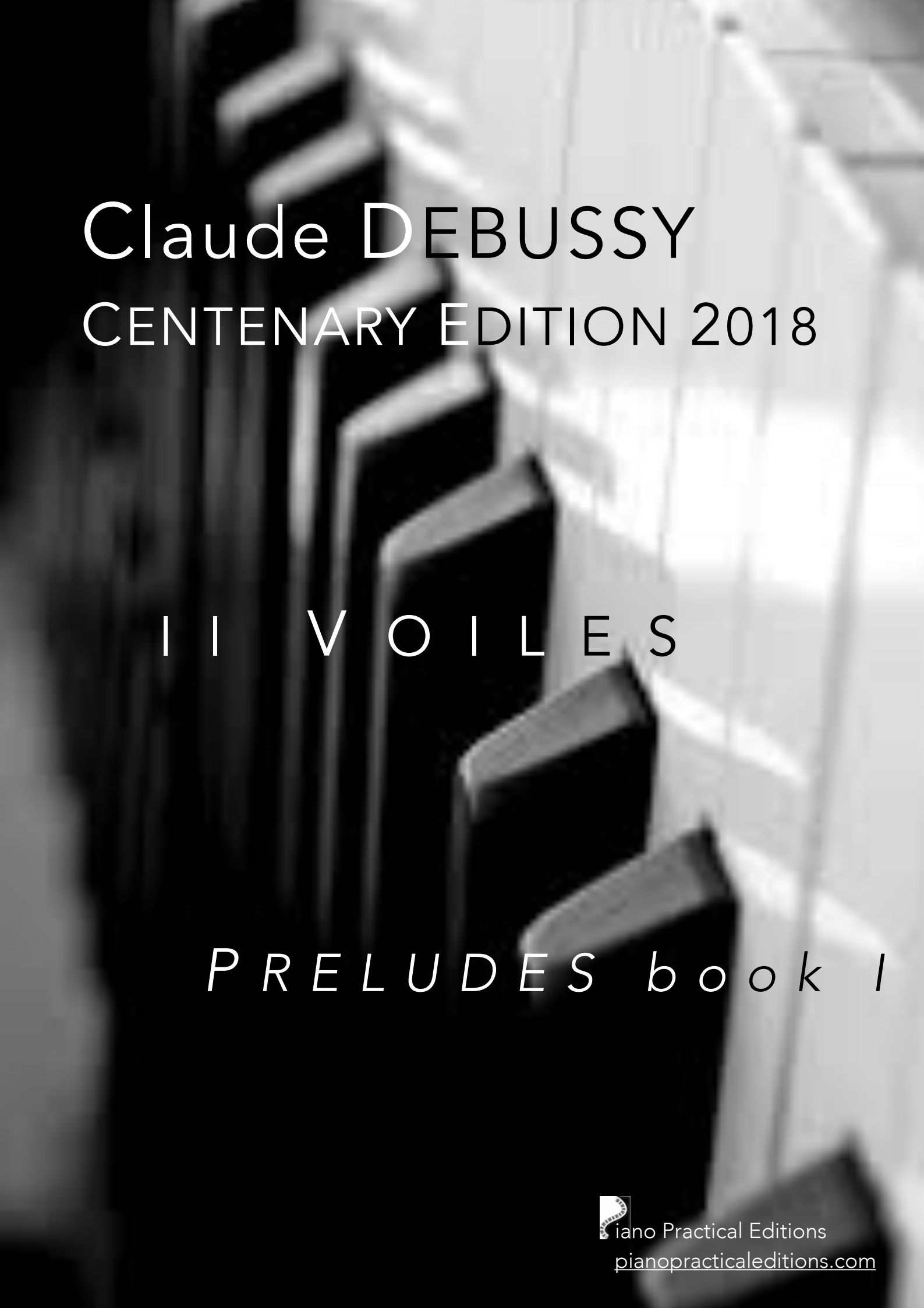

Claude DEBUSSY

CENTENARY EDITION 2018

II VOILES

PRELUDES book I

Piano Practical Editions
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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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Ray Alston : contact@pianopracticaleditions.com

Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

II VOILES

PRELUDES BOOK I

"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.

Much has been said about the motif of descending thirds and the typical whole tone scale, so essential in Debussy's "impressionist" music. I personally love the the oriental theme, especially when it returns in the treble accompanied with quasi-glissandi over the B♭ pedal point.

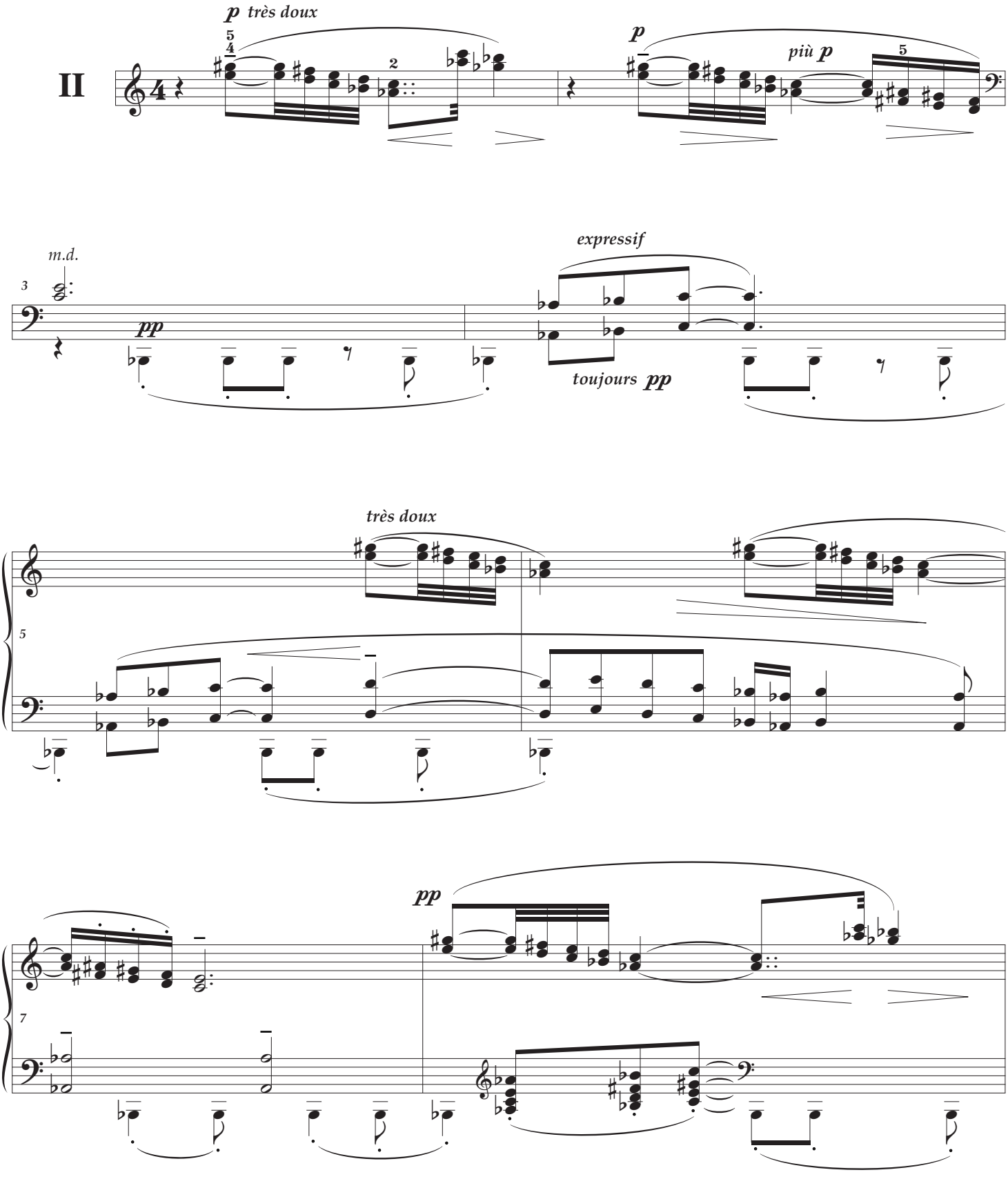
Here is a truly original work, full of character and ethereal mystery, ambiguous both in title and content. I believe the *voiles* are in fact veils, possibly inspired by an American dancer (Loïe Fuller), who used shrouds and unusual lighting to produce imaginative visual effects. "Sails" are also a possible translation, moving us across calm waters into an atmospheric world which is difficult to describe with mere words.

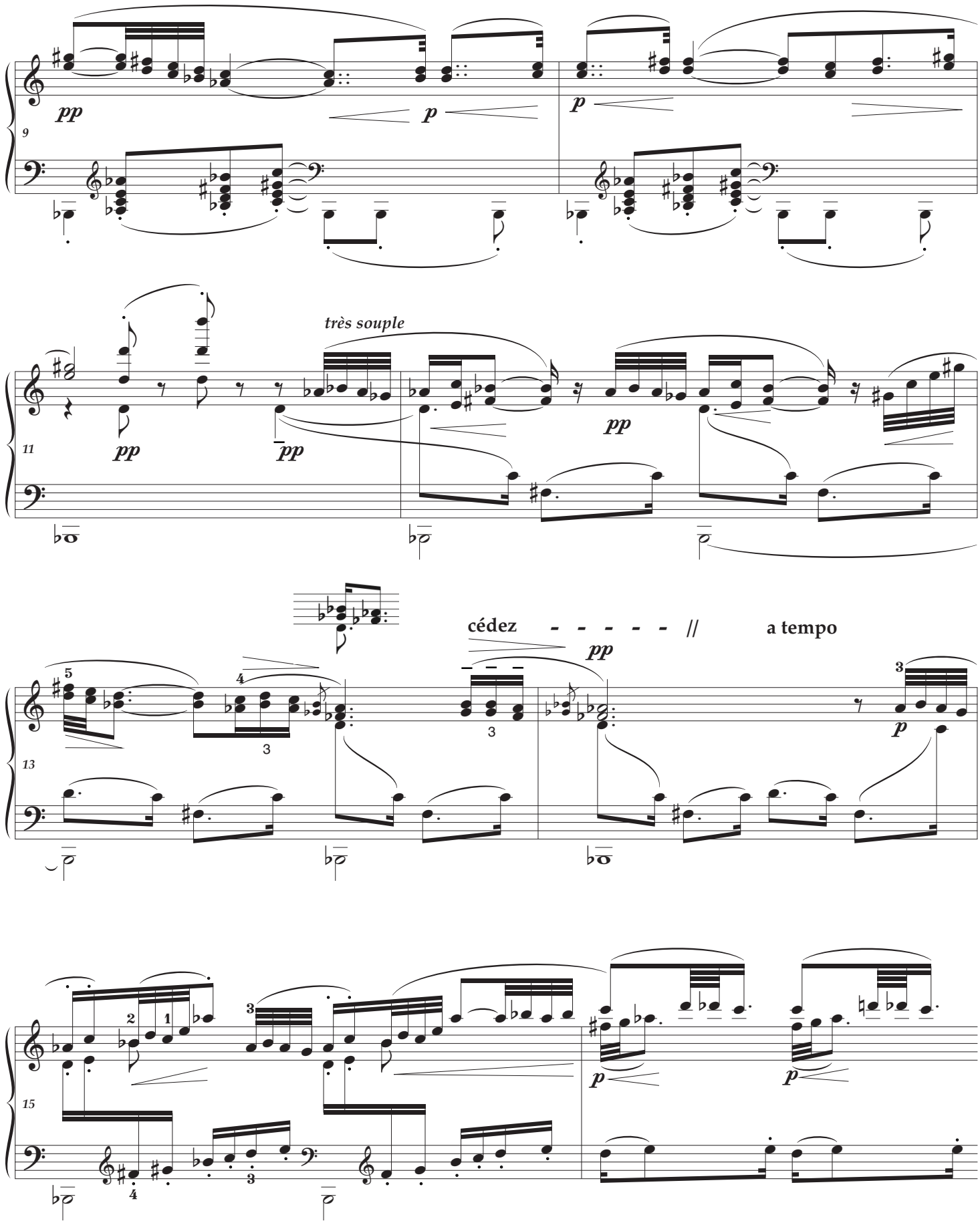
During the course of this centenary year Piano Practical Editions has become a creative and critical working publication. I always felt there were too many bar lines in this prelude and present the music in 4/4 time underlining the long melodic lines and broad feeling of timelessness. I have suggested some fingering in spite of this 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!*

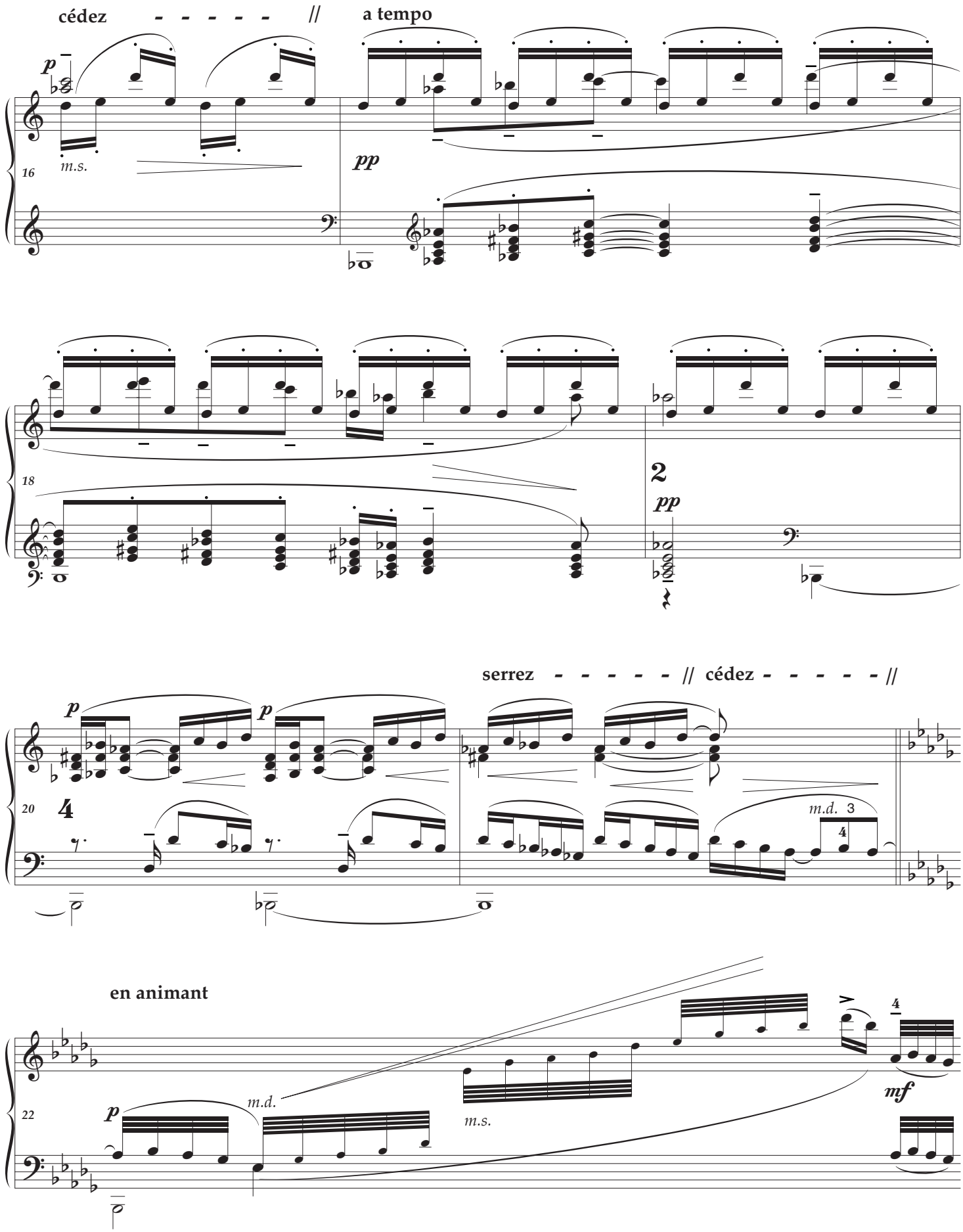
Modéré

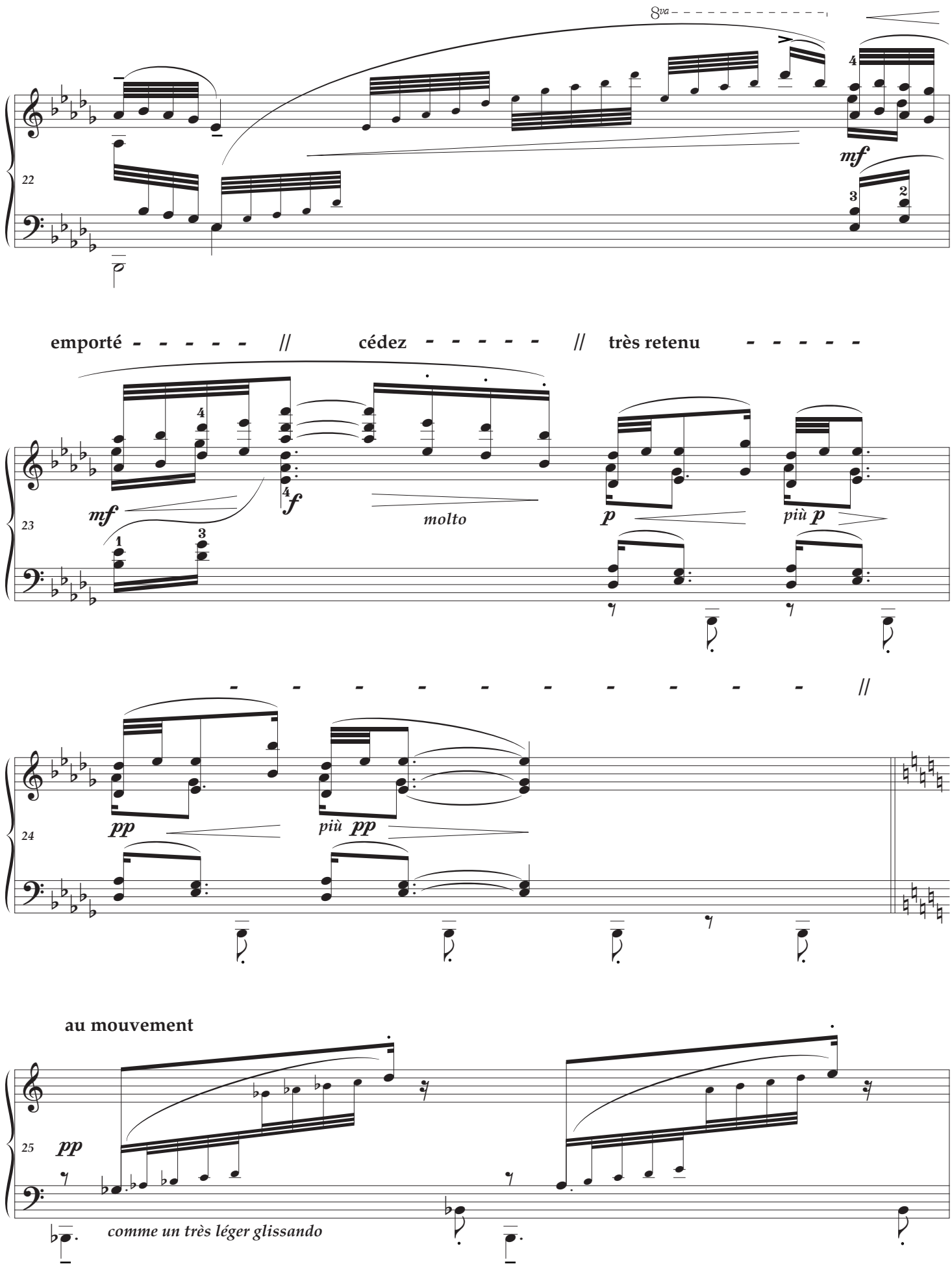
[♪ = 88]
(dans un rythme sans rigueur et caressant)

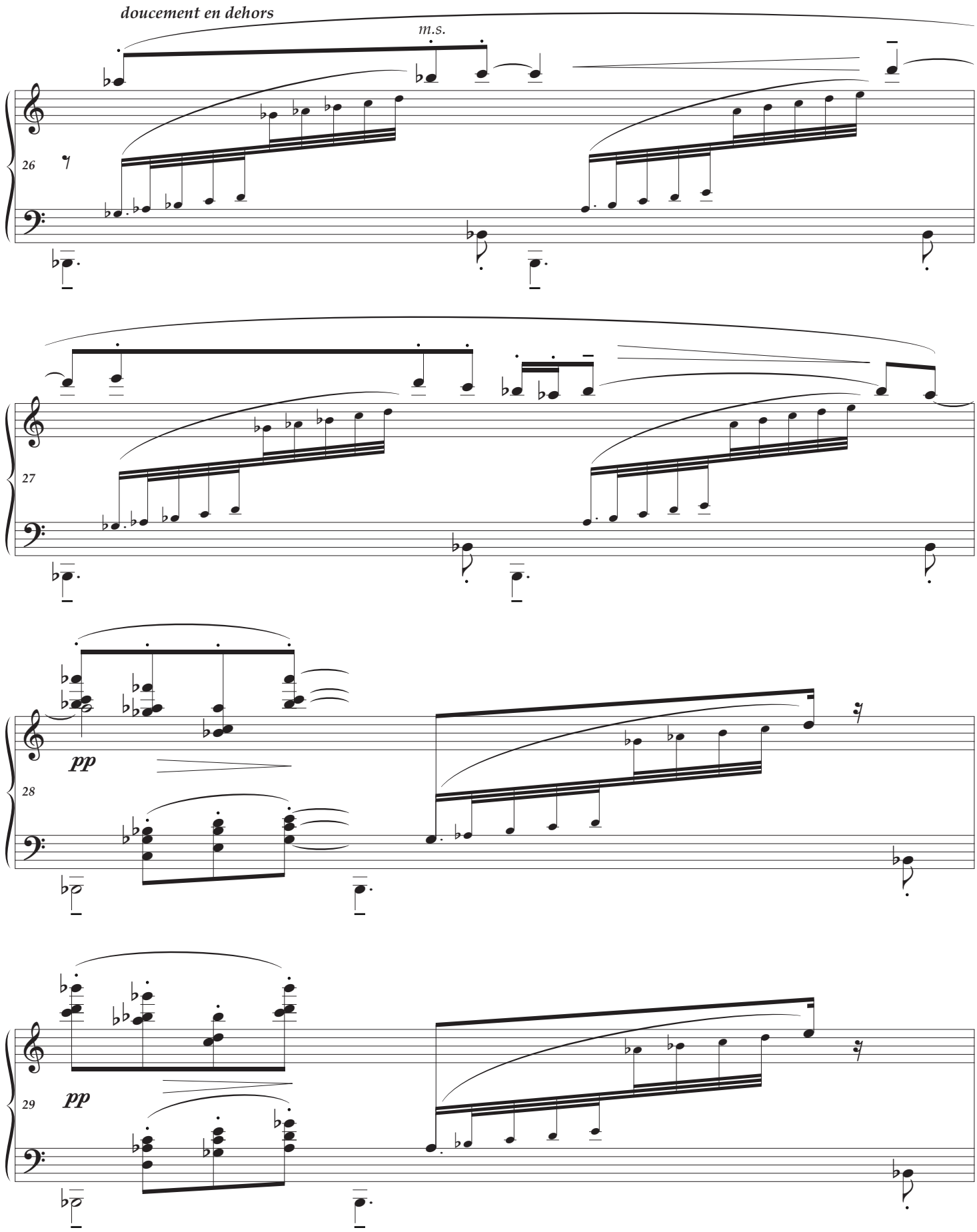
II



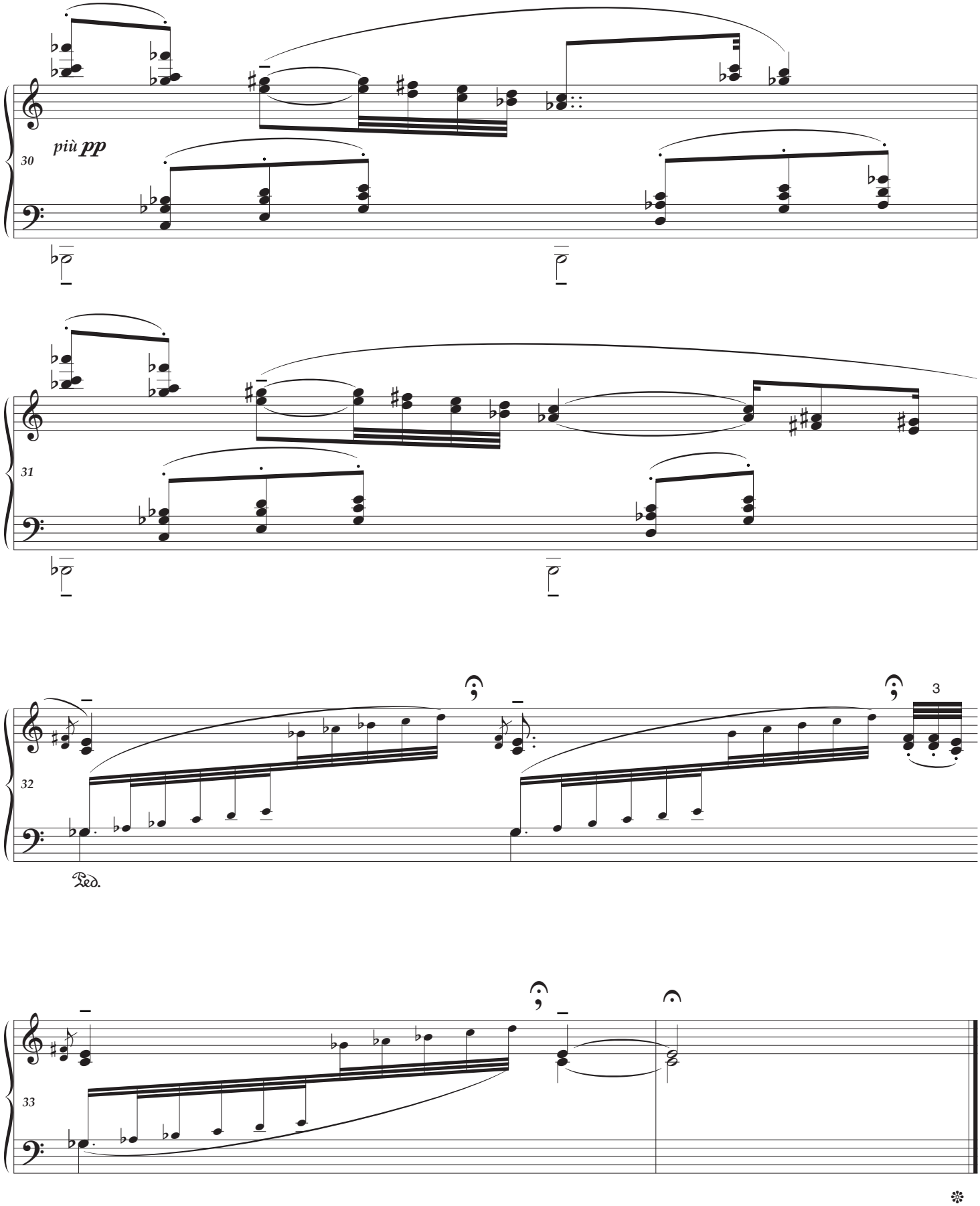

pp
p
p
très souple
pp
pp
pp
cédez - - - - - - //
a tempo
pp
p
p
p


cédez
a tempo
16
m.s.
pp
18
2
pp
serrez
cédez
20
4
m.d.
3
4
22
en animant
m.d.
m.s.
mf


8va
22
mf
23
emporté - - - - - // cédez - - - - - // très retenu - - - - -
mf
f
molto
p
più p
24
pp
più pp
- - - - - - - - - - - - //
au mouvement
25
pp
comme un très léger glissando


doucement en dehors
m.s.
26
27
pp
28
pp
29

très apaisé et très atténué jusqu'à la fin



(...Voiles)

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

Duration: 4'25

- In the first book of Preludes, the composer indicated 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?

- **32-33** Debussy's pedal indication here is curious as the entire work requires a virtually continuous use of the pedal. I personally like to change the pedal at each repetition of the bass G♭.

---

dans un rythme sans rigeur et caressant	*with a yielding and caressing pulse*
très doux	*very gentle*
très souple	*very flexible*
cédez	*slow down*
serrez	*accelerate*
en animant	*animating*
emporté	*exalted*
retenu	*held back*
comme un très léger glissando	*like a very light glissando*
doucement en dehors	*gently in relief*
très apaisé et très atténtué jusqu'à la fin	*very calm and very muted until the end*