STUDIES IN TONE-COLOUR

MAURICE BESLY

WINTHROP ROGERS LTD.

MAURICE BESLY

Op. 28

Studies in Tone-Colour

Ten Tone Pictures
for Piano

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To BRIAN NASH, Esq.

In Gratitude and Friendship

—

..."*For we have sailed upon the self-same quest*
And watched the stars together, you and I."

CONTENTS

	Page
Hampton Court	6
Wind in the Reeds	10
Moonrise on the Lagoons	14
Porcelain	16
Lake Louise	20
A Girl with a Rose in her Hair	22
Bed-time at the Zoo	28
Peri and Pixie	30
Madonna Lilies	34
Dawn on the Hill	36

INTRODUCTION

These little piano pieces are designed as studies in Tone-Colour and Phrasing. They are of moderate difficulty, corresponding to the intermediate standard of our Public Examinations in Music.

TONE-COLOUR

" Tone-Colour " is the result that is aimed at in the several excellent books which have been written on the art of touch. No attempt is here made to add anything to the searching study and wide experience that have contributed such works to our music-shelves ; but one point may be stressed yet again, namely, the importance of listening to and criticising the tone-colour which we produce from the piano. The key-board of a modern piano is a very sensitive piece of mechanism; it must be " touched," not hit, if a beautiful tone-colour is to be produced, and the warmth and depth of that colour, even the colour itself, depends first upon how we actually " touch " the keys, and then upon the use of the pedals.

PEDALLING

There are several books on pedalling full of information and help, so that here again only one point need be emphasized, namely, that the ear, and not the eye, must be trained in order to acquire pedalling facility and excellence. In the following pieces, therefore, very few pedalling marks will be found, for *music is sound*, and only with our ears can we appreciate sound. It must be realised that the sustaining pedal is an integral part of the modern piano, and one which should be in constant use. The only sure guide in pedalling is the ear, to assist which is beyond the art of the engraver and printer.

PHRASING

The meaning of the word " phrasing " in music is probably best explained by saying that phrases correspond to the sentences and phrases in literary composition. Phrases, like sentences, may be of varying length, but they are more or less complete in themselves ; and just as the meaning of any part of a poem or story depends upon the way in which the sentences hold together, so the meaning of a musical composition depends very largely upon the inter-relation of the various phrases.

If you will look at the reproduction of a manuscript, or even at an early printed copy, of Bach or Beethoven you will see that the phrasing is not as a rule clearly indicated, but left to the musicianship of the performer. Nowadays the performer's task is made easier, and phrasing, as well as nuances of tempo and expression, are clearly defined. In the pages that follow, the actual marks and signs show exactly how the music is intended to sound. Each phrase is marked by a curved line or " slur " and represents a complete musical thought. The notes composing any phrase are connected and must be made to sound so. All the notes of phrases are not of equal importance or equal

accent, any more than every word of a sentence is equally important or accented This will be quite clear if you will read aloud this verse of Shelley :—

> " Music when soft voices die
> Vibrates in the Memory :
> Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
> Live within the sense they quicken."

Or again, the wonderful description in Bunyan's " Pilgrim's Progress " of the summons of Mr. Valiant to Heaven :—

> " When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the riverside, into which, as he went, he said ' Death, where is thy sting ? ' And as he went down deeper he said ' Grave, where is thy victory ? ' So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

Thus, in playing any musical composition you must express the various phrases so as to make each intelligible in itself, and in relation to what precedes and what follows it. You must find out particularly where the climax is, and work up to and away from it, with a full understanding of the meaning of the whole.

One or two general principles may be applied to phrasing, making due allowance for the exceptions which prove the rule.

1. Do not accent the last syllable or note of any phrase unless such accent is specifically marked and intended.

2. When two notes are grouped together the first note is slightly more accented than the second. This rule holds good even when the second note is longer than the first. In such cases the second note is, in actual practice, slightly curtailed.

3. When a curved line is drawn over two long notes, or notes in slow tempo, it is merely a legato sign, and the second note is not shortened.

4. Phrases do not always coincide with the rhythmic divisions of a bar. Never allow such cross-phrasing to interfere with rhythm.

The pieces which follow are of three kinds :—

(*a*) Dance forms, *e.g.*, minuet or waltz.
(*b*) Song form.
(*c*) Impressionistic.

The phrasing in (*a*) and (*b*) is comparatively easy and straightforward. In (*c*) it is more difficult and even more important, for, whereas even the more simple dance and song forms require careful phrasing, impressionistic music is quite unintelligible unless it is phrased in a musicianly manner.

Whatever you play, first understand the meaning yourself, and then try to convey that meaning to others.

M. B.

Hampton Court

A Minuet, in the usual form: A, B, A; that is, a first tune, A (here in G major) followed by a second, B (here in the relative minor key) and then a repetition of A.

In A, the first part consists of two 4-bar phrases, while the last 16 bars consist of shorter phrases in sequence, that is, phrases that are similar but higher or lower in the scale. Such sequences are often met with, and seem of themselves to suggest *crescendo* or *diminuendo* according to whether they ascend or descend.

In B, you will notice that the tune is always *legato* and the accompaniment generally *non-legato*. In the first eight bars the tune is played by the right hand, and in the last eight bars by the left.

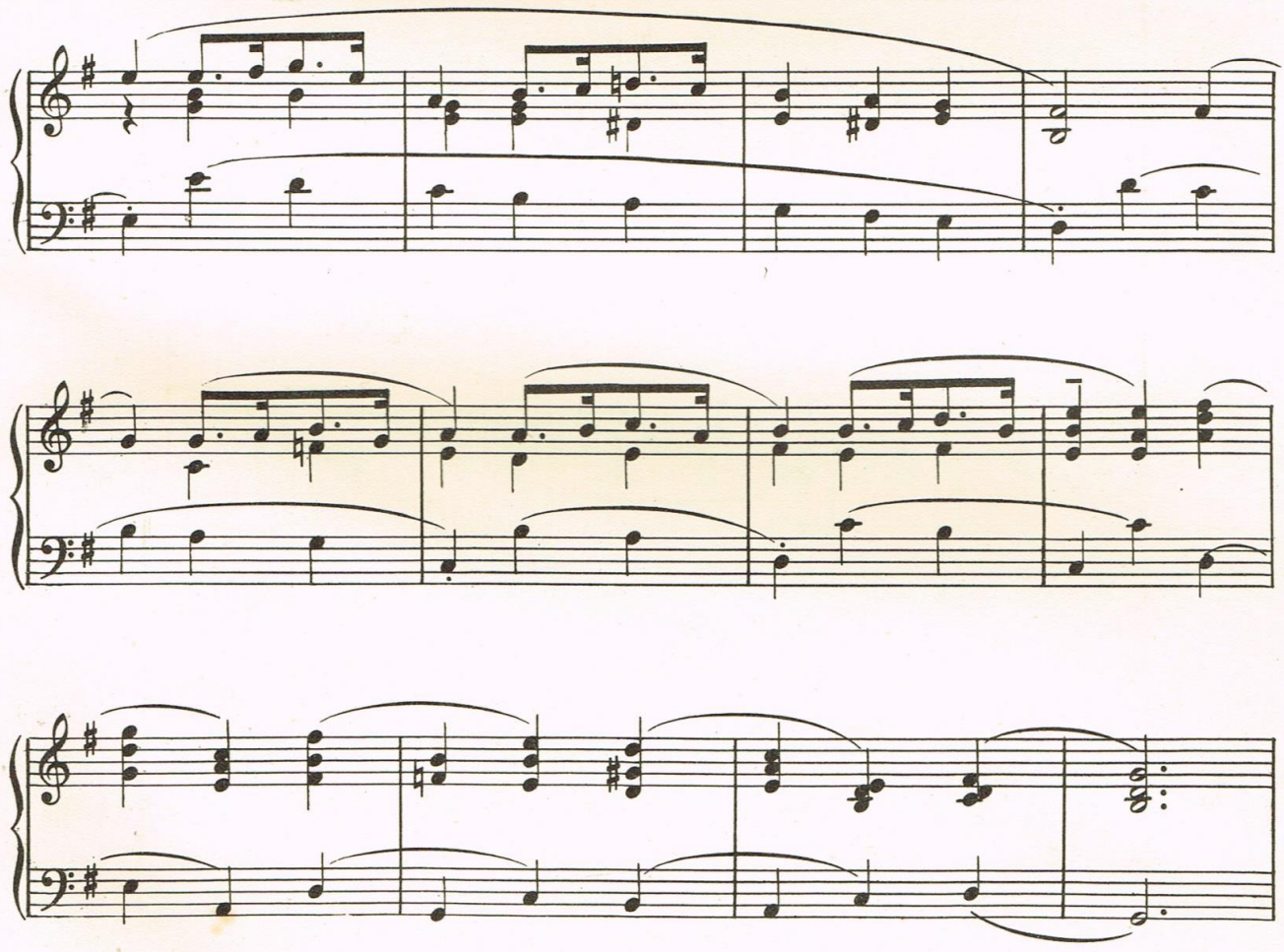
This piece is, in fact, a study more for the left hand than the right, for in A the bass part is particularly important and the descending scales of G major and E minor and the frequent upward jumps of the octave or seventh must be artistically phrased and not merely played as a series of notes.

Hampton Court

Tempo di minuetto

PIANO

f



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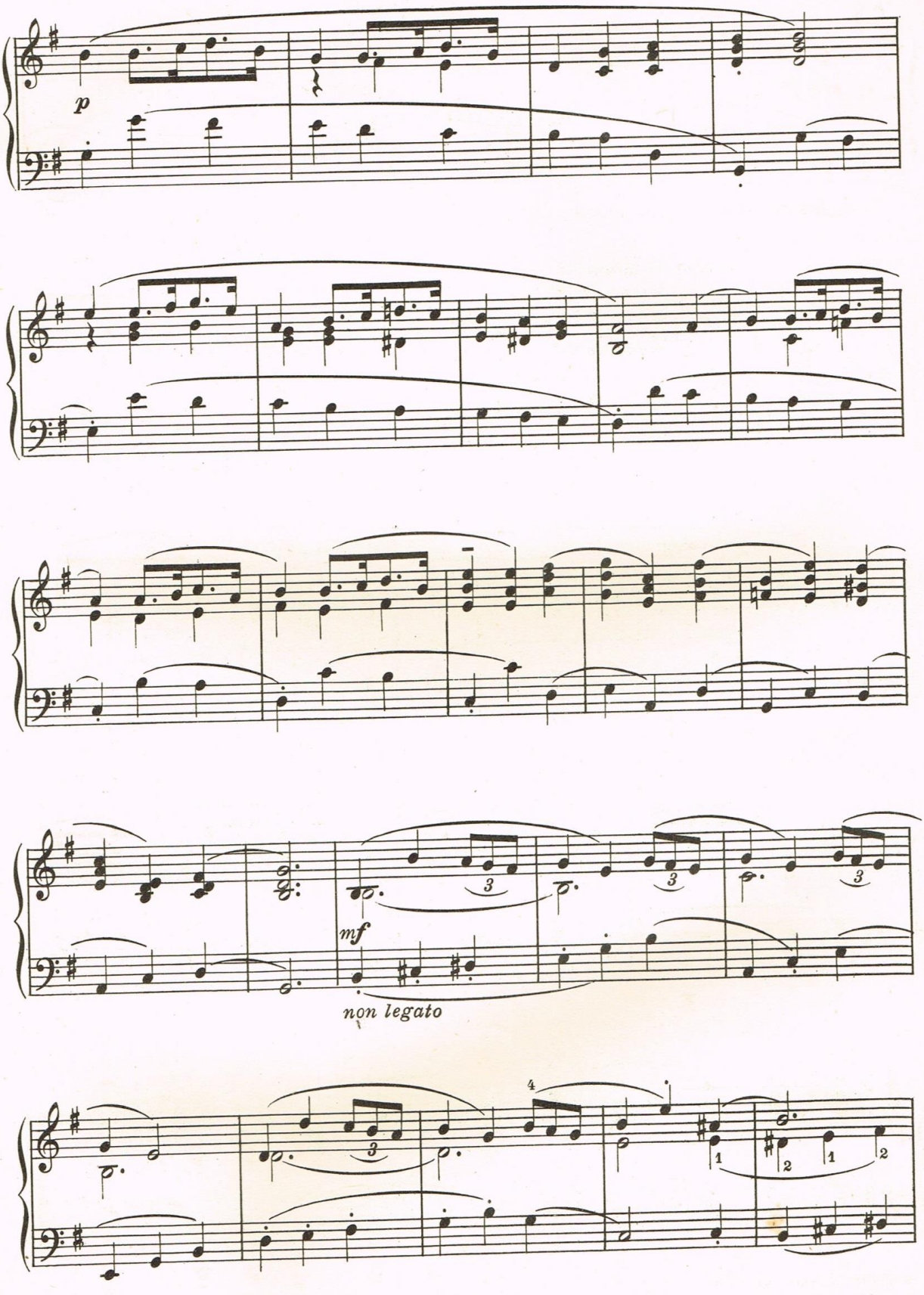
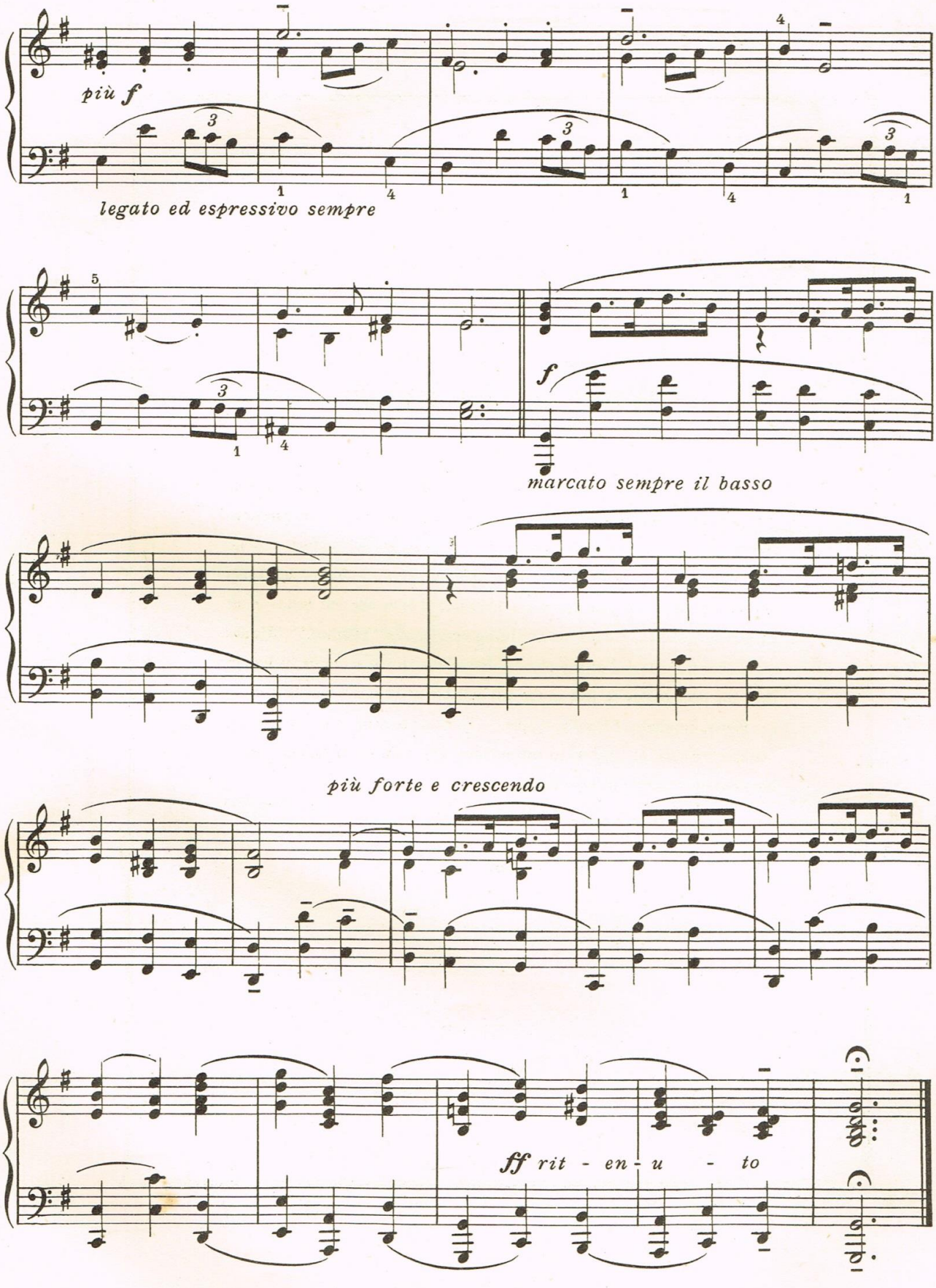
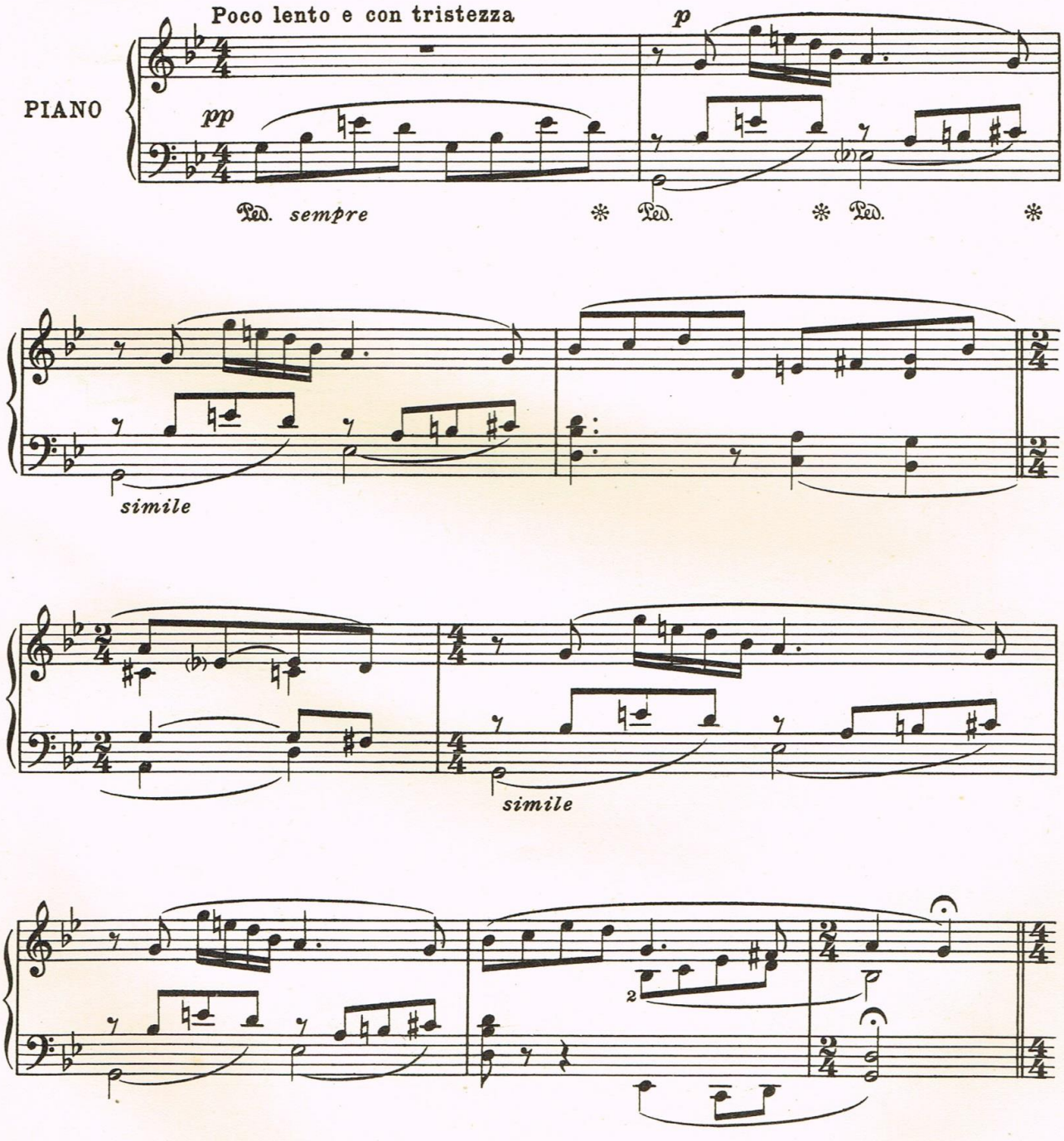

p
mf
non legato


più f
legato ed espressivo sempre
f
marcato sempre il basso
più forte e crescendo
ff rit - en - u - to

Wind in the Reeds

This piece tries to suggest by sound what a poet might convey if he wrote stanzas on this idea. Such music is sometimes called "impressionistic" or "atmospheric," as opposed to "pure music," which has no "programme" or picture. The little wailing phrase which occurs again and again—after the *poco piu mosso* interlude it is in the left hand—must be carefully played, the last quaver being very gently "touched." Always remember that the end of any phrase, unless it is an actual climax, is lighter than the note before it, just as the last syllable of so many words is light, *e.g.* Pansy, Brighton, Clovelly, Apple. Towards the end is a little passage marked *senza tempo*, that is to say without any number of definite beats, but each note having its true value.

Wind in the Reeds



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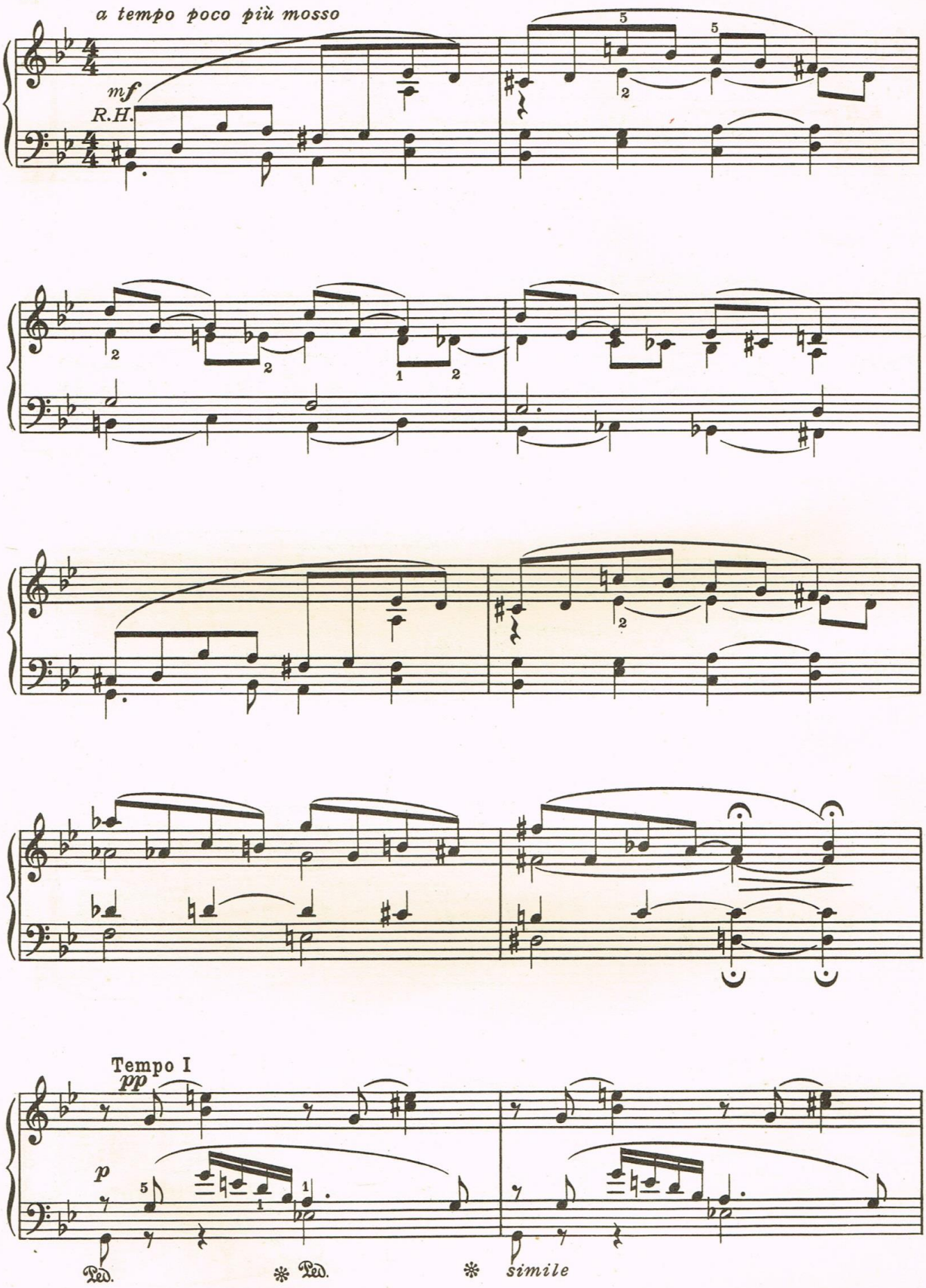
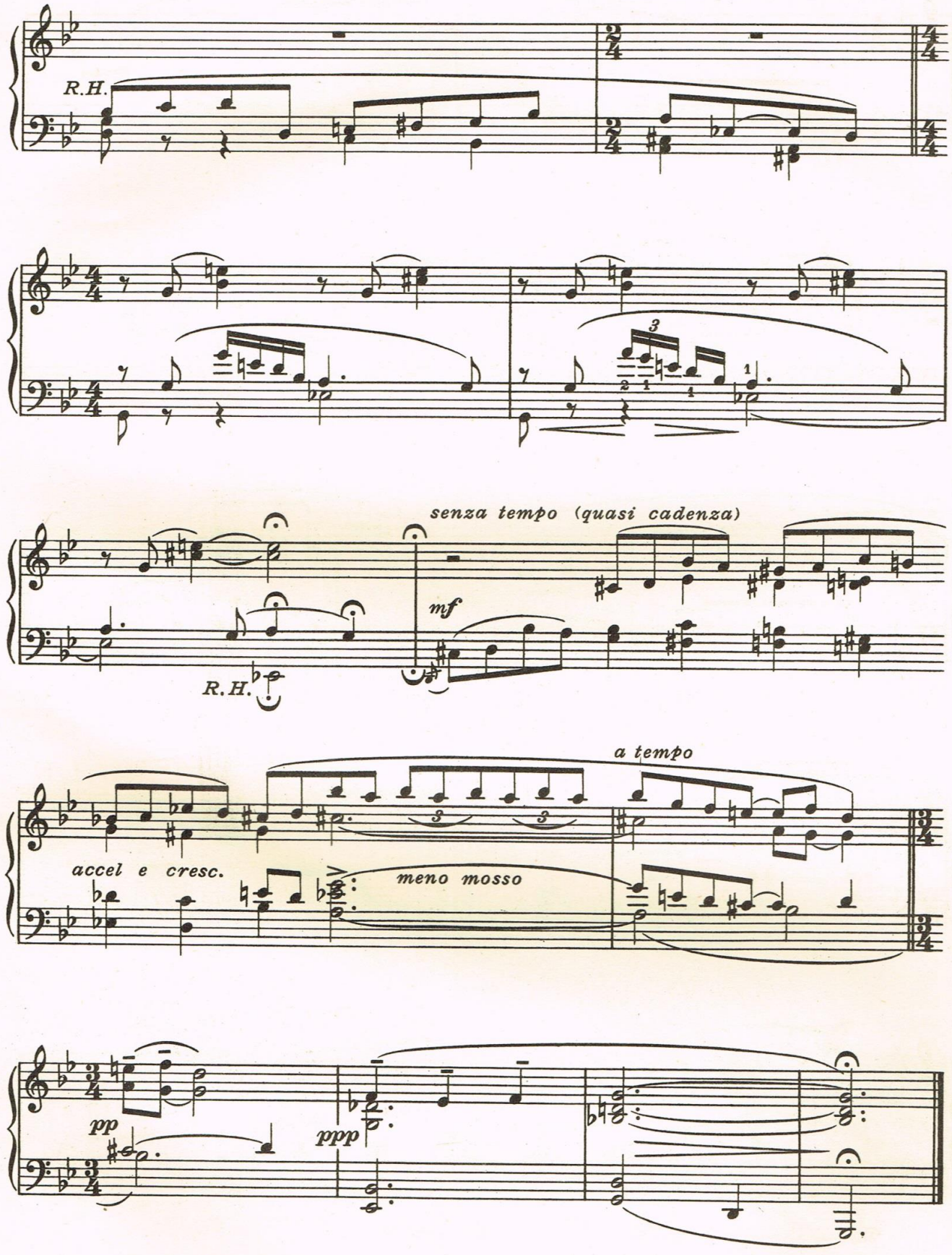
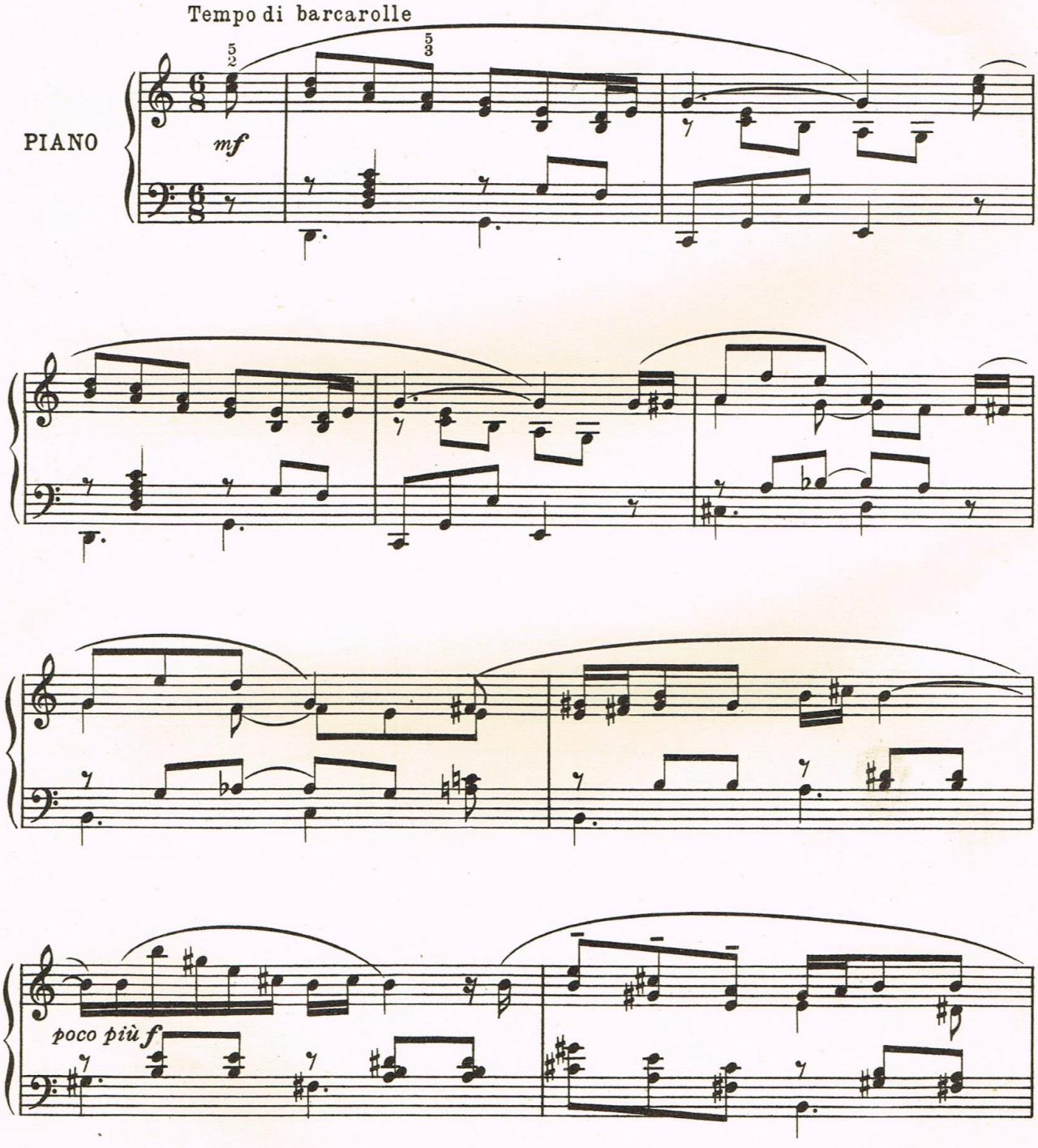

a tempo poco più mosso
mf
R.H.
Tempo I
pp
p
Ped.
Ped.
simile


R.H.
senza tempo (quasi cadenza)
mf
R.H.
a tempo
accel e cresc.
meno mosso
pp
ppp

Moonrise on the Lagoons

"I take an oar and make a rift
In the soft tide of the lagoons."
—William Sharp.

A gentle flowing tune intended to suggest the gentle movement of a boat on the water. The phrasing is quite simple. Notice how at the end the tune is given to the left hand, as if played on a 'cello.



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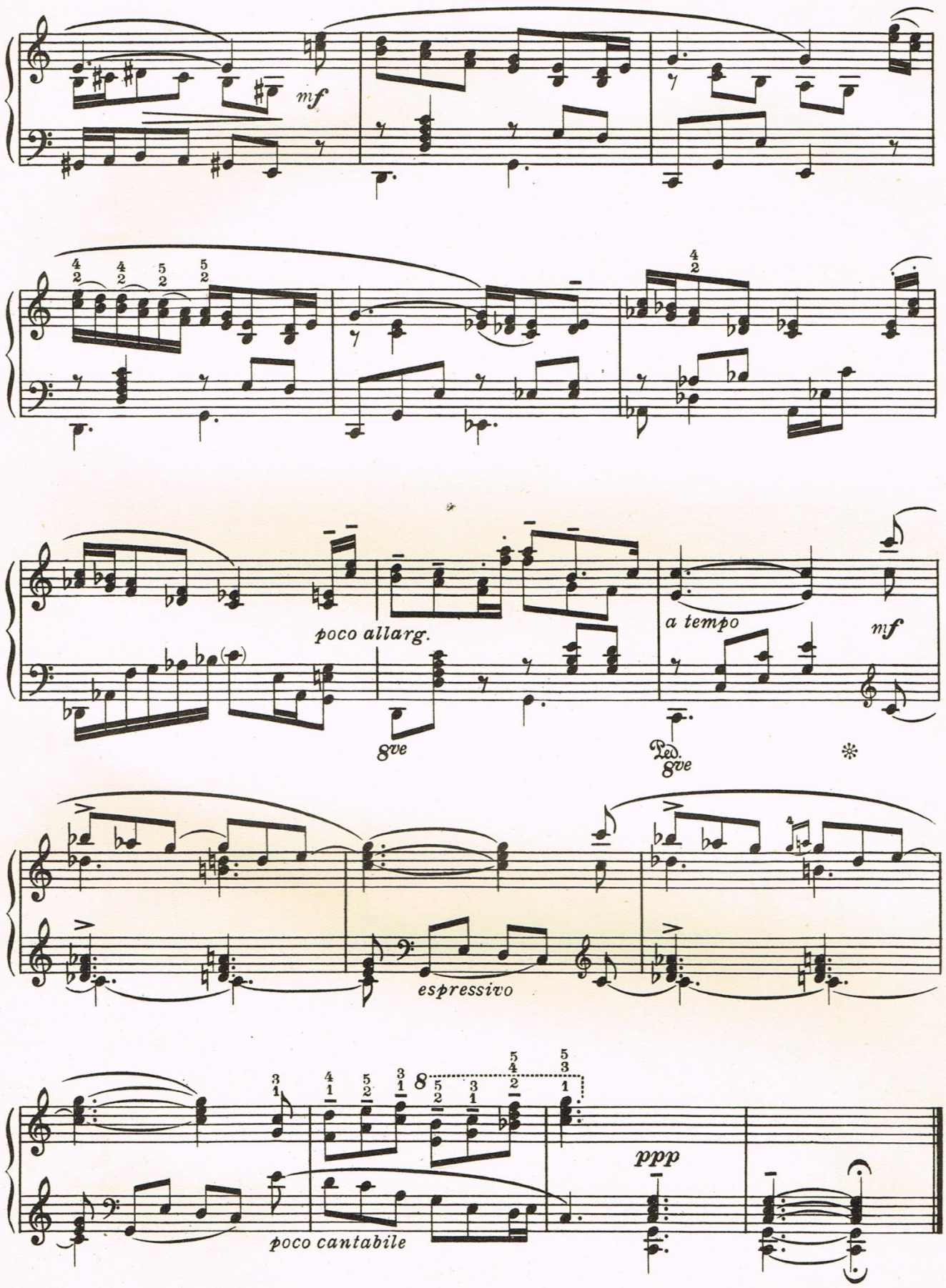
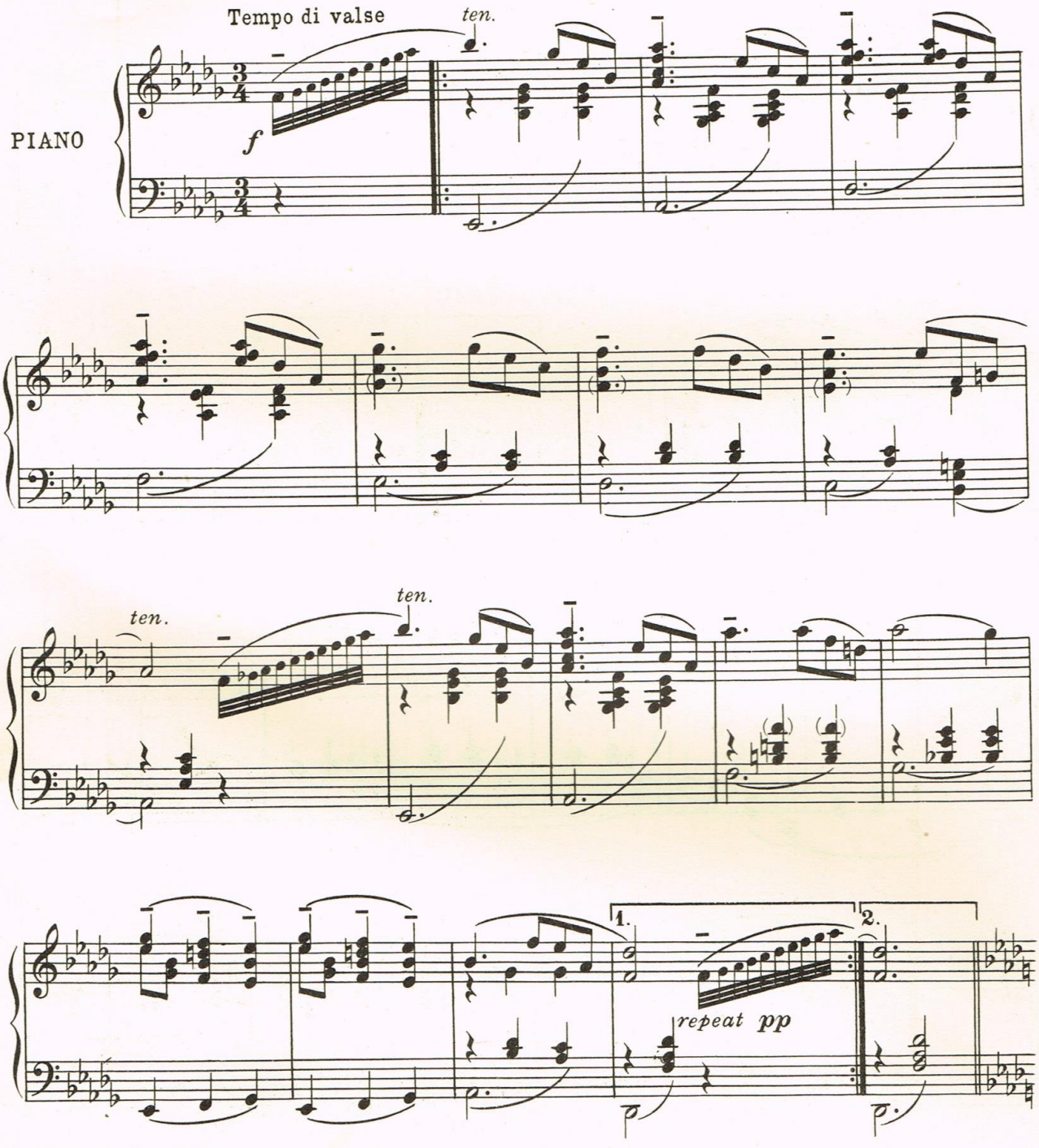

mf
poco allarg.
8ve
a tempo
mf
Ped.
8ve
espressivo
poco cantabile
ppp

Porcelain

A light, wistful waltz, suggesting a dance of a little Dresden China Figure. The B flat at the end of the little run should always be slightly *tenuto*, that is held for a tiny moment, giving a rather piquant effect, quite in keeping with the title of the piece. Note, in the third section, the lift of the top E flat, and how a few bars later, the E flat is not lifted, but on the contrary slightly accented.

Porcelain



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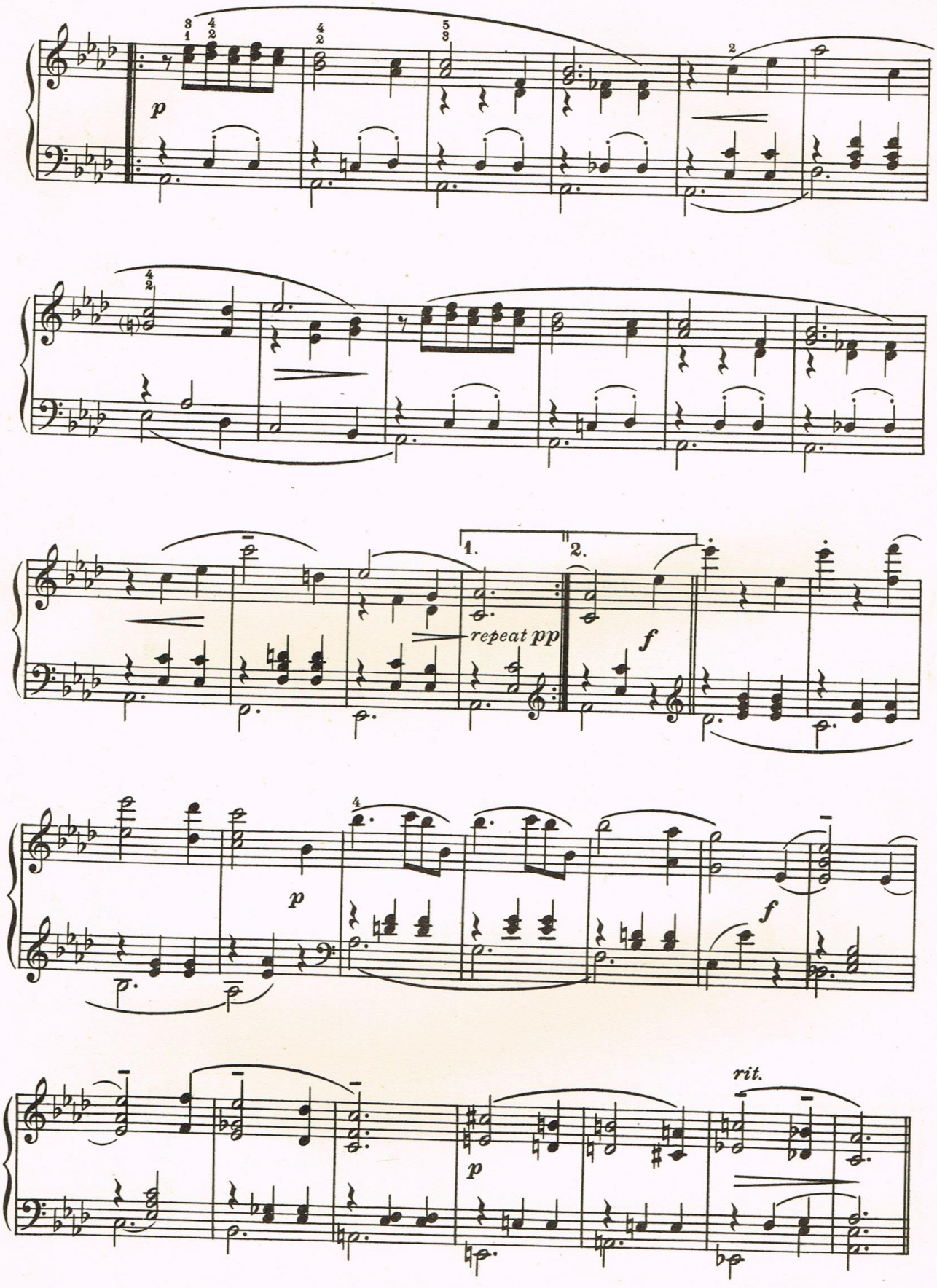
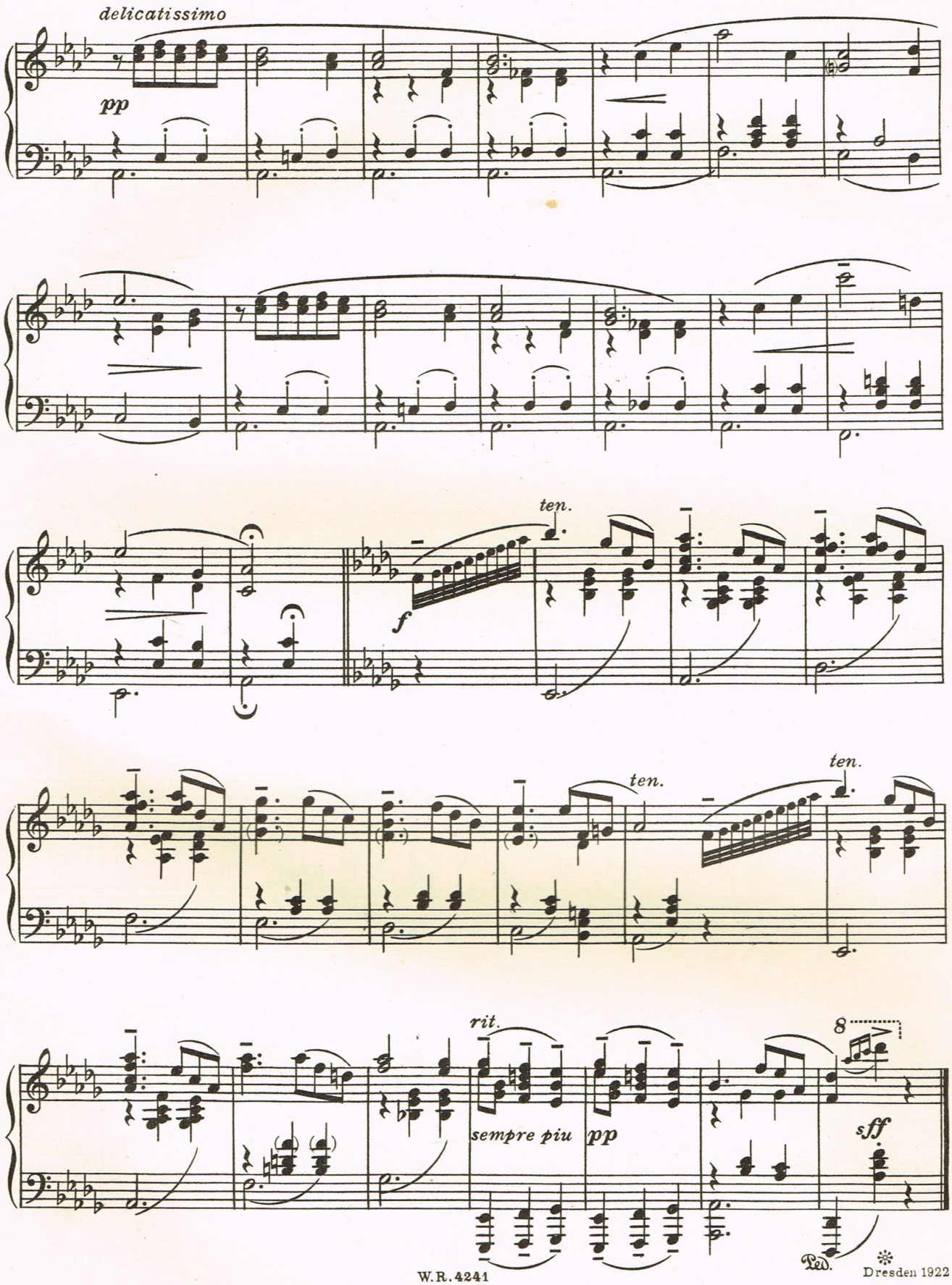

p
1.
2.
repeat pp
f
p
f
rit.
p

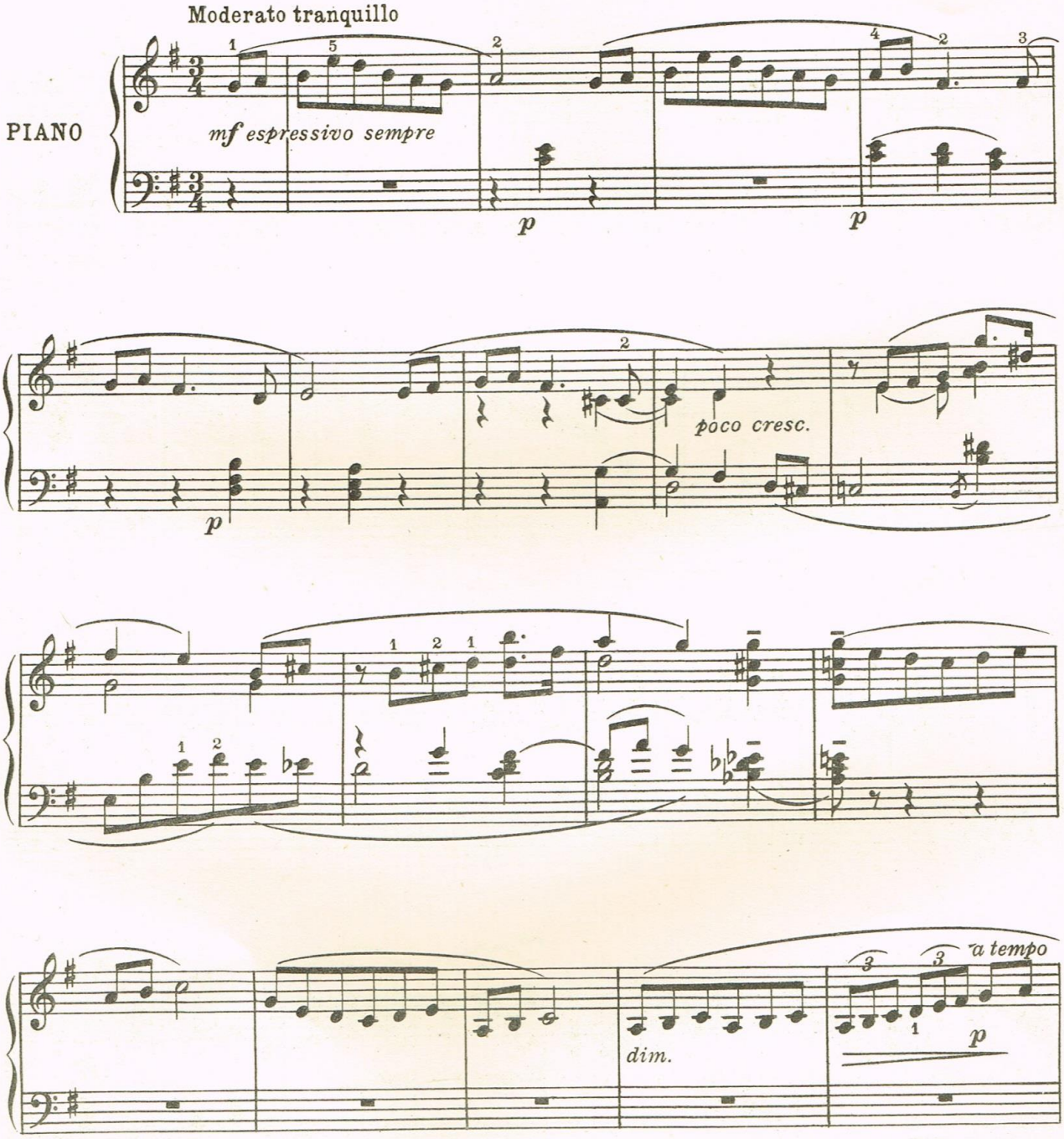


Dresden 1922

Lake Louise

"The lake lay blue below the hill."
—Mary Coleridge.

Lake Louise is one of the loveliest sights in the world—bright blue below snow-clad pinnacles of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Very cold it is, and very quiet. Just in this cold and quiet way must this little piece be played. The phrasing needs no explanation. The last two bars should fade away to nothing (*a niente*).



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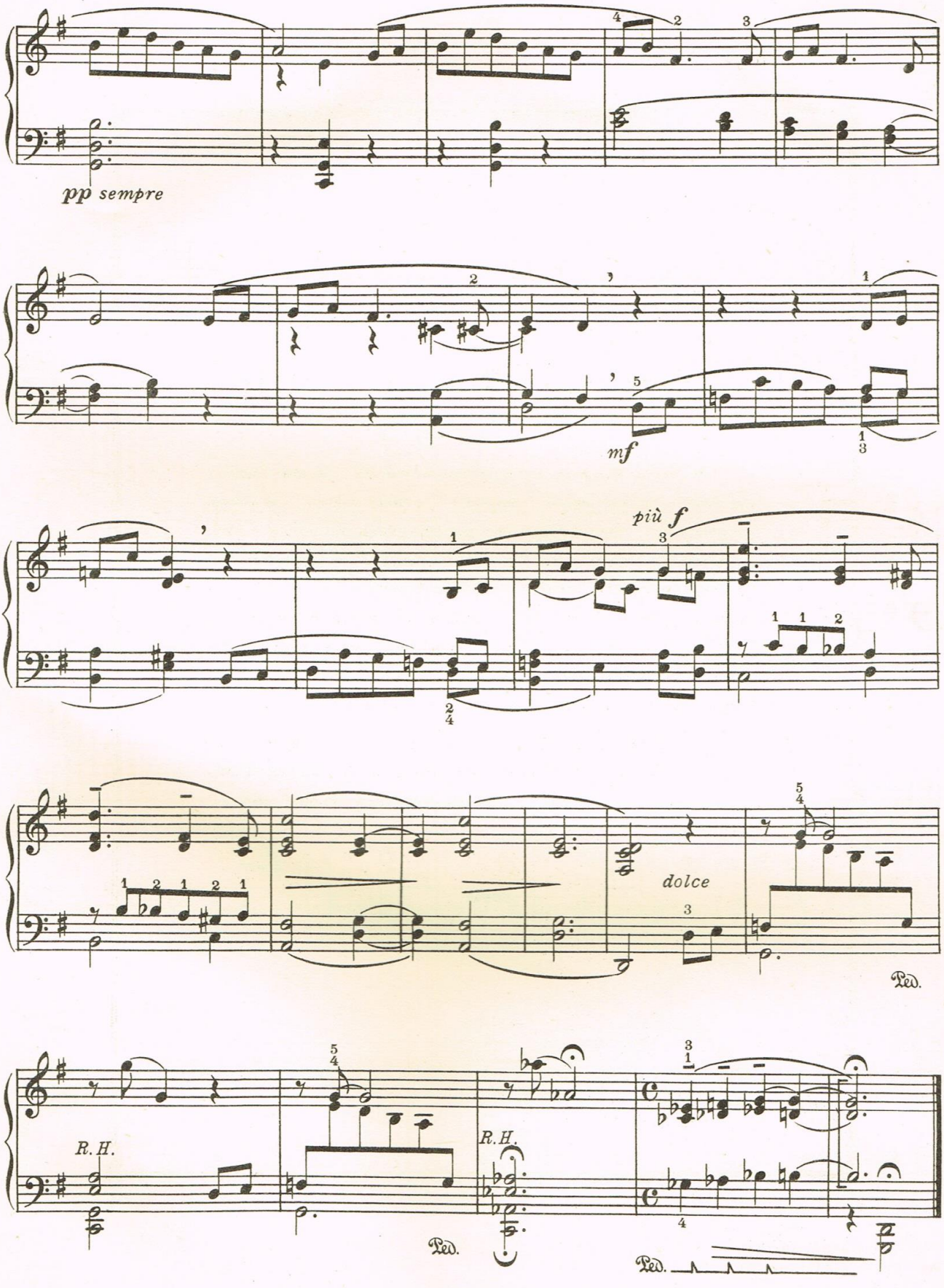
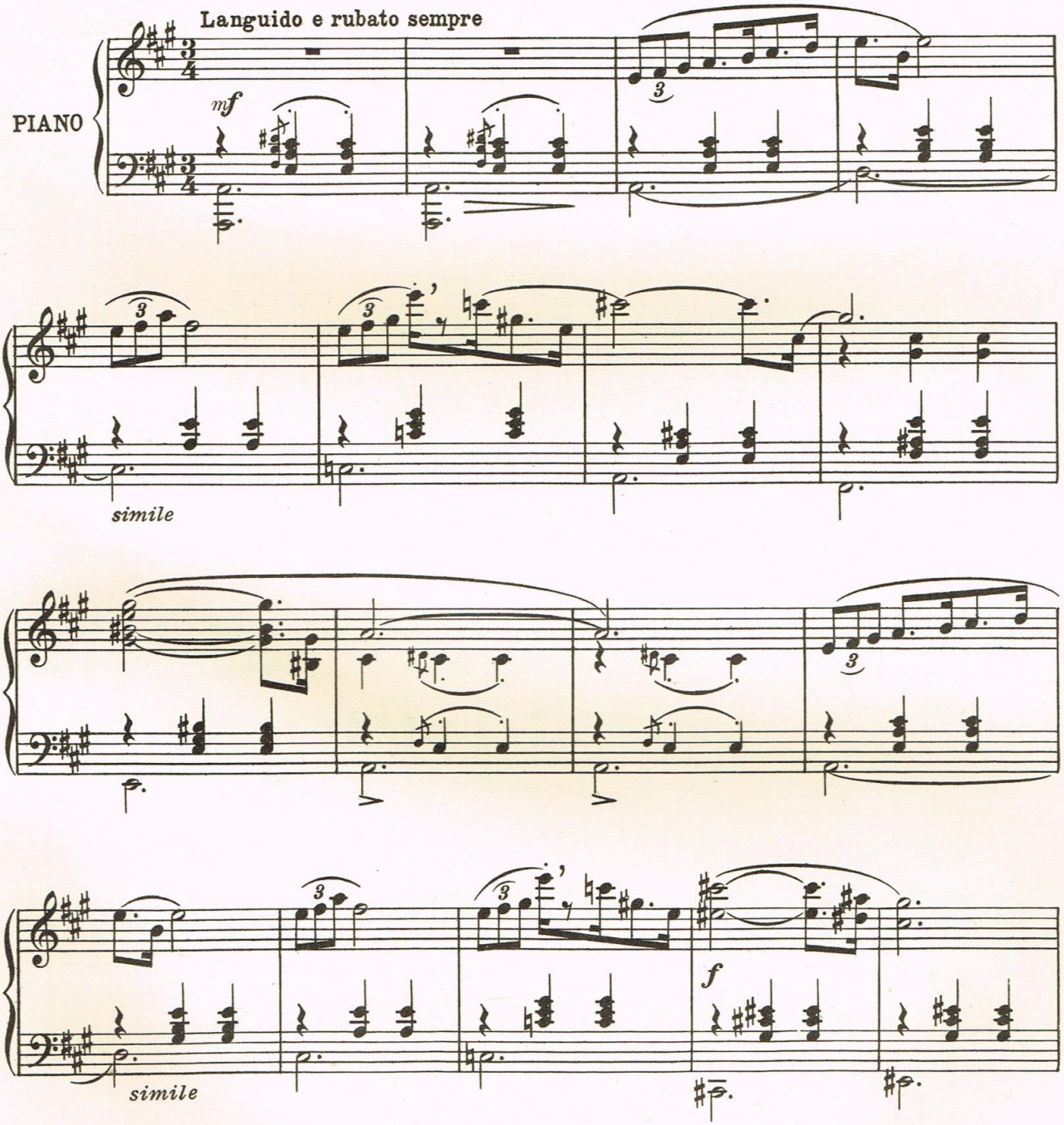

pp sempre
mf
più f
dolce
R.H.
R.H.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

A Girl with a Rose in her Hair

In playing this piece, try to picture to yourself a Spanish Dancer. The music is marked *languido* (" languidly ") *e rubato sempre* (" and always borrowing . . . . the time from one part of a phrase and paying it back in another"). That is to say, the phrases should not be strict, but free, yet always rhythmical. Rhythm is the main essential of a dance, but good dancing is never rigid. One phrase needs a word of explanation, the one which occurs first in bar 6. Here the top E is lifted, and an almost imperceptible break is made after it. This device is most commonly written for stringed instruments, but is effective on the piano if beautifully " touched."

The middle section in A minor contains a technical point known as " rotary motion." For further explanation of this turning of the fore-arm see Tobias Matthay's " Muscular Relaxation Studies," page 40 and Czerny's.

A Girl with a Rose in her Hair



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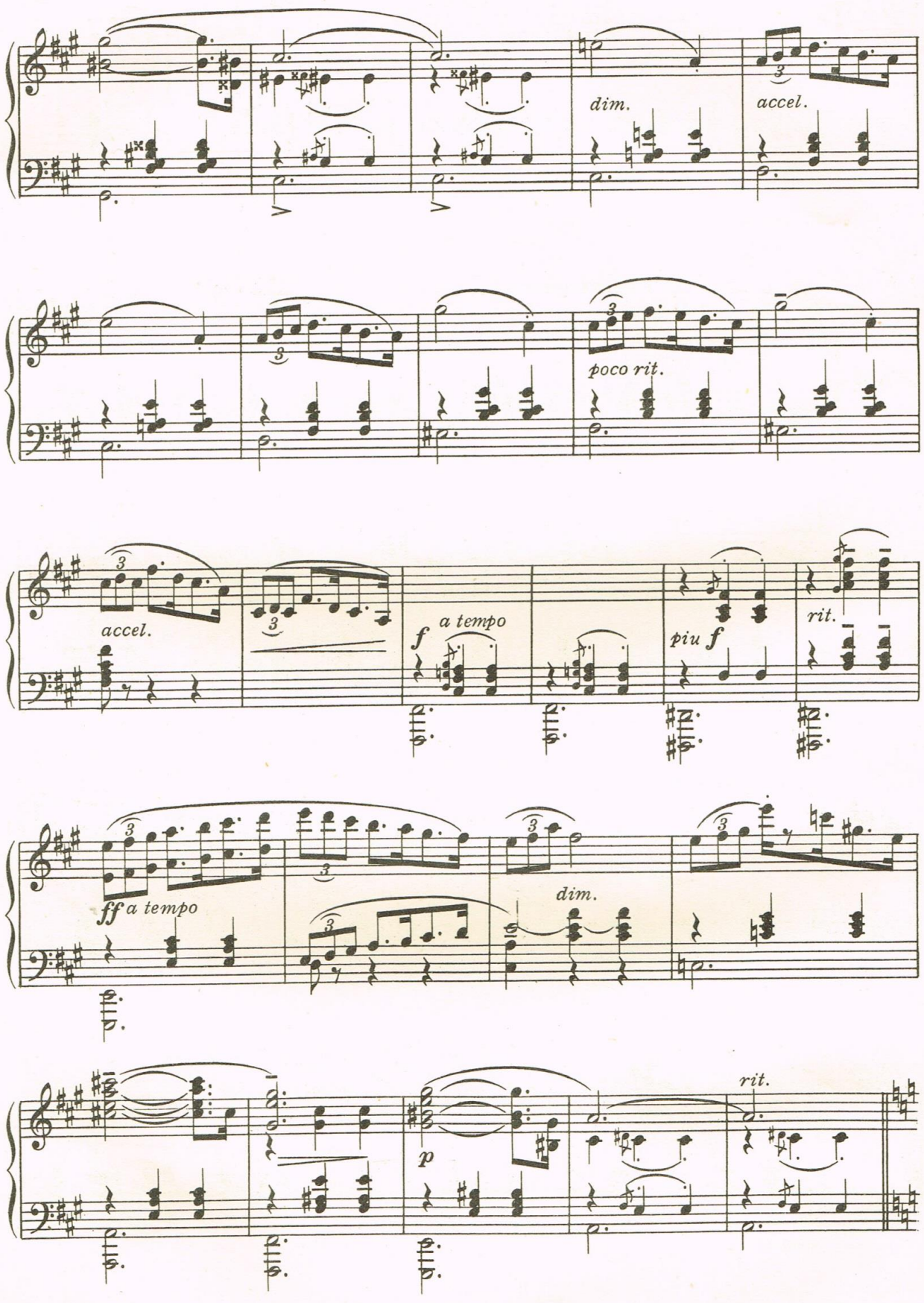
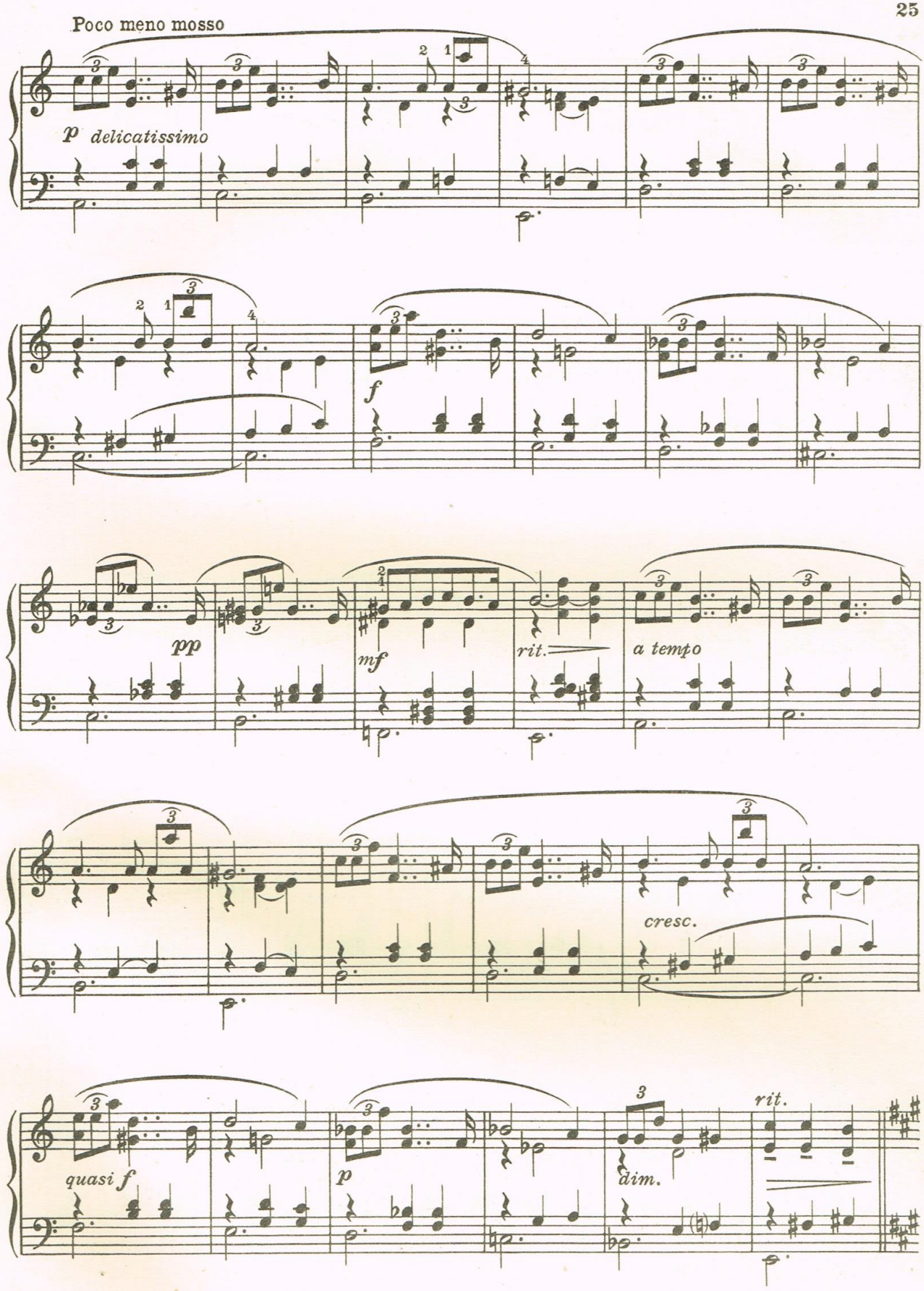
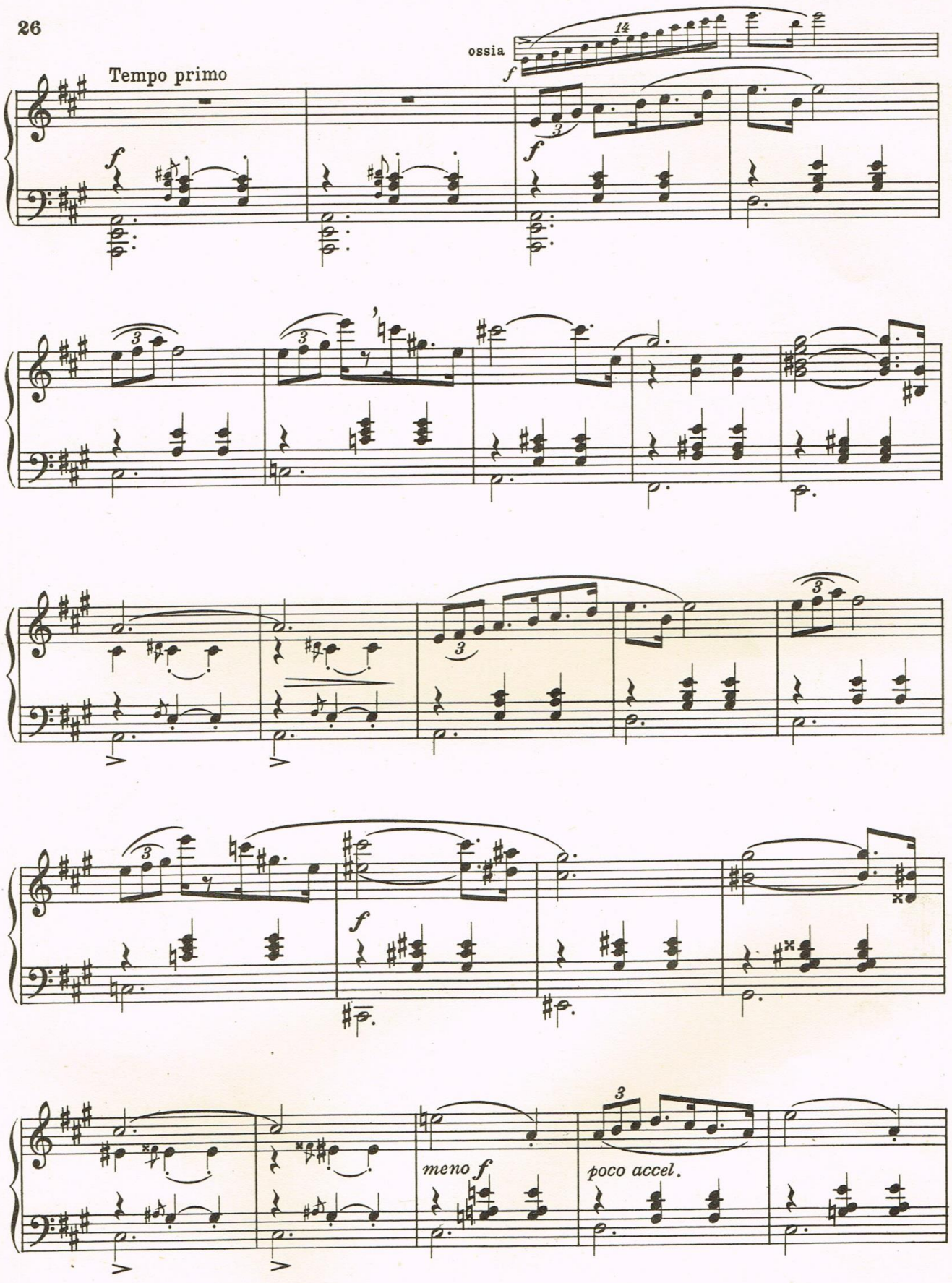
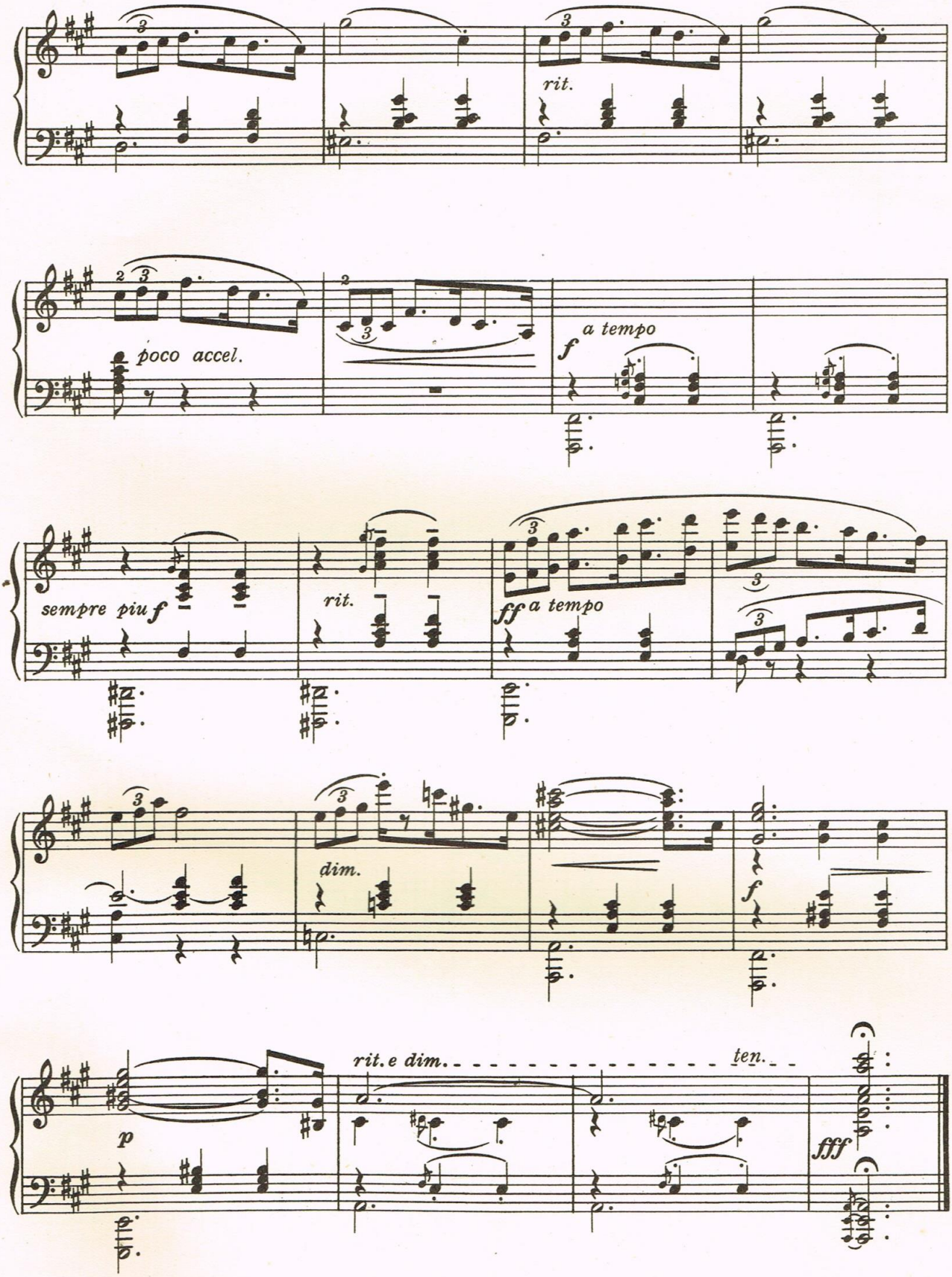

dim.
accel.
poco rit.
accel.
f
a tempo
piu f
rit.
ff
a tempo
dim.
p
rit.


Poco meno mosso
p delicatissimo
f
pp
mf
rit.
a tempo
cresc.
quasi f
p
dim.
rit.

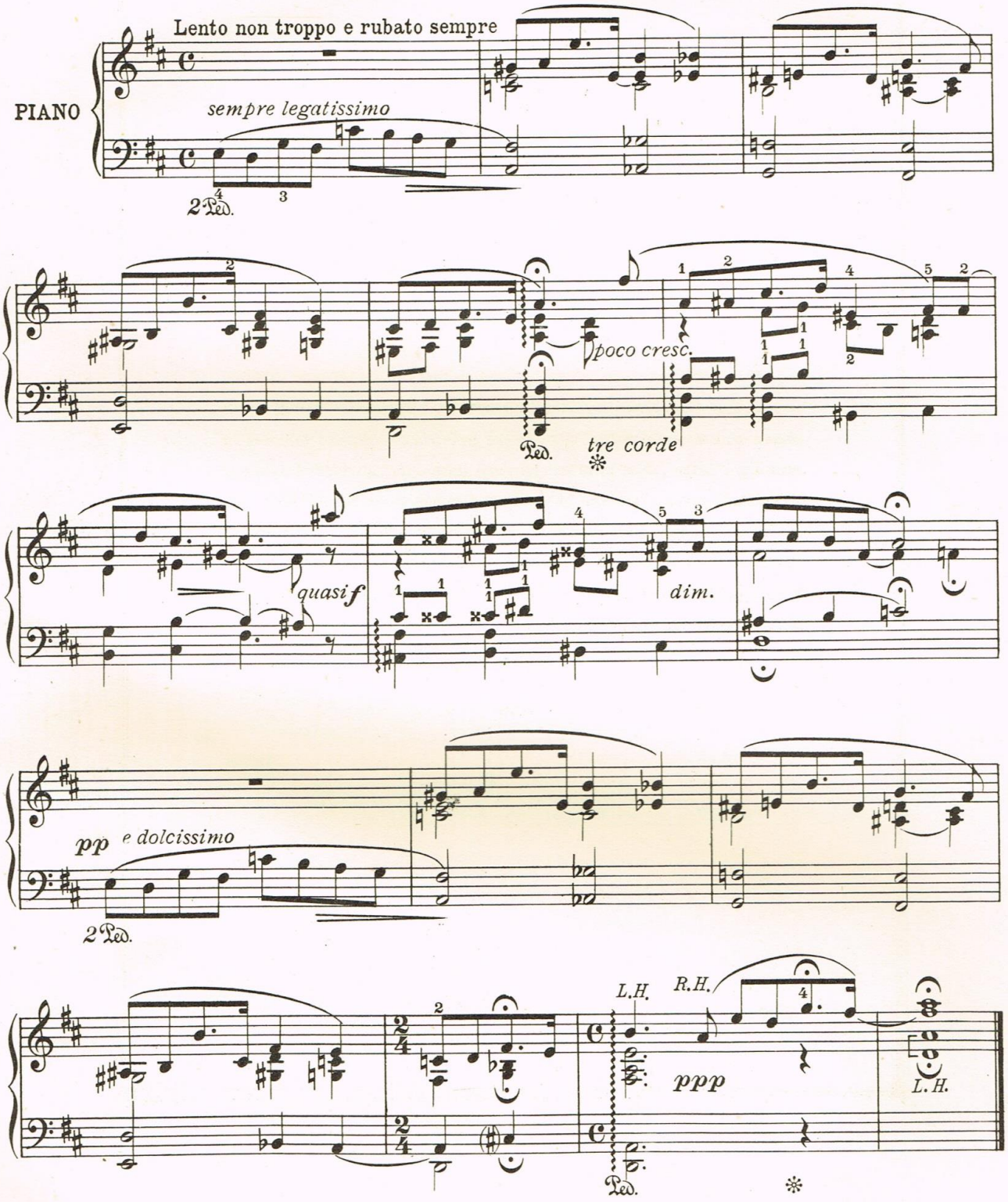

ossia
Tempo primo
meno f
poco accel.


rit.
poco accel.
a tempo
f
sempre piu f
rit.
ff
a tempo
dim.
f
p
rit. e dim.
ten.
fff

Bed-time at the Zoo

This short piece was written in the Zoological Gardens at Sydney, overlooking the world's most beautiful harbour. It is quite difficult. The chromatic changes demand very careful pedalling, calling for very careful listening. Listen to every note, and think carefully of your tone, and how you should touch the keys to produce the tone. In these sixteen bars everything depends on your tone-colour, and your ability to convey thereby the feeling of drowsiness and peace. The first and last bars, though they look easy, are a sure test of good piano playing. Throughout, a perfect *legato* is essential: the hands must as it were creep from note to note. Before beginning to play, always prepare yourself and your audience by a moment's silence.

Bed-time at the Zoo



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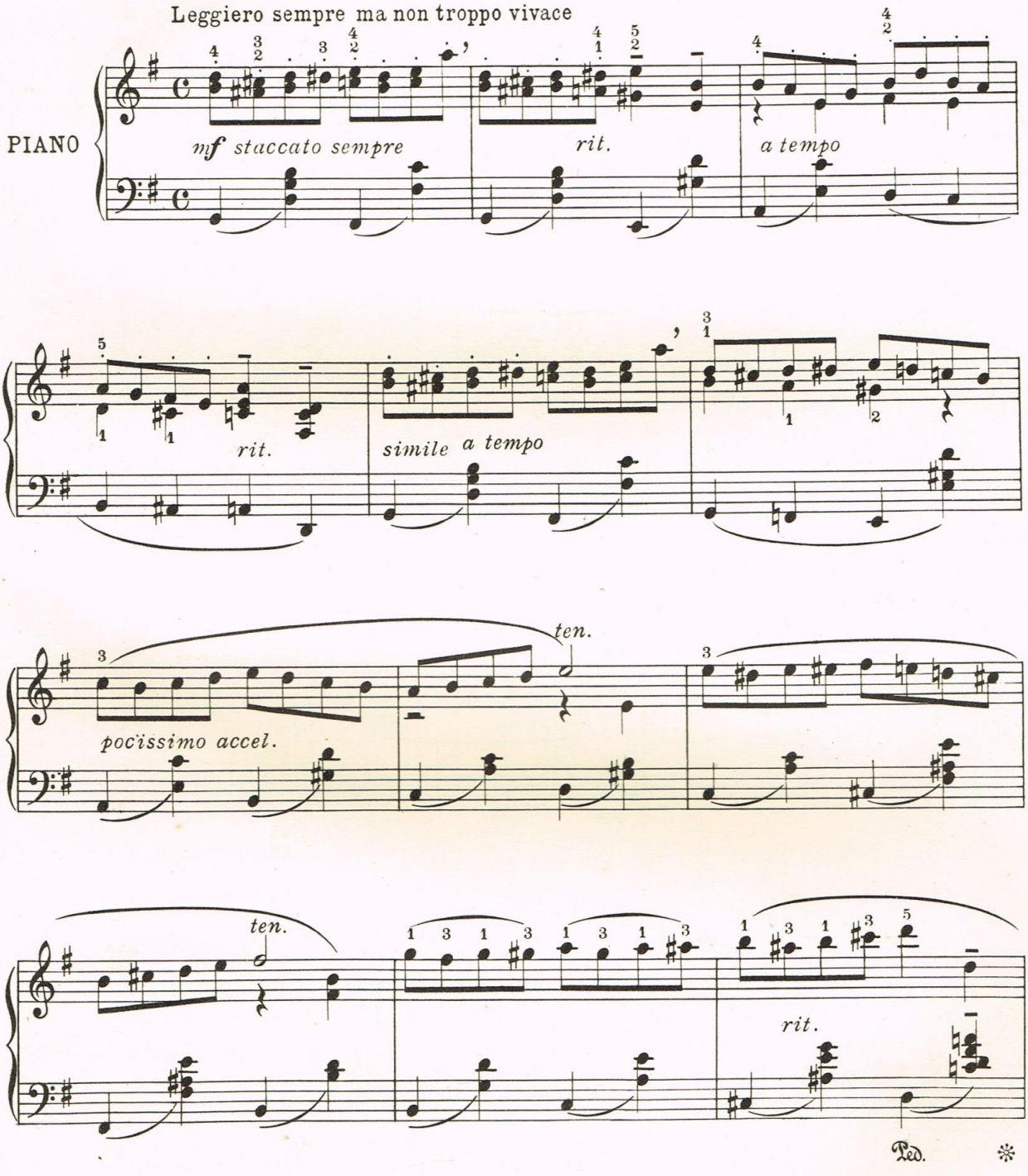
Peri and Pixie

A dance suggested by Hood's poem on Midsummer fairies, to be played with a sense of fun. Note the little *ritenuto* phrases followed at once by *a tempo*. Not until the last two lines does this piece become at all quick in tempo; and the end looks and sounds more difficult than it is: the last run is one of the easiest on the key-board. A trick which will be found very useful in many passages is exemplified at the bottom of the second page. The low octave B must be depressed, *but not sounded again*, as soon as the left hand is free.

Peri and Pixie



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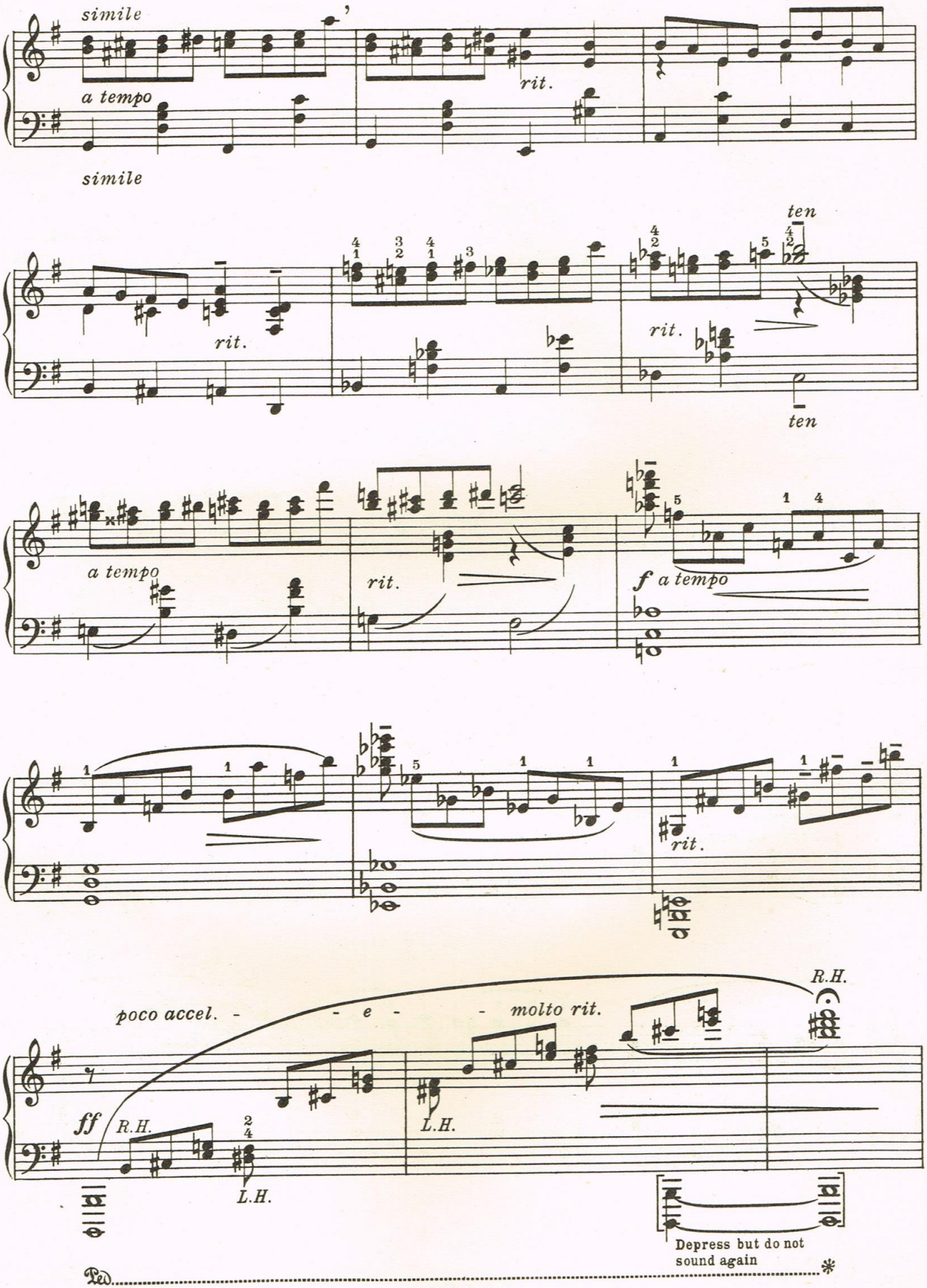
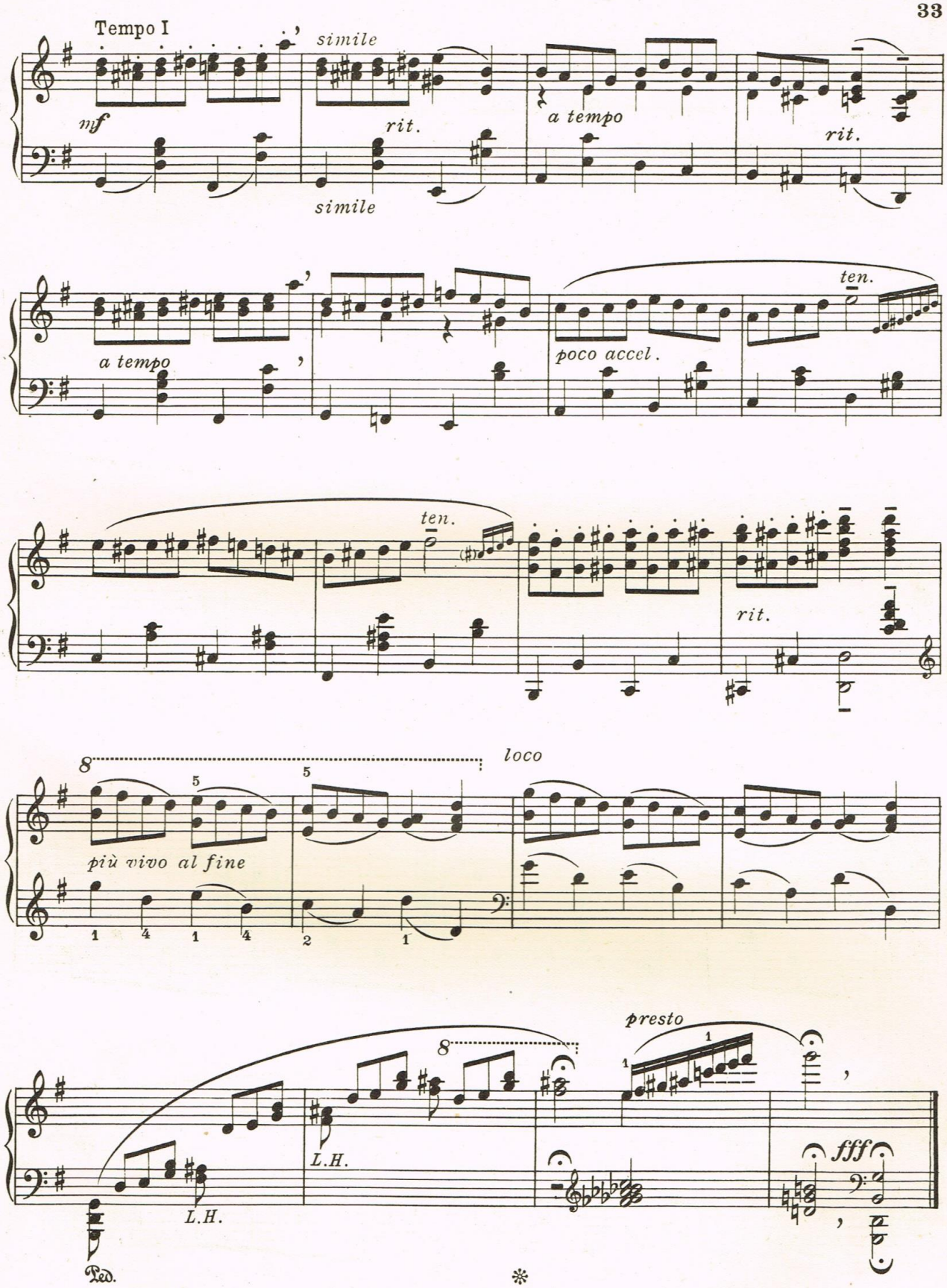
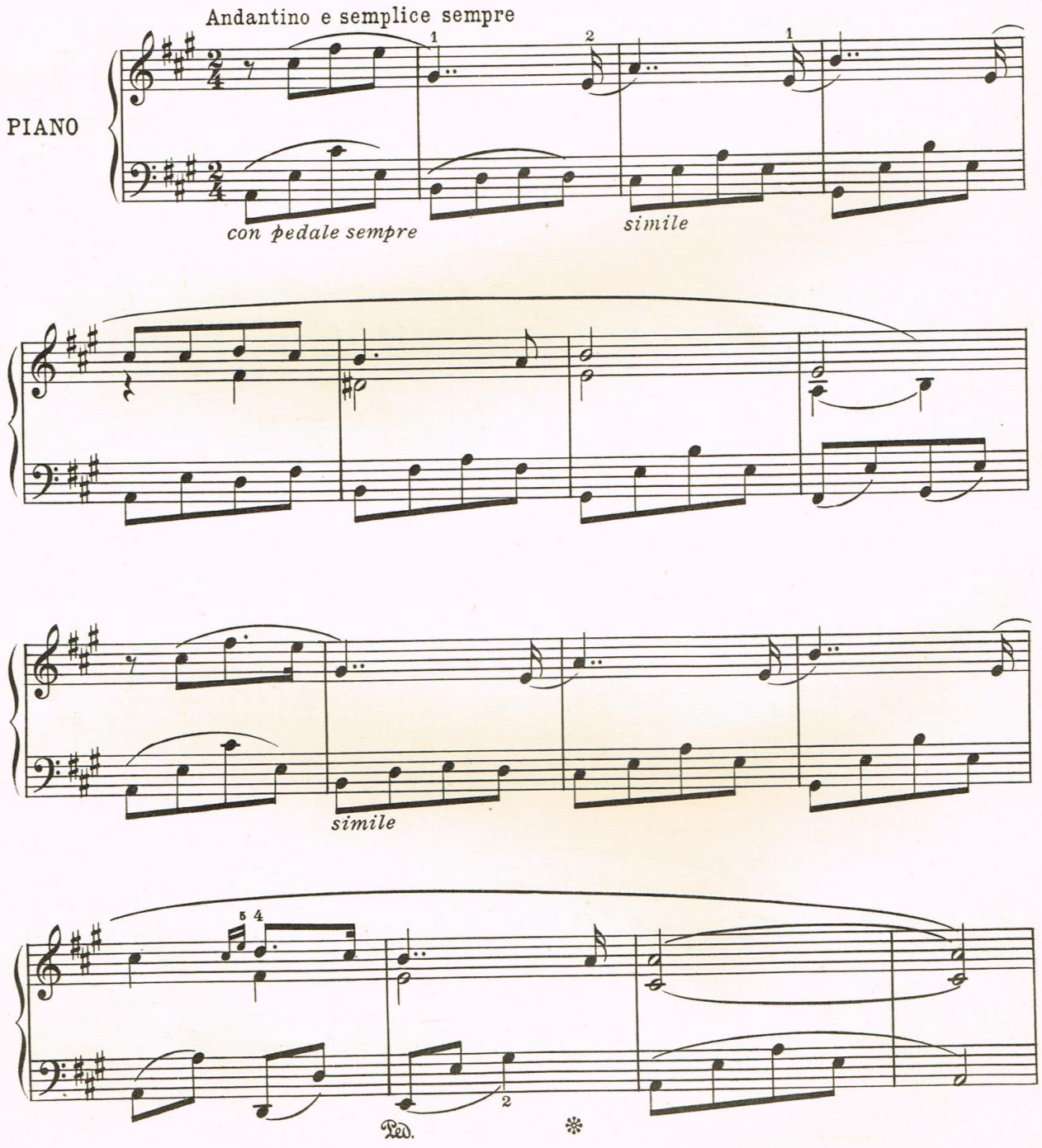

simile
a tempo
rit.
simile
rit.
ten
rit.
ten
a tempo
rit.
f a tempo
rit.
poco accel. - - e - - molto rit.
R.H.
ff
R.H.
L.H.
L.H.
Depress but do not sound again
Ped.
*


Tempo I
mf
simile
rit.
simile
a tempo
rit.
a tempo
poco accel.
ten.
ten.
rit.
più vivo al fine
loco
presto
L.H.
L.H.
fff
Ped.

Madonna Lilies

As the title implies, this song-like tune should be played with simple beauty, rhythmically, and free from all sentimentality. The tone-colour should be pure white and the little phrases played in gentle curves, free from all accentuations.



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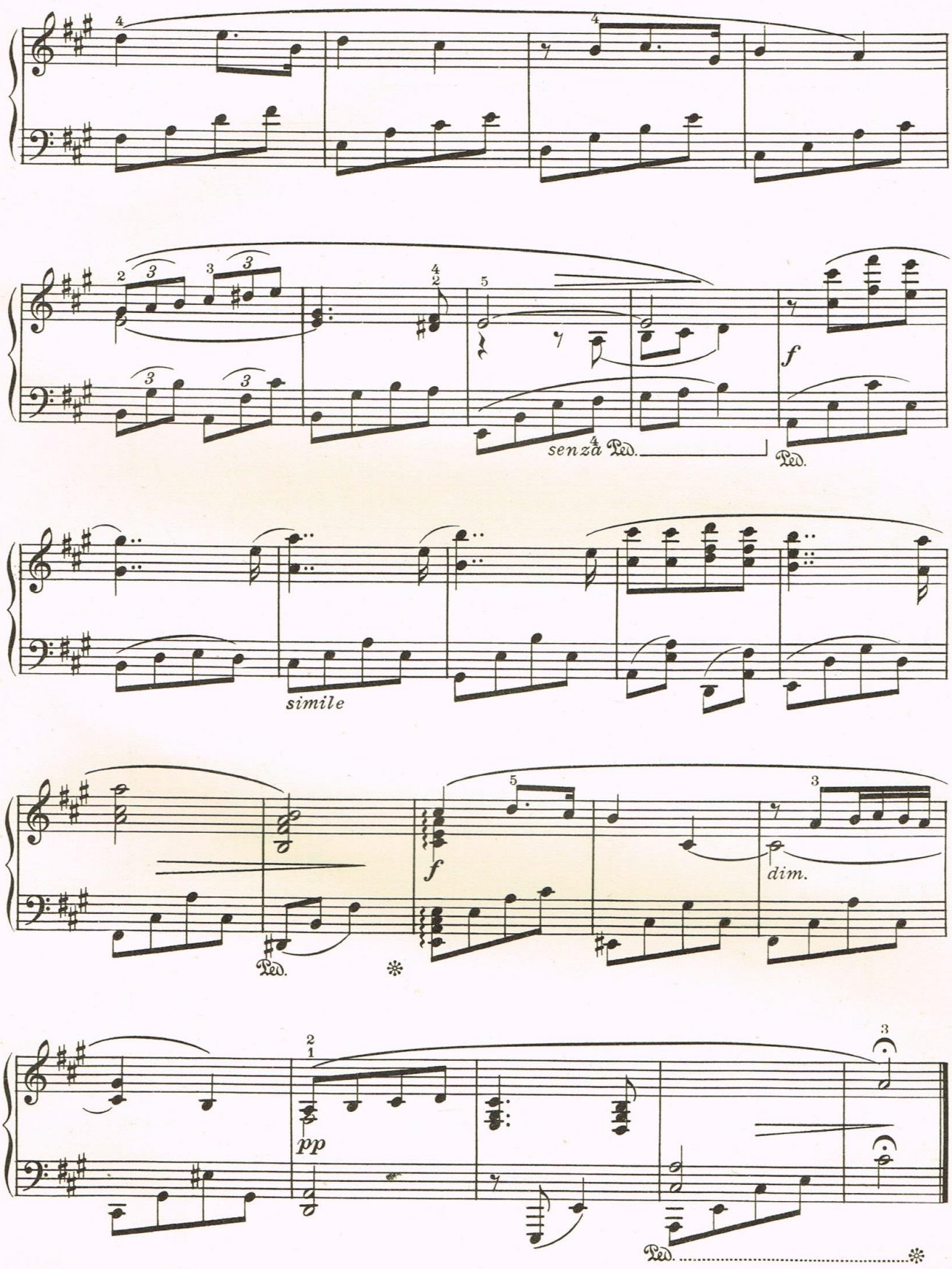

senza Ped.
Ped.
simile
f
dim.
pp
Ped.

Dawn on the Hill

The phrasing of this piece is quite easy to understand, but it is technically more difficult than in the pieces before it.

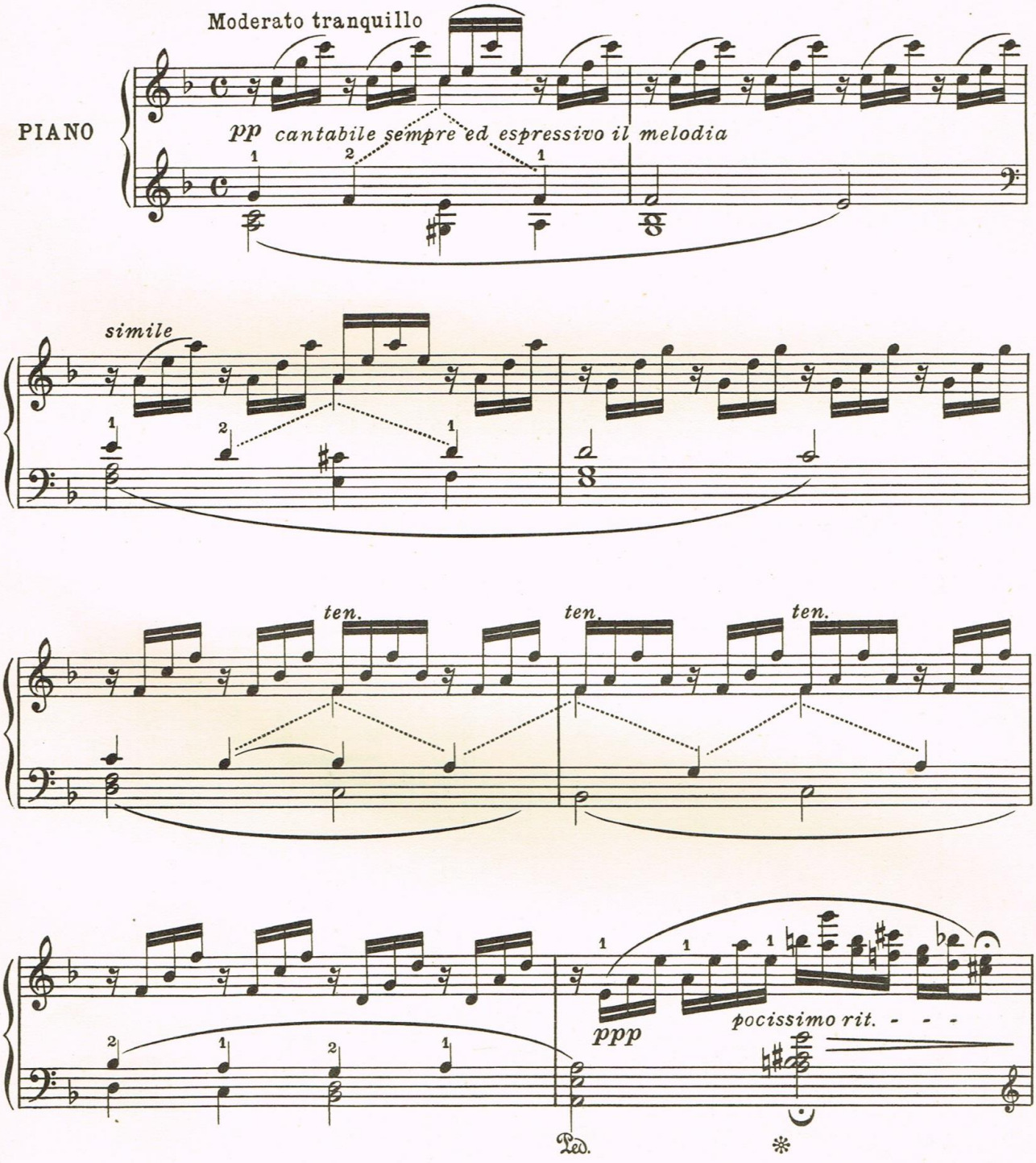
The chief point which will require attention is that the melody is divided between the hands. The right hand is usually playing the little accompaniment figure ; but now and again it plays a note of the melody, and the accompaniment figure as well. This requires very thoughtful application of touch. It is particularly difficult at the return to the main tune where the right hand ends the accompaniment figure (in the first case) on C ; then plays C as the note of the tune and then again in the accompaniment. This difficulty occurs four times and needs careful practice.

The last two bars in 5/4 time work up to the climax of dawn actually breaking, and the left hand picks out the tune, a device which you will meet in César Franck's beautiful Chorale when you come to play it.

Note the use of the pedal at the end, which, by damping away the preceding bass notes, leaves the last chord echoing until the vibrations die away.

Dawn on the Hill

"But look, the morn in russet mantle clad
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill."
—SHAKESPEARE.



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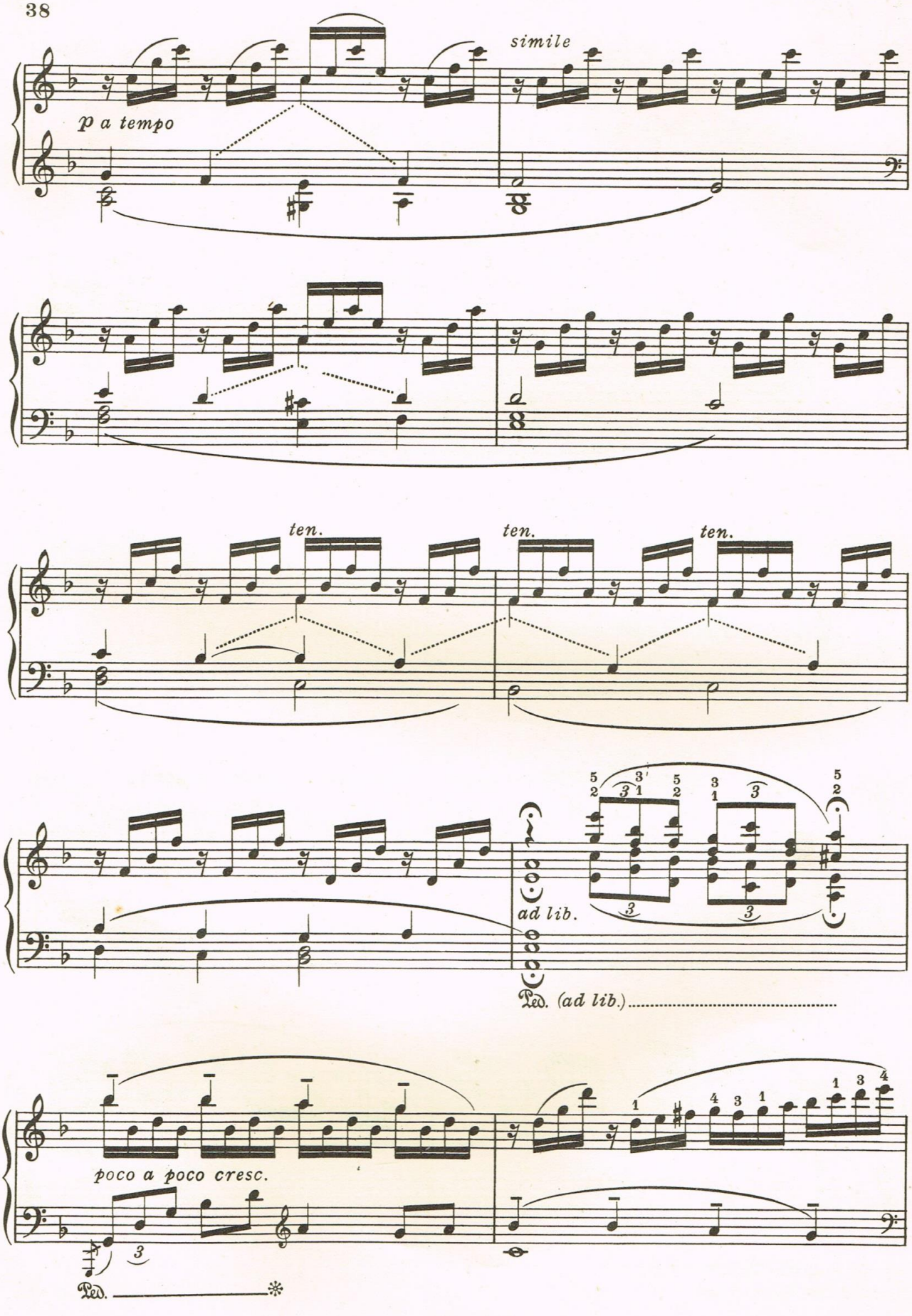
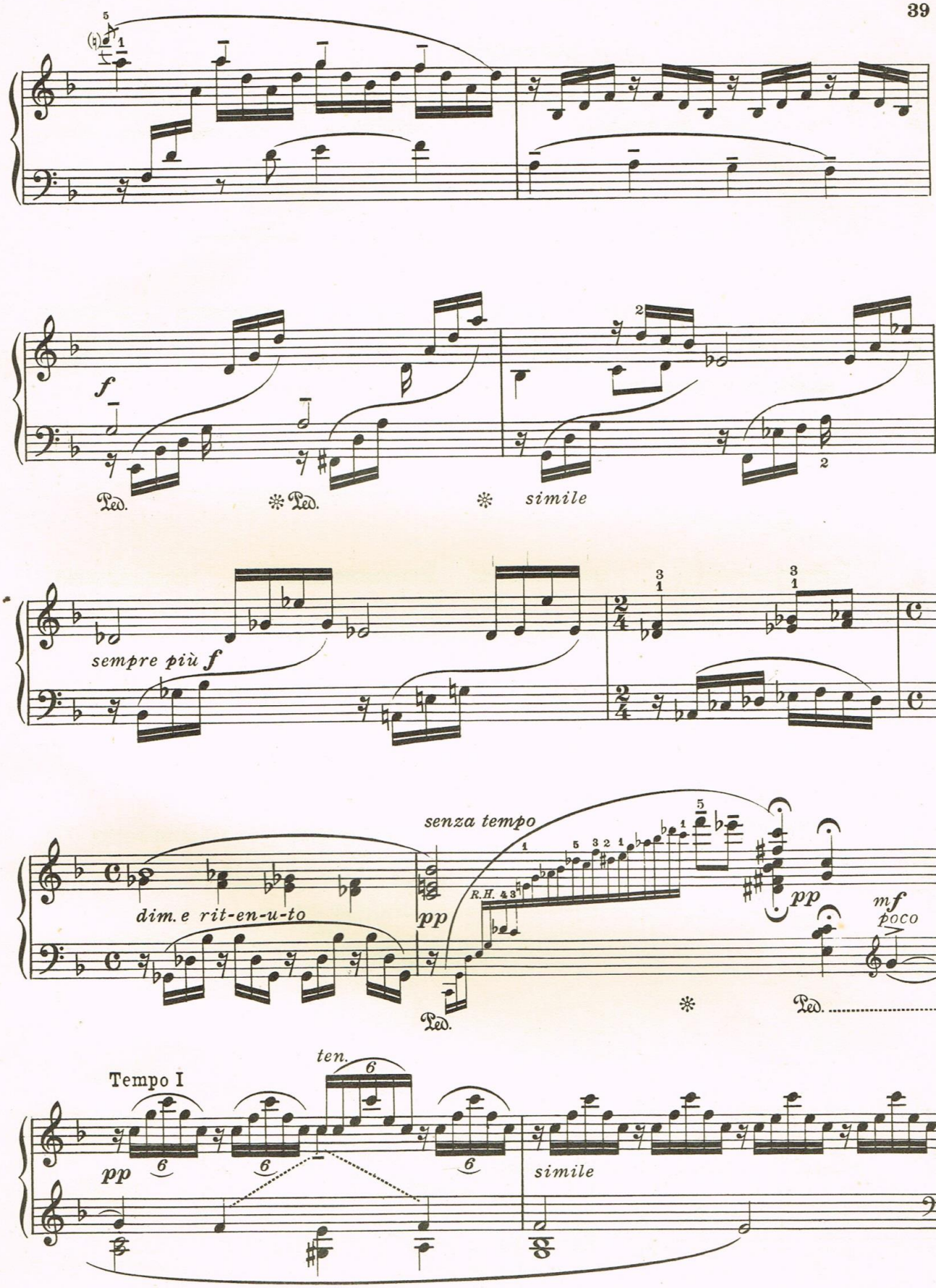
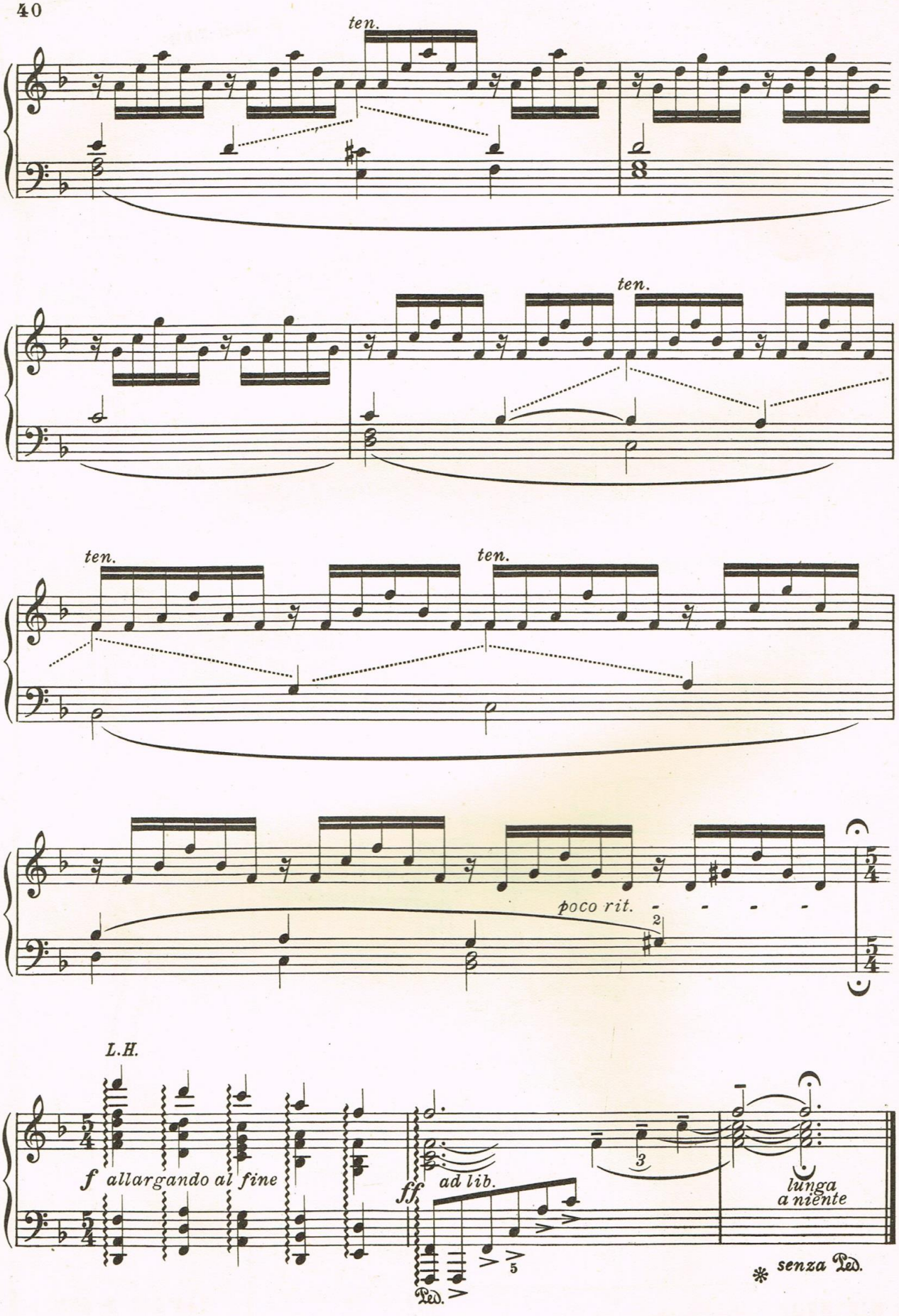

simile
p a tempo
ten.
ten.
ten.
ad lib.
Ped. (ad lib.)
poco a poco cresc.
Ped.


f
Ped.
simile
sempre più f
dim. e rit-en-u-to
senza tempo
pp
R.H.
mf
poco
Tempo I
ten.
simile



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