FRANK BRIDGE (1879–1941)

The centenary year (1979) of Frank Bridge's birth is a most appropriate time for the sonata to be republished. Throughout the 1970s, interest in Bridge's music, particularly the later and more radical works, has been growing steadily; several English pianists have now taken the sonata into their repertoire. Peter Wallfisch's fine recording (on the Pearl label) has also won many friends for it.

The mid-1920s was a crucial time in Bridge's development as a composer—the point when he turned his back on the thoroughgoing romanticism of such orchestral scores as 'Summer' and the salon-influenced piano music and songs by which he was widely known in the pre-First World War period. He began to strike out very much on his own, his enquiring instincts taking full account of musical developments elsewhere in Europe.

The piano sonata was written in memory of a composer friend, Ernest Bristow Farrar, killed in the First World War. Bridge was a pacifist; his feelings about war and the impact of Farrar's death played a significant part in the conception of the sonata, which was started in 1921, but not completed until 1924. The war certainly unlocked dark forces in Bridge's hitherto unruffled artistic make-up. The sonata was given its first performance on October 15, 1925, by Myra Hess—a more adventurous pianist then than in later years. Another early champion of the work was the composer and pianist Alan Bush.

After the première a critic wrote that this was a work to be respected rather than loved—a not unfair judgement—and Sorabji, in a characteristically swashbuckling article on 'The Modern Piano Sonata', dismissed it as a work of little importance, whose best features were derived 'straight from John Ireland'. Later critics have thought much more highly of it, remarking on its uncompromising power, subtleties of construction—particularly in its use of the arch-form so often favoured by Bridge in his early chamber works—and exploitation of sonorities and bitonality.

It remains, after 50 years of turbulent musical development, a commanding, utterly committed work calling for a virtuoso technique to encompass the notes and a keen imagination to come to terms with its very individual sound-world.

John Bishop
(Frank Bridge Trust)

April, 1979.

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To the memory of
Ernest Bristowe Farrar

Duration: 30 minutes

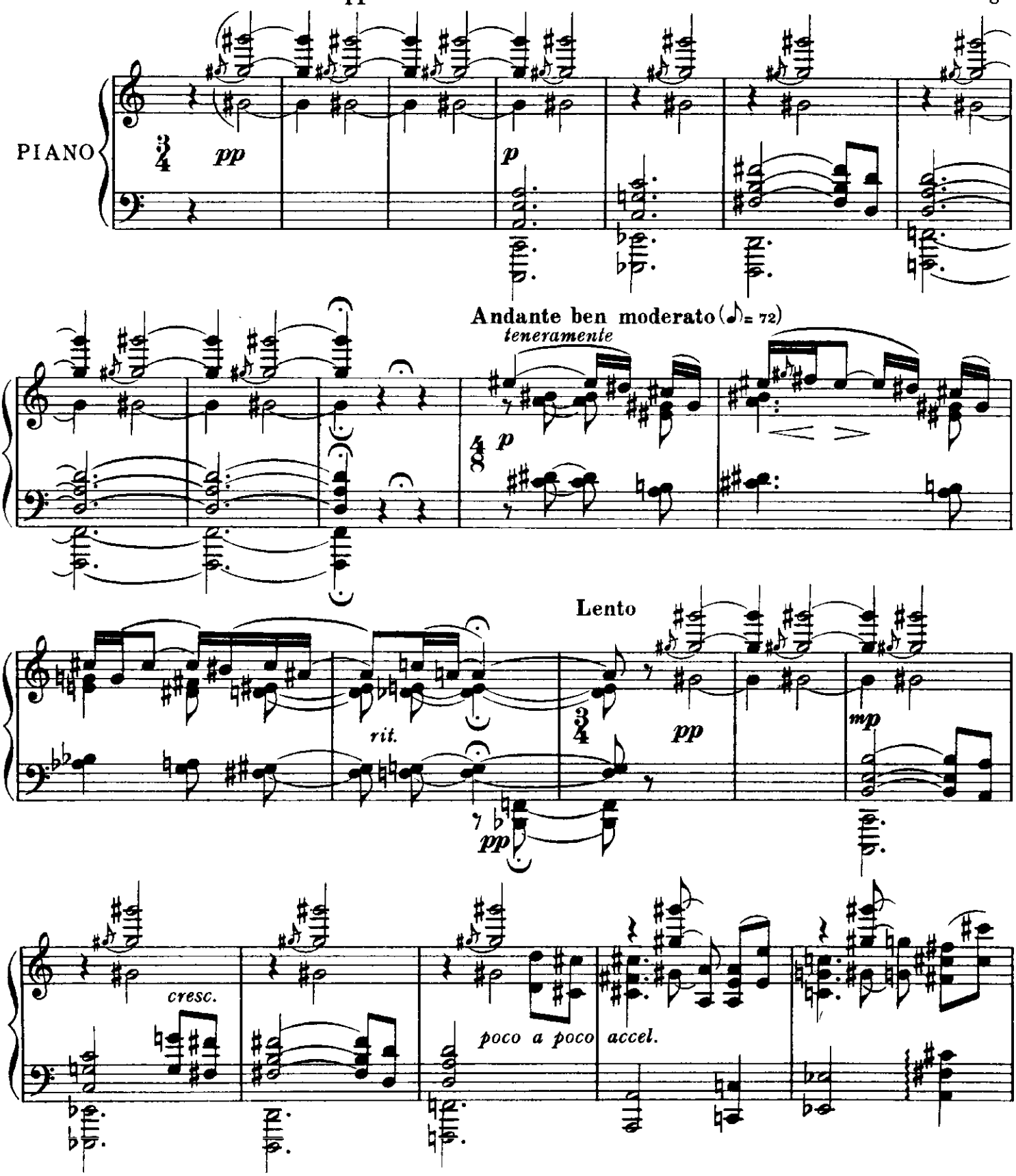
SONATA

I.

Lento ma non troppo M.M. ♩ = 52

Frank Bridge

PIANO



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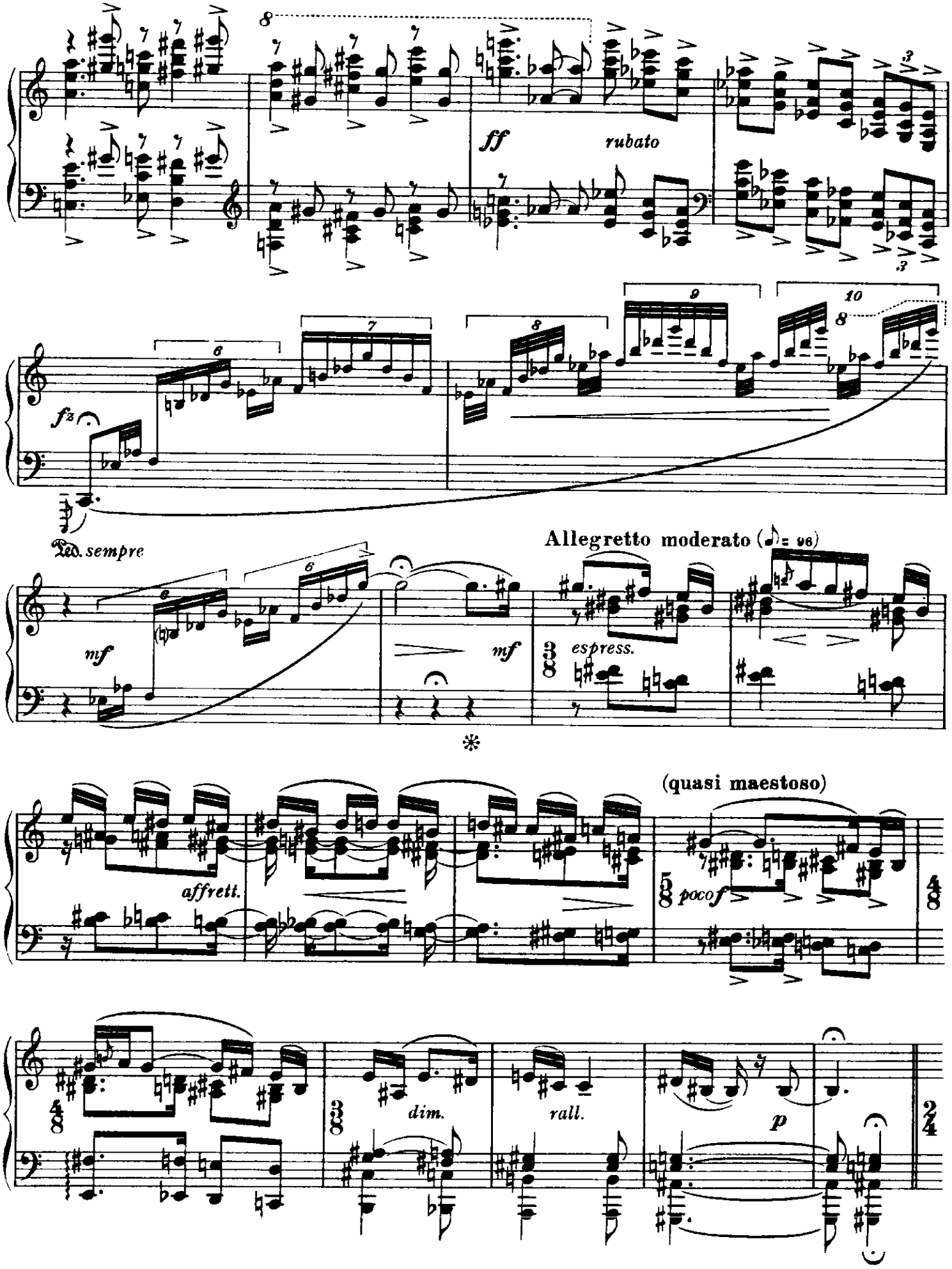
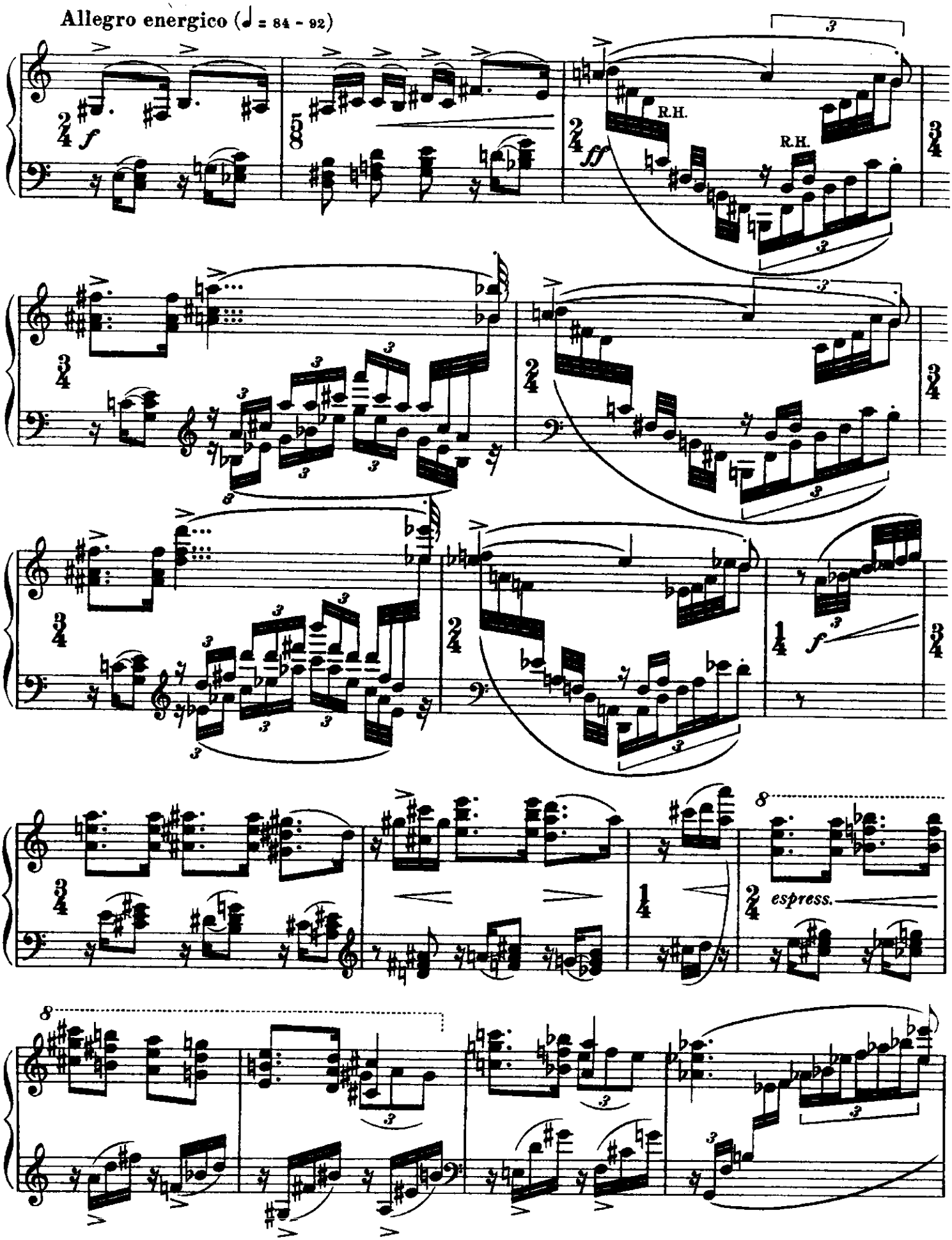
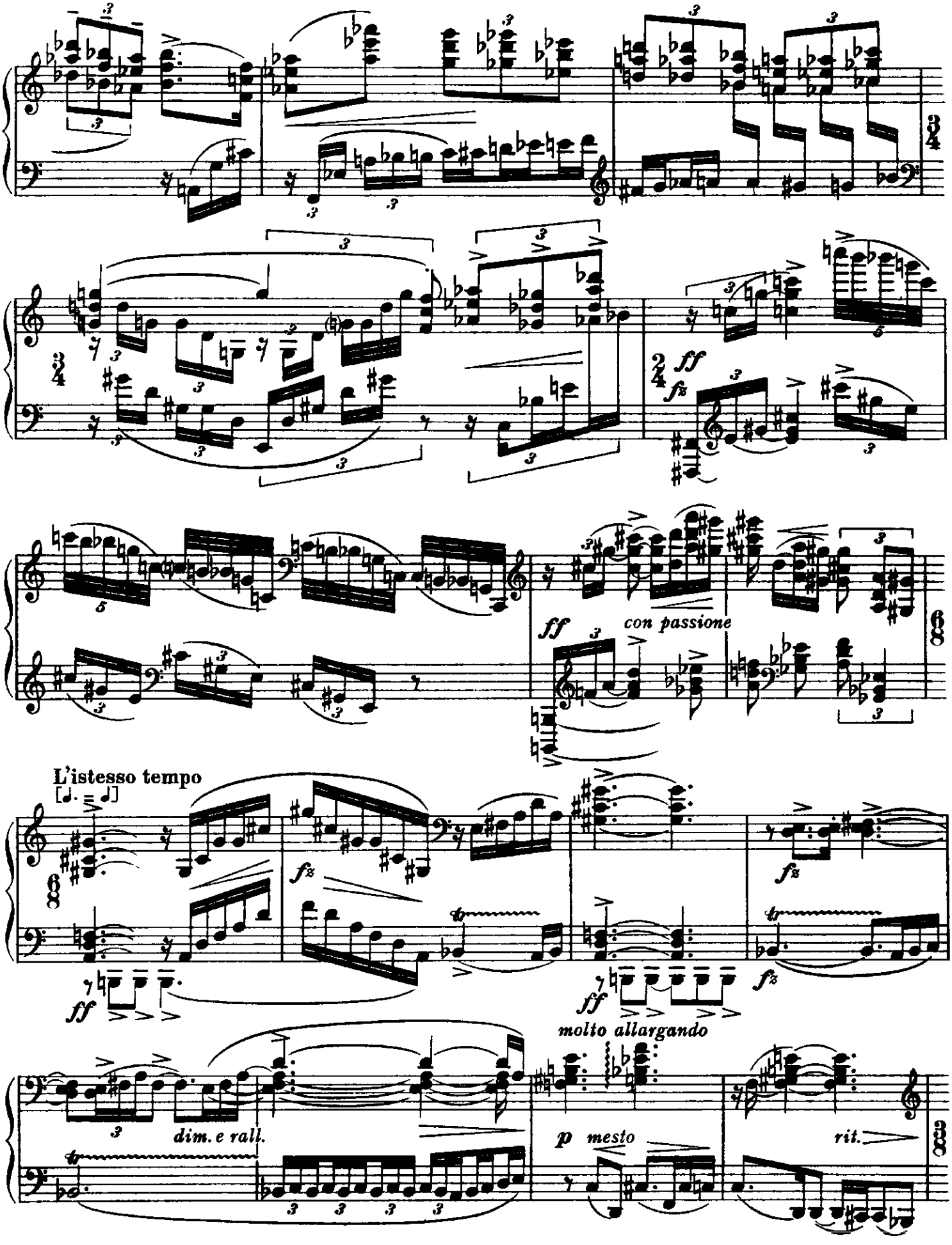
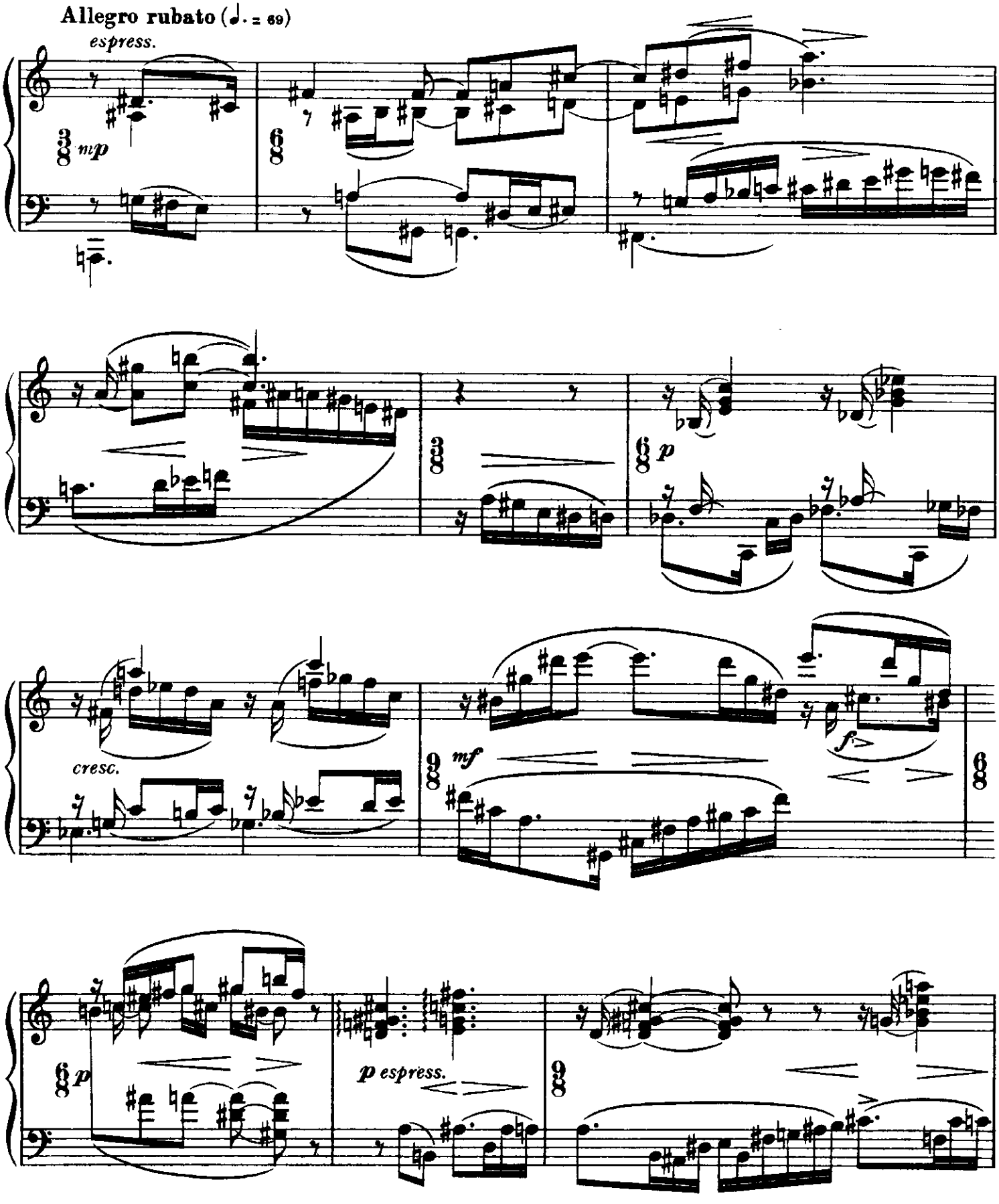
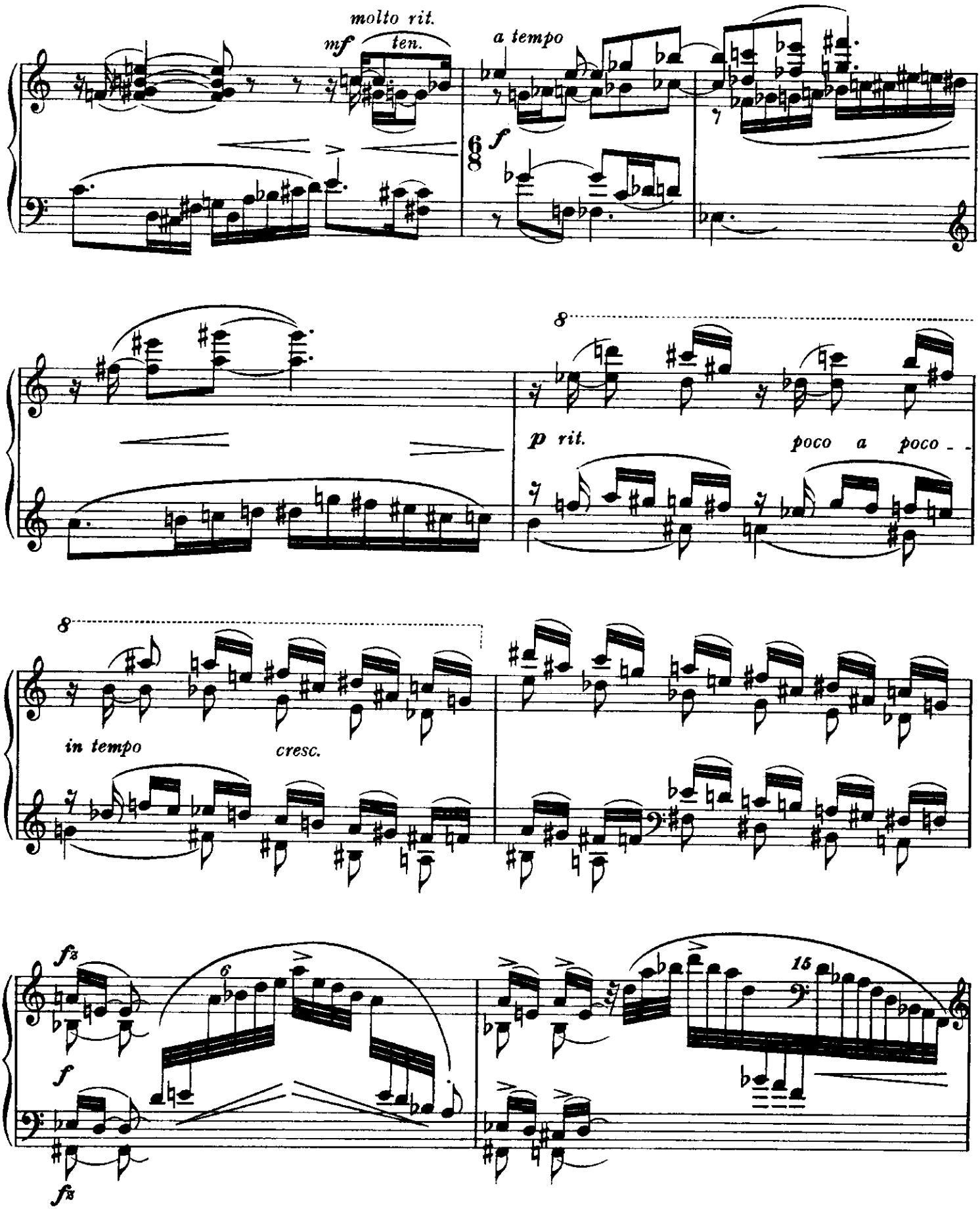
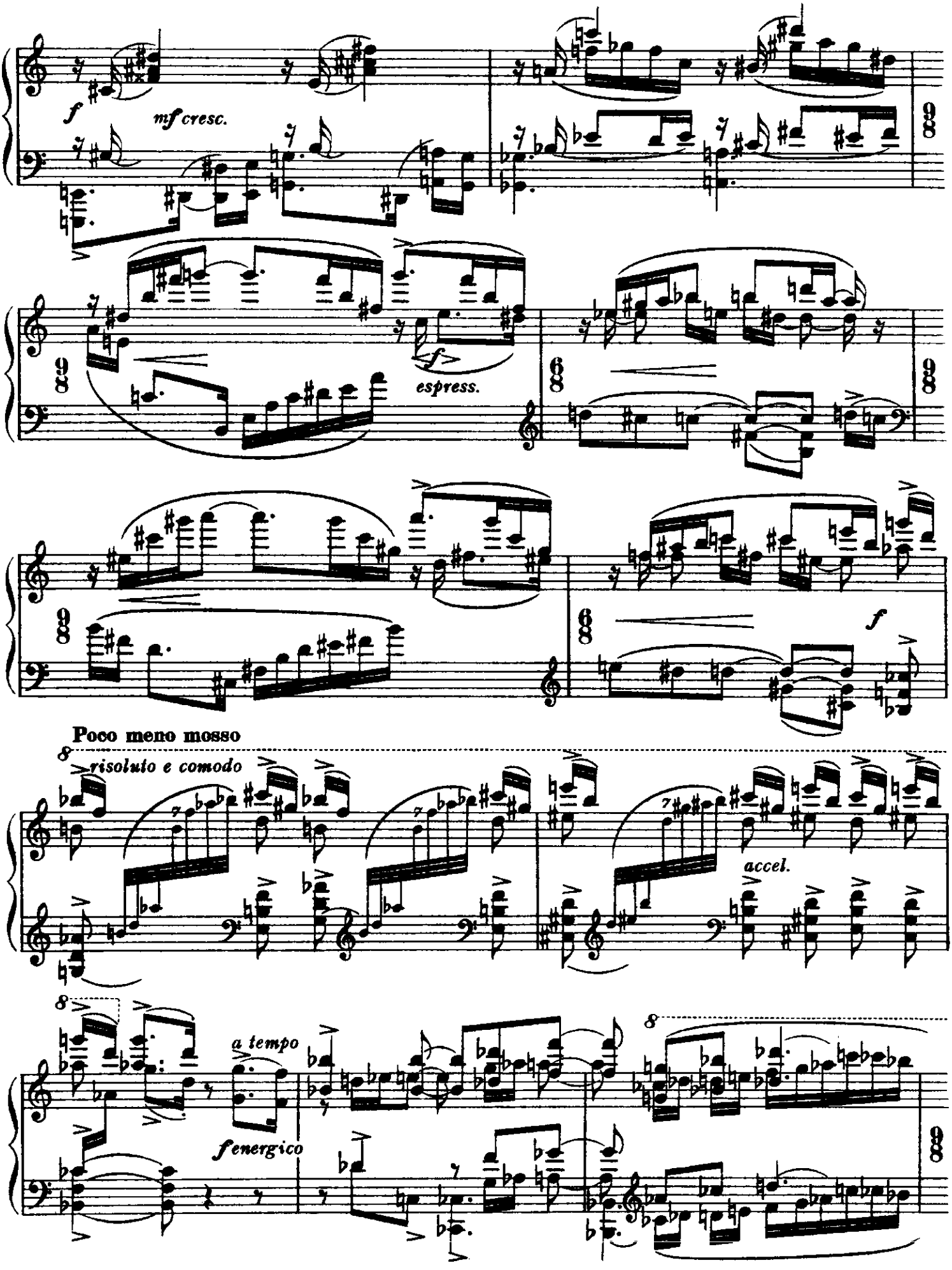

ff
rubato
fz
Ped. sempre
mf
mf
Allegretto moderato (♪= 96)
espress.
(quasi maestoso)
affrett.
poco f
dim.
rall.
p

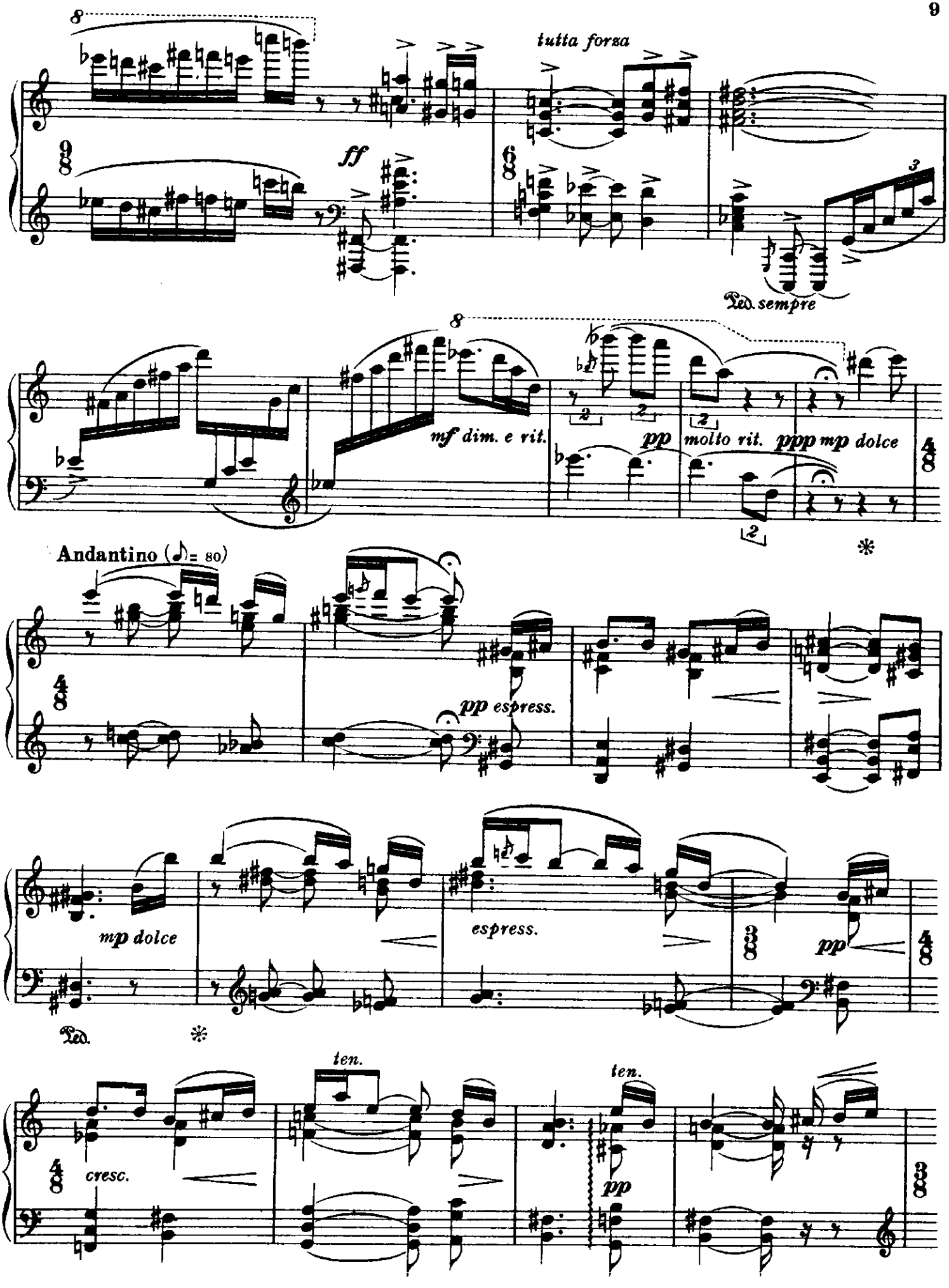

Allegro energico (♩ = 84 - 92)
f
ff
R.H.
R.H.
espress.

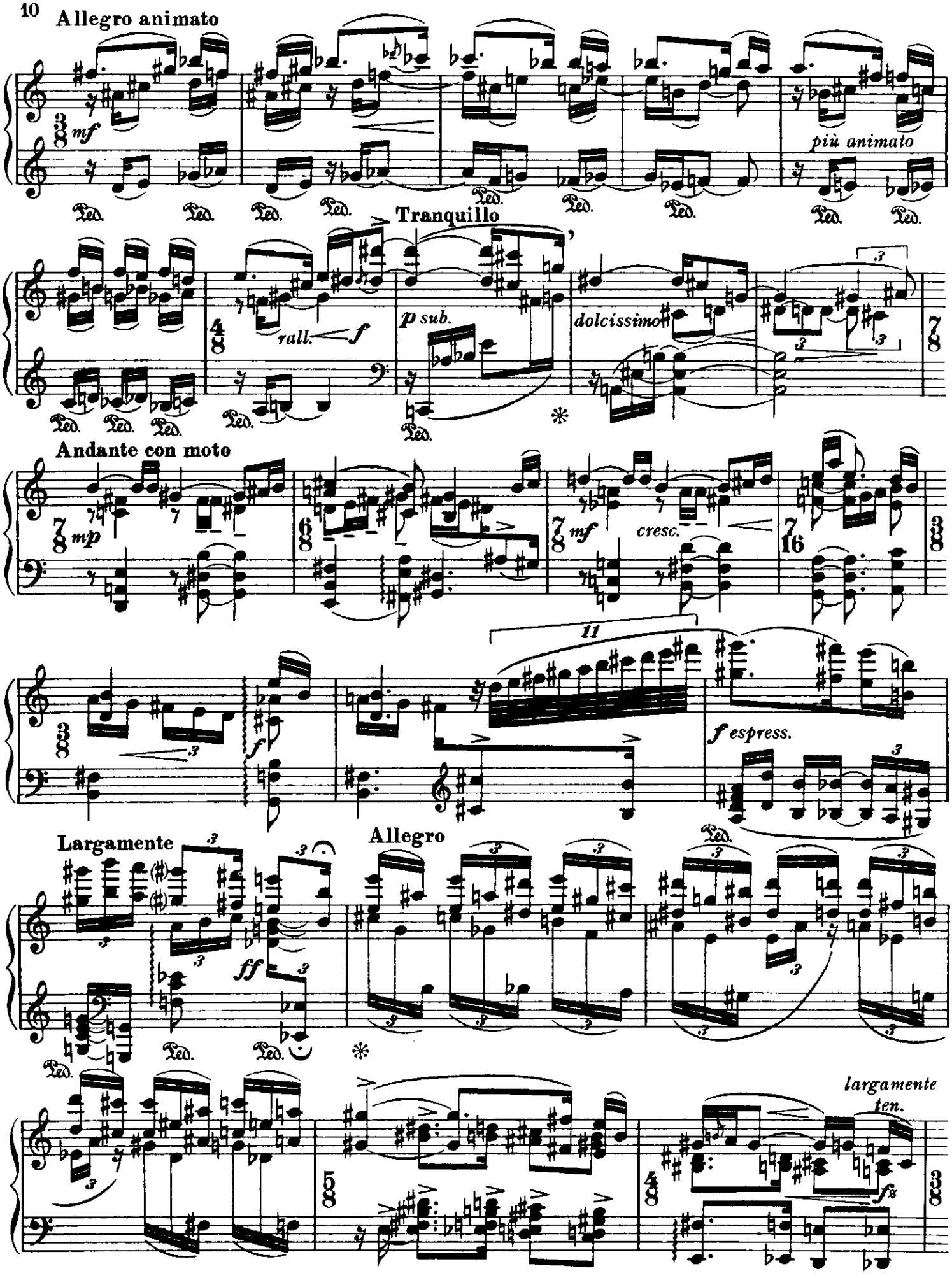

ff
fz
con passione
L'istesso tempo
[♩. = ♩]
molto allargando
dim. e rall.
p mesto
rit.

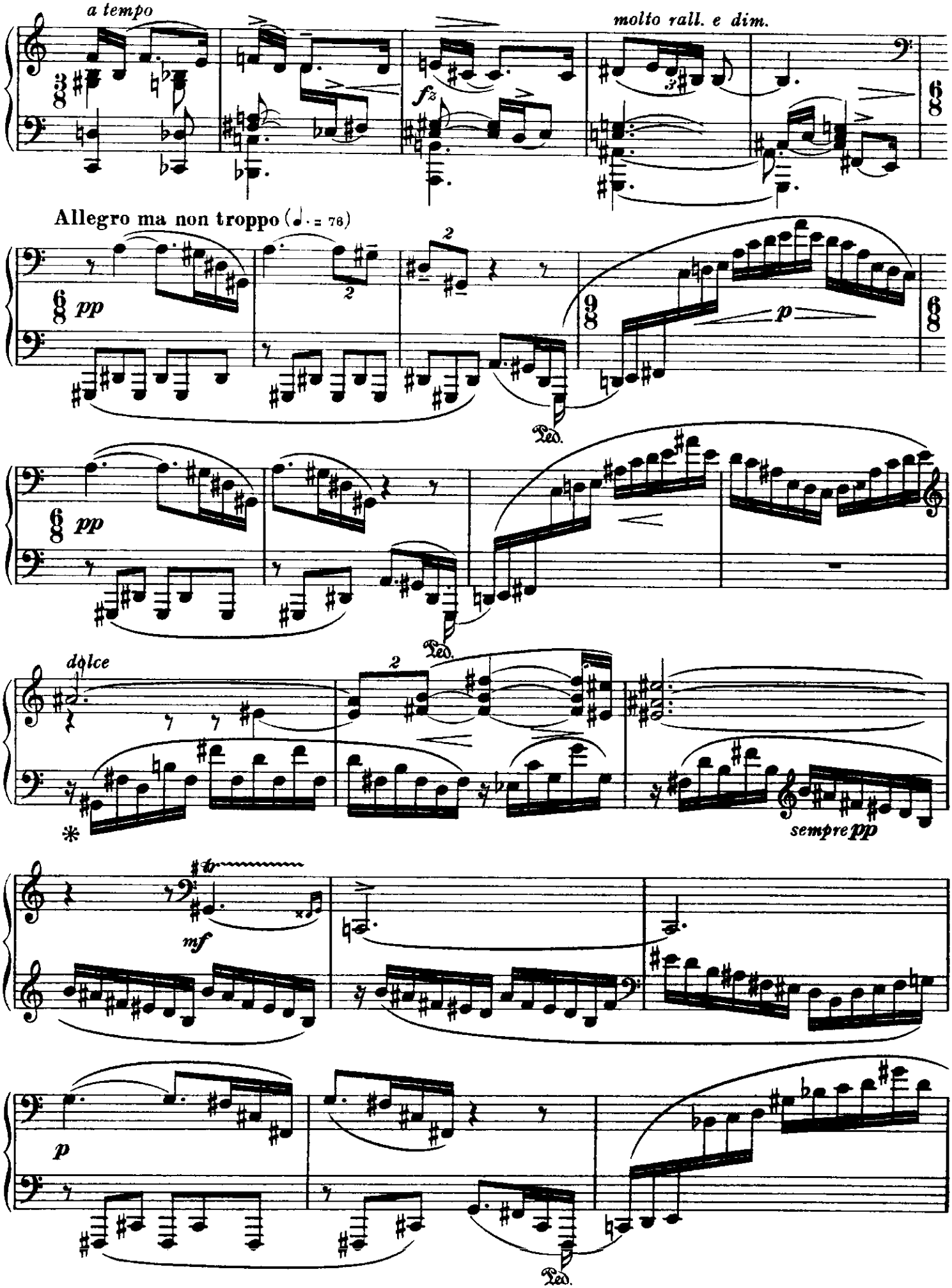

Allegro rubato (♩. = 69)
espress.
mp
p
cresc.
mf
f
p
p espress.

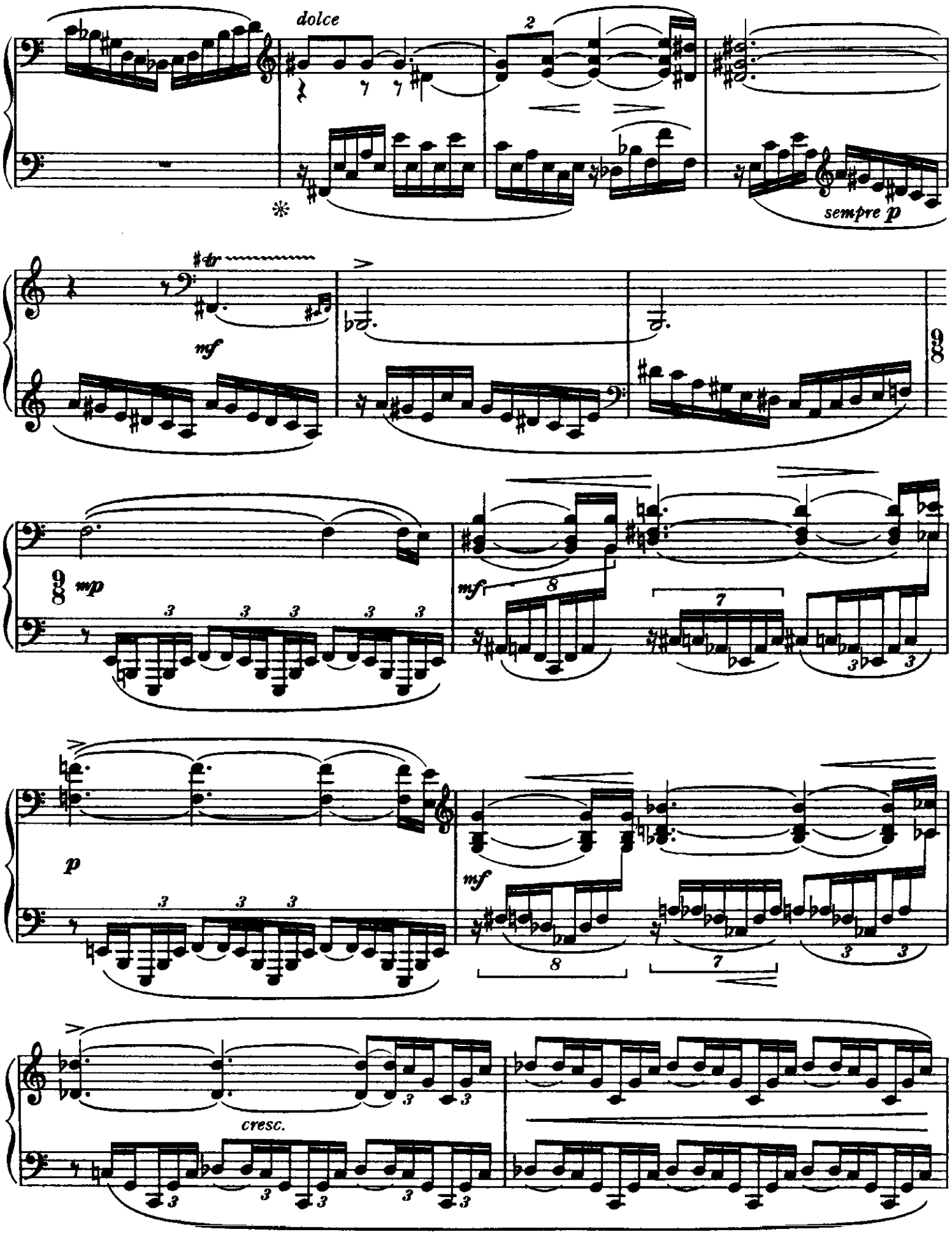

molto rit.
mf
ten.
a tempo
f
8
p rit.
poco a poco
8
in tempo
cresc.
fz
6
f
15
fz

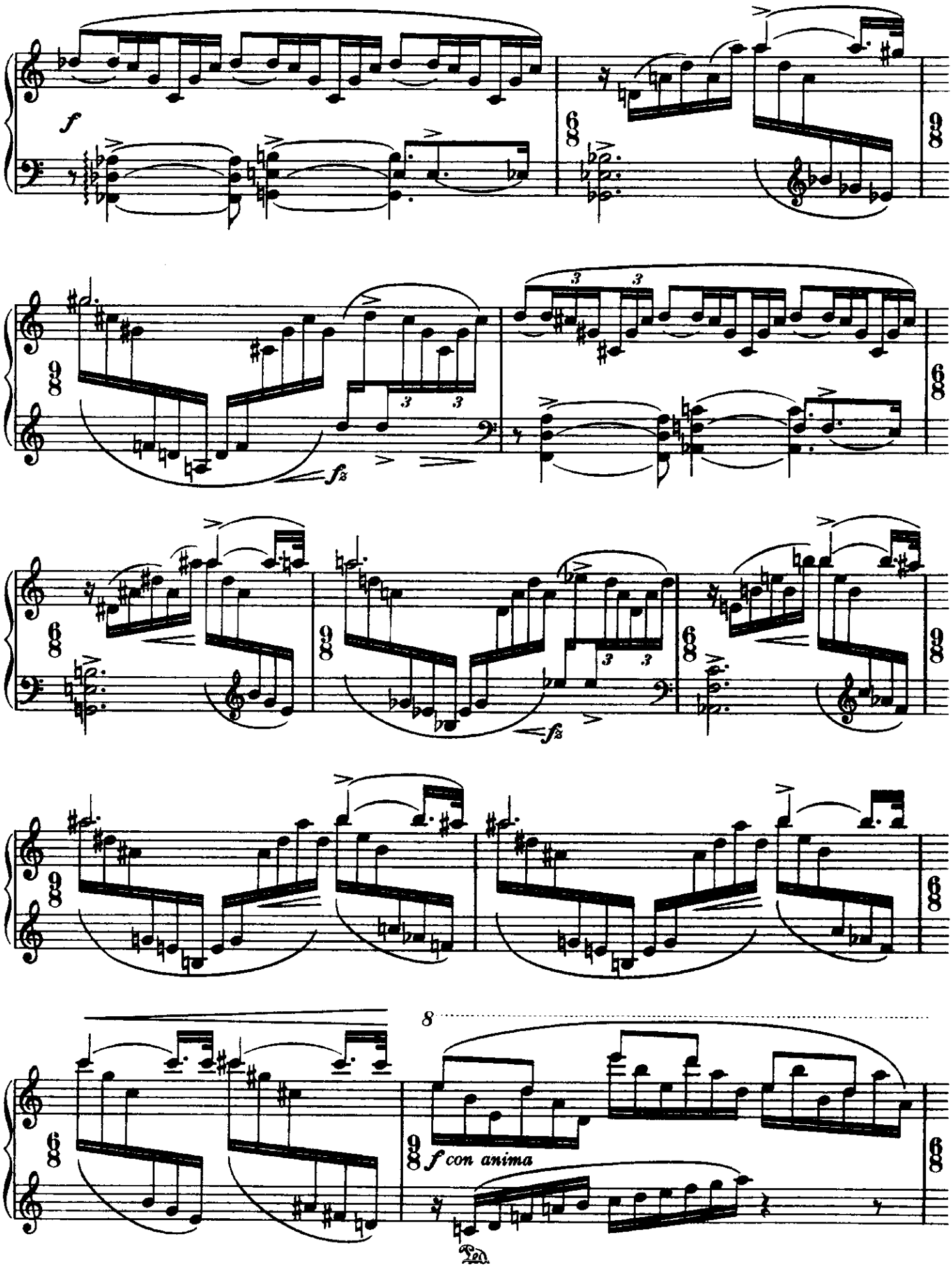

f
mf cresc.
espress.
f
Poco meno mosso
risoluto e comodo
accel.
a tempo
f energico

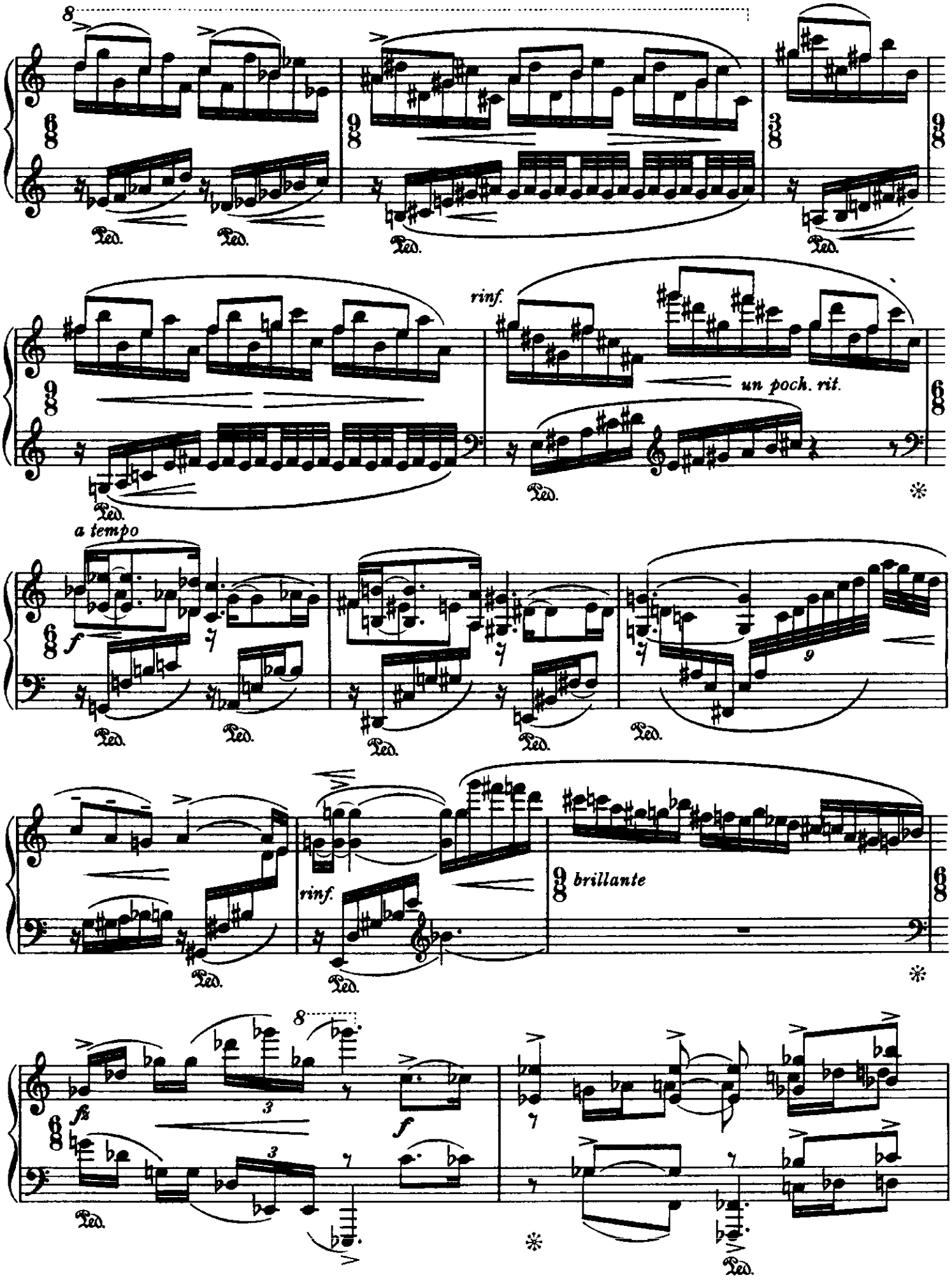

tutta forza
ff
Ped. sempre
mf dim. e rit.
pp molto rit.
ppp mp dolce
Andantino (♪= 80)
pp espress.
mp dolce
espress.
pp
Ped.
ten.
cresc.
ten.
pp

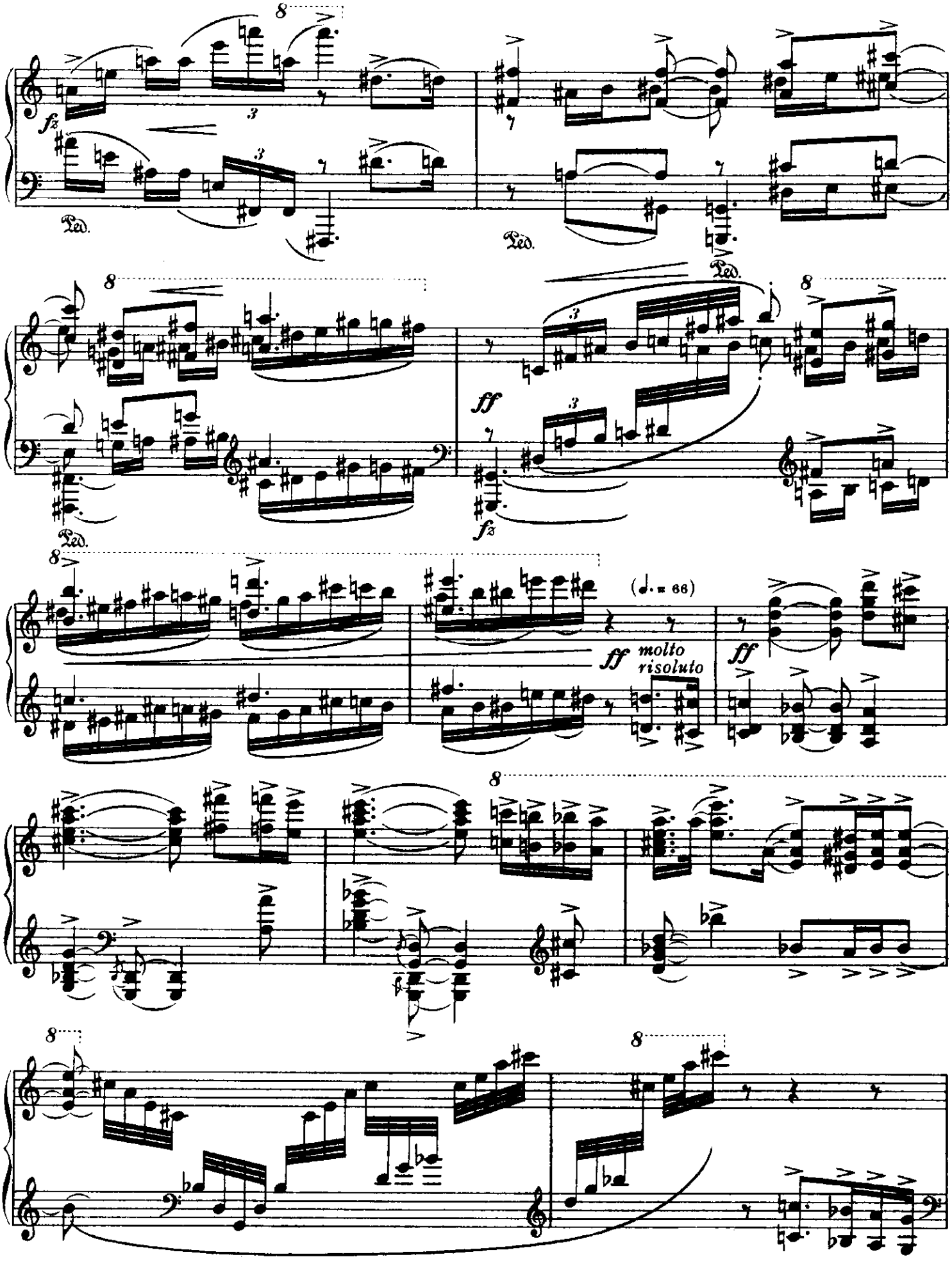

Allegro animato
mf
più animato
Tranquillo
rall.
f
p sub.
dolcissimo
Andante con moto
mp
mf
cresc.
f
f espress.
Largamente
Allegro
ff
largamente
ten.
fz

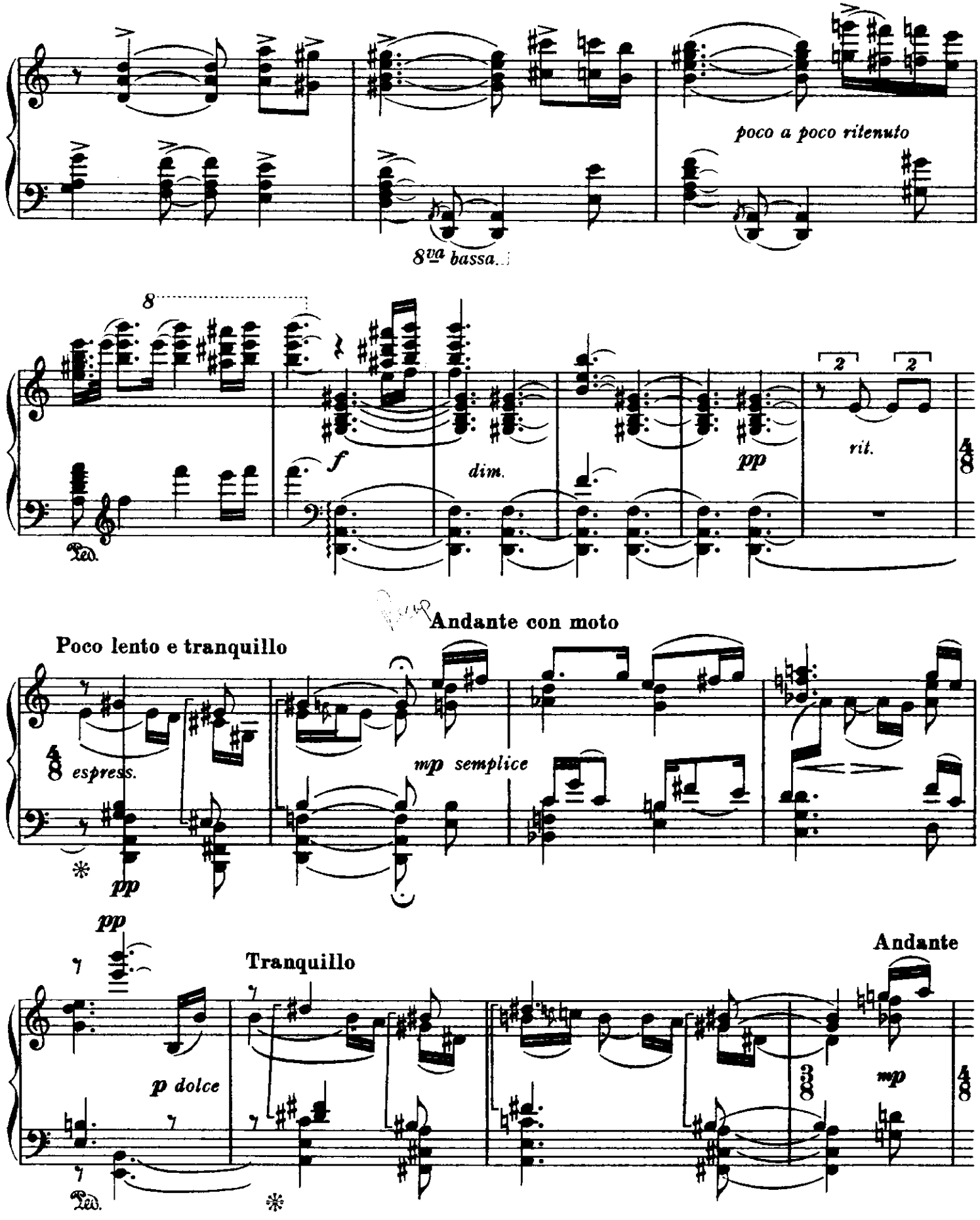

a tempo
molto rall. e dim.
fz
Allegro ma non troppo (♩. = 78)
pp
p
Ped.
dolce
sempre pp
mf

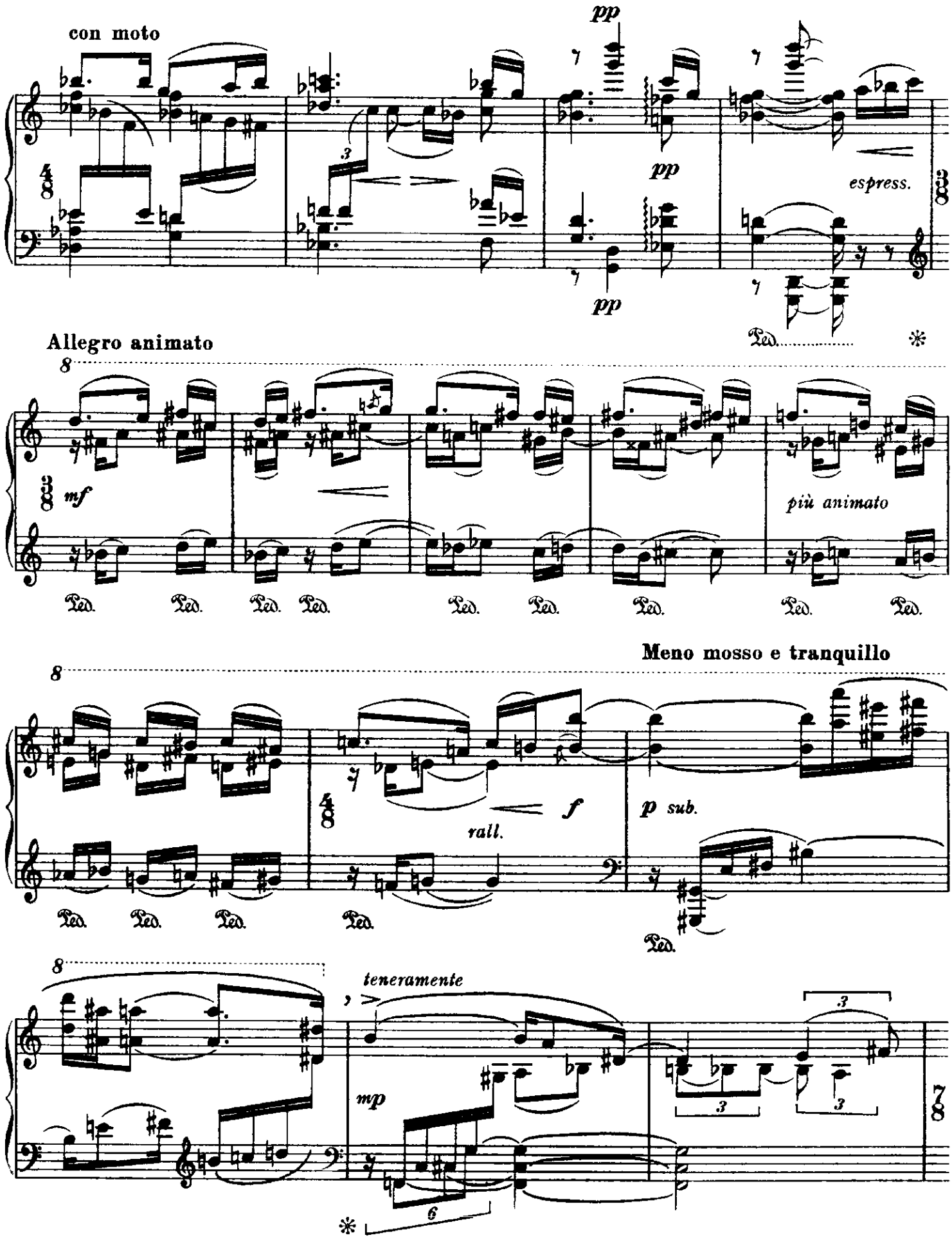

dolce
sempre p
mf
mp
mf
p
mf
cresc.

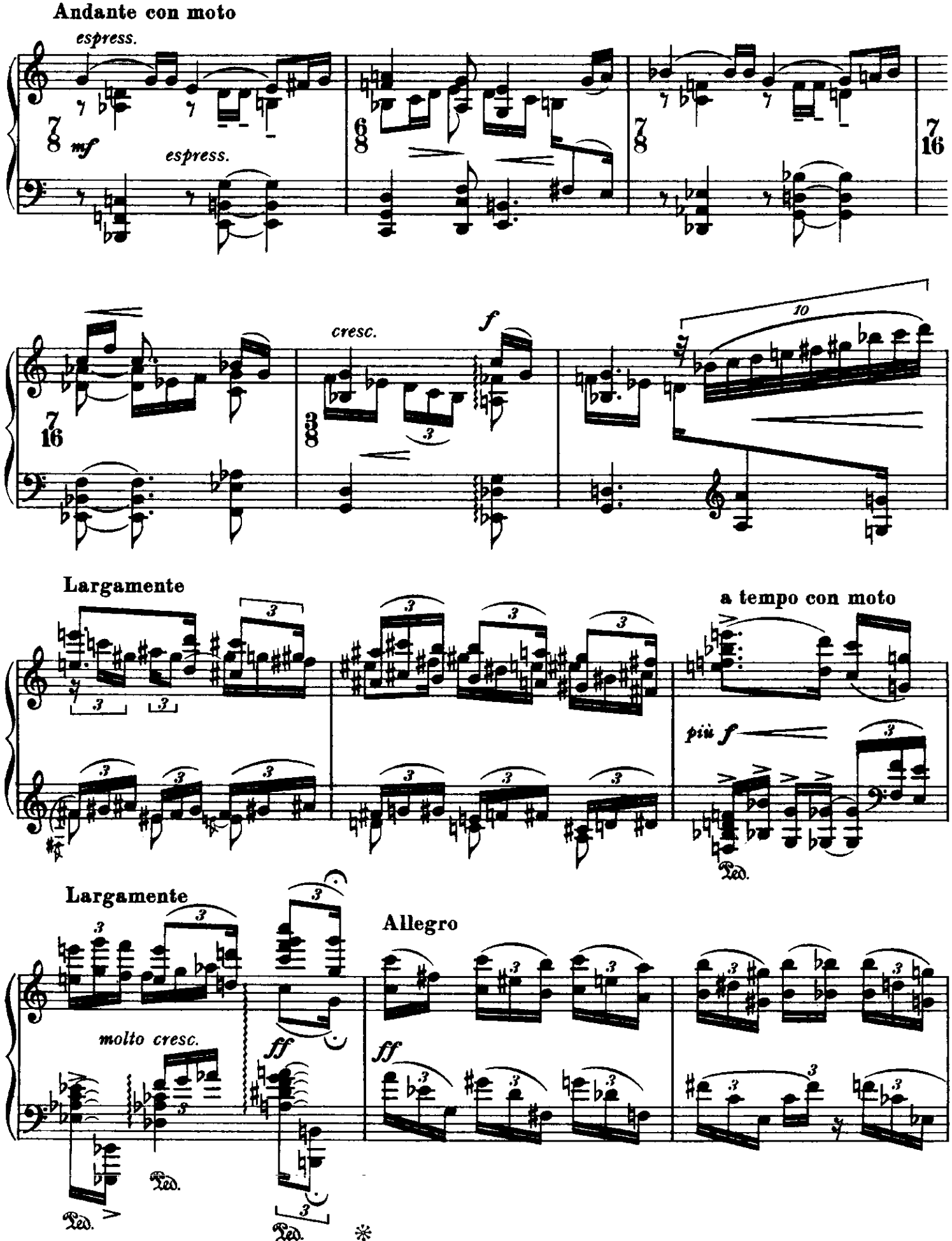

f
fz
fz
8
f con anima

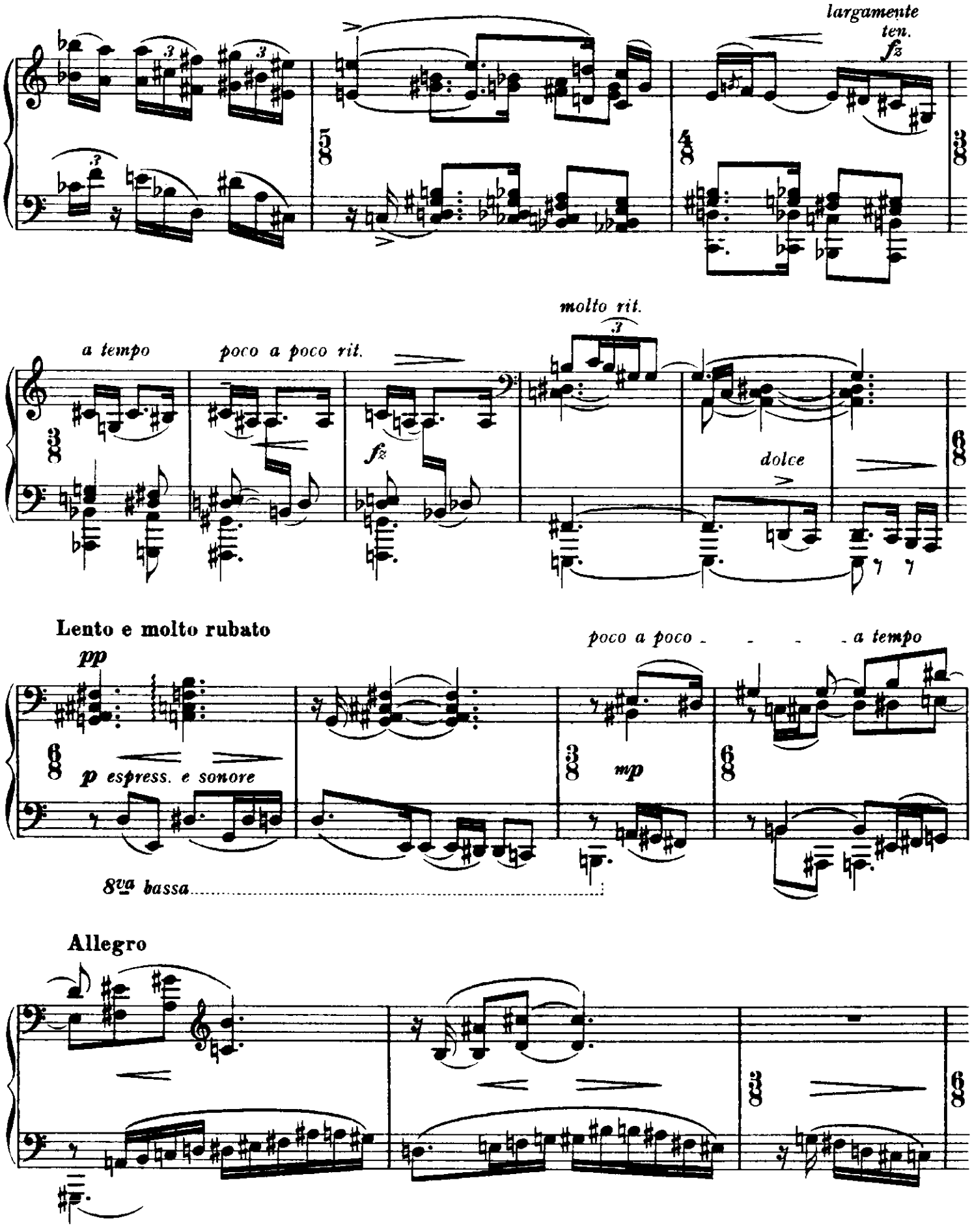

8
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
rinf.
un poch. rit.
Ped.
Ped.
a tempo
f
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
9
Ped.
rinf.
Ped.
Ped.
brillante
8
fz
3
f
3
Ped.
Ped.

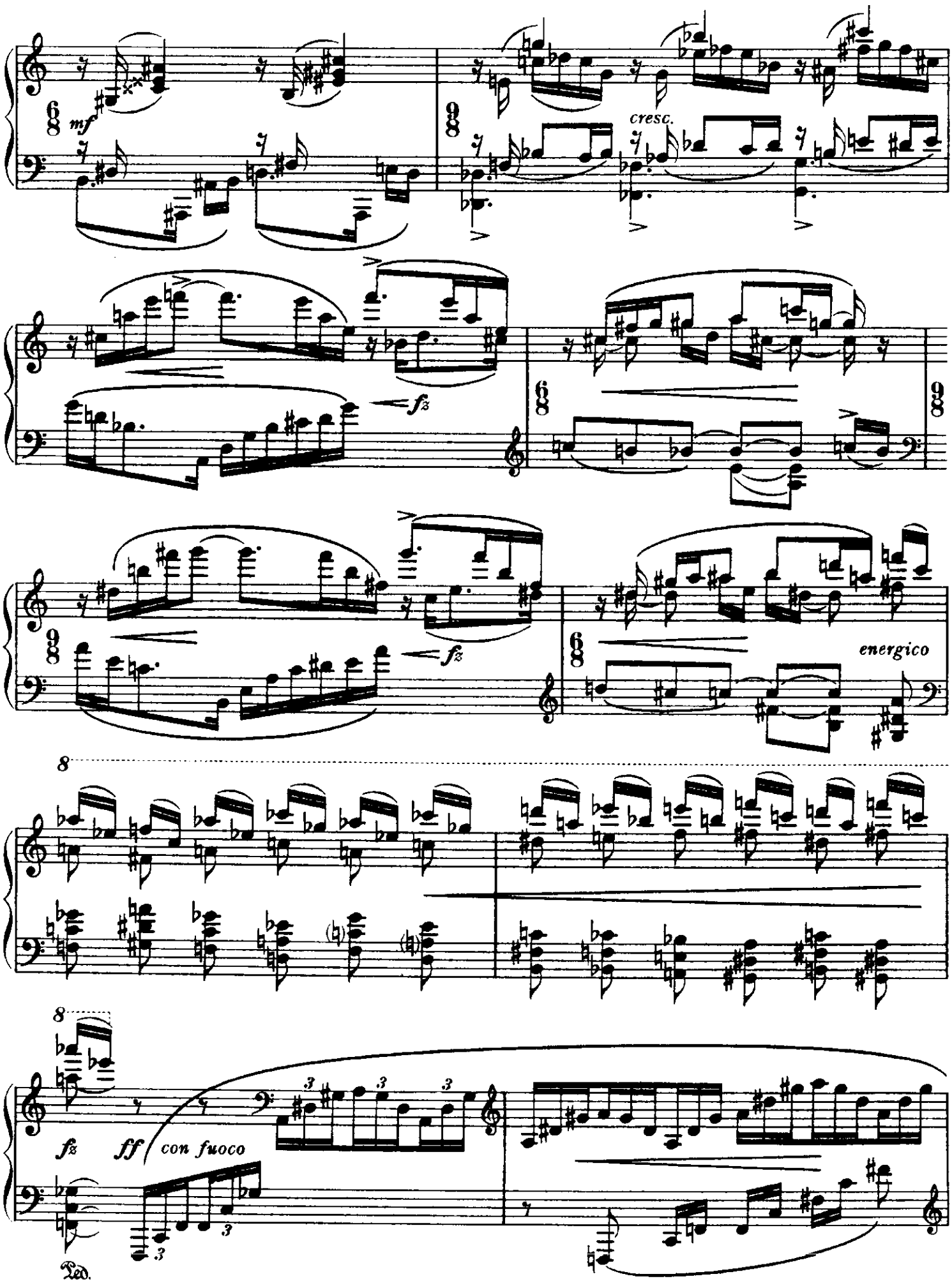

fz
Ped.
ff
fz
(♩. = 66)
ff molto risoluto
ff

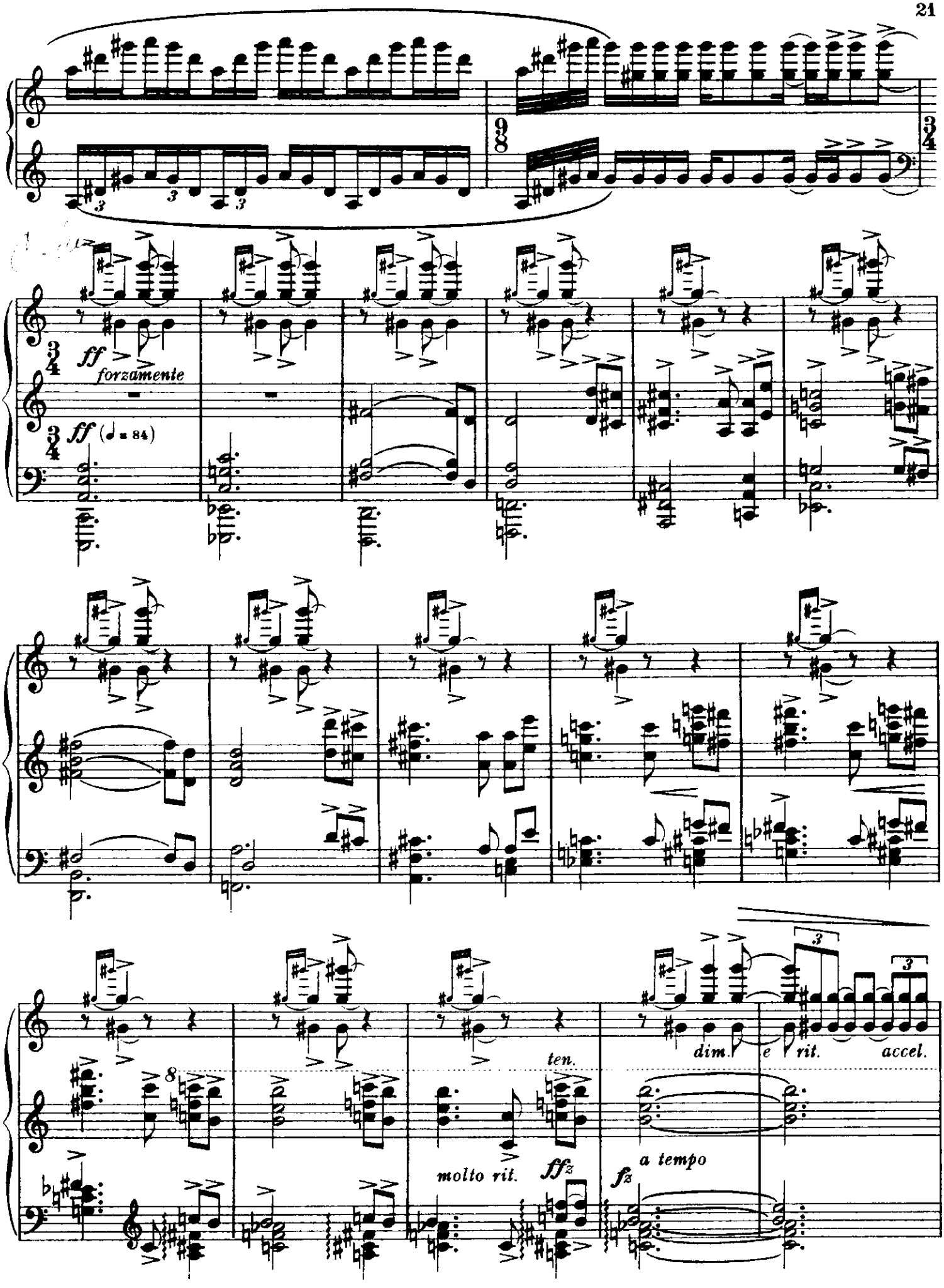

poco a poco ritenuto
8va bassa
8
f
dim.
pp
rit.
Ped.
Andante con moto
Poco lento e tranquillo
espress.
mp semplice
pp
pp
Tranquillo
Andante
p dolce
mp
Ped.

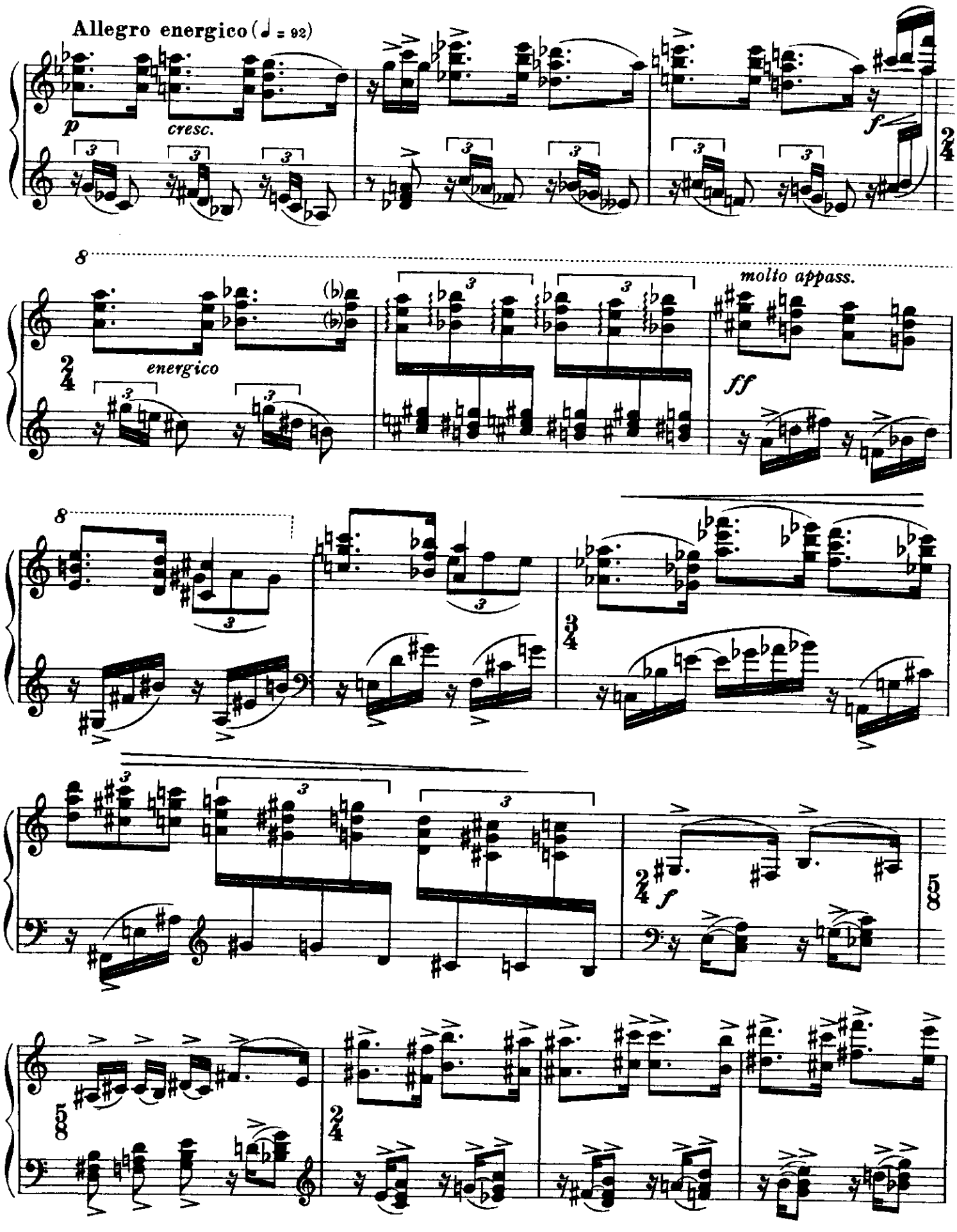

con moto
pp
pp
pp
espress.
Ped.
Allegro animato
mf
più animato
Meno mosso e tranquillo
rall.
f
p sub.
teneramente
mp
3
6

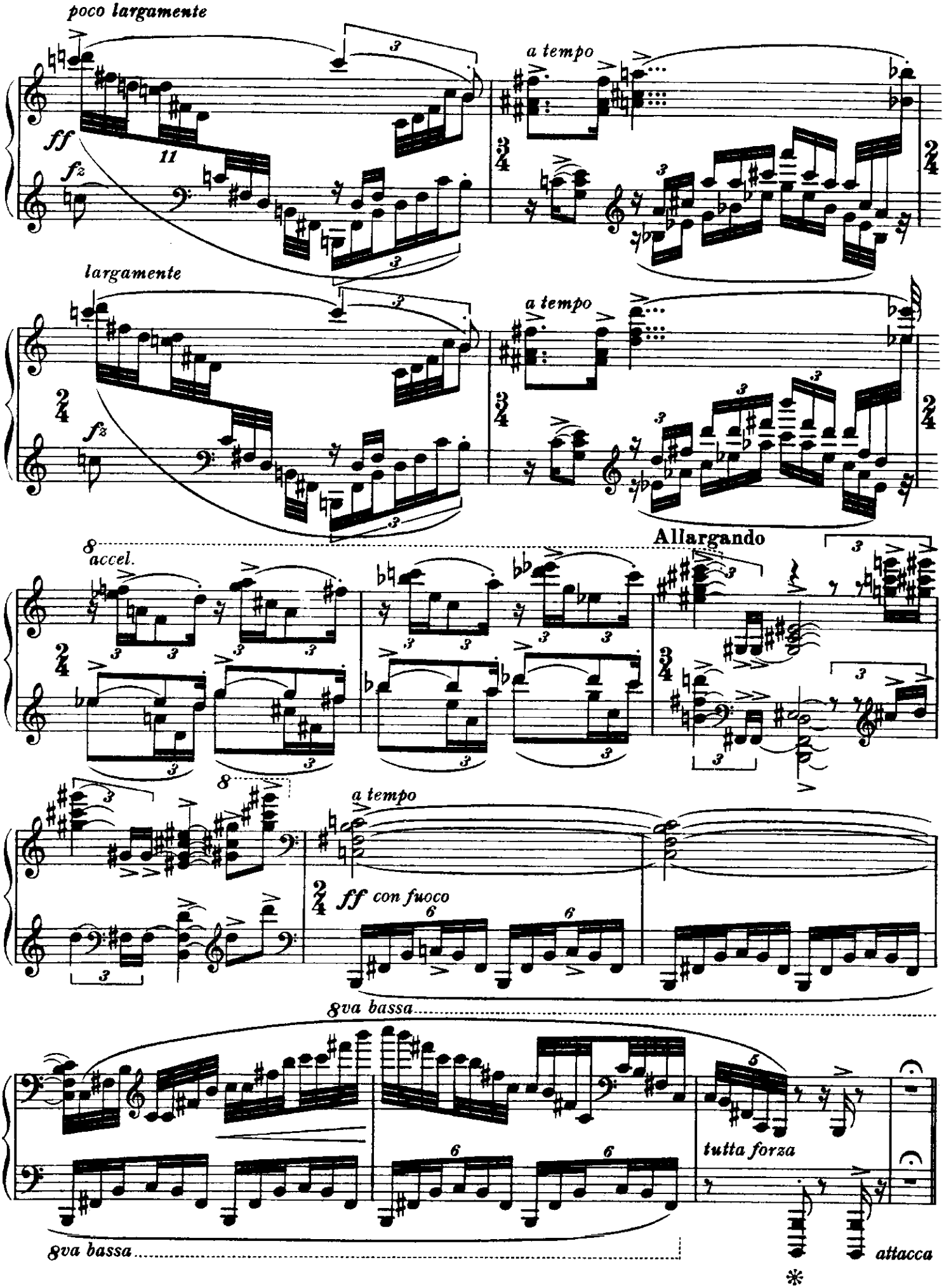

Andante con moto
espress.
mf
espress.
cresc.
f
10
Largamente
a tempo con moto
più f
Largamente
molto cresc.
ff
Allegro
ff
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.


largamente
ten.
fz
molto rit.
a tempo
poco a poco rit.
fz
dolce
Lento e molto rubato
pp
poco a poco
a tempo
p espress. e sonore
mp
8va bassa
Allegro

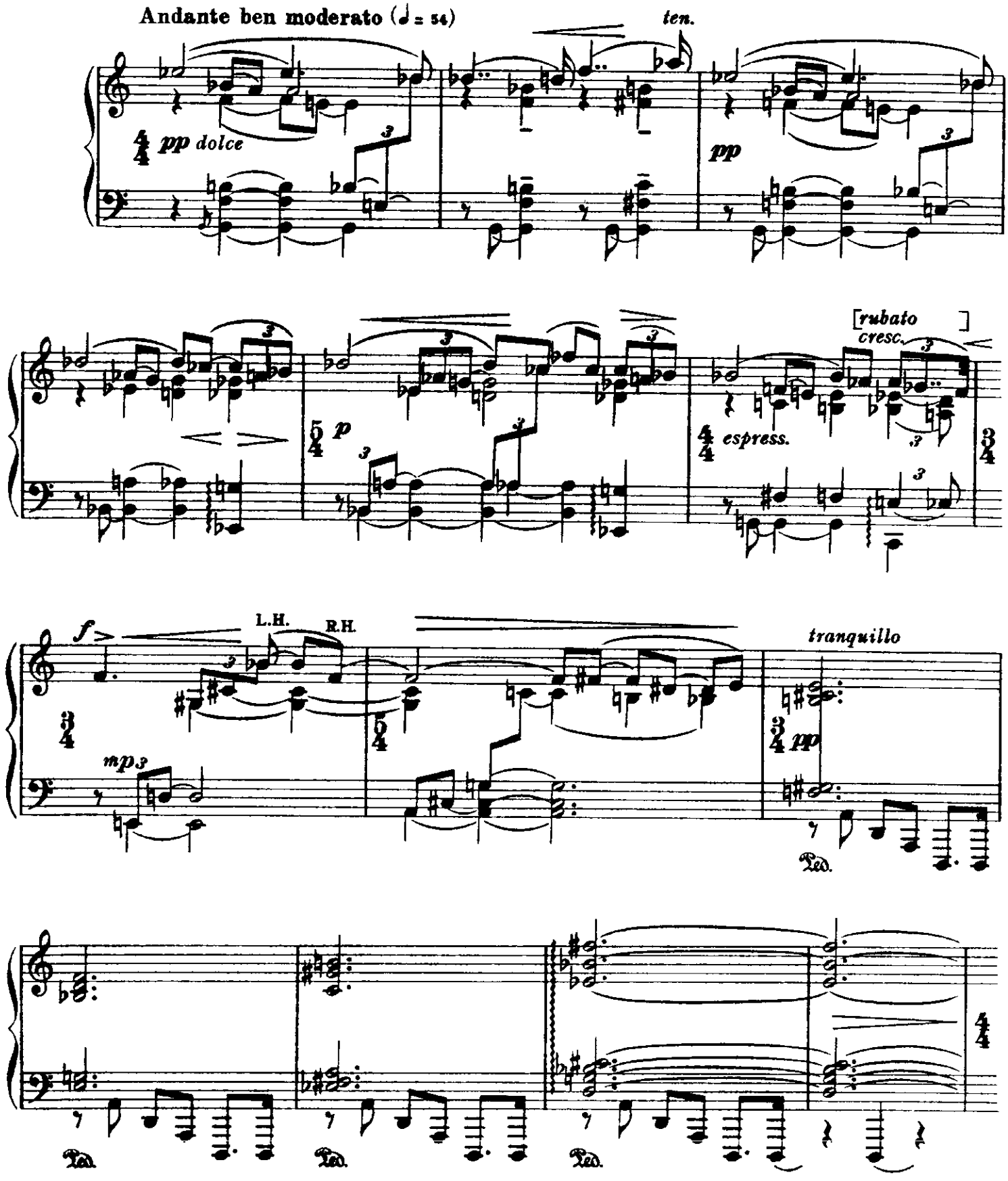

mf
cresc.
fz
fz
energico
8
8
fz
ff
con fuoco
Ped.

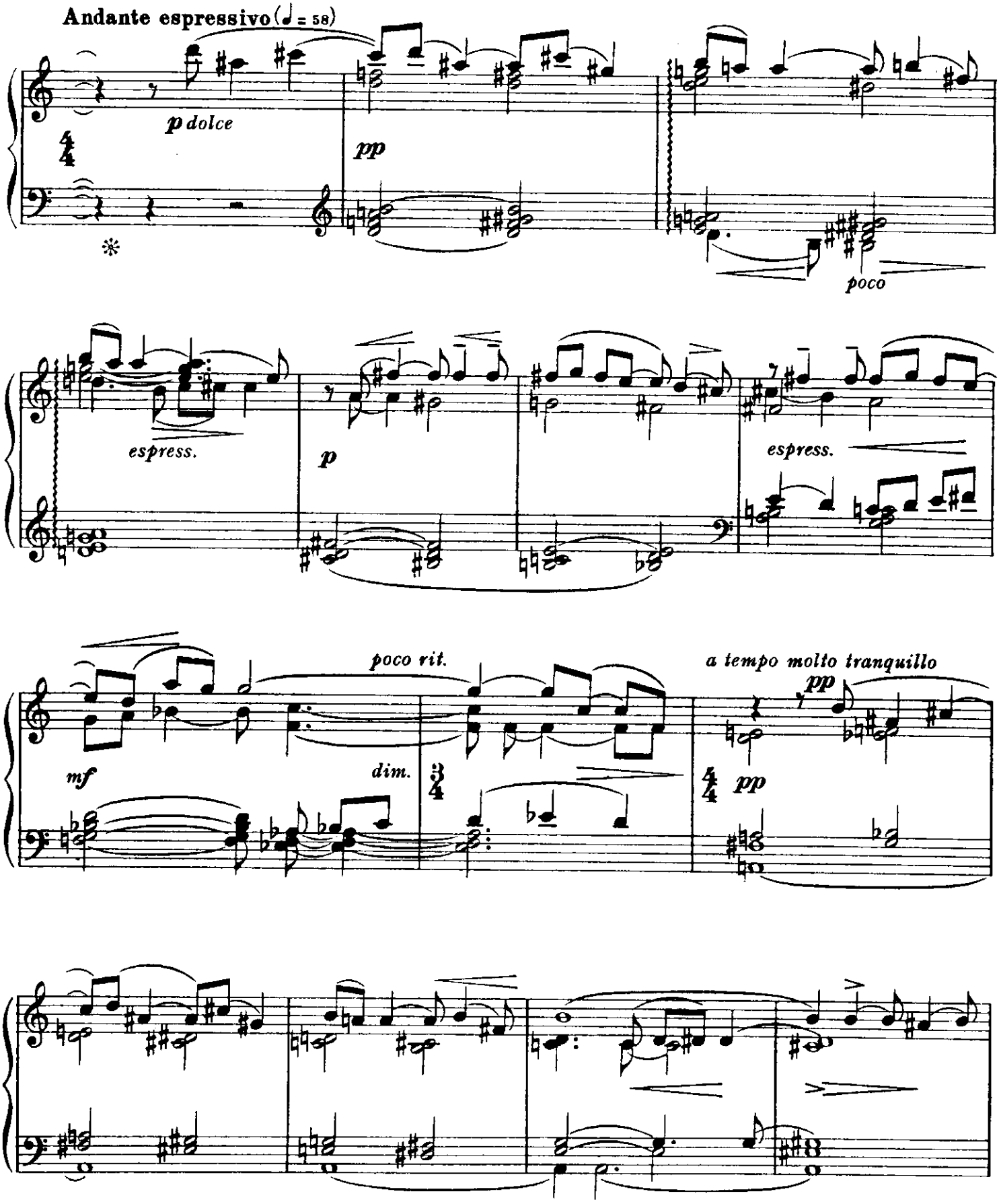

ff
forzamente
ff (♩= 84)
ten.
molto rit.
ffz
fz
a tempo
dim.
e rit.
accel.

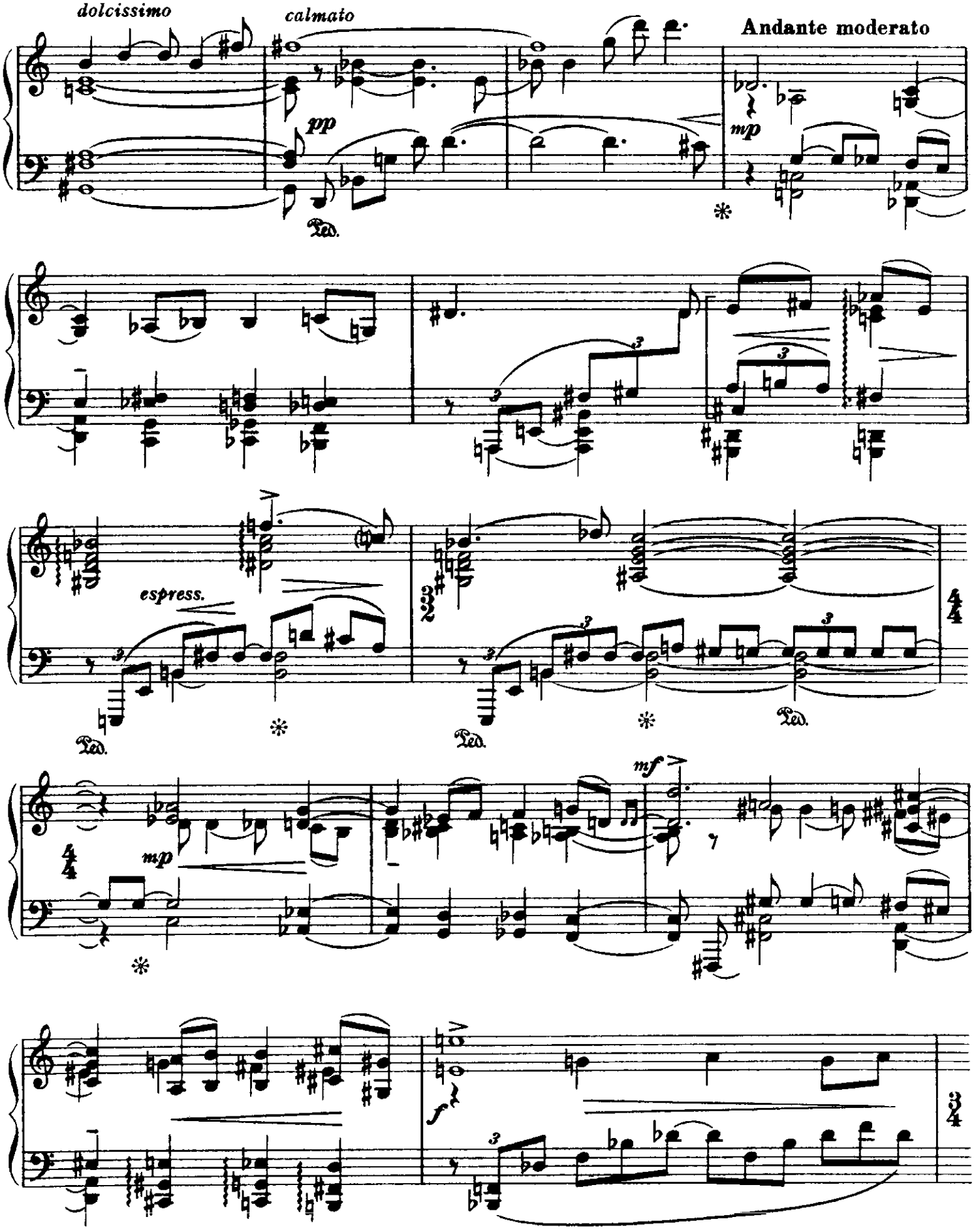

Allegro energico (♩ = 92)
p
cresc.
f
energico
molto appass.
ff
f

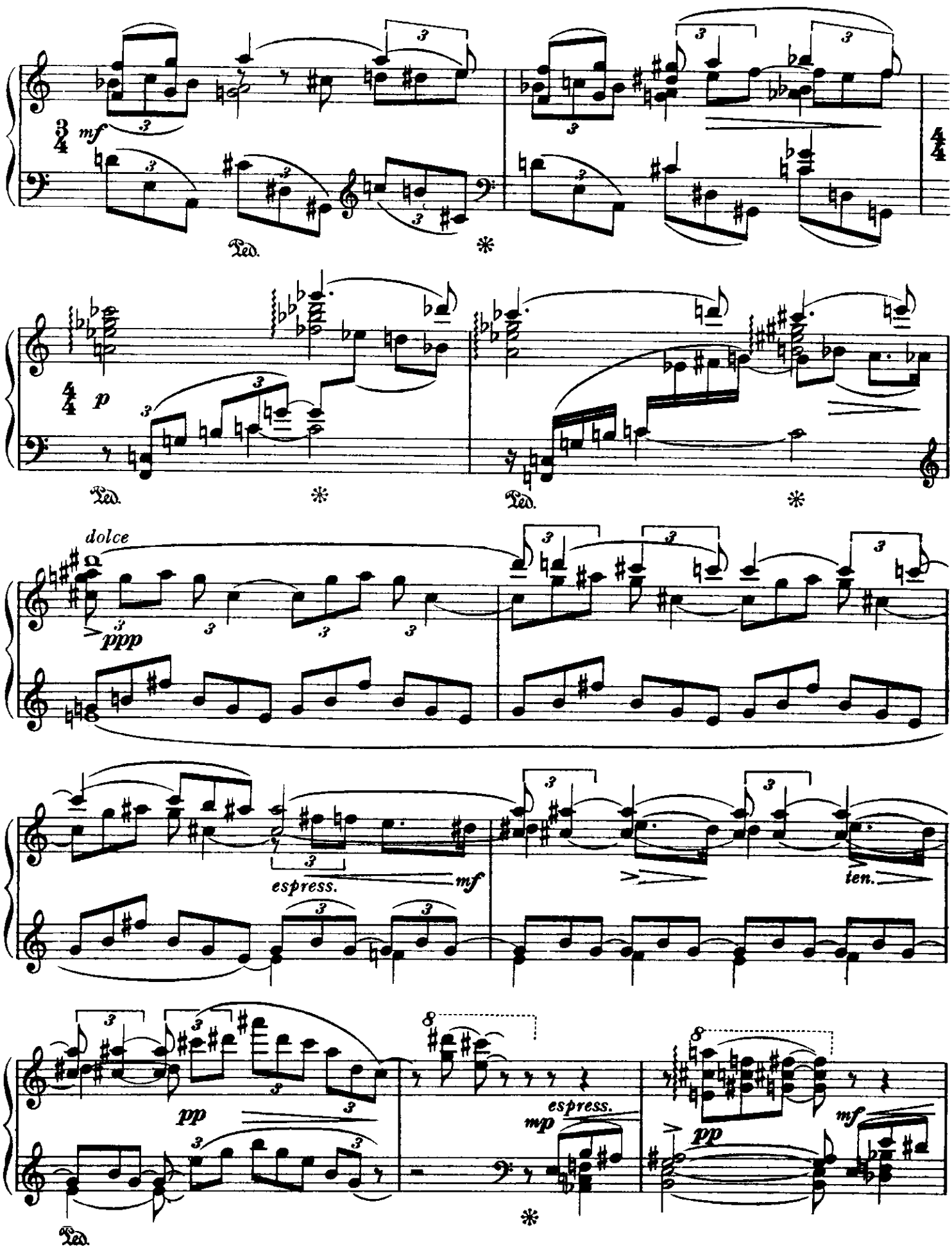

poco largamente
a tempo
largamente
a tempo
accel.
Allargando
a tempo
ff con fuoco
8va bassa
tutta forza
8va bassa
attacca

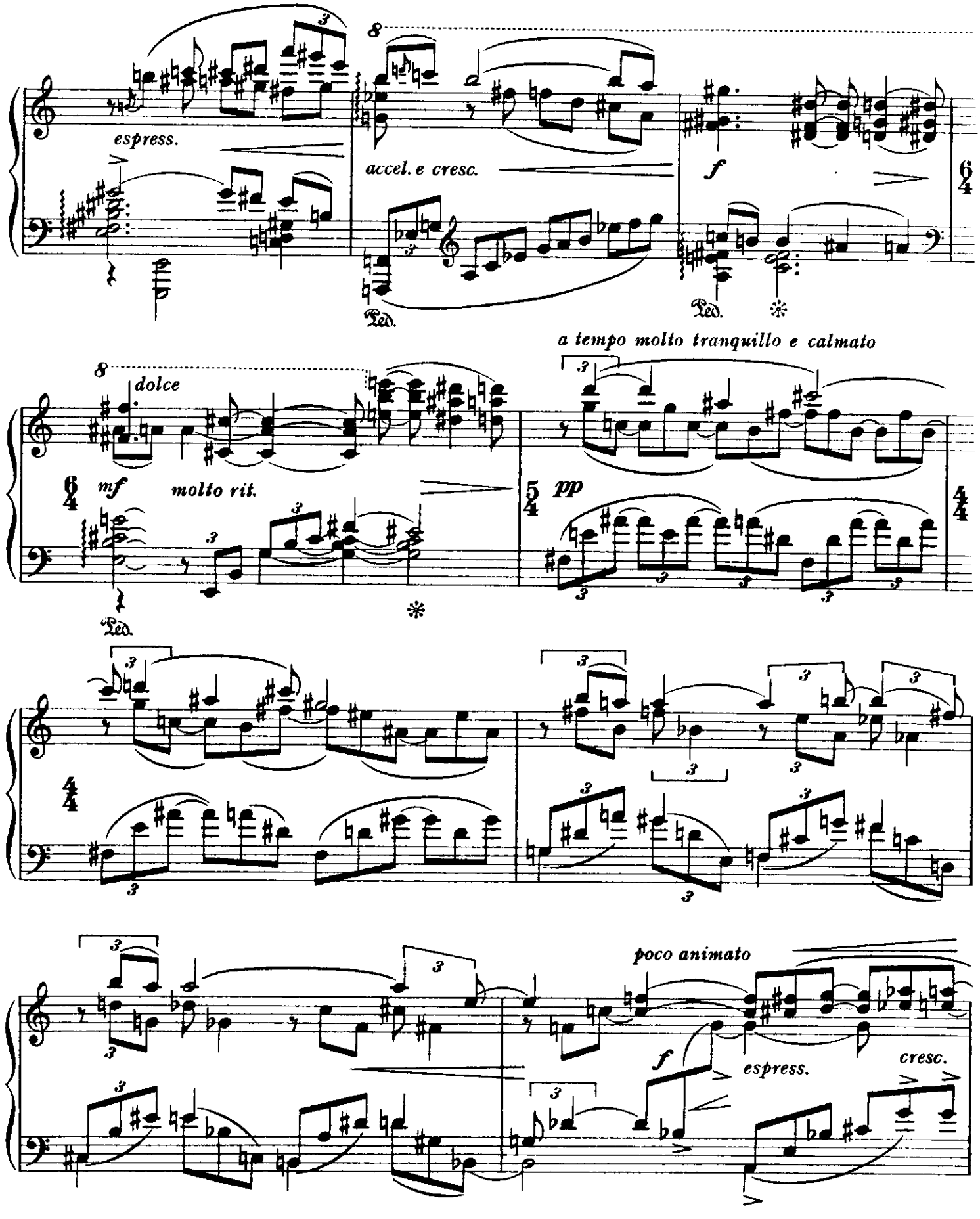
II.

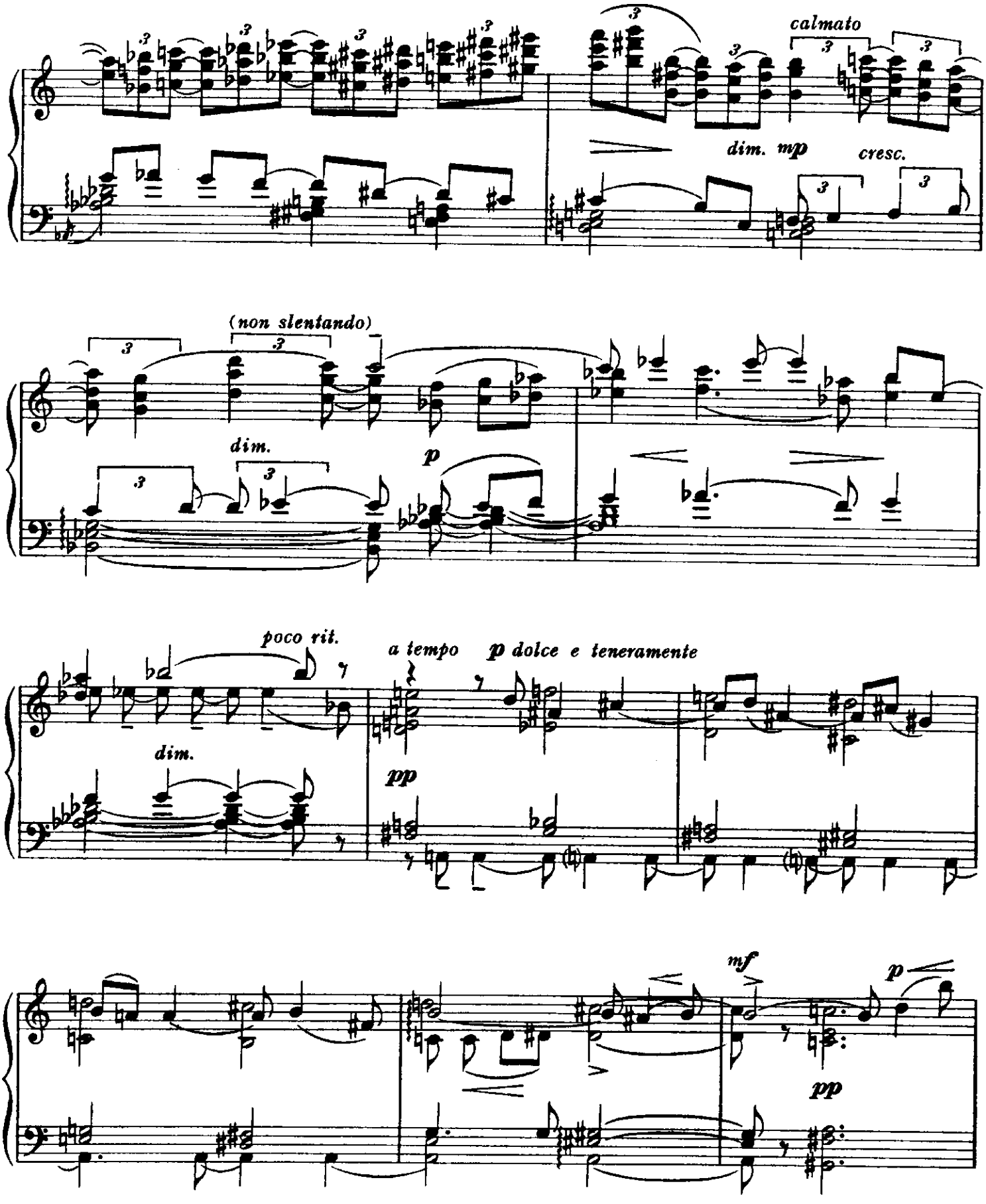

Andante ben moderato (♩ = 54)
ten.
pp dolce
pp
[rubato
cresc.
p
espress.
f
L.H.
R.H.
mp
tranquillo
pp
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

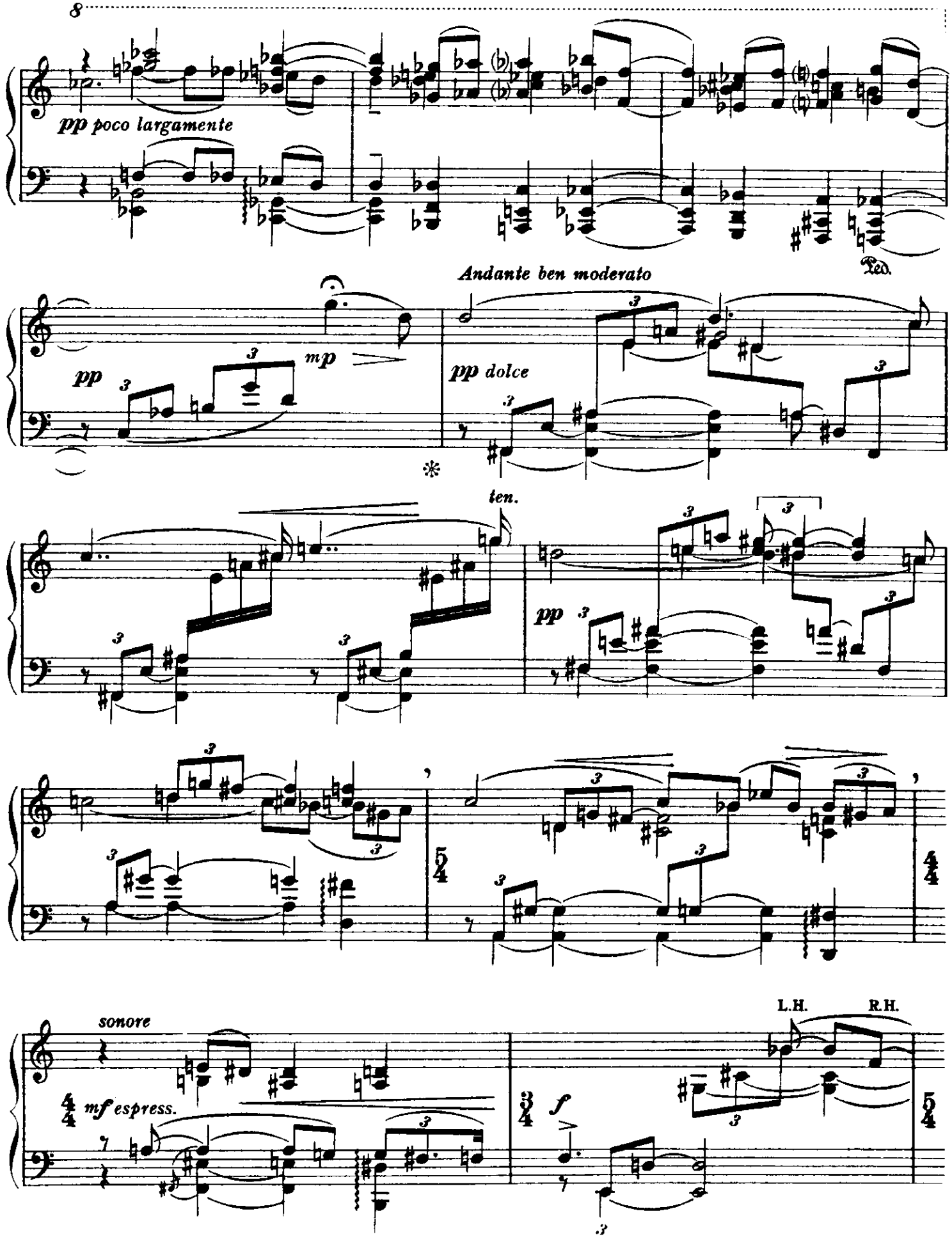

Andante espressivo (♩ = 58)
p dolce
pp
poco
espress.
p
espress.
poco rit.
mf
dim.
a tempo molto tranquillo
pp
pp

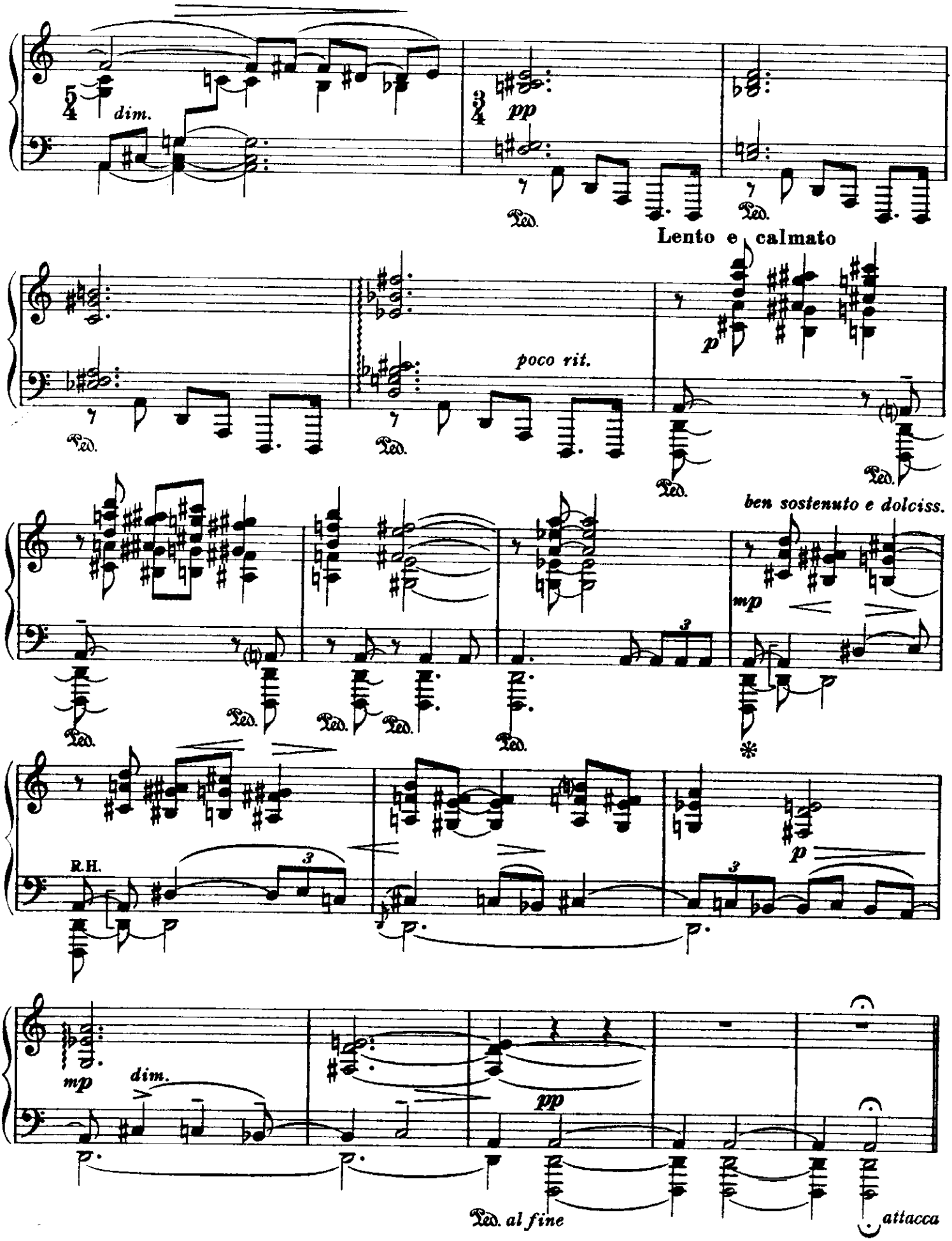

dolcissimo
calmato
Andante moderato
pp
mp
Ped.
espress.
mf
mp
f


mf
Ped.
*
p
Ped.
*
Ped.
*
dolce
ppp
espress.
mf
ten.
pp
Ped.
8
mp
espress.
*
8
pp
mf

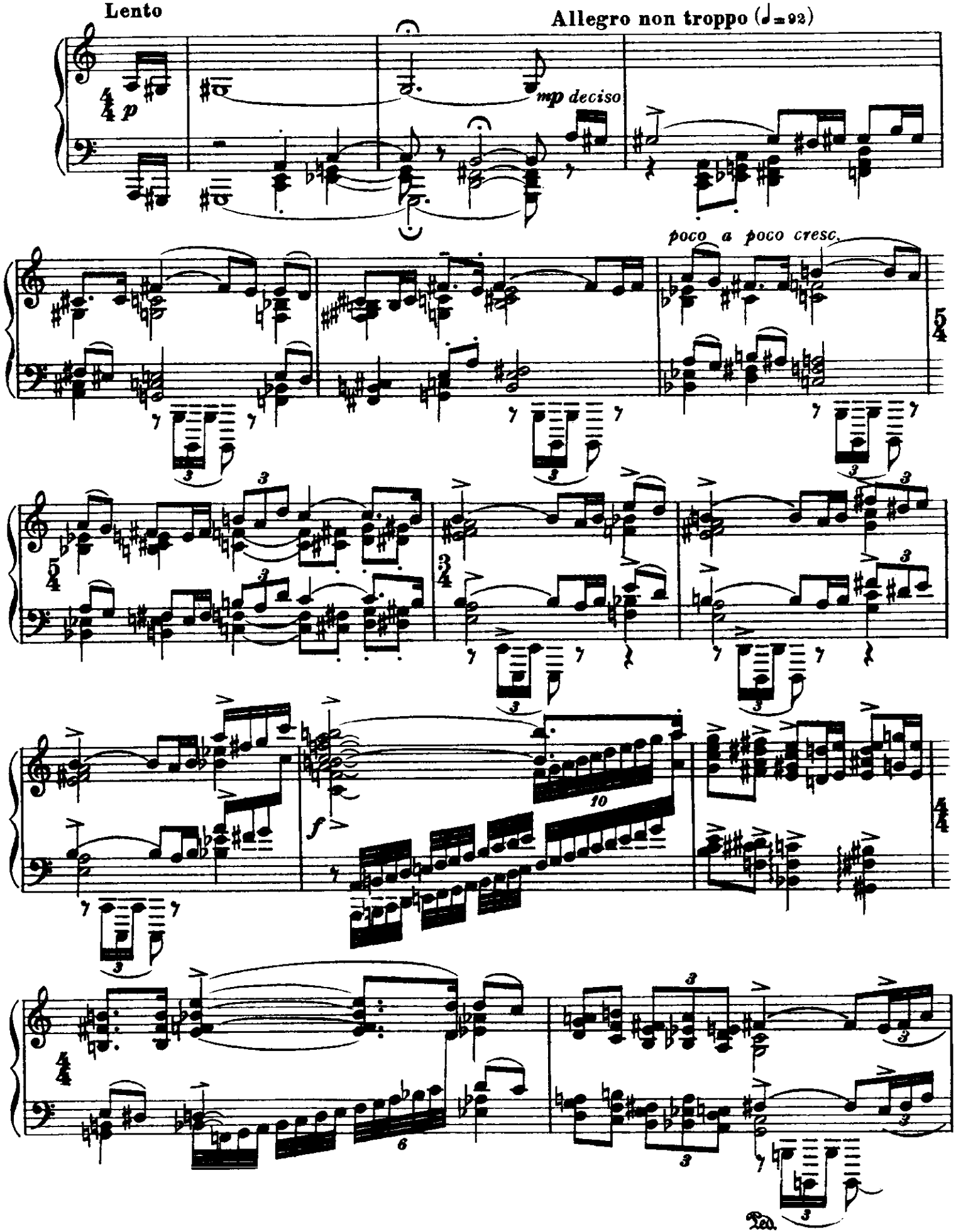

espress.
accel. e cresc.
f
Ped.
Ped.
a tempo molto tranquillo e calmato
dolce
mf
molto rit.
pp
Ped.
poco animato
f
espress.
cresc.

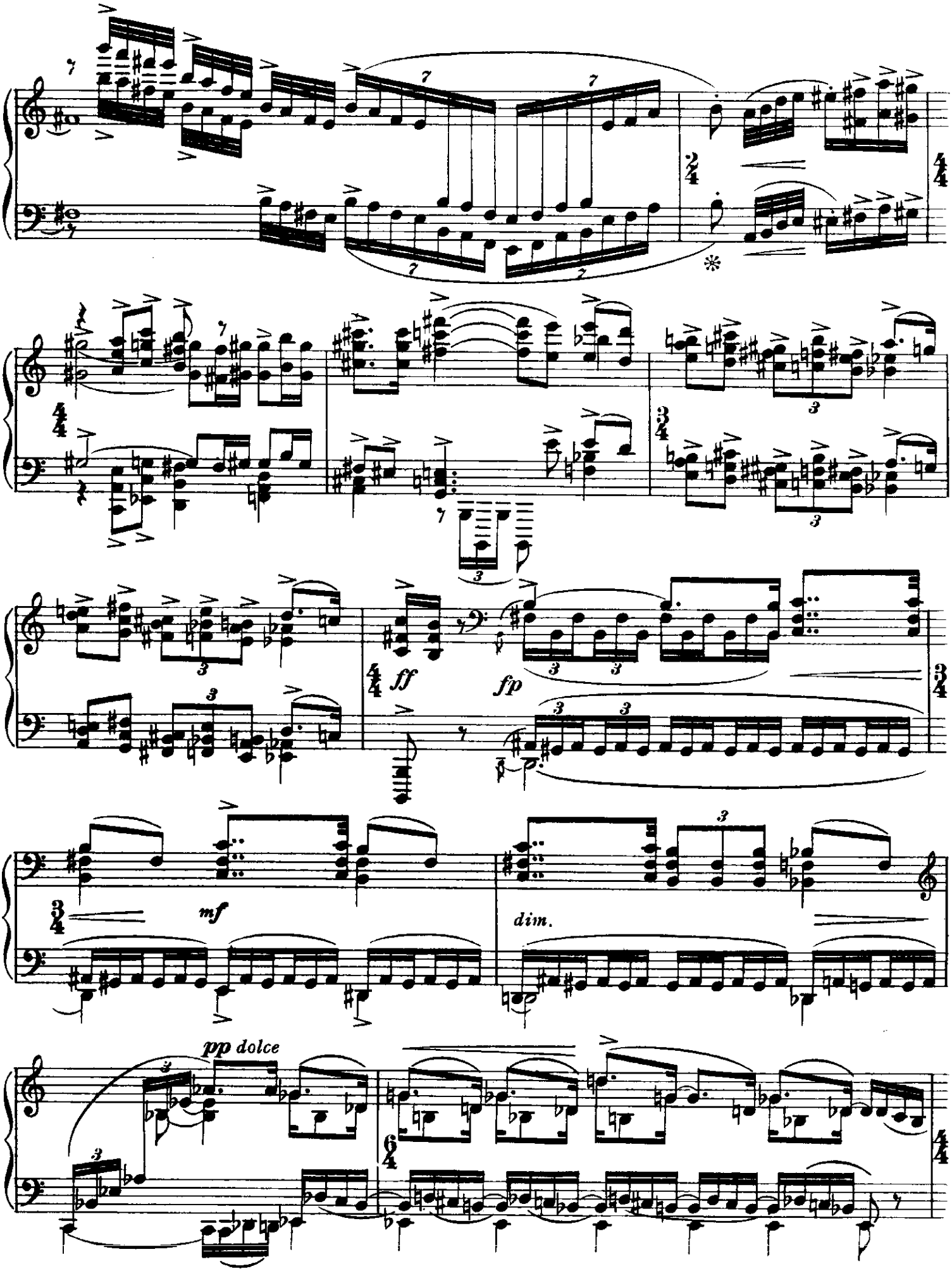

calmato
dim. mp
cresc.
(non slentando)
dim.
p
poco rit.
a tempo
p dolce e teneramente
dim.
pp
mf
p
pp

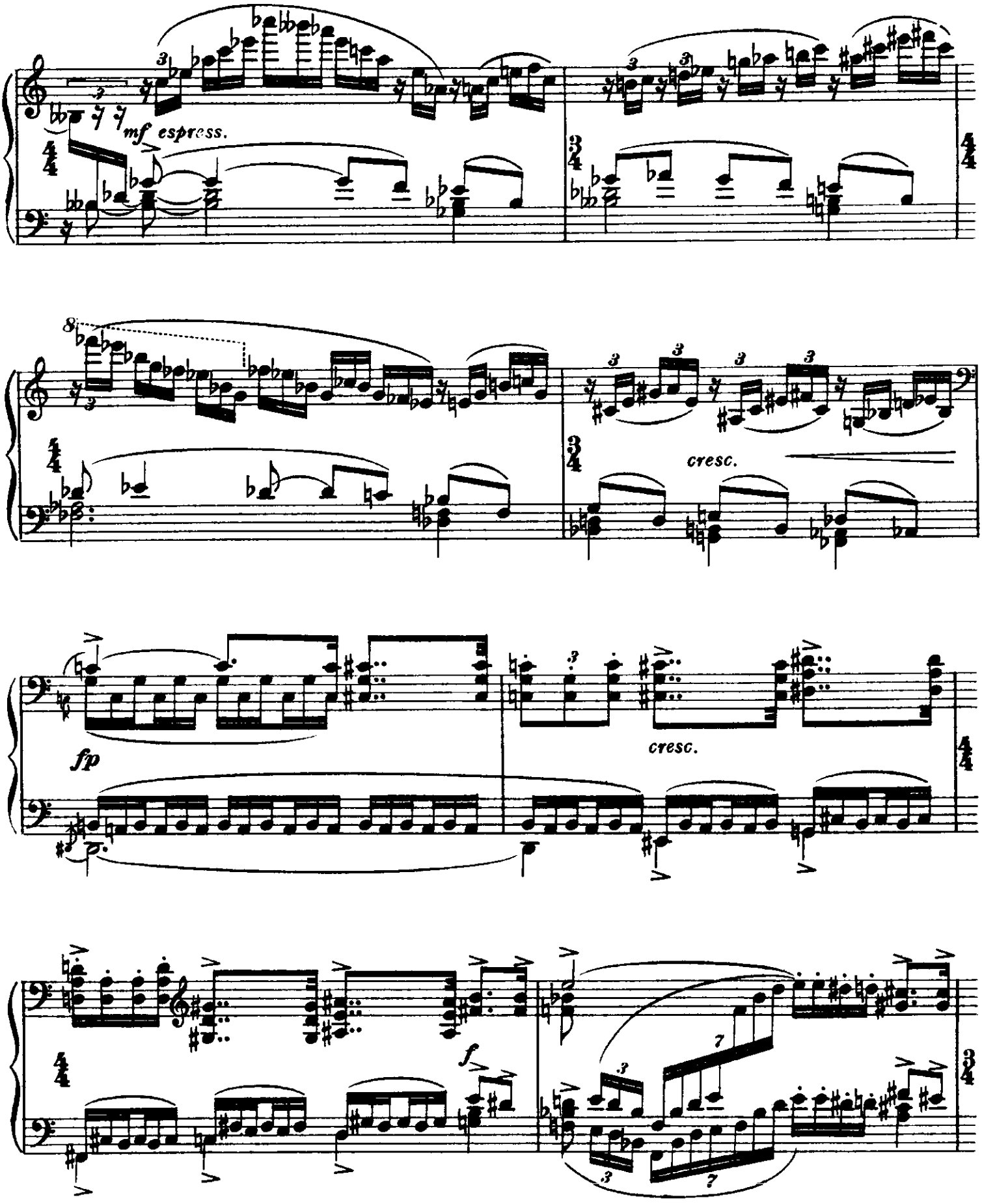

8
pp poco largamente
Ped.
Andante ben moderato
pp
mp
pp dolce
ten.
pp
sonore
mf espress.
L.H.
R.H.
f

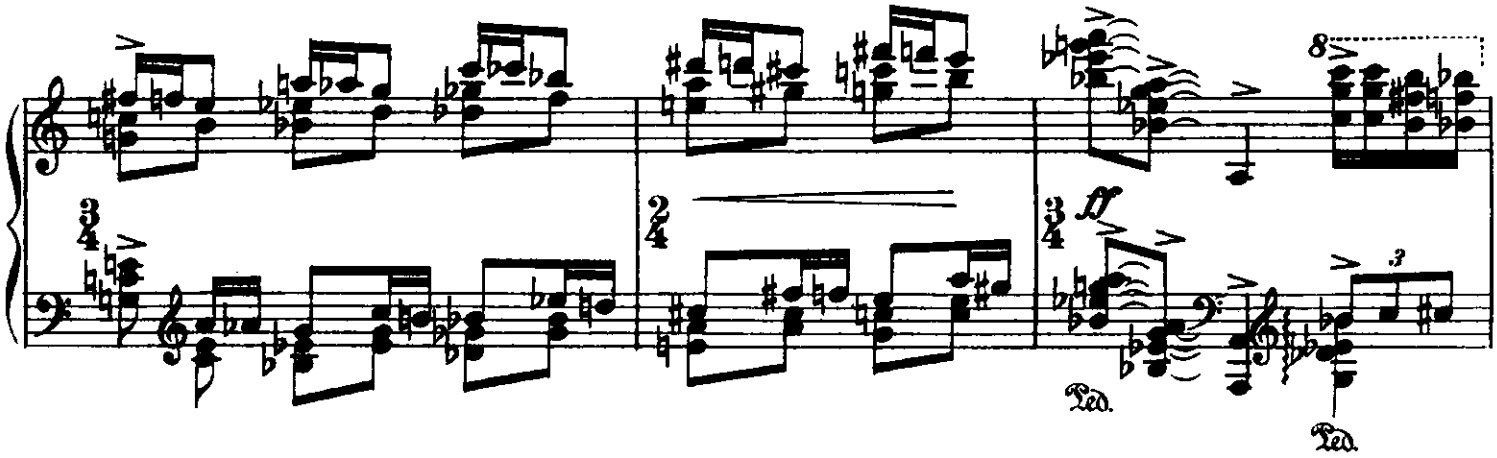

dim.
pp
Lento e calmato
poco rit.
p
ben sostenuto e dolciss.
mp
R.H.
p
mp
dim.
pp
Ped. al fine
attacca

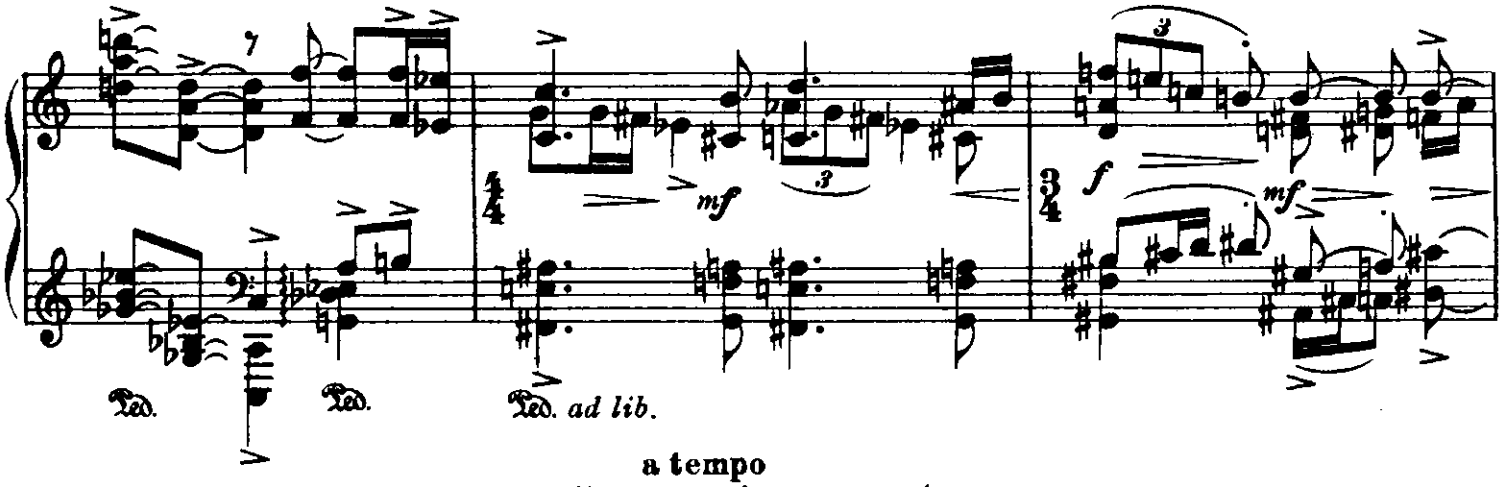
III.




ff
fp
mf
dim.
pp dolce

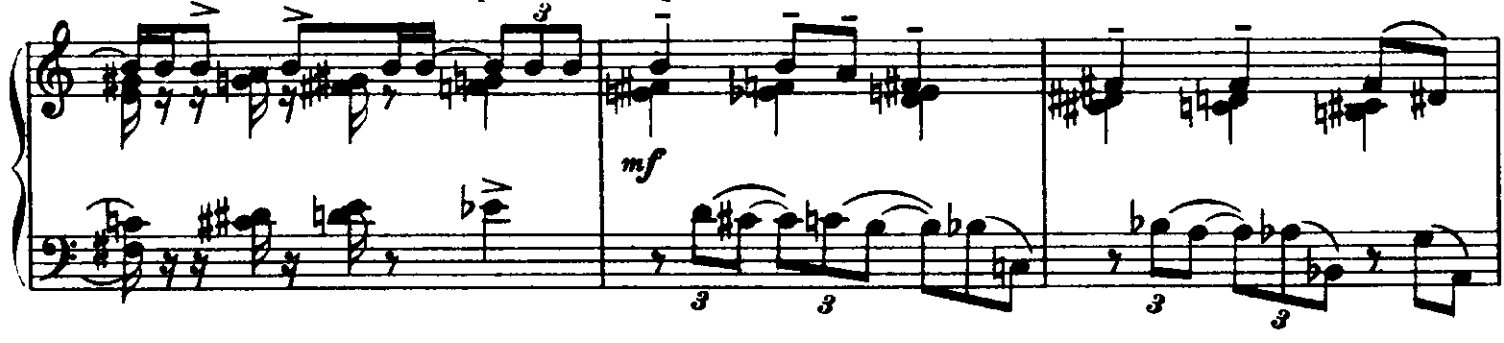

mf espress.
cresc.
fp
cresc.
f

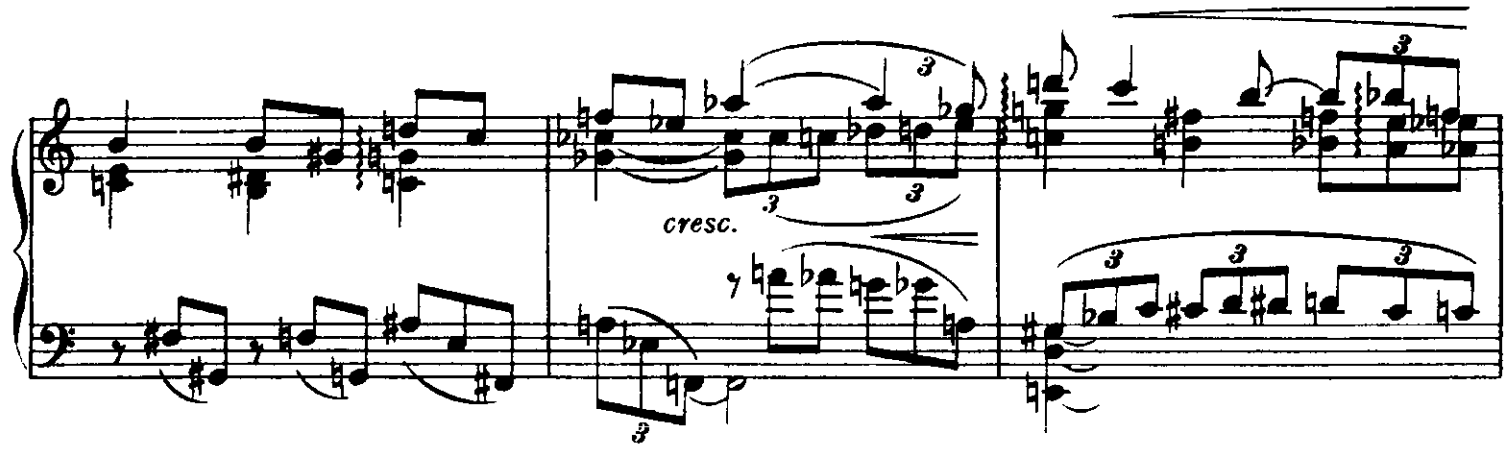


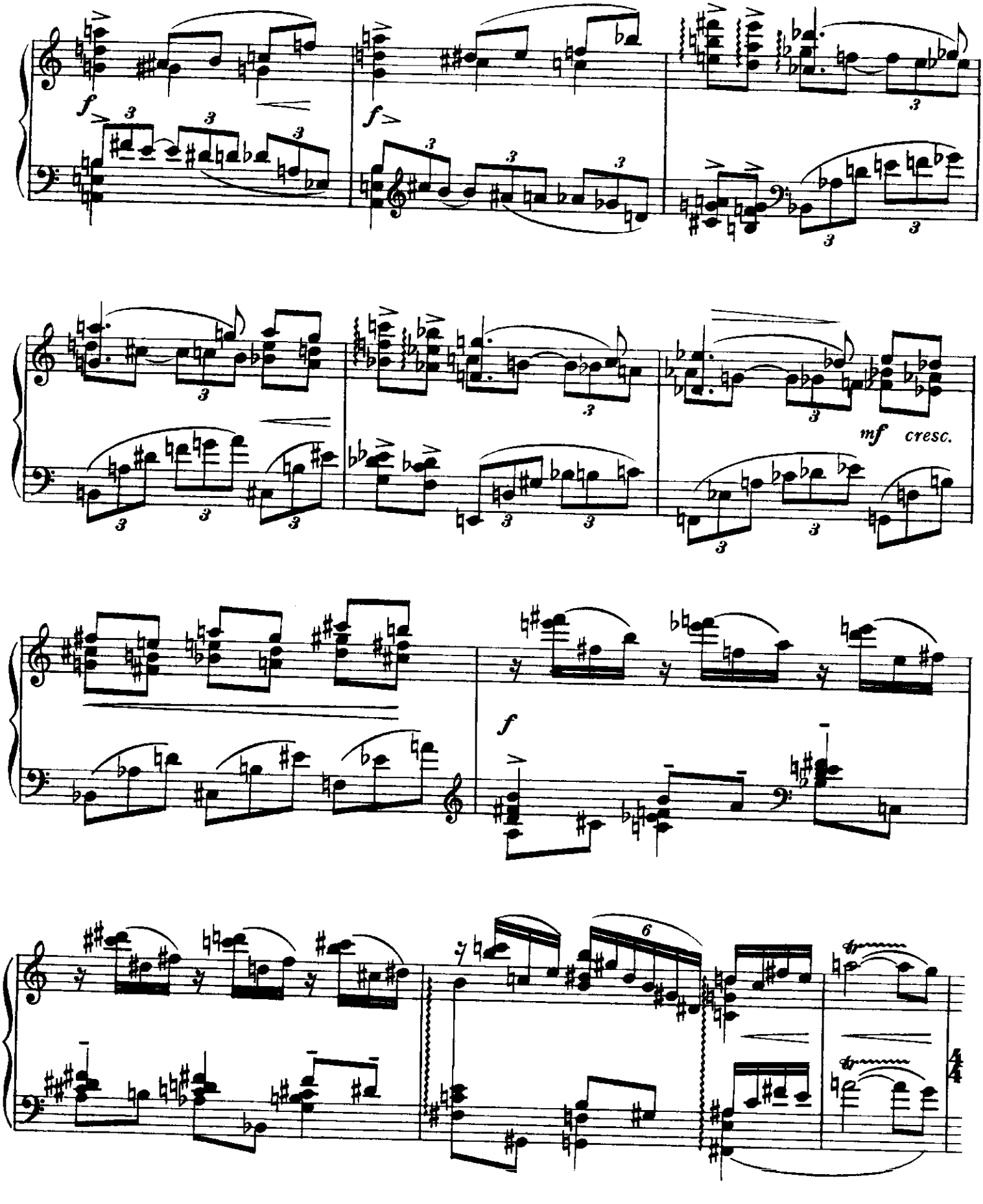


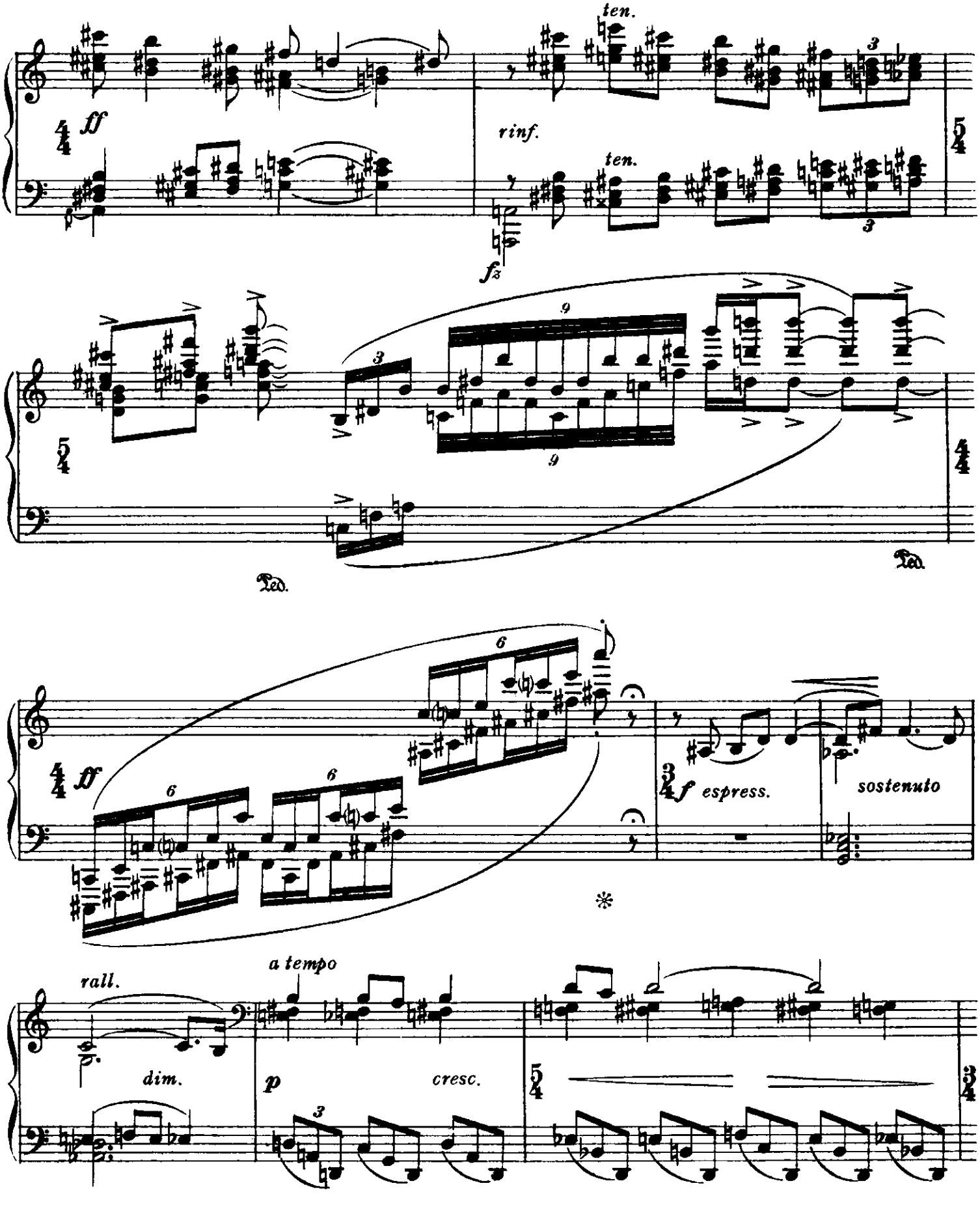
a tempo

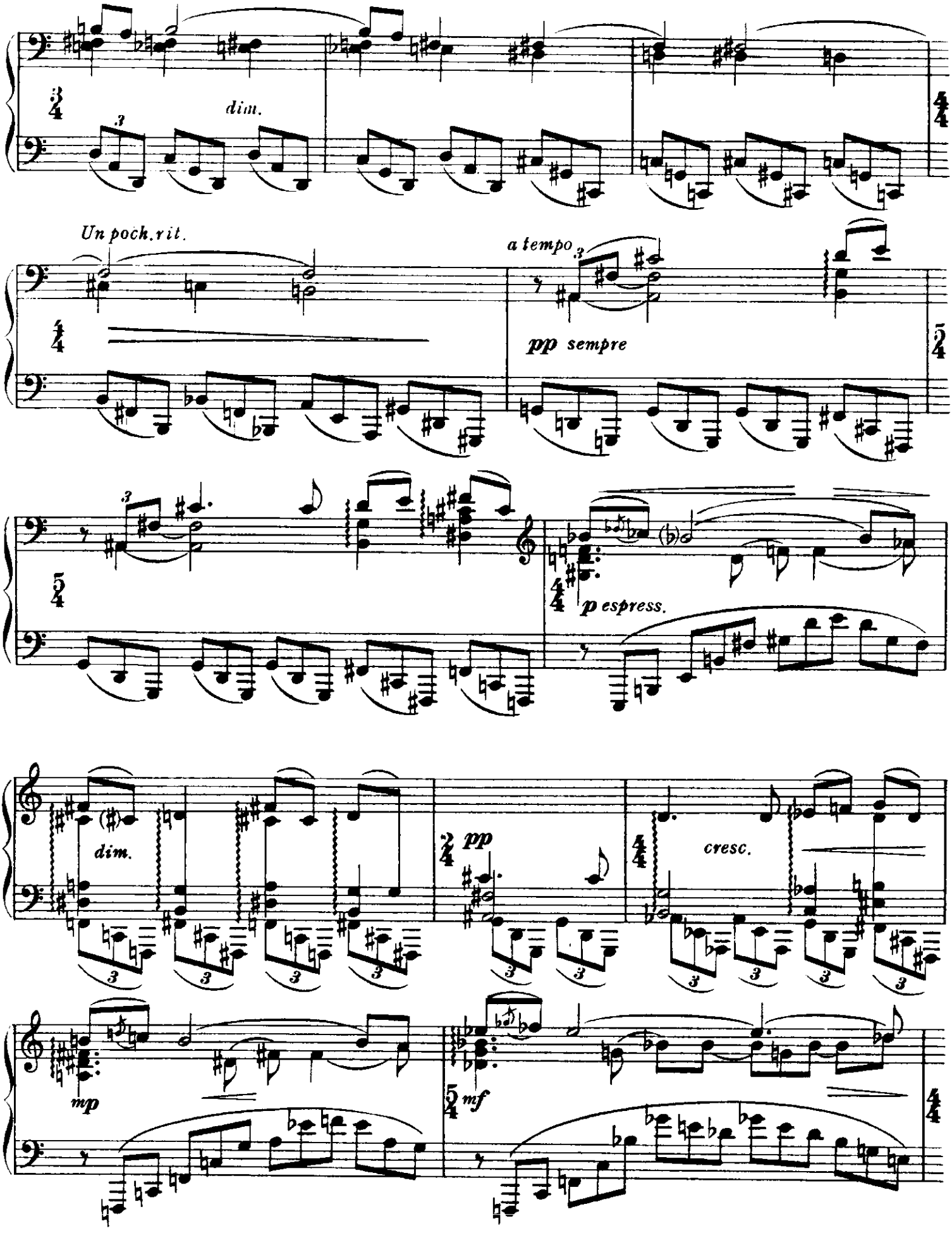
poco rit. *espressivo e con anima*

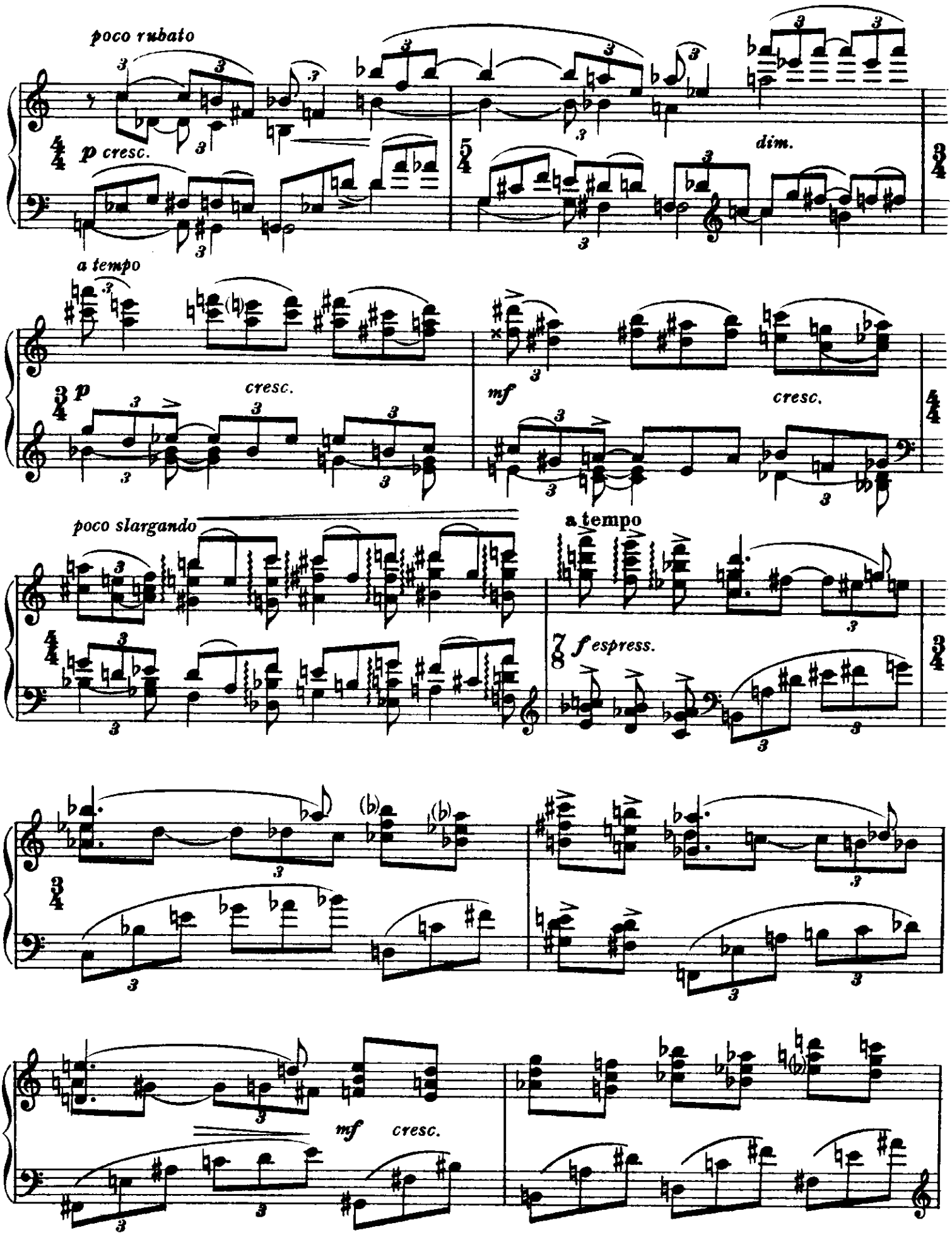


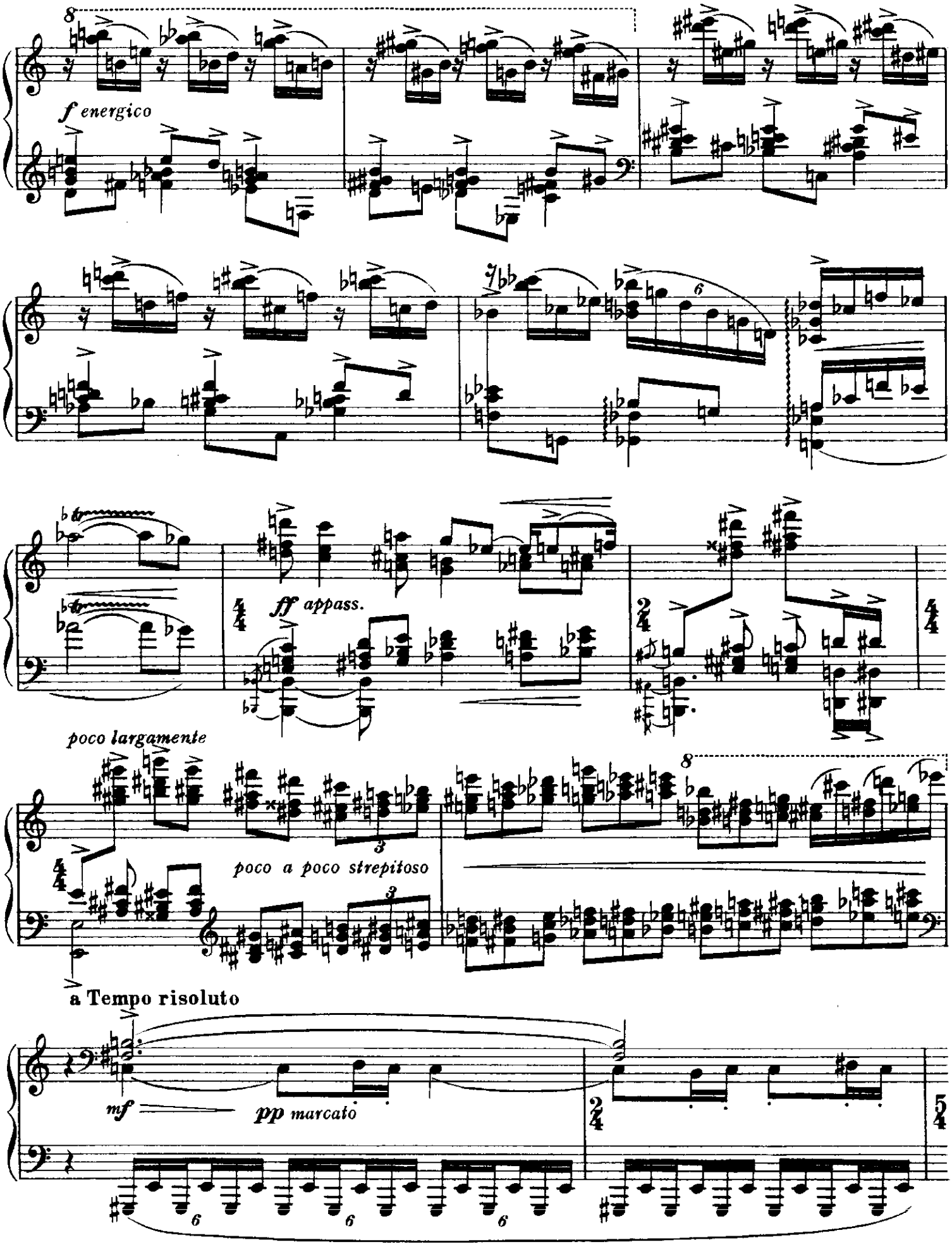


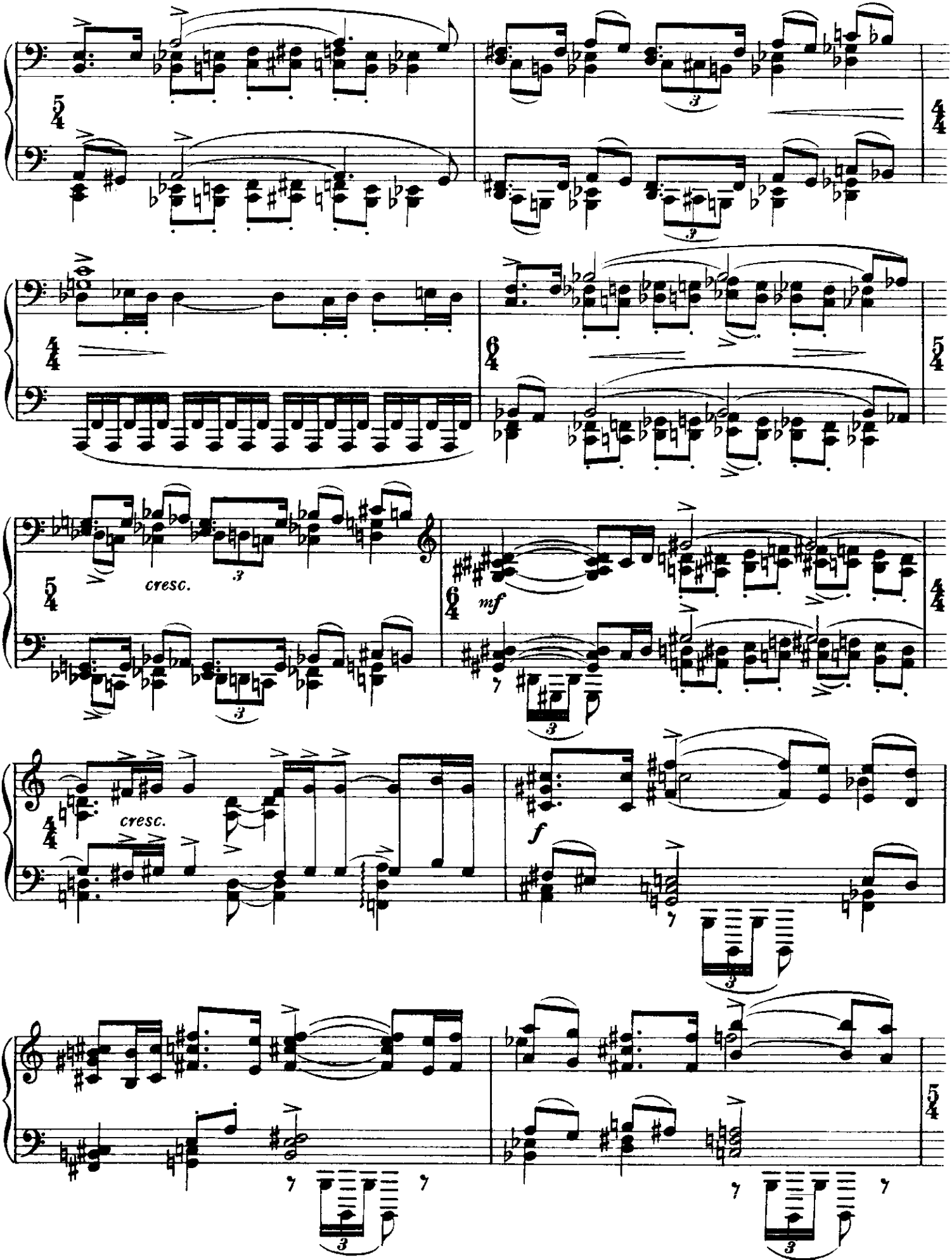

f
f
mf
cresc.
f
6

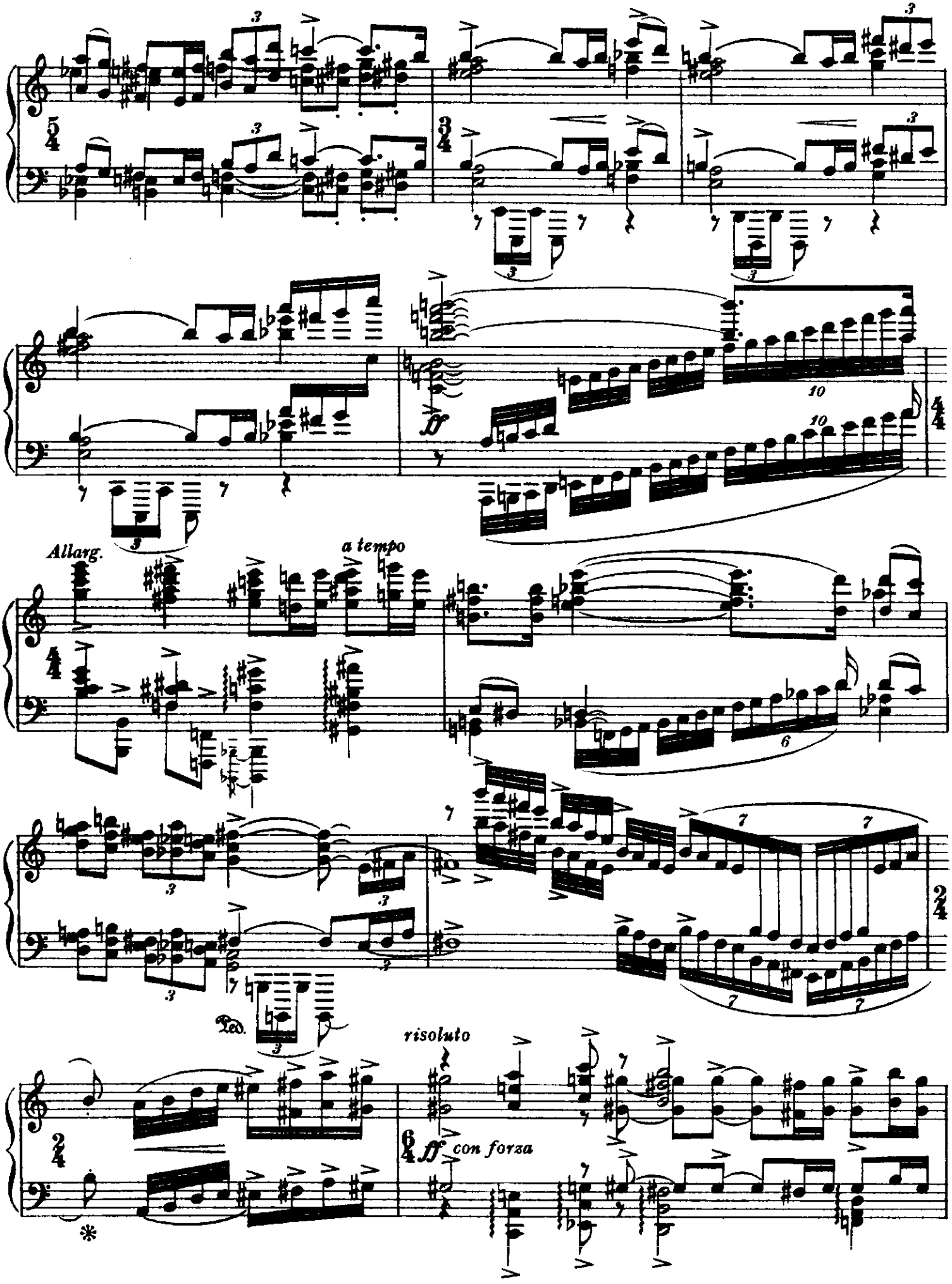

ten.
ff
rinf.
ten.
fz
Ped.
Ped.
ff
espress.
sostenuto
rall.
dim.
a tempo
p
cresc.

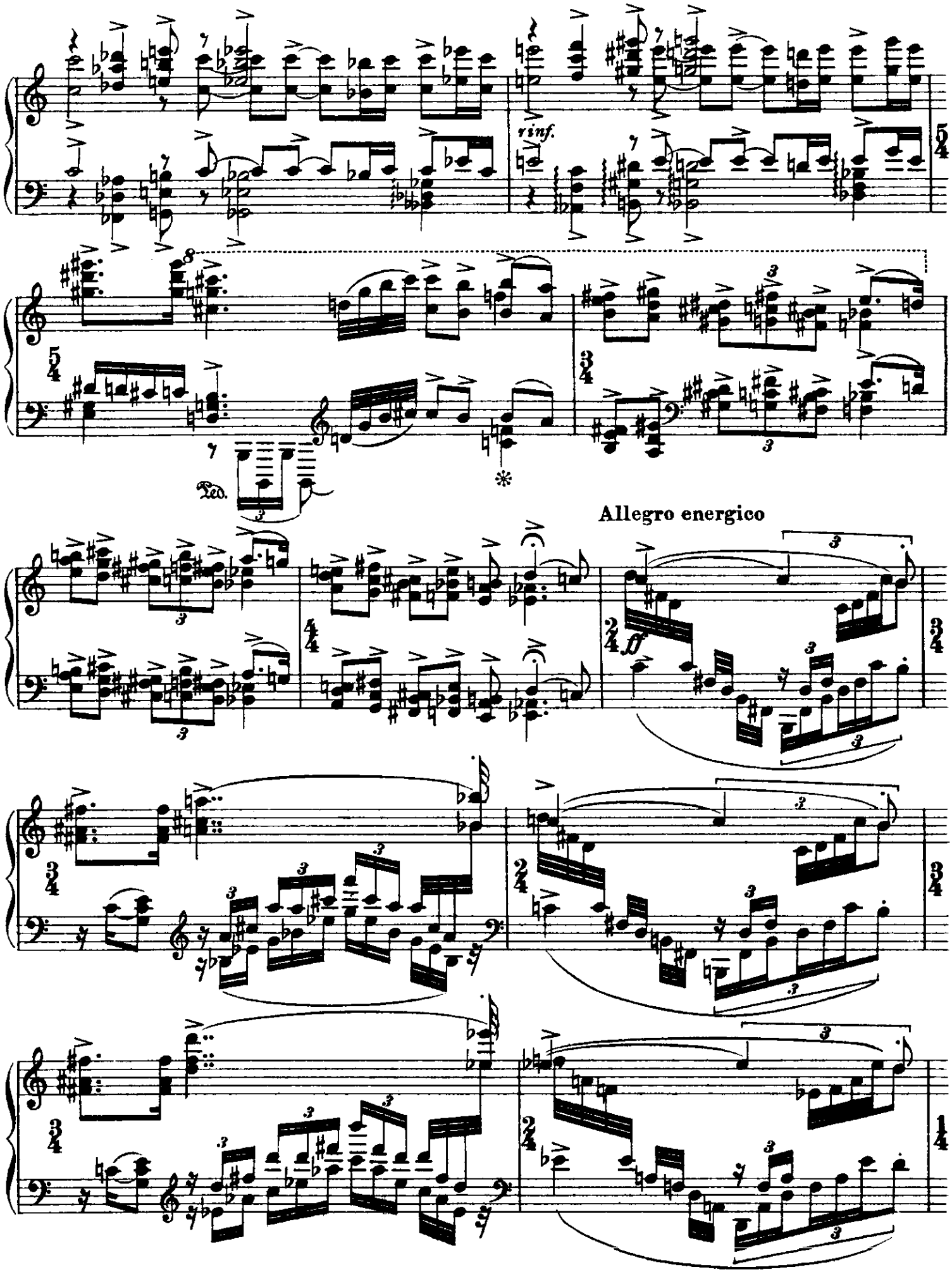

dim.
Un poch. rit.
a tempo
pp sempre
p espress.
dim.
pp
cresc.
mp
mf

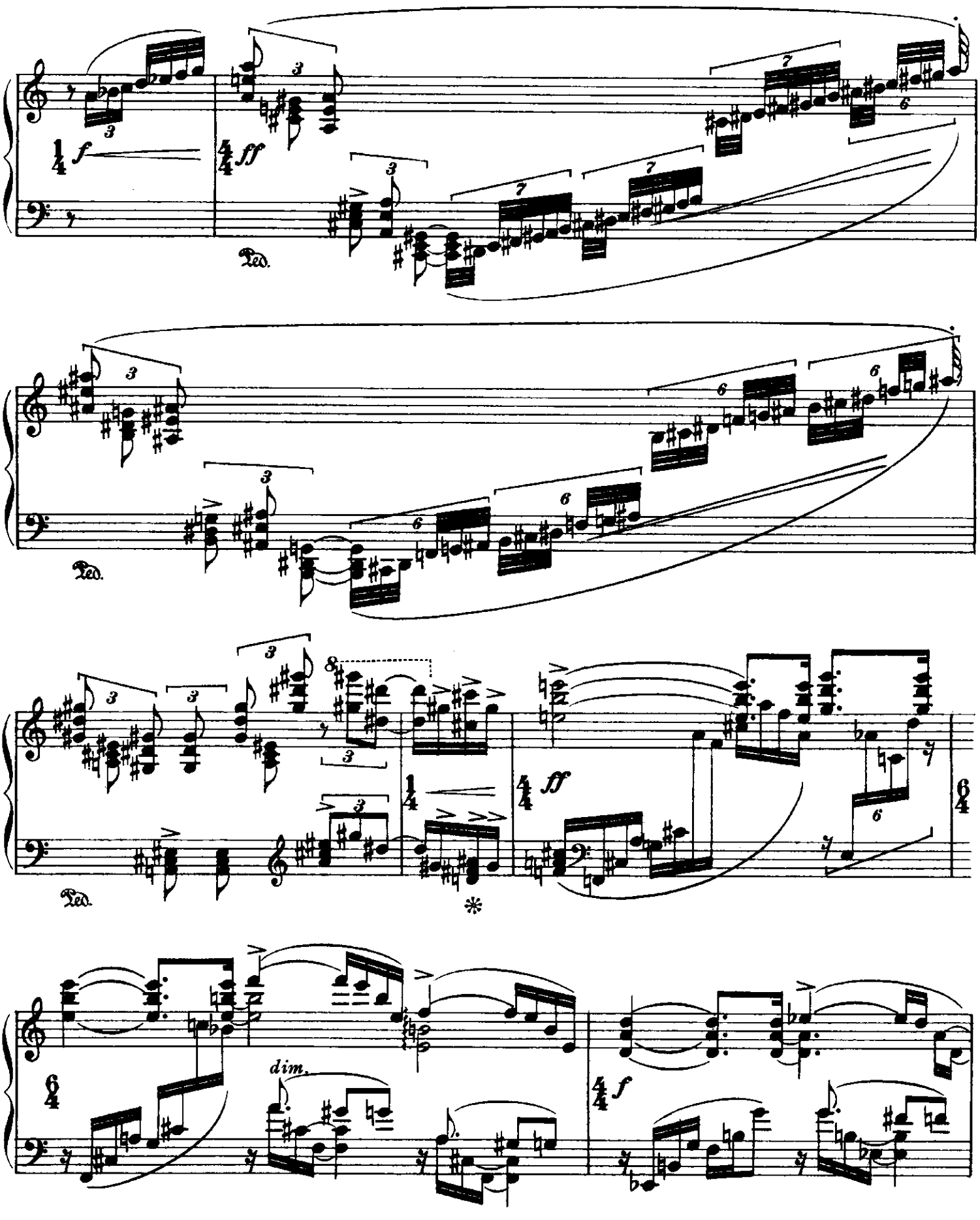

poco rubato
p cresc.
dim.
a tempo
p
cresc.
mf
cresc.
poco slargando
a tempo
f espress.
mf
cresc.

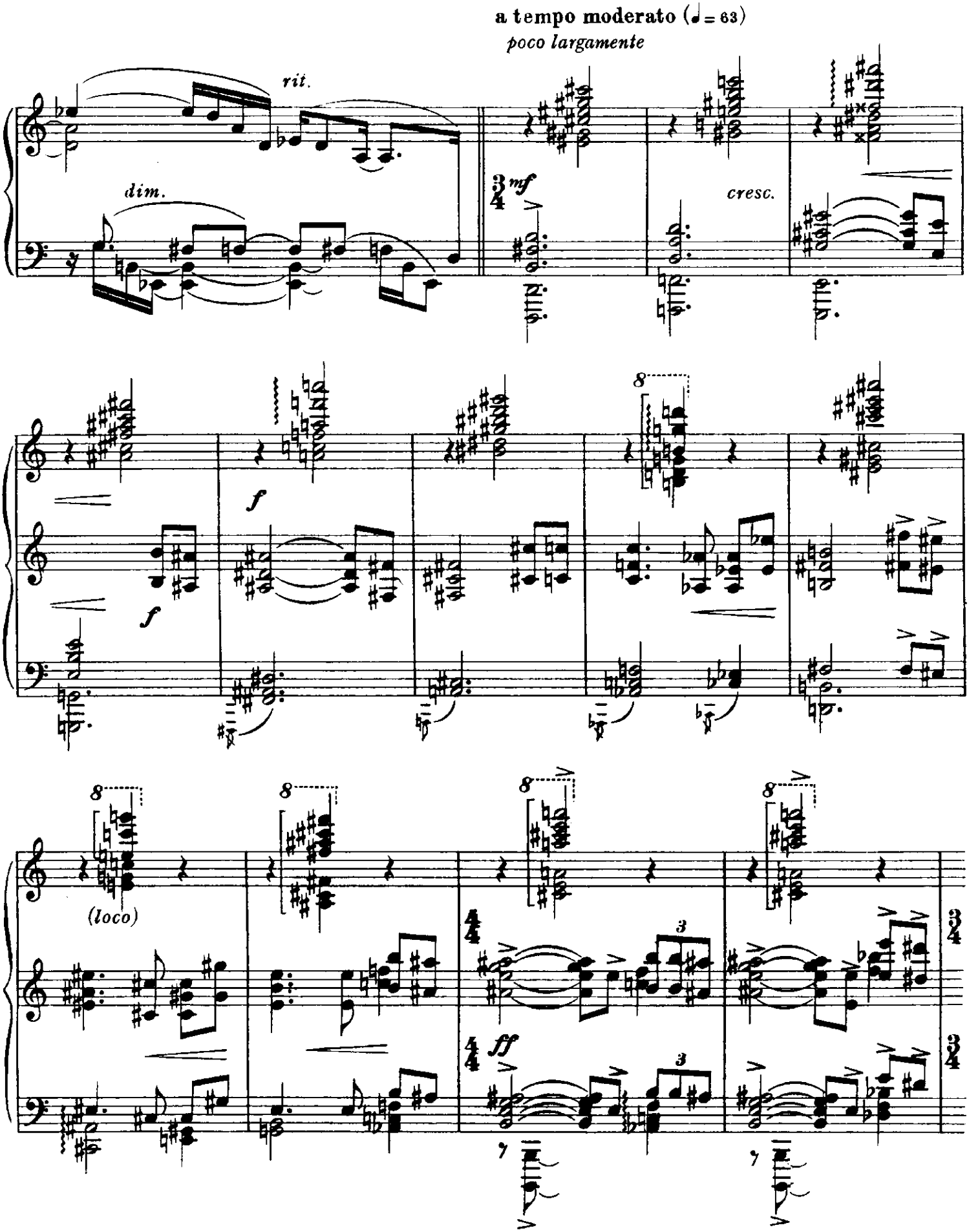

f energico
ff appass.
poco largamente
poco a poco strepitoso
a Tempo risoluto
mf
pp marcato

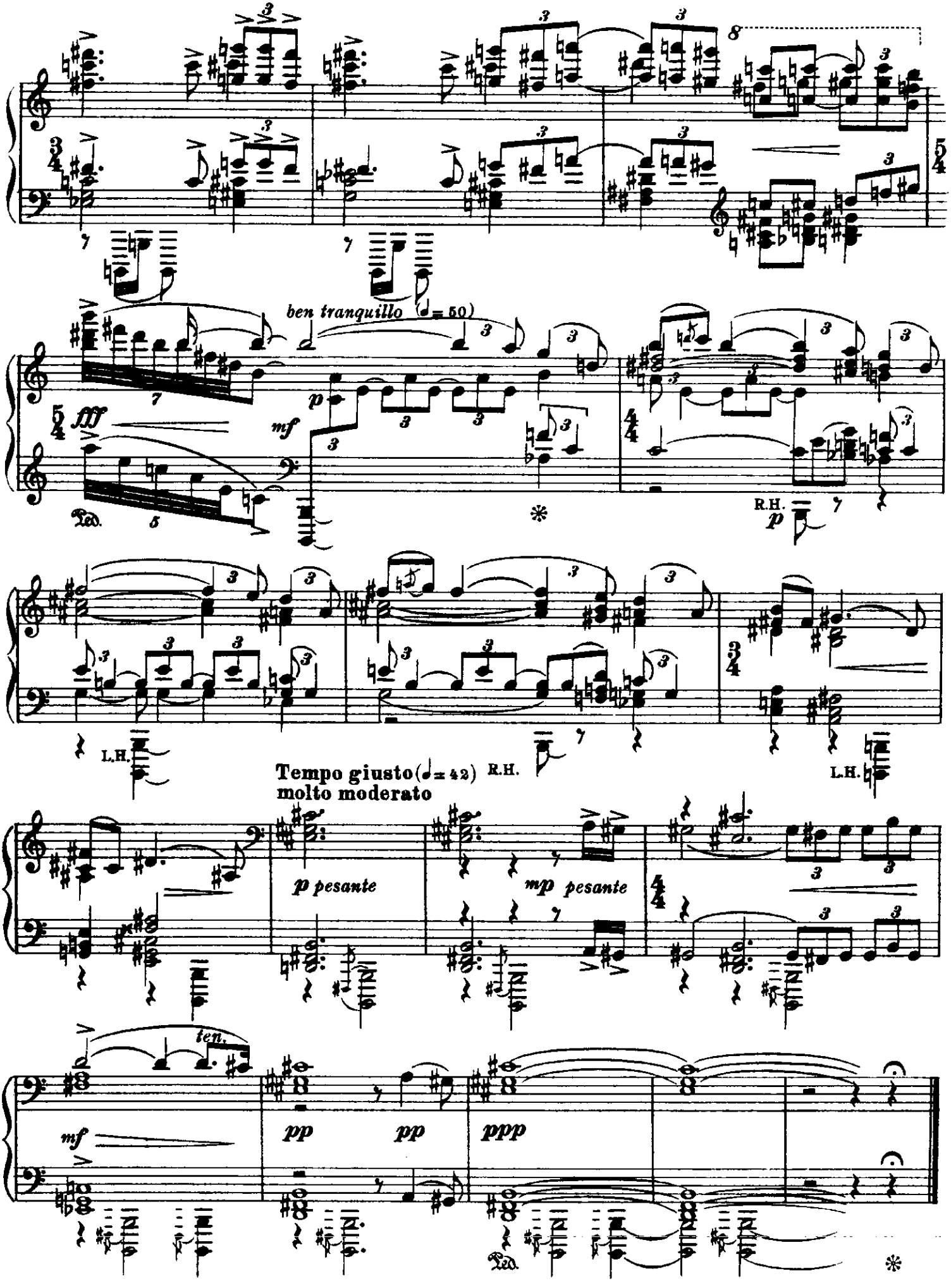

cresc.
mf
cresc.
f


Allarg.
a tempo
ff
risoluto
ff con forza
Ped.


rinf.
Ped.
Allegro energico


f
ff
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
ff
*
dim.
f


a tempo moderato (♩ = 63)
poco largamente
rit.
dim.
mf
cresc.
f
f
8
(loco)
ff
3


ben tranquillo (♩= 50)
Tempo giusto (♩= 42)
molto moderato
p pesante
mp pesante
ten.
pp
pp
ppp
R.H.
L.H.
Ped.