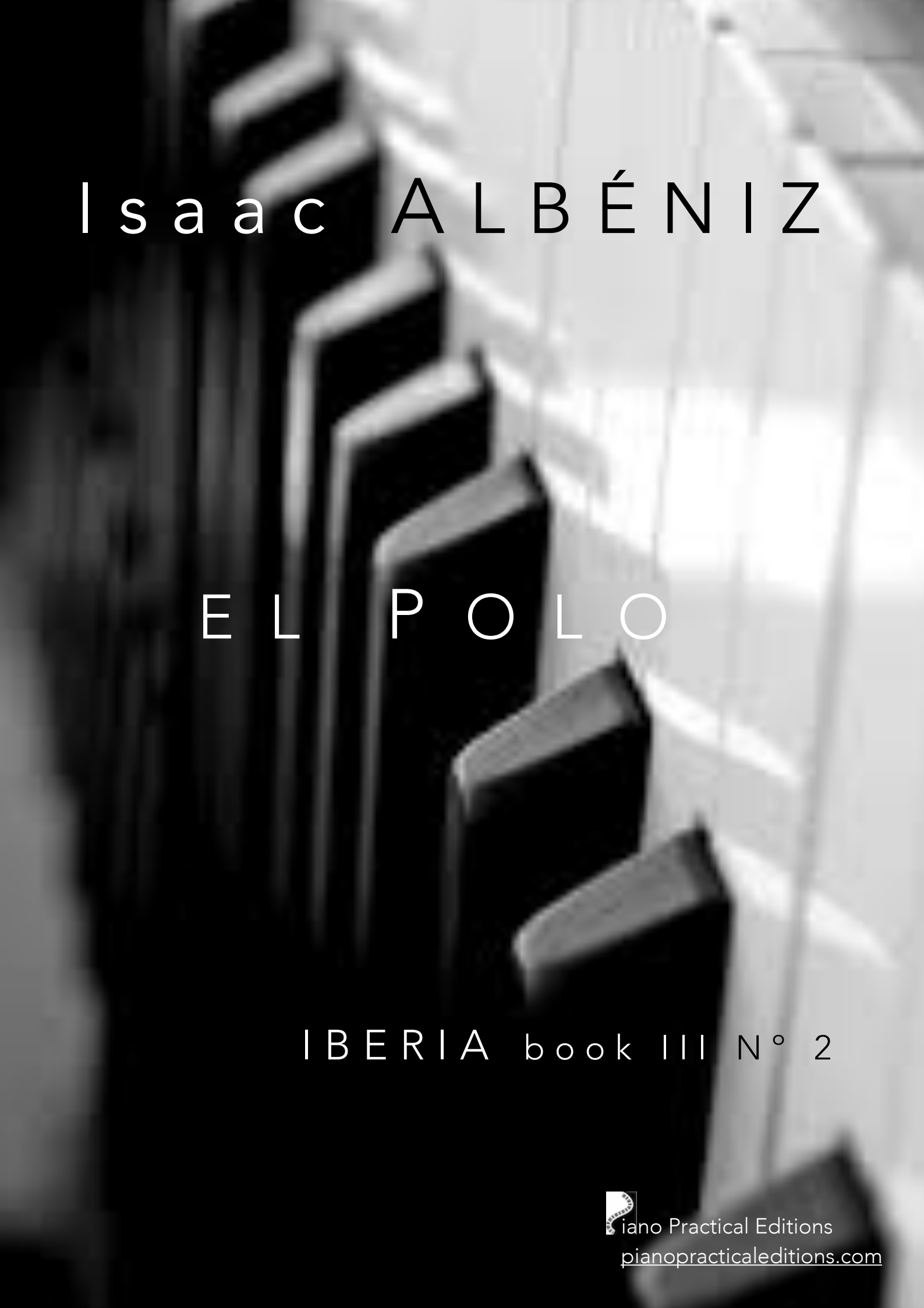

Isaac ALBÉNIZ

EL POLO

IBERIA book III N° 2

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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Isaac ALBÉNIZ 1860 - 1909

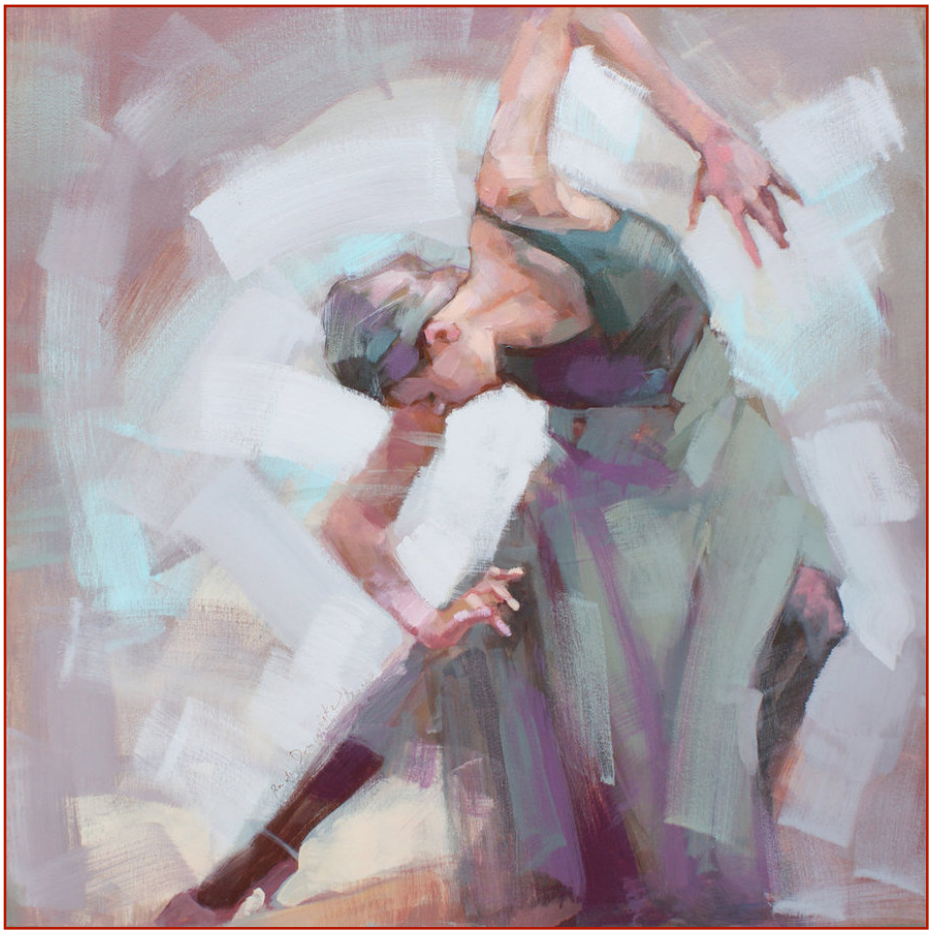
EL POLO

de la suite "IBERIA"

The fractured rhythm, suggesting anguished sobbing and hiccups, is quite obsessive, Albeniz varying an *idée fixe* with consummate skill and hispanic musicianship. We are again deep in Andalusia with *palo flamenco*, a dance in which a *cantaor* sings of suffering while the troubled and melancholic pulse further accompanies a nostalgic second theme.

Debussy was inspired by and indebted to the music of Albéniz, and Messiaen considered *El Polo* a masterpiece (Yvonne Loriod performed all 4 volumes of *Iberia*).

This particular flamenco style originated in 18th century Spanish music and was a source of emotional intensity for Bizet in the creation of Carmen. The third volume of *Iberia* was dedicated to Marguerite Hasselmans, a fine pianist and Fauré's mistress, although Albéniz also added a dedication to Joaquin Malats, the Catalan pianist who gave the first performance of *Iberia* in Madrid — "Al más querido, al único, al artista vibrante y universal, a Malats !!! "*



duende*
Renata Domagalska
(with kind permission of the artist)

When I first heard Alicia De Larrocha perform Albeniz I was amazed and impressed by the language and technical mastery of both composer and interpreter. And when I was finally able to attempt Iberia, I noticed that the text (Éditions Salabert) was often difficult to study: there were inaccuracies, many accidentals and too many instructions, coupled with sub-standard engraving; so I decided to edit the music myself.

In spite of passing through a number of key changes, the composer has curiously written this work entirely with a key signature of 4 flats. Was this through negligence or by design? If the former, I humbly offer this edition which makes quite a few changes of key and time signature, rendering, I believe, the text easier to comprehend and play by eliminating quite a few challenging accidentals.

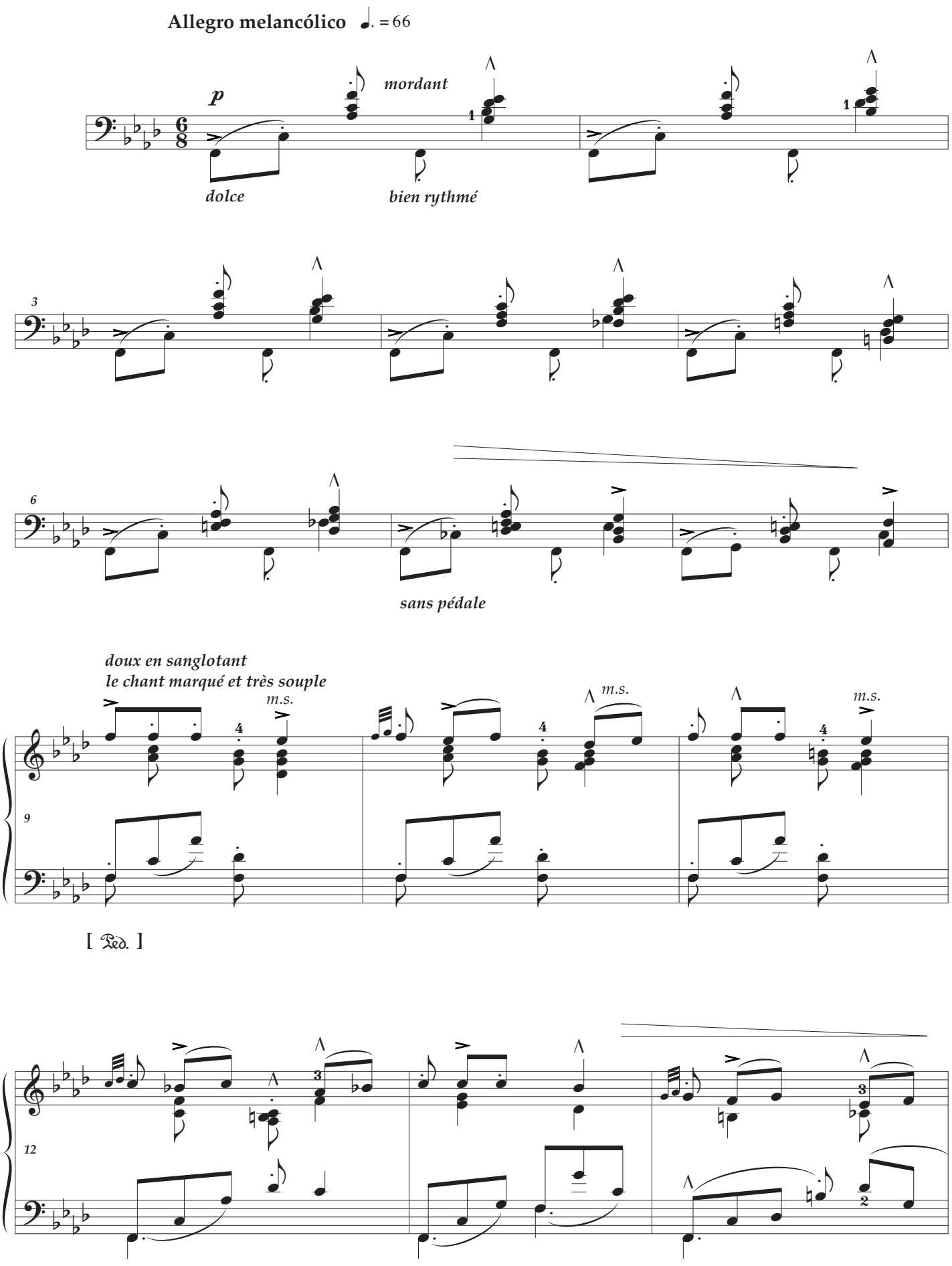
I plead guilty to not having religiously copied every dot, accent, sign, pedal marking and many others. Albeniz was very zealous in having often embellished many, sometimes conflicting, instructions and I have tried to simplify the music within reason relying upon present-day sophisticated pianists and teachers reading the score philosophically.

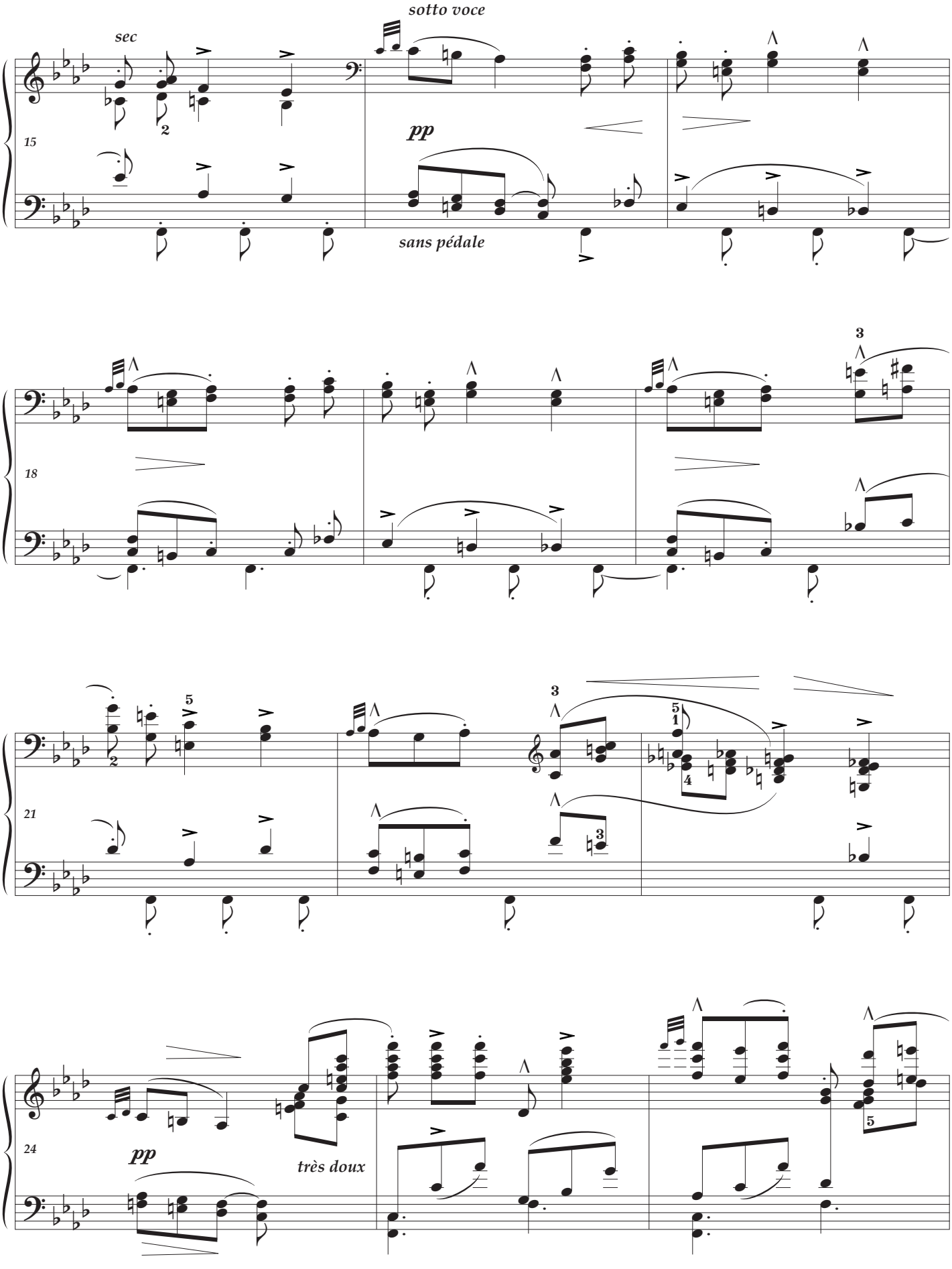
Albéniz was an extrovert with a keen sense of humour, loved and respected by all who knew him. In this wonderful and imaginative music, he was also flamboyant with long descriptions in French and pedalling directions which sometimes seem to be a whirlwind of far-fetched impossibilities — unreasonable and endearing as they are.

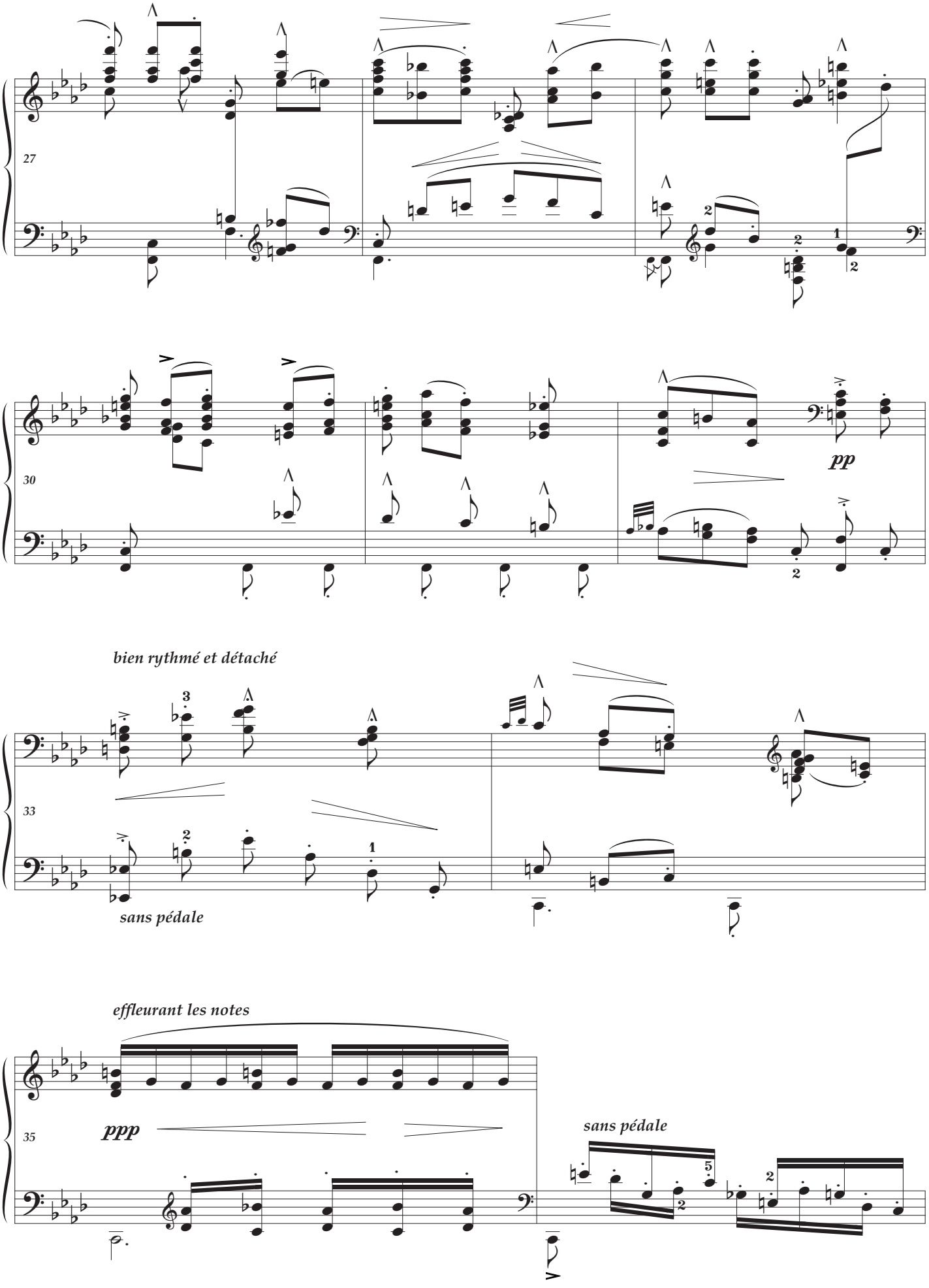
In addition to some suggested fingering, the appendix contains comments, afterthoughts and a French vocabulary. Redistribution between the hands comes under close scrutiny to make certain passages easier or more persuasive.

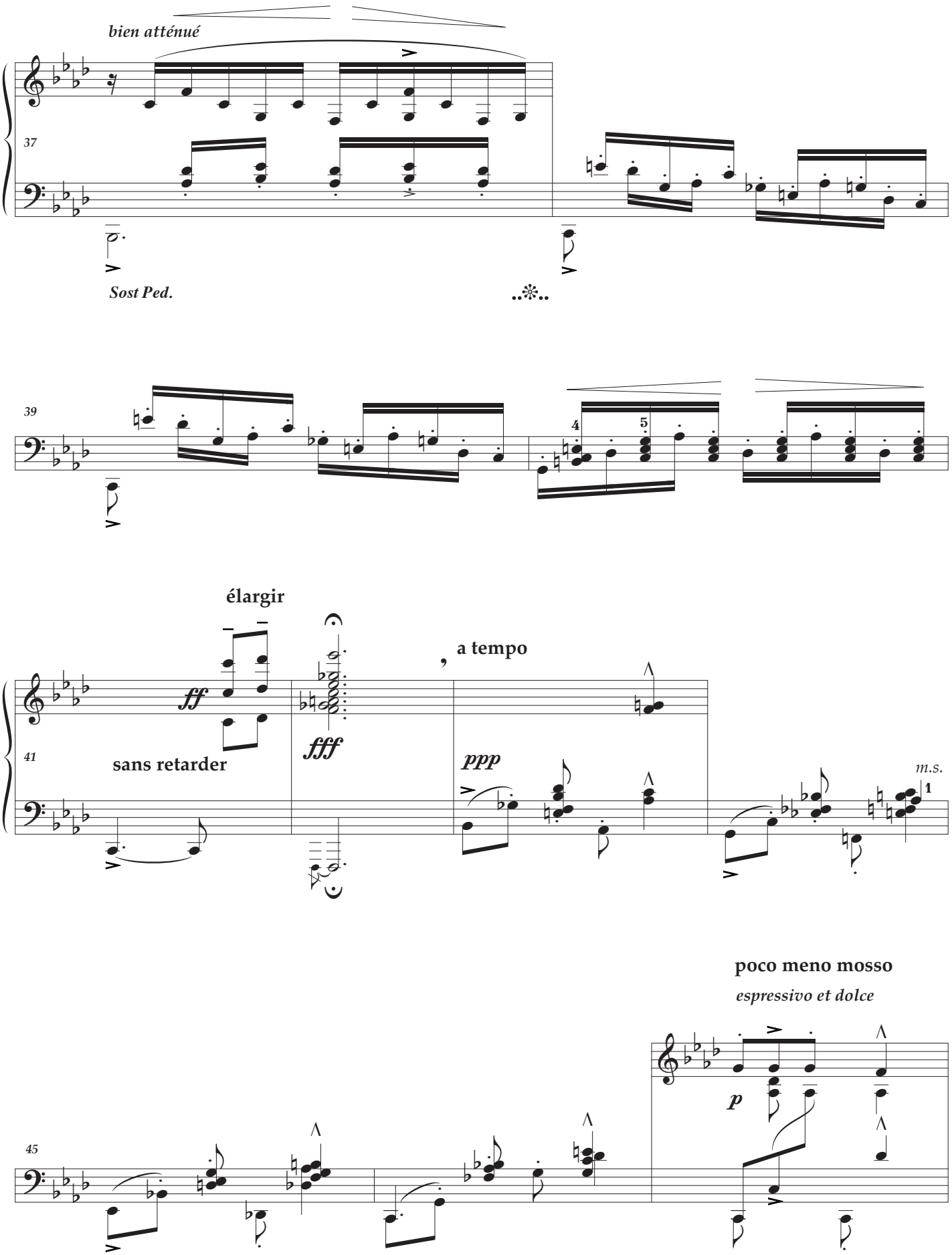
* "To the most loved, to the unique, vibrant and universal artist, to Malats!!!"
* A heightened state of emotion, expression and authenticity, often connected with flamenco

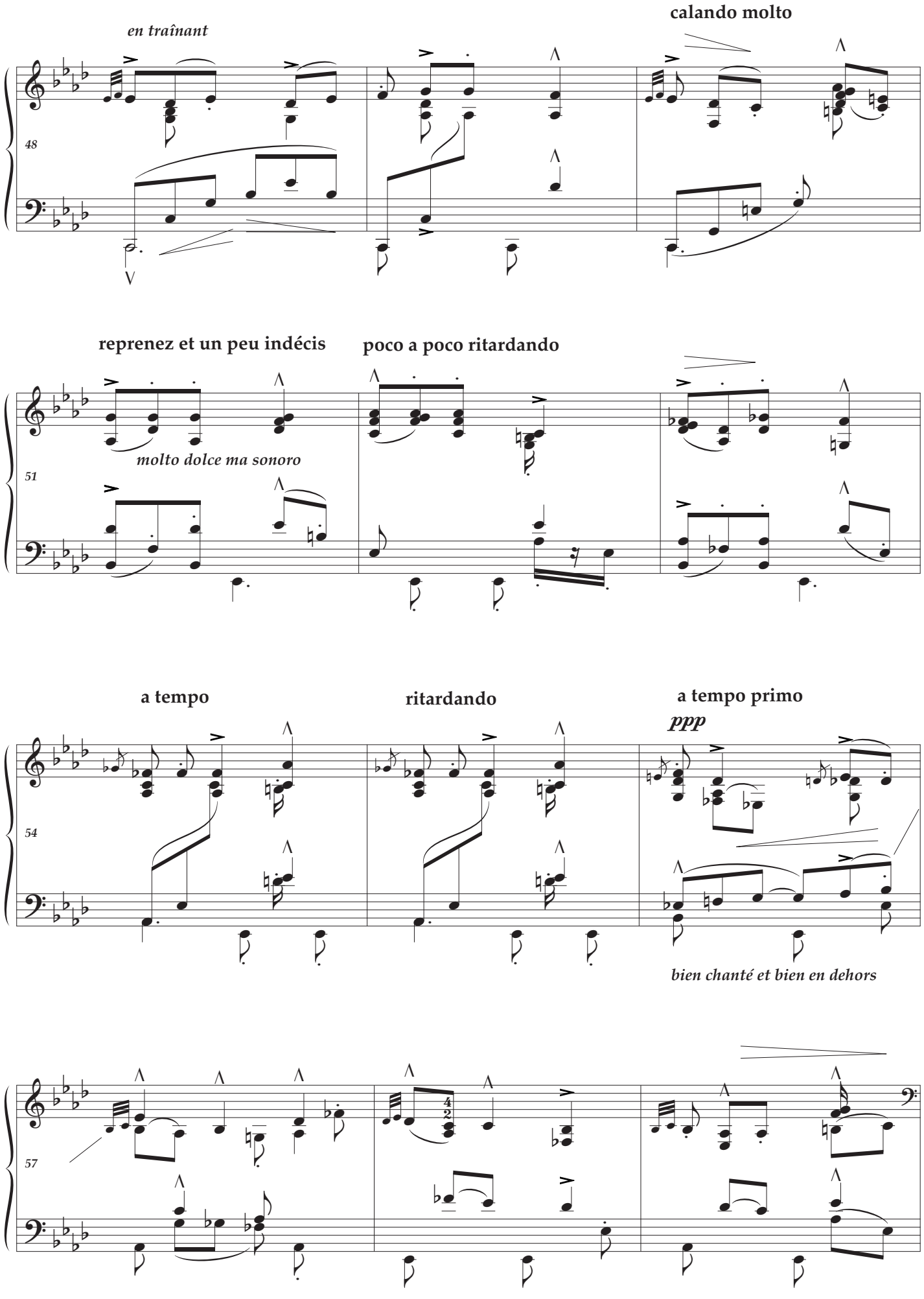
EL POLO

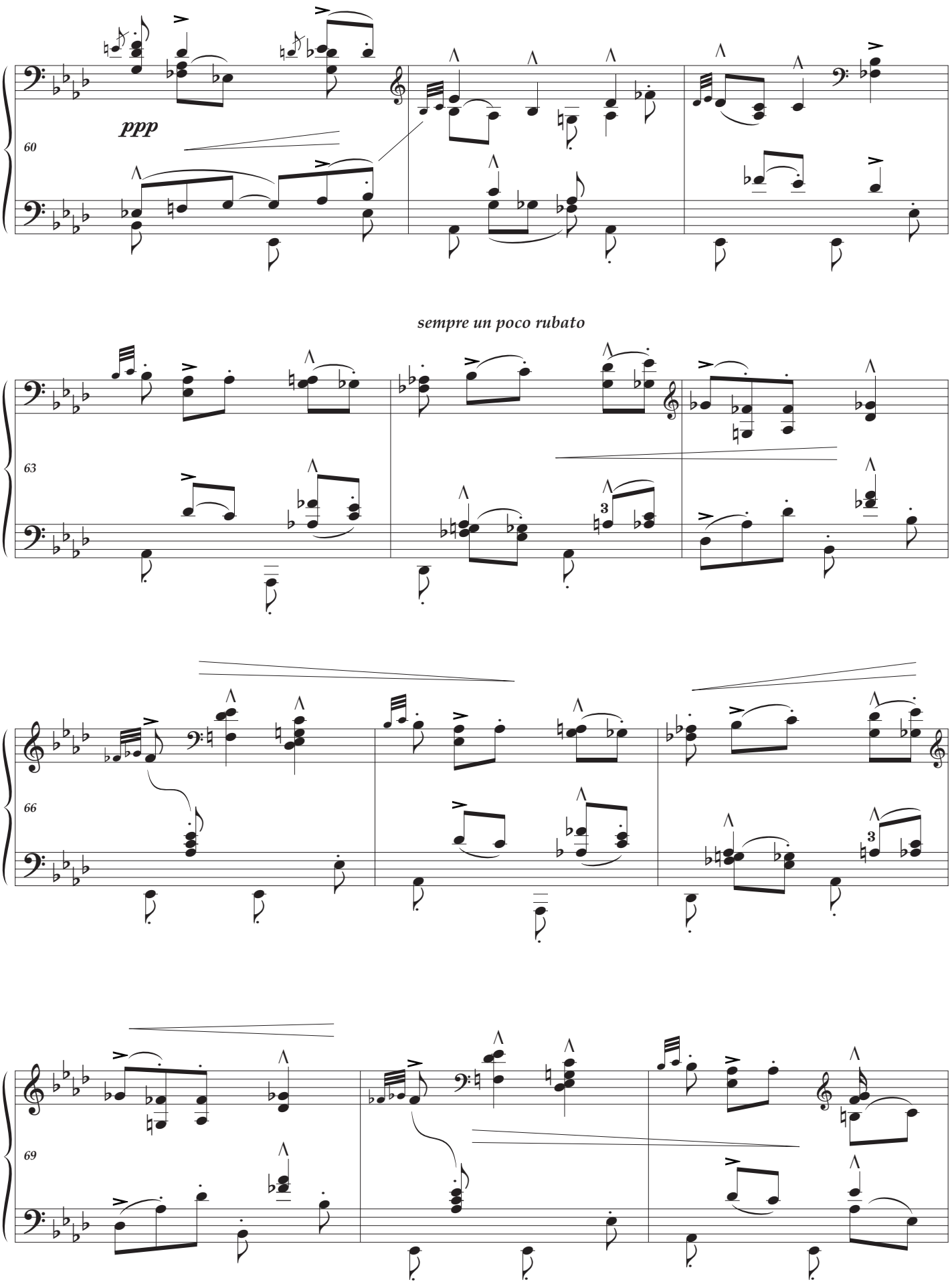

Allegro melancólico ♩. = 66
p
mordant
dolce
bien rythmé
sans pédale
doux en sanglotant
le chant marqué et très souple
m.s.
[Ped.]

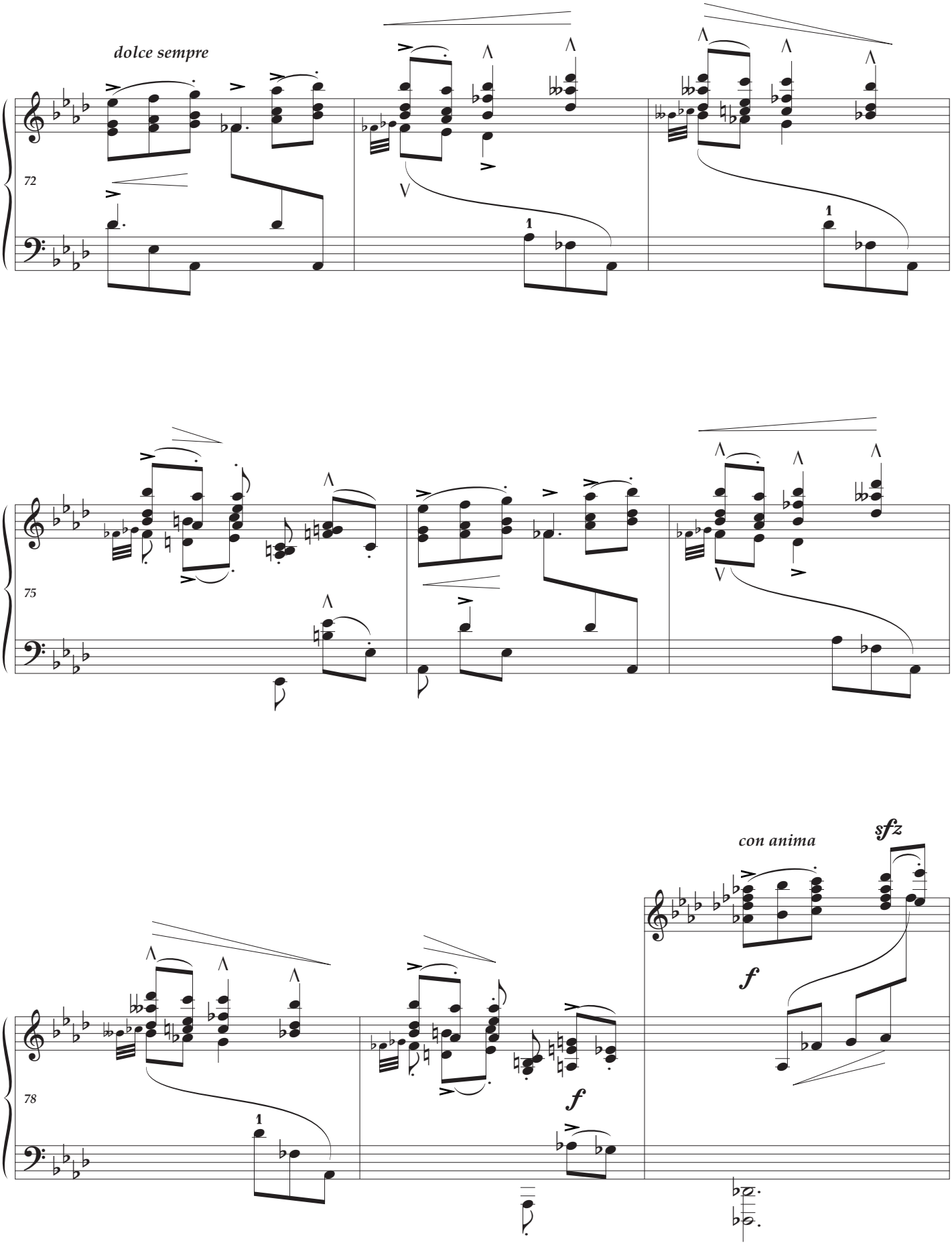

sotto voce
sec
15
pp
sans pédale
18
21
24
pp
très doux

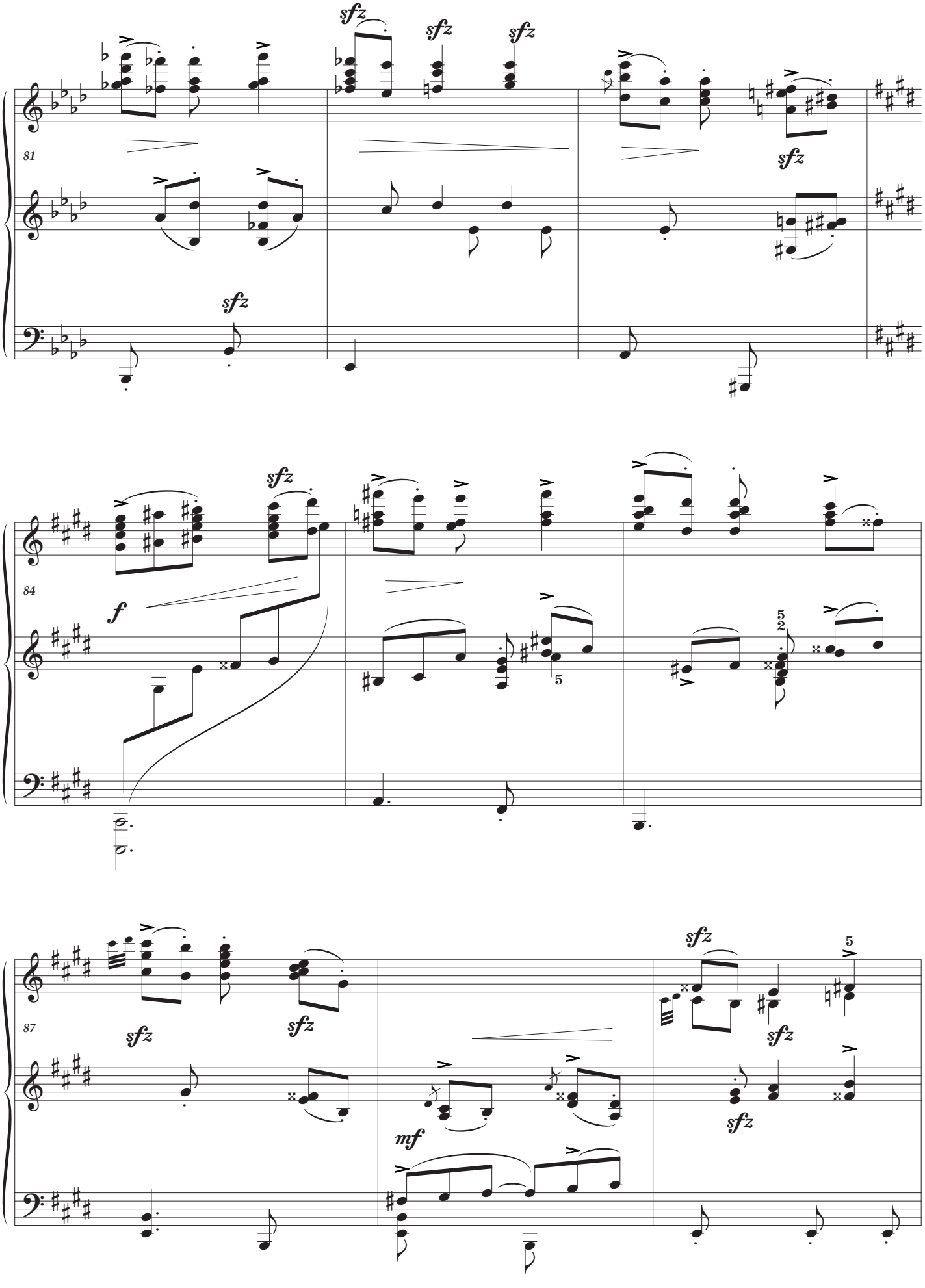

27
30
pp
bien rythmé et détaché
33
sans pédale
effleurant les notes
35
ppp
sans pédale

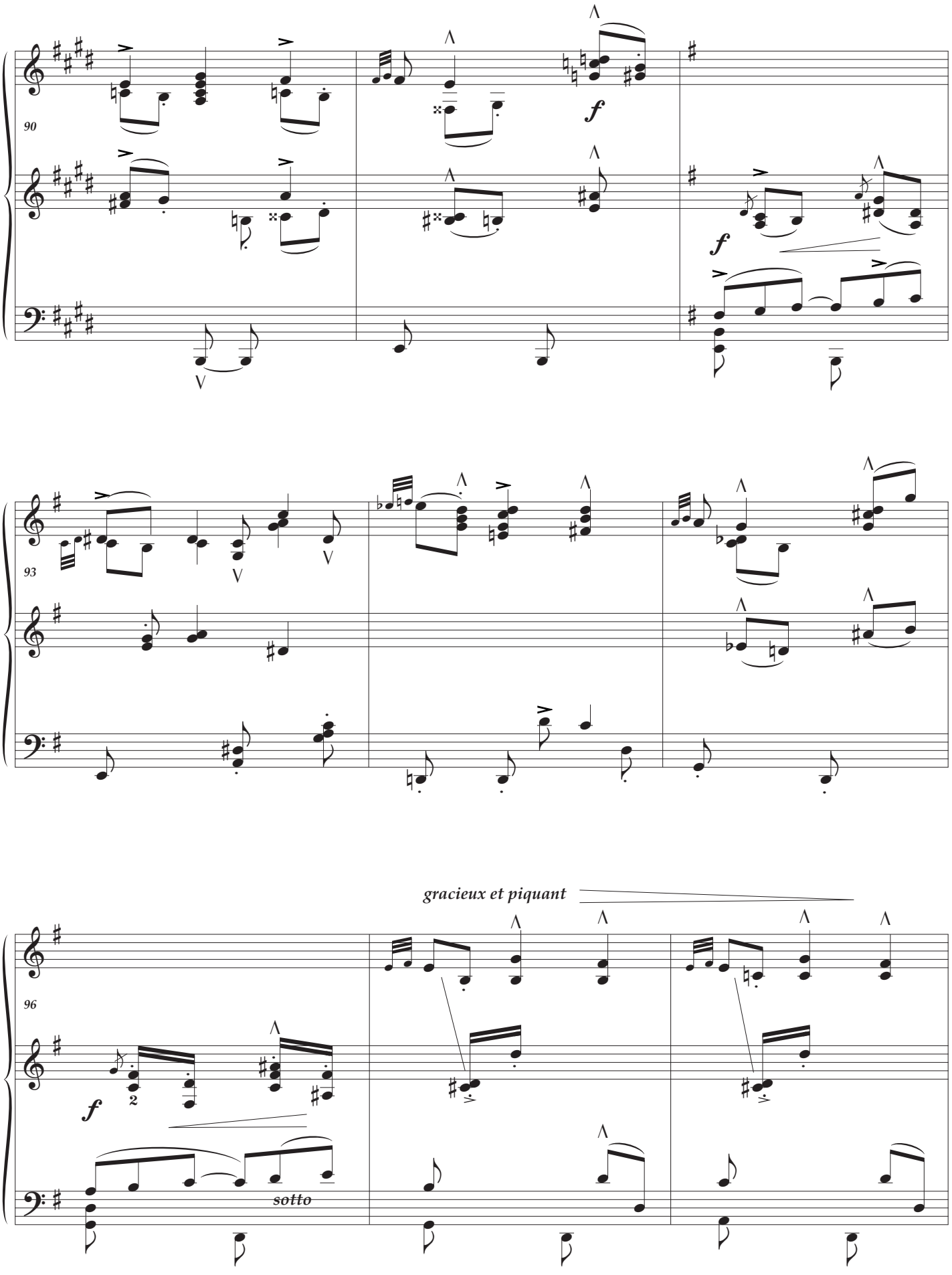

bien atténué
37
Sost Ped.
39
élargir
ff
fff
41
sans retarder
a tempo
ppp
m.s.
poco meno mosso
espressivo et dolce
p
45

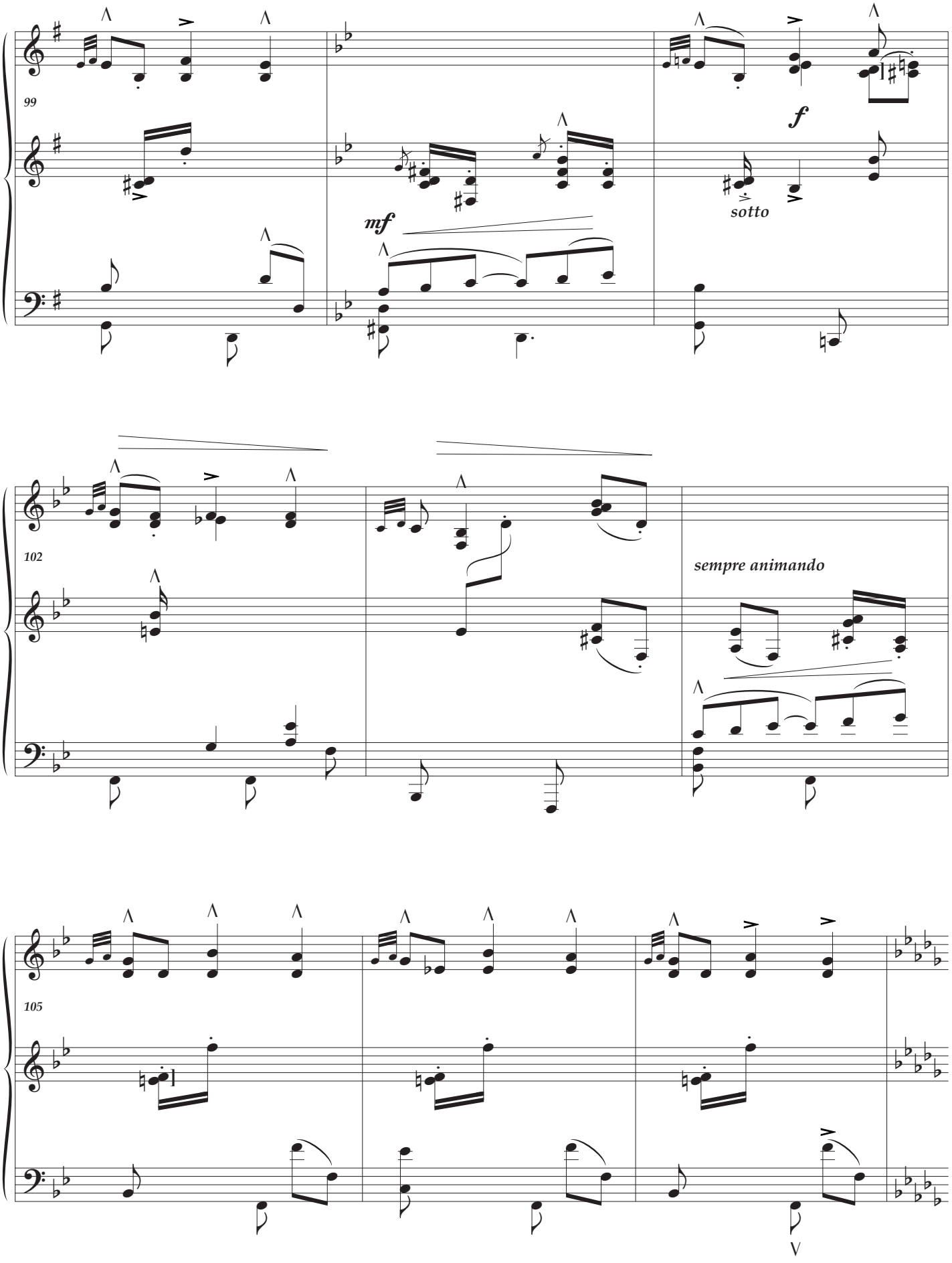

en traînant
calando molto
48
reprenez et un peu indécis
poco a poco ritardando
molto dolce ma sonoro
51
a tempo
ritardando
a tempo primo
ppp
54
bien chanté et bien en dehors
57

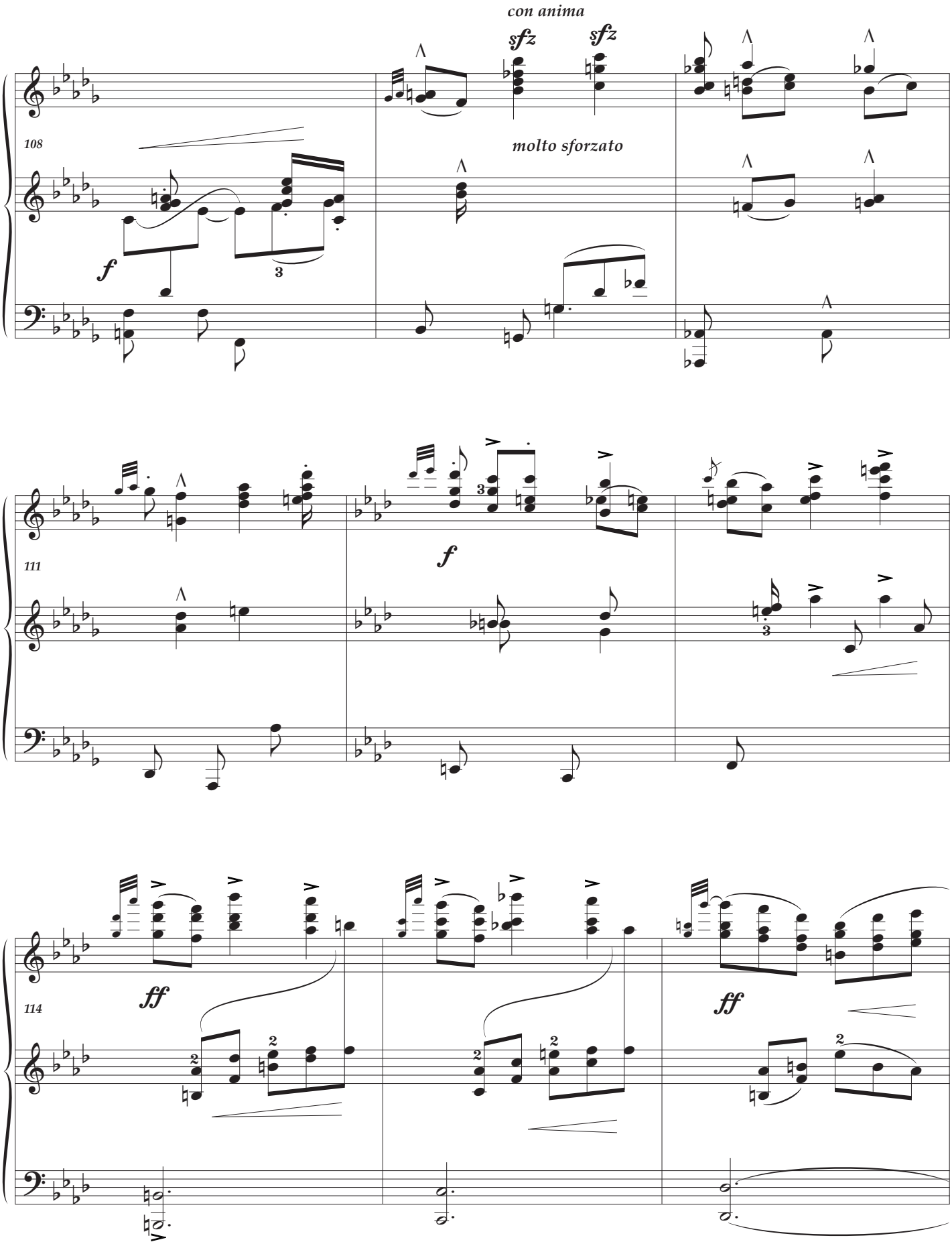

ppp
60
sempre un poco rubato
63
66
69


dolce sempre
72
75
78
con anima
sfz
f
f


81
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
84
f
sfz
5
87
sfz
sfz
mf
sfz
sfz
5


90
f
f
93
gracieux et piquant
96
f
sotto


99
mf
f
sotto
102
sempre animando
105


con anima
sfz
sfz
108
molto sforzato
f
3
111
f
3
114
ff
2
ff
2

con molto brio

8va

117

fff

8vb

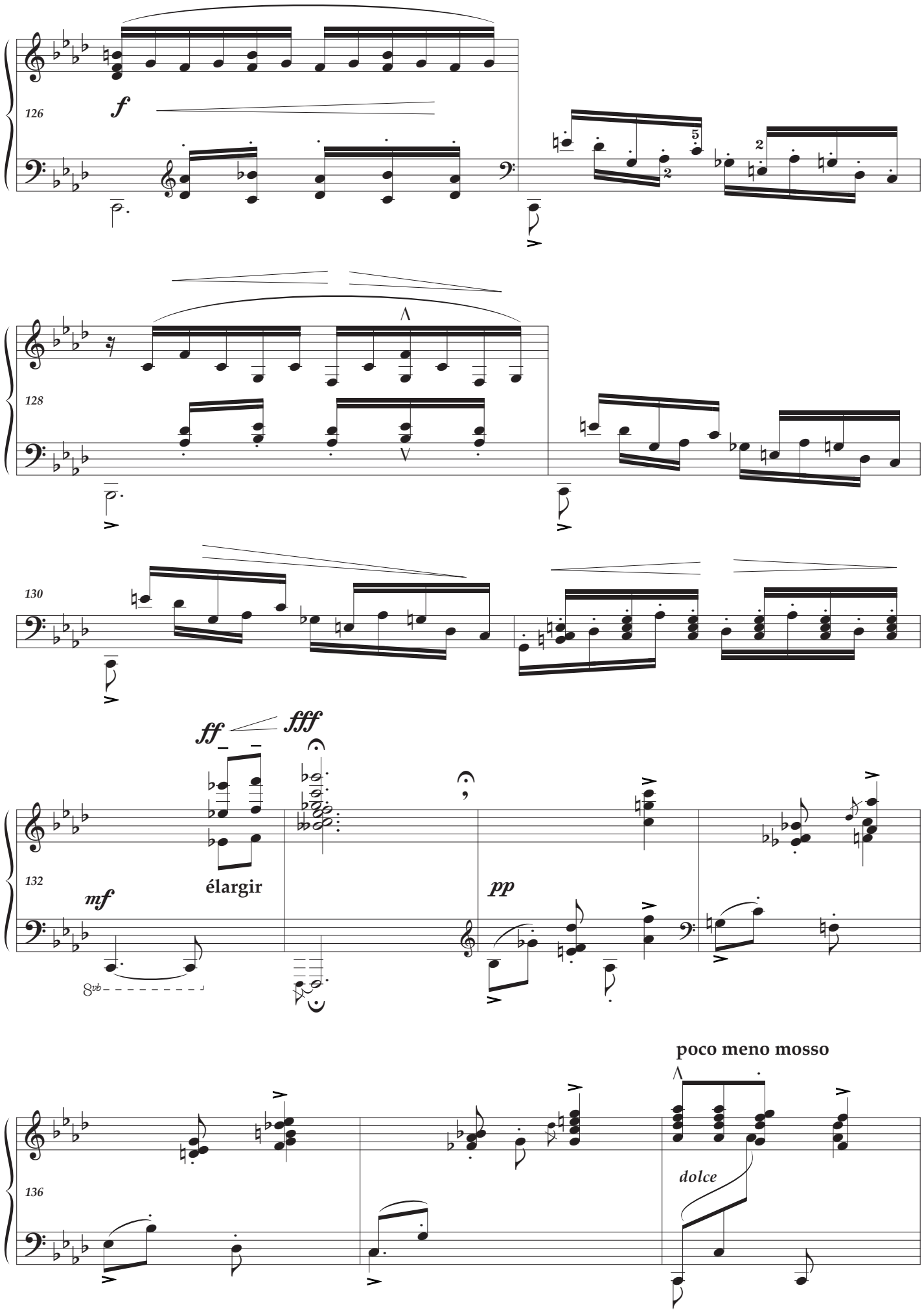
120

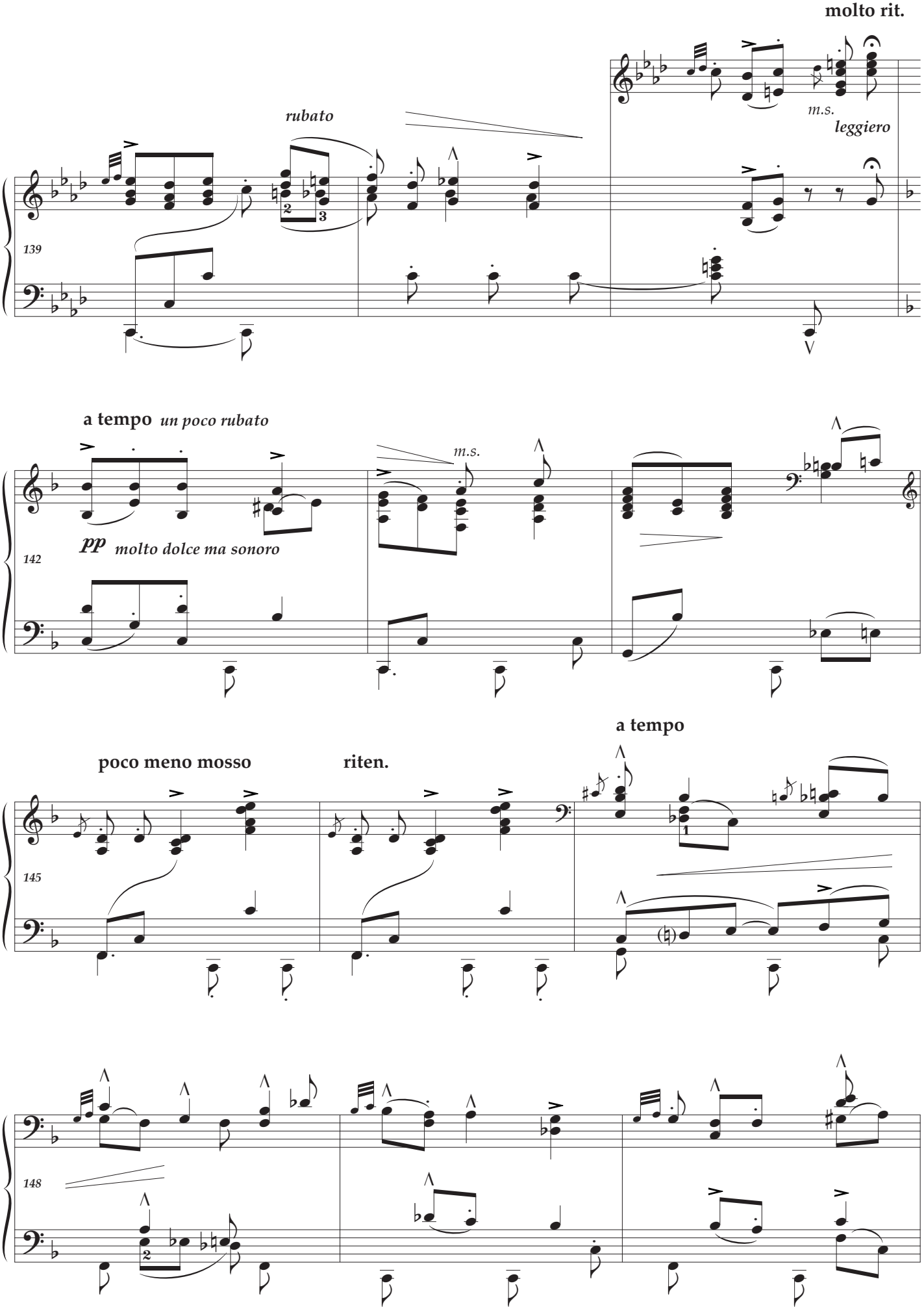
toujours fort et viril

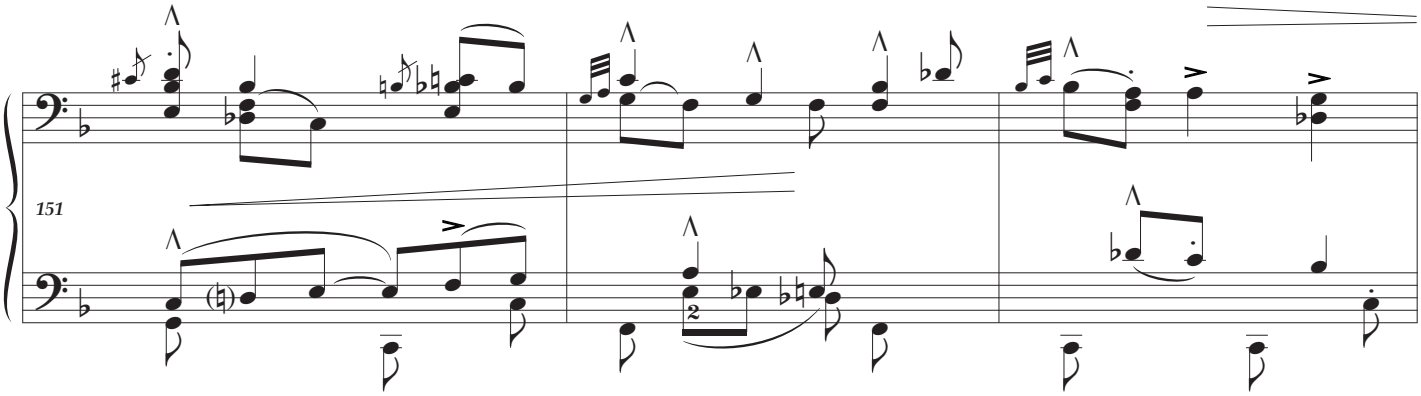
fff

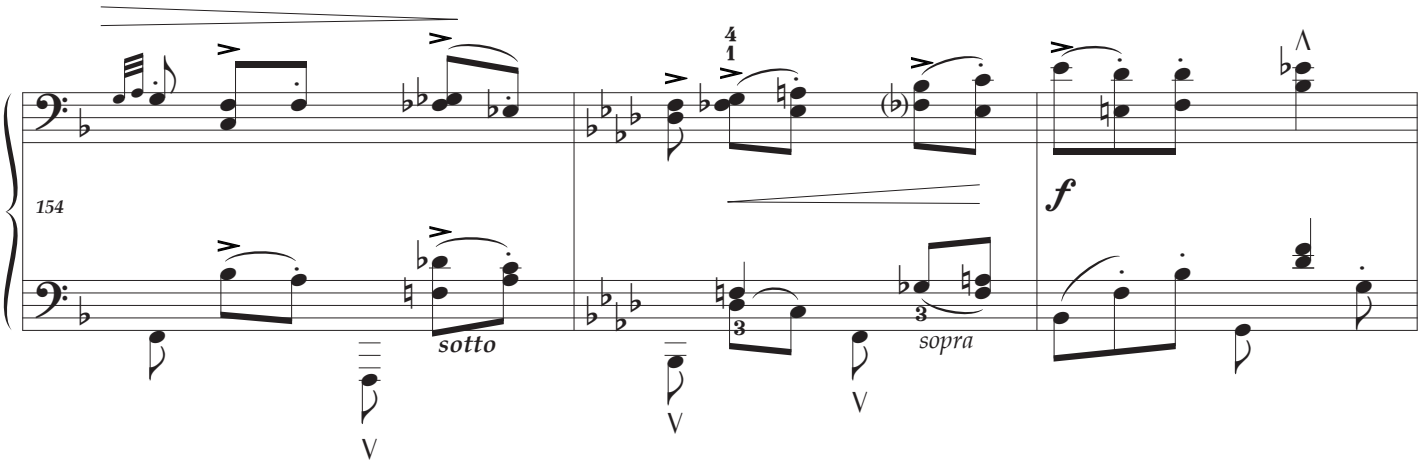
123

ff

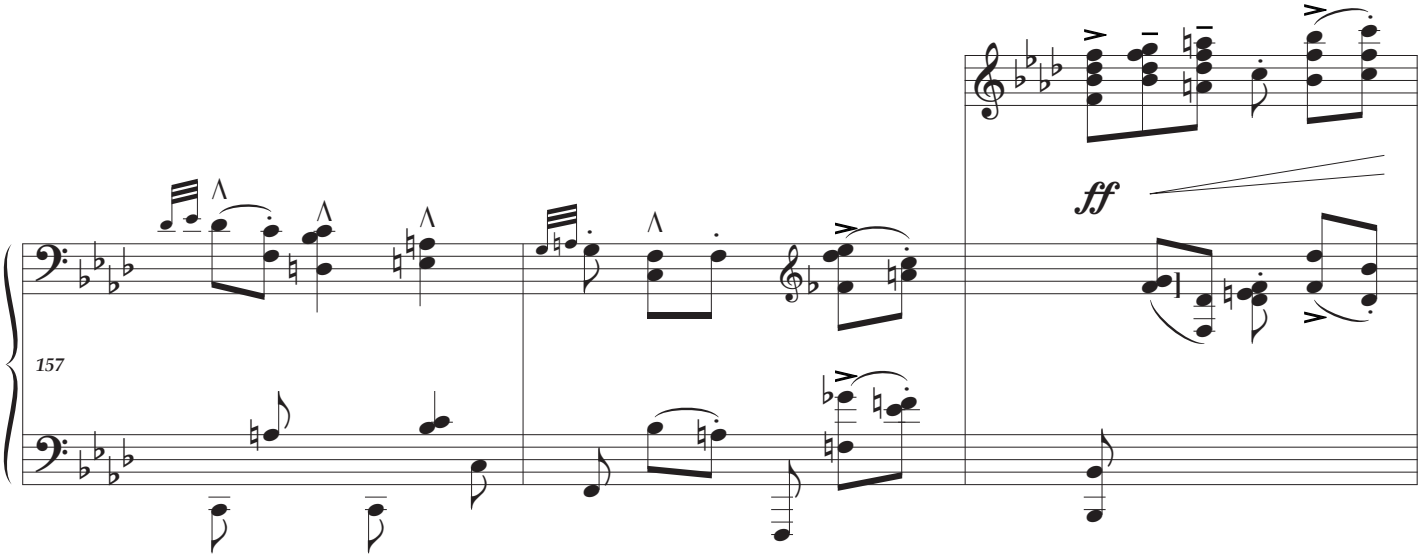

126
f
128
130
ff
fff
élargir
132
mf
8vb
pp
poco meno mosso
136
dolce

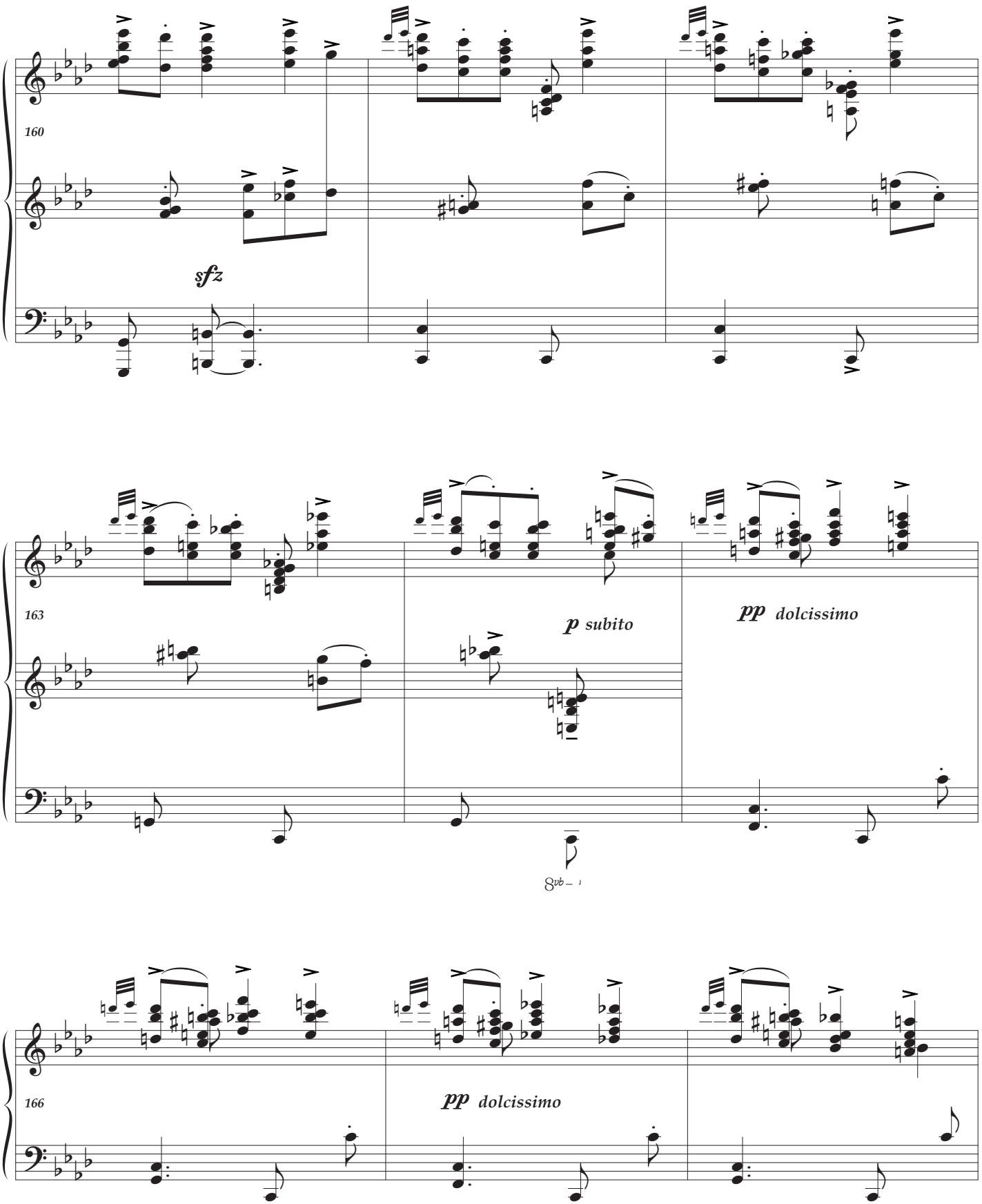

molto rit.
rubato
m.s.
leggiero
139
a tempo un poco rubato
m.s.
142
pp molto dolce ma sonoro
poco meno mosso
riten.
a tempo
145
148

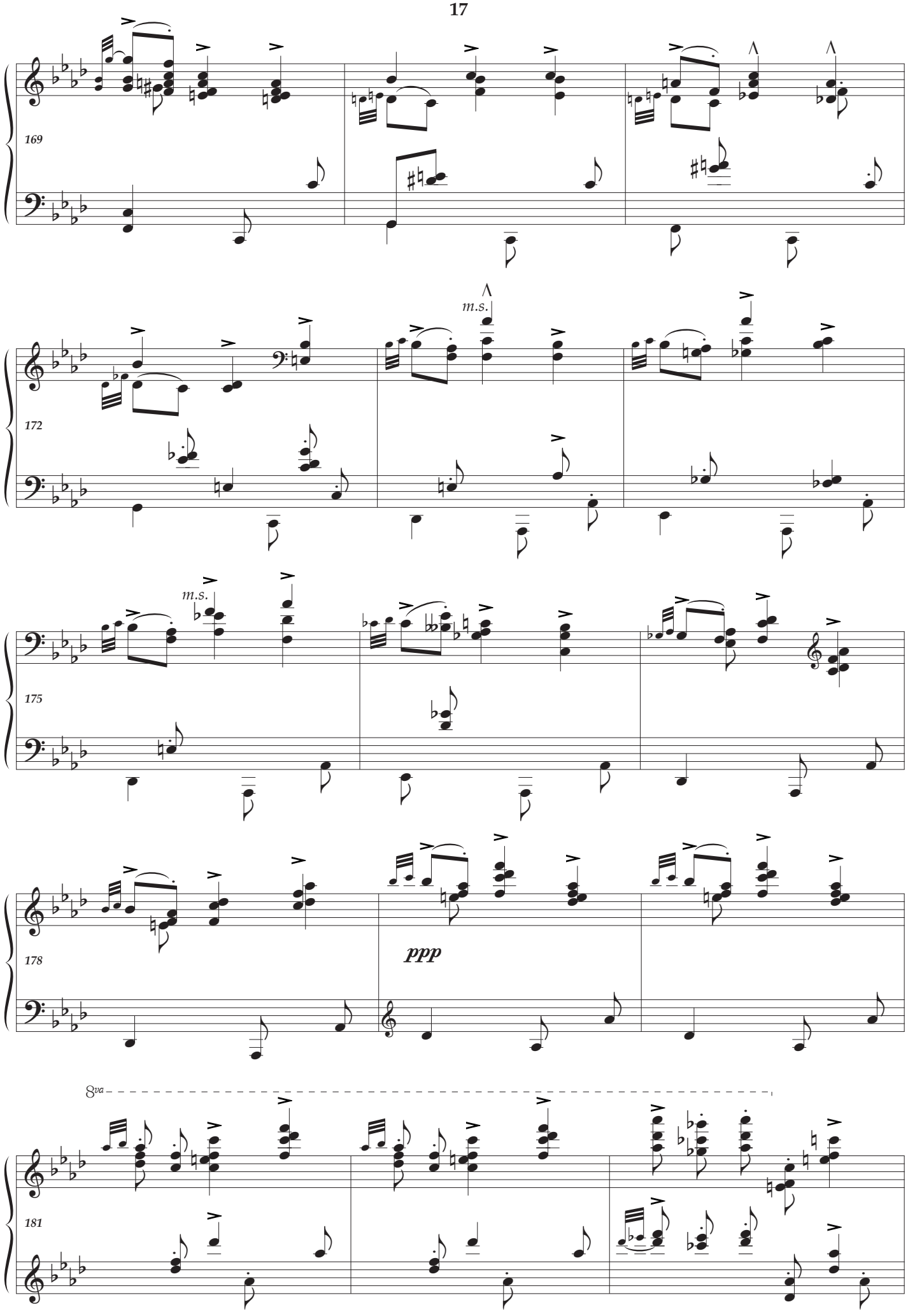


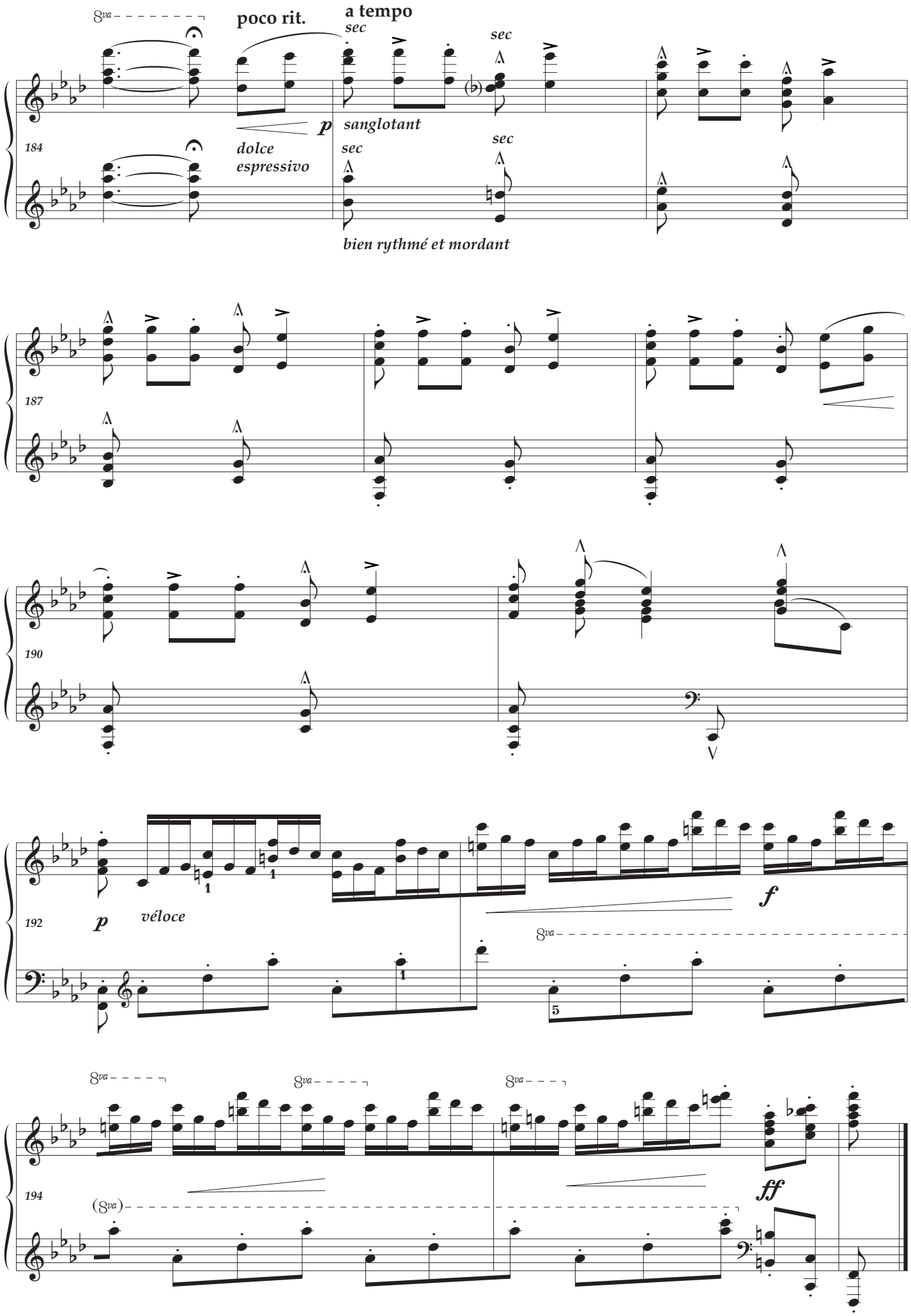


pesante e un poco ritenuto




160
sfz
163
p subito
pp dolcissimo
8vb
166
pp dolcissimo


169
172
m.s.
175
m.s.
178
ppp
8va
181


poco rit.
a tempo
184
dolce
espressivo
p
sanglotant
sec
bien rythmé et mordant
187
190
192
p
véloce
f
194
ff

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

- In the original editions there are several pedal signs and an observation by Debussy can provide a pertinent object lesson: "Pedalling cannot be written down. It varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another."
- As with El Albaicín and Triana (and indeed most of *Iberia*), Albeniz presented *El Polo* with a unique key signature, appropriately modified in this edition.
- In an effort to simplify the text and eliminate accidentals, the time-signature of 3/8 has been replaced with 6/8, which also serves to clearly reveal hemiola and other rhythmic variants.
- For further simplification, short staccato notes and chords are written as quavers, and a crotchet replaces the combination — dotted quaver and semiquaver rest. Except where necessary, rests have been largely omitted, the clearly defined empty spaces serving to show silence.
- There has been some pruning of the composer's multiple instructions in Italian and French.
- The number of staves varies according to the text, and in general stems up = RH and down = LH.
- *poco* ***sf*** has been replaced with the *marcato* sign.
- Some subsidiary grace notes have been omitted.
- *El Polo* stretches a pianist to the limit, with hair-raising changes of register and dynamics. As often as possible the text layout is presented with maximum clarity to enable the reader to choose the most musical and practical use of the meagre ten fingers at his or her disposition, keeping in mind that an Albeniz leap will improve balance in thick chordal writing and add a certain *piquancy* to the sound.

Duration: 7'15

This is Albeniz commenting on his own music written before Iberia: "Here are among them a few things that are not completely worthless. The music is a bit infantile, plain, spirited; but in the end, the people, our Spanish people, are something of all that. I believe that the people are right when they continue to be moved by *Córdoba*, *Mallorca*, by the *copla* of the *Sevillanas*, by the *Serenata*, and *Granada*. In all of them I now note that there is less musical science, less of the grand idea, but more colour, sunlight, flavour of olives. That music of youth, with its little sins and absurdities that almost point out the sentimental affectation... appears to me like the carvings in the Alhambra, those peculiar arabesques that say nothing with their turns and shapes, but which are like the air, like the sun, like the blackbirds or like the nightingales of its gardens. They are more valuable than all else of Moorish Spain, which though we may not like it, is the true Spain".

mordant	biting
doux en sanglotant	gently sobbing
le chant marqué et très souple	the melody marked and flexible
sans pédale	without pedal
bien rythmé et détaché	strong pulse and staccato
effleurant les notes	stroking the notes
bien atténué	very subdued
sans retarder	without slowing down
élargir	broaden
en traînant	dragging
reprenez	back to the original tempo
un peu indécis	a little hesitant
bien chanté et bien en dehors	cantabile and well marked
gracieux et piquant	graceful and spiritied
toujours fort et viril	loud and virile
sec	crisp
véloce	swift

P a c o P e ñ a

A n d a l u s i a n d a n c e r