Java Suite

Phonoramas

Tonal journeys for the Pianoforte

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY

Preface

"Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not."—EMERSON.

Having traveled extensively in many lands, some near and familiar, others remote and strange, it occurred to me that a musical portrayal of some of the interesting things I had been privileged to see, a tonal description of the impressions and emotions they had awakened, would interest those who are attracted by adventure and picturesqueness and inspired by their poetic reactions.

Who is not at heart a globe-trotter?

Are we not all fascinated by distant countries and strange people?

And so the thought gradually matured in me to recreate my roaming experiences.

This cycle of musical travelogues—tonal journeys—which I have named collectively "Phonoramas," begins with a series of twelve descriptive scenes in Java. I have prefaced each with a brief elucidation.

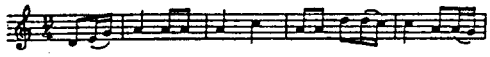
The Island of Java, called "The Garden of the East," with a population of close to forty millions, is the most densely inhabited island in the world. It has a tropical, luxuriant vegetation; marvelous scenery and picturesque inhabitants; huge volcanoes, active and extinct; majestic ruins and imposing monuments of many centuries past.

The Javanese are a docile people, with quaint customs and old traditions. Possessing an ancient culture, they combine originality with proficiency in various arts. It was, however, the native music of the Javanese, in the heart of Java, at Djokja and Solo, that made the most profound impression on me.

All Javanese music is in duple or quadruple time; triple time does not exist. Its sameness of beat and its monotony of pulsation have a lulling, hypnotizing effect; its polyrhythms, syncopations, triplet-figures and manifold passage-patterns help to stimulate interest. Most of Javanese music is based upon the pentatonic scale.

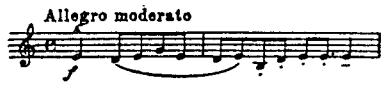
Of the twelve numbers of this suite, all of which are in duple or quadruple time,* the first two dances of the "Three Dances," In the Kraton" and "A Court Pageant in Solo" are entirely diatonic; "Gamelan," "Wayang Purwa," "Hari Besaar" and "Chattering Monkeys," though mainly diatonic are not consistently so; "Boro Budur," "Bromo Volcano," the third of the "Three Dances," "The Gardens of Buitenzorg," "In the Streets of Old Batavia" and "The Ruined Water Castle at Djokja" are considerably more chromatic.

Although some of the following compositions, or parts thereof, express my impressions in the native music-idiom *as I understood it,* I have neither borrowed nor imitated actual Javanese tunes, designs or harmonies in any of the movements excepting the third: Hari Besaar. Here I made use of two fragments of authentic Javanese melodies,

one called Krawitan: 

the other, Kanjut:

I also used two measures from a Javanese Rhapsody for orchestra, composed by Paul Seelig of Bandong, Java, to whom I take pleasure in expressing my indebtedness for valuable information about Javanese music:



Leopold Godowsky

New York, May 27th, 1925.

*My twenty-four "Walzermasken" and the thirty numbers of my "Triakontameron" are in triple time exclusively.

Addendum

"Artists, like the Greek gods, are only revealed to one another."—OSCAR WILDE.

The thoughtful attention given to the interpretative directions of my compositions has resulted in a profusion of expression marks, pedal indications and fingerings. Though they may appear on the surface as too minute and elaborate, I believe the serious student will find them essential and illuminating. To disregard or alter such indications—in the broader sense—would seem to me as much of a license as a change of any melodic line, harmonic texture, or rhythmic design. Even when all the interpretative signs are scrupulously observed, there yet remains ample scope for self-expression and individuality. To the unthinking this statement may appear paradoxical, but to those who do not seek liberty in lawlessness and originality in individualistic distortions, the truth of this assertion will be apparent.

I deem it necessary to emphasize the importance I attach to the extreme softness of a *pp* mark. To play a genuine *pp,* both concentrated and sustained effort is required.

At the same time I wish to draw attention to the dynamic relativity of all accents, except *sf,* which symbol is of an exclamatory character.

Whenever an accent is provided for each note of a melody, as in the third dance of the "Three Dances," the purpose is not to accentuate each tone individually, but to give a dynamically *graded* plastic outline to the melodic contour, with proper regard, of course, for proportionate dynamic values in the interrelationship of phrases.

The same principle is applicable to the *tenuto* (–) mark, which demands a clinging to the key, with a barely perceptible dynamic emphasis.

The sign Λ is a combination of *tenuto* (–) and *sforzando* (*sf*), requiring the notes so marked to be both fully sustained and very strongly emphasized.

The task to establish *firmly* an approximately definite rate of speed for any movement, or to indicate undulations of time *within* any movement, presents insurmountable difficulties. Our ever-variable feeling for what would constitute a correct *tempo* and appropriate time-fluctuations for and during a movement, prevents us from deciding definitely and consistently upon a permanently fixed rate of speed. Therefore I believe that *tempo* designations or metronome marks should be considered as guiding suggestions rather than inflexible directions, although appreciable deviations would lead to misinterpretations. The performer's physical and mental state, his prevailing mood, the *entourage,* the weather, seasonal changes—each and all affect his susceptibility. And the more sensitive and sensitized the artist, the more responsive he is, the more he vibrates and throbs in unison with the known and unknown influences and unfathomable forces, the greater, deeper and finer is his art.

L. G.

New York, July 11th, 1925.

I. Gamelan

Native music, played by the Javanese on their indigenous instruments, is called *Gamelan*. The Javanese ensemble is a kind of exotic orchestra, consisting mainly of diversely shaped and constructed percussive instruments of metal, wood and bamboo, comprising various kinds and sizes of bells, chimes, gongs, sounding boards, bowls, pans, drums (some barrel-like), tom-toms, native xylophones, sonorous *alang-alang* (zephyr-like, aeolian harp-like) and other unique music implements. The only stringed instrument I could discern was the ancient, guitar-shaped *rebab*, which is held by the leader in a position similar to that of the lute.

Both rulers of the two Sultanates of central Java: the Susuhunan of Solo and the Sultan of Djokja, and the two independent princes, Manku Negoro of Solo and Paku Alam of Djokja, have the best, largest and most complete native orchestras *(Gamelan)*. They own old instruments of inestimable value, the enchanting sonority of which is attributable to the mellowing process of time.

The sonority of the *Gamelan* is so weird, spectral, fantastic and bewitching, the native music so elusive, vague, shimmering and singular, that on listening to this new world of sound I lost my sense of reality, imagining myself in a realm of enchantment. Nothing seen or experienced in Java conveyed so strongly the mysterious and strange character of the island and its inhabitants.

The *Gamelan* produces most ethereal pianissimos, particularly entrancing when heard from a distance. It is like a perfume of sound, like a musical breeze. Usually the music, beginning very softly and languidly, becomes faster and louder as the movement progresses, rising, at last, to a barbaric climax.

In this, the first of the descriptive scenes, I have endeavored to recreate a *Gamelan* sonority – a typically Javanese atmosphere. Except for the one chromatic variation (pages 9-10), which is intentionally Occidental, the movement is almost exclusively diatonic and decidedly Oriental (Far Eastern).

II. Wayang-Purwa

Puppet Shadow Plays

This ancient, characteristically Javanese quasi-histrionic entertainment, produced on festive occasions, is very popular in Java. It symbolises to the Javanese their past historical greatness; their hopes, aspirations and national solidarity. To the subdued accompaniment of the *Gamelan*, the *Dalang*, — — manager, actor, musician, singer, reciter and improvisator, all in one,—recites classic Hindu epics, or modernized and localized versions of them, or other mythical or historical tales and East Indian legends, while grotesque, flat leather puppets throw shadows on a white screen to interpret and illustrate the reciter's stories. These puppets the *Dalang* manipulates by means of bamboo rods. Wayang-Purwa is somewhat of a combination of Punch and Judy and Chinese shadows.

III. Hari Besaar

The Great Day

The Kermess– the Country Fair – is here.

From plantations and hamlets natives flock to the town that is the center of the bright, joyous celebrations, naive, harmless amusements. They throw themselves eagerly into the whirl of festivities, enjoying the excitement and animation.

Actors, musicians, dancers and fakirs contribute to the pleasures of the people and to the picturesqueness of the scene.

The Great Day– *Hari Besaar!*

IV. Chattering Monkeys

at the Sacred Lake of Wendit

The Sacred Lake of Wendit is several miles distant from the attractive little city of Malang. In the woods, near the lake, we find ourselves in one of the numerous Simian colonies of Java, among the aborigines of the forest, enjoying an intimate view of their tribal life. On every side are jabbering monkeys, hundreds of them, jumping from tree to tree, running up and down the trunks and branches, while others, nearer the ground, are springing on and off the roofs of the small hotel and the bath houses, snatching bananas from the visitors.

The scene is full of humor, fun and animation.

V. Boro Budur
in Moonlight

On a sacred hill, in the heart of Java, some thirty miles from Djokja, stand the colossal ruins of the most imposing and gigantic Buddhist monument in existence, the world-famous temple of Boro Budur, "The Shrine of the Many Buddhas." No matter how *blasé* the weary traveler may be, he cannot fail to be stirred and bewildered by the stupendous masonry and by the hundreds of sculptured Buddhas, images and bas-reliefs. The amazing dimensions and incredible craftsmanship enrapture the senses; the loftiness of conception, the luxuriance of imagination thrill the beholder.

In moonlight, Boro Budur is most fantastic. An uncanny, eerie, melancholy mood permeates the whole atmosphere. Deep silence and a sense of strangeness and out-of-the-worldness contribute to the impression of utter desolation and to the feeling of inevitable decay and dissolution of all things earthly, the hopeless struggle of human endeavor against eternity.

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VI. The Bromo Volcano
and the Sand Sea at Daybreak

Reaching the Sand Sea from Tosari, the most famous mountain resort in Java, we crossed the sea of sand, perhaps the vastest amphitheatre in the world, arriving at the Bromo crater at dawn.

A marvelous sunrise enhanced the terrifying hugeness and transcendental grandeur of this awe-inspiring panorama. The boiling, roaring, rumbling subterranean forces, seething and spouting up from abysmal depths, the sulphurous vapors and dense clouds, spreading steadily and menacingly over the horizon, suggested scenes from Dante's Inferno, and brought to realization the fact that cataclysmic activities, everlasting fires in the bowels of the earth, threaten all that is alive.

The appalling thought of the frailty of all human institutions was overwhelming. Cui Bono?.....

———+———

But the bright sun, shedding its glorious light and dispelling all fear and gloom, changed the feeling of a crushing futility into an ecstatic triumphal ode. The mere consciousness that such elemental powers exist alleviates the pain of living. An overpowering feeling of humility, of compassion and tenderness toward all things alive, a passionate adoration for the unknown source of all consciousness, filled the soul.

And then we returned.....

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VII. Three Dances

It is doubtful if there is a people in any part of the world whose innermost feelings are so wholly revealed in their dances as are the Javanese.

And whether religious or secular, warlike or peaceful, spiritual or sensuous, these dances are always beautiful.

The first of the "Three Dances" expresses the languor and melancholy of the Far East; the second, the grace and charm of the Oriental dancers; the third, their poetry and tenderness, translated into an Occidental idiom.

VIII. The Gardens of Buitenzorg

Buitenzorg, meaning "Sans Souci" and pronounced Boy-ten-sorg, forty miles from Batavia, is the country capital of Java, where the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies has his residence. His spacious palace is situated in a large park which forms part of the most famous Botanical Gardens in the world.

The finest collection of tropical trees, plants and flowers is to be found in the gardens of this distant corner of our Earth. The profusion, richness, magnificence and beauty of this strange horticultural world are unparalleled.

———— + ————

The fragrant frangipanis, the white tuberoses (the Malay call them "The Charmers of the Night") and a bewildering number of other most delicately scented flowers intoxicate the senses.

The heavily perfumed air awakens an inexpressibly deep and painful yearning for unknown worlds, for inaccessible ideals, for past happenings irrevocably gone—these memories which the ocean of time gradually submerges and finally buries in oblivion.....

Why do certain scents produce unutterable regrets, insatiable longings, indefinable desires?

IX. In the Streets of Old Batavia

To stroll in the old streets of lower Batavia is an exhilarating experience. As we wander near the seashore, through the crowded bazaars and busy, narrow streets, many of which are intersected by bricked canals lined with weather-beaten buildings in the Dutch style, we meet exotic crowds, consisting mainly of Chinese, Arabs, natives and other Asiatics, interspersed with Europeans, of whom the Dutch form a large majority.

———+———

A ramble through the hectic Chinese quarter leads us to a quiet and contemplative corner of the Arab settlement. Another turn brings us to the native quarter. And when the bazaars are reached, a kaleidoscopic, multifarious conglomeration of humans bewilders even the most seasoned globe-trotter.

X. In the Kraton

Surakarta, popularly called Solo, and Djokjakarta, commonly shortened to Djokja, are the most important and interesting native cities in Java.

The greatest ruler– The Susuhunan – resides in Solo, while the next in importance, the Sultan of Djokja, lives in the last named capital. In the heart of each capital is a vast enclosure called the *Kraton*, in which the potentate has his palaces and wherein dwell besides the Sultan, Sultana and princes and princesses, his numerous concubines, slaves and servants, court officials, nobles, musicians, actors, dancers, workmen, tradespeople and many individuals with indefinable occupations. Each *Kraton* has a population of between ten and fifteen thousand, the ensemble constituting a court of huge dimensions.

———+———

It is evening. Quaint scenes charm our vision. Faint sounds of the entrancing *Gamelan* fill the fragrant air. The seemingly unreal reality casts a hypnotic spell over our consciousness.

There is poetry in every ebbing moment.

It is evening in the Orient.....

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XI. The Ruined Water Castle at Djokja

Near the *Kraton* of Djokja, deserted, fallen into decay, stand the mouldy and crumbling remains of the once resplendent Water Palace, with its murmuring fountains and splashing cascades, with its aquatic pranks and air-filling scents of exotic flowers.

Where once was merriment, there is now the mystery and romance of vanished days, the sadness of evanescent pleasures.

The fountains and cascades murmur memories of yesteryears – yearning for past joys, mourning for departed love....

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XII. A Court Pageant in Solo

The pomp, bombast and gorgeousness of a royal procession on a festive occasion or court function in either of the two native capitals make a dazzling and grotesque spectacle. The exuberance and abandon of the natives, the force and charm of the native rhythms, challenge description.

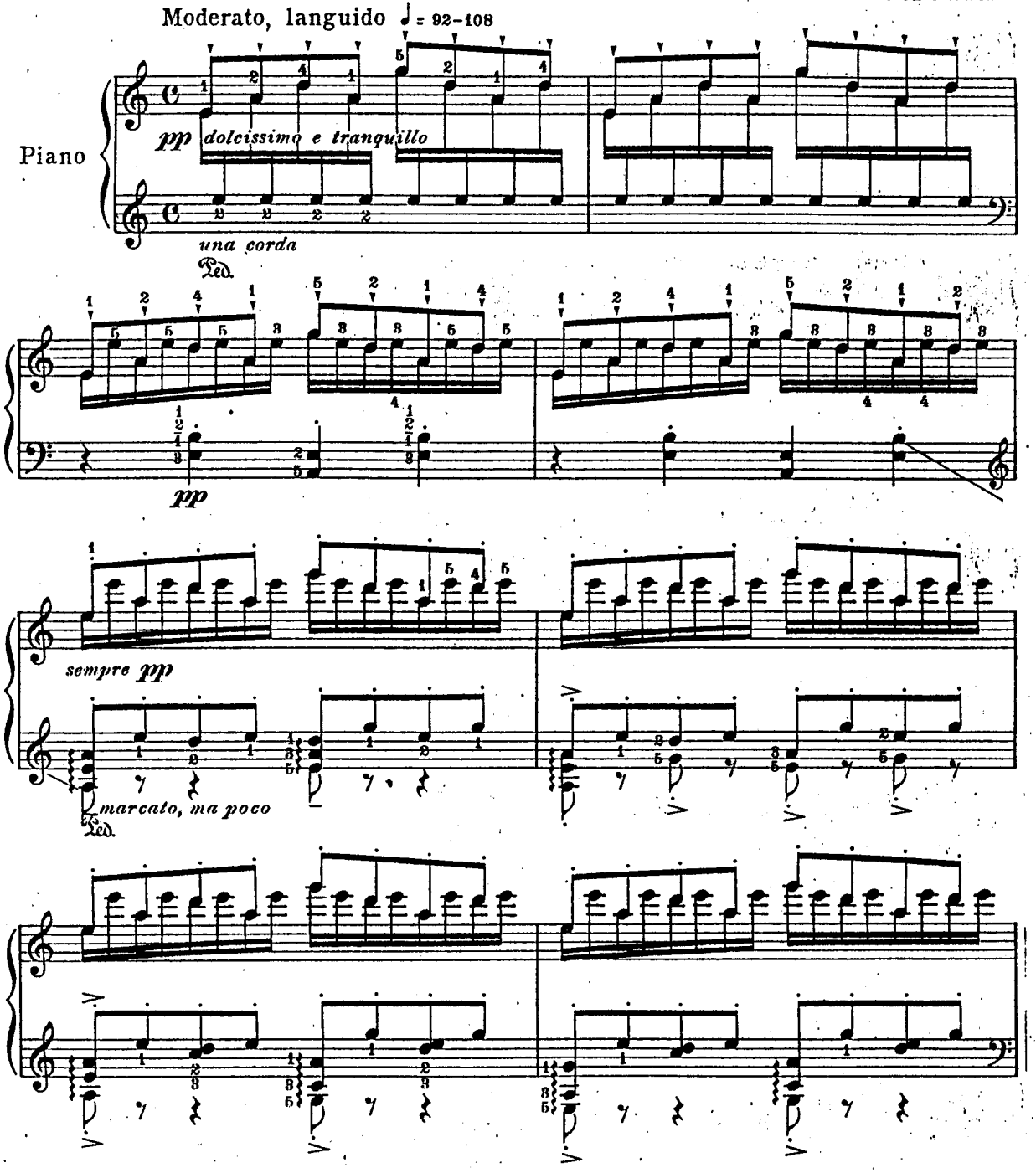
———+———

The clanging and clashing march opens the event. Strongly emphasized in the middle section (F sharp minor) of this closing composition, is that strain of sadness ever present in the music of the Orient. The hilarious mood is resumed with the *Fugato,* which leads back to an intensified version of the barbaric march.

And here these tonal journeys come to an end.

I. Gamelan

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY



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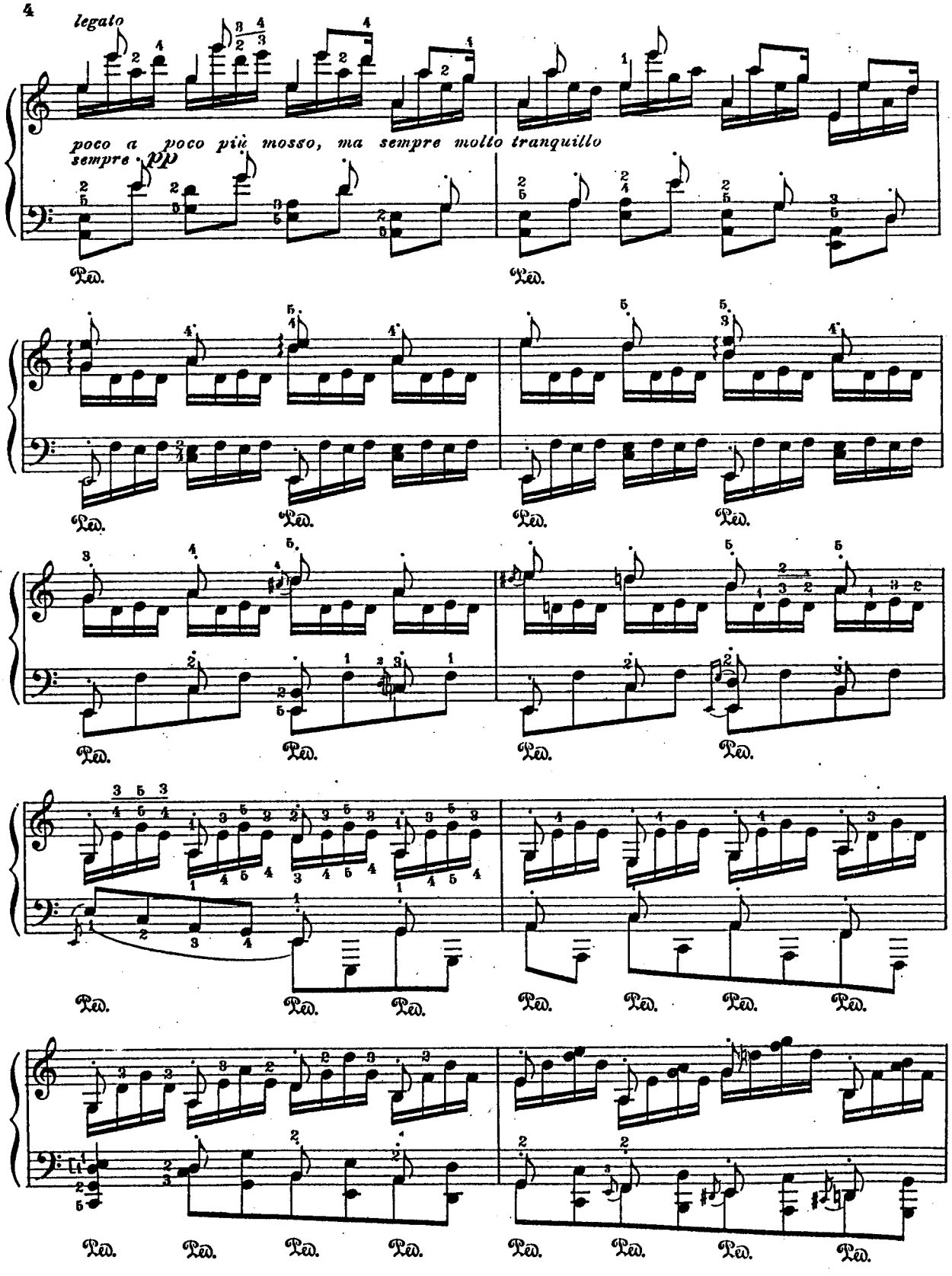
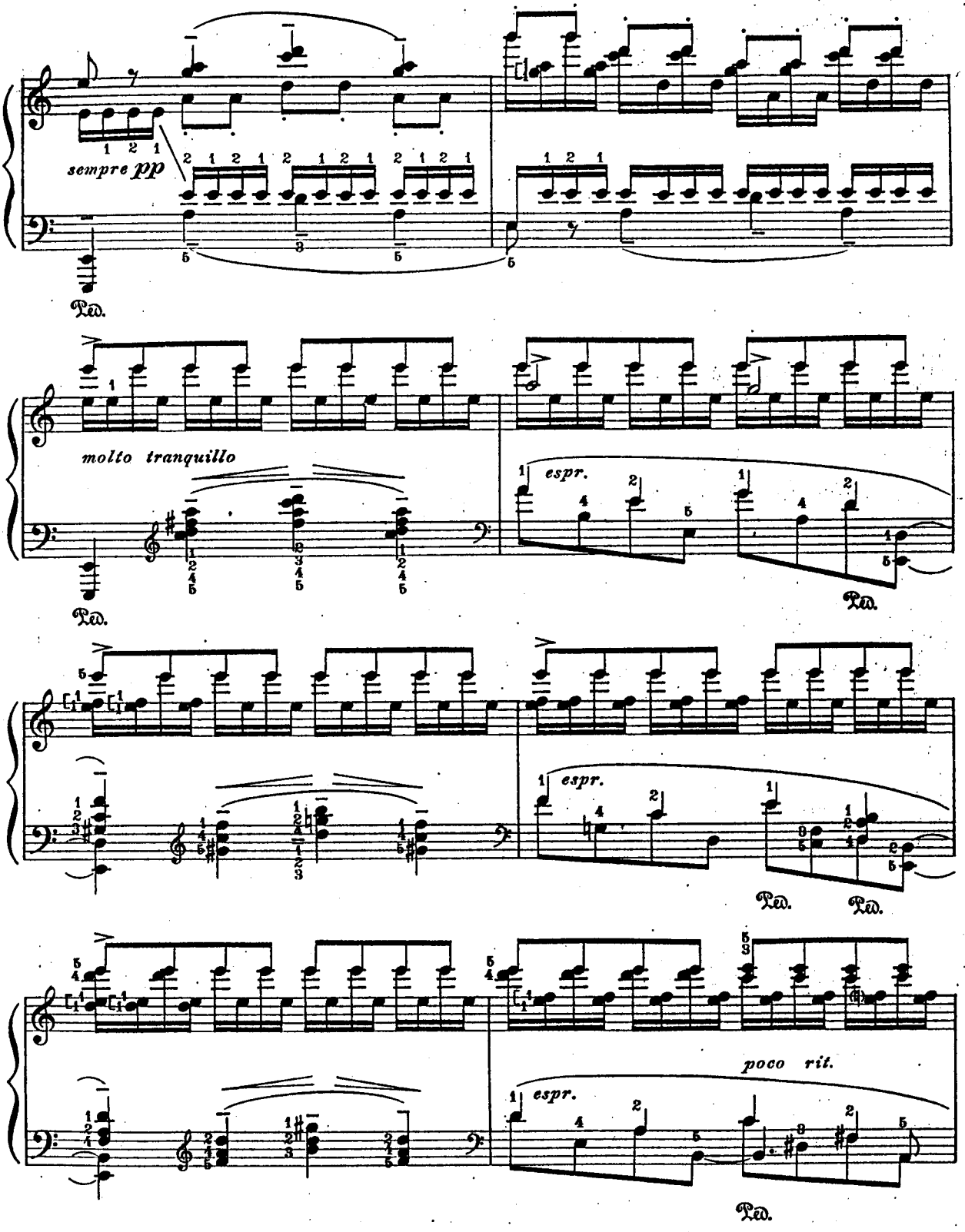
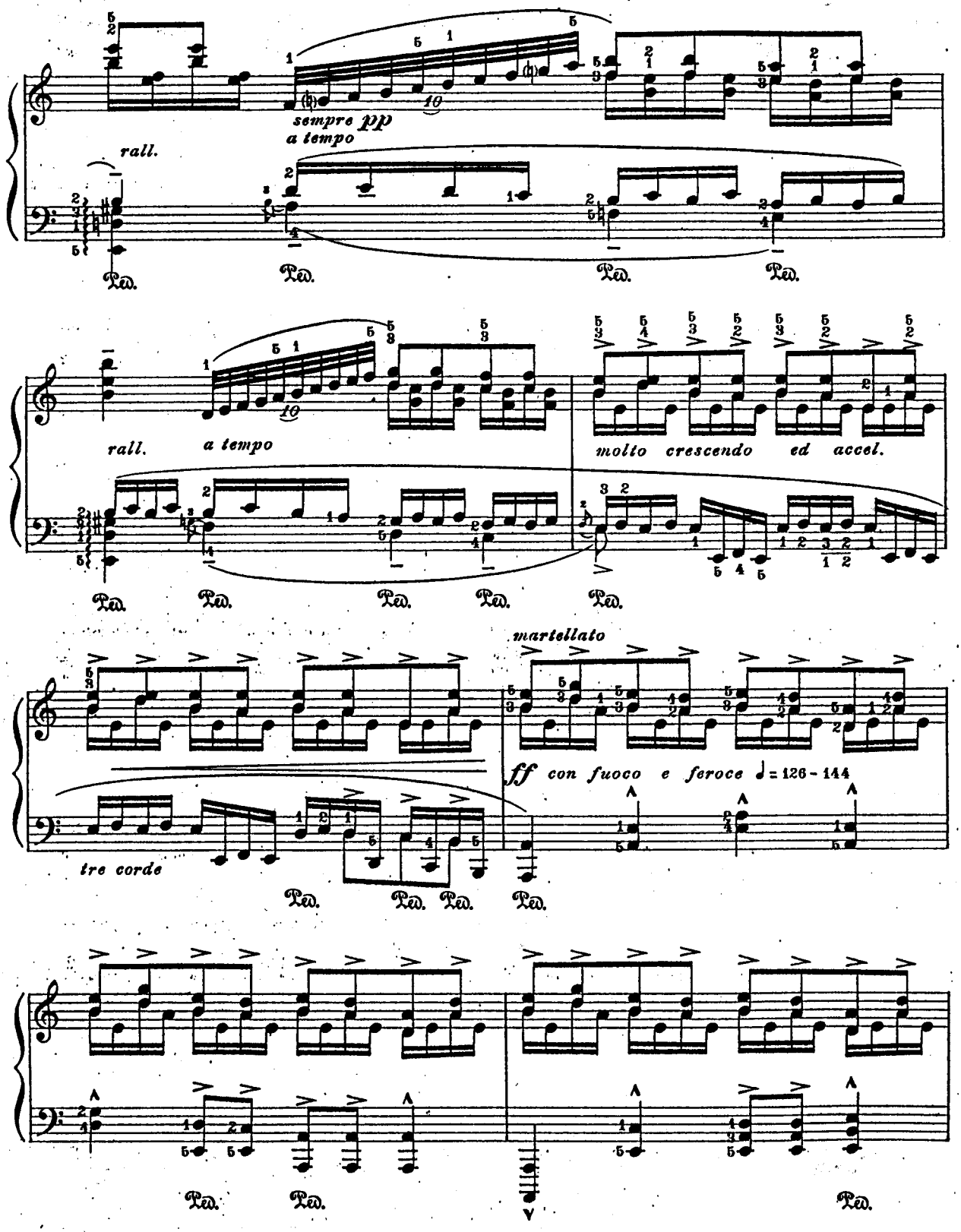
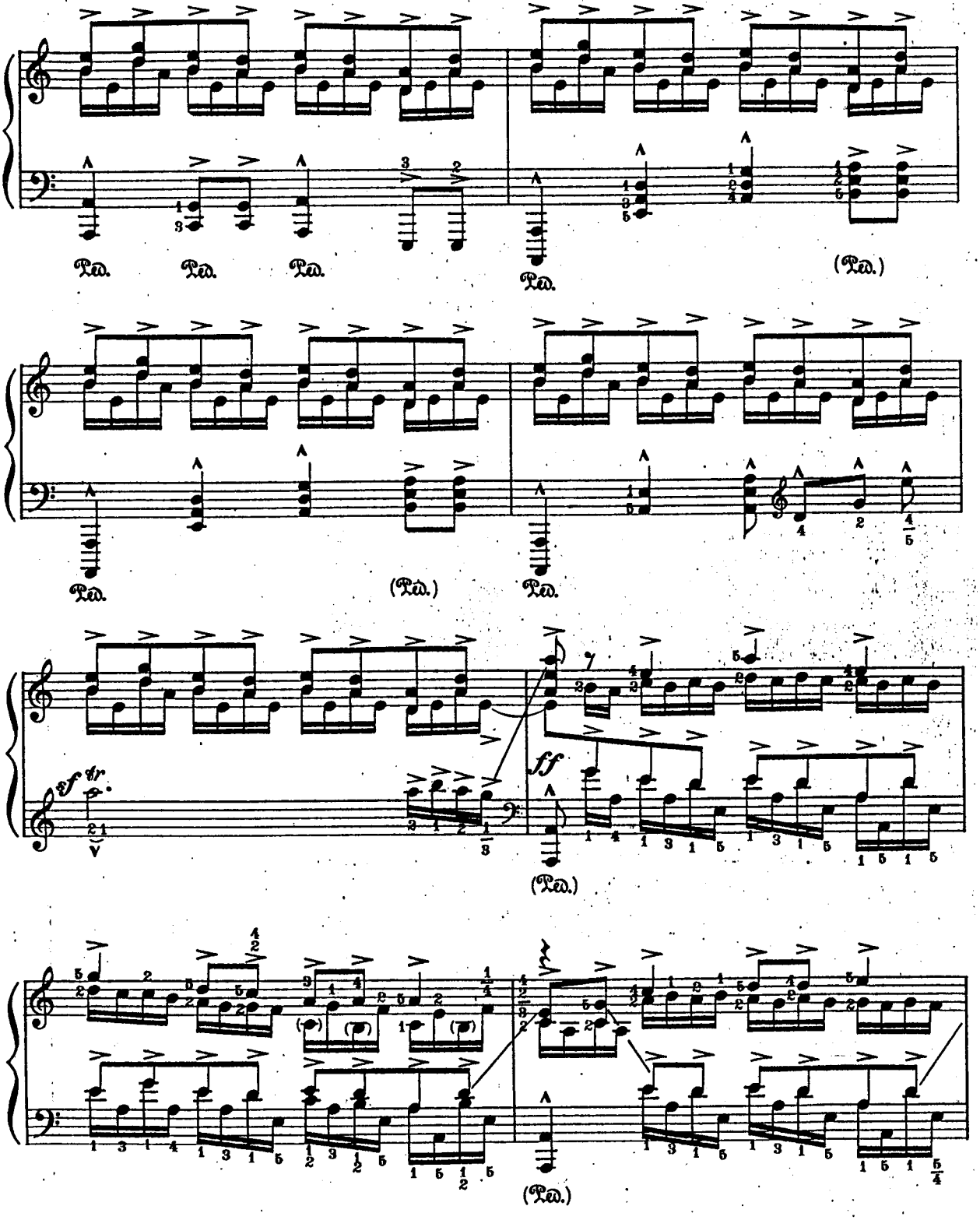
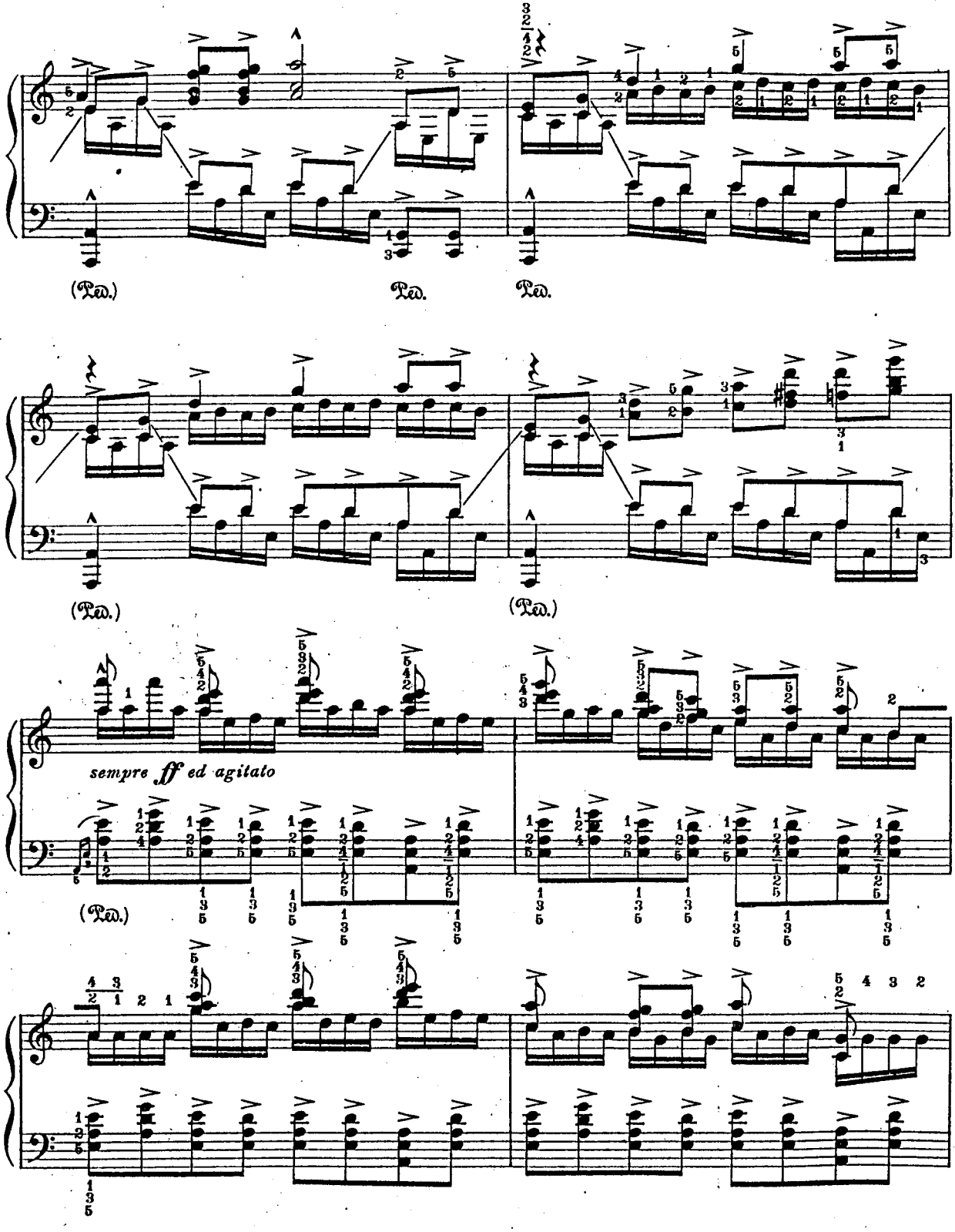
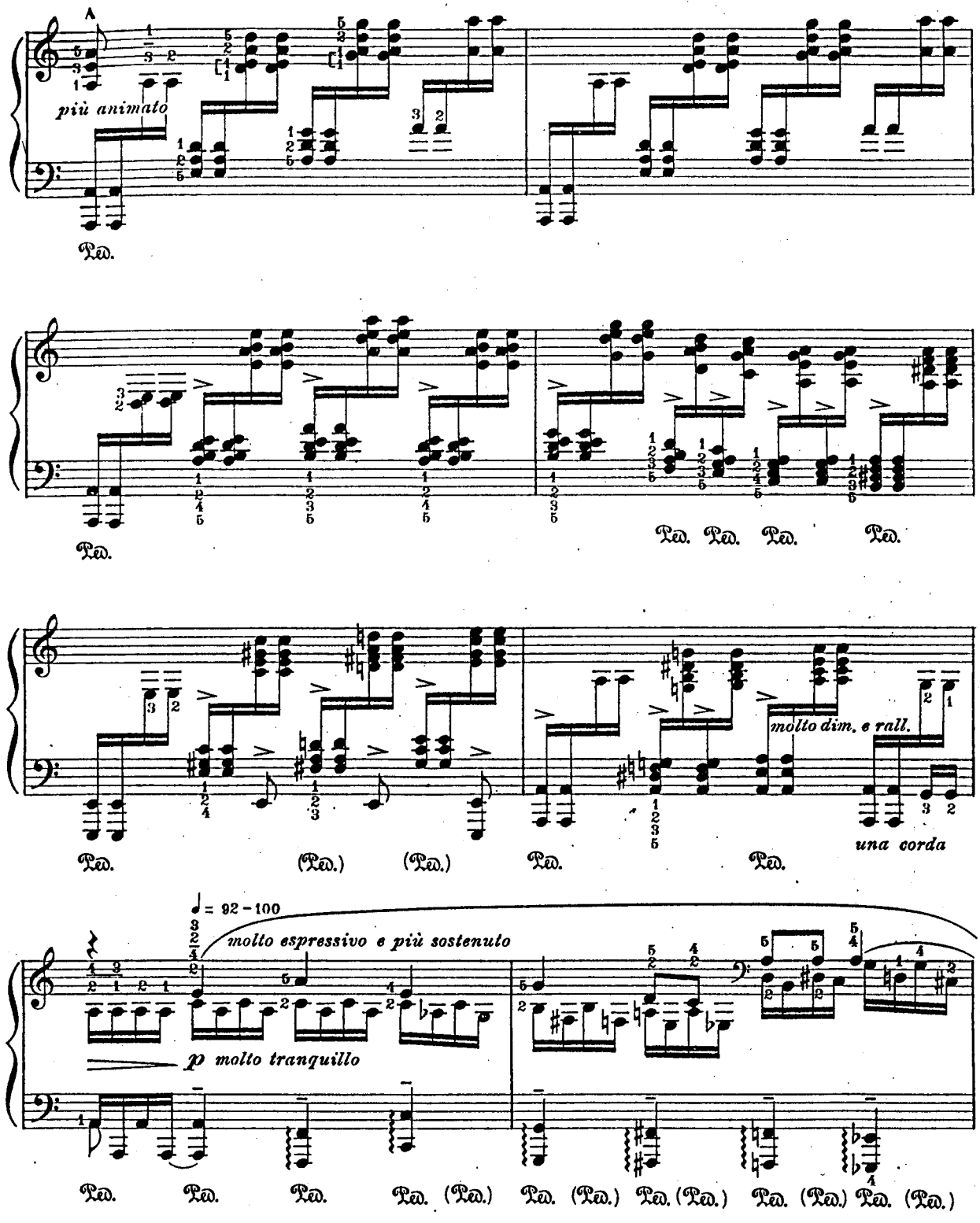

legato
poco a poco più mosso, ma sempre molto tranquillo
sempre pp
Ped.

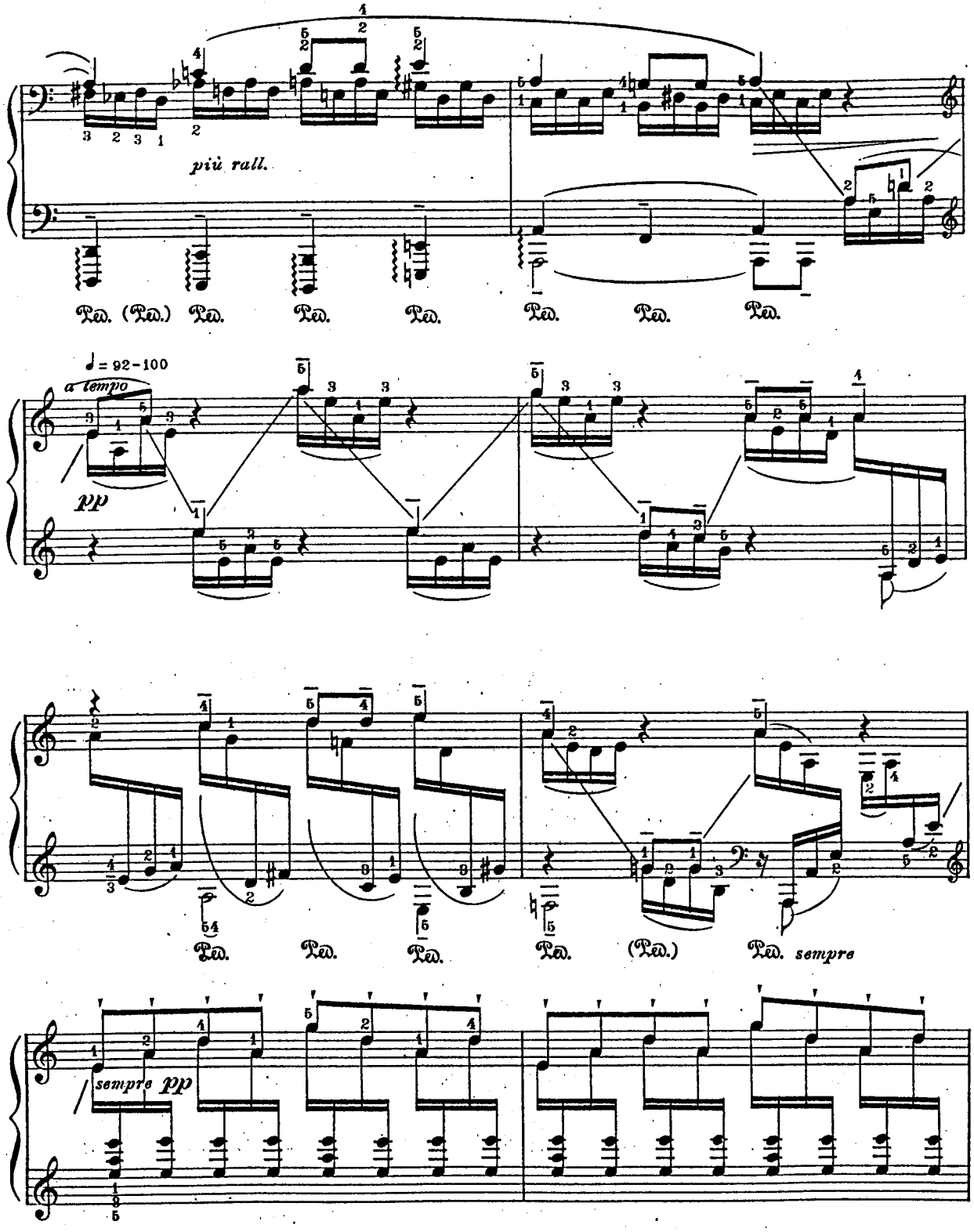

sempre pp
molto tranquillo
espr.
espr.
espr.
poco rit.

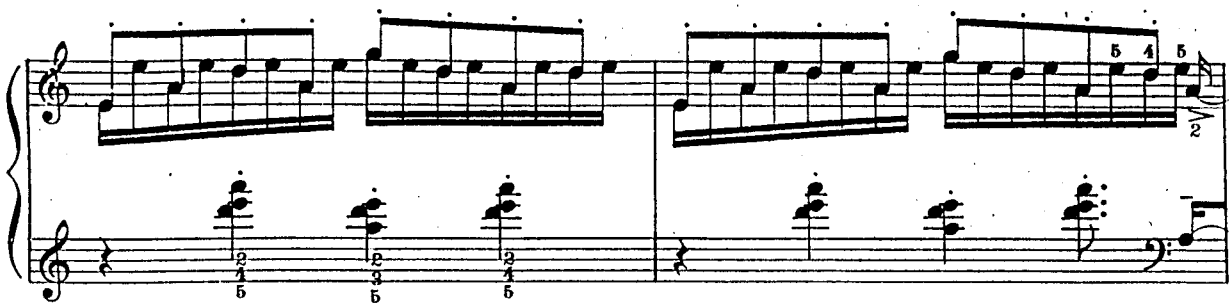

sempre pp
a tempo
rall.
Ped.
rall.
a tempo
molto crescendo ed accel.
martellato
ff con fuoco e feroce ♩= 126 - 144
tre corde


Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
(Ped.)
Ped.
(Ped.)
Ped.
sf tr.
ff
(Ped.)
(Ped.)

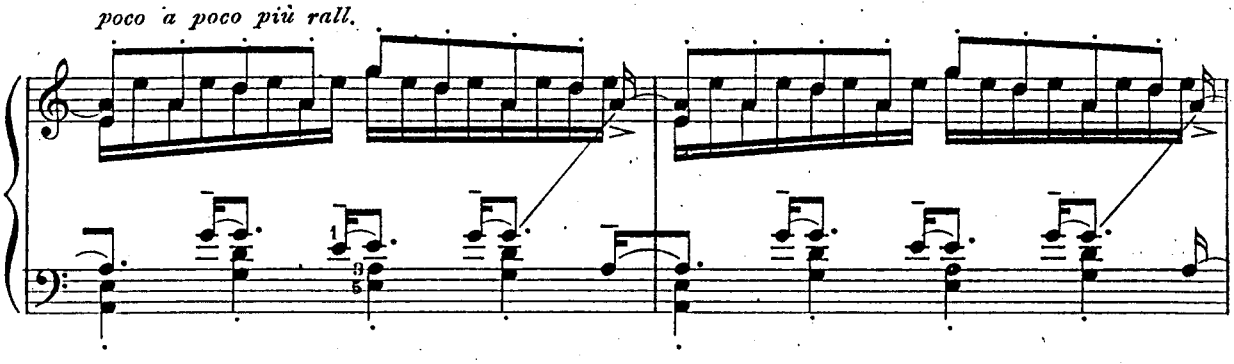

(Ped.)
Ped.
Ped.
(Ped.)
(Ped.)
sempre ff ed agitato
(Ped.)

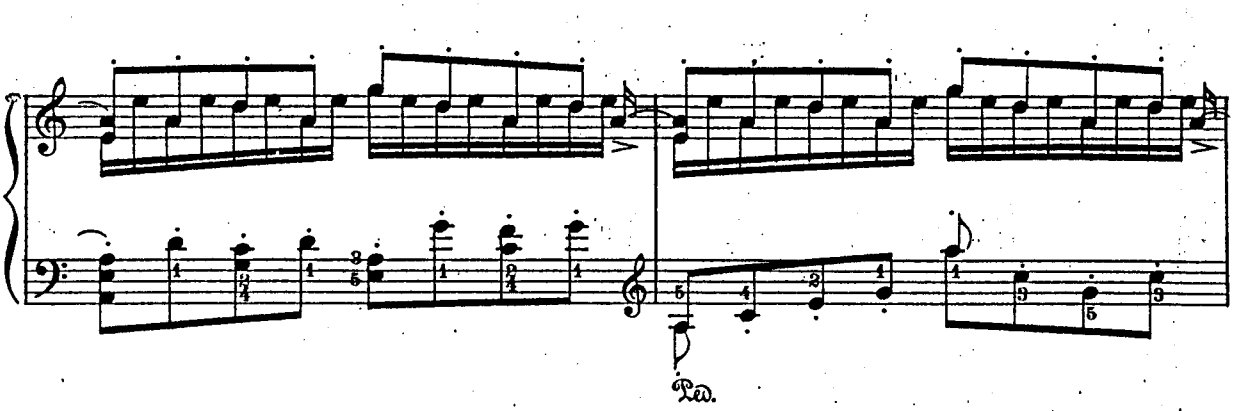

A
più animato
molto dim. e rall.
una corda
♩= 92 - 100
molto espressivo e più sostenuto
p molto tranquillo


più rall.
Ped. (Ped.) Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.
♩ = 92-100
a tempo
pp
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. (Ped.) Ped. sempre
sempre pp

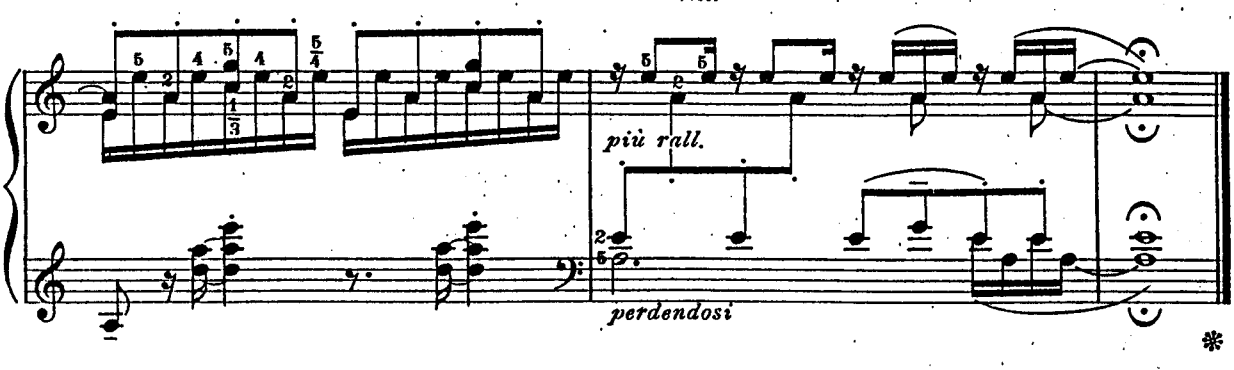


poco a poco più rall.





Ped.



più rall.

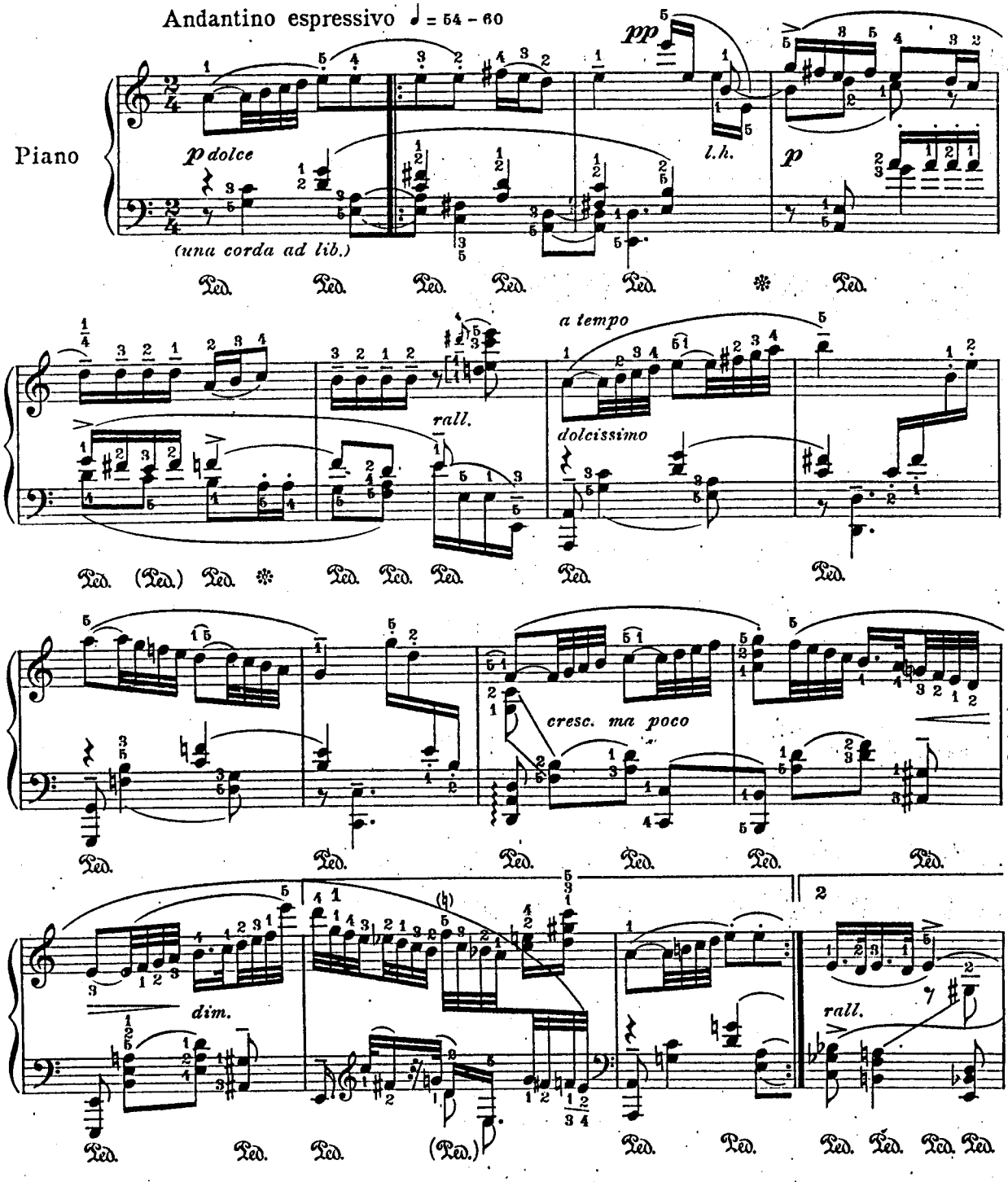
perdendosi

Berlin, Sept. 24th, 1924.

II. Wayang Purwa

PUPPET SHADOW PLAYS

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY



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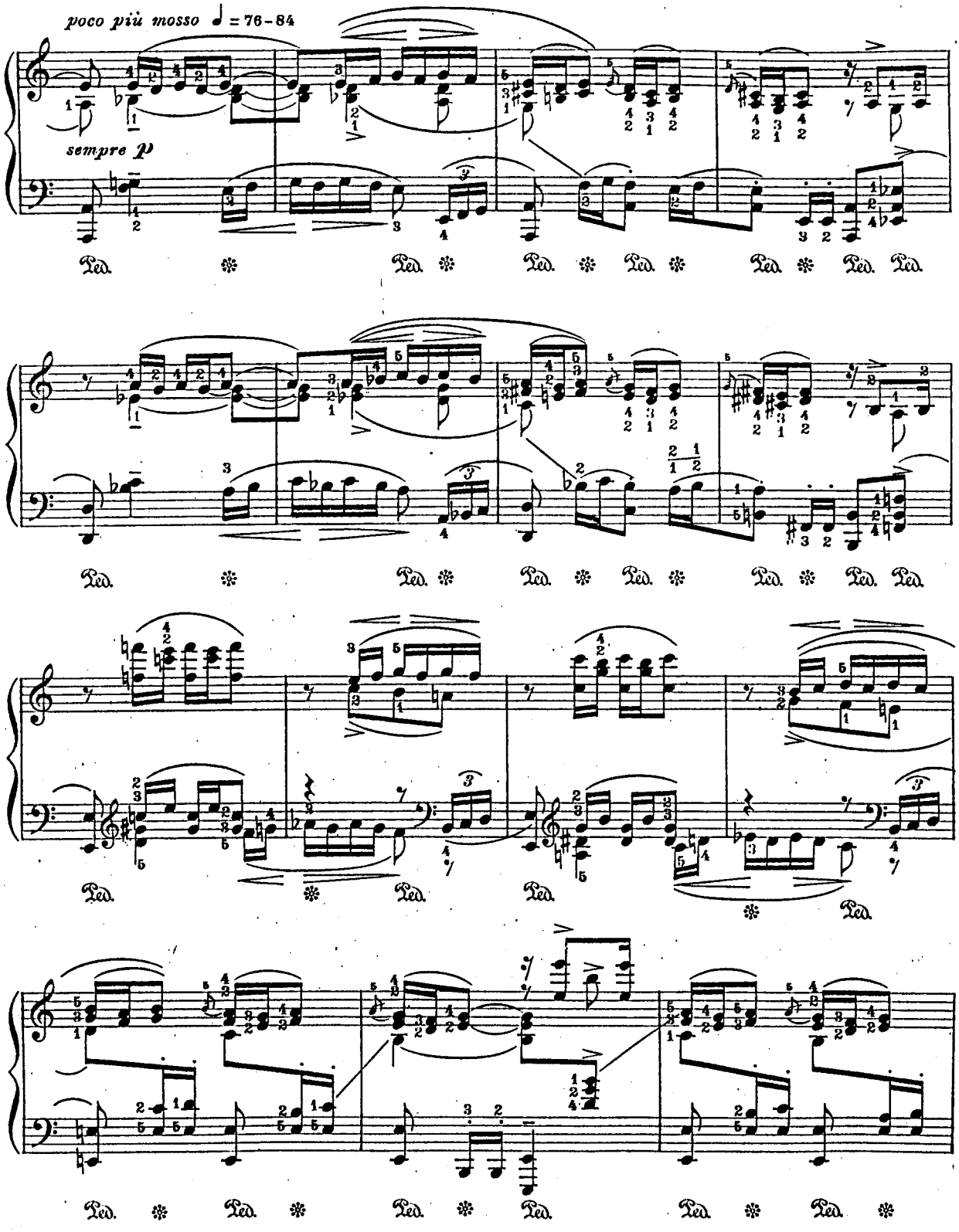
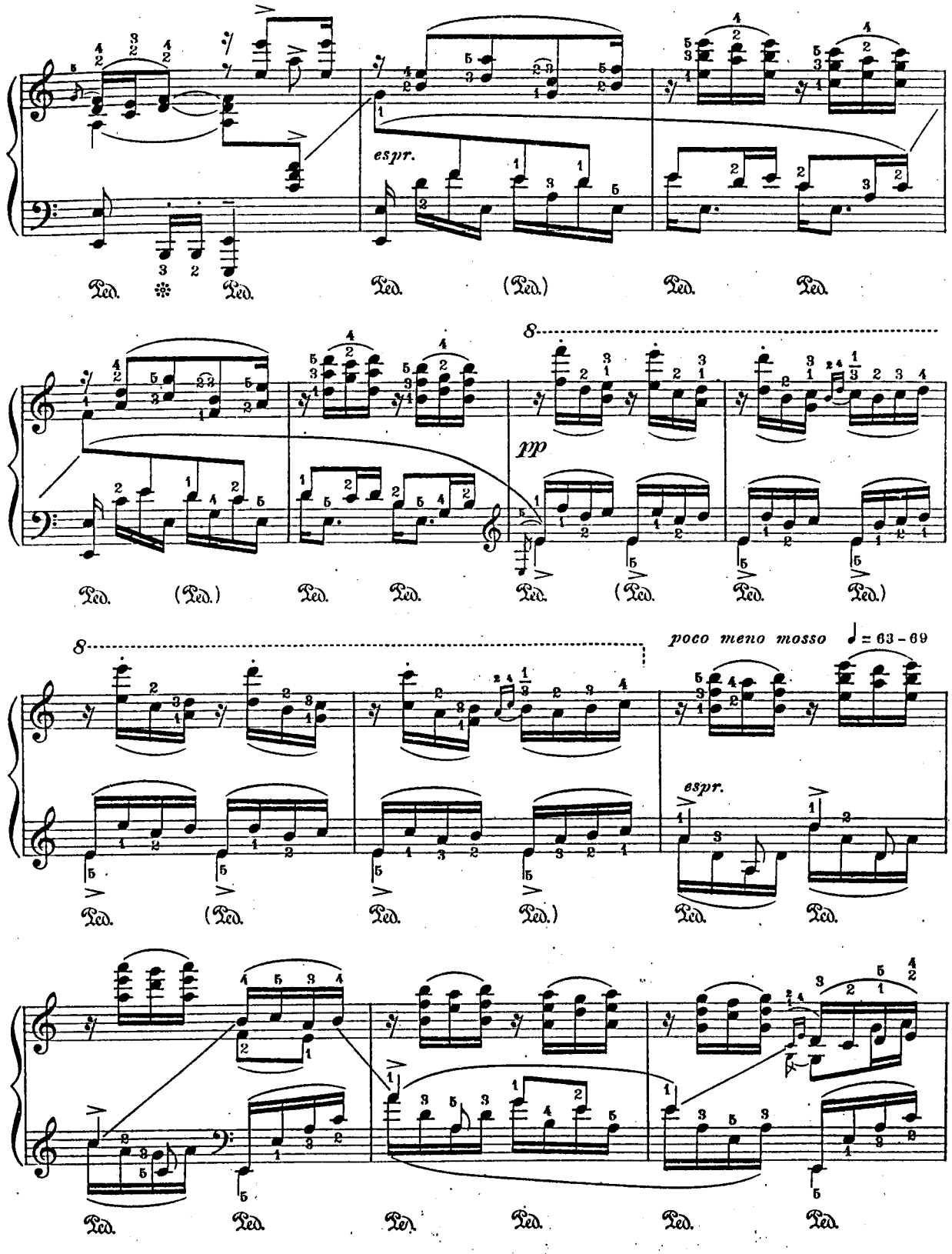
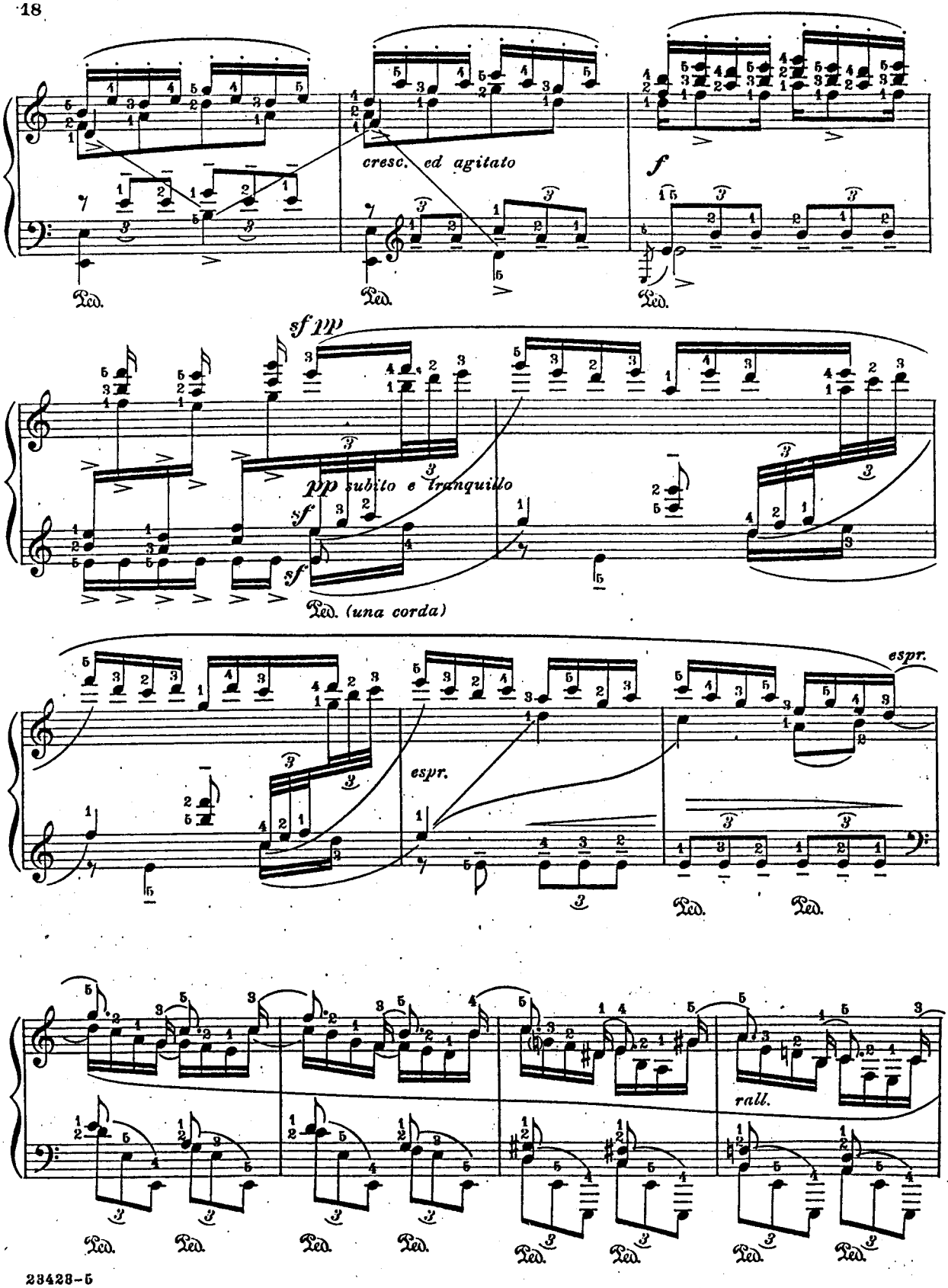
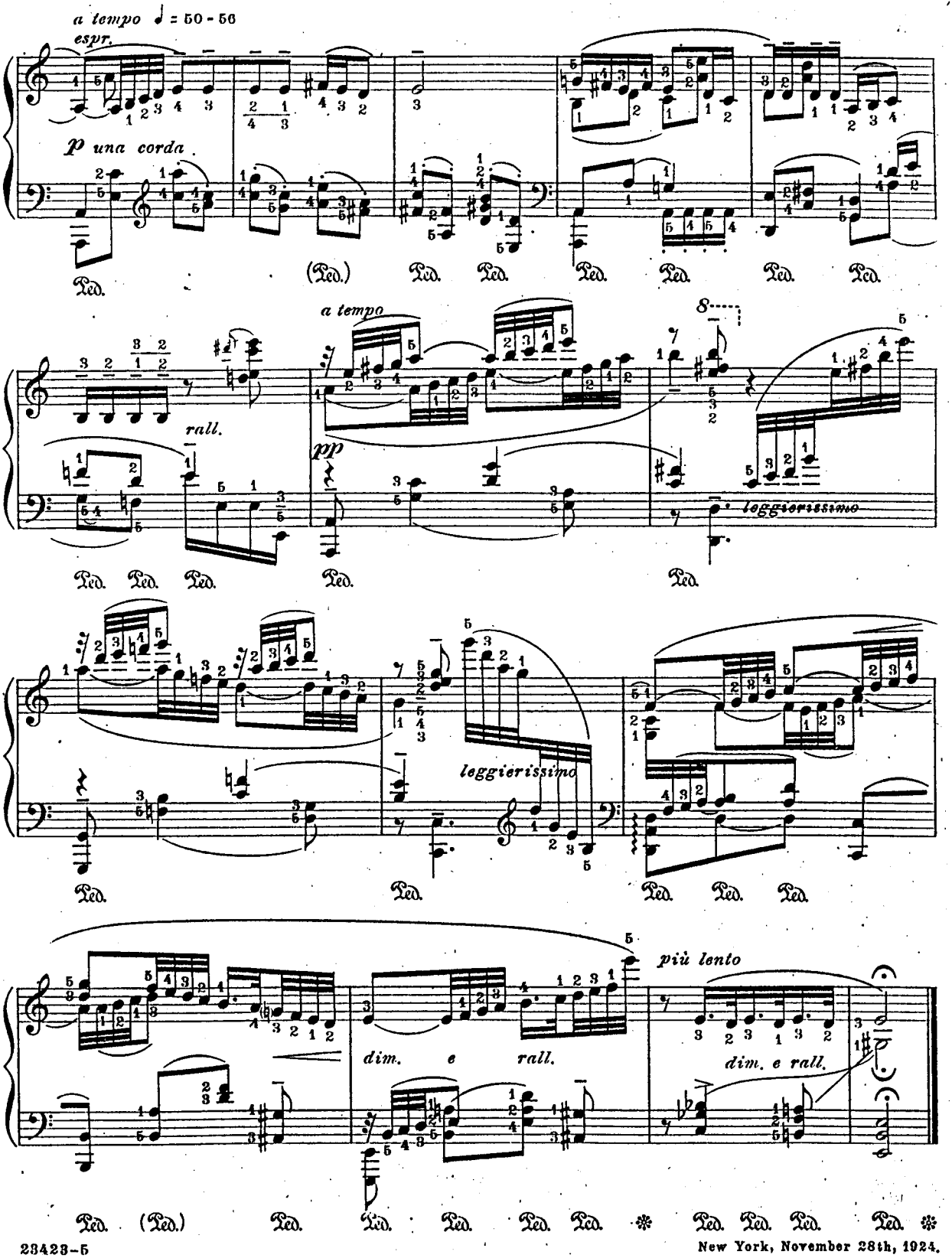

poco più mosso ♩ = 76–84
sempre p
Ped.


espr.
Ped.
(Ped.)
8
pp
poco meno mosso
♩= 63 - 69


cresc. ed agitato
f
sf pp
pp subito e tranquillo
sf
sf
Ped. (una corda)
espr.
espr.
Ped.
Ped.
rall.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

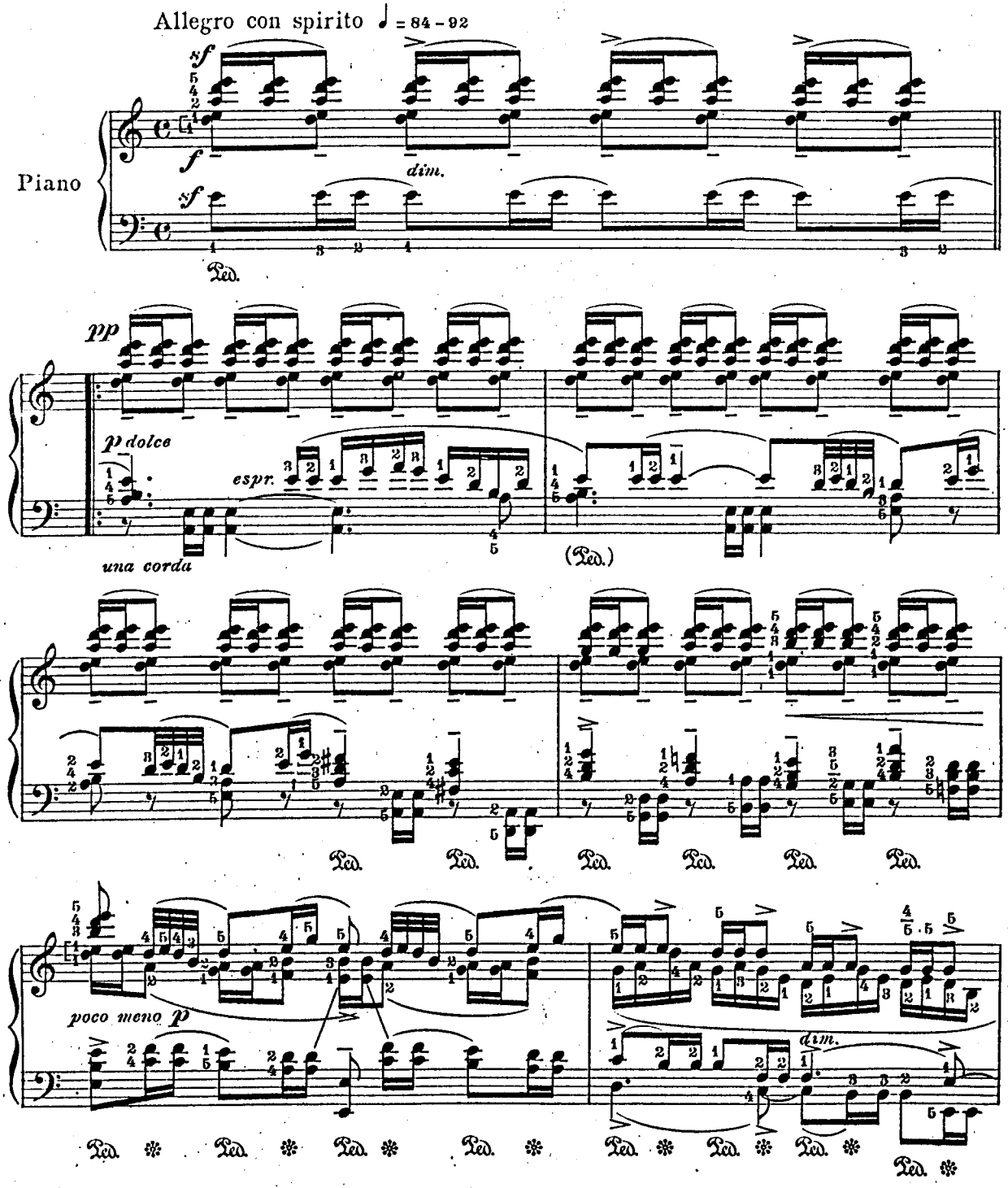


New York, November 28th, 1924.

III. Hari Besaar

THE GREAT DAY

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY



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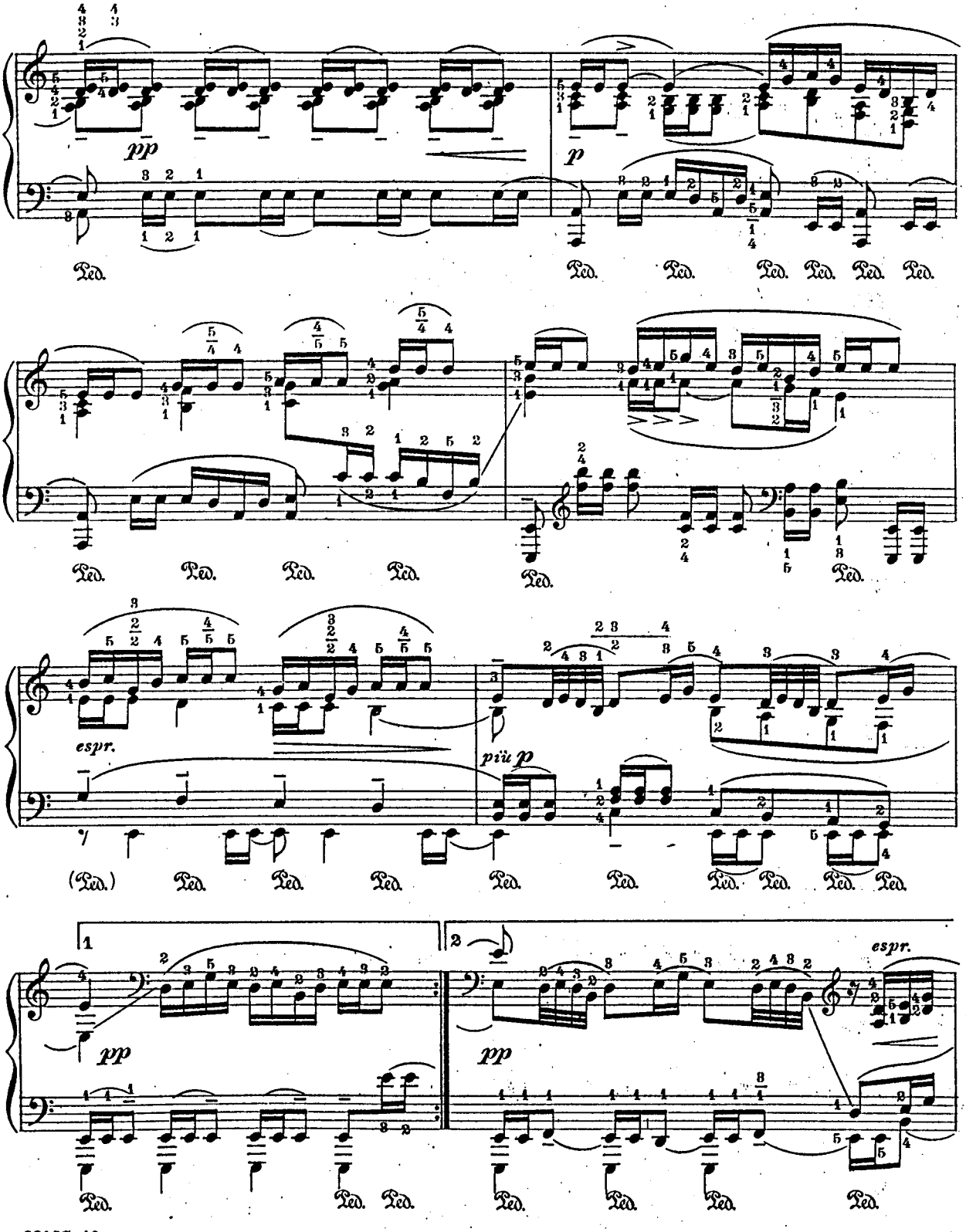
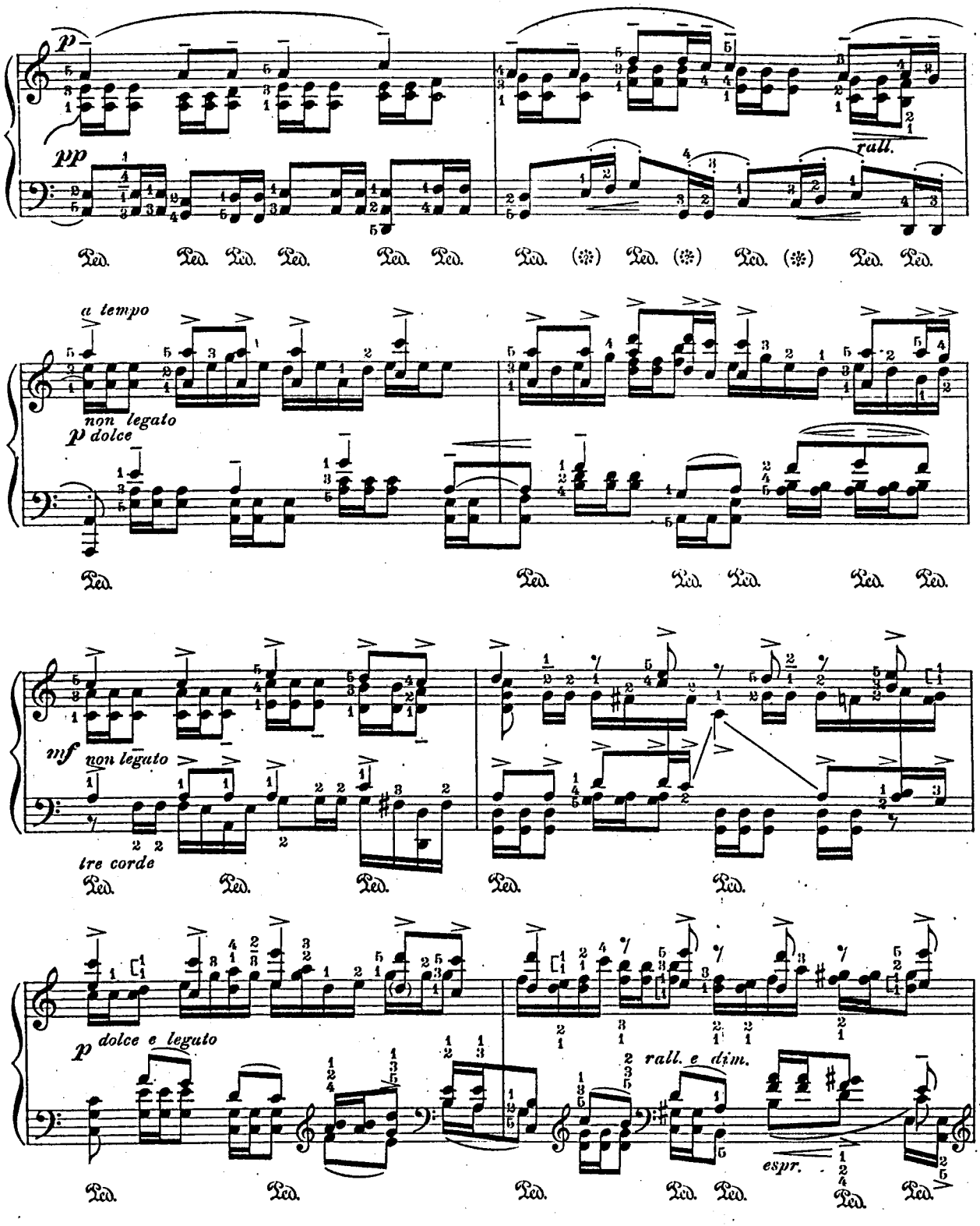
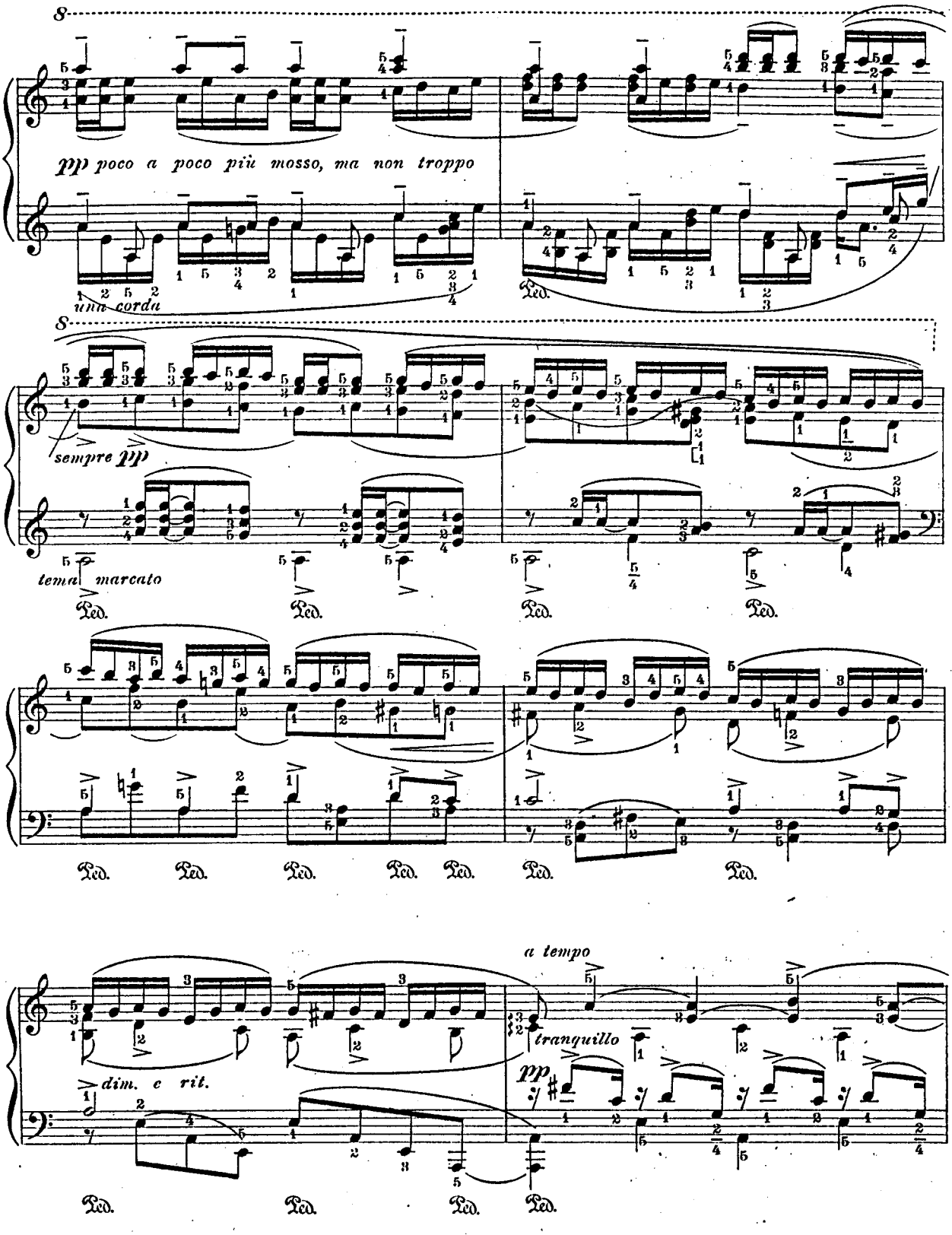
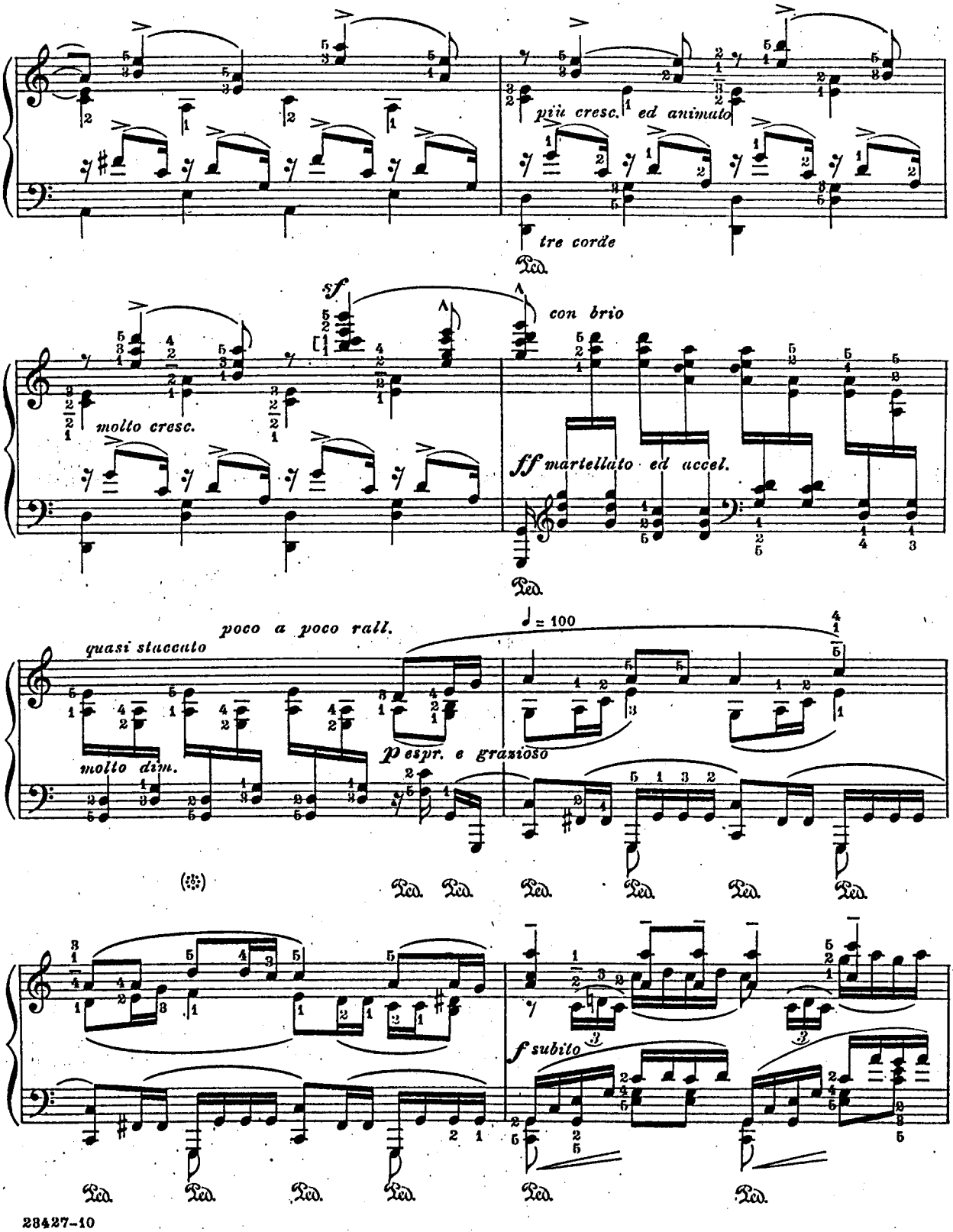
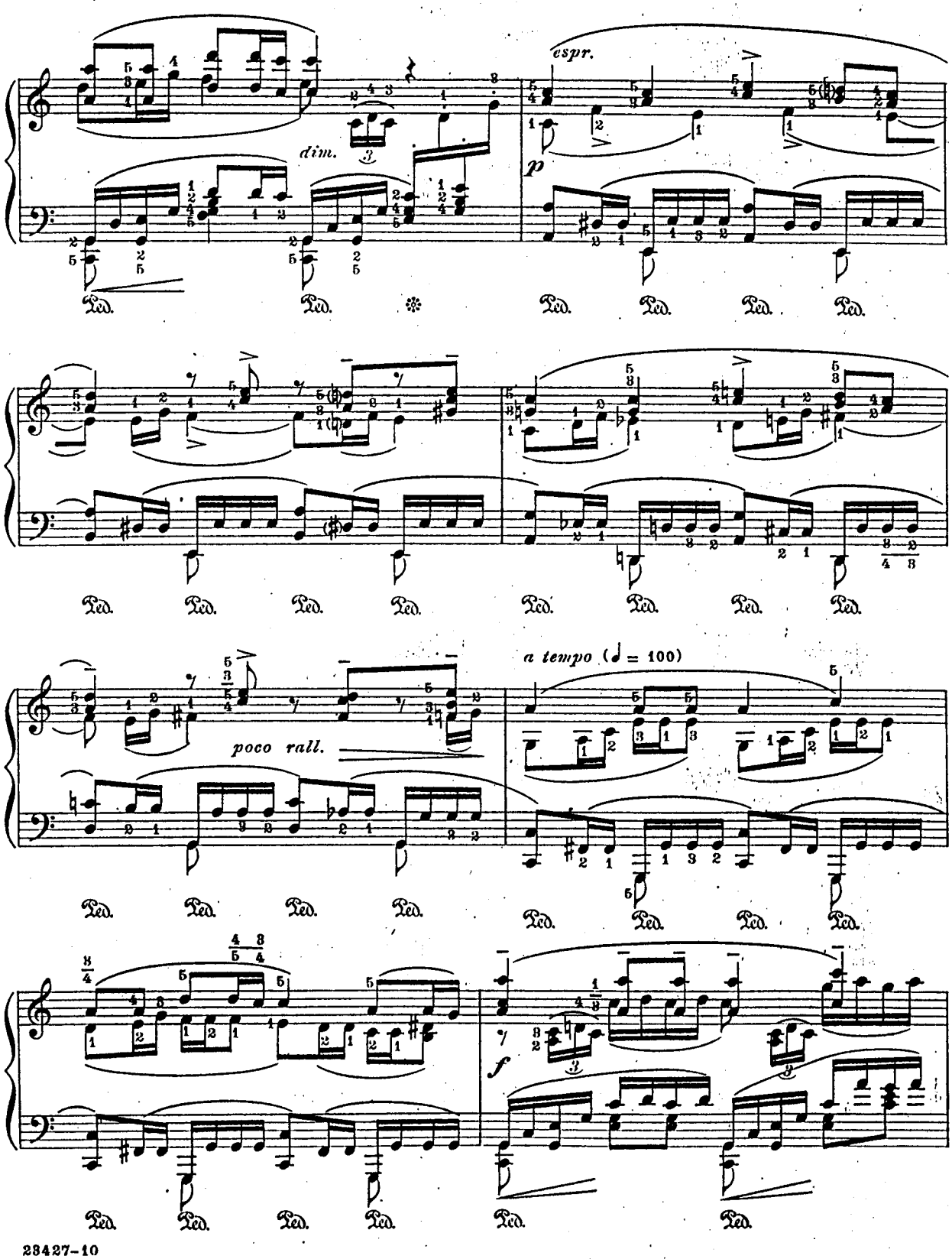
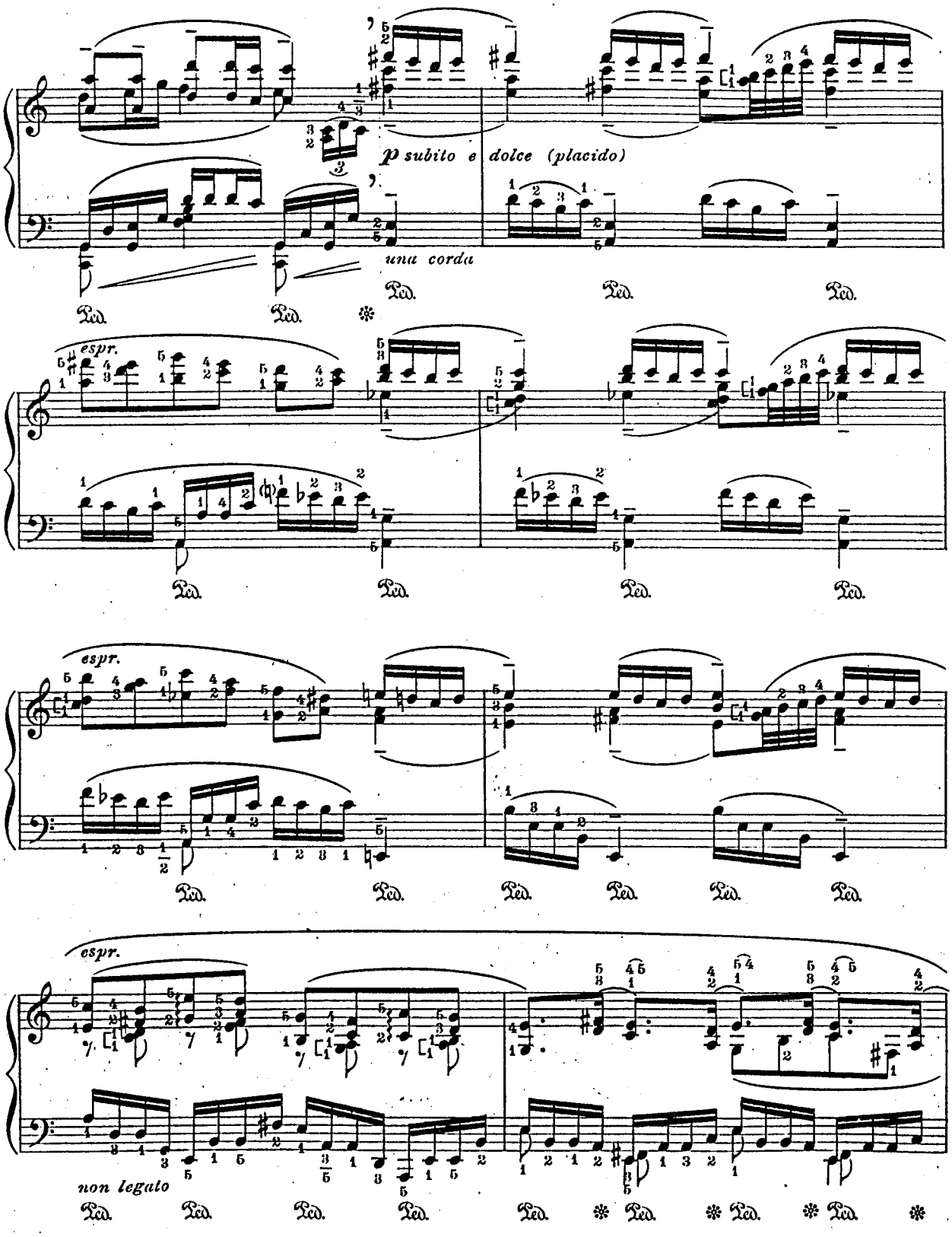

pp
p
espr.
più p
1
2
pp
pp
espr.

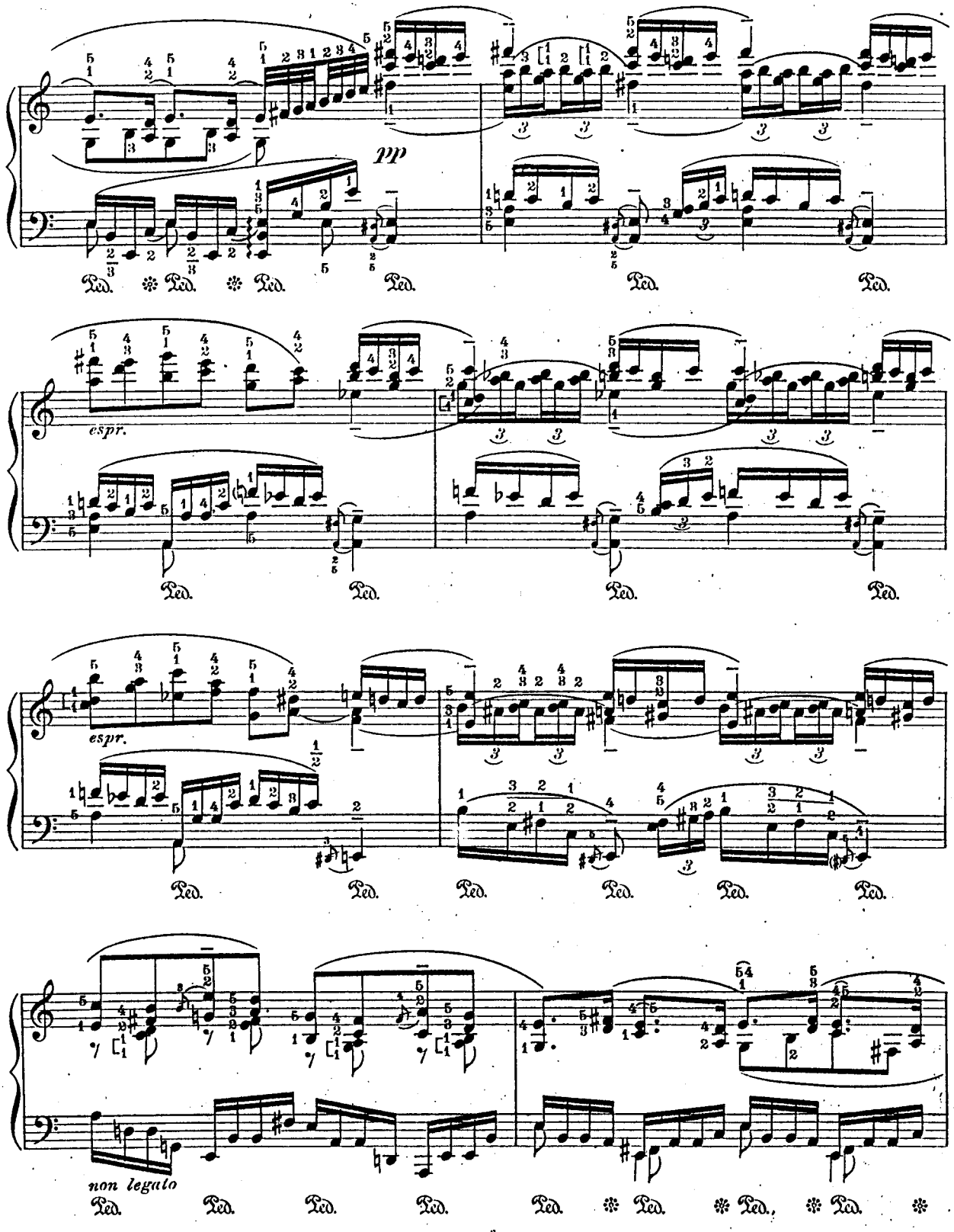

p
pp
rall.
Ped.
a tempo
non legato
p dolce
mf
non legato
tre corde
p dolce e legato
rall. e dim.
espr.

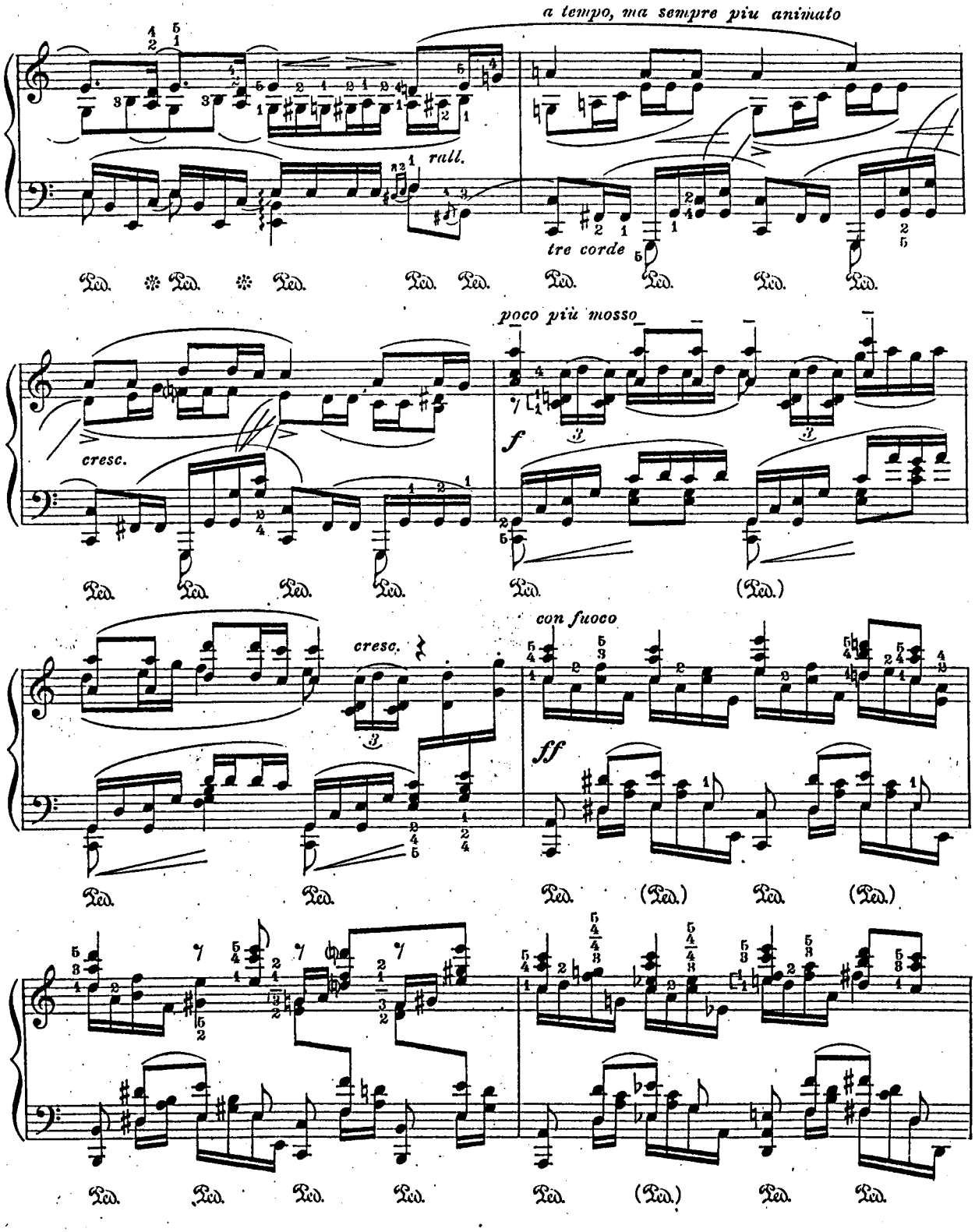

8
pp poco a poco più mosso, ma non troppo
una corda
Ped.
8
sempre pp
tema marcato
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.
a tempo
tranquillo
pp
dim. e rit.
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

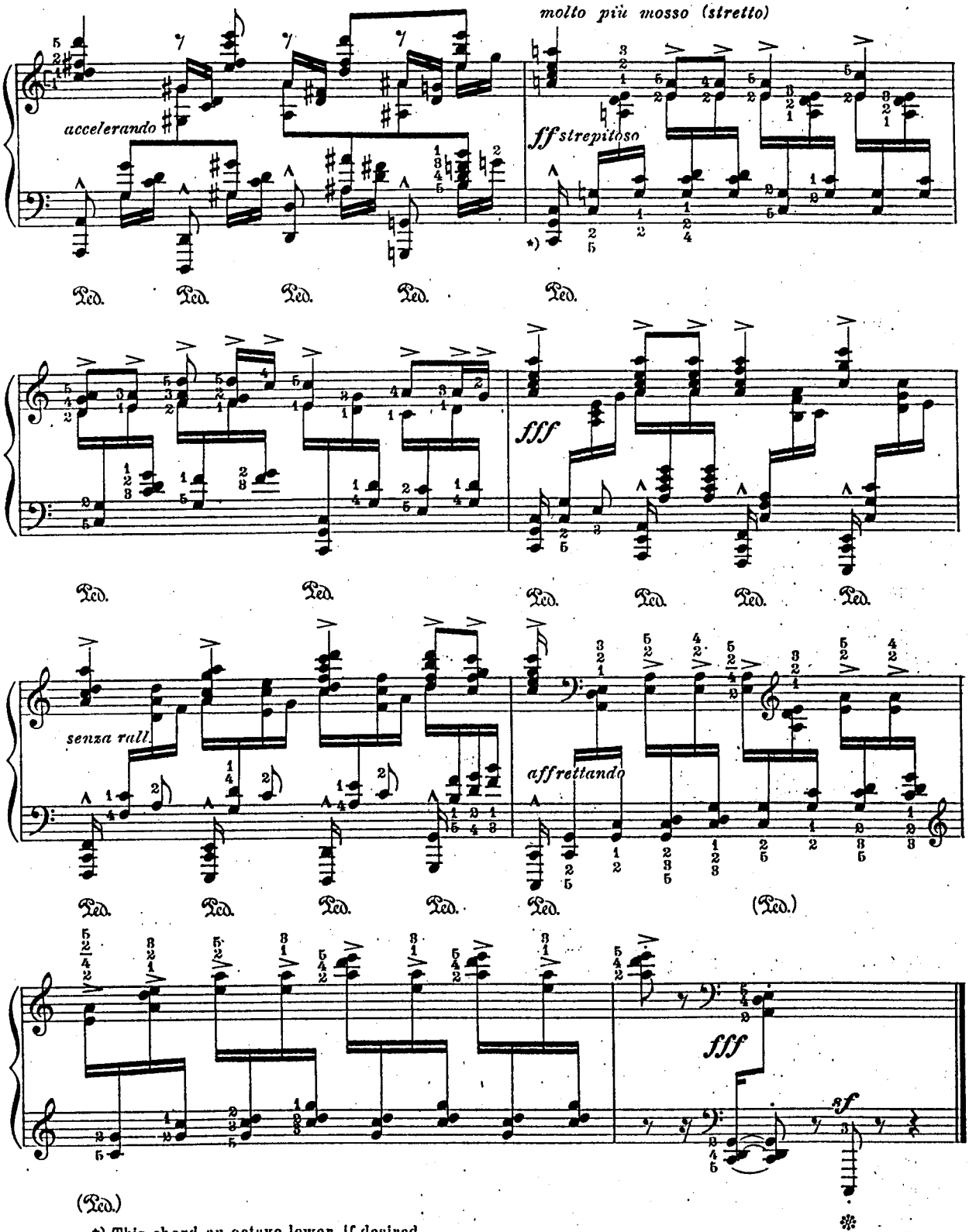

più cresc. ed animato
tre corde
Ped.
sf
molto cresc.
con brio
ff martellato ed accel.
poco a poco rall.
quasi staccato
molto dim.
♩ = 100
p espr. e grazioso
f subito


espr.
dim.
p
poco rall.
a tempo (♩ = 100)
f


p subito e dolce (placido)
una corda
Ped.
espr.
non legato


pp
espr.
espr.
non legato


a tempo, ma sempre più animato
rall.
tre corde
poco più mosso
cresc.
f
cresc.
con fuoco
ff
Ped.



*) This chord an octave lower, if desired.

New York City, Oct. 27th, 1924.

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IV. Chattering Monkeys

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY

Allegro scherzando ♩= 132 - 144

Piano

p leggiero e vivace

senza pedale

espr.

CC
23424-7

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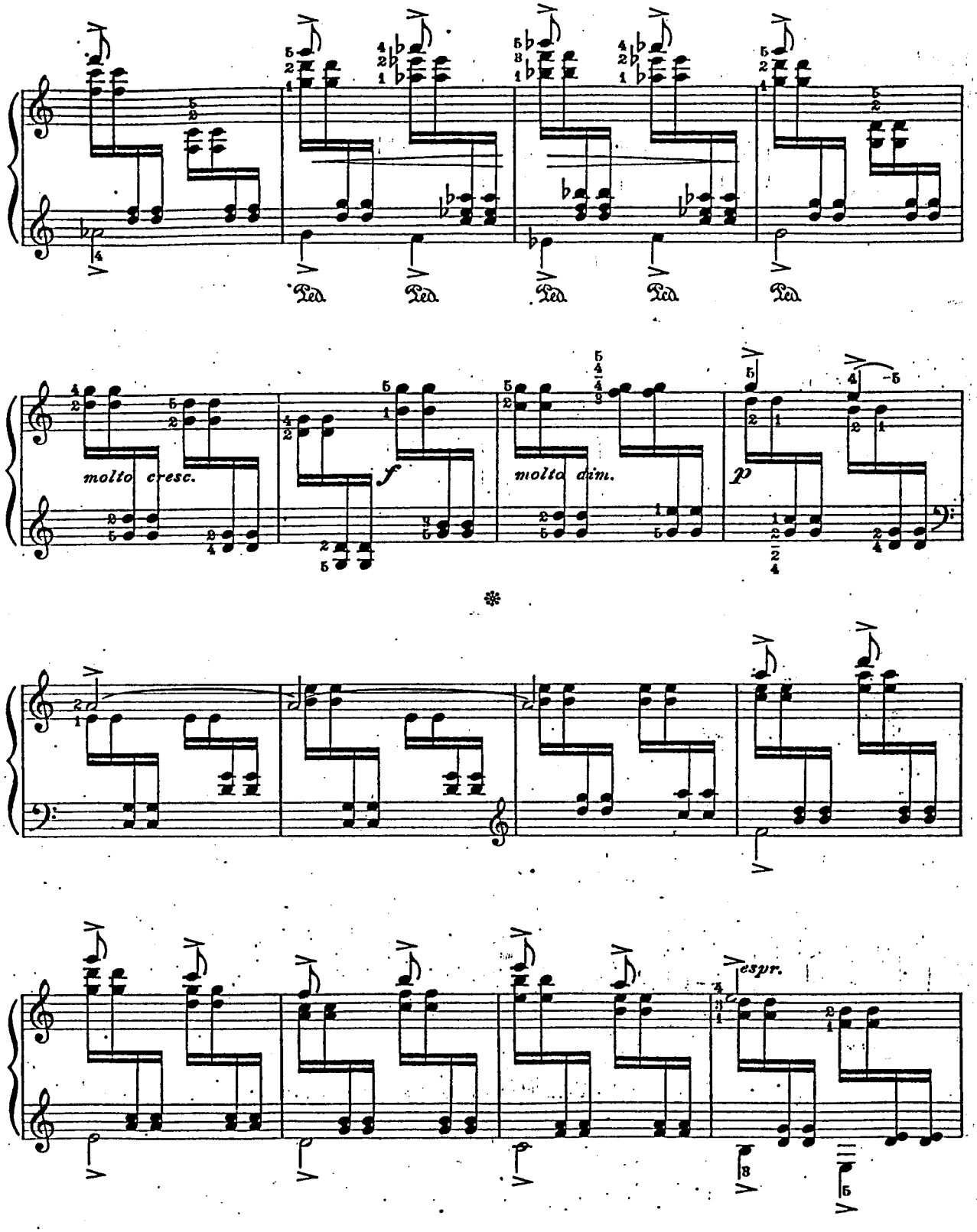
Ped.
molto cresc.
f
molto dim.
p
espr.

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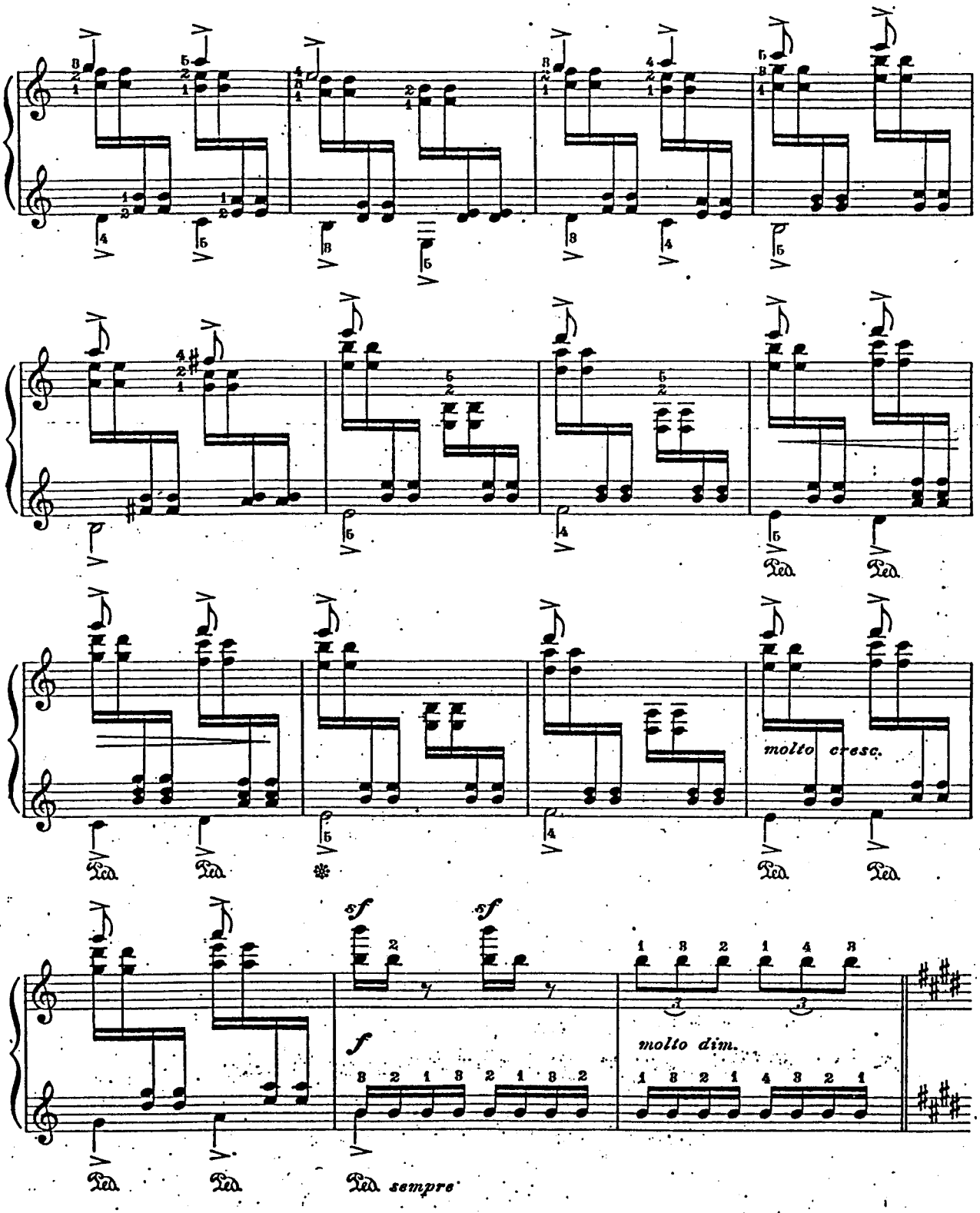

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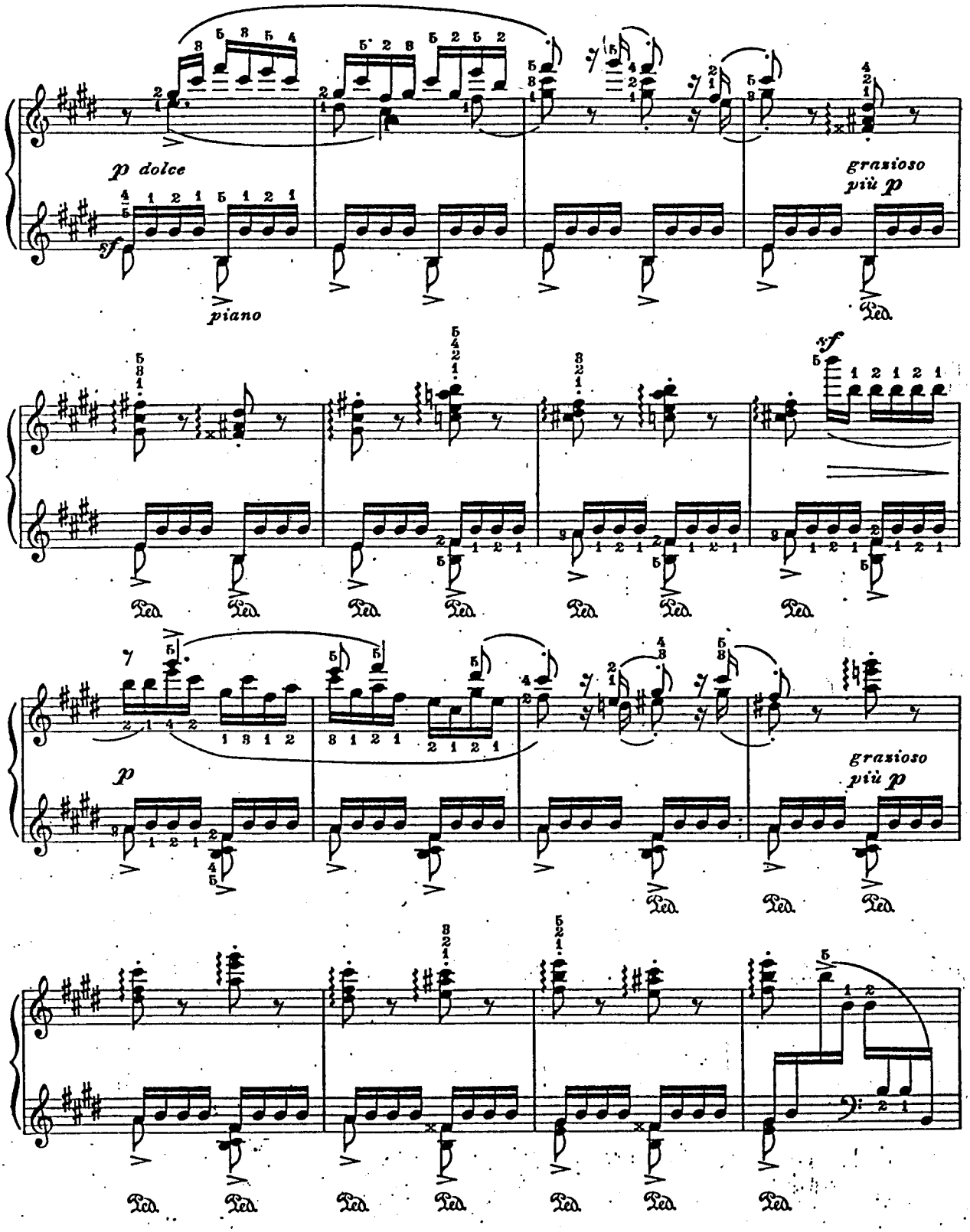
p dolce
sf
piano
grazioso
più p
Ped.
sf
p
grazioso
più p

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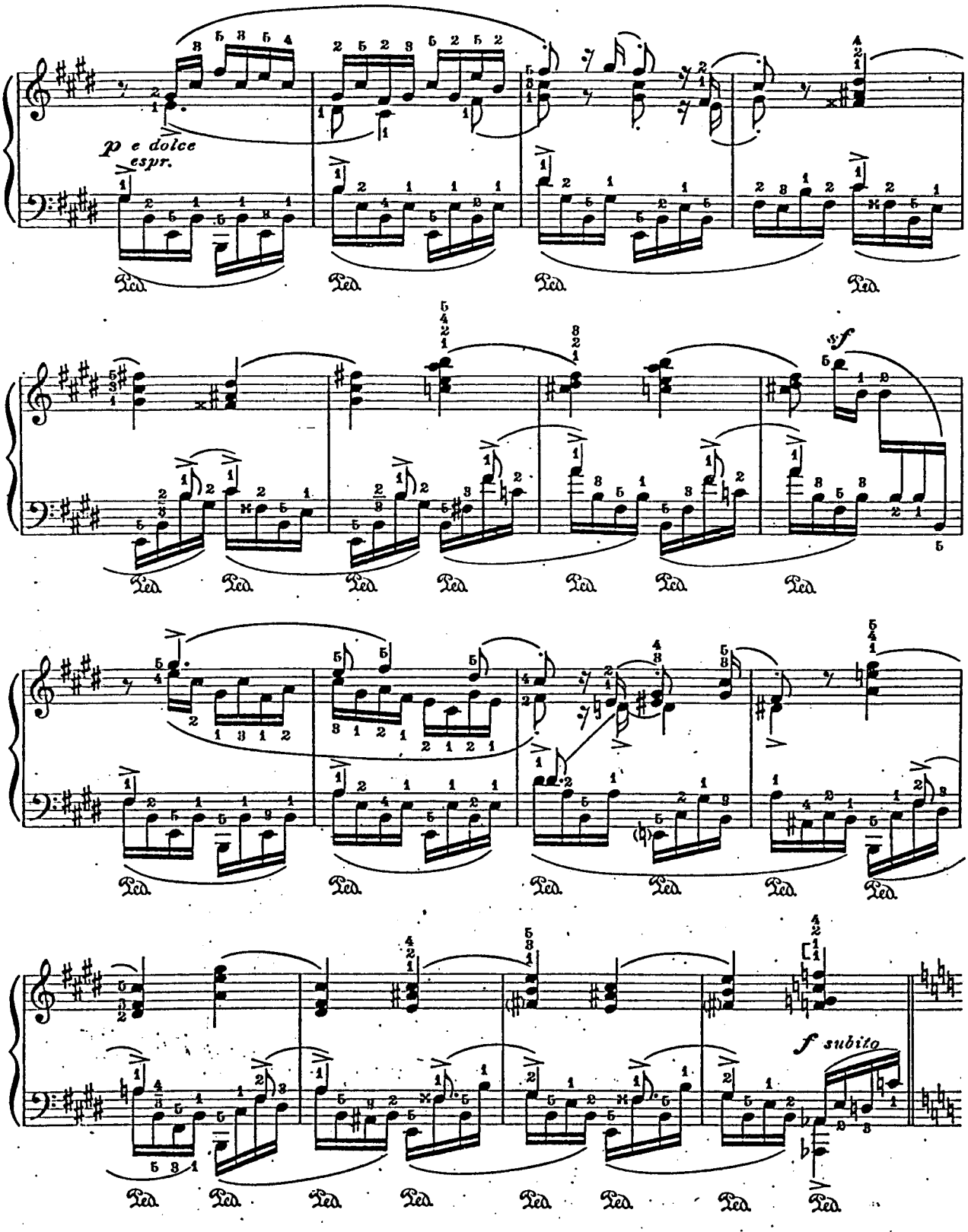

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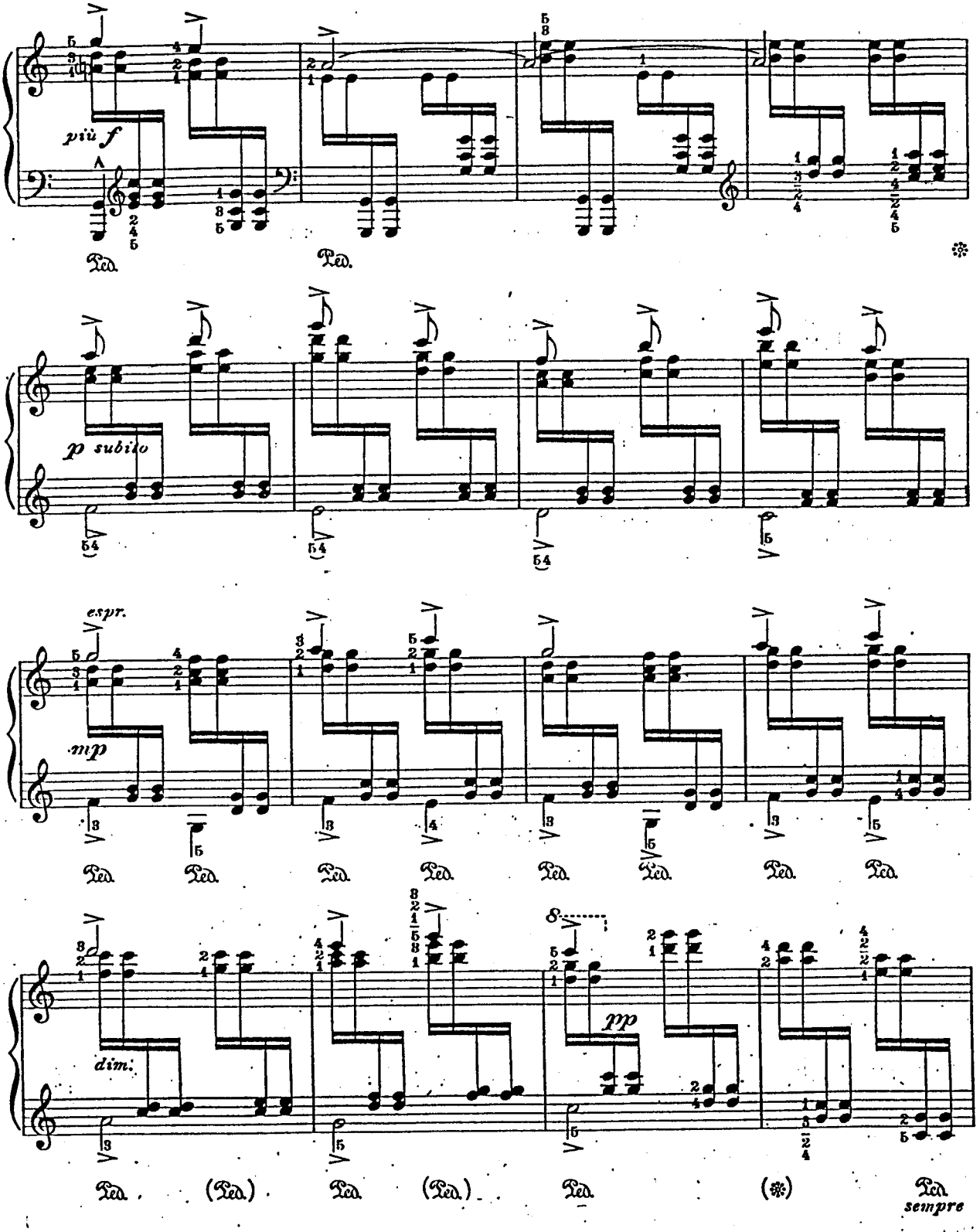
più f
Ped.
Ped.
p subito
espr.
mp
dim.
pp
(Ped.)
(Ped.)
(*)
sempre

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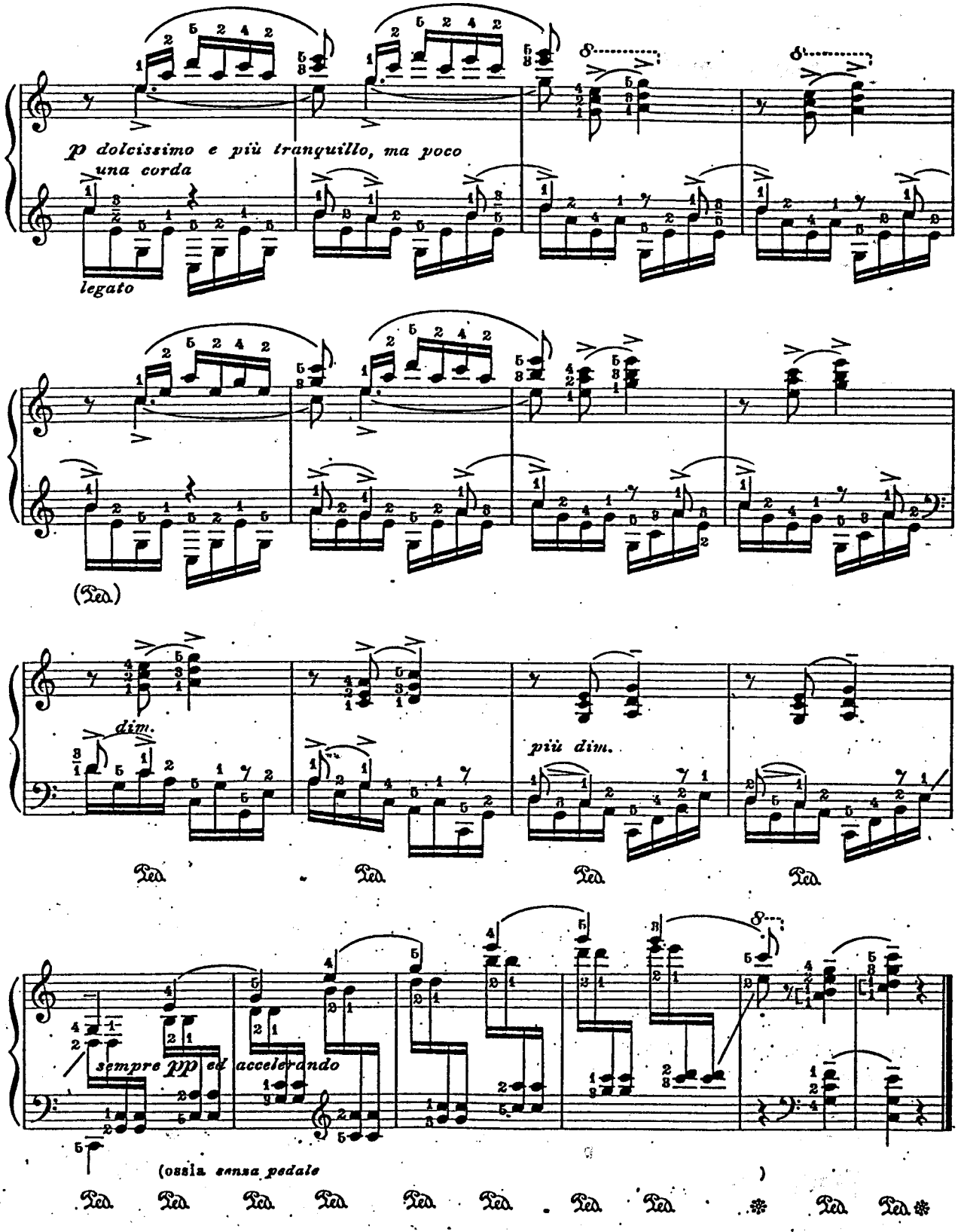

New York, Dec. 3rd, 1924.

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