Isaac ALBÉNIZ

IBERIA book II

- RONDEÑA
- ALMERÍA
- TRIANA

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iano Practical Editions

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

Isaac ALBÉNIZ 1860 - 1909

I B E R I A

12 nouvelles *impressions* en quatre cahiers

Book II dedicated to Blanche Selva

- RONDEÑA 1
- ALMERÍA 19
- TRIANA 39

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 arguably 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's 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 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.

CHARLES CHRISTIAN NAHL the fandango 1873

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*".**

Although Albéniz was a Catalan, his heart was immersed in the folklore and sounds of Andalusia, declaring "*Soy un moro*" — "I am a Moor". Drawing inspiration from their southern rhythms, distinctive idioms and modes, while inventing new themes — the composer writes with virtual Flamenco*** in his blood, giving an impression of spontaneous improvisation — a fusion of French impressionism and Andalusian folklore.

With the second volume (originally conceived in reverse order), the writing becomes more complex: in *Rondeña*, for example there is systematic crossing of the hands, and extremely strenuous polyphonic passages in *Triana* involving the interplay of timbre. But the most striking part of this triptych is without any doubt *Almeria*, a great nocturne whose swaying

taranta rhythms carry the performer with them and charm and bewitch the listener. In the words of the dedicatee, *Almeria* "never lets go of the pianist".

— Jean-François Heisser

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 43.

S*ostenuto* pedal suggestions are editorial; with the left foot it is possible to combine 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" — Debussy writing as *Monsieur Croche* in 1913

*** After the *Reconquista* Flamenco was born of Moorish, Gypsy and Jewish traditions and culture, minority ethnic groups who were persecuted by the Inquisition. Their common suffering found outlet in this highly expressive and passionate music. Eleven of the twelve pieces portray places and scenes in southern Spain using the typical Phrygian and other modes, pedal points, and impressions of guitar, clapping, stamping and castanets.

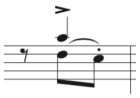
R O N D E Ñ A

Although a difficult piece to master, *Rondeña* is considered one of the less challenging of the collection. Those of you who know and love Andalusia, will immediately respond to this second volume with three pieces expressing heat, passion and flamenco from this corner of Spain.

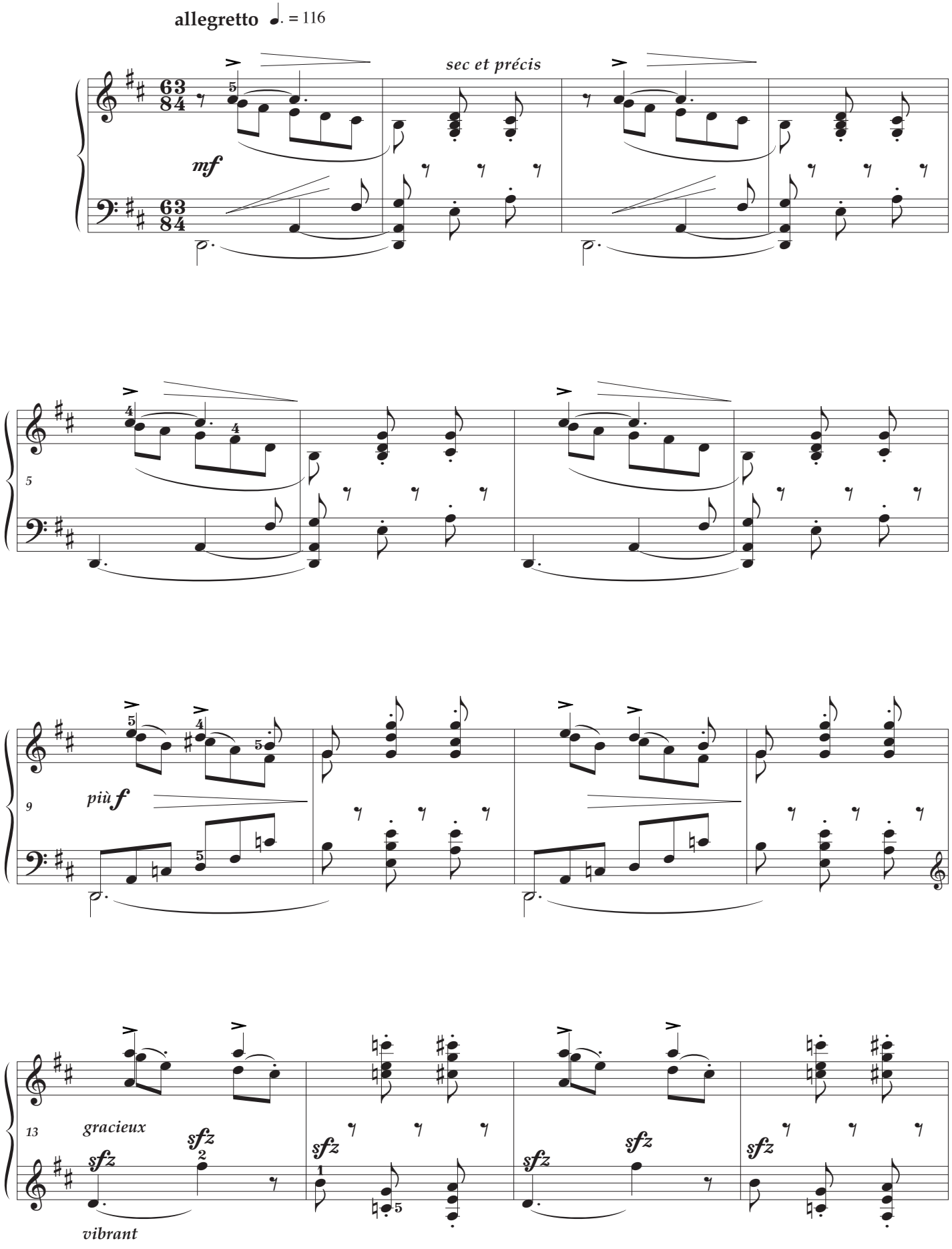
Dating from 1907 the music draws inspiration from a *fandango* with riffs and motifs imitating guitars and castanets. The title refers to the picturesque town of Ronda but might also be about a marriage celebration with dancers clapping as illustrated by the two crisp chords in bar 2. *America* from Bernstein's *West Side Story* features *petenera* — a *'palo'*, a slower and melancholic character folk dance, with metric swapping between 6/8 and 3/4.

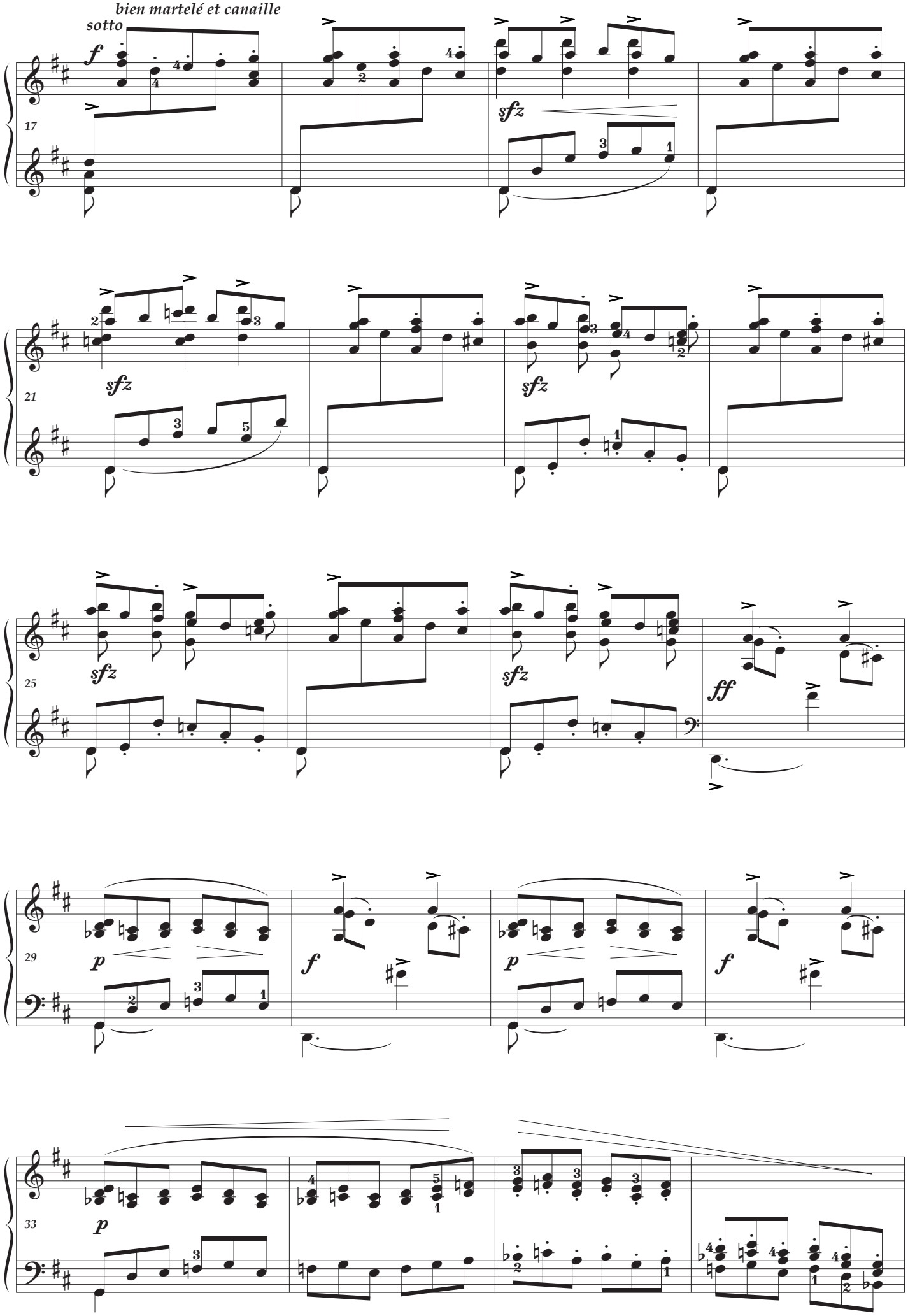
With stunning harmonic invention and a heartfelt melody, the central *copla*, in *cante jondo**, is steamy, languid and melancholic. I love this ecstatic episode, and the way the composer develops and combines thematic and rhythmic ideas, disappearing finally with a distinctive nocturnal final section. The climax at page 14 reminds me of the earlier *El Puerto* from volume one. The witty coda is most unexpected.

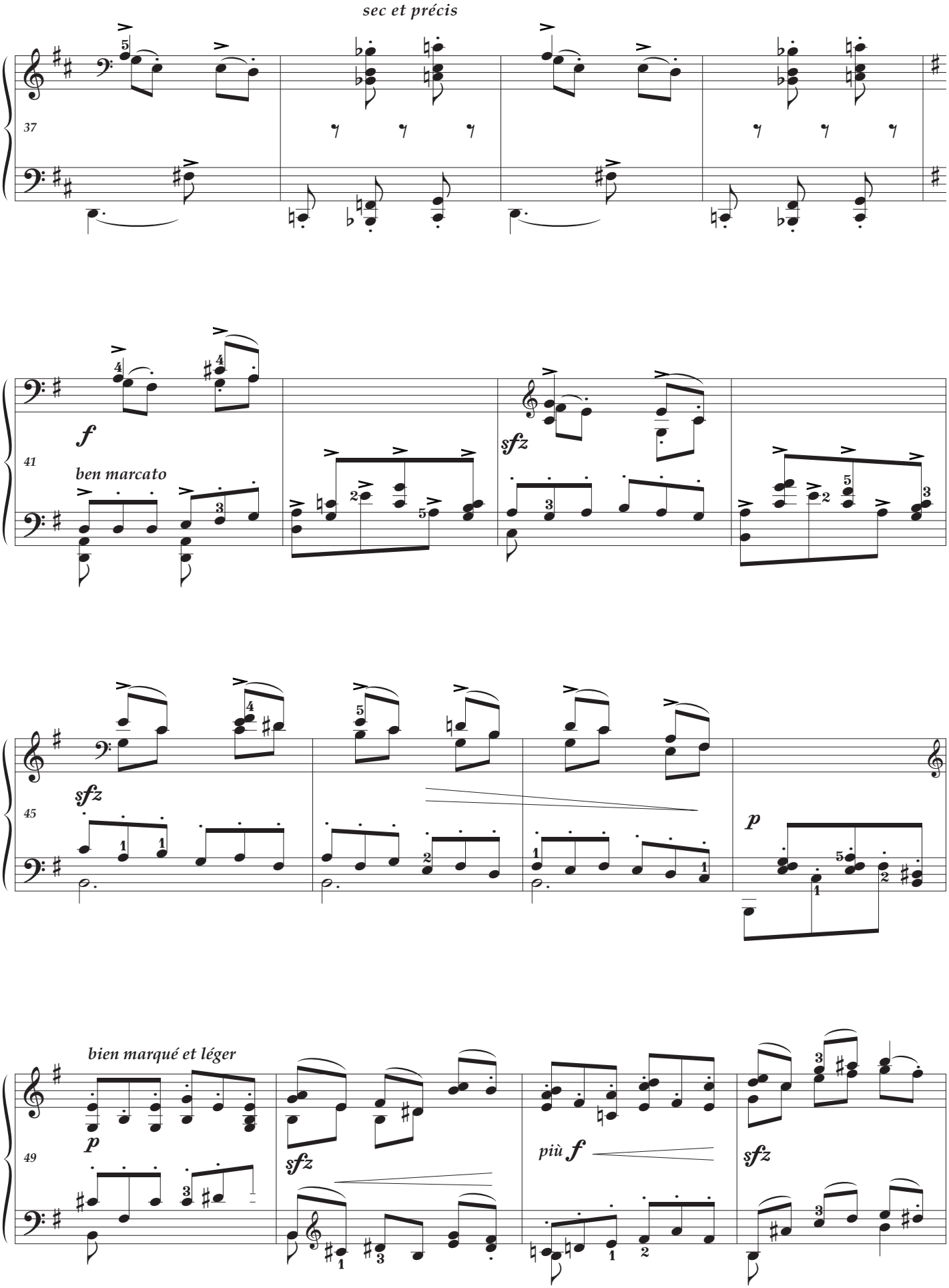
* Deeply moving vocal flamenco

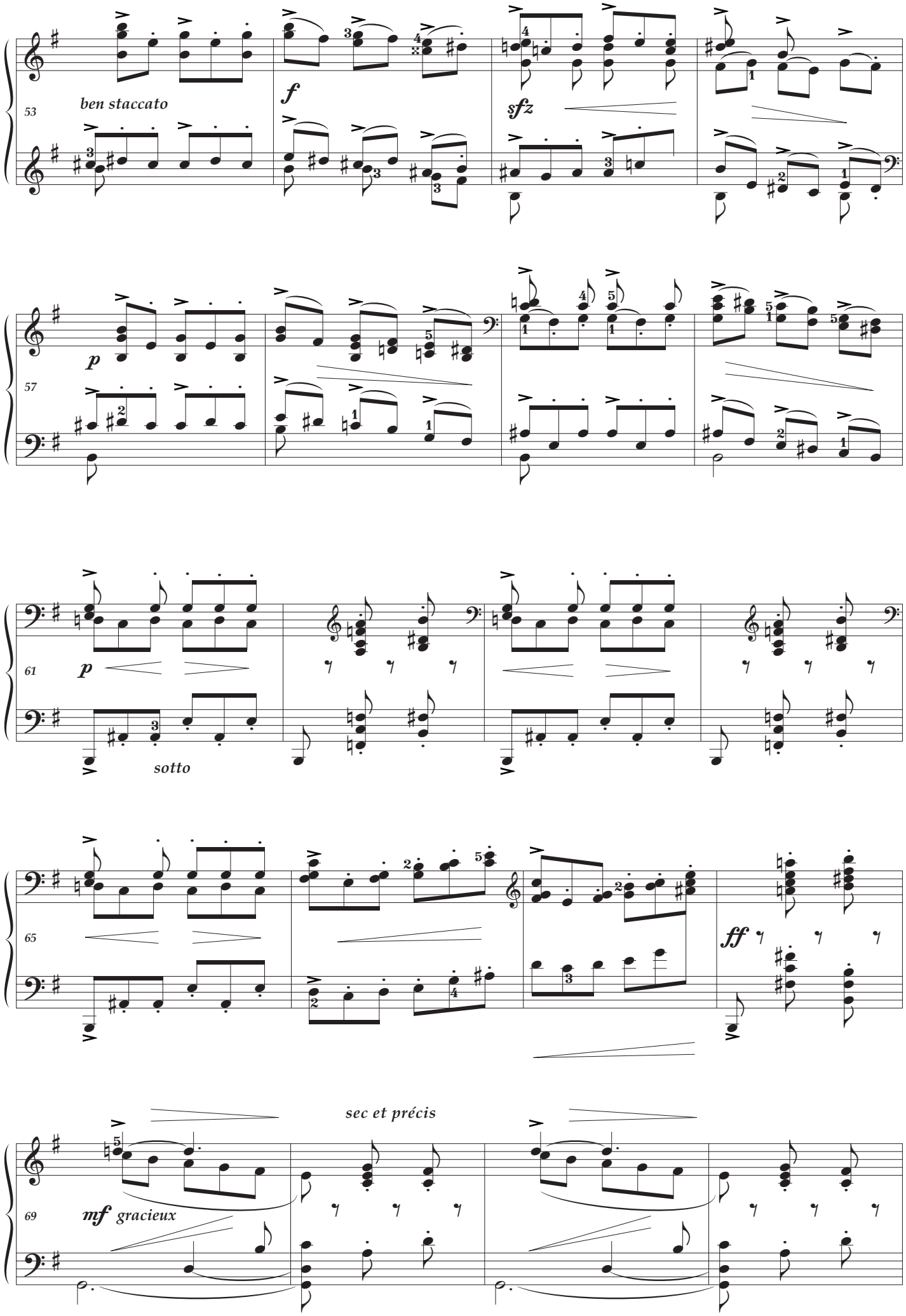
- Duration 7'25
- There are many, many pedal signs, and an observation by Debussy can provide a pertinent object lesson: "Pedalling cannot be written down. It varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another." Thus I have only included those which are perhaps not evident. In this piece, there are quite a number of opportunities to use the sostenuto pedal* combined with the sustaining pedal.
- 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.
- in order to simplify the text has been replaced throughout with 
- the time-signatures: every bar contains 6 quavers, and the metre is shown with careful beaming
- there has been some pruning of Albeniz's multiple instructions in Italian and French.
- it is suggested that A section grace notes should be played **before** the beat but **on** the beat for the lyrical sections.
- **73** section adaptations
- **77** an early edition gives C♯ — a certain error
- **78 & 86** lower octave suggested omission
- **175 & 177** an alternative RH accompaniment is offered for these 2 bars
- **183 & 187** an alternative final beat accompaniment is offered here

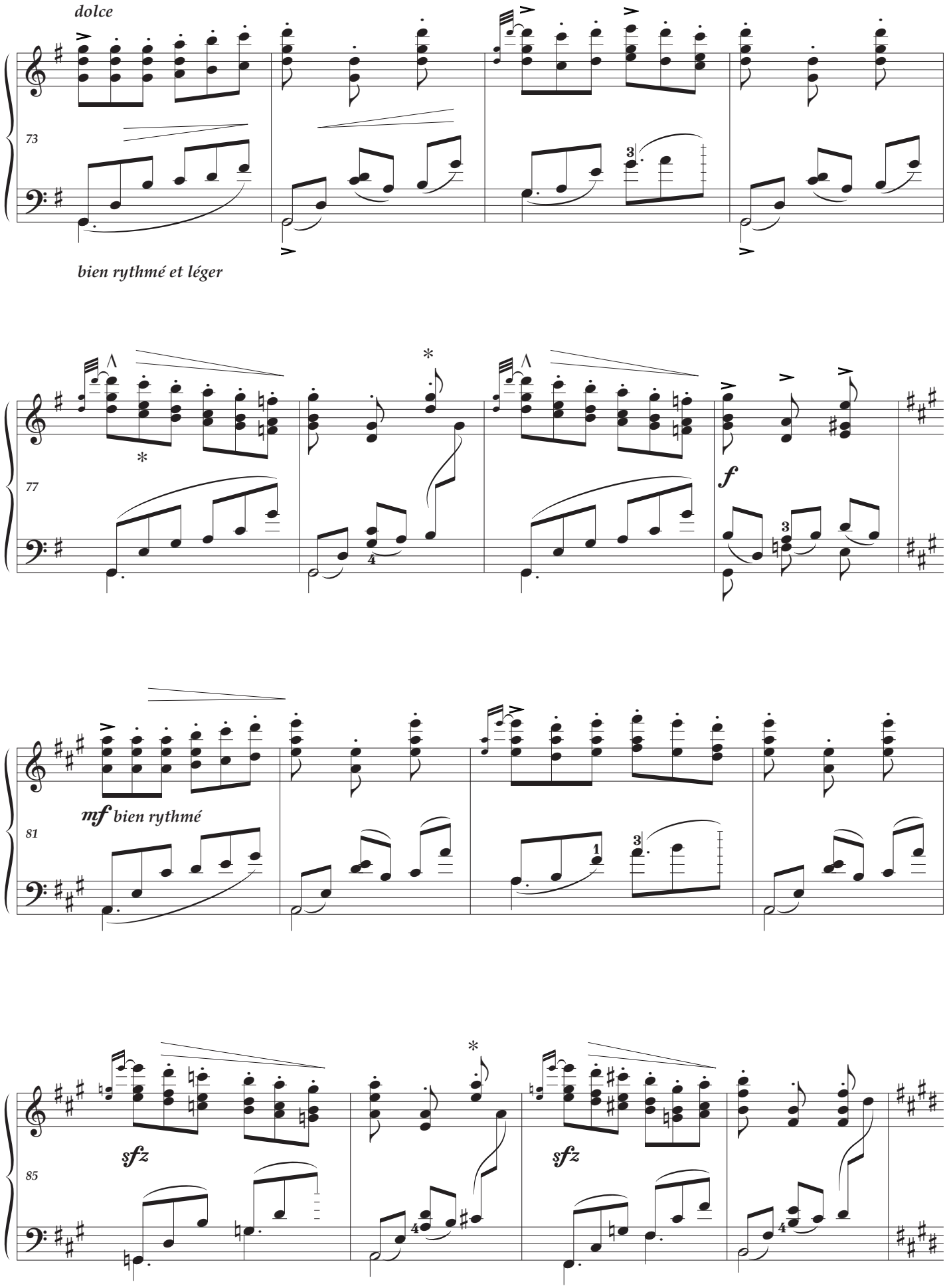
RONDEÑA

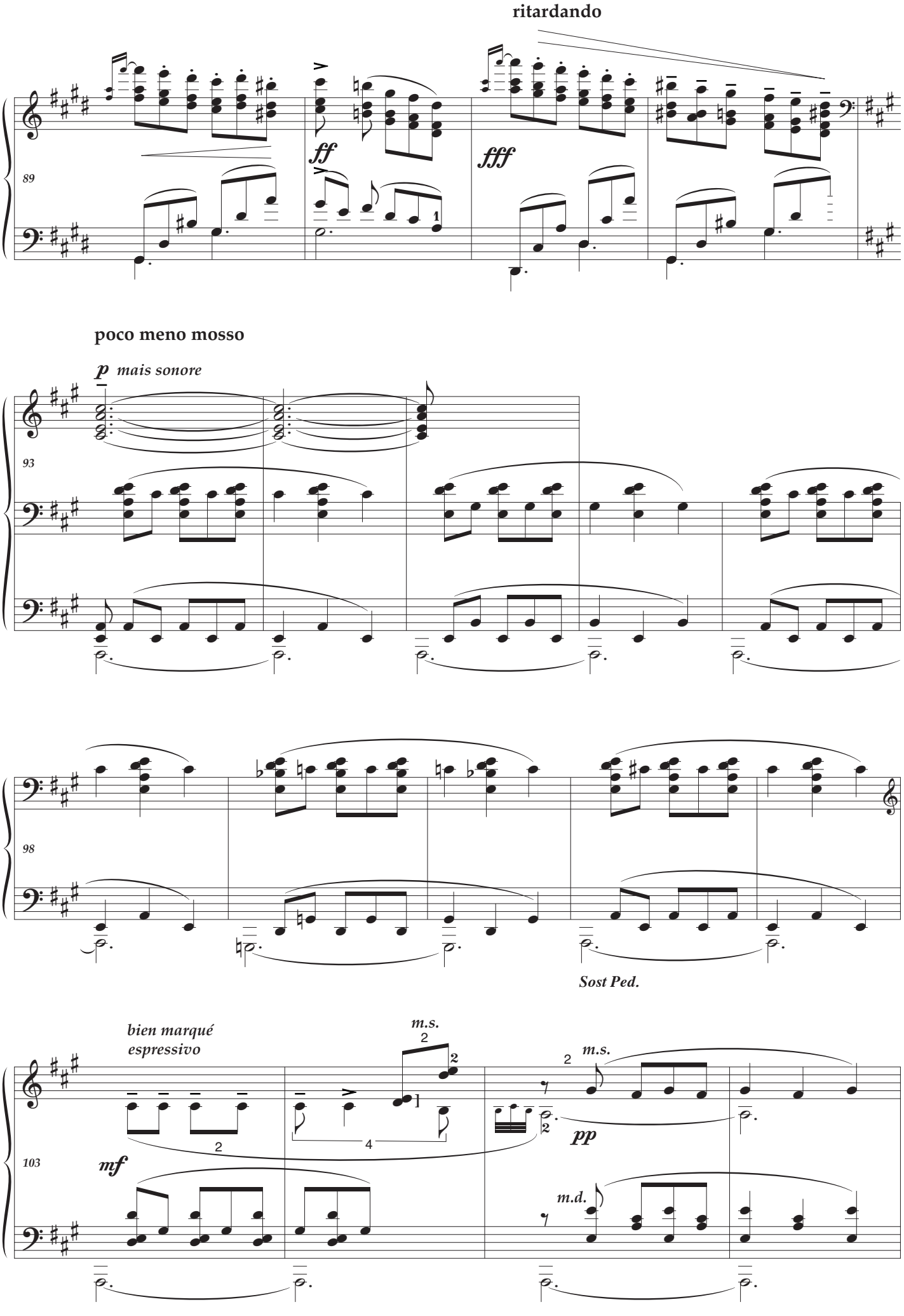

allegretto ♩. = 116
sec et précis
mf
5
più f
9
gracieux
sfz
vibrant
13

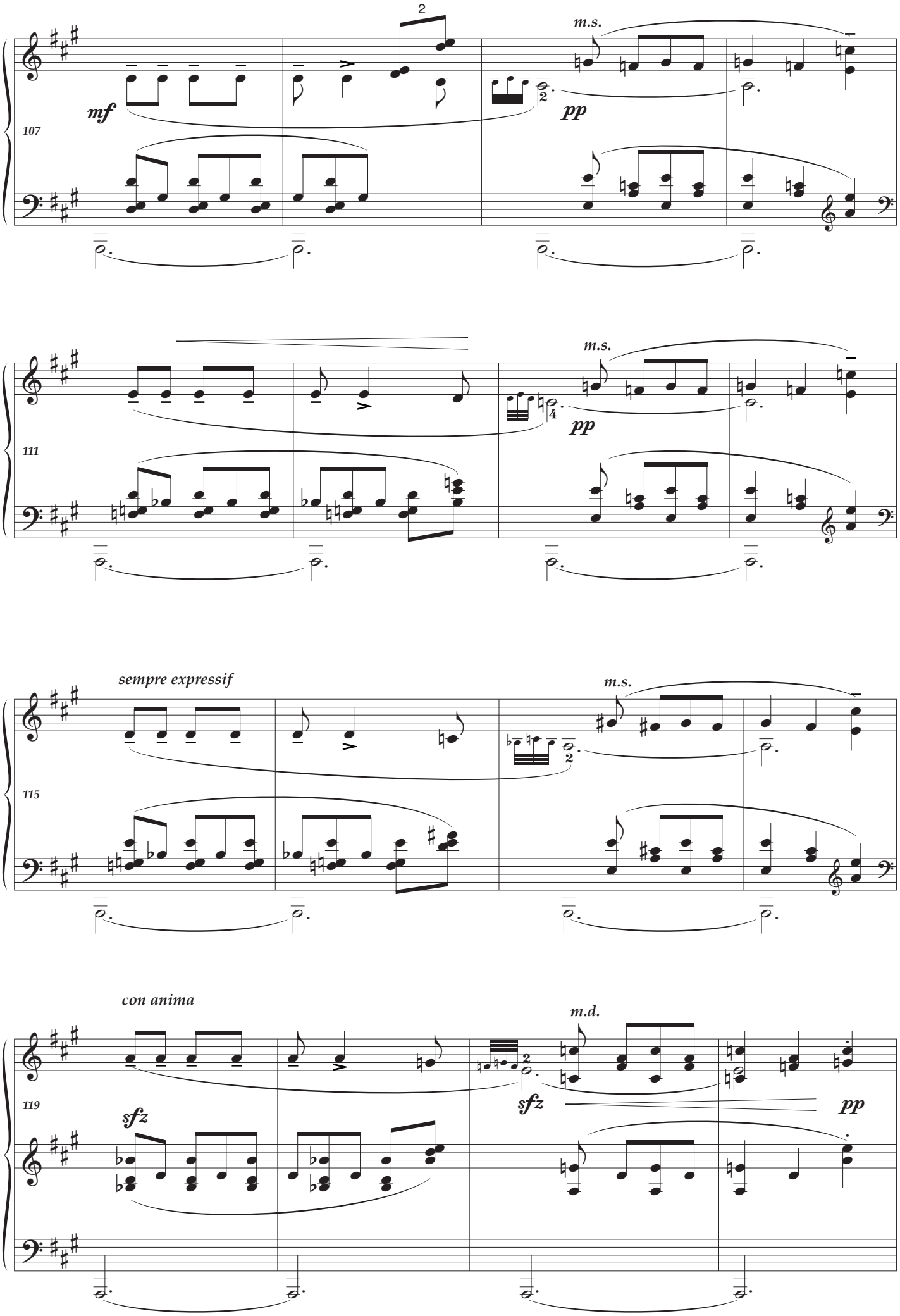

bien martelé et canaille
sotto
f
17
sfz
21
25
ff
29
p
33

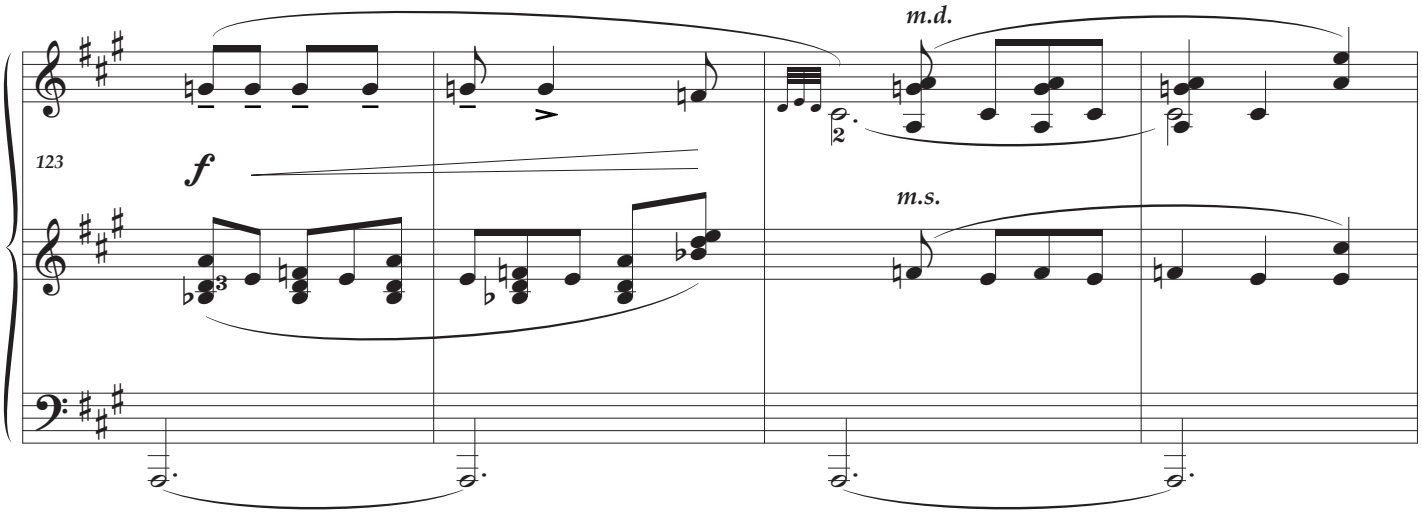

sec et précis
37
41
f
ben marcato
sfz
45
sfz
p
49
p
bien marqué et léger
sfz
più f
sfz

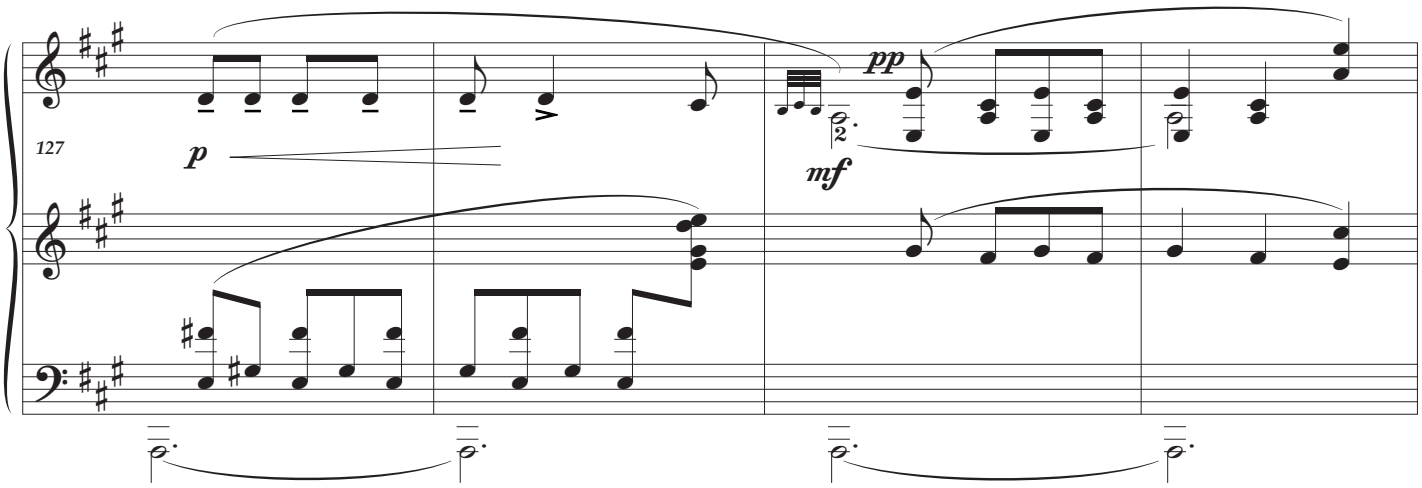

53
ben staccato
f
sfz
57
p
61
p
sotto
65
ff
69
mf gracieux
sec et précis

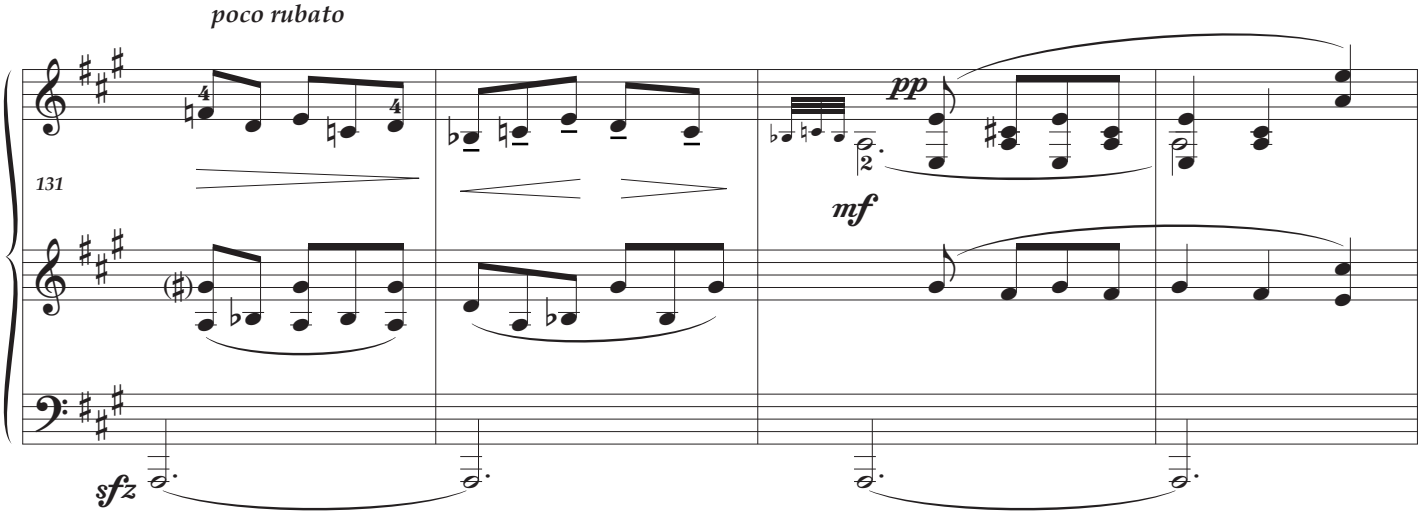

dolce
73
bien rythmé et léger
77
f
81
mf bien rythmé
85
sfz
sfz

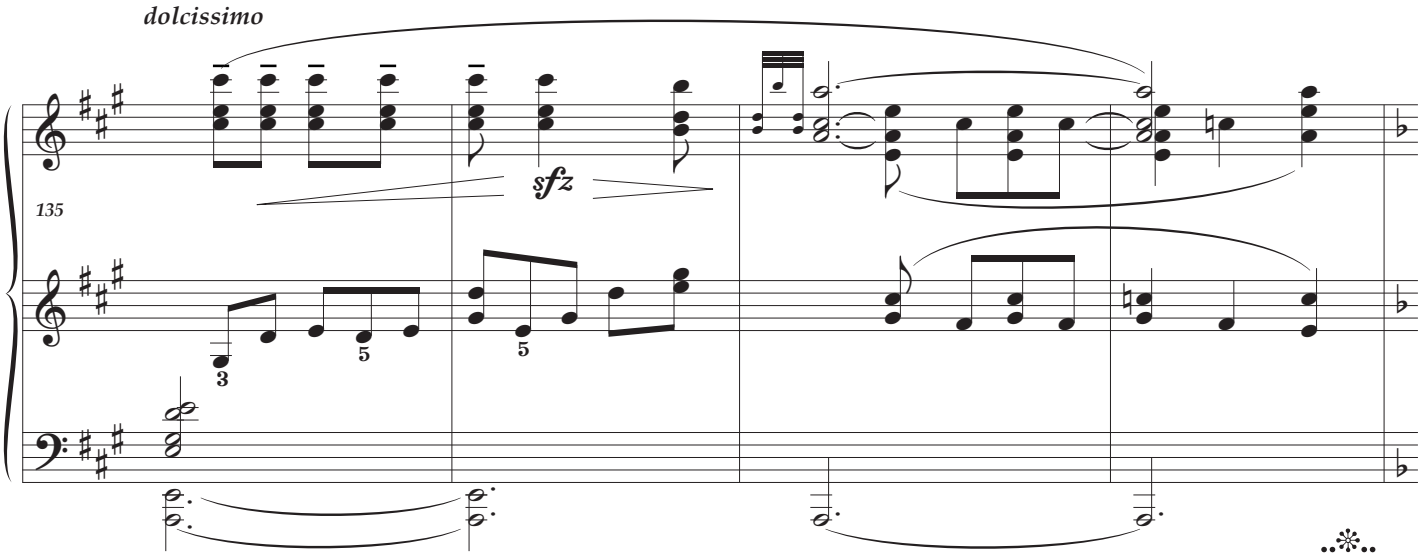

ritardando
ff
fff
89
poco meno mosso
p mais sonore
93
98
Sost Ped.
bien marqué
espressivo
m.s.
mf
pp
m.d.
103

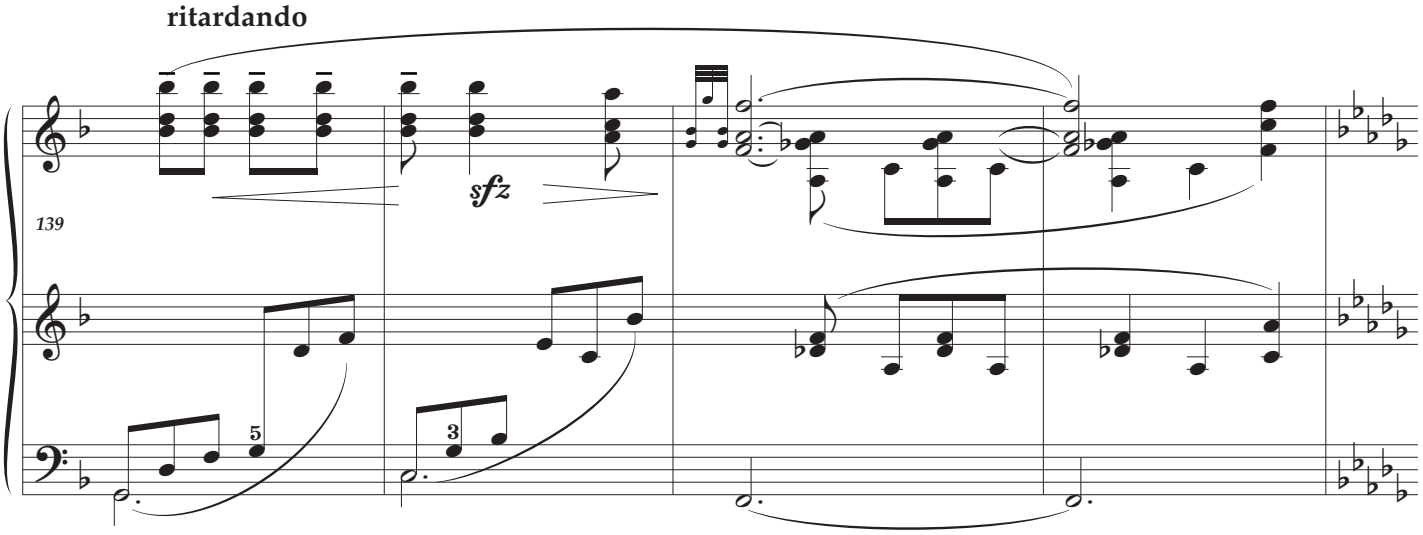

2
m.s.
mf
pp
107
m.s.
pp
111
sempre expressif
m.s.
115
con anima
m.d.
sfz
sfz
pp
119

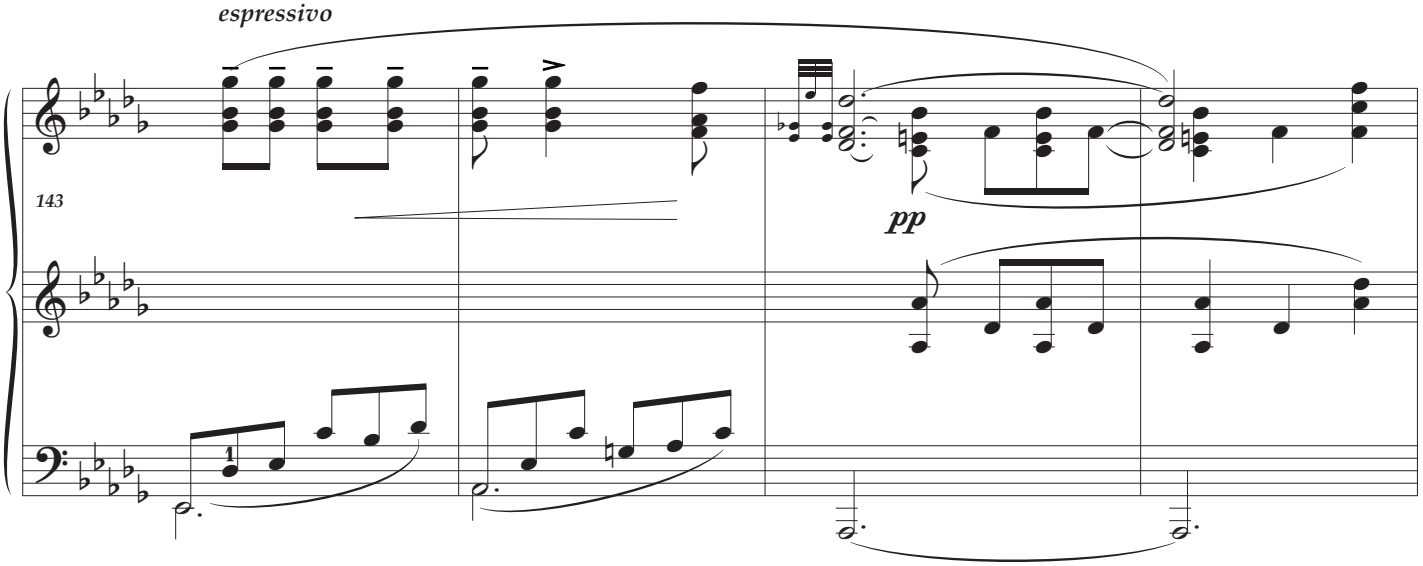

m.d.
123
f
m.s.

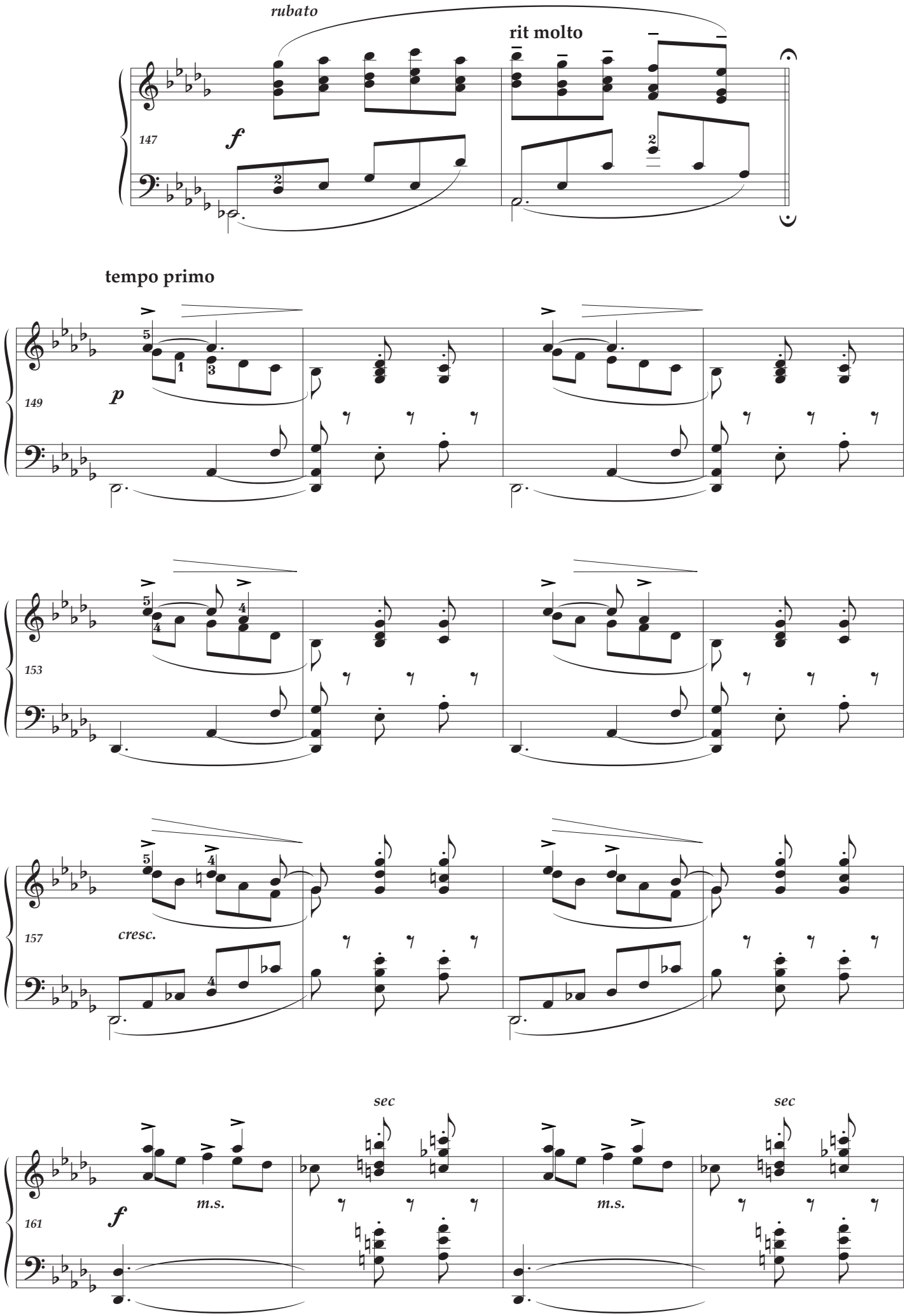

127
p
pp
mf

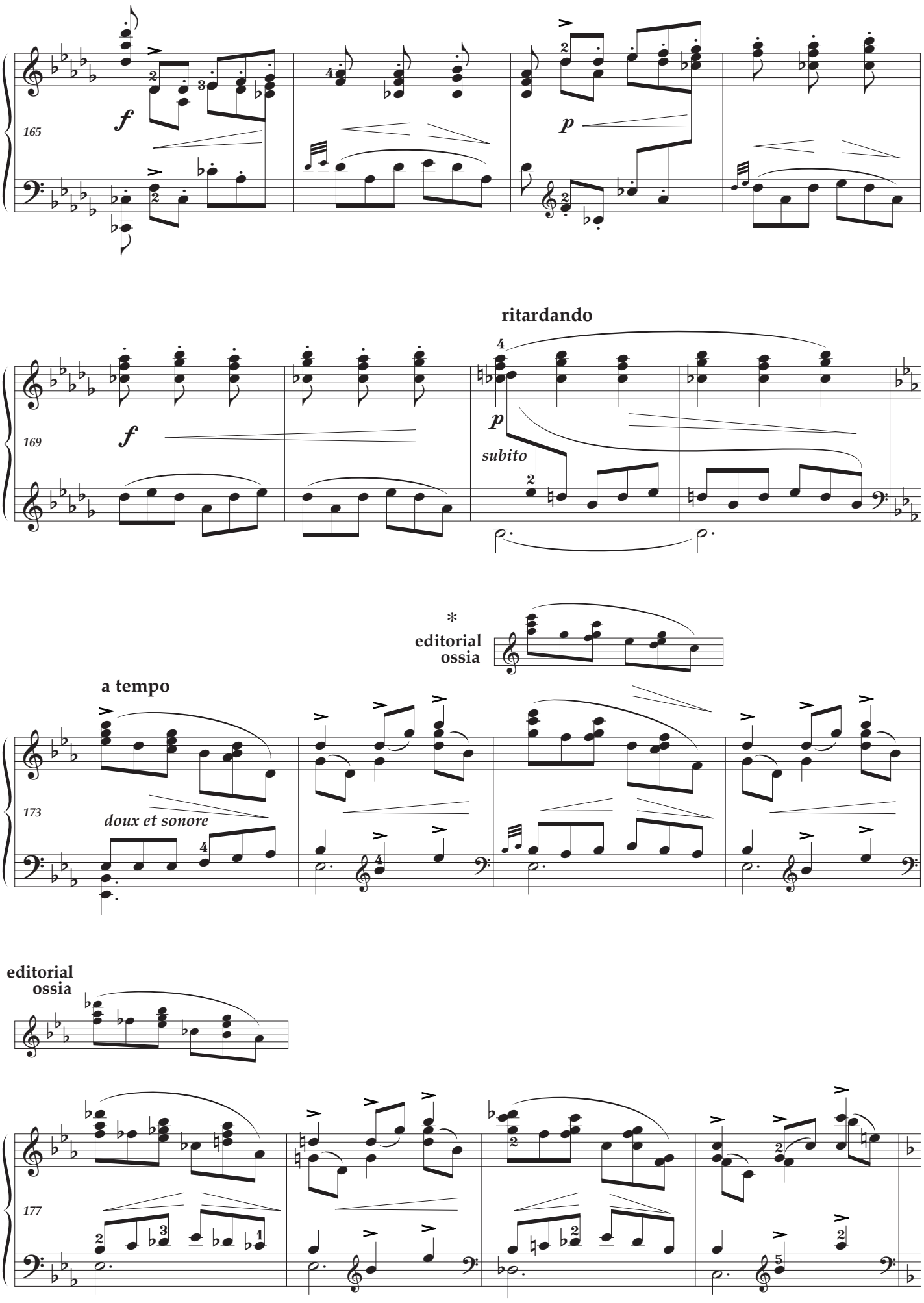

poco rubato
131
pp
mf
sfz

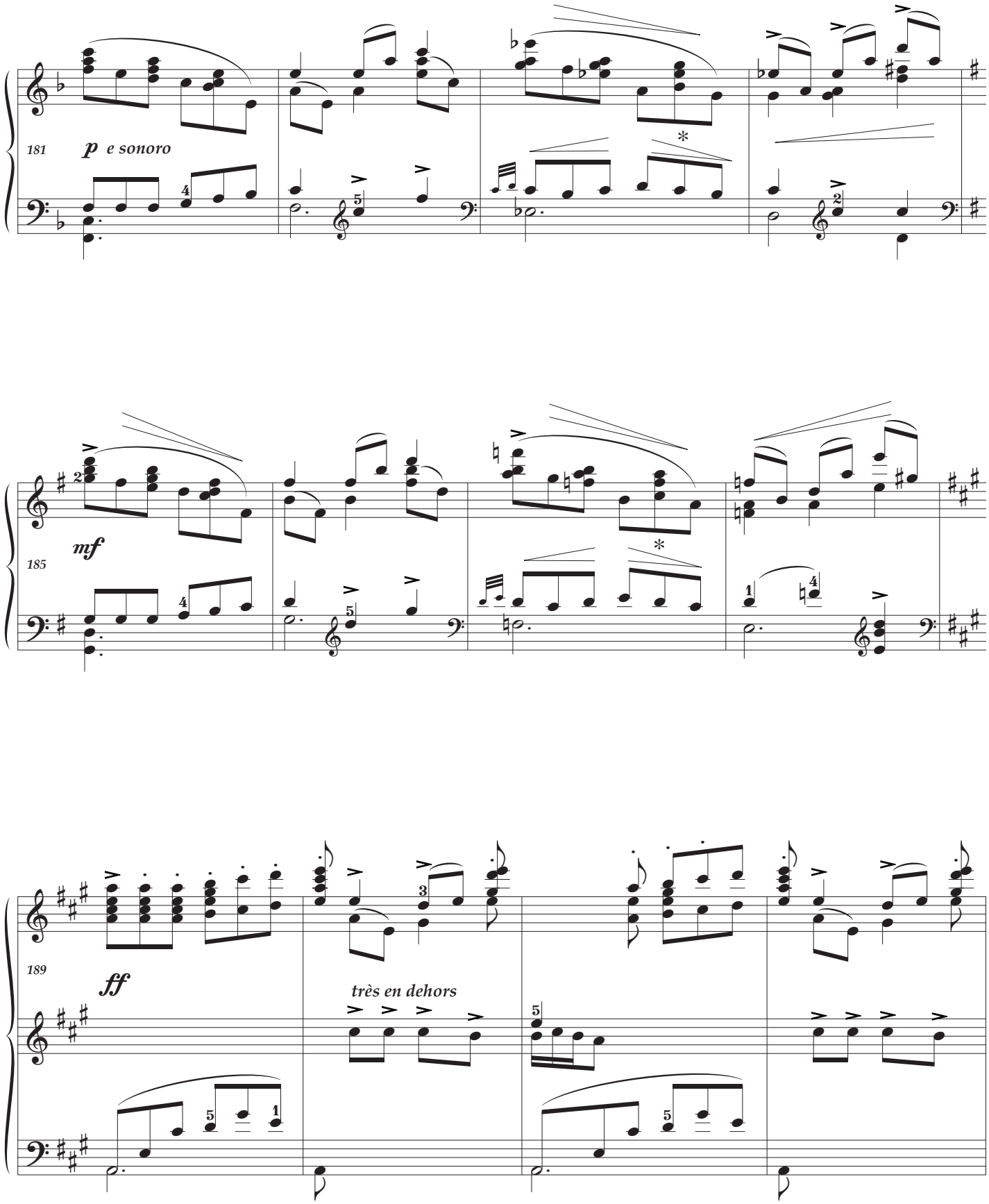

dolcissimo
135
sfz


ritardando
139
sfz


espressivo
143
pp


rubato
rit molto
147
f
tempo primo
149
p
153
157
cresc.
sec
m.s.
161
f


165
f
p
ritardando
169
f
p
subito
*
editorial
ossia
a tempo
173
doux et sonore
editorial
ossia
177


181
p e sonoro
185
mf
189
ff
très en dehors

193

strident

fff

ritardando

pesante

8va

197

poco ritenuto

fff

Ped.

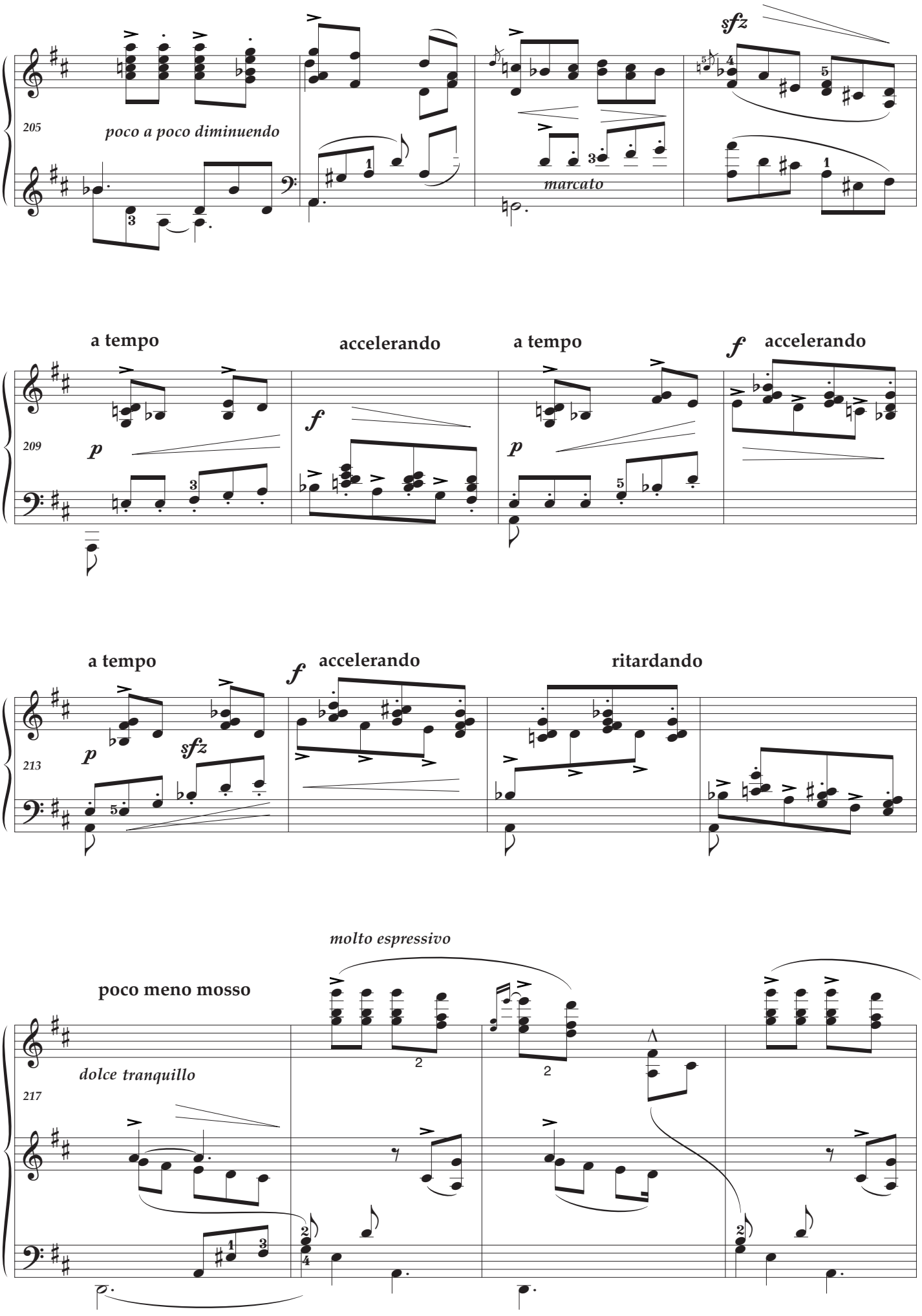
a tempo

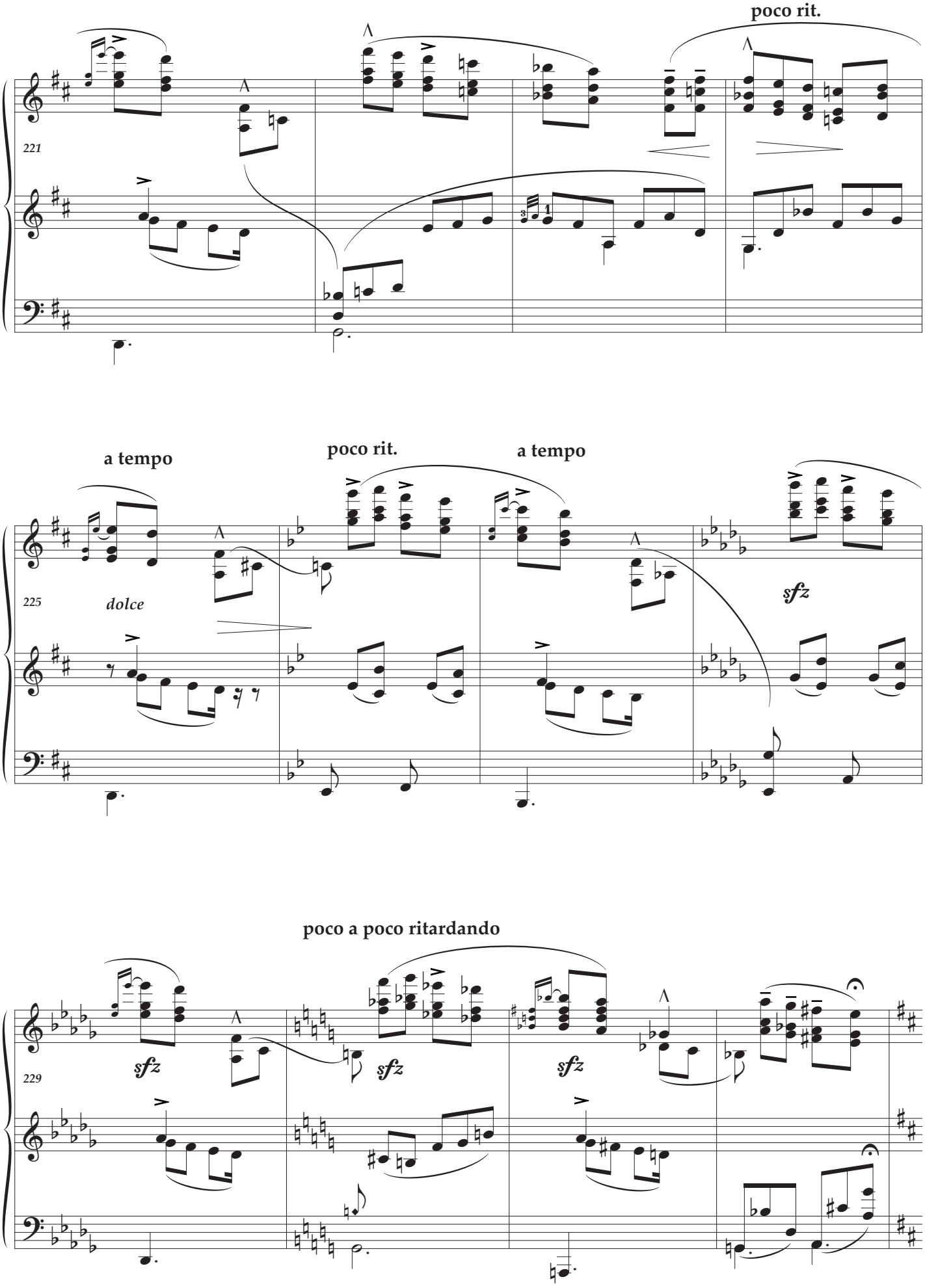
(8va) *loco*

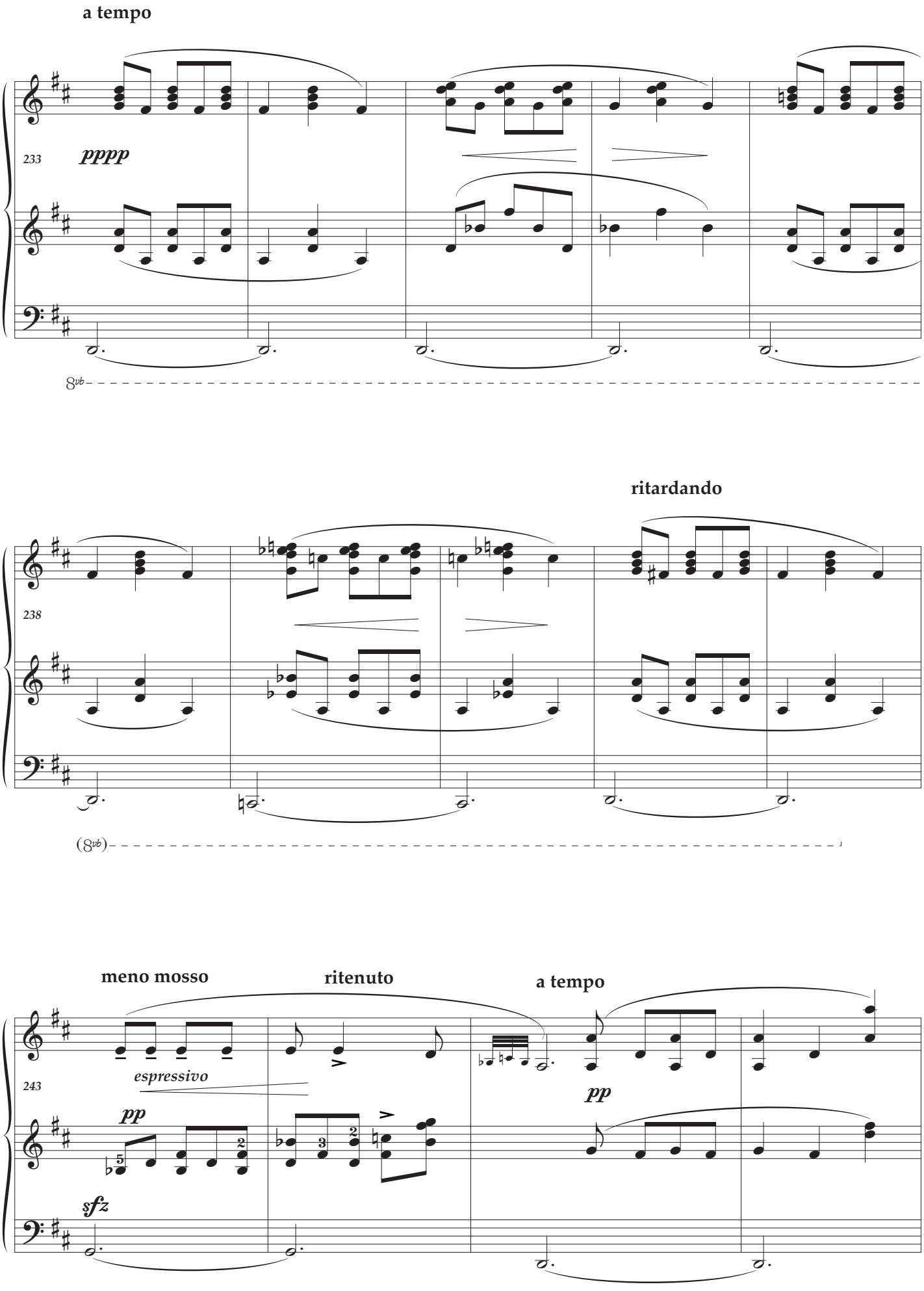
201

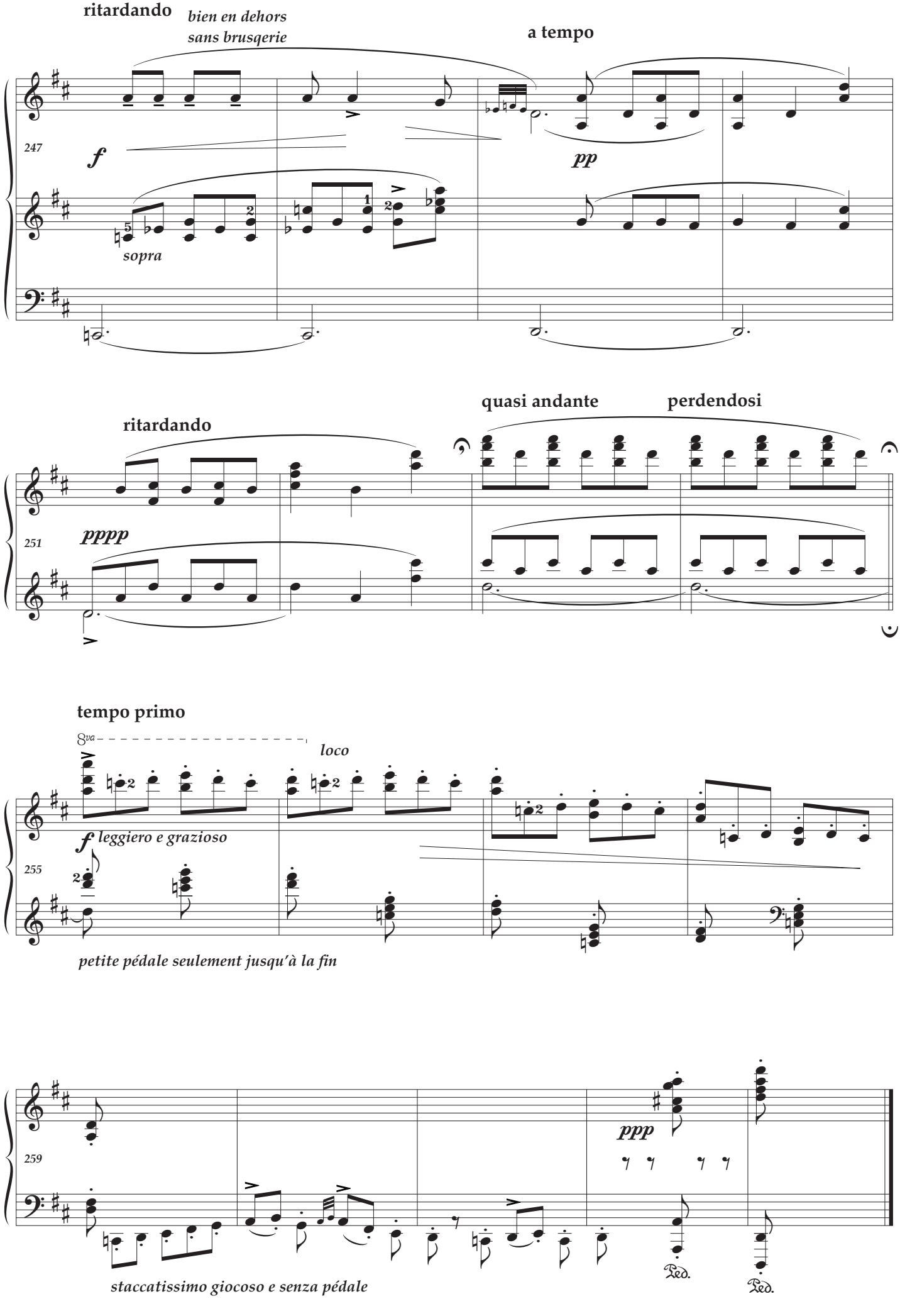
ff *espressivo*

execution


205
poco a poco diminuendo
marcato
sfz
209
a tempo
accelerando
a tempo
f
accelerando
p
213
a tempo
f
accelerando
ritardando
p
sfz
molto espressivo
poco meno mosso
217
dolce tranquillo


poco rit.
221
a tempo
poco rit.
a tempo
225
dolce
sfz
poco a poco ritardando
229
sfz
sfz
sfz


a tempo
233
pppp
8vb
ritardando
238
(8vb)
meno mosso
ritenuto
a tempo
243
espressivo
pp
sfz
pp



Nice, 17 octobre 1906

A L M E R Í A

An atmospheric and exotic introduction to the pianistic world of Albeniz reflecting this southern region of Spain. Tied to a closely related key, *Almería* begins much like the preceding *Rondeña*, but the dance has now become a languid dream during a siesta in the torrid Andalusian heat, reinforced by mesmerising repetition of the opening riff. An extended and effective pedal point leads to a typical central impression of *cante jondo** — ardent music from the heart. Less technically challenging than *Triana* but very rewarding to study, I particularly love the animated section, suggestive of a passionate *jota.*

With great coherence and despite the apparent differences, the composer places *Almería* directly after *Rondeña*, imbued with the same stylistic and ideological framework. Moreover, the latter can be defined as the interplay between calm and lively rhythm, and as Debussy suggests elsewhere, Albeniz magnificently prolongs this evocative serenade.

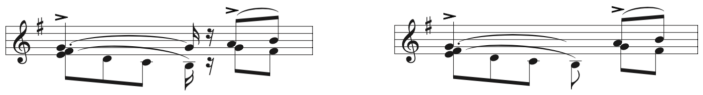
— Enrique Franco

But the most striking part of this triptych is without any doubt *Almería*, a great nocturne whose swaying taranta rhythms carry the performer with them and charm and bewitch the listener. In the words of the dedicatee, *Almería* 'never lets go of the pianist'.

— Jean-François Heisser

* Deeply moving vocal flamenco

- duration 9'40
- In the original editions, there are many, many pedal (and other signs) and an observation by Debussy can provide a pertinent object lesson: "Pedalling cannot be written down. It varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another."
- 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.
- in order to simplify the text some bars have been 're-drawn' thus :

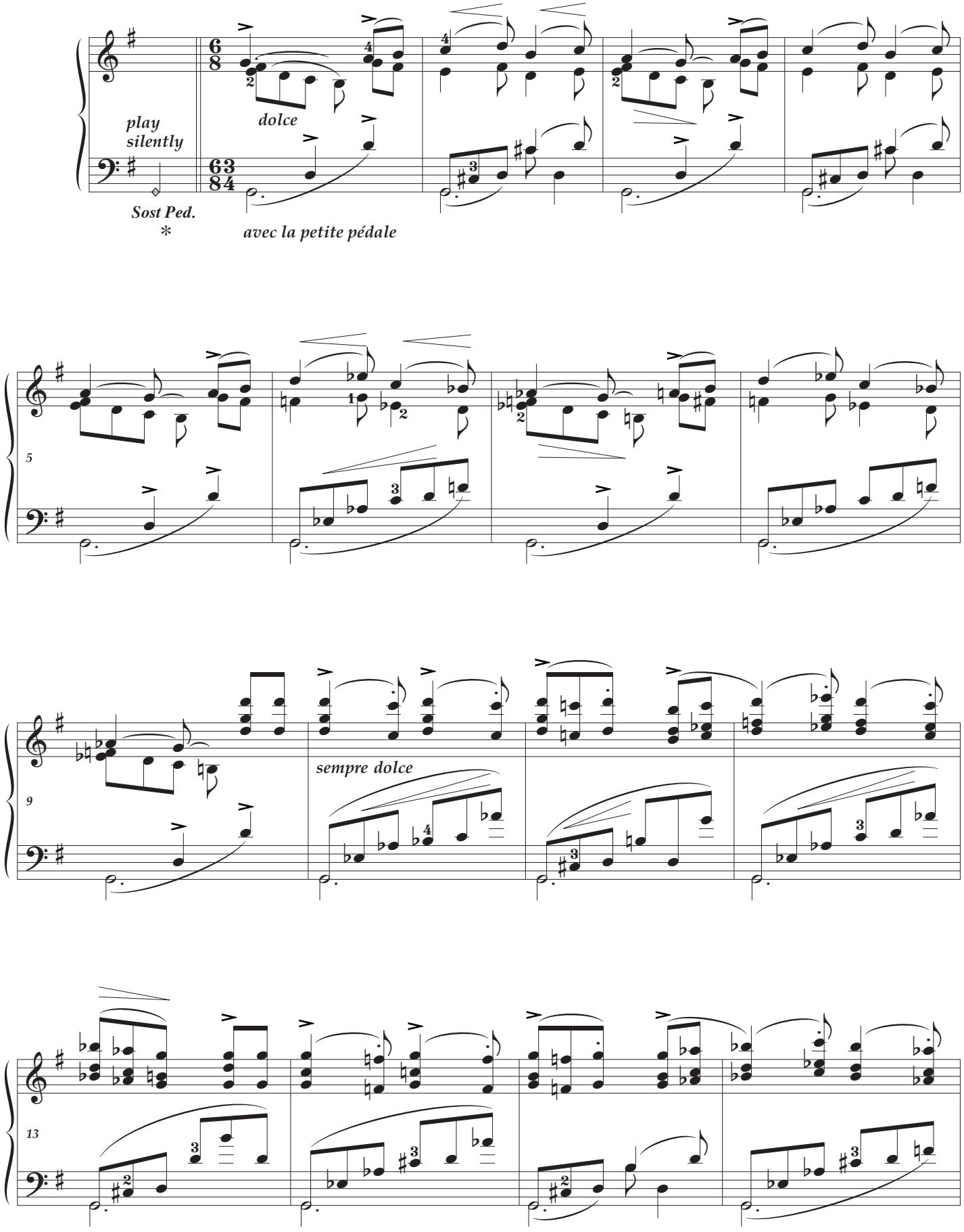


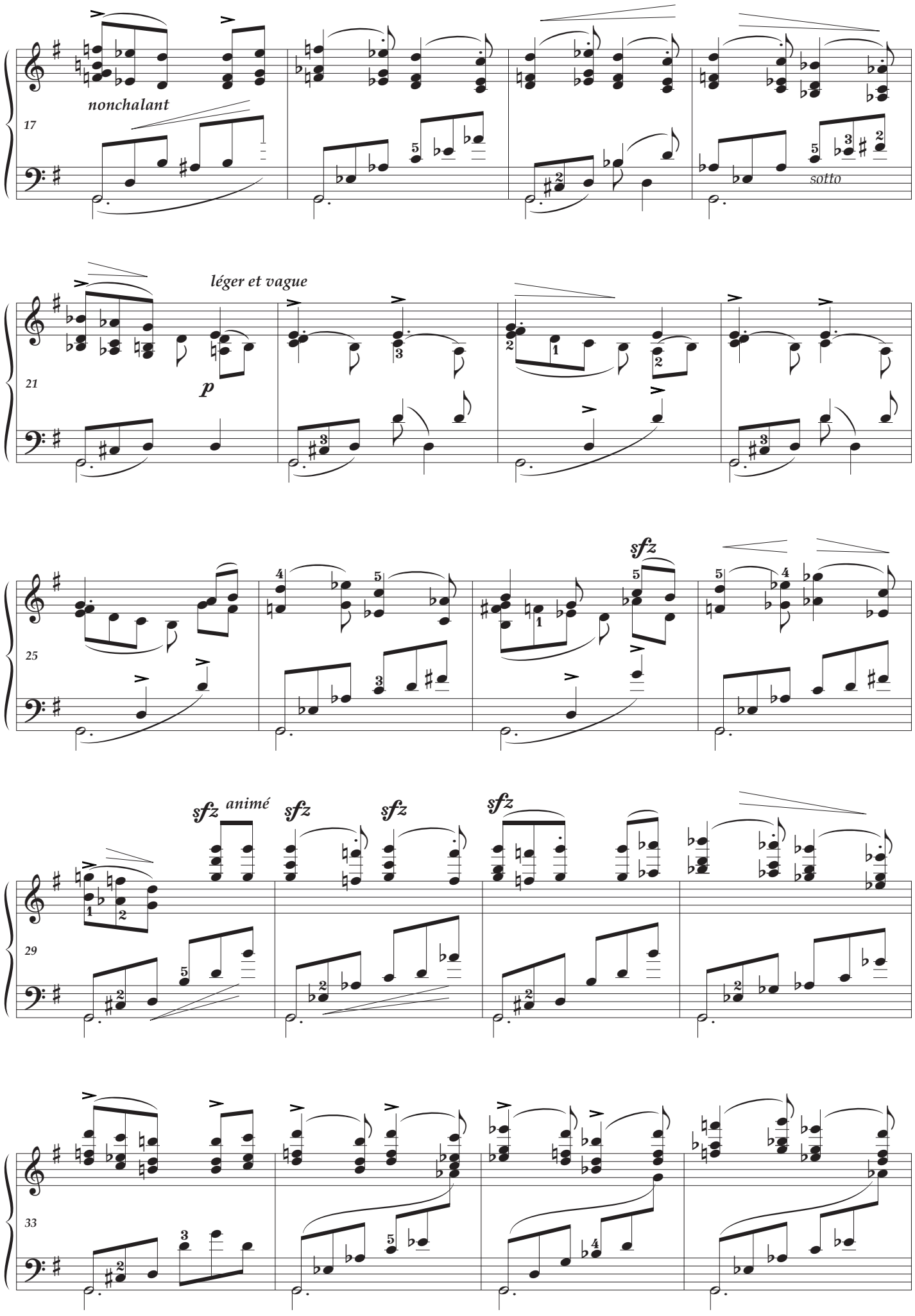
- time-signatures … every bar contains 6 quavers, and the metre is shown with careful beaming
- there has been some pruning of Albeniz's multiple instructions in Italian and French
- there are quite a number of opportunities to use the *sostenuto* pedal combined with the sustaining pedal commencing before bar **1** with an editorial silently played G
- **99** for smaller hands
- **141** a *crescendo* is suggested to prepare for the *sforzato* in **143**
- **145** an *acciaccatura* has been added in the bass (which may also be tied to **143**) to pronounce the first note of the tenor melody
- **204** a 'rearrangement' to enable the magical sostenuto pedal
- **254-256** editorial hand swap to enable a clearing pedal change at the second beat

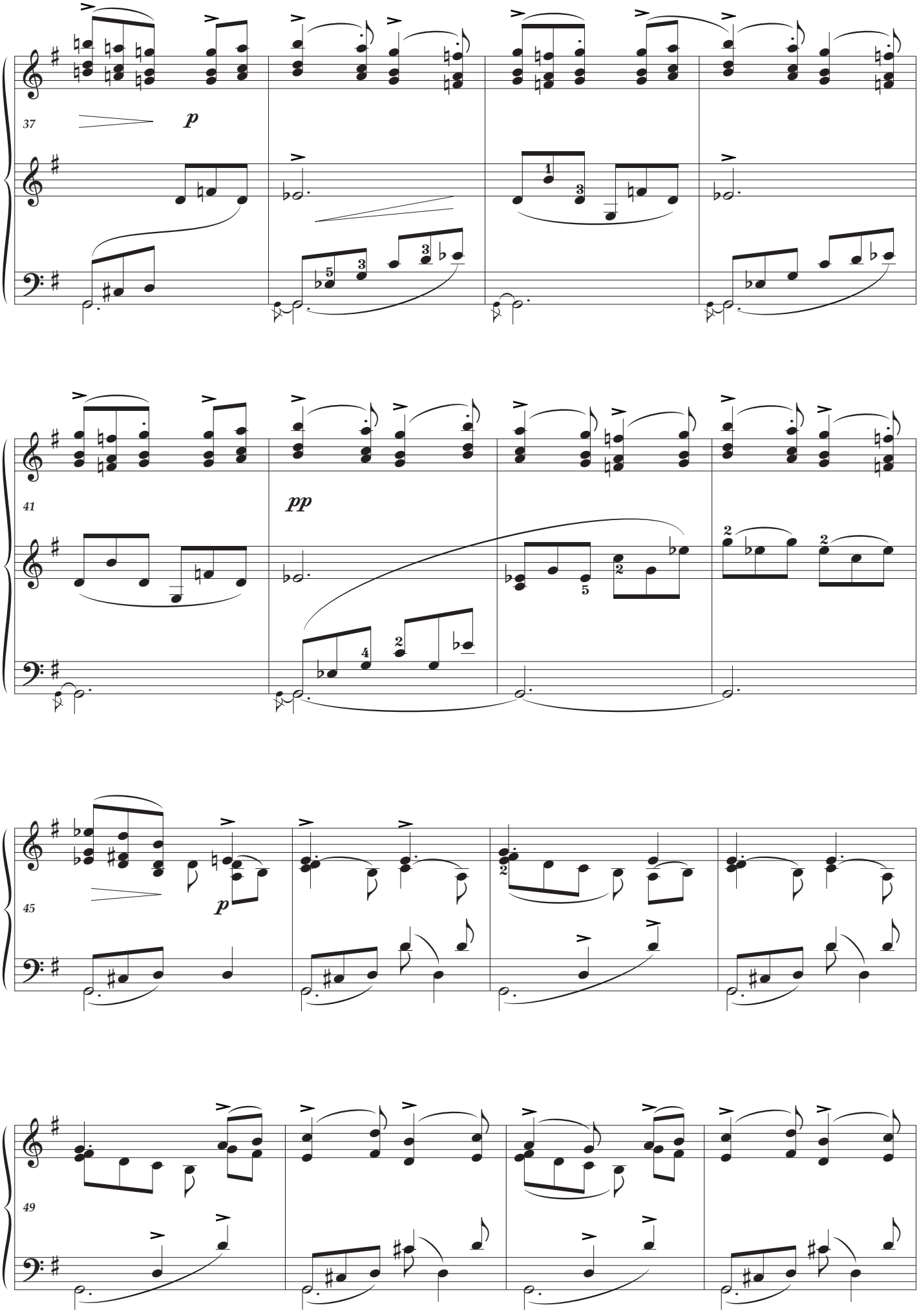
A L M E R Í A

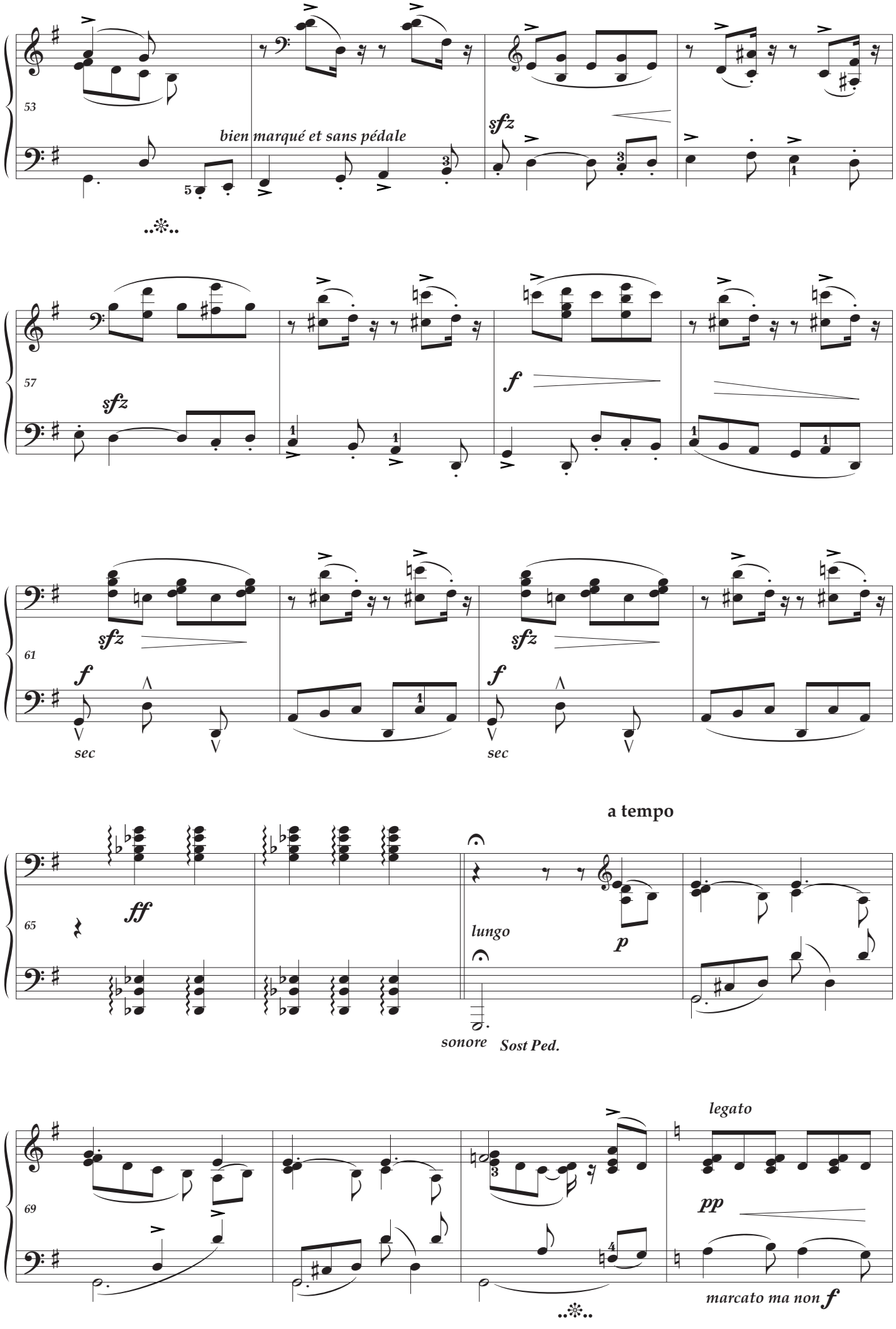
tout ce morceau doit être joué d'une façon nonchalante et molle mais bien rythmée

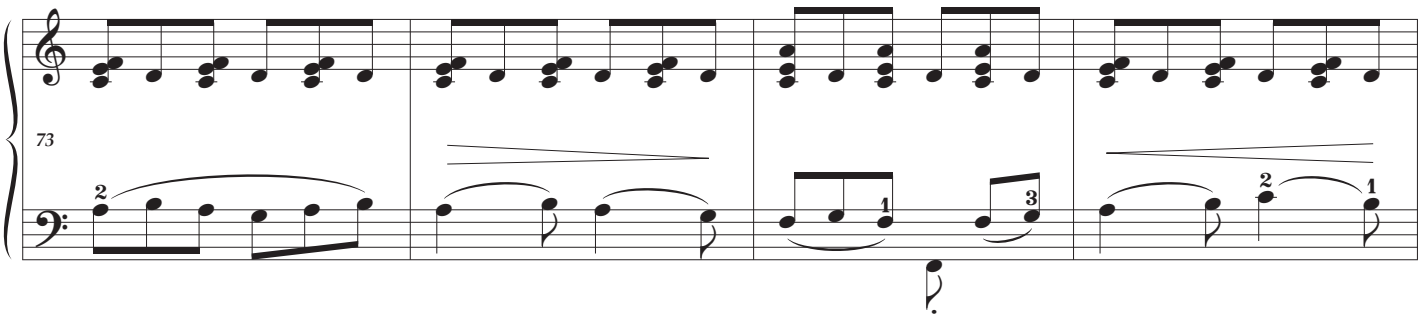
allegretto moderato ♩. = 72

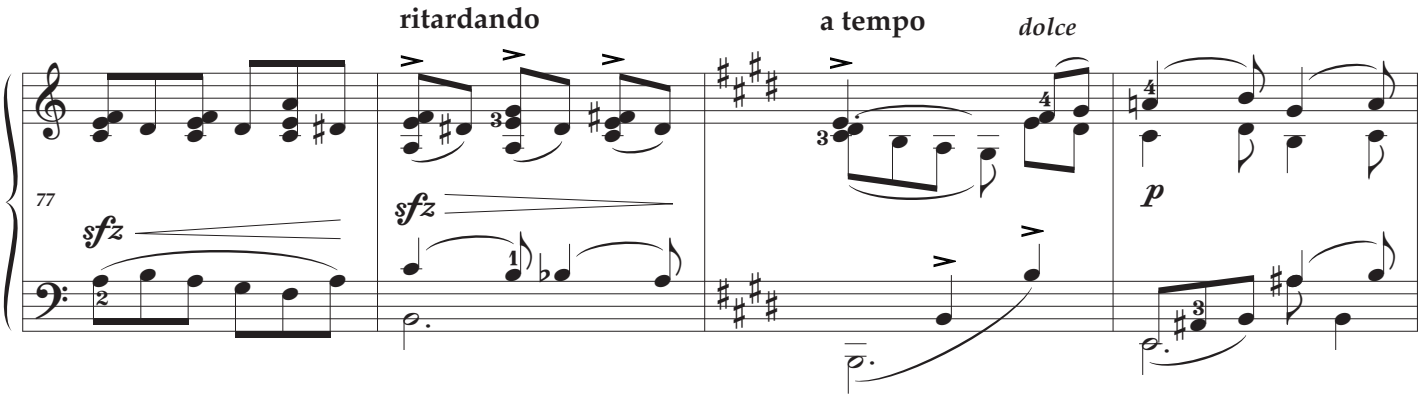


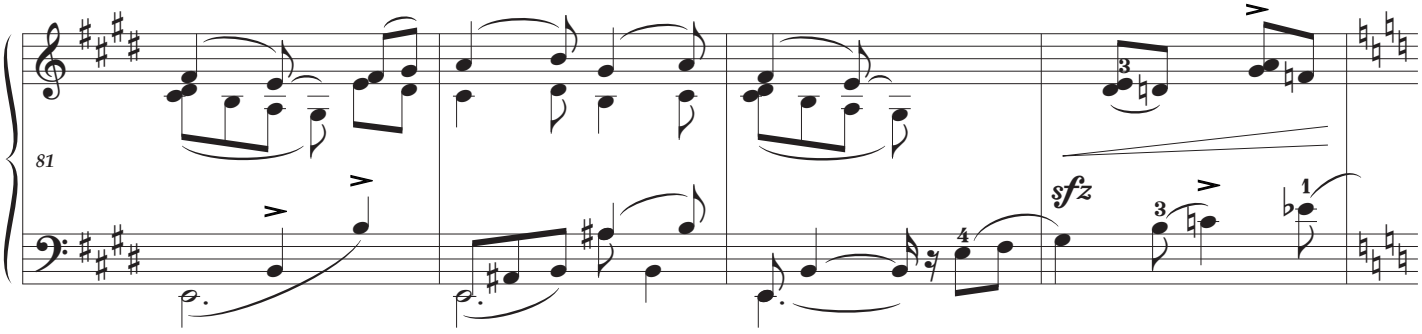

nonchalant
17
sotto
léger et vague
21
p
25
sfz
sfz animé
sfz
sfz
sfz
29
33

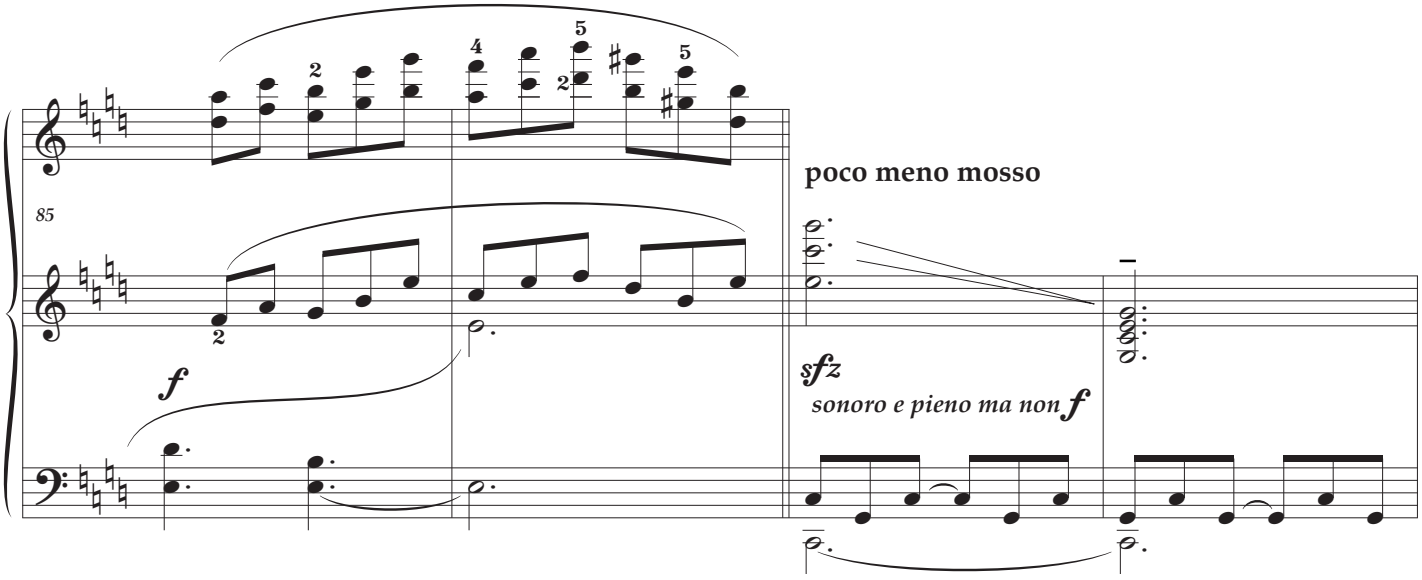

37
p
41
pp
45
p
49

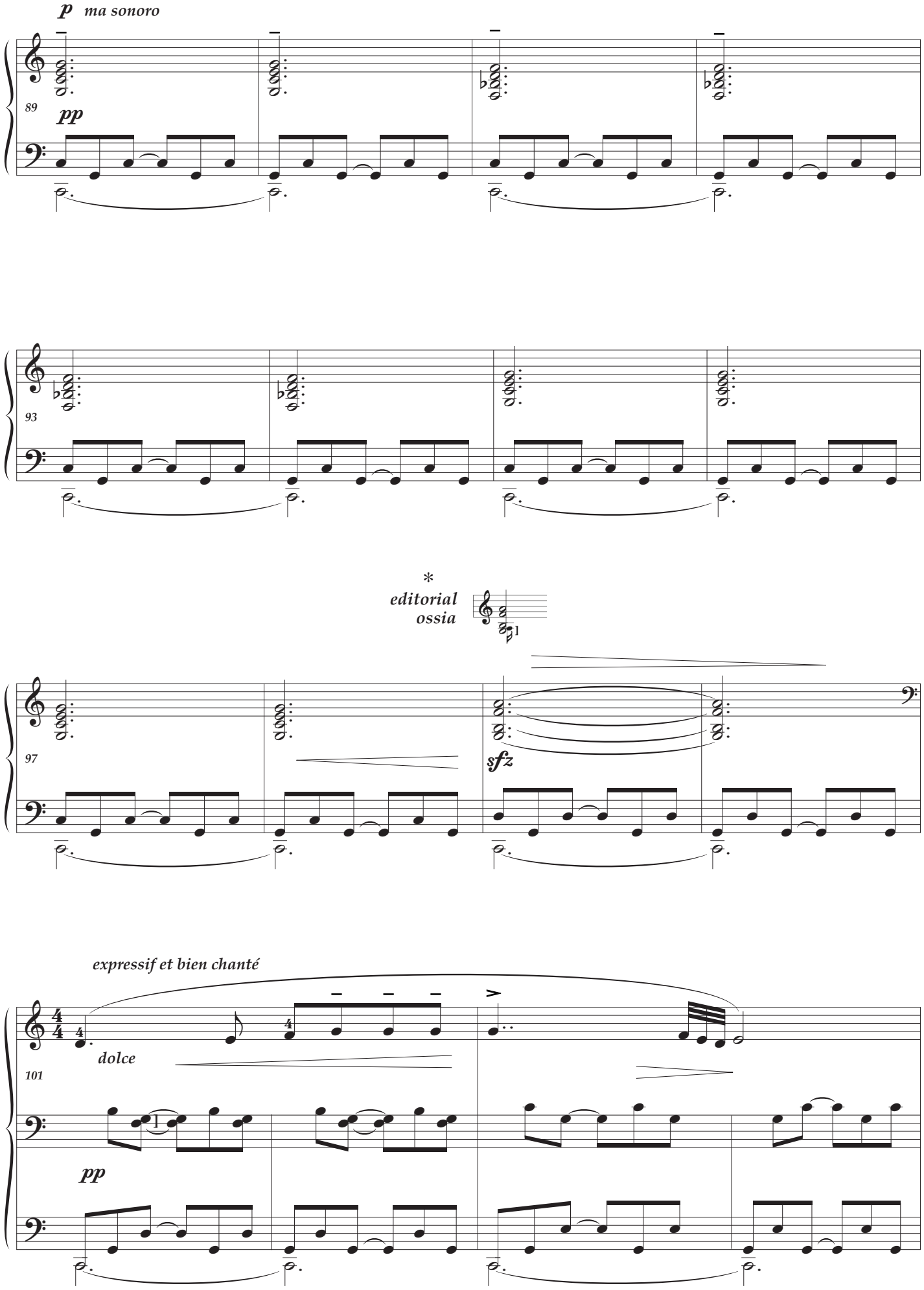

53
bien marqué et sans pédale
sfz
57
sfz
f
61
sfz
f
sec
sfz
f
sec
a tempo
65
ff
lungo
p
sonore
Sost Ped.
69
legato
pp
marcato ma non f

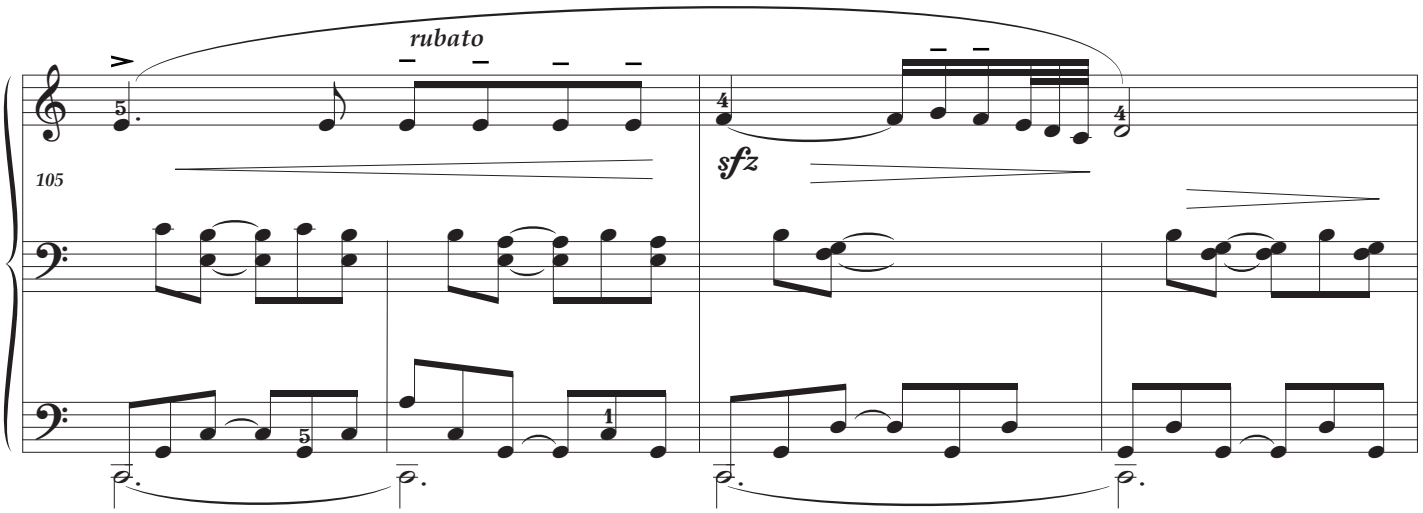

73


ritardando
a tempo
dolce
77
sfz
sfz
p

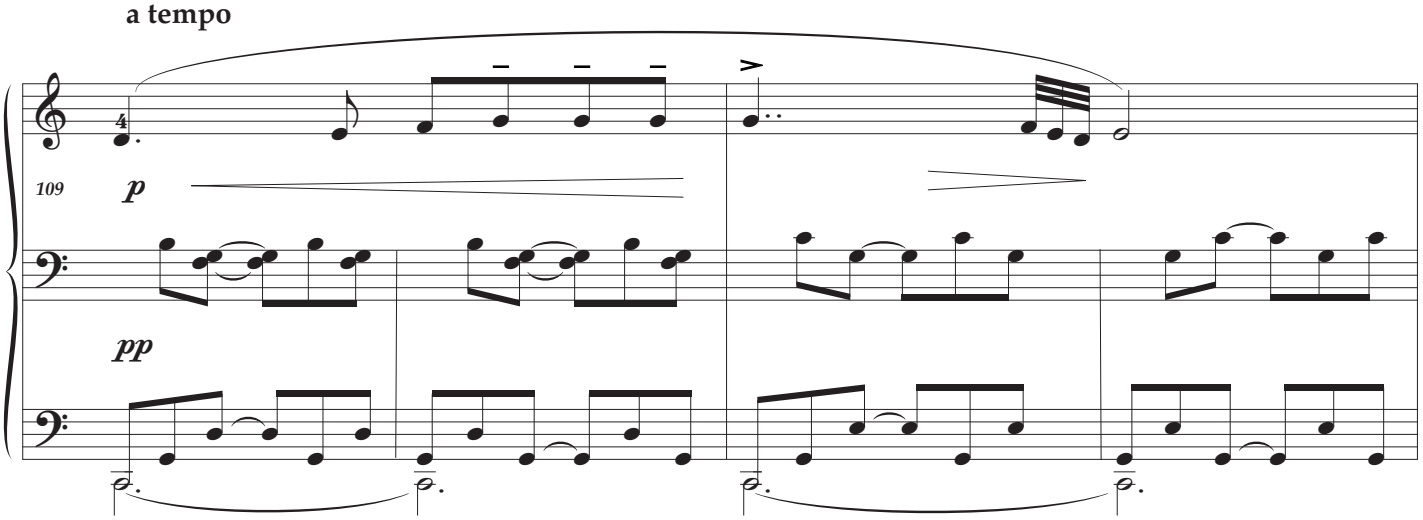

81
sfz

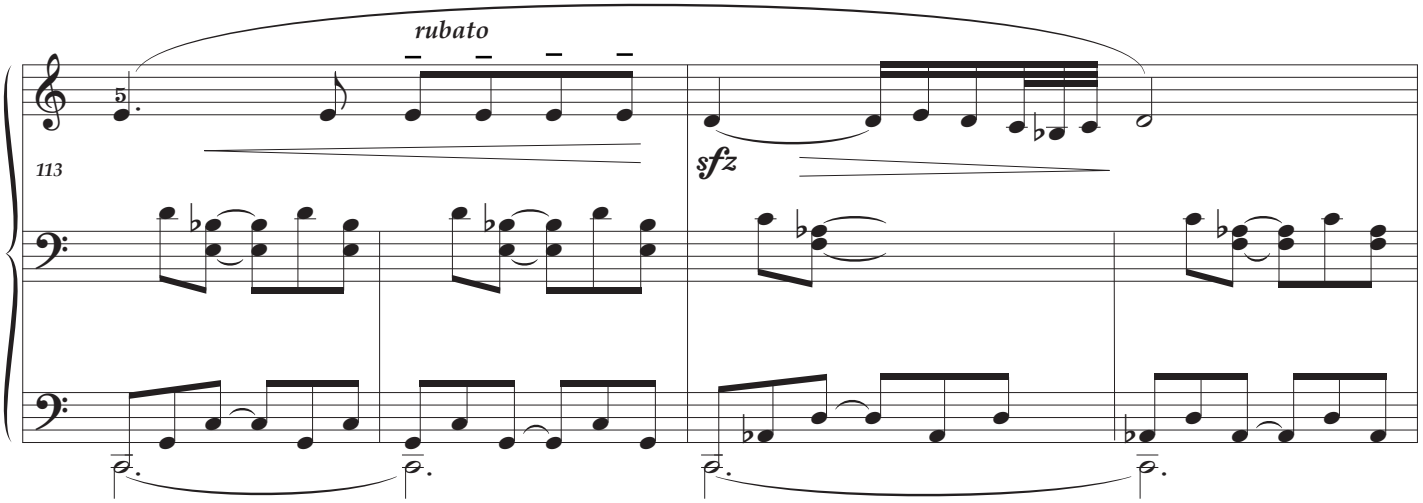

85
poco meno mosso
f
sfz
sonoro e pieno ma non f

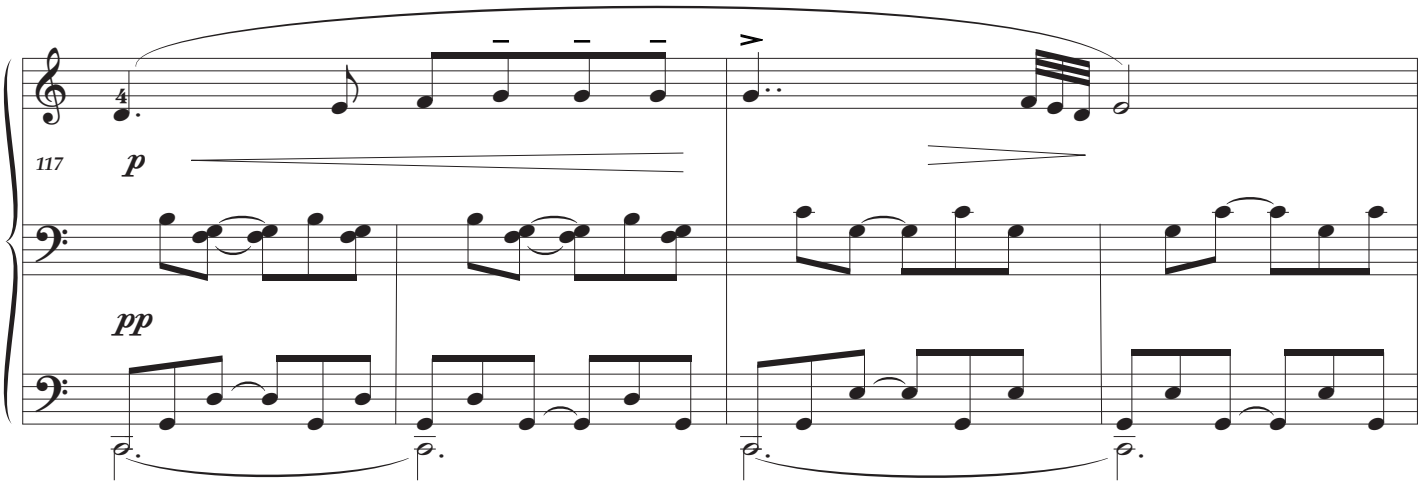

p ma sonoro
89
pp
93
*
editorial
ossia
97
sfz
expressif et bien chanté
101
dolce
pp

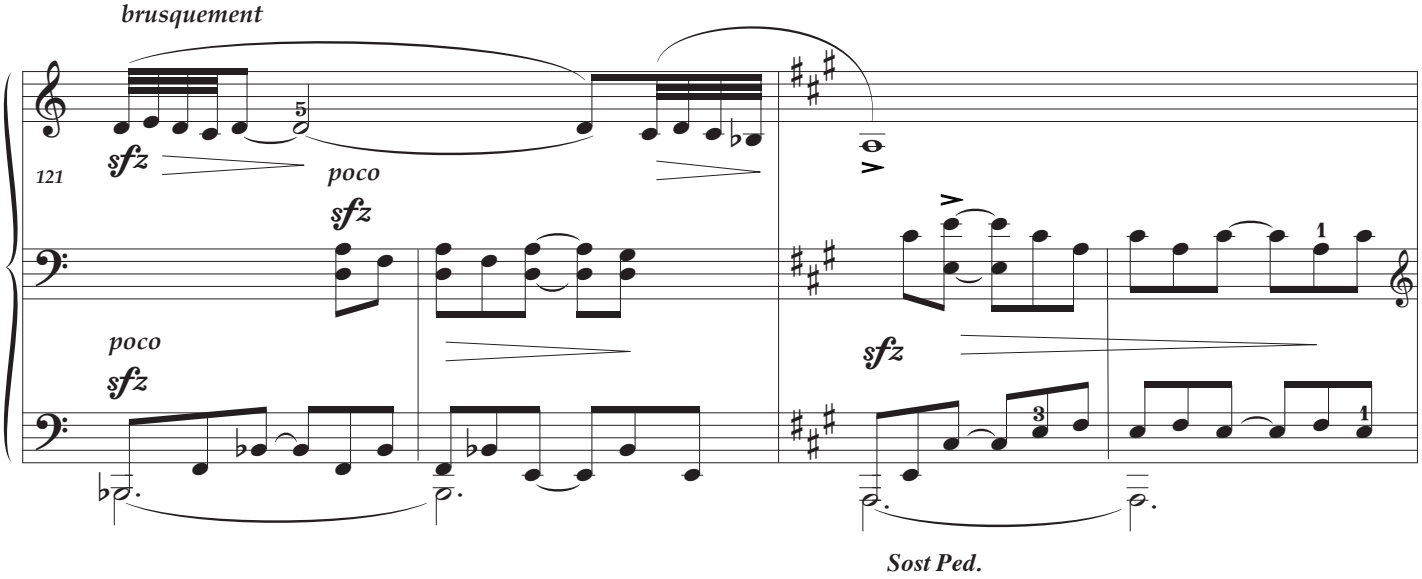


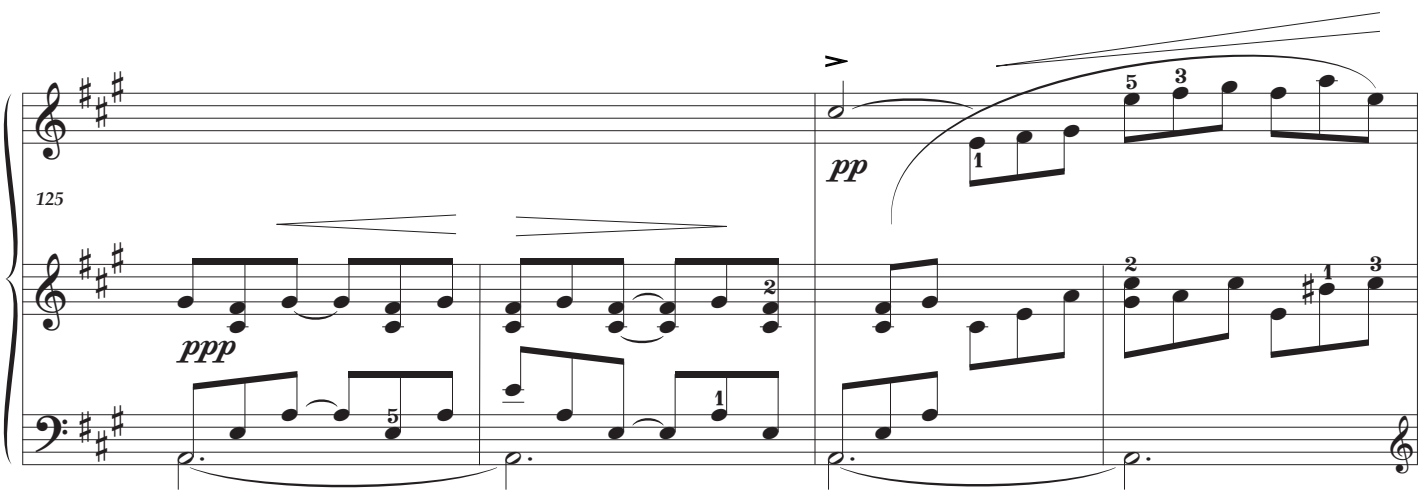
a tempo

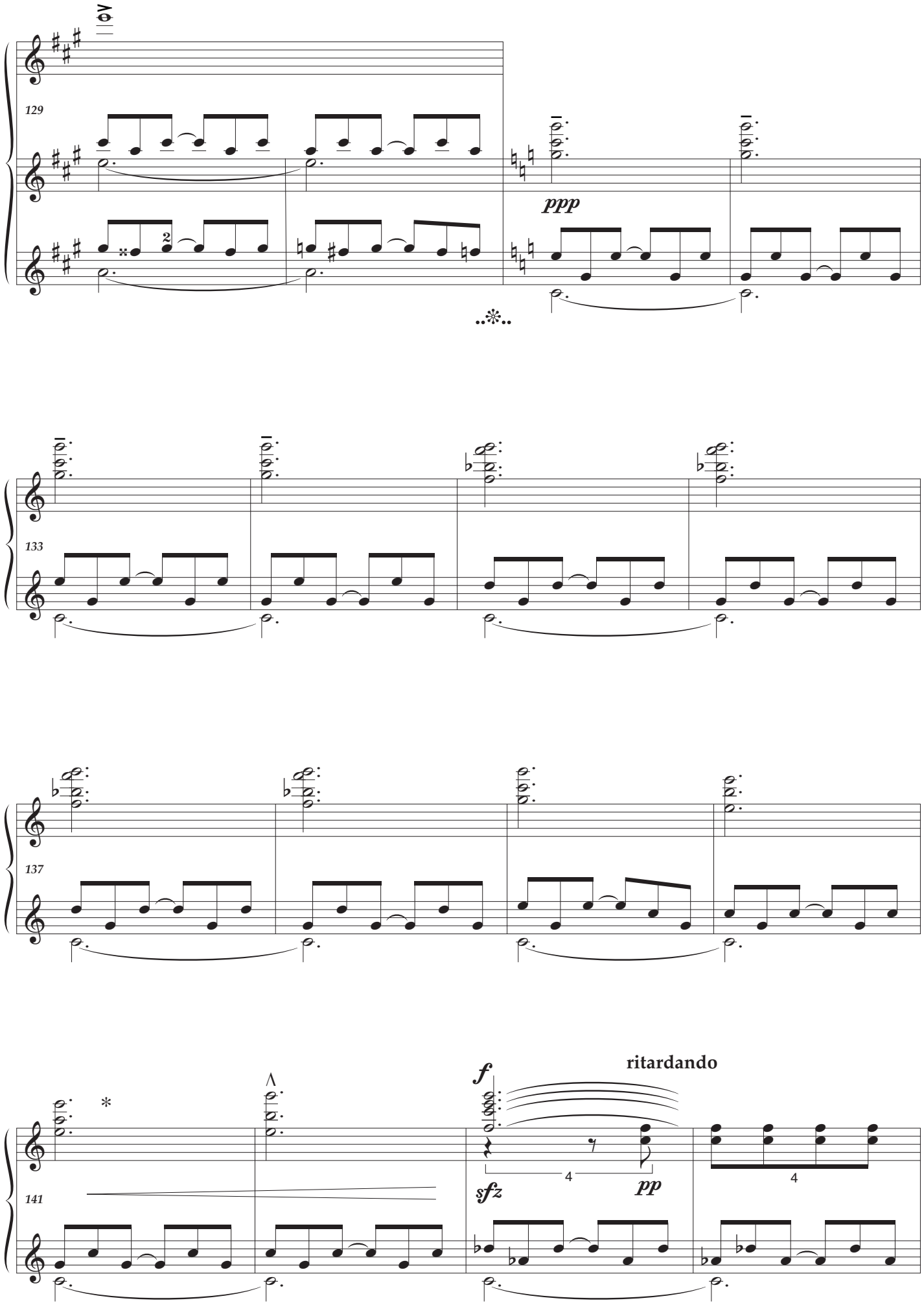


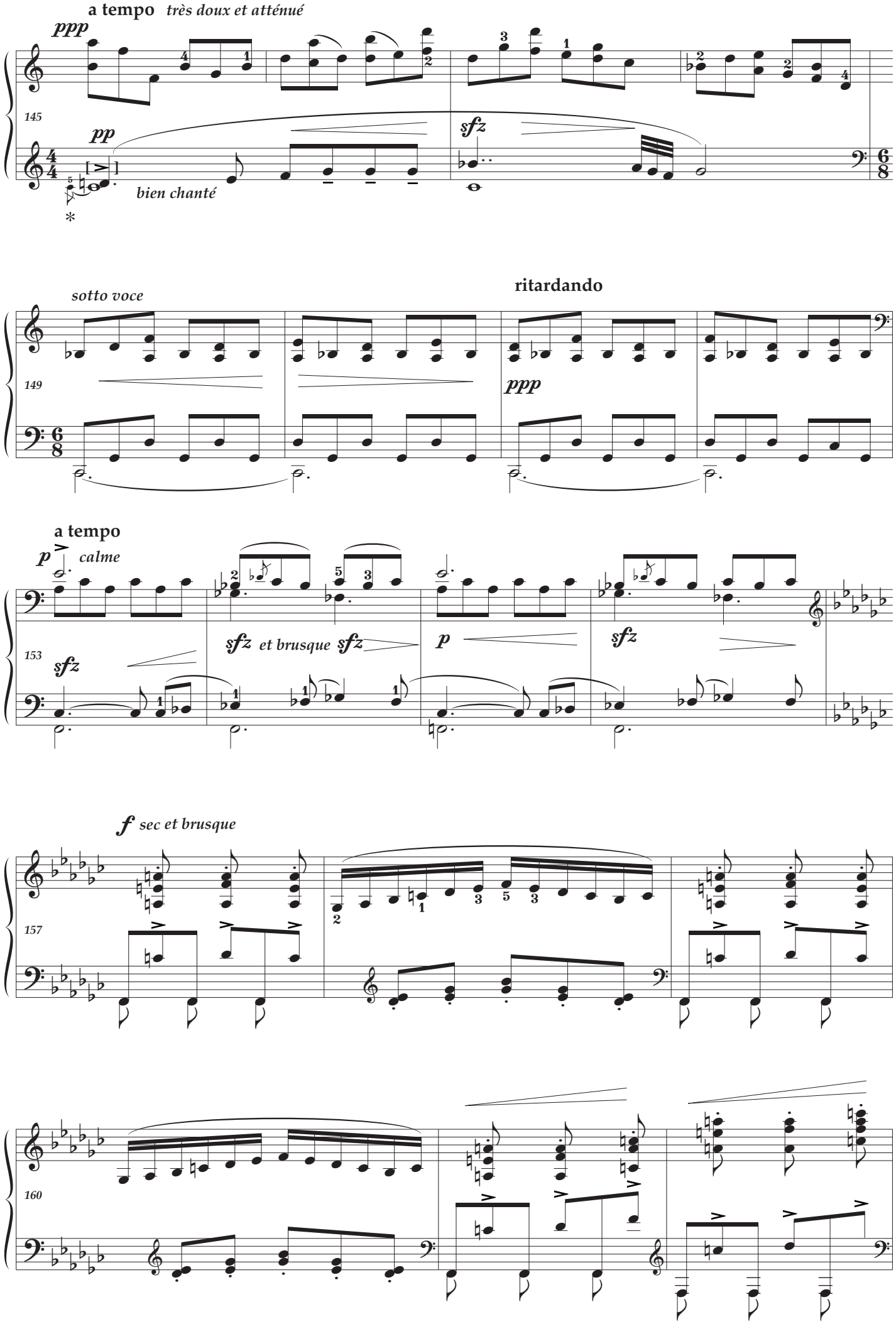


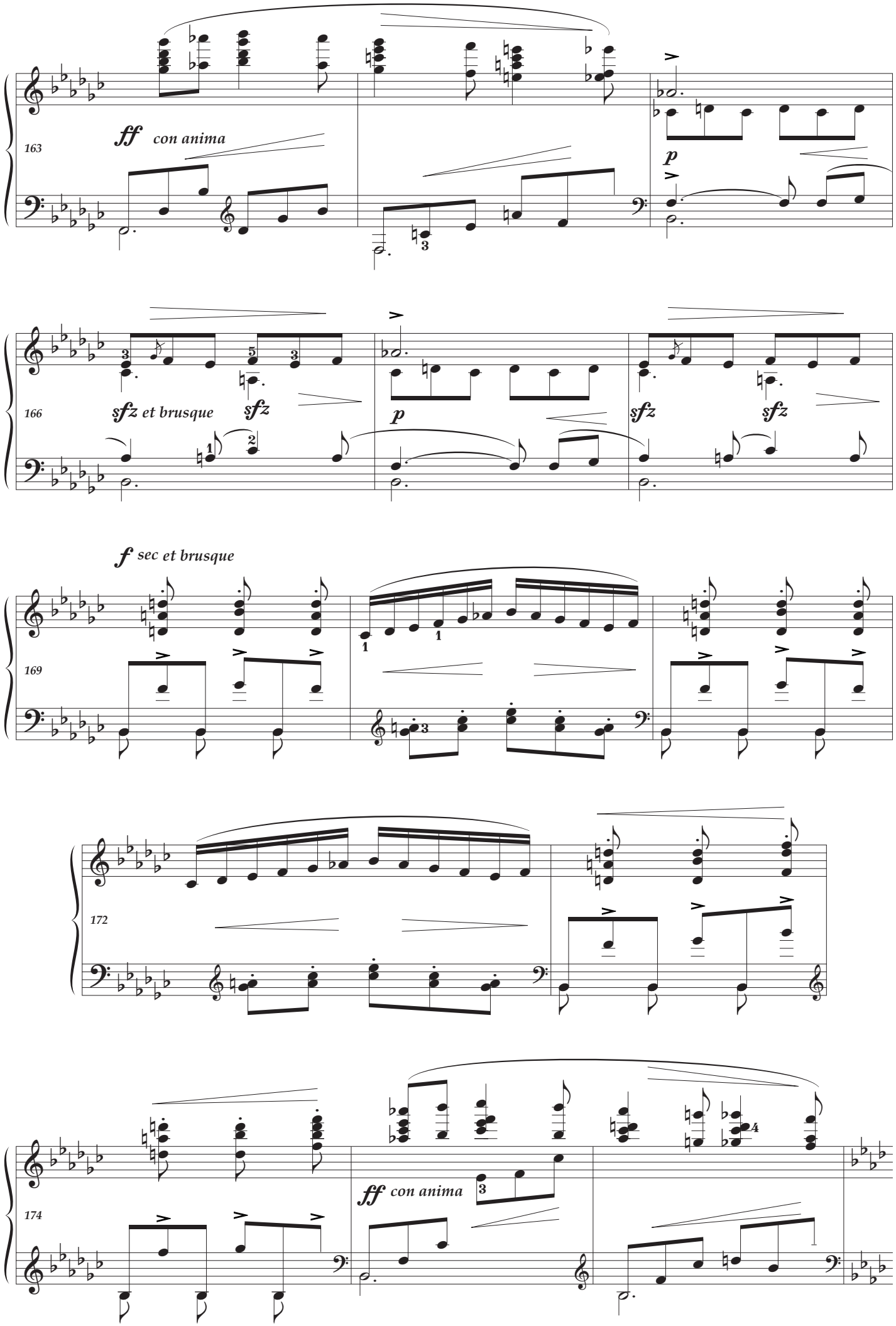

117
p
pp

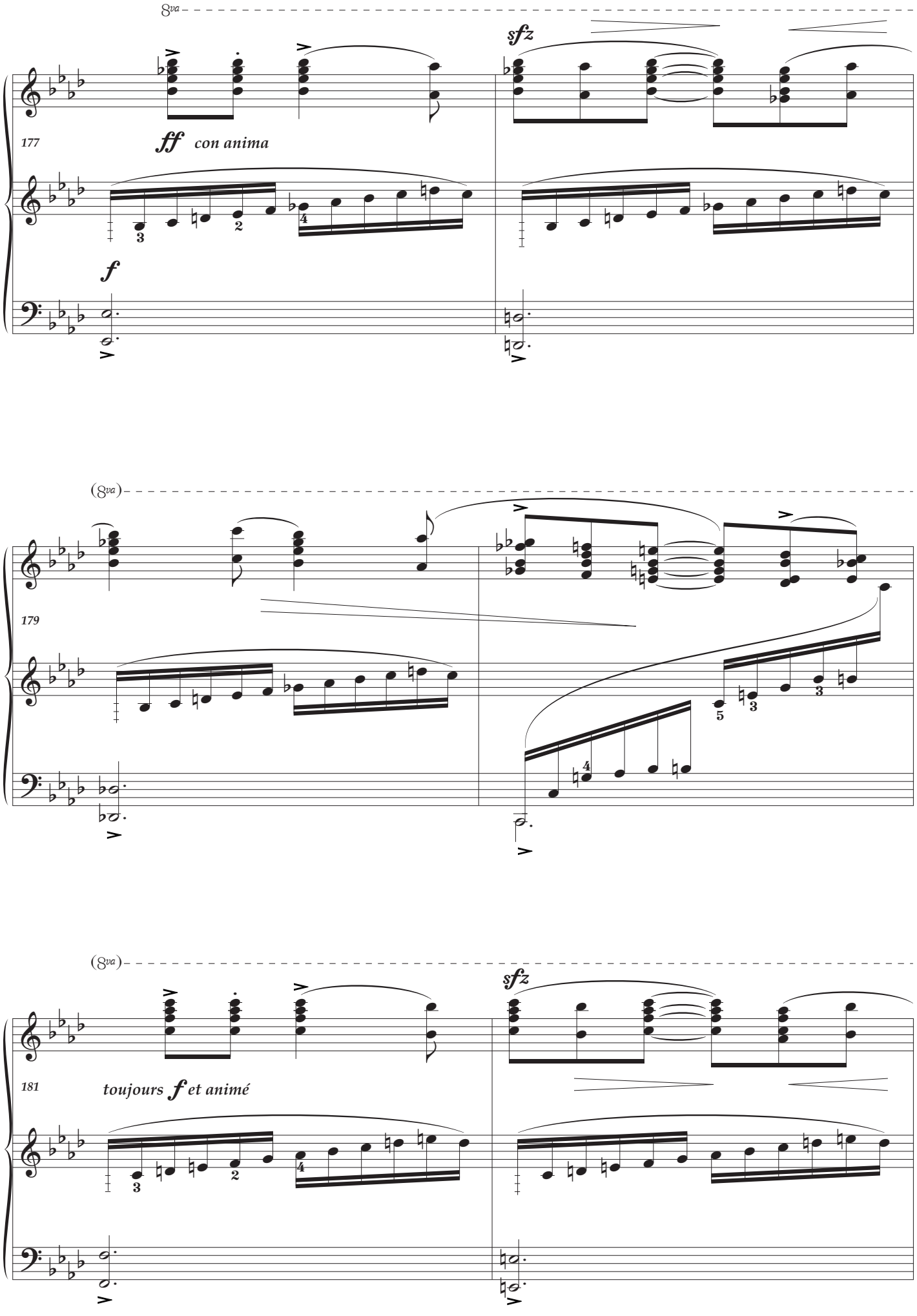

brusquement
121
sfz
poco
sfz
poco
sfz
sfz
Sost Ped.

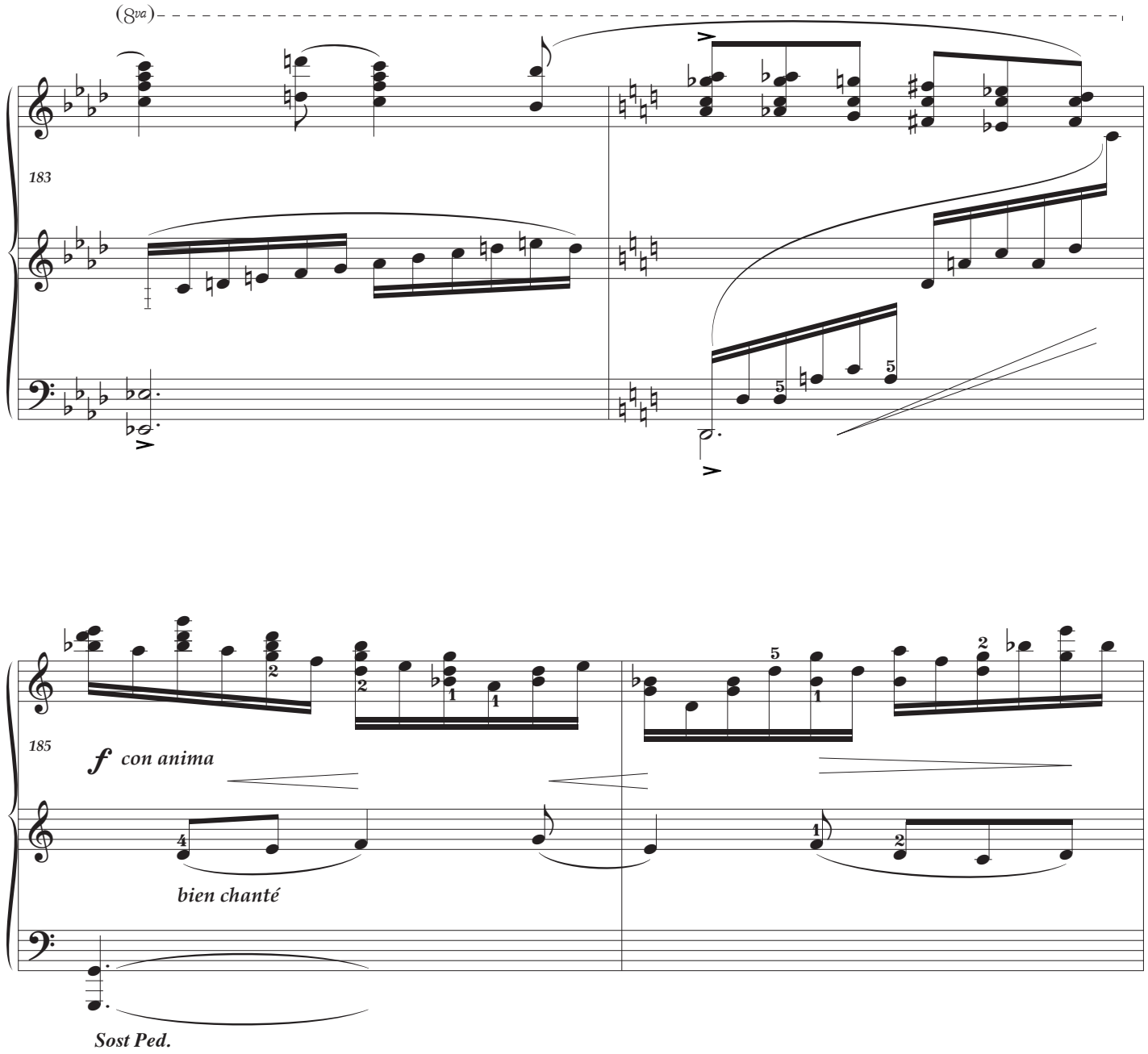

125
pp
ppp

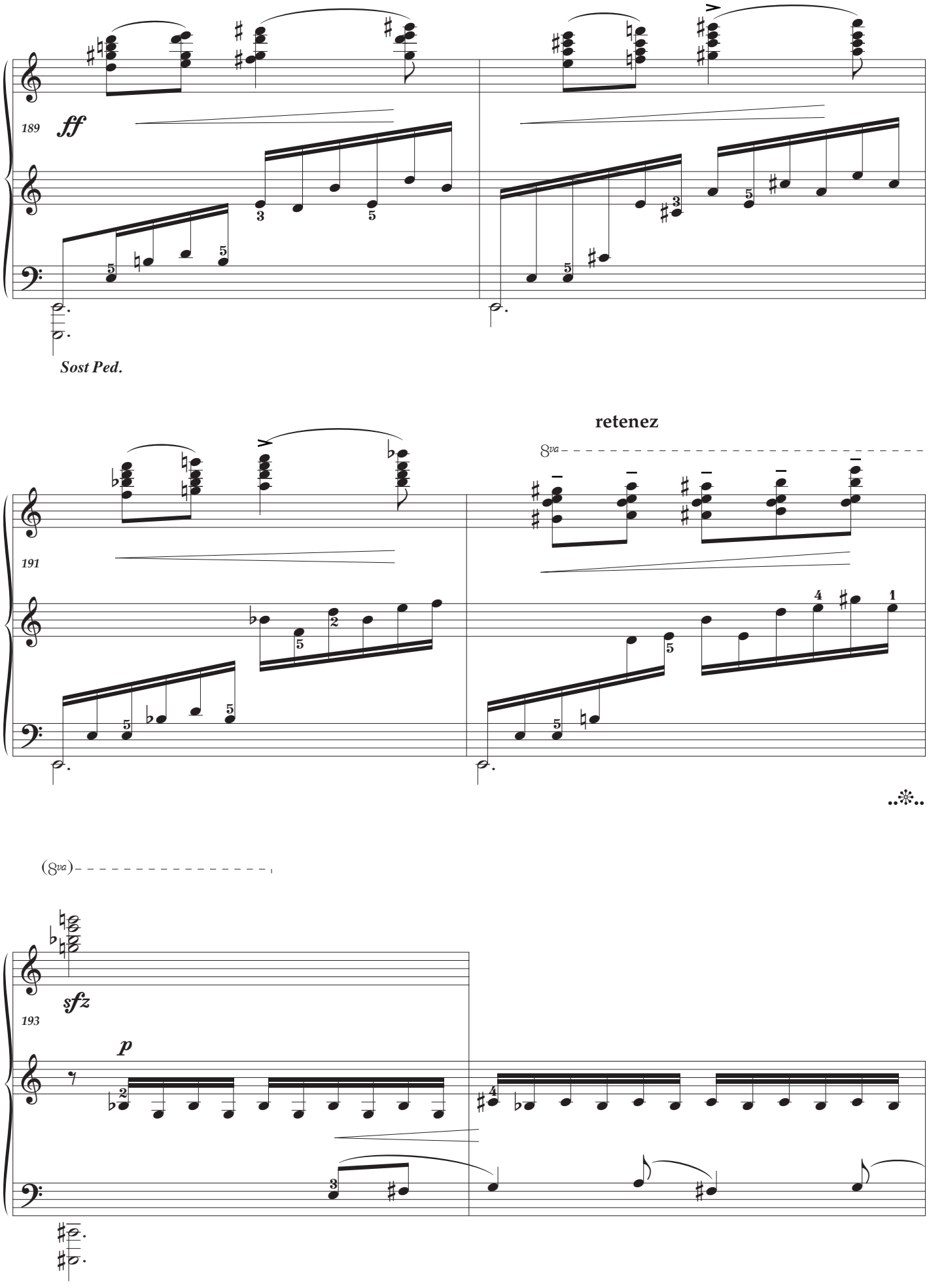

129
ppp
133
137
141
ritardando
f
sfz
pp
4
4

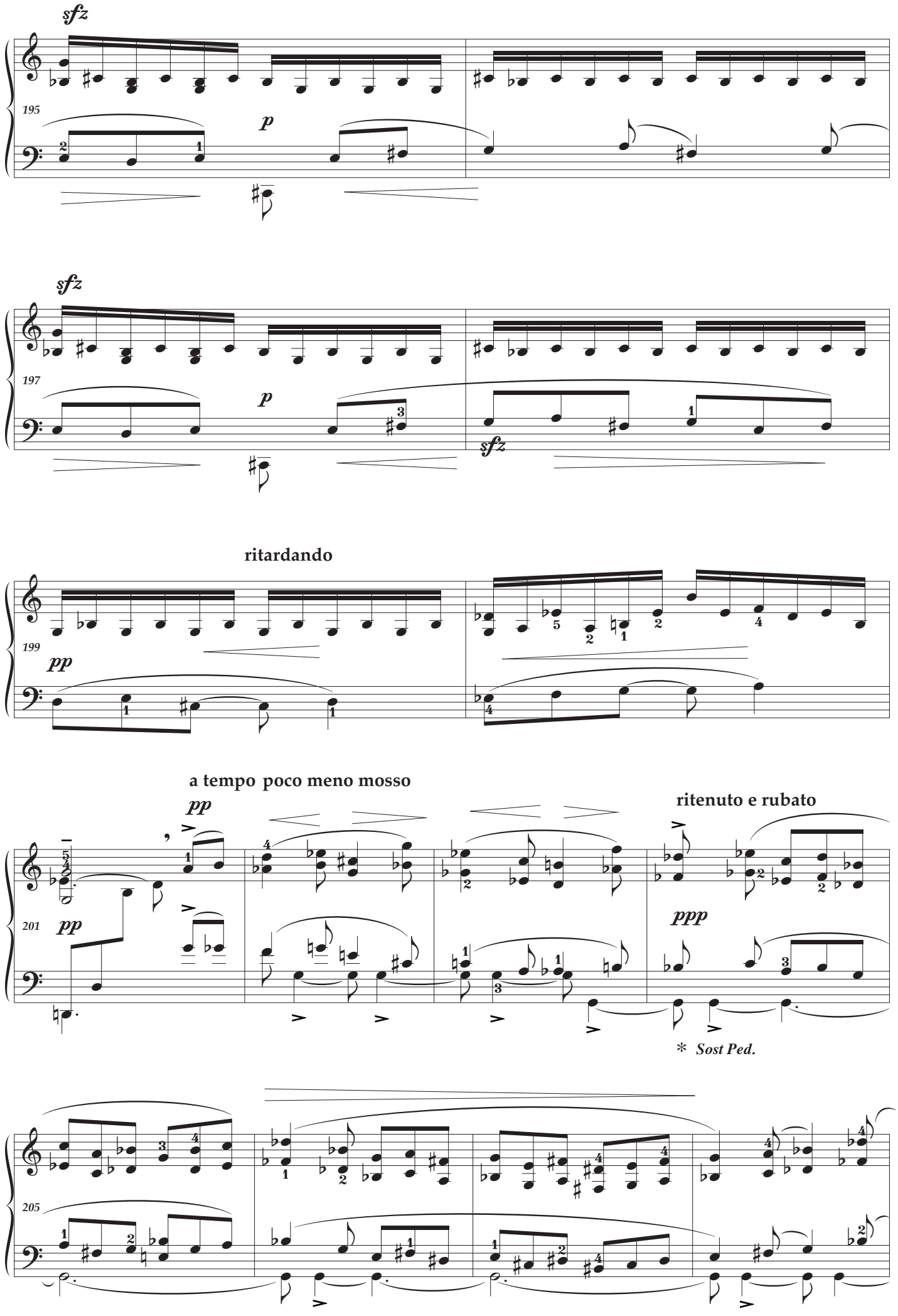

a tempo très doux et atténué
ppp
145
pp
bien chanté
sfz
sotto voce
ritardando
149
ppp
a tempo
p calme
153
sfz
sfz et brusque sfz
p
sfz
f sec et brusque
157
160

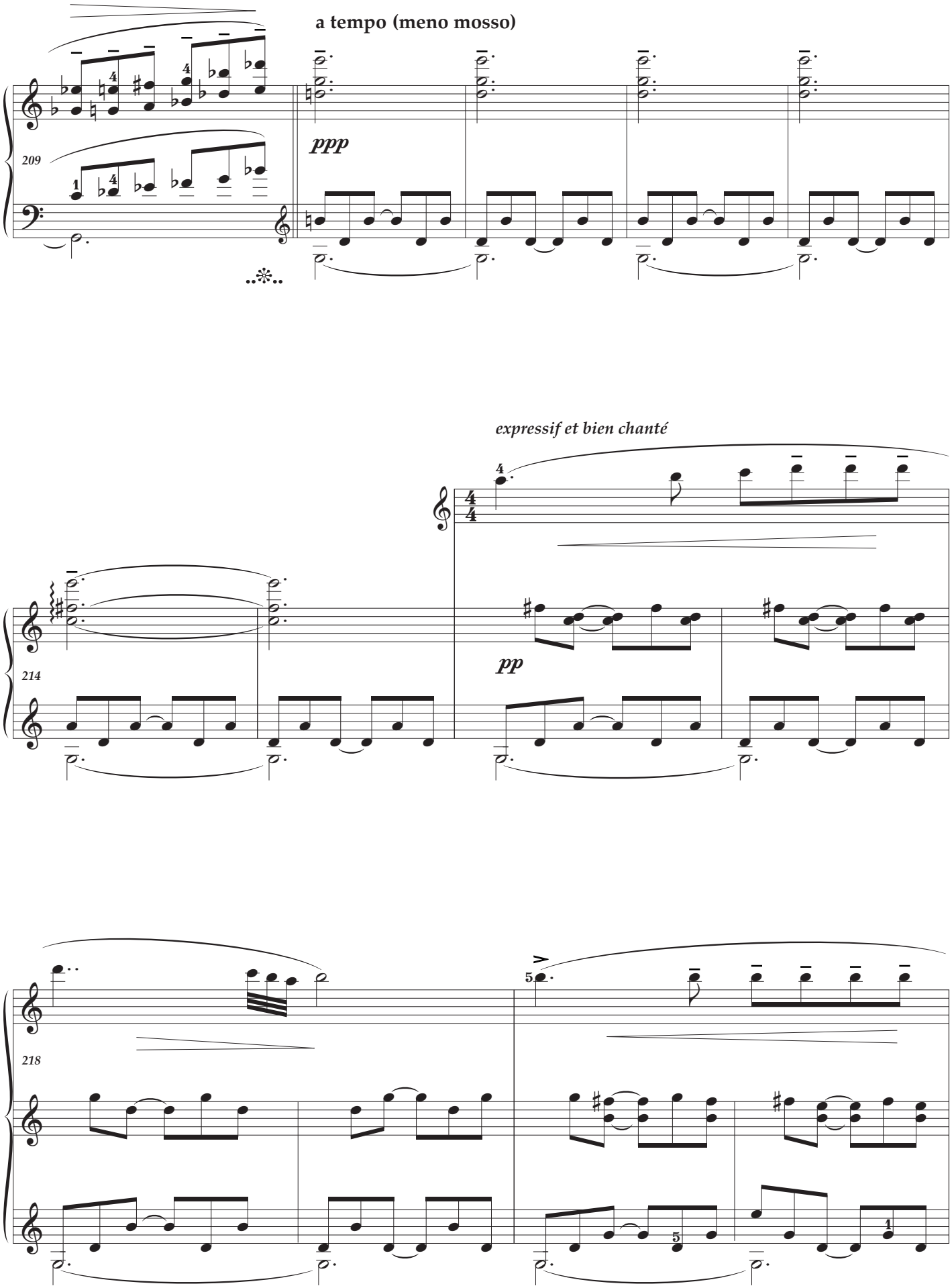

163
ff con anima
p
166
sfz et brusque
sfz
p
sfz
sfz
f sec et brusque
169
172
174
ff con anima

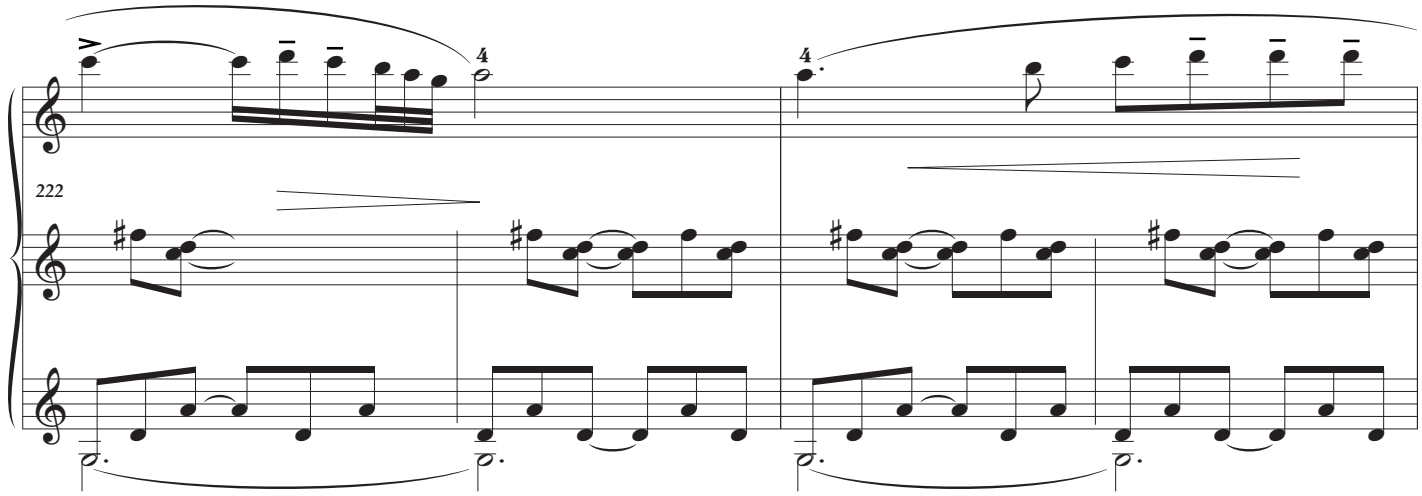

8va
177
sfz
ff con anima
f
(8va)
179
(8va)
181
sfz
toujours f et animé

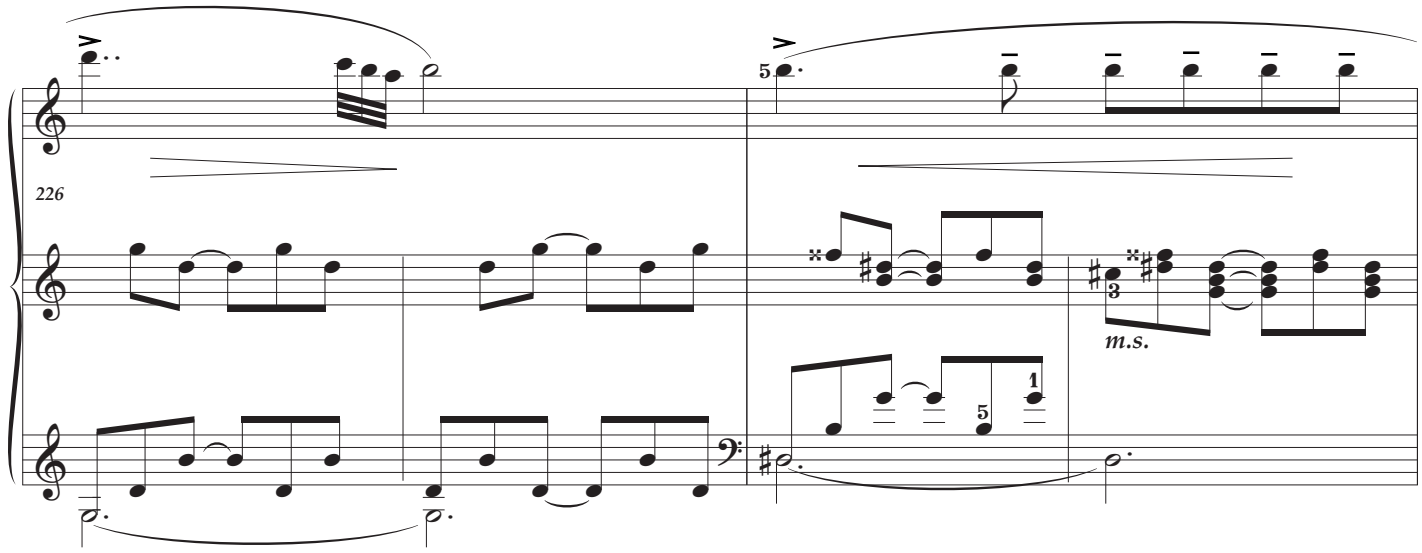

(8va)
183
185
f con anima
bien chanté
Sost Ped.
187
Sost Ped.

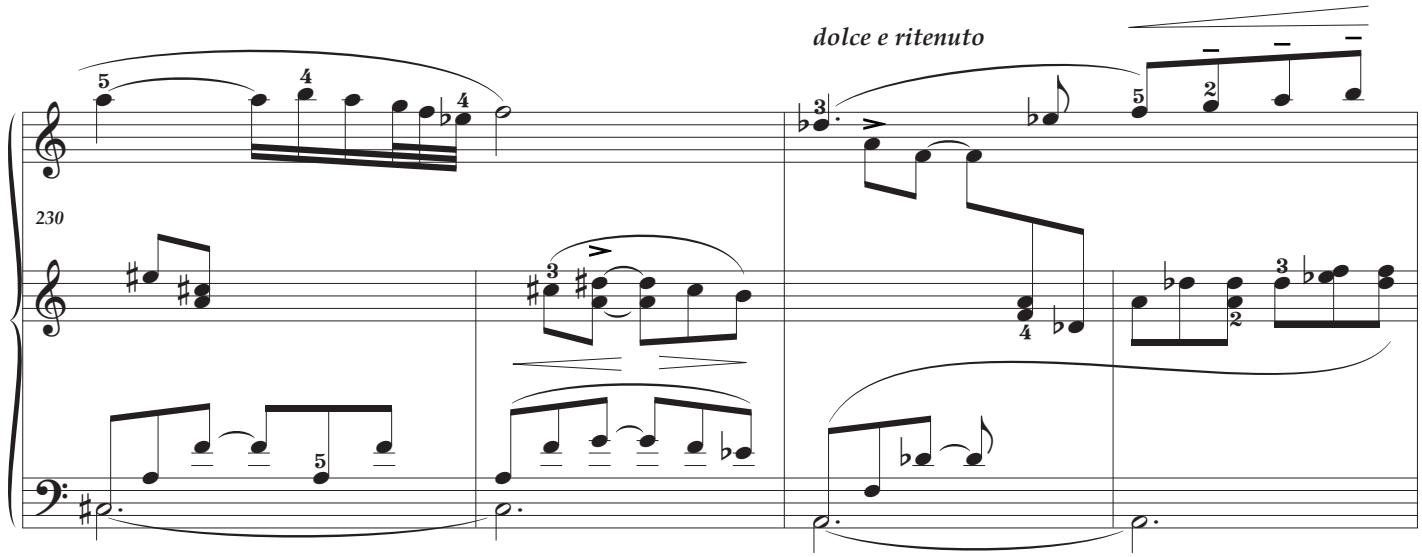

189
ff
Sost Ped.
retenez
8va
191
(8va)
193
sfz
p

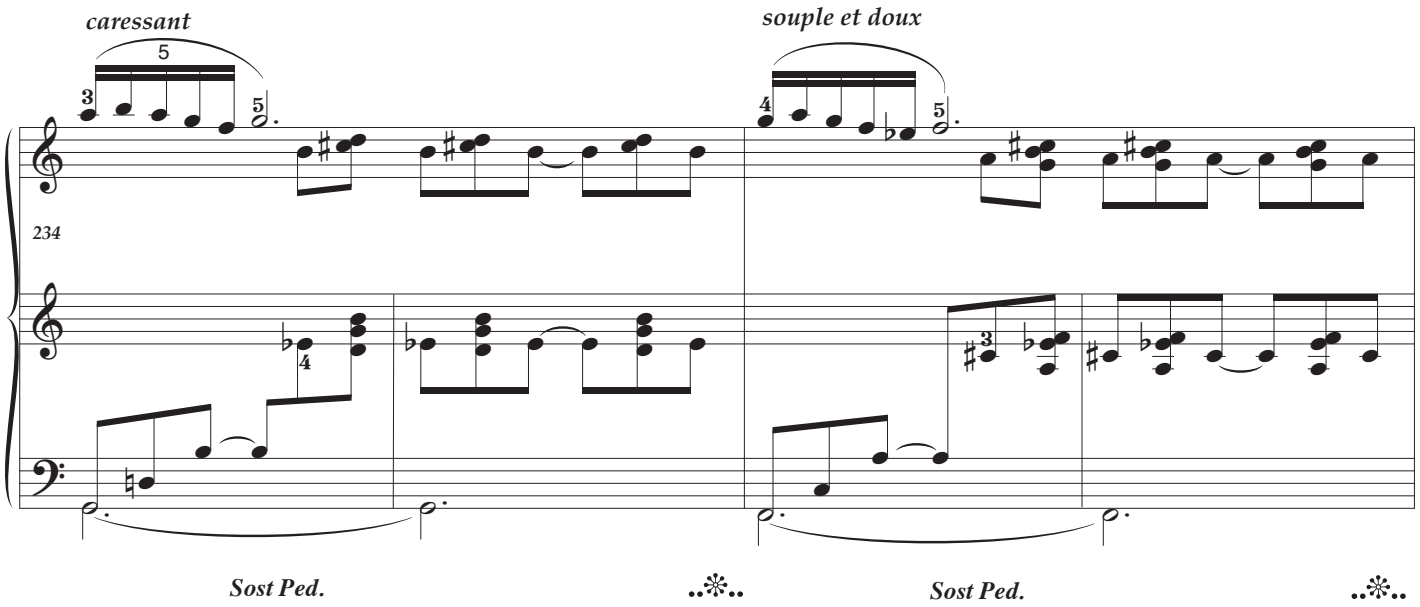

sfz
195
p
sfz
197
p
sfz
ritardando
199
pp
a tempo poco meno mosso
pp
ritenuto e rubato
201
pp
ppp
* Sost Ped.
205

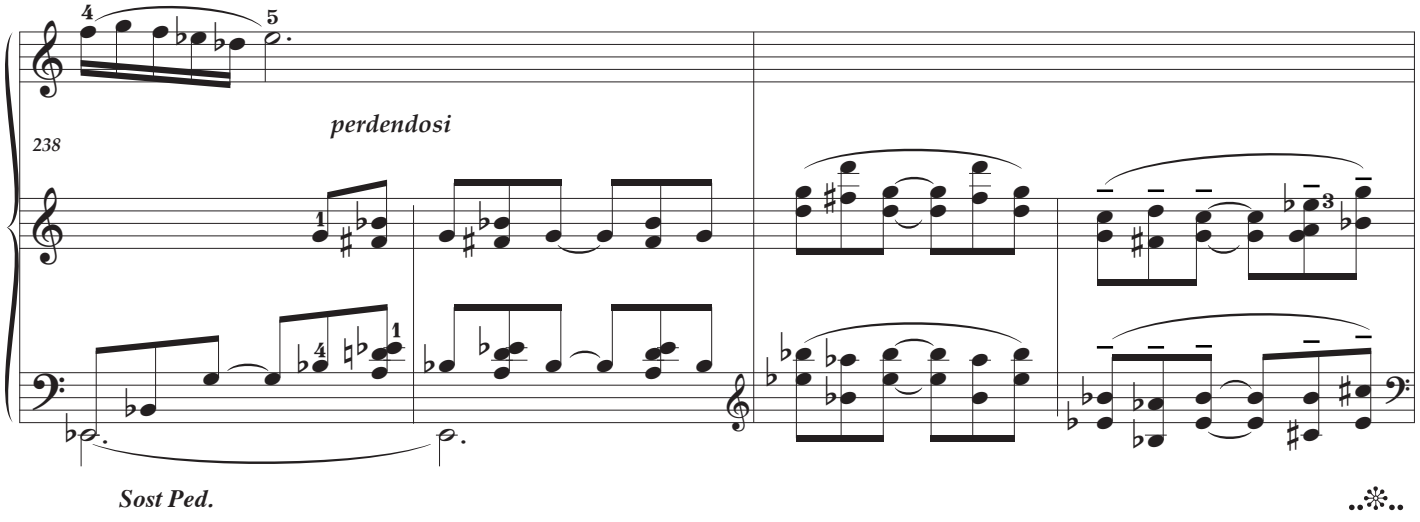

a tempo (meno mosso)
ppp
209
expressif et bien chanté
pp
214
218

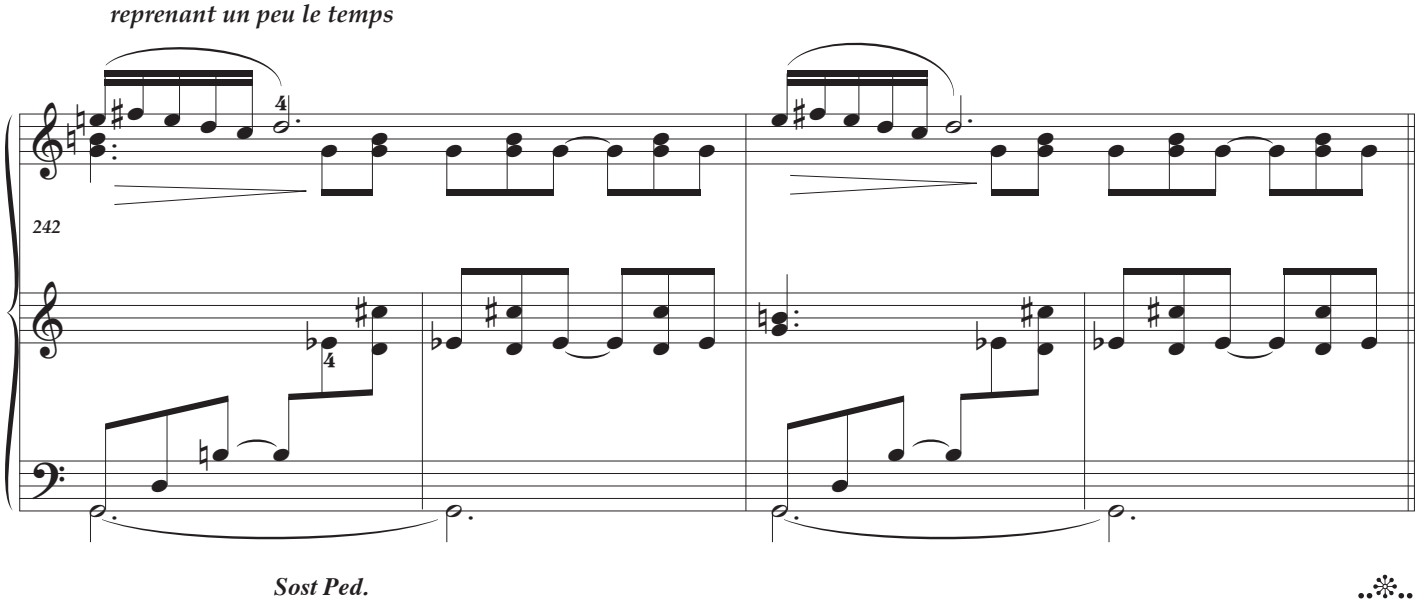

222

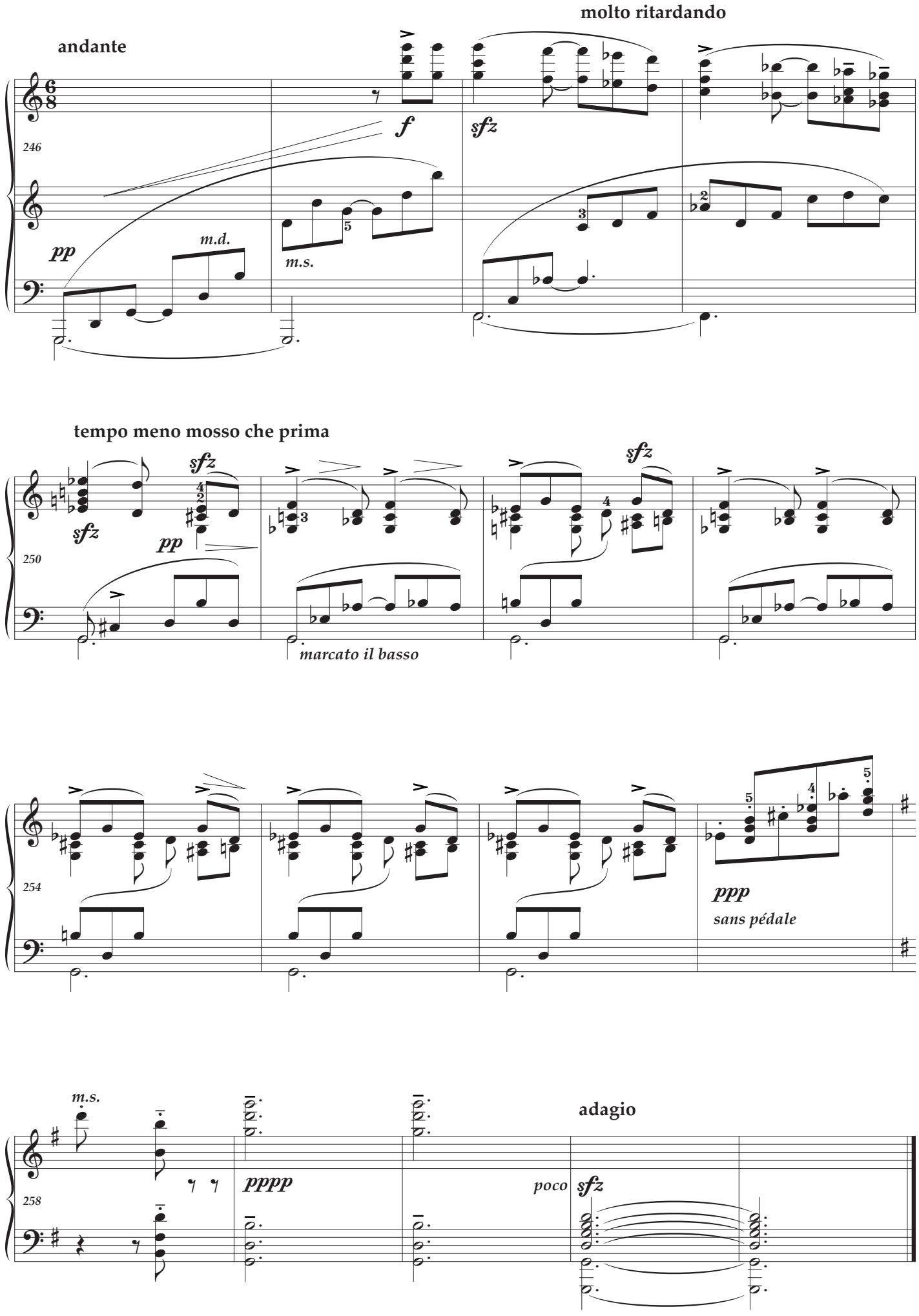

226
m.s.


dolce e ritenuto
230


caressant
souple et doux
234
Sost Ped.
Sost Ped.


perdendosi
238
Sost Ped.


reprenant un peu le temps
242
Sost Ped.



Paris, 22 juin 1906

T R I A N A

Triana is on the west bank of the Guadalquivir River, well-known for its Romany community. Probably the most popular piece of the collection, the music evokes a flamenco *fiesta*, with strumming guitars, clicking castanets, hand clapping, and stamping feet. We hear a *sevillanas* and a *pasodoble torero*, trumpeted by the band at bullfights.

This passionate music is certainly very difficult to read and play, and one is very tempted to leave out quite a few notes, or to at least rearrange them to suit one's own hand and technique; indeed, 10 fingers often seem inadequate to manage all the crossing of hands, leaps and large chords.

The explosion of *Triana* comes as a complete contrast and it features a popular type of flamenco called *seguidillas sevillanas*. The first part develops the rhythm with great gusto, while in the second a lilting theme appears. The development, based on these two elements, becomes very complex and interesting, and naturally, rather difficult. The problem posed is therefore how to play it correctly without overloading the character of the work, which is amusing, sparkling and has a hidden accompaniment of castanets.

Joaquín Malats gave a preview performance in Madrid, where its success required him to play it again as an encore, and the same happened in Barcelona shortly afterwards. "We passionately applauded your *Triana*", wrote Breton, "you are on the right path". And Malats enthused, "everyone says the same — *Triana* is adorable". It is not a bravura work, as quite a few pianists think, but one of grace and nuance.

— Enrique Franco

The popularity that certain more easily accessible pieces have always enjoyed (one thinks in particular of *Triana* and *El Corpus en Sevilla*, which immediately became test pieces at the Paris Conservatoire) no doubt played a part in obscuring an overall view of *Iberia* and in marginalising pieces deemed too abstruse or unplayable. Posterity, even today, has all too often responded to only certain aspects of the work — its flashes of brilliance, its larger-than-life vitality, not to say its exoticism — and in doing so has ignored its dreamy or sombre aspects, its tragic and poignant accents. If Falla's music is characterised by its brutal contrasts between light and shade, it is half-tones that dominate here, hesitation between major and minor tonalities and the subtlety of the most delicately nuanced sentiments. The choice of keys is decisive, since each of them brings its own specific colour and light: one thinks, for example, of the luminous F sharp major of *El Corpus en Sevilla*, a Lisztian use of the key (as in the Hungarian composer's *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude*) that clearly looks forward to the principal tonality of Messiaen's Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jésus.

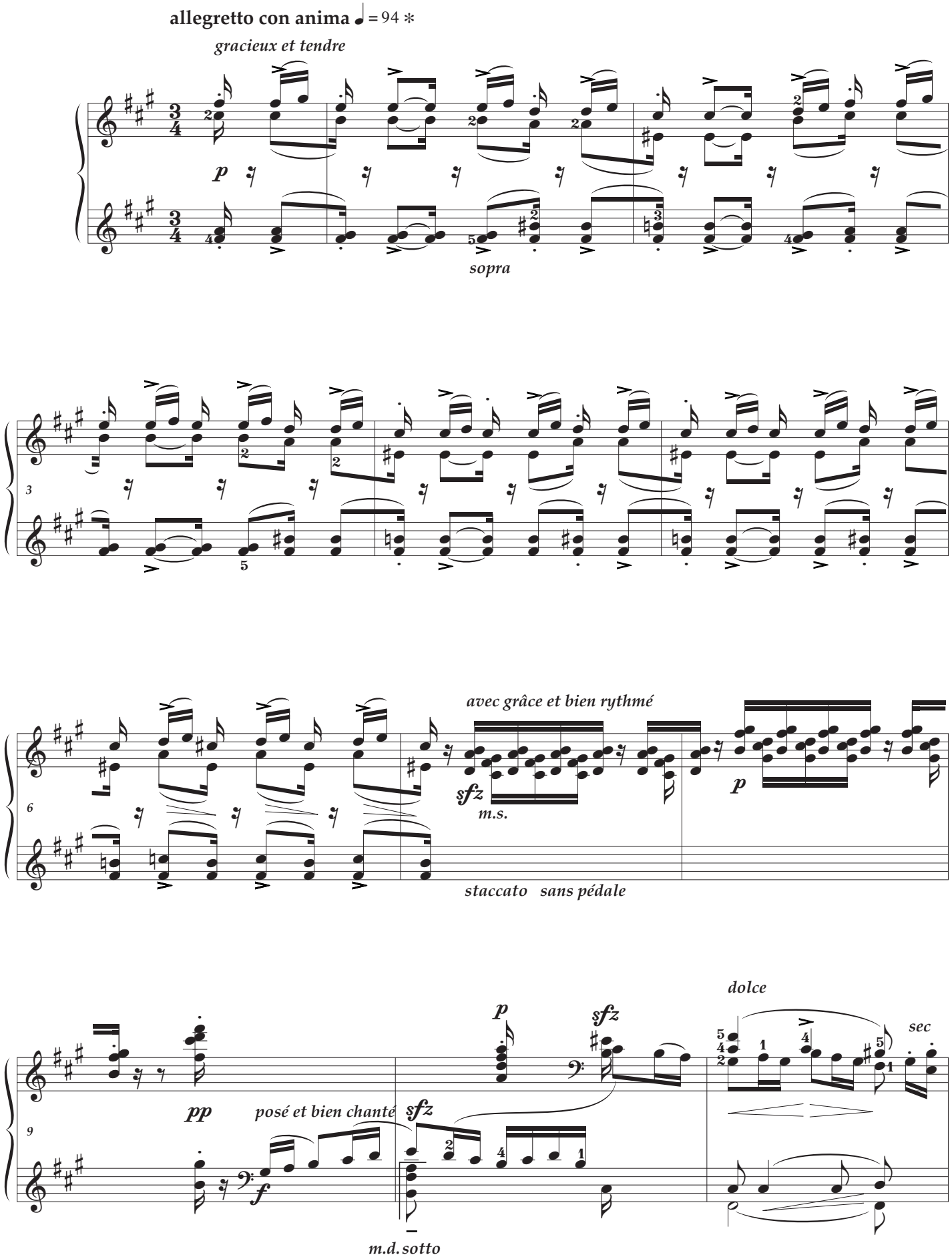
— Jean-François Heisser

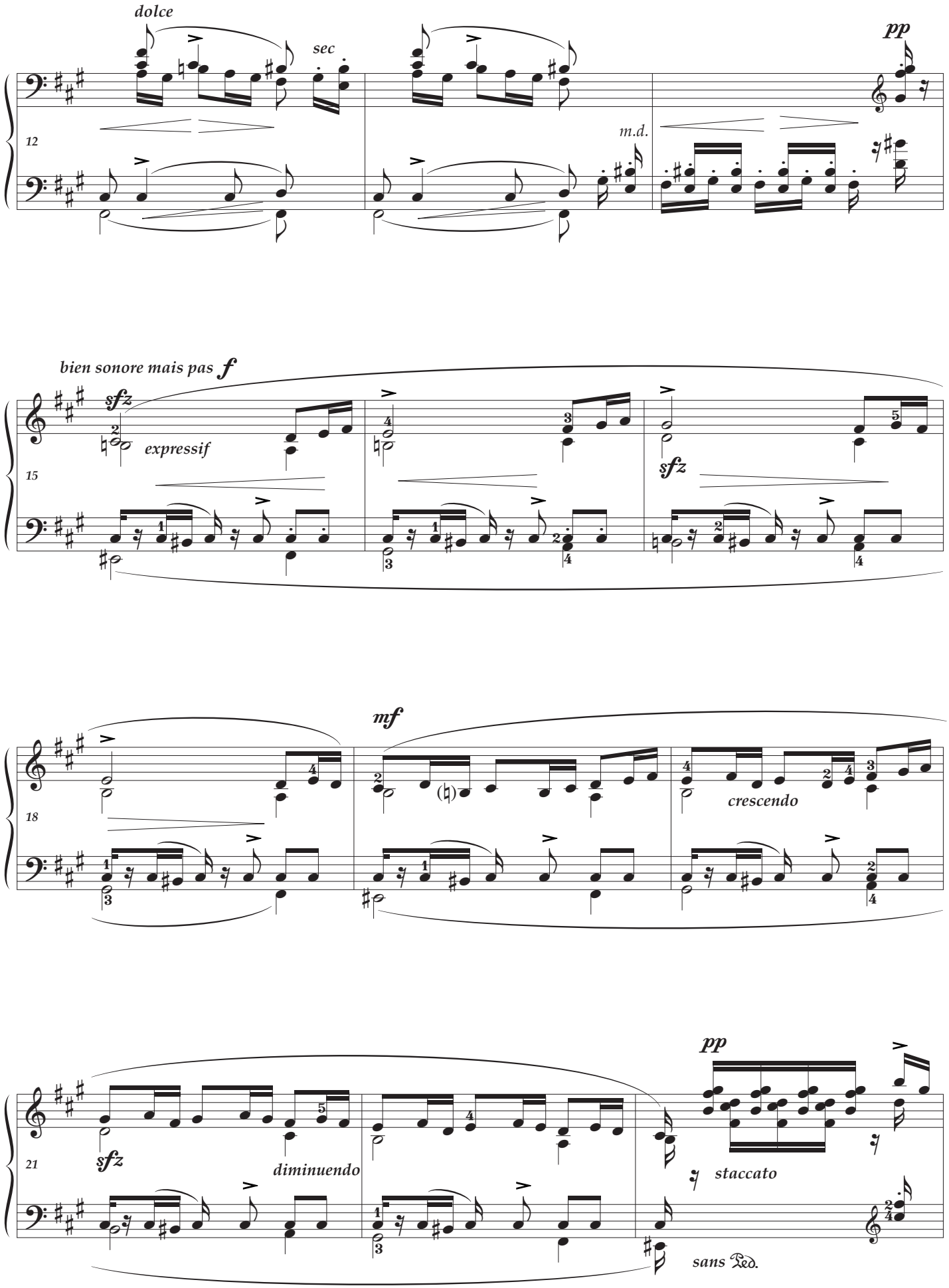
EMILIO SÁNCHEZ-PERRIER barrio de Triana c1888

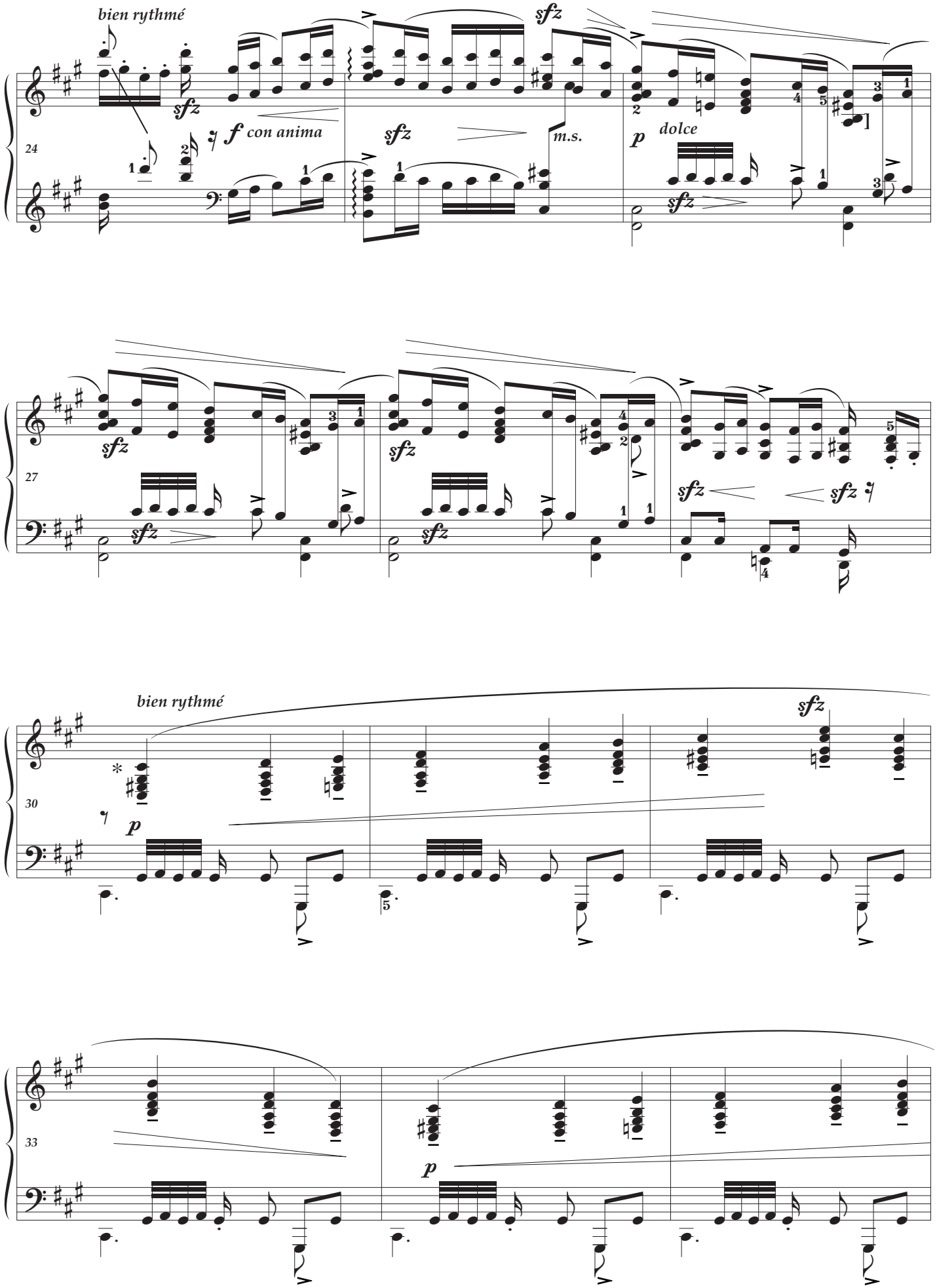
- duration 5'
- The original metronome speed is ♩. = 94, possibly a little too fast to portray the character *gracieux et tendre*
- Albeniz's dynamic range is relatively restrained in this piece : ***ppp*** to ***fffff***
- There are many, many pedal (and other signs) and an observation by Debussy can provide a pertinent object lesson: "pedalling cannot be written down. It varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another."
- In line with the other pieces in *Iberia* Albeniz presented *Triana* with a unique key signature, with modifications in this edition
- **30-37** simplification of rhythmic values
- **58-89** this passionate and beautifully crafted central (main) section has been minimally modified to make it easier to read and slightly easier to play. Practically all the notes and signs are there but not necessarily with the original hand patterns; it is rather difficult but pianistically very rewarding.
- **66-73** presented in F with the accompaniment 'rearranged'. There is an alternative version omitting a few RH octaves on page **56.**
- **100** B♯ is perhaps more logical... a possible error
- **122-125** added octave and *sostenuto* pedal are editorial

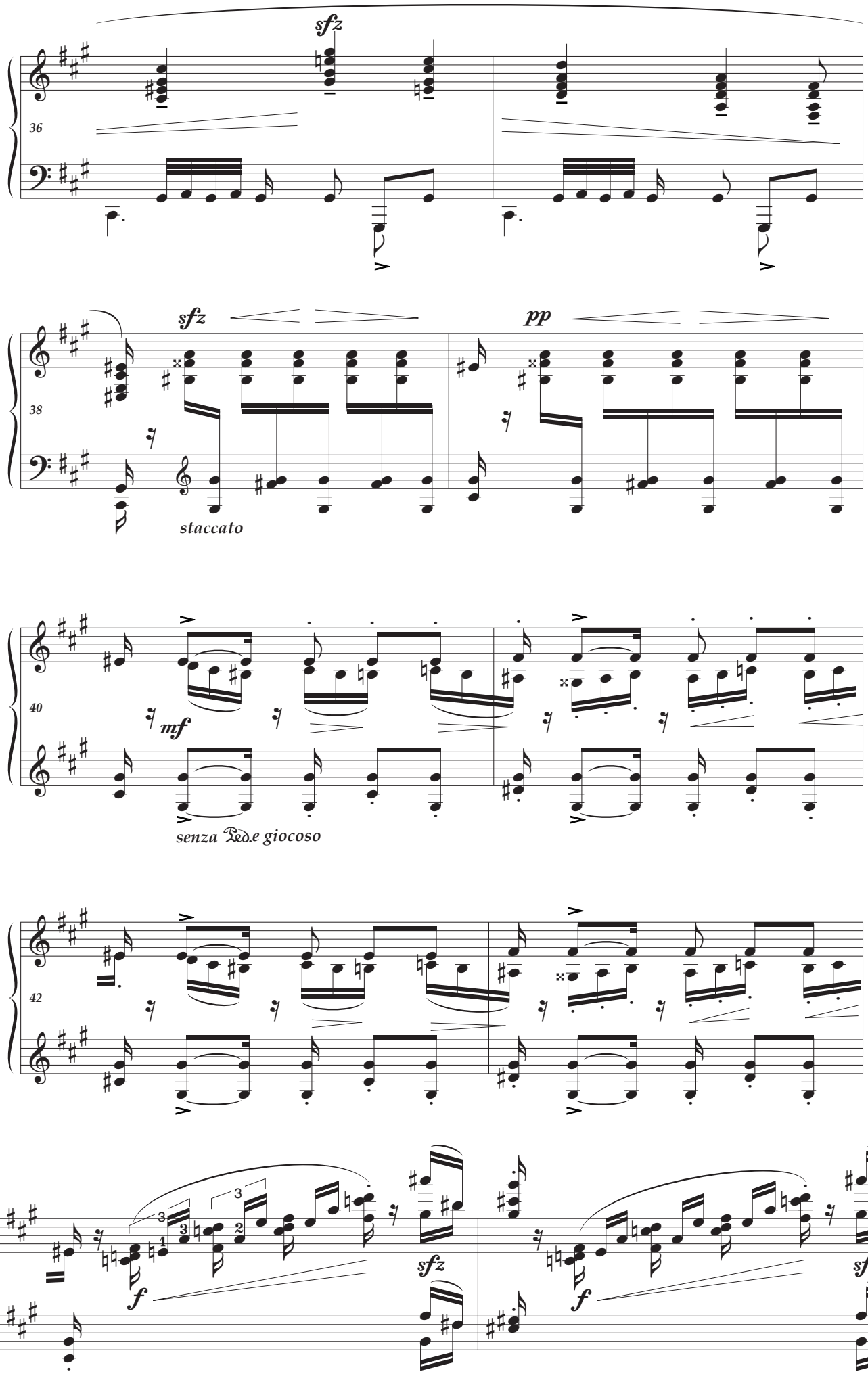
FRANCISCO GOYA
Doña Isabel Lobo Velasco de Porcel 1805

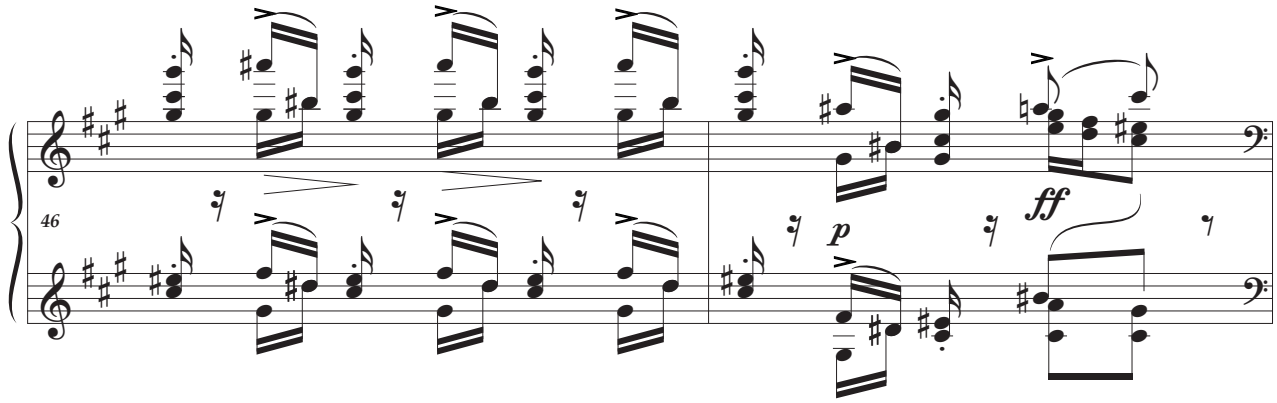
T R I A N A

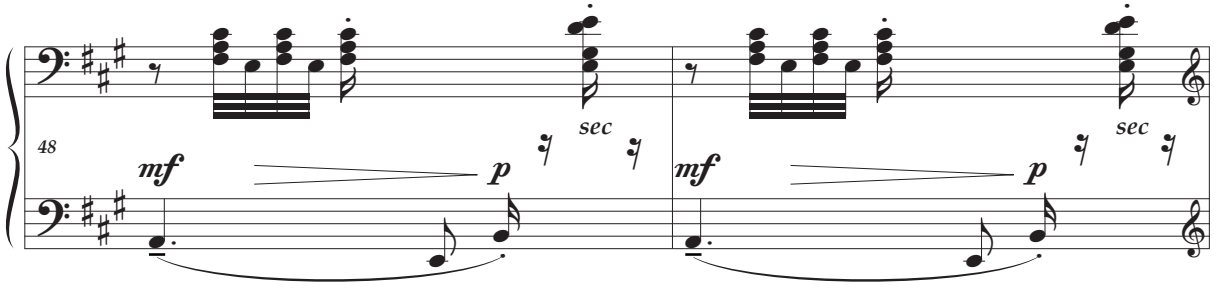

allegretto con anima ♩ = 94 *
gracieux et tendre
p
sopra
3
6
avec grâce et bien rythmé
sfz
m.s.
p
staccato sans pédale
9
dolce
p
sfz
sec
pp
posé et bien chanté
sfz
f
m.d. sotto

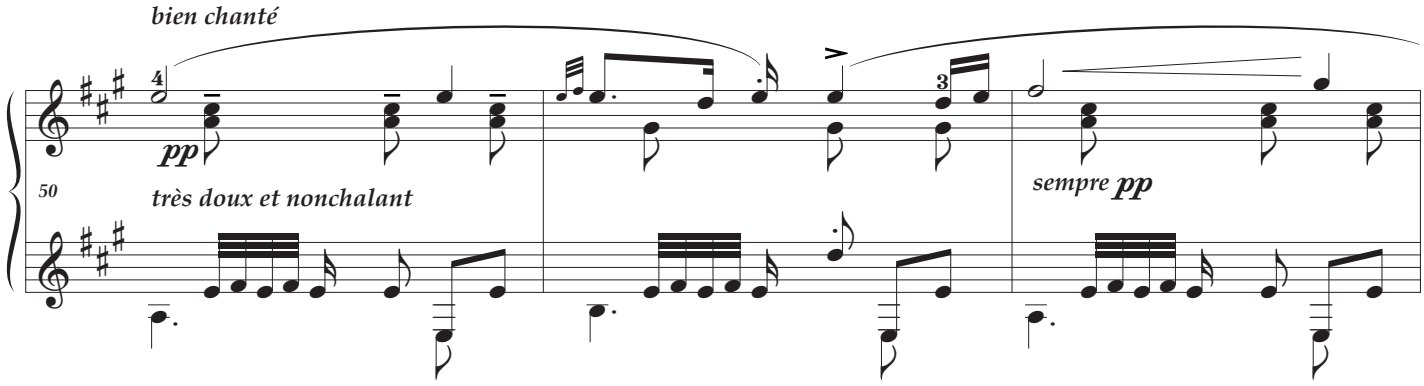

dolce
sec
pp
12
m.d.
bien sonore mais pas f
sfz
expressif
15
sfz
mf
18
crescendo
pp
21
sfz
diminuendo
staccato
sans Ped.

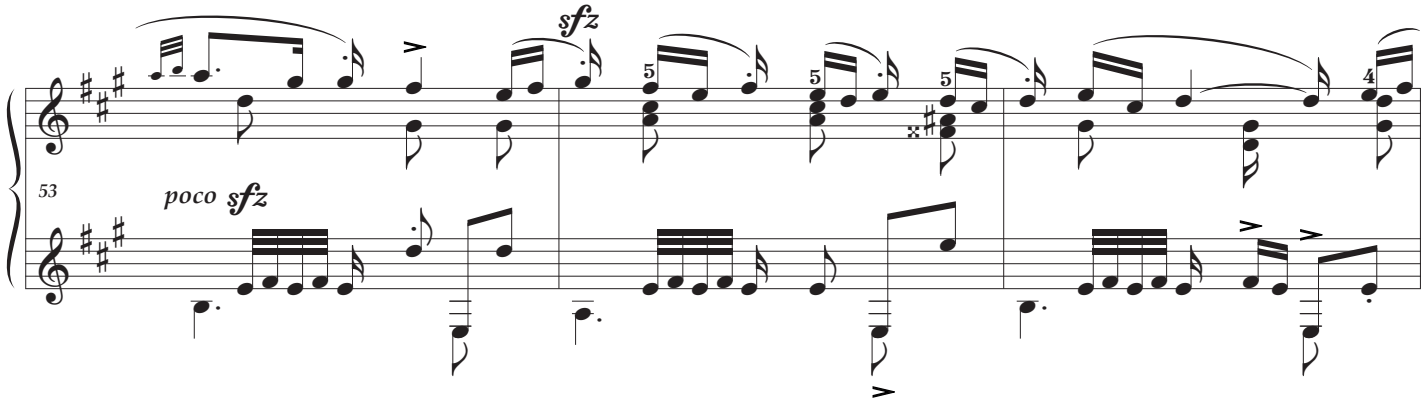

bien rythmé
sfz
f con anima
sfz
m.s.
sfz
p
dolce
sfz
24
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
27
bien rythmé
p
sfz
30
p
33

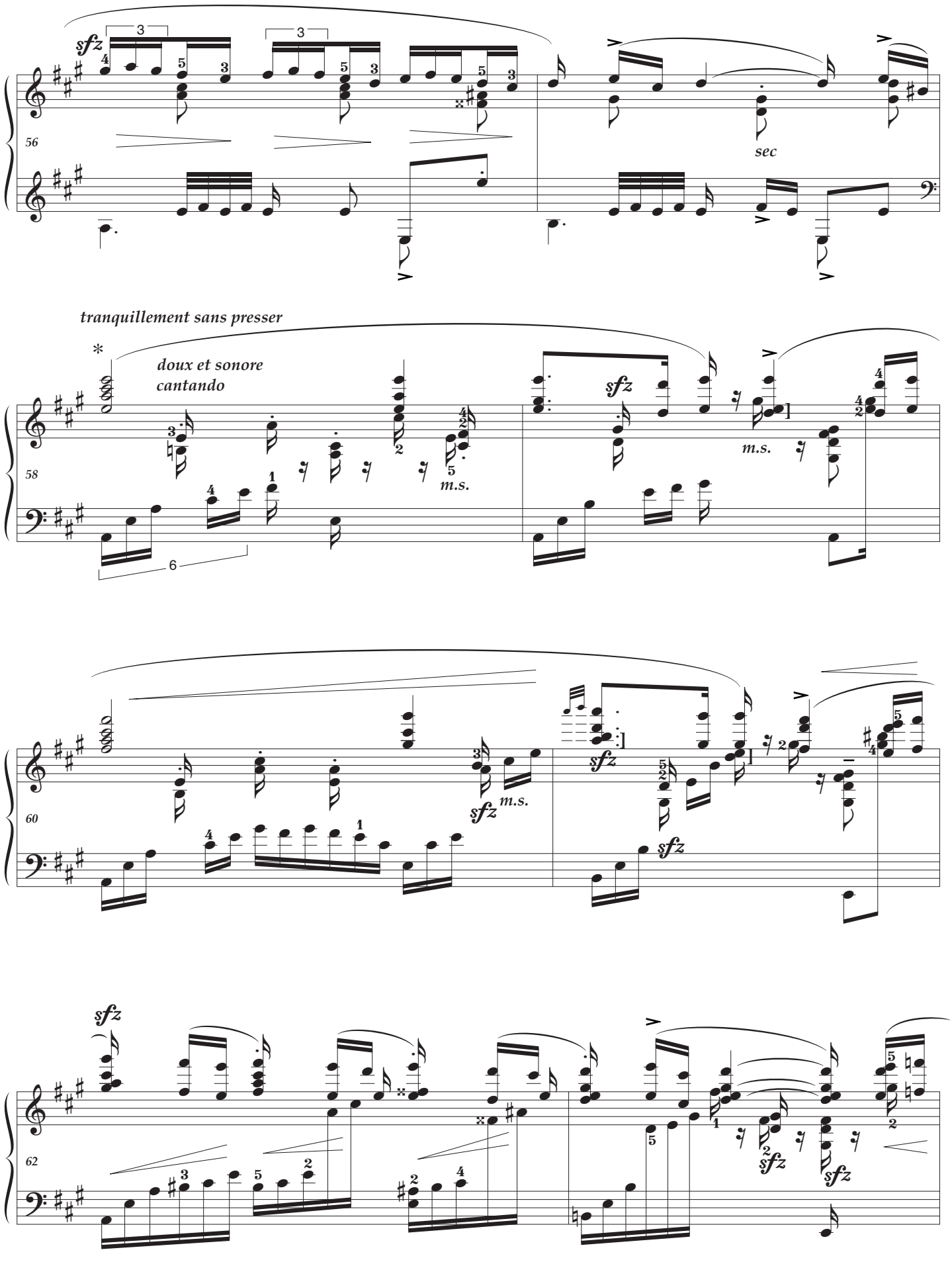

sfz
36
sfz
pp
38
staccato
mf
40
senza Ped.e giocoso
42
f
sfz
44

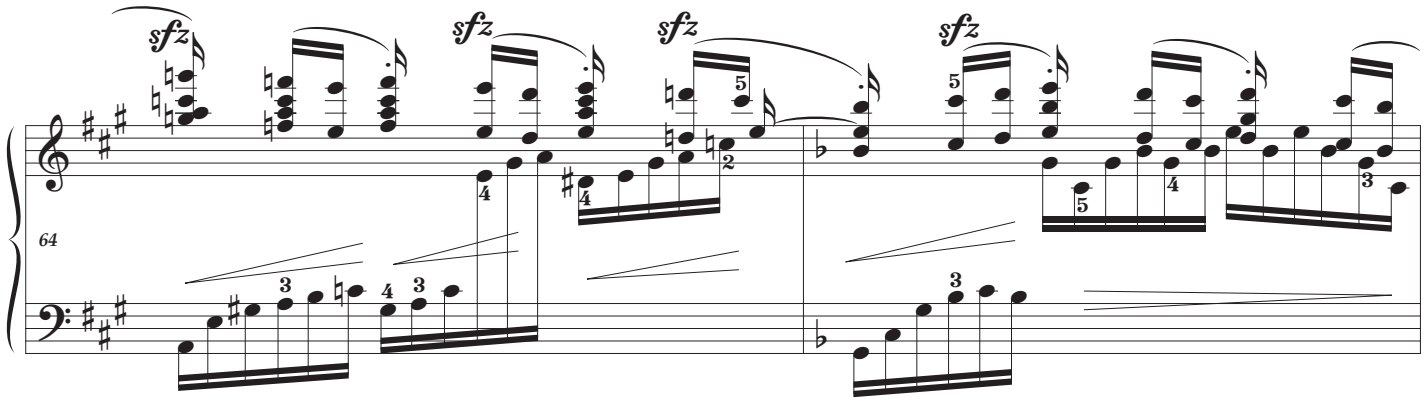

46
ff
p


48
mf
p
sec
mf
p
sec

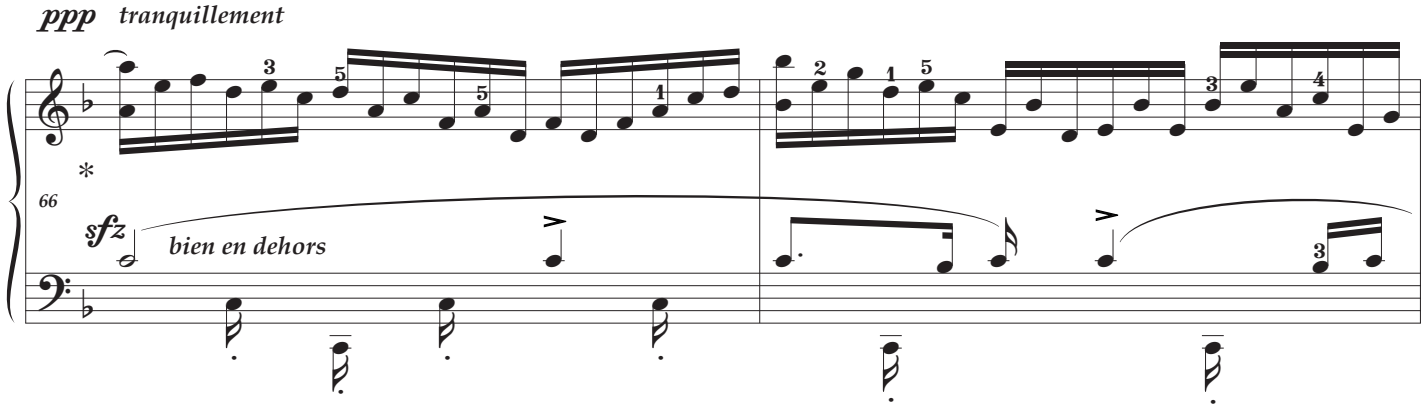

bien chanté
pp
50
très doux et nonchalant
sempre pp

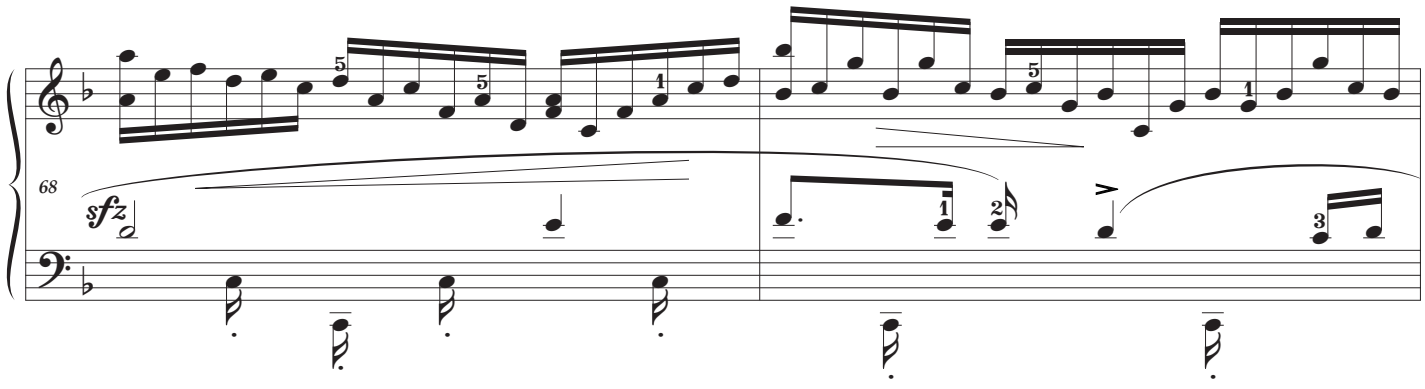

sfz
53
poco sfz

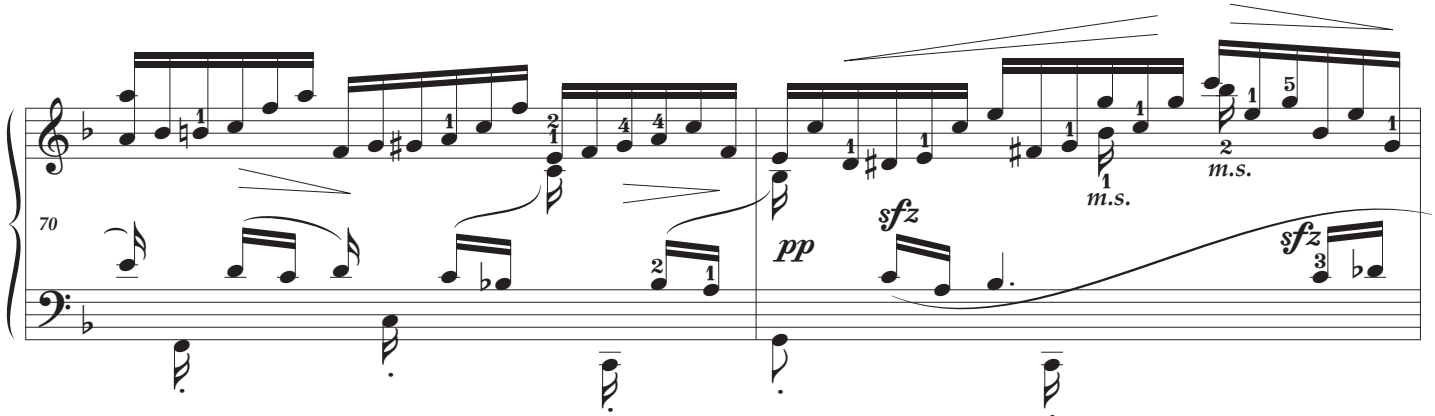

sfz
56
sec
tranquillement sans presser
doux et sonore
cantando
58
m.s.
sfz
60
62

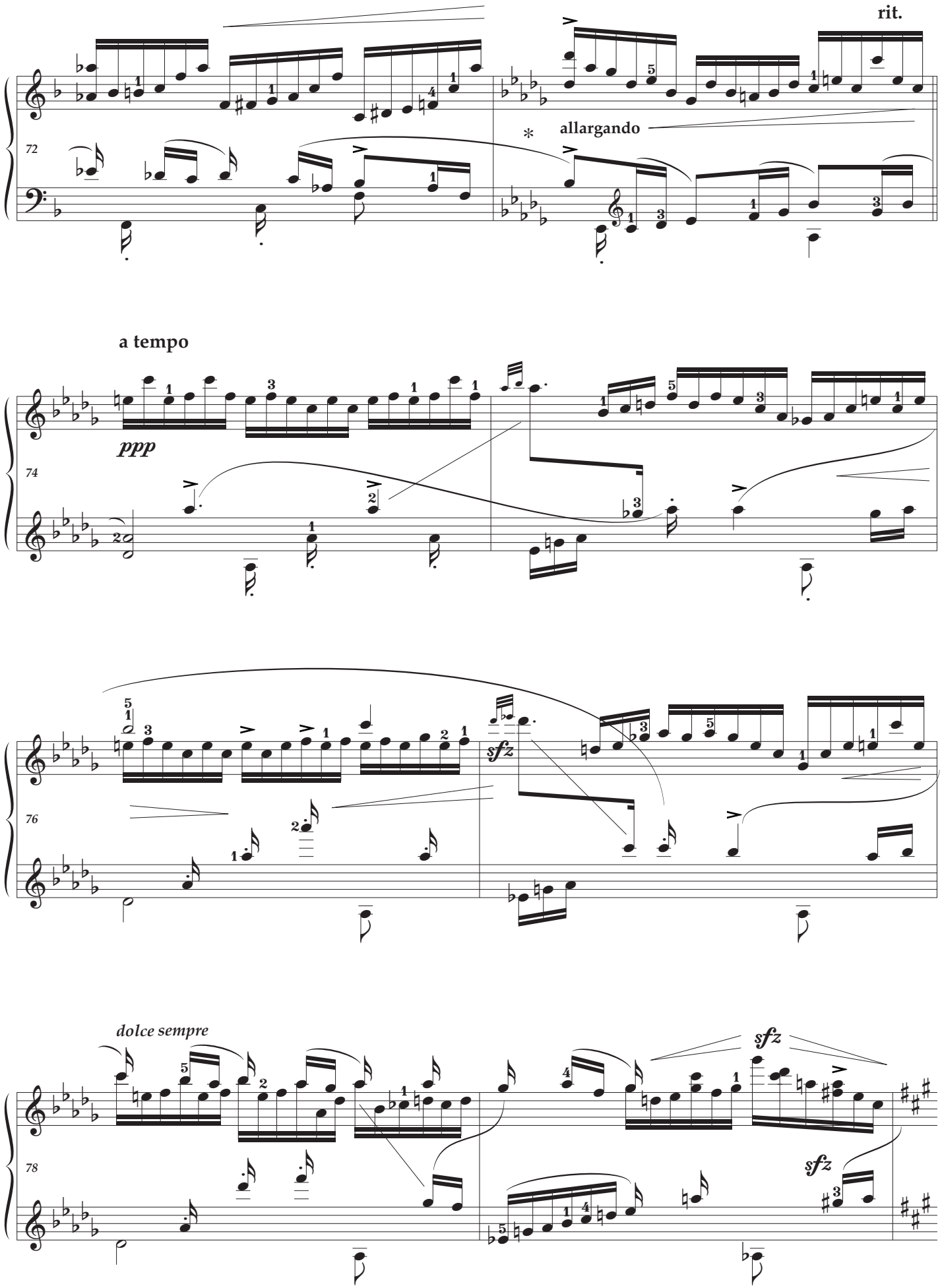


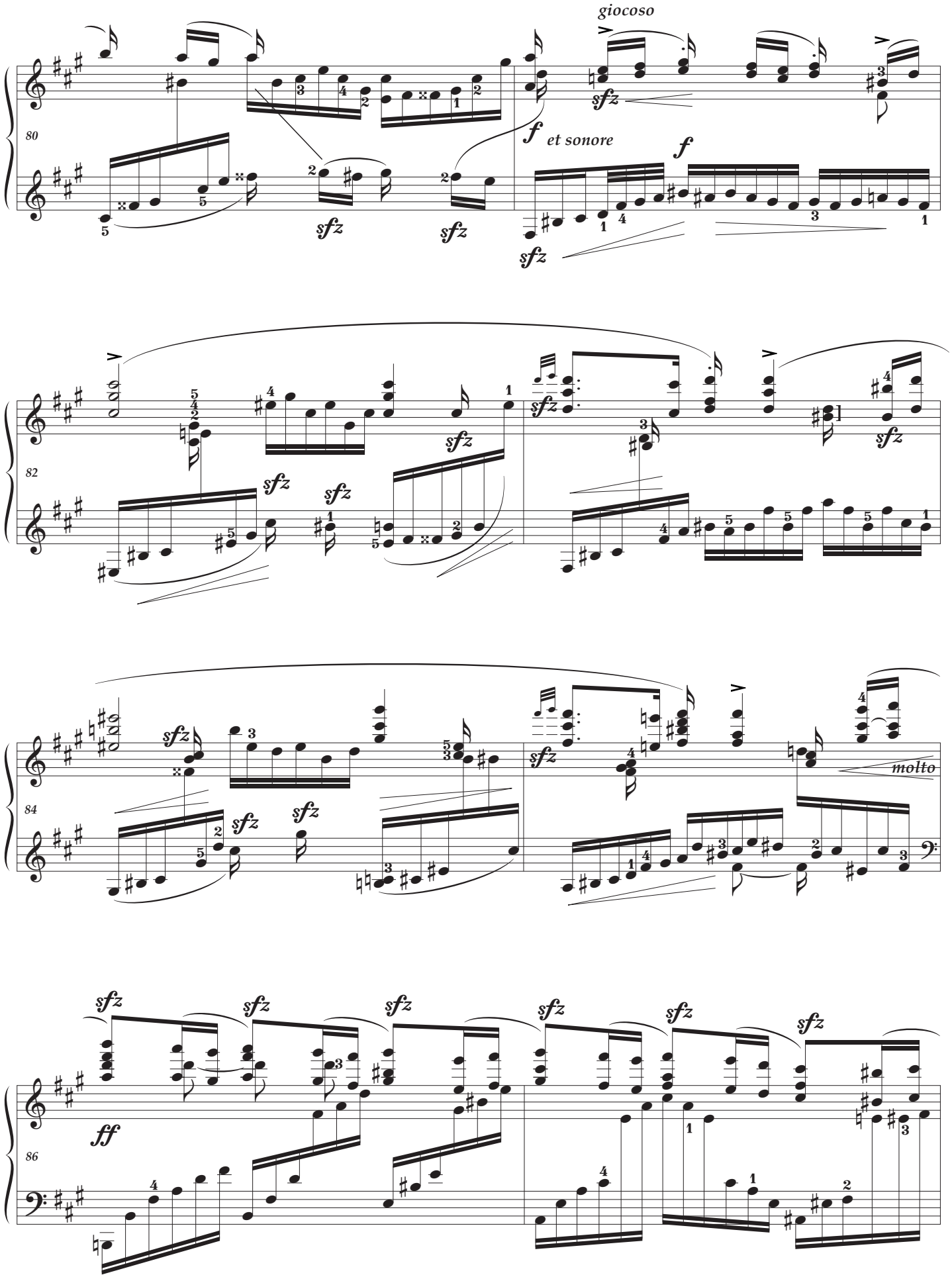
see page 56 for an alternative arrangement

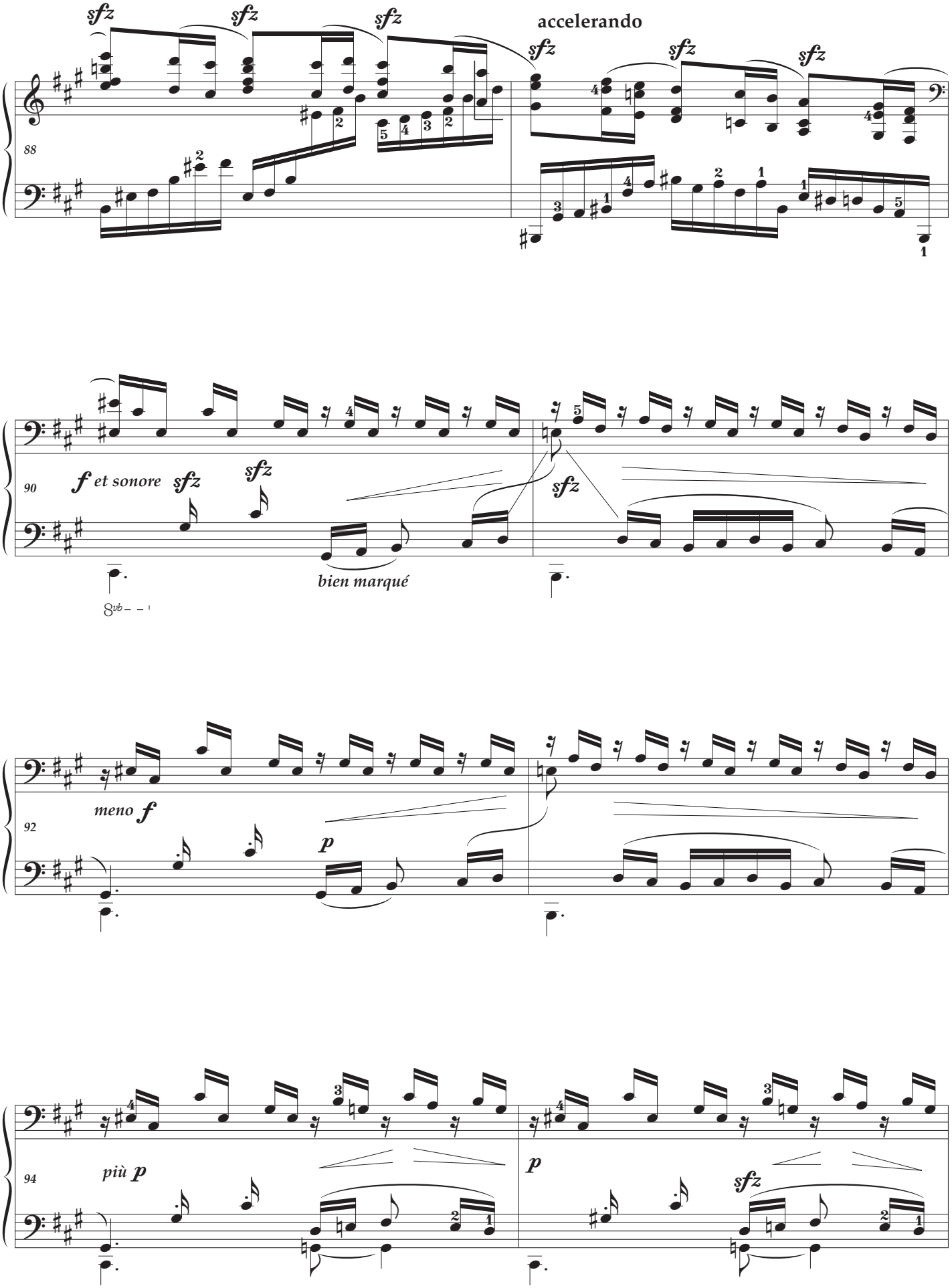


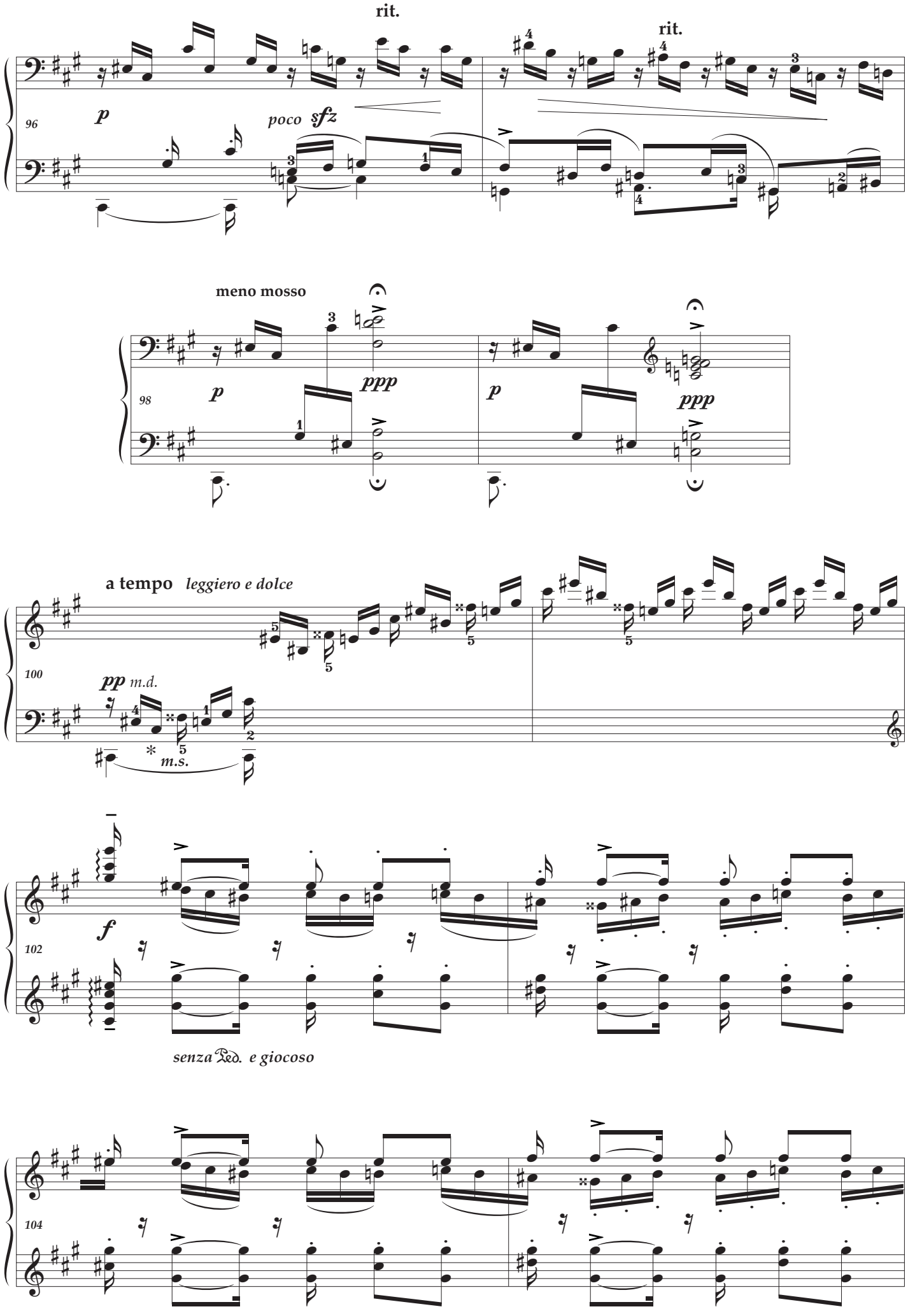


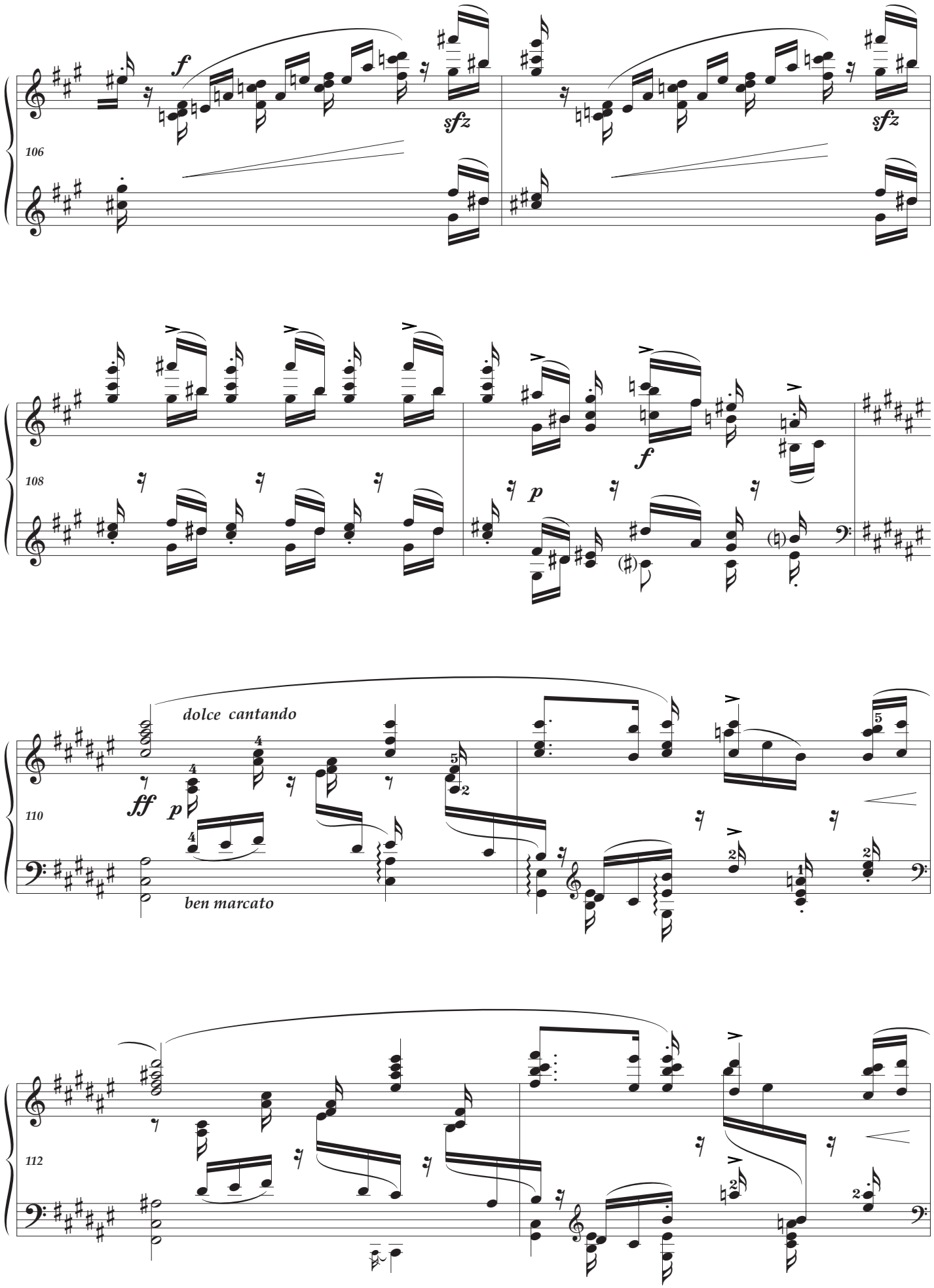


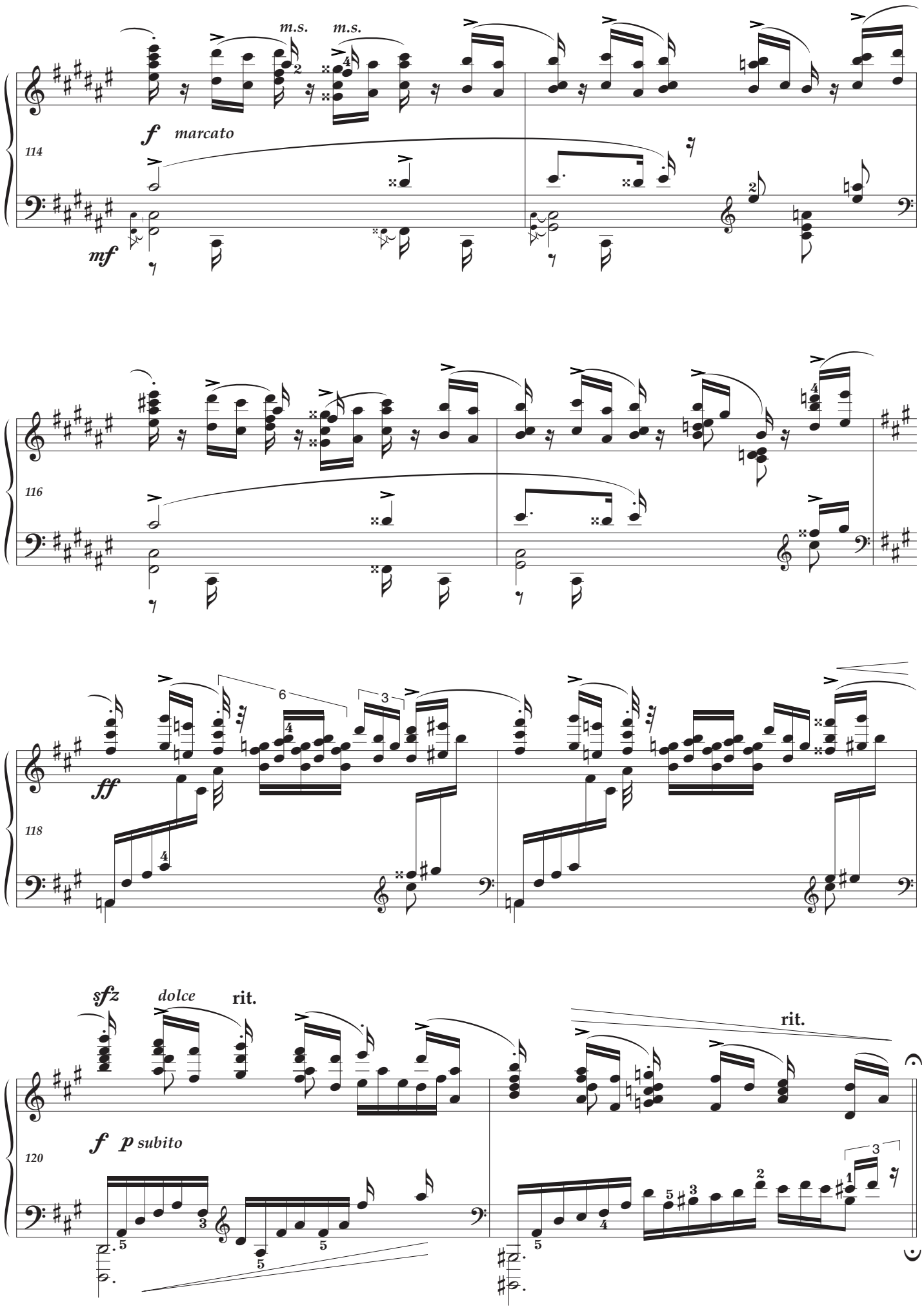

rit.
allargando
72
a tempo
ppp
74
sfz
76
dolce sempre
sfz
sfz
78

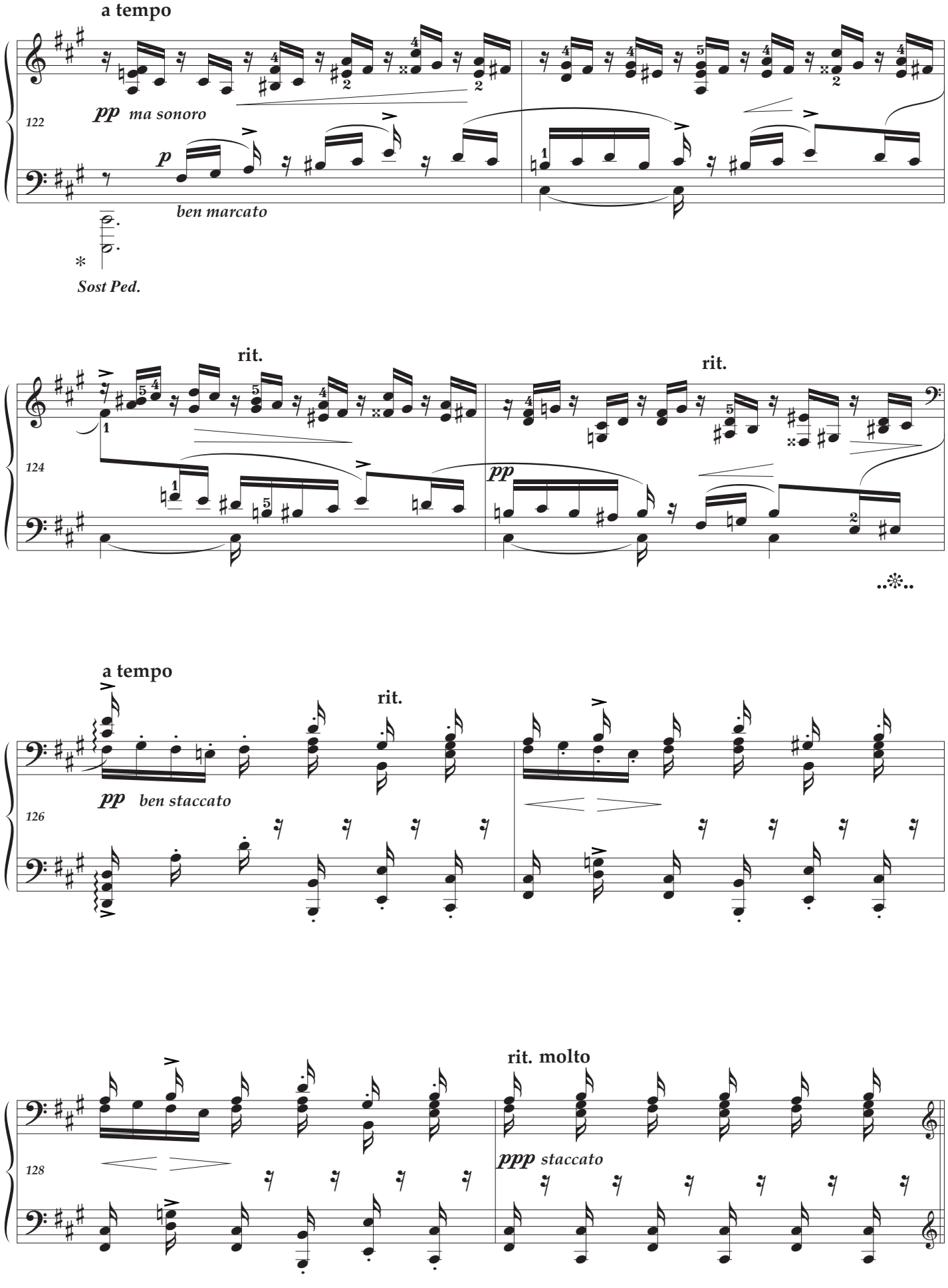

giocoso
et sonore
molto

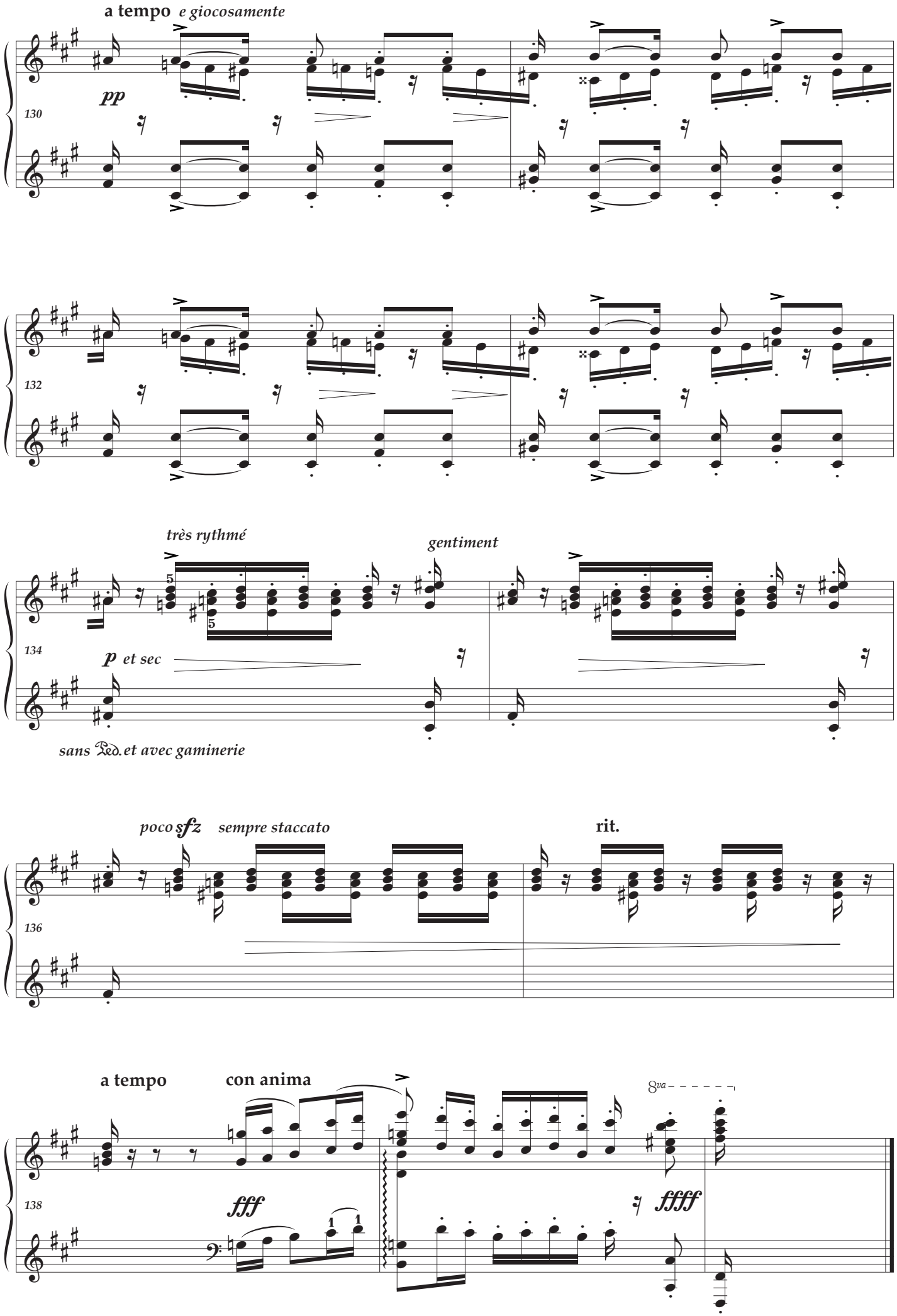

88
sfz
sfz
sfz
accelerando
sfz
sfz
sfz
90
f et sonore
sfz
sfz
sfz
bien marqué
8vb
92
meno f
p
94
più p
p
sfz


rit.
rit.
96
p
poco sfz
meno mosso
98
p
ppp
p
ppp
a tempo leggiero e dolce
100
pp m.d.
m.s.
102
f
senza Ped. e giocoso
104

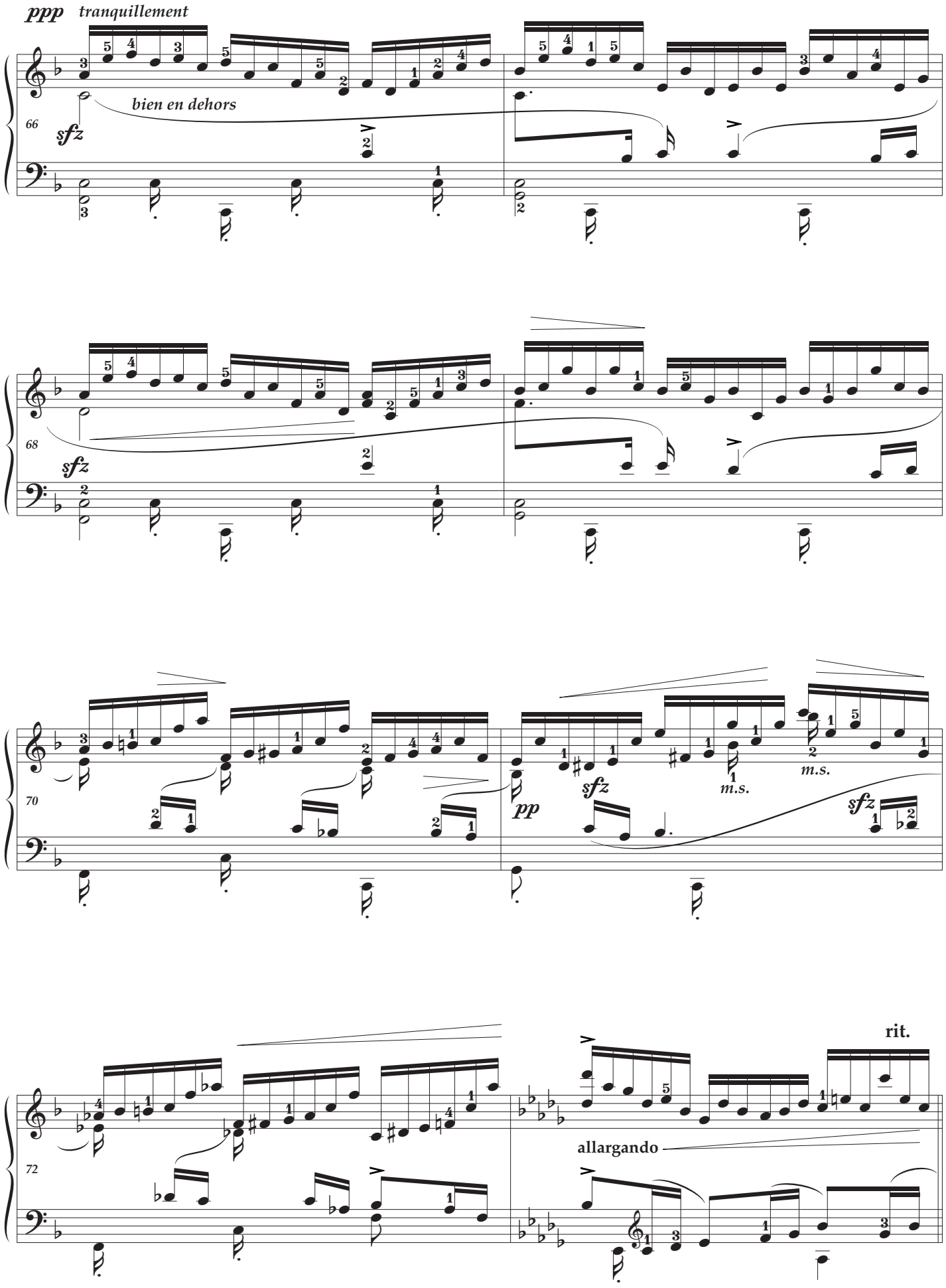

106
f
sfz
sfz
108
f
p
110
dolce cantando
ff
p
ben marcato
112


m.s.
m.s.
f marcato
114
mf
116
ff
118
sfz
dolce
rit.
rit.
f p subito
120


a tempo
122
pp ma sonoro
p
ben marcato
Sost Ped.
rit.
rit.
124
pp
a tempo
rit.
126
pp ben staccato
rit. molto
128
ppp staccato


a tempo e giocosamente
pp
130
132
très rythmé
gentiment
134
p et sec
sans Ped. et avec gaminerie
poco sfz sempre staccato
rit.
136
a tempo
con anima
8va
138
fff
ffff

alternative arrangement



continues page 48

vocabulary

I

sec et précis	*crisp and precise*
gracieux	*graceful*
vibrant	*resonant*
bien martelé et canaille	*well articulated and mischievous*
bien marqué et léger	*well marked and light*
bien rythmé	*rhythmical*
mais sonore	*but with full tone*
très en dehors	*much to the fore*
strident	*raucous*
sans brusquerie	*without abruptness*
petite pédale seulement jusqu'à la fin	*use only the soft pedal until the end*

II

tout ce morceau doit être joué d'una façon nonchalante et molle mais bien rythmée	*to be played in a gracious and languid manner but with strong rhythm*
léger et vague	*light and vague*
animé	*lively*
bien marqué et sans pédale	*well marked and without pedal*
sonore	*resonant*
expressif et bien chanté	*expressive and cantabile*
brusquement	*abruptly*
très doux et atténué	*very gentle and more at ease*
sec	*crisp*
caressant	*caressing*
souple	*flexible*
reprenant un peu le temps	*gradually back to the original tempo*

III

gracieux et tendre	*graceful and tender*
avec grâce et bien rythmé	*with grace and rhythmical*
sans pédale	*without pedal*
posé et bien chanté	*serene and in singing style*
bien sonore mais pas forte	*sonorous but not loud*
très doux et nonchalant	*very gentle and nonchalant*
tranquillement sans presser	*calmly without hurrying*
bien en dehors	*bring out the melody*
bien marqué	*well marked*
avec gaminerie	*playful and mischievous*
gentiment	*amiably*

A L B E N I Z

I B E R I A book II

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