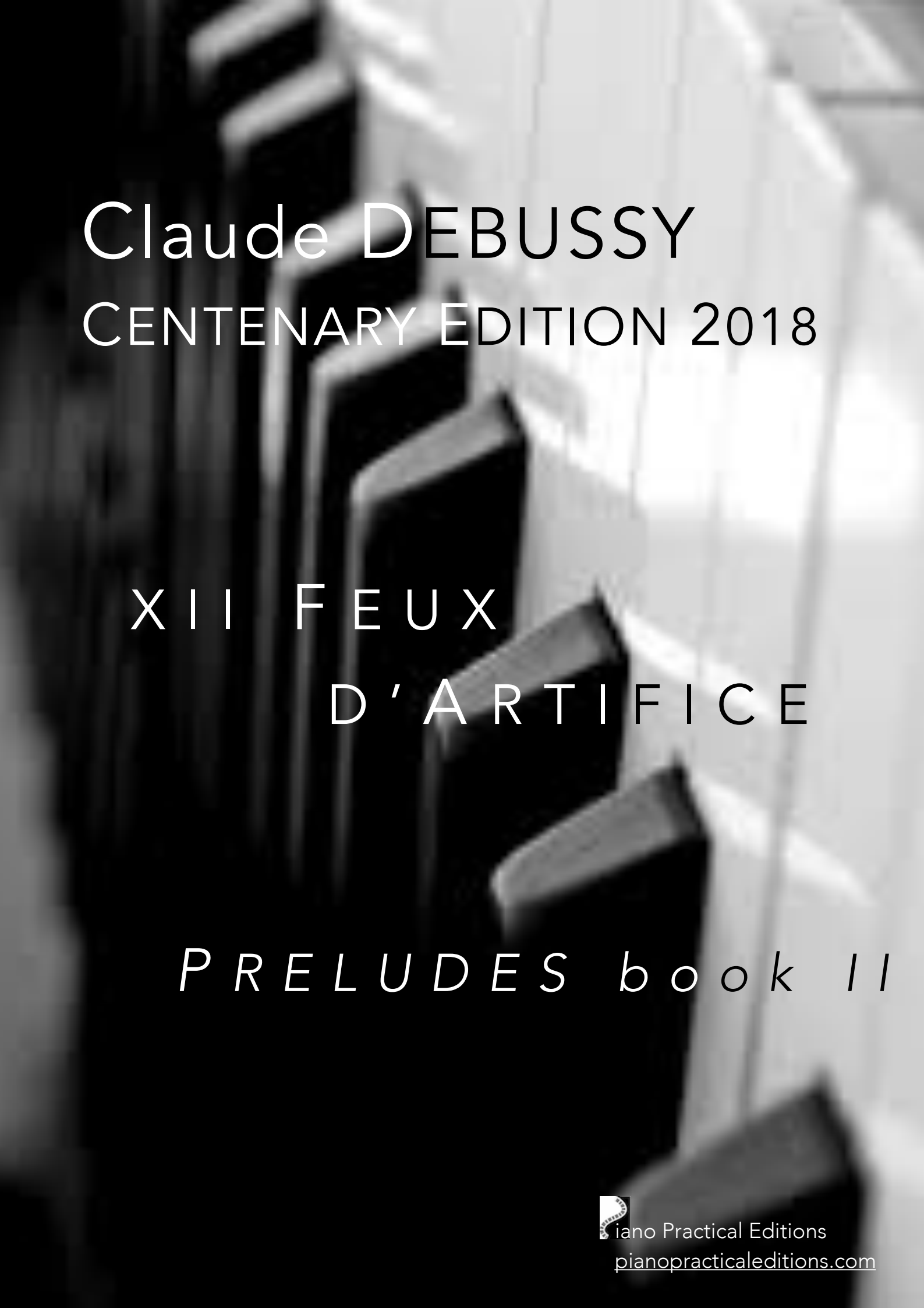

Claude DEBUSSY
CENTENARY EDITION 2018

XII FEUX D'ARTIFICE

PRELUDES book II

Piano Practical Editions
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Ray Alston : contact@pianopracticaleditions.com

Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

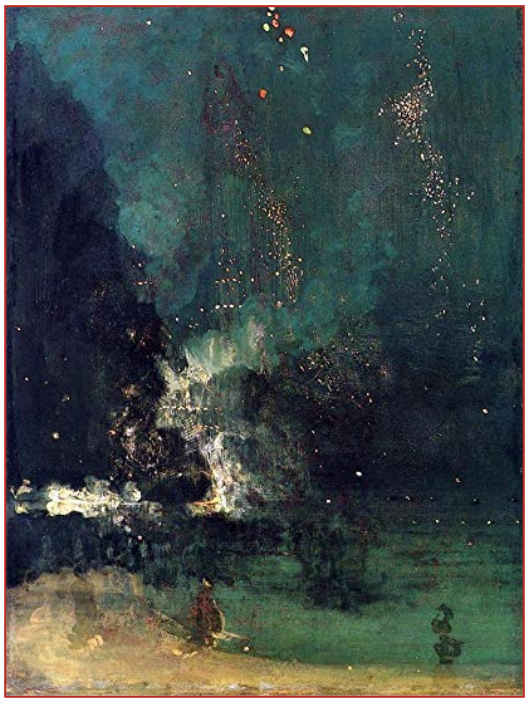
XII FEUX D'ARTIFICE

PRELUDES BOOK II

"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.

The last of these 24 *préludes*, is also the most technically challenging — fireworks over the Seine and fireworks at the keyboard. Debussy rarely tries to imitate Lisztian pyrotechnics but here he succeeds in writing a dazzling virtuoso display piece to end the set. Bastille day revellers in Paris provide the backdrop for rockets, firecrackers, sparklers and explosions in the night sky, as the audience quietly waits in anticipation of a complex harmonic wonderworld of extreme dynamics and dissonance, giving voice to breathtaking light. The prelude appropriately concludes with a soft and brief quotation from *La Marseillaise* in polyphony with a final utterance of the principal motif.



Nocturne in Black and Gold
The Falling Rocket*
James McNeill Whistler

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 and hand disposition, you will find significant modifications to the general layout in an effort to eliminate inconsistencies and improve visual impact.

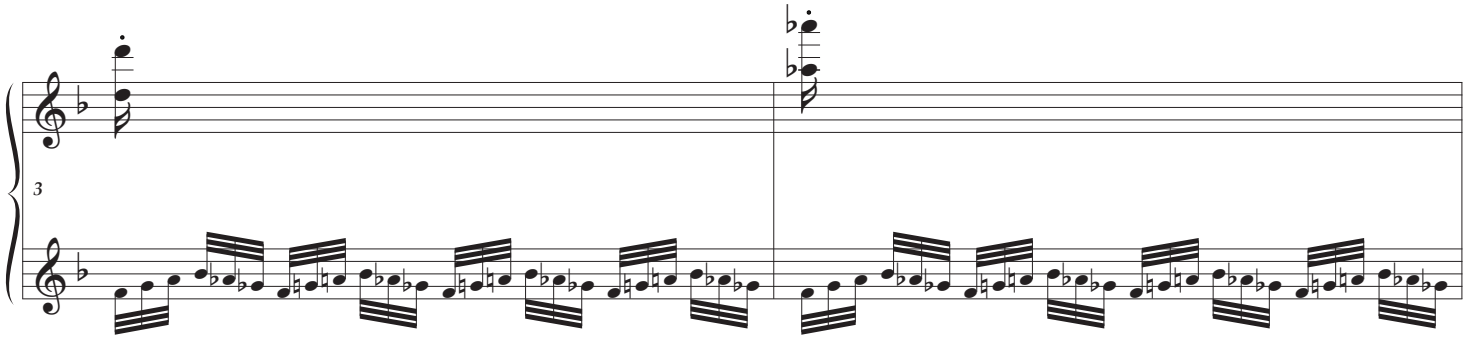
Here is an apt quotation by the composer :"Absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, negating musicians' perverse desire to completely dismiss the composer's (and editor's), and thereby vindicating words of eternal wisdom: 'If you want something done well, do it yourself'". Let us seek our own fingering!

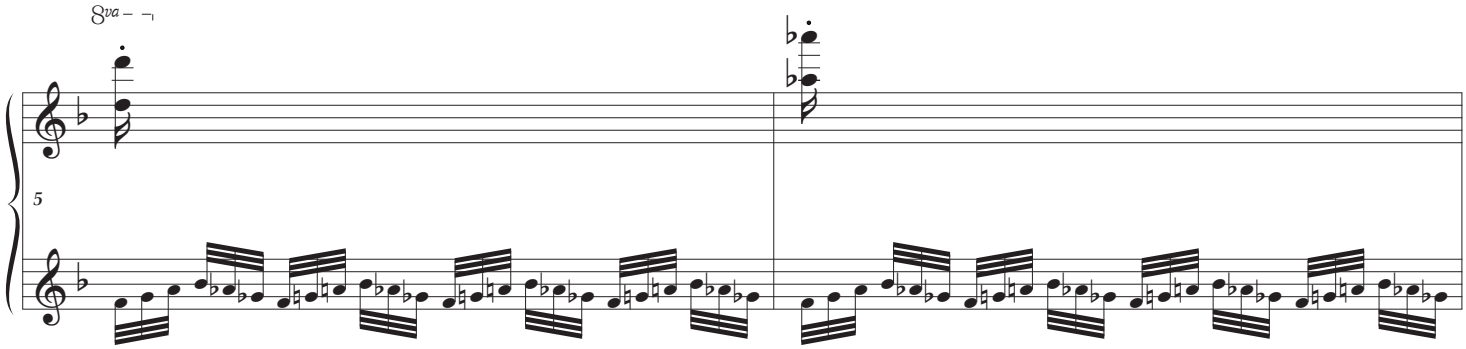
* Completed in 1875 — "scatters stars through the impenetrable darkness of the night." It is very probable that Debussy saw and admired this work exhibited in Paris around 1900; he was enchanted by the artist's pure style and seduced by the aesthetic of illusion, in which the exquisite becomes the evanescent.

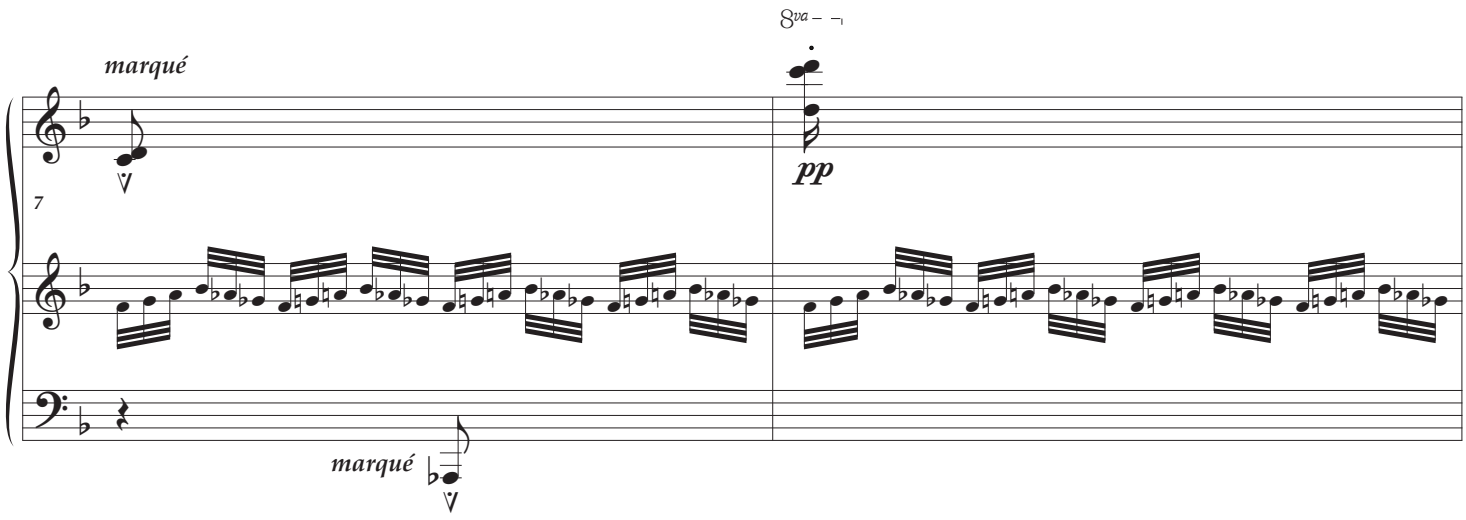
Modérément animé

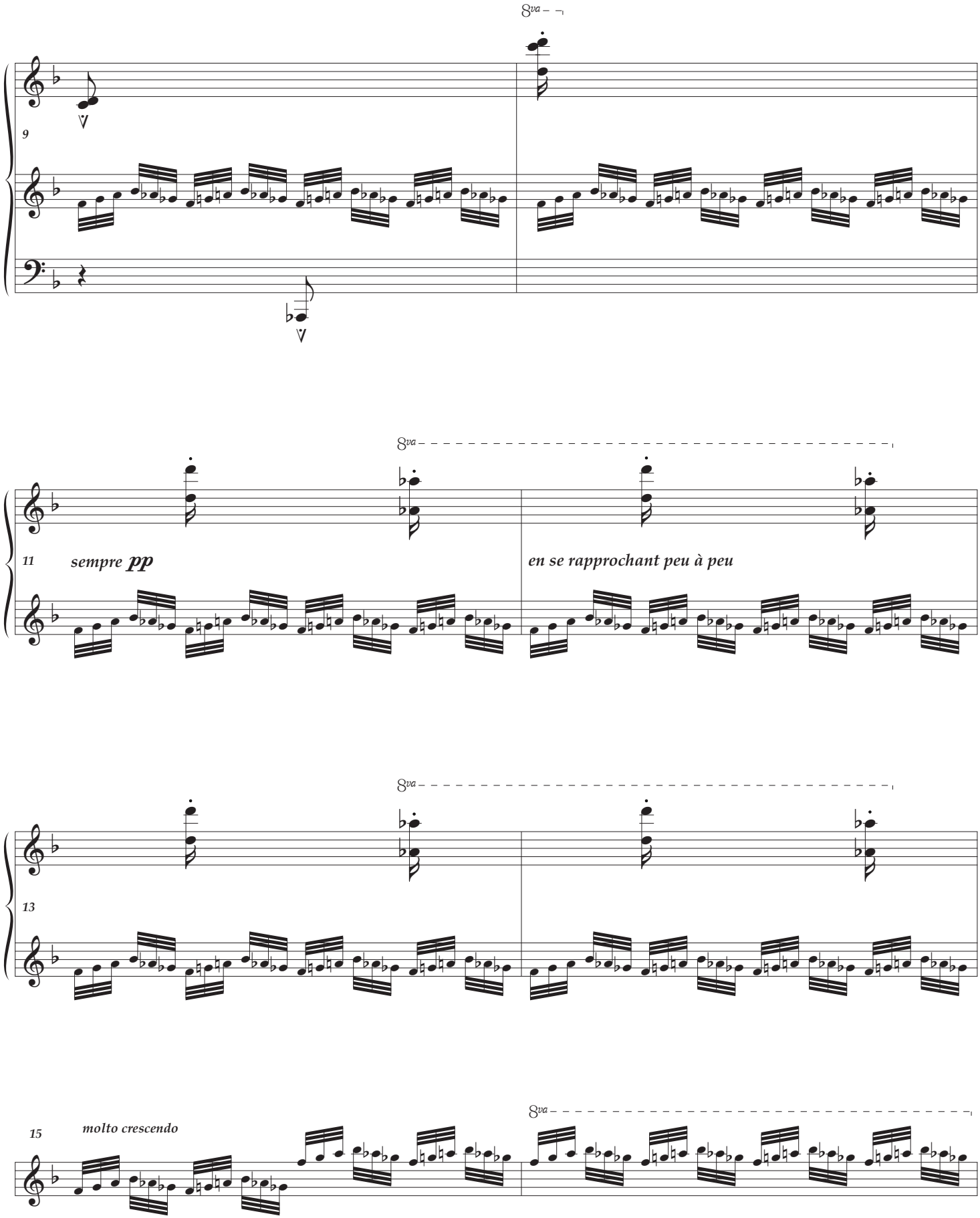
XII

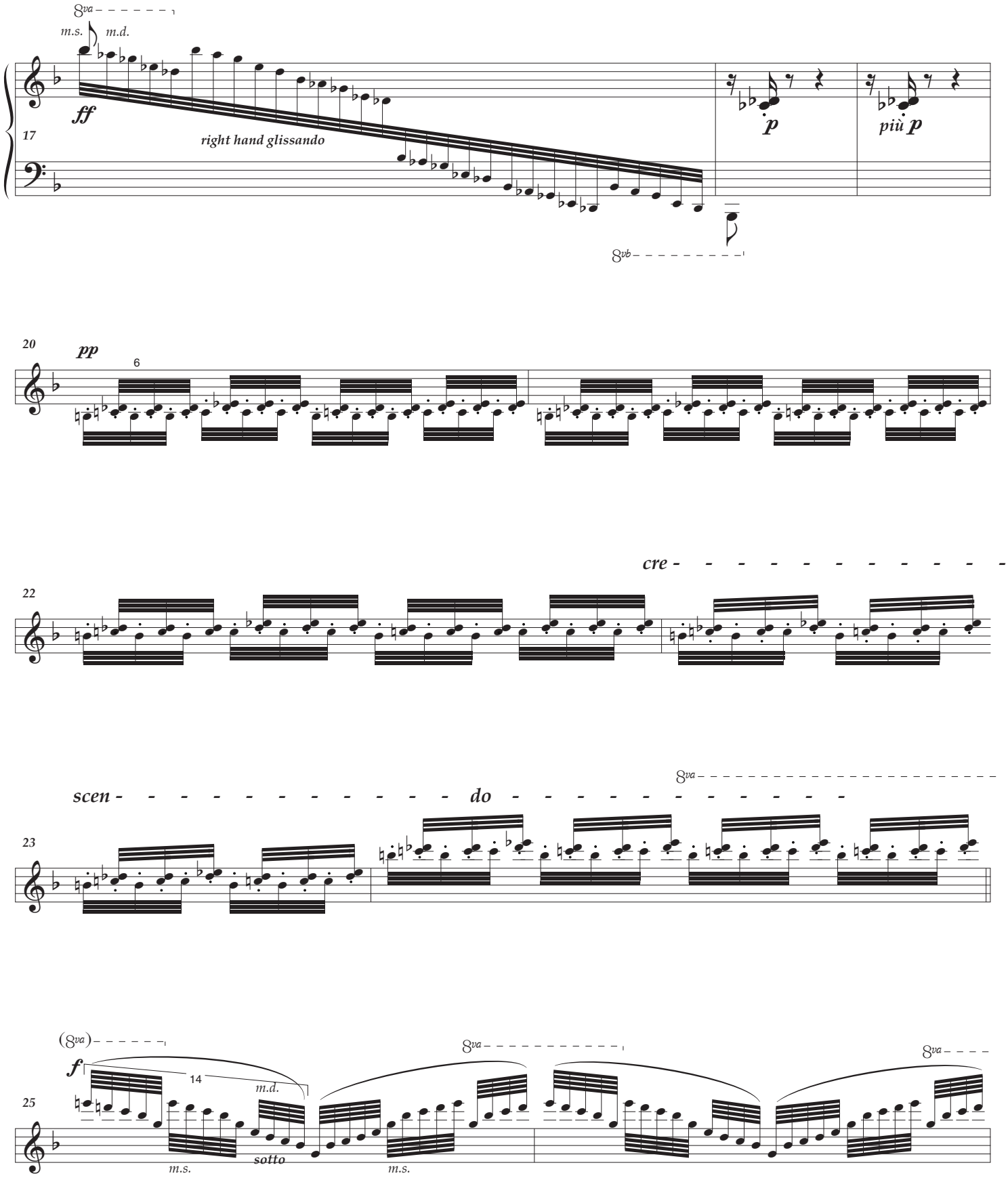
léger, égal et lointain

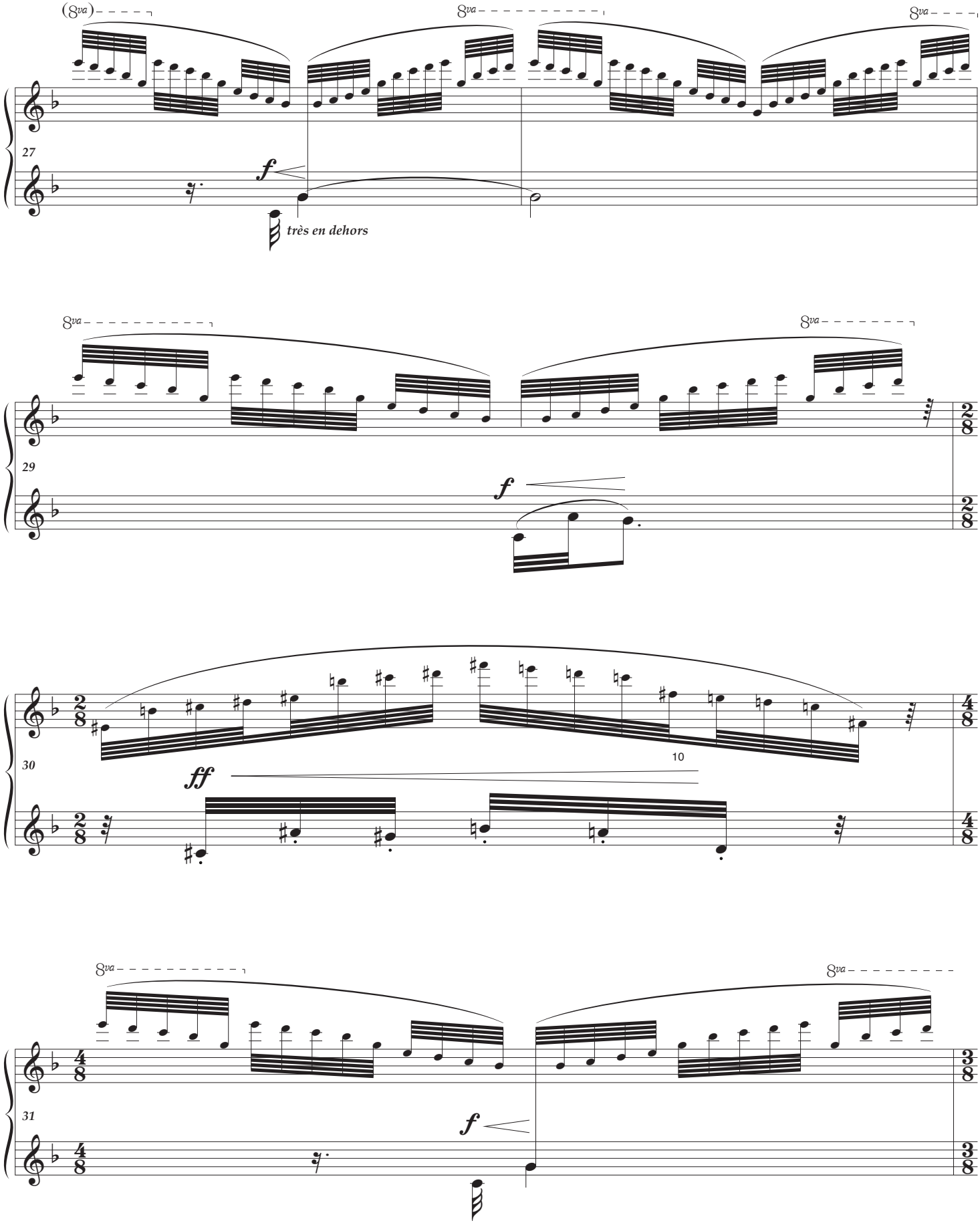


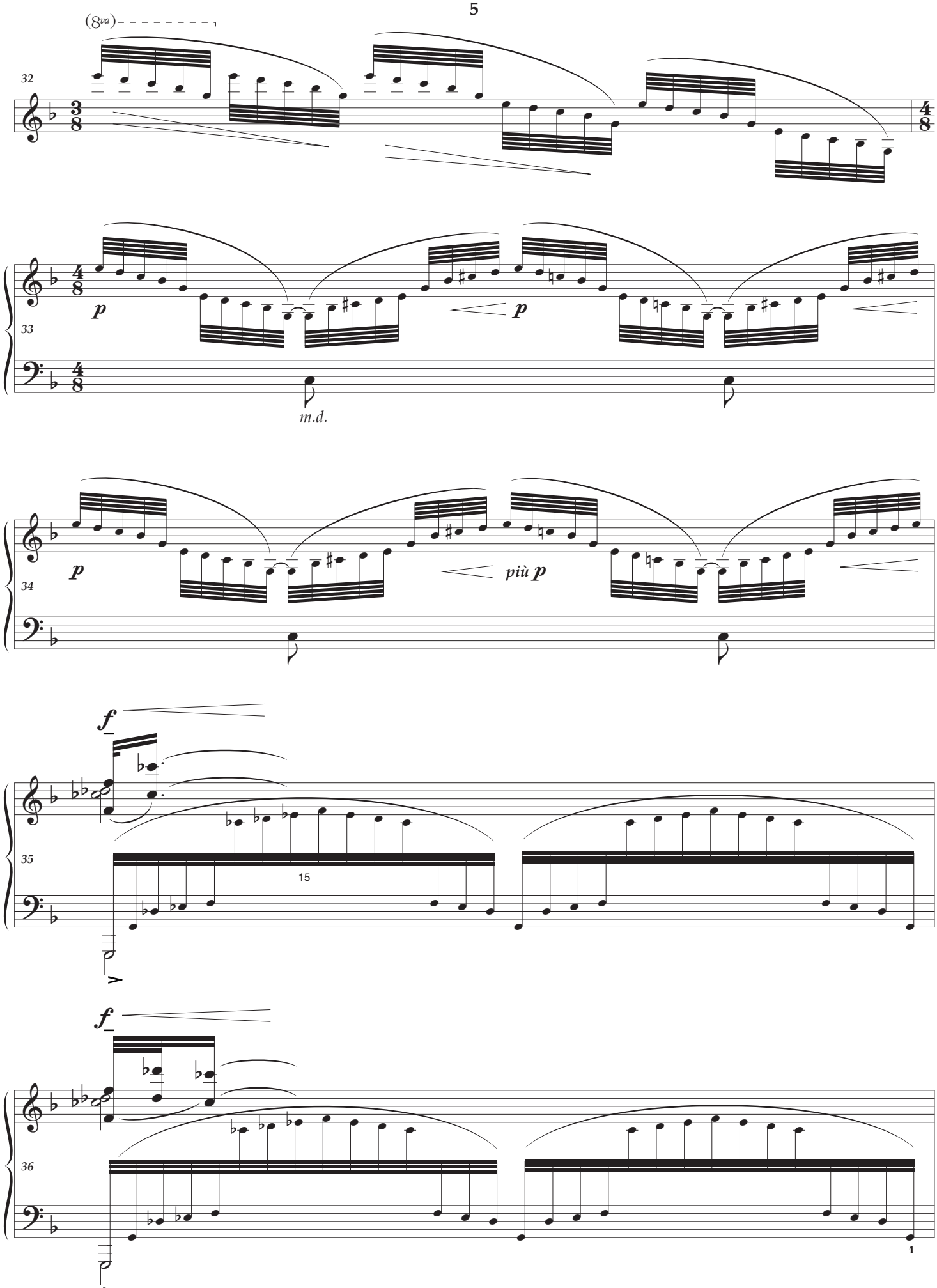


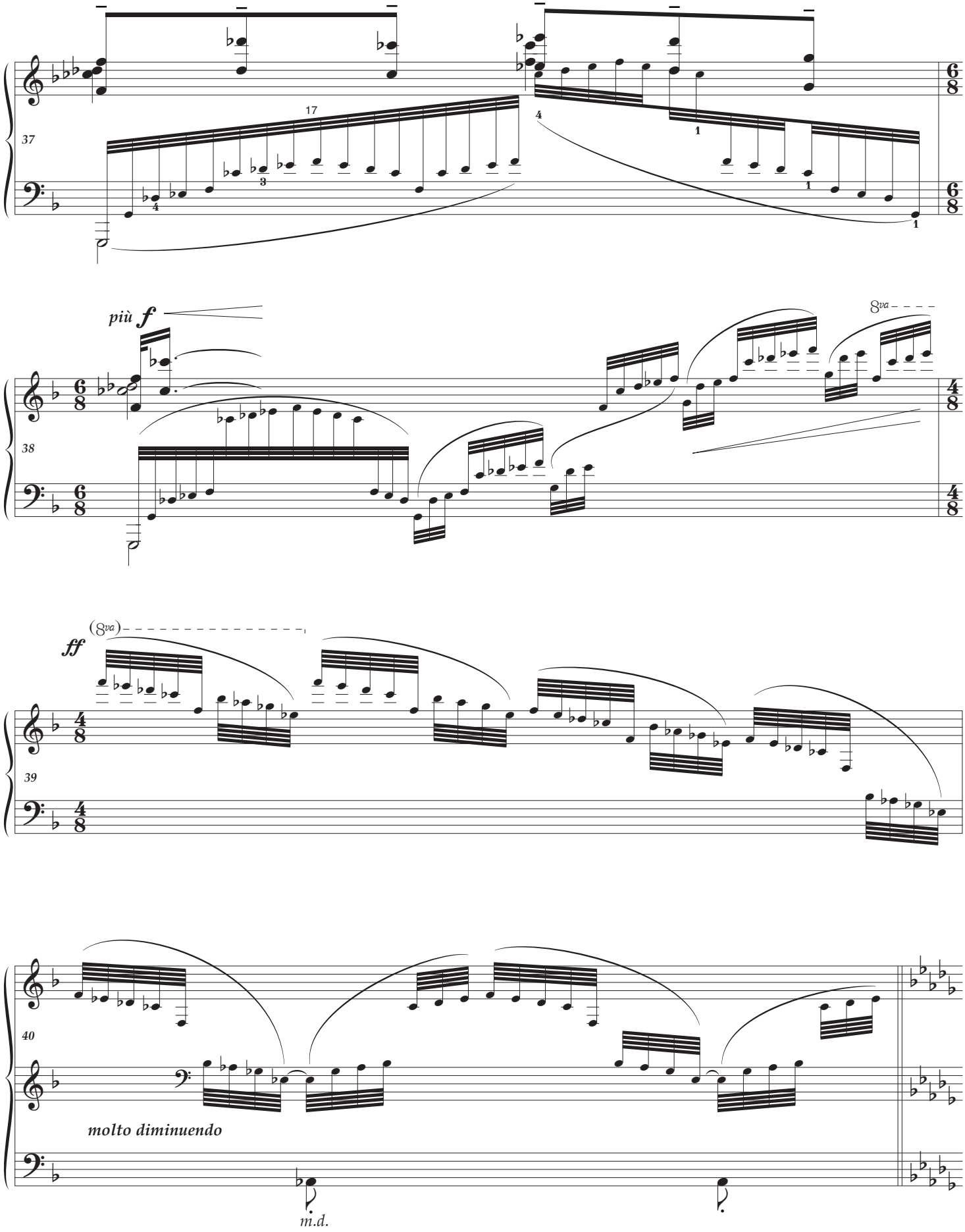


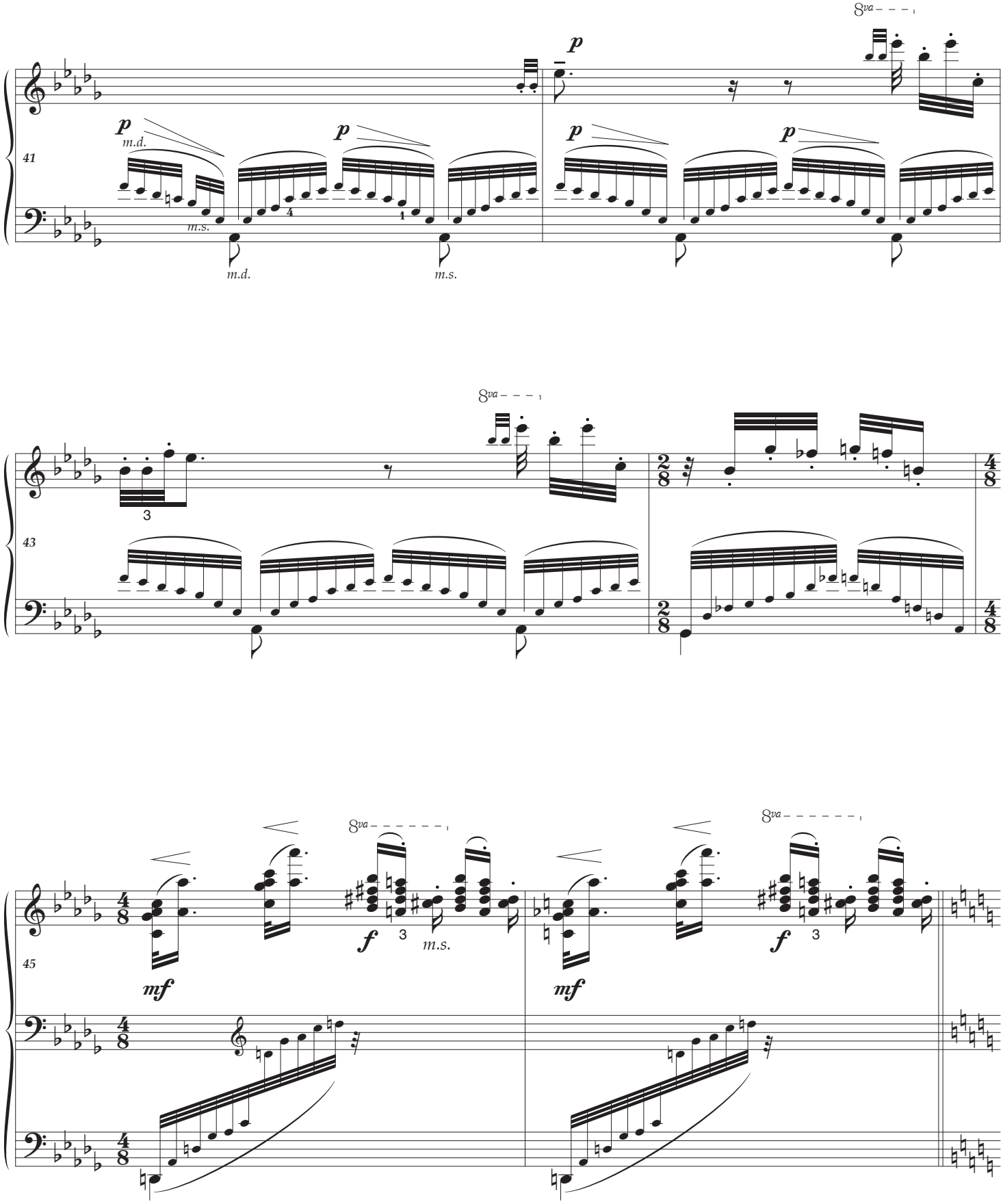

8va
9
8va
11
sempre pp
en se rapprochant peu à peu
8va
13
15
molto crescendo
8va

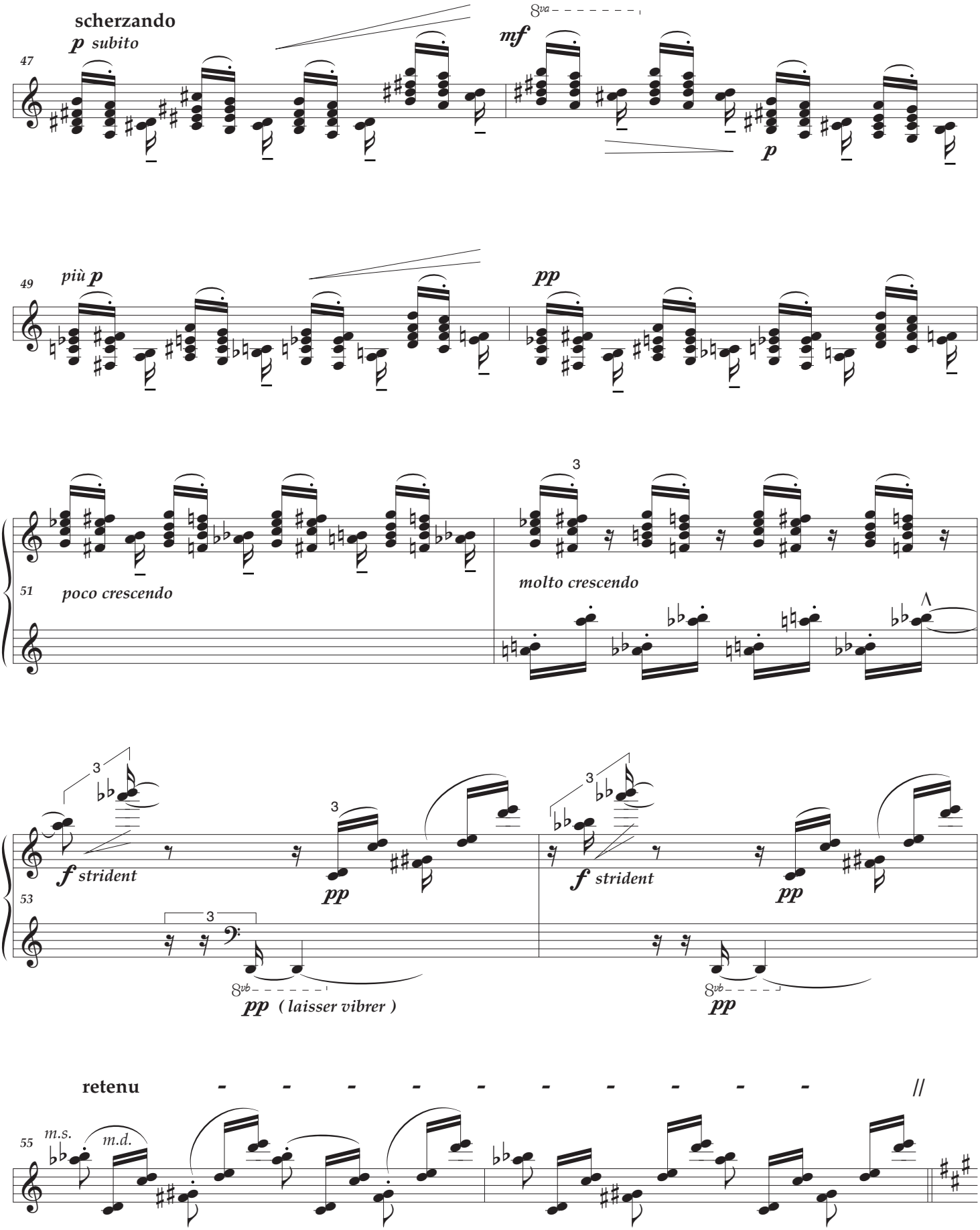

8va
m.s.
m.d.
ff
17
right hand glissando
p
più p
8vb
20
pp
6
cre - - - - - - - - - - - -
22
8va
scen - - - - - - - - - - - - - do - - - - - - - - - - -
23
(8va)
f
14
m.d.
25
m.s.
sotto
m.s.
8va
8va


(8va)
8va
8va
27
f
très en dehors
8va
8va
29
f
2/8
2/8
30
ff
10
2/8
4/8
8va
8va
31
f
4/8
3/8


(8va)
32
33
p
p
m.d.
34
p
più p
35
f
15
36
f
1


37
17
38
più f
8va
39
ff
(8va)
40
molto diminuendo
m.d.


41
43
45
8va
p
m.d.
m.s.
mf
f


scherzando
p subito
47
8va
mf
p
più p
49
pp
poco crescendo
51
molto crescendo
3
f strident
pp
53
8vb
pp (laisser vibrer)
retenu
55
m.s.
m.d.
//

mouvement (plus à l'aise)

sempre ***pp***

57

volubile

m.s.

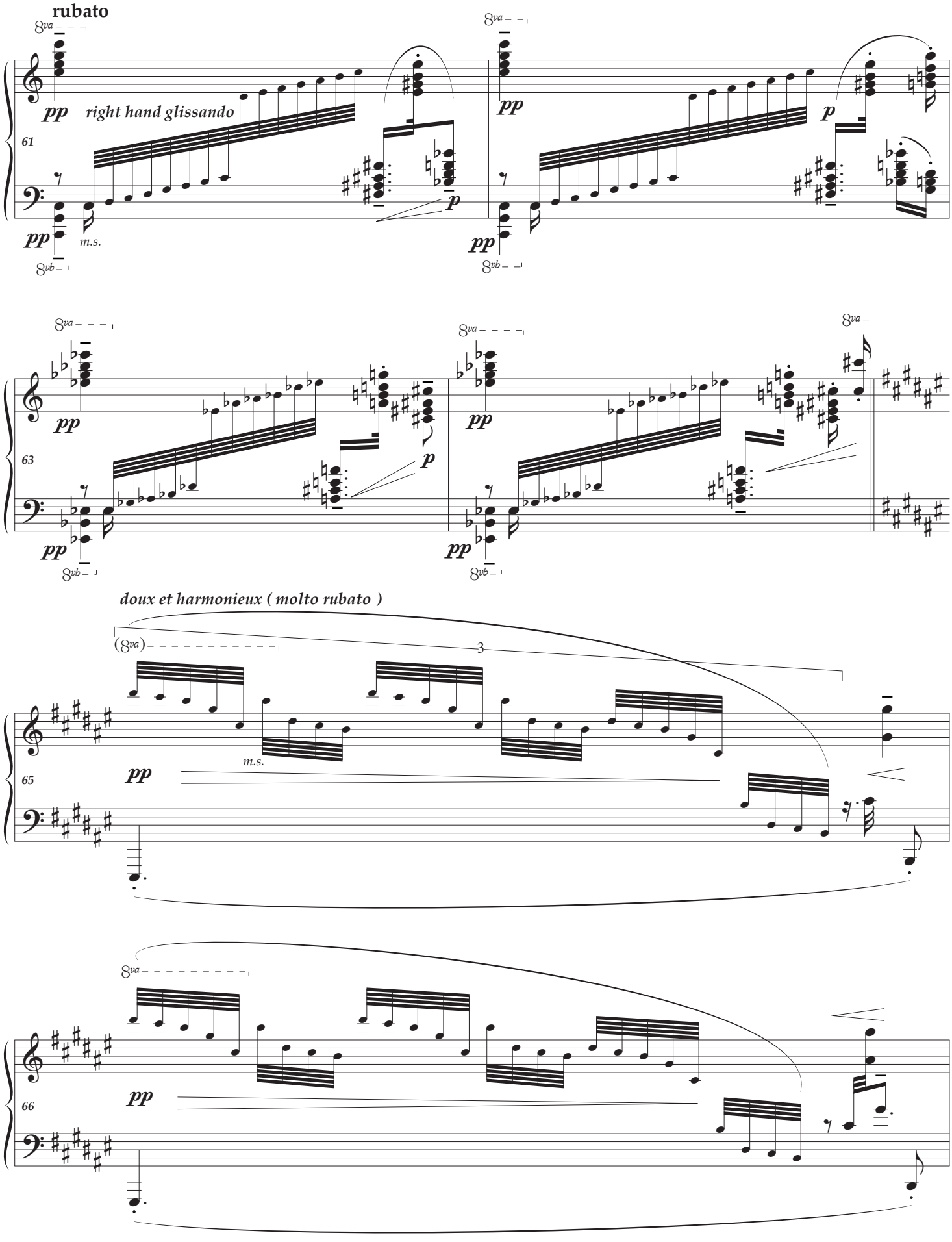
58

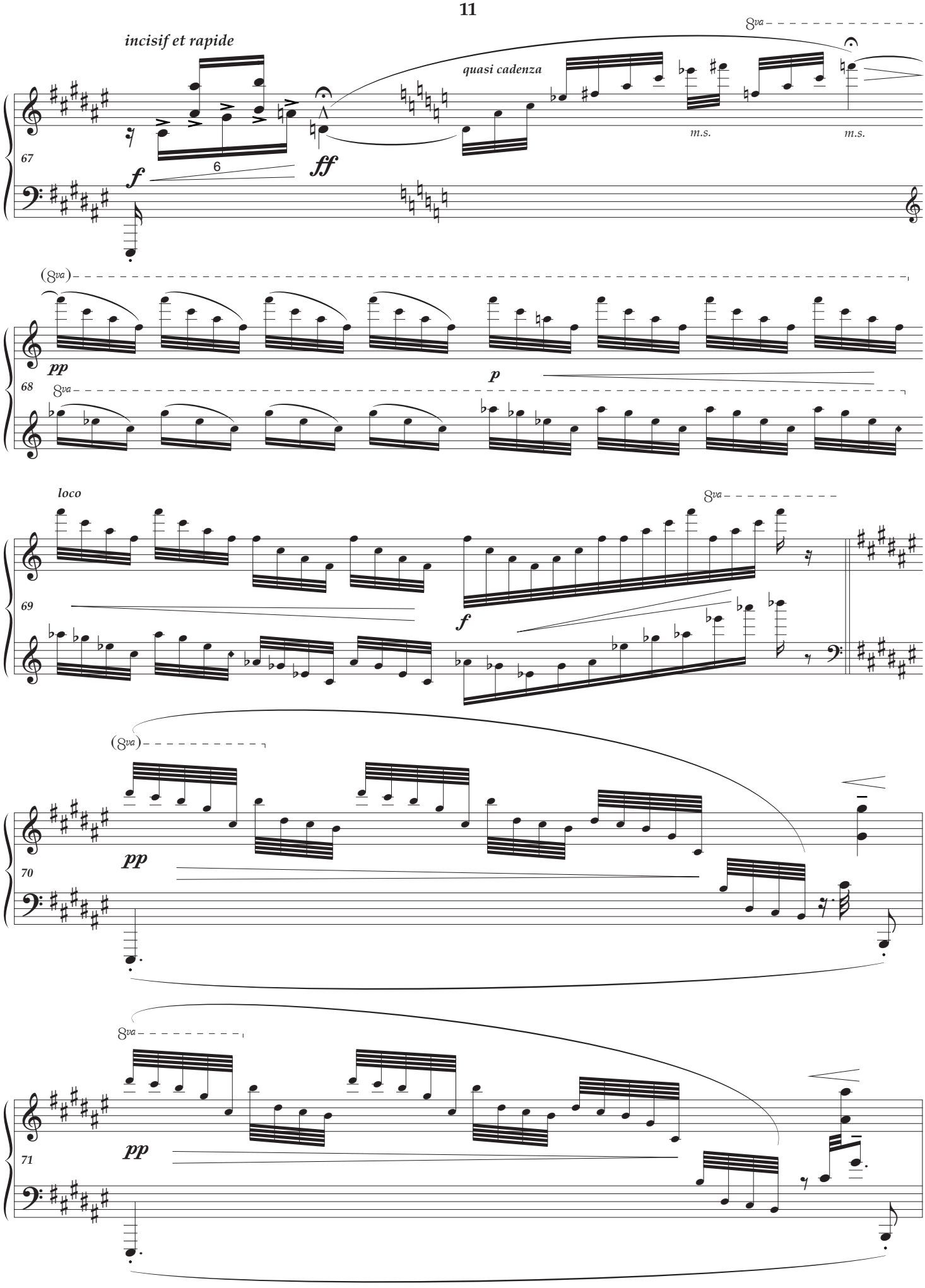
59

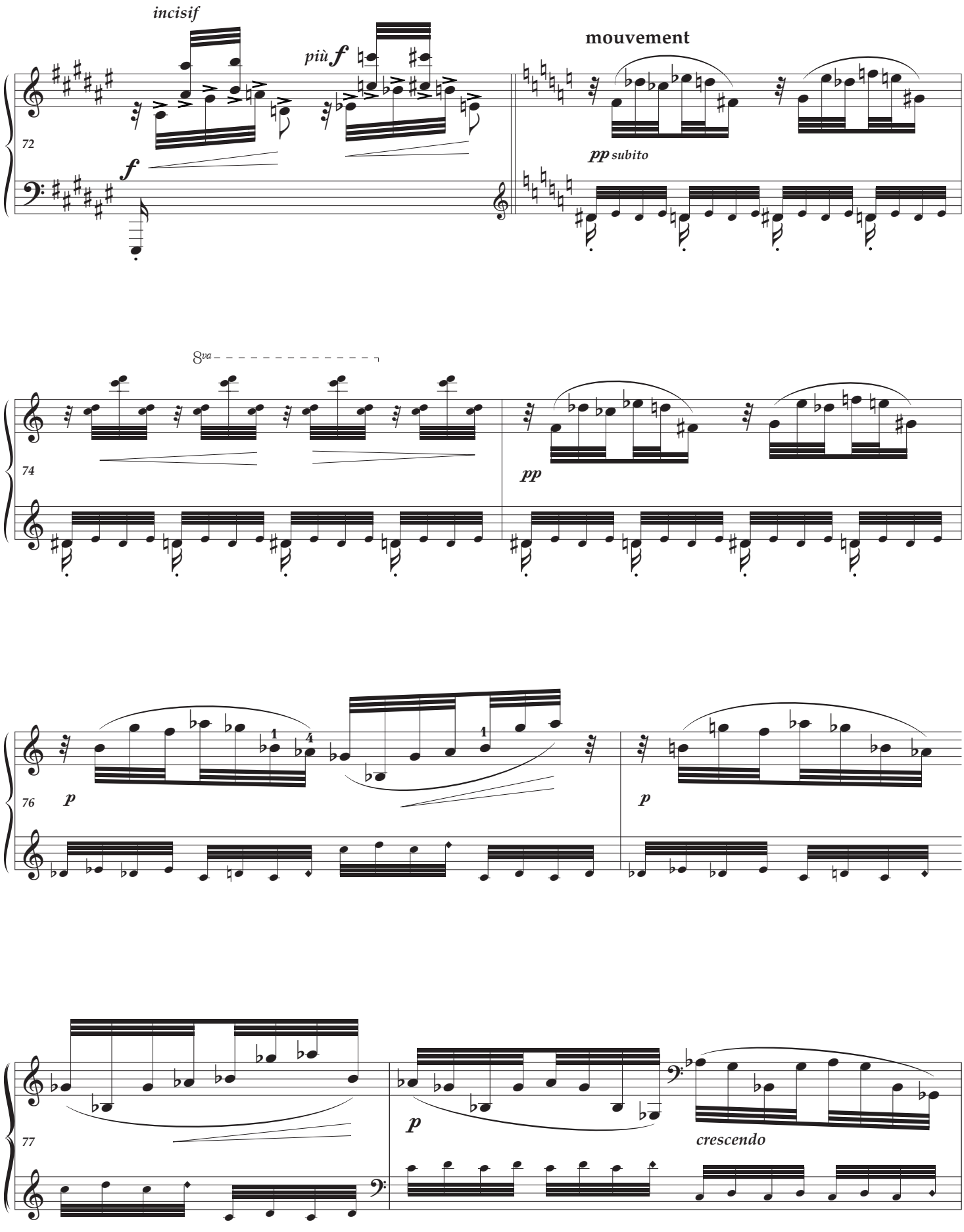
les basses légères et harmonieuses

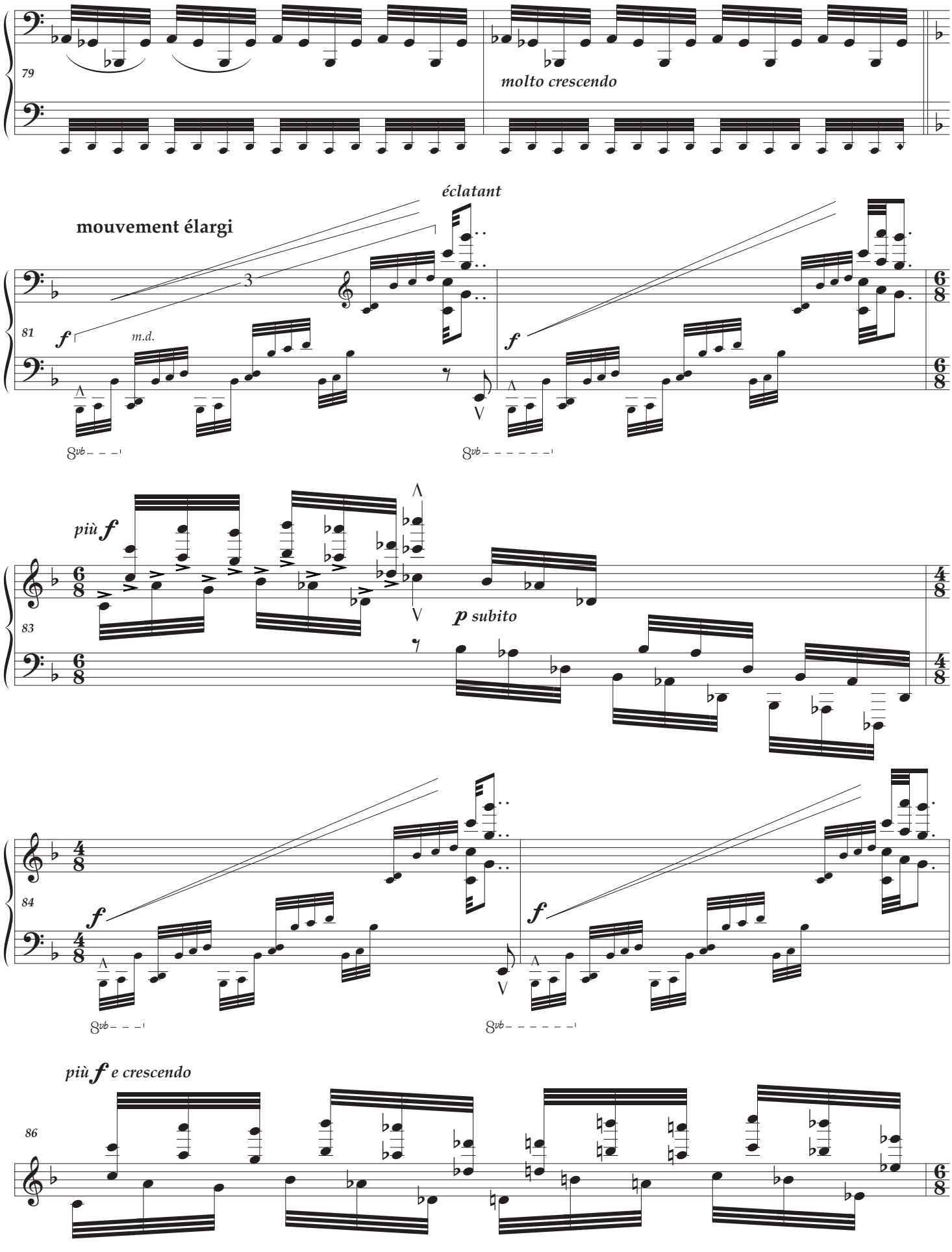
60

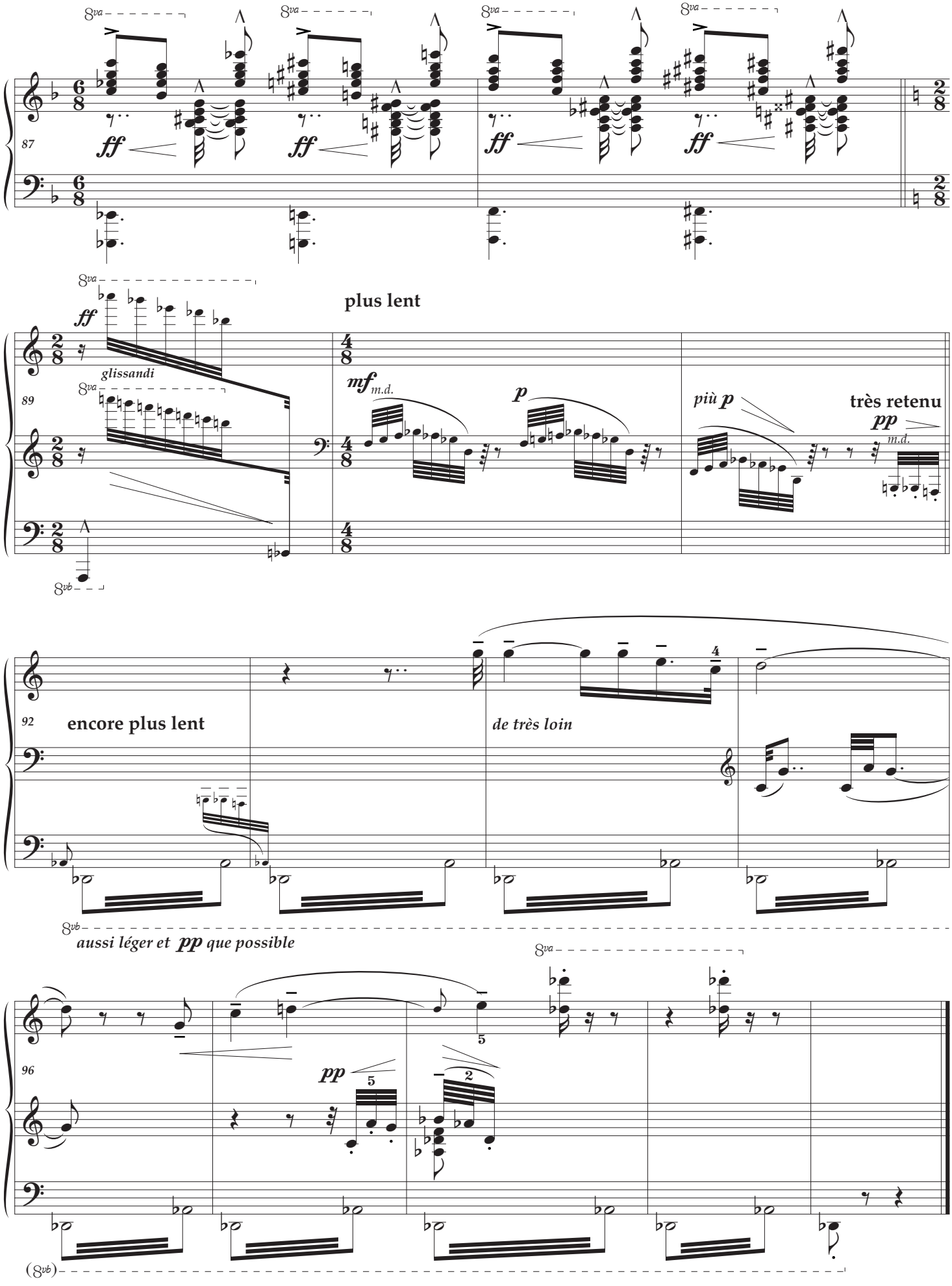
pp


rubato
8va
pp
right hand glissando
61
m.s.
8vb
p
63
doux et harmonieux (molto rubato)
(8va)
3
65
66


incisif et rapide
quasi cadenza
8va
m.s.
m.s.
67
f
6
ff
(8va)
pp
68
8va
p
loco
8va
69
f
(8va)
pp
70
8va
pp
71


incisif
più f
f
mouvement
pp subito
72
8va
74
pp
p
76
p
p
77
crescendo


79
molto crescendo
éclatant
mouvement élargi
81
f
m.d.
3
8vb
f
8vb
più f
83
p subito
84
f
8vb
f
8vb
più f e crescendo
86



(... Feux d'artifice)

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & French vocabulary

Duration: 5'

- 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?
- **1-16** I have reversed the hands for this tricky opening, thereby gaining a millisecond for the impending leaps, and enabling continuity of the accompaniment in **7 & 9**
- **17** Black key glissandos can be painful… try using all four nails simultaneously (exluding the thumb); play the first note with the other hand — the greater the nail angle, the louder it will sound.
- **37** LH accompaniment slightly modified
- **38** the time signature 5/8 here — surely a misprint
- **41-43** It is unclear whether to play the RH grace notes before the beat; at the 4th beat of **42** it certainly allows more time.
- **52** Debussy has confusingly written the LH as dotted notes
- **61-64** these pianissimo glissandos will certainly respond to the technique described in **17**
- **76-80** the final LH demisemiquaver (diamond notehead) can be omitted
- **83** The time signature is mysteriously missing here, and the value of the unique rest seems inaccurate.
- **86** the original time signature of 2/8 seems impossible — compare with **72**
- **98** by slightly delaying the final treble "Marseillaise" E, it is possible to keep the bass tremolo going without interruption

modérément animé	*fairly animated*
léger, égal et lointain	*light, even and from afar*
marqué	*marked*
en se rapprochant peu à peu	*gradually becoming nearer*
très en dehors	*much in relief*
strident	*piercing*
laisser vibrer	*keep the pedal on*
plus à l'aise	*more calm*
volubile	*flowing, fluent*
les basses légères et harmonieuses	*the bass light and harmonious*
doux	*gentle*
incisif et rapide	*cutting and rapid*
mouvement élargi	*broader tempo*
éclatant	*spectacular*
très retenu	*seriously held back*
encore plus lent	*even slower tempo*
de très loin	*very distant*
aussi léger et *pp* que possible	*as light and pp as possible*