Claude DEBUSSY

CENTENARY EDITION 2018

POUR le PIANO

- PRÉLUDE
- SARABANDE
- TOCCATA

Piano Practical Editions
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iano Practical Editions

Musical Health Warning : please be aware that these editions are definitely not urtext and should be consulted together with a traditional version. They have been devised purely to help solve musical and technical problems at the piano.

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Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

POUR le PIANO

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II SARABANDE page 14 and SOUVENIR DU LOUVRE page 33
III TOCCATA page 17

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

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

"At the Piano"
James Abbott McNeill Whistler

In 1896 at the age of 34 Debussy began this neo-classical suite of three movements, completed by 1901. The composer's harmonic fabric had developed significantly since *Bergamasque* written six years earlier, becoming more animated and fantastic with many original pianistic and musical effects.

In spite of having a "difficult" relationship with his pupils — *"la volaille à laquelle je donne des leçons"*, three were made dedicatees.*

The **Prelude** is absolutely riveting with innovative harmonies, virtuosity, creative pianism and power laying a solid foundation for his later piano works. After a thematic 5-bar introduction, an extended organ pedal point emerges — and I am convinced that this opening movement was partly inspired by the sostenuto pedal** which Steinway had introduced some 25 years before; with perfect timing it is possible to create a truly stunning orchestral sound. Thereafter, we discover a declamatory overture with scintillating glissandi, whole-tone chords and scales in wide contrasts of register. I love the central section — another pedal point, this time on a middle register A♭ — and finally a captivating harp-like cadenza.

The **Sarabande** is a tweaked revision of an earlier work published in 1894 and entitled *Souvenir du Louvre* — the second of three *Images Oubliées.* I have included this work (page 33) as it is fascinating to compare them; the two movements are almost identical, the later version just altering some modal harmonies and superficial details of layout and phrasing. Émile Vuillermoz said Debussy played it 'with the easy simplicity of a good dancer from the sixteenth century', and indeed, it sounds both antique and modern at the same time. One feels that this is a very personal dialogue with the piano — the listener almost superfluous as the performer converses within the music resulting in one of his most intimate pieces for any instrument.

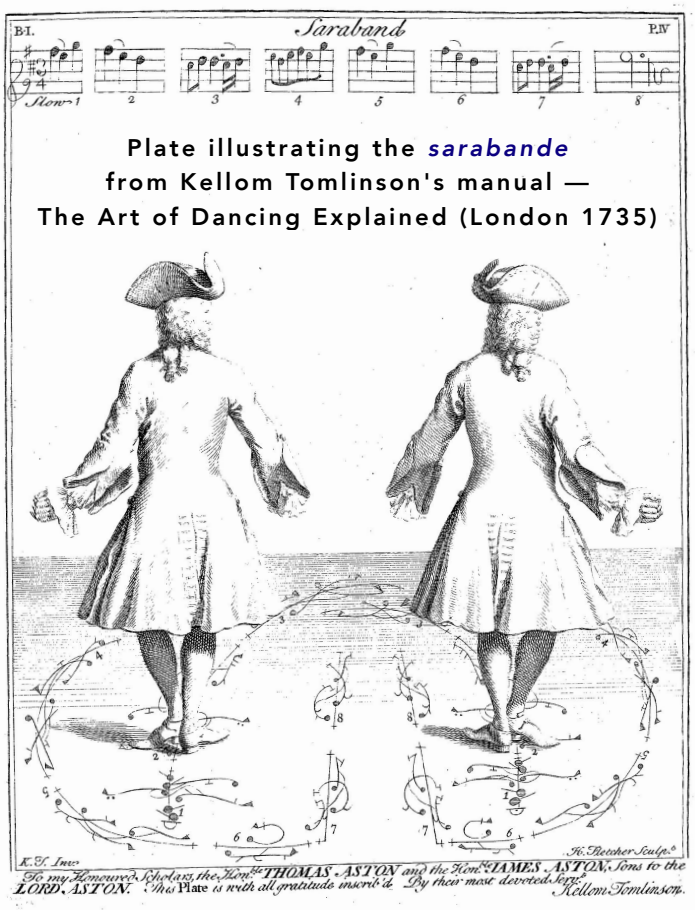

Plate illustrating the *sarabande* from Kellom Tomlinson's manual — The Art of Dancing Explained (London 1735)

The suite ends with a splendid **Toccata**, both graceful and exuberant, a work which must have influenced Ravel's Toccata (*Tombeau de Couperin)* written over 10 years later; a gorgeous central tenor melody *alla breve* transposed by Ravel to the soprano. This work is deservedly a favourite among those seeking virtuoso pleasures. However the triumphant ending should not cloud our artistic judgement; Debussy insisted that clarity and refinement were more important than mere speed and fireworks. Many French pianists of his time commented on how important it was to approach Debussy's piano music with the same diligence and rigour that one would apply to a Bach fugue. Ricardo Viñes gave its first performance in January 1902.

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In addition to some suggested fingering, the appendix on page 31 contain comments, afterthoughts and a vocabulary. Redistribution between the hands comes under close scrutiny to make certain passages easier or more persuasive. Debussy rarely uses the pedal sign preferring extended ties or long bass notes, impossible to hold otherwise; sometimes indicating *laisser vibrer…*

"*Pedalling cannot be written down*", Debussy explained — *"It varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another".* Combined with the sustaining pedal, it is possible, even desirable, to use the sostenuto** pedal effectively, although this is entirely editorial.

**Mademoiselle Worms de Romilly* was given a piano lesson by Debussy on the morning of his marriage to Rosalie Texier, the fees covering the cost of their modest wedding breakfast.

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

PRÉLUDE

à Mademoiselle Worms de Romilly

Assez animé et très rythmé [♩ = 120]

f

non legato

un peu retardé

p

Sost. Ped.

peu à peu, reprendre

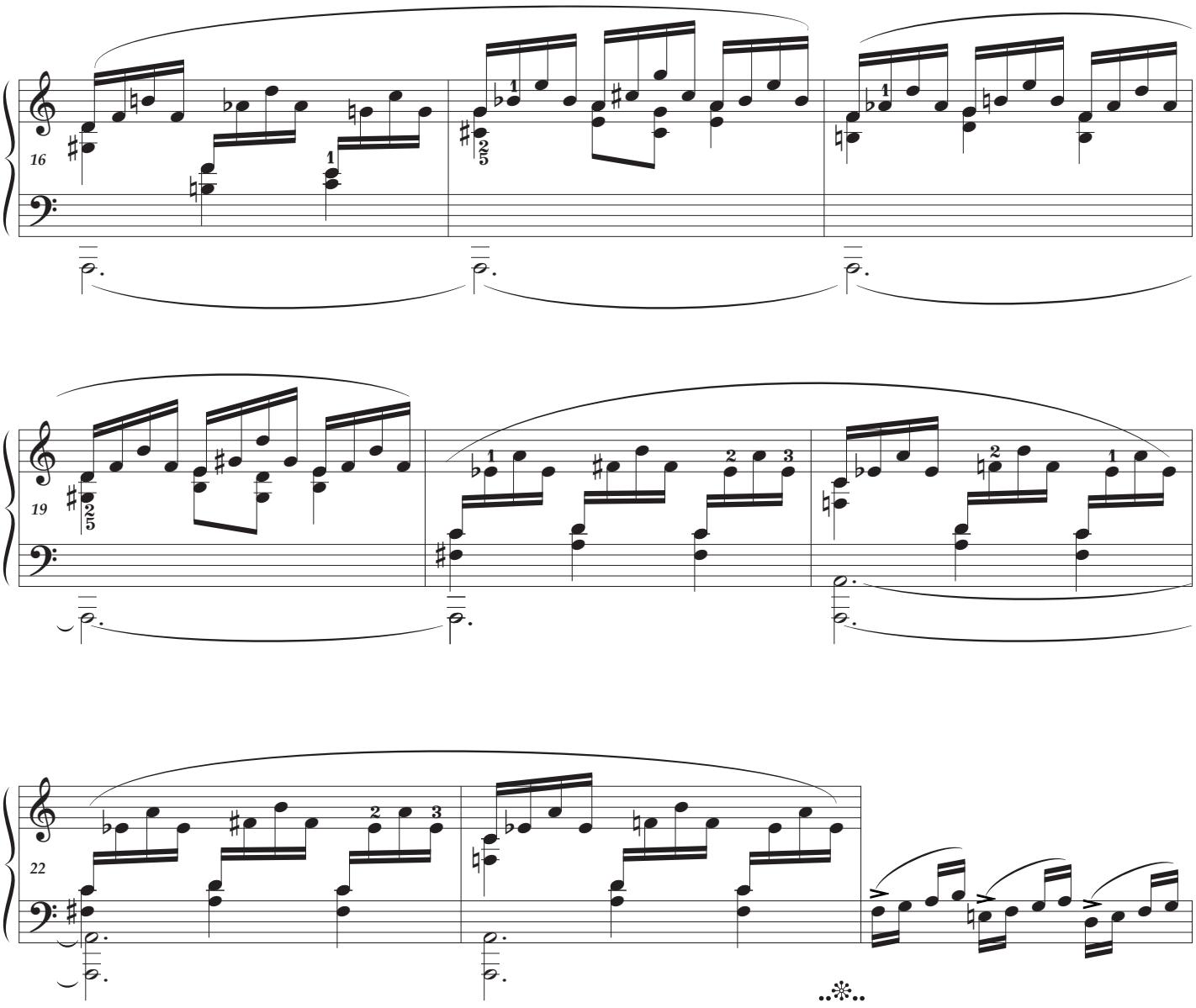
7

le mouvement

10

(crescendo peu a peu)

13

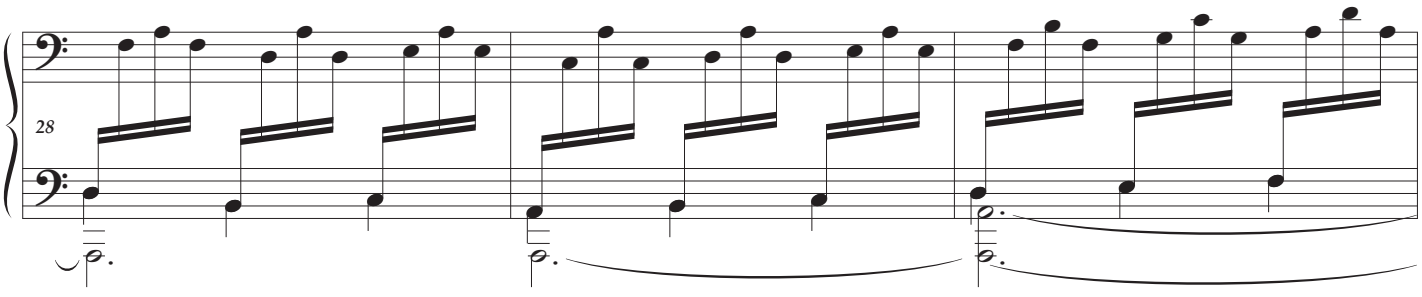


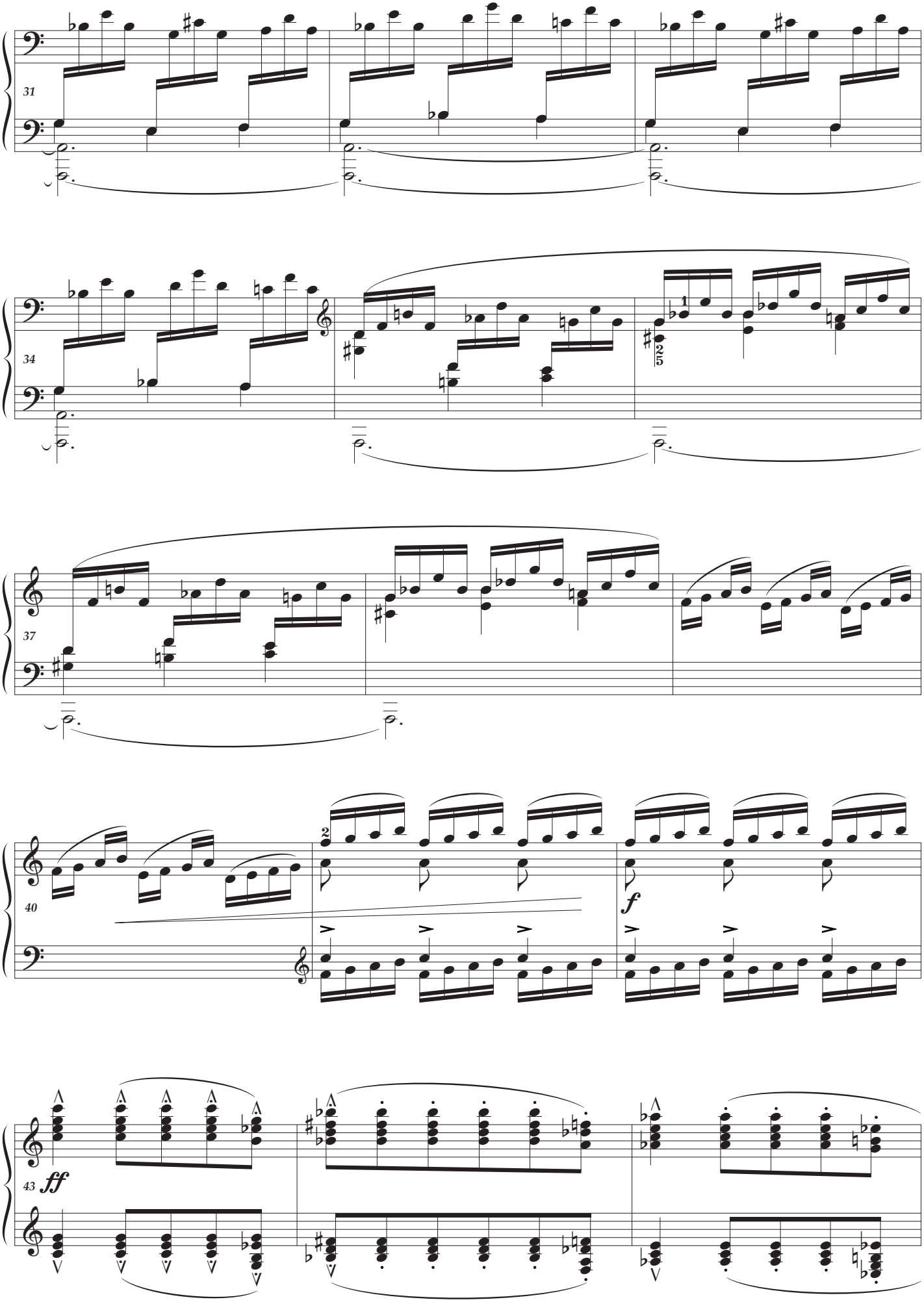
[retenu]

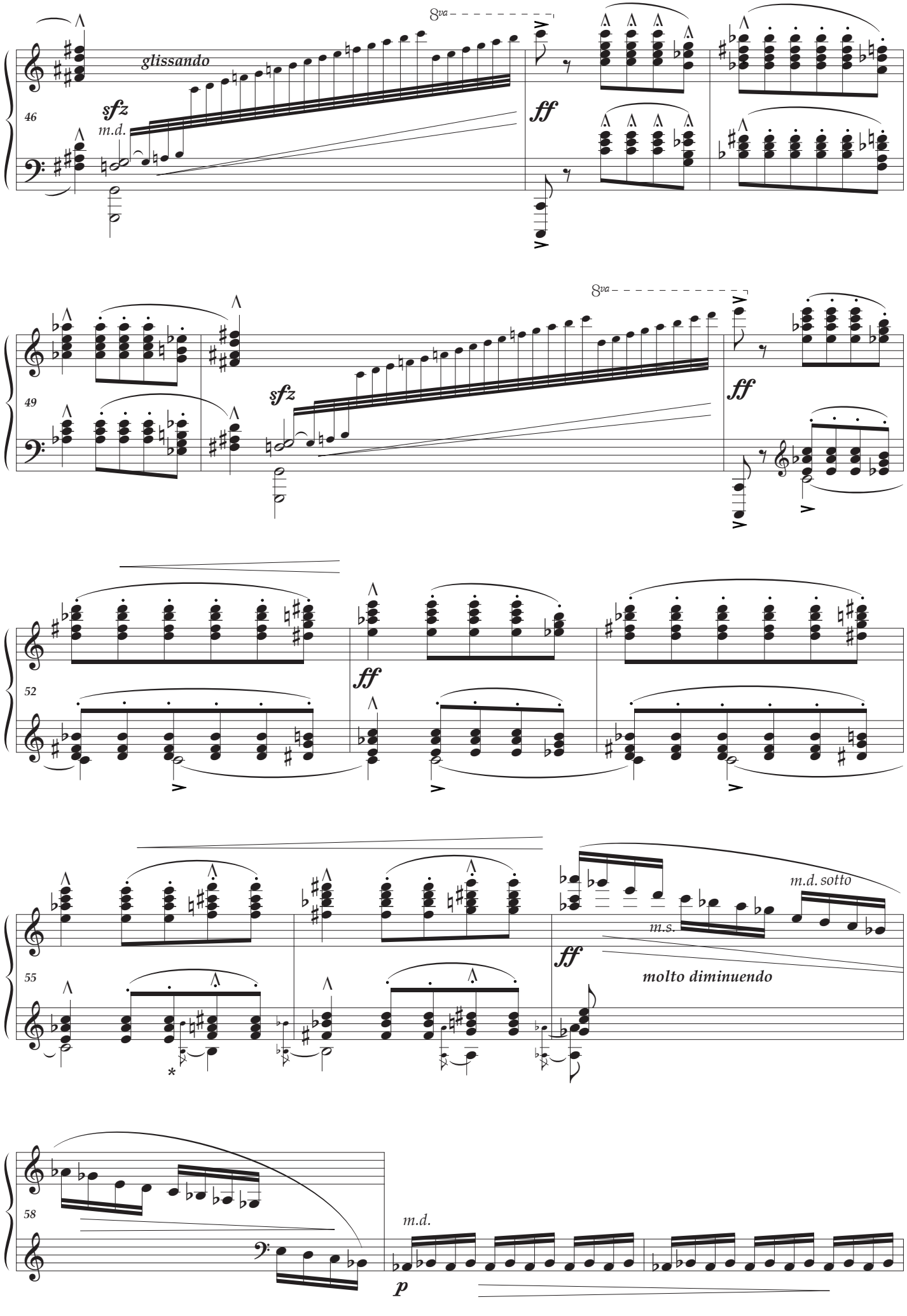
[un peu retardé]

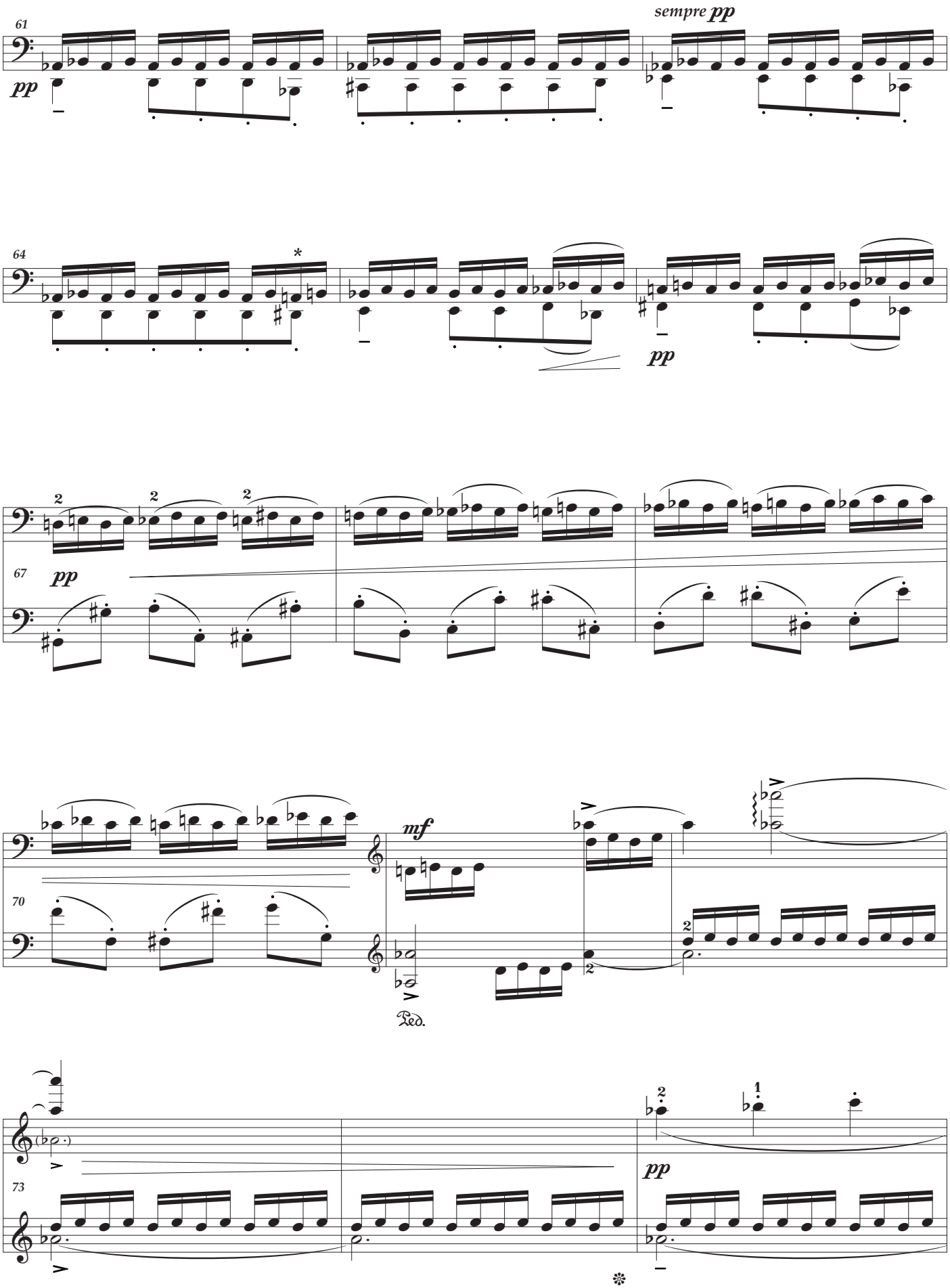
pp

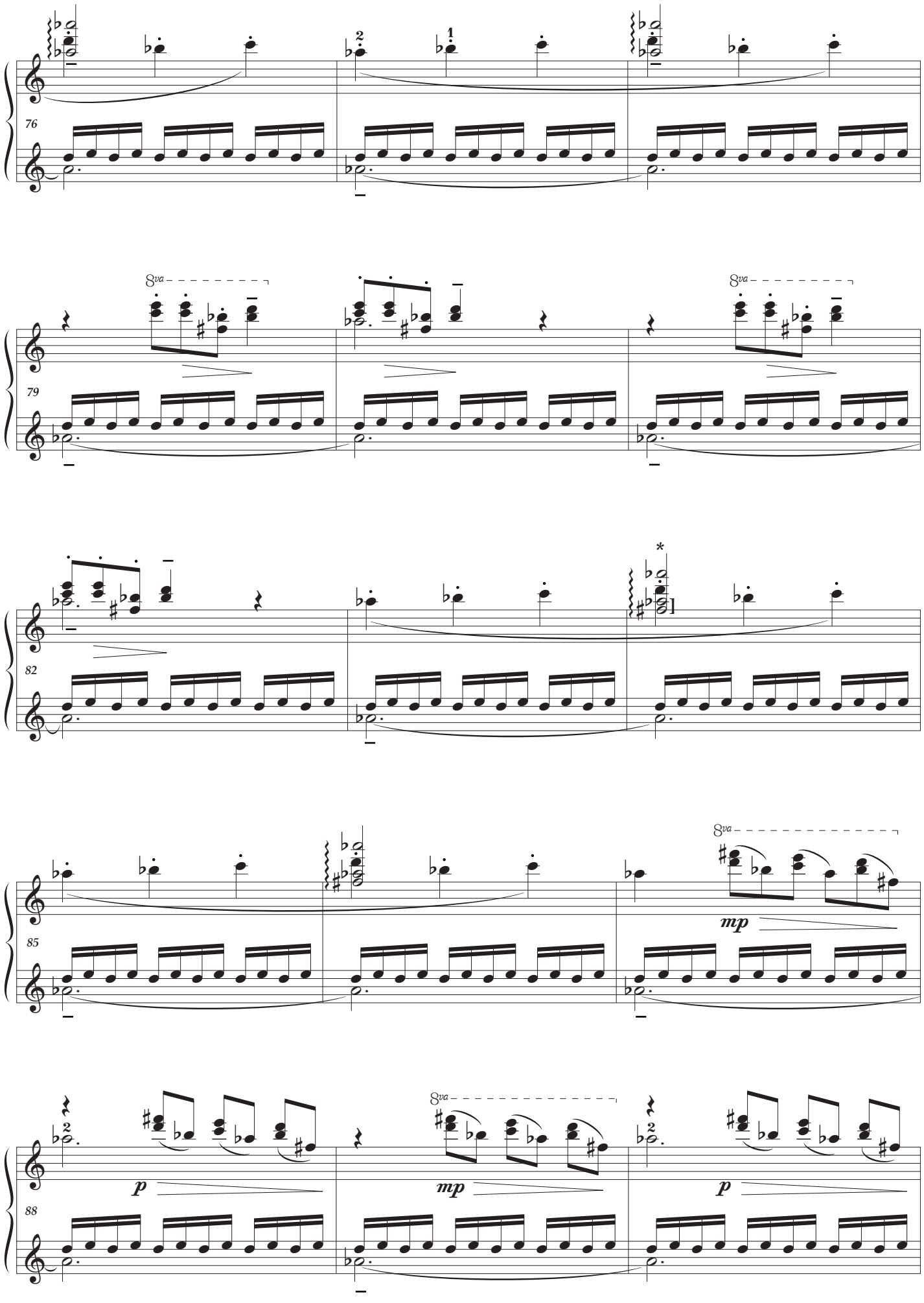
Sost. Ped.

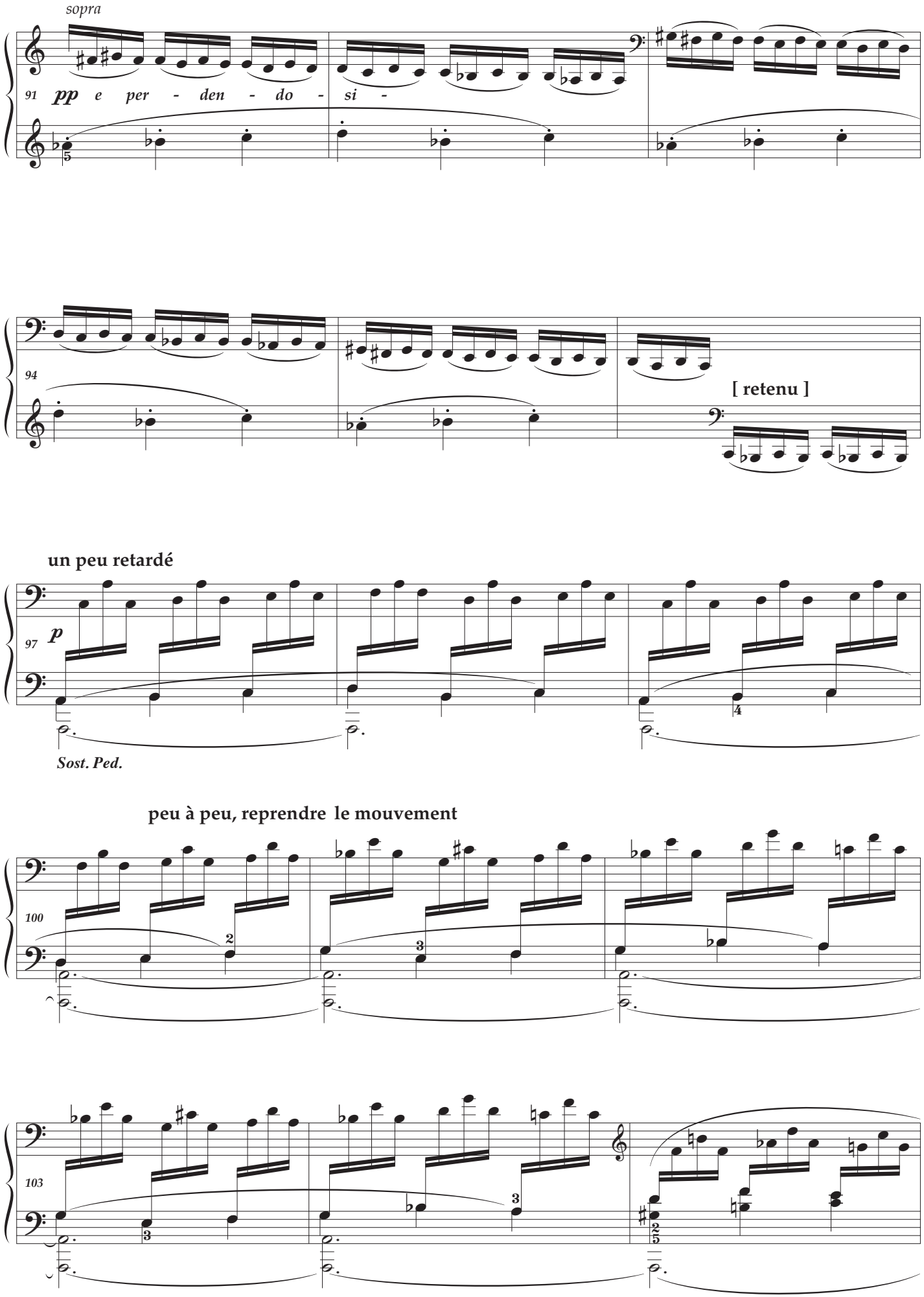


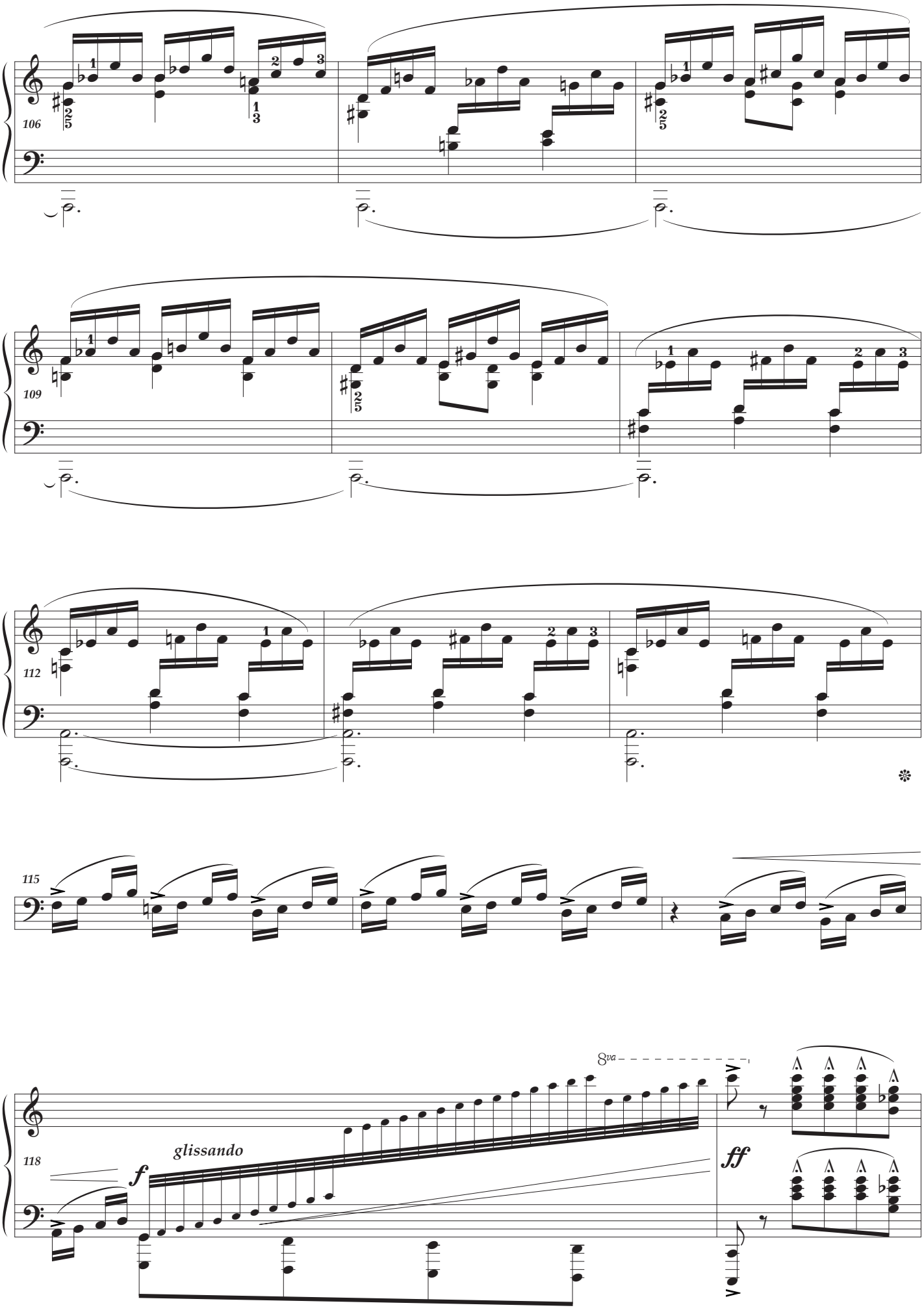

31
34
37
40
43
ff
f

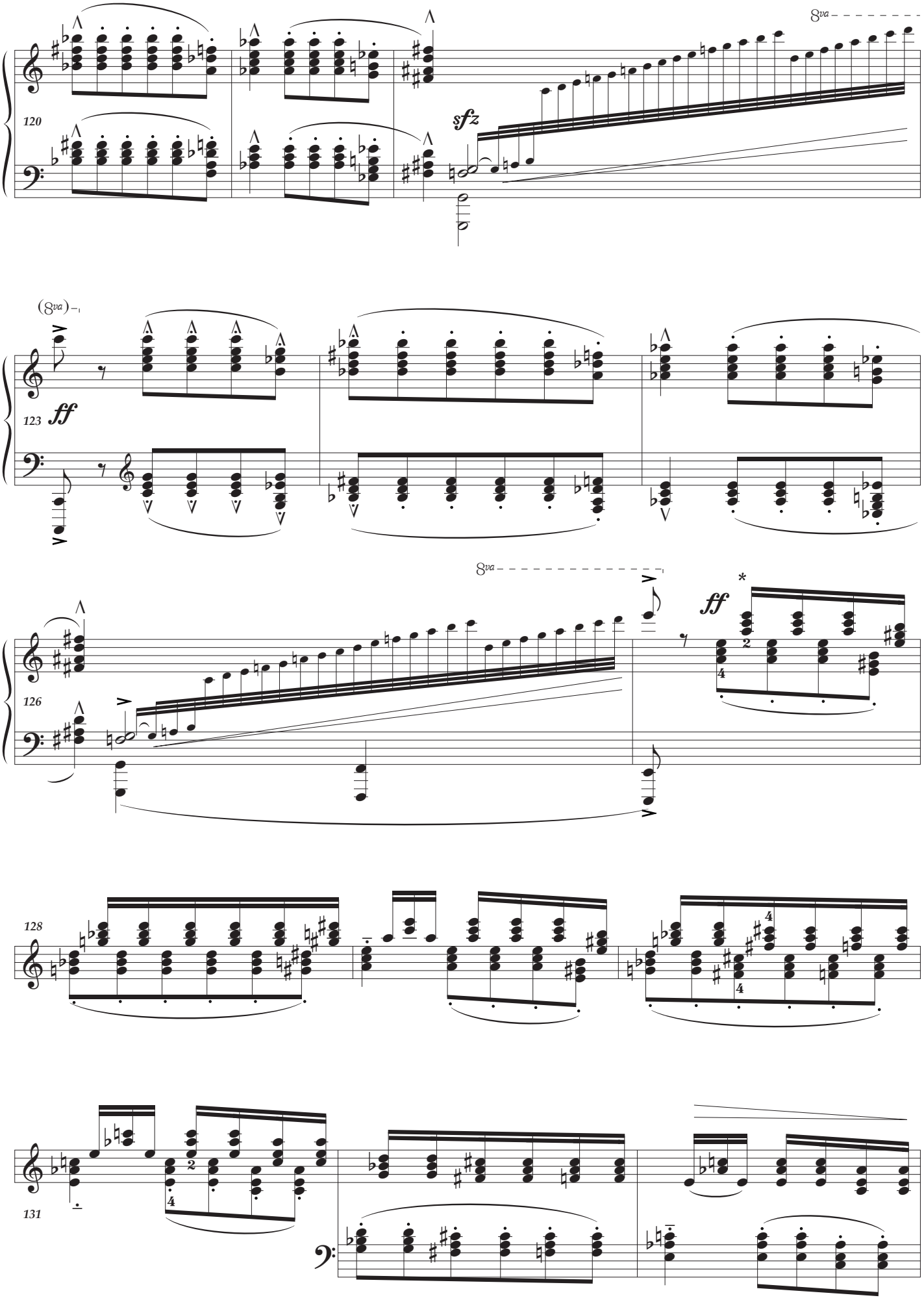

46
glissando
sfz
m.d.
8va
ff
49
sfz
8va
ff
52
ff
55
m.d. sotto
m.s.
ff
molto diminuendo
58
m.d.
p

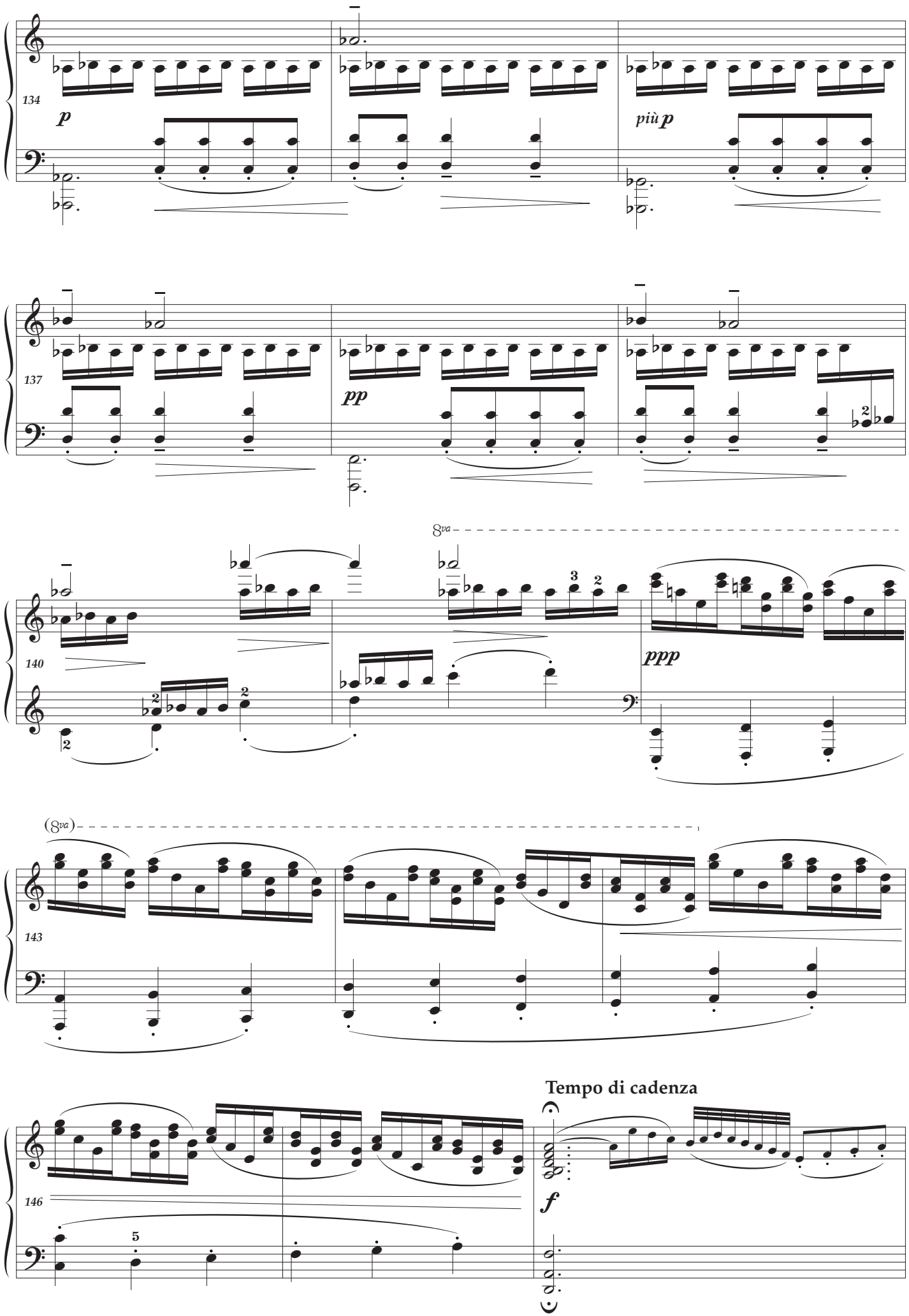

61
pp
sempre pp
64
*
pp
67
pp
70
mf
Ped.
73
pp

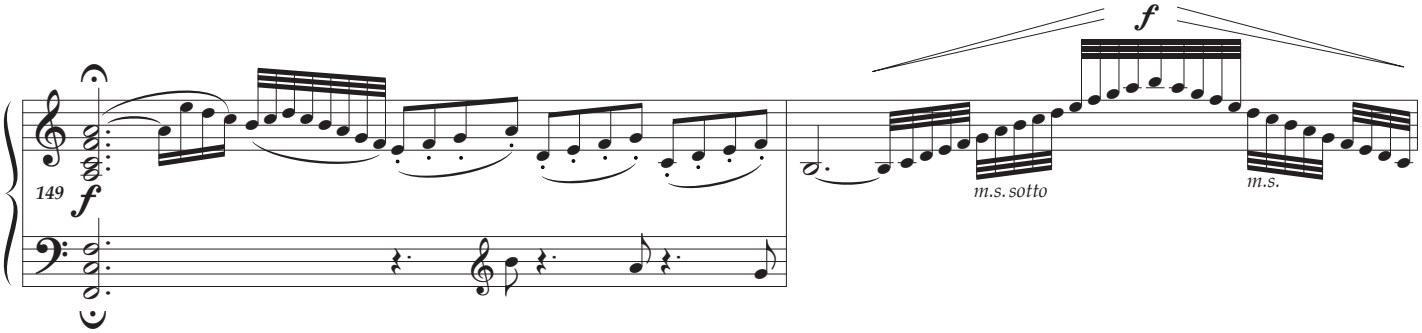

76
79
82
85
88
8va
mp
p

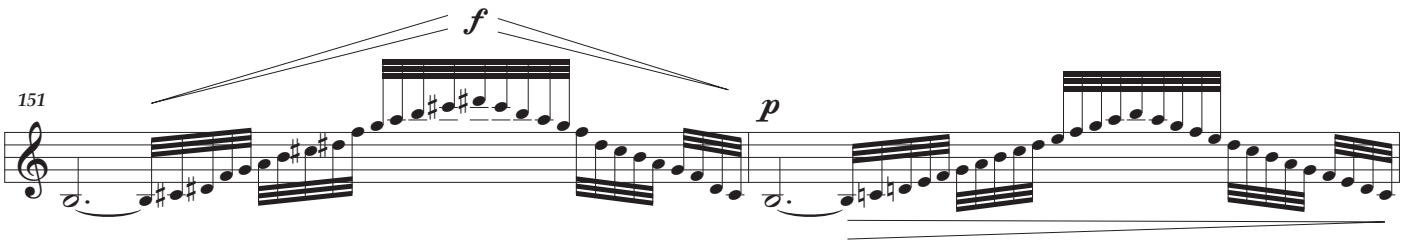

sopra
91
pp e per - den - do - si -
94
[retenu]
un peu retardé
97
p
Sost. Ped.
peu à peu, reprendre le mouvement
100
103

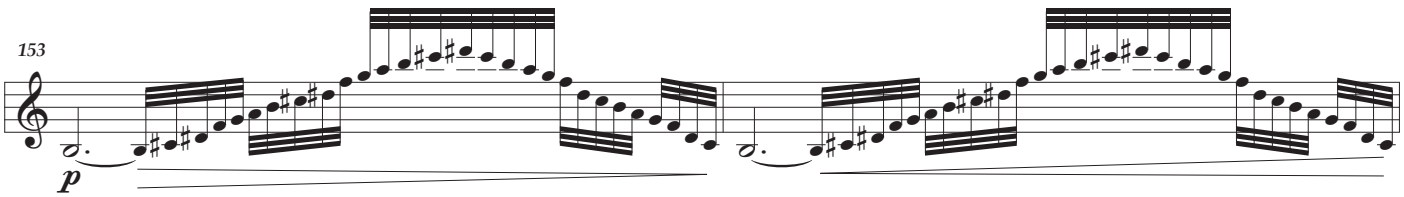

106
109
112
115
118
glissando
f
8va
ff


120
8va
sfz
123
(8va)
ff
126
8va
ff
128
131

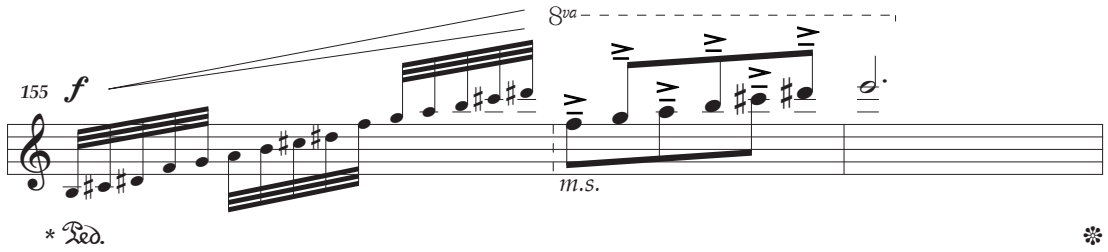

134
p
più p
137
pp
140
8va
ppp
143
(8va)
146
Tempo di cadenza
f

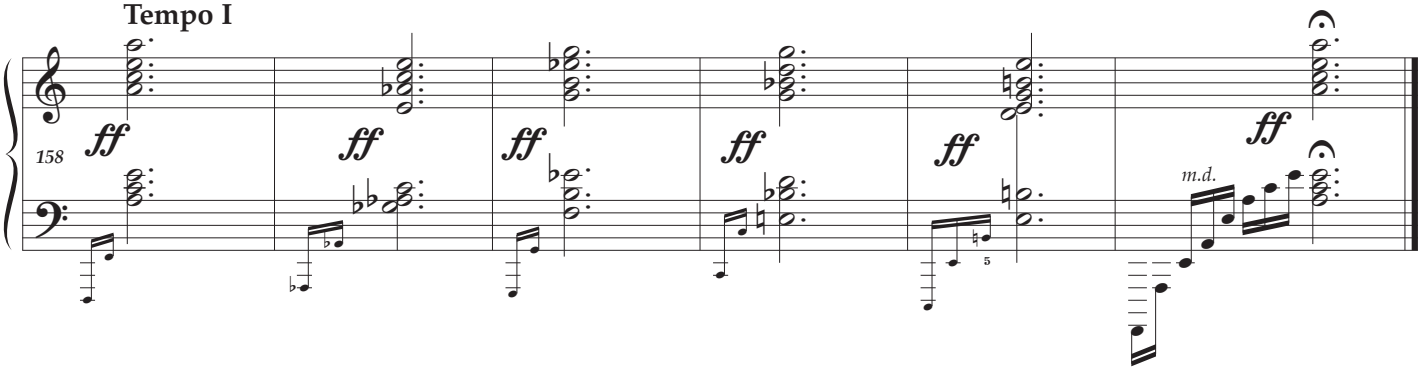

149
f
f
m.s. sotto
m.s.


151
f
p


153
p

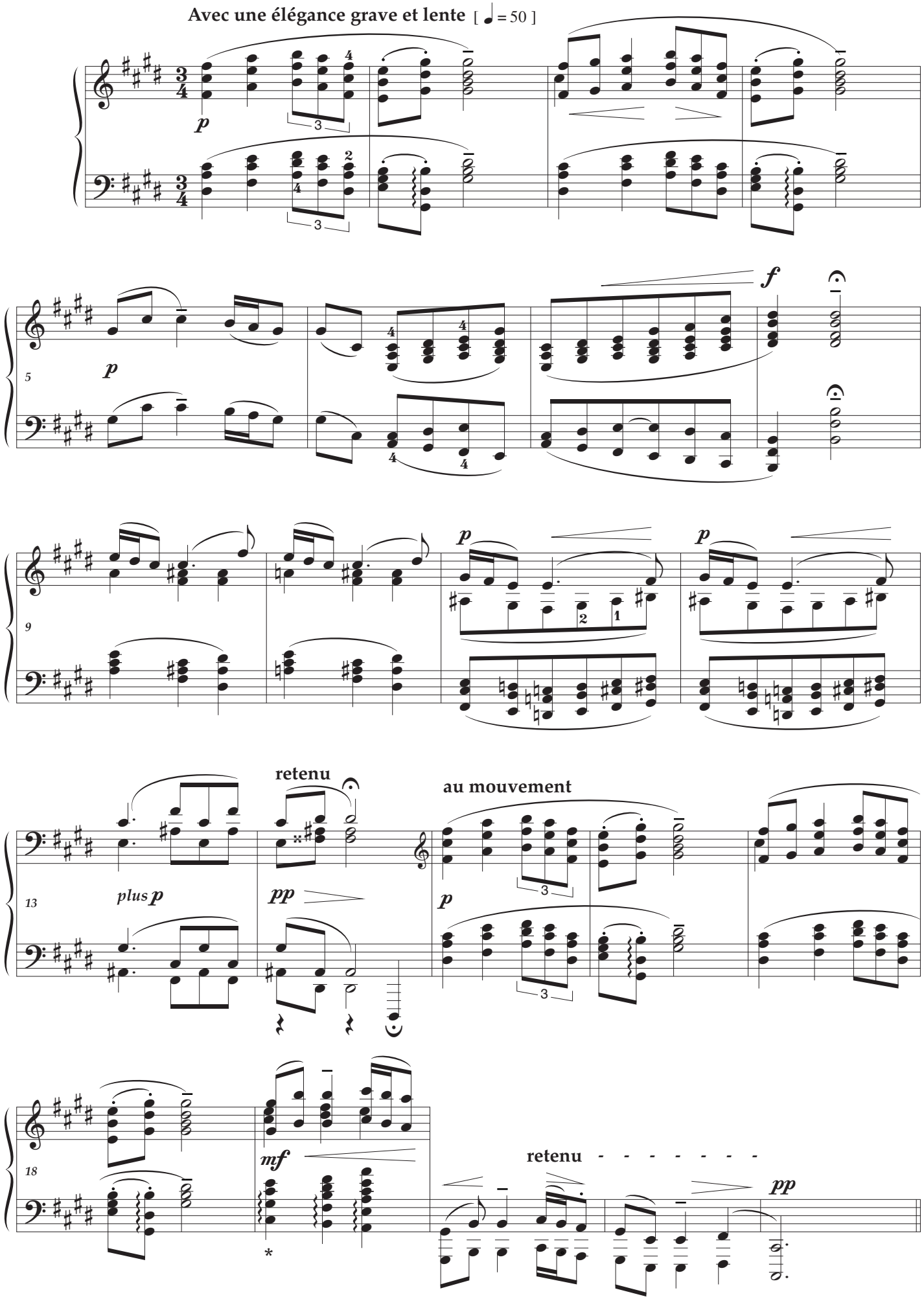
retenu

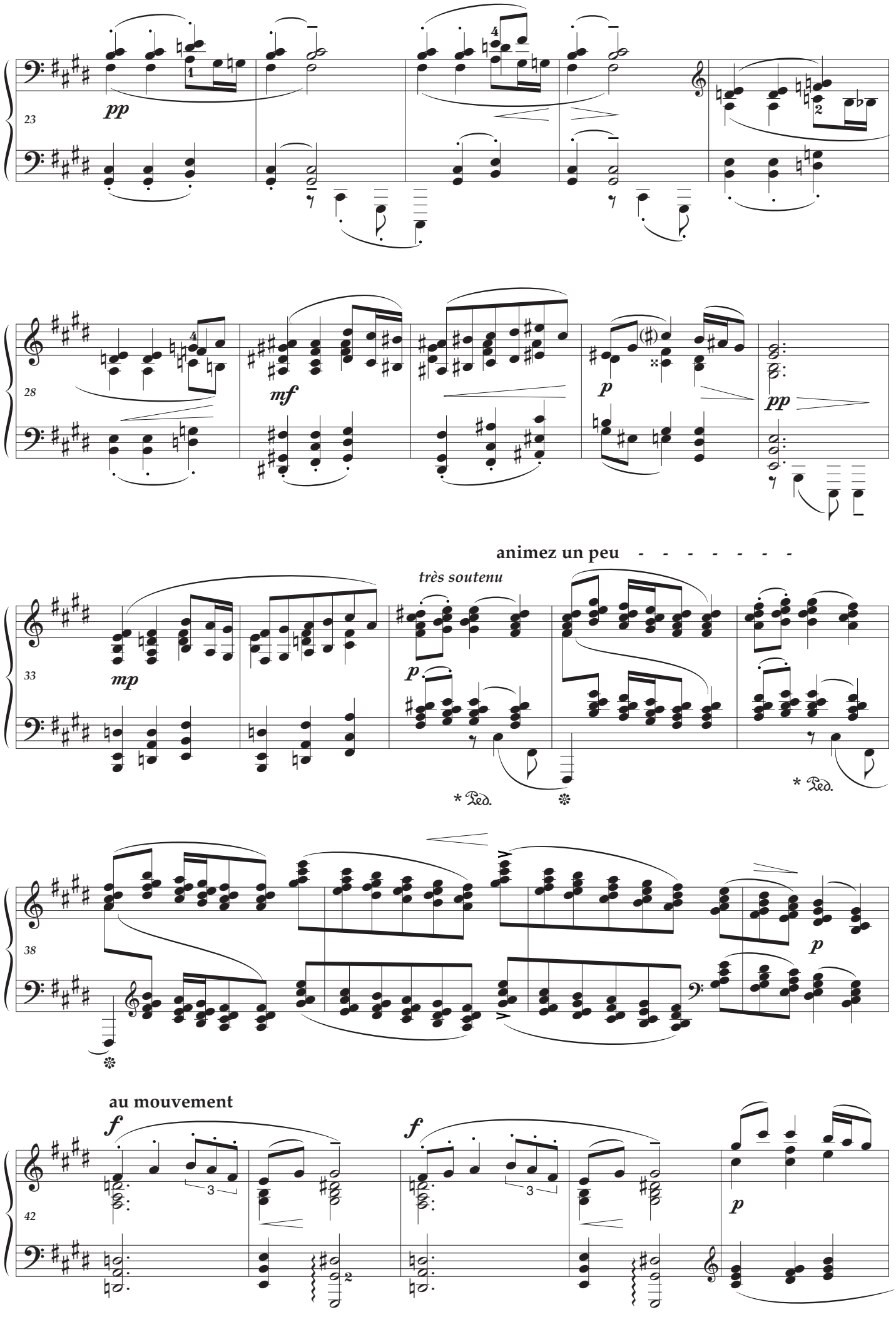

8va
155
f
m.s.
* Ped.

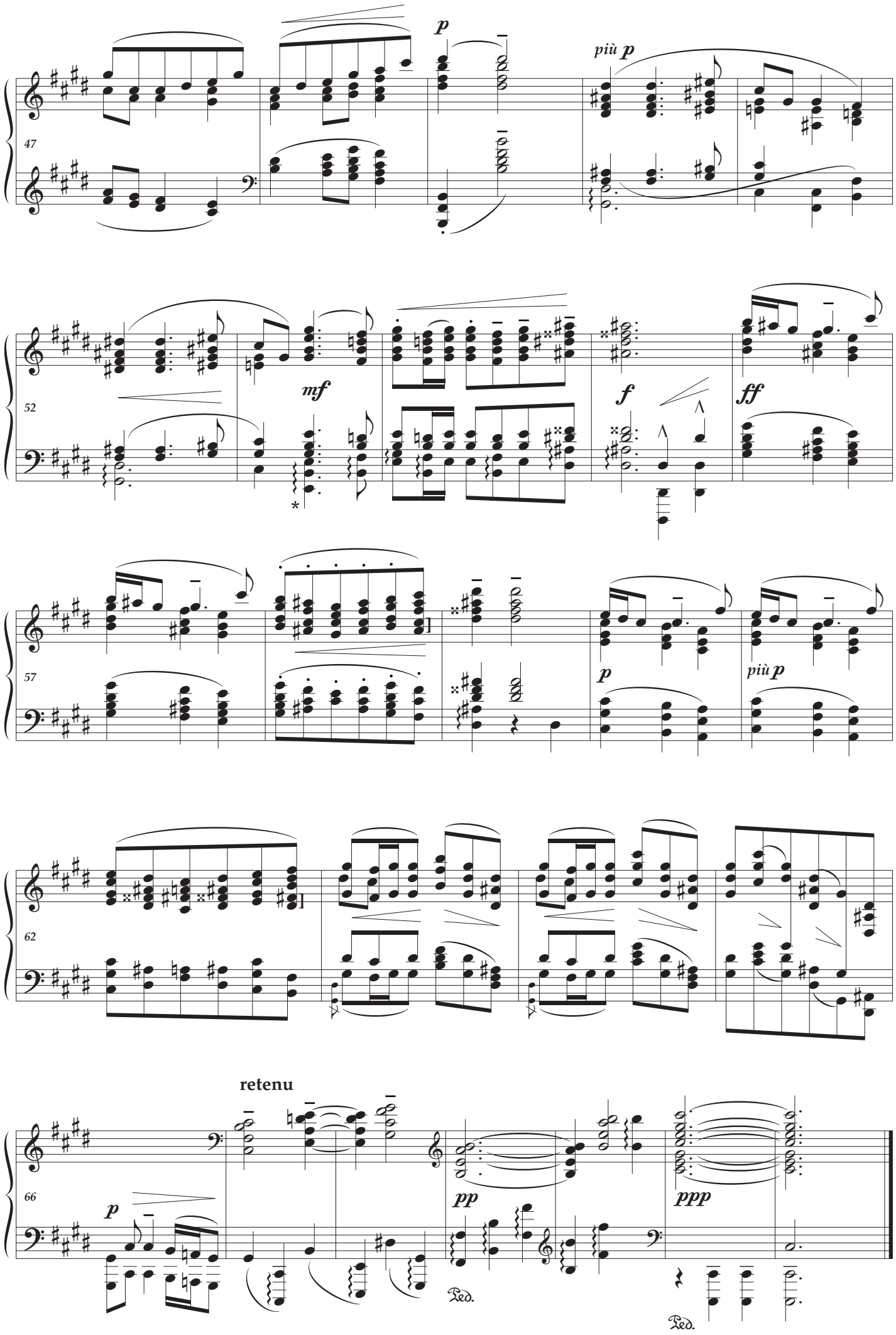

Tempo I
158
ff
ff
ff
ff
ff
ff
m.d.

SARABANDE

à Madame E Rouart née Yvonne Lerolle

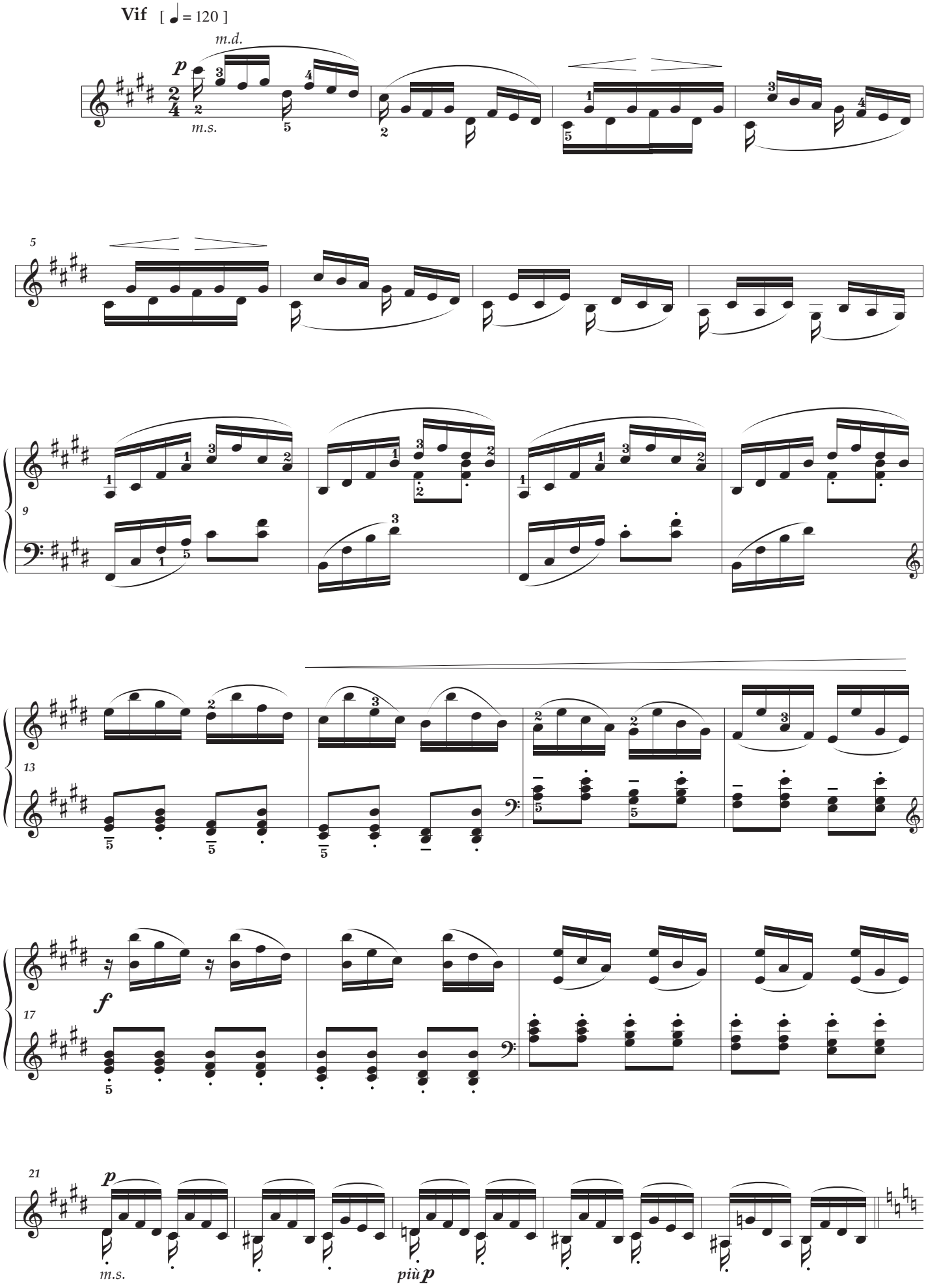


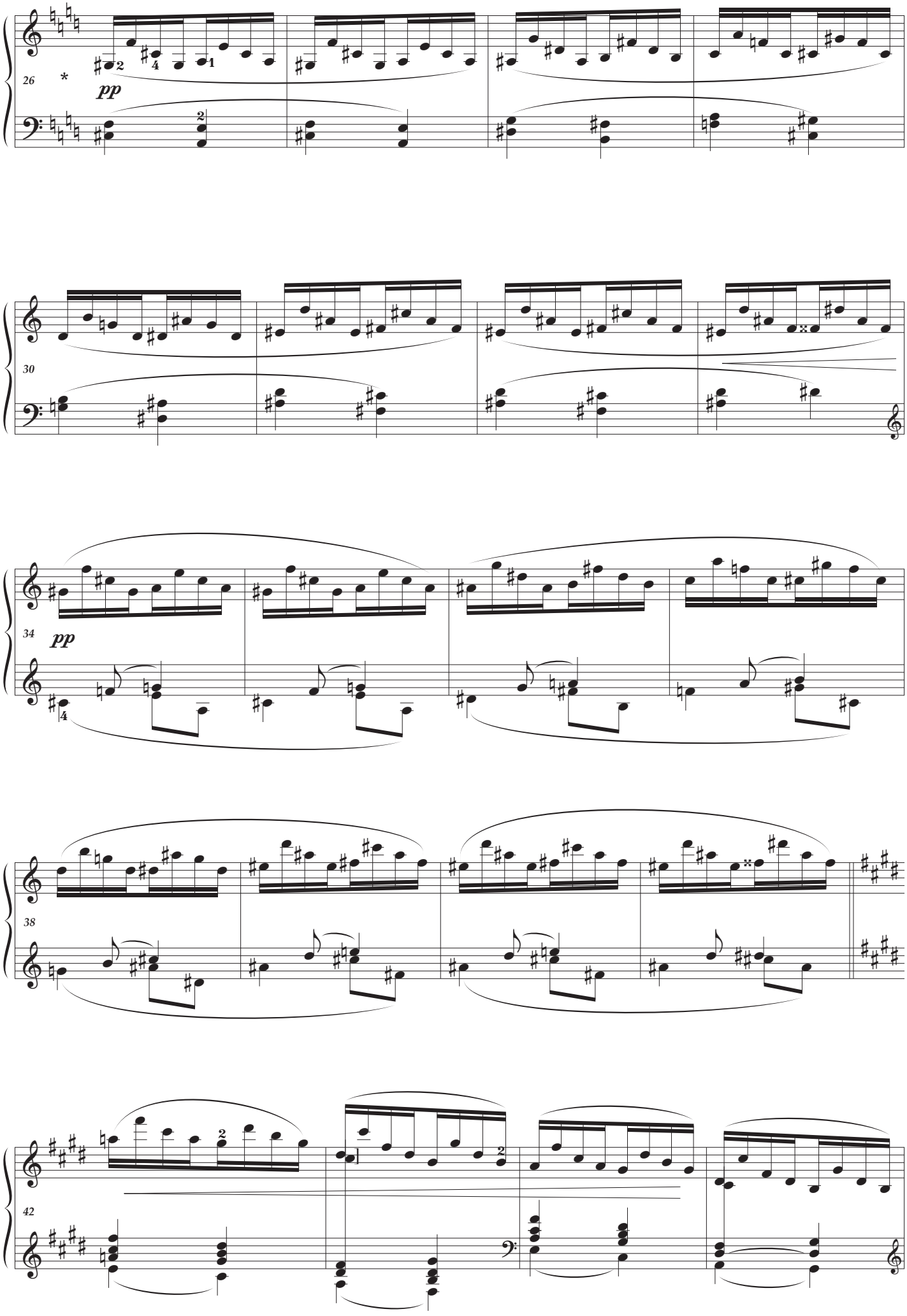

23
pp
28
mf
p
pp
animez un peu
très soutenu
33
mp
p
* Ped.
* Ped.
38
p
au mouvement
42
f
f
p

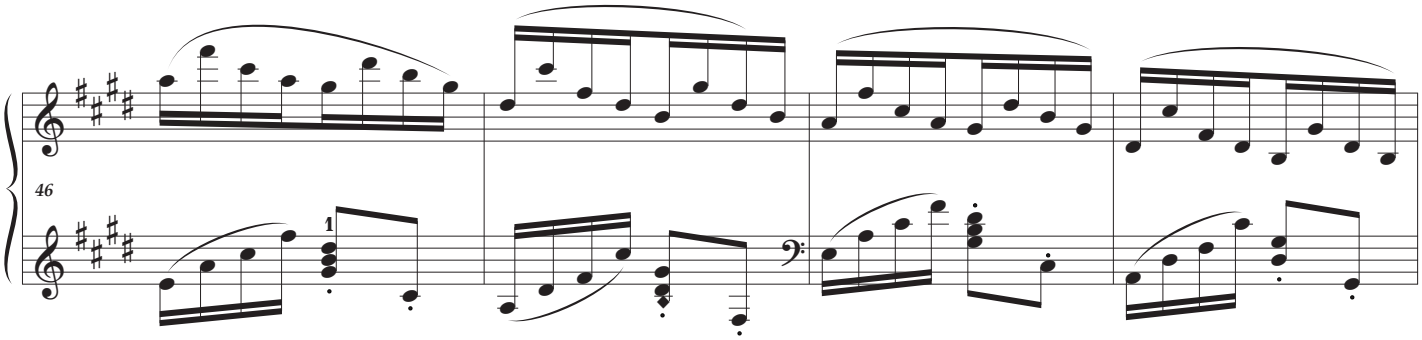

47
p
più p
52
mf
f
ff
57
p
più p
62
retenu
66
p
pp
ppp
Ped.
Ped.

TOCCATA

à Nicolas Coronio




26
pp
30
34
pp
38
42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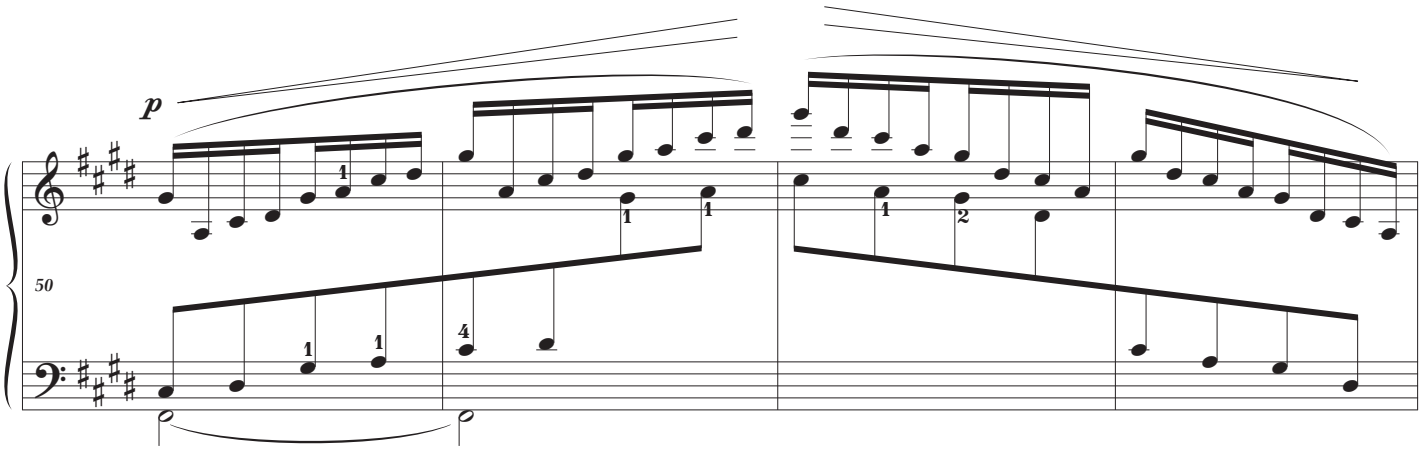
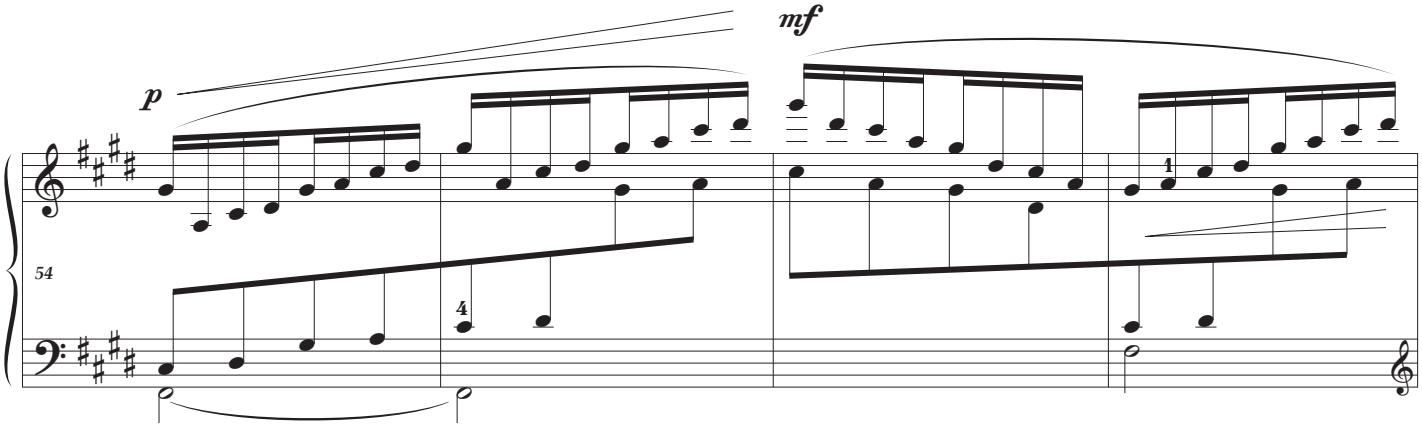
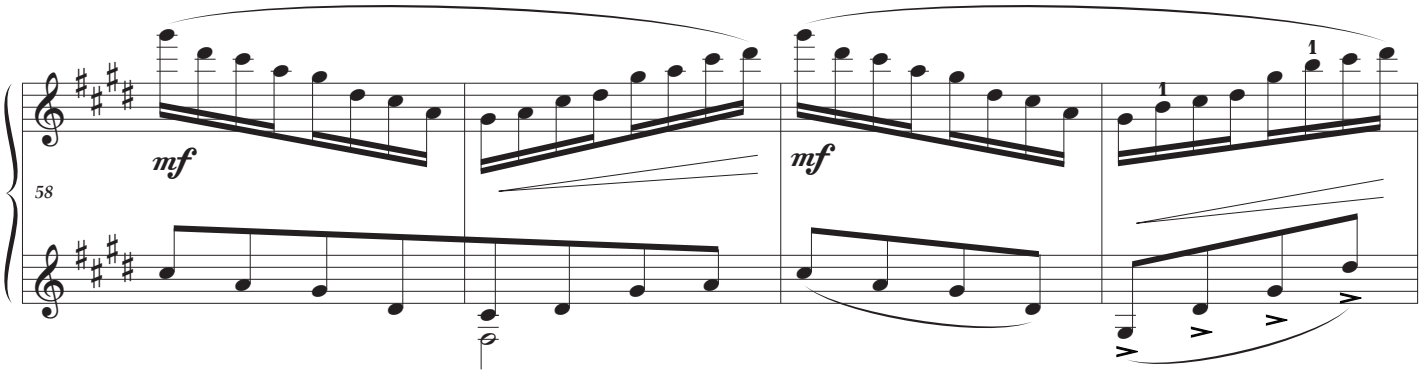
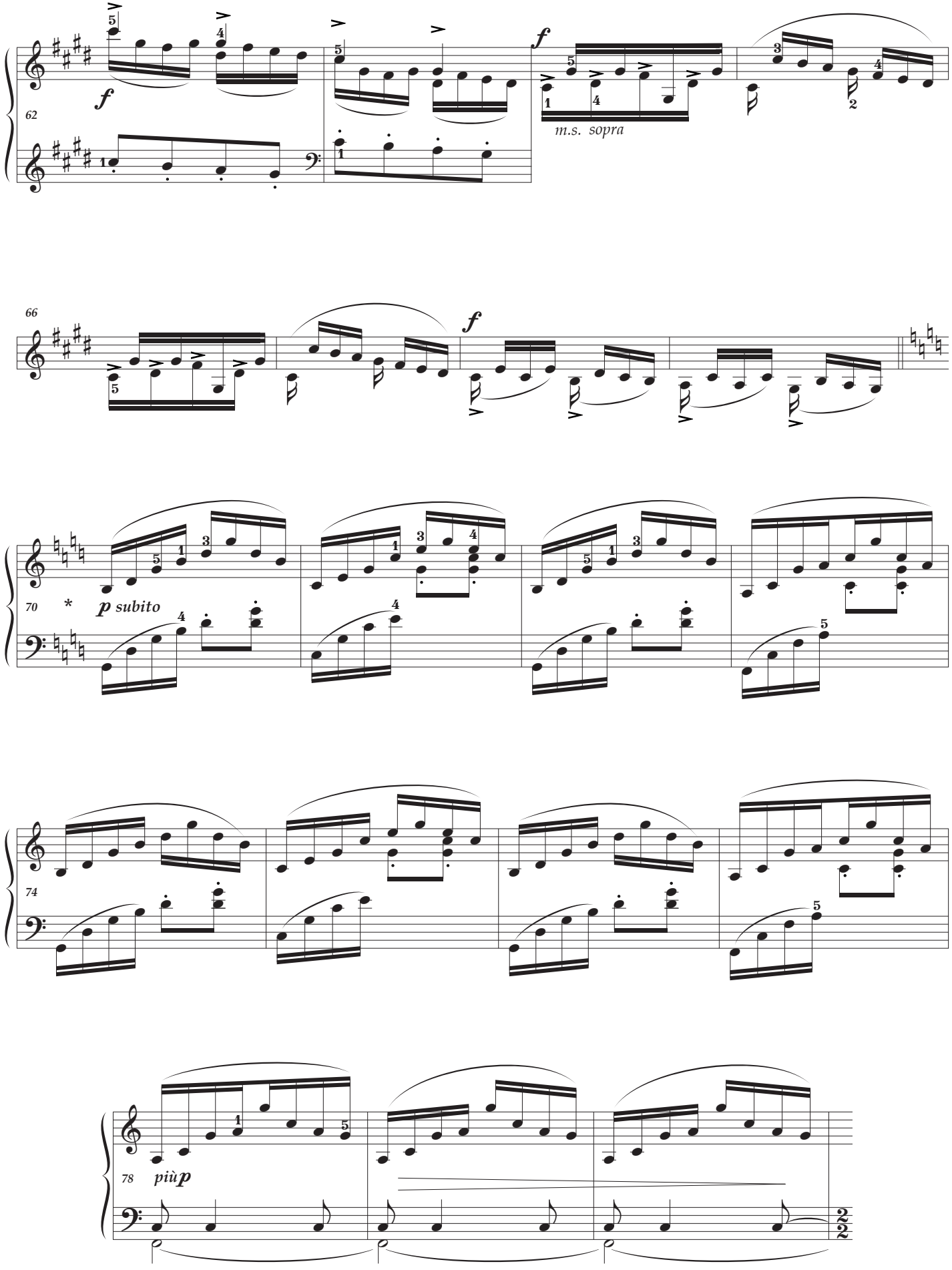
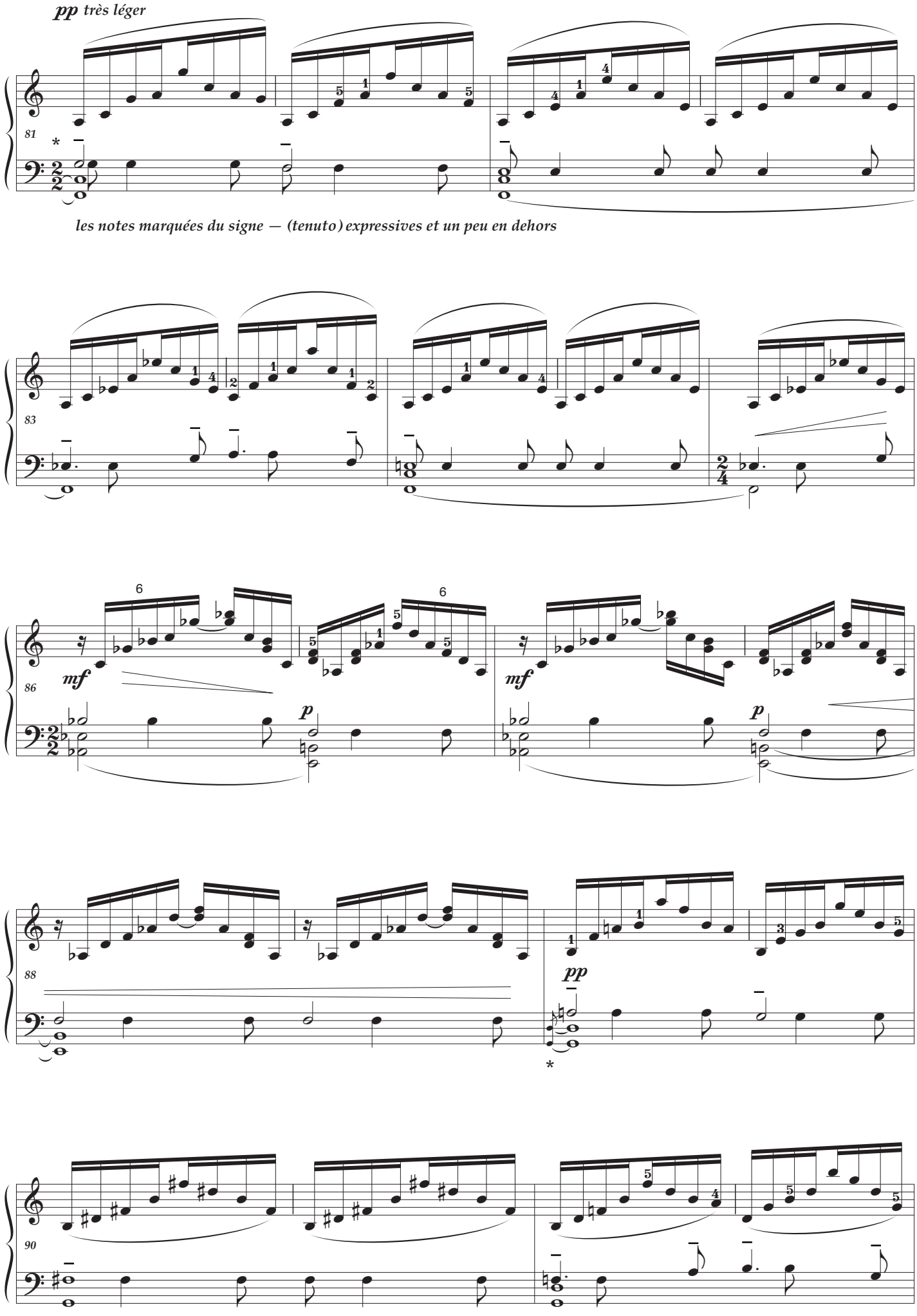
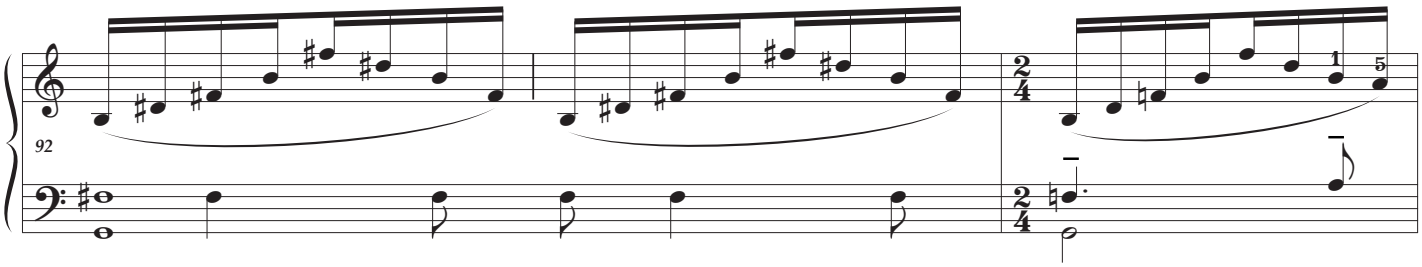

p
50


p
mf
54


mf
mf
58


62
f
m.s. sopra
66
f
70
*
p subito
74
78
più p


pp très léger
81
les notes marquées du signe — (tenuto) expressives et un peu en dehors
83
86
mf
p
mf
p
88
pp
90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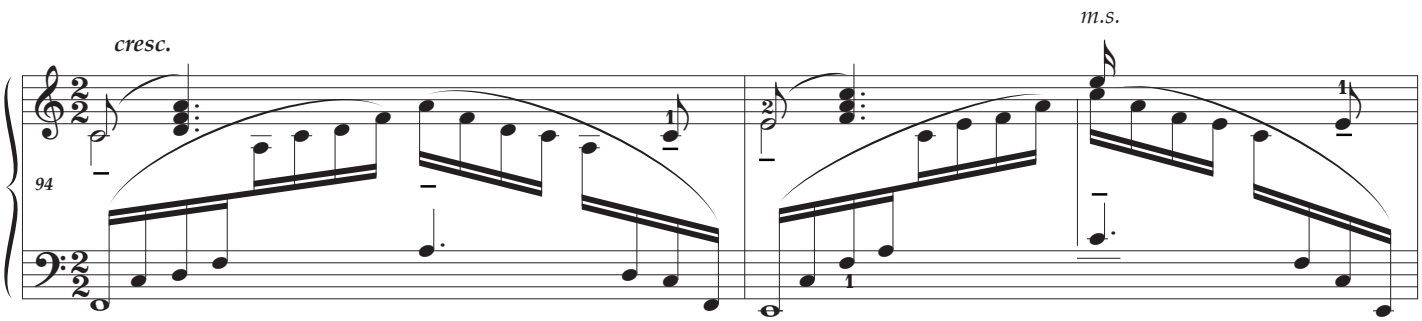
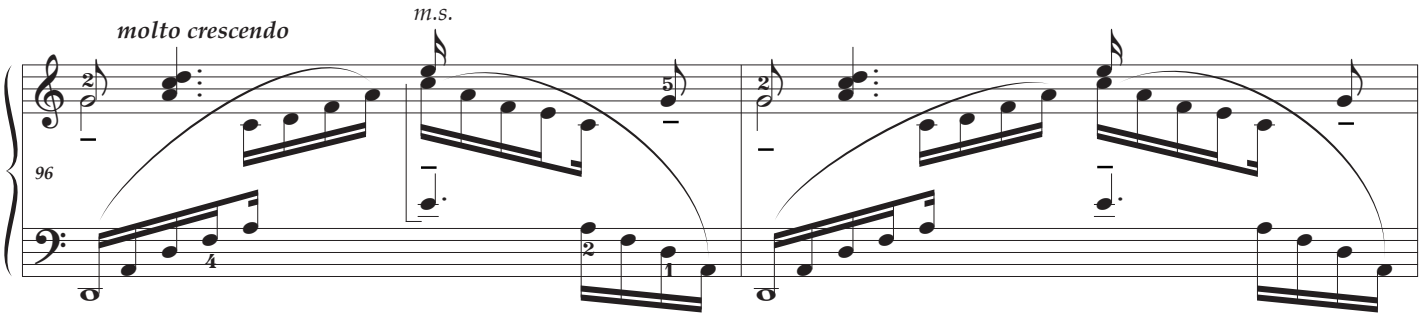
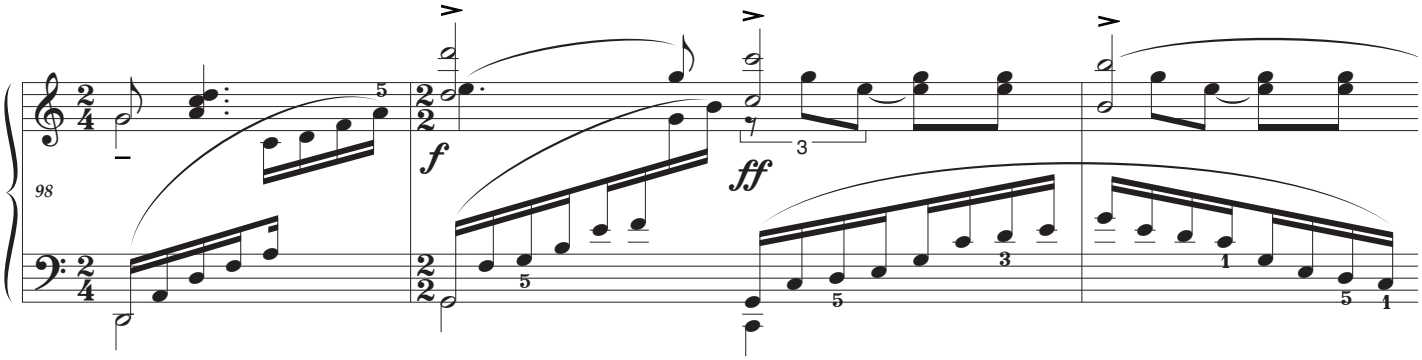
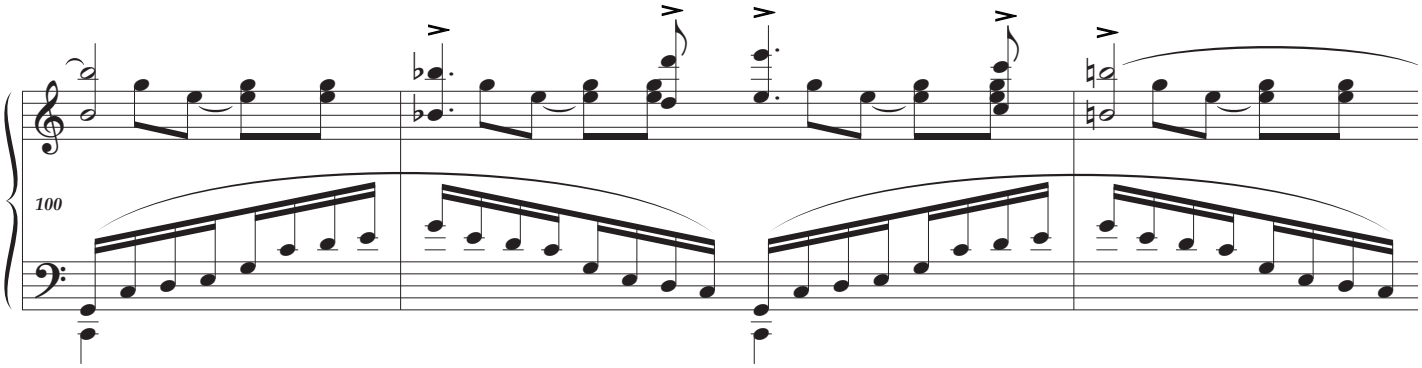

cresc.
m.s.
94


molto crescendo
m.s.
96


f
ff
98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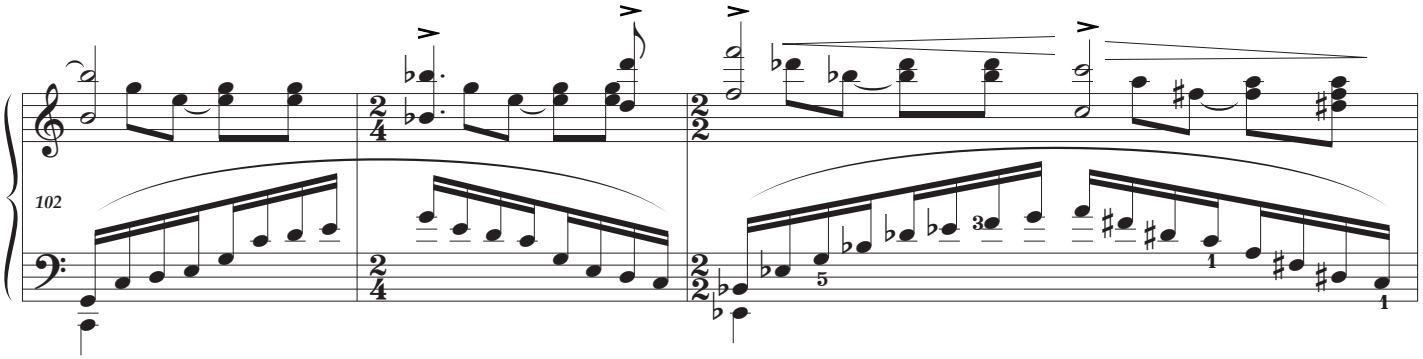
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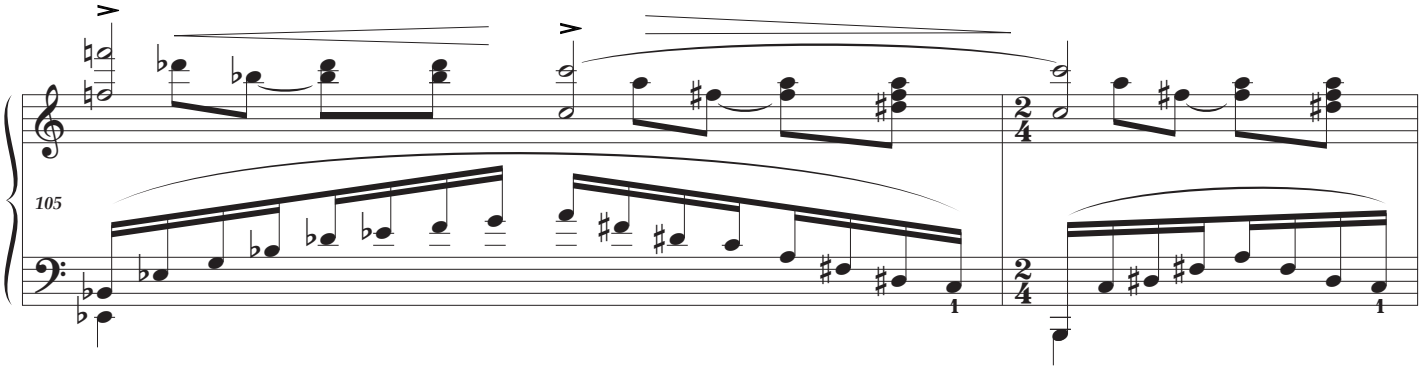
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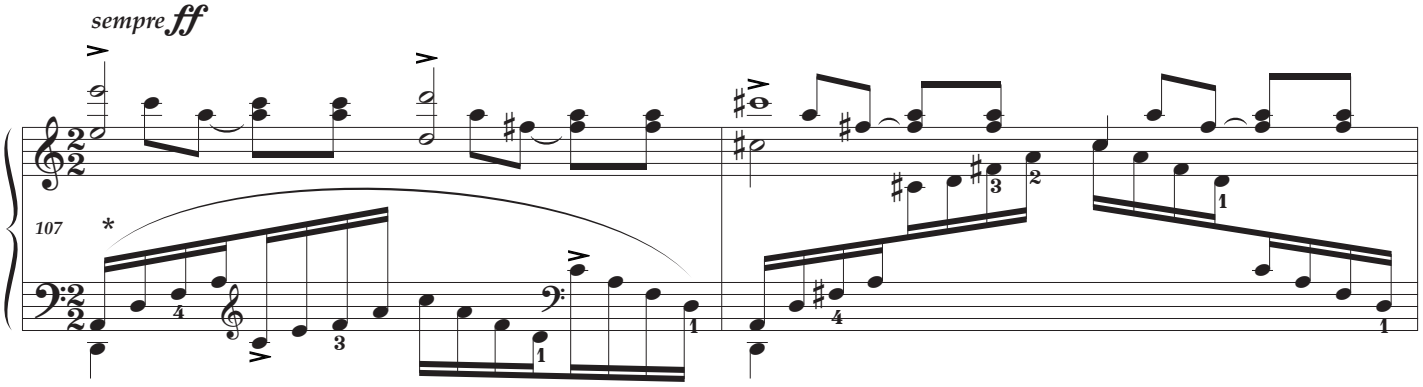
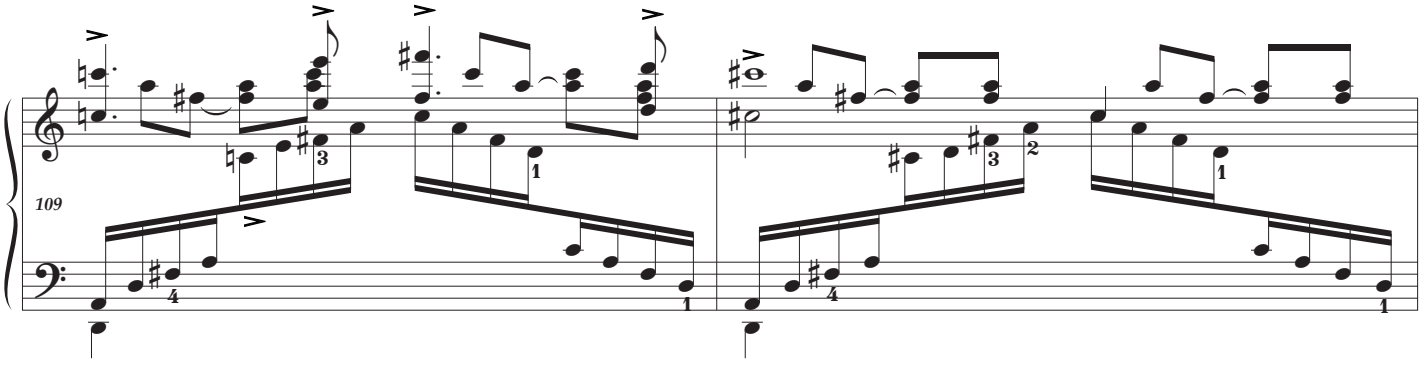

sempre ff
107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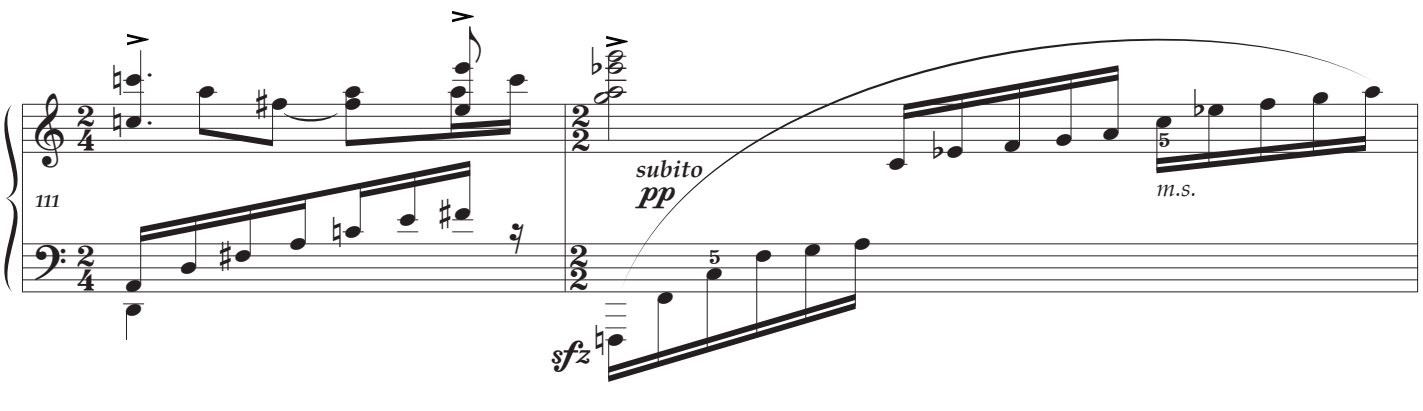
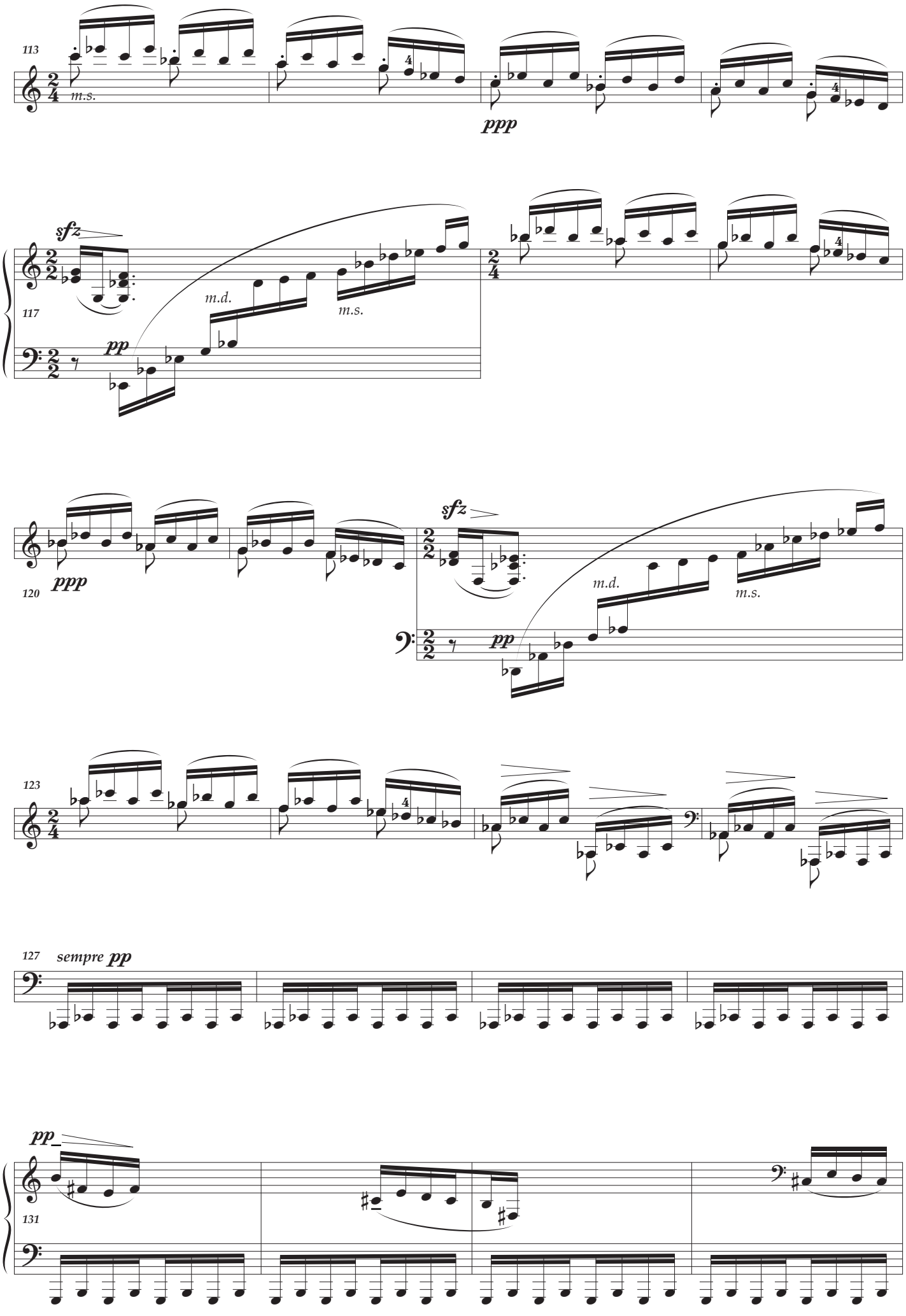
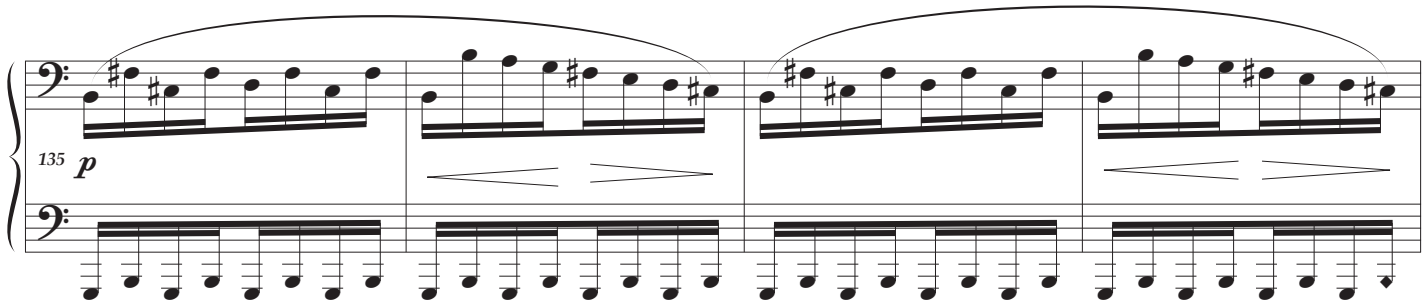
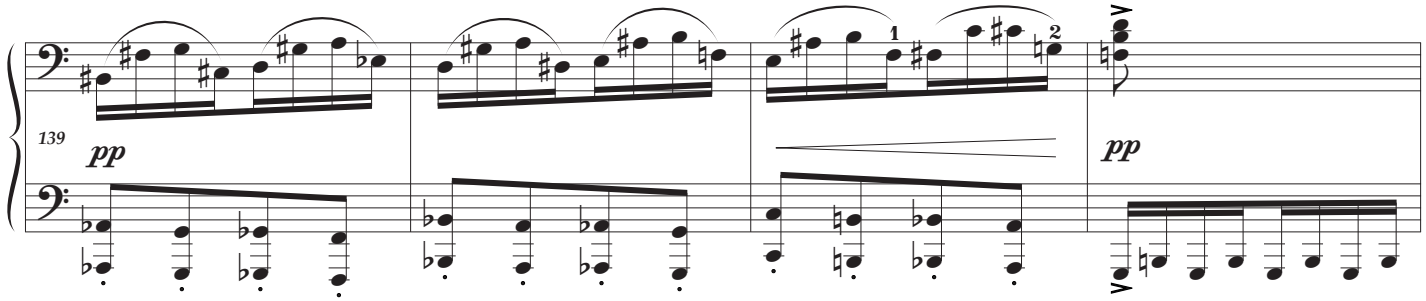
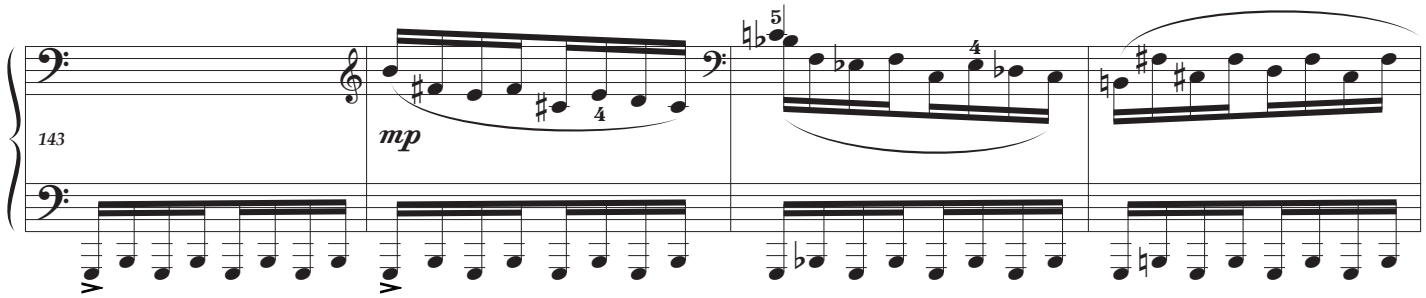
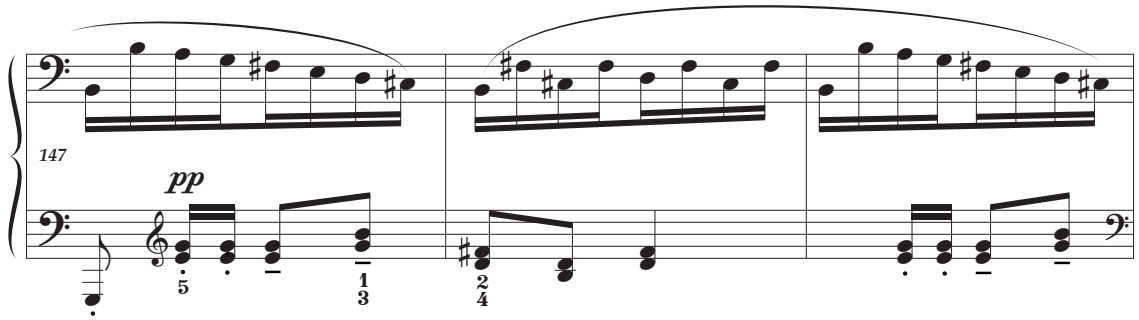

111
subito
pp
m.s.
sfz

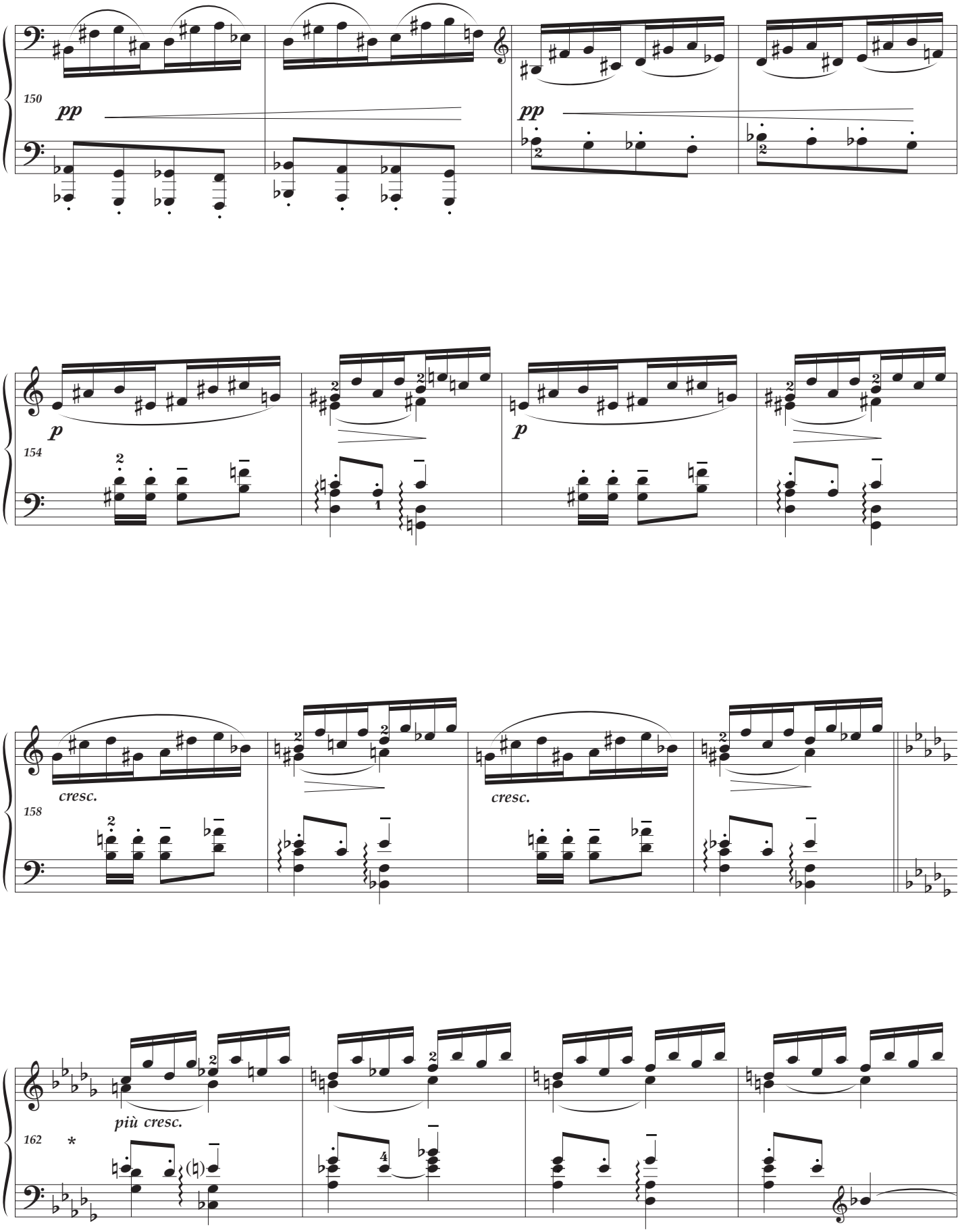

113
m.s.
ppp
sfz
117
m.d.
m.s.
pp
ppp
120
sfz
m.d.
m.s.
pp
123
127
sempre pp
pp
131

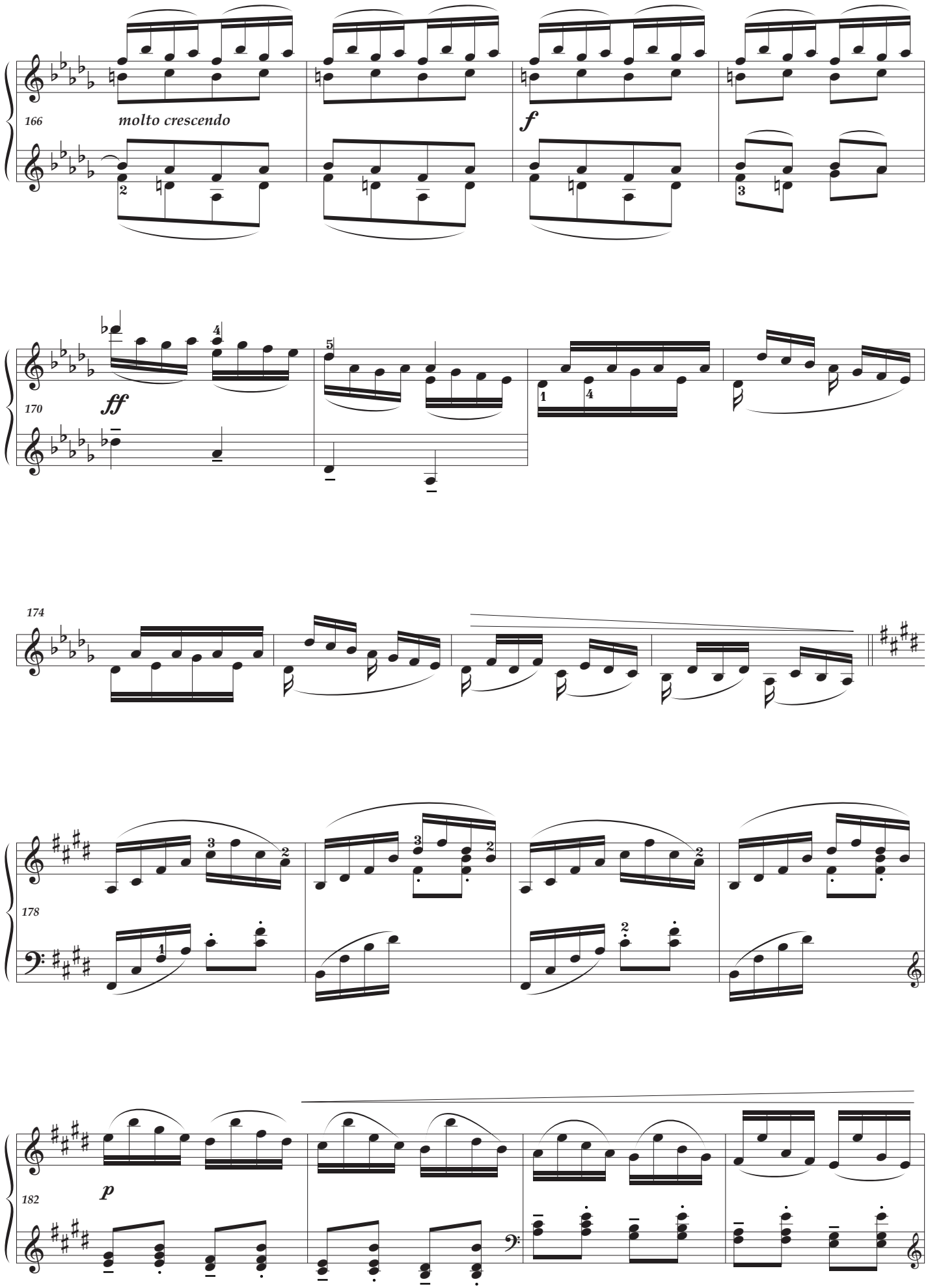

135
p

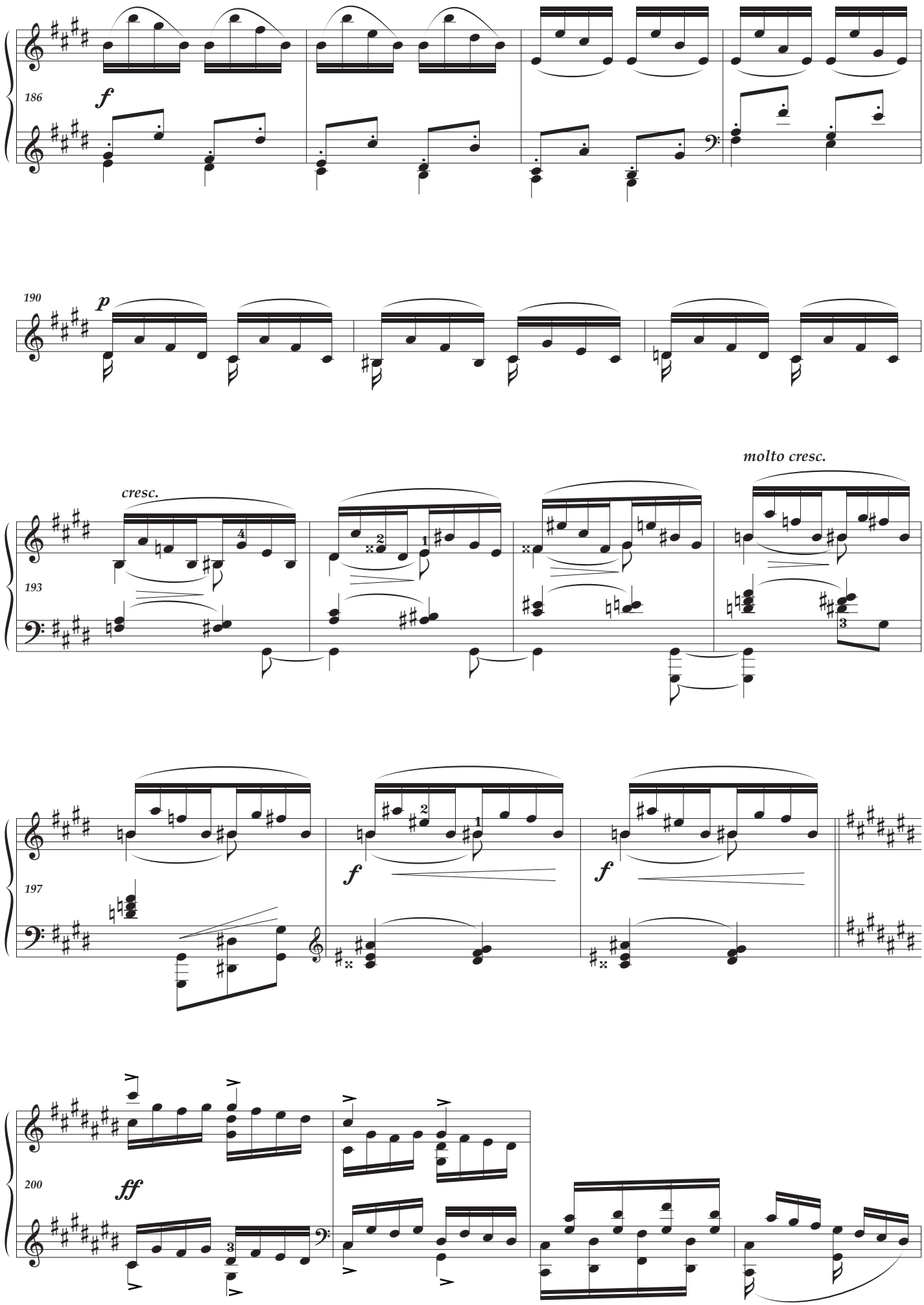

139
pp
pp

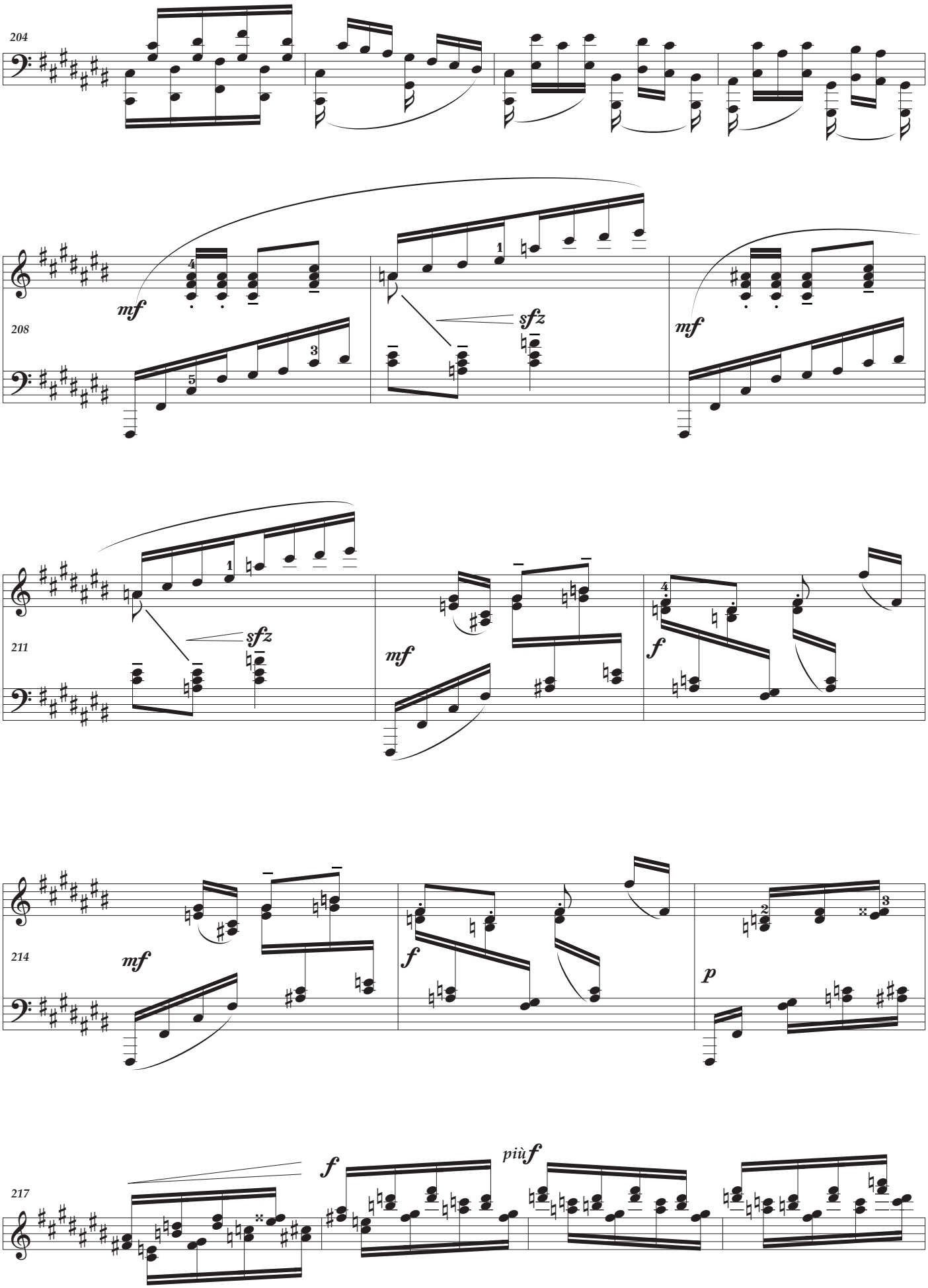

143
mp

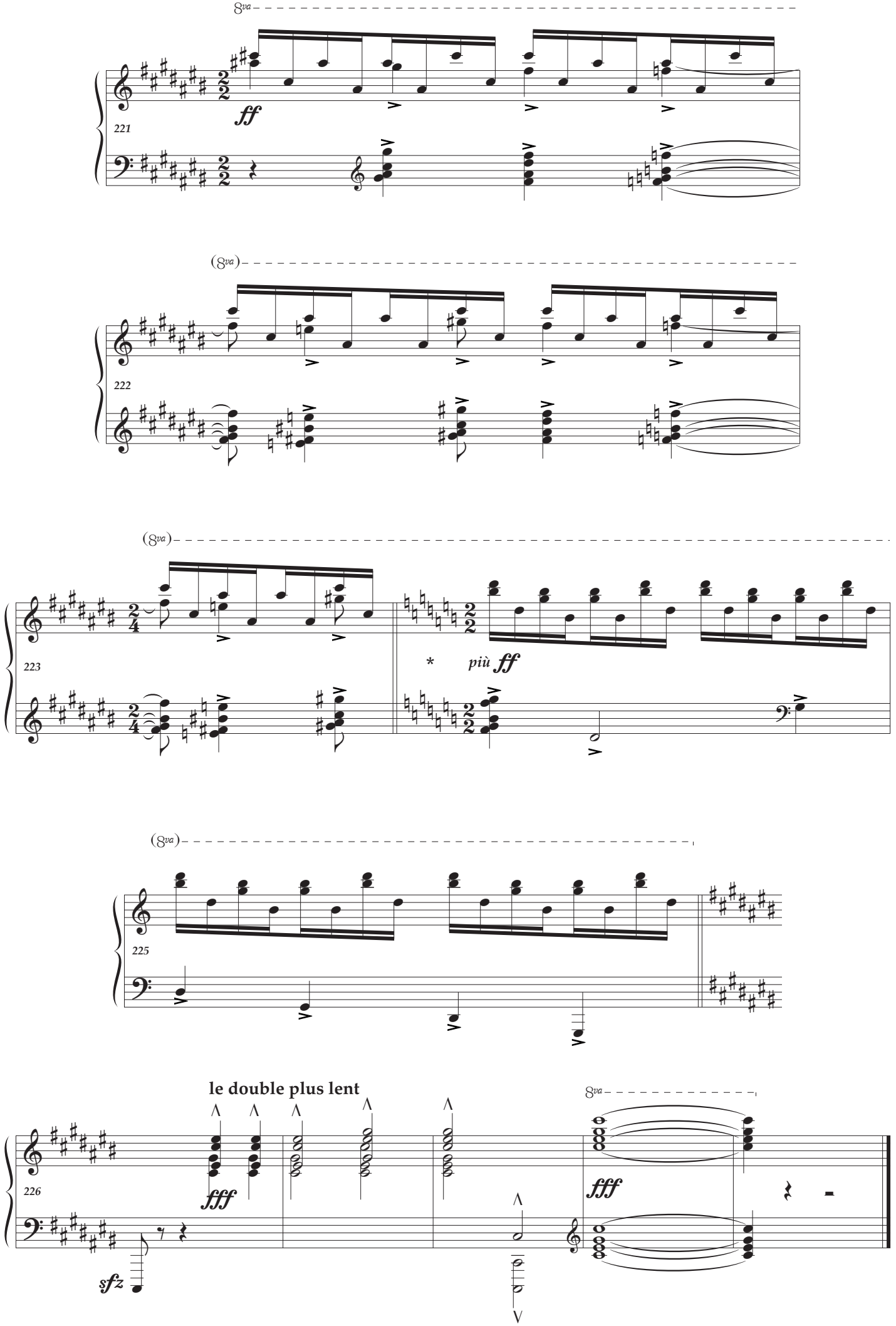

147
pp


150
pp
pp
154
p
p
158
cresc.
cresc.
162
più cresc.
*


166
molto crescendo
f
170
ff
174
178
182
p


186
f
190
p
cresc.
molto cresc.
193
197
f
f
200
ff


204
208
mf
sfz
mf
211
sfz
mf
f
214
mf
f
p
217
f
più f


8va
ff
221
(8va)
222
(8va)
223
* più ff
(8va)
225
le double plus lent
8va
fff
226
fff
sfz

Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & French vocabulary

- **Prelude** (page 3) Duration**: 5’10**

- **55-57** In the bass, I have added acciaccaturas & an extra octave as a practical solution to this awkward and dramatic climax
- **62** first quaver probably staccato… see **64**
- **64** RH final 2 semiquavers — I am convinced that the naturals should logically be delayed as suggested here
- **84** presented as in **86** (an A♭ is missing in the original edition)
- **127-133** I have included some logical rearrangement of the RH chordal patterns
- **155-157** editorial pedal suggestion

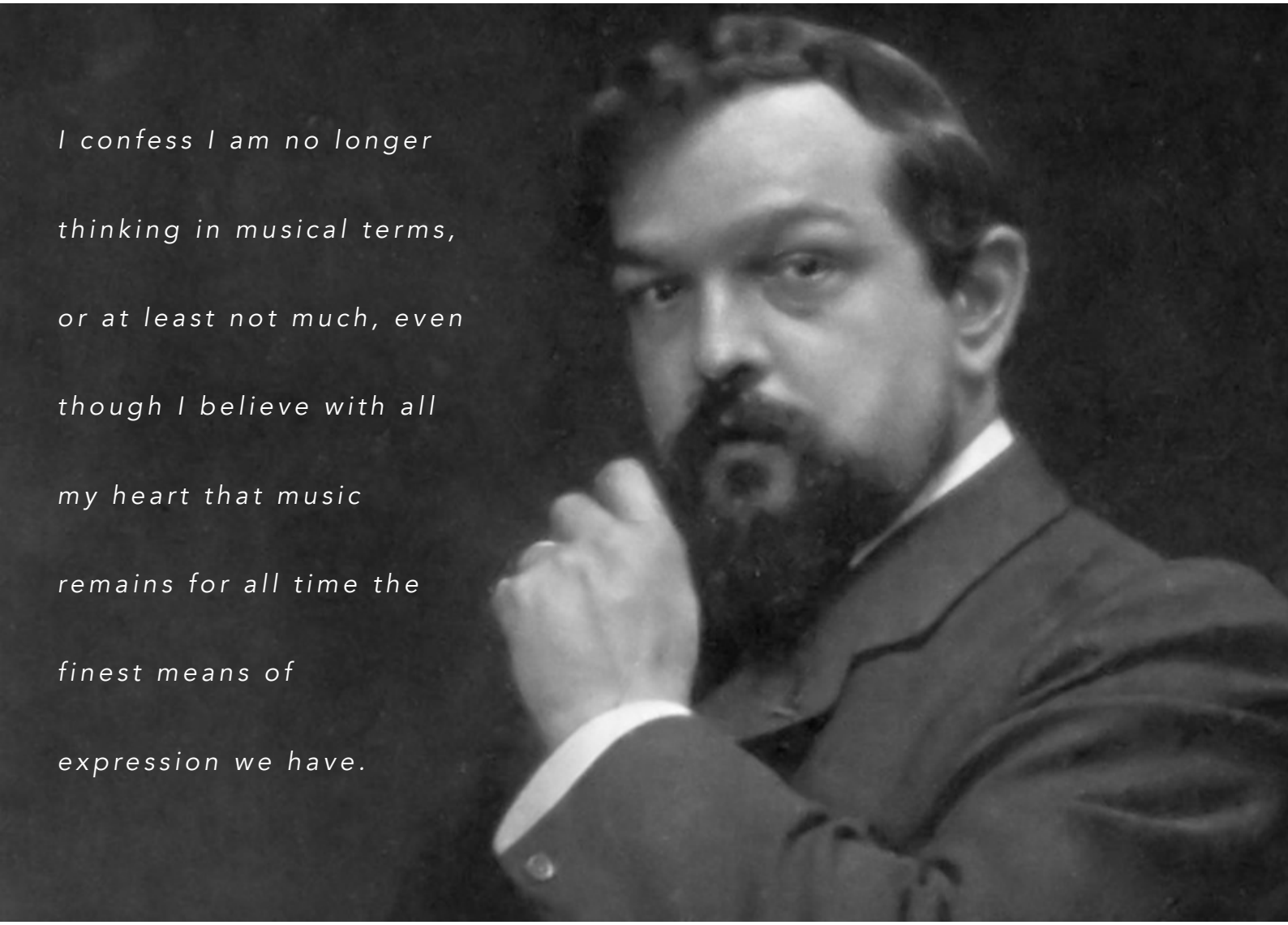
- **Sarabande** (page 14) Duration**: 5’15**

- **19 & 53** LH arpeggiated chords modification alternative
- **35 & 37** editorial pedal suggestion

- **Toccata** (page 17) Duration**: 4’50**

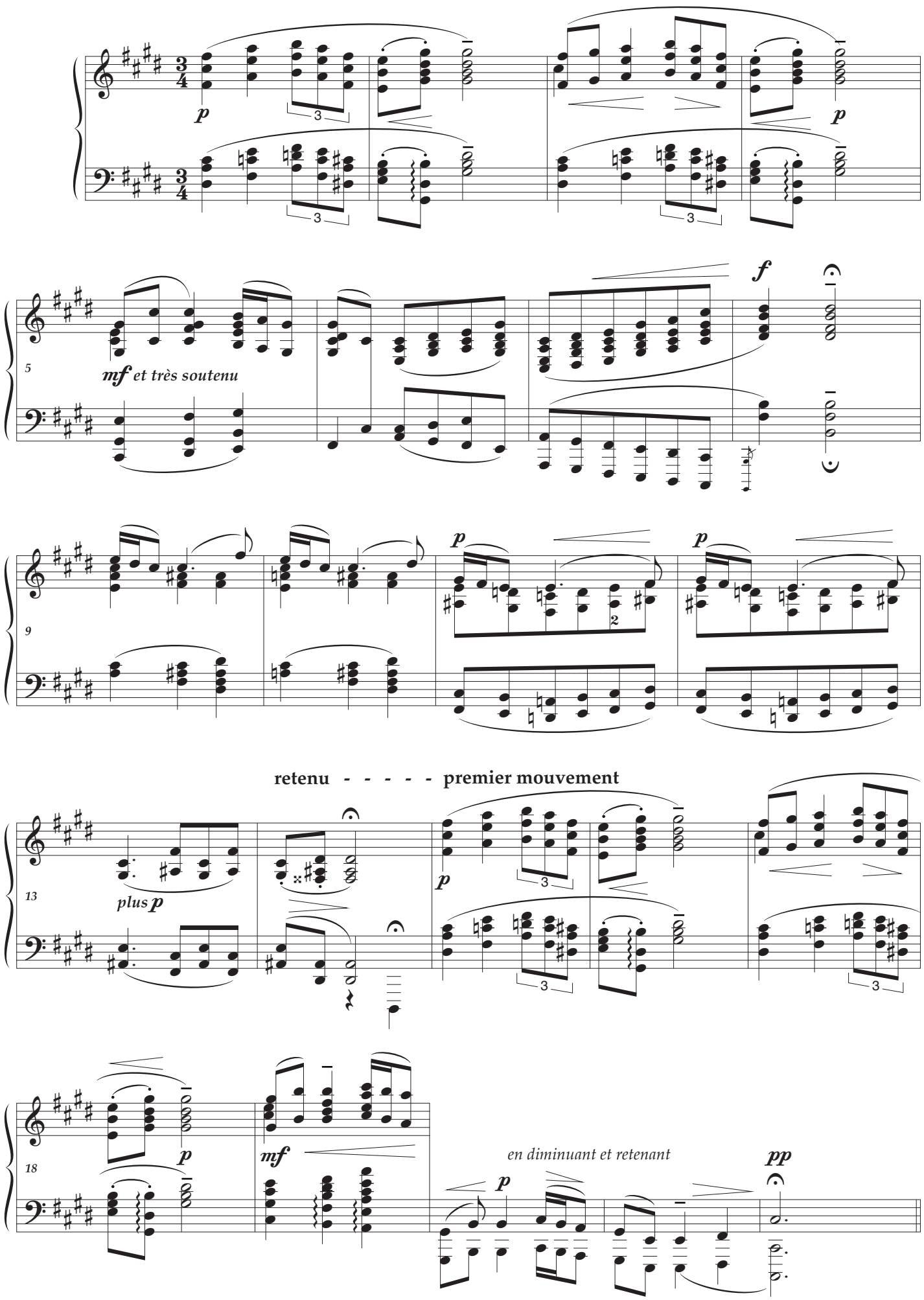
- **26-41** presented with a blank key-signature
- **70-77** presented in C major
- **81-122** the melodic line is presented with an alternative time-signature — *alla breve*
- **89** the LH acciaccatura makes it easier for the thumb to “sing”
- **107-110** LH arpeggios have been slightly tweaked
- **162-177** presented in D♭
- **224-225** presented in C

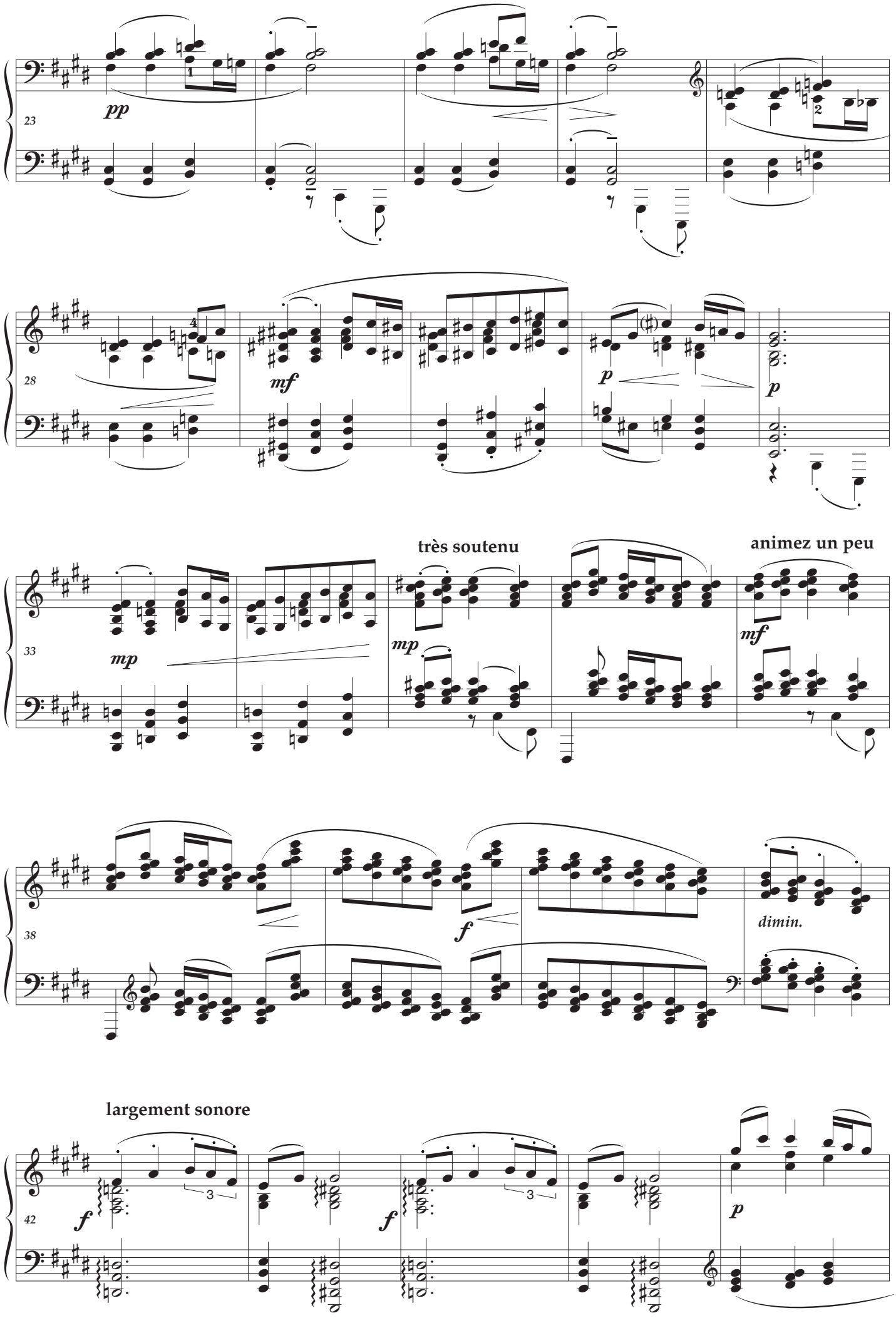
assez animé	*sufficiently animated*
très rythmé	*very rhythmic*
un peu retardé	*tempo held back a little*
peu à peu reprendre le mouvement	*return gradually to the original tempo*
retenu	*tempo held back*
avec une elegance grave et lente	*with a slow and stately elegance*
au mouvement	*a tempo*
tres soutenu	*very sustained*
animez un peu	*a little lively*
vif	*rapid*
les notes marquées du signe — (tenuto)	*notes marked with the tenuto sign (–)*
expressives et un peu en dehors	*expressive and a little in relief*
le double plus lent	*the tempo twice as slow*

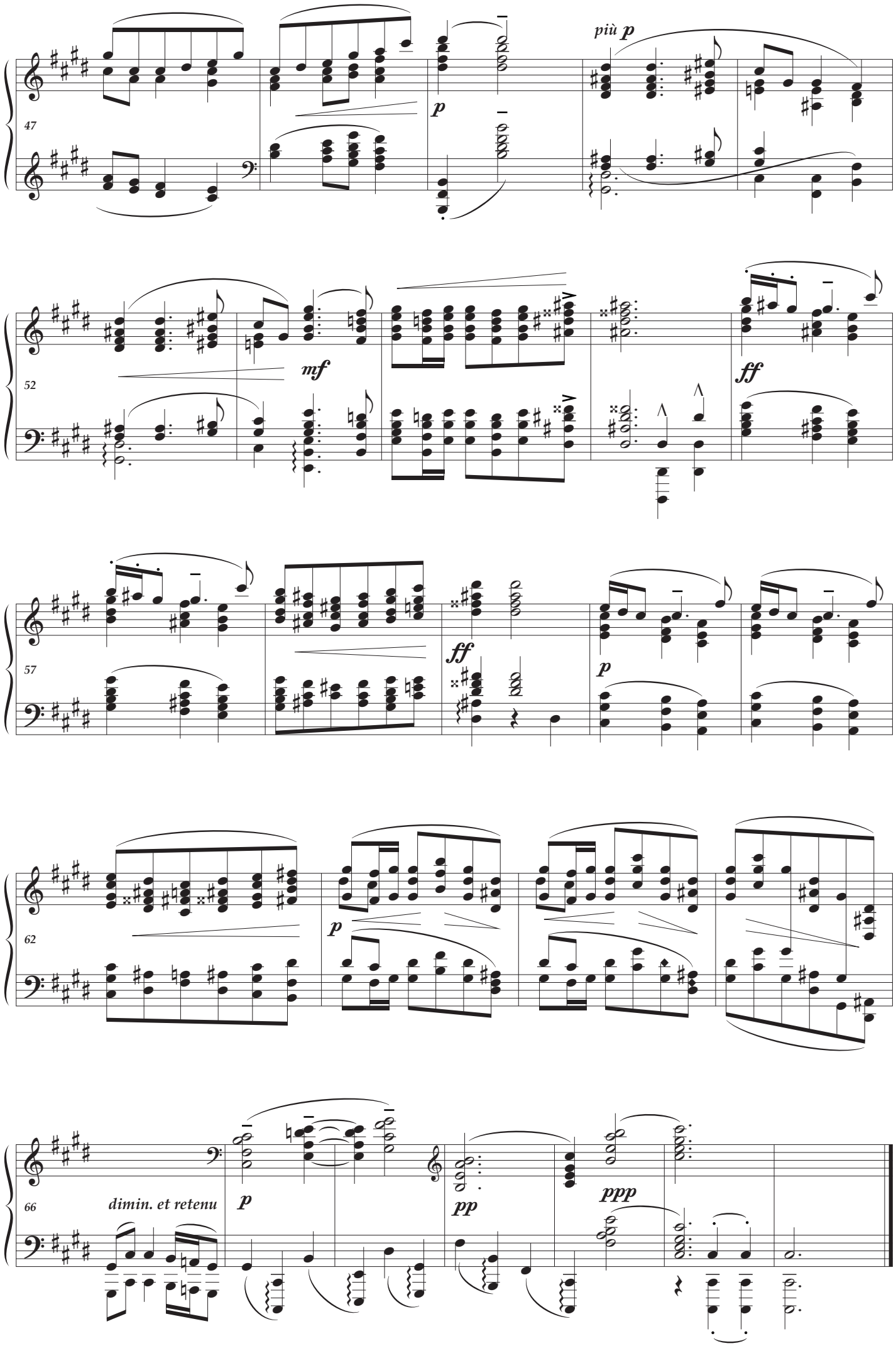


SOUVENIR DU LOUVRE

SARABANDE VERSION 1894




23
pp
28
mf
p
p
33
mp
très soutenu
mp
animez un peu
mf
38
f
dimin.
largement sonore
42
f
3
f
3
p


47
più p
p
52
mf
ff
57
ff
p
62
p
66
dimin. et retenu
p
pp
ppp