WILLIAM
• BOLCOM

# 12 ETUDES for PIANO

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Recorded by the composer for Advance Recordings (FGRS–14)

# Performance Notes

12 ETUDES FOR PIANO, while dealing with almost all aspects of piano technique, concentrates on control of textures, dynamics, pedals and the use of the strings of the piano. The work is dedicated to Mme. BERTHE PONCY JACOBSON, who suggested the composition of these etudes, and Mr. JAMES BRUCE MATHER, in honor of his marriage on November 7, 1964.

First performed in Paris (1965) by the composer.

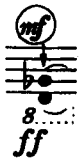
All twelve of the etudes may be played as a single work, or each etude may be played as a separate selection, or each book of four etudes may be played as a unit.

## GENERAL DIRECTIONS

1. Dynamics: = sharp staccato

= normal staccato

= portamento




and similarly indicated dynamics pertain only to the note to which the arrow points.

2. Pedal markings:

loud pedal = *Ped.* ——————— ✱

slowly off pedal = *Ped.* ——————— ✱

flutter pedal = *Ped.* ——————— ✱

up half pedal = *Ped.* ——————— ½

half pedal = (½ *Ped.*)

sostenuto pedal = *S. P.* ———————

3. Pauses: = long

= normal

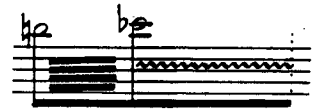
= short

4. *accel.* → → → *rit.* ← ← ←

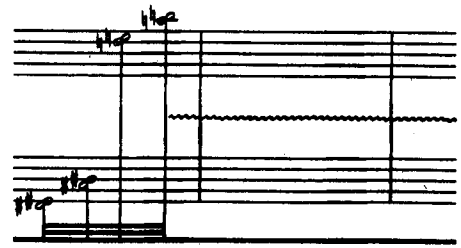
The spacing of arrows indicates the degree of *accel.* or *rit.;* close together = greater, far apart = gradual

Confine the *accel.* or *rit.* within the bracket.

5. Tremolo:



and



6. Playing on the inside of the piano: Etudes 6 and 12 utilize this technique. The player should familiarize himself with the construction of the piano so as to make it easier to locate the individual strings.

7. Additional directions are to be found throughout the score.

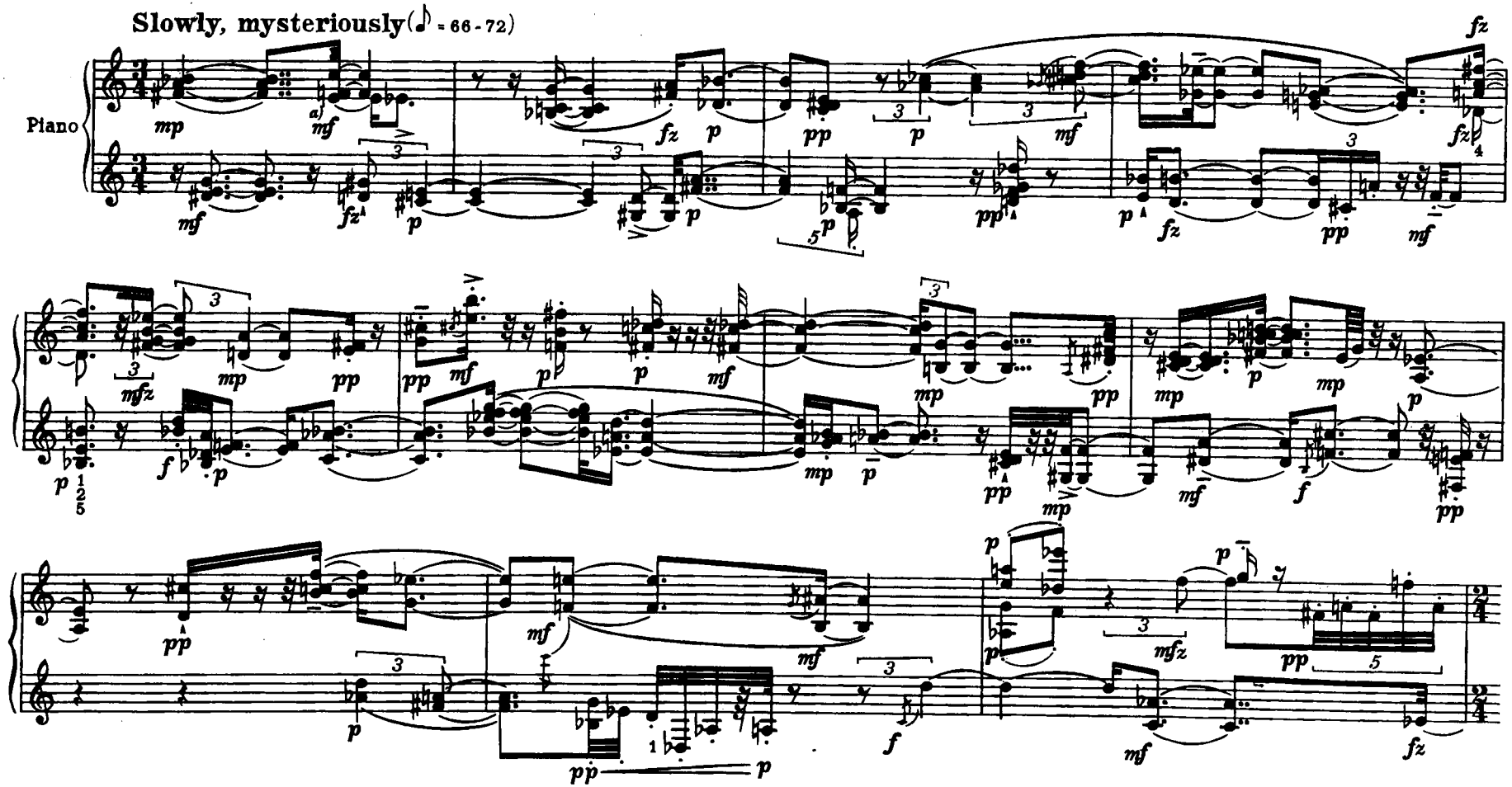
# 12 ETUDES FOR PIANO

## Book I

William Bolcom

### 1.

Contrasts of touch and dynamics; over and under hand technique in a small area.




a) Accidentals apply to notes within the unit of beat and/or beamed note-groups, unless otherwise indicated.

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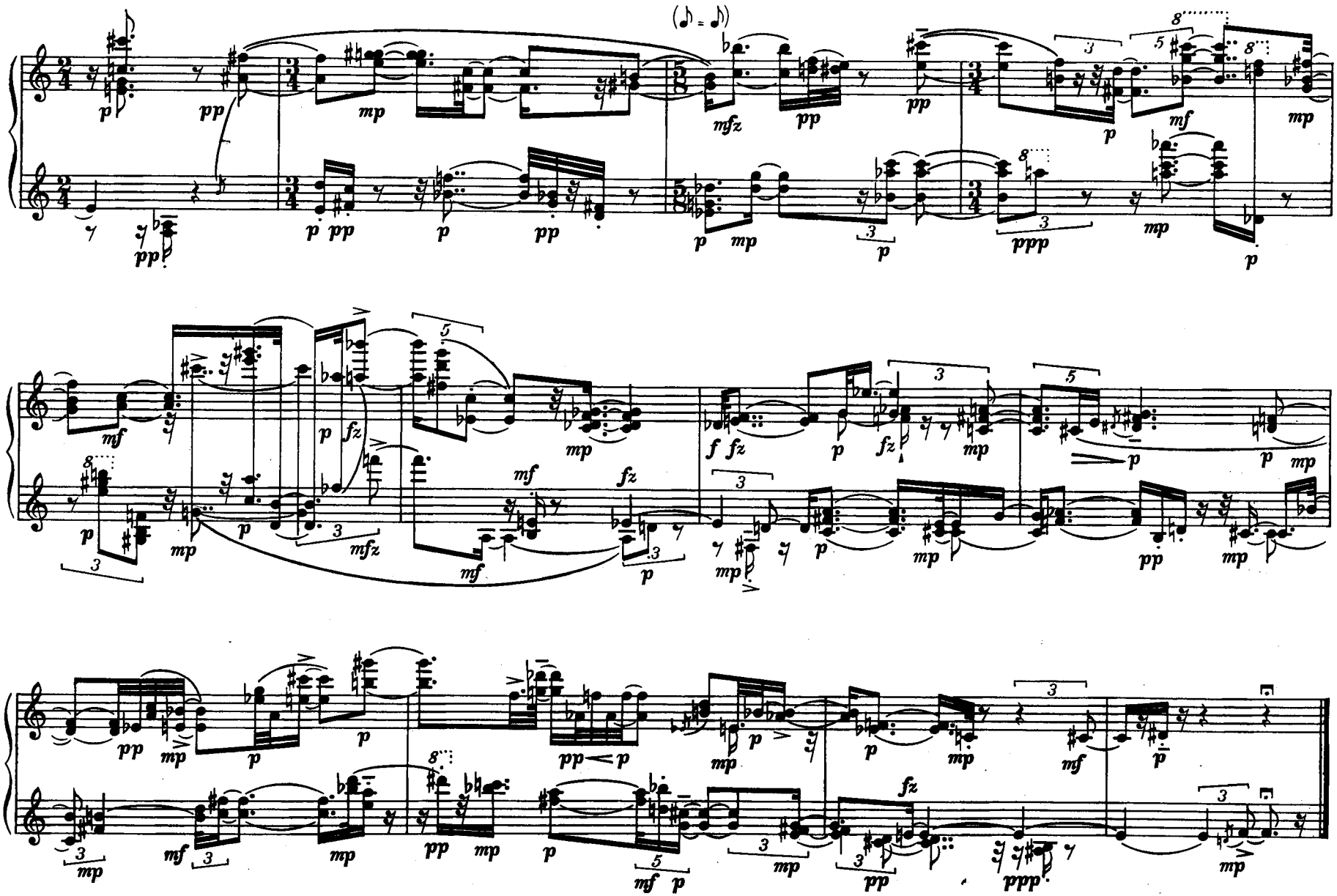
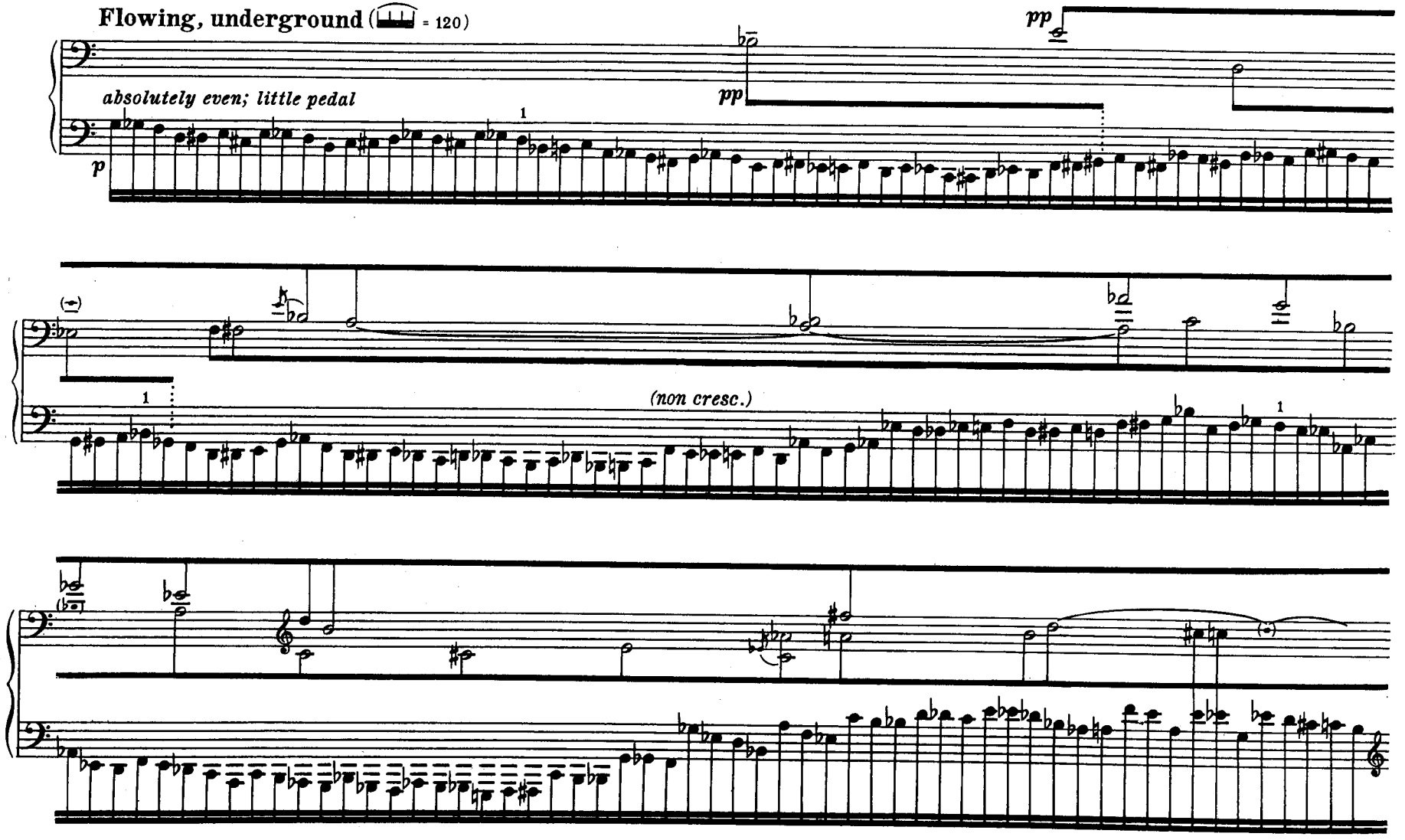
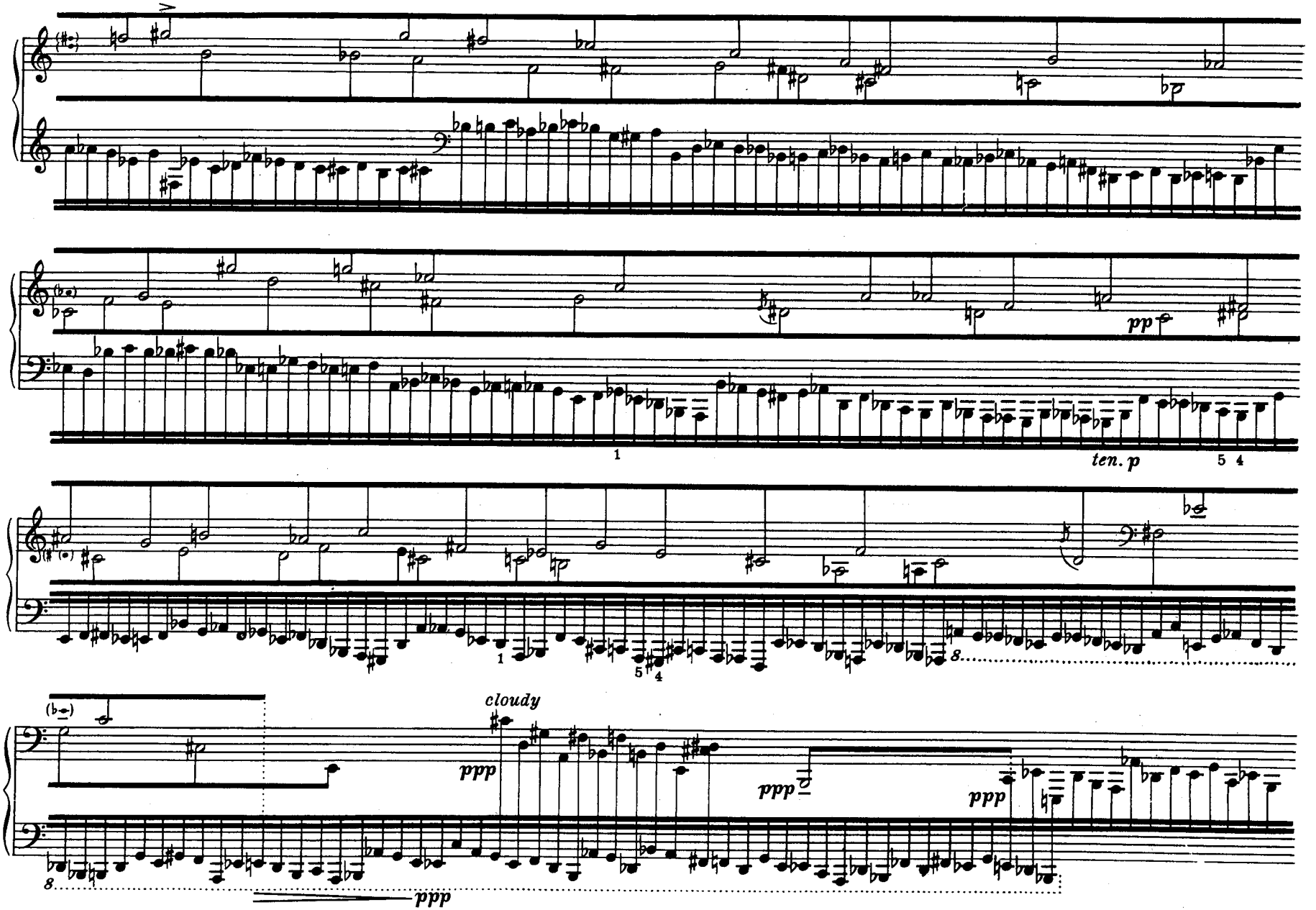
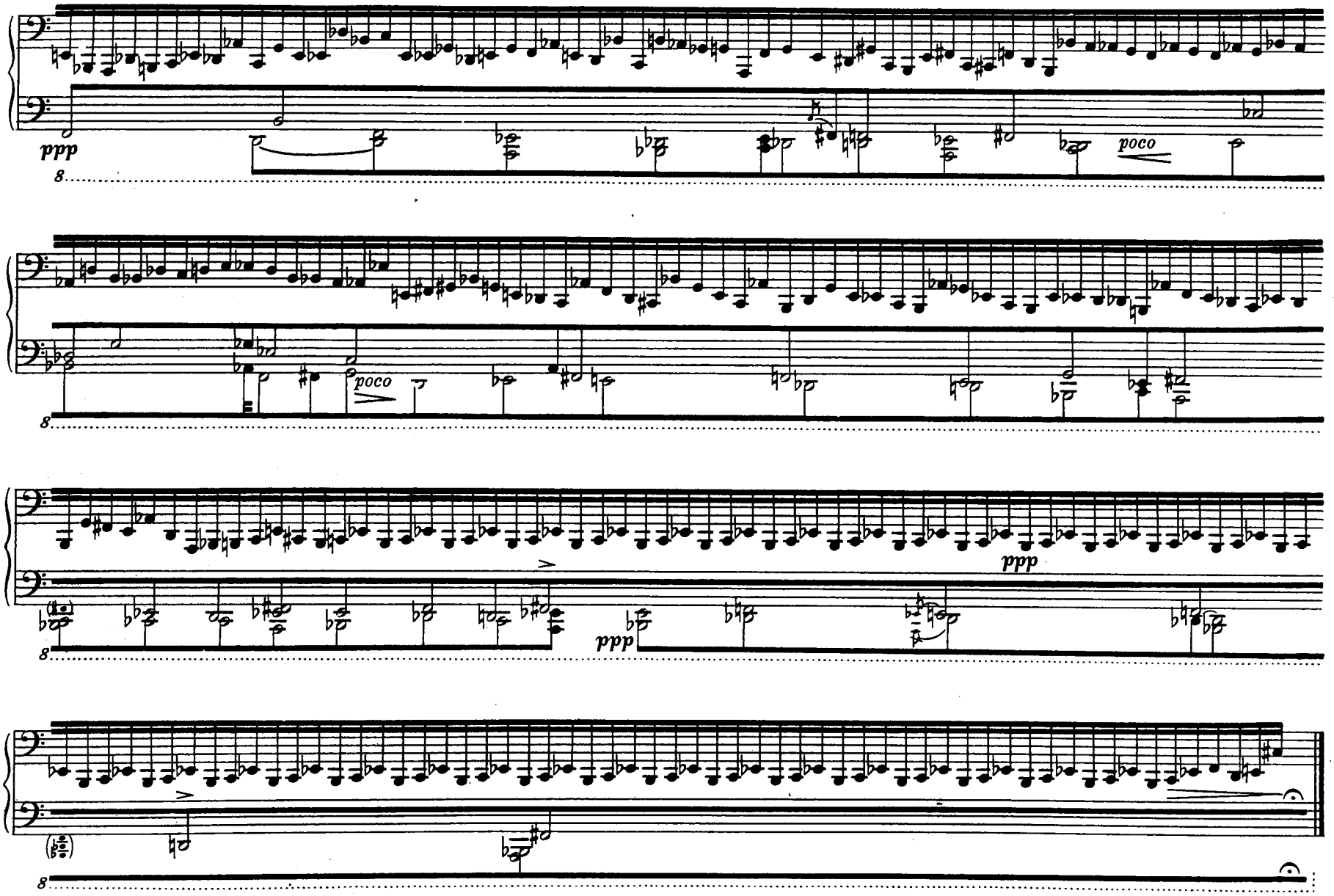


# 2.

Smoothness of even passagework in both hands. Notation is proportional. Place long notes against running notes; placement of note, not stem, gives point of attack. Accidentals apply only to notes they immediately precede, although courtesy cancellations are provided.

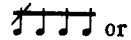



pp
ten. p
cloudy
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp


ppp
poco
poco
ppp
ppp

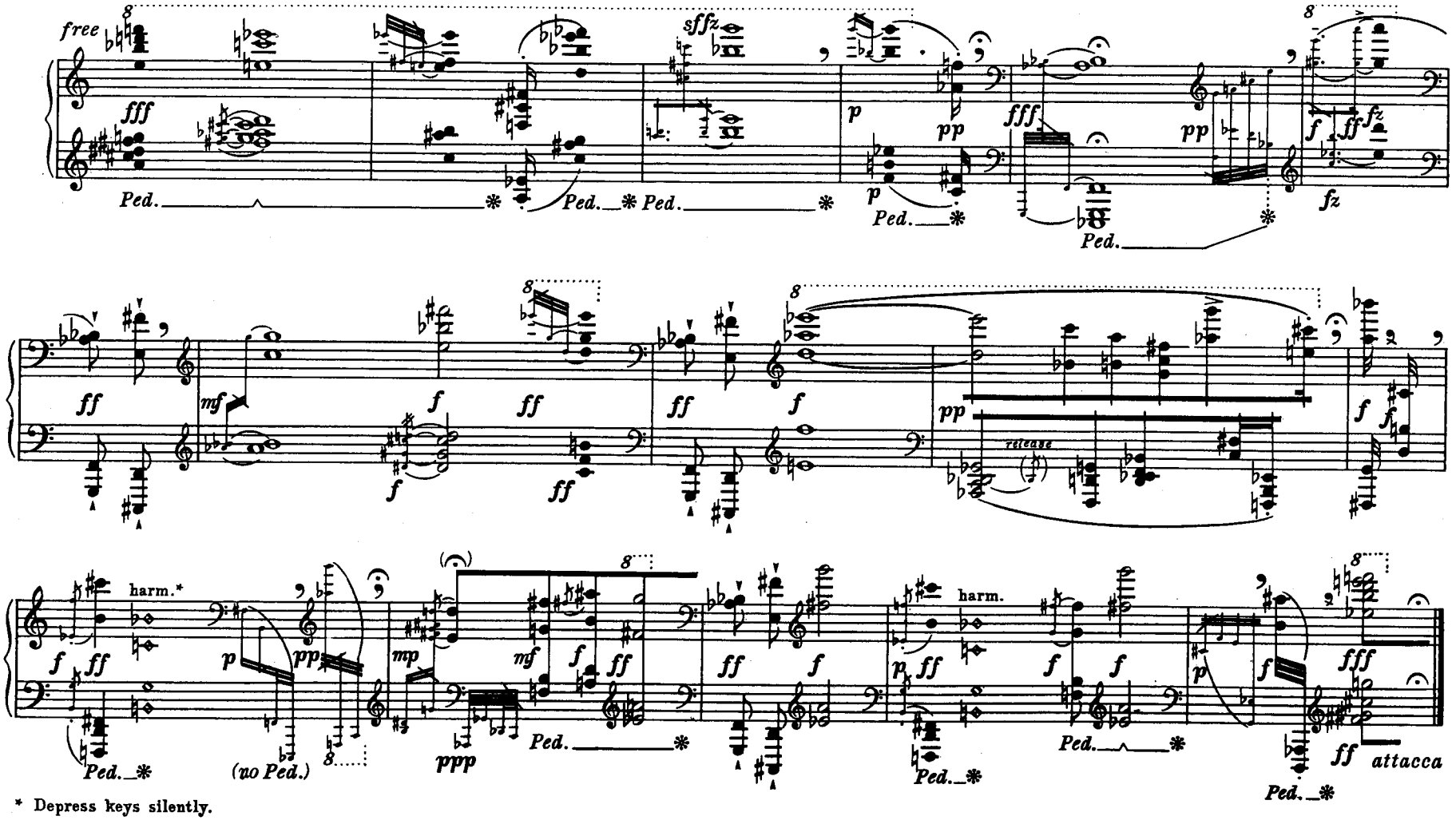
# 3.

A study in sonorities. Notation is free and proportional, e.g.: 𝅝 is longer than 𝅗𝅥, 𝅗𝅥 is longer than ♩, ♩ is longer than ♪, ♪ is longer than 𝅘𝅥𝅯; otherwise, look to spacing on beam.

 or means grace-note groups without regularity of rhythm;  means with regularity of rhythm.

means longer values, played without regularity, roughly according to the spacing of the notes.

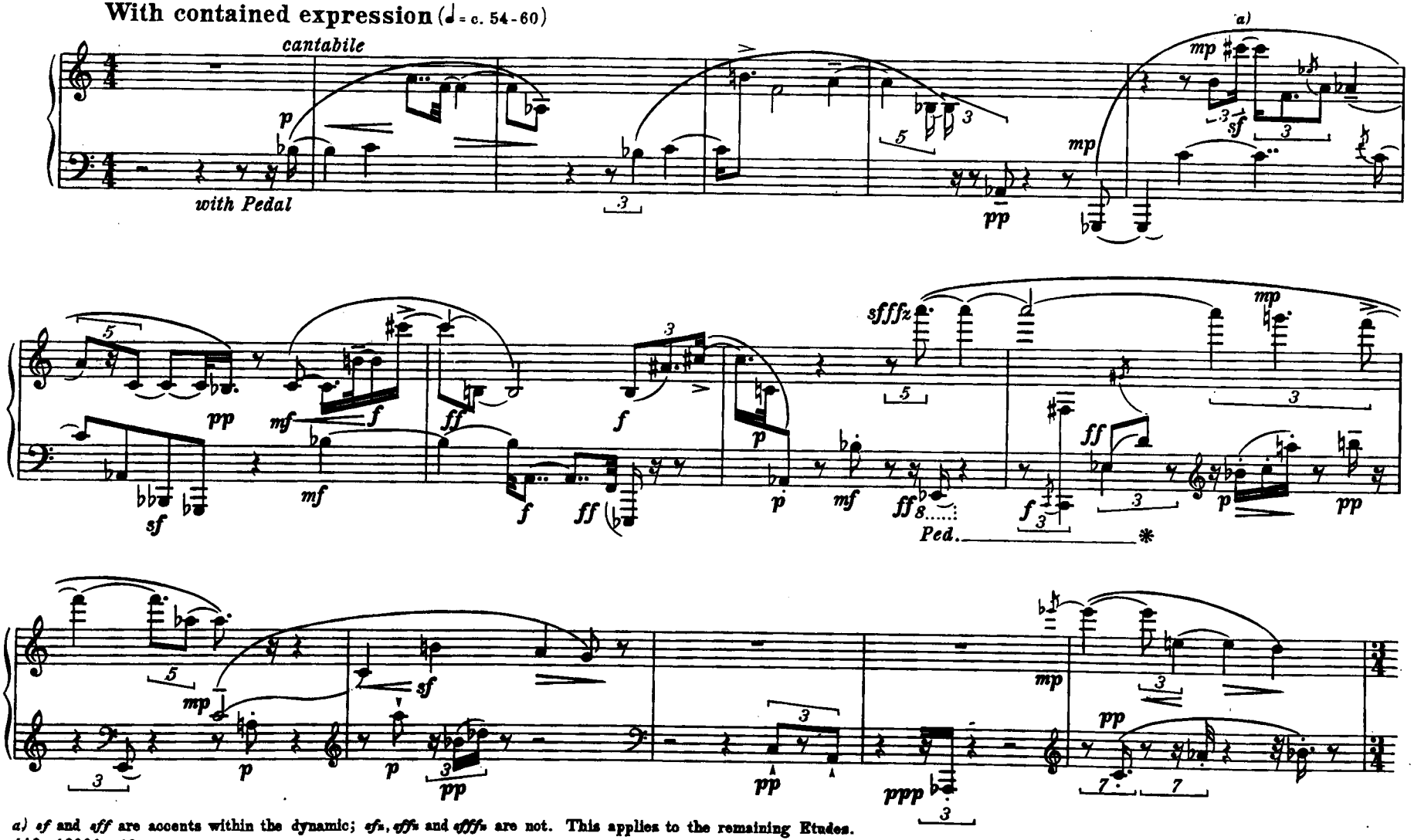
**Sonorously**
**Moderato**



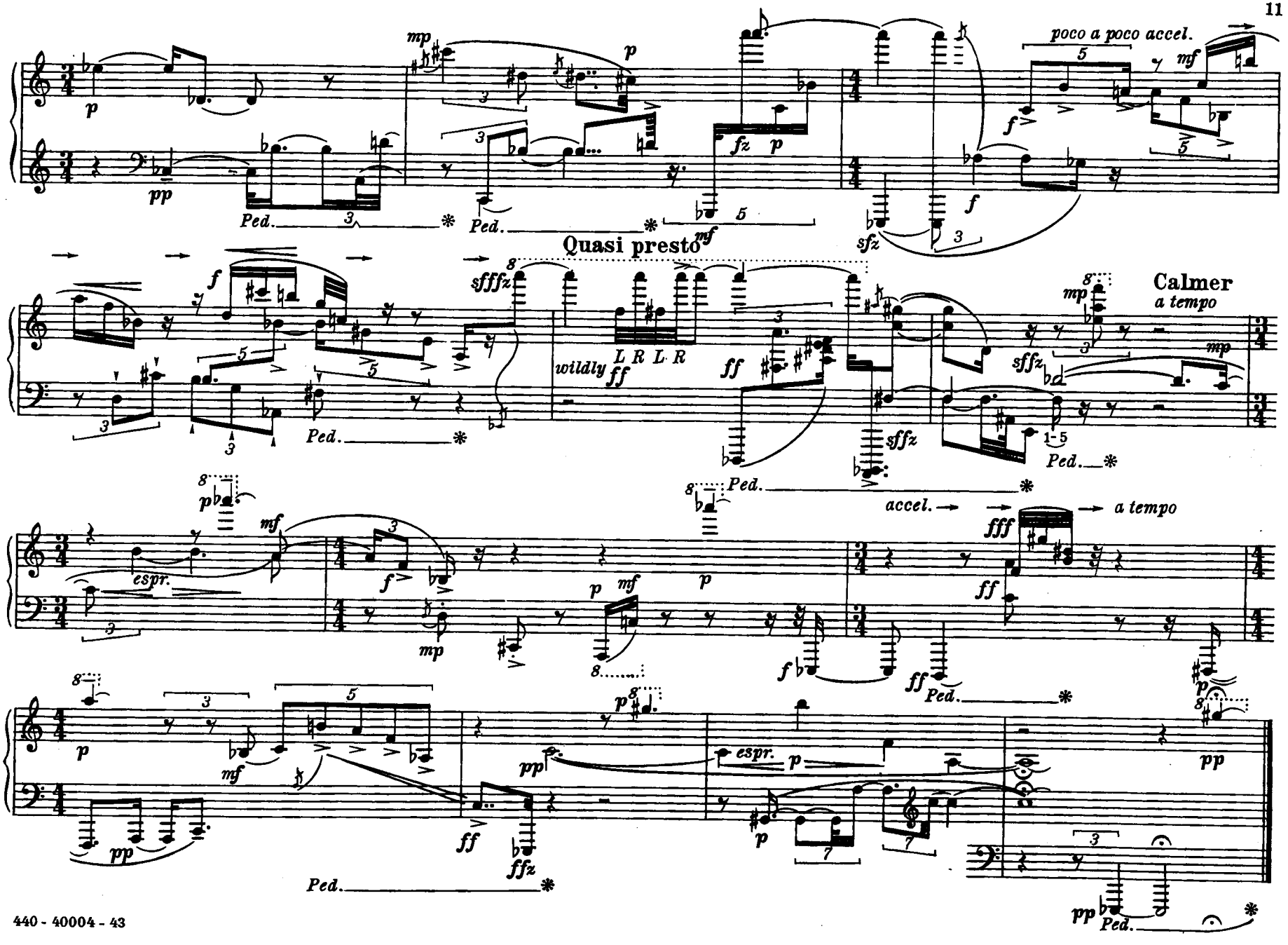

* Depress keys silently.

# 4.

A sustained line against various types of accompaniment.



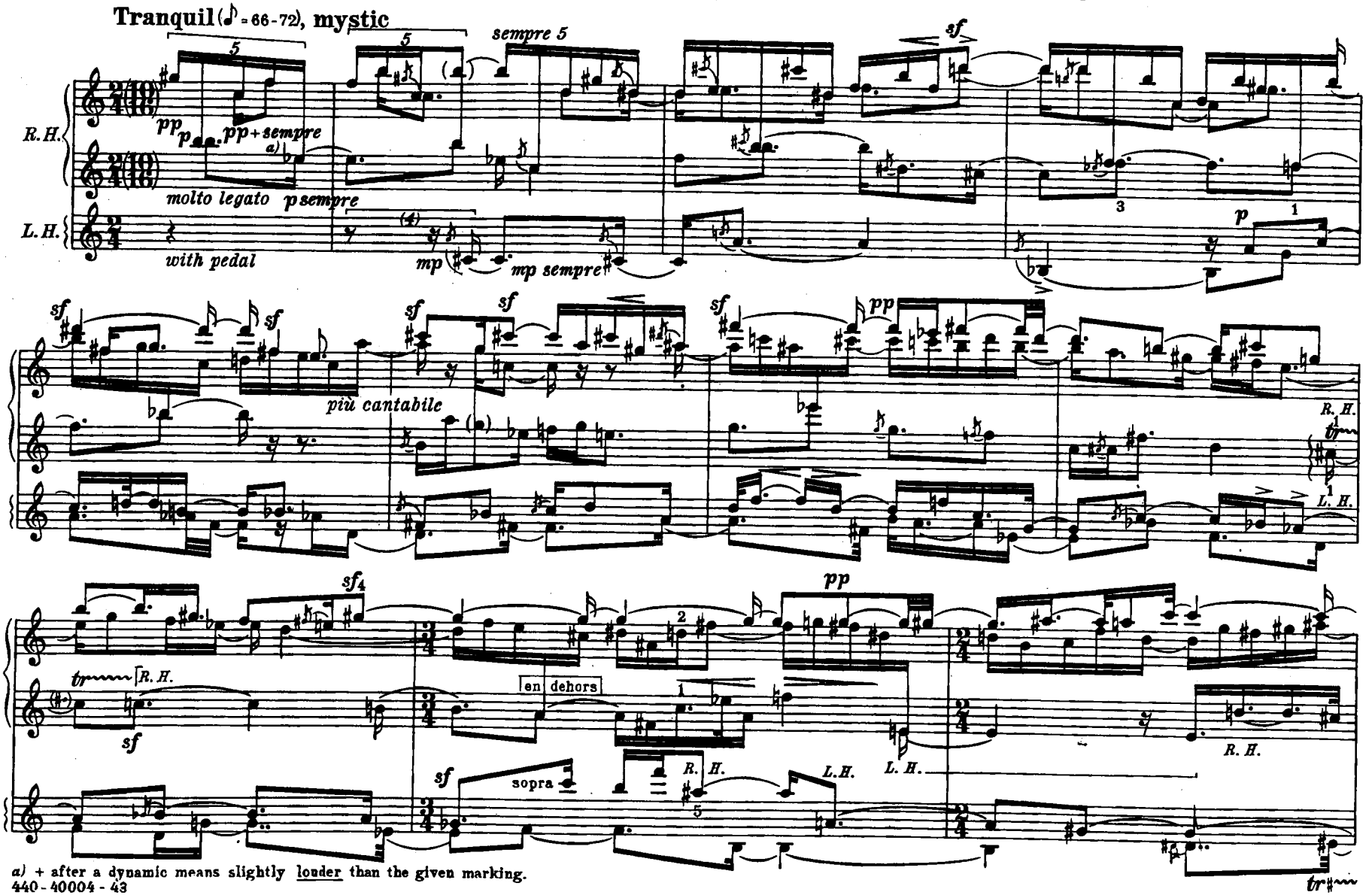

*a) sf* and *sfff* are accents within the dynamic; *sfz*, *sffz* and *sffffz* are not. This applies to the remaining Etudes.


poco a poco accel.
Quasi presto
wildly
L R L R
Calmer
a tempo
accel.
a tempo
espr.
Ped.

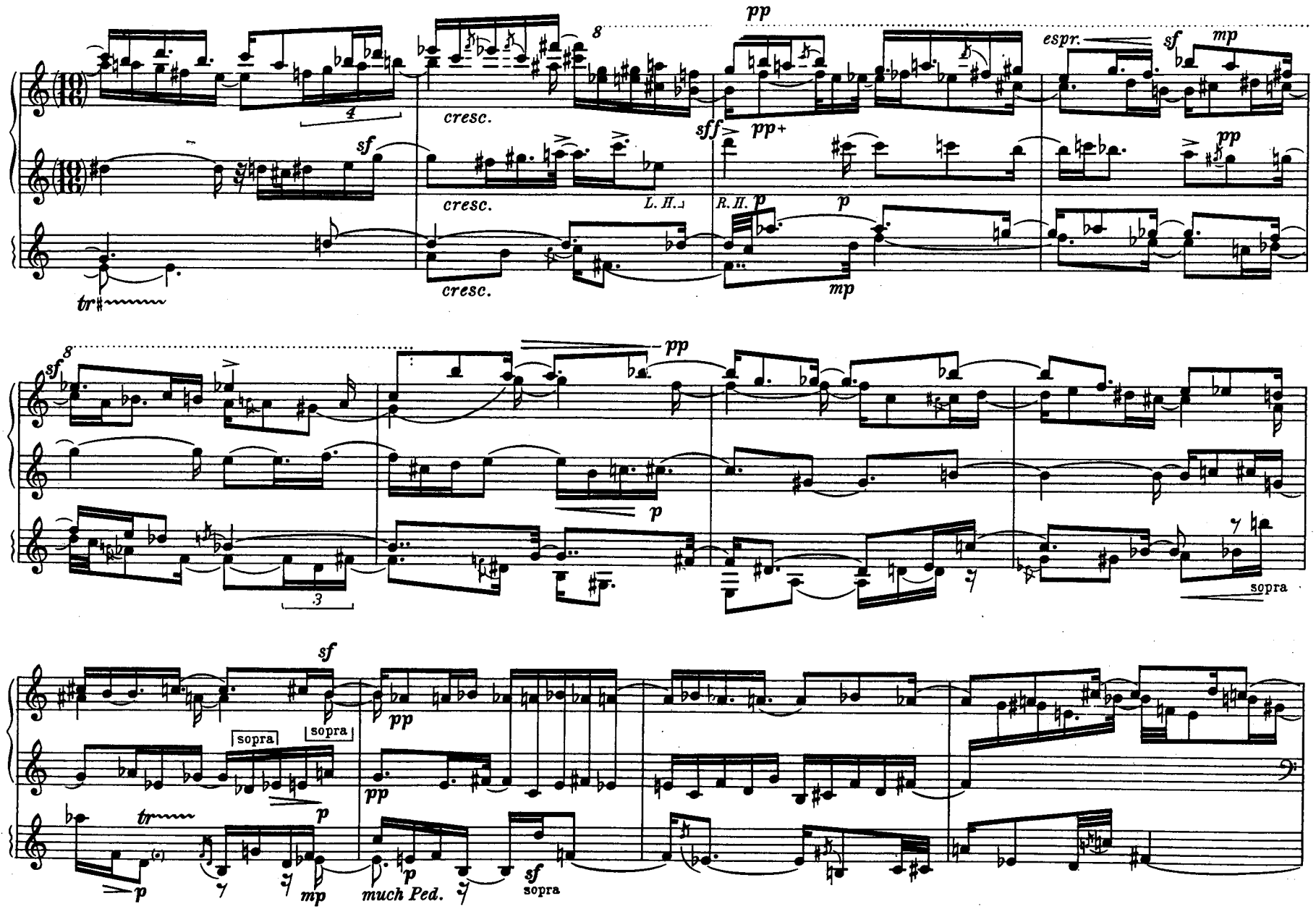
# Book II

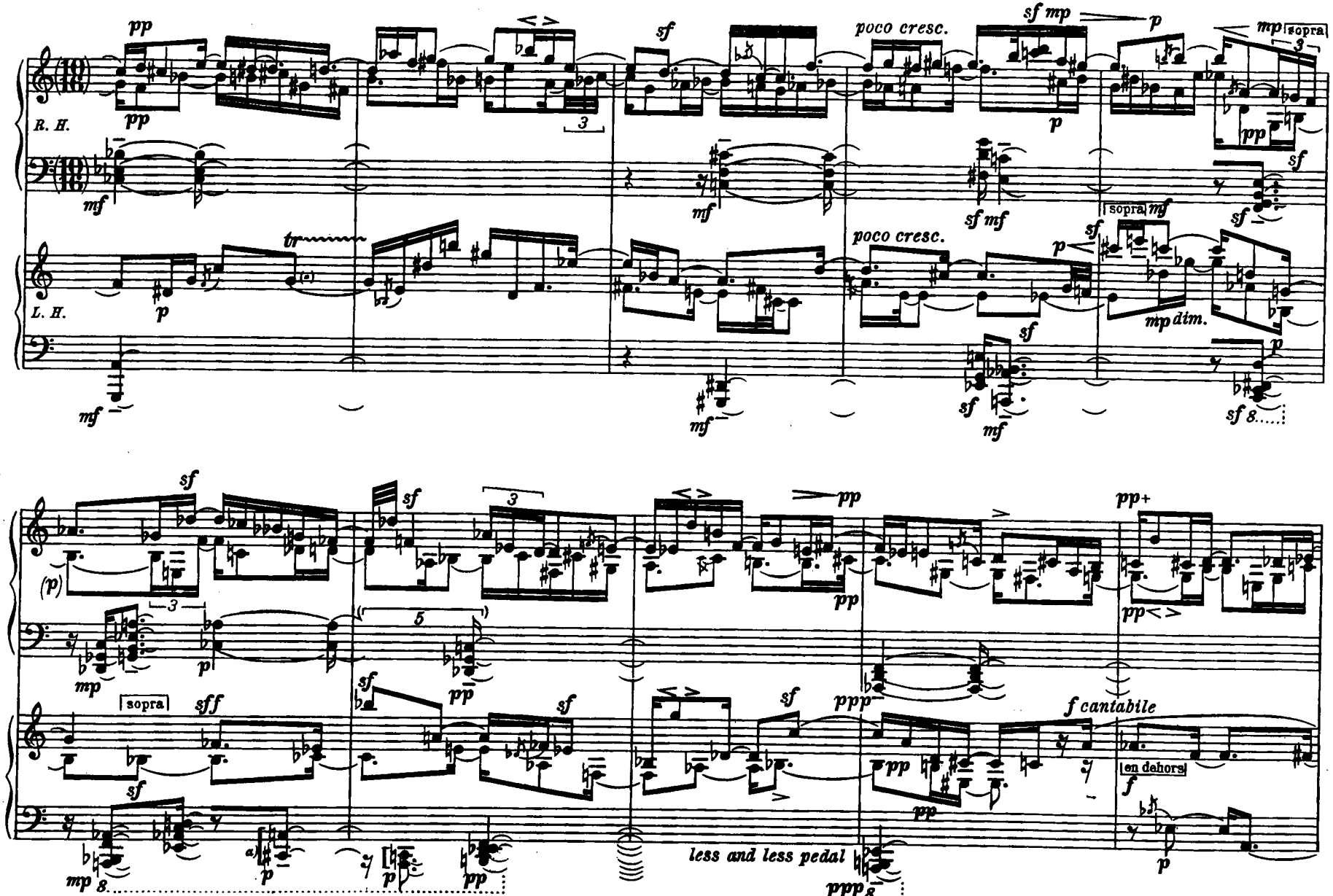
## 5.

5 against 4 rhythm throughout. Also, sustained line against accompaniment, many voices moving contrapuntally. Use of pedals.

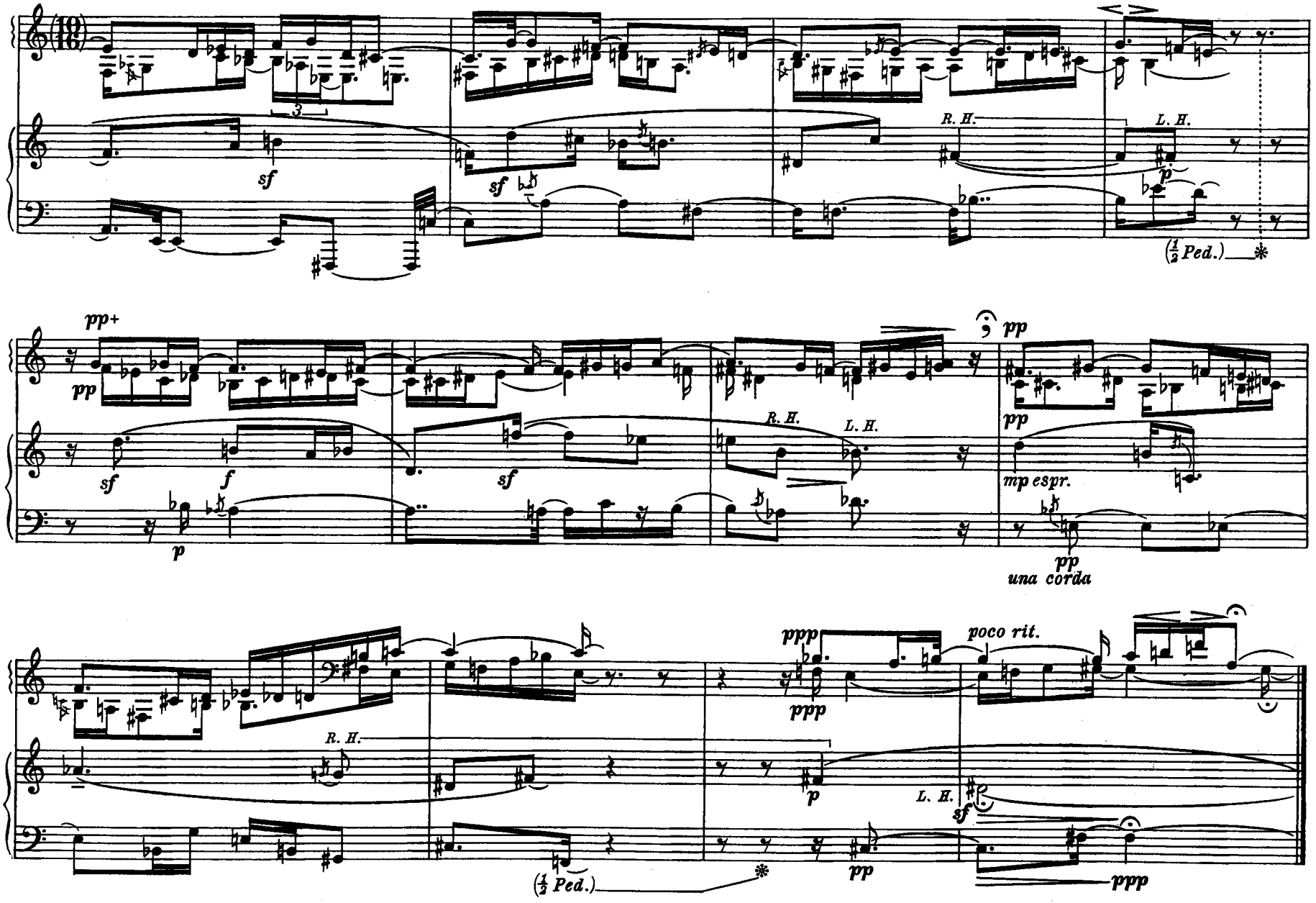



a) + after a dynamic means slightly louder than the given marking.


pp
8
cresc.
sff
pp+
espr.
sf
mp
sf
cresc.
L. H.
R. H.
p
p
pp
tr
cresc.
mp
8
sf
pp
p
3
sopra
sf
sopra
sopra
pp
pp
tr
p
p
mp
much Ped.
p
sf
sopra



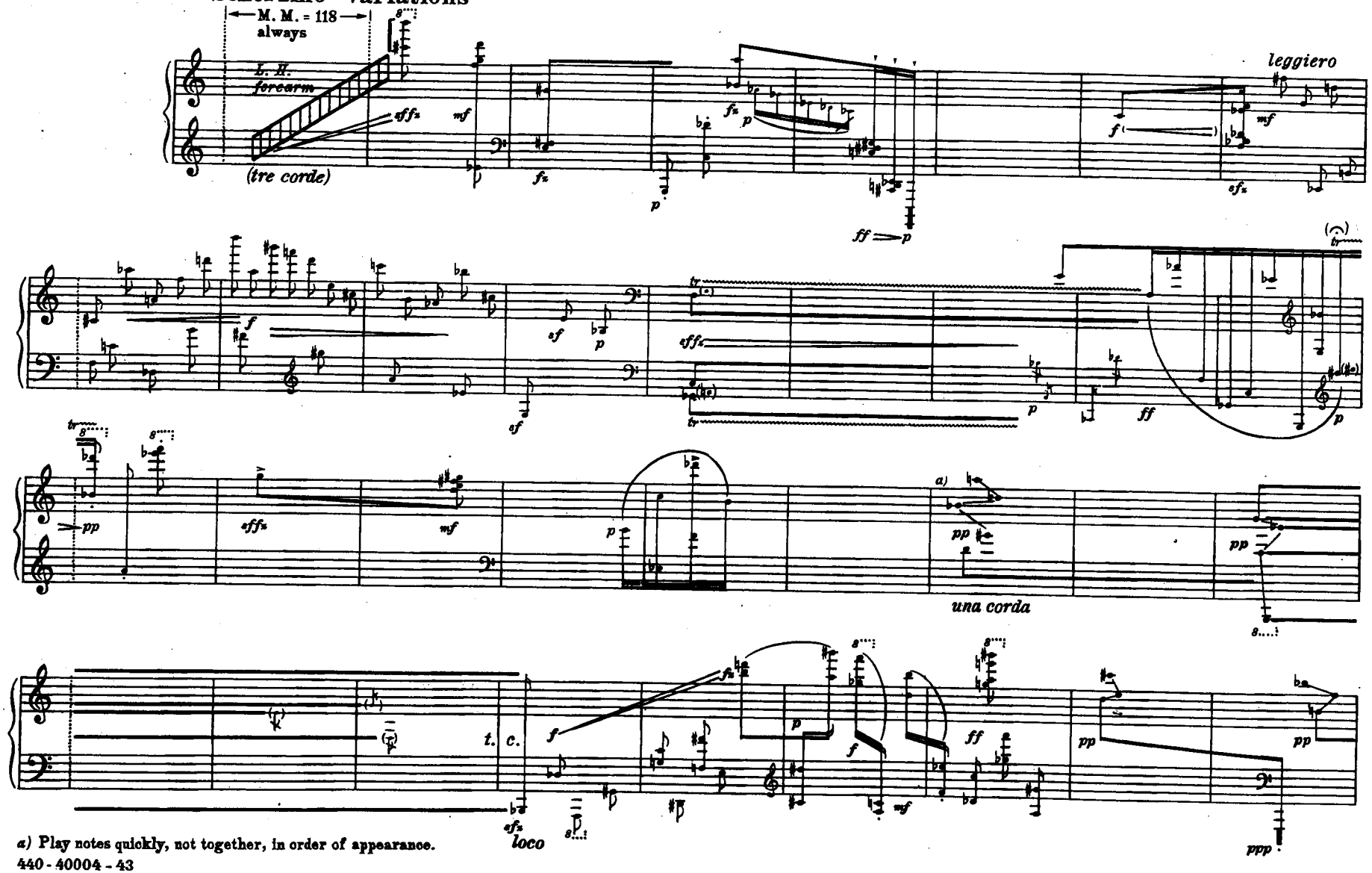

a) Cluster: all notes chromatically within the given interval.


(10)
3
sf
sf
R. H.
L. H.
p
(½ Ped.)
*
pp+
pp
sf
f
p
sf
R. H.
L. H.
pp
pp
mp espr.
pp
una corda
R. H.
(½ Ped.)
*
ppp
ppp
poco rit.
p
L. H.
sf
pp
ppp

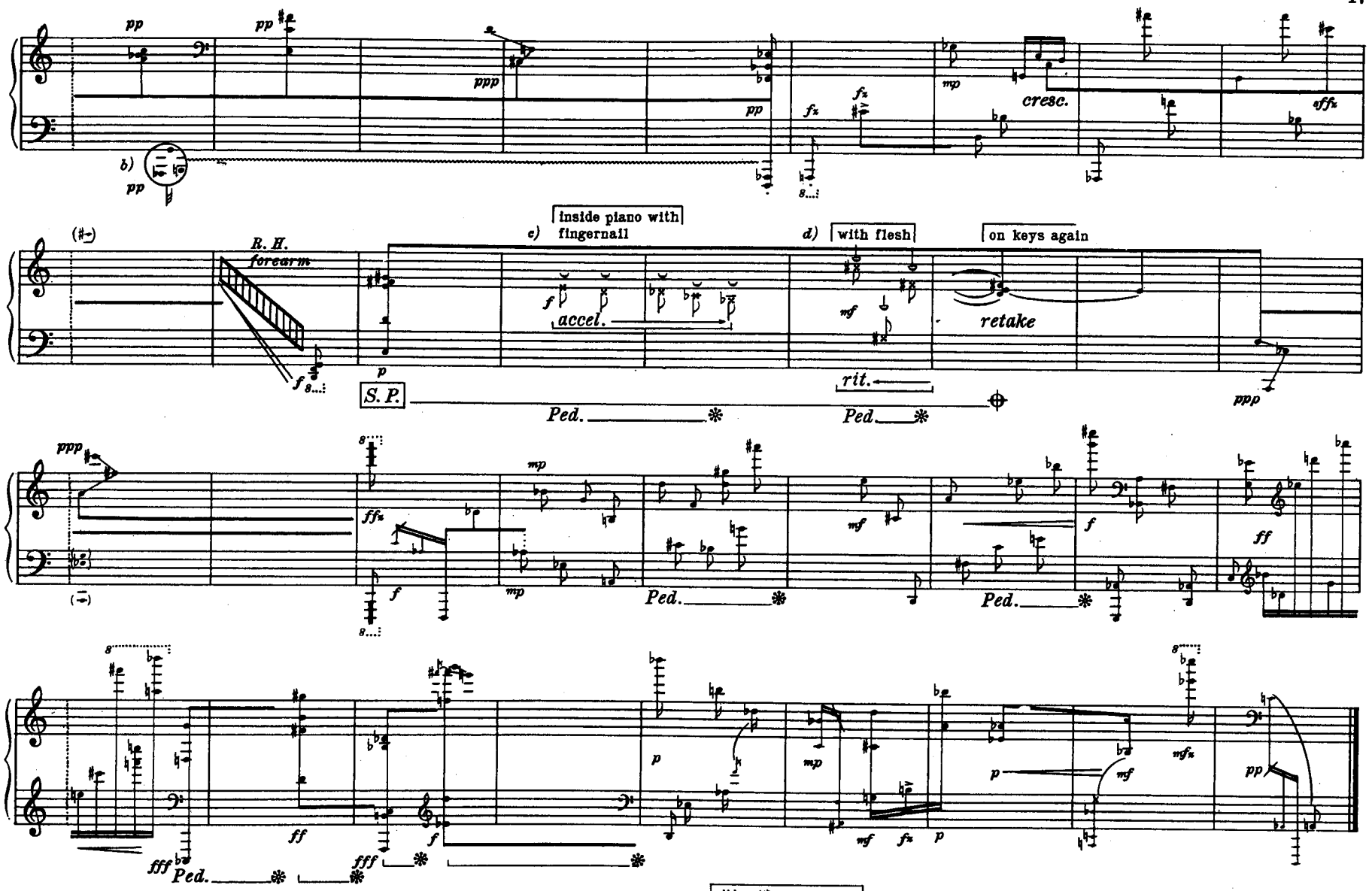
# 6.

Relative notation: all measures are equal; place notes within them according to spacing. Use of forearm in sweeping motion, elbow to wrist. Some use of inside of piano. ‡ means use the flat of the hand (actual notes are up to the performer).

## Scherzino - Variations




a) Play notes quickly, not together, in order of appearance.




b) ○ around several notes means to improvise quickly around the notes.
○ gives approximate values of notes.

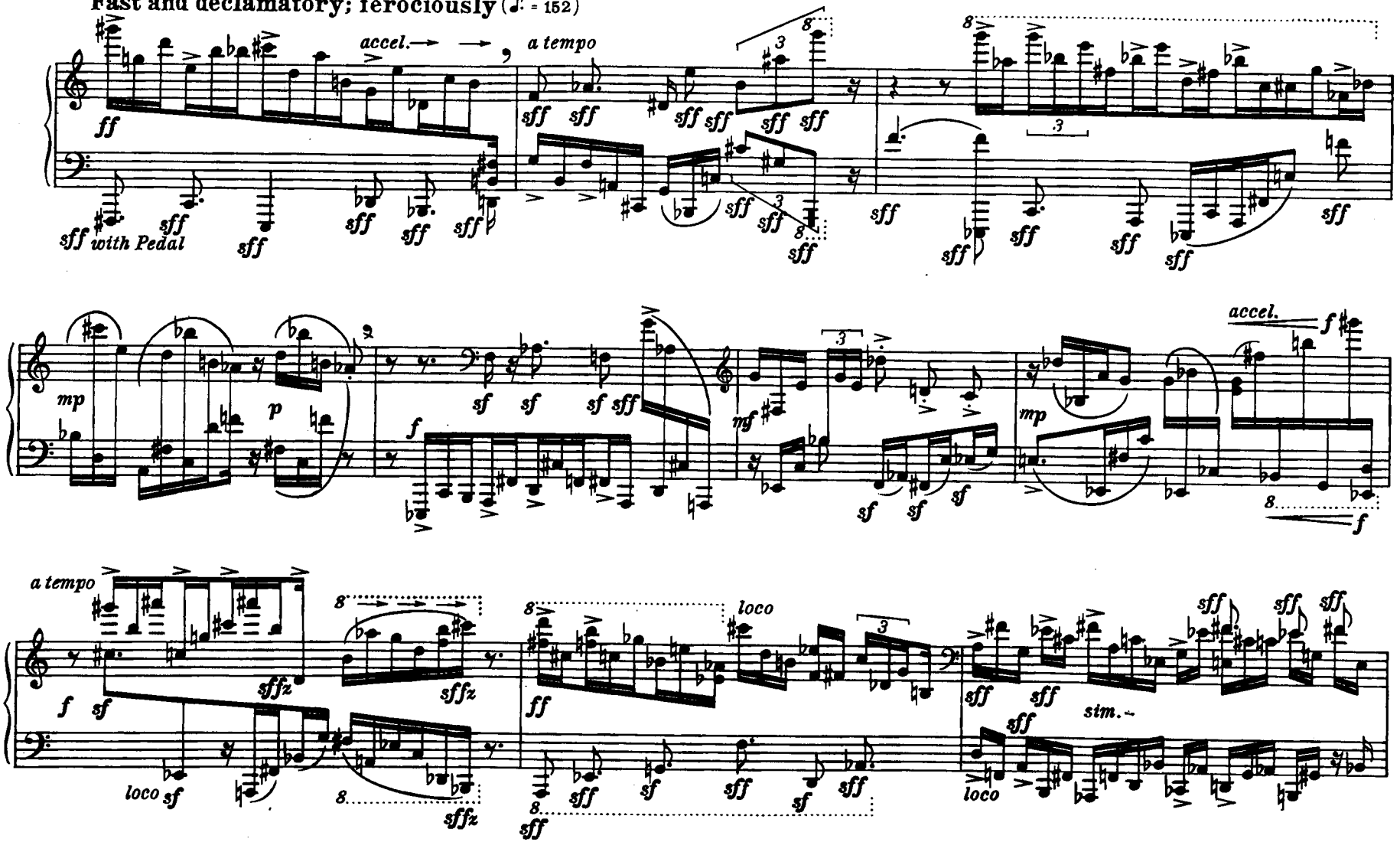
c) ossia: slide with metal or nail

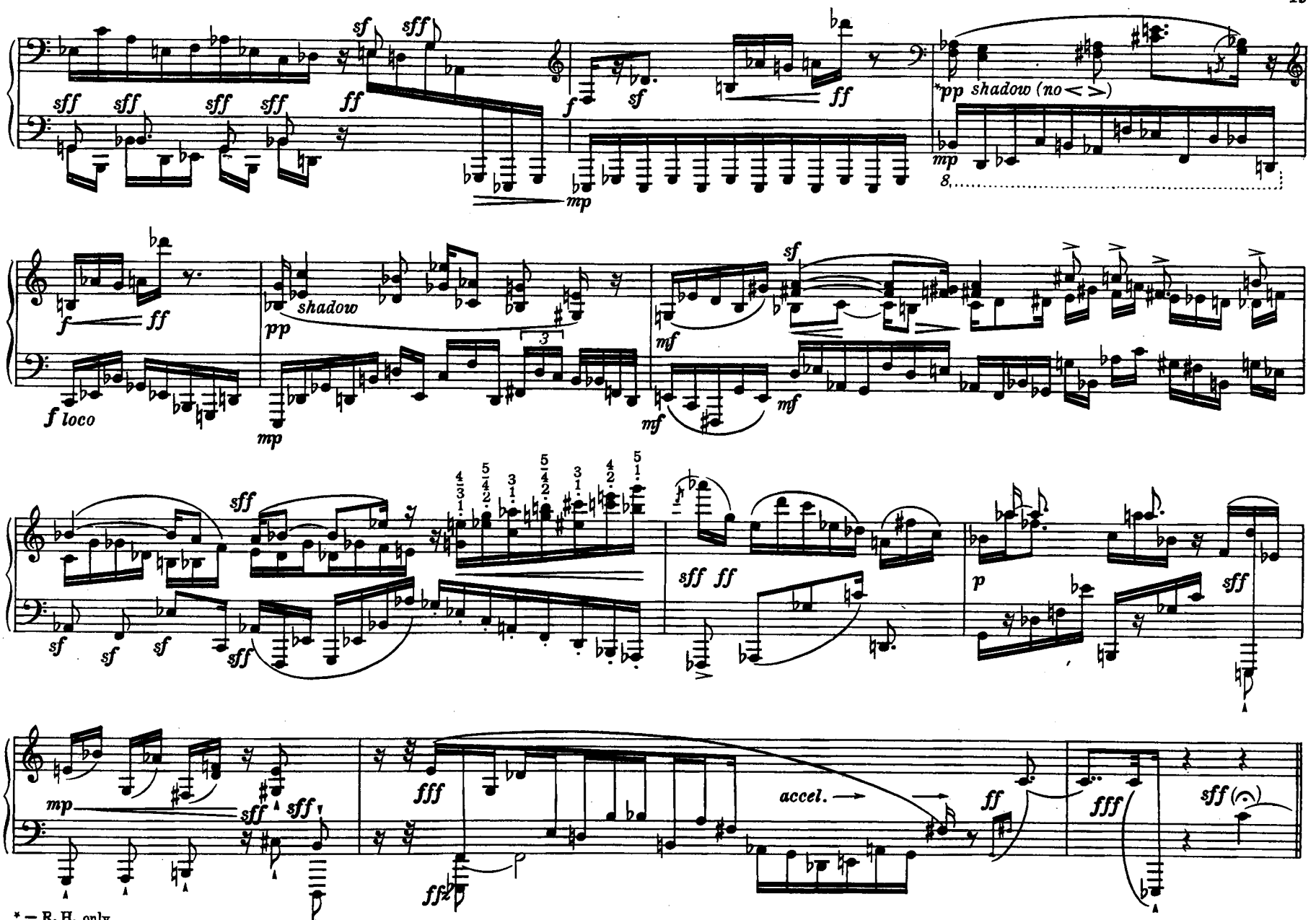
d) With fleshy pads of fingers.

# 7.

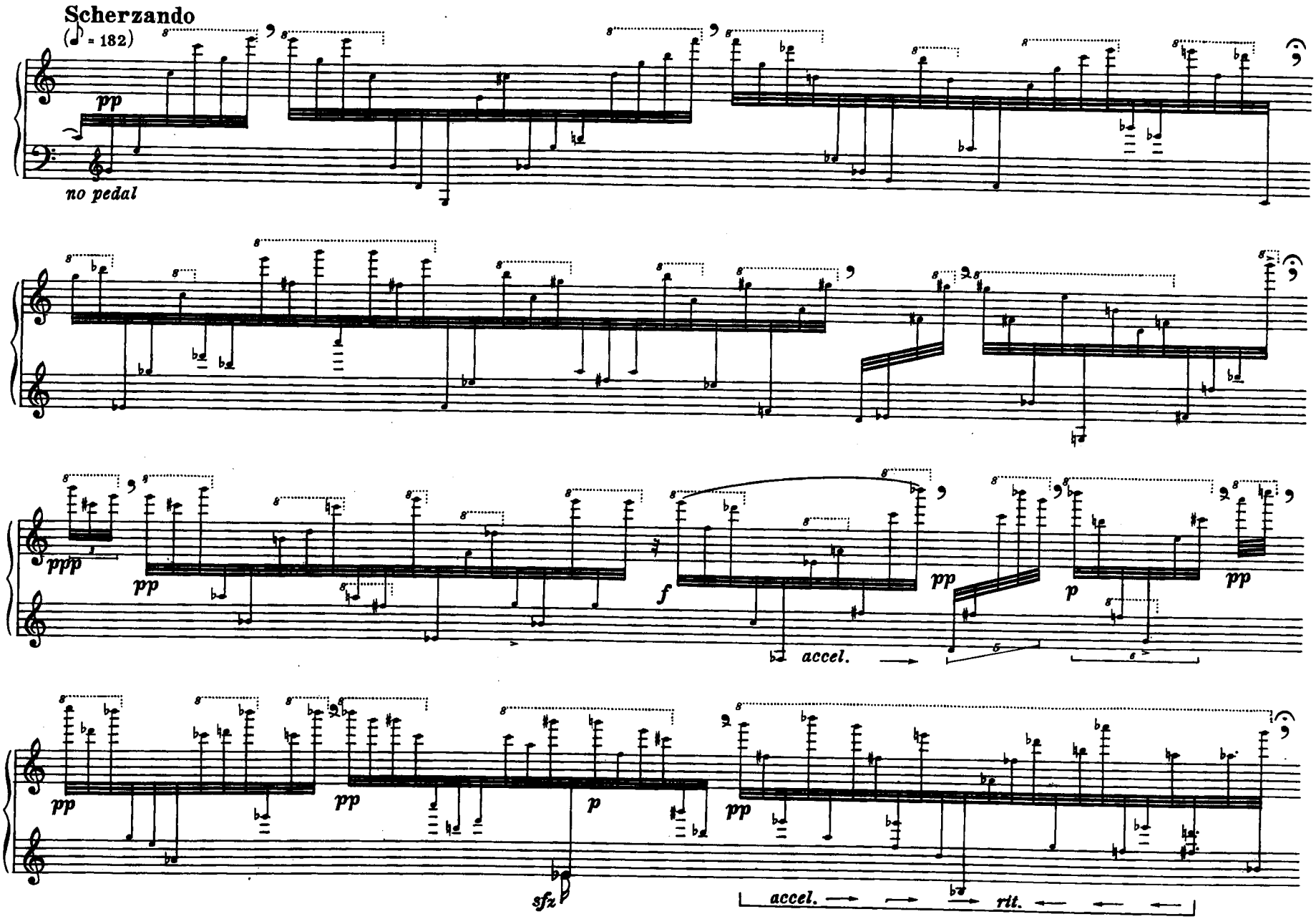
Hand shifting, lateral stretching and contracting without destroying hand position. In "Scherzando", smoothness of passage from one hand to the other. Sixteenth note is duration unit. Accidentals apply only within beamed group.

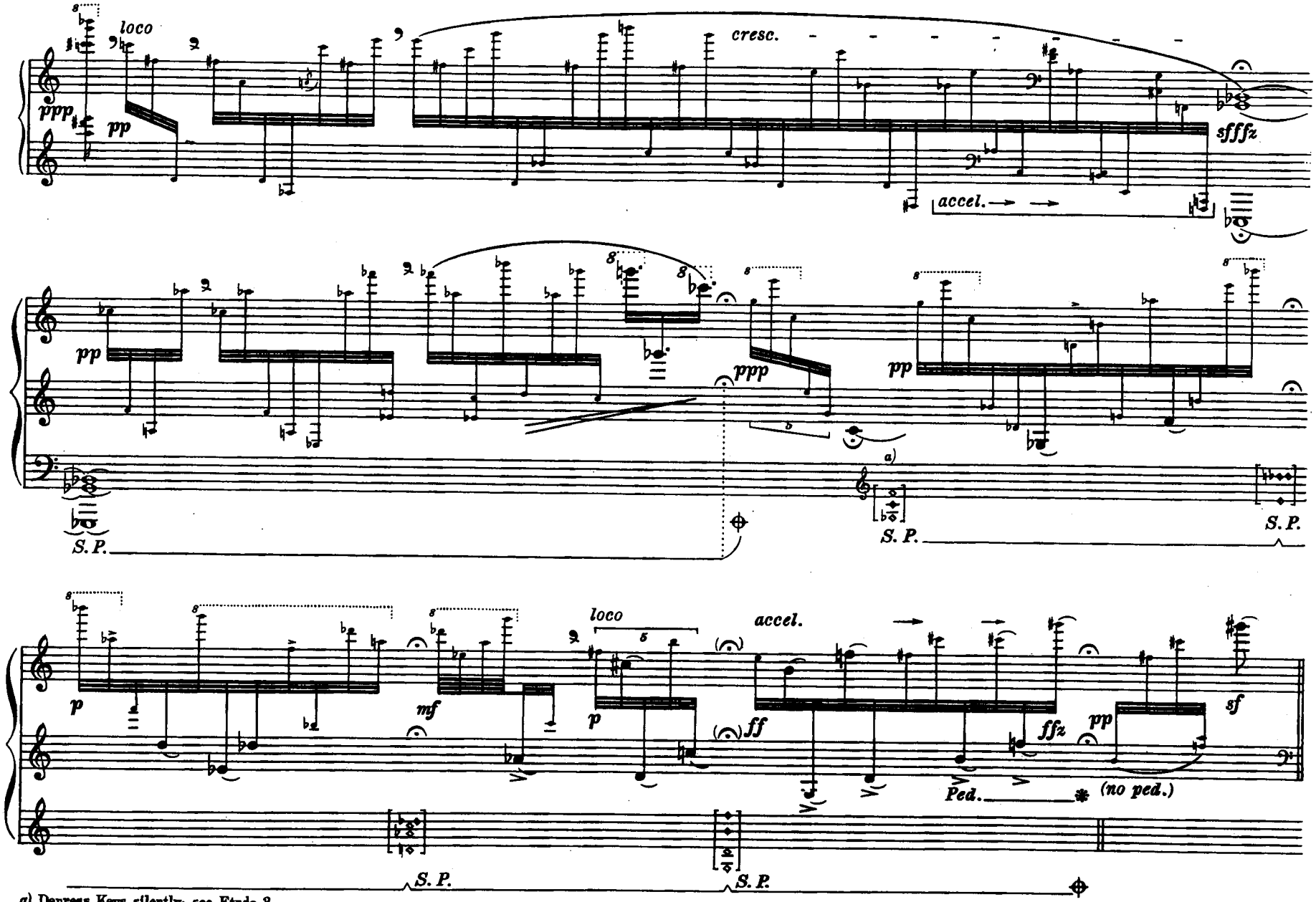
**Fast and declamatory; ferociously** (♩. = 152)



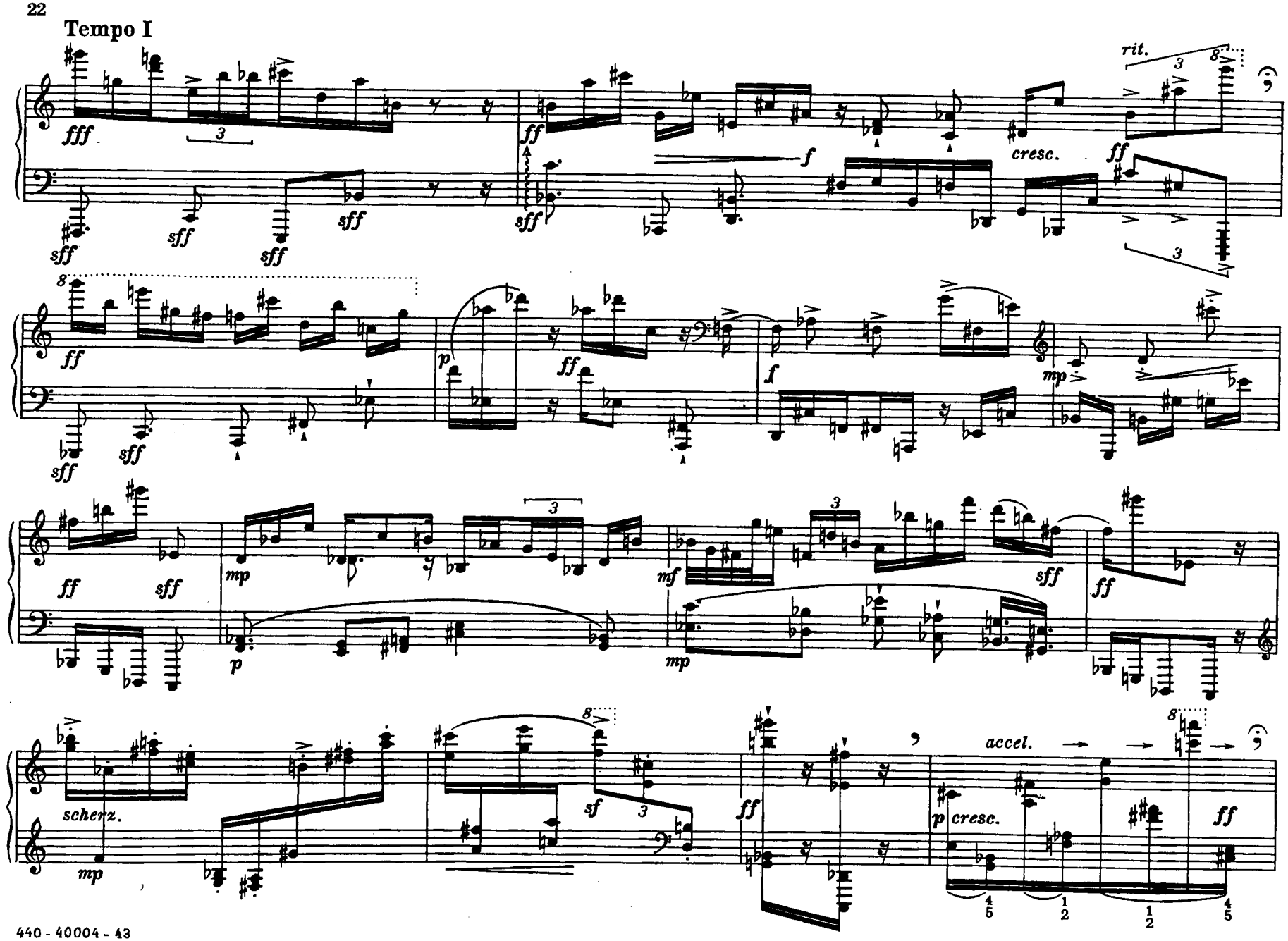

sf sff
sff sff sff sff ff
mp
f sf ff
*pp shadow (no < >)
mp
8
f ff
f loco
pp shadow
3
mp
mf sf
mf mf
sff
sf sf sf sff
sff ff
p sff
mp sff sff
fff
ff
accel.
ff
fff
sff

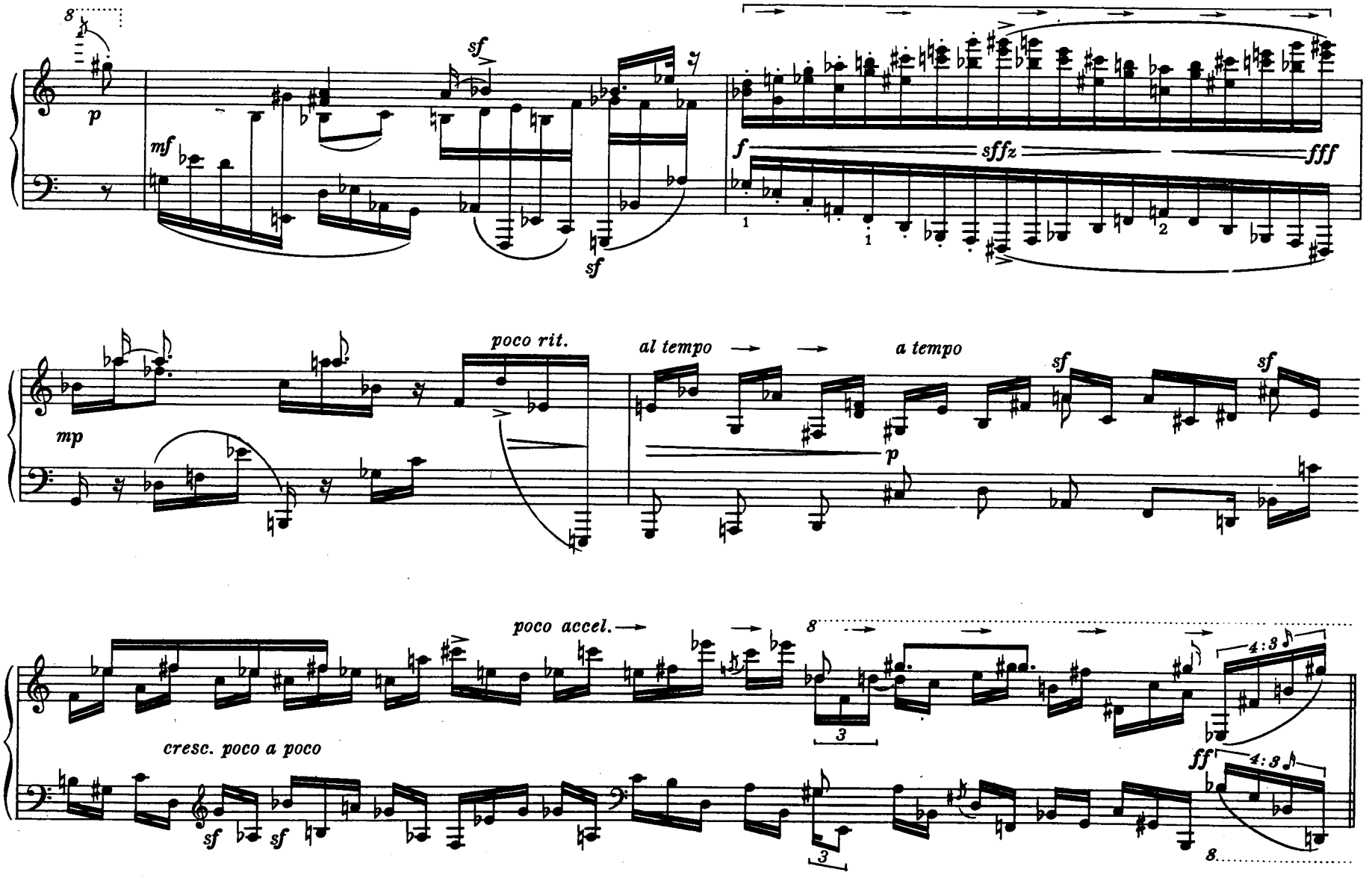
* — R. H. only


Scherzando
(♩. = 182)
pp
no pedal
ppp
pp
f
pp
p
pp
accel.
pp
pp
p
pp
sfz
accel.
rit.

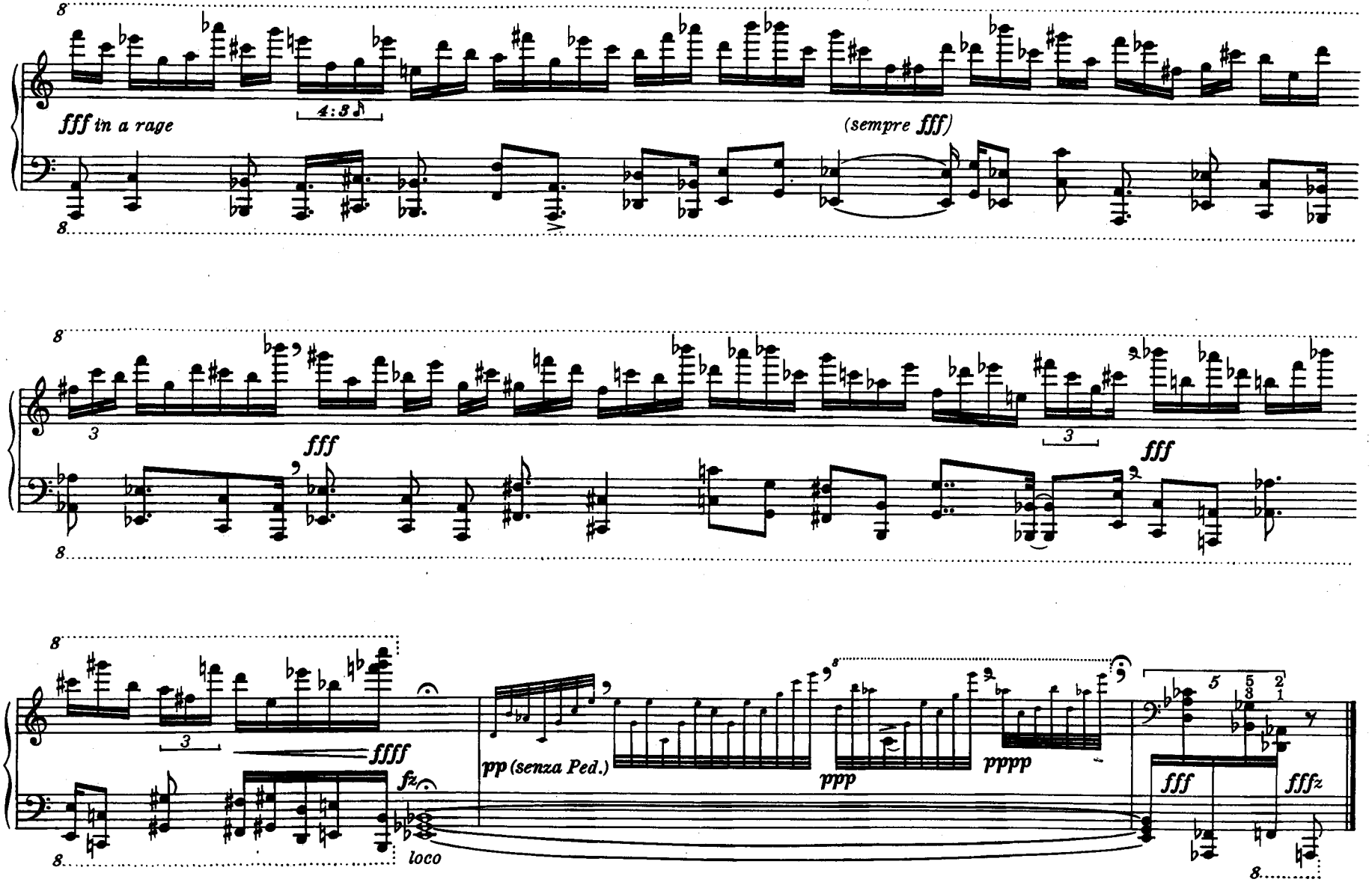



a) Depress Keys silently; see Etude 3


Tempo I
fff
sff
ff
f
cresc.
rit.
p
mp
mf
sff
scherz.
sf
accel.

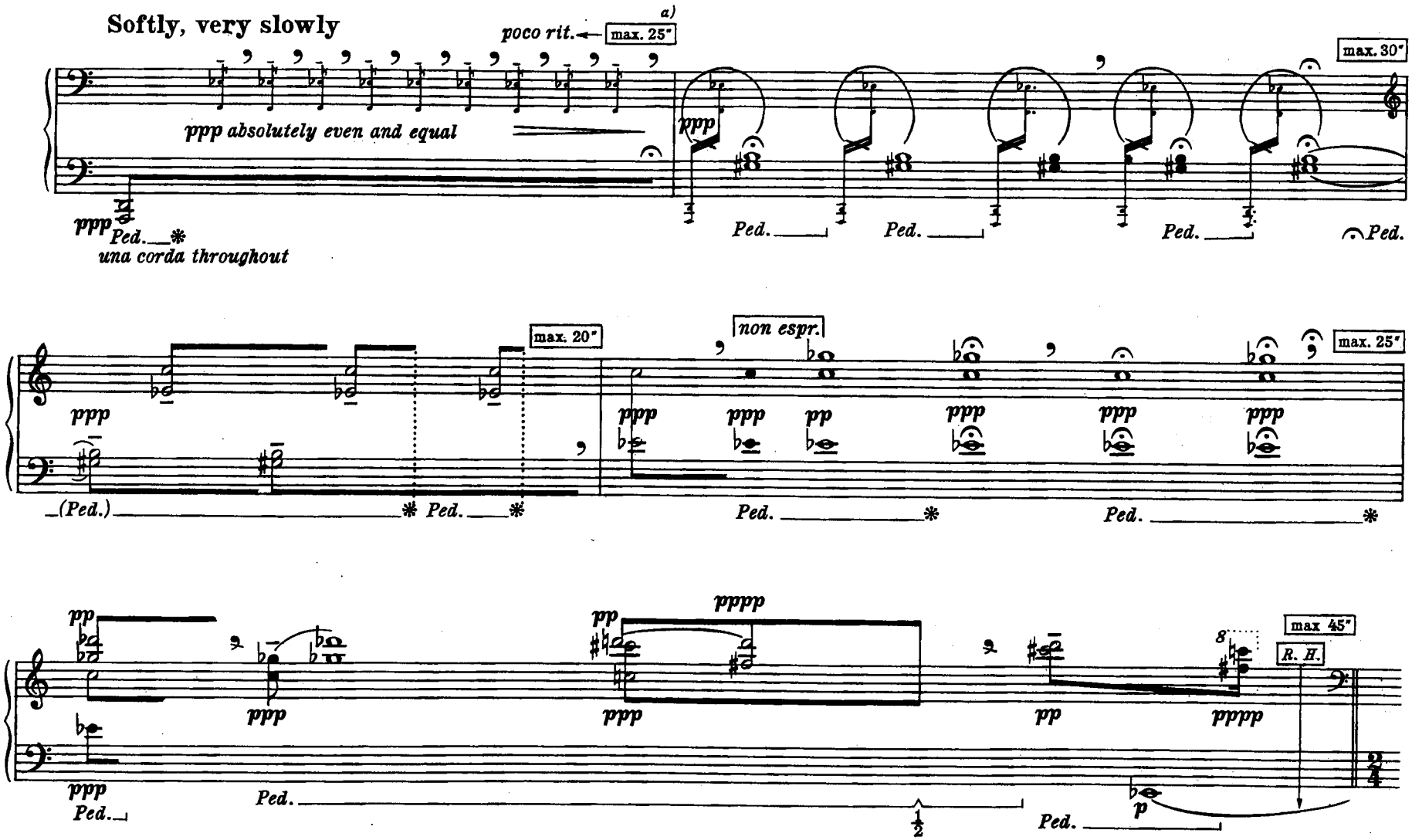

8
p
mf
sf
sf
f
sffz
fff
poco rit.
al tempo
a tempo
sf
sf
mp
p
poco accel.
8
4:3
cresc. poco a poco
sf
sf
3
3
ff
4:3
8

**Con forza, pochissimo più mosso**

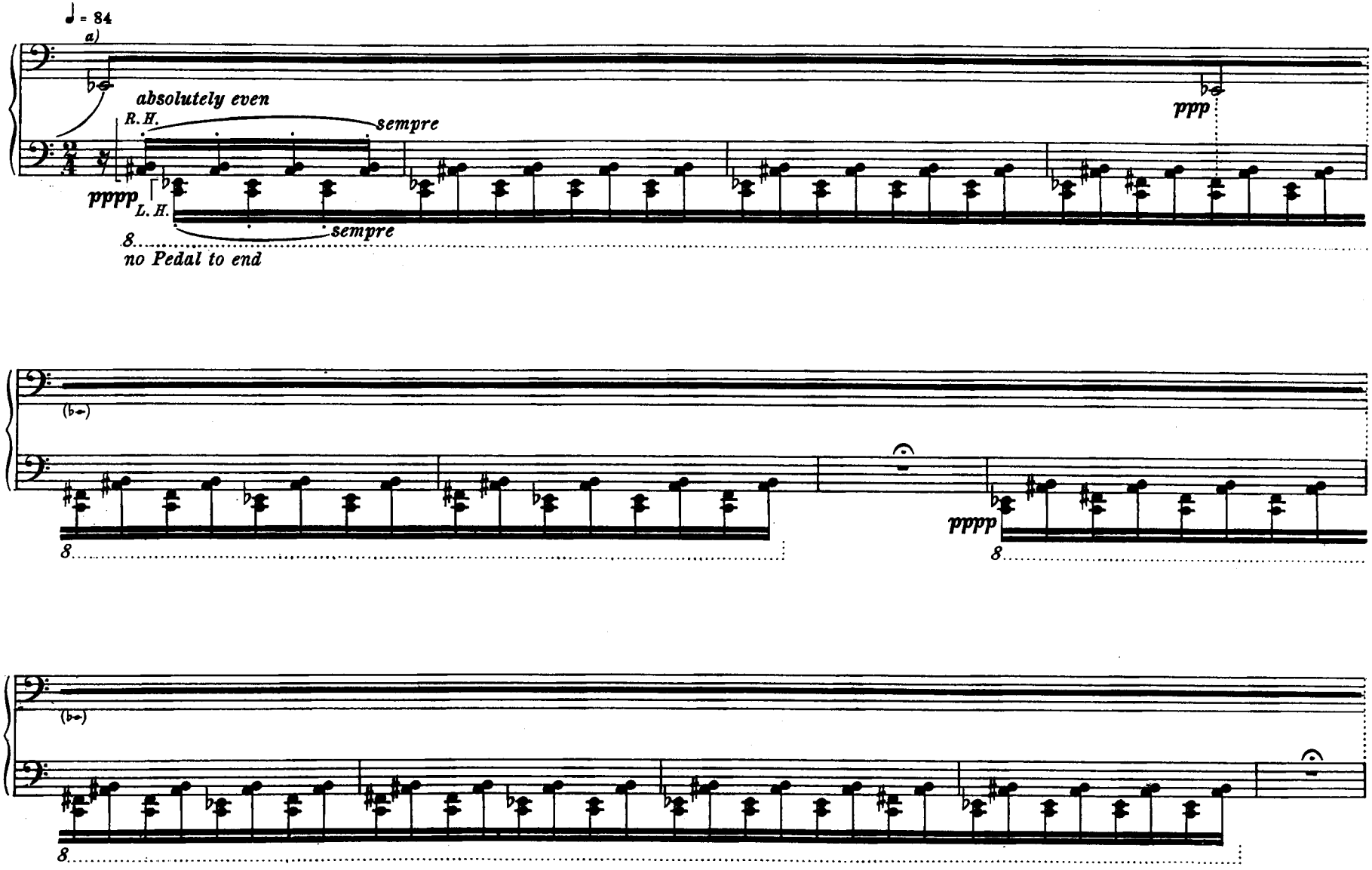


# 8.

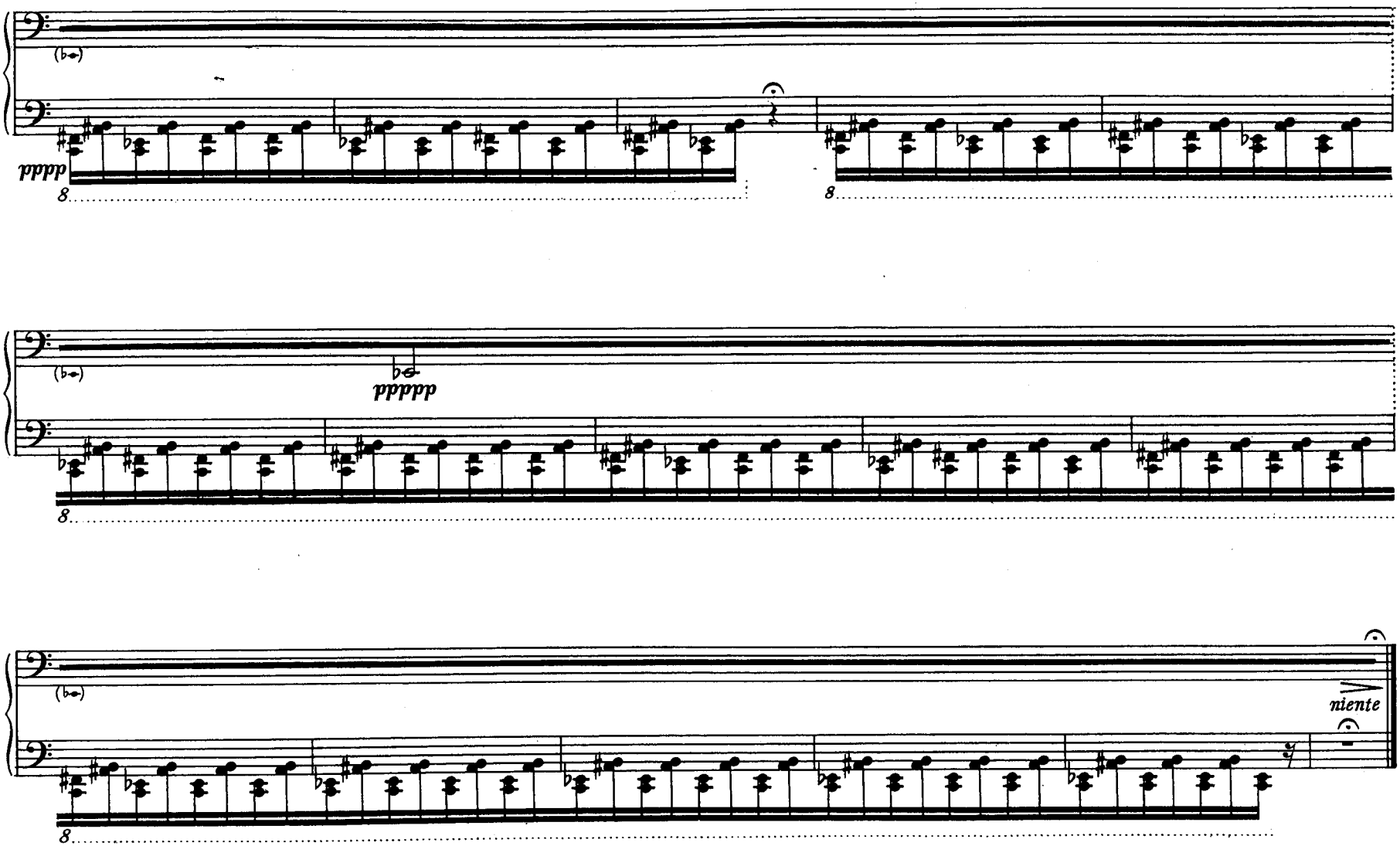
Evenness and control of tone.




a) In this Etude and in No. 12, lengths given in seconds are not absolute, but relative to each other.



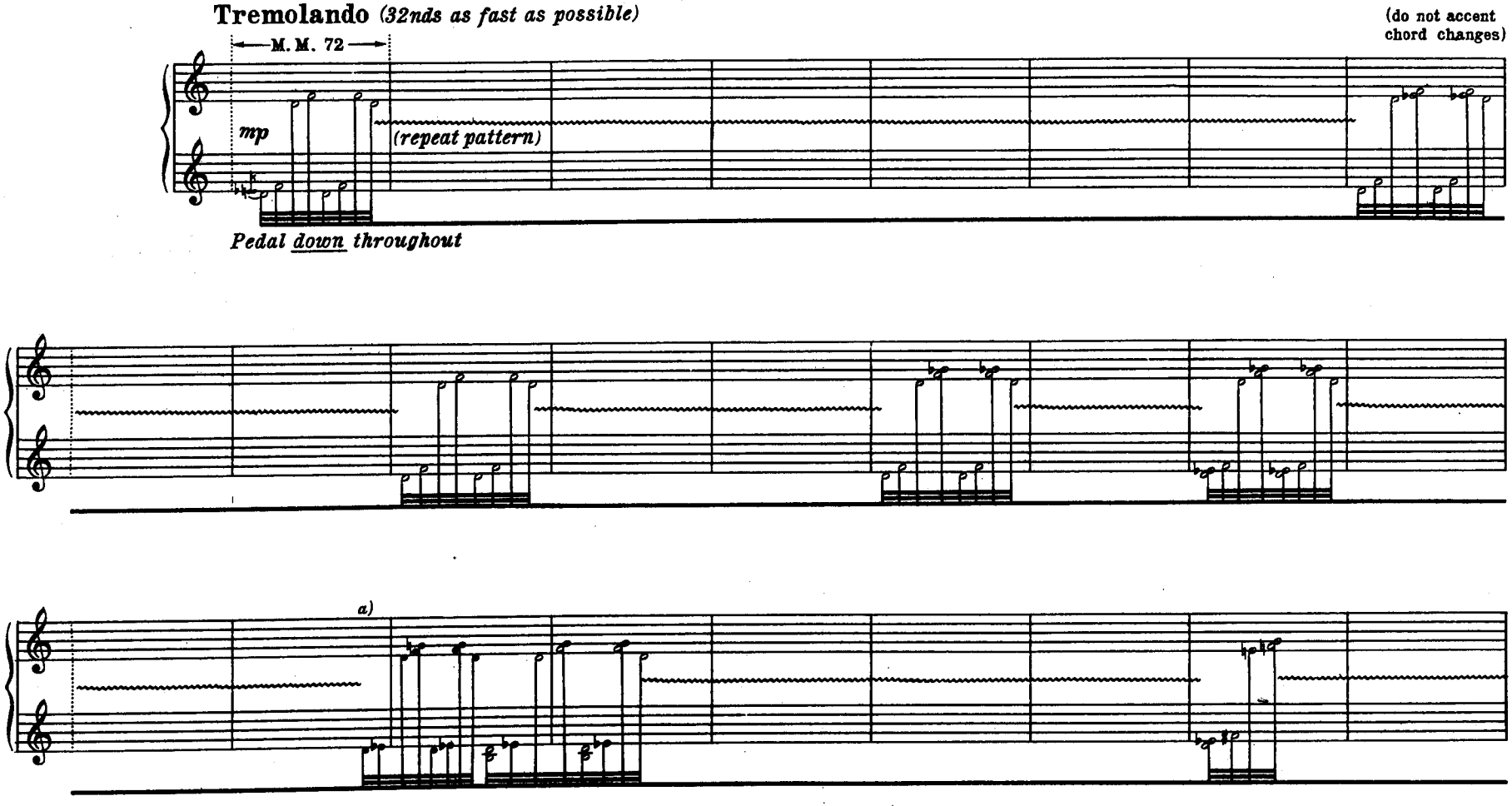

a) Accidentals apply for each measure.


pppp
8
8
ppppp
8
niente
8

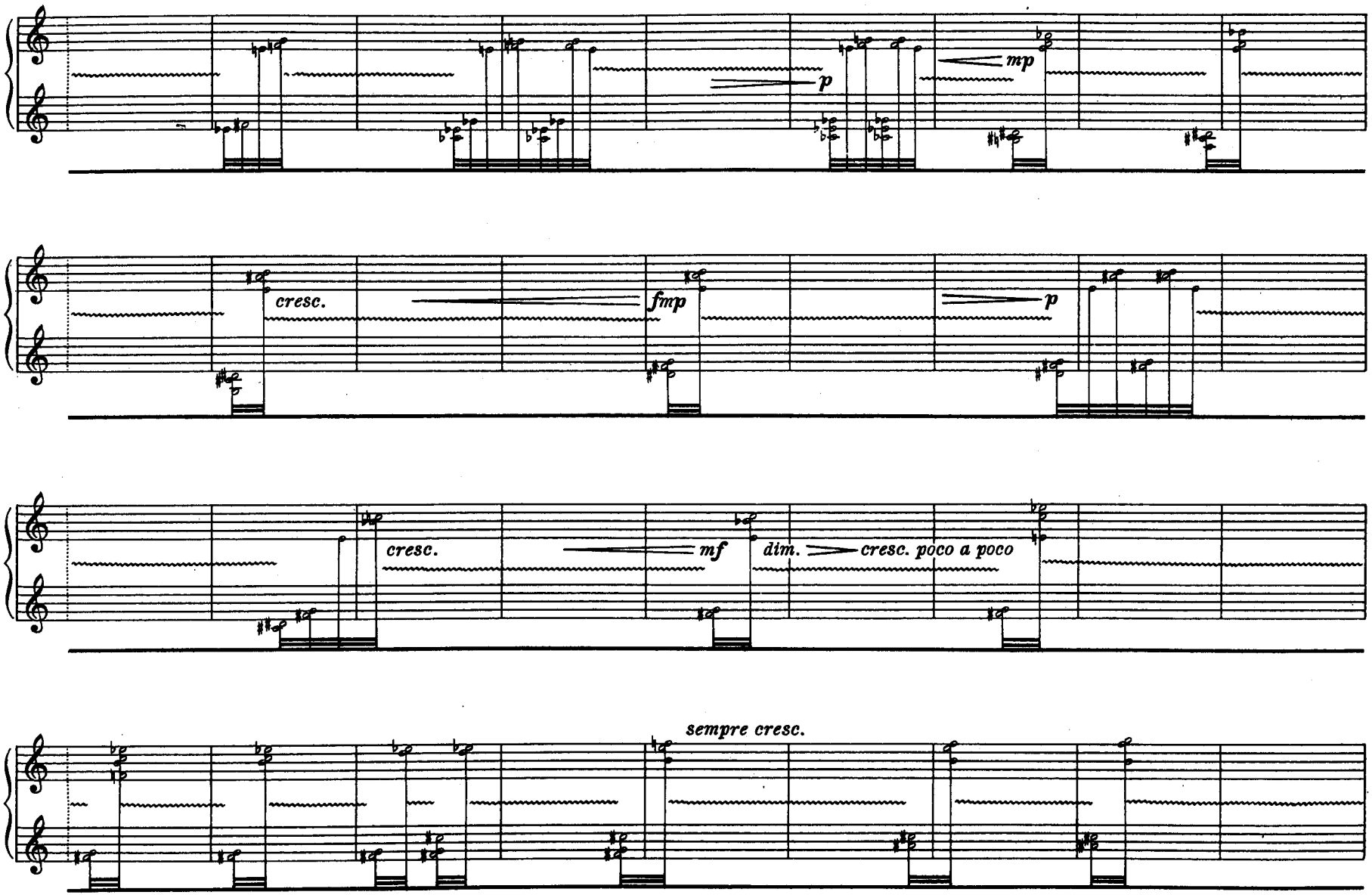
# Book III

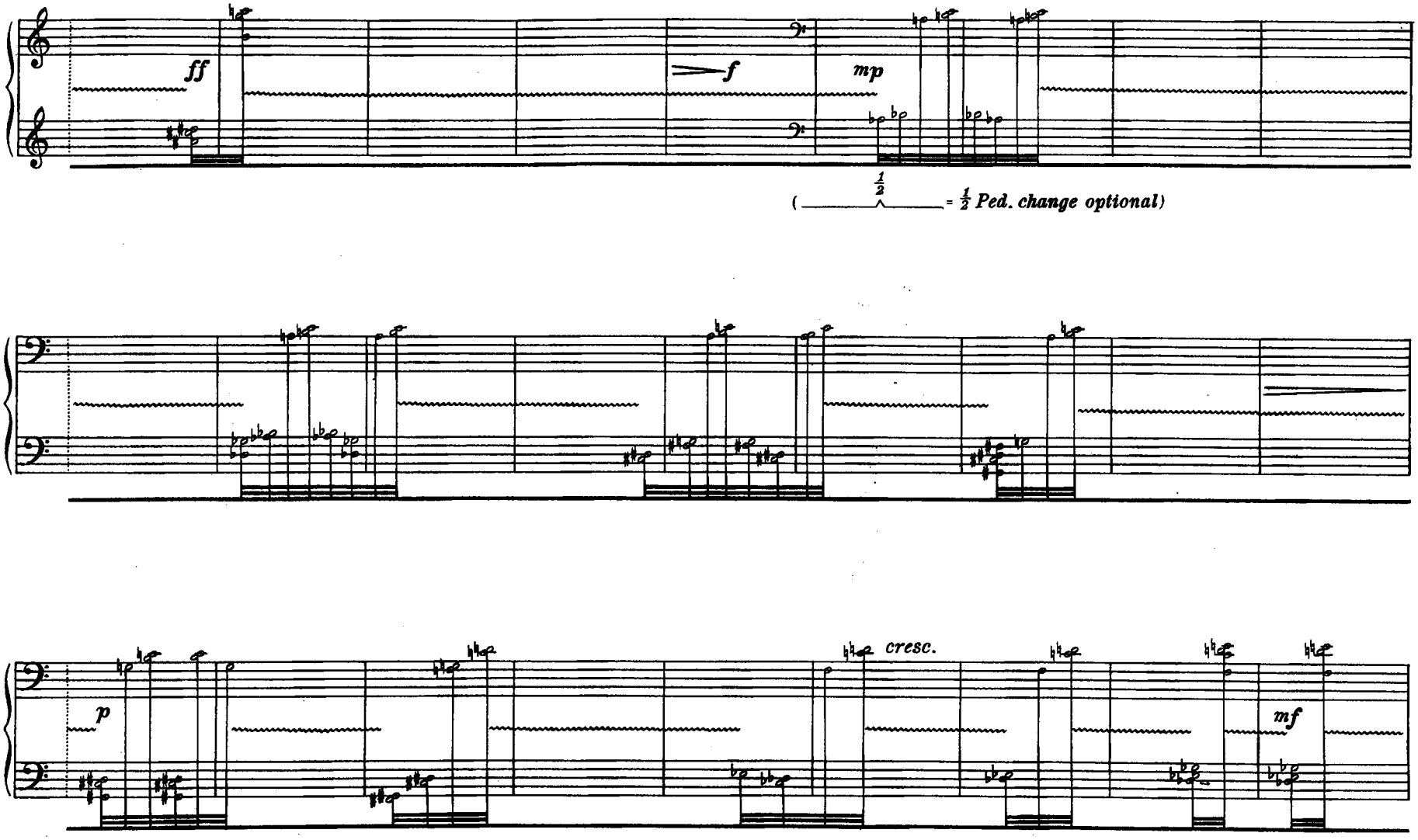
## 9.

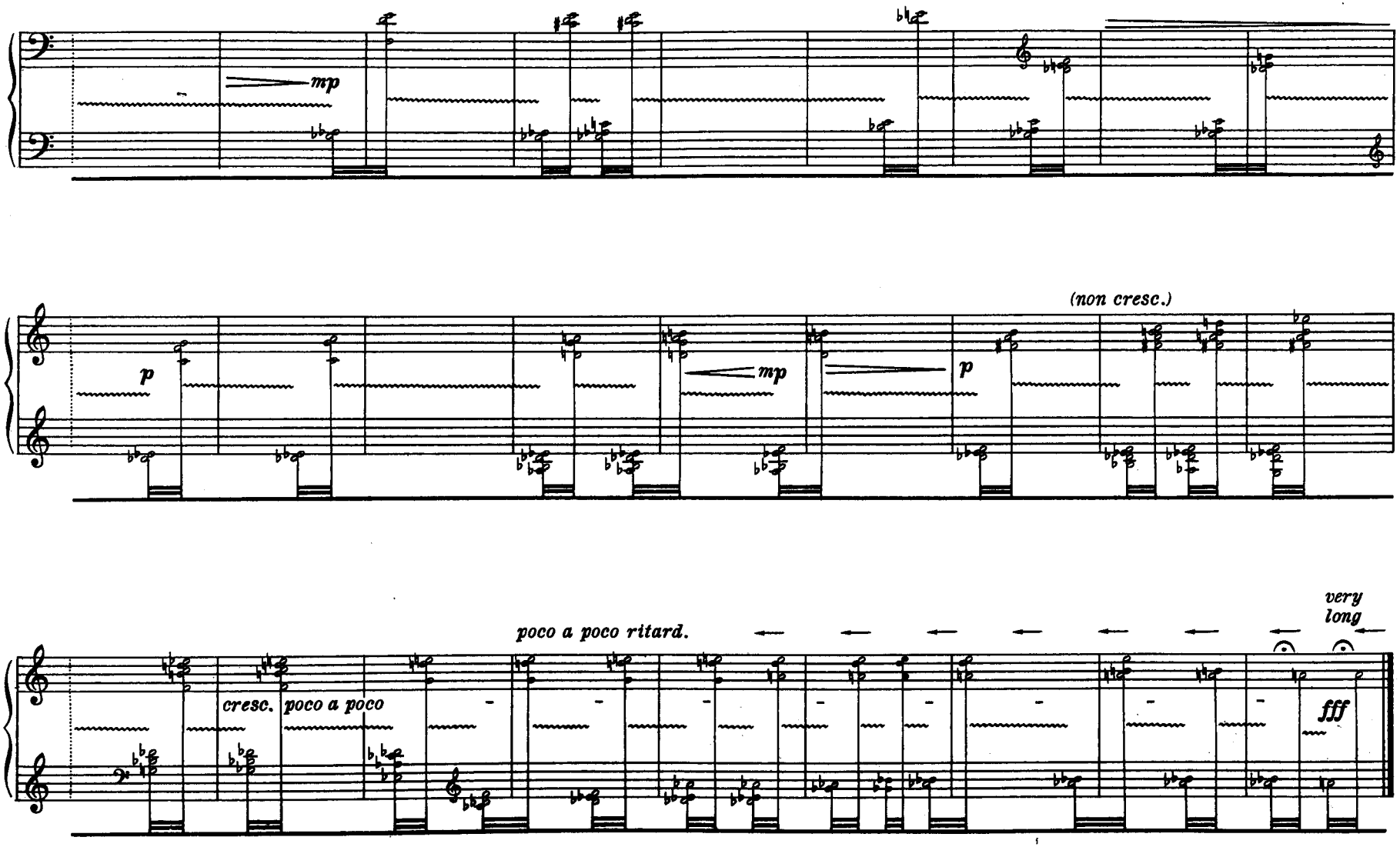
Continual tremolo without cease. Exercise in relaxation. Relative notation, as in Etude No. 6.




a) Black 32nds: do only once.


p
mp
cresc.
fmp
p
cresc.
mf
dim.
cresc. poco a poco
sempre cresc.

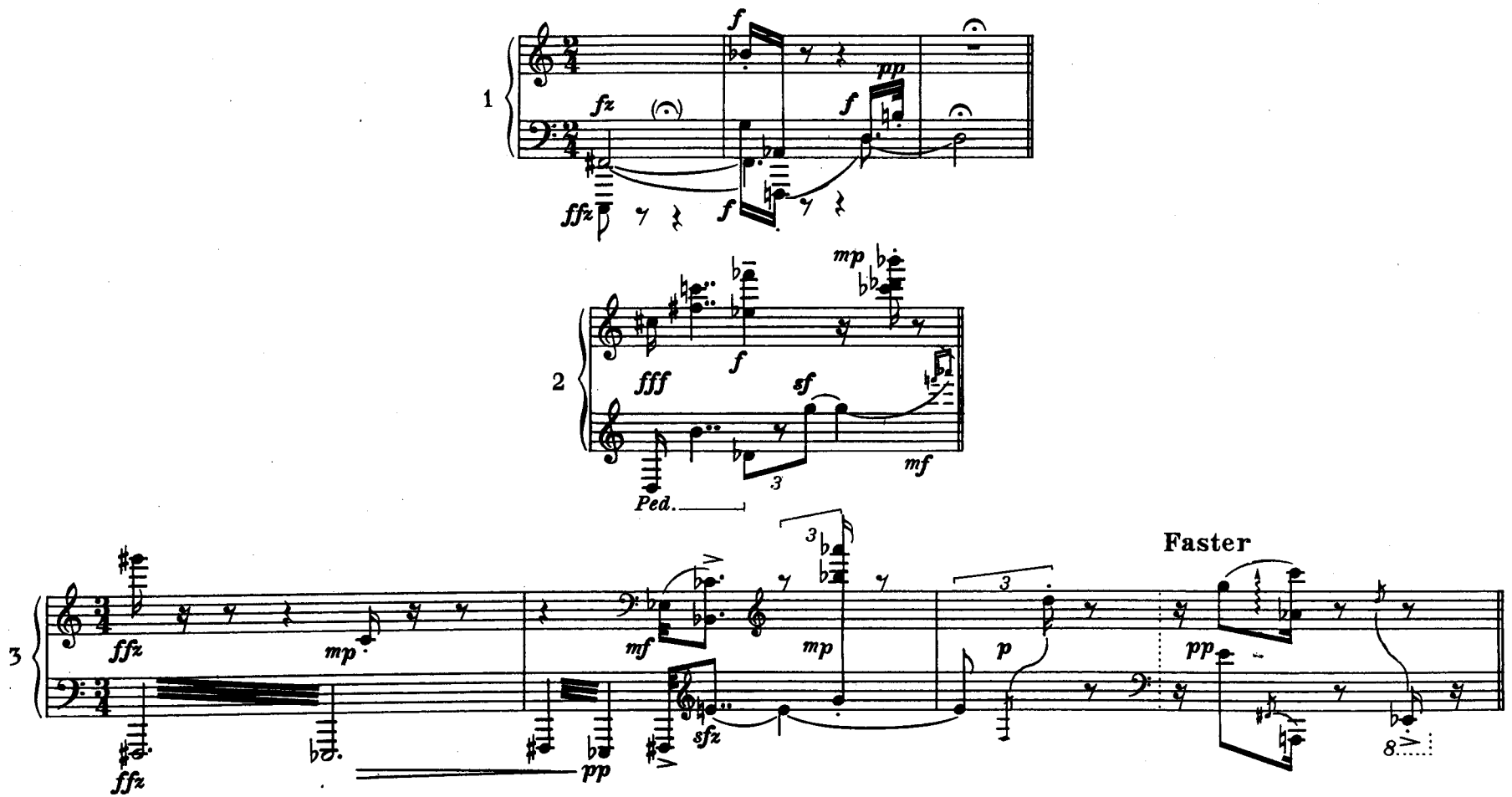

ff
f
mp
( ½ = ½ Ped. change optional)
p
cresc.
mf

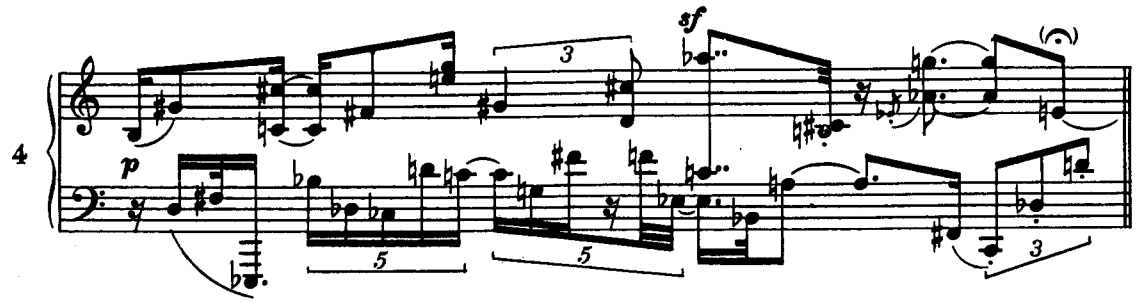

mp
p
mp
p
(non cresc.)
poco a poco ritard.
very
long
cresc. poco a poco
fff

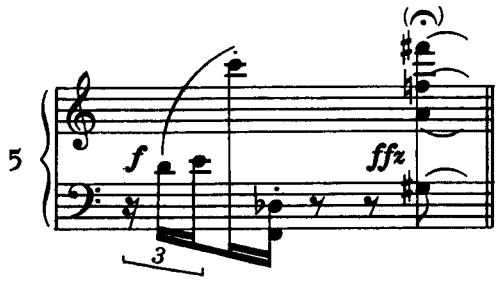
# 10.

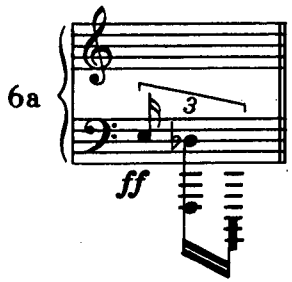
## Gestures

Leaps; use of sostenuto pedal. Speeds of phrases or "gestures" and spacing between them are left to the discretion of the performer. He may eliminate certain "gestures" according to his taste. He may not, however, change the order of the "gestures". This etude is controlled by predetermination, not chance; the pianist should select his "gestures" in advance and work out a scale of proportionally pleasing speeds and spacings, much as an actor will take a speech and find lines to emphasize, others to suppress, some to declaim slowly, others to be rushed for effect, etc. The performer will find some "gestures" as complete thoughts, others as dependent material. If this etude is to be played separately, it should naturally have a different shape than if it is to be played as part of the series.

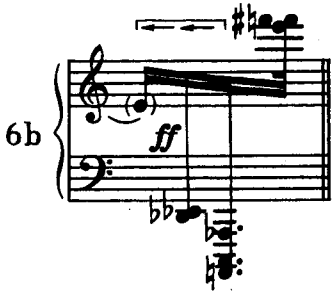




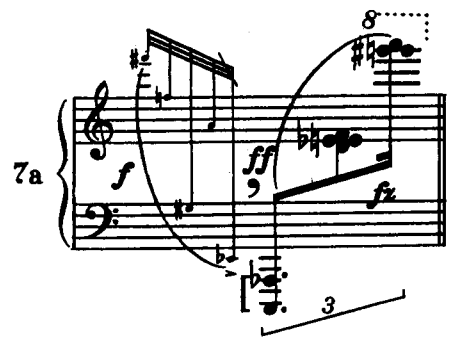




OR




(NEVER BOTH)

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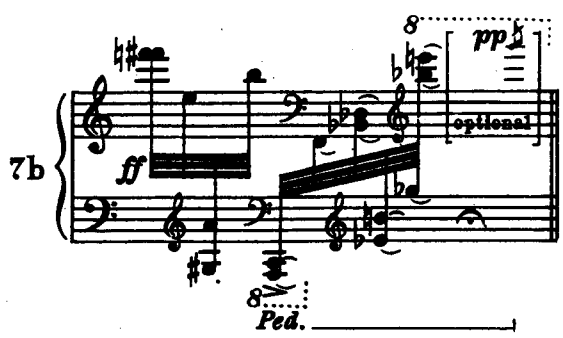
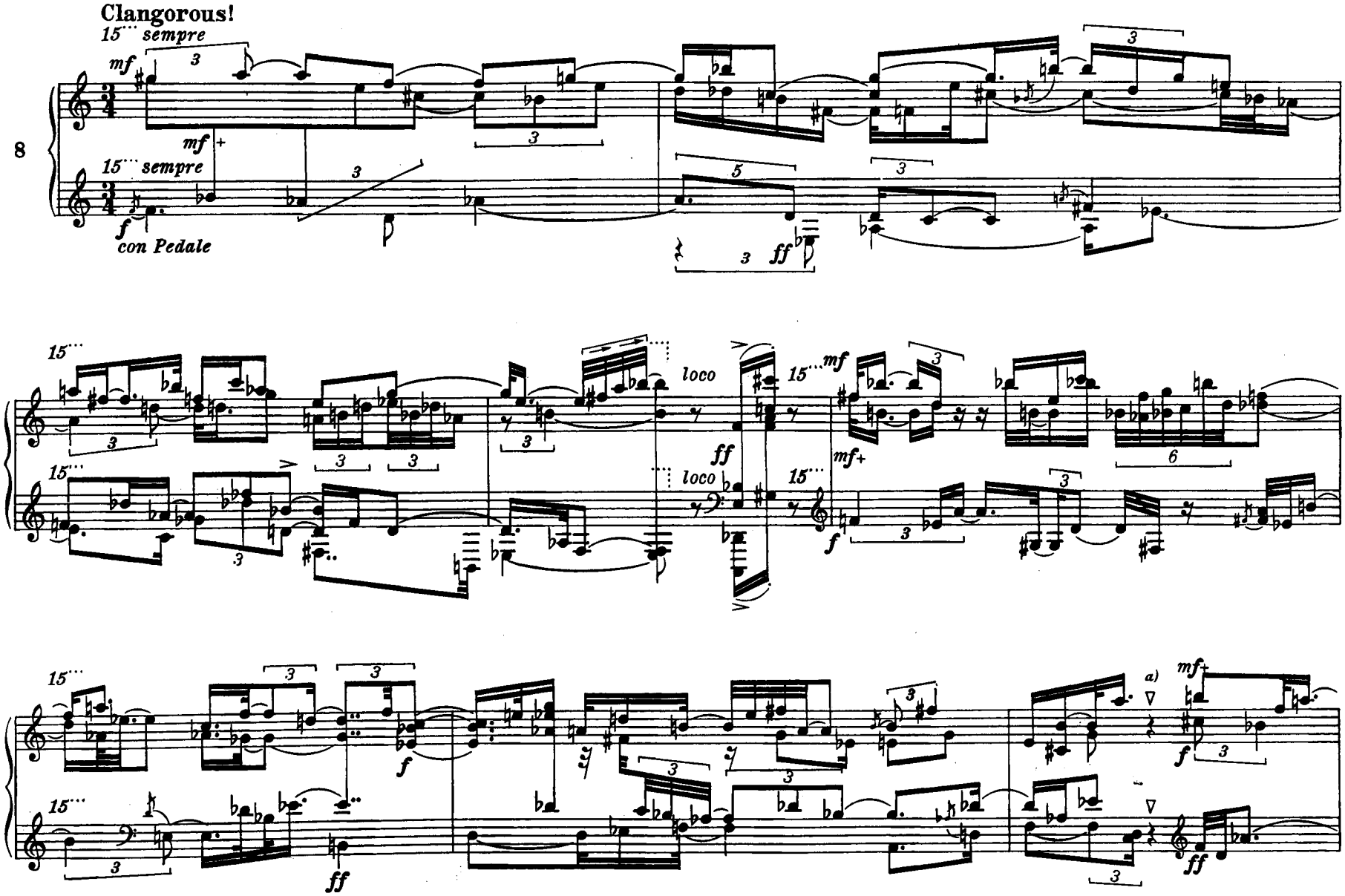
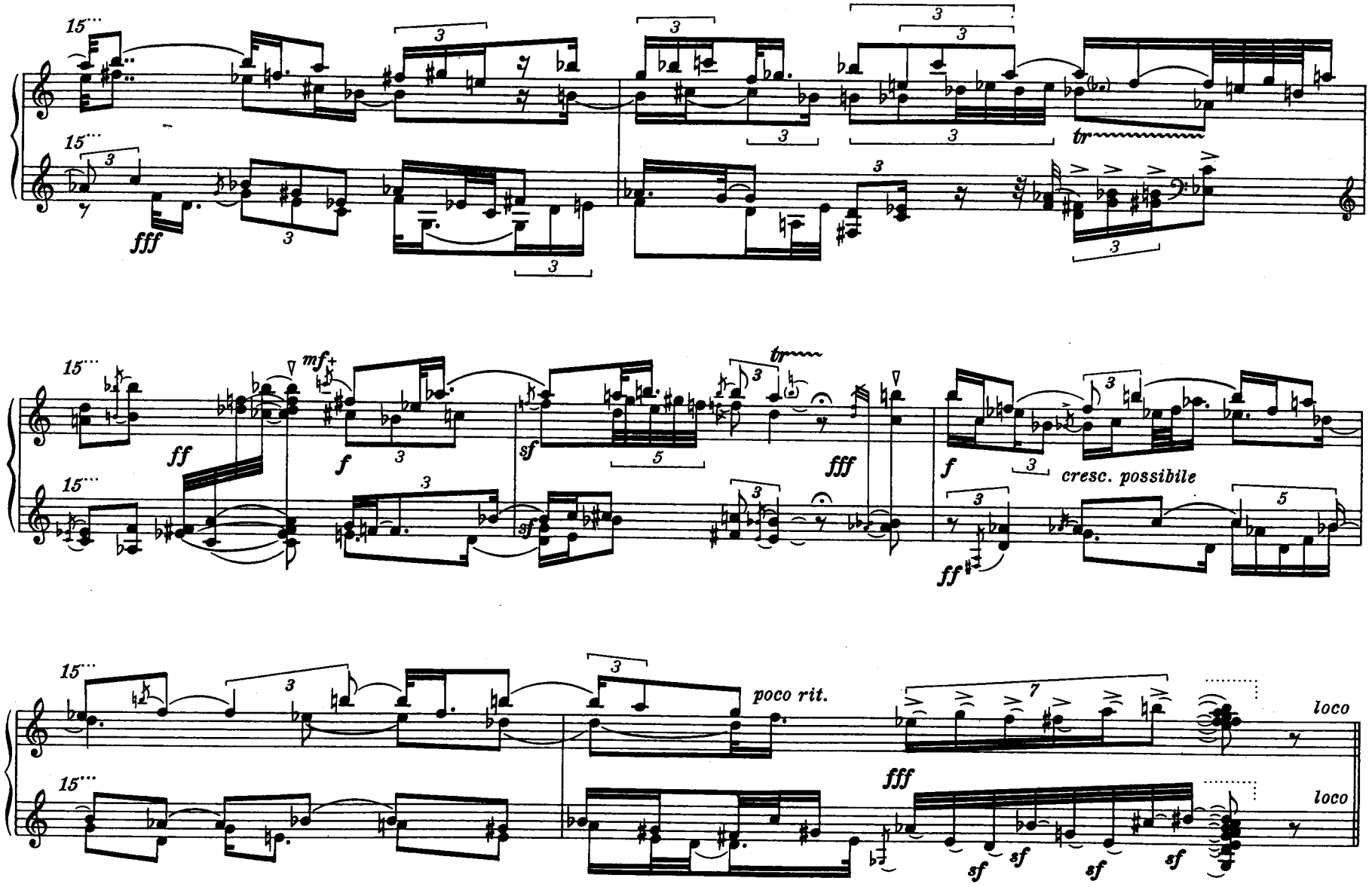


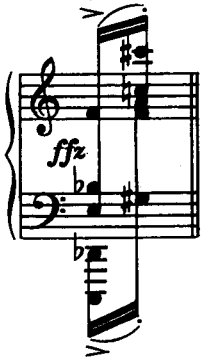

(NEVER BOTH)



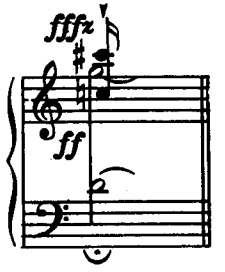

*a)* ▽ over a note or rest shortens its value slightly.


fff
tr
ff
mf
f
sf
fff
cresc. possibile
ff
poco rit.
fff
loco
loco

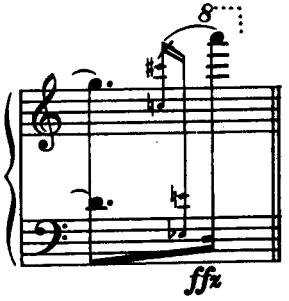
9




10

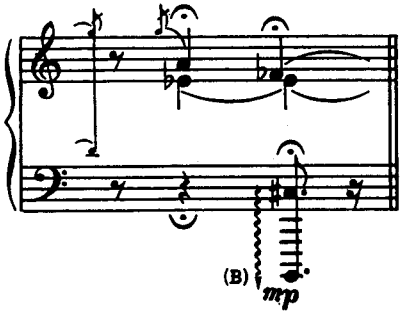



11a



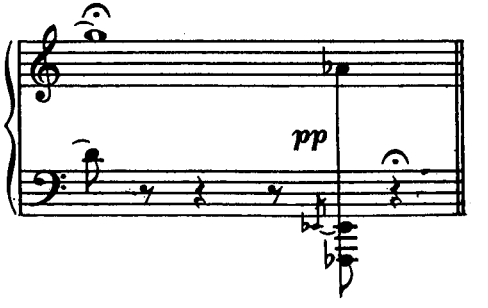

OR

11b

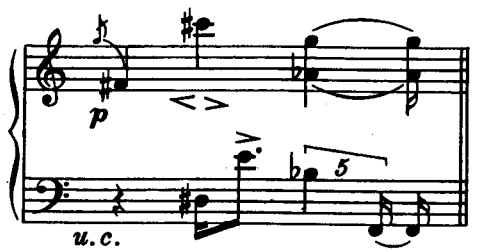



OR

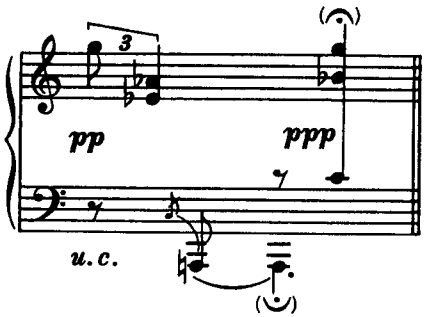
11c



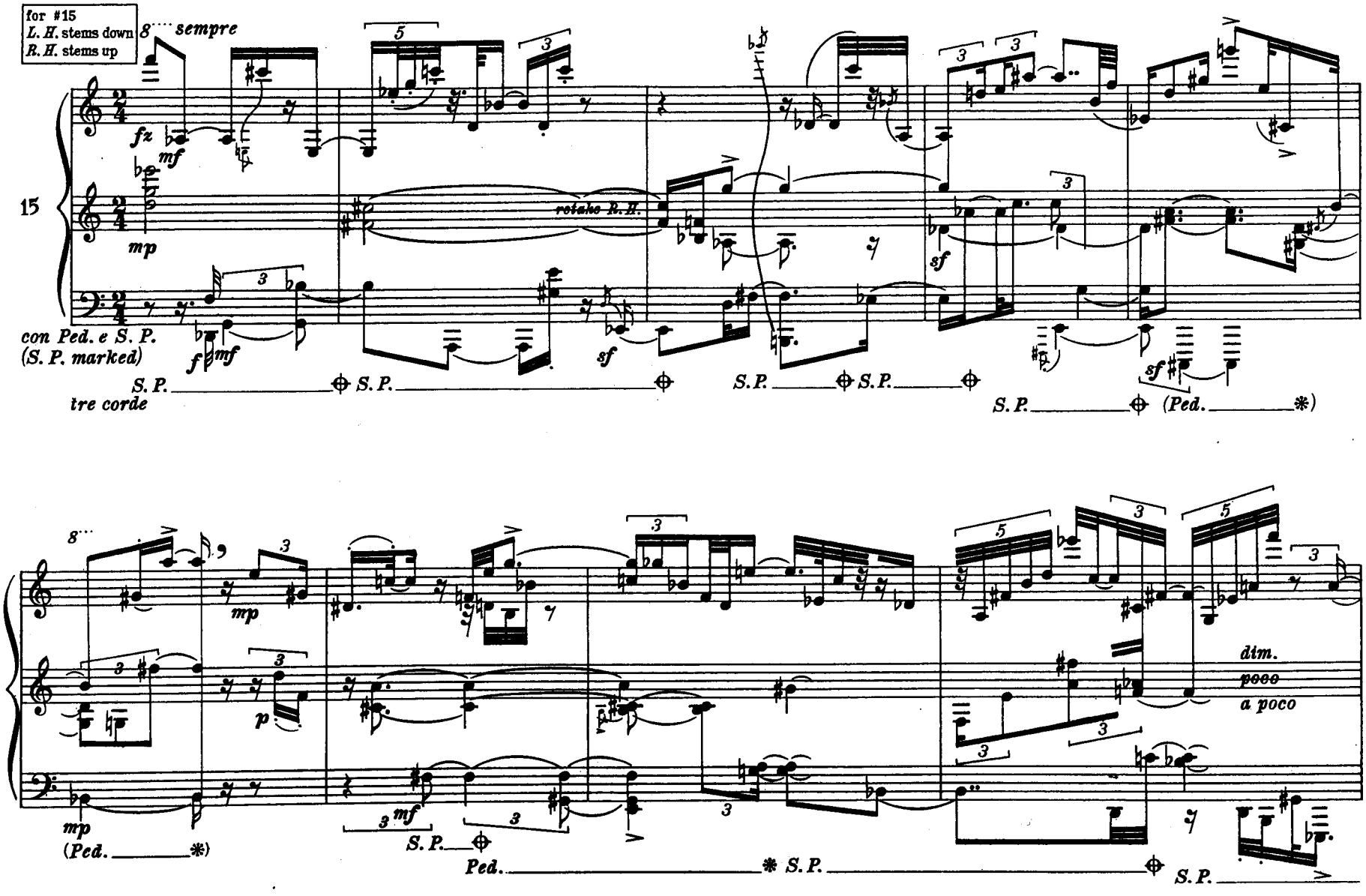
12

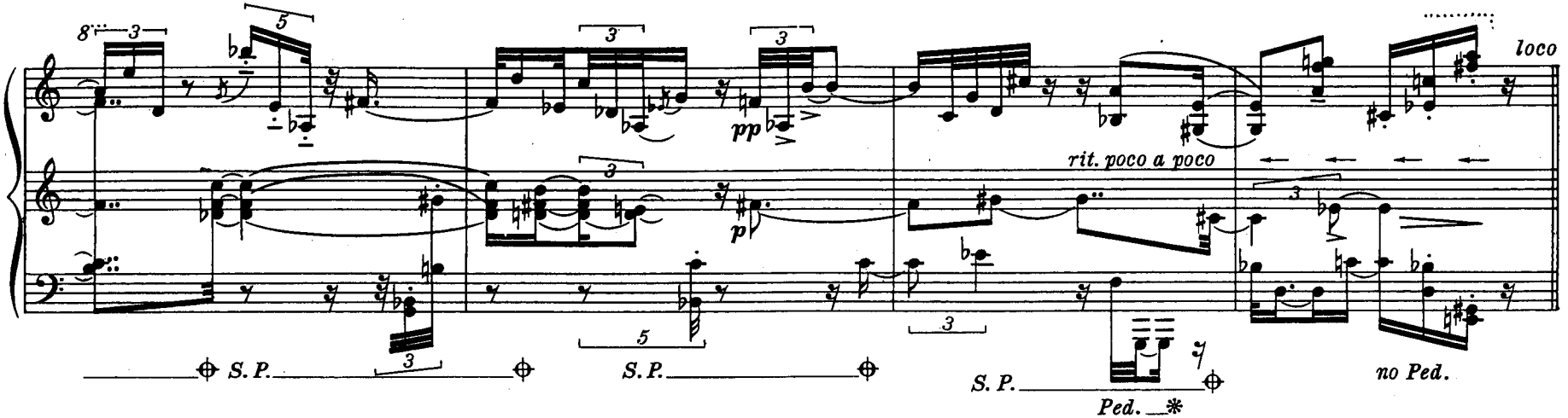


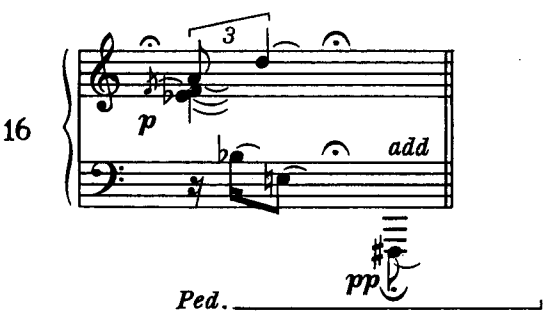

13

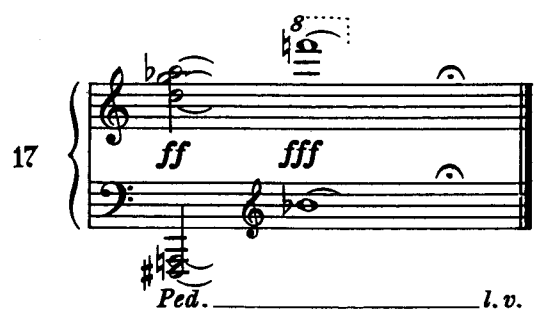



14


for #15
L. H. stems down
R. H. stems up
8 sempre
15
fz
mf
mp
rotate R. H.
sf
con Ped. e S. P.
(S. P. marked)
f mf
S. P.
tre corde
S. P.
S. P.
S. P.
sf
S. P.
(Ped.
*)
8
mp
p
mp
(Ped.
*)
mf
S. P.
Ped.
* S. P.
S. P.
dim.
poco
a poco


loco
rit. poco a poco
pp
p
S. P.
S. P.
S. P.
Ped.
no Ped.

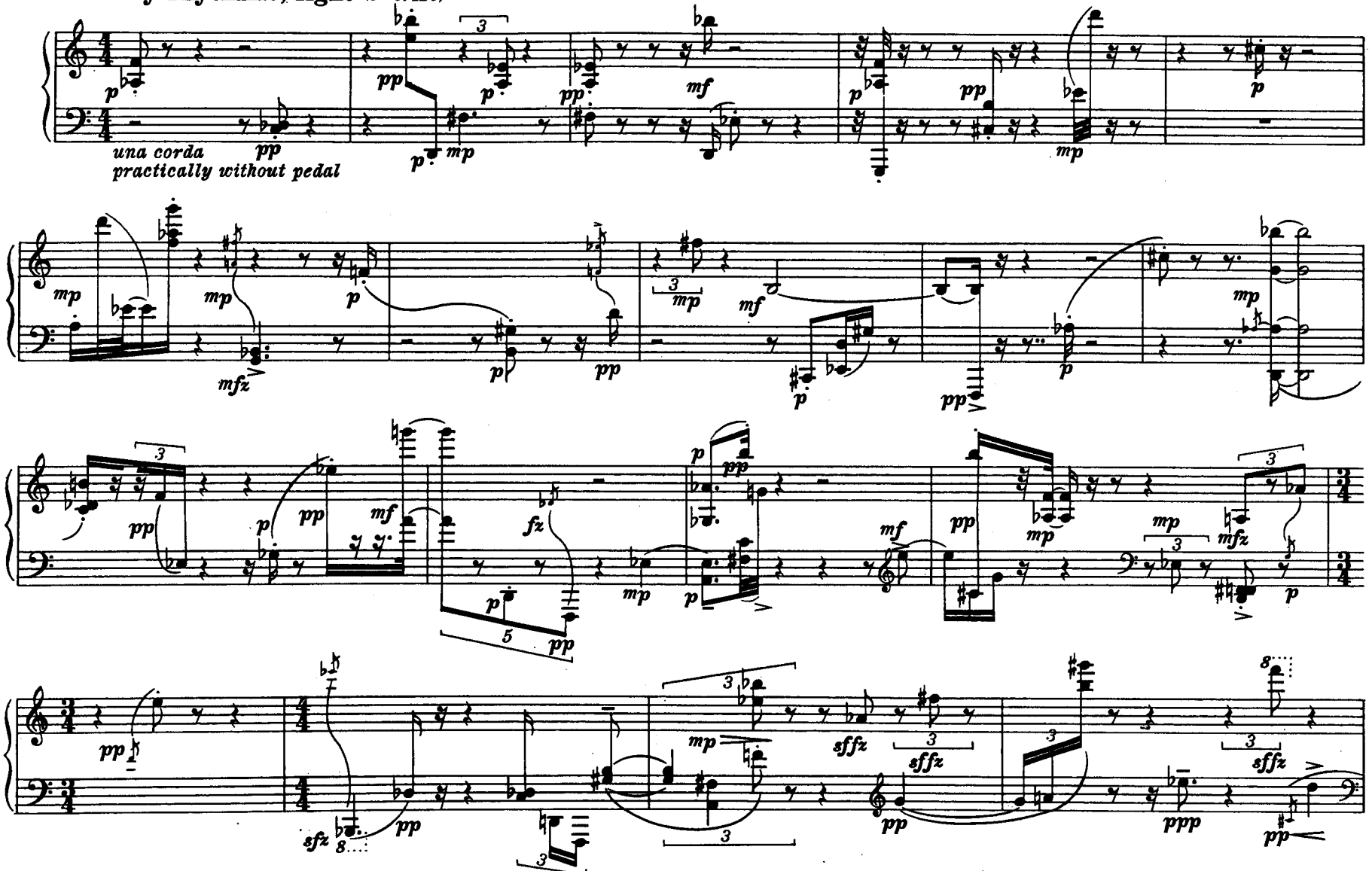

16
p
add
pp
Ped.

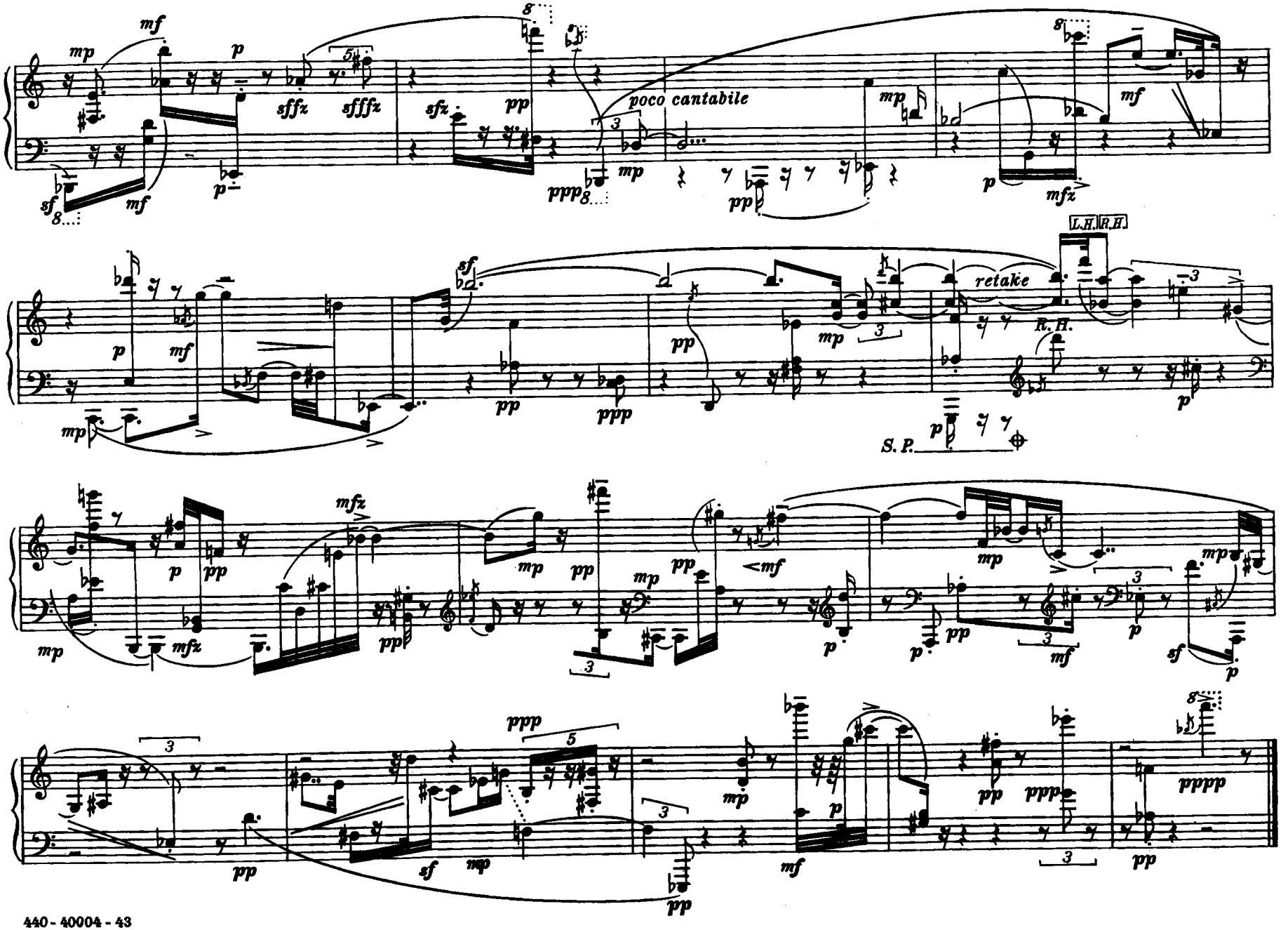

17
ff
fff
Ped.
l. v.

# 11.

Rhythms; lightness of touch. Sustained line with staccato.

**Very rhythmic, light** (♩= c. 126)

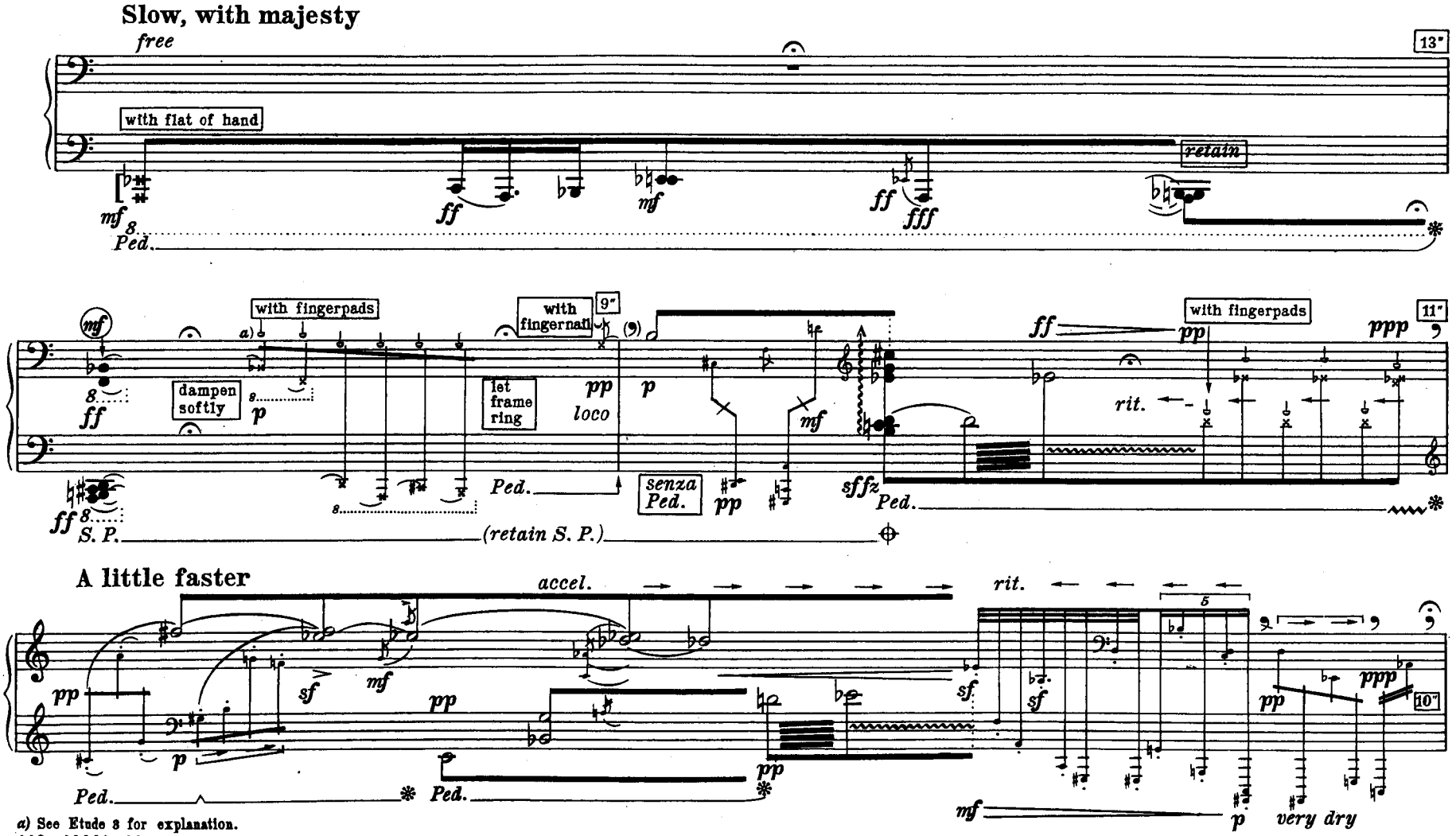



poco cantabile
retake
L.H.
R.H.
S. P.

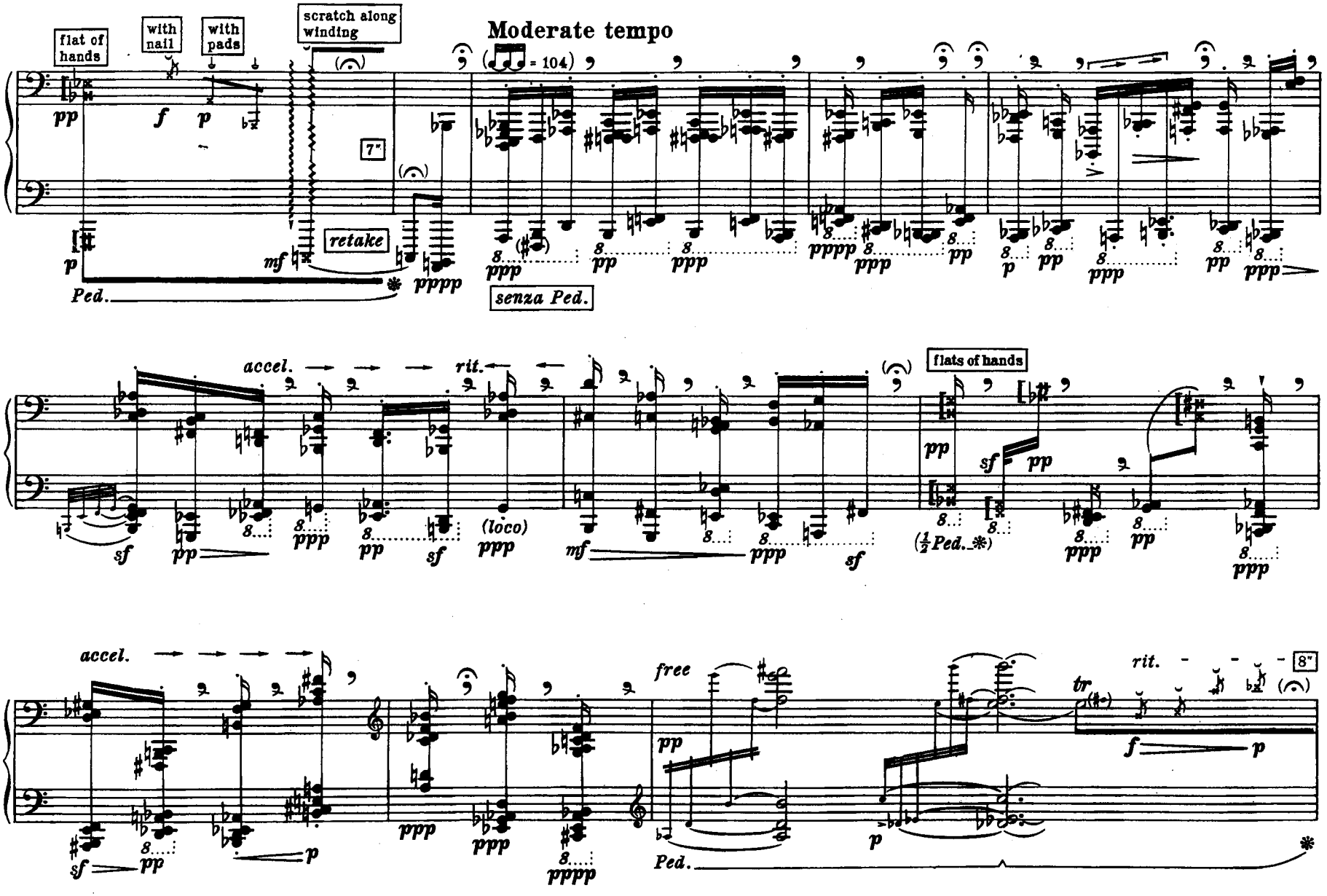
# 12. Apotheosis

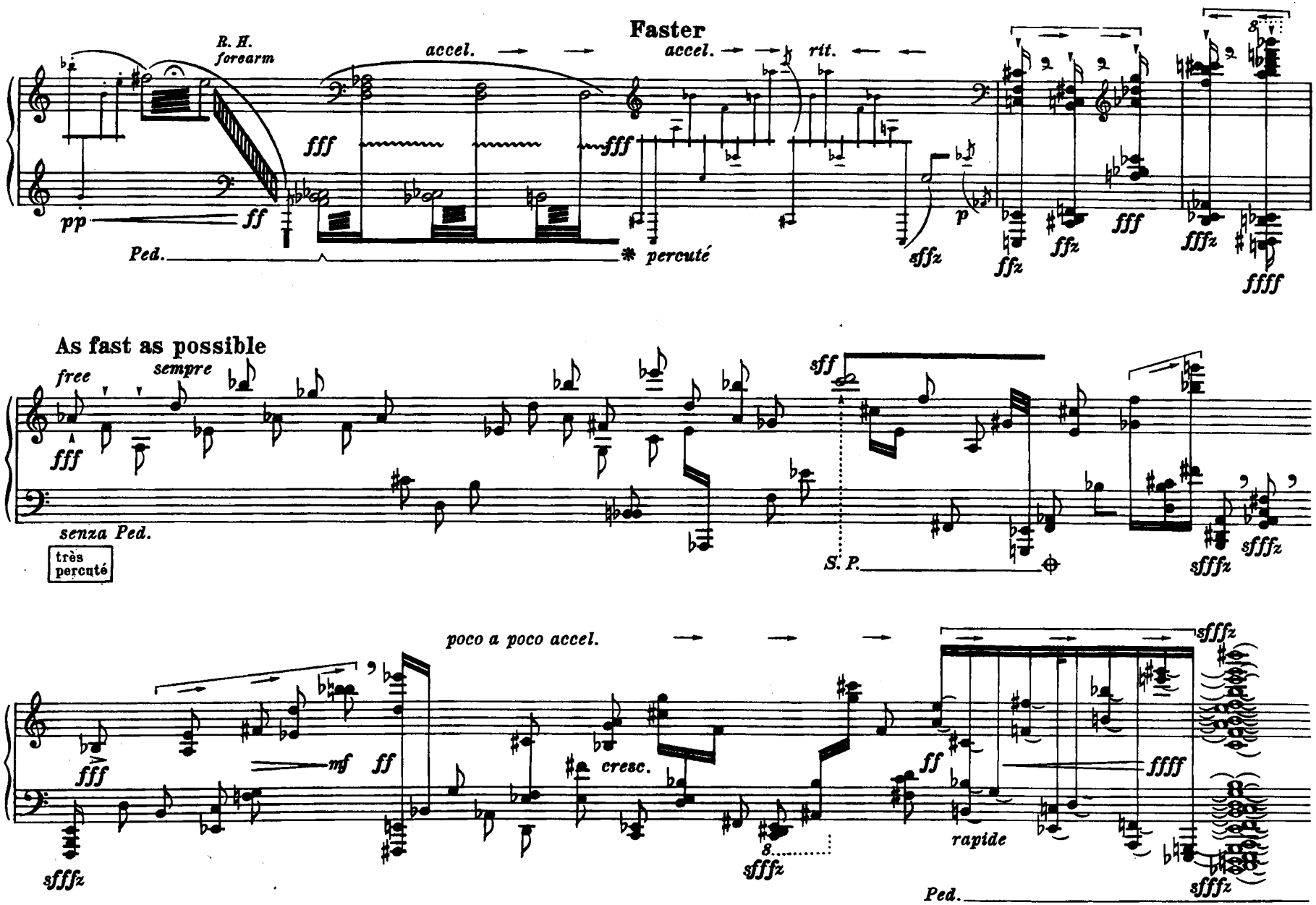
*In memoriam Béla Bartók*

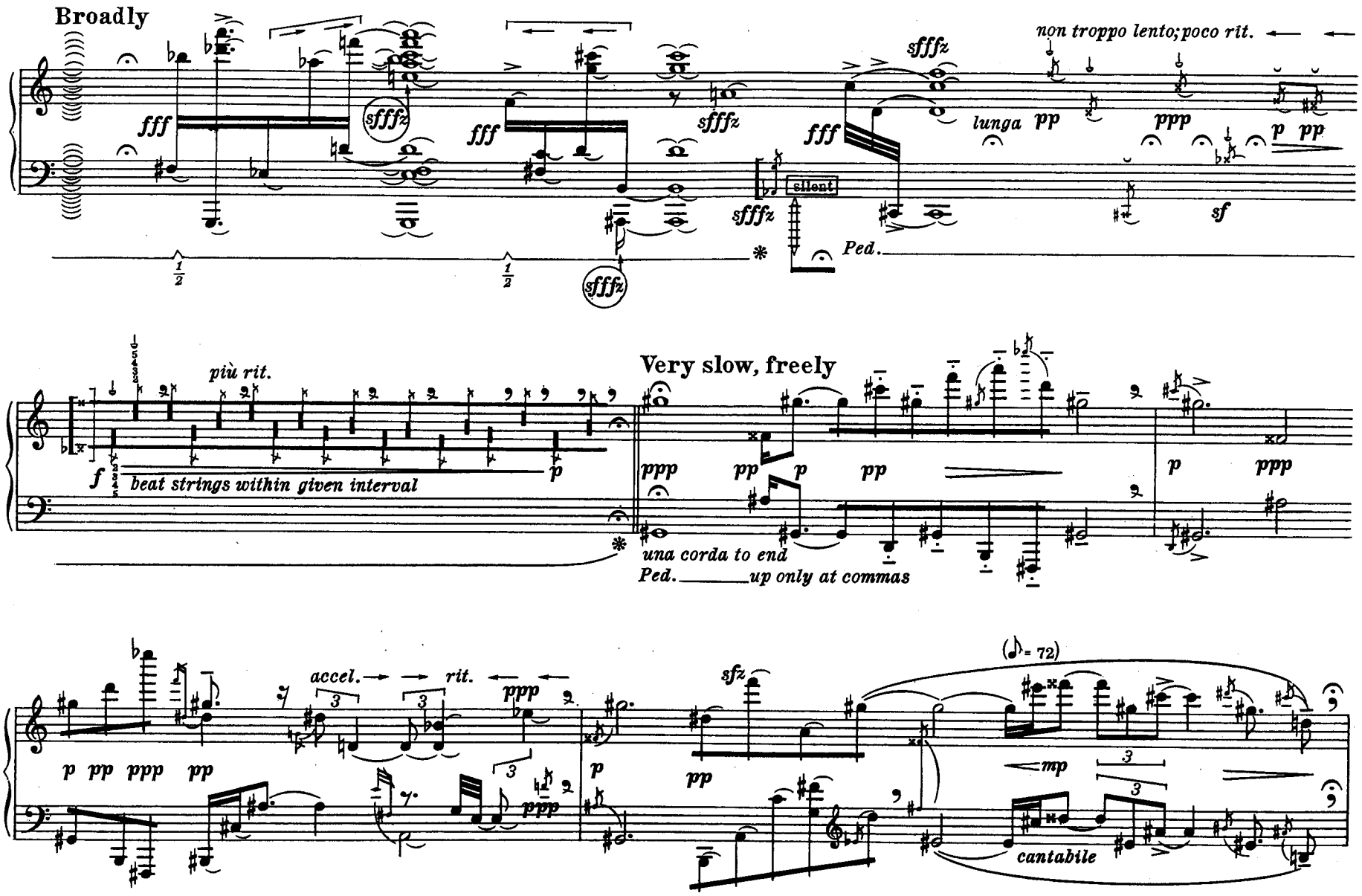
Use of real, proportional and free rhythmic notation. Cluster, use of inside of piano. Varied types of touch.
"Percuté" = percussive touch
x = inside piano
♩ = on keyboard

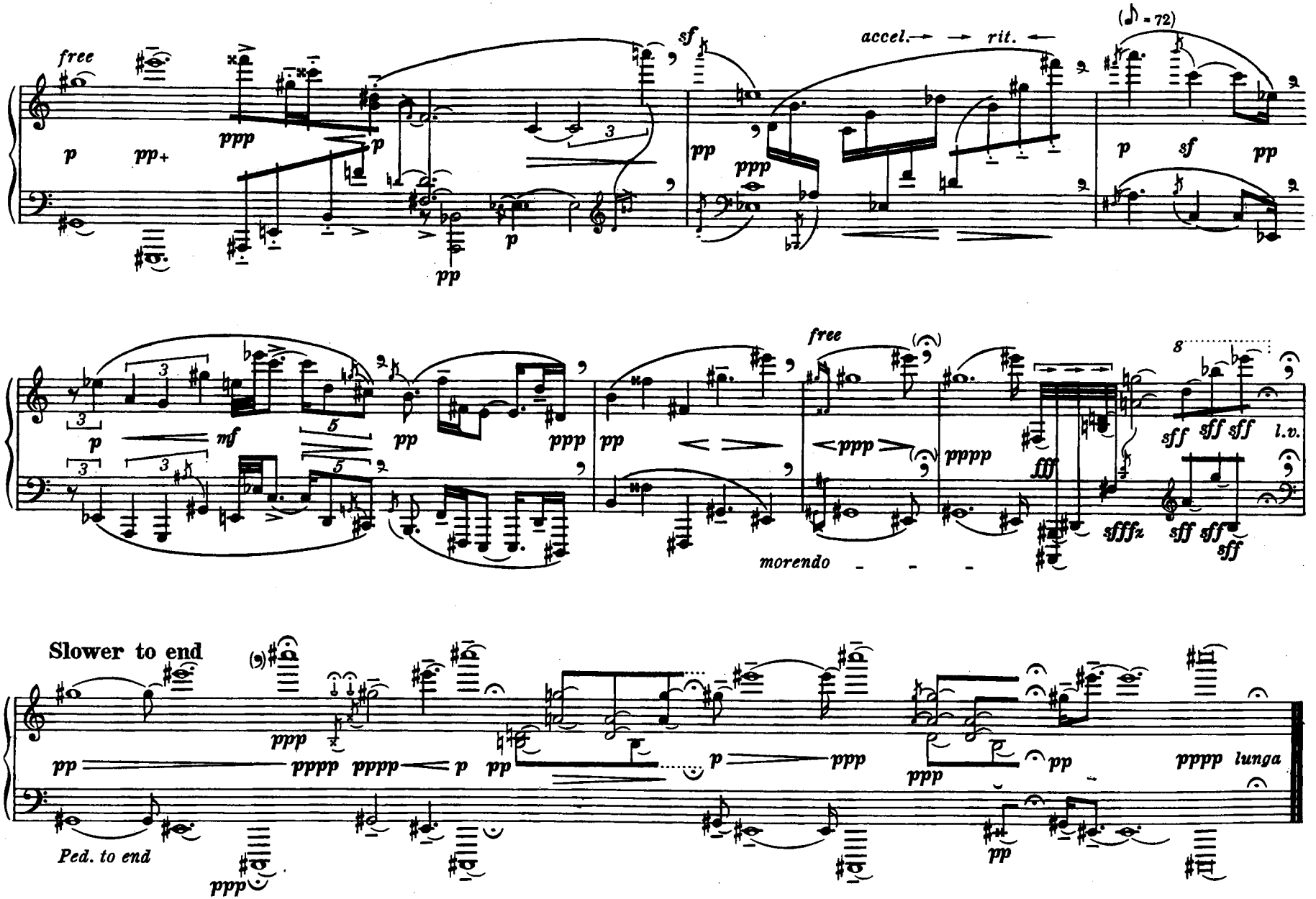



a) See Etude 8 for explanation.


flat of hands
with nail
with pads
scratch along winding
Moderate tempo
(♪ = 104)
7"
retake
senza Ped.
accel.
rit.
(loco)
flats of hands
(½ Ped.)
free
tr
rit.
8"
Ped.


Faster
R. H.
forearm
accel.
accel.
rit.
pp
ff
fff
fff
Ped.
* percuté
sffz
p
ffz
ffz
fff
fffz
8
ffff
As fast as possible
free
sempre
fff
senza Ped.
très
percuté
sff
S. P.
sfffz
sfffz
poco a poco accel.
sfffz
fff
mf
ff
cresc.
8
sfffz
ff
ffff
rapide
Ped.
sfffz


Broadly
fff
sfffz
non troppo lento; poco rit.
lunga
pp
ppp
p
pp
sf
silent
Ped.
più rit.
f
beat strings within given interval
Very slow, freely
una corda to end
Ped. up only at commas
accel.
rit.
(♪ = 72)
sfz
mp
cantabile


free
accel. → → rit. ←
(♪ = 72)
morendo
Slower to end
Ped. to end
l.v.
lunga