Marc–André Hamelin

TRIPLE ÉTUDE (after Chopin)

(Op. 10, No. 2, Op. 25, No. 4, & Op. 25, No. 11, combined)

(1992)

Between 1894 and 1914 Leopold Godowsky published his extraordinary series of *Studies on Chopin's Études*; these were fifty-four in number. There is evidence, judging from back-cover listings in early editions of these pieces, that a further eleven studies were at least conceived and very possibly even written out. One of these was to have been a contrapuntal combination of Chopin's Op. 10, No. 2, Op. 25, No. 4, and Op. 25, No. 11, a tantalizing idea to be sure. It has always been the desire of many die-hard pianophiles to find out how in the world Godowsky was able to pull off such a bizarre compositional stunt while having the end-result remain musical and coherent. There has been hope that the manuscript still exists, but the greater likelihood is that it was lost or destroyed during World War II, along with the other unpublished studies.

The present étude was written at the suggestion of a friend who, on the basis of my reworking of Op. 10, No. 5, thought somehow that I could perhaps come up with something approaching Godowsky's contrapuntal feat. I will leave it to you to evaluate whether or not the effort was successful (or even worthwhile), but I will say I took *great* pleasure in writing this little piece, especially after finding out that in the first eight bars the three original studies fit so well together. (It gets a little more complicated afterwards.)

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It goes almost without saying that this étude should be played with the utmost articulational clarity; the various elements from each study should always be clearly discernible, even when relegated to the background. To this end, a tempo no faster than the one indicated is recommended. (A useless warning if there ever was one!)

Those expecting the constant presence of *all three* original textures are in for a major disappointment, although something approaching this does occur in the recapitulation. I deemed it preferable instead to play down the sextuplet texture in particular for most of the étude's length, not only to avoid overcluttering the music and to help the piece remain playable, but also because focusing on the *thematic material* of Op. 25, No. 11, instead of the sextuplets proved to be much more interesting. I must say I was surprised at how *economically* such an arrangement could be written; I could have made it a LOT more difficult to play.

Lastly, the harmonic discipline in this piece is, of necessity, anything but strict—despite my VERY BEST efforts—especially as regards consecutive octaves, but to my mind these were unavoidable in a situation like this. May the more academically minded of you forgive these transgressions!

M.-A. H.

To anyone who has ever wondered what Godowsky's own transcription would have looked like

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(Op. 10, No. 2, Op. 25, No. 4, and Op. 25, No. 11, combined)

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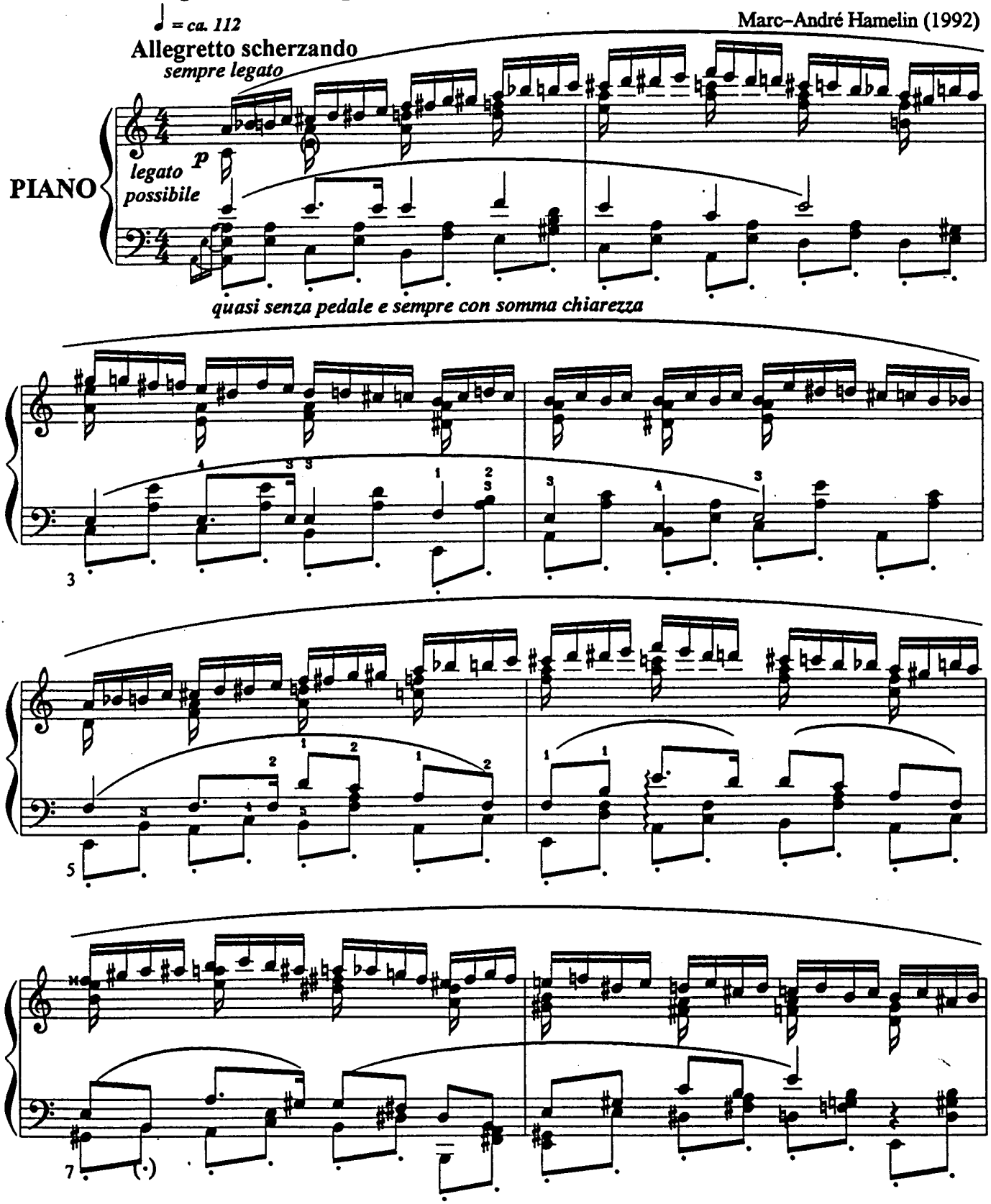

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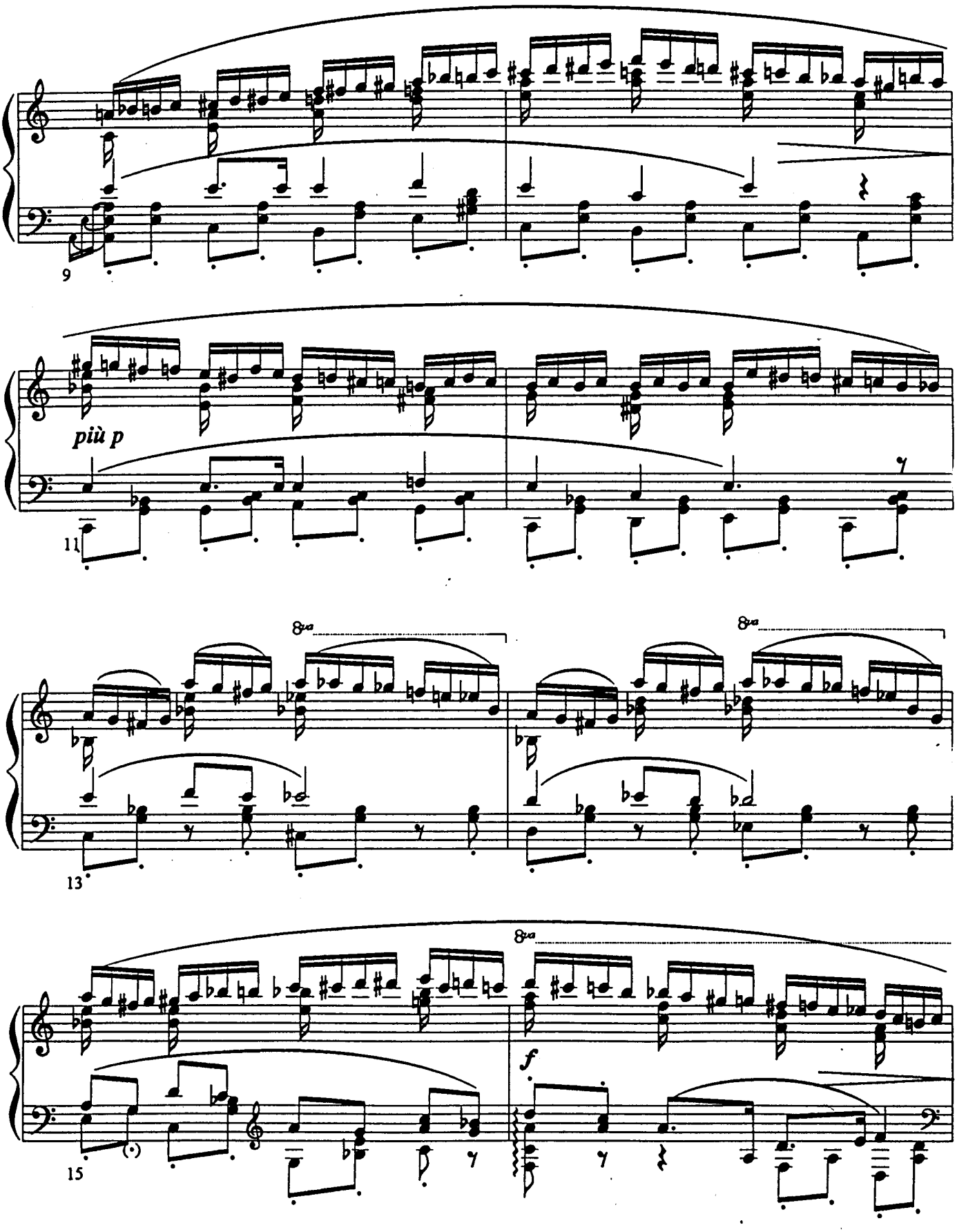
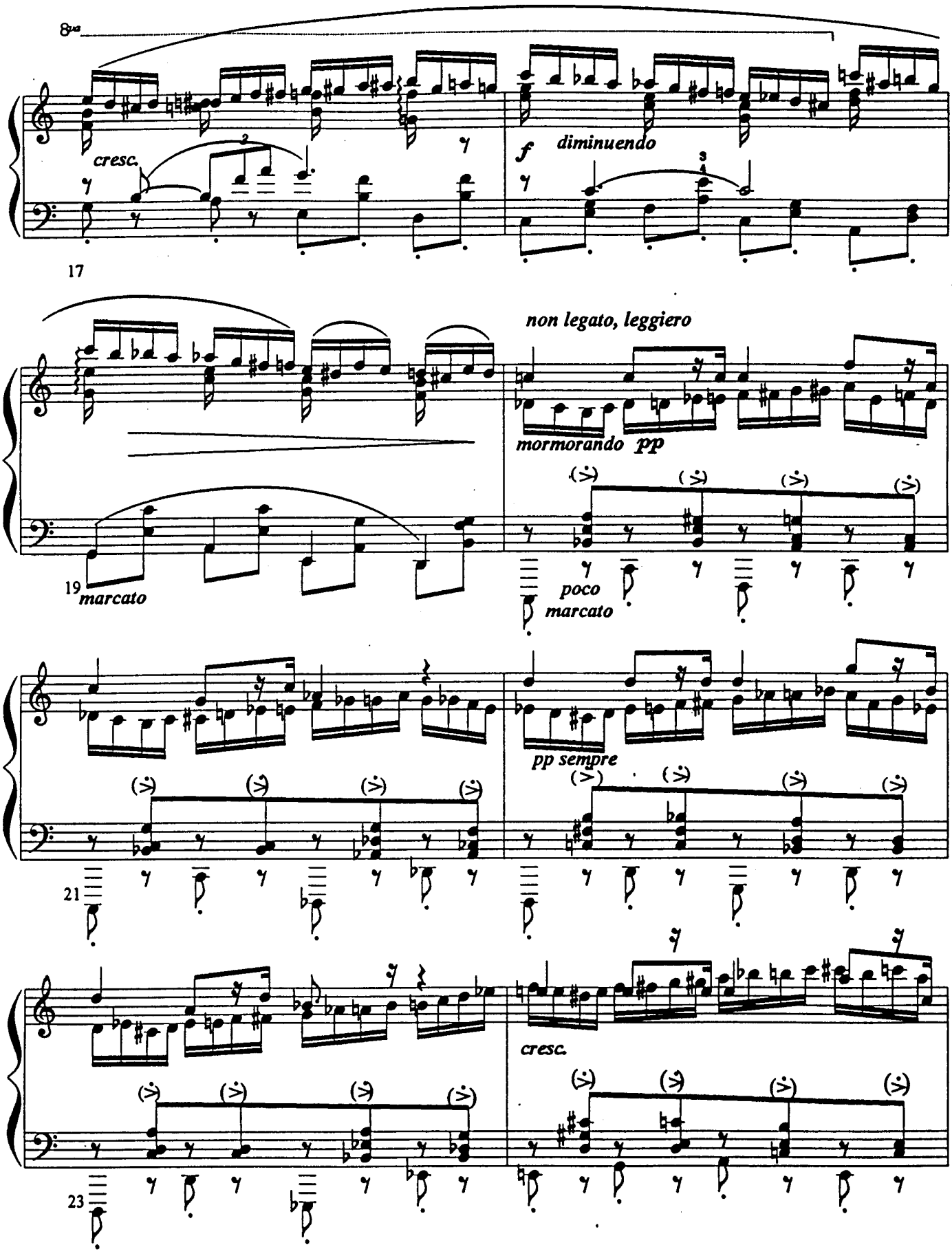
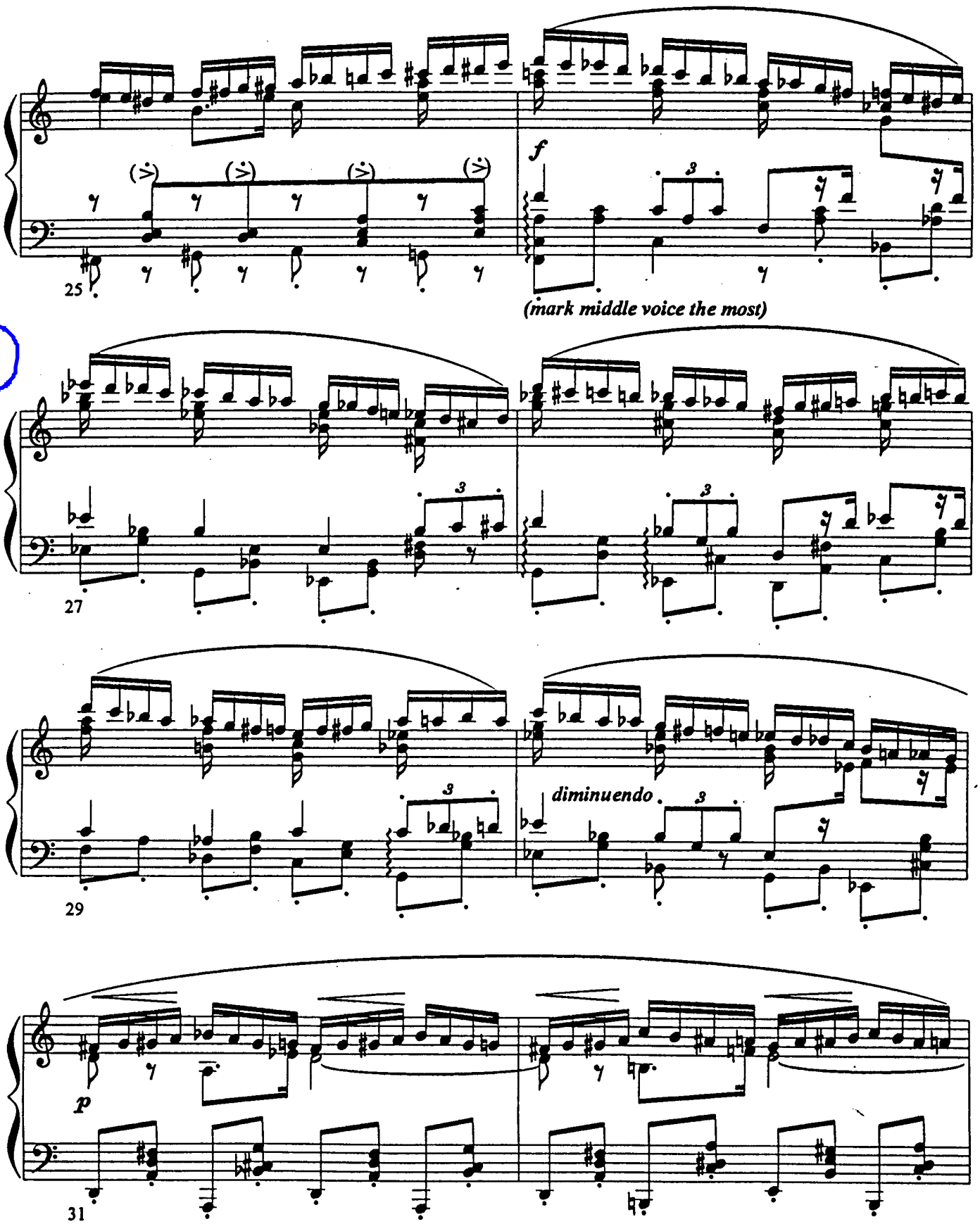
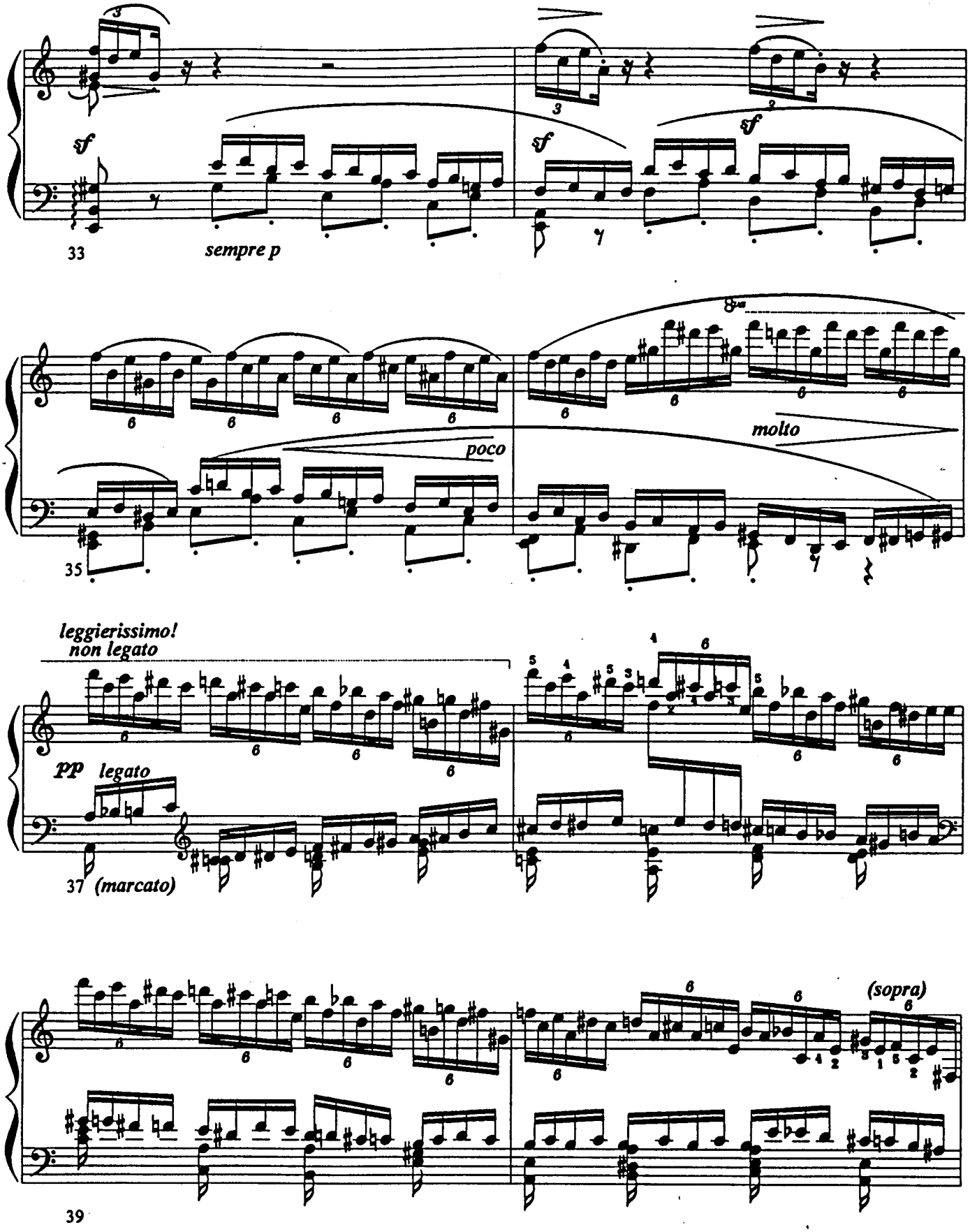
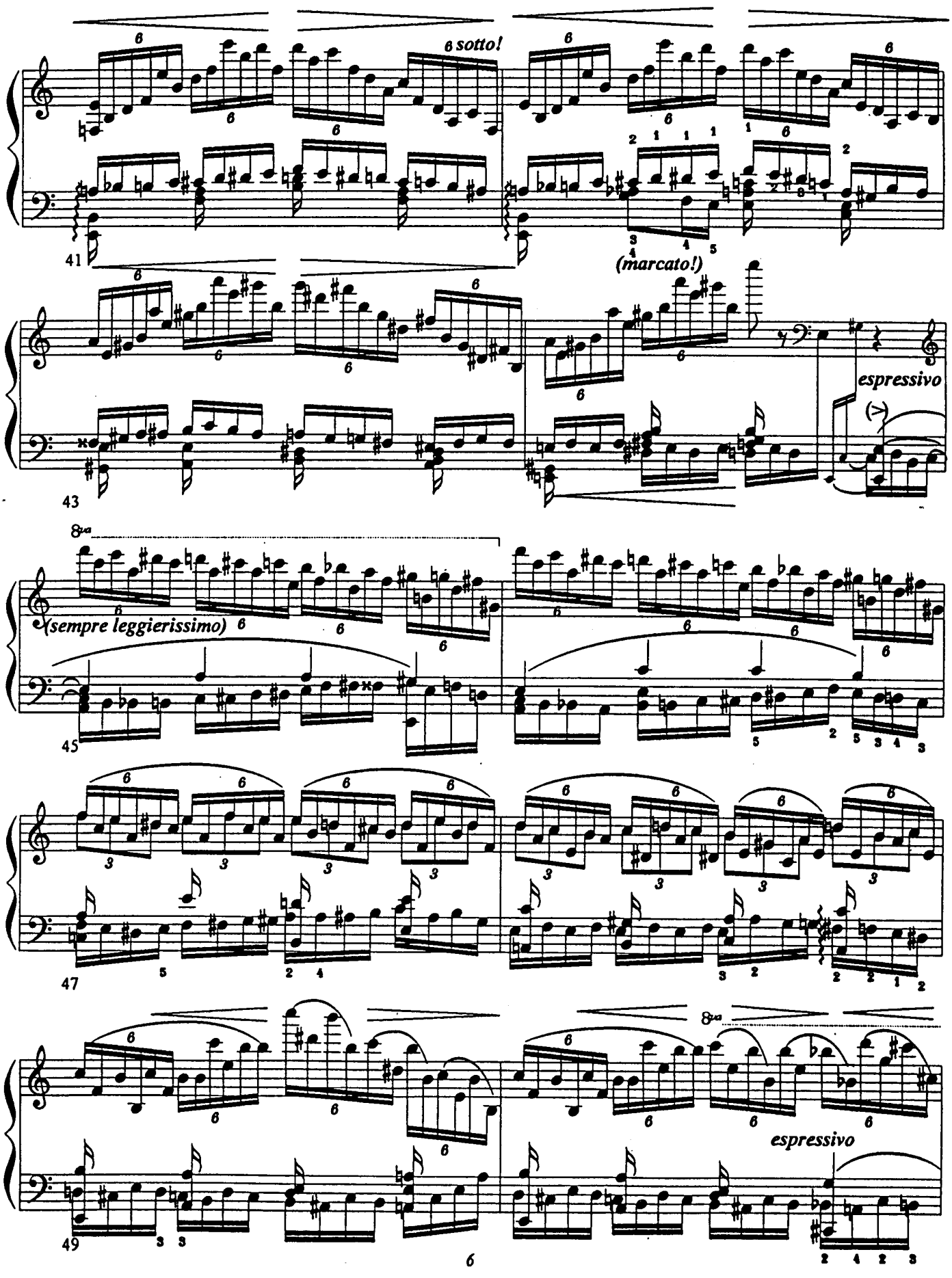
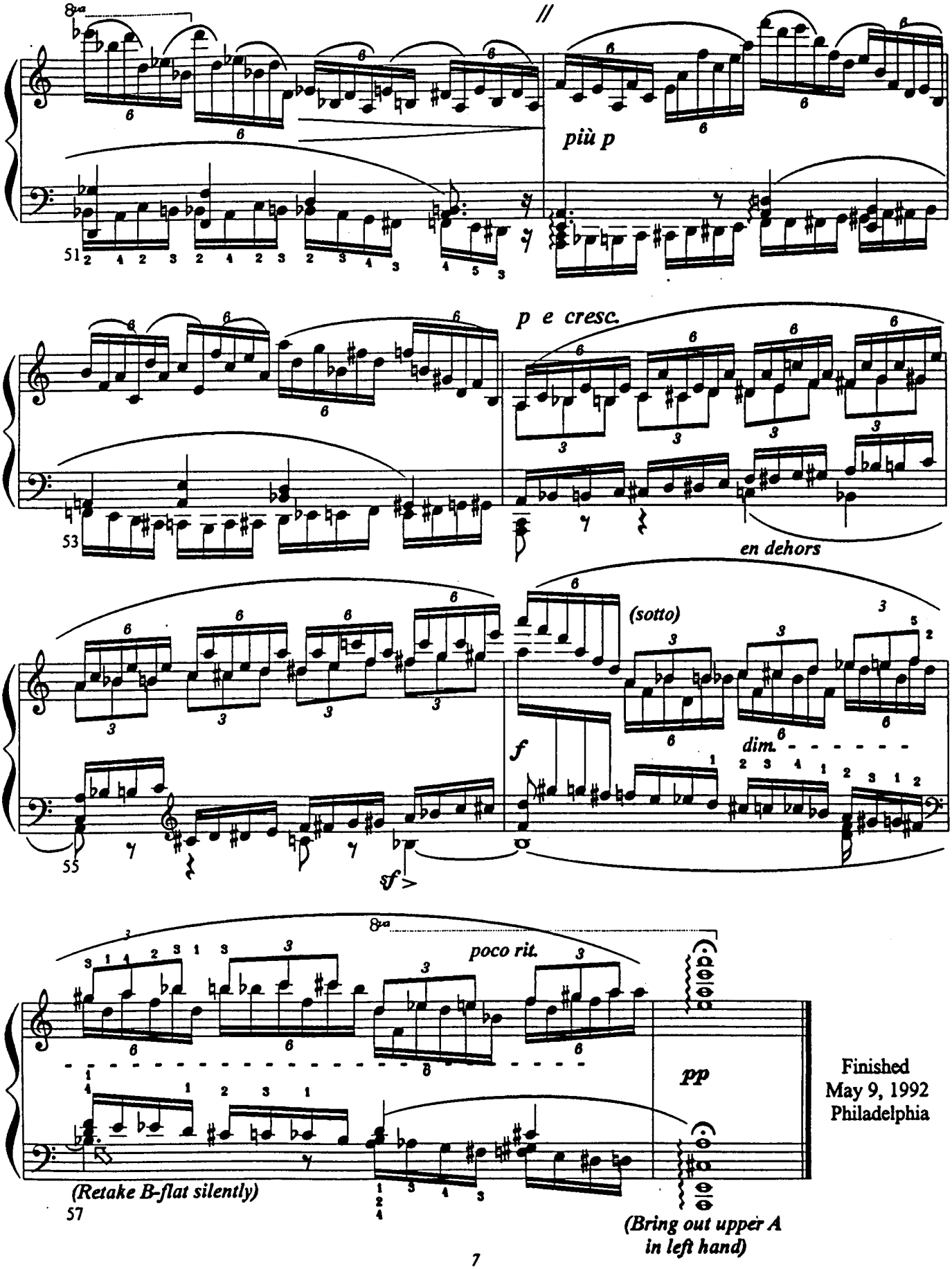

9
più p
11
8va
8va
13
8va
f
15


8va
cresc.
f
diminuendo
17
non legato, leggiero
mormorando pp
19
marcato
poco
marcato
pp sempre
21
cresc.
23


25
f
(mark middle voice the most)
27
29
diminuendo
31
p


sf
sf
sf
33
sempre p
poco
molto
35
leggierissimo!
non legato
pp
legato
37
(marcato)
(sopra)
39


6 sotto!
41
(marcato!)
espressivo
43
8va
(sempre leggierissimo)
45
47
8va
espressivo
49
6



Finished
May 9, 1992
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