Isaac ALBENIZ

El ALBAICÍN

IBERIA book III N° 1

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

Isaac ALBENIZ 1860 - 1909

EL ALBAICÍN

de la suite "IBERIA"

Dedicated To Marguerite Hasselmans (Fauré's mistress) the first piece of book III evokes the Romany district of Granada. With its winding, medieval streets *El Albaicín* is a magical quarter on a hill facing the Alhambra, with a maze of very narrow streets.

Albeniz conveys spicy Andalusian fragrance from its very first plucked sounds to the final flourish, passing through passionate scenes of flamenco *bulerías* and evocative *cante jondo.**

When I first heard Alicia De Larrocha perform 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,* I noticed that the text (Éditions *Salabert*) was often difficult to study: there were inaccuracies, many accidentals and too many instructions, coupled with sub-standard engraving; so I decided to edit the music myself.

In spite of passing through many key and metre changes, the composer has curiously written this complex work entirely in 3/8 time with a key signature of 5 flats. Was this through negligence or by design? If the former, I humbly offer this edition which makes quite a few changes of key and time signature, rendering, I believe, the text easier to comprehend and read by eliminating quite a few challenging accidentals.

A pastel showing Granada from a steep street of *El Albaicín*. With kind permission of the artist.

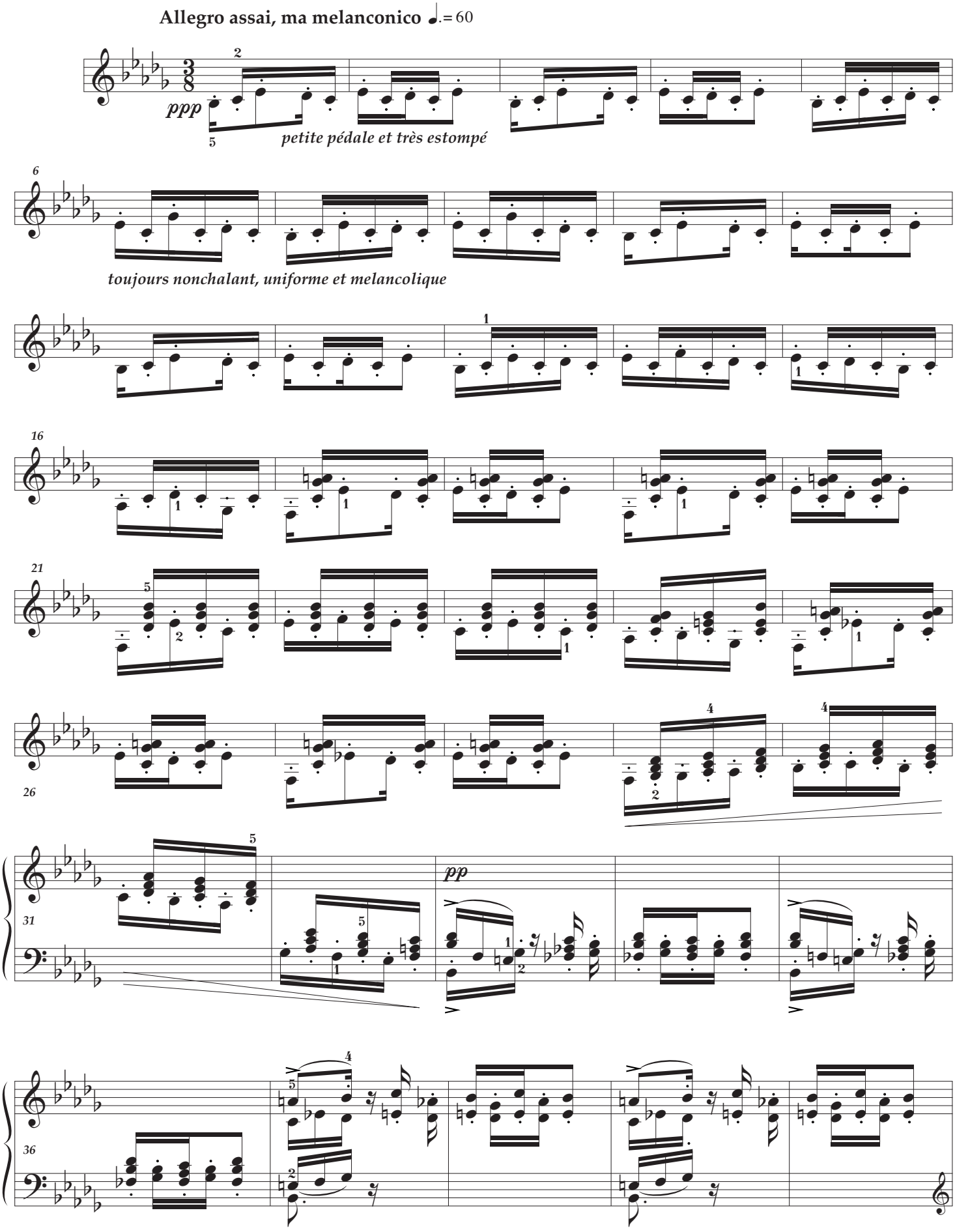
I plead guilty to not having religiously copied every dot, accent, sign, pedal marking and many others. Albeniz was very zealous in having often embellished many, sometimes conflicting, instructions and I have tried to simplify the music within reason relying upon present-day sophisticated pianists and teachers reading the score philosophically.

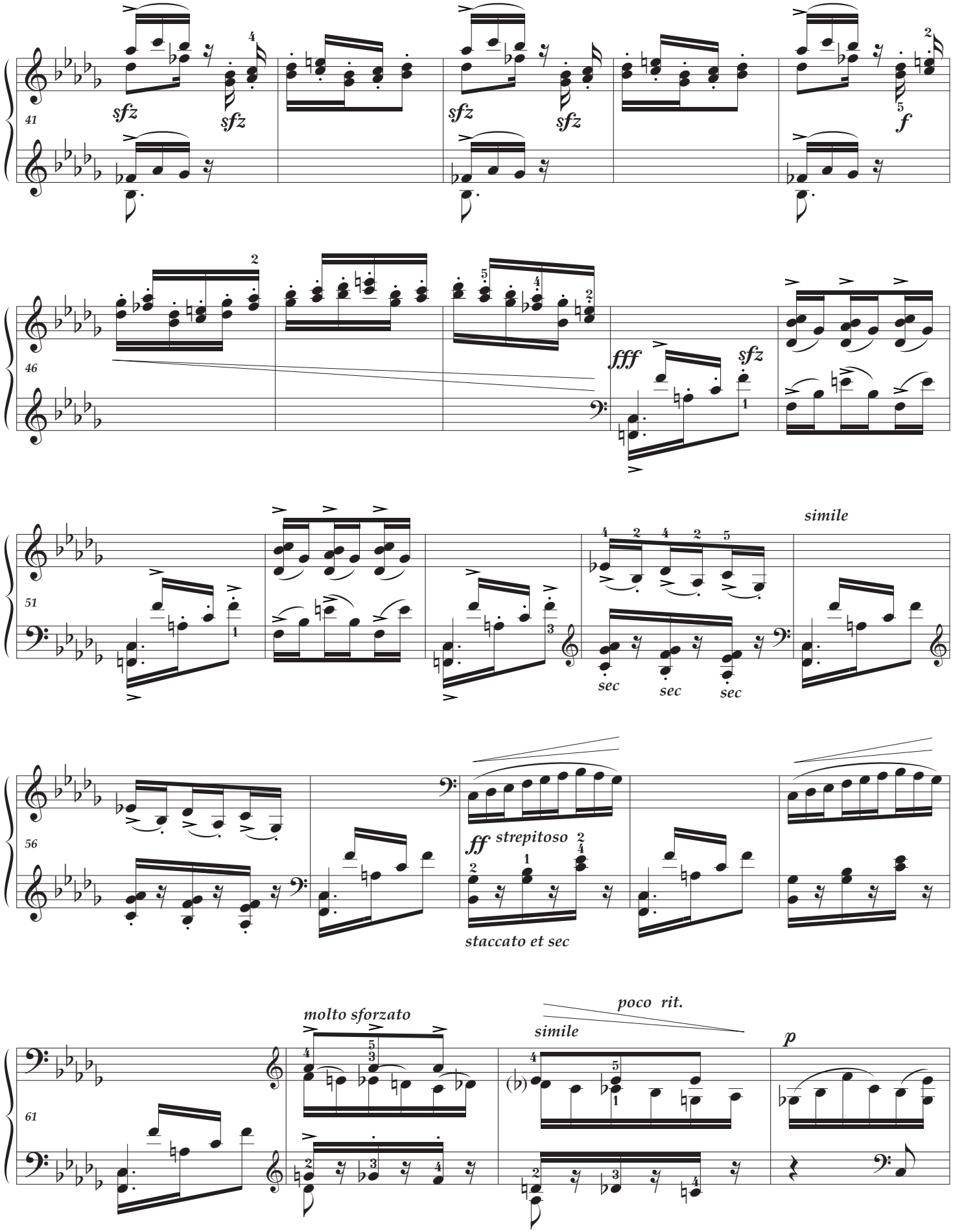
Albéniz was an extrovert with a keen sense of humour, loved and respected by all who knew him. In this wonderful and imaginative music, he was also flamboyant with long descriptions in French and pedalling directions which sometimes seem to be a whirlwind of far-fetched impossibilities — unreasonable and endearing as they are.

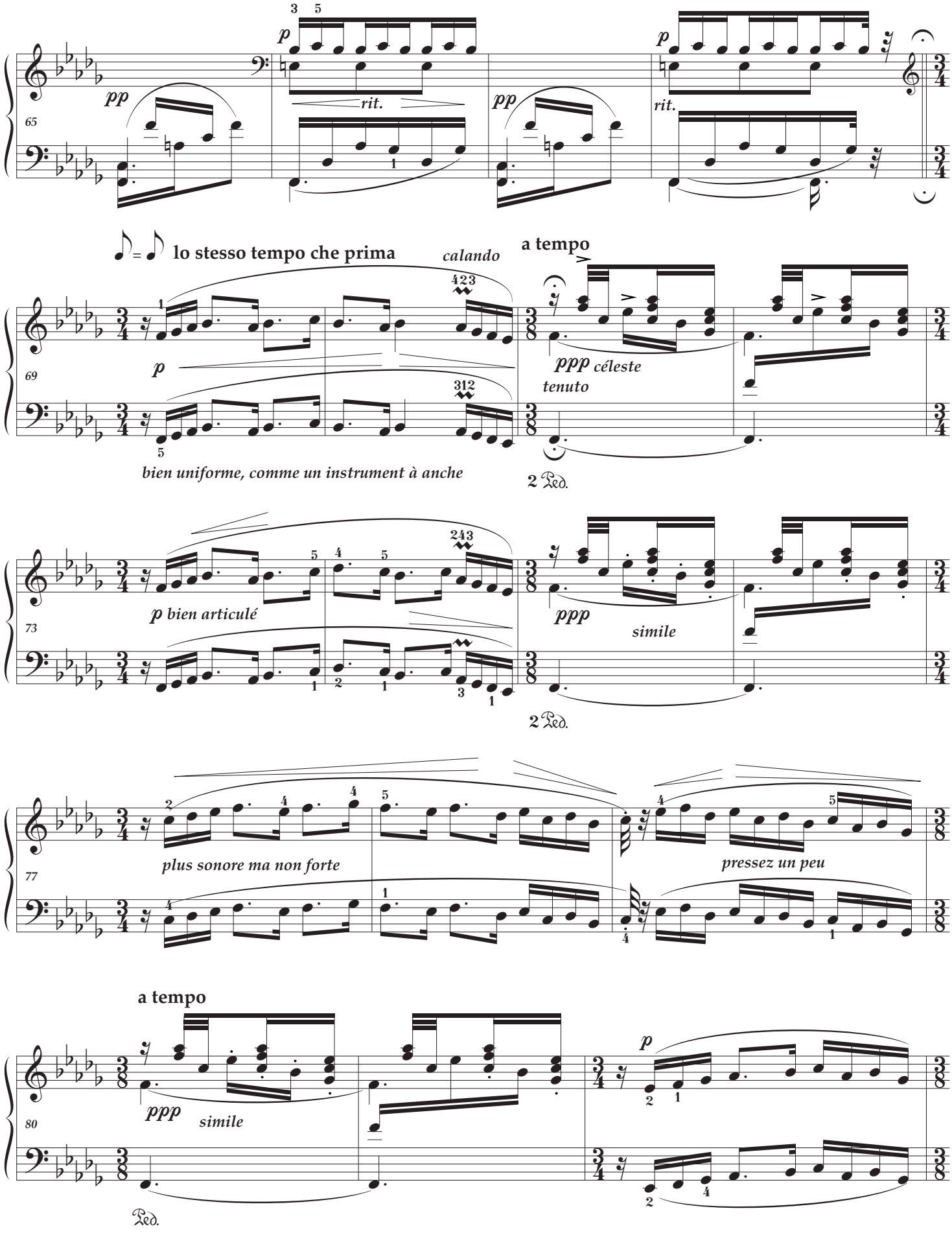
In addition to some suggested fingerings, the appendix contains comments, afterthoughts and a vocabulary. Redistribution between the hands comes under close scrutiny to make certain passages easier or more persuasive. It is possible, even desirable, to use the sostenuto pedal effectively, although this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

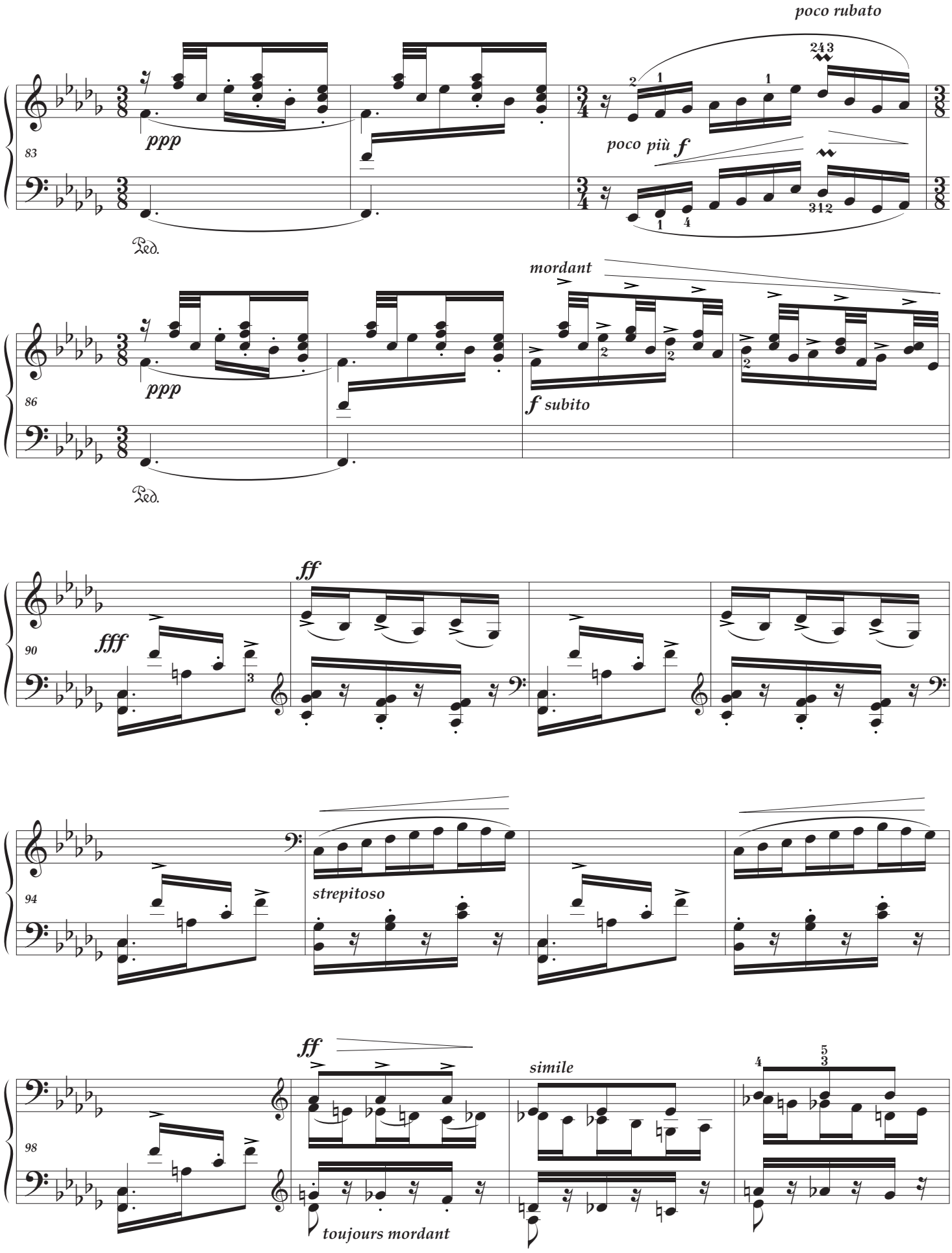
* Deeply moving vocal flamenco

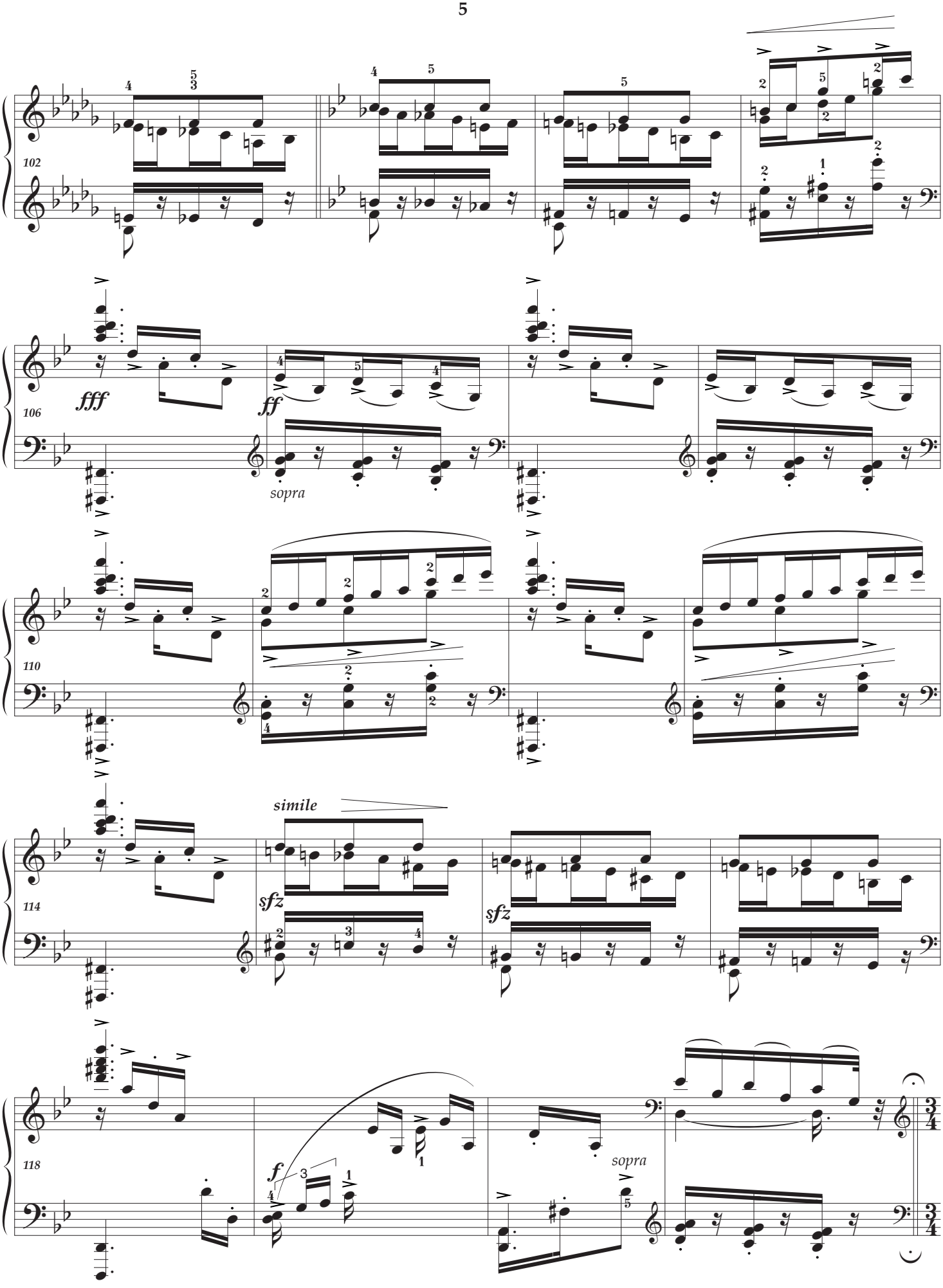
EL ALBAICÍN

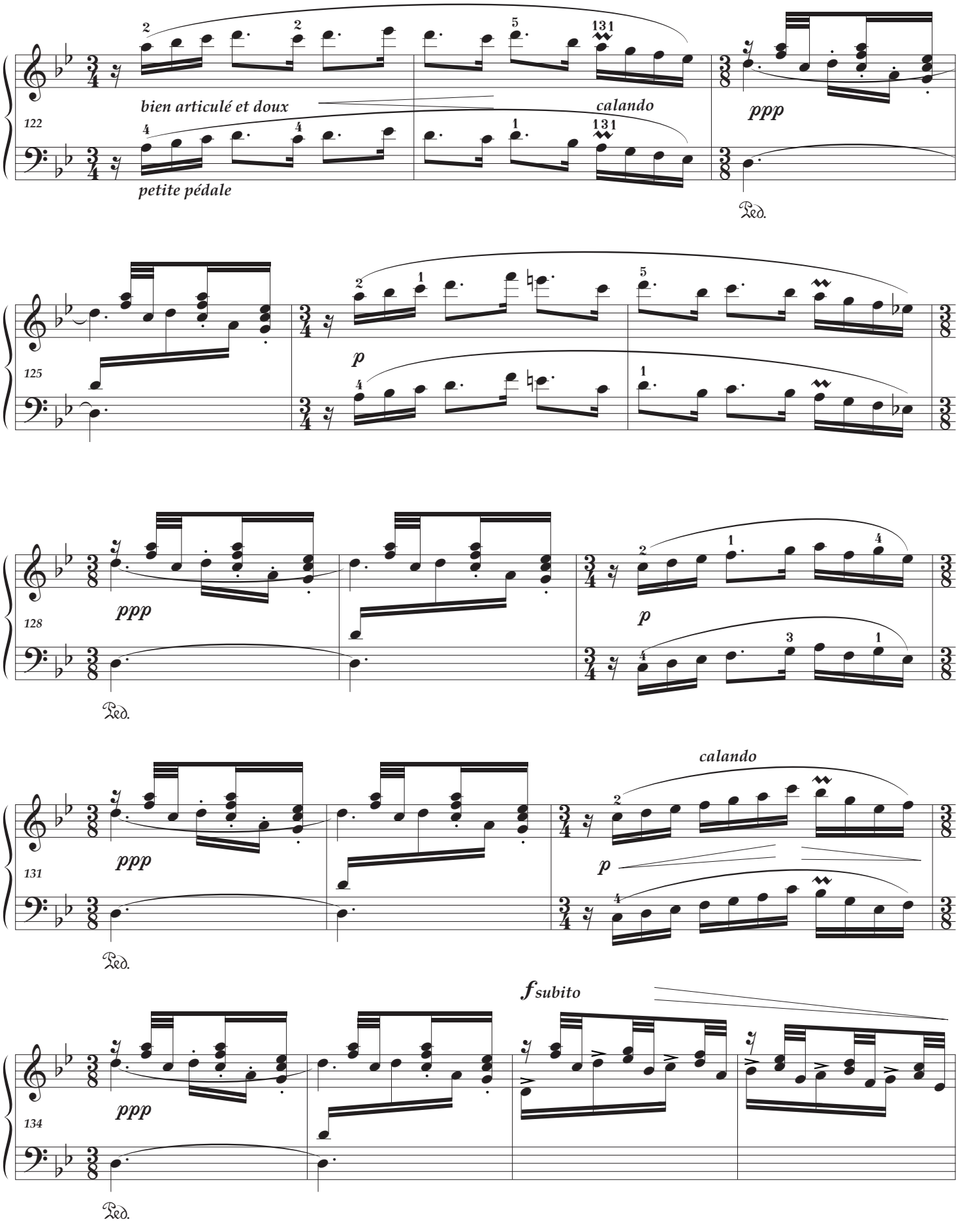

Allegro assai, ma melanconico ♩.= 60
ppp
petite pédale et très estompé
toujours nonchalant, uniforme et melancolique
pp

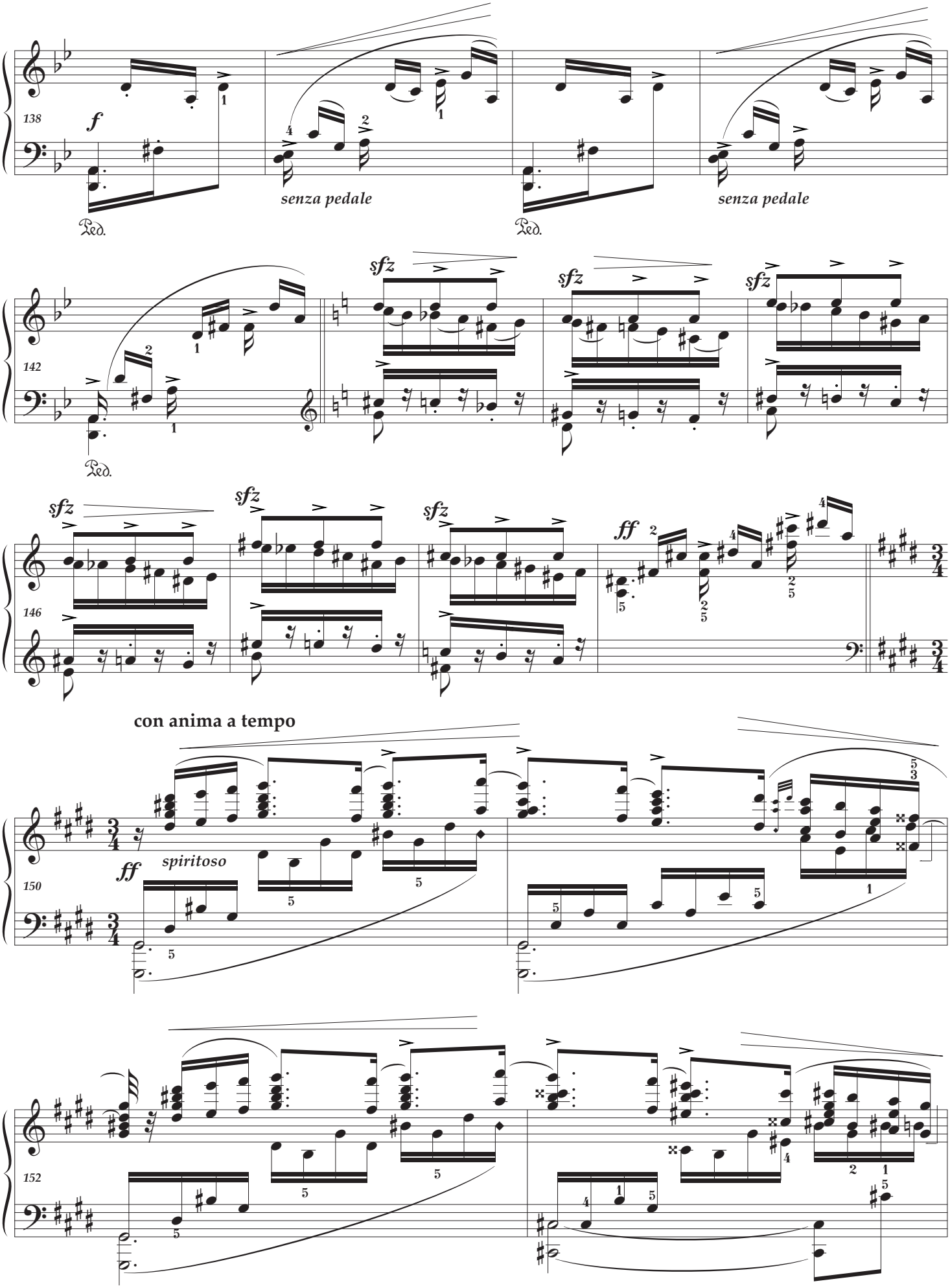

41
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz
f
46
fff
sfz
51
simile
sec
sec
sec
56
ff strepitoso
staccato et sec
61
molto sforzato
simile
poco rit.
p

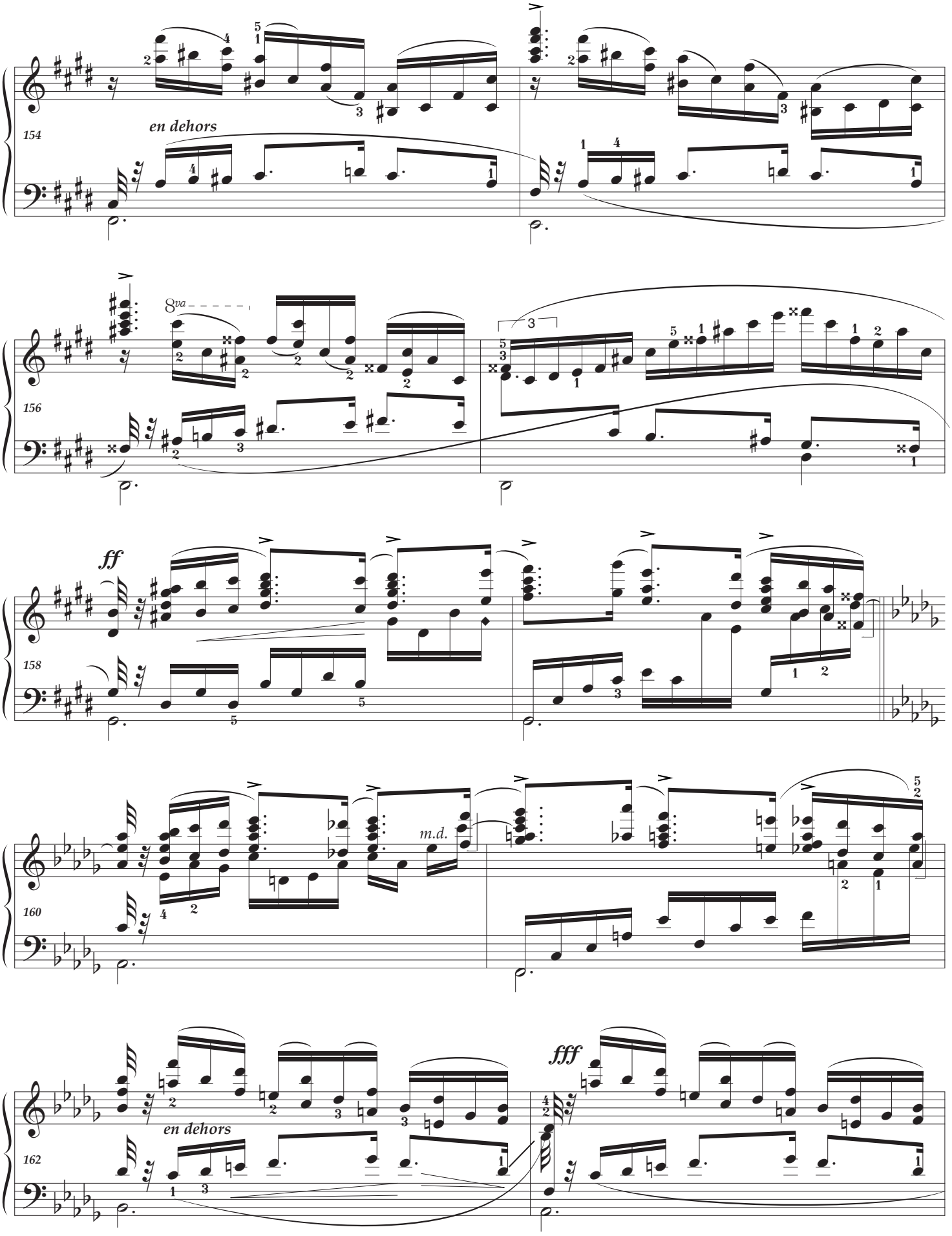

65
pp
p
rit.
pp
p
rit.
69
lo stesso tempo che prima
calando
a tempo
p
ppp céleste
tenuto
bien uniforme, comme un instrument à anche
2 Ped.
73
p bien articulé
ppp
simile
2 Ped.
77
plus sonore ma non forte
pressez un peu
80
a tempo
ppp
simile
p
Ped.

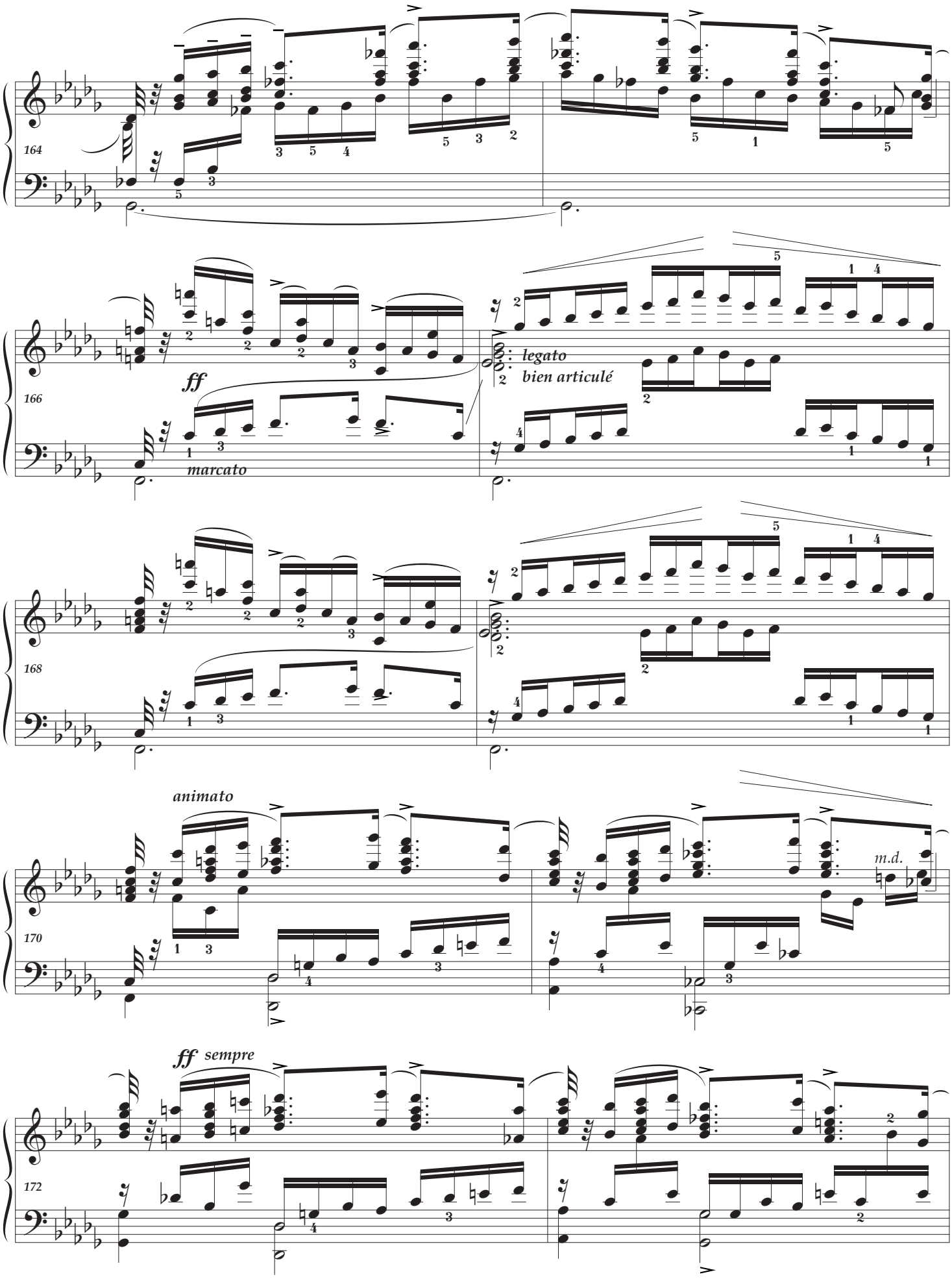

poco rubato
83
ppp
poco più f
Ped.
86
ppp
mordant
f subito
Ped.
90
fff
ff
94
strepitoso
98
ff
simile
toujours mordant

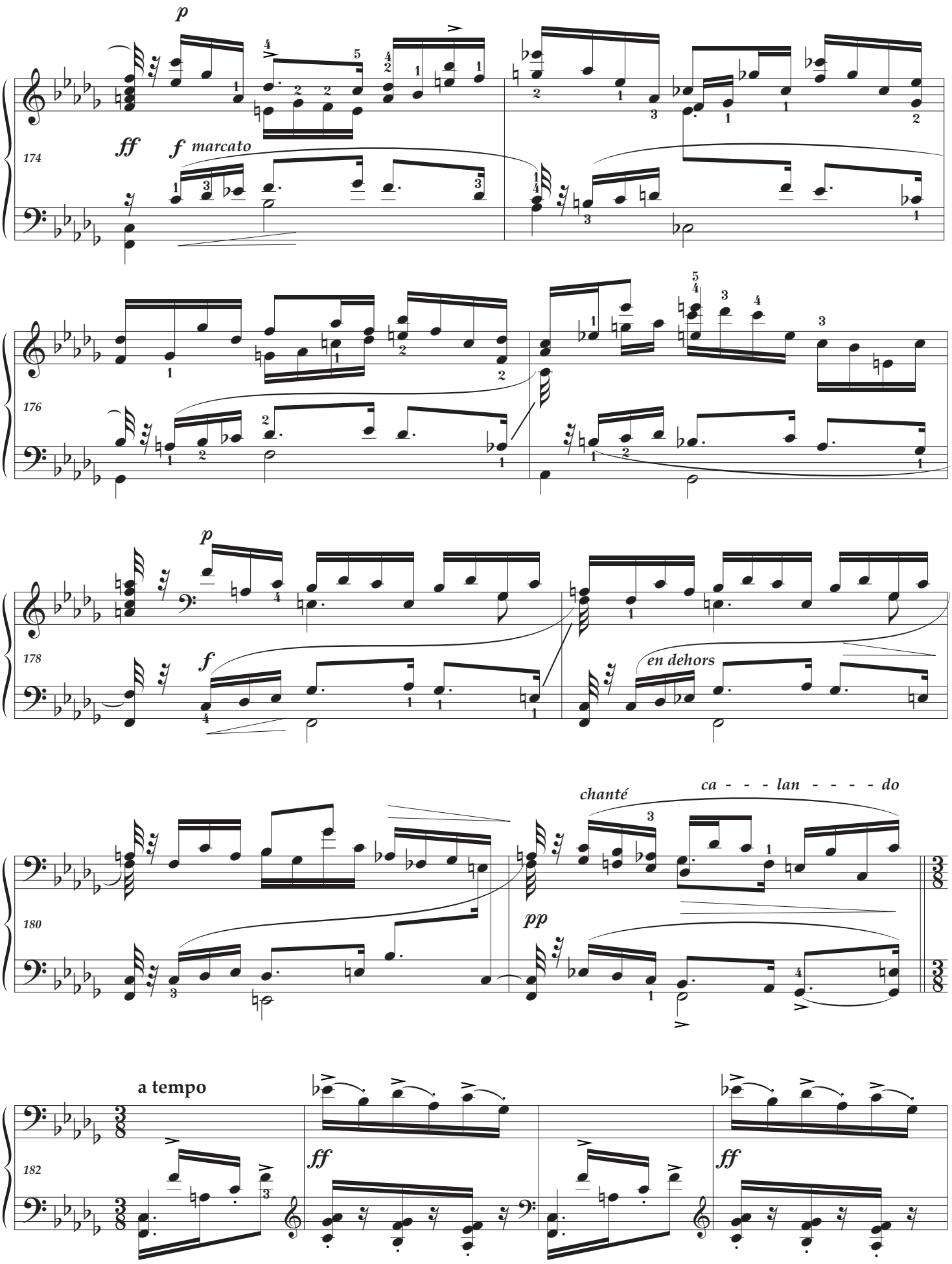

102
106
fff
ff
sopra
110
114
simile
sfz
sfz
118
f
sopra

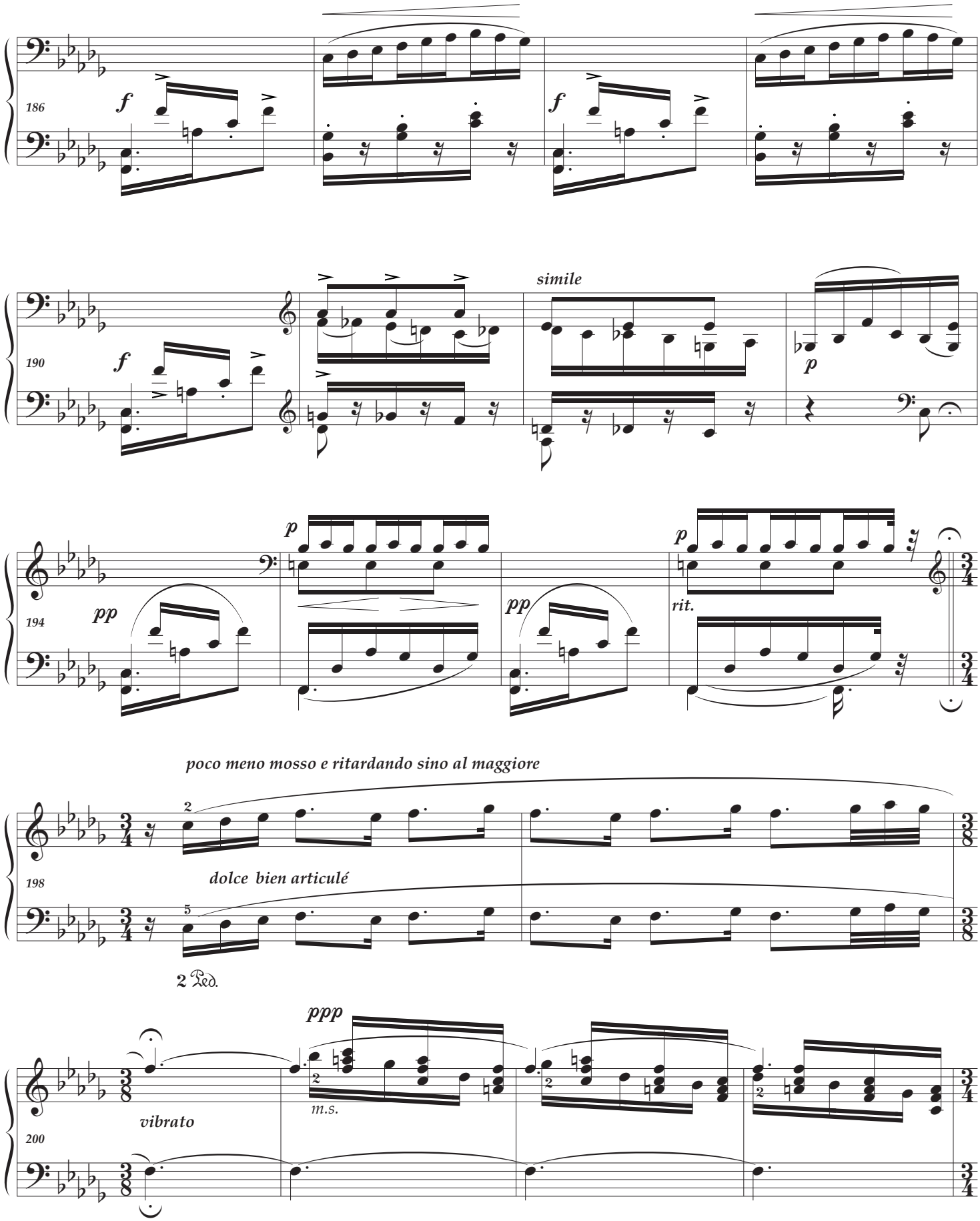

122
bien articulé et doux
petite pédale
calando
ppp
Ped.
125
p
128
ppp
Ped.
p
131
ppp
Ped.
calando
p
134
ppp
Ped.
fsubito


138
f
senza pedale
Ped.
senza pedale
Ped.
142
sfz
sfz
sfz
Ped.
146
sfz
sfz
sfz
ff
con anima a tempo
150
ff
spiritoso
152

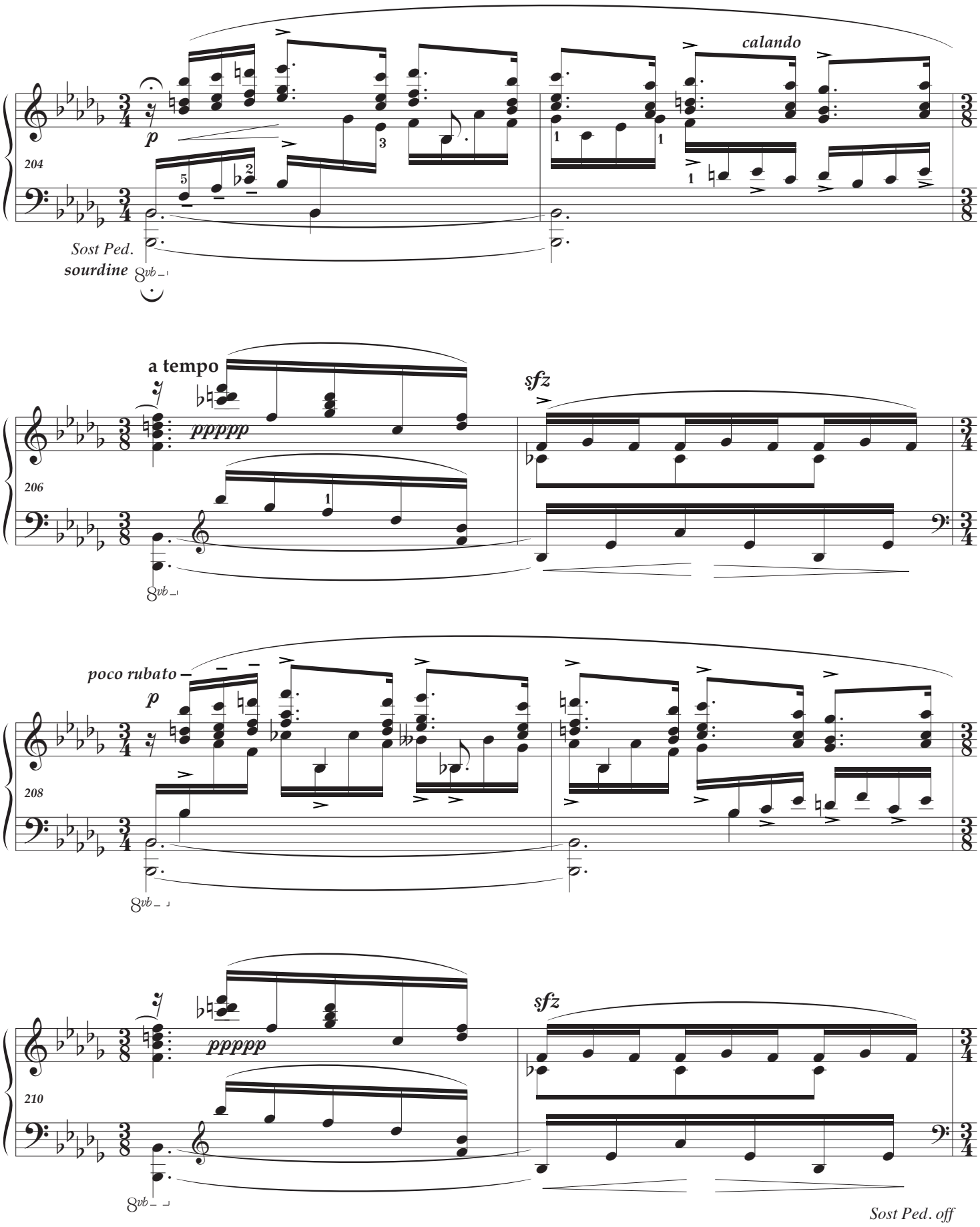

154
en dehors
156
8va
158
ff
160
m.d.
162
en dehors
fff

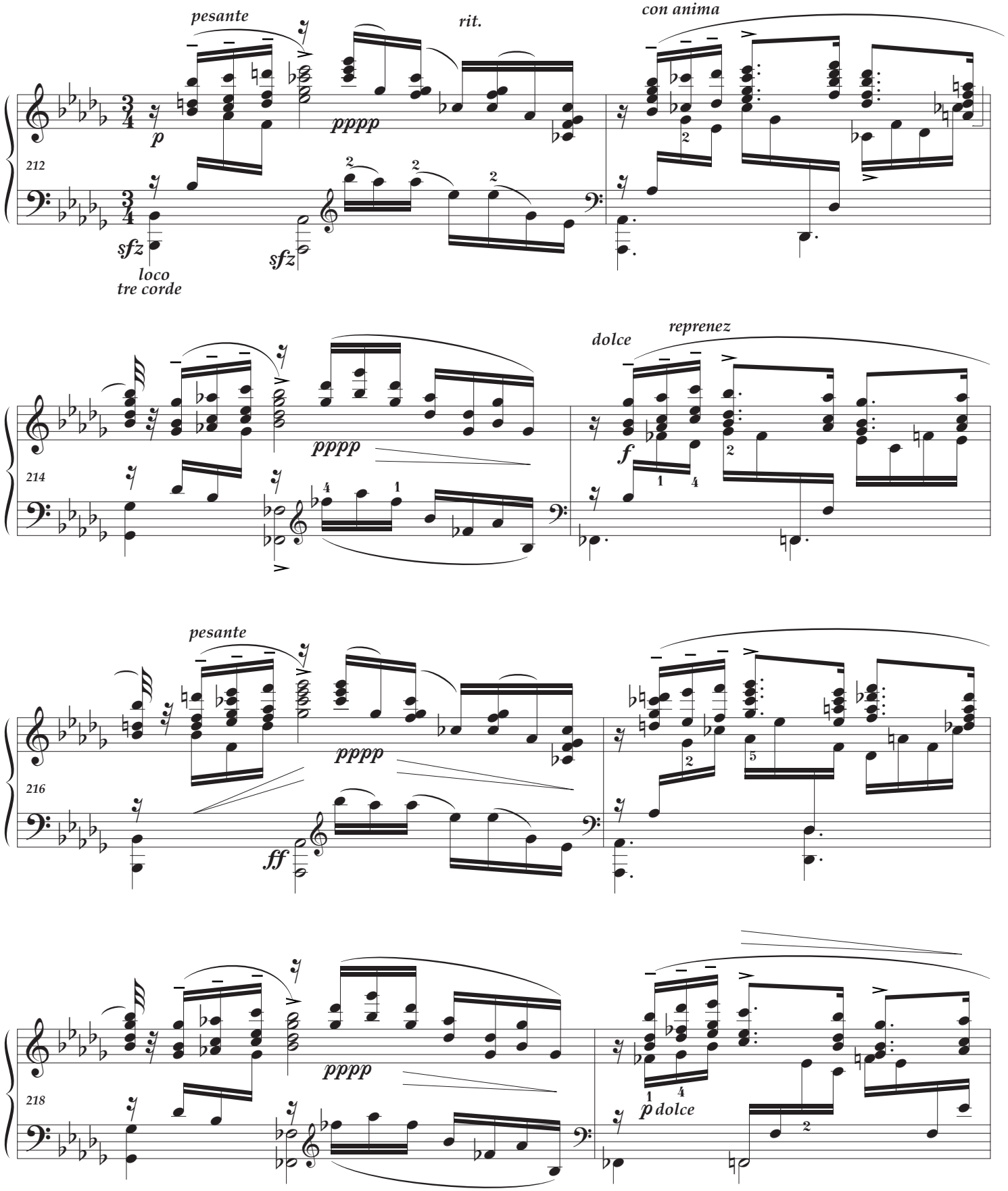

164
166
ff
marcato
legato
bien articulé
168
animato
170
m.d.
ff sempre
172

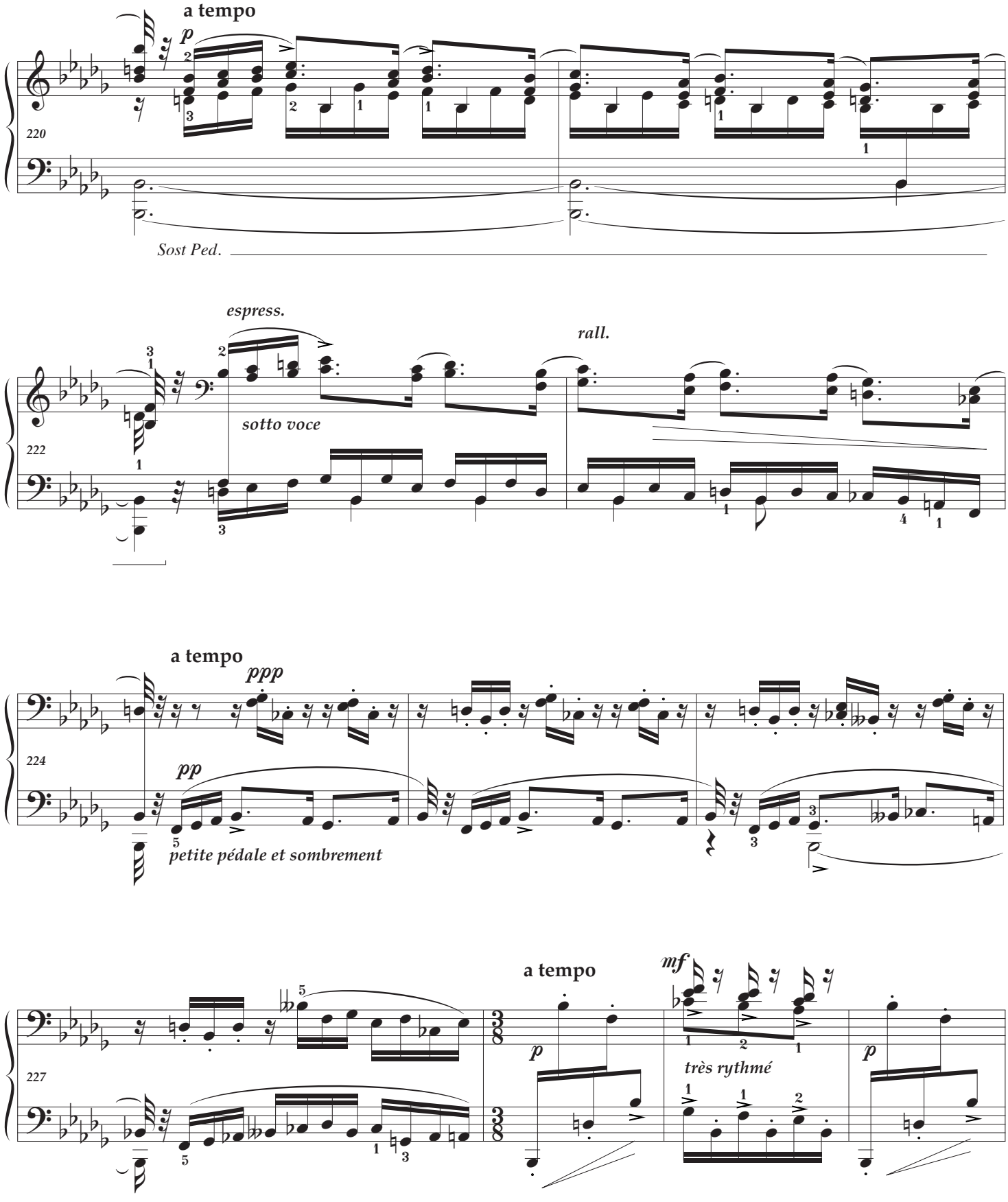

p
ff
f marcato
174
176
p
f
178
en dehors
chanté
ca - - - lan - - - - do
pp
180
a tempo
ff
182

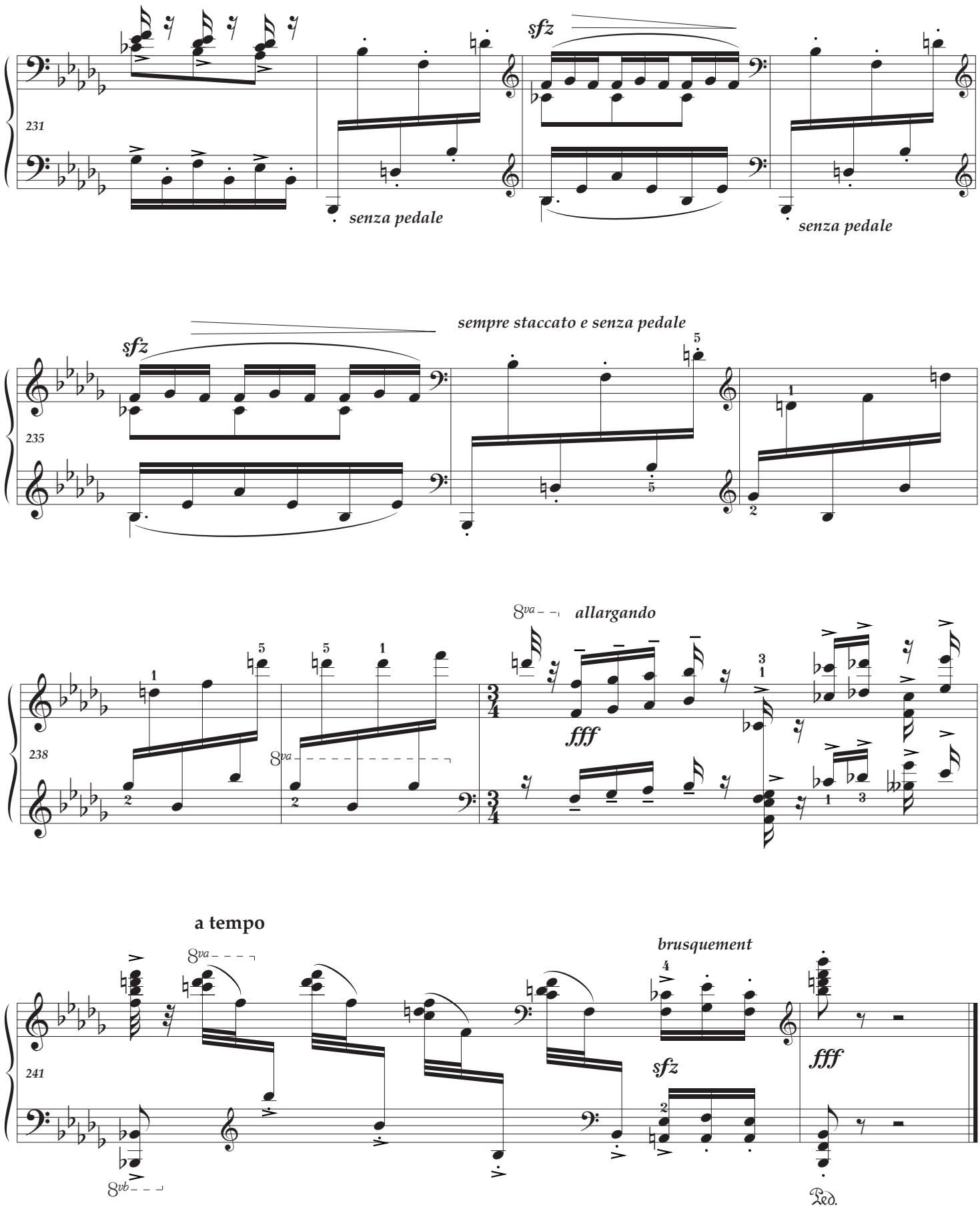

186
f
f
190
f
simile
p
194
pp
p
pp
p
pp
rit.
poco meno mosso e ritardando sino al maggiore
198
dolce bien articulé
2 Ped.
ppp
200
vibrato
m.s.

commencez doucement et ne reprenez le mouvement que graduellement, mais toujours un peu retenu




pesante
rit.
con anima
212
p
pppp
sfz
loco
tre corde
sfz
214
pppp
dolce
reprenez
f
216
pesante
pppp
ff
218
pppp
p dolce


a tempo
p
220
Sost Ped.
espress.
rall.
sotto voce
222
a tempo
ppp
224
pp
petite pédale et sombrement
a tempo
mf
très rythmé
227
p
p


231
sfz
senza pedale
senza pedale
235
sfz
sempre staccato e senza pedale
238
8va
allargando
fff
241
a tempo
8va
8vb
brusquement
sfz
fff
Ped.

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

- 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.

- Given the composer's dynamic range is ***ppppp*** to ***fffff***, ***ff*** is not all that loud!

Duration: 7'30

- 88 & 136 ***f*** subito assumed
- 123 mordent moved to 3rd beat in line with similar bars (i.e. 127)
- 150 & 152 chordal writing to match 158 & 160
- 167 & 9 bass F has a doubtful tie here
- 175 the final C♭ has an error in the original edition
- 177 1st beat — there is a likely error in the treble, modified here
- 220 Be sure to use the sostenuto pedal during the RH demi-semiquaver rest
- 224-227 RH slurred in the original edition; Alicia De Larrocha also plays the LH staccato here.
- 232 and similar — these bars are pedalled in the original
- 241 bass one 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 such Steinways in the Paris *salons*. 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 prevalent.

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”.

bien uniforme, comme un instrument à anche	even tone, like a wind instrument
petite pedale	soft pedal
bien estompé	veiled, very blurred
toujours nonchalant uniforme et melanconique	unhurried, even in tone and sad
céleste	very soft
bien articulé	articulate, very clear
plus sonore	more tone
pressez un peu	hurrying a little
mordant	biting
doux	gentle
en dehors	in relief
chanté	singing tone
sino al maggiore	until the major section
vibrato	vibrated (i.e. pedalled)
commencez doucement et ne reprenez le mouvement que graduellement	begin gently, gradually gaining momentum
mais toujours un peu retenu	but always a little held back
reprenez	back to tempo
sombrement	darkly
très rythmé	very rhythmical
brusquement	suddenly