THE ALKAN SOCIETY

25 Esquisses pour piano

Inspired by Ch. V. ALKAN

Composed by members of the Alkan Society

ESQUISSES

25 Motifs

Published in 2020 by The Alkan Society (pdf edition)
www.alkansociety.org

Copyright © The Alkan Society (selection and editorial matters) and individual composers as noted

25 Esquisses pour piano

Inspired by Ch. V. ALKAN

Composed by members of the Alkan Society

In issue 97 of the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, Richard Murphy proposed that members of the Society be invited to compose a piano piece lasting no more than 150 seconds inspired by Alkan's *Esquisses*, op. 63. These could be imagined either as a tribute to Alkan and his op. 63 or, more broadly, as an opportunity for a composer – whether professional or amateur – to be stimulated and influenced by Alkan.

The deadline for submissions was Alkan's 206th birthday, 30th November 2019. The project was timed to coincide with the 100th issue of the *Bulletin*, published in April 2020. To encourage amateur composers in particular, the printed edition of our new *Esquisses* was anonymous. This subsequent on-line edition (November 2020) now includes the names of the composers.

The number and variety of submissions certainly exceeded our expectations. All submissions were accepted without alteration. Most were hand-written, and these have been carefully and expertly transcribed using notation software by our Honorary Secretary, Dr José López, to whom we owe a very significant debt of gratitude. The pieces are in alphabetical order of title.

We feel that the collection demonstrates how Alkan's *Esquisses* can spark an imaginative compositional response. It is up to you, the readers and performers, to explore whether you agree.

Editorial team

Nick Hammond, High Stittenham, UK
José López, Miami, USA
Richard Murphy, London, UK
Richard Shaw, London, UK

Contents

Catching as catch can 3
John White

Chevauchez dans l'obscurité 5
Philipp Rhein

..... du début jusqu'à la fin 10
Richard Murphy

Esquisse: Dolce con anima 11
Frederik Keygnaert

Esquisse mécanique 12
Hugh Shrapnel

Extrait de concerto 18
Brian Inglis

Figure-skating 20
John White

Fils des cloches 21
Alex Bolton

Fragment de quatuor 23
Brian Inglis

Hiding and seeking 26
John White

Le festin du Prophète Élie – petites variations sur un thème juif 28
José López

Le manège enchanté 33
Unattributed

Les cloches 34
Brian Inglis

Oiseaux tristes et joyeux 37
Brian Inglis

Prélude XI 39
Brian Arlon Sunday

Prélude XII 42
Brian Arlon Sunday

Remembering 43
John White

Romancing 44
John White

Tarantellinetto 45
Ryan Layne Whitney

The first female referee 47
Dave Smith

The Lord is my shepherd 49
Alan Mills

Trotting 53
John White

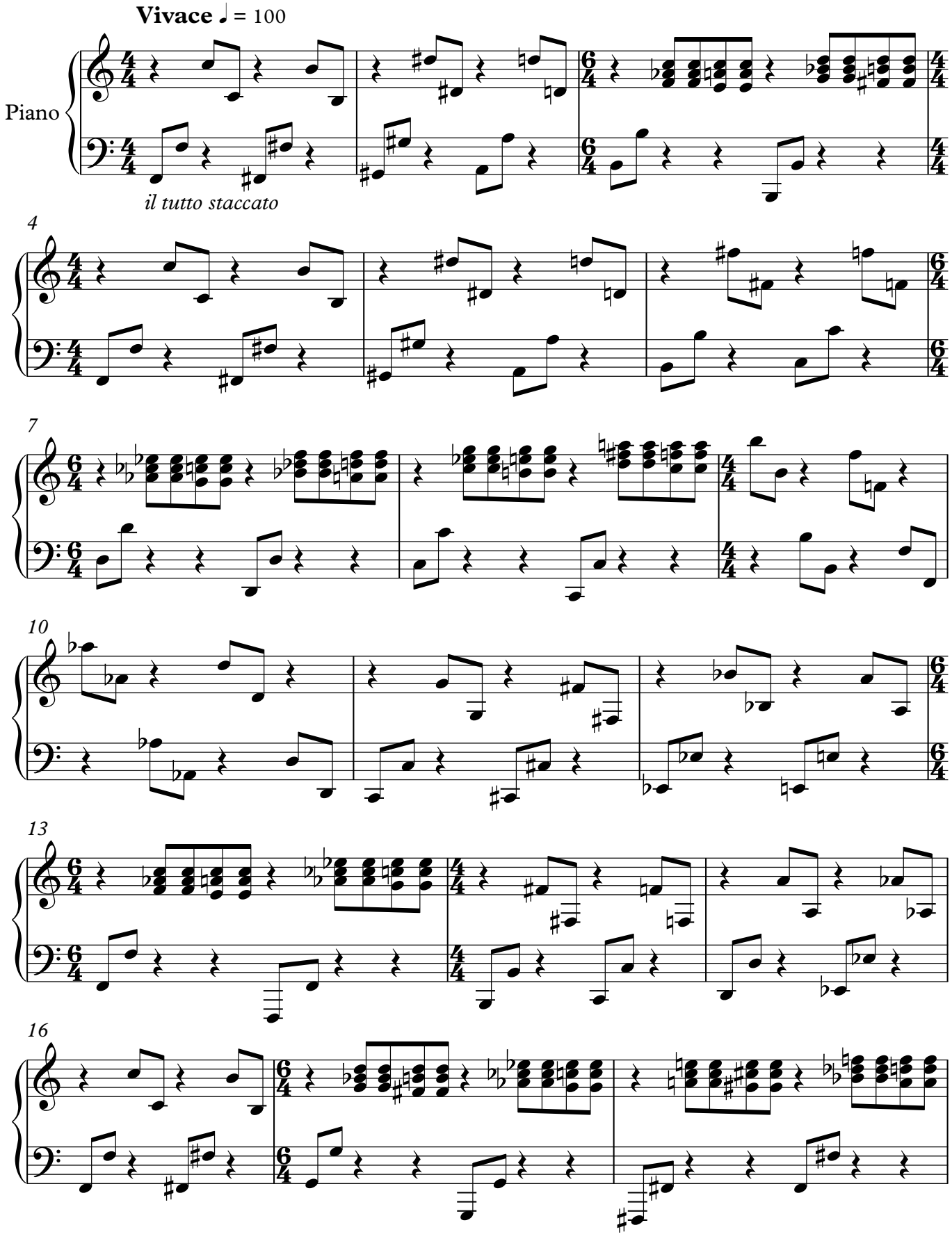
83' Utan Satir 55
John Goslin

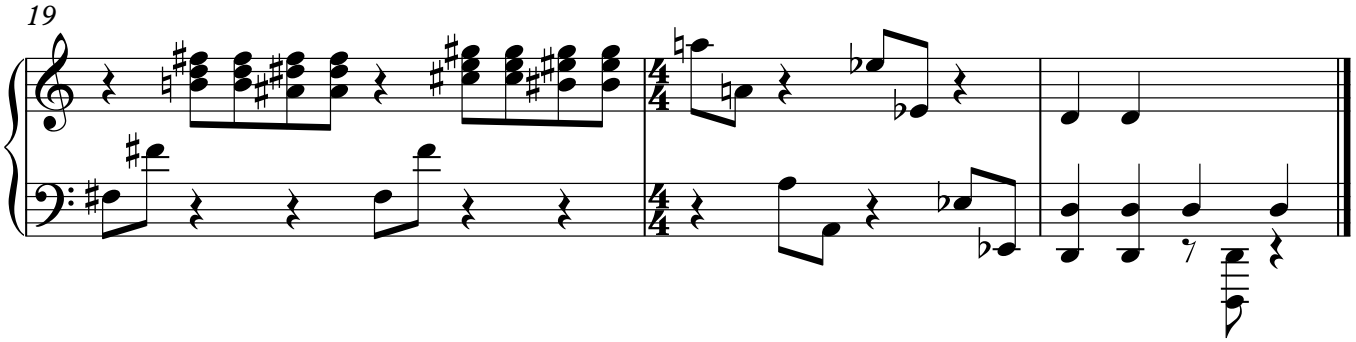
Vent d'Ouest 57
Nigel Hitchman

Waltzing 63
John White

Catching as catch can

John White




19

Chevauchez dans l'obscurité
(Ride into darkness)

Philipp Rhein

agitated **approx.** ♩. = 140

non leg.

Piano

f

5

10

leg.

15

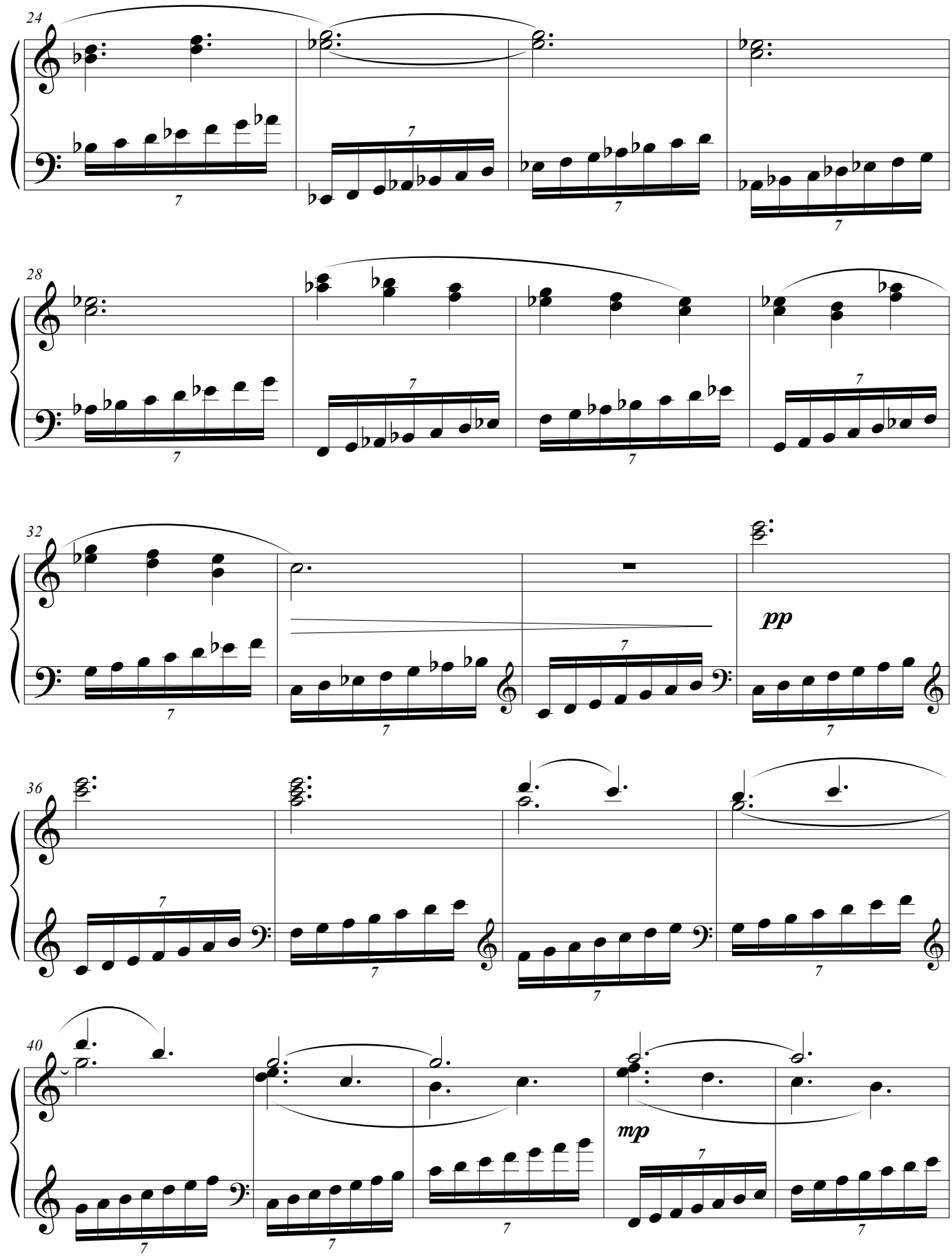
legato **delightful**

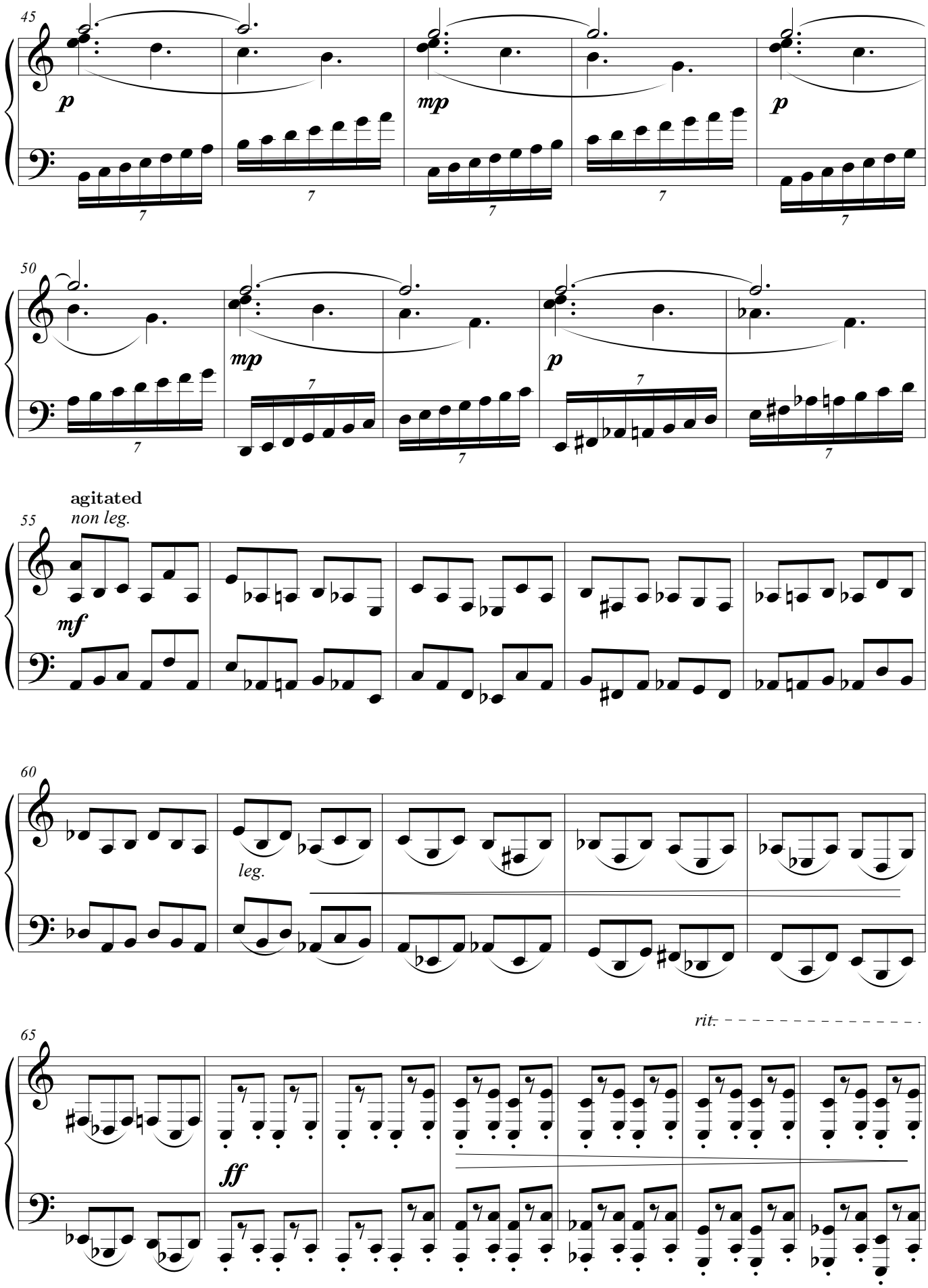
p

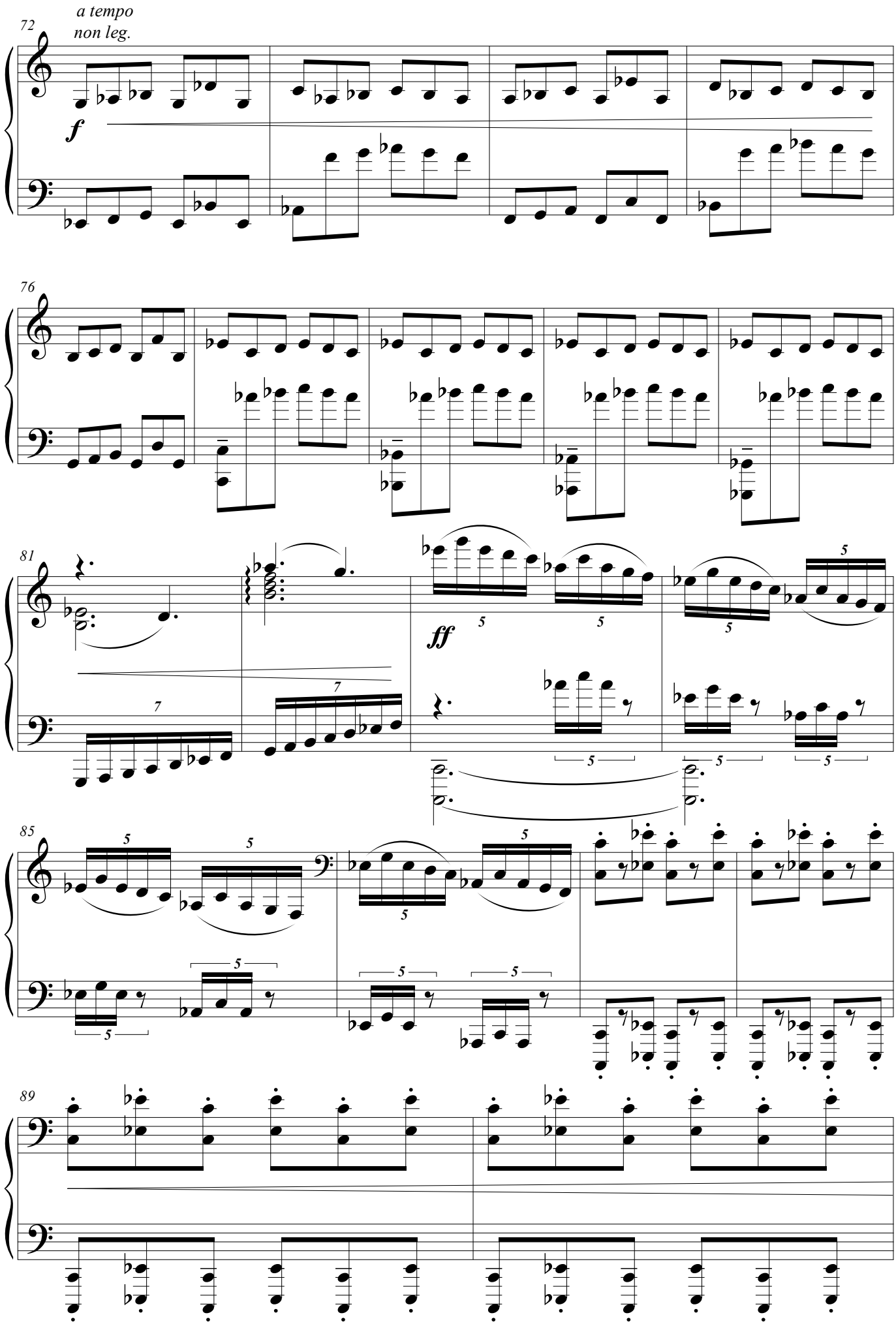
mp

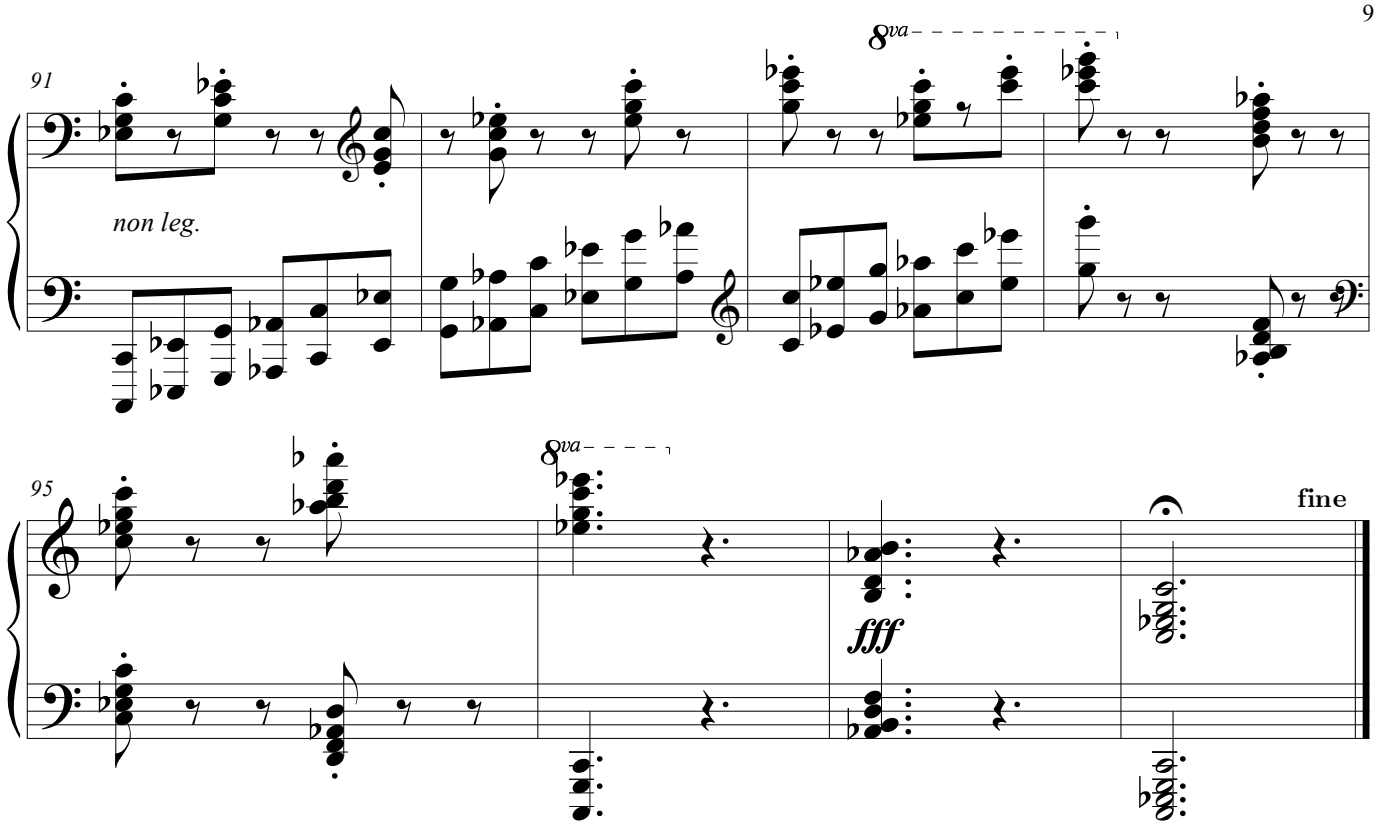
con ped.

20


24
28
32
pp
36
40
mp

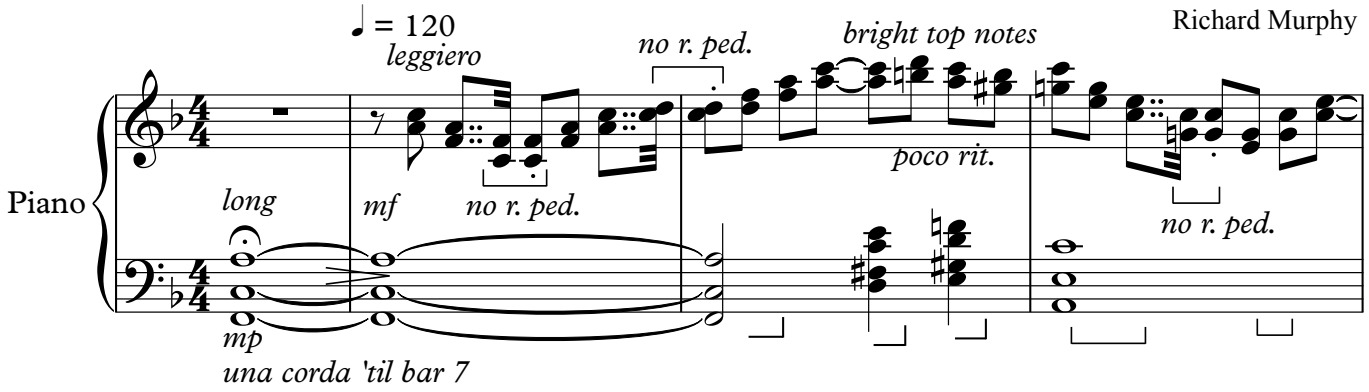

45
p
mp
p
7
50
mp
p
agitated
non leg.
55
mf
60
leg.
rit.
65
ff

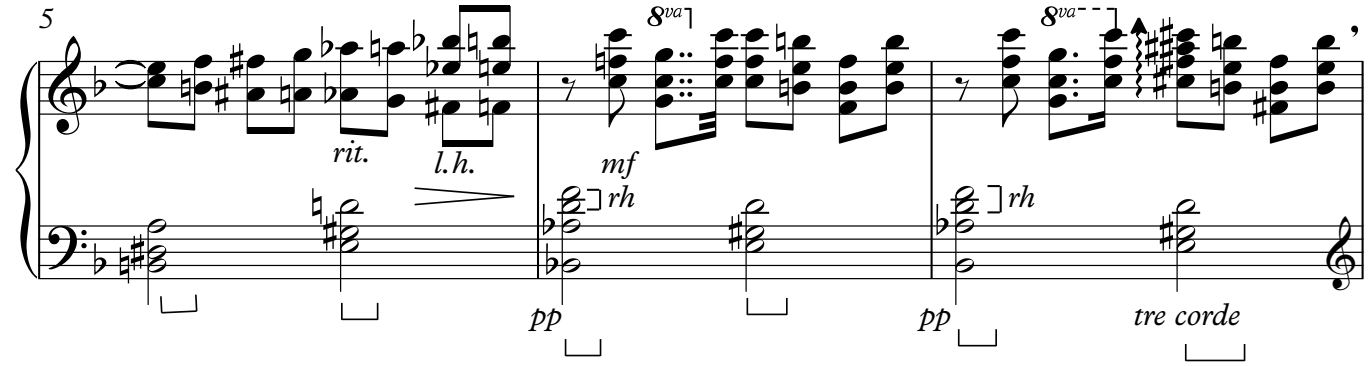

a tempo
non leg.
72
f
76
81
ff
85
89

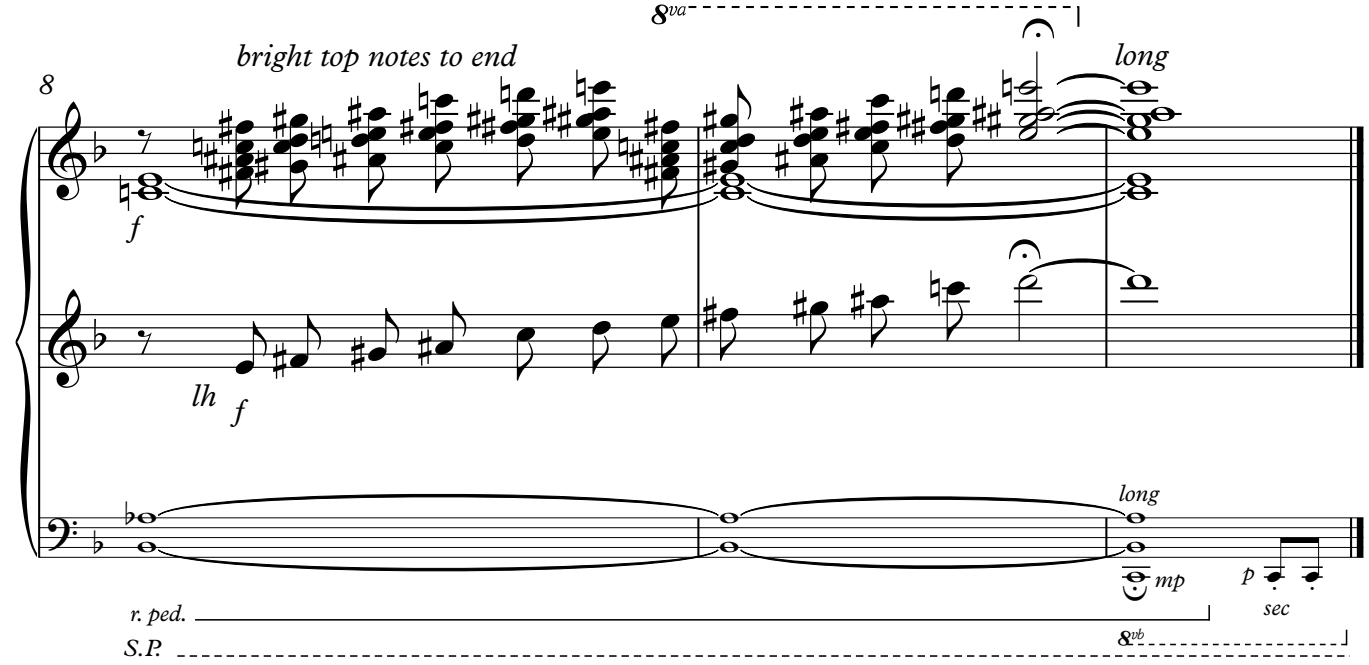

91
8va
non leg.

95
8va
fff
fine

..... du début jusqu'à la fin .....





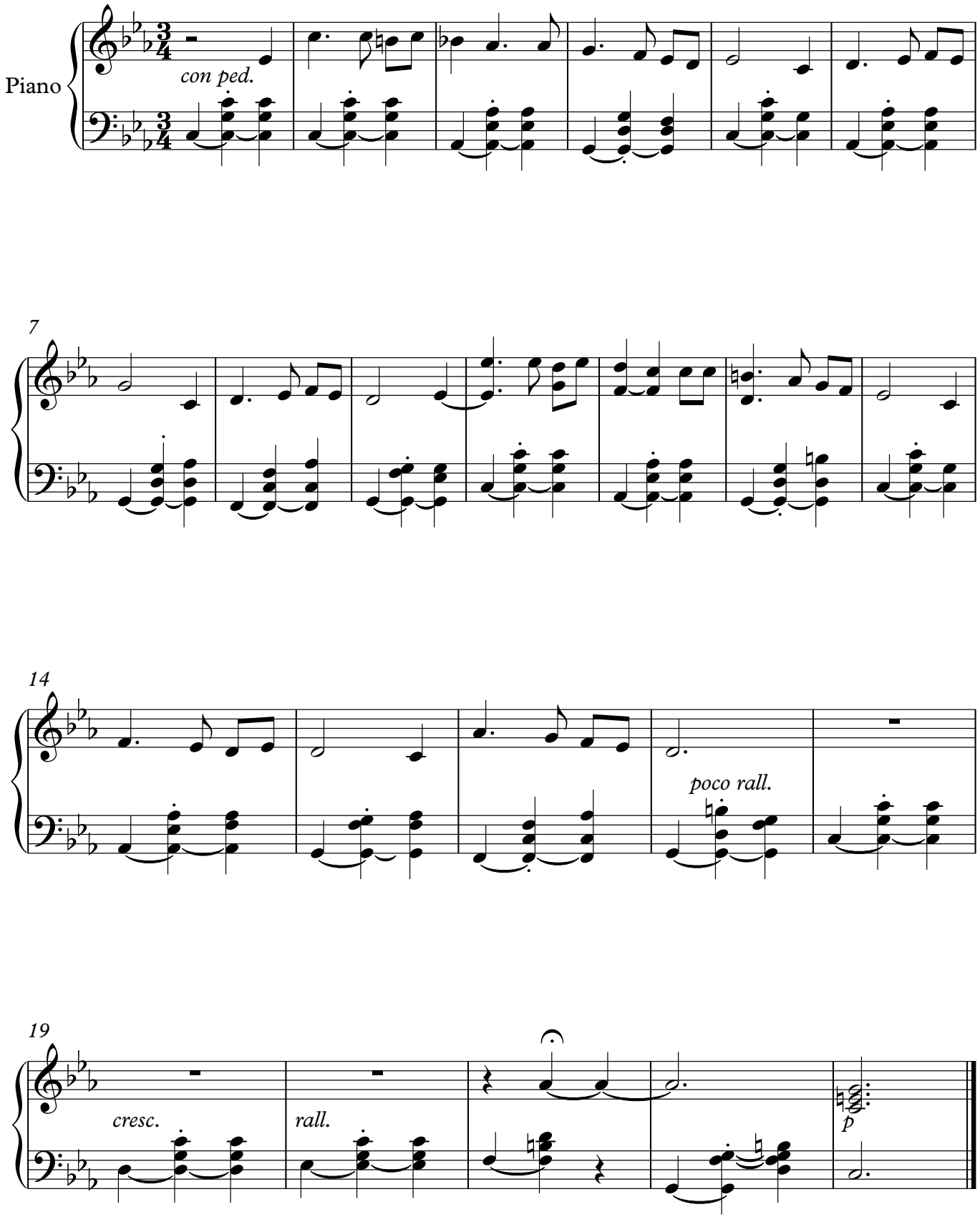


r.ped. - right pedal
S.P. - sustain (middle)pedal

Esquisse

Dolce con anima

Frederik Keygnaert



Esquisse mécanique

In commemoration of Charles-Valentin Alkan

Hugh Shrapnel

Allegro moderato
♪ = 208

giocoso, with élan

Piano

p

No Ped.

4

p

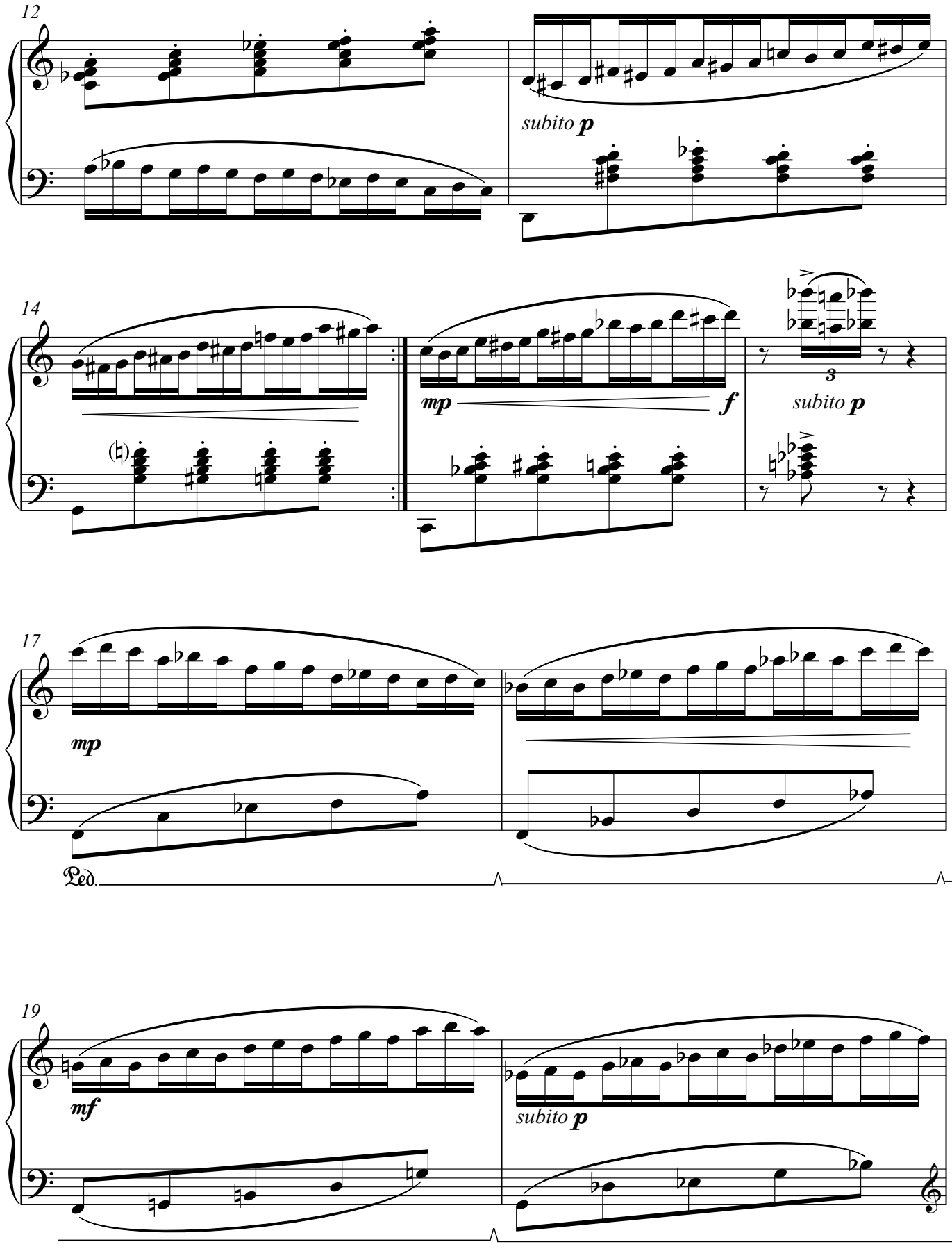
7

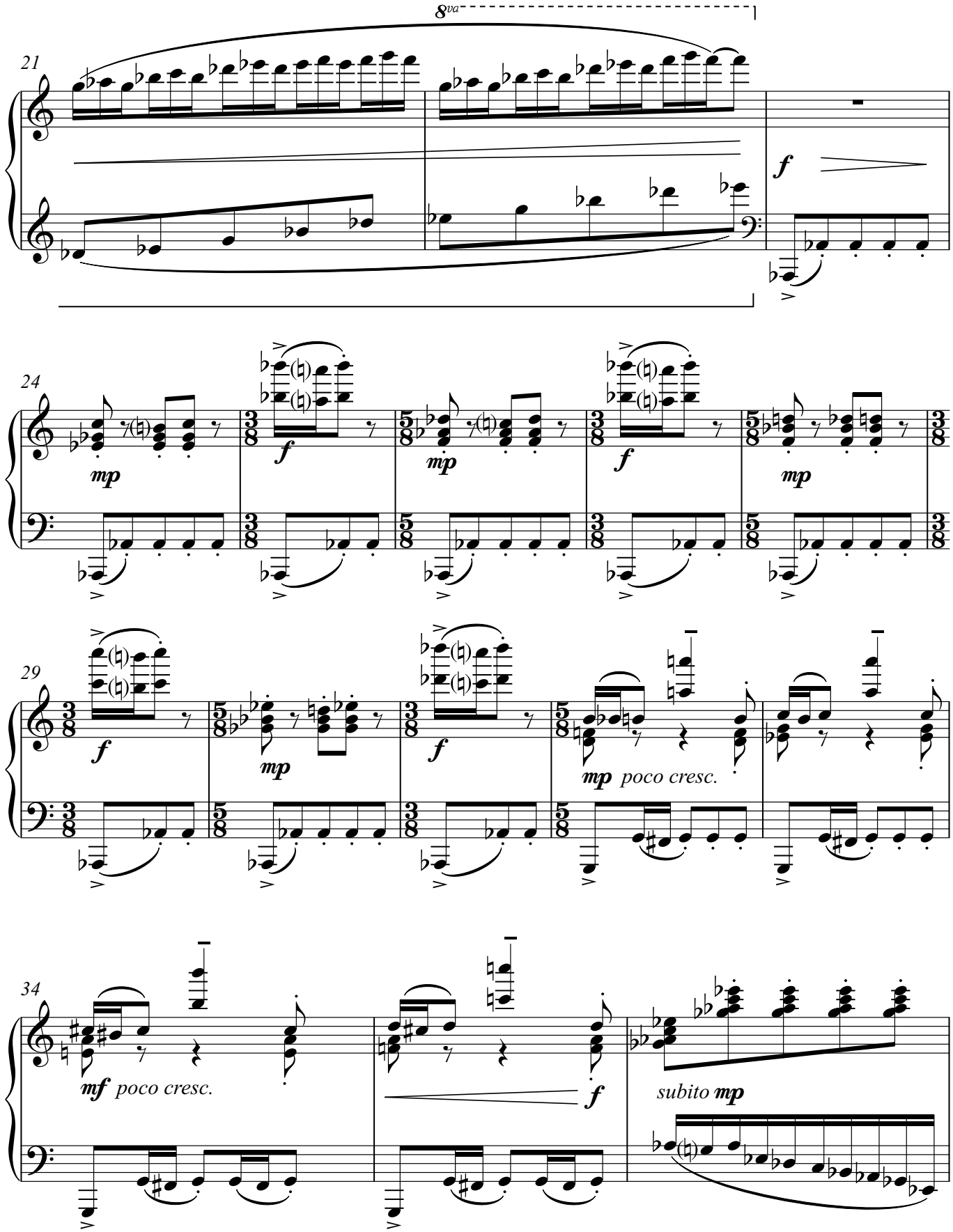
p

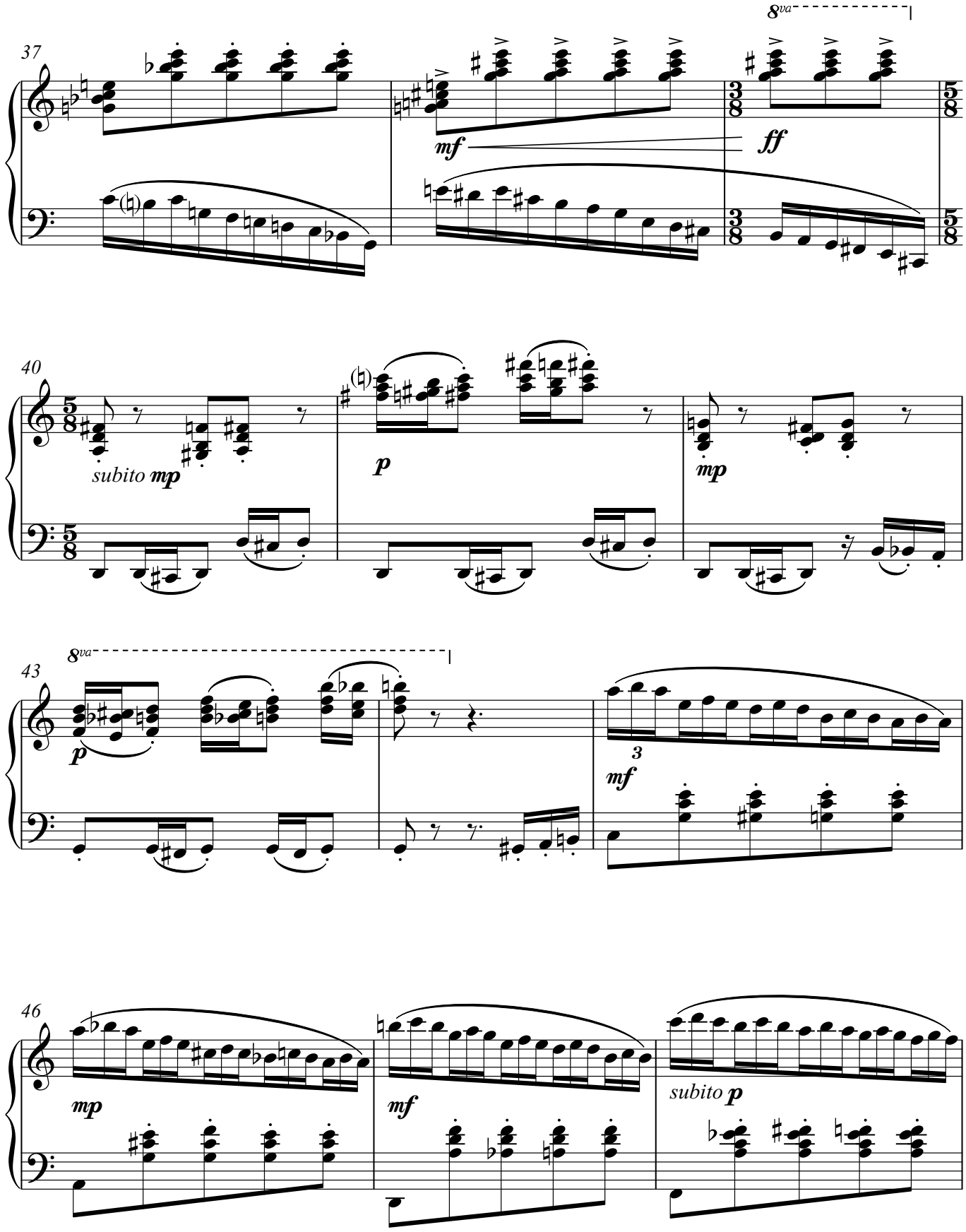
9

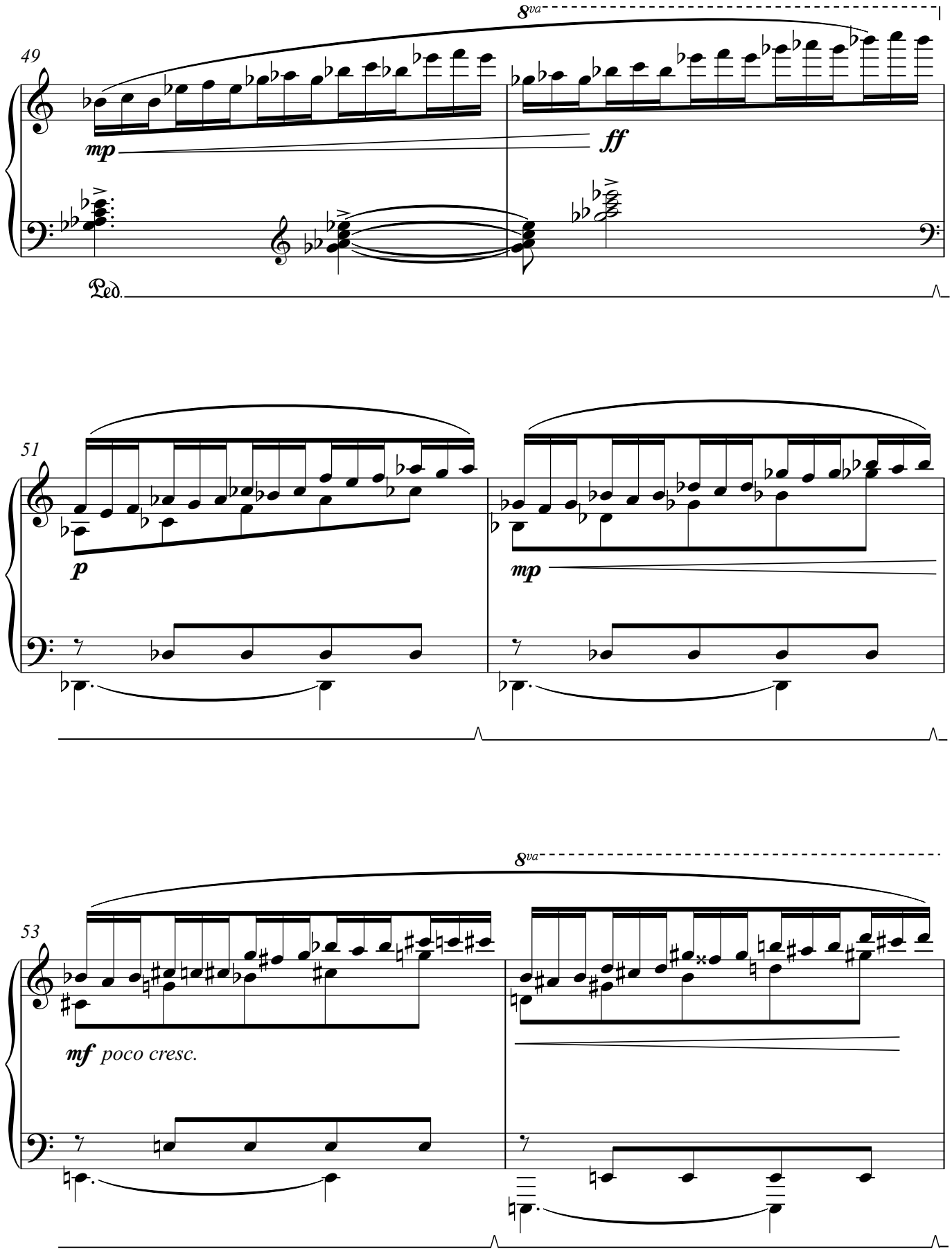
mp

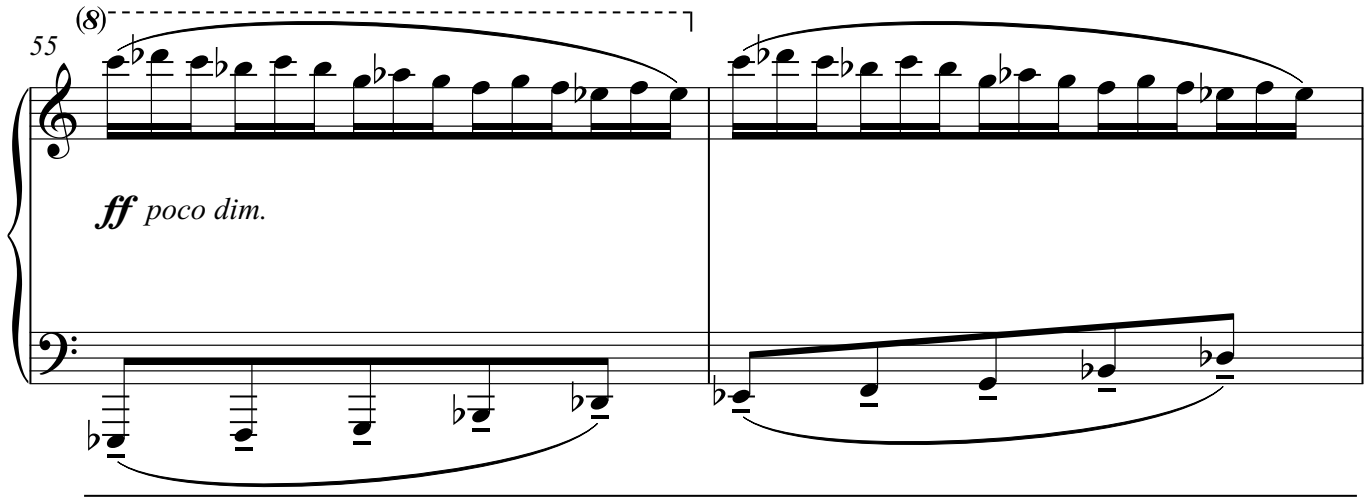
mf

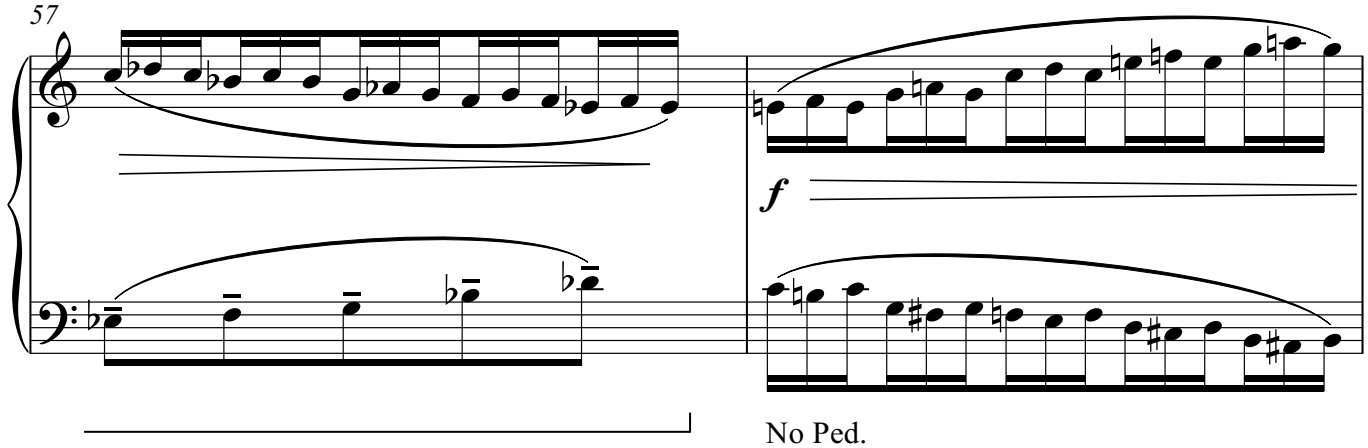

12
subito p
14
mp
f
3
subito p
17
mp
Ped.
19
mf
subito p

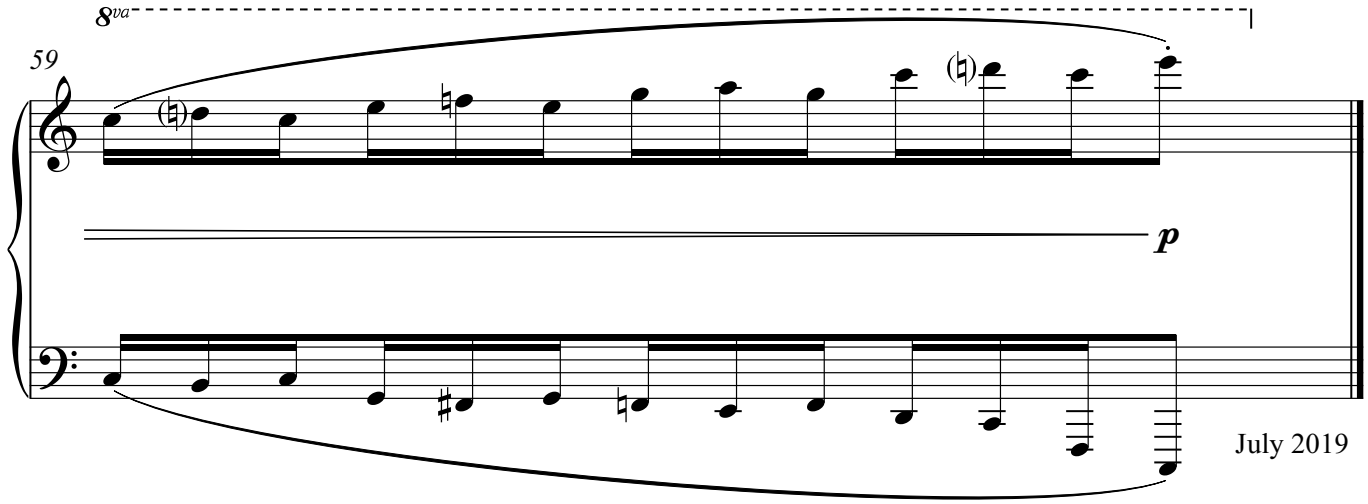

8va
21
f
24
mp
f
mp
f
mp
29
f
mp
f
mp poco cresc.
34
mf poco cresc.
f
subito mp


37
8va
mf
ff
40
subito mp
p
mp
43
8va
p
3
mf
46
mp
mf
subito p


49
8va
mp
ff
Ped.
51
p
mp
53
8va
mf poco cresc.



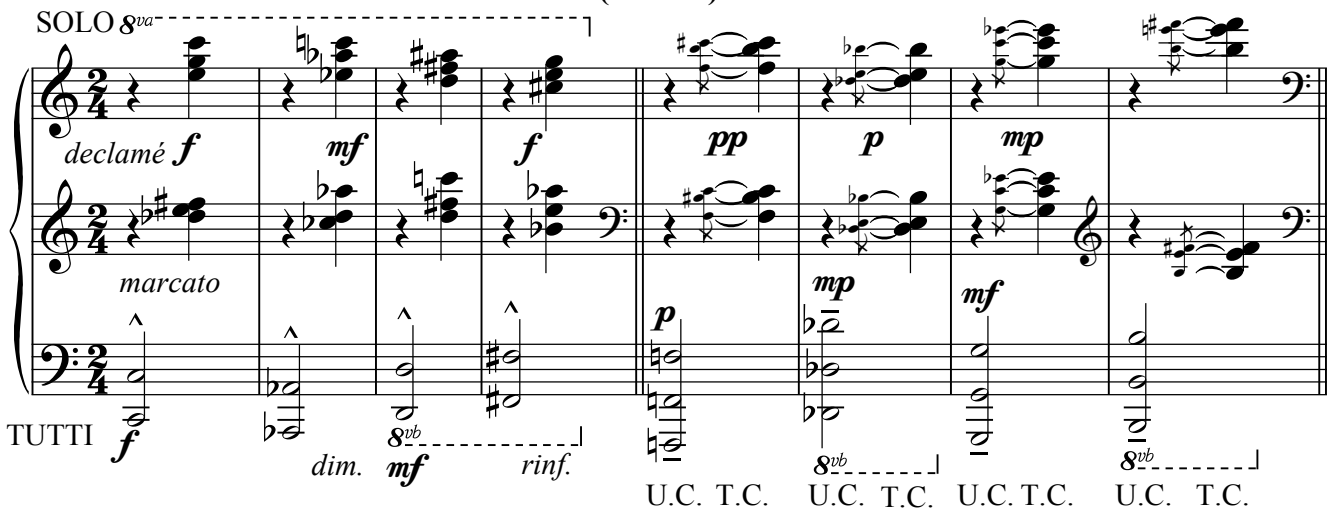




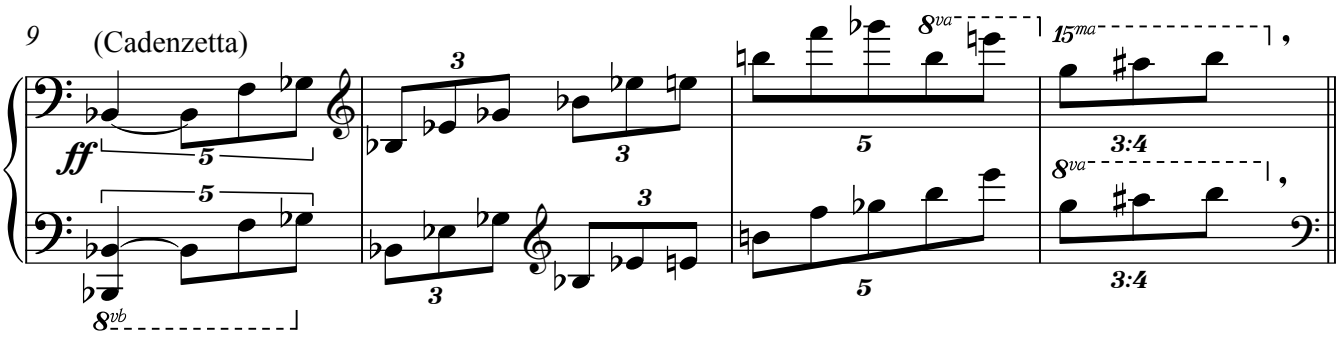
July 2019

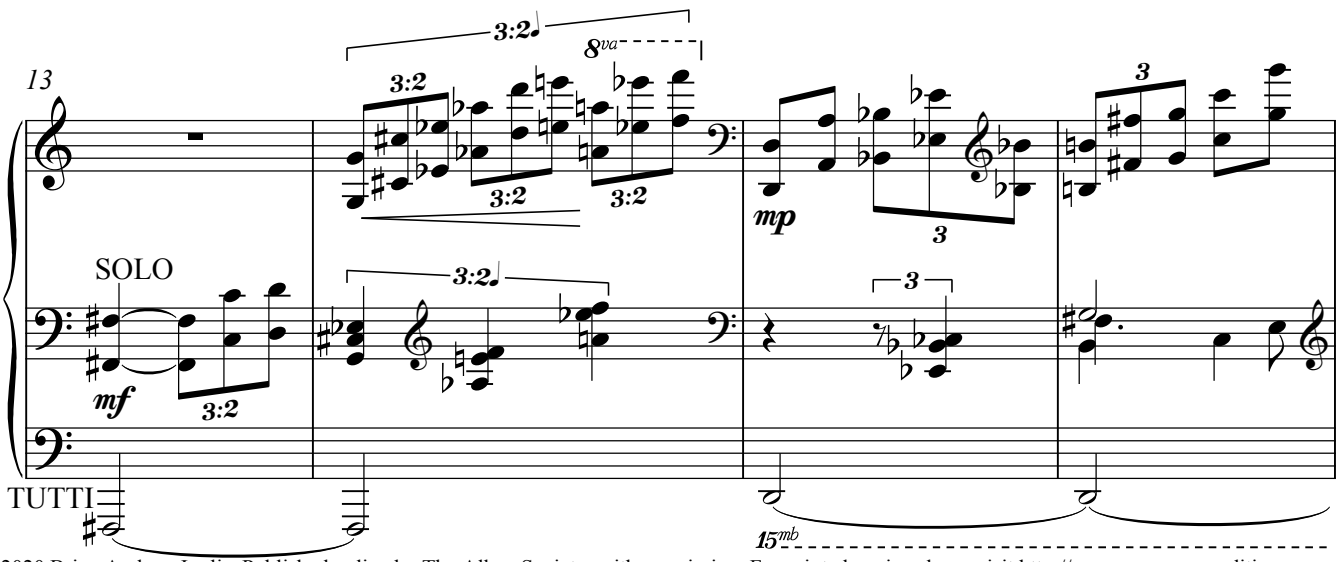
Extrait de concerto

Andante (♩ = 100) **meno mosso (♩ = 75)** Brian Inglis

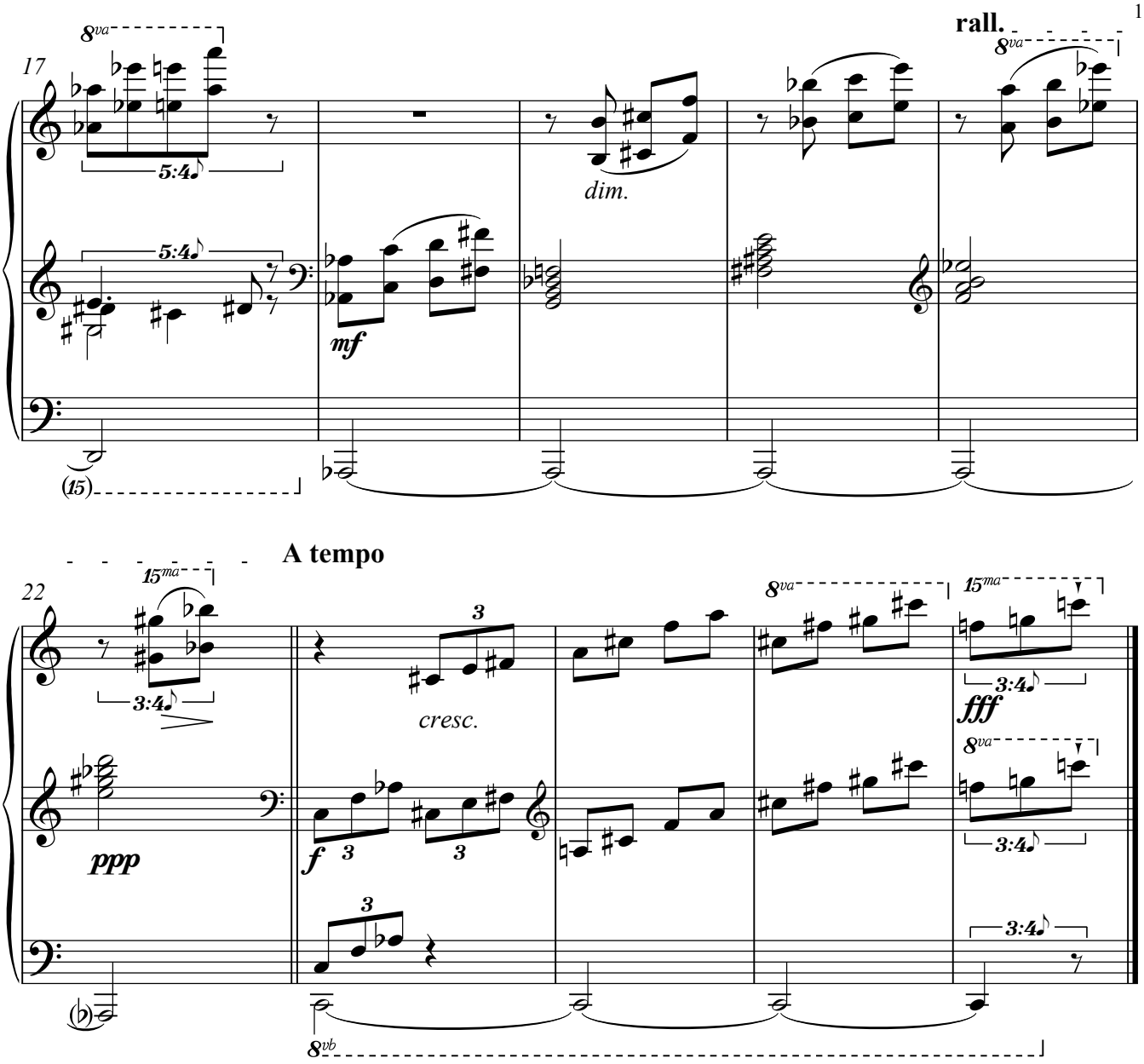


A tempo (♩ = 100)





© 2020 Brian Andrew Inglis. Published online by The Alkan Society, with permission. For printed copies please visit http://www.composersedition.com.

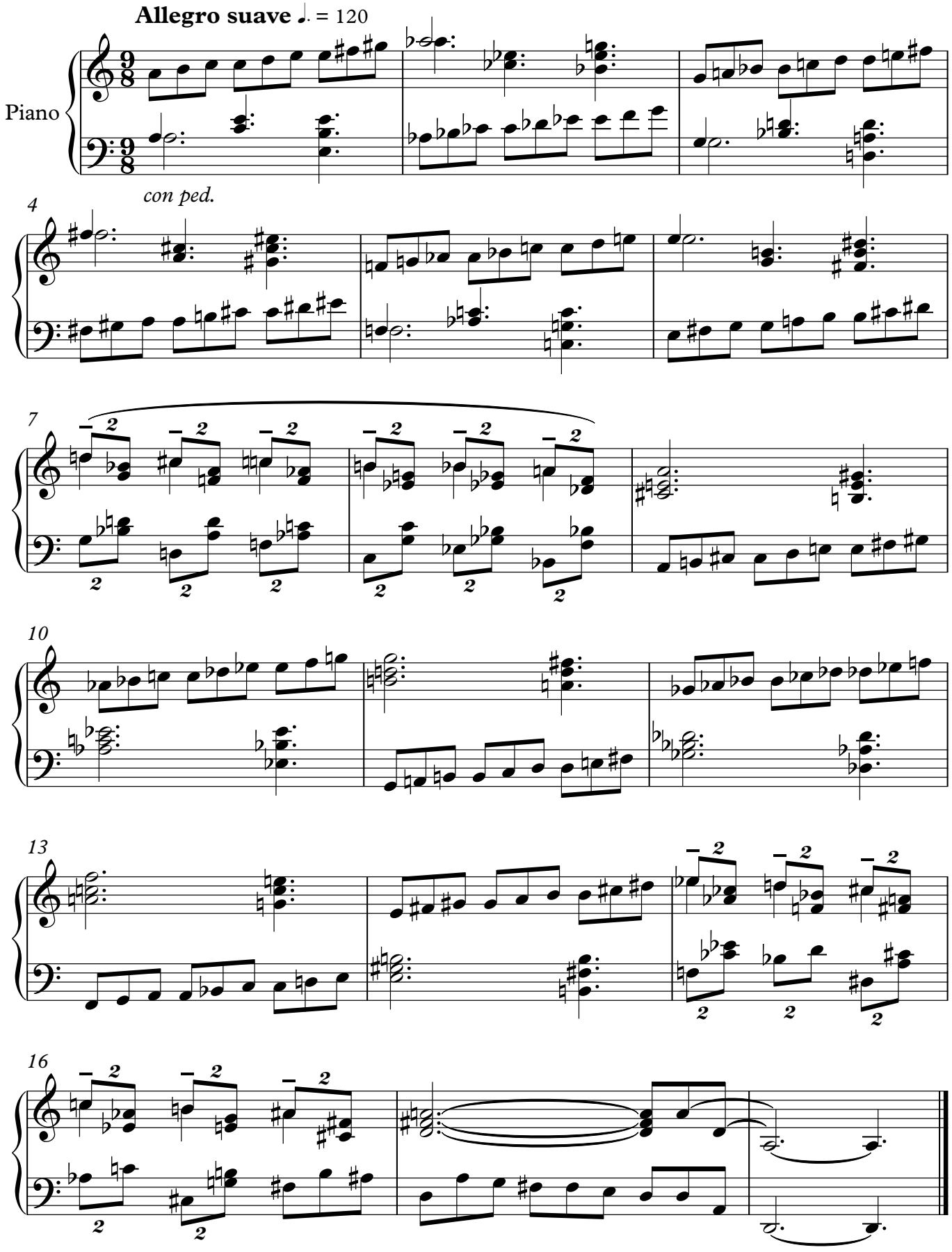


30 September 2019

Note: A nod at Alkan's 'Tutti de Concerto', op.63 no 15, within a different stylistic frame of reference, with a wink at the British complexity school along the way.

Figure-skating

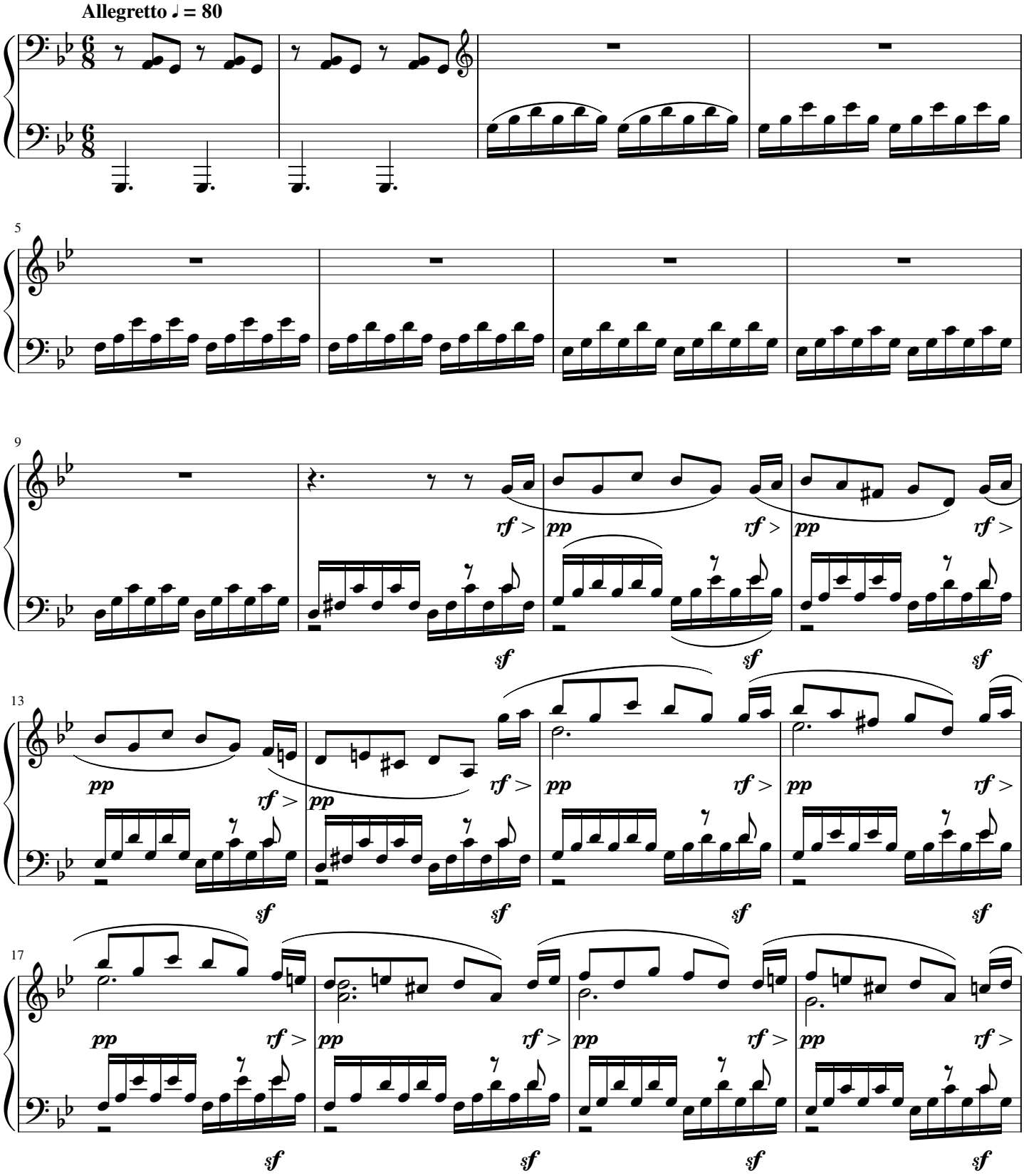
John White

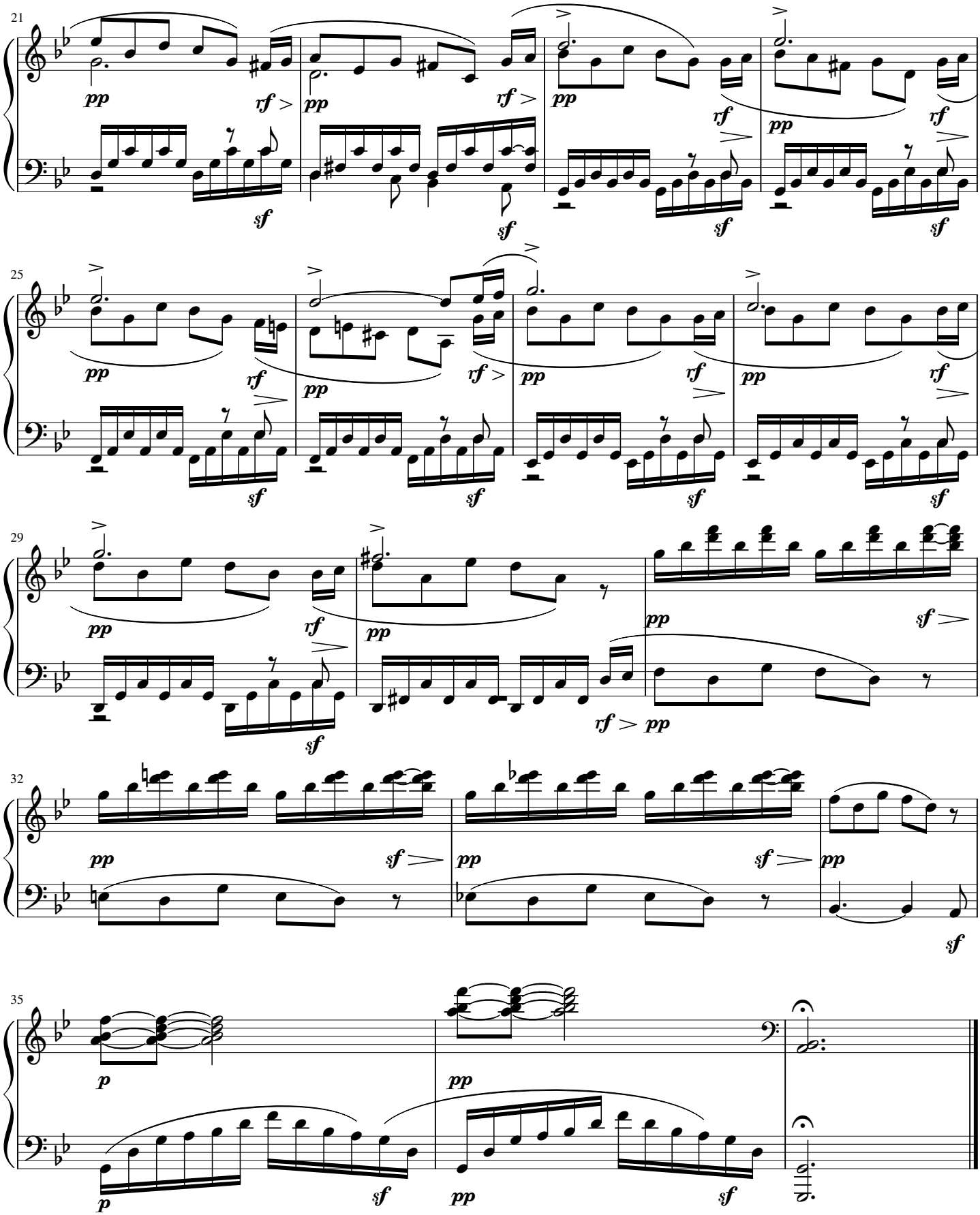


Fils des Cloches

(inspiré par Charles-Valentin Alkan's Esquisses Op.63 No.4)

Alex Bolton

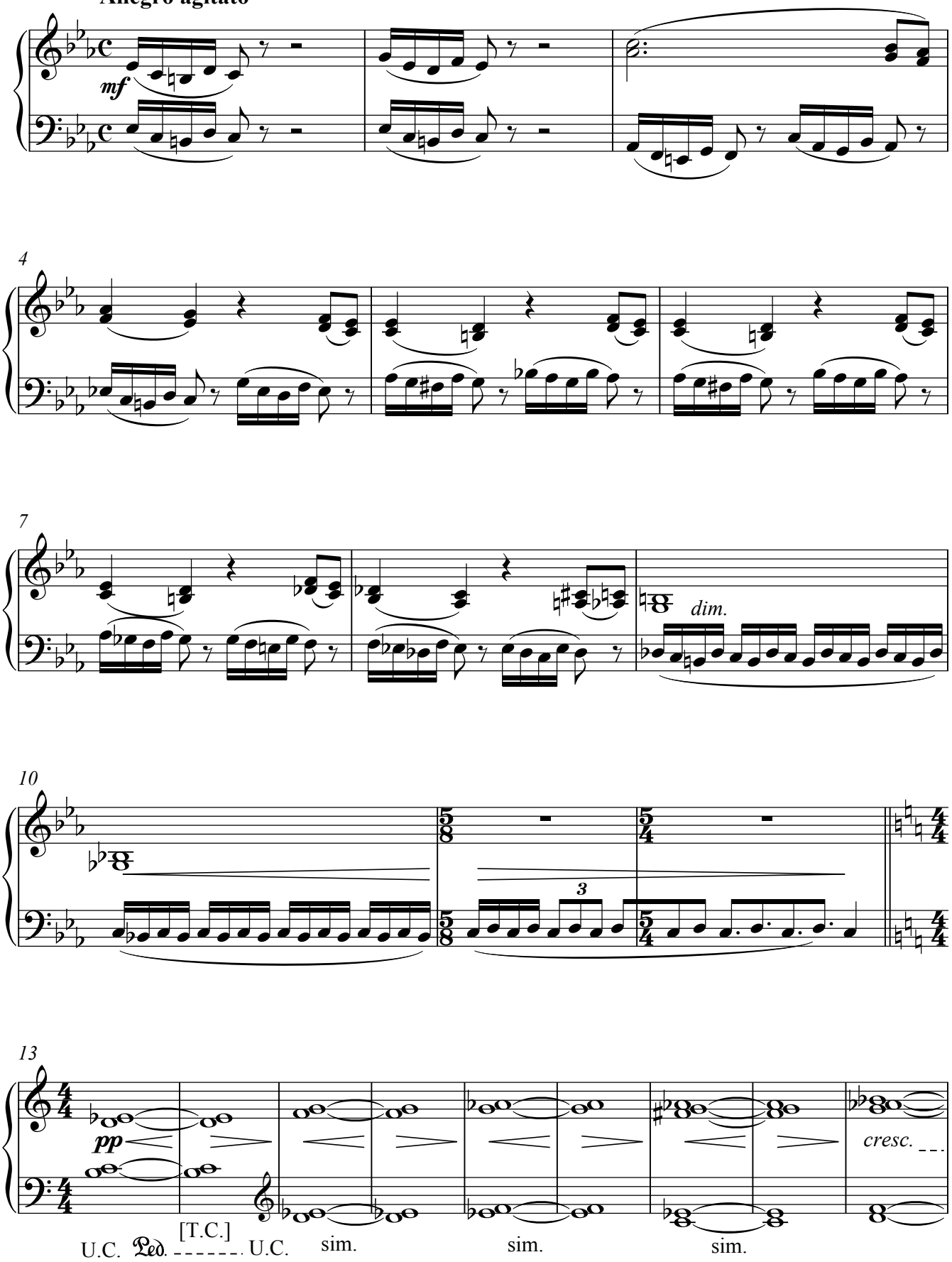



21
pp
rf >
sf
25
29
32
35
p

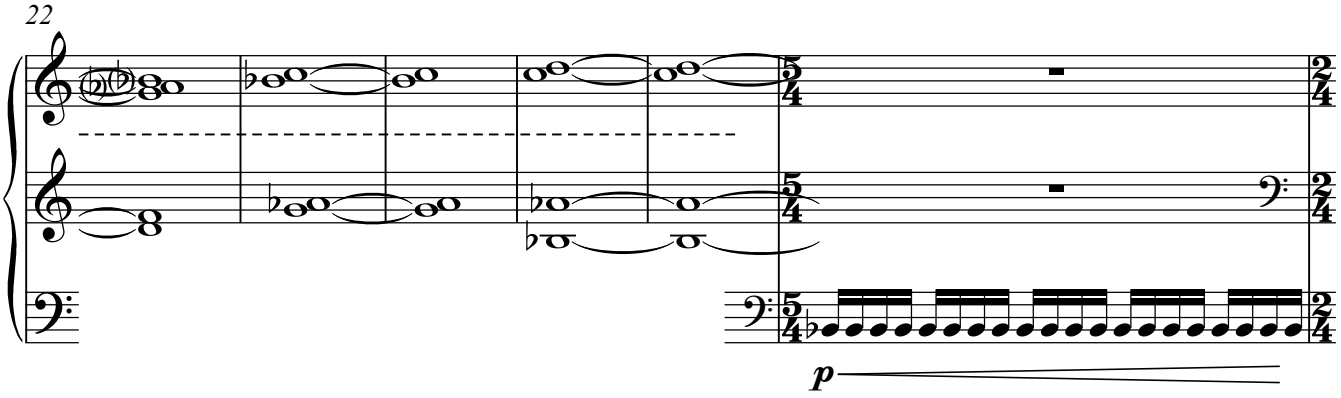
Fragment de quatuor

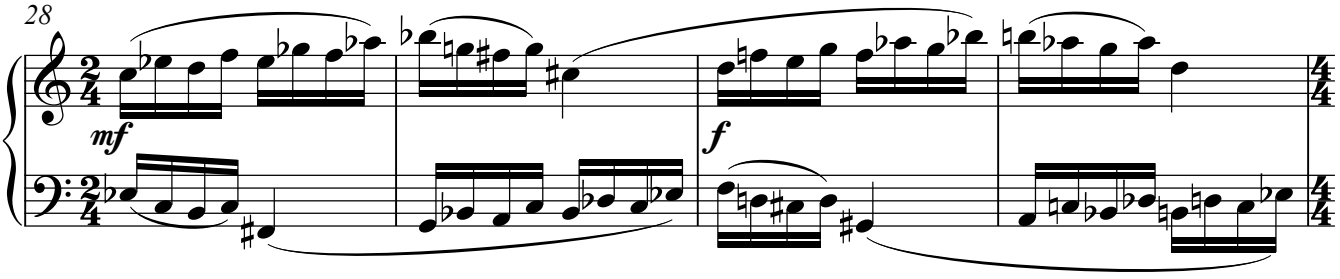
Brian Inglis

Allegro agitato

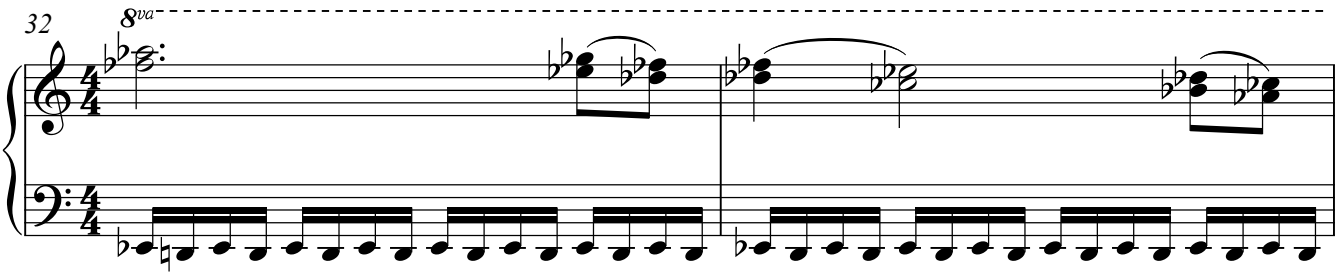


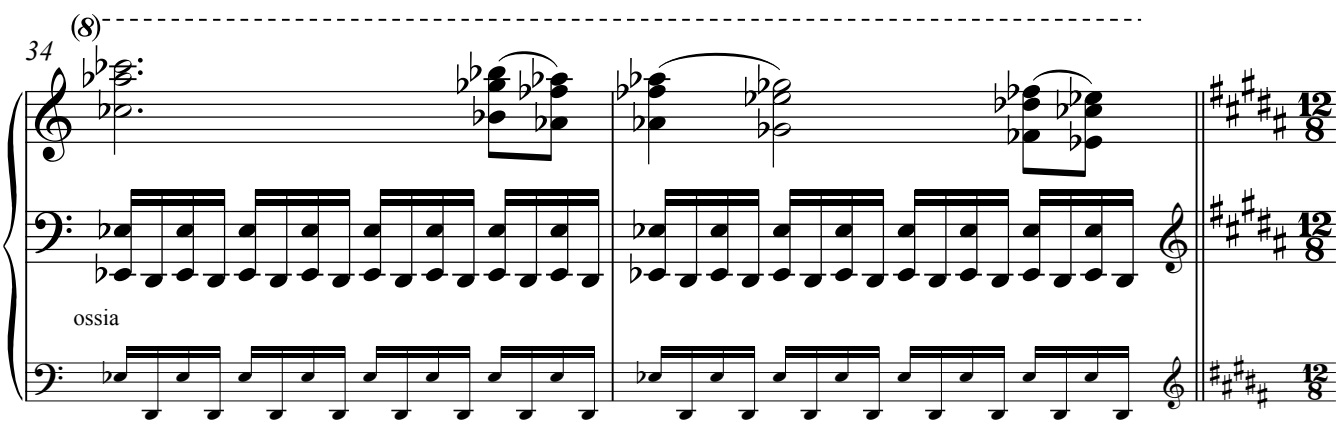
© 2020 Brian Andrew Inglis. Published online by The Alkan Society, with permission. For printed copies please visit http://www.composersedition.com.

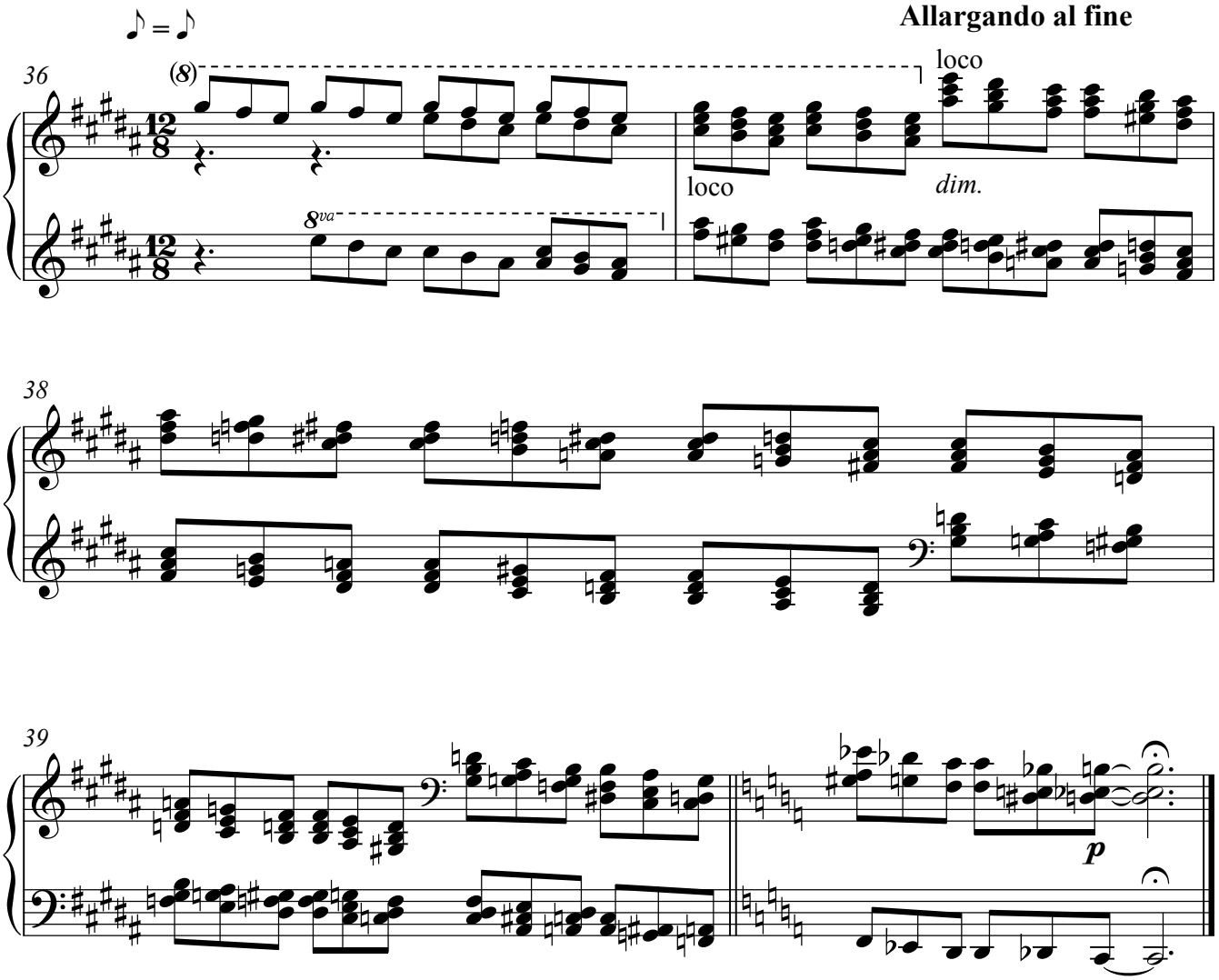




Più mosso





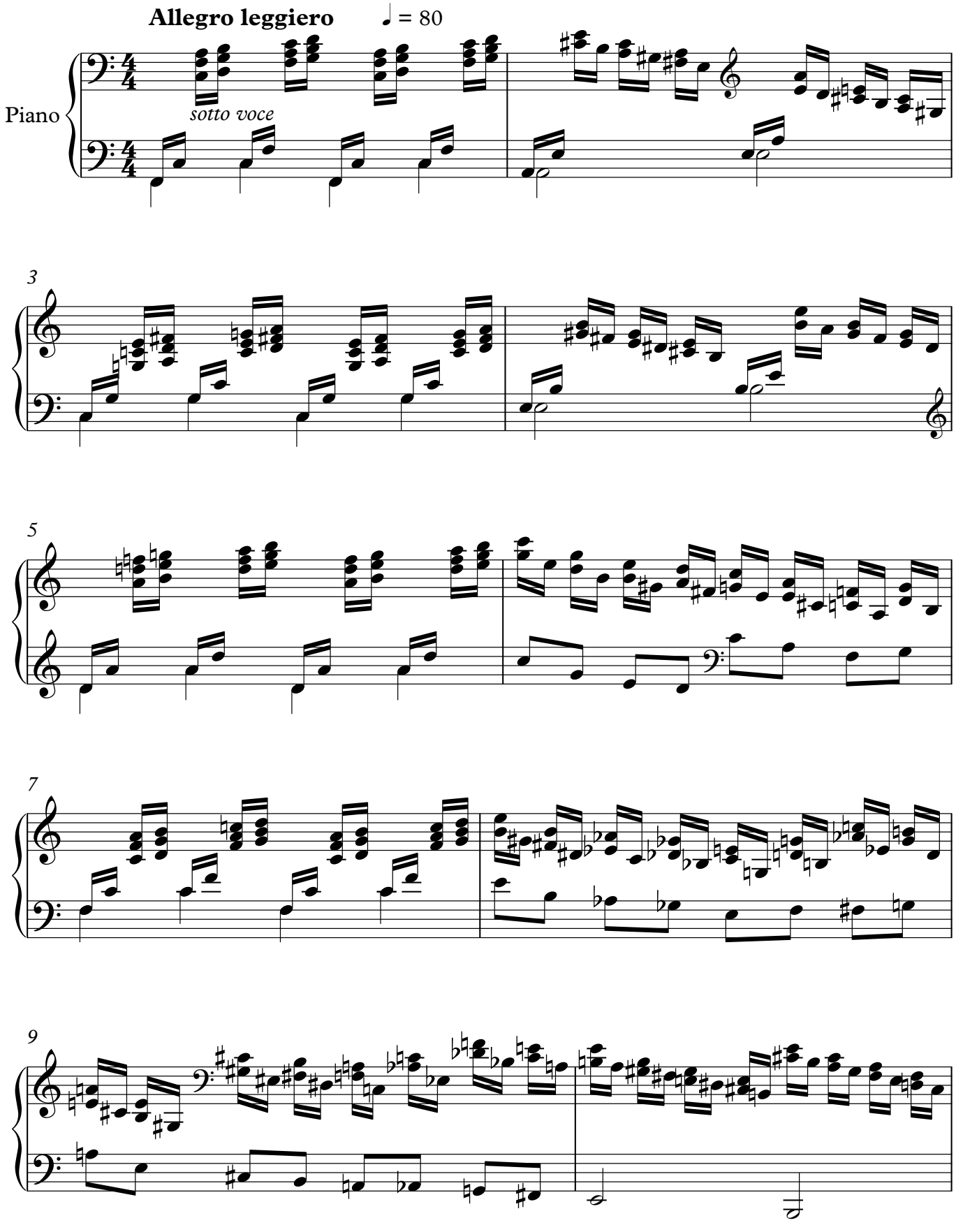


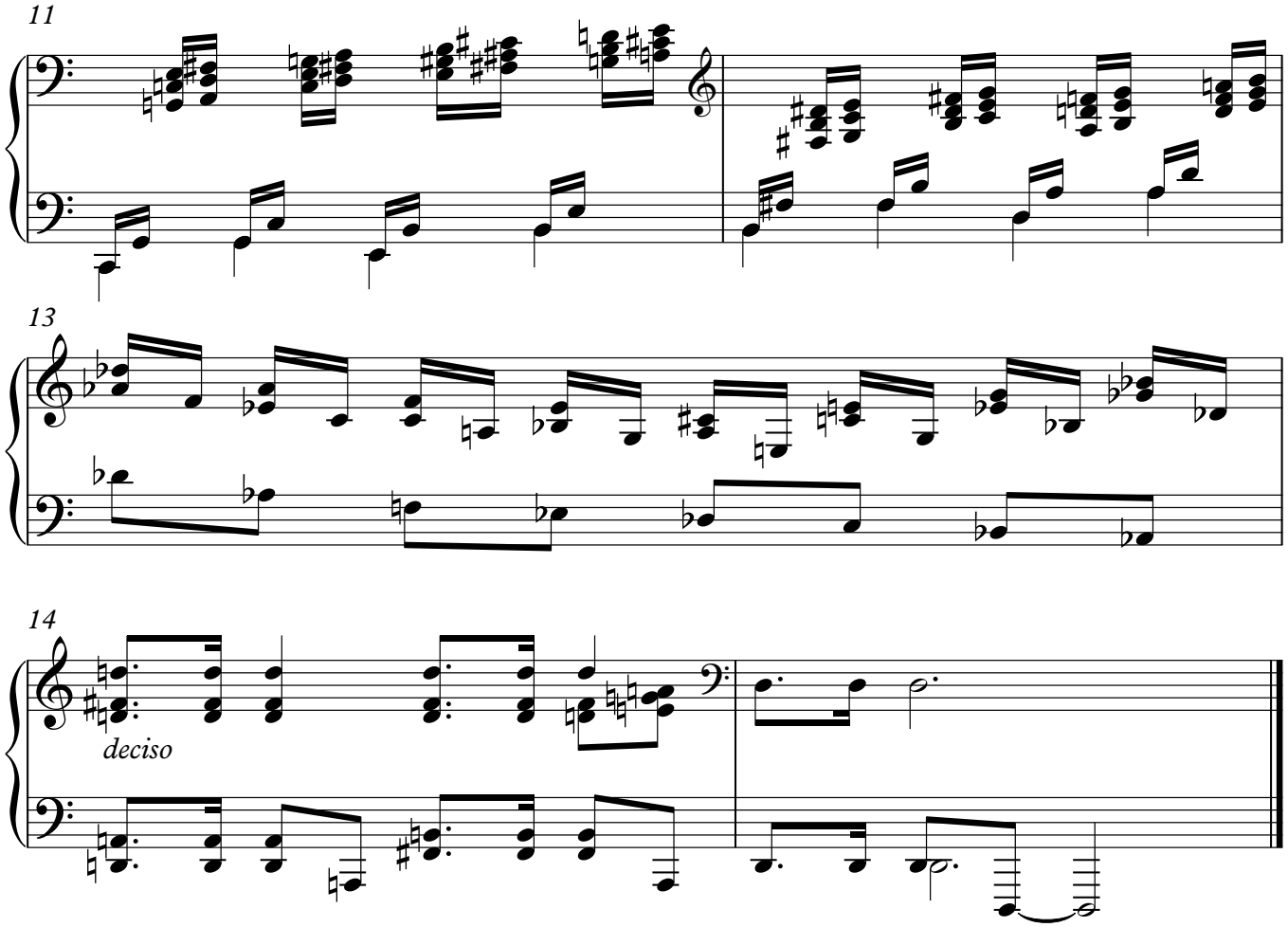
22 July 2019

NOTE: This piece takes a transcription of Alkan's tantalising opening for a projected string quartet in C minor as a starting point, then leads it in a slightly different direction...

Hiding and Seeking

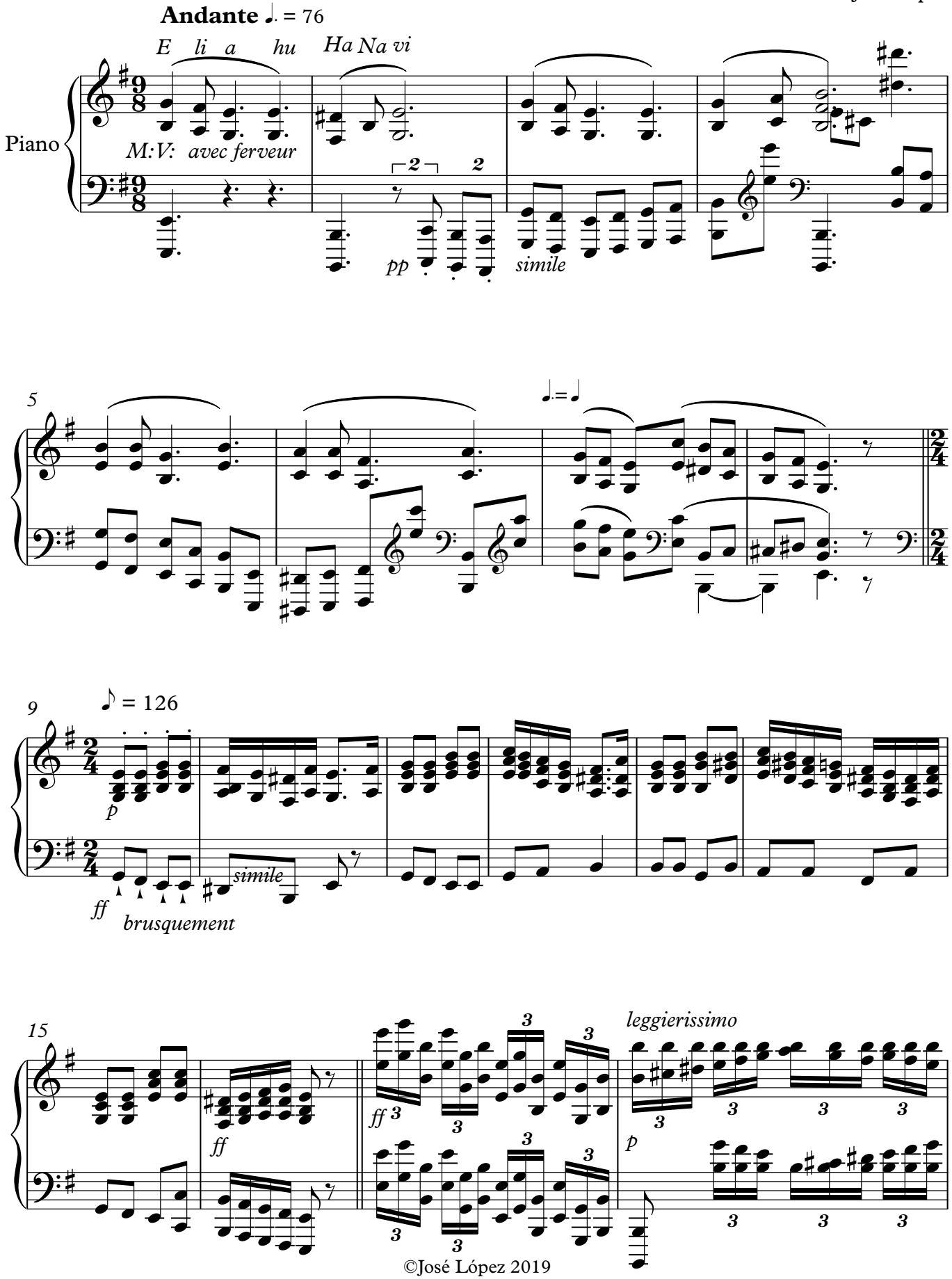
John White



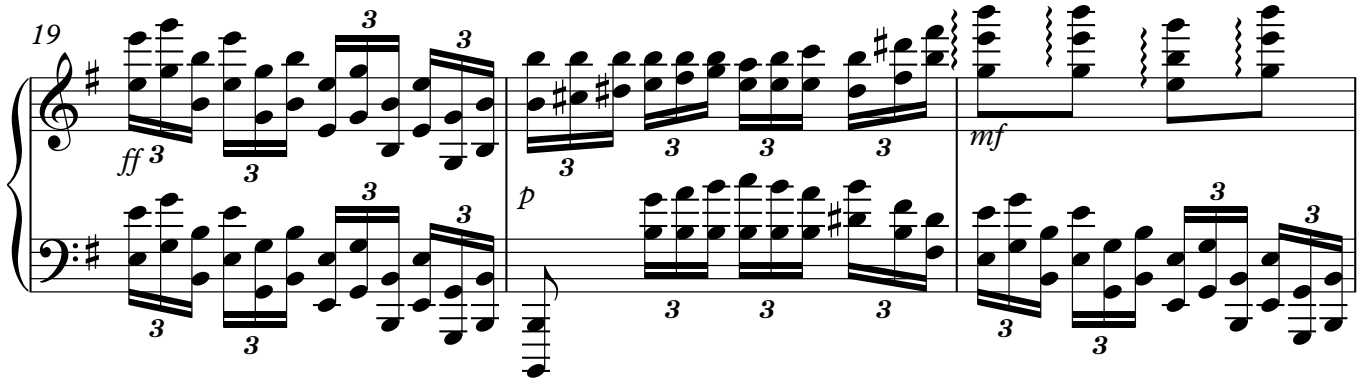

11
13
14
deciso

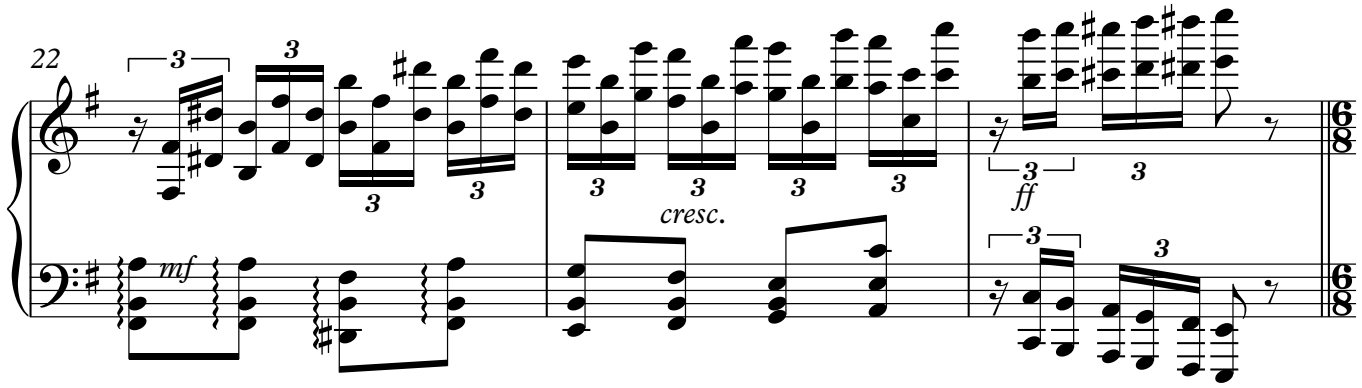
Le festin du Prophète Élie - petites variations sur un thème juif

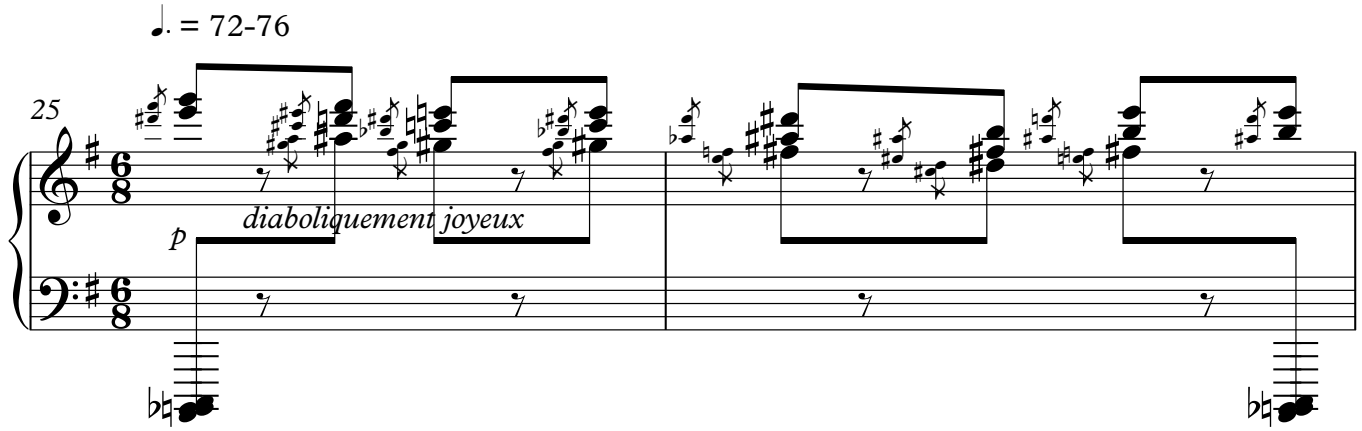
José López

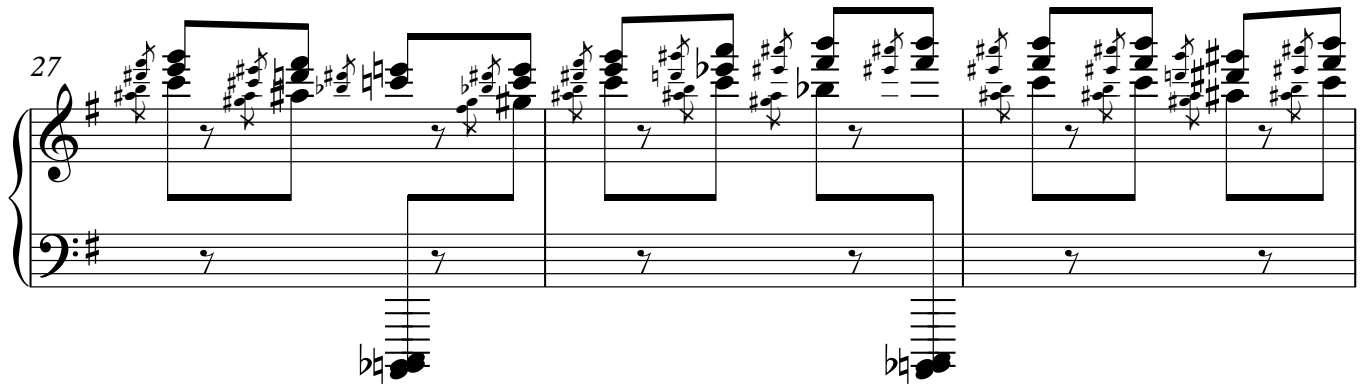


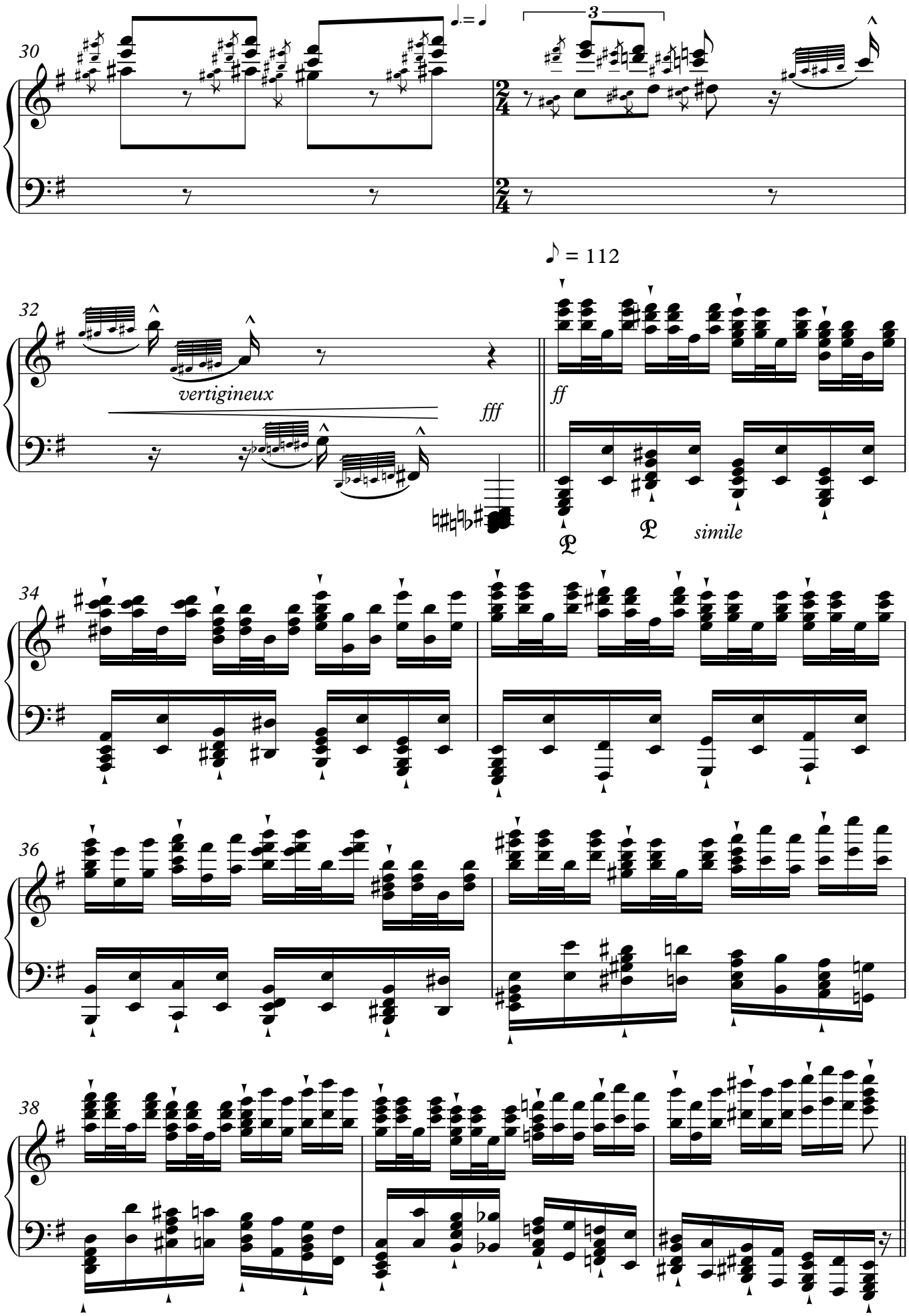
©José López 2019

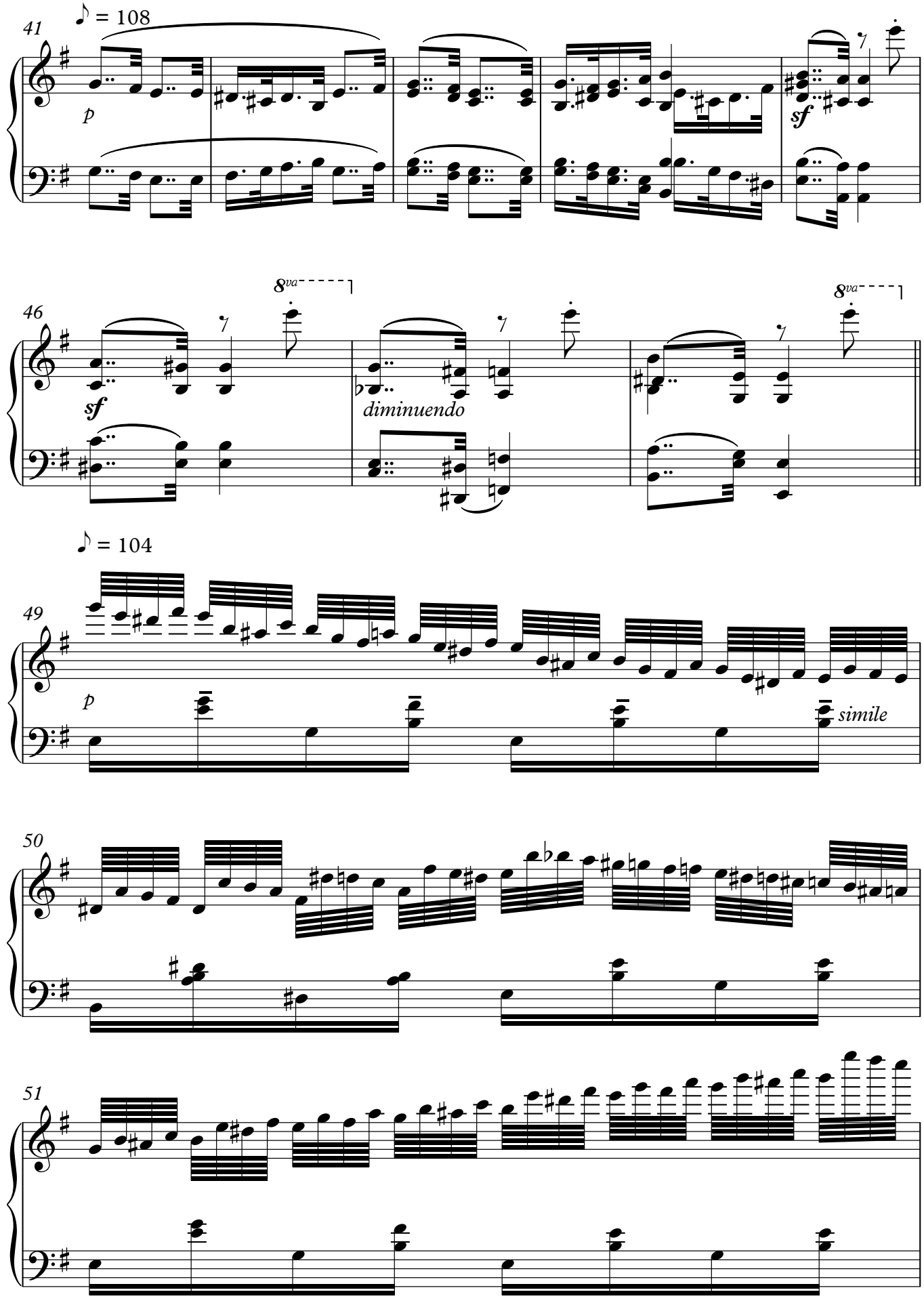

19
ff
p
mf

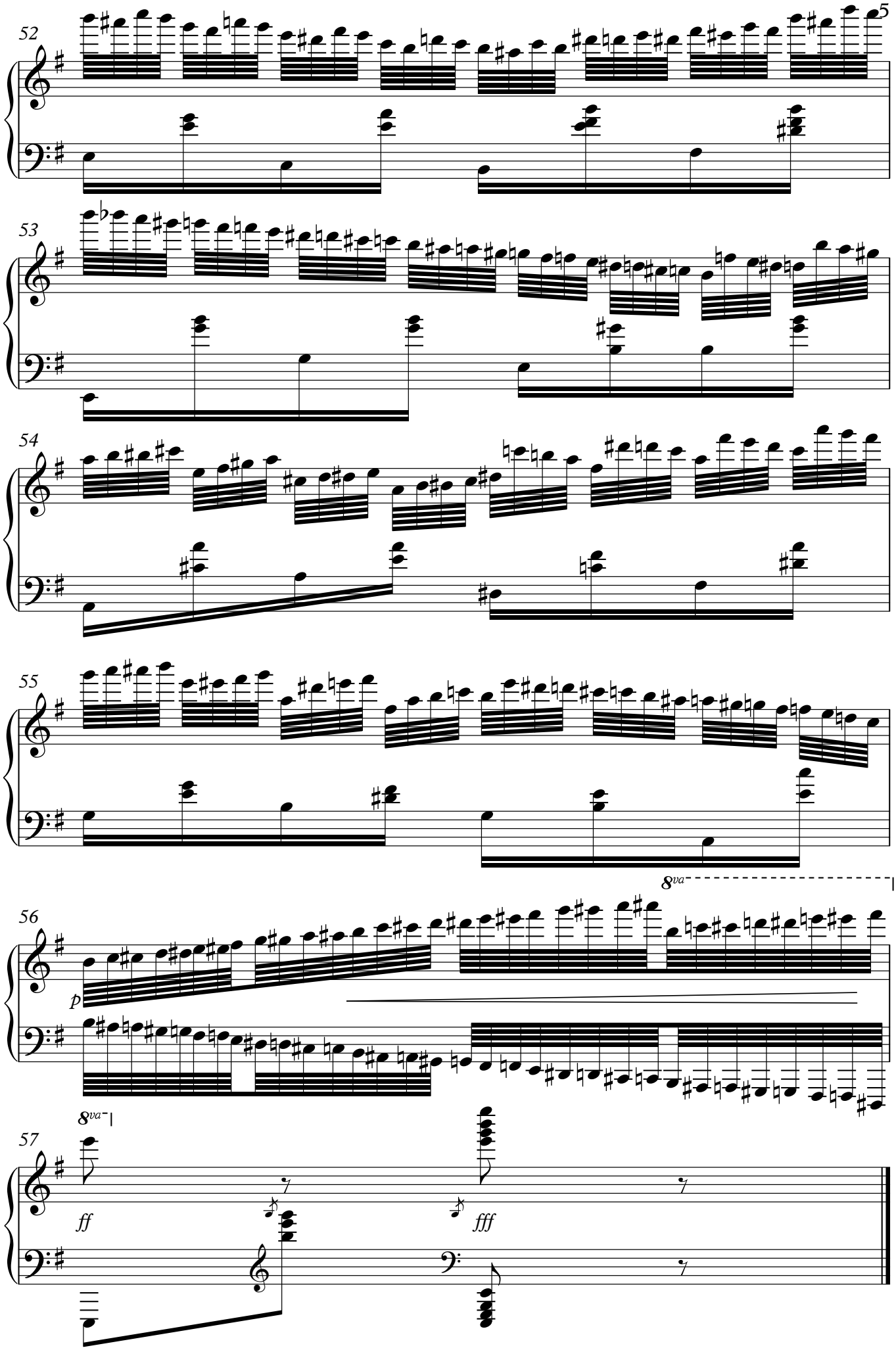

22
mf
cresc.
ff


♩. = 72-76
25
p
diaboliquement joyeux


27

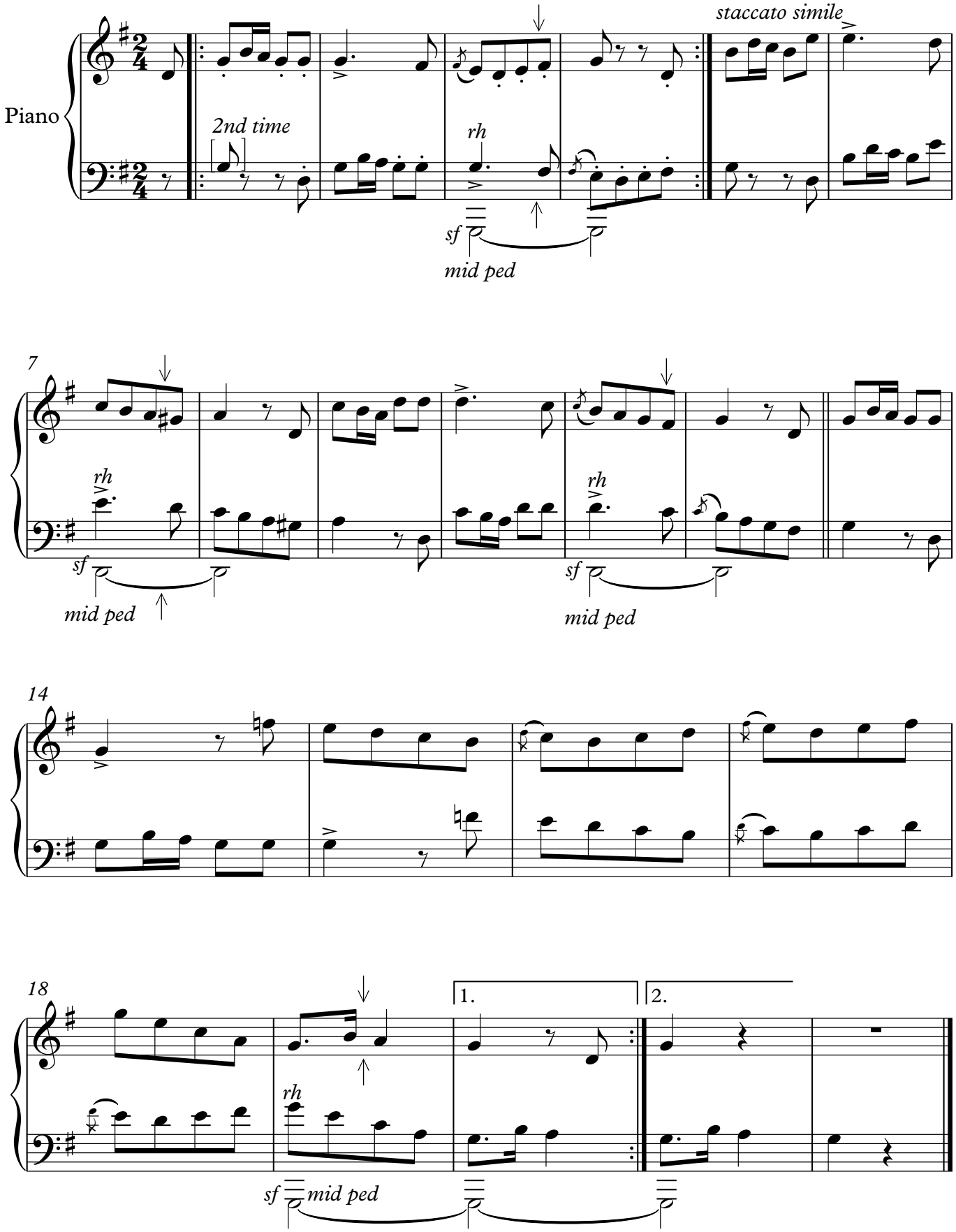

30
3
32
vertigineux
fff
ff
simile
34
36
38


41
♪ = 108
p
sf
46
8va
sf
diminuendo
8va
♪ = 104
49
p
simile
50
51


52
5
53
54
55
8va
56
p
8va
57
ff
fff

Le Manège Enchanté

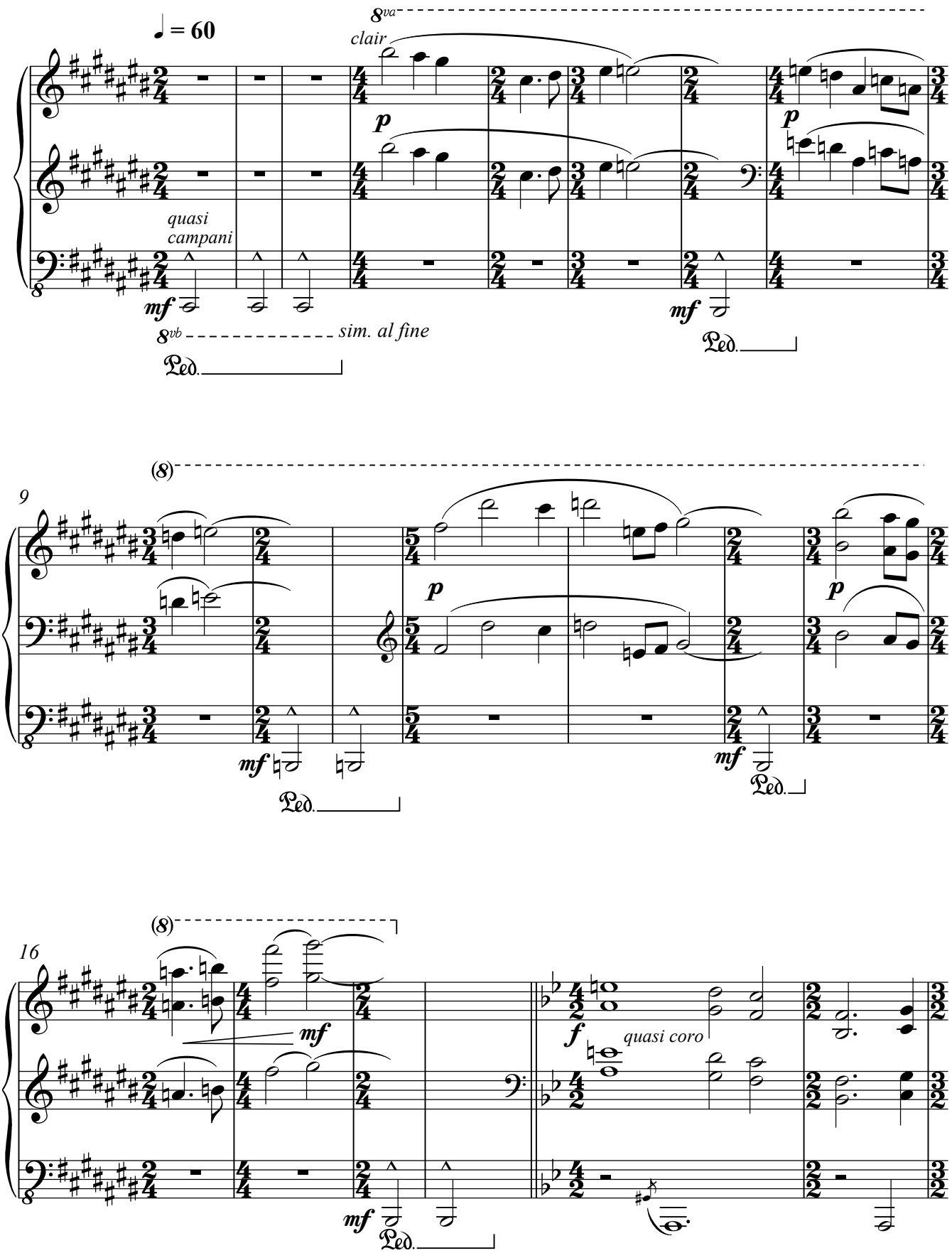
unattrib.



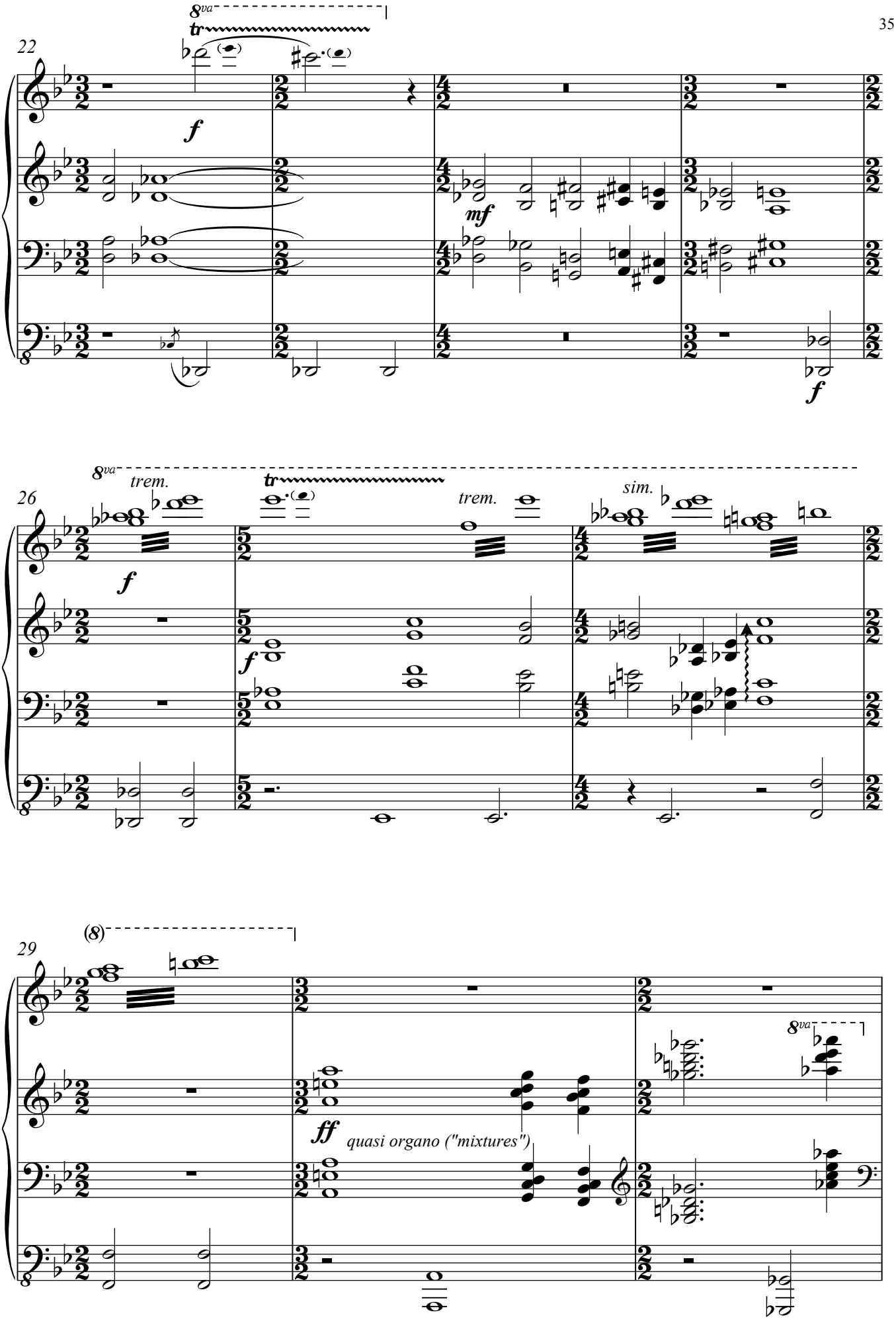
Performer decides when to use right hand for bass clef notes
Arrows indicate precise moment to use middle pedal

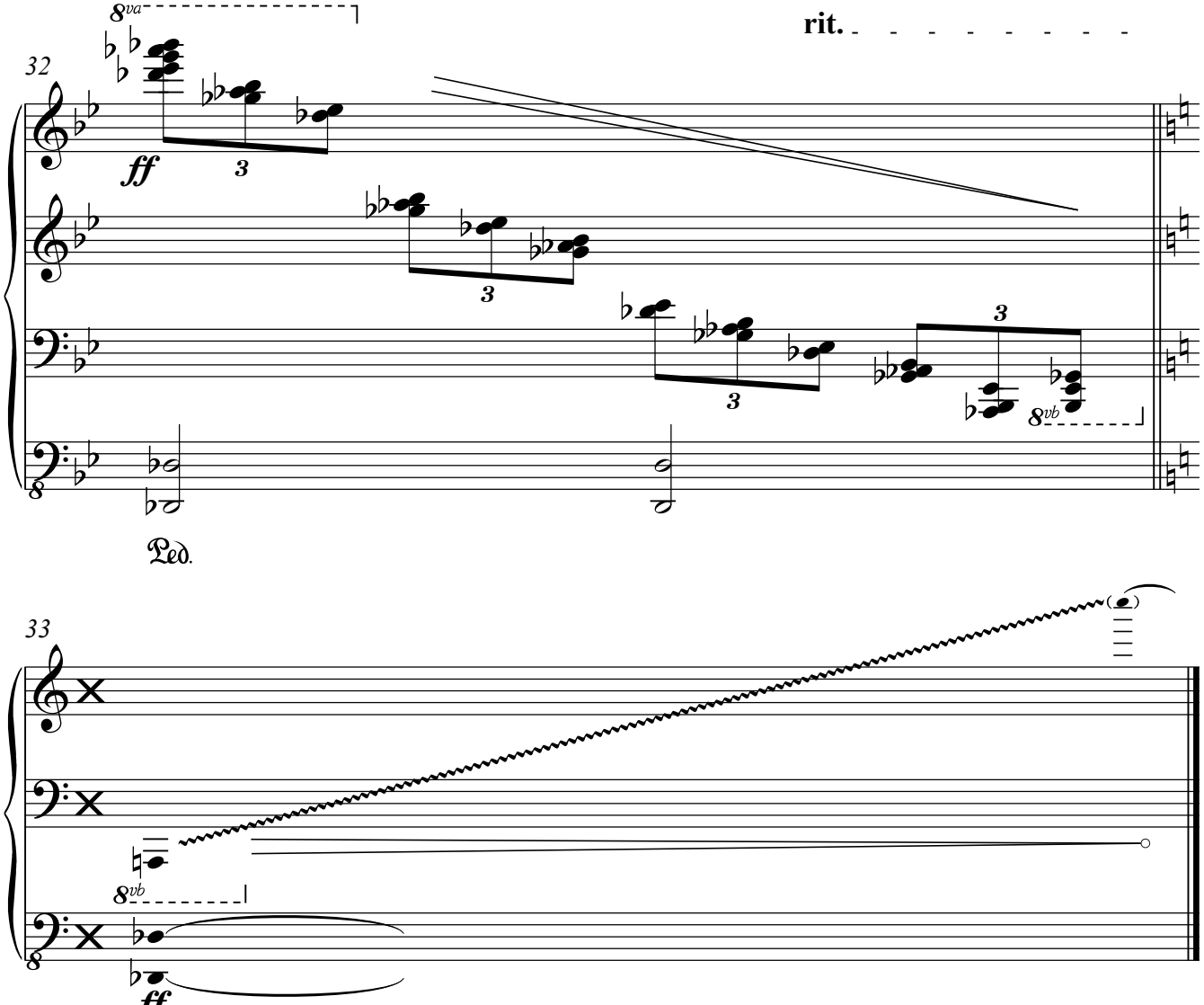
Les cloches

Brian Inglis



© 2020 Brian Andrew Inglis. Published online by The Alkan Society, with permission. For printed copies please visit http://www.composersedition.com.


22
8va
tr
f
mf
f
26
8va
trem.
tr
trem.
sim.
f
f
29
(8)
8va
ff
quasi organo ("mixtures")



* white note glissando, not too fast, gradually slowing down, *diminuendo al niente* (last few notes should be key-noise only, without sounding pitch).

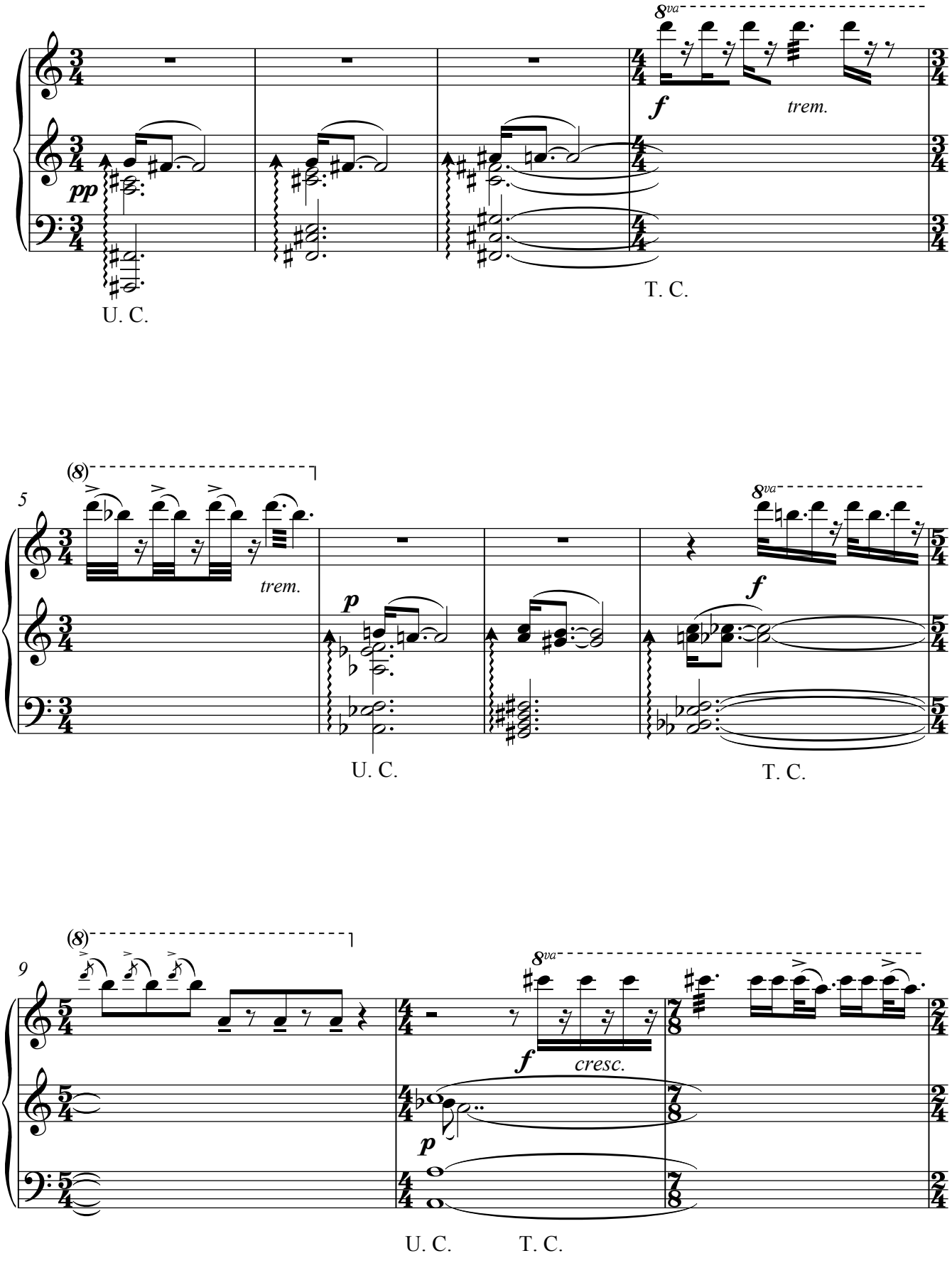
17 November 2019

Note: A very different take on bell sounds to Alkan's op.63 no 4, with a side nod at the kind of colour and keyboard 'orchestration' found in the piano music of Debussy (as well as Alkan). A slight echo, too, of the implacable mysticism of the latter's final unnumbered piece from Op. 63, 'Laus Deo'.

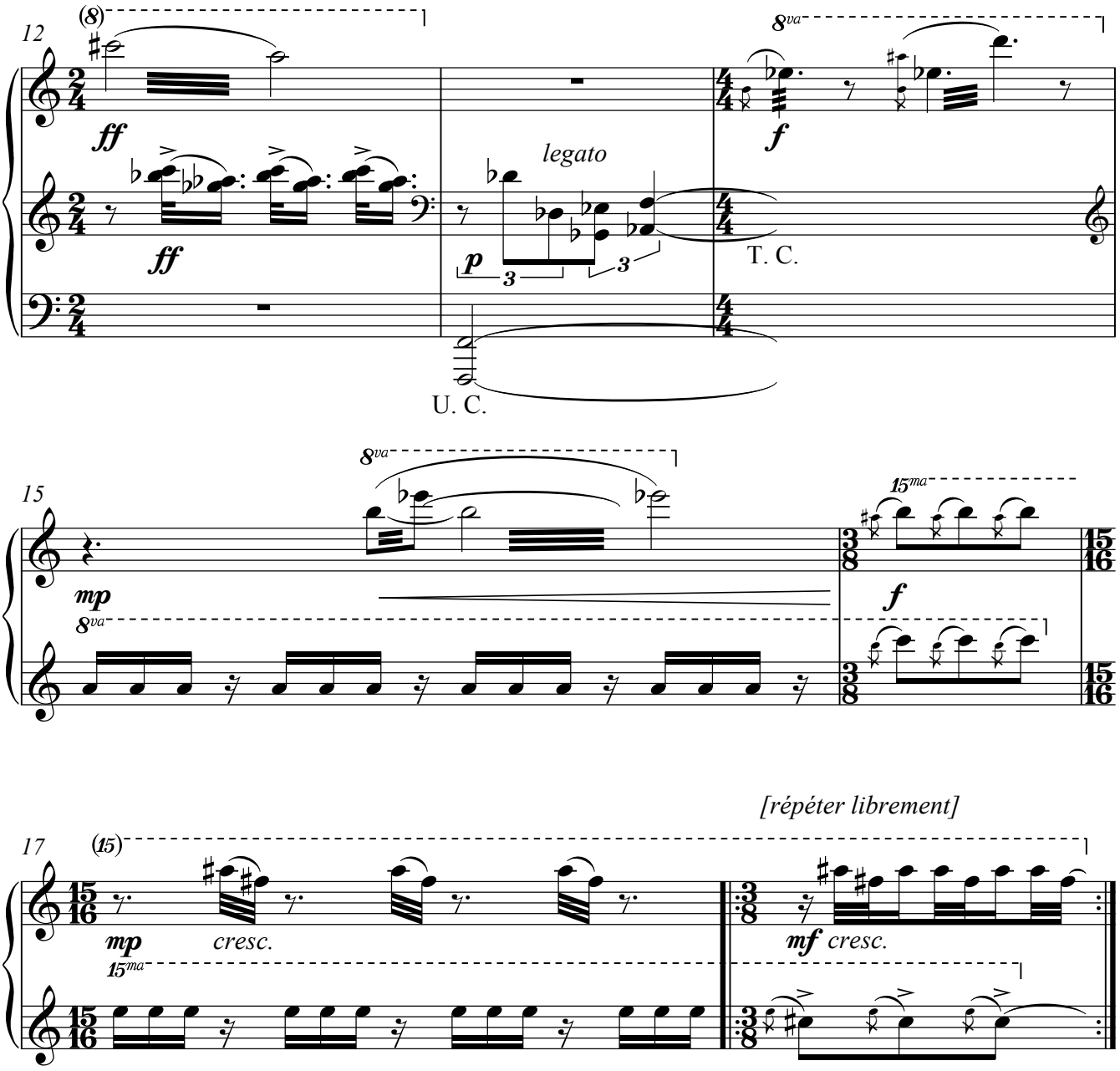
Oiseaux tristes et joyeux

Brian Inglis

Larghetto (♩ = ca. 60)



© 2020 Brian Andrew Inglis. Published online by The Alkan Society, with permission. For printed copies please visit http://www.composersedition.com.

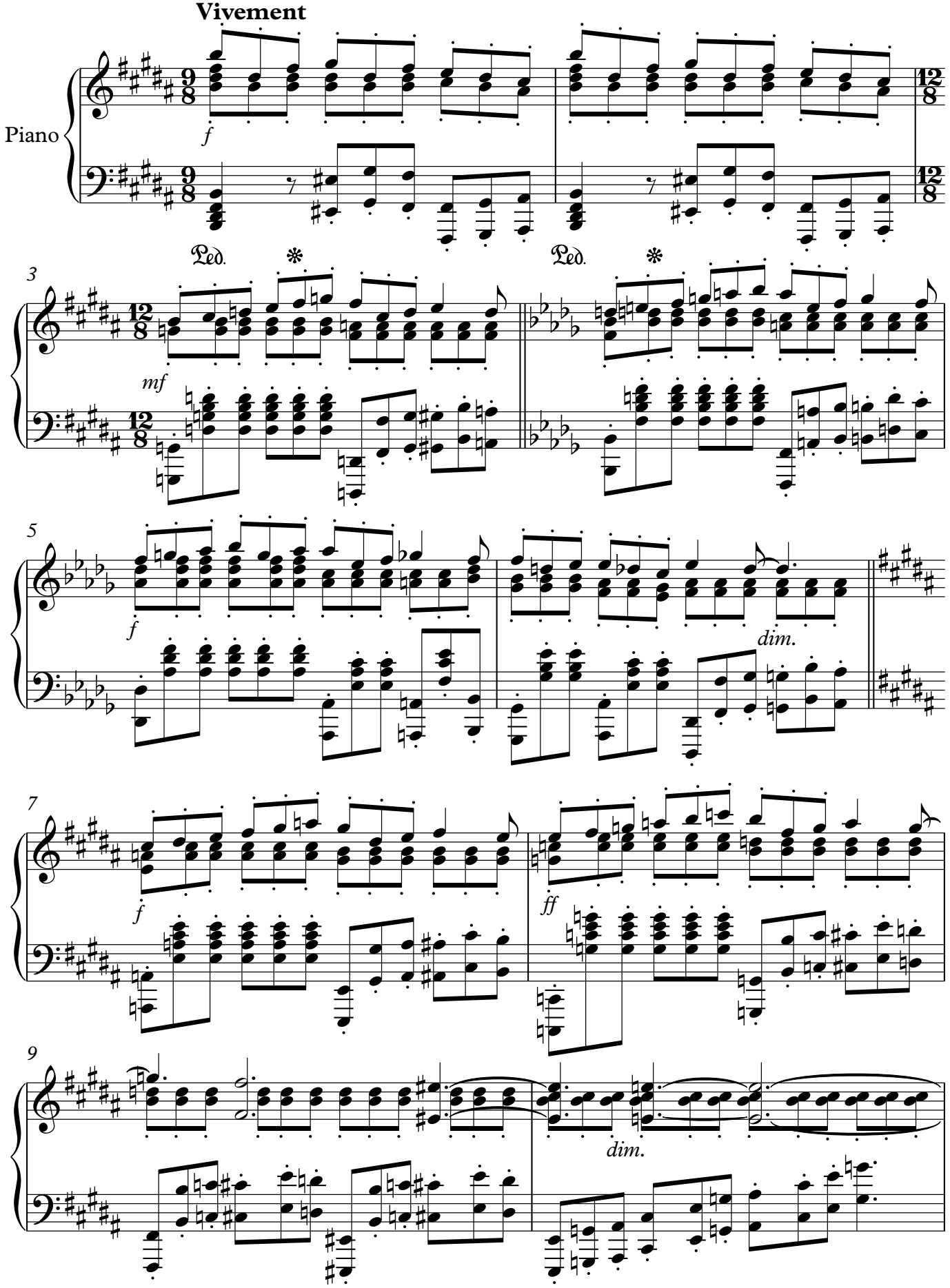


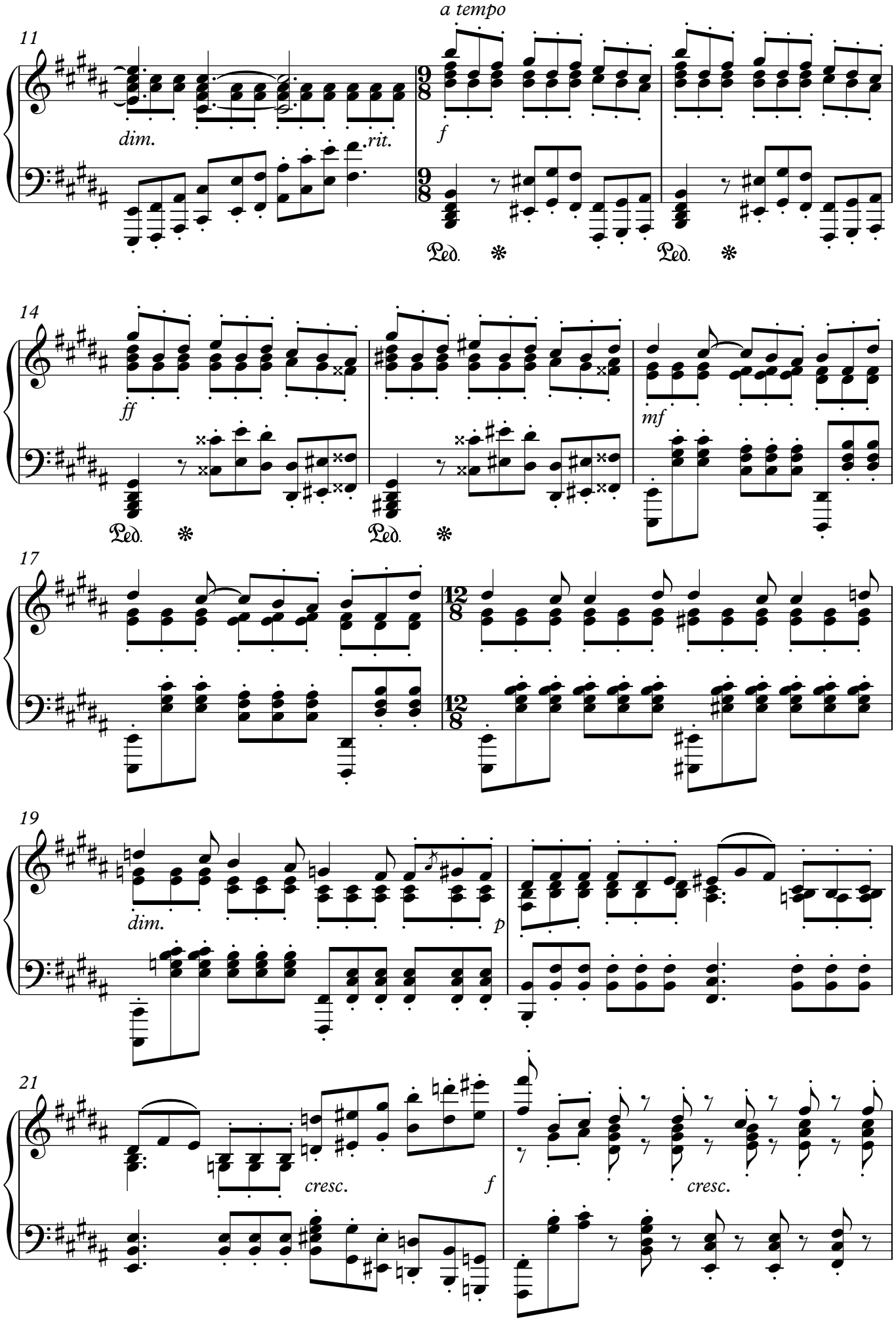
12 August 2019

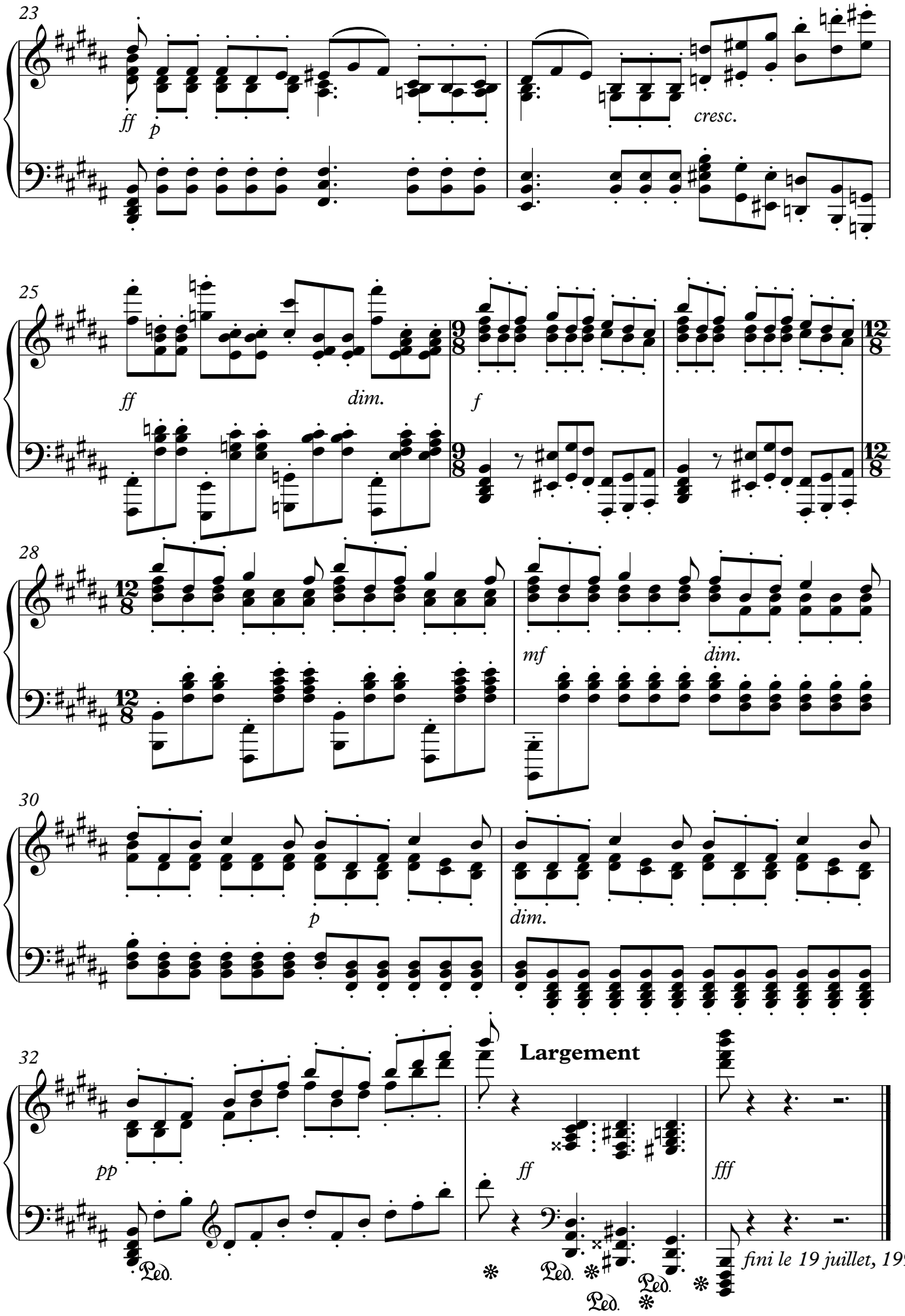
Note: This piece references the trajectory from Rameau's 'Rappel des oiseaux' to Messiaen's Petites esquisses d'oiseaux via Ravel and Alkan, whose op. 63 Esquisses certainly fall within this space of French pianism. In the inimitable words of Richard Gorer: 'he stands like some musical pithecanthropus as a link between the clavecinistes, and the impressionists of the early years of the twentieth century'.

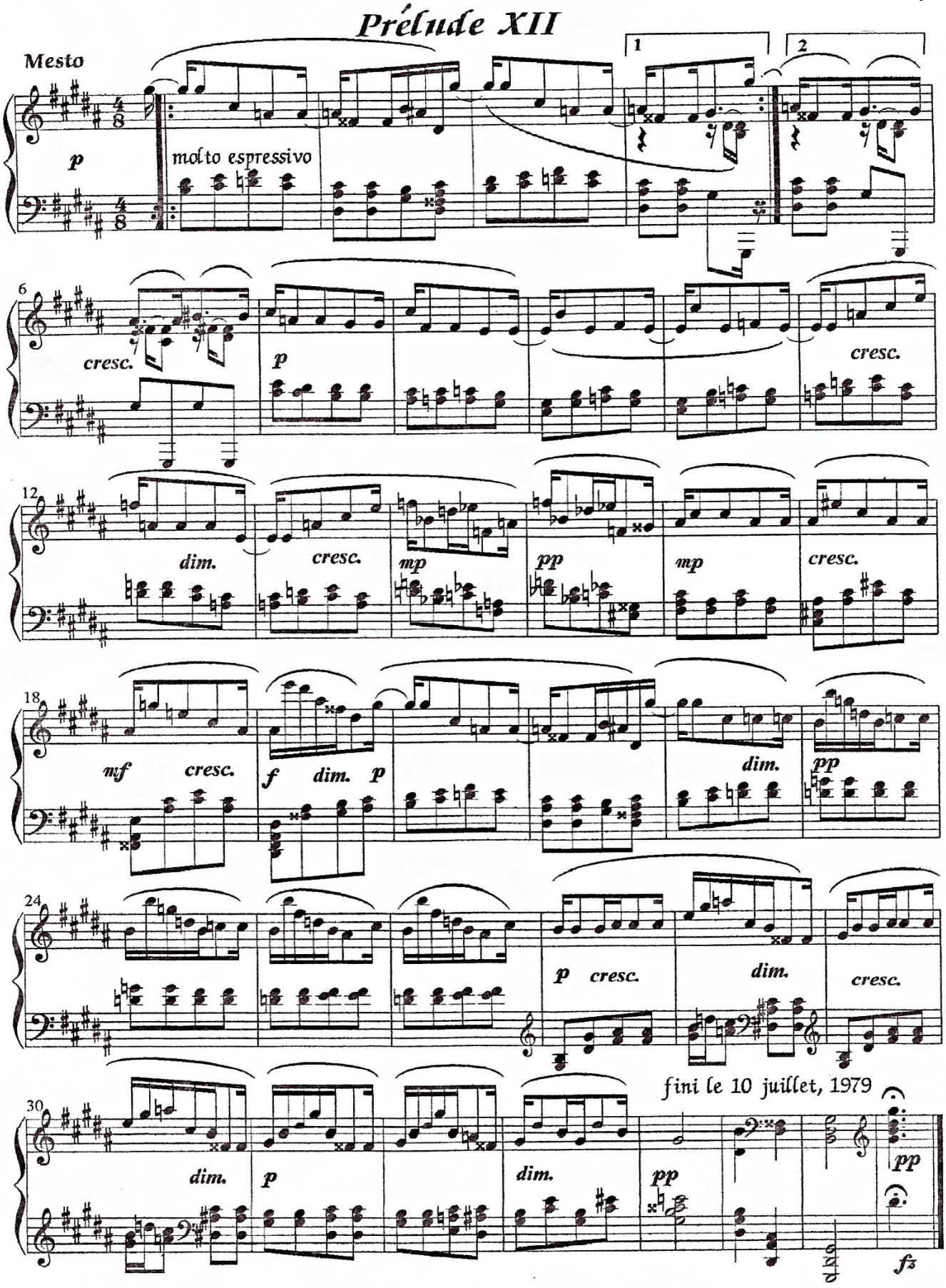
Prélude XI

Brian Arlon Sunday




11
a tempo
dim.
rit.
f
Ped.
Ped.
14
ff
mf
Ped.
Ped.
17
19
dim.
p
21
cresc.
f
cresc.

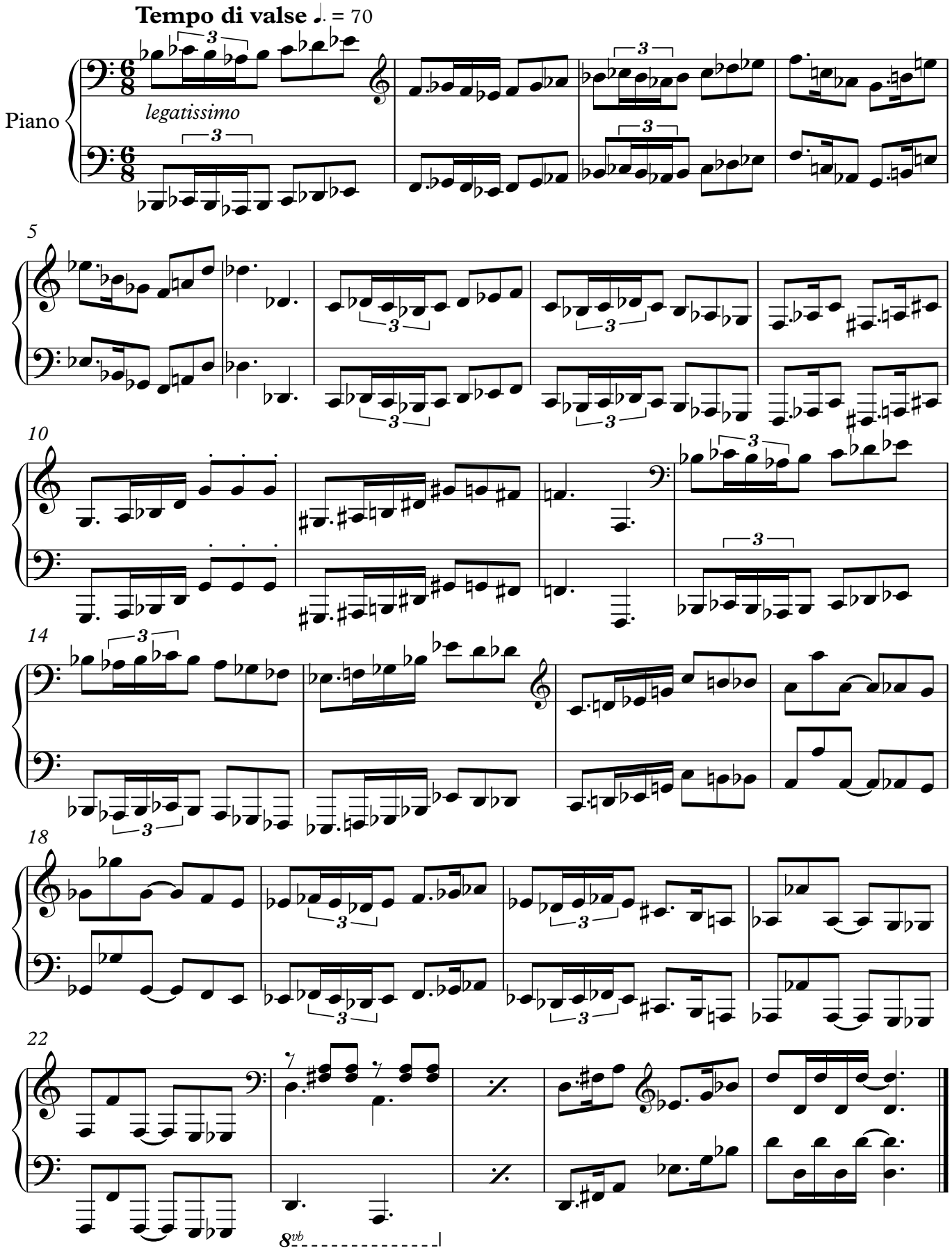

23
ff
p
cresc.
25
ff
dim.
f
28
mf
dim.
30
p
dim.
32
pp
Largement
ff
fff
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
fini le 19 juillet, 1995



"Erratum: b19, LH - 1st chord should have an Fx (double sharp)

Remembering

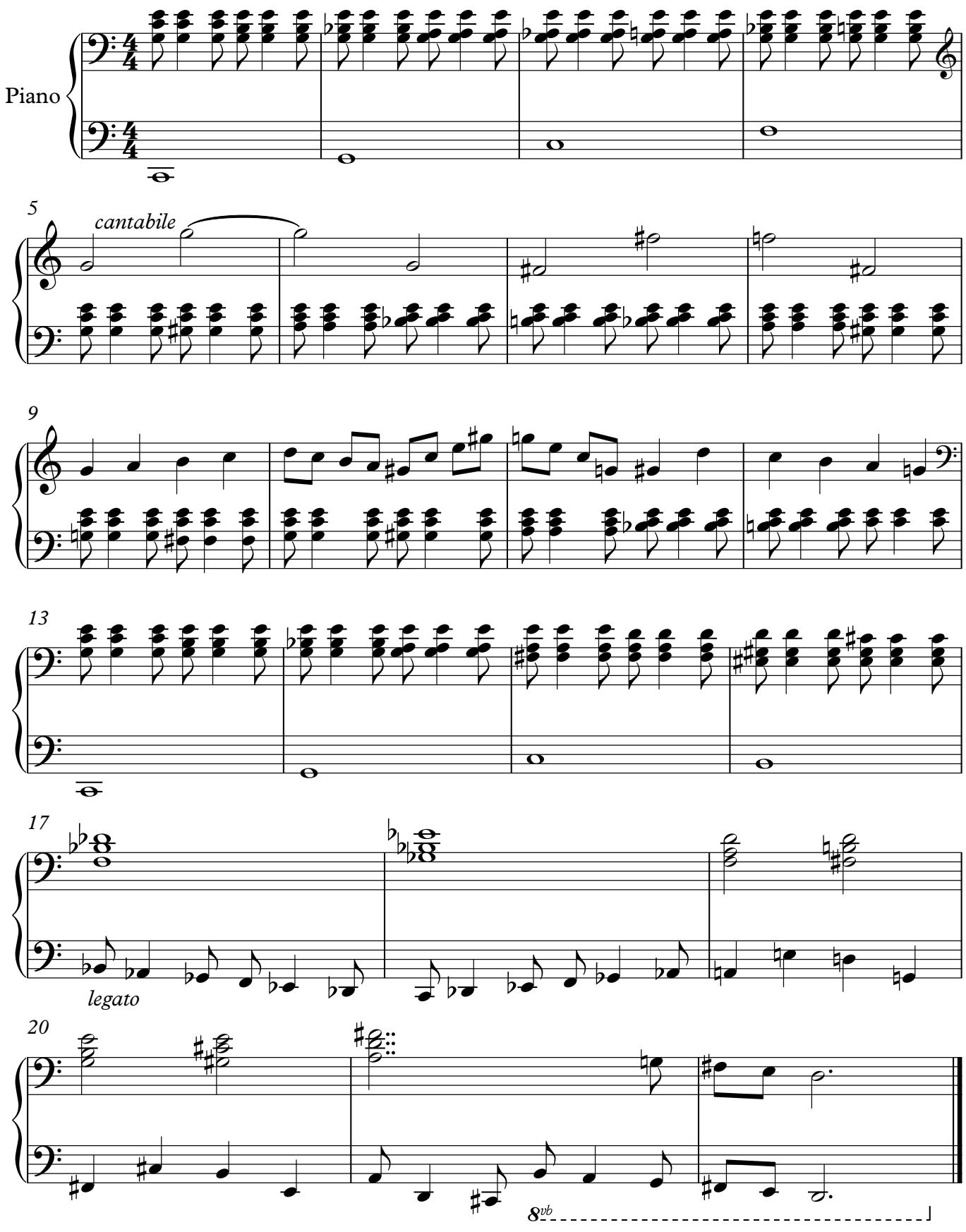
John White



Romancing

John White

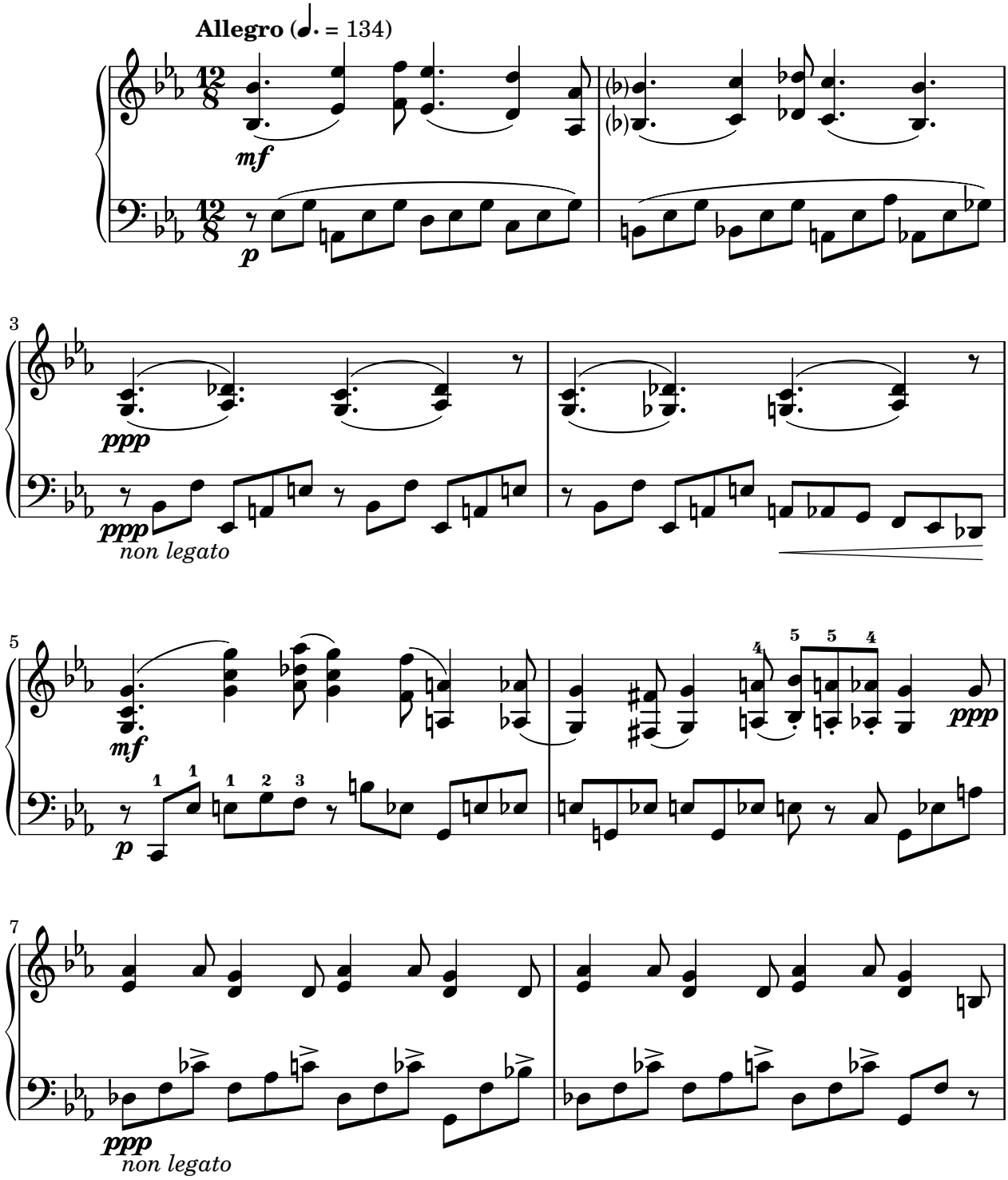
Andante sostenuto

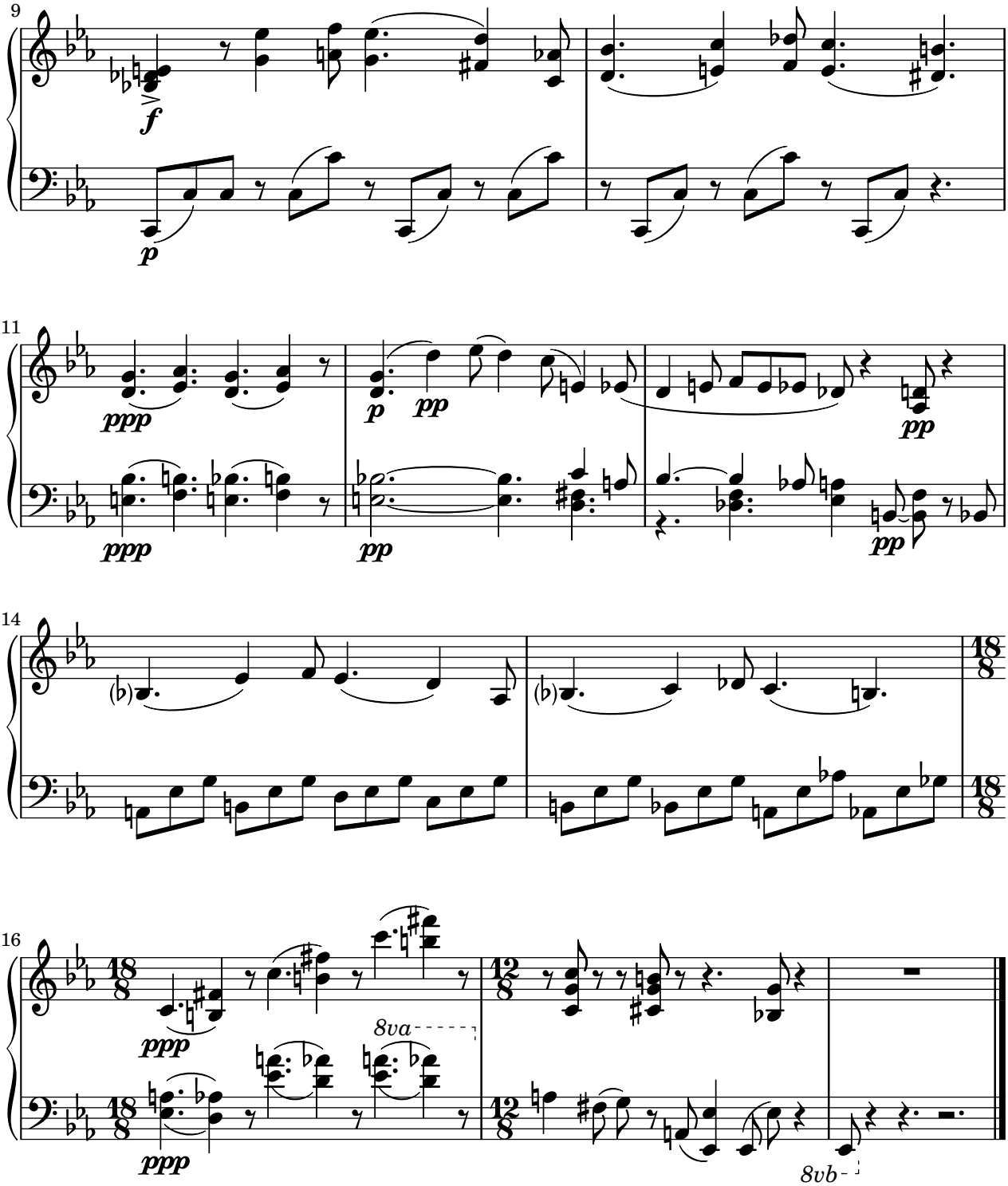


Tarantellinetto

Esquisse

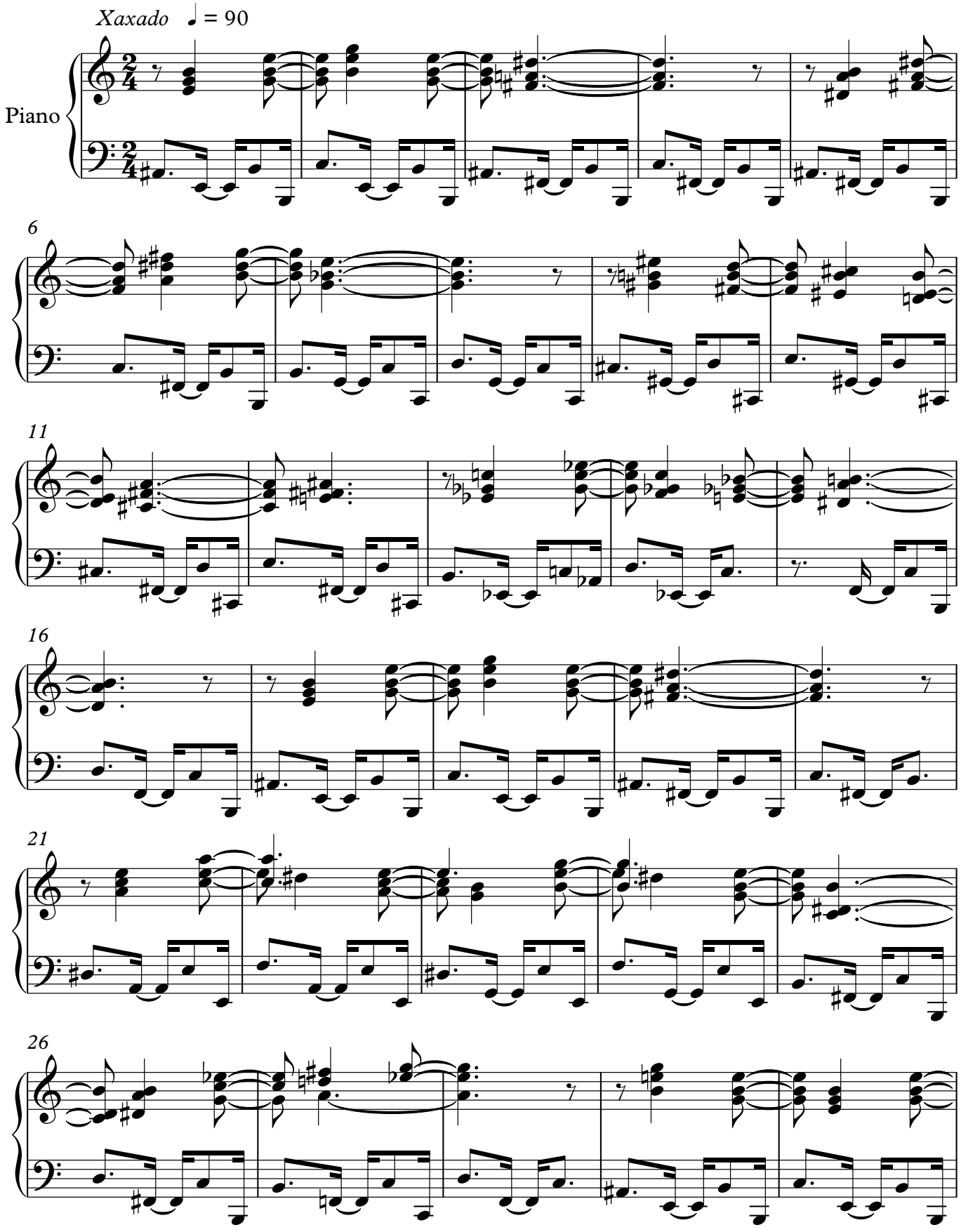
Ryan Layne Whitney

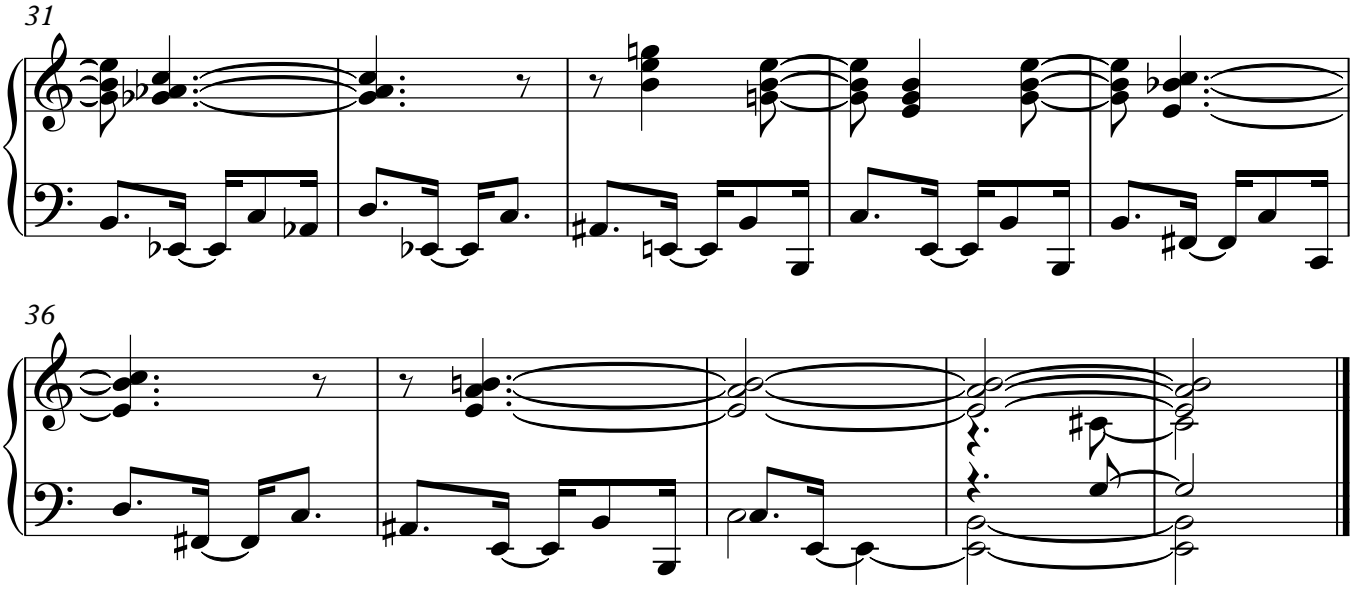



9
f
p
11
ppp
p
pp
14
16
8va
8vb

The First Female Referee

Dave Smith





In a 1974 programme note for a concert including five of his piano sonatas, the composer John White drew attention to a notable aspect of Alkan's music, namely "The exposition of mysterious order", referring to the kind of surprises which occur in spite of (and more often because of) the strict compositional discipline involved. This observation had no small effect on *The first female referee*, the title taken from *Hunter of Stories*, a collection of brief writings by the Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano.

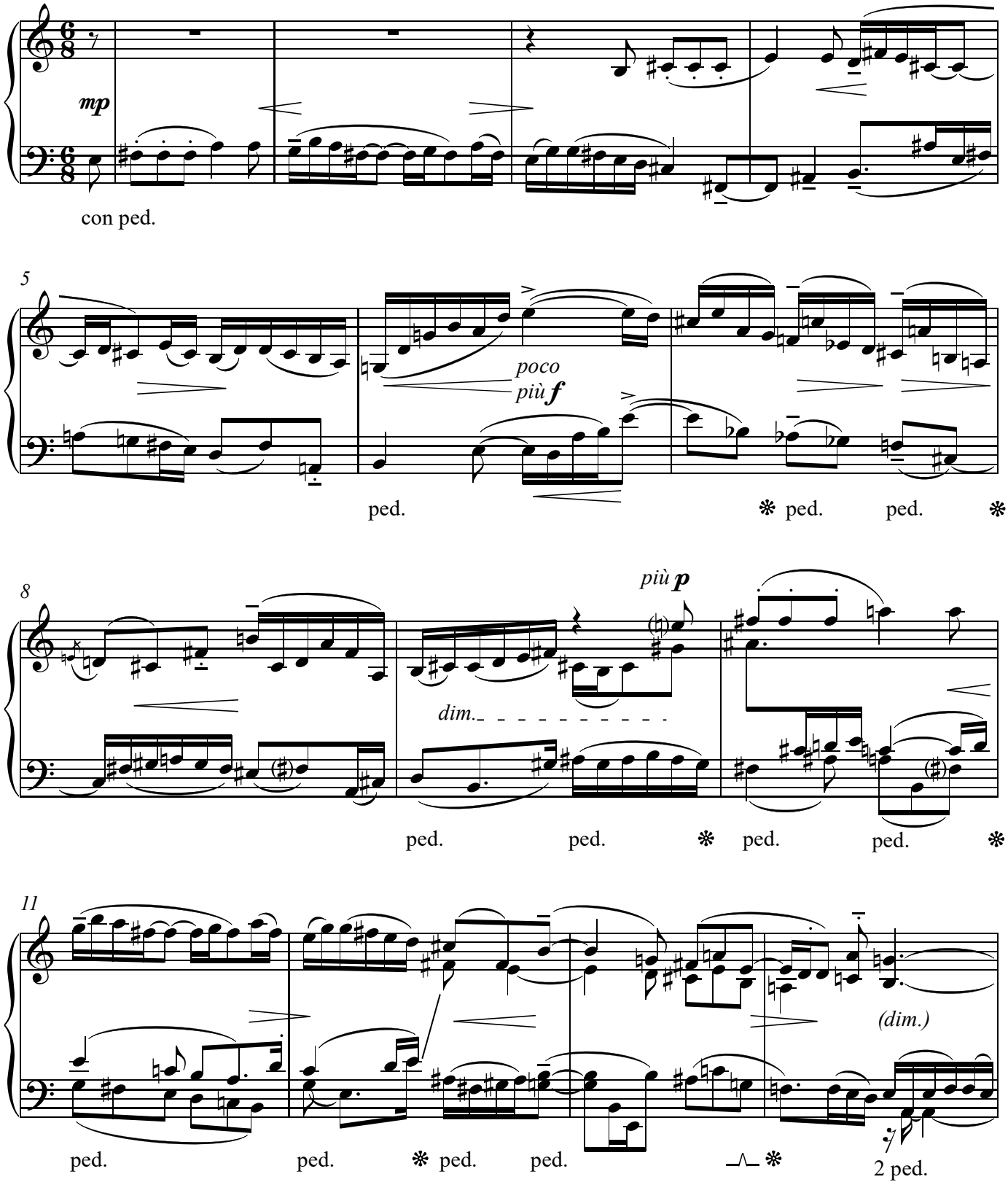
to Florian Mitrea

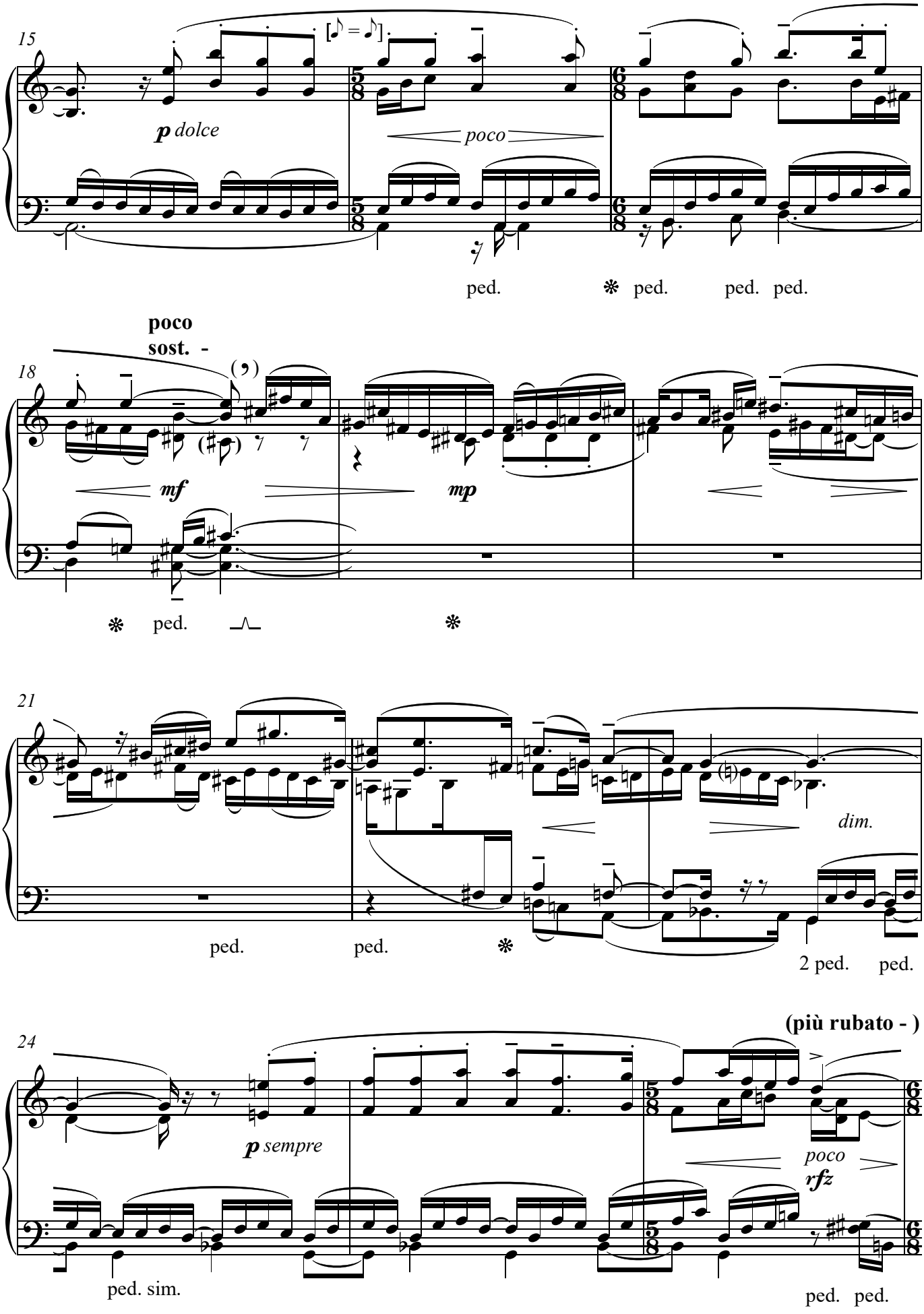
The Lord is my Shepherd

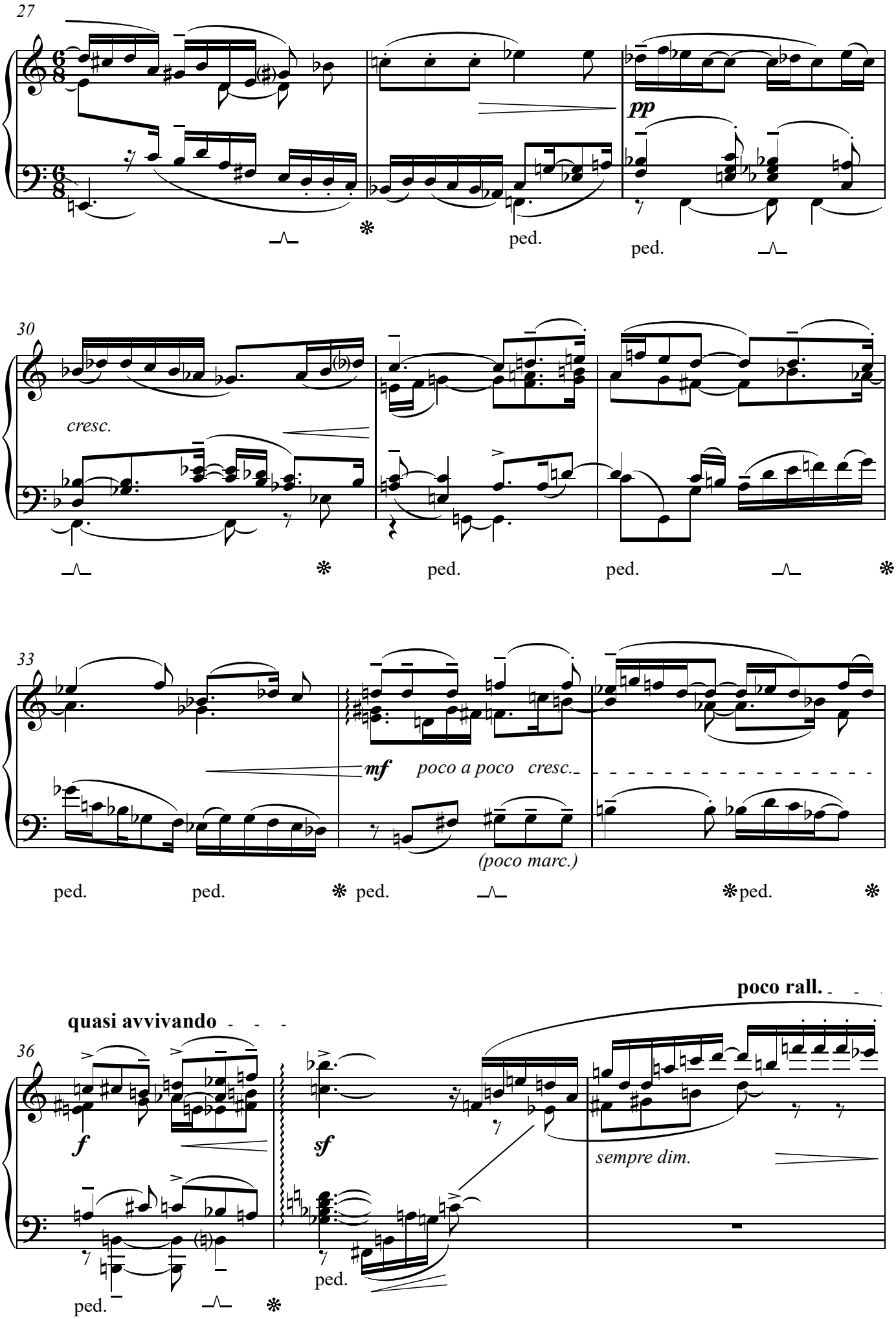
homage to Alkan - after an ancient Hebrew melody for Psalm XXIII

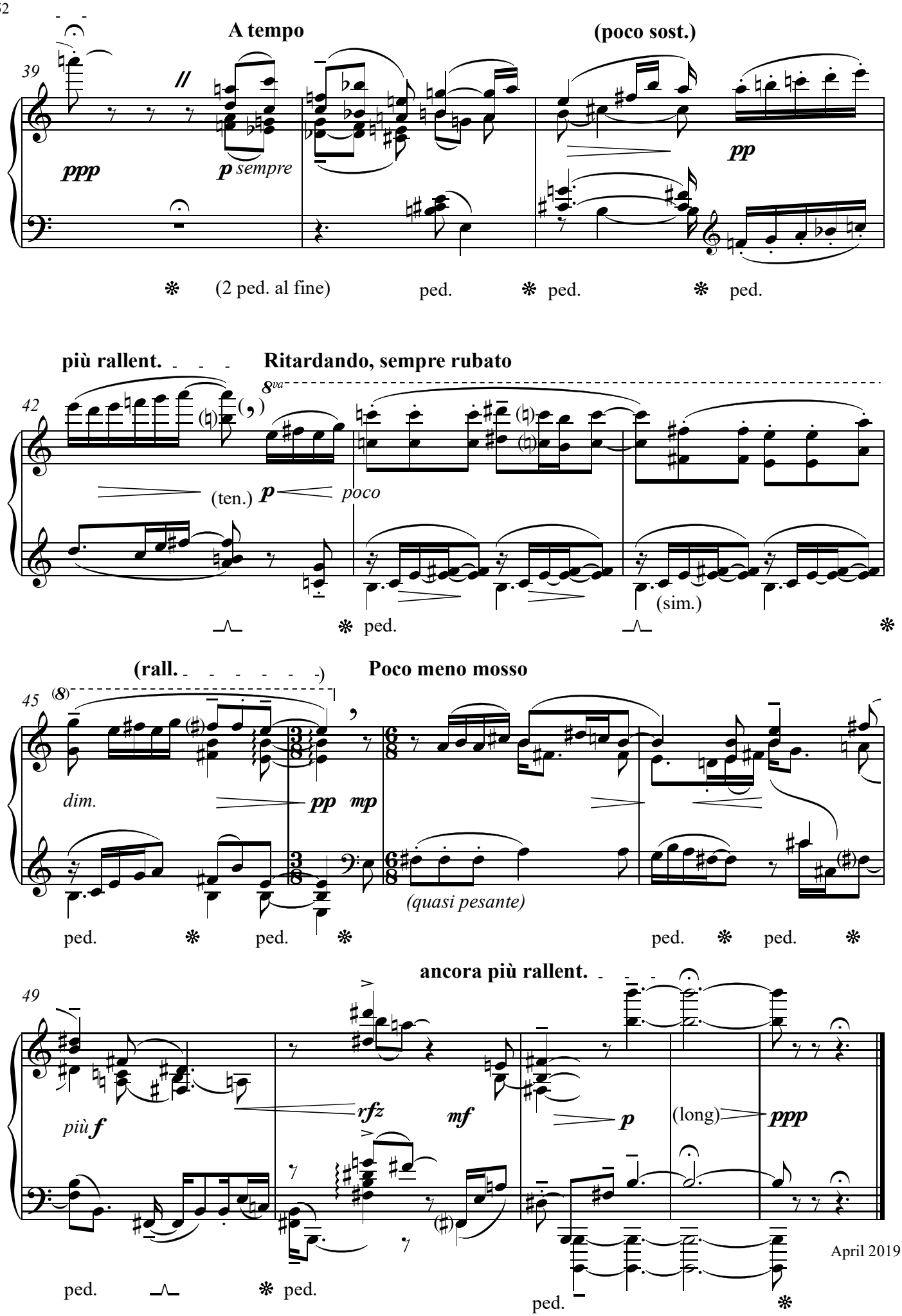
Alan Mills

Gently flowing - flexible and expressive




15
[♪ = ♪]
p dolce
poco
ped.
ped.
ped. ped.
poco
sost. -
18
mf
mp
ped.
21
dim.
ped.
ped.
2 ped.
ped.
(più rubato -)
24
p sempre
poco
rfz
ped. sim.
ped. ped.


27
pp
ped.
ped.
30
cresc.
ped.
ped.
33
mf
poco a poco cresc.
(poco marc.)
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
poco rall.
quasi avvivando
36
f
sf
sempre dim.
ped.
ped.


A tempo
(poco sost.)
39
ppp
p sempre
pp
(2 ped. al fine)
ped.
ped.
ped.
più rallent.
Ritardando, sempre rubato
8va
42
(ten.) p
poco
(sim.)
ped.
(rall.
Poco meno mosso
45
(8)
dim.
pp
mp
(quasi pesante)
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
ancora più rallent.
49
più f
rfz
mf
p
(long)
ppp
ped.
ped.
ped.

April 2019

Trotting

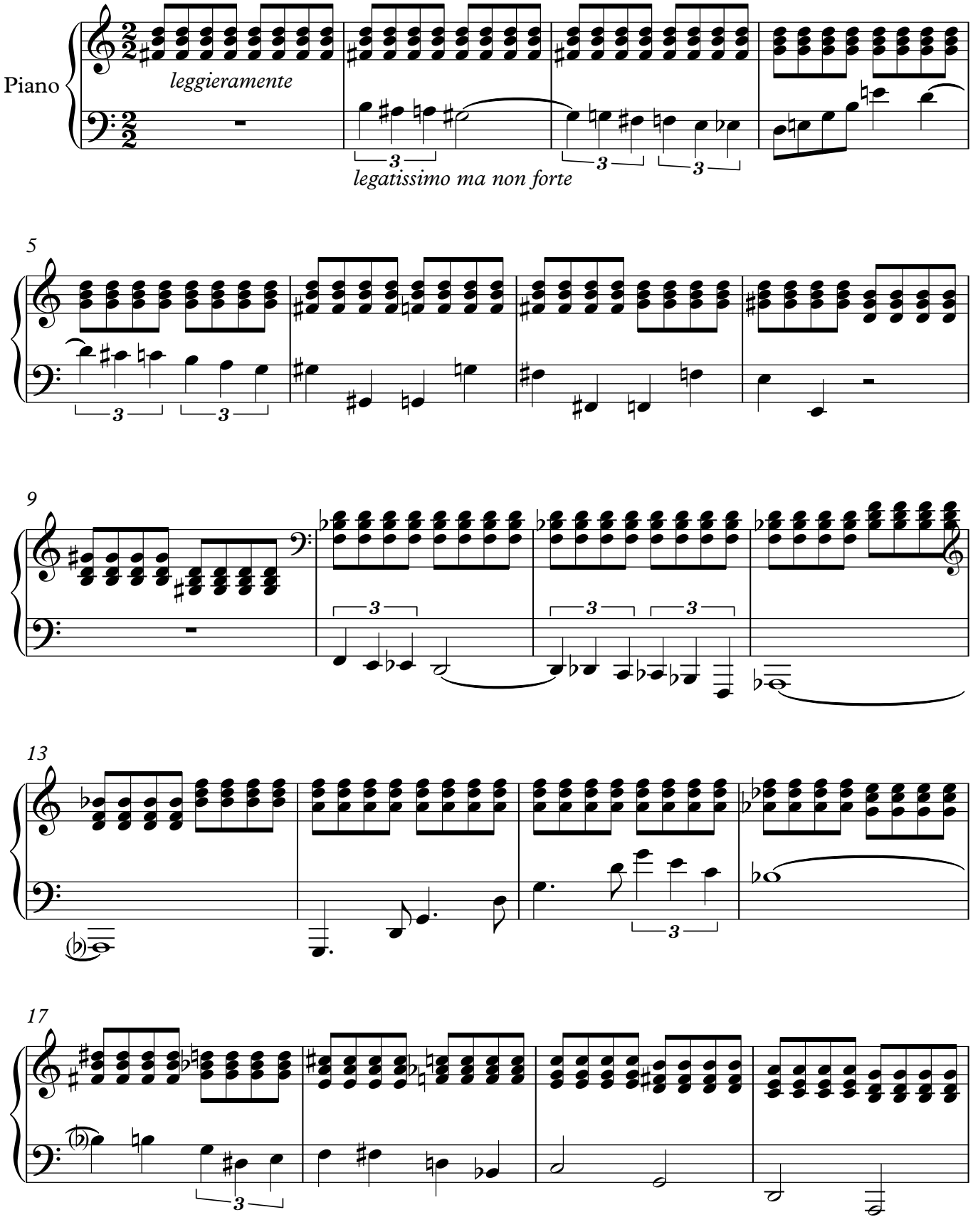
John White

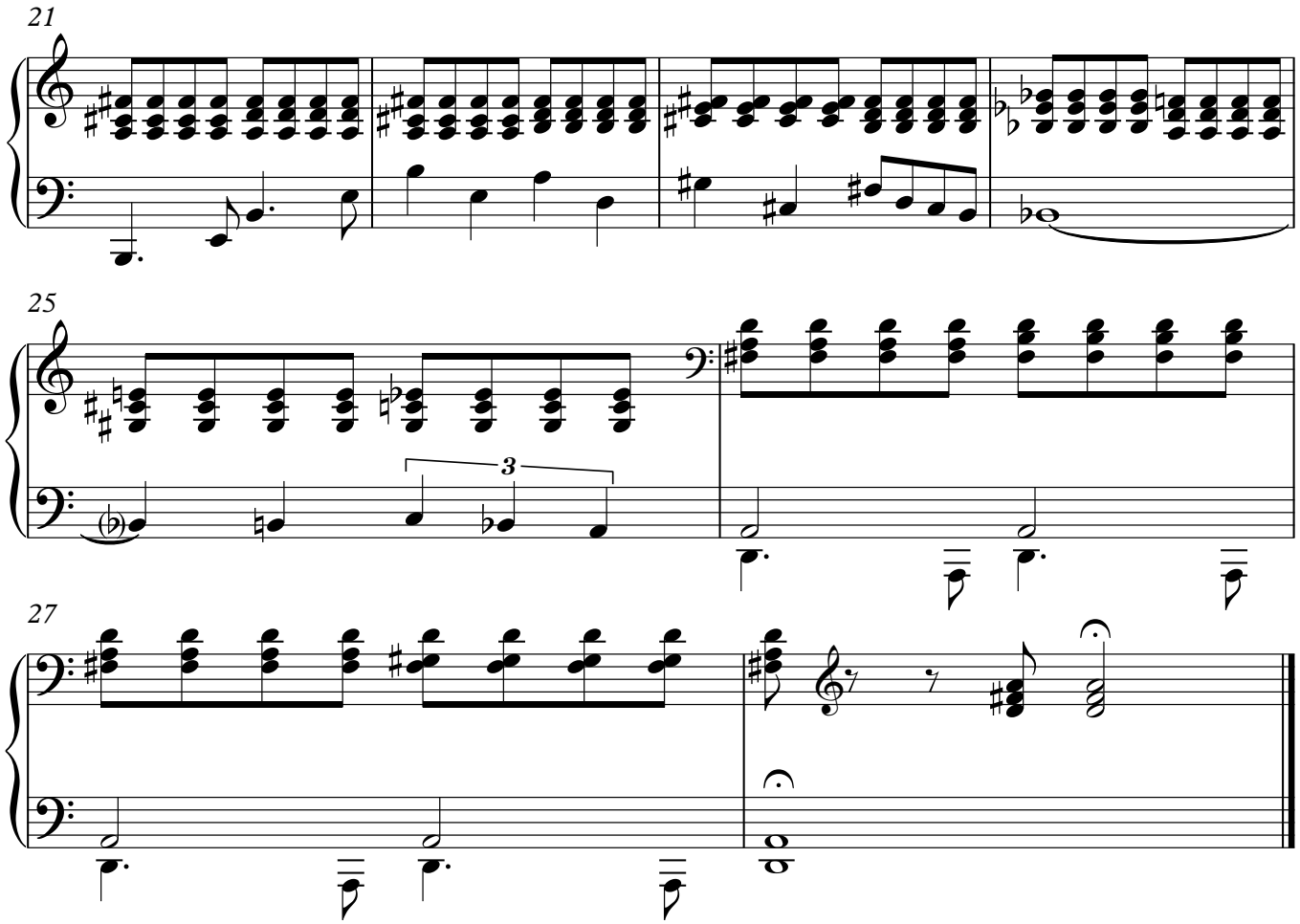
Allegro leggiero ♩ = 70

Piano

leggieramente

legatissimo ma non forte




21
25
3
27

83' Utan Satir

John Goslin

Moderato

Piano

Delicately

6

(*add octave below*)

11

f relentless

now quiet

3

p

18

p

mp

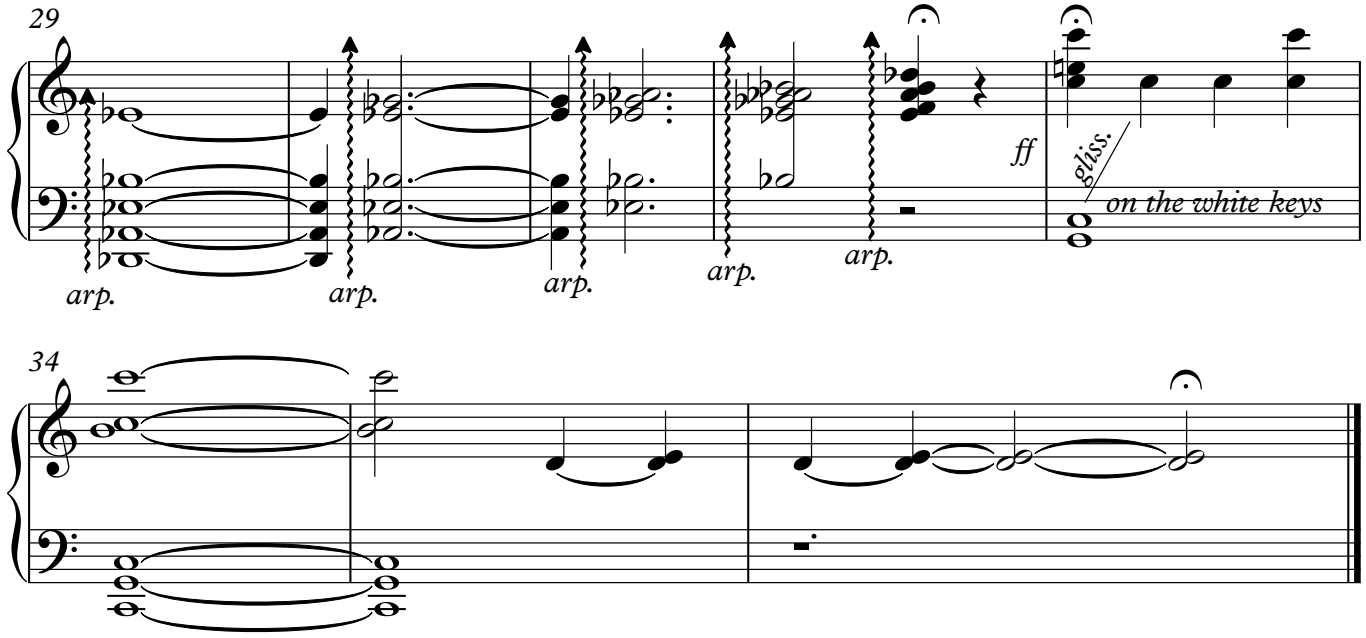
23

mf

arpeggio

f maestoso

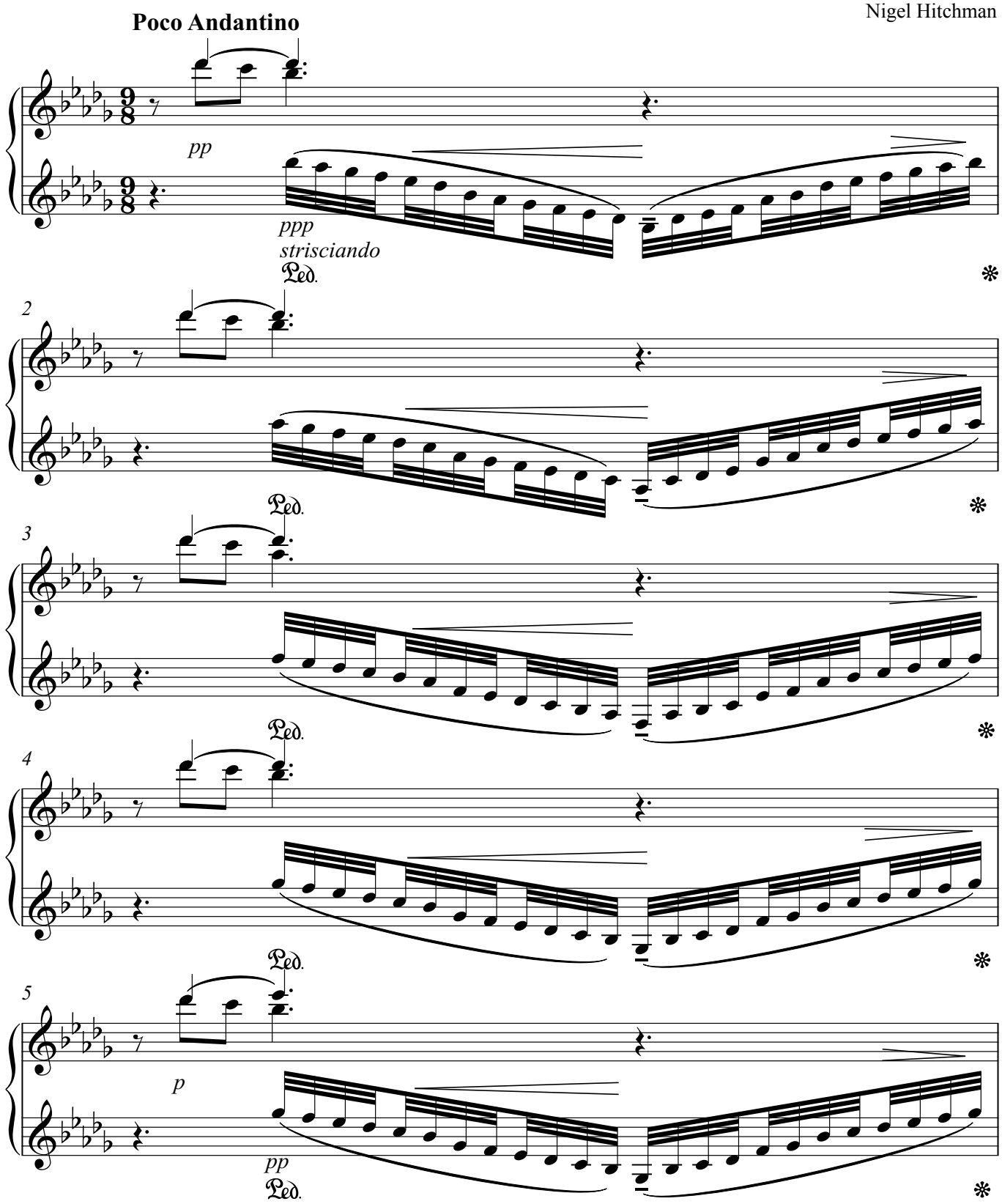
tremolo

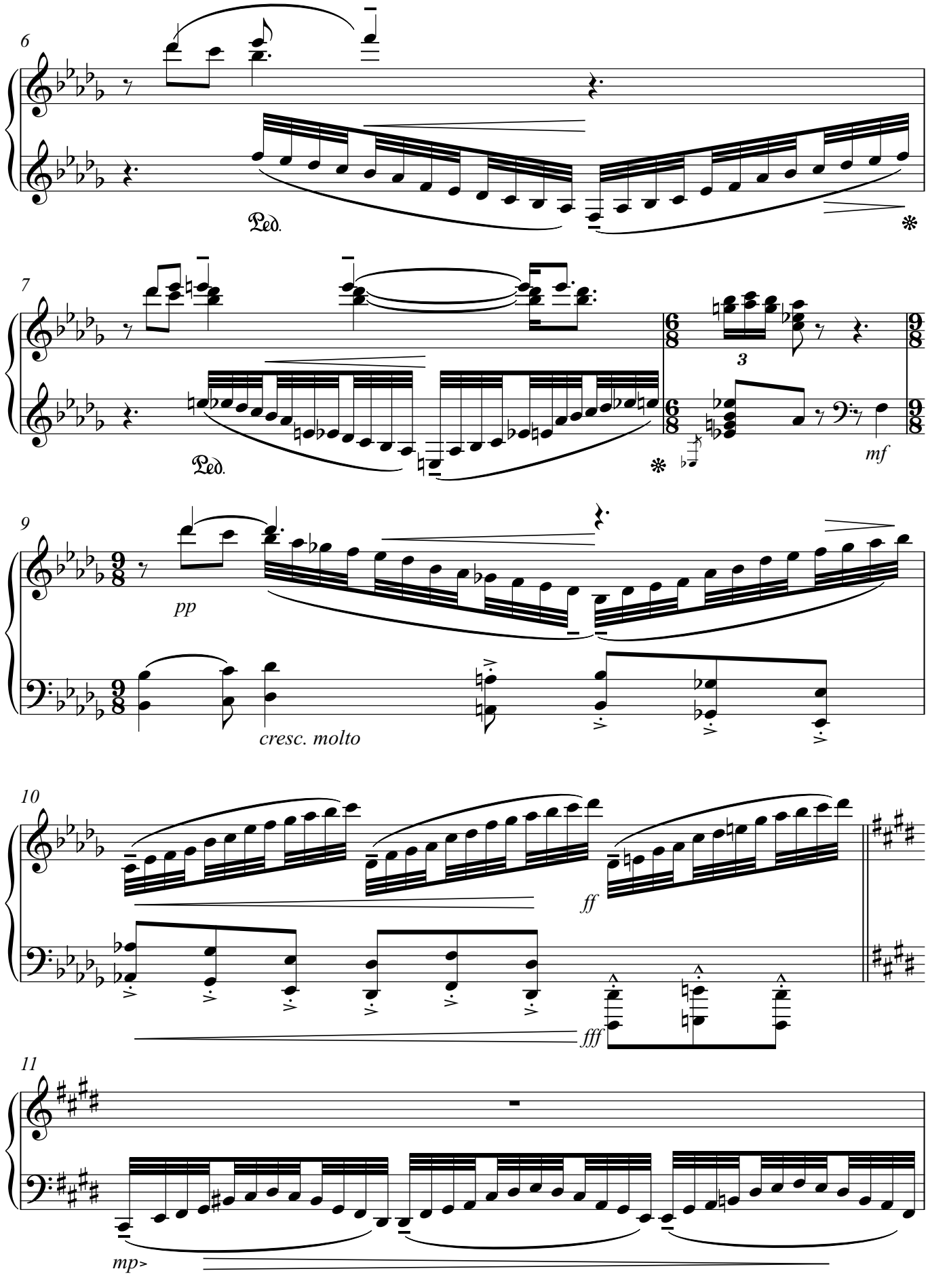

29
arp.
arp.
arp.
arp.
arp.
ff
gliss.
on the white keys
34

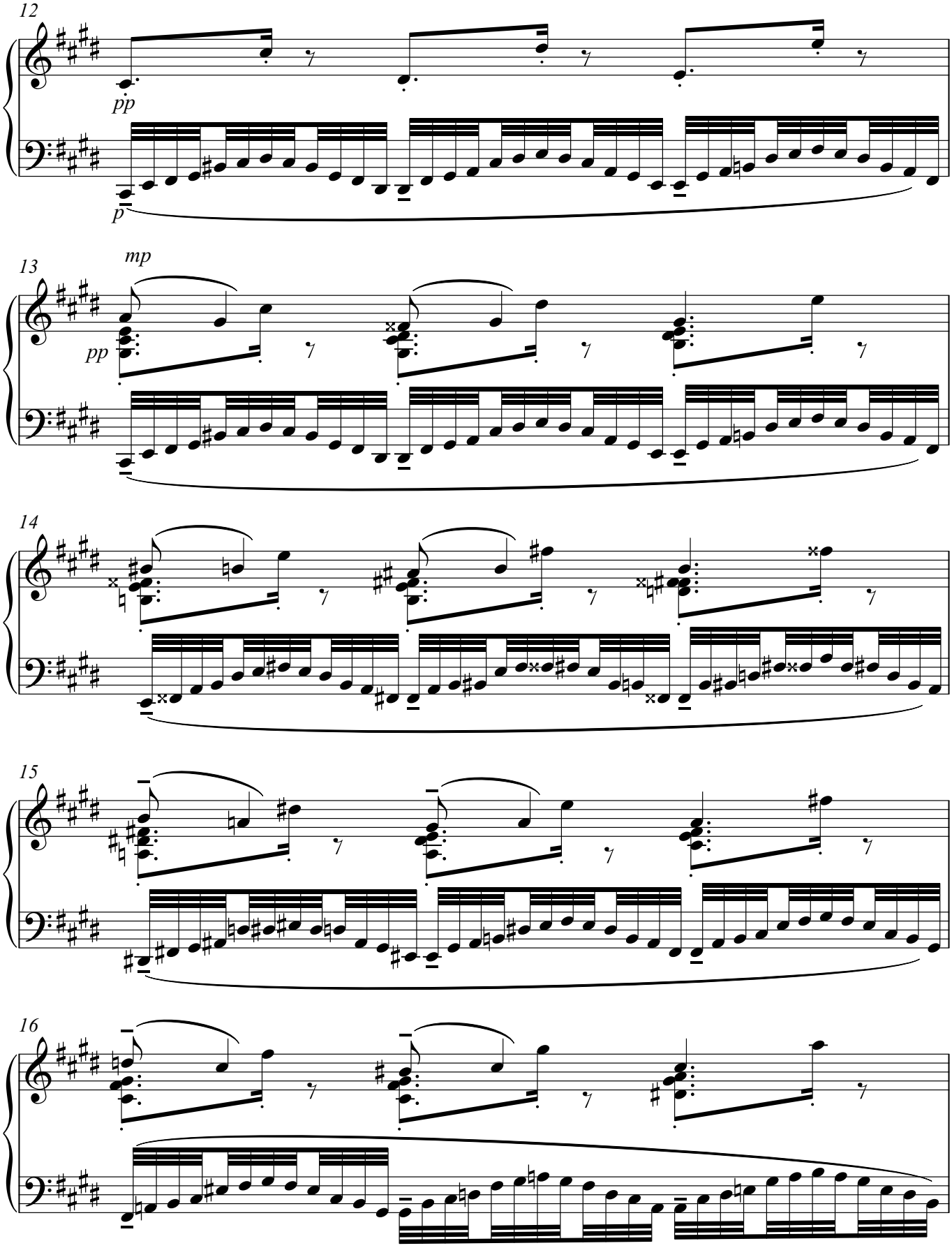
Vent d'Ouest

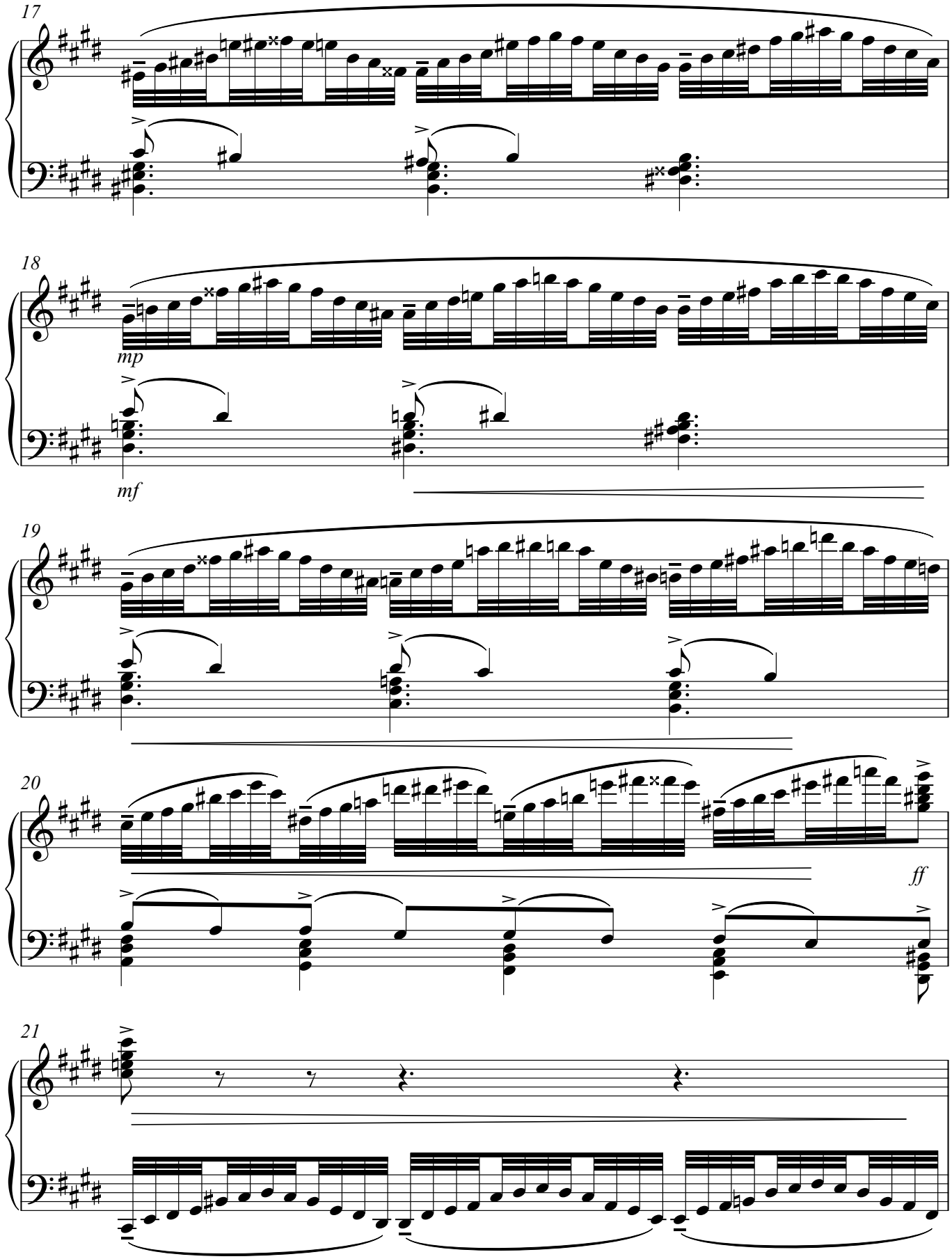
Esquisse d'apres Alkan

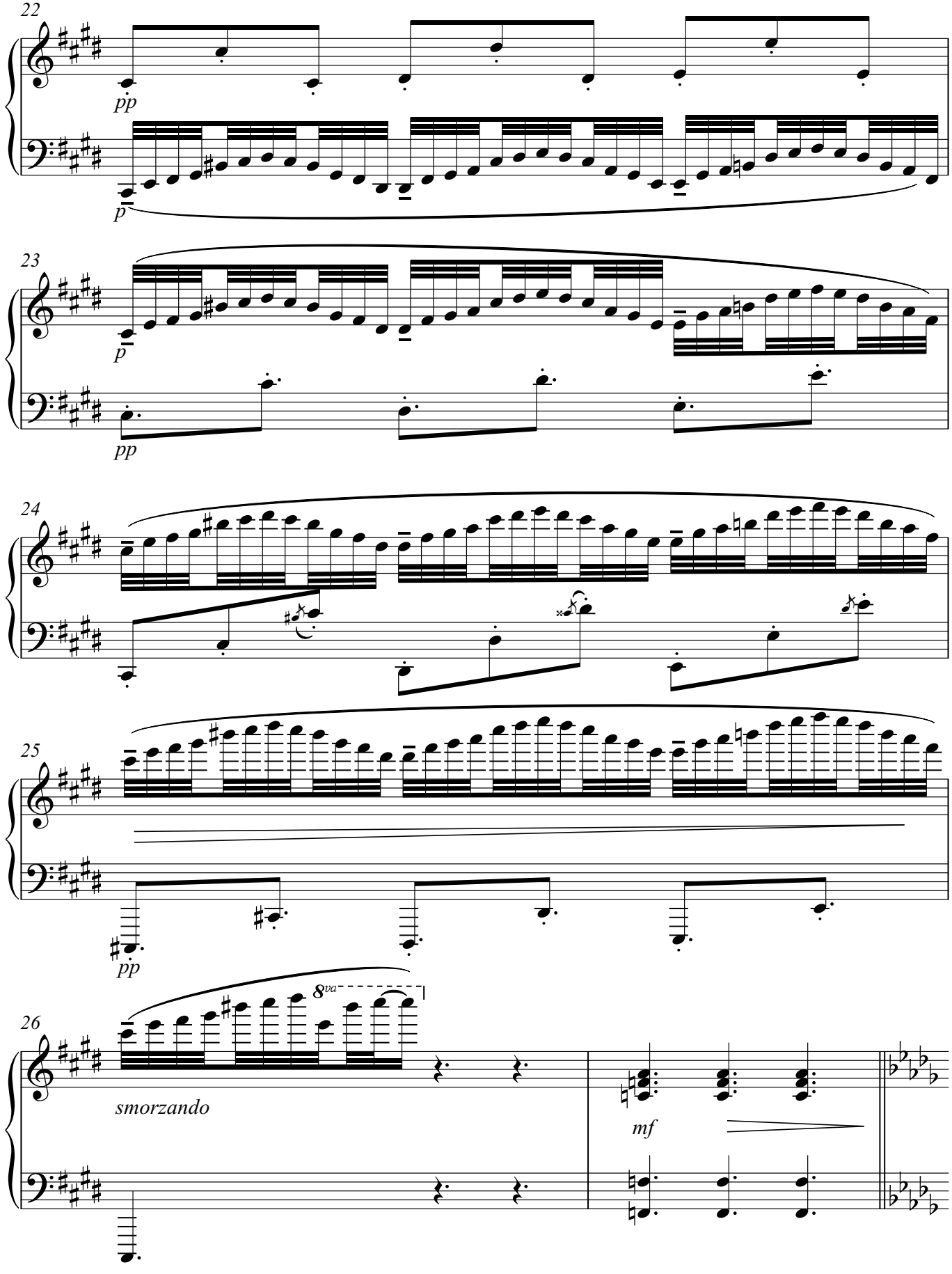
Nigel Hitchman

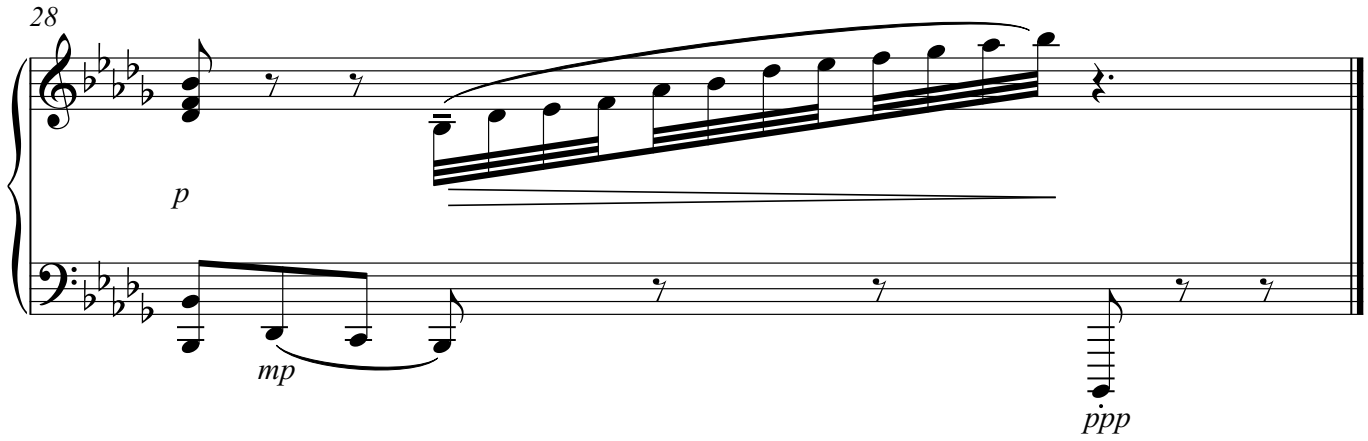



6
Ped.
7
Ped.
3
mf
9
pp
cresc. molto
10
ff
fff
11
mp>


12
pp
p
13
mp
pp
14
15
16

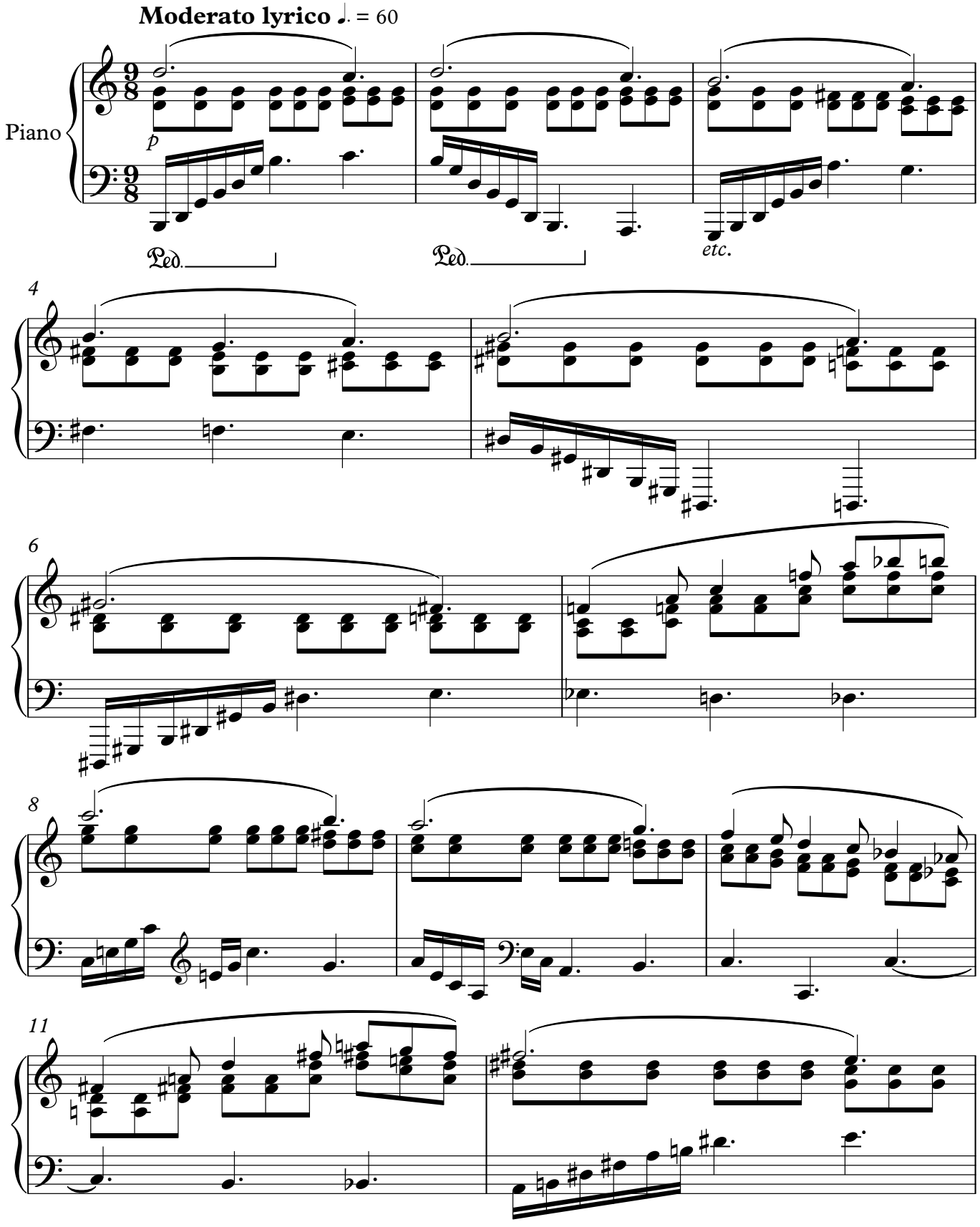

17
18
mp
mf
19
20
ff
21

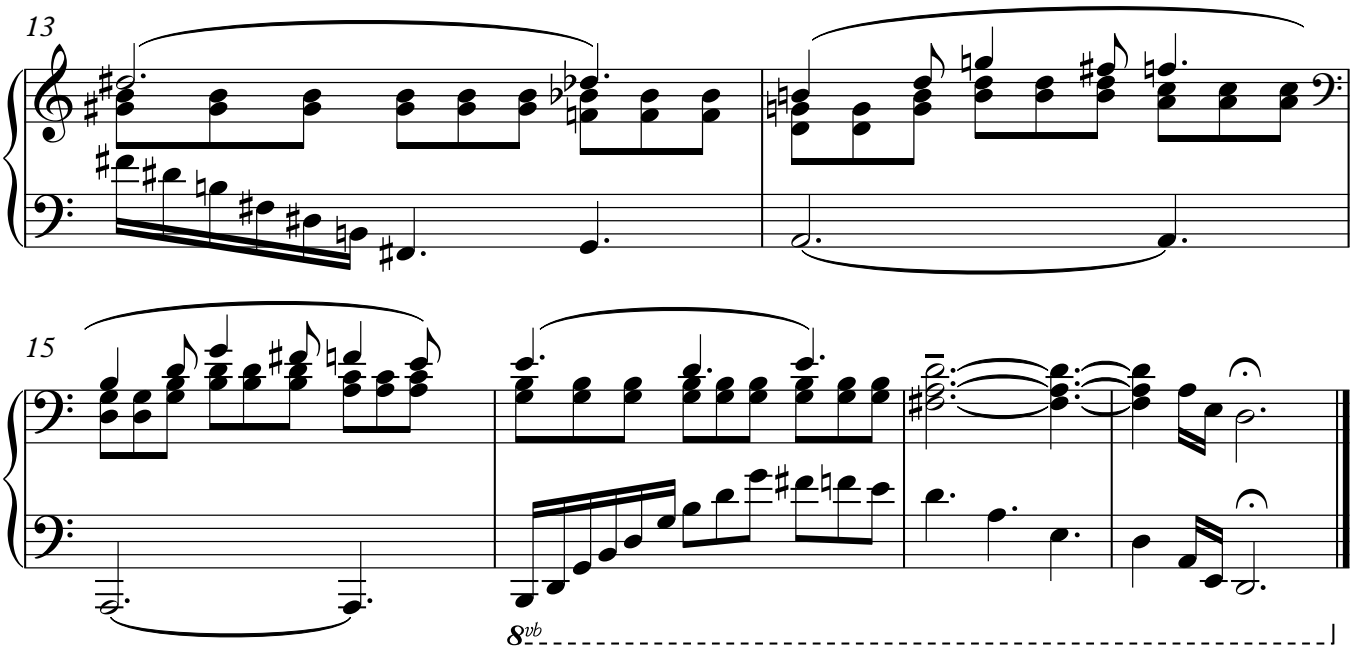

22
pp
p
23
p
pp
24
25
pp
8va
26
smorzando
mf


28
p
mp
ppp

Waltzing

John White




13
15
8vb

And a sketch/esquisse from Alkan – the Parisian self-isolator

The image[1] shows a detail from the first page, fourth system, first bar, of the manuscript of *Les regrets de la nonette* for piano in G minor, dated 7 July, 1854. Pen and black ink on commercially produced manuscript paper from Paris c. 1850. Six notes, two dots, stem, tie before first note, beam, slur, and cross-hatching with border.

The dedication to Louise at the top of this particular page may indicate Alkan's attempt at a fair copy when transcribing from a dedication-free draft – though, by definition, a fair copy would be correction-free.

We see the original 14th bar with right-hand notes only. The three chords are C and E flat, B flat and D, B flat and D. This last chord may be the error Alkan made, as all similar figurations fall typically by step, i.e., no preceding notes immediately repeated. A lapse of concentration perhaps – very easily done when copying. Was he annoyed with himself? Whatever, Alkan made the decision to continue writing after this correction, and not to start a new page. He also left a sizeable blot on the bass clef in bar 11. Without scientific examination, neither bar seems to have left evidence of the use of a blotting substance, leaving these marks with a strong colour profile.

The blot indicates that Alkan may well have used a dip pen. The nib would have had an oblique cut of perhaps 15 degrees from top right. This gives vertical lines the much thinner width-variation used for note stems than the thicker horizontal lines used for beams. He would have been practised in the technique of rotating the pen slightly to facilitate these differences. It appears that he used a rounder nib for the cross-hatching and its border. The black note-heads are neat roundels. The concluding minims each have a two-stroke form – a shorter upper and longer lower curve. Alkan's border work takes precedence over the cross-hatching grid.

Unambiguously isolating this bar from the rest of the music was a forcefully articulated process of containment and offers a striking visual focus to the page.

Richard Murphy

[1] This image and its context is on view at IMSLP: see imslp.org/wiki/Les_regrets_de_la_nonette_(Alkan%2C_Charles-Valentin)