Claude DEBUSSY
CENTENARY EDITION 2018

IMAGES BOOK II

- CLOCHES à TRAVERS les FEUILLES
- Et la LUNE DESCEND sur le TEMPLE qui FUT
- POISSONS d'OR

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Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

Images book II

Cloches à travers les feuilles

Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut

Poissons d'or

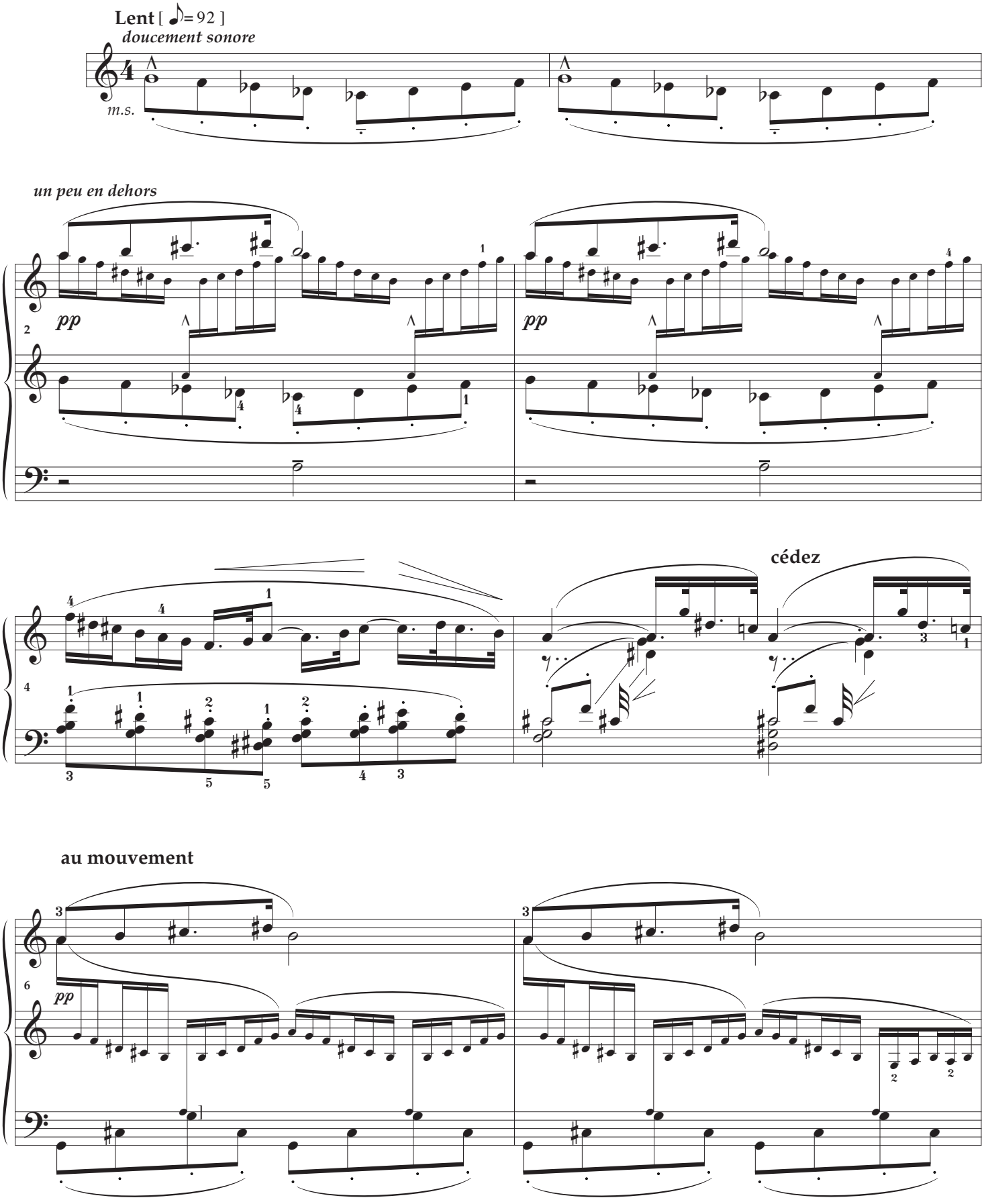
Debussy dedicated this second volume of *Images* to three of his friends: the artist Alexandre Charpentier, the musicologist Louis Laloy, and the pianist Ricardo Viñes. As early as 1903, the composer had planned to send his publisher "twelve pieces for the piano" including the three titles produced here, and they were finally published by Durand in 1908, with a first public performance by Ricardo Viñes the following year.

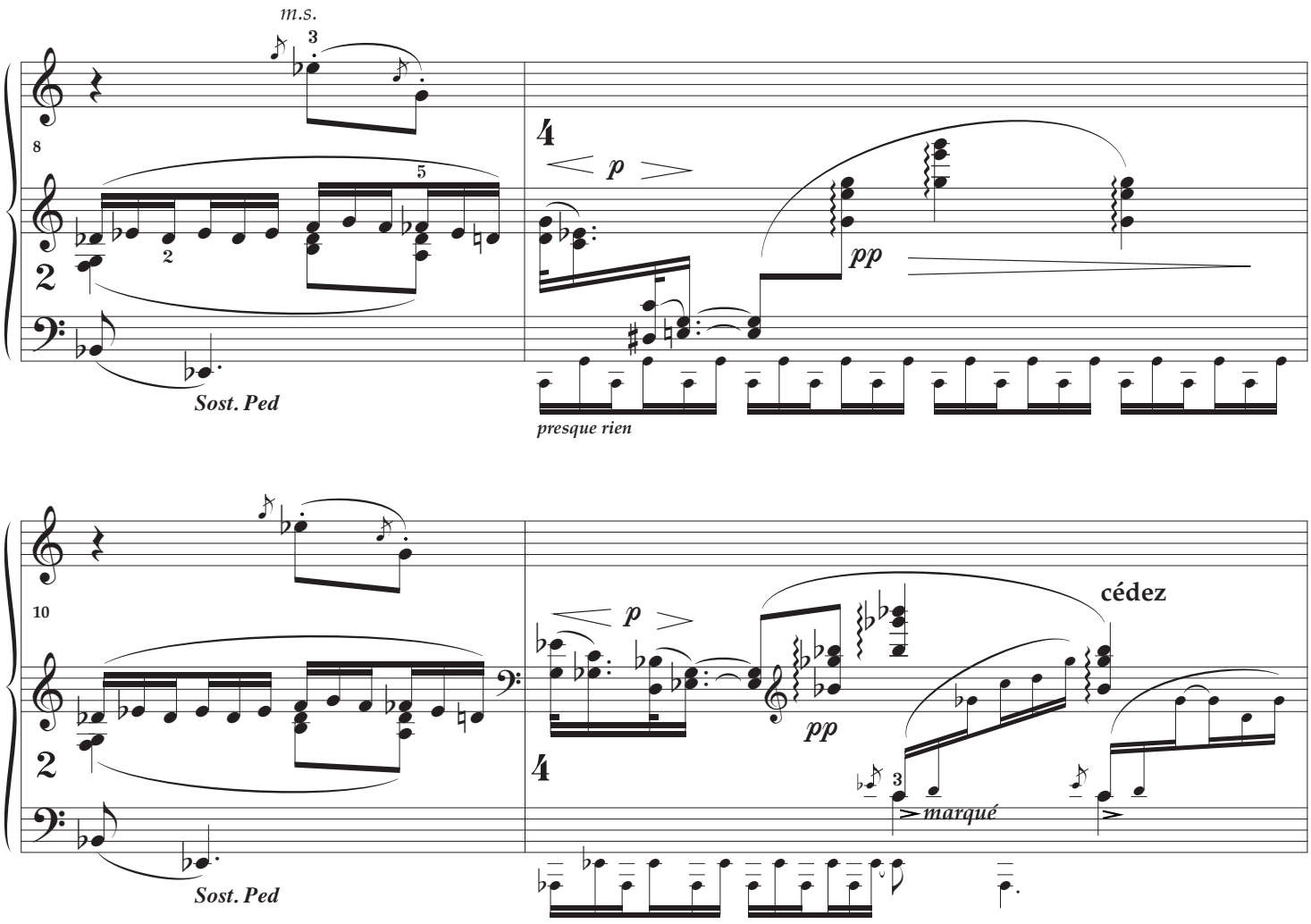
Laloy stated that the score marked « a true revolution in the art of piano writing ». In the early 1900s, Debussy's already exquisite and subtle techniques, took on new depths of tone colour and sophistication.

While it is possible to try and find meaning and clues to interpretation in the evocative titles, the music is rather a projection, an illusion of mood and character, each piece finding its own *raison d'être* through the skill of the composer.

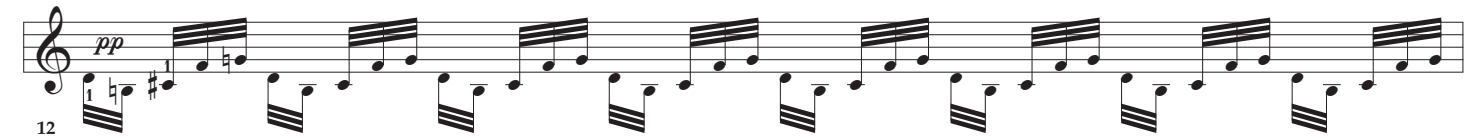
As Baudelaire had recently stated: « scents, colours and sounds reflect one another. » Debussy once wrote: « The aim of French music is, before all, to please. The musical genius of France may be described as a fantasy of the senses ».

Cloches à travers les feuilles

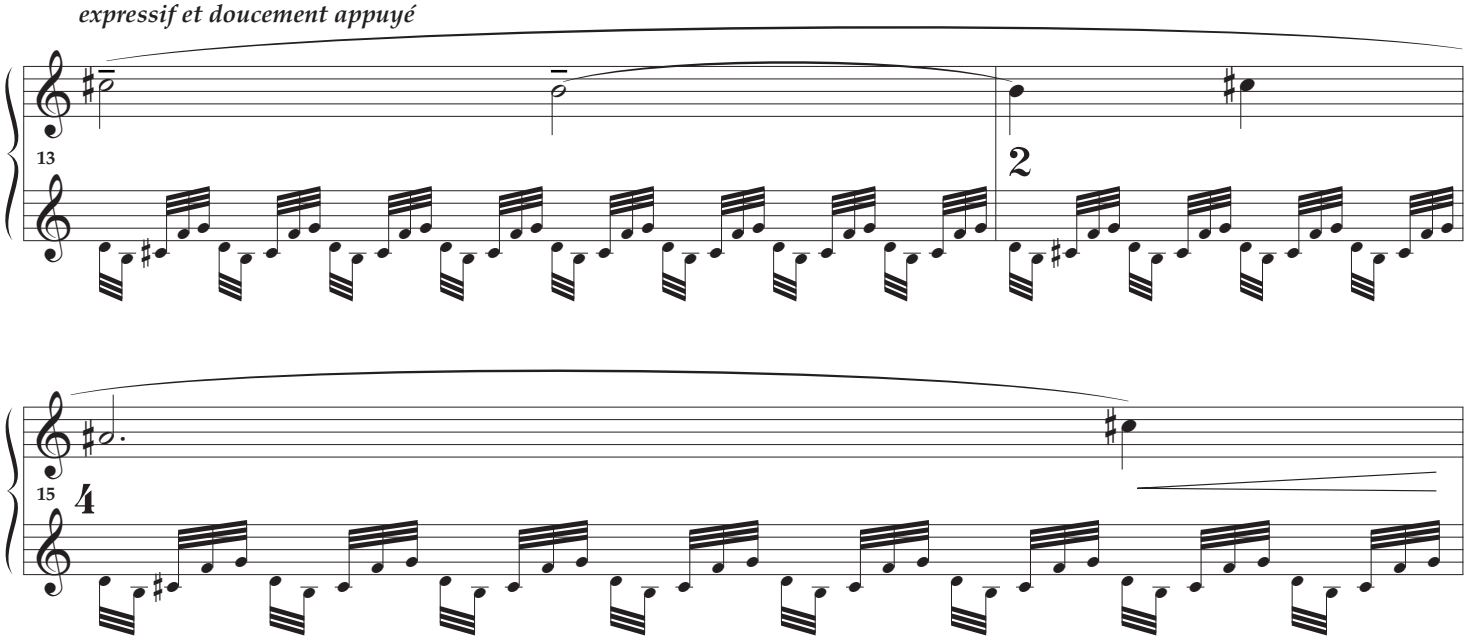


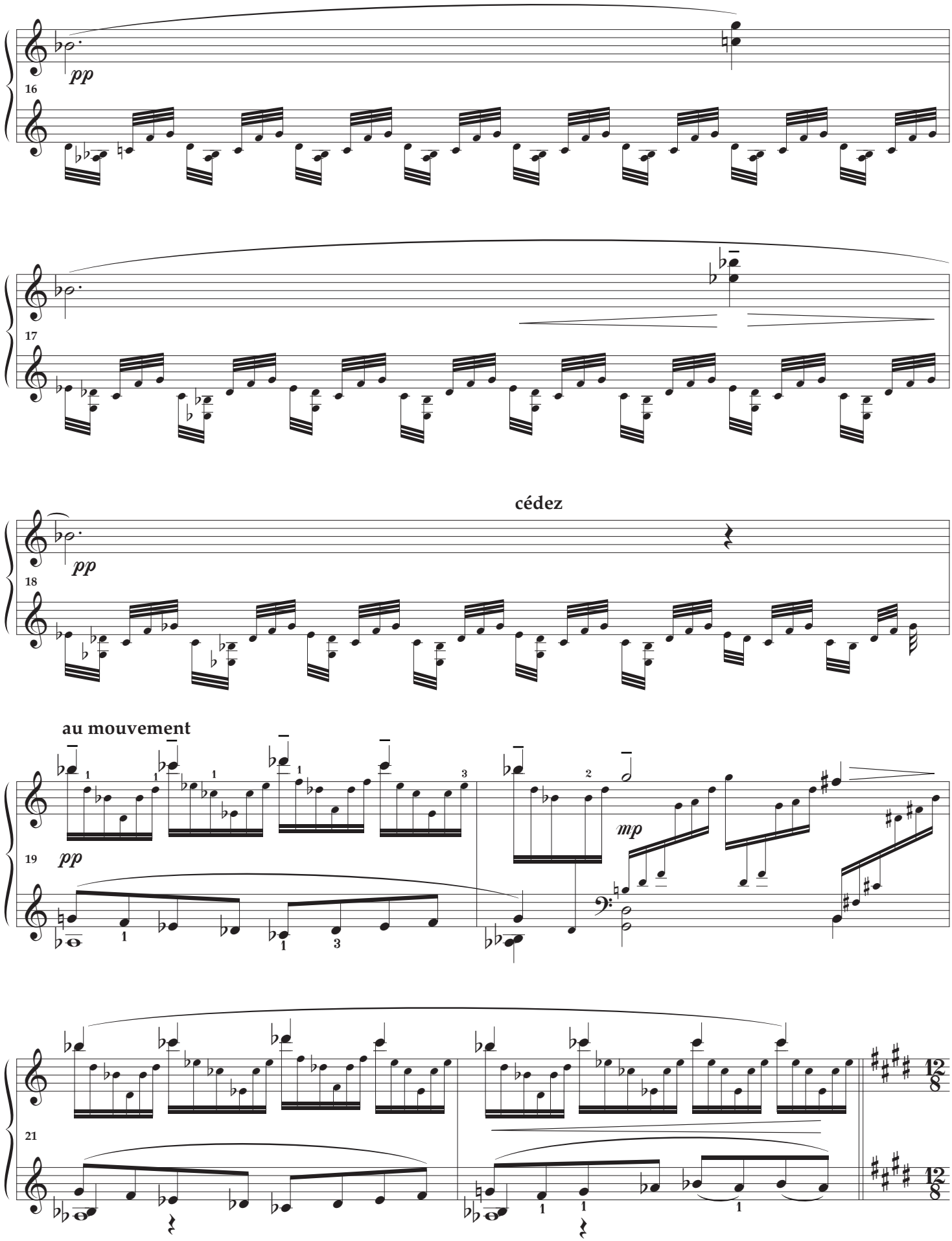


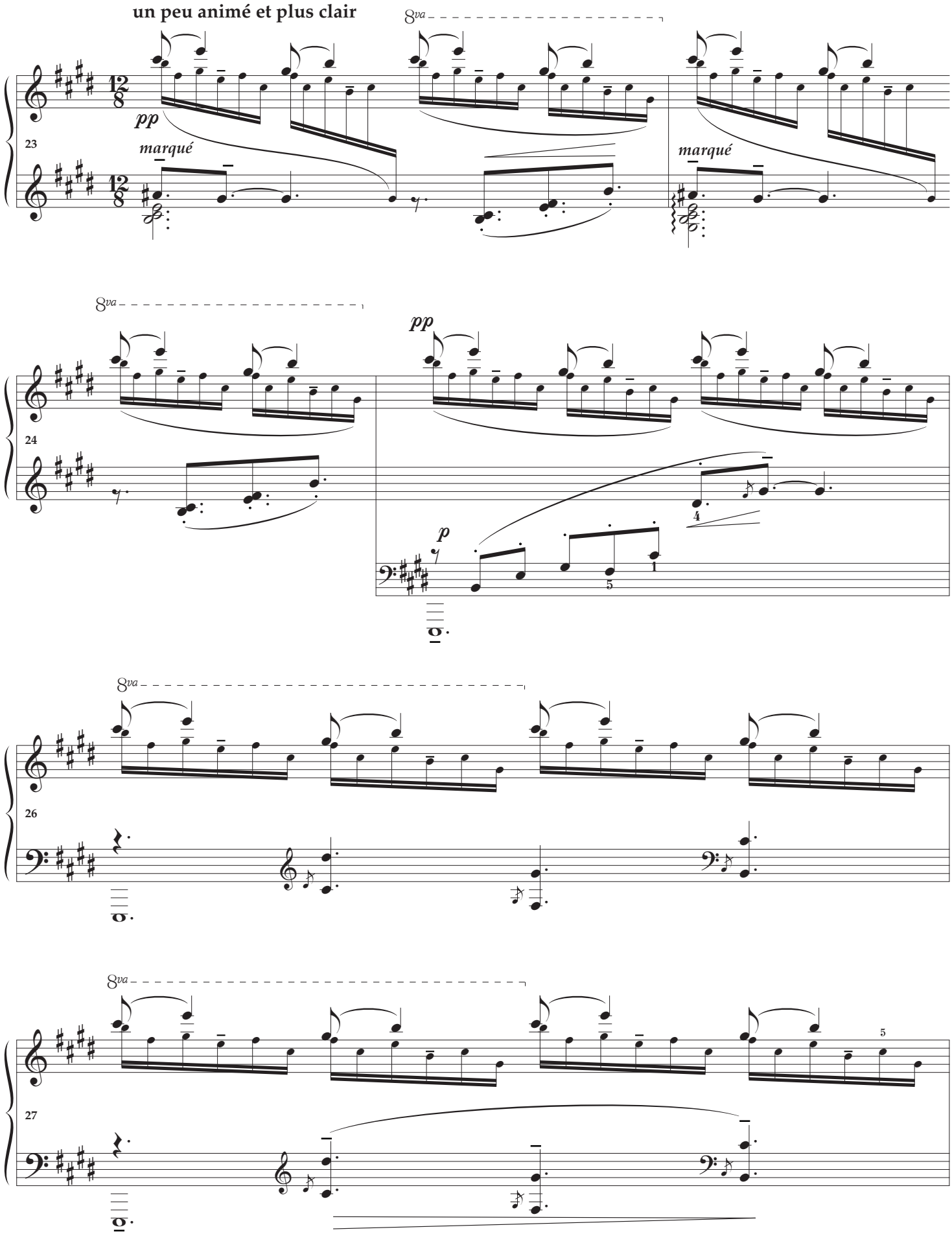
au mouvement *très égal — comme une buée irisée*

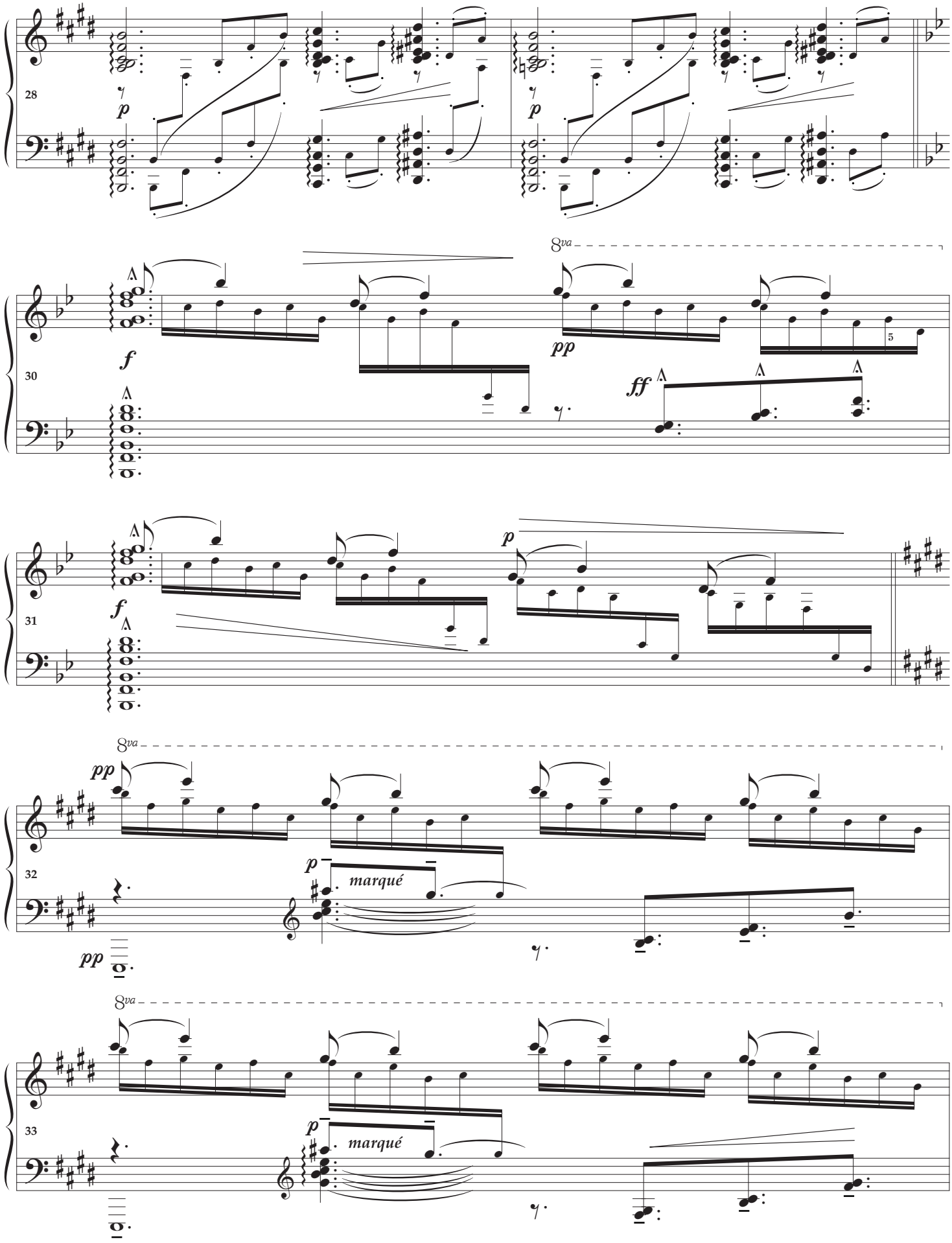


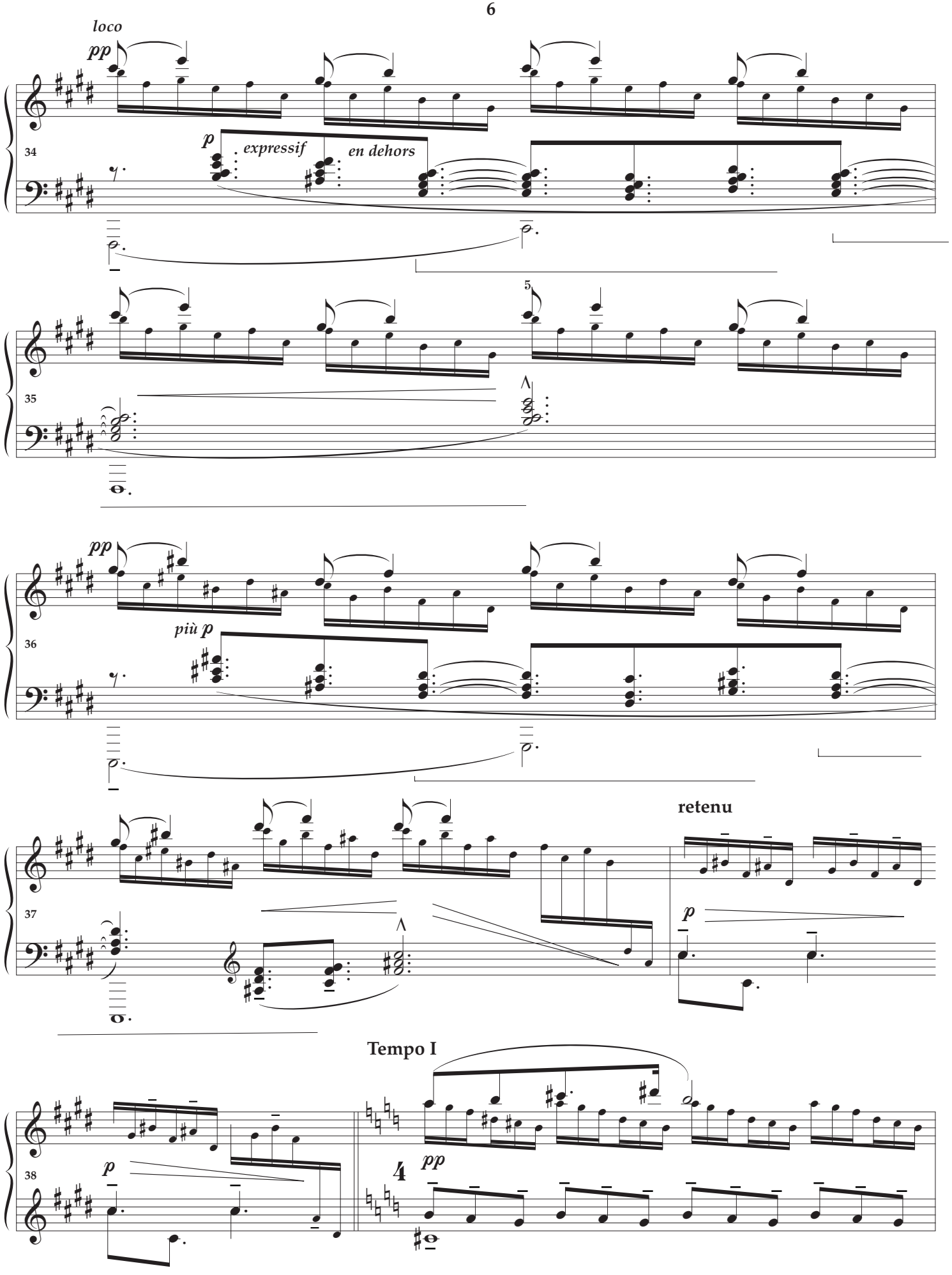
expressif et doucement appuyé

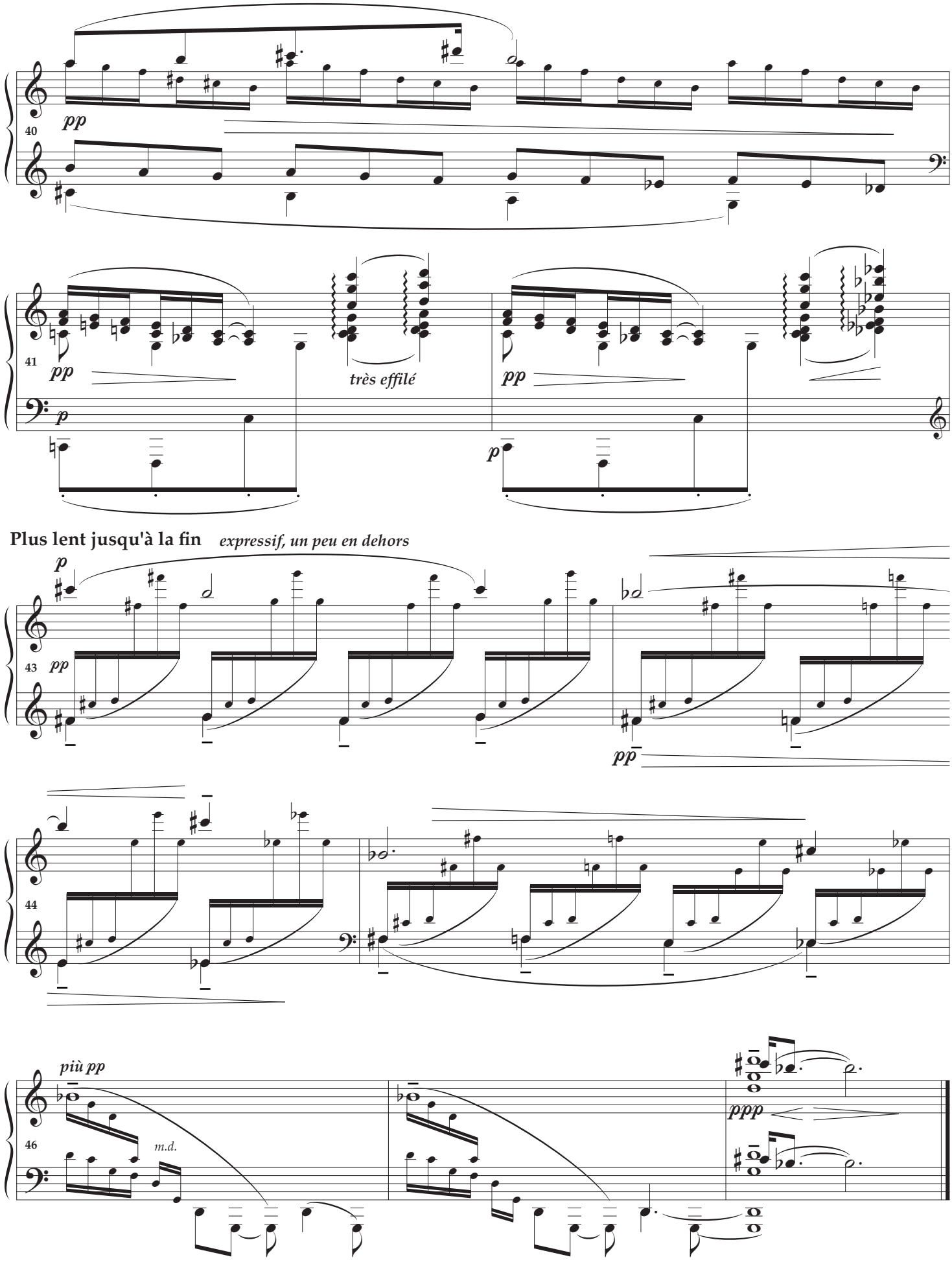



16
pp
17
cédez
18
pp
au mouvement
19
pp
mp
21
12/8
12/8


un peu animé et plus clair
8va
pp
marqué
marqué
23
8va
pp
24
p
4
5
1
8va
26
8va
27
5


28
p
p
30
f
8va
pp
ff
5
31
f
p
32
8va
pp
p
marqué
pp
33
8va
p
marqué


loco
pp
p
expressif
en dehors
34
5
35
pp
più p
36
retenu
37
p
Tempo I
38
p
4
pp


40
pp
41
pp
très effilé
p
pp
p
Plus lent jusqu'à la fin
expressif, un peu en dehors
p
43
pp
pp
44
più pp
46
m.d.
ppp

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

In spite of my having suggested some fingerings, here is an extract from Debussy's own introduction to his etudes: "Absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, negating musicians' perverse desire to completely dismiss the composer's (and editor's), and thereby vindicating words of eternal wisdom: 'If you want something done well, do it yourself'". Let us seek our own fingering!

The trick is to feel the piece in slow crotchet beats, but it must not drag. Keep an even slower tempo in reserve for the final bars. Debussy uses a variety of markings for pressure and accentuation, but avoids sforzato in this piece.

- The bracketed metronome speed appears in the original Durand edition
- On page 6 the four pedal suggestions are necessary to maintain the tenor melodic line
- The sostenuto pedal suggestion on page two is editorial
- **30 & 31** presented in B flat

Duration: 4'50

doucement sonore	gently sonorous
un peu en dehors	a little in relief
presque rien	almost silent
très égal — comme une buée irisée	very even — like an iridescent mist
doucement appuyé	gentle pressure
cedez	yield
un peu animé et plus clair	a little animated and more bright in tone
marqué	marked
très effilé	arpeggiate delicately
plus lent jusqu'à la fin	slower tempo until the end

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II *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut*

(And the moon sets upon the temple that was)

à Louis Laloy

According to the dedicatee, a cultivated sinologist, this most original composition was inspired by Chinese poetry and the Orient evoking East Asia in particular. The *image* is much inspired by the gamelan* and features a recurring ornamented pentatonic melody, leaving an impression of profound stillness and serenity. A contemplative essay on the monastic and mystical East.

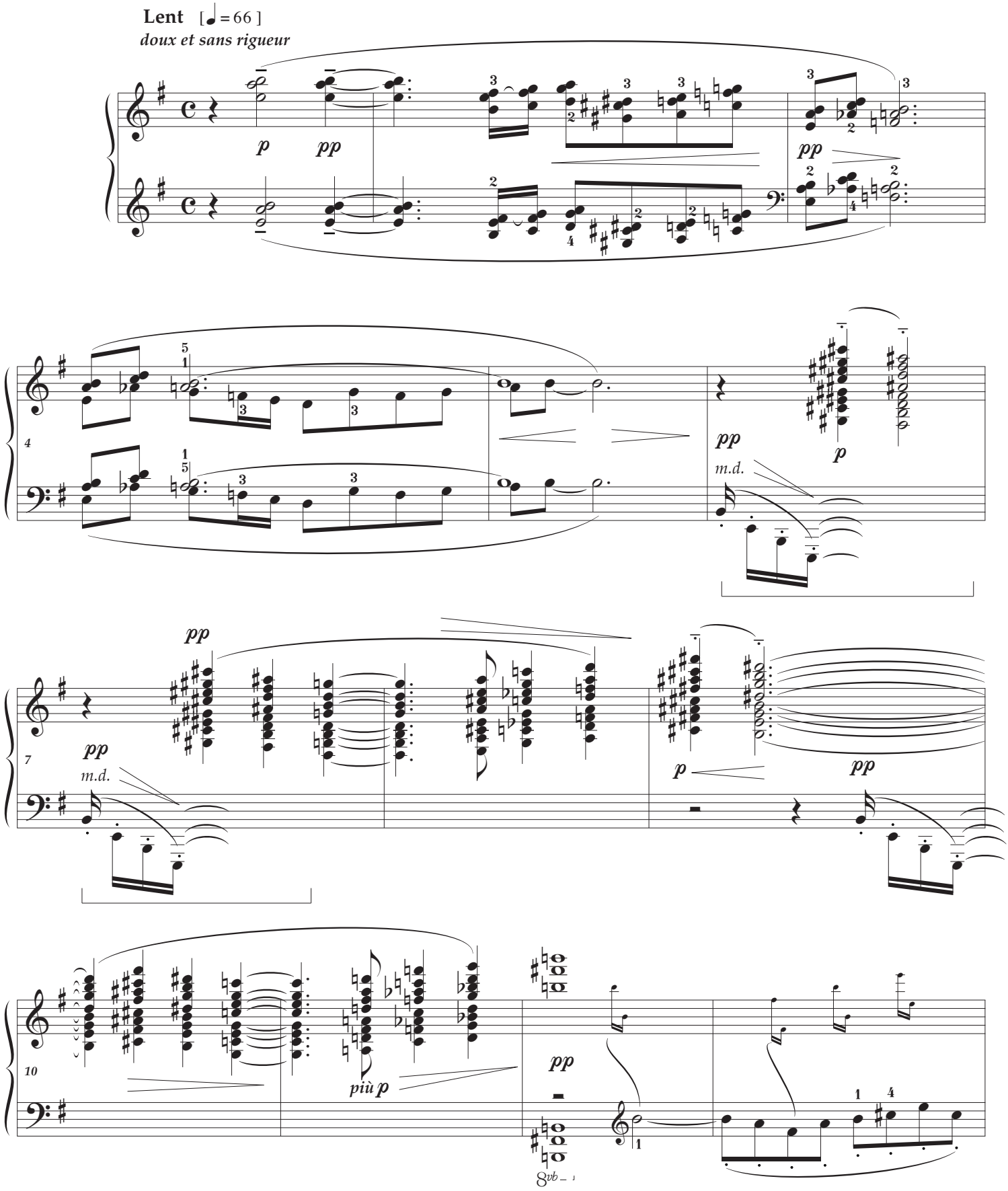
Much of the chordal writing is derived from early western traditional music but Debussy uses these harmonies as unique sounds in themselves. Like the ruined temple, the language has survived, but in a new world and with a new purpose. It is possible to see how this piece must have influenced Bartók's *the Night's Music.*

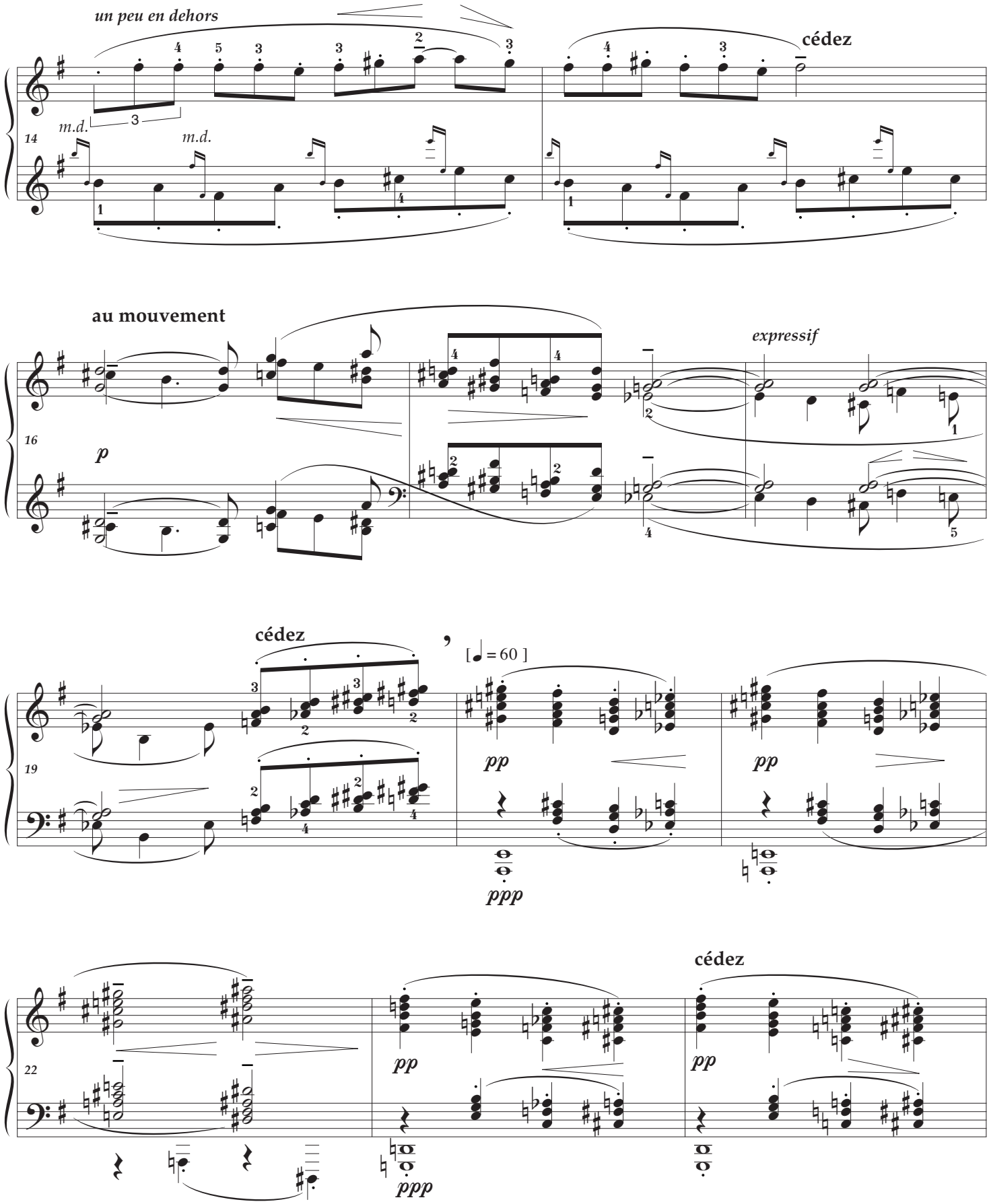
Debussy remarked that the school of the Javanese musician « consists of the eternal rhythm of the sea, the wind in the leaves, and a thousand other tiny noises, which they listen to with great care…»

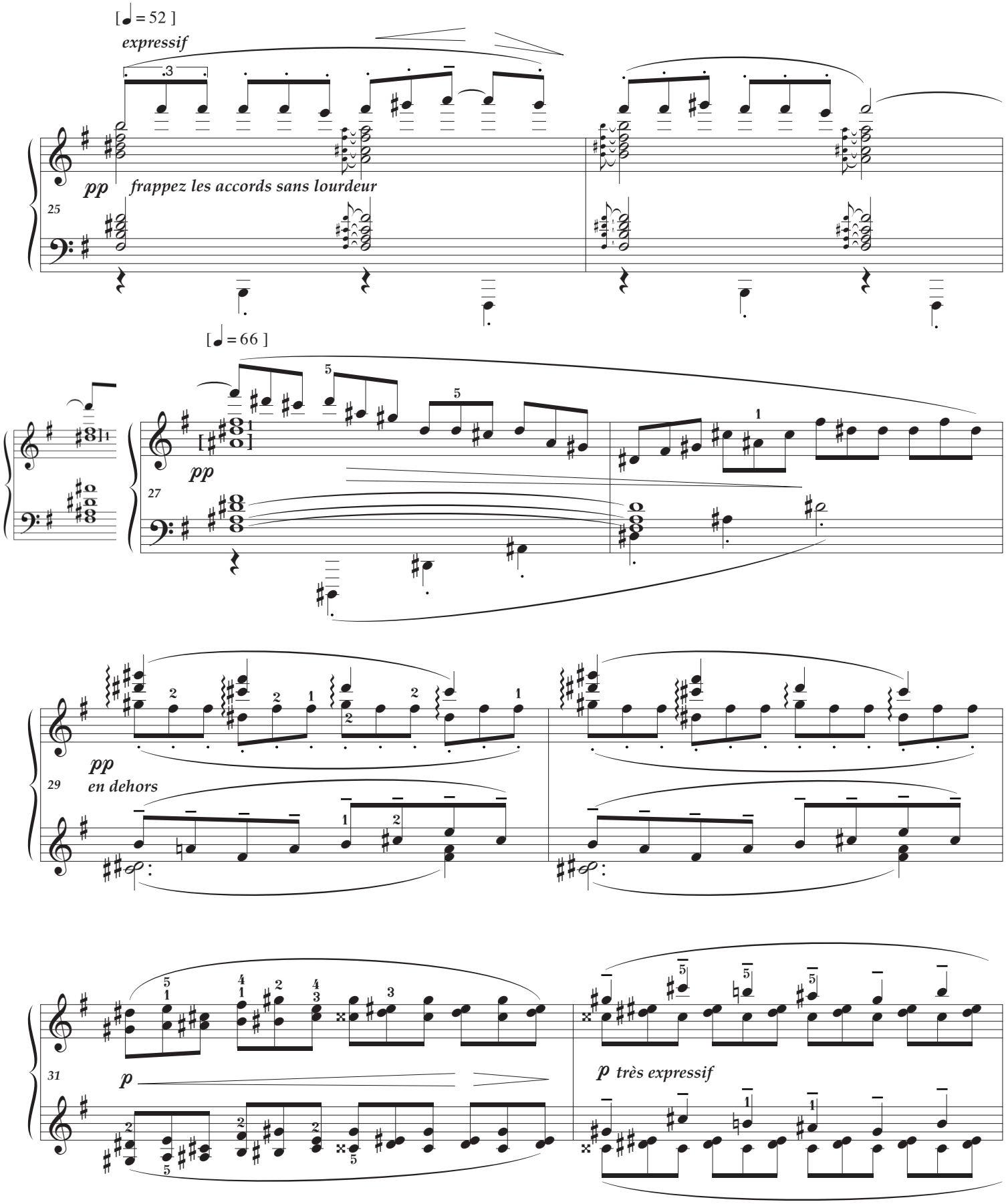
« Do you remember the Javanese music, able to express every shade of meaning, even unmentionable shades . . . which make our tonic and dominant seem like ghosts, for use by naughty little children? »

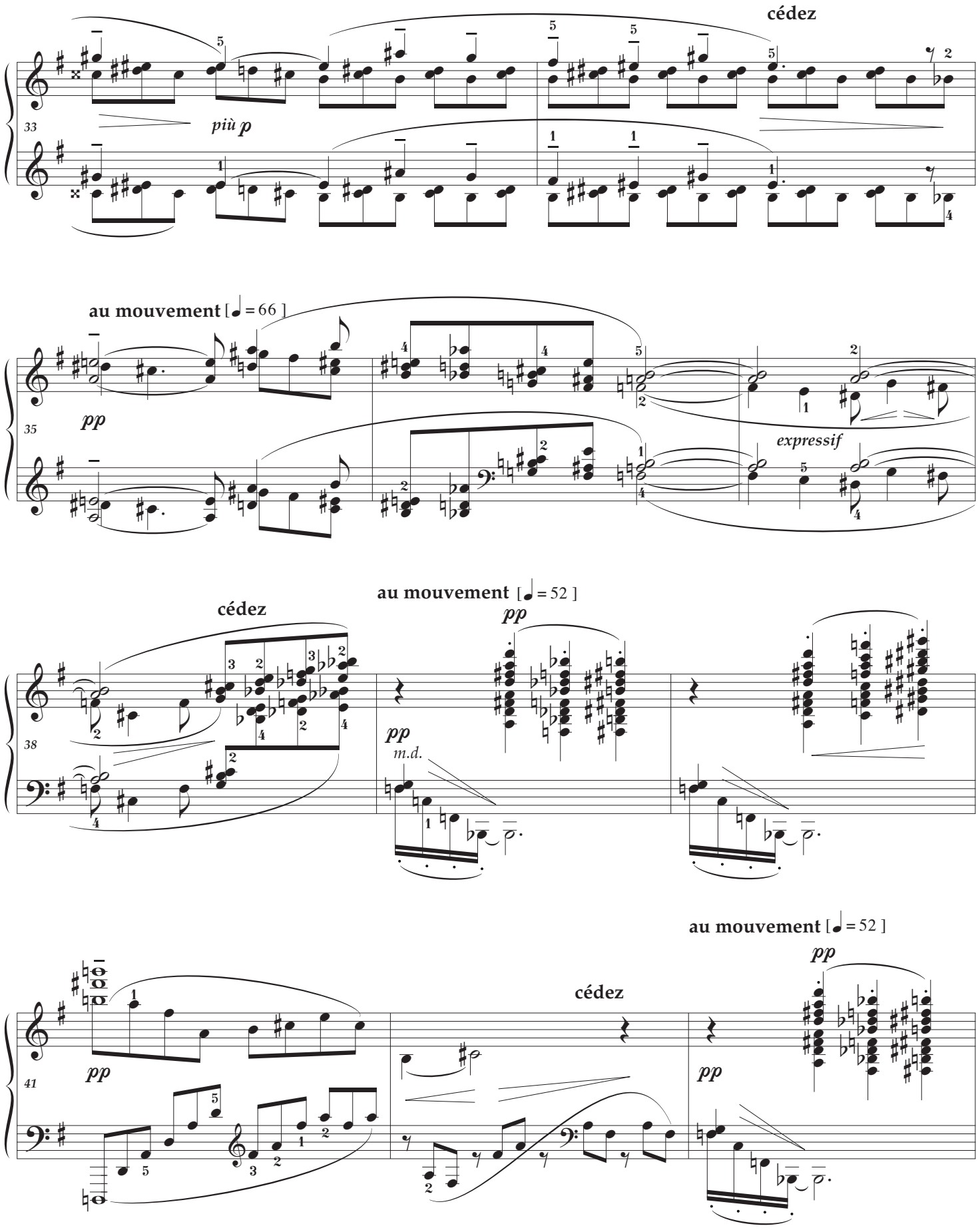
* *the traditional percussion ensemble of Java and Bali in Indonesia*

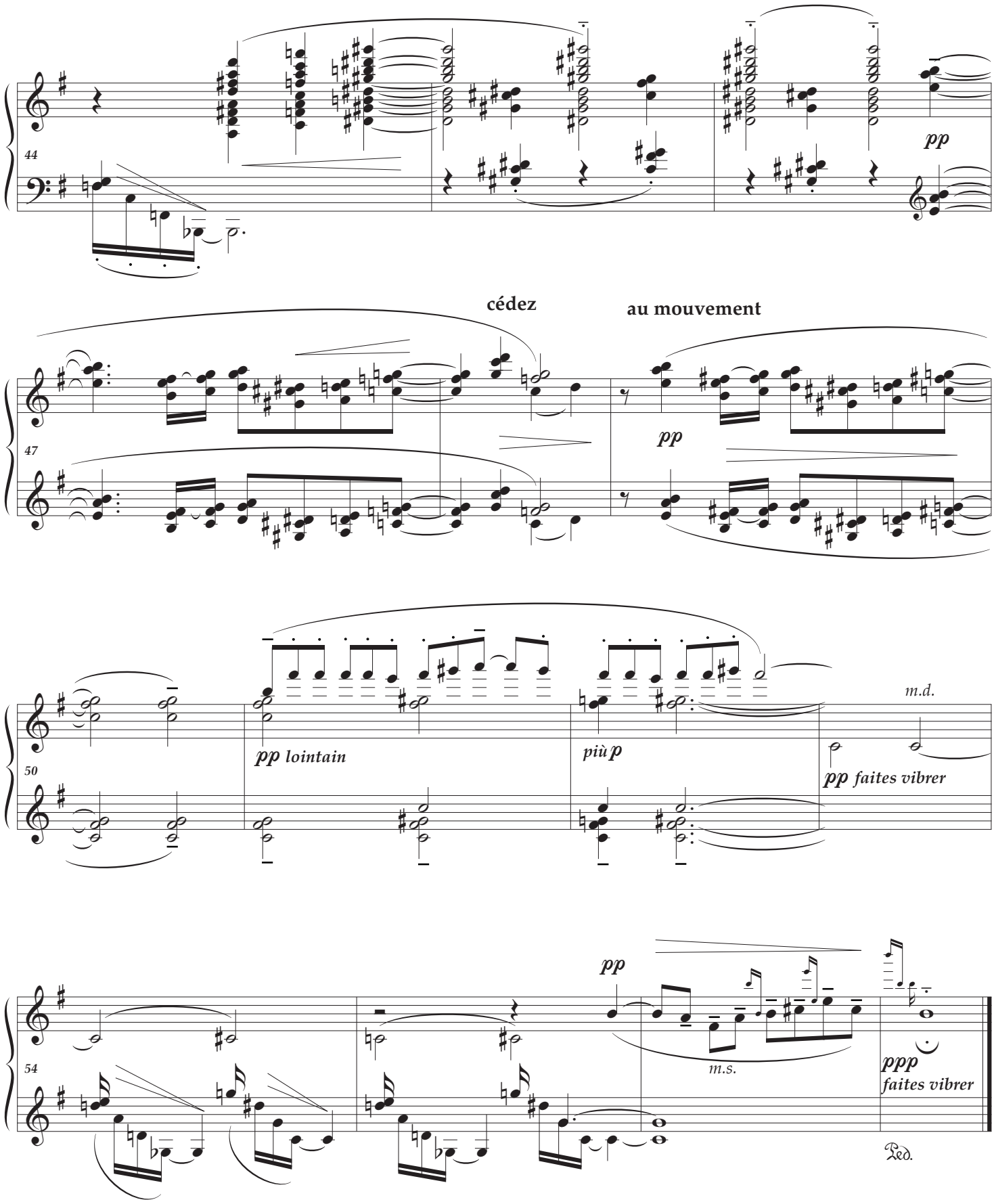
Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut




un peu en dehors
cédez
m.d.
m.d.
14
au mouvement
expressif
p
16
cédez
[♩ = 60]
pp
pp
ppp
19
cédez
pp
pp
ppp
22


[♩ = 52]
expressif
pp
frappez les accords sans lourdeur
25
[♩ = 66]
pp
27
pp
en dehors
29
p
31
p très expressif


cédez
33
più p
au mouvement [♩ = 66]
35
pp
expressif
cédez
au mouvement [♩ = 52]
38
pp
pp
m.d.
au mouvement [♩ = 52]
cédez
41
pp
pp
pp


44
pp
47
cédez
au mouvement
pp
50
pp lointain
più p
m.d.
pp faites vibrer
54
pp
m.s.
ppp
faites vibrer
Ped.

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III *Poissons d'Or*

(Golden Fish)

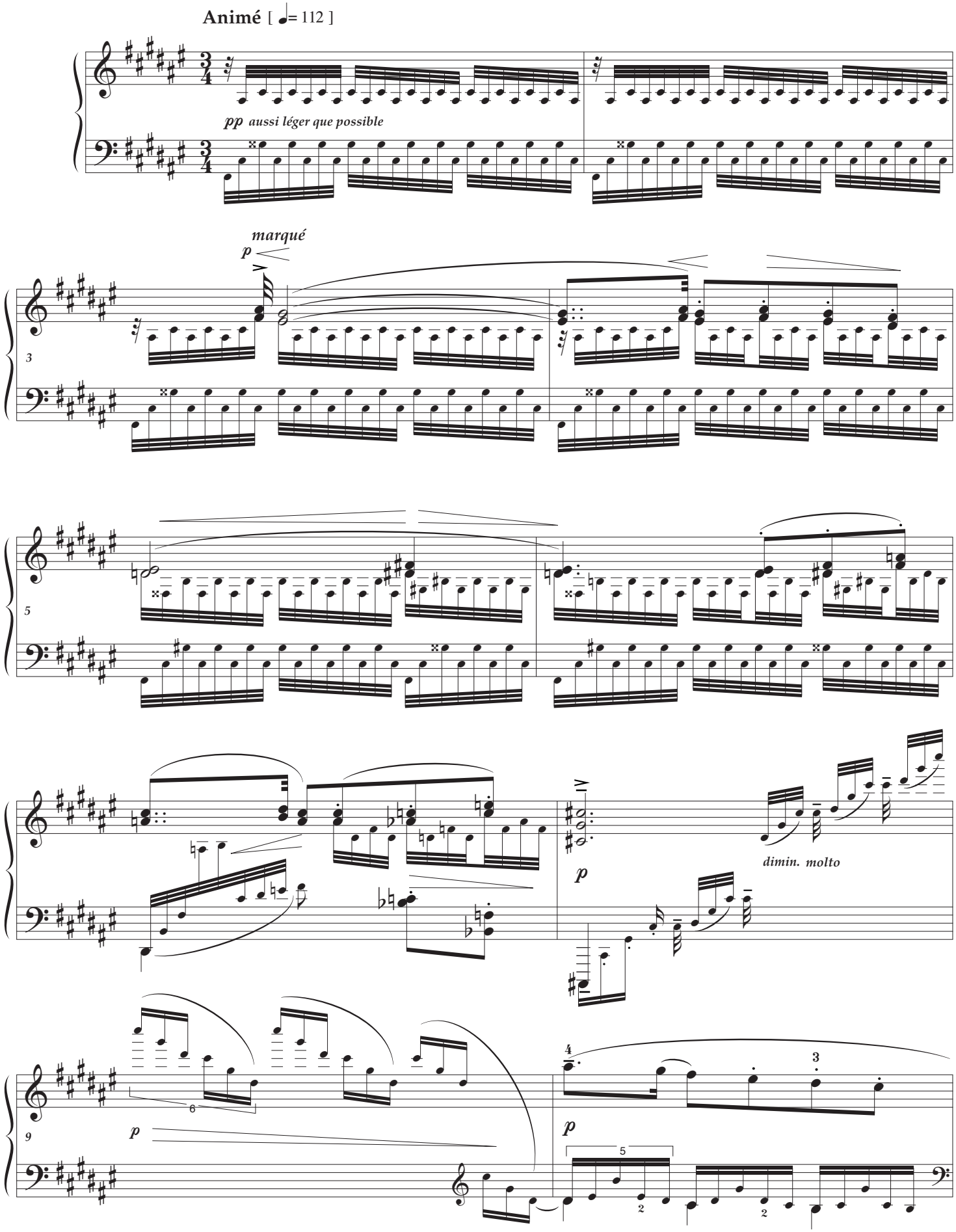
à Ricardo Viñes

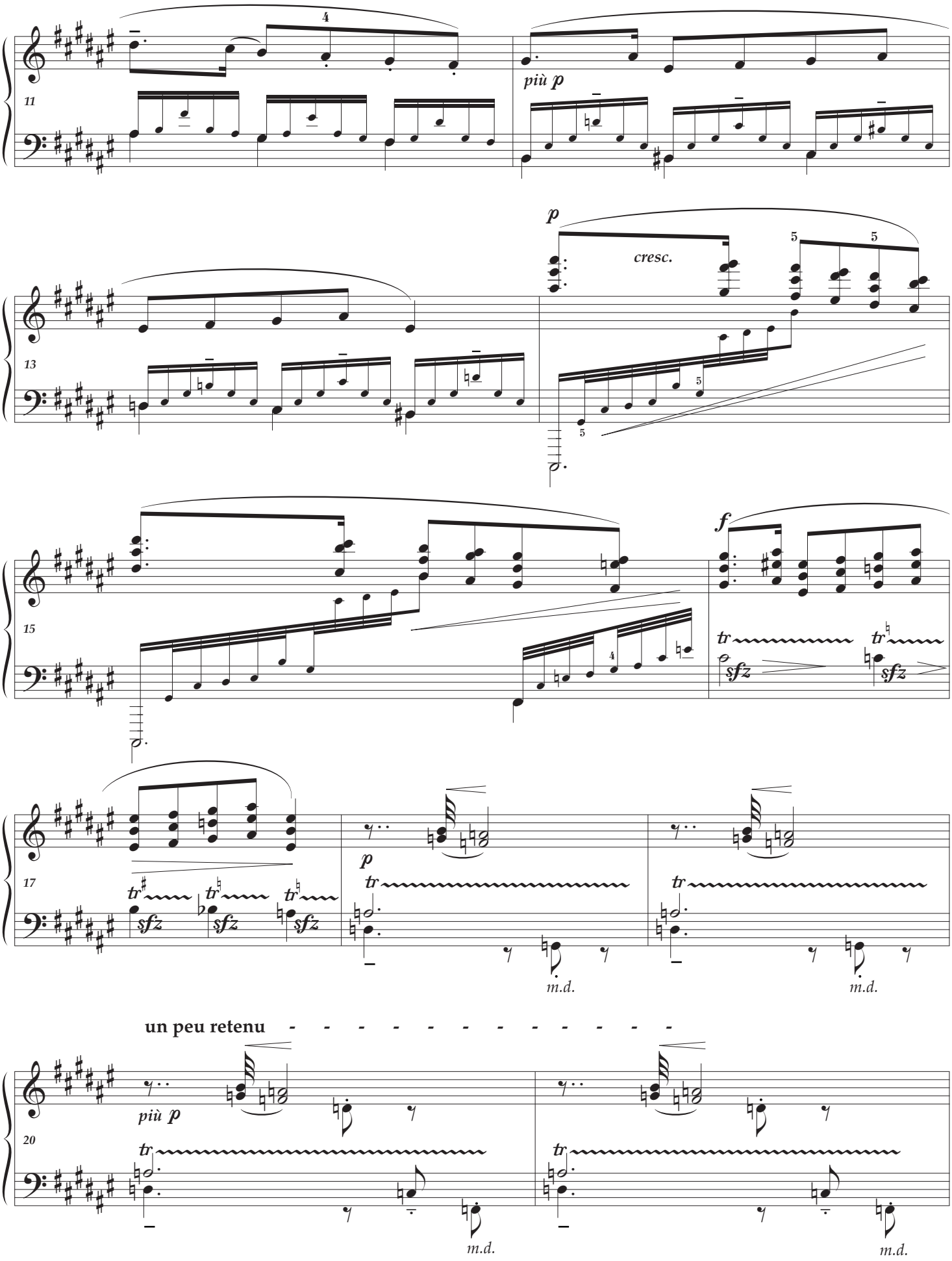
Thus the first and last of these 6 *images* have watery themes and of the six, *Poissons d'Or*, together with *Reflets dans l'eau*, is probably the most frequently performed. Published in 1905, this gorgeous piece demonstrates Debussy's extraordinary sense of colour in sound, his pianistic imagination unbound by the music of his time.

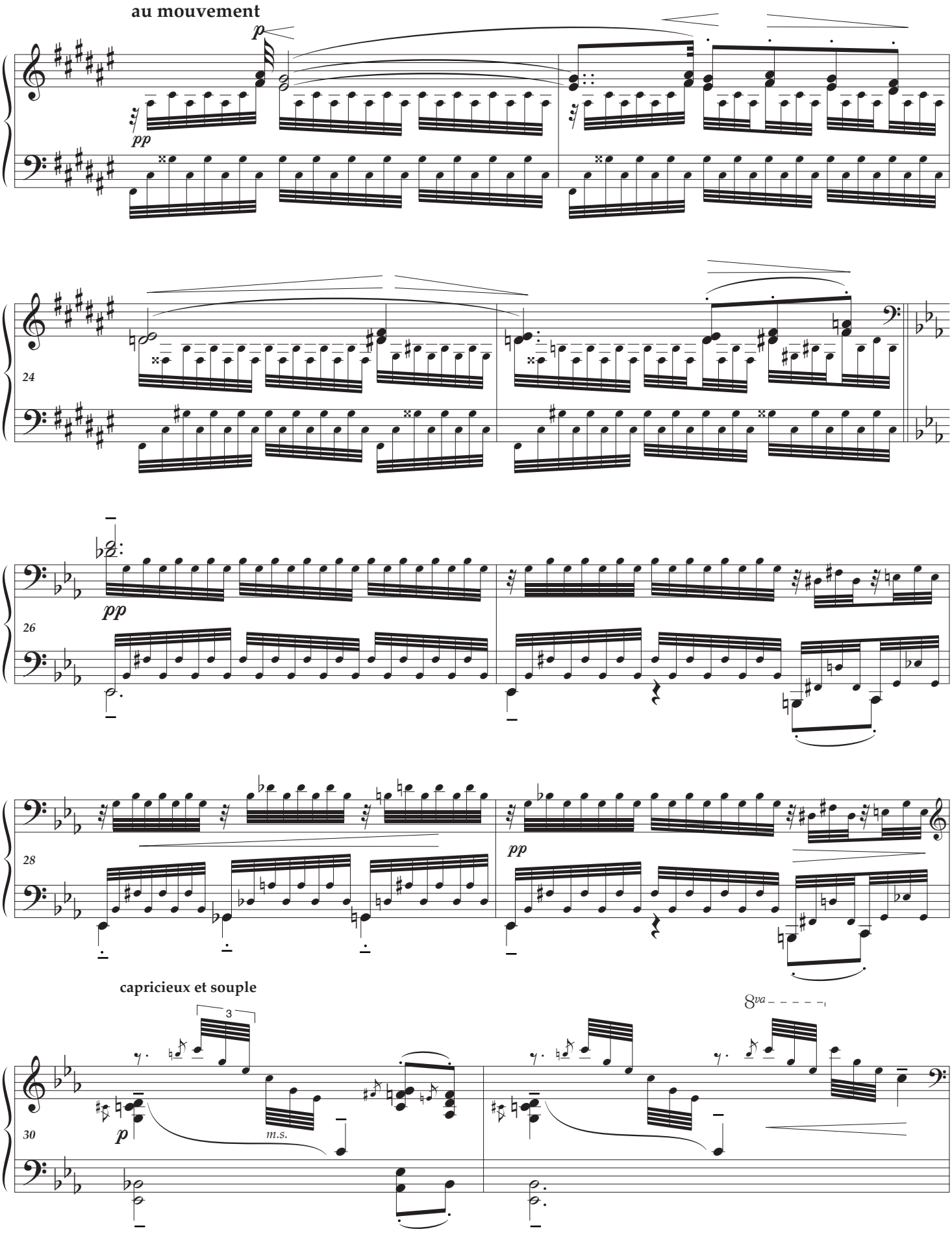
In French, a goldfish is usually translated as *poisson rouge* — a red fish, if you like. Debussy's description of a golden fish is indeed poetic, and you will indeed find some piscine excitement here — some "shimmering" and perhaps a flash of scale, tail and fin — this is inspired music, full of delicate melodies and inventive harmonies, grace and elegance. The poetry is in the music, perhaps not quite so much in the water as perhaps *reflets dans l'eau.*

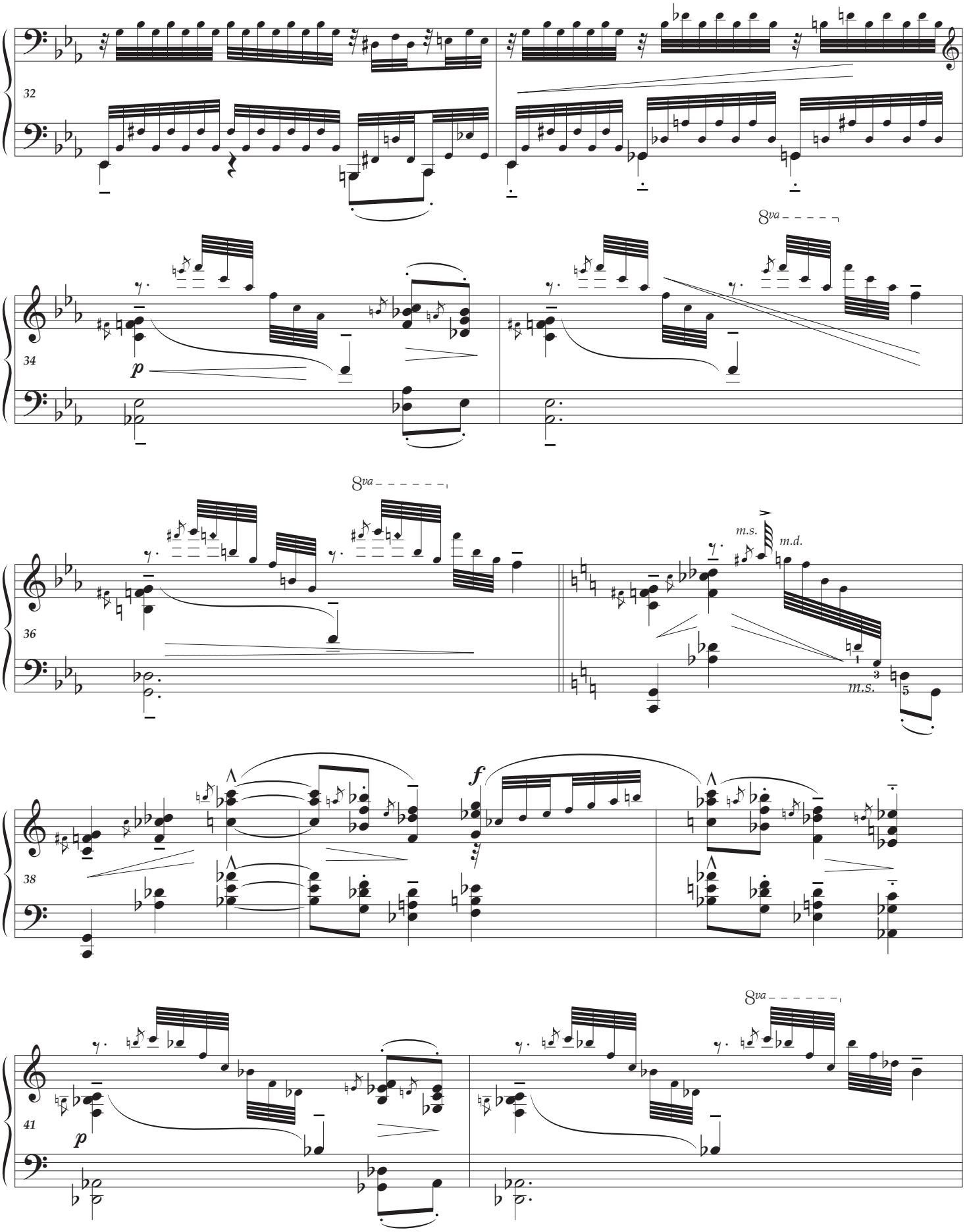
Apparently its inspiration was a small Japanese lacquer panel owned by Debussy and depicting two gold-coloured fish. It is also quite possible that the piece was inspired by a Minkus 1866 ballet (revived by the Bolshoi in Moscow 1903) — *Le Poisson Doré.*

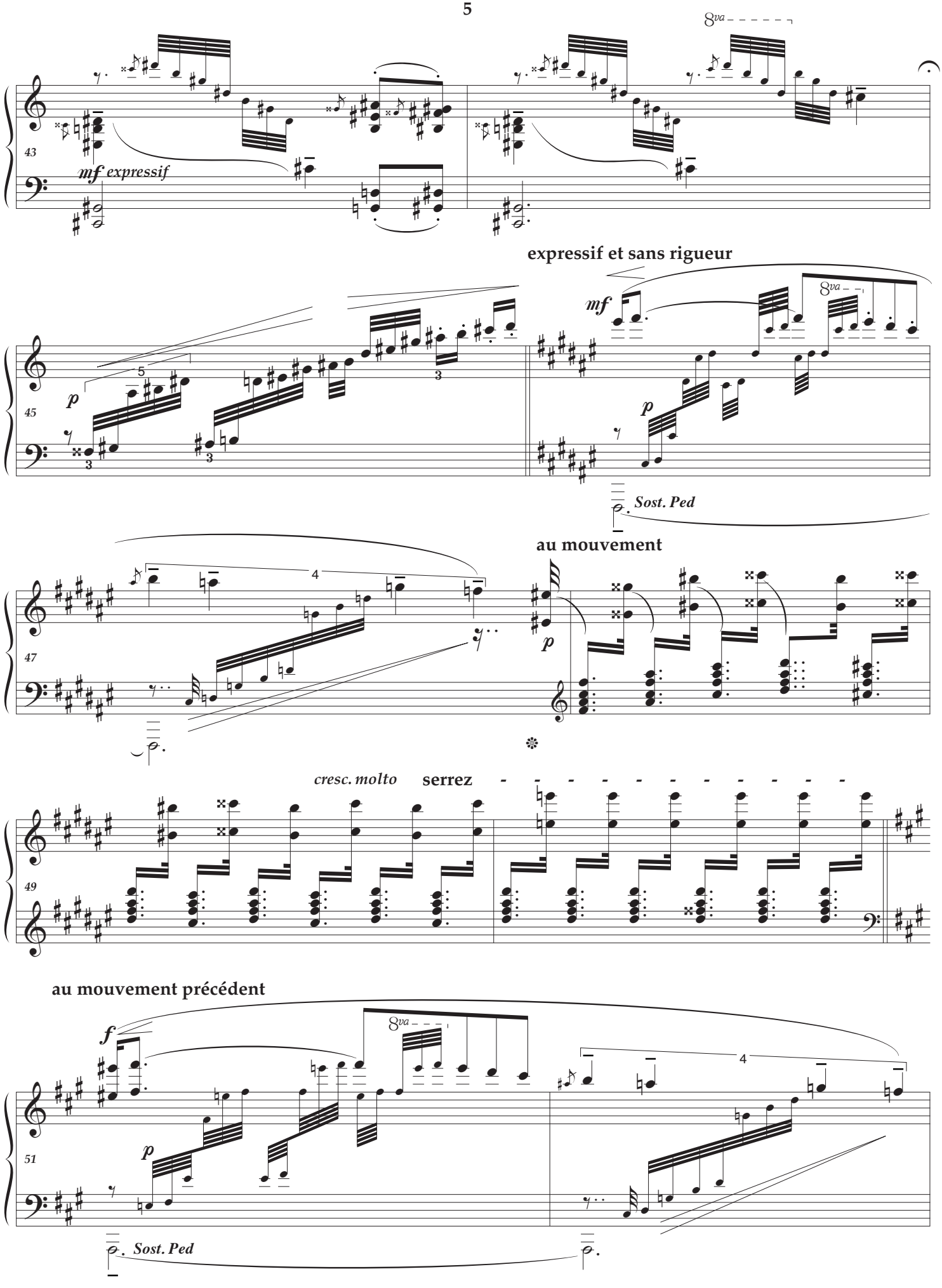
POISSONS D'OR

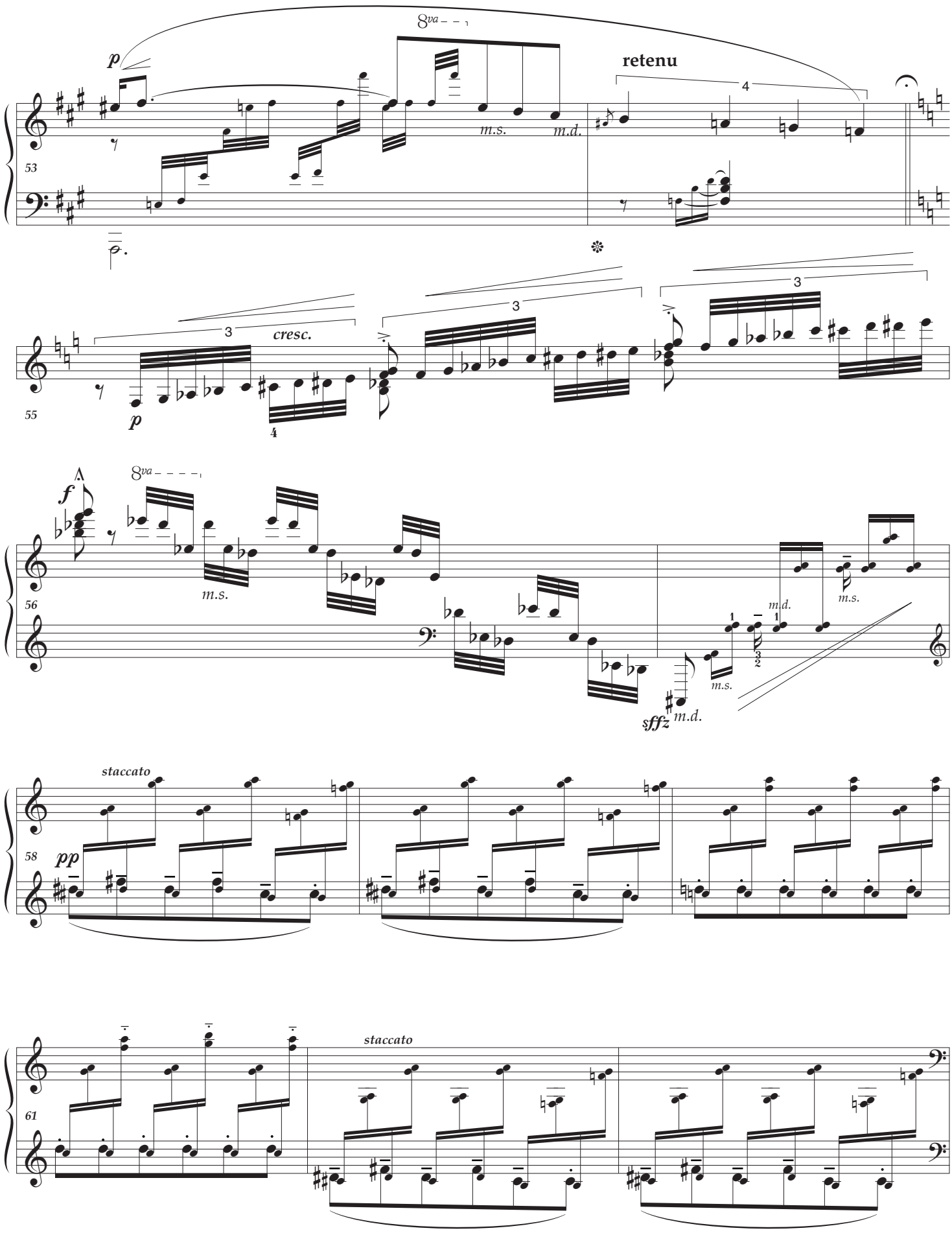


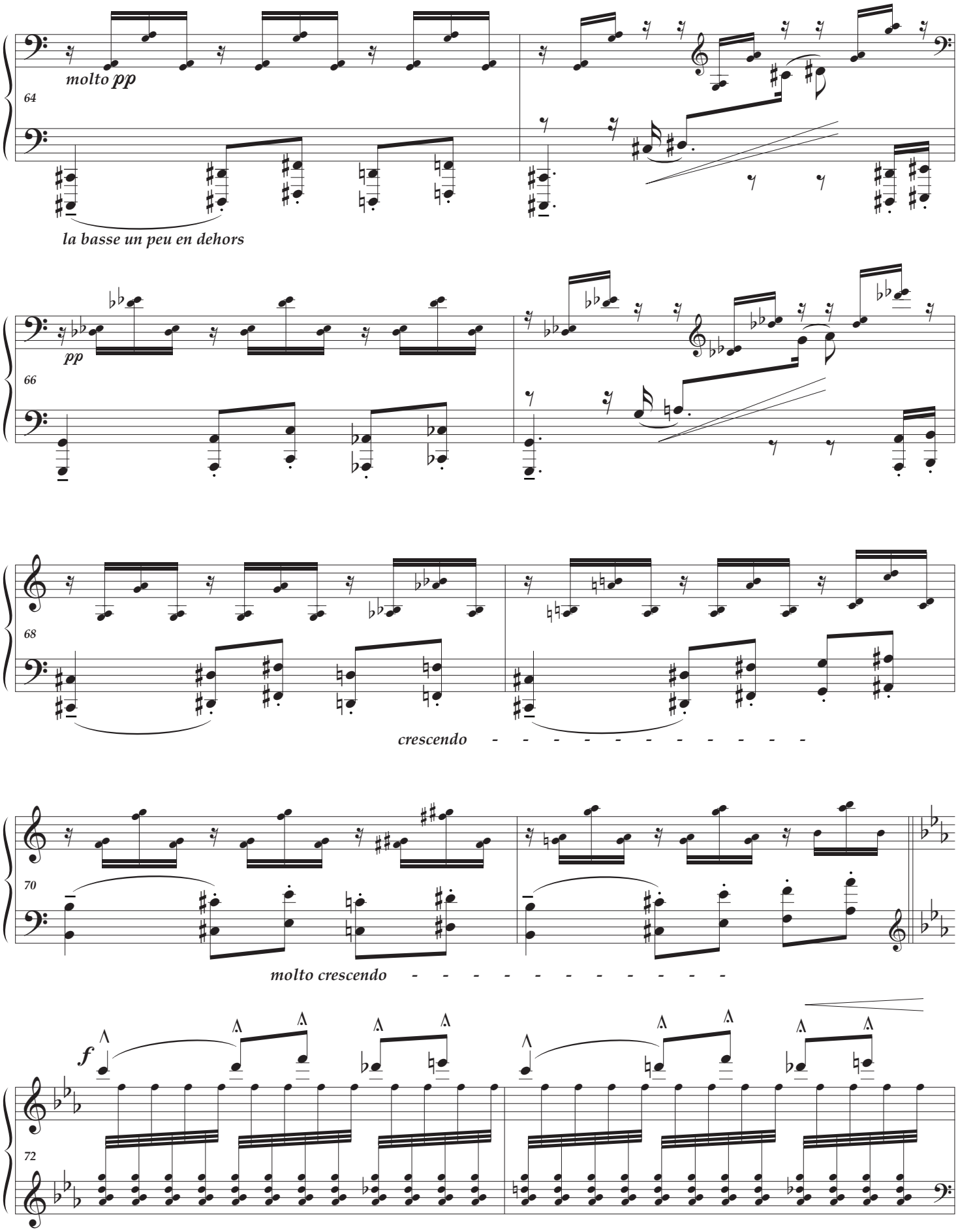

11
4
più p
13
p
cresc.
5
5
15
f
tr
sfz
17
p
m.d.
un peu retenu
20
più p

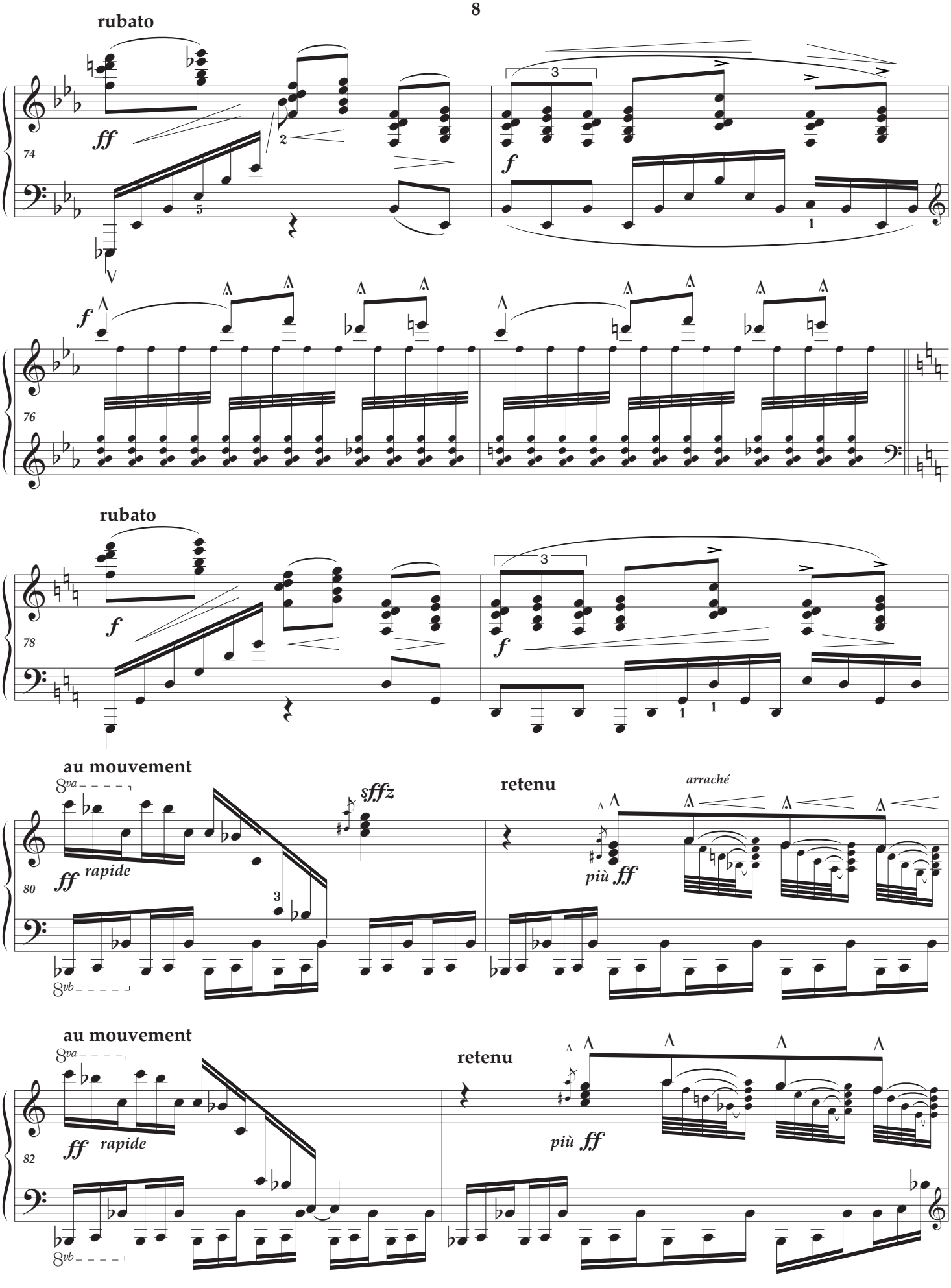

au mouvement
p
pp
24
pp
26
pp
28
capricieux et souple
3
p
m.s.
8va
30

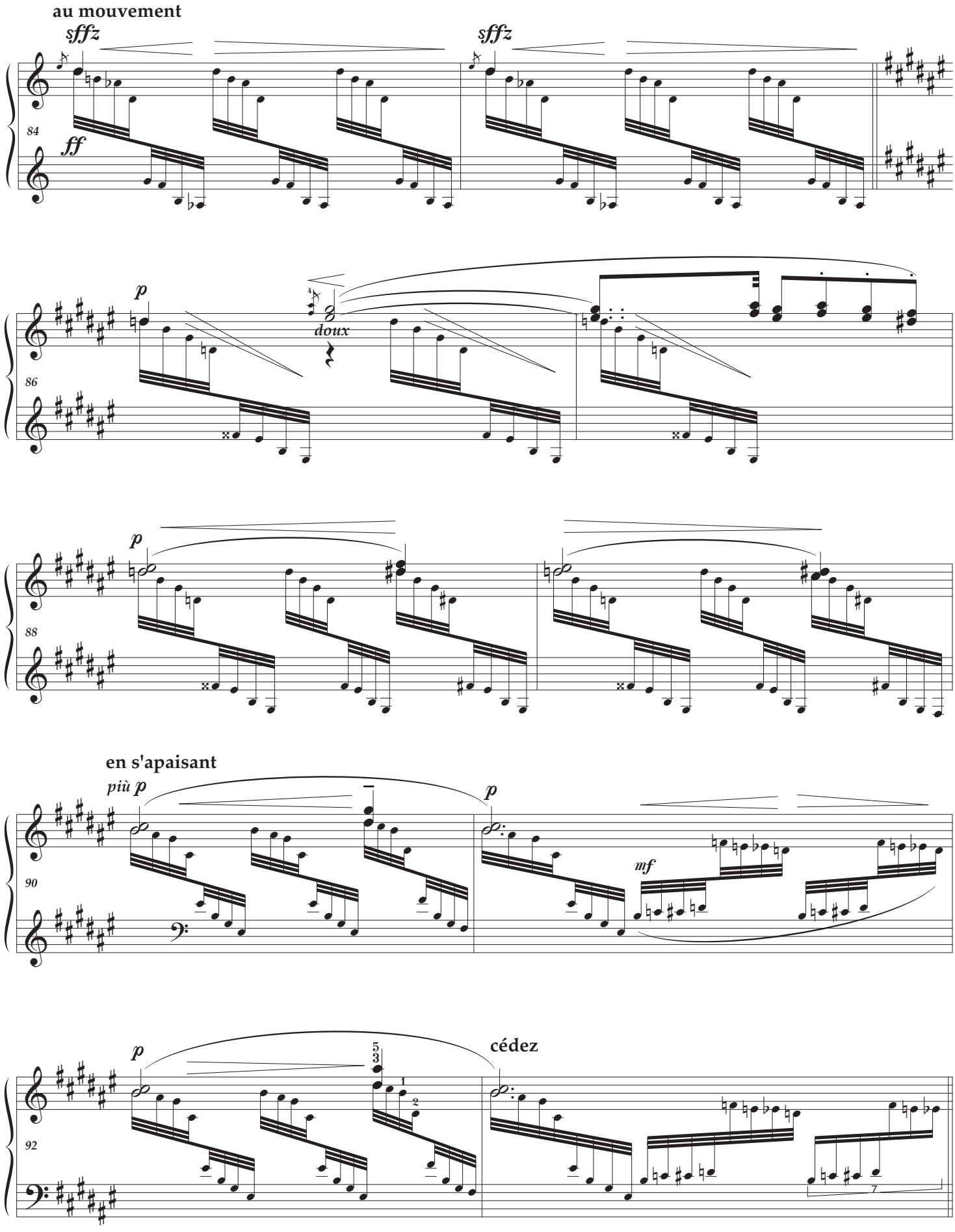

32
34
8va
p
36
8va
m.s.
m.d.
m.s.
38
f
41
p
8va


43
mf expressif
8va
expressif et sans rigueur
45
p
mf
Sost. Ped
au mouvement
47
cresc. molto
serrez
49
au mouvement précédent
51
f
Sost. Ped


8va
p
retenu
4
m.s.
m.d.
53
cresc.
3
55
f
56
sffz
staccato
pp
58
61


molto pp
64
la basse un peu en dehors
pp
66
68
crescendo
70
molto crescendo
f
72


rubato
ff
74
f
f
76
rubato
f
78
f
au mouvement
8va
sfffz
ff rapide
80
retenu
arraché
più ff
8vb
au mouvement
8va
ff rapide
82
retenu
più ff
8vb


au mouvement
sffz
sffz
84
ff
p
doux
86
p
88
en s'apaisant
più p
p
mf
90
p
cédez
92

commencer au-dessous du mouvement

pp scherzando

94

5

au mouvement et en serrant jusqu'à la fin

cresc.

più cresc.

f

dimin.

p

Modéré

95

pp

retenu

96

più pp

8va

ppp

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- The bracketed metronome speed appears in the original Durand edition

Duration: 4'50

- The sostenuto pedal suggestions are editorial
- **14/15** the LH accompaniment has been slightly 'rearranged'
- **39** I believe that the 3rd beat A flat and B flat may be an error, corrected here to naturals
- **94** This *scherzando* passage sounds rather fine if played with some clarity with minimum pedal

aussi léger que possible	as light as possible
marqué	marked
capricieux et souple	capricious and not in strict time
sans rigueur	rhythmically free
serrez	accelerate
la basse un peu en dehors	the bass slightly in relief
arraché	wrenched
en s'apaisant	becoming calm
doux	*dolce*
cédez	yield
commencez au dessous du mouvement	begin with a slower tempo
en serrant jusqu'à la fin	accelerating until the end