# Isaac ALBÉNIZ

## IBERIA book I

- EVOCACIÓN
- EL PUERTO
- FÊTE DIEU À SEVILLE

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# Isaac ALBÉNIZ 1860 - 1909

# I B E R I A

## 12 nouvelles *impressions* en quatre cahiers

**Book I** dedicated to Madame Ernest Chausson


- EVOCACIÓN 1
- EL PUERTO 12
- FÊTE DIEU À SEVILLE 23


A long overdue revision of my earlier edition from 2018 has provided a splendid opportunity to rediscover this extraordinary creation from Albeniz' last years. As is so often the case, the real joy in studying these masterworks is the deep communication of thought that passes directly from composer to interpreter, and there are many, many such magical moments particularly during the intimate *cante jondo* sections; the presence of an audience becomes quite superfluous.

There is general agreement among pianists and musicians that *Iberia*, Albéniz' *"swan song"*, is his greatest work and possibly the most significant and challenging work for piano by a Spanish composer. As Donal Henahan once wrote — "There is really nothing in Isaac Albeniz's *Iberia* that a good three-handed pianist could not master, given unlimited years of practice and permission to play at half tempo".

It is worth remembering that after many decades of complacency and foreign domination, Spanish music was only beginning to experience a slow reawakening during Albéniz' life; *Iberia* was seen to be a daring and revolutionary composition. Hitherto he had not created any work that could be considered outstanding.* These 'impressions' of Spain were created at the age of 45 and only a few years before his death in 1909. With *Iberia*, Albéniz dragged Spanish music into the twentieth-century.

We find four books of very diverse music reflecting different scenes and moods from Spain and as there is no essential thread (hence the caption *12 nouvelles Impressions)*, it is possible to perform them in any order and in any number.

When I first heard Alicia De Larrocha perform them I was astounded and impressed by the language and technical mastery of both composer and interpreter. And when I was finally able to attempt the work, I noticed that the text (Éditions *Salabert*) was often difficult to study; there were inaccuracies, many accidentals and too many instructions, coupled with sub-standard engraving. So I decided to edit and publish the music myself.

With the exception of differing major and minor modes in *Evocación* and *El Corpus en Sevilla*, Albéniz never

*Jeanne Escudier & Debussy playing a duet in 1893*

changes key signatures in *Iberia,* preferring the heavy use of accidentals. Was this through negligence or by design? If the former, I humbly offer this edition which inserts many adjustments, rendering, I believe, the text easier to read and comprehend.

Albéniz was an extrovert with a keen sense of humour, loved and respected by all who knew him. In this wonderful and imaginative music, he was also flamboyant with long descriptions in French and pedalling directions which sometimes seem to be a whirlwind of far-fetched impossibilities — unreasonable and endearing as they are. I plead guilty to not having religiously copied every dot, accent, sign, pedal marking and many others. He was very zealous in having often embellished many, sometimes conflicting, instructions and I have tried to simplify the music within reason relying upon present-day sophisticated pianists and teachers reading the score philosophically. At first I considered reducing the quintuple ***f*** and ***p***, but then thought they were rather fun and OTT. While the titles are mostly in Spanish, practically all the directions are in French, which is not surprising as he lived for much of his life as an expat in France. Regarding use of the sustaining pedal, I will quote Debussy: "Pedalling cannot be written down — it varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another."

The subtitle's language underlines an enormous affinity with France, and musicians from Debussy to Messiaen were particularly impressed and inspired by his music. Albéniz had been living there for more than a decade when he began *Iberia*, the impressionist sounds, exotic modes, and dissonant clusters reflecting his Francophonic credentials. Granados described the music of Albéniz as quite unique: "an elegance that smiles with sadness and progresses by degrees until it achieves a mastery both commanding and serene; like Goya's *Maja, Iberia* evokes memories of our 'golden century'. To have some idea of their worth, it is useful to read Debussy's appreciation of *Eritaña* (book IV): "*les yeux se ferment comme éblouis d'avoir contemplé trop d'images*".**

This first book was dedicated to Jeanne Escudier, Ernest Chausson's wife, the titles undergoing changes from the manuscript. The three pieces are related by tonality, descending in perfect fifths — A flat, D flat and F sharp. *Evocatión* acts as a prelude and is the only piece without reference to a place in the title, reflecting its impressionist credentials. The following *zapateado**** entitled *El Puerto* brings to life a bustling, brusque and joyful harbour scene. The holy week procession in Seville dramatically closes the volume with marching bands, a melancholic *saeta***** with flamenco guitars and distant church bells anticipating Debussy's *La Cathédrale Engloutie*.

As an interpreter-performer I often have to ask myself why a composer has chosen a particular

time or key signature and sometimes the answer is not at all obvious. Now that we have the tools with which to 're-arrange' the music otherwise, my work as an editor becomes much more interesting. When these pieces were first written I like to think that the composer did not necessarily consider all the options, (at the time they had so much else to think about) and I doubt whether a colleague, editor or proofreader would have had the temerity to question a composer's wishes. However, in retrospect I like to think that these now aged composers are approvingly viewing my modifications from above and giving the nod to my humble efforts.  A vocabulary may be found on page 45.

*Sostenuto* pedal suggestions are editorial;  with the left foot it is possible to combine it with the soft pedal, and impressionist orchestral sounds can be achieved by judicious and simultaneous use of the damper pedal. This invention was first shown in Paris at the Industrial Exposition of 1844 but not immediately taken up by piano builders. In 1874, is was perfected and patented by Steinway, soon to be fitted on all their grands and revolutionary uprights. One obvious commercial reason for not including the *sostenuto* pedal in musical scores must have been the thought of excluding buyers whose pianos didn't have it. Debussy and Ravel certainly played such Steinways in the Paris salons. Apparently, in 1900 the composer René de Castéra bought a 3-pedal Steinway on the advice of Albeniz. One could say that it took over 100 years for it to become widespread.

*— Ray Alston September 2024*

* Albeniz commenting on his own music written before Iberia: "Here are among them a few things that are not completely worthless. The music is a bit infantile, plain, spirited; but in the end, the people, our Spanish people, are something of all that. I believe that the people are right when they continue to be moved by *Córdoba*, *Mallorca*, by the *copla* of the *Sevillanas*, by the *Serenata*, and Granada. In all of them I now note that there is less musical science, less of the grand idea, but more colour, sunlight, flavour of olives. That music of youth, with its little sins and absurdities that almost point out the sentimental affectation... appears to me like the carvings in the Alhambra, those peculiar arabesques that say nothing with their turns and shapes, but which are like the air, like the sun, like the blackbirds or like the nightingales of its gardens. They are more valuable than all else of Moorish Spain, which though we may not like it, is the true Spain".

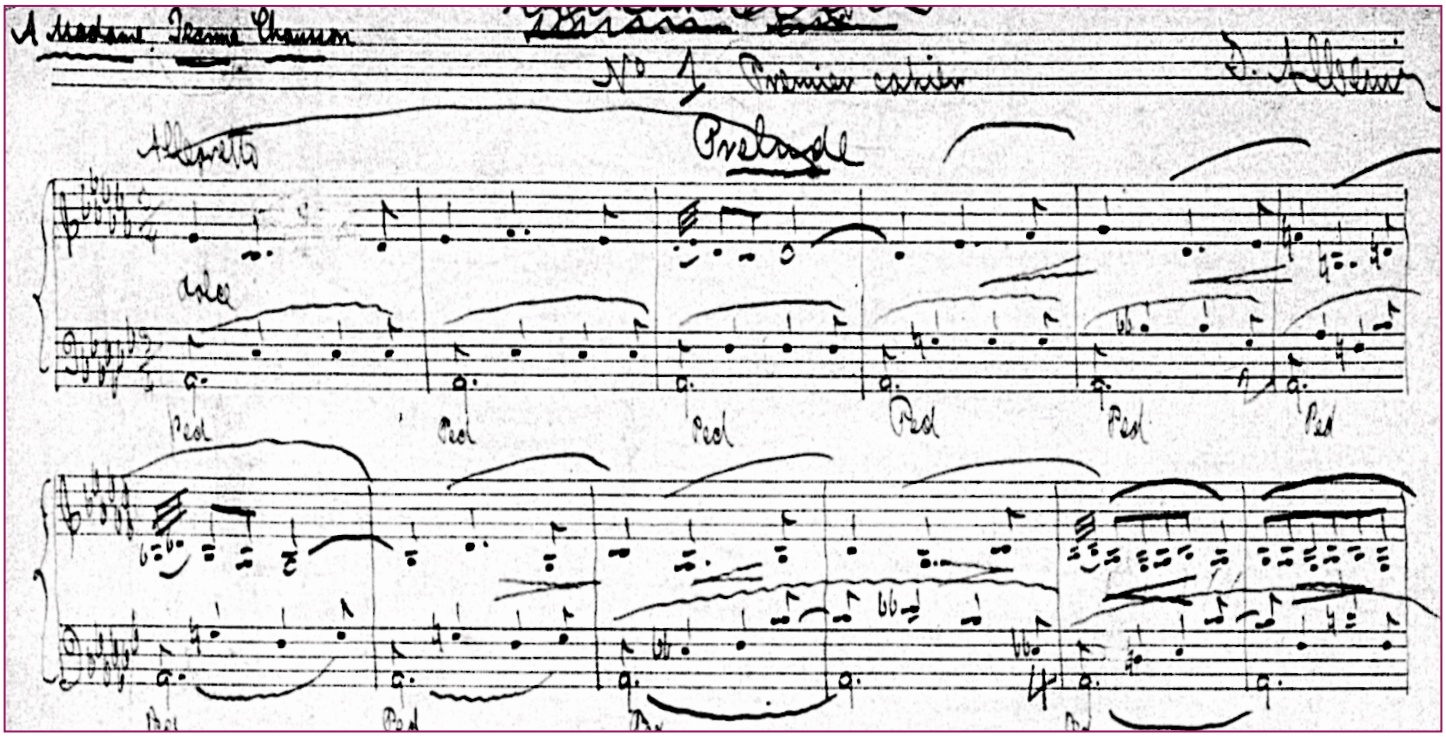
** One closes one's eyes and is bedazzled by the sheer wealth of invention in this music" — writing as *Monsieur Croche* in 1913

*** a polyrhythmic and typical flamenco style

**** a flamenco singing style with origins in Andalusian folklore — improvised with a religious character it is performed without accompaniment for religious parades at Easter

*Albeniz* portrait Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

# E V O C A C I Ó N
## r e m i n i s c e n c e




A richly inspirational and harmonic fabric is immediately recognisable in this *Evocación*, which acts as a prelude to the twelve works which comprise the opus. Enthused by the music of Ravel and Debussy, Albéniz transformed his earlier charming salon style, into a series of tone poems capturing the spiritual essence of Spain.

As can be seen, its original title was indeed *Prelude*, a most hauntingly wistful and introspective piece reflecting a quietly emotional vision of Albéniz' native country. This late decision was felicitous and much better describes its character. After the final bars, The composer confirms the place and date of composition *Paris — 9 décembre 1905.*

The opening piece of the suite is a nostalgic haze of memories that recall Spain through a misty filter. With the exception of the brief central climax, most of *Evocación* is surrounded in delicate textures and sonorities and there is an over-abundance of quiet dynamic markings culminating in a ***ppppp*** at the final page. It is a good idea to reserve your most quiet and most intimate playing for the coda and have a healthy dose of cantabile in the opening of the piece, making sure that the melody is reminiscent of the *Cante Jondo* style of flamenco singing.

There could not be a better prologue for the whole suite of Iberia than this serene, majestic and melancholy work. Standing on its own, this piece

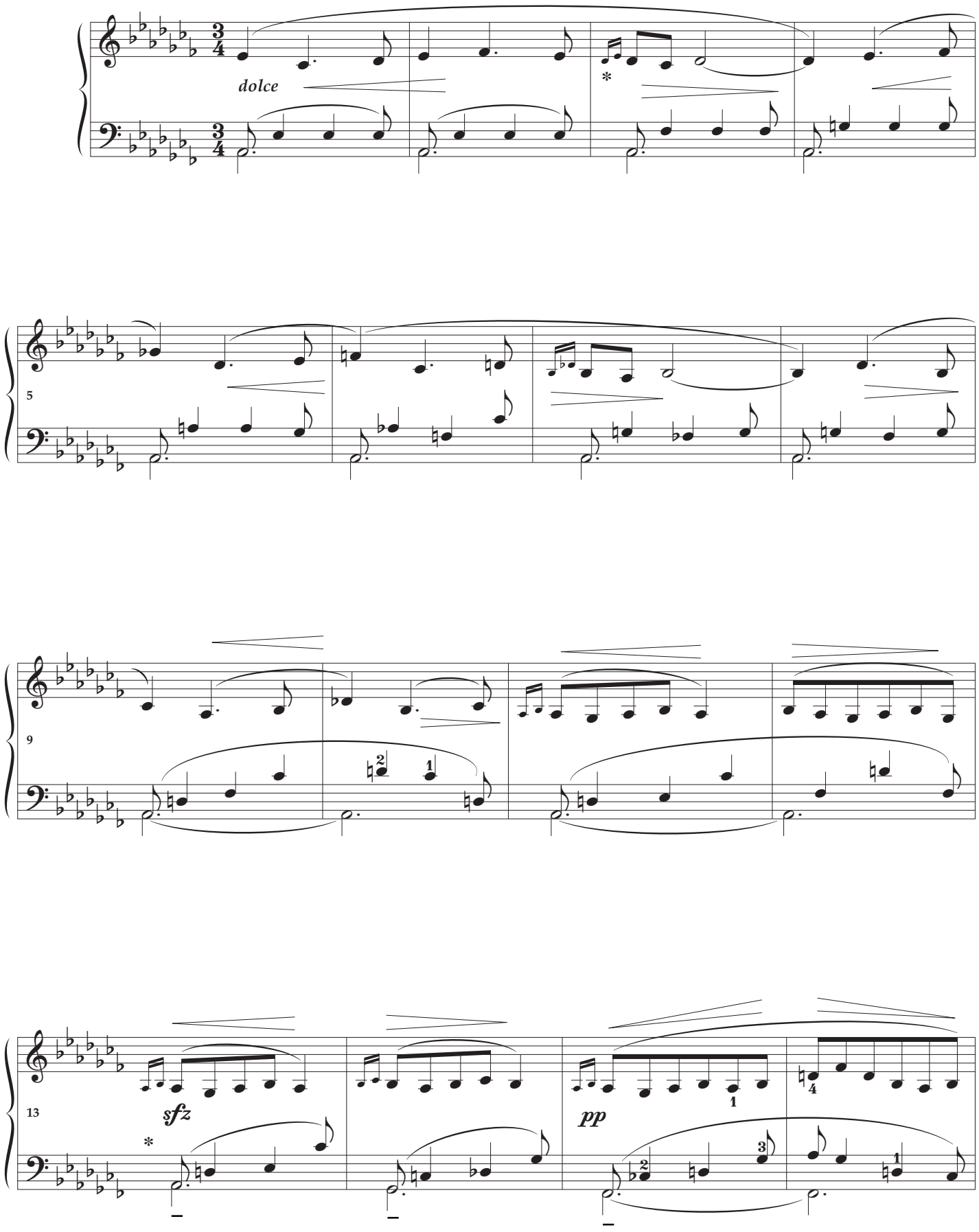
could well sum up the composer's *raison d'être*. Isaac Albéniz and his twelve marvelous fragments: serenading Spain, in particular his beloved Andalusia, from foreign lands, from abroad. But we are eased into it with calm distinction in *Evocación*, which were it not for its designation as a *fandanguillo*, would be distinguishable as Spanish not because of a recognisable nationalist pre-eminence but because of some unidentifiable quality.

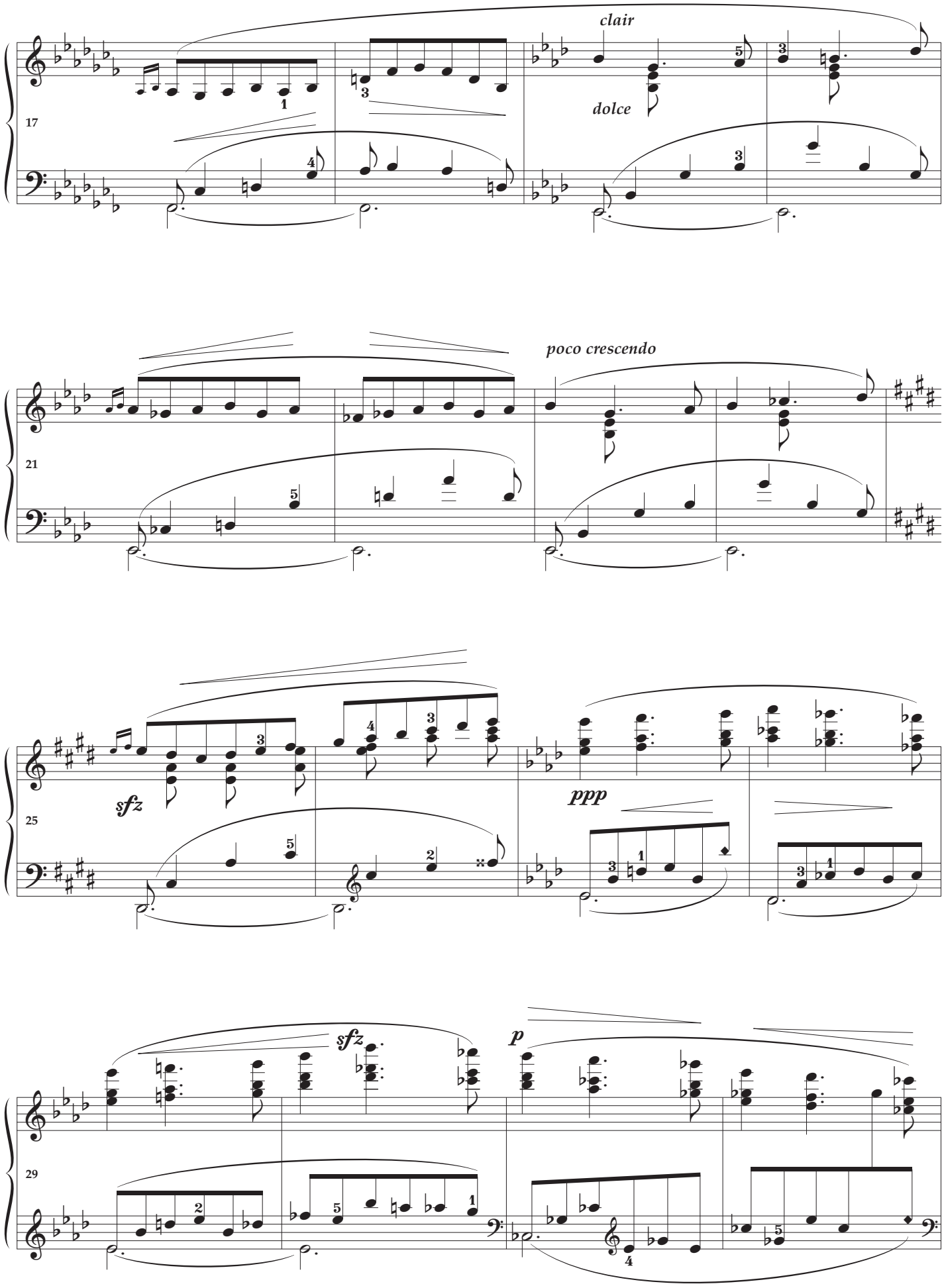
*— Yale Fineman*

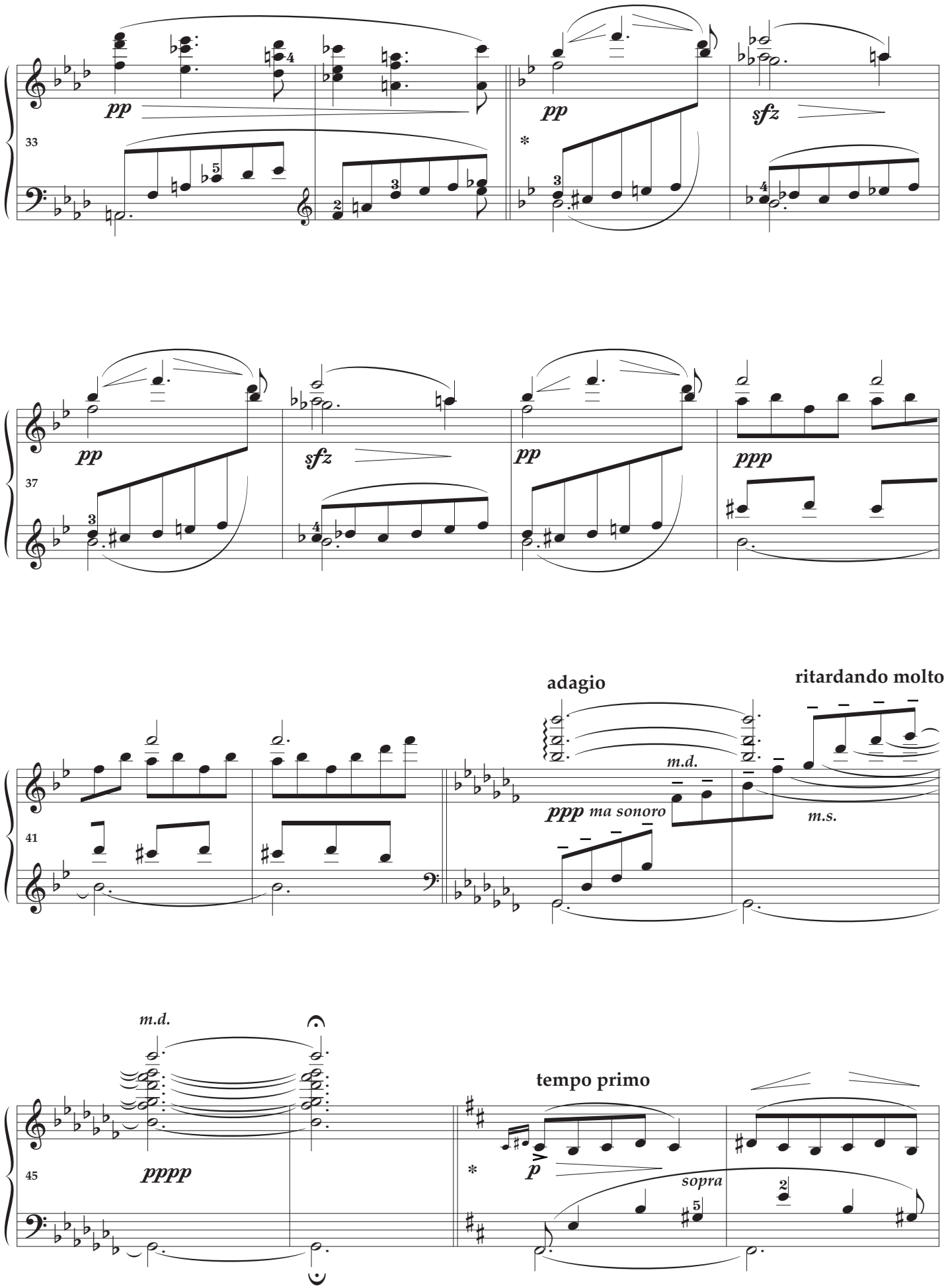
- duration 6'40
- although the manuscript indicates that grace notes should begin on the beat, there will be occasions when they might sound better before
- With the exception of differing major and minor modes in *Evocación* and *El Corpus en Sevilla*, Albéniz never changes key signatures in *Iberia*, preferring the heavy use of accidentals.
- modified key-signatures throughout
- **13-15** editorial dynamic and articulation modifications
- **55/67/69/77/81** editorial acciaccaturas
- **90** editorial pedal suggestion
- **114** editorial suggestion to silently replay the bass

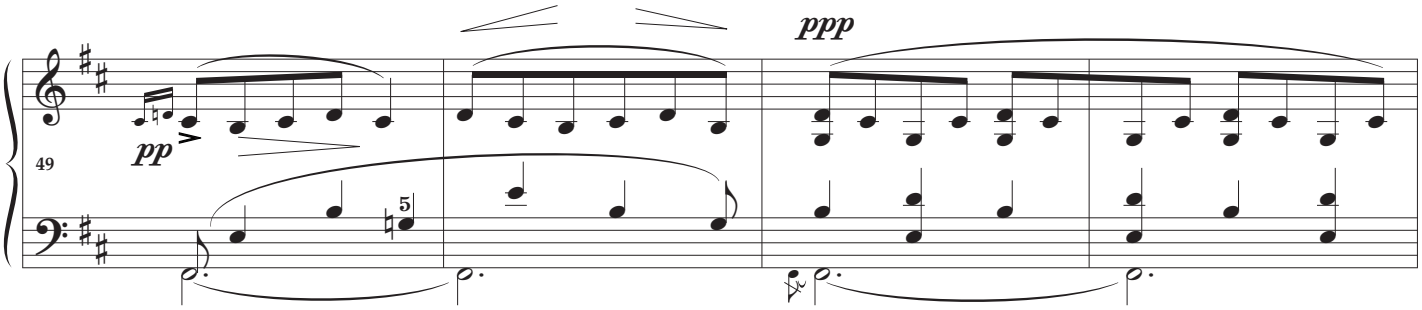
# EVOCACIÓN

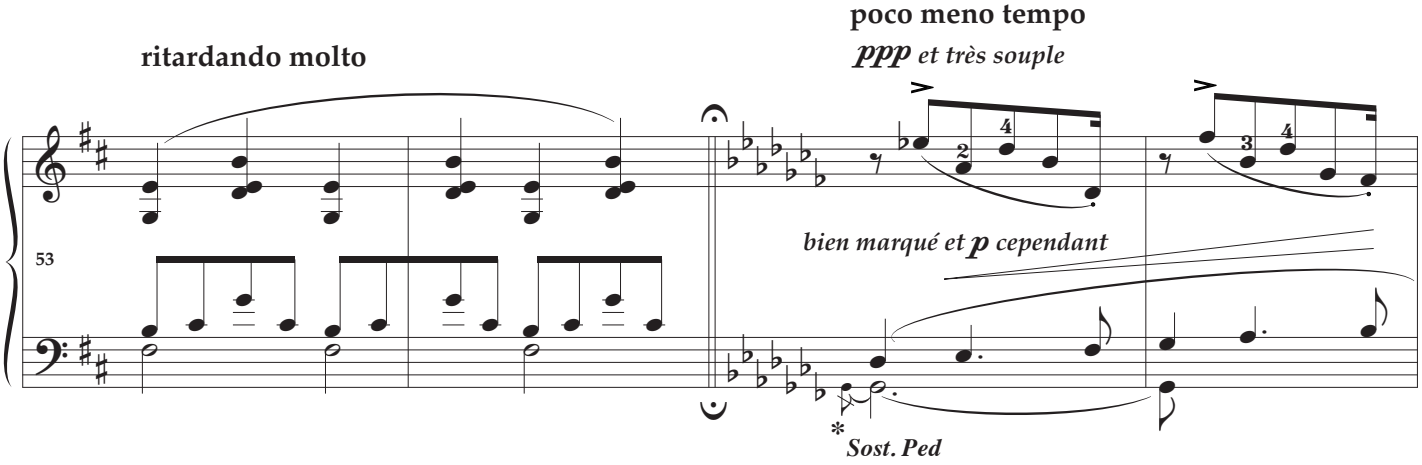
**allegretto espressivo**

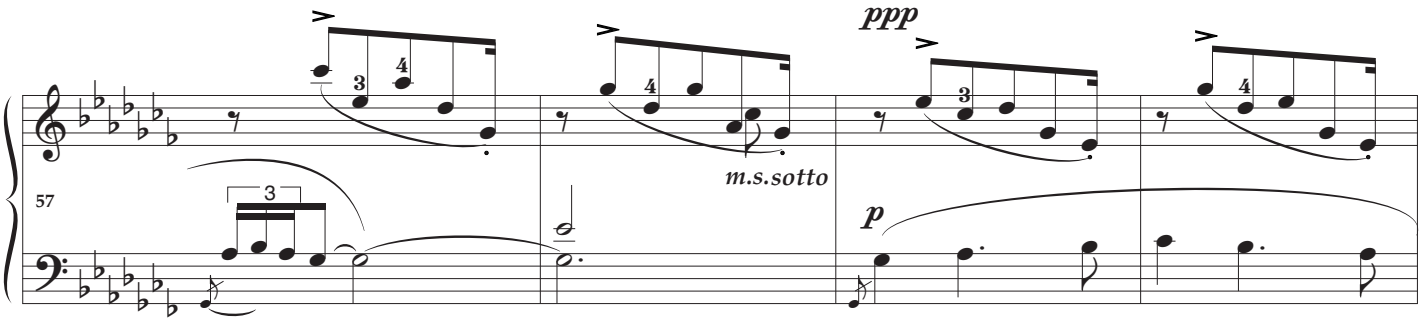


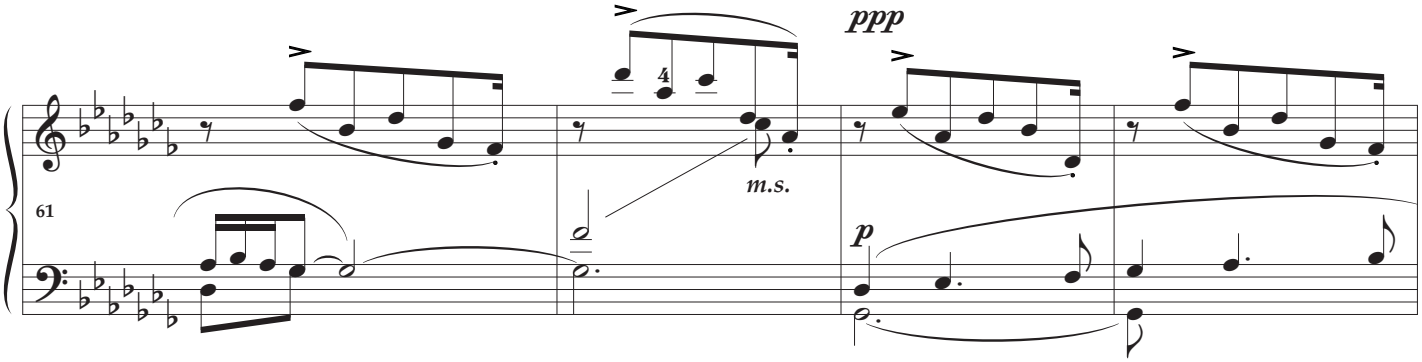

clair
dolce
17
poco crescendo
21
sfz
ppp
25
sfz
p
29

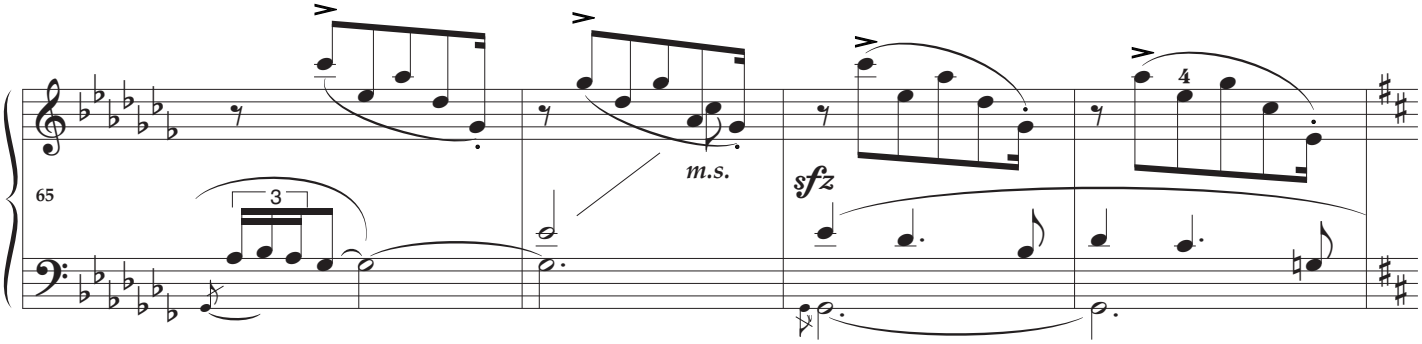

33
pp
pp
sfz
37
pp
sfz
pp
ppp
41
adagio
ritardando molto
m.d.
ppp ma sonoro
m.s.
45
m.d.
pppp
tempo primo
p
sopra

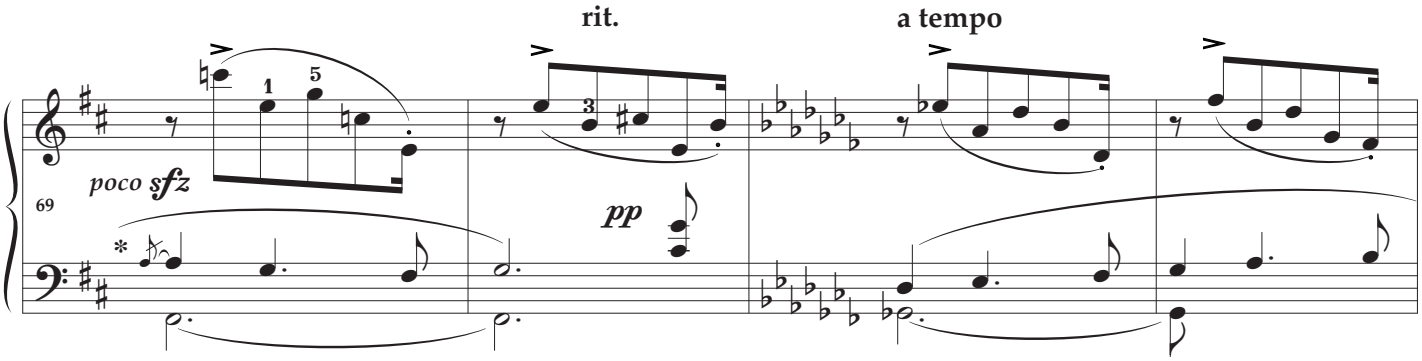

ppp
pp
49

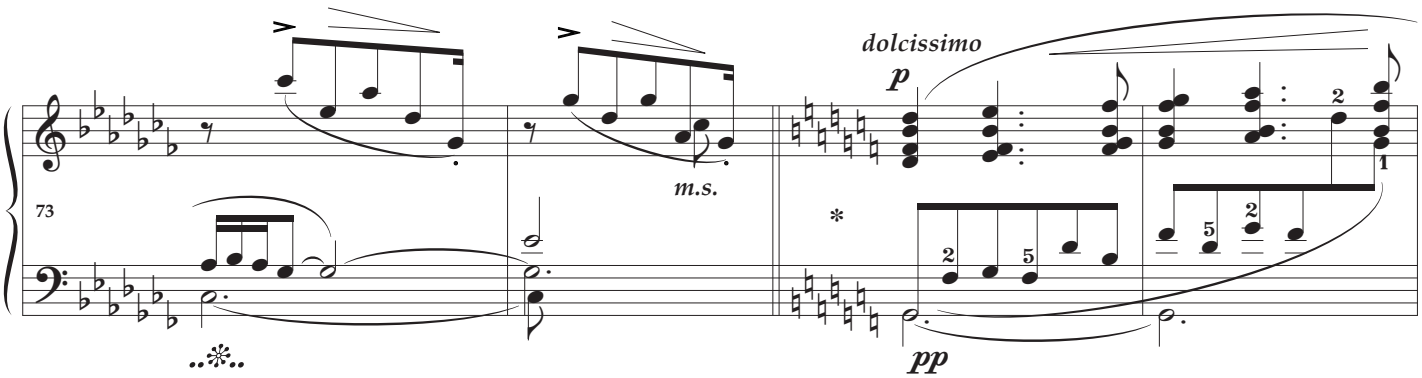

ritardando molto
poco meno tempo
ppp et très souple
bien marqué et p cependant
53
* Sost. Ped

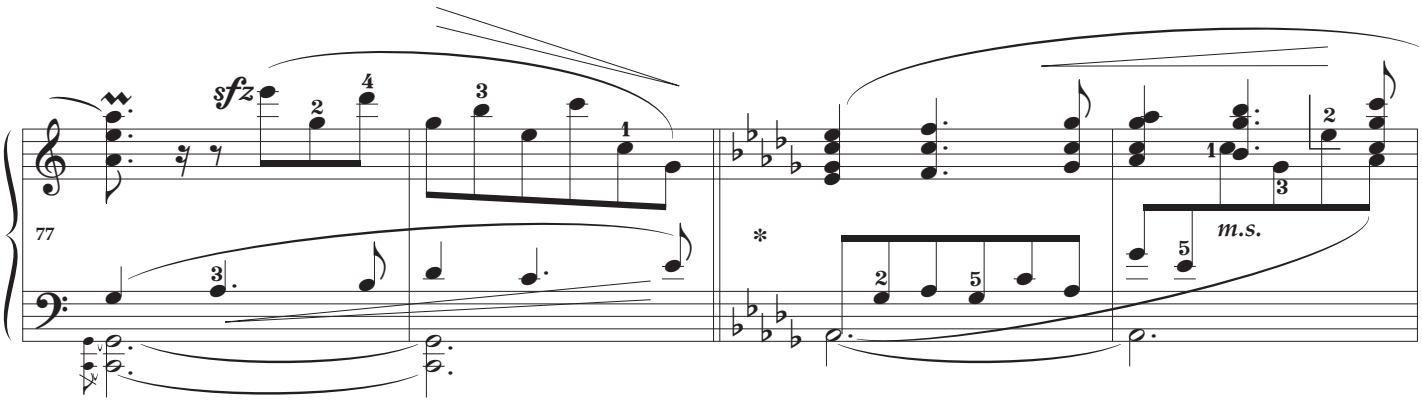

ppp
m.s.sotto
p
57

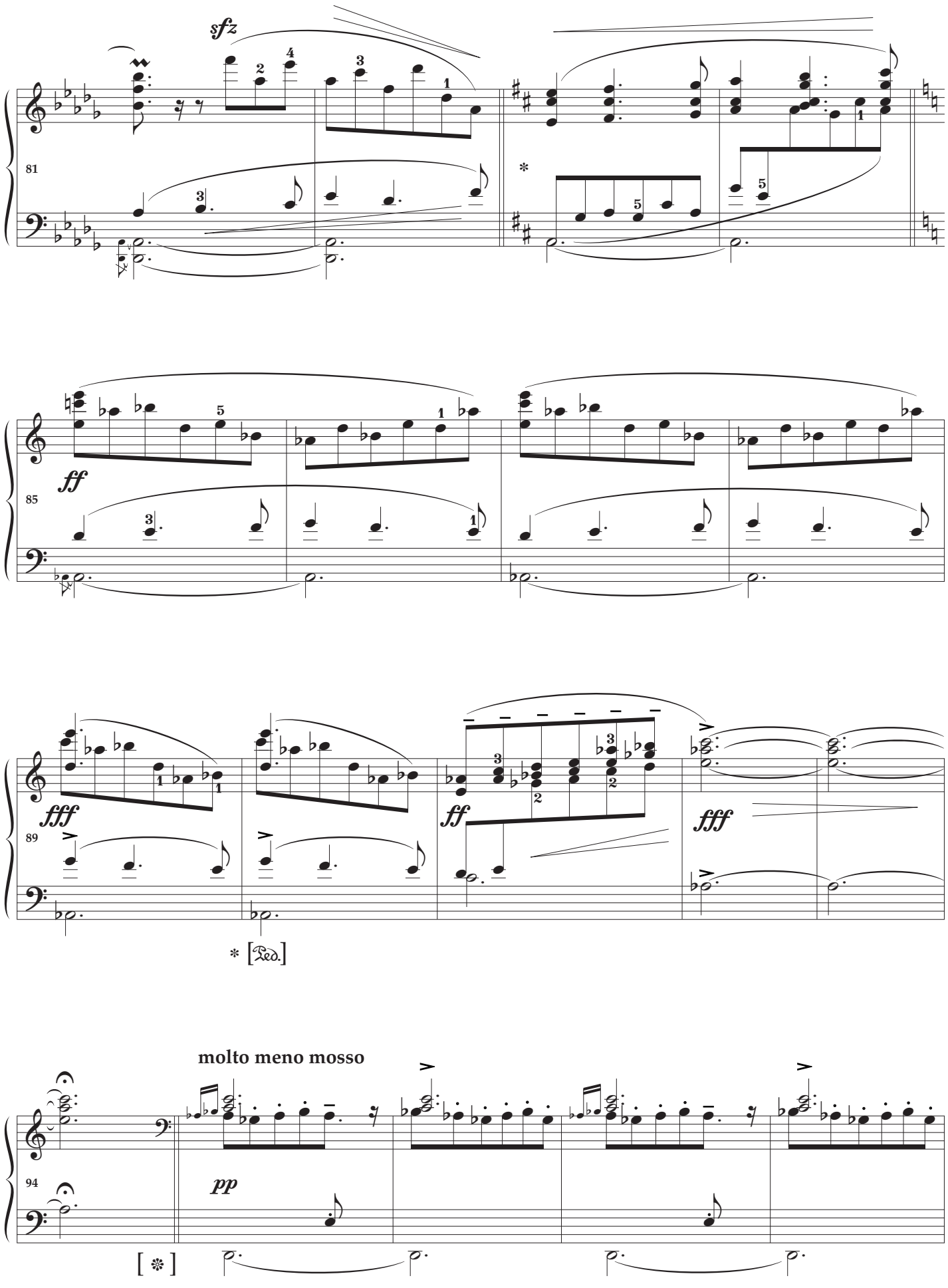

ppp
m.s.
p
61


65
m.s.
sfz

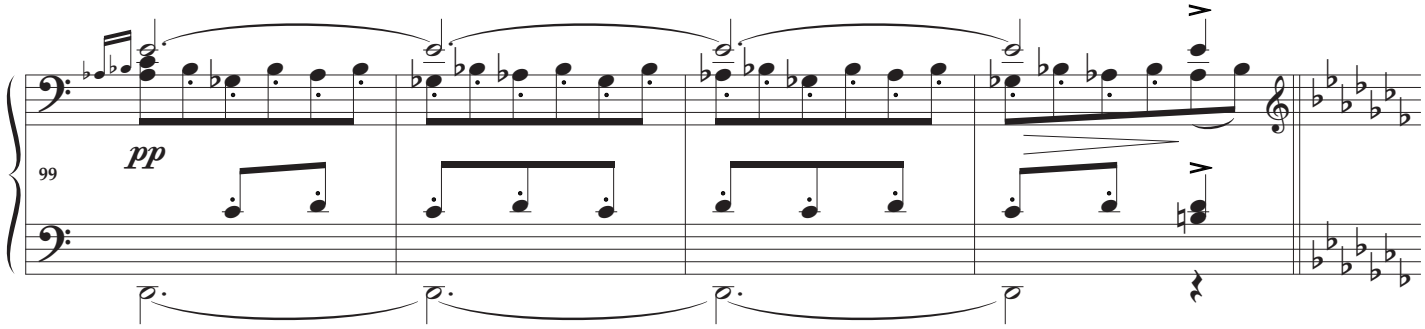

rit.
a tempo
69
poco sfz
pp


73
m.s.
dolcissimo
p
pp


77
sfz
m.s.

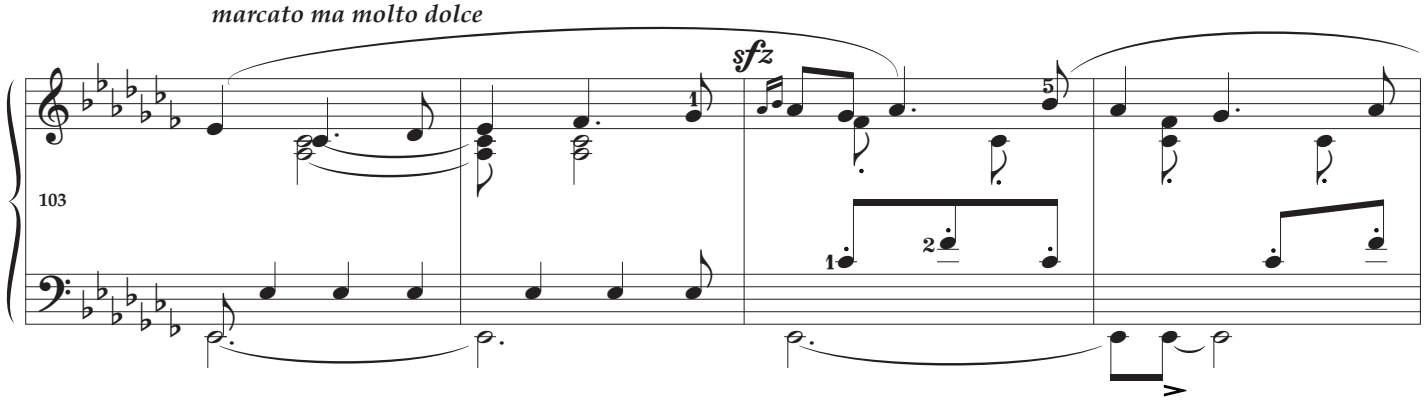

sfz
81
ff
85
fff
ff
fff
89
* [Ped.]
molto meno mosso
pp
94
[ * ]

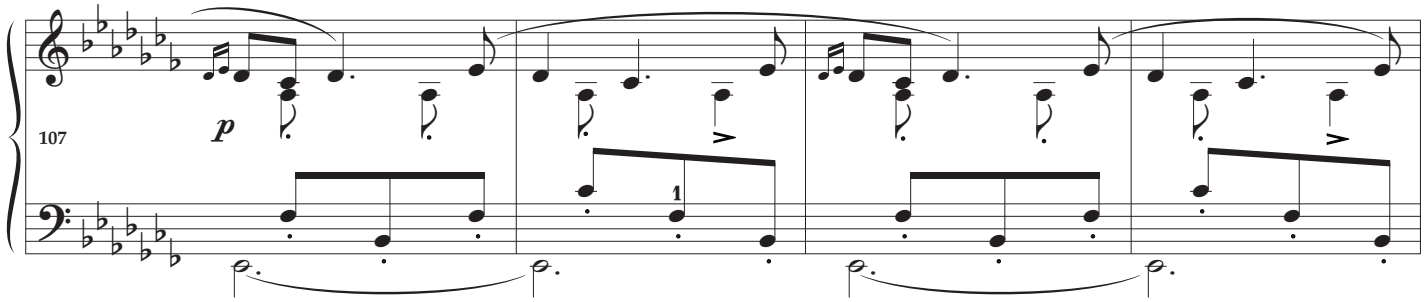
ritardando molto




a tempo

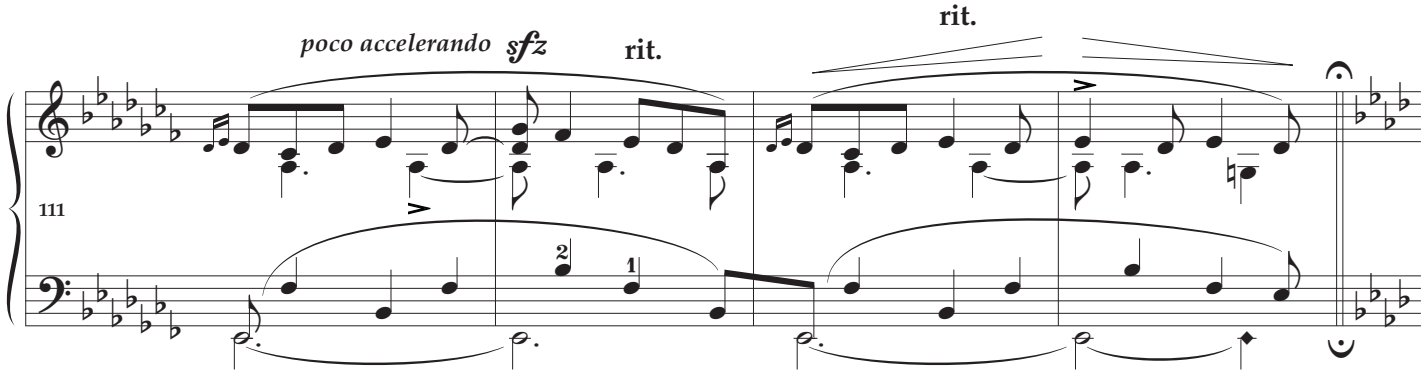
*marcato ma molto dolce*



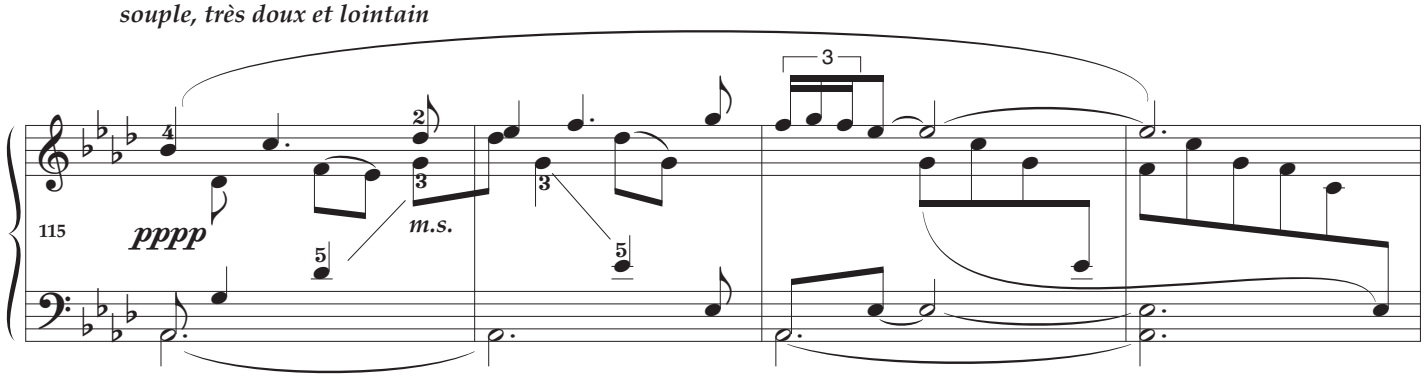

*poco accelerando* *sfz* rit.

rit.

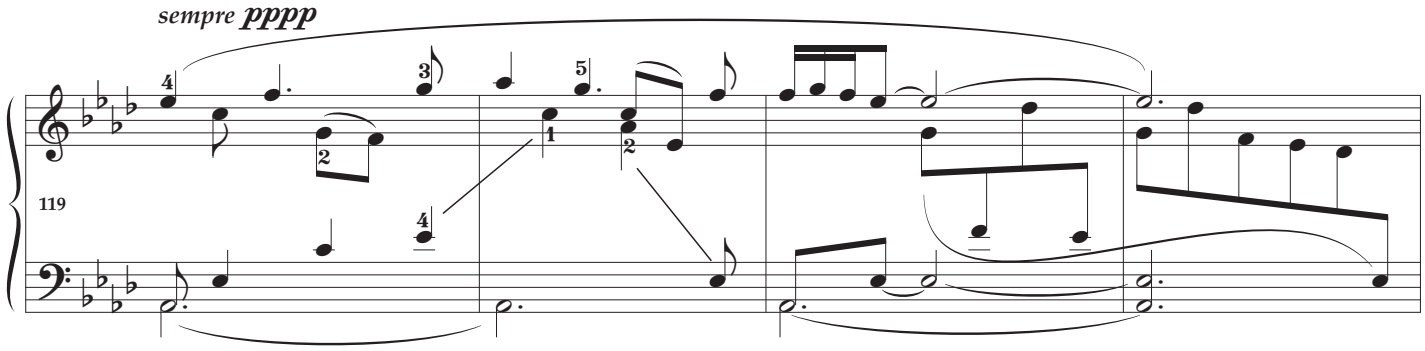


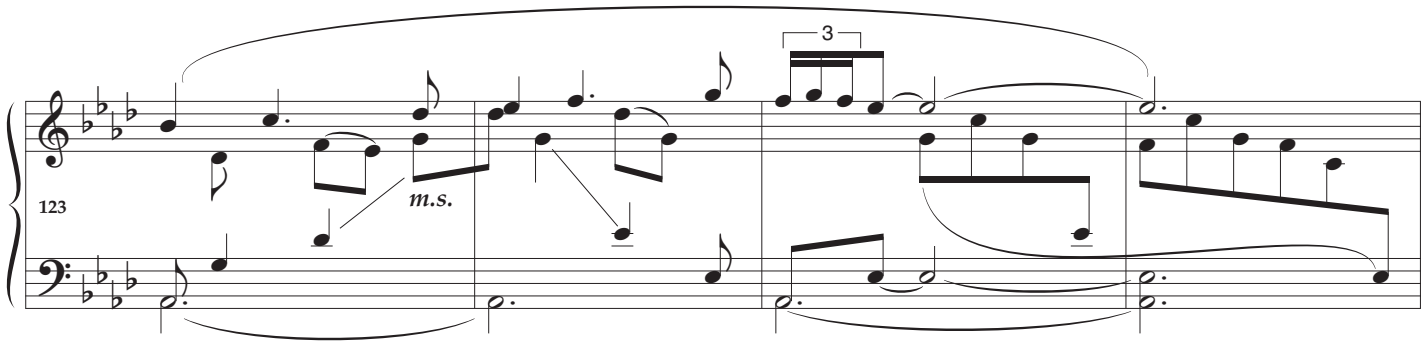

*[ replay silently ]

**meno mosso**
*souple, très doux et lointain*



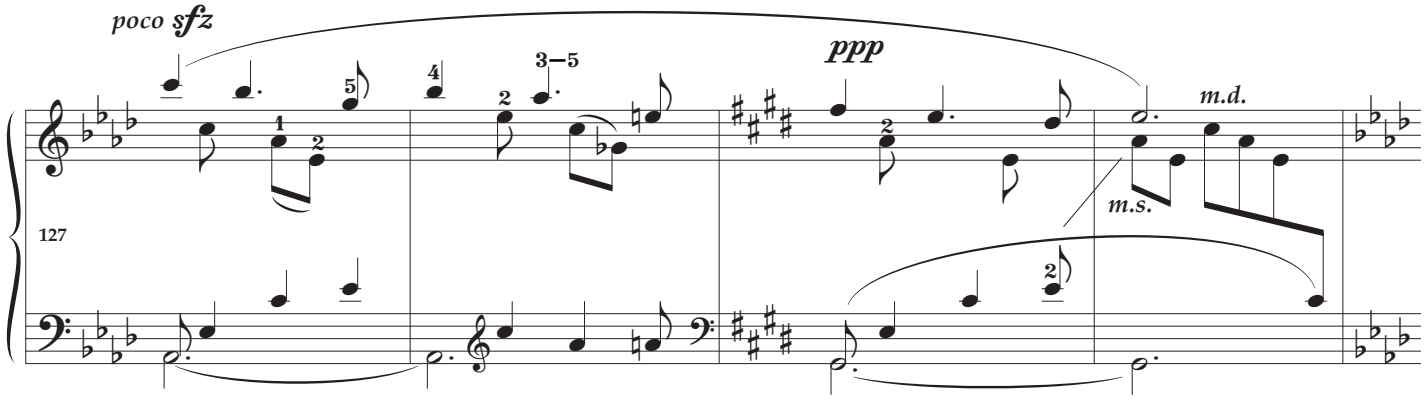

*sempre* ***pppp***

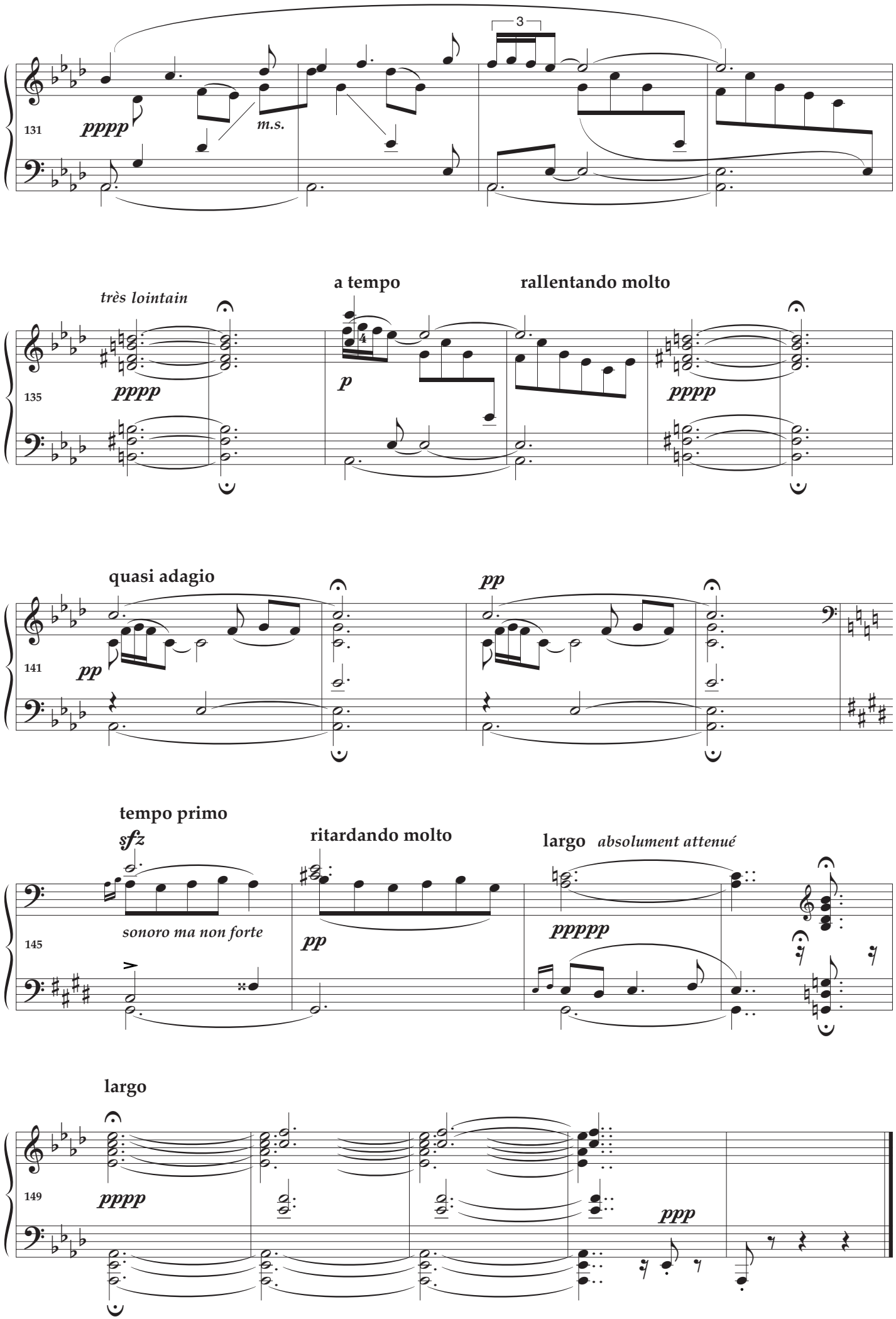



*poco* ***sfz***

***ppp***




131
pppp
m.s.
3
très lointain
pppp
135
a tempo
p
rallentando molto
pppp
quasi adagio
pp
141
pp
tempo primo
sfz
sonoro ma non forte
145
ritardando molto
pp
largo
absolument attenué
ppppp
largo
149
pppp
ppp

# EL PUERTO
## *the port*

Originally entitled *Cádiz*, *El Puerto* leads us from a reflective and yearning reminiscence to an exuberant character study, a lively musical image of *Santa Maria*, a fishing port on the Guadalete River in the Bay of Cádiz, an area the composer knew very well.

Although this is certainly one of the less challenging works of *Iberia*, it is a highly charged piece and perfectly brings to life another scene from the peninsular. In the torrid heat of Andalusia Albéniz transforms a single theme to describe rough fisherfolk shouting, singing, dancing and flirting.

Dating from his final years in Paris (1905). together with *El Albaicín* and *Triana*, it most brilliantly features guitars and flamenco*. As much of his life was spent abroad, the piece shows a nostalgic vision of his native Spain. Typically, the composer displays much inventiveness in his choice of modulations, culminating with a dramatic augmented chord pedal point climax, a technique repeated in *Rondeña* from volume two. Albéniz often completes works in *Iberia* with a magical coda, bringing the piece to a peaceful close.

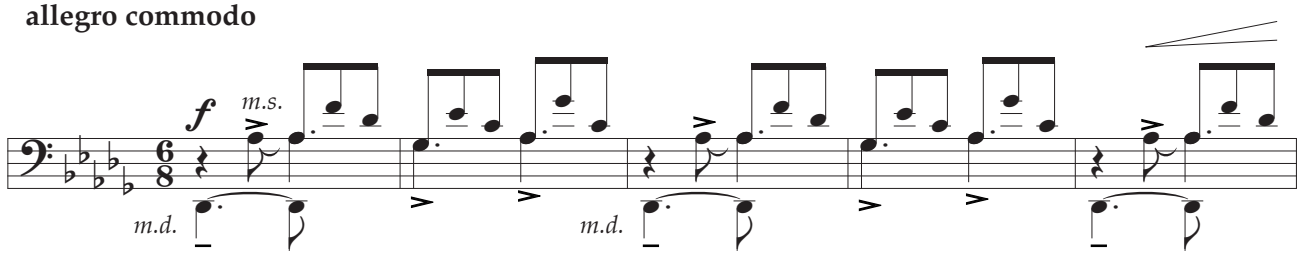
* A *zapateado*, including a gypsy *polo* and the stamping of *bulerías*, originating in Jerez.

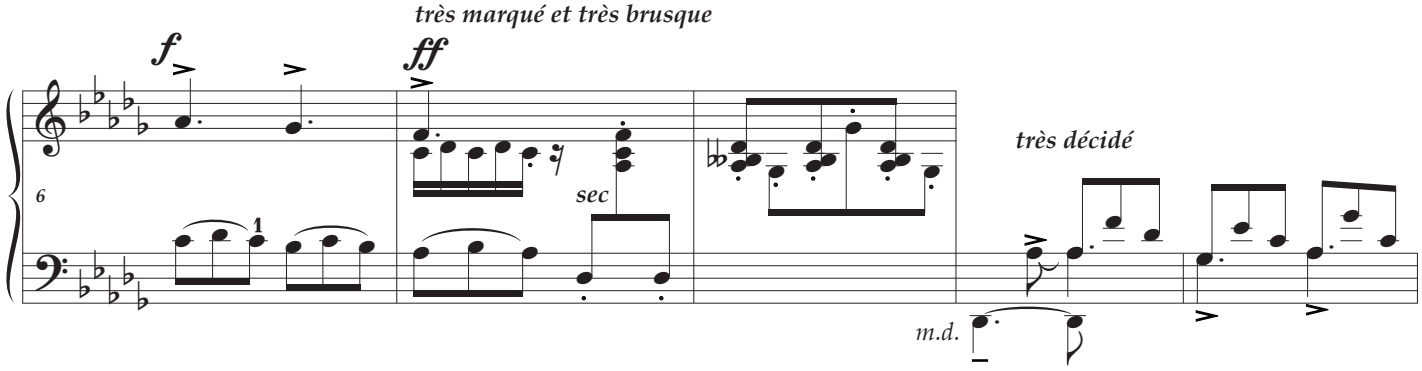
- duration 4'30
- although there are possible indications that grace notes should begin on the beat, playing them in advance might sometimes prove to be a more convincing solution
- With the exception of differing major and minor modes in *Evocación* and *El Corpus en Sevilla*, Albéniz never changes key signatures in *Iberia*, preferring the heavy use of accidentals.
- **37** editorial delayed ***pp***
- modified key-signatures throughout
- **131** treble final quaver — there is a possible error here, corrected to match section A (**33**)
- **157-182** *meno tempo* = meno mosso. In the original edition, these 25 bars are full of special instructions underlining the composer's desire to slow down the pace : *rit poco a poco, sempre rit, 2 rallentandos, retardant toujours, molto rit* and finally *adagio* at **183**.

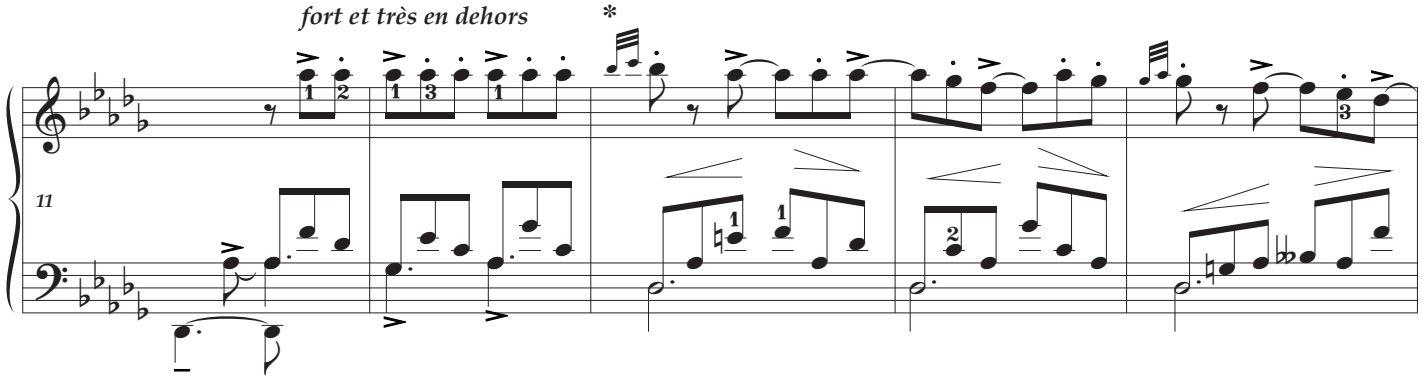
*ÉDOUARD MANET le port de Bordeaux 1871*

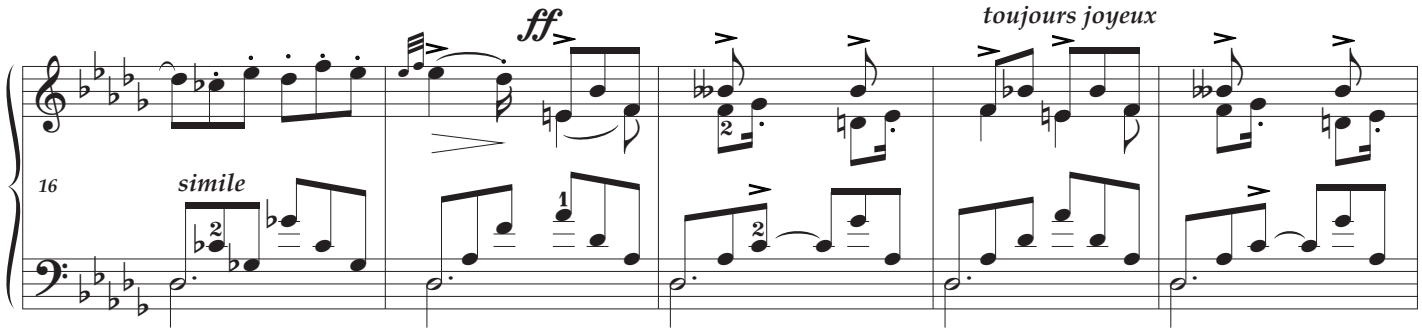
# EL PUERTO

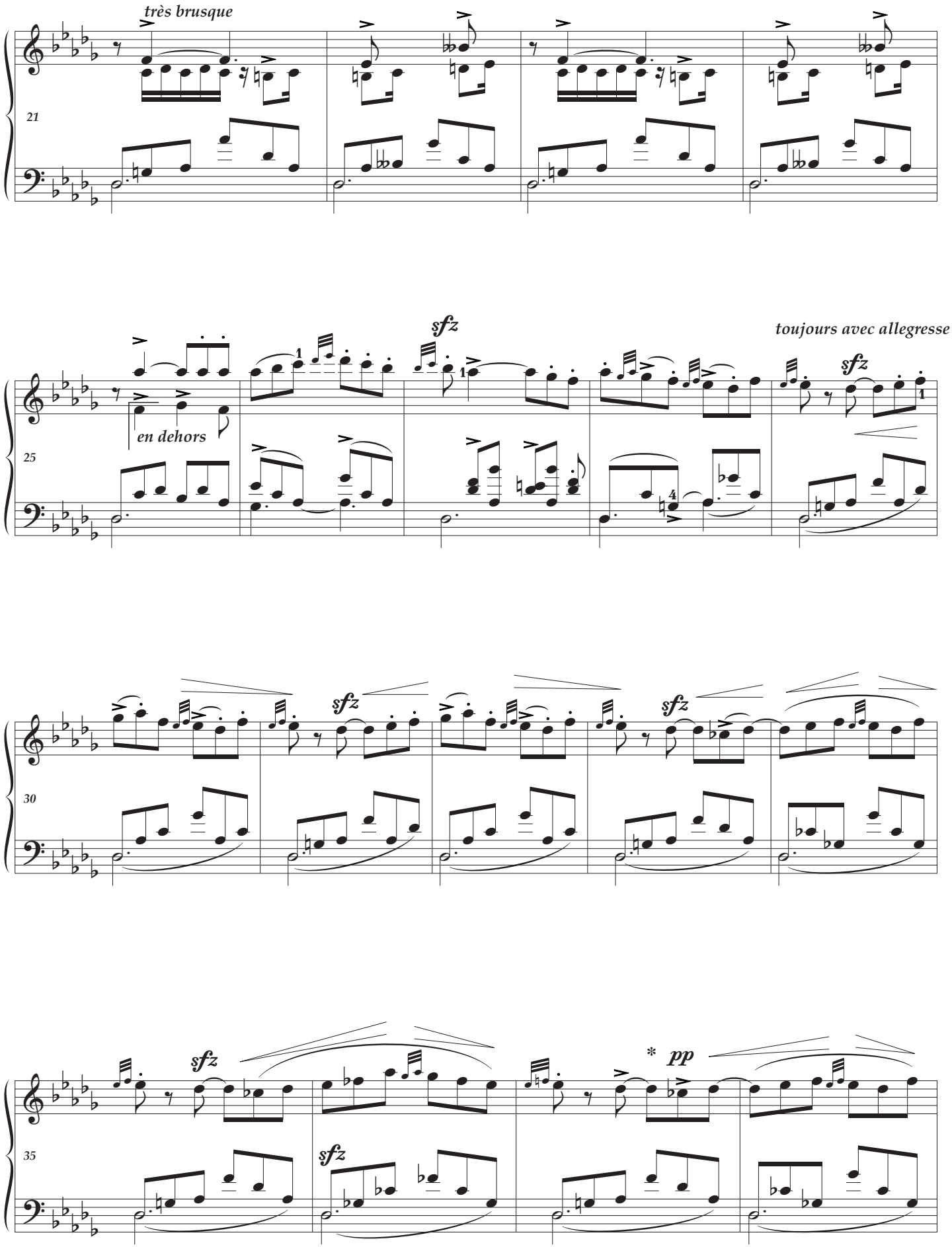
**allegro commodo**

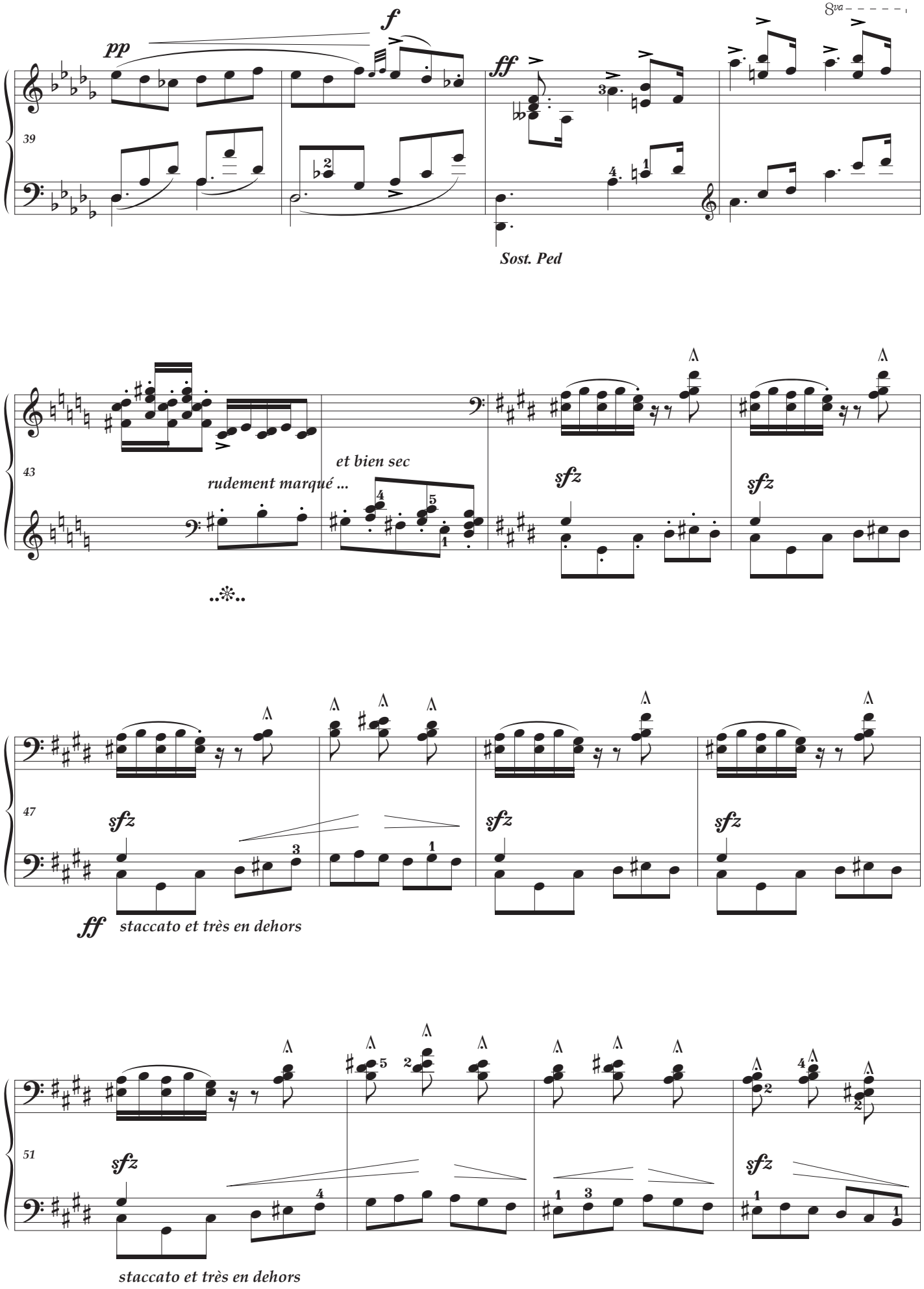


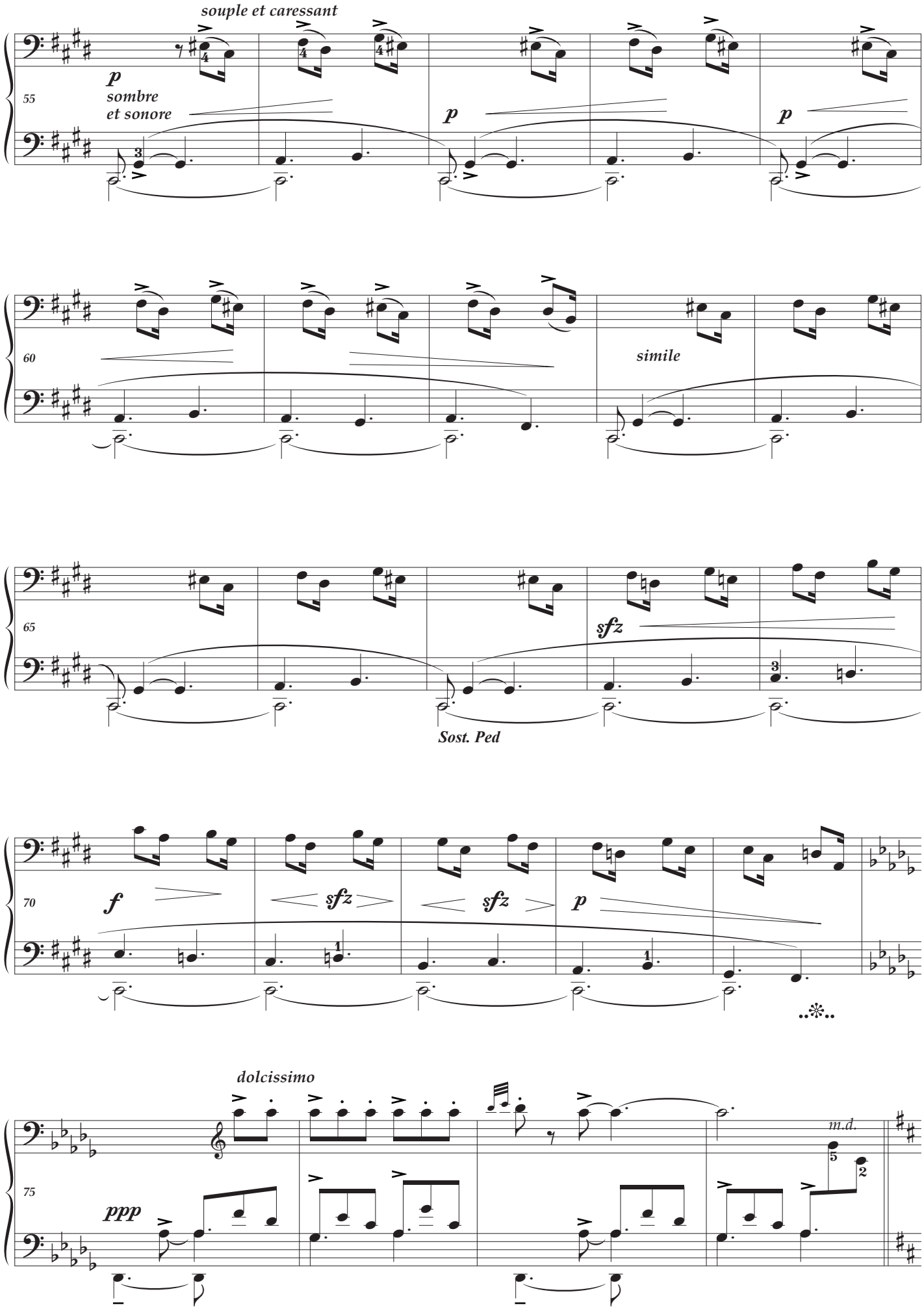



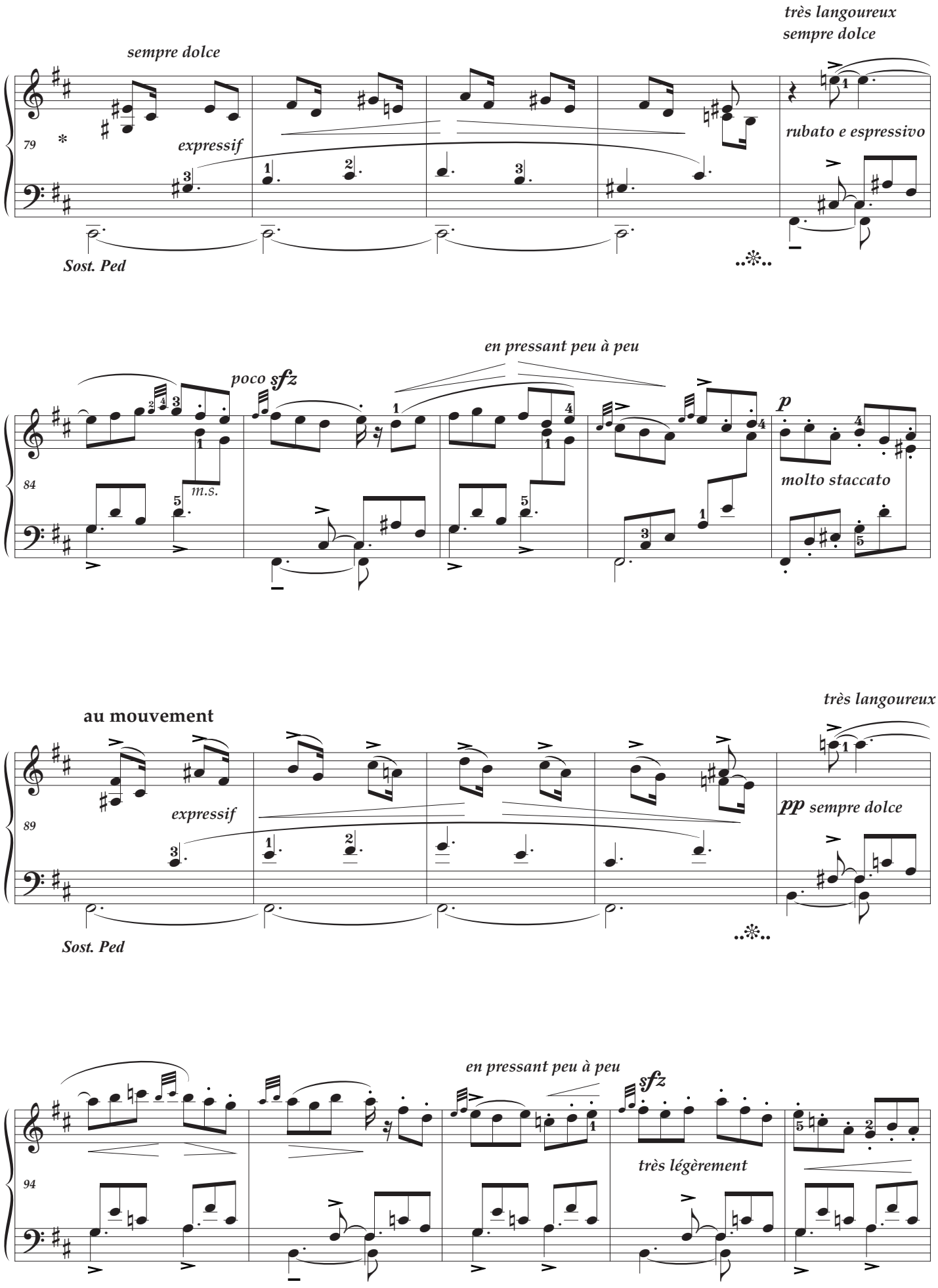




très brusque
21
sfz
toujours avec allegresse
en dehors
25
sfz
sfz
30
sfz
* pp
35
sfz

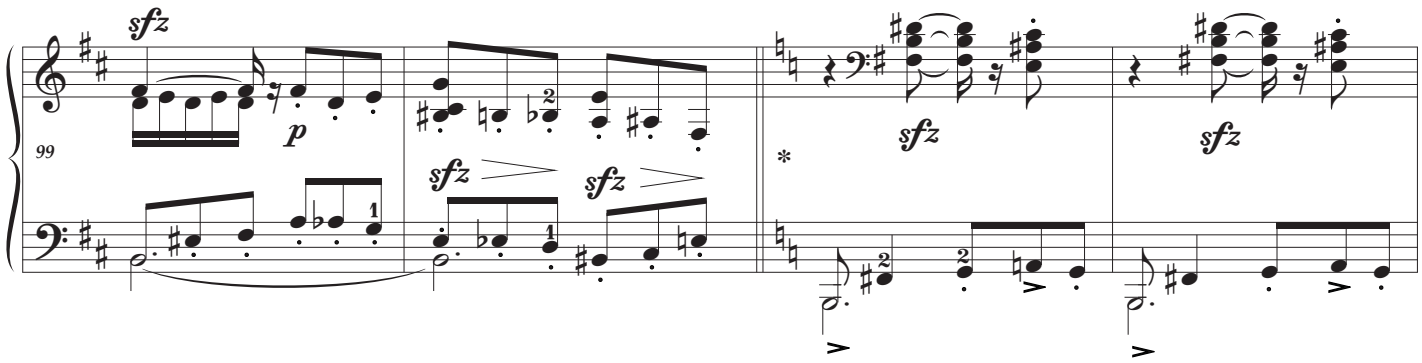

pp
f
ff
8va
39
Sost. Ped
43
et bien sec
rudement marqué ...
sfz
sfz
47
sfz
sfz
sfz
ff staccato et très en dehors
51
sfz
sfz
staccato et très en dehors


souple et caressant
p
sombre
et sonore
55
p
p
60
simile
65
sfz
Sost. Ped
f
sfz
sfz
p
70
dolcissimo
ppp
75
m.d.

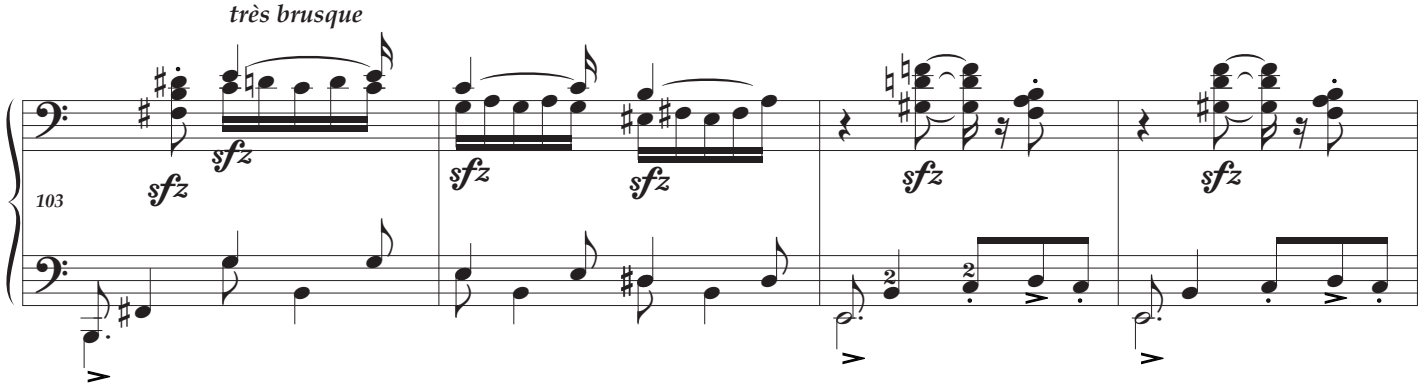

très langoureux
sempre dolce
sempre dolce
79
expressif
rubato e espressivo
Sost. Ped
en pressant peu à peu
poco sfz
84
m.s.
p
molto staccato
très langoureux
au mouvement
89
expressif
pp sempre dolce
Sost. Ped
en pressant peu à peu
94
sfz
très légèrement

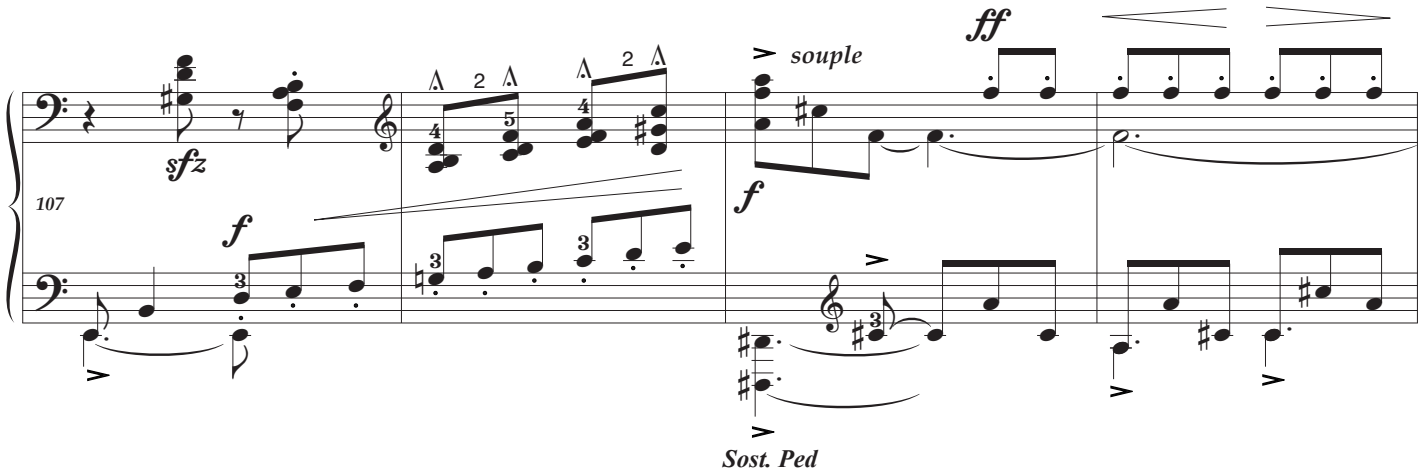
**au mouvement**

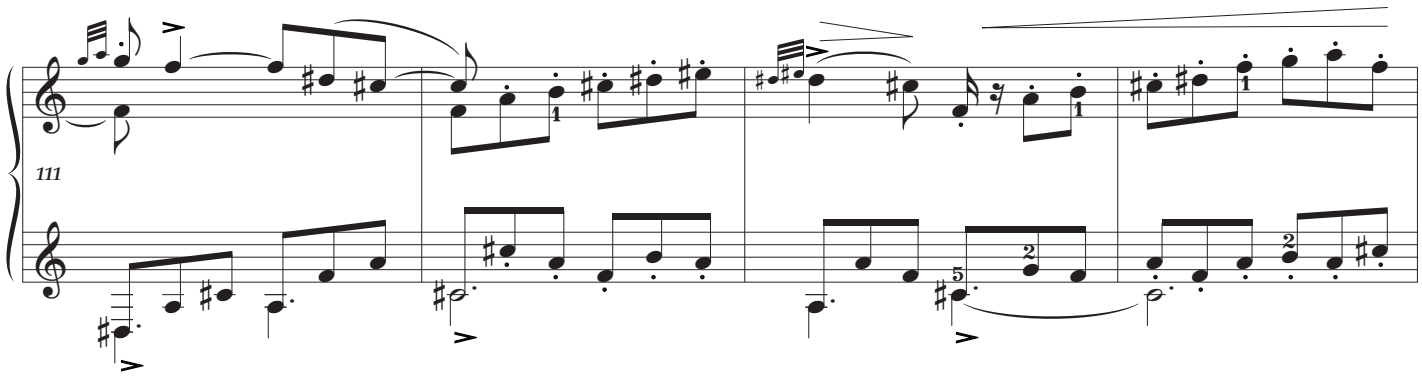
*brusquement*

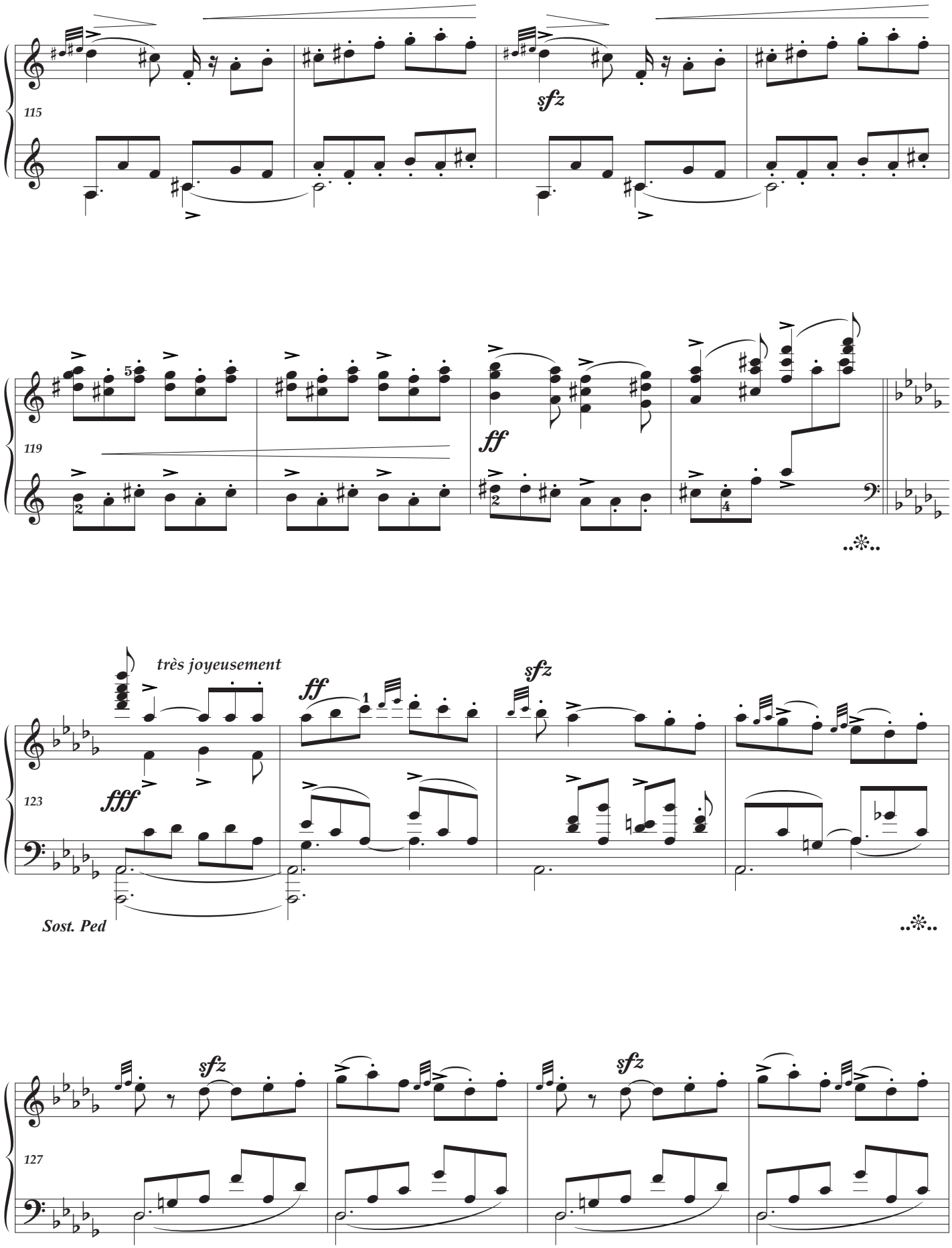


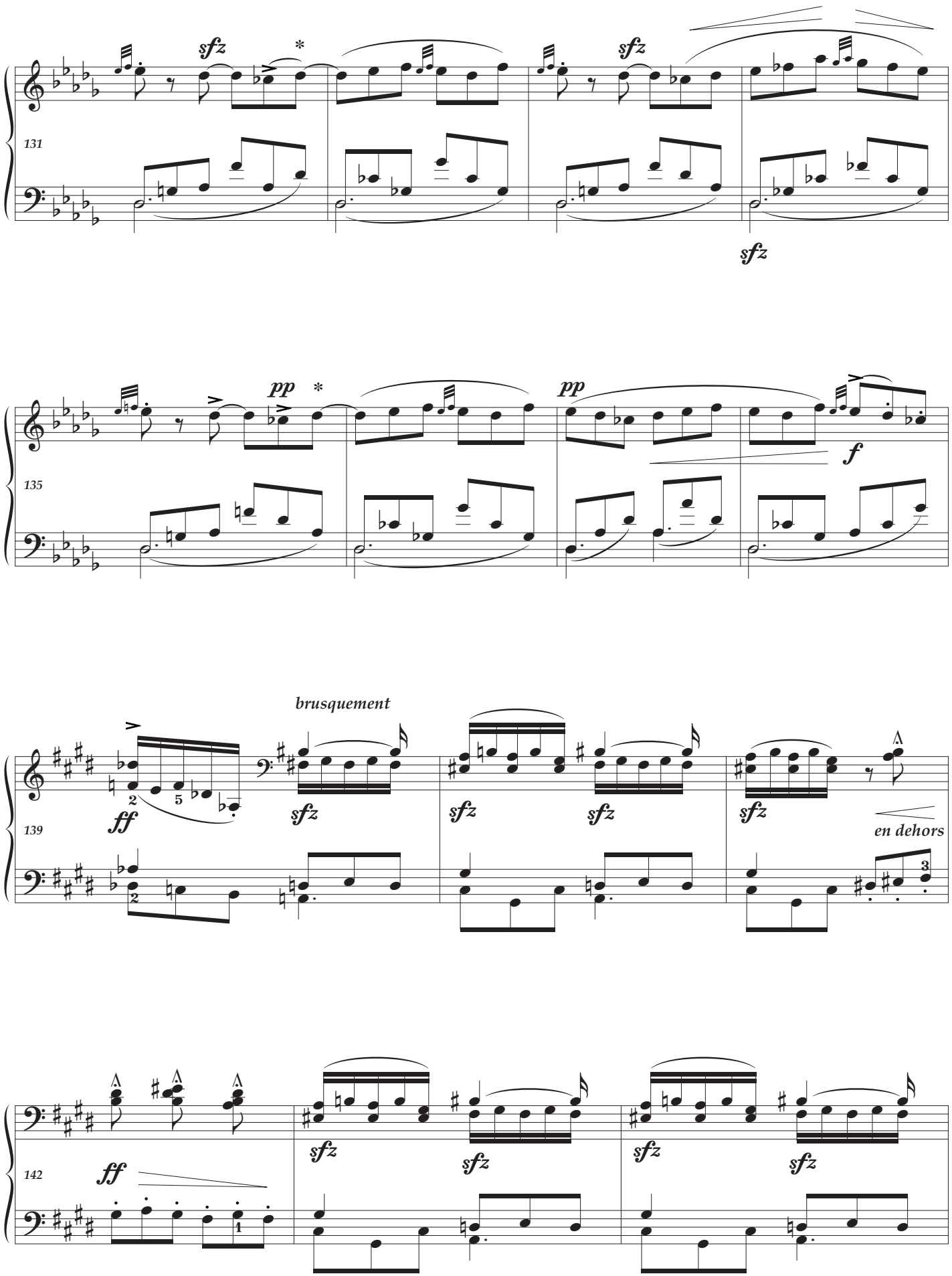

*très brusque*

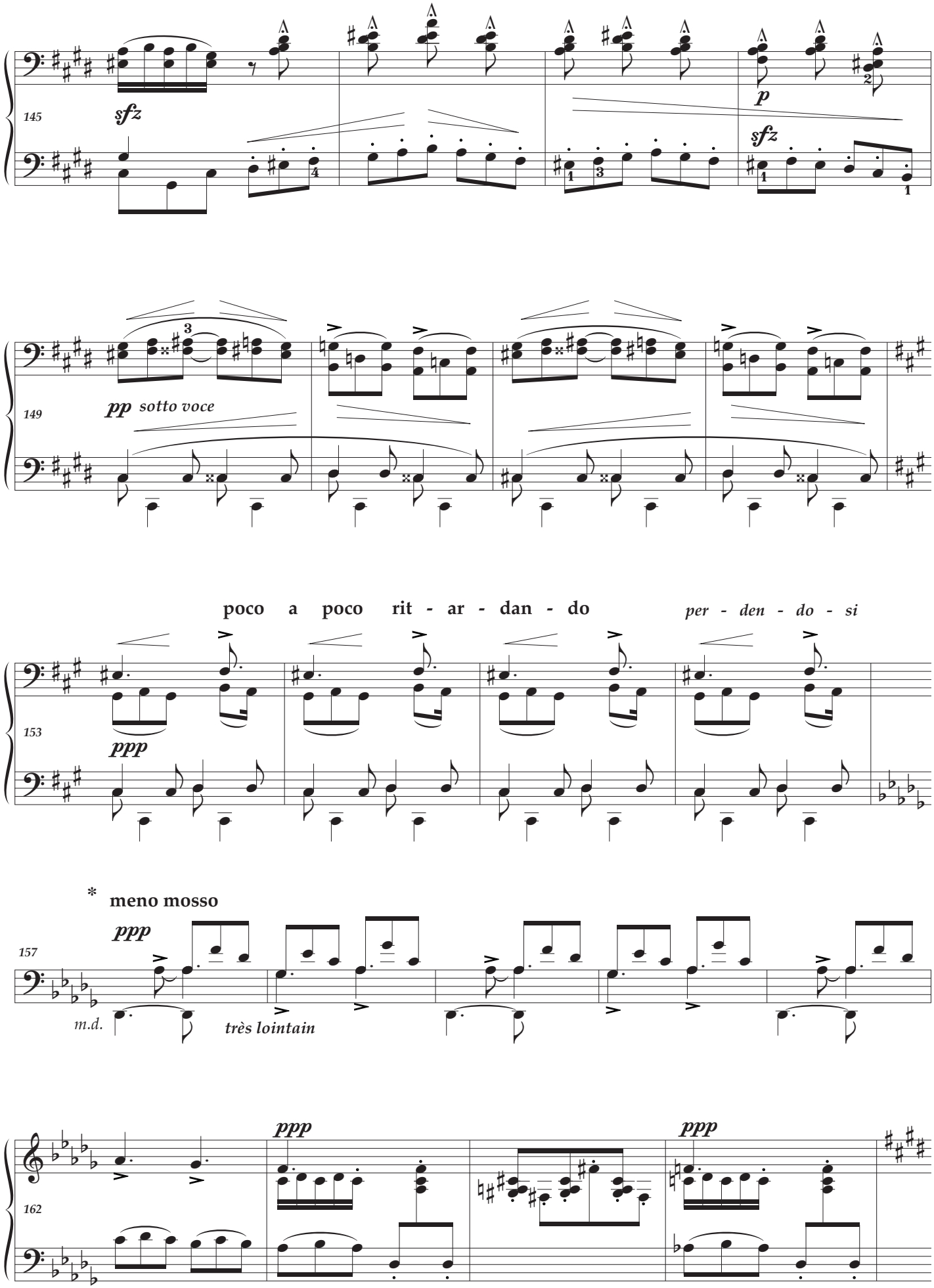


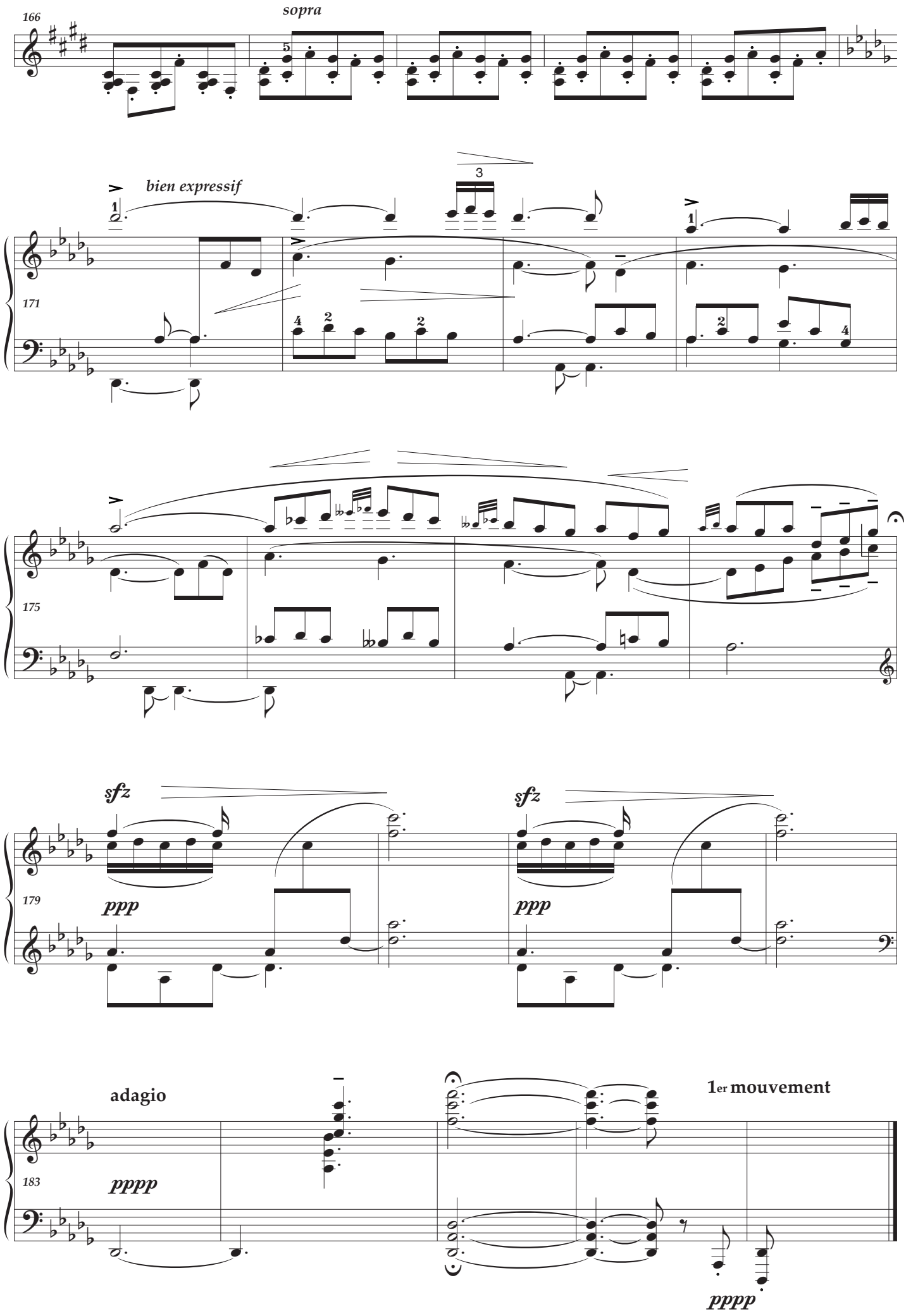




115
sfz
119
ff
very joyeusement
fff
ff
sfz
123
Sost. Ped
sfz
sfz
127


131
sfz
*
sfz
sfz
135
pp
*
pp
f
brusquement
139
ff
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
en dehors
142
ff
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz


145
sfz
p
sfz
149
pp sotto voce
poco a poco rit - ar - dan - do
per - den - do - si
153
ppp
* meno mosso
157
ppp
m.d.
très lointain
162
ppp
ppp


166
sopra
bien expressif
171
175
sfz
ppp
sfz
ppp
179
adagio
pppp
183
1er mouvement
pppp

# FÊTE DIEU À SEVILLE
# CORPUS CHRISTI en SEVILLA

Published in 1906, the longest piece of the suite — this challenging, original and passionate piano music was highly esteemed by Debussy and Messiaen. In Andalusian streets, Spaniards are capable of making a resounding din and their national festival *Corpus Christi** is an excellent example. Here Albeniz captures the hubbub that people make, the procession, the flamenco, the music, the songs, the bells and the heady atmosphere with remarkable perception and skill, superimposing the many layers of sound to be heard on this very special day. From the very first arresting drum beats, *La Tarara*** is played as a staccato march, soon to become the accompaniment to a trumpeted *saeta****. The central section is a reflective song with flamenco guitar accompaniment while the Giralda bells anticipating *Debussy's* submerged cathedral bring the work to an effective end.

Finally, as a fitting concluding work to the first volume we find a vast range of dynamics and variety of expression; it is not often that we come across ***ppppp*** and ***fffff*** and to find them both in the same piece is unusual, to say the least. Most composers would have been content with a more modest palette, but Albeniz is certainly not a traditional composer and in his later years, was still writing very challenging and masterful music, inspired by the sounds of Spain, his homeland. Orchestral in scale, the work has been orchestrated by Leopold Stokowski, Enrique Fernández Arbós, Francisco Guerrero Marín and Peter Breiner.

* Corpus Christi in Seville is one of the most important days of the year. Dating from the early fifteenth century, the procession is accompanied by marching bands, and *tarascas* (monsters), to the tolling of the *Giralda* (Seville Cathedral) bells.

** The *tarara* was originally a children's song and dance eventually becoming a popular song. It is possibly of Sephardic origin.

*** a religious Andalusian penitent lament

*MANUEL CABRAL Y AGUADO BEJARANO* Corpus Christi Procession in Seville 1857

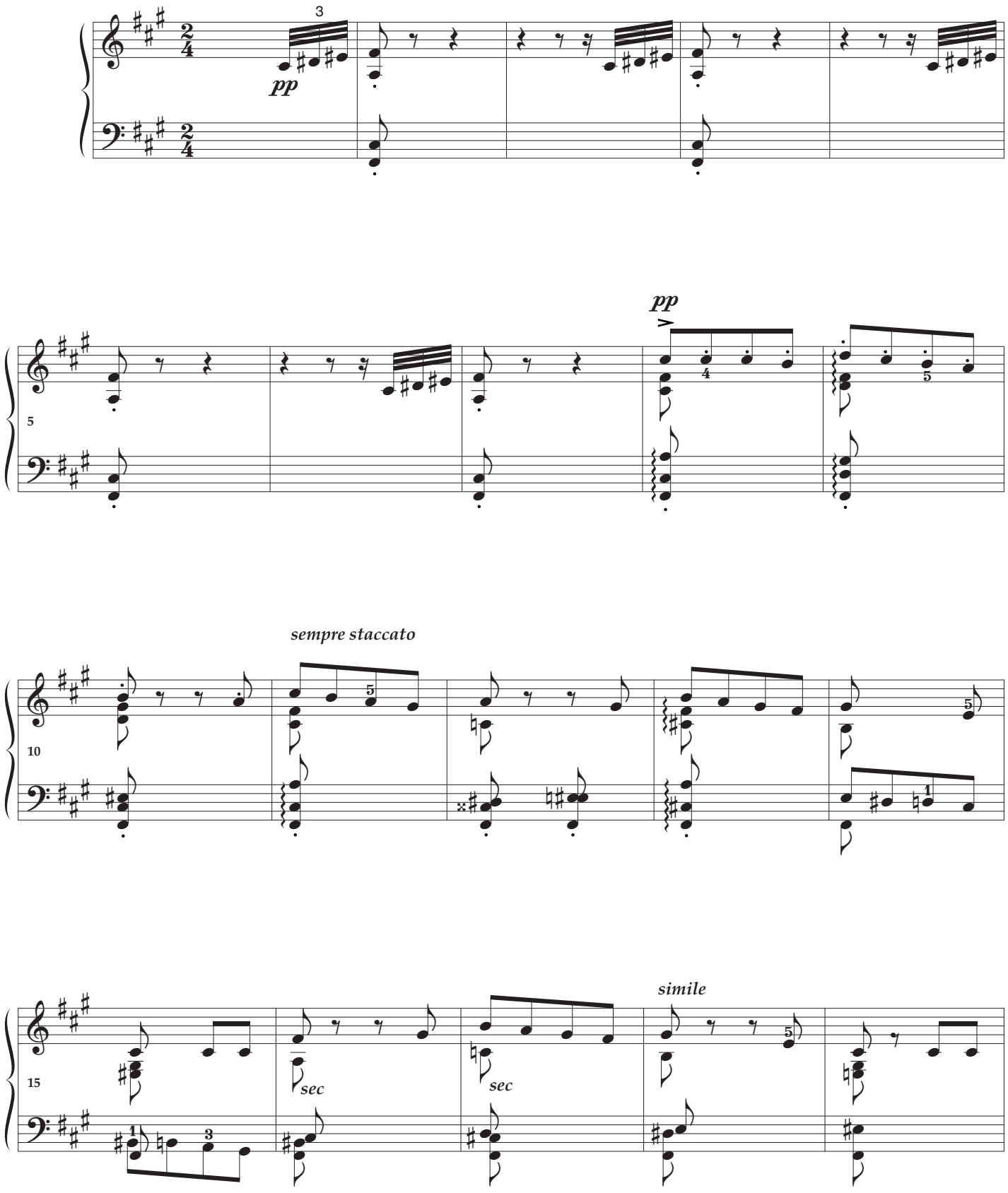
- duration varying between 7’15 and 10’
- although there are possible indications that grace notes should begin on the beat, playing them in advance might sometimes prove to be a more convincing solution
- With the exception of differing major and minor modes in *Evocación* and *El Corpus en Sevilla*, Albéniz never changes key signatures in *Iberia*, preferring the heavy use of accidentals. 38 the tie is missing in some editions
- modified key-signatures throughout

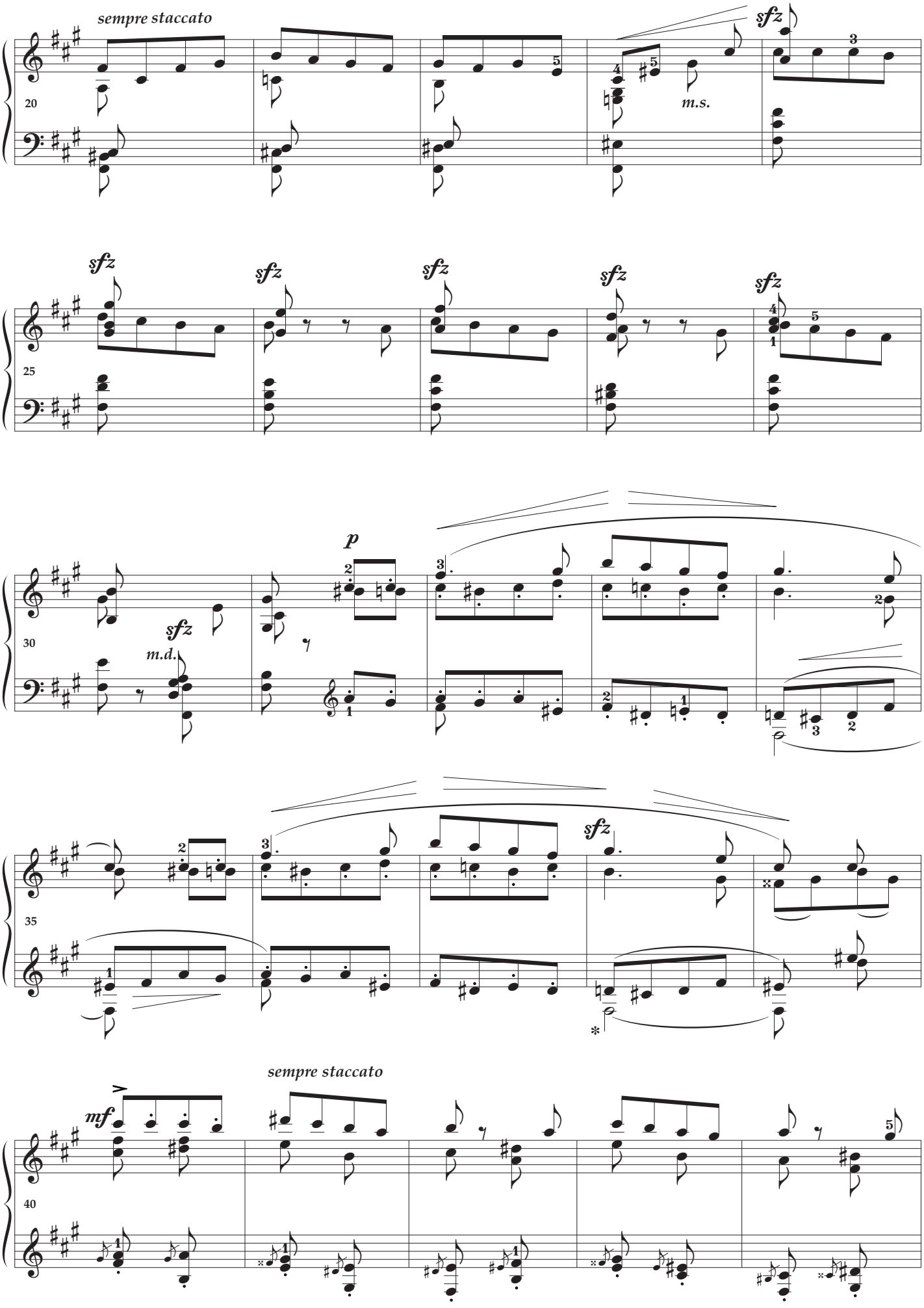
- **59** two chordal notes removed to match **55**
- **64** bass octave added
- **99** bass acciaccatura misprint corrected (E sharp)
- **144** bass D natural not tied in the original
- **182** there is a fermata here in the original — a probable misprint
- **238** G sharp is a probable misprint
- **271** bass B sharp misprint, corrected here
- **283, 286** bass transposed an octave lower

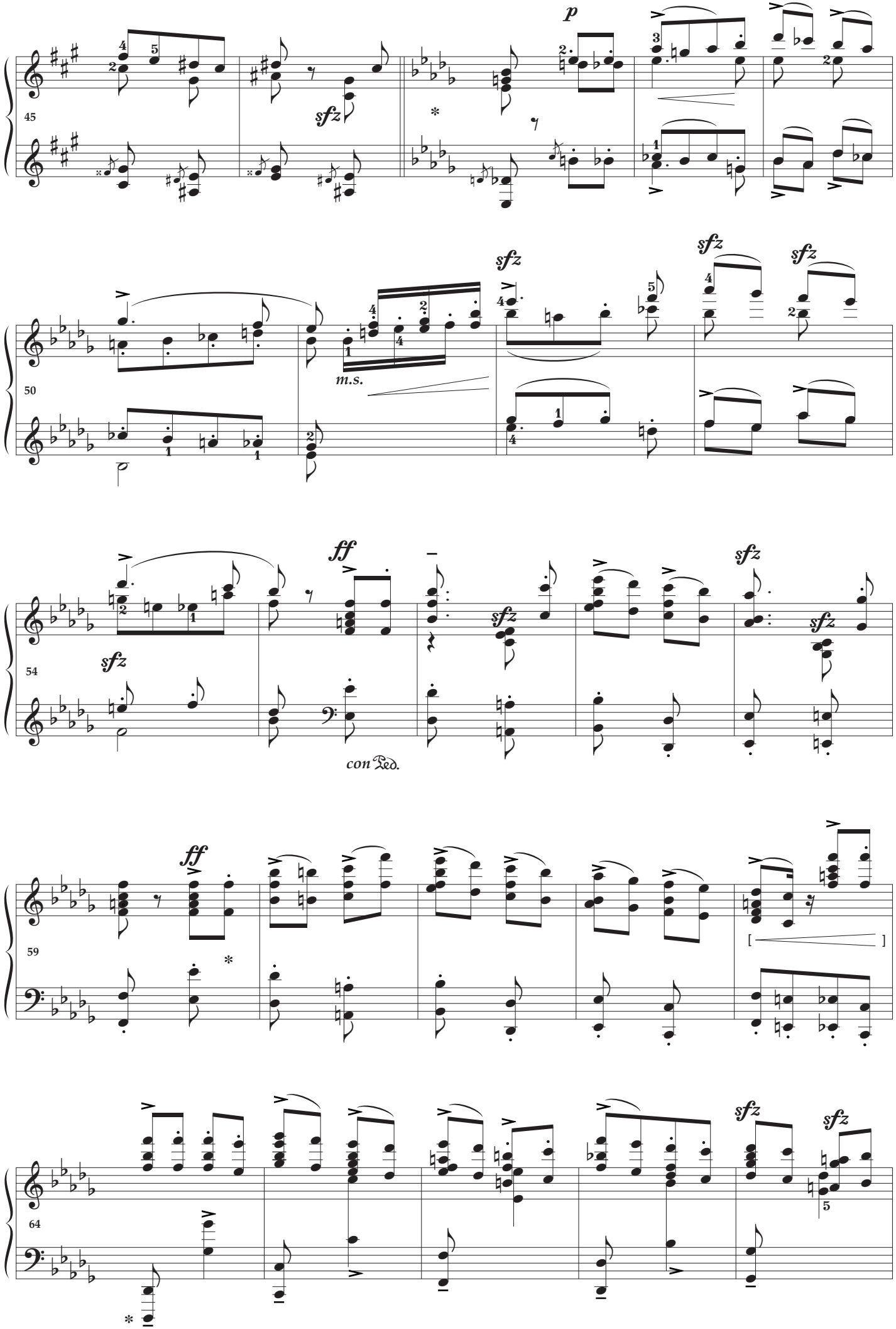
Corpus Christi Procession with a Bishop carrying the monstrance under a canopy *c.1400*

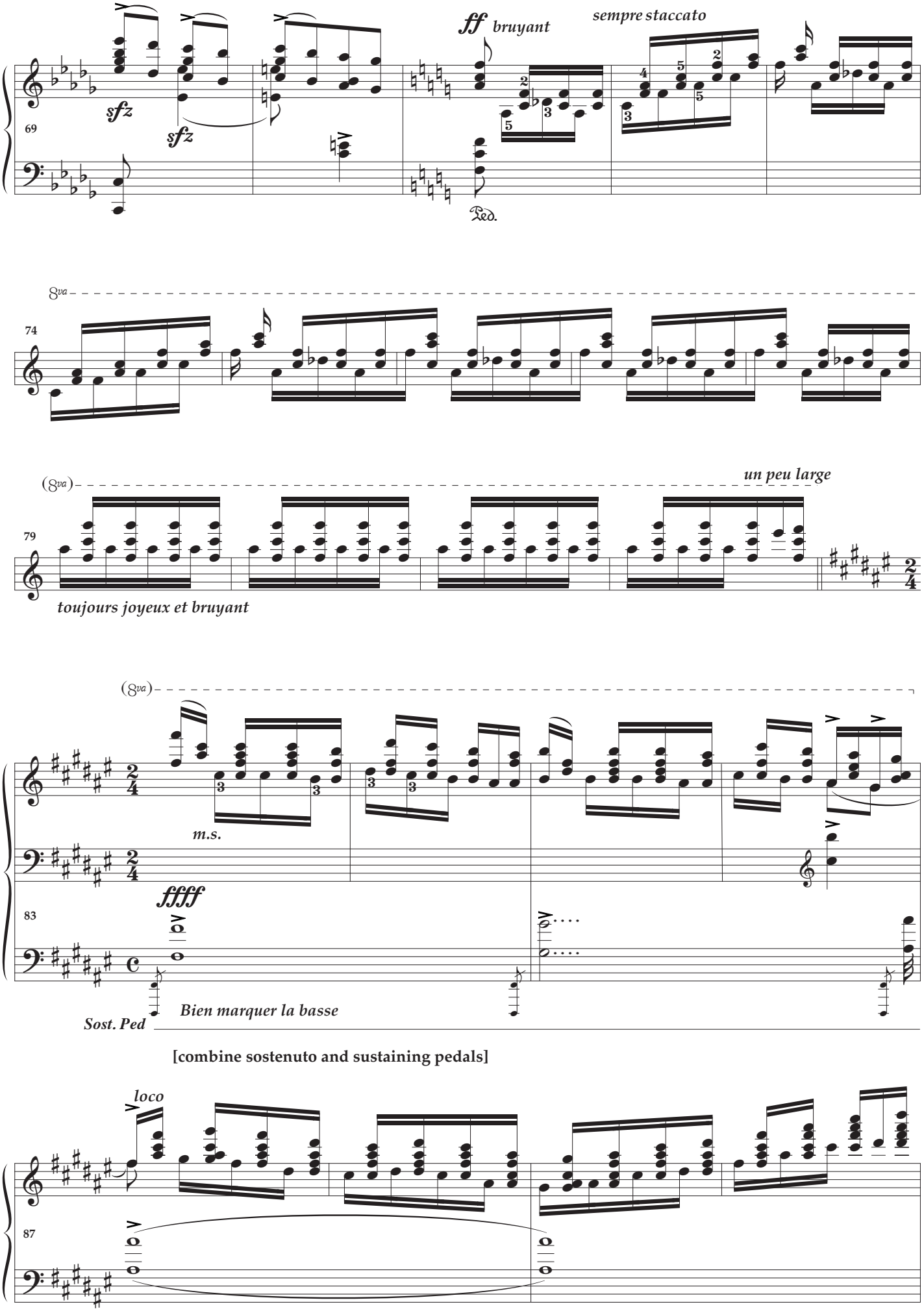
# FÊTE DIEU à SEVILLE
## CORPUS CHRISTI en SEVILLA

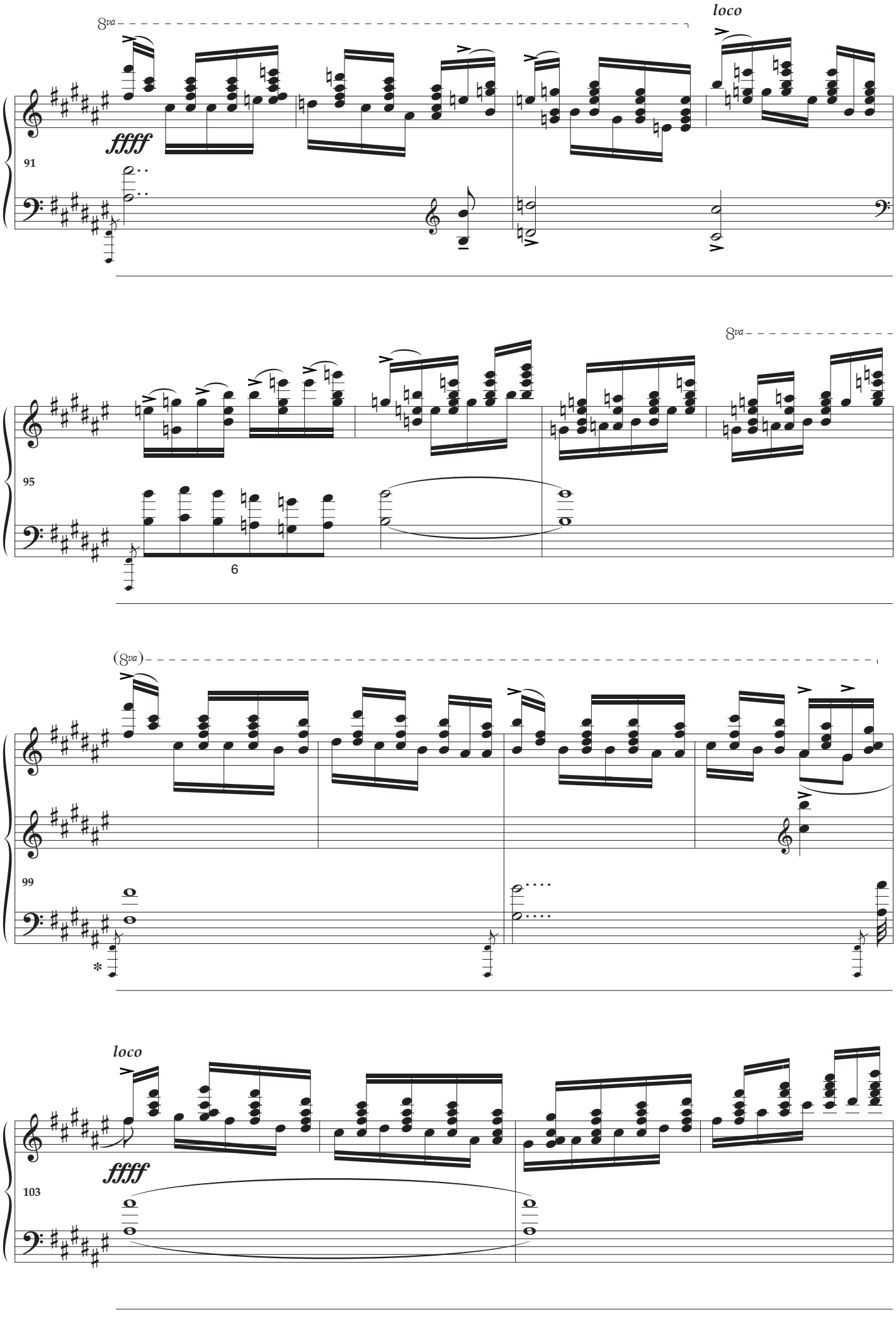
**allegro gracioso** [♩= 96]

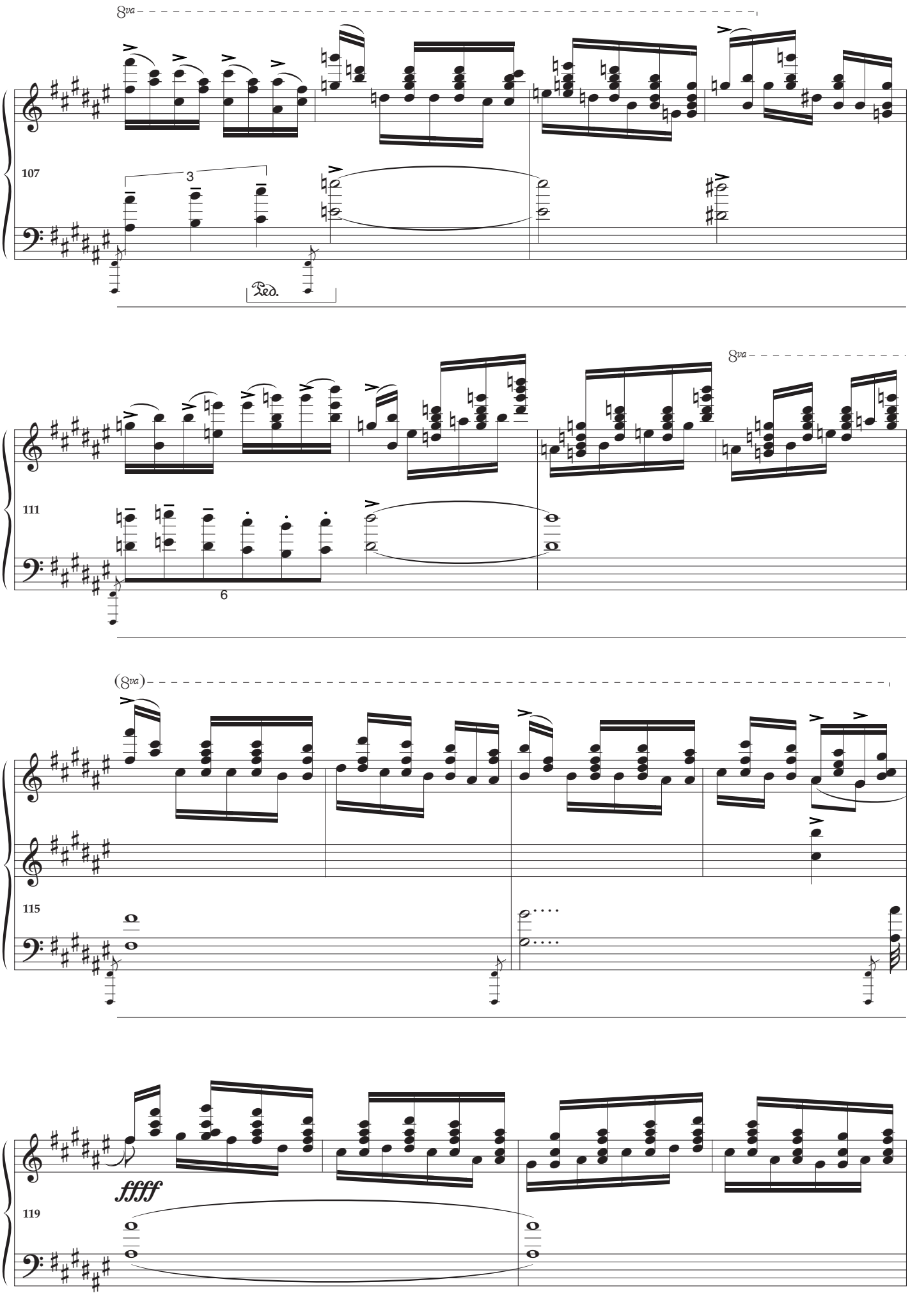


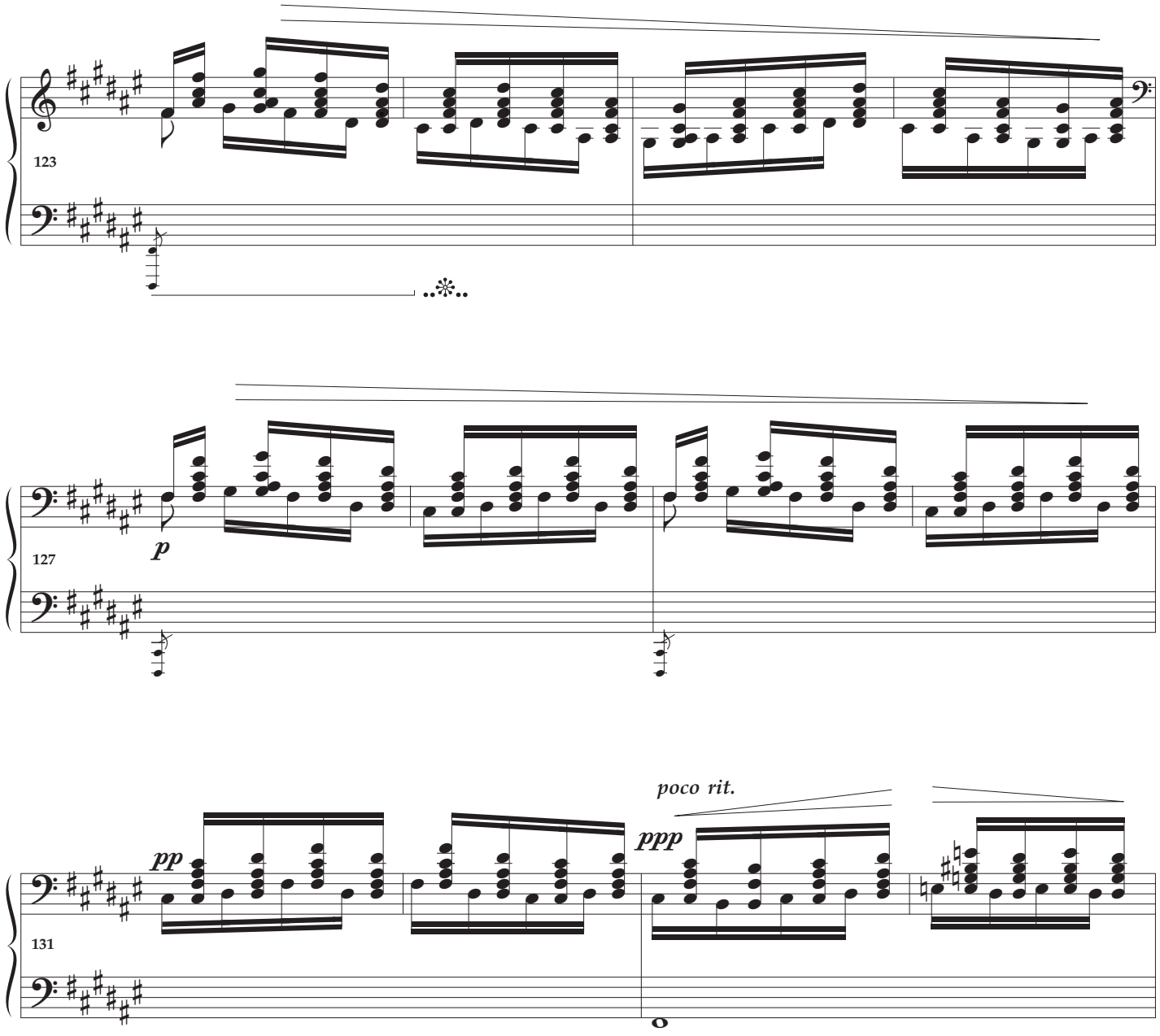

sempre staccato
sfz
m.s.
20
sfz
25
p
m.d.
30
35
sempre staccato
mf
40


45
p
sfz
50
m.s.
sfz
54
ff
sfz
con Ped.
59
ff
64
sfz


sempre staccato
ff bruyant
sfz
sfz
Ped.
69
8va
74
(8va)
un peu large
79
toujours joyeux et bruyant
(8va)
m.s.
ffff
83
Sost. Ped
Bien marquer la basse
[combine sostenuto and sustaining pedals]
loco
87

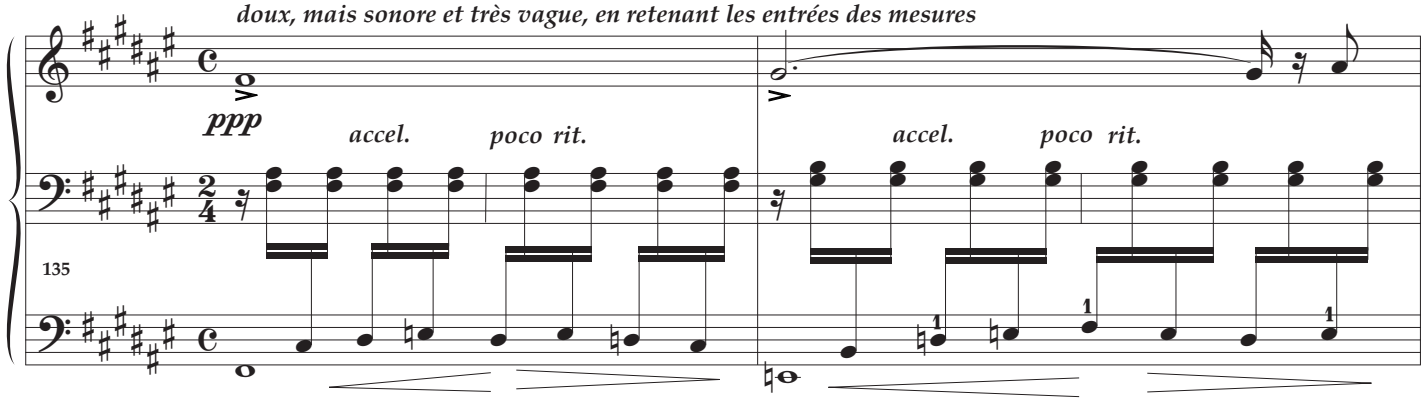

8va
loco
ffff
91
95
6
(8va)
99
*
loco
ffff
103

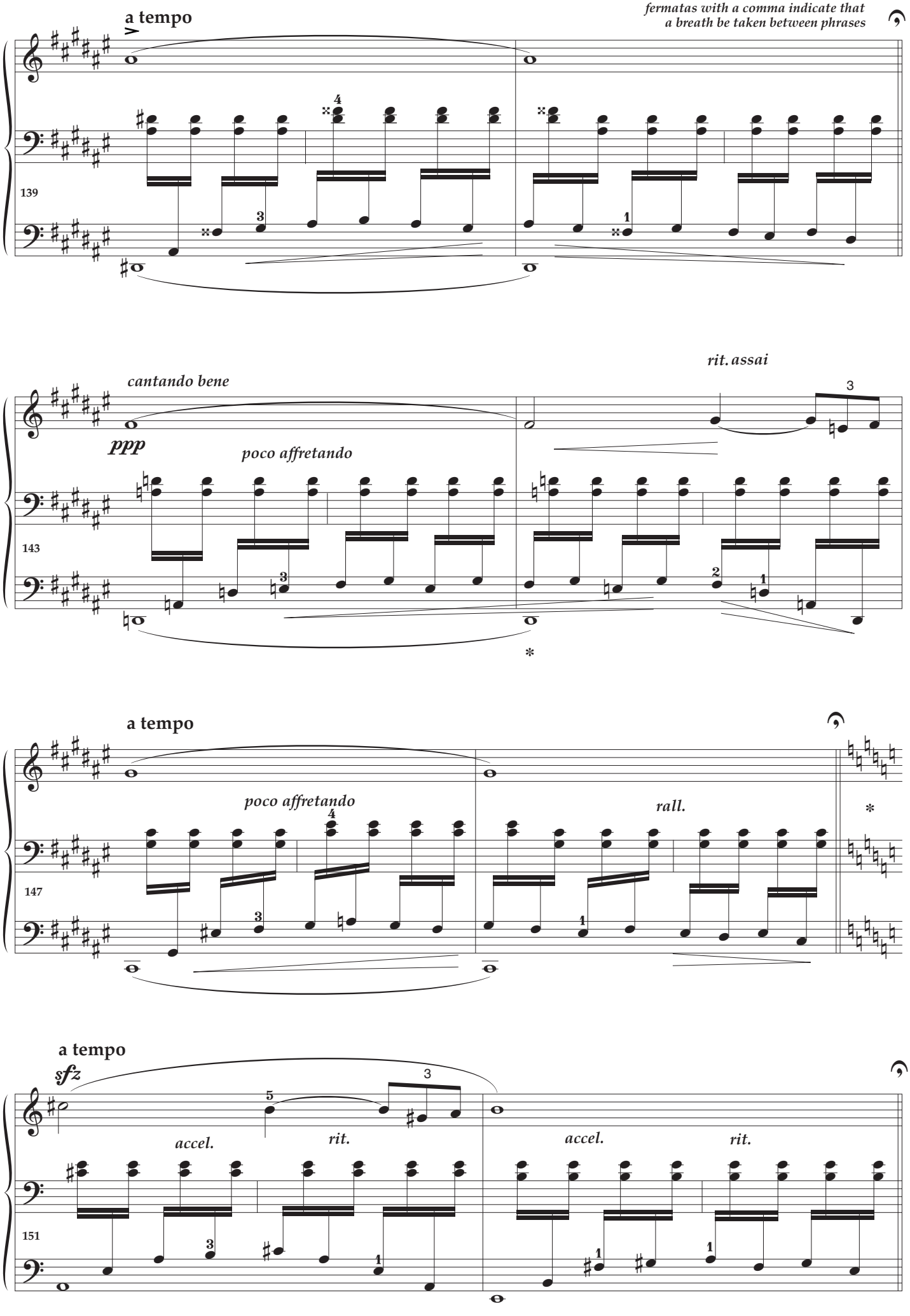

8va
107
3
Ped.
8va
111
6
(8va)
115
ffff
119

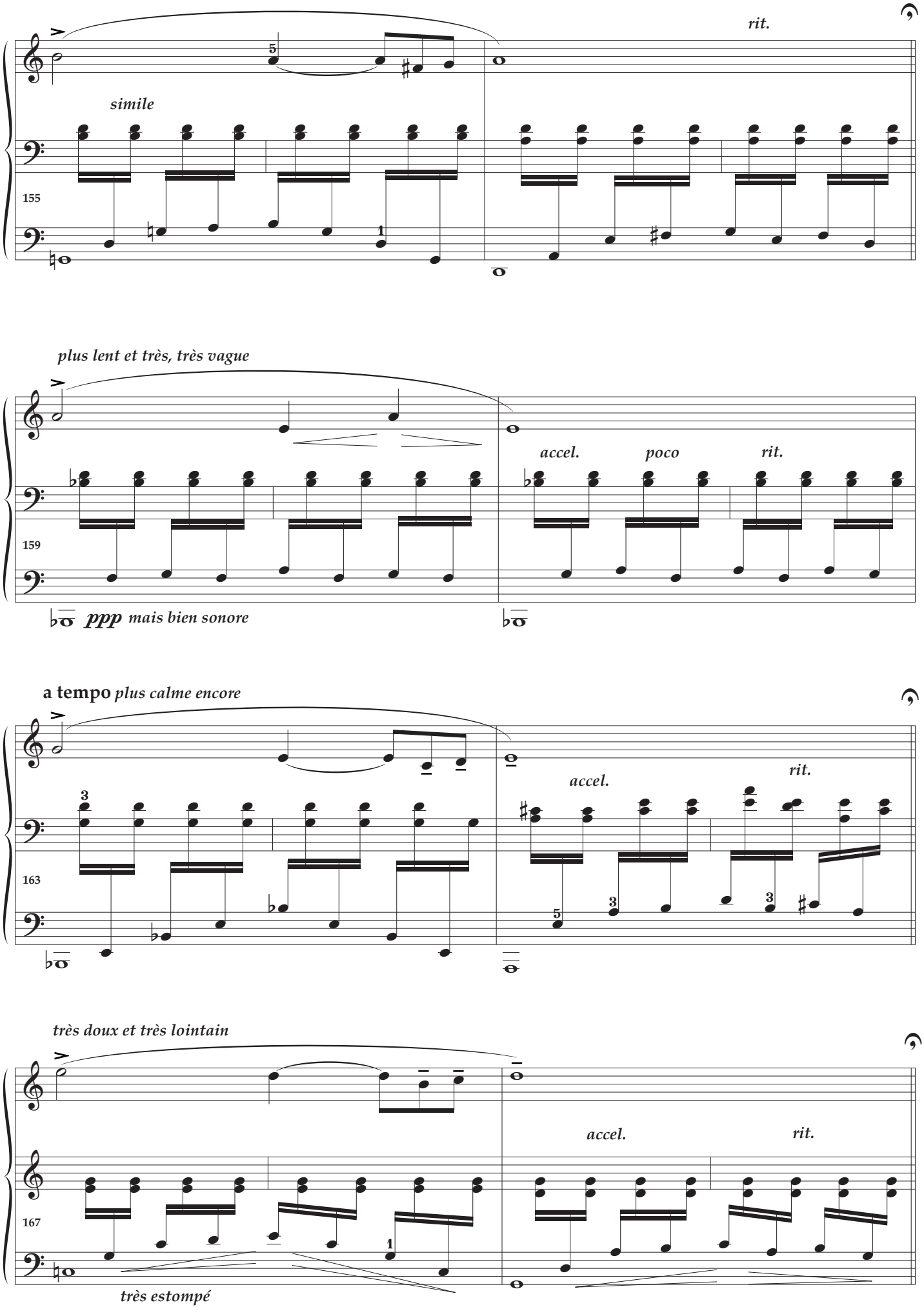


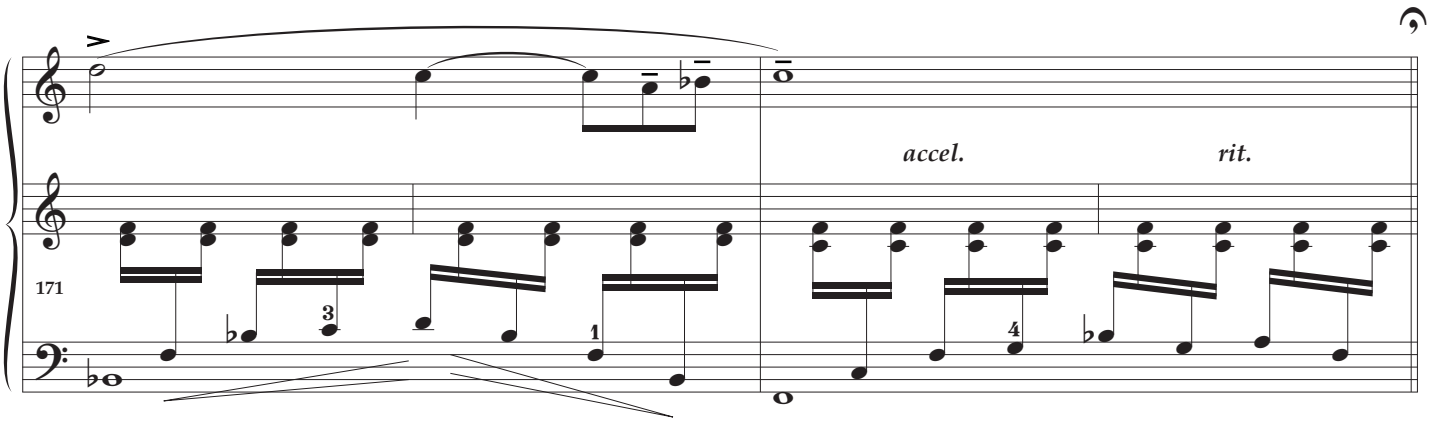

**a tempo** *un peu plus calme*

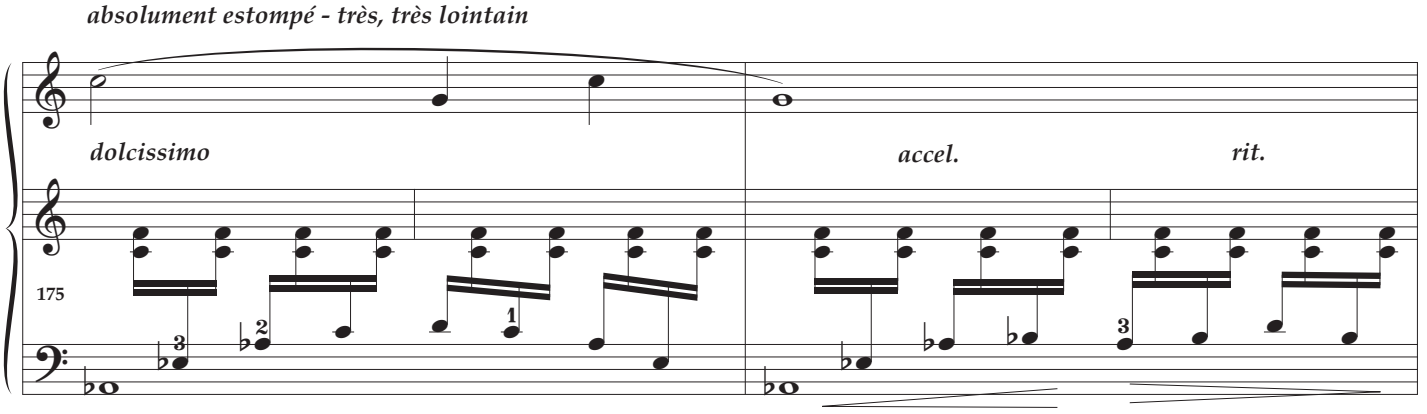
*doux, mais sonore et très vague, en retenant les entrées des mesures*

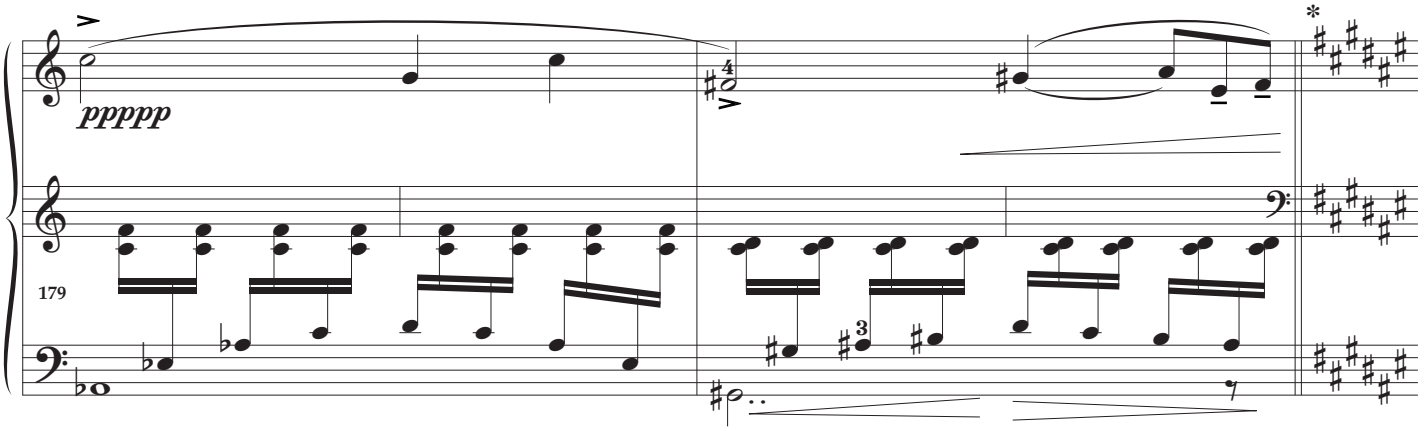


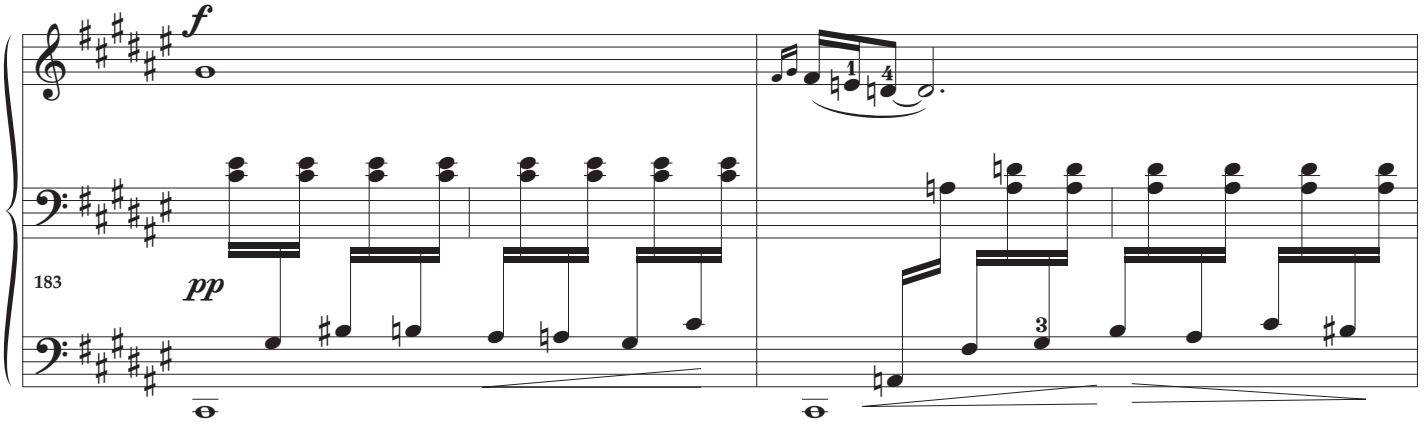

a tempo
fermatas with a comma indicate that
a breath be taken between phrases
139
cantando bene
ppp
poco affretando
rit. assai
143
a tempo
poco affretando
rall.
147
a tempo
sfz
accel.
rit.
accel.
rit.
151

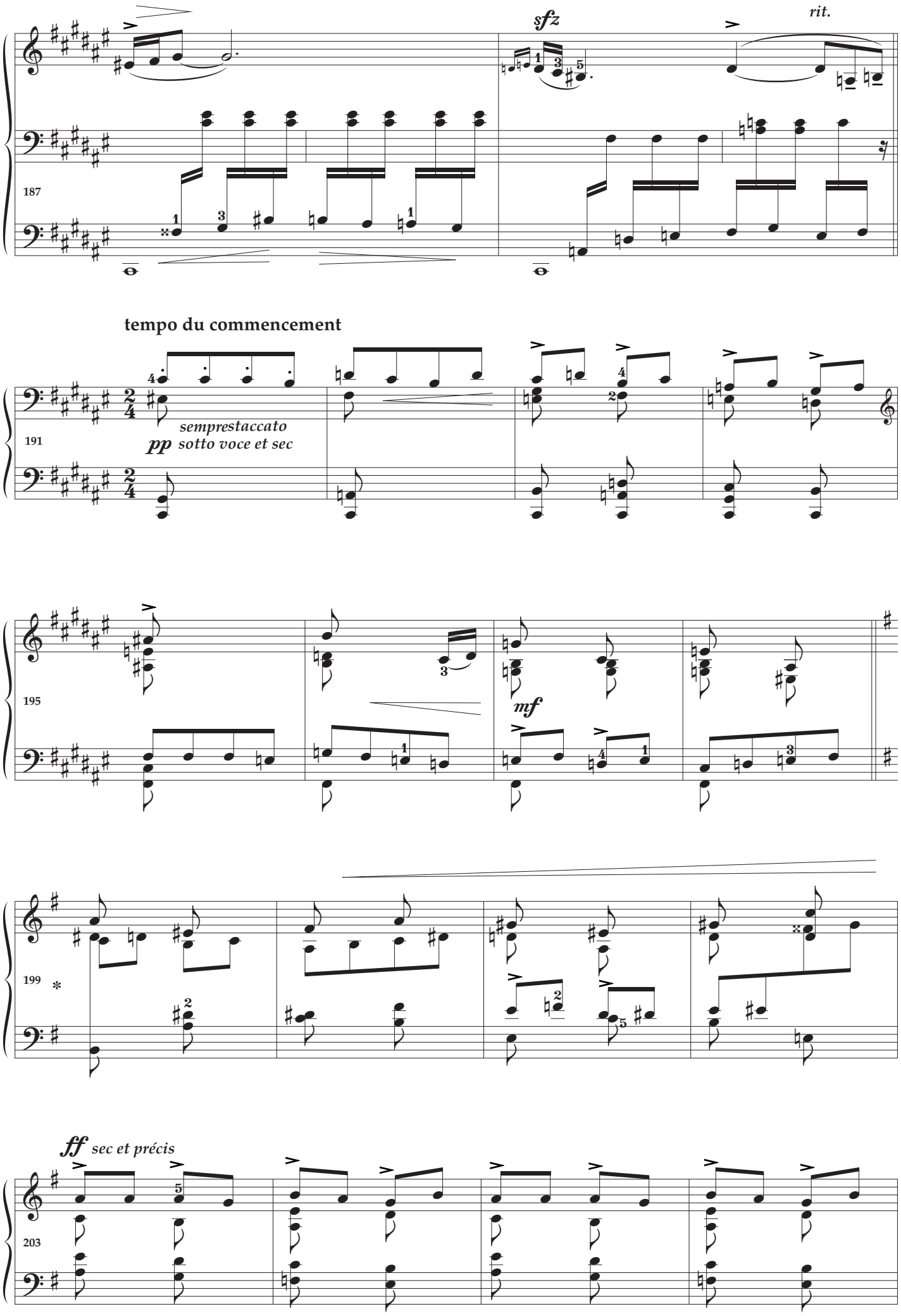

rit.
simile
155
plus lent et très, très vague
accel.
poco
rit.
159
ppp mais bien sonore
a tempo plus calme encore
accel.
rit.
163
très doux et très lointain
accel.
rit.
167
très estompé

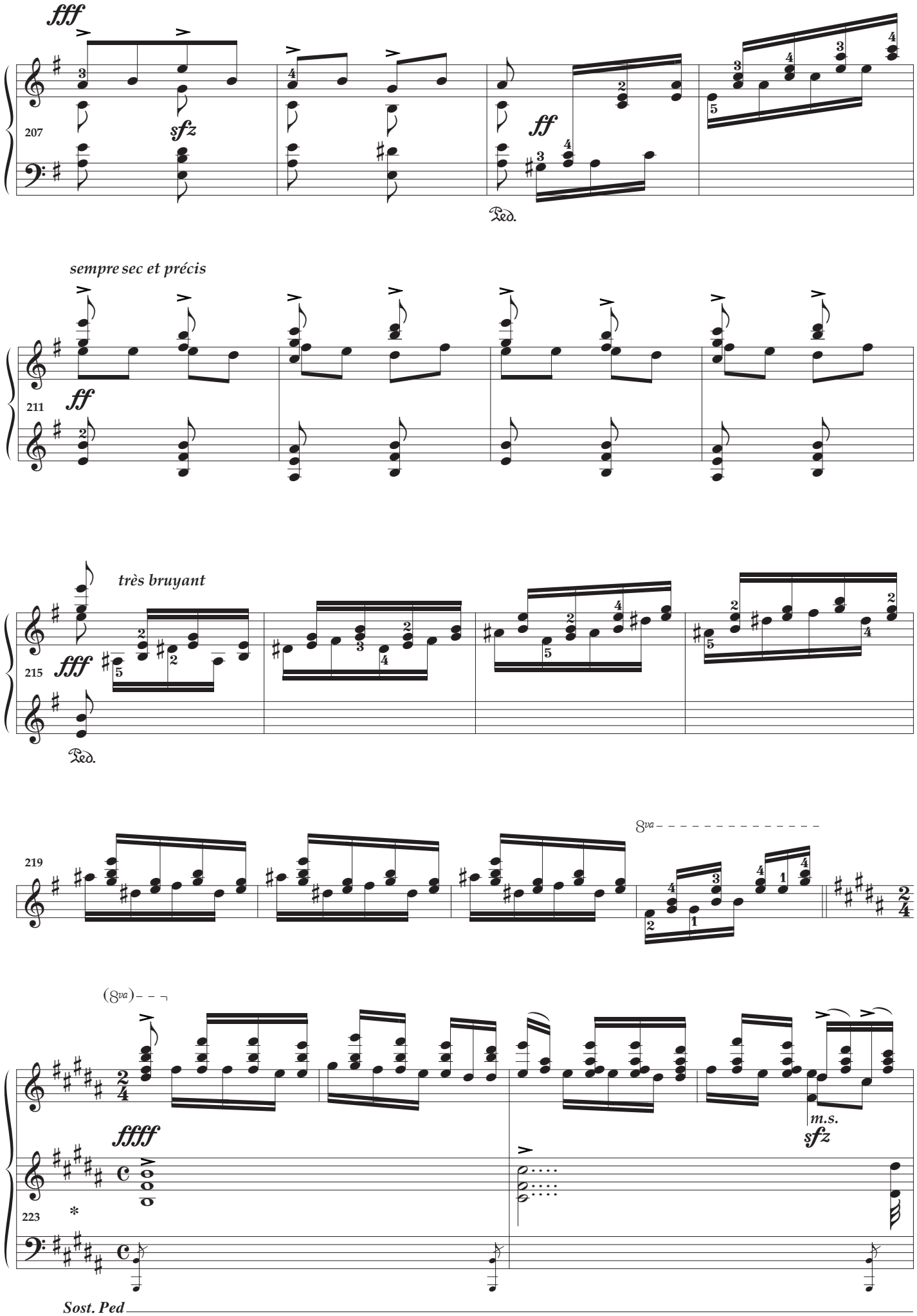

accel.
rit.
171

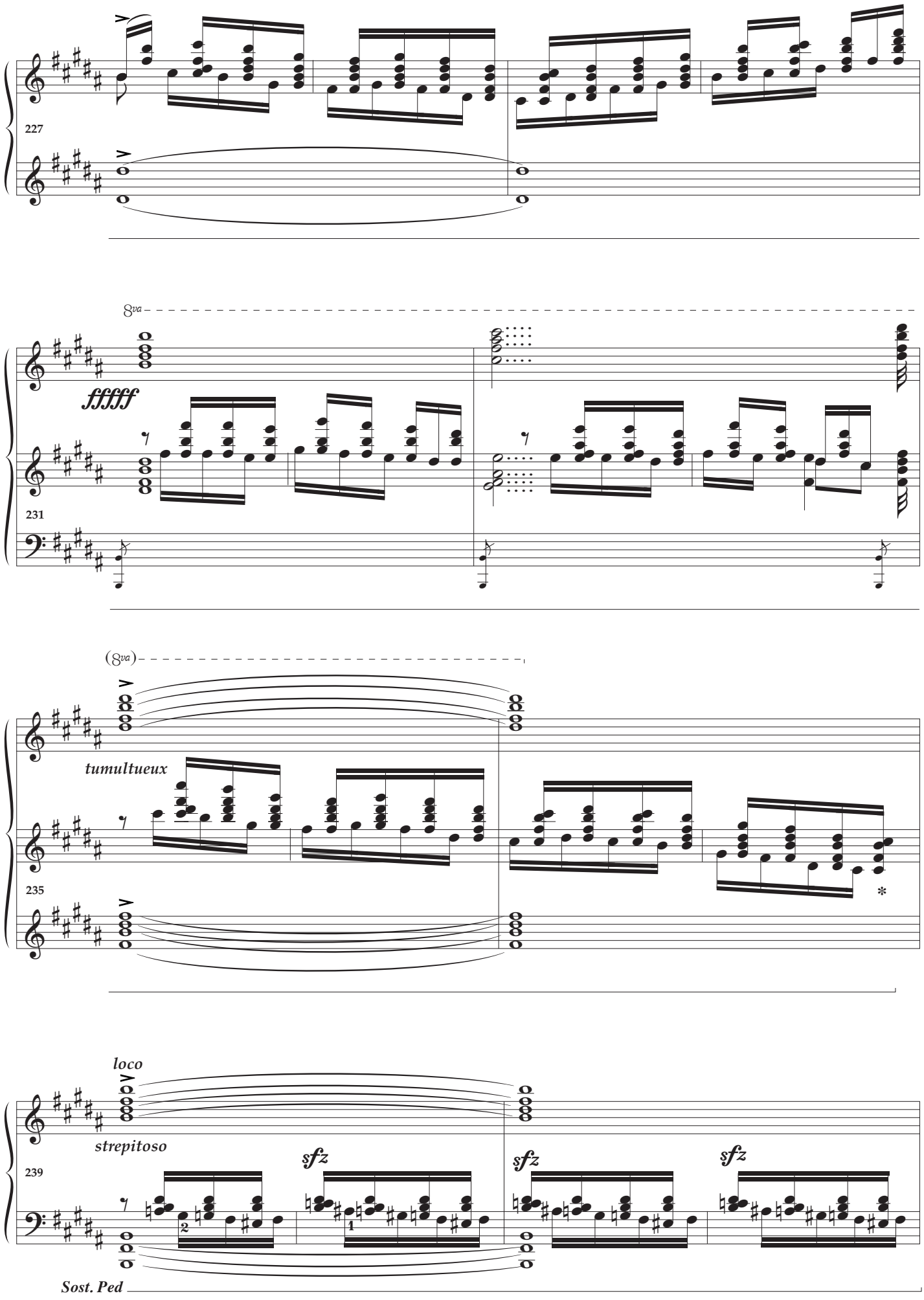

absolument estompé - très, très lointain
dolcissimo
accel.
rit.
175

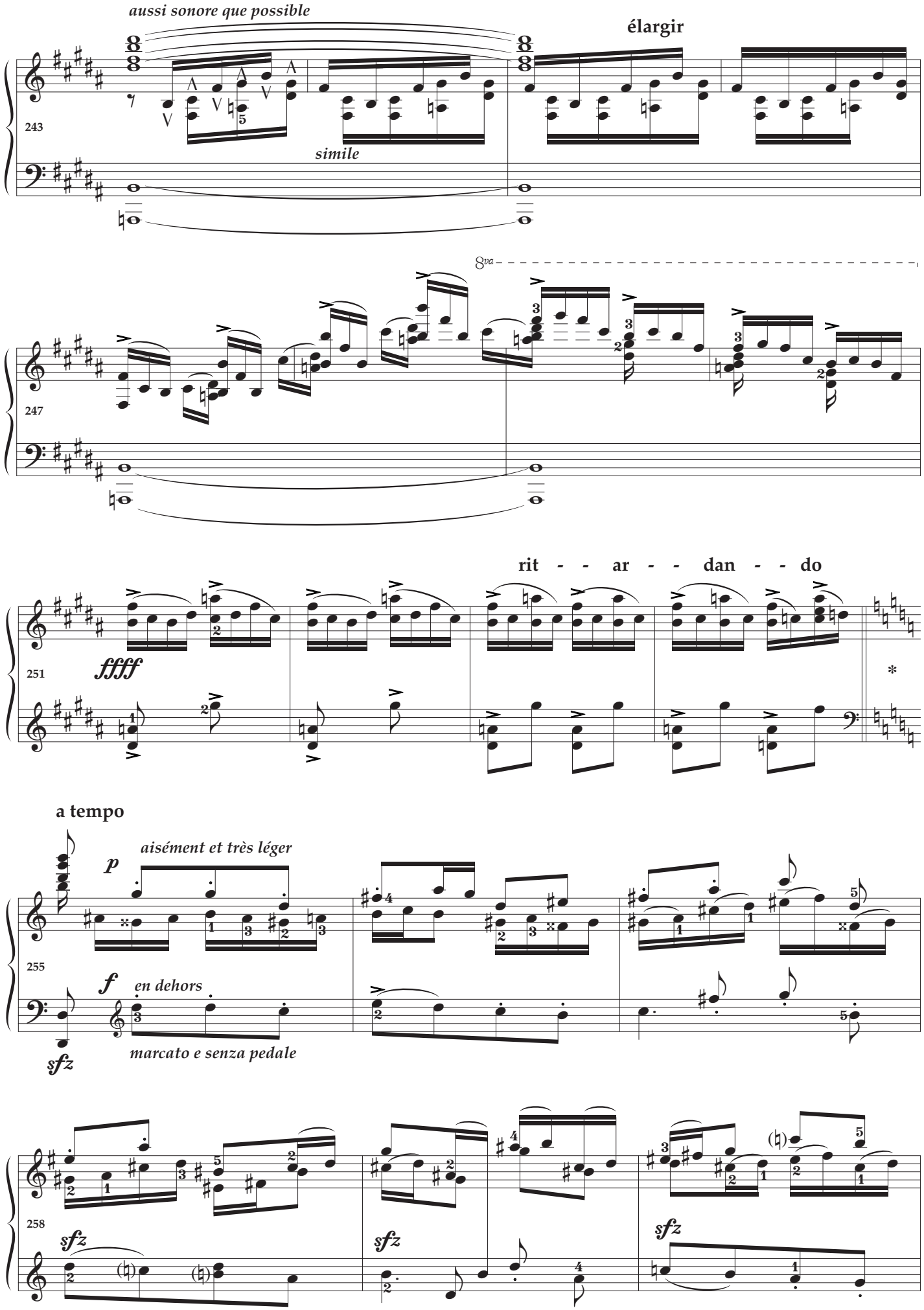

ppppp
179


f
pp
183

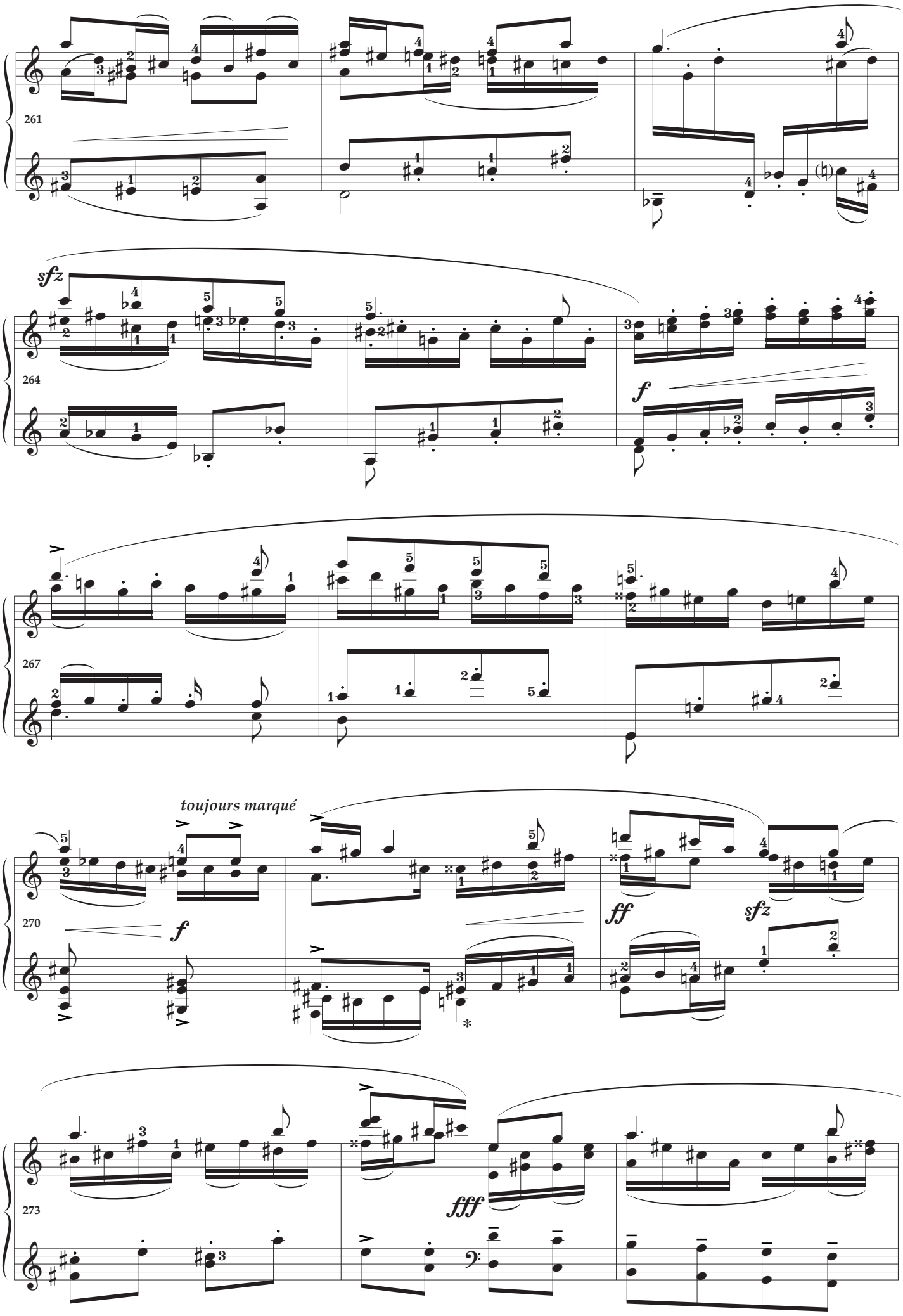

sfz
rit.
187
tempo du commencement
191
sempre staccato
pp sotto voce et sec
195
mf
199
ff sec et précis
203

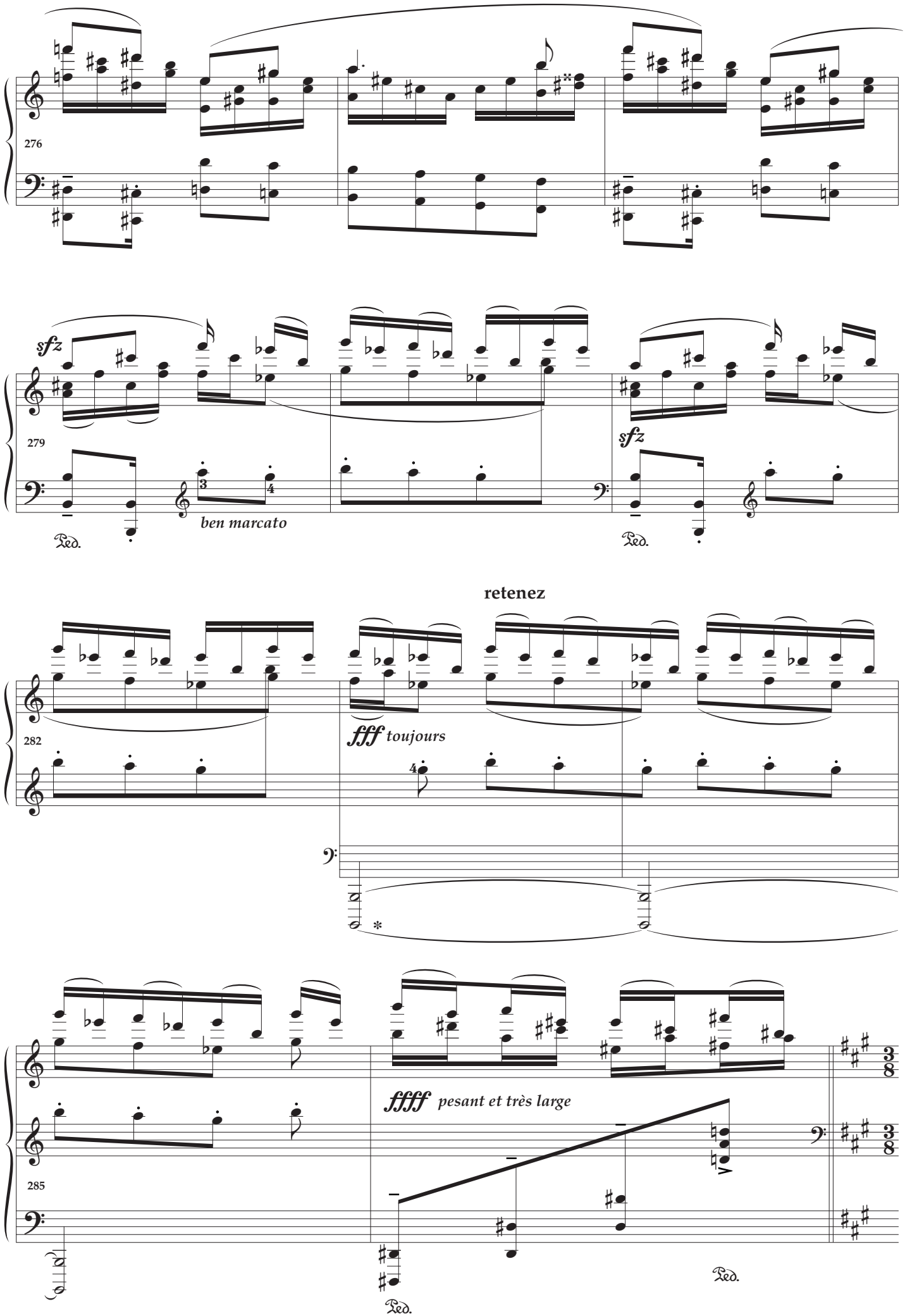

fff
sfz
207
ff
Ped.
sempre sec et précis
ff
211
très bruyant
fff
215
Ped.
8va
219
(8va)
ffff
m.s.
sfz
223
*
Sost. Ped

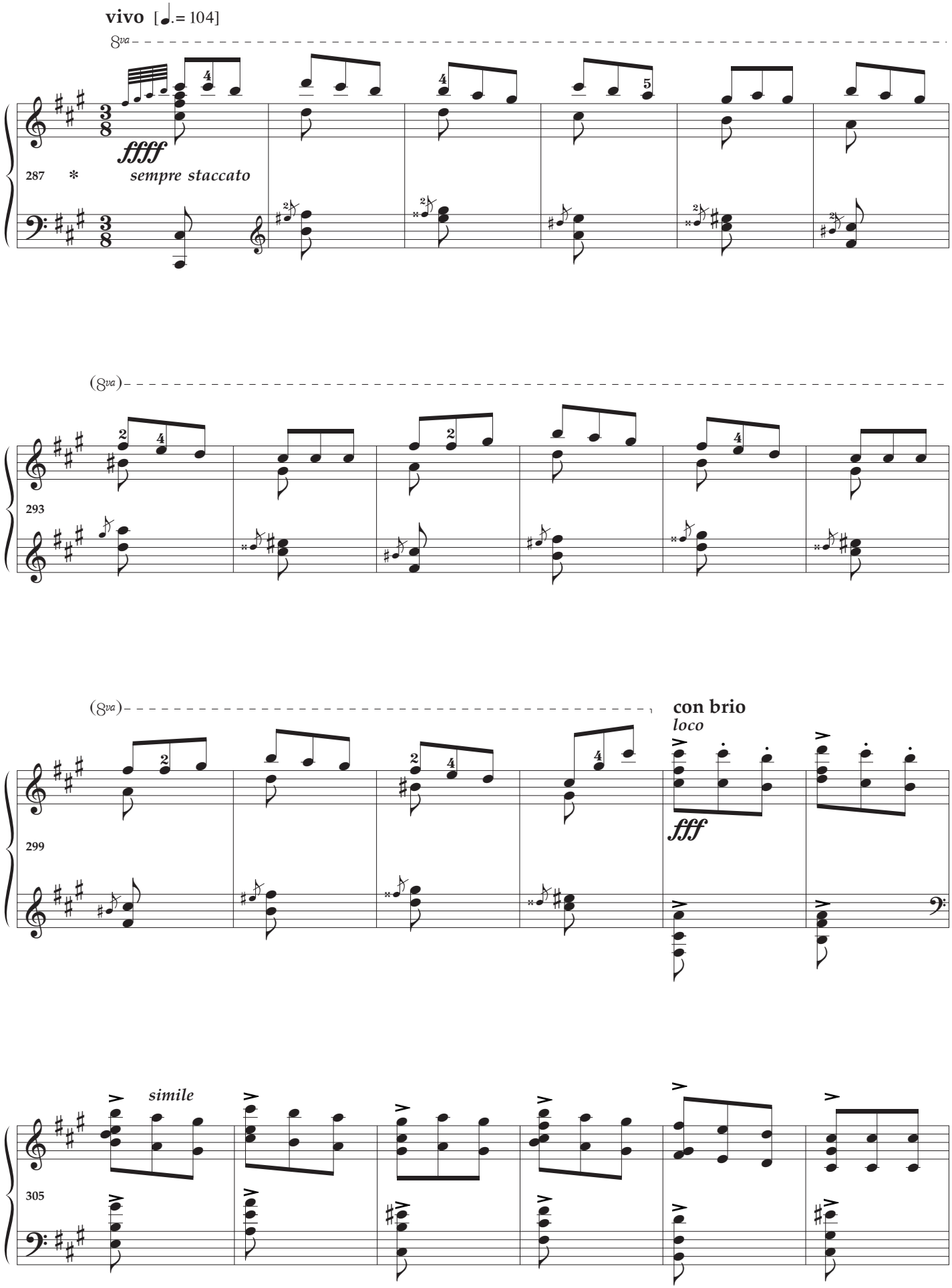

227
8va
fffff
231
(8va)
tumultueux
235
loco
strepitoso
239
sfz
sfz
sfz
Sost. Ped

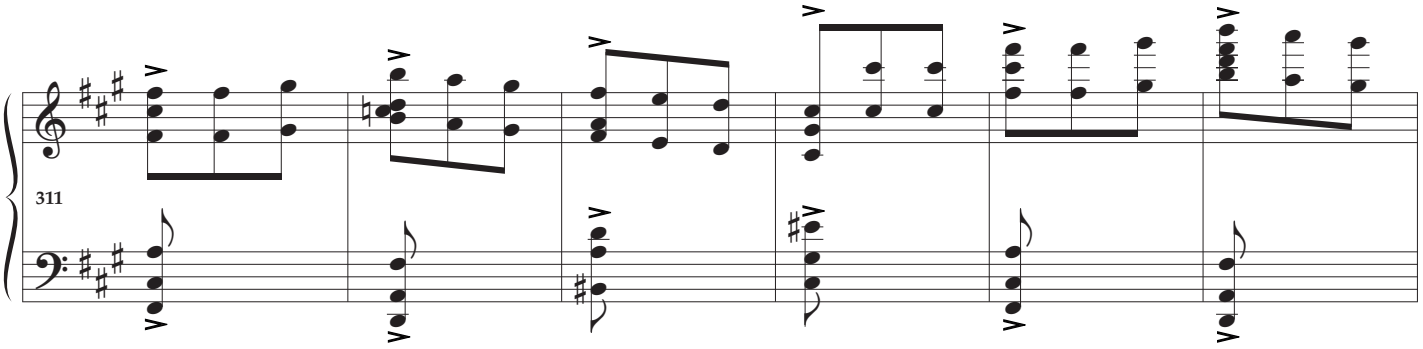

aussi sonore que possible
élargir
243
simile
8va
247
rit - - ar - - dan - - do
251
ffff
*
a tempo
p
aisément et très léger
255
f
en dehors
sfz
marcato e senza pedale
258
sfz
sfz
sfz

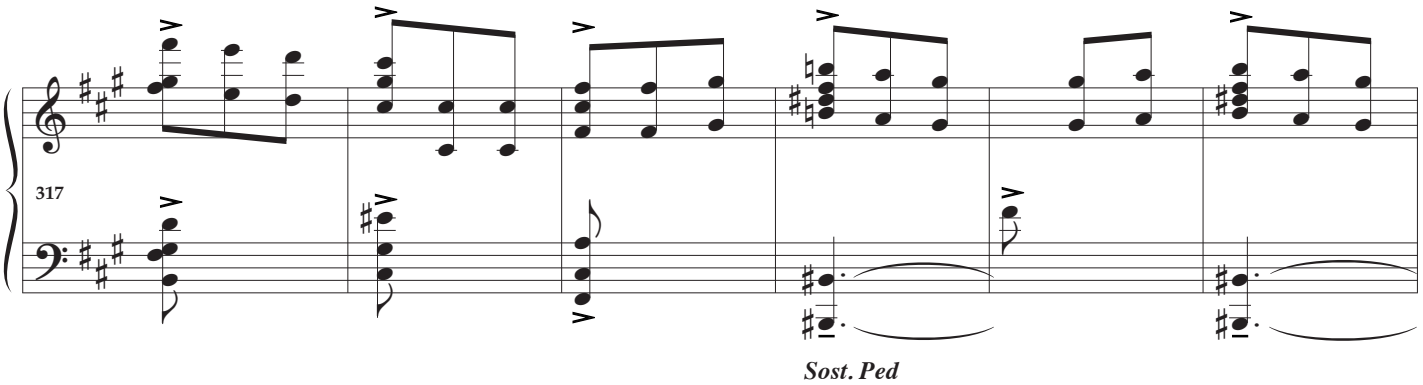
*la partie supérieure en dehors*

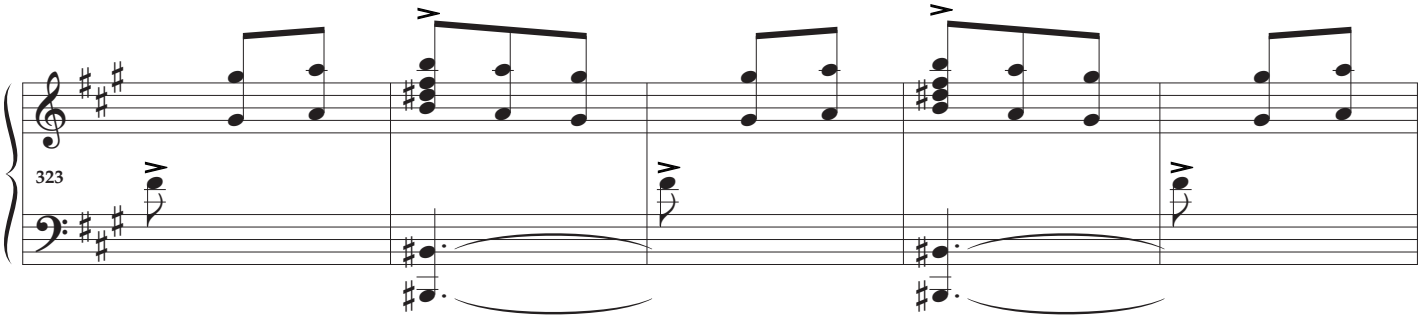


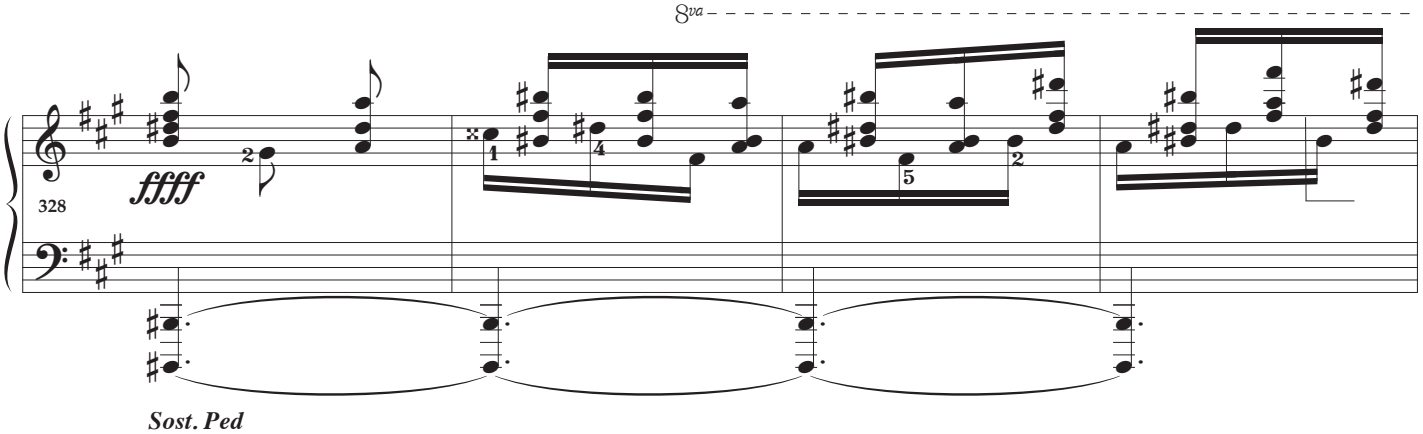

276
sfz
279
ben marcato
Ped.
sfz
Ped.
retenez
282
fff toujours
285
ffff pesant et très large
Ped.
Ped.

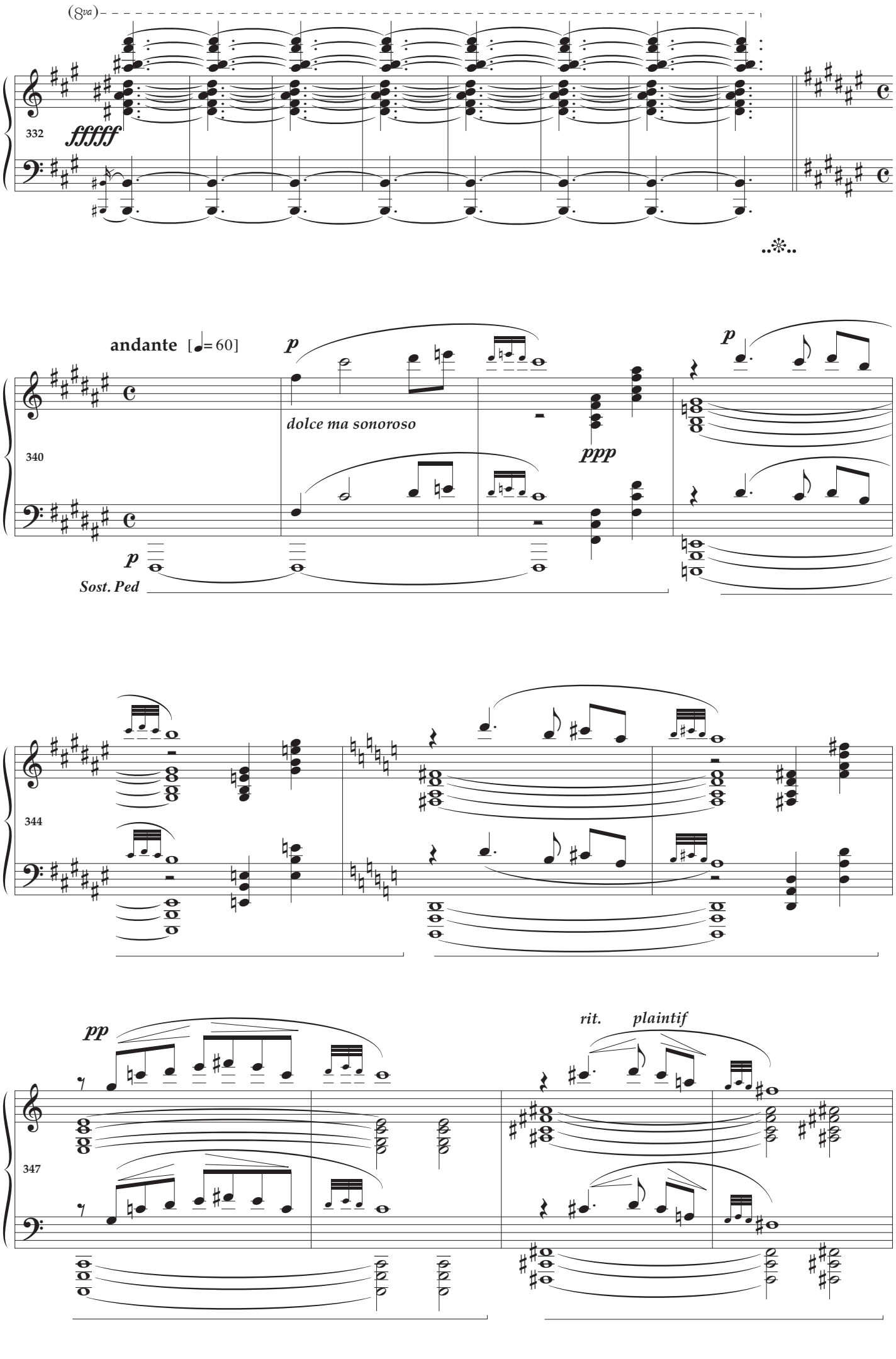

vivo [♩.= 104]
8va
ffff
287
*
sempre staccato
(8va)
293
(8va)
con brio
loco
fff
299
simile
305

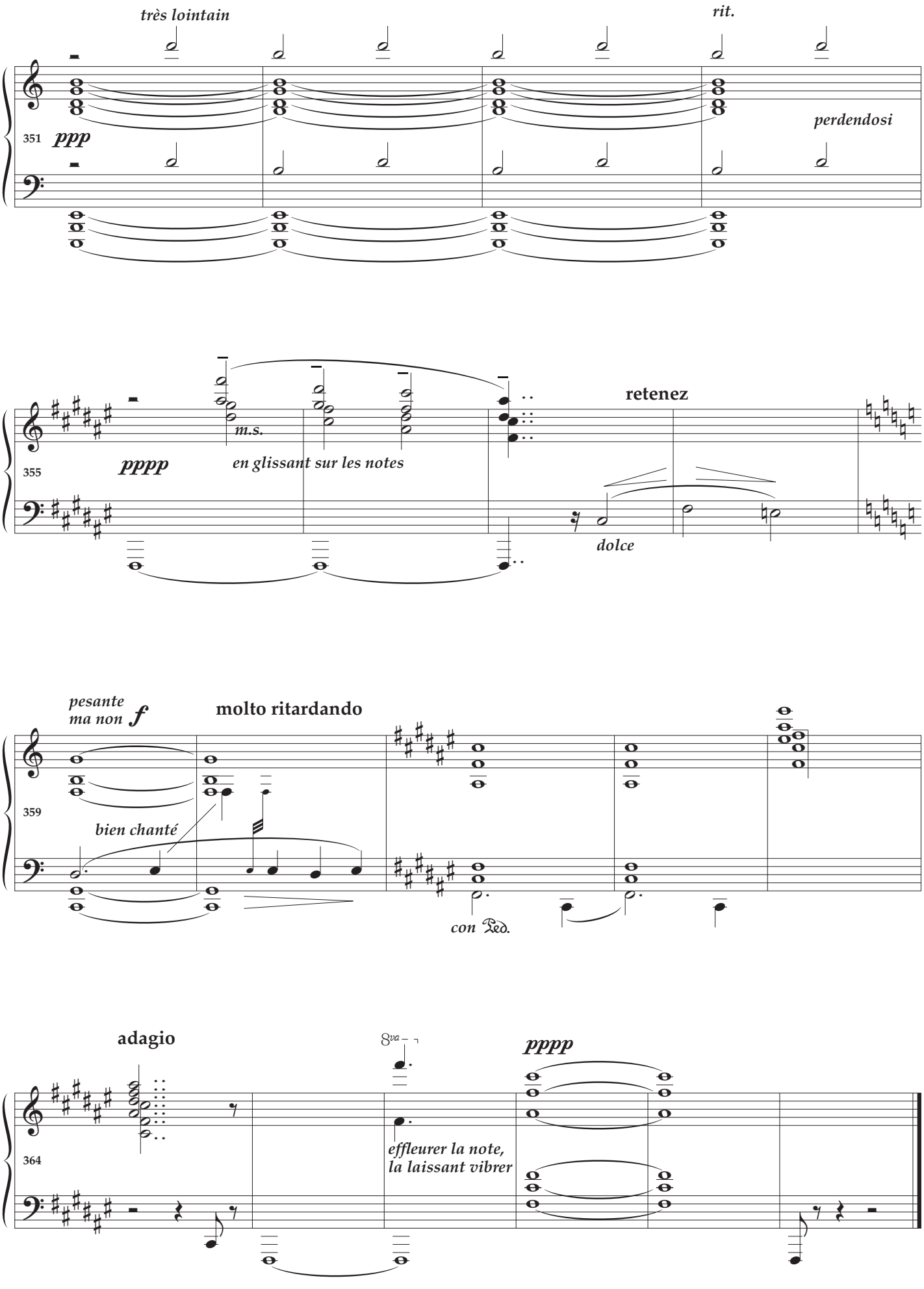

311


317
Sost. Ped


323


8va
328
ffff
Sost. Ped


(8va)
fffff
332
andante [♩= 60]
p
dolce ma sonoroso
ppp
p
340
p
Sost. Ped
344
pp
rit.
plaintif
347


très lointain
rit.
351
ppp
perdendosi
355
pppp
m.s.
en glissant sur les notes
retenez
dolce
pesante
ma non f
molto ritardando
359
bien chanté
con Ped.
adagio
8va
pppp
364
effleurer la note,
la laissant vibrer

# vocabulary

## I

| | |
|---|---|
| clair | *luminous* |
| très souple | *not metronomic* |
| bien marqué et *p* cependant | *p but well marked* |
| très doux et lointain | *very gentle and as from afar* |
| absolument attenué | *muted completely* |

## II

| | |
|---|---|
| très marqué et très brusque | *well accented and abrupt* |
| très décidé | *very determined* |
| fort et très en dehors | *loud and projected forcefully* |
| toujours joyeux | *always joyful* |
| brusquement | *abruptly* |
| très brusque | *very abrupt* |
| avec allégresse | *with enthusiasm* |
| rudement marqué et bien sec | *harshly marked and very abrupt* |
| souple et caressant | *supple and tender* |
| sombre et sonore | *dark and sonorous* |
| langoureux | *languid* |
| en pressant peu à peu | *accelerating little by little* |
| très légèrement | *very lightly* |
| avec la petite pédale | *with the soft pedal* |
| joyeusement | *joyously* |
| au mouvement | *a tempo* |
| lointain | *distant* |

## III

| | |
|---|---|
| sec | *crisp* |
| bruyant | *noisily* |
| un peu large | *slight ritardando* |
| toujours joyeux | *always joyful* |
| bien marquer la basse | *accentuate the bass* |
| un peu plus calm | *a little more calm* |
| doux, mais sonore et très vague, | *gentle, but with full tone and very vague,* |
| en retenant les entrées des mesures | *holding back before the following bars* |
| cantando bene | *in true singing style* |
| plus lent et très, très vague | *slower tempo and very, very vague* |
| lointain | *distant* |
| plus calme encore | *even more calm* |
| estompé | *veiled, blurred* |
| tumultueux | *stormy* |
| sec et précis | *crisp and precise* |
| aussi sonore que possible | *as loud as possible* |
| élargir | *broaden* |
| aisément | *with ease* |
| léger | *light* |
| en dehors | *in relief* |
| la partie supérieure en dehors | *project the upper part* |
| retenez tempo | *tempo held back* |
| pesant et très large | *heavy and very broad* |
| plaintif | *mournful* |
| en glissant sur les notes | *stroking the keys* |
| bien chanté | *cantabile* |
| effleurer la note, la laissant vibrer | *caress the key and let reverberate* |

# A L B E N I Z

## I B E R I A book I

*published September 2018 — revised September 2024*

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