LISZT

Étude d'Exécution Transcendante No. 5

Feux Follets

Arrangement for the left hand
by Matthias Heymann

© 2025 Matthias Heymann

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the author.

matthias.heymann@gmail.com
www.youtube.com/MatthiasHeymann

Edition: 2025-08-05

Preface

The etudes of Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) and Franz Liszt (1811–1886) are studied by pianists worldwide to elevate their technique to a professional level, and they are a staple of concert programs and piano competitions. Chopin's etudes are designed to each focus on a single technical aspect in isolation, such as playing in thirds, sixths, or octaves. In contrast, while some Liszt etudes are infamous for specific difficulties, they generally demand the mastery of a broader range of challenges.

Liszt's *Feux Follets*, No. 5 in his cycle *Études d'Exécution Transcendante*, is widely considered one of the most difficult etudes ever written. Its most feared passage comprises a rapid succession of wide intervals that require the right hand's finger pairs 1–2 and 4–5 to simultaneously execute trill-like patterns while moving chromatically through uncomfortable hand positions; mastering this specific difficulty alone requires hundreds of hours of dedicated training. The reward for the effort extends far beyond this piece alone: This etude's relentlessly unforgiving demands for technical efficiency and perfect hand–wrist positioning have the power to transform the right hand's technique holistically, elevating it to levels that may previously have seemed out of reach.

Once a pianist has proudly mastered a piece like this, they may turn their attention to the weaker left hand and wonder how to best transfer their newly acquired skills from the right to the left. Some pianists, such as Marc-André Hamelin, are advocating for an approach called symmetrical inversion, in which a passage is mirrored across middle D and played by the opposite hand. This allows the pianist to utilize both their newly formed subconscious brain pathways and their conscious knowledge about hand positioning and effective practice patterns, and it can make practice sessions more effective by exercising both hands simultaneously. The downside of this approach is that it generally completely destroys the melodic and harmonic content of the piece at hand.

Leopold Godowsky (1870–1938) sought to overcome this issue with his 53 *Studies on Chopin's Études,* in which he more freely rearranged Chopin's etudes for the opposite hands, sacrificing some of the benefits of perfect mirroring in favor of preserving the musical content. Notably, Chopin's *Double Thirds* etude (Op. 25.6)—an invaluable stepping stone toward the mastery of *Feux Follets*—has a left-hand counterpart in Godowsky's *Study No. 36*.

The present arrangement of *Feux Follets* follows in Godowsky's footsteps, providing a left-hand-focused version of Liszt's etude that mirrors the original's key patterns in the opposite hand as accurately as possible while preserving its musical content with only minor concessions. I hope the aspiring pianist will find this arrangement useful in transferring their skills acquired from practicing the original *Feux Follets* to their left hand—and perhaps even dare to perform it on stage one day.

Enjoy!

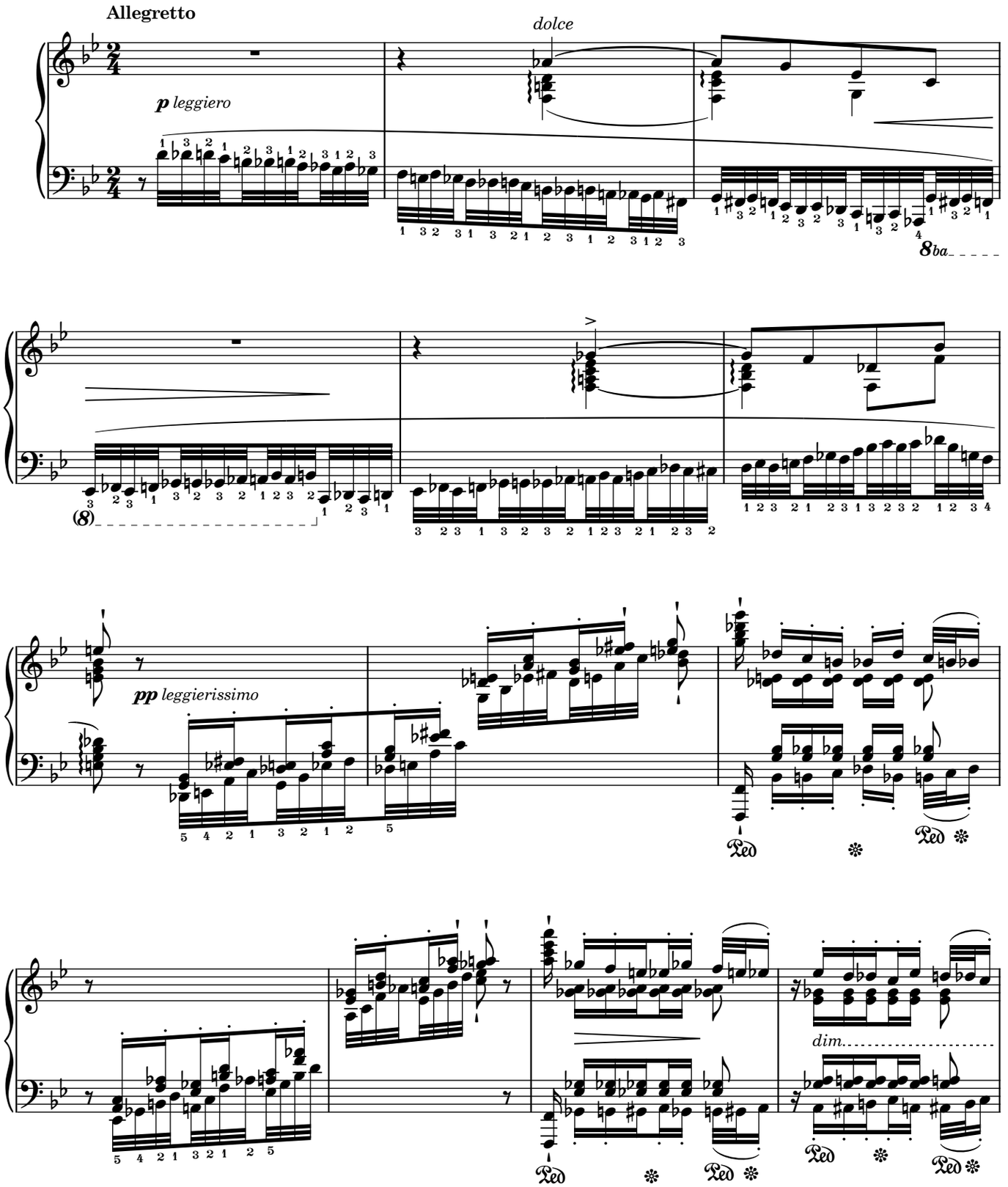
Matthias Heymann
March 2025

Franz Liszt: Étude d'Exécution Transcendante No. 5

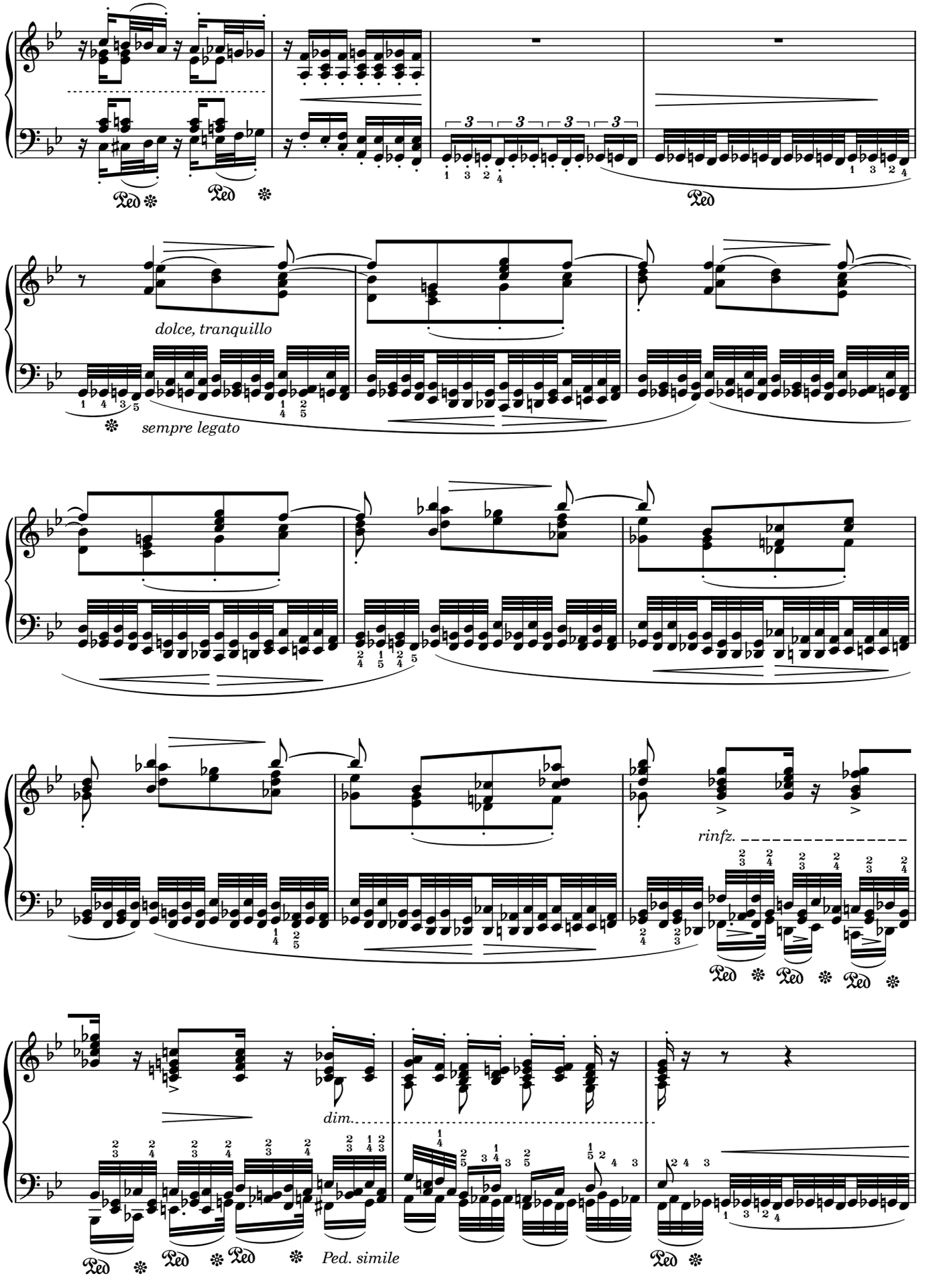
Feux Follets

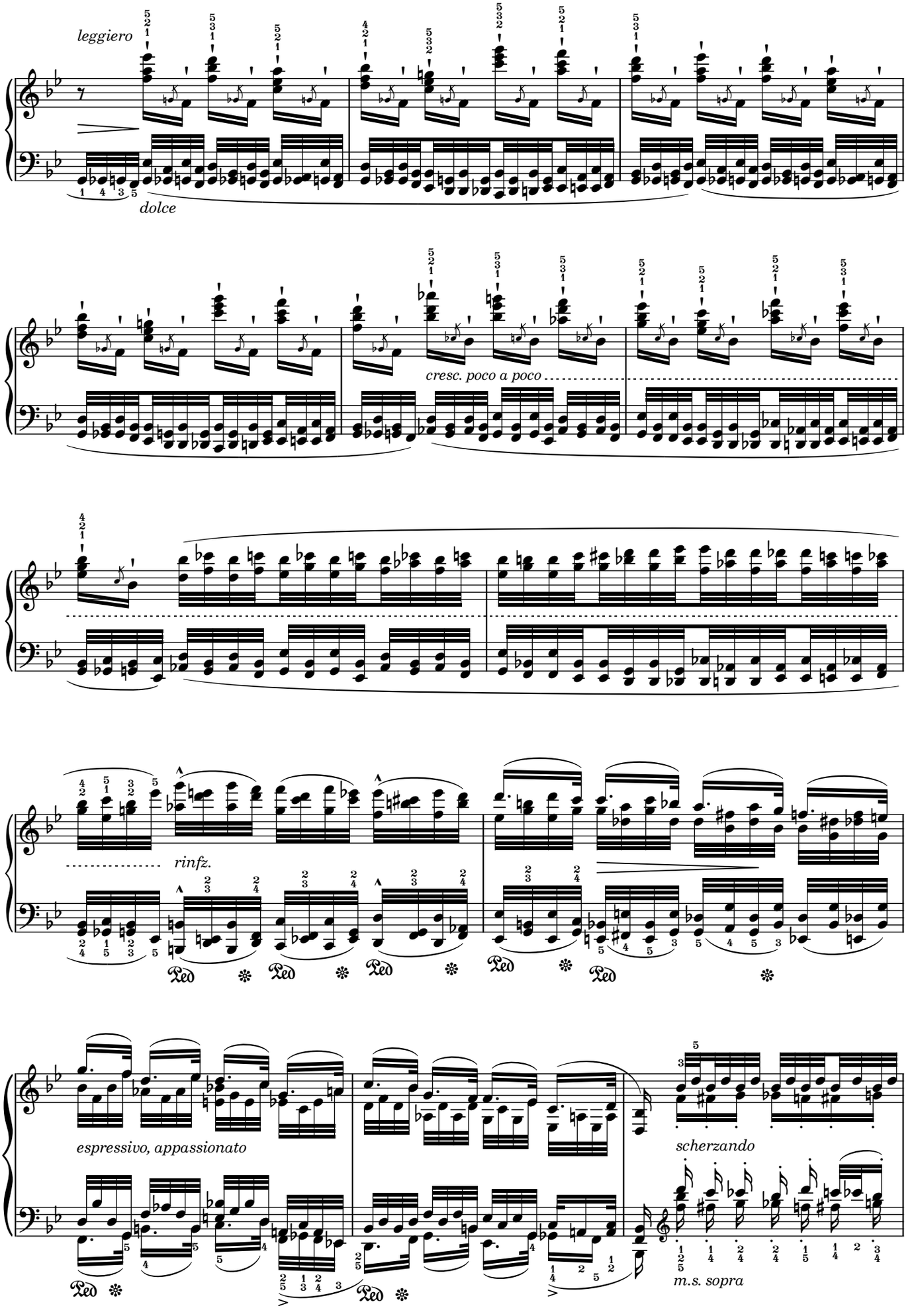
(Irrlichter)

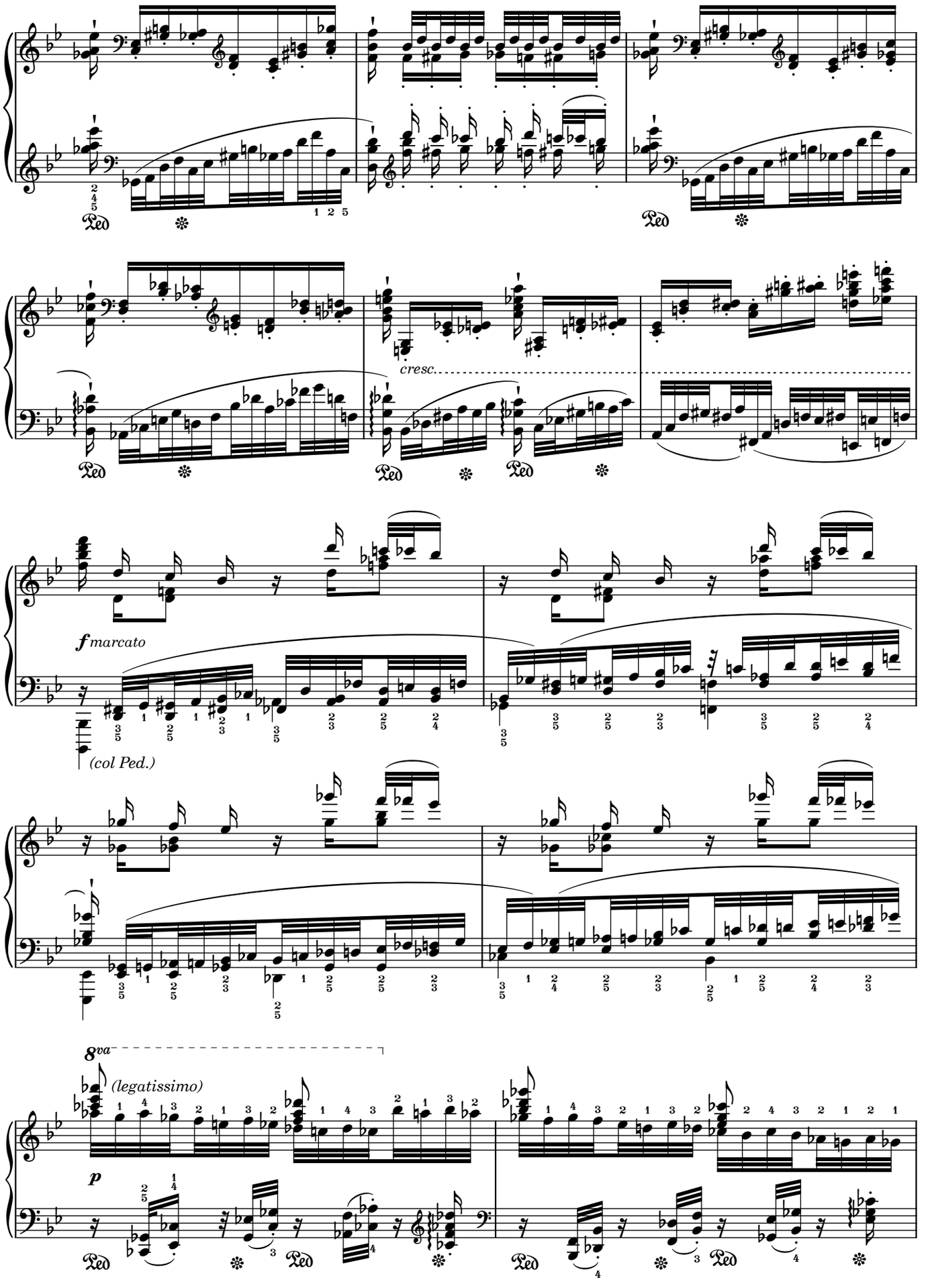
Arrangement for the left hand by Matthias Heymann

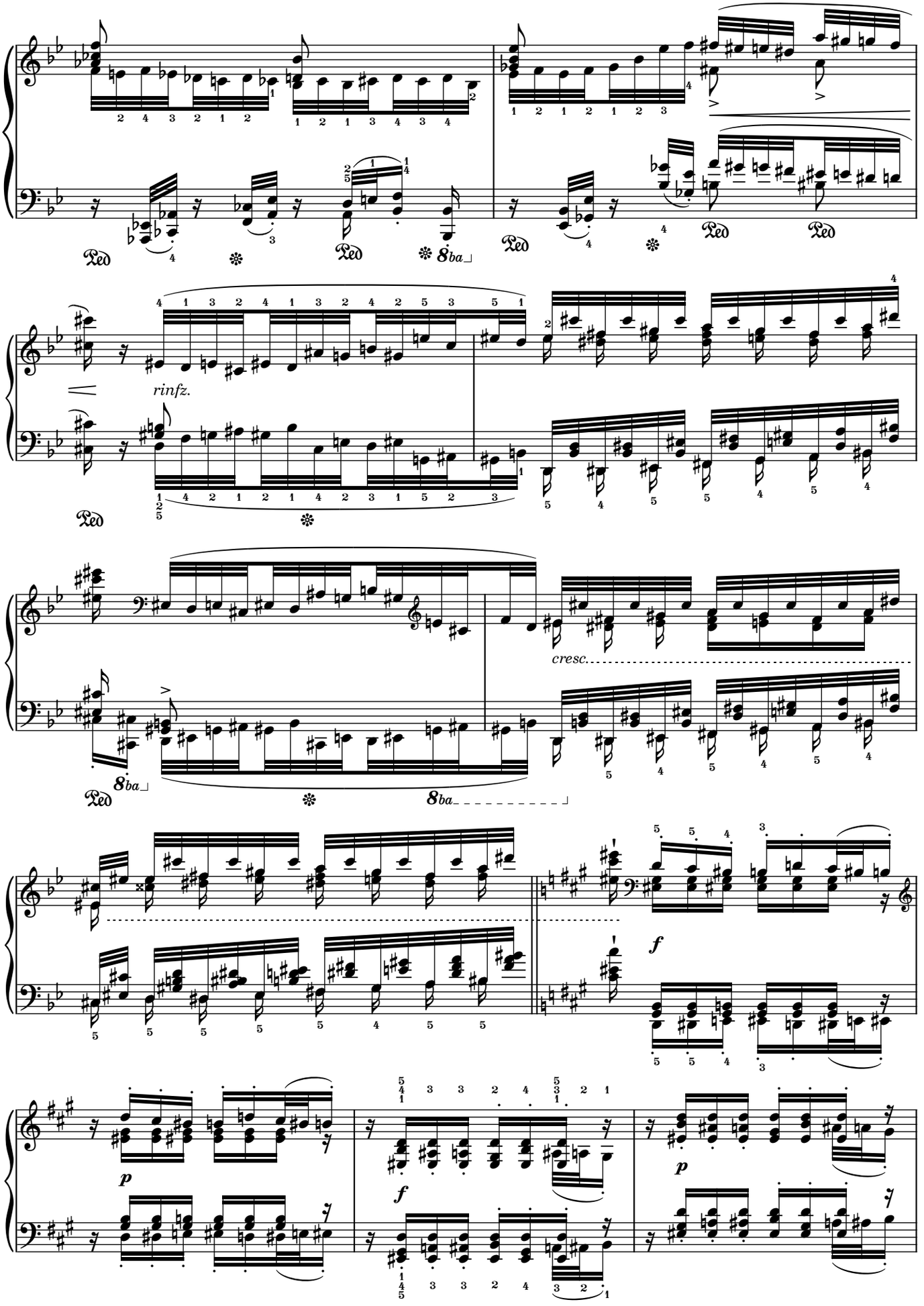


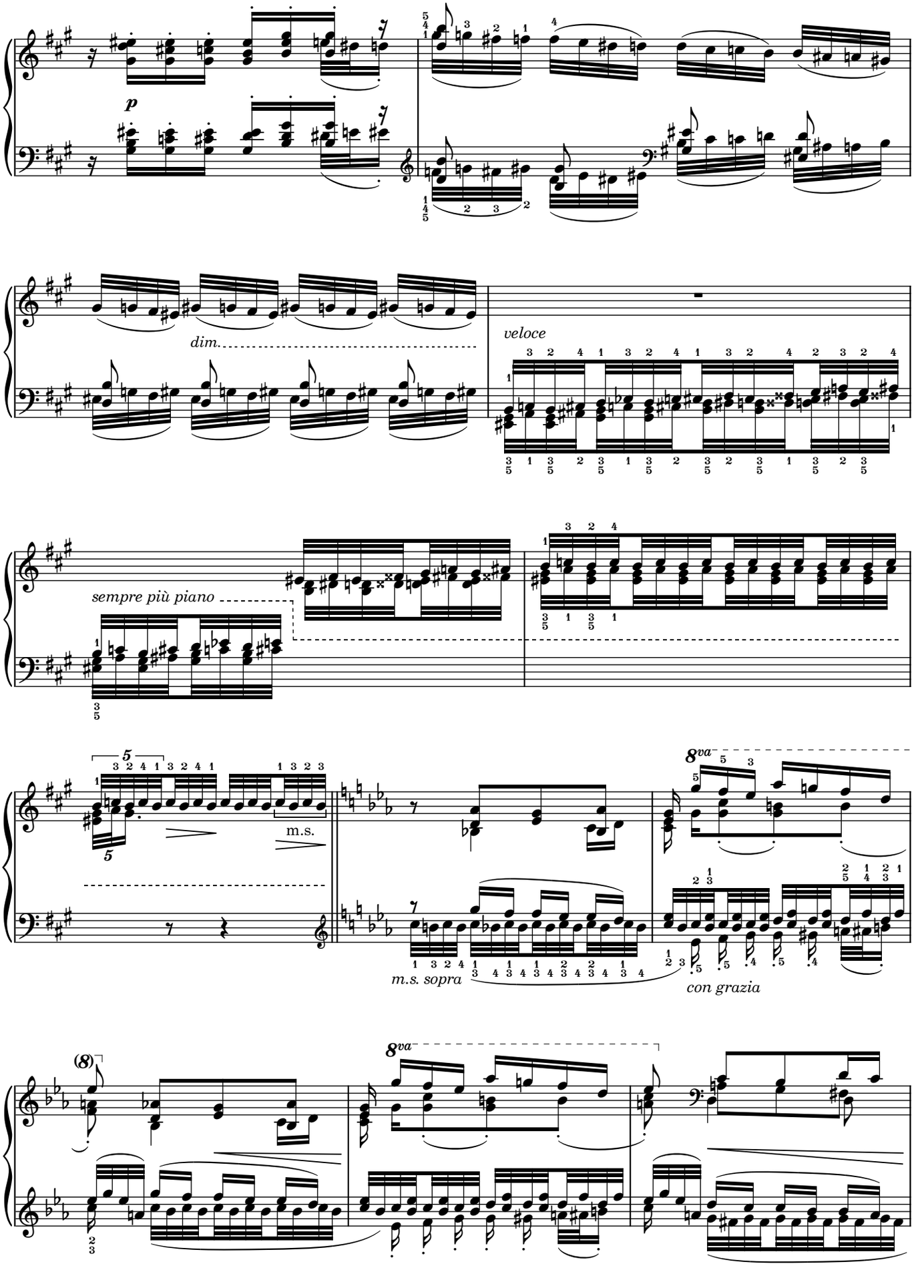
© 2025 Matthias Heymann – matthias.heymann@gmail.com – www.youtube.com/MatthiasHeymann

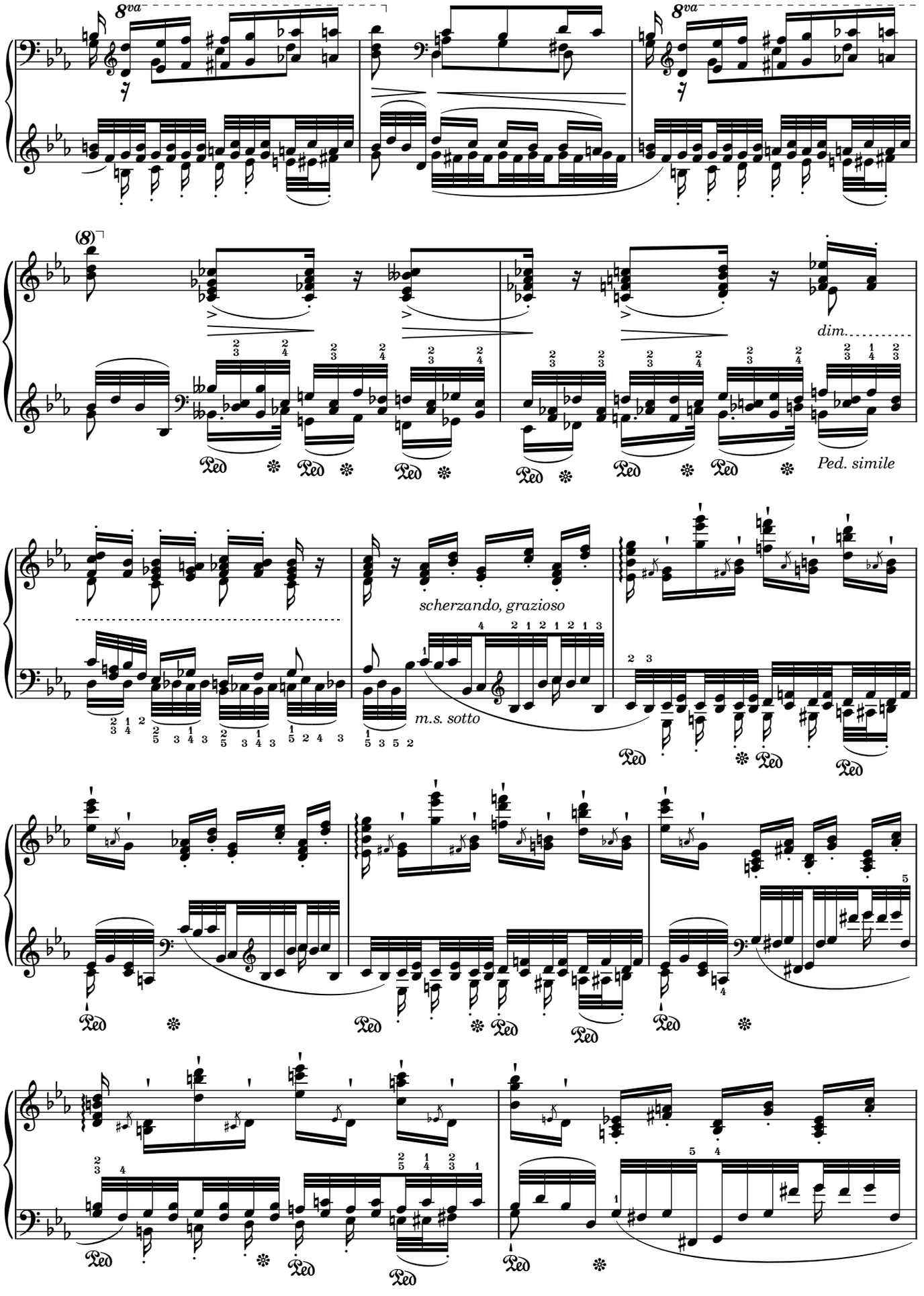

dolce, tranquillo
sempre legato
rinfz.
dim.
Ped. simile

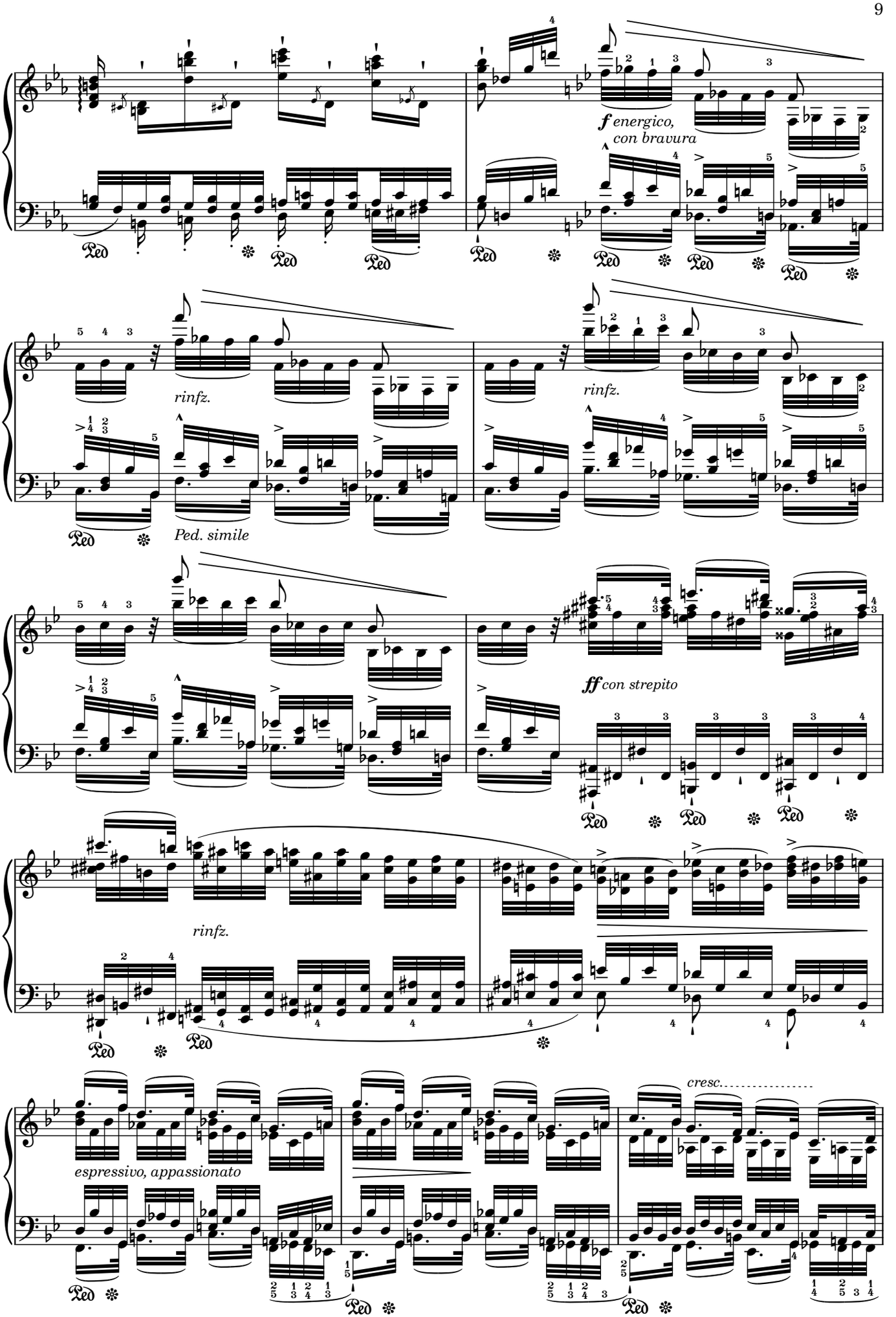

leggiero
dolce
cresc. poco a poco
rinfz.
espressivo, appassionato
scherzando
m.s. sopra

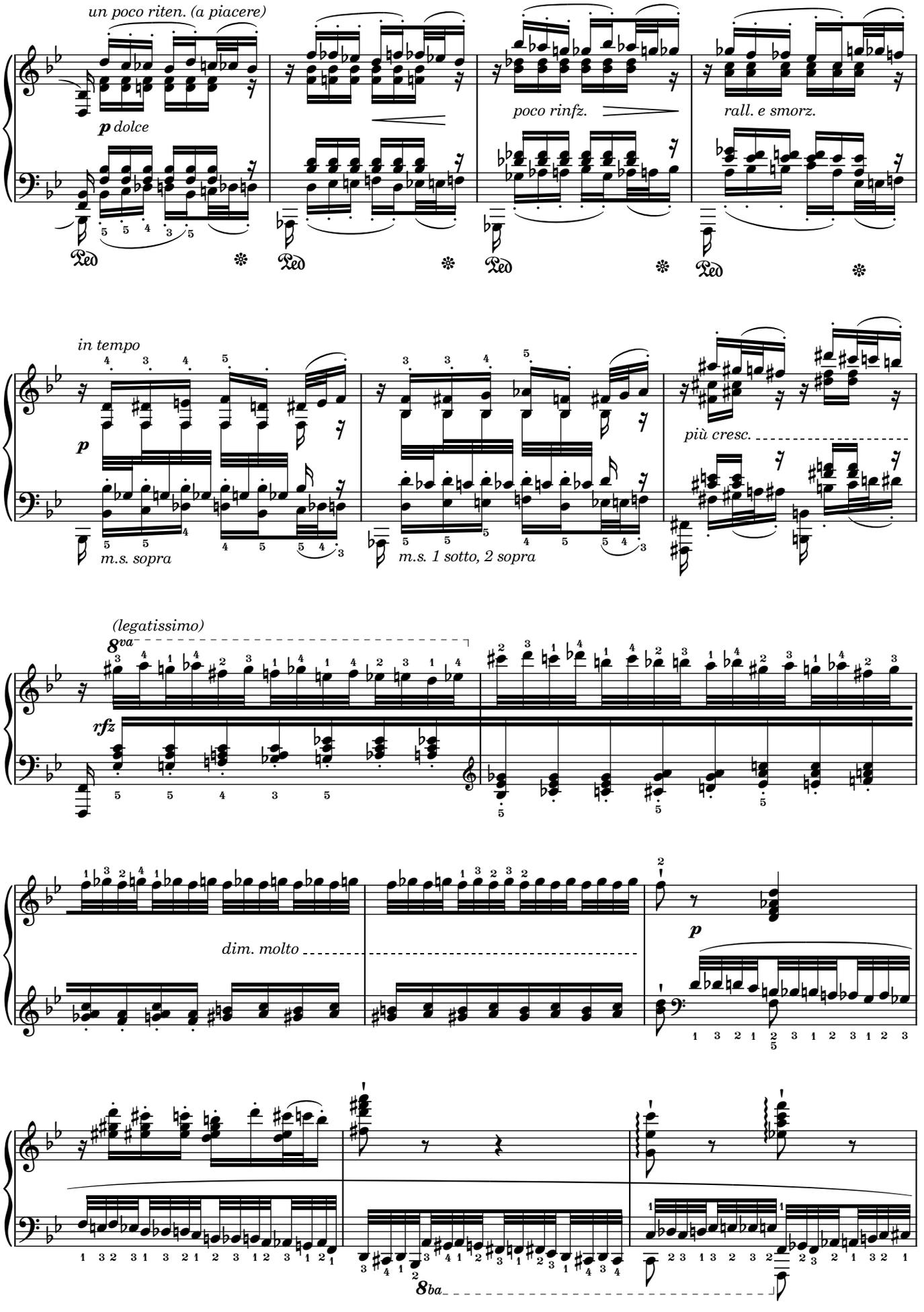

cresc.
f marcato
(col Ped.)
8va
(legatissimo)
p

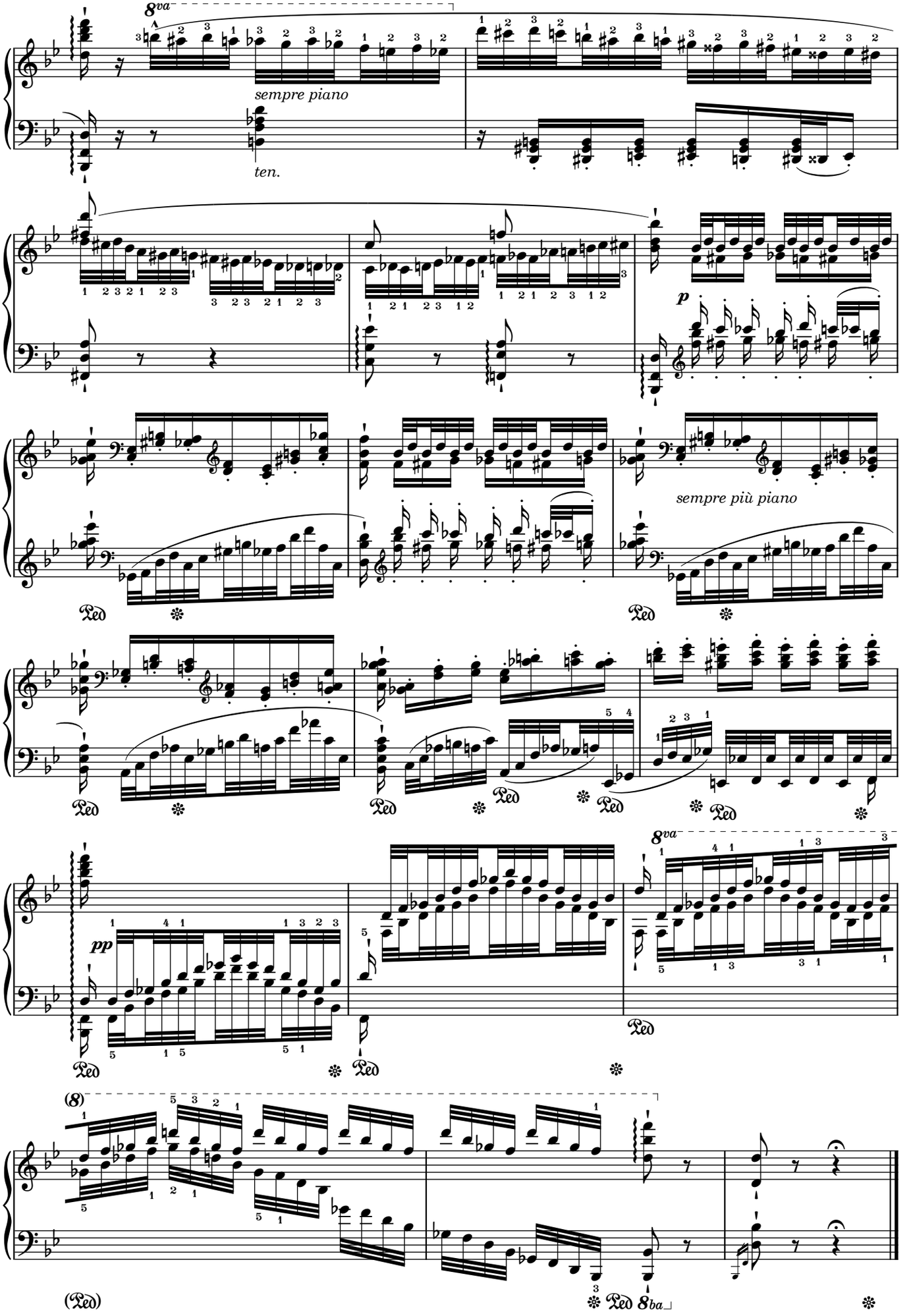

Ped
8ba
rinfz.
cresc.
f
p
f
p


p
dim.
veloce
sempre più piano
m.s.
m.s. sopra
8va
con grazia
(8)


8va
8va
(8)
dim.
Ped. simile
scherzando, grazioso
m.s. sotto


f energico, con bravura
rinfz.
rinfz.
Ped. simile
ff con strepito
rinfz.
espressivo, appassionato
cresc.


un poco riten. (a piacere)
p dolce
poco rinfz.
rall. e smorz.
in tempo
p
più cresc.
m.s. sopra
m.s. 1 sotto, 2 sopra
(legatissimo)
8va
rfz
dim. molto
p
8ba


8va
sempre piano
ten.
p
sempre più piano
Ped
pp
8va
(8)
(Ped)
8ba