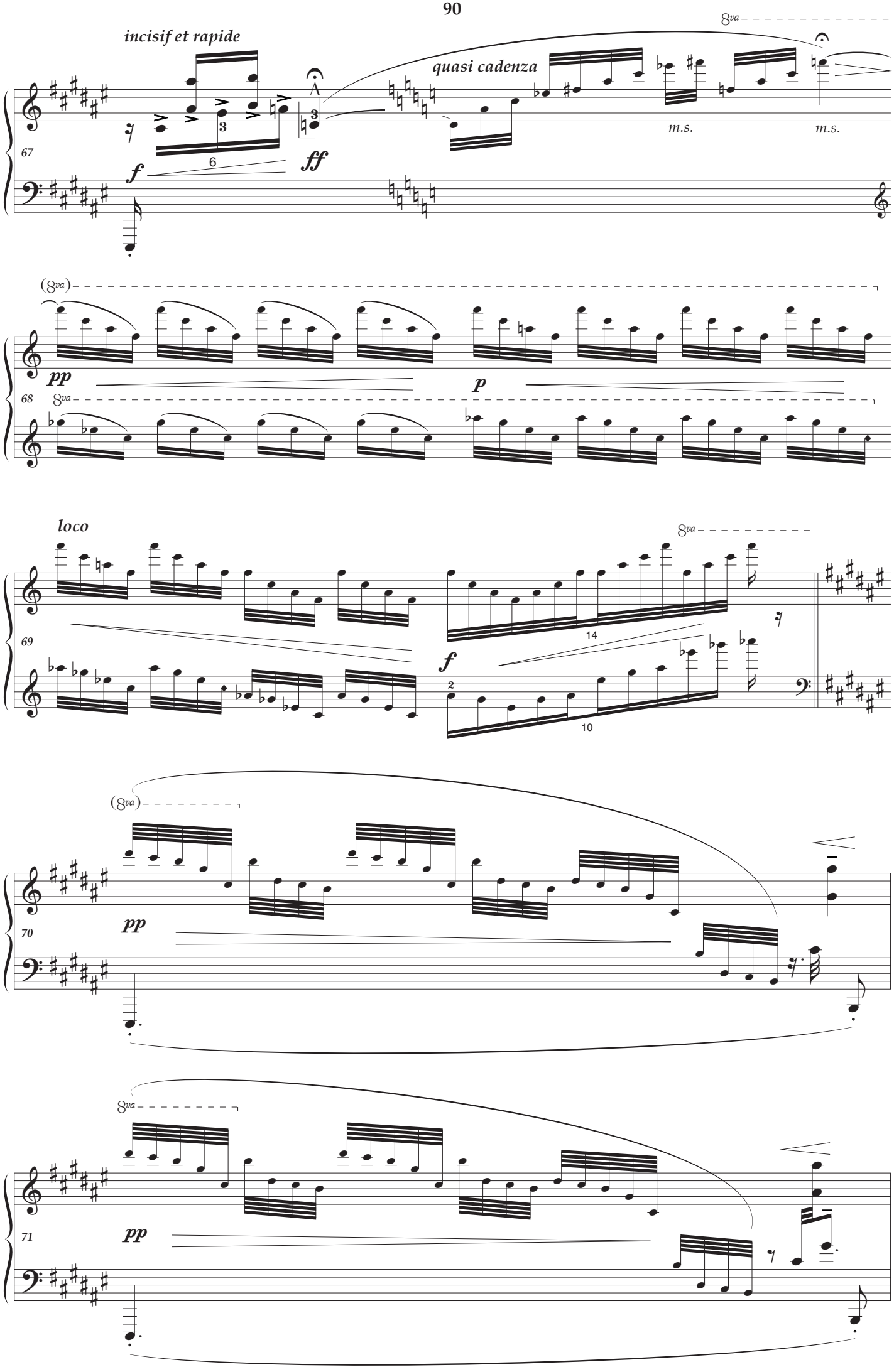

scherzando
p subito
47
8va
mf
p
49
più p
pp
51
poco crescendo
molto crescendo
3
*
53
f strident
pp
8vb
pp (laisser vibrer)
retenu
55
m.s.
m.d.

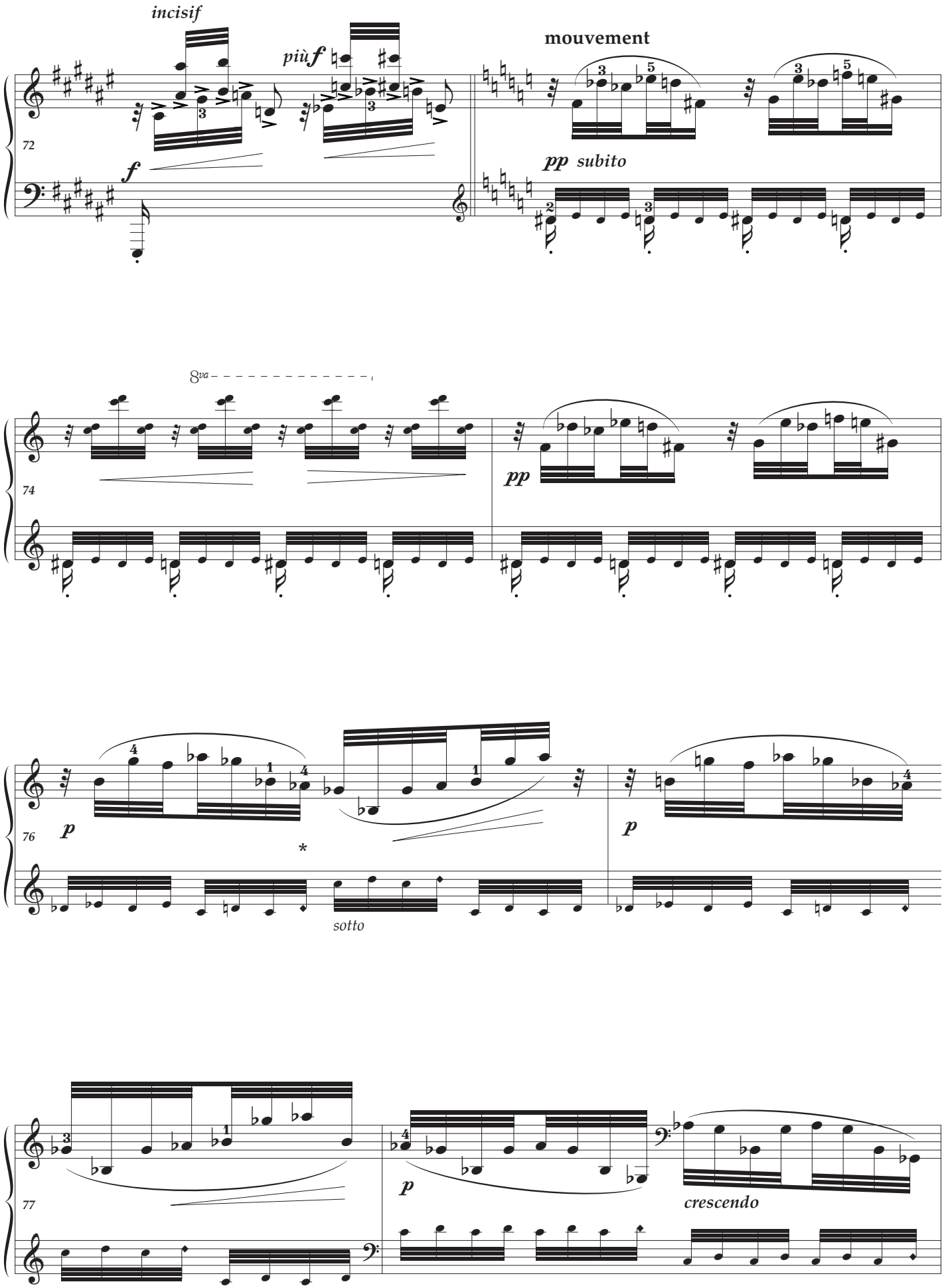
mouvement (plus à l'aise)

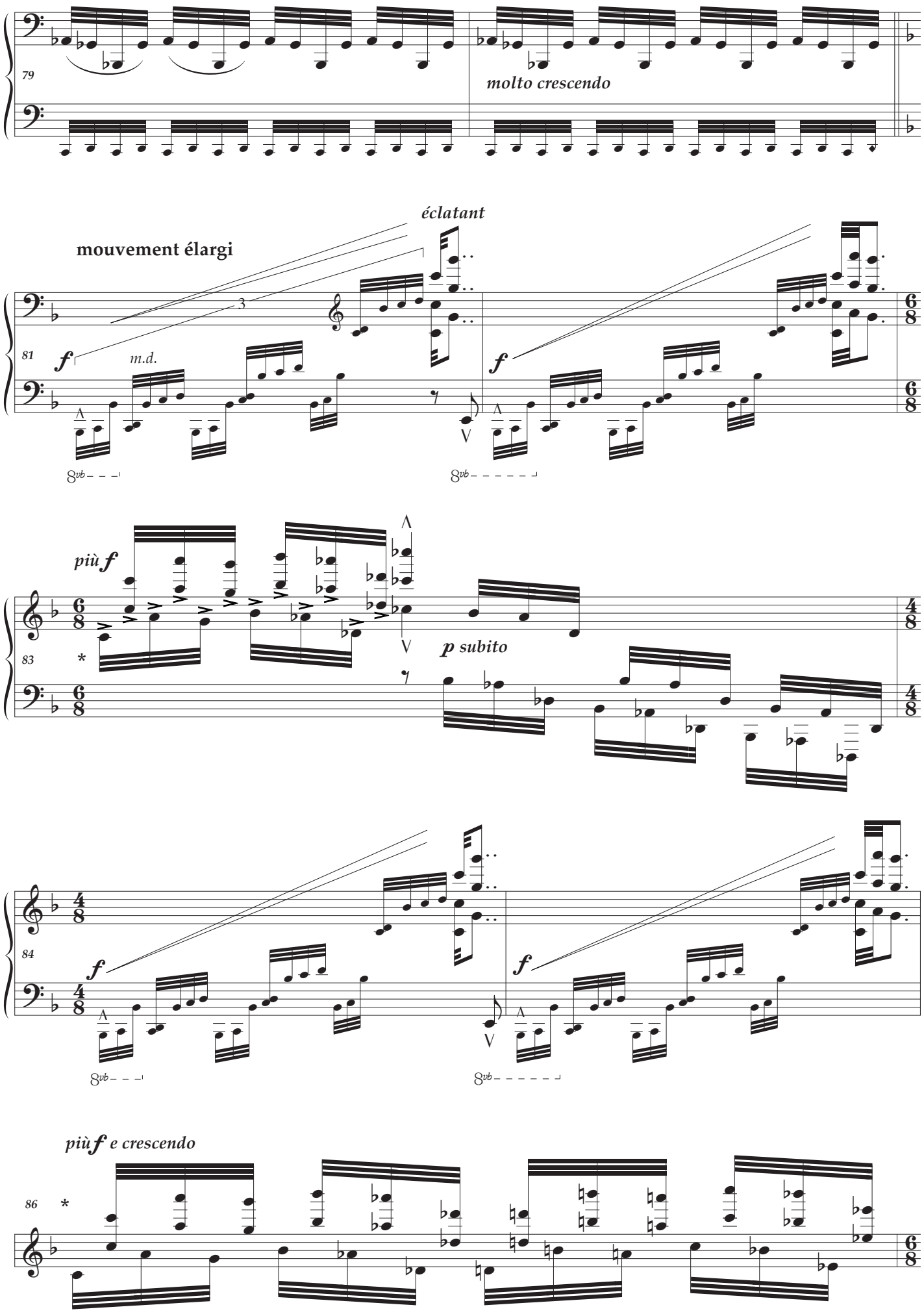
sempre ***pp***

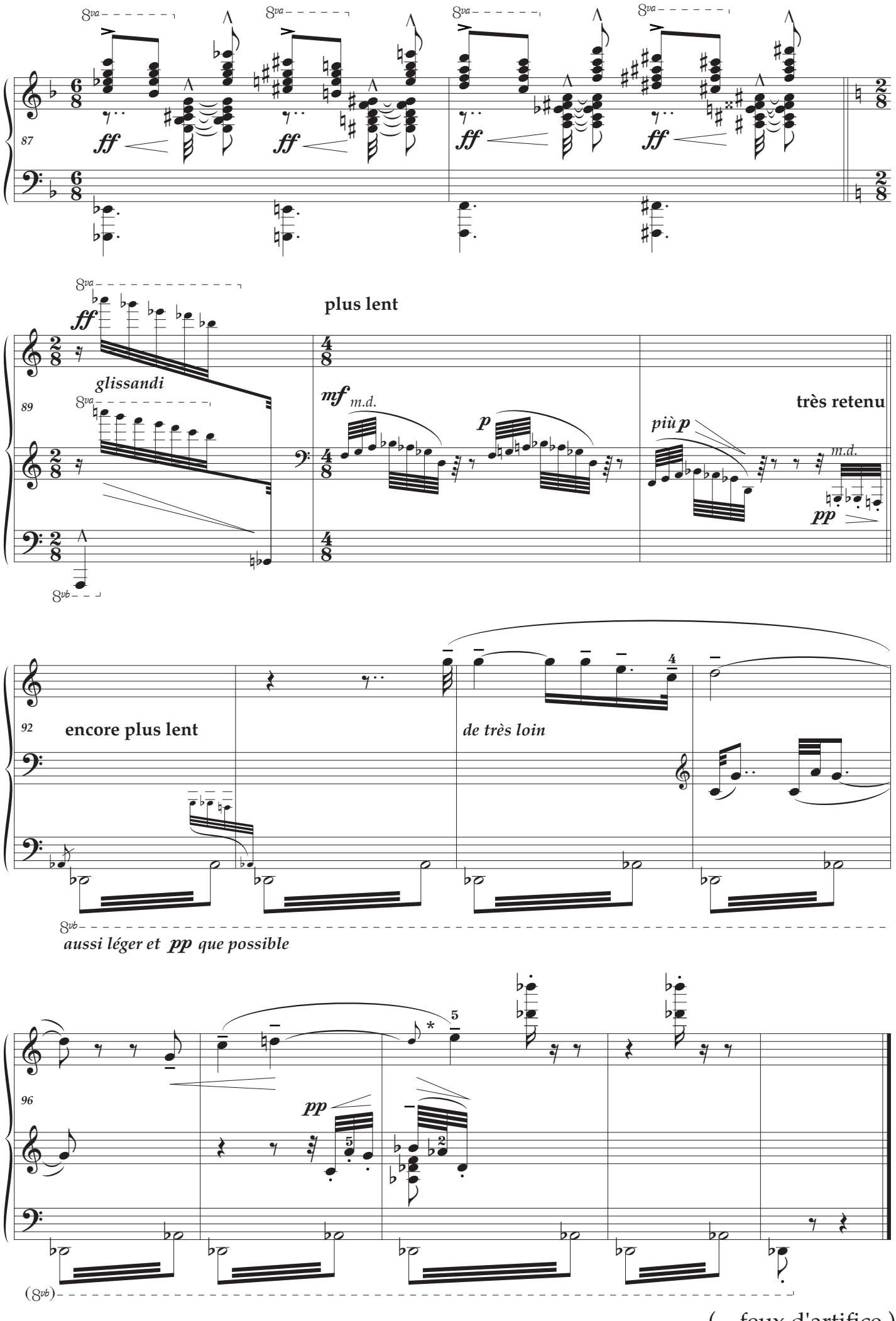



rubato
8va
right hand glissando
61
pp
*
m.s.
8vb
p
63
doux et harmonieux (molto rubato)
(8va)
3
65
66


incisif et rapide
quasi cadenza
8va
m.s.
m.s.
67
f
6
ff
(8va)
pp
p
68
8va
loco
8va
69
f
14
2
10
(8va)
70
pp
8va
71
pp


incisif
più f
mouvement
pp subito
8va
pp
p
sotto
p
p
crescendo


79
molto crescendo
éclatant
mouvement élargi
81
f
m.d.
8vb
83
più f
p subito
84
86
più f e crescendo

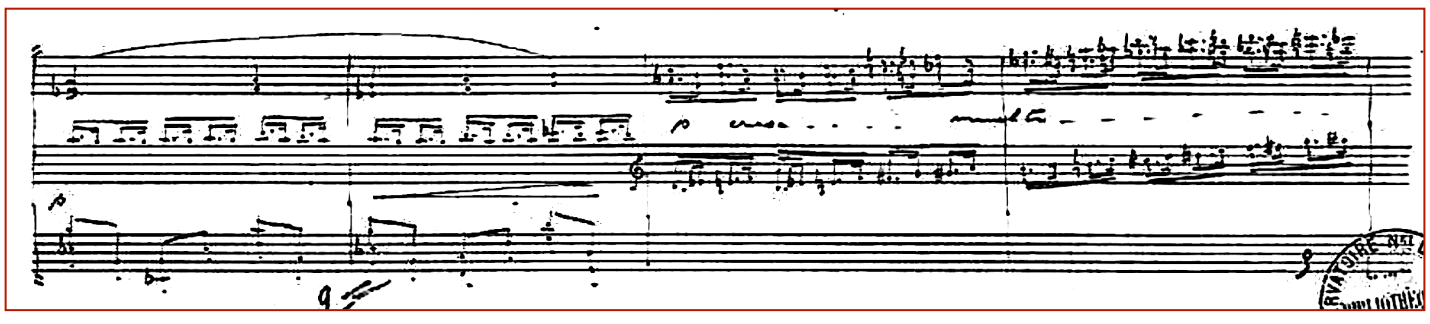

87
ff
plus lent
glissandi
89
mf m.d.
p
più p
très retenu
m.d.
pp
92
encore plus lent
de très loin
aussi léger et pp que possible
96
pp
(... feux d'artifice)

Préludes 1-5 Vocabulary

I	modéré	*moderato*
	extrêmement égal et léger	*extremely even and light*
	la main gauche un peu en valeur sur la main droite	*left hand with slightly more weight than the right*
	cédez	*slow down*
	mouvement	*a tempo*
	un peu en dehors	*a little in relief*
	un peu retenu	*a little held back*
	un peu marqué	*a little marked*
	en retenant et en effaçant	*holding back and dying away*
	presque plus rien	*almost nothing more*
II	lent et mélancolique	*slow and wistful*
	doucement soutenu et très expressif	*gently sustained and very expressive*
	un peu plus allant et plus gravement expressif	*a little quicker and more deeply expressive*
	un peu en dehors	*a little in relief*
	plus lent	*slower*
	marqué	*marked*
	cédez	*ritenuto*
	mouvement	*a tempo*
	dans le sentiment du début	*with the same feeling of the opening*
	lointain	*from afar*
III	avec de brusques oppositions d'extrême	*with abrupt contradictions of extreme*
	violence et de passionnée douceur	*violence and gentle passion*
	âpre	*harsh*
	passionément	*passionately*
	ironique	*sarcastic*
	gracieux	*graceful*
	en retenant	*holding back*
	un peu retardé	*the tempo a little held back*
	lointain	*from afar*
IV	marqué	*marked*
	cédez	*slow down*
	sans rigueur	*with rhythmic freedom*
	retenu	*ritardando*
	en retenant	*held back*
	doux et rêveur	*gentle and dreamy*
	un peu en dehors	*a little in relief*
V	calme — doucement expressif	*calm — gently expressive*
	doux et léger	*dolce e leggiero*
	un peu animé	*a little (more) livelydeeply expressive*
	joyeux	*joyous*
	cédez	*held back*
	au mouvement	*a tempo*
	en retenant	*ritenuto*
	doucement soutenu	*gently sustained*
	sans lourdeur	*without heaviness*

Préludes 6-9 Vocabulary

VI	dans le style et le mouvement d'un Cake Walk	*in the style and tempo of a Cake Walk*
	strident	*strident*
	sec	*abrupt*
	spirituel et discret	*witty and understated*
	traîné	*dragging*
	très retenu	*seriously held back*
VII	un peu en dehors	*a little in relief*
	marqué	*marked*
	un peu animé	*a little animated*
	léger	*light*
	au mouvement	*a tempo*
	en animant peu à peu	*animating gradually*
	cédez	*held back*
	mouvement du début	*tempo primo*
	plus lent	*slower*
	timbrez légèrement la petite note	*lightly accentuate the acciaccatura*
VIII	retenu	*held back*
	au mouvement	*a tempo*
	scintillant	*brilliant*
	doux	*gentle*
	à l'aise	*at ease*
	en dehors	*in relief*
	le double plus lent	*twice as slow*
	un peu au-dessous du mouvement	*the tempo a little less quick*
	doucement marqué	*gently marked*
	aussi léger que possible	*as light as possible*
IX	aimable	*amiable*
	expressif	*expressive*
	peu à peu animé	*little by little (more) lively*
	retenu	*held back*
	léger	*light*
	[premier] mouvement	*tempo [primo]*
	animez un peu	*a little more lively*
	même mouvement	*l'istesso tempo*
	lointain	*from afar*



Préludes 10 - 12

X

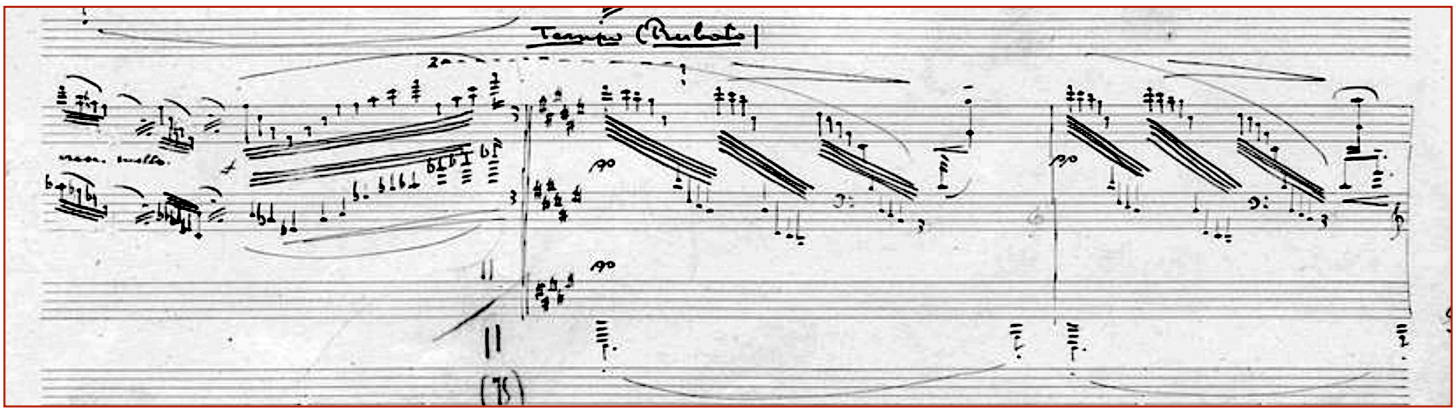
très calme et doucement triste	*very calm and quietly sorrowful*
cédez	*slow down*
mouvement	*a tempo*
animez un peu	*a little more lively*
marqué	*marked*
premier mouvement	*a tempo primo*
retenu	*held back*
plus lent	*slower tempo*
très doux et très expressif	*very gentle and very expressive*
très lent	*very slow*
encore plus doux	*even softer*

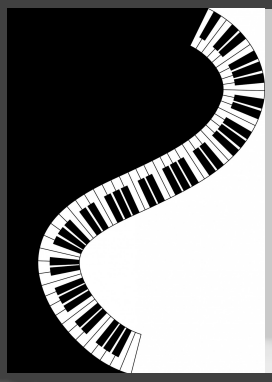
XI

modérément animé	*fairly animated*
cédez	*slow down*
un peu plus animé	*a little quicker*
légèrement détaché sans sécheresse	*lightly detached without being monotonous*
les notes marquées du signe - doucement timbrées	*notes marked with the sign - gently marked*
doux et lié	*gentle and legato*
retenu	*held back*
gracieux	*graceful*
au mouvement	*a tempo*

XII

modérément animé	*fairly animated*
léger, égal et lointain	*light, even and from afar*
marqué	*marked*
en se rapprochant peu à peu	*gradually becoming nearer*
très en dehors	*much in relief*
strident	*piercing*
laisser vibrer	*keep the pedal on*
plus à l'aise	*more calm*
volubile	*flowing, fluent*
les basses légères et harmonieuses	*the bass light and harmonious*
doux	*gentle*
incisif et rapide	*cutting and rapid*
mouvement élargi	*broader tempo*
éclatant	*spectacular*
très retenu	*seriously held back*
encore plus lent	*even slower tempo*





D E B U S S Y

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