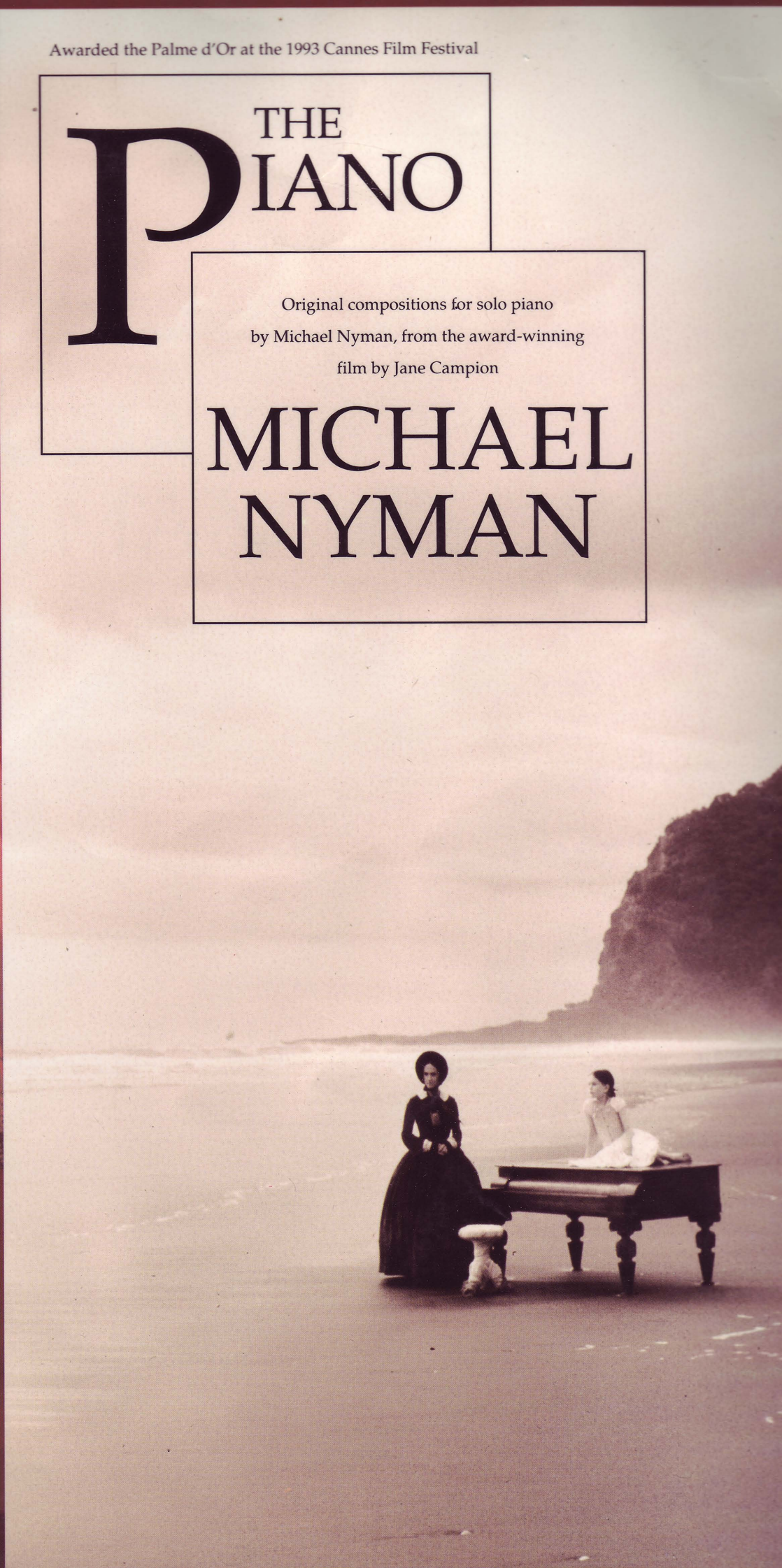
Awarded the Palme d'Or at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival

THE PIANO

Original compositions for solo piano
by Michael Nyman, from the award-winning
film by Jane Campion

MICHAEL NYMAN



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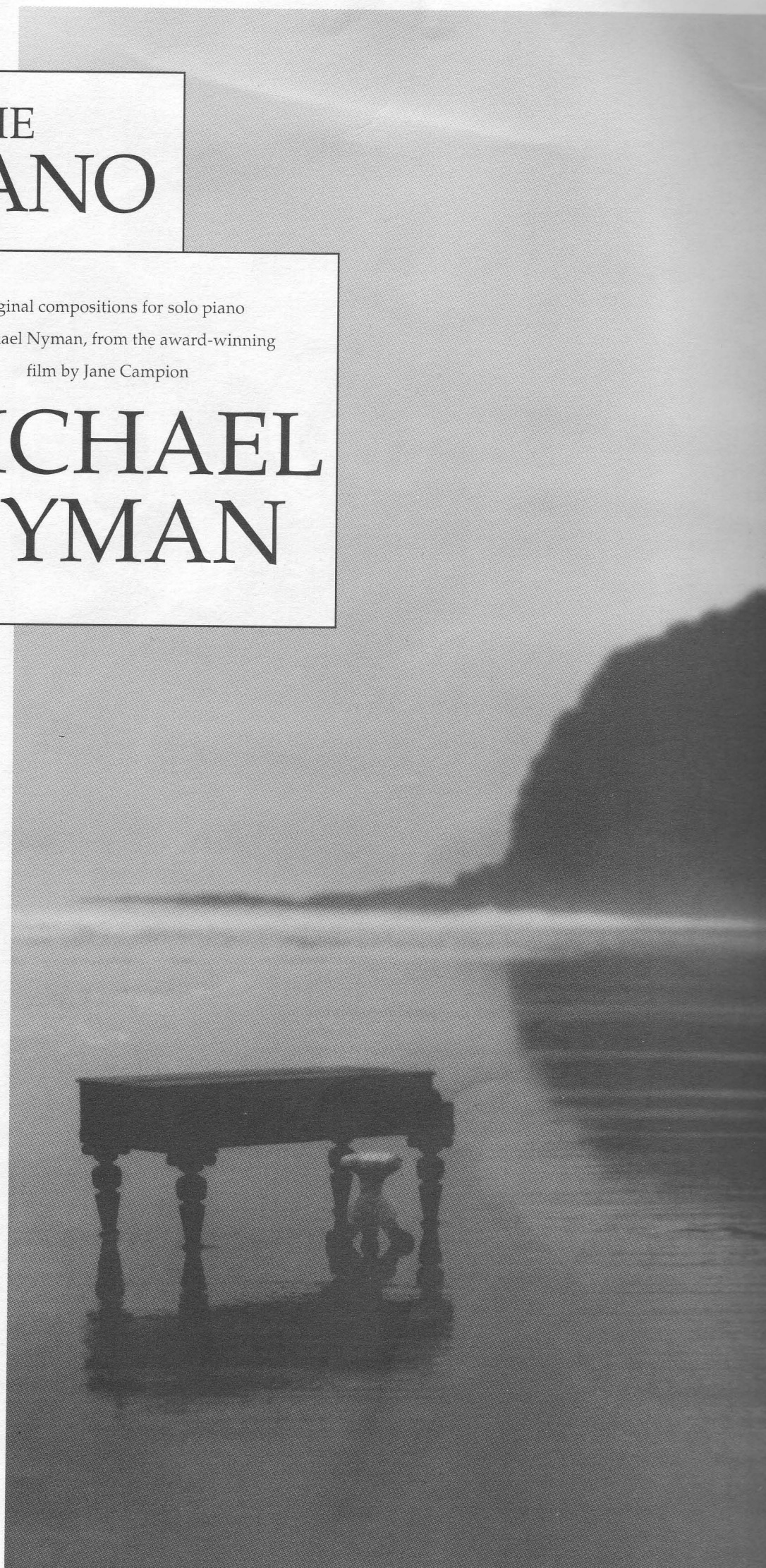

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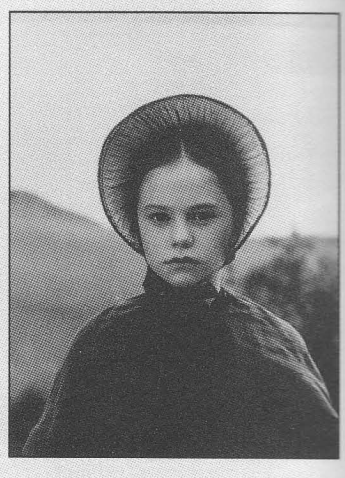

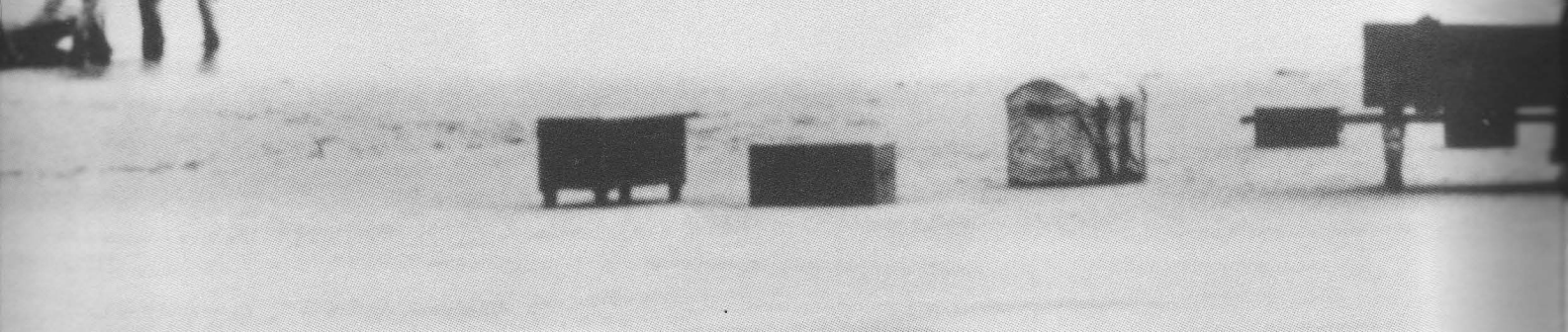

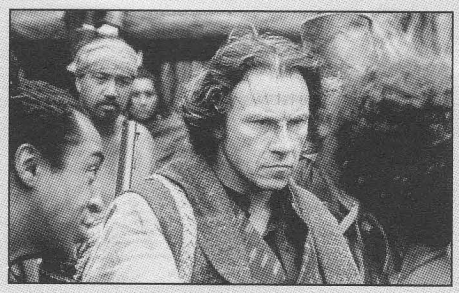

1. BIG MY SECRET 6

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THE PIANO
MICHAEL NYMAN

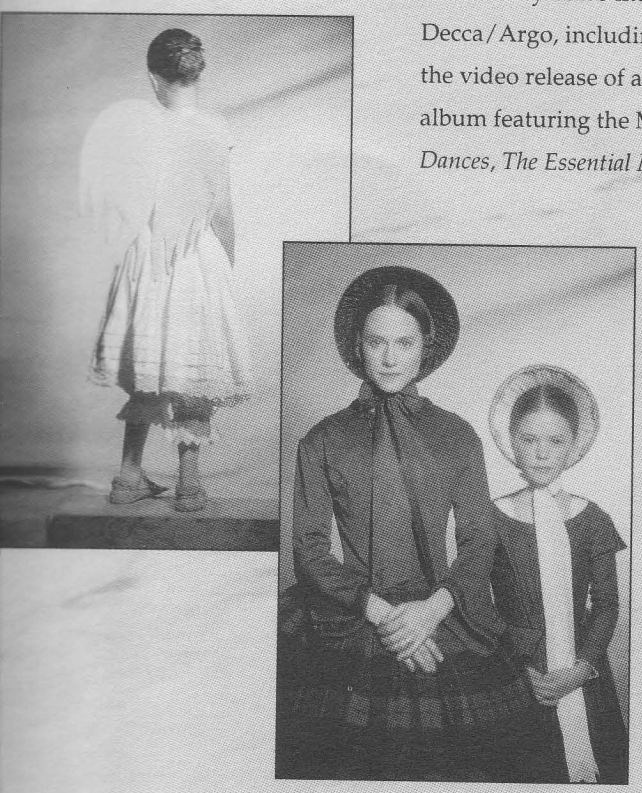
Michael Nyman was born in London in 1944 and studied at the Royal Academy of Music and King's College London. In addition to composing, his musical career has involved collecting folk music in Romania, editing baroque and new music, writing an opera libretto (for Birtwistle's *Down by the Greenwood Side*), music criticism (1968-78), performing and lecturing. His book *Experimental Music - Cage and Beyond* (1974) is now a classic text on music written after 1945.

Since 1977, Nyman has composed for the Michael Nyman Band and for a wide range of media and artists internationally. His catalogue includes chamber, orchestral, vocal & choral works, operas (*The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* is constantly in production worldwide) and music for dance, film - including 18 soundtracks for Peter Greenaway (notably *The Draughtsman's Contract, Prospero's Books, The Cook, The Thief, His Wife And Her Lover*) and most recently *The Piano* for director Jane Campion - and television.

He has collaborated on a variety of arts projects over recent years notably, in 1989, *La Traversée de Paris* - the audio-visual spectacular held at the Grand Arche de la Défense in Paris, celebrating the bicentenary of the French Revolution - and, in 1991, the TV opera *Letters, Riddles and Writs*, written and directed by Jeremy Newson for BBC2's *Not Mozart* series commemorating the bicentenary of Mozart's death.

Numerous festivals have commissioned Nyman's music, including the Spitalfields, Cheltenham, Huddersfield, Vale of Glamorgan, Bloomsbury, and London Opera Festivals in Britain, Expo '92 in Seville, and the Festival de Lille and Festival de l'Été de Seine Maritime in France. Amongst the many artists associated with his music are the Belgian Radio Choir, Xenakis Ensemble, The Composer's Ensemble, English Gamelan Orchestra, Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, Royal Ballet, Trio of London, Balanescu Quartet, Arditti Quartet, London Brass, Piano Circus, Ute Lemper, Sarah Leonard, John Harle, Virginia Black, James Bowman and Fretwork.

Michael Nyman's music is frequently recorded with the most recent releases on Decca/Argo, including *String Quartets Nos. 1-3, Prospero's Books, Songbook* (including the video release of a documentary film on the 1992 European Tour of the Songbook album featuring the Michael Nyman Band and Ute Lemper), *1-100, Where the Bee Dances, The Essential Michael Nyman Band* and *Time Will Pronounce.*



THE PIANO
COMPOSER'S NOTE

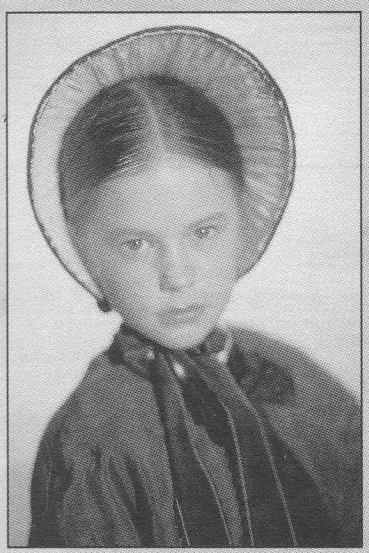
Ada, her nine year old daughter and her piano arrive to an arranged marriage in the remote bush of nineteenth century New Zealand.

Of all her belongings, her husband refuses to transport the piano and it is left behind on the beach. Unable to bear its certain destruction, Ada strikes a bargain with an illiterate tattooed neighbour. She may earn her piano back if she allows him to do certain things while she plays; one black key for every lesson.

The arrangement draws all three deeper and deeper into a complex emotional, sexual bond remarkable for its naïve passion and frightening disregard for limits.

In writing for *The Piano,* I had to establish not only the usual repertoire of music for the film, but a specific repertoire of piano music that would have been Ada's repertoire as a pianist. I began creating her a folio of material that I imagined she had in her head, that her fingers carried around with her, almost as if she had been the composer.

Initially I was unsure as to how precisely to pitch the style: it had to be a "possible" mid-nineteenth century music but not pastiche and obviously written in 1992. But then I had the perception that, since Ada was from Scotland, it was logical to use Scottish folk and popular songs as the basis for our music. Once I hit on that idea the whole thing fell into place.



It's as though I was writing the music of another composer who happened to live in Scotland, then New Zealand in the mid 1850s. Someone who was obviously not a professional composer or pianist. So there had to be a modesty to it.

It was a real challenge to write this music, because it is absolutely crucial to the film. If you delve into the reasons for the piano's existence, you realise that the establishing of a musical language is crucial. Since Ada doesn't speak, the piano music doesn't simply have the usual expressive role but becomes a substitute for her voice. The sound of the piano becomes her character, her mood, her expressions, her unspoken dialogue. It has to convey the messages she is putting across about her feelings towards Baines, during the piano lessons, and these differ from lesson to lesson as the relationship, state of sexual bargaining and passion develop.

I've had to create a kind of aural scenography which is as important as the locations, as important as the costumes. Ada's music is described by one of the characters in the film as "like a mood that passes through you...a sound that creeps into you".

In performance, the pieces can be played in any order; any number (including just one) can be played on occasion, and if played as a suite individual numbers may be repeated. It should be emphasised that Nos. 1 (Big My Secret) and 6 (The Heart Asks Pleasure First) are the key pieces.

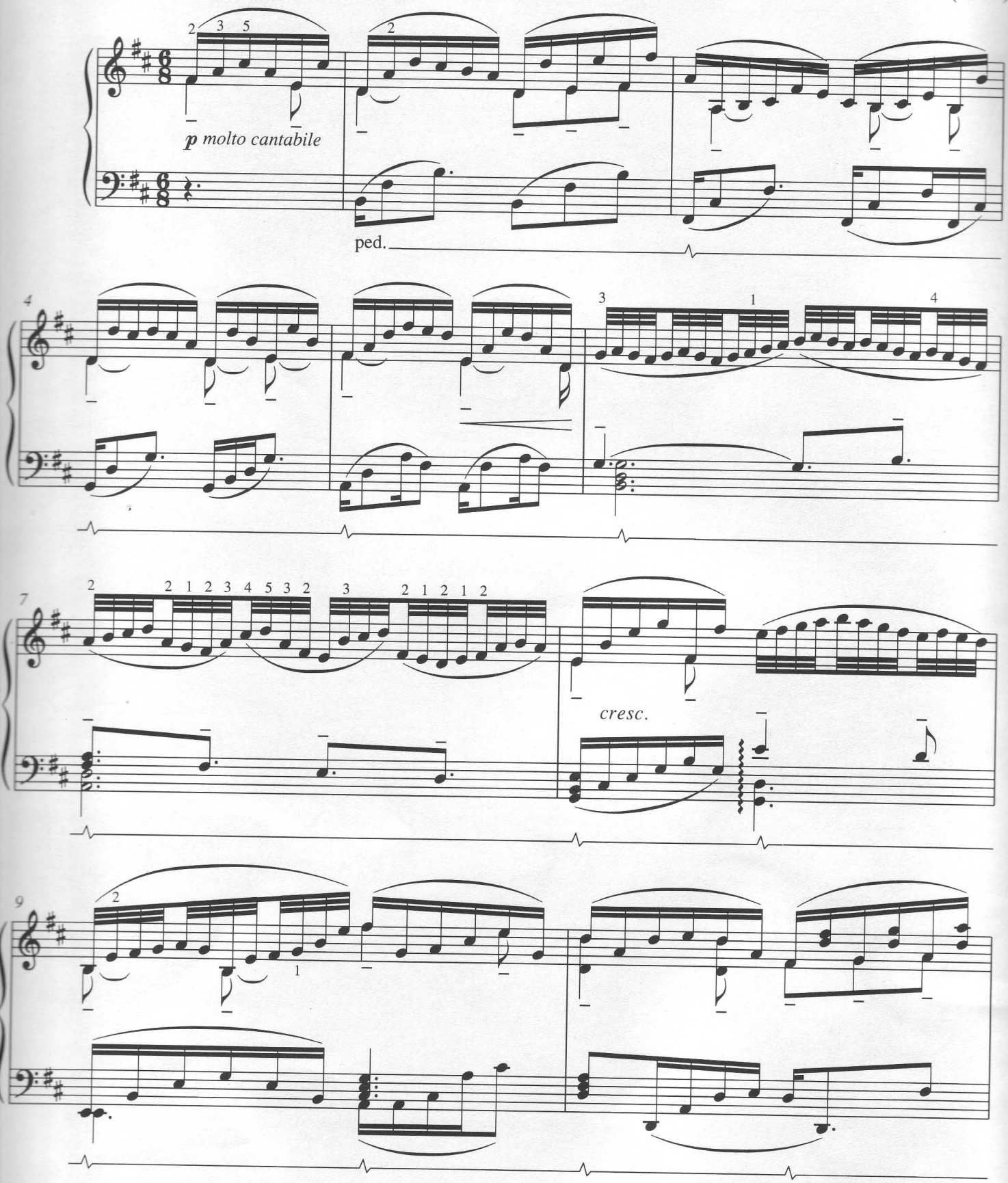
MICHAEL NYMAN

THE PIANO

1. BIG MY SECRET

Molto adagio con rubato ♪ = 50 - 64

MICHAEL NYMAN (1992)



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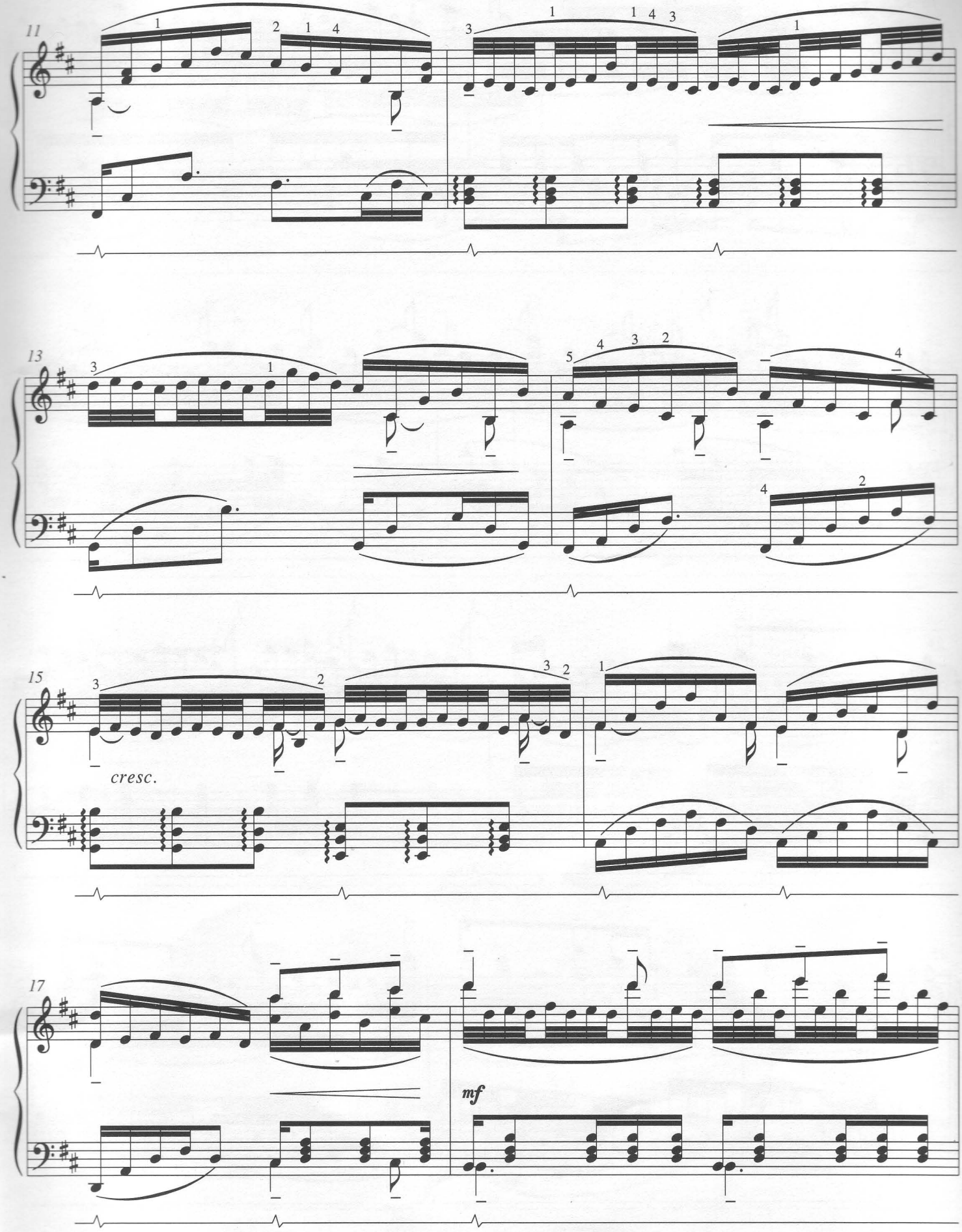
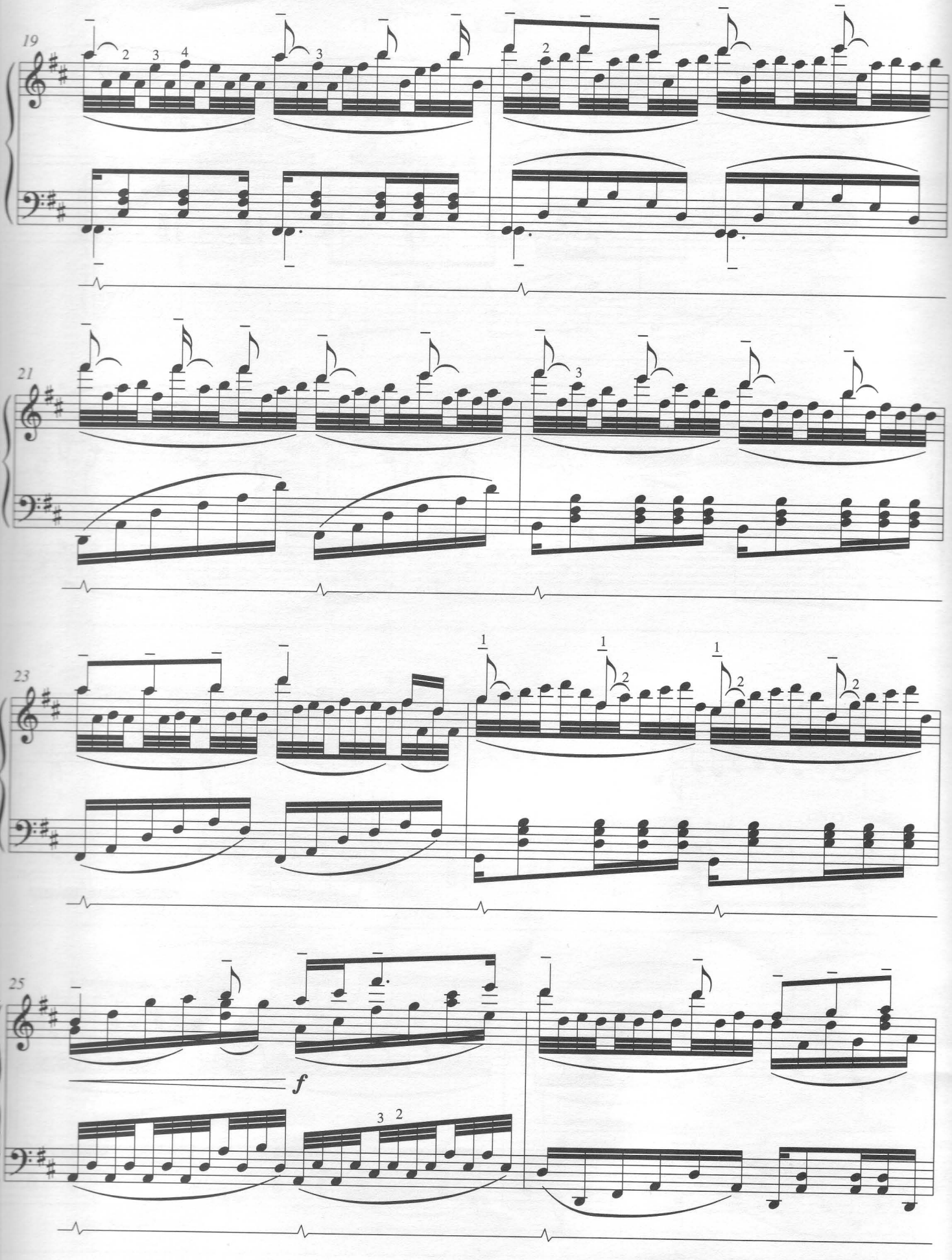
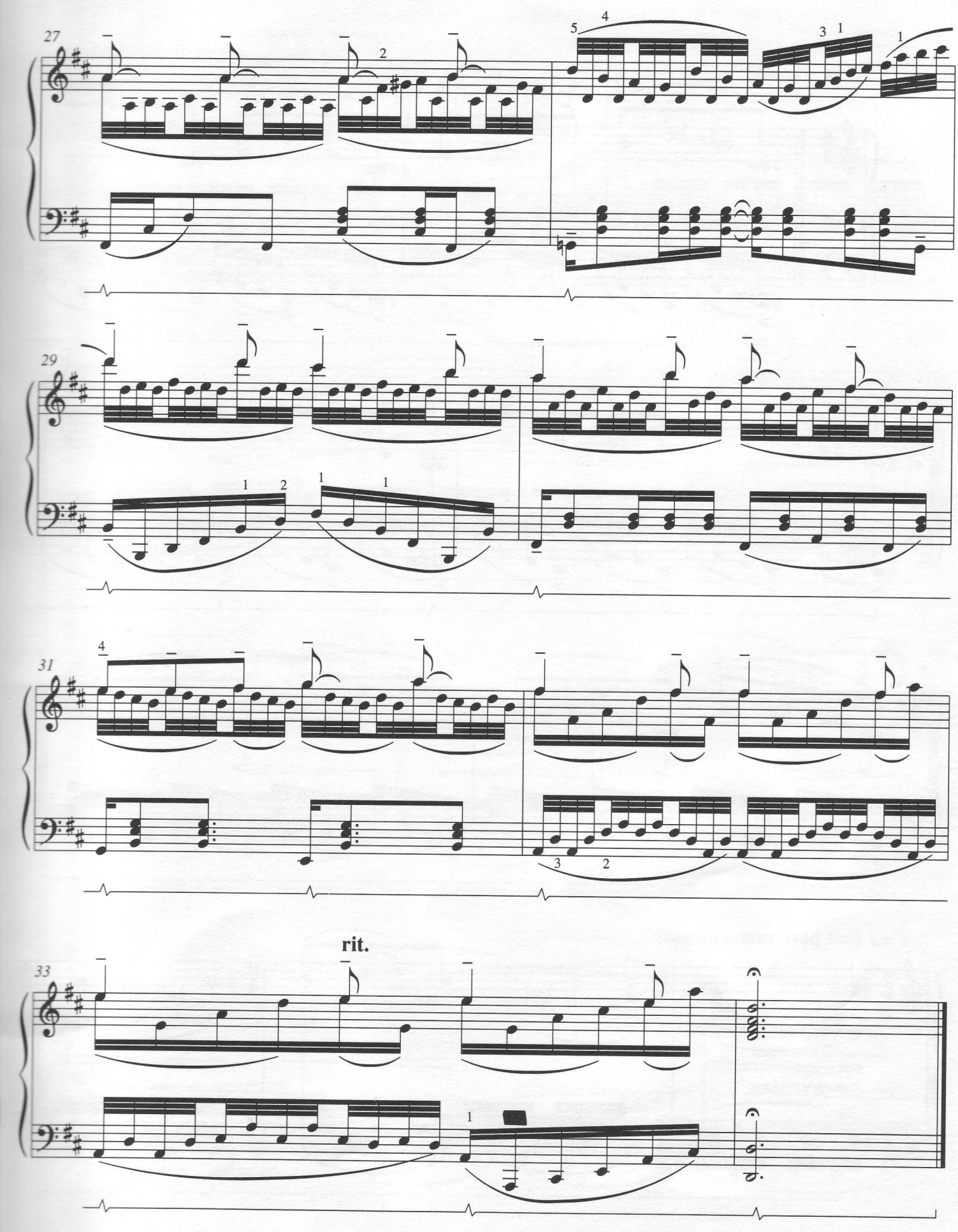
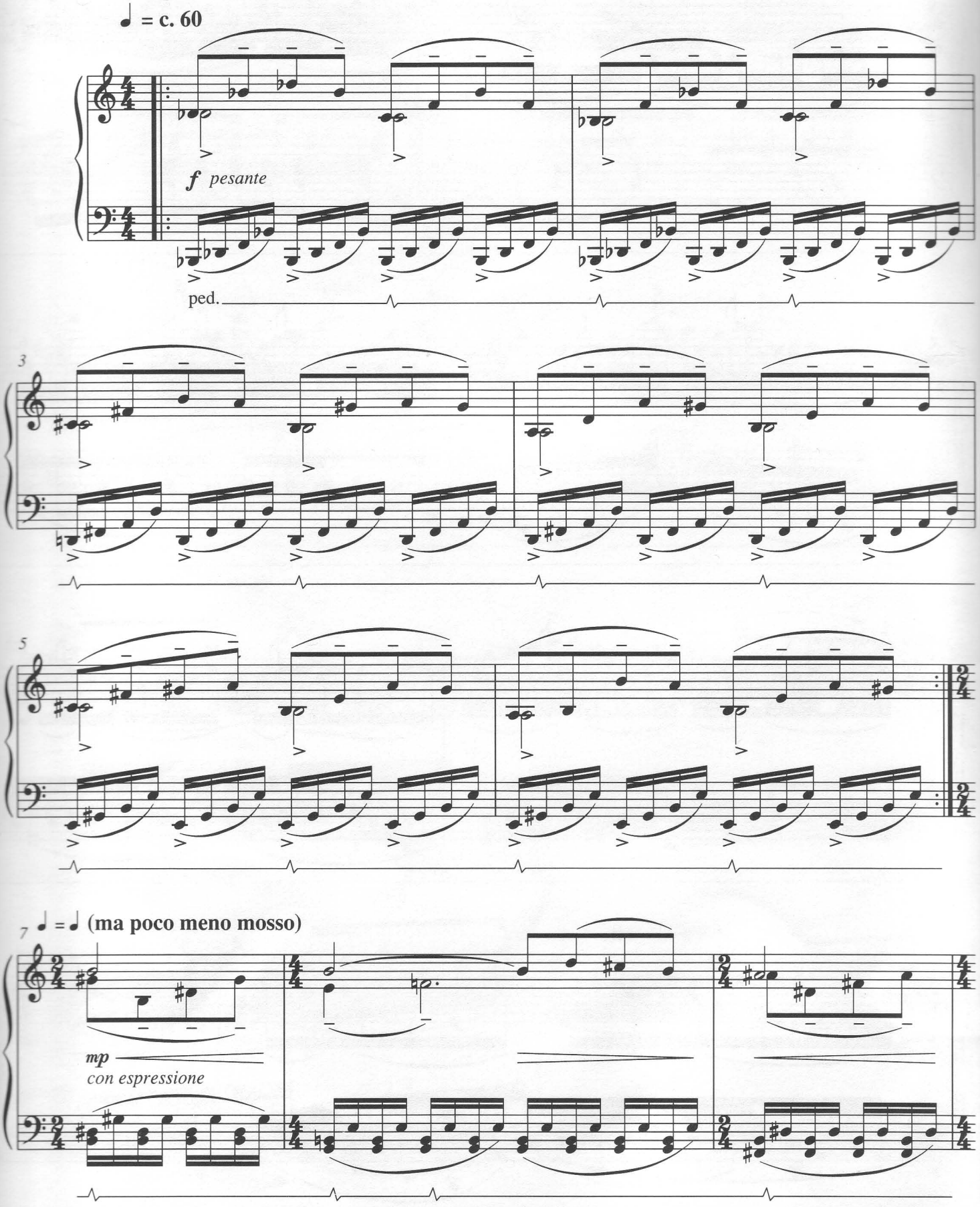
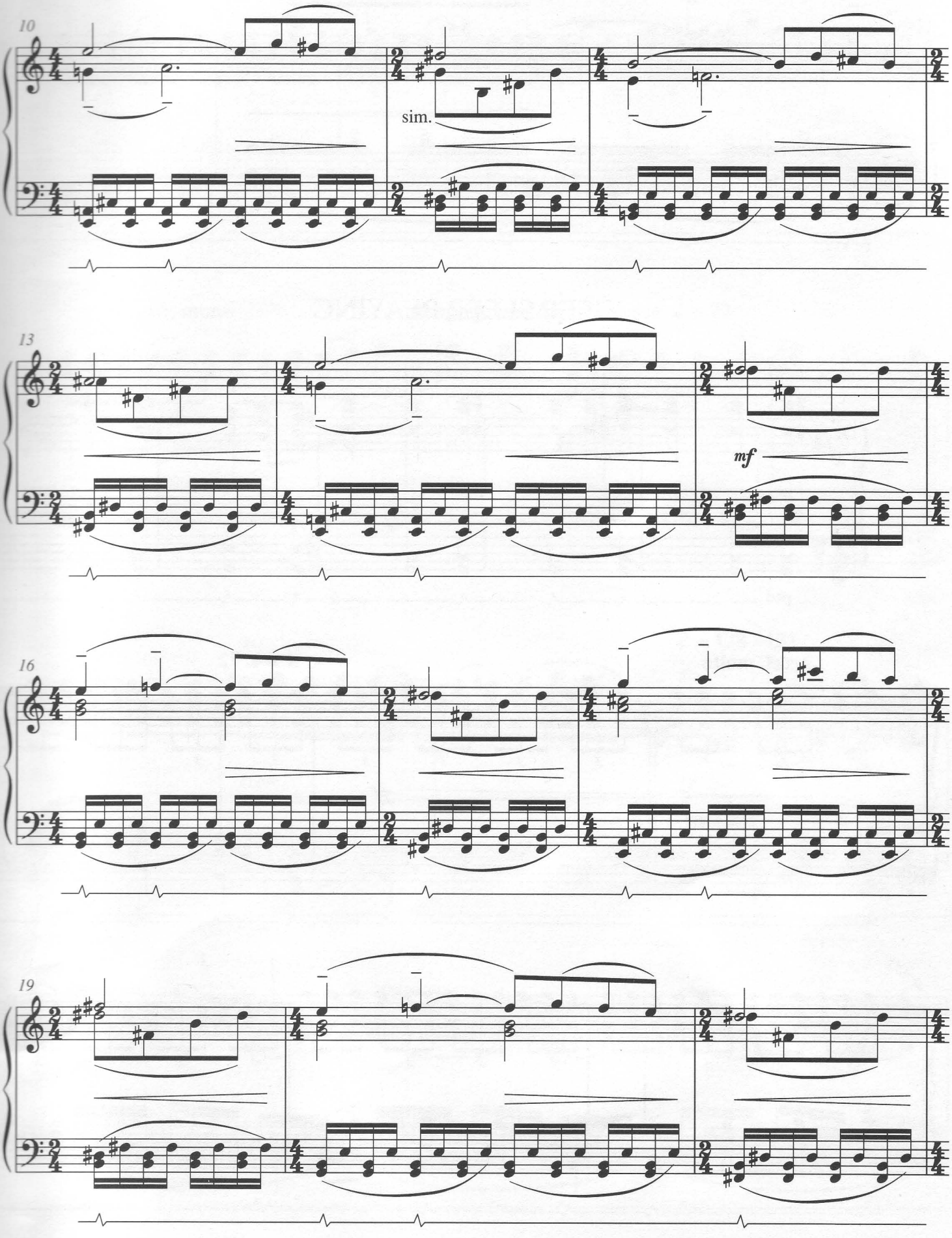

11
13
15
cresc.
17
mf

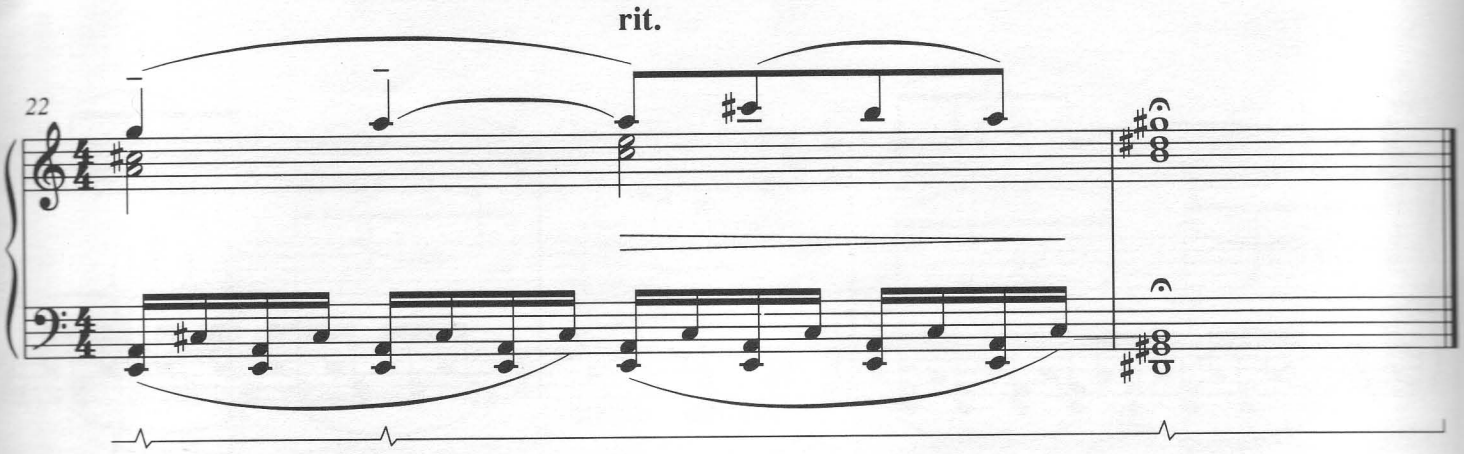

19
21
23
25
f


27
29
31
rit.
33

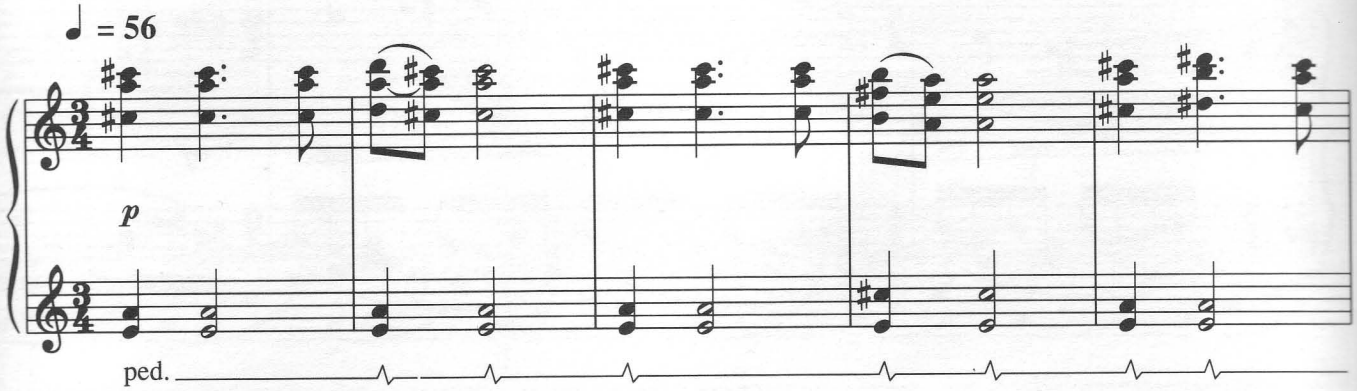
2. THE MOOD THAT PASSES THROUGH YOU

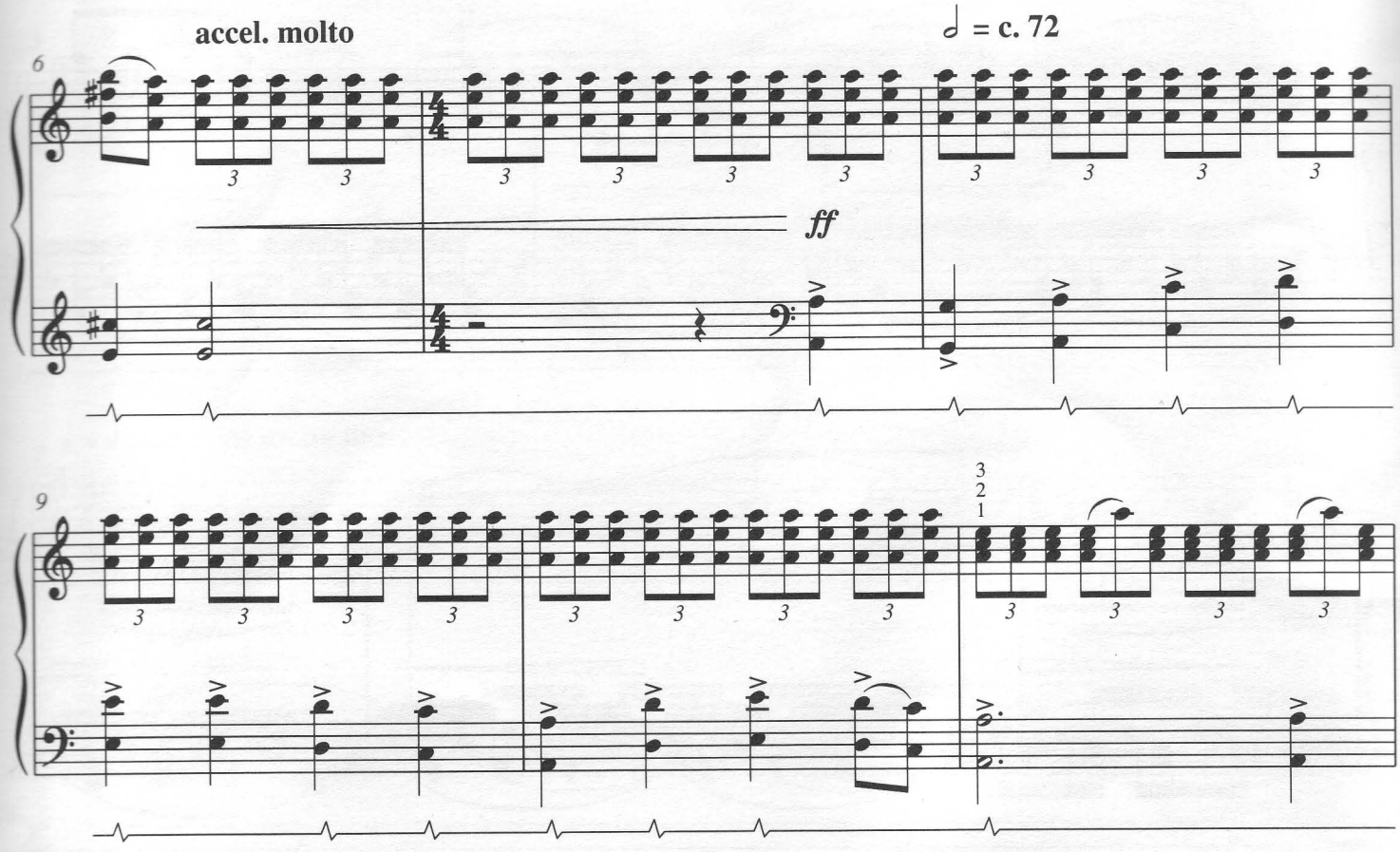


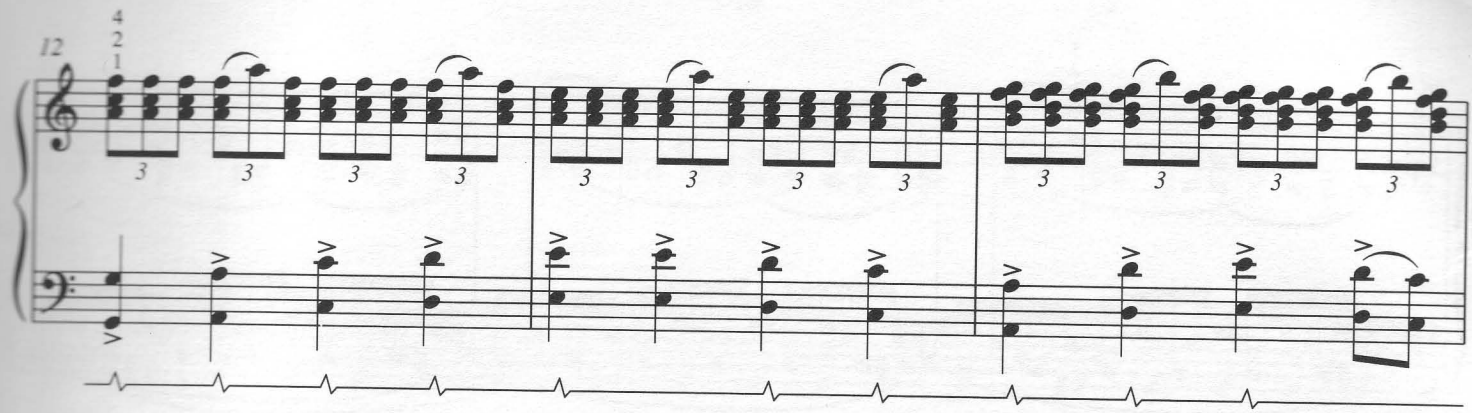

10
sim.
13
mf
16
19



3. DEEP SLEEP PLAYING



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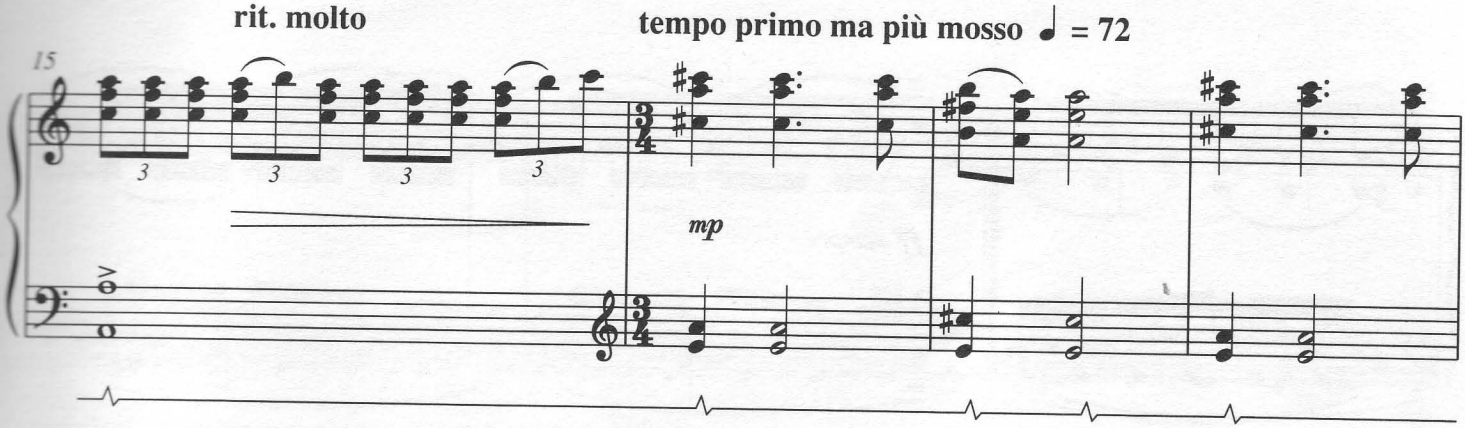
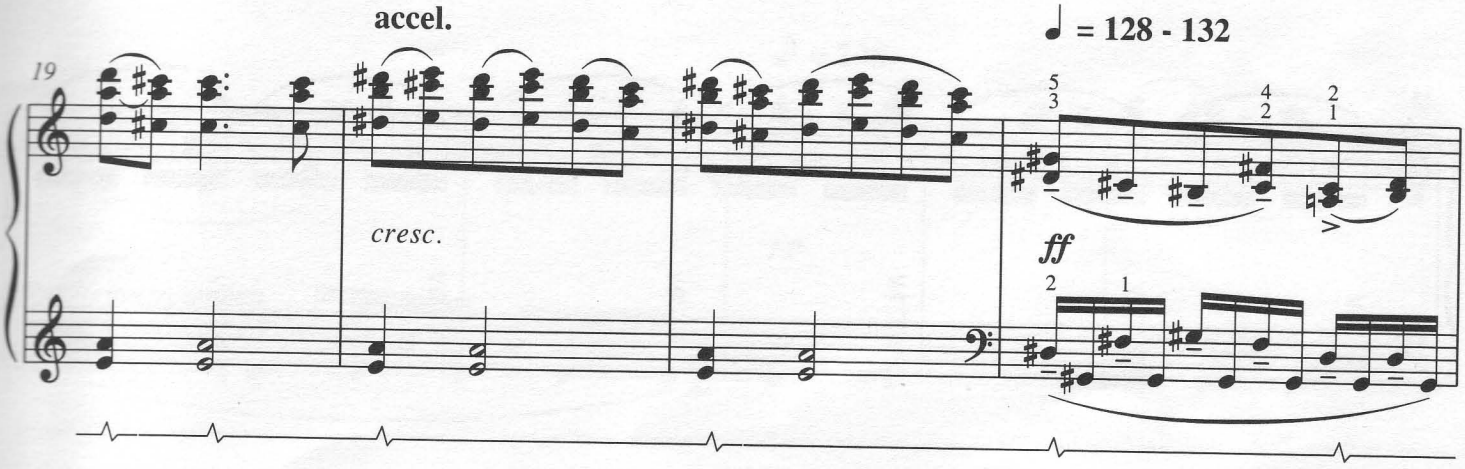
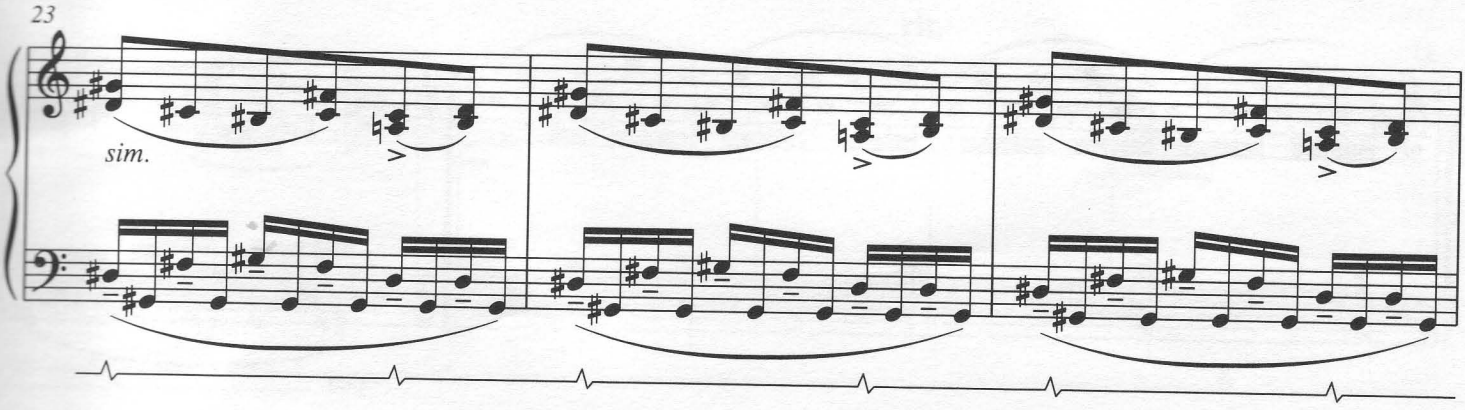
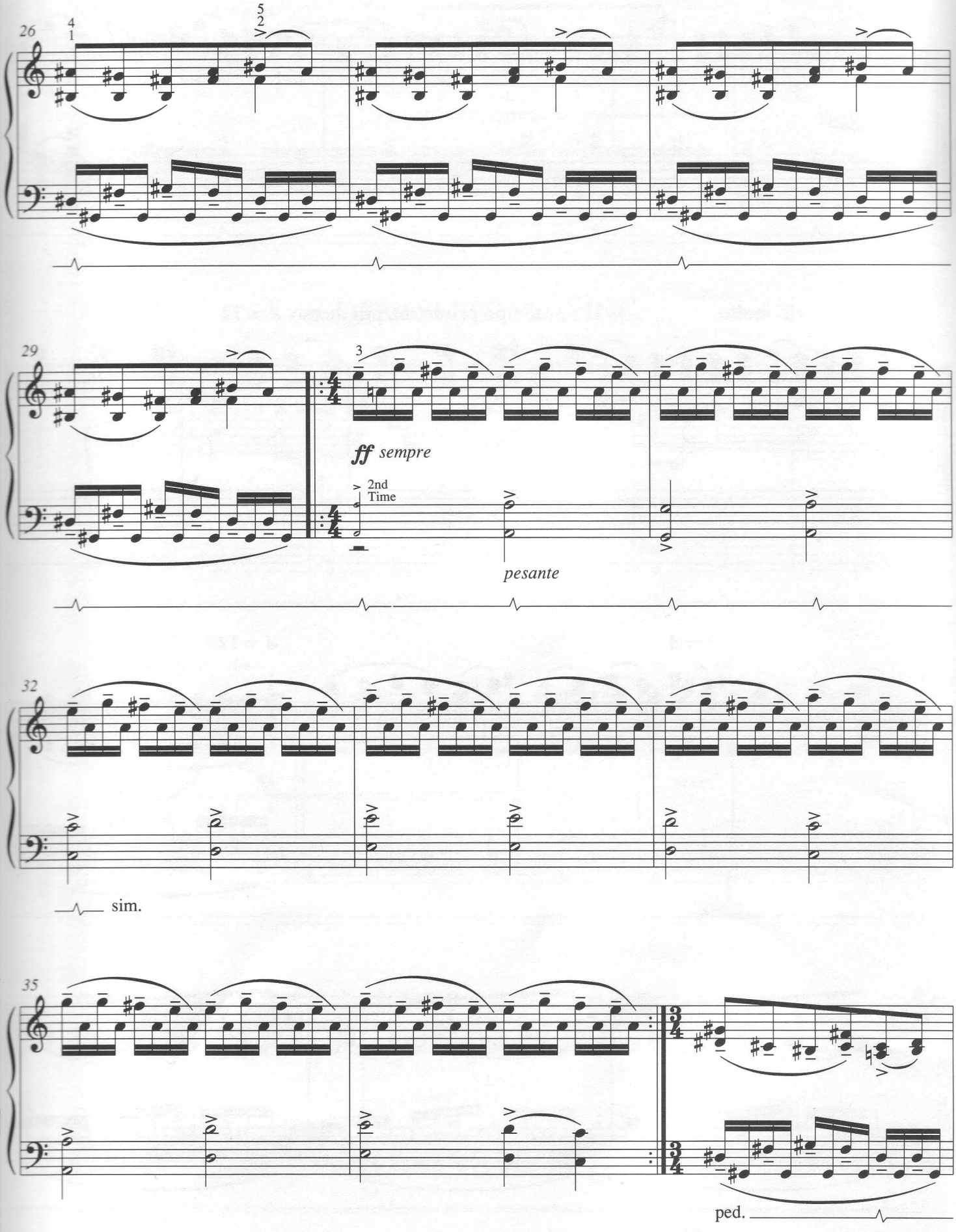
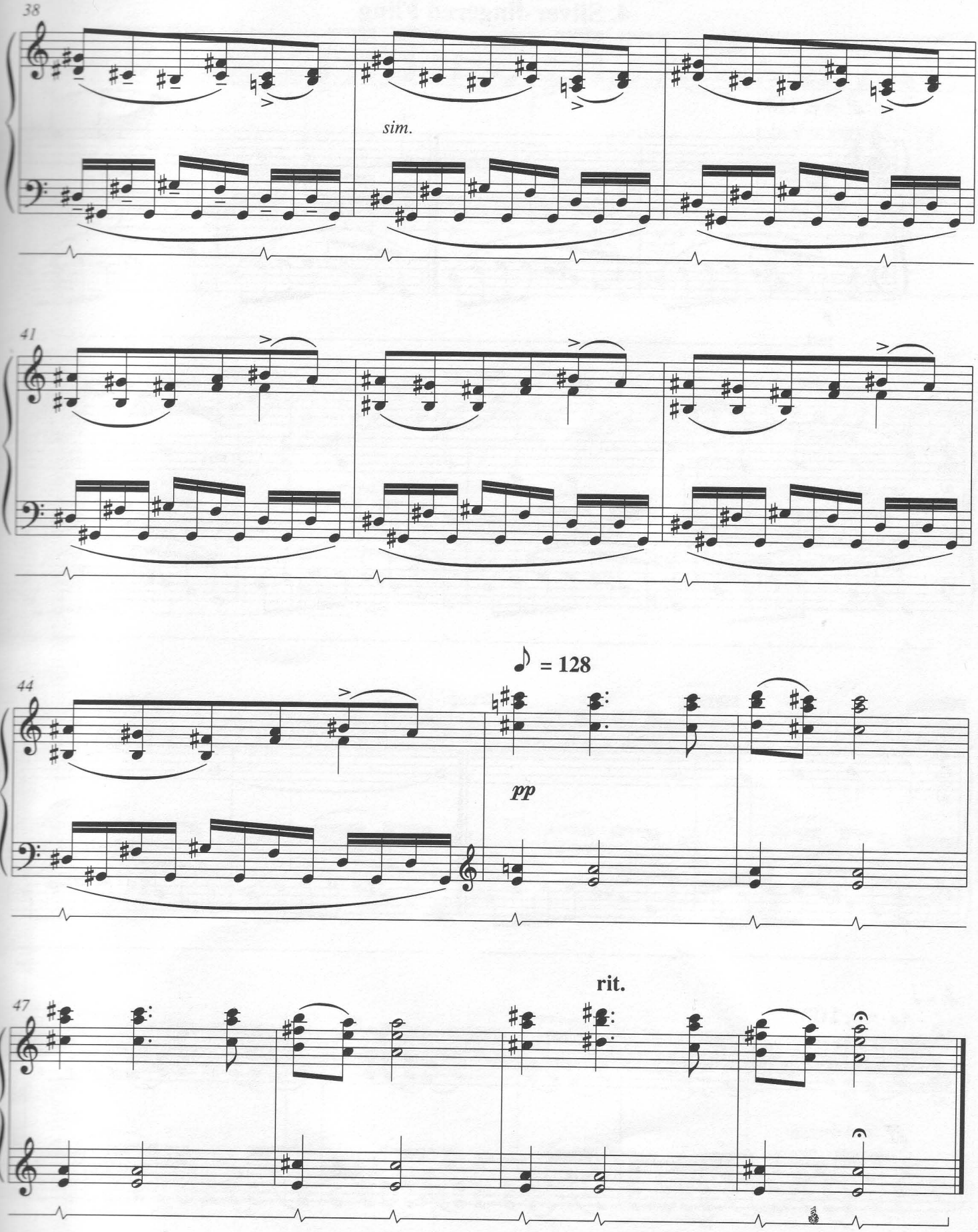

rit. molto
tempo primo ma più mosso ♩ = 72
15
mp

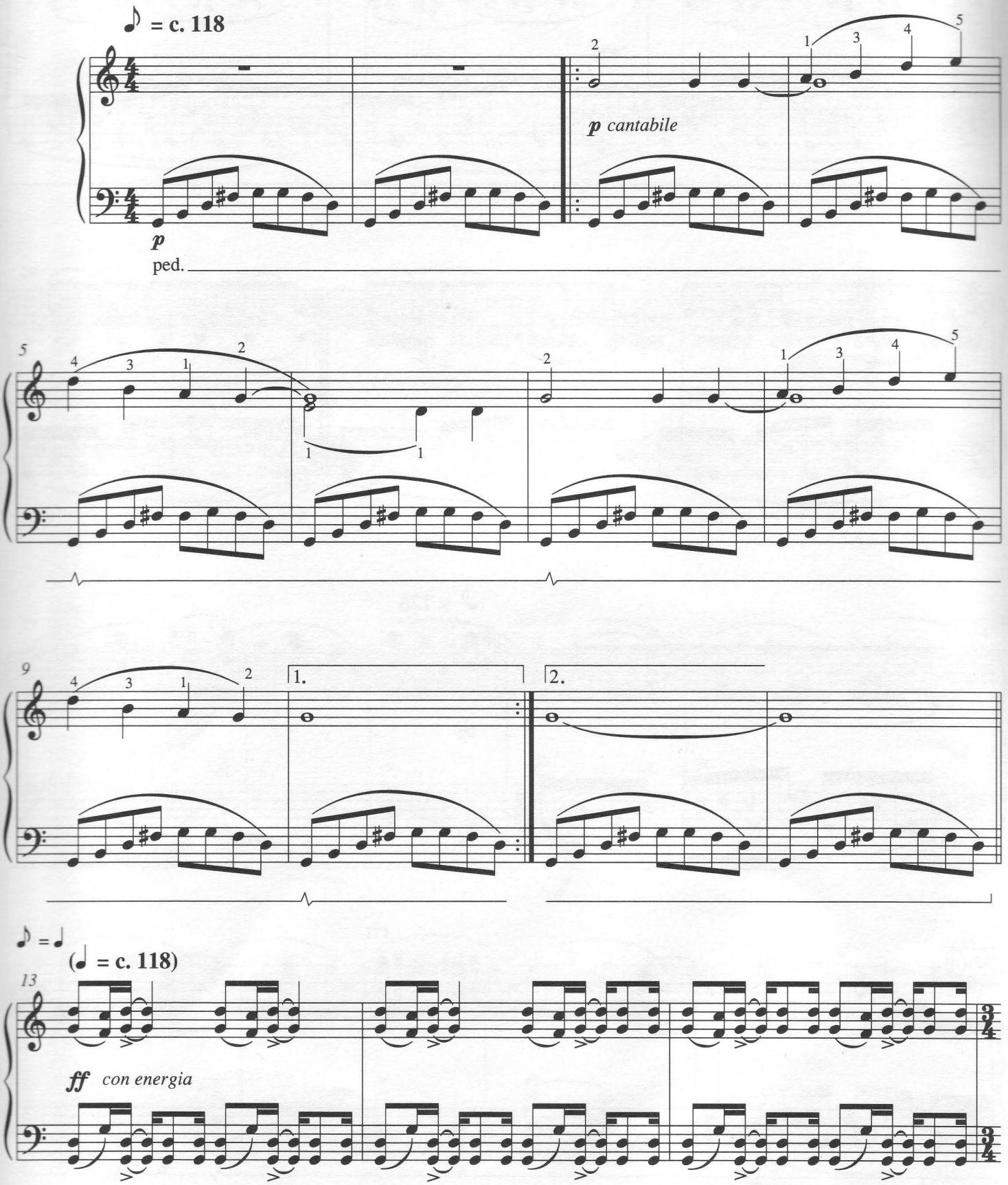

accel.
♩ = 128 - 132
19
cresc.
ff

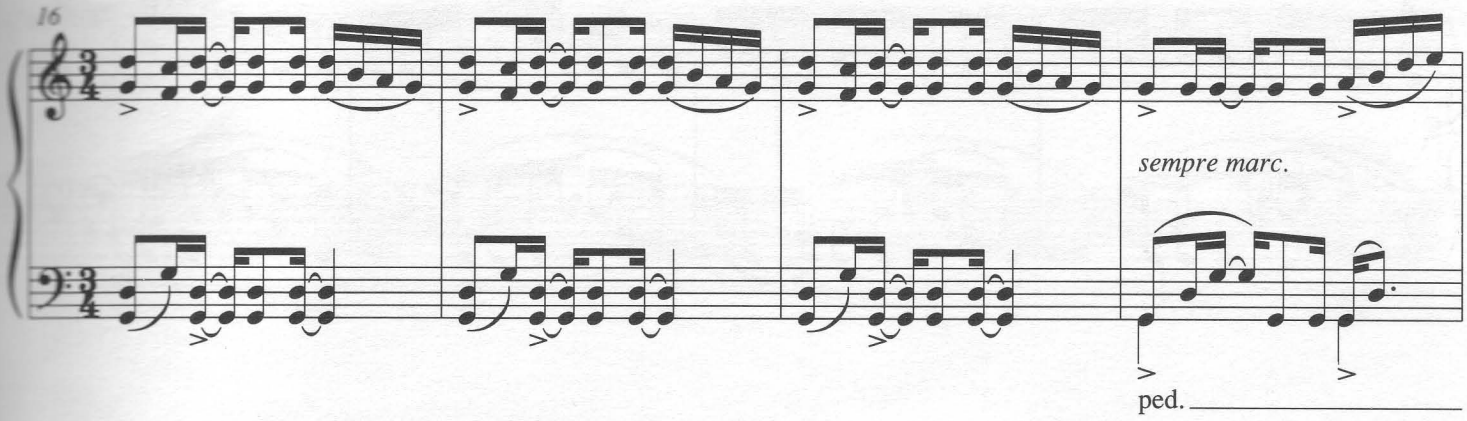

23
sim.

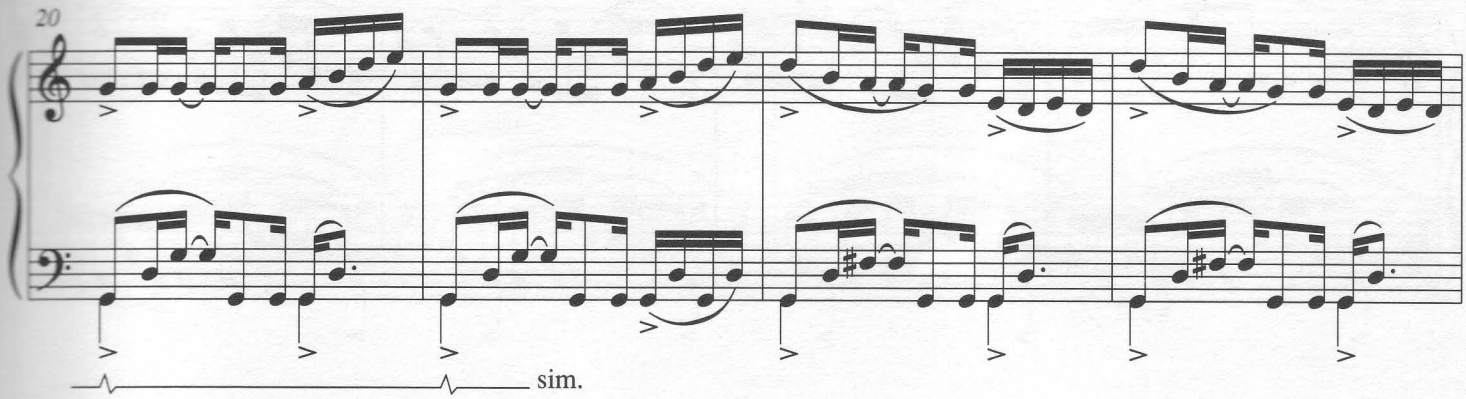

26
4
1
5
2
29
3
ff sempre
2nd
Time
pesante
32
sim.
35
ped.

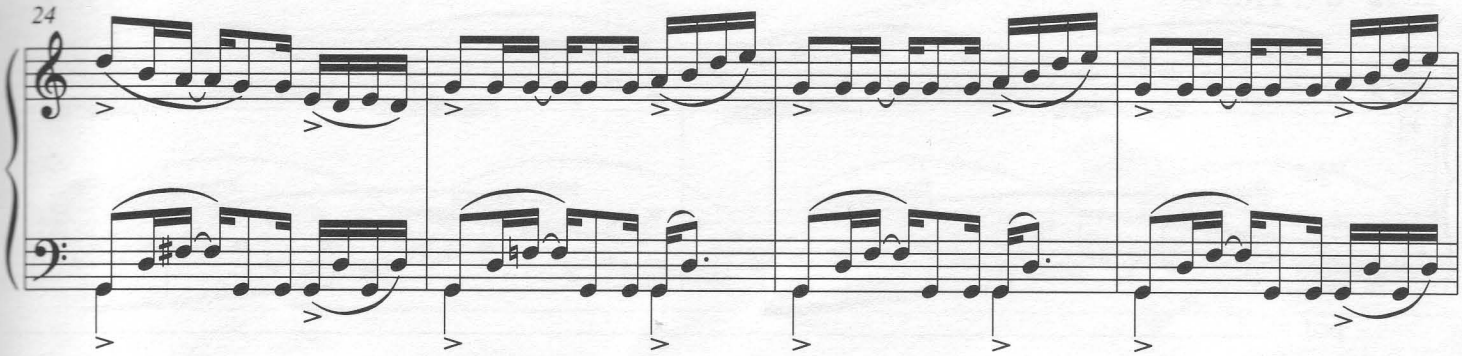

38
sim.
41
44
♪ = 128
pp
47
rit.

4. Silver-fingered Fling




16
sempre marc.
ped.


20
sim.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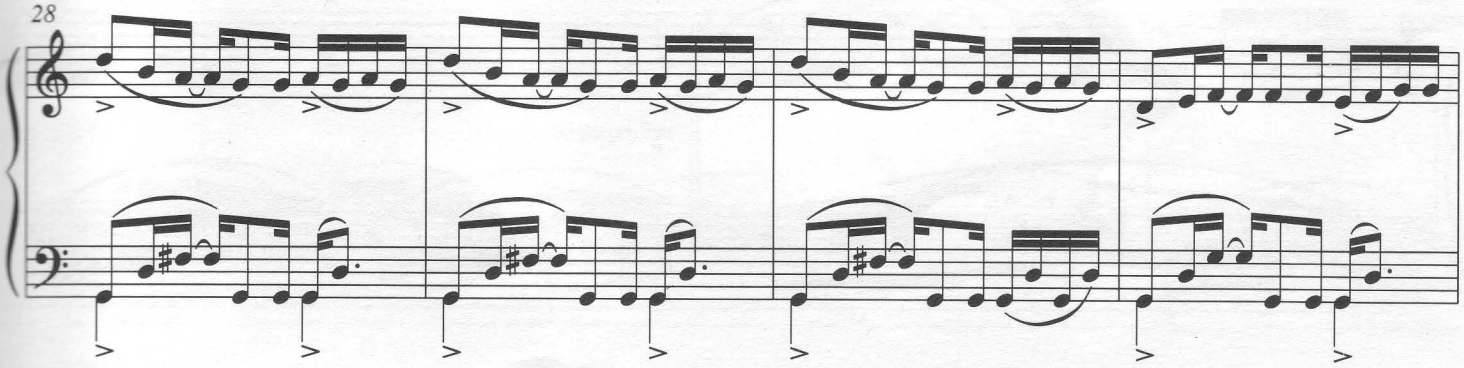
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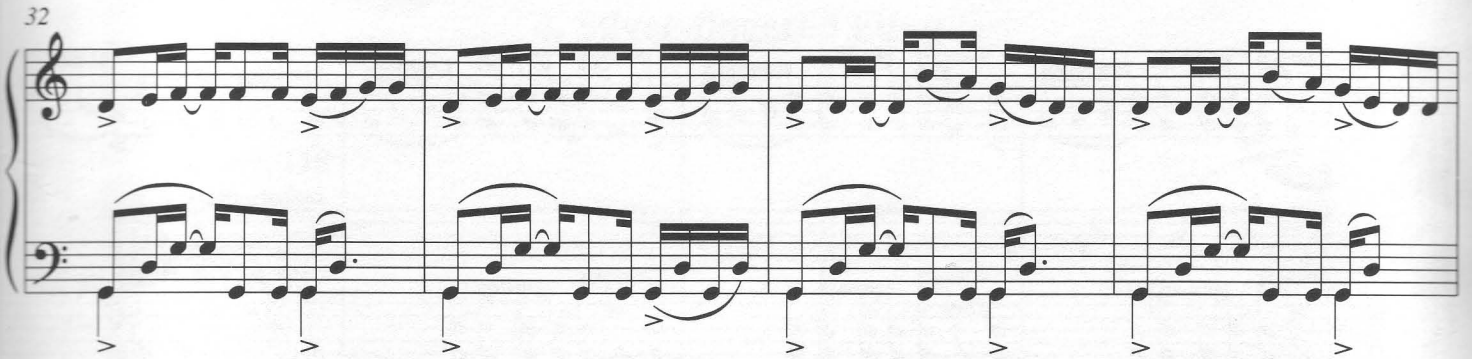
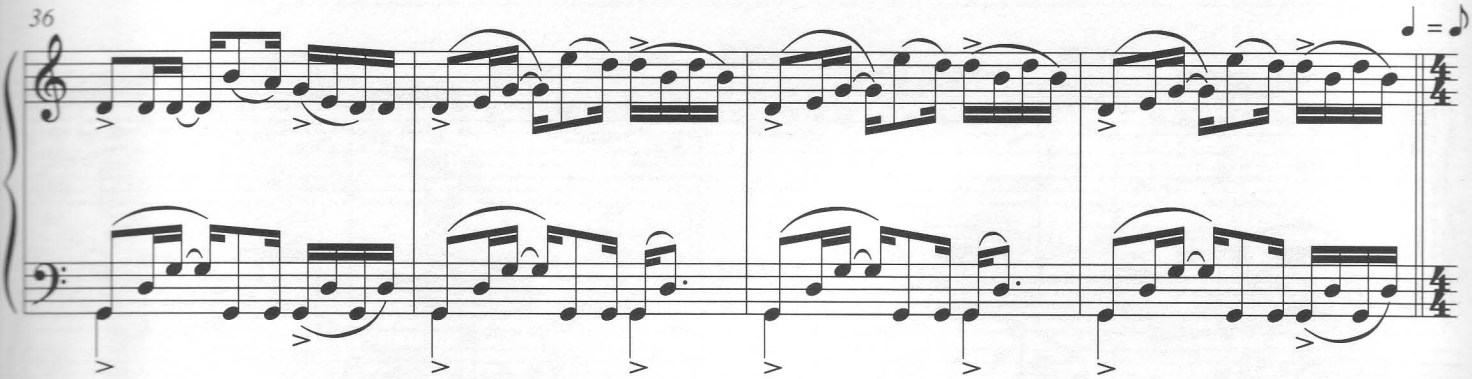
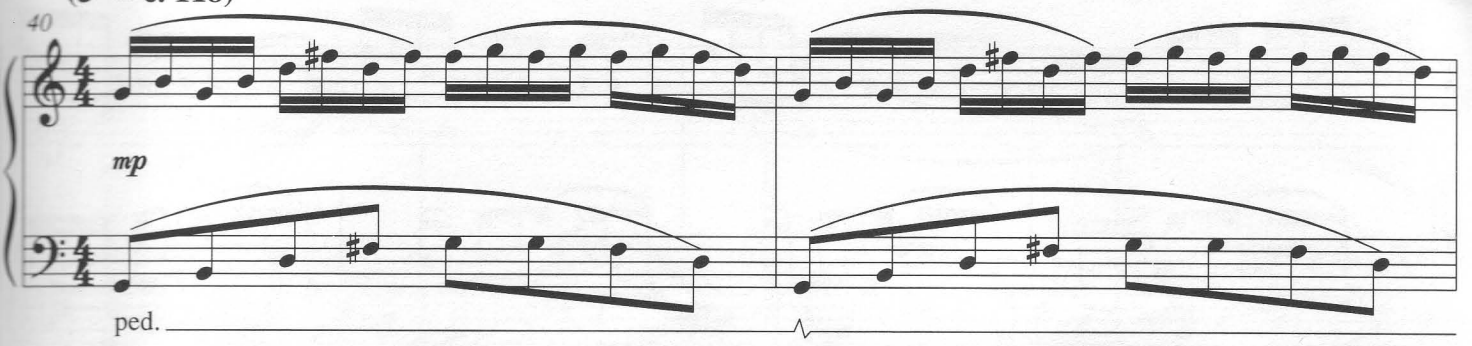
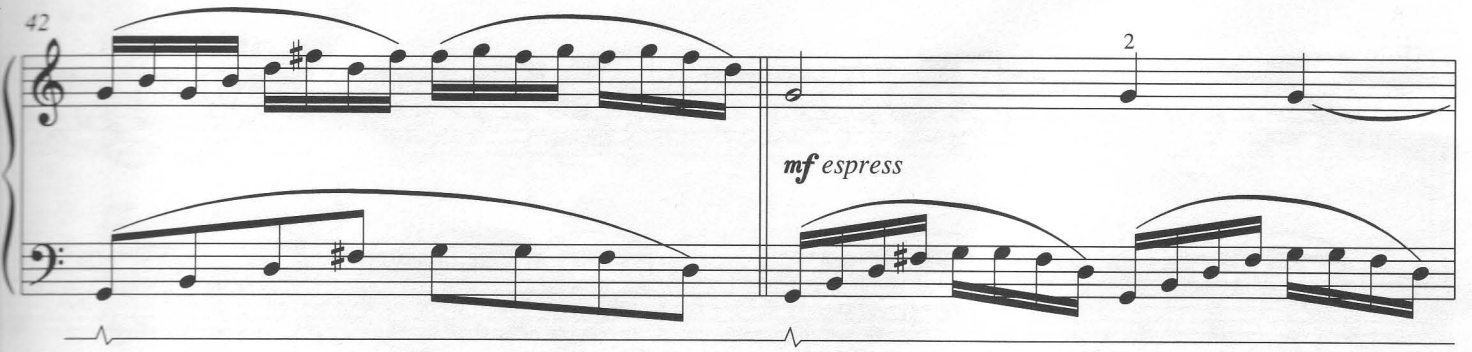
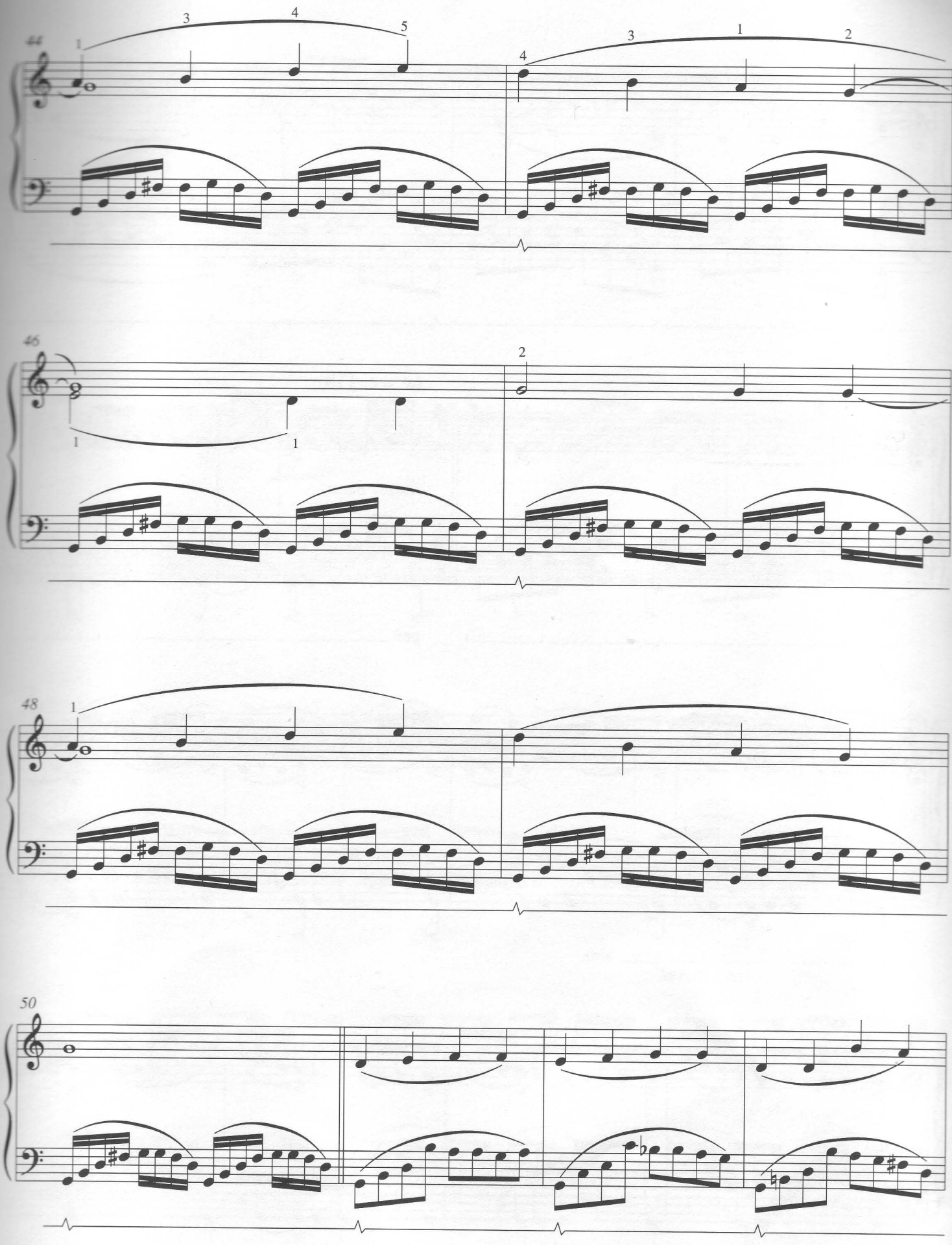


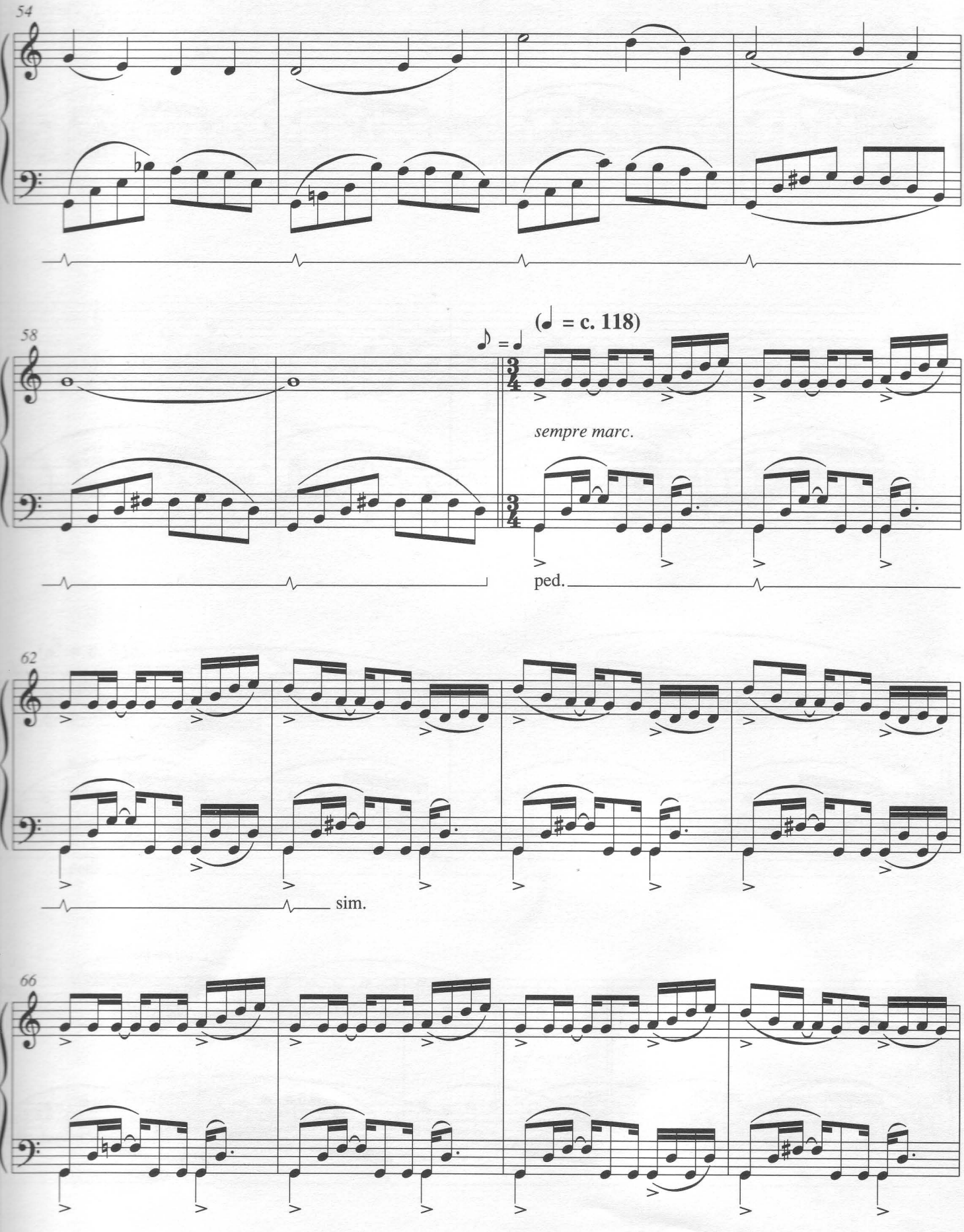


(♪ = c. 118)

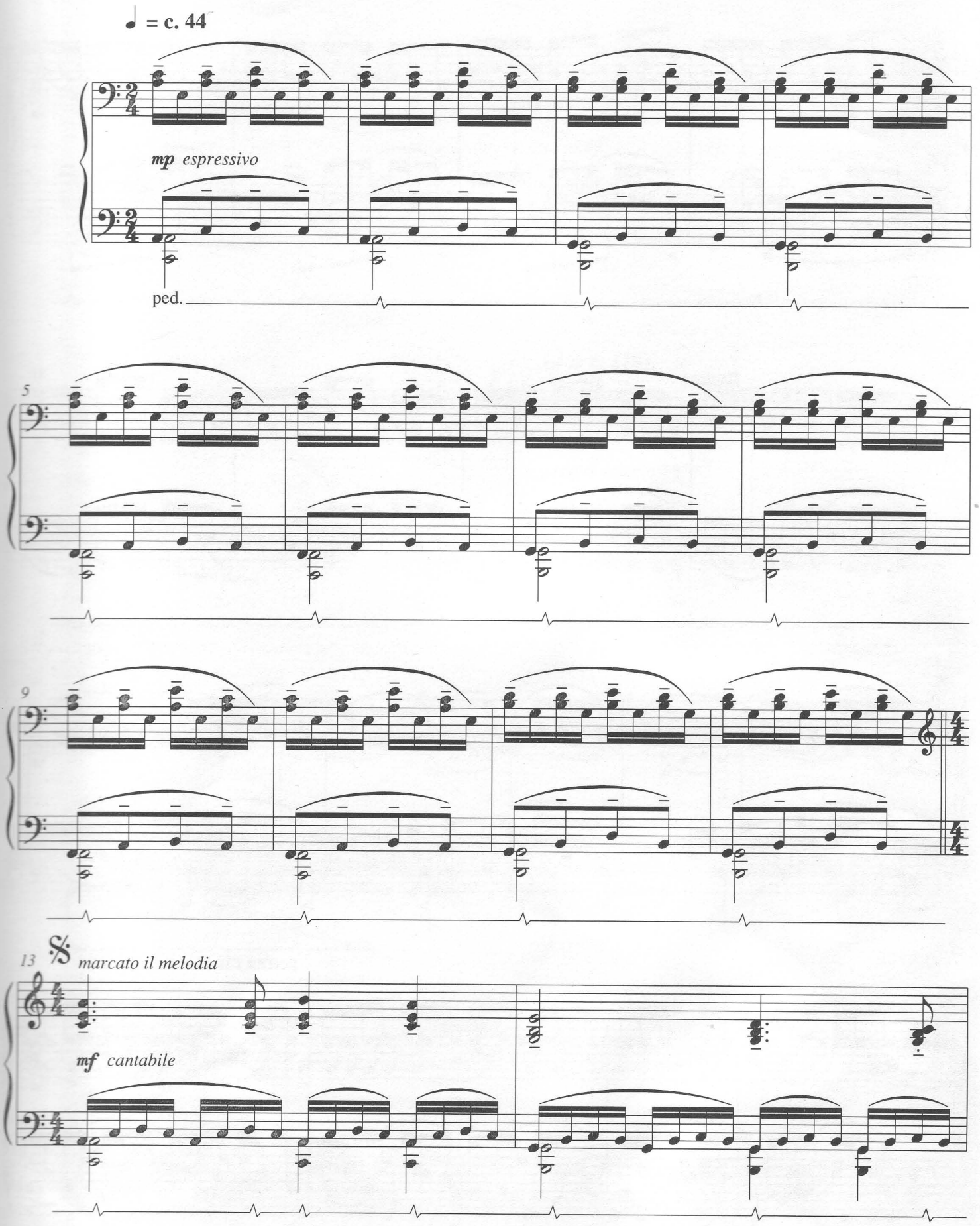


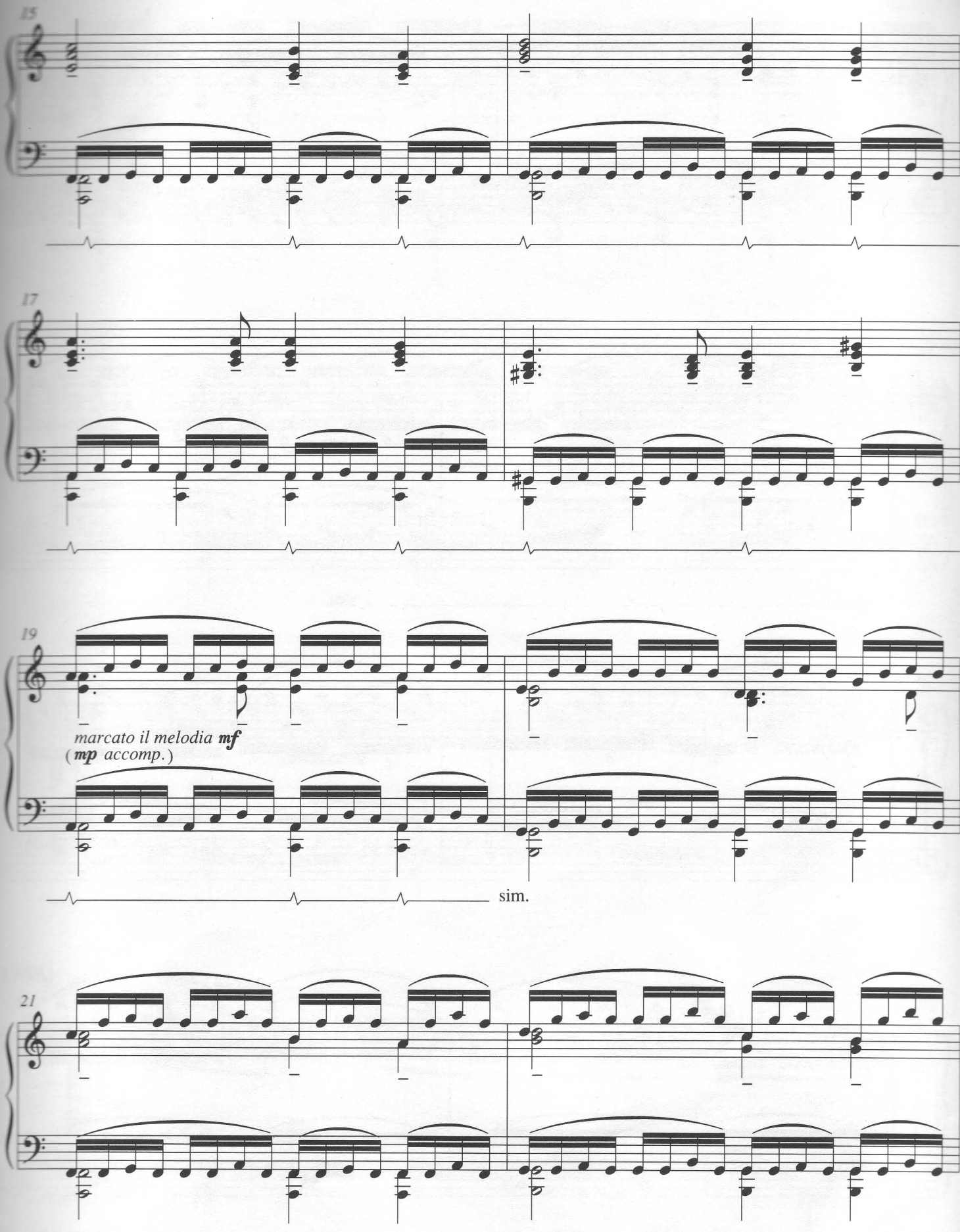


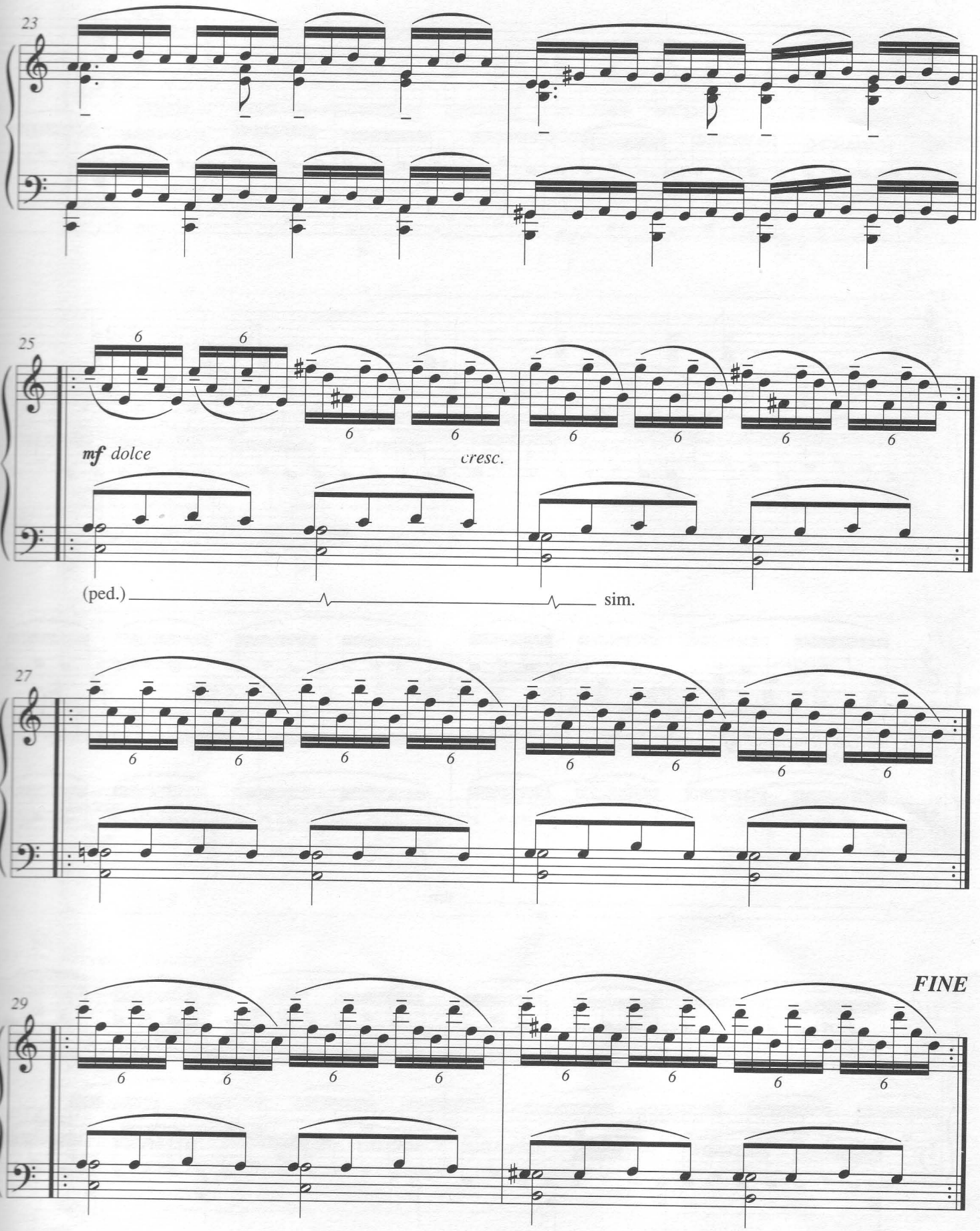

44
46
48
50

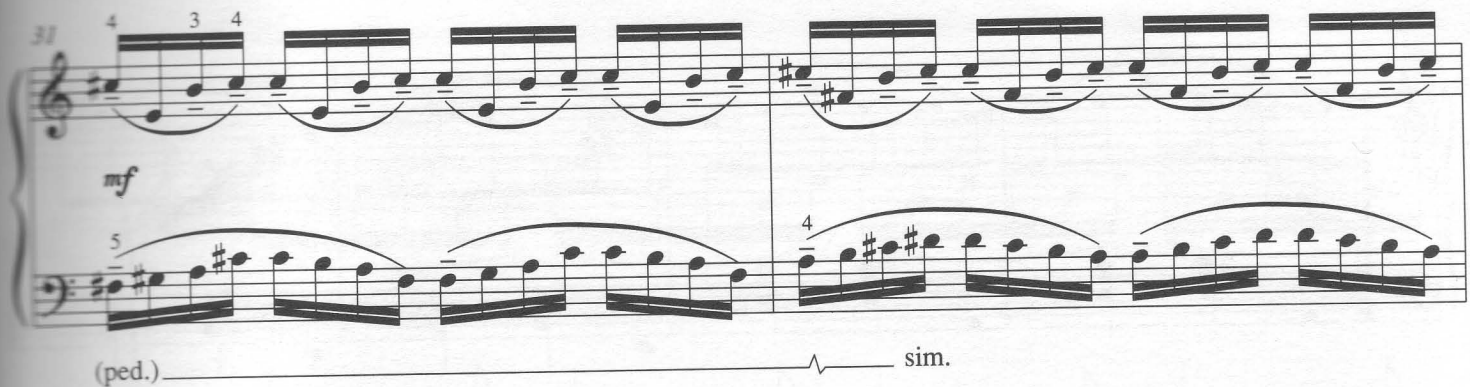

54
58
(♩ = c. 118)
♪ = ♩
3/4
sempre marc.
ped.
62
sim.
66

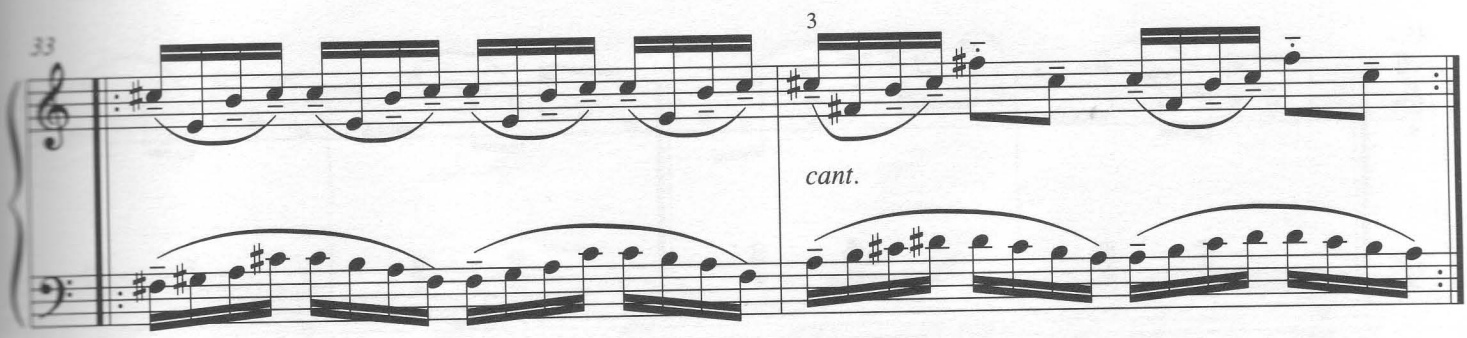
5. The Attraction Of The Pedalling Ankle

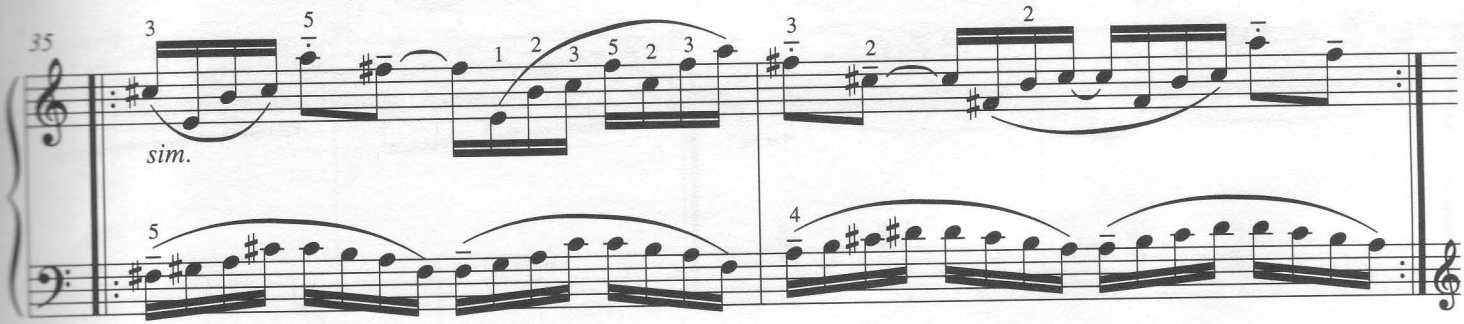


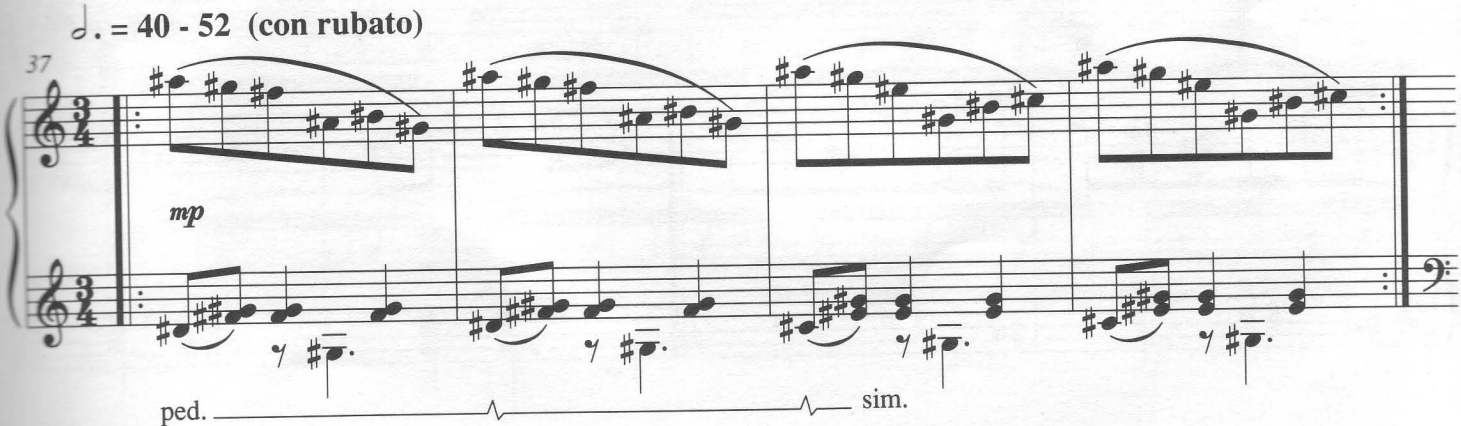

15
17
19
marcato il melodia mf
(mp accomp.)
sim.
21

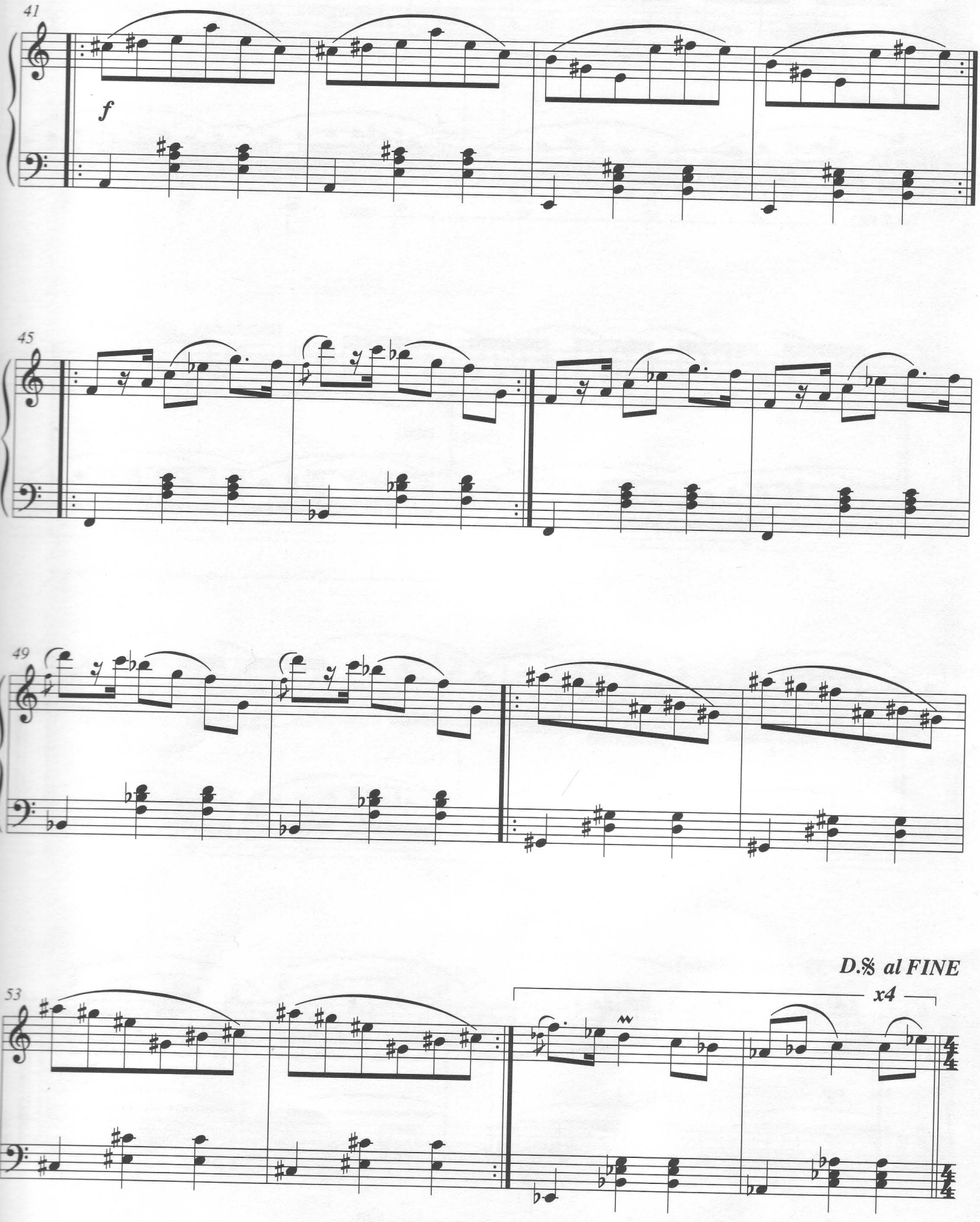

23
25
mf dolce
cresc.
(ped.)
sim.
27
29
FINE


31
mf
(ped.)
sim.

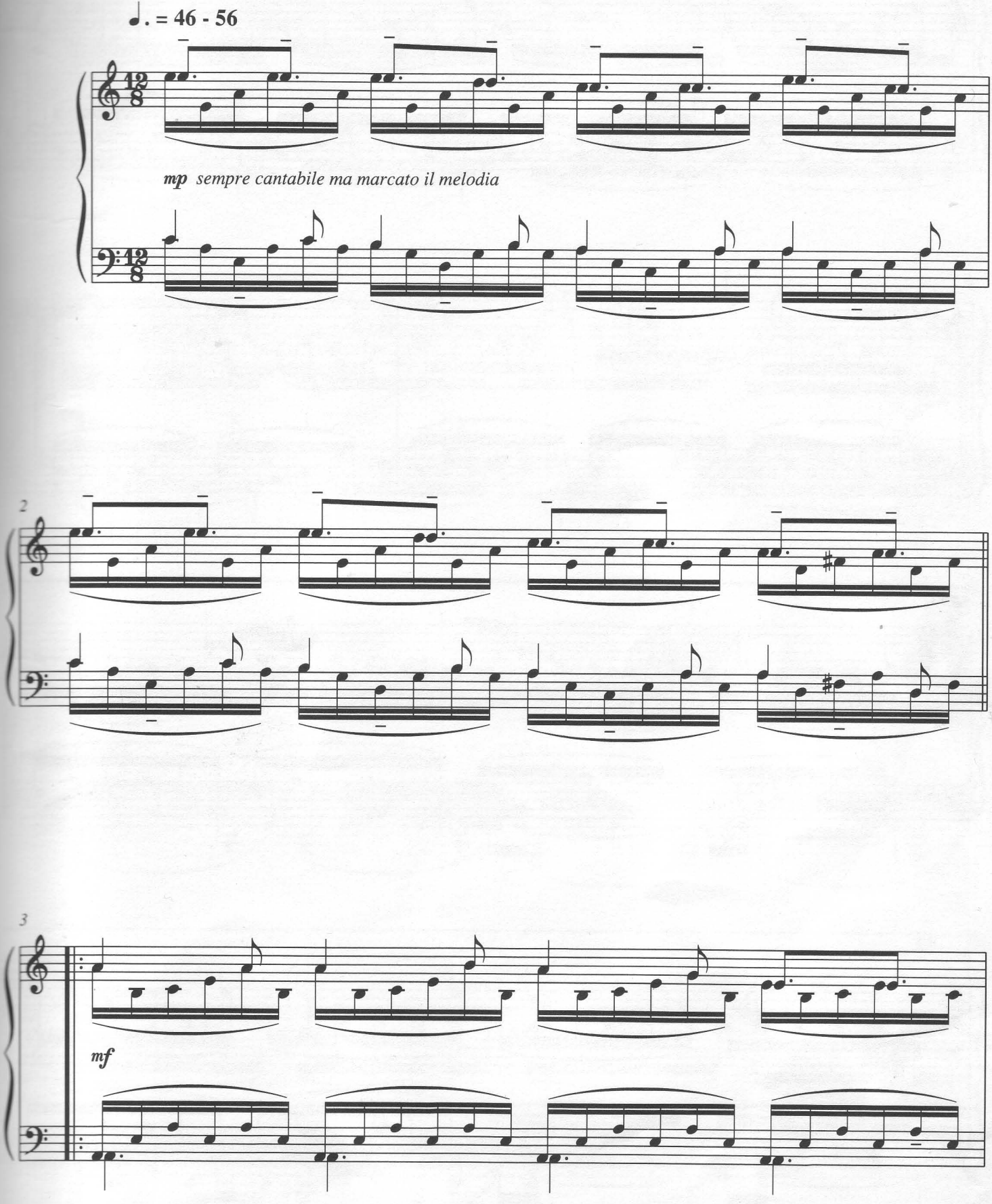

33
cant.

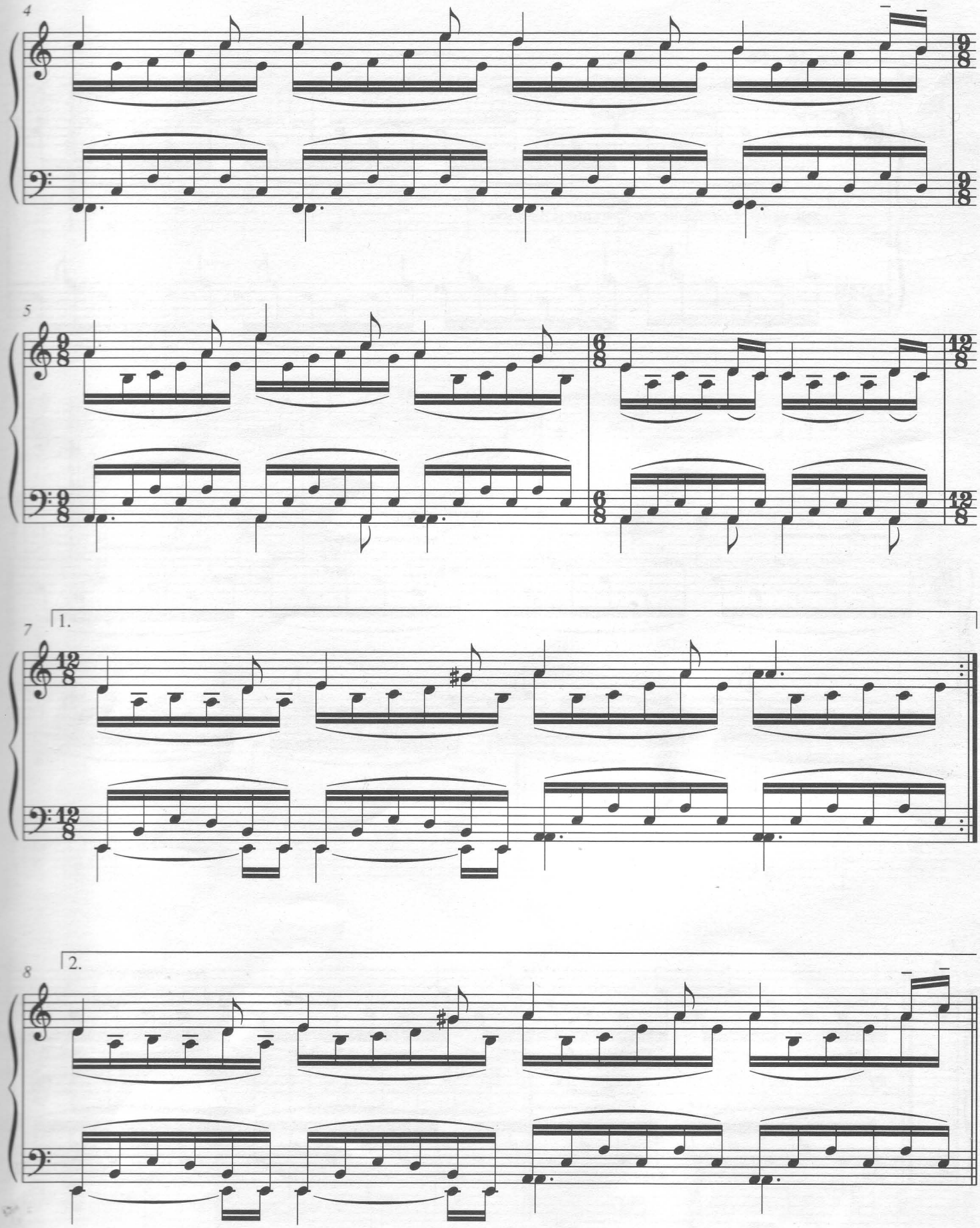

35
sim.


♩. = 40 - 52 (con rubato)
37
mp
ped.
sim.


41
f
45
49
53
D.S. al FINE
x4

6. THE HEART ASKS PLEASURE FIRST

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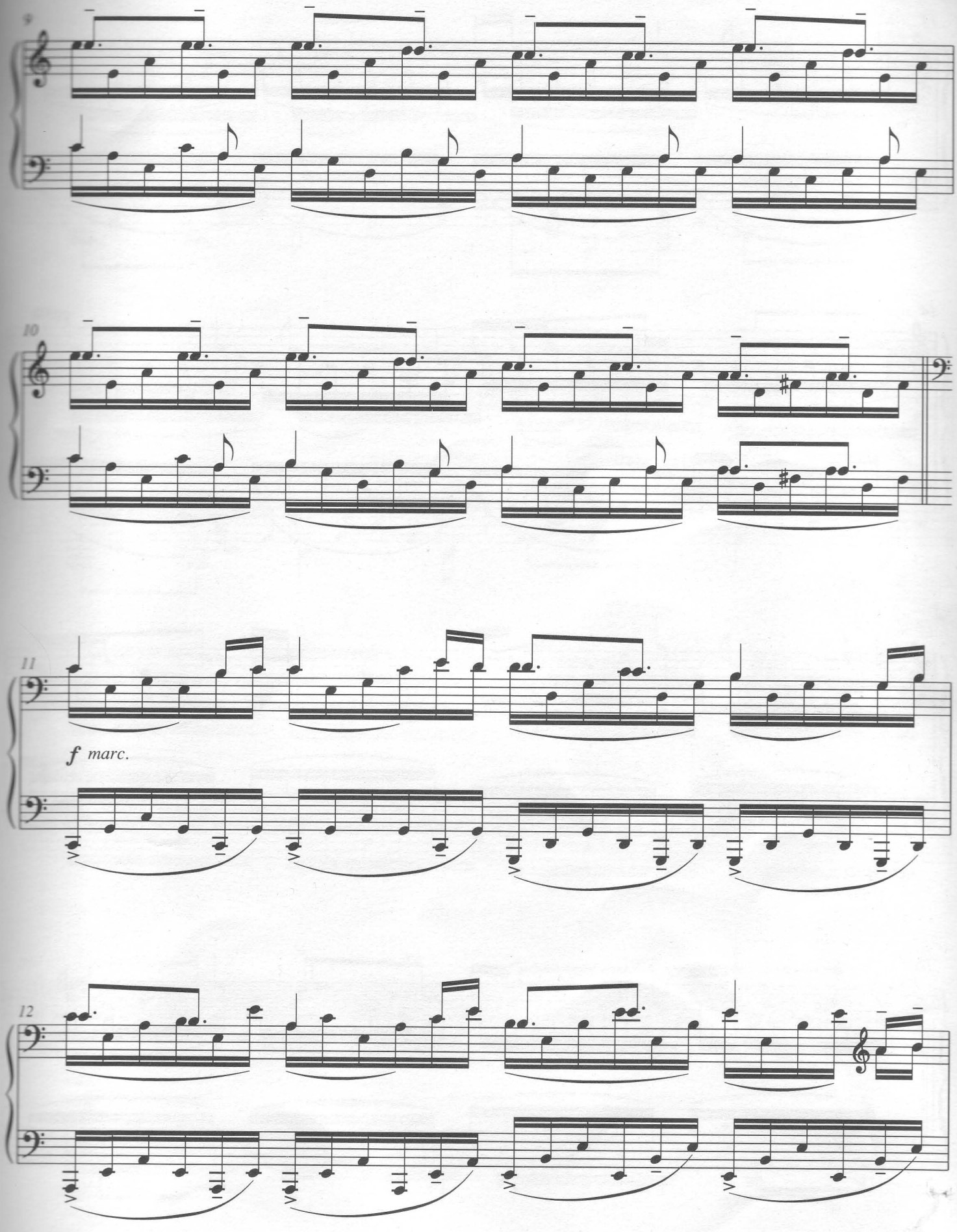
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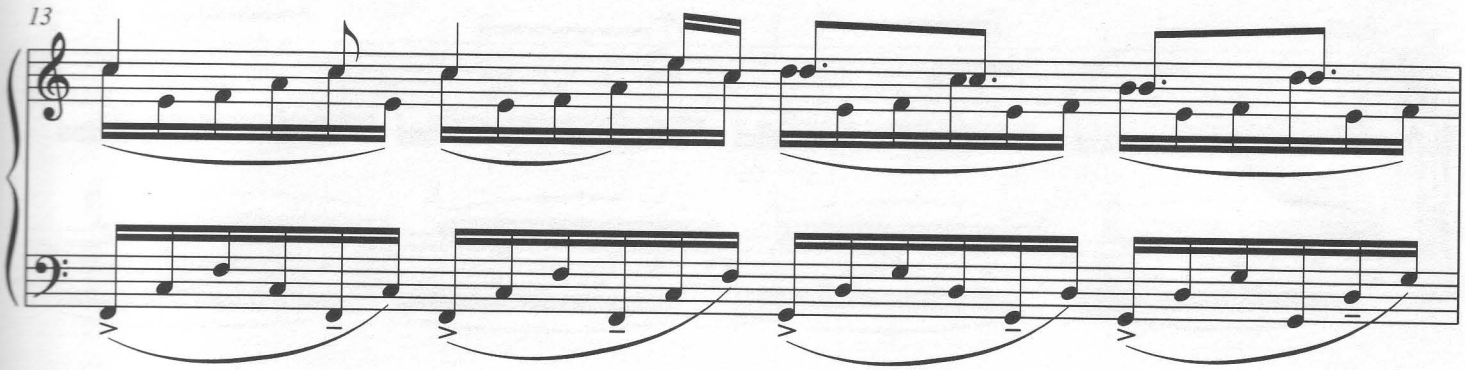
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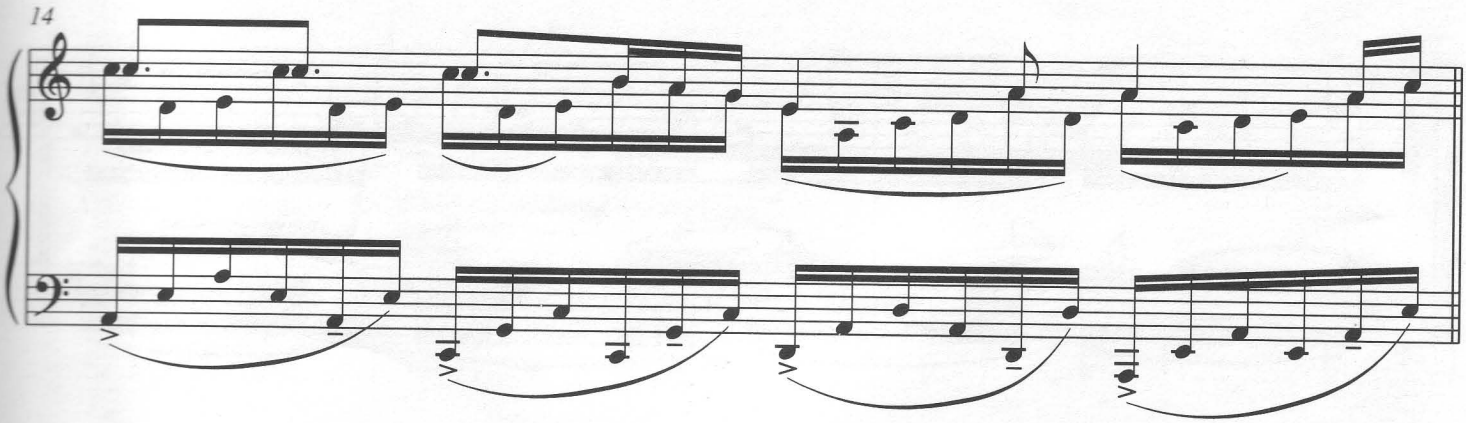
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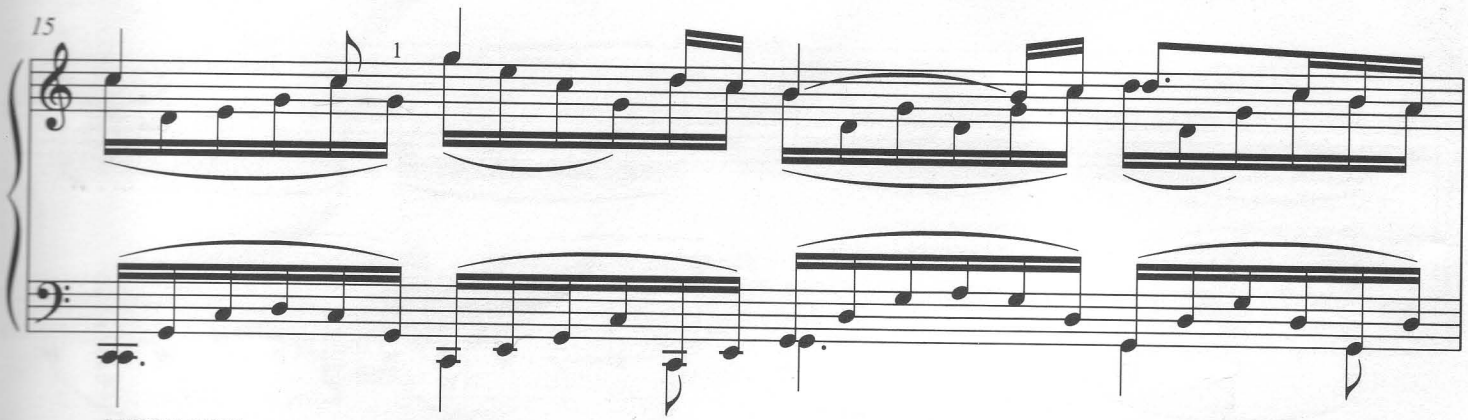
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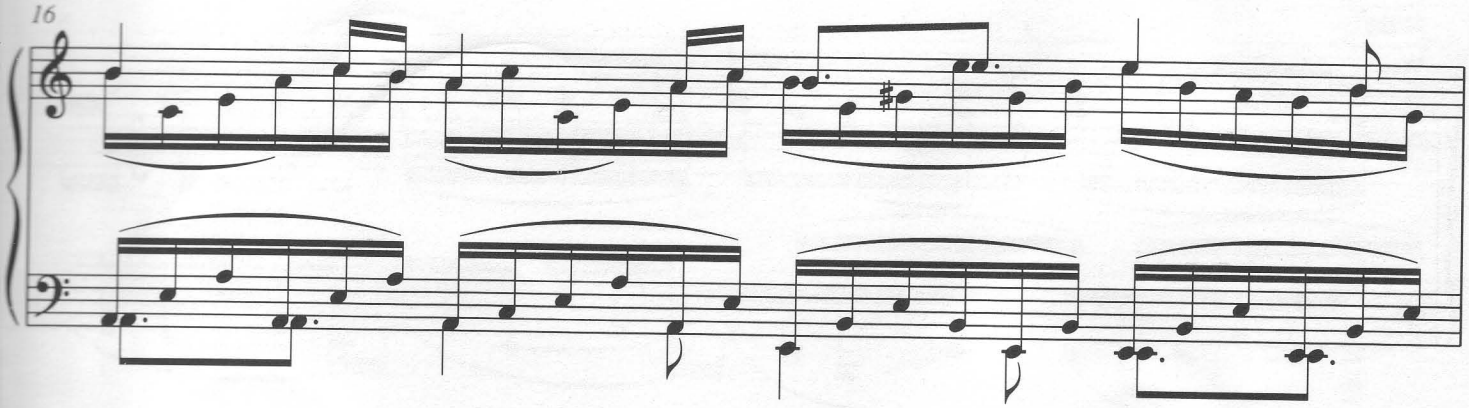
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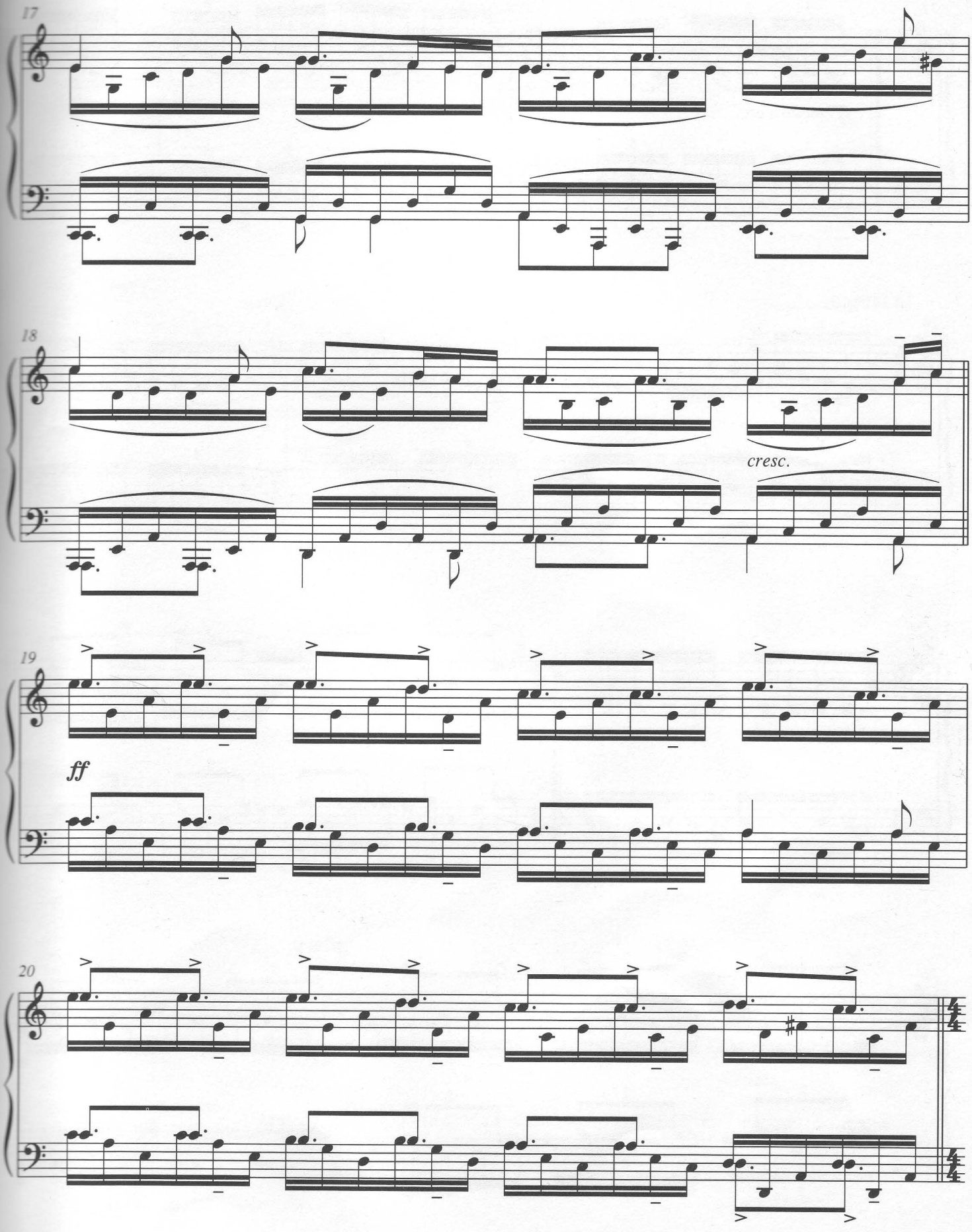
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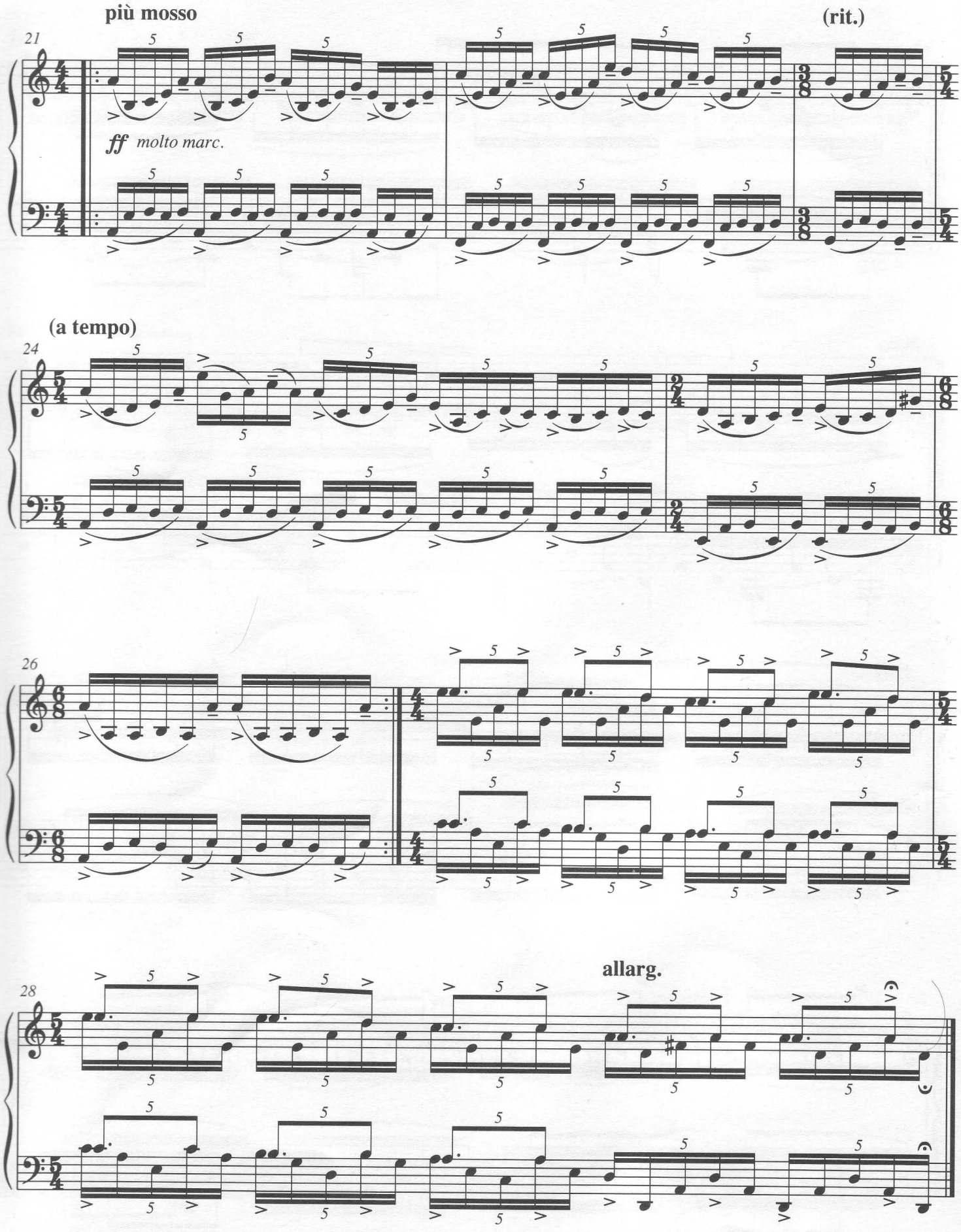

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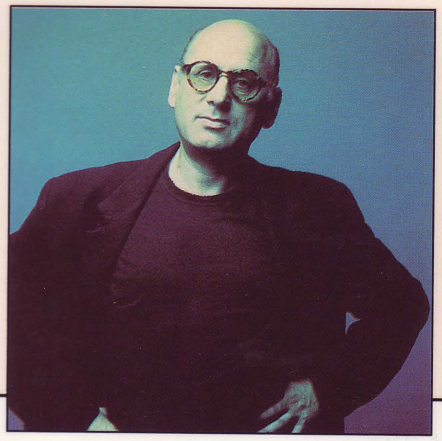
Michael Nyman, composer of
the music for *The Piano*



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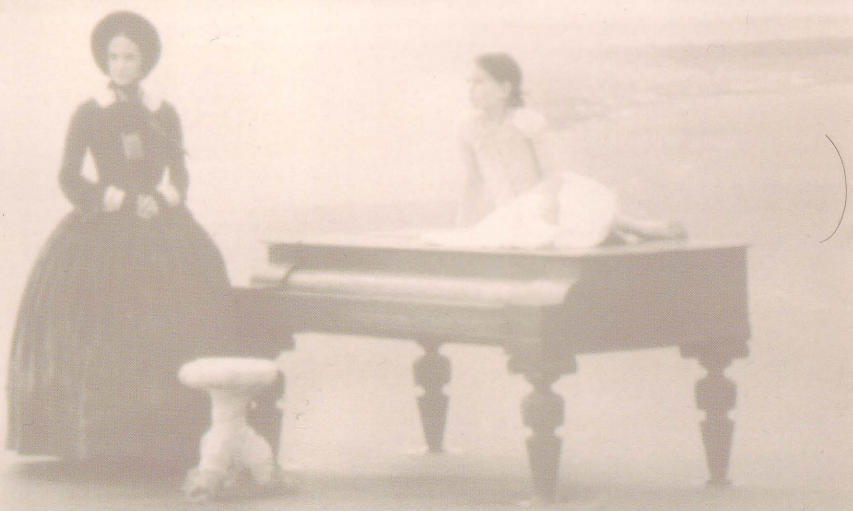
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