Frédéric CHOPIN

ÉTUDES Opus 25

Volume II: 5 - 8

E minor

G♯ minor

C♯ minor

D♭ major

Piano Practical Editions
pianopracticaleditions.com

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

Frédéric CHOPIN 1810 - 1849

ÉTUDES Opus 25

à Madame la Comtesse d'Agoult

Volume II

5 : E minor	page	1
6 : G♯minor		9
7 : C♯minor		17
8 : D♭major		23
appendix		28

The first set of studies Op 10 were conceived when a precocious 19-year old, a period which saw his departure from Warsaw, arriving finally in Paris (via Dresden, Vienna, Linz, Munich and Stuttgart). Dedicated to *la Comtesse d'Agoult**, Op 25 (1832-1835) further demonstrates the inspired creativity of this extraordinary composer before his short life was beset by complications of existence, relationships and ill-health in western Europe.

Eugène Delacroix 1838

Simultaneously published (1837) in France, England and Germany, they reveal conflicting details — and were then further tweaked by the composer. Quite apart from the futile quest for precision, and without wishing to encourage a 'free-for-all', a wide spectrum for individual readings is available.

To quote Jeffrey Kallberg — *Indeed, some of this sense of difference arose precisely because of Chopin's habits as a composer. He revised inveterately. Individual manuscripts of his works teem with cancellations and insertions. Multiple autographs of the same composition seldom agree. The texts of editions issued "simultaneously" in different countries during his lifetime frequently diverge. In sum, composition for Chopin was an open-ended process, unbounded by the nature and physical restrictions of the source or the limits of publication. However, it should not be overlooked that his sensitive organism and extraordinary improvisatory gift were constantly susceptible to the influence of spontaneous and intuitive creative impulses.*

Piano Practical Editions

While a number of commercial editions vie with each other to produce a 'definitive' version**, I present an entirely personal interpretation of these *études*, created nearly 200 years ago and still probably the most significant contribution to the pleasure and frustration of thousands, dare I say millions, of aspiring pianists worldwide.

Cortot, usually most eloquent in his appraisal of Chopin's works, limits himself to a very short paragraph:

> *We did not wish to overload the text with any æsthetic observation. It is just possible to establish rules in hand and finger technique for artistic expression. We cannot equally define personality and taste.*

This edition attempts to underline the artistic qualities of these highly imaginative studies, before reviewing the multiple technical problems they pose.

The Metronome, Maelzel's latest gadget (1815), was a musician's *must-have*, but In general *tempi* are nearly always considerably faster than is musically desirable and reasonable. Although I dislike to commit myself, suggestions are included. Much thought has been given to alternative hand distribution and for what it is worth, my own individual fingering.

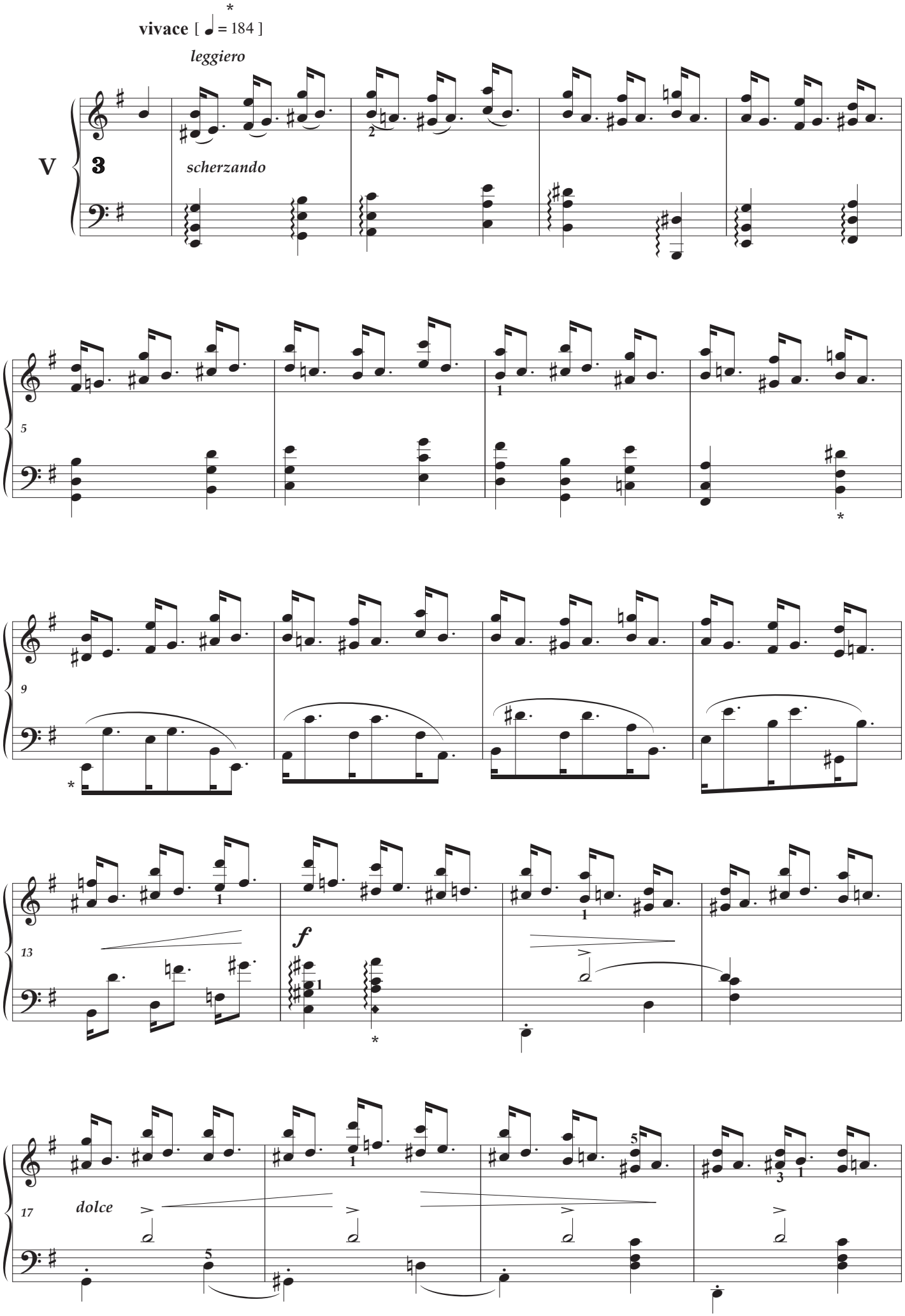
With apprehension, ***PPE*** admits to 'adaptations' of the text (usually marked with an asterisk) and does not reproduce every accent, nuance and expression mark from any particular source. A further consideration must involve a comparison between Chopin's Pleyel and modern instruments: there is less tone volume, the action is lighter, keys are smaller (the octave span is narrower) and the key dip is eight instead of ten millimetres on a modern piano. A few comments and afterthoughts can be found in the appendix on page 28**.**

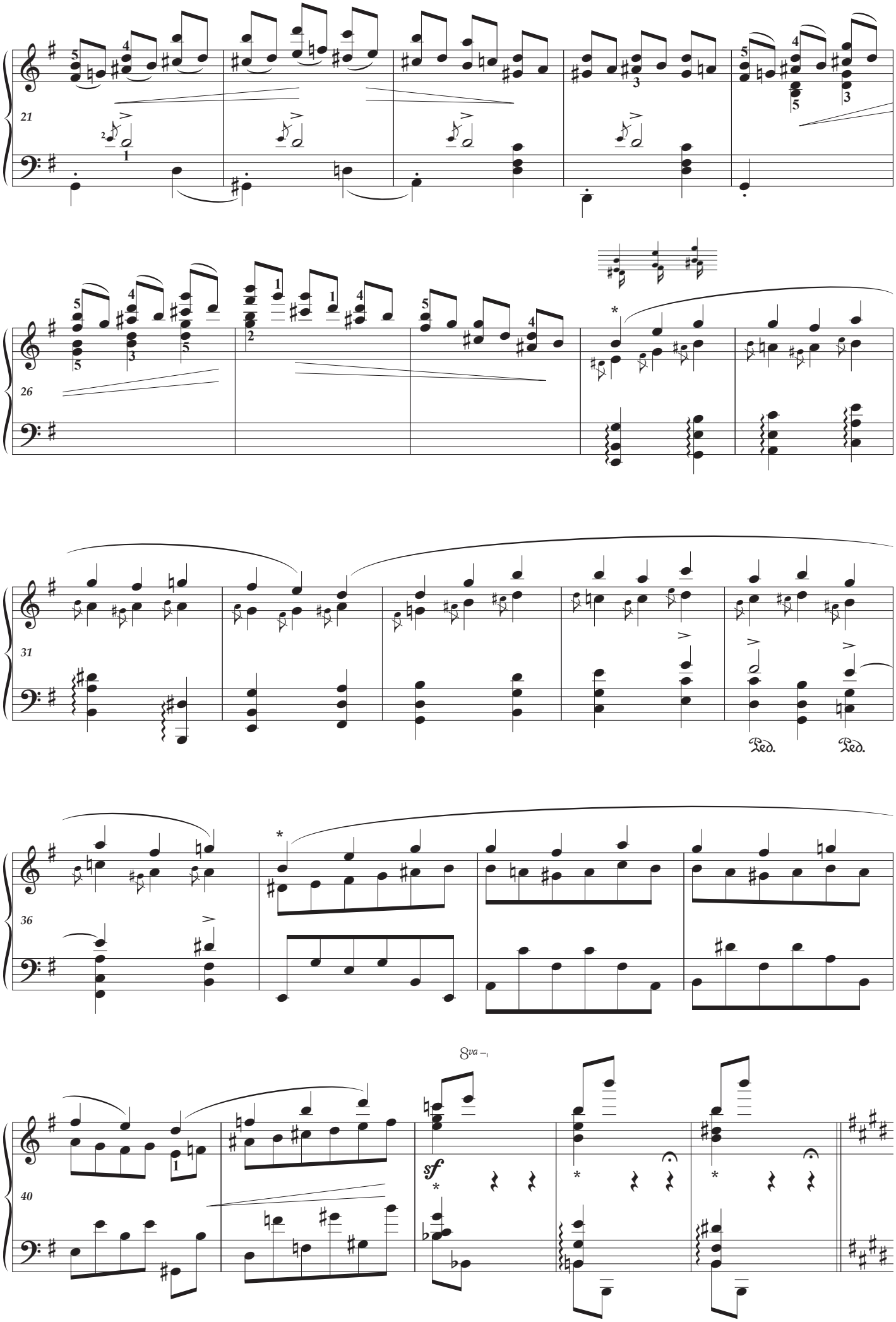
While each *étude* presents one or more specific technical challenges, the music presented is often emotionally charged and always very satisfying to study. Beyond mere transcendental exercises, they have become indispensable repertoire for self-discovery.

Ray Alston
June 2023

* ***Marie Cathérine Sophie, Comtesse d'Agoult*** *(née* ***de Flavigny*** *)*; was a romantic author and historian, known also by a pen name, **Daniel Stern**. She was also the partner of Op 10's dedicatee, Franz Liszt, and mother to their three children.

*** There are no less than 24 editions of the studies, many claiming to be Urtext, including those of Paderewski, Fontana, Reinecke, Klindworth, von Bülow, Kullak, Mikuli, Friedman, Friedheim, de Pachmann, Casella, Joseffy and Badura-Skoda.*


vivace [♩ = 184]
leggiero
V
3
scherzando
5
9
13
f
17
dolce


21
26
31
Ped.
Ped.
36
40
8va
sf

più lento [♩ = 168] *

leggiero

45

p

ben tenuto

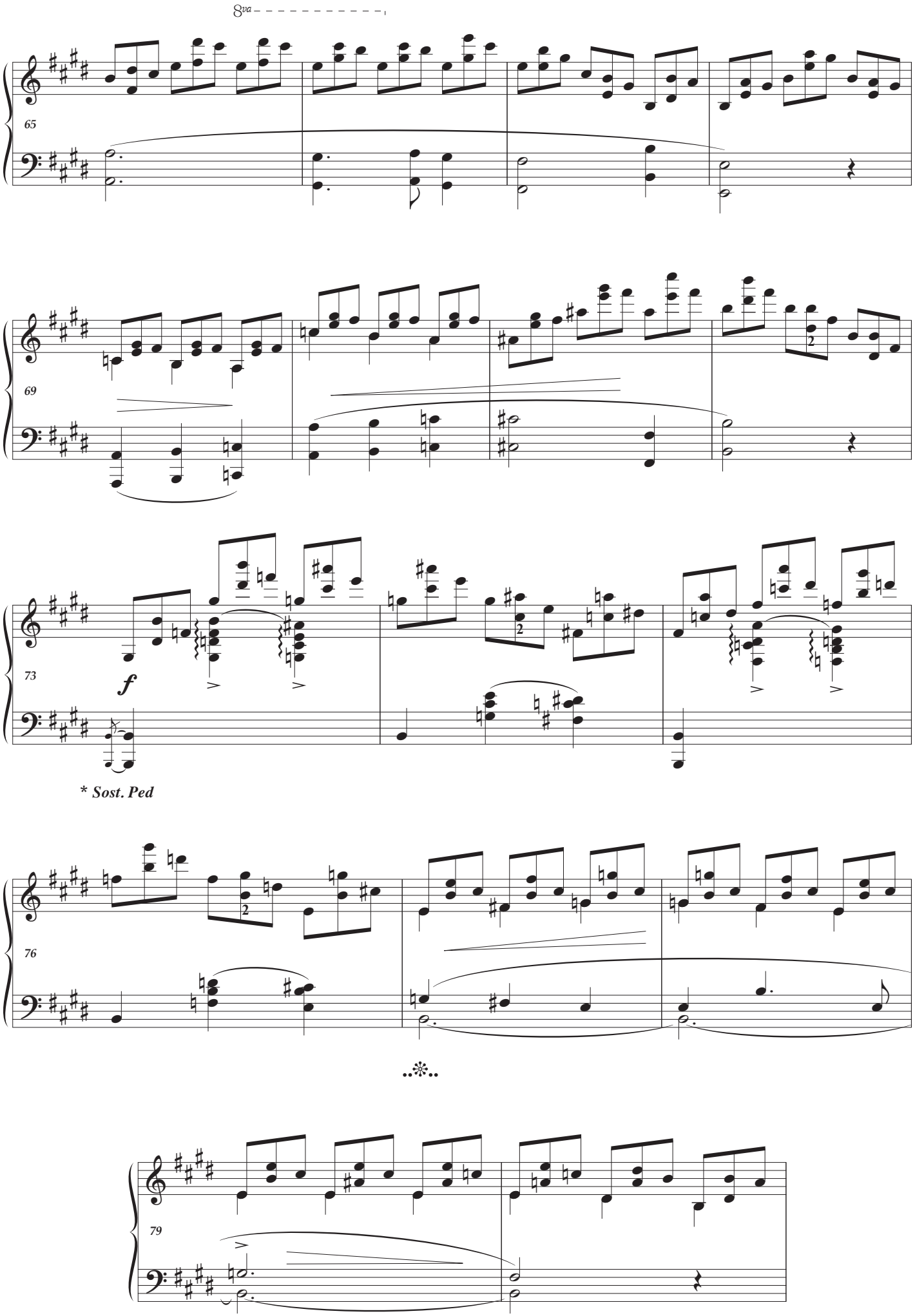
49

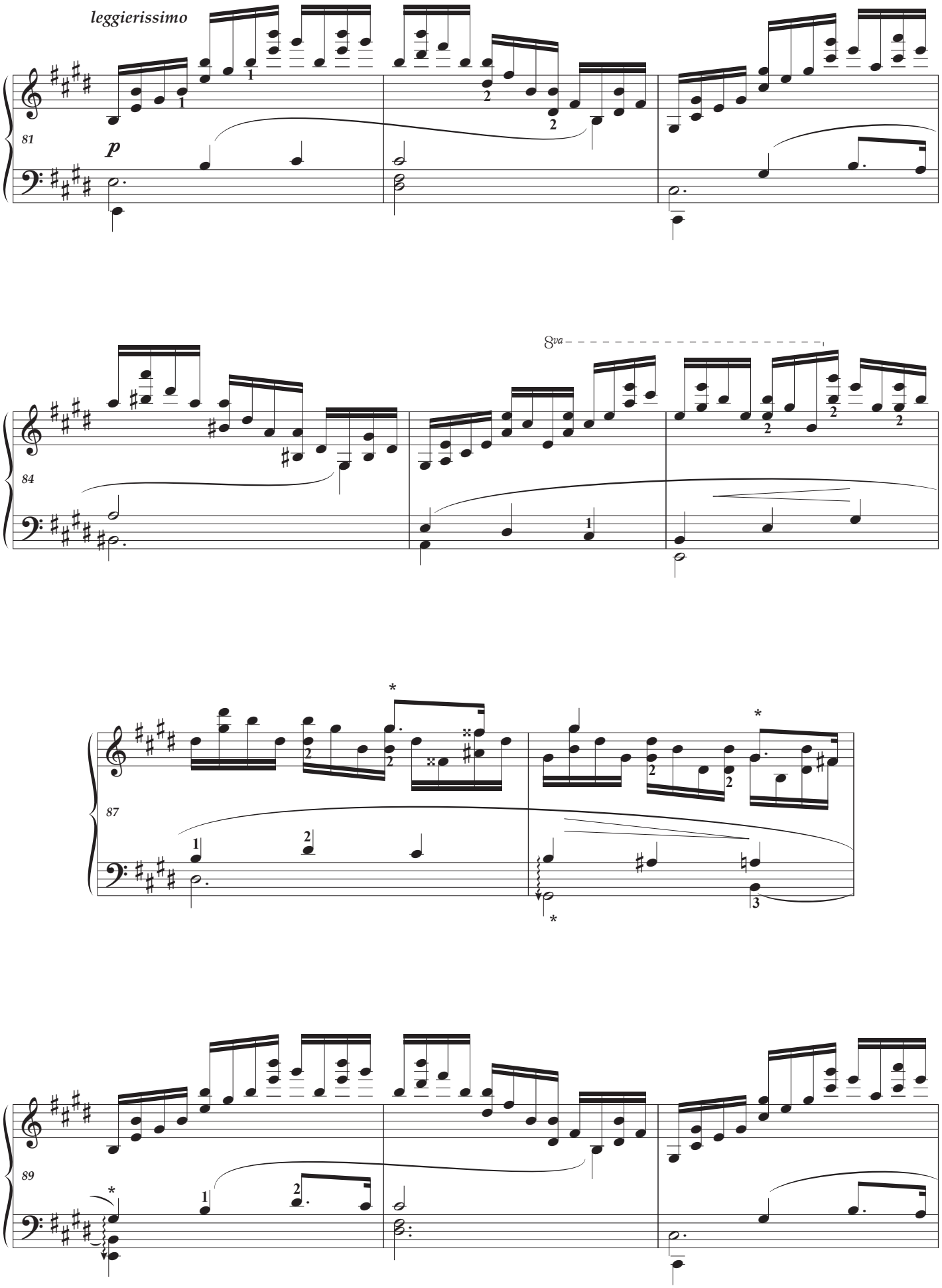
8va

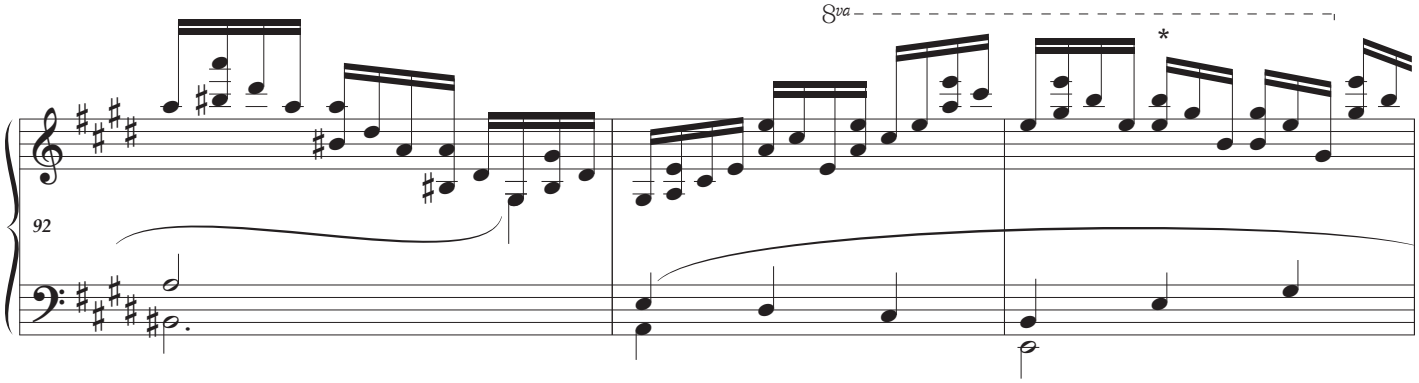
53

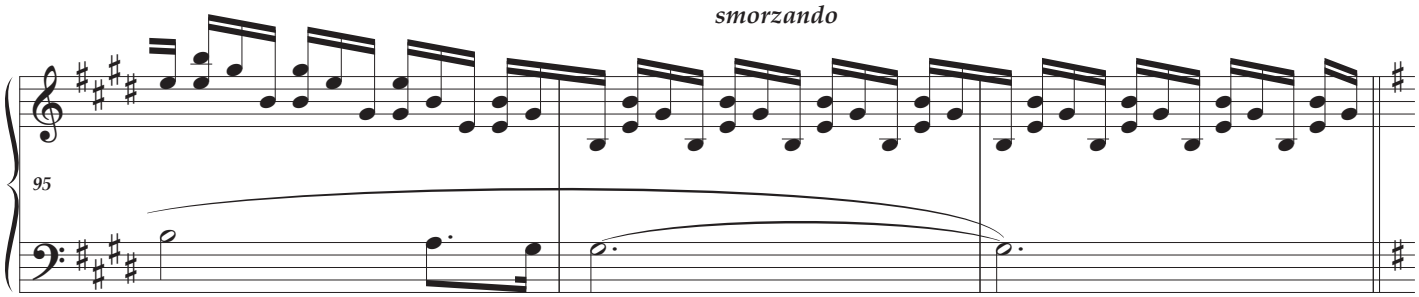
57

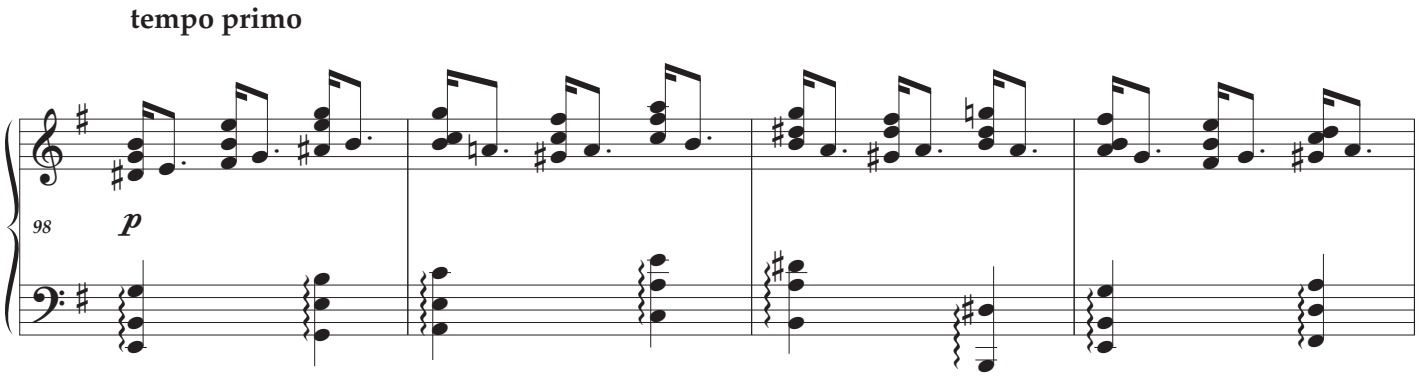
61

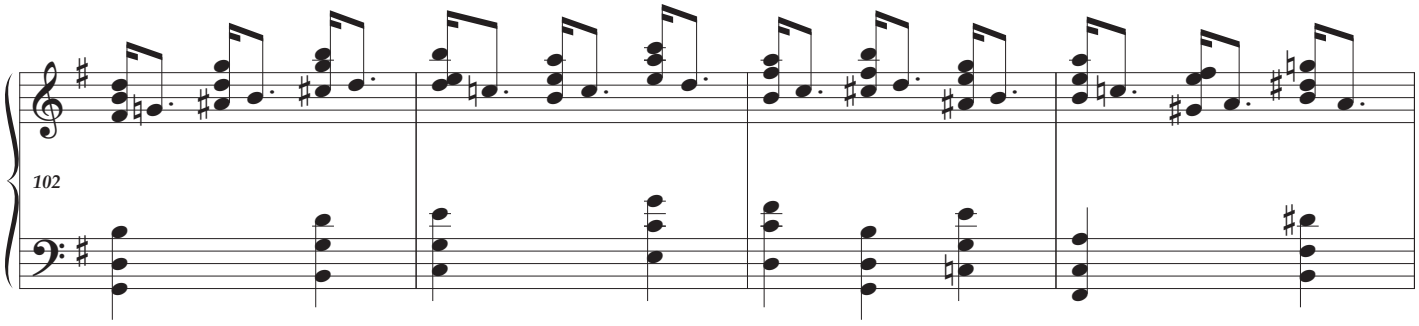

8va
65
69
73
f
* Sost. Ped
76
79

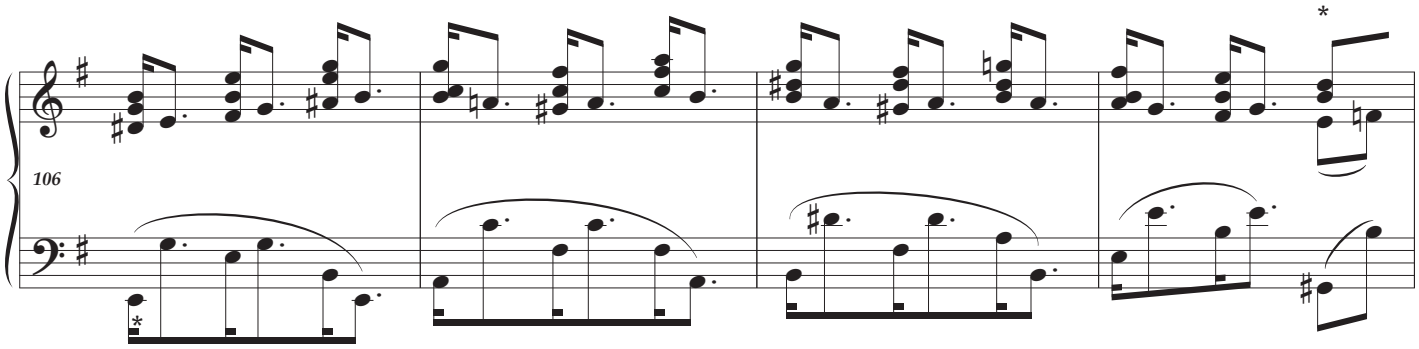

leggierissimo
81
p
84
8va
87
89

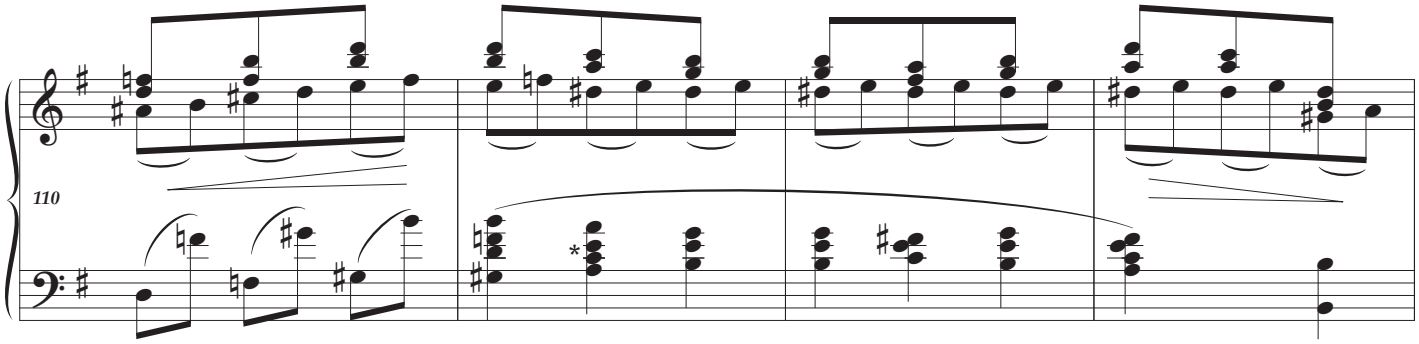

8va
*
92

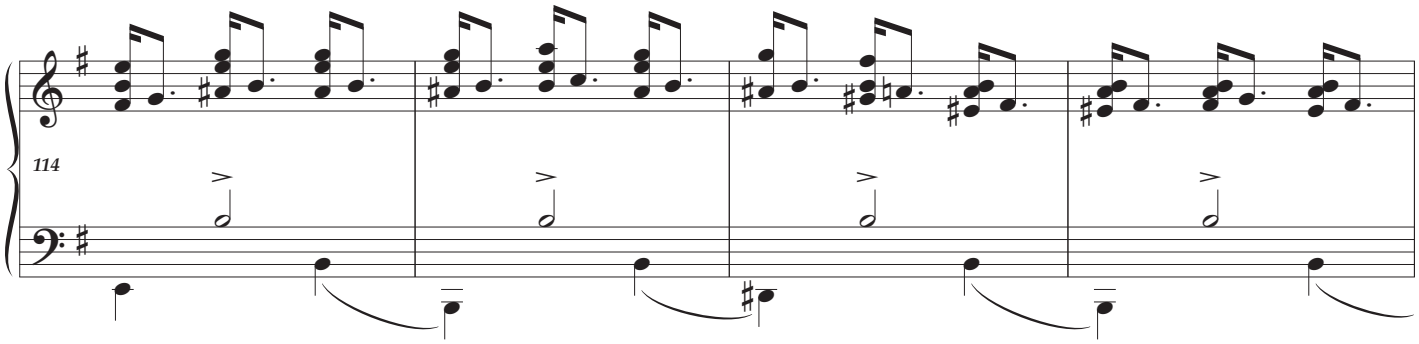

smorzando
95

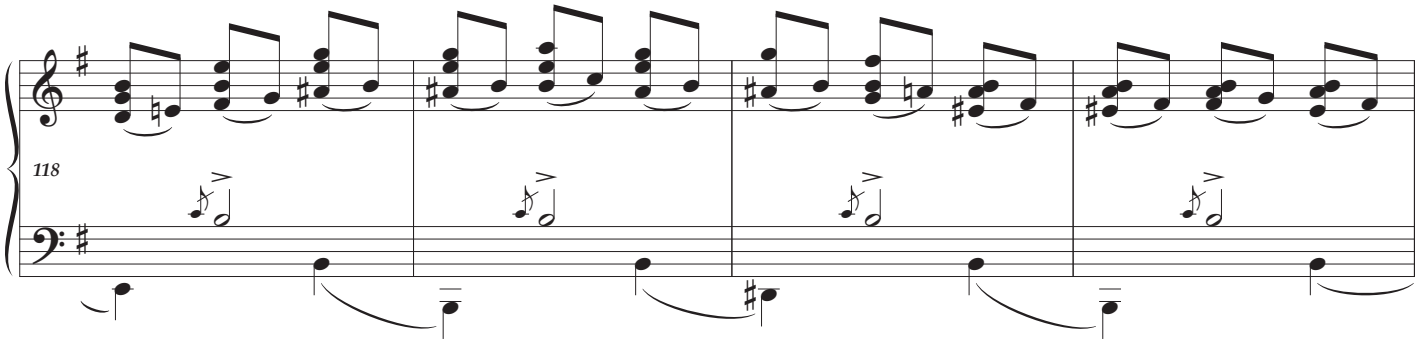

tempo primo
98
p

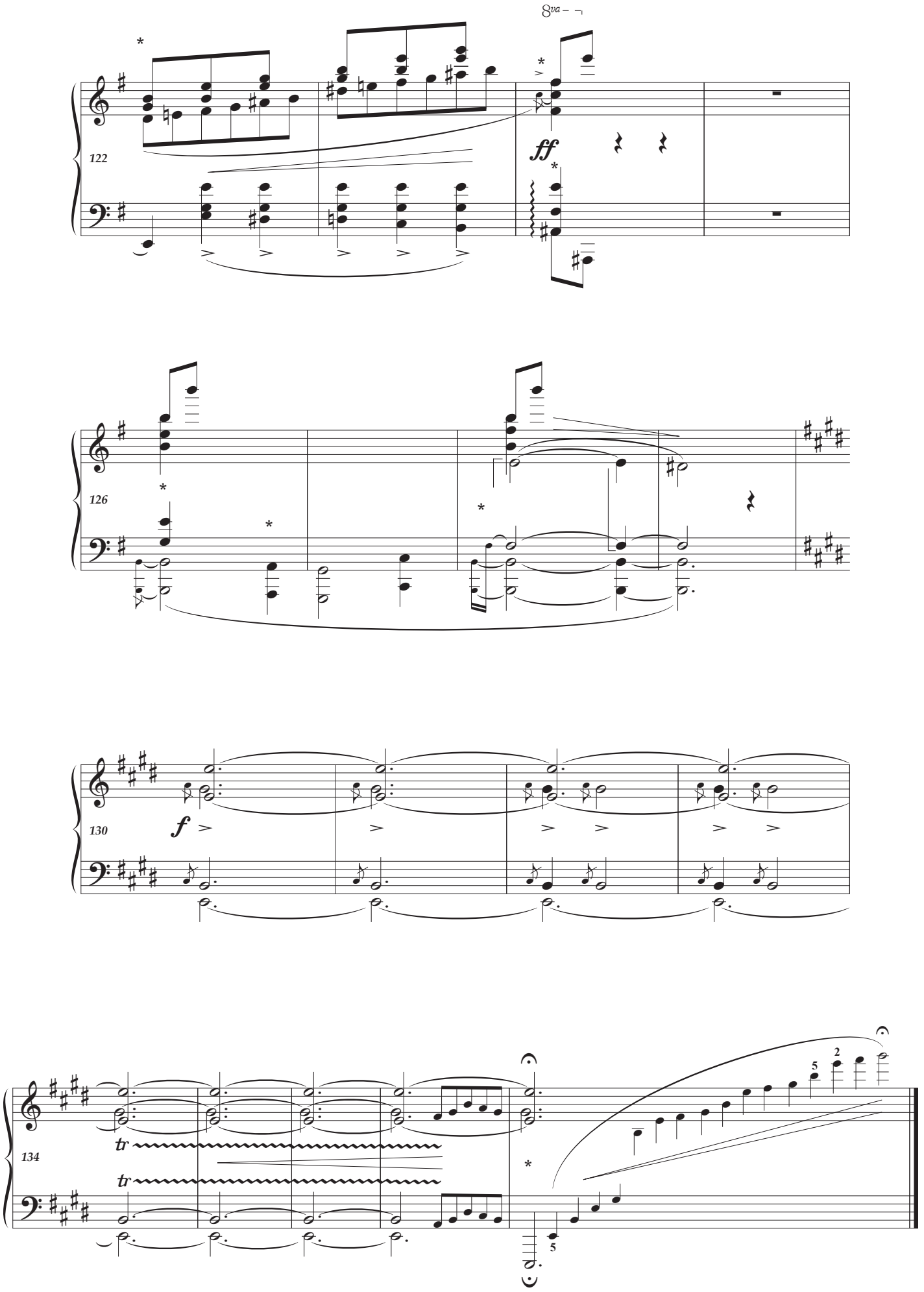

102

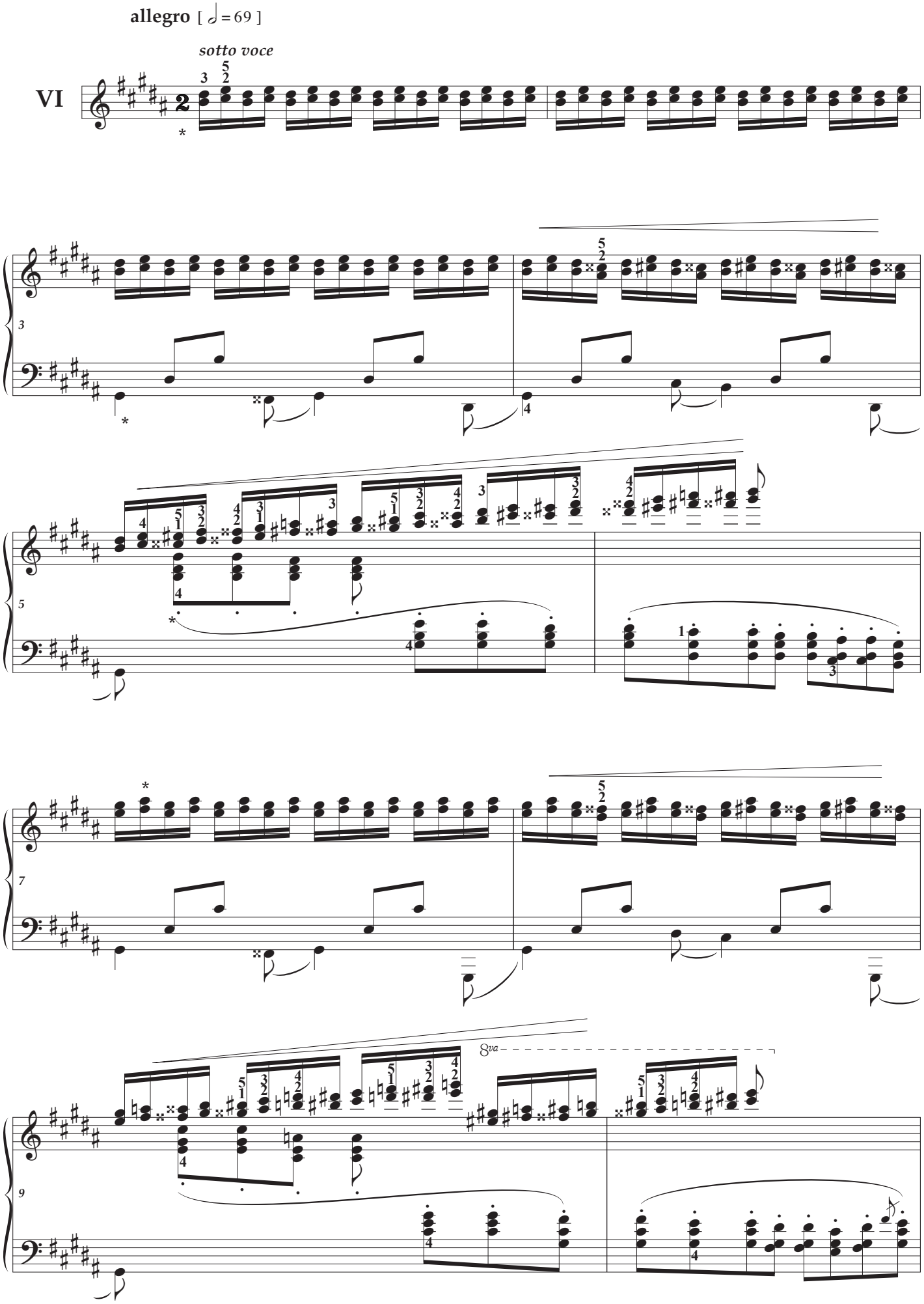

106

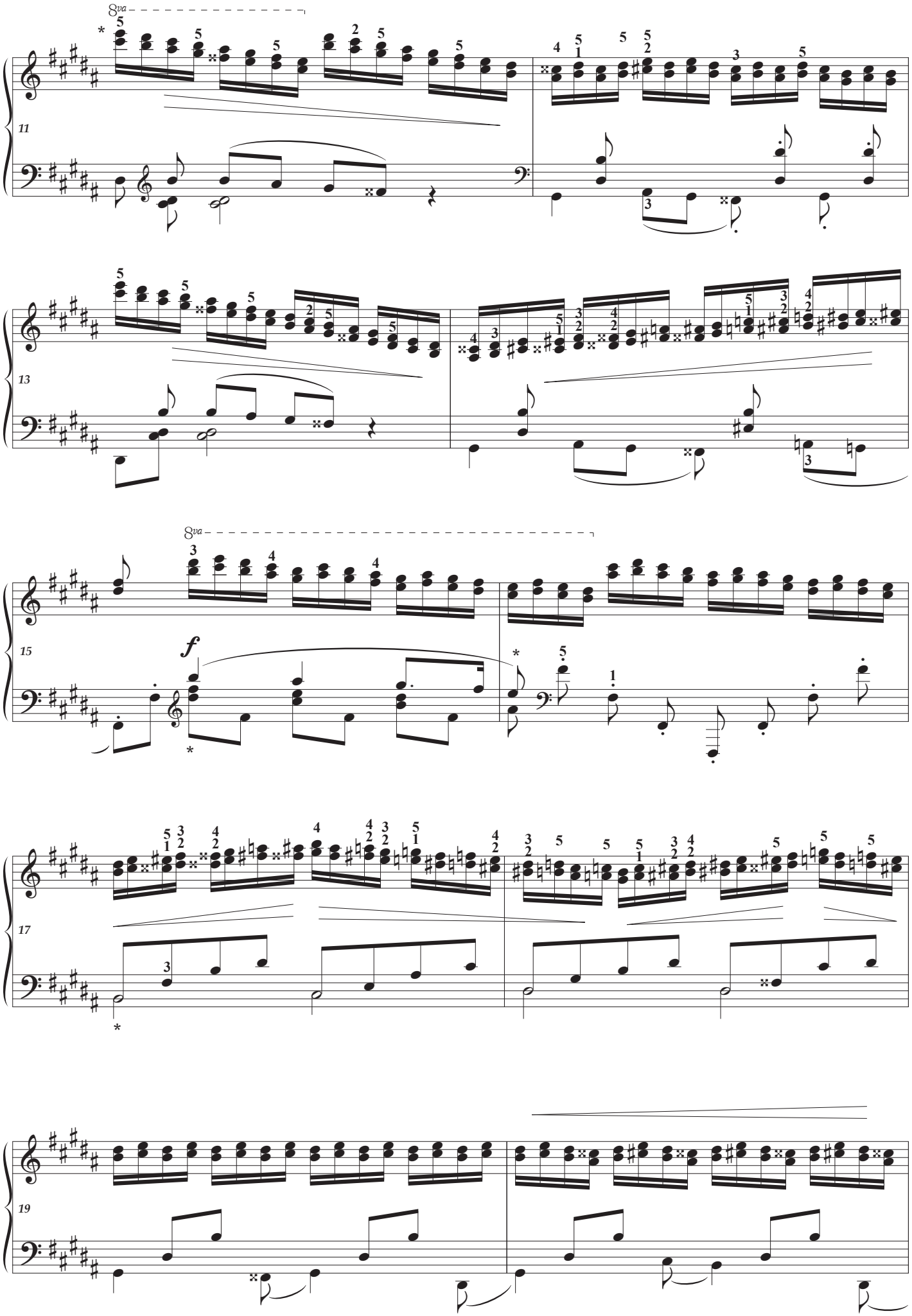

110

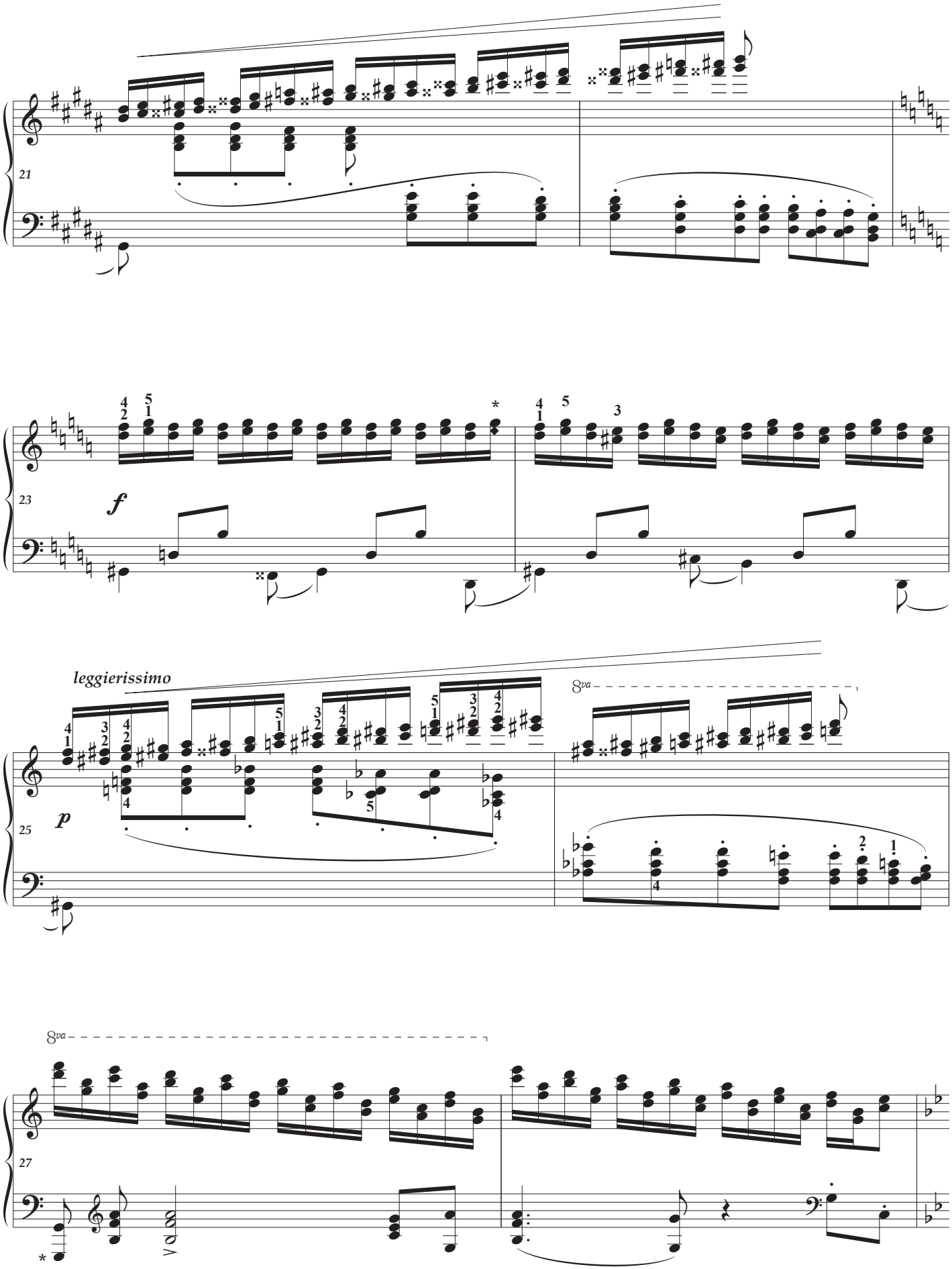

114

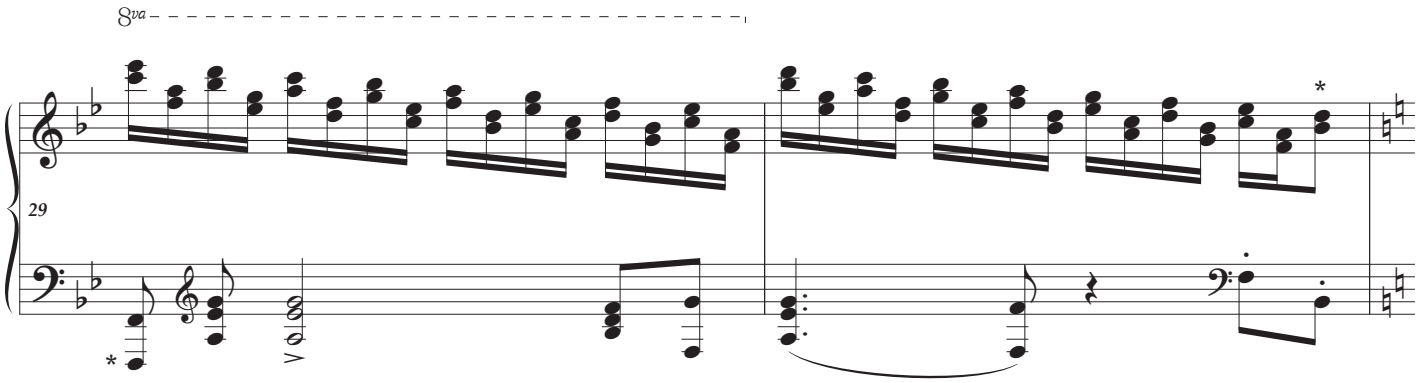

118

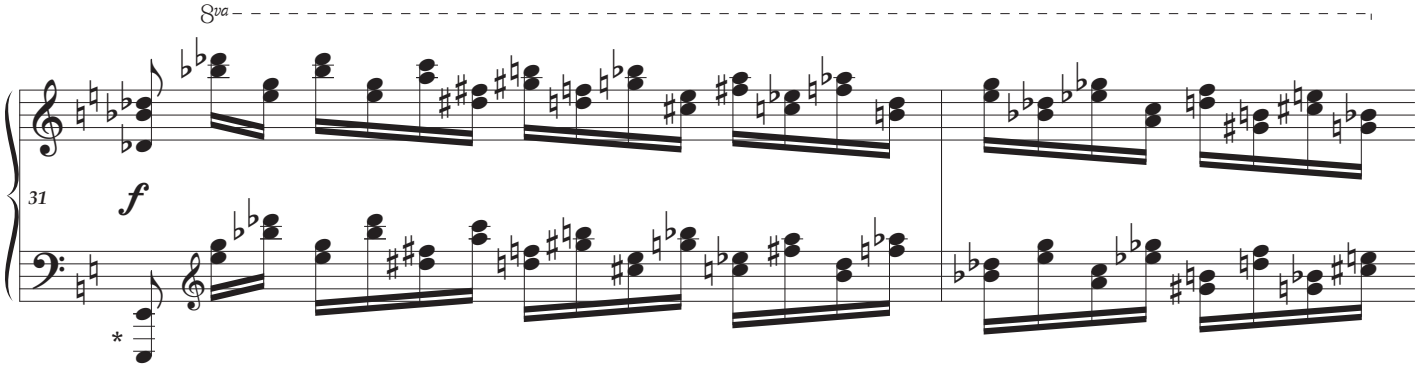

8va
122
ff
126
130
f
134
tr
tr
5
2
5

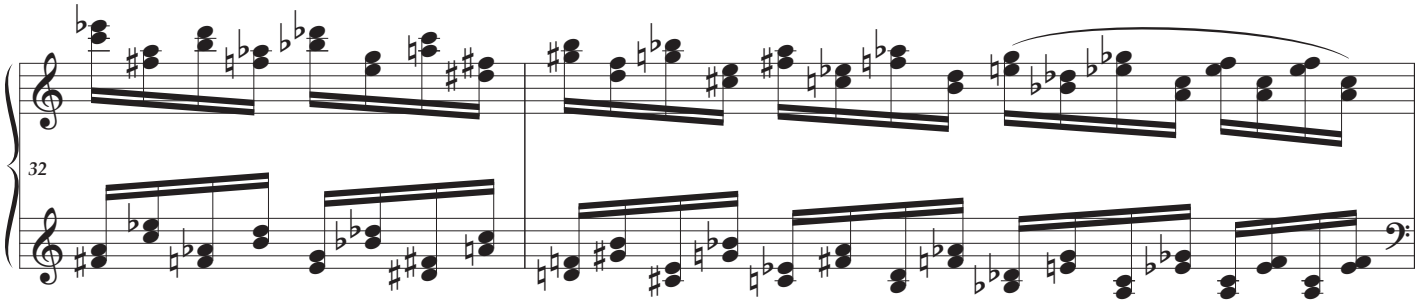

allegro [𝅗𝅥 = 69]
sotto voce
VI
8va

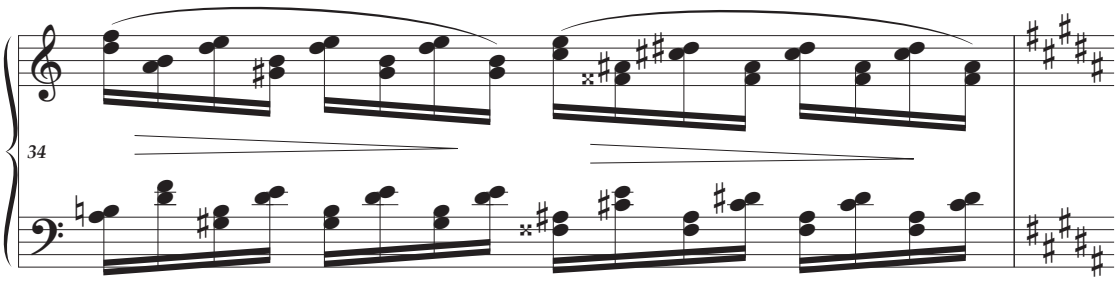

8va
11
13
8va
15
f
17
19

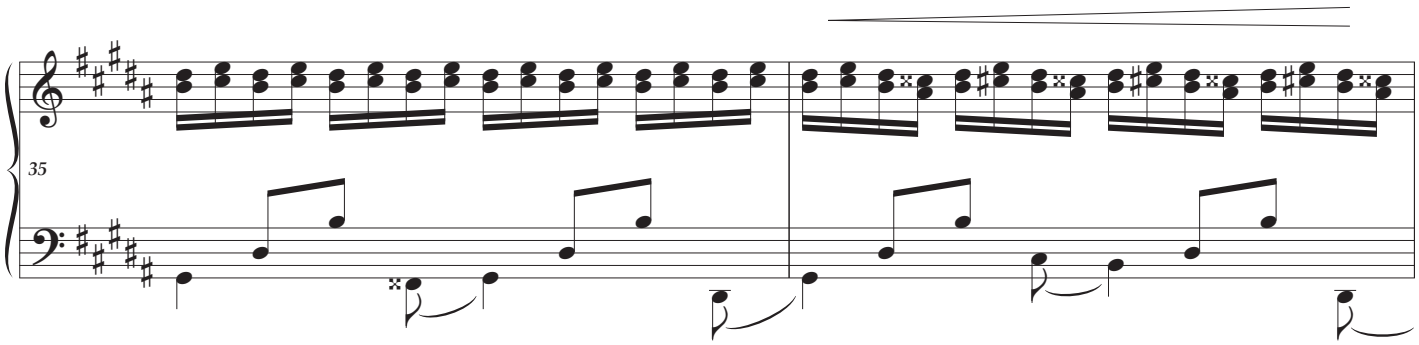

21
23
f
leggierissimo
p
25
8va
27
8va

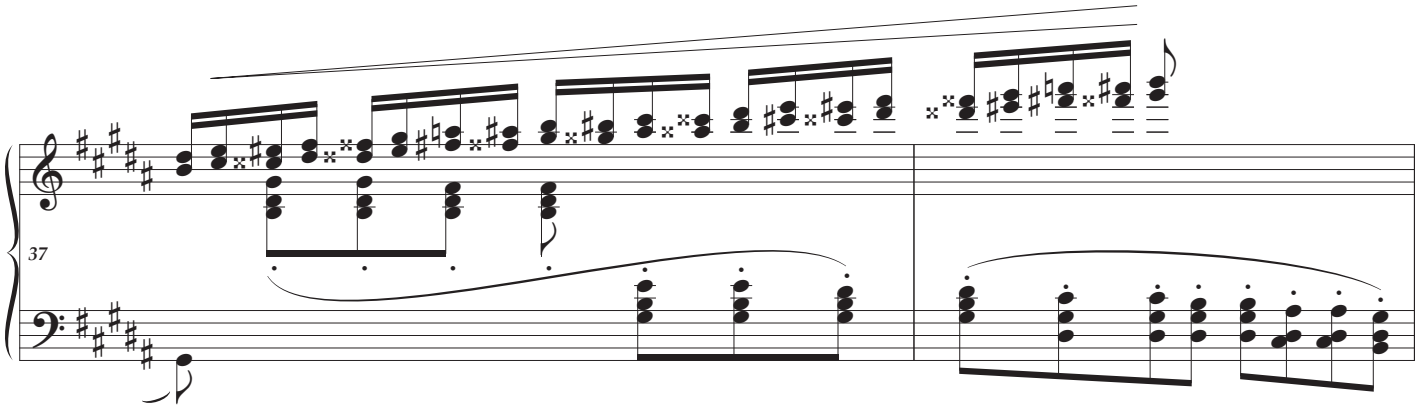

8va
29

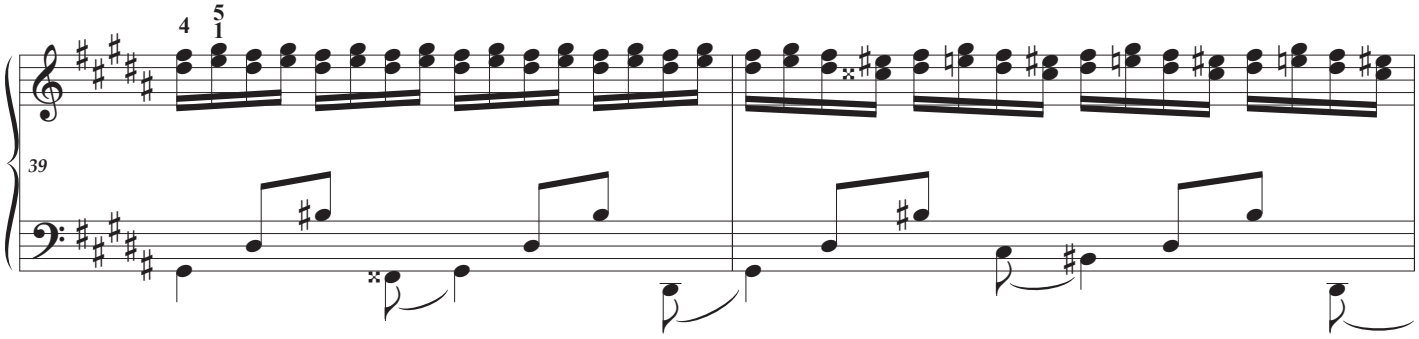

8va
31
f

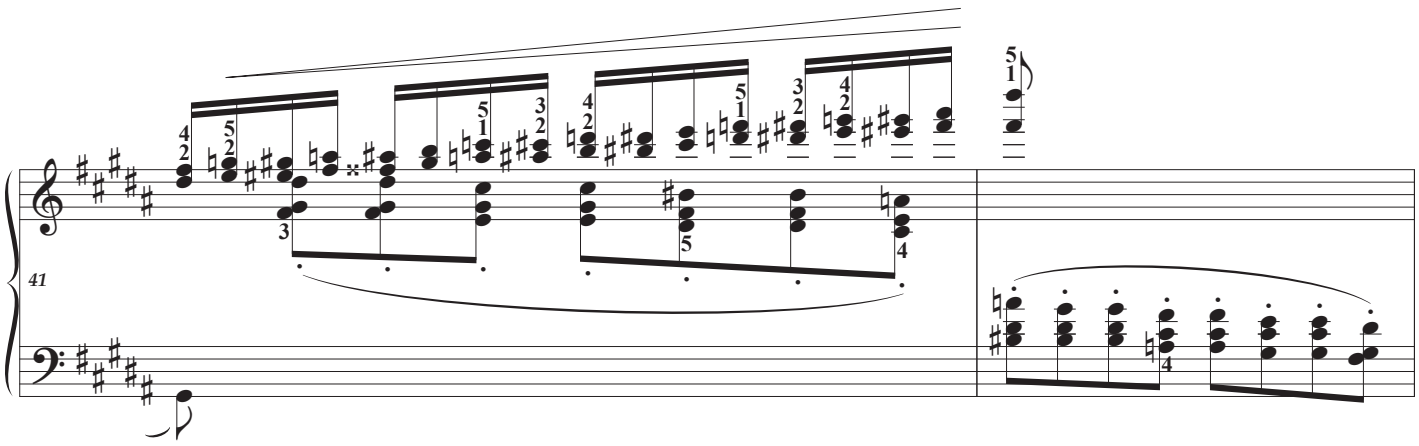

32

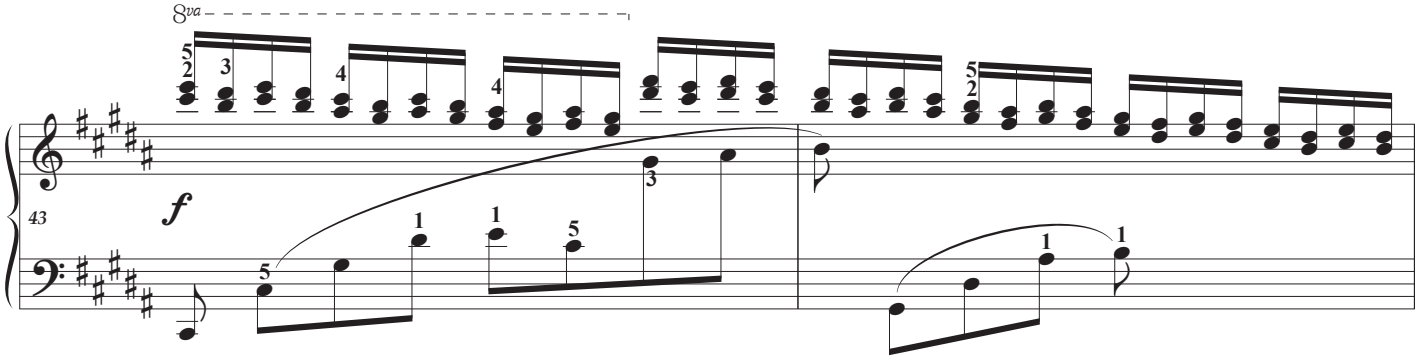

34

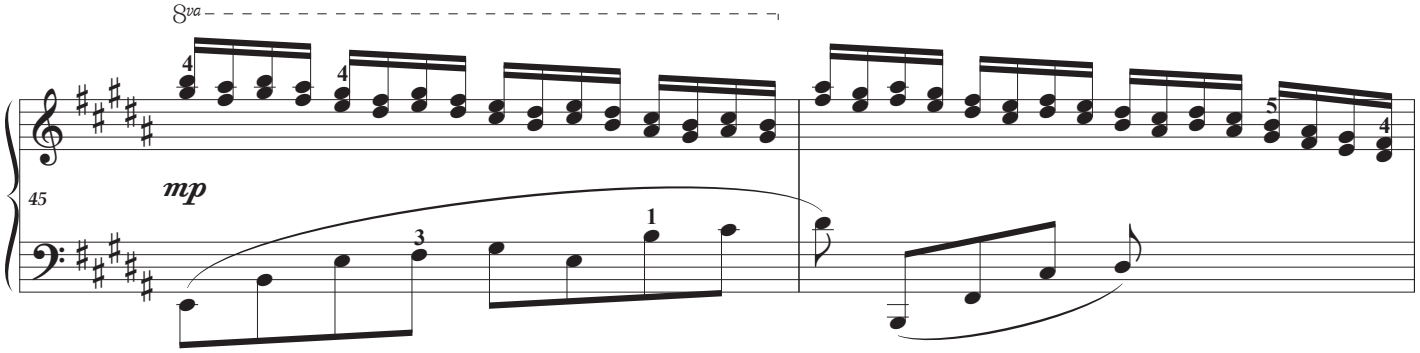

35

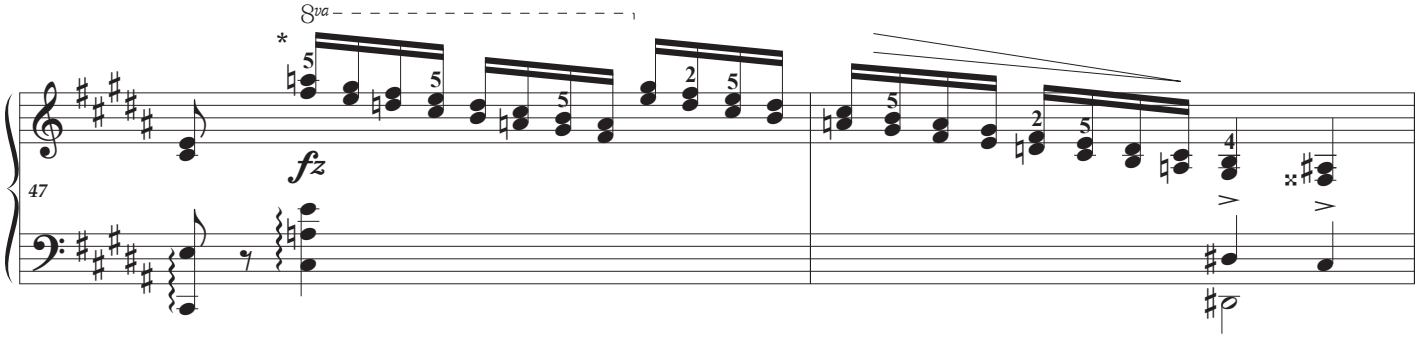

37

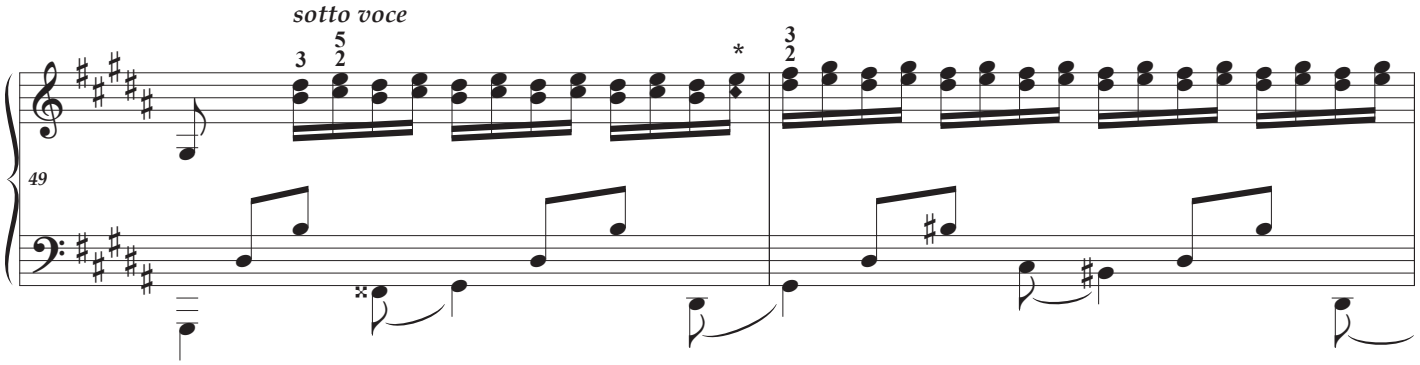

39

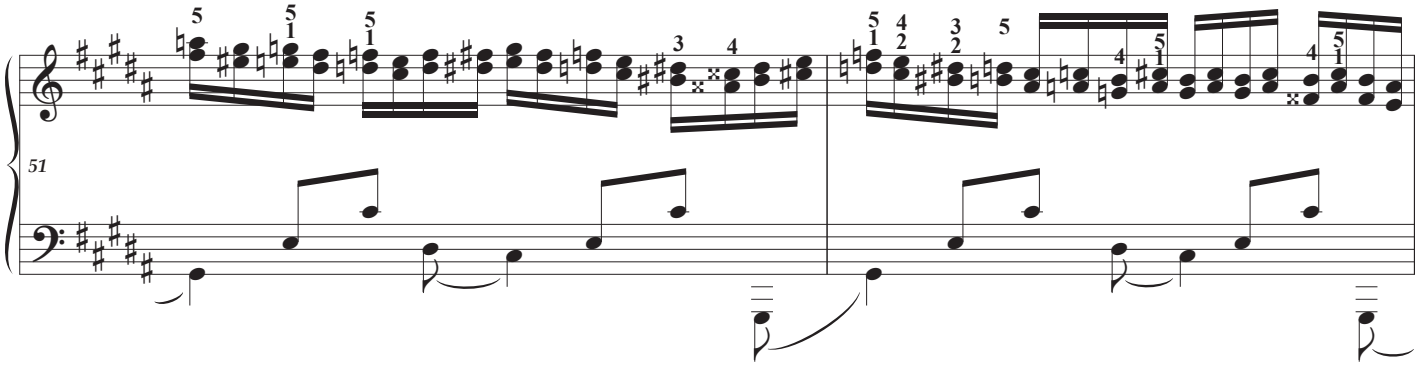

41

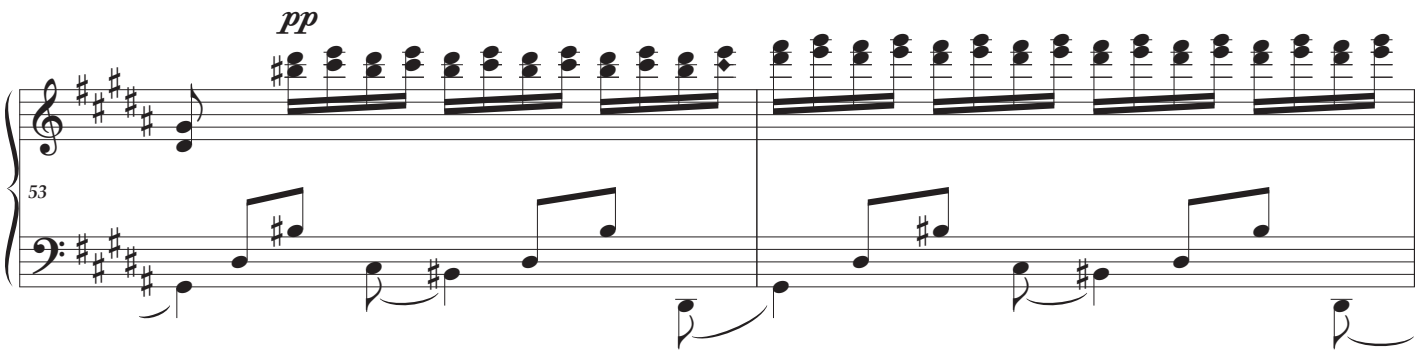

8va
43
f

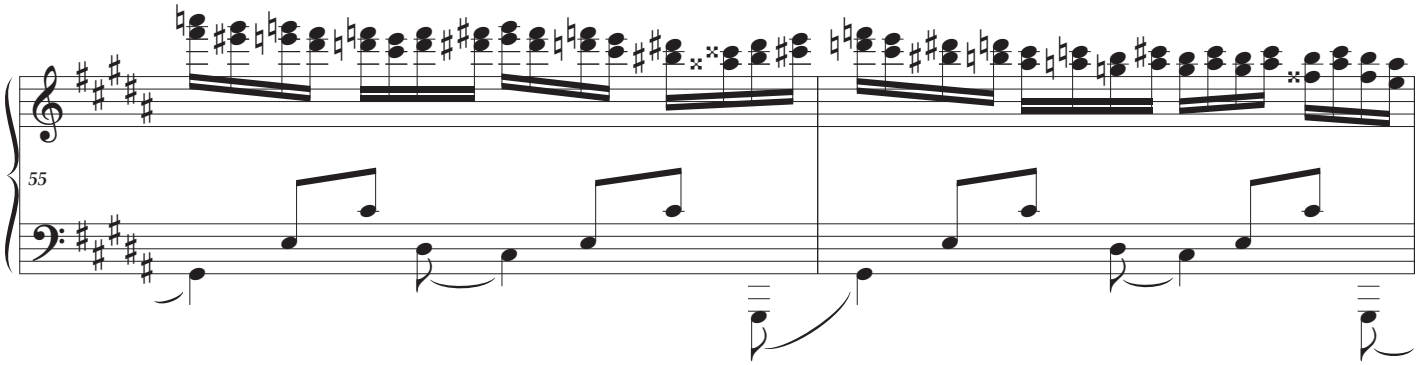

8va
45
mp

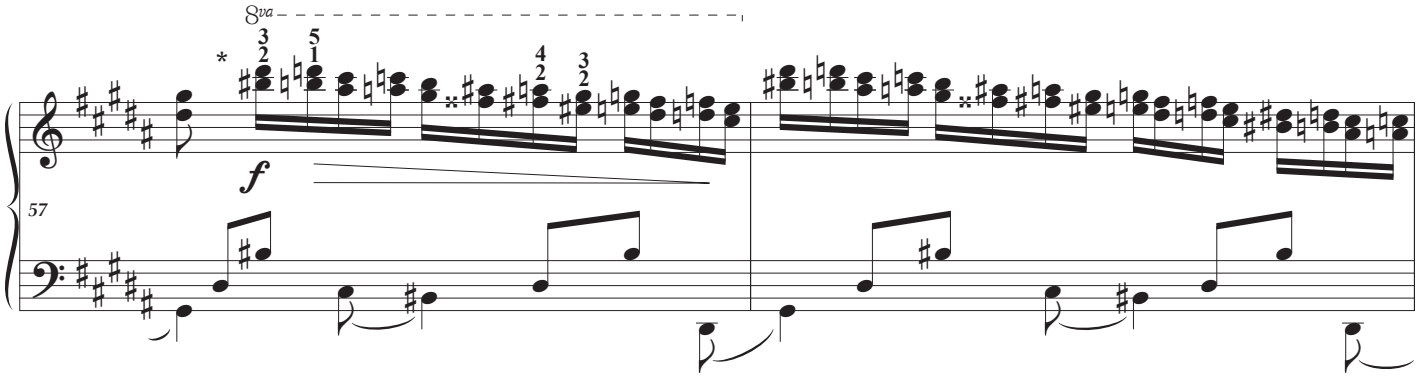

8va
47
fz

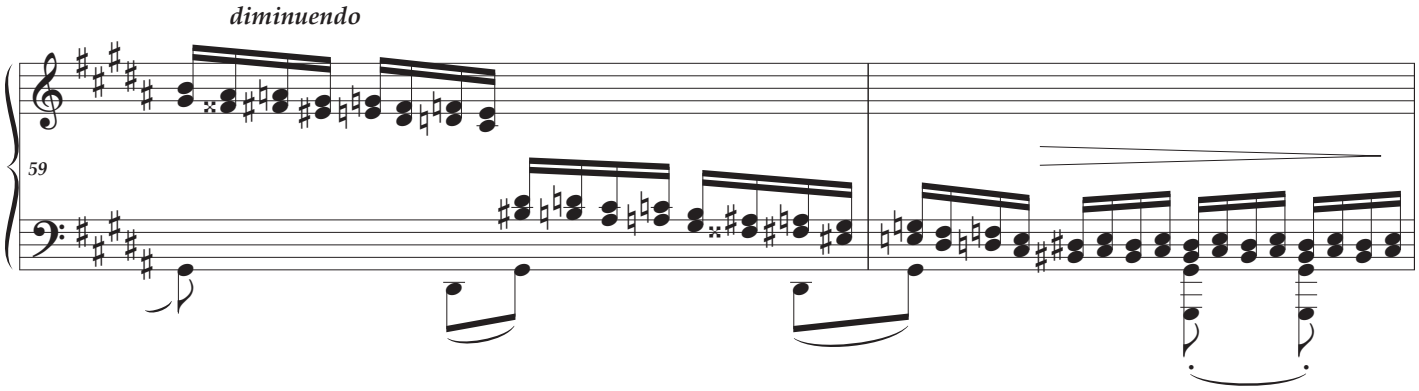

sotto voce
49

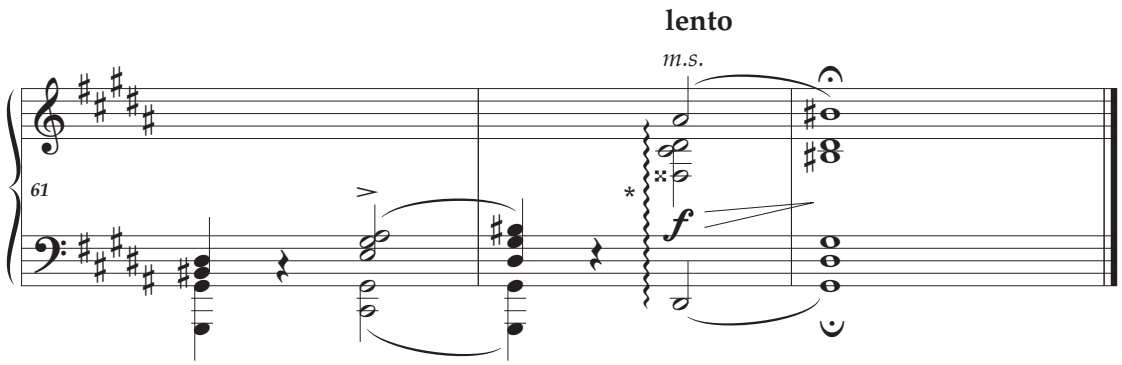

51


pp
53

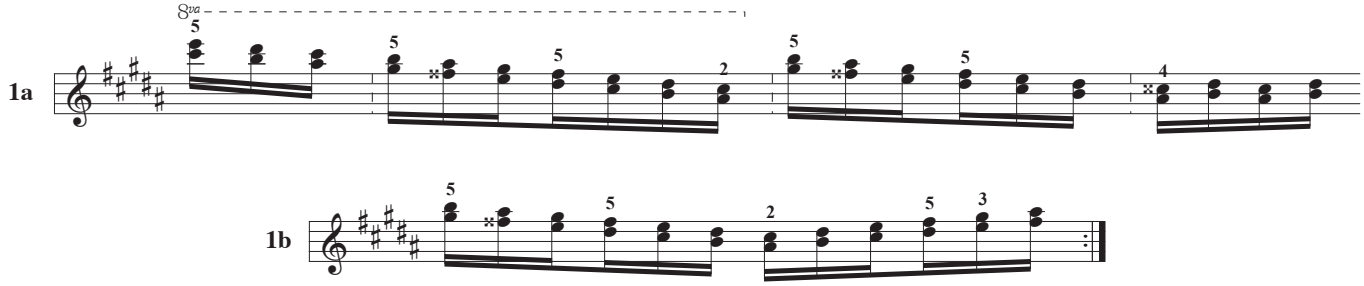

55


8va
*
f
57

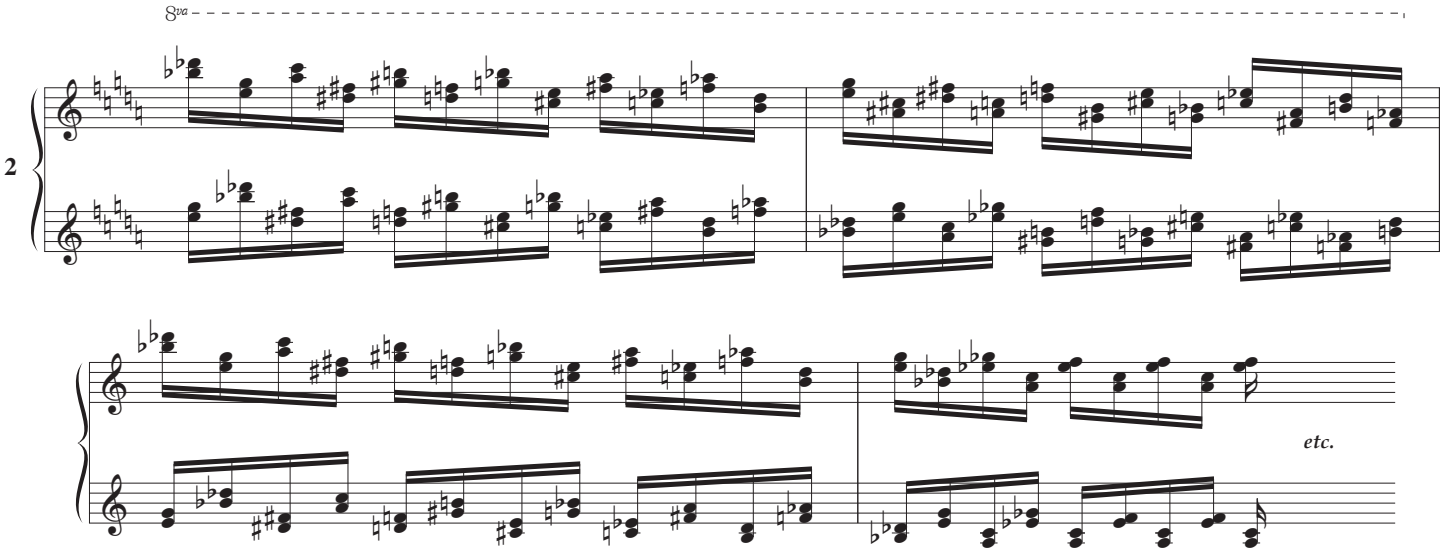

diminuendo
59


lento
m.s.
61
*
f

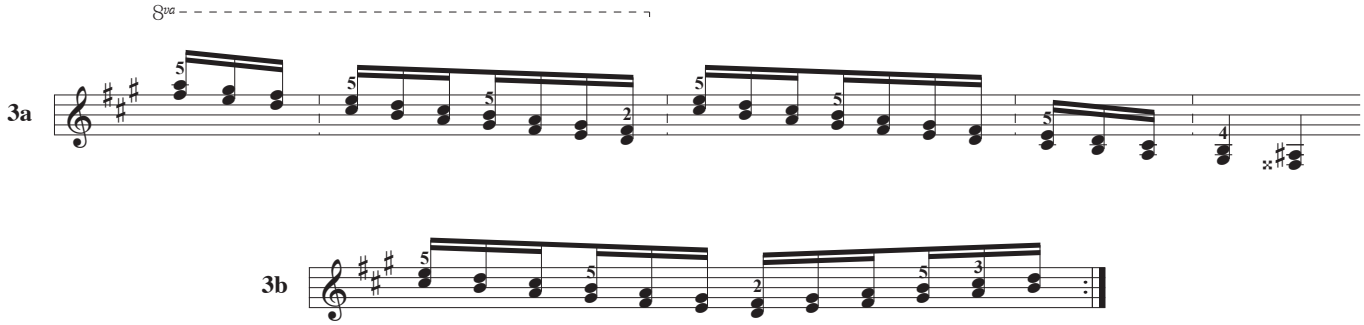
bars 11-12 re-beamed



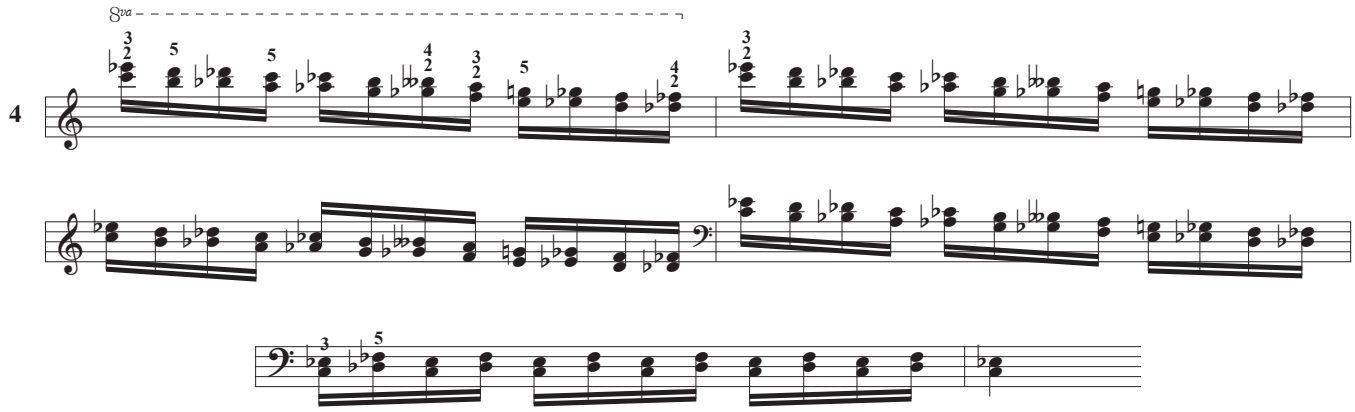
bars 31-33 in triple time

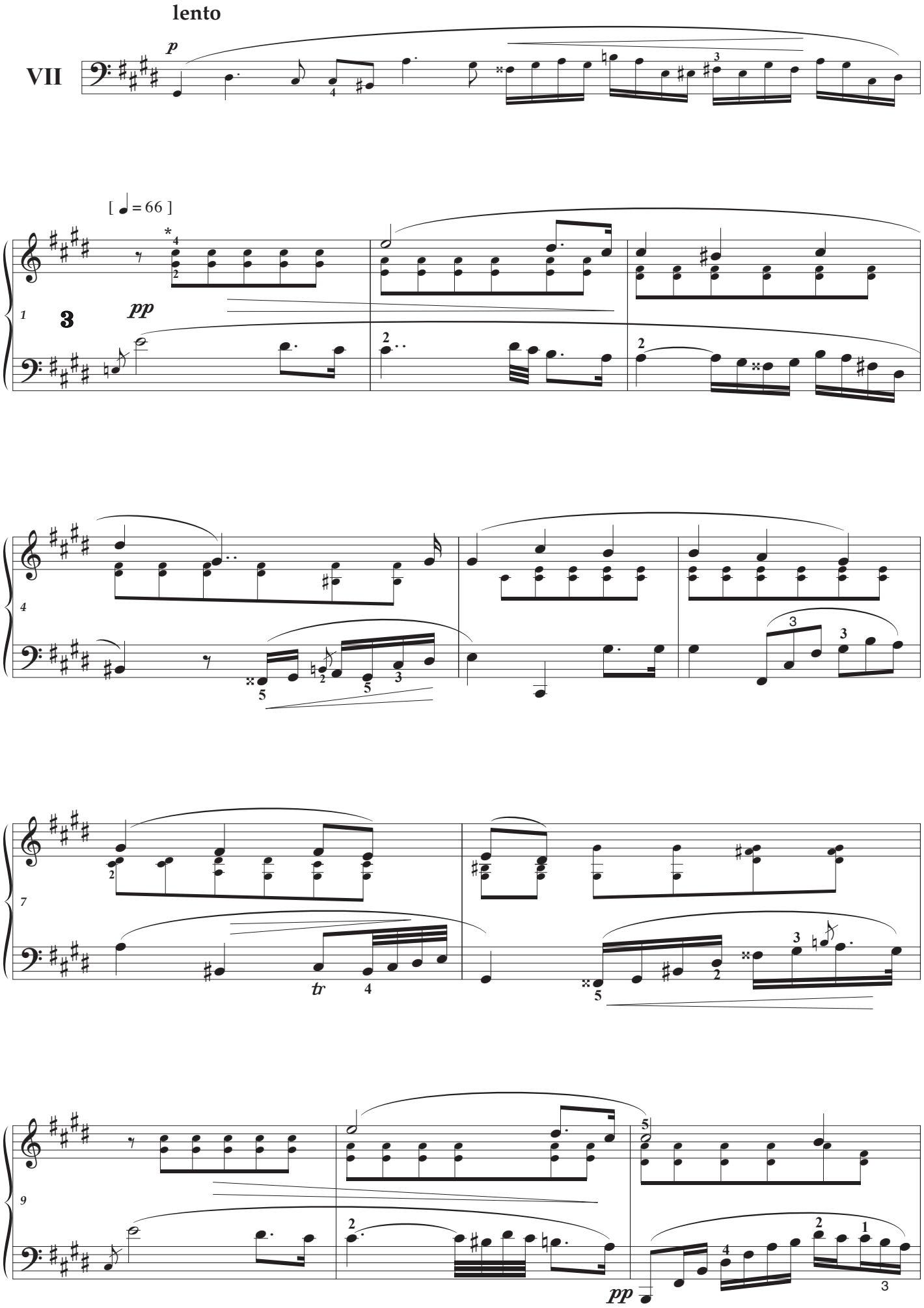


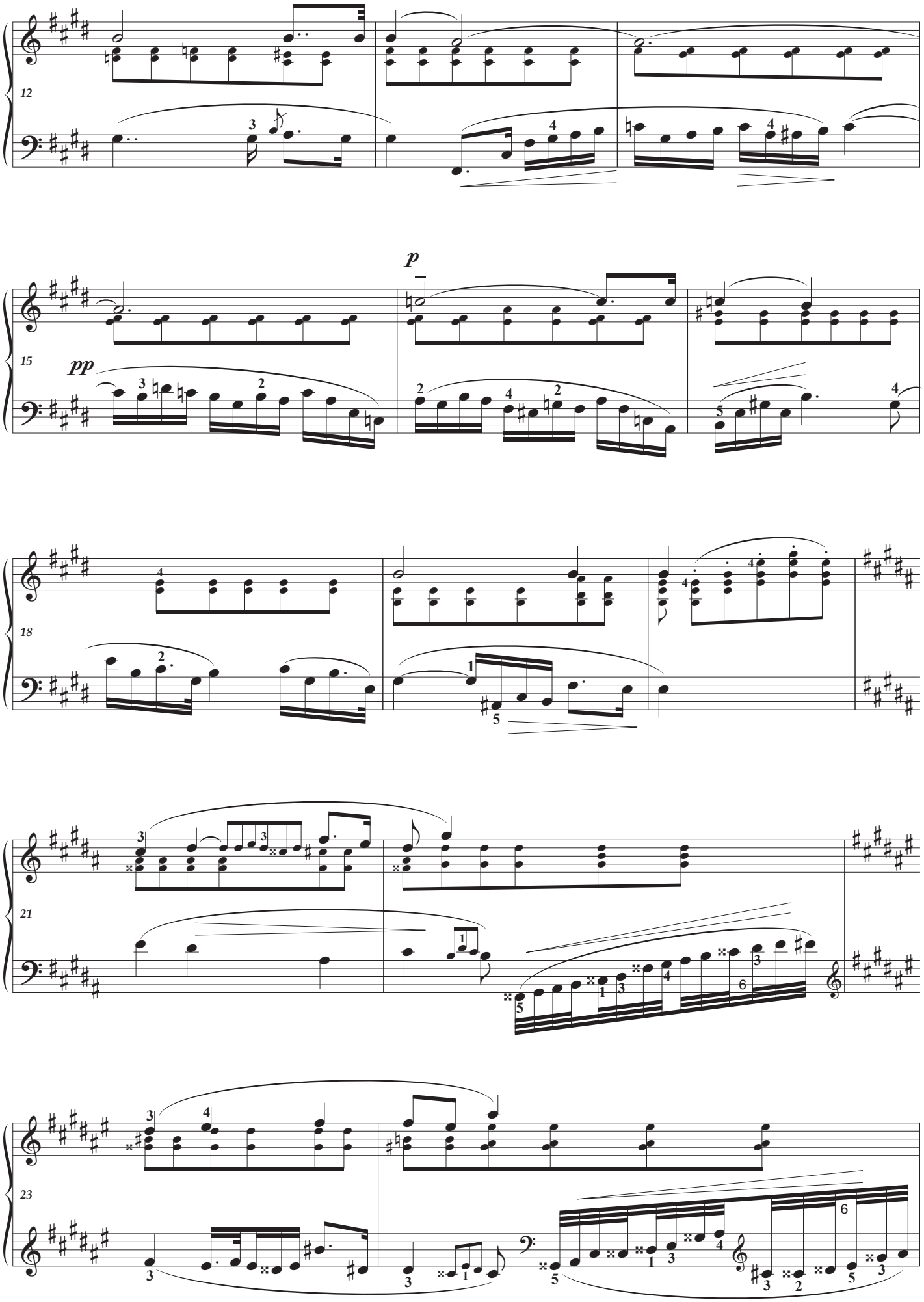
bars 47-48 re-beamed

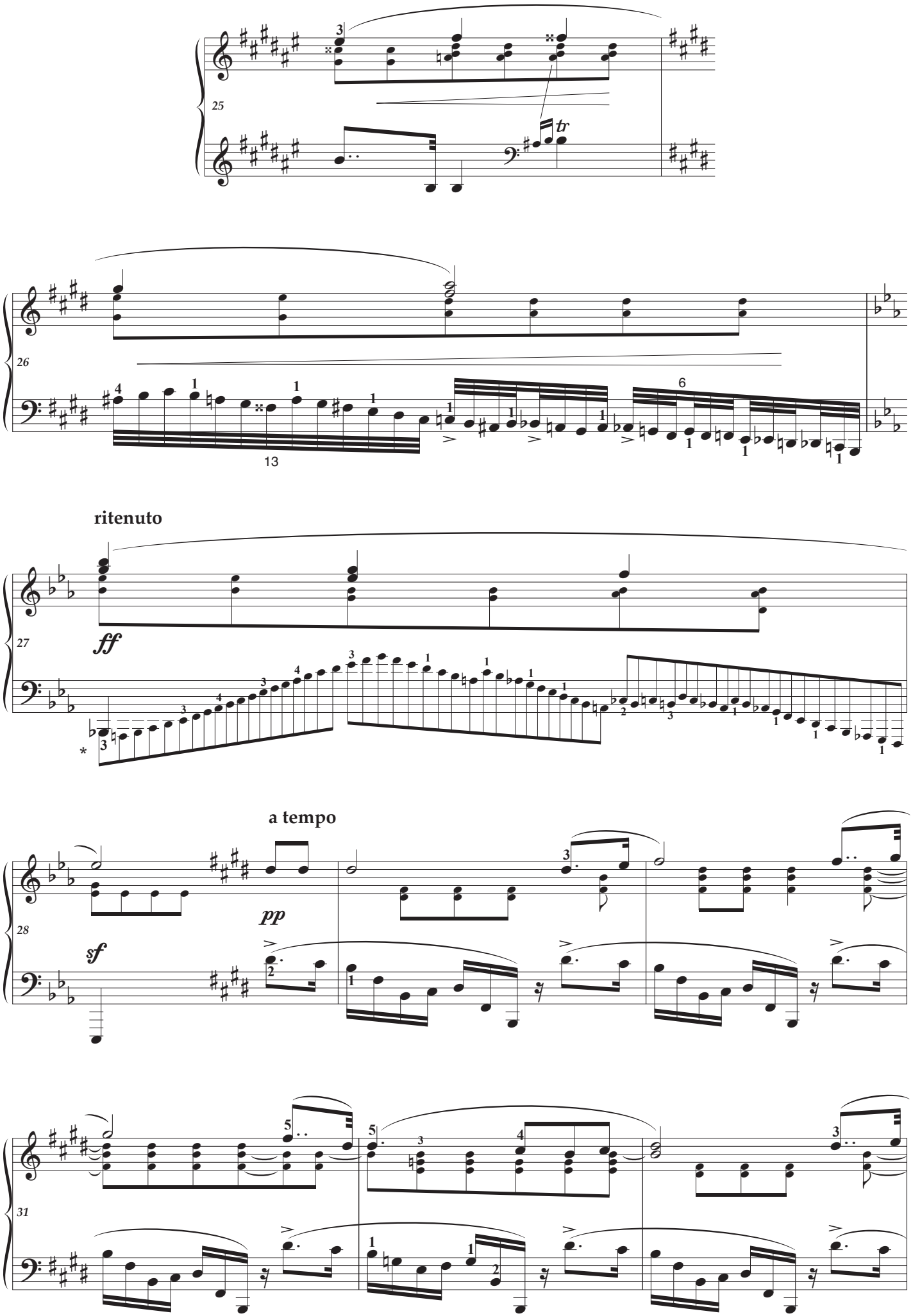


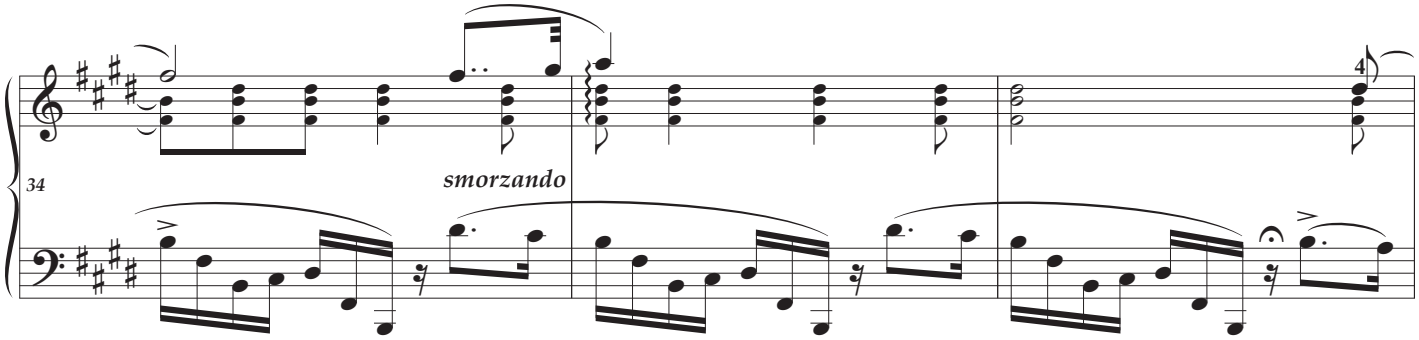
bars 57-61 in triple time

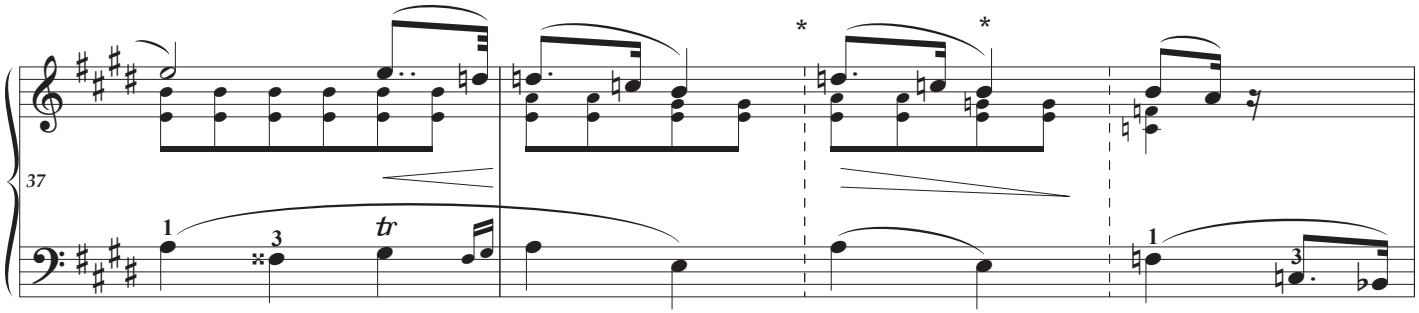


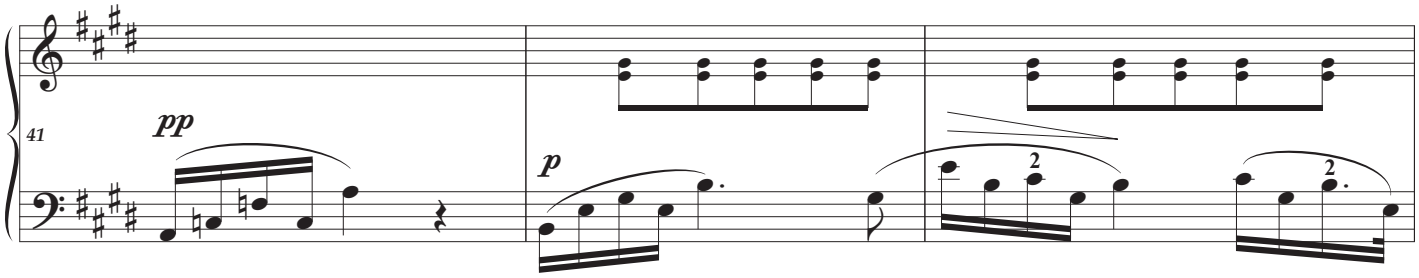

lento
VII
p
[♩ = 66]
3
pp
tr
pp

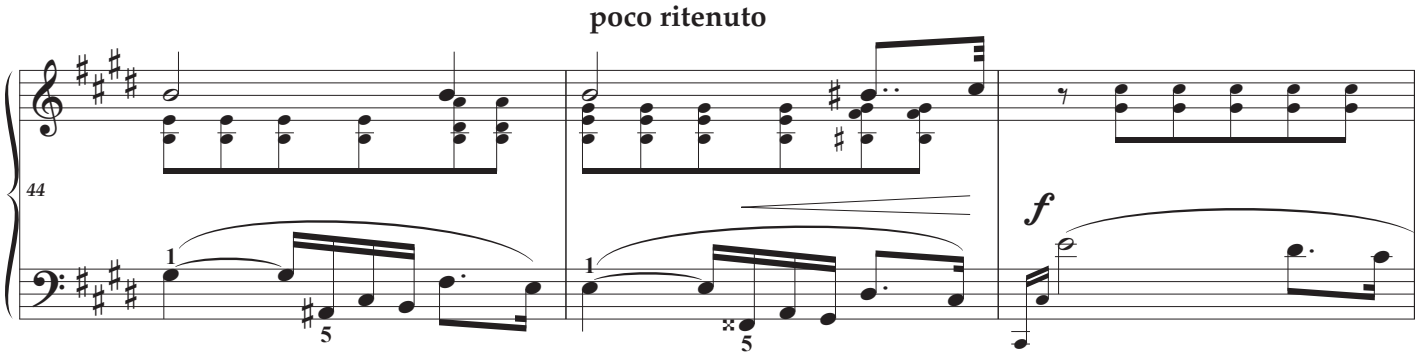

12
15
p
pp
18
21
23

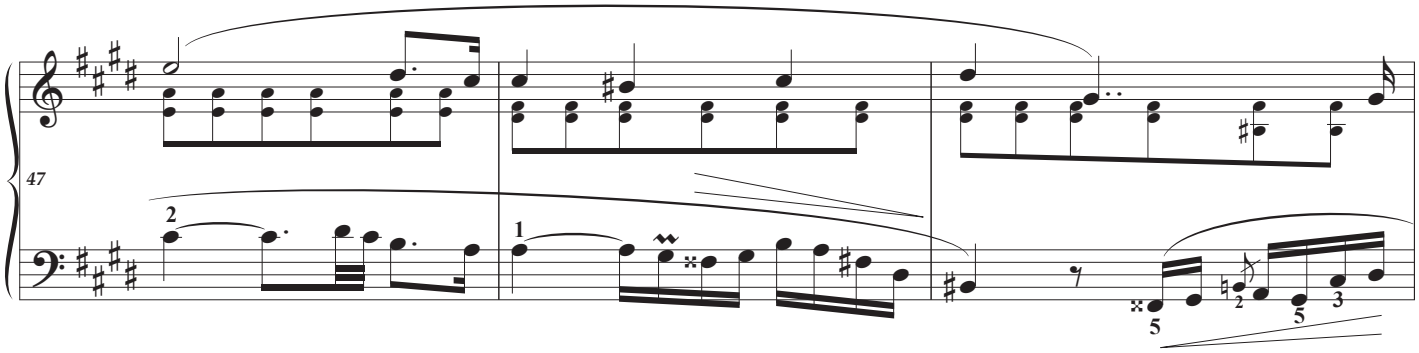

25
tr
26
13
ritenuto
27
ff
a tempo
28
pp
sf
31

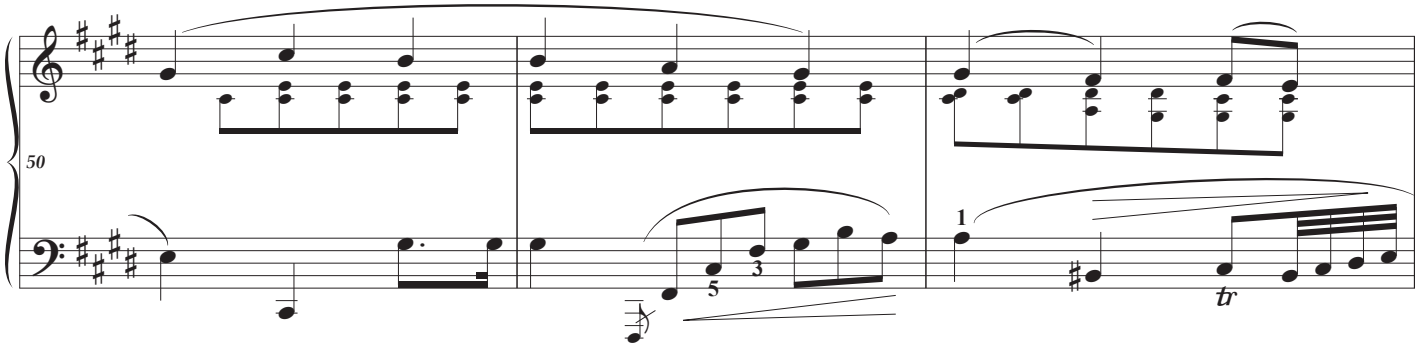

34
smorzando

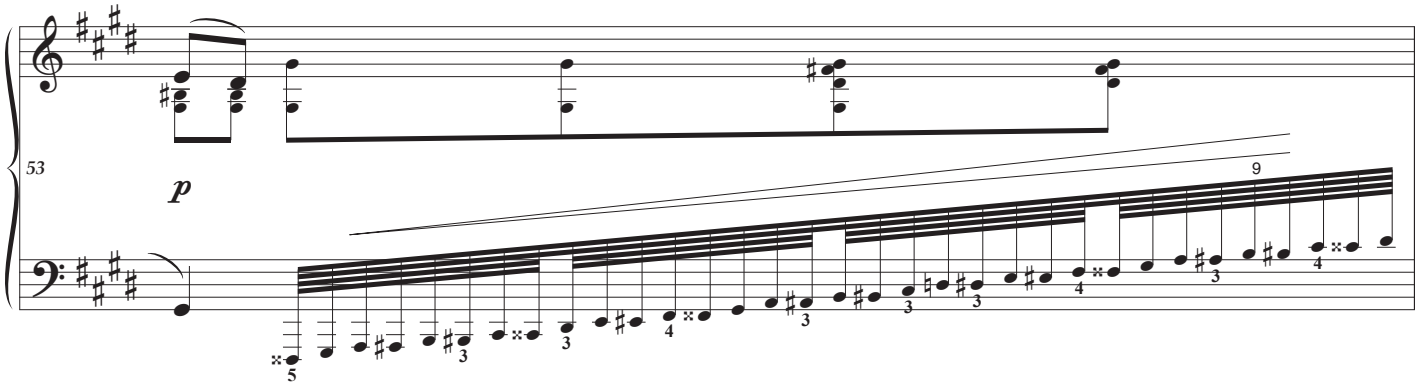

37
tr

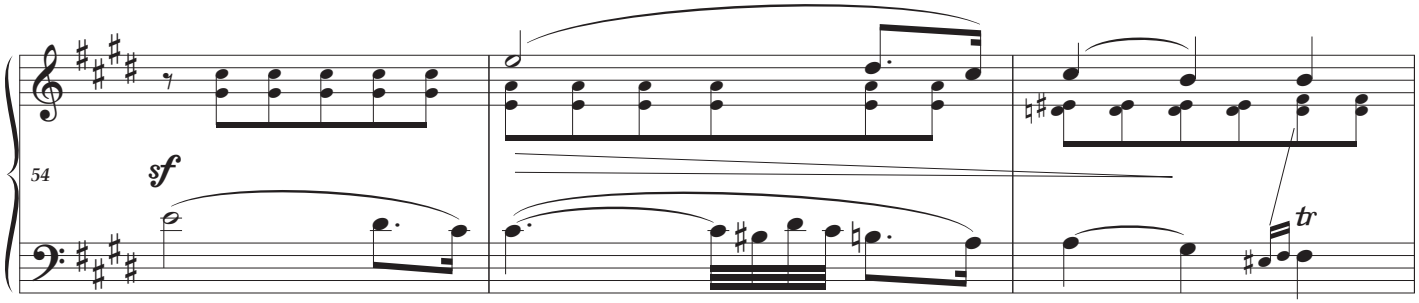

41
pp
p

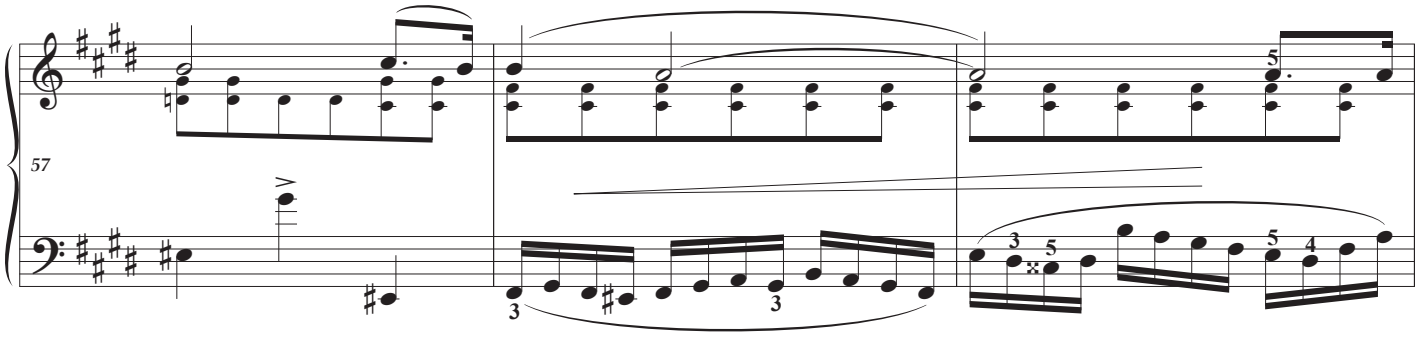

poco ritenuto
44
f

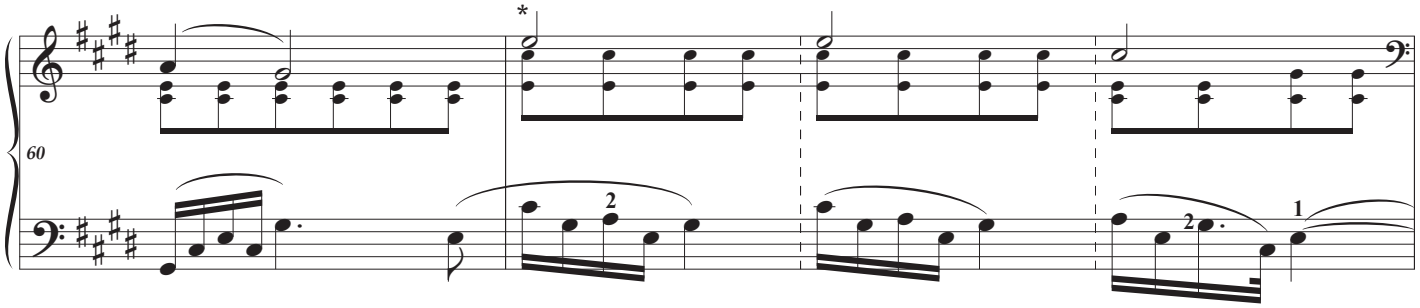

47

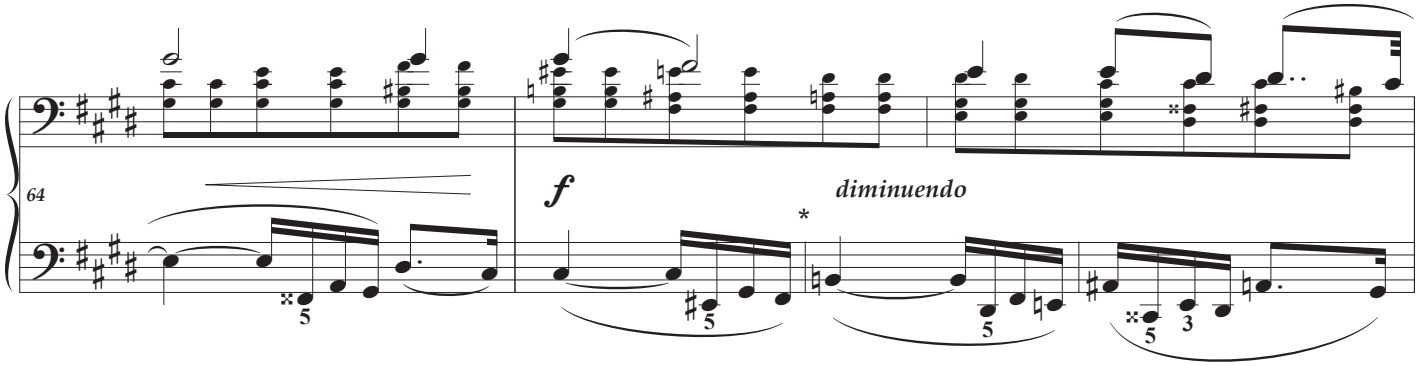

50
tr

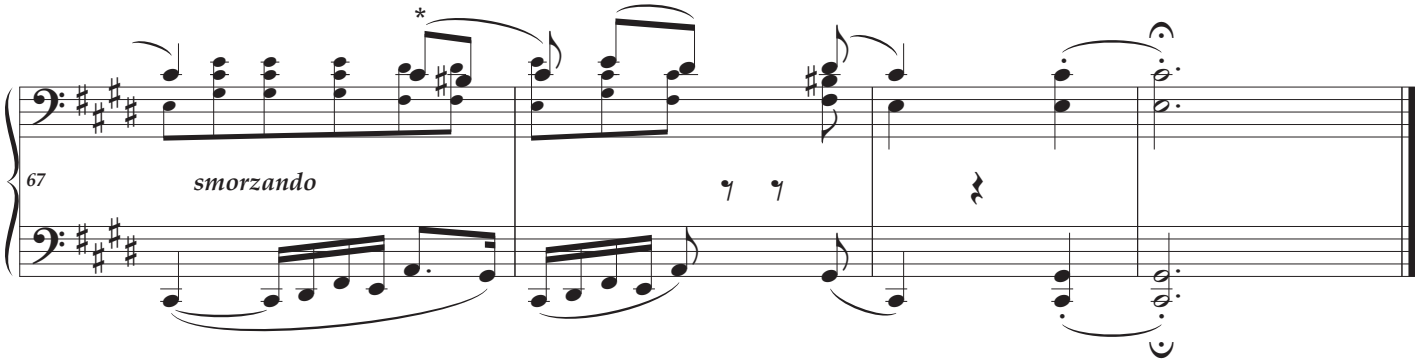

53
p

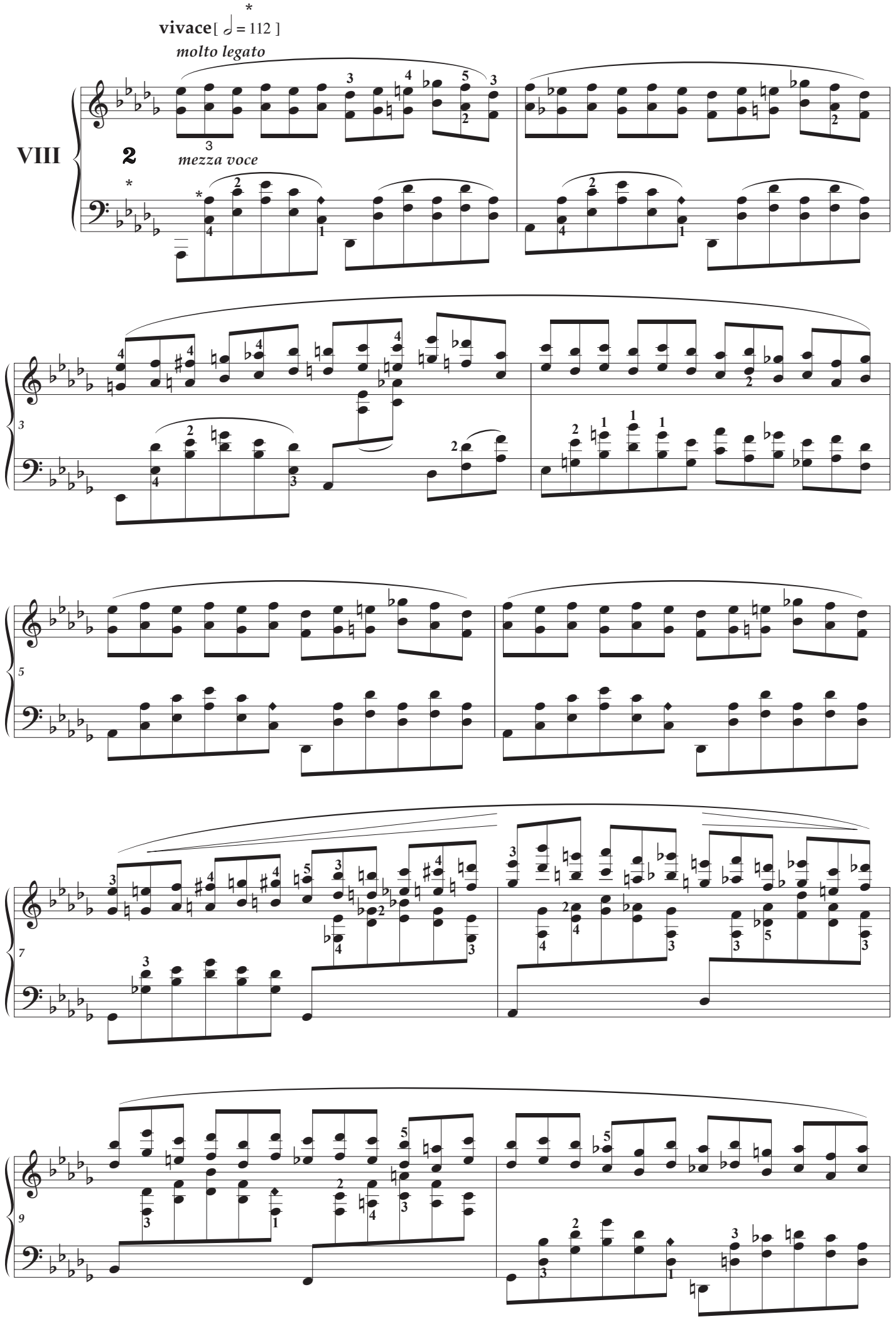

54
sf
tr

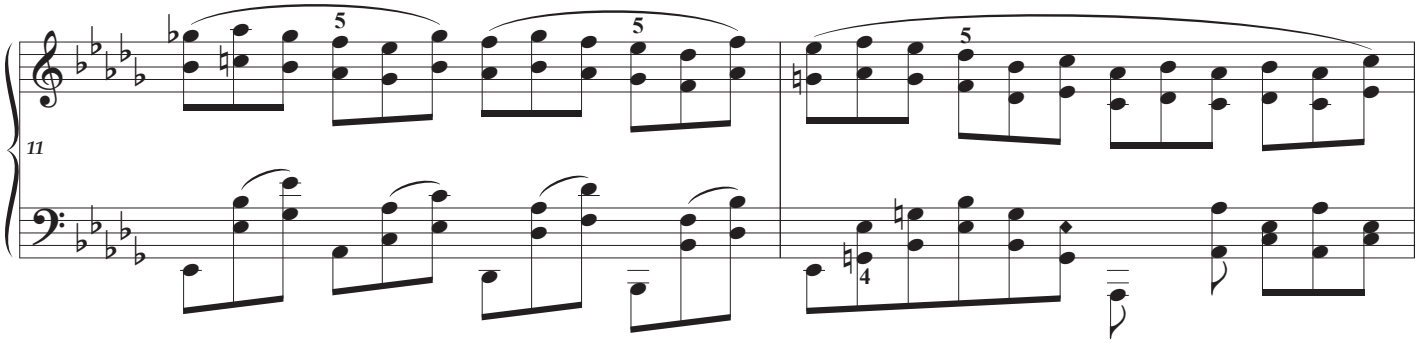

57

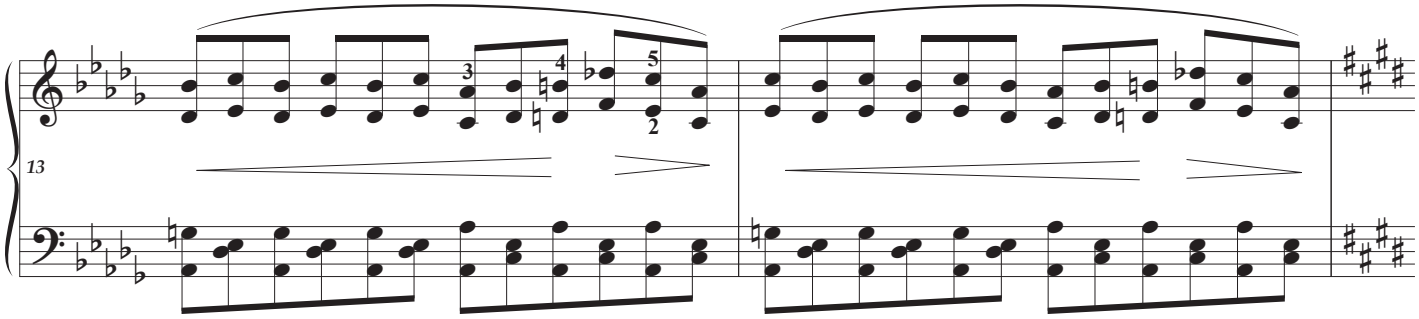

60

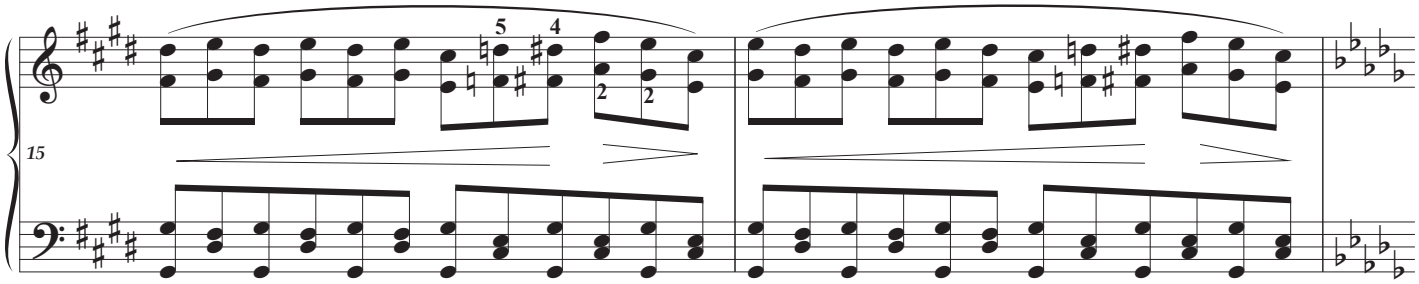

64
f
diminuendo

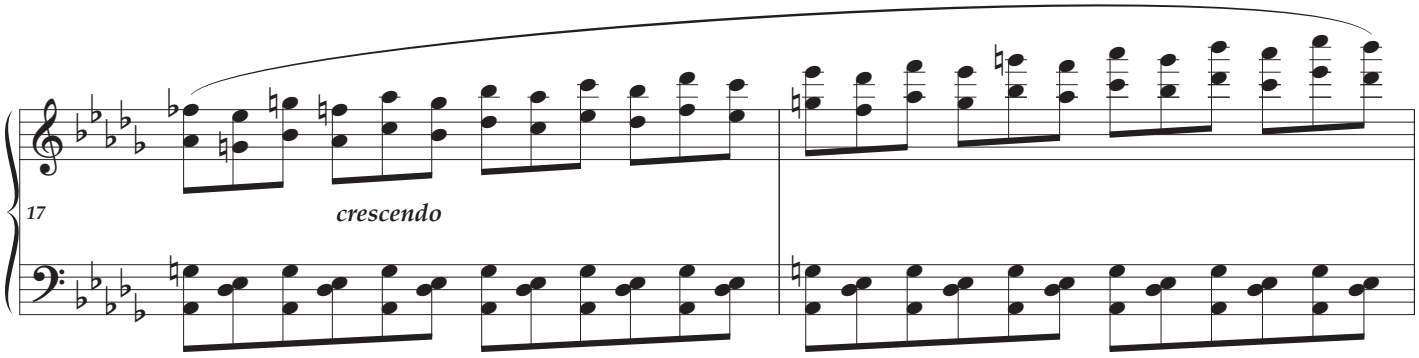

67
smorzando

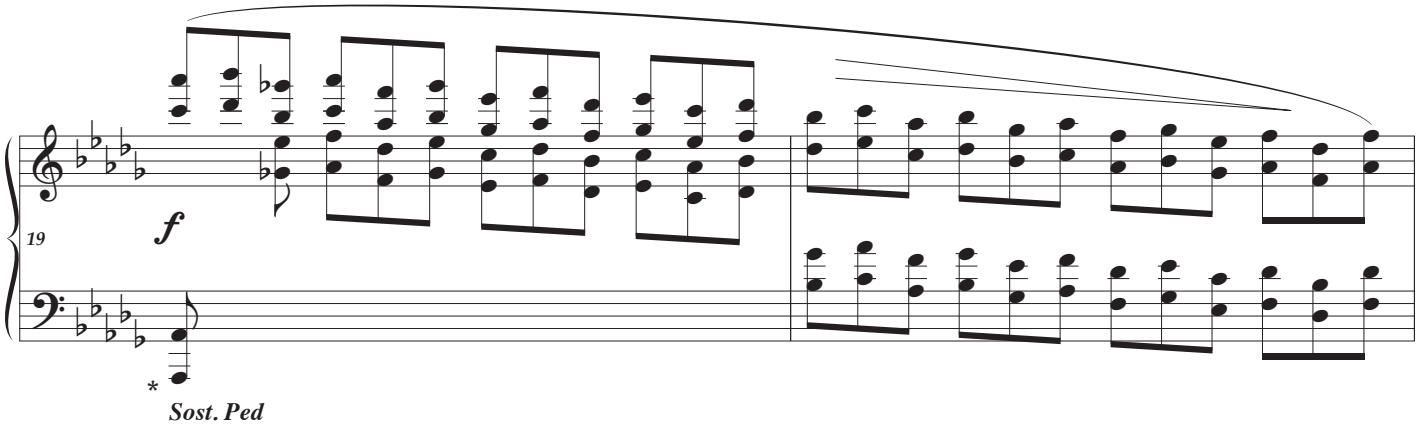

vivace [𝅗𝅥 = 112]
molto legato
VIII
2
mezza voce

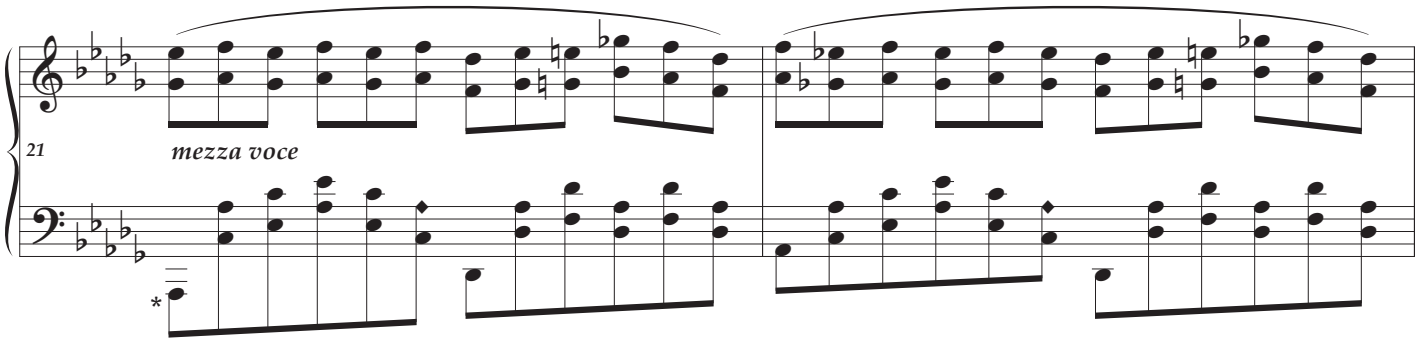

11

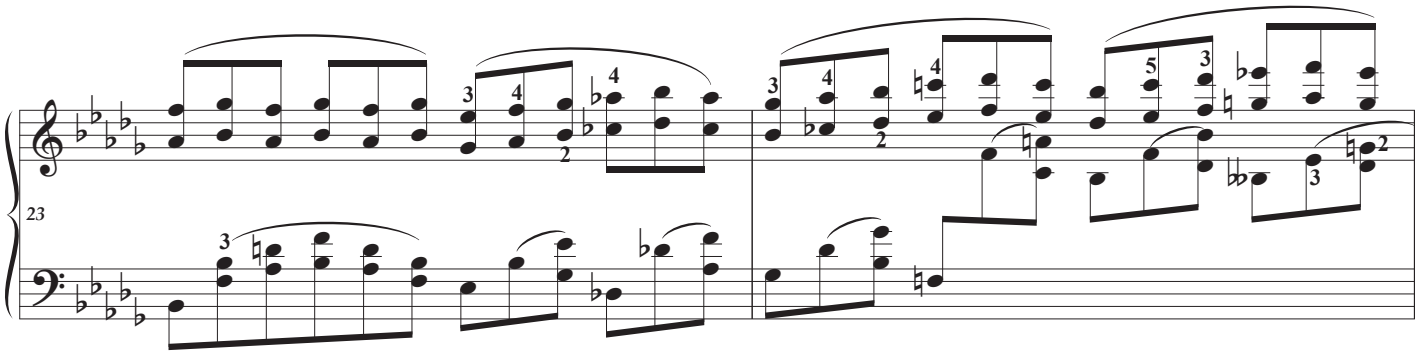

13

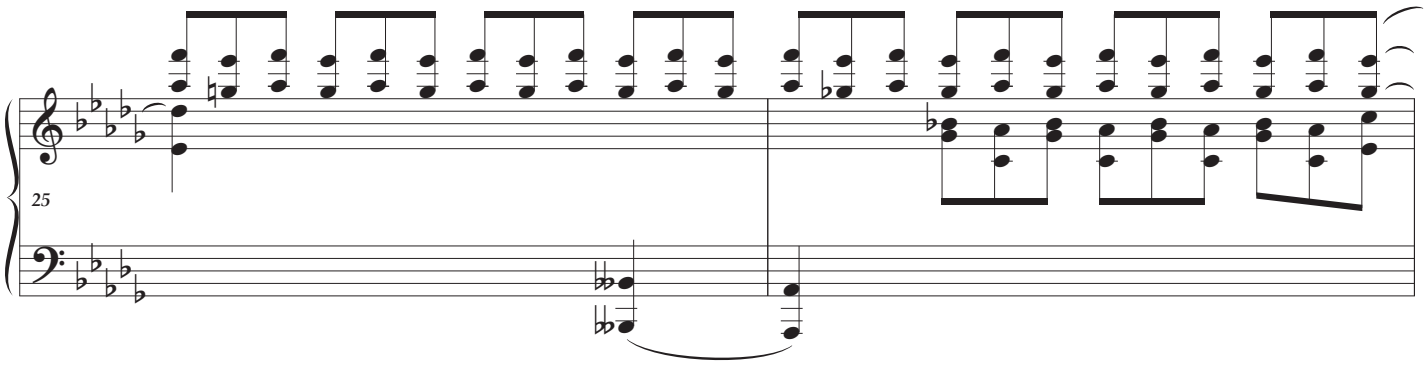

15

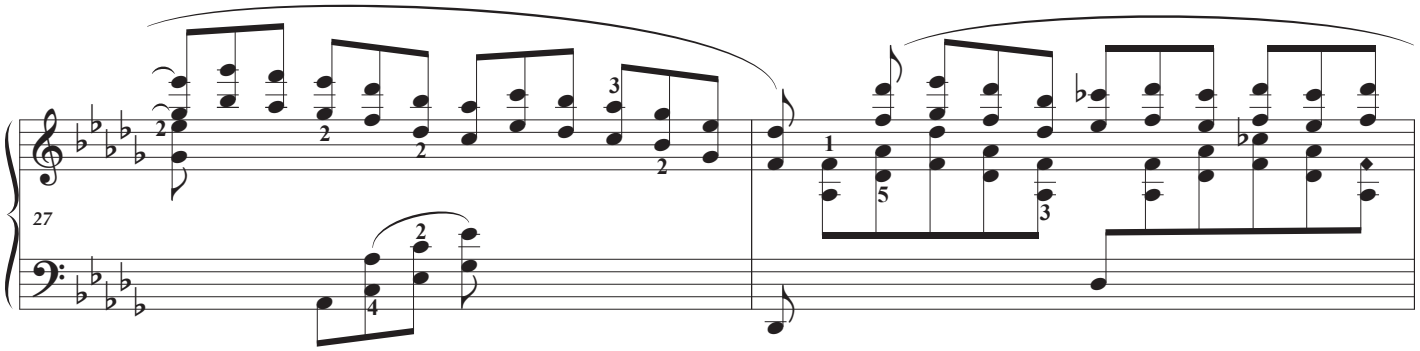

17
crescendo

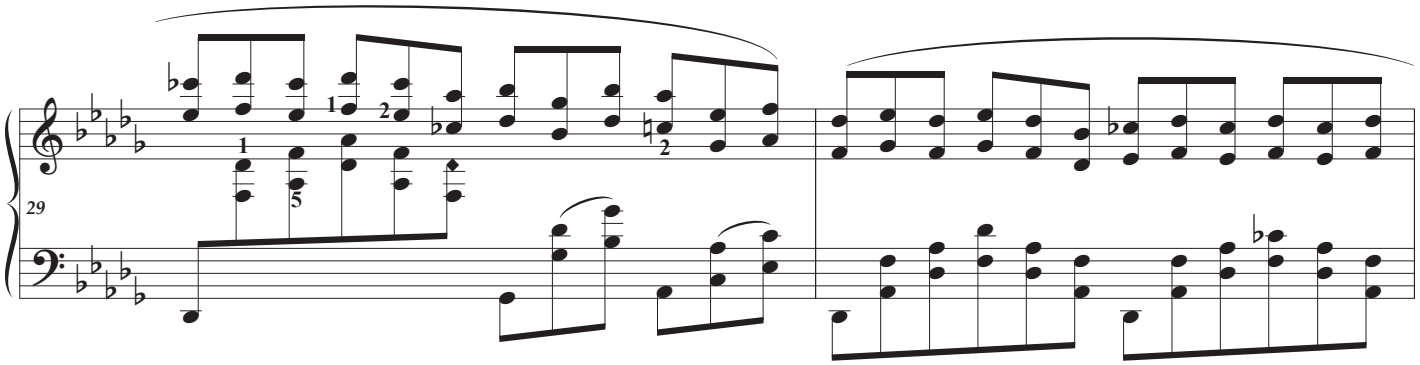

19
f
*
Sost. Ped

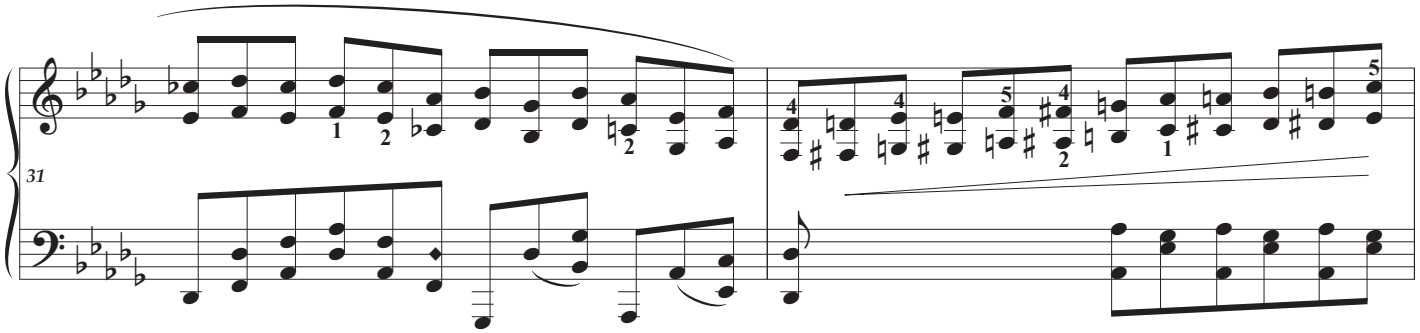

21
mezza voce
*

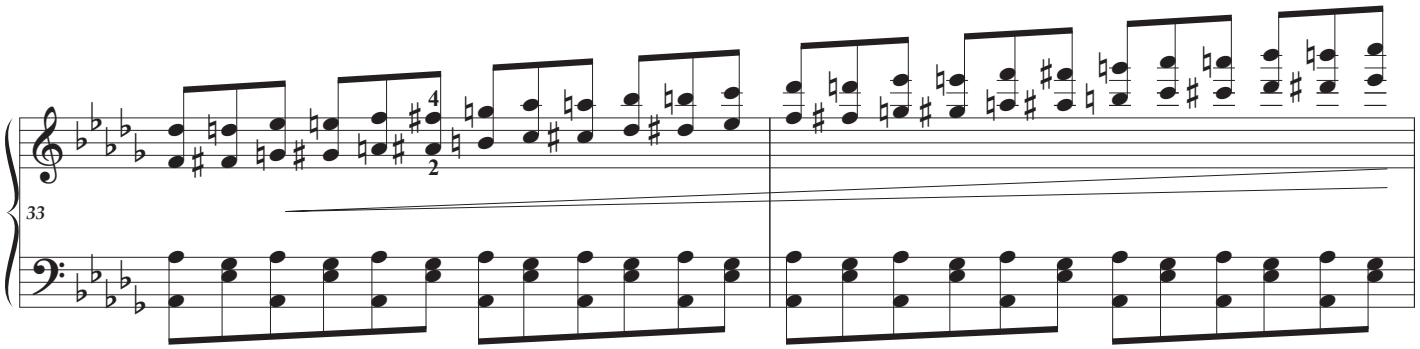

23

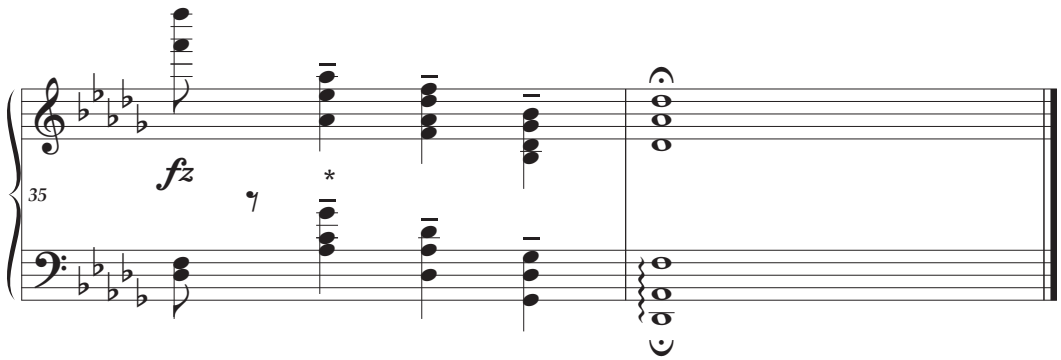

25


27

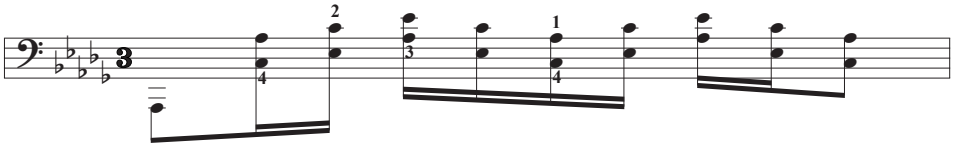

29

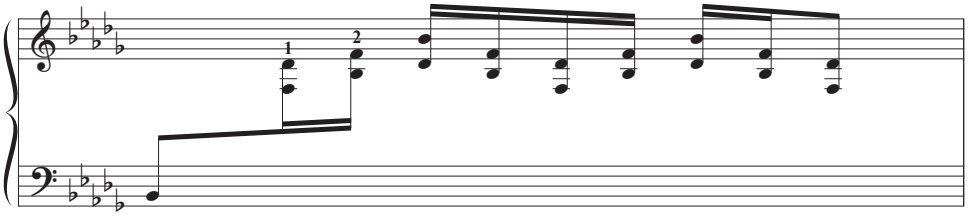

31

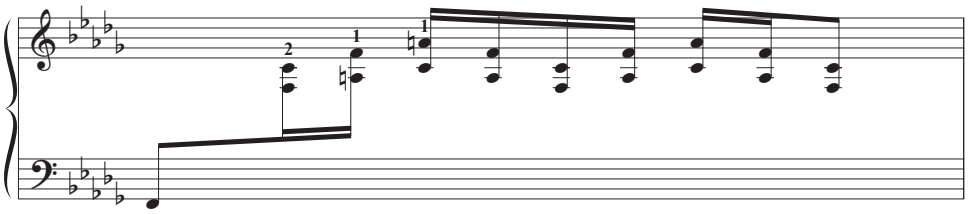

33


35
fz

left hand preparatory exercise format







Appendix

Comments and afterthoughts

- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- Chopin disliked giving titles, and those that have become popular over the years are often quite inappropriate
- as I have mentioned elsewhere, metronome speeds are nearly always considerably faster than is musically desirable and reasonable

Étude N° 5 in E minor page **1**

As is so often the case, this inventive work suffers from an unfortunate nickname — an attractive lightly played melody with provocative charm is accompanied by various ornaments (acciaccaturas and appoggiaturas) which surely cannot be considered as 'wrong' notes. In fact, balancing the right hand is not easy, involving a large stretch and having to project with the fifth finger. Rather like the earlier N° 3 in F this is a study for delicacy in both touch and pedalling. In marked contrast, we enjoy a central melody of great lyrical beauty for cello in the tonic major, with effective RH arpeggiated accompaniment. Chopin concludes this ornamental triumph with simultaneous trills and a slowly ascending flourish.

I recommend the Cortot edition preparatory exercises. Be aware that this edition features quite a few personal 'arrangements' of certain passages, either to facilitate or to render them more persuasive.

Notes

- all editions give a very quick ♩ = 184 — I recommend 164
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy of any edition
- **8/9** an alternative is proposed in the original German edition

•**14** editorial suggestion for the diamond-headed bass C to be omitted

•**29** these acciaccaturas should be crushed to differentiate from **1-20**

•**37** editorial soprano and alto voice division

•**42-44** editorial 'arrangement' of these three bars

•**45** some editions give ♩ = 168 — I recommend 120

•**51** & **58** editorial alto voice

•**52** bass crotchet

•**52/53** editorial descending arpeggiation

•**73-76** editorial *sostenuto* pedal suggestion for this beautiful pedal point

•**87-88** editorial 'arrangement' of the soprano voice

•**87-88** bass D♯ tied

•**94-97** editorial beaming

•**111** some editions omit E

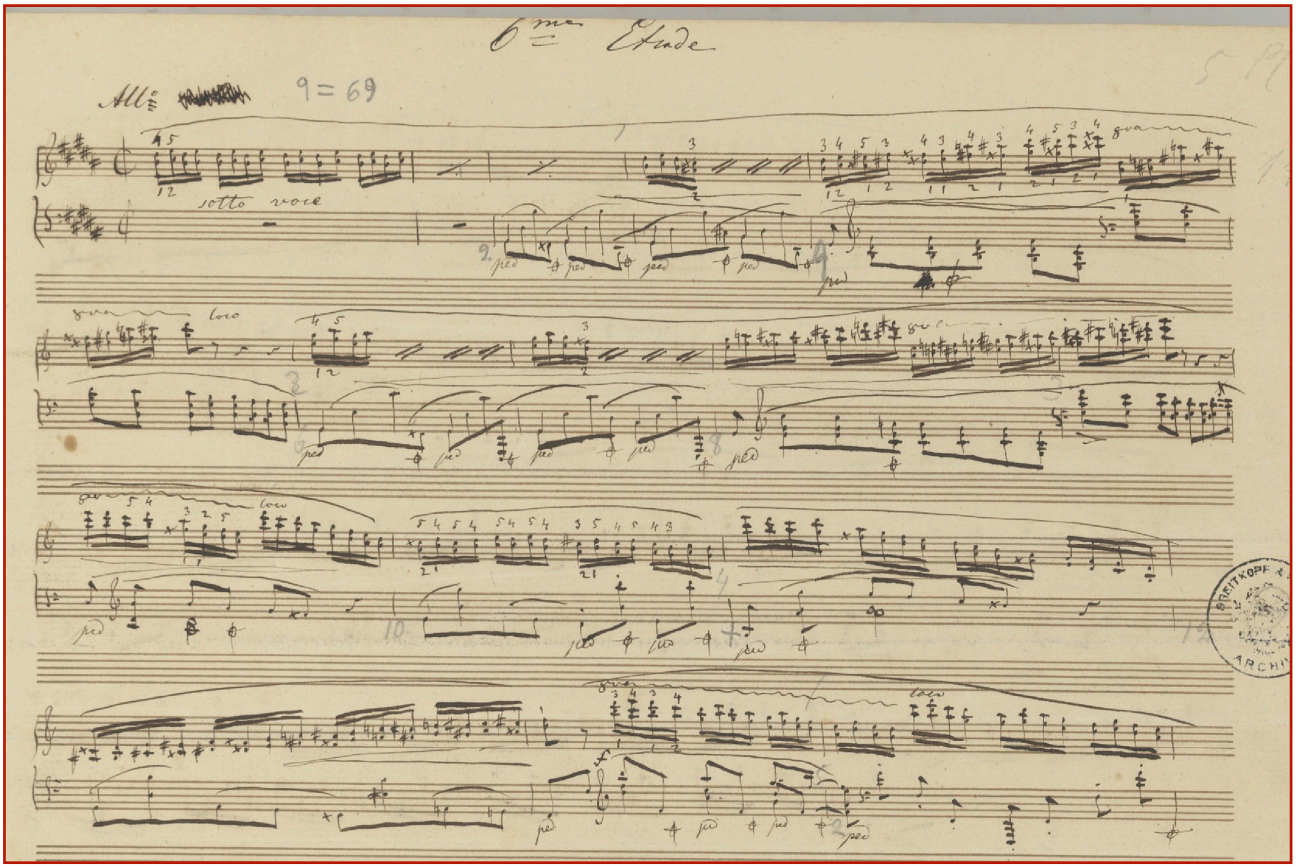
•**122** editorial alto voice

•**124** editorial 'arrangement' of both hands

•**126** editorial 'arrangement' of left hand — originally marked ***p***

•**128** editorial 'arrangement' — by swapping hands at the tie it is possible to silently hold the bass and 'clean' up the pedal

•**138** marked ***fff*** but I prefer an understated final flourish

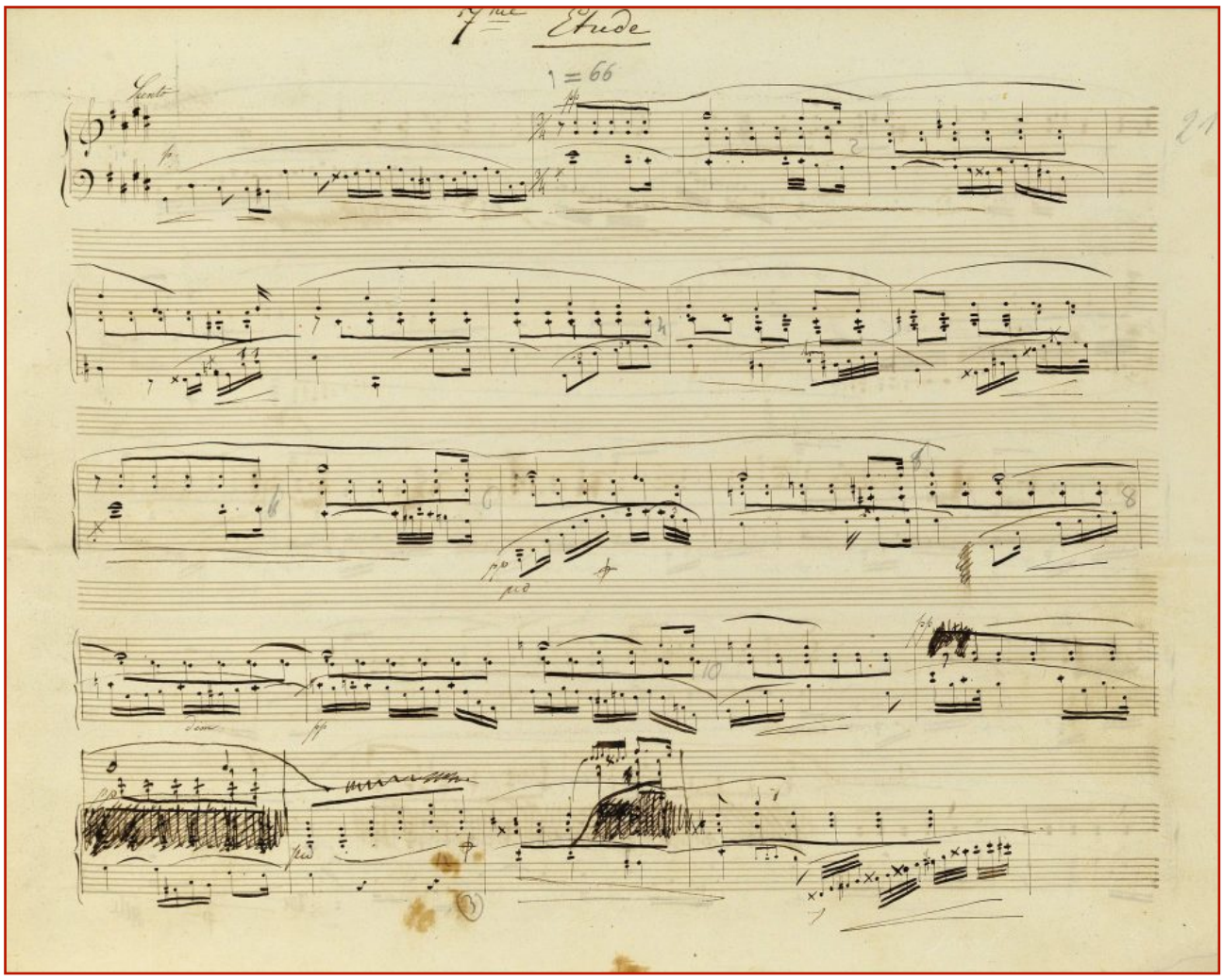


Étude N° 6 in G♯ minor page **9**

Trills, turns and scales both diatonic and chromatic, ascending and descending in double thirds, and the left hand has its own problems — simultaneously responsible for melody and bass. As always, Chopin magically transforms what could have been a dull and repetitive technical exercise into a charismatic challenge. The hands complement each other perfectly and together they create an original and beautiful study — the tenor and bass could really do with two hands and I suggest studying it thus with great care to the end. The preparatory exercises on page 16 will benefit from separating both upper and lower scales using identical fingering.

Notes

- 𝅗𝅥 = 69 — I recommend 60
- some editions erroneously give common time
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy of any edition
- study the lower part with both hands until fluent before attempting with left hand only
- **5** and similar bars editorial simplified phrasing
- **7** while the majority still play this as a natural there are persuasive arguments for an exotic A♯
- **11-12** re-beamed on page 16
- **15** soprano 'arrangement'
- **17** editorial bass voice
- **23** if the proposed fingering is adopted the diamond-headed E can be omitted
- **27/29/31** added bass octave
- **30** editorial omission of the tied B♭
- **31-33** re-beamed on page 16
- **47-48** re-beamed on page 16
- **49/53** if the proposed fingering is adopted the diamond-headed C♯ an be omitted
- **57** presented in triple time on page 16
- **62** some editions give separated arpeggiation

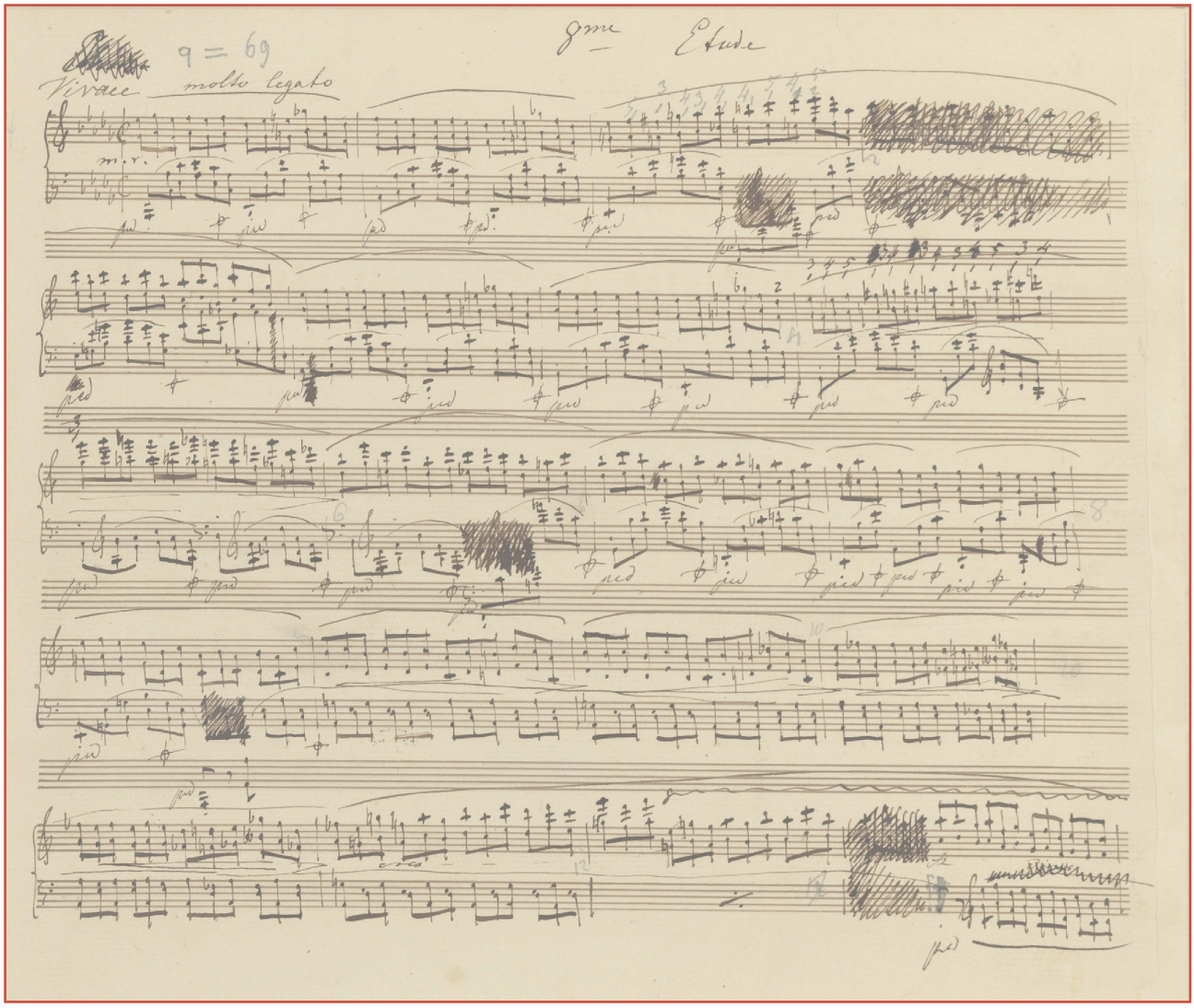


Étude N° 7 in C♯ minor page **17**

A poetically nostalgic and extremely emotional duet for soprano and cello with pulsating accompaniment, this deeply felt and heartbreaking work is both a study in counterpoint, *cantabile* and balance. Play through and interpret both solos individually and in partnership, at first without accompaniment. It is essential to maintain a forward-moving pulse and to avoid excessive sentimentality and self-indulgence.

Notes

- most editions give ♩ = 66 — I recommend a very flexible 56
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy of any edition
- editorial reduced font for the accompaniment
- editorial changes of key
- **27/52** editorial beaming
- **38-40** editorial modification of time-signature and dashed barlines
- **39** G♯ is an alternative
- **61-63** editorial modification of time-signature and dashed barlines
- **65-66** editorial modification of bass barlines
- **67-68** editorial modification of treble voicing



Étude N° 8 in D♭ major page **23**

In marked contrast to number 7, another study in simultaneous double notes for both hands (the right exclusively in sixths). In tandem with the darker-hued number 6 in thirds, full of *joie de vivre*, there is a physical pleasure in encompassing these wide stretches knowing that one is enjoying a lesson in flexibility and sensibility from a master. Most commentators write about the problems relating to the right hand, but the left is probably even more difficult, fast leaps and thumb mobility adding further complications. Painful arthritis forced me to seek alternative fingering, to be found in this edition. Superficially a study in the style of Czerny, it does nevertheless present Chopin's inventiveness in the way he combines these double intervals to create a splendid and mellifluous challenge.

Notes

- most editions give 𝅗𝅥 = 69 — I recommend 60
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy of any edition
- while the metronome indication is in minims, some editions erroneously give common time
- there is a preparatory exercise format for the left hand on page 27
- **19** editorial bass octave and *sostenuto* pedal
- **21** editorial lower bass octave
- **35** marked *ff* but I prefer an understated ending

C H O P I N

ÉTUDES Op 25

Volume II

published June 2023

Clésinger c. 1849

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

Piano Practical Editions
pianopracticaleditions.com