WA-WAN SERIES OF AMERICAN COMPOSITIONS

FOR PIANOFORTE

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THE ISLAND OF THE FAY

BY

HENRY F. GILBERT

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It was during one of my lonely journeyings, amid a far-distant region of mountain locked within mountain, and sad rivers and melancholy tarns writhing or sleeping within all — that I chanced upon a certain rivulet and island. I came upon them suddenly in the leafy June, and threw myself upon the turf, beneath the branches of an unknown odorous shrub, that I might doze as I contemplated the scene. I felt that thus only should I look upon it — such was the character of phantasm which it wore.

On all sides — save to the west, where the sun was about sinking — arose the verdant walls of the forest. The little river which turned sharply in its course, and was thus immediately lost to sight, seemed to have no exit from its prison, but to be absorbed by the deep green foliage of the trees to the east — while in the opposite quarter (so it appeared to me as I lay at length and glanced upward) there poured down noiselessly and continuously into the valley, a rich golden and crimson water-fall from the sunset fountains of the sky.

About midway in the short vista which my dreamy vision took in, one small circular island, profusely verdured, reposed upon the bosom of the stream.

> So blended bank and shadow there,
> That each seemed pendulous in air —

so mirror-like was the glassy water, that it was scarcely possible to say at what point upon the slope of the emerald turf its crystal dominion began.

My position enabled me to include in a single view both the eastern and western extremities of the islet; and I observed a singularly marked difference in their aspects. The latter was all one radiant harem of garden beauties. It glowed and blushed beneath the eye of the slant sunlight, and fairly laughed with flowers. The grass was short, springy, sweet-scented, and Asphodel-interspersed. The trees were lithe, mirthful, erect — bright, slender and graceful — of eastern figure and foliage, with bark smooth, glossy, and parti-colored. There seemed a deep sense of life and joy about all; and although no airs blew from out the Heavens, yet everything had motion through the gentle sweepings to and fro of innumerable butterflies, that might have been mistaken for tulips with wings.

The other or eastern end of the isle was whelmed in the blackest shade. A sombre, yet beautiful and peaceful gloom here pervaded all things. The trees were dark in color and mournful in form and attitude — wreathing themselves into sad, solemn, and spectral shapes, that conveyed ideas of mortal sorrow and untimely death. The grass wore the deep tint of the cypress, and the heads of its blades hung droopingly, and, hither and thither among it, were many small unsightly hillocks, low, and narrow, and not very long, that had the aspect of graves, but were not; although over and all about them the rue and the rosemary clambered. The shade of the trees fell heavily upon the water, and seemed to bury itself therein, impregnating the depths of the element with darkness. I fancied that each shadow, as the sun descended lower and lower, separated itself sullenly from the trunk that gave it birth, and thus became absorbed by the stream; while other shadows issued momently from the trees, taking the place of their predecessors thus entombed.

This idea, having once seized upon my fancy, greatly excited it, and I lost myself forthwith in revery. "If ever island were enchanted," said I to myself, "this is it. This is the haunt of the few gentle Fays who remain from the wreck of the race. Are these green tombs theirs? — or do they yield up their sweet lives as mankind yield up their own? In dying, do they not rather waste away mournfully; rendering unto God little by little their existence, as these trees render up shadow after shadow, exhausting their substance unto dissolution? What the wasting tree is to the water that imbibes its shade, growing thus blacker by what it preys upon, may not the life of the Fay be to the death which ingulfs it?"

As I thus mused, with half-shut eyes, while the sun sank rapidly to rest, and eddying currents careered round and round the island, bearing upon their bosom large, dazzling, white flakes, of the bark of the sycamore — flakes which, in their multiform positions upon the water, a quick imagination might have converted into anything it pleased — while I thus mused, it appeared to me that the form of one of those very Fays about whom I had been pondering, made its way slowly into the darkness from out the light at the western end of the island. She stood erect in a singularly fragile canoe, and urged it with the mere phantom of an oar. While within the influence of the lingering sunbeams, her attitude seemed indicative of joy — but sorrow deformed it as she passed within the shade. Slowly she glided along, and at length rounded the islet and re-entered the region of light. "The revolution which has just been made by the Fay," continued I, musingly, "is the cycle of the brief year of her life. She has floated through her winter and through her summer. She is a year nearer unto Death; for I did not fail to see that as she came into the shade, her shadow fell from her, and was swallowed up in the dark water, making its blackness more black."

And again the boat appeared, and the Fay; but about the attitude of the latter there was more of care and uncertainty, and less of elastic joy. She floated again from out the light, and into the gloom (which deepened momently) and again her shadow fell from her into the ebony water, and became absorbed into its blackness. And again and again she made the circuit of the island (while the sun rushed down to his slumbers), and at each issuing into the light, there was more sorrow about her person, while it grew feebler, and far fainter, and more indistinct; and at each passage into the gloom, there fell from her a darker shade, which became whelmed in a shadow more black. But at length, when the sun had utterly departed, the Fay, now the mere ghost of her former self, went disconsolately with her boat into the region of the ebony flood — and that she issued thence at all I cannot say, — for darkness fell over all things, and I beheld her magical figure no more. — *From "The Island of the Fay," by* EDGAR ALLAN POE.

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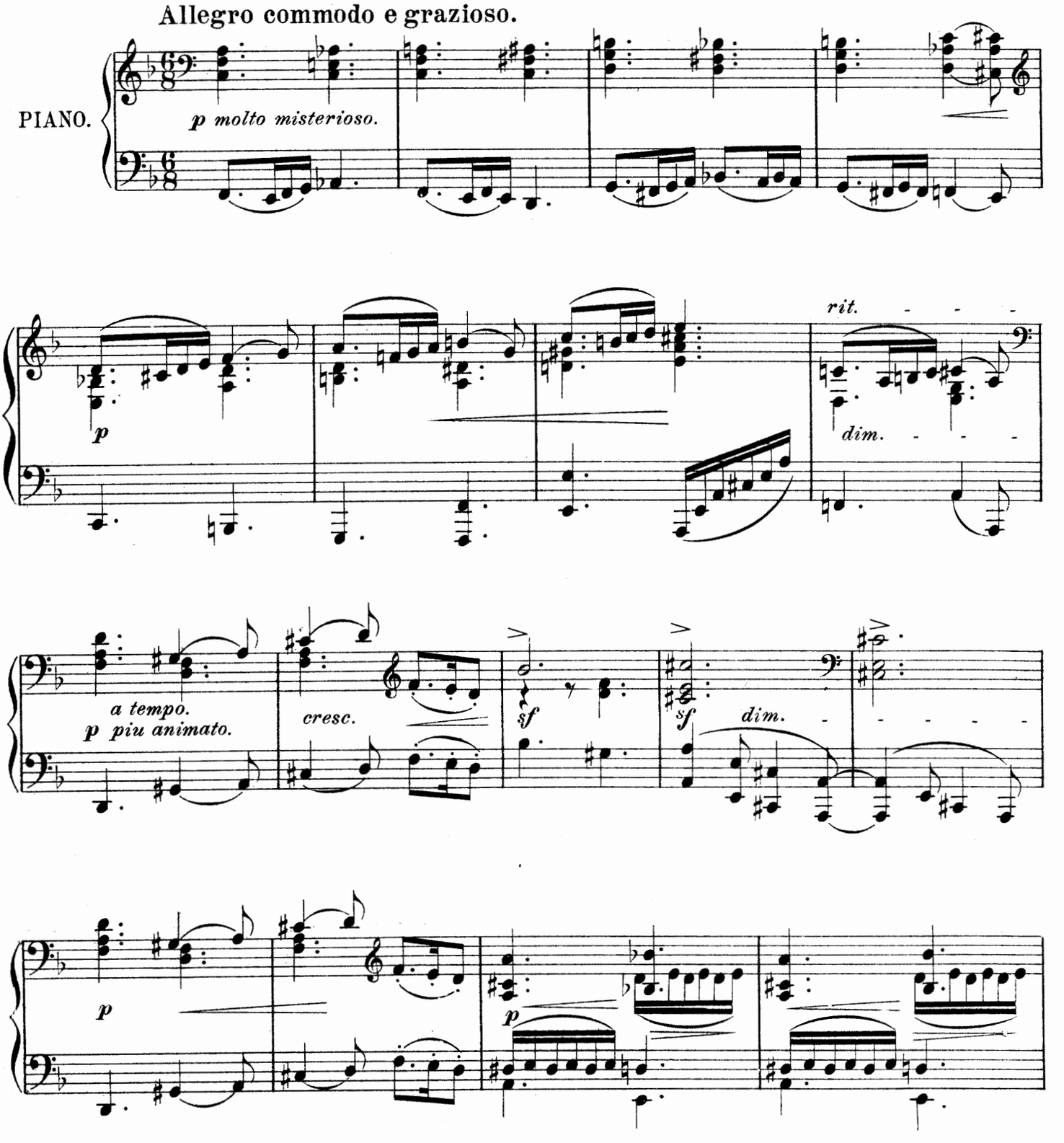
The Island of the Fay.

AFTER POE.

HENRY F. GILBERT.

Allegro commodo e grazioso.



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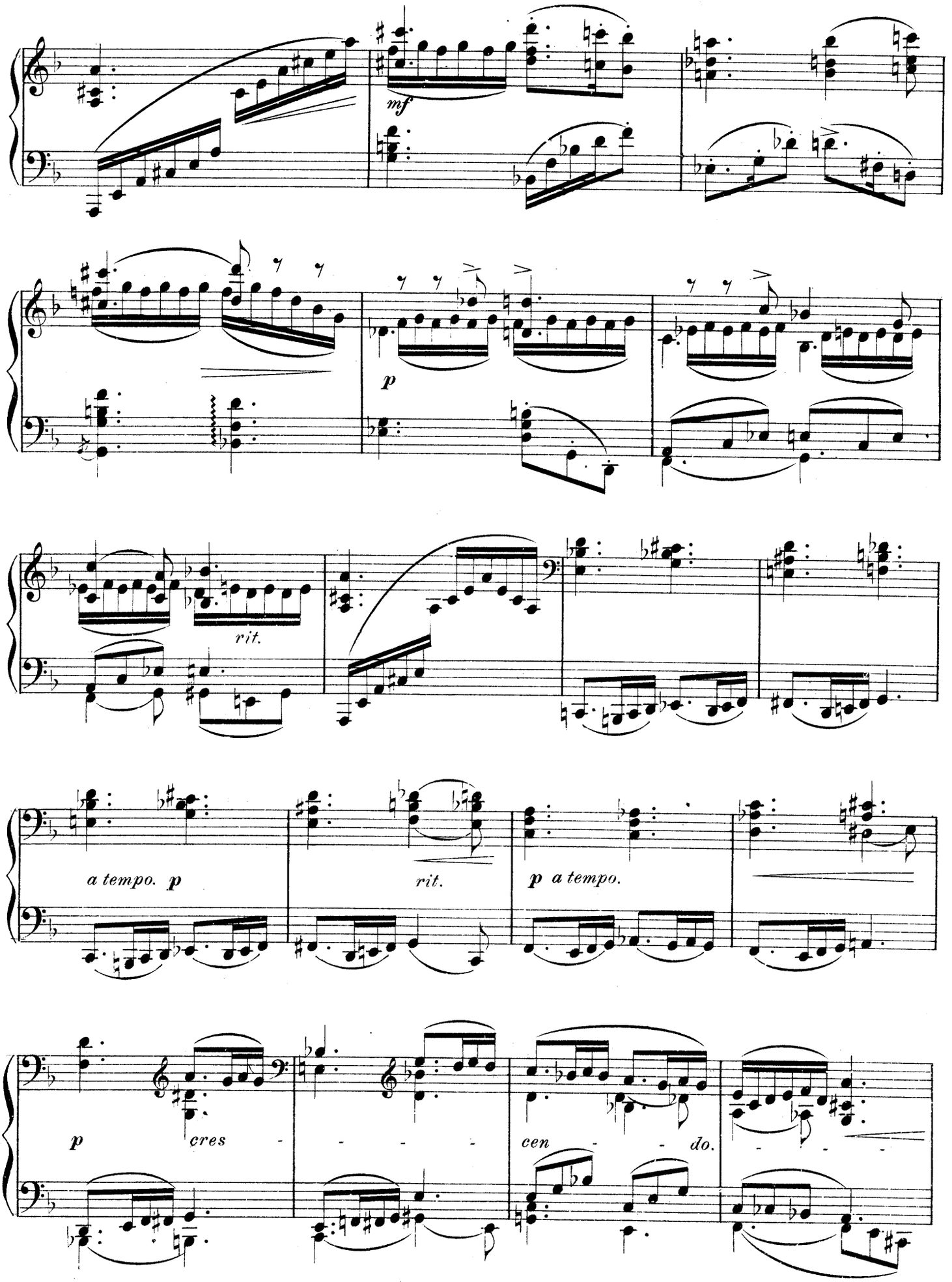
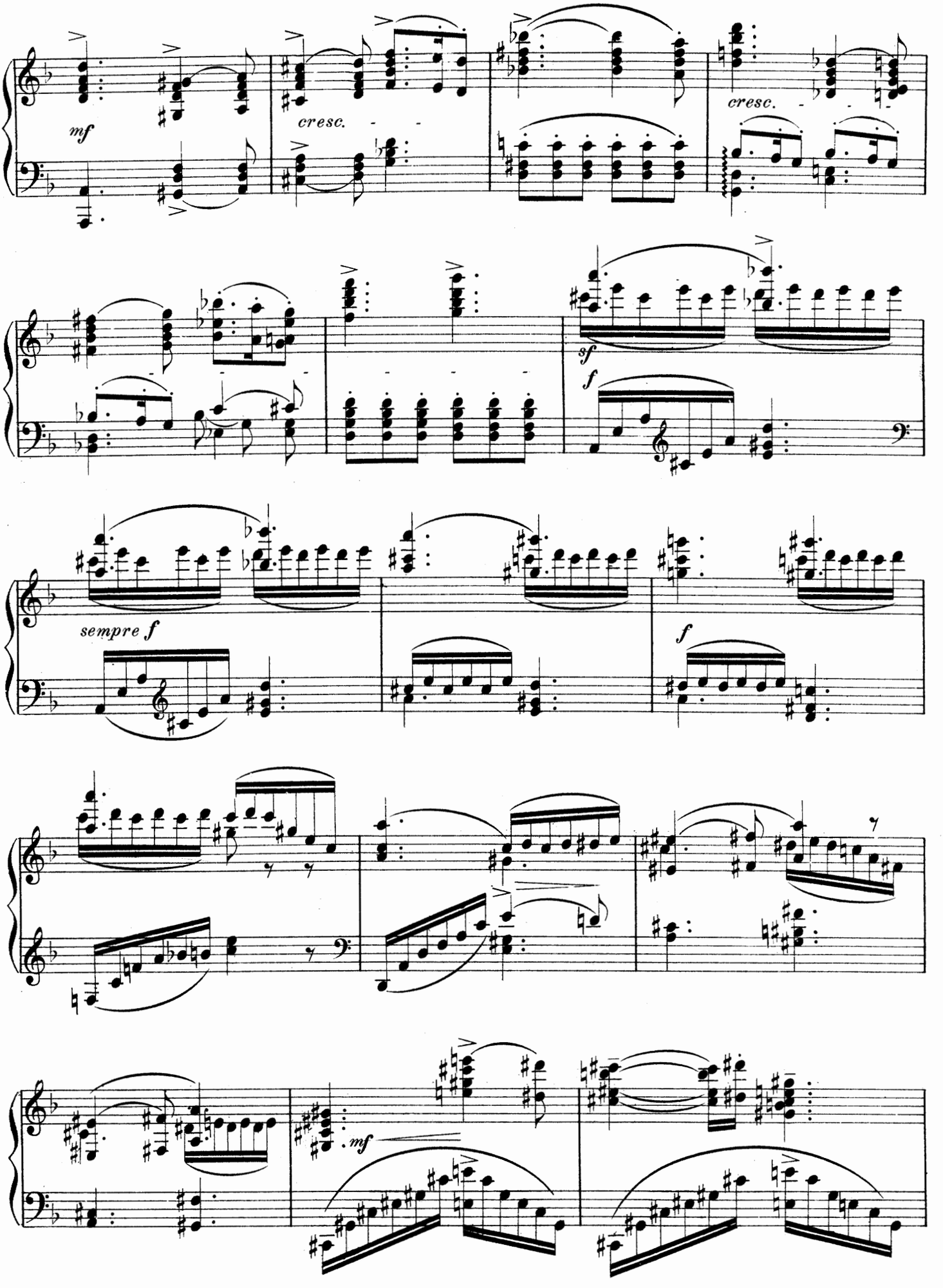
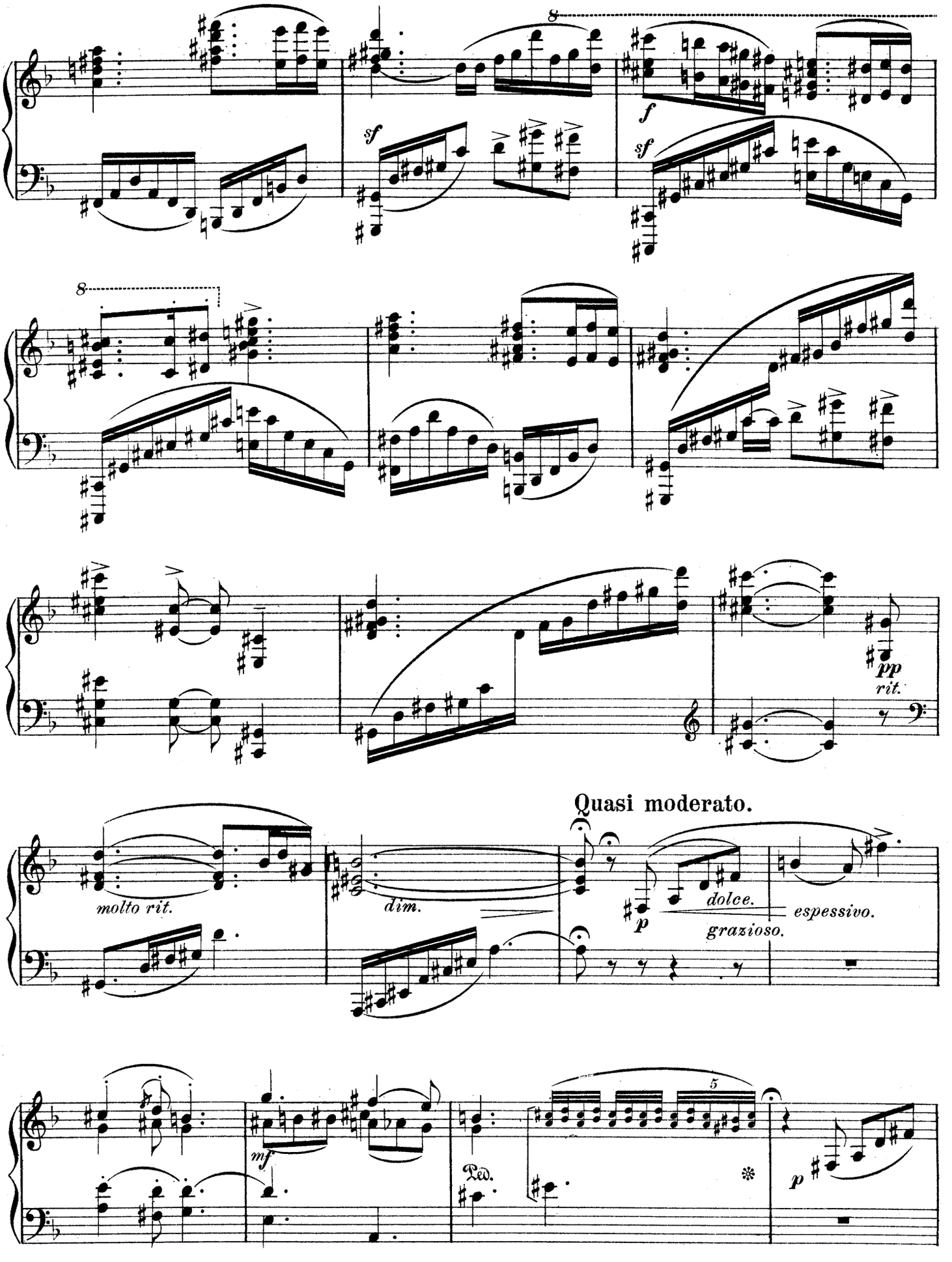
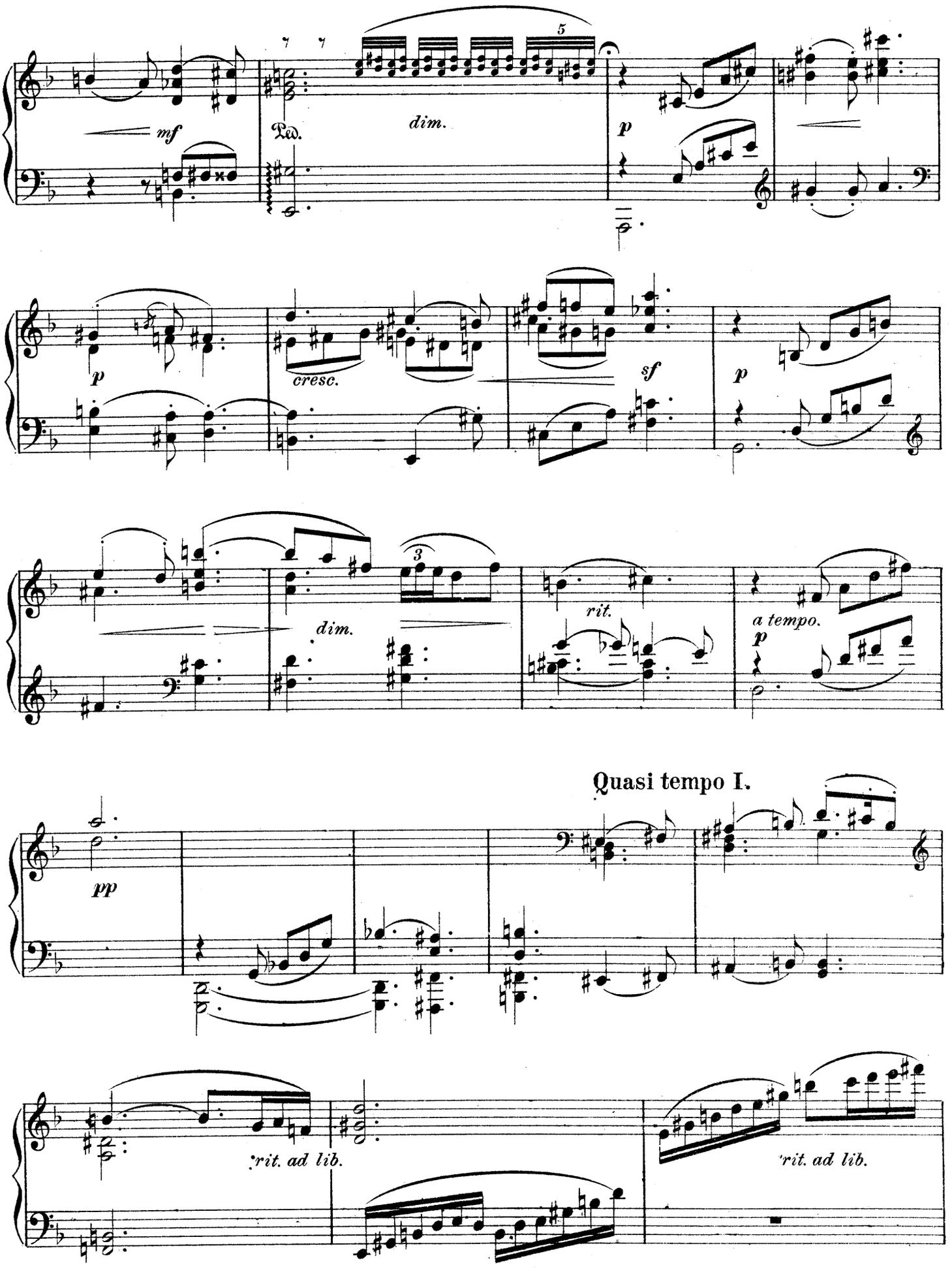
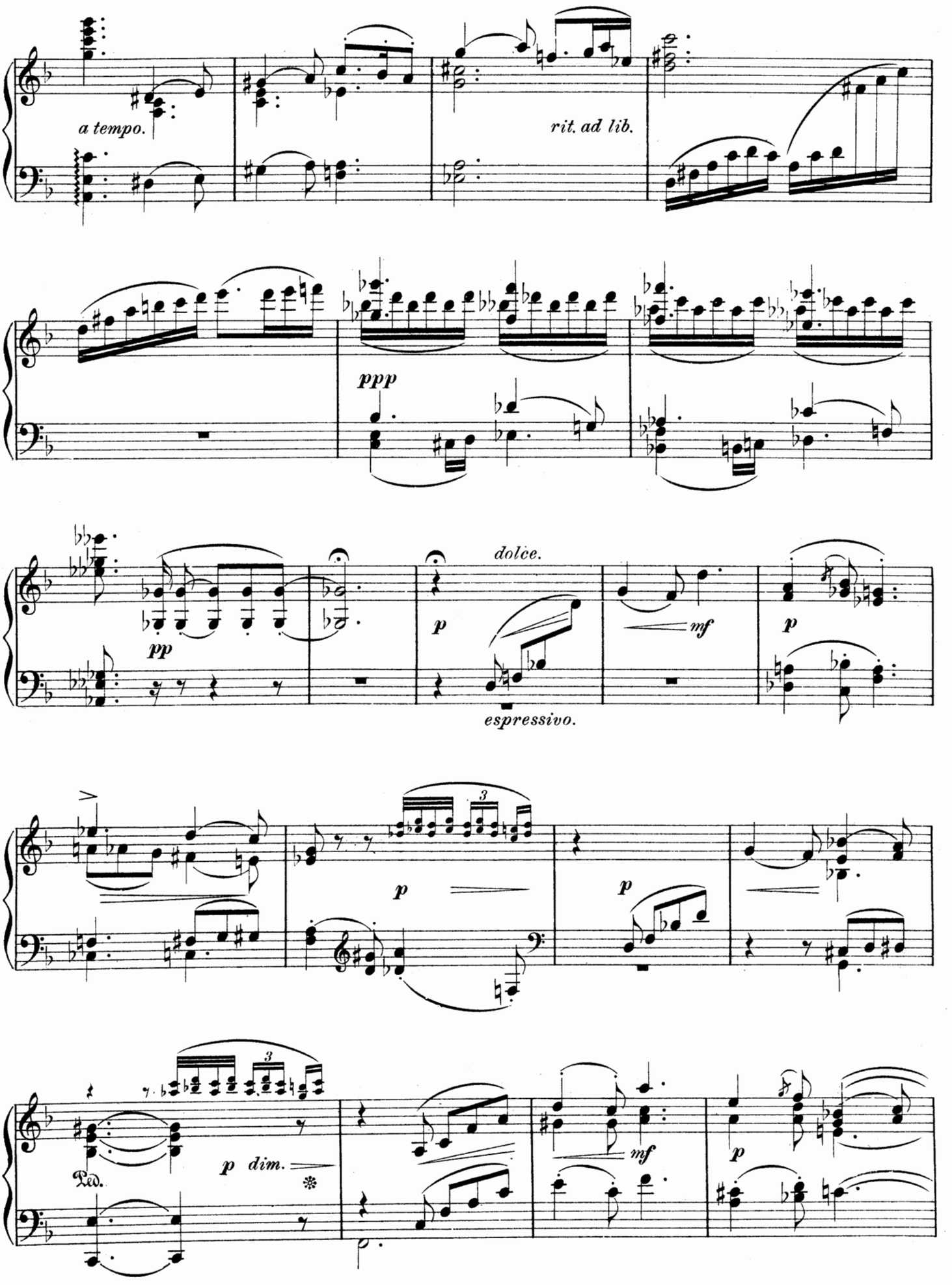
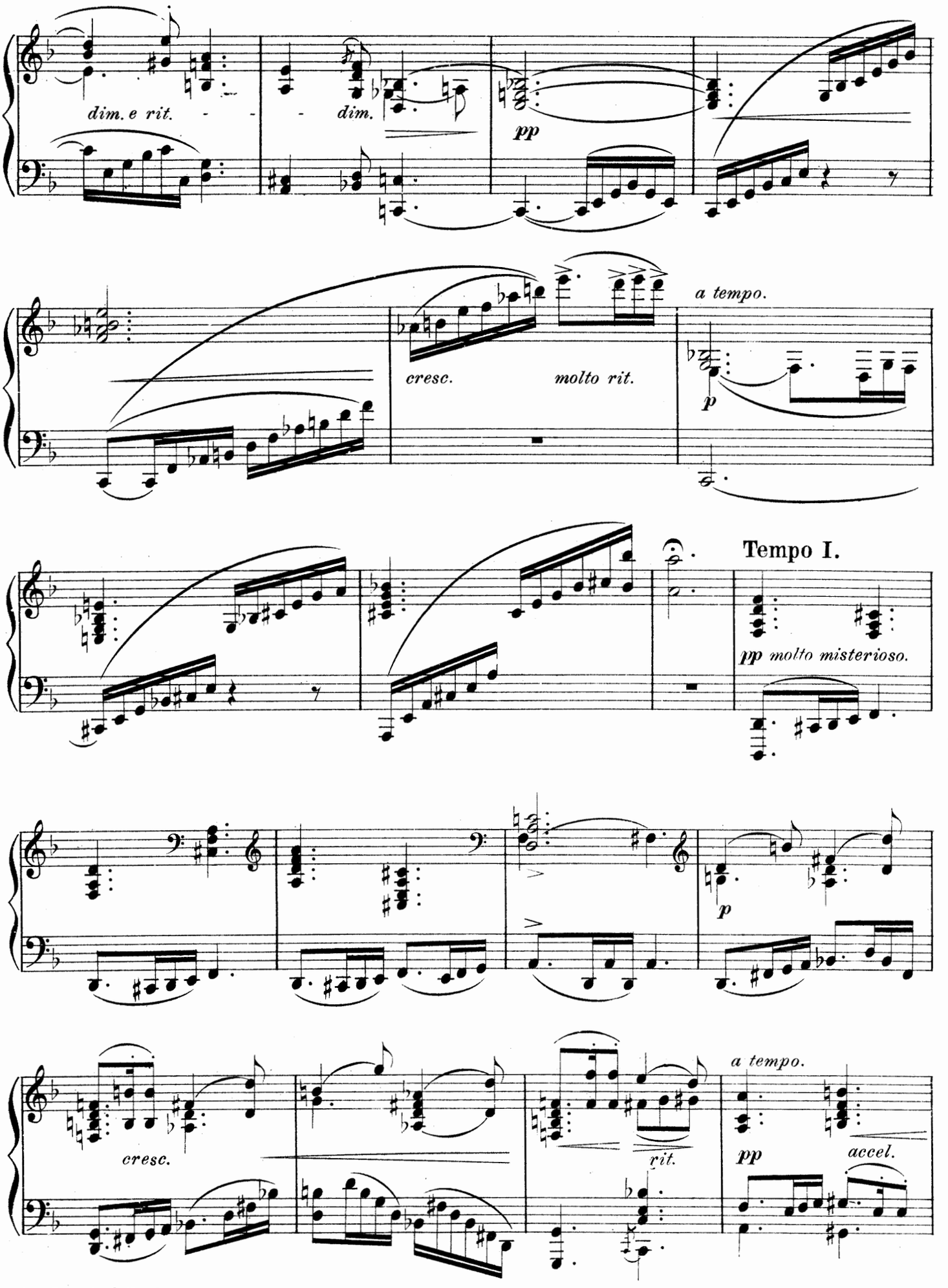

mf
p
rit.
a tempo. p
rit.
p a tempo.
p cres - - - - cen - - do.

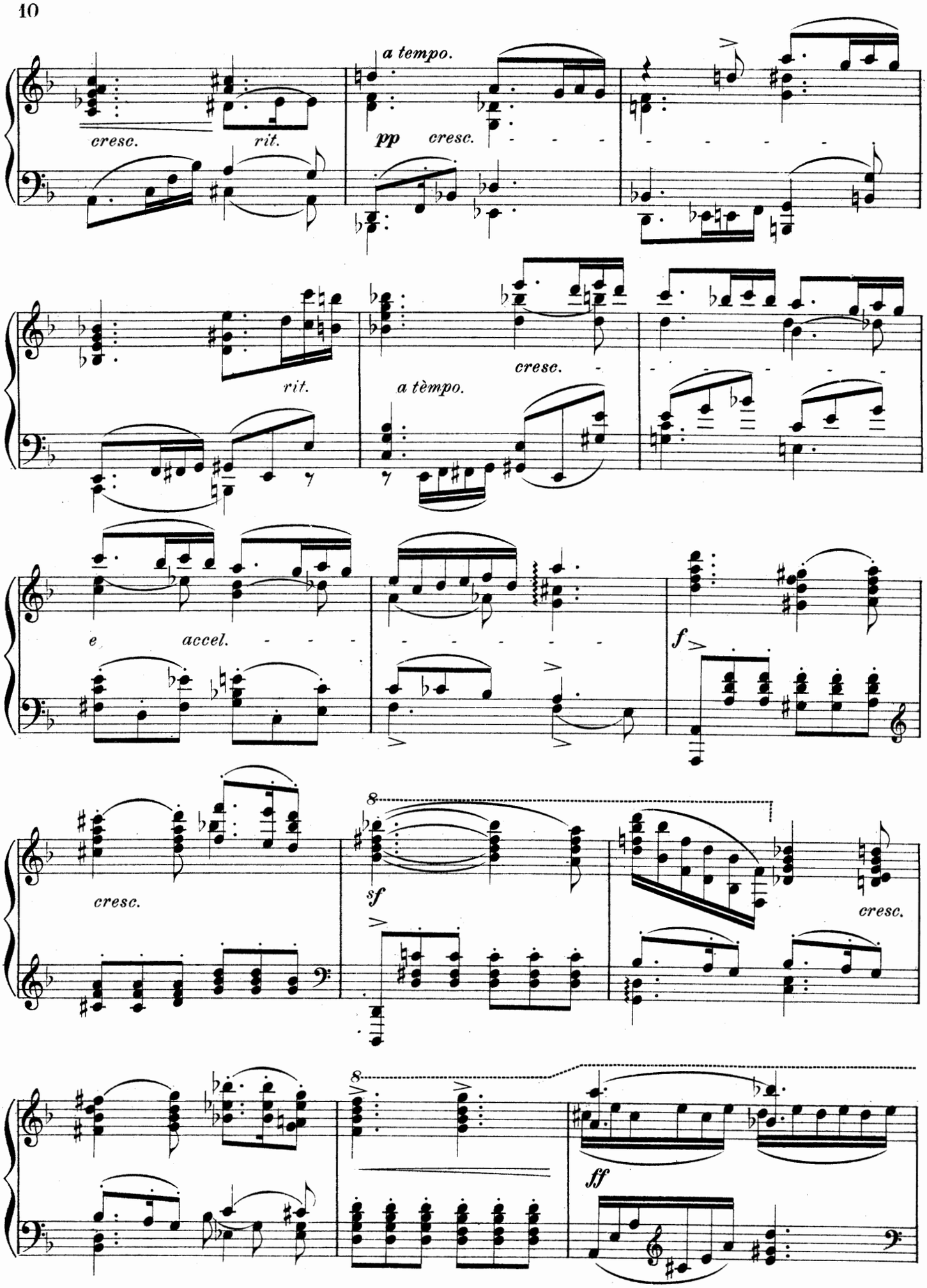

mf
cresc.
cresc.
sf
f
sempre f
f
mf

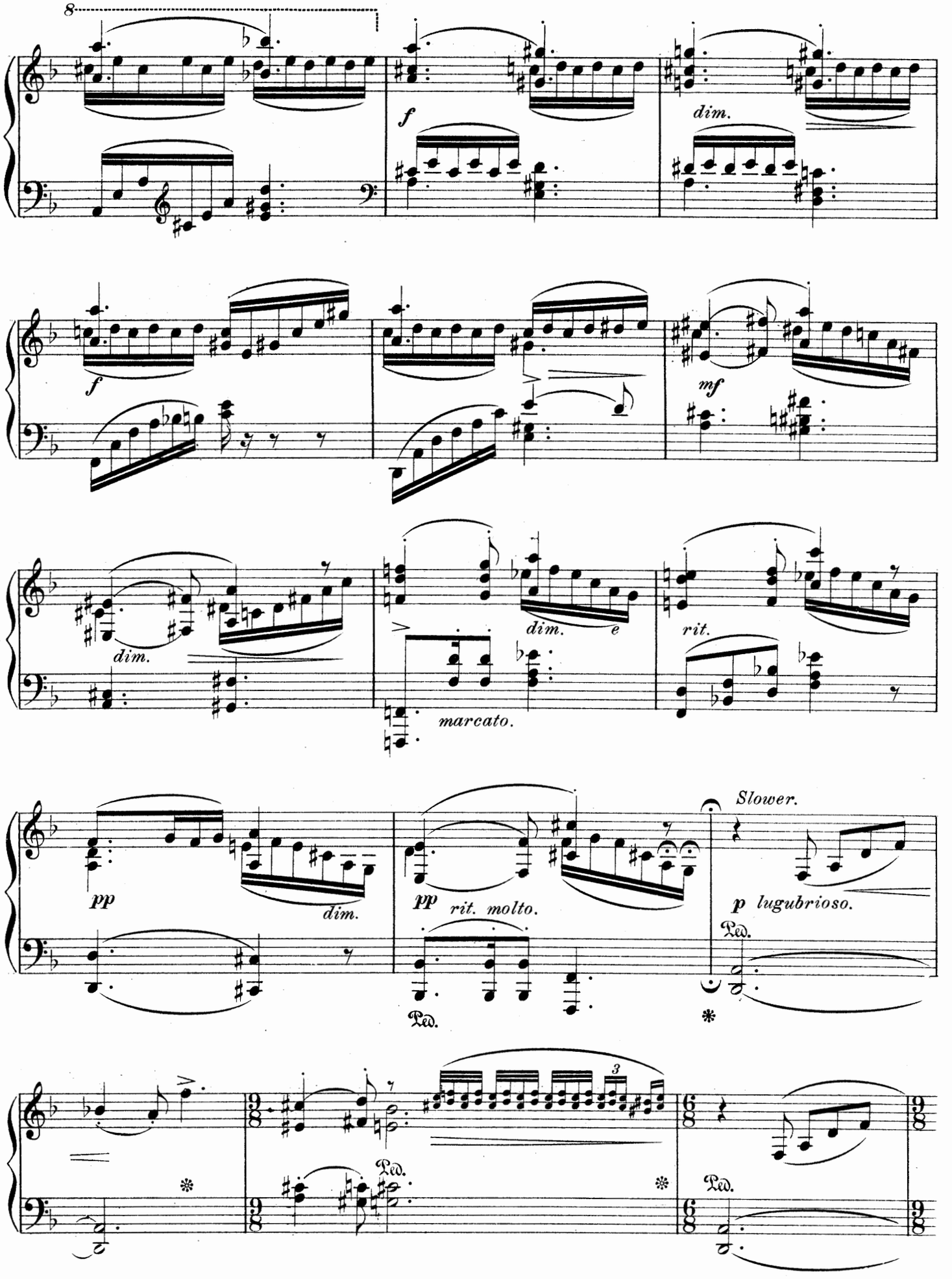

8
sf
f
sf
8
pp
rit.
Quasi moderato.
molto rit.
dim.
p
dolce.
espessivo.
grazioso.
mf
Ped.
5
p


mf
dim.
p
p
cresc.
sf
p
dim.
rit.
a tempo.
p
Quasi tempo I.
pp
rit. ad lib.
rit. ad lib.


a tempo.
rit. ad lib.
ppp
pp
dolce.
p
espressivo.
mf
p
3
p
p
3
p dim.
Ped.
mf
p


dim. e rit.
dim.
pp
a tempo.
cresc.
molto rit.
p
Tempo I.
pp molto misterioso.
p
cresc.
rit.
a tempo.
pp
accel.


a tempo.
cresc.
rit.
pp
cresc.
rit.
cresc.
a tèmpo.
e
accel.
f
cresc.
8
sf
cresc.
8
ff


8
f
dim.
f
mf
dim.
dim.
e
marcato.
rit.
pp
dim.
pp
rit. molto.
Slower.
p lugubrioso.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
3

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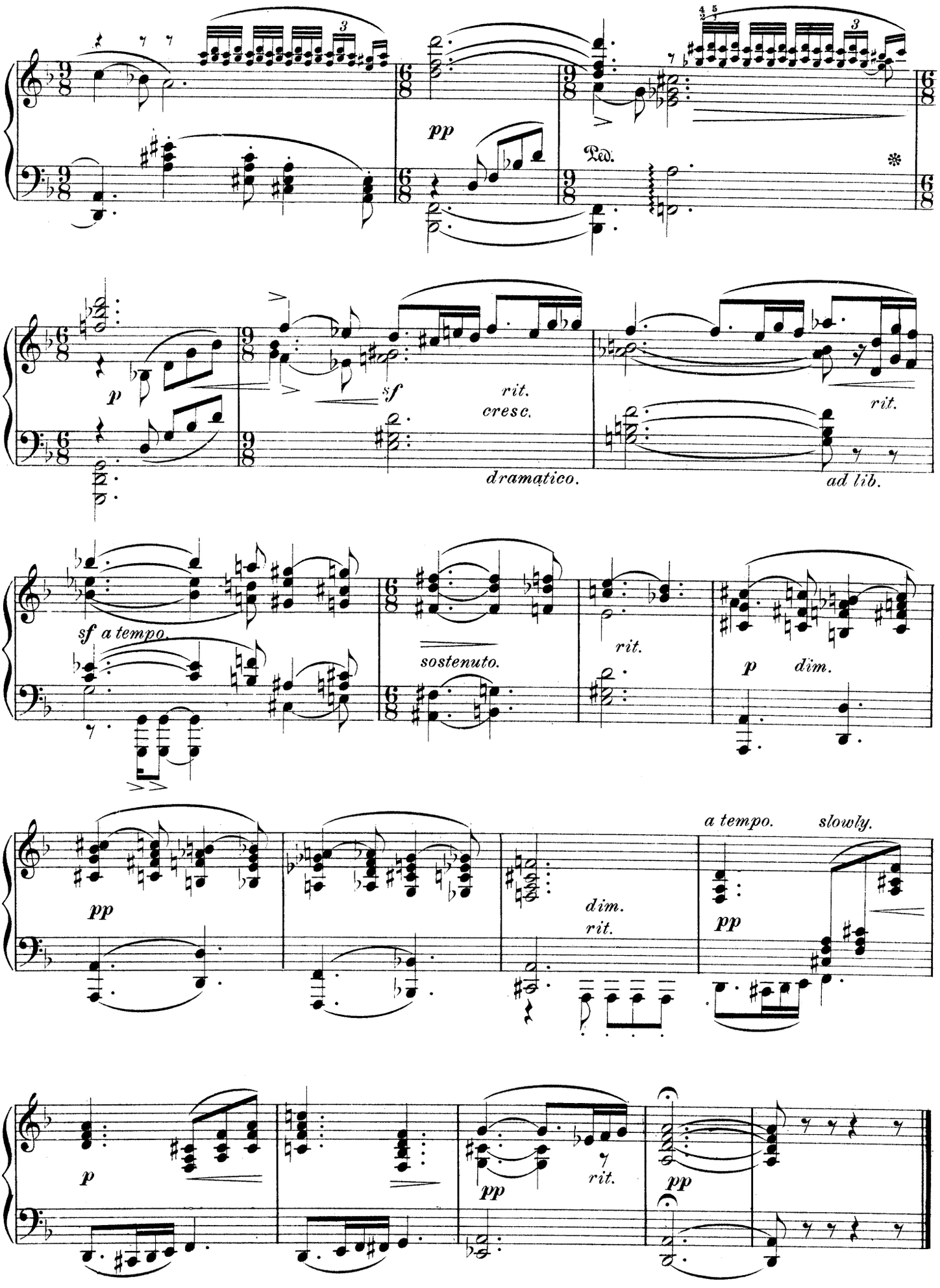
pp
Ped.
*
p
sf
rit.
cresc.
dramatico.
rit.
ad lib.
sf a tempo.
sostenuto.
rit.
p
dim.
a tempo.
slowly.
pp
dim.
rit.
pp
p
pp
rit.
pp

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