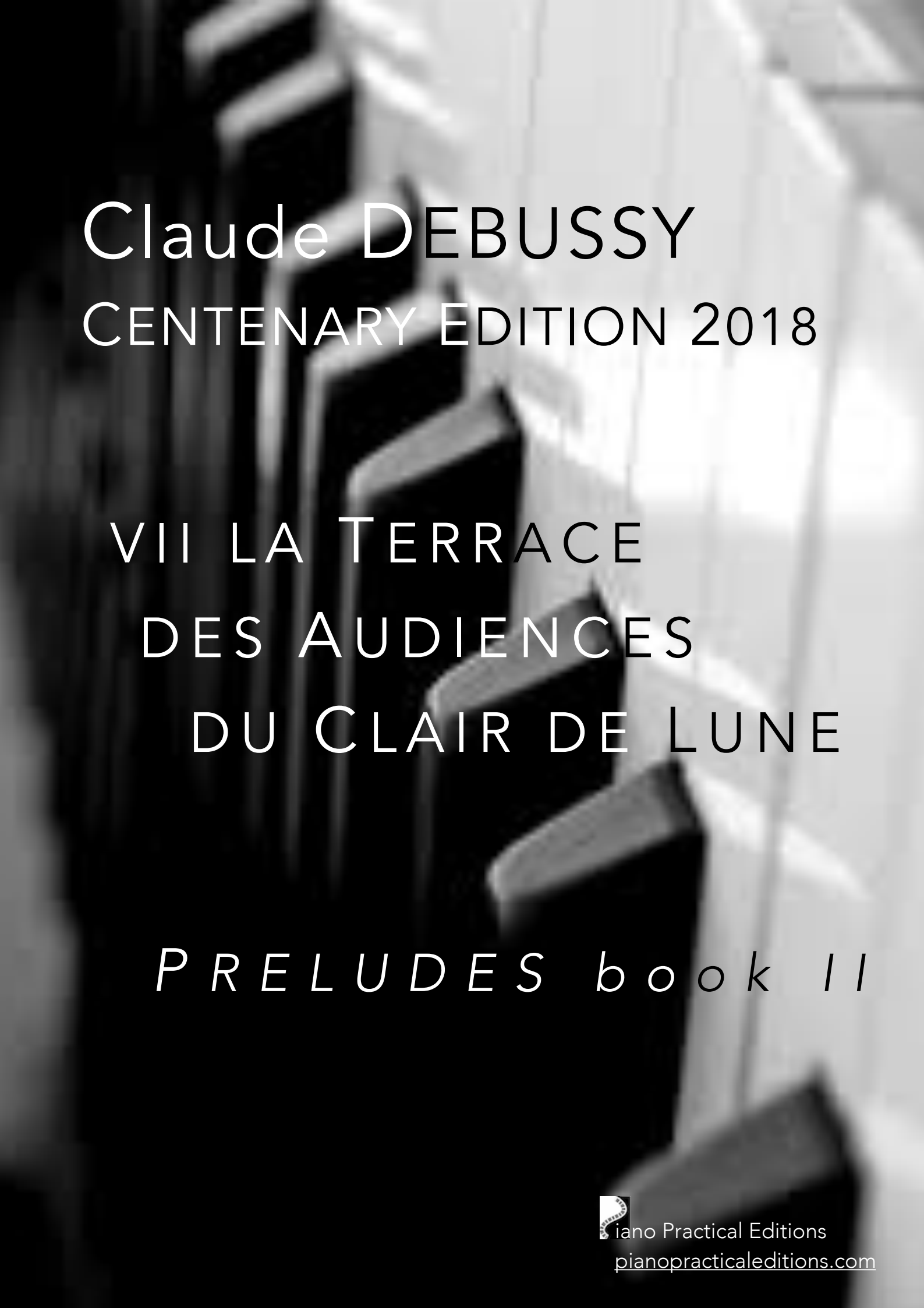

Claude DEBUSSY

CENTENARY EDITION 2018

VII LA TERRACE DES AUDIENCES DU CLAIR DE LUNE

PRELUDES book II

Piano Practical Editions
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Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

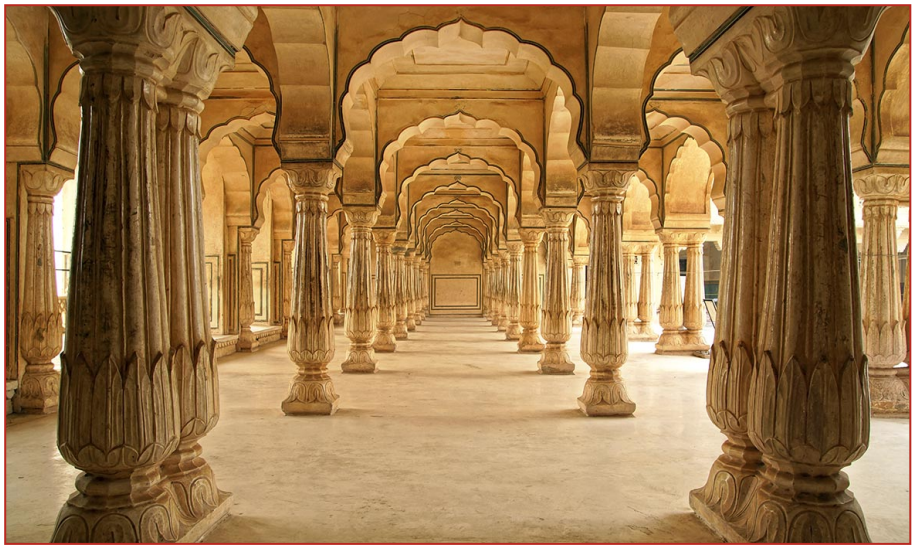
VII LA TERRACE DES AUDIENCES DU CLAIR DE LUNE

PRELUDES BOOK II

"I believe more and more that music in its essence is not a thing that can be poured into a precise 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.

This rather obscure title (the Hall of Public Audience by moonlight) was discovered quite by chance in 1912 when the composer was reading an article by René Puaux in *Le Temps*. This is a lively account of a visit the writer made to the abandoned city of Amber,



La Terrasse des Audiences — Diwan-e-Aam —* the Hall of Public Audience *

near Jaipur. Debussy was clearly stimulated by poetic descriptions of deserted palaces, a completely uninhabited city only recently crowded with chariots, elephants, ostlers and mahouts.

Stephen Walsh*** makes the point that the music might be regarded as a response to the activity of the imagination in the face of the beautiful but inexplicable relics of history. At first the eye sees and the ear hears only debris, musical fragments, then gradually some kind of picture materialises with a distinct shape, yet no clear connection with the fragments that preceded it. The visitor turns away moved by what he has seen, but still in truth mystified as to what precisely it was.

Moments of exaltation evoke a distant land, shrouded in legend, saturated with exotic overtones — a subtly elusive and ethereal scene requiring great sensitivity by an artist.

During the course of this centenary year *Piano Practical Editions* has become a creative and critical working publication; in addition to a few suggestions of fingering, sostenuto pedal and hand disposition, you will find significant modifications to the general layout.

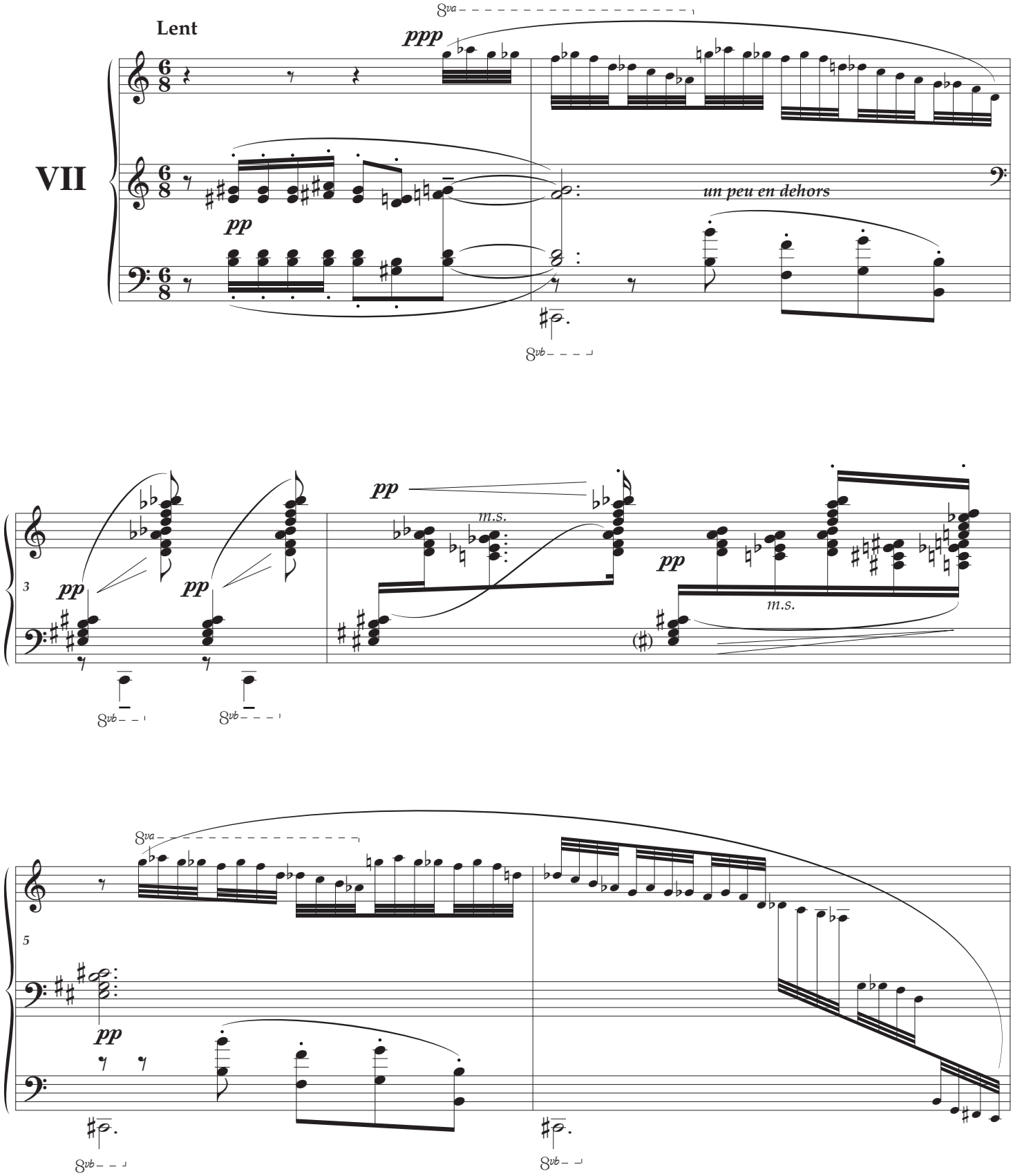
Here is an apt quotation by the composer :"Absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, negating musicians' perverse desire to completely dismiss the composer's (and editor's), and thereby vindicating words of eternal wisdom: 'If you want something done well, do it yourself'". Let us seek our own fingering!

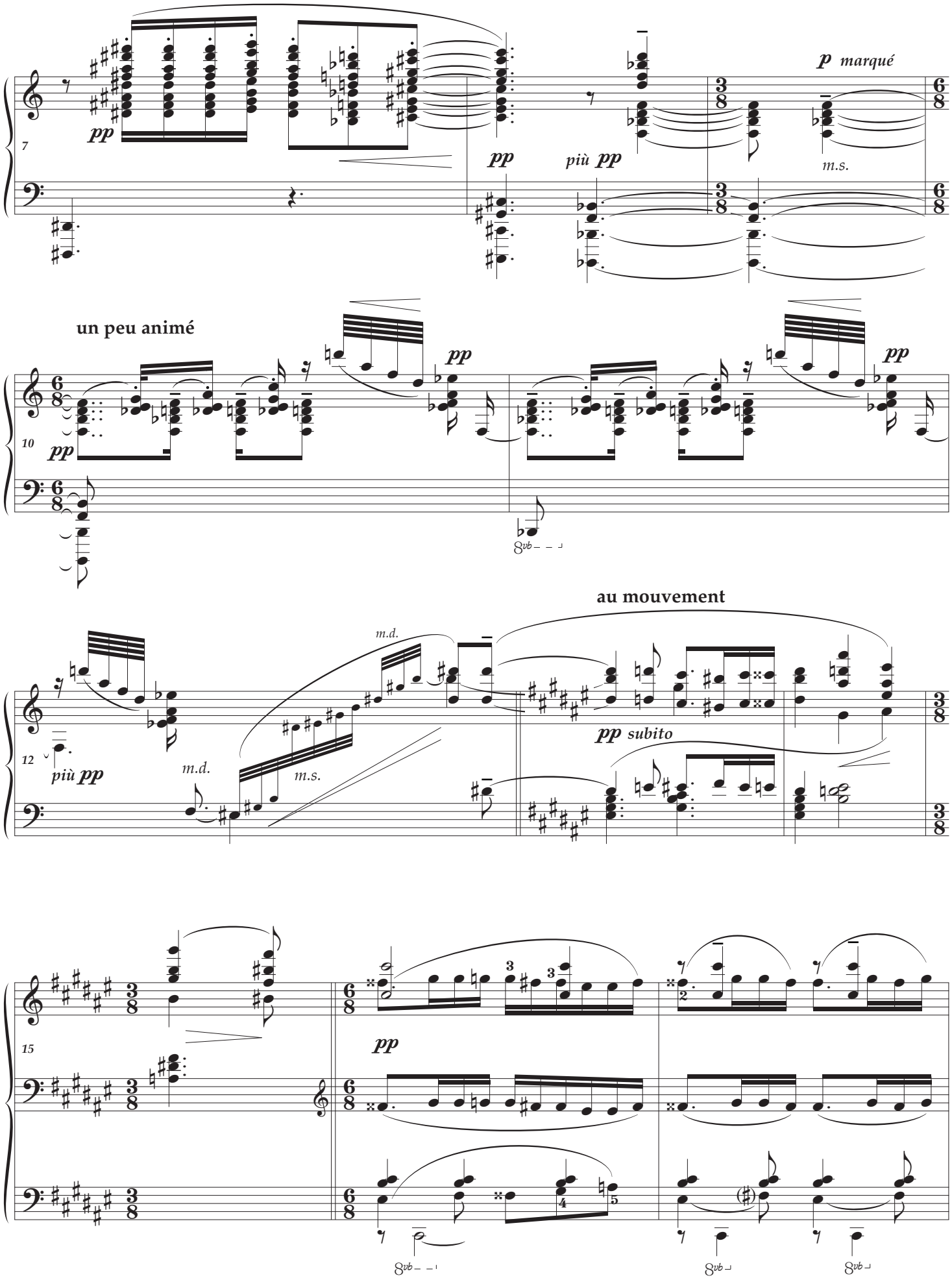
In my original introduction to this prelude I wrote that although the music depicts little majesty nor festivity, and even less pomp, the article in question gave an account of the Delhi Durbar* following the coronation of King George V as Emperor of India. Mr. Walsh correctly concludes that the work has nothing to do with the Durbar.

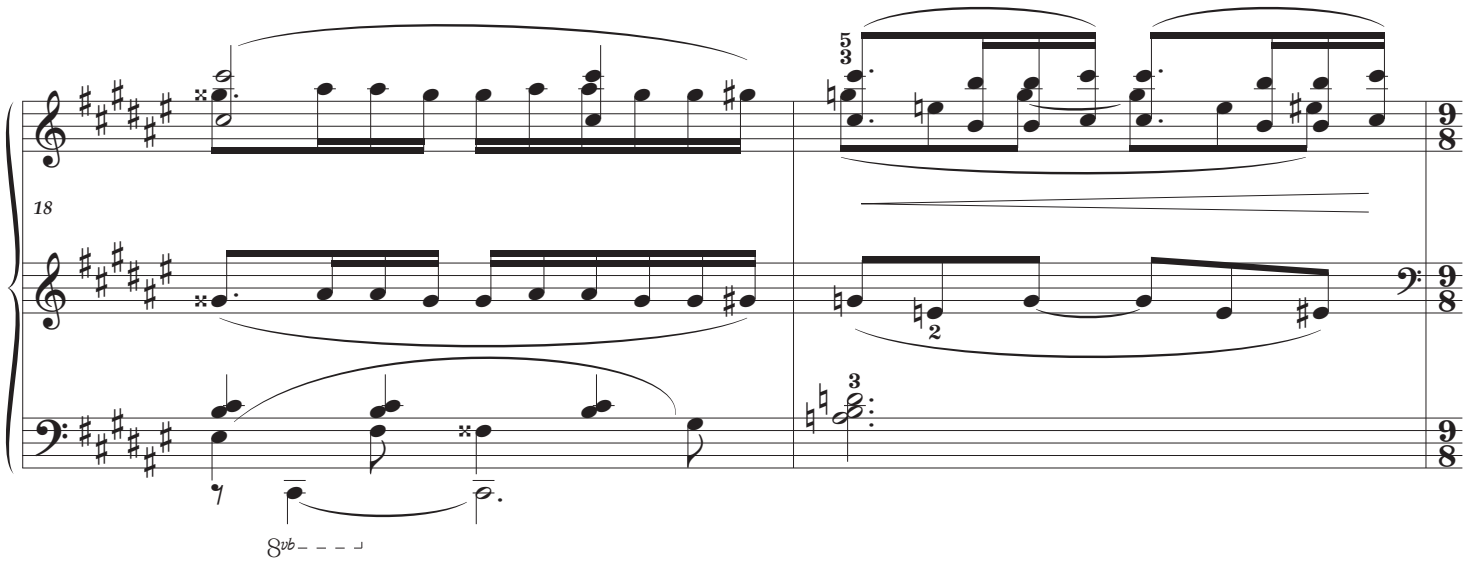
*A public ceremonial reception held by a ruler in India. The Delhi Durbar, held in December 1911, officially crowned the newly enthroned George V and Queen Mary; attired in their Coronation robes, the emperor and empress appeared in an unprecedented event of prestige and pageantry.

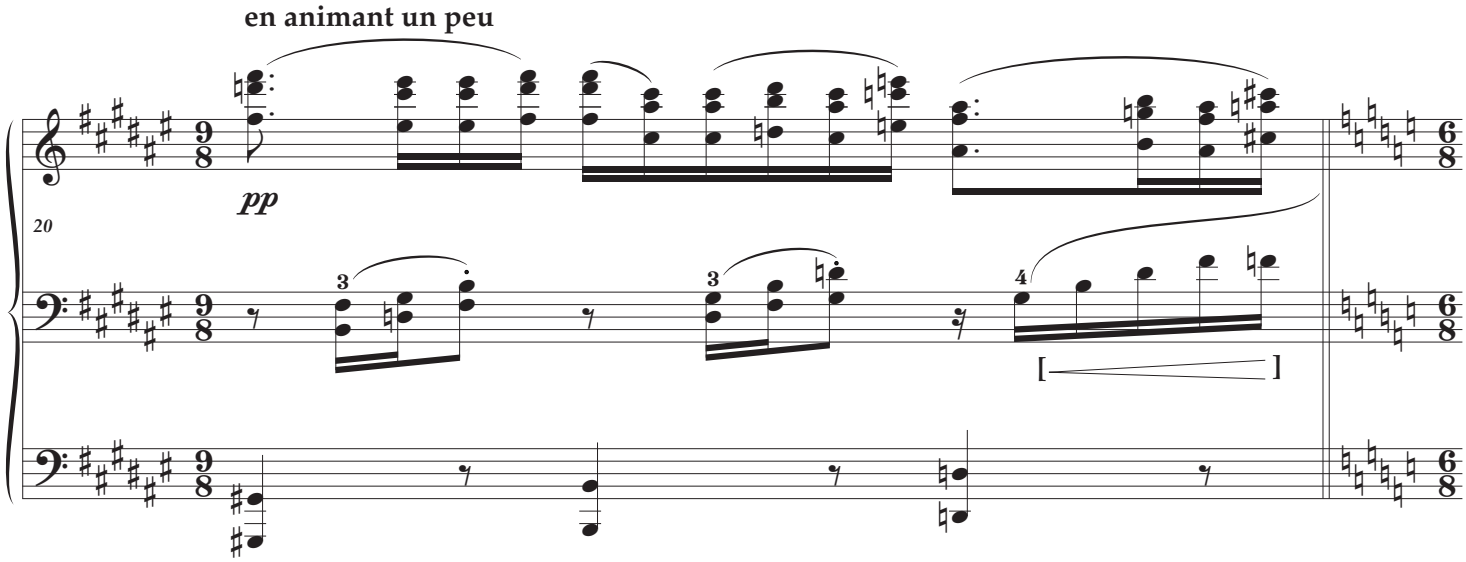
**Amber Fort, Jaipur — important state assemblies were held here in the 17th and 18th centuries. The abundant stone pillars turn this space into an optical illusion. Beneath these intricately-designed arches, Kings used to meet with citizens seeking help.

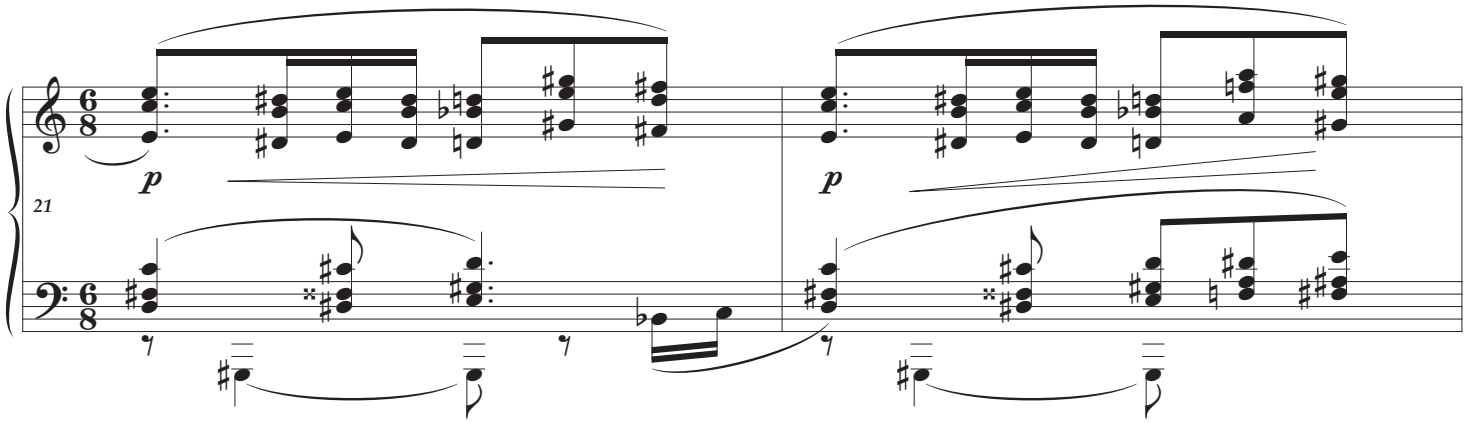
***A quotation from "Debussy… A Painter in Sound" by Stephen Walsh

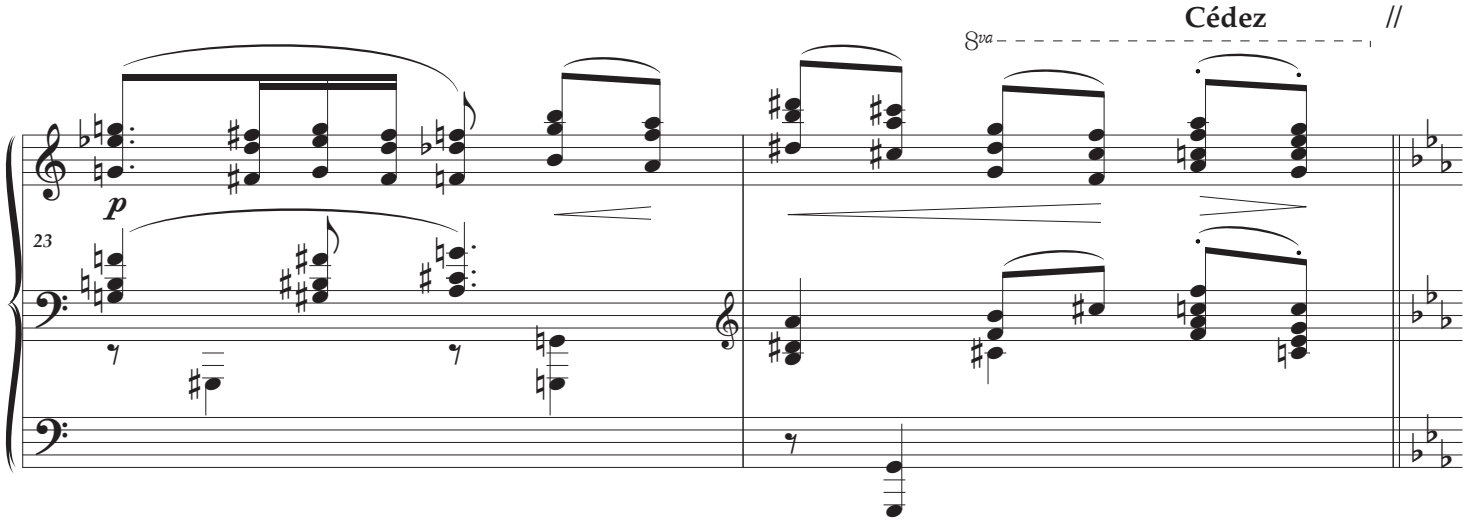

VII
Lent
ppp
pp
un peu en dehors
8va
8vb
3
pp
m.s.
5

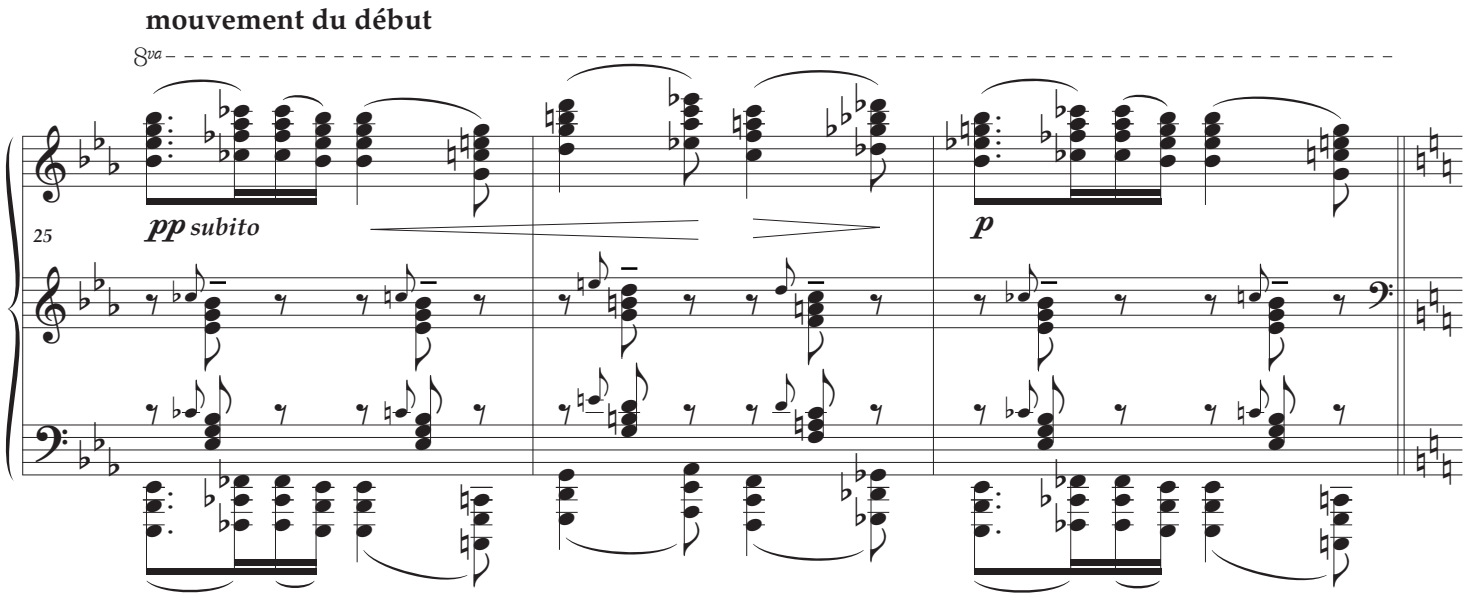

7
pp
pp
più pp
p marqué
m.s.
un peu animé
10
pp
pp
pp
8vb
au mouvement
12
più pp
m.d.
m.d.
m.s.
pp subito
15
pp
3
3
2
4
5
8vb
8vb
8vb

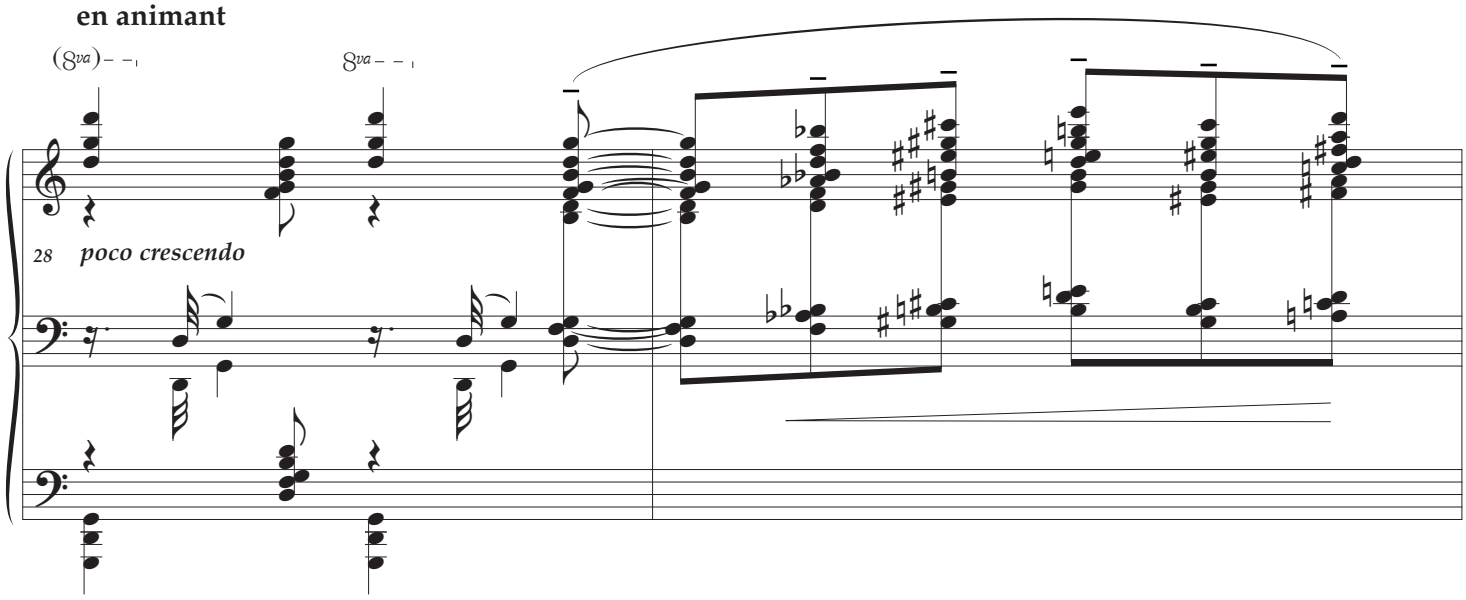

18
8vb

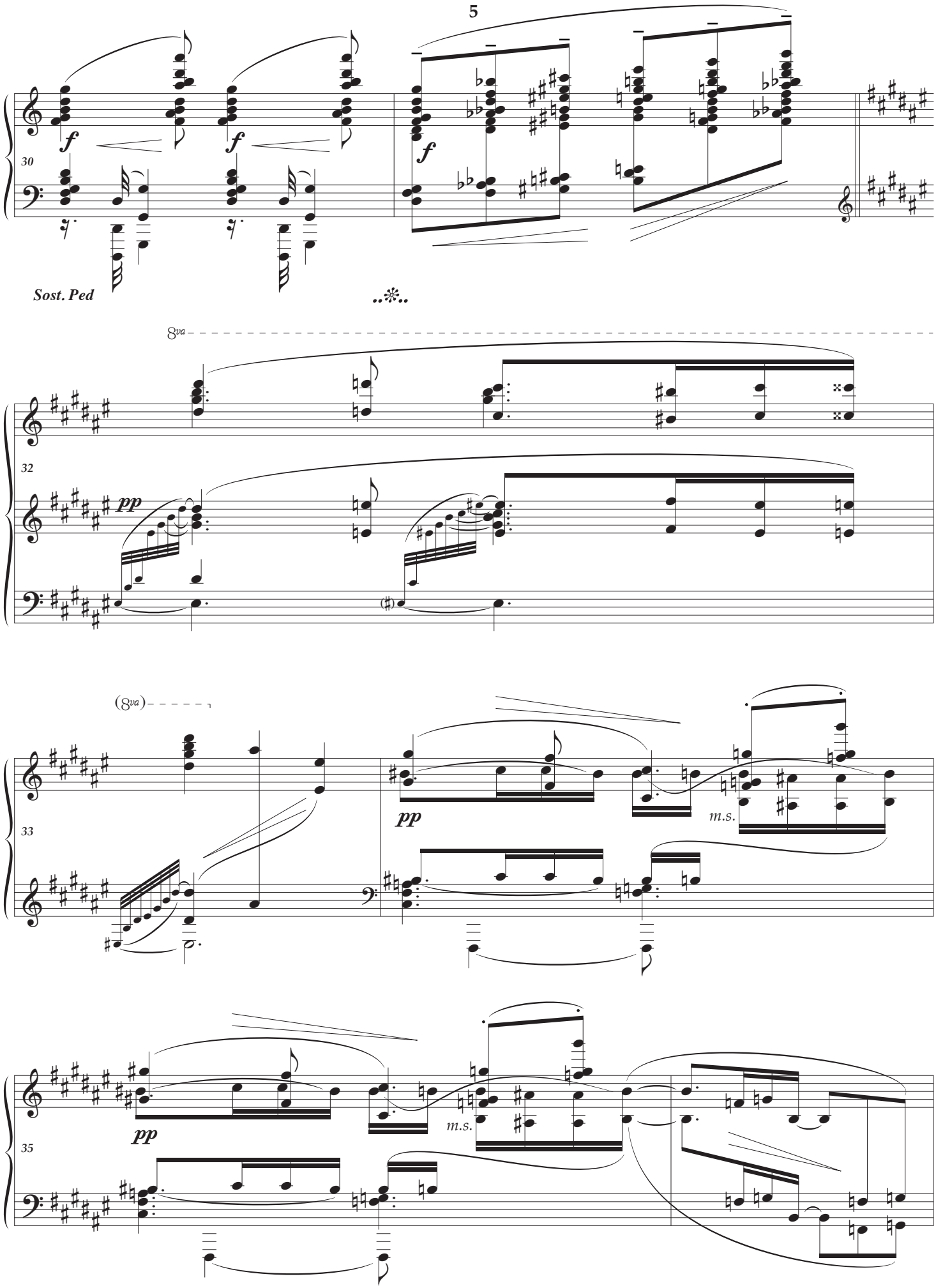

en animant un peu
pp
20

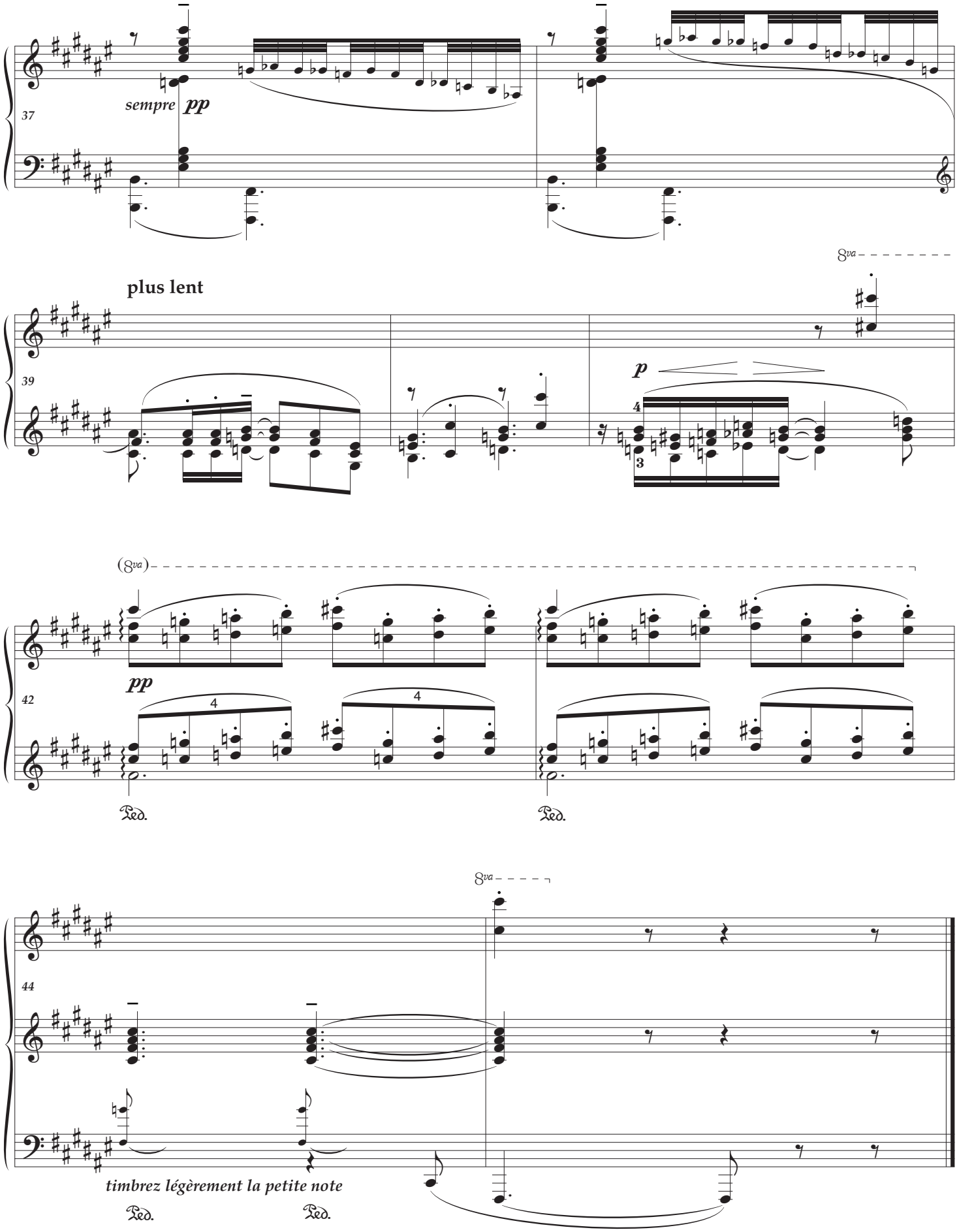

p
p
21


Cédez
8va
p
23


mouvement du début
8va
pp subito
25
p


en animant
(8va)
8va
28
poco crescendo


30
f
f
f
Sost. Ped
8va
32
pp
(8va)
33
pp
m.s.
35
pp
m.s.



(... La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune)

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & French vocabulary

Duration: 4'40

- 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."* Might this explain why there are no metronome speeds in the second book?
- There is a tendency to perform *La Terrace* too slowly, feeling 6 quaver beats. The section from **39** to the end should be even slower, so it is sensible to keep something in reserve. Feeling 2 dotted crotchet beats will save the work from inevitable dragging.
- **1-12** presented with a blank key signature
- **21-24** presented with a blank key signature
- **29** sostenuto pedal editorial suggestion
- **43-43** editorial pedal indications

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un peu en dehors	*a little in relief*
marqué	*marked*
un peu animé	*a little animated*
en animant un peu	*animating a little*
cédez	*held back*
mouvement du début	*tempo primo*
timbrez légèrement la petite note	*sound the acciaccatura but just a little*