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Piano Course: Grade 8, Studies

Sherwood Music School

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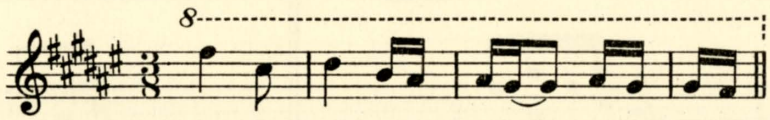
Sherwood Music School Courses

PIANO — Study 801

In this celebrated Concert Study, known as "If I Were a Bird", Henselt's artistic kinship with Chopin is shown; for the technical feature making the piece a study is set in a musical work of great poetic content. The title appears singularly appropriate. To the imagination, the broken chord figures may easily suggest the flight of a bird, winging its way through sunny skies. The more intense middle section, in the relative minor key, might represent the struggles with contrary winds or passing storms, while the third section indicates, in its final peacefulness, safe arrival at the haven.

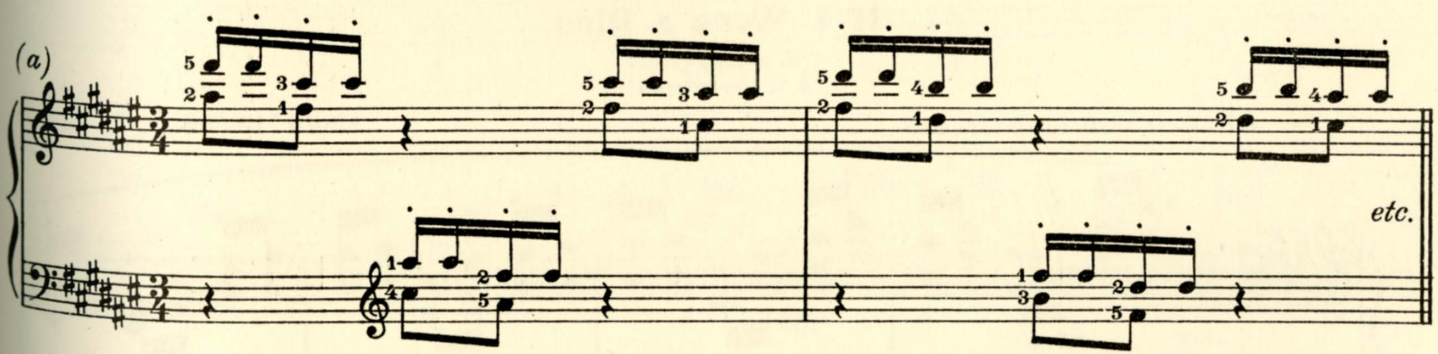
The melodic line — implied rather than shown in the notation — should at all times stand out clearly and prominently, by means of slight but distinct accents. For example, the melody carried by the first four measures is this:



Moreover, all the broken chord passages are to be played with the utmost legato. The proper connection of the consecutive pairs of notes, yet with no overlapping, presents a problem which can best be mastered by beginning the practice very slowly and carefully. The dynamic variety and the pedaling, so clearly indicated, must be added in the same way; that is, first in slow and very exact practice.

Invaluable preparatory work for this Study will be found in Exercise 801, which should be referred to and used with this particular object in view.

The following variants derived from the material of the Study may be applied and practiced in extended passages:



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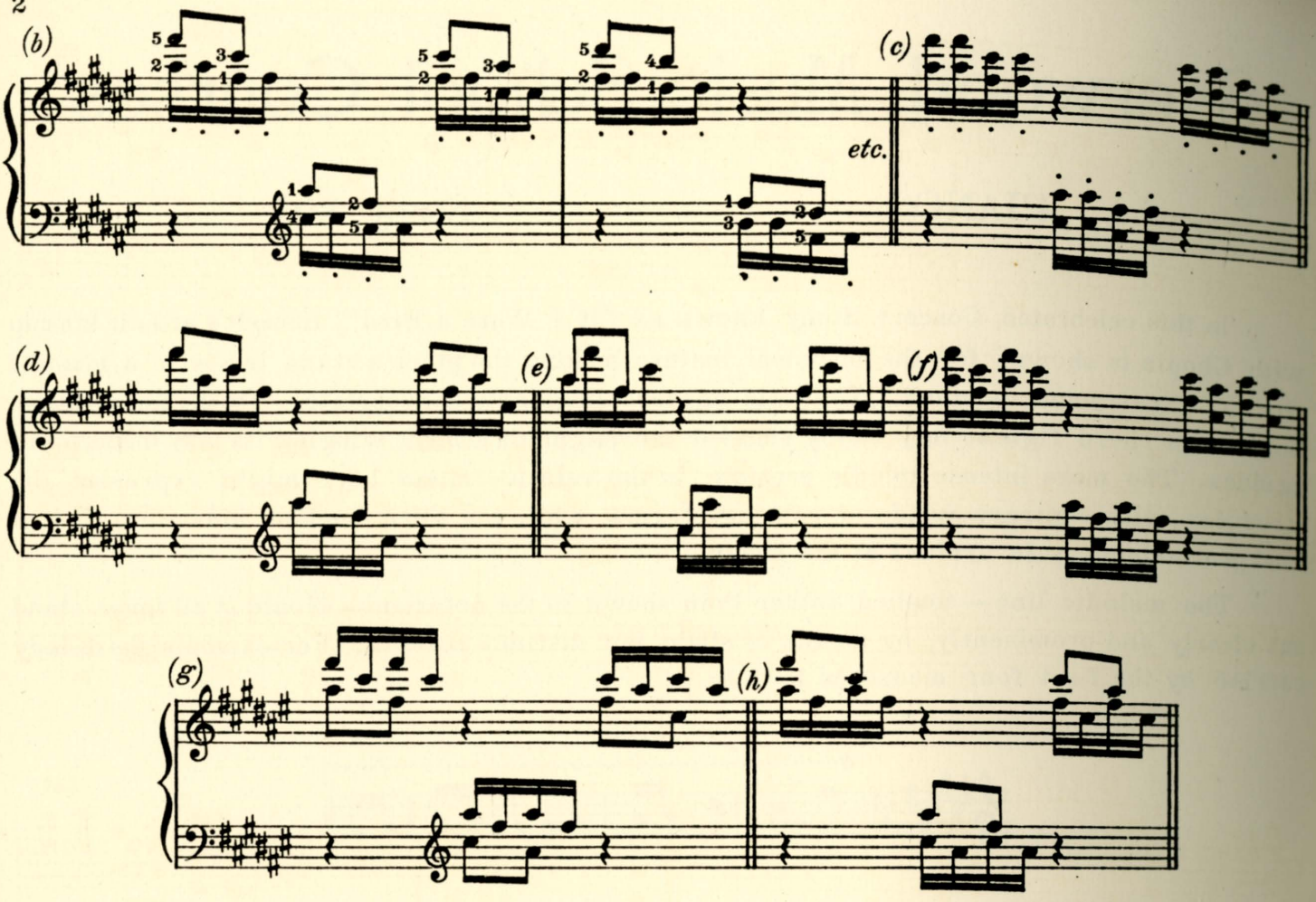
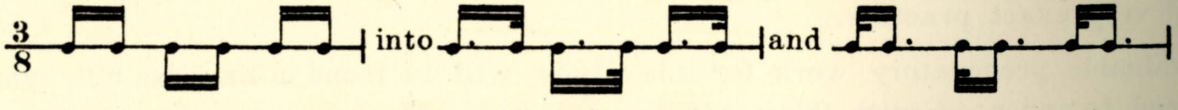


In the more advanced stages of practice, a simple rhythmic variation may be applied by converting the given rhythm of



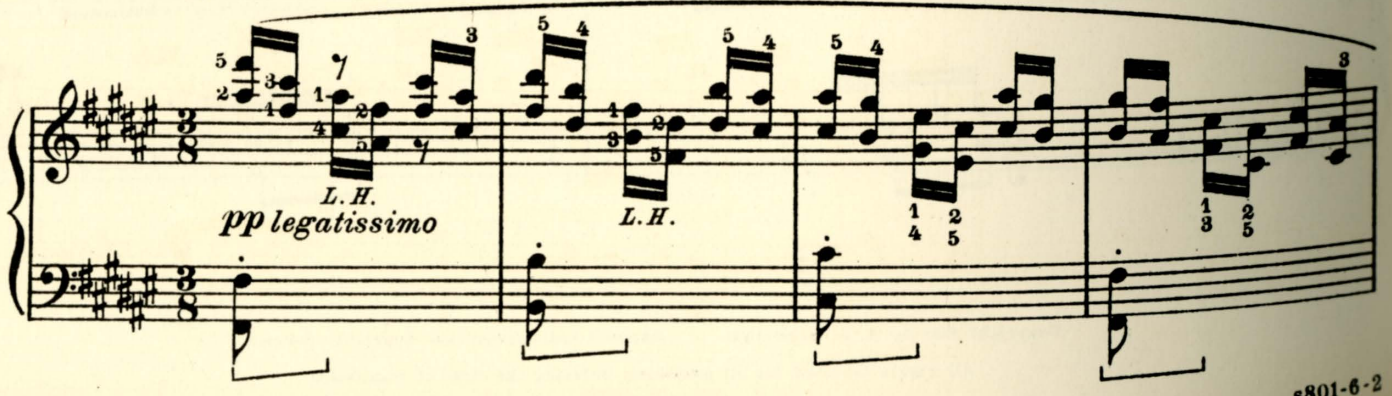
Concerning the pedal indications, it may be said that the pedal is, in most cases, only added to give a pizzicato-like accent to the bass octaves, and should be released exactly as marked. The broken chords, themselves, should maintain a constant legato without the aid of the pedal, which would only obscure their clean-cut figuration if used more extensively.

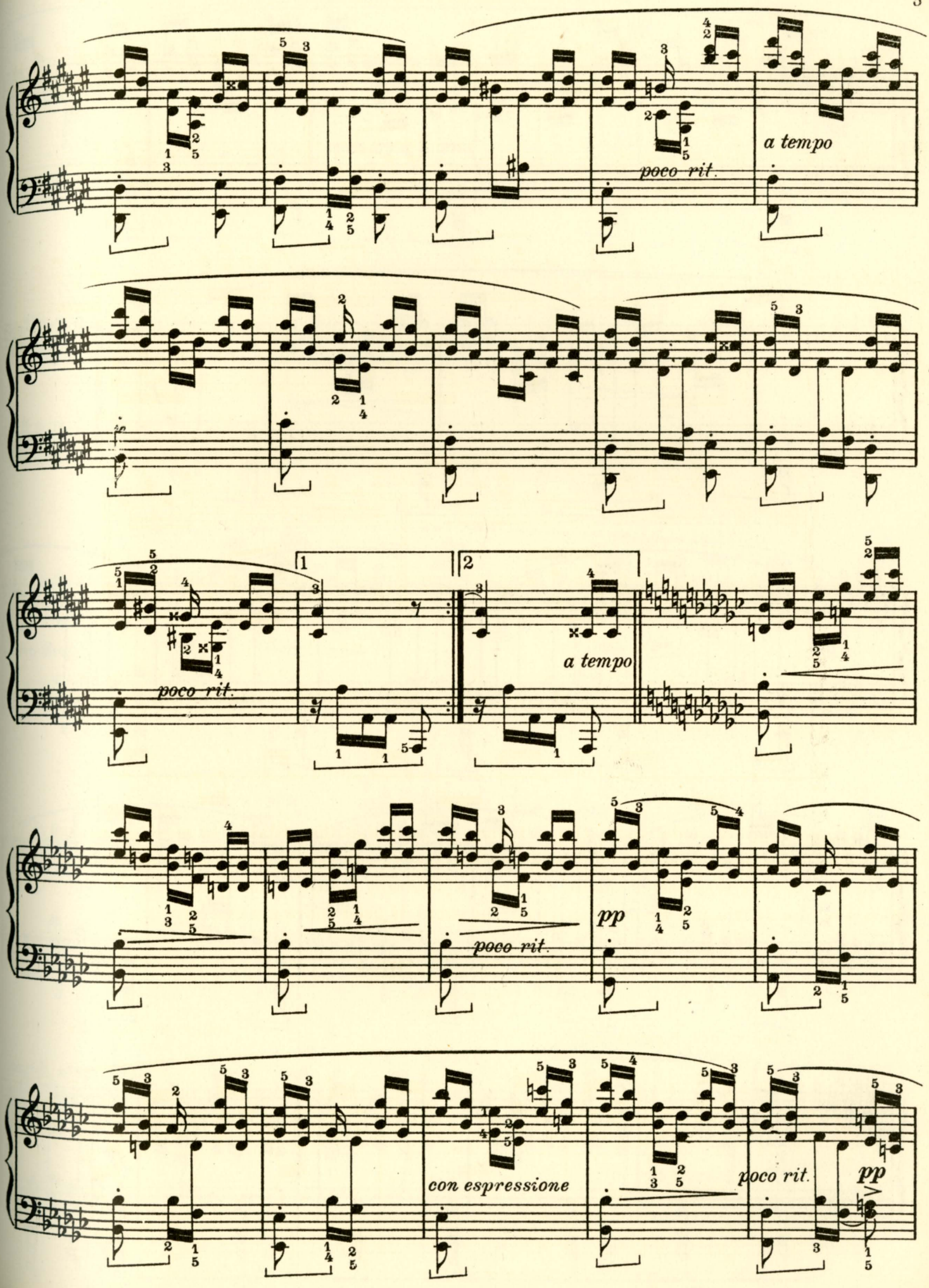
If I Were a Bird

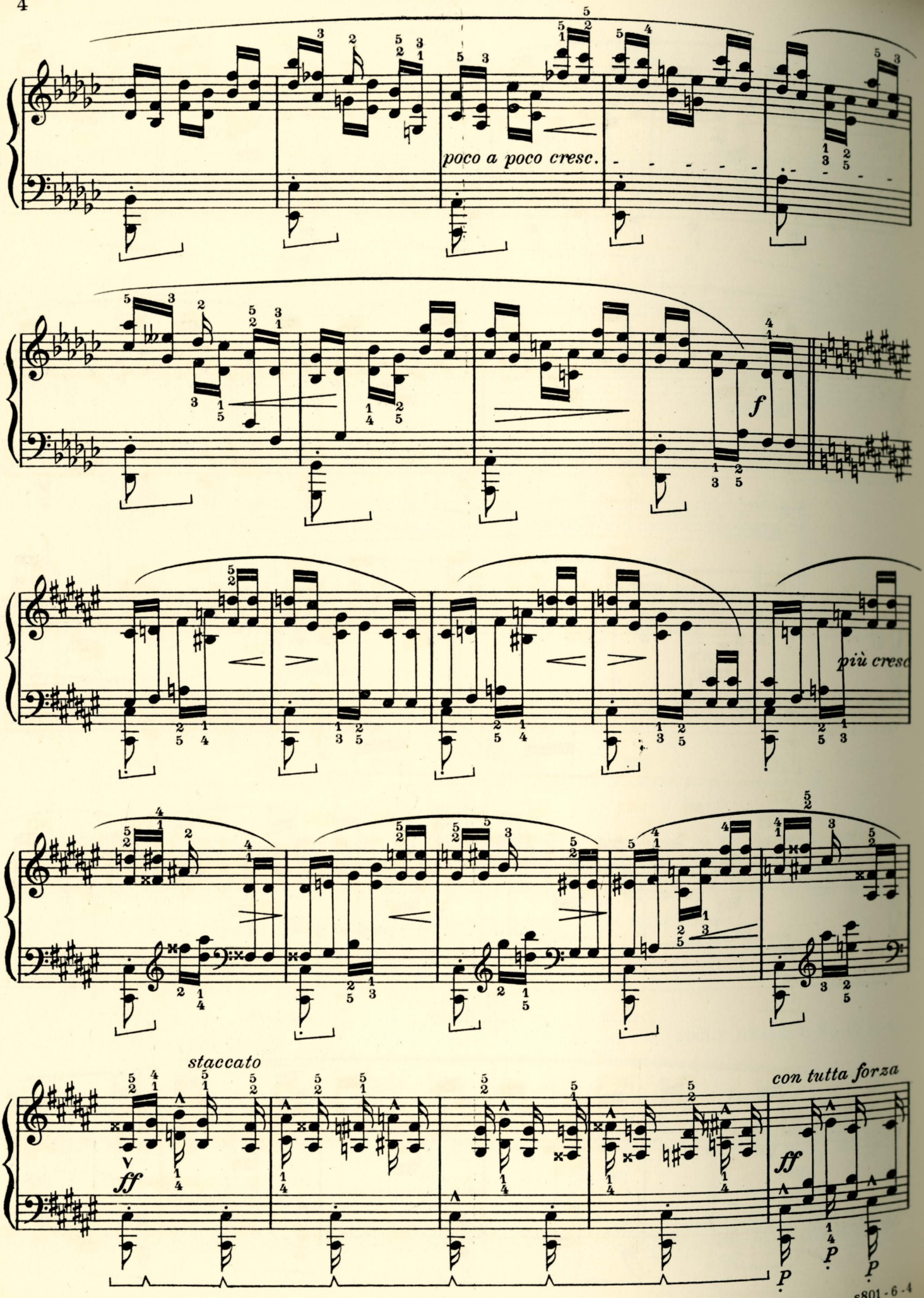
"Si oiseau j'étais
À toi je volerais!"

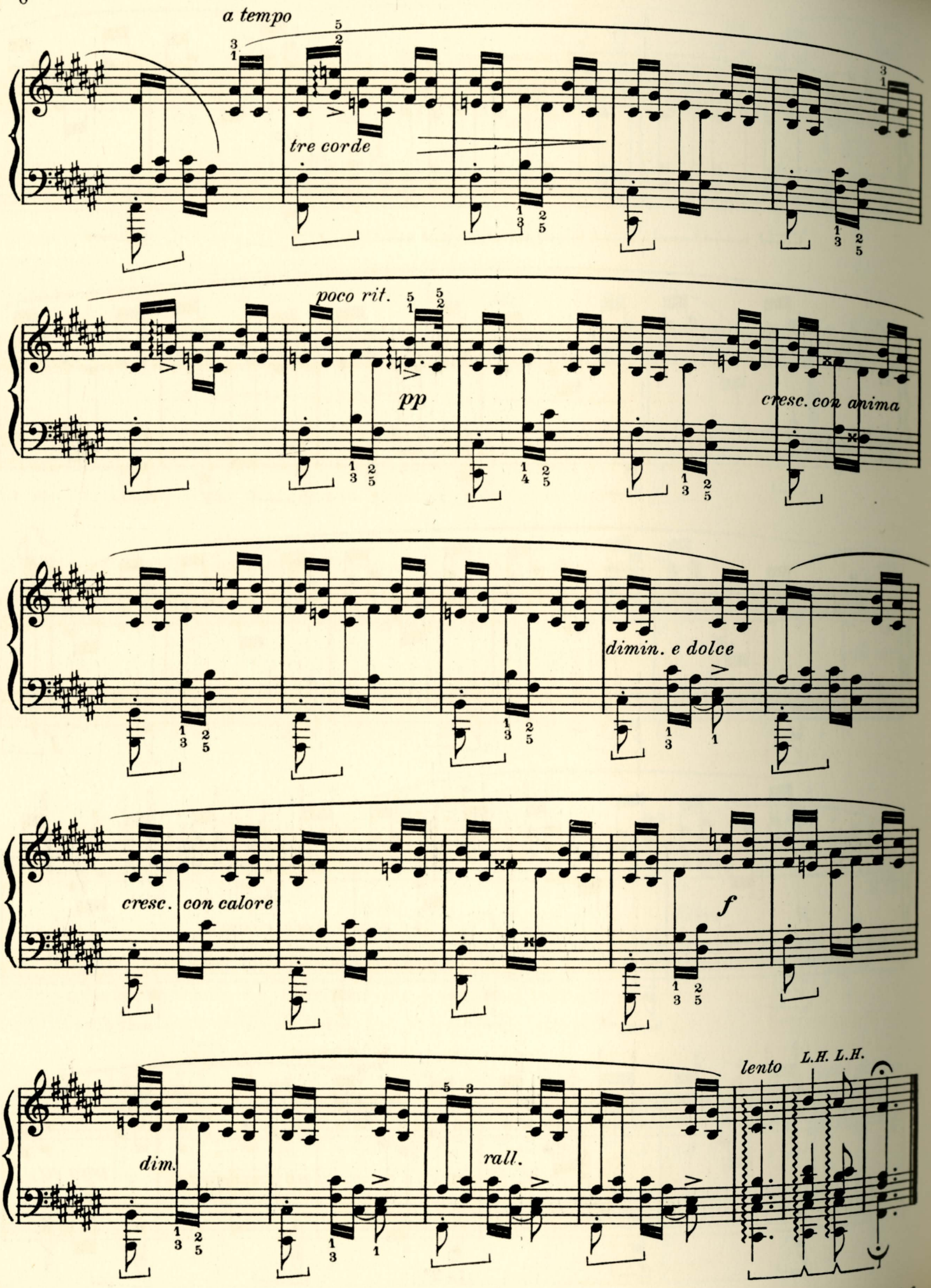
Allegro con leggierezza

ADOLF HENSELT, Op. 2, No. 6.




poco rit.
a tempo
poco rit.
1
2
a tempo
pp
poco rit.
con espressione
poco rit.
pp


poco a poco cresc.
f
più cresc
staccato
ff
con tutta forza
ff
P
P
P


a tempo
tre corde
poco rit.
pp
cresc. con anima
dimin. e dolce
cresc. con calore
f
dim.
rall.
lento
L.H. L.H.

Sherwood Music School Courses

PIANO — Study 802

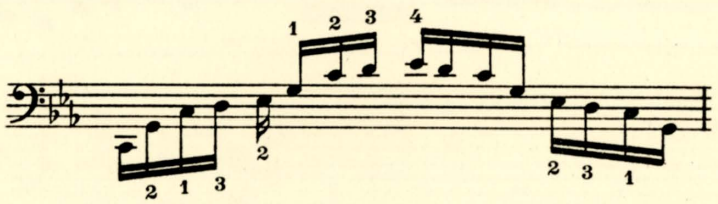
This famous tone picture, surcharged with the spirit of patriotic passion, is known as the Revolutionary Etude. It was composed in 1831 in Stuttgart, Germany, where Chopin (then in his twenty-first year) was sojourning en route to Paris. Here he learned that his country's capital, Warsaw, had been captured by the Russians.

The musical canvas portrays a picture of poignant grief, anxiety and despair, concerning the fate of his beloved fatherland. It is, indeed, an epic poem, breathing storm and stress.

A masterpiece such as this would, in a way, seem to require no annotation, because its impetuous inspiration calls forth a fittingly inspirational interpretation. Yet a few practical remarks will be of use to the student whose technic is sufficiently advanced for him to play it, but not at that stage in which difficulties do not exist.

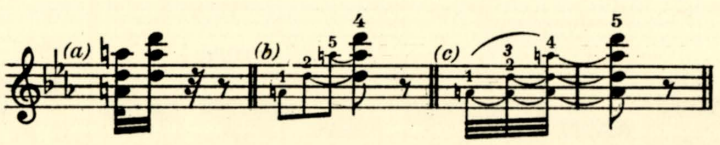
The chief problem of a mechanical nature is, of course, in the left hand part — the constant rapid sixteenth-note movement. In order to render this with the greatest ease and effectiveness, it is necessary to have a wave-like arm motion, somewhat as recommended for arpeggios, and illustrated by diagrams, in Lesson 94, TECHNIC.

Whenever the right hand is otherwise unemployed, as in measures 9, 19, 49 and 59, it may assist the left hand to play the ceaseless running passages. Measure 9, for instance, may be played in the following manner:



A great climax is reached in measure 37, the approach to it being by means of a crescendo of the utmost possible extent (in measure 36). Another imposing climax occurs in measure 65, where the key of G♭ is suddenly introduced. The first bass note in this measure is sometimes played as an octave, to make the chord more forcible. The time should not be broken in order to do this, nor for any other reason, throughout the entire Study; its impetuosity must be constant and irresistible.

Different methods are used for breaking up the first chord in measure 55, such as



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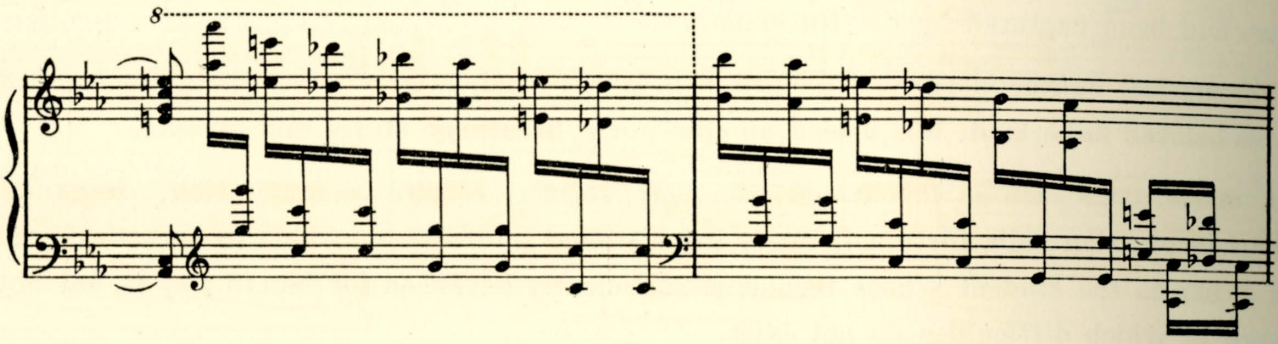
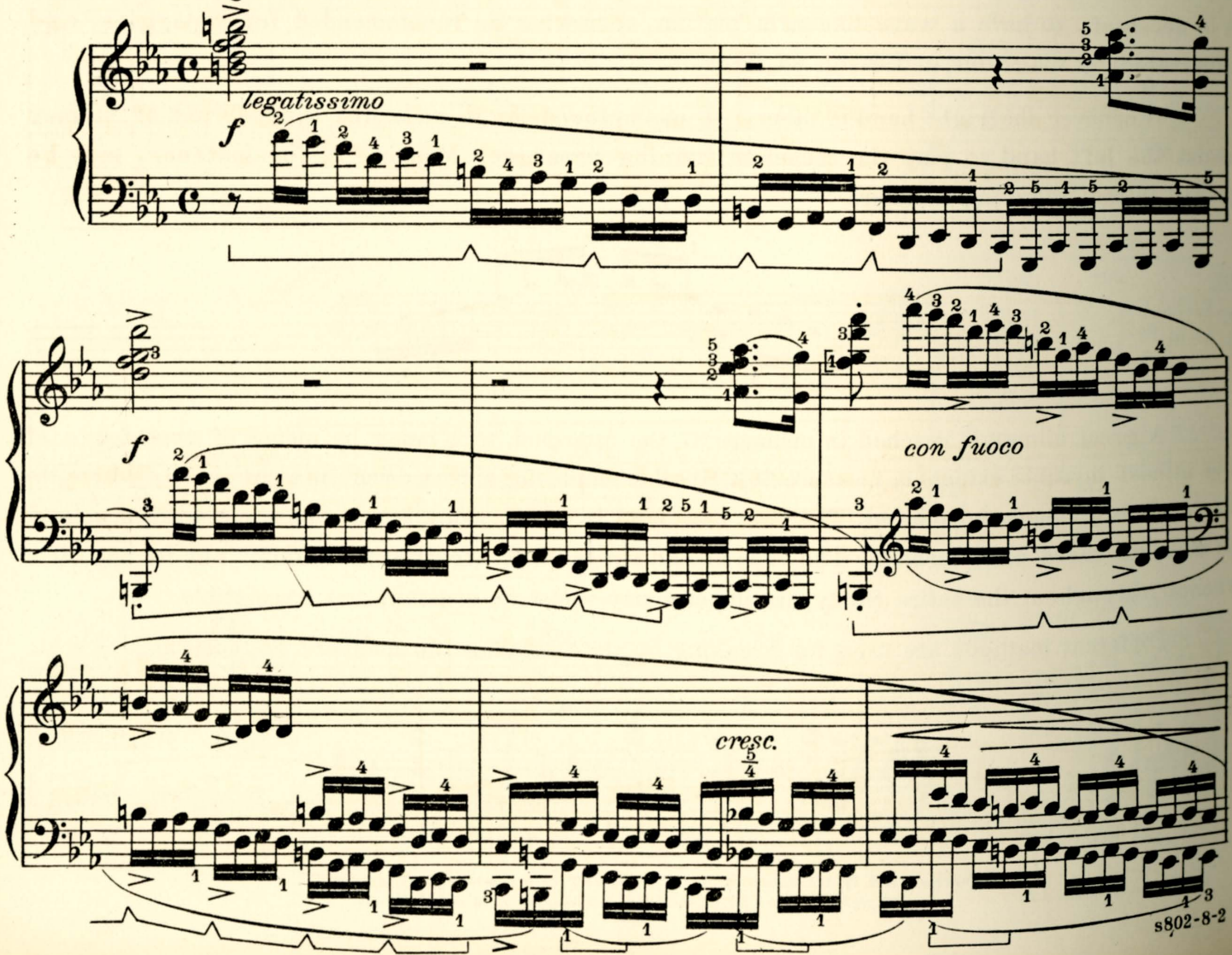
In any case, the high D should receive the accent on the first beat of the measure, the lower notes being played before the beat. Hence, the notation at *(c)* above is to be recommended, as the three lower notes are shown as a triplet of thirty-second notes at the end of the previous measure, and consequently are played with the last left-hand note at that point.

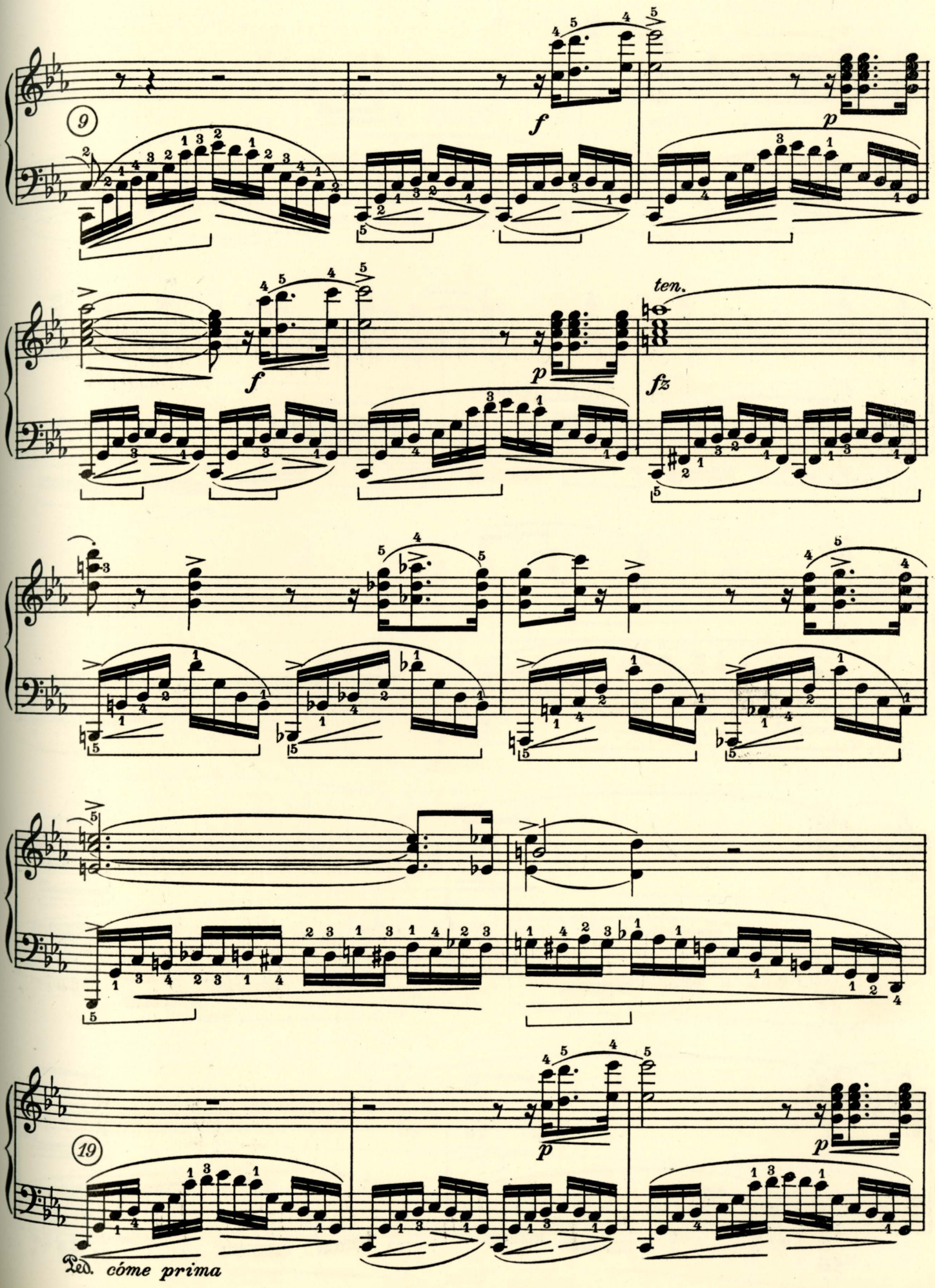
Many virtuosi substitute interlocking octaves for the concluding bravura passage in measures 81 and 82. This produces a brilliant close, and for those with great facility in octave playing, it will be found very welcome. Simply start with the right hand part and play in alternating octaves as follows:

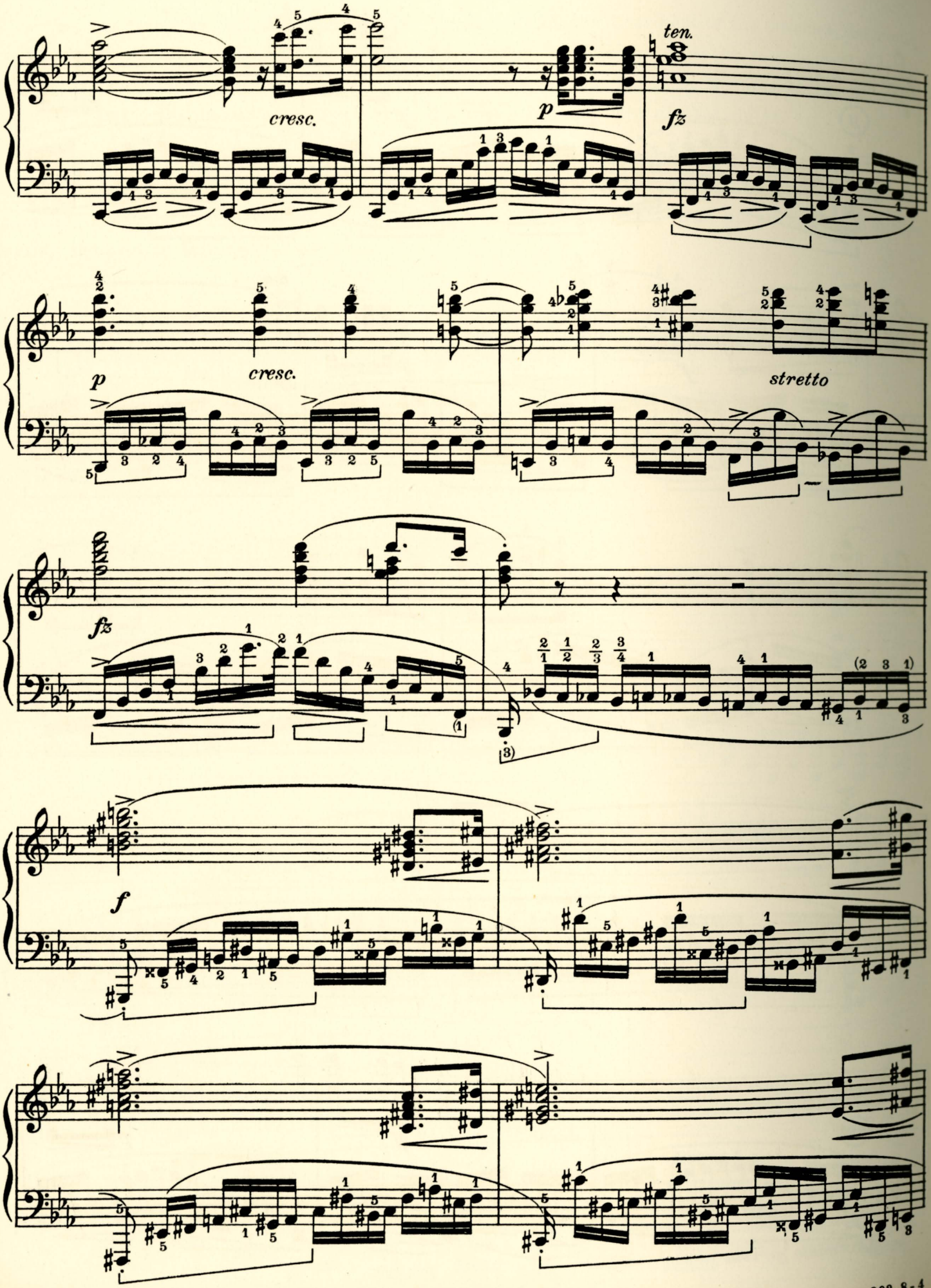


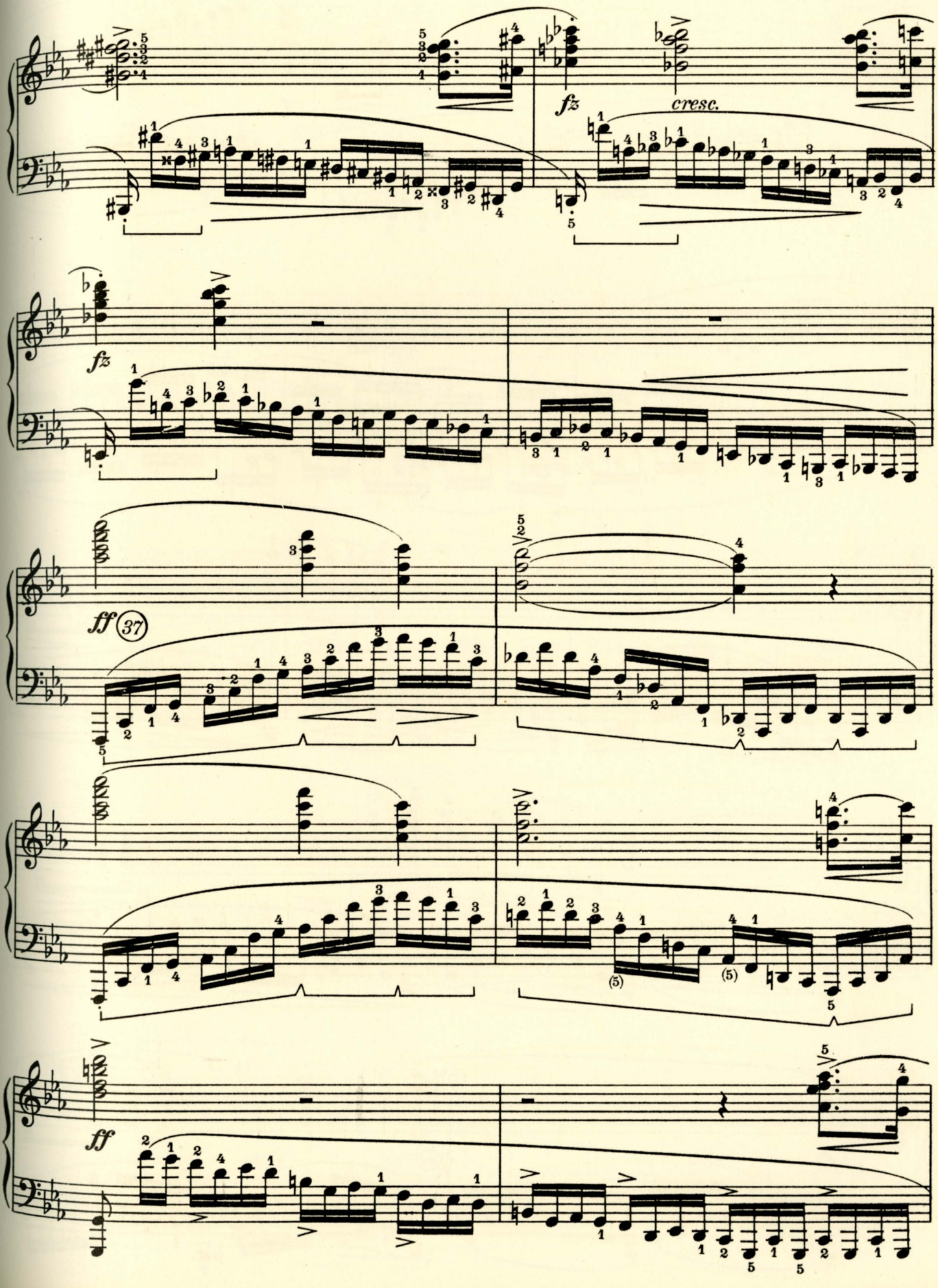
Allegro con fuoco

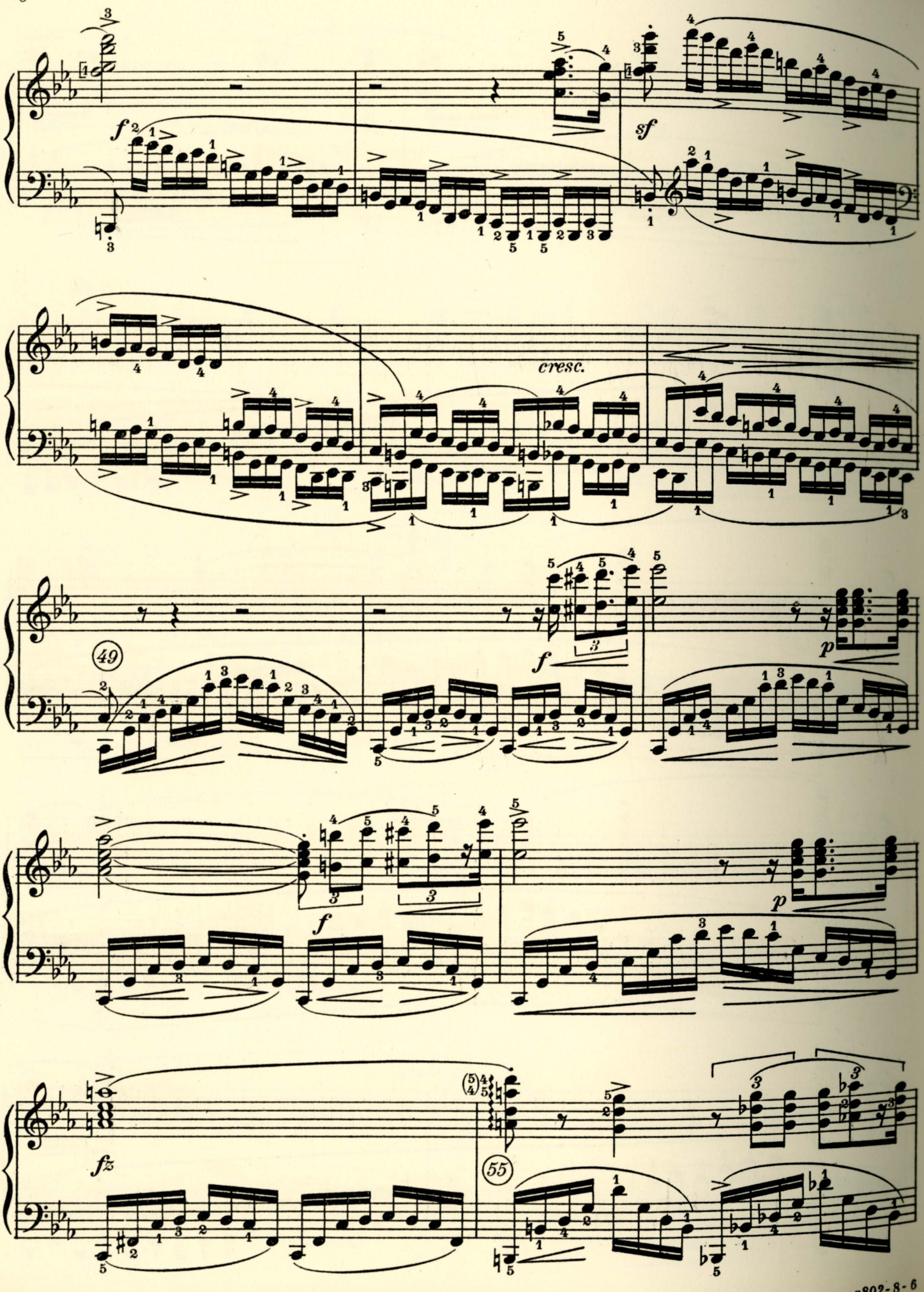
CHOPIN, Op. 10, No. 12

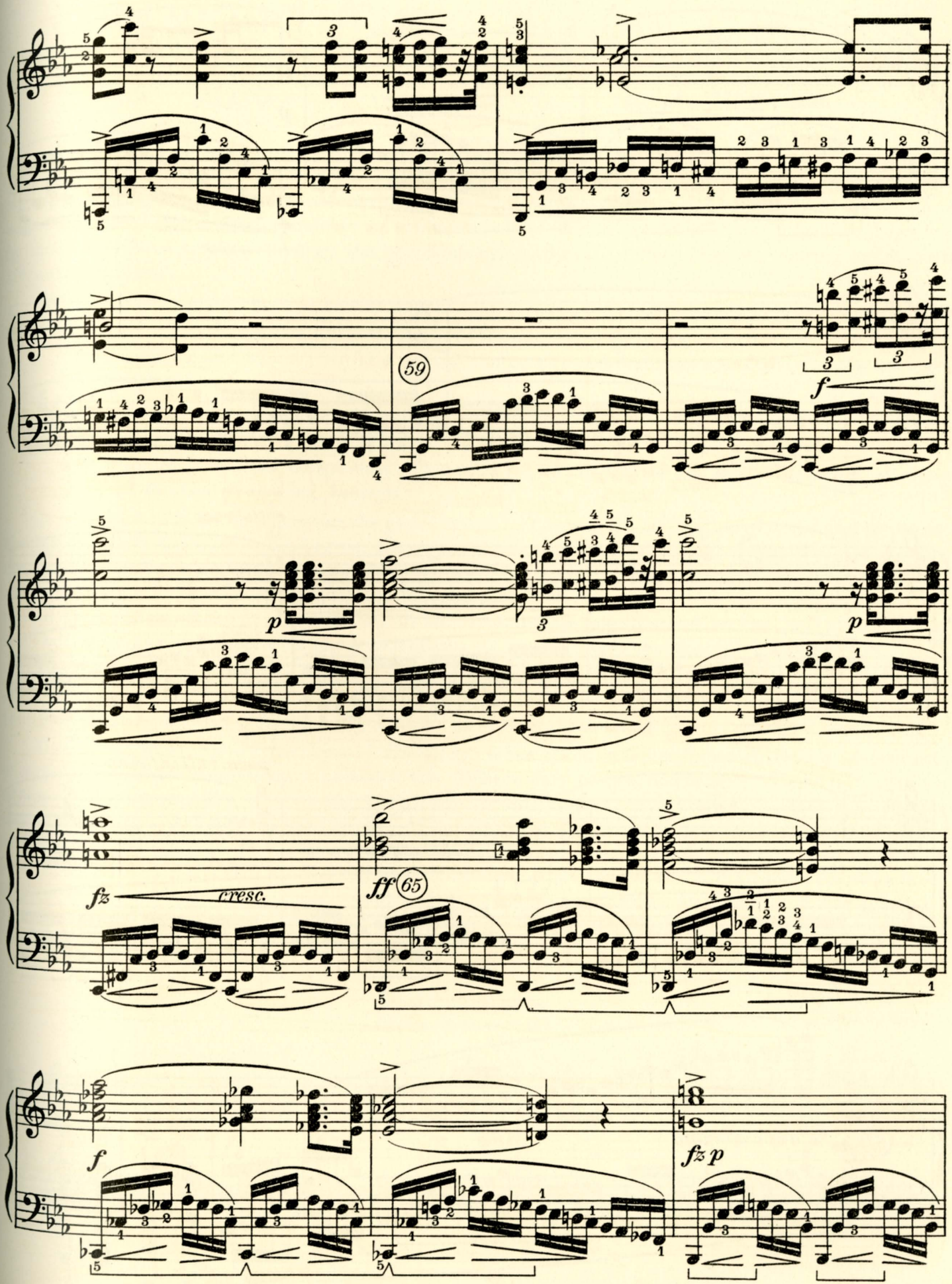


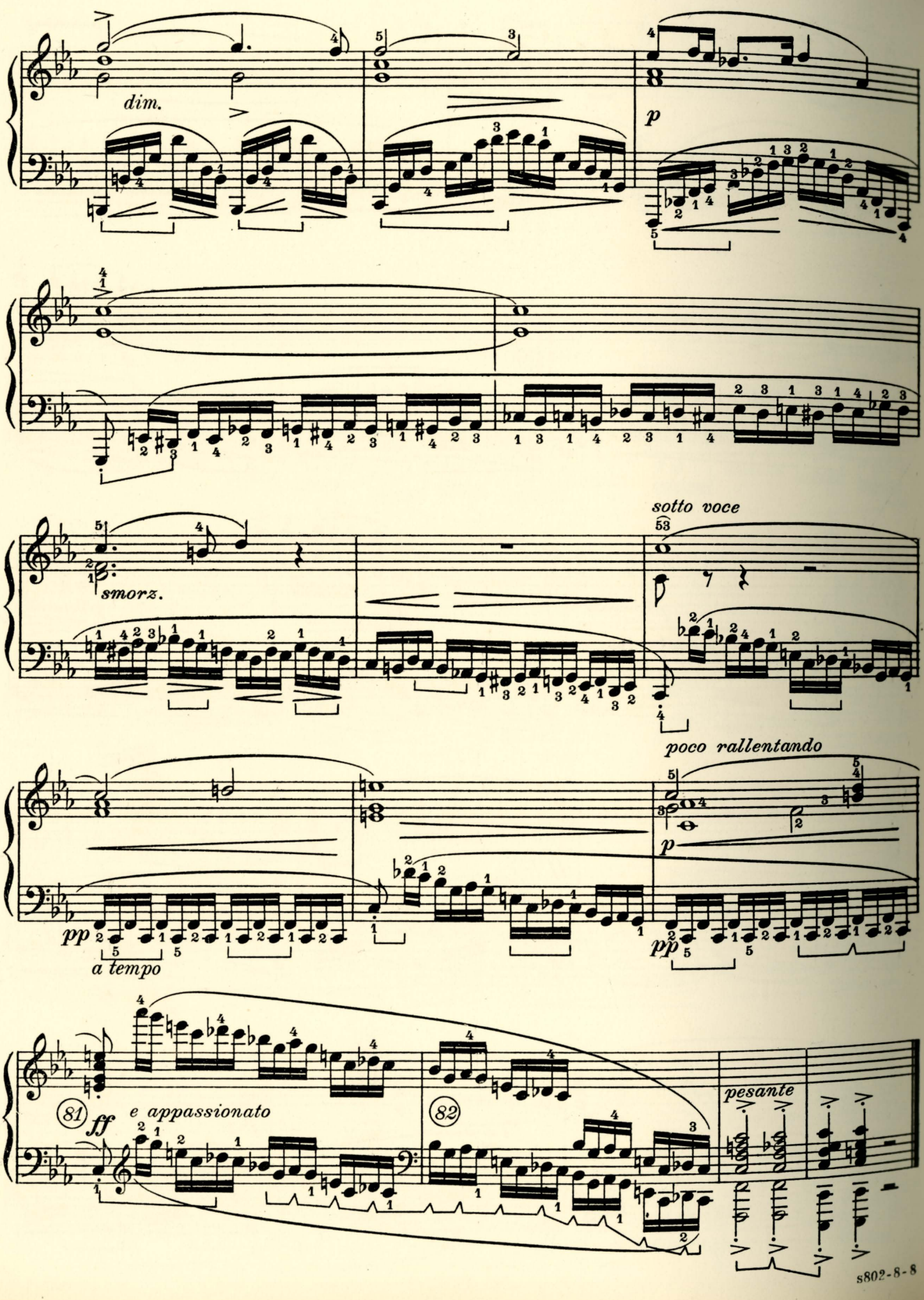

9
f
p
f
p
ten.
fz
19
p
p
Ped. cóme prima


cresc.
ten.
fz
p
cresc.
stretto
fz
f


fz
cresc.
fz
ff 37
ff


f
sf
cresc.
49
f
p
f
p
fz
55


59
f
p
fz
cresc.
ff
65
f
fz p


dim.
p
smorz.
sotto voce
poco rallentando
p
pp
a tempo
pp
81
ff
e appassionato
82
pesante

Sherwood Music School Courses

PIANO — Study 803

This brilliant Concert Study makes many and various demands upon the player, in its extreme lightness and speed, in its staccato skips, and in the complete legato required in some of its passages. It presents, in fact, a number of problems, all of which can be adequately handled, however, by those who have worked through the preparatory material of this Course, leading up to such advanced playing.

When distinguished virtuosi render works of this type, three points of technical excellence are immediately noted by the careful listener, as follows:

a) Lightness of execution. The lighter the total tonal load and mass, the greater the ease in fast work.

b) Meticulous pedaling. Excellence in this respect is governed by close listening for clearness, and the consequent absence of tonal confusion.

c) Complete mental composure. This is of prime importance for the achievement of either of the two preceding factors.

It is a good plan to omit playing the grace notes, at first, in the cultivation of speed and lightness. Having attained these, in some degree, the grace notes may be added. They should be played almost simultaneously with the principal notes of the melodic design. This, as well as simplifying the execution, is really more in keeping with the fanciful nature of the composition than a clear-cut and detached articulation of the grace notes would be. The momentary discord on the accent brings out the rhythm of the passage with great crispness.

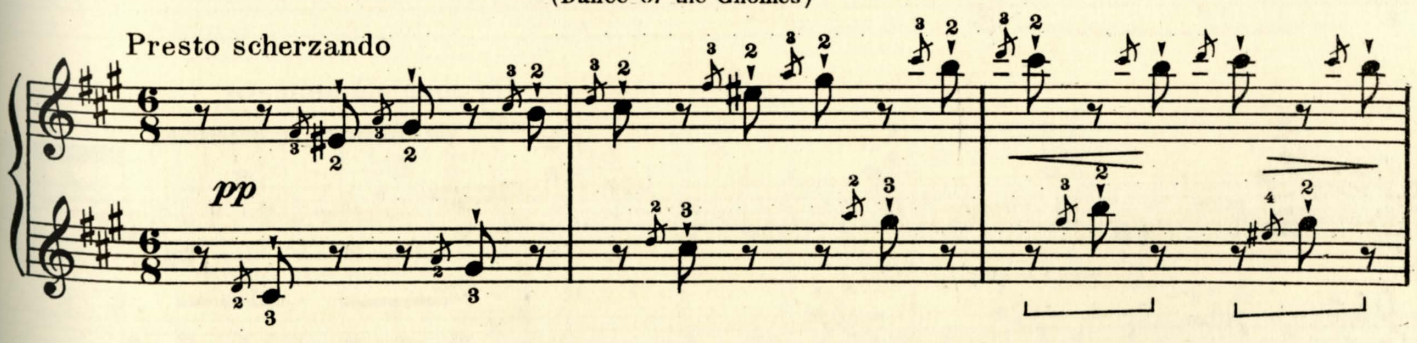
Observe that the pairs of thirty-second notes in measures 13 to 20, differ slightly from the note pairs of the preceding measures, although some players make no difference between them. The first of each pair of notes, instead of being a grace note, as before, is now a separately accented note.

One of the most difficult portions of this Study, when taken in tempo, is the chromatic succession of augmented triads beginning in measure 115. Where they continue in complete chords, beginning at the end of measure 118, *stringendo,* the attack should be staccato throughout, with a strong accentuation on the first note of each group. When any special difficulty, such as this, is encountered, do not allow it to remain a stumbling-block. Inquire into the cause of the difficulty, for blind and thoughtless repetition will not solve it. In many cases improper fingering, or faulty position of finger or arm will be found to be the cause of the trouble. Fear of the passage itself may, moreover, cause an excessive tightening of the muscles. When this fear is overcome, by analysis and painstakingly slow practice, the difficulty is largely eliminated.

Gnomenreigen

(Dance of the Gnomes)

FRANZ LISZT



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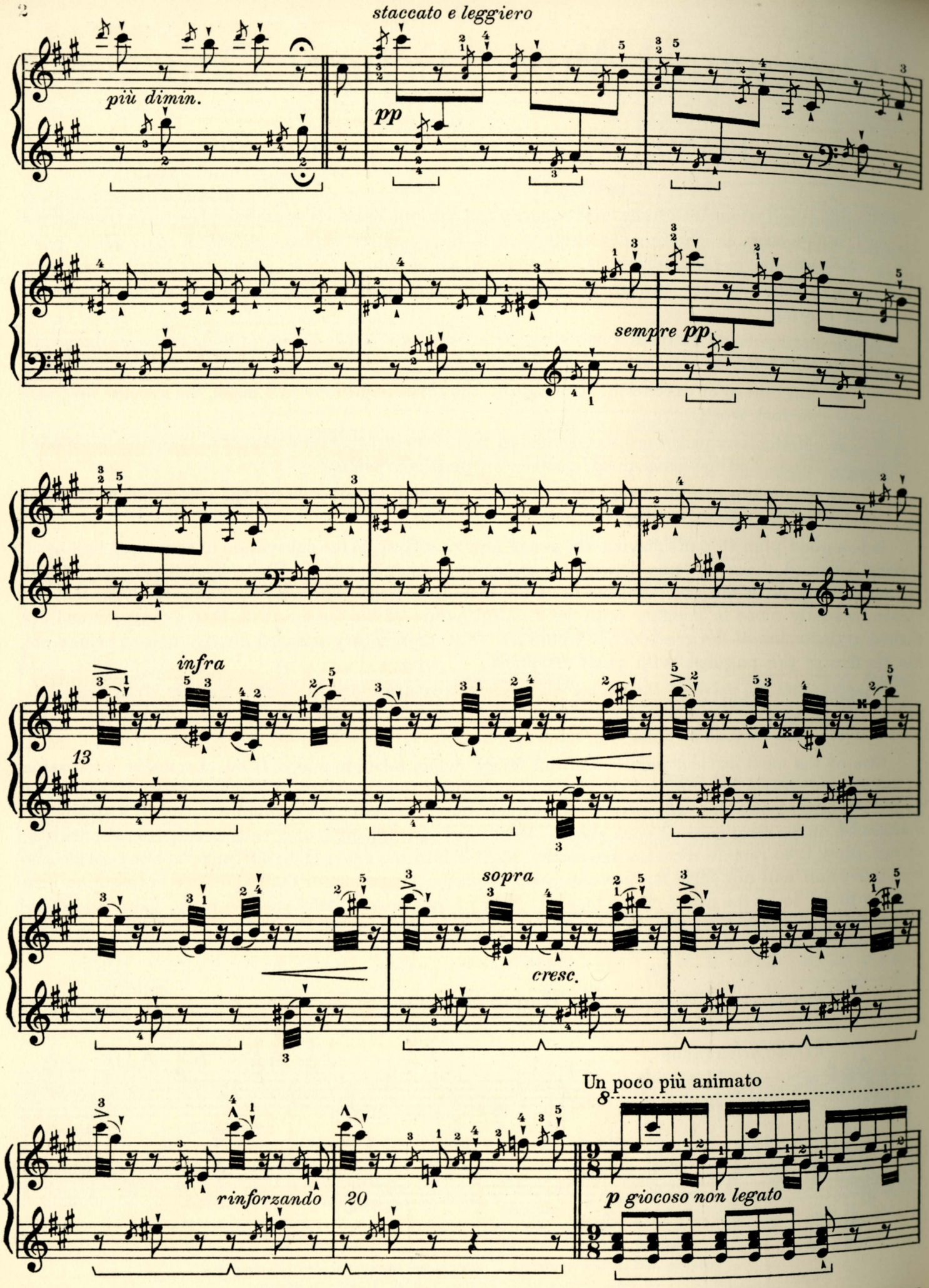
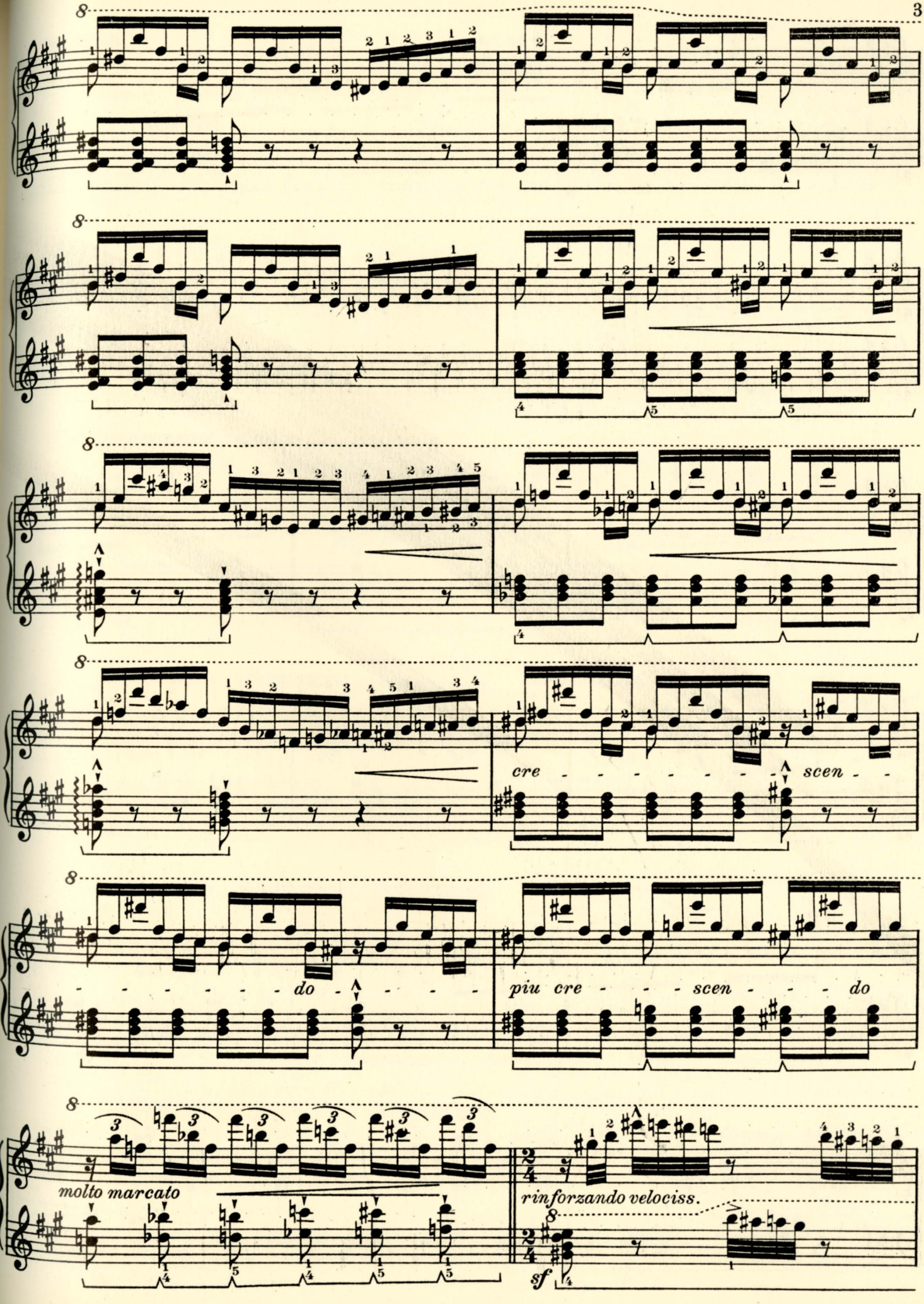
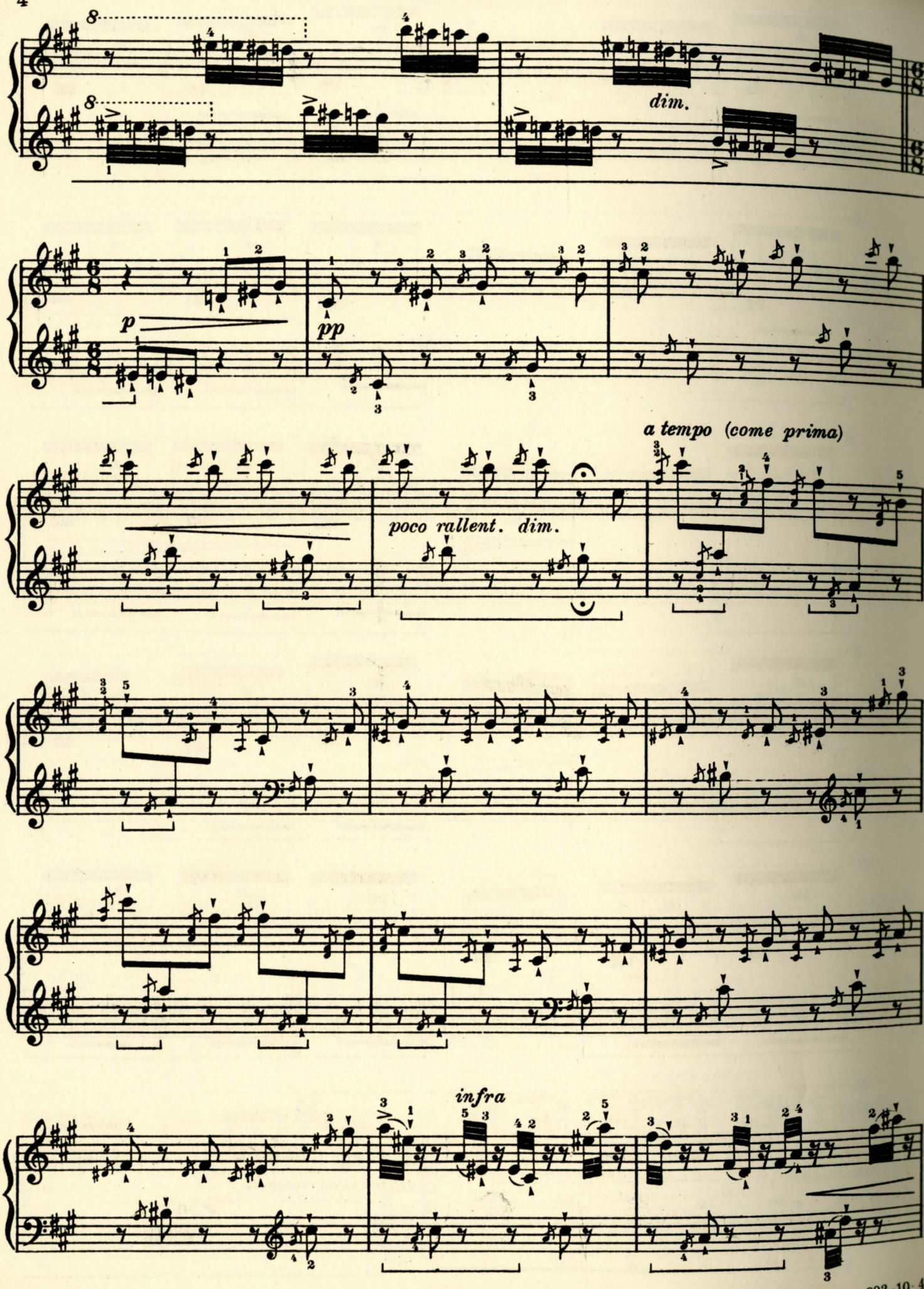
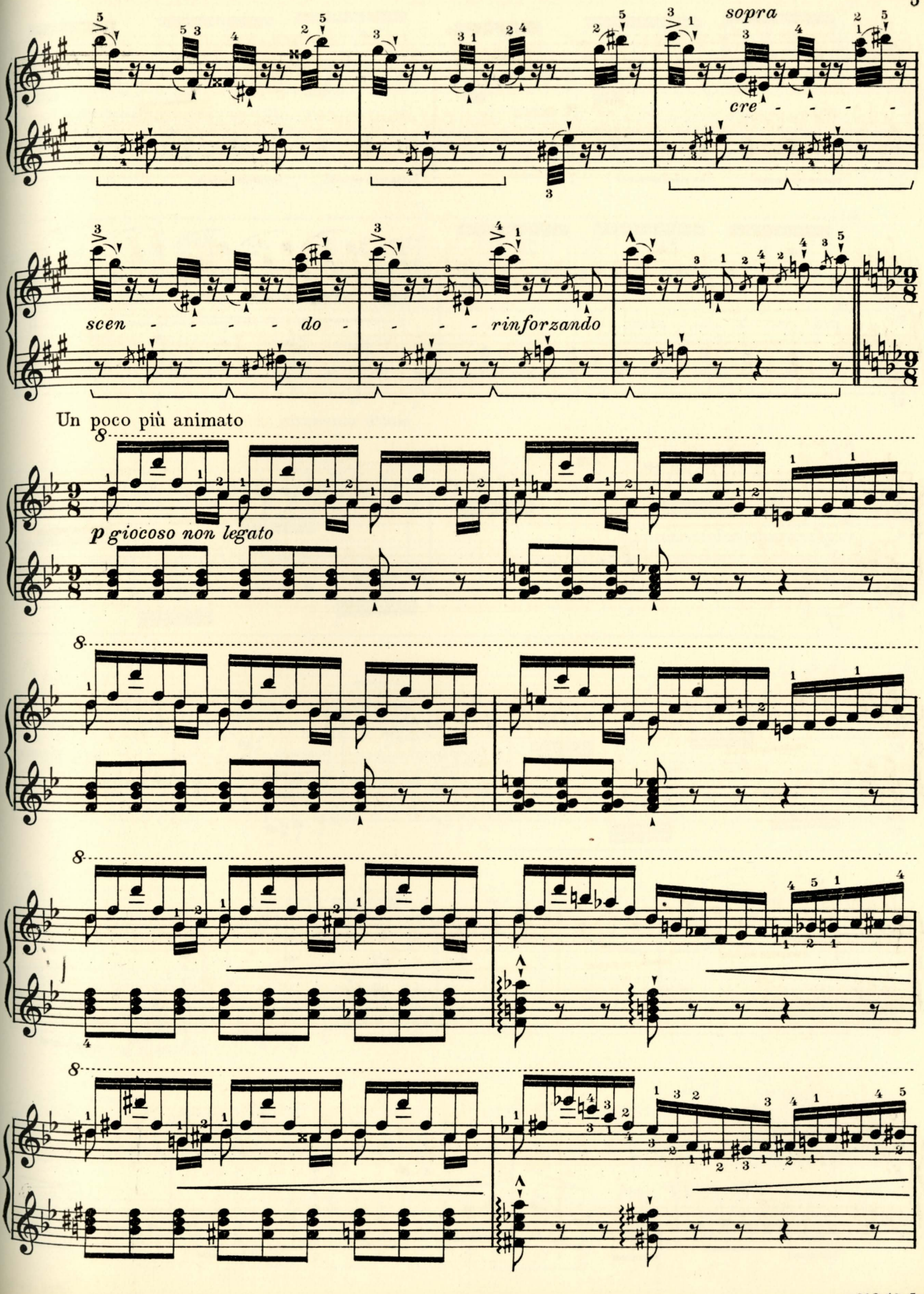
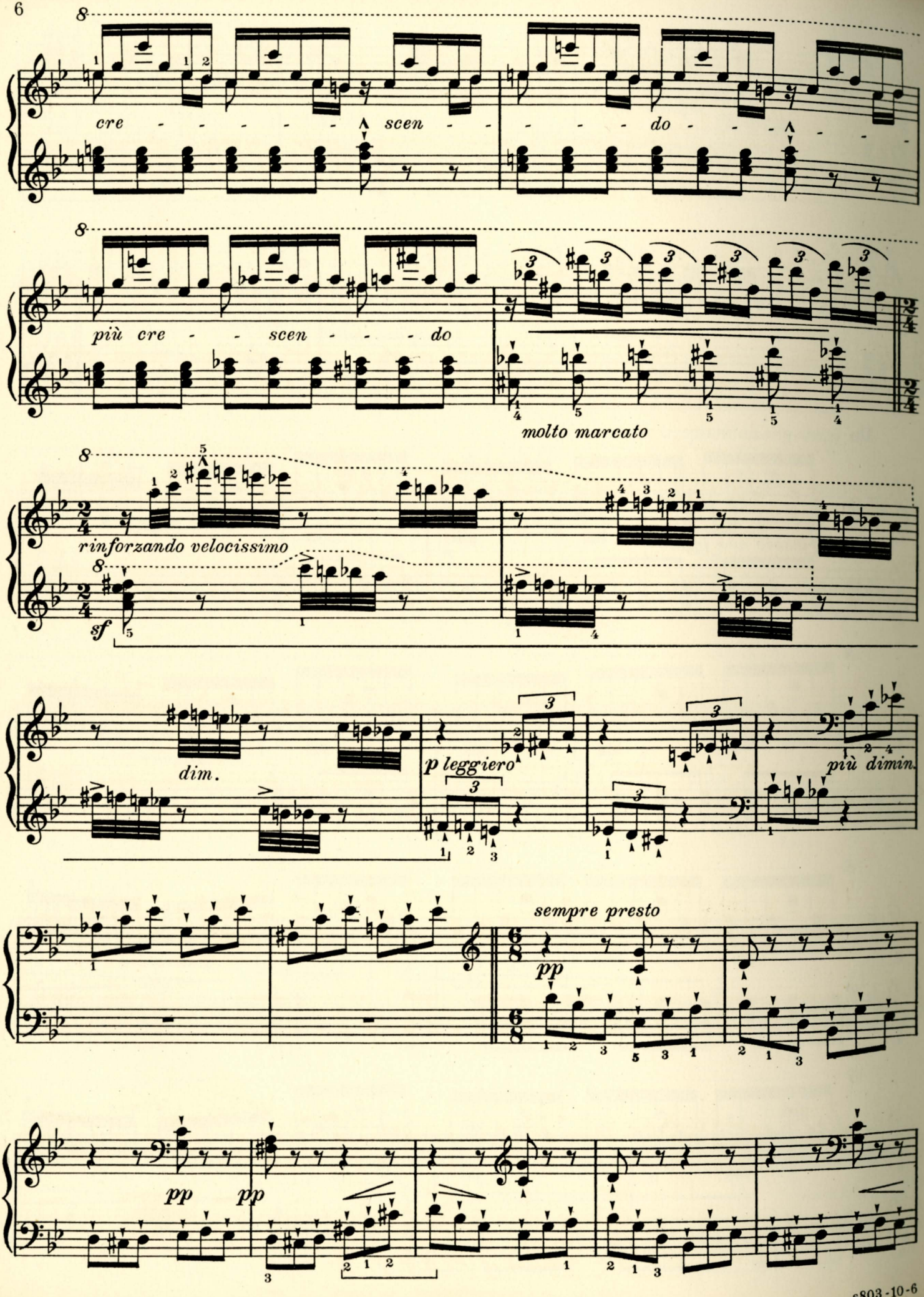
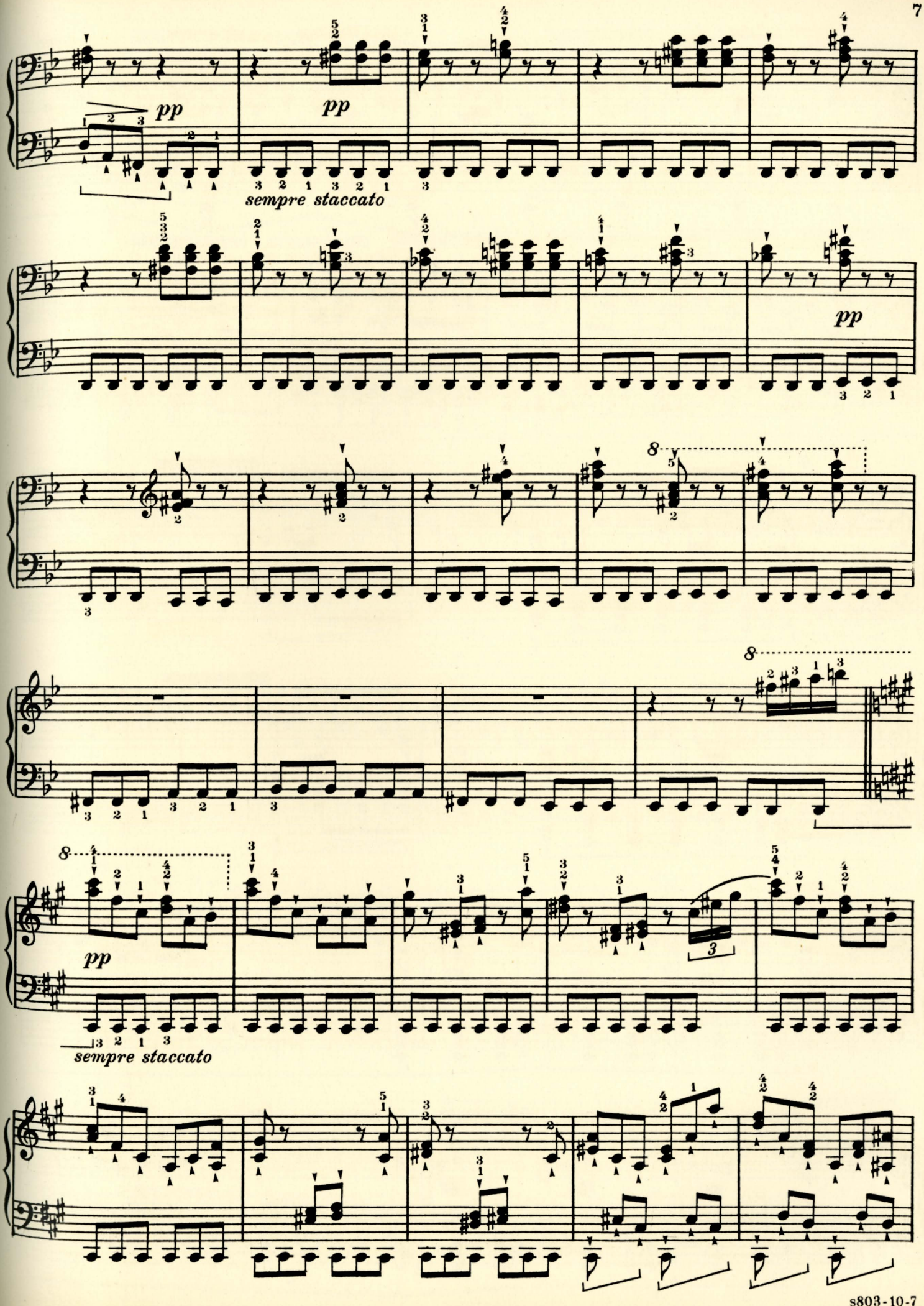

staccato e leggiero
più dimin.
pp
sempre pp
infra
13
sopra
cresc.
Un poco più animato
8
rinforzando
20
p giocoso non legato

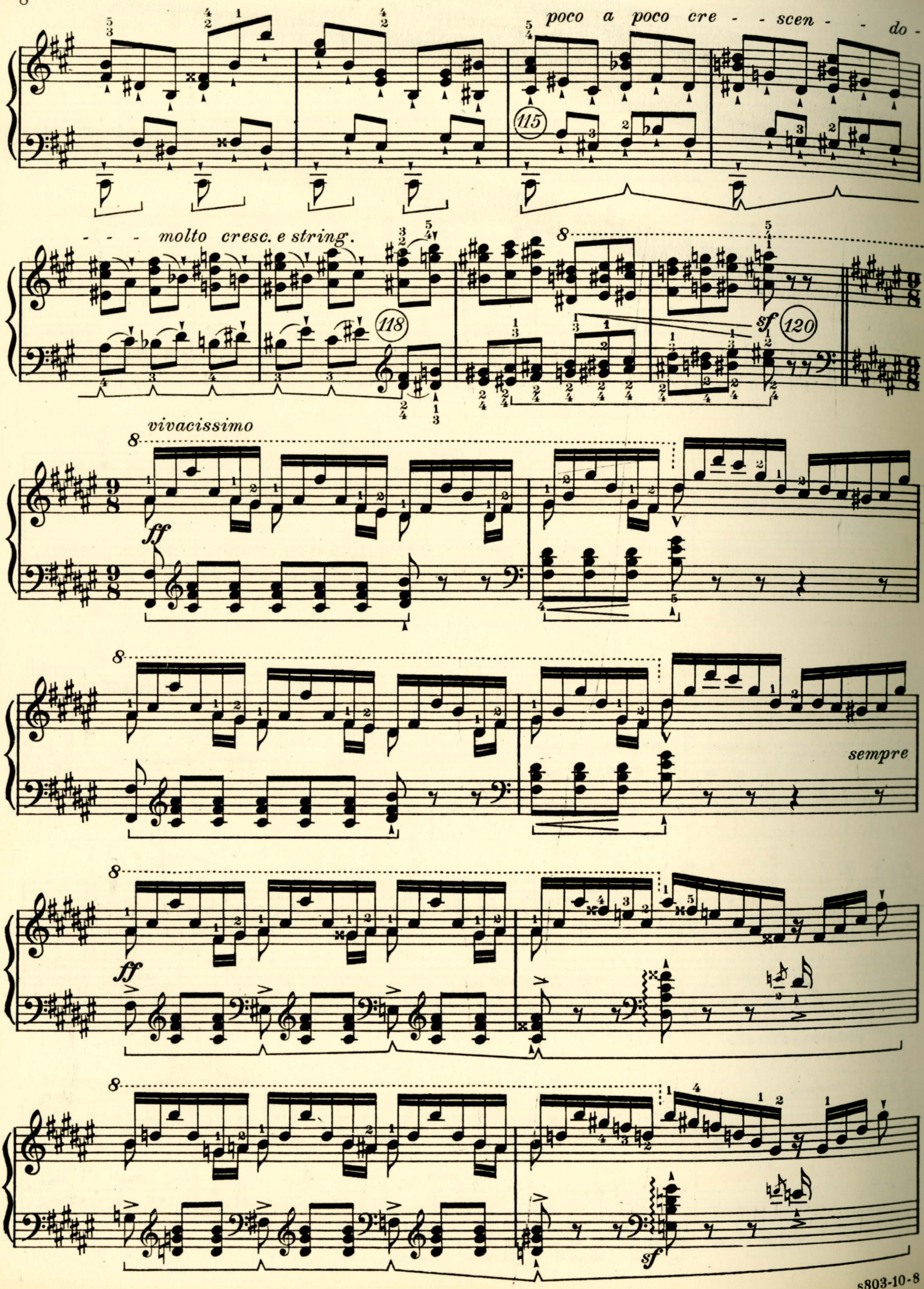

cre - - - - - - - - scen - -
- - - - - - - do - - - -
piu cre - - - scen - - - do
molto marcato
rinforzando velociss.
sf

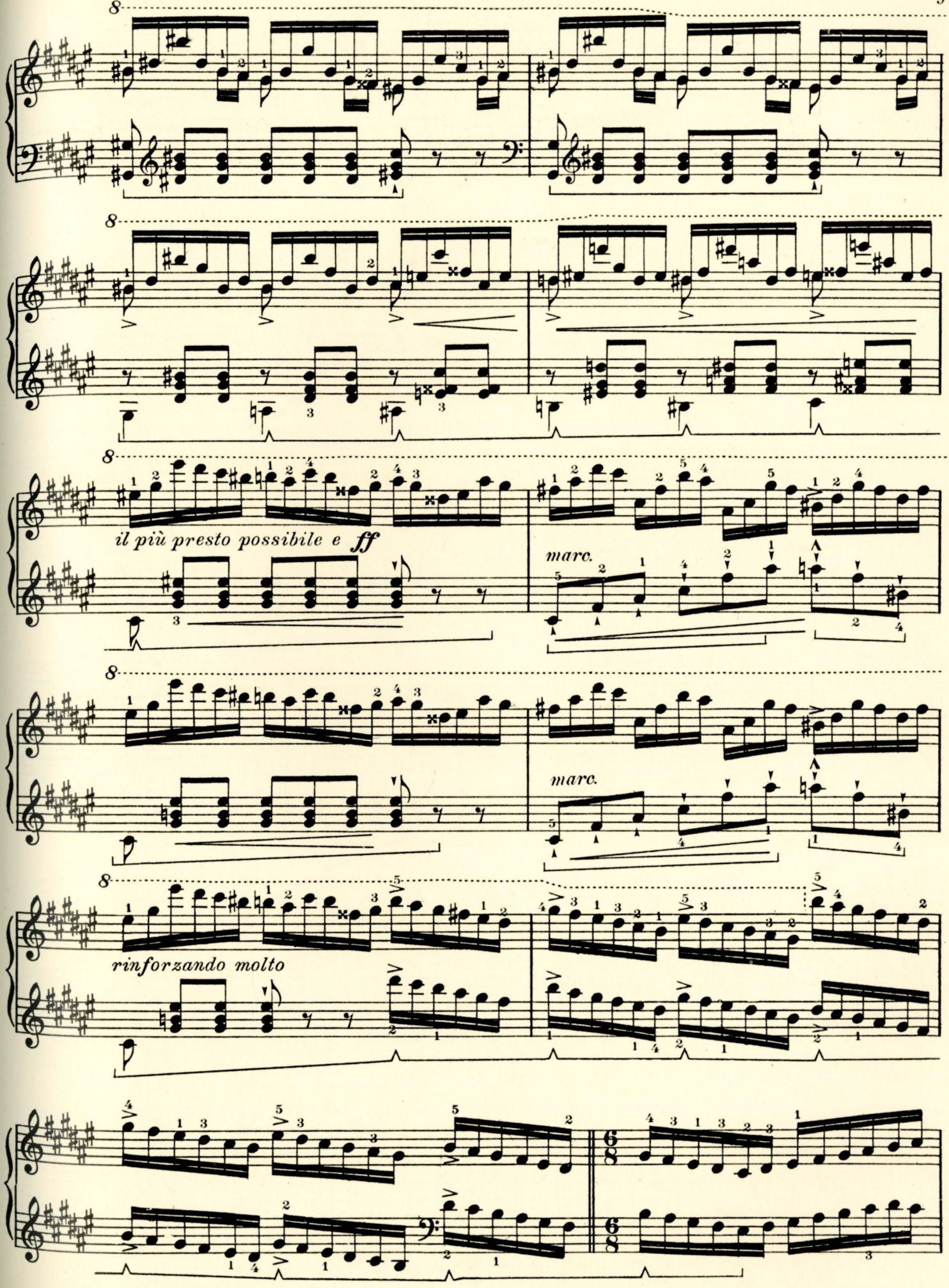

dim.
p
pp
a tempo (come prima)
poco rallent. dim.
infra

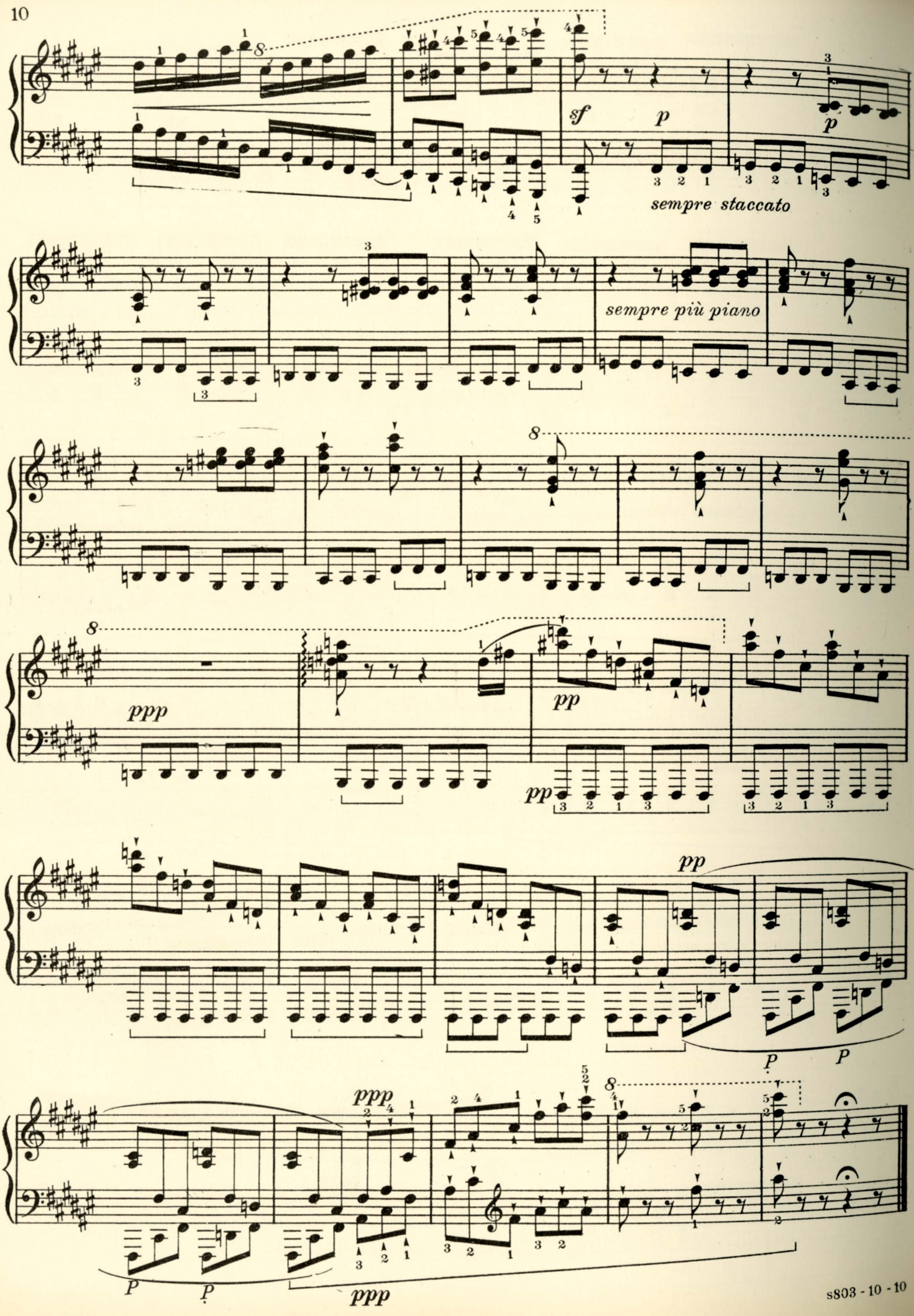

sopra
cre - - - -
scen - - - - - do - - - - - rinforzando
Un poco più animato
p giocoso non legato


cre - - - - - - scen - - - - - - do - - - -
più cre - - scen - - - - do
molto marcato
rinforzando velocissimo
sf
dim.
p leggiero
più dimin.
sempre presto
pp
pp
pp


pp
pp
sempre staccato
pp
8
8
pp
3
sempre staccato


poco a poco cre - - scen - - do -
115
- - - molto cresc. e string.
118
sf
120
vivacissimo
ff
sempre
ff
sf


8
8
8
il più presto possibile e ff
marc.
8
marc.
8
rinforzando molto


sf
p
p
sempre staccato
sempre più piano
ppp
pp
pp
pp
P
P
P
P
ppp
ppp

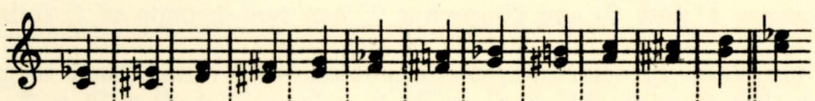
Sherwood Music School Courses

PIANO — Study 804

The sailient feature of this Study being scale passages in chromatic minor thirds for the right hand, the three fingerings already presented in this Course are summarized here. (See Exercise 703 and Lesson 139, TECHNIC.) As there are many different types of hand, and varying circumstances with regard to the passage containing the chromatic thirds, some divergences from these fingerings have been sponsored, at times, by eminent pianists. These are appended for comparison with the three fingerings mentioned, and may be used when advantageous to the individual.

The "First Fingering" of this Course is a standard and well-established one. The only pairs of fingers used are $\frac{3}{1}$, $\frac{4}{2}$ and $\frac{5}{3}$, and the $\frac{5}{3}$ pair is used twice in each octave. The slight modification of this attributed to Von Bülow, Tausig and others, has $\frac{5}{3}$ only once in each octave, and otherwise $\frac{3}{1}$ and $\frac{4}{2}$ alternately throughout. This fingering has the disadvantage of not repeating in the second octave, as will be seen below:

(a)



FIRST FINGERING (See Exercise 703)	3/1	4/2	3/1	4/2	5/3	3/1	4/2	3/1	4/2	3/1	4/2	5/3	3/1
Von Bülow, Tausig and others	"	"	"	"	3/1	4/2	5/3	"	"	"	"	3/1	4/2

The "Second Fingering" which is, in general, probably the best and most useful of all, is said to embody the "Slide Principle." It is given at *(b)*, and followed by three variants introduced respectively by Chopin, Busoni and De Pachmann.

(b)

SECOND FINGERING (See Exercise 703)	3/1	4/2	5/1	3/2	4/2	3/1	4/2	3/1	4/2	5/1	3/2	4/2	3/1
Chopin	"	"	"	"	4/1	"	"	"	"	"	"	4/1	"
Busoni	"	"	"	"	4/2	5/1	"	"	"	"	"	4/2	5/1
De Pachmann	4/1	"	"	"	"	3/1	"	"	"	"	"	4/2	5/1

These variants gain the advantage in one particular only by losing it in another. For example, the use of $\frac{4}{1}$ in the second row of *(b)* makes a perfect legato from the preceding third, but breaks the perfect legato which $\frac{4}{2}$ makes with the following third.

The "Third Fingering" *(c)* corresponds almost entirely with one by Godowsky. It is described in Lesson 139, TECHNIC, as providing extreme legato in slow or moderate tempo.

(c)

THIRD FINGERING (See Lesson 139)	3/1	4/2	5/1	3/2	5/1	4/3	5/2	3/1	4/2	5/1	3/2	4/2	3/1
Godowsky	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	5/1	"

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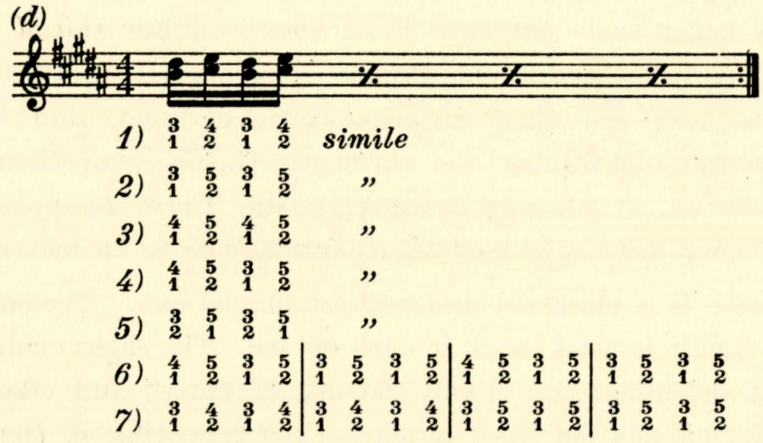
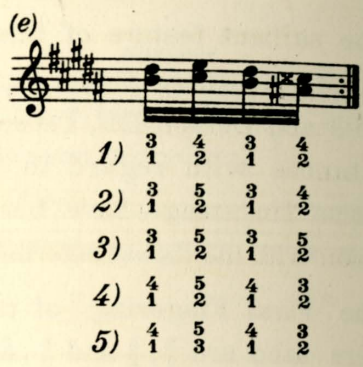
The use of $\frac{5}{1}$ in the second row of *(c)* has the same result as the change in the second row of *(b)* explained above. It affords a perfect legato with the preceding third, but sacrifices the perfect legato for both notes, which $\frac{4}{2}$ makes with the following third.

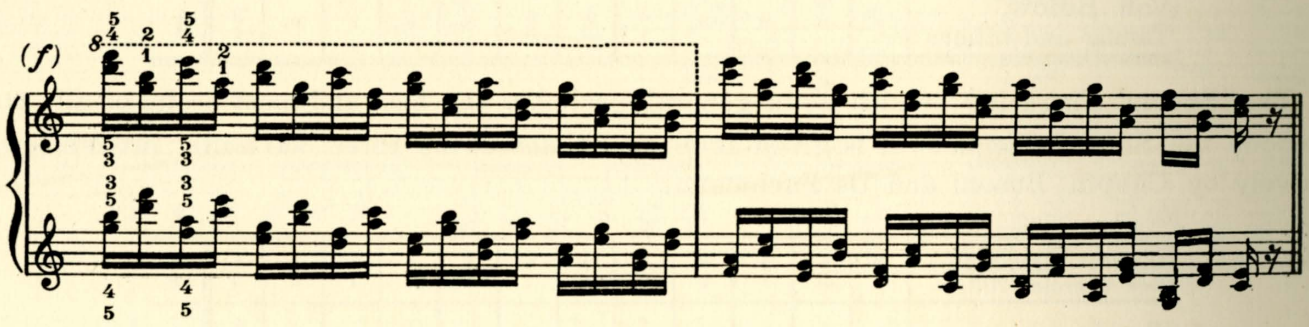
The diatonic thirds in the Study may also have different fingerings, and the application of a number of them to the melodic figures quoted below is strongly recommended:





The first five fingerings of *(d)* are to be repeated for each of the note-groups. Fingering *6)* alternates groups *4)* and *2)*, and fingering *7)* has two groups of *1)* followed by two groups of *2)*.

A good preparatory exercise in connection with this Study is given at *(f)*. It may be transposed into all of the twelve keys, with identical fingering, and should be played *leggierissimo* and *legato, fortissimo* and *pianissimo*.

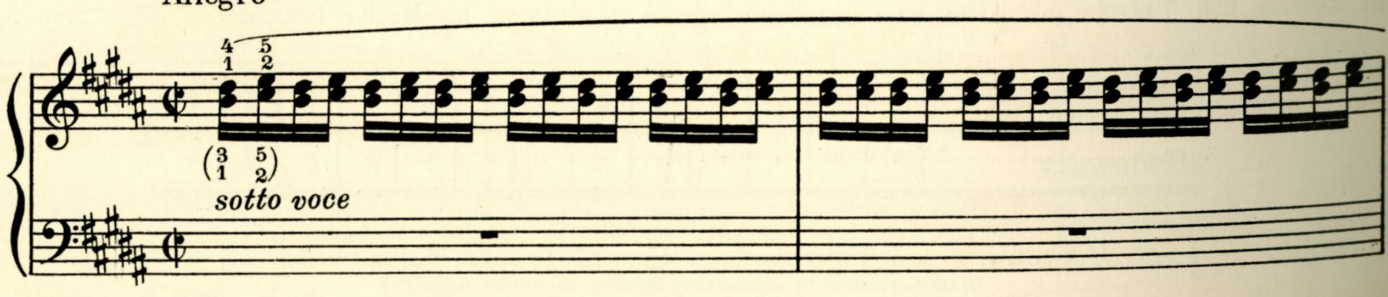


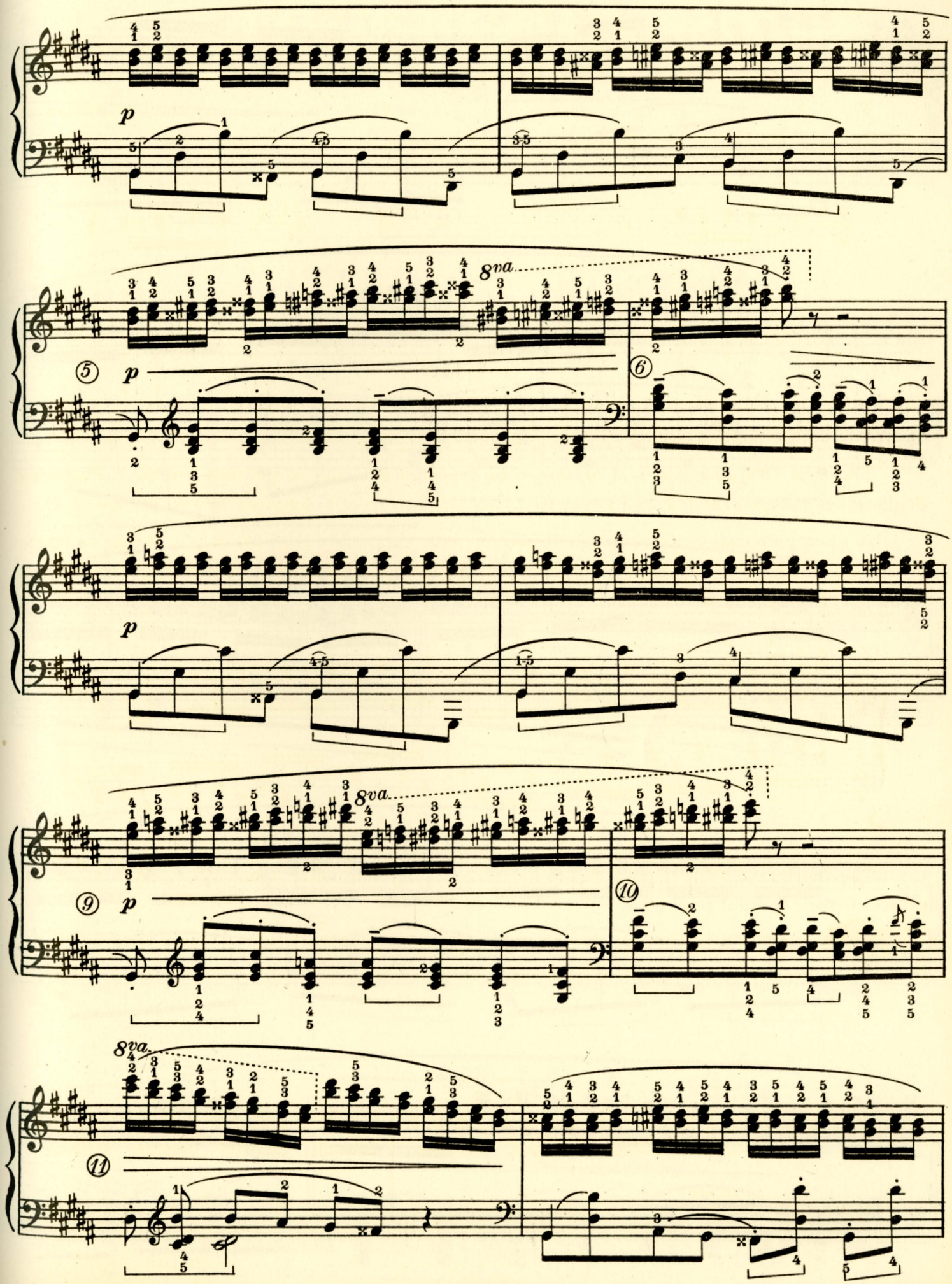
The fourth and fifth fingers should be made to play somewhat strongly, in practice, as an offset to their natural weakness.

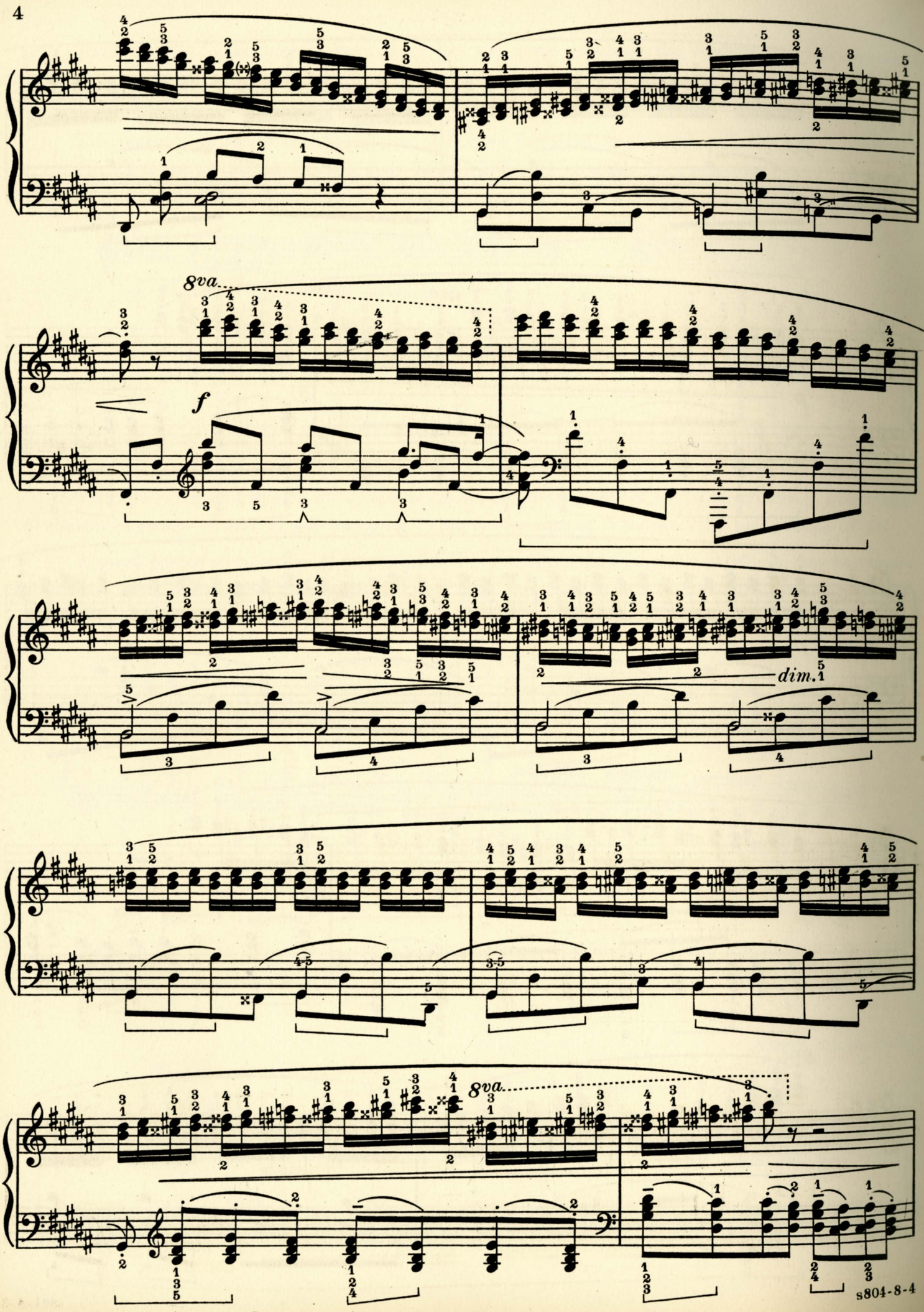
There is a charming counter-melody in the uppermost left-hand notes of measures 5-6, 9-11, etc. It should be made distinctly observable.

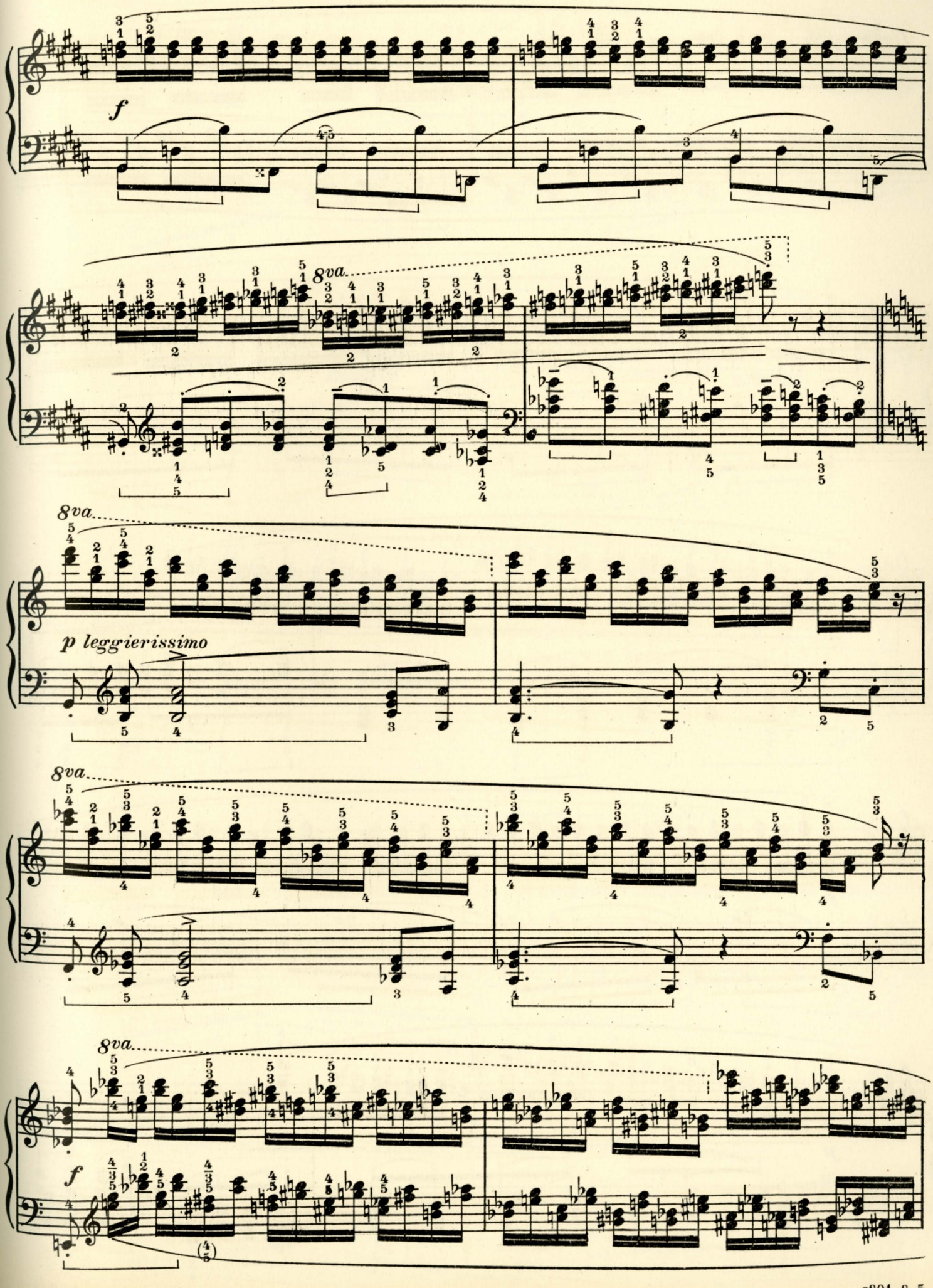
CHOPIN Op. 25, No. 6

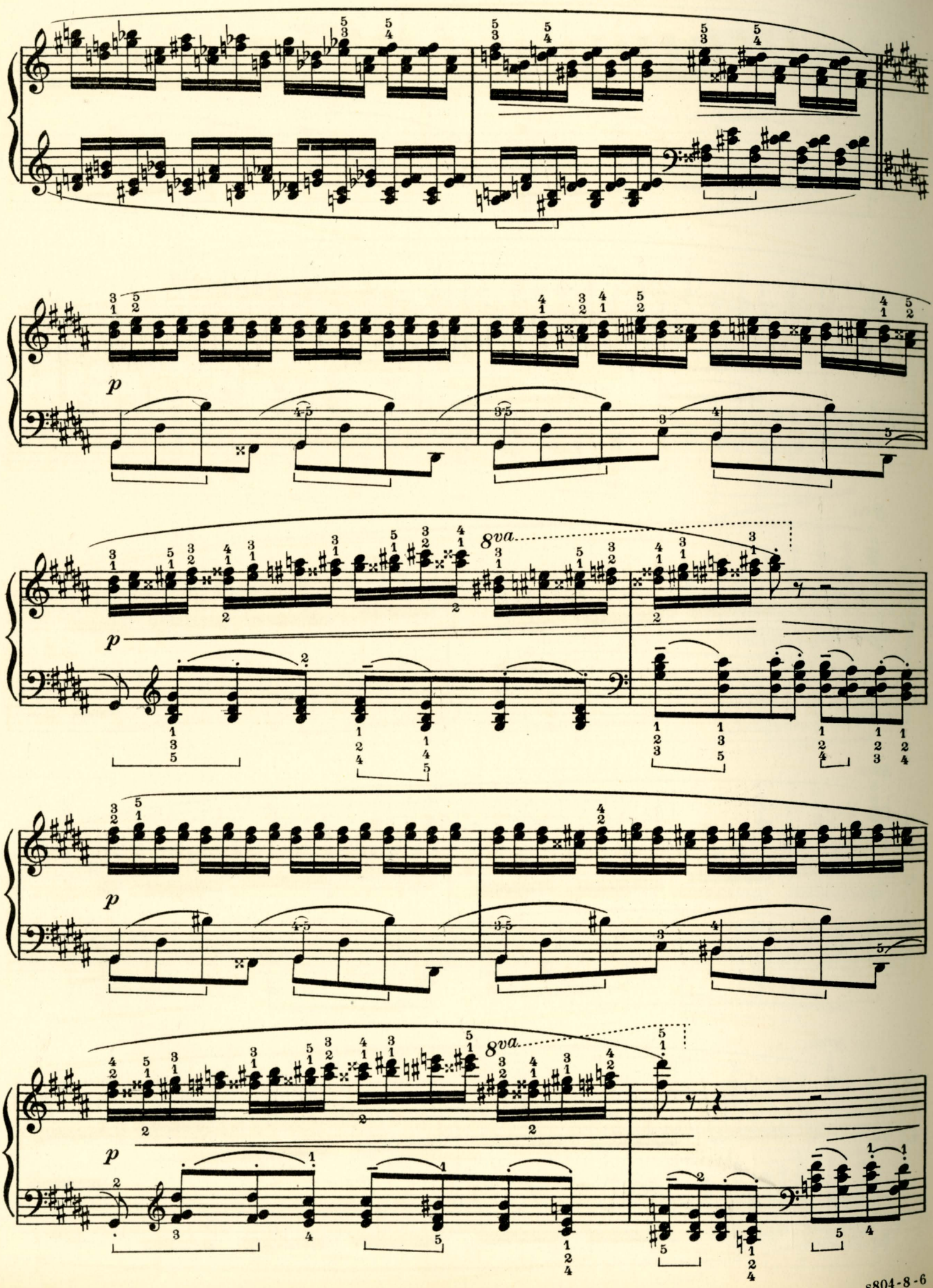
Allegro

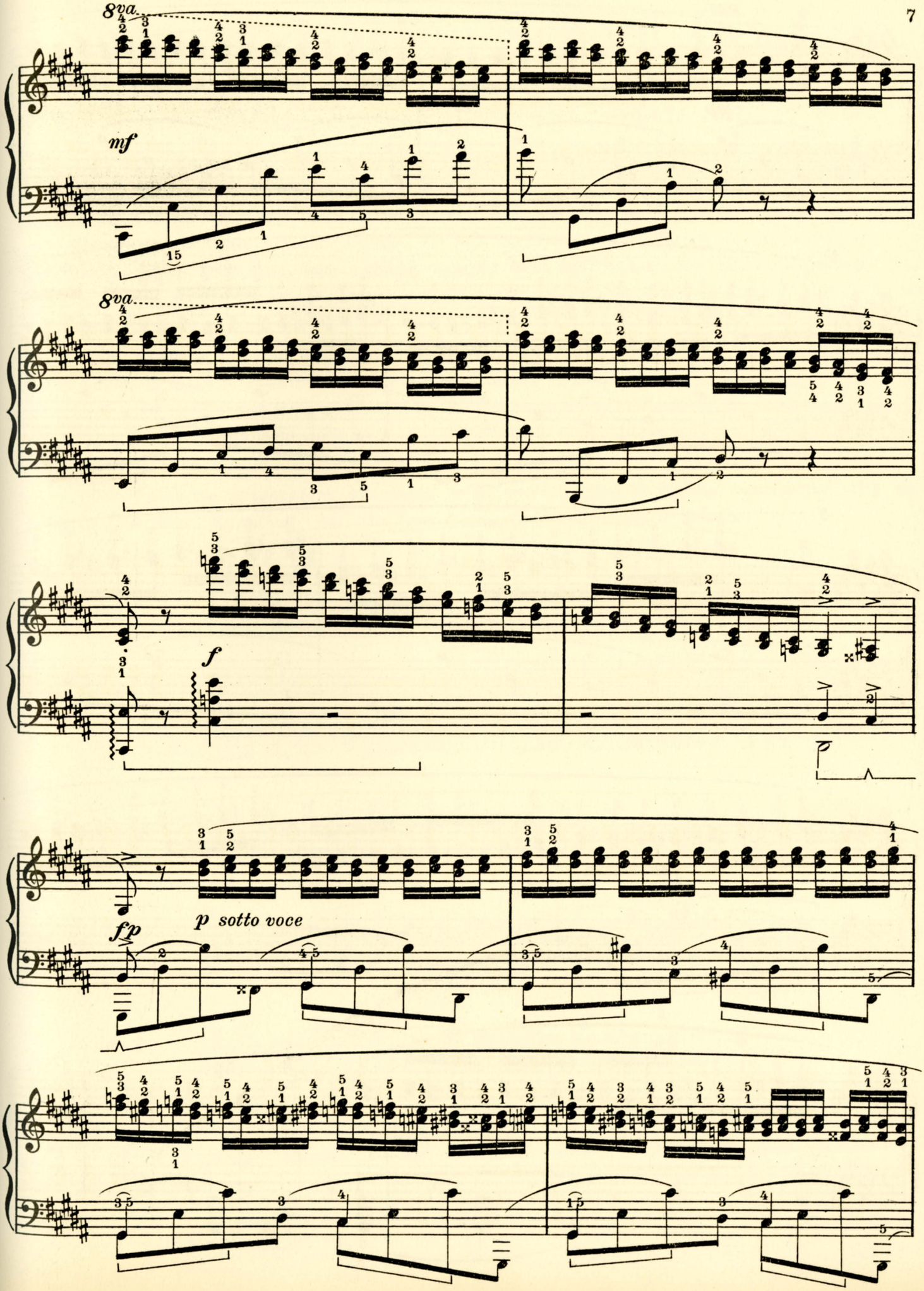


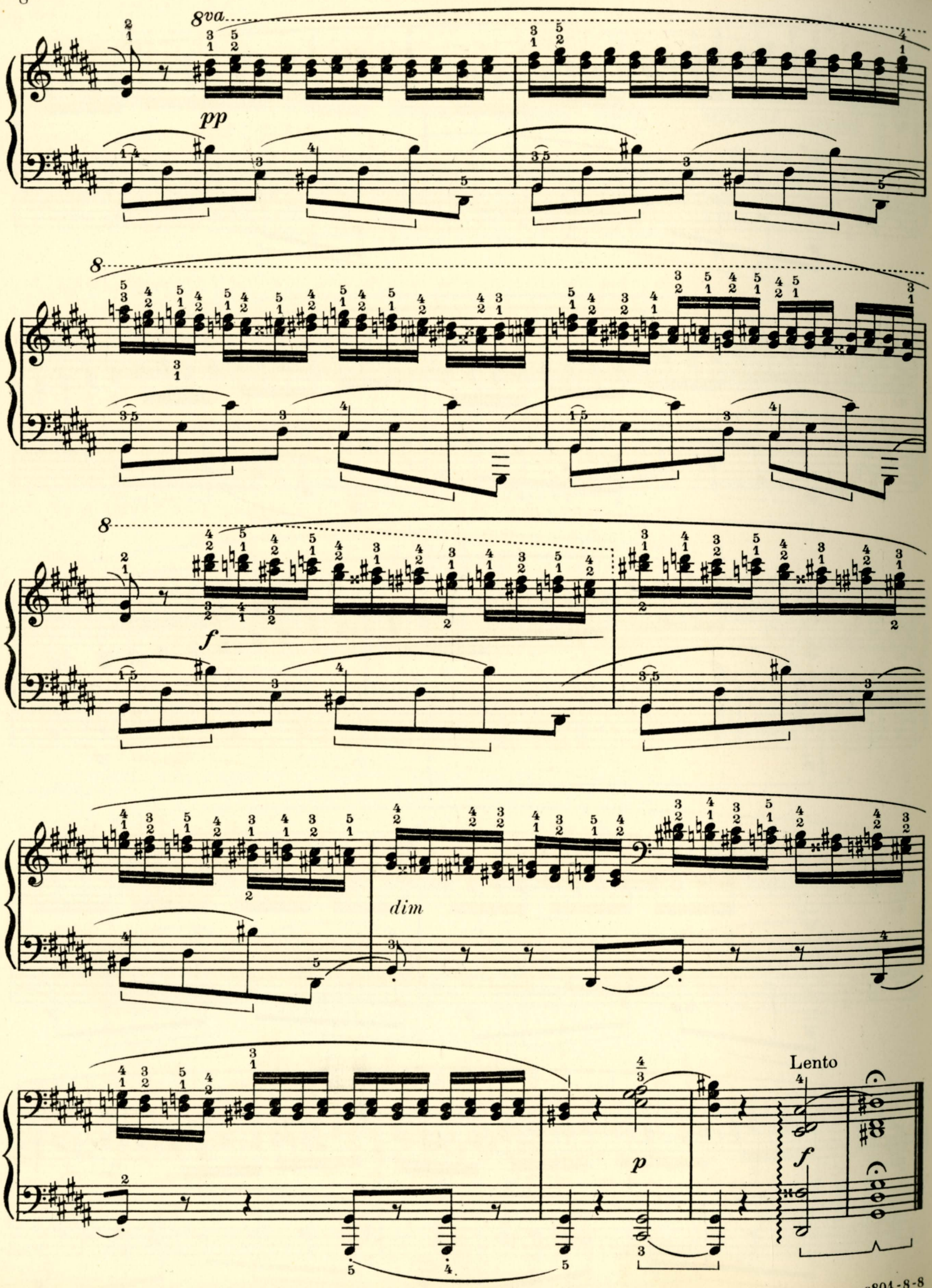

p
8va
5
p
6
p
8va
9
p
10
8va
11


8va
f
dim.
8va


f
8va
8va
p leggierissimo
8va
8va
f


p
8va
p
8va
p


8va
mf
8va
f
fp
p sotto voce


8va
pp
8
8
f
dim
Lento
p
f

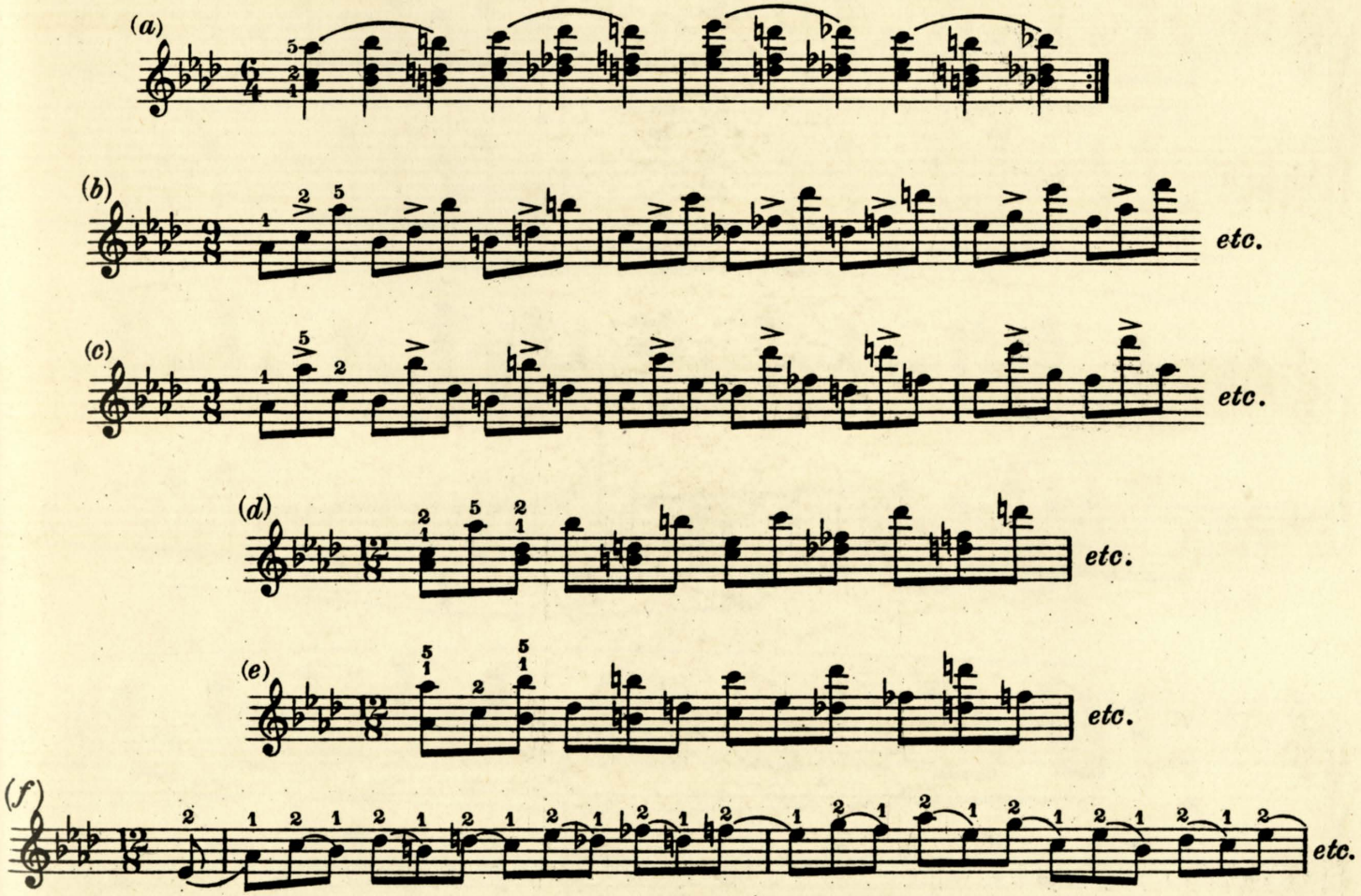
Sherwood Music School Courses

PIANO — Study 851

This Study is an exceedingly piquant composition, with richness of rhythm, of harmonic material, and of nuances. It exhibits the rhythmic peculiarity of the right hand part being practically in six-four measure, while the left hand enunciates the twelve-eight measure very distinctly. The right hand must actually suggest both rhythms, now one and now the other being delicately accentuated. Or, to put it a little differently, a six-four melodic outline is to be disguised under a twelve-eight rhythm.

The tempo is spirited, but, excepting in measures 44-49, which contain an impassioned climax, there is more of grace than of force manifested in the music. The hands must glide over the keys with great lightness and the utmost relaxation compatible with the large stretches. If laboriously and strenuously executed, these extensions of the hand will quickly produce irritation and fatigue.

The following preparatory exercises will prove helpful in giving familiarity with the chords and their fingering, and the transitions from one chord to another.



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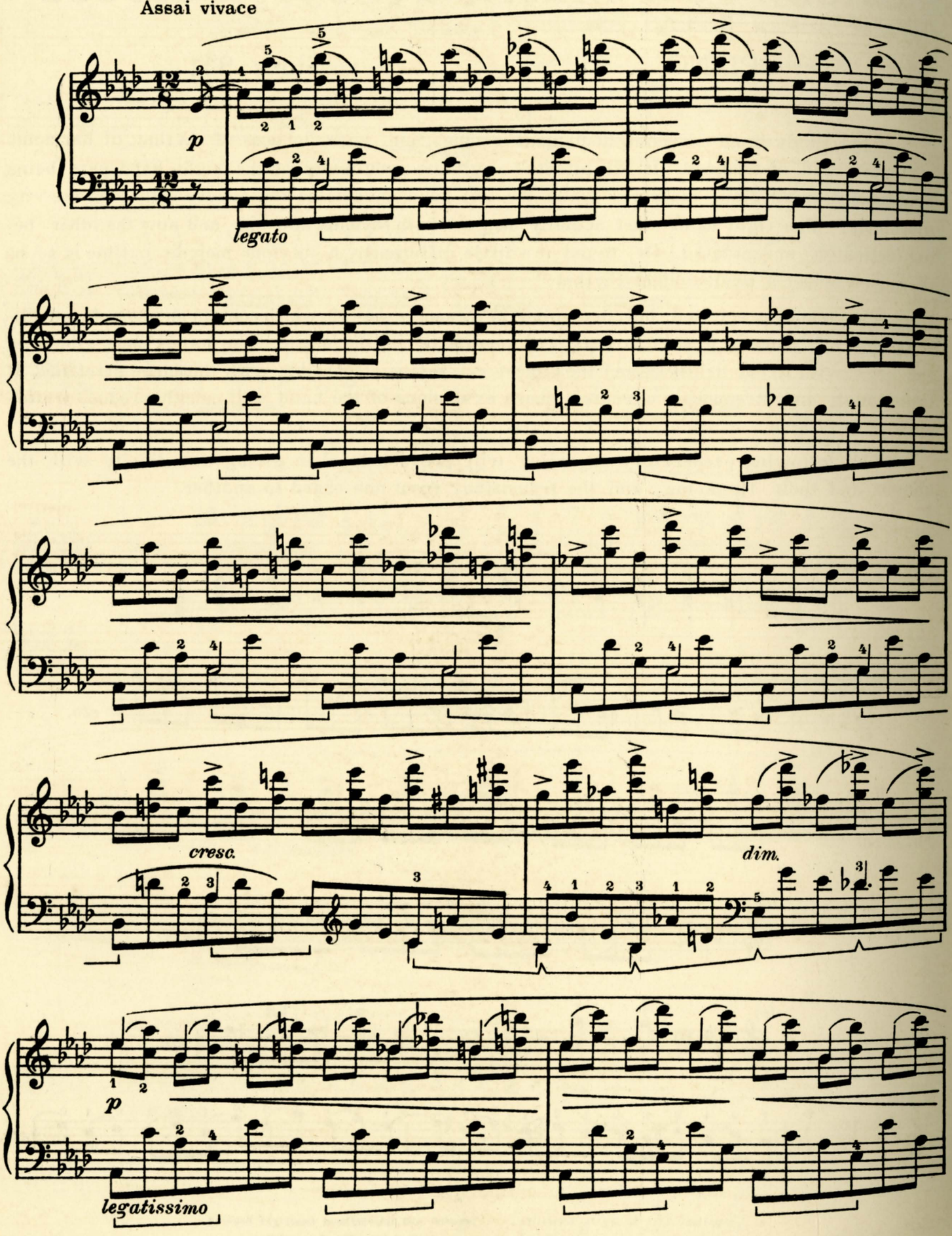
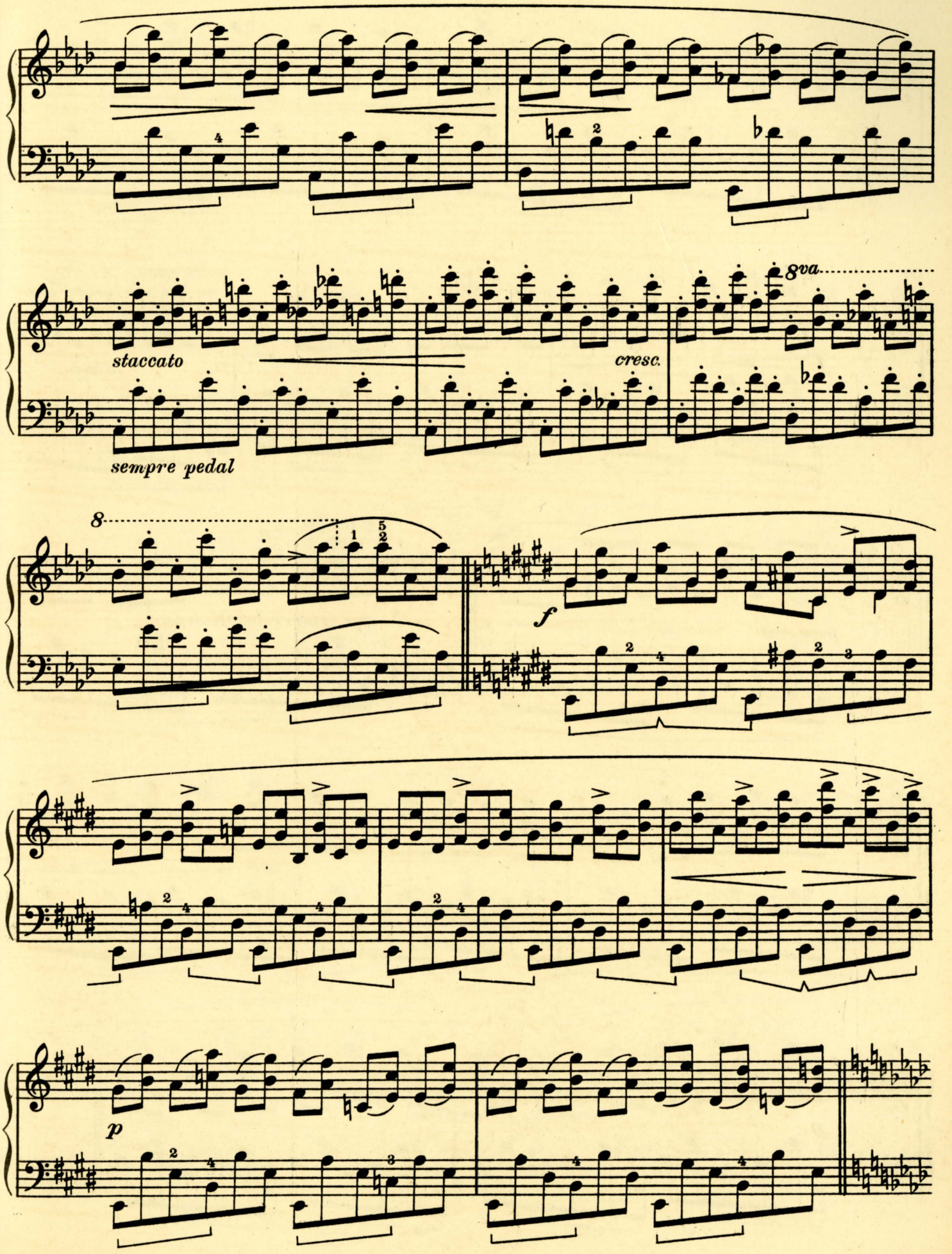
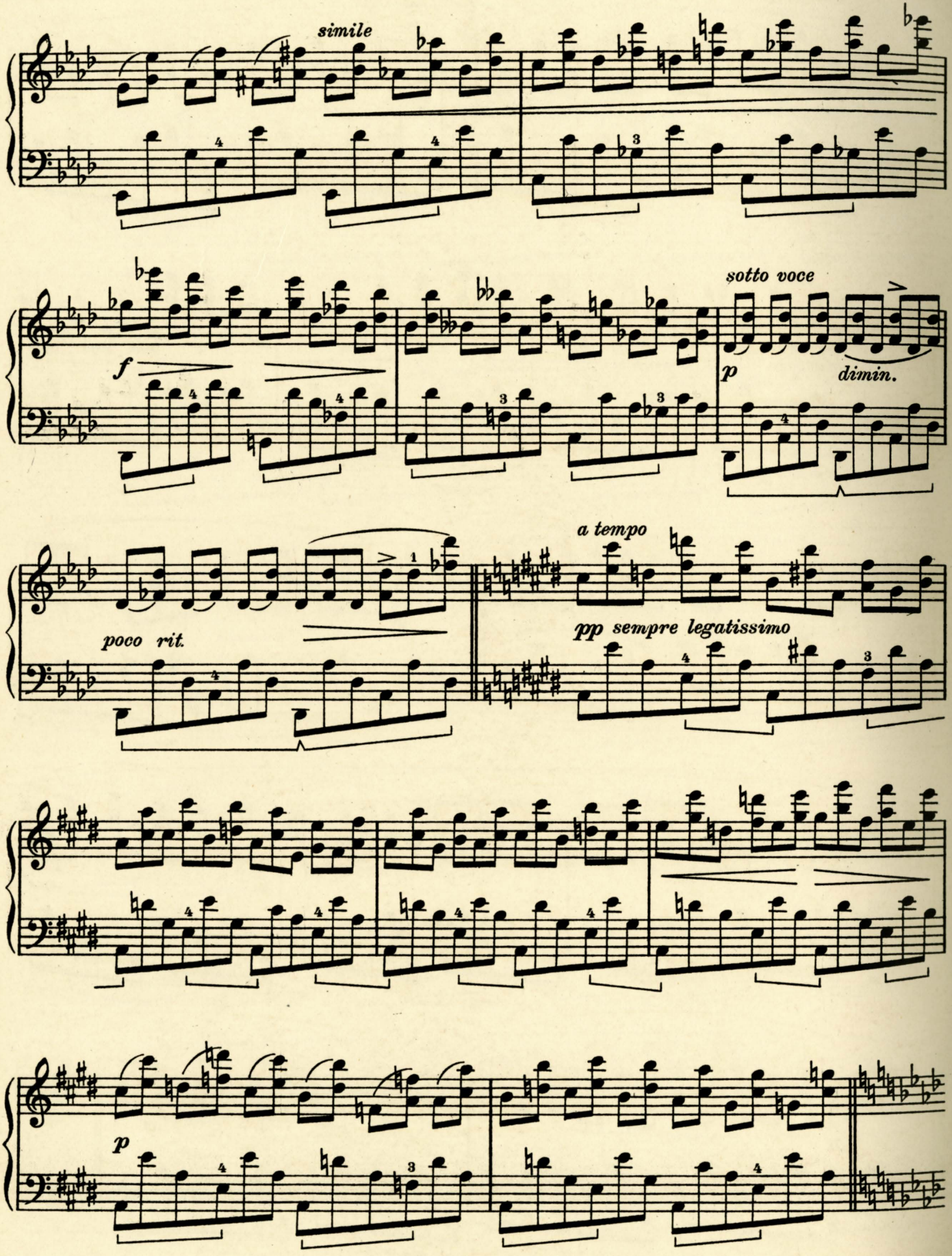
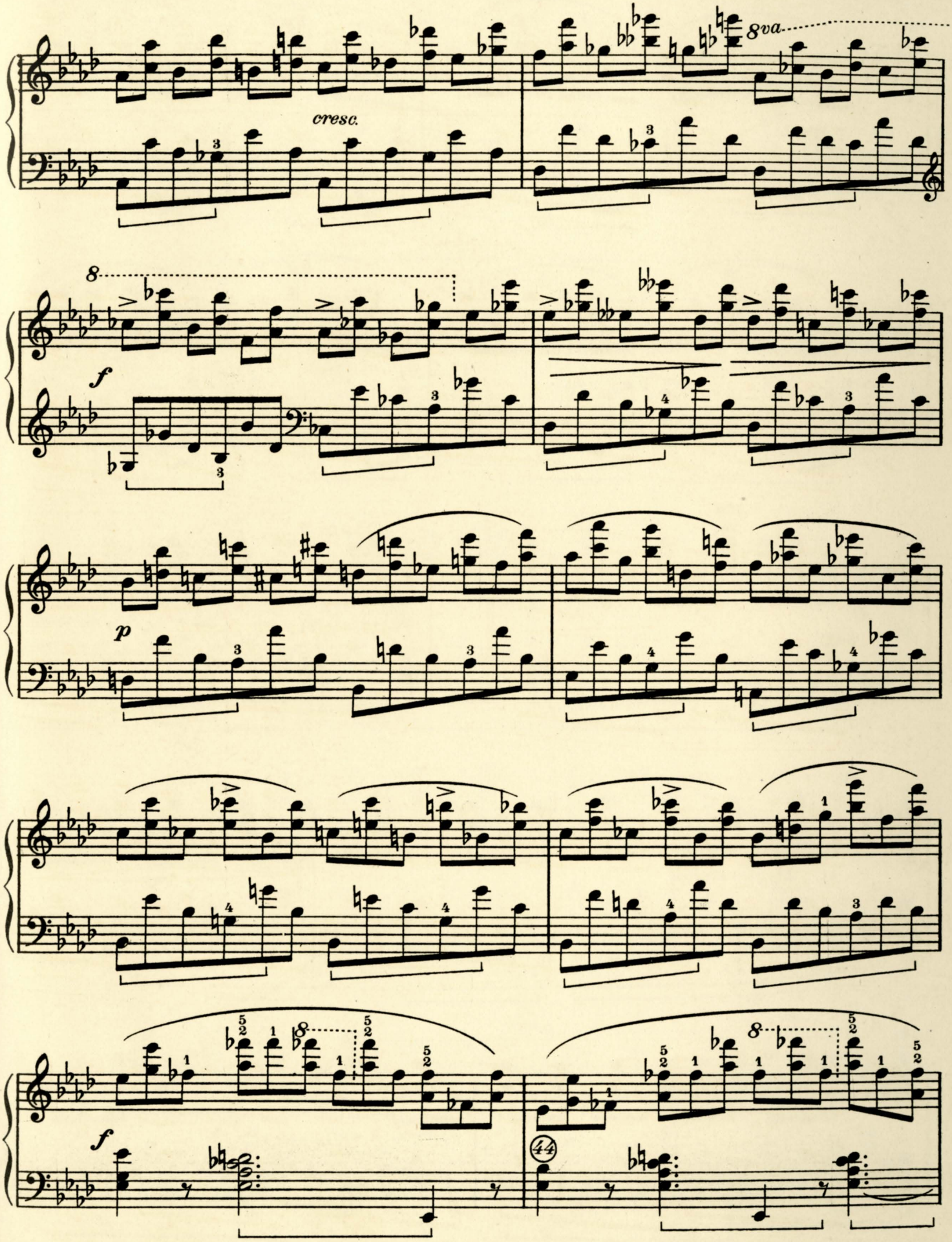
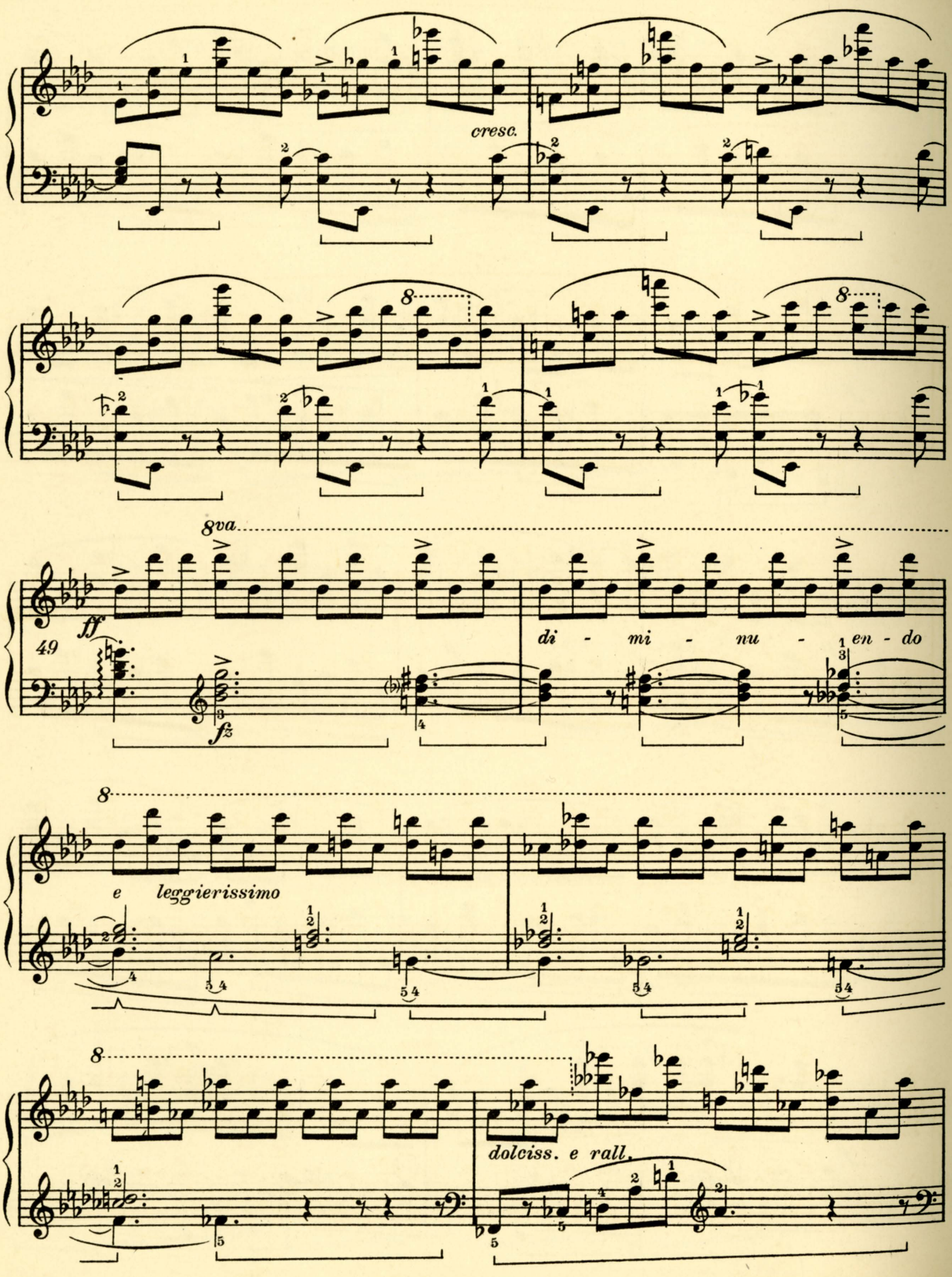
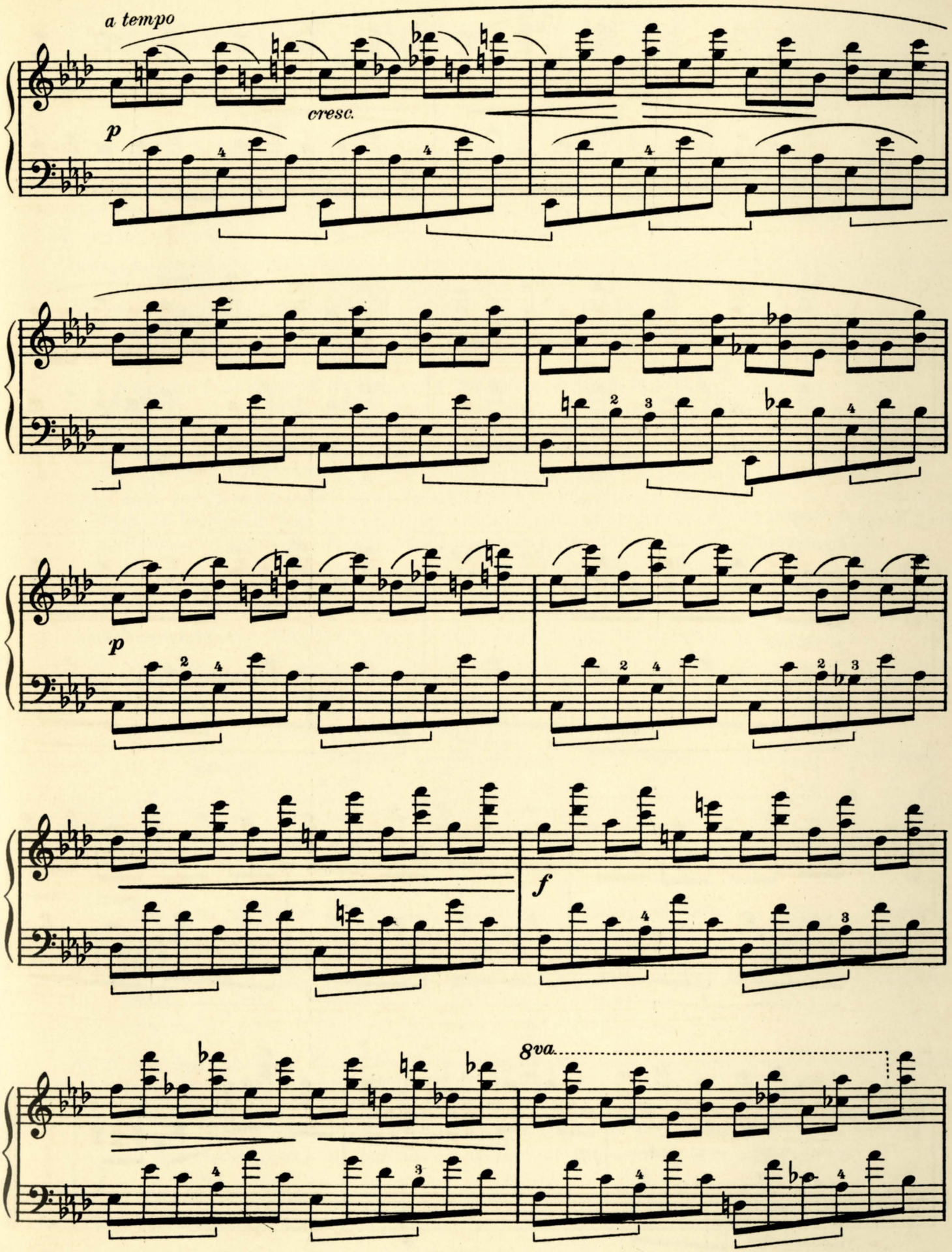

Assai vivace
p
legato
cresc.
dim.
p
legatissimo

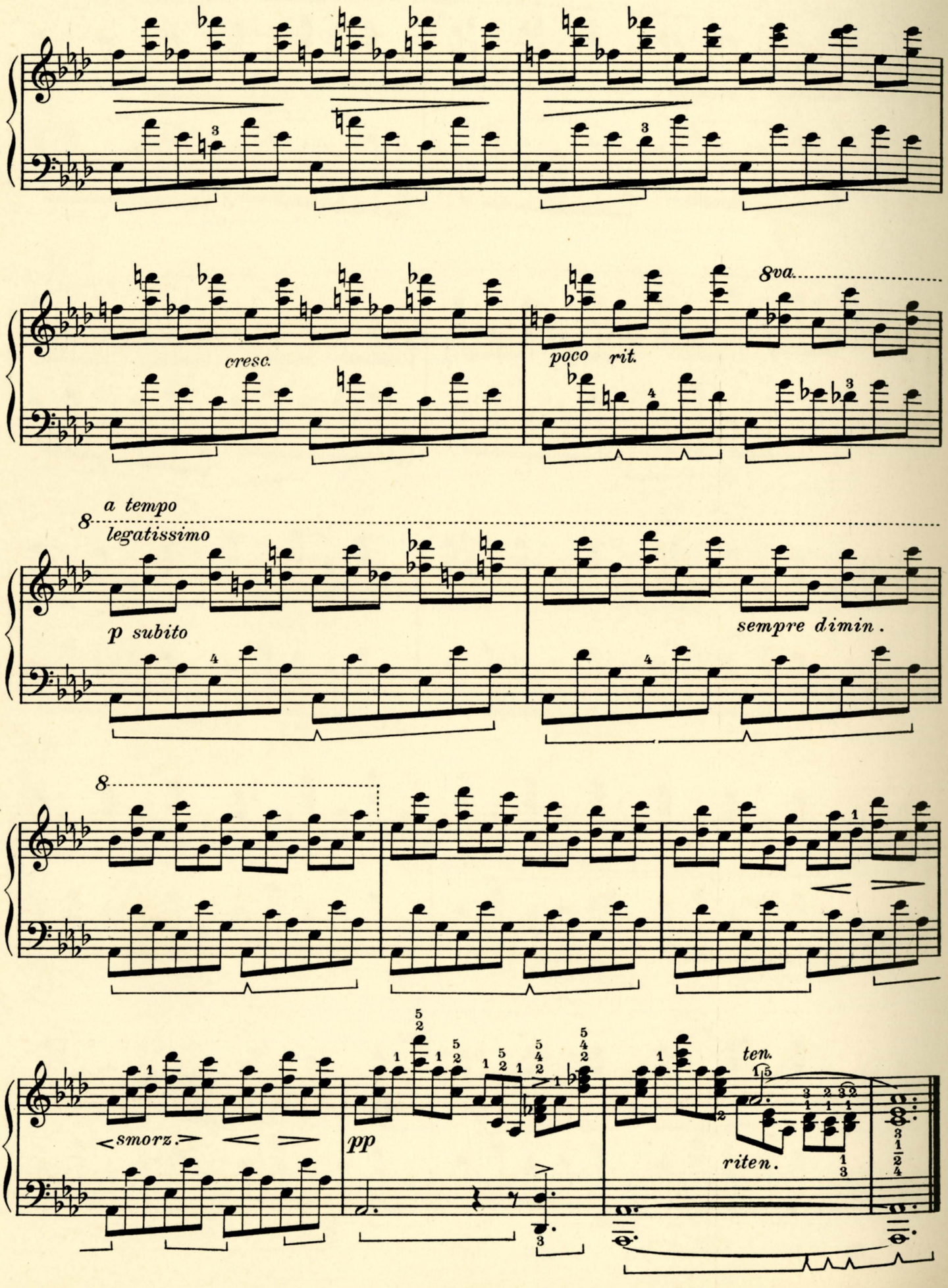

staccato
sempre pedal
cresc.
8va
8
f
p


simile
f
sotto voce
p
dimin.
poco rit.
a tempo
pp sempre legatissimo
p


8va
cresc.
f
p
f
44


cresc.
8
8va
ff
49
fz
di - mi - nu - en - do
e leggierissimo
dolciss. e rall.


a tempo
cresc.
p
p
f
8va


cresc.
poco rit.
8va
a tempo
legatissimo
p subito
sempre dimin.
smorz.
pp
ten.
riten.

Sherwood Music School Courses

PIANO — Study 853

This Study is a general favorite, and is known among music lovers as "The 'Butterfly' Etude." The light and airy charm of the figure which forms the prevailing motive suggests the movements of a graceful butterfly, as it flutters from place to place.

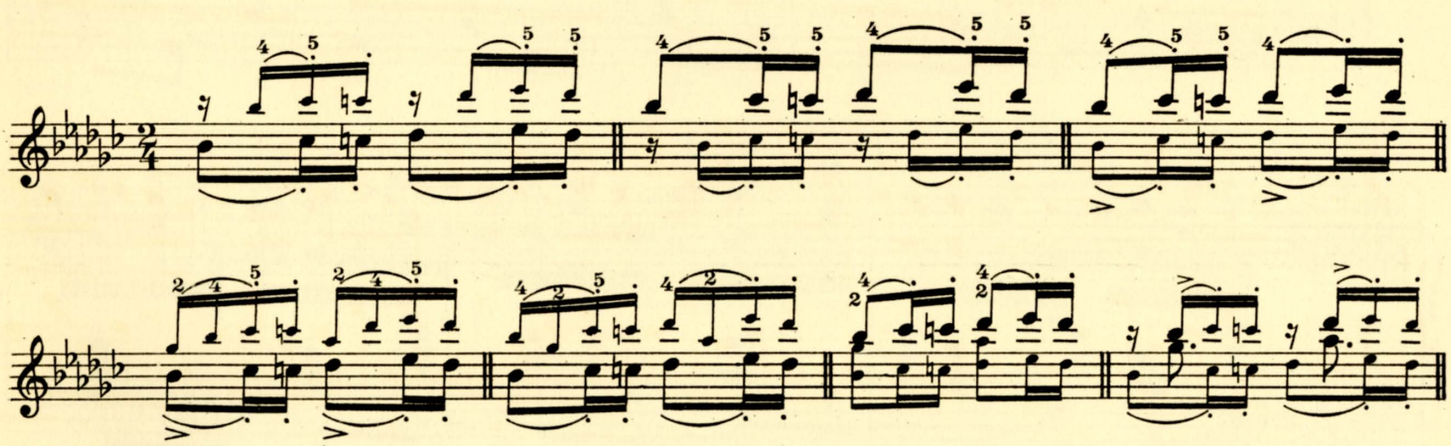
Here, as elsewhere, rules for careful habits of practice must be observed. Short though it may be, the Study is decidedly a test of endurance. The utmost elasticity of the wrist is essential, if the required speed and the characteristic lightness are to be attained.

Slow practice at first, with strict attention to the proper movement and touch, is essential, in order to produce freedom of action, and prevent undue tension later, when playing in fast tempo.

The strictest legato must be observed for the first three-fourths of each group or figure; that is, up to the first octave. The octaves themselves are staccato, but the notes preceding them are legato. The wrist is rather low for the first note and the double notes following them. As soon as the fingers have pressed down the double notes (G♭ and B♭ in measure 1), raise the wrist preparatory to playing the octaves (C♭ and C♮). Play both of these with a higher wrist. Repeat this movement in playing each group with octaves, up to measure 25. The upward motion of the wrist towards the octave about to be played will insure freedom and lightness of the wrist and forearm, and will help in the acquirement of the light (*leggiero*) style so necessary for the character of this Study.

It is best to concentrate all preparatory work on each hand separately; first, in a moderately fast tempo, and then, by degrees, accelerating the pace. This refers not only to the correct playing of the notes, but more especially to observing — even in the slower pace — all indications of changing dynamics and speed. This is a task that will amply repay all conscientious endeavor.

Some useful preparatory exercises which will make the work more thorough and interesting, are as follows:



After practicing each of the above variants separately, play them with the left-hand part of the Study itself, observing all of the indications of expression.

The left hand accompaniment contains no special phase of difficulty that has not been met with before; but on account of the rapidity of the tempo, it is well to give some attention to the practice of the skips. Arm movement with controlled wrist and fingers is used throughout.

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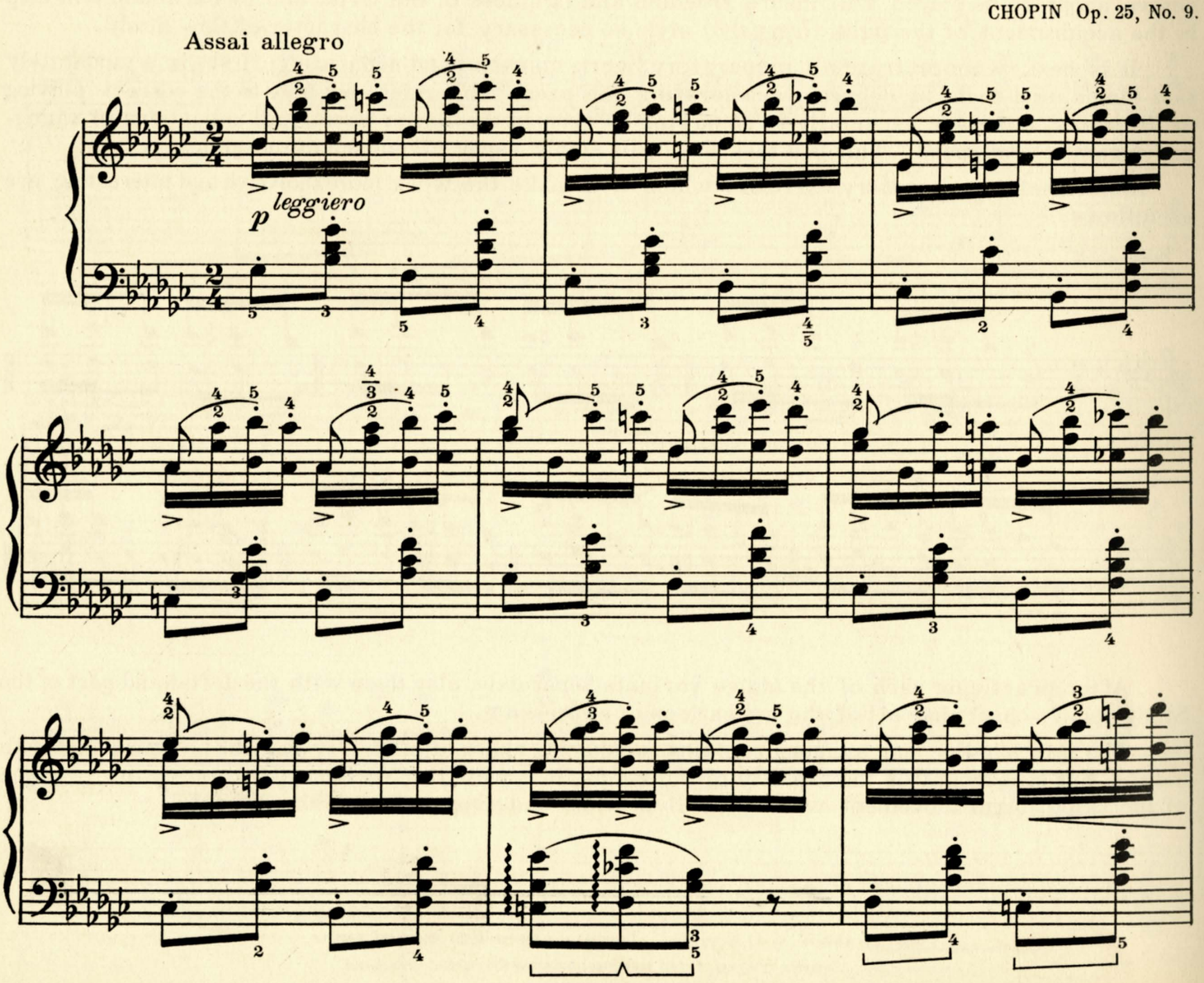
Beginning with measure 25, there is a radical change of character. Here the style is no longer light, but a decided *forte,* leading up to a powerful climax in measure 33, and then diminishing gradually until it reaches measure 37. The qualities required here are great power and brilliancy. In order to add to the climax of tone, as well as to bring out a melodious bass progression, the composer has given octaves to the left hand part. In this passage, it will, however, be necessary to keep a reserve of power, so that a gradual crescendo is possible up to the climax in measure 33, followed by a diminuendo to measure 37.

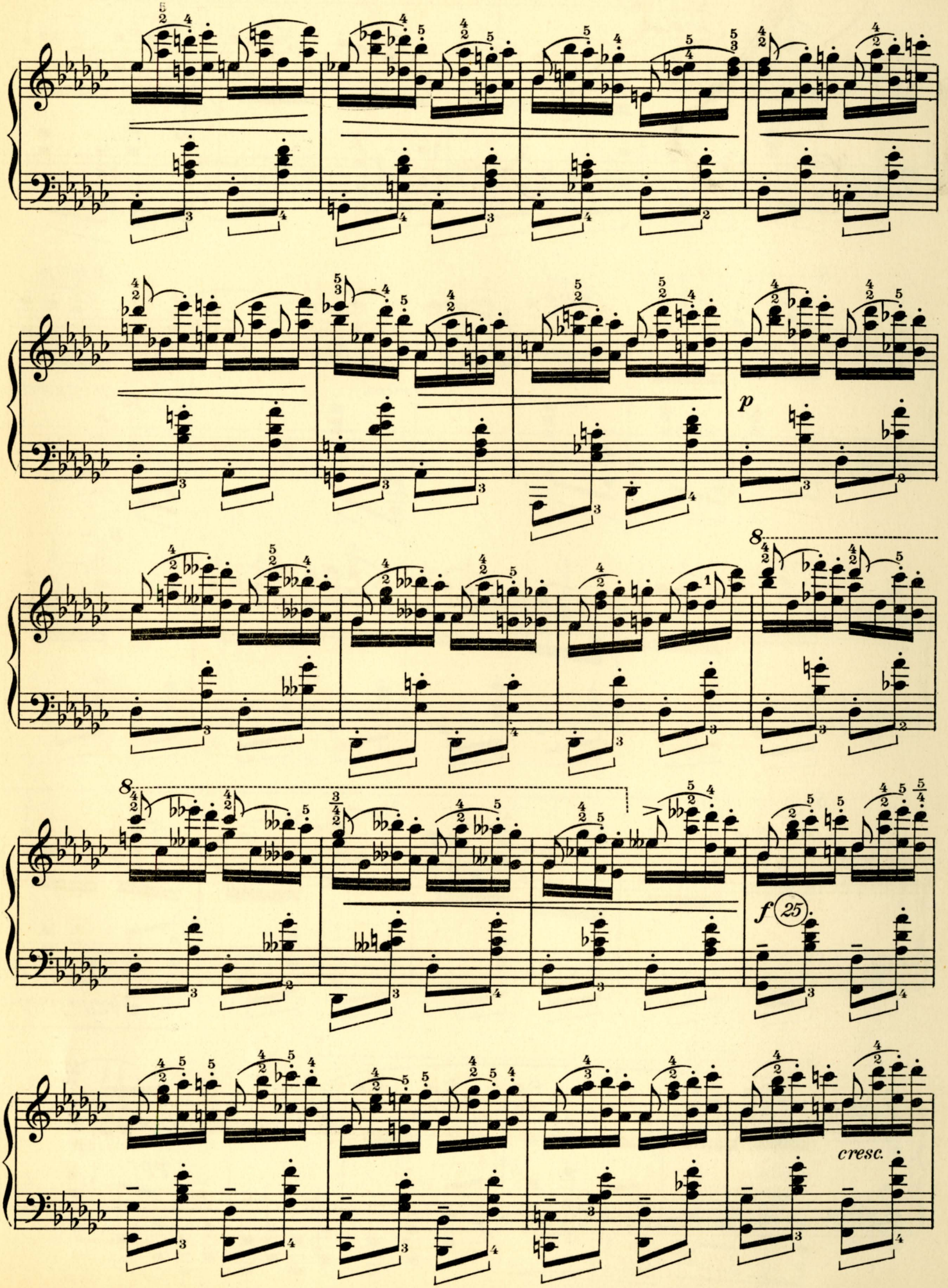
In measures 37-45 we have again a *leggiero* passage like the first part of the Study. The last seven measures must be played strictly legato and as lightly as possible.

The greatest care must be taken in the shading of the crescendos and diminuendos. While the *leggiero* parts are to be played softly, there must not be monotony. They should rather suggest, alternately, the high lights and the darkest colors of the butterfly, as it is seen now in sunshine and again in shadow. The middle section, which is forte, must also, as stated before, have decided tonal variety.

The finished performance of the composition should seem effortless and spontaneous, or it will lack the airy grace which has given it its popular name.

CHOPIN Op. 25, No. 9.




p
8
8
f
25
cresc.