Isaac ALBÉNIZ

El CORPUS en SEVILLA

FÊTE DIEU à SEVILLE

IBERIA book I N° 3

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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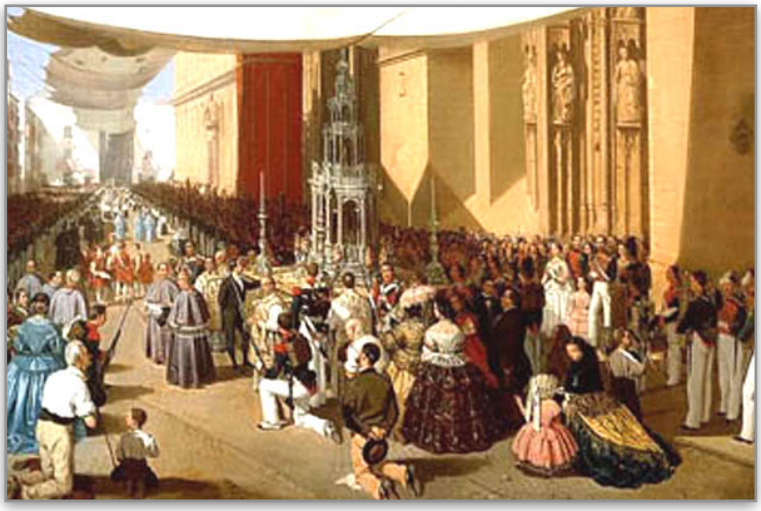
Isaac ALBÉNIZ 1860 - 1909

CORPUS EN SEVILLA

de la suite "IBERIA"

It is not often that we come across *ppppp* and *fffff* and to find them both in the same piece is unusual, to say the least. Most traditional composers would have been content with a more modest range of dynamics: but Albeniz is certainly not a "traditional" composer and in his later years, was still writing very challenging and masterful music, inspired by the sounds of Spain, his homeland. He is described as an exuberant and generous individual and these pieces reflect his attitude towards practically the only solo instrument for which he wrote — the piano.



Iberia, a suite of twelve piano pieces, was created at the age of 45 and hitherto Albeniz had not produced any work that could be considered outstanding [1]. Just a few years before his death in 1909, he composed his swan-song, these "impressions" of Spain. The longest piece of the suite, *El Corpus en Sevilla* or *Fête-dieu à Seville*, was highly esteemed by Debussy and Messiaen and here we can enjoy genuinely challenging, original and inspired piano music. With *Iberia*, Albéniz dragged Spanish music into the twentieth-century. It is orchestral in scale and has been successfully orchestrated.

In Andalusian streets, the Spanish are capable of making one hell of a din and their national festival *Corpus Christi* [2] is an excellent example. Here Albeniz captures the noise of the people, the procession, the flamenco, the music, the songs, the bells and the heady atmosphere with remarkable perception and skill, superimposing the many sounds to be heard on this very special day. From the very first arresting drum beats, *La Tarara* [3] is played as a staccato march, soon to become the accompaniment to a trumpeted *saeta* [4]. The central section is a reflective song with flamenco guitar while the Giralda bells *à la Debussy* brings the work to an effective end.

When I first heard Alicia De Larrocha perform piano music by 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* myself I noticed that the music (I used the French edition *Salabert*) was often difficult to study: there were inaccuracies, many accidentals and too many instructions, coupled with sub-standard engraving ; so I decided to re-edit the music, boldly inserting changes of key signature and eliminating some of the markings in excess.

I plead guilty to not having religiously copied every dot, accent, sign, pedal marking and many others. Albeniz was rather over zealous in having often embellished many, sometimes conflicting, instructions (i.e. *pppp mais très sonore*) 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. At first I was going to eliminate the quintuple *f* and *p*, but then thought they were rather fun and OTT. While the titles are mostly in Spanish, practically all the instructions are in French, which is not surprising as he lived for much of his life as an expat in France.

In addition to some suggested fingerings, the appendix contains durations, comments, afterthoughts and a vocabulary. Redistribution between the hands comes under close scrutiny to make certain passages easier or more persuasive. It is possible, even desirable, to use the sostenuto pedal

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1 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".

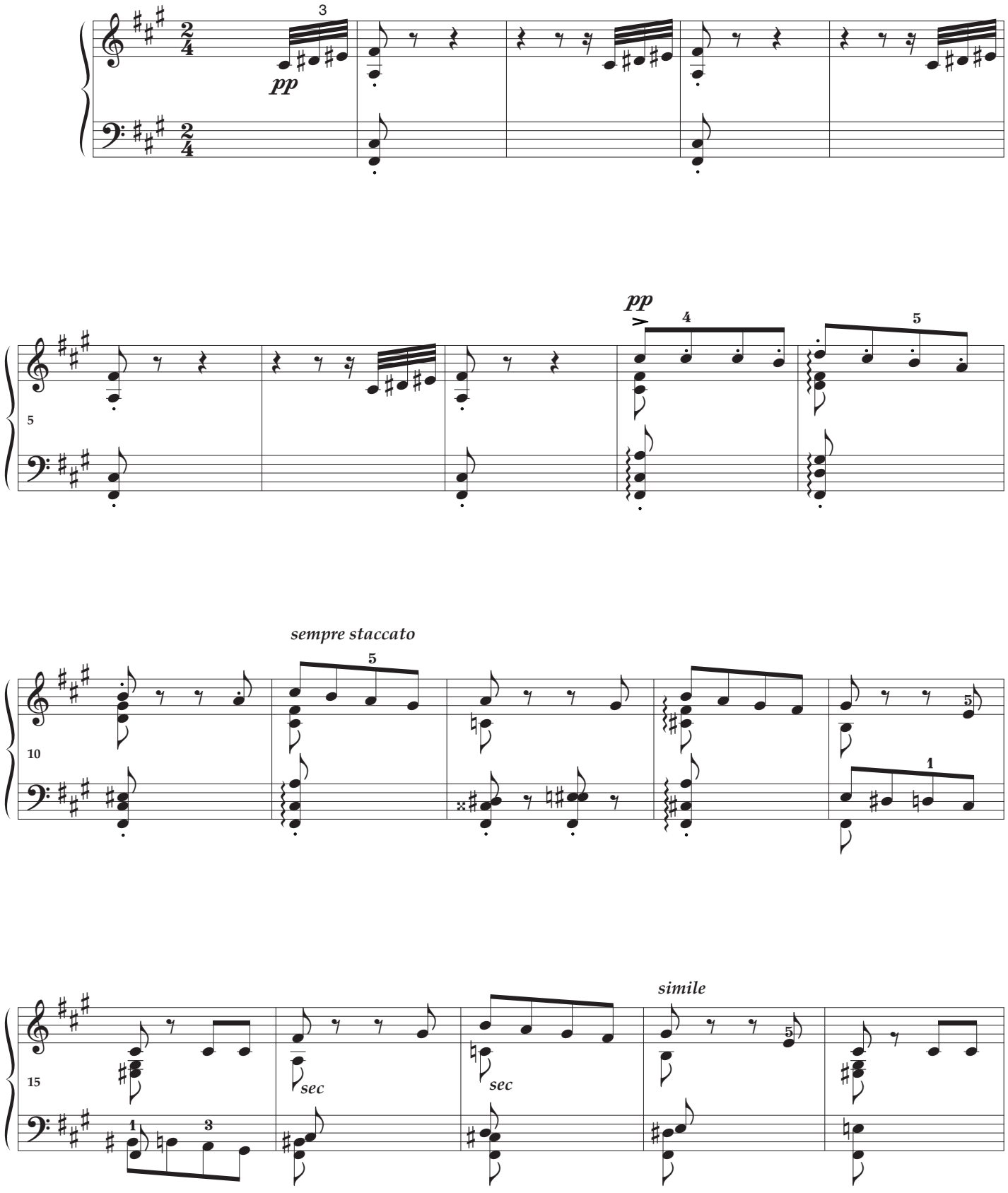
2 Corpus Christi in Seville is one of the most important days of the year dating from the early fifteenth century. The procession, accompanied by marching bands, bears a statue of the Virgin, with dances and tarascas (monsters), to the tolling of the Giralda (Seville Cathedral) bells.

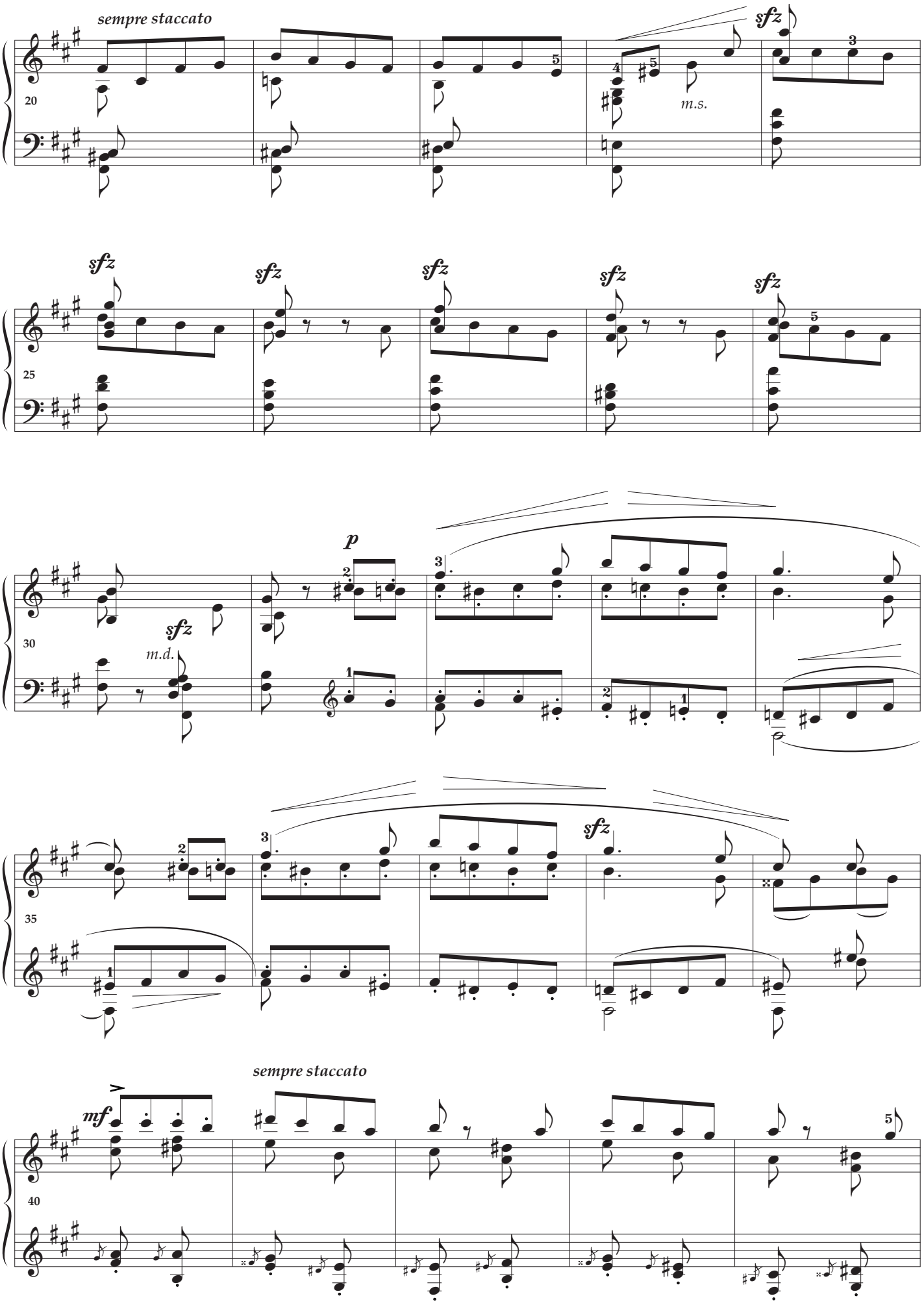
3 The *tarara* was originally a children's song and dance eventually becoming a popular song. It is possibly of Sephardic origin.

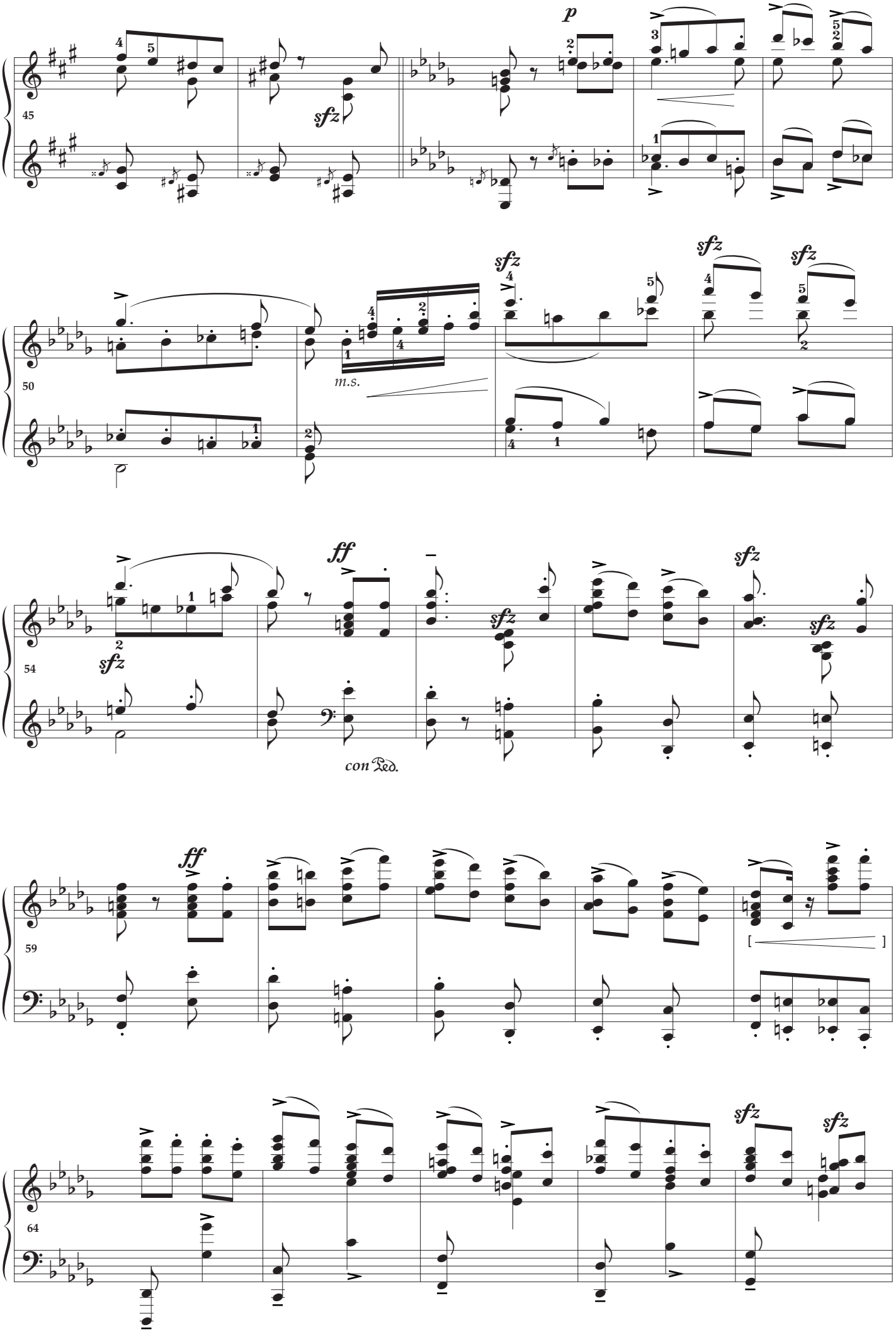
4 A religious Andalusian penitent lament.

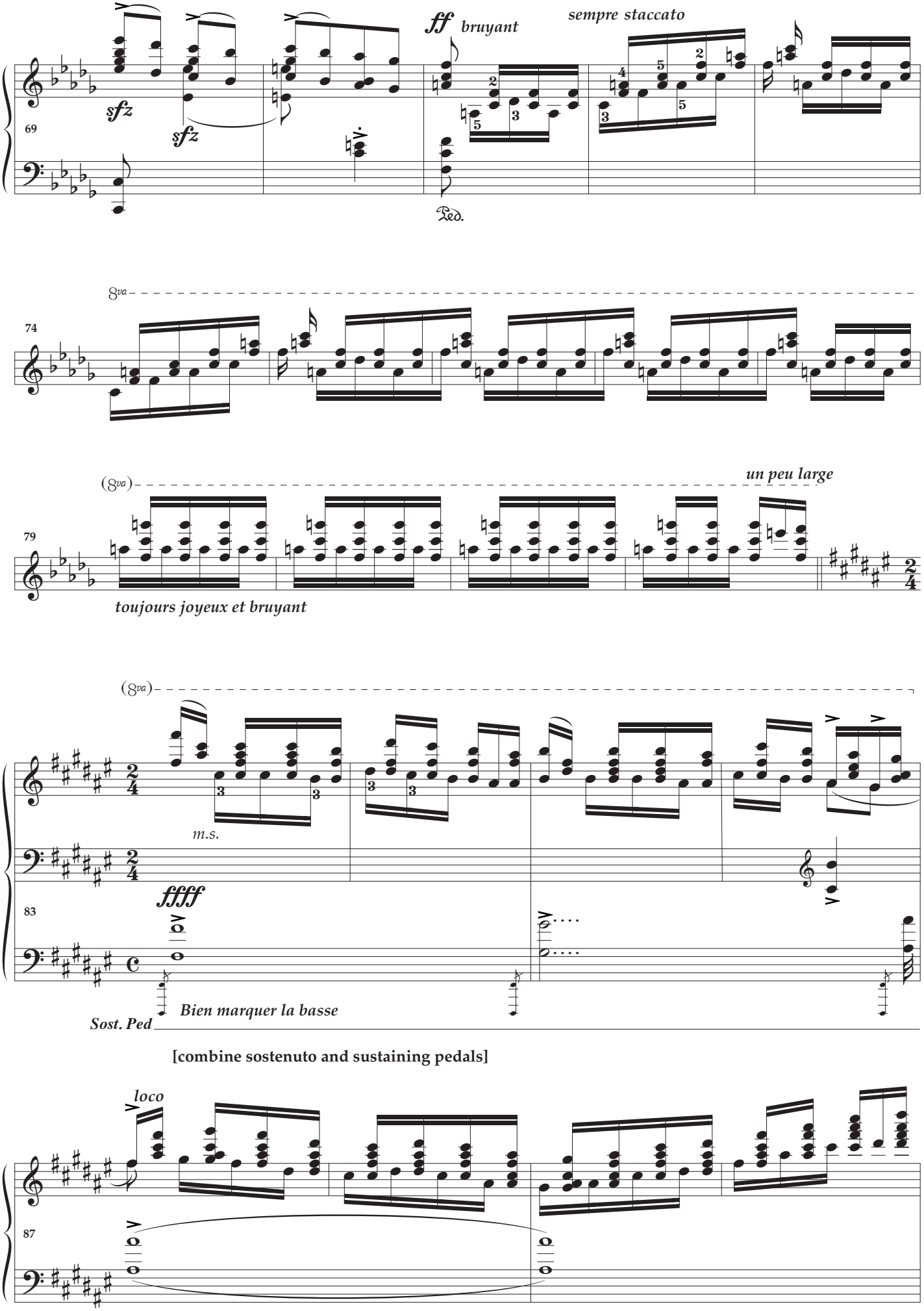
FÊTE DIEU À SÉVILLE
EL CORPUS EN SEVILLA

Allegro gracioso [♩= 96]

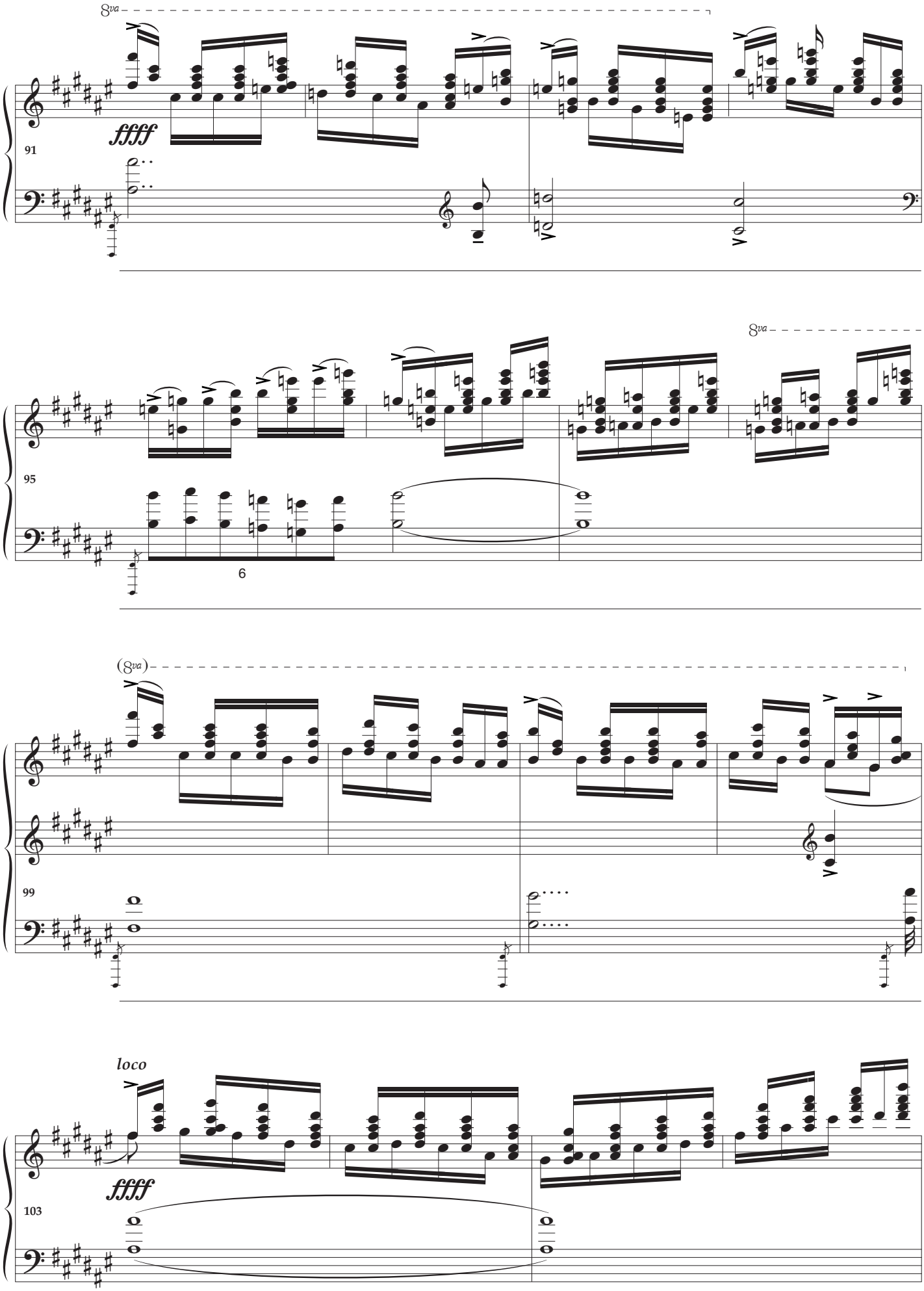


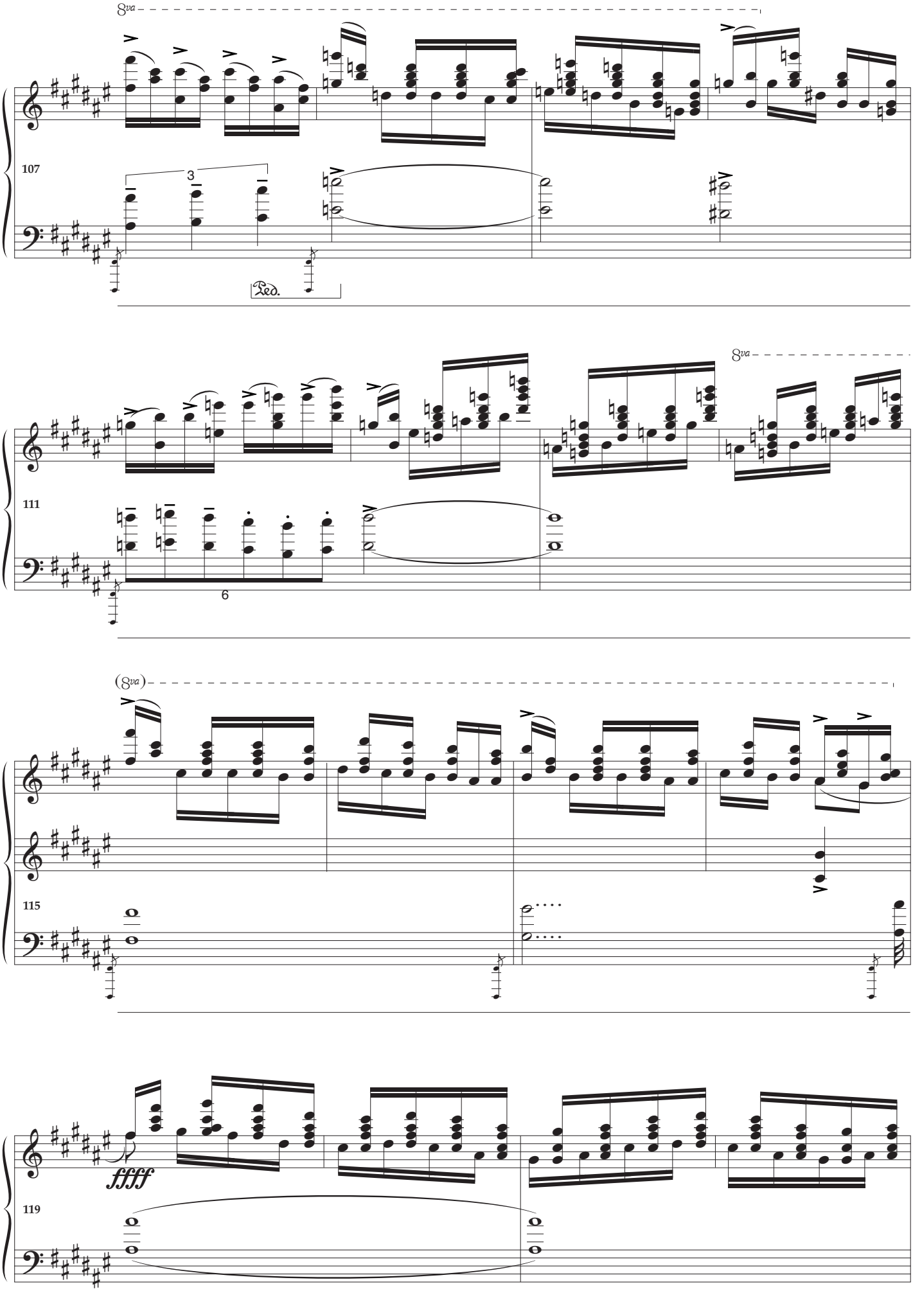

sempre staccato
sfz
m.s.
20
sfz
25
p
m.d.
30
35
sempre staccato
mf
40

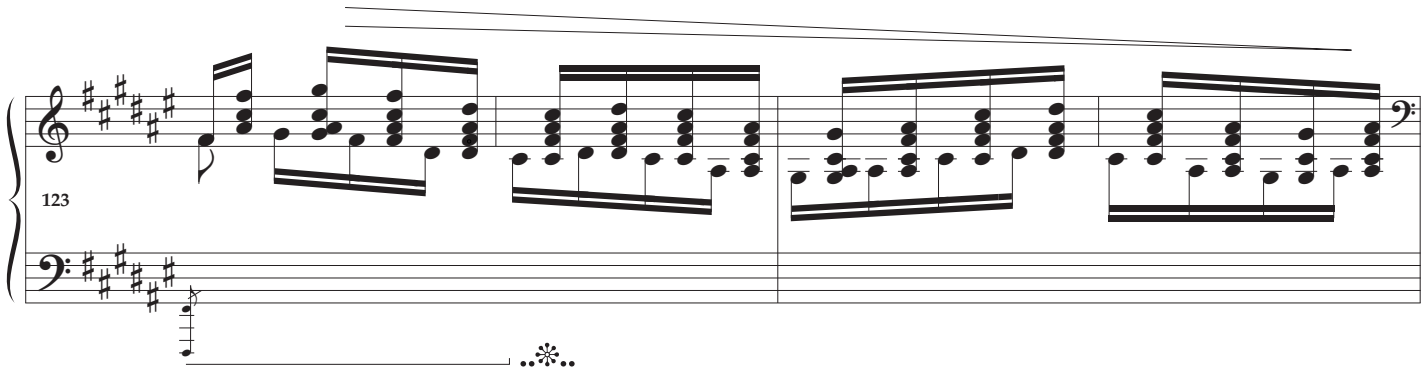

45
p
sfz
50
m.s.
sfz
54
ff
sfz
con Ped.
59
ff
64
sfz

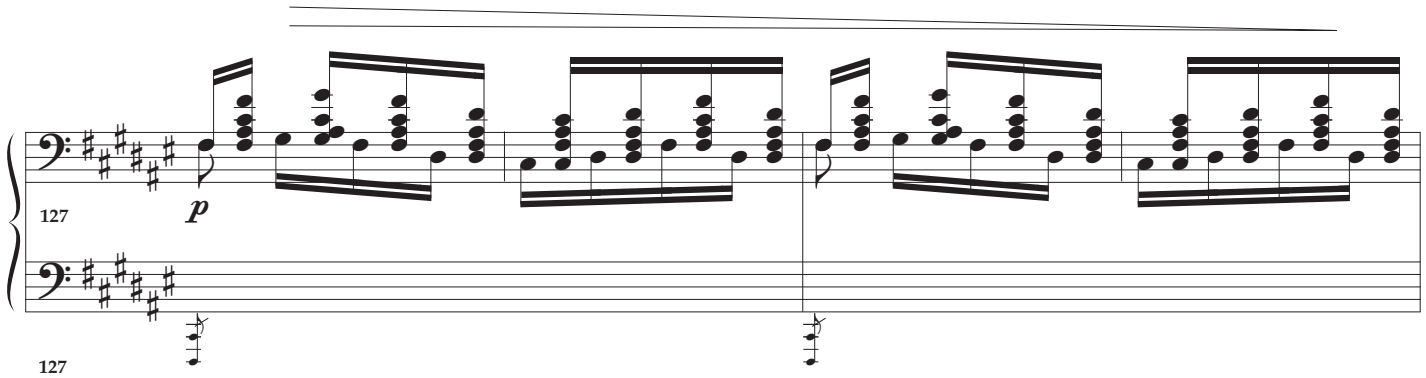


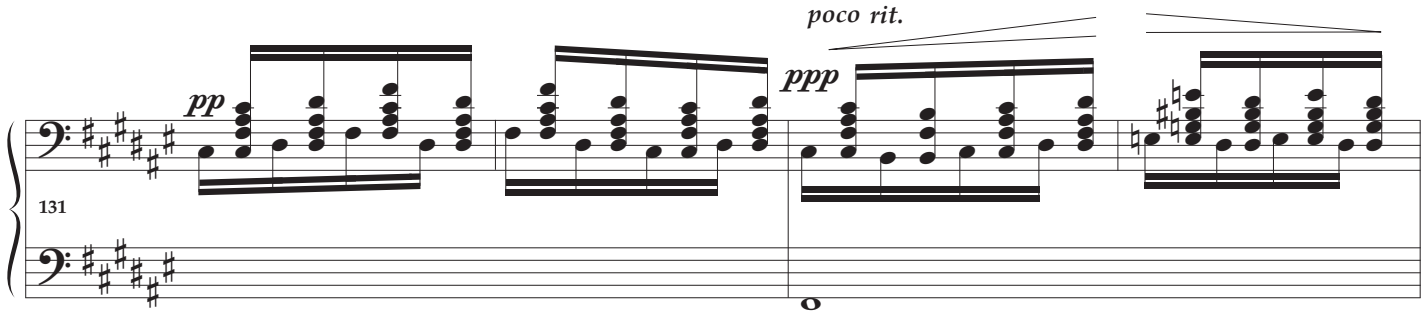
[combine sostenuto and sustaining pedals]


8va
ffff
91
95
6
8va
(8va)
99
loco
ffff
103


8va
107
3
Ped.
8va
111
6
(8va)
115
ffff
119

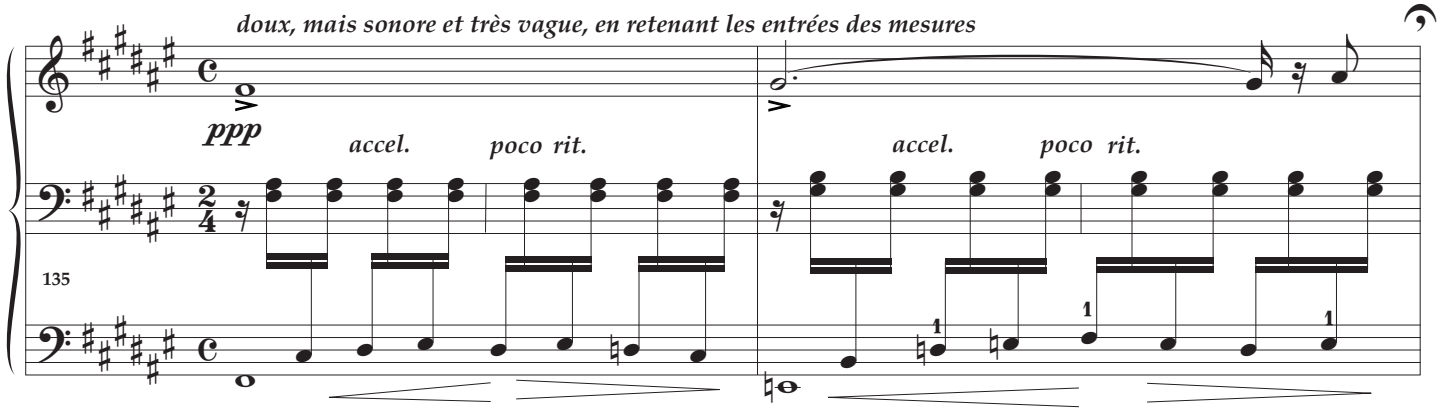




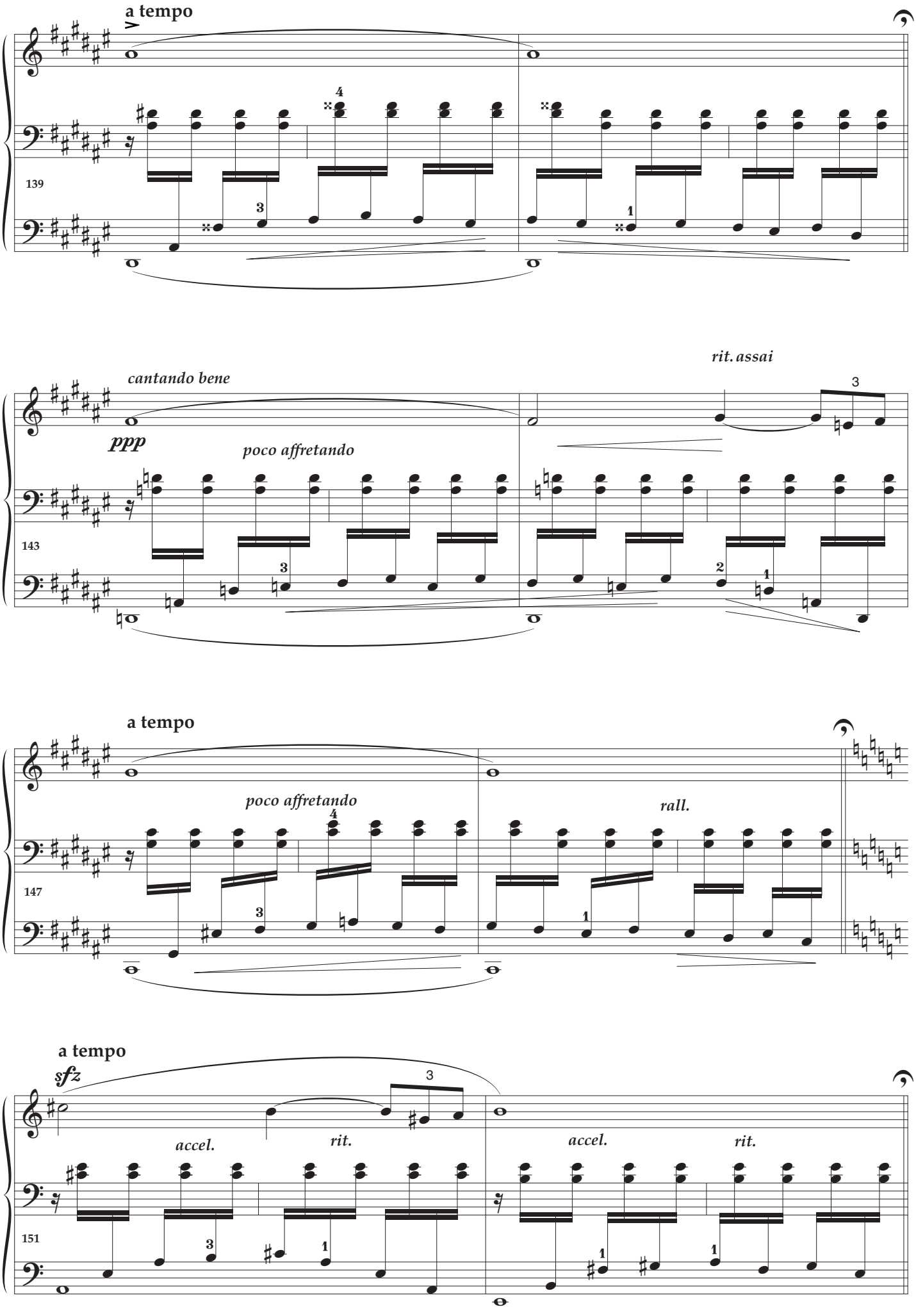


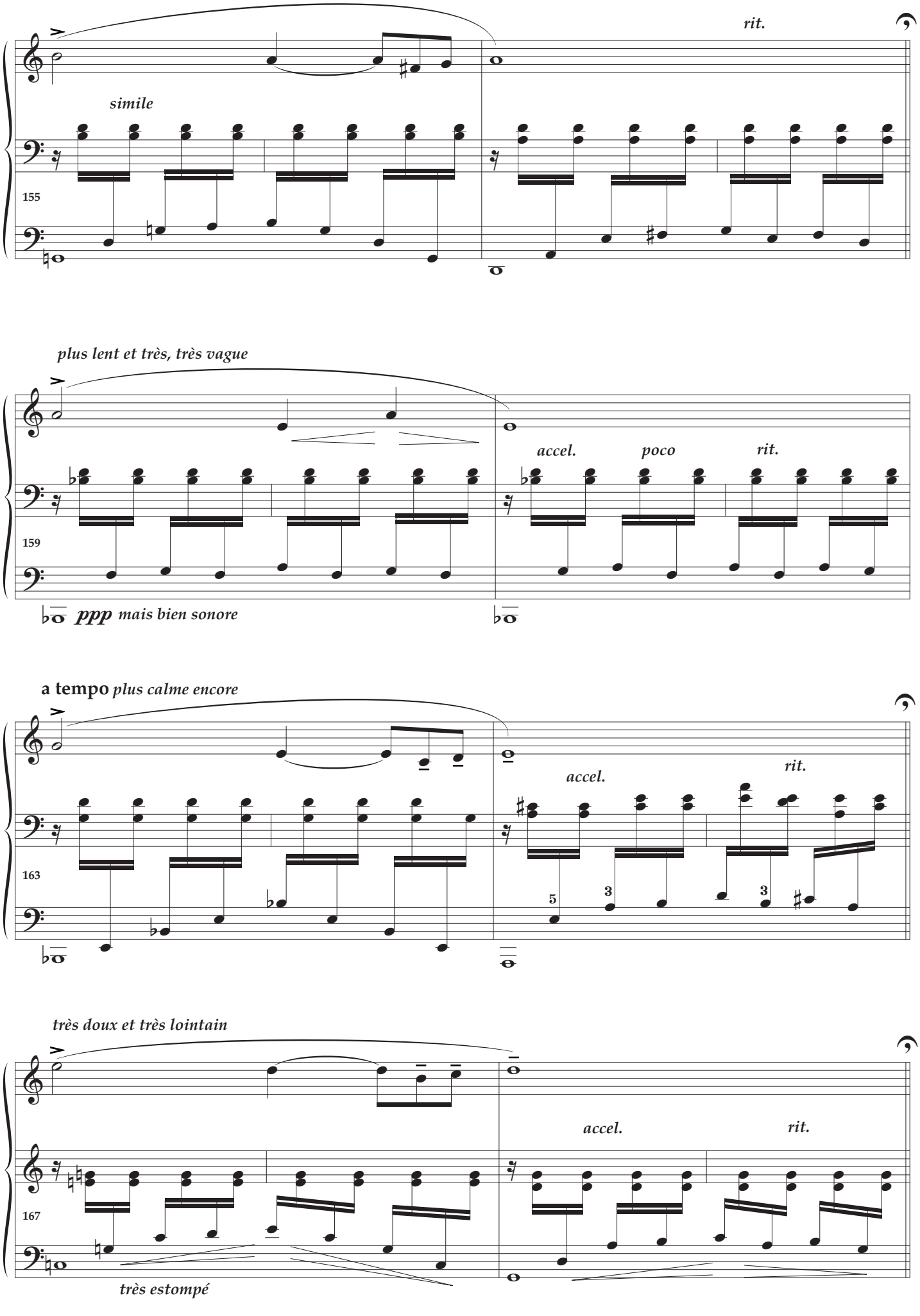
a tempo *un peu plus calme*

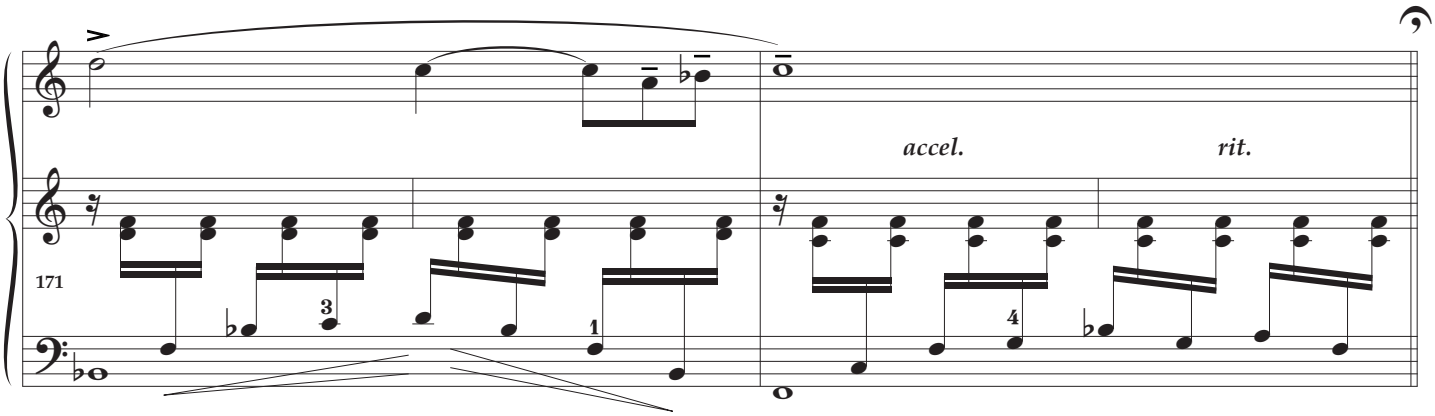
doux, mais sonore et très vague, en retenant les entrées des mesures



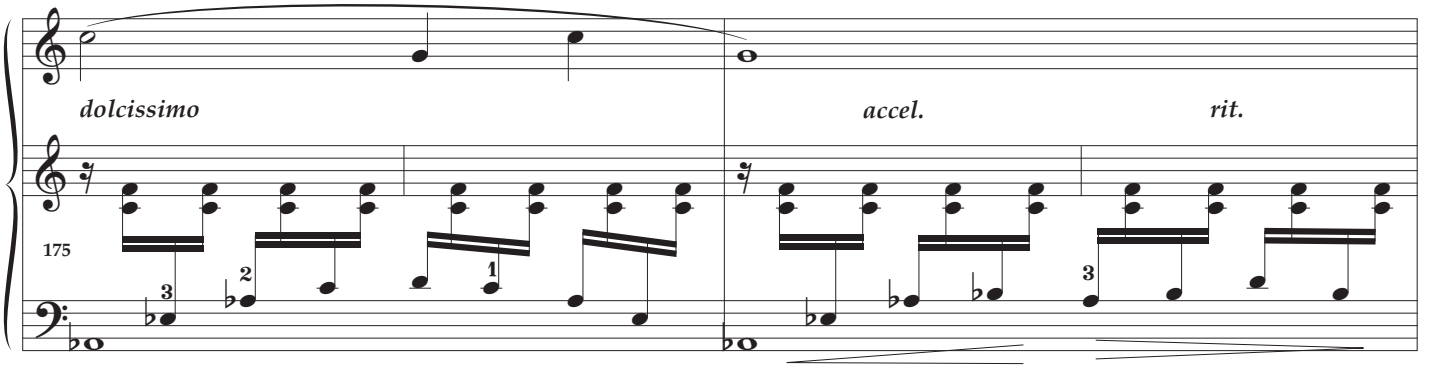
Fermatas with a comma indicate that a hiatus be taken between phrases

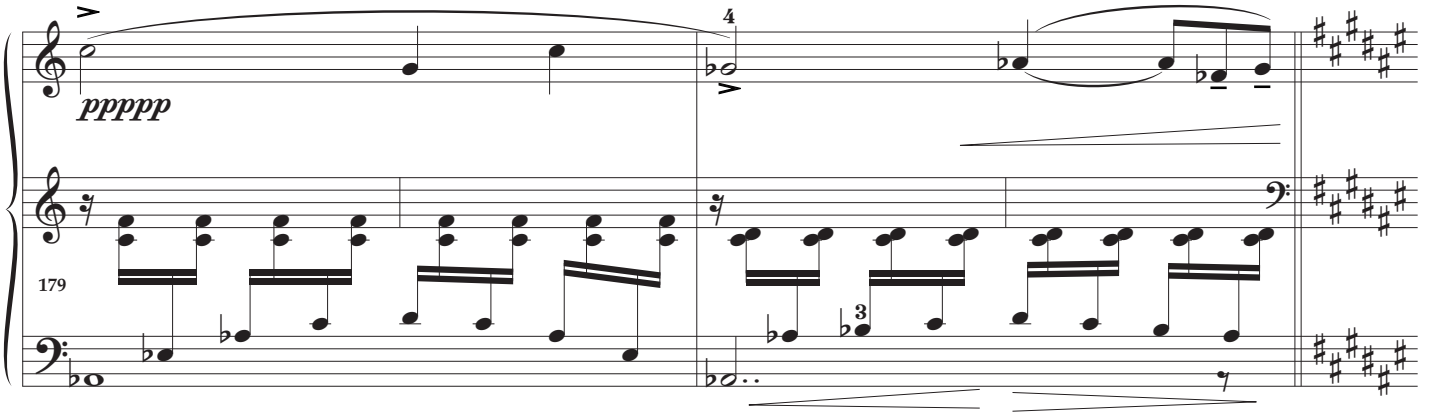

a tempo
139
cantando bene
ppp
poco affretando
rit. assai
143
a tempo
poco affretando
rall.
147
a tempo
sfz
accel.
rit.
accel.
rit.
151

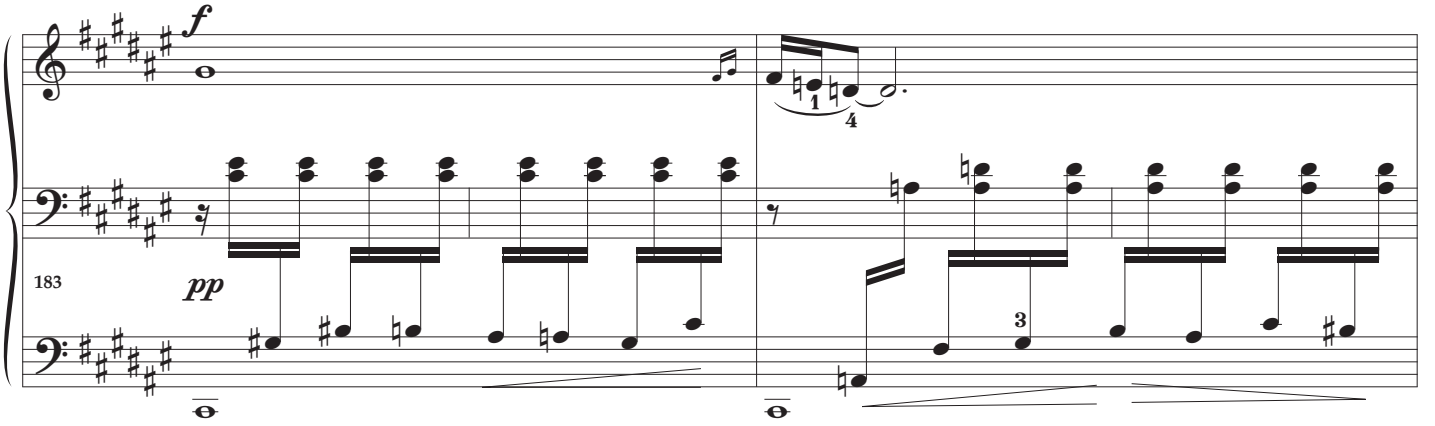

rit.
simile
155
plus lent et très, très vague
accel.
poco
rit.
159
ppp mais bien sonore
a tempo plus calme encore
accel.
rit.
163
5
3
3
très doux et très lointain
accel.
rit.
167
très estompé

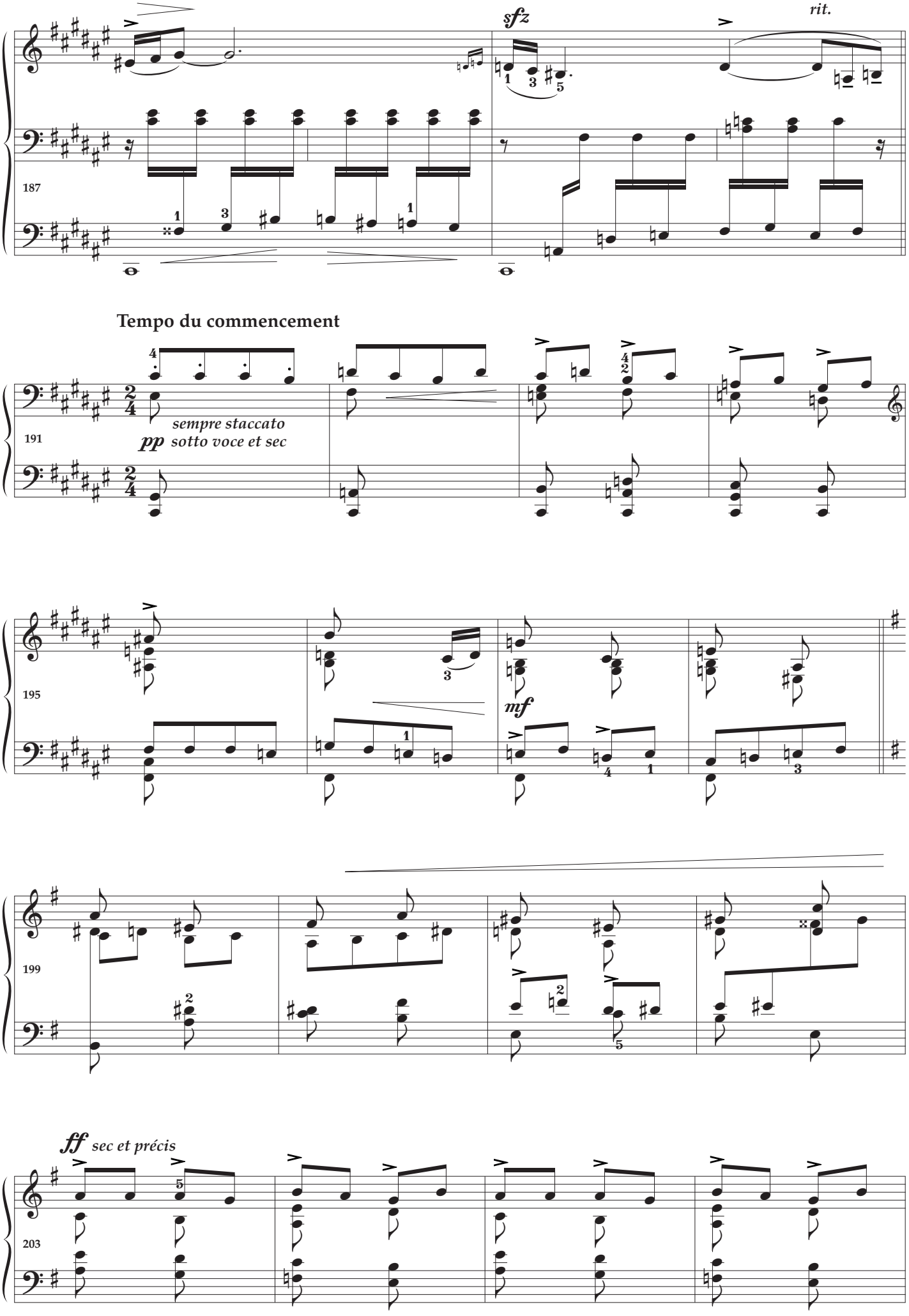


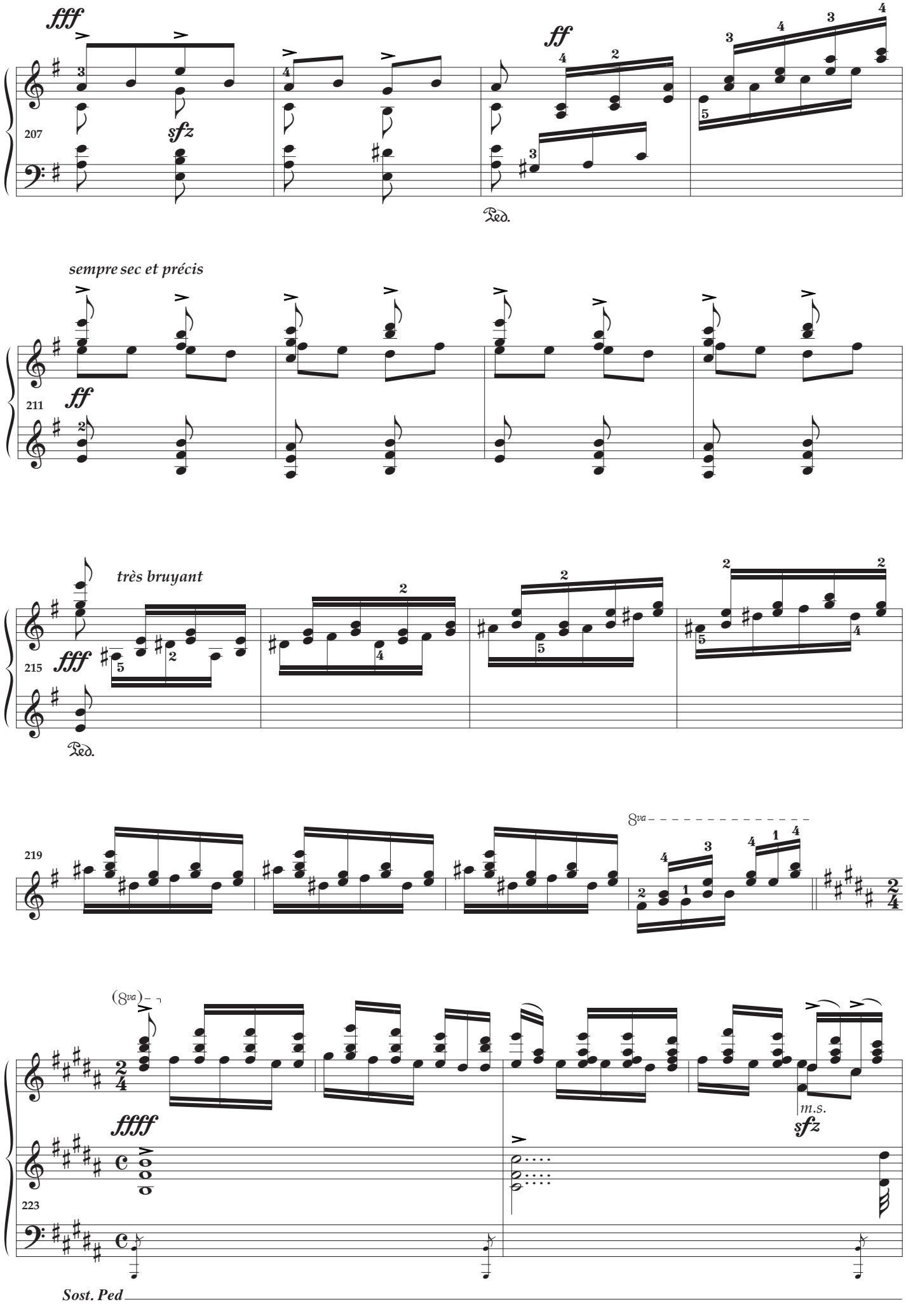
absolument estompé - très, très lointain

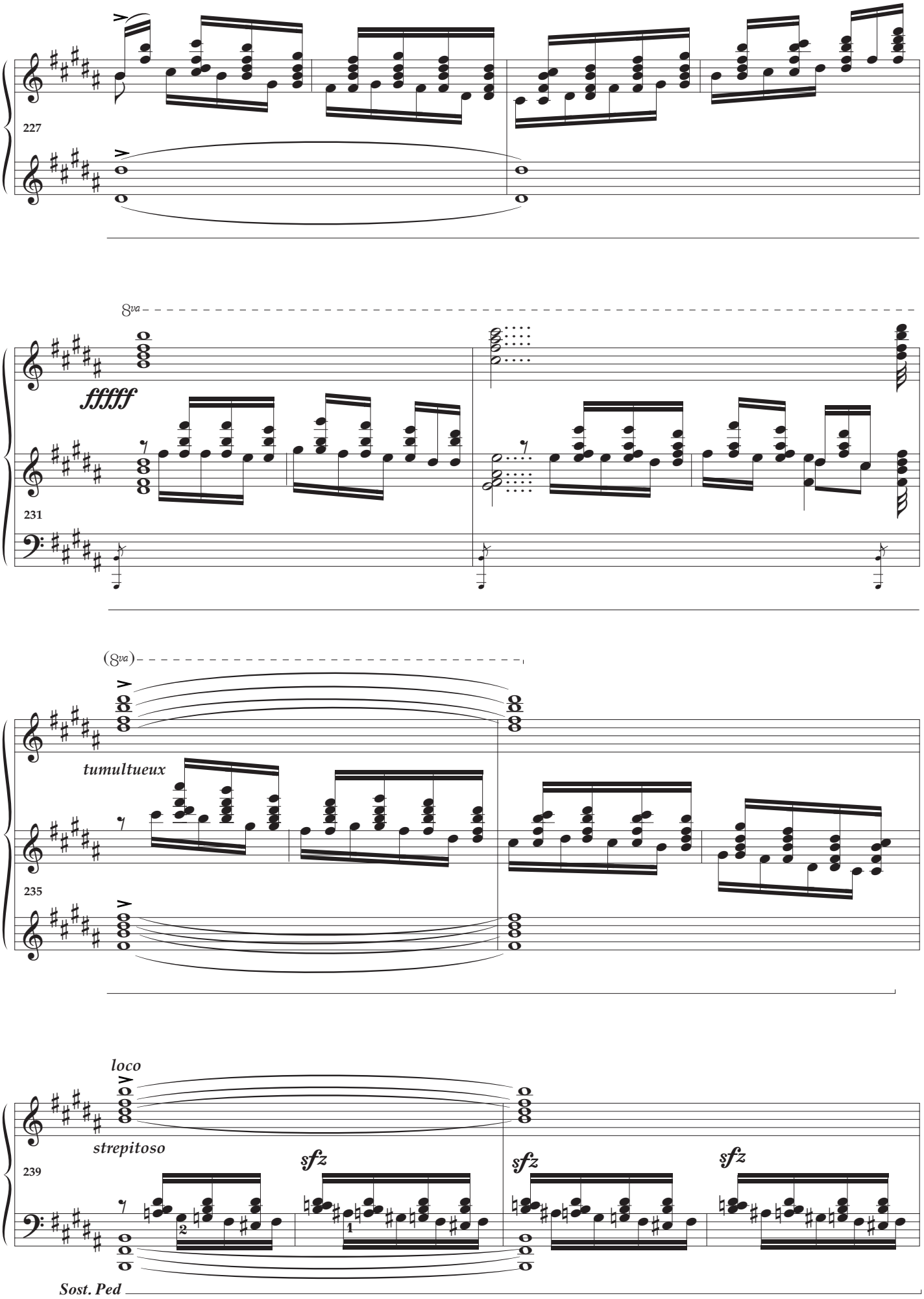


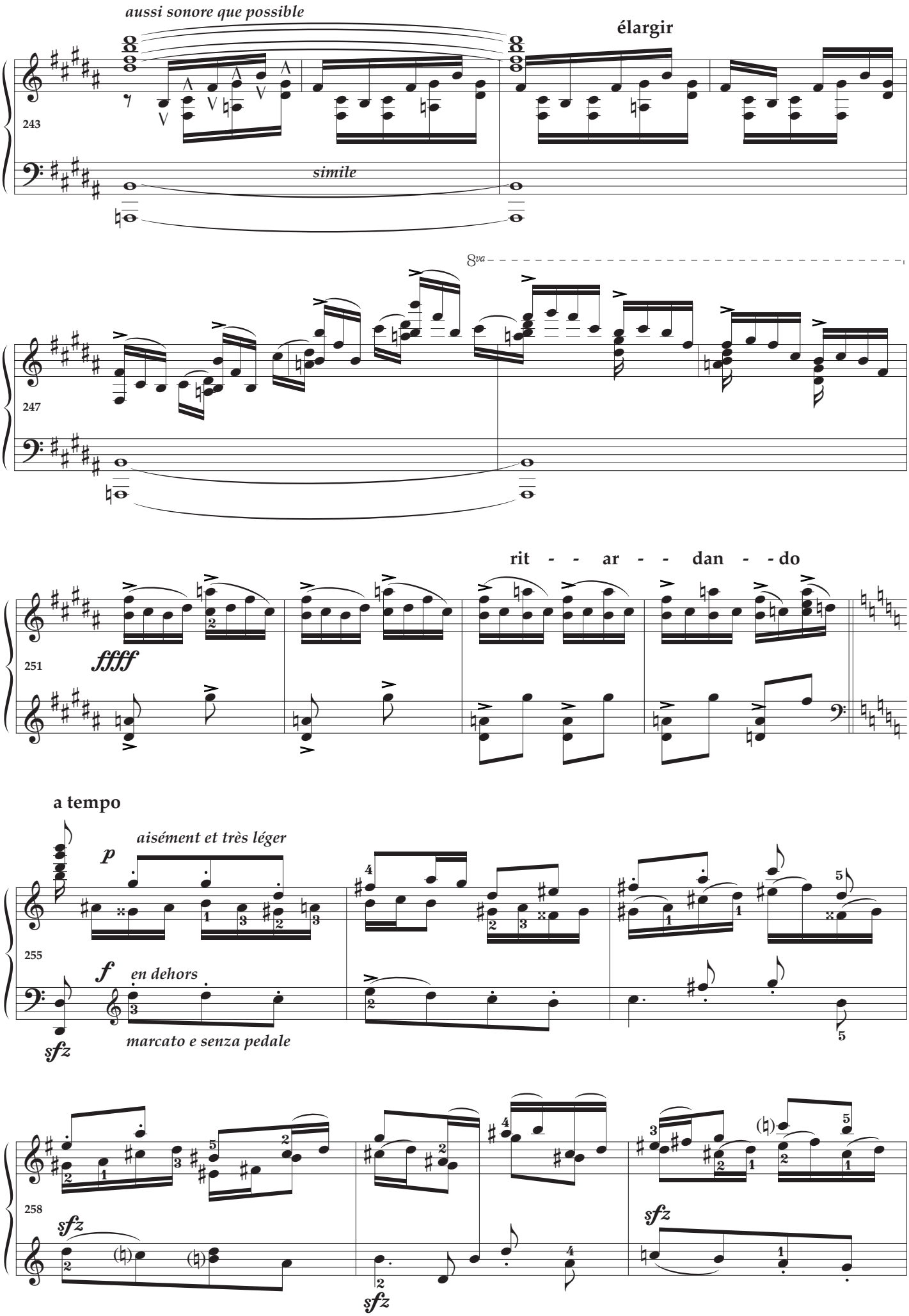





sfz
rit.
187
Tempo du commencement
191
sempre staccato
pp sotto voce et sec
195
mf
199
ff sec et précis
203


fff
sfz
ff
Ped.
sempre sec et précis
ff
très bruyant
fff
Ped.
8va
(8va)
ffff
m.s.
sfz
Sost. Ped


227
8va
fffff
231
(8va)
tumultueux
235
loco
strepitoso
239
sfz
sfz
sfz
Sost. Ped


aussi sonore que possible
élargir
243
simile
8va
247
rit - - ar - - dan - - do
251
ffff
a tempo
255
p
aisément et très léger
f
en dehors
sfz
marcato e senza pedale
258
sfz
sfz
sfz

la partie supérieure en dehors

261

264

sfz *f*

267

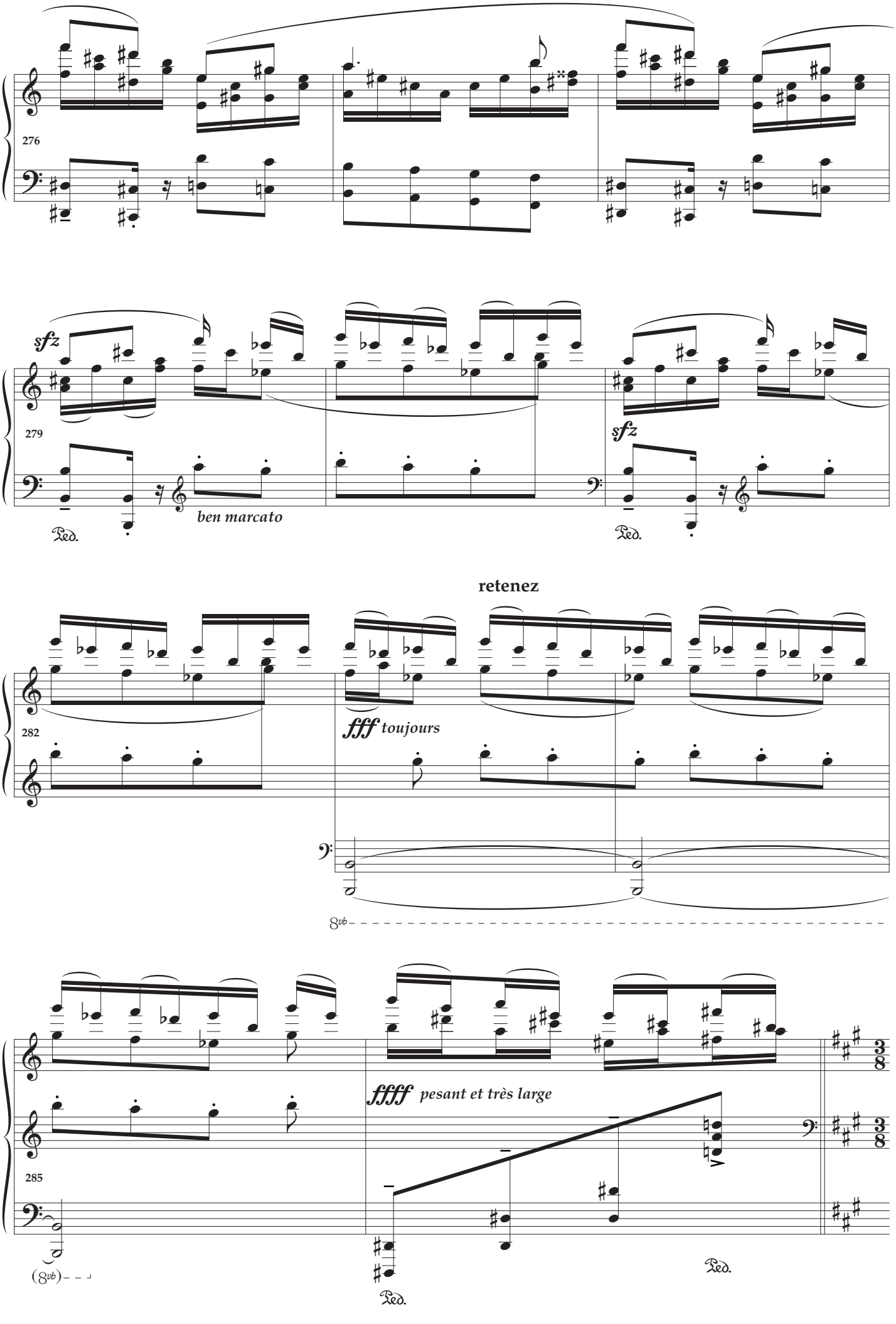
toujours marqué

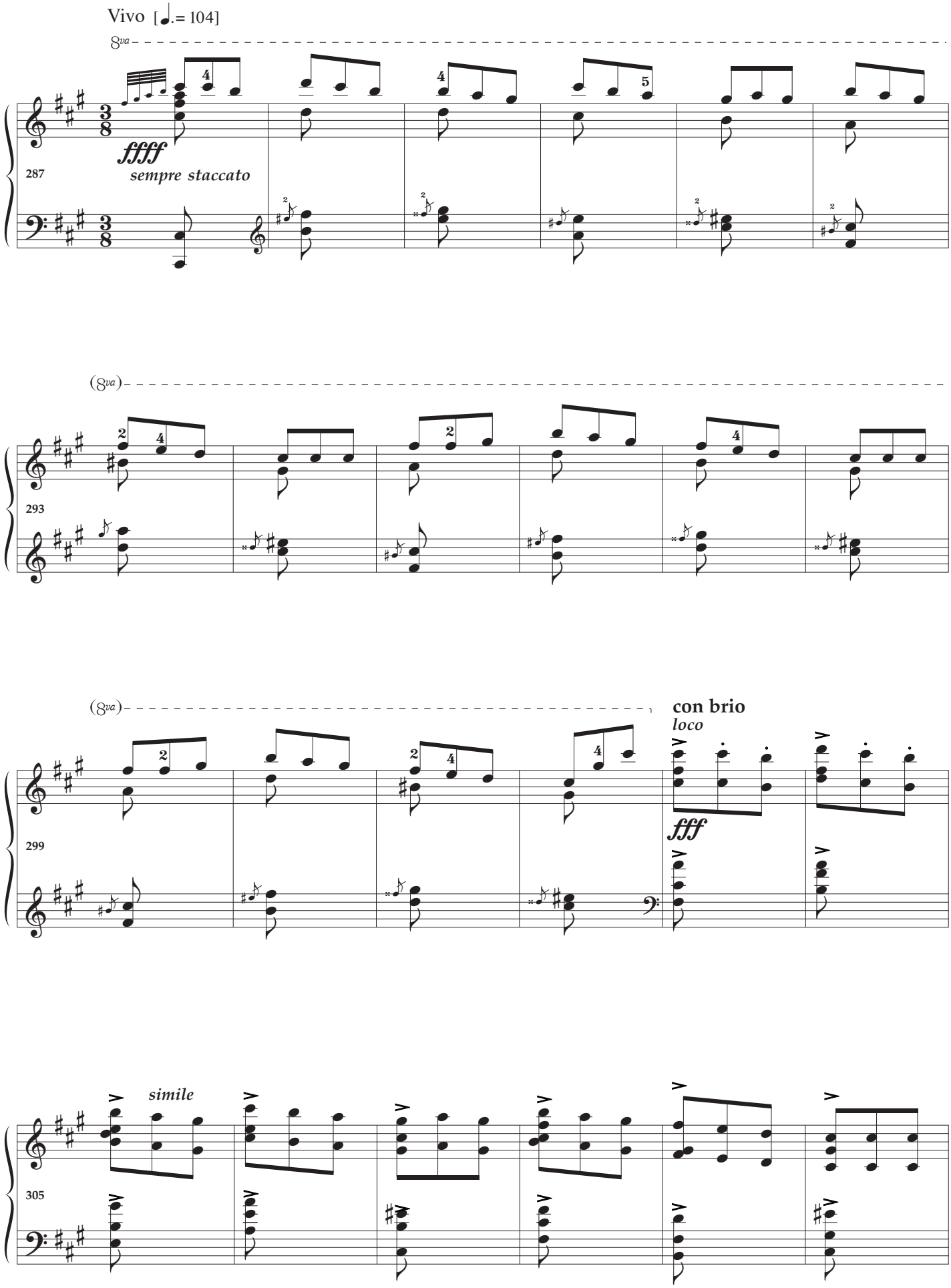
270

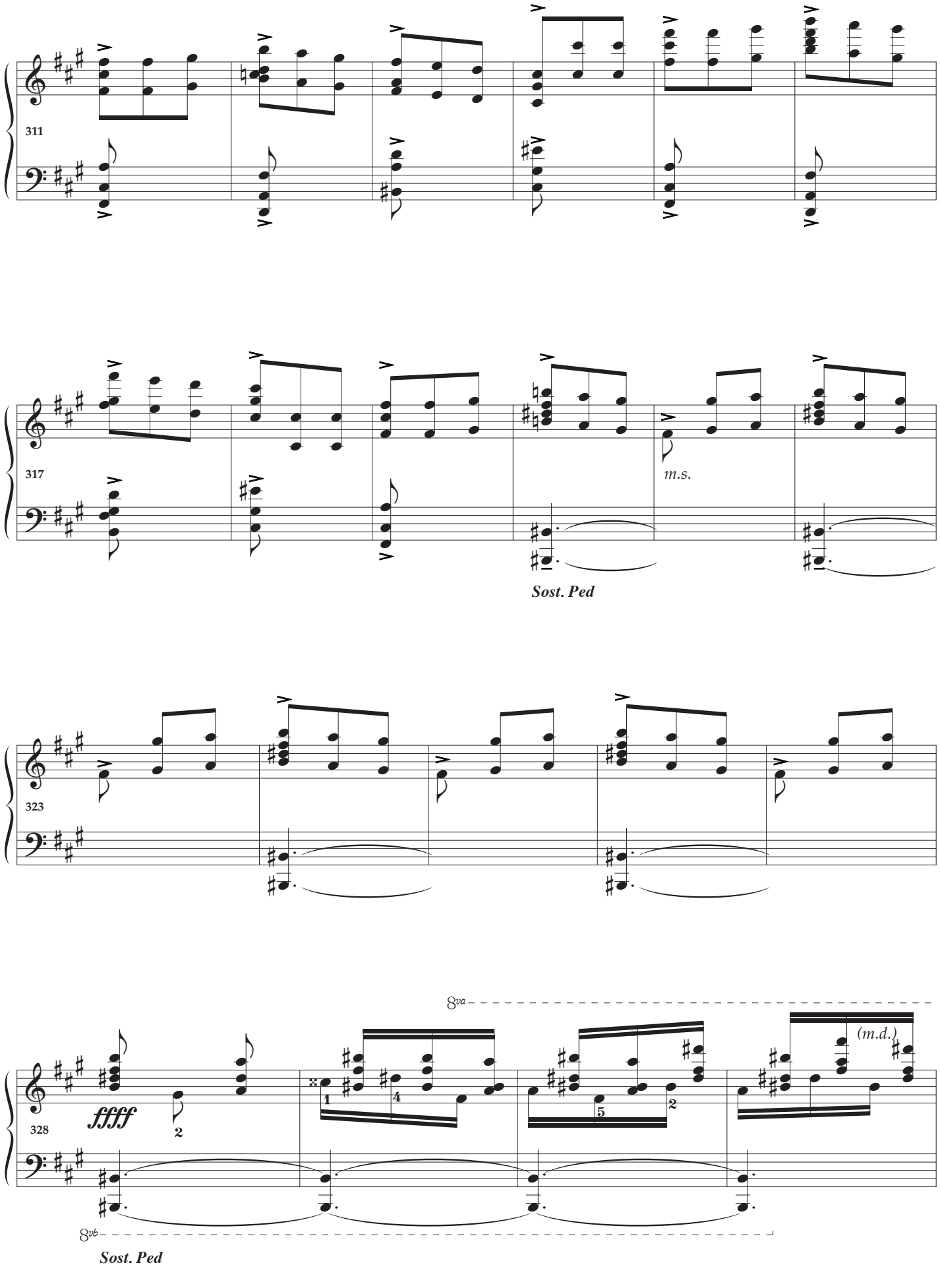
f *ff* *sfz*

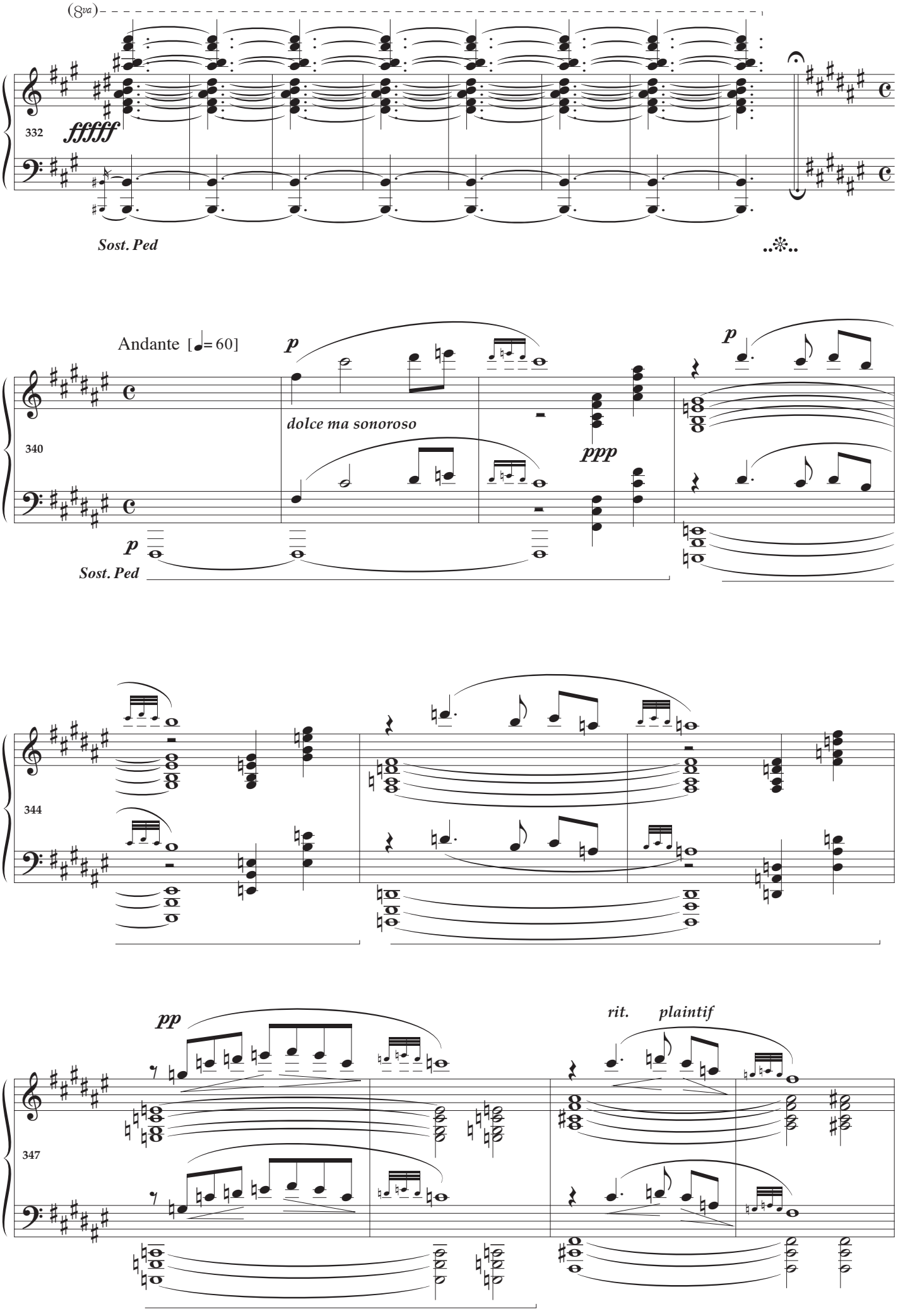
273

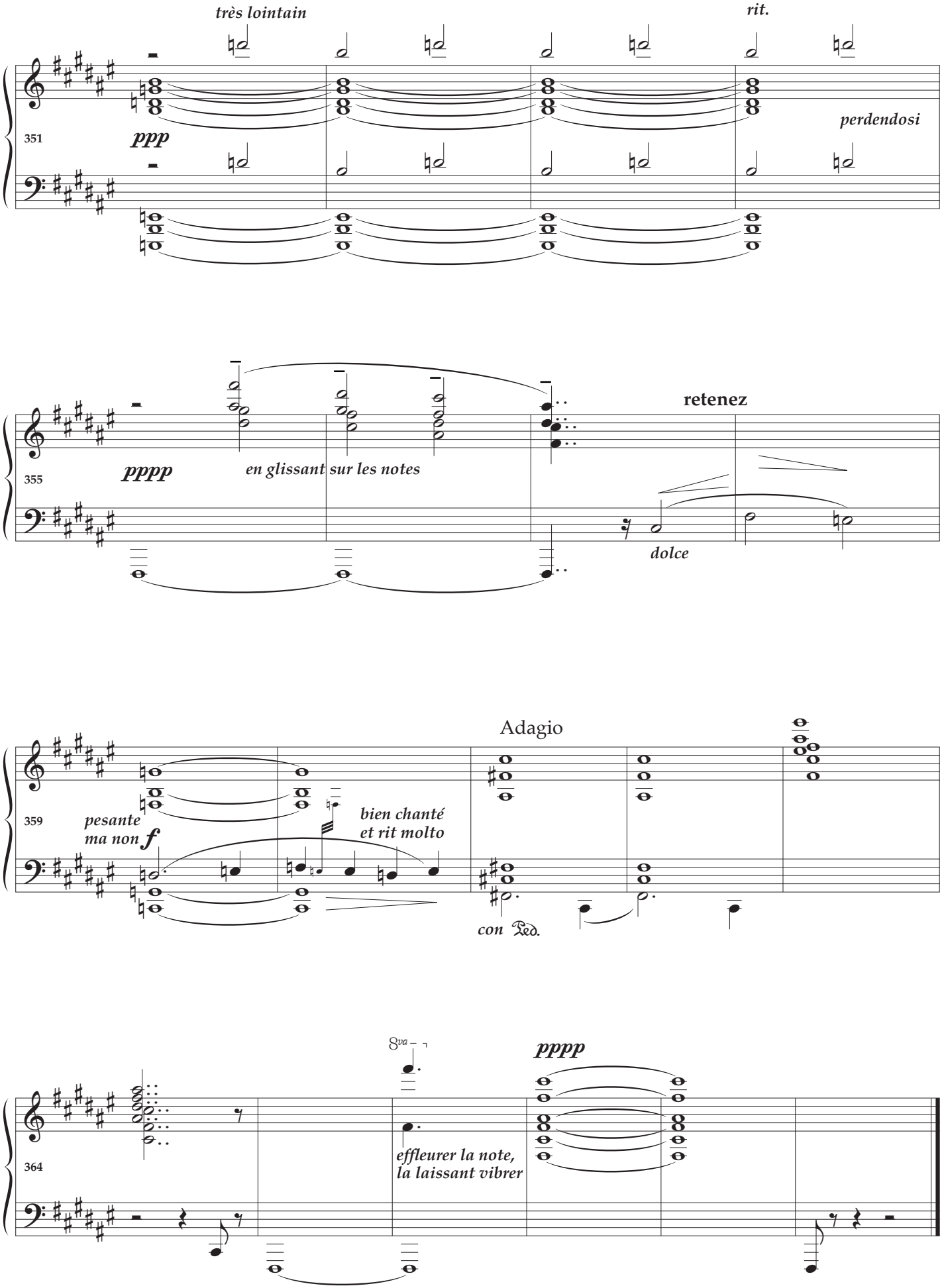
fff


276
sfz
279
ben marcato
Ped.
sfz
Ped.
retenez
282
fff toujours
8vb
285
ffff pesant et très large
(8vb)
Ped.
Ped.


Vivo [♩.= 104]
8va
287
ffff
sempre staccato
(8va)
293
(8va)
299
con brio
loco
fff
simile
305


311
317
m.s.
Sost. Ped
323
328
ffff
8va
(m.d.)
8vb
Sost. Ped


(8va)
332
fffff
Sost. Ped
Andante [♩= 60]
p
dolce ma sonoroso
ppp
p
340
p
Sost. Ped
344
pp
rit.
plaintif
347


très lointain
rit.
351
ppp
perdendosi
355
pppp
en glissant sur les notes
retenez
dolce
Adagio
359
pesante
ma non f
bien chanté
et rit molto
con Ped.
364
8va
pppp
effleurer la note,
la laissant vibrer

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Appendix

Durations, comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

- Albeniz gives no metronome speeds
- None of the sostenuto pedal suggestions are attributed to Albeniz. With practice it is possible to combine the sostenuto* and soft pedals with the left foot, judiciously coupled with the sustained pedal, producing wonderful impressionist orchestral sounds.

Duration: there are many recordings ranging from 7'15 to more than 10' !

- 47 - 82 written in B flat minor to eliminate accidentals
- 59 two chordal notes removed matching 55
- 64 bass octave added
- 99 bass acciaccatura misprint corrected (E sharp)
- 144 bass D natural not tied in the original
- 151 - 180 modulations written without key signature
- 182 there is a fermata here in the original, a possible misprint, removed here
- 199 - 222 written in E minor
- 223 - 254 written in B
- 238 final chord has a G sharp misprint, corrected here
- 255-286 modulations written without key signature
- 287 - 339 written in F sharp minor
- 271 bass B sharp misprint, corrected here
- 283, 286 bass transposed an octave lower

The sostenuto pedal was first shown in Paris at the Industrial Exposition of 1844. The idea was not immediately taken up by piano builders, but in 1874, is was perfected and patented by Steinway, soon to be fitted on all their grands and better uprights. One obvious commercial reason for not including the sostenuto pedal in musical scores must have been the thought of excluding buyers whose pianos didn't have it. Debussy and Ravel certainly played one such Steinway grand *chez* Madame de Saint Marceaux and also one bought by Winnaretta de Polignac in 1906. Apparently, in 1900 the composer René de Castéra bought a 3 pedal Steinway on the advice of Albeniz. One could say that it took over 100 years for it to become commonplace.

sec	crisp
bruyant	noisy
un peu large	slight ritardando
bien marquer la basse	hammer out the bass
doux, mais sonore et très vague, en retenant les entrées des mesures	gentle, but with tone and very vague, holding back before the following bars
cantando bene	in true singing style
plus lent et très, très vague	slower tempo and very, very vague
affretando	hurrying
lointain	distant
plus calme encore	even more calm
estompé	veiled, blurred
tumultueux	stormy
strepitoso	impetuous
aussi sonore que possible	as loud as possible
élargir	broaden
aisément	with ease
léger	light
en dehors	in relief
la partie supérieure en dehors	the upper part in relief
retenez tempo	tempo held back
pesant et très large	heavy and very broad
plaintif	mournful
en glissant sur les notes	stroking the notes
effleurer la note, la laissant vibrer	stroke the note, allowing the sound to vibrate