Frédéric CHOPIN

ÉTUDES Opus 25

Volume III: ***9 - 12***

G♭ major
B minor
A minor
C minor

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.

Please send comments and error reports to
Ray Alston contact@pianopracticaleditions.com

Frédéric CHOPIN 1810 - 1849

ÉTUDES Opus 25

à Madame la Comtesse d'Agoult

Volume III

9 : G♭ major	page	1
10 : B minor		5
11 : A minor		15
12 : C minor		26
appendix		37

The first set of studies Op 10 were conceived when a precocious 19-year old, a period which saw his departure from Warsaw, arriving finally in Paris (via Dresden, Vienna, Linz, Munich and Stuttgart). Dedicated to *la Comtesse d'Agoult**, Op 25 (1832-1835) further demonstrates the inspired creativity of this extraordinary composer before his short life was beset by complications of existence, relationships and ill-health in western Europe.

Published the same year (1837) in France, England and Germany, they reveal conflicting details — and were then further tweaked by the composer. Quite apart from the futile quest for precision, and without wishing to encourage a 'free-for-all', a wide spectrum for individual readings is available.

To quote Jeffrey Kallberg — *Indeed, some of this sense of difference arose precisely because of Chopin's habits as a composer. He revised inveterately. Individual manuscripts of his works teem with cancellations and insertions. Multiple autographs of the same composition seldom agree. The texts of editions issued "simultaneously" in different countries during his lifetime frequently diverge. In sum, composition for Chopin was an open-ended process, unbounded by the nature and physical restrictions of the source or the limits of publication. However, it should not be overlooked that his sensitive organism and extraordinary improvisatory gift were constantly susceptible to the influence of spontaneous and intuitive creative impulses.*

Piano Practical Editions

While a number of commercial editions vie with each other to produce a 'definitive' version**, I present an entirely personal interpretation of these *études*, created nearly 200 years ago and still probably the most significant contribution to the pleasure and frustration of thousands, dare I say millions, of aspiring pianists worldwide.

Cortot, usually most eloquent in his appraisal of Chopin's works, limits himself to a very short paragraph:

> *We did not wish to overload the text with any æsthetic observation. It is just possible to establish rules in hand and finger technique for artistic expression. We cannot equally define personality and taste.*

This edition attempts to underline the artistic qualities of these highly imaginative studies, before reviewing the multiple technical problems they pose.

The Metronome, Maelzel's latest gadget (1815), was a musician's *must-have*, but In general *tempi* are nearly always considerably faster than is musically desirable and reasonable. Although I dislike to commit myself, suggestions are included. Much thought has been given to alternative hand distribution and for what it is worth, my own individual fingering.

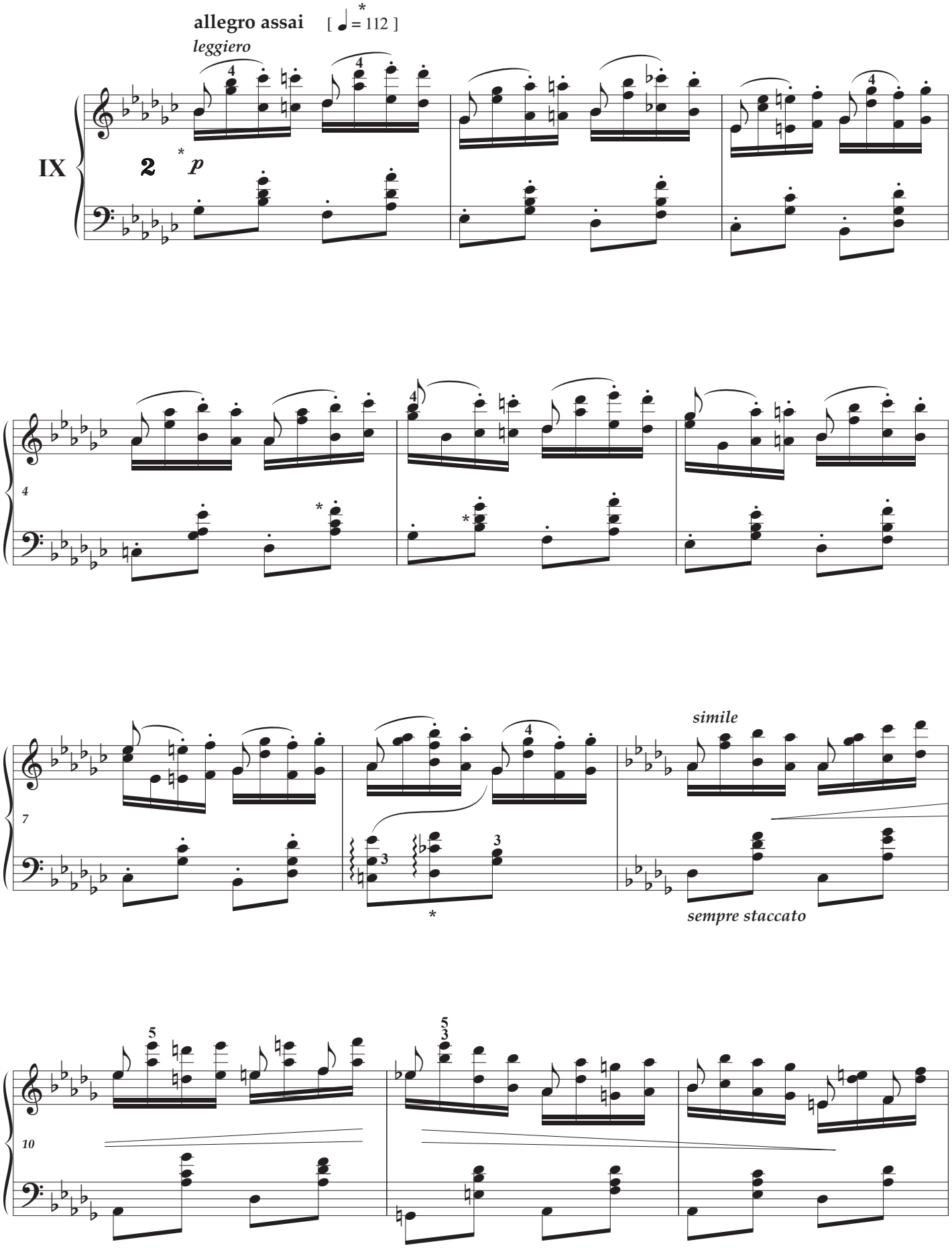
With apprehension, ***PPE*** admits to 'adaptations' of the text (usually marked with an asterisk) and does not reproduce every accent, nuance and expression mark from any particular source. A further consideration must involve a comparison between Chopin's Pleyel and modern instruments: there is less tone volume, the action is lighter, keys are smaller (the octave span is narrower) and the key dip is eight instead of ten millimetres on a modern piano. A few comments and afterthoughts can be found in the appendix on page 37.

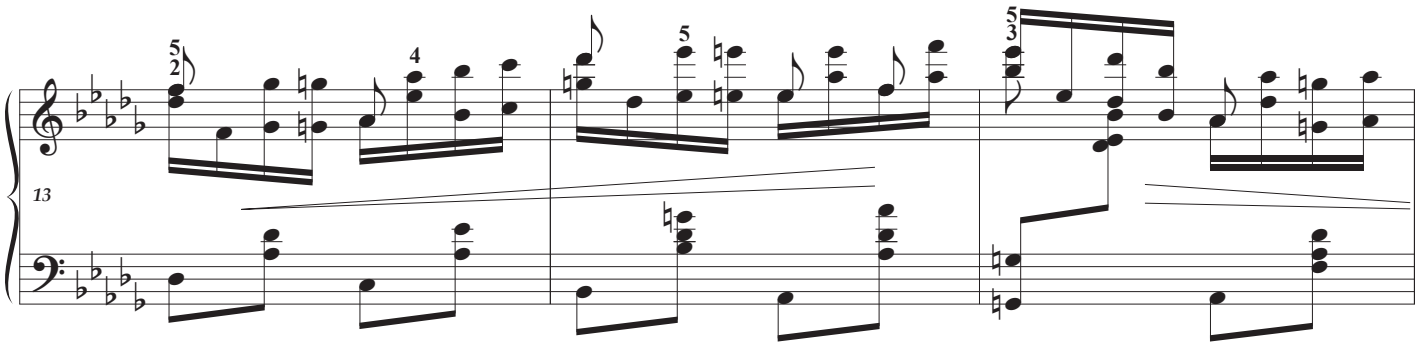
While each *étude* presents one or more specific technical challenges, the music presented is often emotionally charged and always very satisfying to study. Beyond mere transcendental exercises, they have become indispensable repertoire for self-discovery.

Ray Alston
August 2023

* ***Marie Cathérine Sophie, Comtesse d'Agoult*** *(née* ***de Flavigny*** *)*; was a romantic author and historian, known also by a pen name, **Daniel Stern**. She was also the partner of opus 10's dedicatee, Franz Liszt, and mother to their three children.

*** There are no less than 24 editions of the studies, many claiming to be Urtext, including those of Paderewski, Fontana, Reinecke, Klindworth, von Bülow, Kullak, Mikuli, Friedman, Friedheim, de Pachmann, Casella, Joseffy and Badura-Skoda.*


allegro assai
[♩* = 112]
leggiero
IX
2
p
simile
sempre staccato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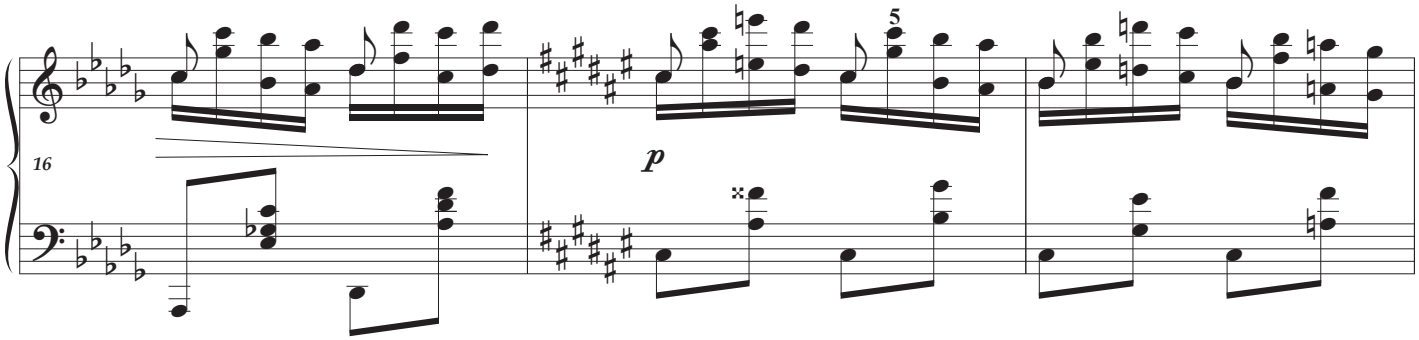
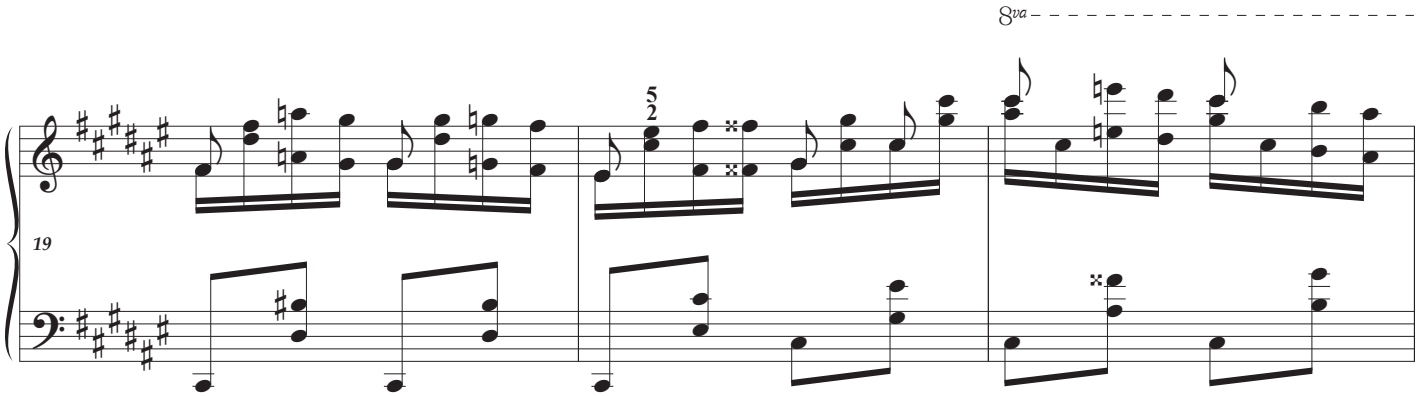
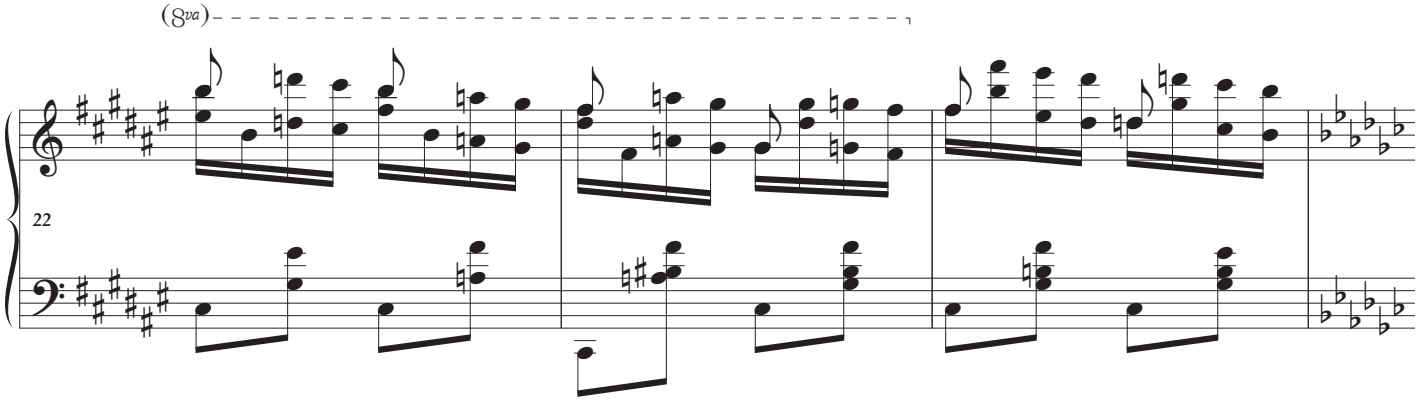
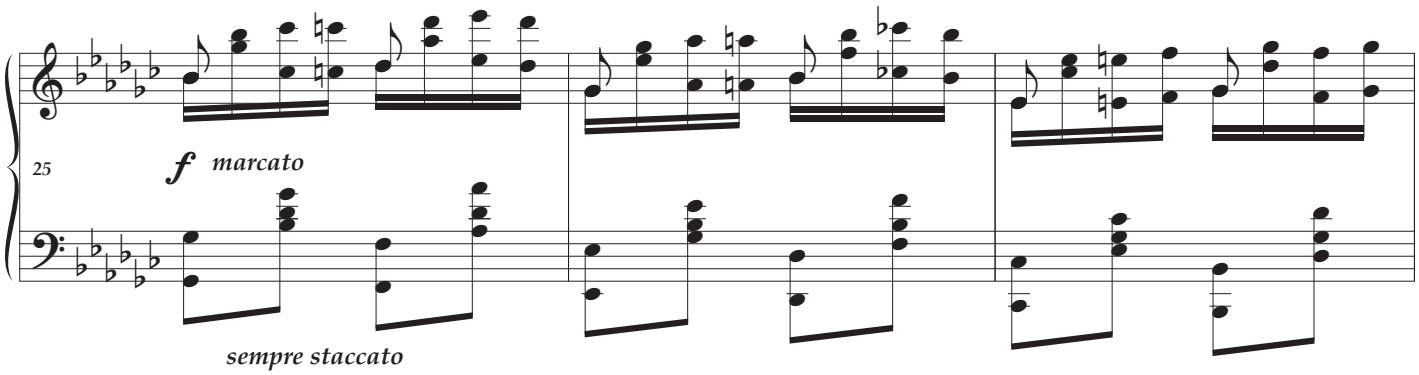
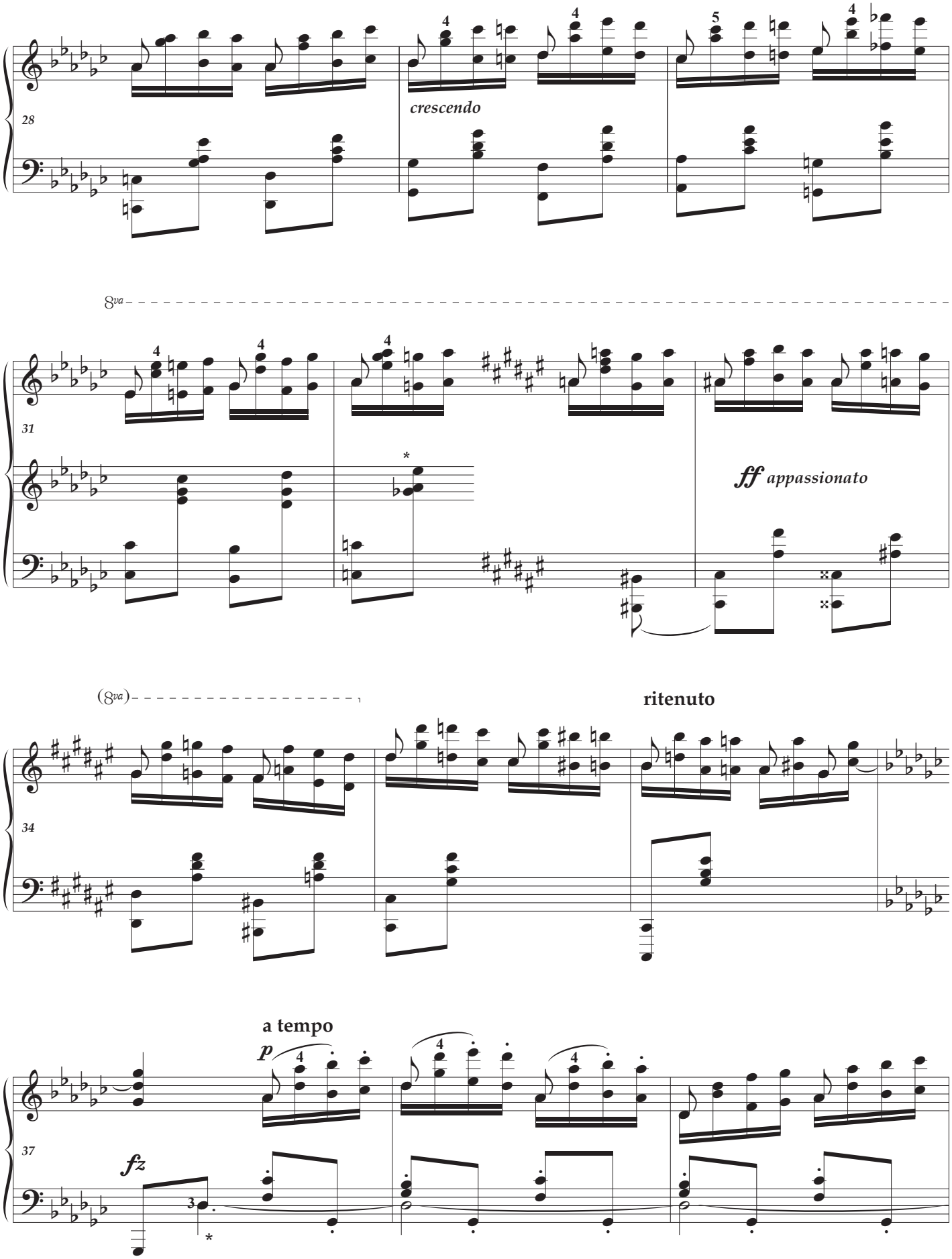
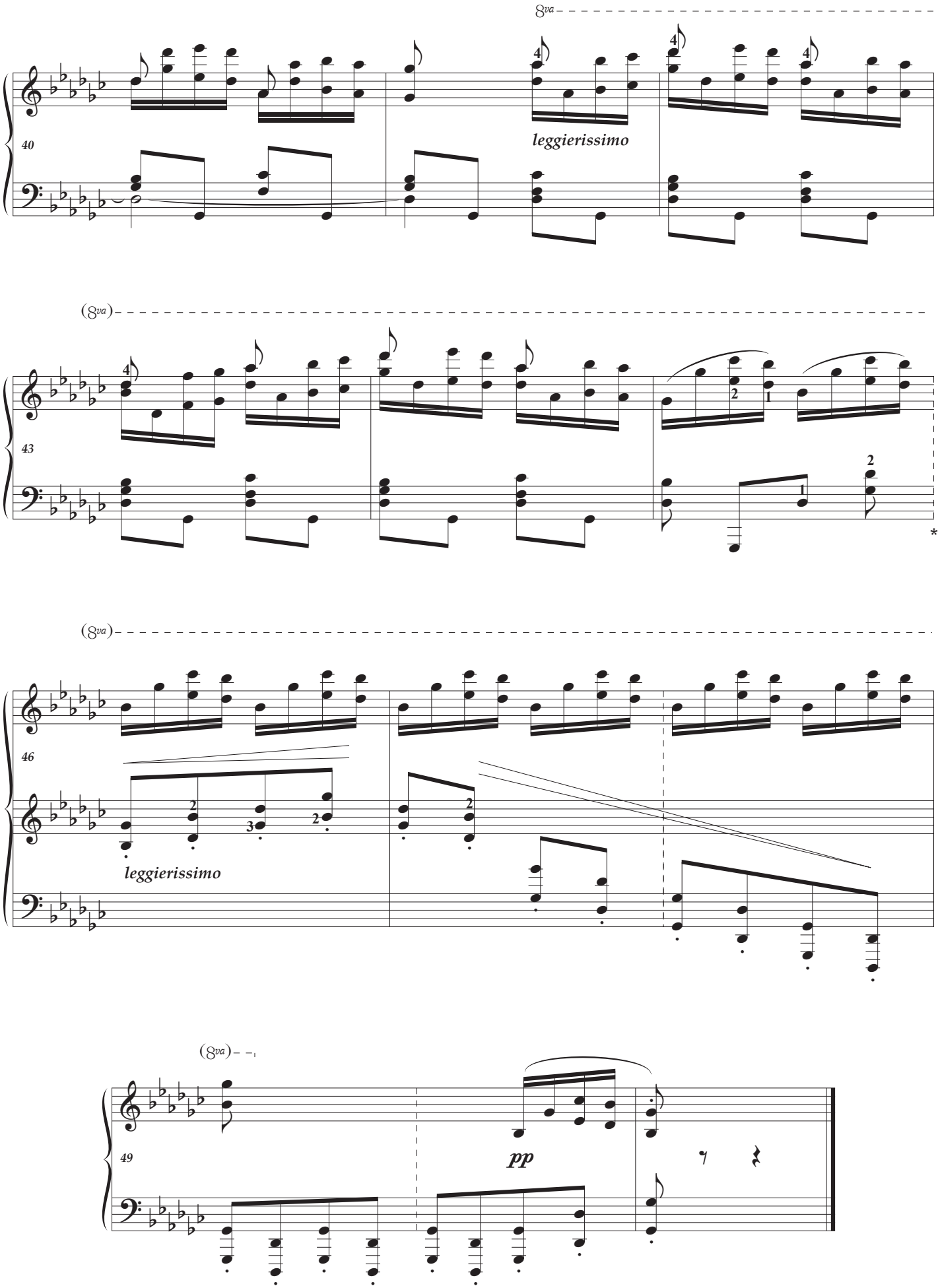

16
p

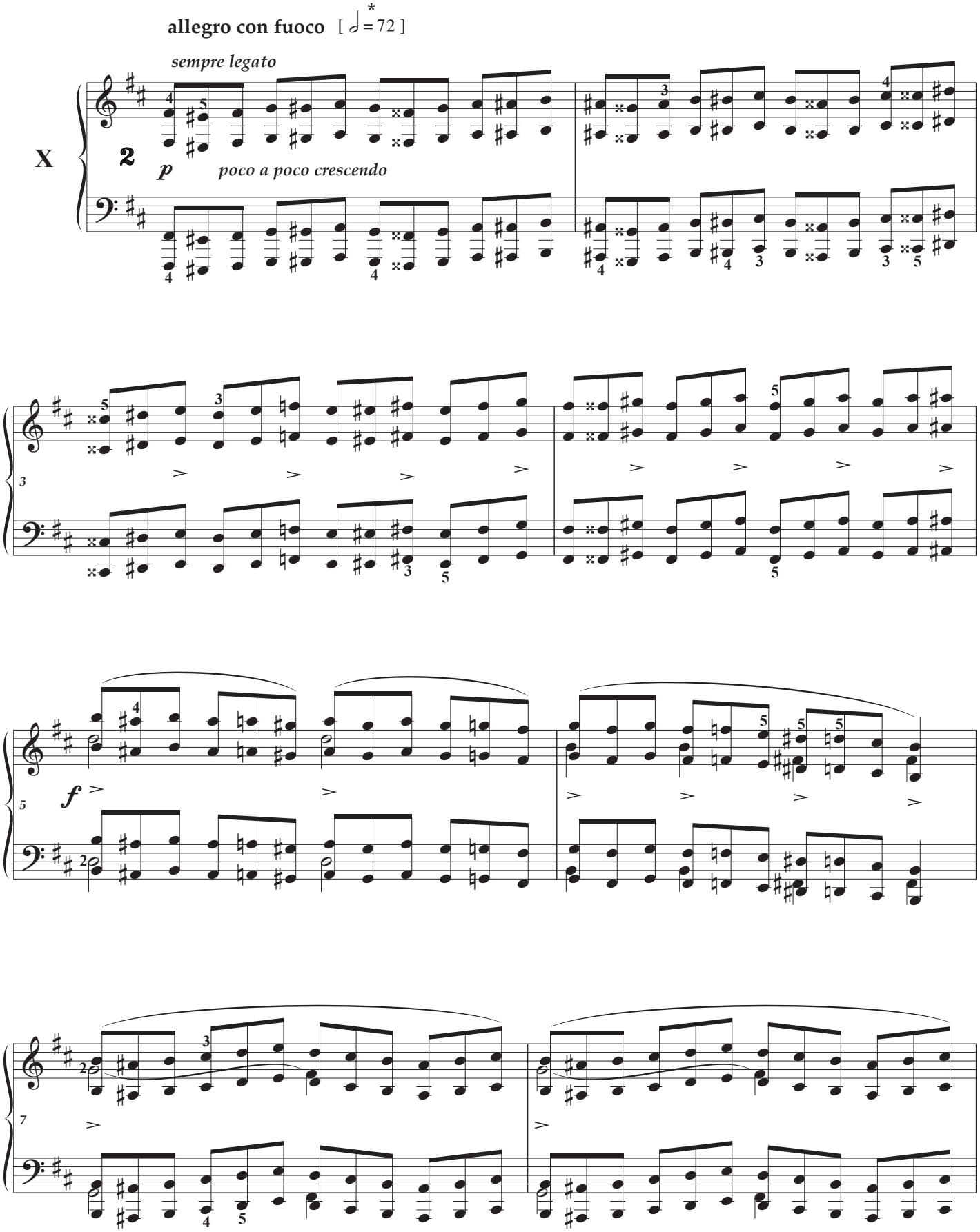

8va
19

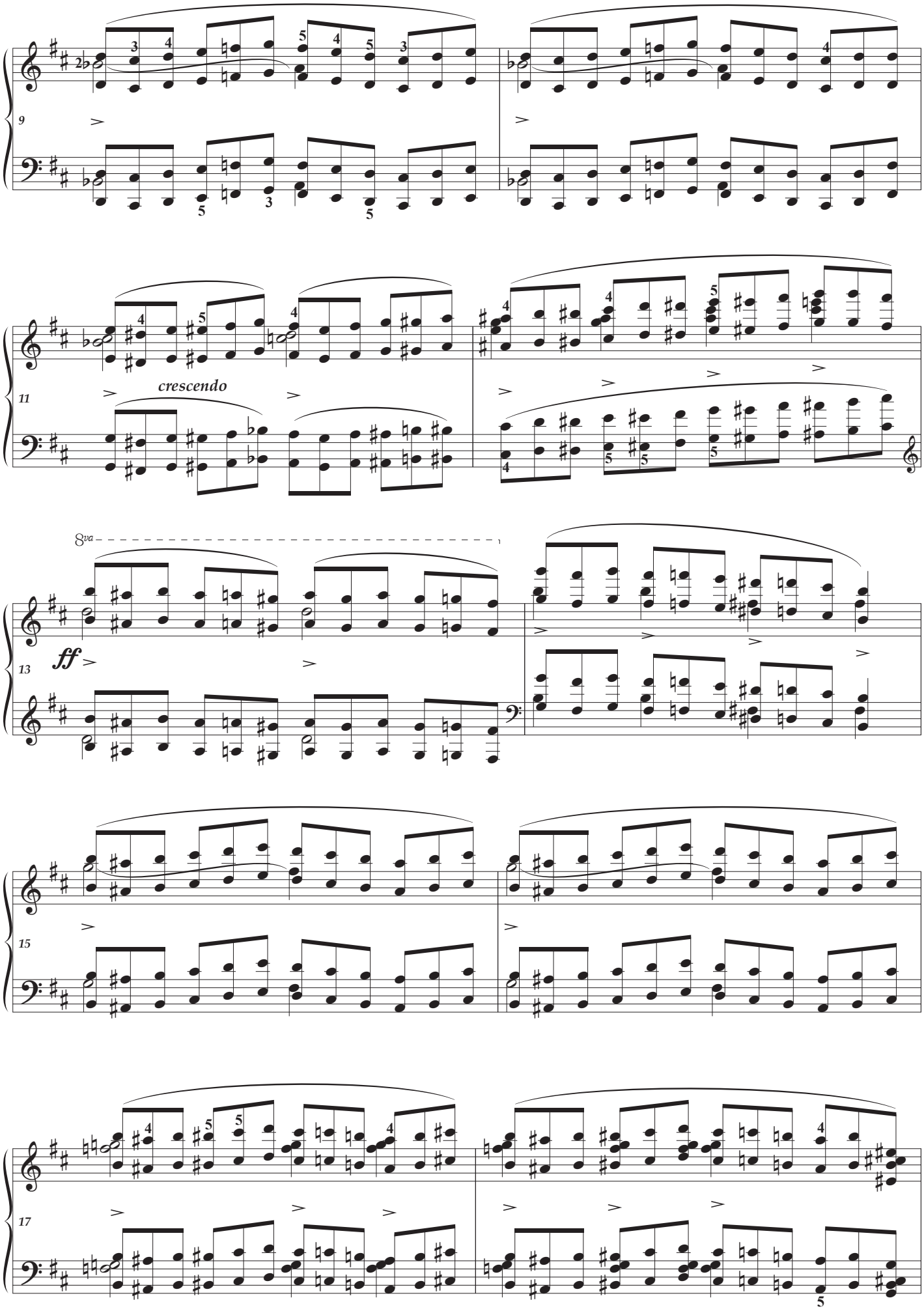

(8va)
22

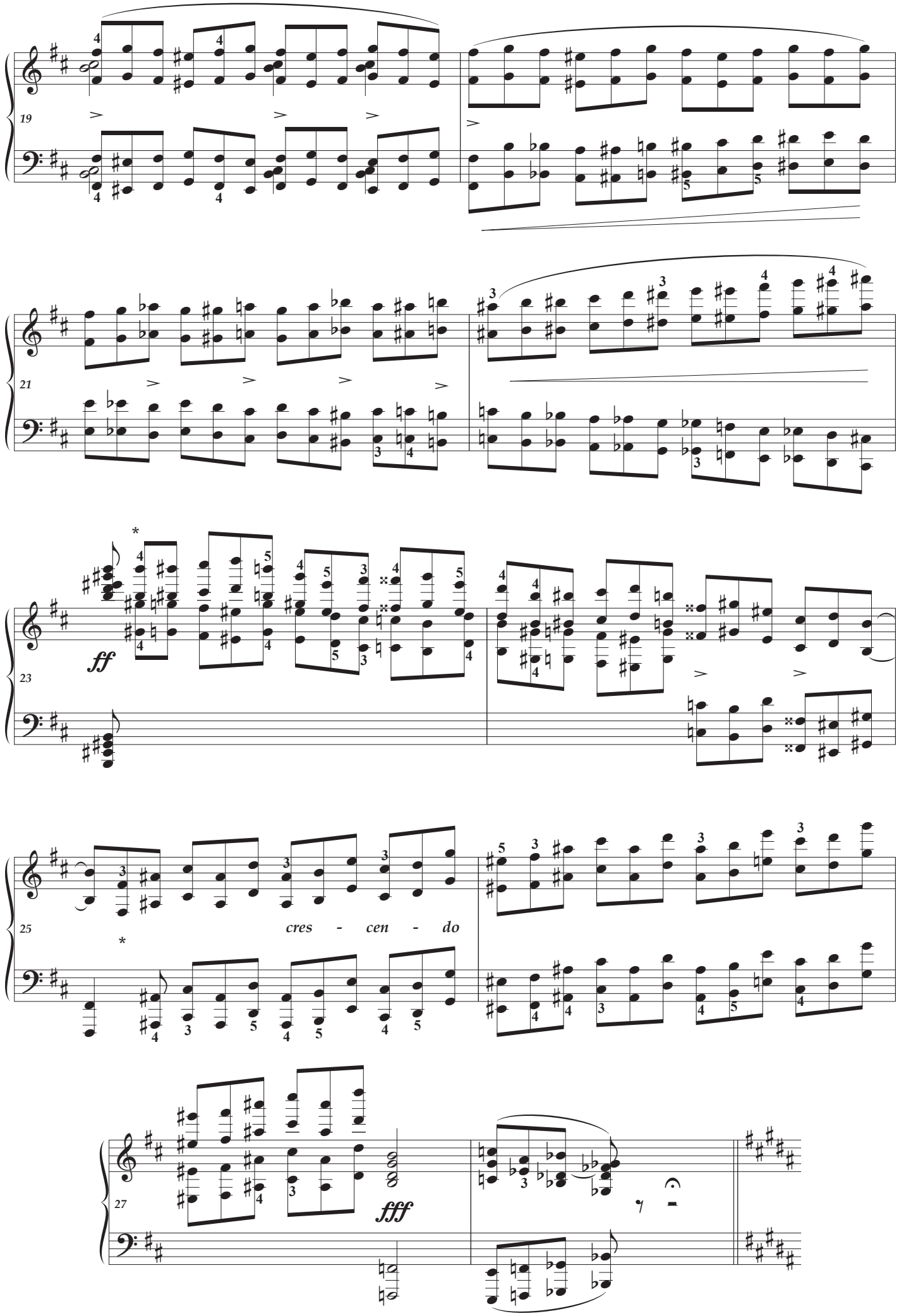

25
f marcato
sempre staccato

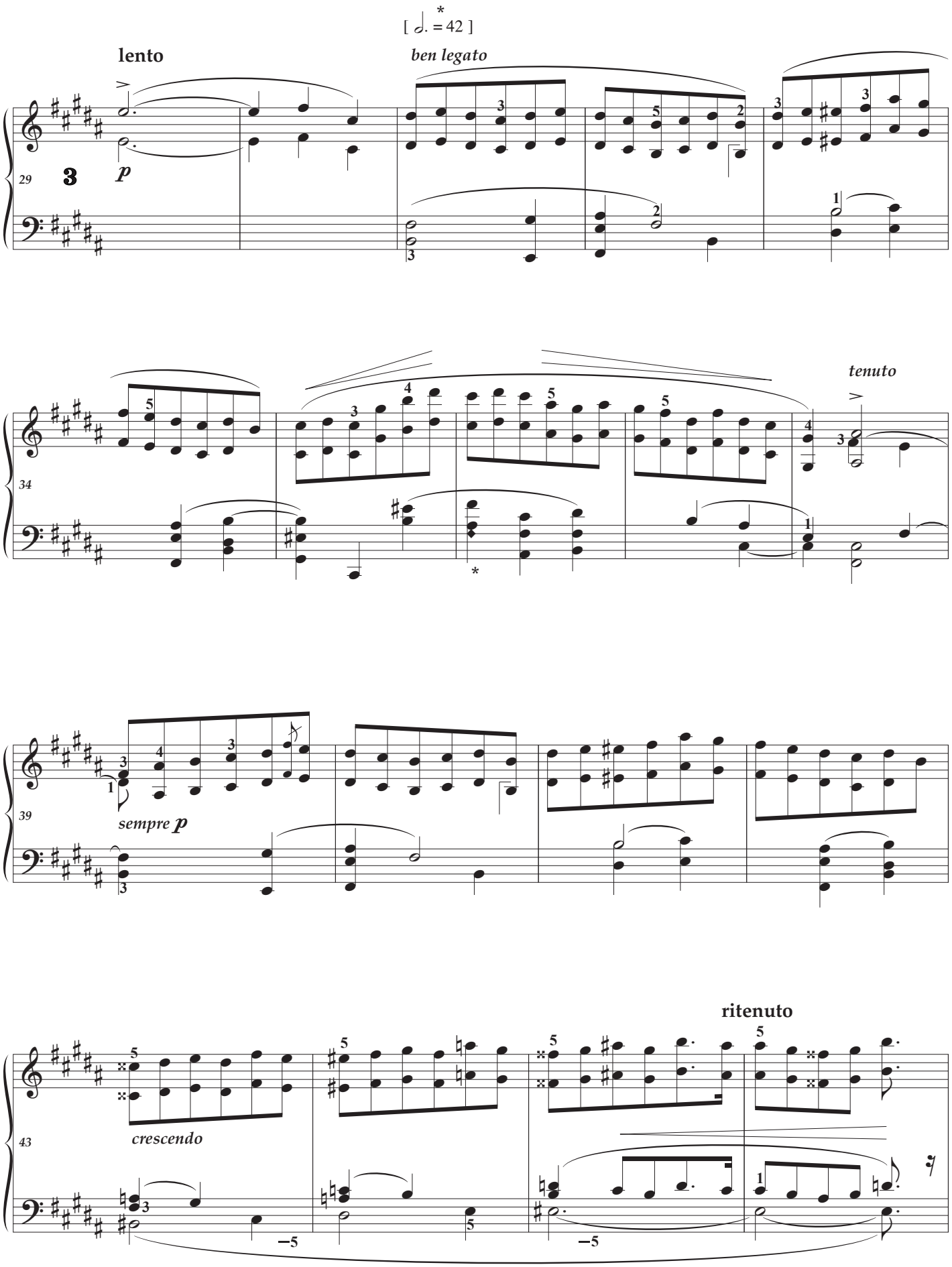

28
crescendo
8va
31
ff appassionato
(8va)
34
ritenuto
a tempo
p
37
fz

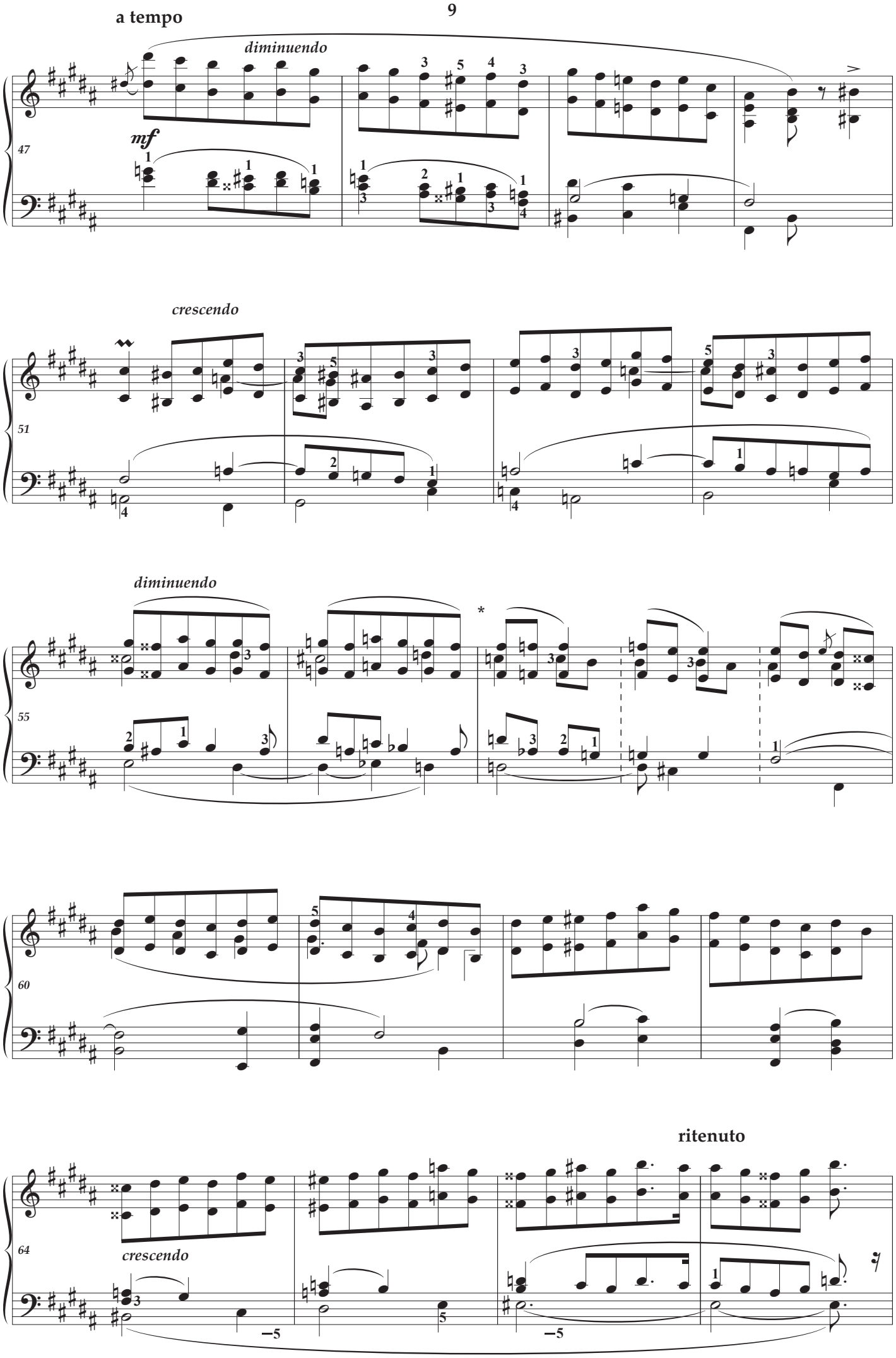

8va
40
leggierissimo
(8va)
43
(8va)
46
leggierissimo
(8va)
49
pp

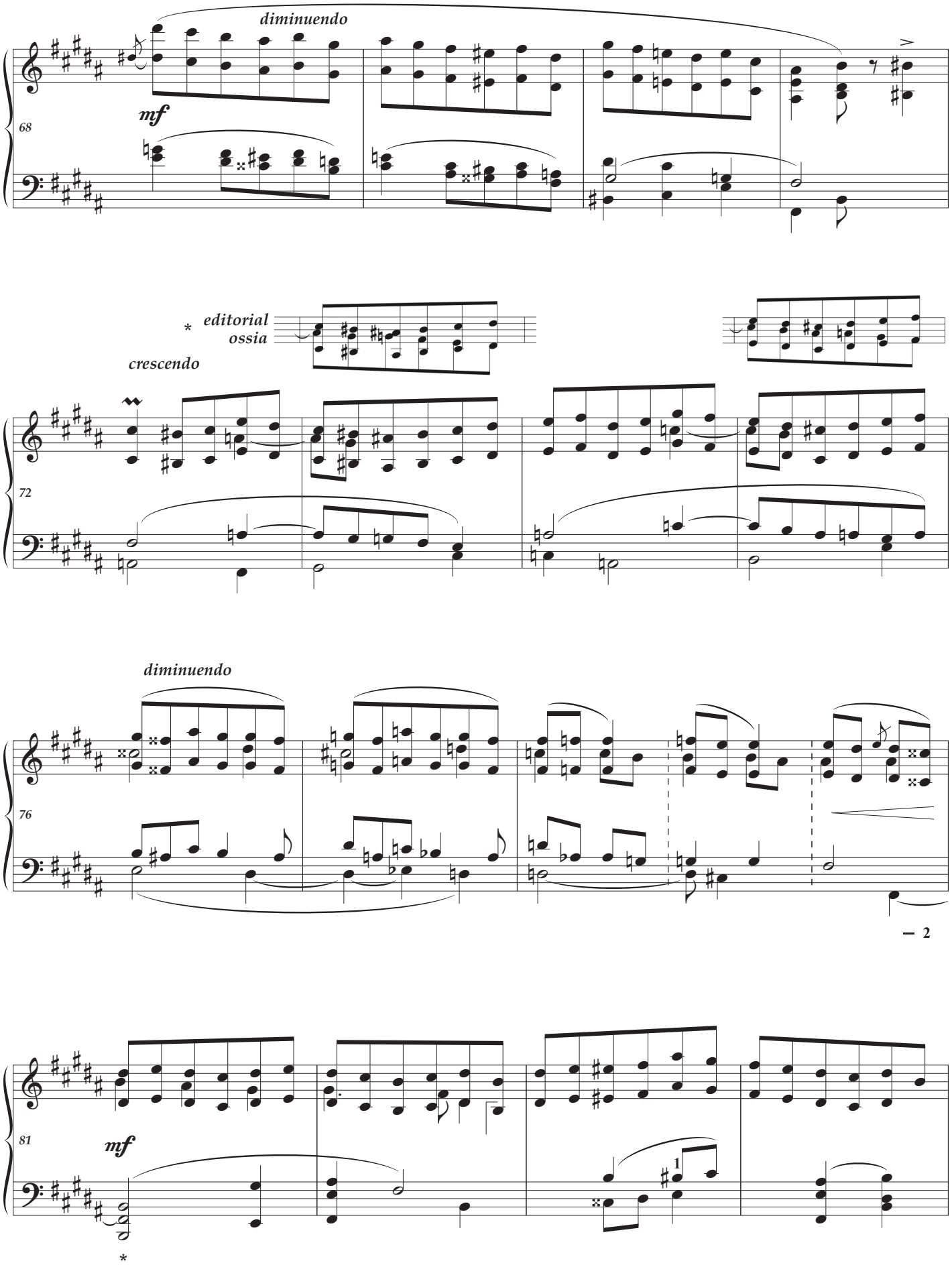

allegro con fuoco [𝅗𝅥* = 72]
sempre legato
X
2
p
poco a poco crescendo
3
5
f

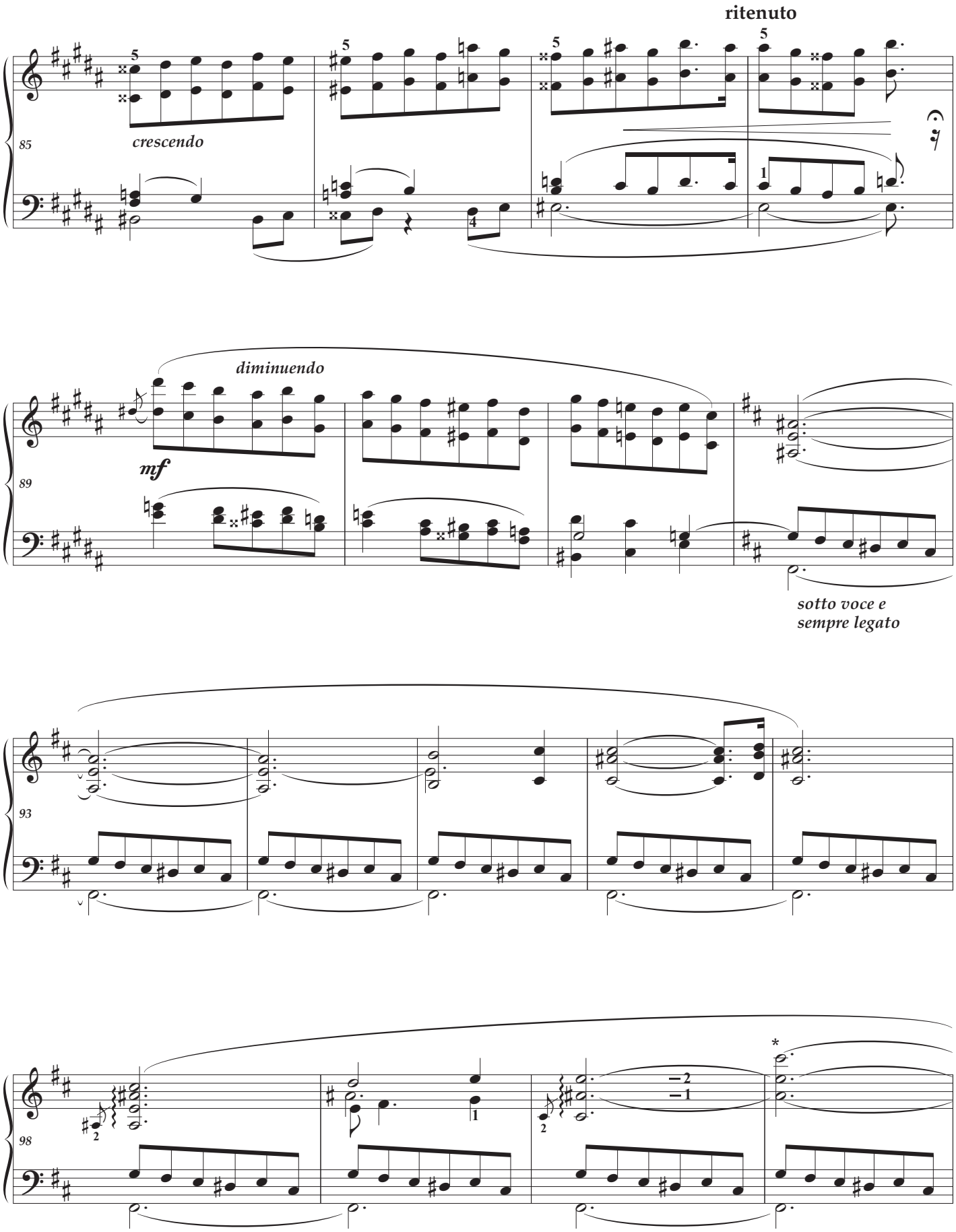

9
11
crescendo
13
8va
ff
15
17

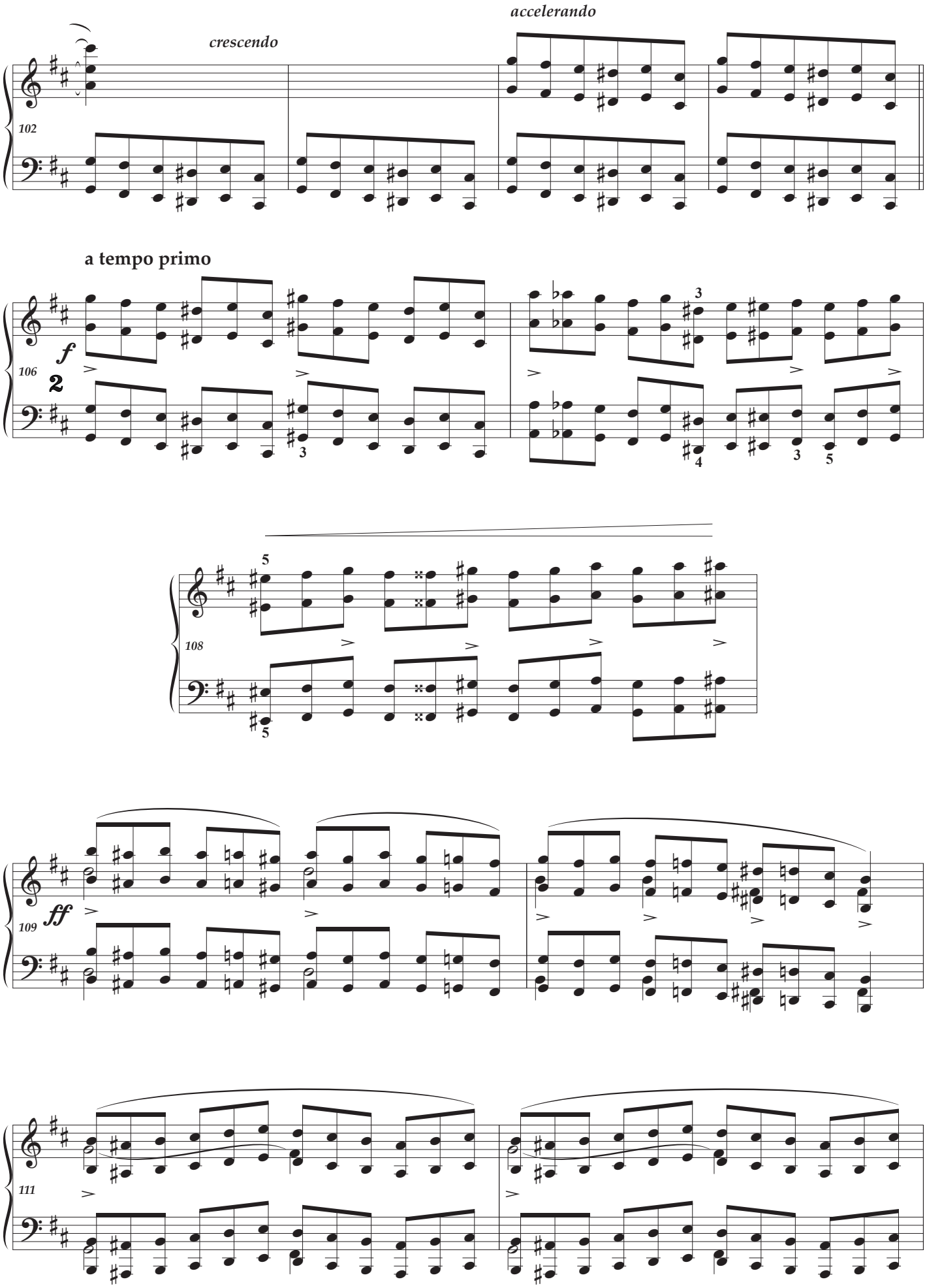

19
21
23
ff
25
cres - cen - do
27
fff

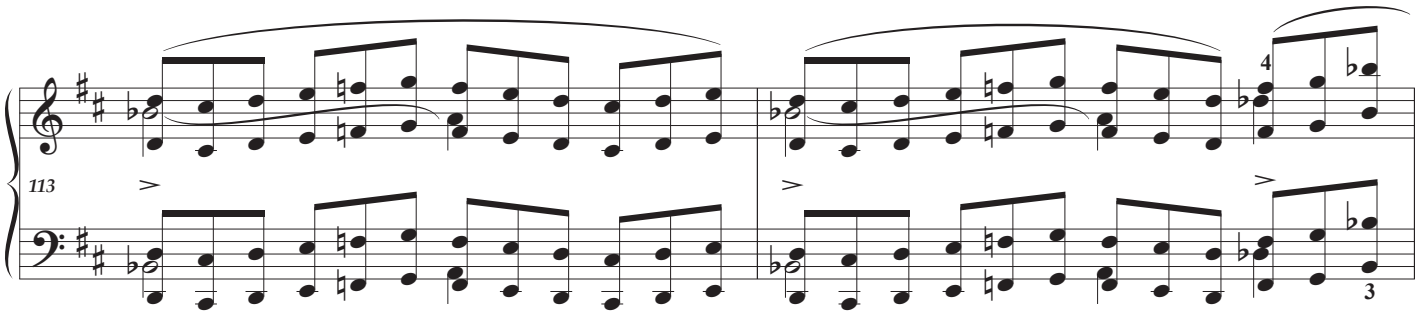

[𝅗𝅥. = 42]
lento
ben legato
p
tenuto
sempre p
crescendo
ritenuto


a tempo
diminuendo
mf
47
crescendo
51
diminuendo
55
60
ritenuto
crescendo
64


diminuendo
mf
68
editorial
ossia
*
crescendo
72
diminuendo
76
— 2
81
mf
1
*


ritenuto
85
crescendo
89
diminuendo
mf
sotto voce e
sempre legato
93
98


crescendo
accelerando
102
a tempo primo
f
106
2
108
ff
109
111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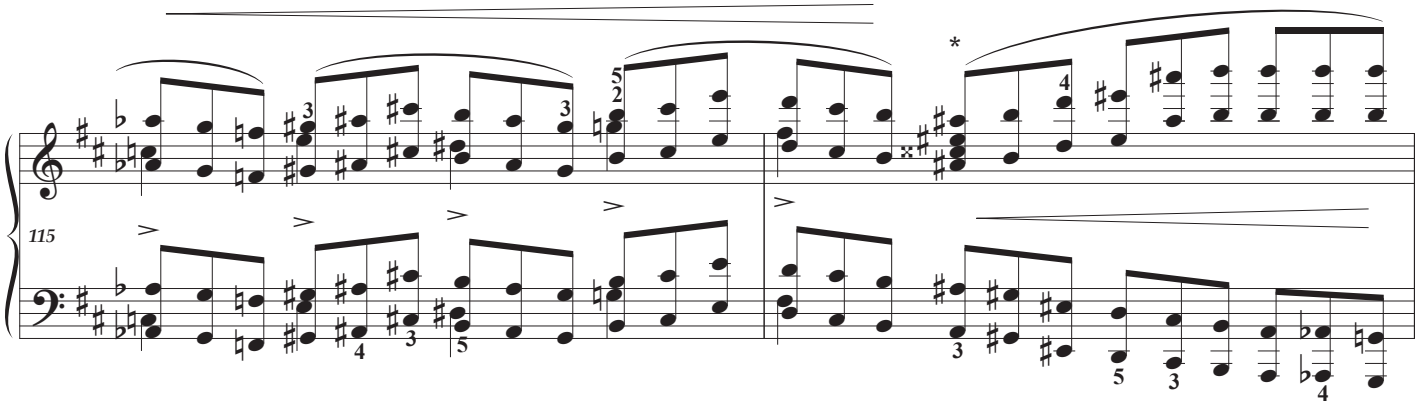
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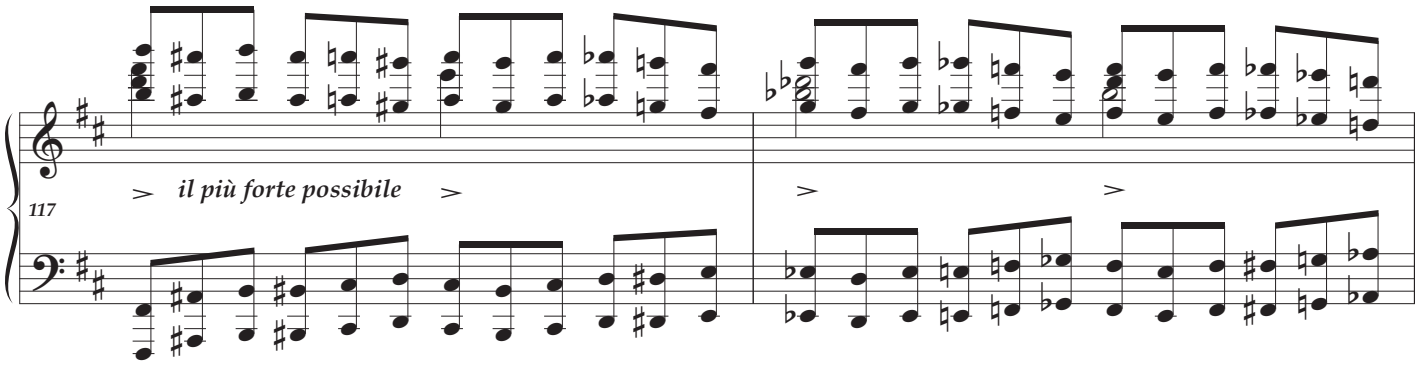
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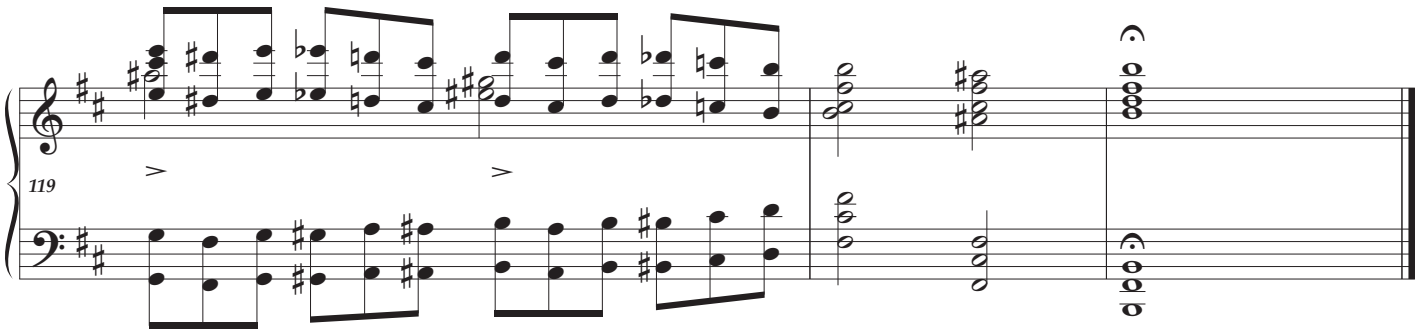
il più forte possibile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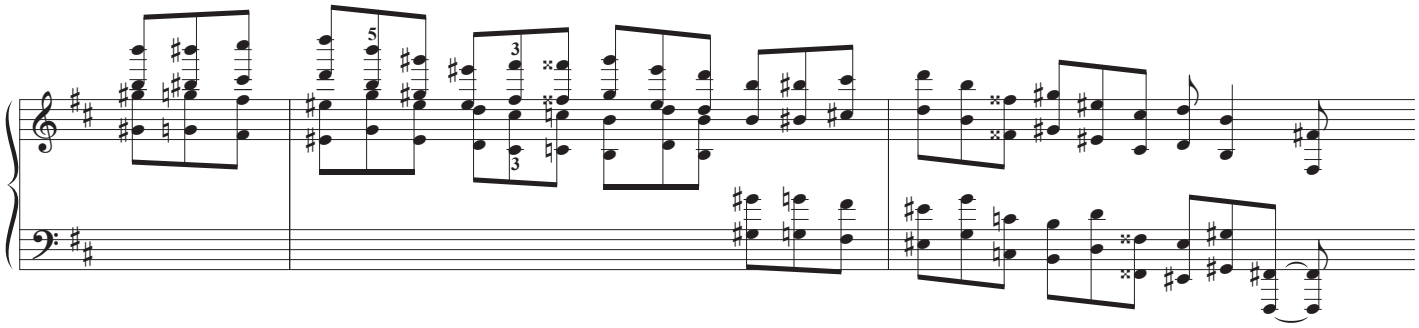
alternative metre for **23**



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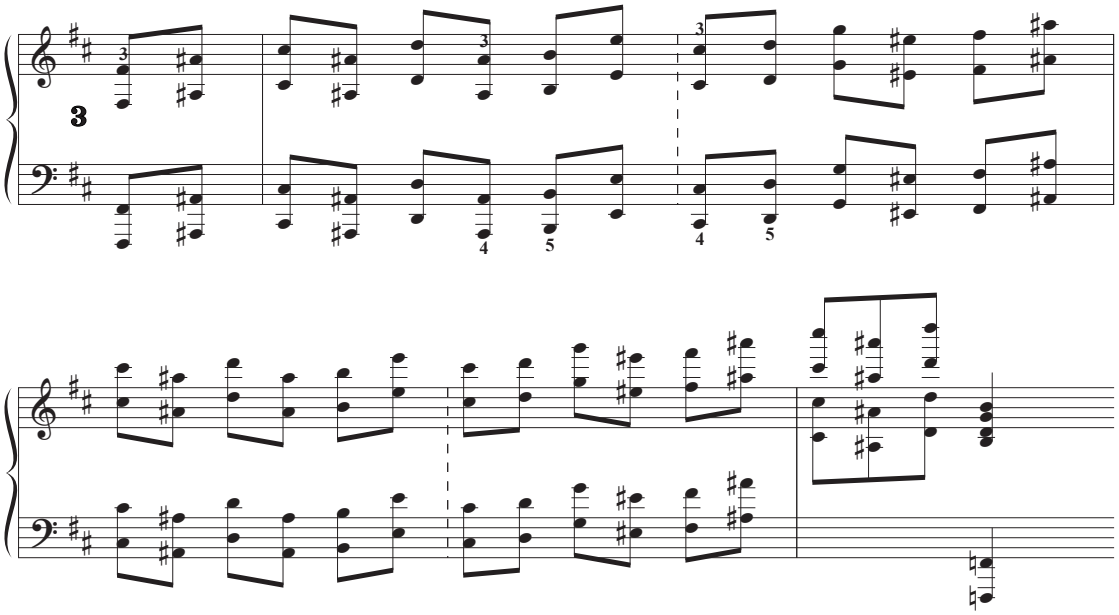

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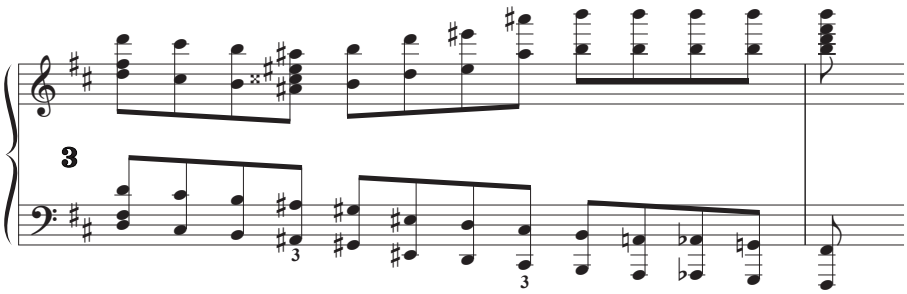
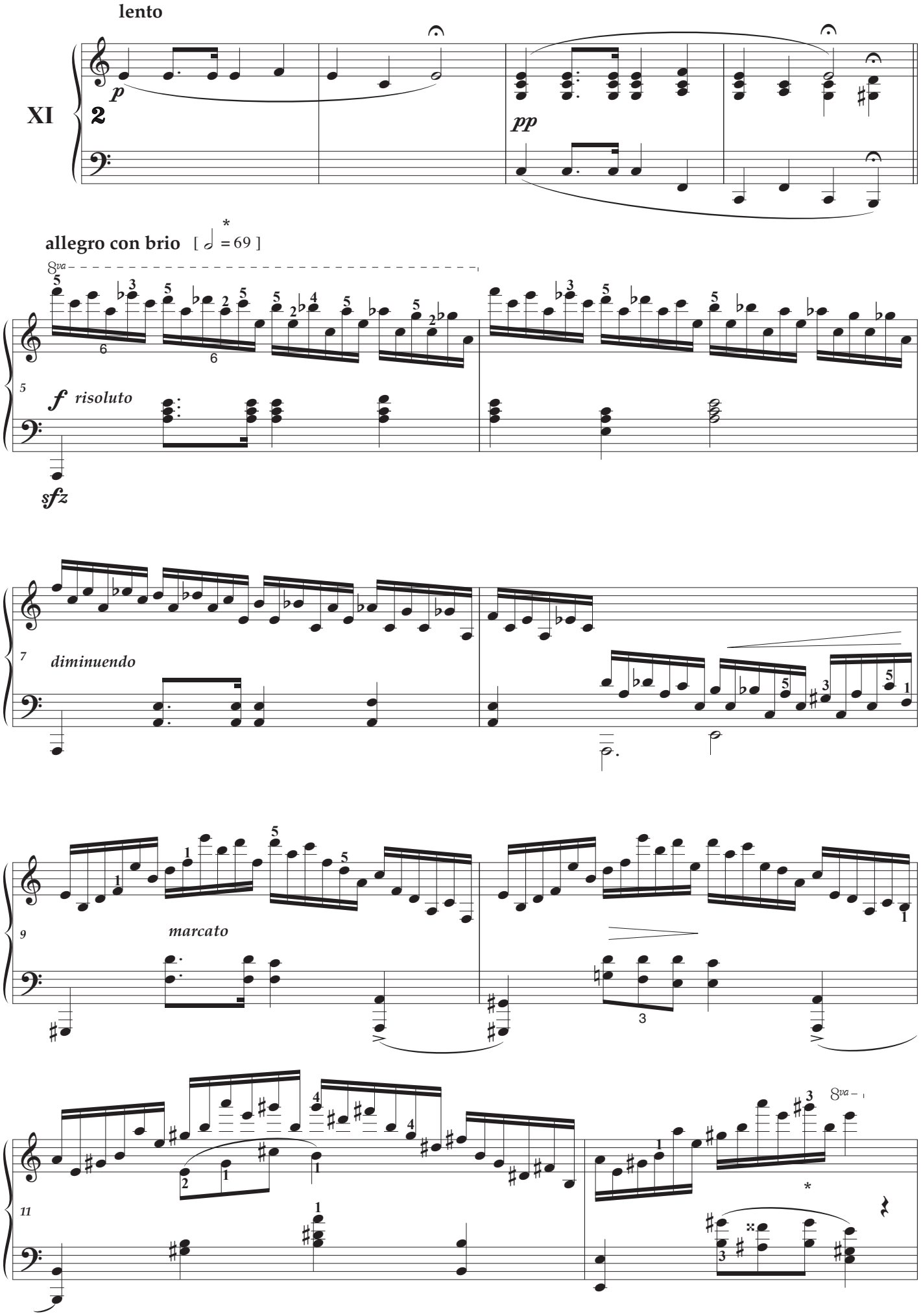
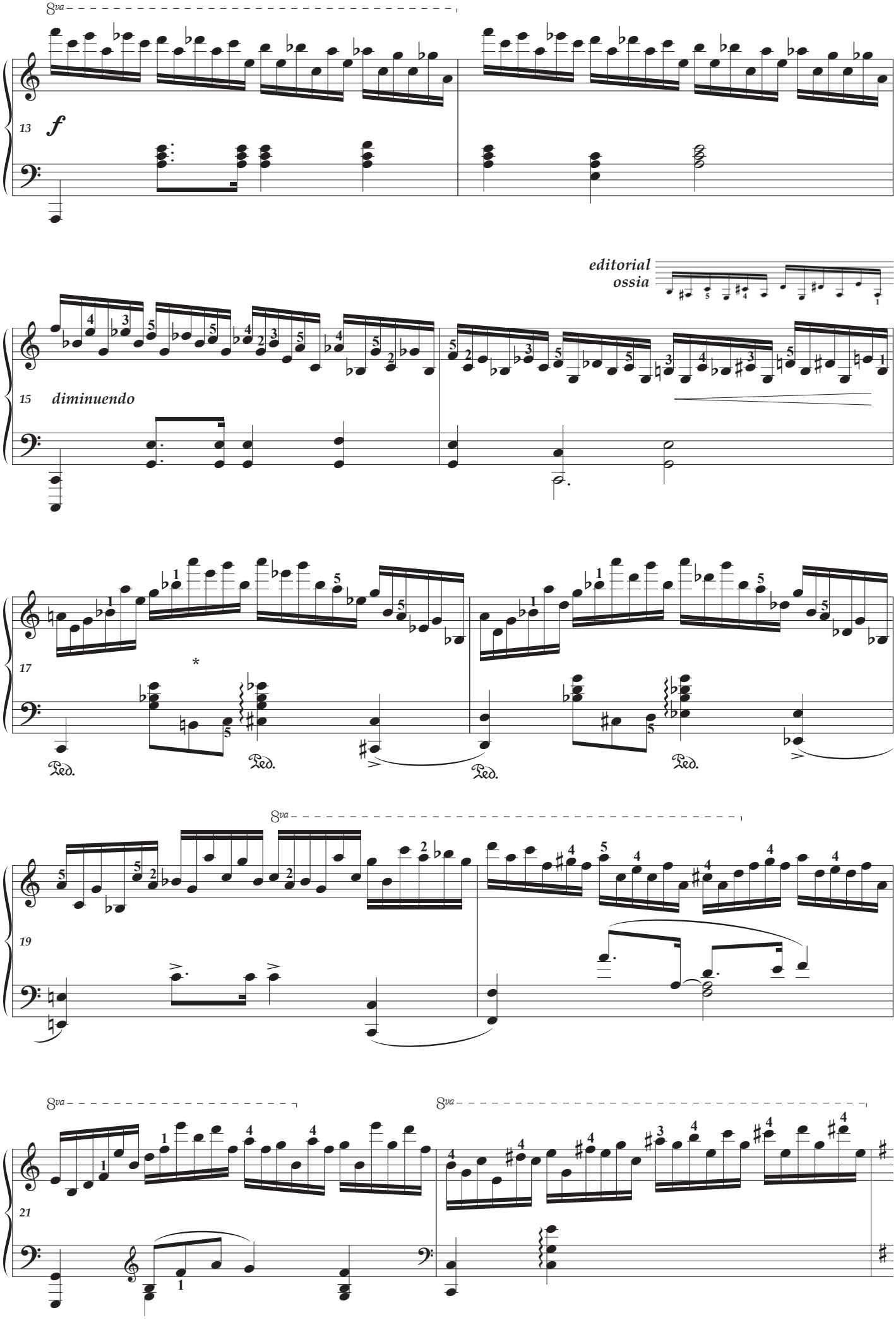
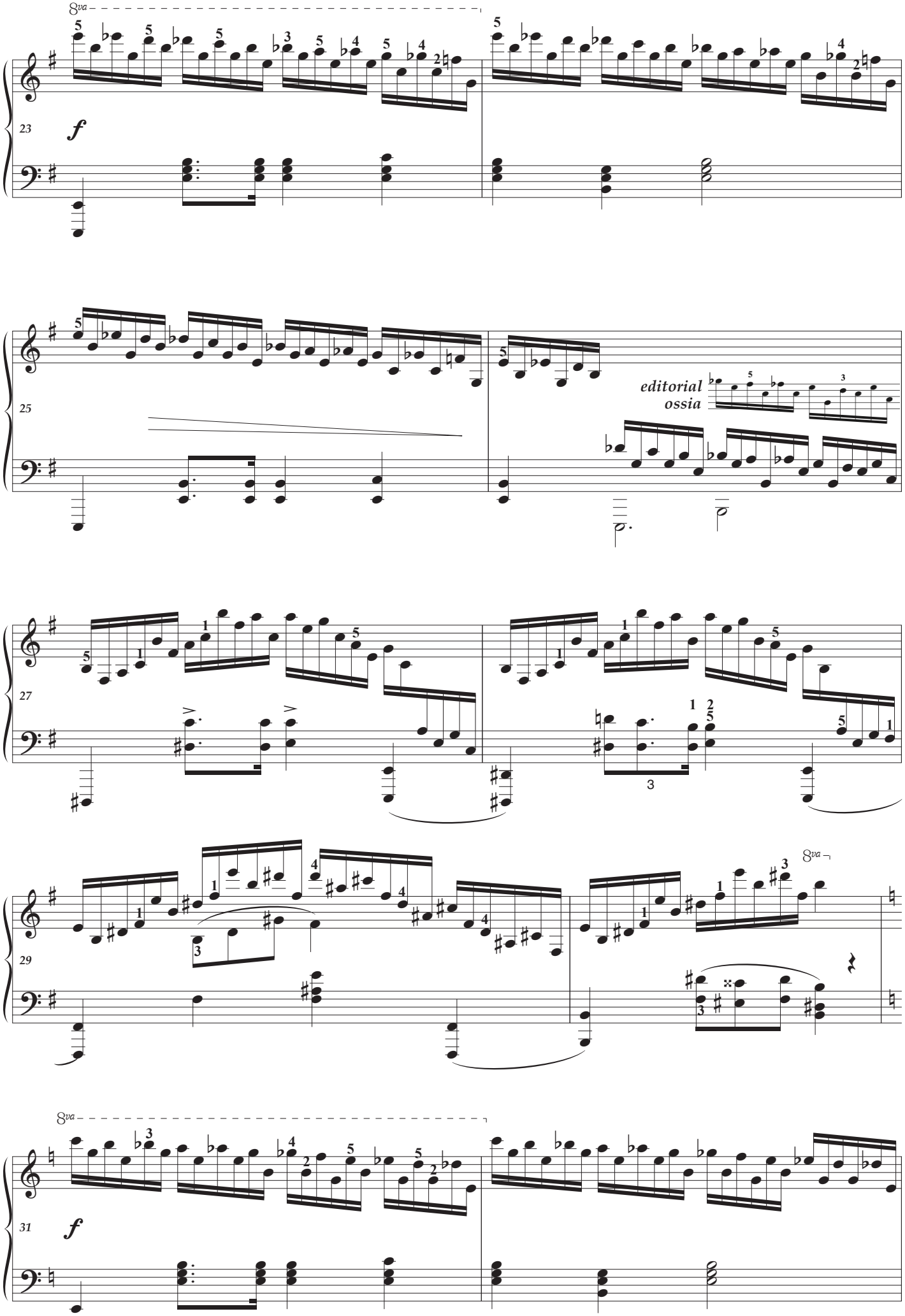
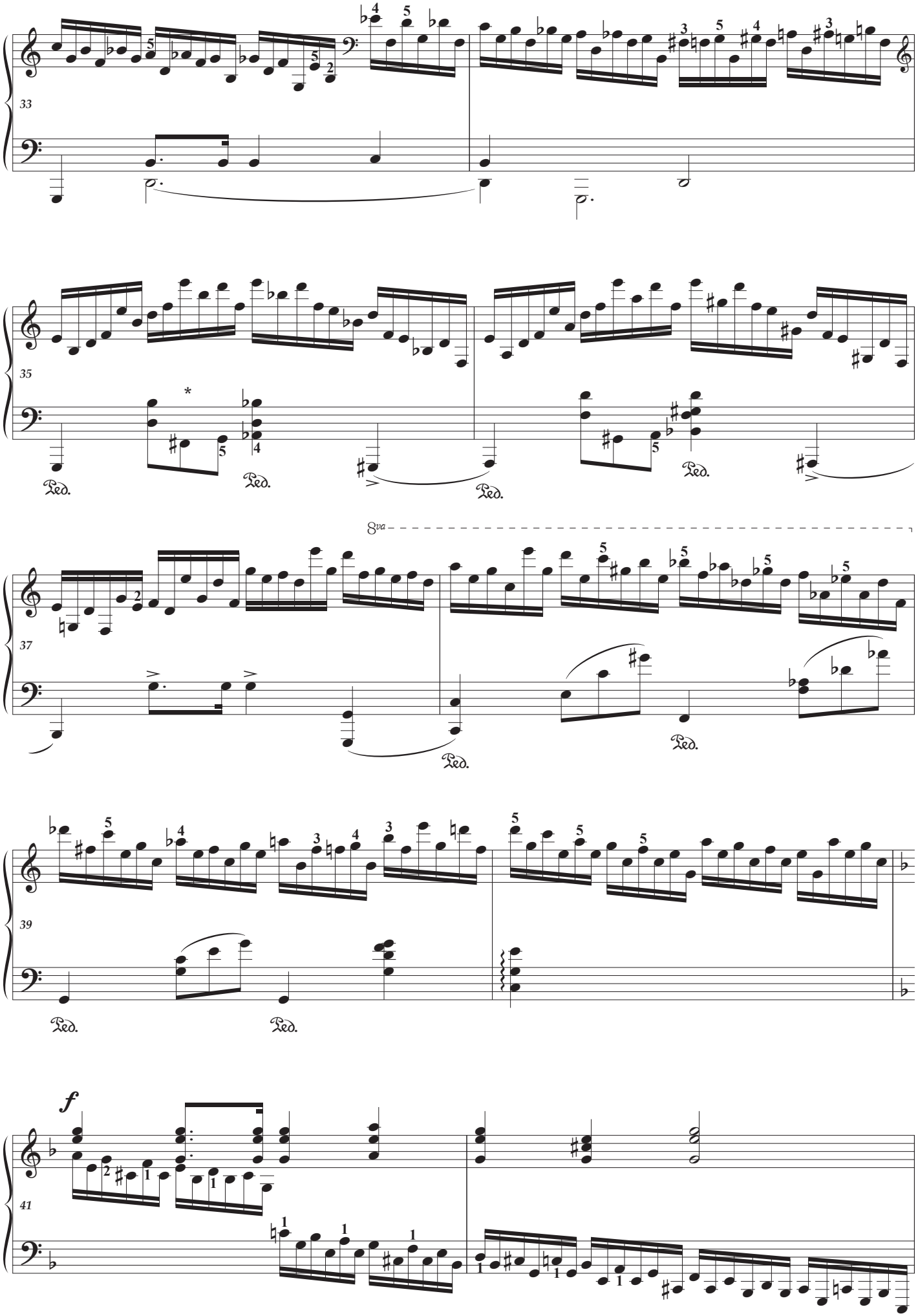
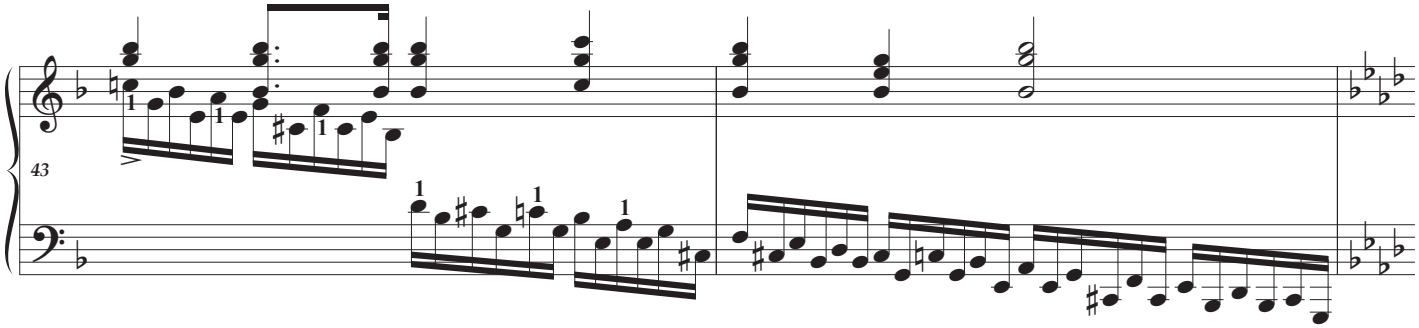



lento
XI
2
p
pp
allegro con brio [𝅗𝅥 = 69]
8va
5
f risoluto
sfz
diminuendo
marcato
8va


8va
13
f
editorial
ossia
15
diminuendo
17
*
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
8va
19
8va
8va
21


8va
23
f
25
editorial
ossia
27
29
8va
31
f


33
35
Ped.
37
8va
39
41
f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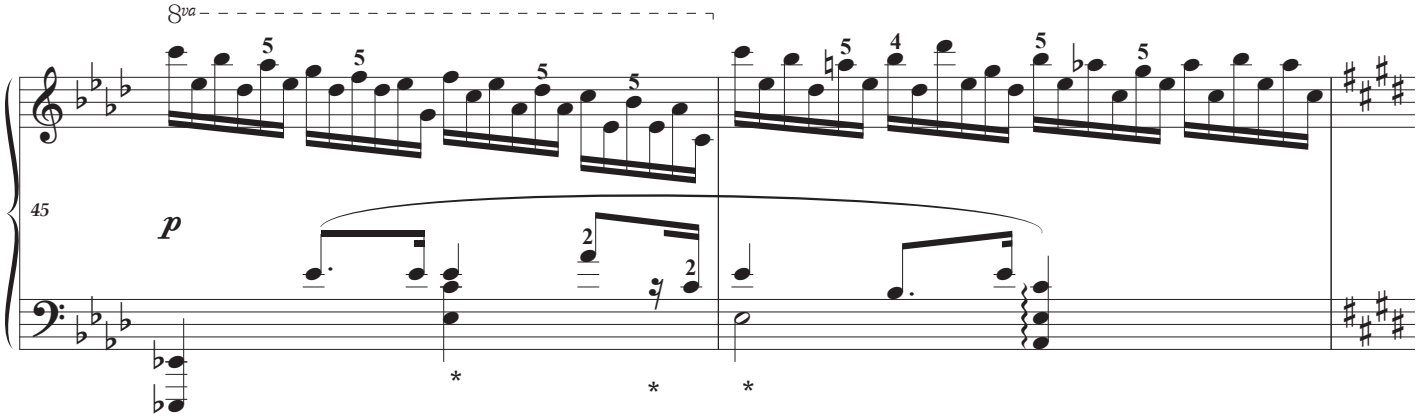
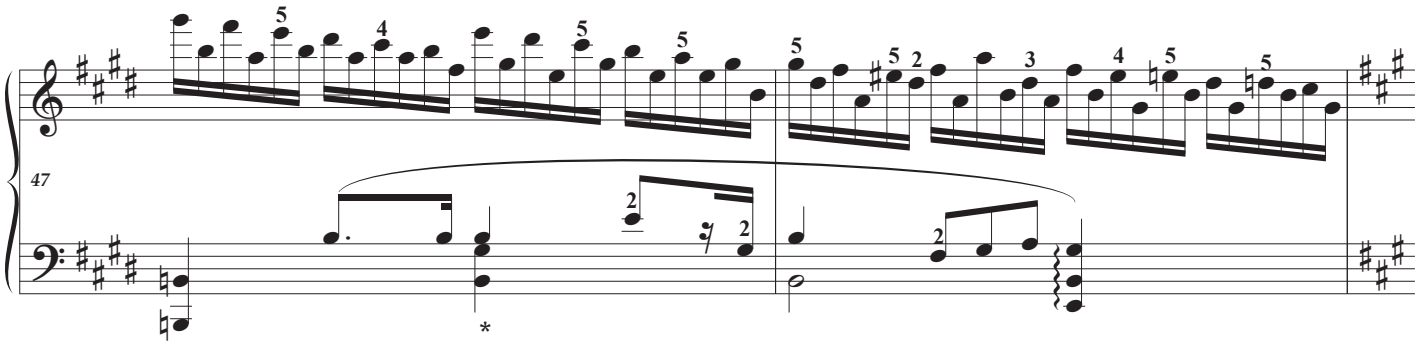

8va
45
p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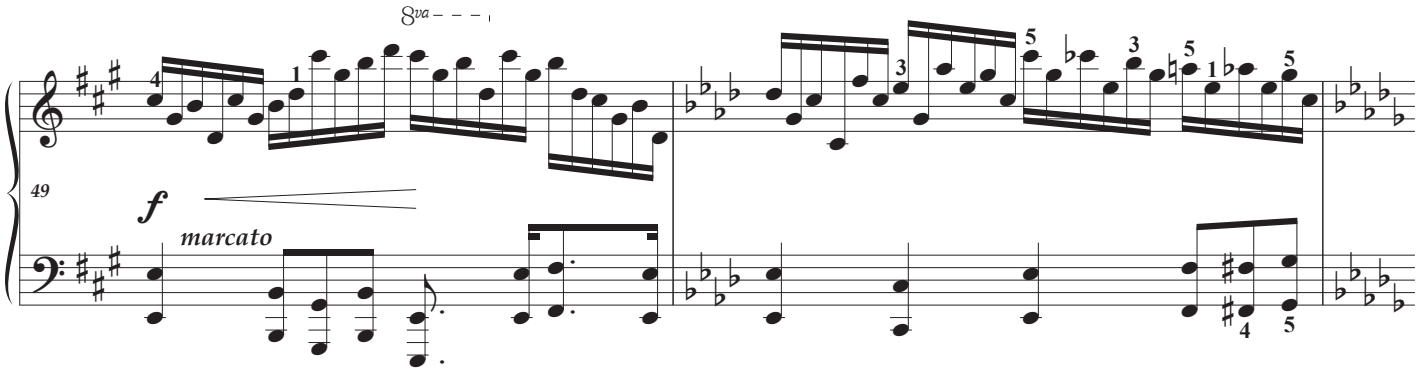
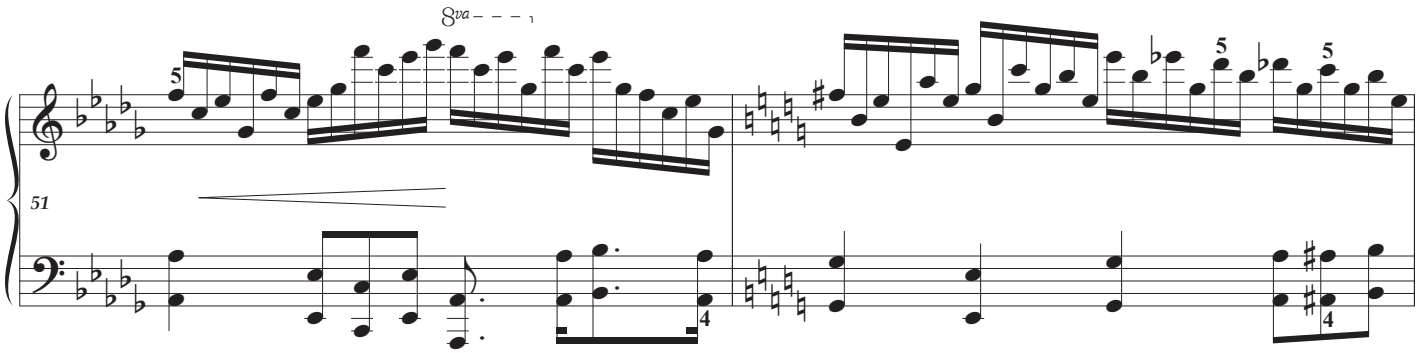

8va
49
f
marcato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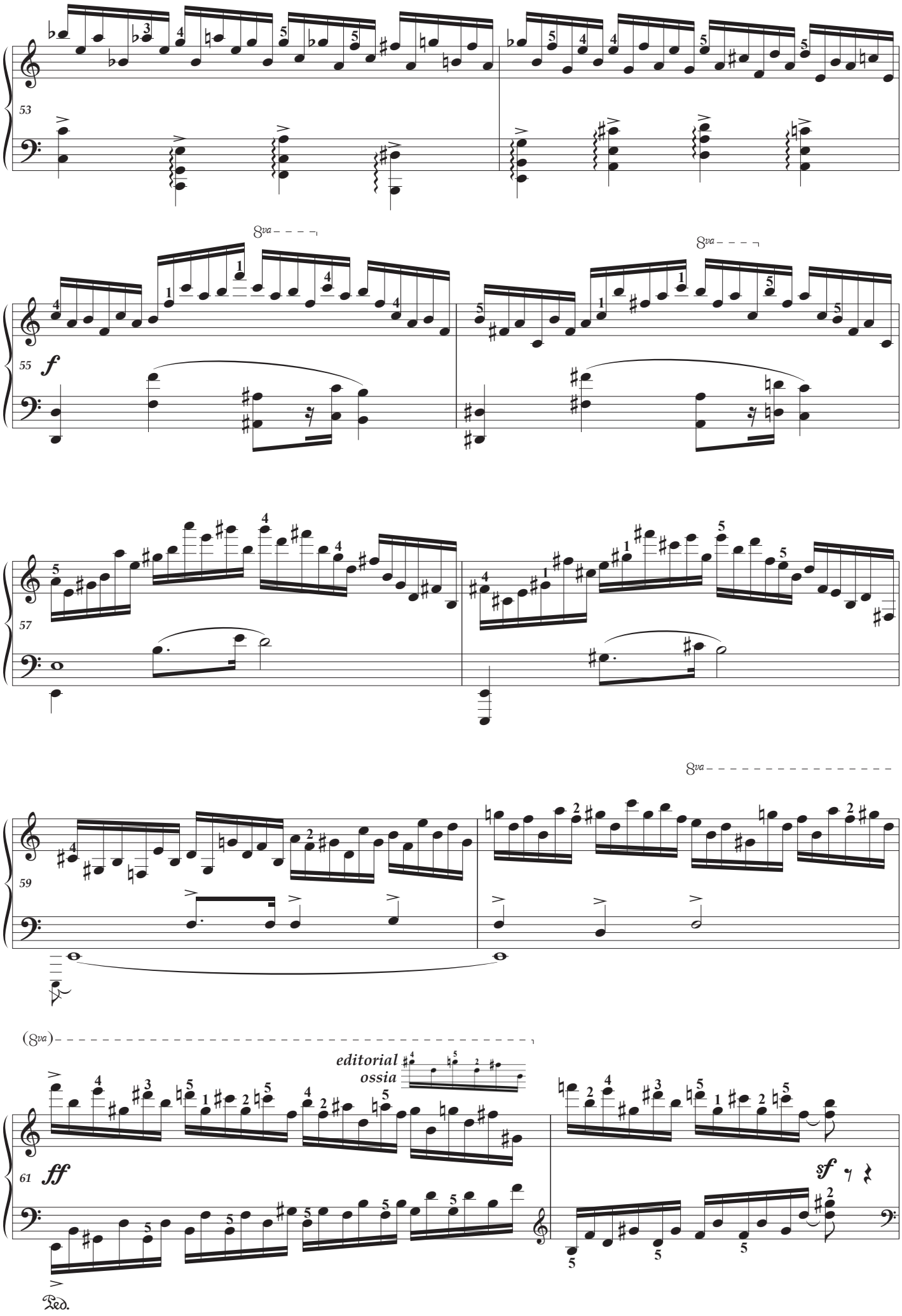
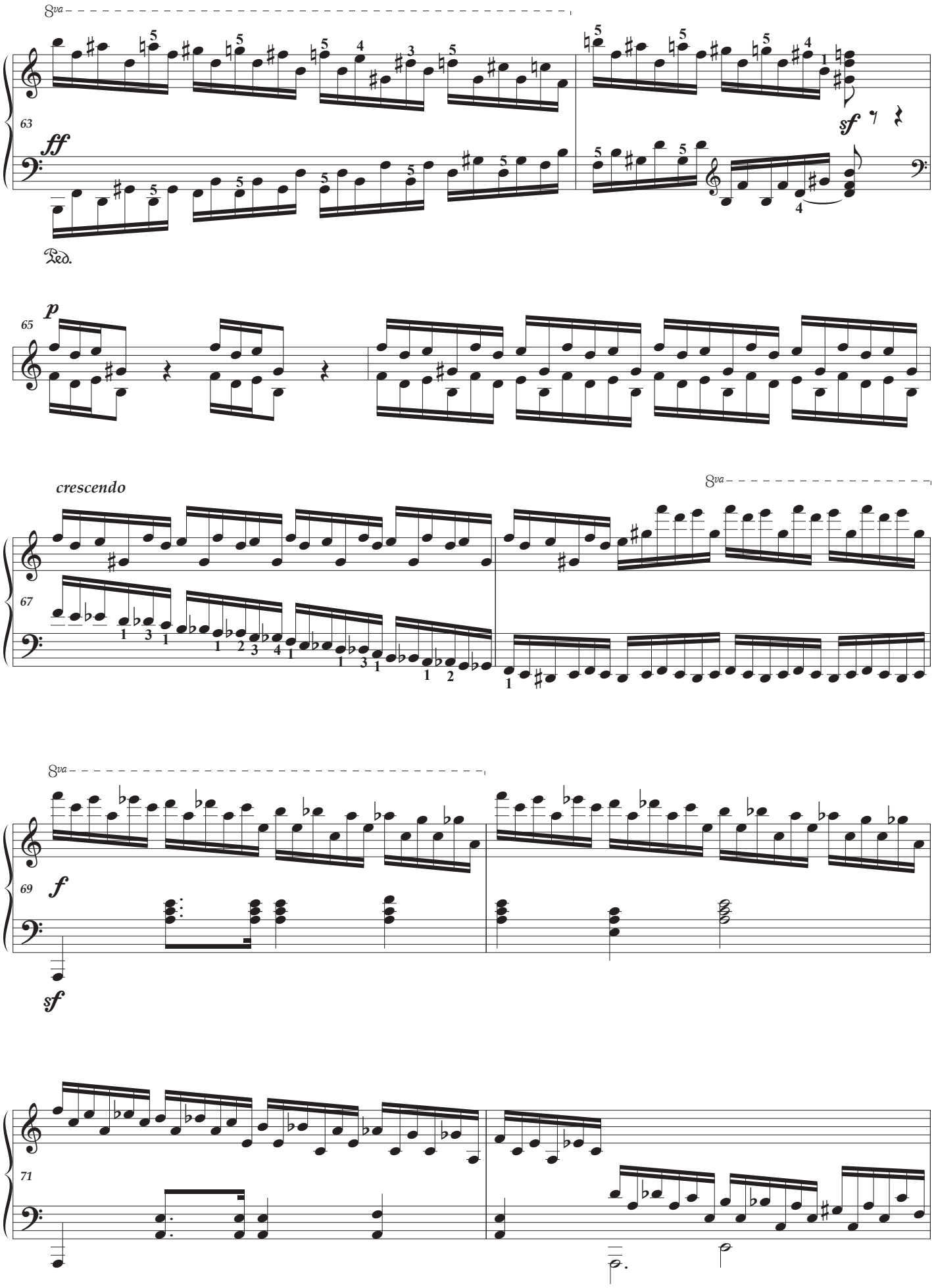
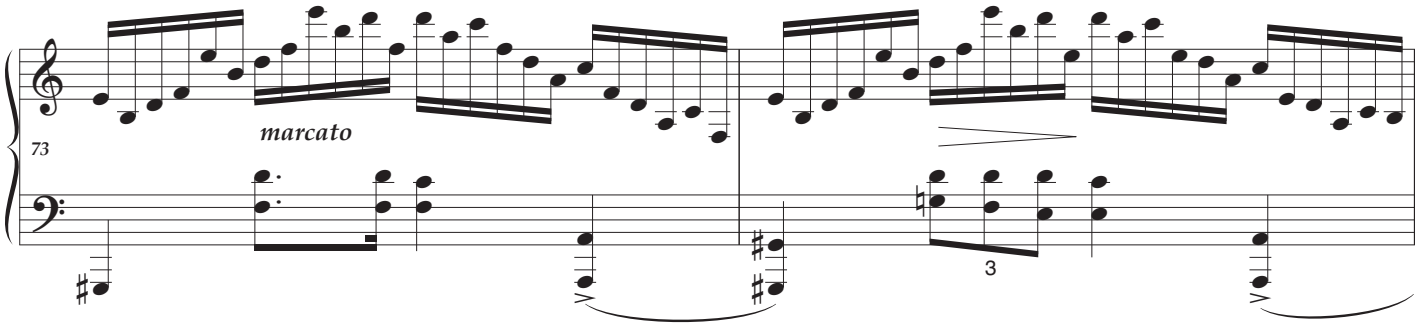
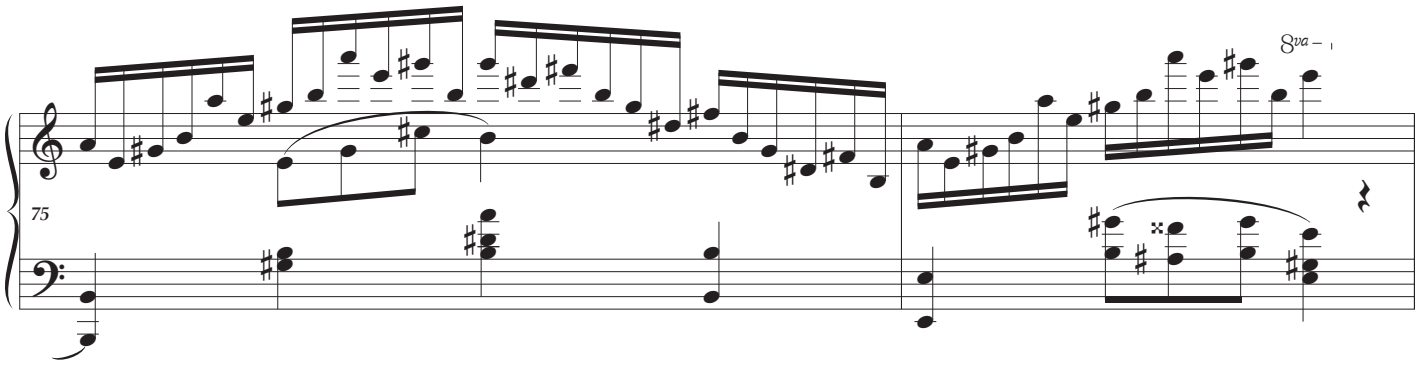

53
55
f
57
59
61
ff
sf
8va
(8va)
editorial
ossia
Ped.


8va
63
ff
sf
Ped.
65
p
crescendo
67
8va
69
f
sf
71


73
marcato
3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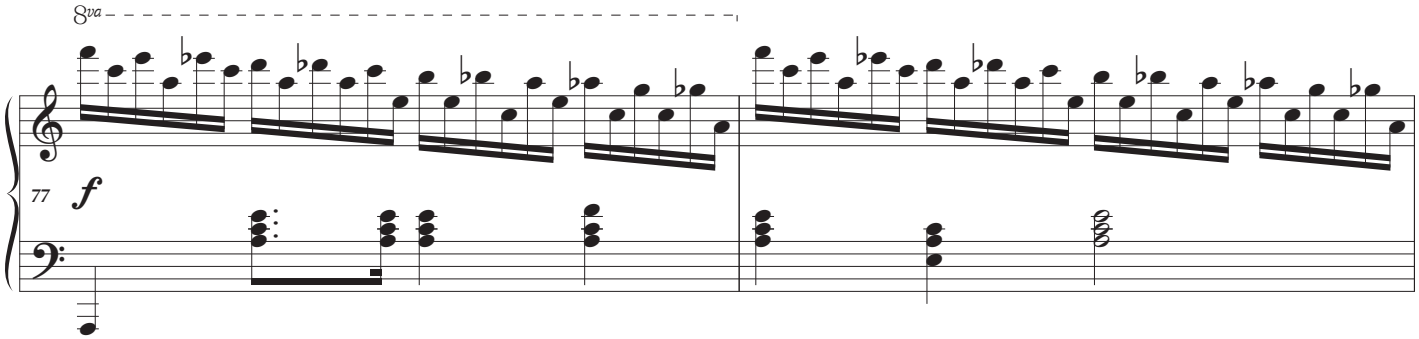
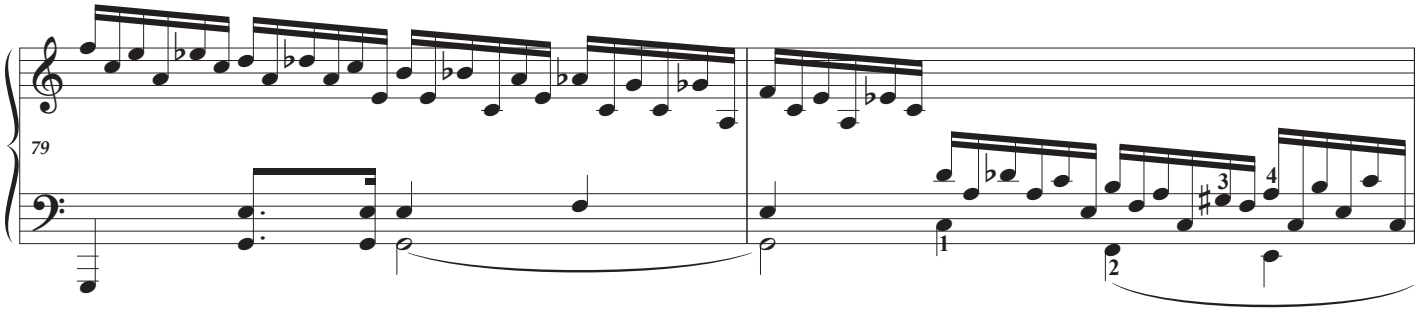
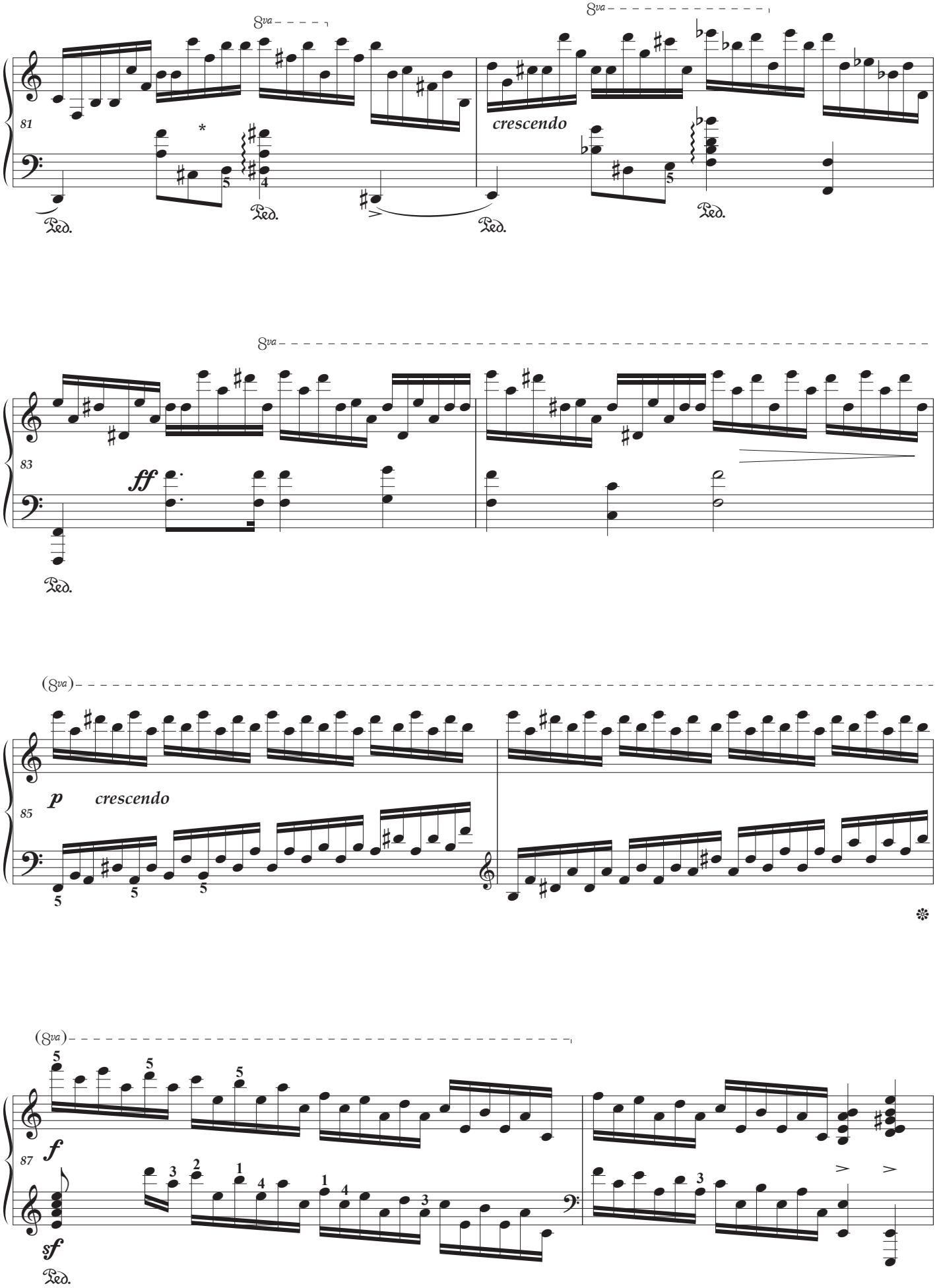
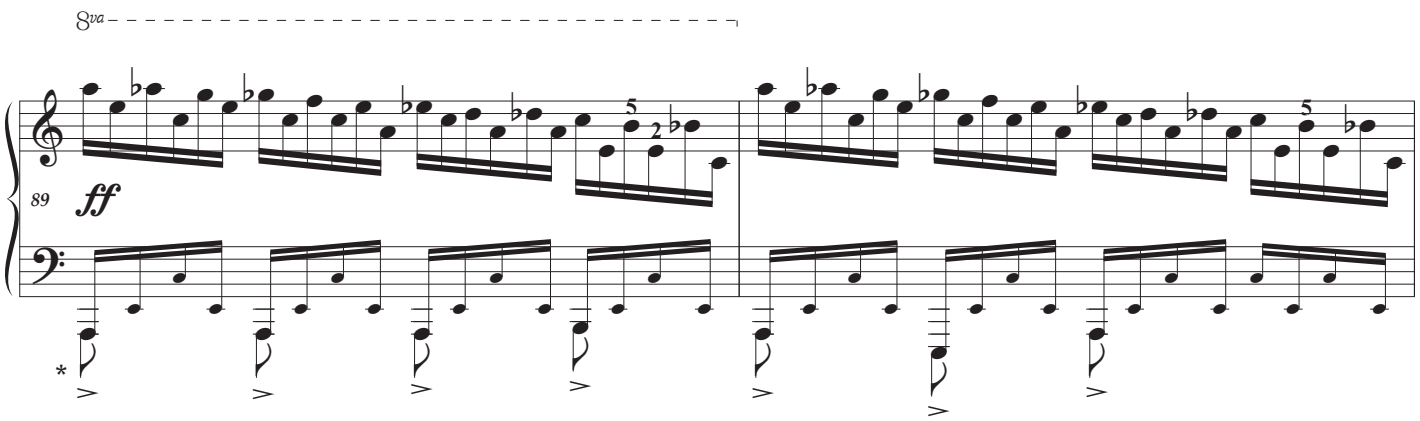
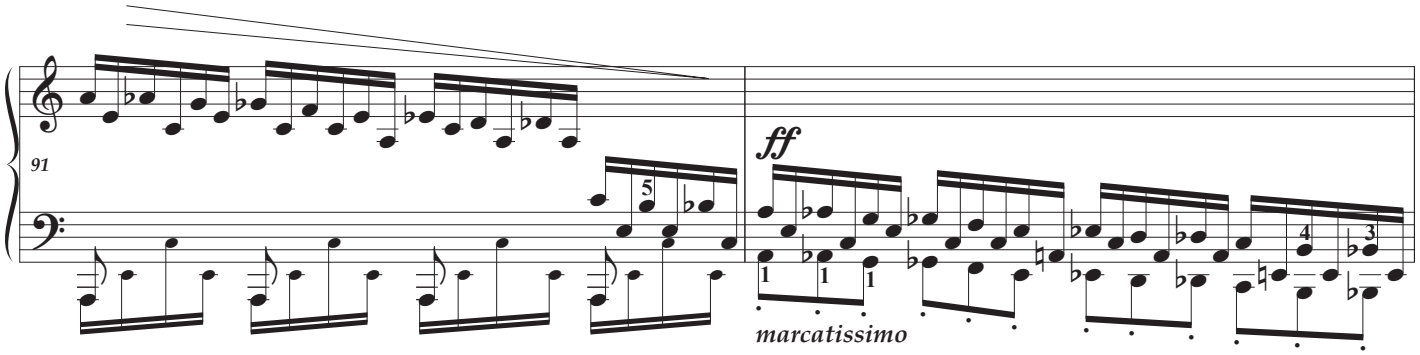
8va

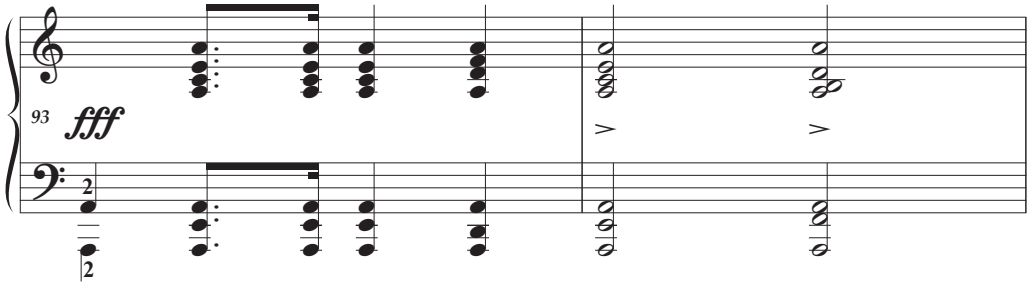

8va
77
f

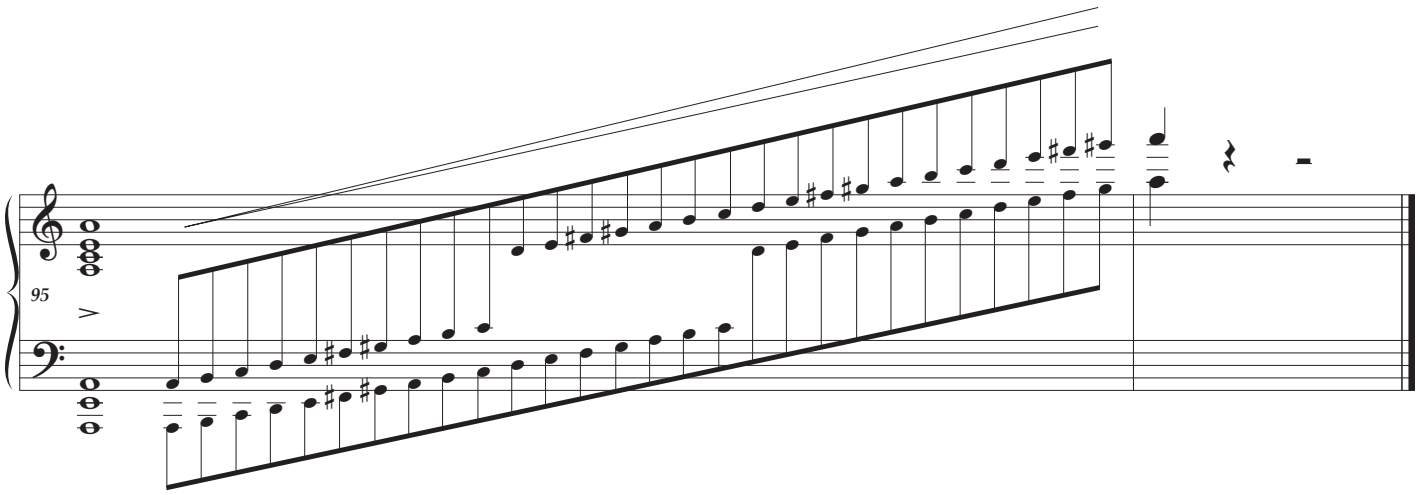

79
1
2
3
4


8va
81
crescendo
Ped.
83
ff
85
p
crescendo
(8va)
87
f
sf









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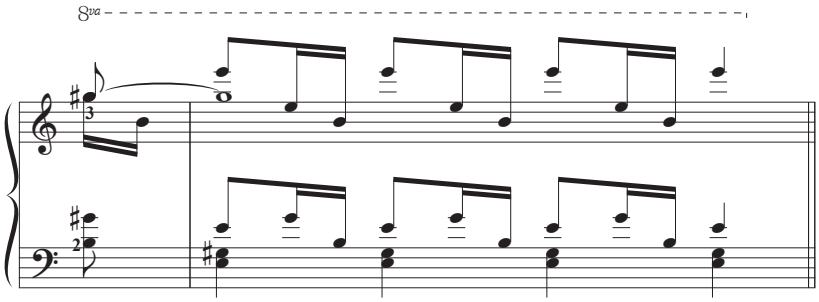

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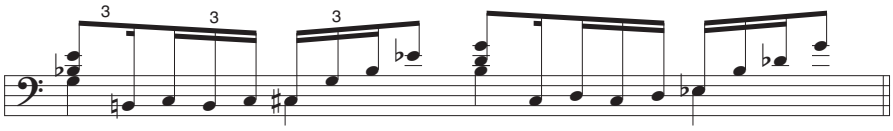

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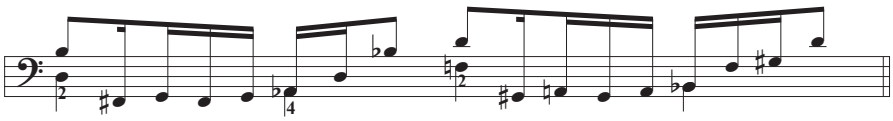

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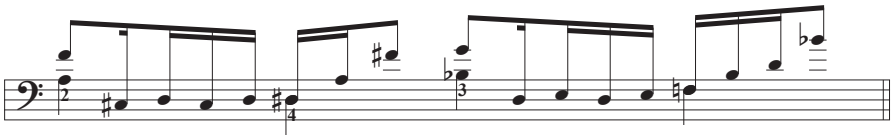

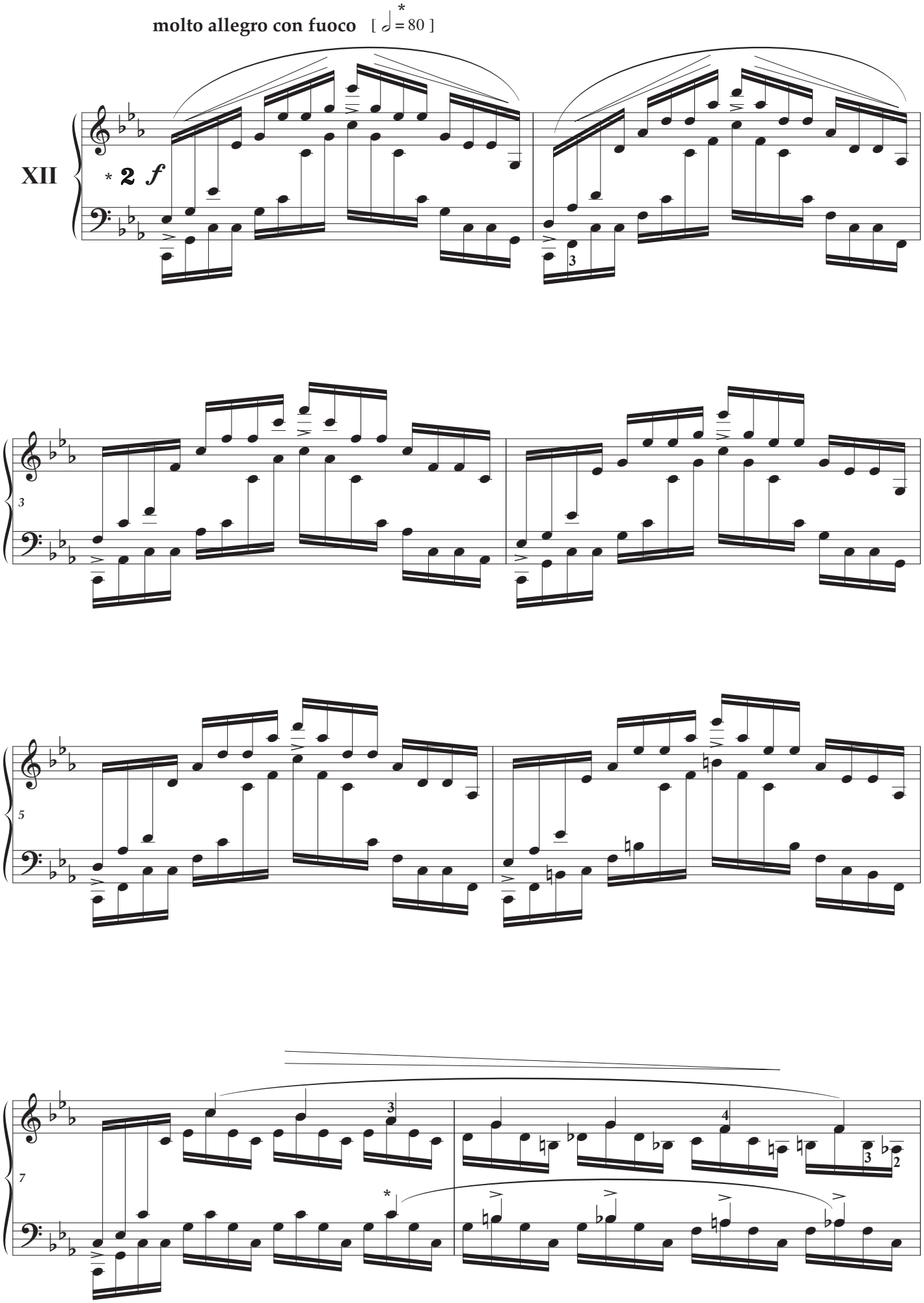
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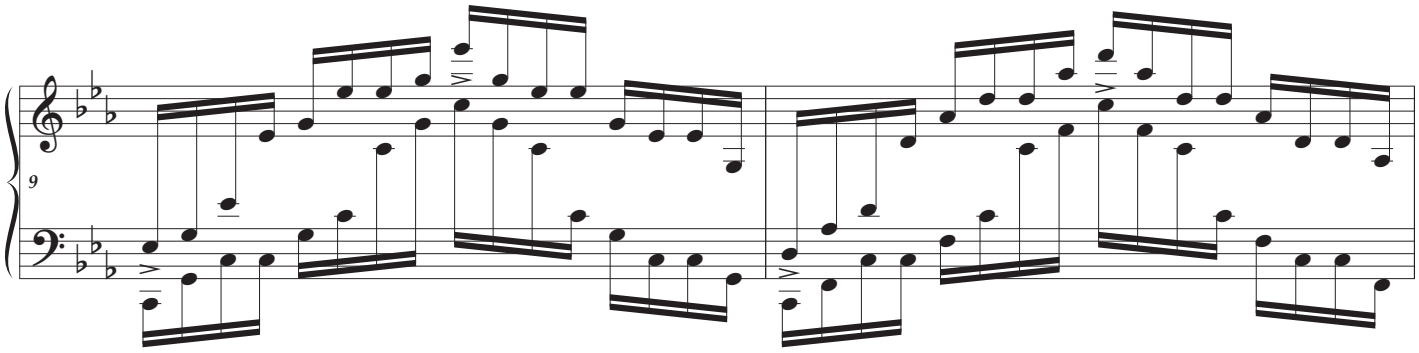
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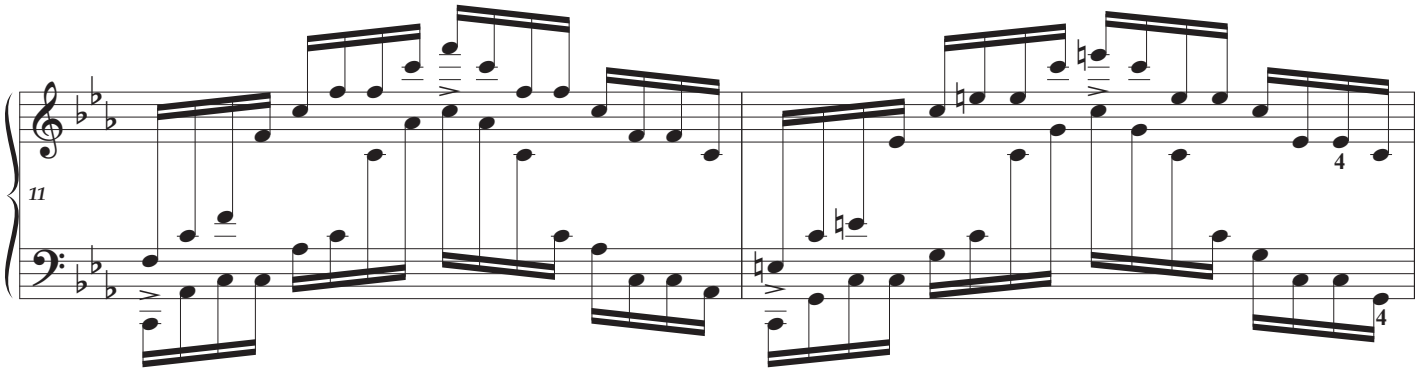
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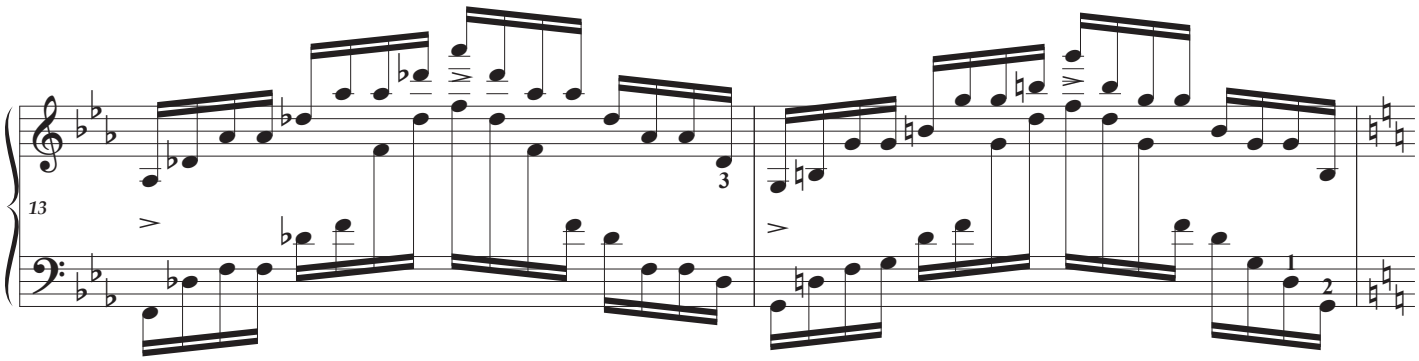
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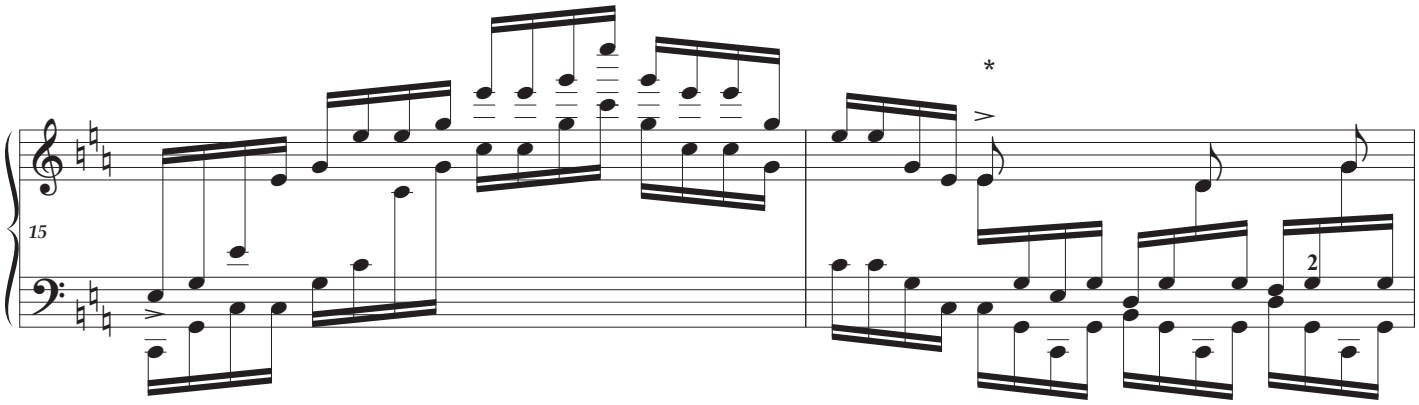
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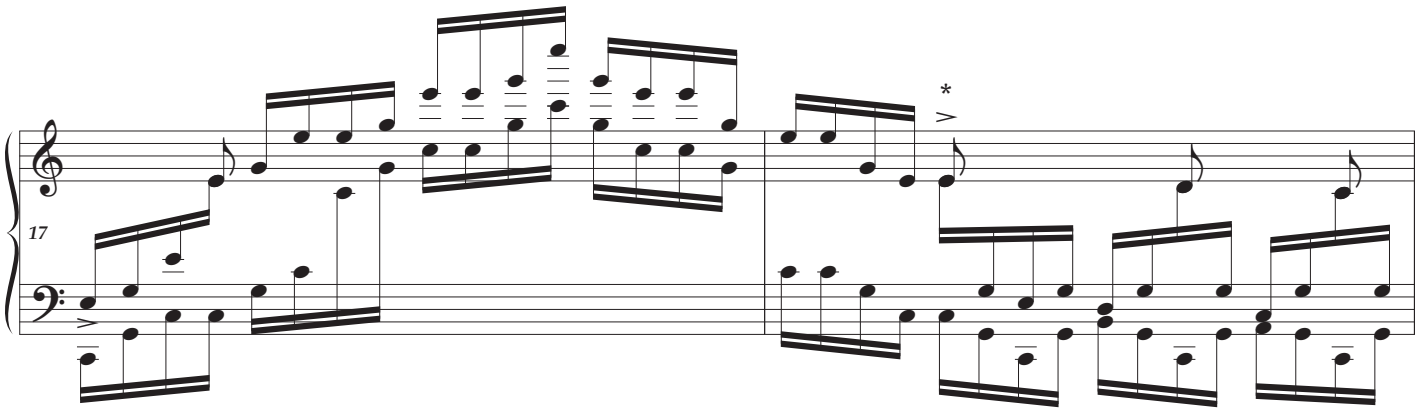
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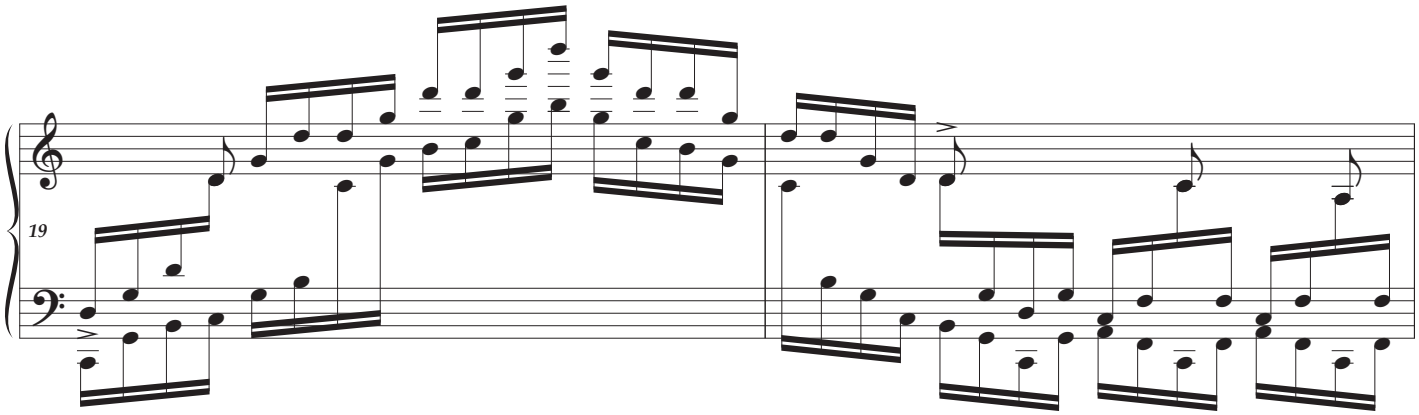
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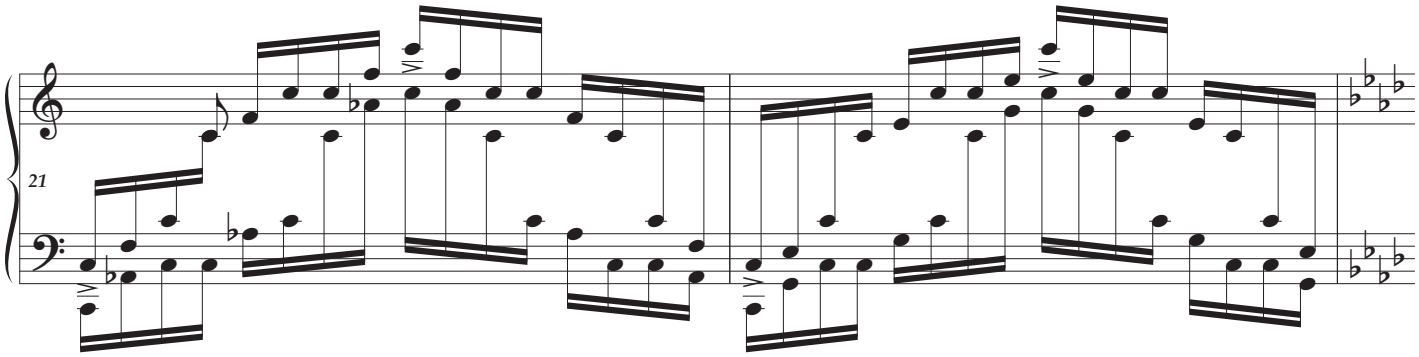
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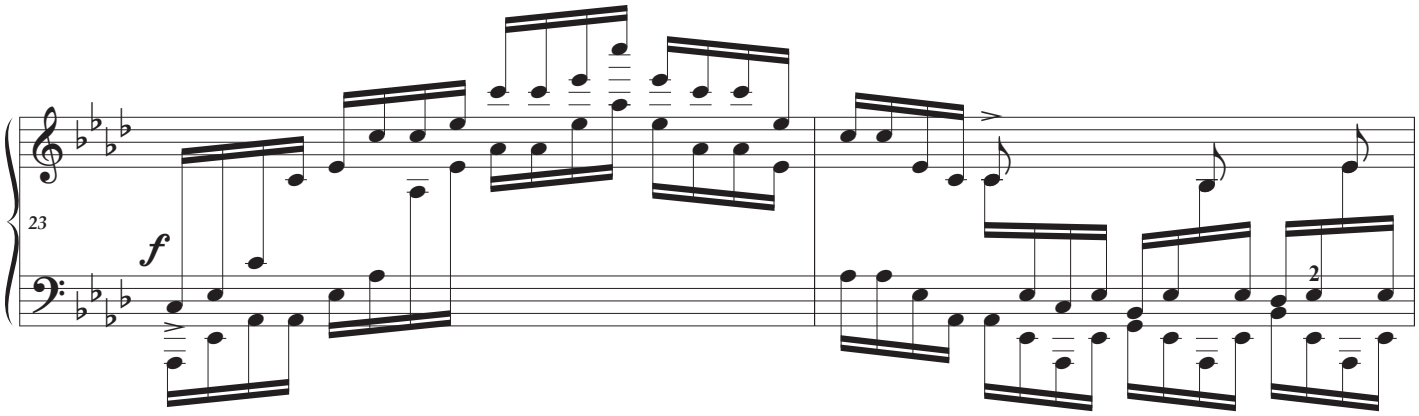
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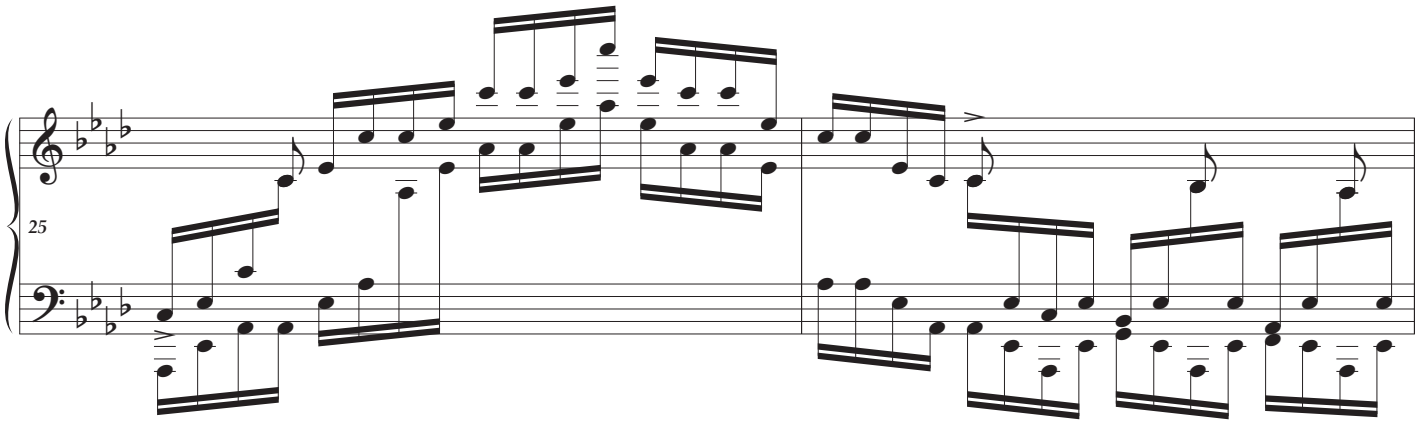

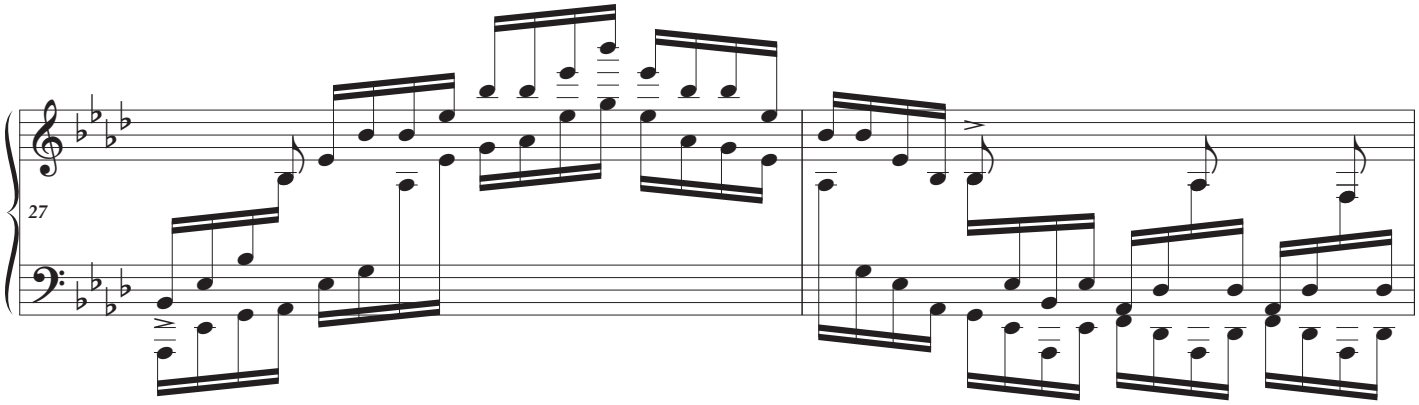

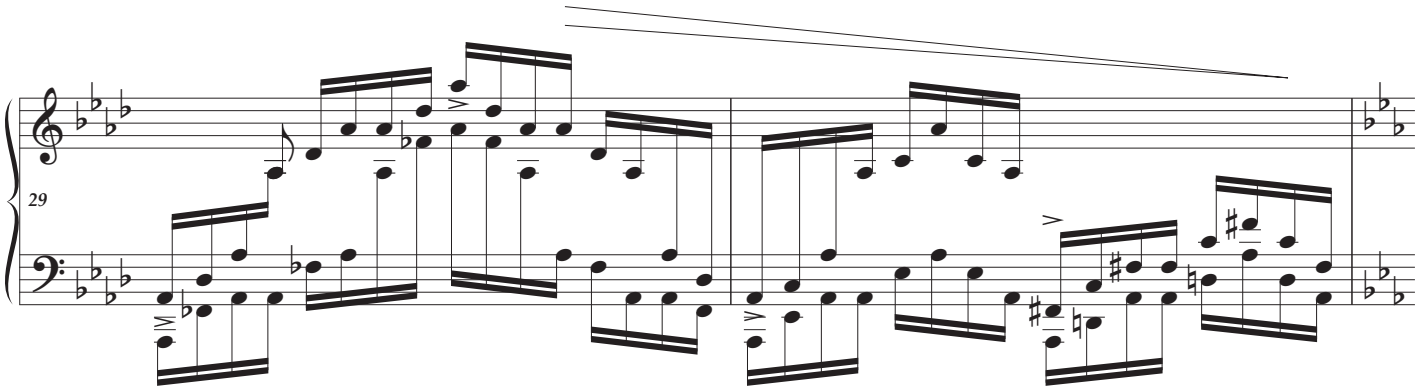

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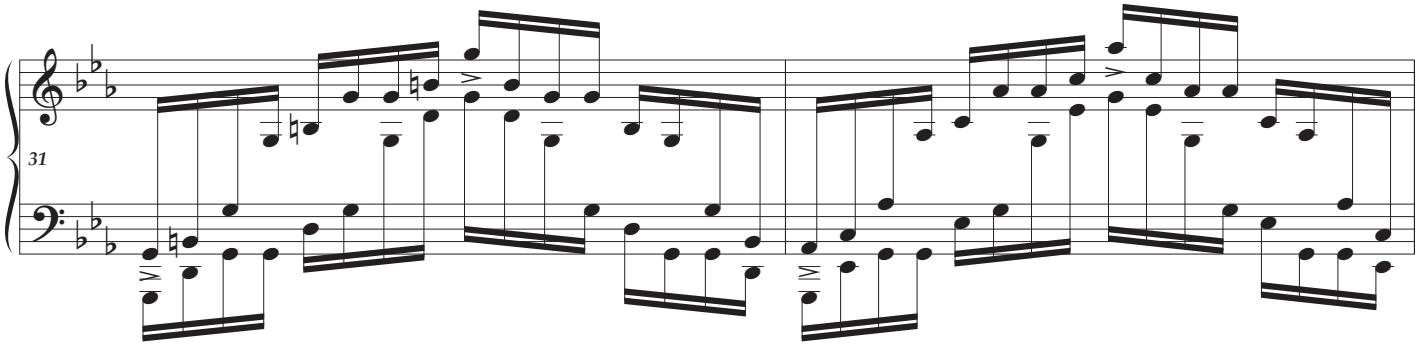

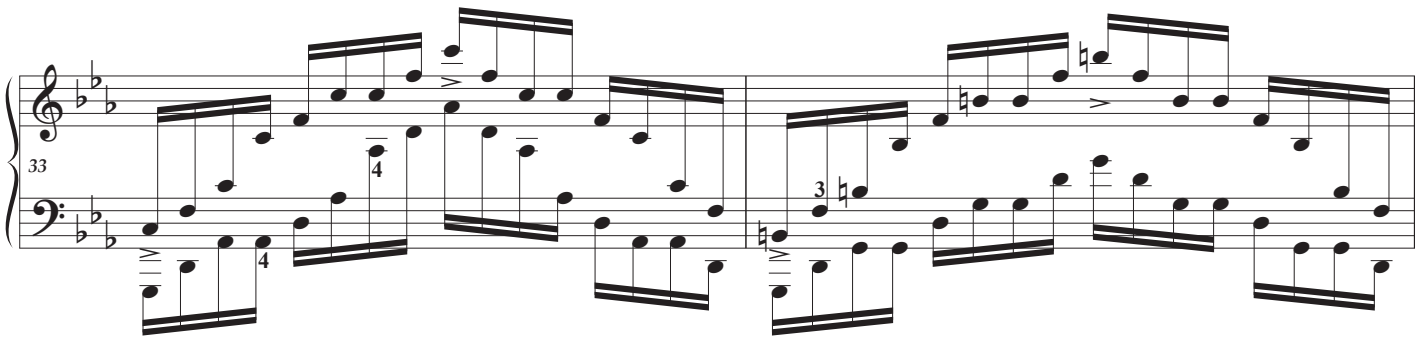
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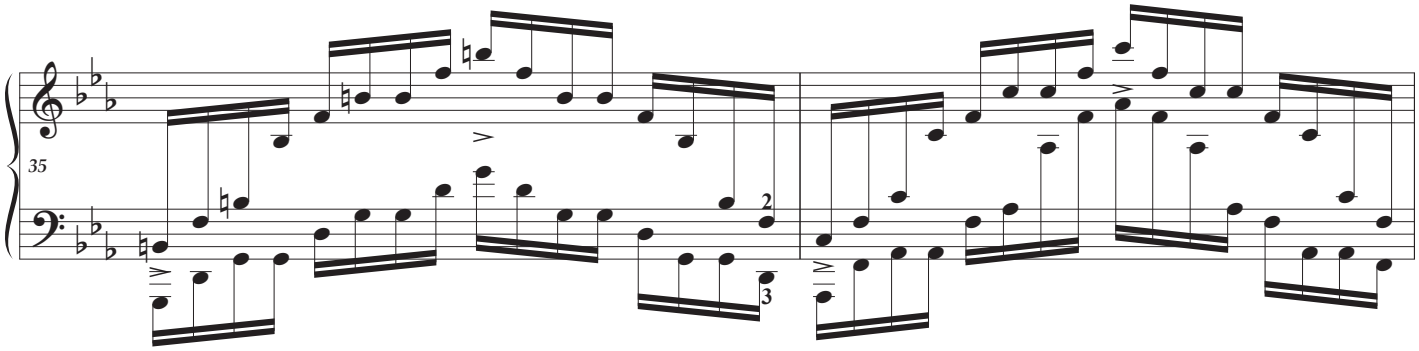
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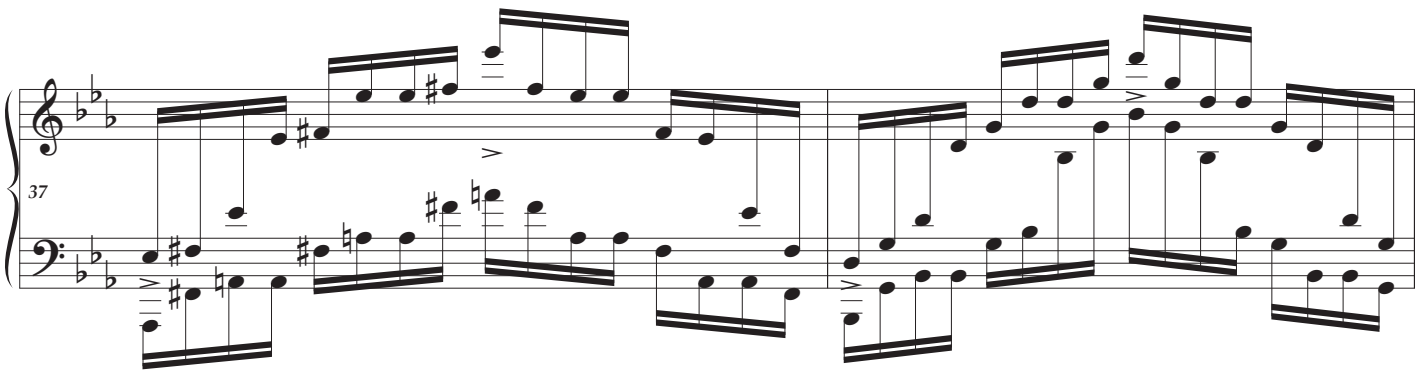
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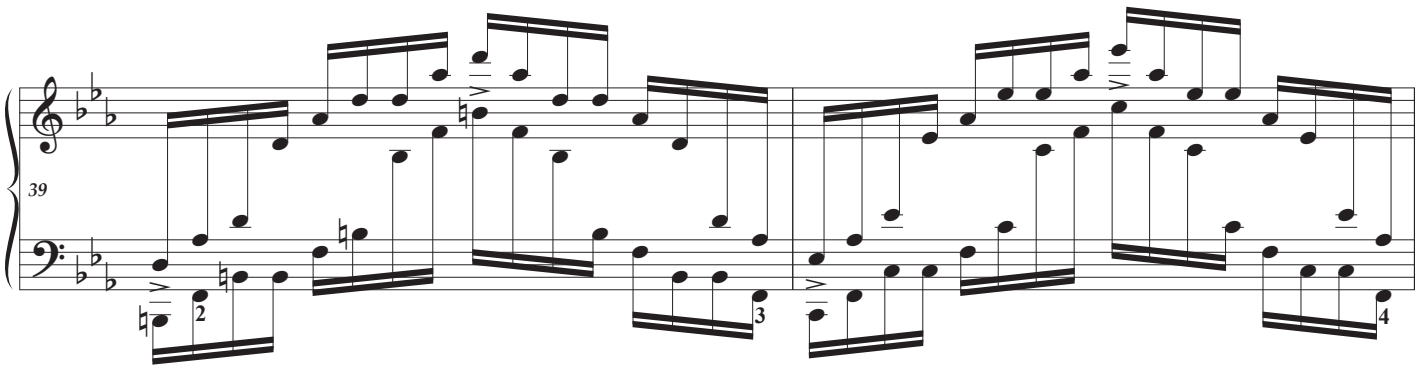
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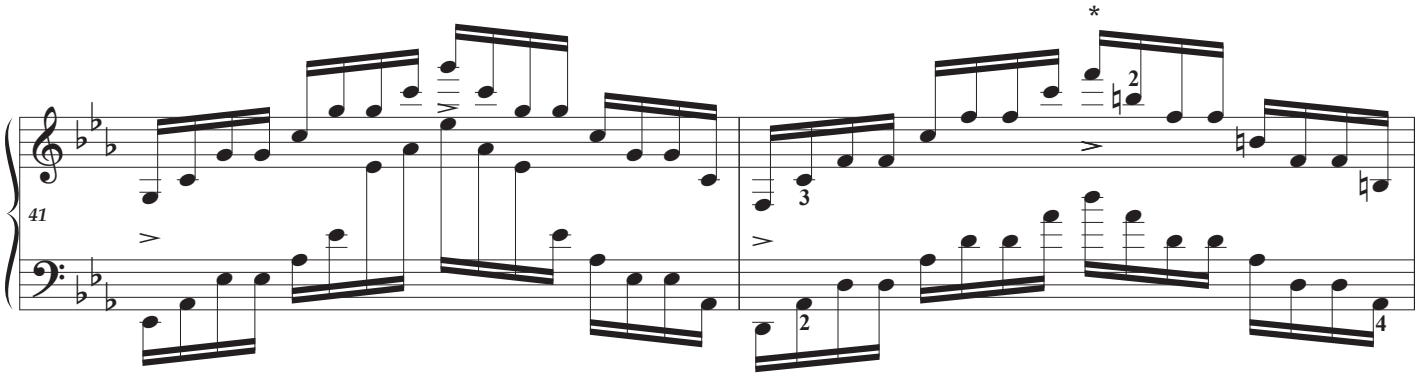

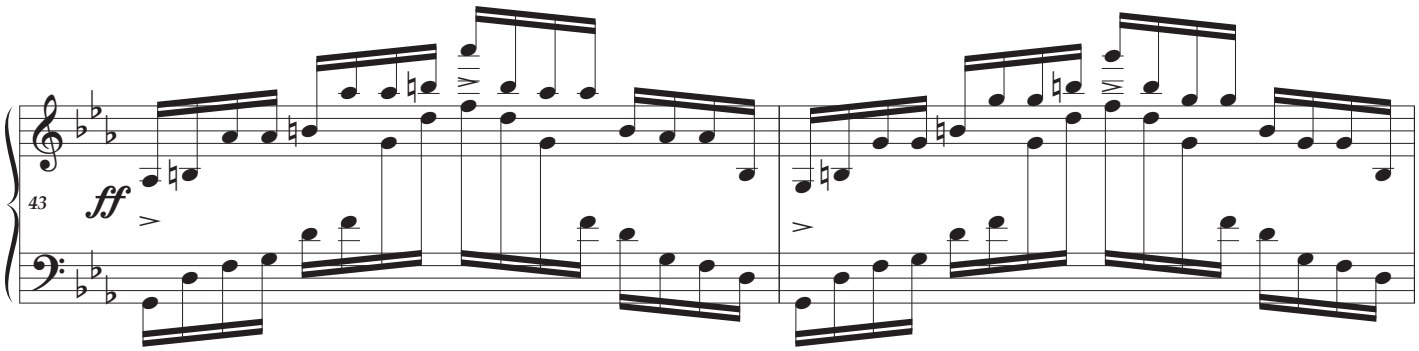

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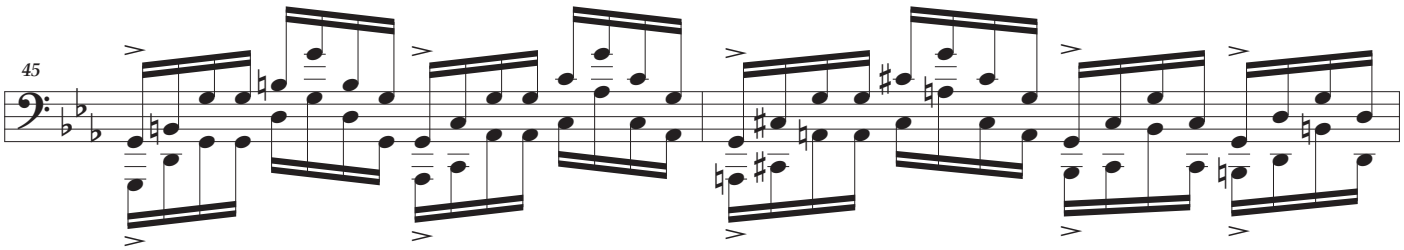

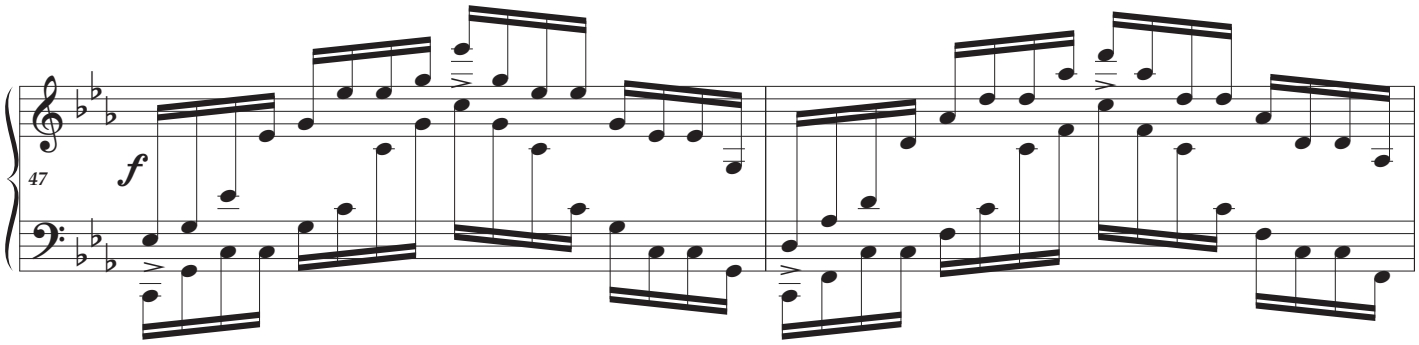

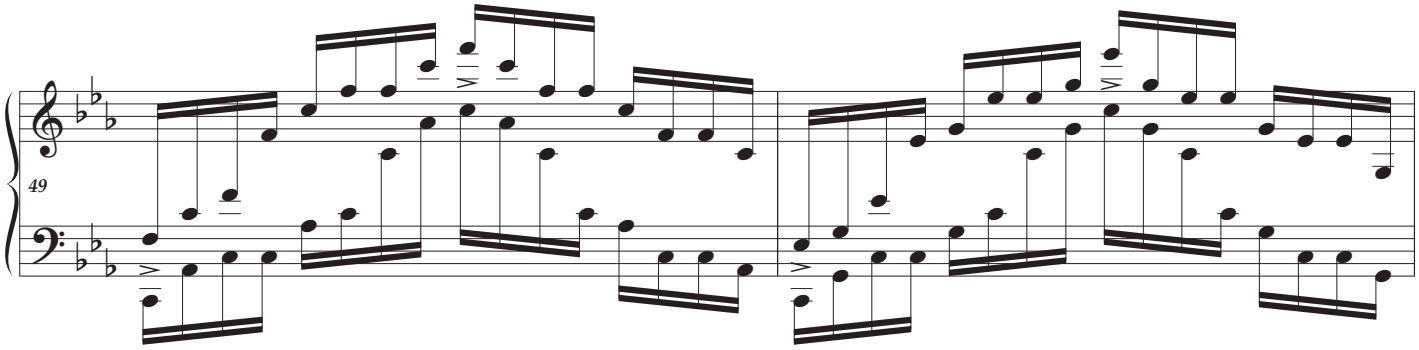

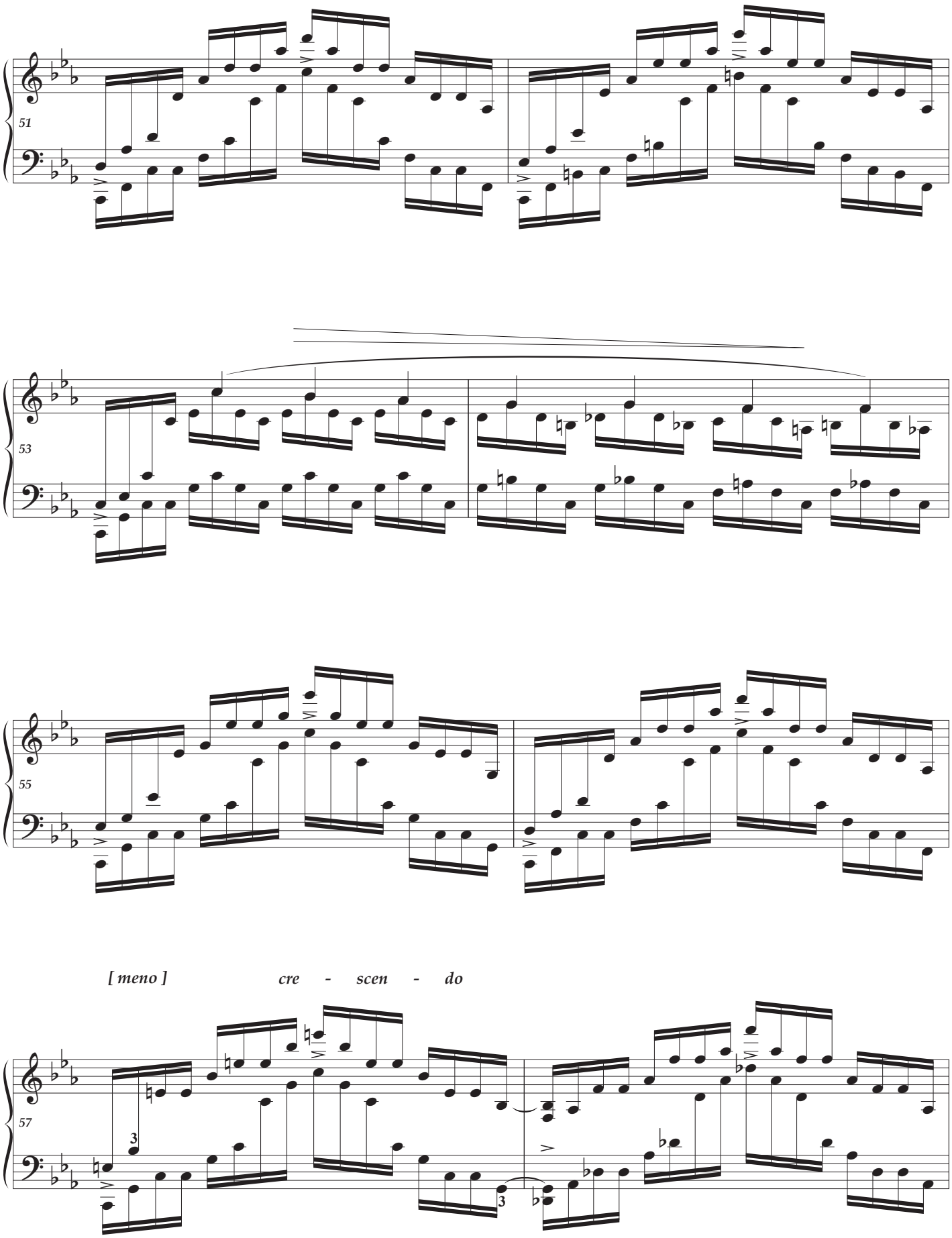
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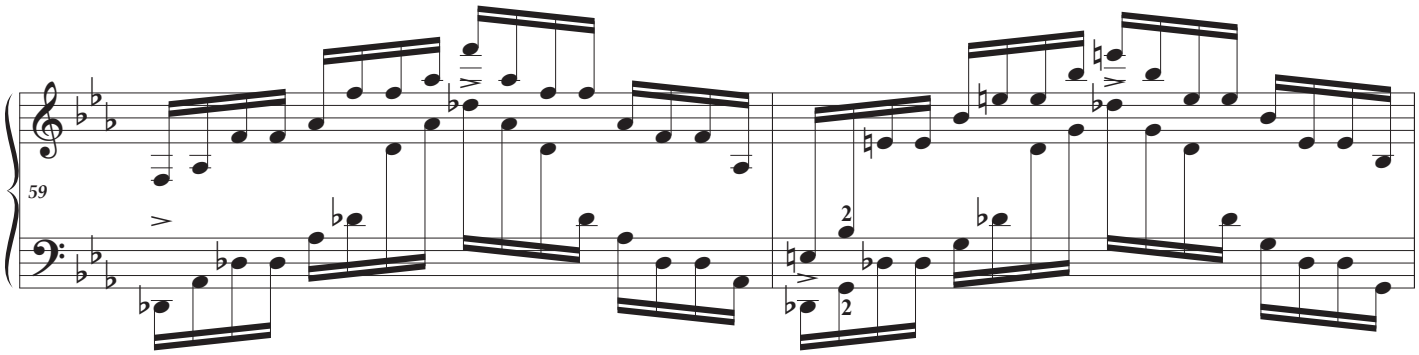
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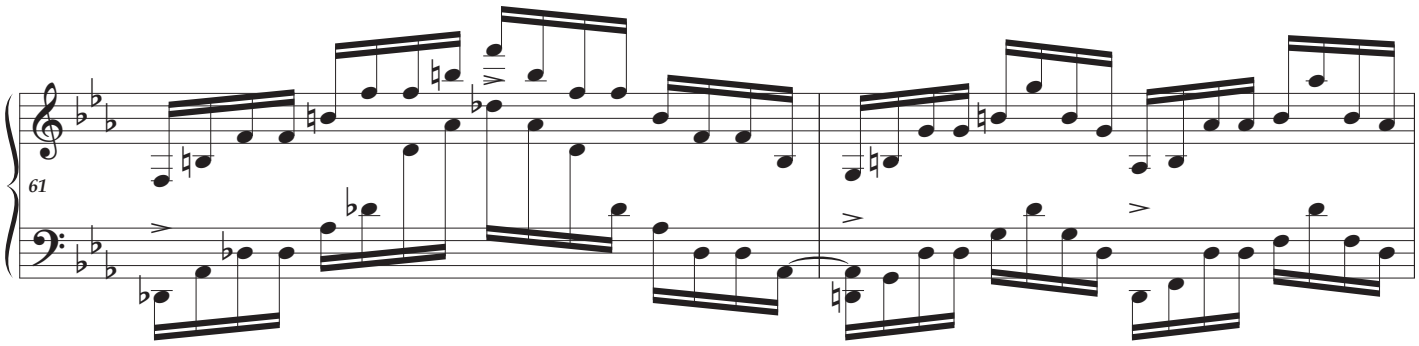
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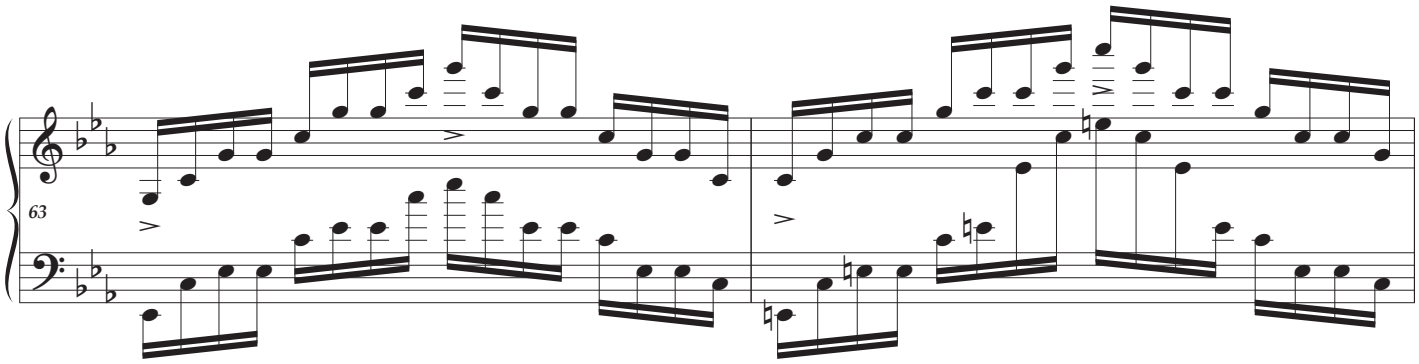
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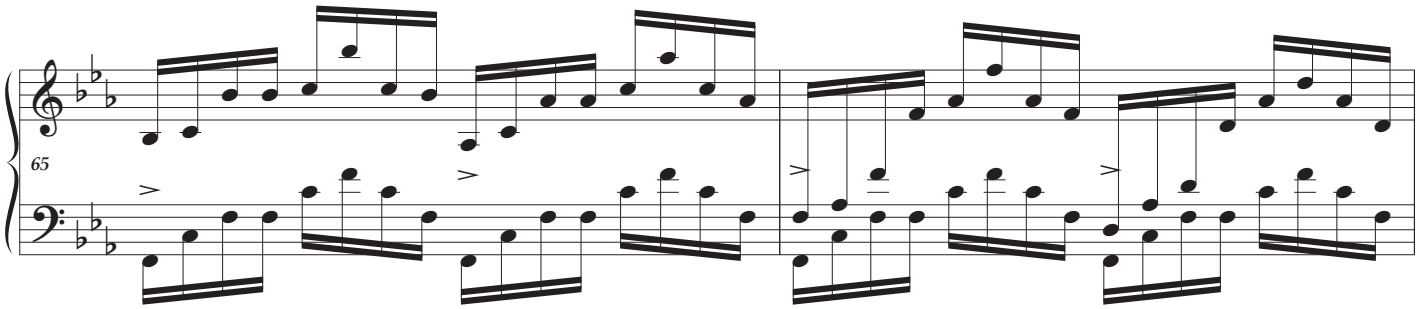
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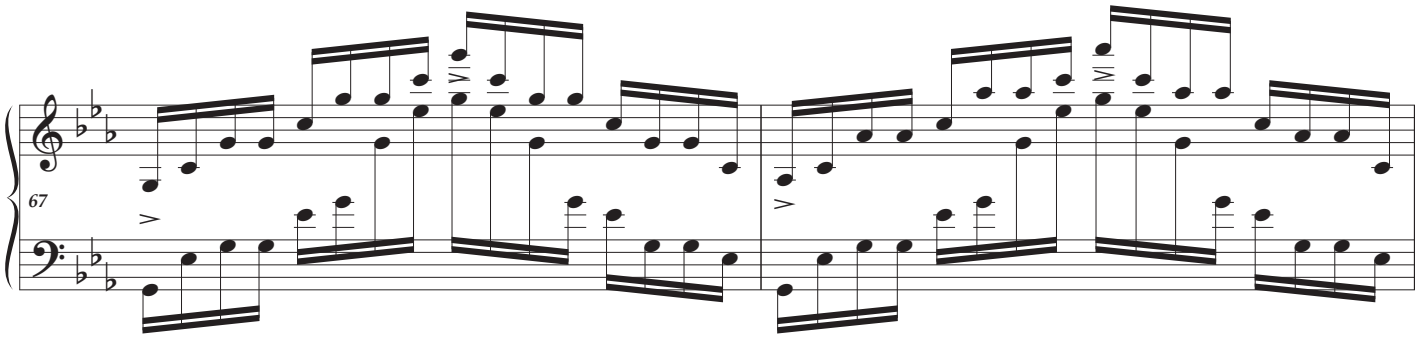
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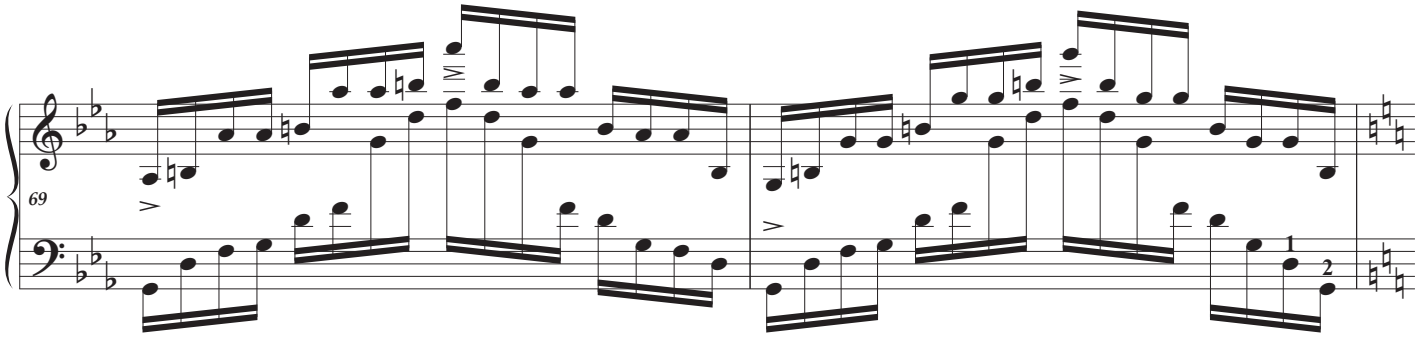
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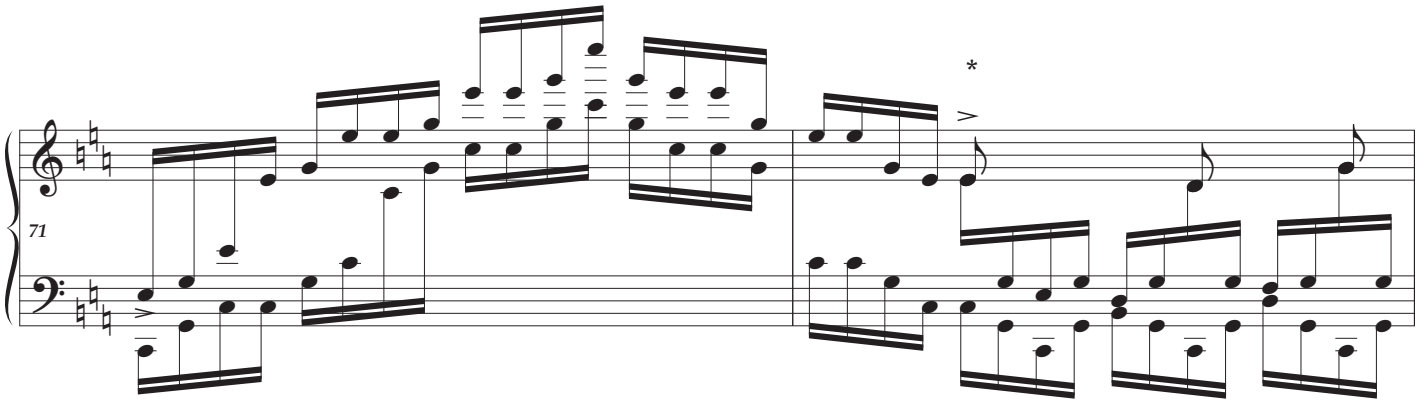
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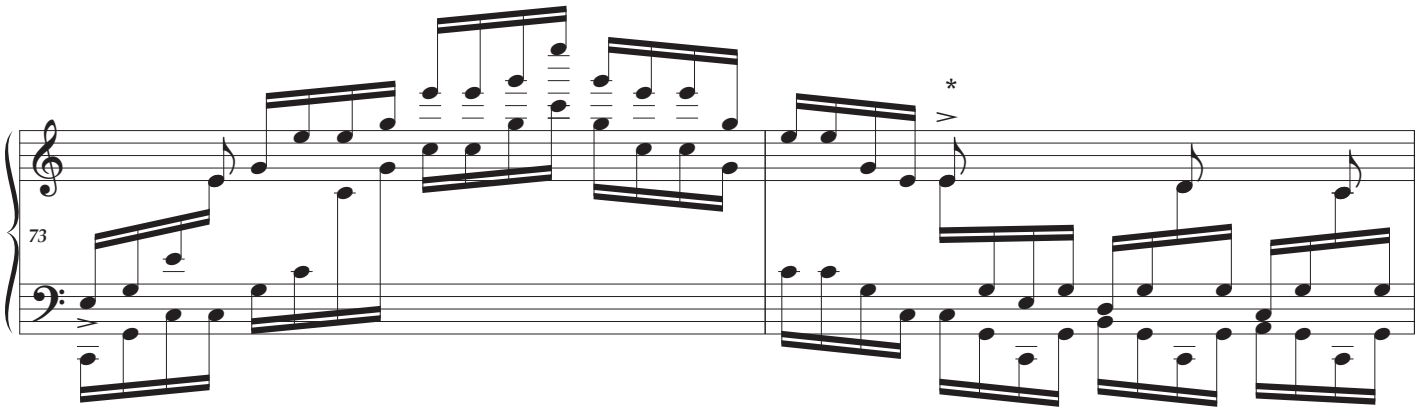
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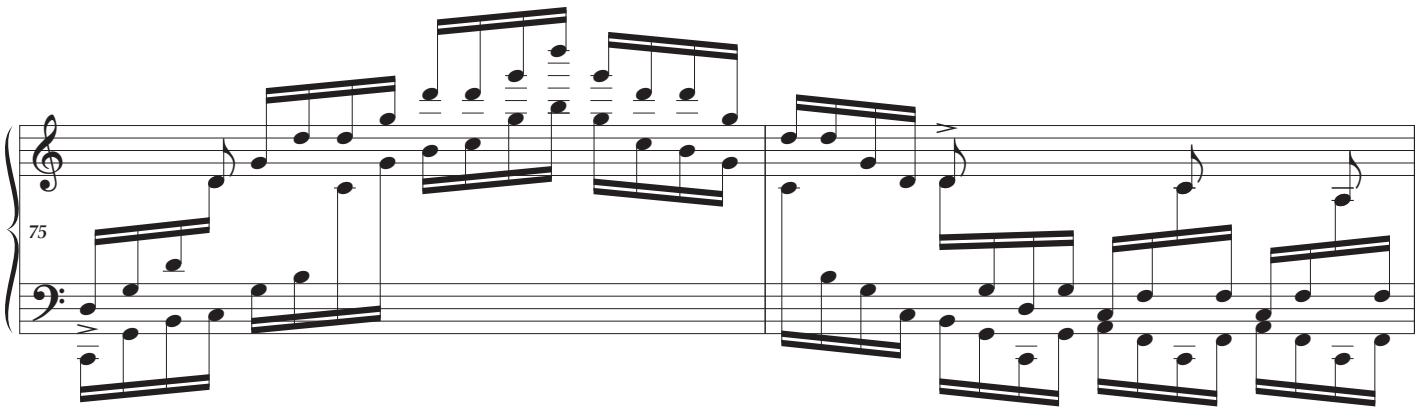
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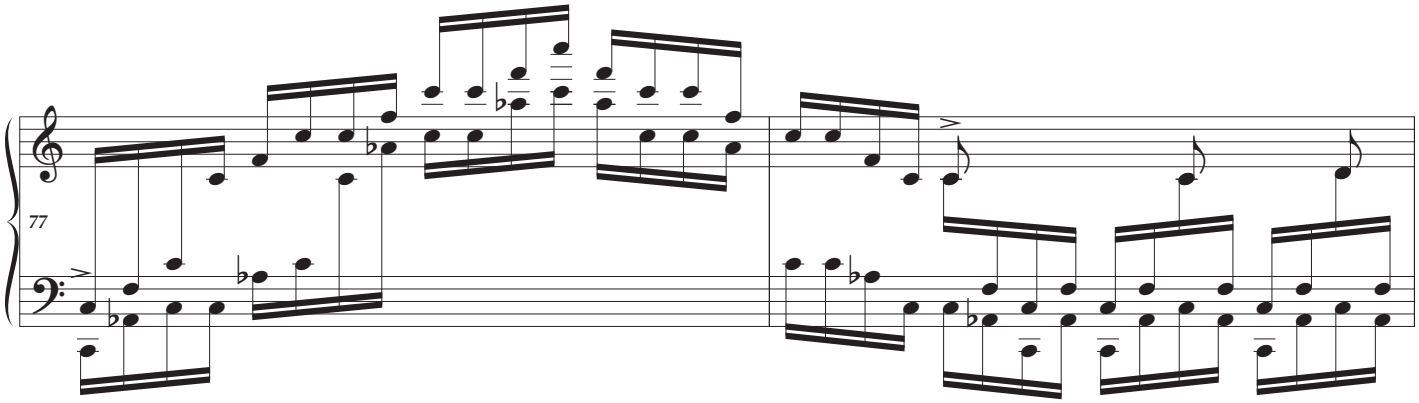
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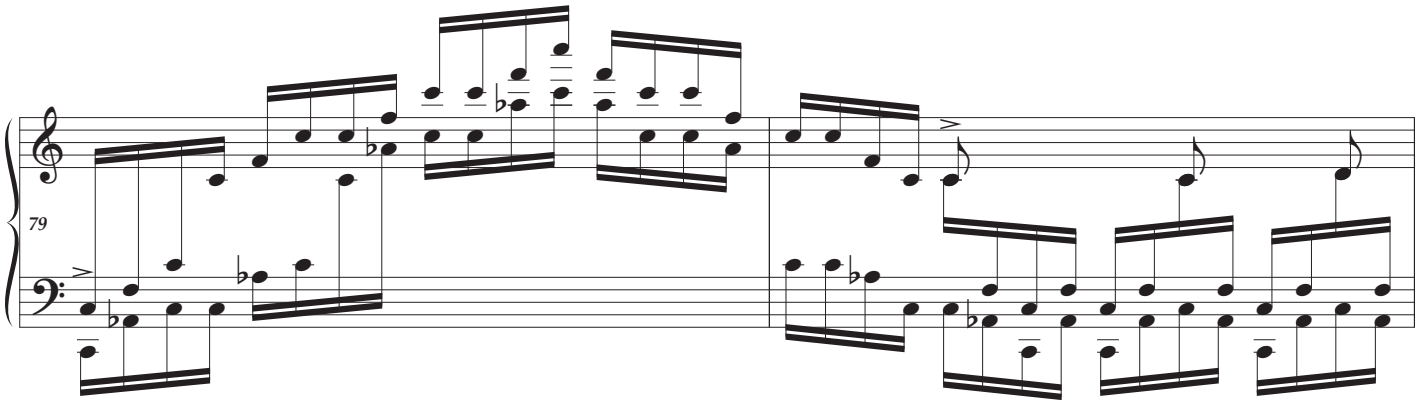
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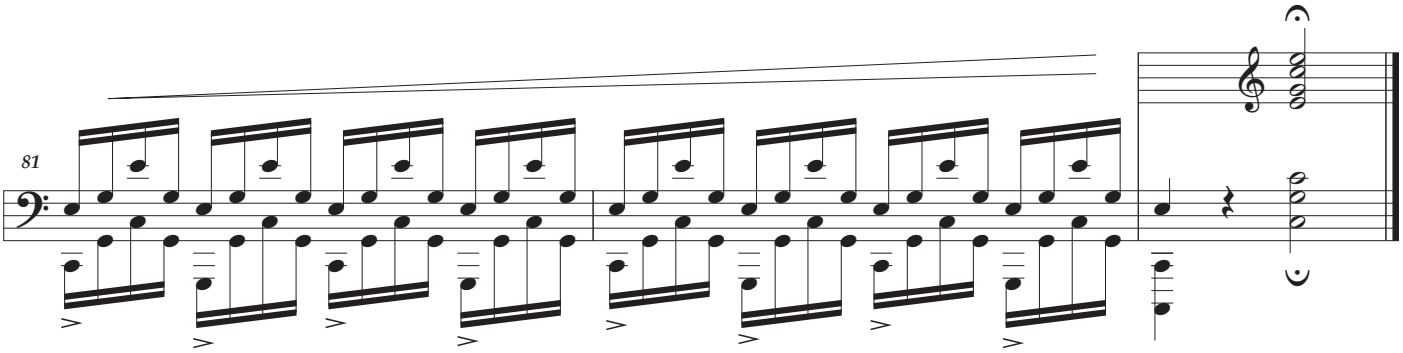
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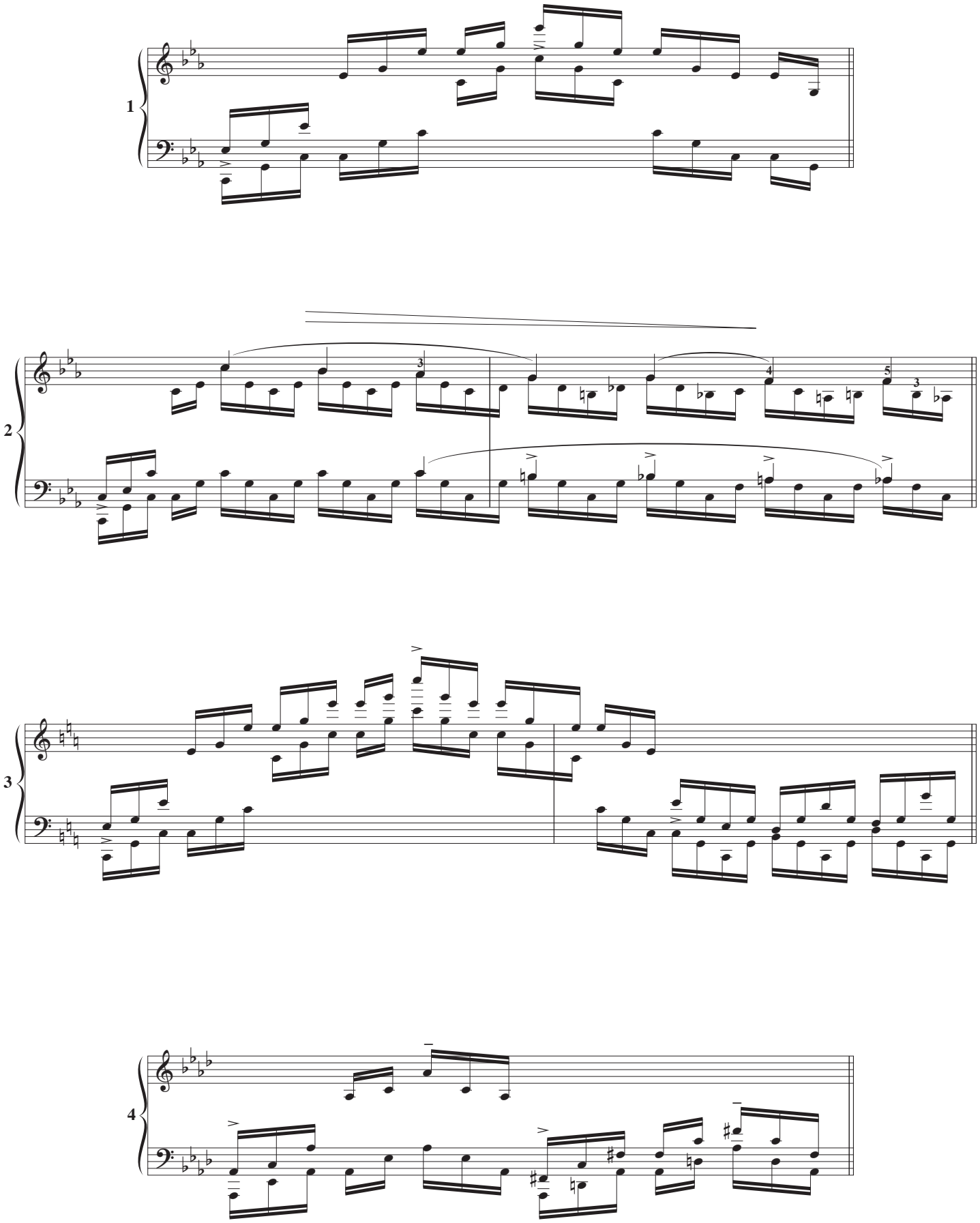
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Appendix

Comments and afterthoughts

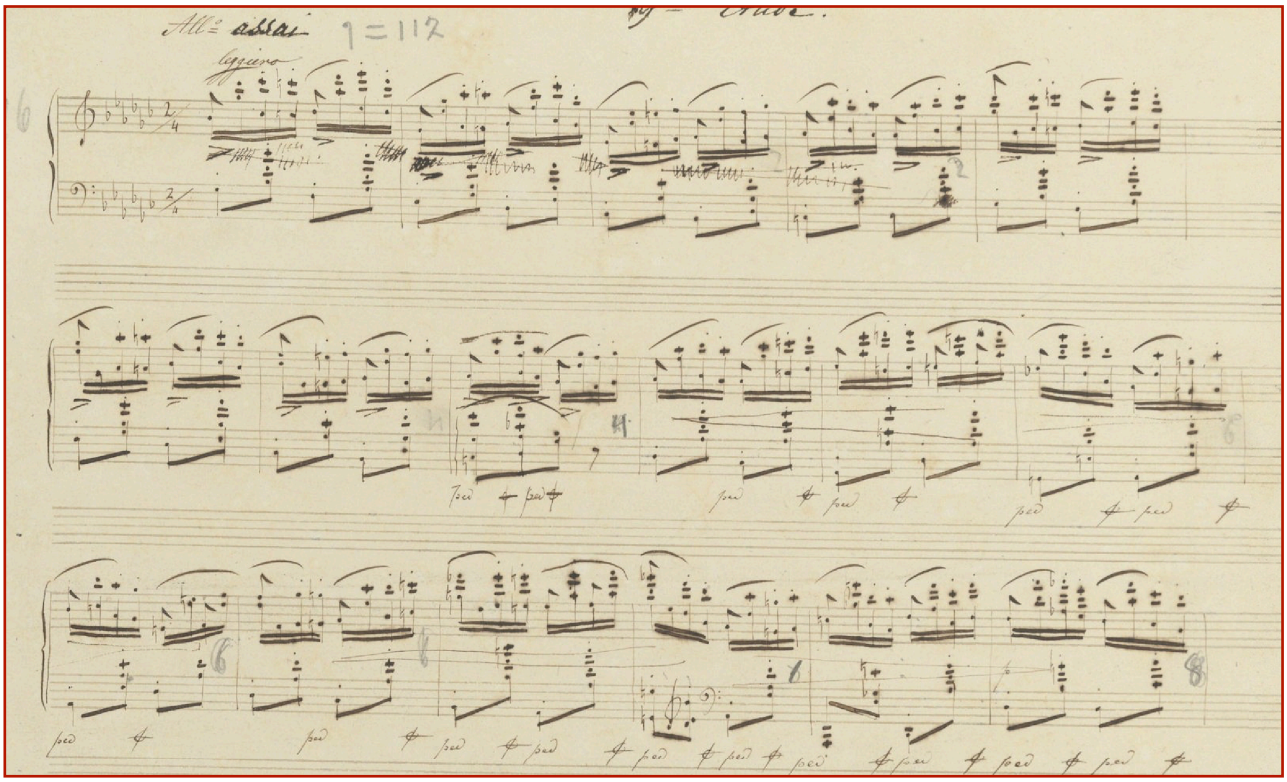
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- although Chopin disliked giving titles, the nicknames from this group of four studies are plausible
- as I have mentioned elsewhere, metronome speeds are nearly always considerably faster than is musically desirable and reasonable

Étude N° 9 in G♭ major page **1**

While its lepidopteran nickname is not the least appropriate among these etudes, it cannot do justice to this brief, essentially graceful broken octave study of charming and galant inventiveness. I recommend the Cortot edition preparatory exercises.

Notes

- bars 1-8 — many editions give unlikely accents on all the melodic quavers
- all editions give a very quick ♩ = 112 — I recommend 96
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy of any edition
- **4** C♭D♭F is an unlikely alternative
- 8 some editions insert an A♭
- **37-41** the tied D♭ is proposed by Cortot
- **45-49** editorial dashed barlines

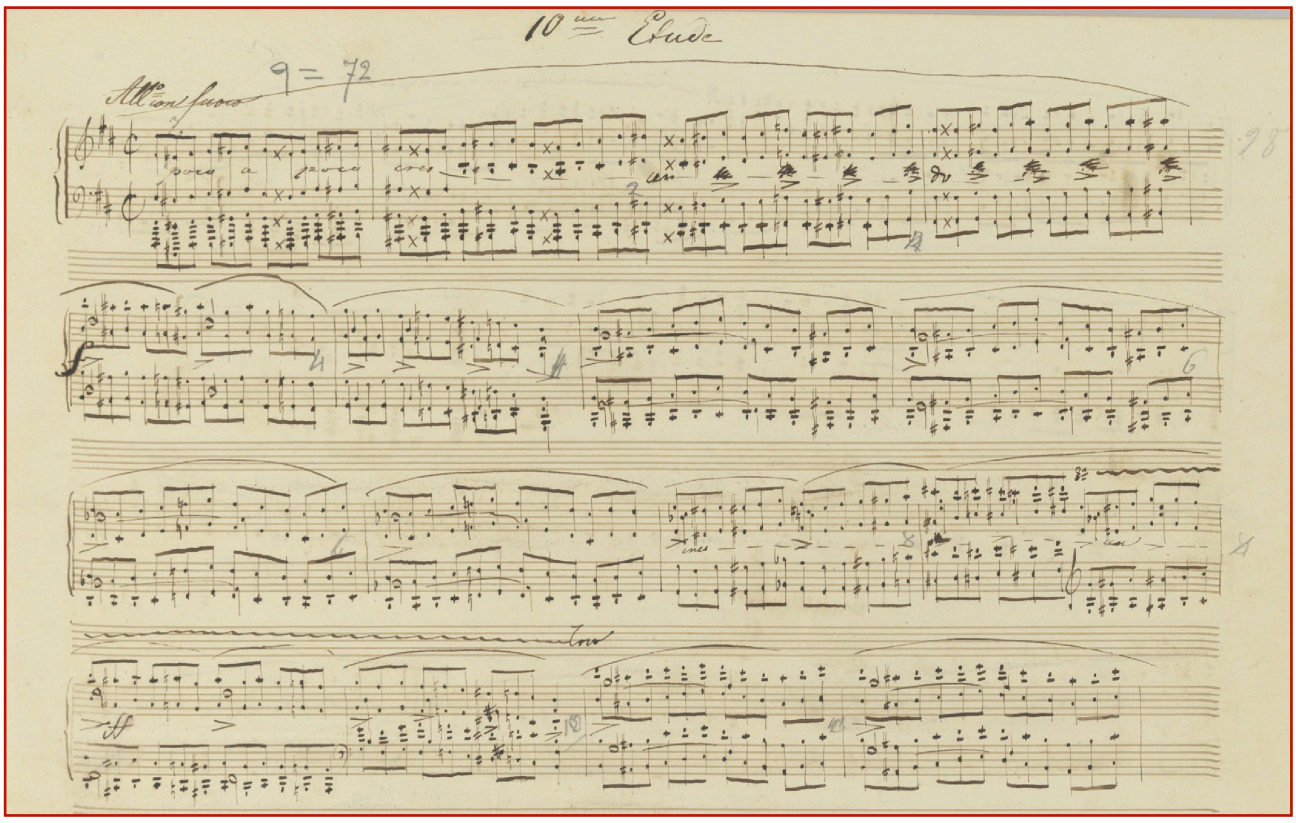


Étude N° 10 in B minor page **5**

While the image might represent hell, it is certainly infernally difficult to perform. I recall the opening stages of the Munich competition many years ago when during my youthful effort all the lights went out leaving the auditorium in total darkness, and I was instructed to cease my 'blindfolded' performance after the central section. Stormy writing creates another extreme study demanding not only great agility and power, but dynamic control and stamina — one must be thankful that the recap has a reduced number of bars! Another octave study, this time on a grander scale with feverish passion in the mould of the first scherzo, variously described as 'a hurricane threatening death' and 'destruction and chaos with hell finally triumphant'. As with the first scherzo we discover an ecstatic contrasting central section with the octaves now become eloquent and contrapuntal. While generally recommending the Cortot preparatory exercises, it is important to realise the futility of over-straining physically to hold the inner notes; this is in part a study for projection of the interior voices, achievable by accentuation and judicious use of the pedal.

Notes

- 𝅗𝅥 = 72 — I recommend 63
- some editions erroneously give common time
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy of any edition
- **23** see page 14 for an alternative metre
- **31** some editions give this unlikely metronome speed — a very flexible 𝅗𝅥. = 38 is more realistic
- **36** I suggest omitting the diamond-headed note
- **57-59** editorial change of metre and dashed barlines
- **73/75** it would seem reasonable to introduce a few modifications for the third repeat
- **84** editorial added tie and bass octave
- **116** see page 14 for an alternative metre

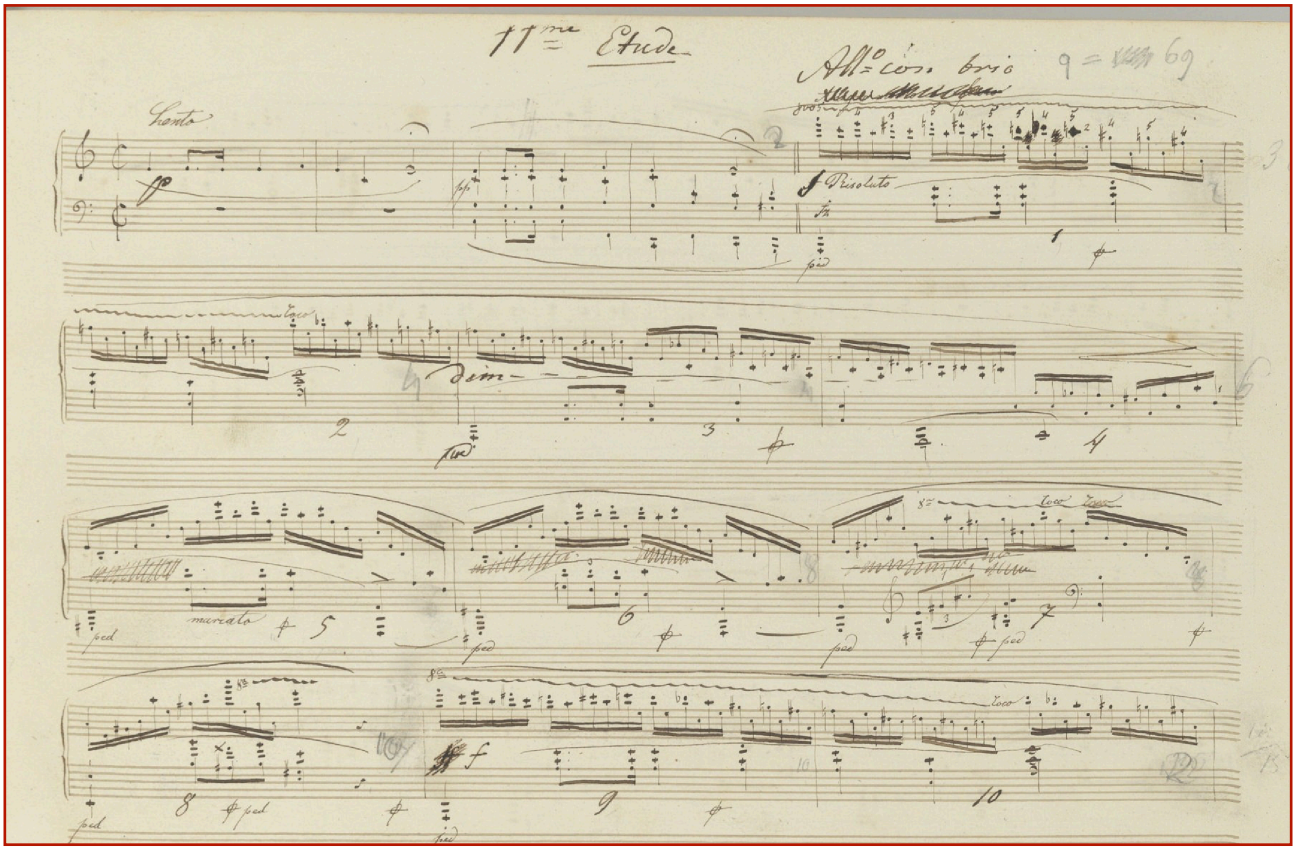


Étude N° 11 in A minor page **15**

Its nickname 'Winter Wind' refers to furiously swirling chromatic scales and broken chords combined for the right hand. It is the simplicity of the opening four bar theme — at the suggestion of his friend Charles A. Hoffmann — which provides unusual distinction. This strong rhythmical motif in unlikely military style makes similar demands to Op 25 N° 6 (RH double thirds) where the left hand is responsible for projecting the melodic line while accompanying a sometimes awkward bass. Indeed it would be helpful if we had three hands for this etude, and I suggest pre-studying the left hand part using 10 fingers. The semiquaver passages will benefit from study in an alternative metre of 6/4.

Notes

- most editions give 𝅗𝅥 = 69 — I recommend 60 — most editions erroneously give common time (see the autograph below)
- phrasing, dynamics, accentuation and pedalling are not a strict copy of any edition
- editorial changes of key-signature
- **12/17/35/81** preparatory exercises on page 25
- **45/47** many editions omit the mediant
- **45** consistent with **47/55/56**
- **46** bass E♭ tied?
- **89-91** editorial bass voice and reduced font
- **95** editorial *sostenuto* pedal

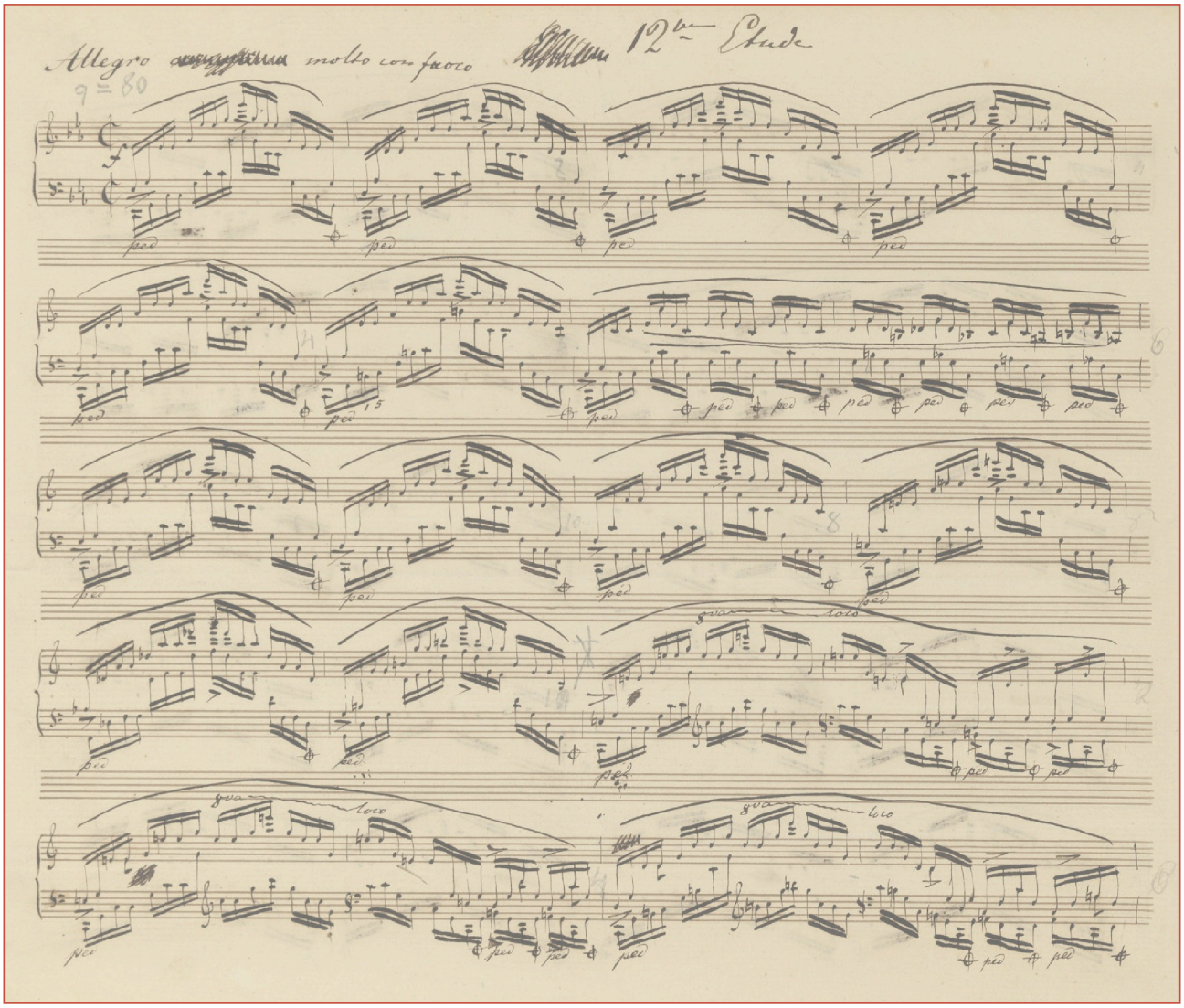


Étude N° 12 in C minor page **26**

Superficially similar to Op 10 N° 1 but far more profound and interesting to study; apart from an equally demanding bass, it is rhythmically fascinating, requiring us to to simultaneously think in groups of 4 semiquavers and other varied arpeggio groups for which there are four basic 'shapes', re-beamed for clarity on page 36. While I do not wish to encourage punctuating the RH thumb, I believe one should be aware of this underlying alternative. The harmonic structure and development is handled with great maturity and its oceanic nickname not entirely inappropriate.

Notes

- most editions give 𝅗𝅥 = 80 — I recommend 66
- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy of any edition
- some editions erroneously give common time
- **7-8** editorial tenor voice and accentuation
- **16** editorial soprano voice with minor modifications of presentation
- **42** the only bar which features an altered descending harmony and I am ashamed to admit that I did not notice the B♮ for a number of years



C H O P I N

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