TEN ETUDES

For Piano

by

Virgil Thomson

CARL FISCHER, Inc.
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VIRGIL THOMSON

Ten Etudes

Technical Notes

by

E. ROBERT SCHMITZ

Glossary

ARR, arm release and retraction.

IHR, inward humeral rotation.

OHR, outward humeral rotation.

NORMAL, no humeral rotation.

UppAR, upper-arm rotation.

NUMERAL in circle, pivotal finger.

NOTE in circle, pivotal note.

REPEATING TREMOLO

Keep the right hand above the left except where the contrary is indicated. In the middle section, play the arpeggiated chords with a swift side-to-side adjustment of arm position, always projecting the upper note clearly. The non-arpeggiated chords in this passage should be as light as possible, like an echo. In the four-measure crescendo in the next to the last line, do not increase the volume too rapidly; arrive at *ff* only where marked.

TENOR LEAD

This very easy etude tests the performer's ability to project arm weight at will on one or another voice in chords. The familiar tenor melody should not be in evidence the first time through, all weight and expression being carried by the soprano. In the repeat, the tenor is to sing out eloquently while the other voices remain subdued.

FINGERED FIFTHS

In playing consecutive fifths rapidly do not attempt to achieve legato in both voices. Project the arm weight on that voice in which legato is attainable by the fingering indicated. Play the other voice detached, by oscillating the arm, using very little finger motion. This rotation should be pivoted on whichever finger is not used in the next fifth.

OHR and IHR indicate positions of the arm respectively close to the body and away from it. The few printed markings can be supplemented by many others, always in the interest of smoother execution.

FINGERED GLISSANDO

The musical effect to be obtained is that the theme be vibrant while the scale remains even and light, tantamount to a glissando. In order to obtain this evenness one must avoid letting one hand after the other drop (or "land") on the keyboard. Move each hand to a position of complete readiness to play all the notes of a group somewhat before the time for playing any of them. This position should be close to the key surface, the fingers remaining always flexed. A light finger stroke completes the execution. Maintain the arm always in readiness for quick lateral displacement in the direction of the pattern. Changes in humeral rotation are indicated only in the first measure. These can be determined throughout on the following basis: when the fingering of any group of notes includes a crossing of fingers over the thumb, IHR will be used; when it does not include such crossing, the arm should be exactly in front of the group of notes to be played.

DOUBLE GLISSANDO

Do not try to play glissandos with much weight; you will injure your fingers. Dynamic expression should be achieved mainly through the first and last notes. Neither is it necessary to depress the keys to the bottom of their fall. Skim along the surface, using either the *inside* of the finger or the *nail*. NEVER touch the keys with the cuticle.

The whole-tone glissando is performed by drawing the second or third finger across the notes C D E F♯ G♯ A♯ in a wavy line, D and G♯ being the turning points of the wave. If you find you cannot do this smoothly and painlessly, substitute a fingered glissando, touching in each octave C D E with the middle fingers of the right hand and F♯ G♯ A♯ with those of the left (*m.s. sopra*).

FOR THE WEAKER FINGERS

This etude should be performed with perfect evenness and with a mechanical exactitude of rhythm. Keep the right arm constantly in motion through constant adjustments of IHR and OHR An infinitesimal rotation of the upper arm Will also be found helpful.

OSCILLATING ARM

For the right hand use upper-arm rotation of small dimension, combined with finger work from the knuckles. Fingers should be only slightly curved. Derive IHR and OHR positions logically from the fingerings. Rhythmic independence of the two hands is to be maintained throughout.

Pianists not accustomed to crossing the longer fingers over the thumb in chords may find the left-hand fingerings arbitrary. Their purpose is to minimize humeral rotation in wide skips, which is likely to produce fatigue and consequent inaccuracy. They will be found surprisingly practical for ARR playing.

FIVE-FINGER EXERCISE

Keep the fingers of the right hand curved and play softly throughout. The left hand requires two weights, one for the upper voice, which sings a melody, and a lighter one for the bass.

PARALLEL CHORDS

Do not exaggerate the right hand dynamics. Harmonic fullness can be better obtained by playing the rhythmic chords of the left hand slightly louder than the bass octaves that precede them. In the middle sections all left-hand notes or chords should be played with equal force in any one measure. Do not retard or accelerate the rhythm at any point, and do not play the melody *con sentimento*.

RAGTIME BASS

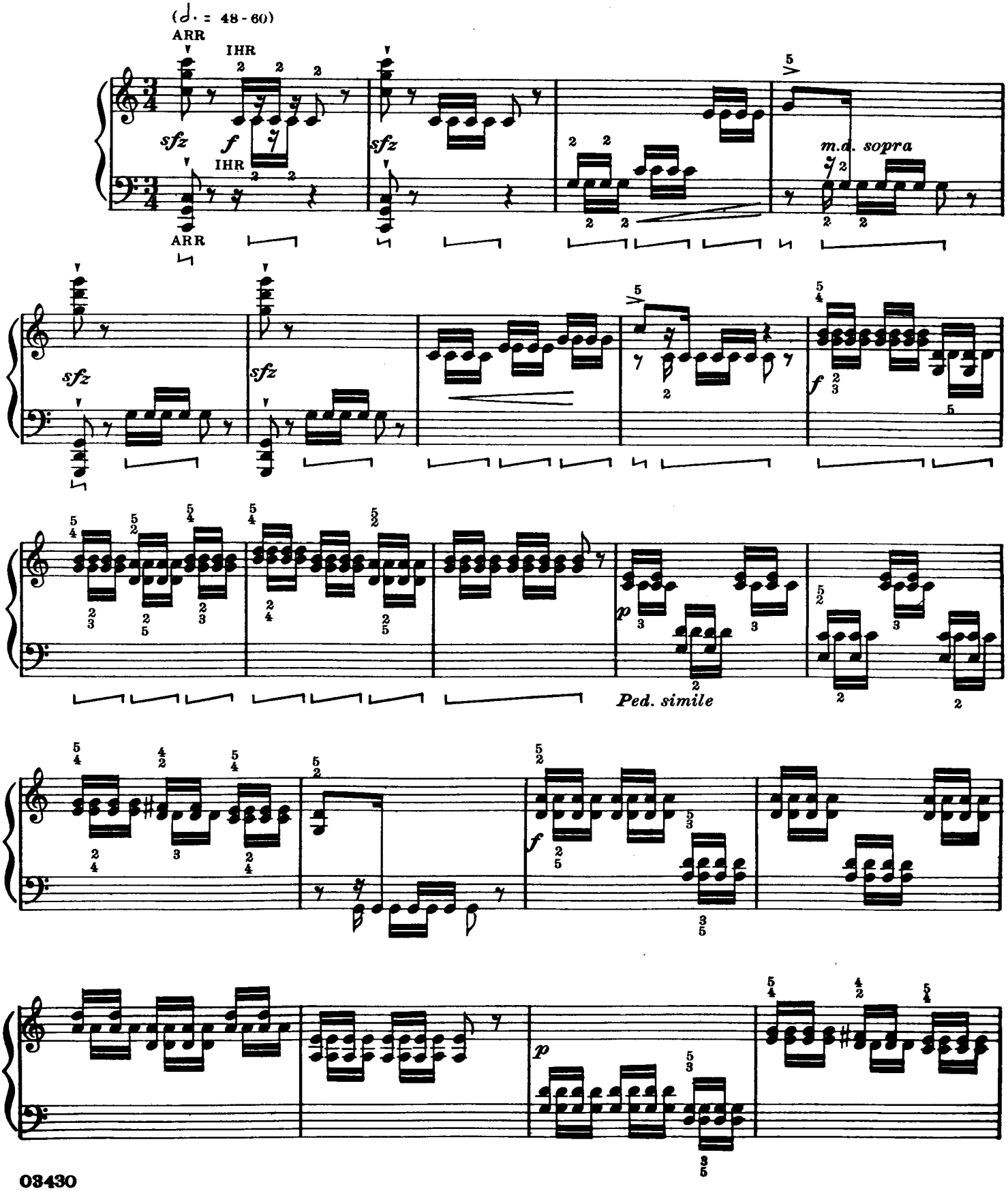
In the right hand observe an absolute equality of eighth-note percussion throughout. Accent the off-beats slightly in the left hand. Finger all white-key octaves 1-5, all black key octaves 1-4. The left-hand fingerings, as in "Oscillating Arm", have been designed to minimize fatigue. No chord is to be played without complete preparation, which is to say that the fingers must be in place for it, before it is sounded (by ARR). By this means one can substitute accuracy for uncertainty in the playing of chords approached by wide skips.

Repeating Tremolo

(Fanfare)

Fingered by
E.Robert Schmitz

VIRGIL THOMSON



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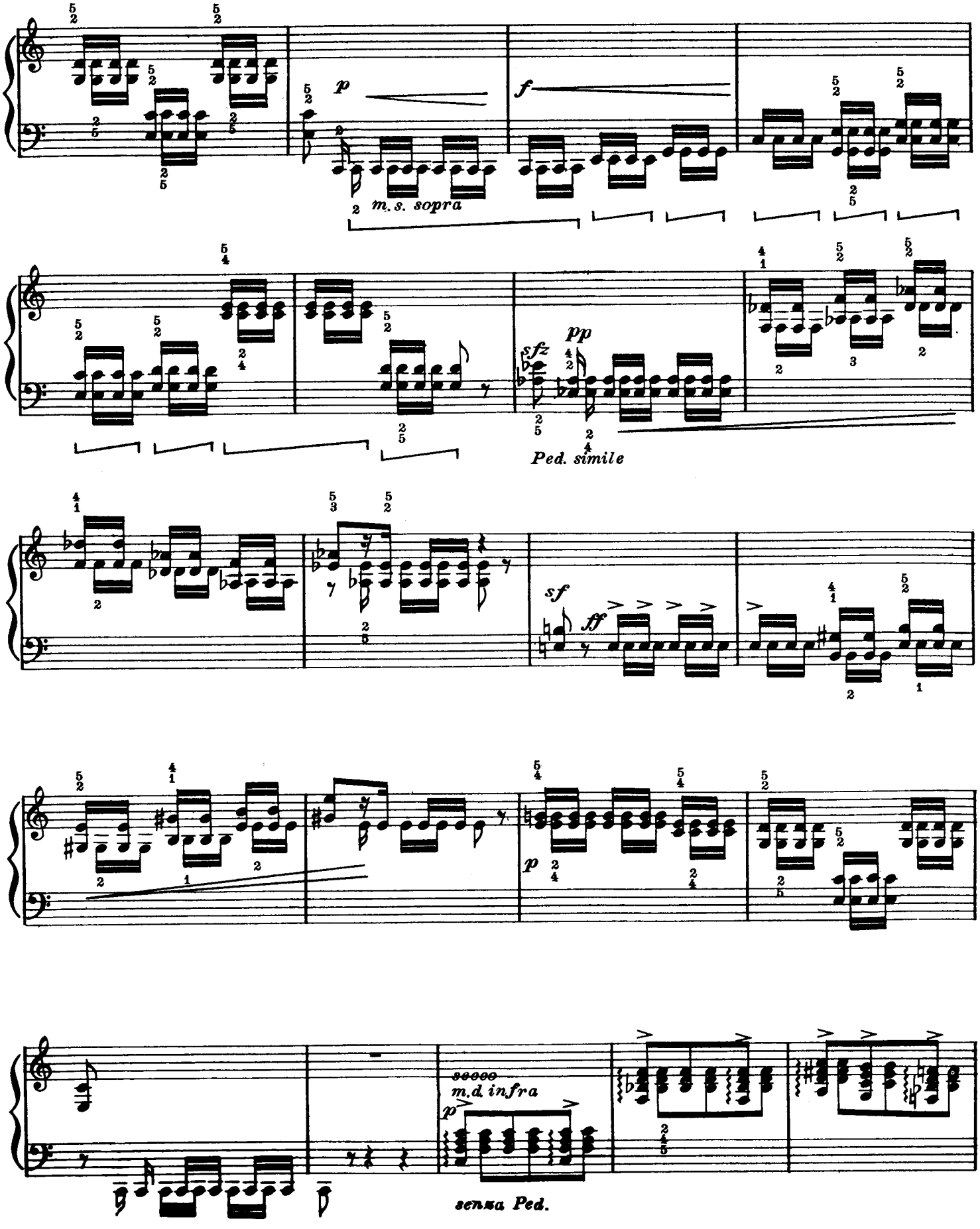
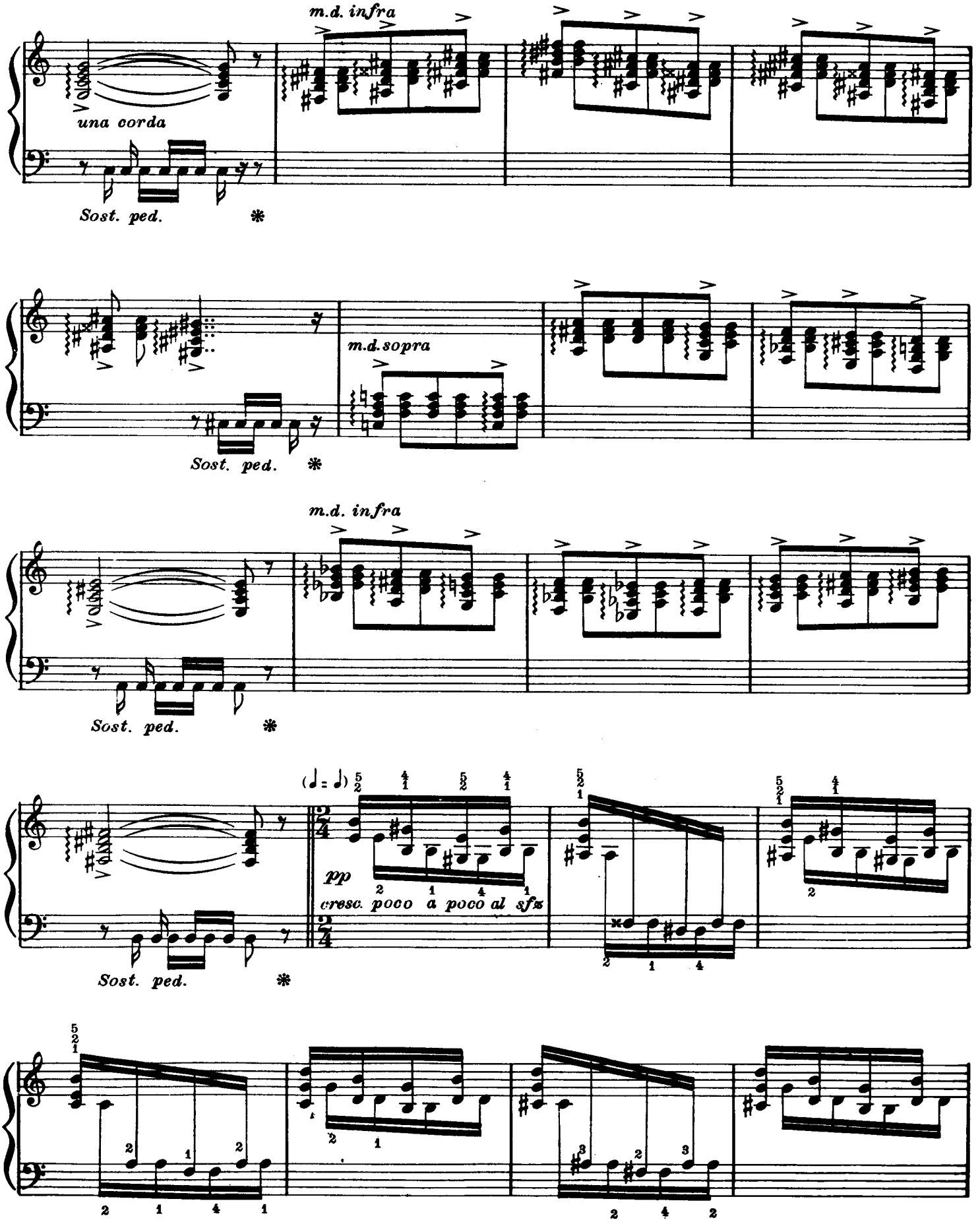
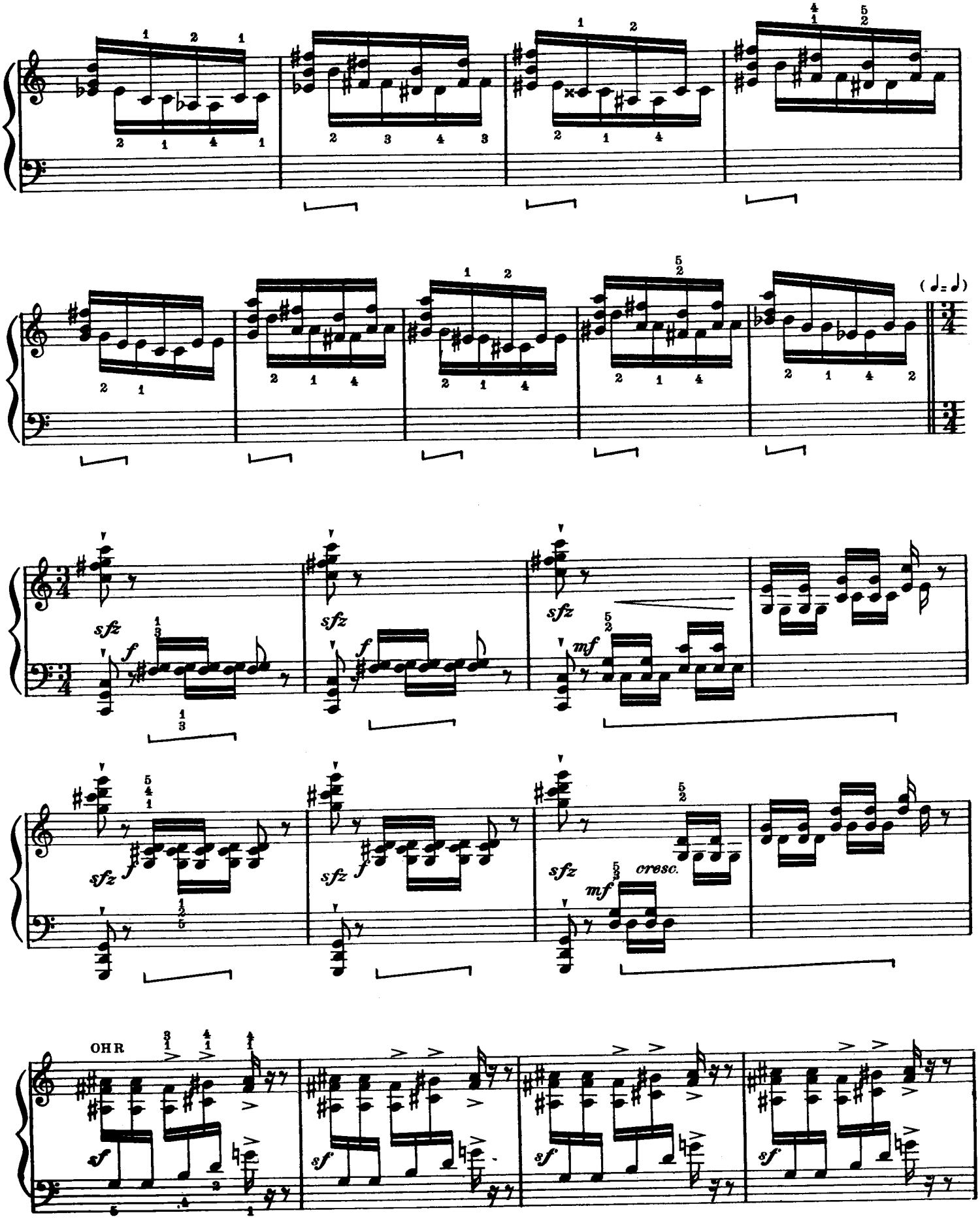
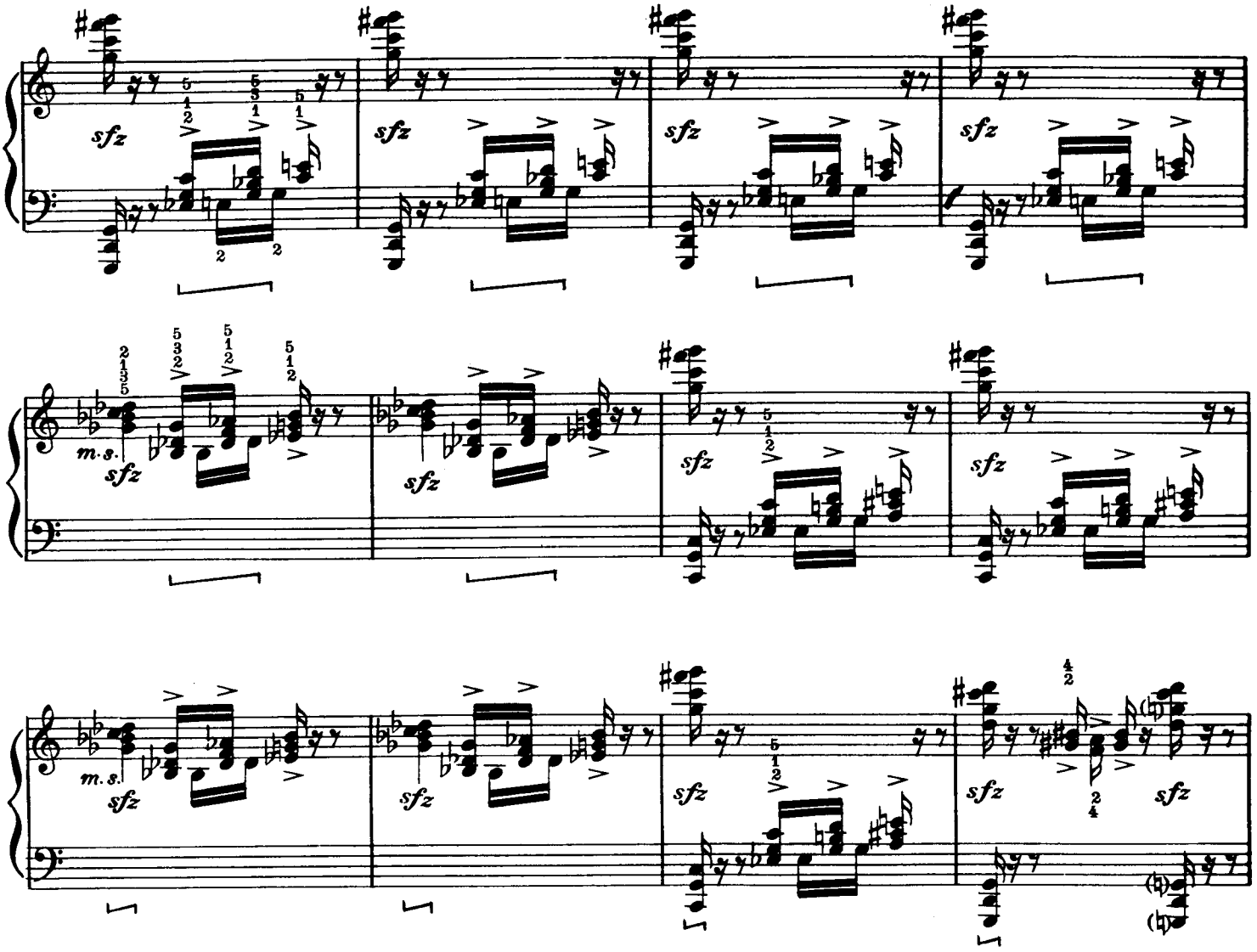
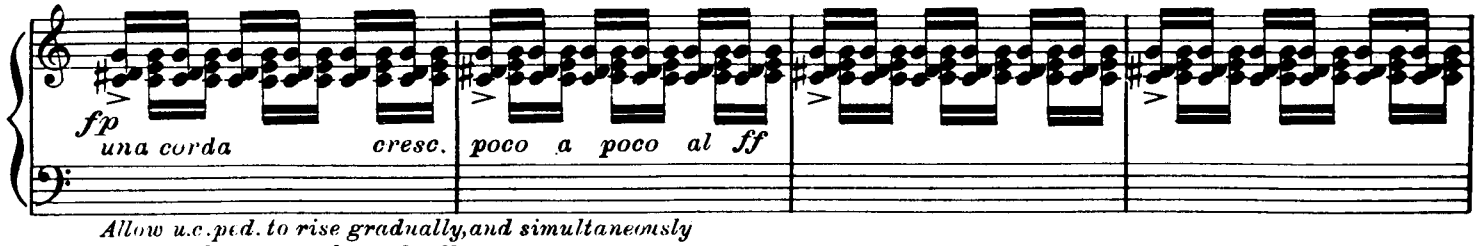

p
m. s. sopra
f
sfz
pp
Ped. simile
sf
ff
p
m. d. infra
p
senza Ped.

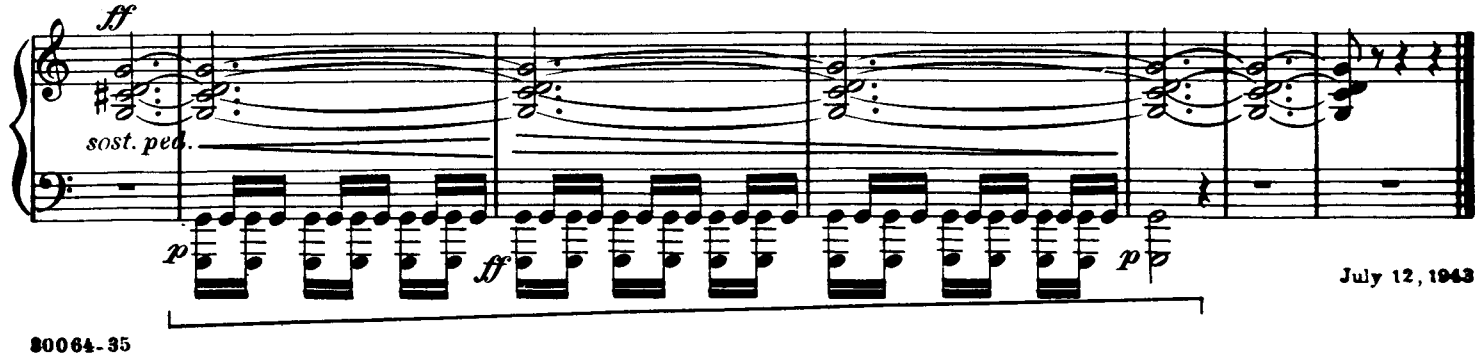

m.d. infra
una corda
Sost. ped.
m.d. sopra
Sost. ped.
m.d. infra
Sost. ped.
pp
cresc. poco a poco al sfz
Sost. ped.


(♩. = ♩)
sfz
f
mf
cresc.
OHR
sf





Allow u.c.ped. to rise gradually, and simultaneously depress damper ped. gradually.



July 12, 1943

Tenor Lead

(Madrigal)

Fingered by
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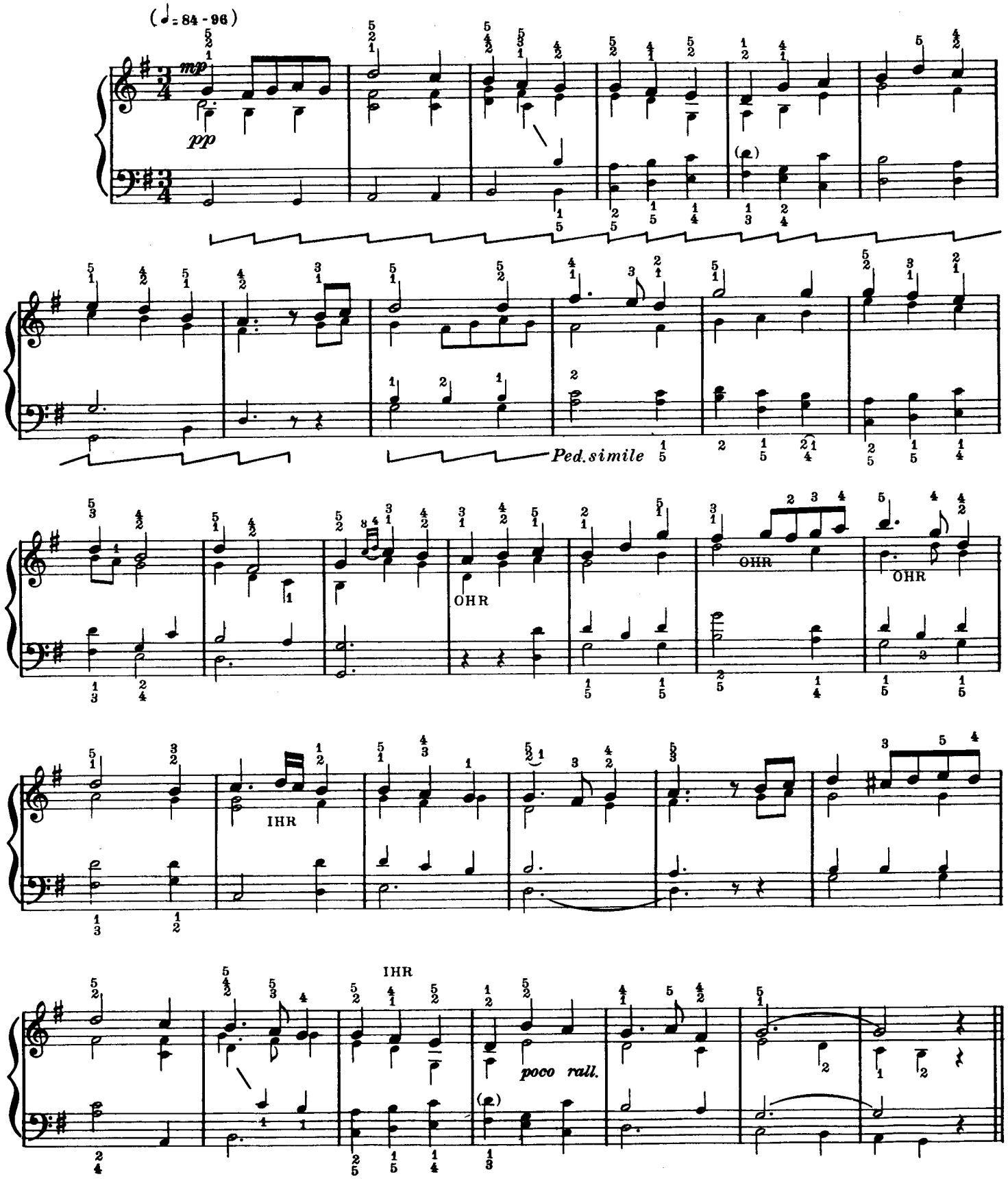

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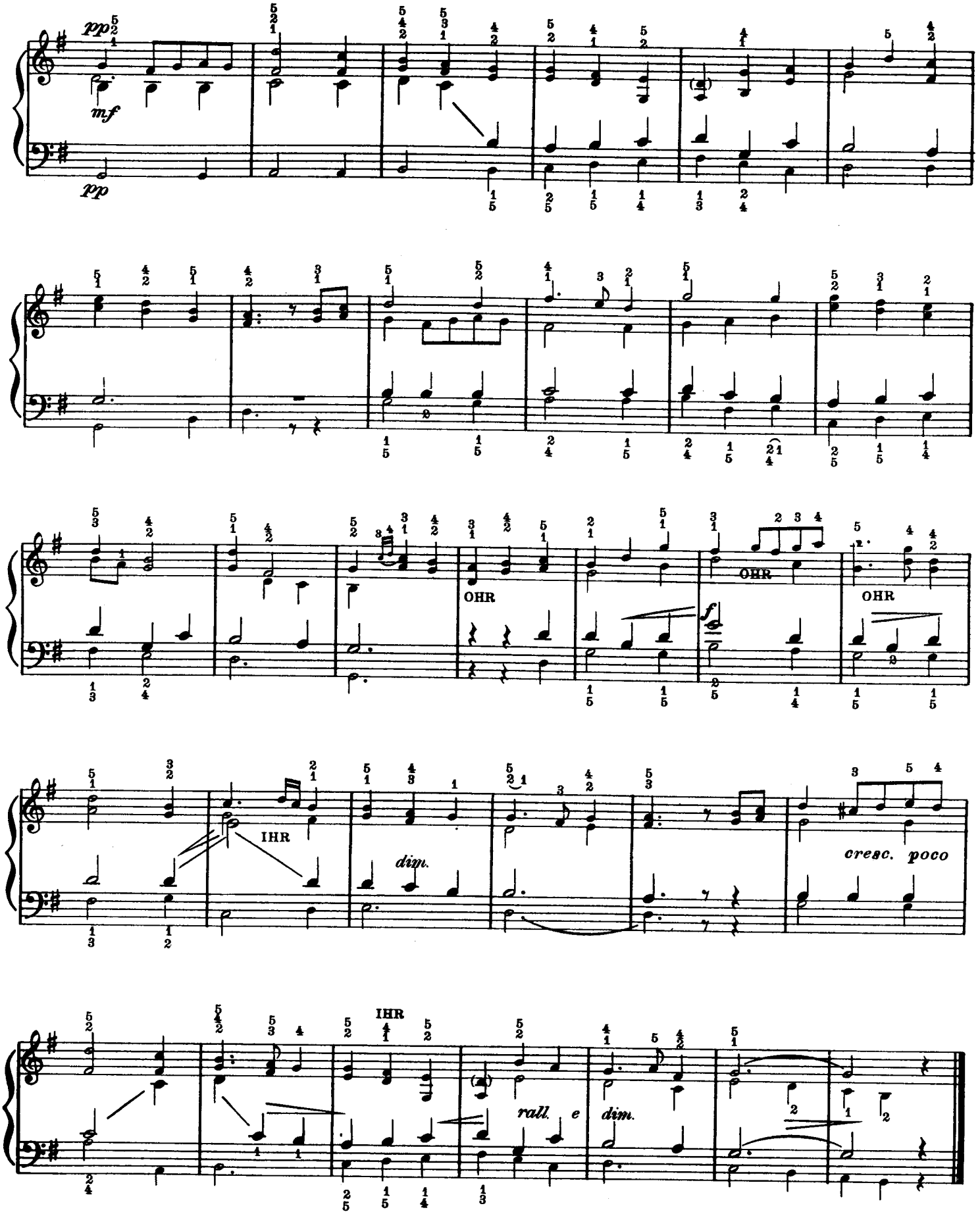
Poco meno mosso



Fingered Fifths

(Canon)

Fingered by
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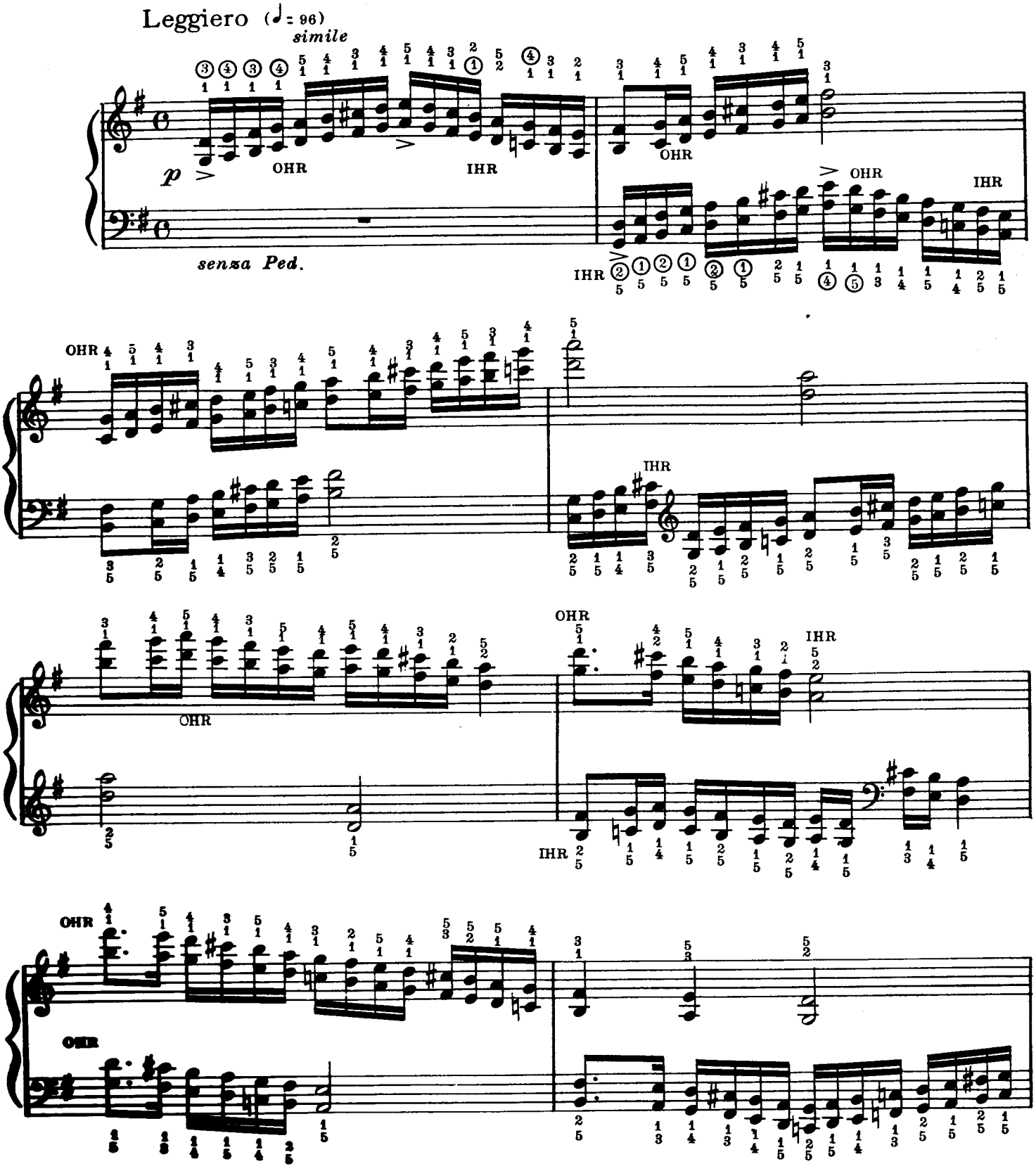

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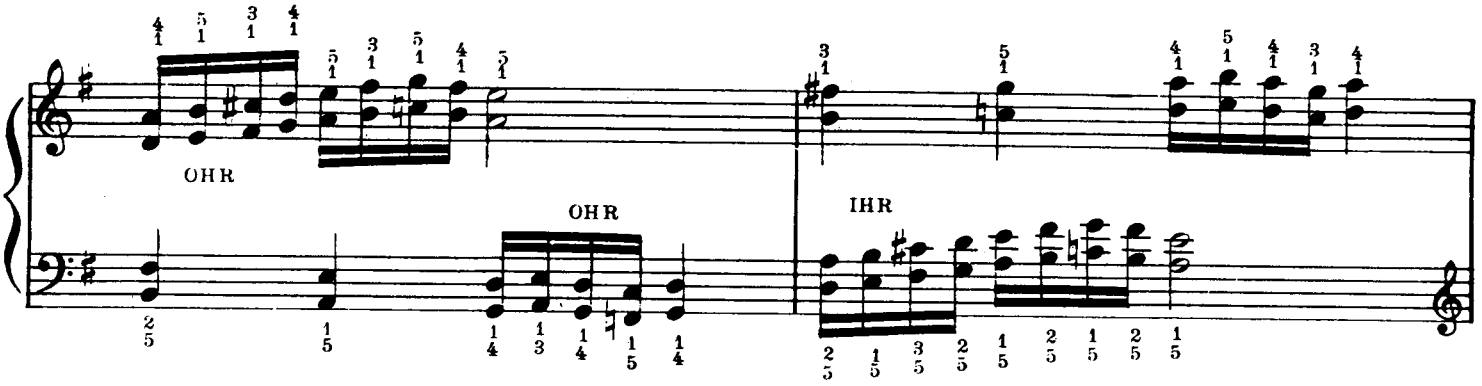
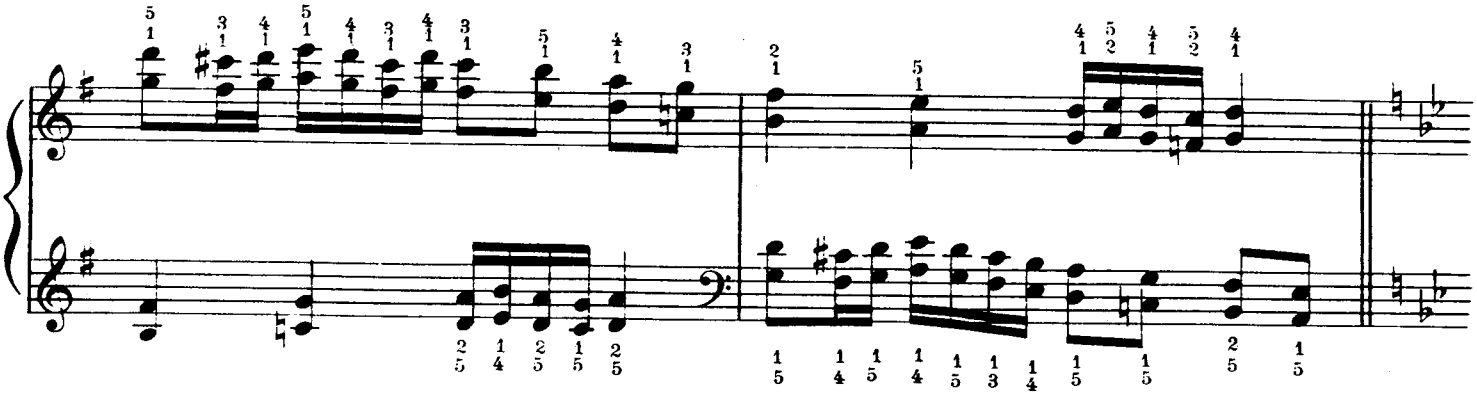
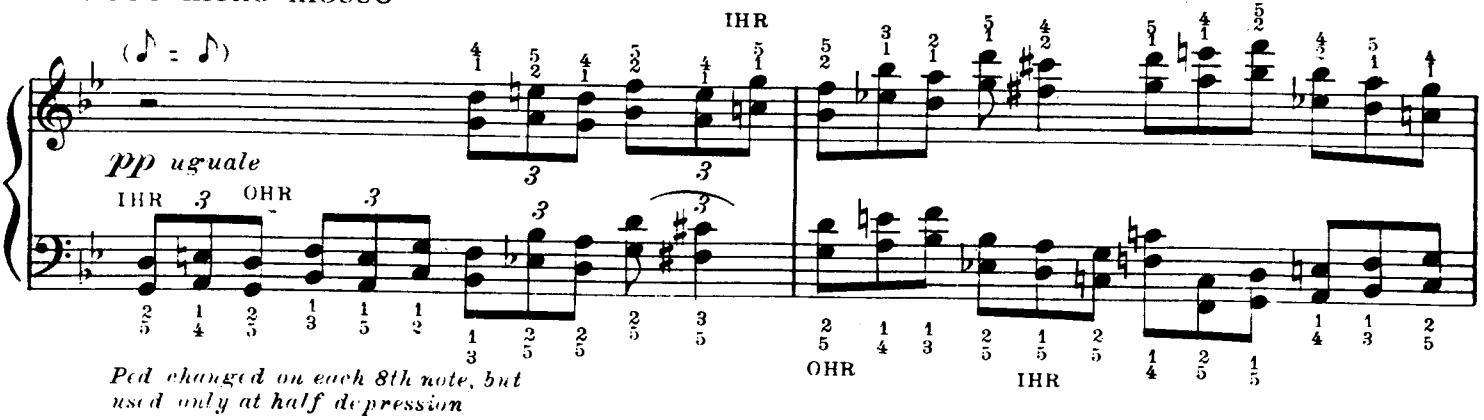
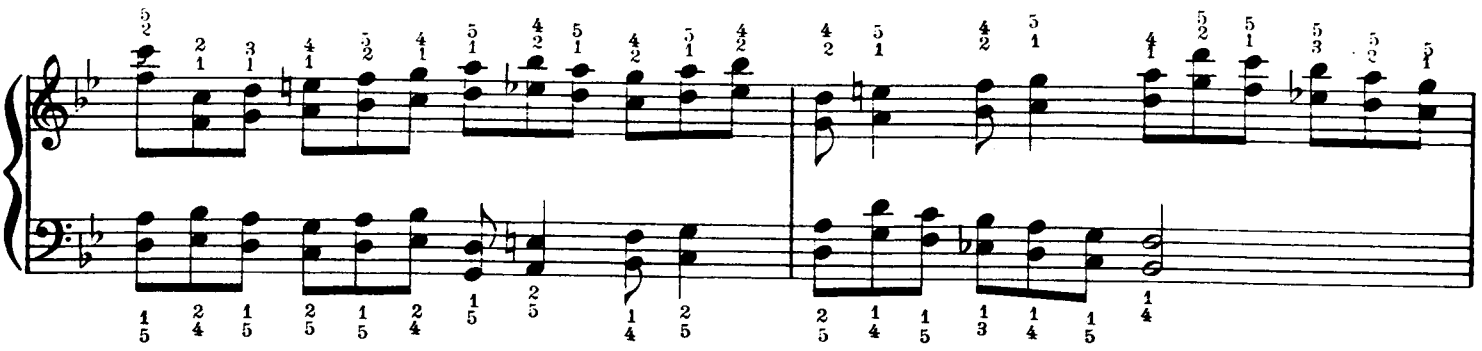


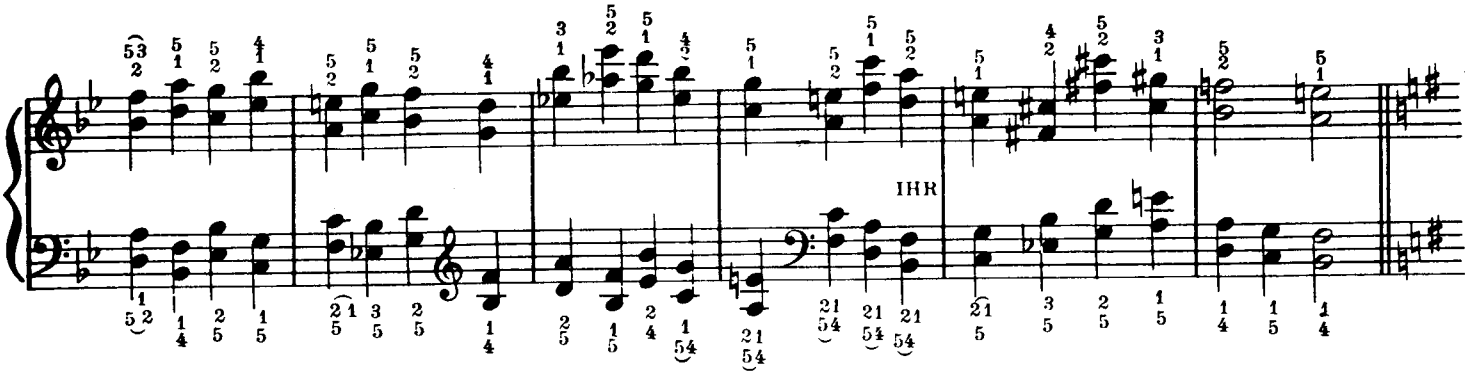


Poco meno mosso

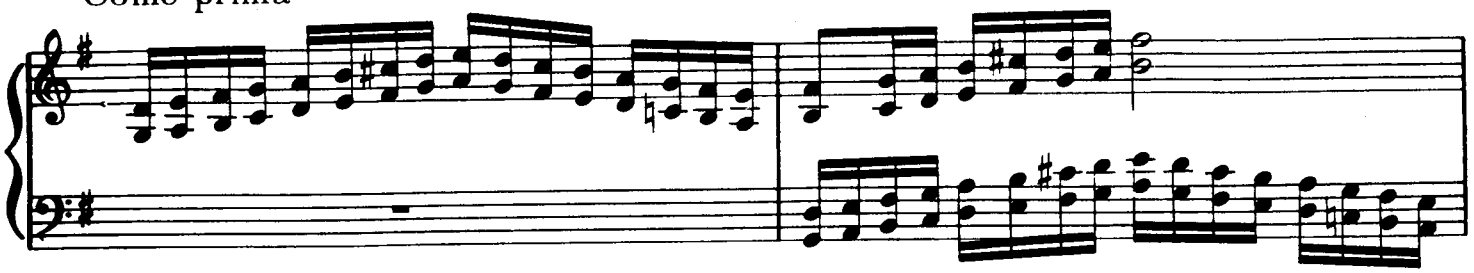


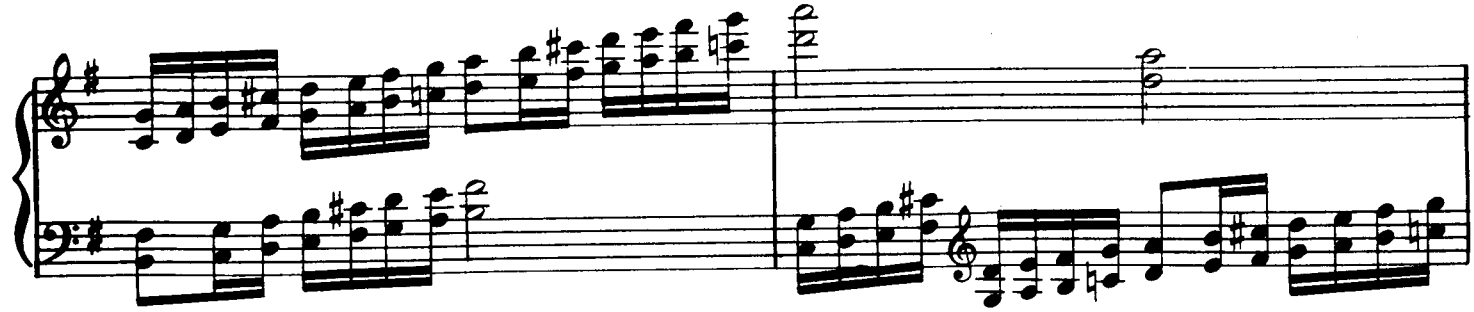
Ped changed on each 8th note, but used only at half depression

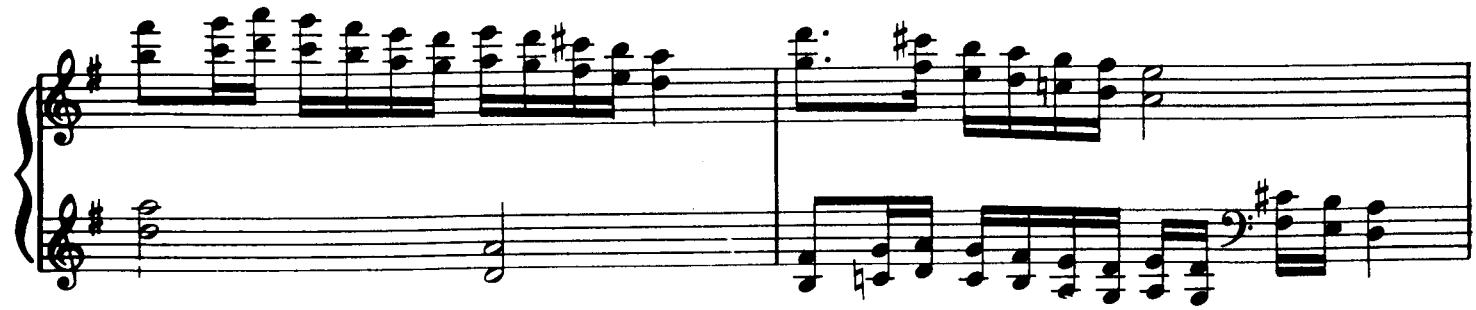


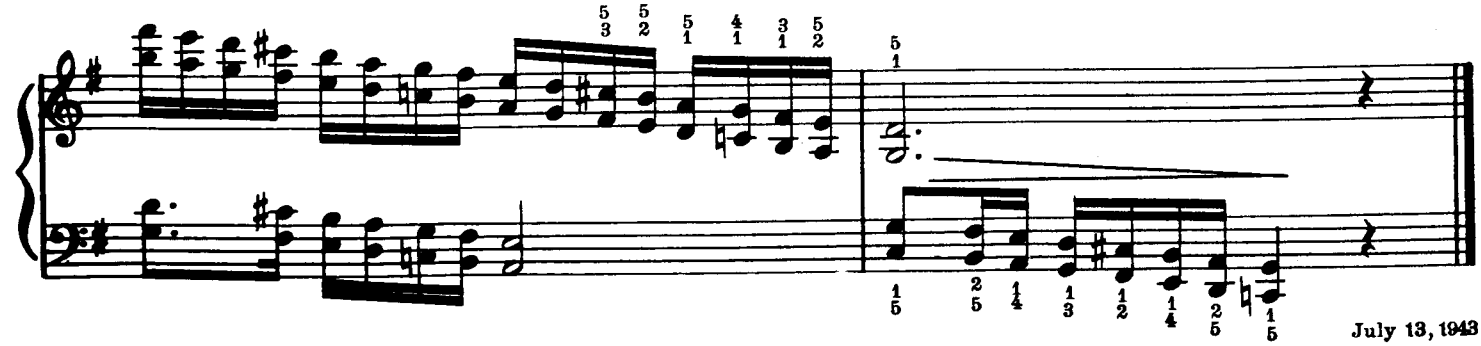


Come prima









July 13, 1943

Fingered Glissando

(Aeolian Harp)

Fingered by
E. Robert Schmitz

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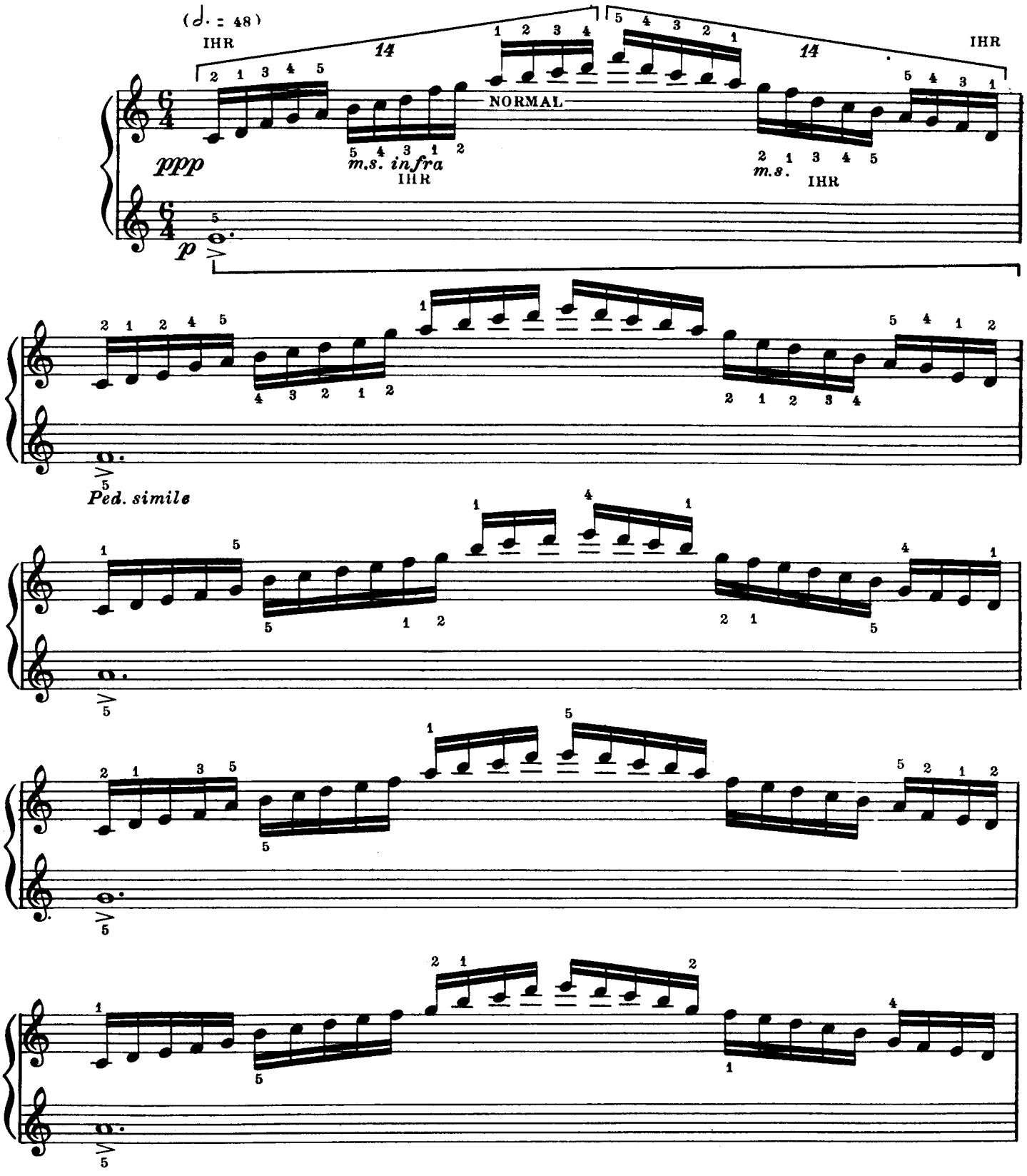

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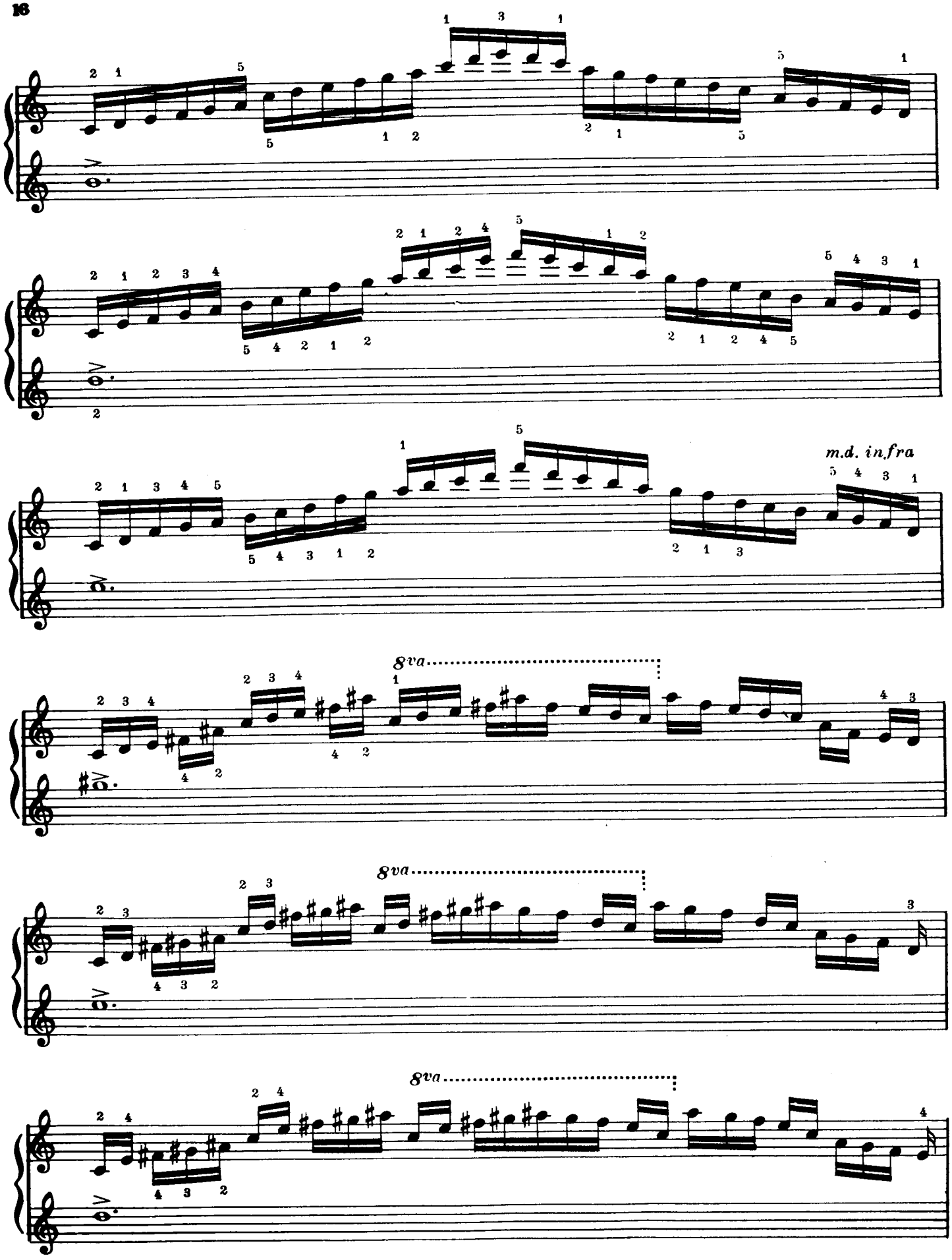
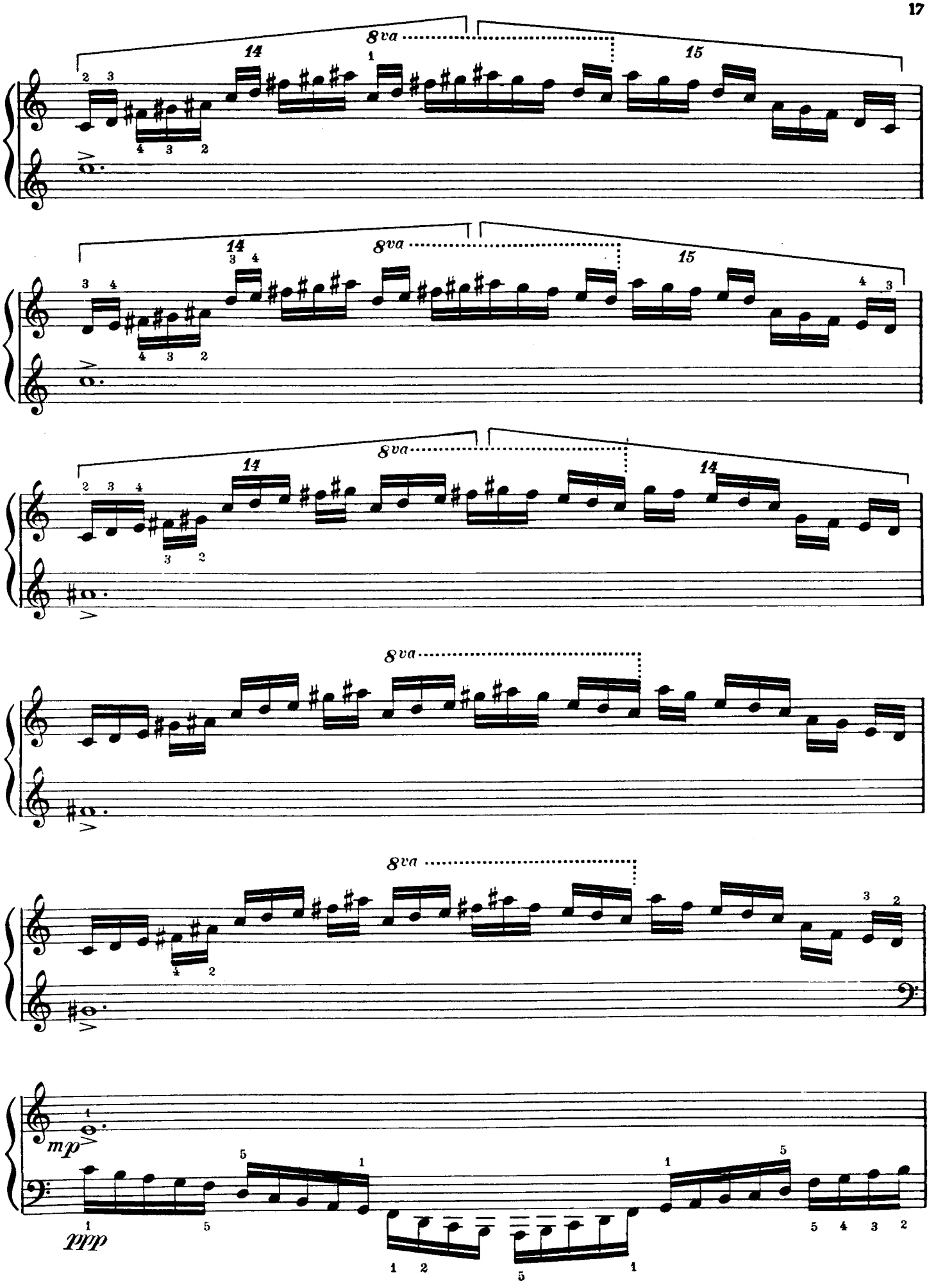
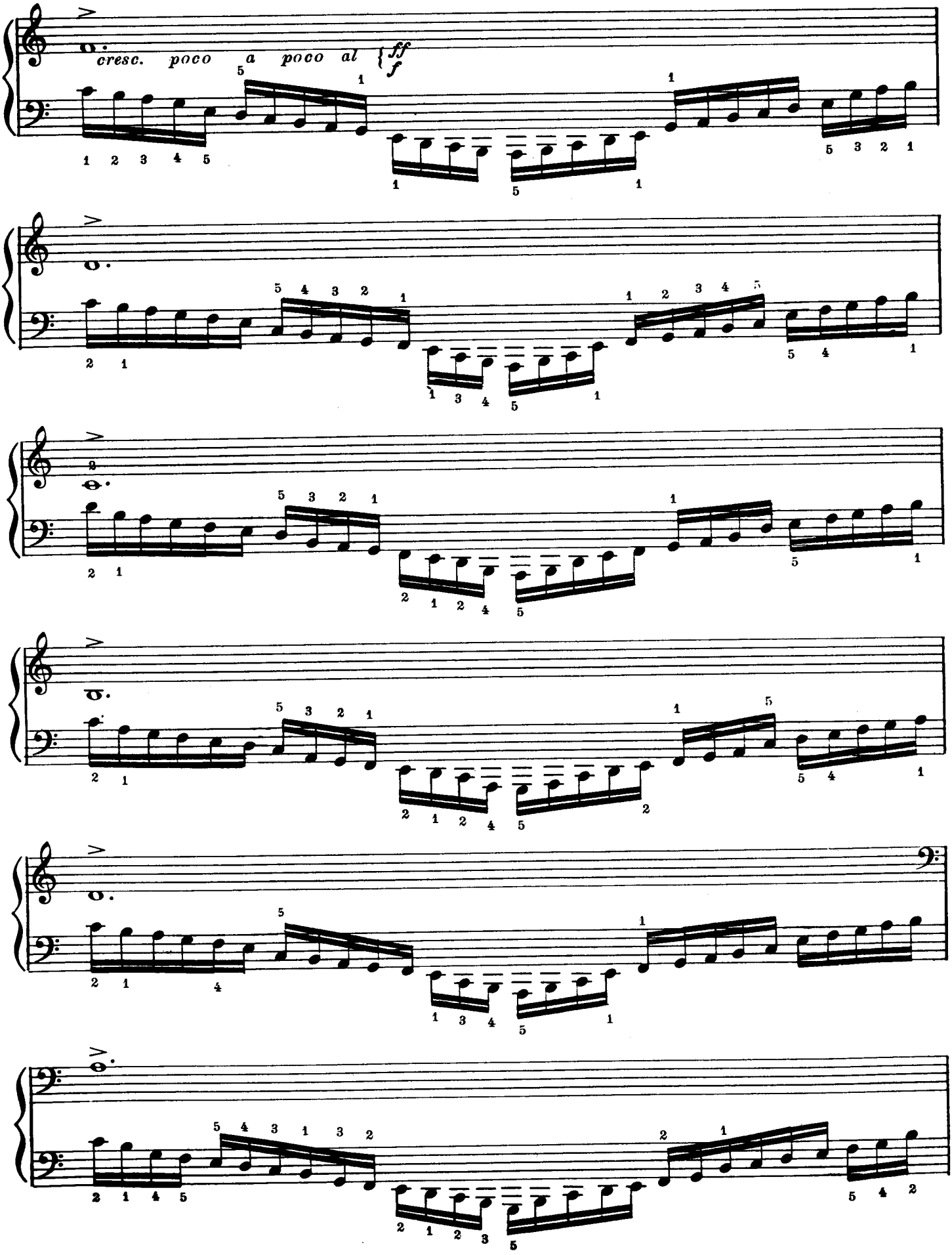
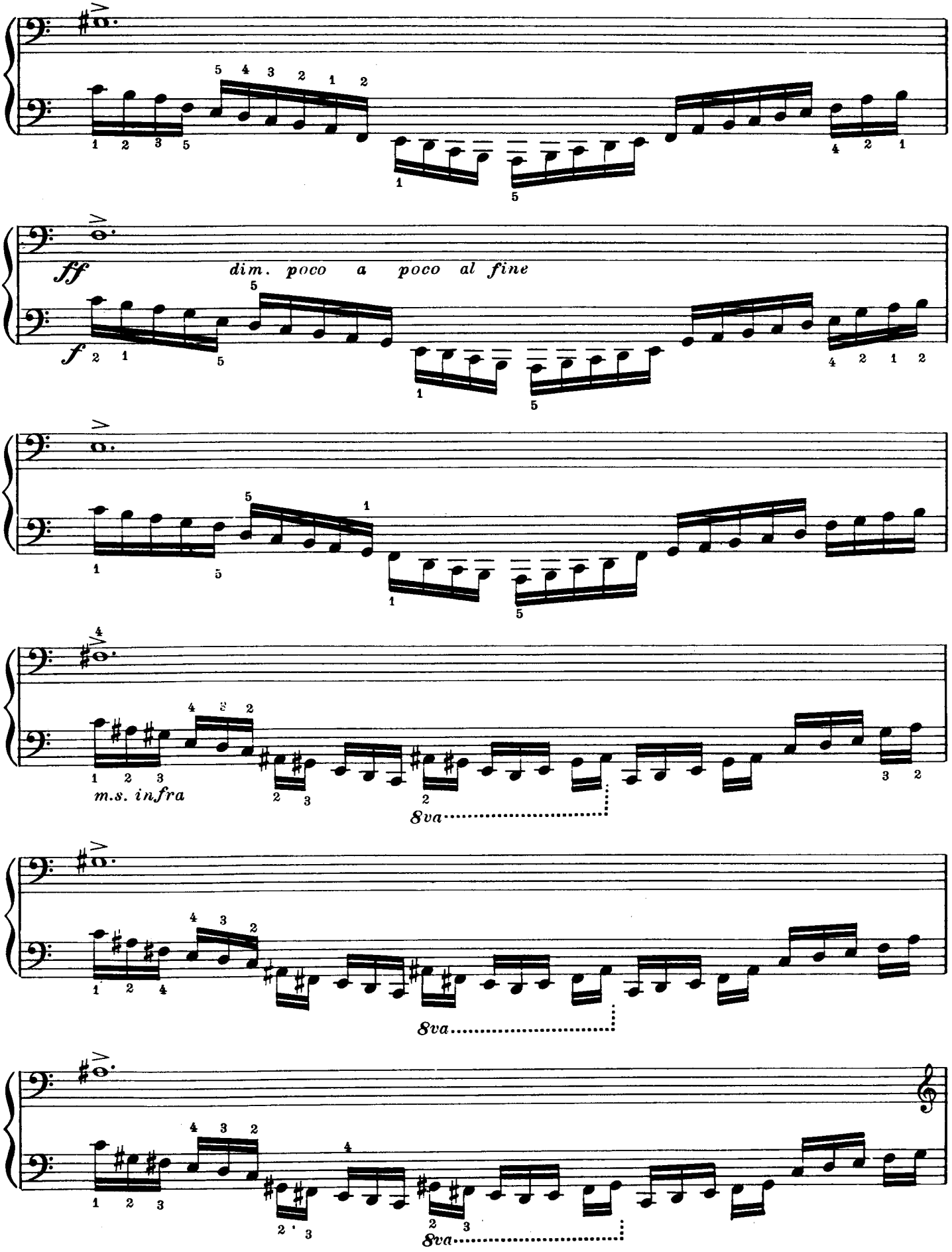
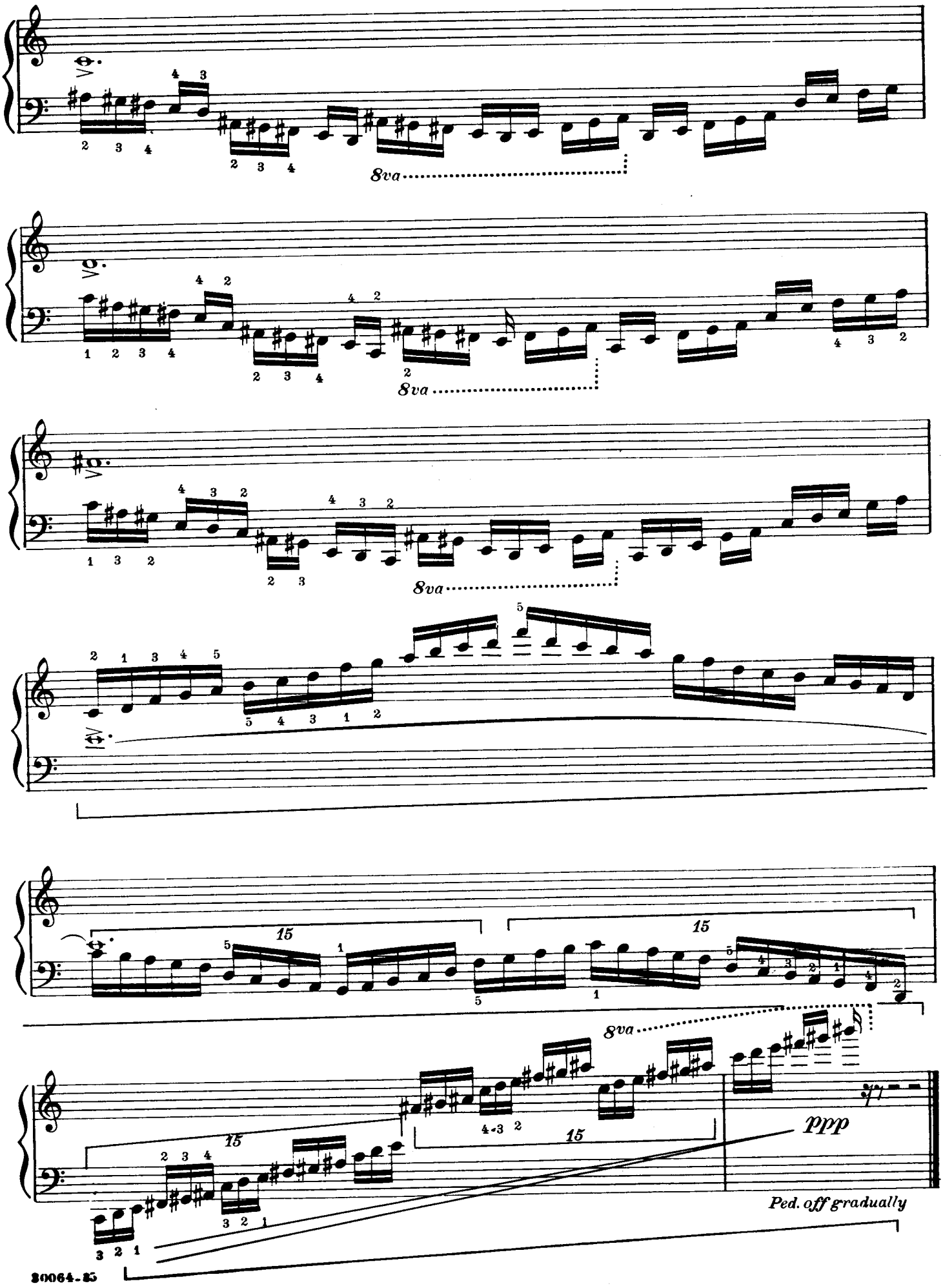

m.d. in fra
8va
8va
8va


8va
14
15
8va
14
15
8va
14
14
8va
8va
mp
ppp


cresc. poco a poco al
ff
f


ff
dim. poco a poco al fine
f
m.s. infra
8va
8va
8va

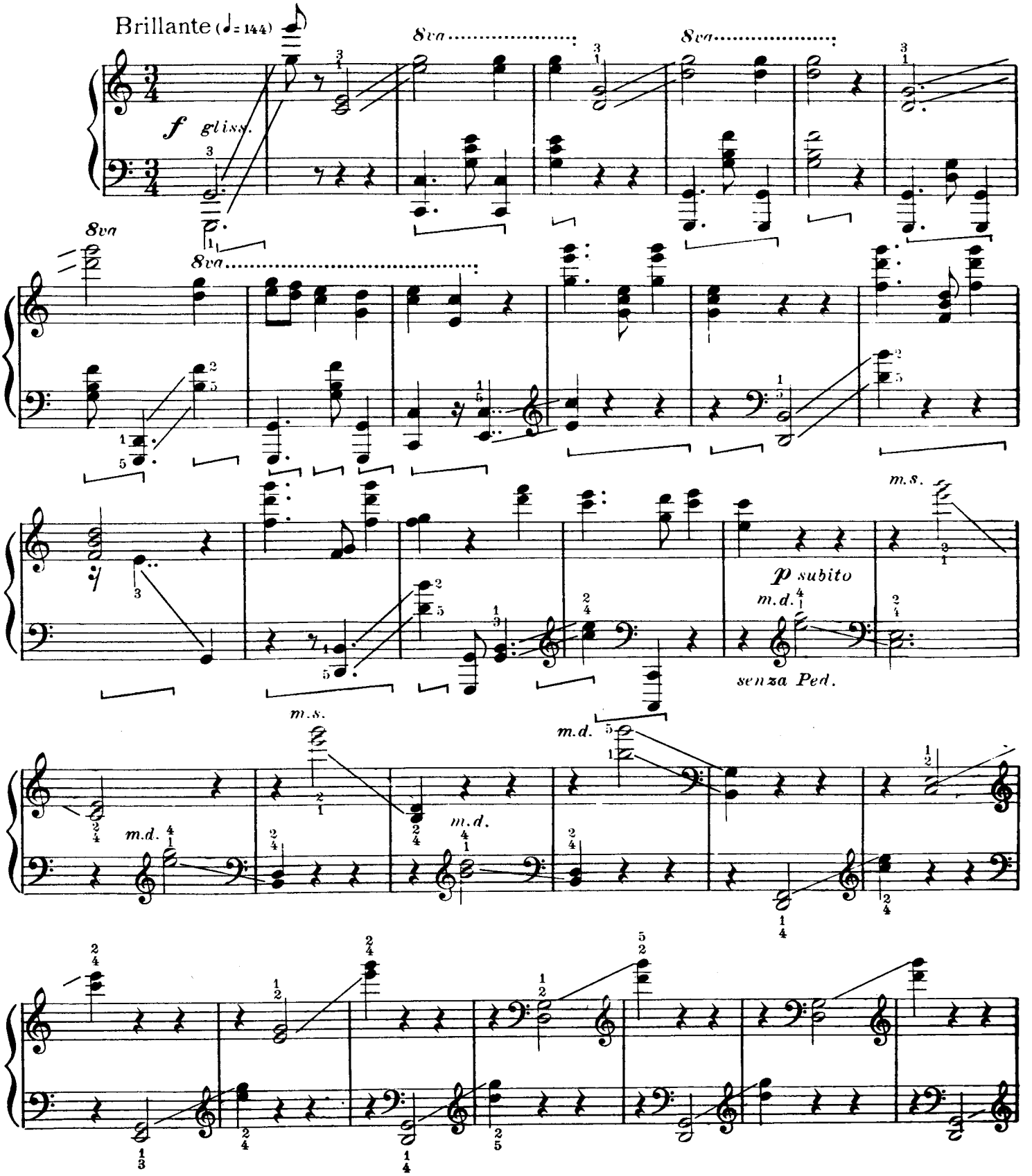

8va
8va
8va
15
15
8va
15
ppp
Ped. off gradually

Double Glissando

Waltz

Fingered by
E. Robert Schmitz

VIRGIL THOMSON



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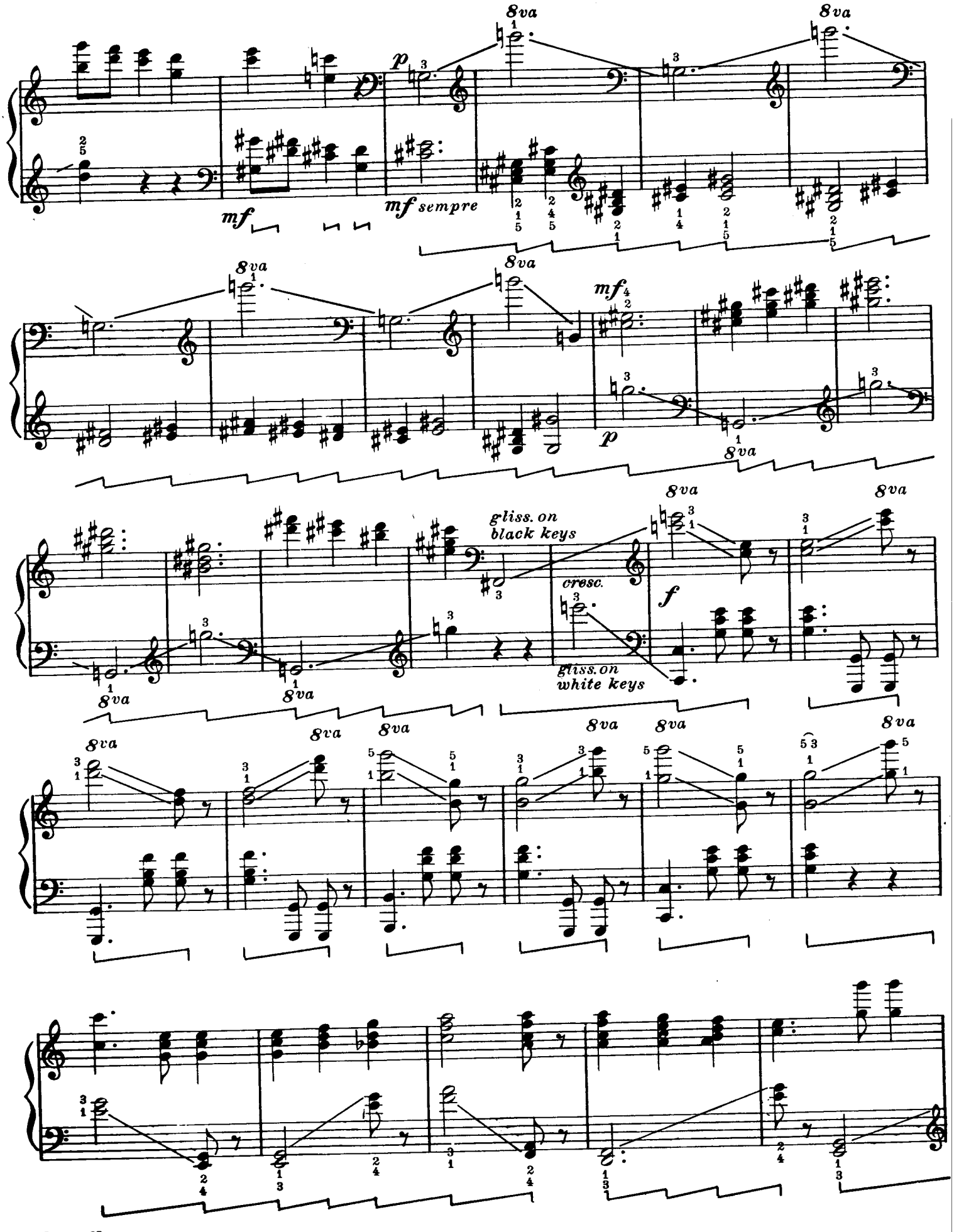
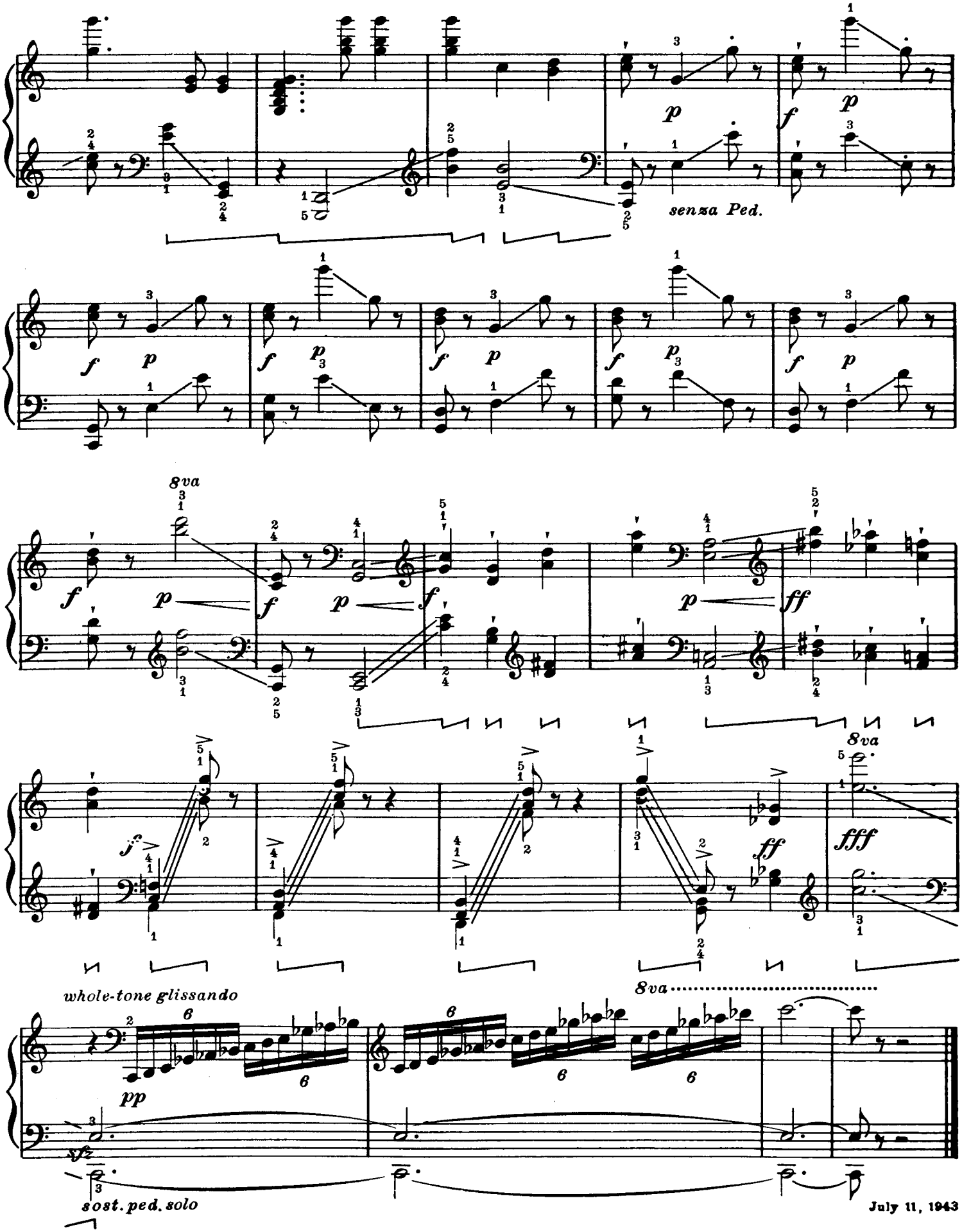

8va
p
mf
mf sempre
mf
p
gliss. on black keys
cresc.
f
gliss. on white keys



July 11, 1943

For the Weaker Fingers

(Music-box Lullaby)

Fingered by
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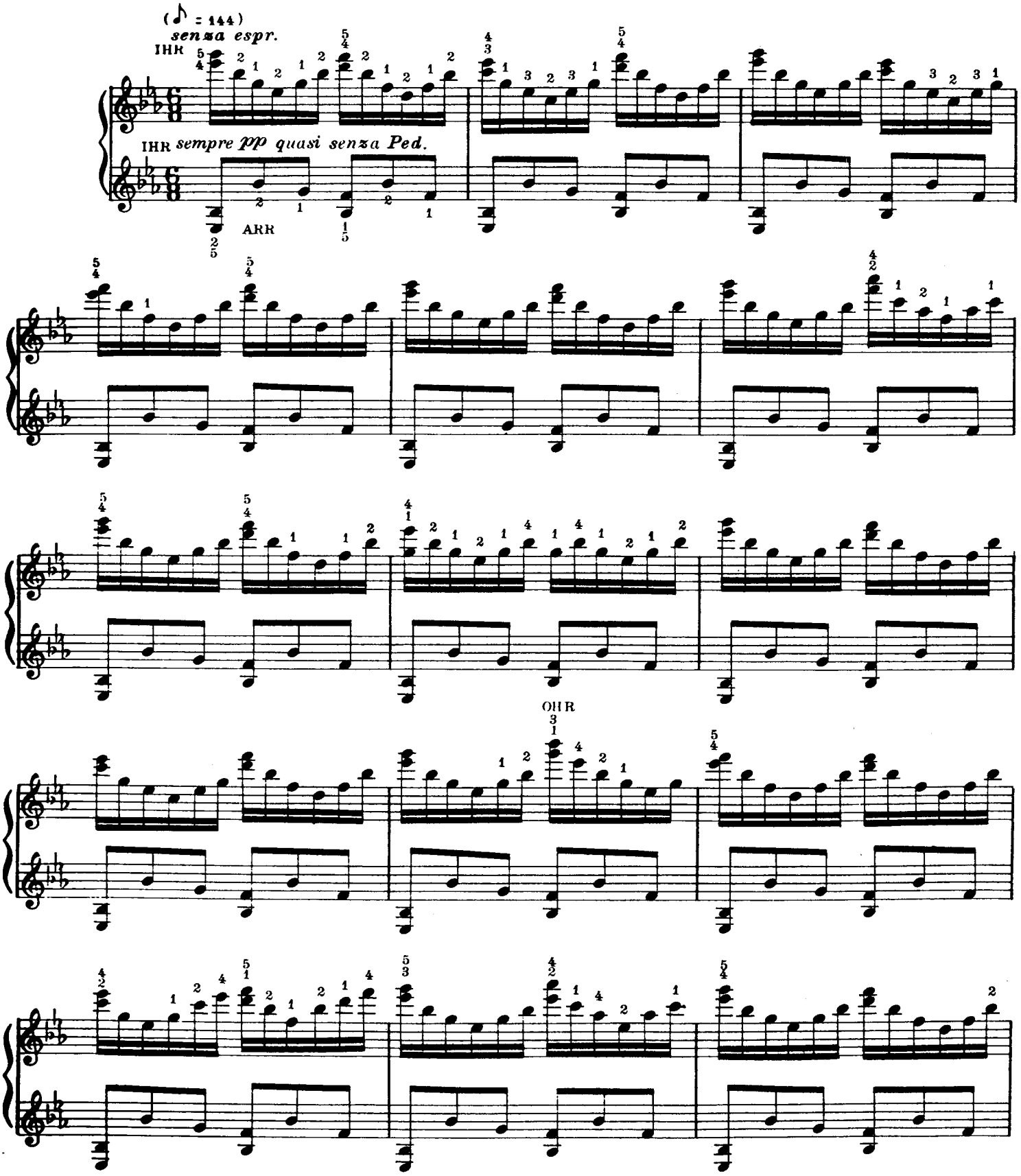

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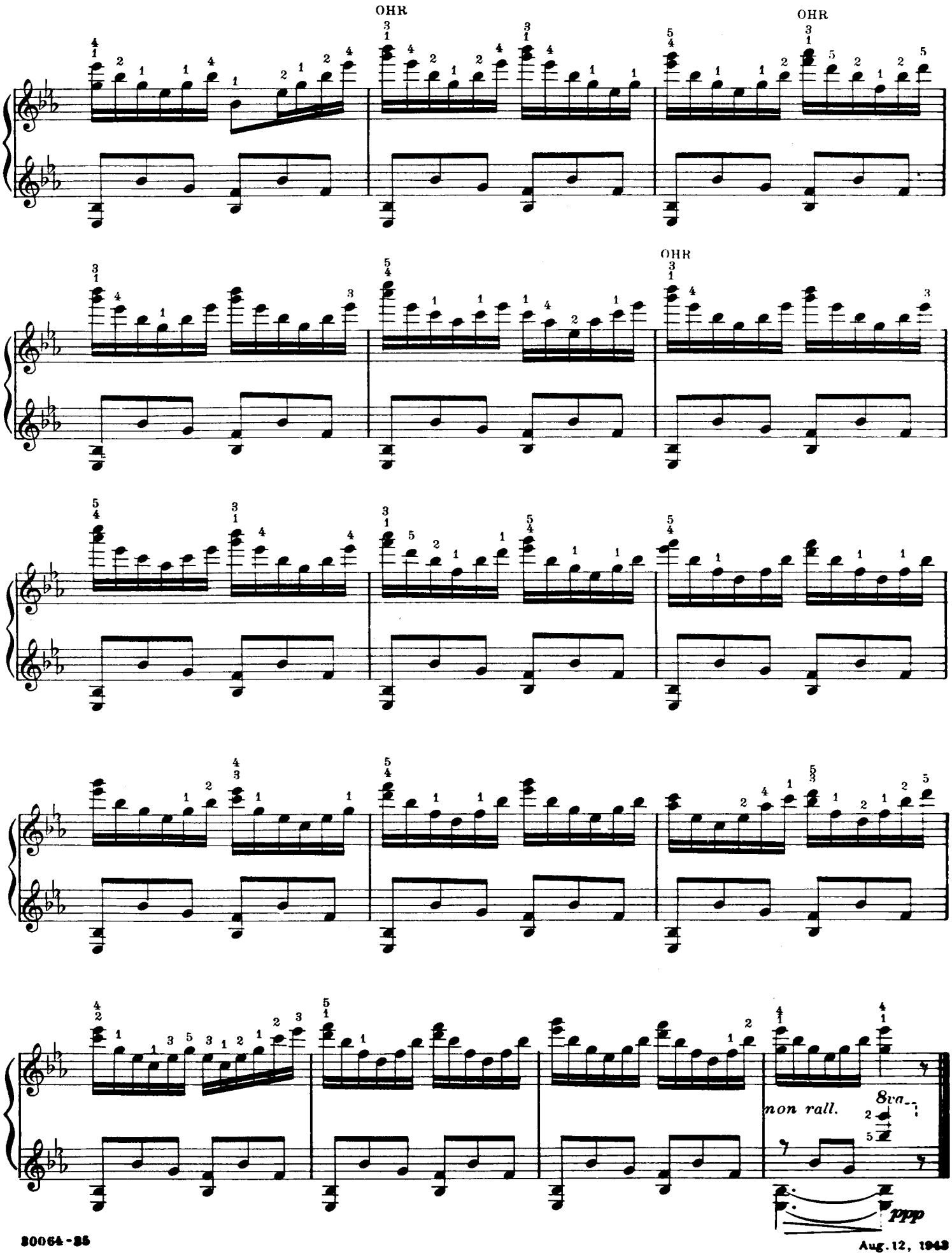

Aug. 12, 1943

Oscillating Arm

(Spinning Song)

Fingered by
E.Robert Schmitz

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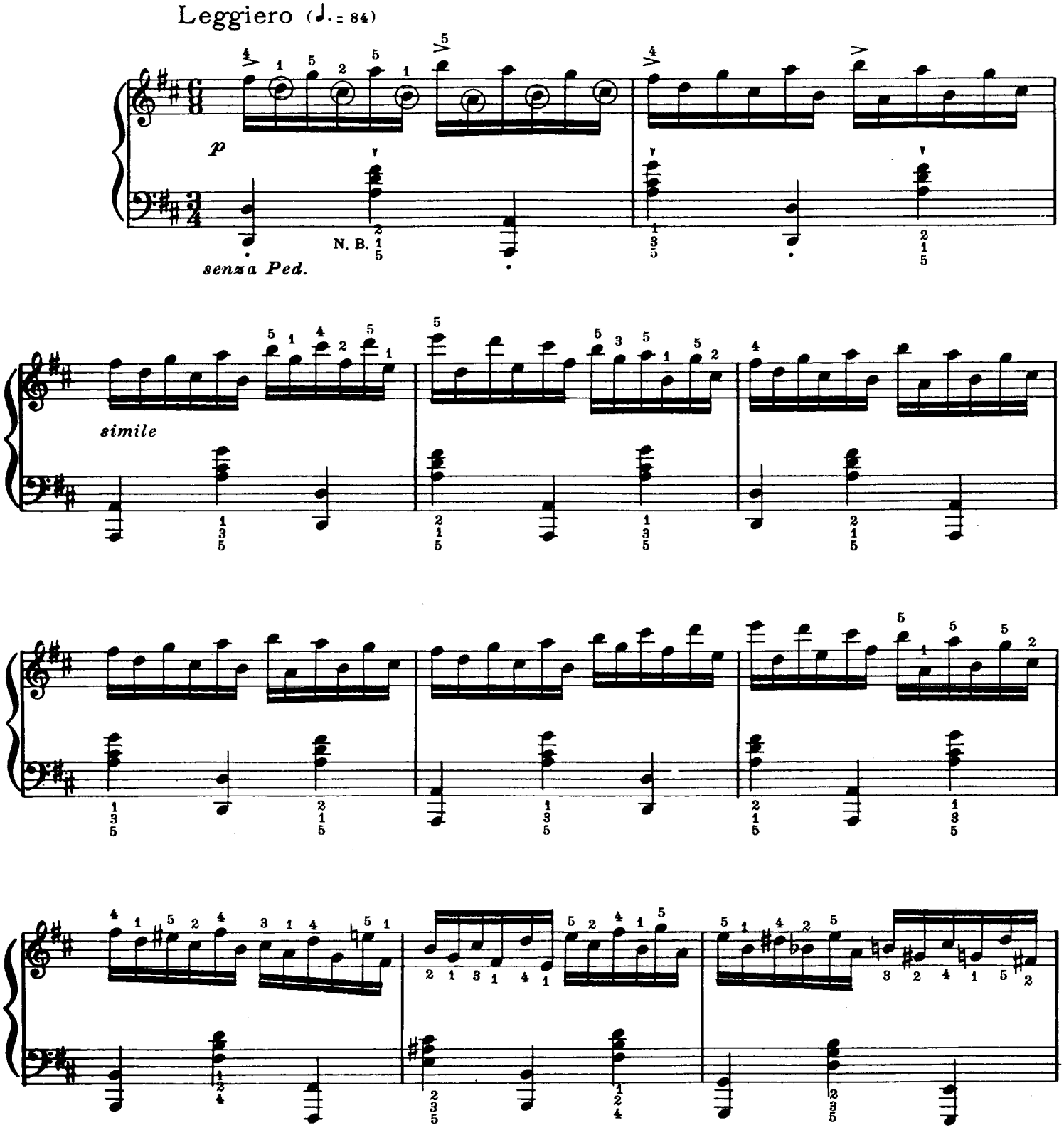

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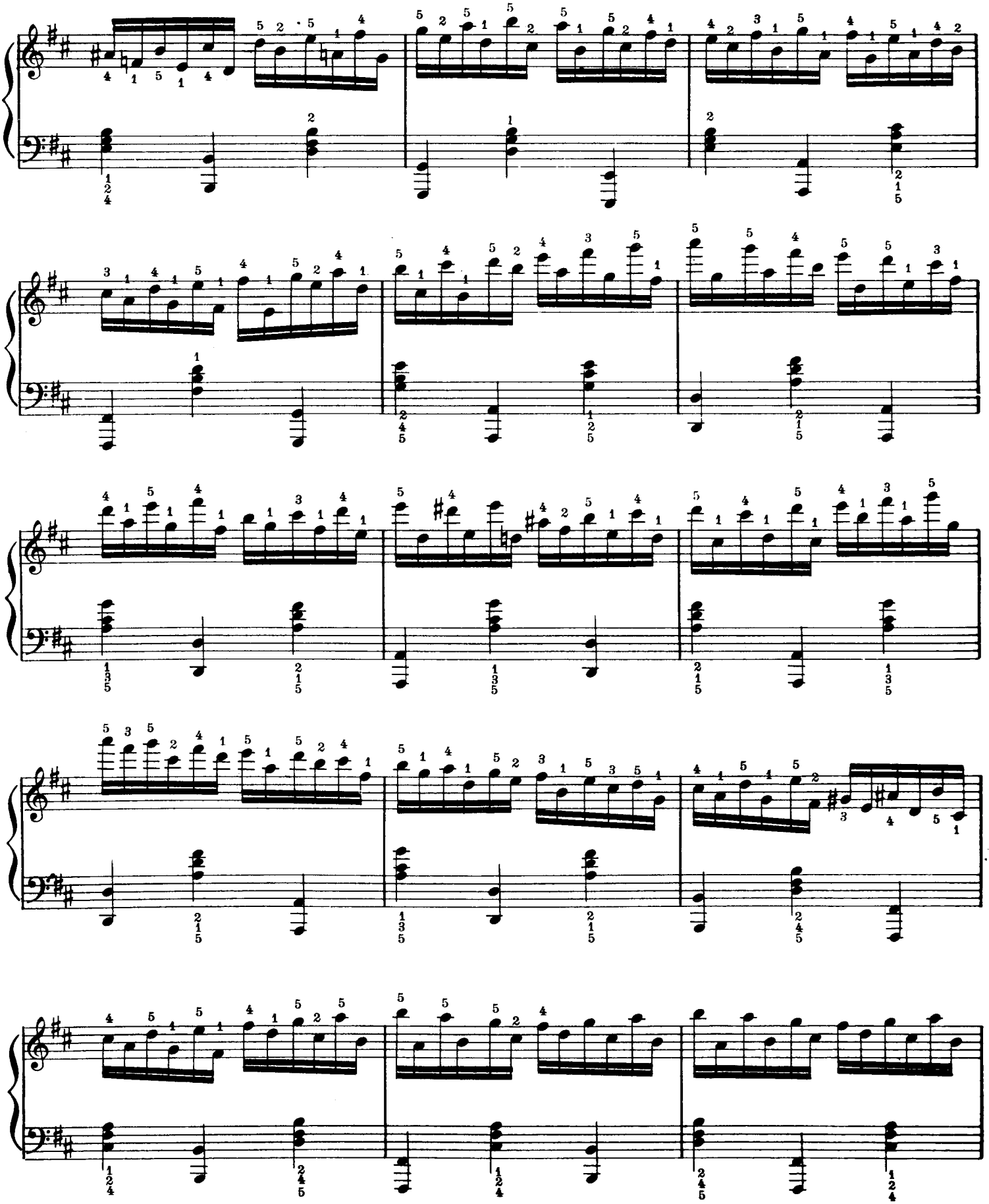
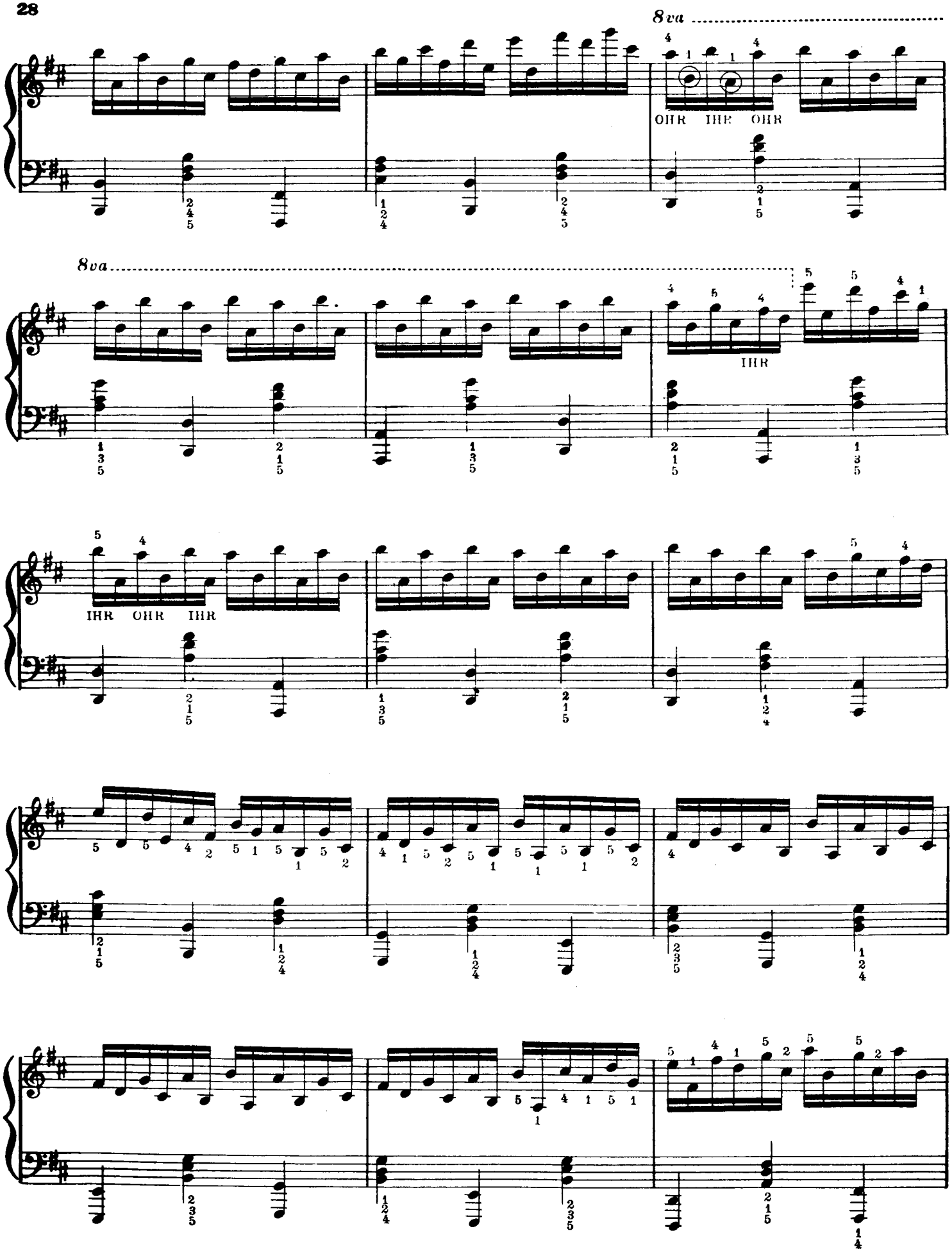
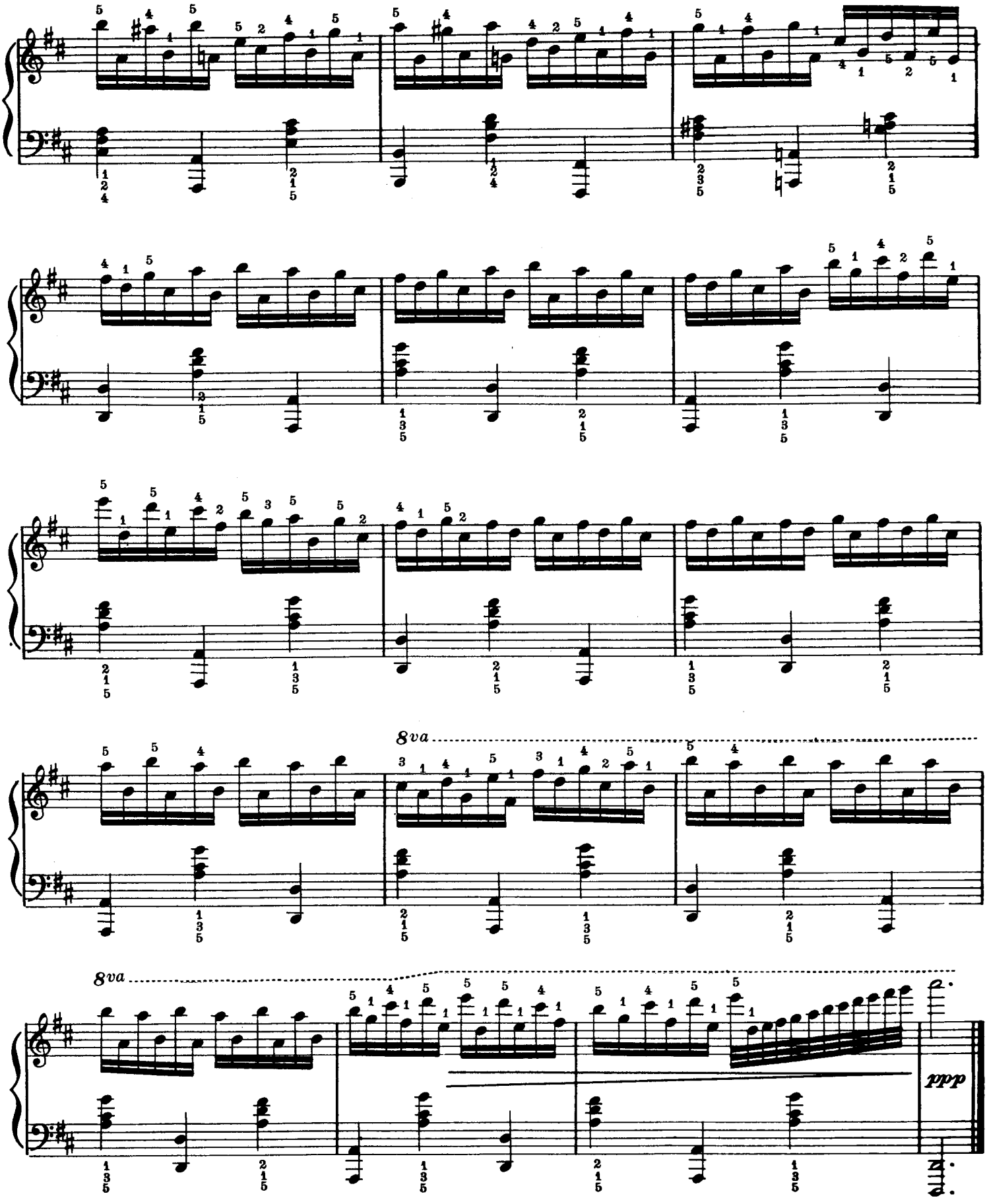



8va
OHR IHR OHR
8va
IHR
IHR OHR IHR


8va
8va
ppp

Five-Finger Exercise

(Portrait of Briggs Buchanan)

Fingered by
E. Robert Schmitz

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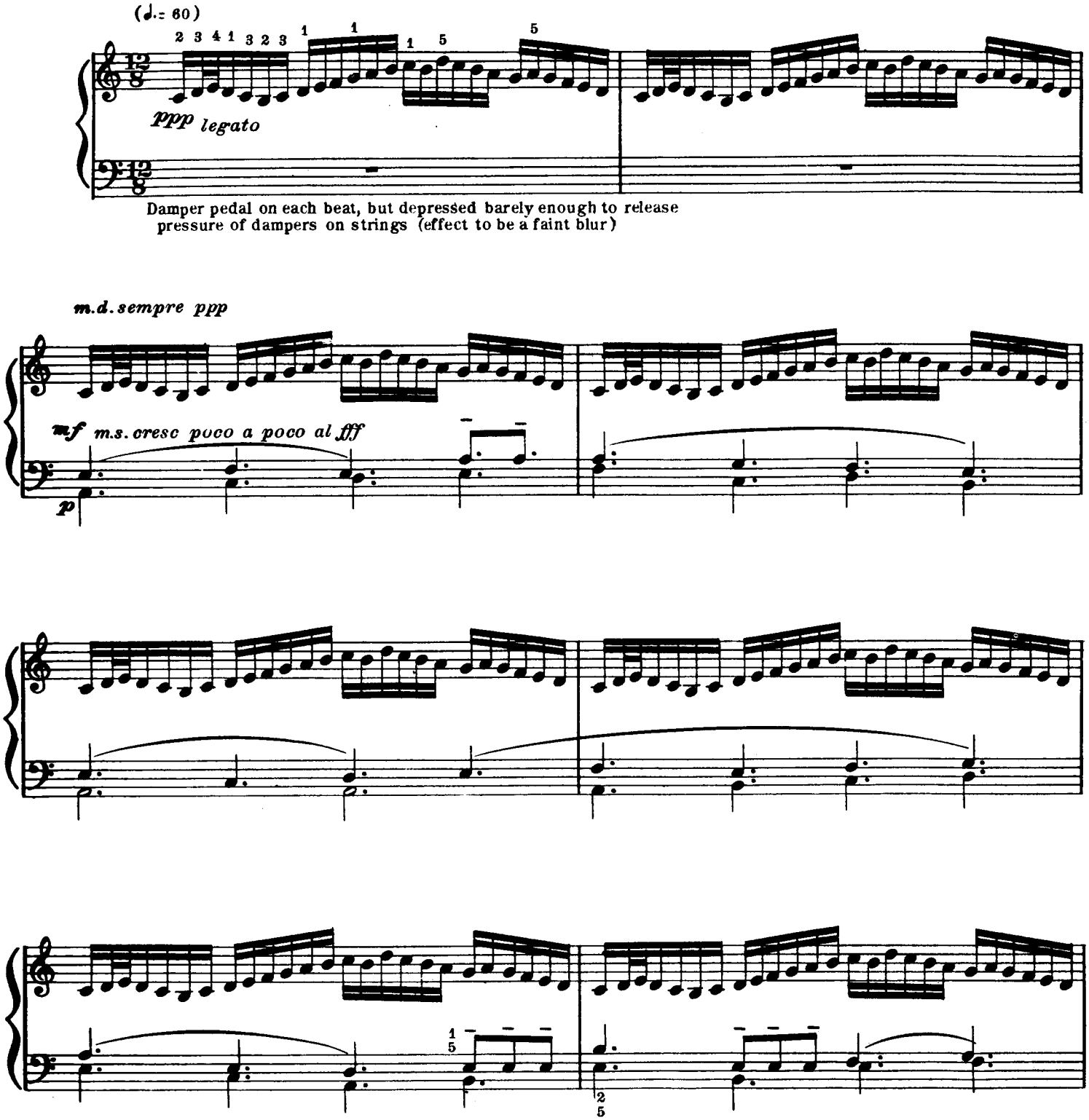

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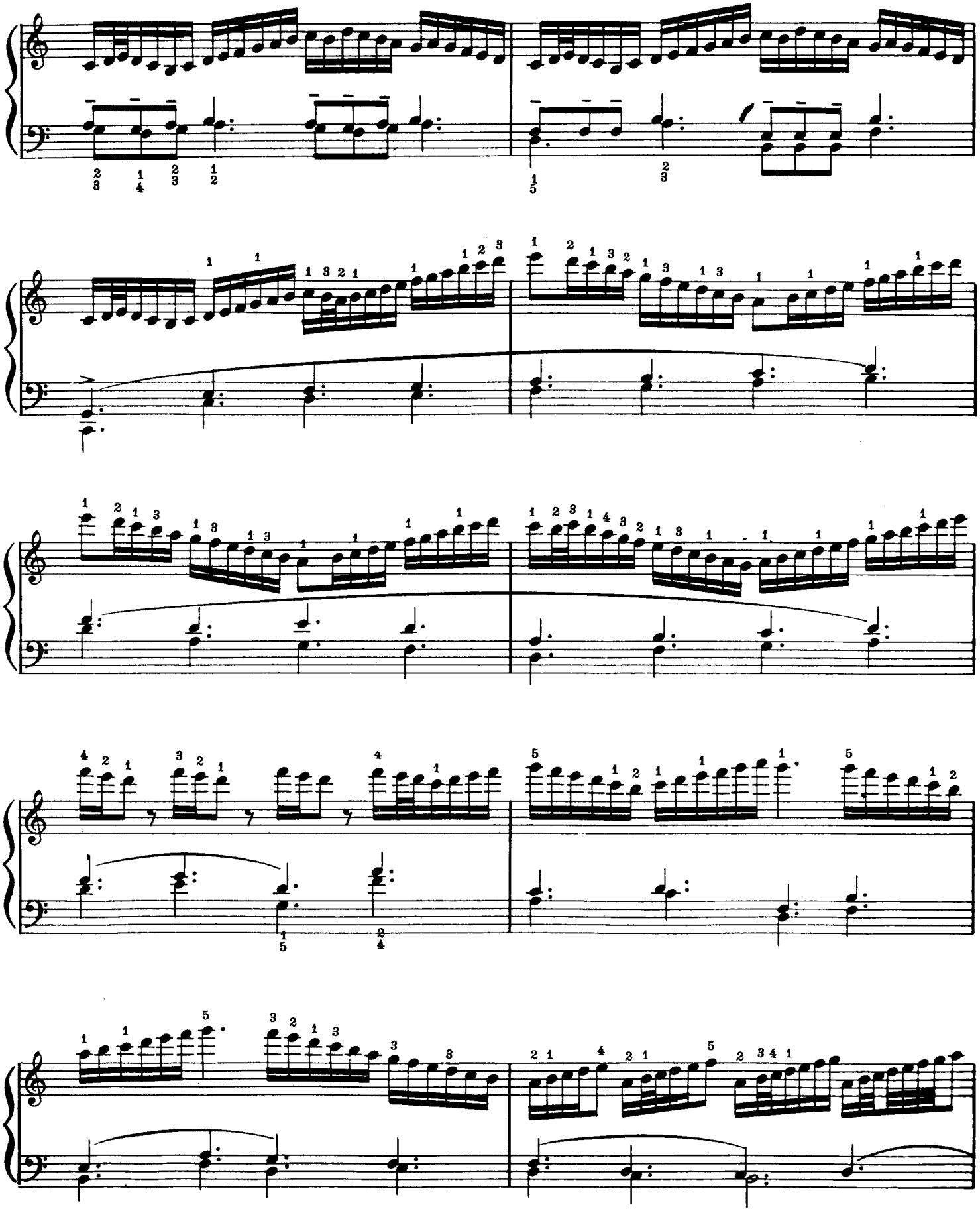
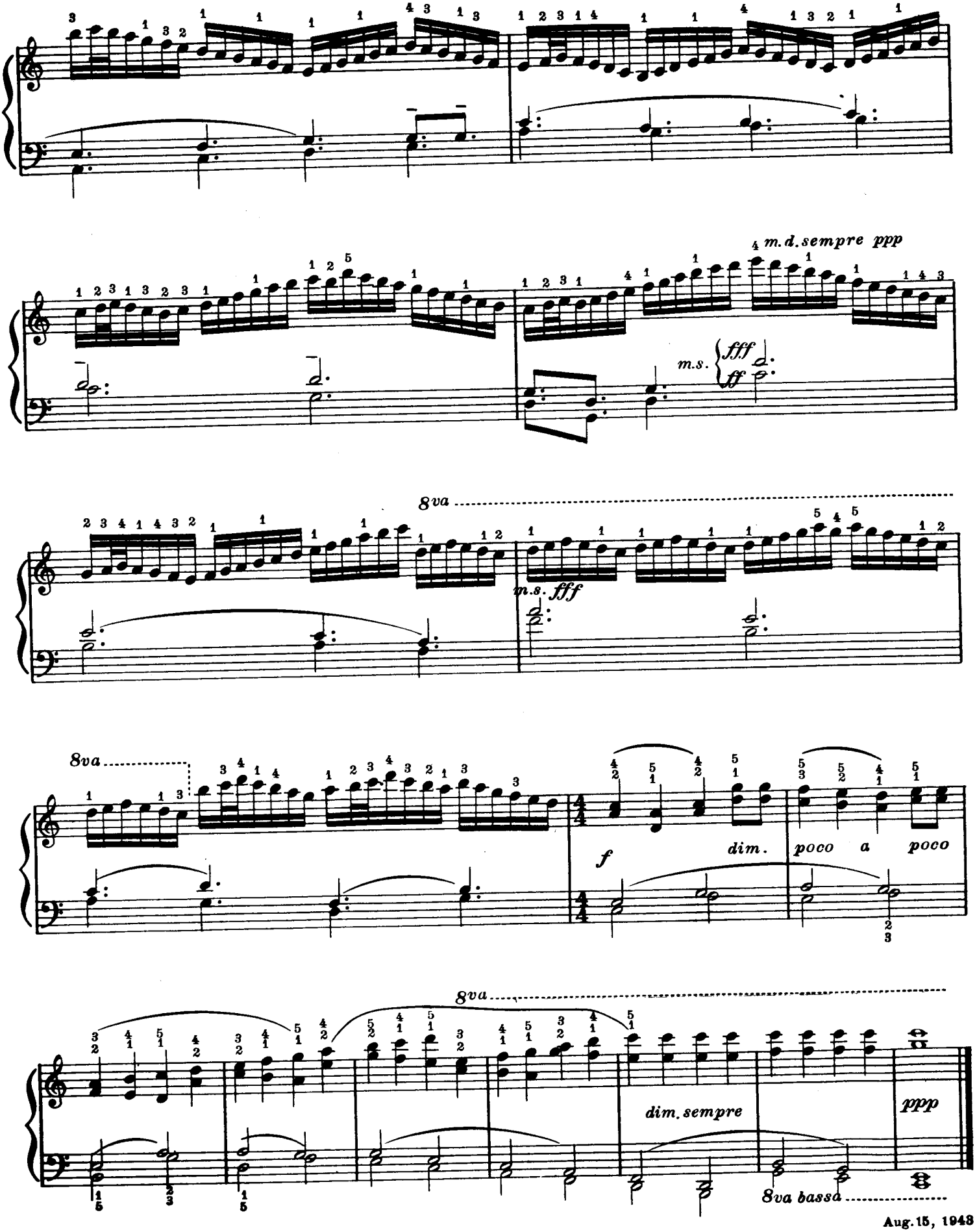



m.d. sempre ppp
m.s. fff ff
8va
m.s. fff
8va
f
dim.
poco a poco
8va
dim. sempre
ppp
8va bassa

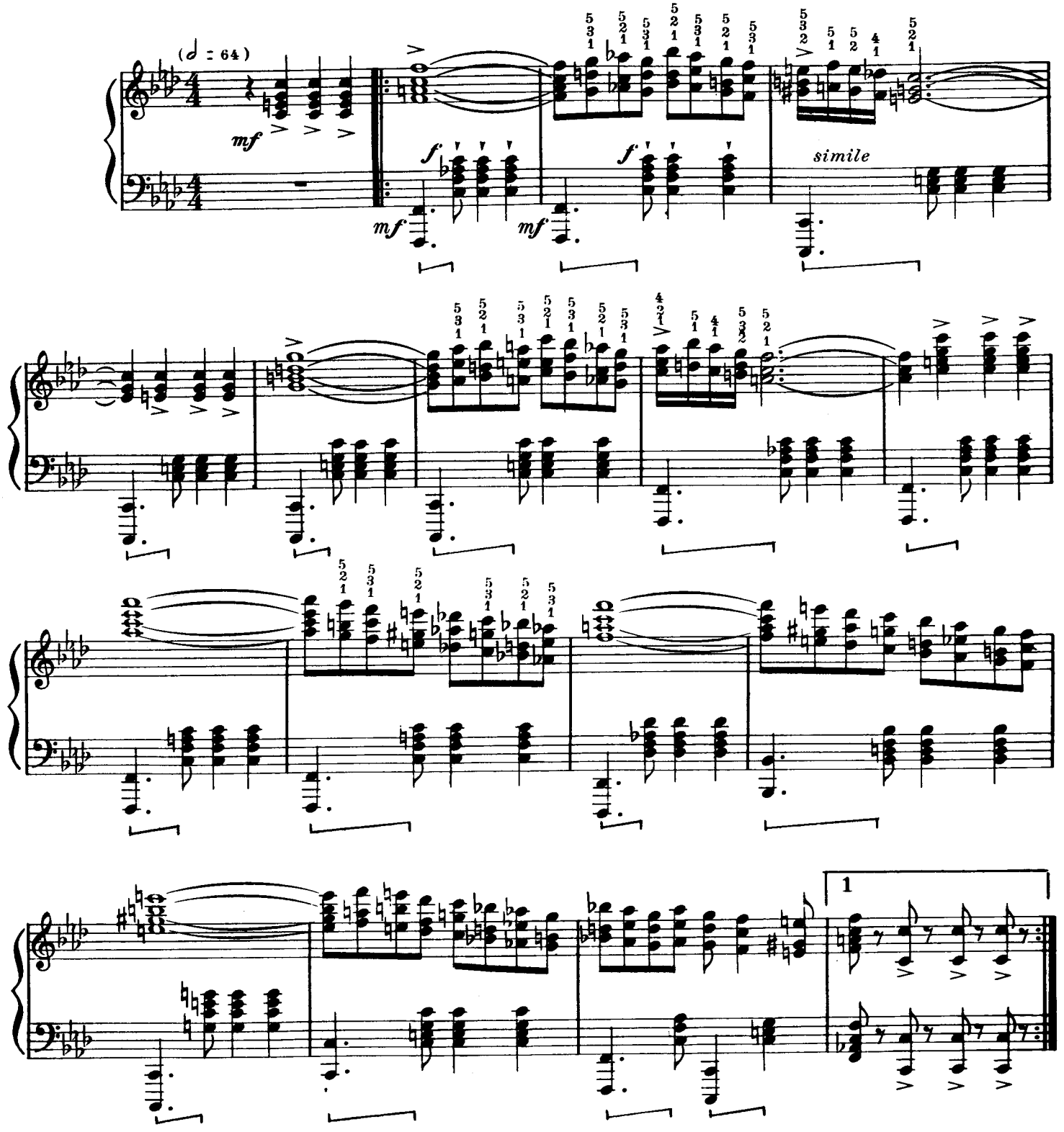
Aug. 15, 1948

Parallel Chords

Tango

Fingered by
E. Robert Schmitz

VIRGIL THOMSON



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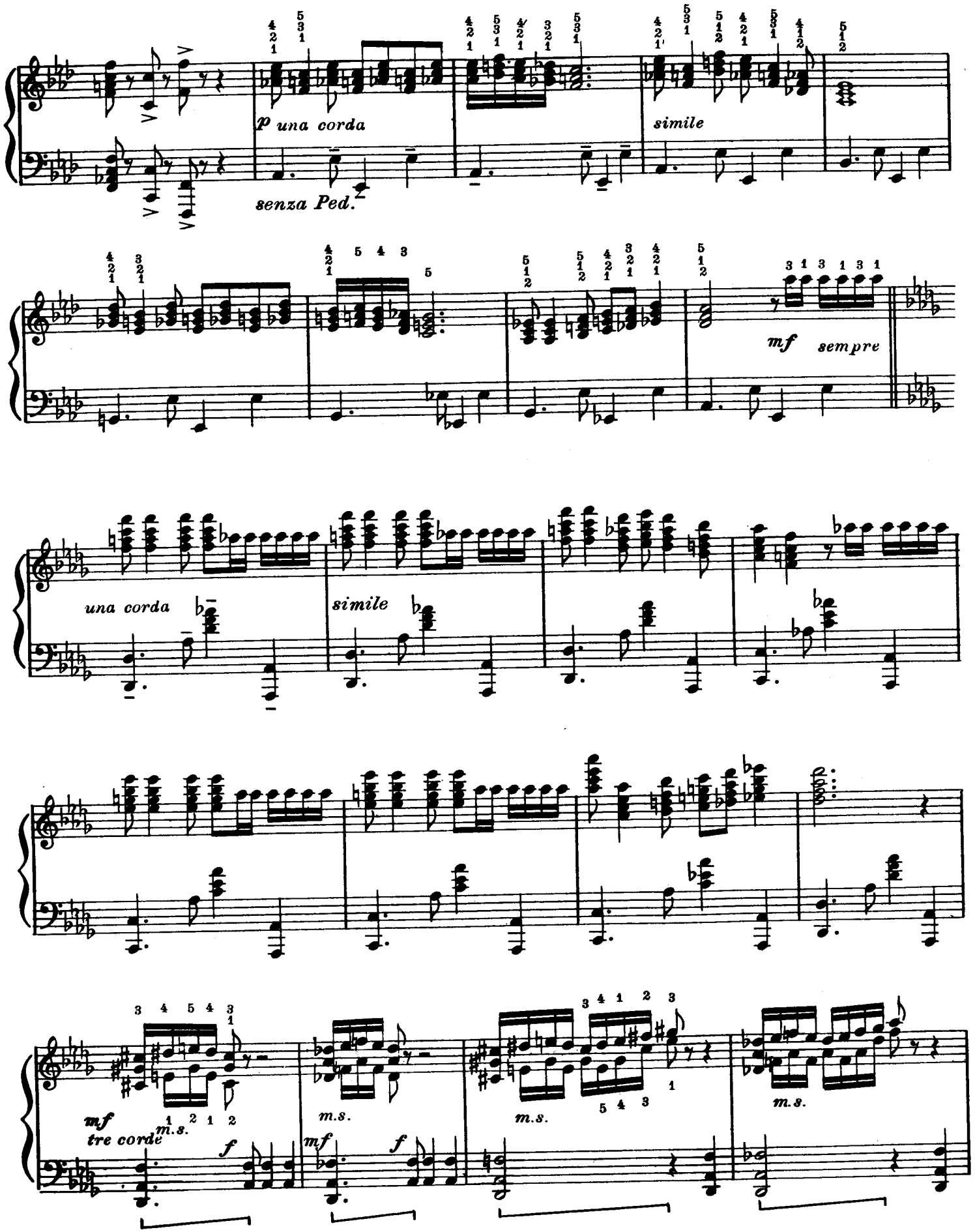
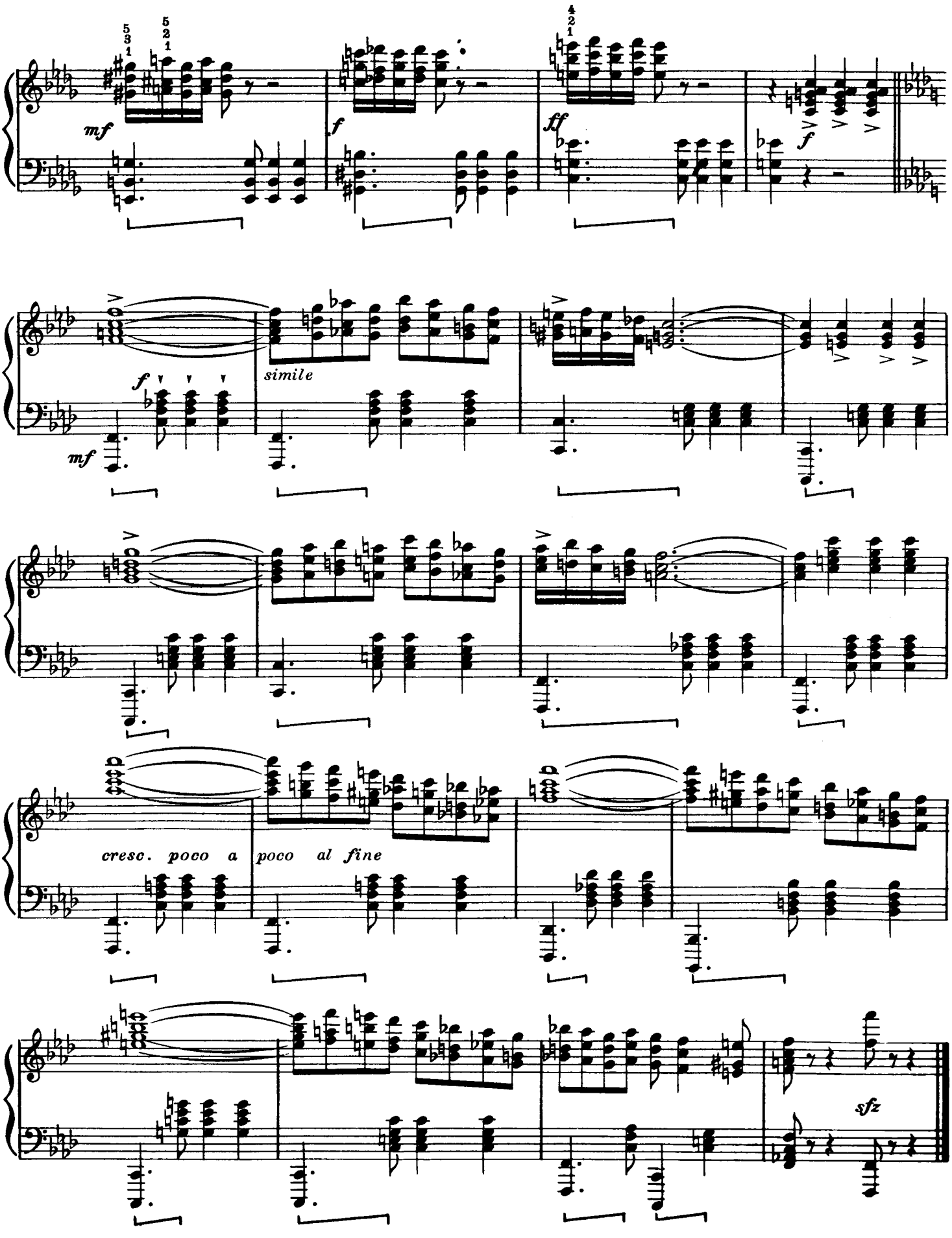

p una corda
senza Ped.
simile
mf sempre
una corda
simile
mf
tre corde
m.s.
f
mf
f
m.s.
m.s.
m.s.

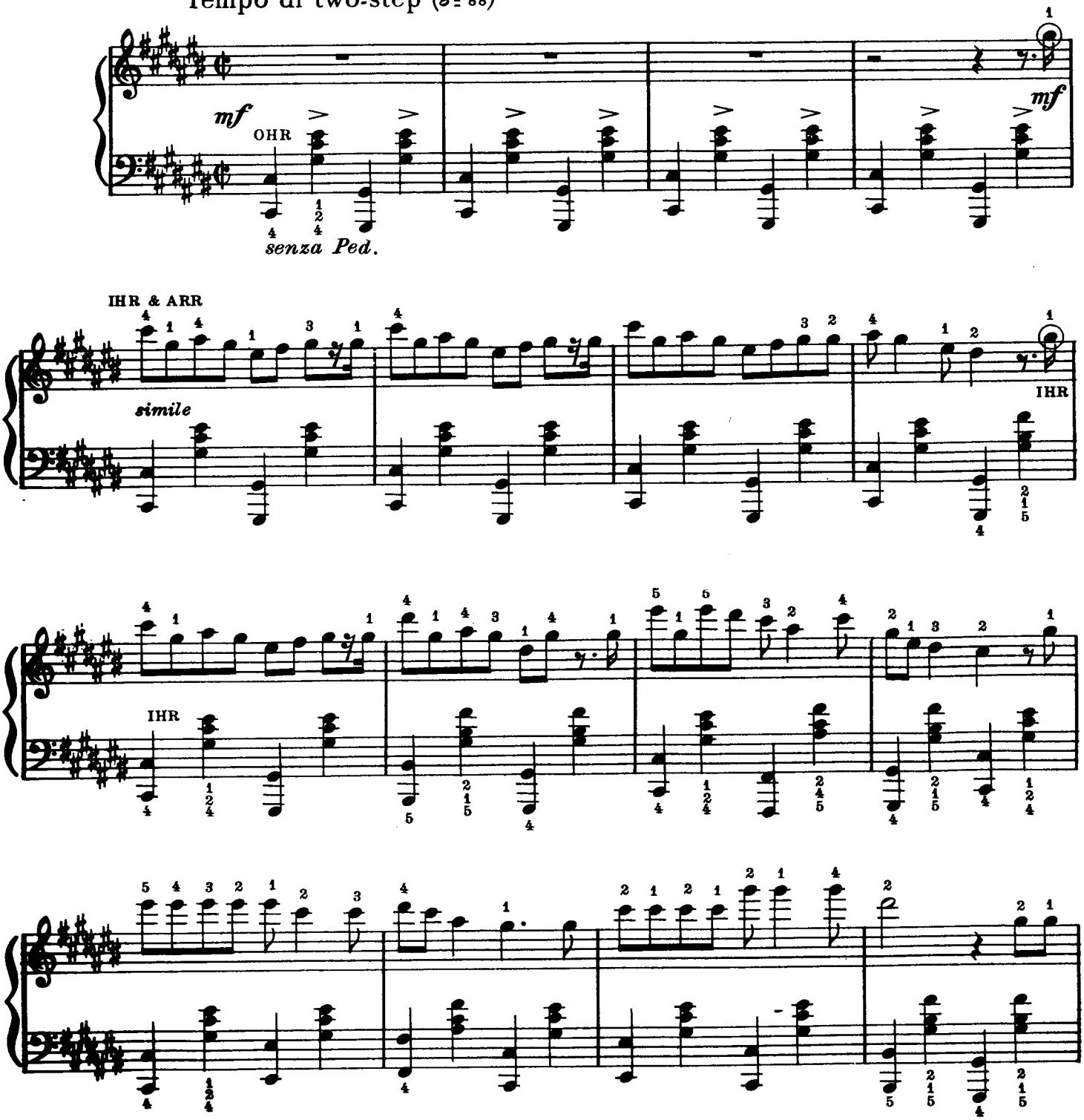

mf
f
ff
f
f
simile
mf
cresc. poco a poco al fine
sfz

Ragtime Bass

Fingered by
E. Robert Schmitz

VIRGIL THOMSON

Tempo di two-step (♩= 88)



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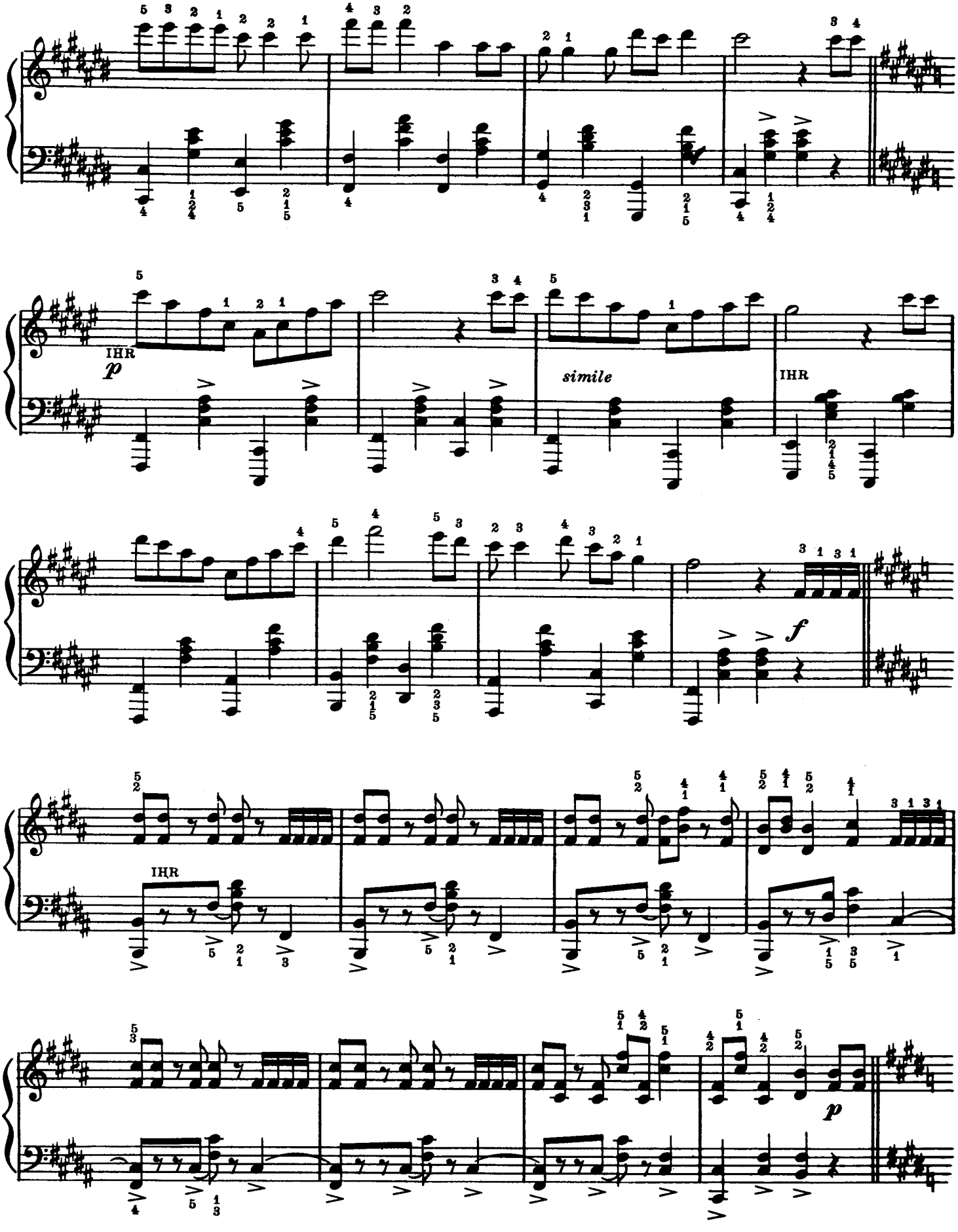
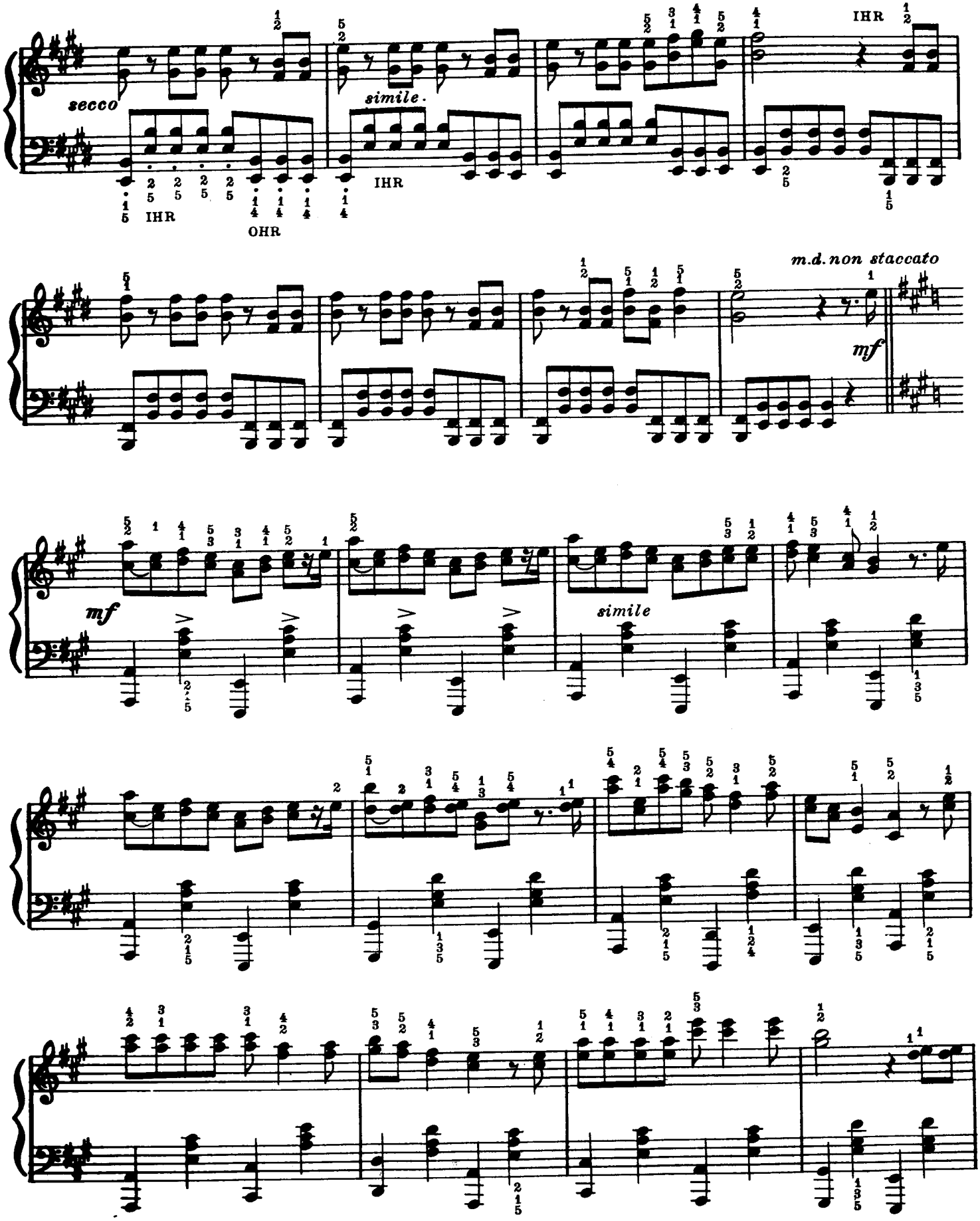
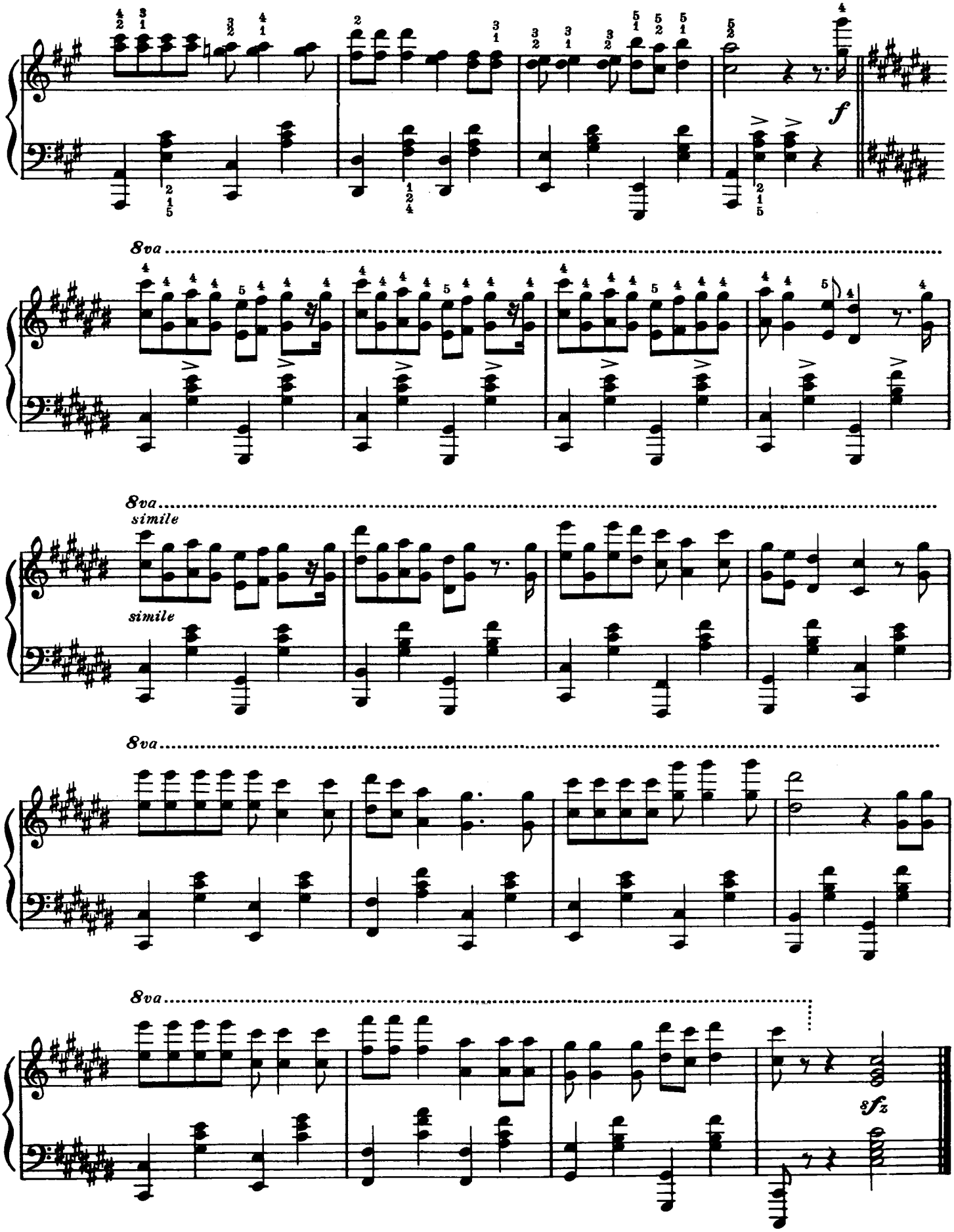

IHR
p
simile
IHR
f
IHR
p


secco
IHR
OHR
simile.
IHR
IHR
m.d. non staccato
mf
mf
simile


f
8va
8va
simile
simile
8va
8va
8fz

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