Frédéric CHOPIN

ÉTUDES Opus 10

Volume I: 1 - 4

C major

A minor

E major

C♯ minor

Piano Practical Editions
pianopracticaleditions.com

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 10

à son ami *Franz Liszt*

Volume I

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2 : A minor **12**
3 : E major **18**
4 : C♯ minor **24**
appendix **38**

Some of Chopin's 24 studies 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). A fairly early opus revealing the inspired creativity of this extraordinary composer before his short life was beset by complications of existence, relationships and ill-health in western Europe; all twelve studies from this collection were dedicated to Liszt.

Eugène Delacroix 1838

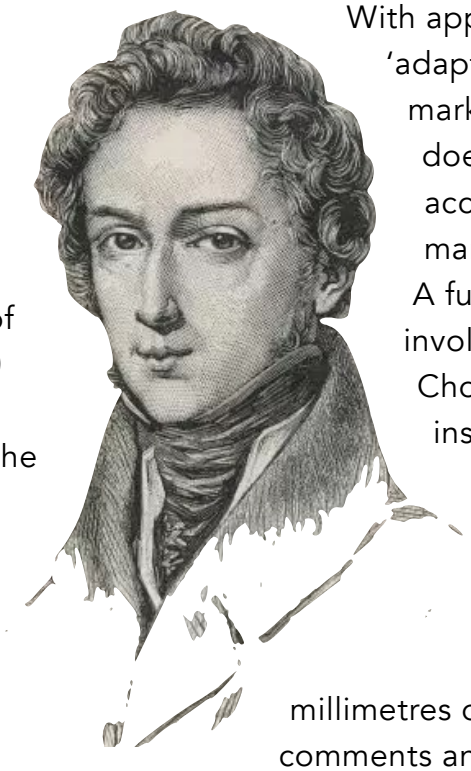
Simultaneously published in France, England and Germany, they reveal conflicting details — and were then further tweaked by the composer. Quite apart from the futile quest for precision, and without wishing to encourage a 'free-for-all', a wide spectrum for individual readings is available.

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, who was 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.

It should be mentioned that the metronome speeds indicated seem to have been added after the autographs. 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.

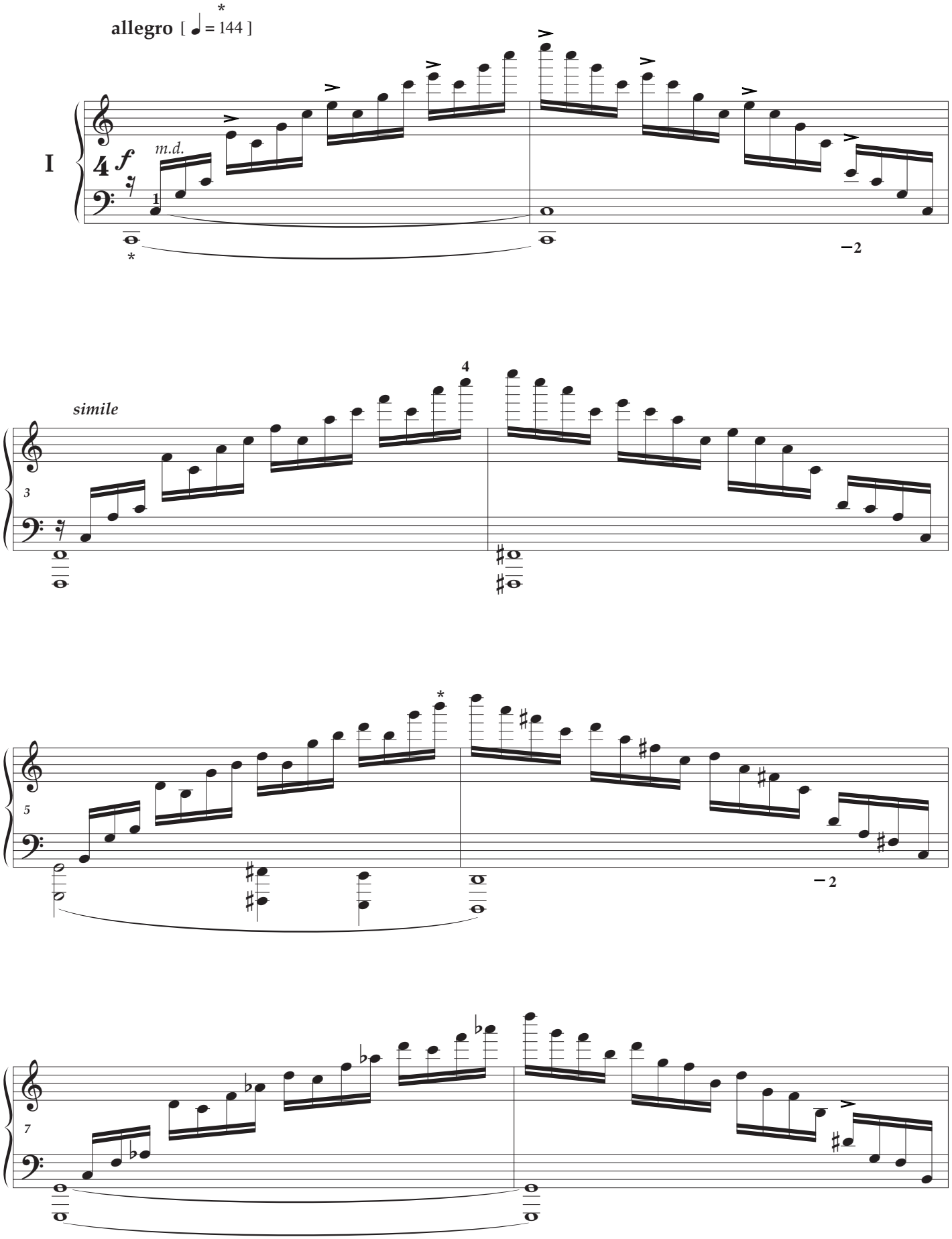
With apprehension, ***PPE*** admits to 'adaptations' of the text (usually marked with an asterisk) and does not reproduce every accent, nuance and expression mark from any particular source. A further consideration must involve a comparison between Chopin's Pleyel and modern instruments: there is less 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 38.

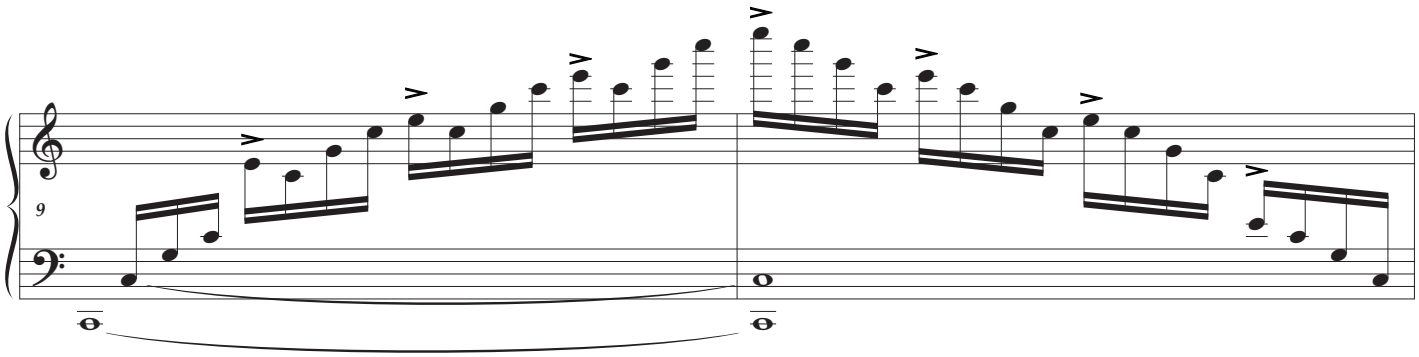
While each *étude* presents one or more specific technical challenges, the music presented is often emotionally charged and always very satisfying to study. Beyond mere transcendental exercises, they have become indispensable repertoire for self-discovery.

Ray Alston

January 2023

** 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 [♩ = 144]
I
m.d.
simile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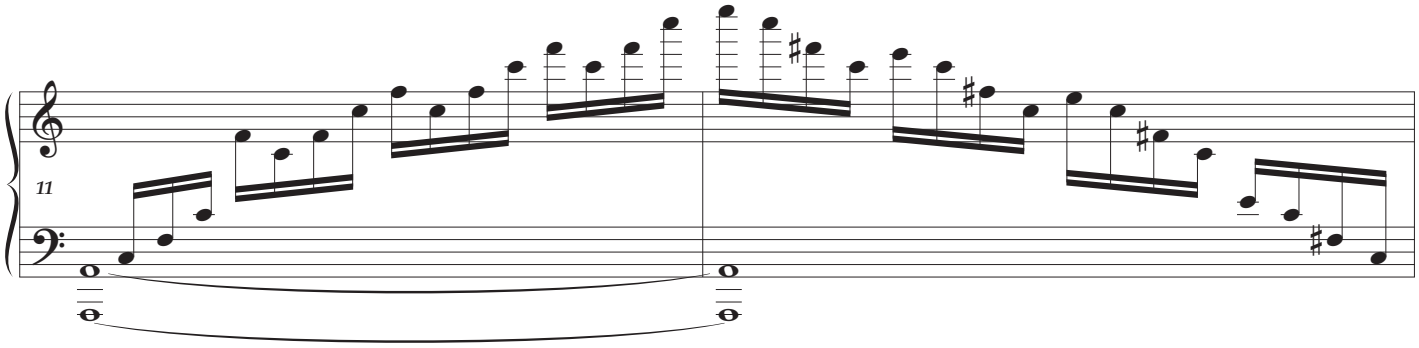
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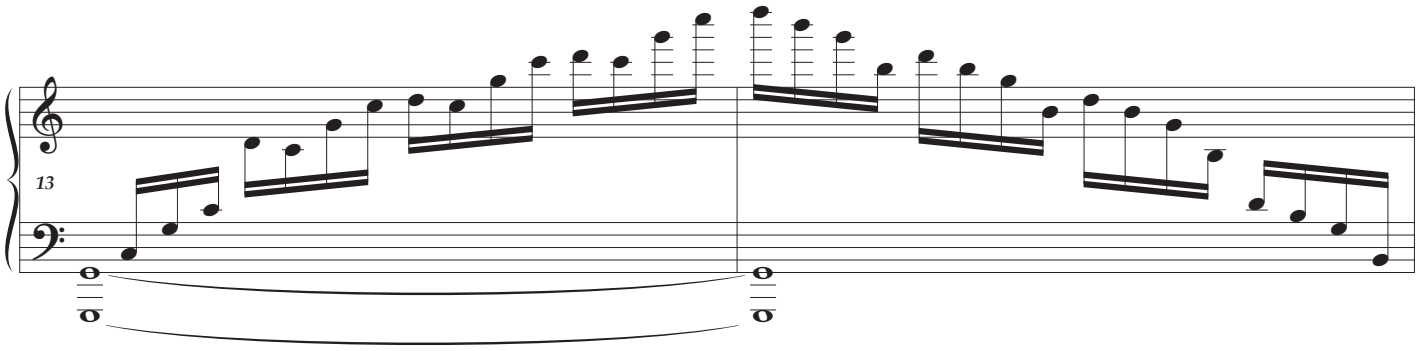
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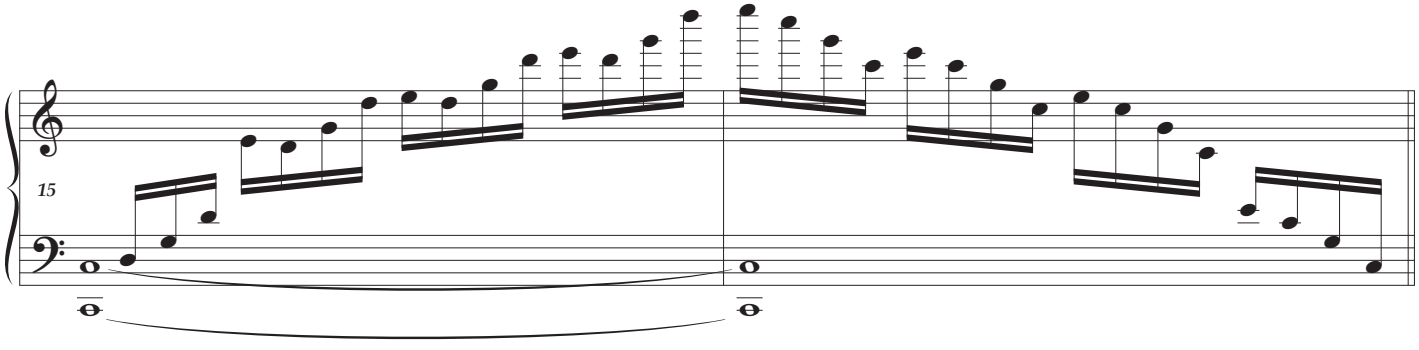
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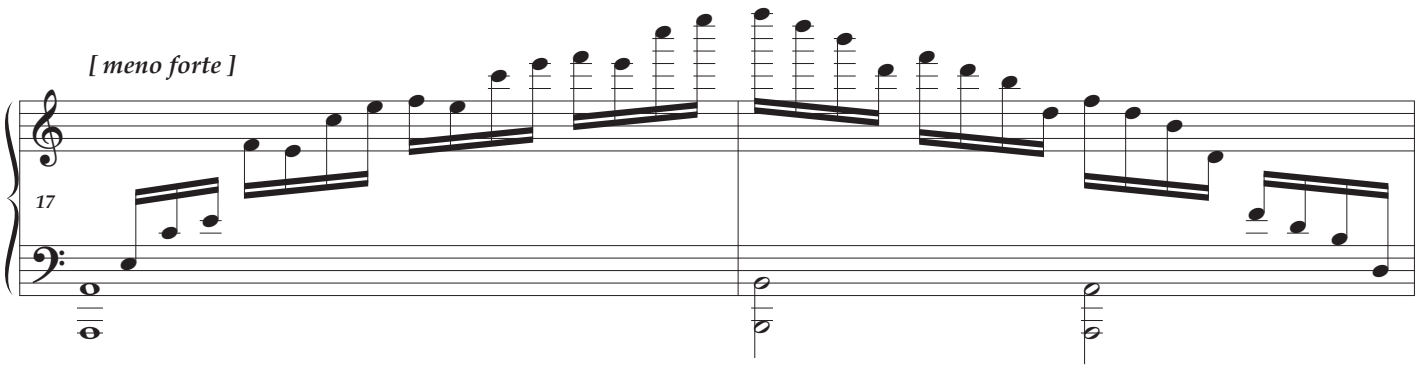
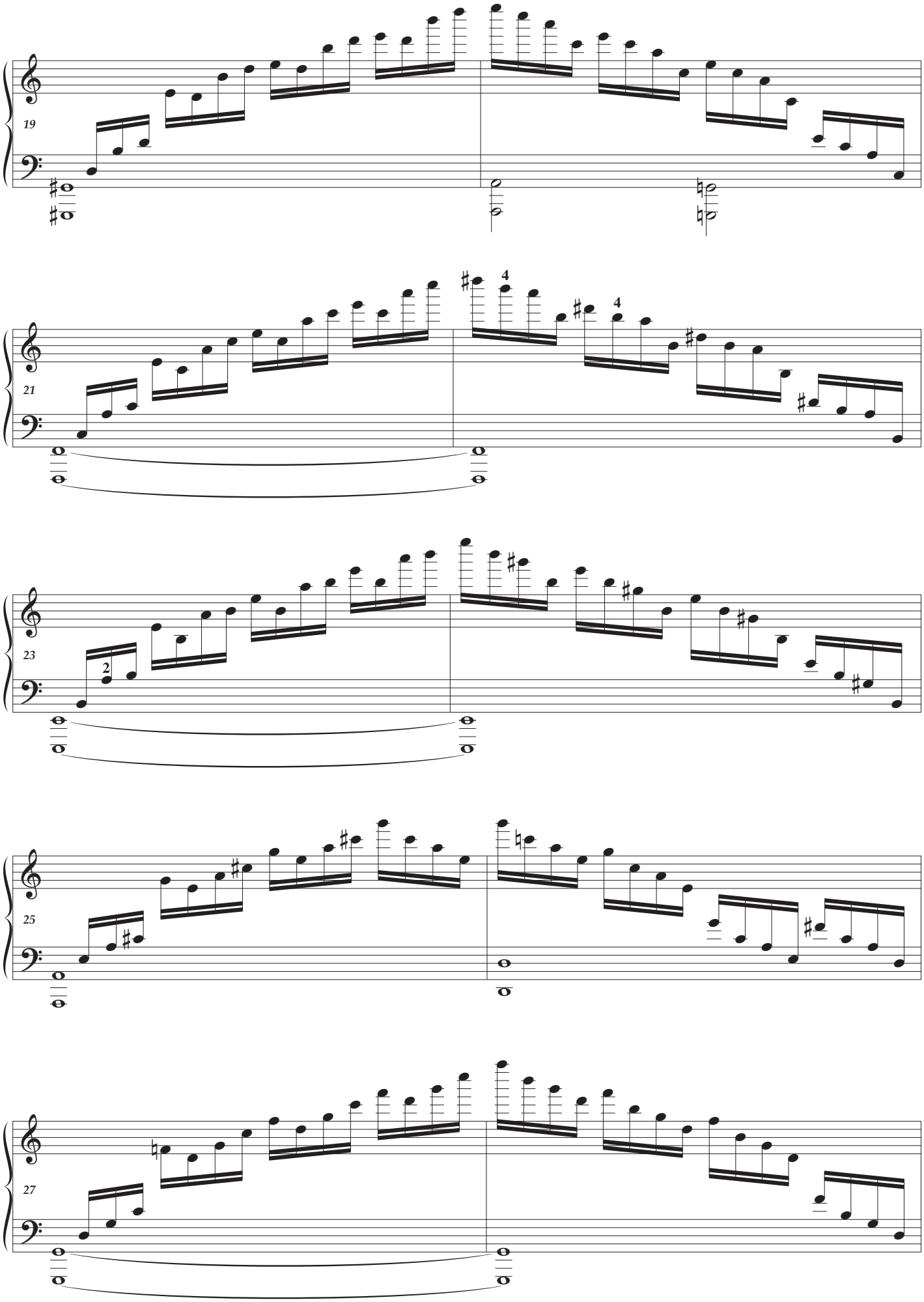
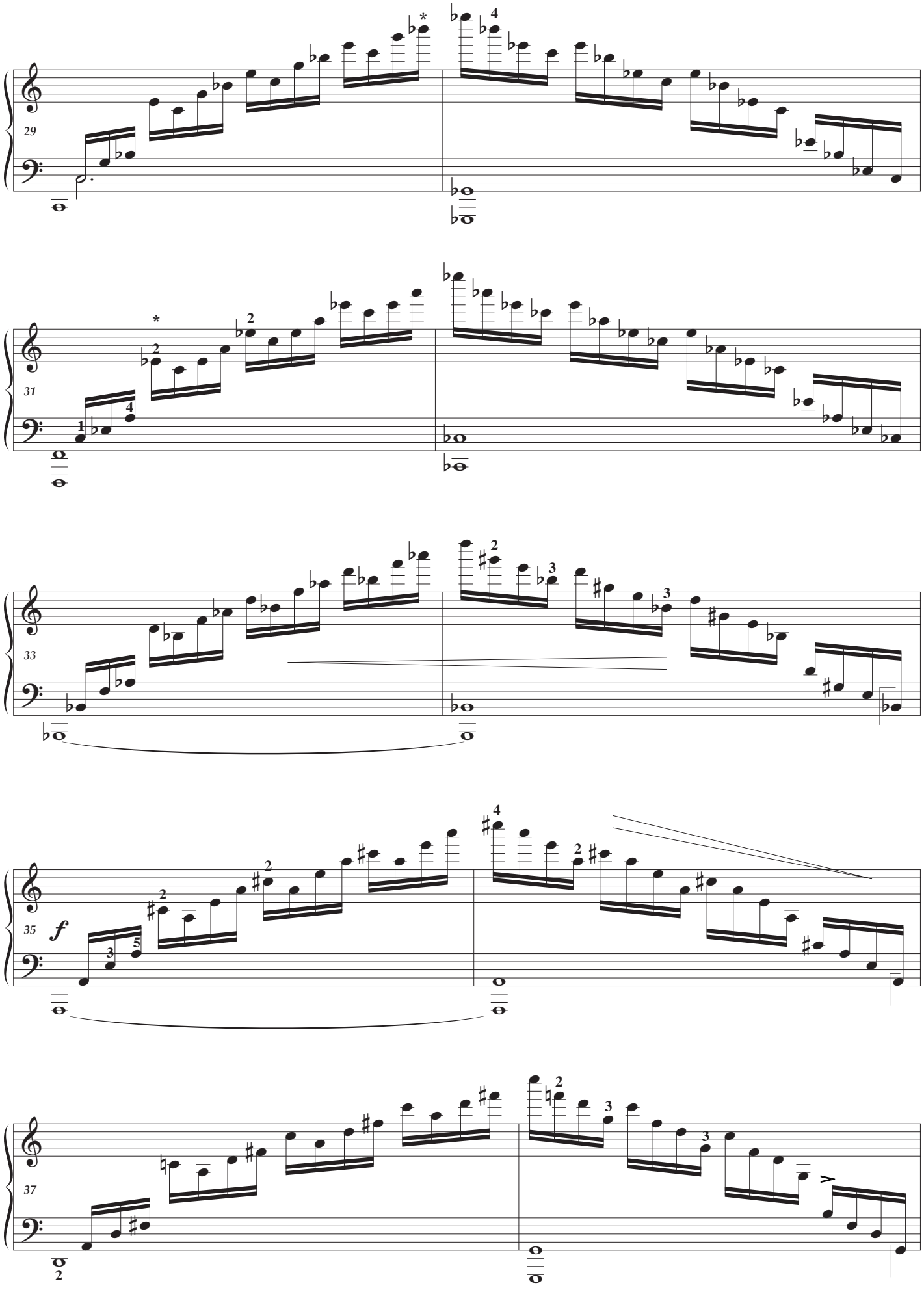
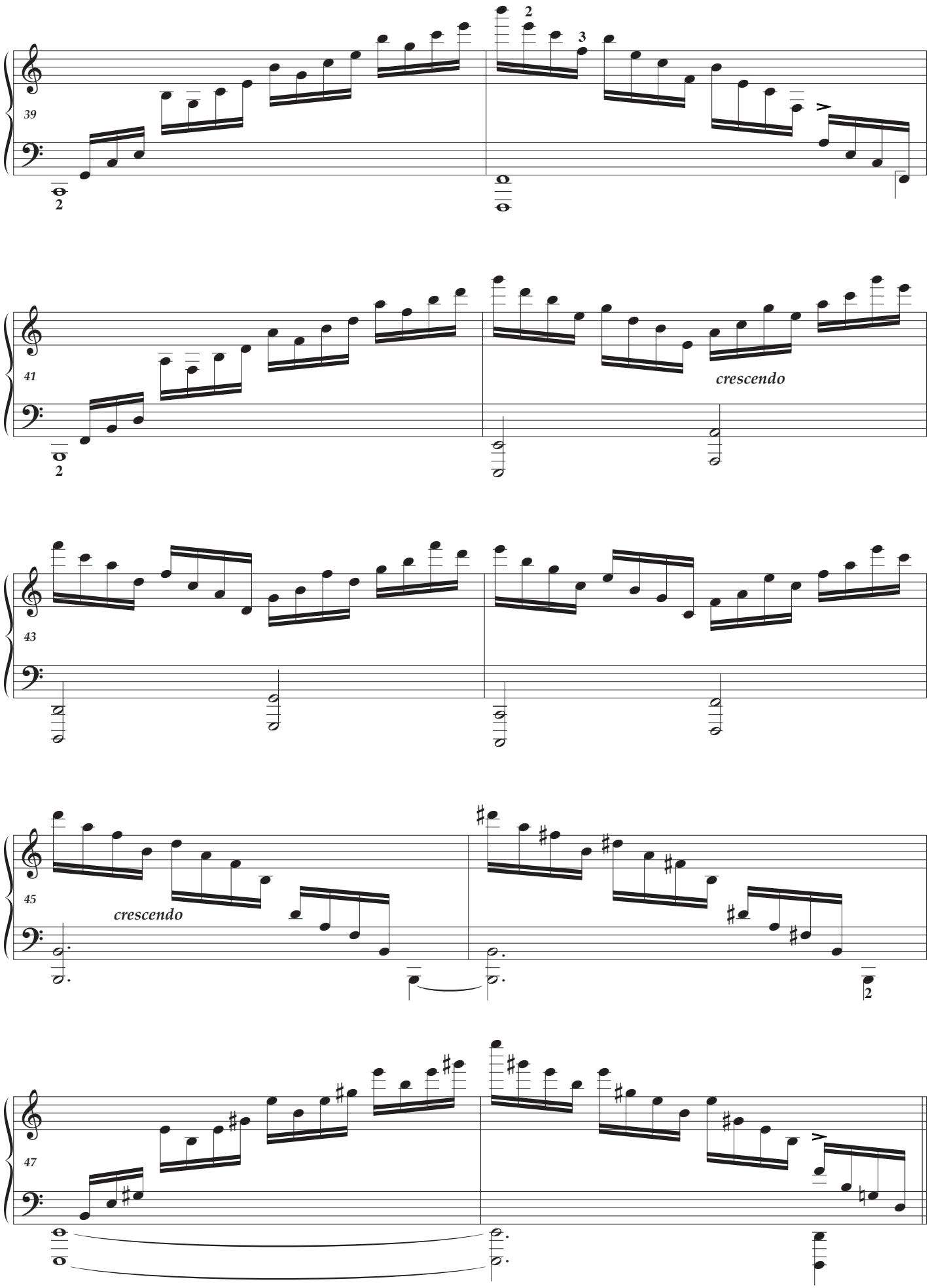
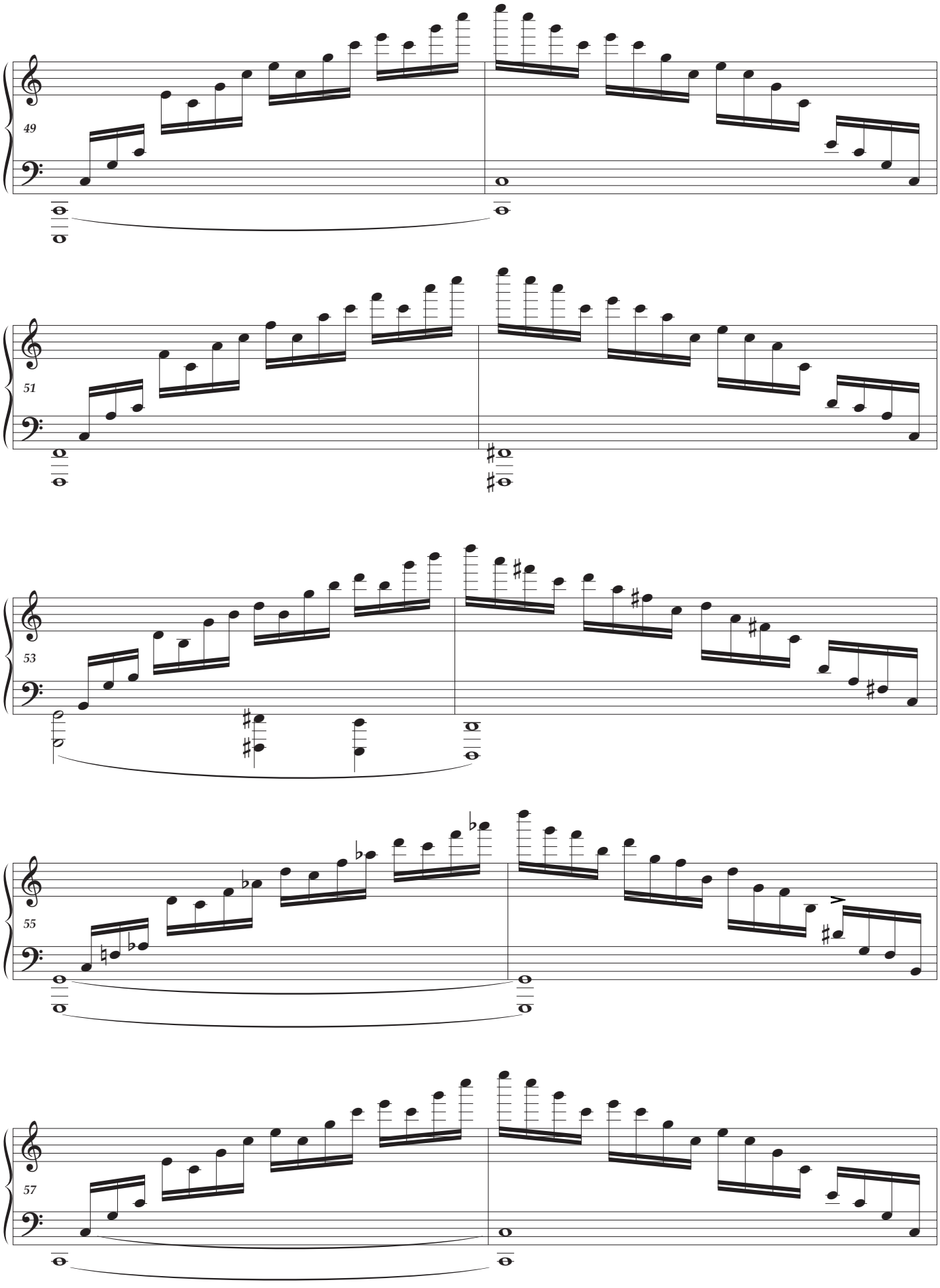
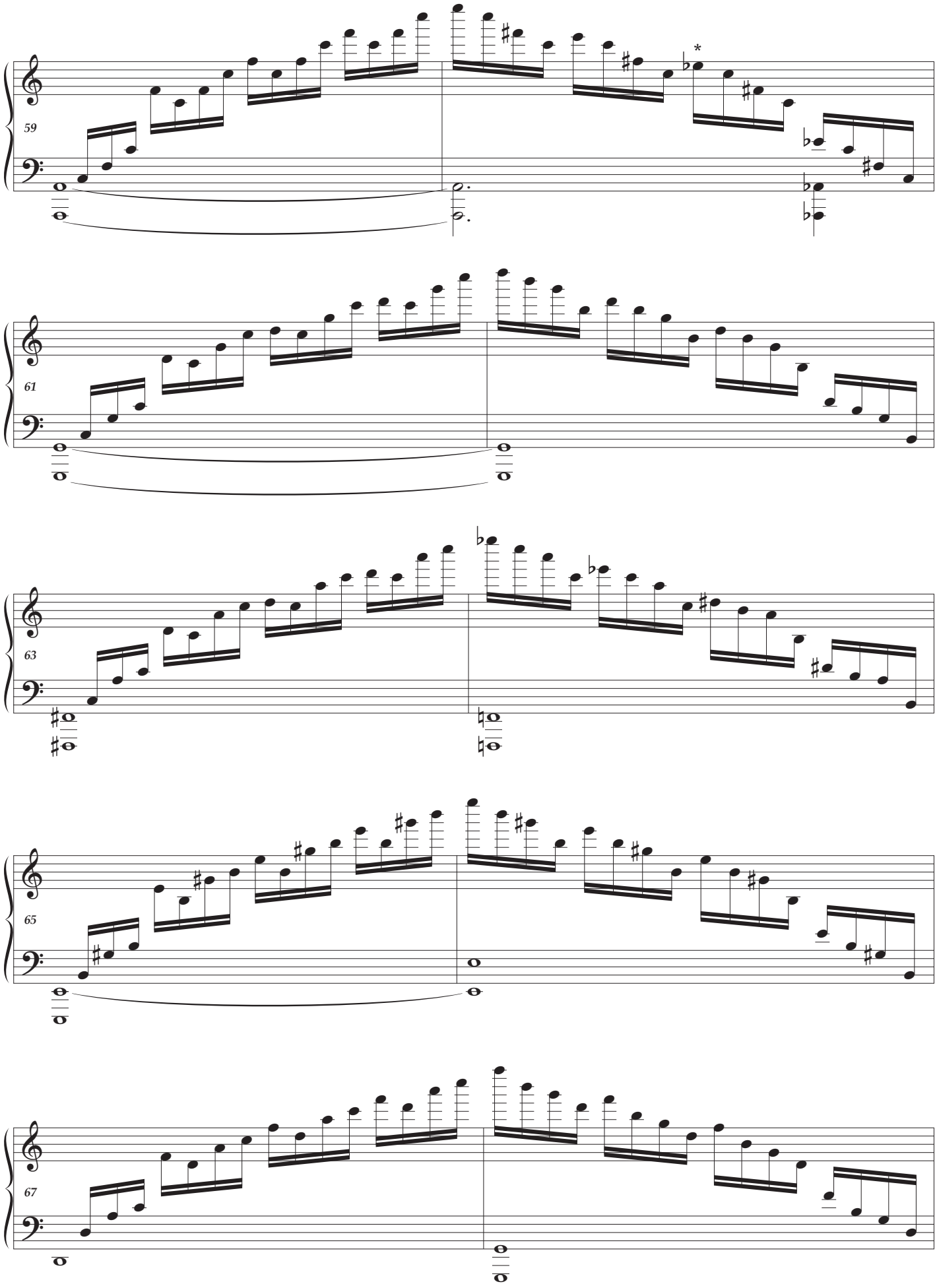

[meno forte]
17

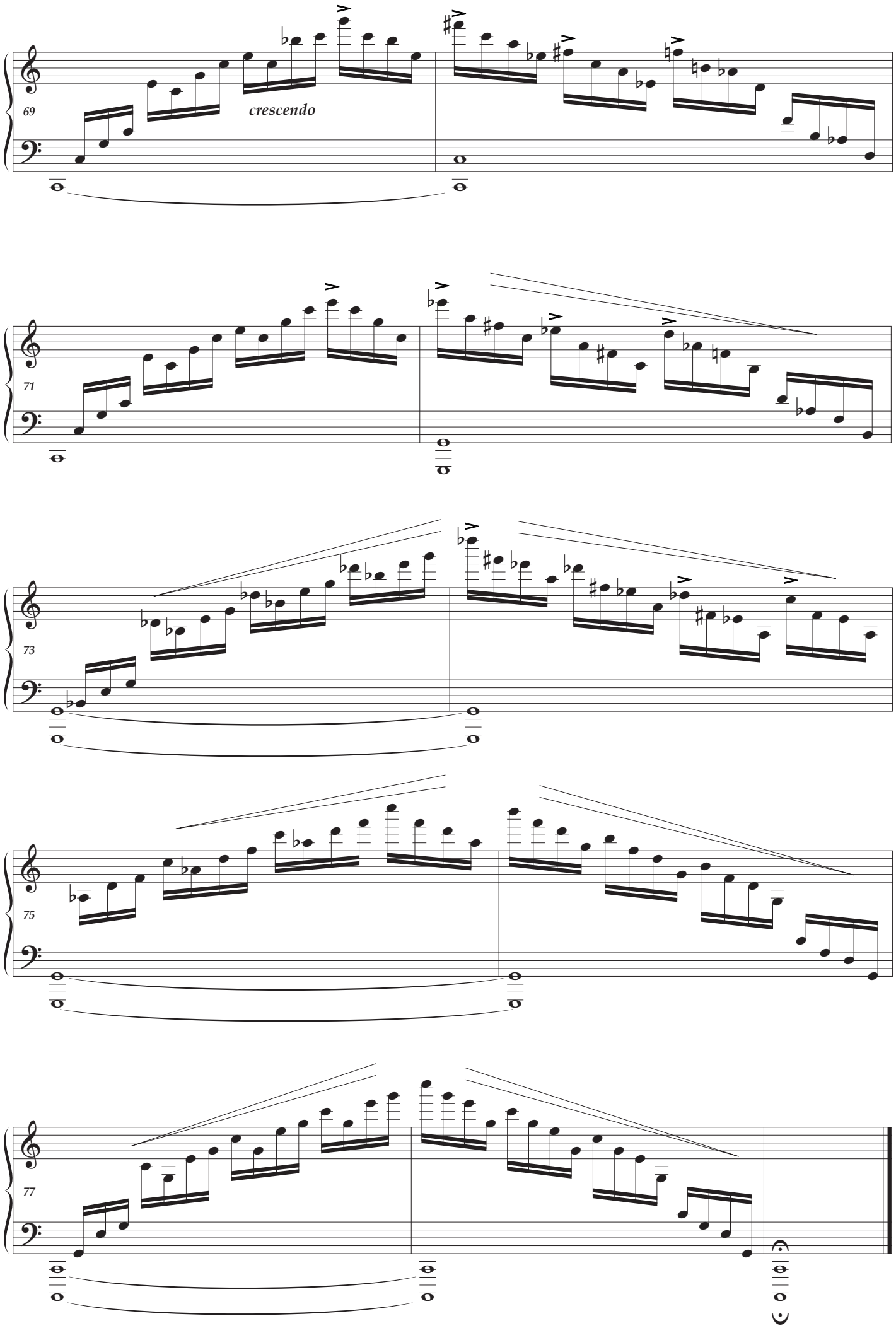

19
21
4
4
23
2
25
27


29
31
33
35
f
37

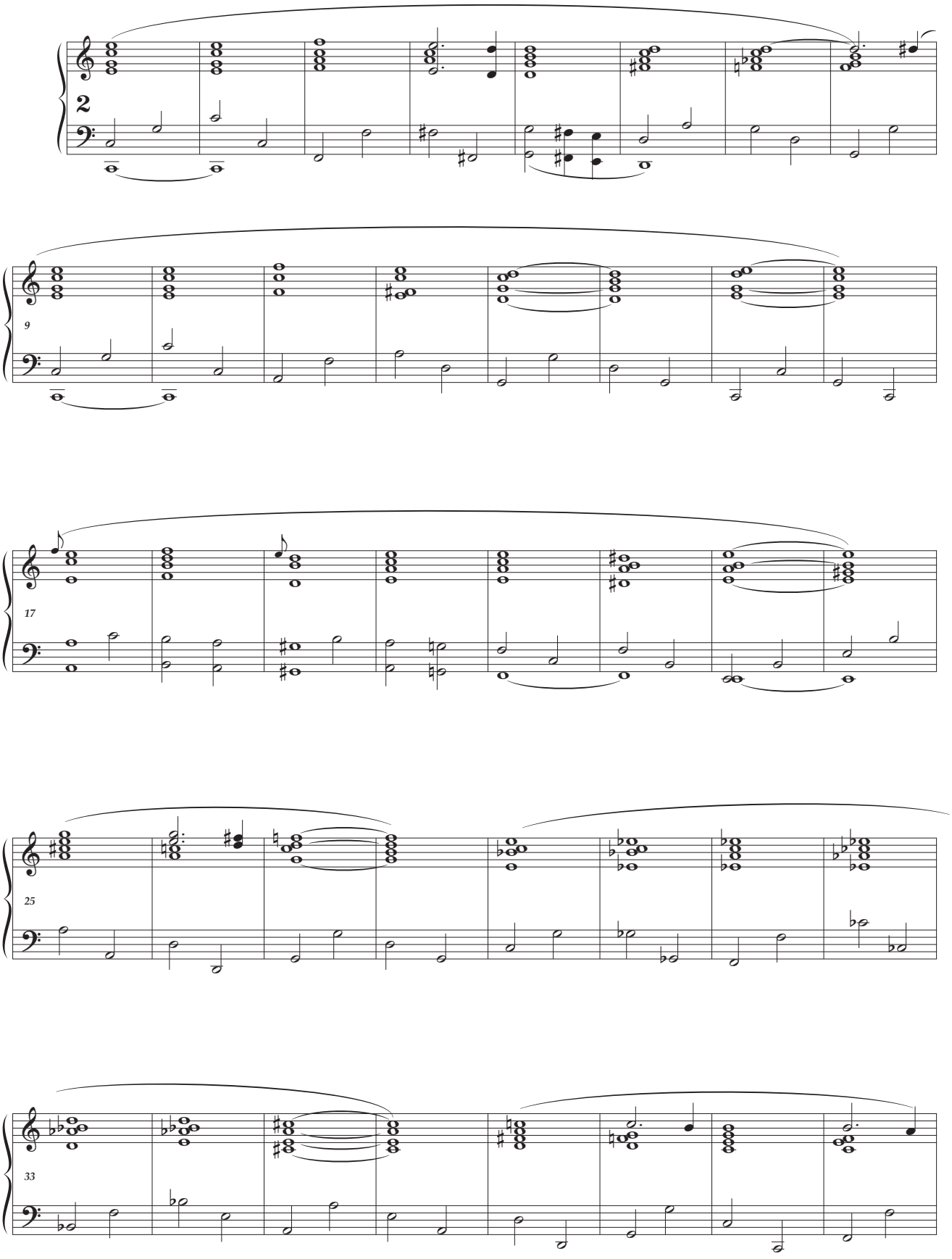

39
41
crescendo
43
45
crescendo
47

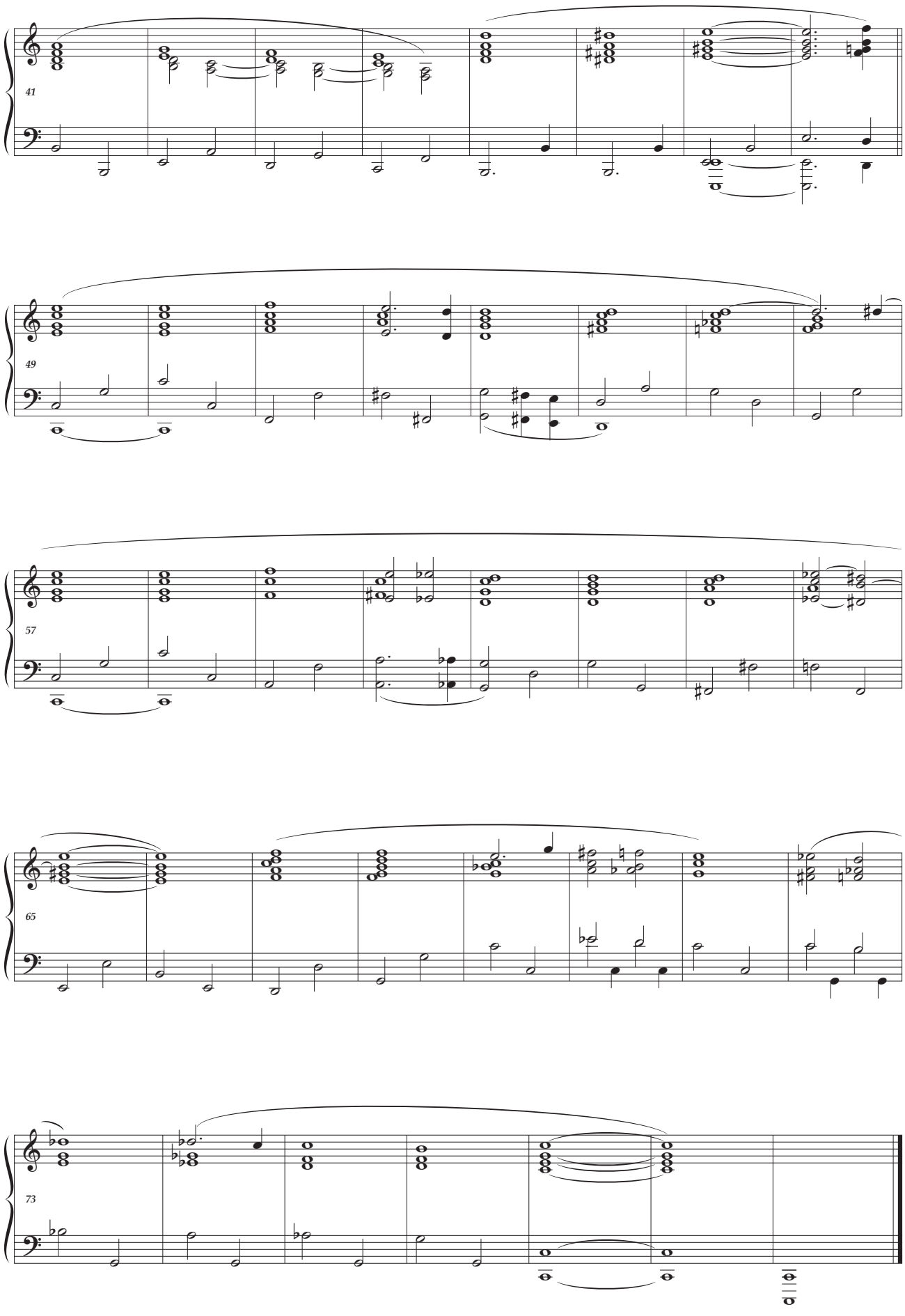

49
51
53
55
57


59
61
63
65
67

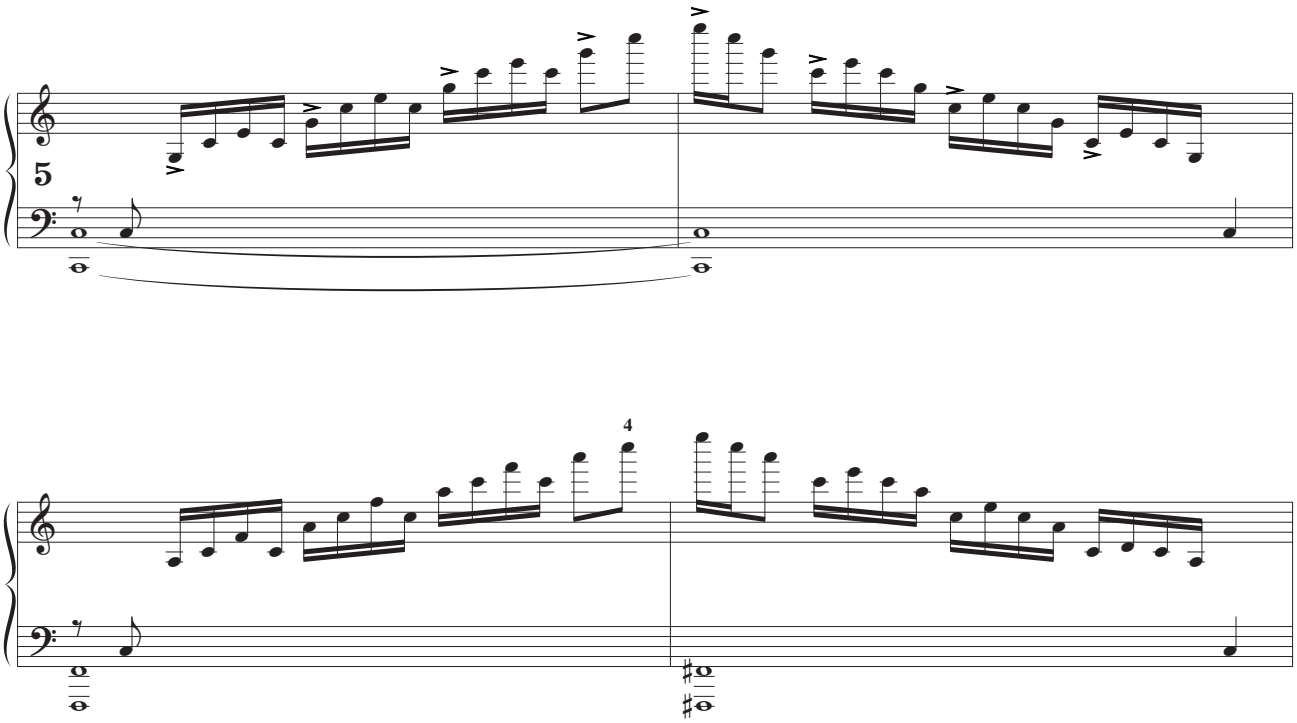

69
crescendo
71
73
75
77

the entire study in skeleton form

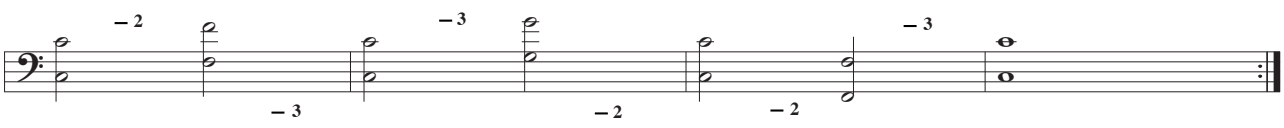


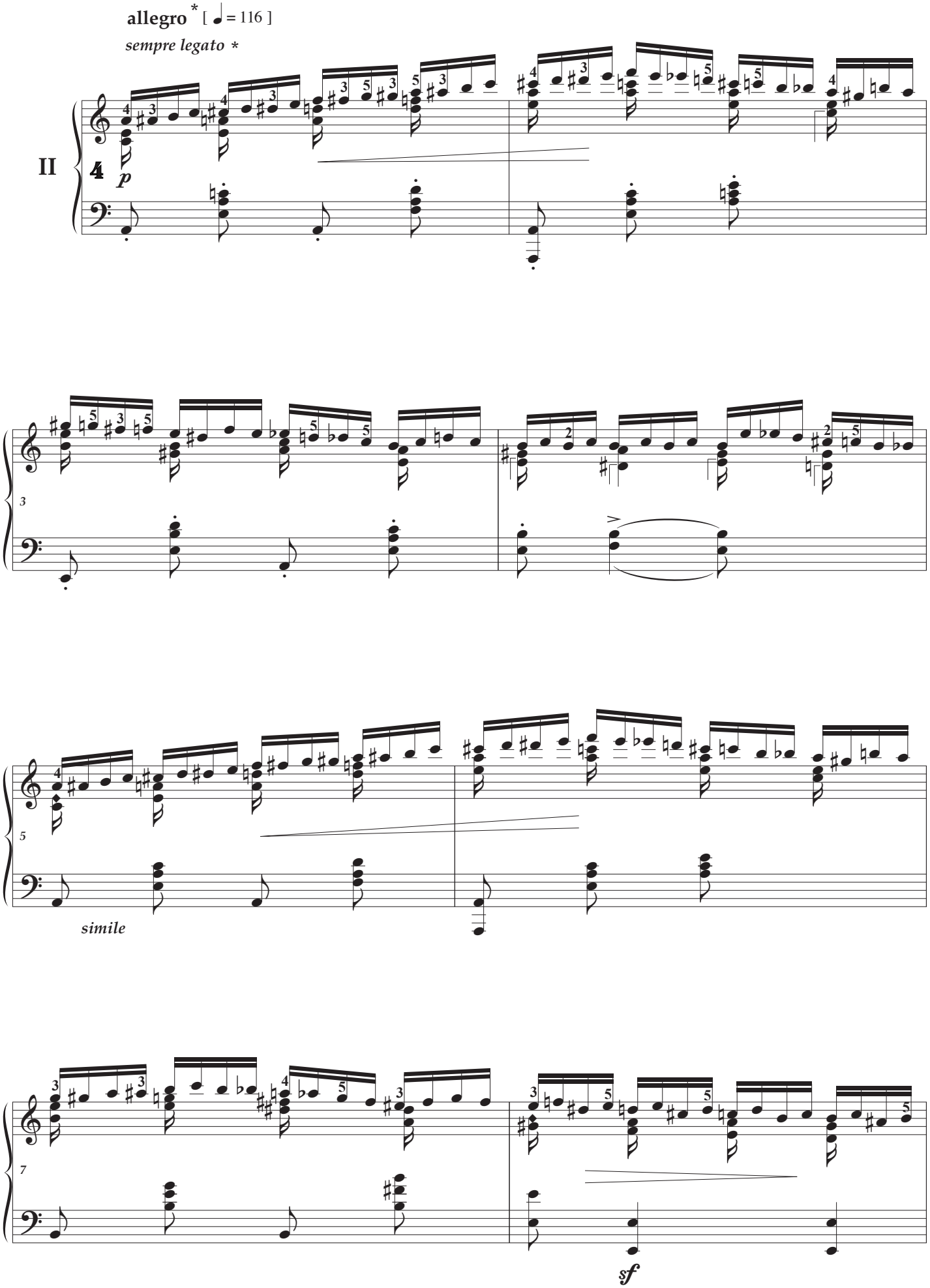

41
49
57
65
73

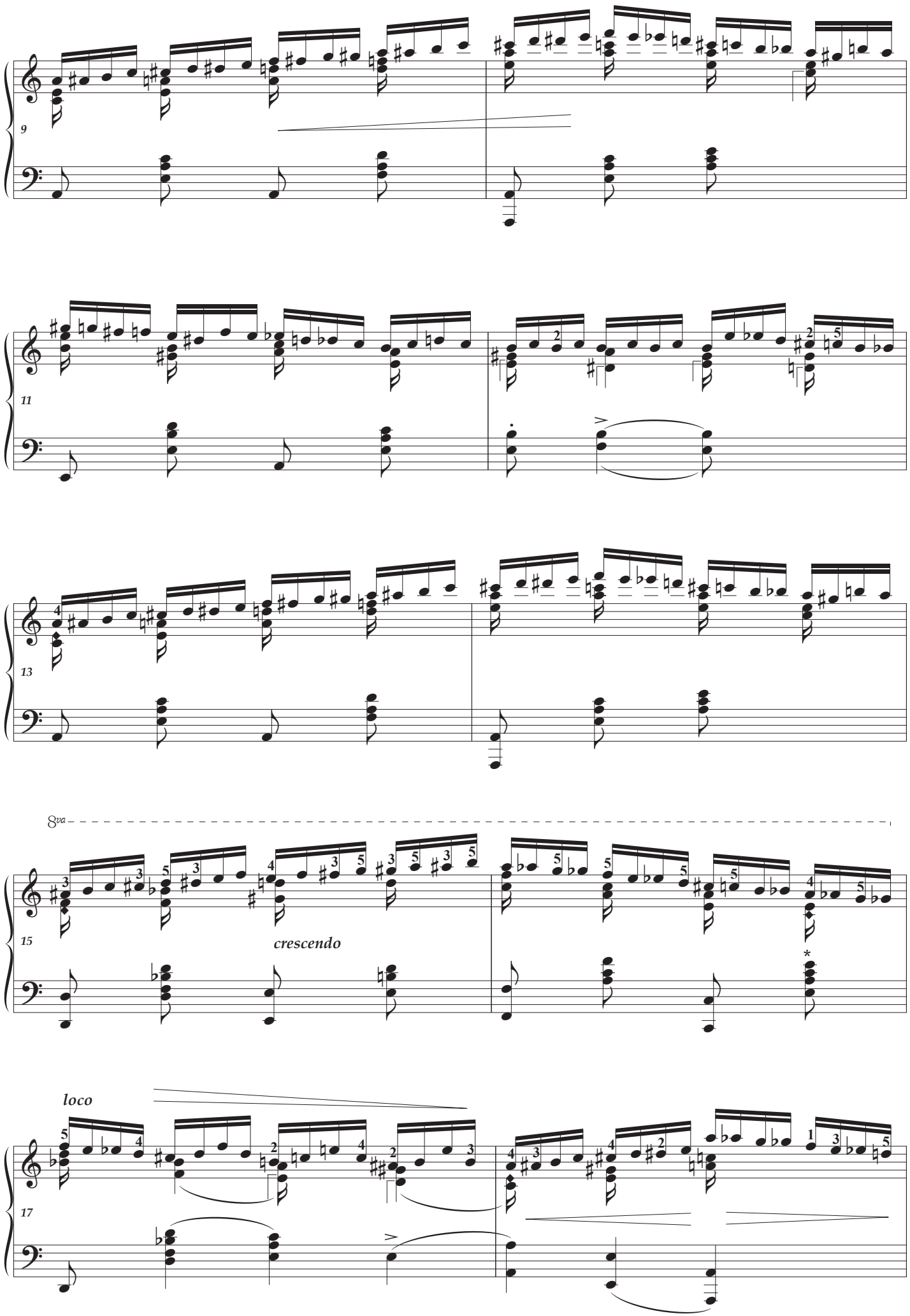
try playing the entire piece in this pattern displacing accentuation to contract rather than extend the hand

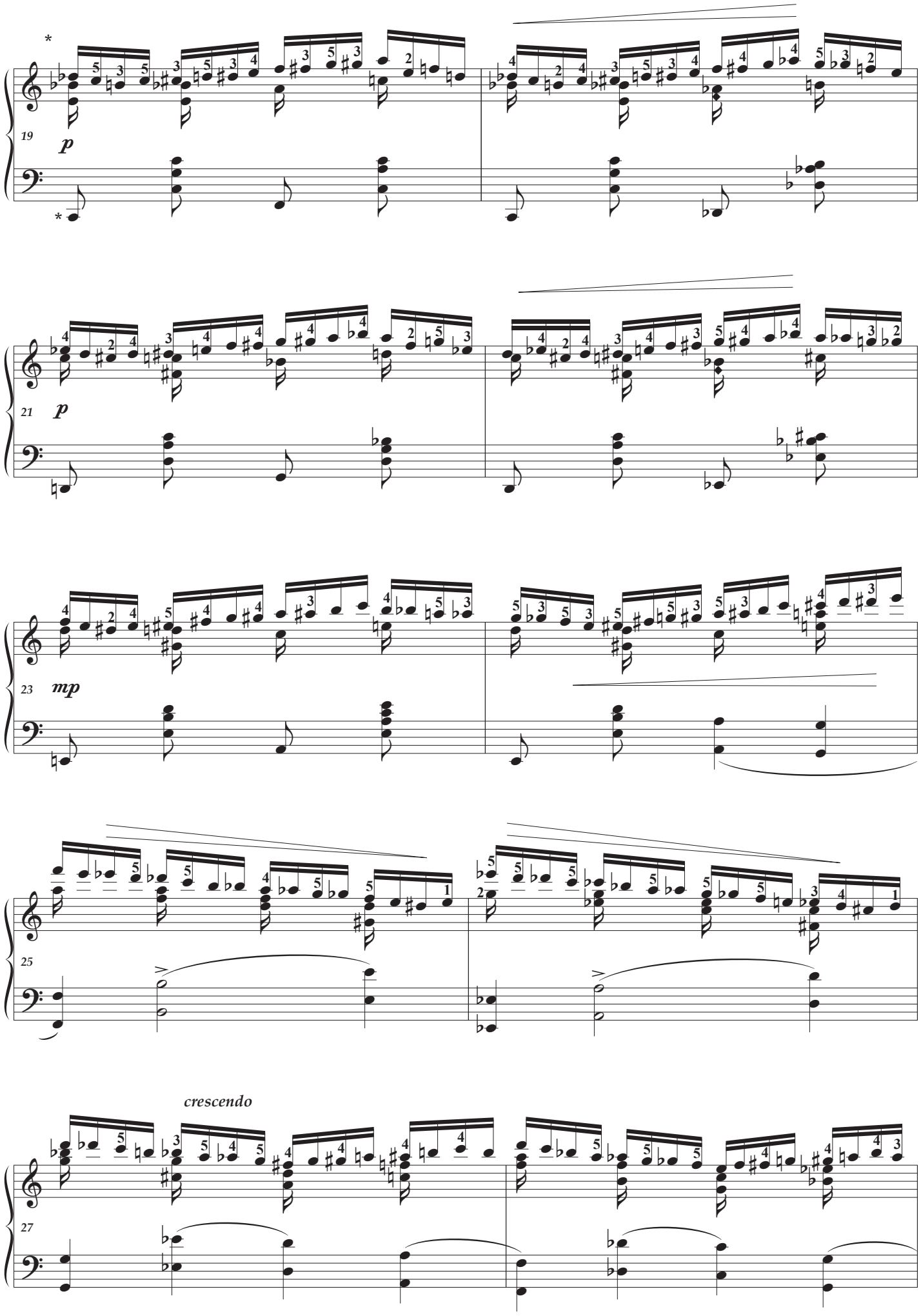


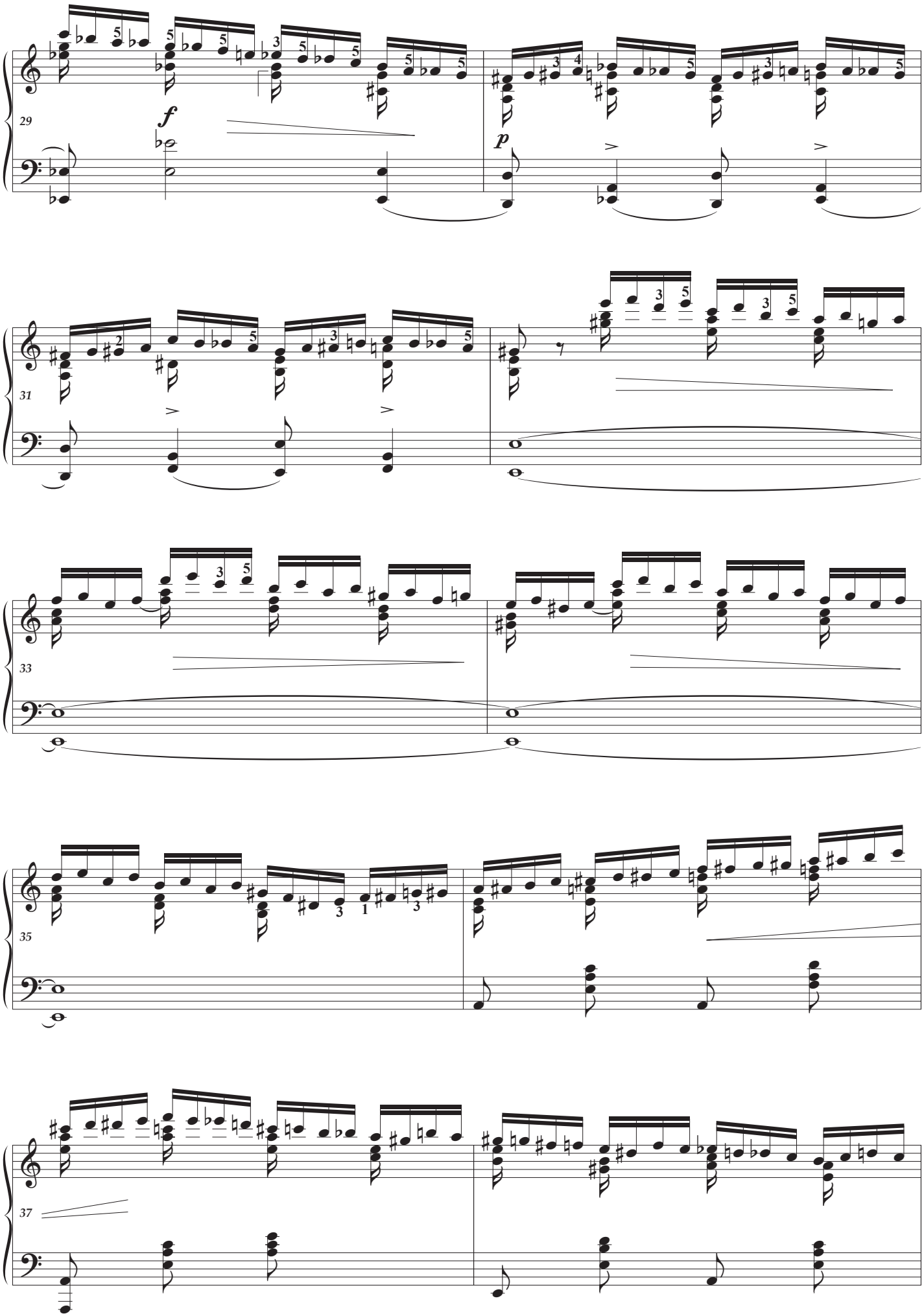
left hand finger substitution will visually help guiding the right — to be practised until the technique is automatic with eyes shut

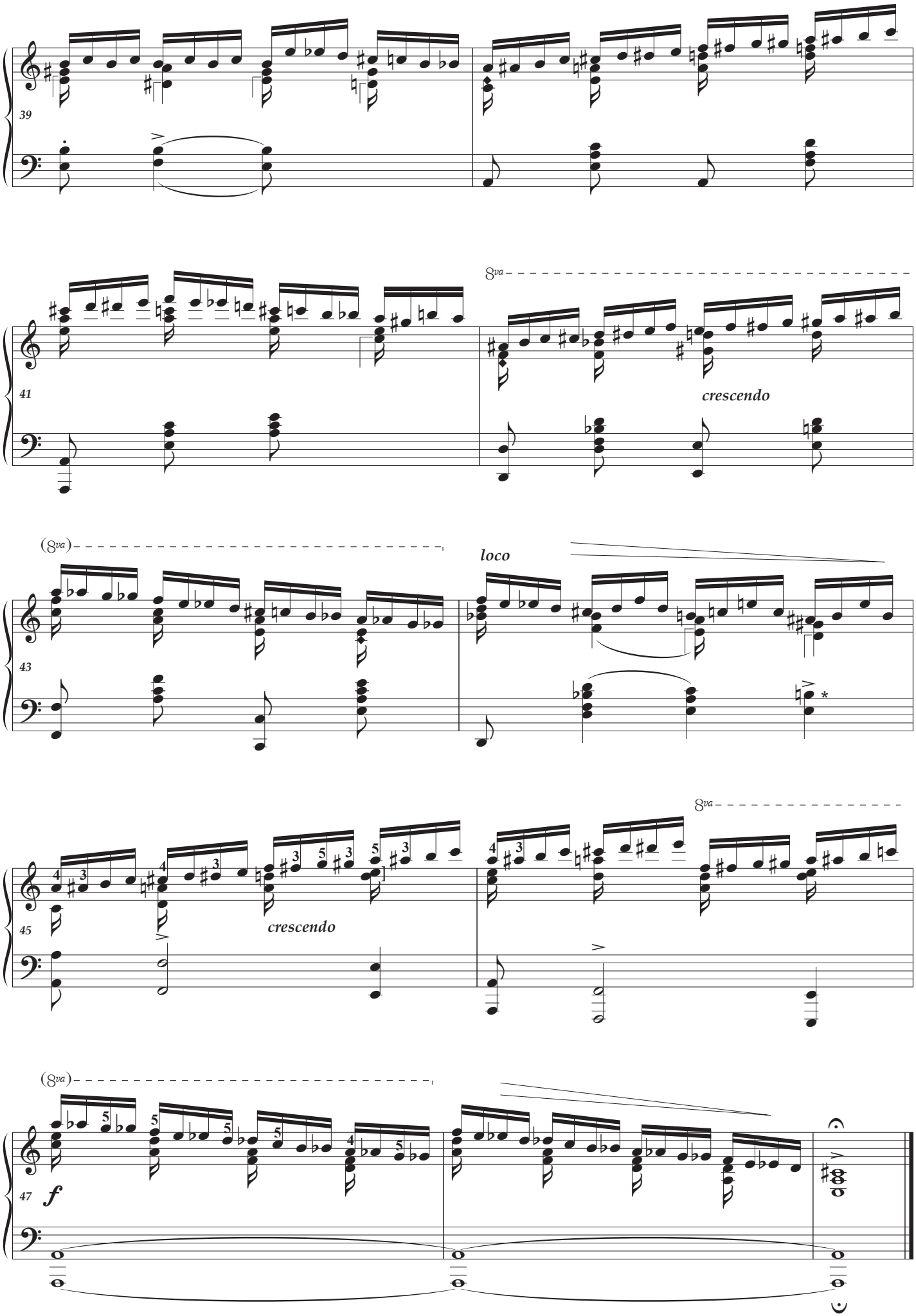



allegro * [♩ = 116]
sempre legato *
II
p
simile
sf

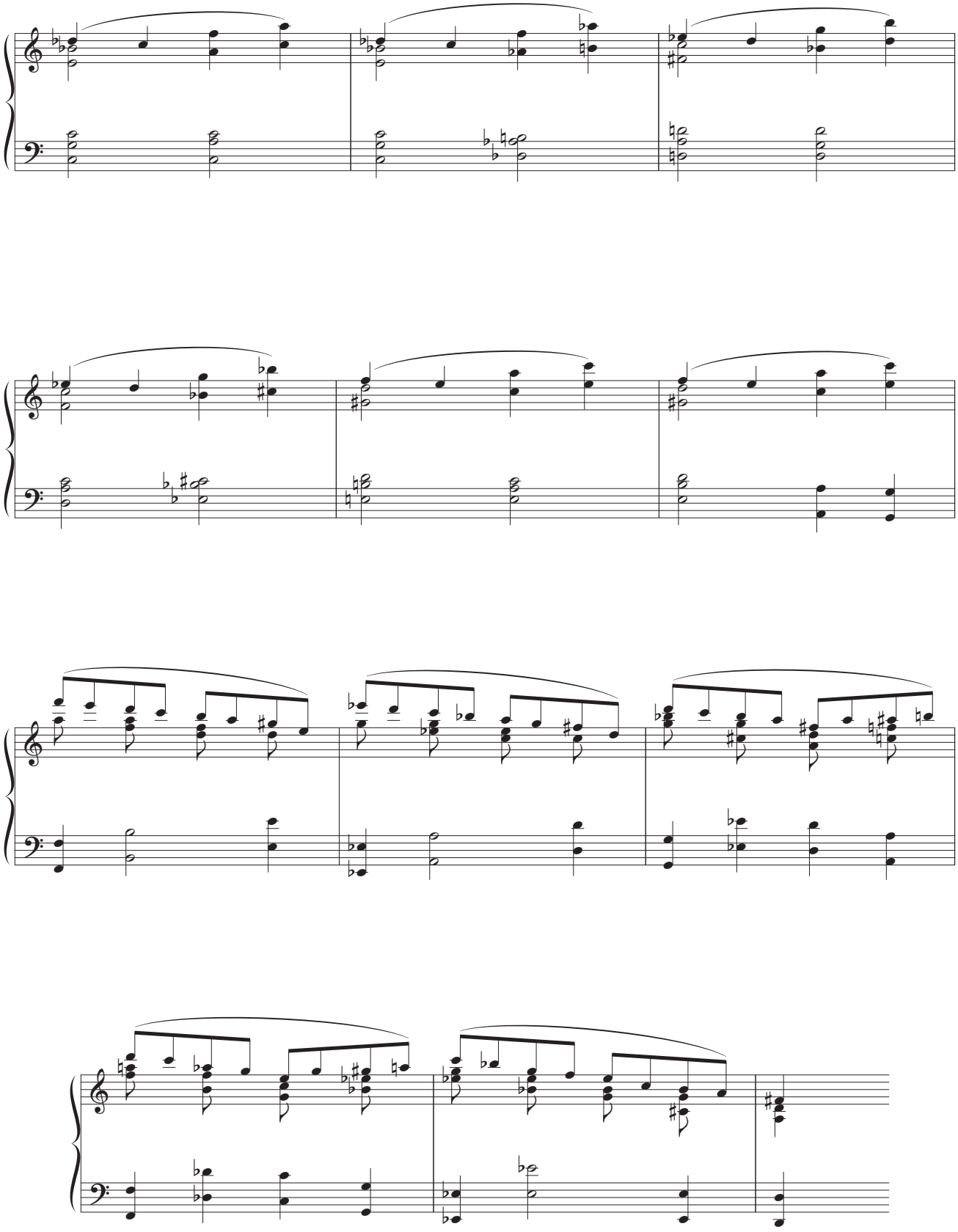

9
11
13
8va
15
crescendo
loco
17

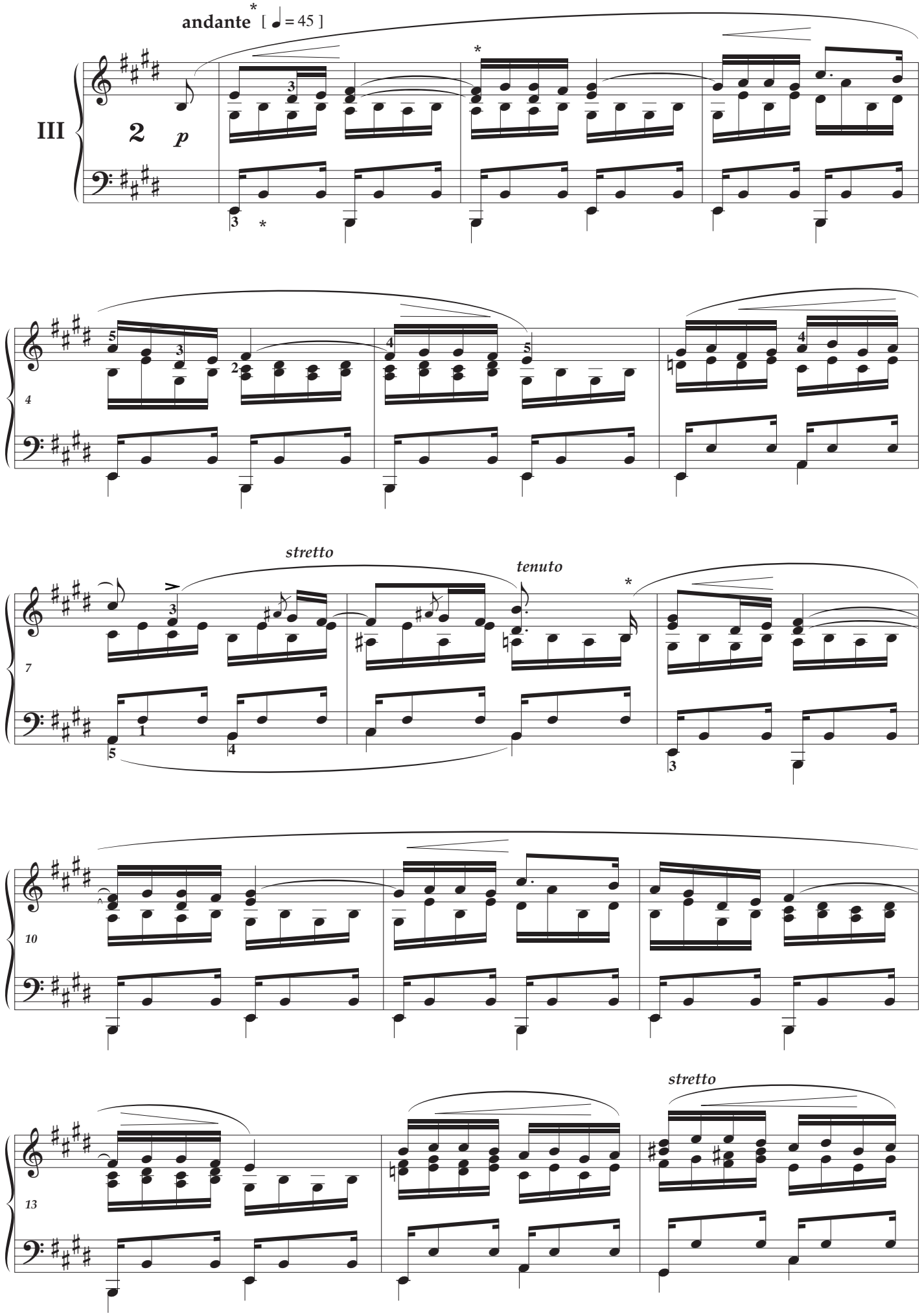

19
p
21
p
23
mp
25
crescendo
27

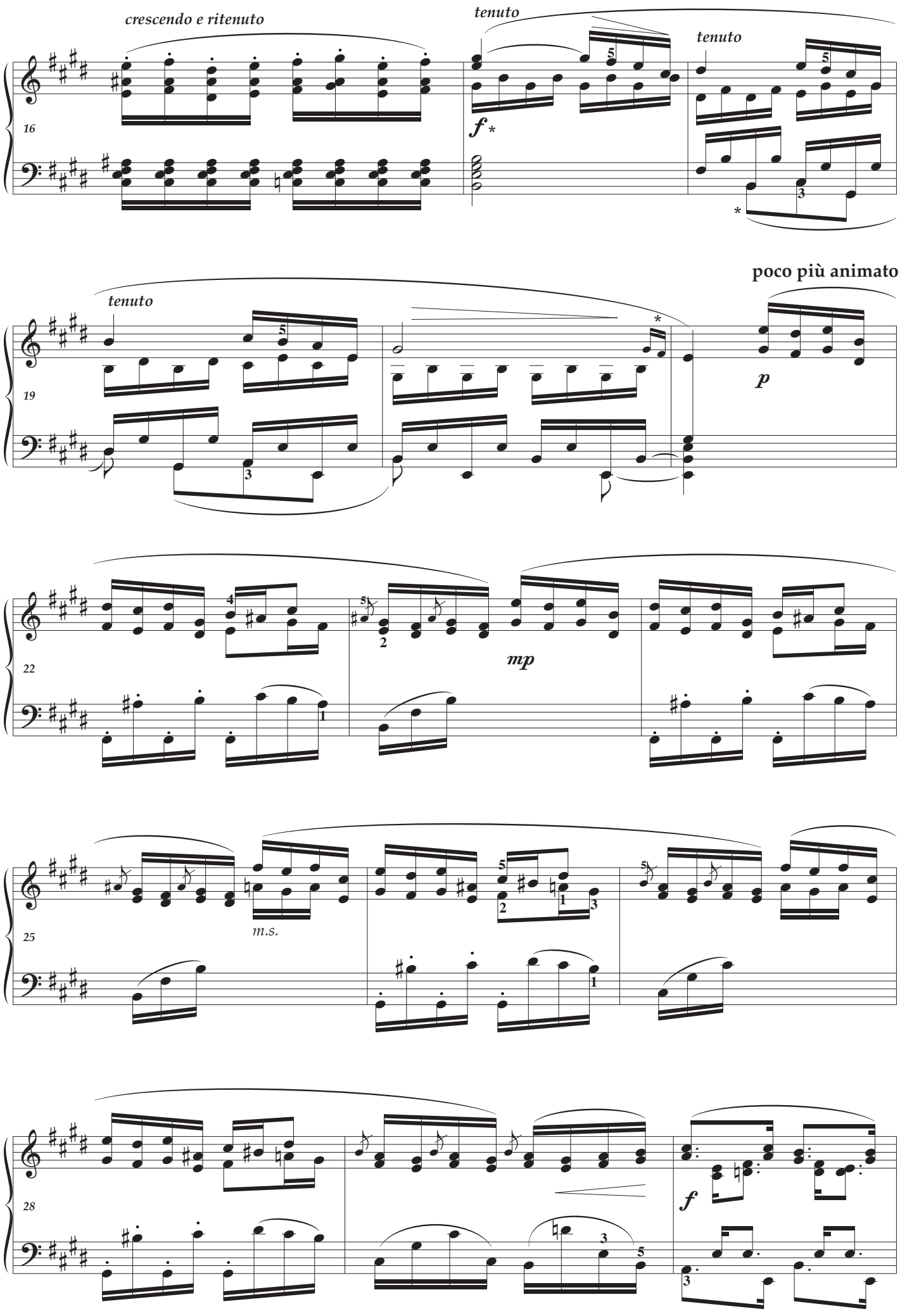

29
f
p
31
33
35
37

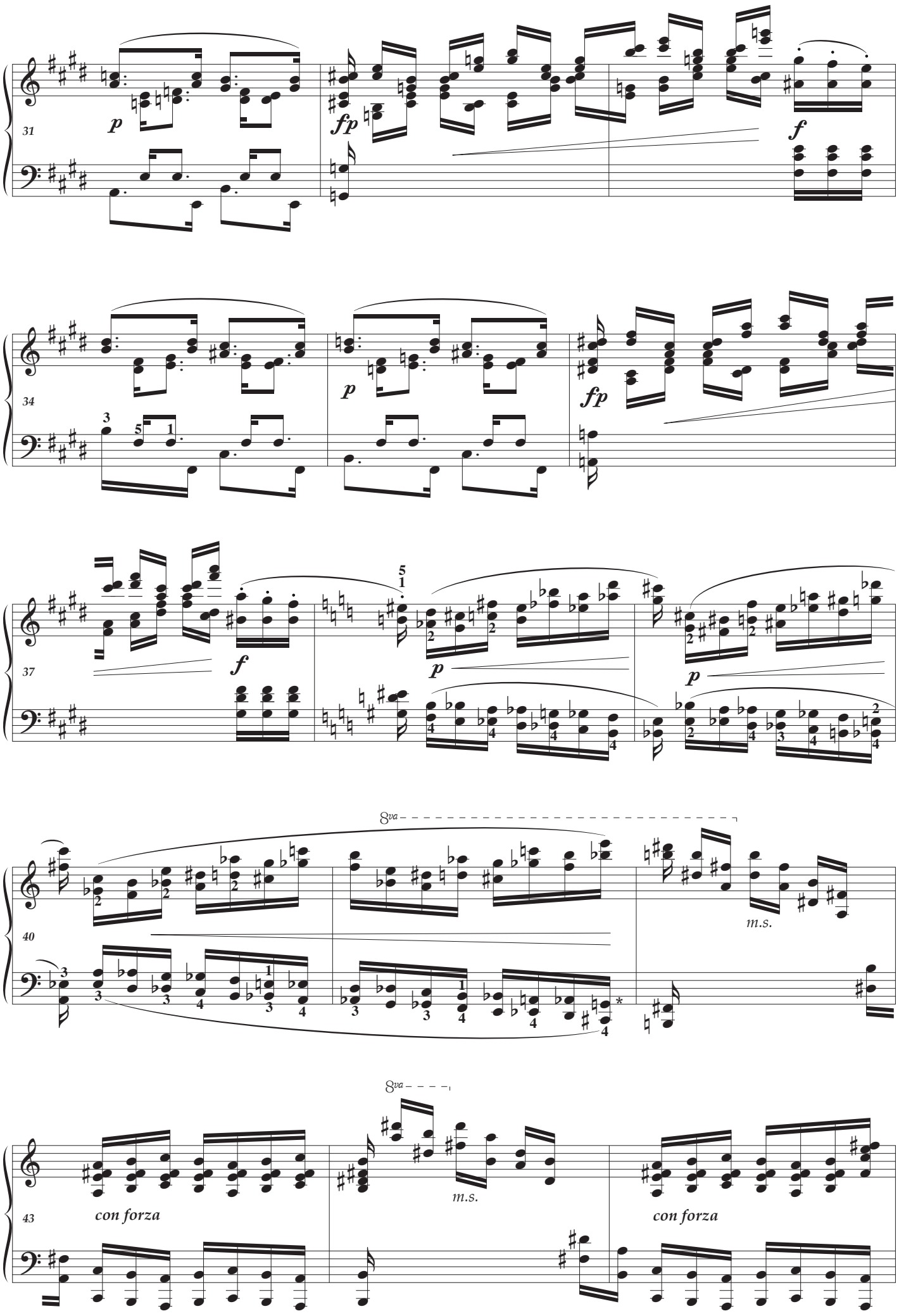

39
41
8va
crescendo
(8va)
loco
43
45
crescendo
8va
(8va)
47
f

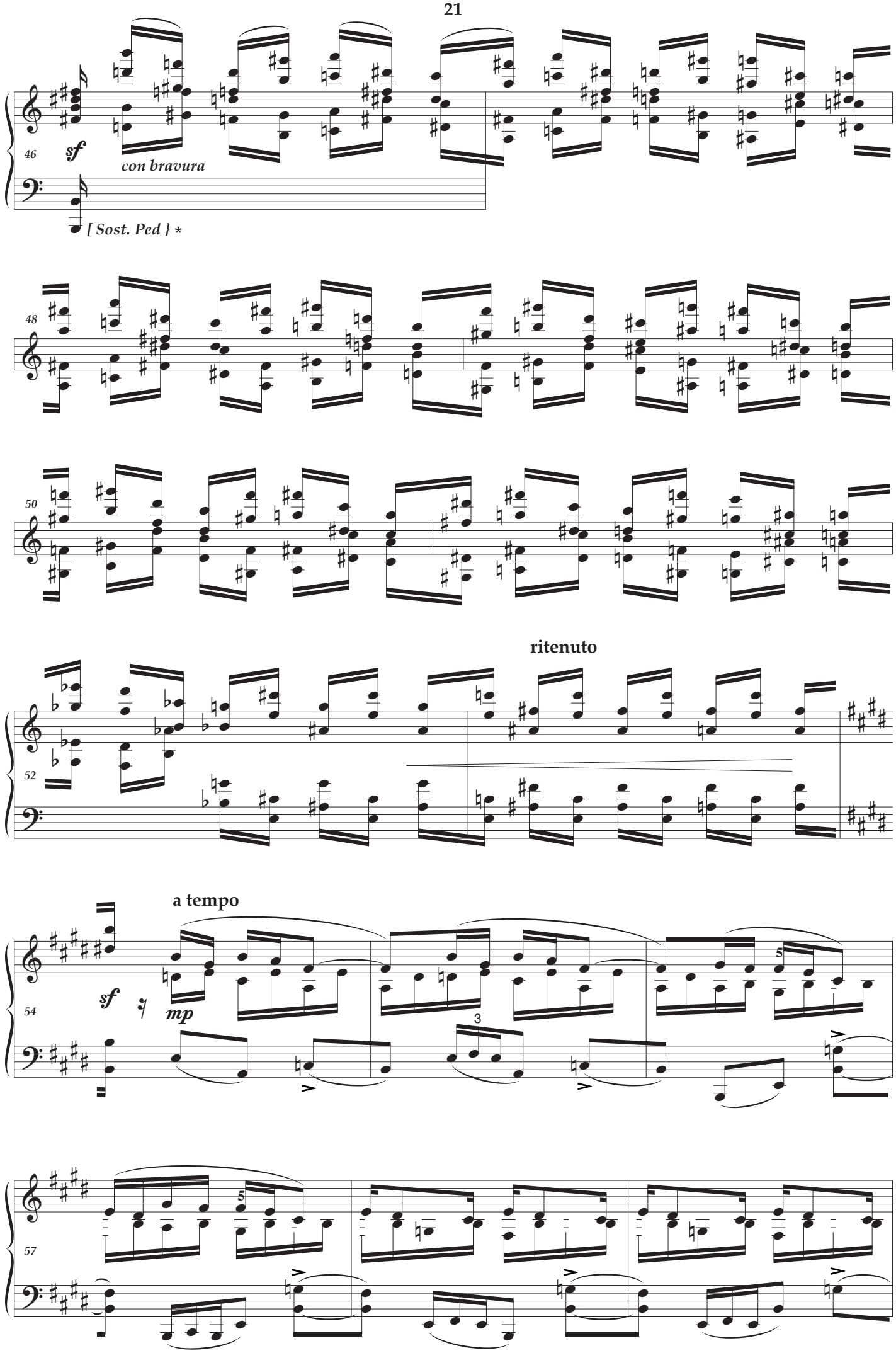
bars 19 — 30 in skeleton form

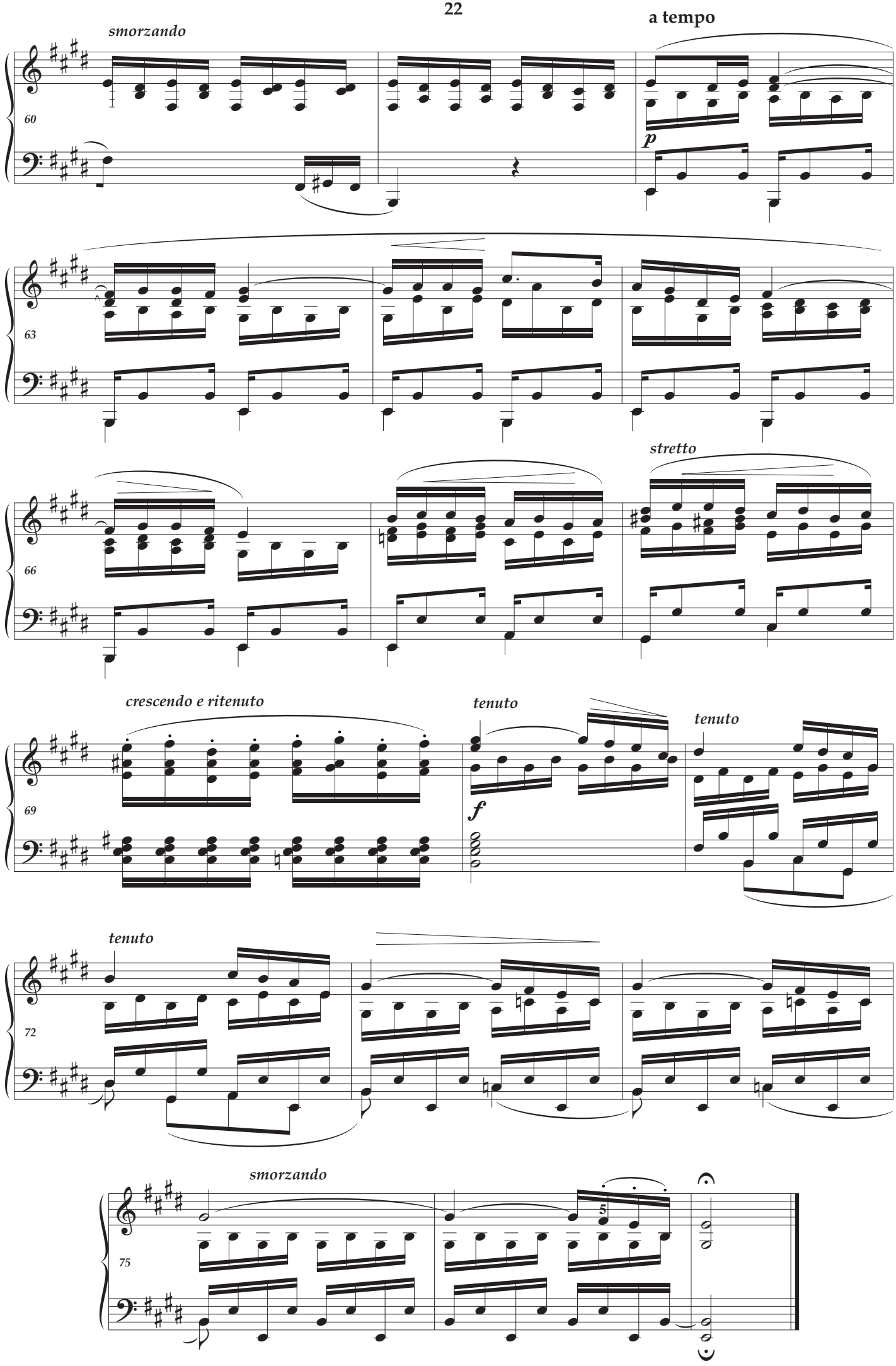



andante* [♩ = 45]
III
2
p
stretto
tenuto
stretto

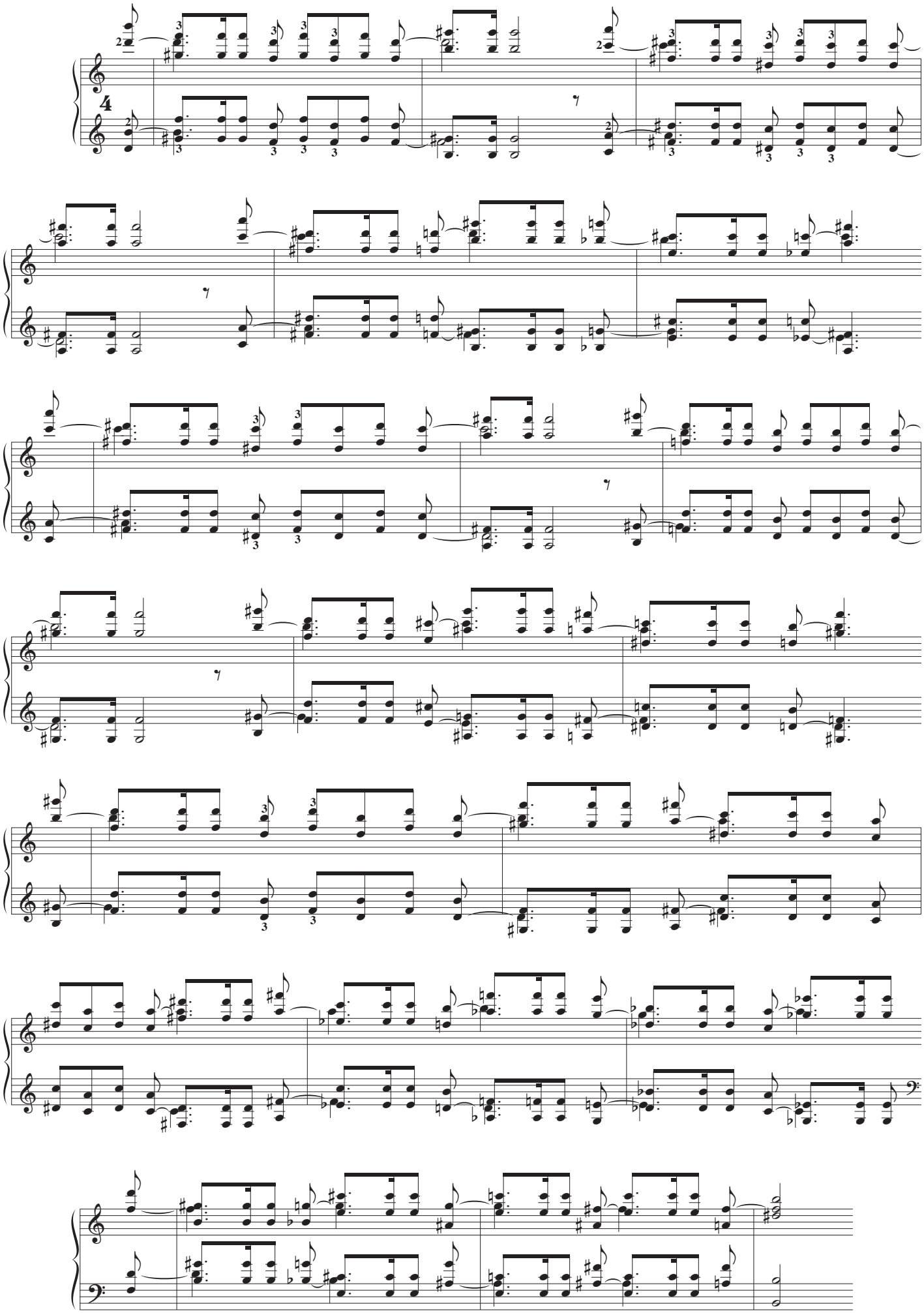

crescendo e ritenuto
tenuto
tenuto
16
f *
*
poco più animato
tenuto
19
p
22
mp
m.s.
25
28
f

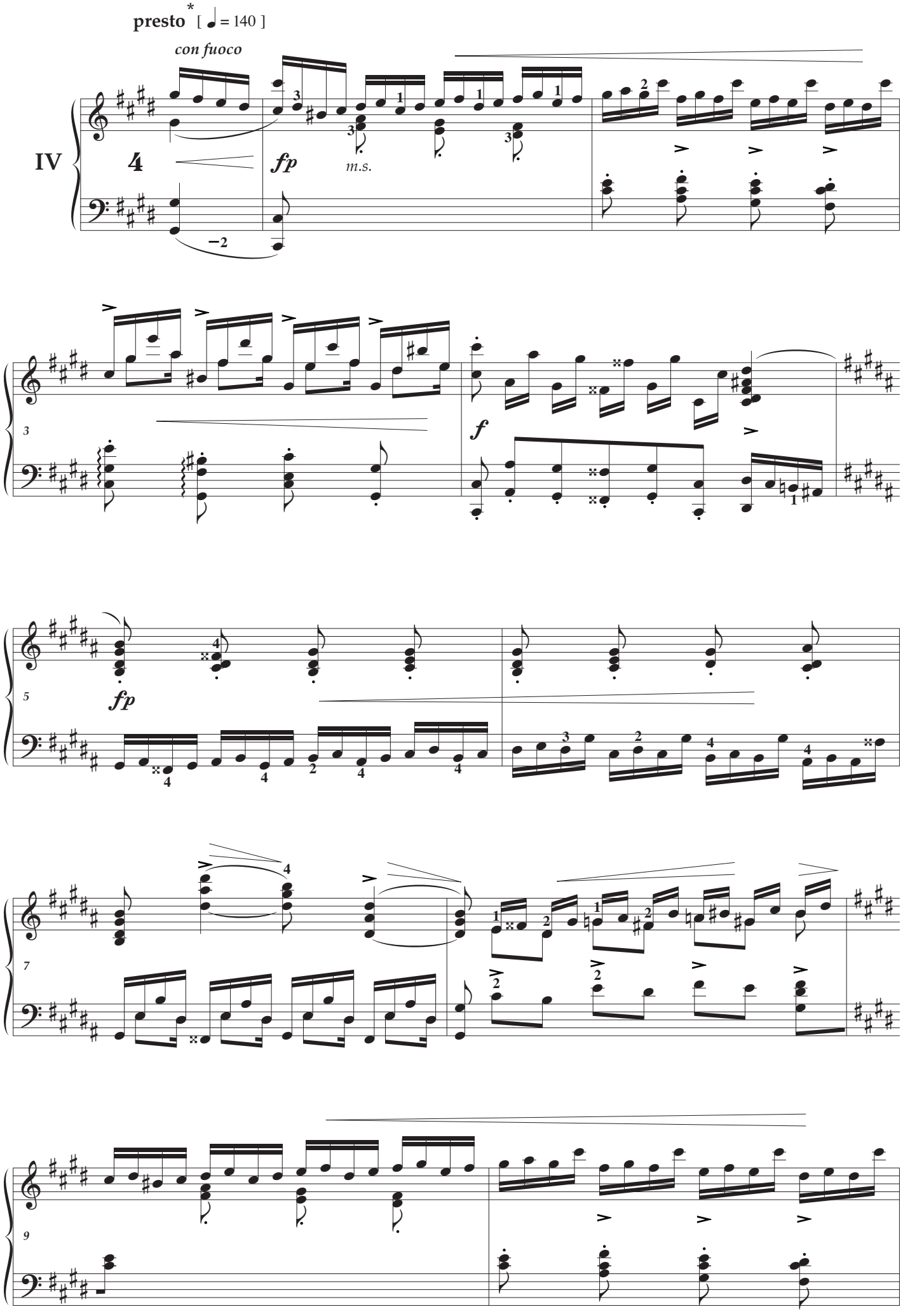

31
p
fp
f
34
p
fp
37
f
p
p
40
8va
m.s.
43
con forza
8va
m.s.
con forza

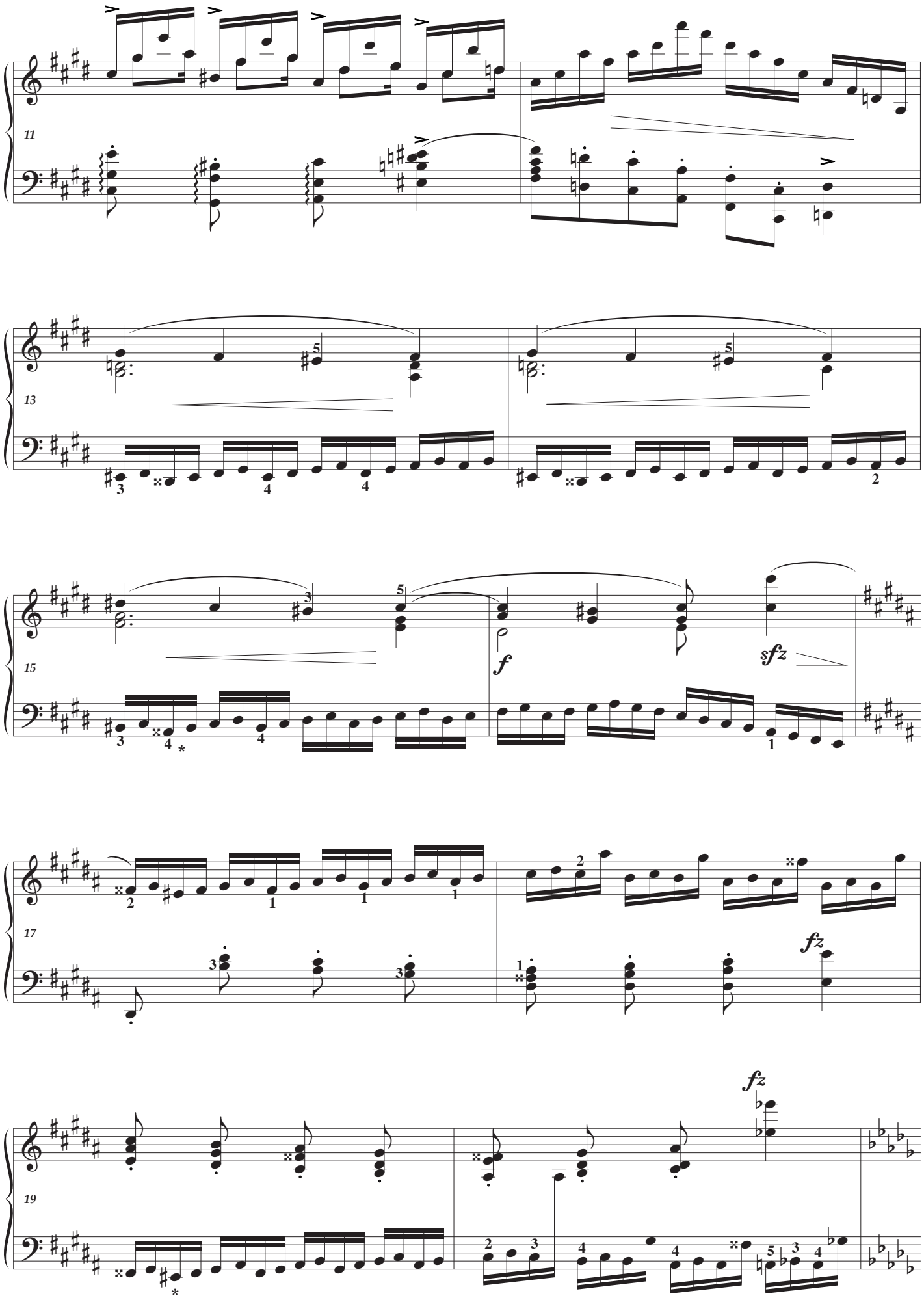

46
sf
con bravura
[Sost. Ped] *
48
50
52
ritenuto
a tempo
54
sf
mp
3
5
57
5

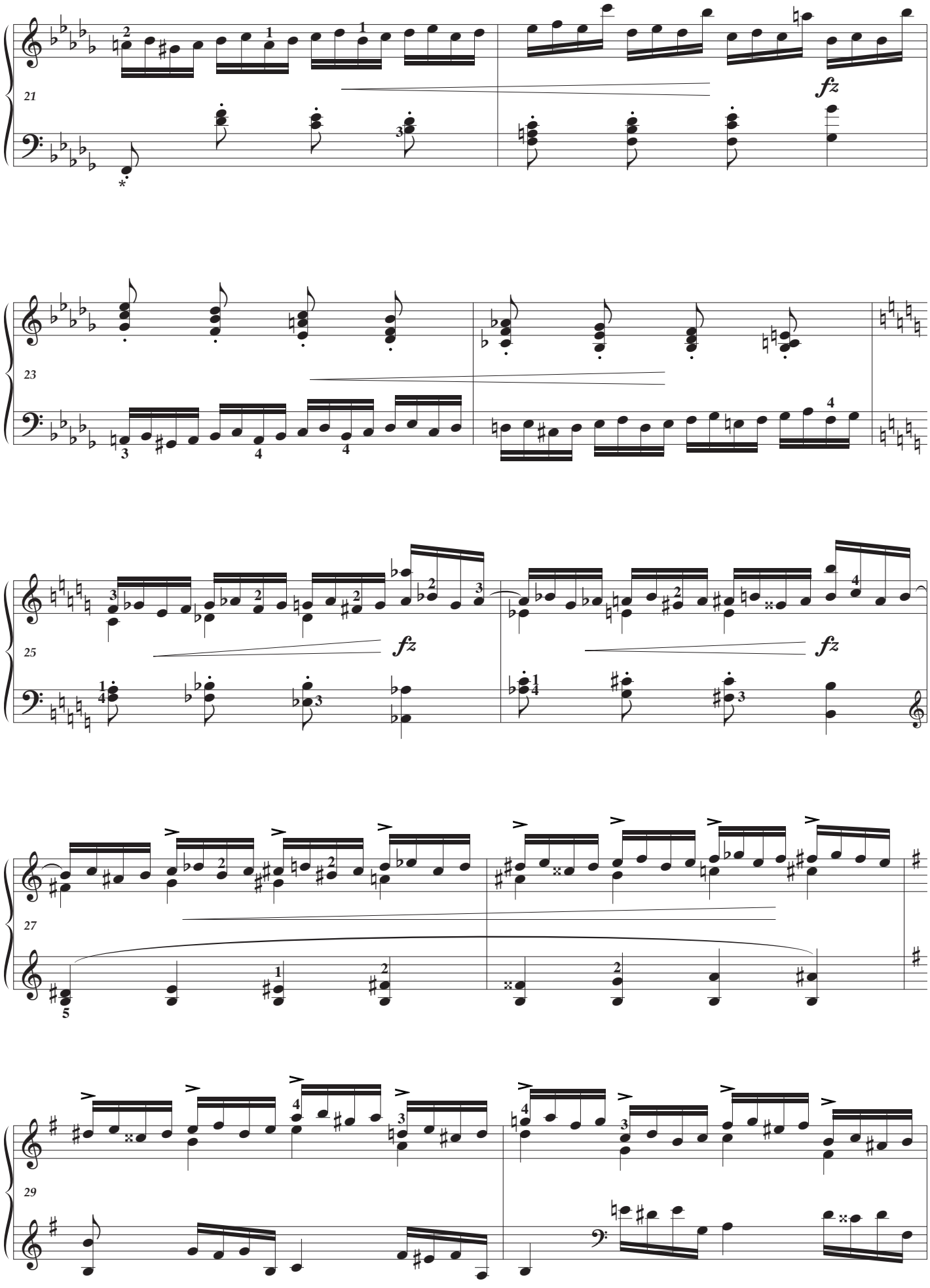

smorzando
a tempo
60
p
63
66
stretto
crescendo e ritenuto
tenuto
tenuto
69
f
tenuto
72
smorzando
75
5

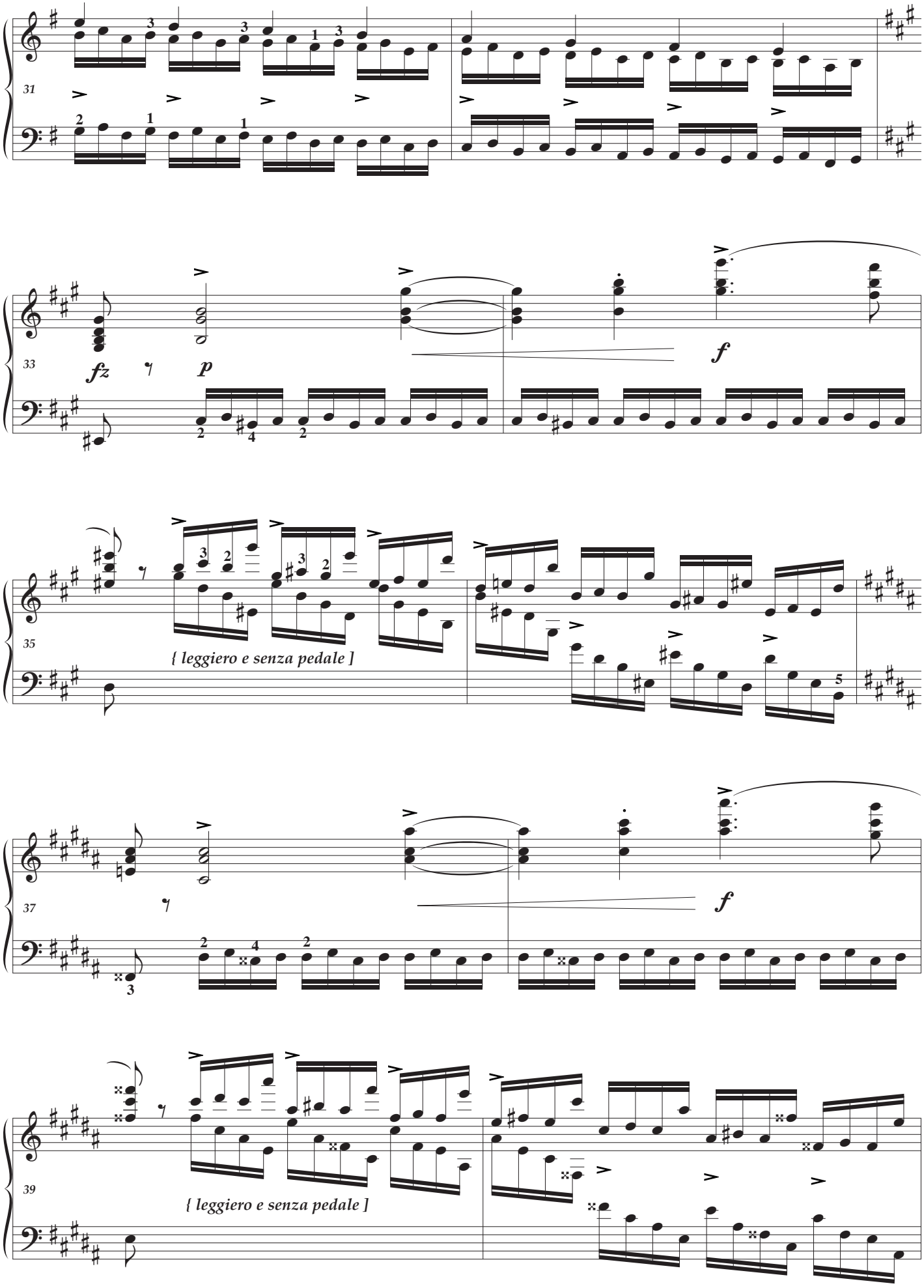
preparatory exercise for **46 — 54**

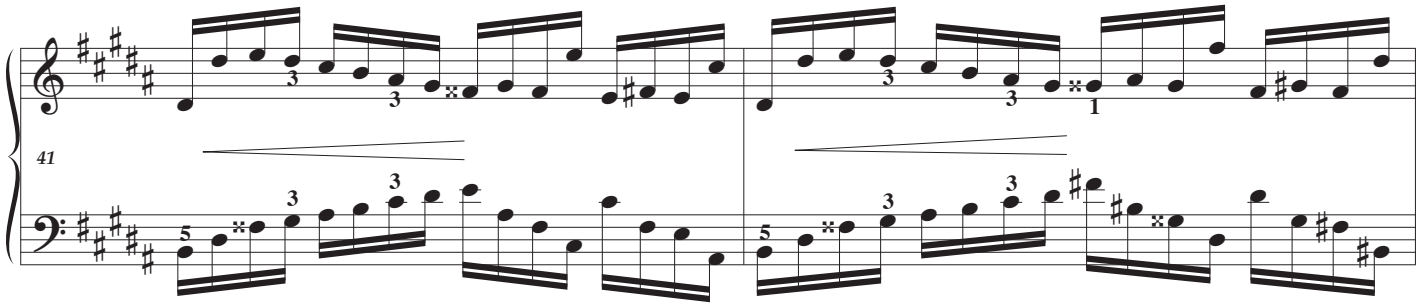



presto * [♩ = 140]
con fuoco
IV
4
fp
m.s.
3
f
5
fp
7
9


11
13
15
f
sfz
17
fz
19
fz


21
fz
23
25
fz
fz
27
29


31
33
fz
p
f
35
{ leggiero e senza pedale]
37
f
39
{ leggiero e senza pedale]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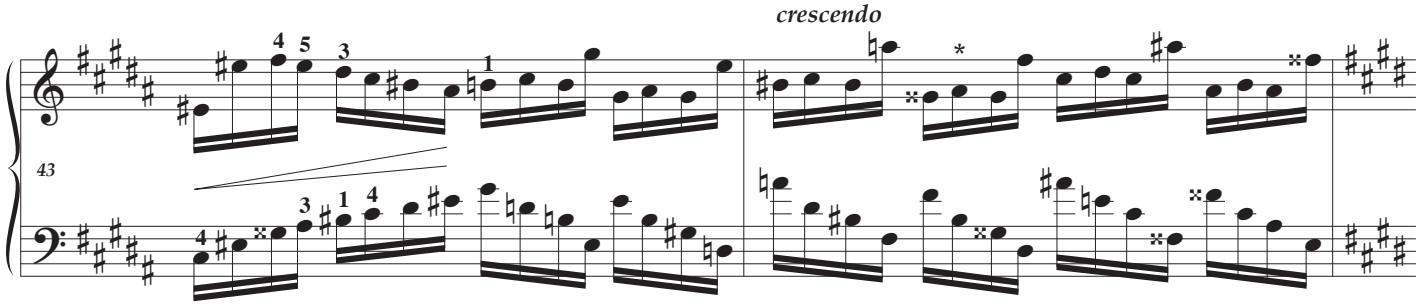
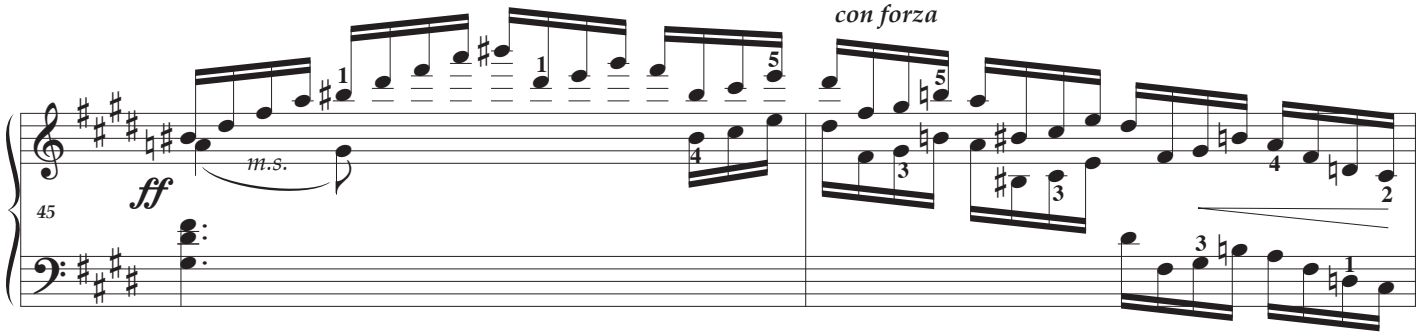
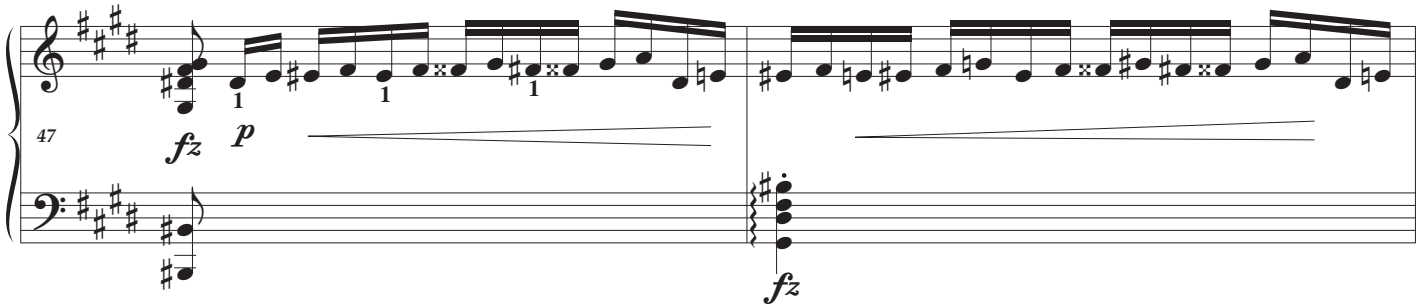
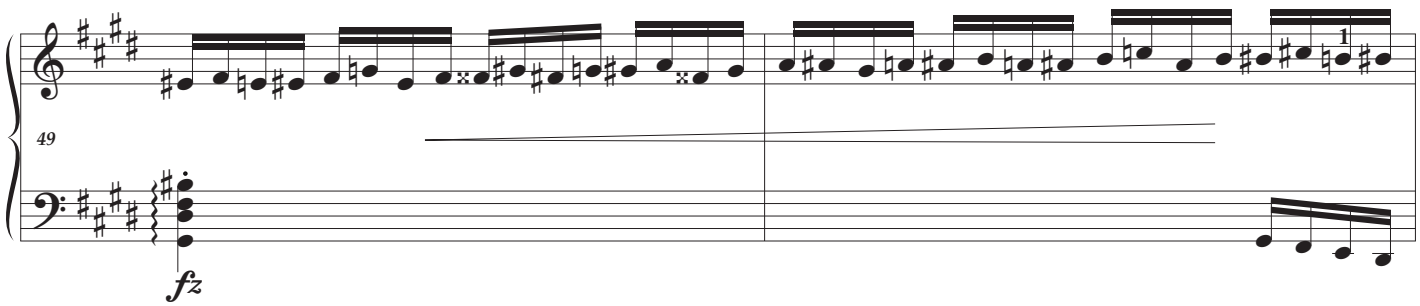
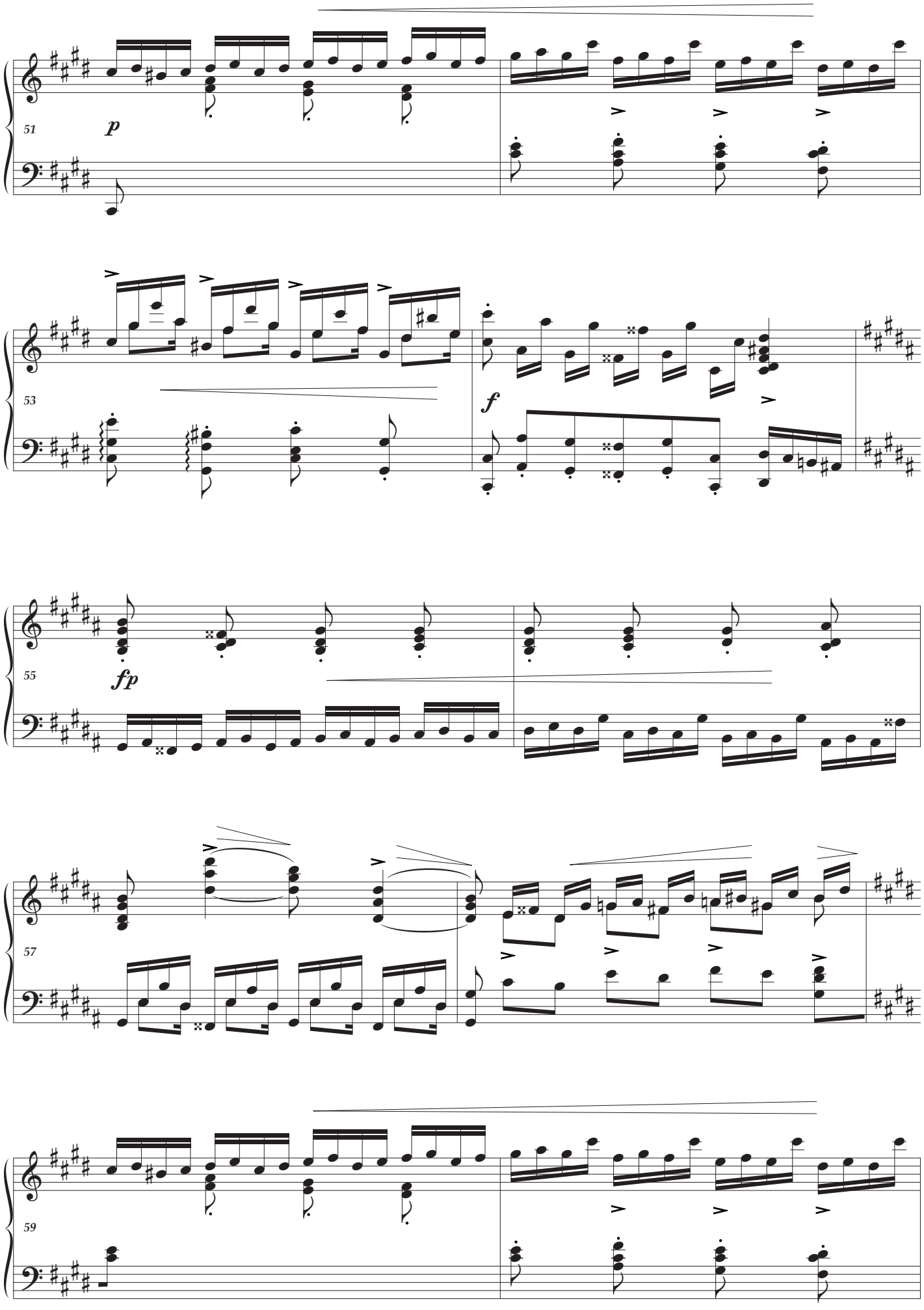
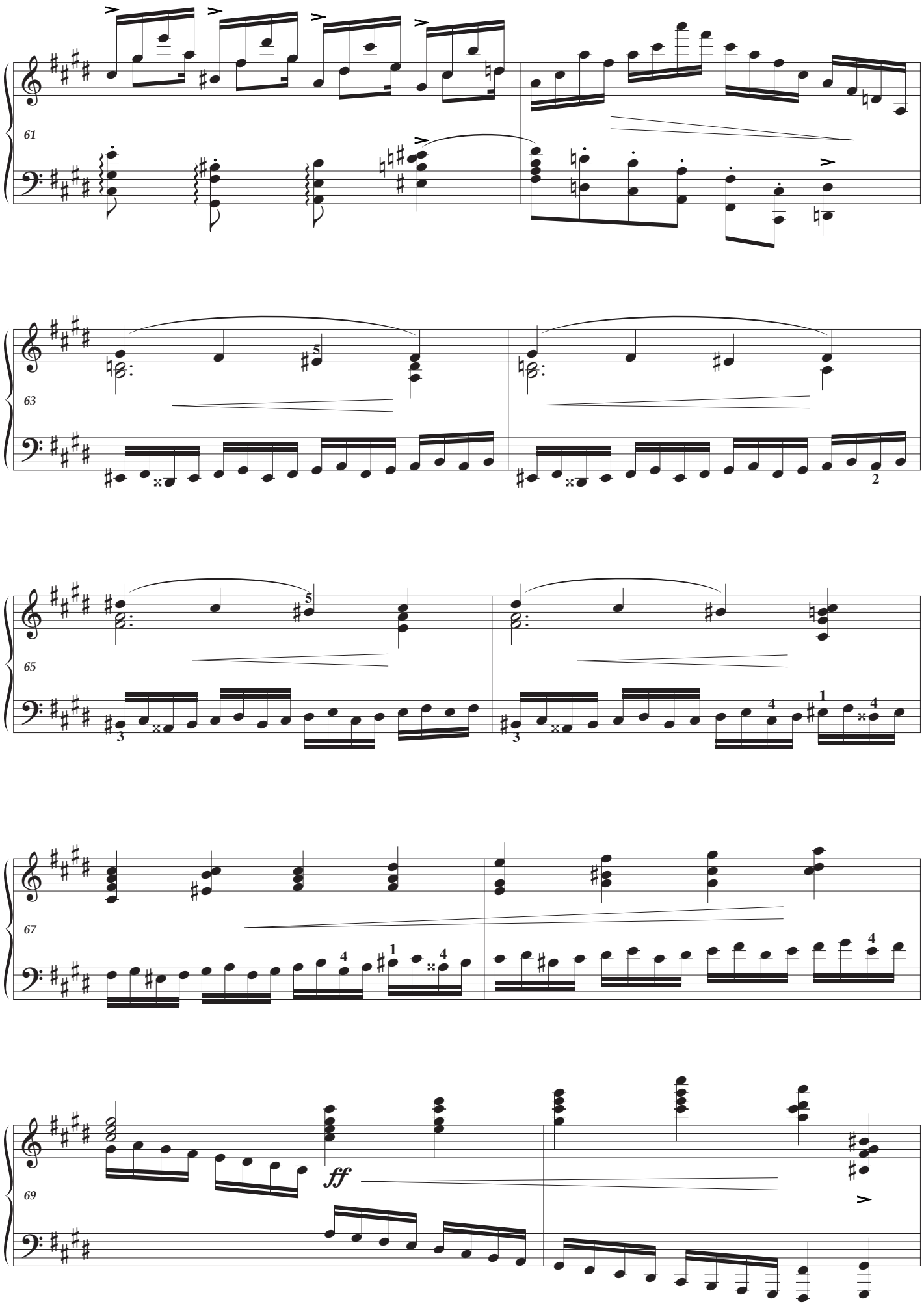

crescendo
43


con forza
ff
m.s.
45


47
fz
p
fz


49
fz


51
p
53
f
55
fp
57
59


61
63
65
67
69
ff

sempre più fuoco

71 *fz* *ff*

73 *ff*

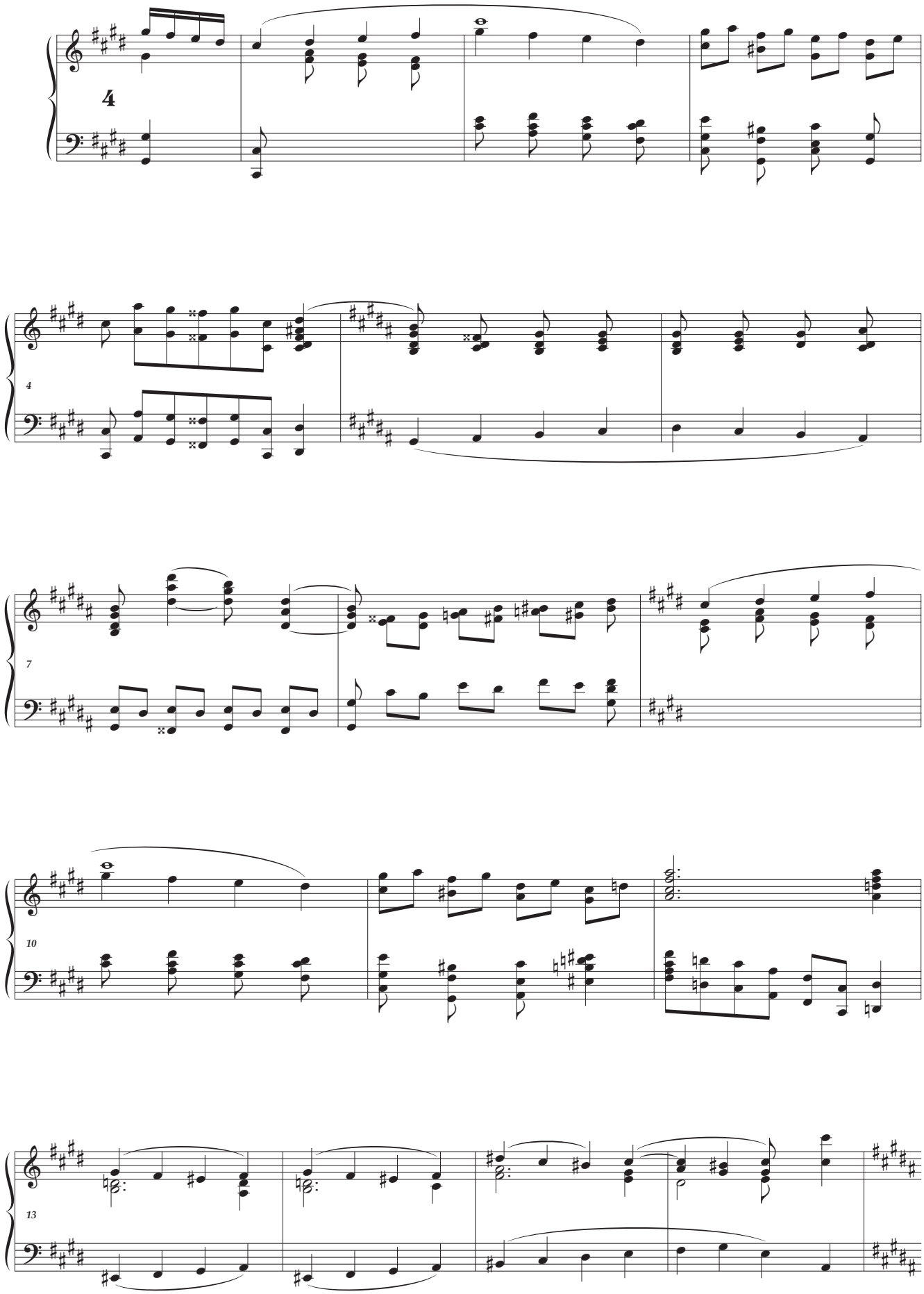
75 *[meno f]*

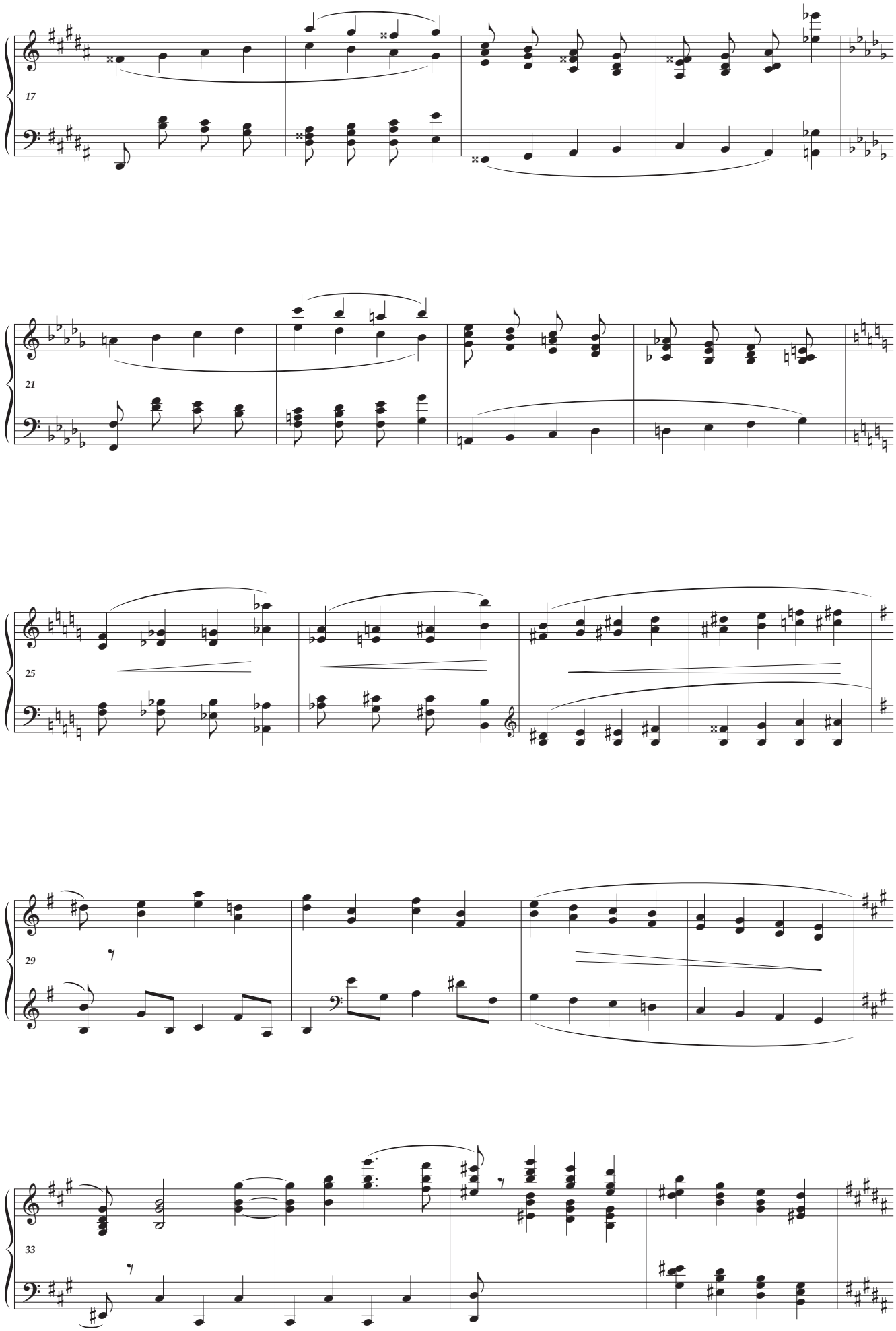
77

79 *m.d.*

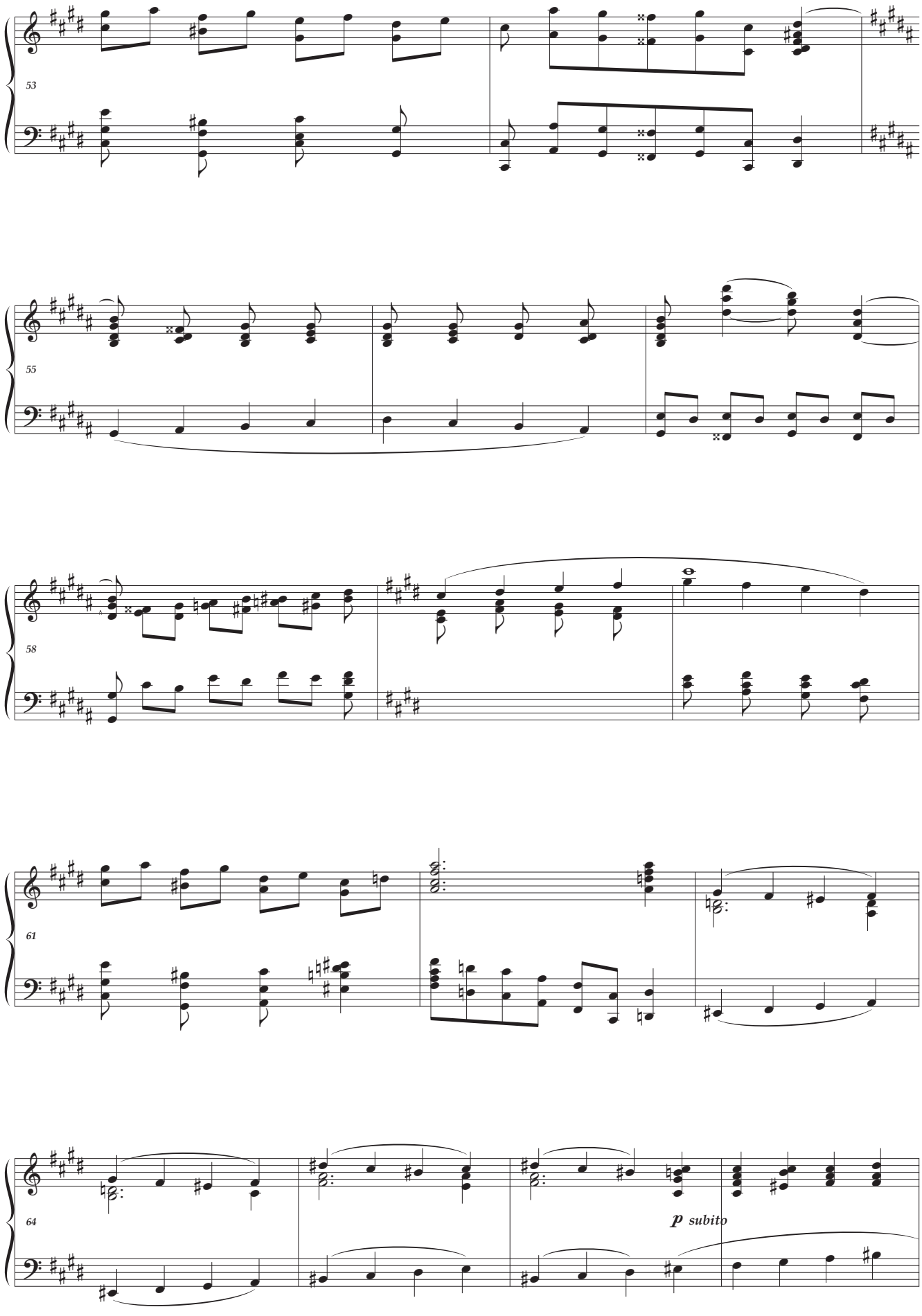
81 *ff*

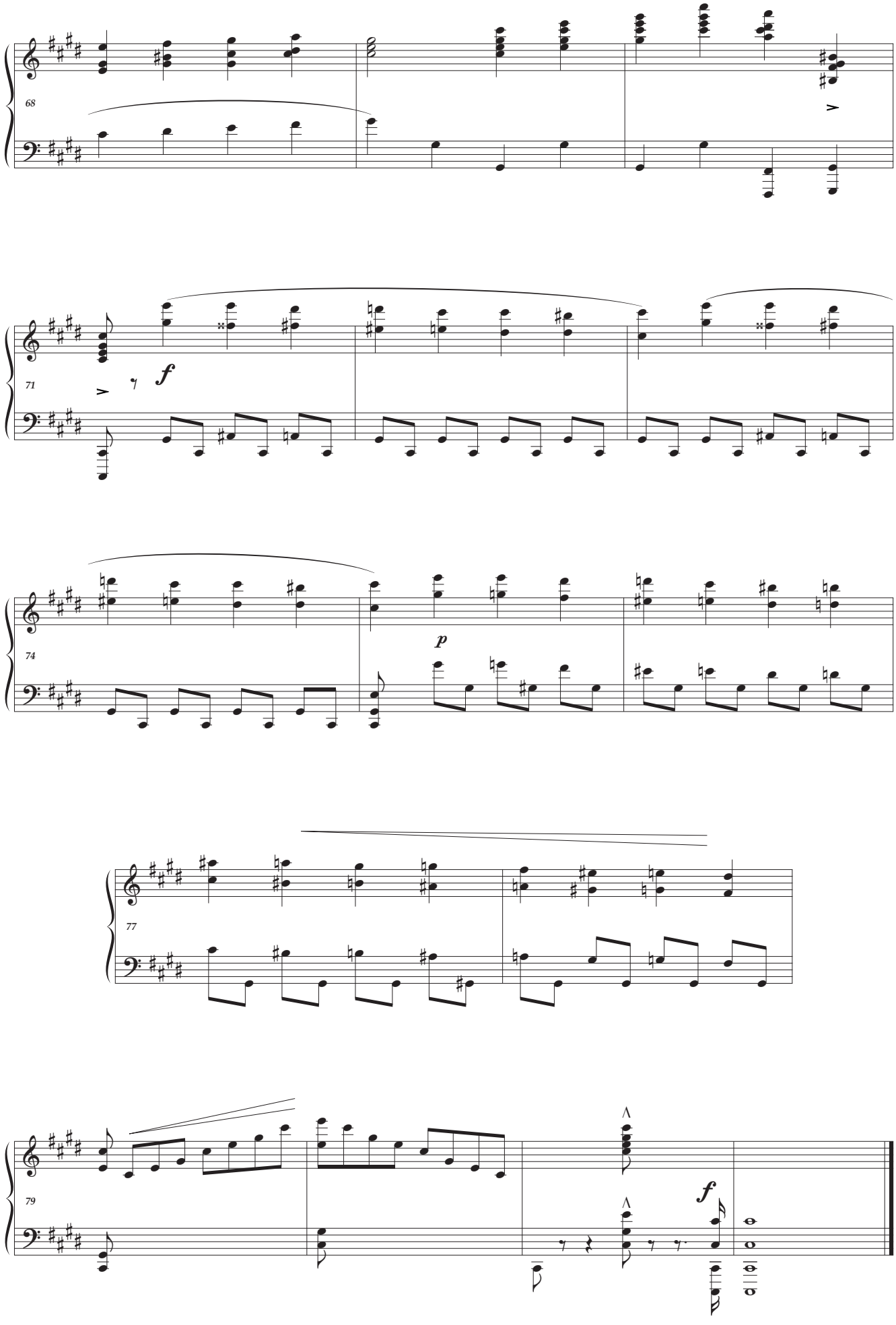
the entire study in skeleton form



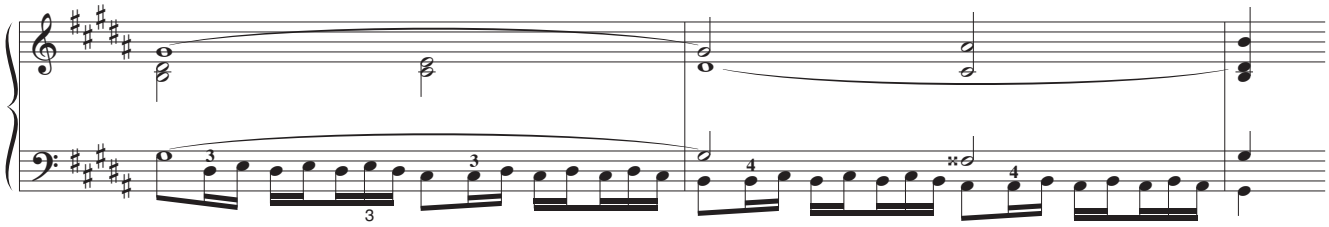

17
21
25
29
33

37
41
m.s.
44
47
50

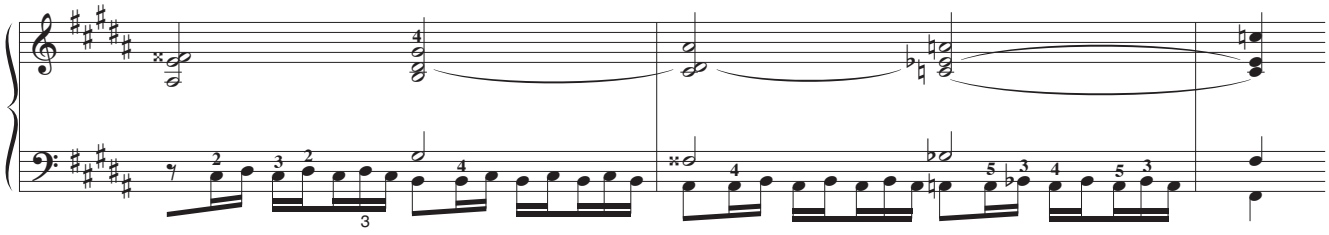

53
55
58
61
64
p subito


68
71
f
74
p
77
79
f

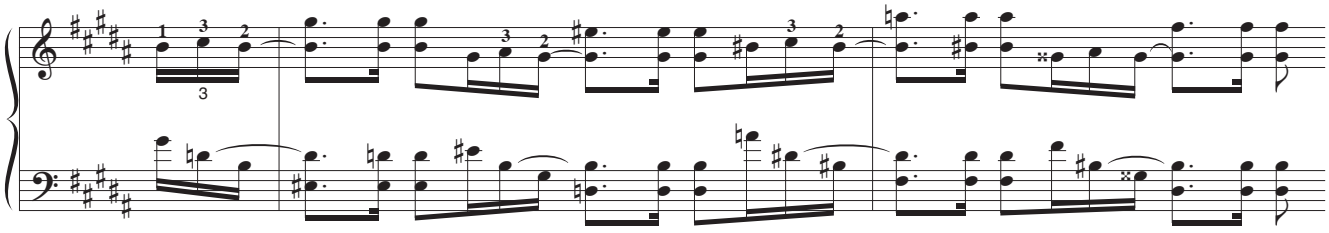
an exercise for bar 6

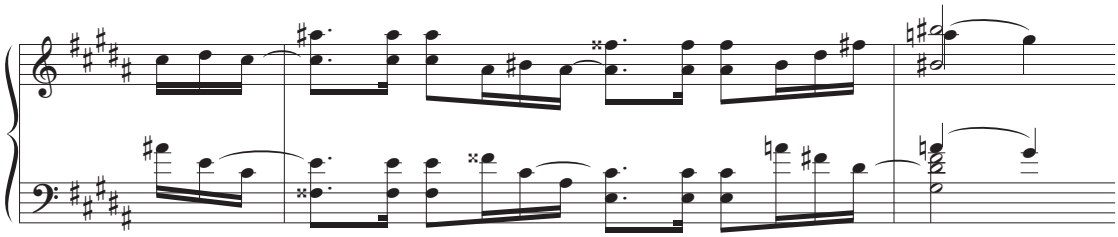


an exercise for bar 20



an exercise for bars 43 — 44





Appendix

Comments and afterthoughts

- phrasing, dynamics and accentuation are not a strict copy from any particular source
- The composer disliked giving titles, and those that have gained favour over the years are often quite inappropriate.

Étude N° 1 in C major page **1**

Curiously the set begins without that familiar Chopinesque subtlety which we know and love, and could almost pass for the work of any of his contemporaries such as Clementi, Cramer, Czerny, Heller or Henselt. However, the extended chordal configuration over four octaves provide much physical satisfaction and there are a few harmonic *frissons* along the way.

Guard against over-practising and using too much permanent force. To help grasp its form, on page 9 I have included a skeleton omitting the perpetual semiquavers). In addition to recommending the Cortot edition preparatory exercises, to achieve a more contracted hand position, another has been added with an alternative rhythmic approach on page 11.

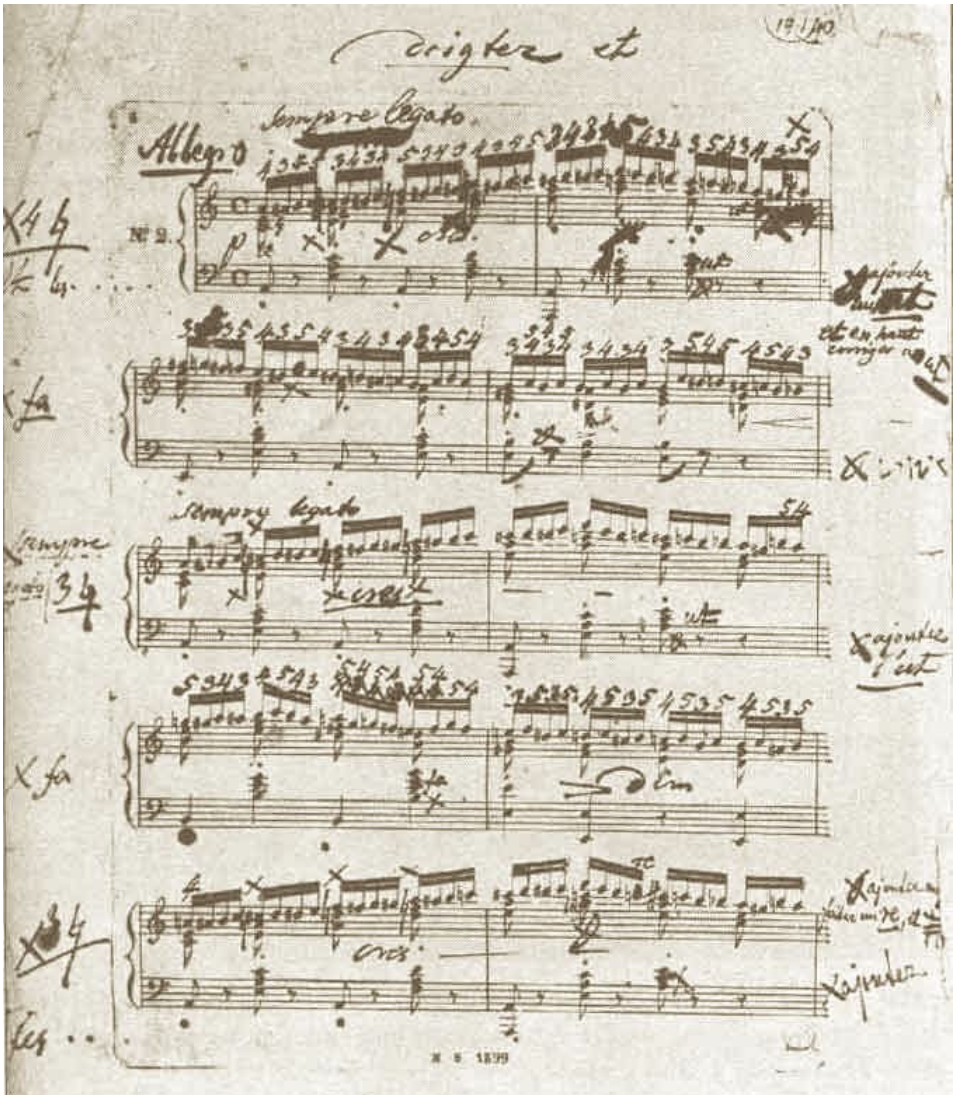
- most editions give ♩ = 176
- **1** and similar passages have been slightly modified
- **29** C is an alternative reading
- **31-40** editorial fingering reflecting the difficulty of playing this passage on a modern piano
- **60** some editions give E♮

Étude N° 2 in A minor page **12**

A dramatic contrast in dynamics and style — this delicate work is undoubtedly the most difficult of the 24; apart from achieving a light, precise and elegant touch with the weaker fingers, there is a problem of stamina. I make no apology for proposing the omission of a few strategic notes (diamond-headed), which will render the study slightly less punishing on a modern piano. It would seem superfluous to advise against over-practising.

- most editions give ♩ = 144
- it can be instructive to vary chromatic technique between *legato* and *leggiero*
- **16** modification of text
- **19** some editions add an octave above, perhaps in error
- **19-30** the chord progression is reproduced without chromatics on page 16
- **44** note the subtle difference with **17**

an early Kistner edition with
fingering in Chopin's hand c. 1833

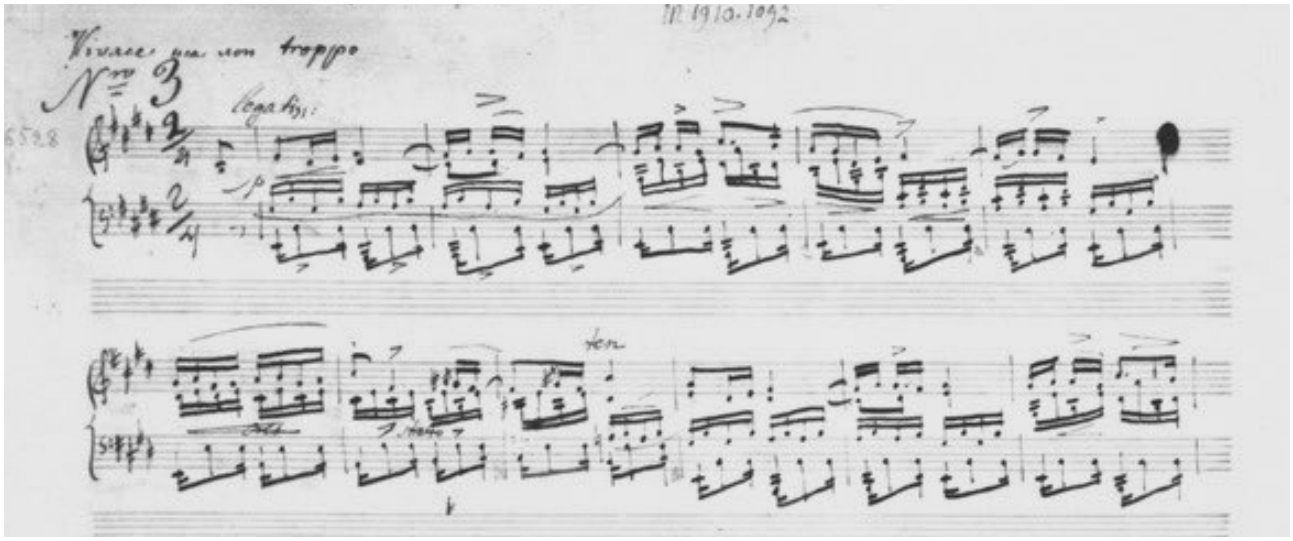


Étude N° 3 in E major page **18**

Almost immediately after its publication in 1833 this became one of the composer's most popular pieces, the main theme accessible to amateur pianists. Rather like the Beethoven Fantasy Sonata in C sharp minor (Op 27/2) it has been much disserved by inappropriate nicknames and a hackneyed and sentimental approach to interpretation, dated nineteenth century traditions.

The surreal transformation from the manuscript's ***Vivace*** *ma non troppo* to the published ***Lento*** *ma non troppo* is worthy of a Holmes mystery and I rely on personal experience and insight to effect a solution. As Chopin clearly wrote, I believe the beat should be in crotchets, the underlying flowing semiquavers murmuring agreeably in accompaniment. Somewhere between Beethoven's Op 13 central *Adagio*, and Chopin's original *Vivace* I believe there is room for compromise, and I propose an *Andante* ♩ = 45, at which speed the *poco più animato* makes more sense. It is worth mentioning an abridged version which Chopin approved for his pupil Jane Stirling, omitting the technically more challenging section from **32** — **53**.

While recommending the Cortot edition preparatory exercises, on page 22 another has been added for **46** — **54**. As an excellent aural preparation for polyphonic music, I recommend selecting any two voices and allocating one hand for each to better control dynamic balance.



- most editions give ♩ = 50
- editorial *andante* (see above)
- **1** editorial omission of unlikely syncopated accents
- **2** editorial alto voice omission
- **8** editorial soprano
- **17** editorial dynamic
- **18** editorial bass voice
- **20** grace notes possibly before the beat
- **41** several editions give F ♯
- **46** an interesting effect may be achieved by combining the *sostenuto* and damper pedals for a few bars

Étude N° 4 in C ♯ minor page **24**

Although this is essentially a study for rapid and light fingerwork, there is much to admire both harmonically and melodically; it is most instructive to attentively play through the the harmonic and melodic framework on page 32. Whenever I hear this particular study I recall "Sparky's Magic Piano", first heard as a very young child. Despite the implications of its sombre key, we discover a world of goblins in an animated virtuoso showpiece. The trick is to aim for Chopinesque refinement and to avoid Lisztian force in the louder passages. In addition to recommending the Cortot edition preparatory exercises, for a few awkward passages, three have been added on page 37.

- most editions give an unlikely 𝅗𝅥 = 88 (a Keaton or Chaplin accelerated chase soundtrack)
- **15** A♯ is an alternative reading
- **19** F♯ is an alternative reading
- **21** LH F octave — compare with **17**
- **44** B♮ is an alternative reading
- **78** proposed omission

Ray Alston

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C H O P I N

ÉTUDES Op 10

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