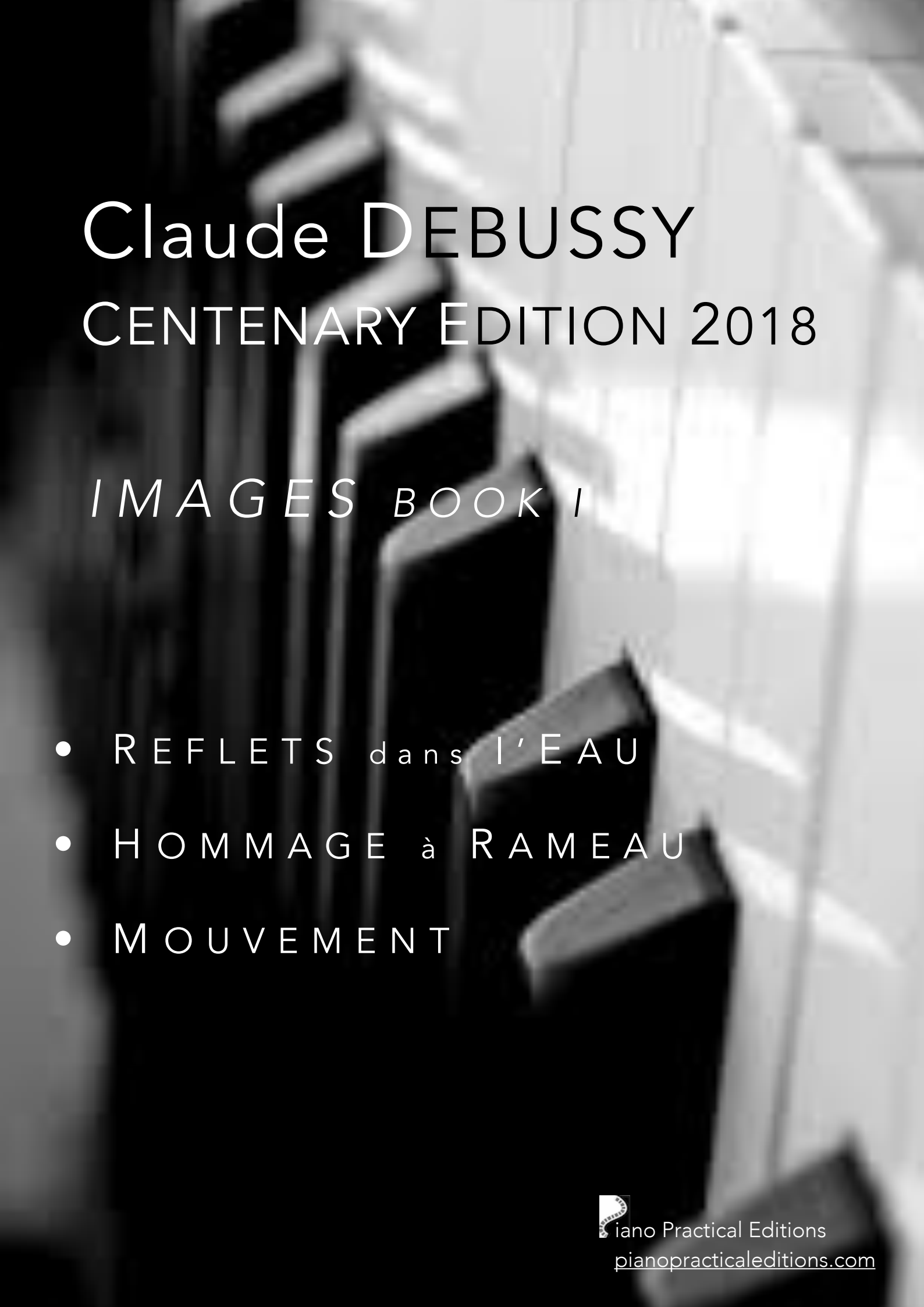

Claude DEBUSSY
CENTENARY EDITION 2018

IMAGES BOOK I

- REFLETS dans l'EAU
- HOMMAGE à RAMEAU
- MOUVEMENT

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Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

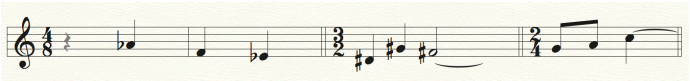
Images book I

Reflets dans l'eau

Hommage à Rameau

Mouvement

Images book I was first performed in Paris by Ricardo Viñes : "*The sound of the sea, the curve of the horizon, the wind in the leaves, the cry of a bird enregister complex impressions within us*," Debussy told an interviewer in 1911. "*Then suddenly, without any deliberate consent on our part, one of these memories issues forth to express itself in the language of music.*" It is interesting to note that each of the three *images* features a similar 3-note motif which occurs very often, and is sometimes hidden in the accompaniments:



The composer himself valued the *Images* highly, telling his publisher, Jacques Durand, "*I think I may say without undue pride that I believe these pieces will live and will take their place in the piano literature ... either to the left of Schumann, or to the right of Chopin.*"

From a letter to Durand : "*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.*"

"*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.

In addition to some suggested fingerings, the appendices contain comments, afterthoughts and a vocabulary. Redistribution between the hands comes under close scrutiny to make certain passages easier or more persuasive. Debussy never uses the pedal sign preferring extended ties or long bass notes, impossible to hold otherwise; sometimes even *laisser vibrer...*

* 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.

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I *Reflets dans l'eau*

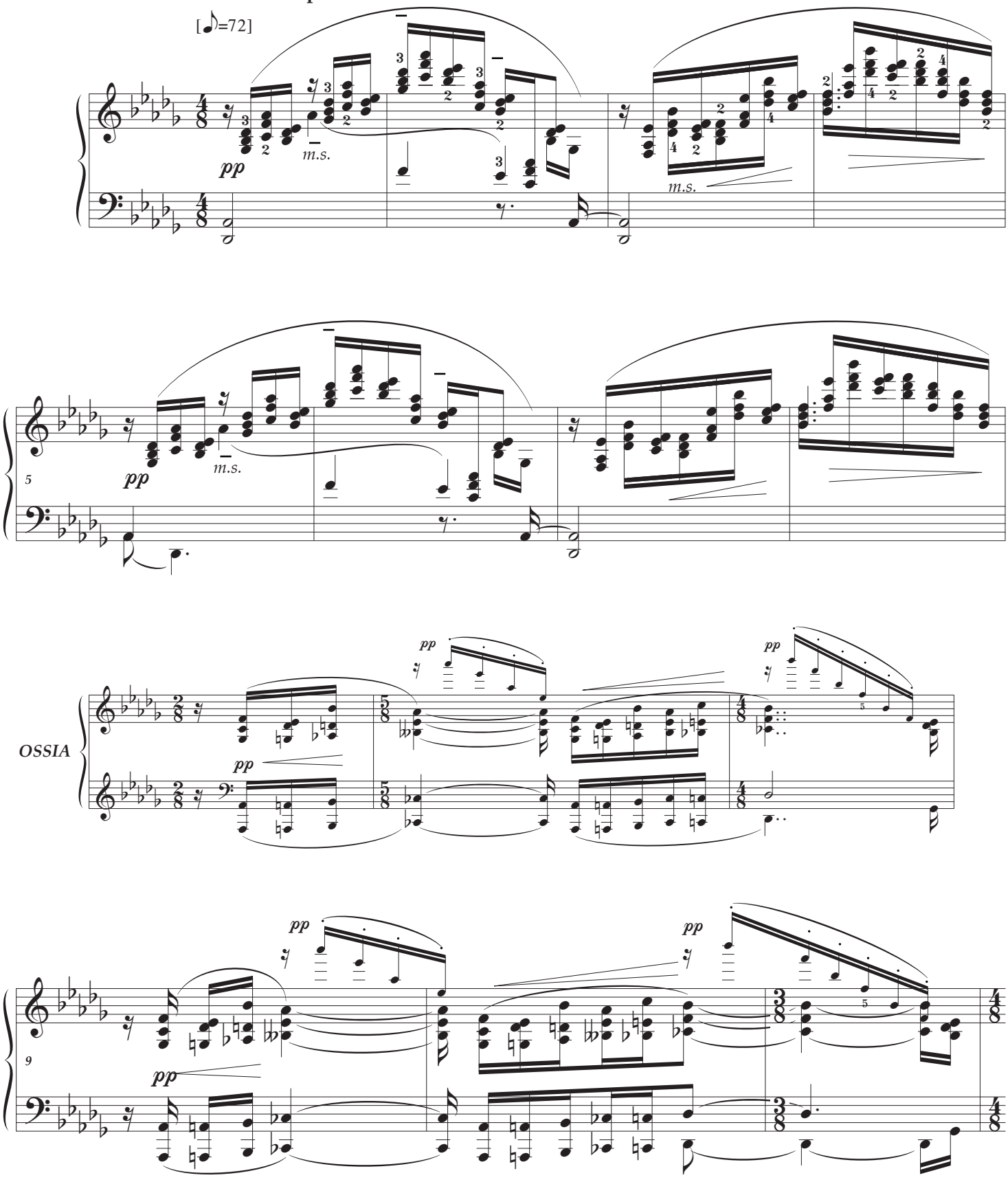
(Reflections in the water)

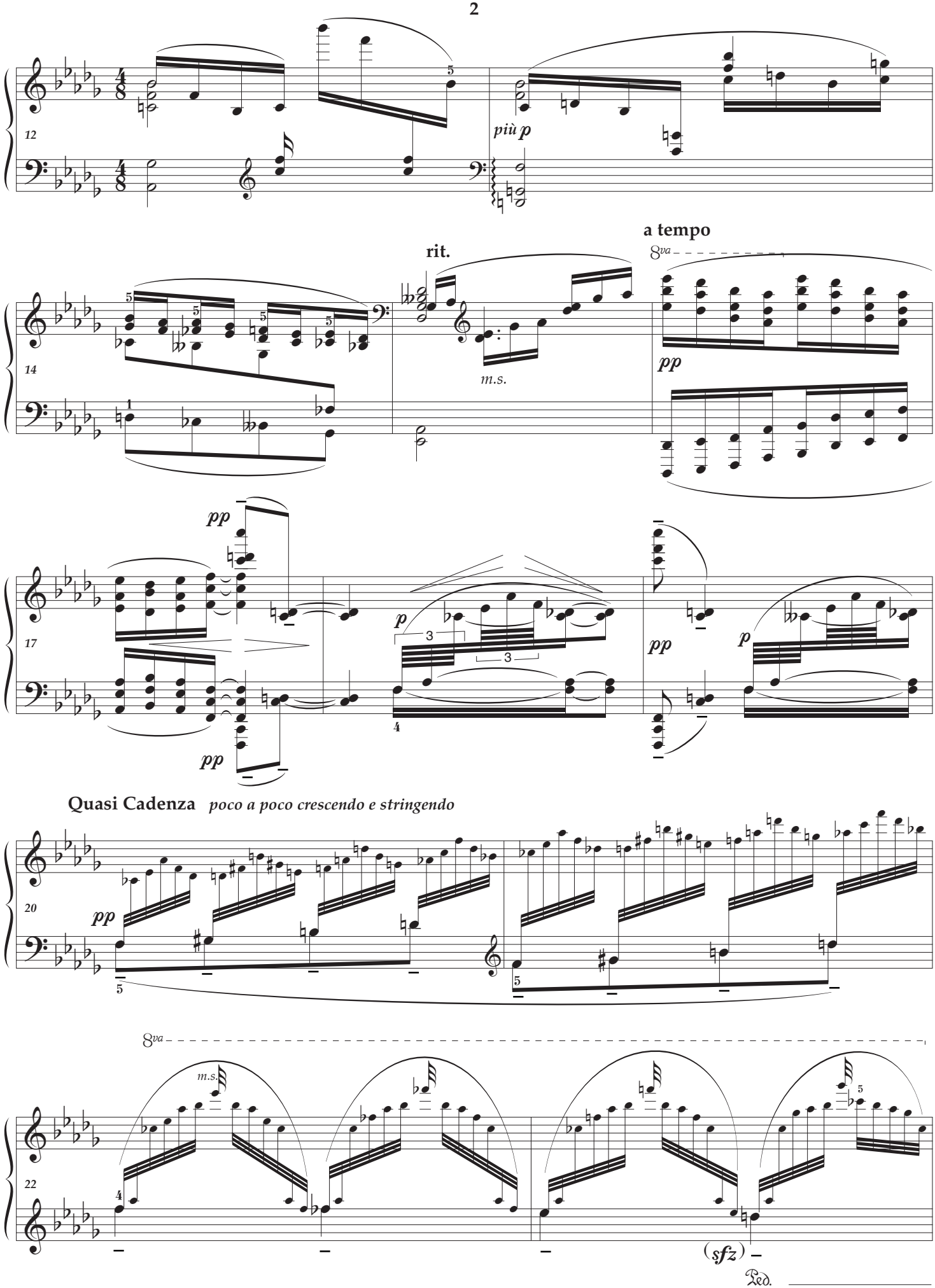
The French impressionists were obsessed by water... rightly so, as it is such an obvious subject for reflection. Even when a body of water is calm, it is not still, and as the wind caresses it ceaselessly it becomes a living and breathing essence — presenting an admirable challenge for the artist, composer and interpreter.

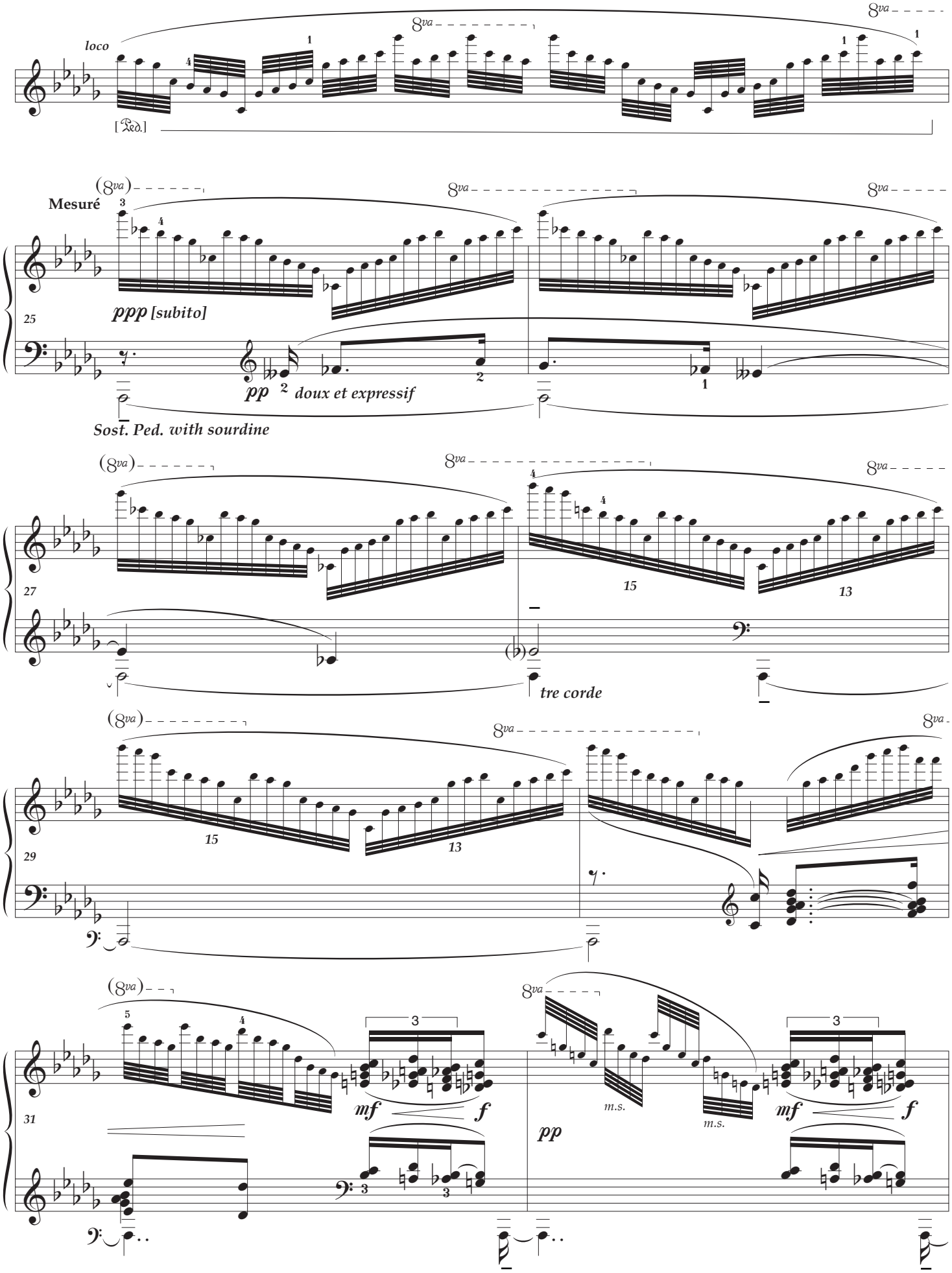
Published in 1905, this opening piece of the first book of *Images* demonstrates Debussy's extraordinary sense of colour in sound, his pianistic imagination unbound by the harmonies of his time. As Edward Lockspeiser pointed out — "one can only imagine the impressions retained by the 17-year-old composer, of months spent at the dramatic *Château de Chenonceau* rising from the waters".

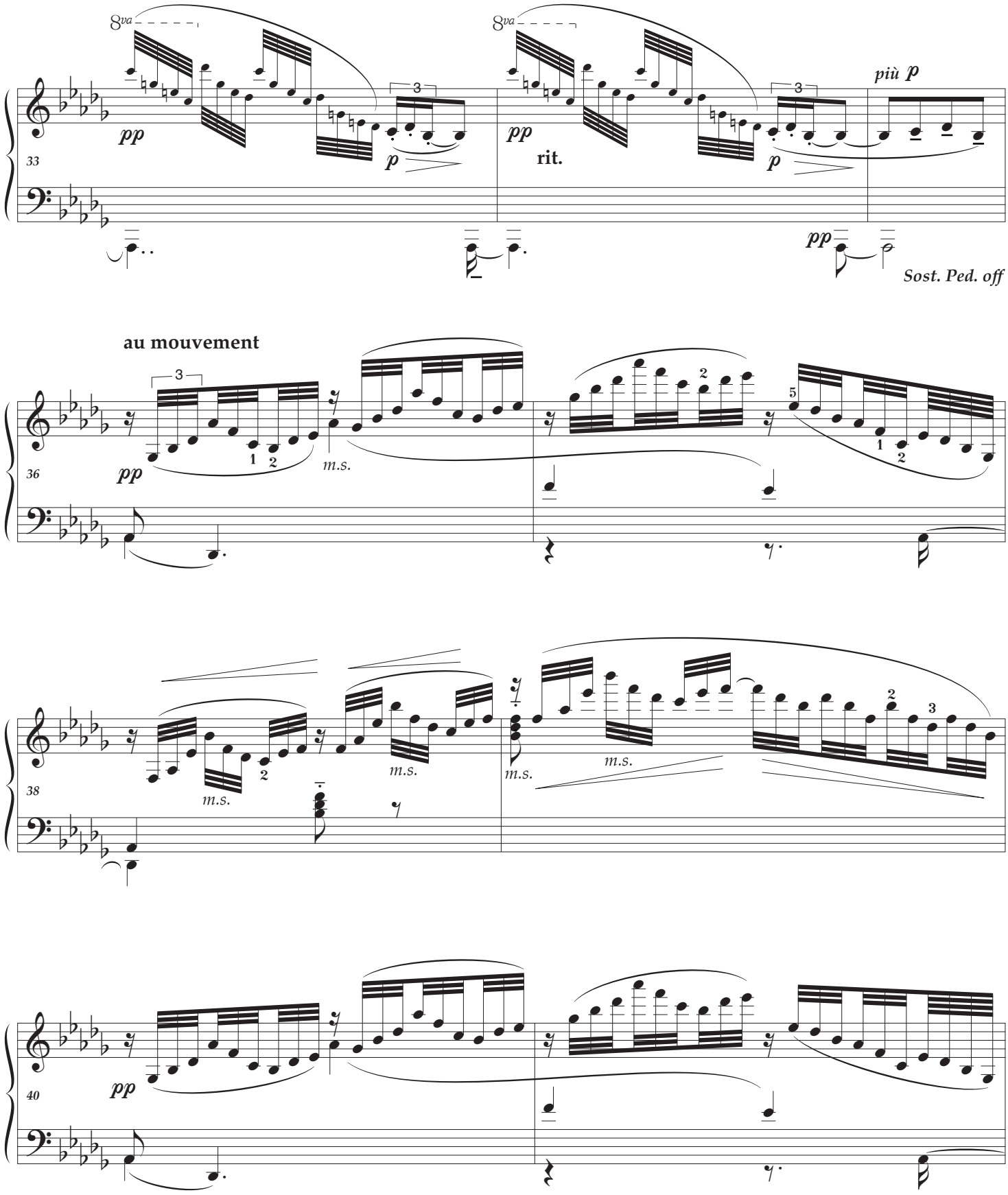
Reflets dans l'eau

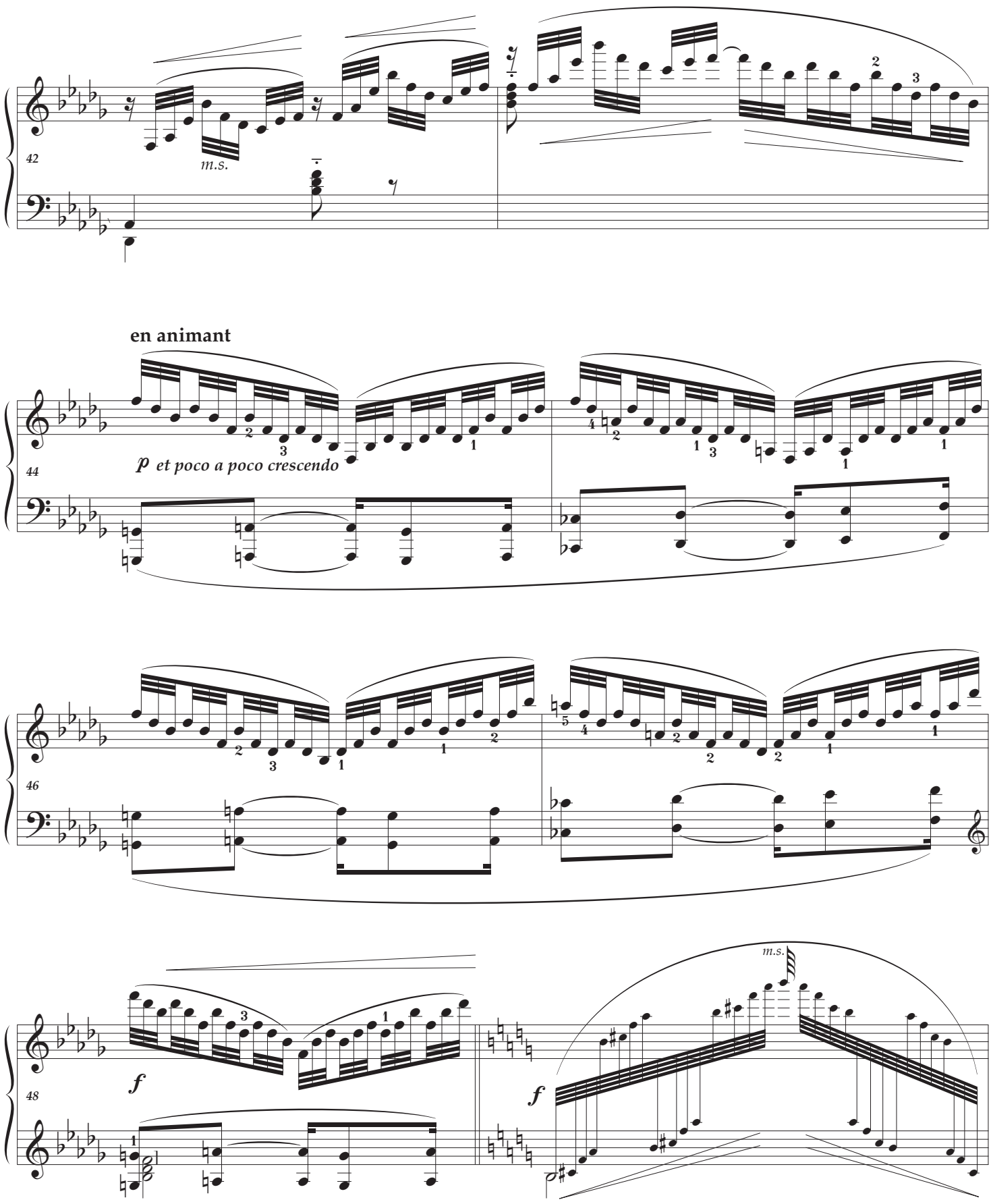
Andantino molto (tempo rubato)

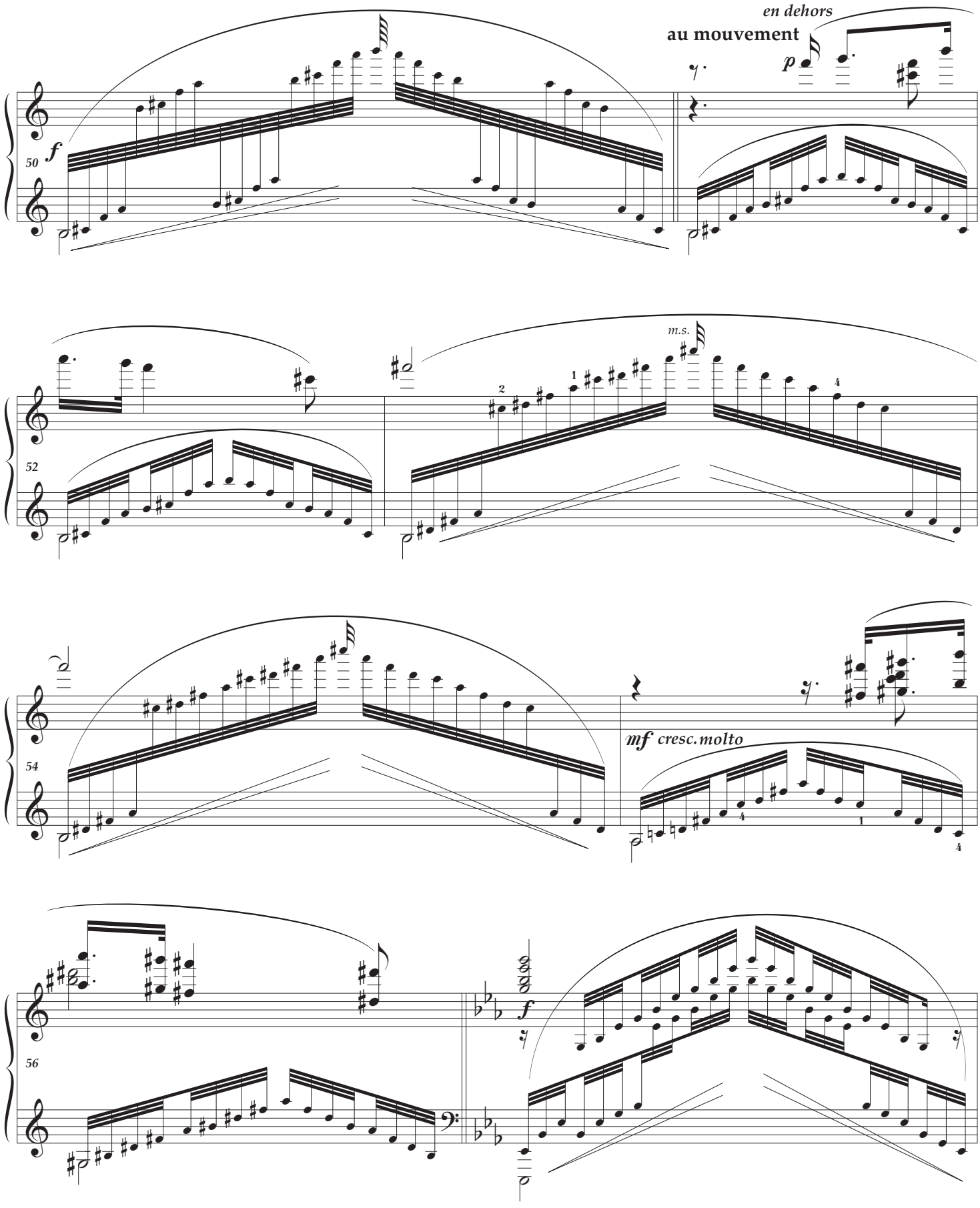


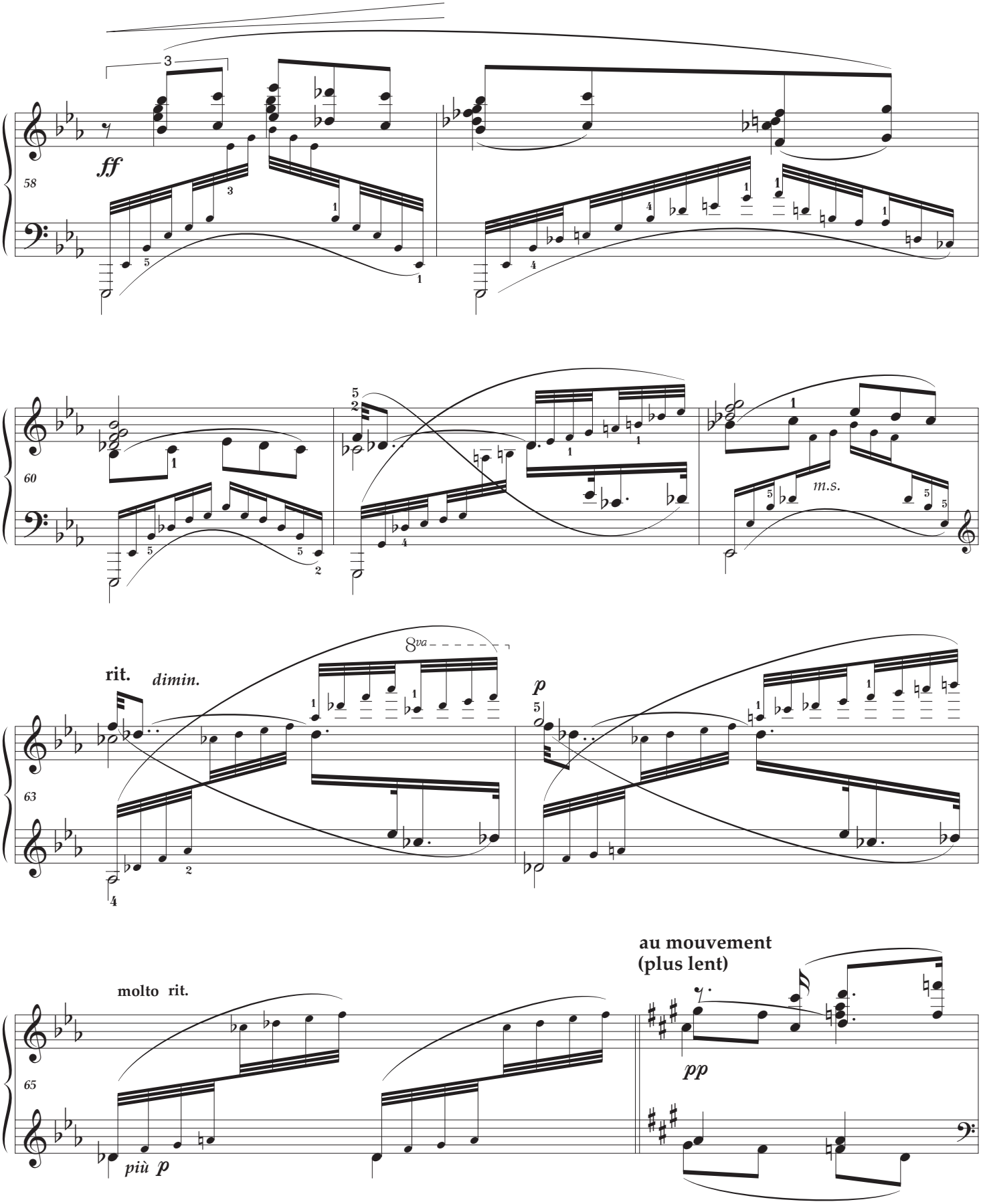

più p
rit.
a tempo
8va
m.s.
pp
p
Quasi Cadenza poco a poco crescendo e stringendo
(sfz)
Ped.

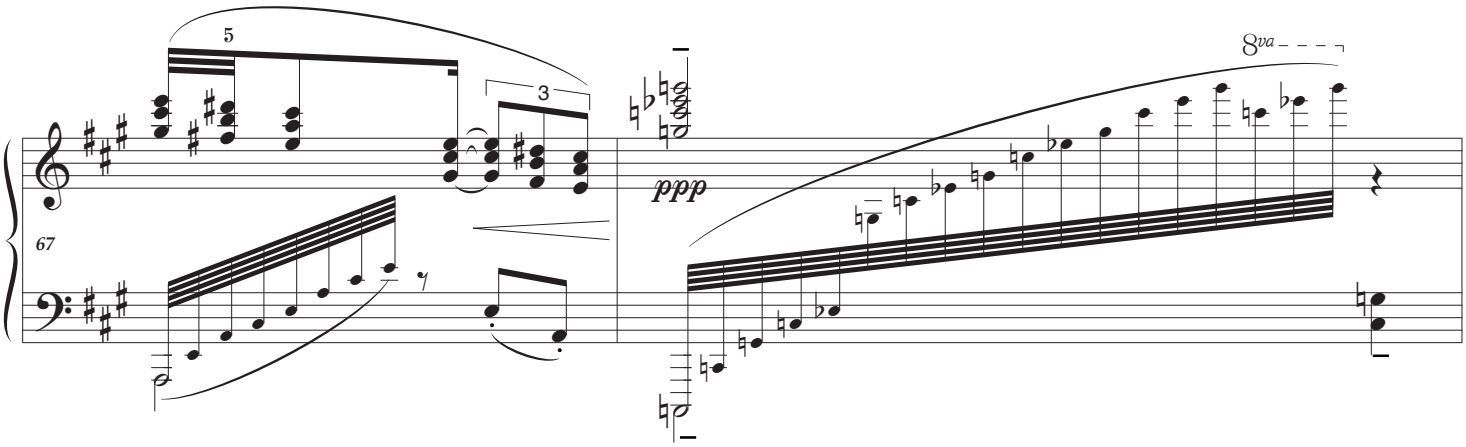

loco
[Ped.]
Mesuré
ppp [subito]
pp doux et expressif
Sost. Ped. with sourdine
tre corde
mf
f
pp
m.s.

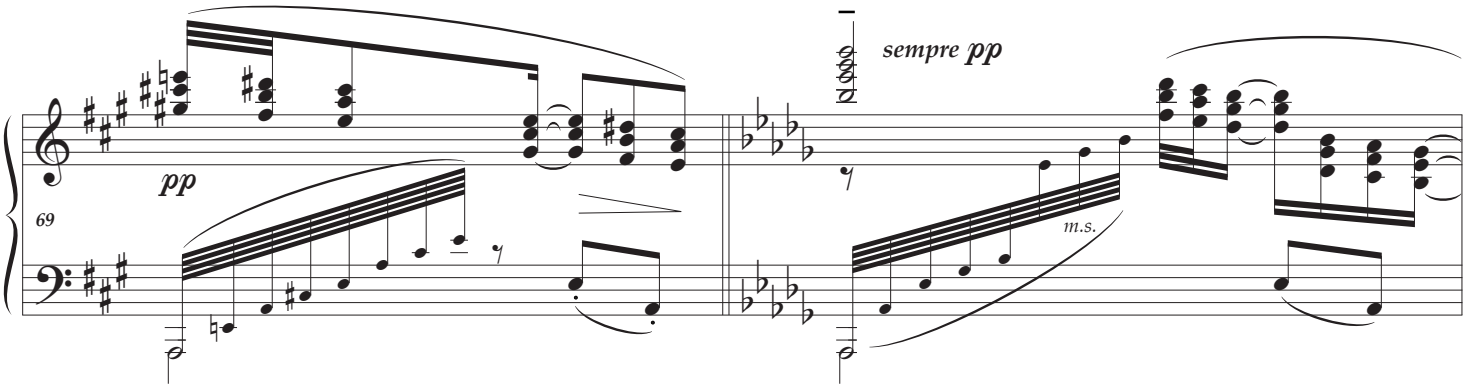

8va
8va
pp
p
pp
rit.
p
più p
pp
Sost. Ped. off
au mouvement
pp
m.s.
m.s.
m.s.
m.s.
m.s.
pp


42
m.s.
en animant
44
p et poco a poco crescendo
46
48
f
f
m.s.

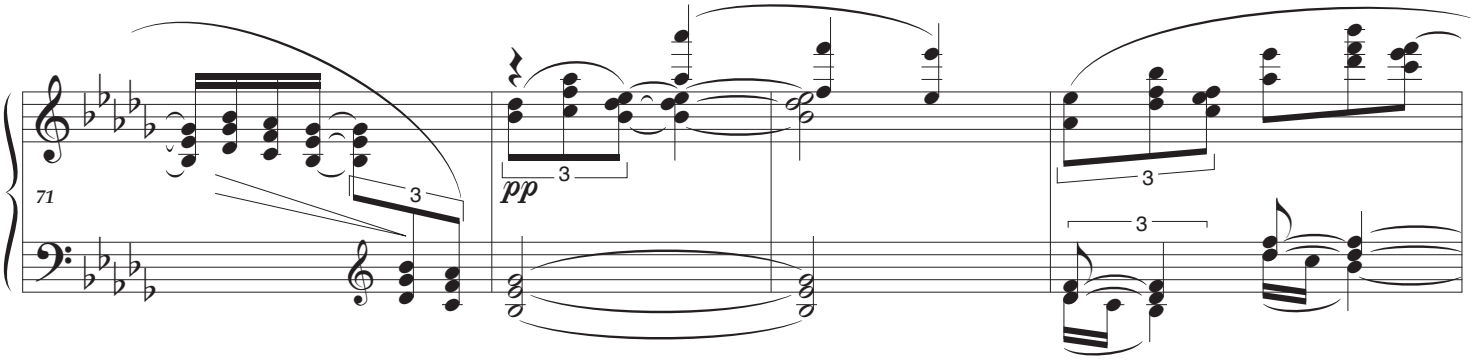

en dehors
au mouvement
50
f
p
52
m.s.
54
mf cresc. molto
56
f

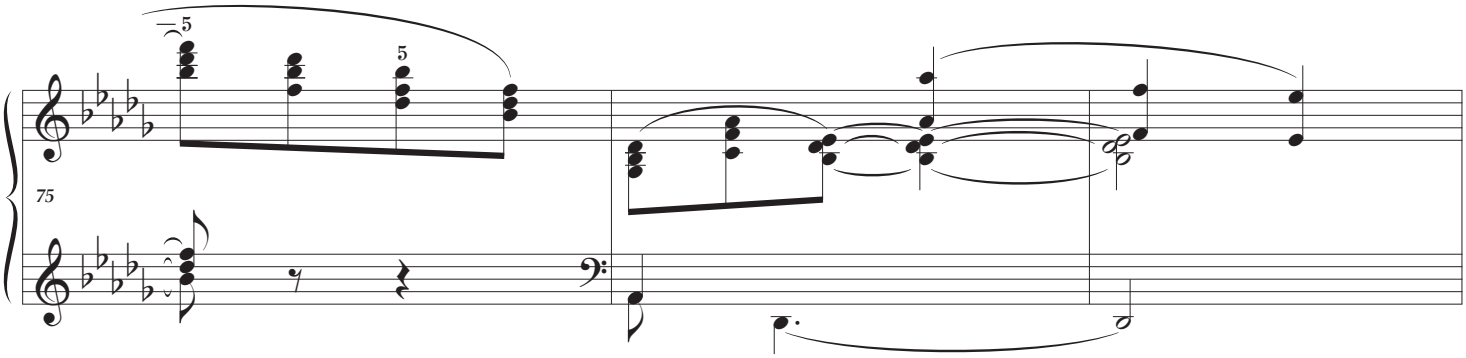

ff
58
60
m.s.
rit.
dimin.
8va
63
p
molto rit.
più p
au mouvement
(plus lent)
pp
65

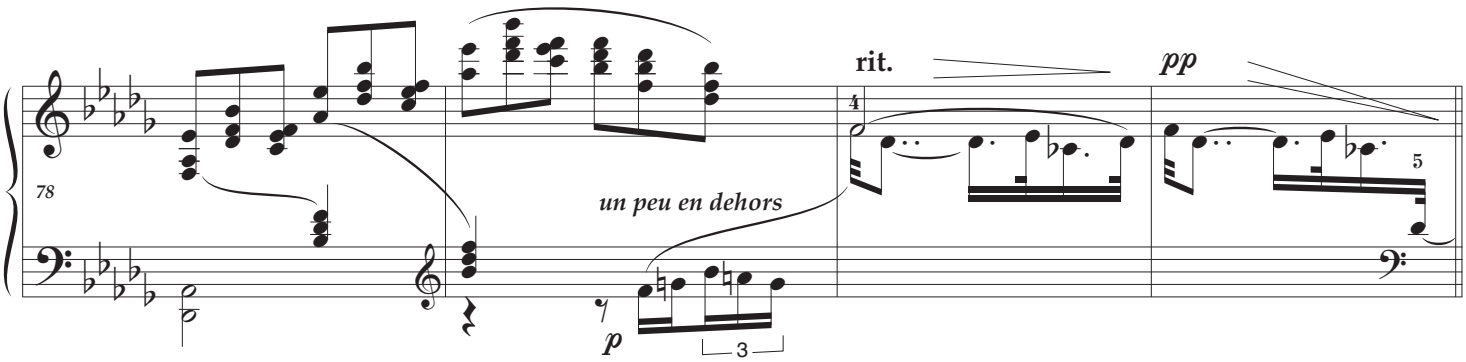




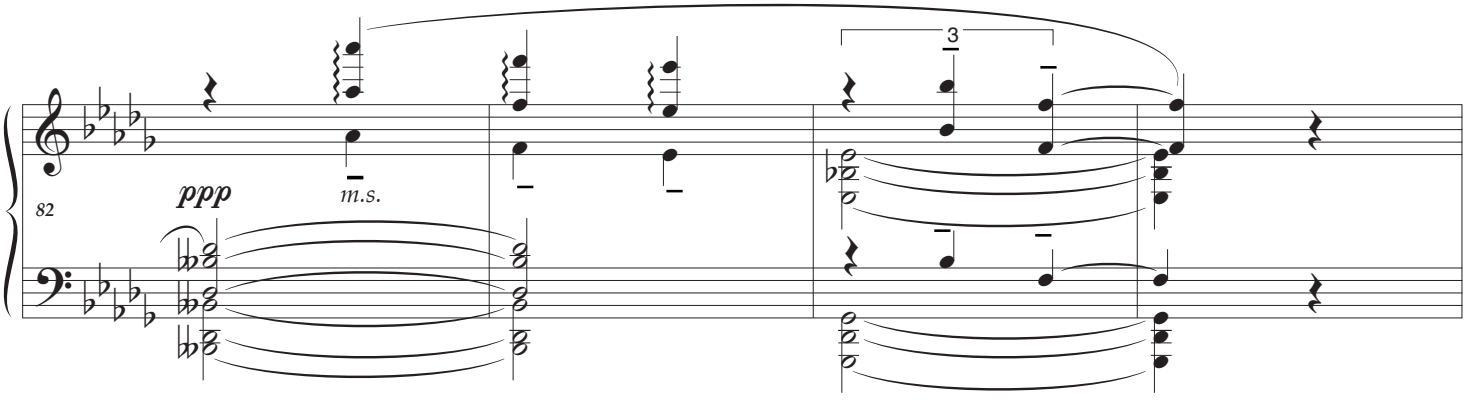
Tempo I **(en retenant jusqu'à la fin)**

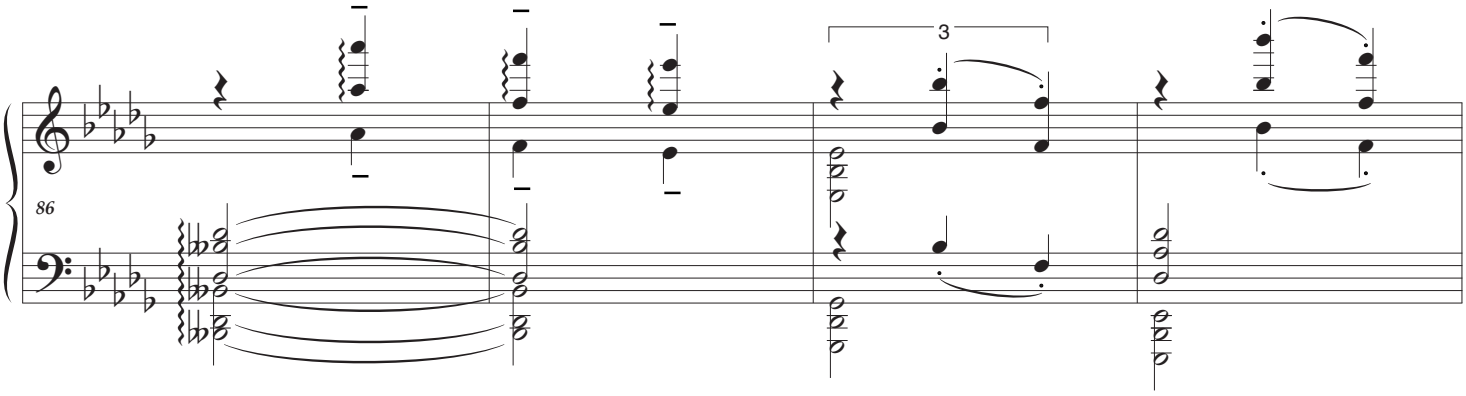


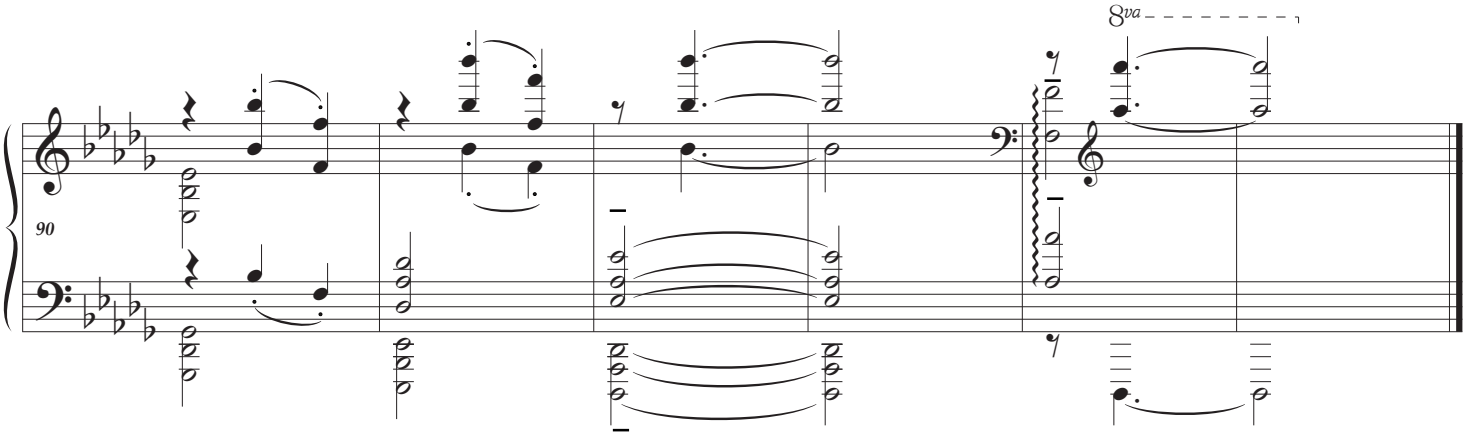




Lent **(dans une sonorité harmonieuse et lointaine)**







[*half* Ped.]

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

Duration: 5 minutes

- Debussy gives no metronome speeds
- All pedalling is editorial
- None of the sostenuto pedal suggestions are attributed to Debussy. With practice it is possible to combine the sostenuto* and soft pedals with the left foot. However, the result should seldom be "clean", bearing in mind that the overall goal should be "pianistic" and the impressionist harmonies as within a dreamlike "cloud".
- 2-4 The hand distribution has been altered here to help the chords glide very, very softly.
- 9-11 — When I first studied *Reflets dans l'eau* I was transported by the original harmonies and extraordinary impressionism, but I must admit to having been mystified by the metre and bar-lines; I have therefore included an ossia showing my own reflections on this subject.
- 23 — after the earlier *poco a poco crescendo, as* there is no further dynamic, I have suggested a ***sf*** and pedal here. The ***ppp*** subito (editorial) sourdine coupled with the sostenuto pedal can be held until the end of the pedal point in bar 35.
- 30 The RH accompaniment has been slightly *re-moulded*

---

en animant	*becoming more animated*
en retenant jusqu'à la fin	*slowing down until the end*
un peu en dehors	*slightly in relief*
dans une sonorité harmonieuse et lointaine	*with harmonious tone as from afar*

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II *Hommage à Rameau*

(Tribute to Rameau)

Jean-Phillipe Rameau
1683 - 1764

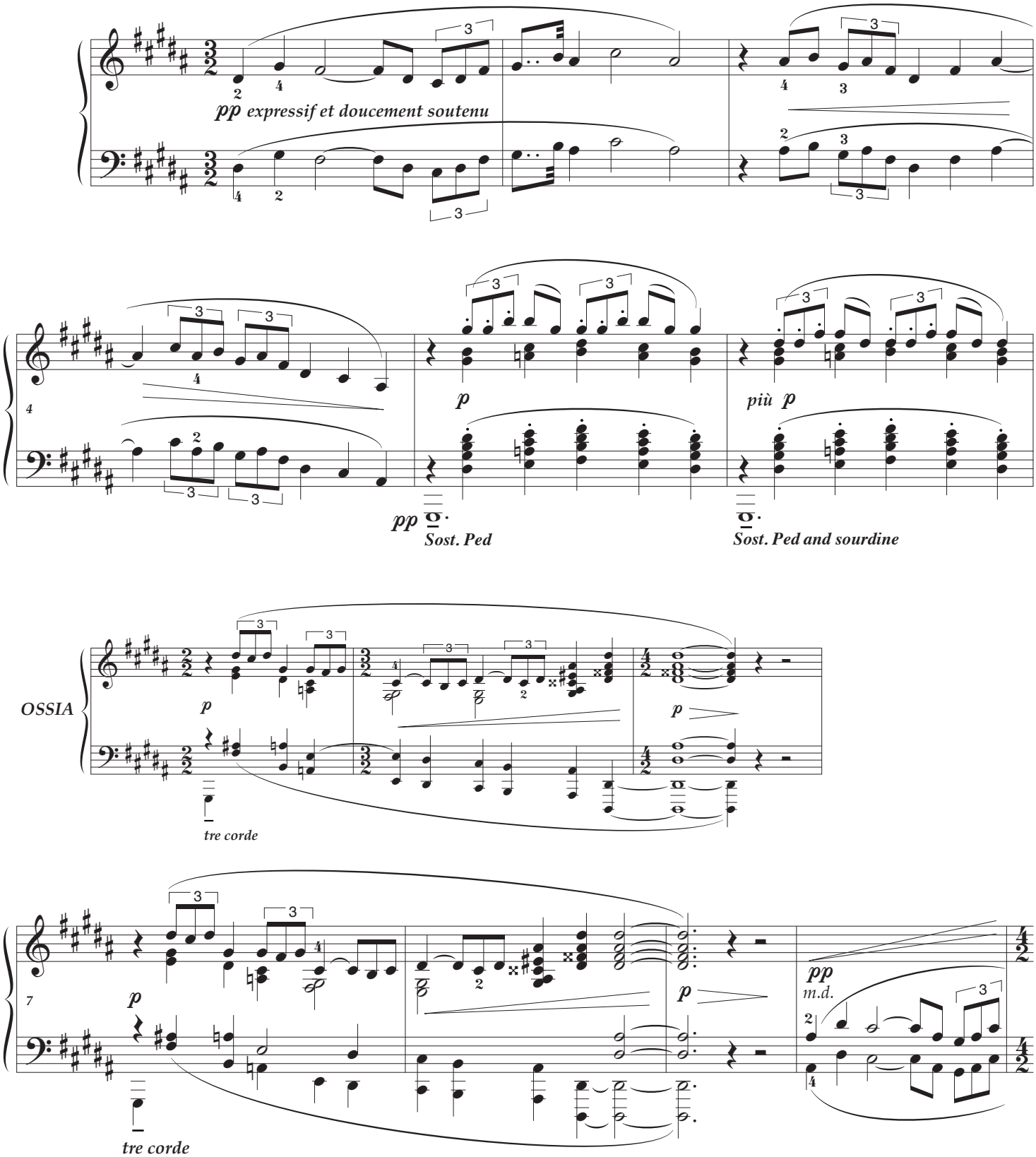
The title of this second piece is somewhat curious, to say the least. It is true that Debussy was editing a Rameau score at the time and this is a tribute to a French composer of a bygone age. Then there is the initial tempo direction "in the style of a sarabande but not in strict time". Frankly, apart from the choice of triple time and tied notes, there is nothing here resembling the dance's disreputable New World origins nor the slow and dignified dance it became in 17th century France.

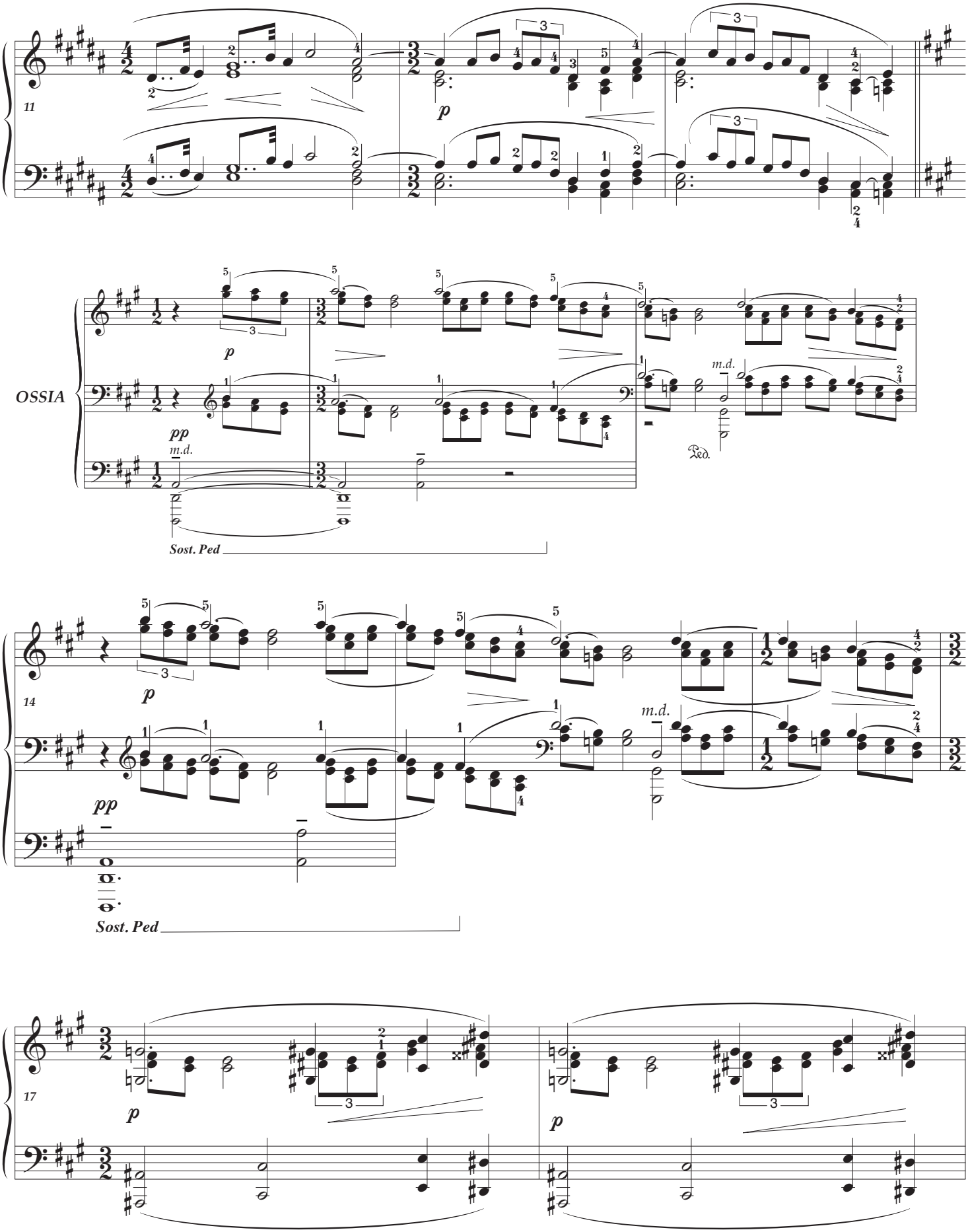
That being said, the piece is quite wonderful, displaying an extraordinary wealth of imagination and summoning much of Debussy's wide harmonic experience. I love in particular the magical moment at 31, the more animated section from 43, followed by a most dramatic, unexpected mysterious ostinato at 48. After the exotic impressionism of *Reflets dans l'eau*, here we find a personal and impassioned hypnotically slow movement that makes all the years of pianistic study very worthwhile. A work of tension and power covering a very wide range of dynamics and emotion.

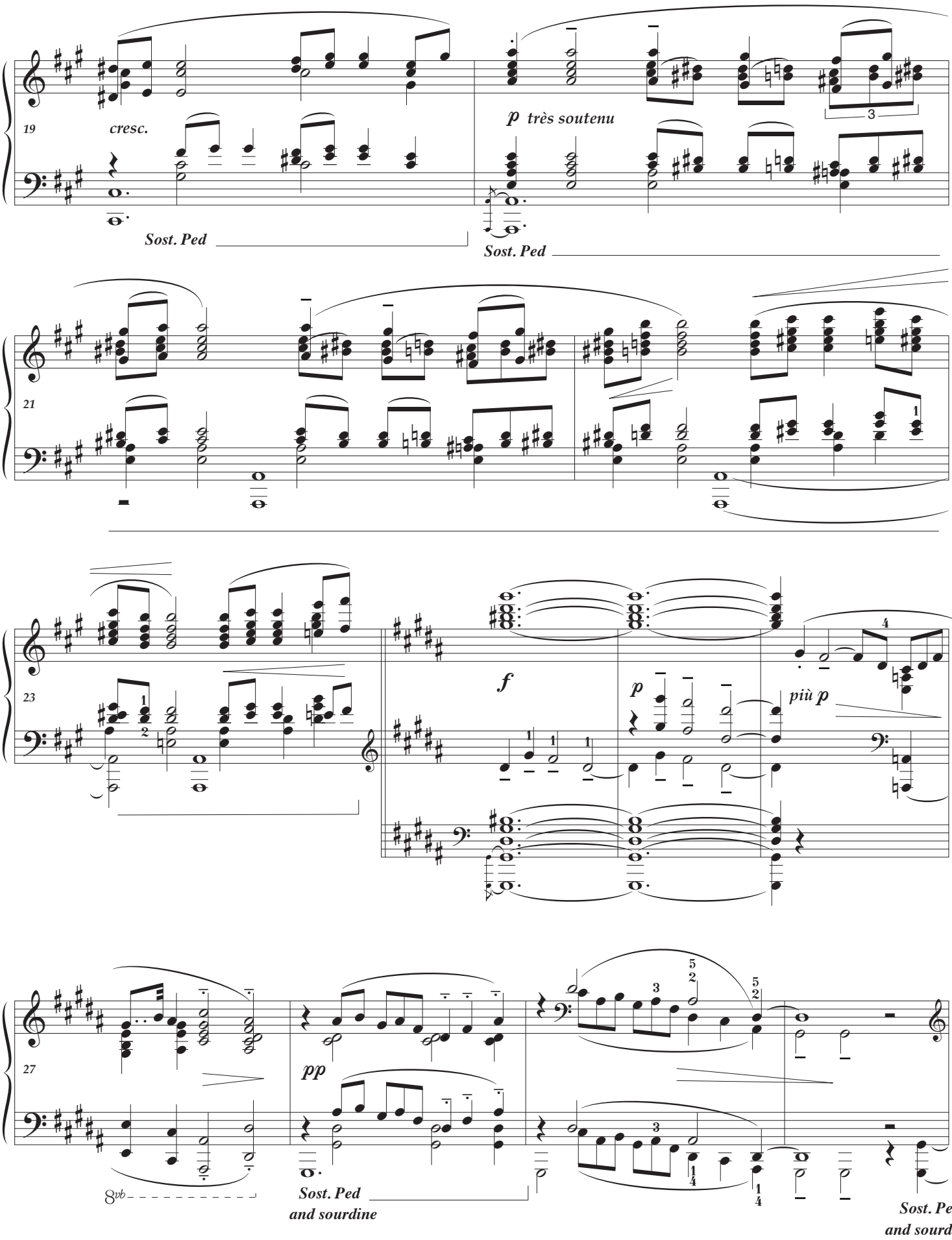
Hommage à Rameau

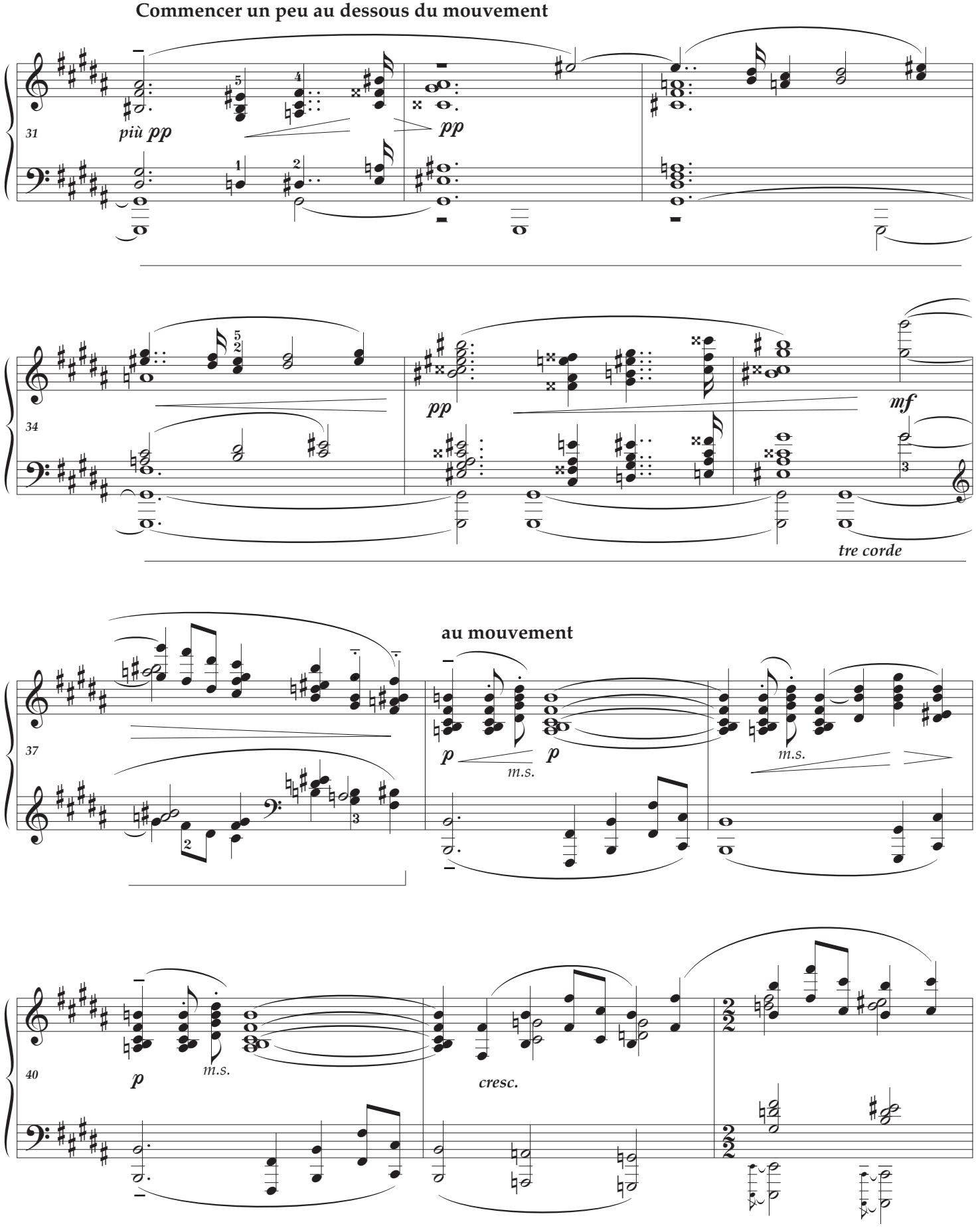
Lent et grave [𝅗𝅥 = 33]

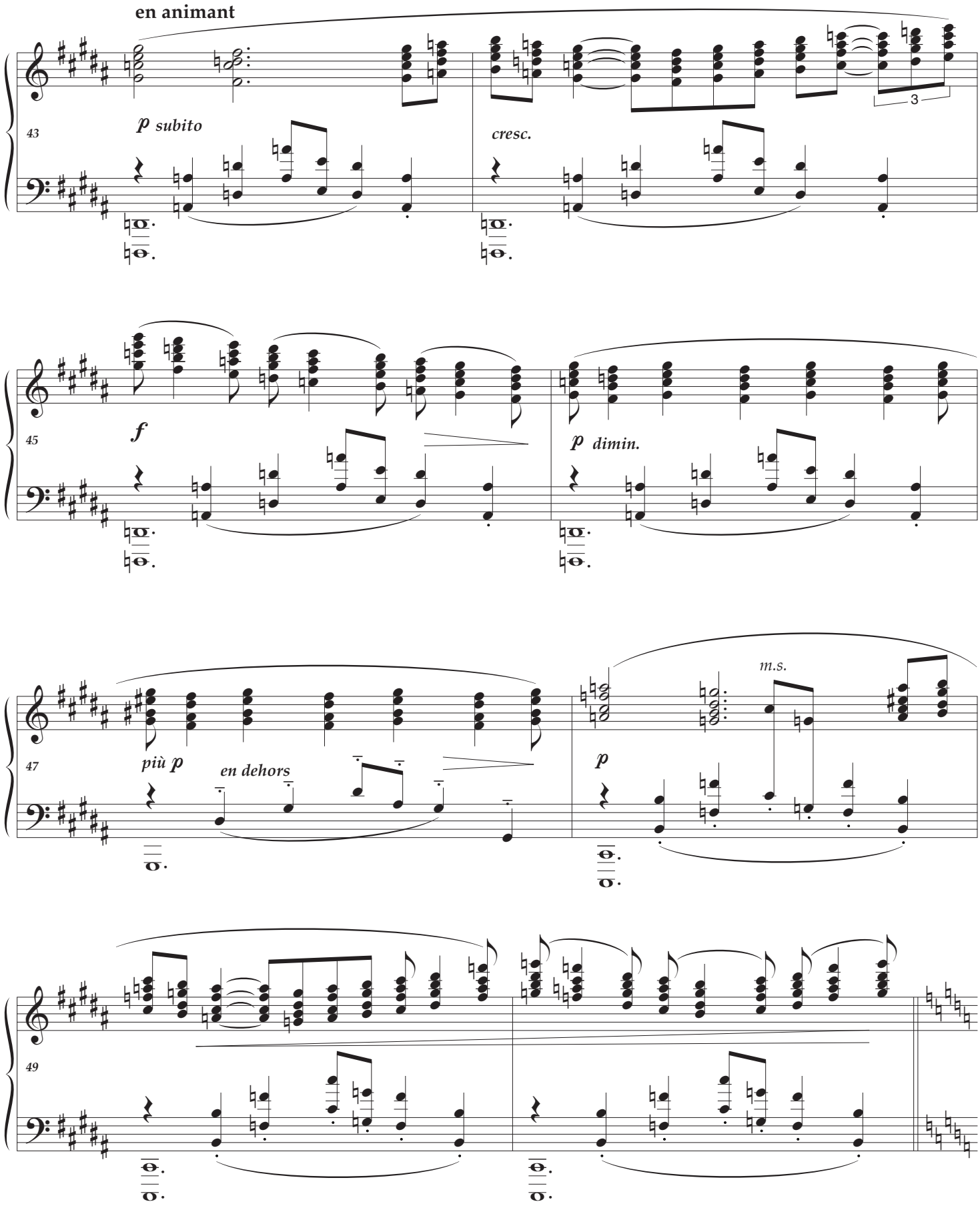
(dans le style d'une Sarabande mais sans rigueur)

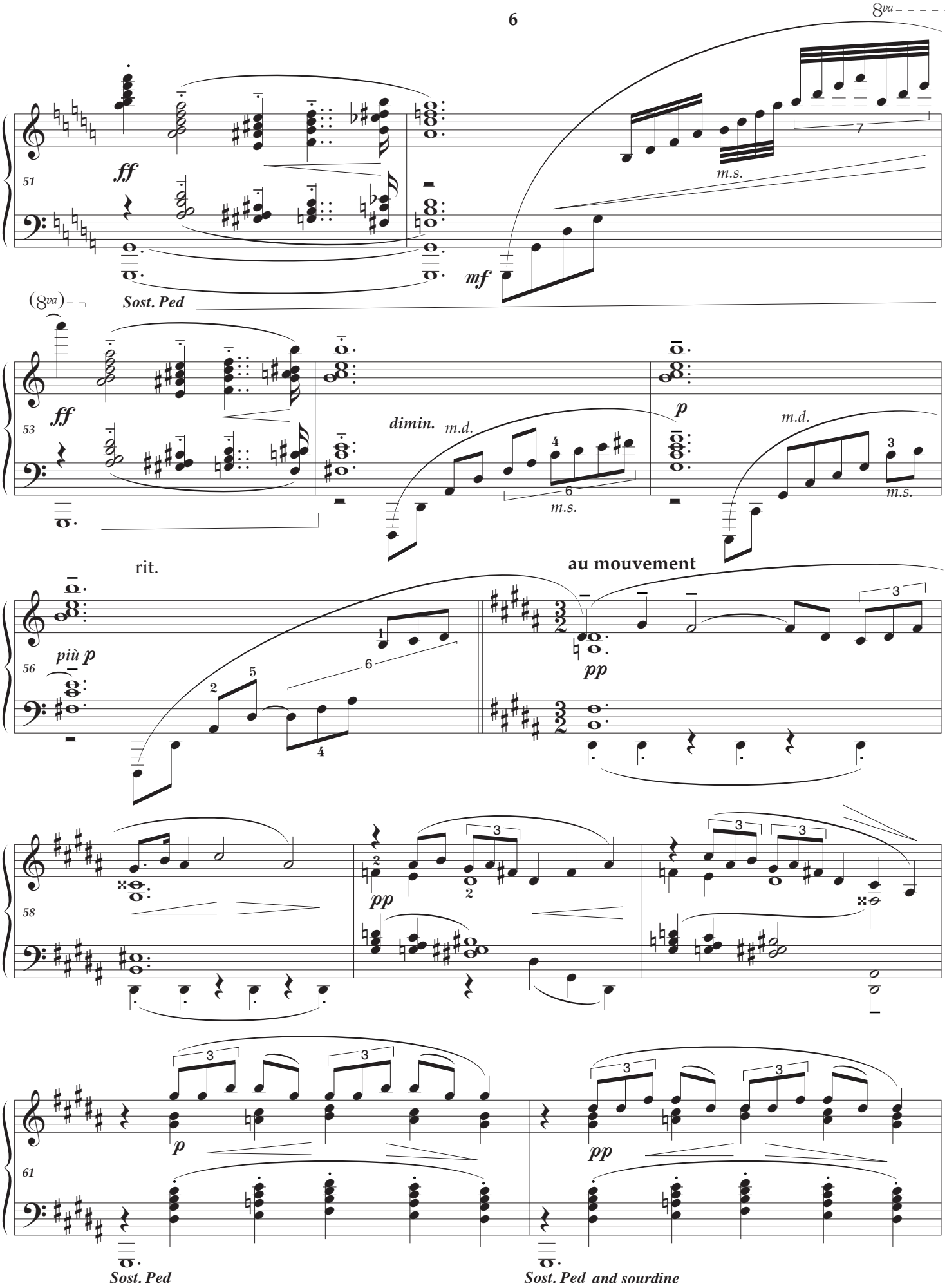


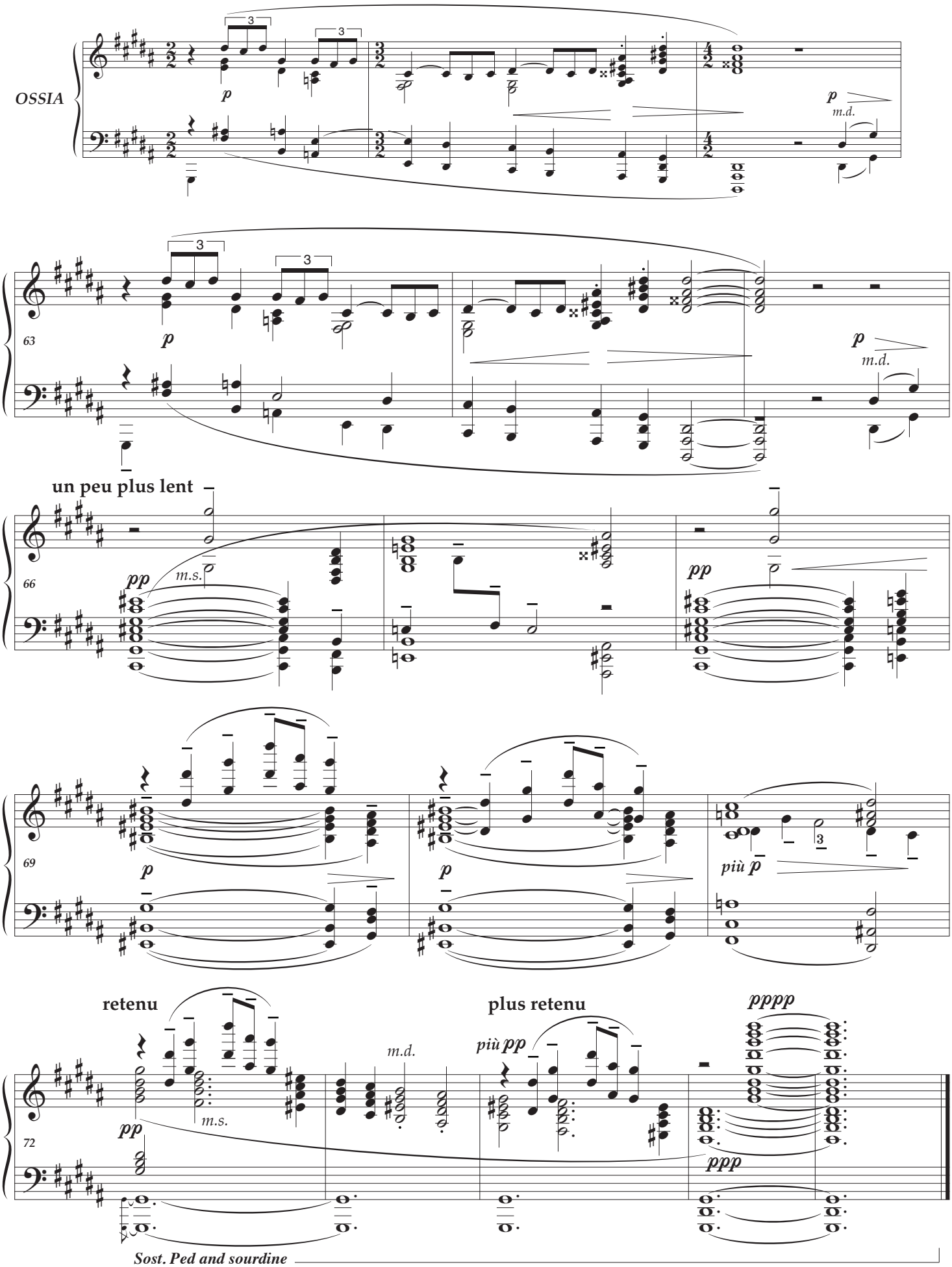

11
p
OSSIA
pp
m.d.
Sost. Ped
14
p
pp
m.d.
Sost. Ped
17
p
p


19
cresc.
p très soutenu
Sost. Ped
Sost. Ped
21
23
f
p
più p
27
pp
8vb
Sost. Ped
and sourdine
Sost. Ped
and sourdine


Commencer un peu au dessous du mouvement
31
più pp
pp
34
pp
mf
tre corde
au mouvement
37
p
m.s.
p
m.s.
40
p
m.s.
cresc.


en animant
43
p subito
cresc.
3
45
f
p dimin.
47
più p
en dehors
p
m.s.
49


8va
51
ff
mf
m.s.
7
(8va)
Sost. Ped
53
ff
dimin.
m.d.
m.s.
p
m.d.
m.s.
rit.
au mouvement
56
più p
pp
58
pp
61
p
pp
Sost. Ped
Sost. Ped and sourdine


OSSIA
p
m.d.
63
un peu plus lent
pp
m.s.
66
69
più p
retenu
plus retenu
più pp
pppp
ppp
72
Sost. Ped and sourdine

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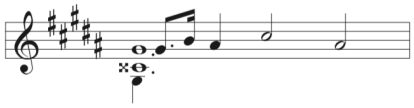
Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

Duration 3'45

- Debussy gives no metronome speeds
- All pedalling is editorial
- None of the sostenuto pedal suggestions are attributed to Debussy. With practice it is possible to combine the sostenuto and soft pedals with the left foot. However, the result should seldom be "clean", bearing in mind that the overall goal should be "pianistic" and the impressionist harmonies as within a dreamlike "cloud".
- 7-9, 14-16 and 63-65 ossias. When *Hommage à Rameau* was first placed on the music desk, I was transported by the deeply felt harmony and extraordinary power of the work, but I must admit to having been mystified by the metre and bar-lines; therefore ossias have been included showing my own reflections on the subject.
- 14-23 A major key signature
- 19 Try the sostenuto from the second RH quaver
- 42 second minim tenor B; I wonder whether Debussy considered replacing this with G sharp.
- 43 *p* presumably *subito*
- 58 Suggestion to hold the top G♯ :
- 61-62 dynamics altered to match 5 & 6



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dans le style d'une sarabande	in the style of a saraband
mais sans rigueur	but not in strict time
doucement soutenu	gently underlined
très soutenu	very underlined
commencer au dessous du mouvement	begin with a slower tempo
en animant un peu	becoming a little more animated
plus lent	slower
retenu	held back

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III *Mouvement*

(Movement)

The title of this third piece is somewhat ambiguous… a movement and something moving. Although perhaps more prosaic than I & II, the music is equally impressionist and original. Debussy stated that *Mouvement*, a *moto perpetuo which* could be mistaken for one of his studies, "must revolve itself in an implacable rhythm"; its animated energy possibly portrays an industrial and whirring workplace. There is a most original ending, which disappears into nothingness — "*presque plus rien*", as if the *mouvement* continues but it is now too far away to be heard.

Women working in factory
Sir John Lavery 1918

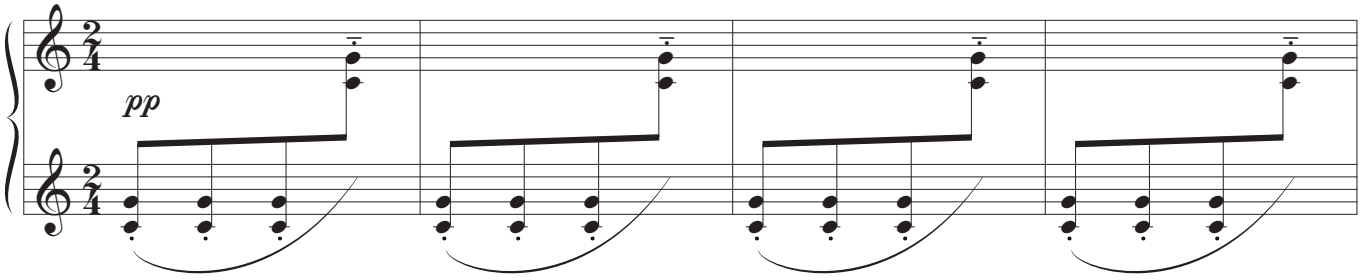
With shifting rhythms and key changes, the whole-tone scale and exotic harmonies, Debussy evokes a bustling and iridescent scene; it is so much easier to convey movement in music than in painting or poetry.

Cortot described the piece as illustrating light and joy in lively activity without hysteria…

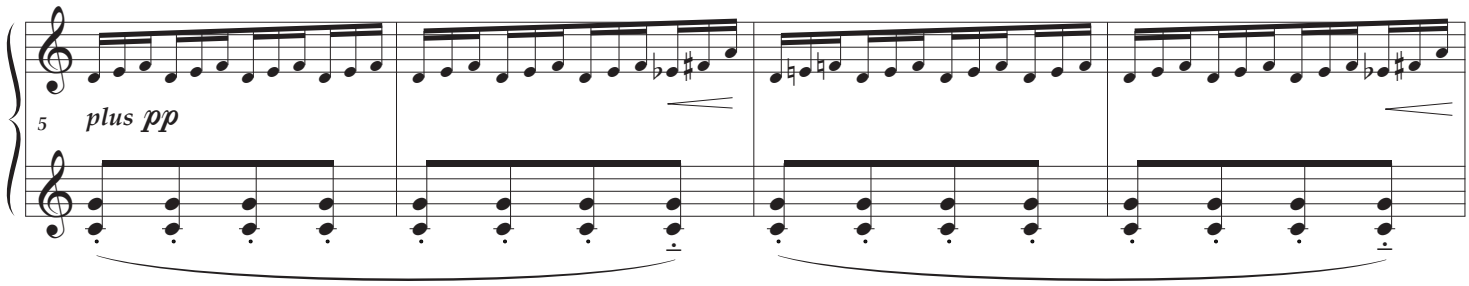
Apparently, *Mouvement*, along with *Reflets dans l'eau*, was in Debussy's mind as early as December 1901, when he played draft versions to Ricardo Viñes. The titles were not finalised until July 1903, when they were sent to the publisher Fromont.

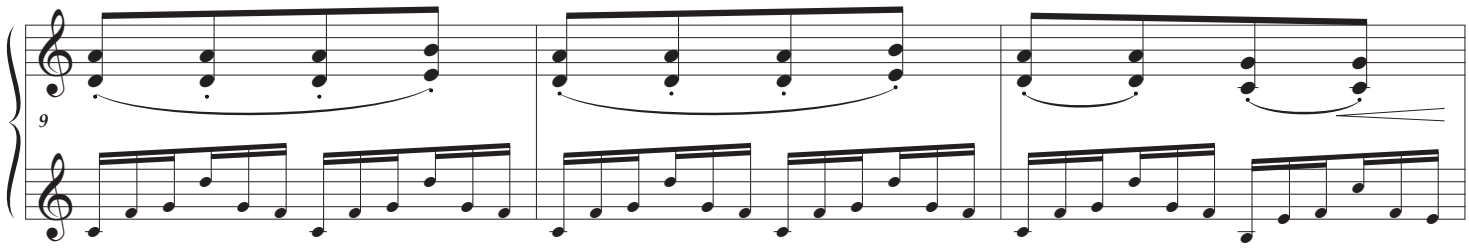
Mouvement

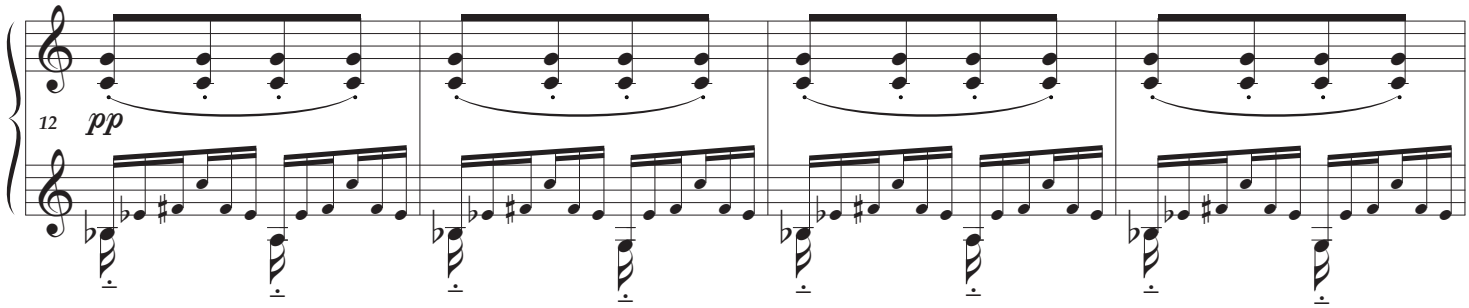
Animé **(avec une légèreté fantasque mais précise)** [♩= 96]

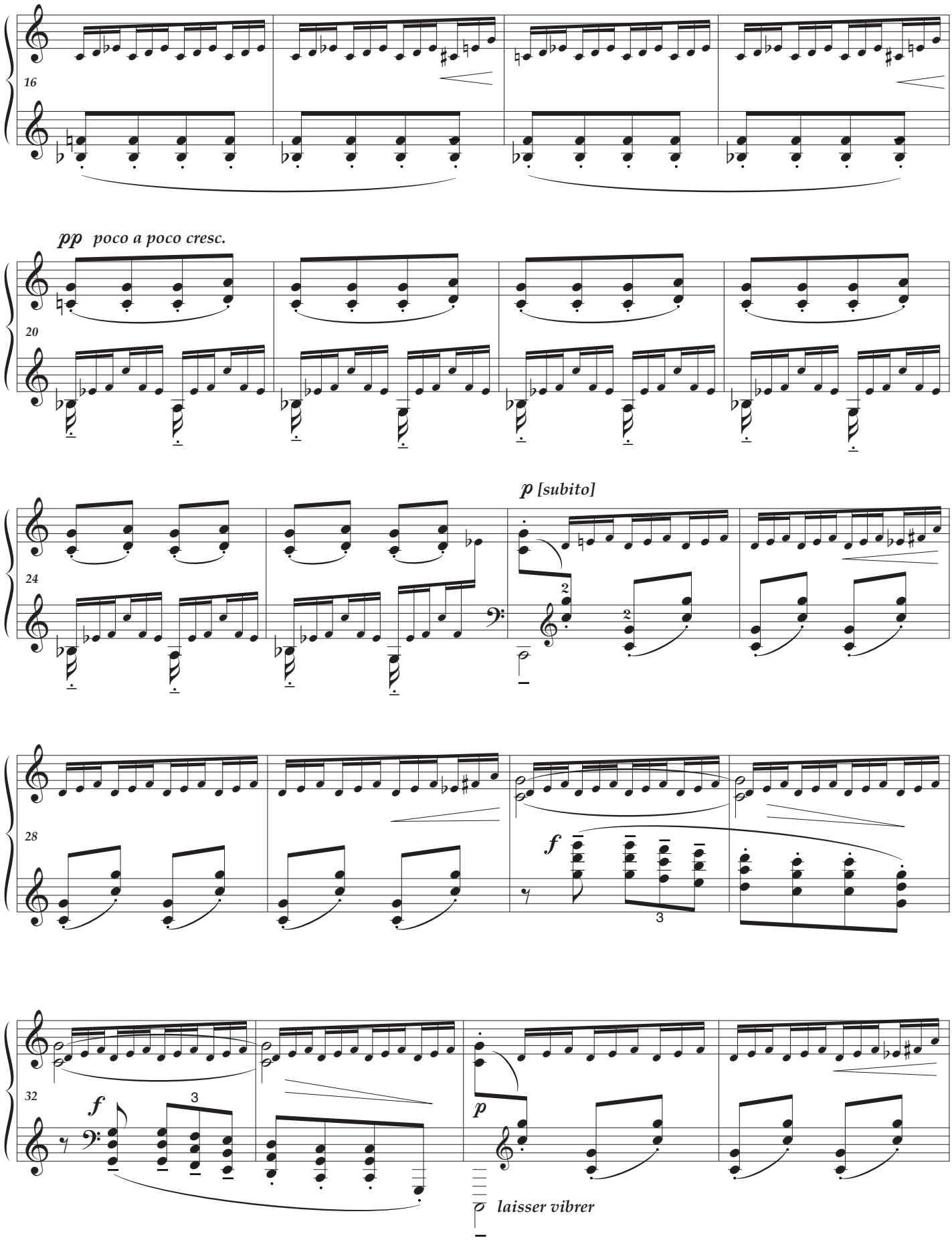


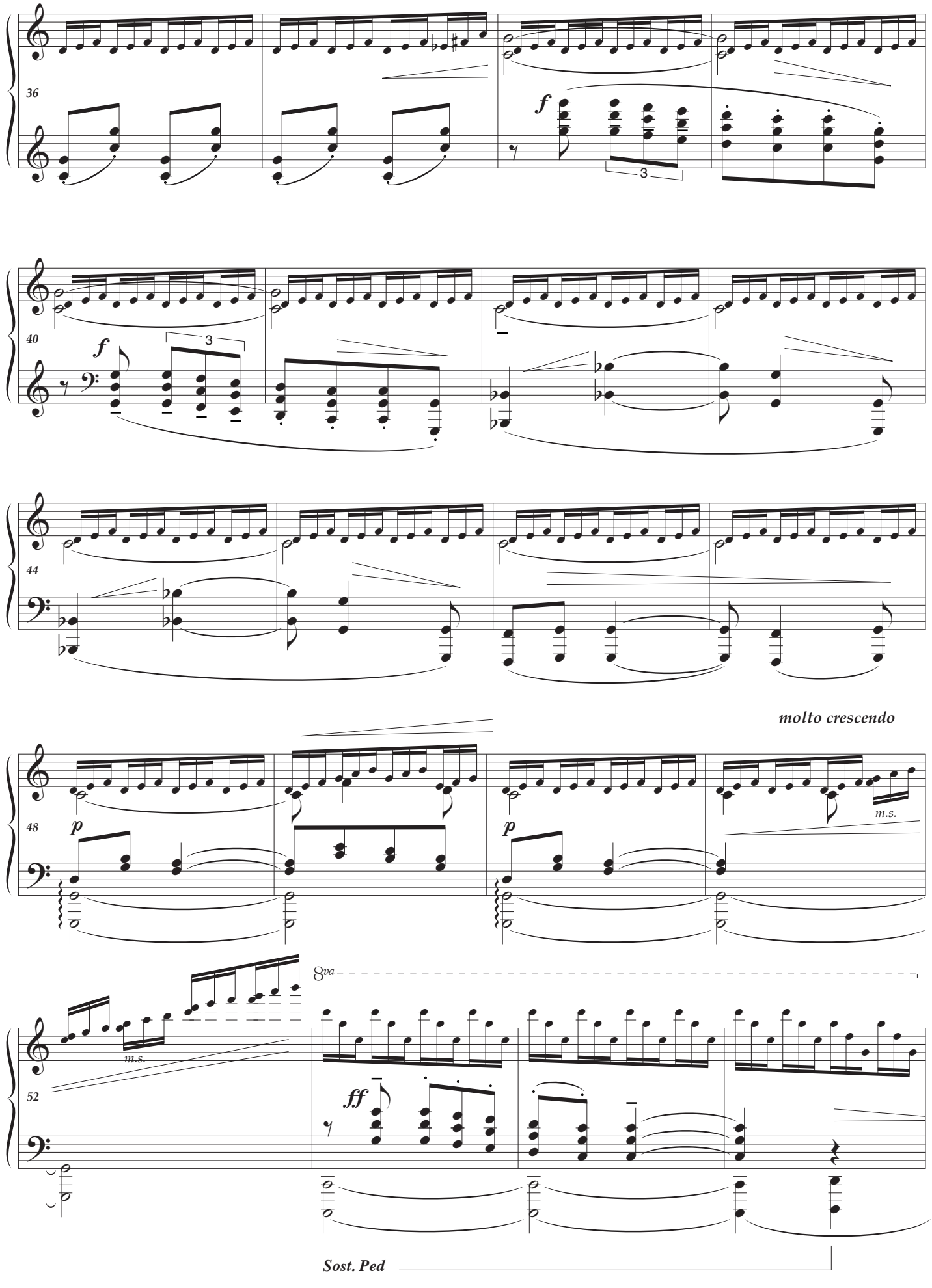
the semiquaver triplets more in evidence than the quavers

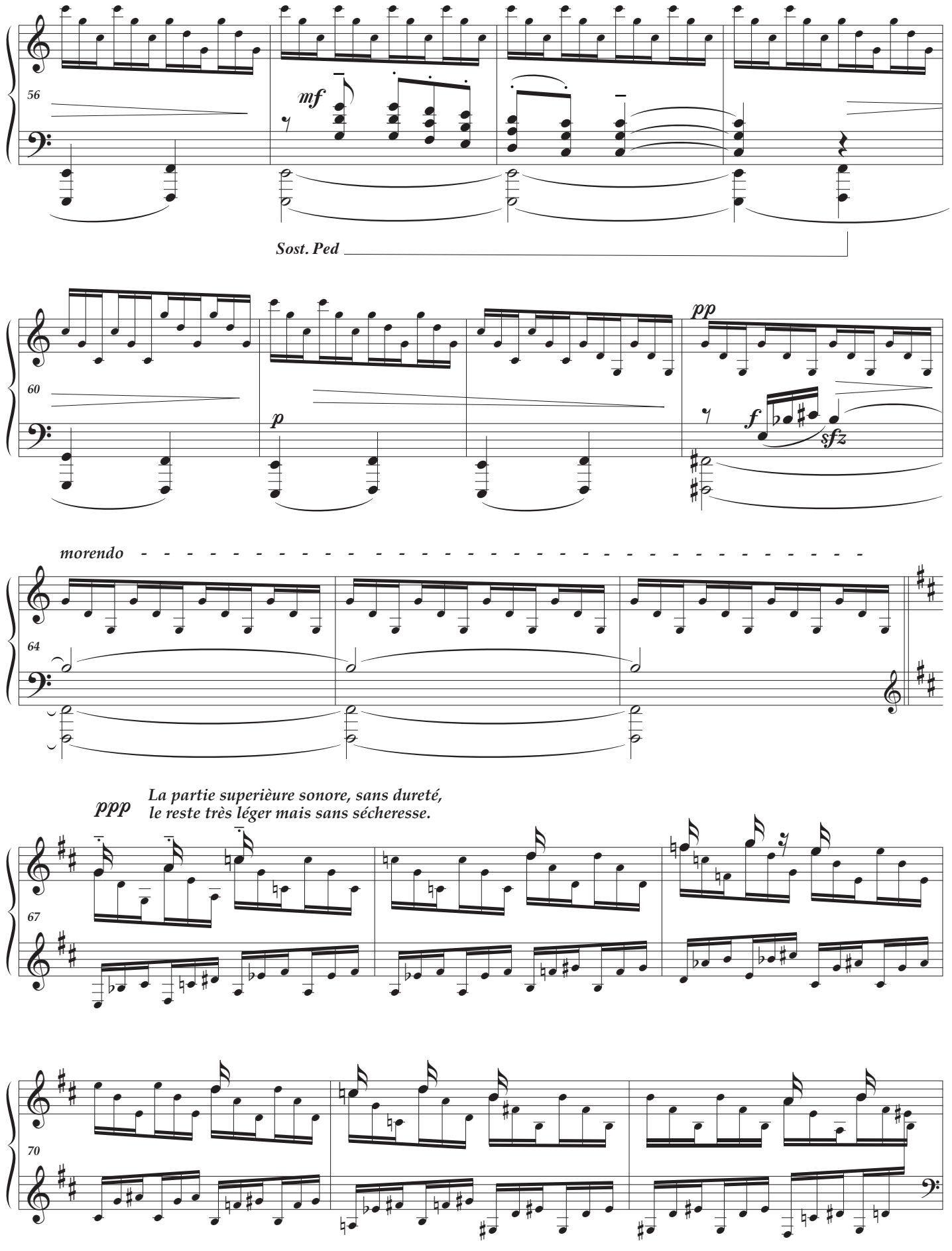


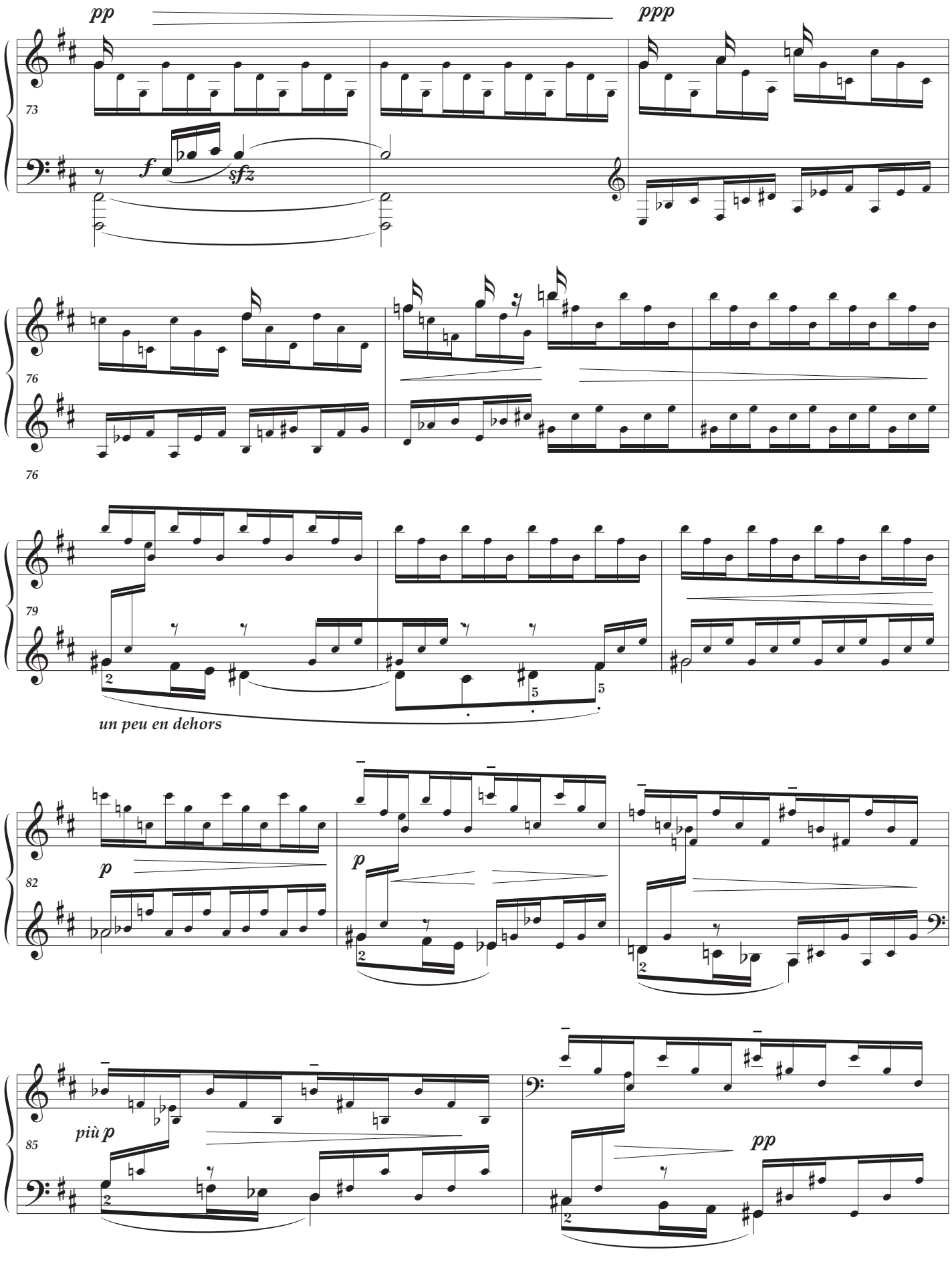


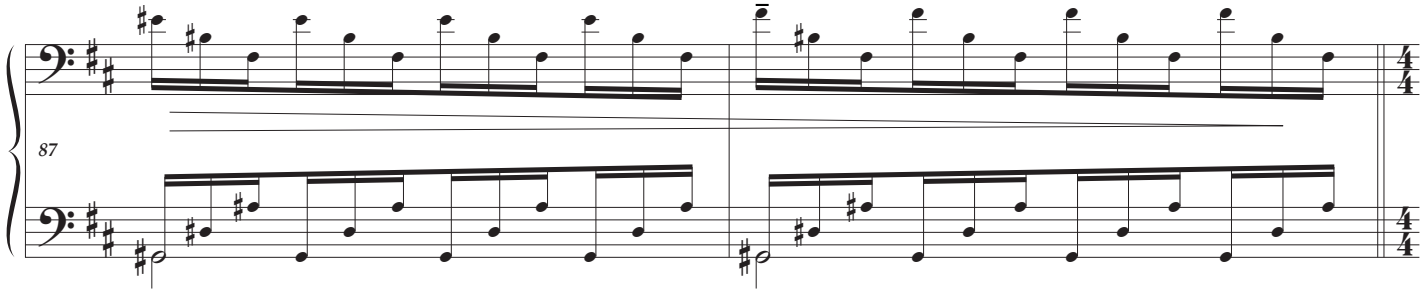



16
pp poco a poco cresc.
20
p [subito]
24
f
28
f
32
p
laisser vibrer

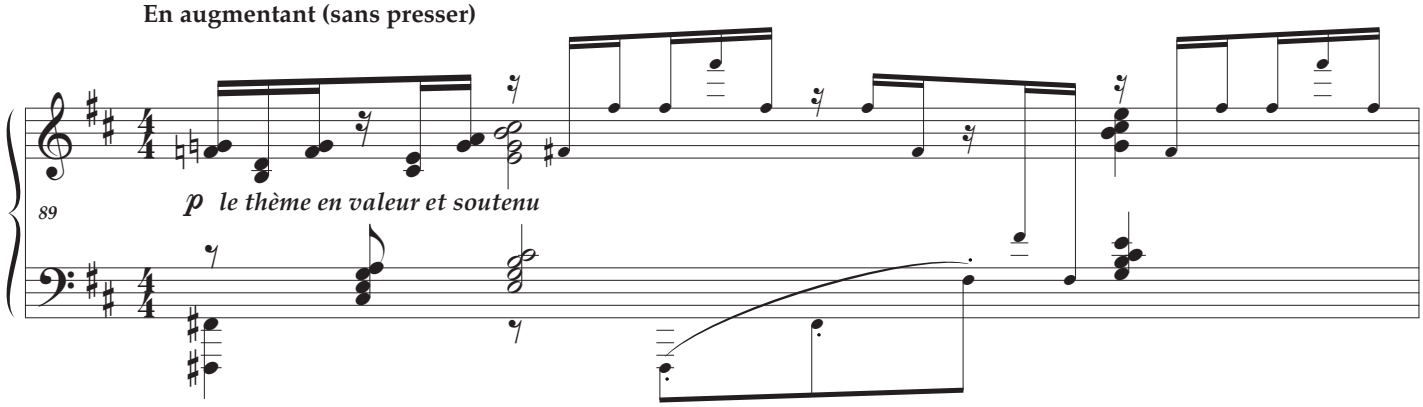

36
f
3
40
f
3
44
molto crescendo
48
p
p
m.s.
52
m.s.
8va
ff
Sost. Ped

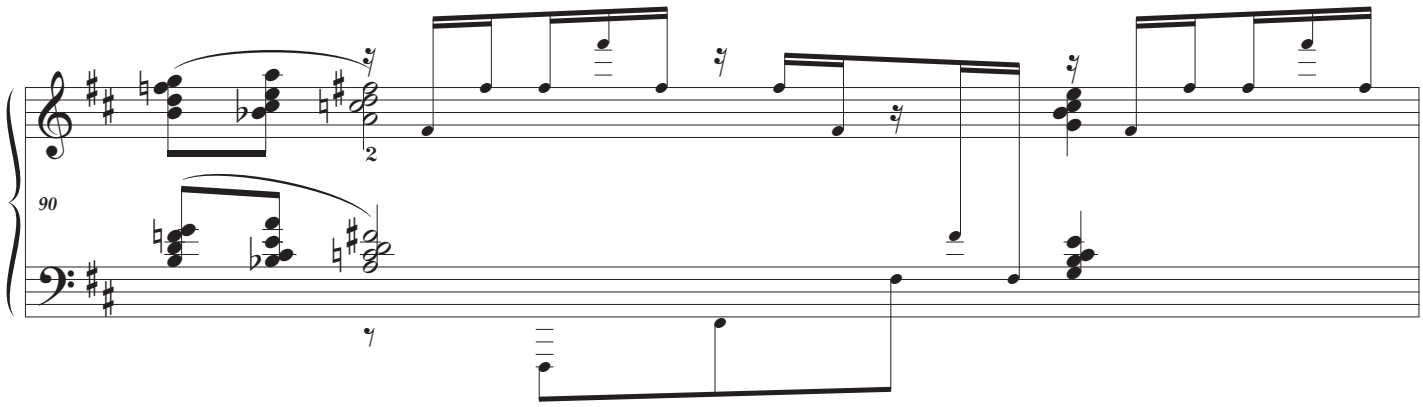

56
mf
Sost. Ped
60
p
pp
f
sfz
morendo
64
ppp
La partie superièure sonore, sans dureté,
le reste très léger mais sans sécheresse.
67
70

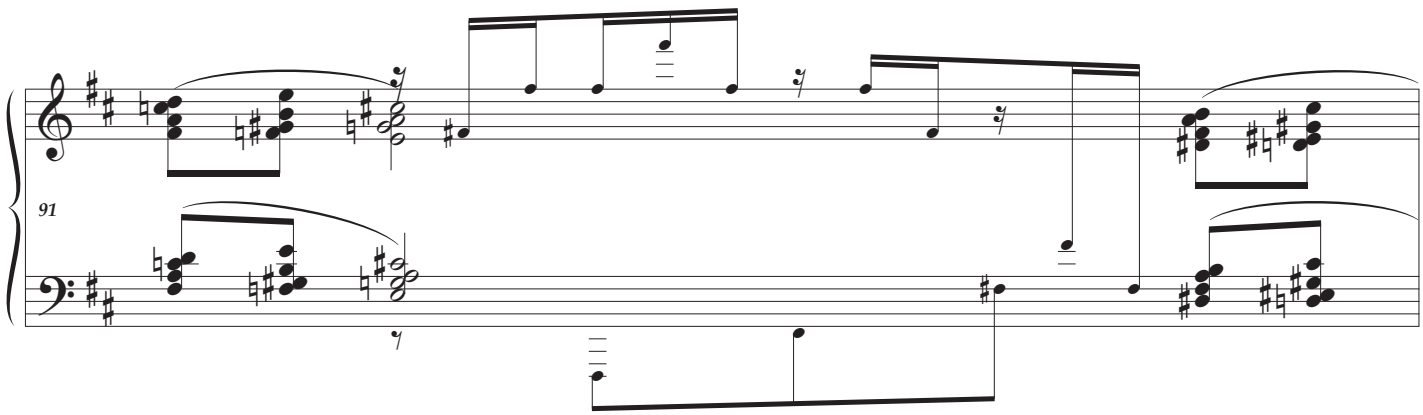

pp
ppp
73
f
sfz
76
76
79
2
5
5
un peu en dehors
p
p
82
2
2
più p
85
2
pp
2

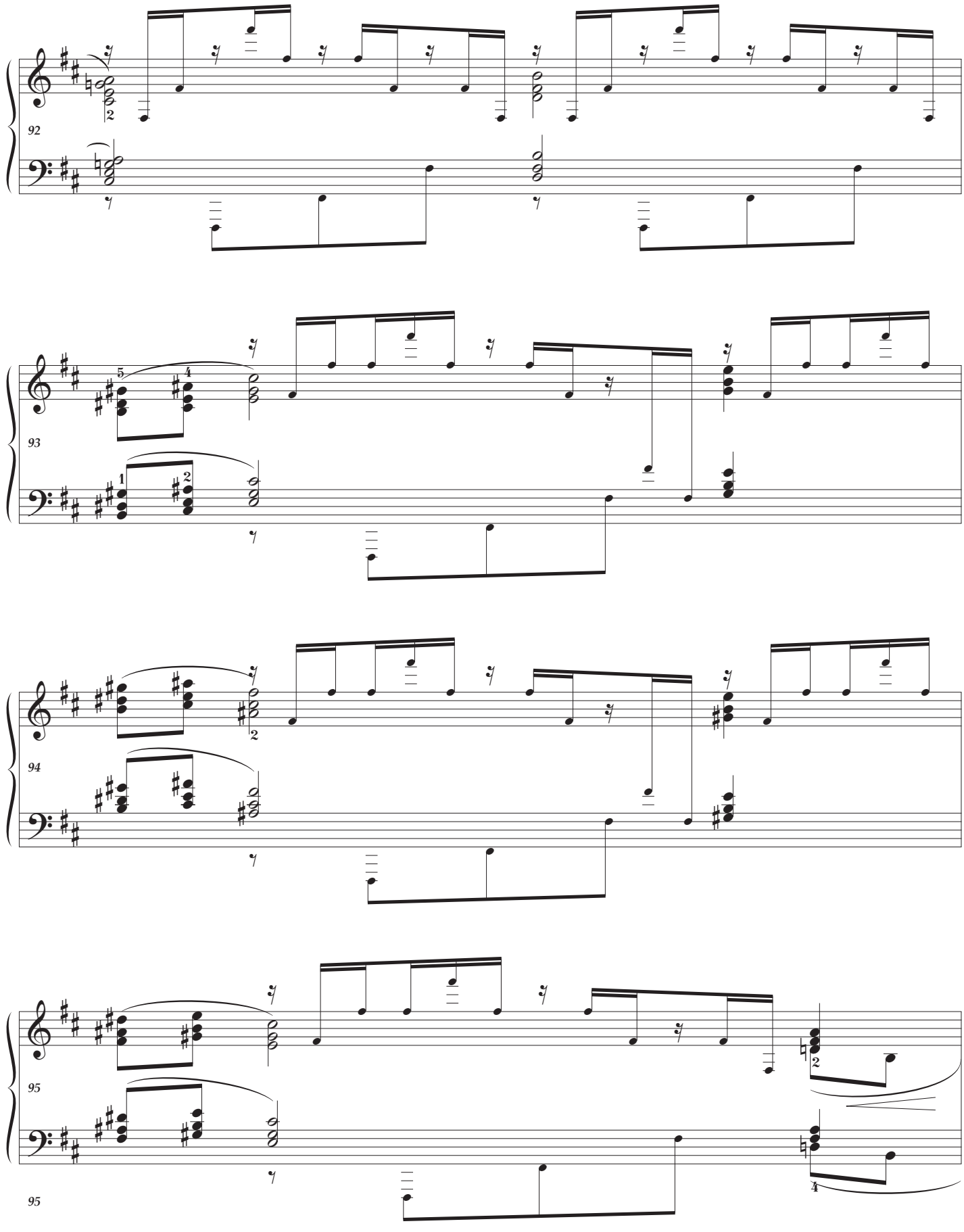


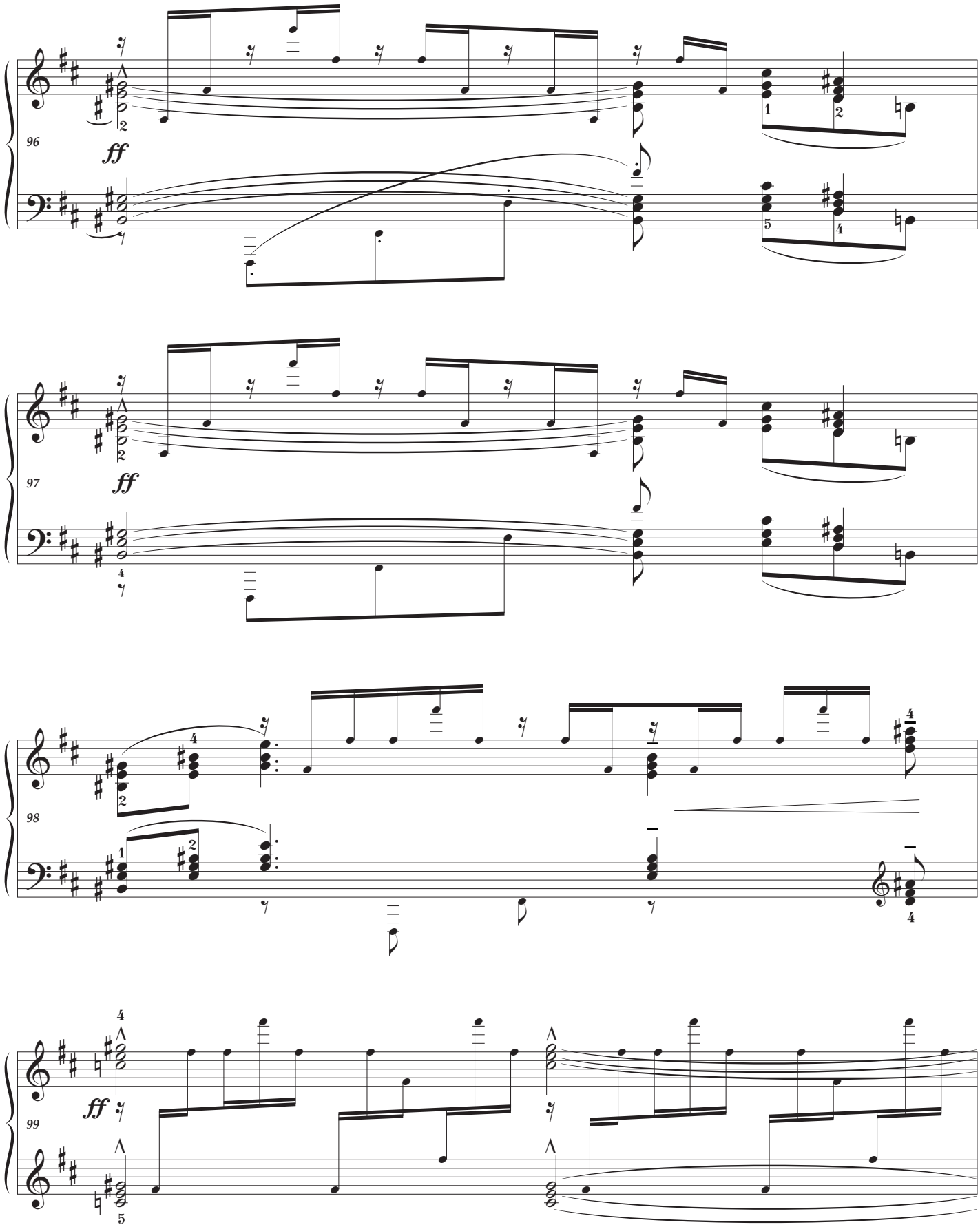
En augmentant (sans presser)

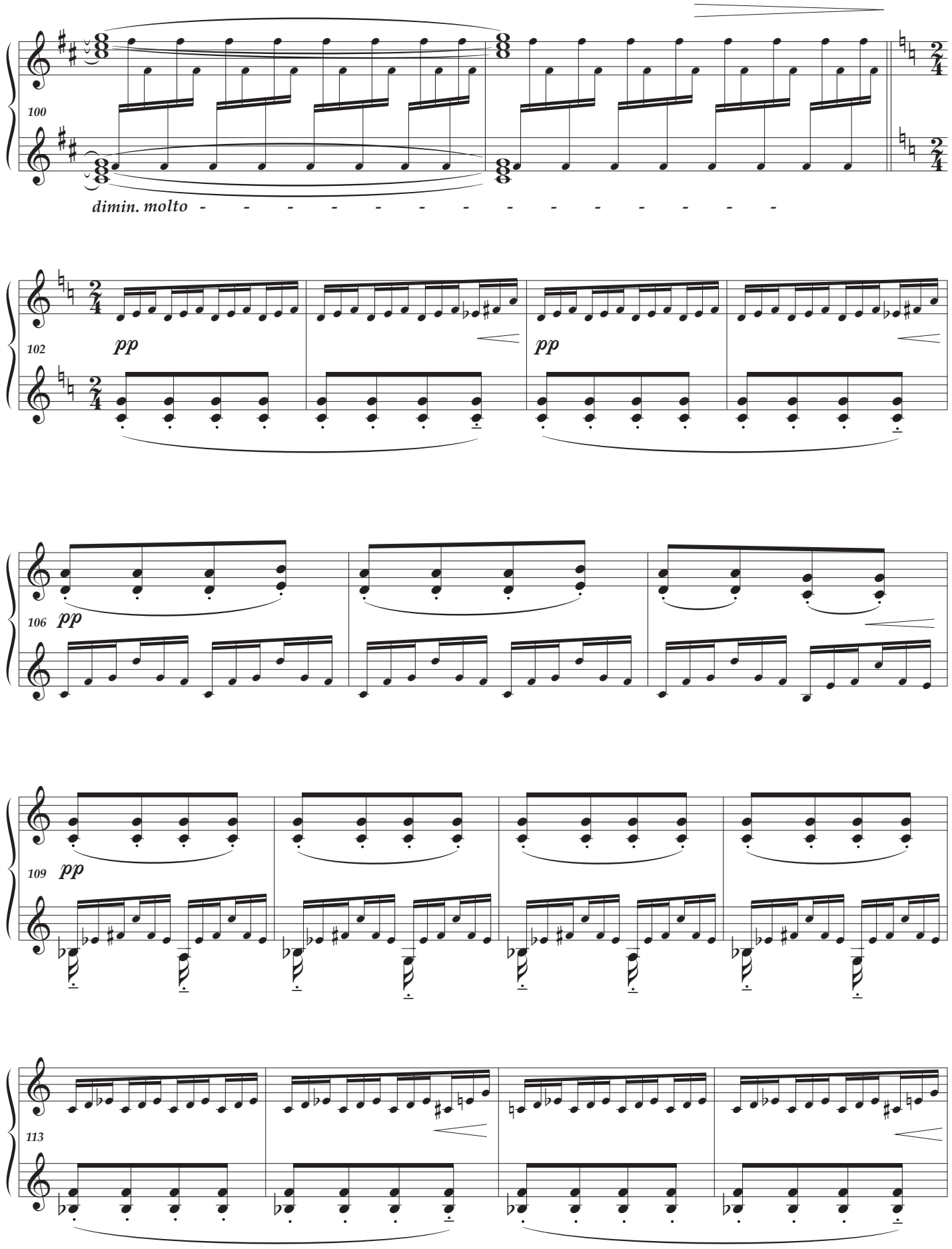


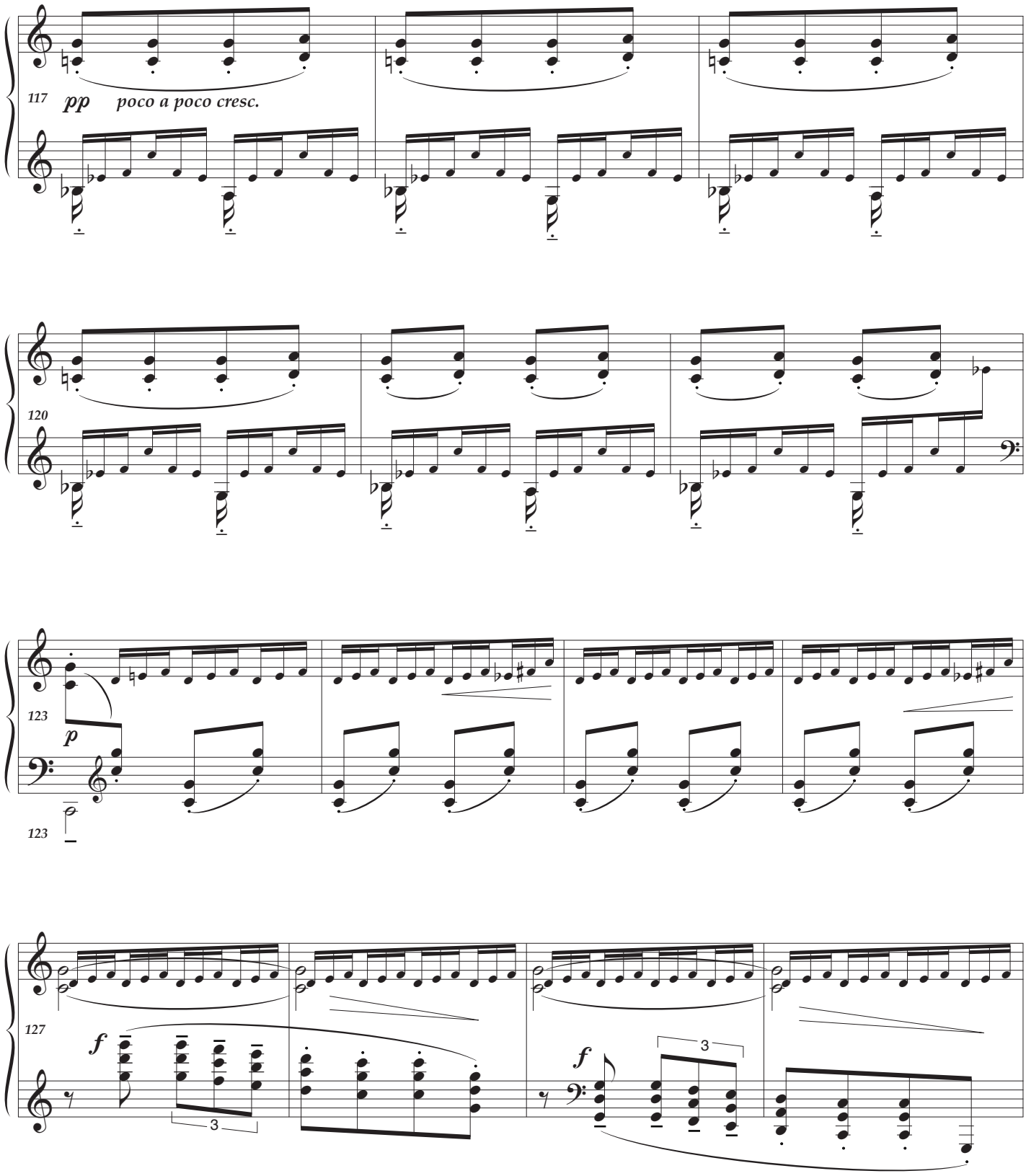


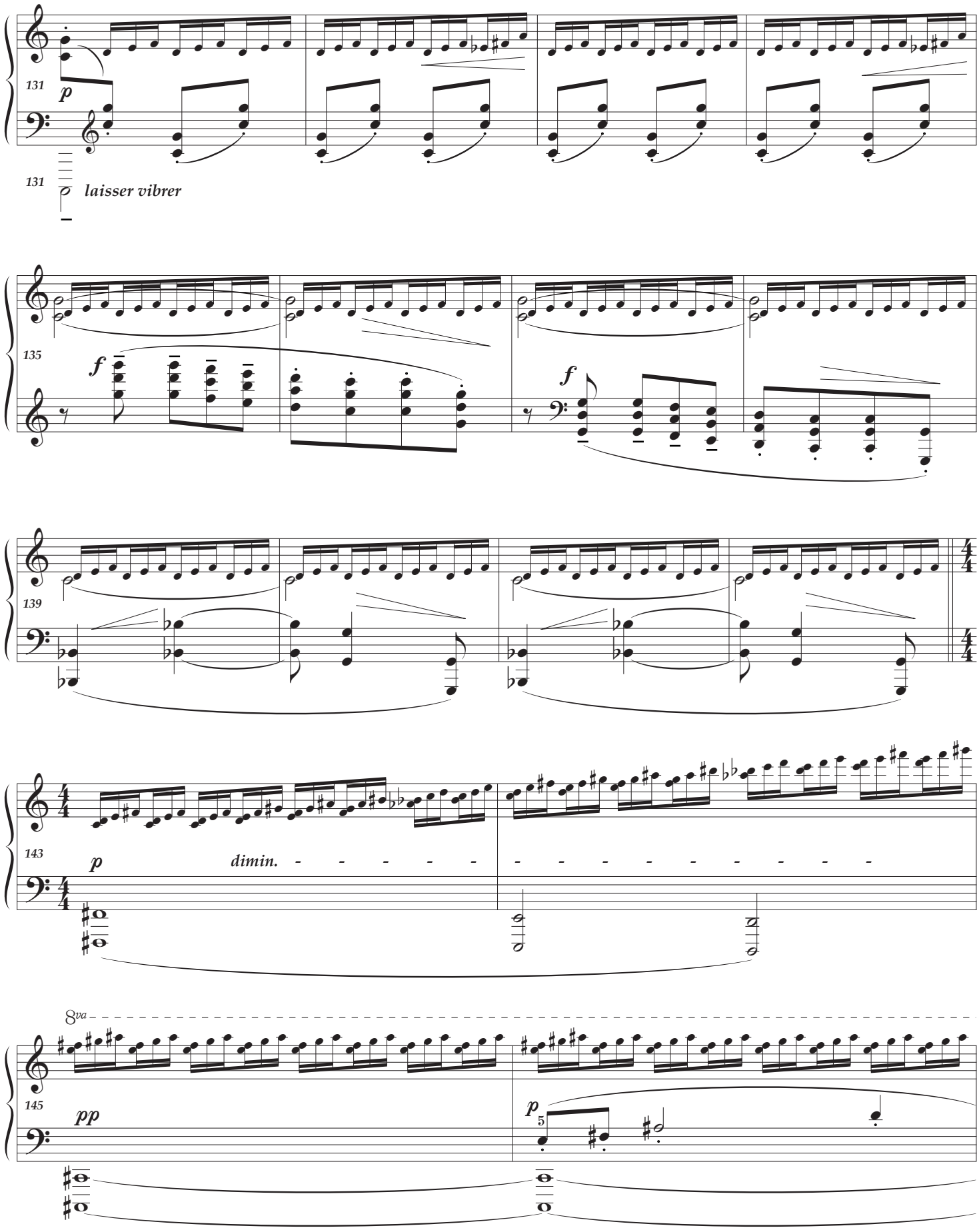


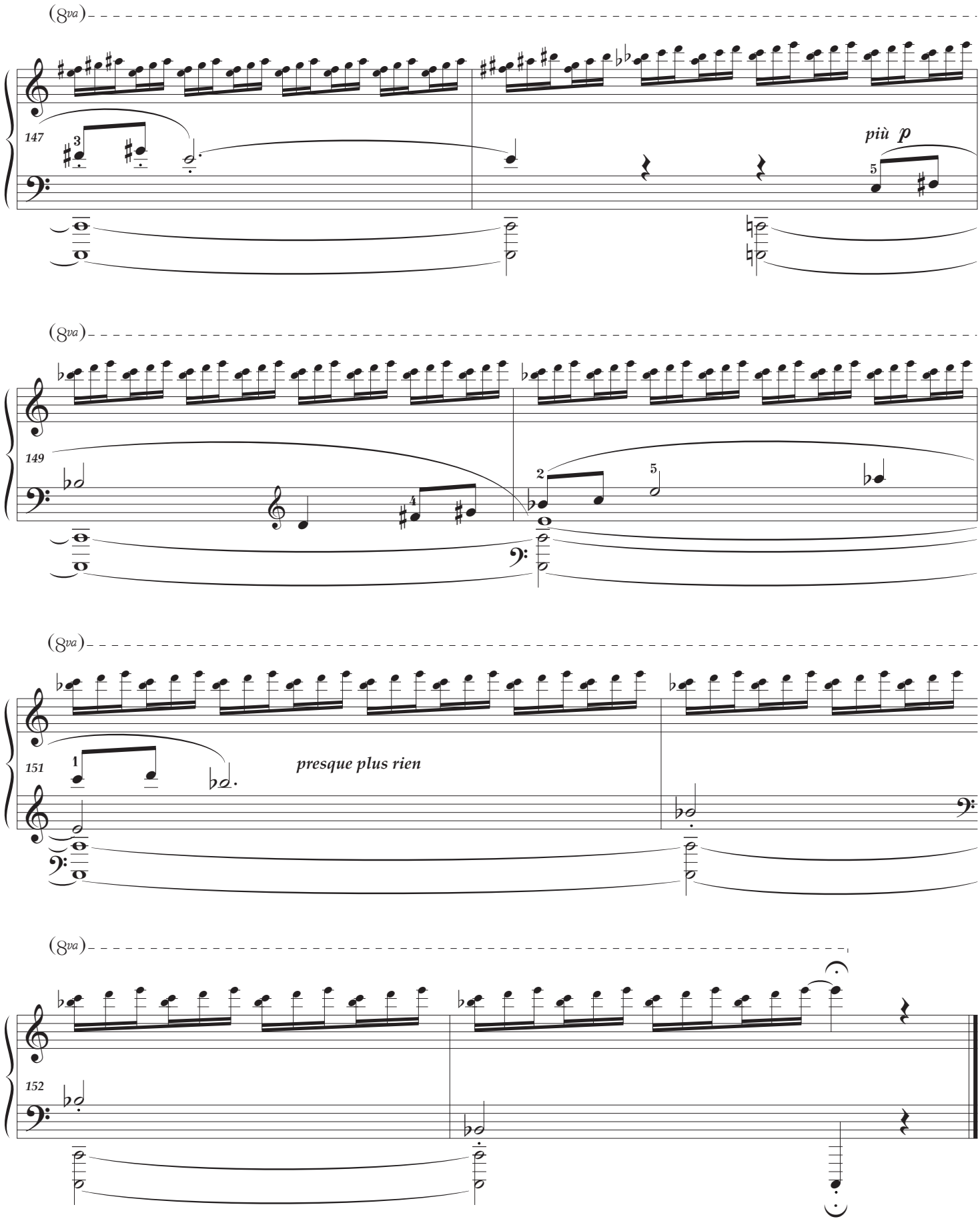

92
93
94
95
95


96
ff
97
ff
98
99
ff


100
dimin. molto
102
pp
pp
106
pp
109
pp
113


117
pp
poco a poco cresc.
120
123
p
123
127
f
3
f
3


131
p
131
laisser vibrer
135
f
f
139
143
p
dimin.
8va
145
pp
p
5


(8va)
147
più p
(8va)
149
(8va)
151
presque plus rien
(8va)
152

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.

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

Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

Duration 3'30

- Debussy gives no metronome speeds
- All pedalling is editorial
- Neither of the sostenuto pedal suggestions are attributed to Debussy
- 5-25 Debussy writes *la m.d. en valeur sur la m.g.* meaning I think that through most of the outer sections, the semiquaver triplets should project more than the quavers.
- 20-25 LH bass line presented as 12-16
- 26-39 Hands swapped
- 67-77 RH melody presentation similar to the bass 20-25 etc.
- 89-101 and 143-153 I believe that the central section and coda should be interpreted in common time, underlining their more expressive and melodic character.

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avec une légèrté fantasque mais précise	with whimsical lightness but precise
laisser vibrer	resonate — i.e. with plenty of pedal
La partie superièure sonore, sans dureté,	the soprano melody with tone, but not forced,
le reste tres léger mais sans sécheresse	the rest very light but sensitively
un peu en dehors	a little in relief
en augmentant (sans presser)	gradually increasing tone (without hurrying)
le thème en valeur et soutenu	the theme highlighted and sustained
presque plus rien	almost nothing more