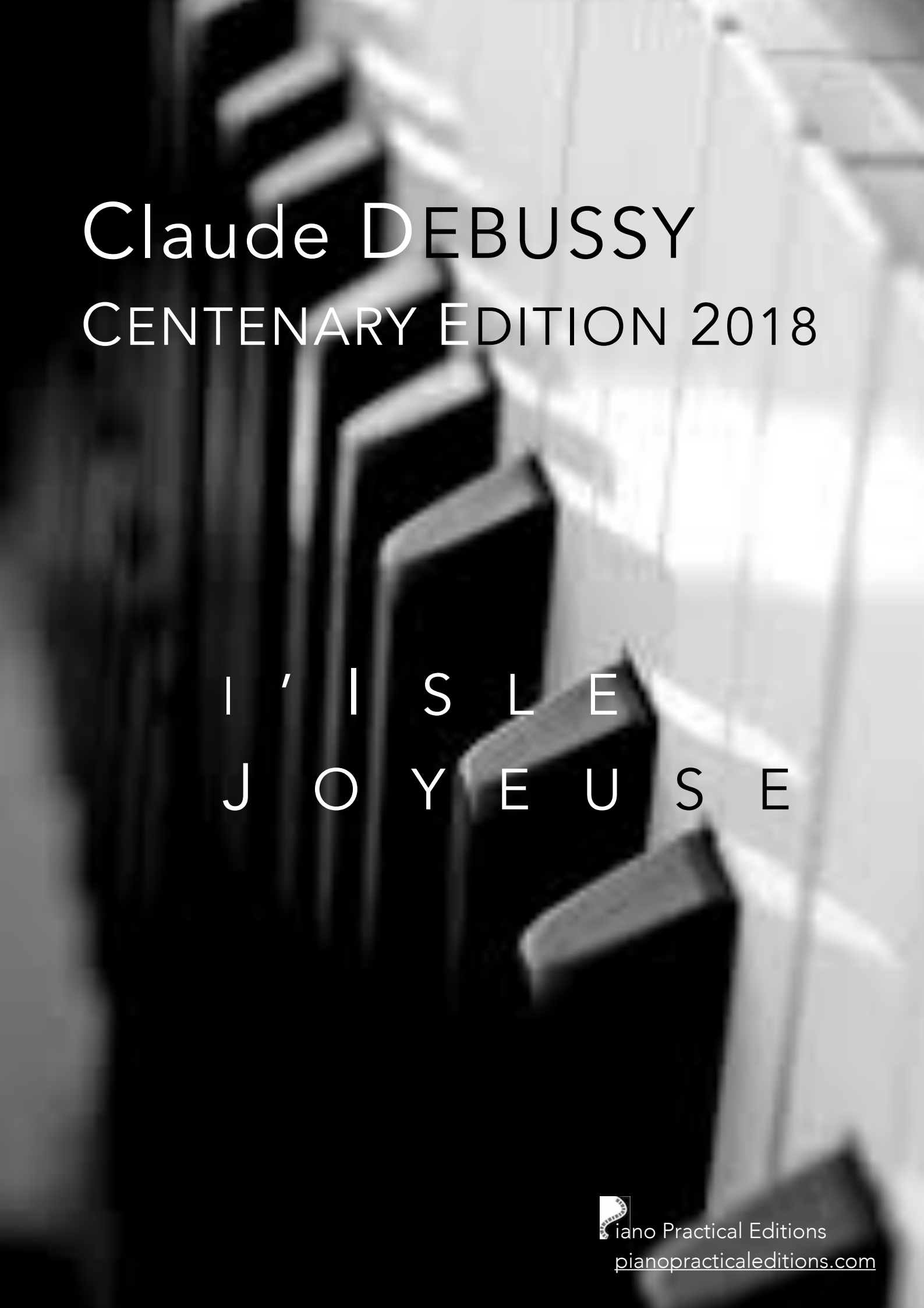

Claude DEBUSSY

CENTENARY EDITION 2018

L'ISLE JOYEUSE

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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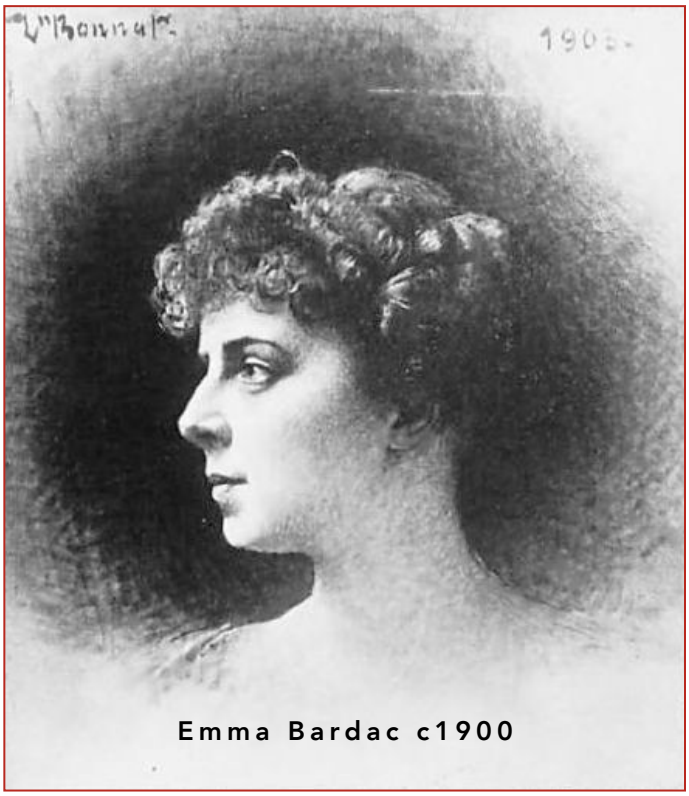
Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

l'Isle Joyeuse

Published in 1904, *l'Isle Joyeuse* is generally accepted to be twinned with *Masques*, from the same year. Unmistakably erotic, the opening flute solo cadenza is worthy of *l'après-midi d'un faune.* Inspired by an eighteenth century painting by Watteau *Le Pèlerinage à l'île de Cythère*, a work of art so special that the artist produced no less than three versions; the second can be admired in the *Louvre*. They were named *pèlerinage* and later *embarquement*, although the subject more probably depicts a departure from the island of Cythera, the birthplace of Venus, featuring besotted couples visiting a shrine to the goddess of love. Much of Debussy's music is sensual and exotic and this work expresses euphoria enjoyed by the French aristocracy. Seldom has his music reached such ecstatic and triumphal lyricism. Without subtlety, the winged cupids can leave us in no doubt — these French aristocrats have found desire, love and joy on a sultry Greek island, and following an elopement with his second wife, Emma Bardac, Debussy leaves us in no doubt that he too has found passion on his romantic island — the music speaks for itself.

Roy Howat advances a plausible argument that with *Masques* and *d'un Cahier d'Esquisses*, Debussy may have planned three pieces to form a suite similar to *Images* or *Estampes*; the first and third were performed as a pair by Ricardo Viñes in February 1905. They can be found, united in one volume possibly for the first time, under the title *3 morceaux 1903-1904*, on the Piano Practical Editions website, where their interconnection as a group can be readily appreciated.



Emma Bardac c1900

"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

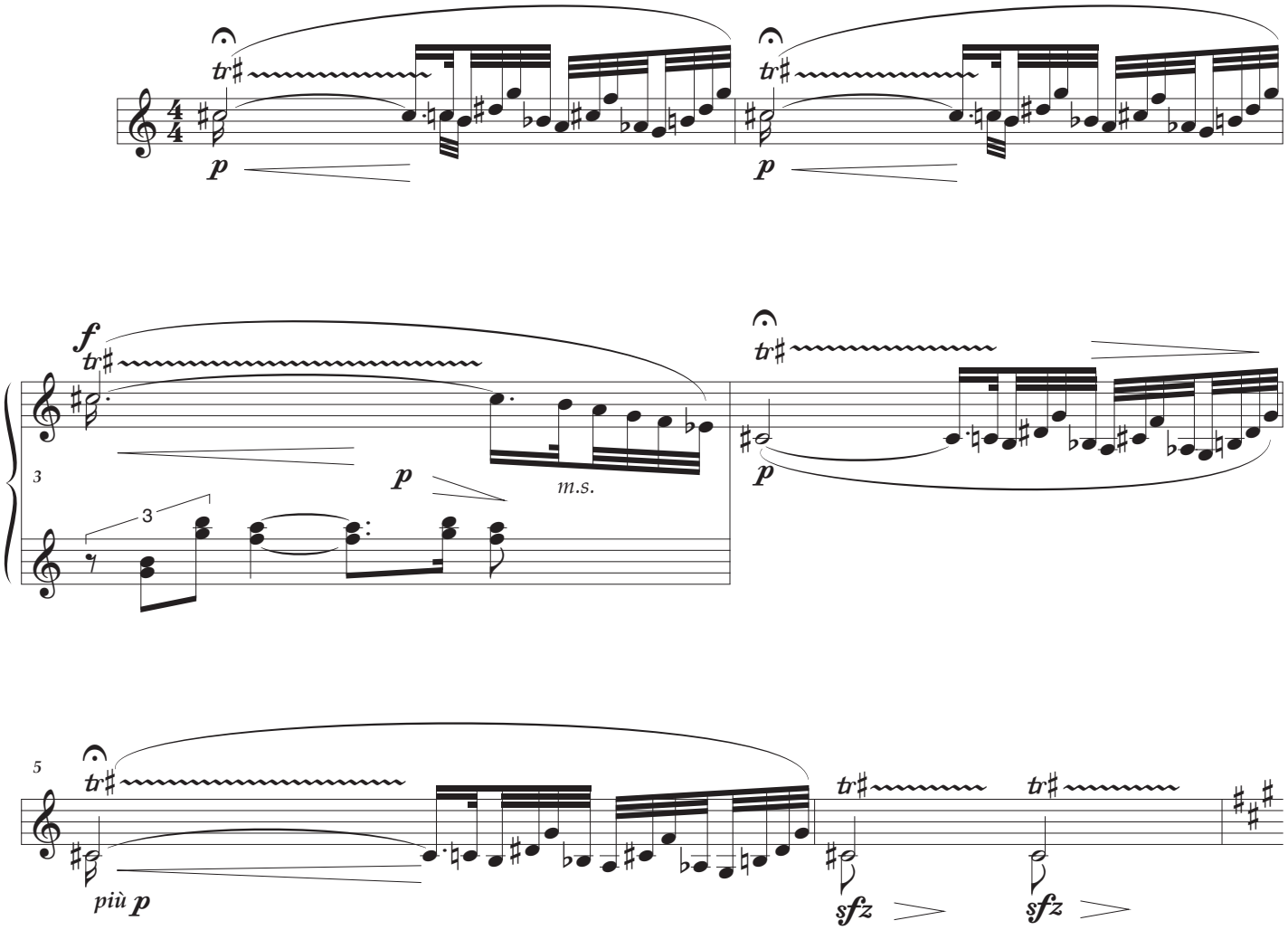
The strong influence of French piano music is surely identified with Chopin and Debussy who share a unique position as masters of an exceptional instrument; through an extensive affinity with the sustaining pedal they each created a personal language conceived to communicate their work with the greatest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

During the centenary year *Piano Practical Editions* became a creative and critical publication; several modifications have been made (see the appendix page **20**) with a possible improvement in the text layout.

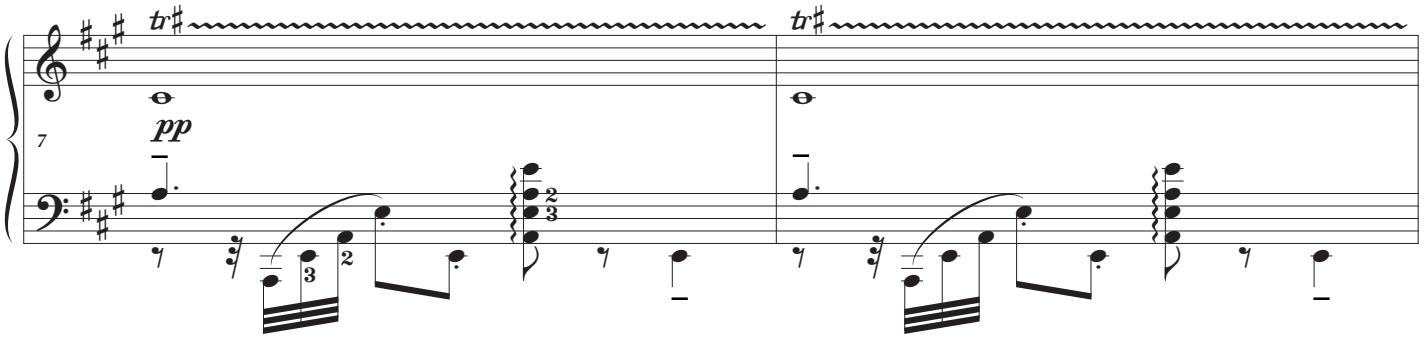
Here is an apt quotation by the composer : "Absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, negating musicians' perverse desire to completely dismiss the composer's (and editor's), and thereby vindicating words of eternal wisdom: 'If you want something done well, do it yourself'. Let us seek our own fingering!"
« Il n'y a pas de théorie, le plaisir est la règle. » — There is no such thing as theory, pleasure is the only rule" — Claude Debussy

Watteau *"l'Embarquement pour Cythère"* 1717

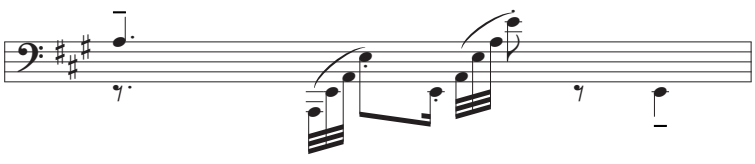
Quasi una cadenza

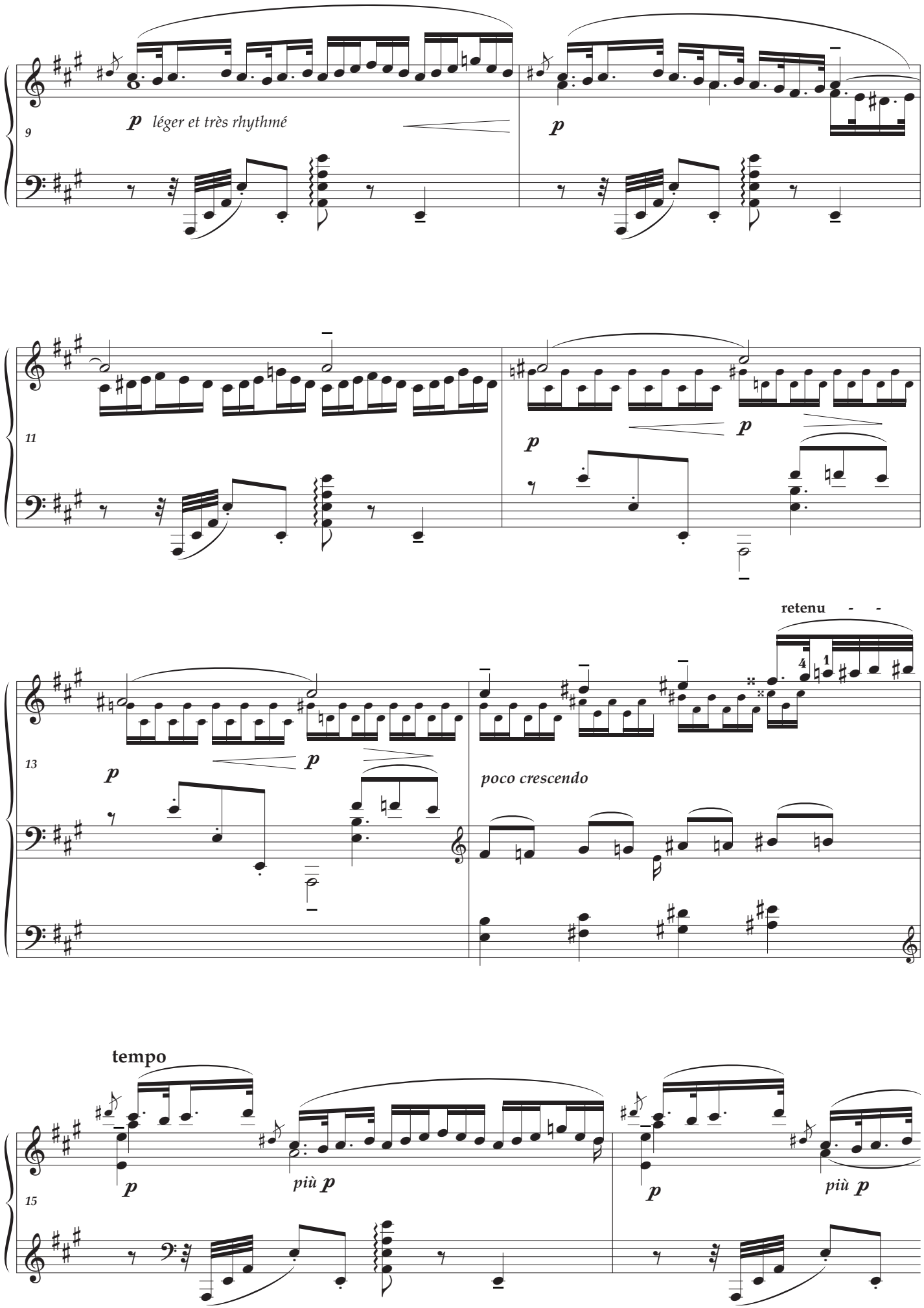


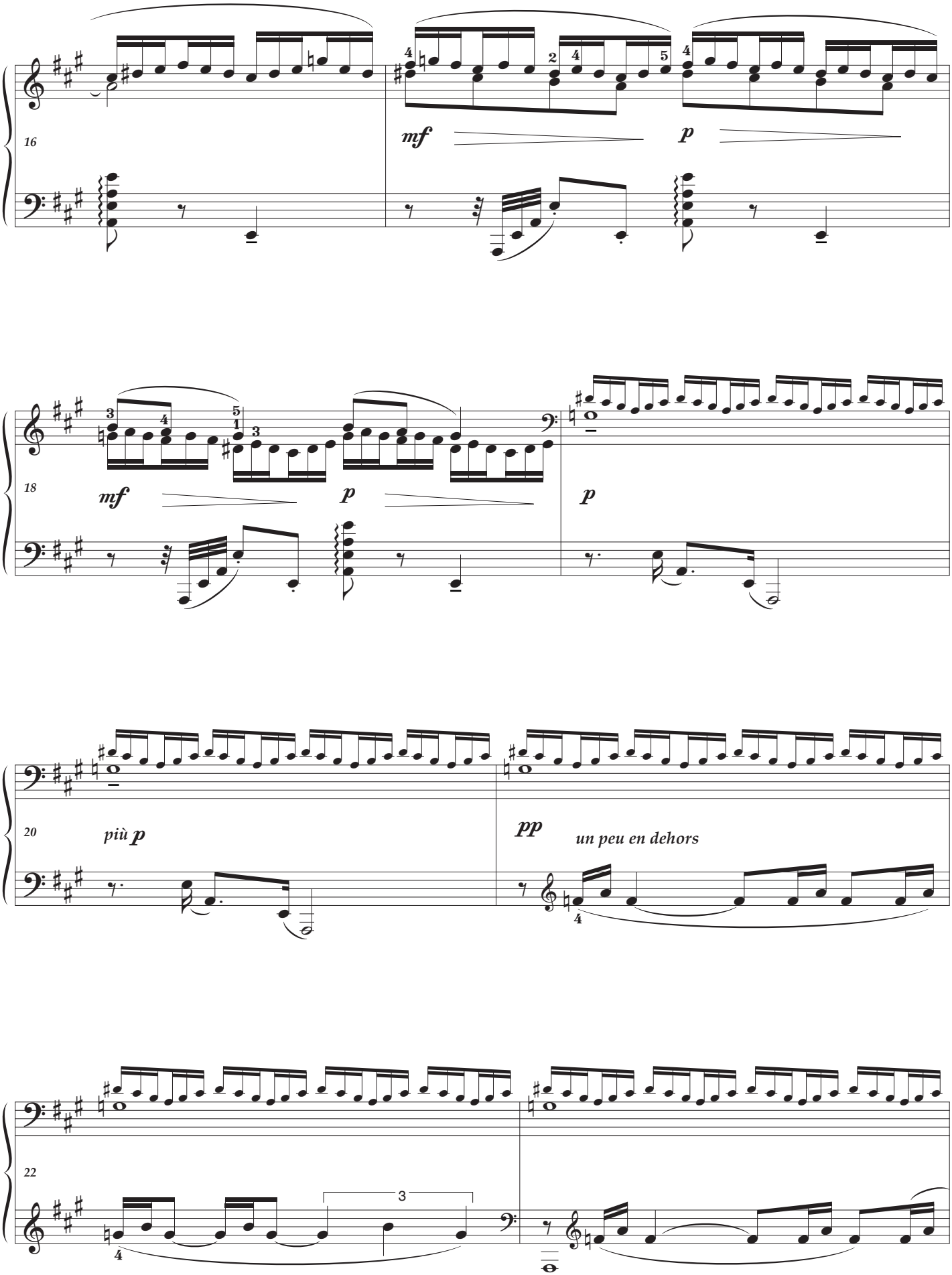
tempo : modéré et très souple

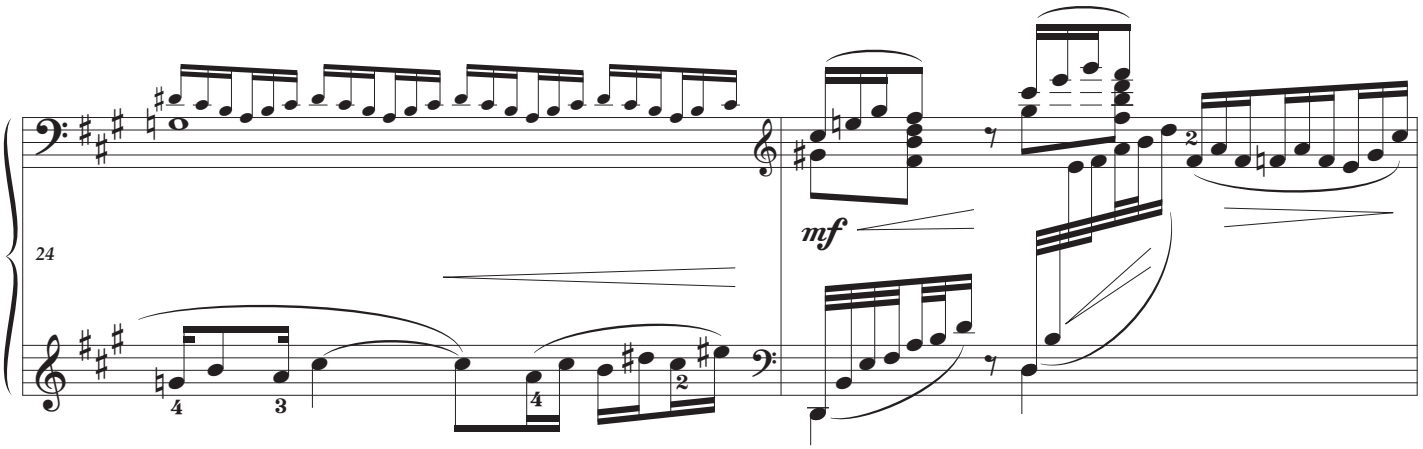


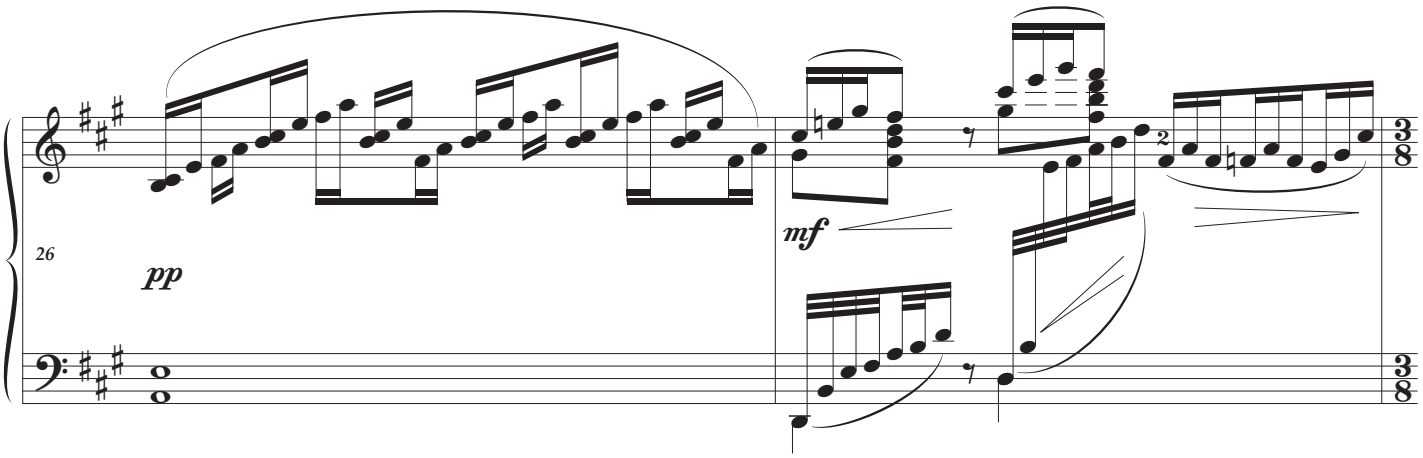
editorial realisation

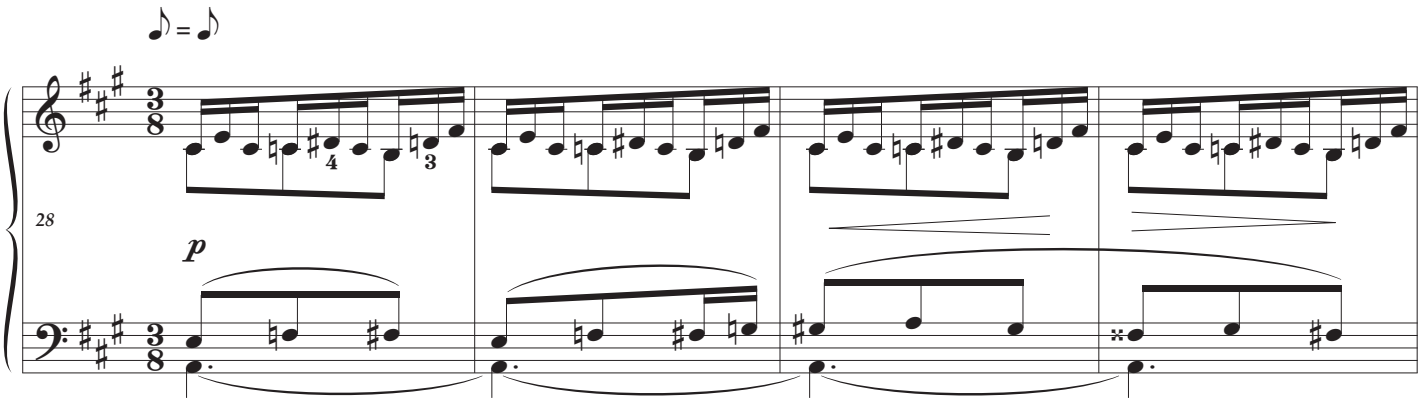


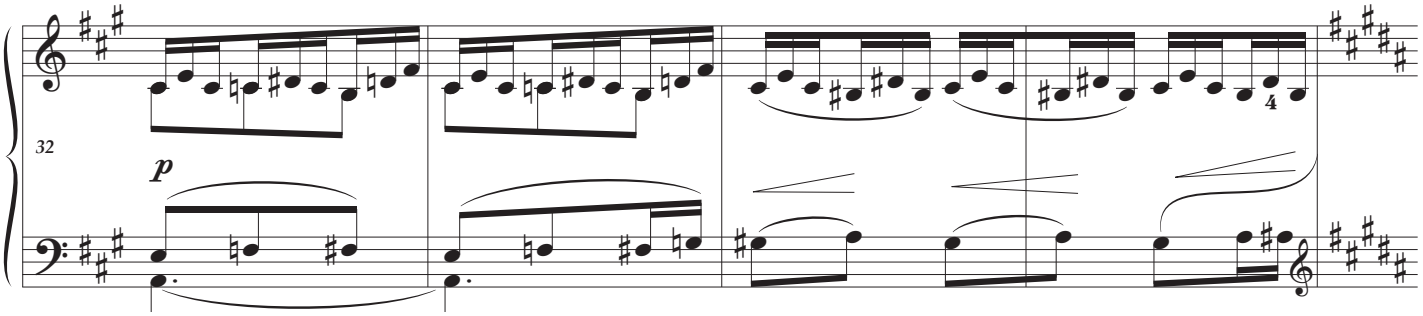

9
p léger et très rhythmé
p
11
p
p
13
p
p
poco crescendo
retenu - -
tempo
15
p
più p
p
più p

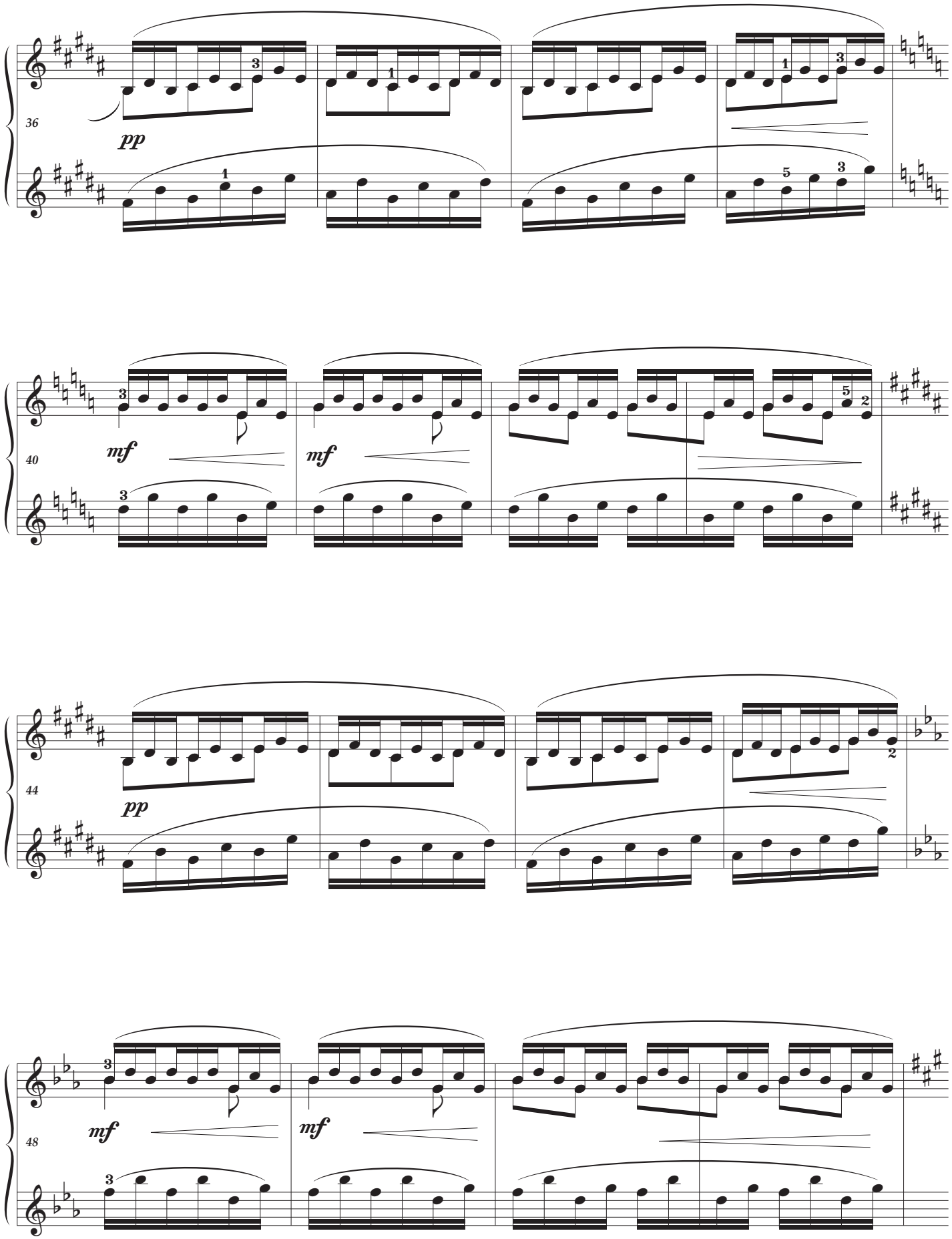

16
mf
p
18
mf
p
p
20
più p
pp
un peu en dehors
22
3

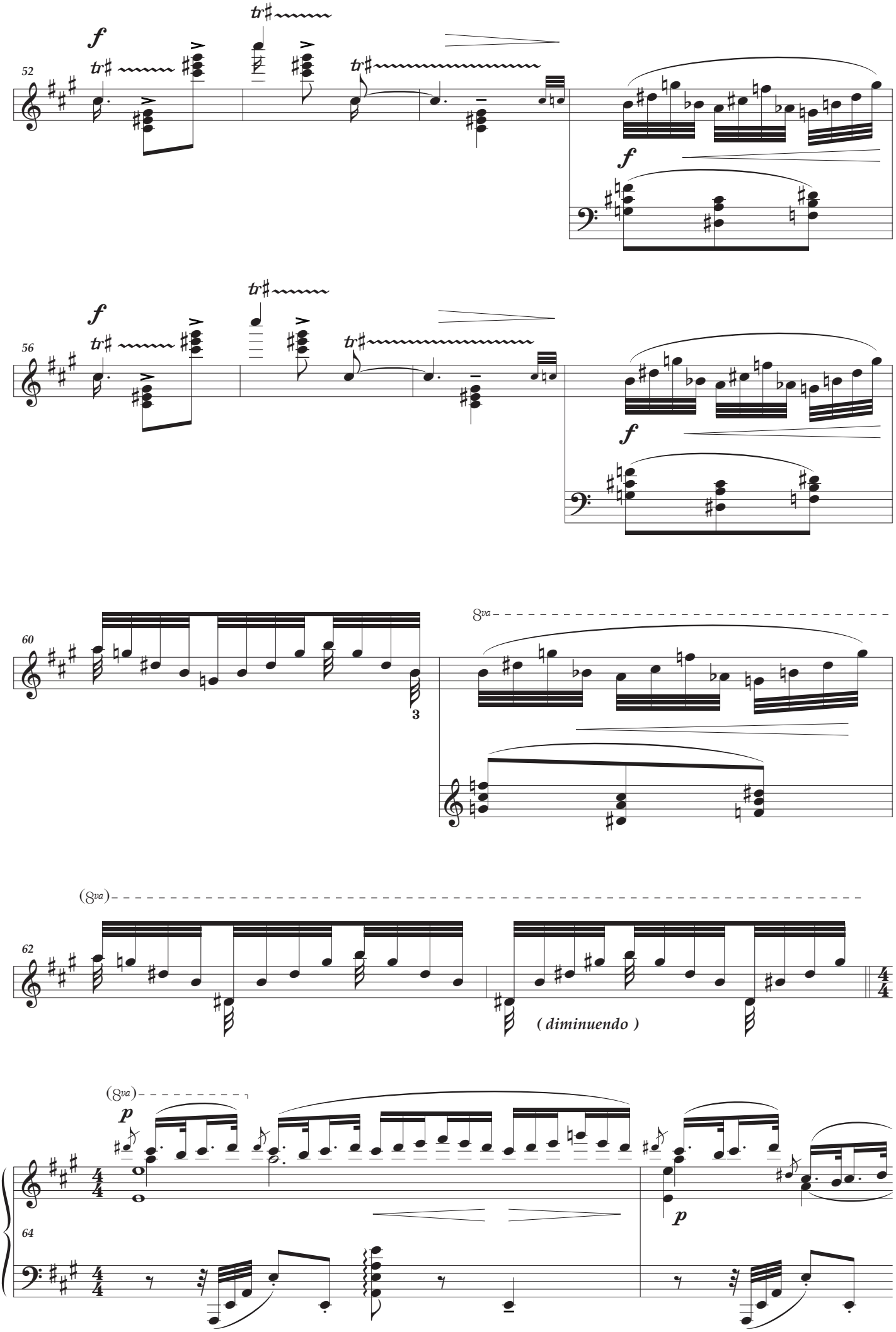

24
mf

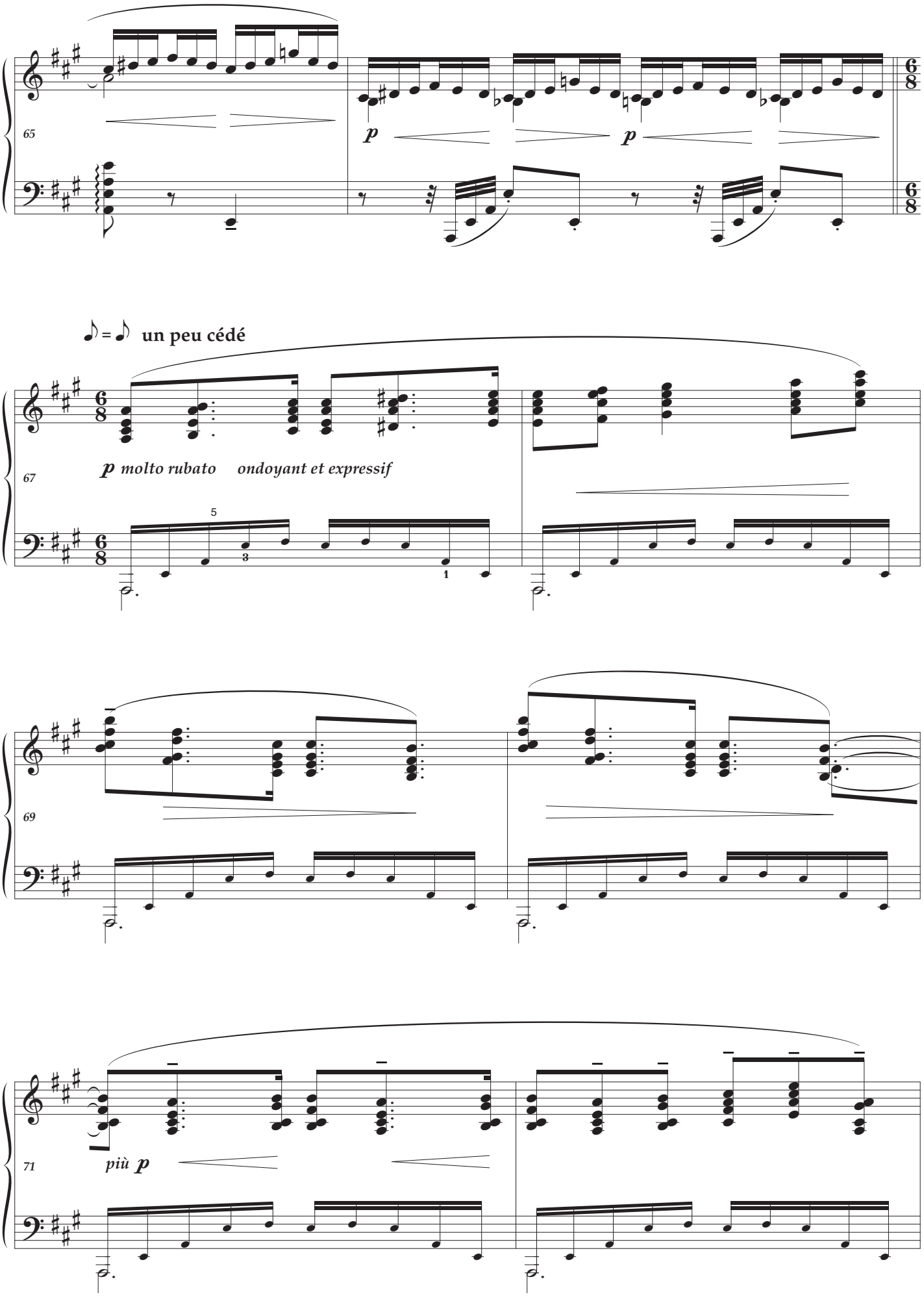

26
pp
mf

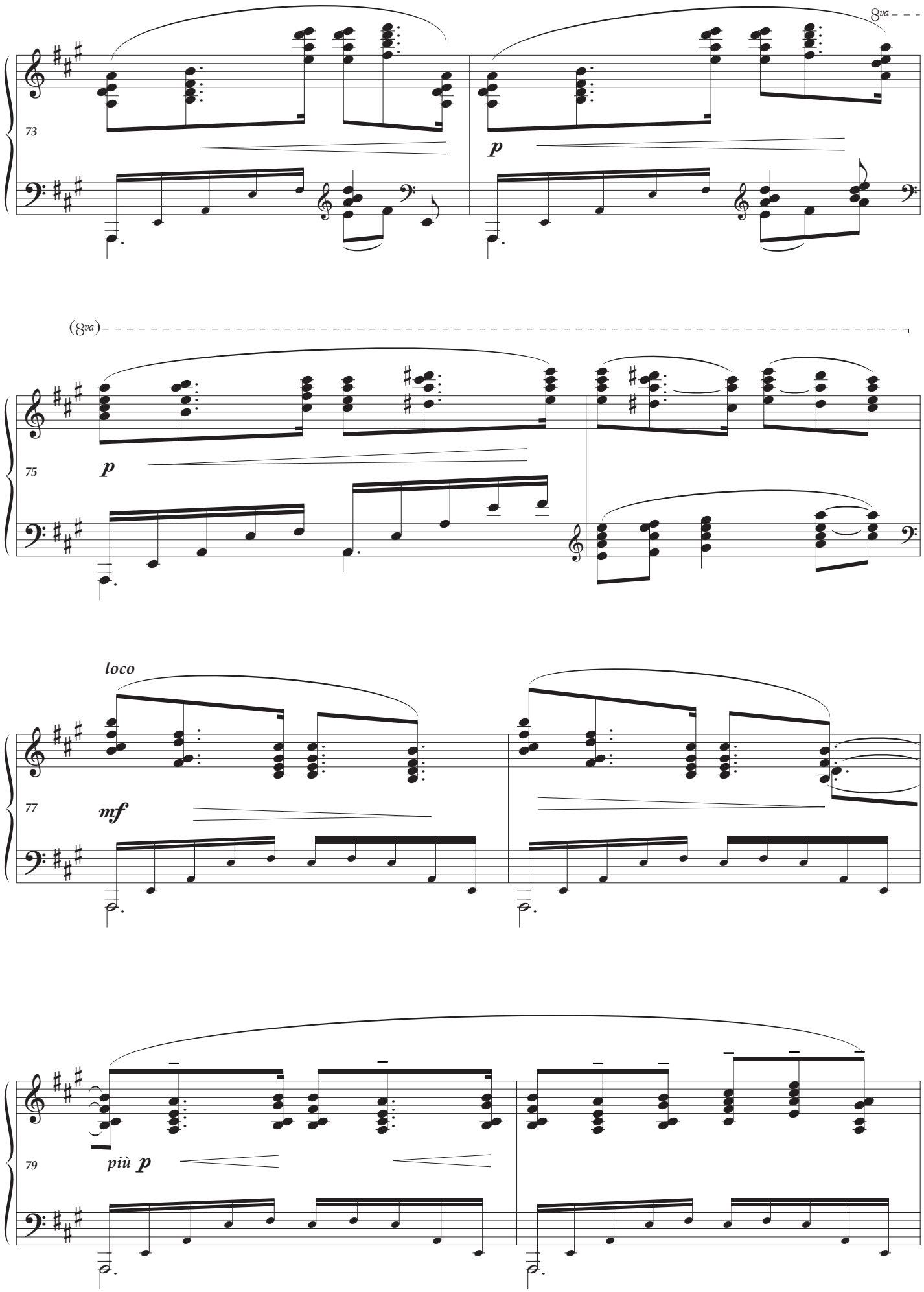

♪ = ♪
28
p

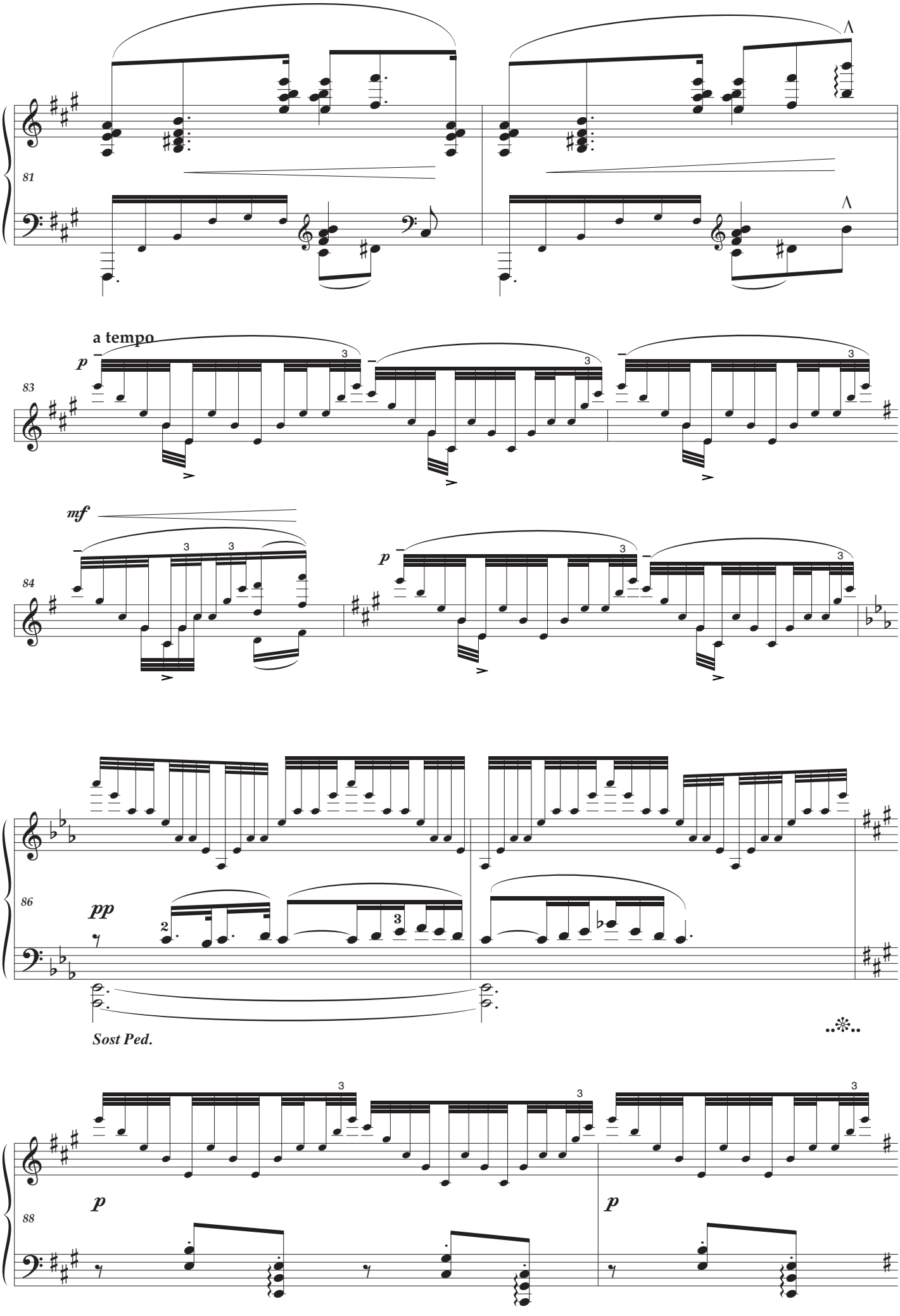

32
p

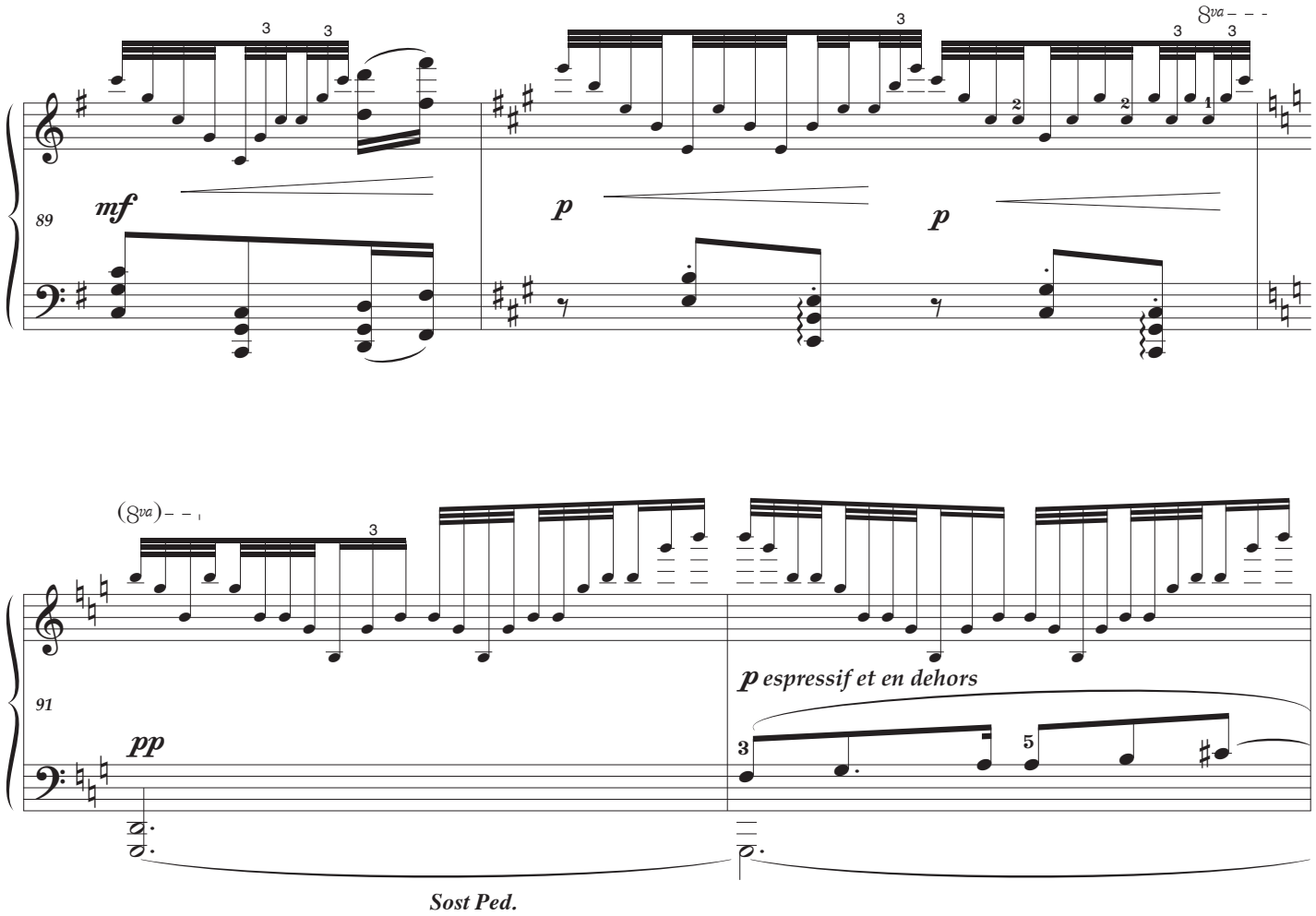

36
pp
40
mf
mf
44
pp
48
mf
mf

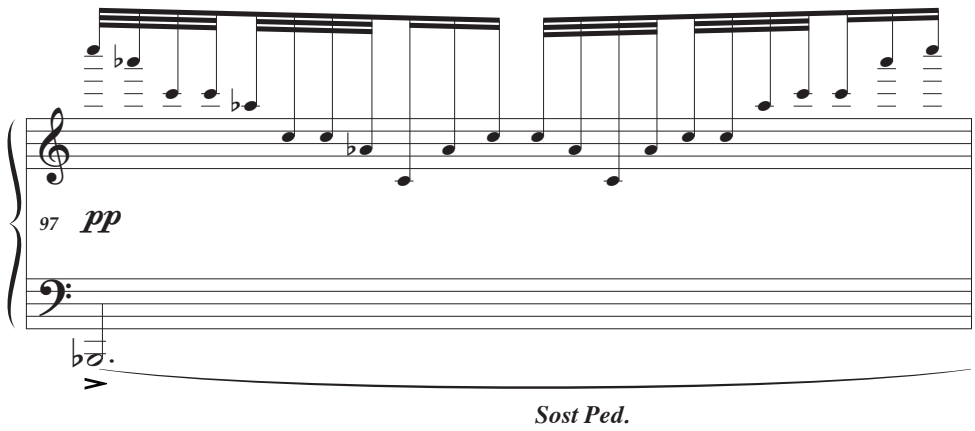

52
f
tr
f
56
f
tr
f
60
3
8va
(8va)
62
(diminuendo)
4/4
(8va)
p
64
4/4
p

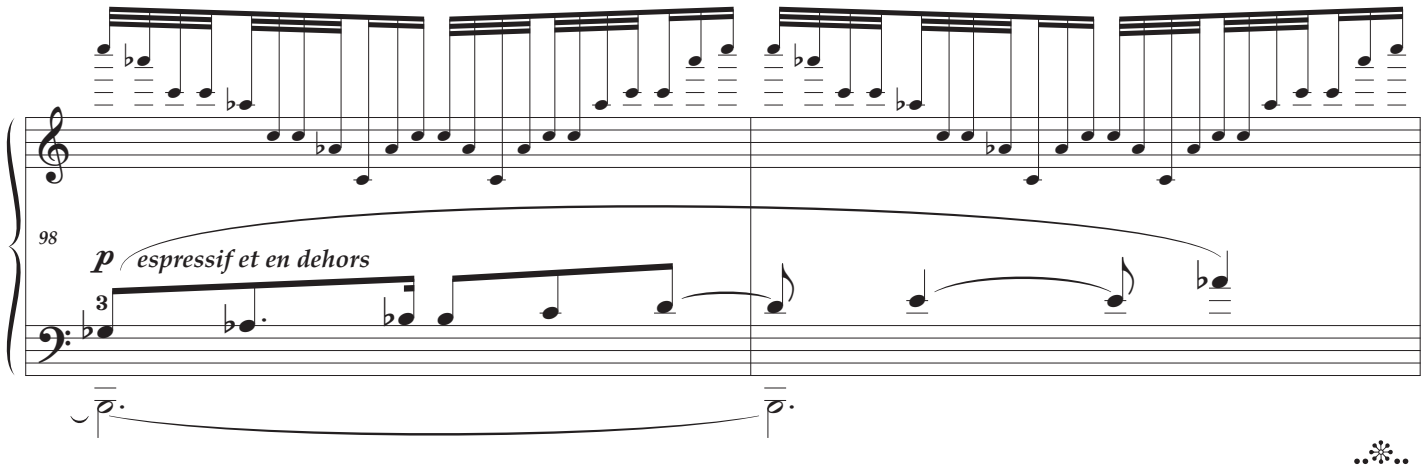

65
p
p
6
8
♪ = ♪ un peu cédé
67
p molto rubato ondoyant et expressif
5
3
1
69
71
più p

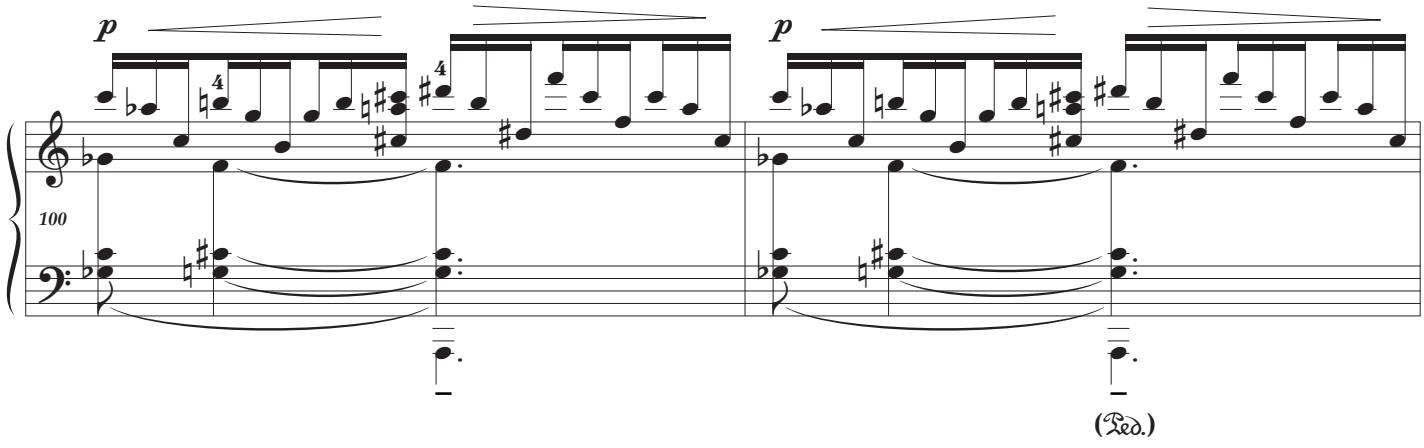

8va
73
p
(8va)
75
p
loco
77
mf
79
più p

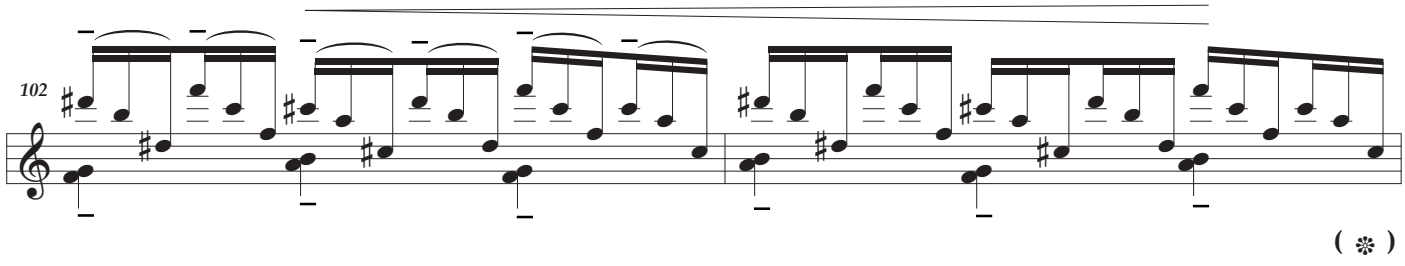

81
a tempo
p
83
mf
p
84
pp
86
Sost Ped.
p
p
88

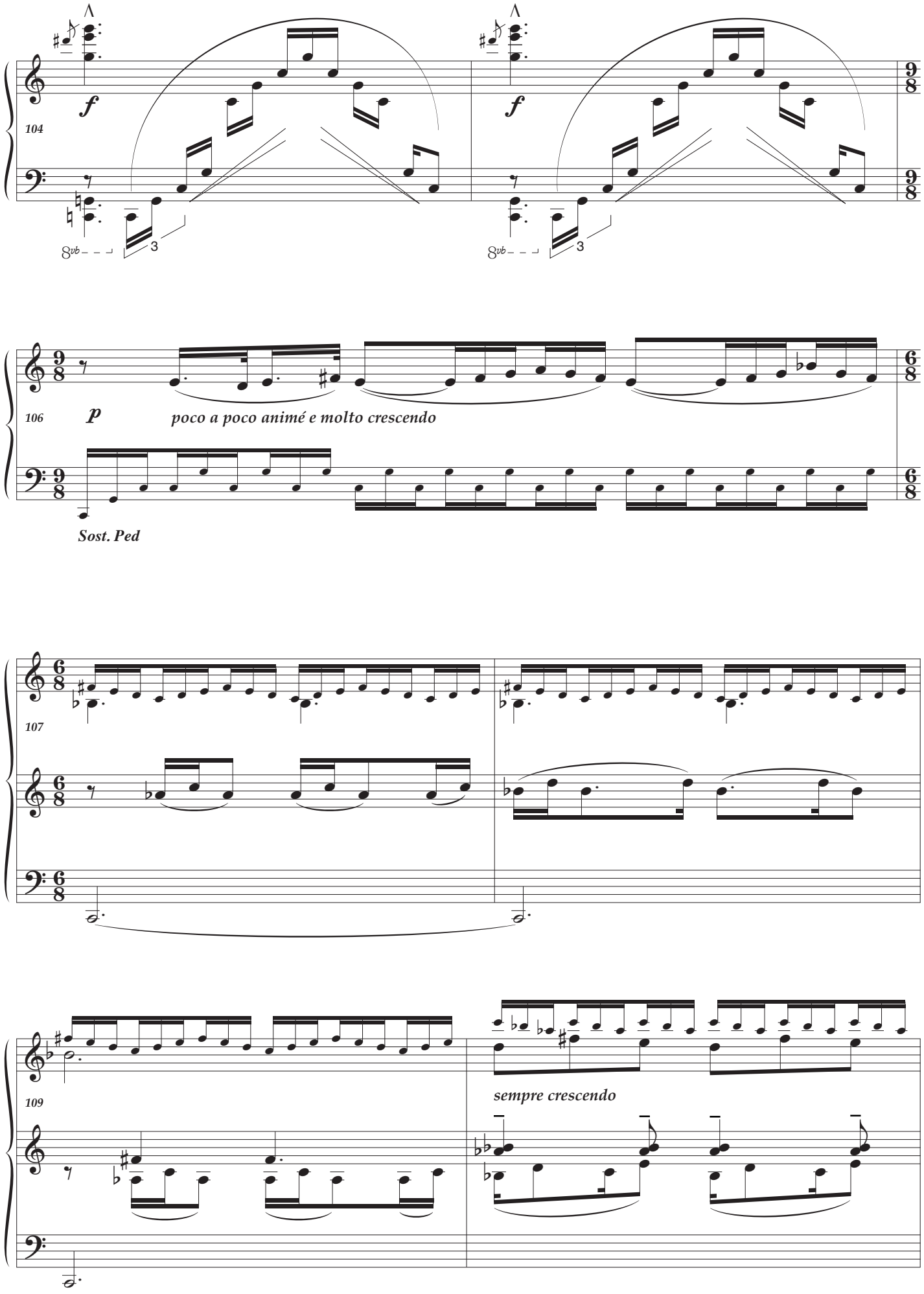

8va
mf
89
p
p
(8va)
91
pp
p espressif et en dehors
Sost Ped.
93
95
pp
Sost Ped.

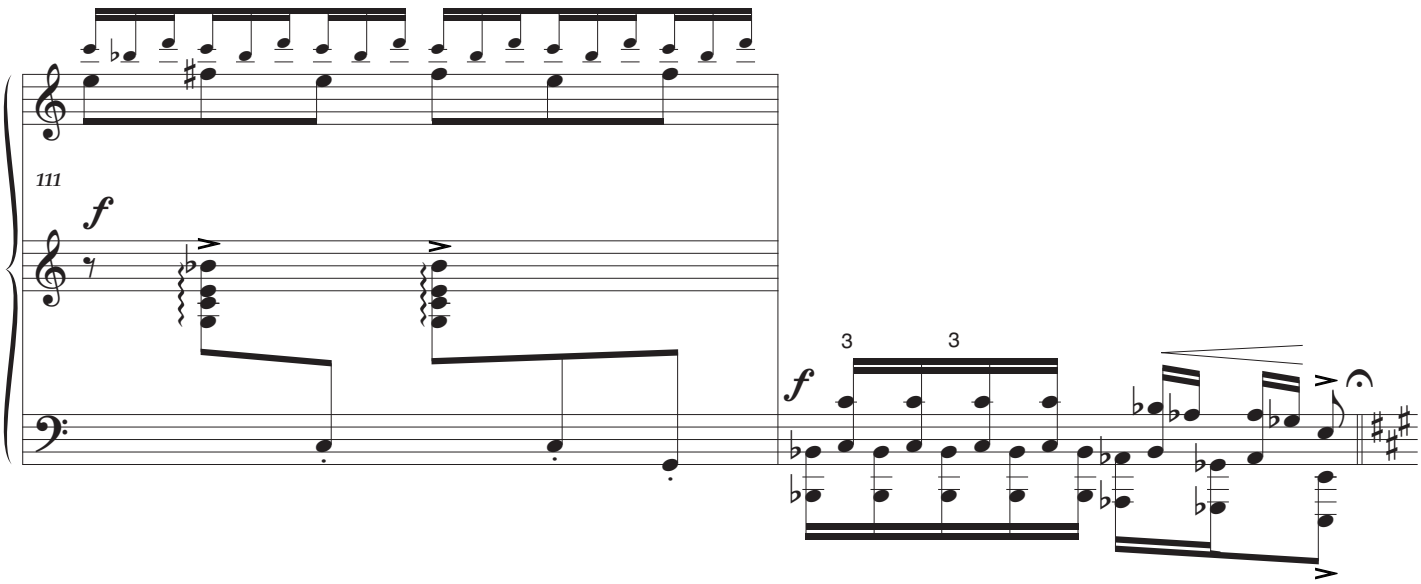

97
pp
Sost Ped.

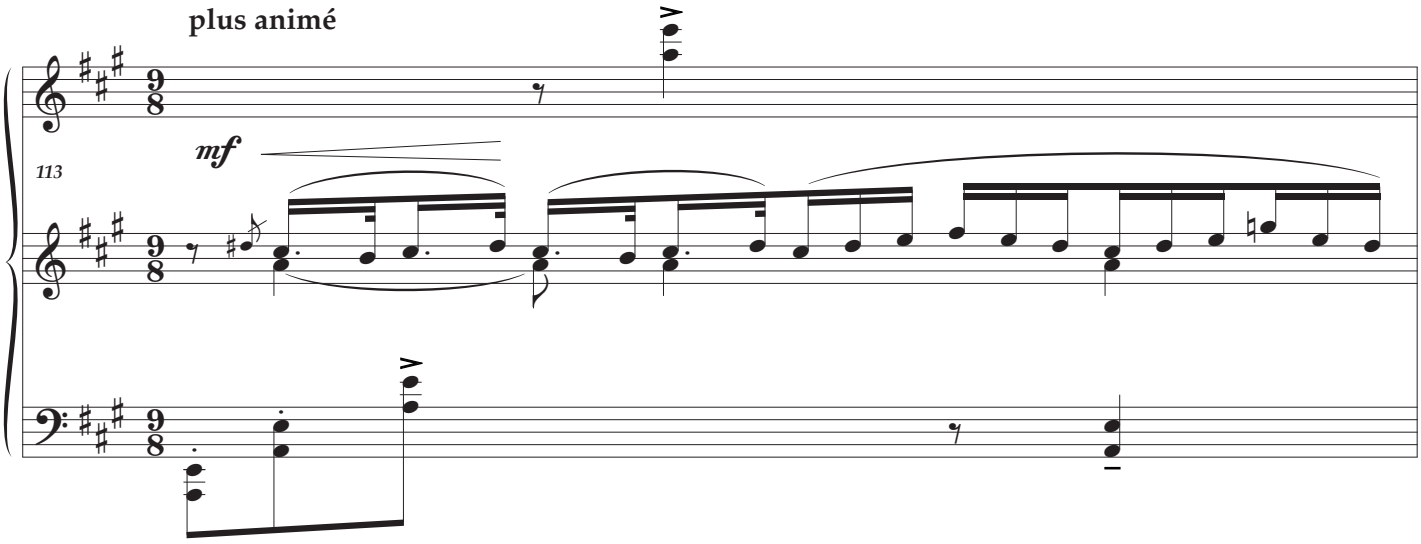

98
p espressif et en dehors

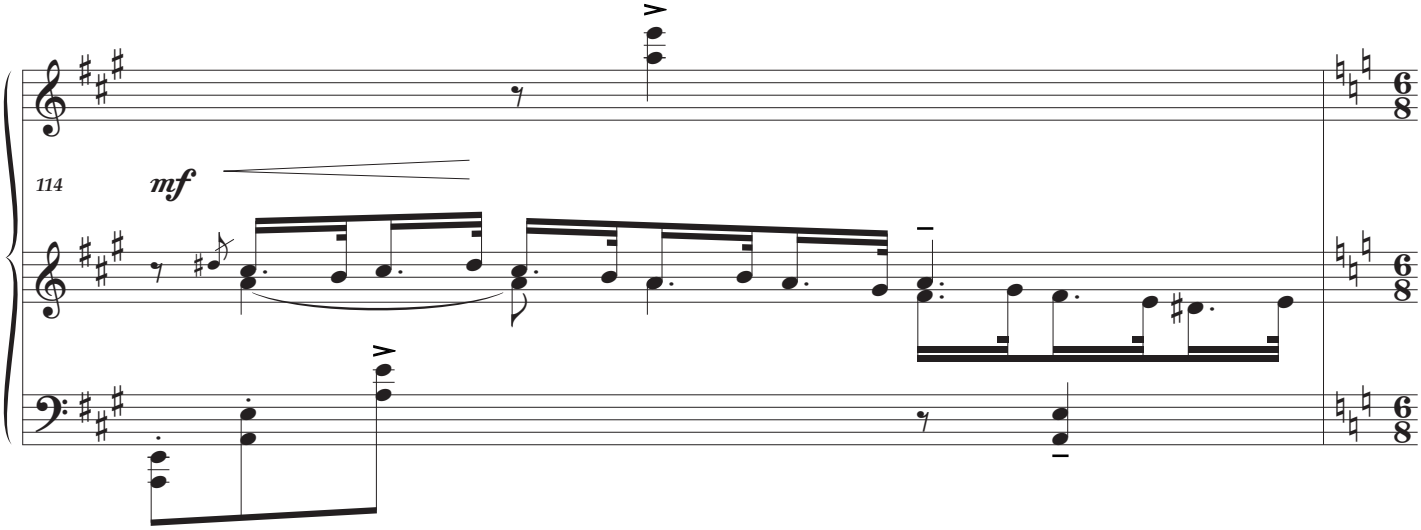

100
p
p
(Ped.)

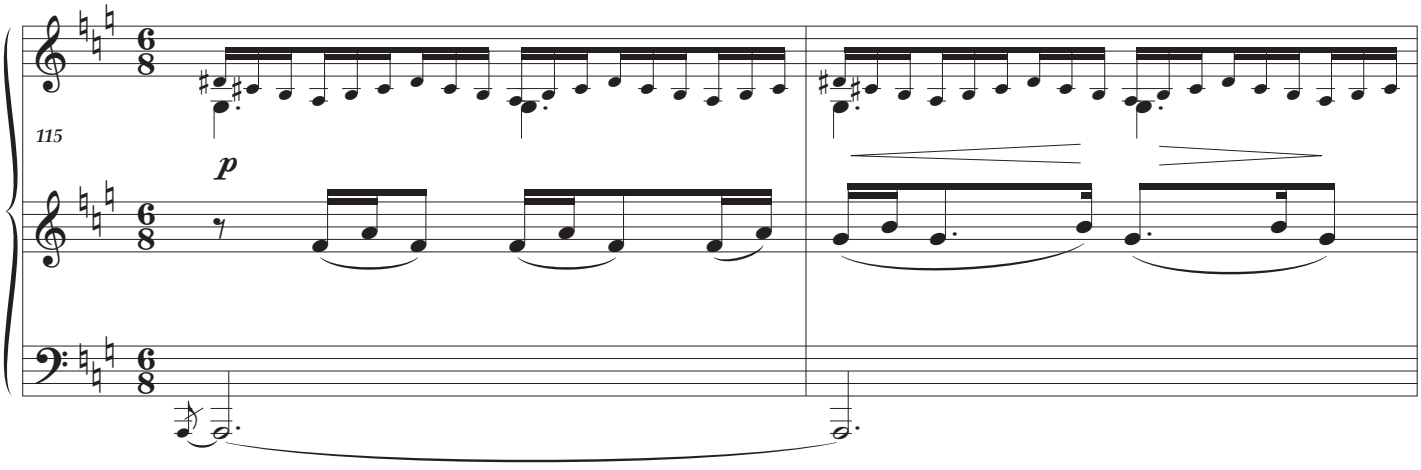

102
( )

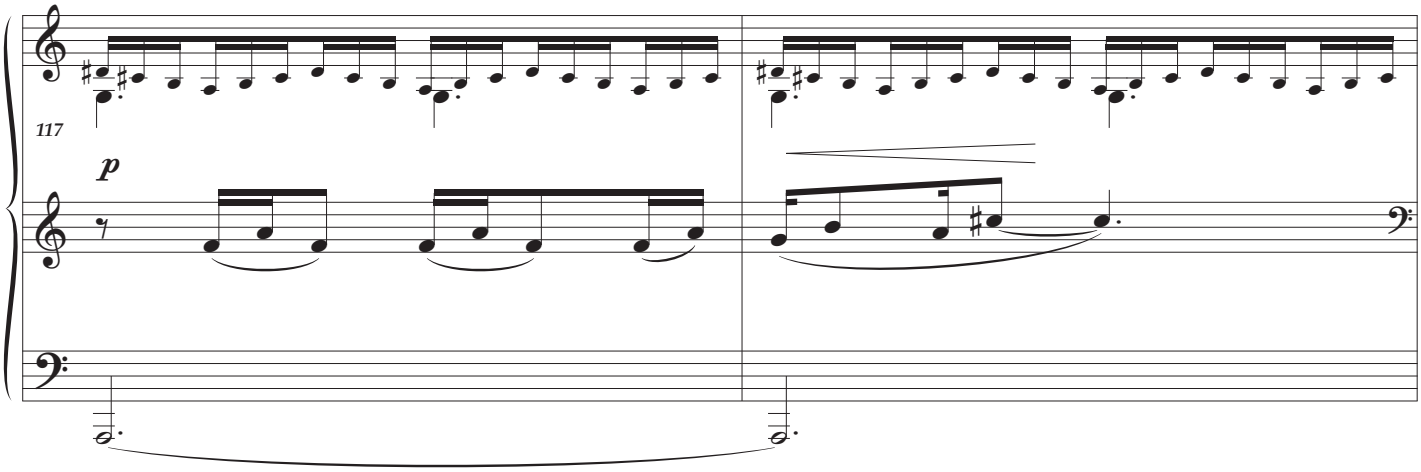

104
f
8vb
3
106
p
poco a poco animé e molto crescendo
Sost. Ped
107
109
sempre crescendo


111
f
3
3
f


plus animé
113
mf


114
mf


115
p
Sost Ped.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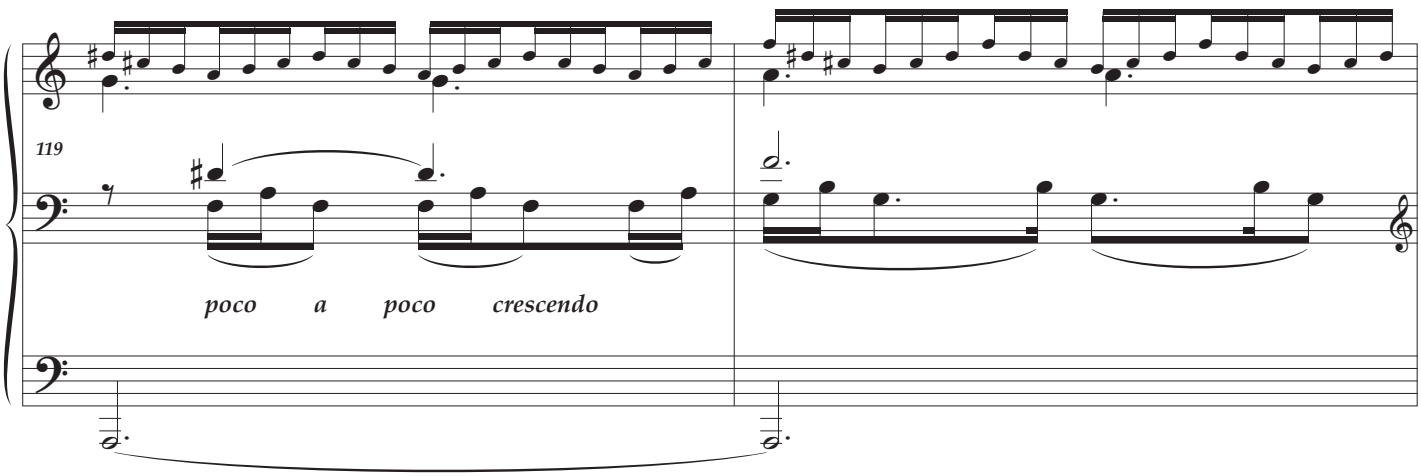
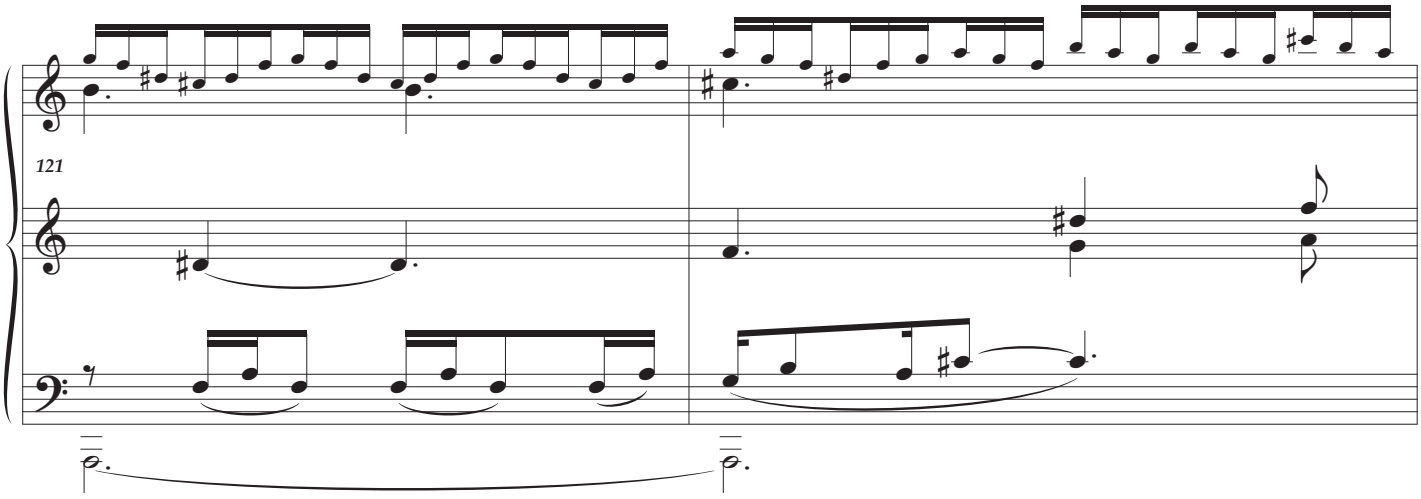
p


119
poco a poco crescendo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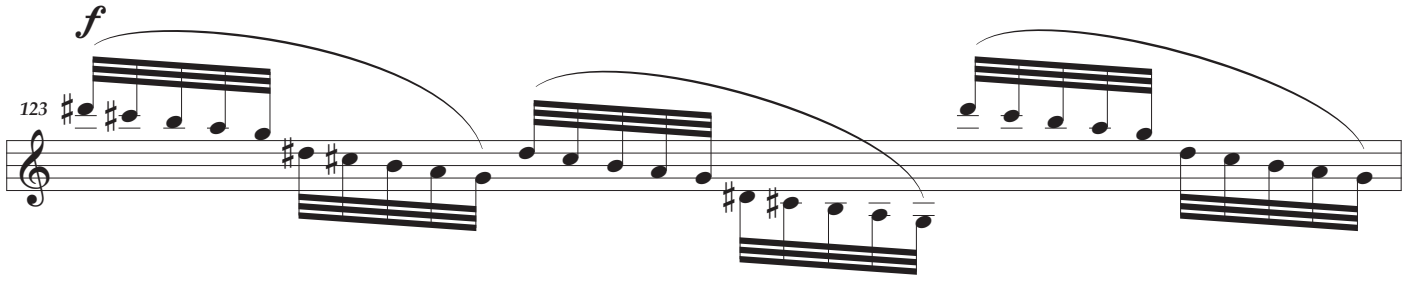
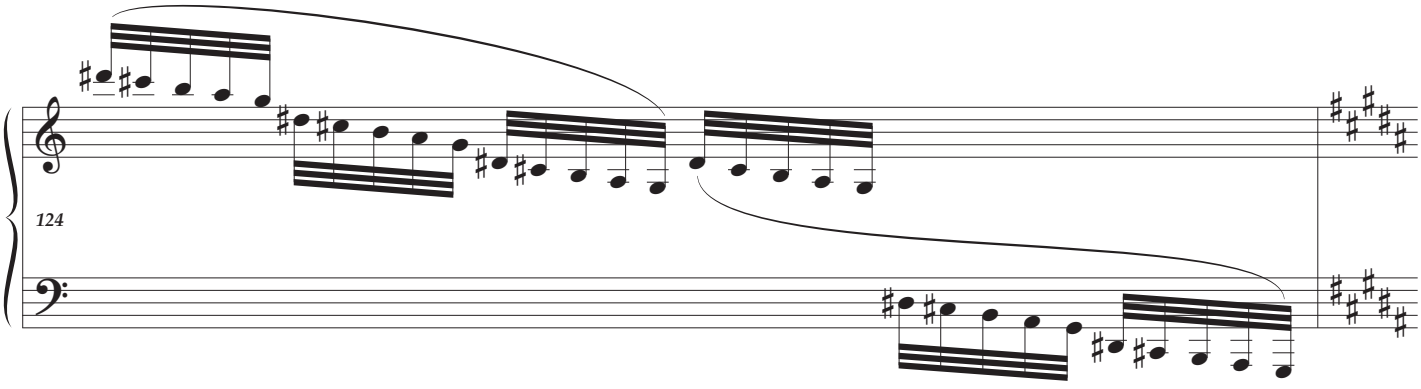

f
123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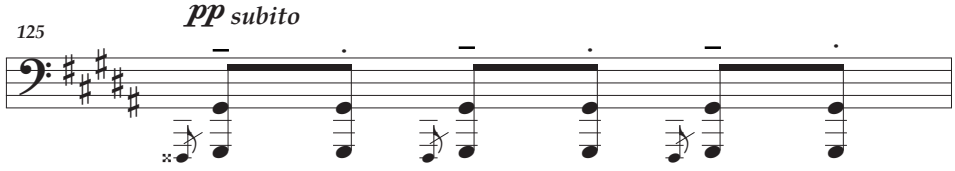
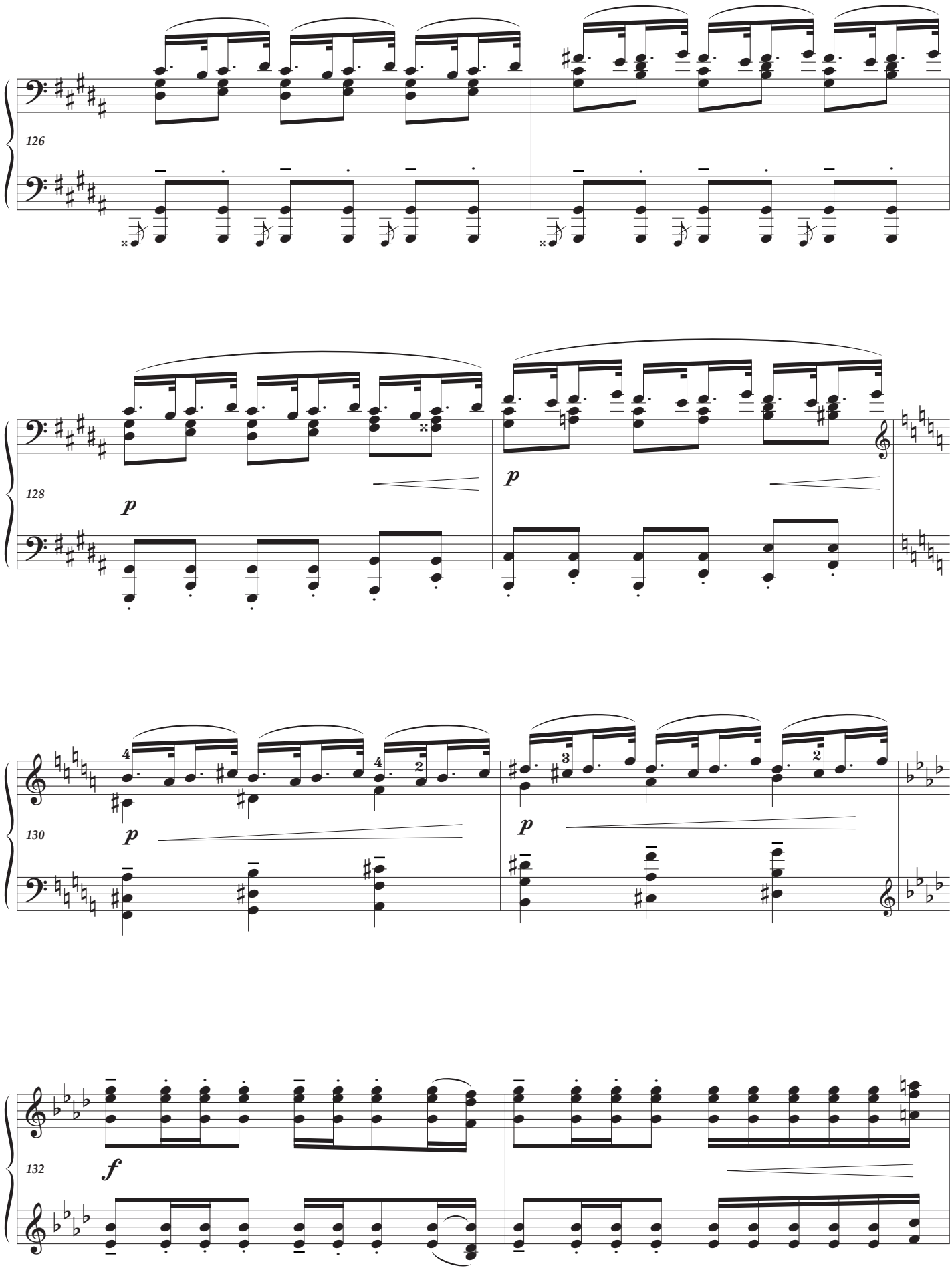
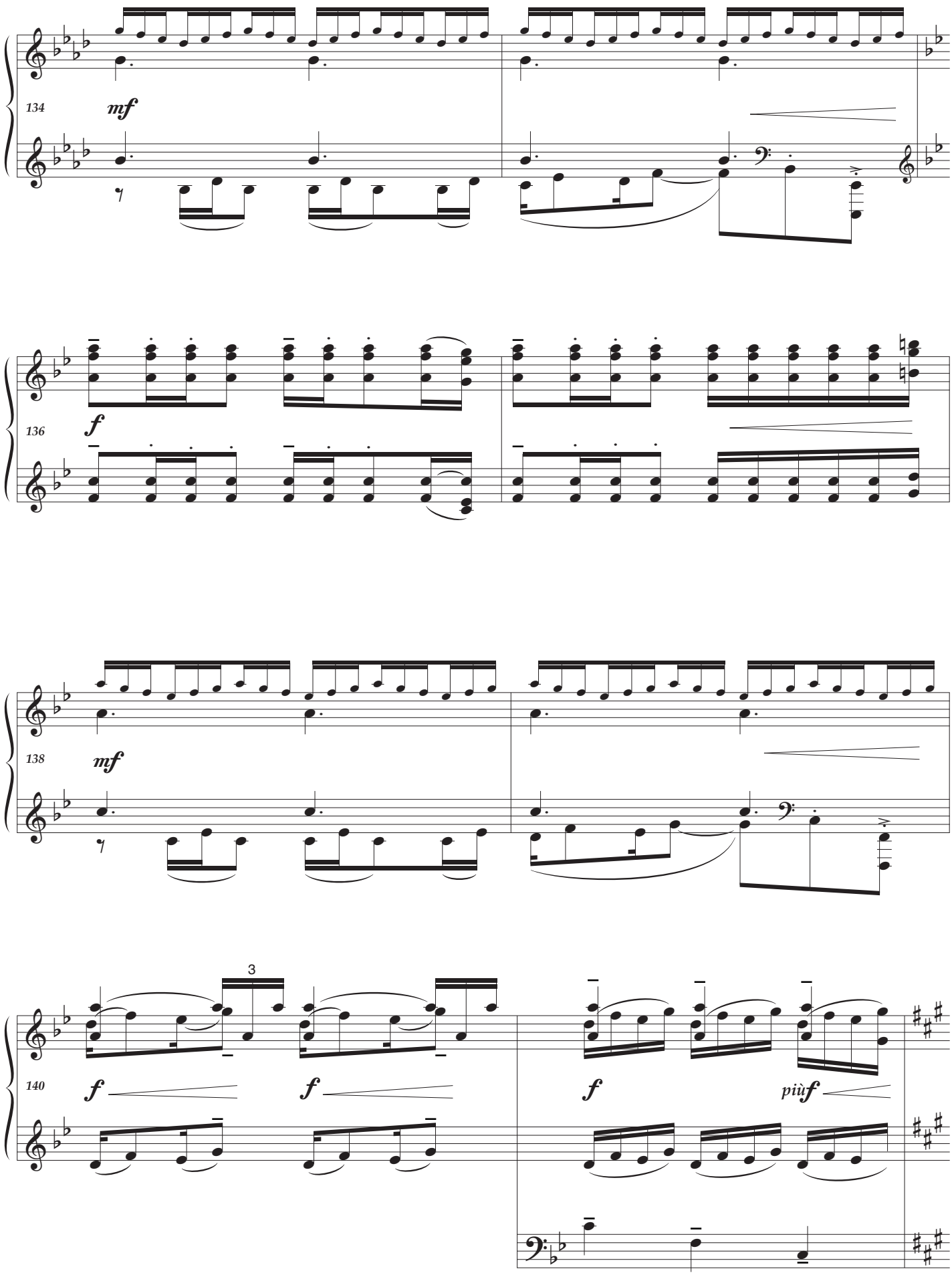
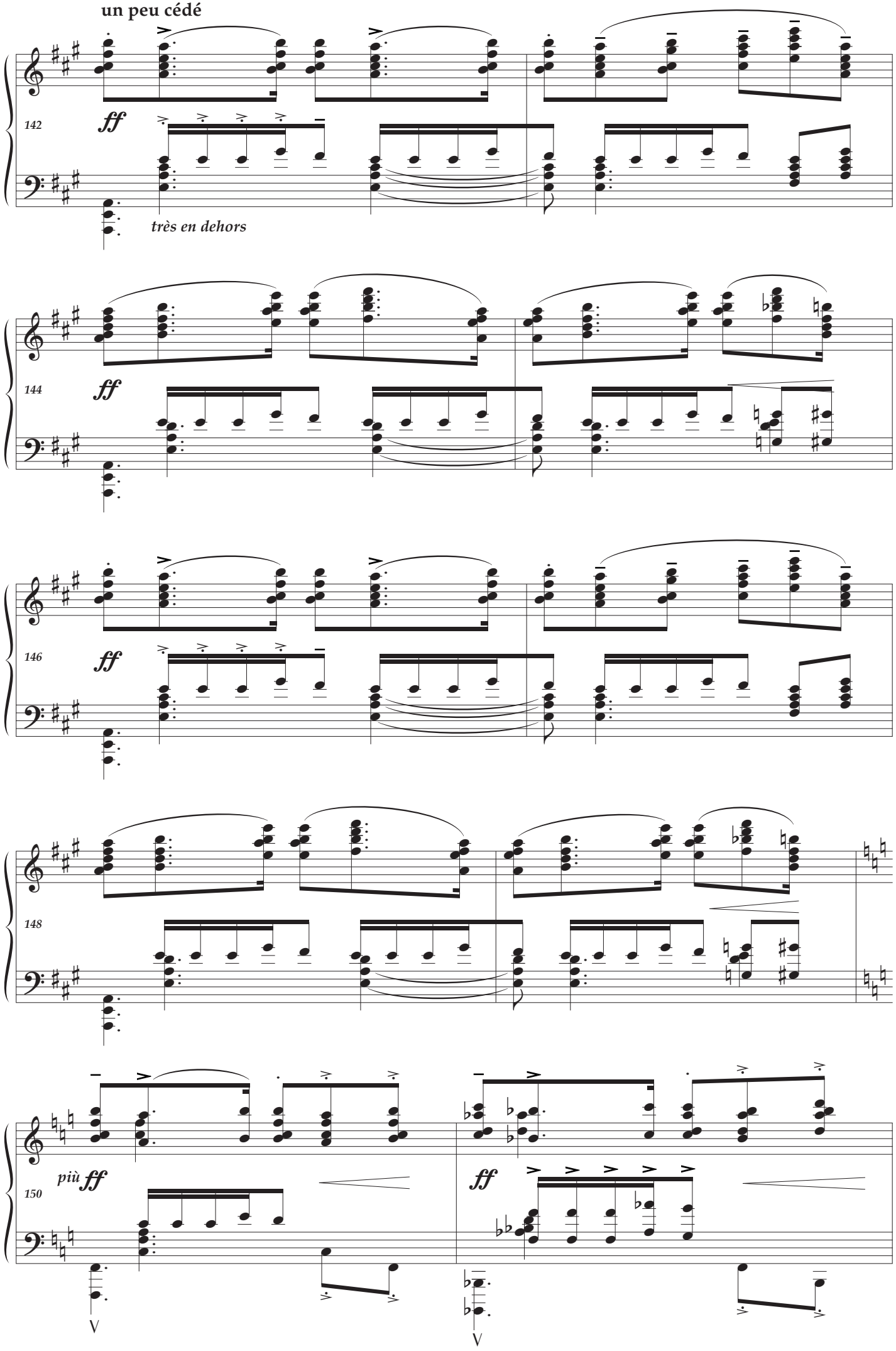
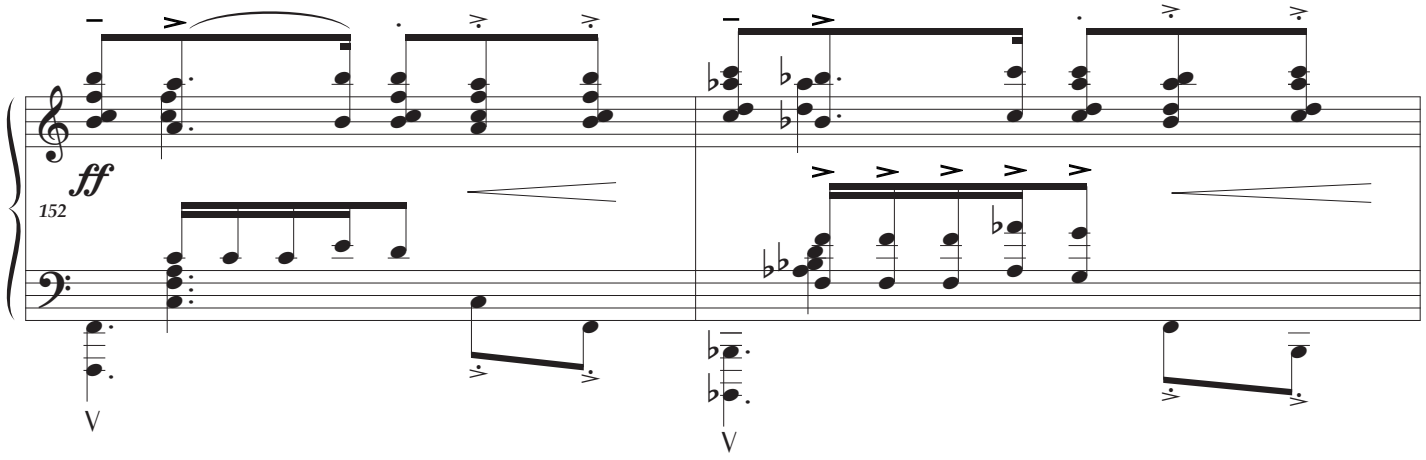

125
pp subito

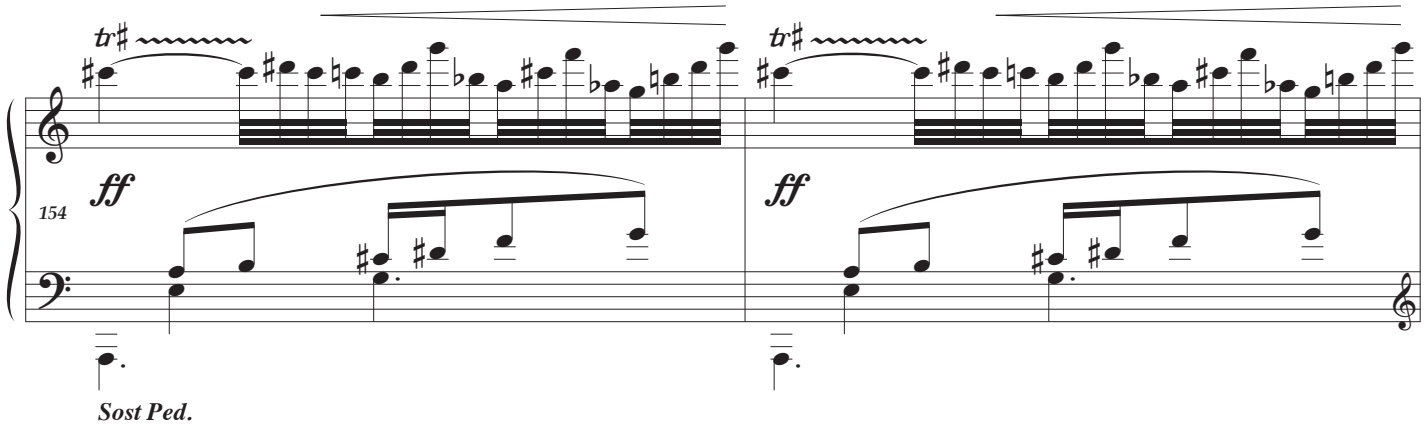

126
128
p
p
130
p
p
132
f

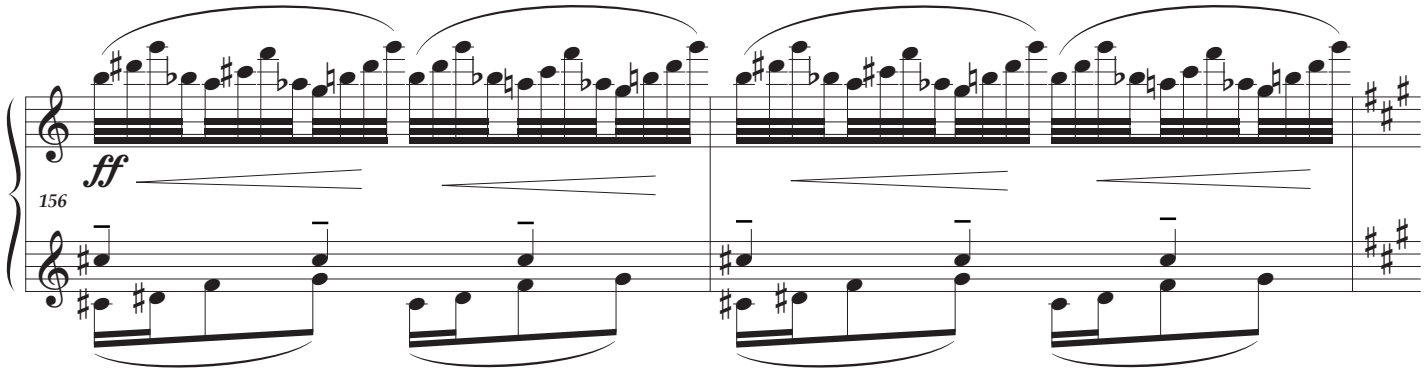

134
mf
136
f
138
mf
3
140
f
f
f
più f

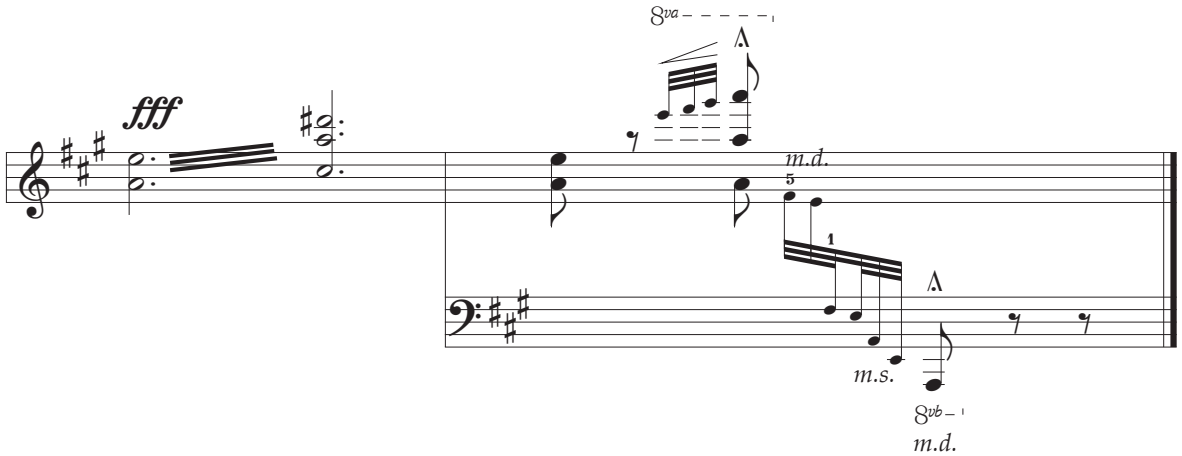

un peu cédé
142
ff
très en dehors
144
ff
146
ff
148
150
più ff
ff



tempo : très animé jusqu'à la fin







Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & French vocabulary

- In the first book of Preludes, the composer indicated some metronome speeds in brackets, and once wrote: *"as a rose which might only last for one morning, a metronome speed might only work for one bar."* This explains why there are so few metronome speeds in Debussy's music
- "*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.

l'Isle Joyeuse Duration **: 6'25**

- **7 —** a moderate *tempo di habanera* — It would seem sensible to choose a speed which will allow a meaningful and realisable *plus animé* at 113. **52-57** as in the opening bars, try playing the first note of these trills with LH.
- **67-** from this bar to the end the time signature 3/8 has been modified to 6/8 (or 9/8)
- **106** Bass accompaniment editorial modification
- **115** Bass editorial acciaccatura for the sostenuto pedal
- **124** the first two quintuplets have been raised an octave

modéré et très souple	*moderate and very free*
léger	*light*
plus animé	*more lively*
un peu cédé	*slow down a little*
ondoyant	*swaying*
jusqu'à la fin	*until the end*

** 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 provide it. Debussy and Ravel certainly played a Steinway sostenuto grand *chez* Madame de Saint Marceaux and another bought by Winnaretta de Polignac in 1906. One could say that it took over 100 years for it to become commonplace.