Concerto in D

for Piano, Violin and String Quartet

Op. 21

in Full Score

Ernest Chausson

Note by Victor Rangel-Ribeiro

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Composed in 1889–91 and published in 1892, Chausson's *Concert en Ré Majeur* was dedicated to violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. Ysaÿe premiered the work on 4 March 1892, in Brussels, with pianist Auguste Pierret and a string quartet identified in the first edition of the score only as "Crickboom—Biermasz—Van Hout—Jacob."

I. Décidé—Calme—Animé 1

II. *Sicilienne:* Pas vite 34

III. Grave 43

IV. *Finale:* Très animé 58

Chausson's *Concert*

Chausson began composing his *Concert en Ré Majeur* in 1889, but progress was painfully slow despite his considerable writing experience. Barely 31 years old, Chausson's substantial output already included three stage works—especially the lyric drama *Hélène*; the evocative *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* for voice and orchestra; his symphonic poem *Viviane;* a piano trio; six motets; and seventeen songs, the first of his exquisite *Mélodies.* And yet the *Concert* languished—(". . . as long as that animal is not finished and copied, I feel I cannot be calm")—until its completion in 1891, only to be judged "a dismal failure" by its composer.

Chausson's sustained mood of despair was no surprise in light of what Paris's critics had in store for him: the "very disagreeable dissonances" of his B-flat Symphony (1891) . . . the "ugly, shrill, grating" of his incidental music to Maurice Bouchor's play *La légende de Sainte-Cécile* (1892), full of ". . . little anemic numbers, without inspiration."

Given such a caustic arena, Chausson made the wise decision to premiere the *Concert* in Brussels, at the Salon des XX, founded by his friend Octave Maus. That wealthy and enlightened patron of the arts exhibited all that was new in painting—works of Gauguin, Renoir and Pissarro—and in contemporary music. Despite the defection of the pianist—who claimed his part was unplayable!—but with the delight of violin virtuoso Eugène Ysaÿe, the premiere was a rousing success, highlighted by applause so spontaneous and warm that it startled the composer: "Never have I had such great success," he wrote in his diary. "Everybody seems to love the *Concert.*" "I scarcely know myself since my return from Brussels," he wrote to Ysaÿe. "I have never been so lighthearted and happy, and I cannot think of you all without emotion. I feel that I am going to do far better work than before, and it is to you that I shall owe this."

"Concerto" is the traditional but misleading translation of the title *Concert*—a word more accurately rendered here as "agreement" or "harmonious ensemble." While Chausson's music—especially the pairing of solo violin and solo piano against the concerted string quartet—hints at a small opposition of forces suggestive of a Handel *concerto grosso* or of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, the resemblance is superficial. In form and substance, the *Concert* is far removed from these Baroque prototypes. Closer in form and instrumental structure are the great 19th-century models: Schubert's "Trout" Quintet (1816), Schumann's Piano Quintet, Op. 44 (1843), Brahms' Opus 34 (1866), Franck's Quintet in F Minor (1879), and the Dvořák Opus 81 (1887).

Yet the Chausson work is unique in the management of its instrumental forces, and of their melodic lines and harmonic colors. This said, the spirit of César Franck hovers benevolently over this music, especially the sonorities of that master's Piano Quintet and legendary Violin Sonata—for Chausson was one of Franck's star pupils among the loyal followers dubbed "la bande à Franck": Henri Duparc, Vincent d'Indy, and the lesser-known Guillaume Lekeu.

The *Concert* delights us with its sense of partnership in the exploration of its themes: the soaring violin-piano duet of the first movement . . . the country idyll of the "Sicilienne," leading us, said d'Indy, "towards the gardens where bloom the charming fancies of Gabriel Fauré" . . . the fleet whirlwind of the Finale . . . and the sharp poignancy of the *Grave* movement that precedes it. D'Indy saw an encroaching "rigidity of death" in that somber movement, a premonition of ". . . how far those of the musicians of this period who died young seem, in the more emotional parts of their work, to have been haunted by a foreboding, as it were, of this premature journey to another world."

One can only reflect on Ernest Chausson's unwritten works—so striking had been his development in the last years of his life—and on the irony of his death at age 44, crashing headfirst into a wall as he cycled down a gentle slope, trying to keep up with his daughter Étiennette.

Victor Rangel-Ribeiro
New York, 1999

GLOSSARY

accent, stressed
animé, lively
archet, bowed [cancels previous *pizzicato*]
augmentant beaucoup = crescendo molto
augmenter [*augm.*] (*peu à peu*) = *crescendo* (*poco a poco*)
au mouvement [*Mouv^t*] = a tempo [*Tempo I*]

calme, calm
cédez = ritardando

décidé, decisive, firmly

en augmentant (*toujours*) (*peu à peu*), (*et un peu pressé*),
becoming louder (always) (little by little) (and slightly rushed)
en dehors, prominently, bring out
en diminuant, becoming softer
en élargissant un peu, becoming somewhat broader
en pressant, rushing
en retardant un peu, slowing down a little
en retenant, holding back, restrained
en revenant au mouvement [*Mouv^t*] = returning to the original tempo
expressif, expressive
extrêmement retenu = molto ritenuto

grave, solemn

indication du manuscrit [footnote, p. 62],
Chausson's notation in the original score

librement, freely
lié = legato
long, long (sustained tone)

m.d. [*main droite*], right hand
m.g. [*main gauche*], left hand
moins forte, not as loud
moins vite, not as fast

pas vite, not fast
plus animé, livelier
plus fort [*f*], louder
plus large, broader
[*première*] *1ere*, first (original tempo, etc.)

retenu = ritenuto

sans rigeur, freely ["without strictness"]

toujours = sempre
très animé, very lively
très chanté = molto cantabile
très lié = molto legato
très retenu = molto ritenuto
très vif, very spirited

un peu plus lent, a little slower
un peu plus vite, a little faster
un peu pressé, somewhat rushed
un peu retenu = poco ritenuto

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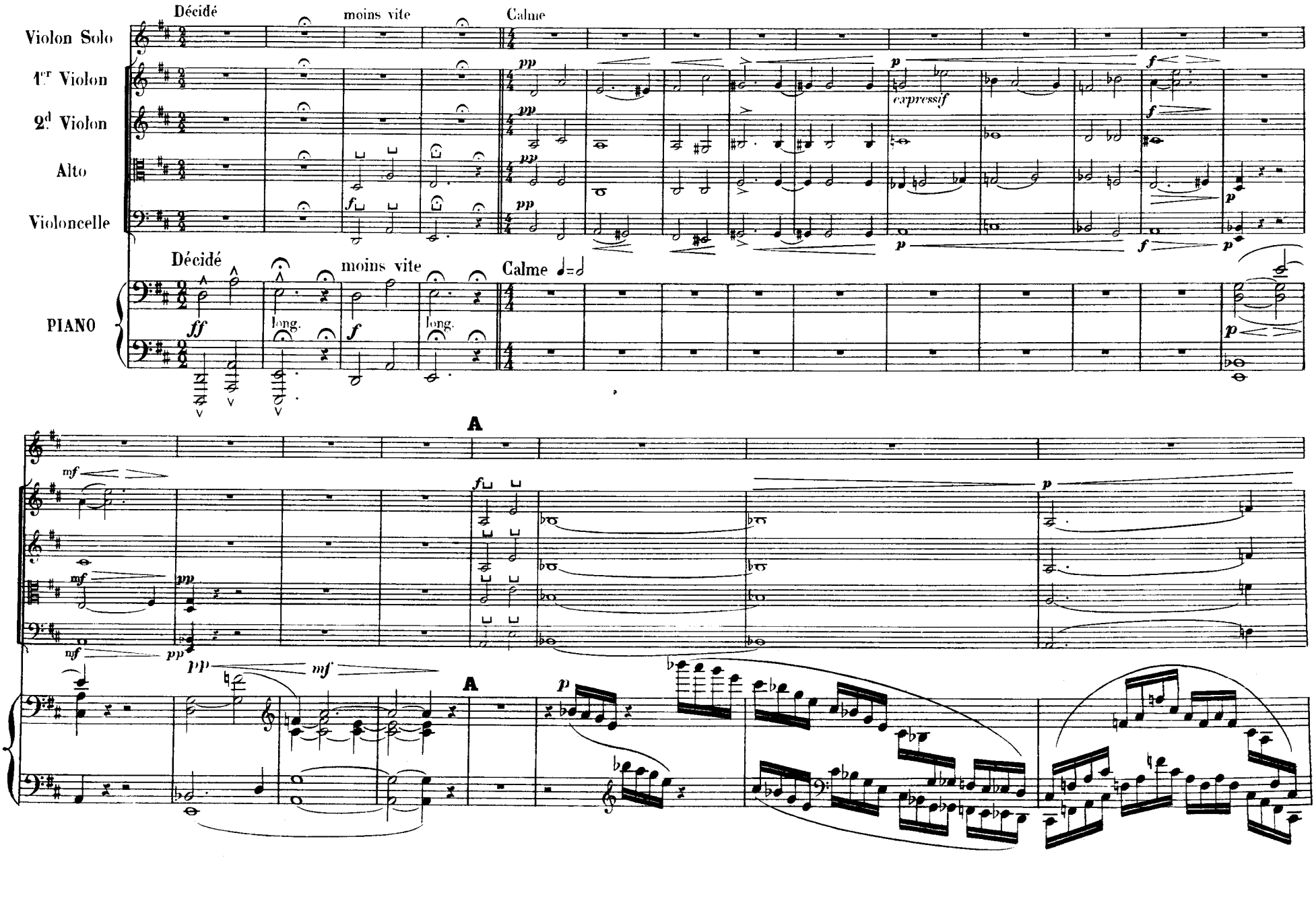
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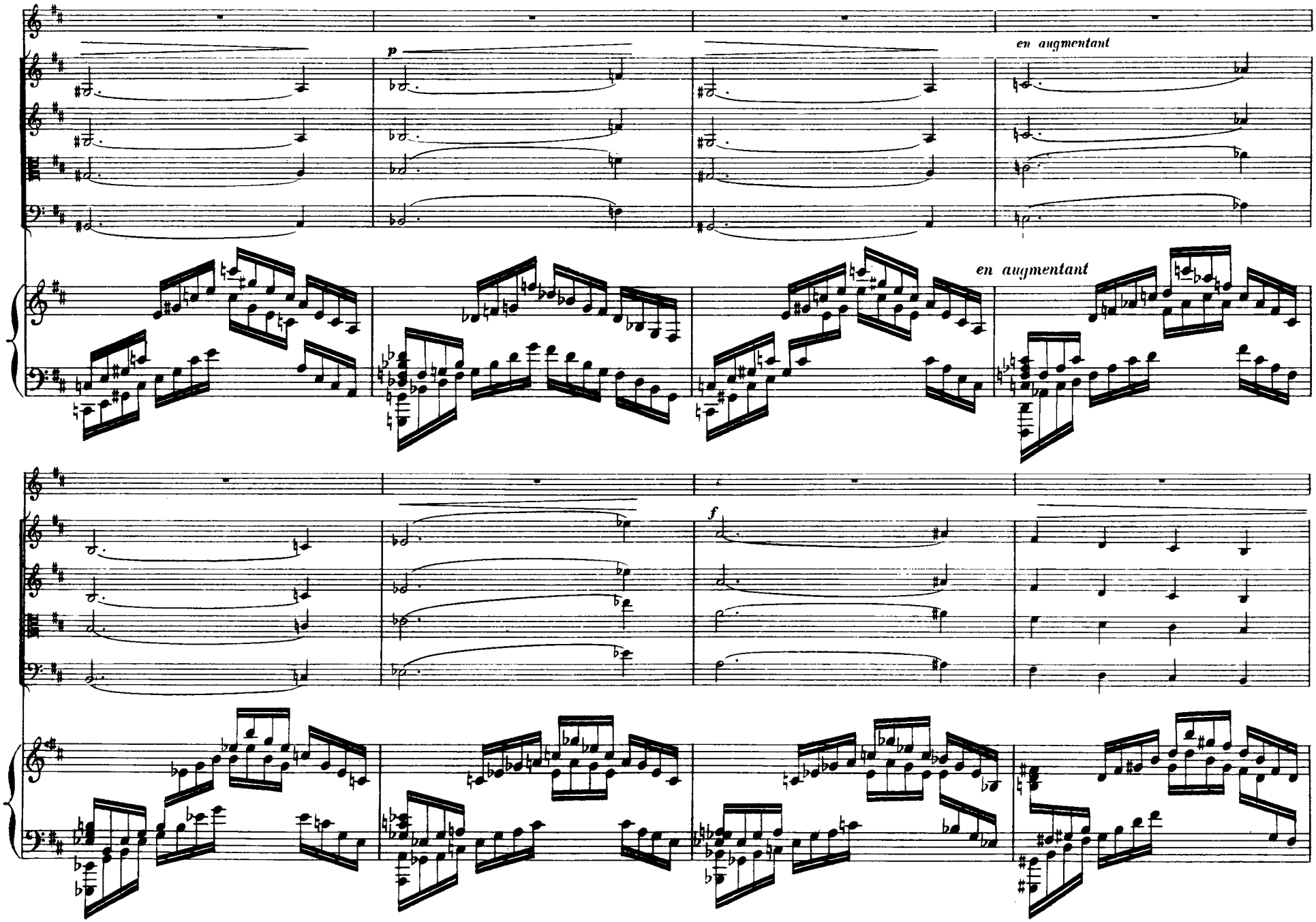
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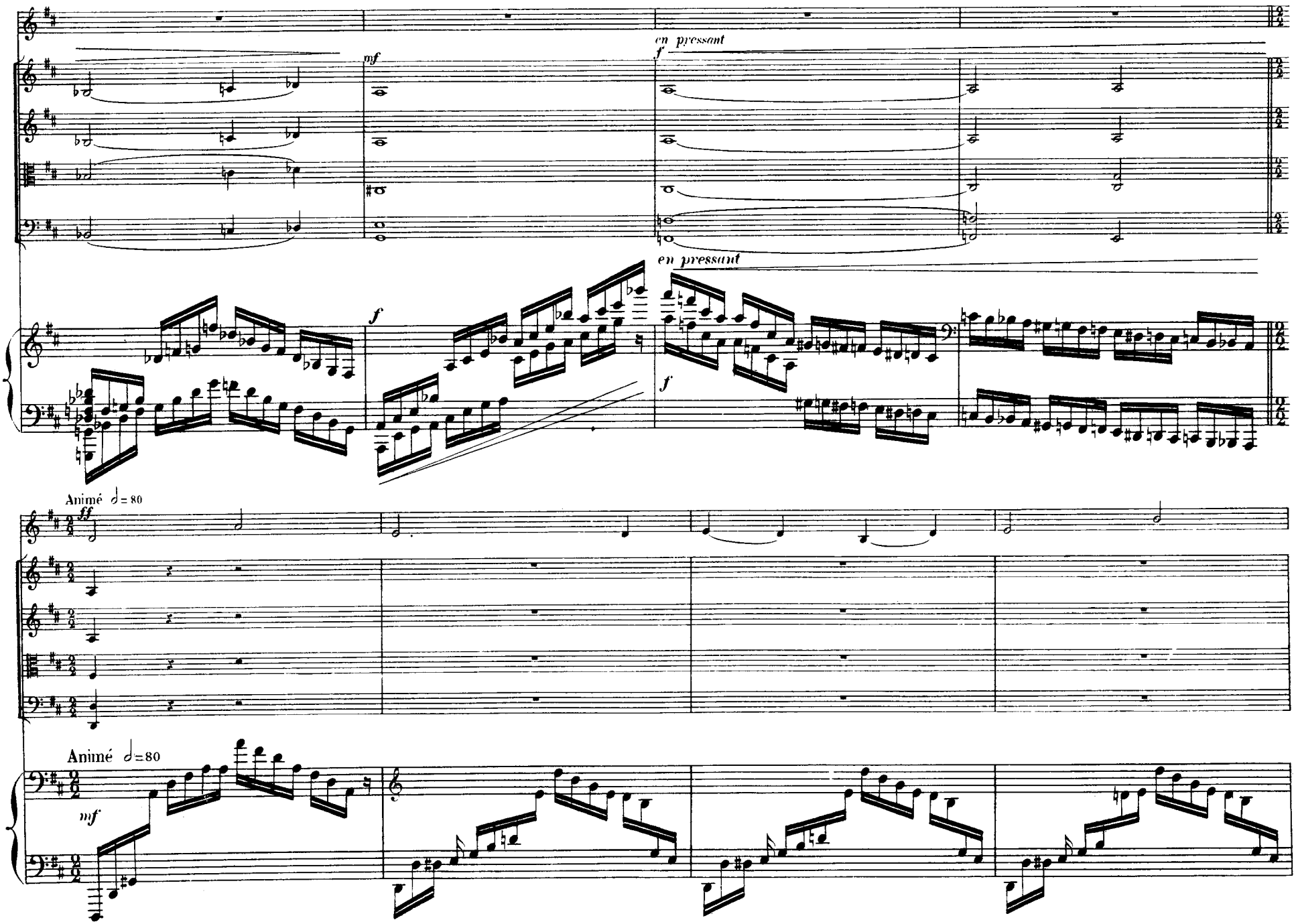
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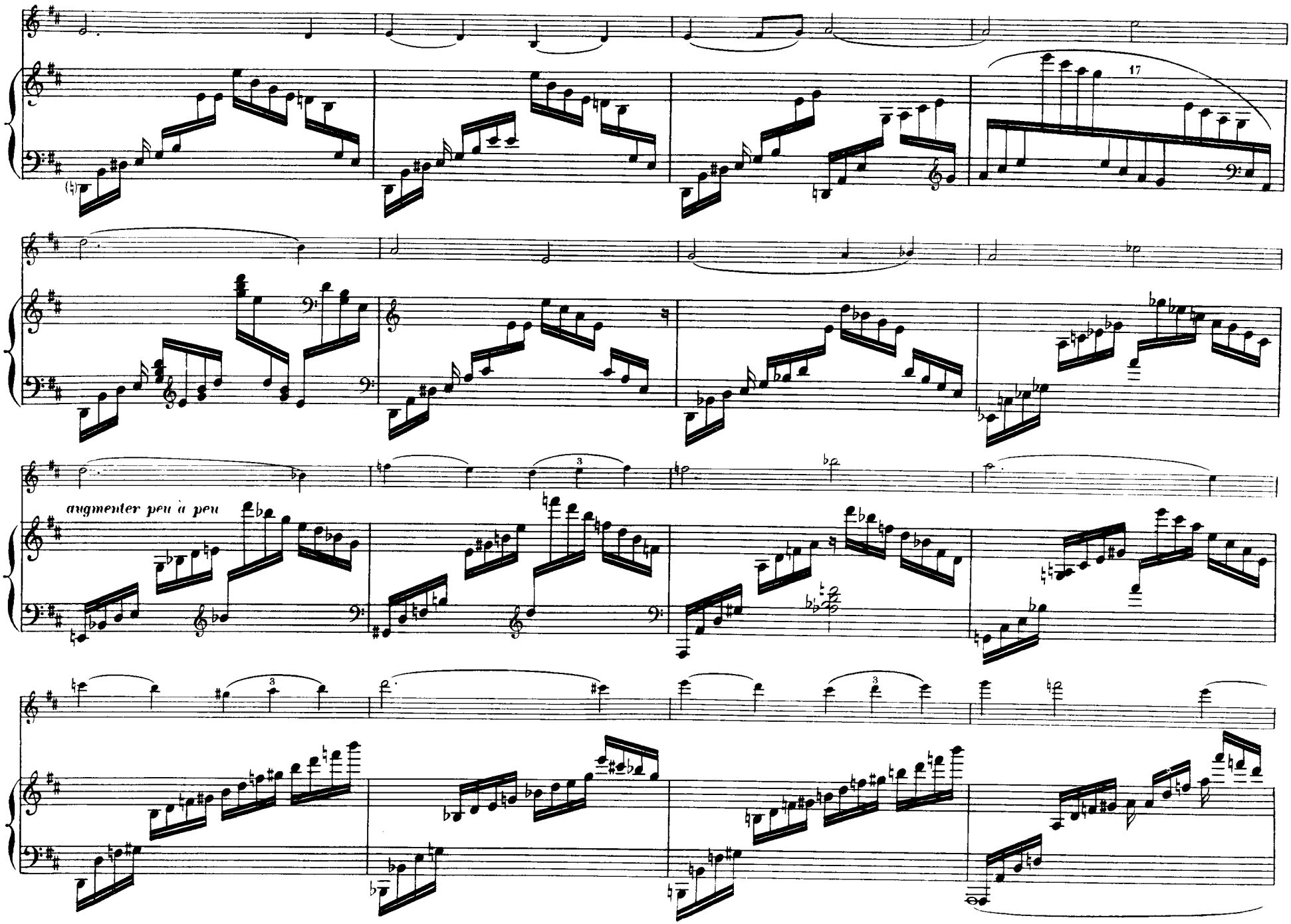
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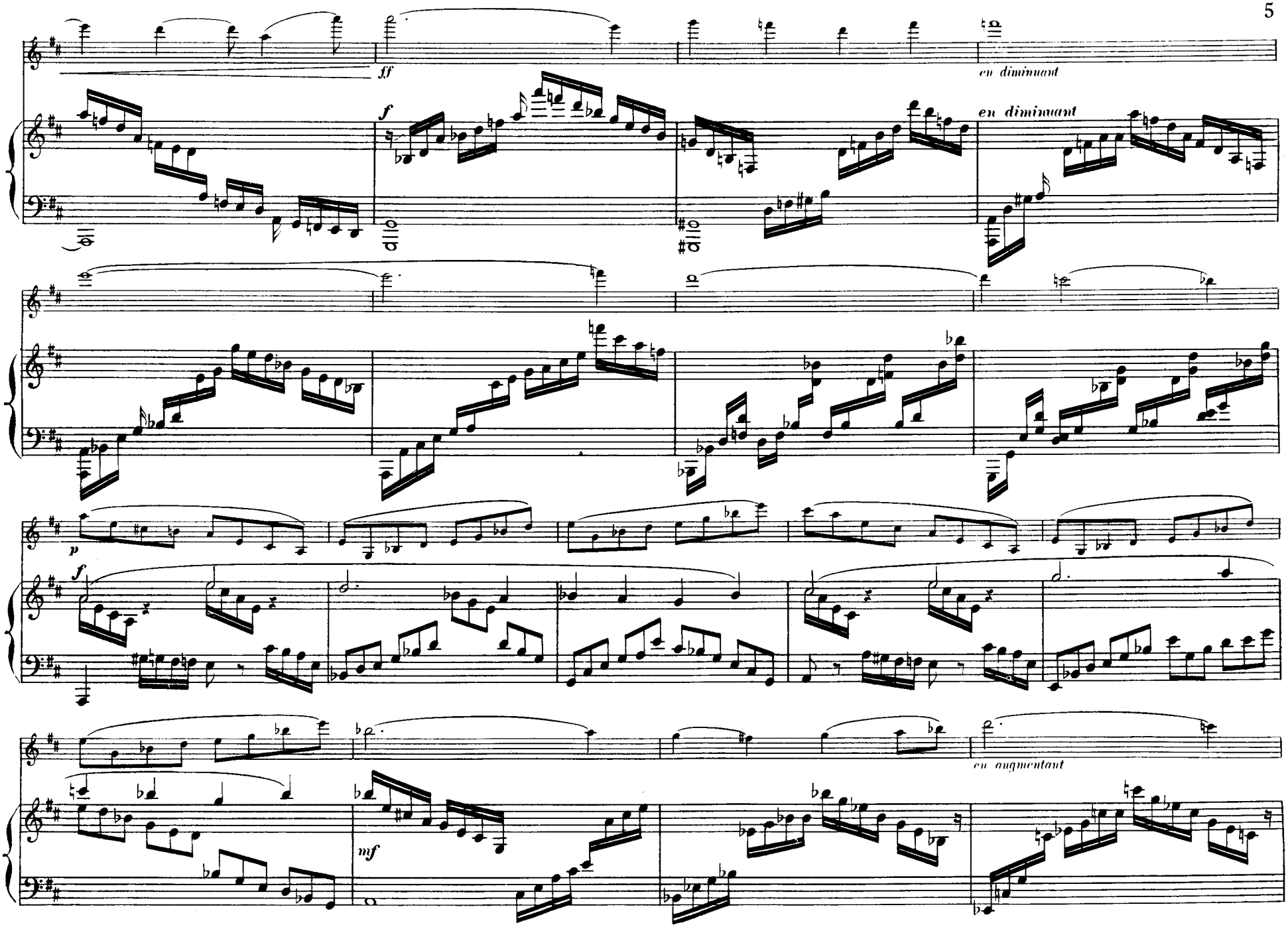
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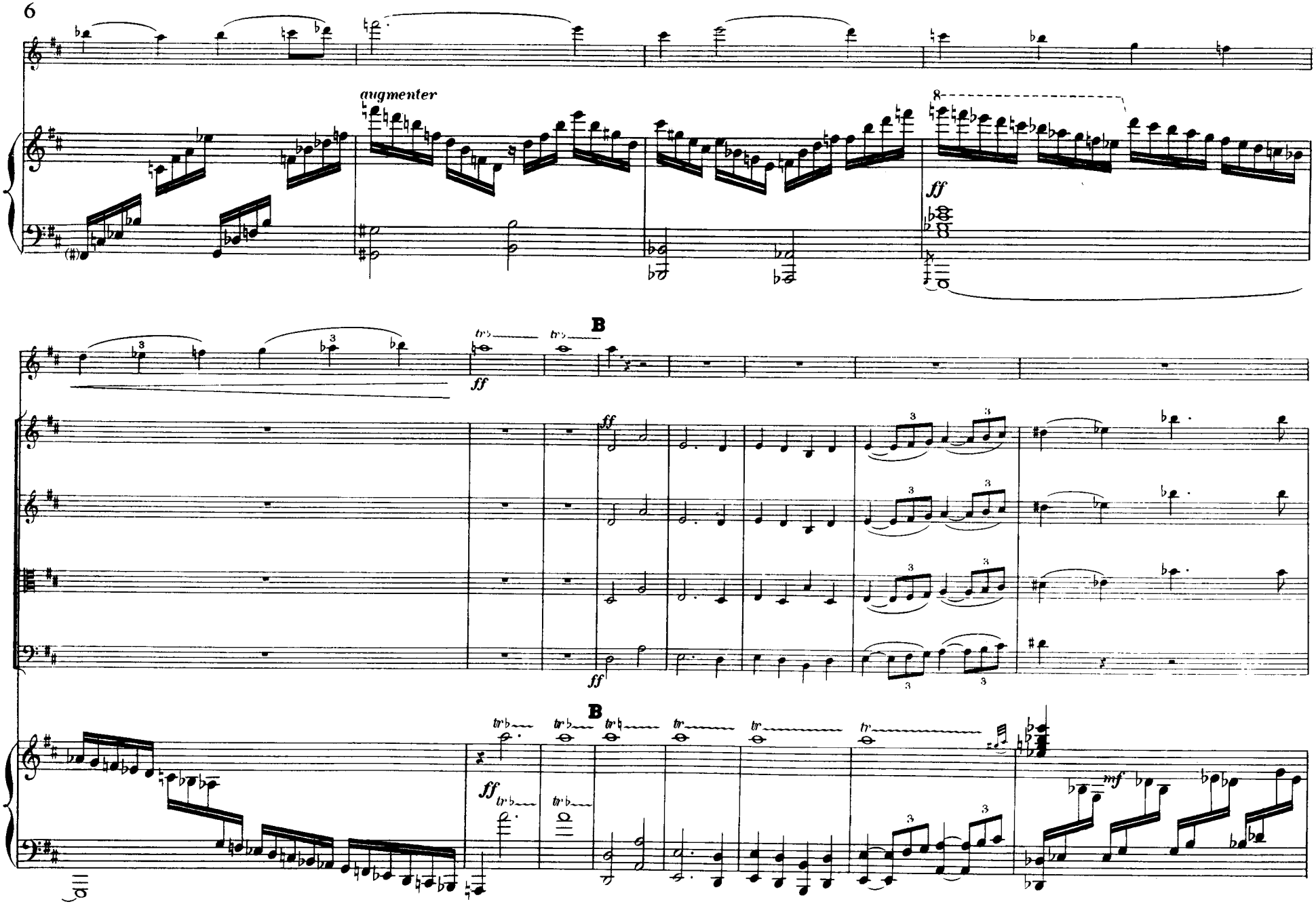
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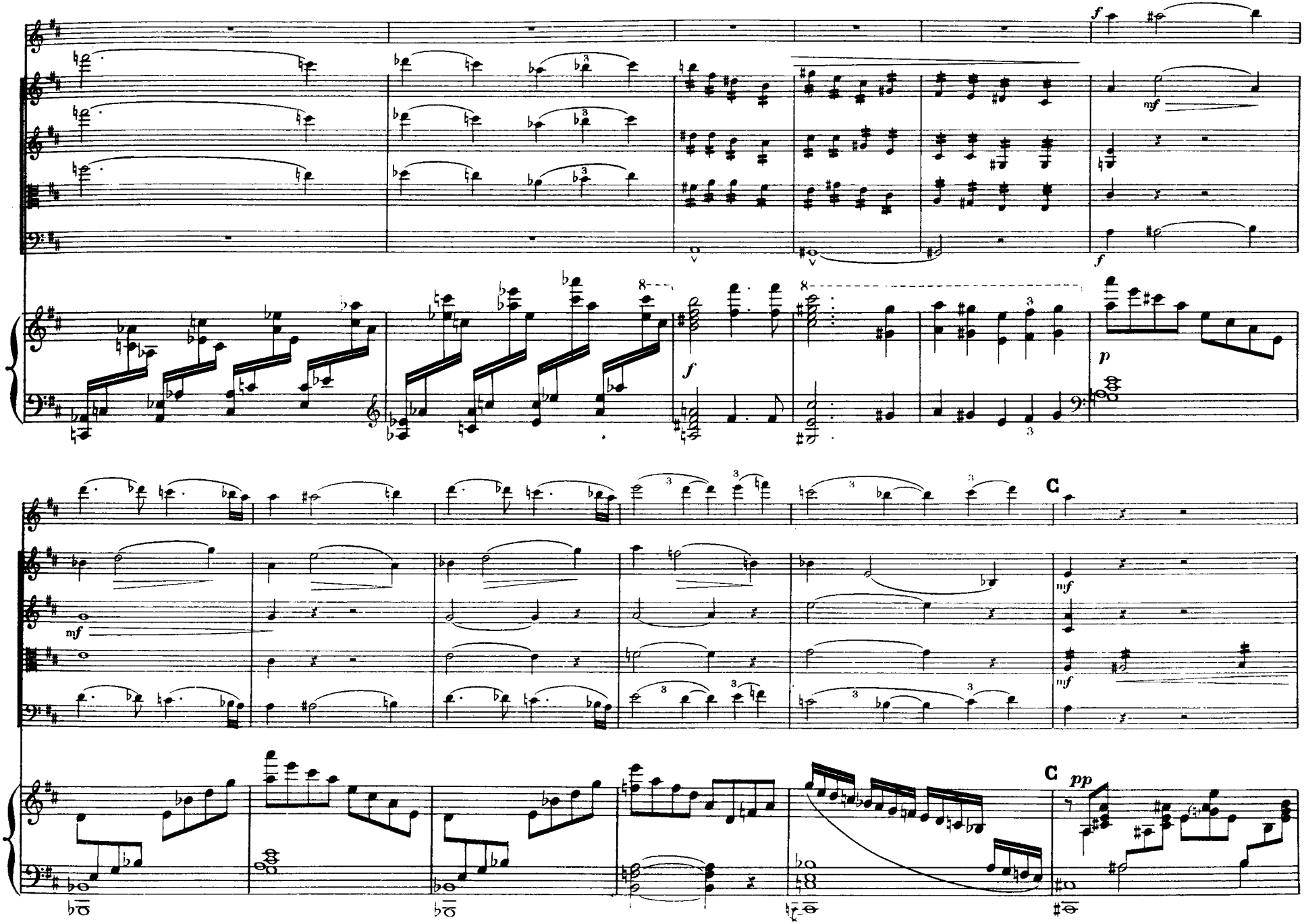
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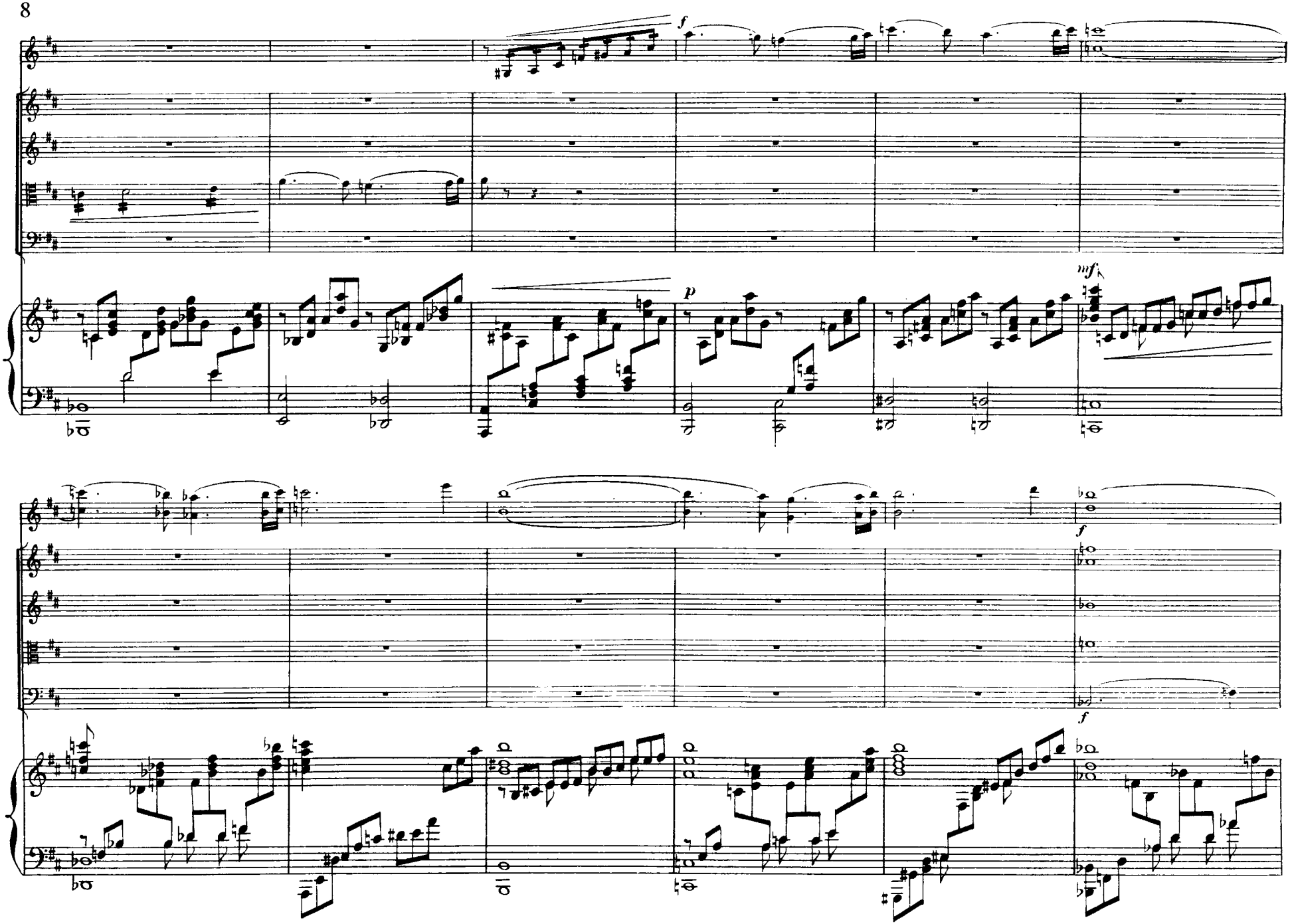
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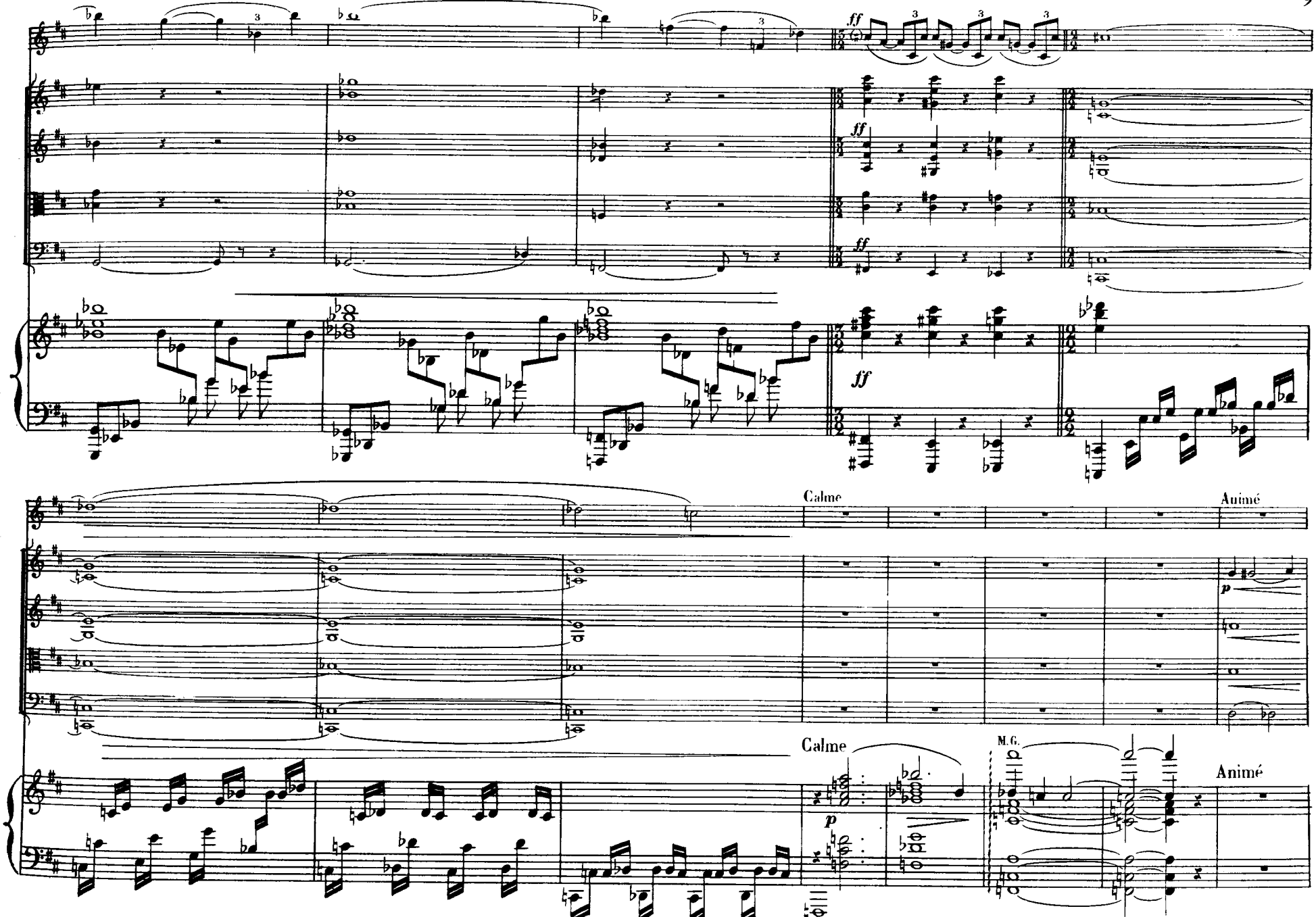
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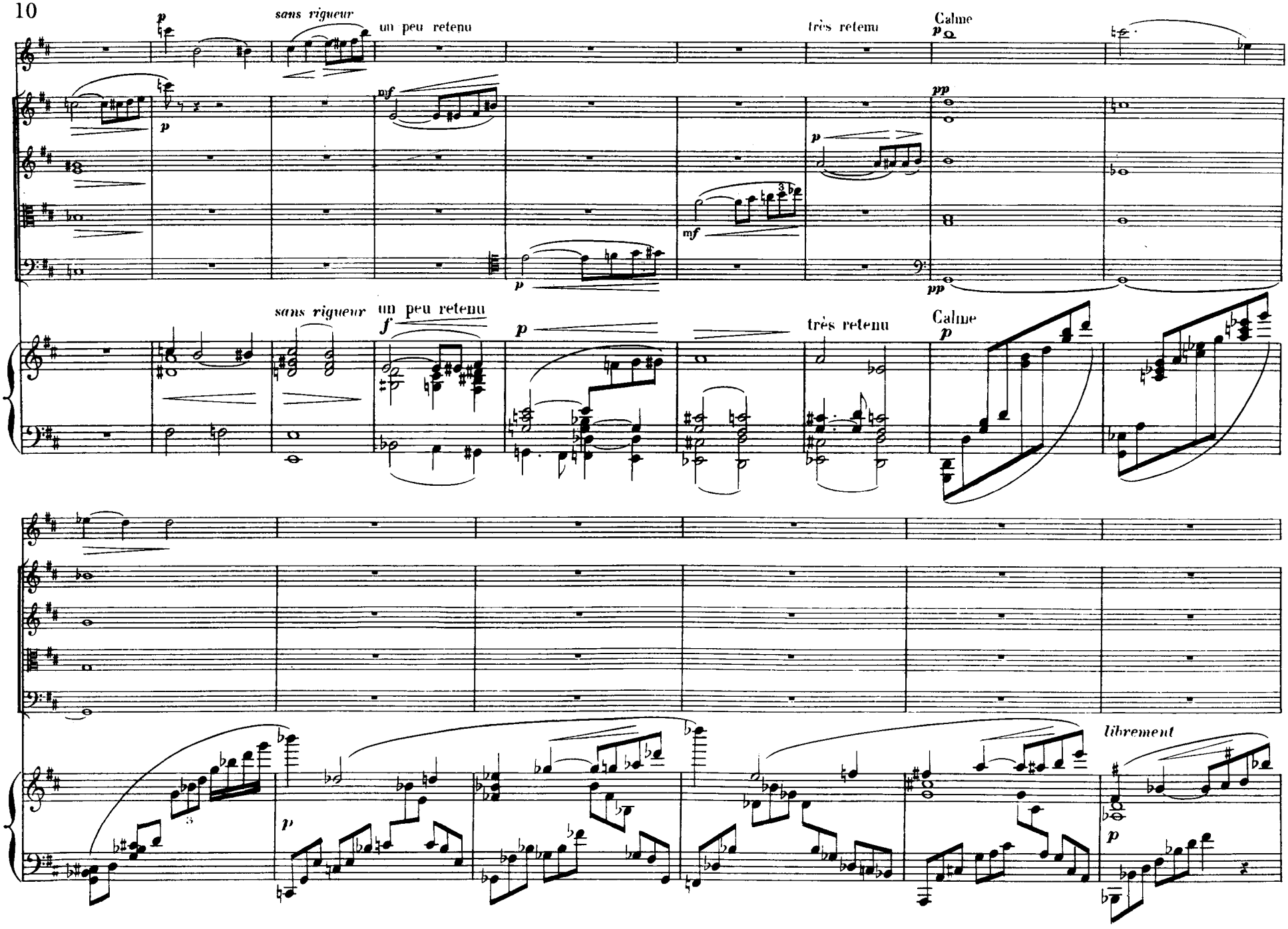
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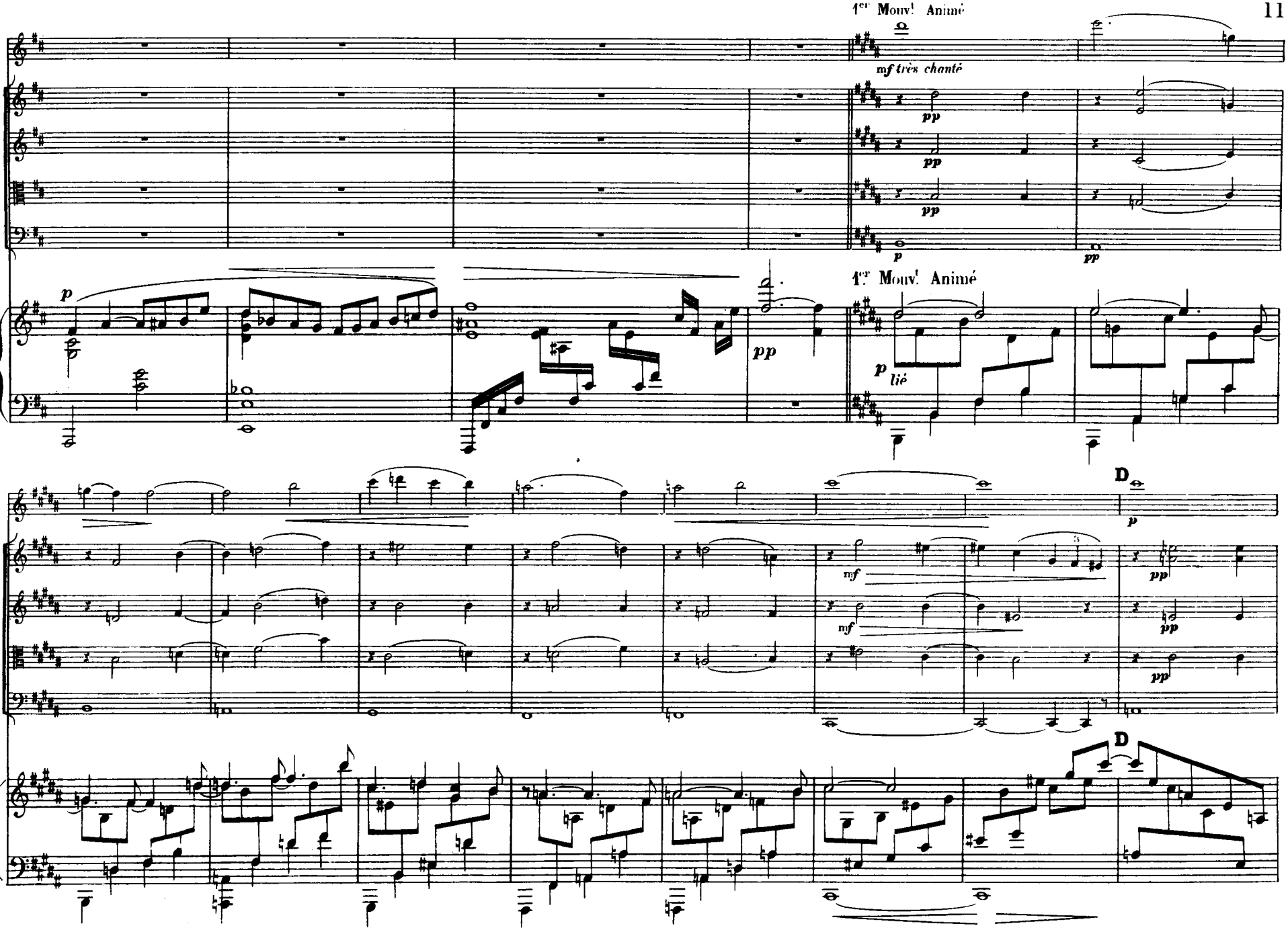
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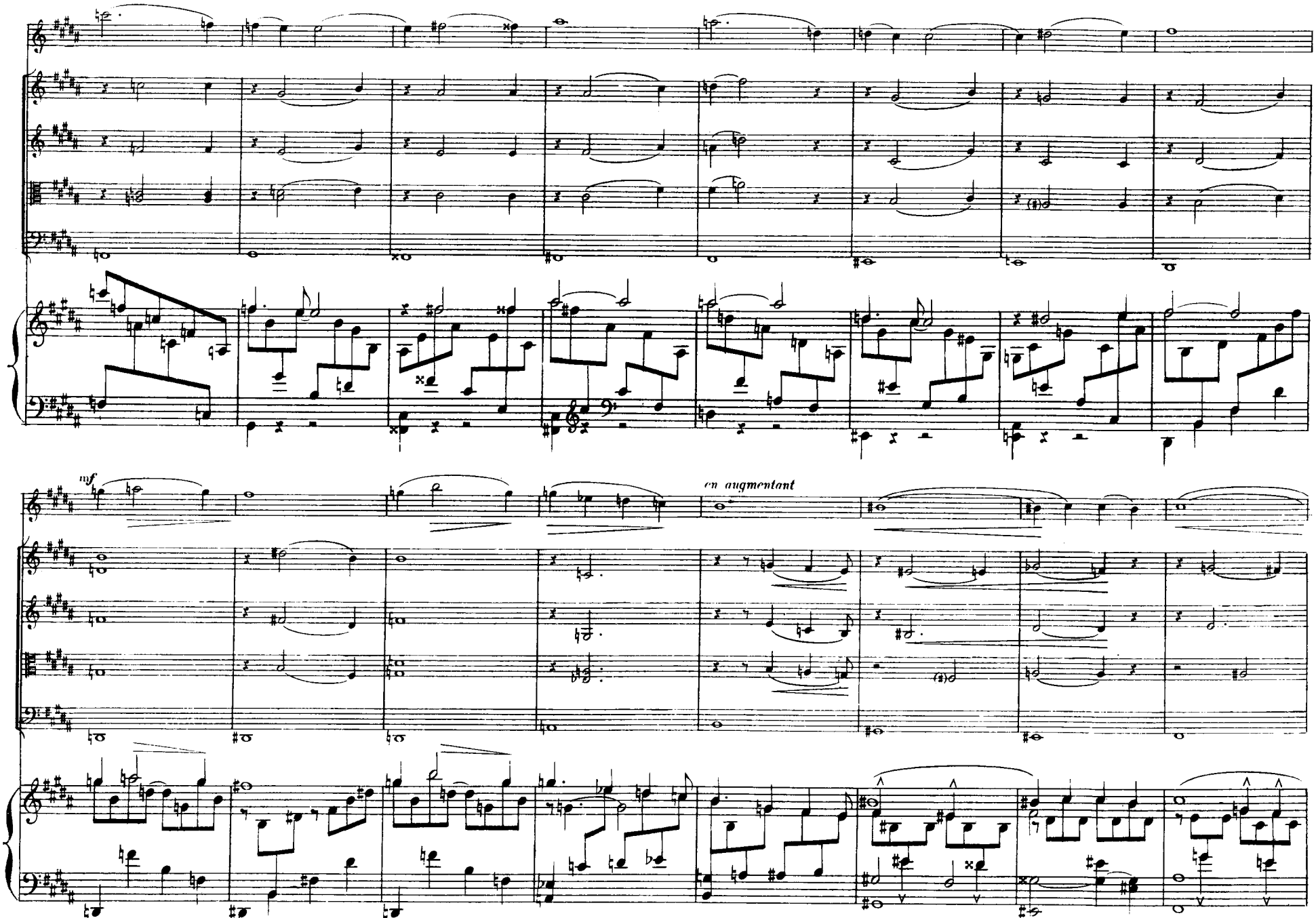
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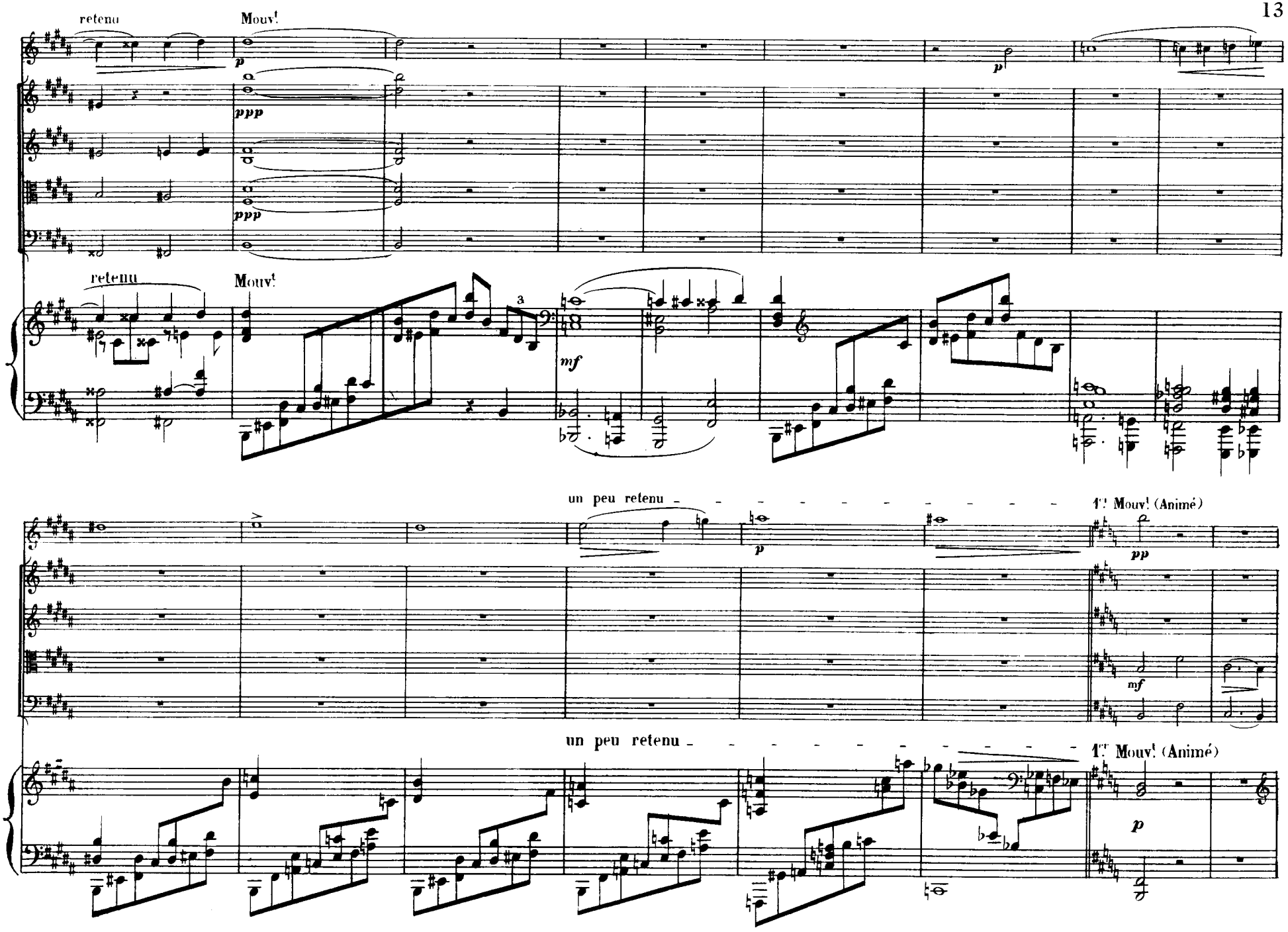
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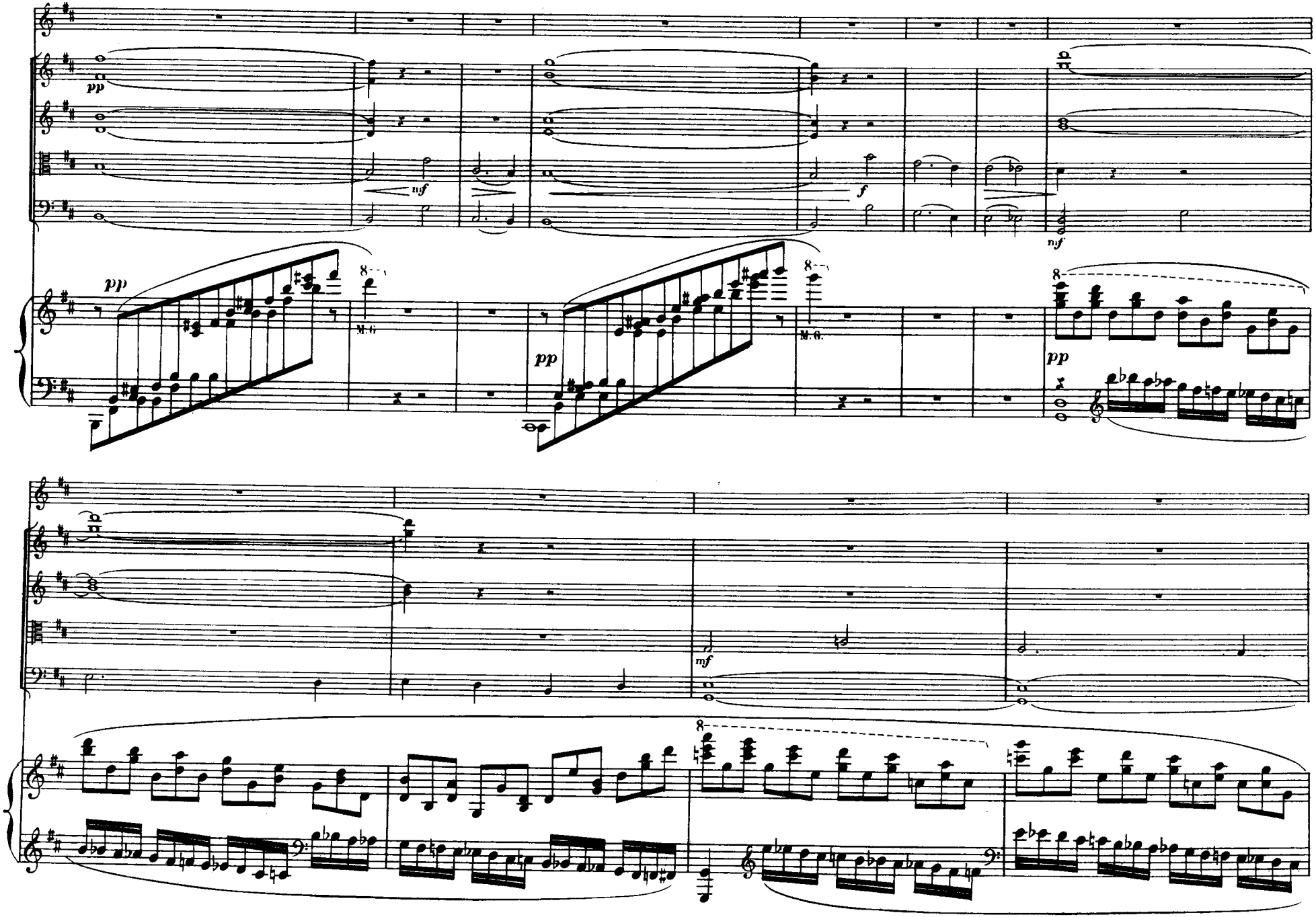
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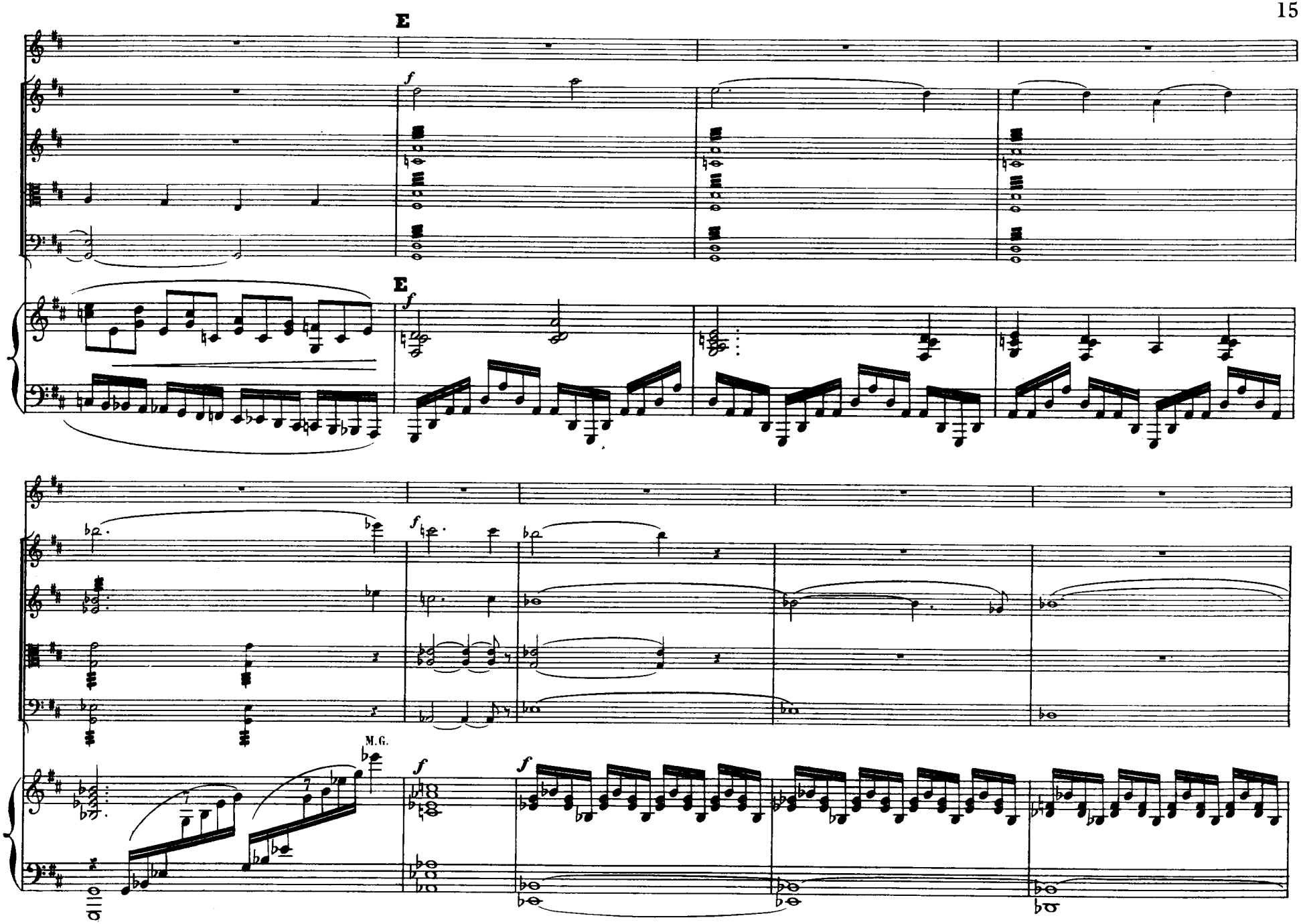
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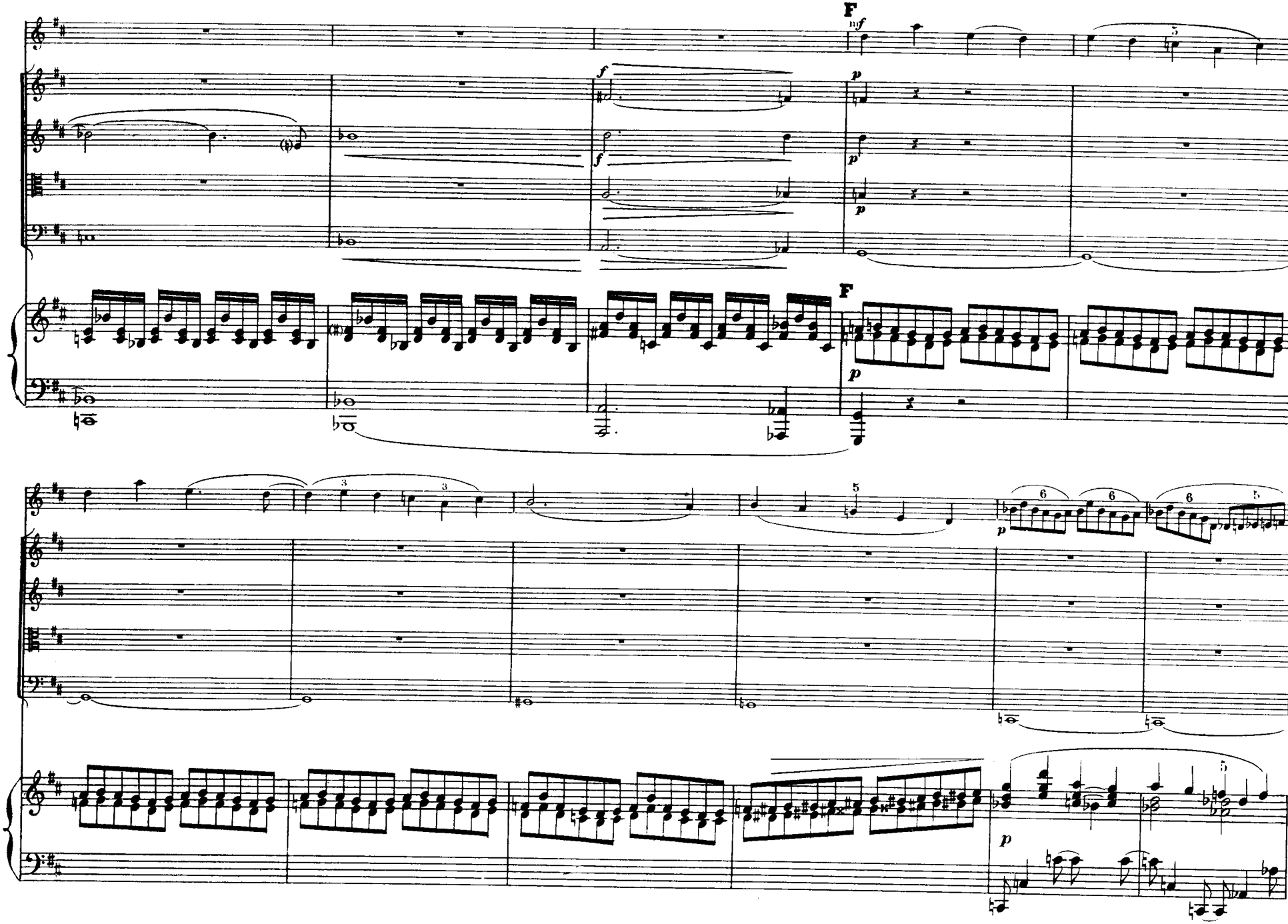
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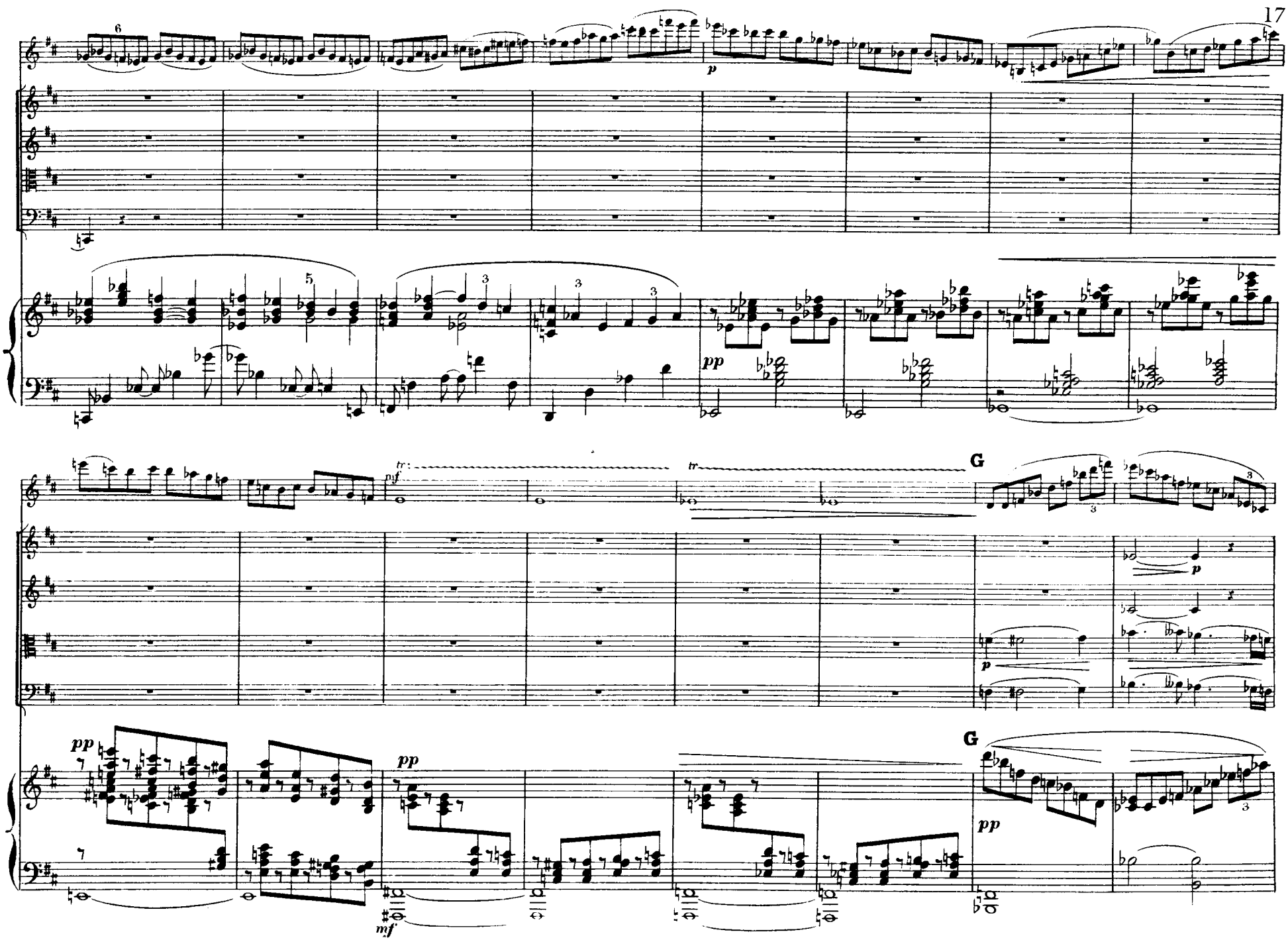
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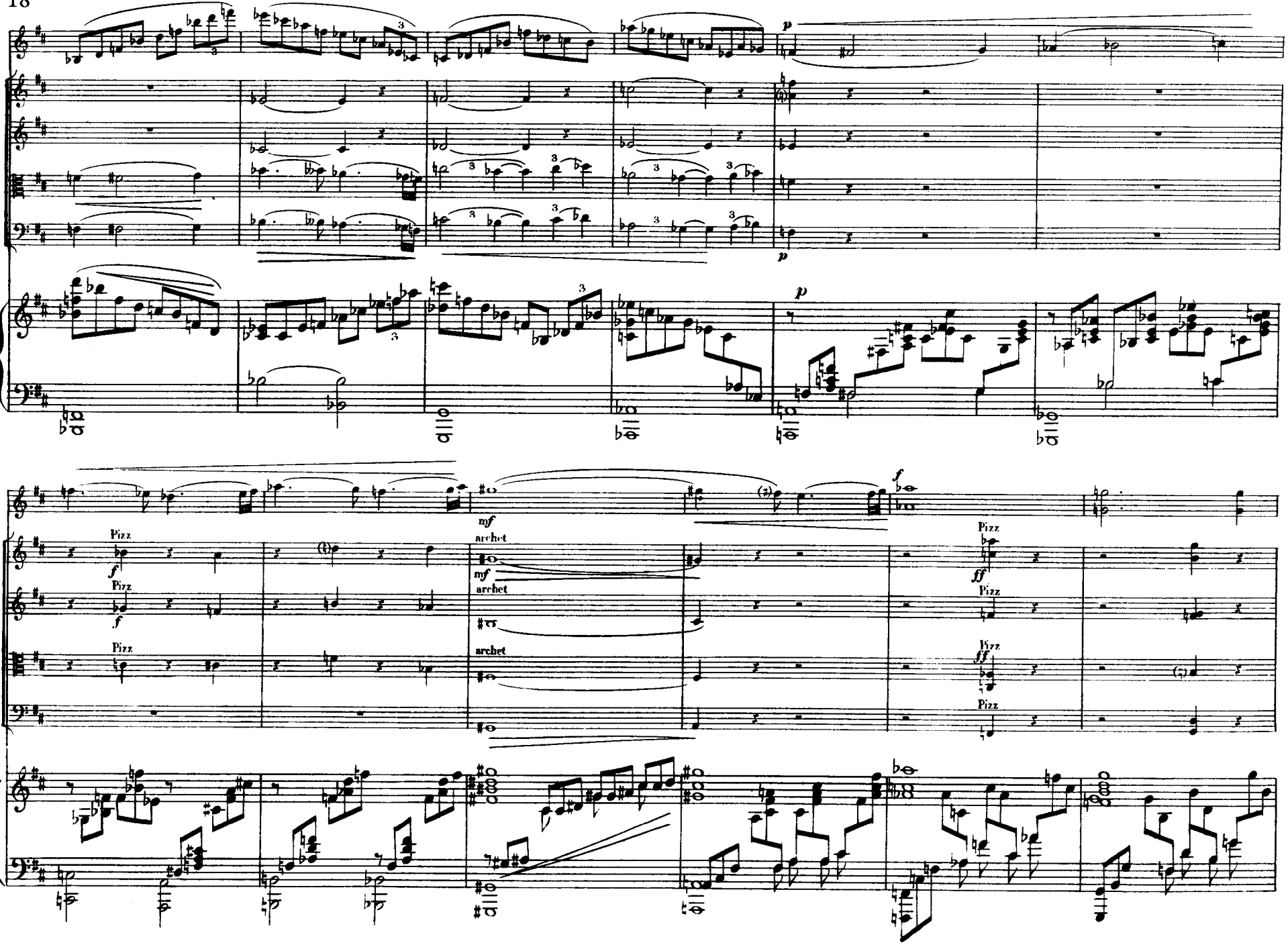
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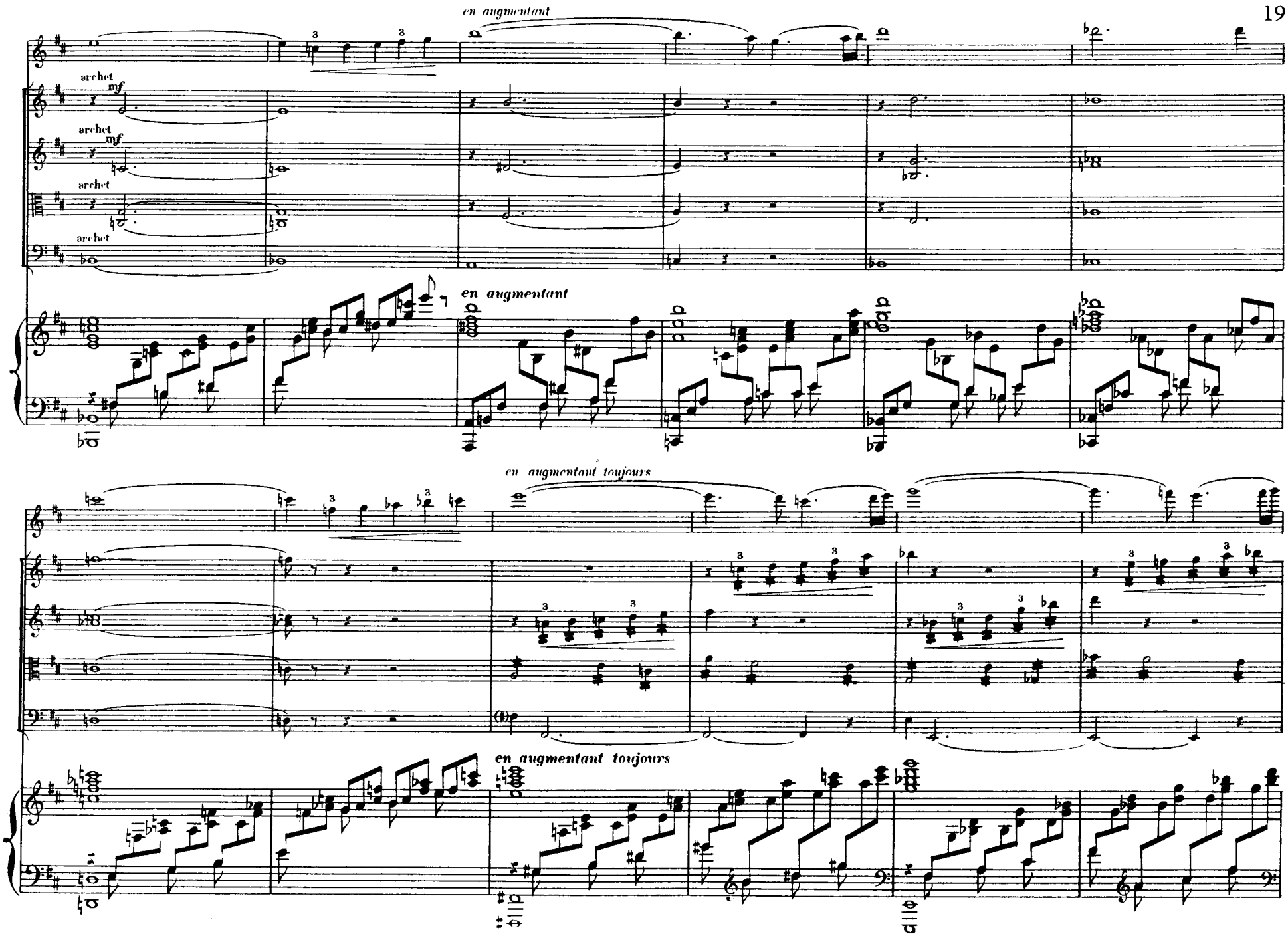
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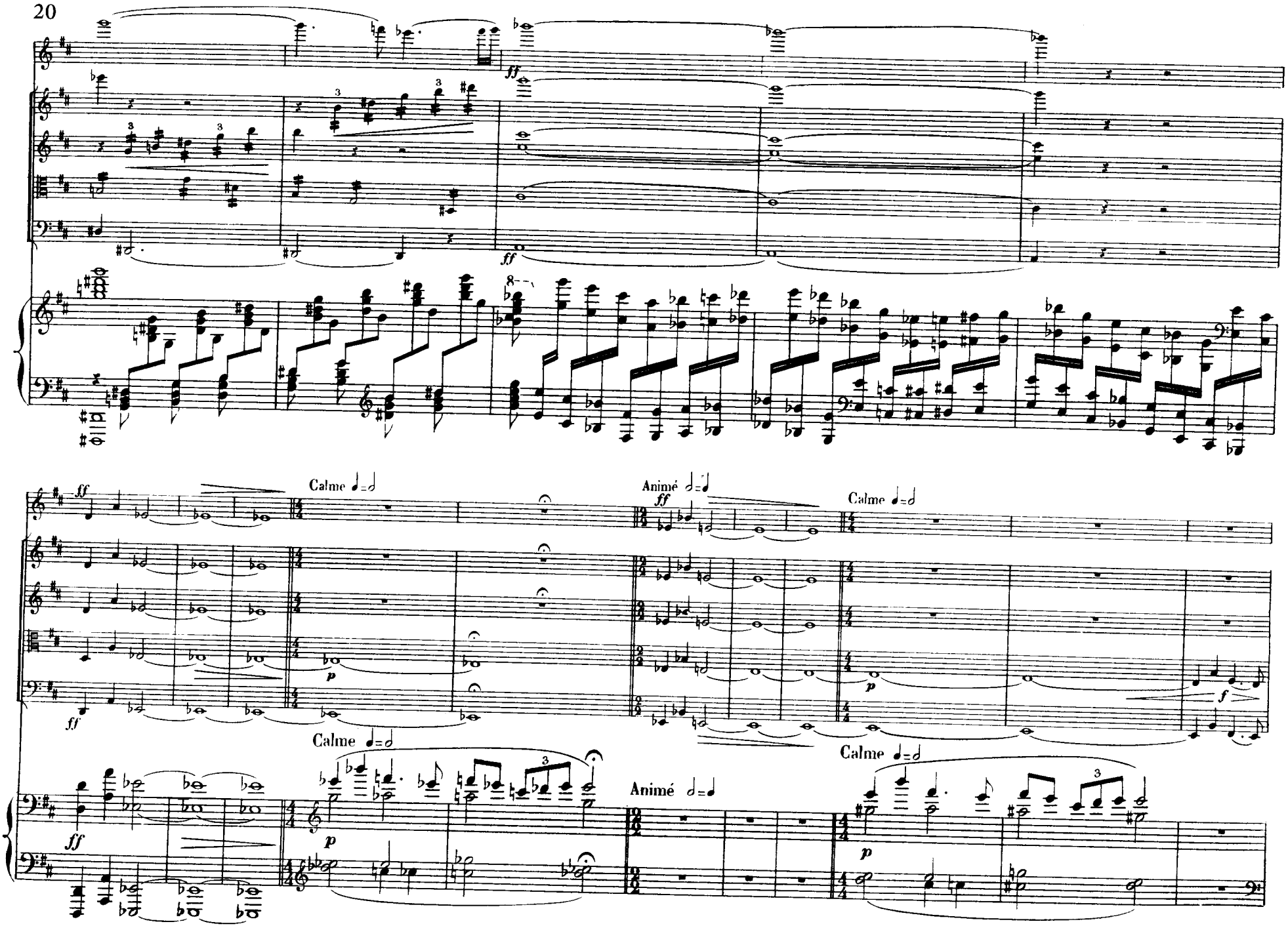
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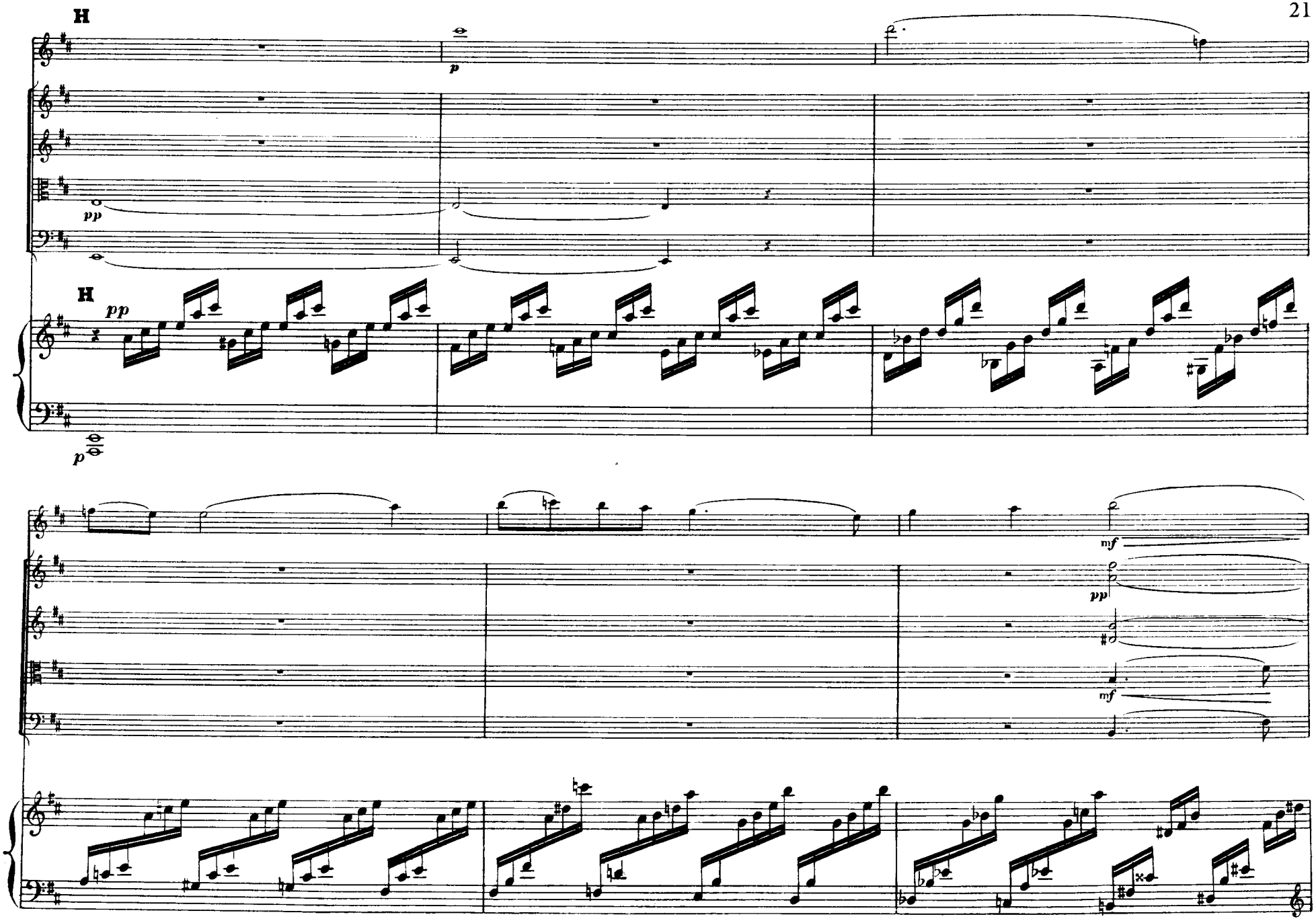
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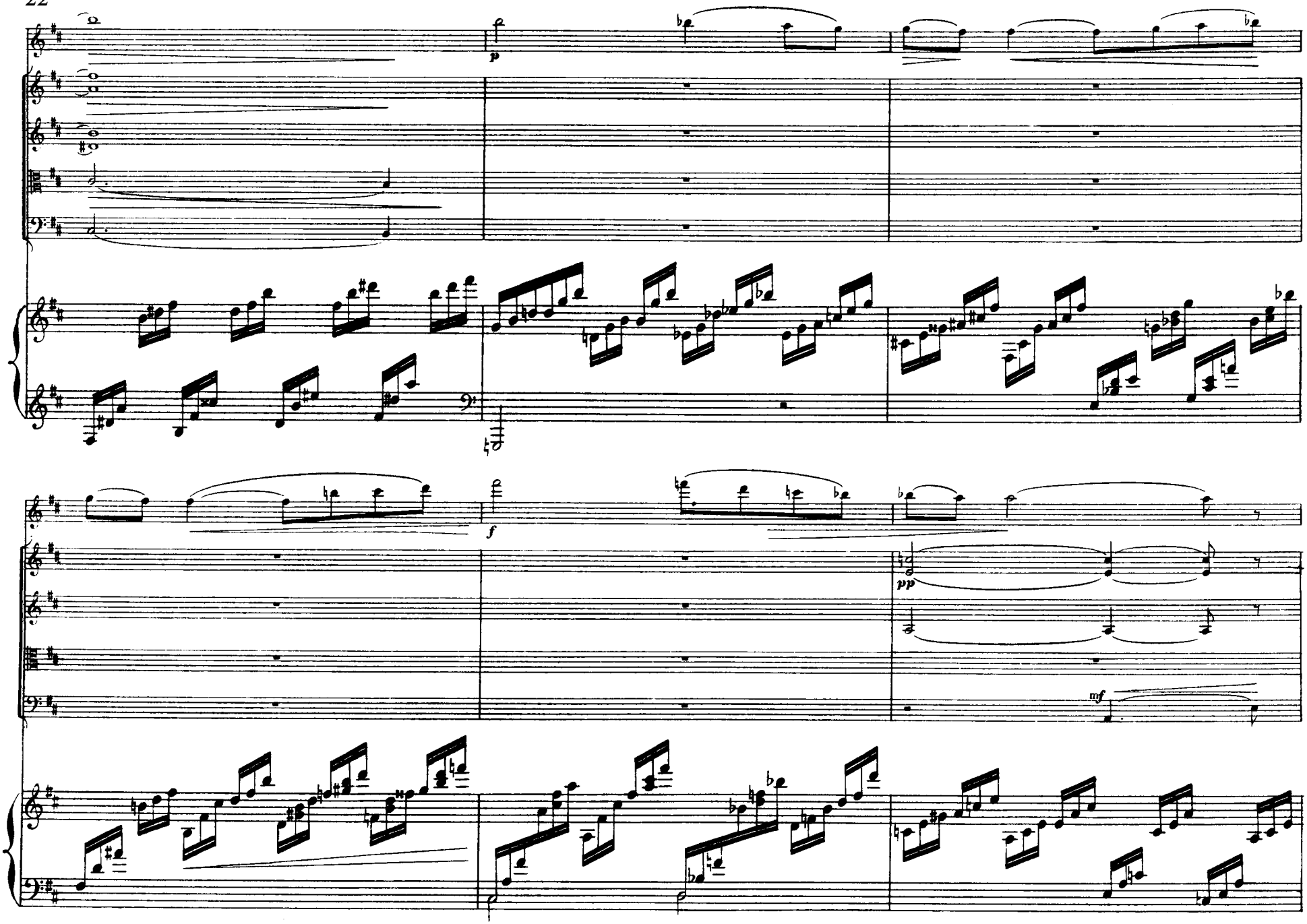
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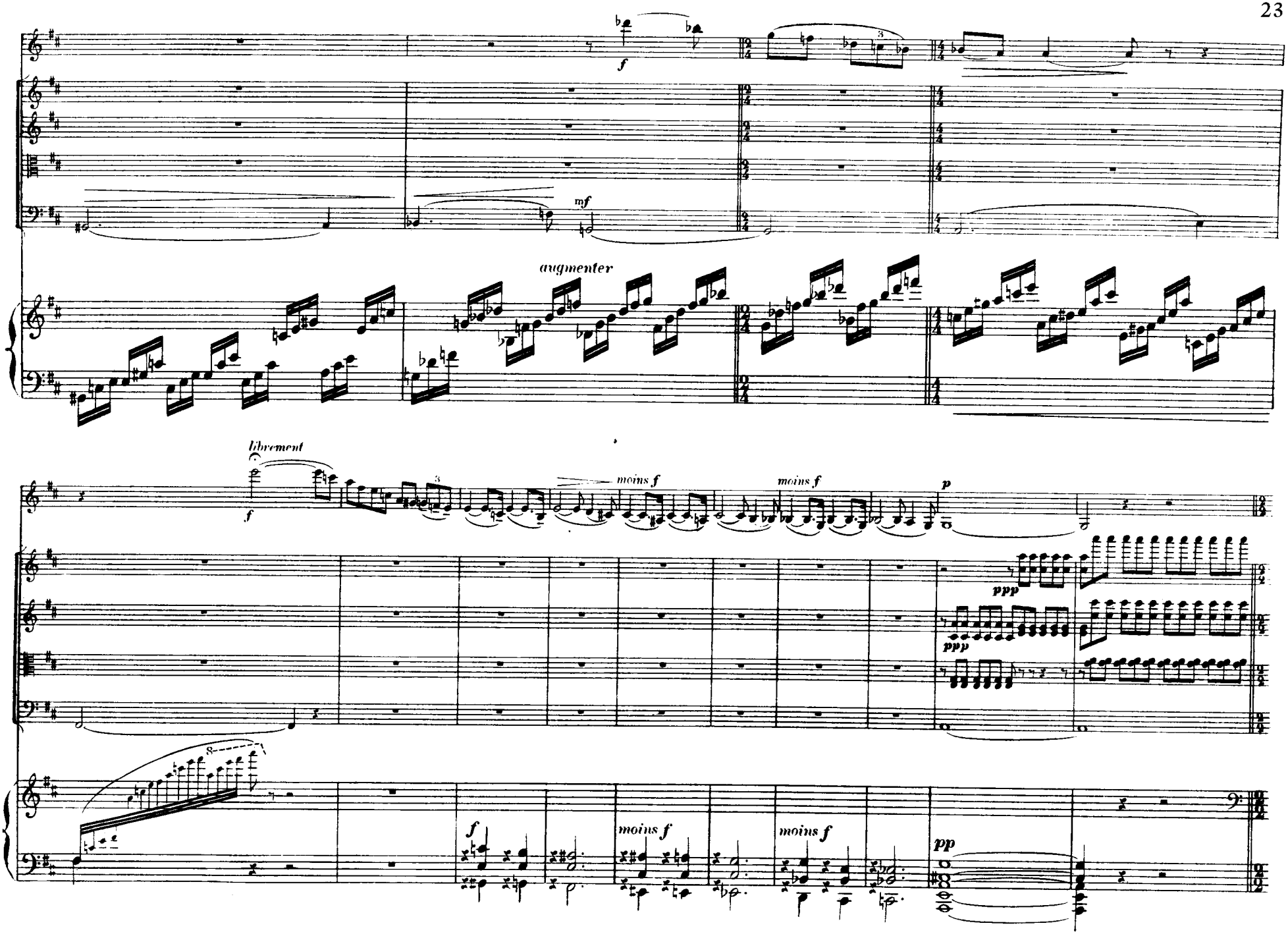
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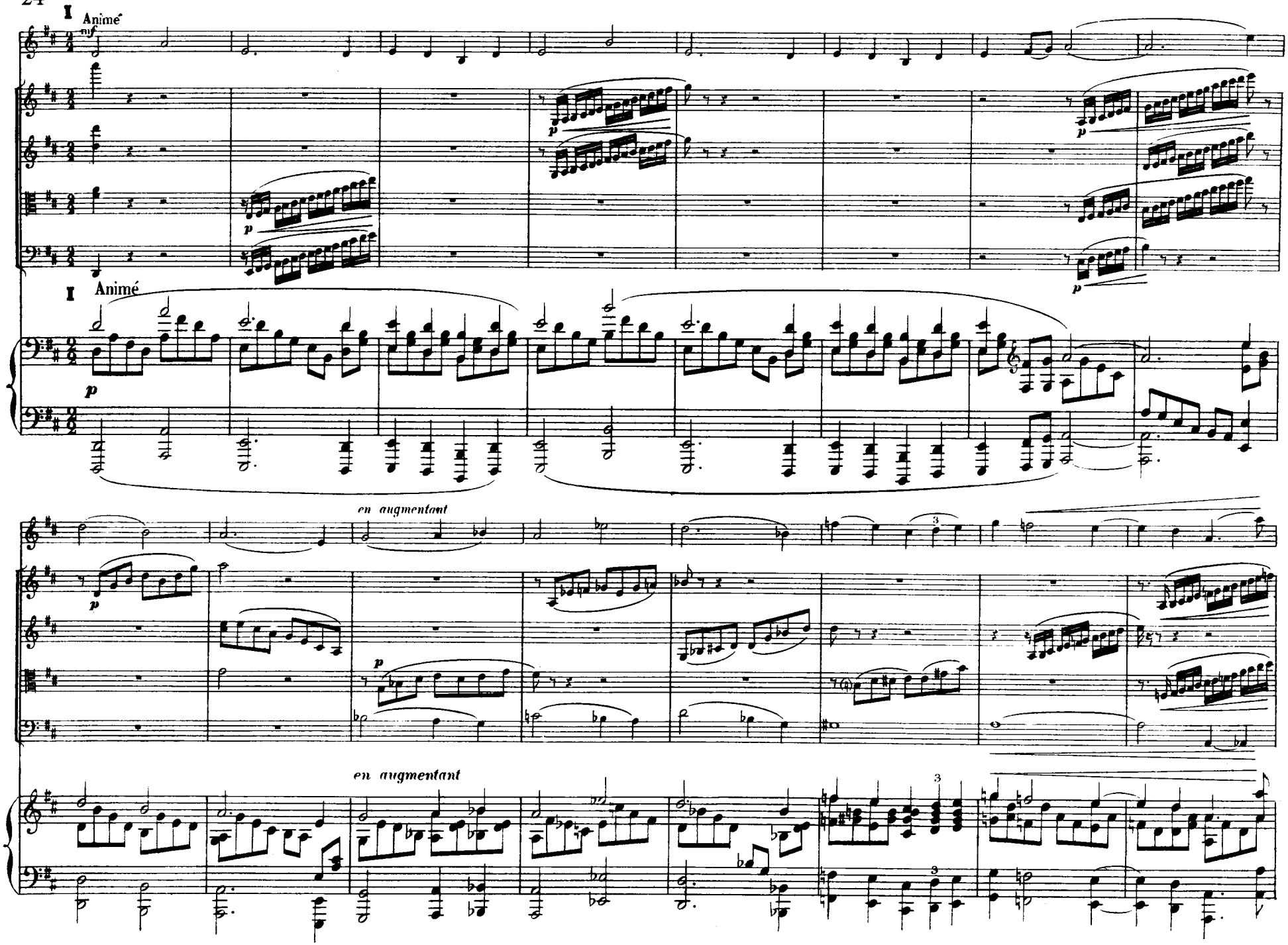
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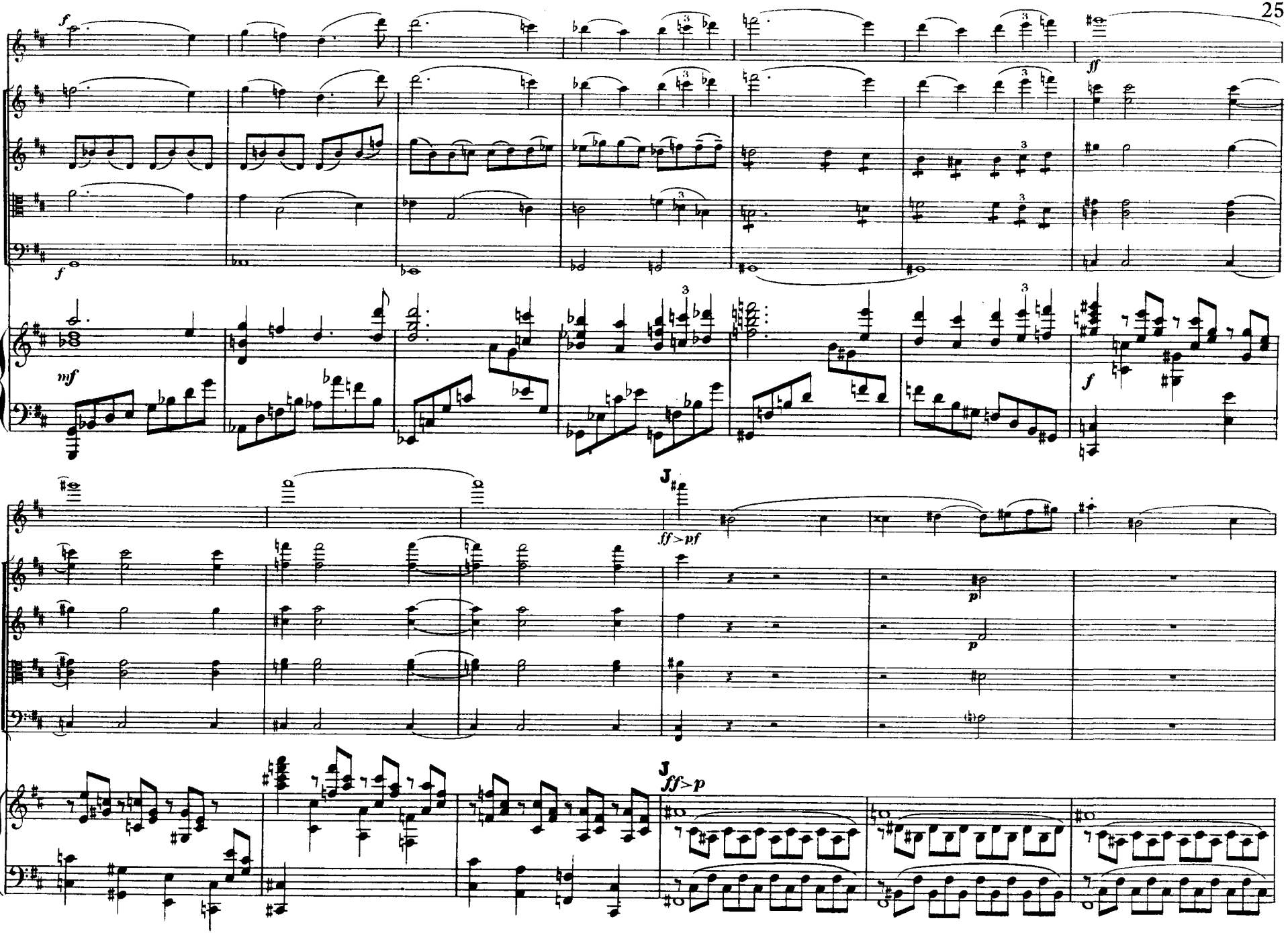
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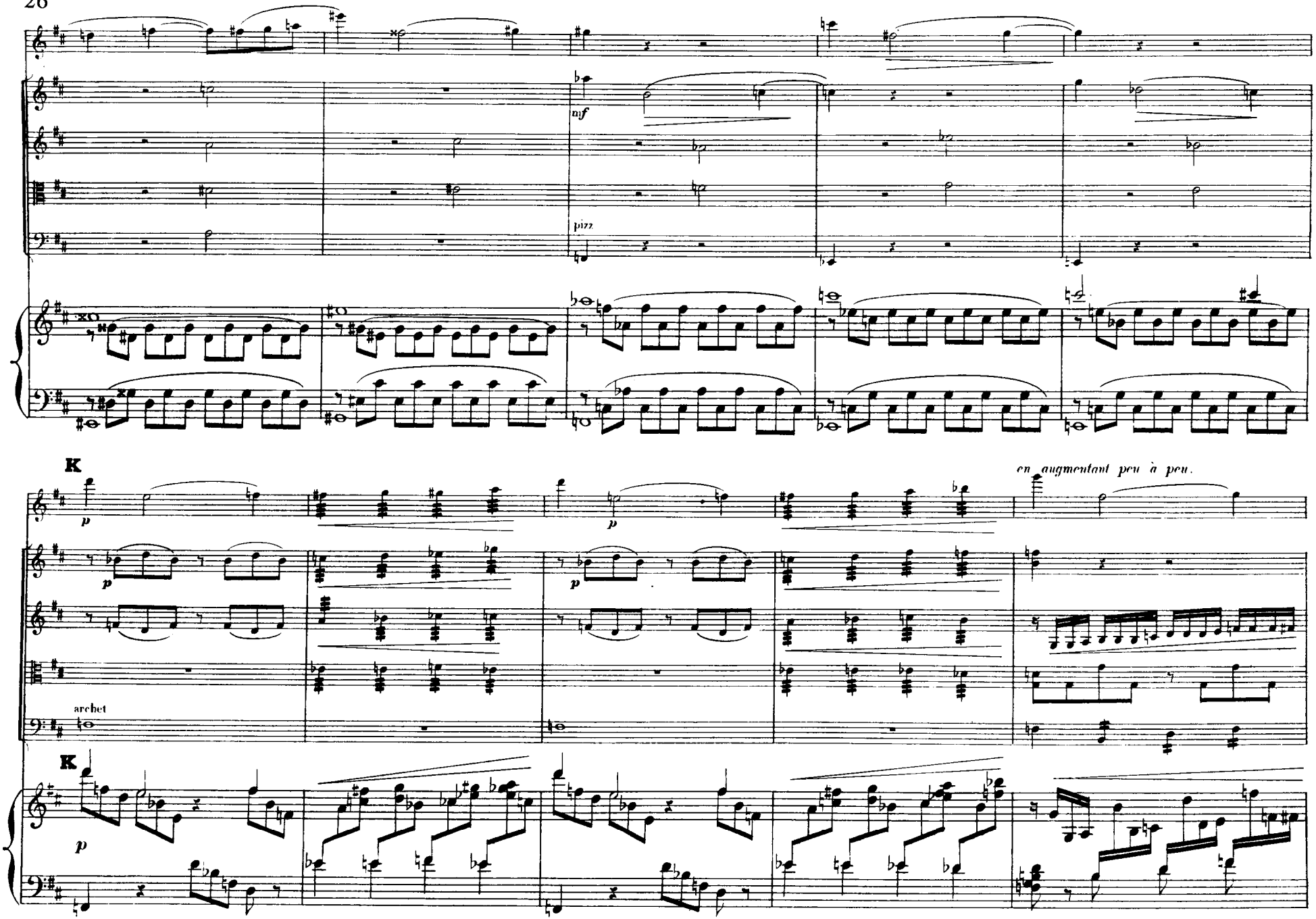
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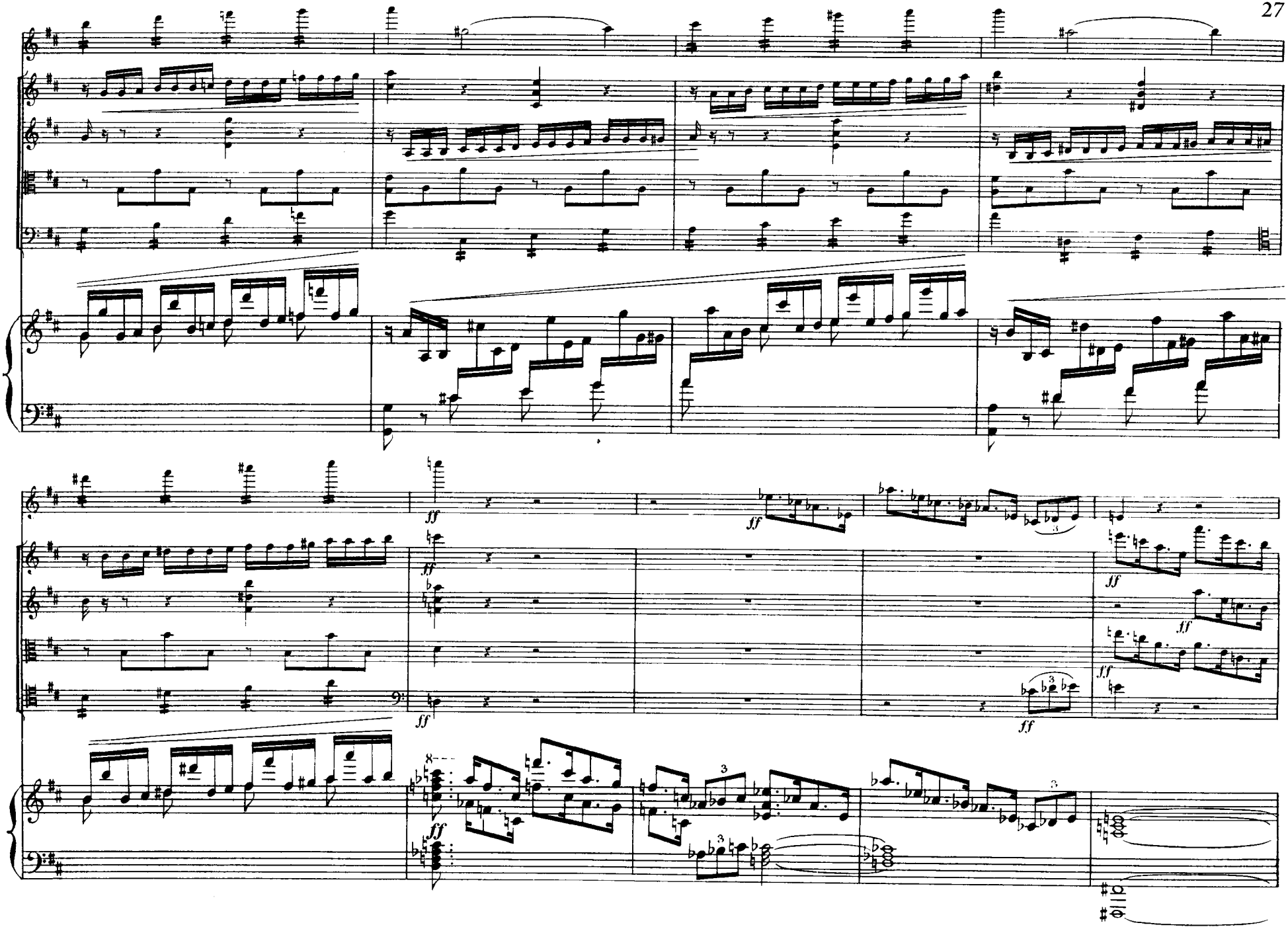
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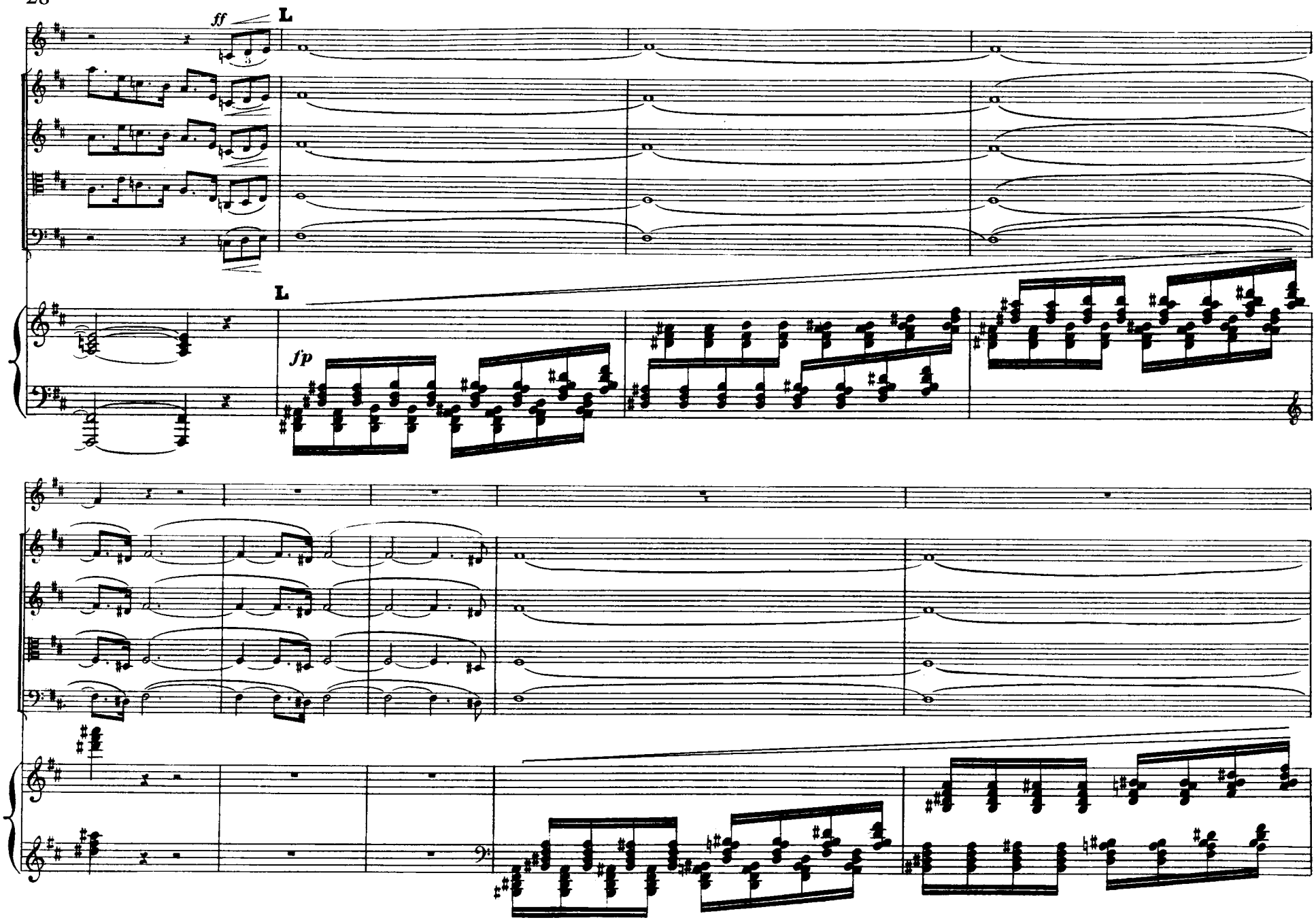
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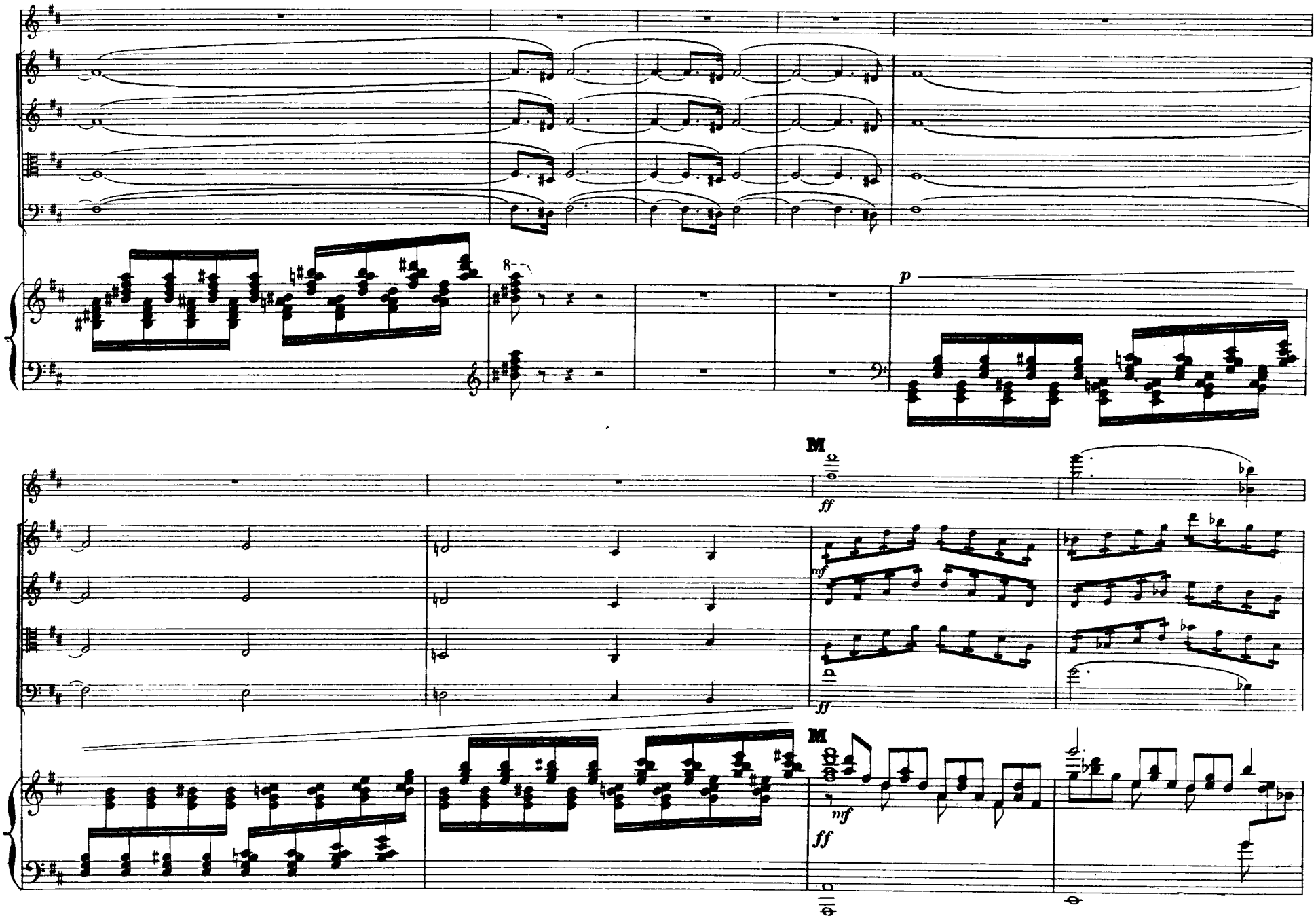
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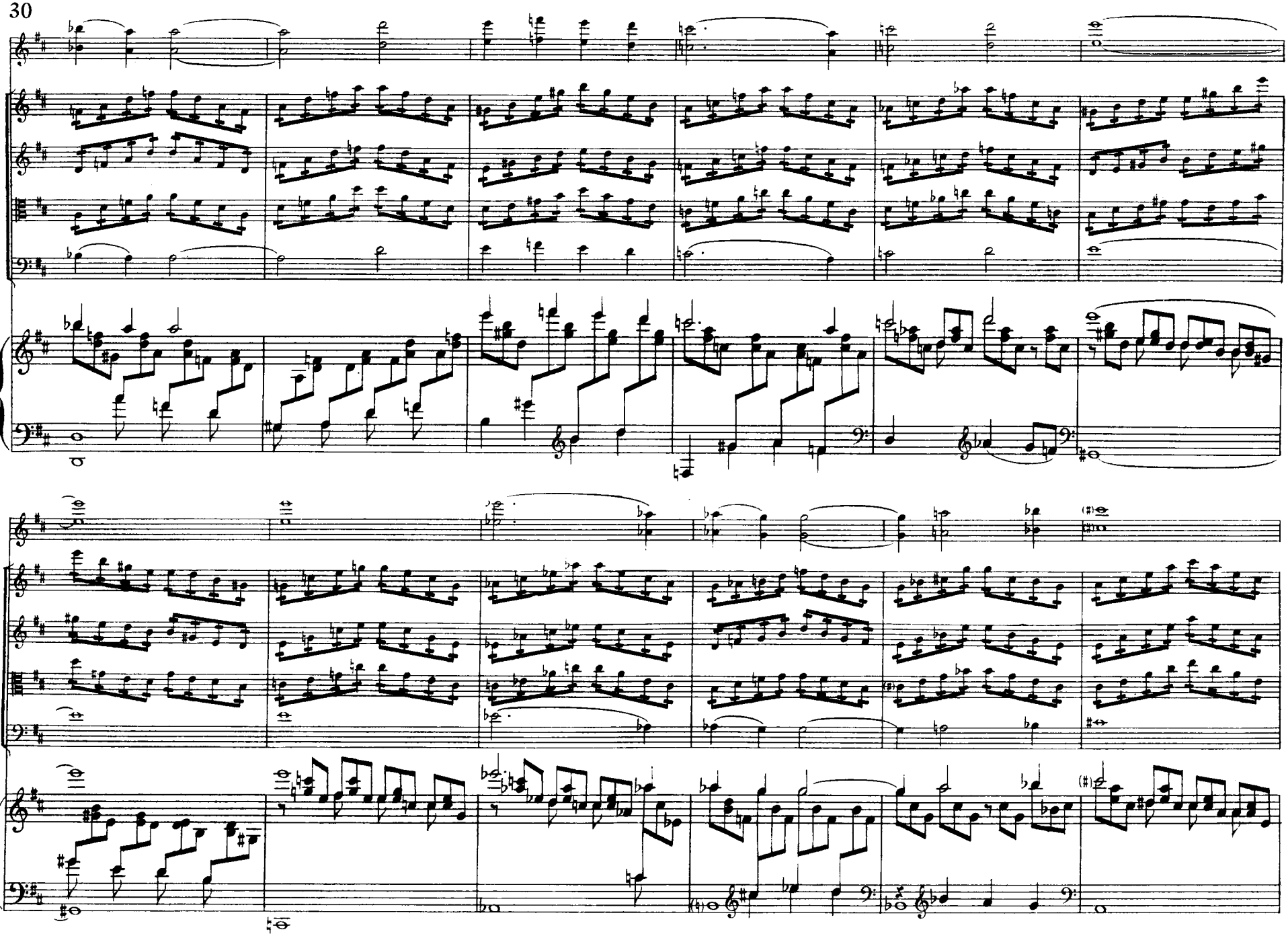

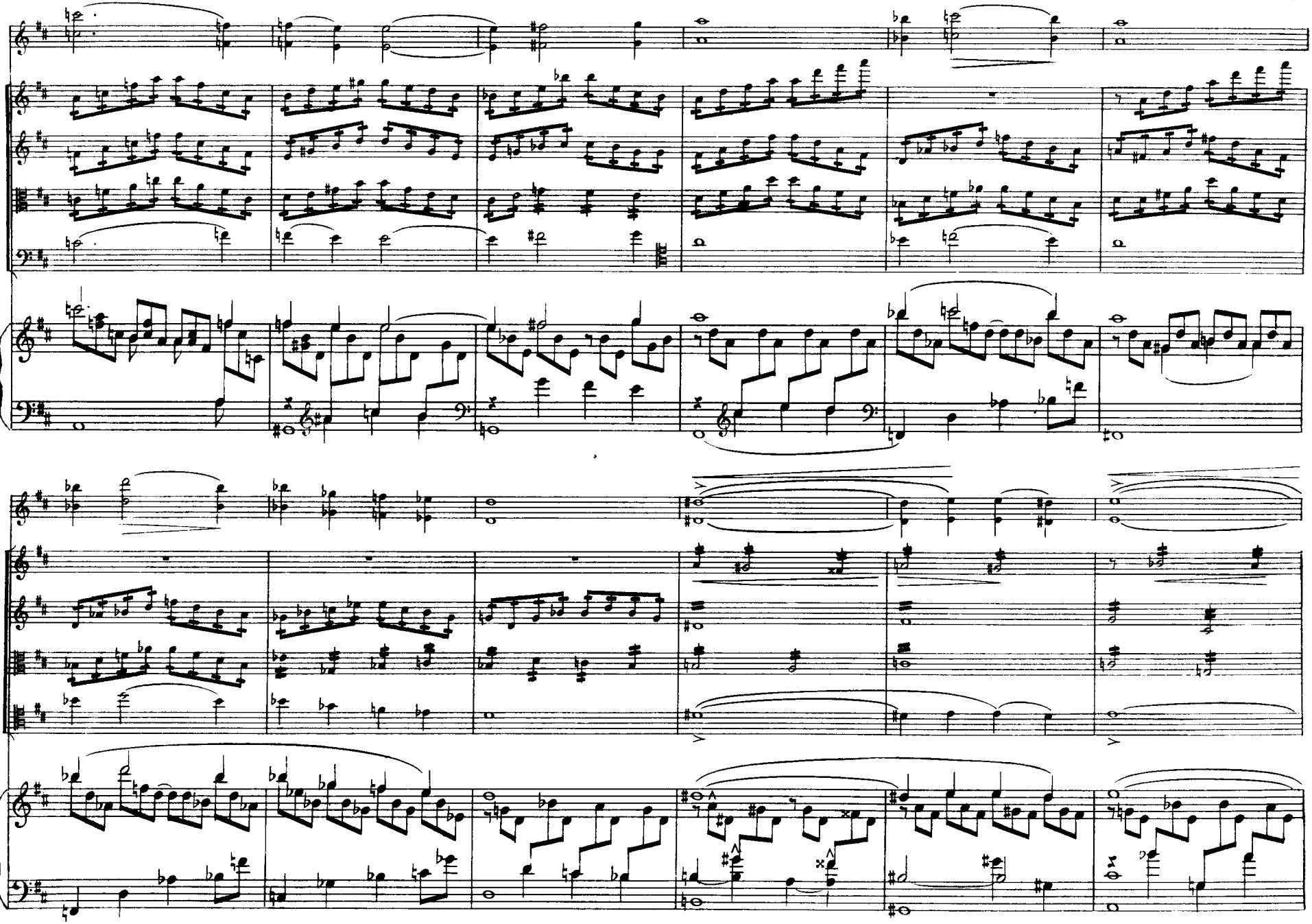

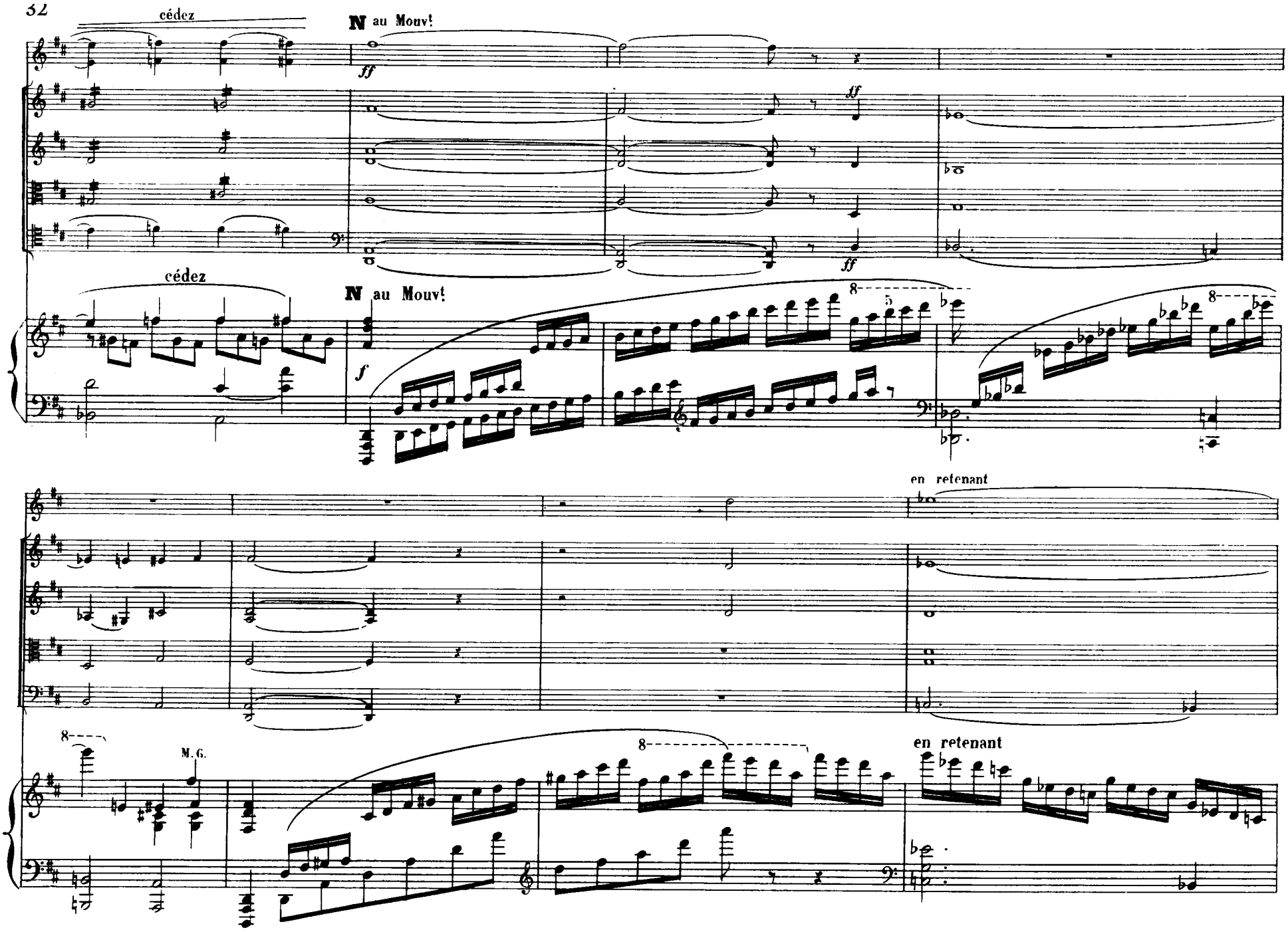
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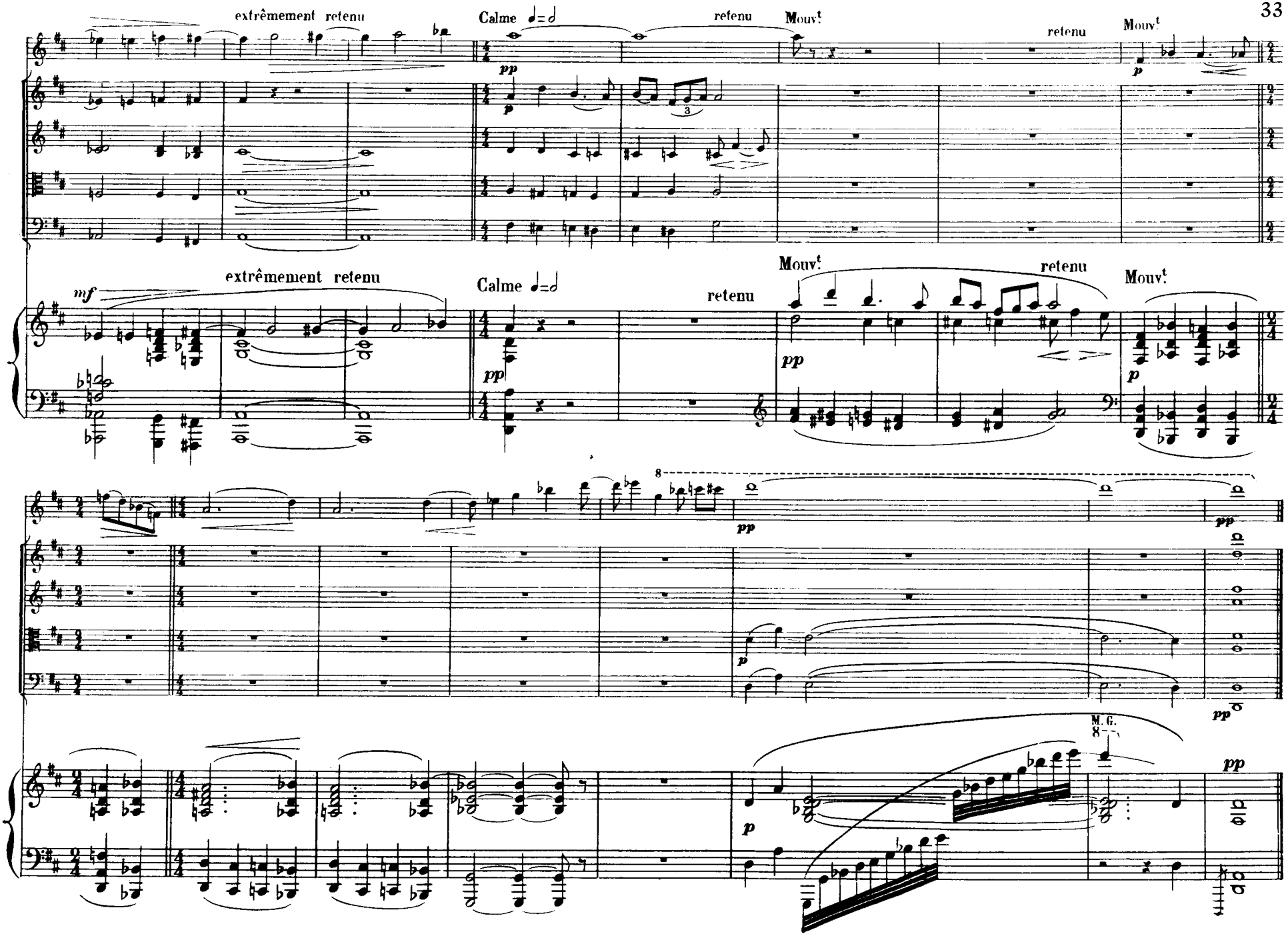
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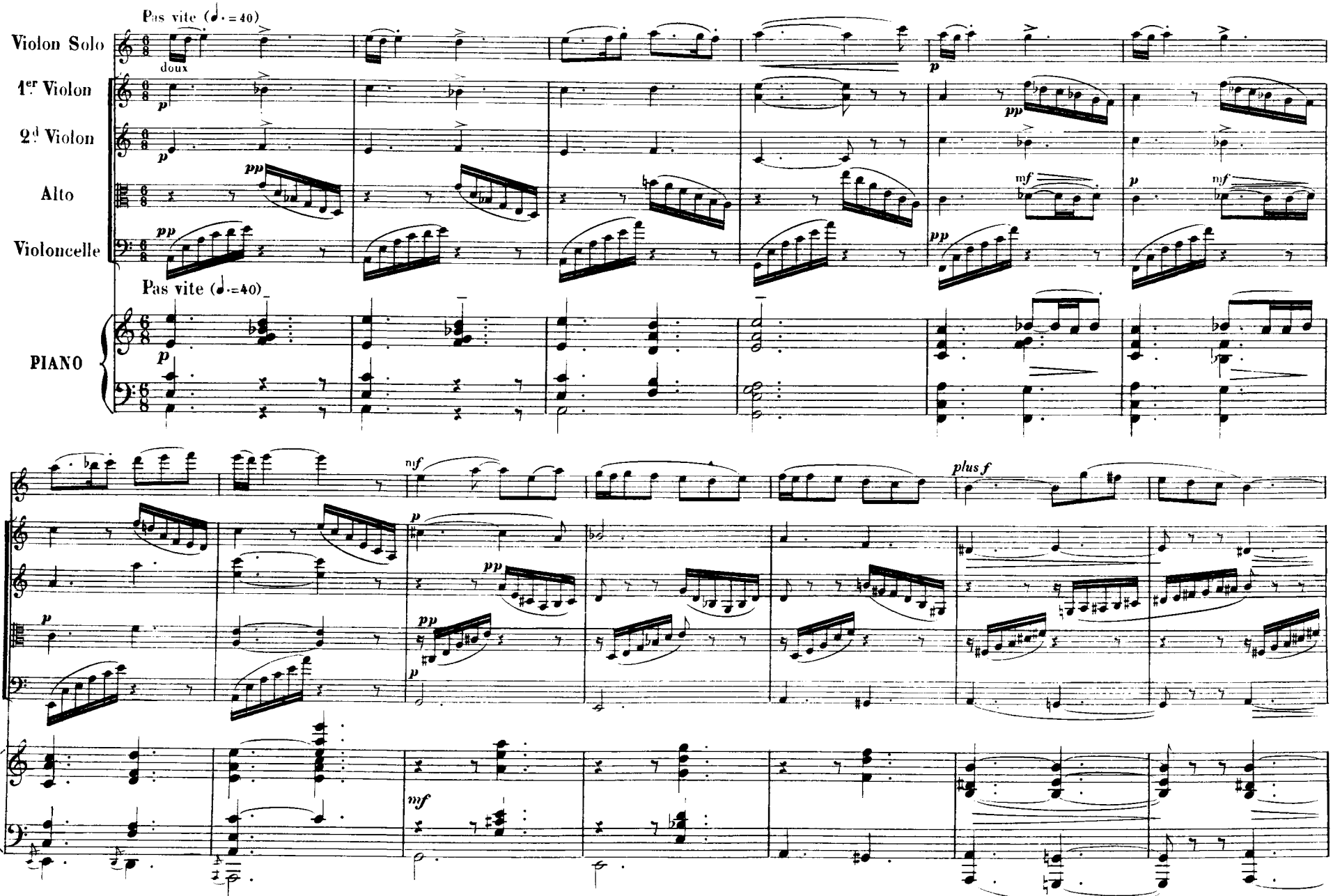
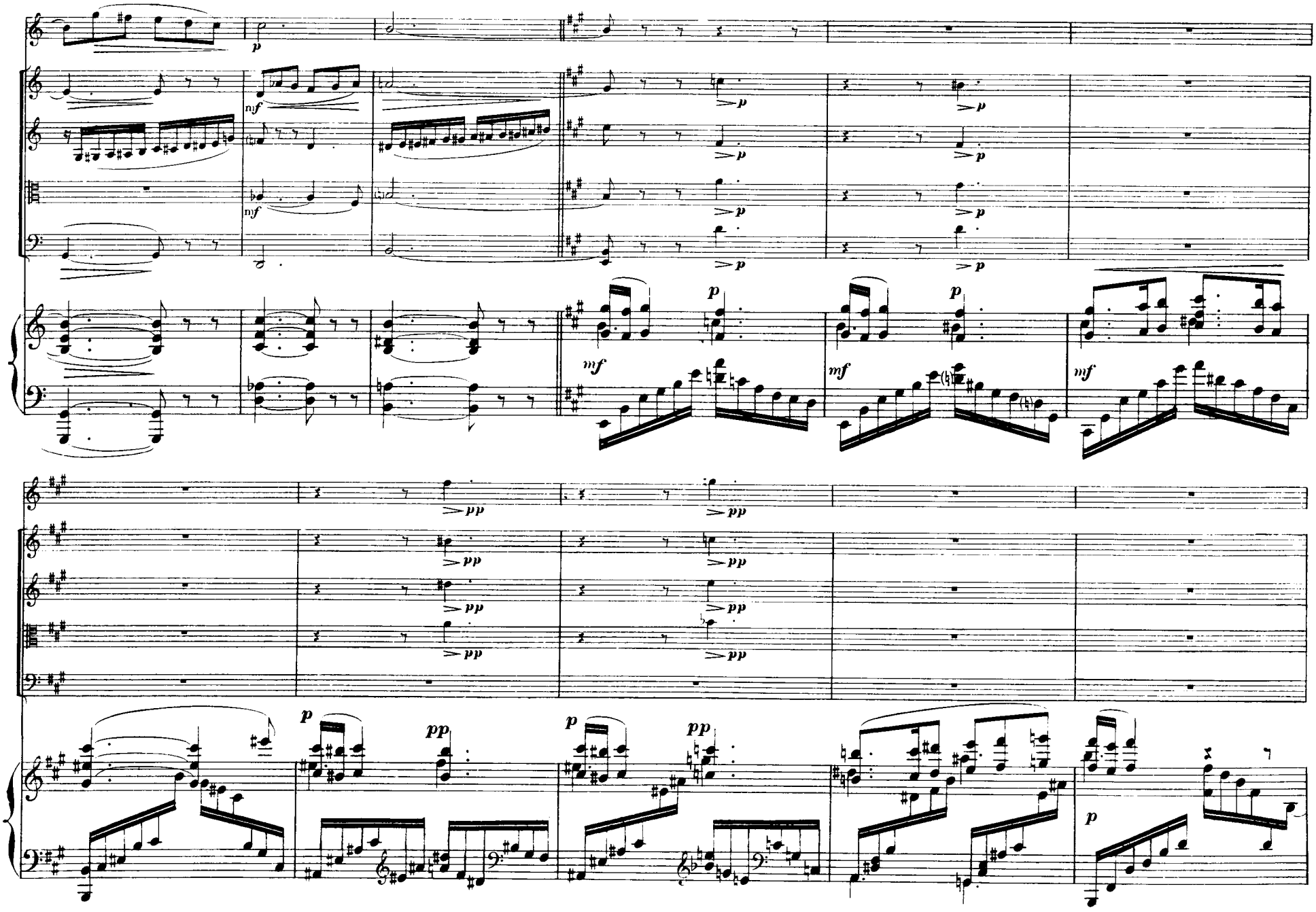
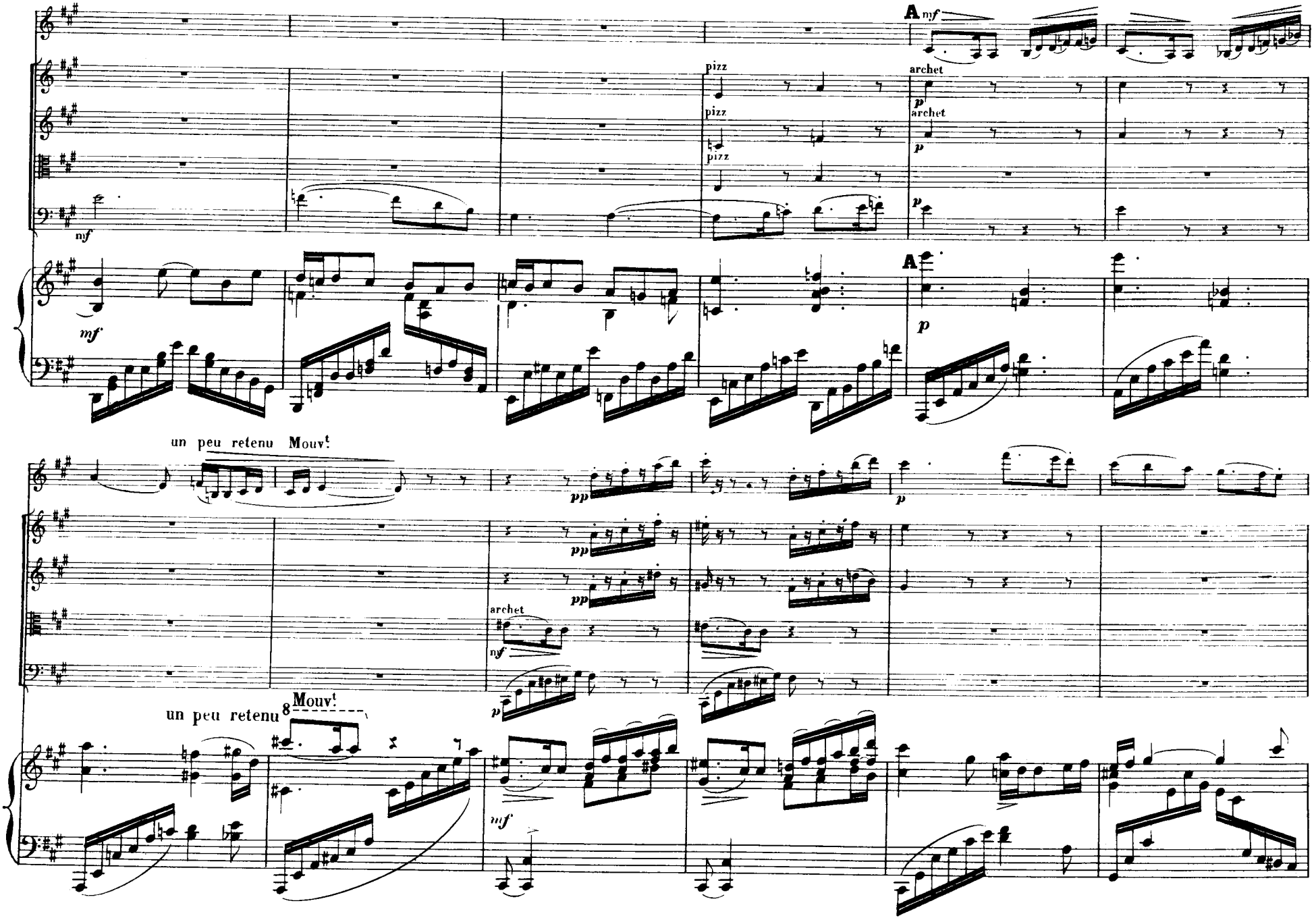
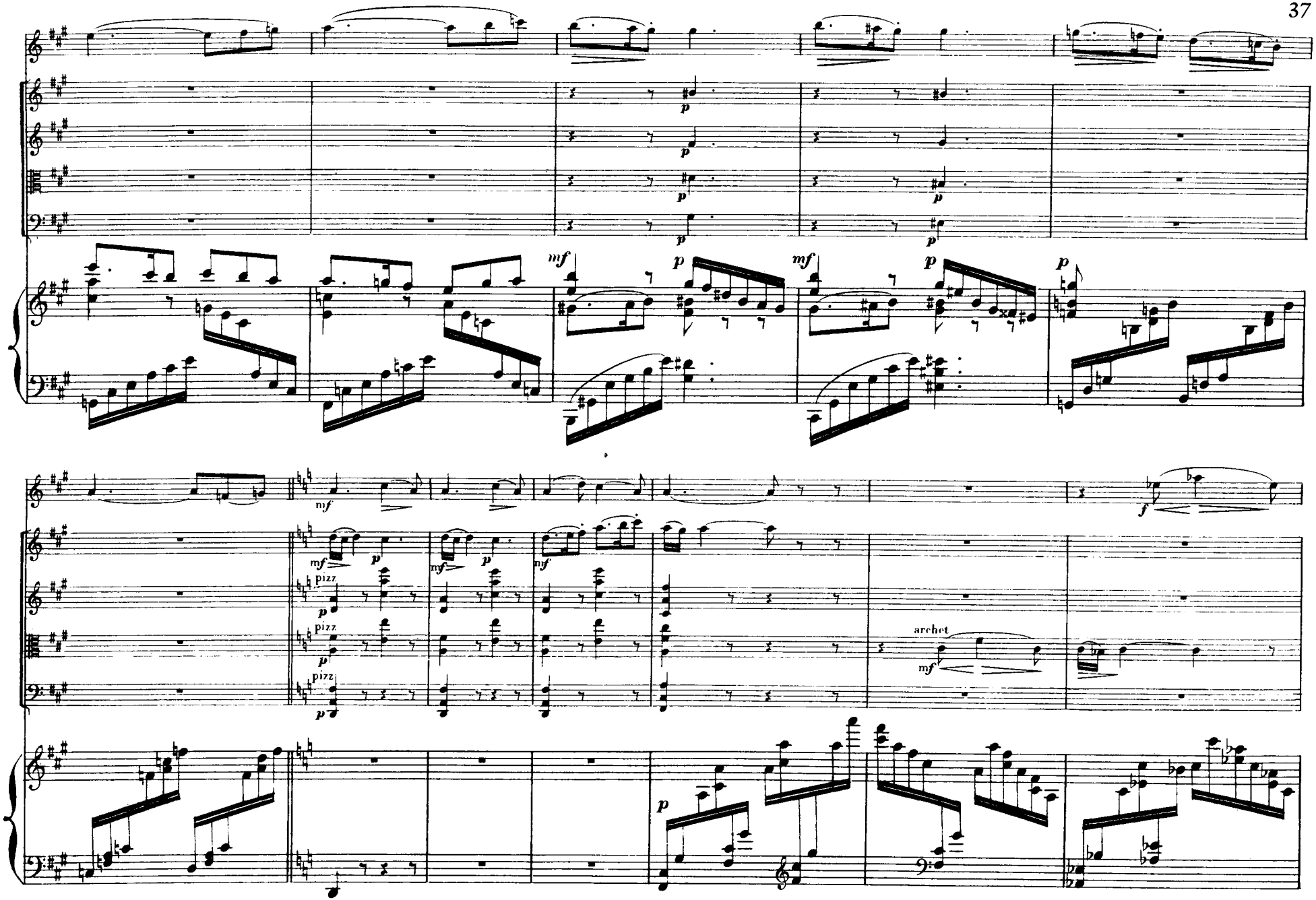
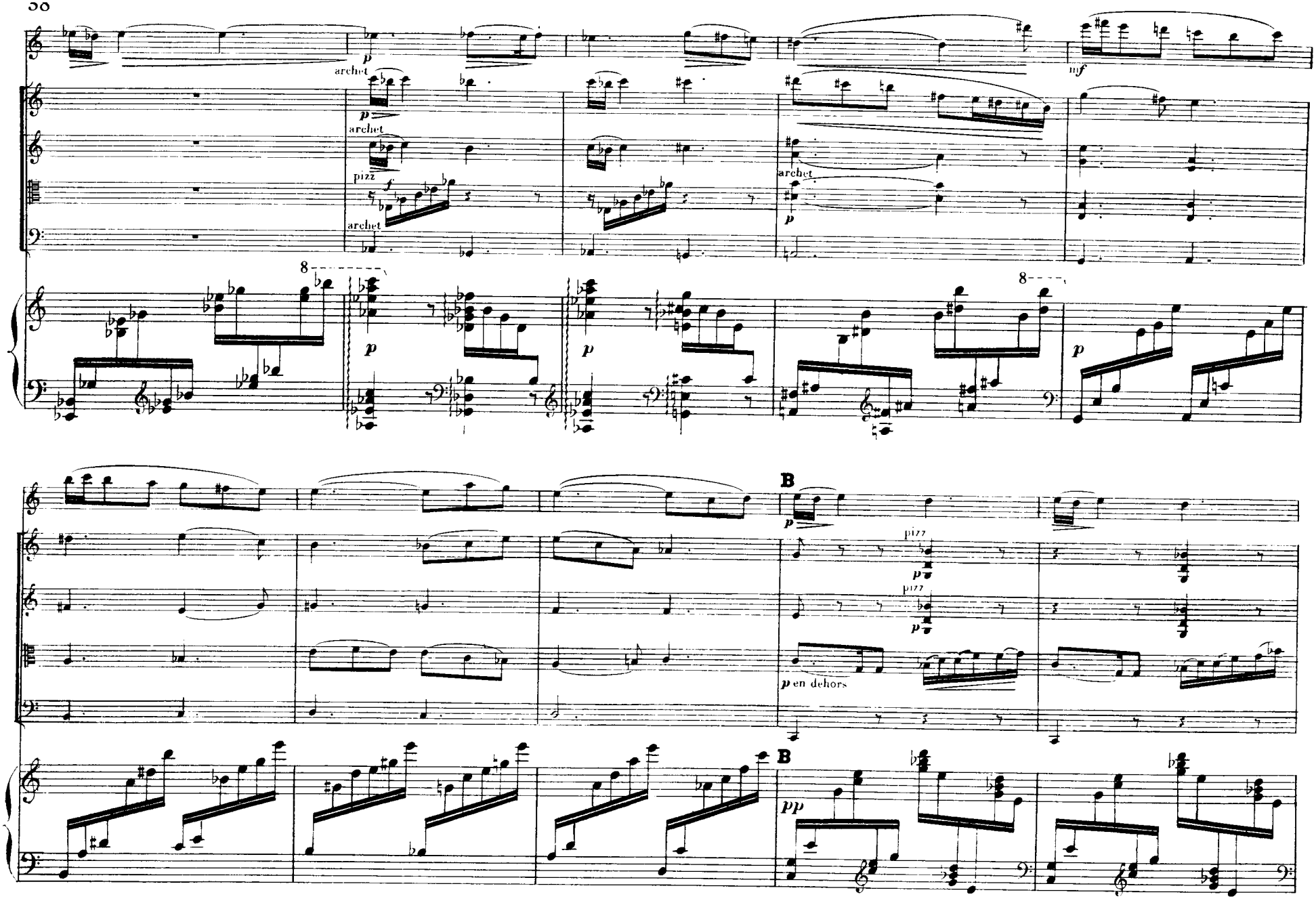
II. Sicilienne

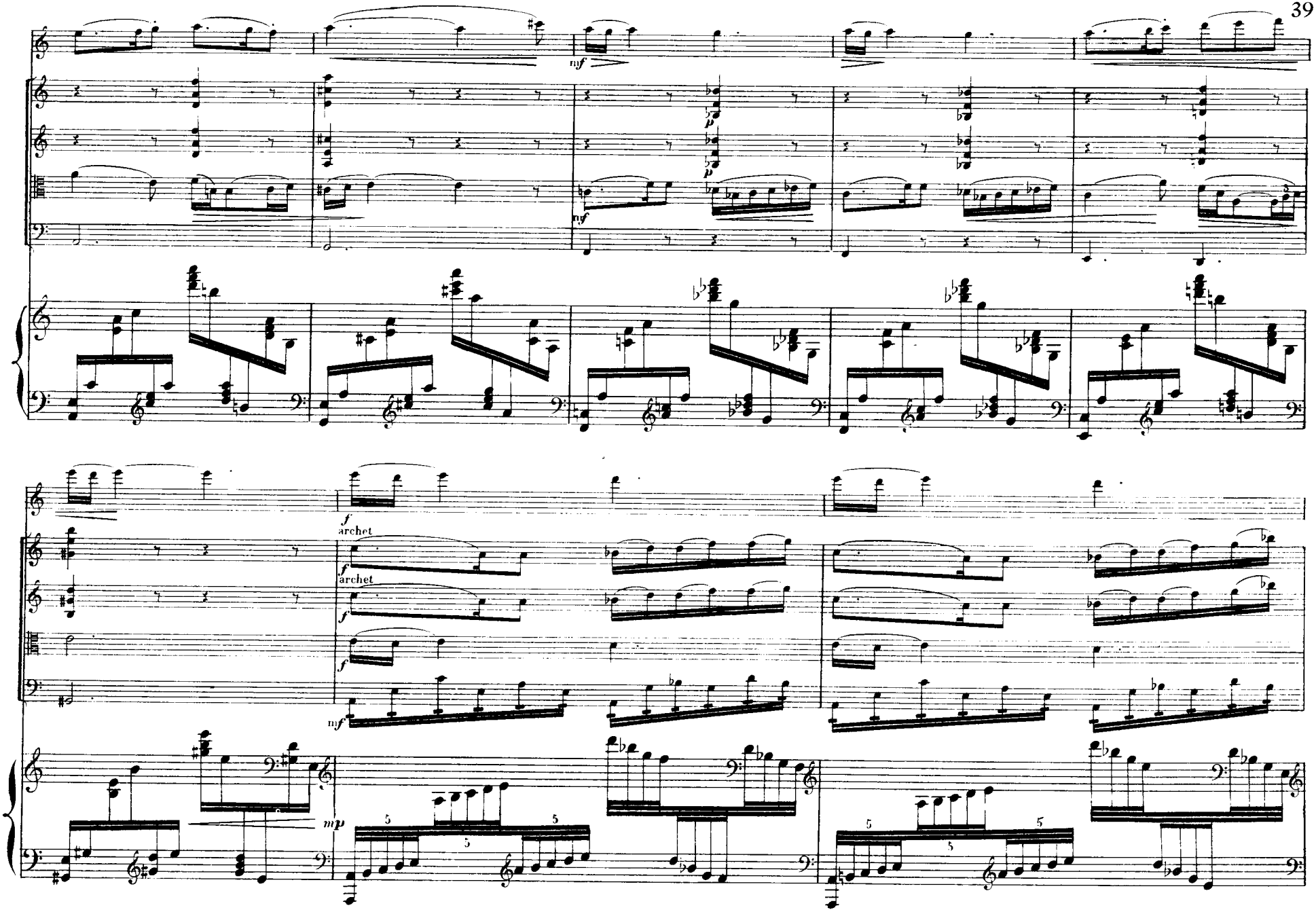


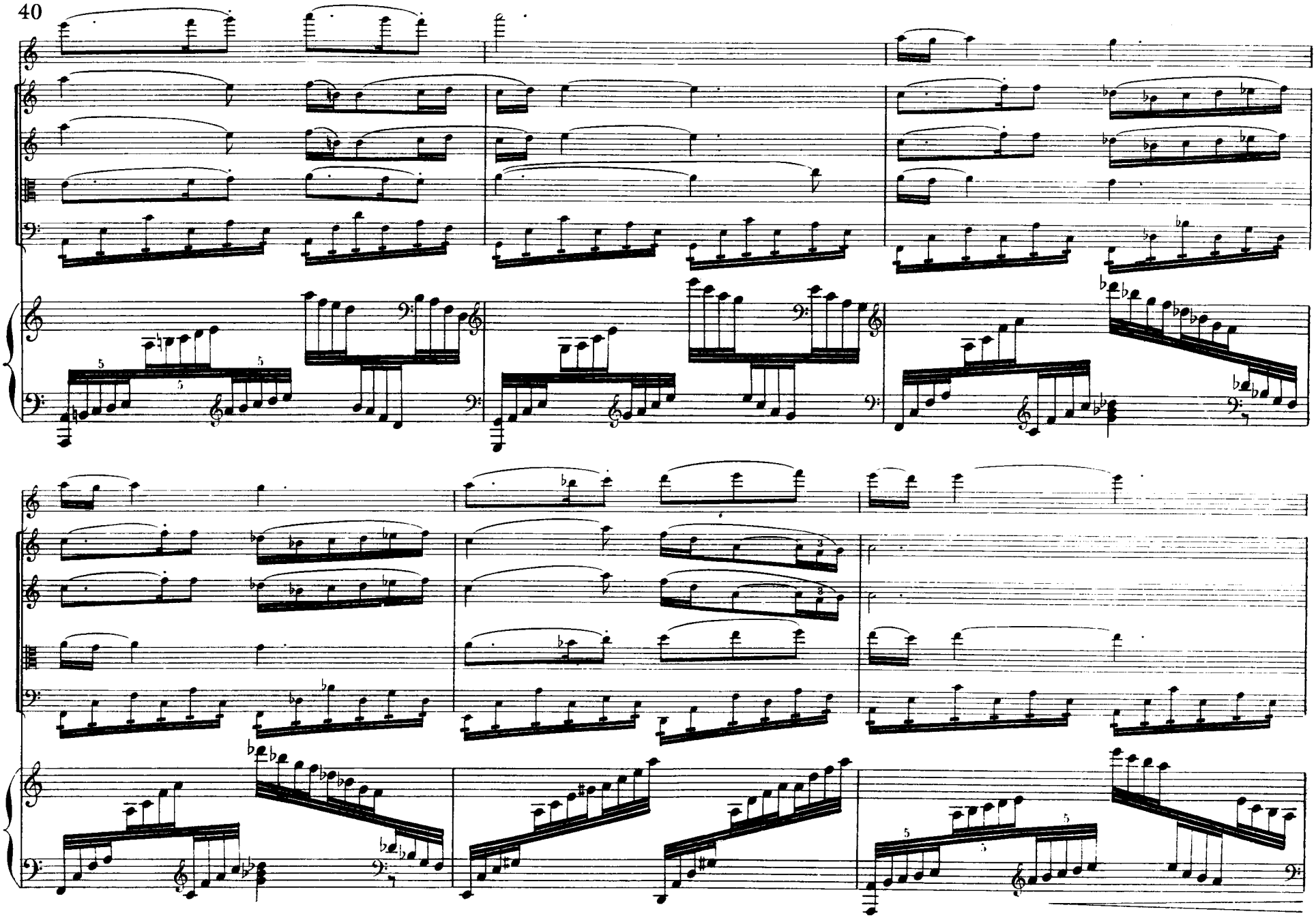

p
mf
mf
p
p
p
p
p
p
p
mf
p
mf
p
mf
pp
pp
pp
pp
pp
pp
pp
pp
p
pp
p
pp
p

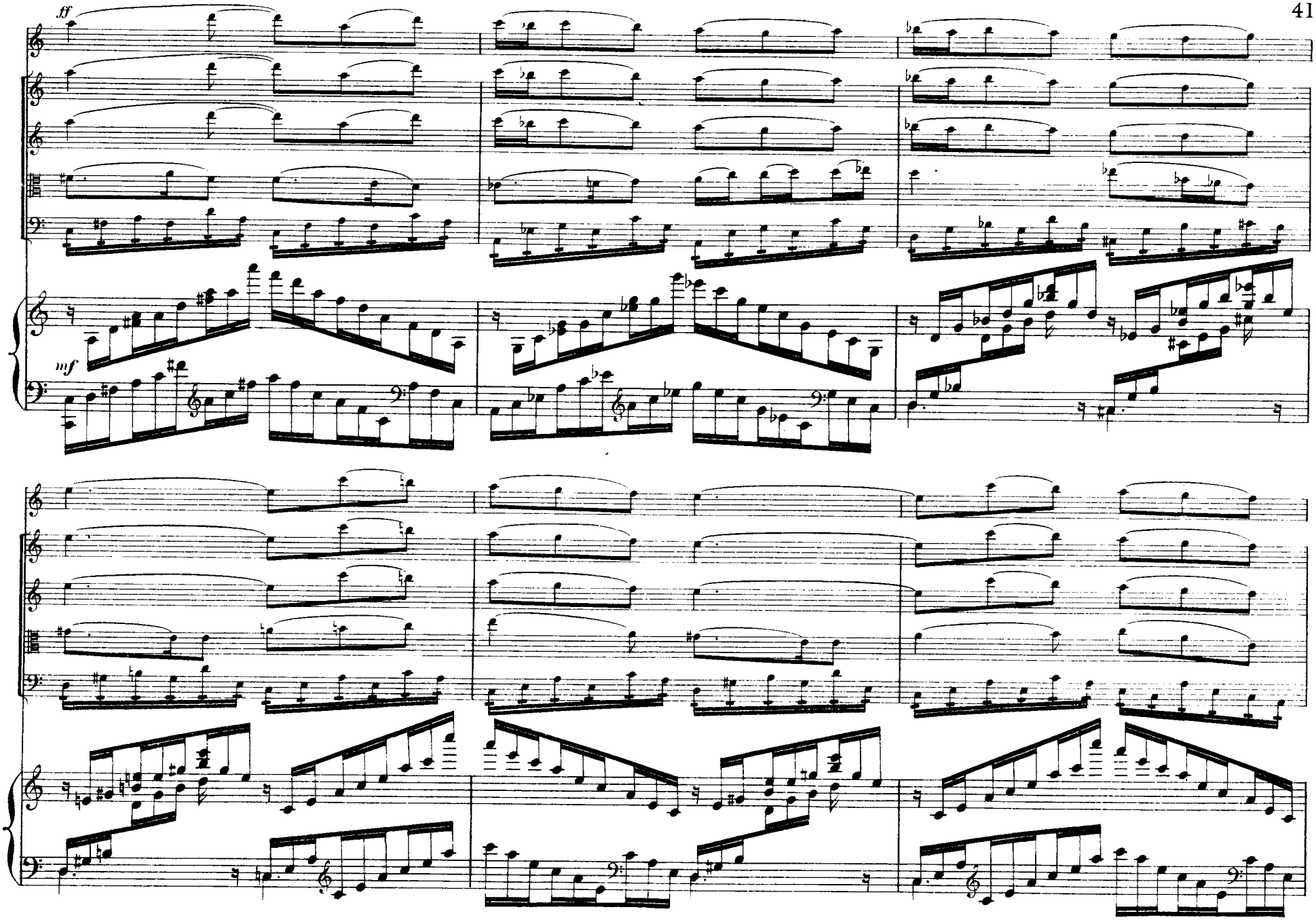

A
mf
pizz
pizz
pizz
archet
archet
p
p
mf
A
p
un peu retenu Mouvt
pp
pp
pp
p
archet
mf
un peu retenu 8 Mouvt
mf

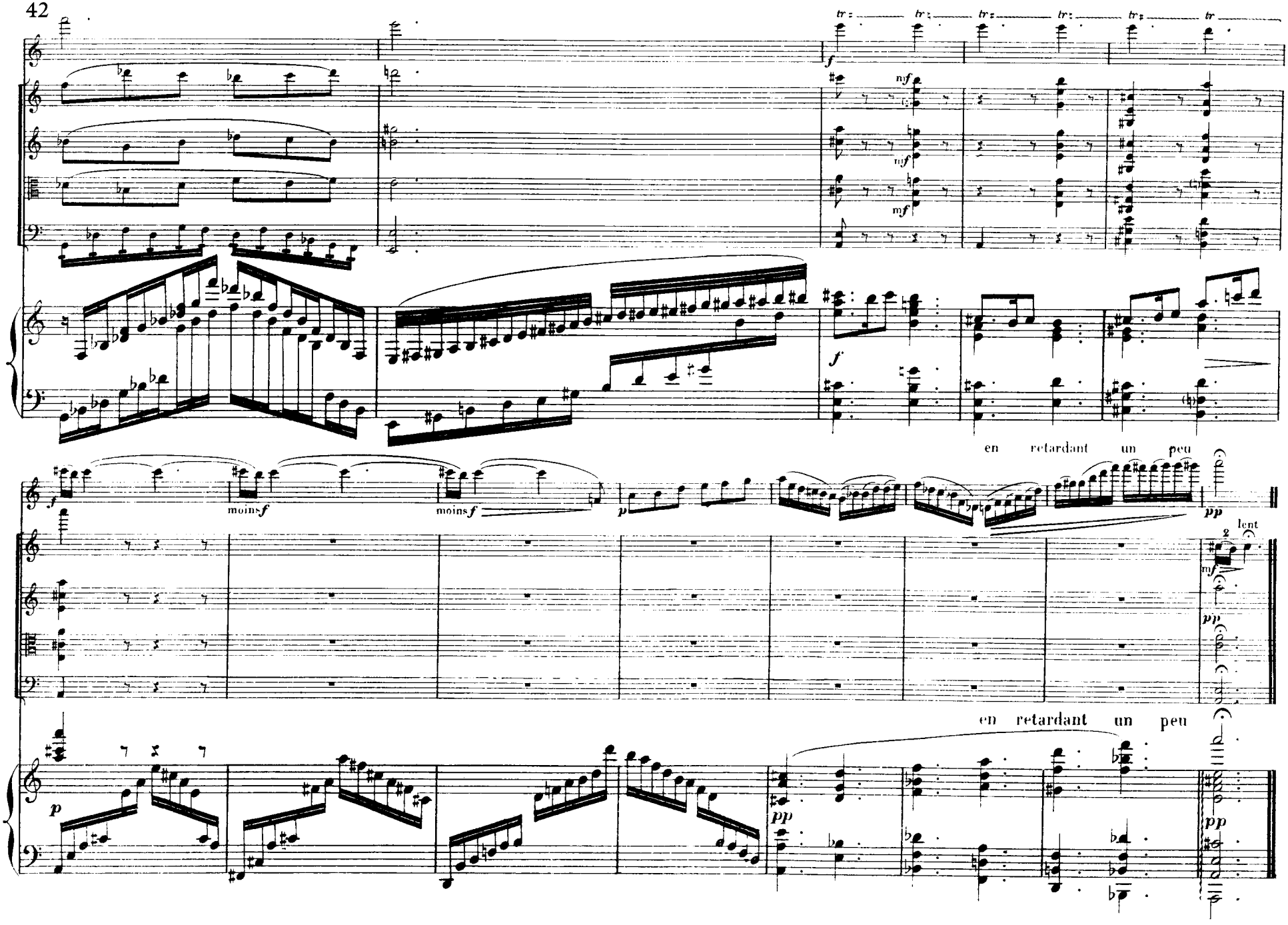

mf
p
pizz
archet
f


p
archet
mf
pizz
f
8
B
p en dehors
pp

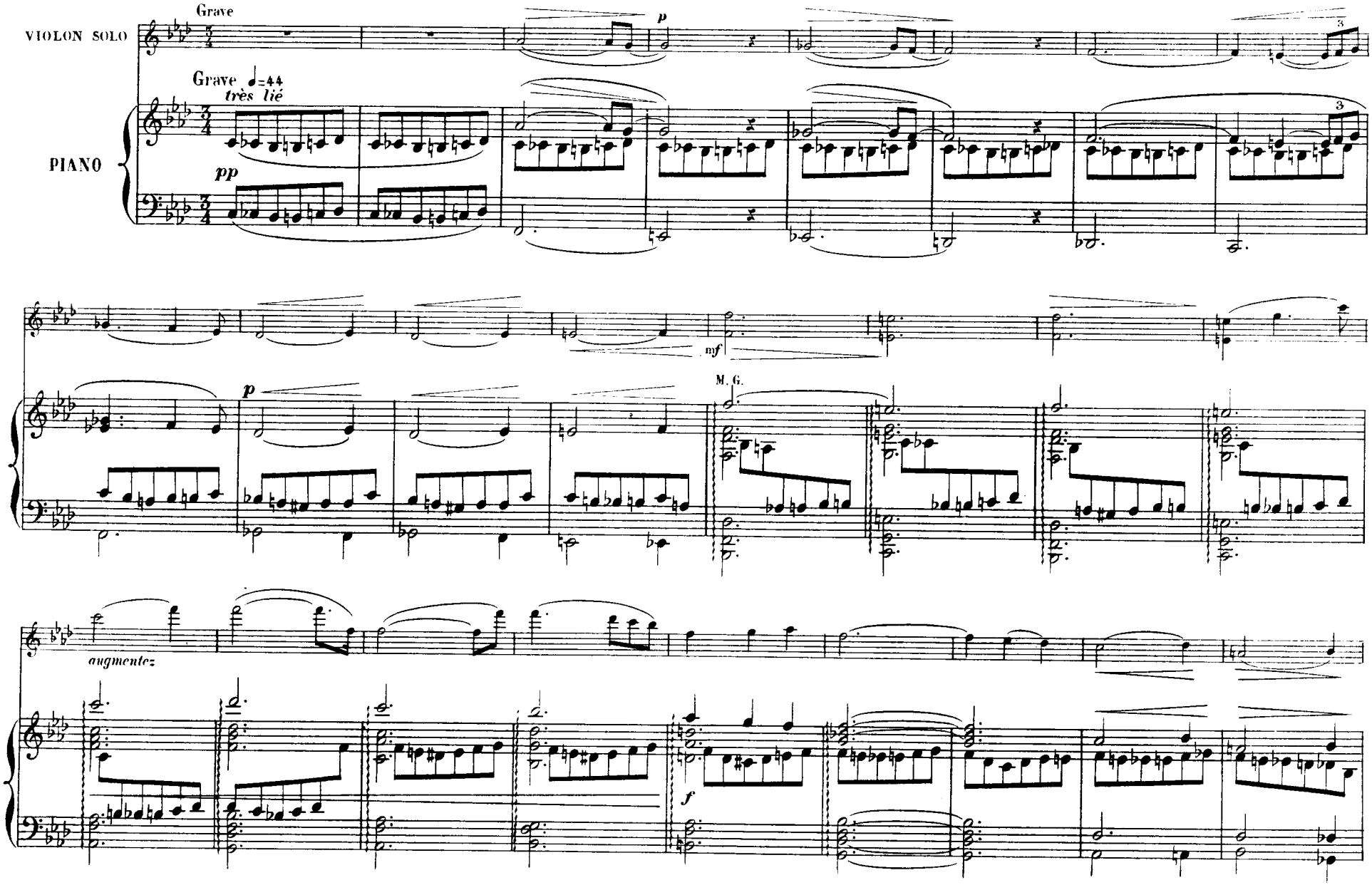

mf
p
p
mf
f
archet
f
archet
f
f
mf
mp
5
5
5
5

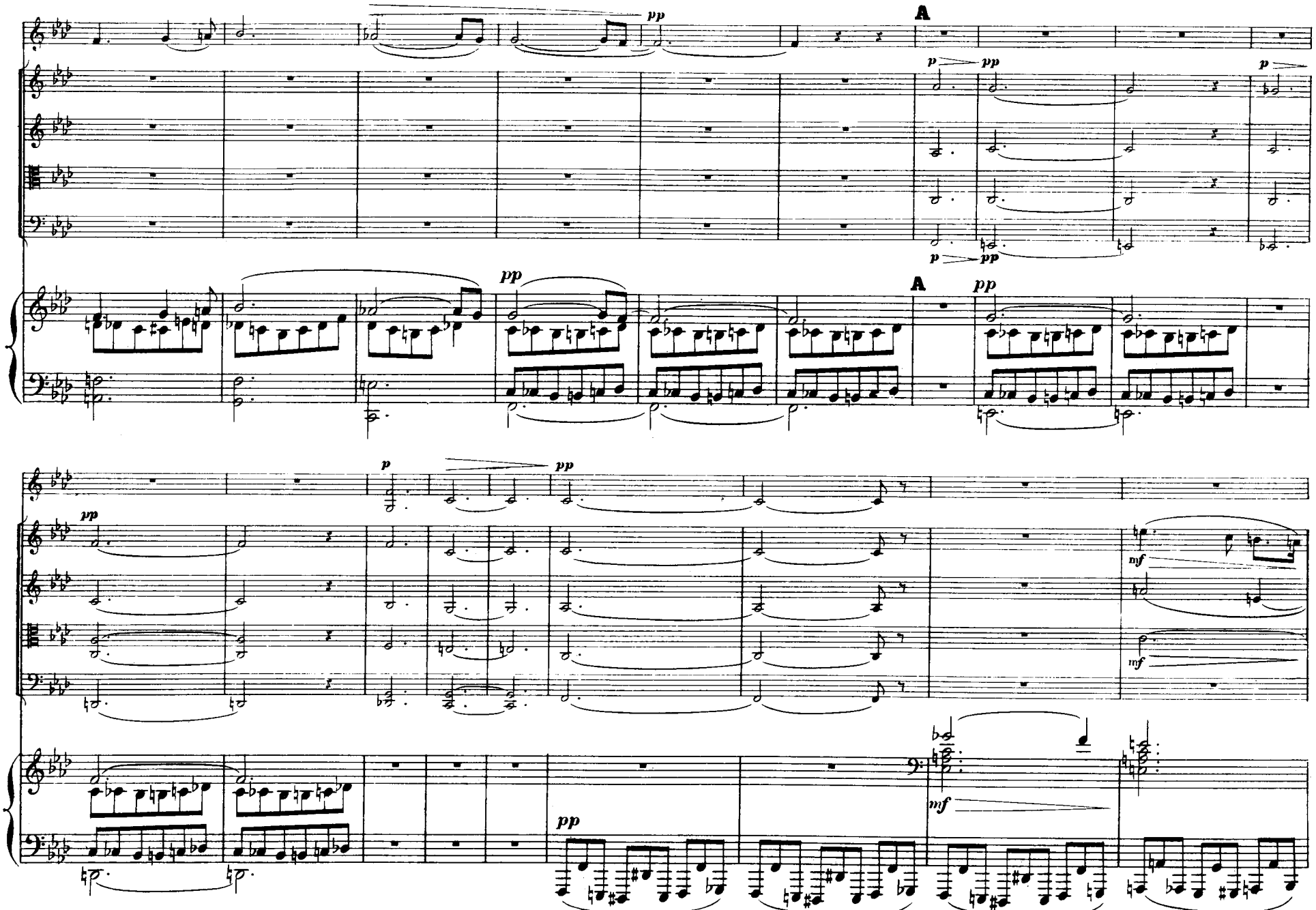


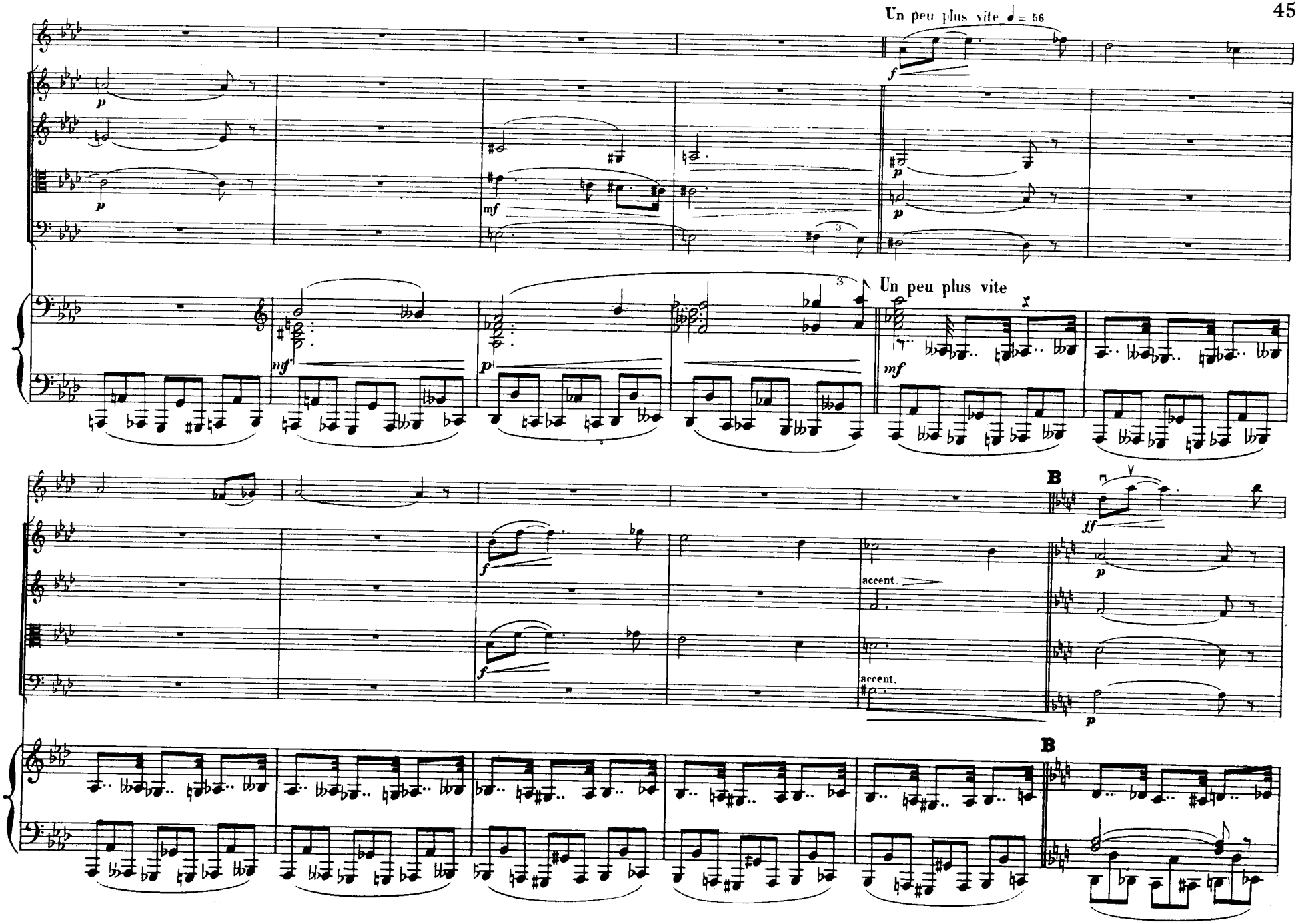

ff
mf

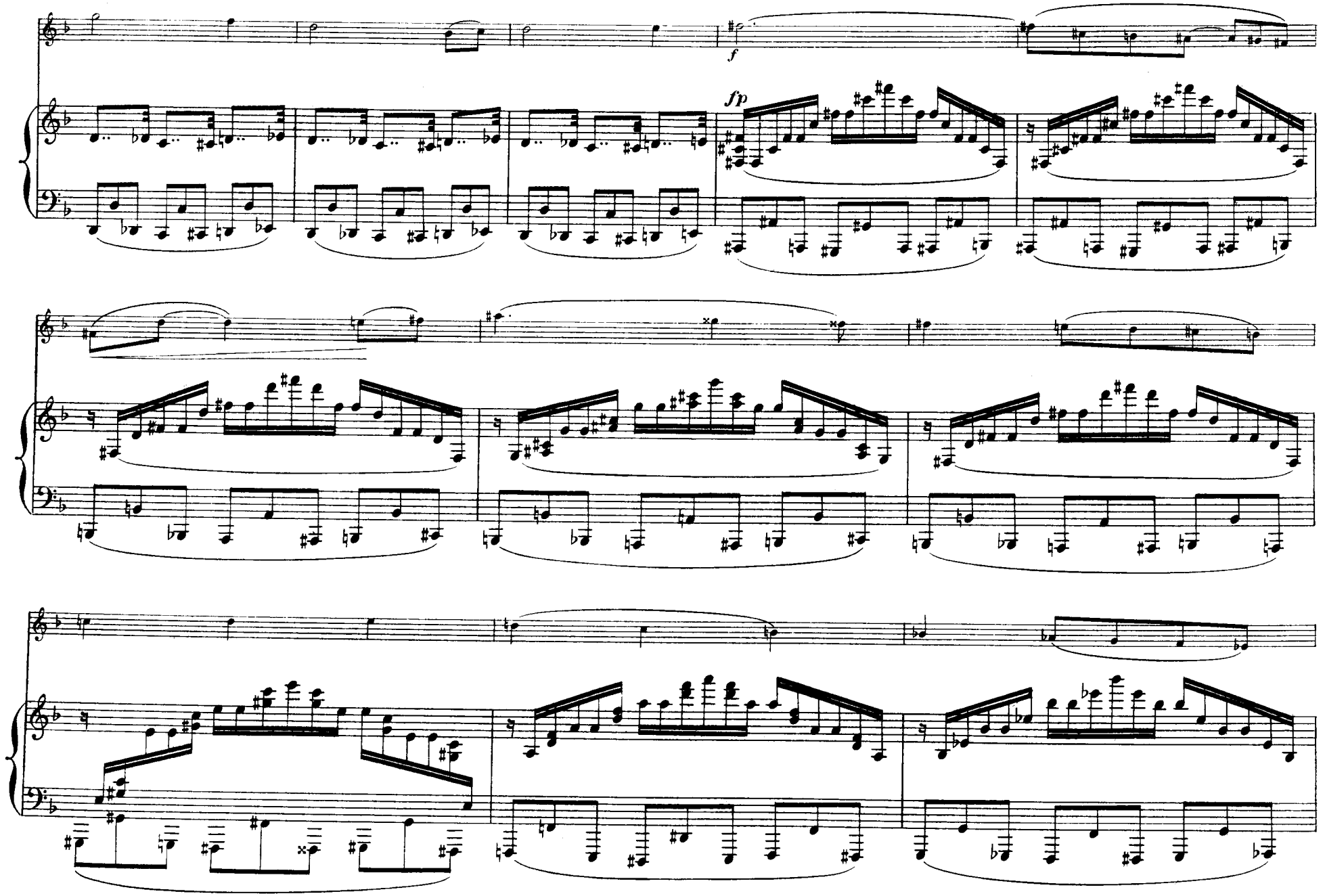

tr
f
nf
mf
f
en retardant un peu
moins f
moins f
p
pp
lent
mf
pp
en retardant un peu
p
pp
pp

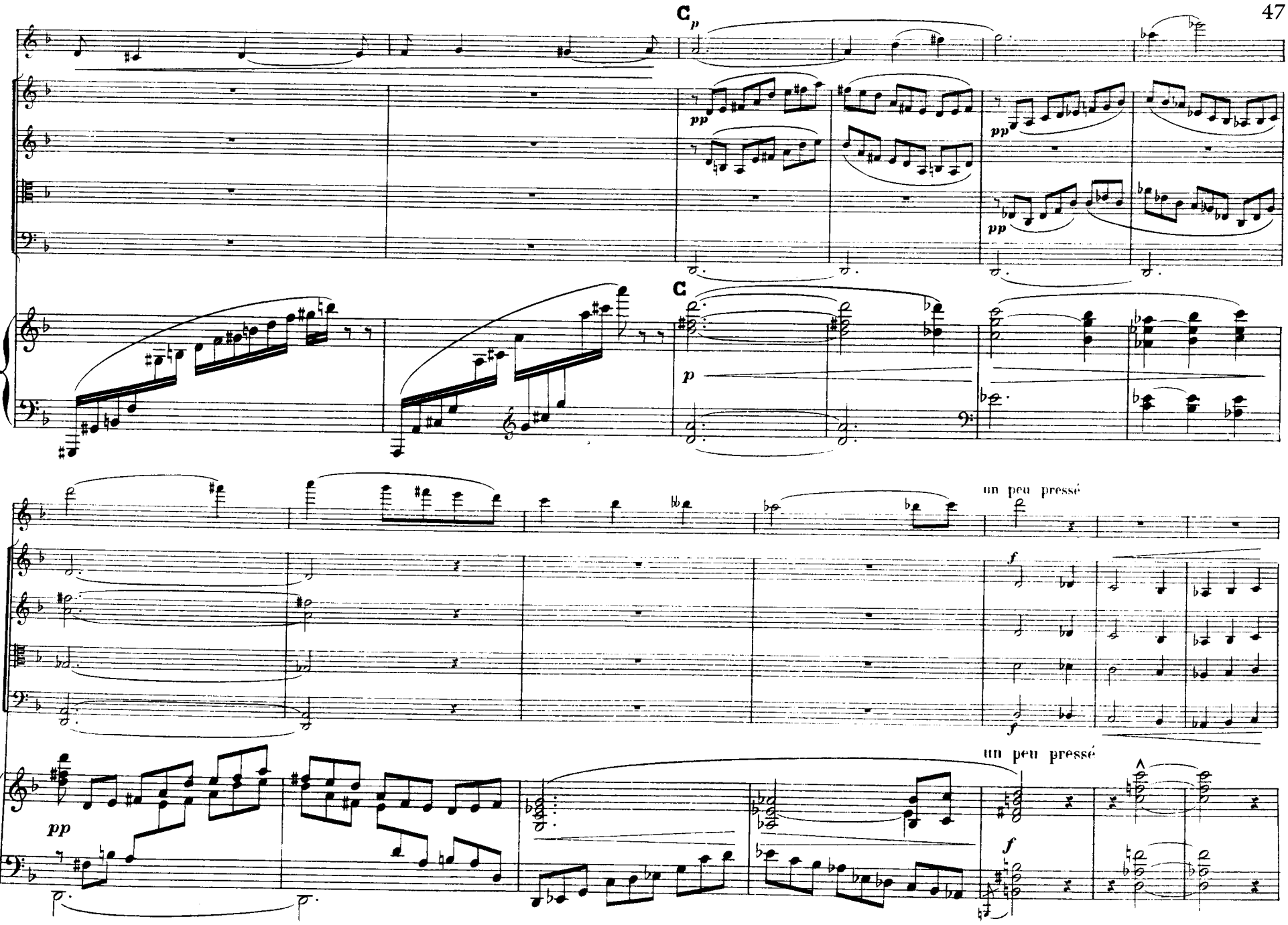
III.

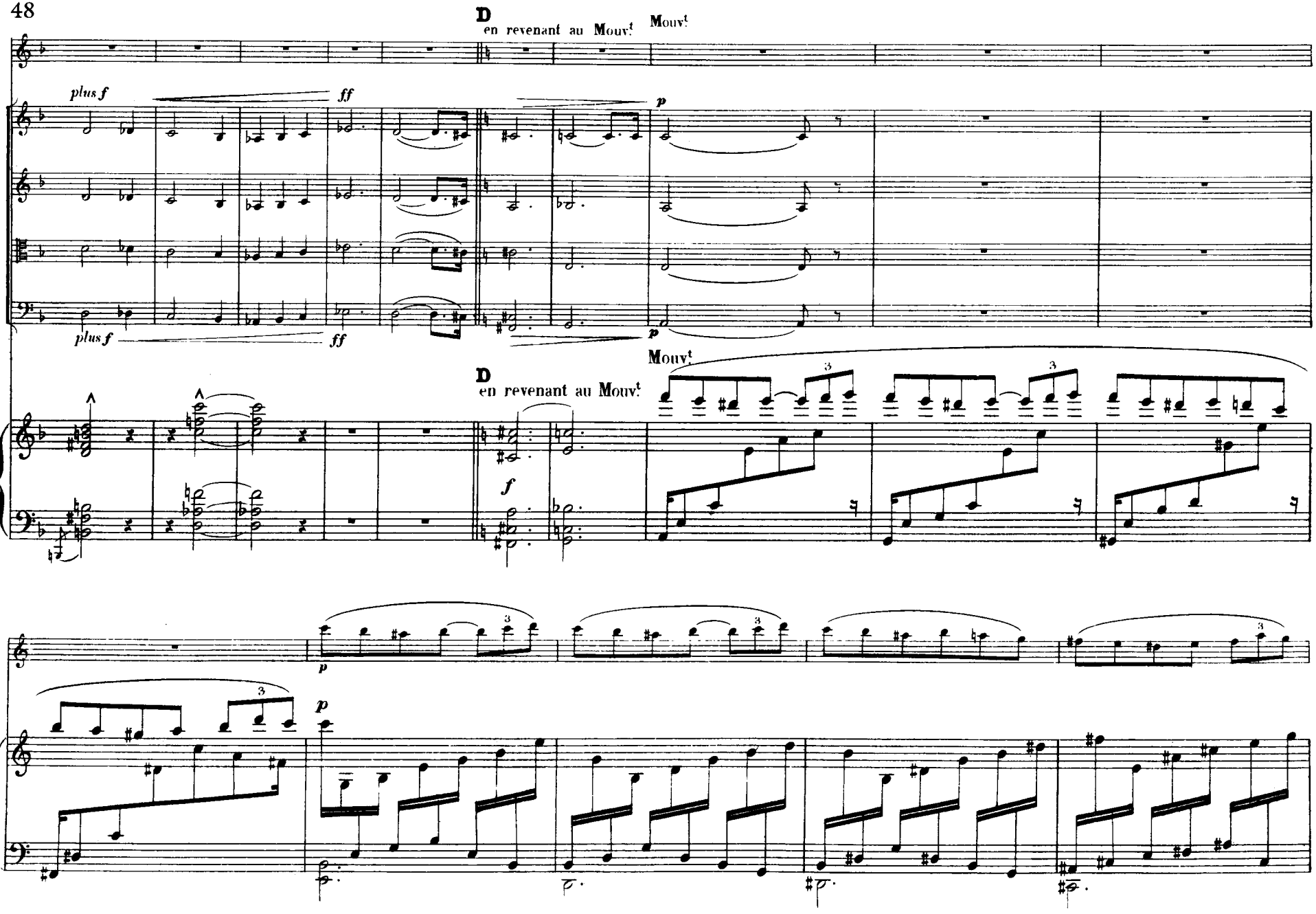

Grave
VIOLON SOLO
Grave ♩=44
très lié
PIANO
pp
p
mf
M. G.
augmentez
f

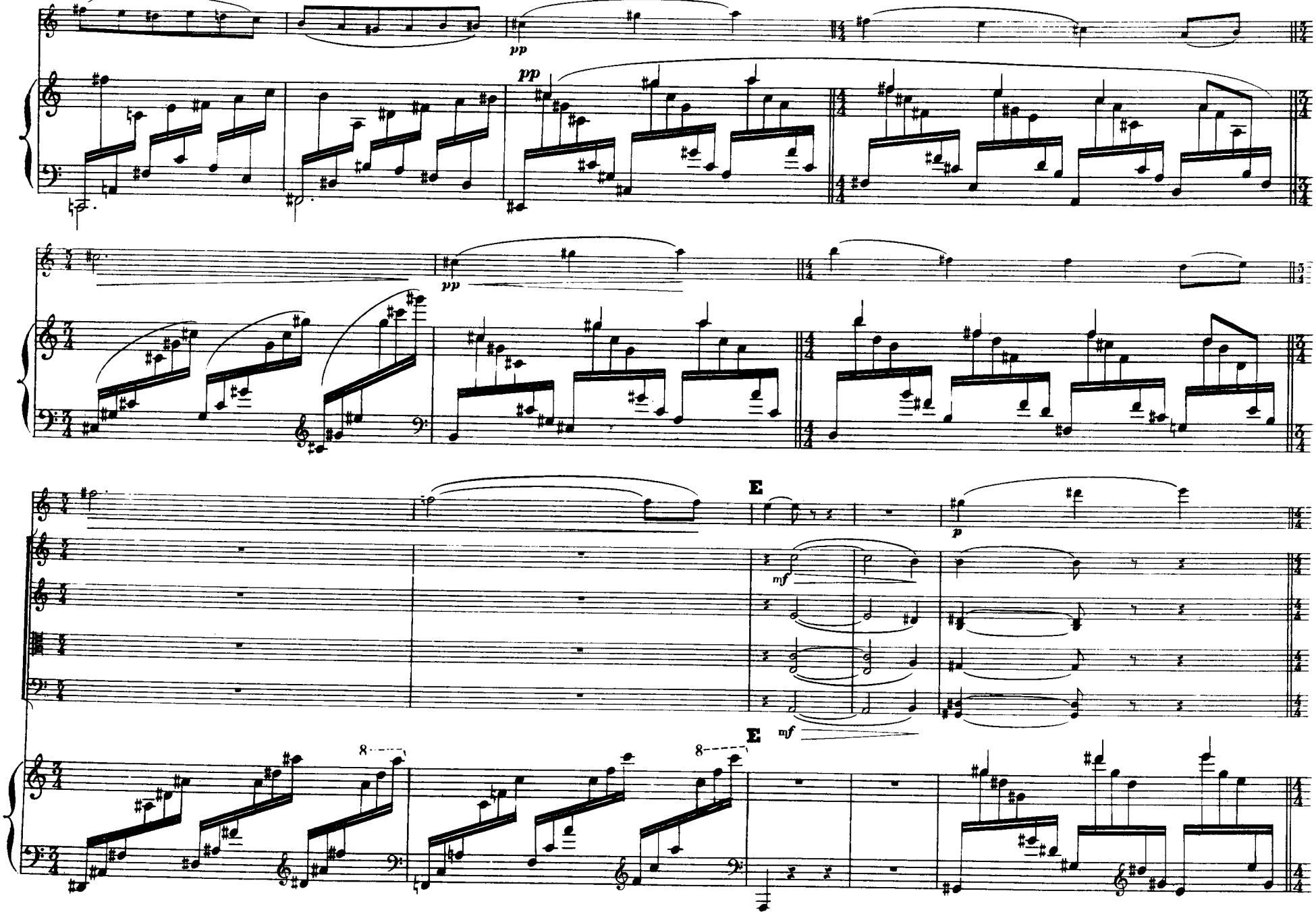

A
A

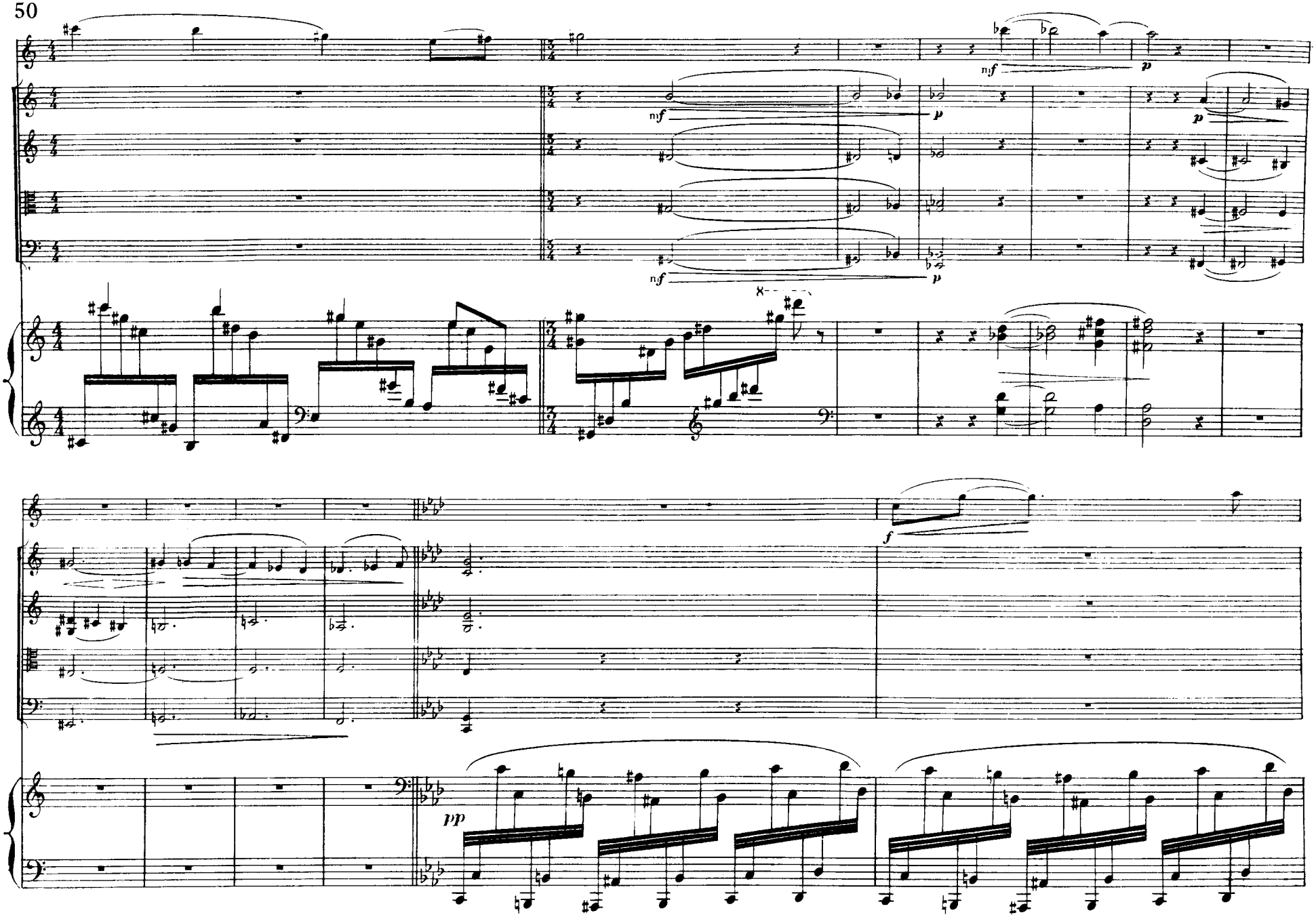

Un peu plus vite ♩ = 56
Un peu plus vite
B
B
accent.
accent.

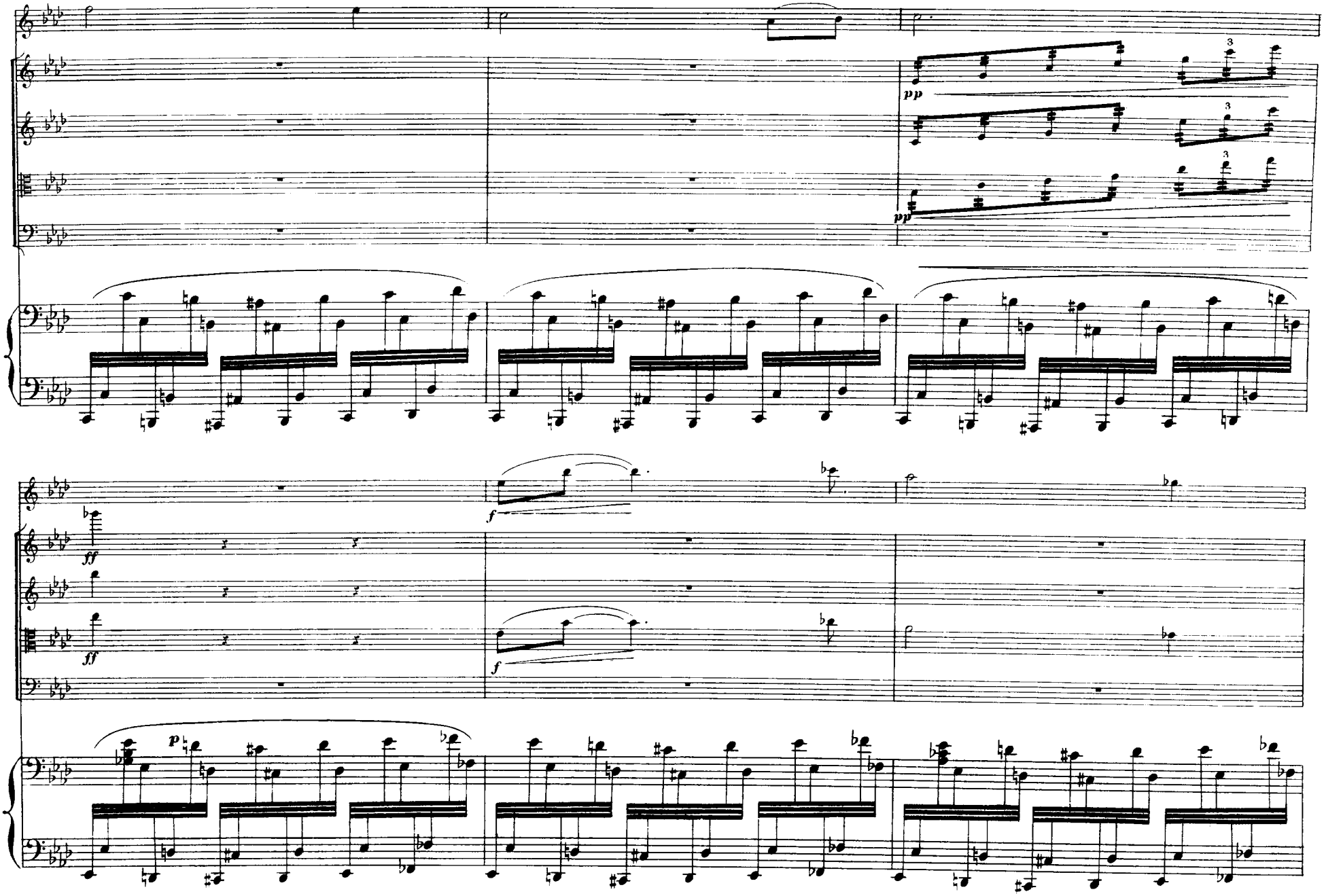

f
fp

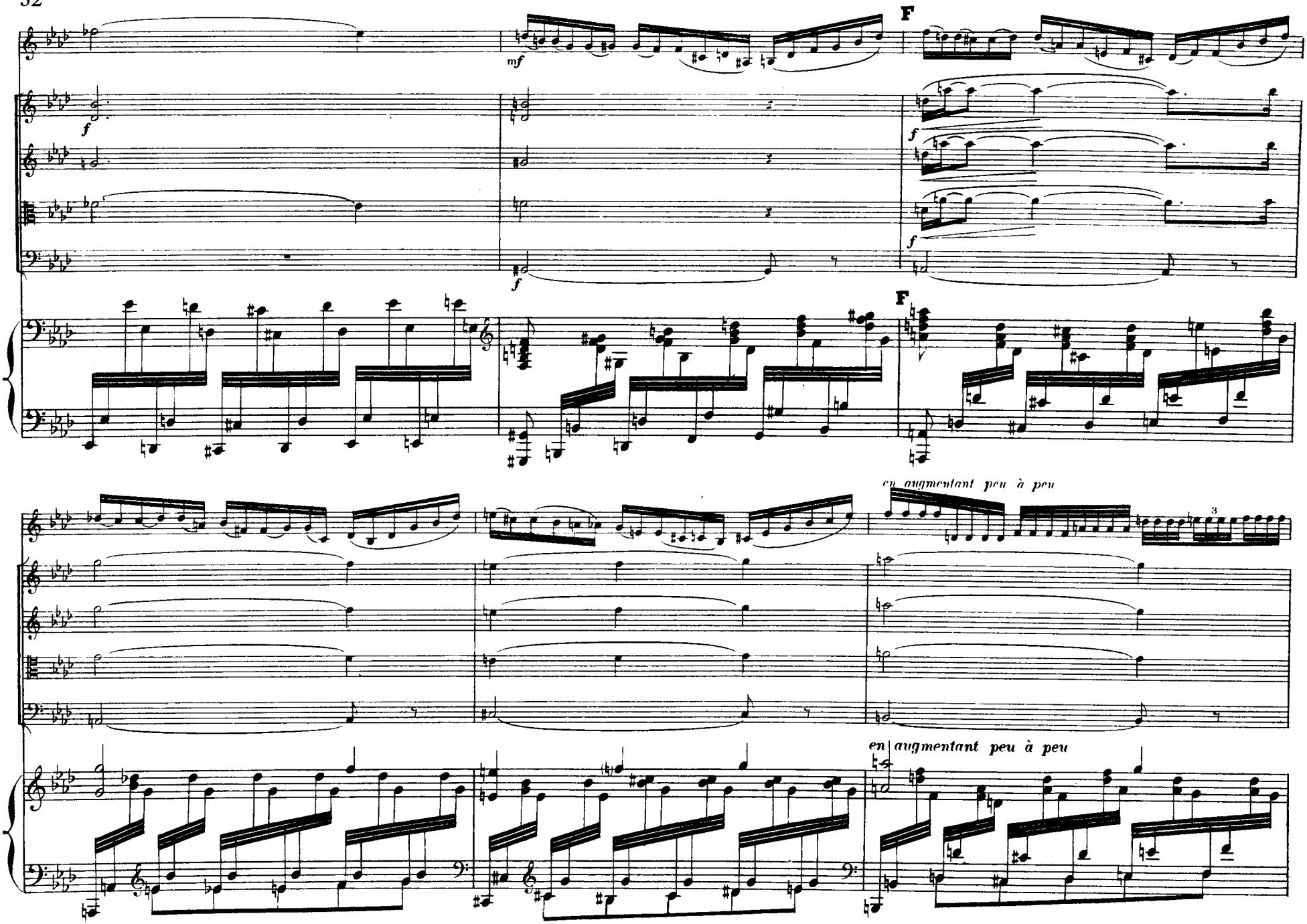

C
p
pp
pp
pp
C
p
un peu pressé
f
f
un peu pressé
pp
f

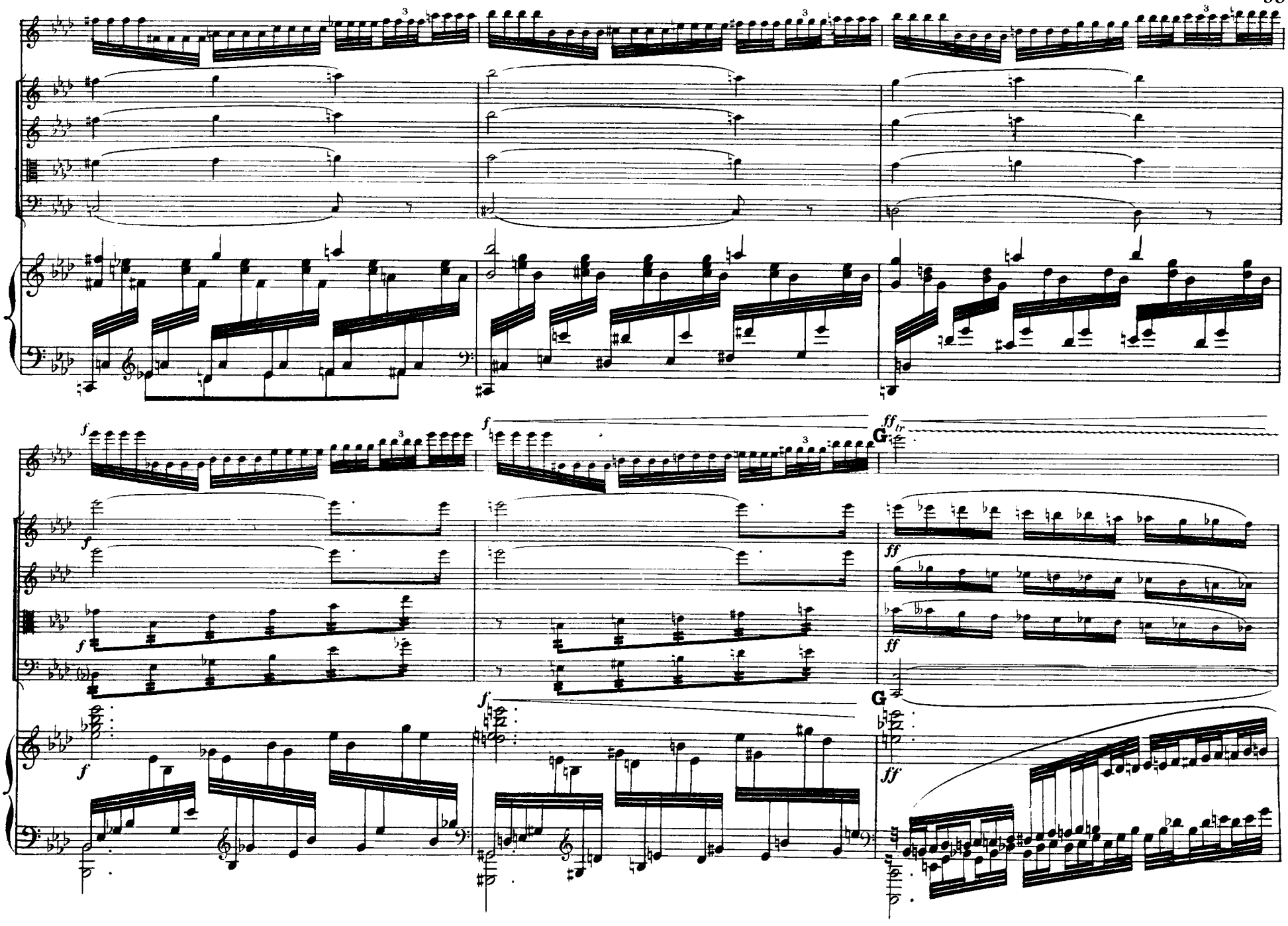

D
en revenant au Mouvt
Mouvt
plus f
ff
p
plus f
ff
p
D
en revenant au Mouvt
Mouvt
f
p
p

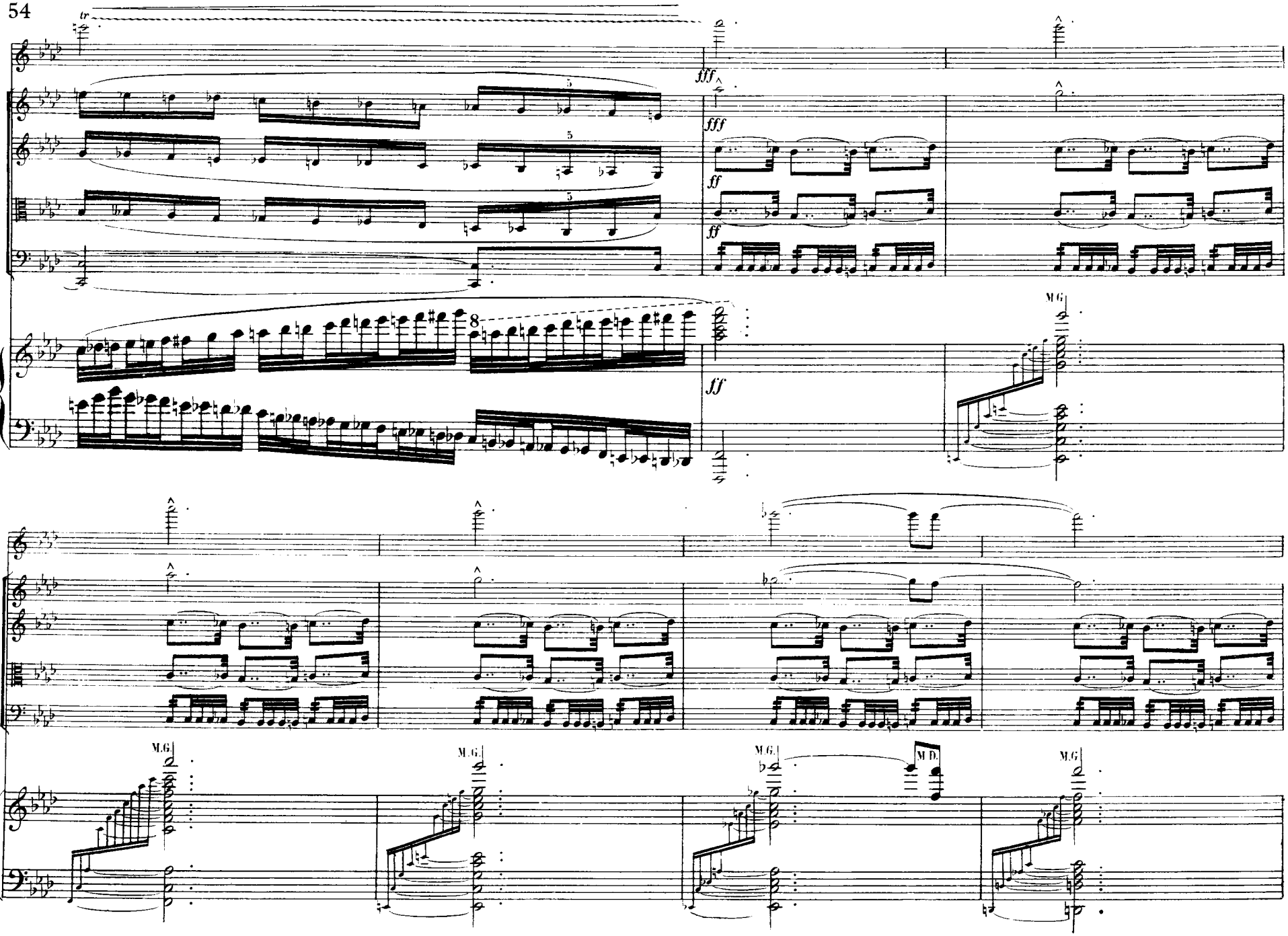

pp
pp
pp
E
p
mf
mf
E
8
8

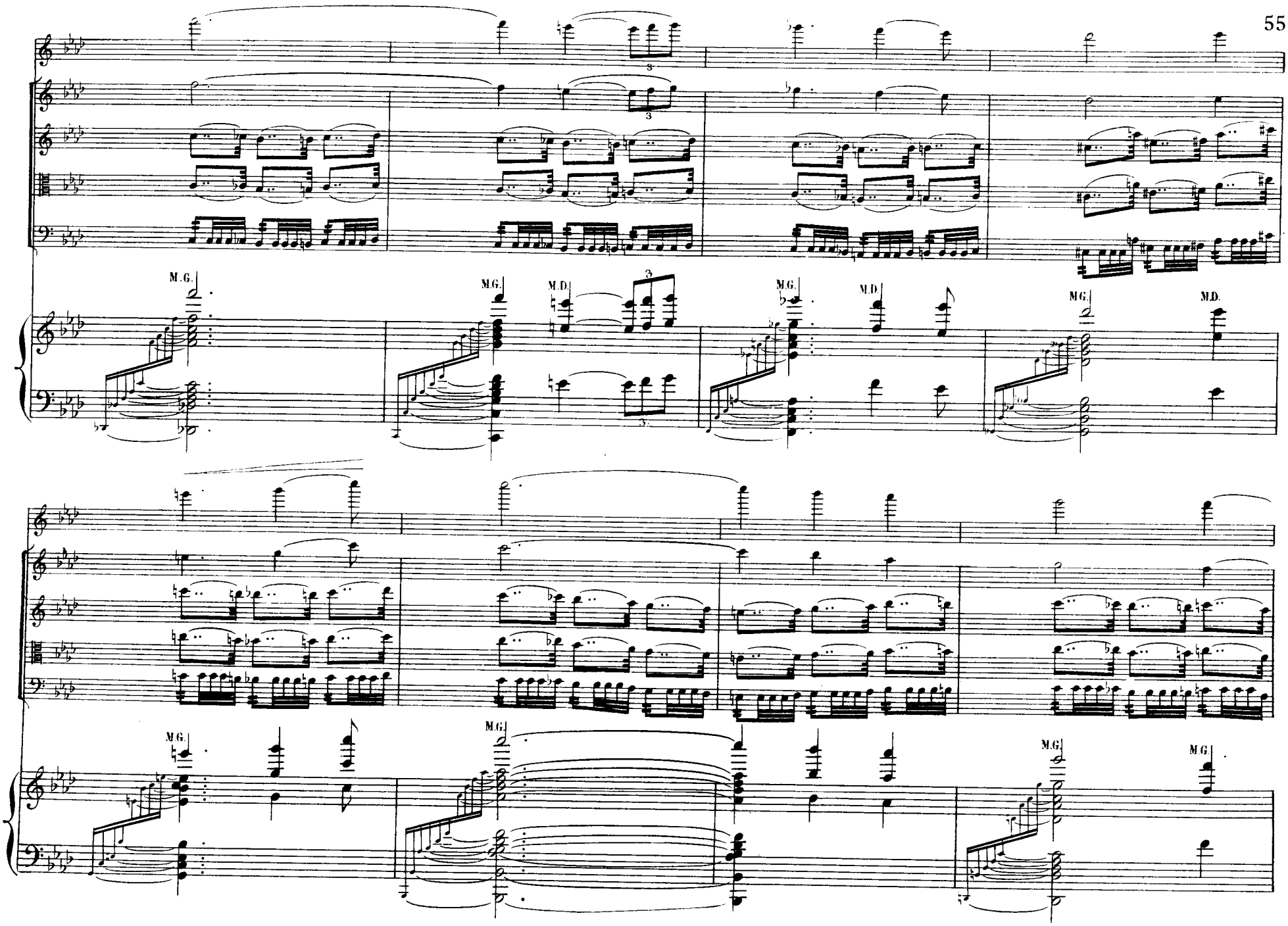

mf
p
mf
p
mf
p
f
pp

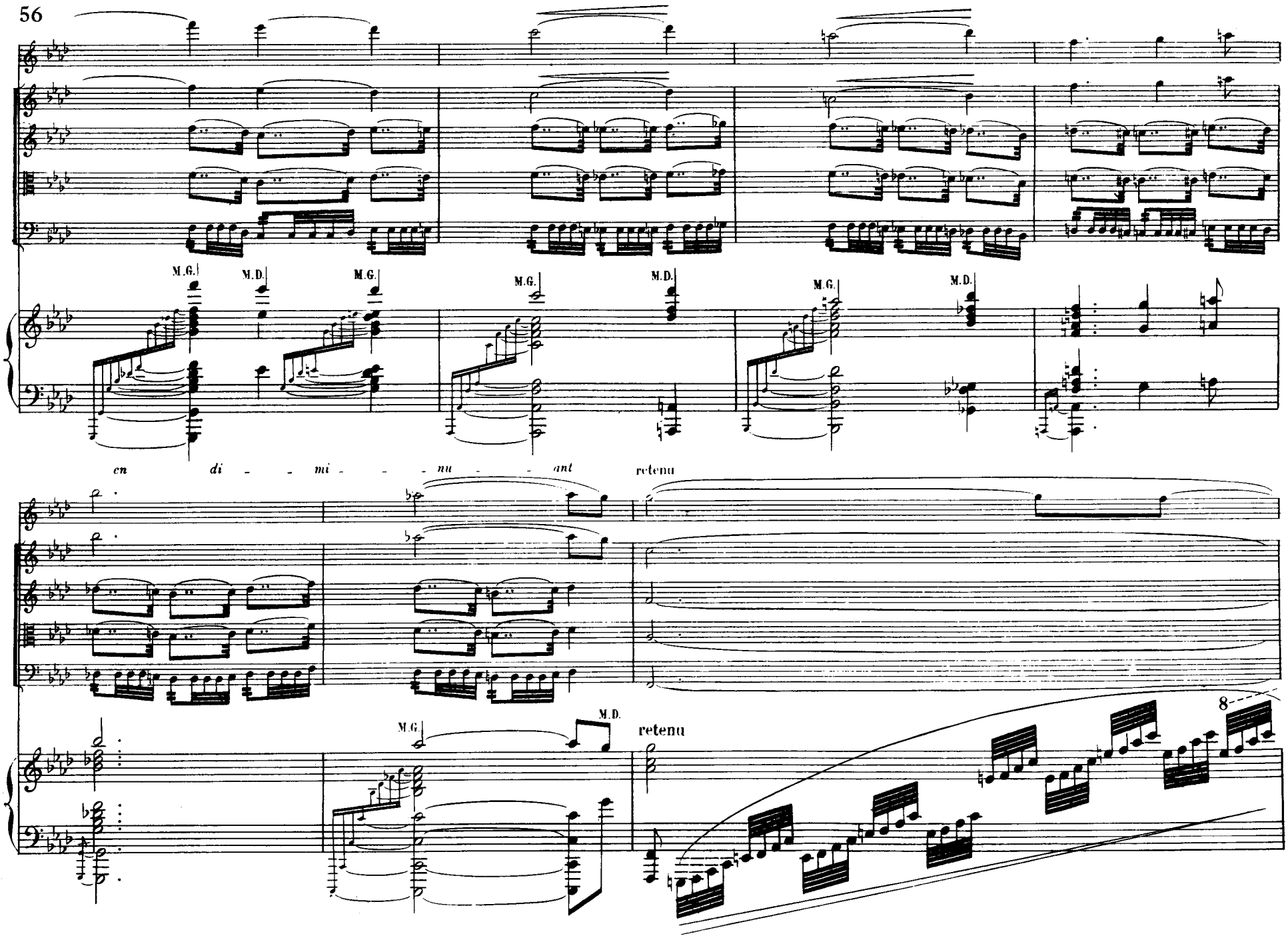

pp
pp
f
ff
ff
f
p

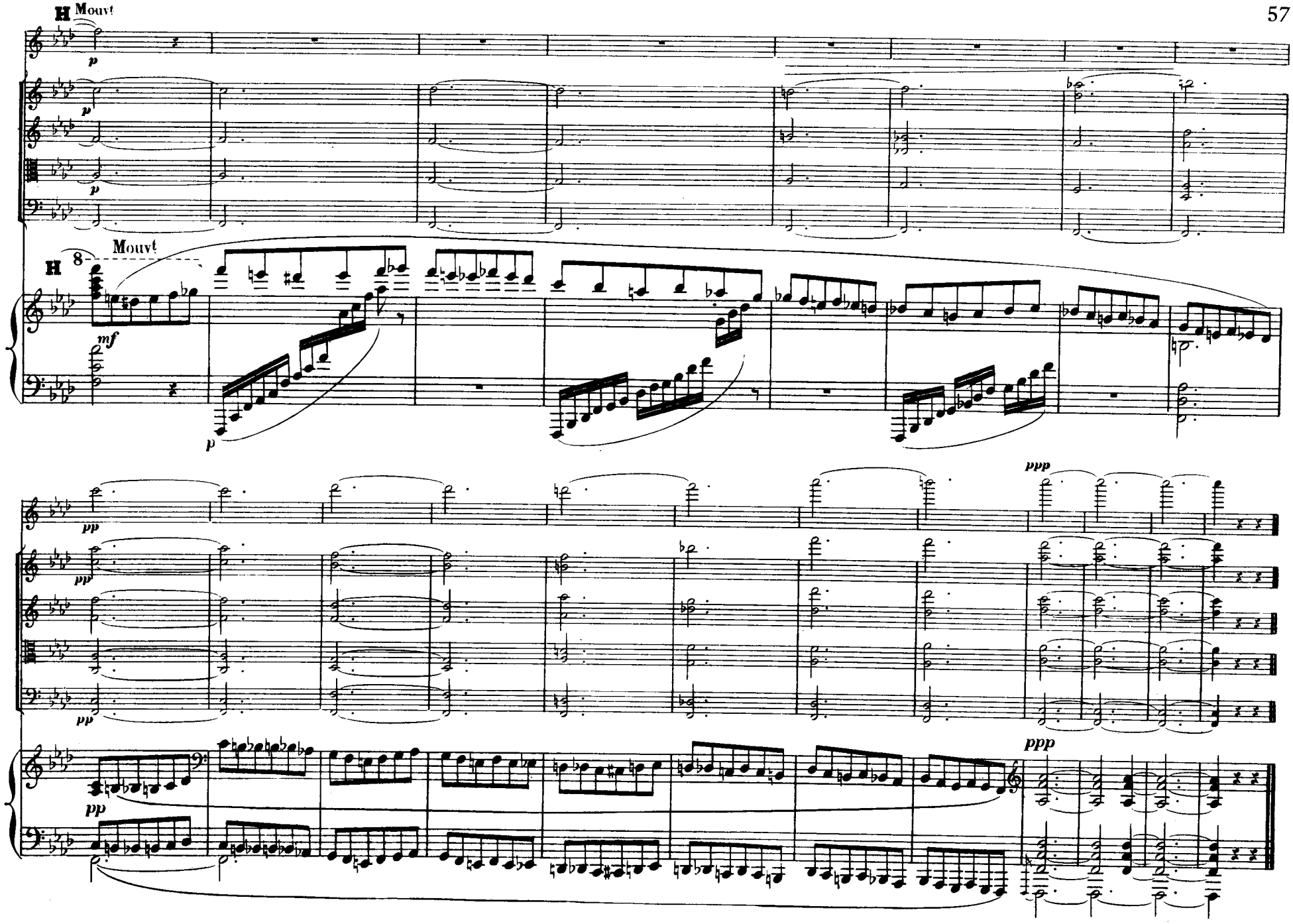

F
mf
f
F
en augmentant peu à peu
en augmentant peu à peu


f
ff
tr
G

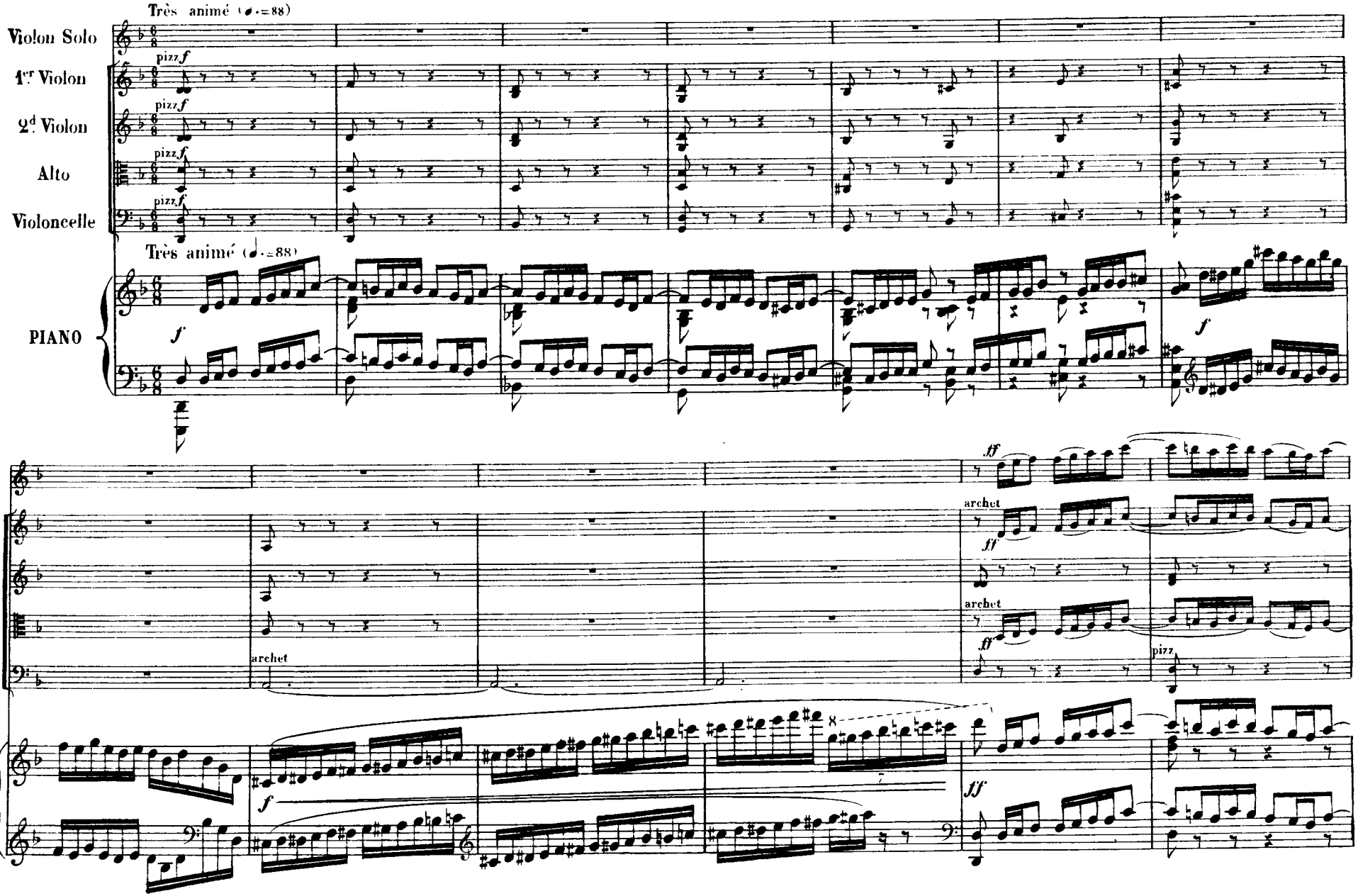

tr
fff
fff
ff
ff
ff
M.G.
M.G.
M.G.
M.G.
M.D.
M.G.

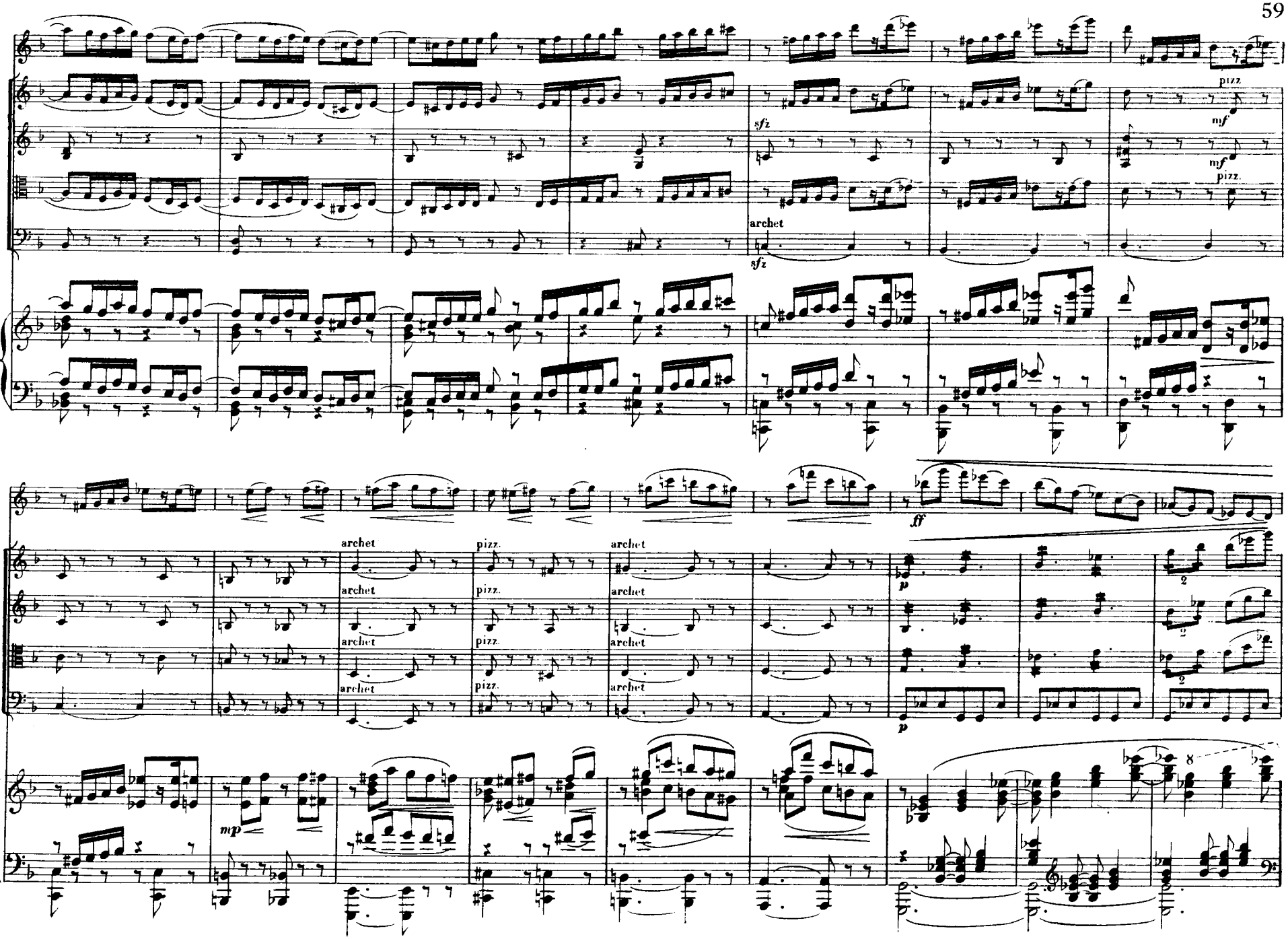

M.G.
M.D.
M.G.
M.D.
M.G.
M.D.
M.G.
M.G.
M.G.
M.G.

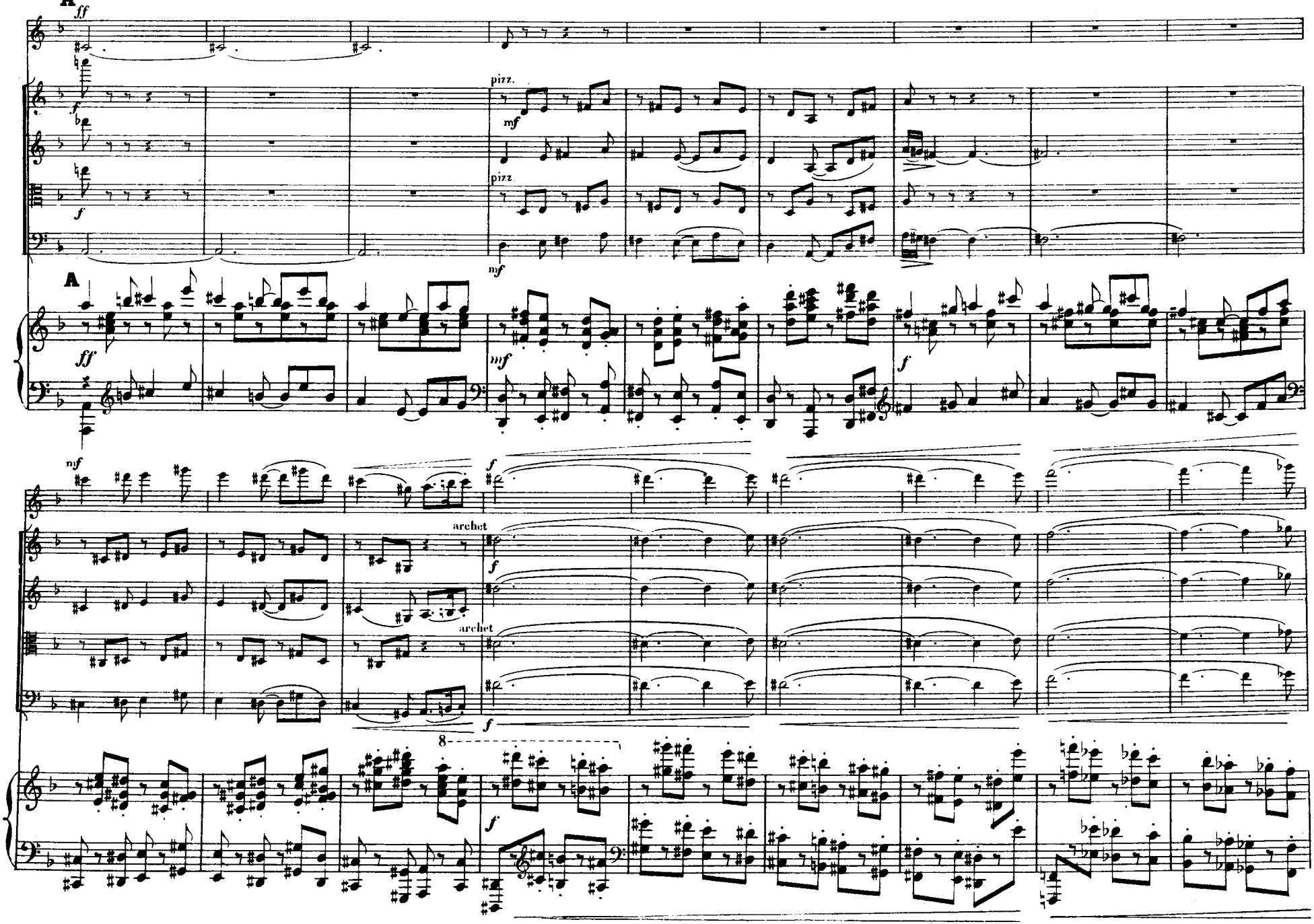

M.G.
M.D.
M.G.
M.G.
M.D.
M.G.
M.D.
en di - - mi - - - nu - - ant
retenu
M.G.
M.D.
retenu
8

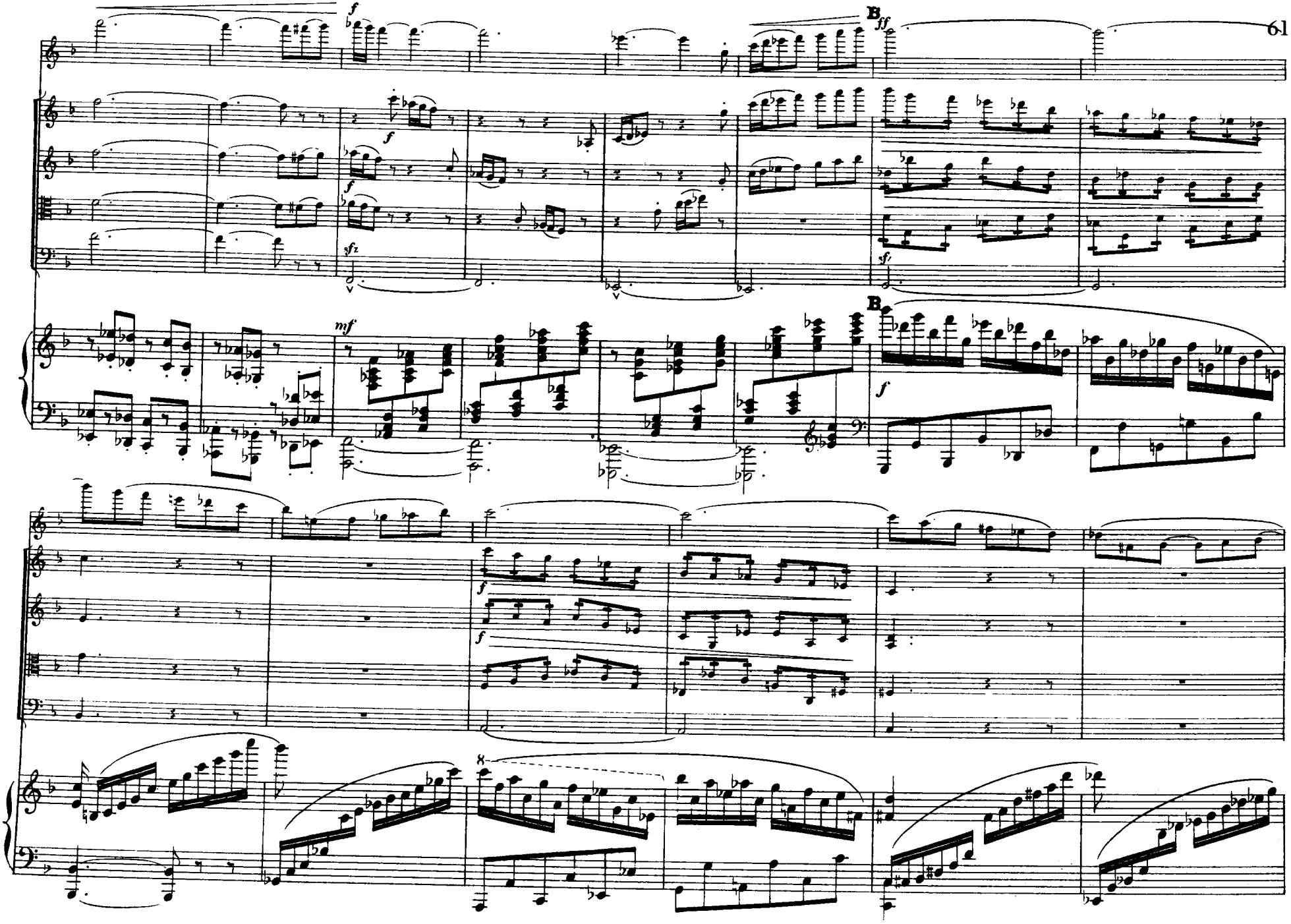

H Mouvt
p
p
p
H 8 Mouvt
mf
p
pp
pp
pp
pp
ppp
ppp

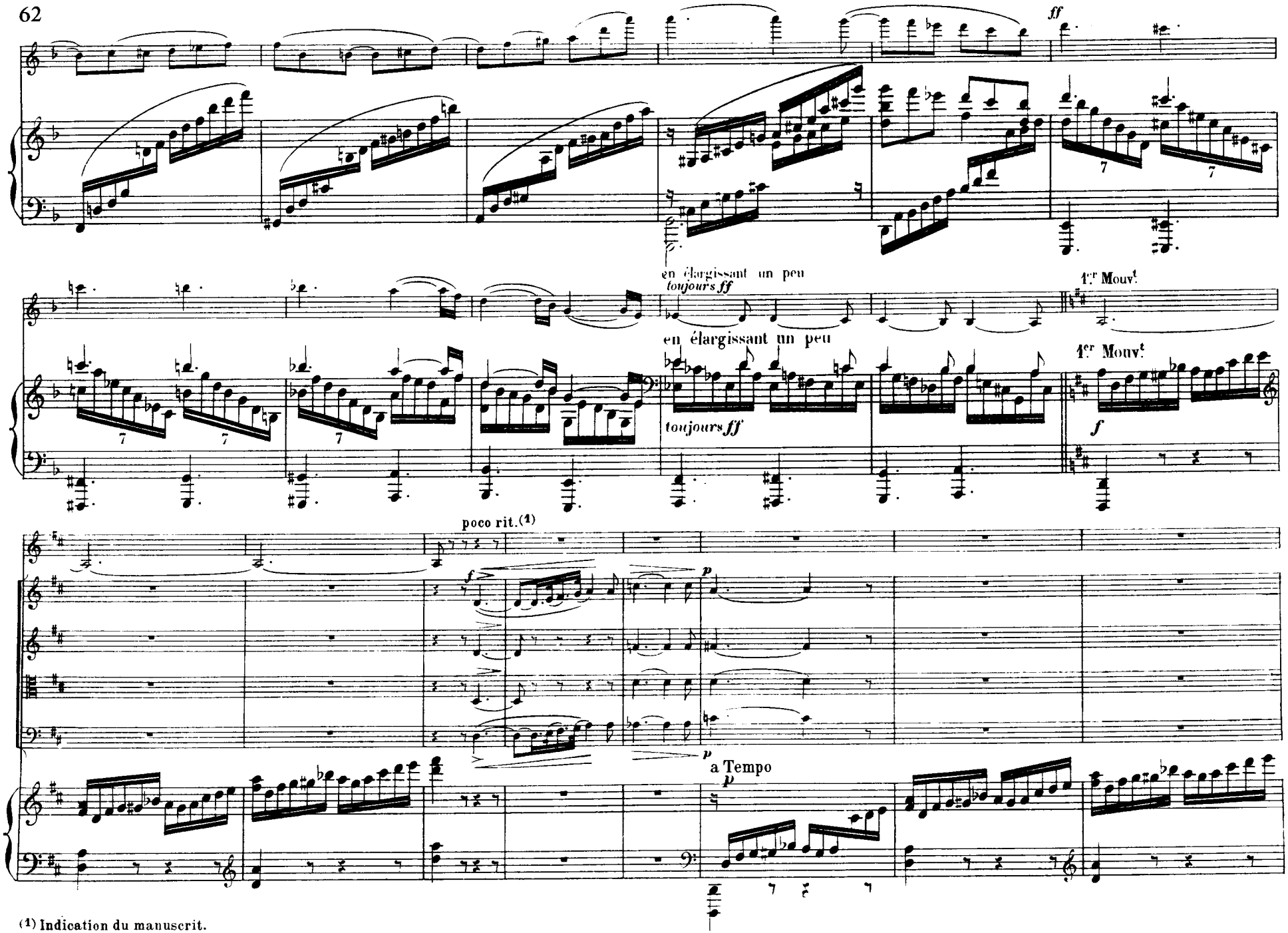
IV. Finale


Très animé (♩.=88)
Violon Solo
1er Violon
2d Violon
Alto
Violoncelle
pizz. f
Très animé (♩.=88)
PIANO
f
ff
archet
pizz.

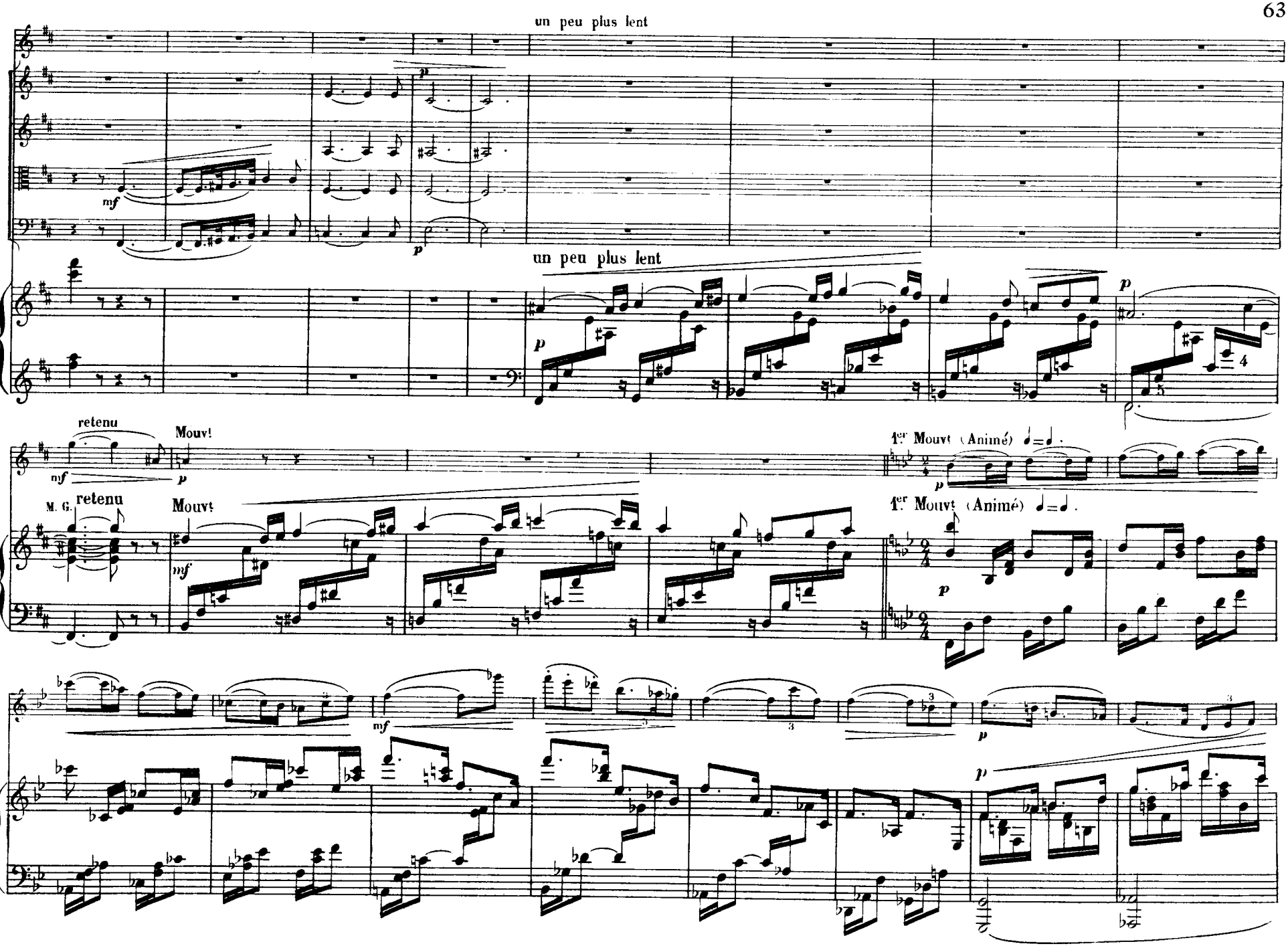

sfz
pizz.
mf
archet
ff
p
mp
8

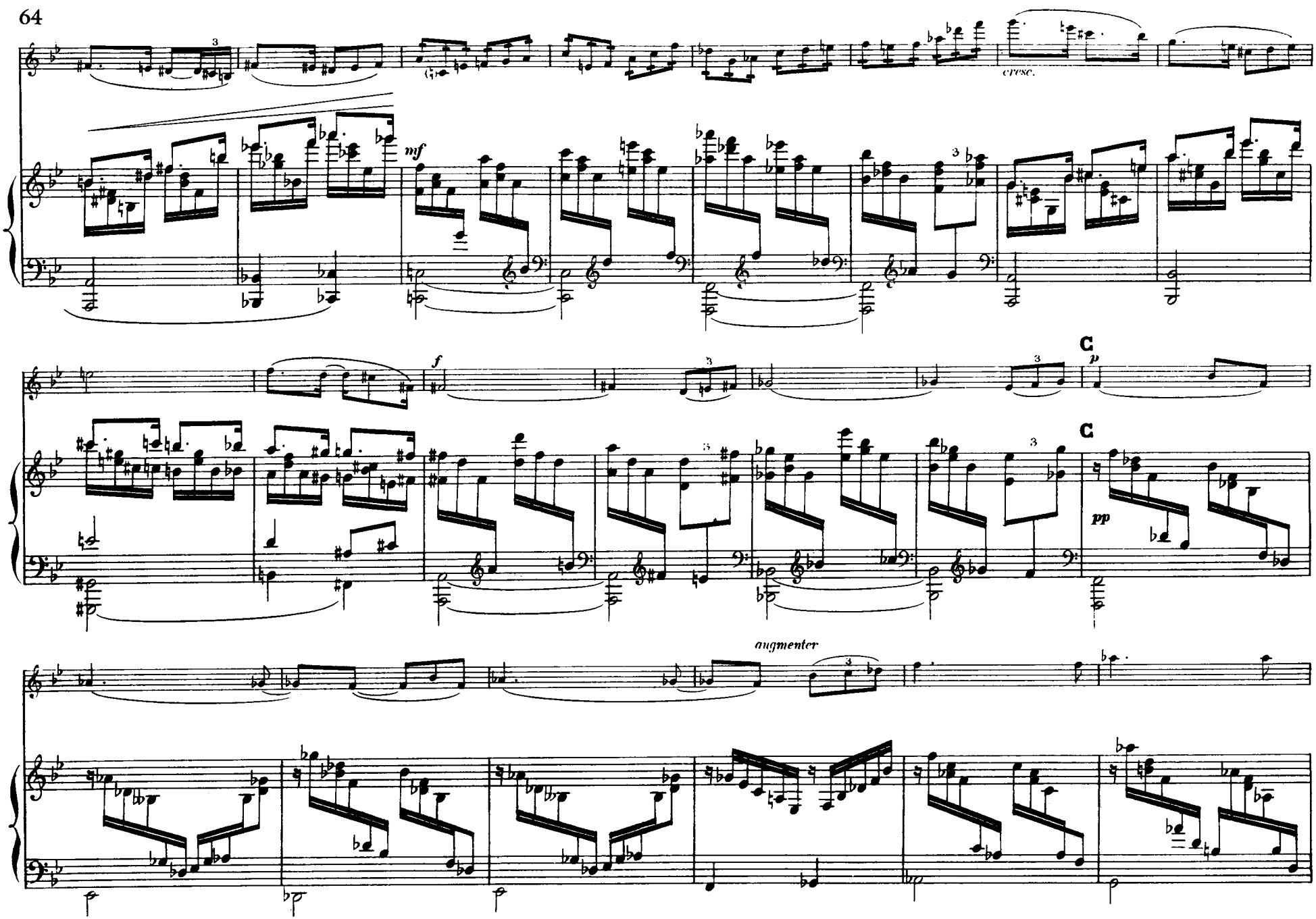

A
ff
f
pizz.
mf
pizz.
mf
A
ff
mf
f
nf
f
archet
f
archet
f
8
f

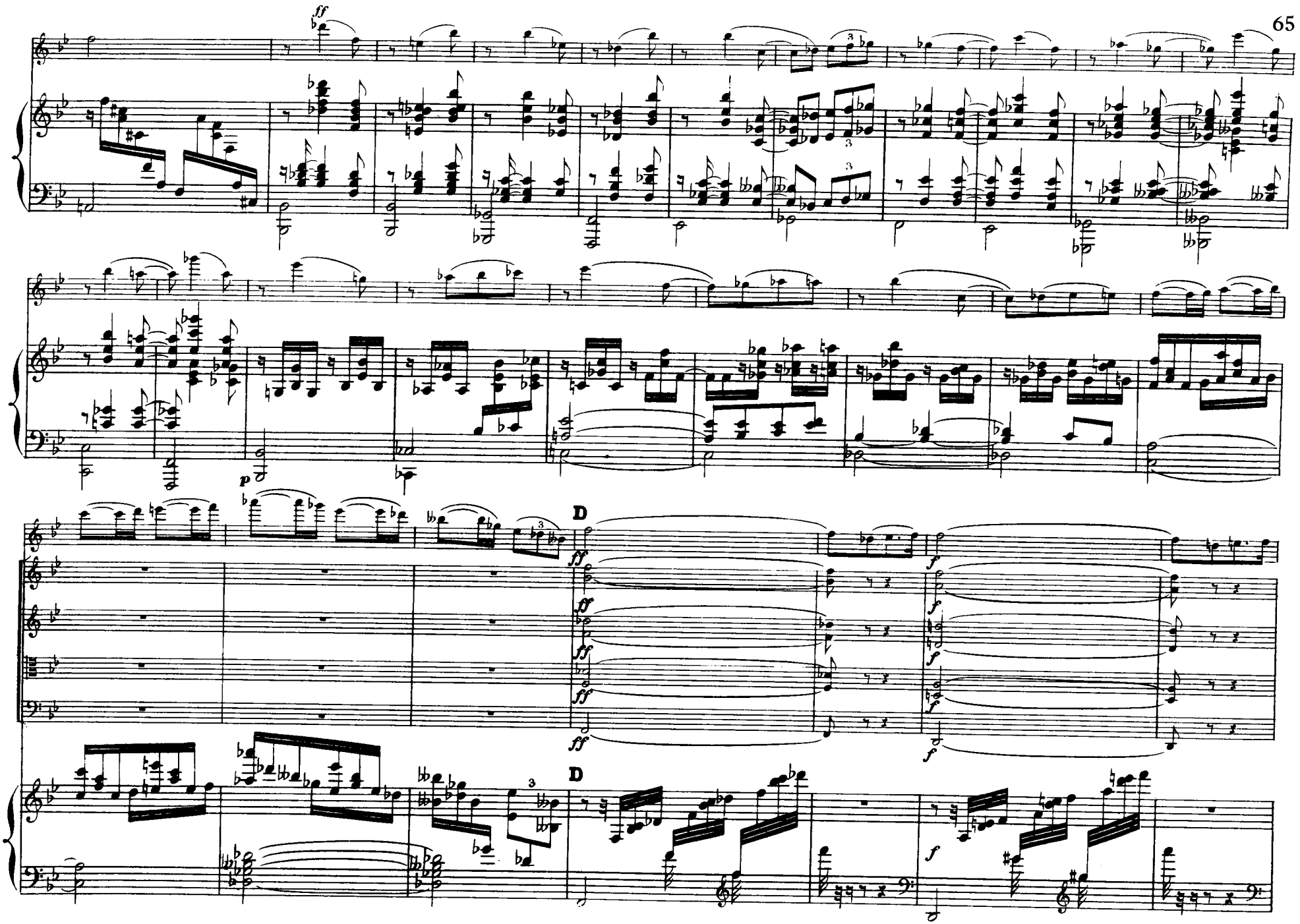

B
B
8

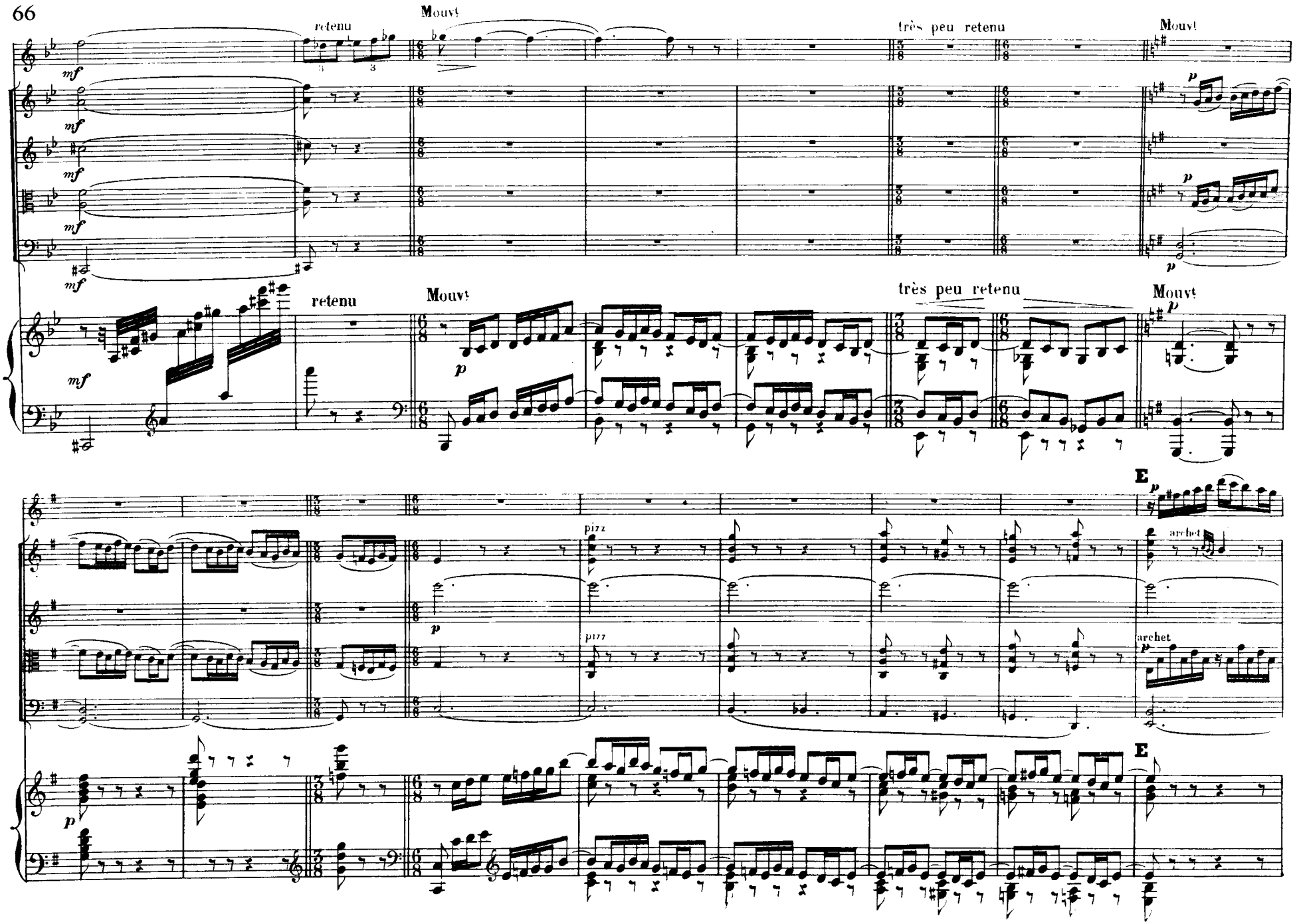


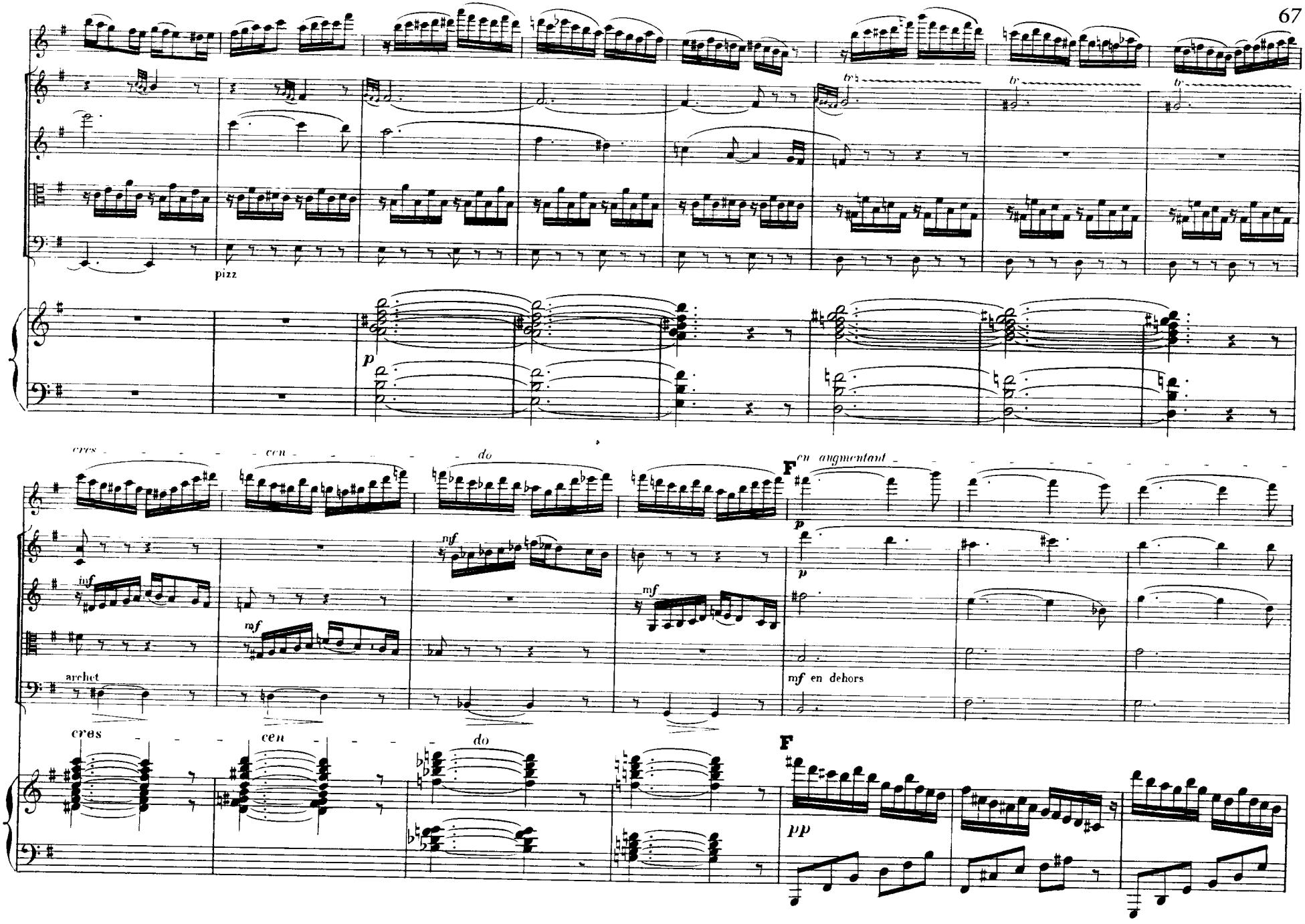
(1) Indication du manuscrit.

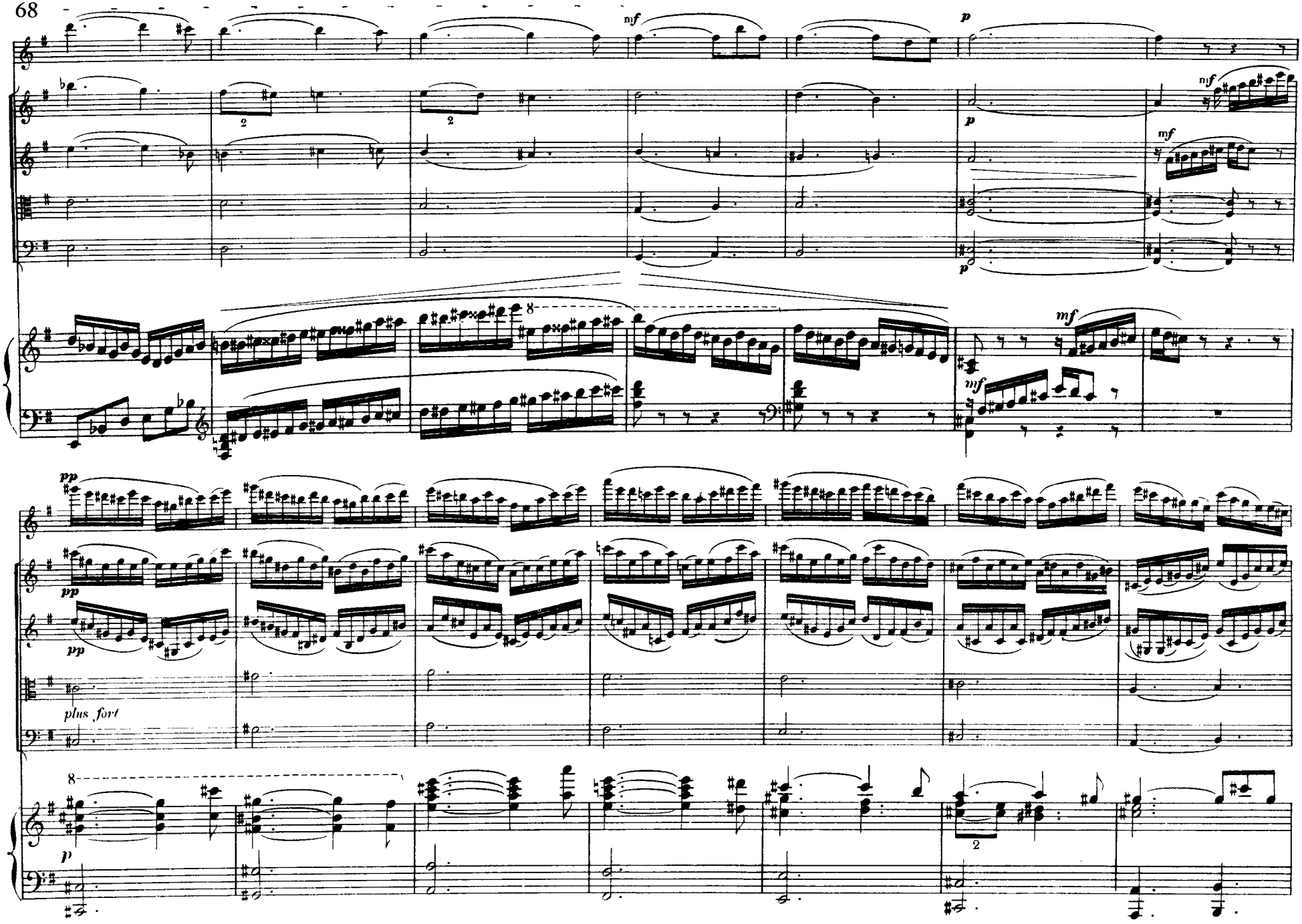

un peu plus lent
mf
p
un peu plus lent
p
retenu
Mouv!
mf
p
1er Mouvt (Animé)
M. G.
retenu
Mouvt
mf
p
1er Mouvt (Animé)
mf
p
p

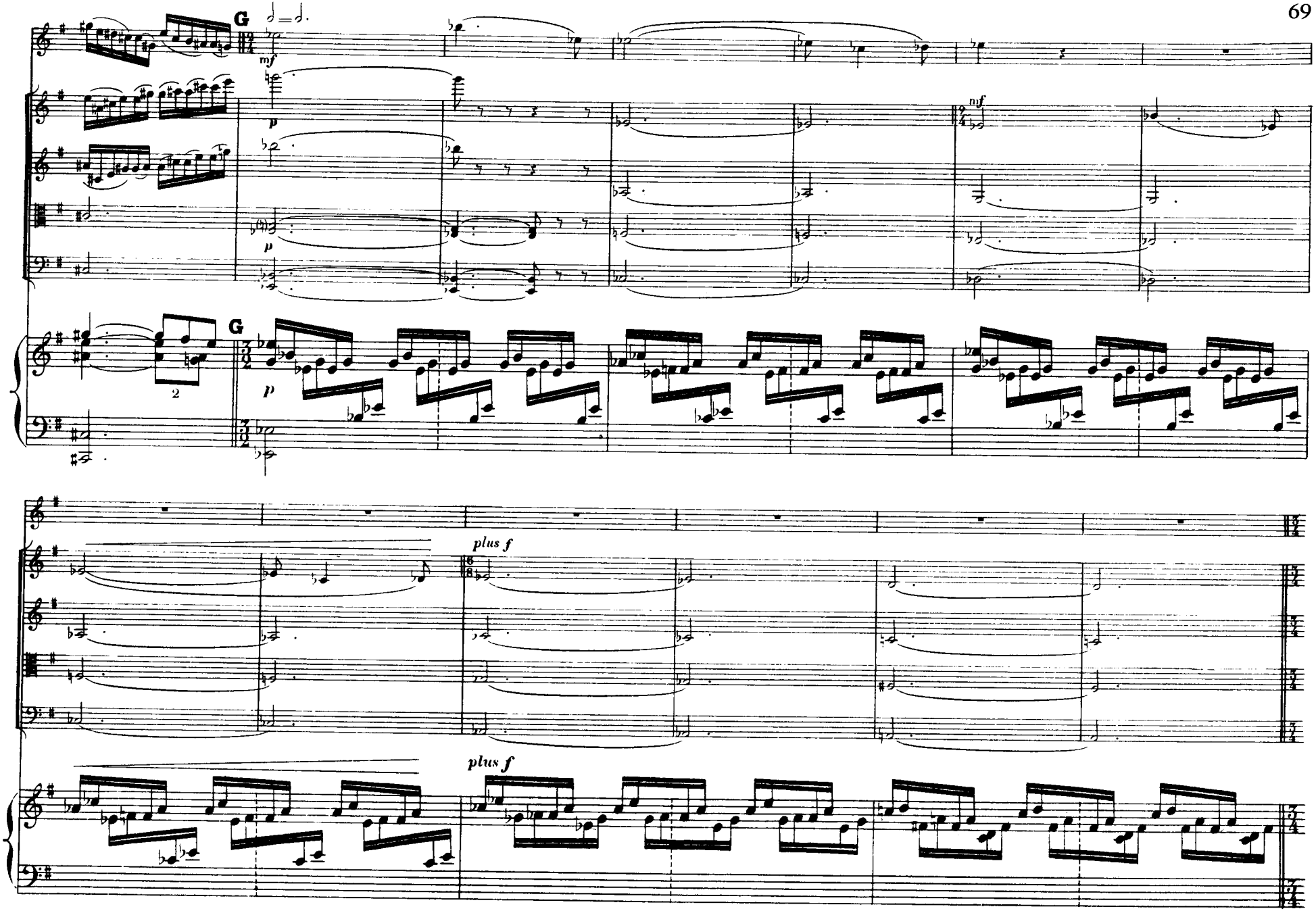

cresc.
mf
f
C
p
C
pp
augmenter

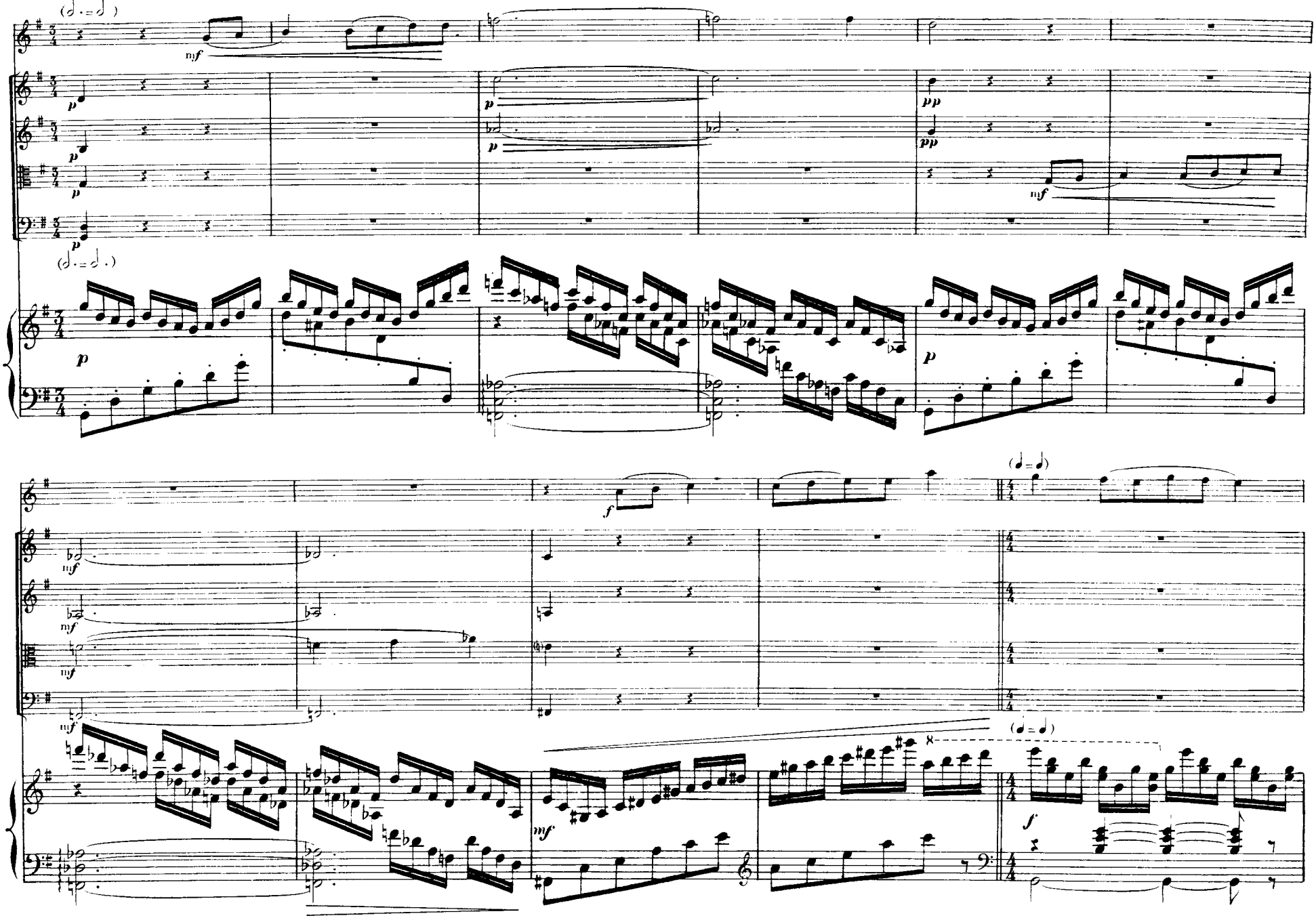

ff
p
D
ff
f
D
f

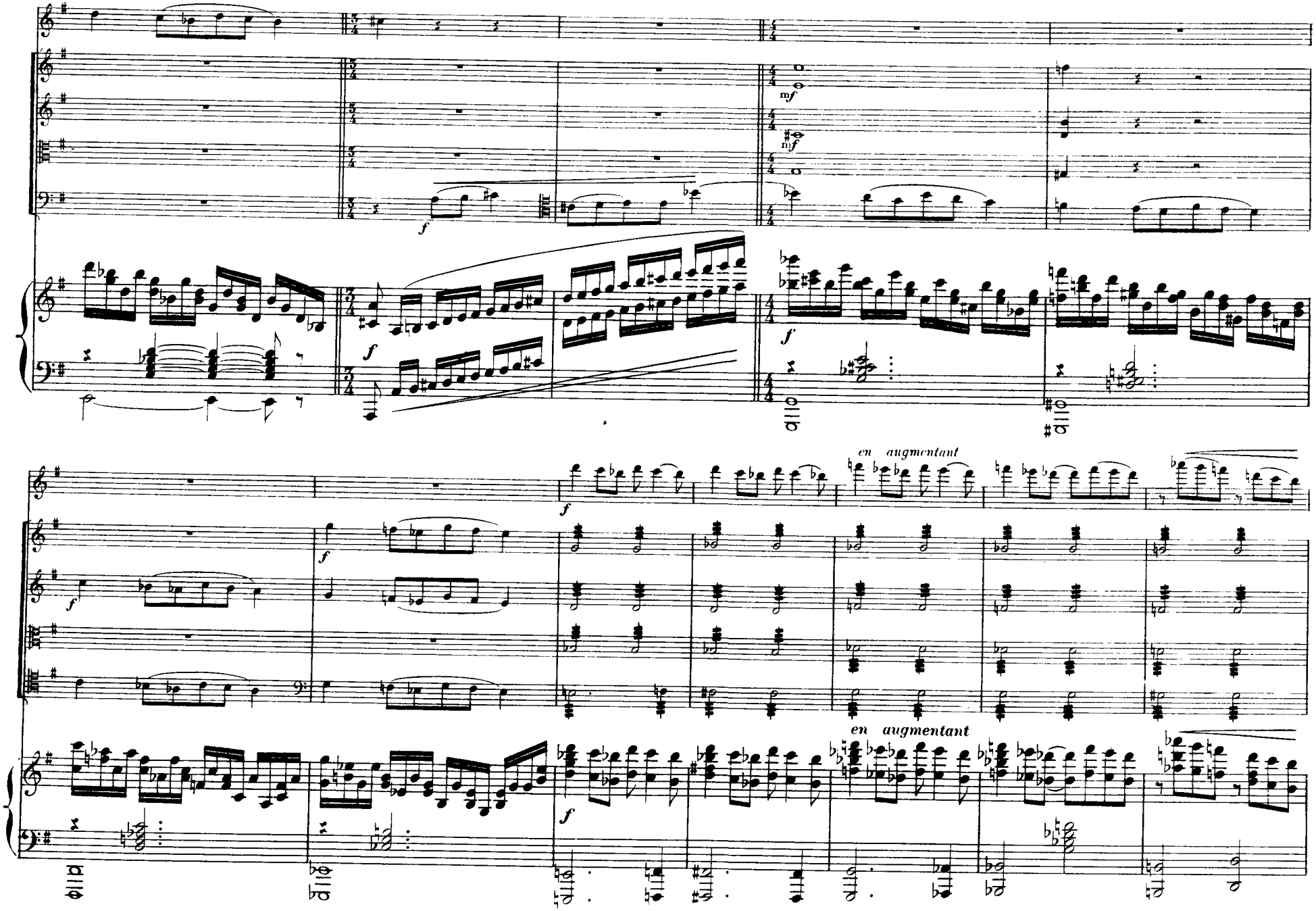

retenu
Mouvt
très peu retenu
Mouvt
mf
p
retenu
Mouvt
très peu retenu
Mouvt
E
pizz
archet
E

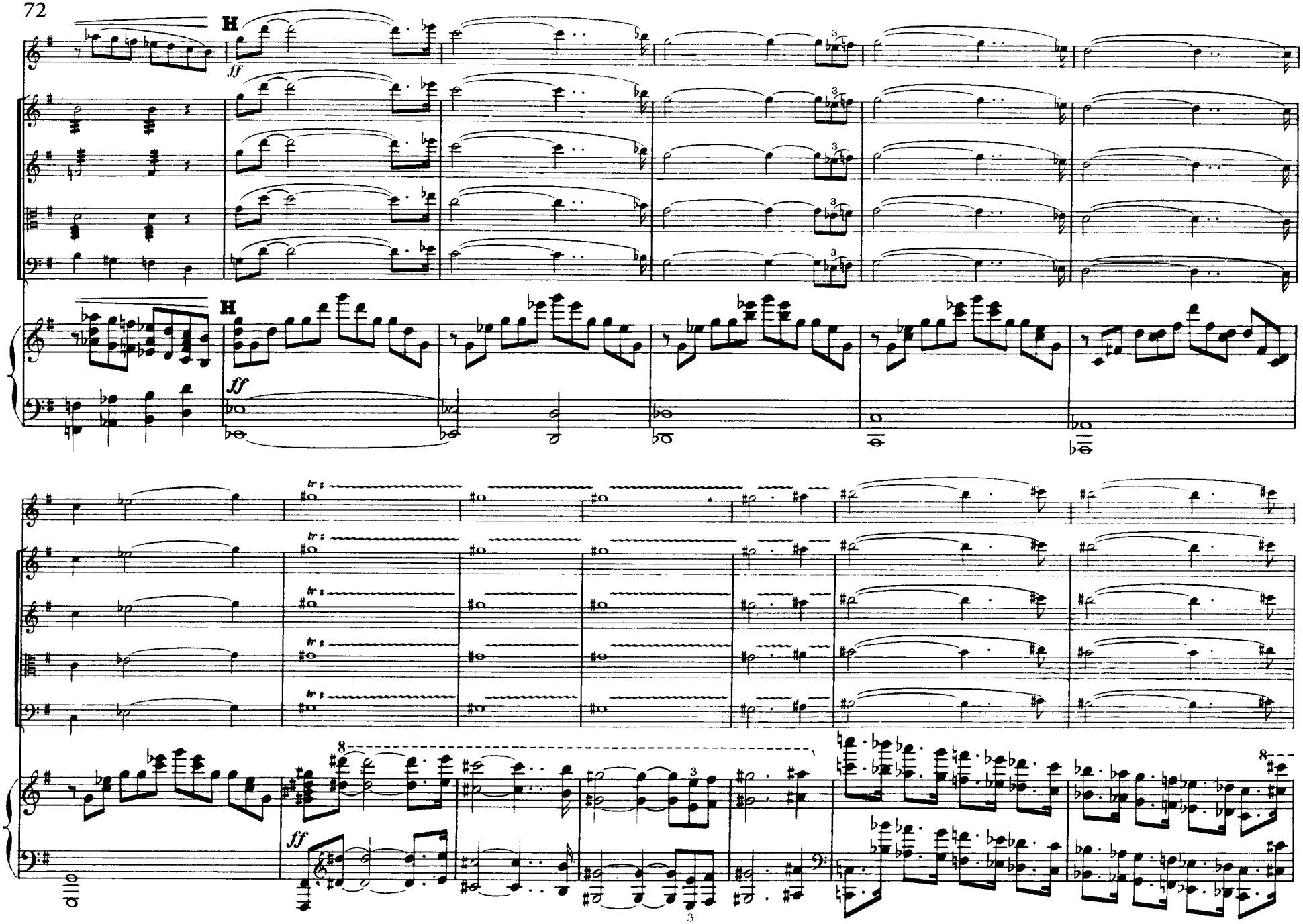

pizz
tr
tr
tr
p
cres
cen
do
F
en augmentant
p
inf
mf
mf
p
archet
mf en dehors
cres
cen
do
F
pp

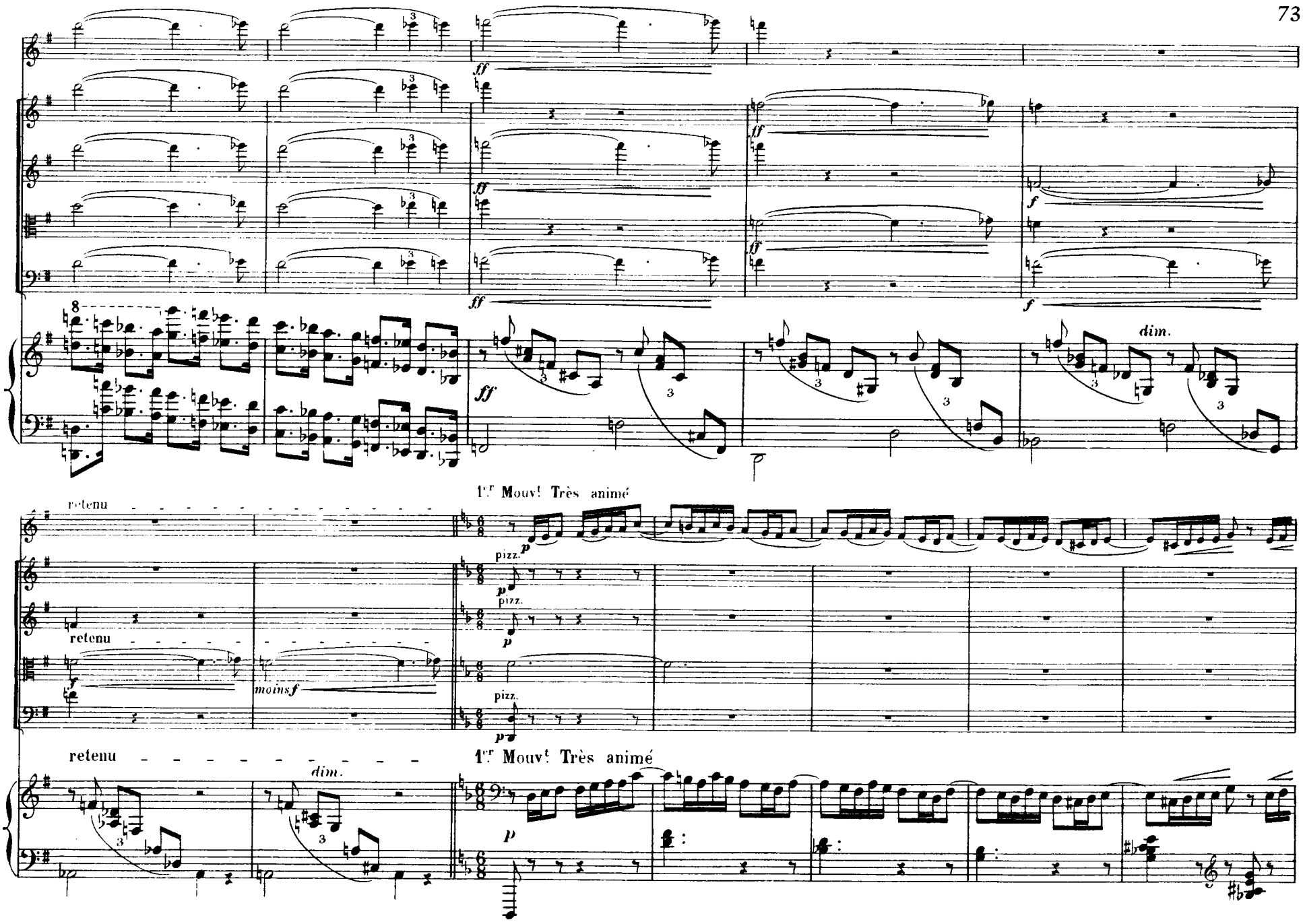

nf
p
nf
p
mf
mf
pp
pp
pp
plus fort
p

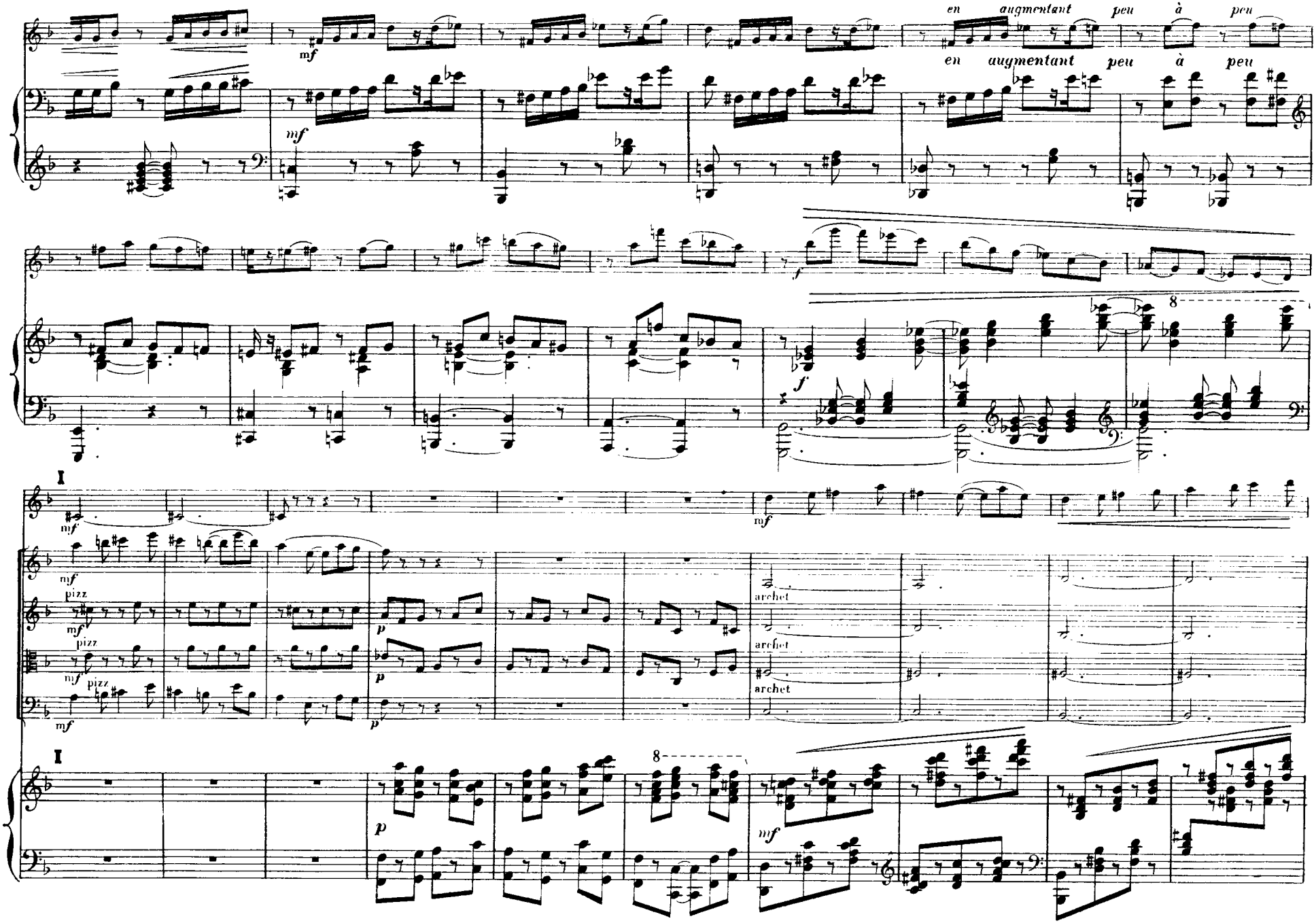

G
mf
p
mf
G
p
2
plus f
plus f

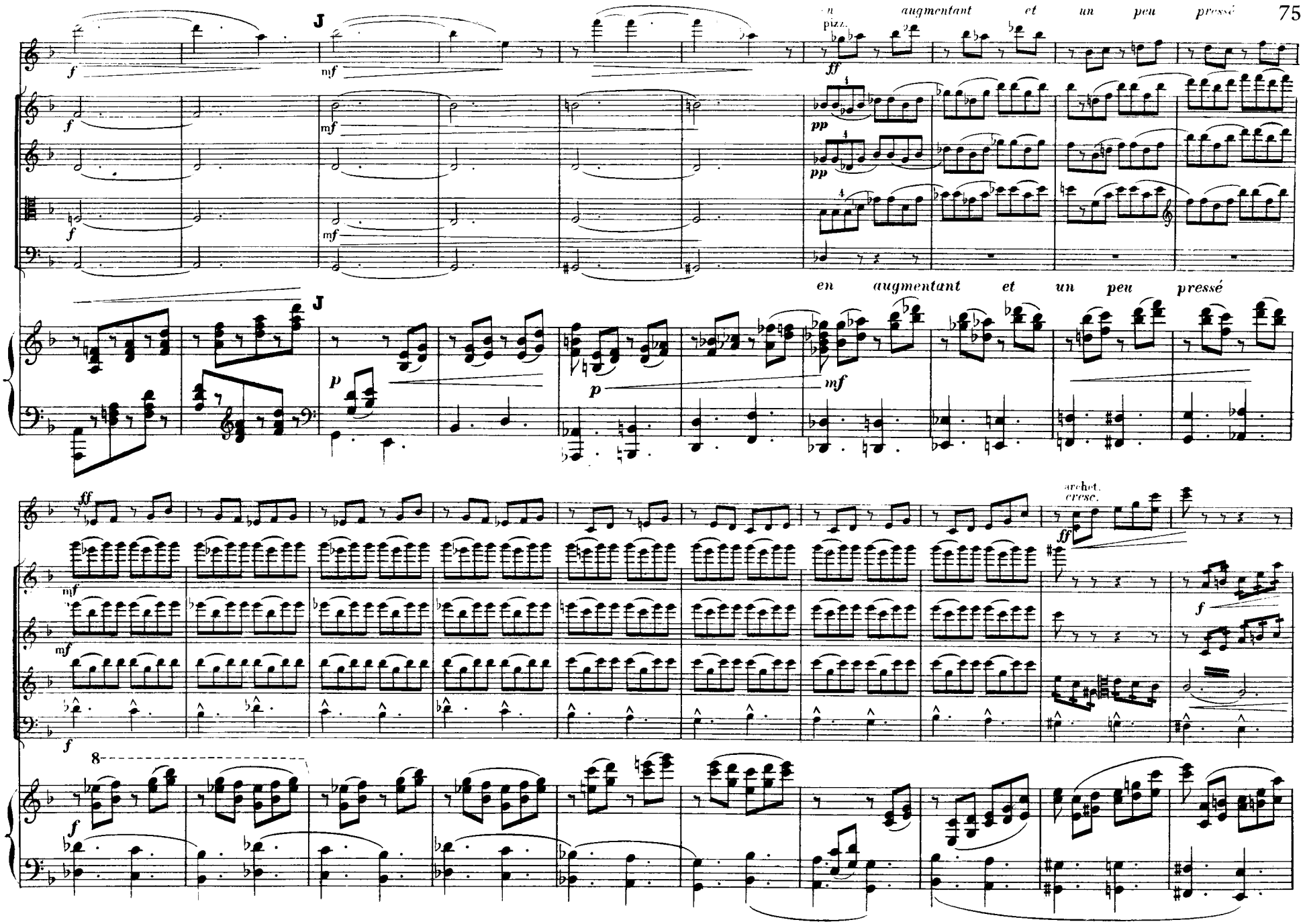

mf
p
pp
f

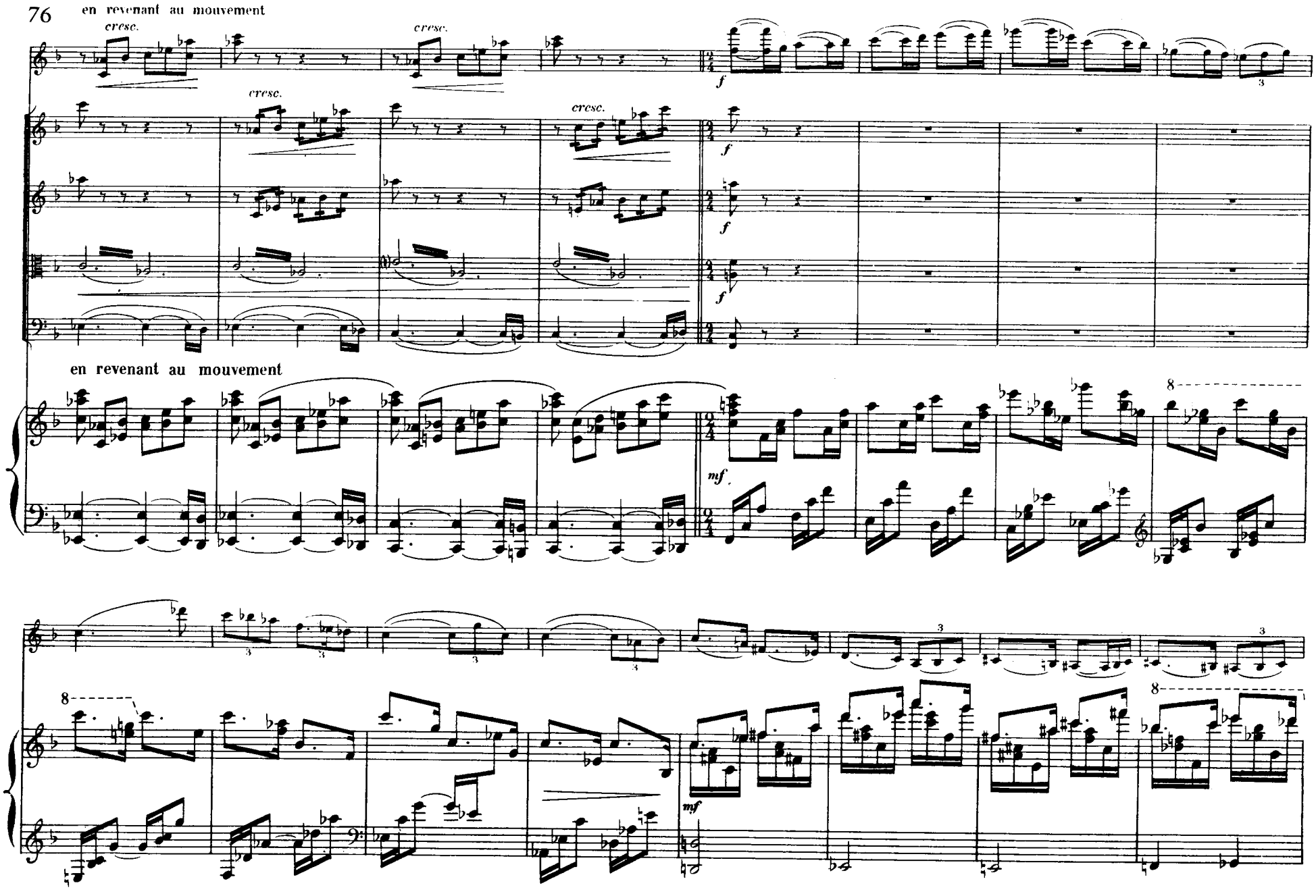

mf
mf
f
f
f
f
en augmentant
f
f
f
en augmentant

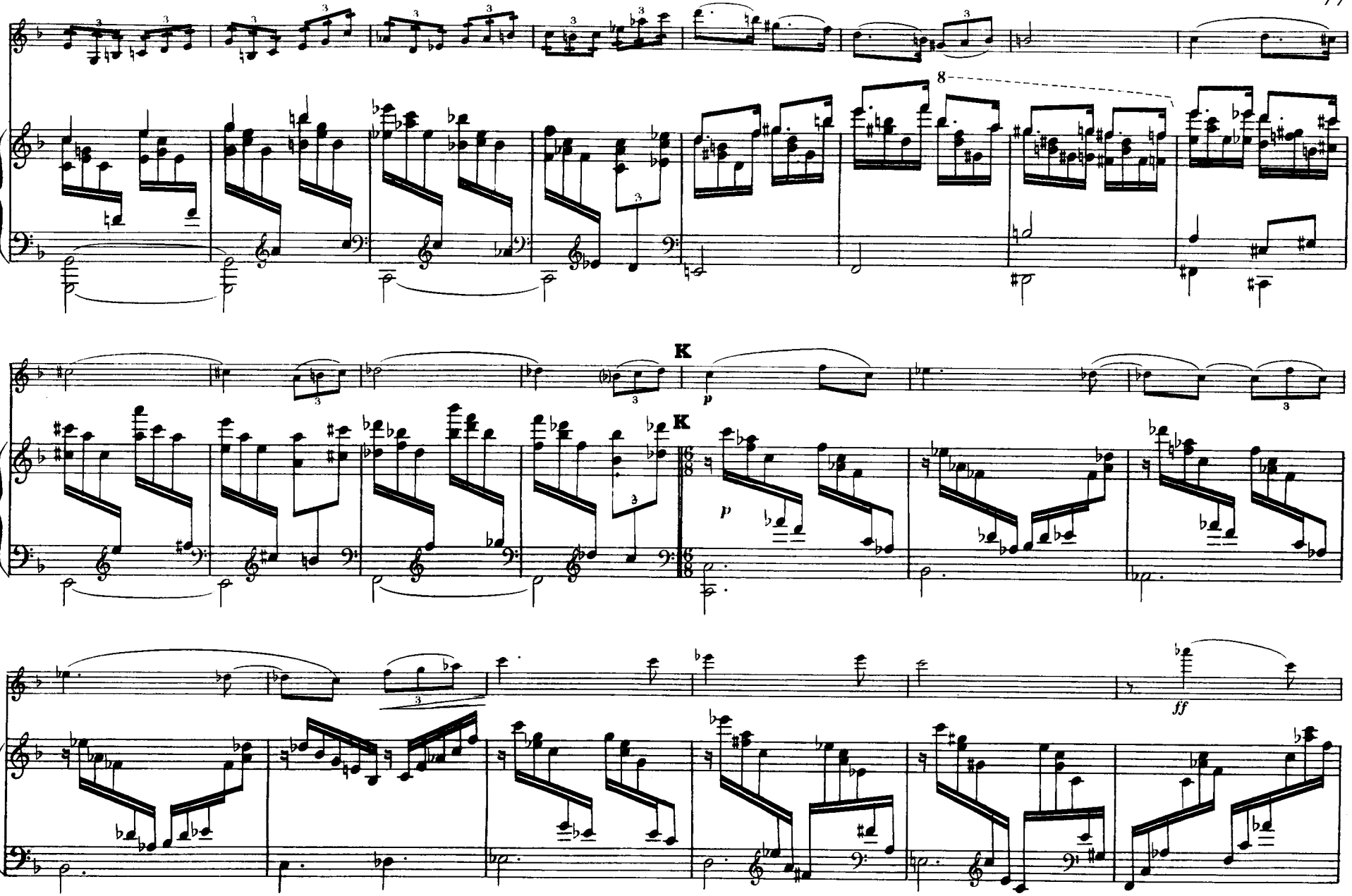

H
ff
H
ff
tr
8
ff
3

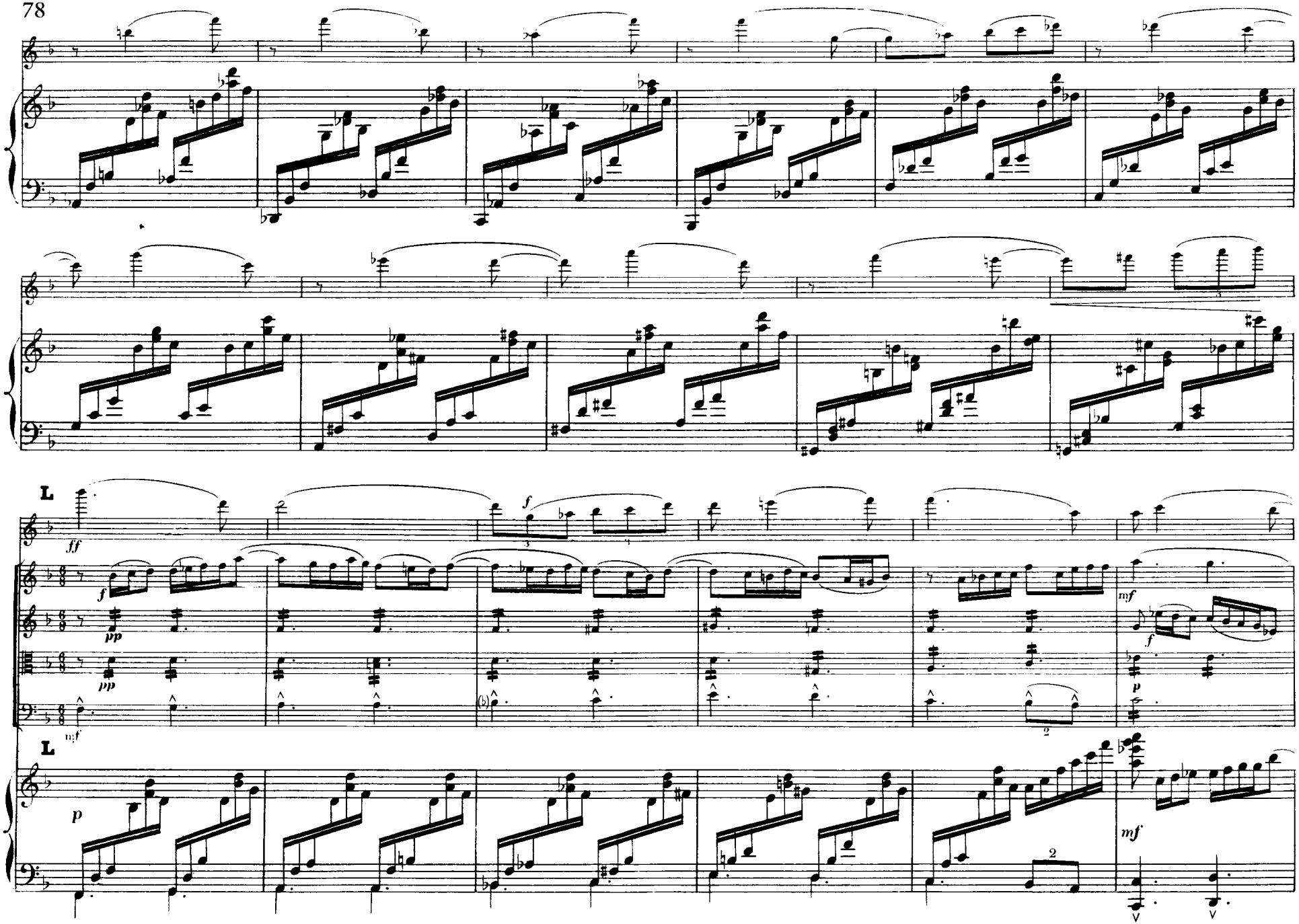

ff
f
dim.
1.er Mouvt Très animé
retenu
pizz.
p
moins f
1.er Mouvt Très animé

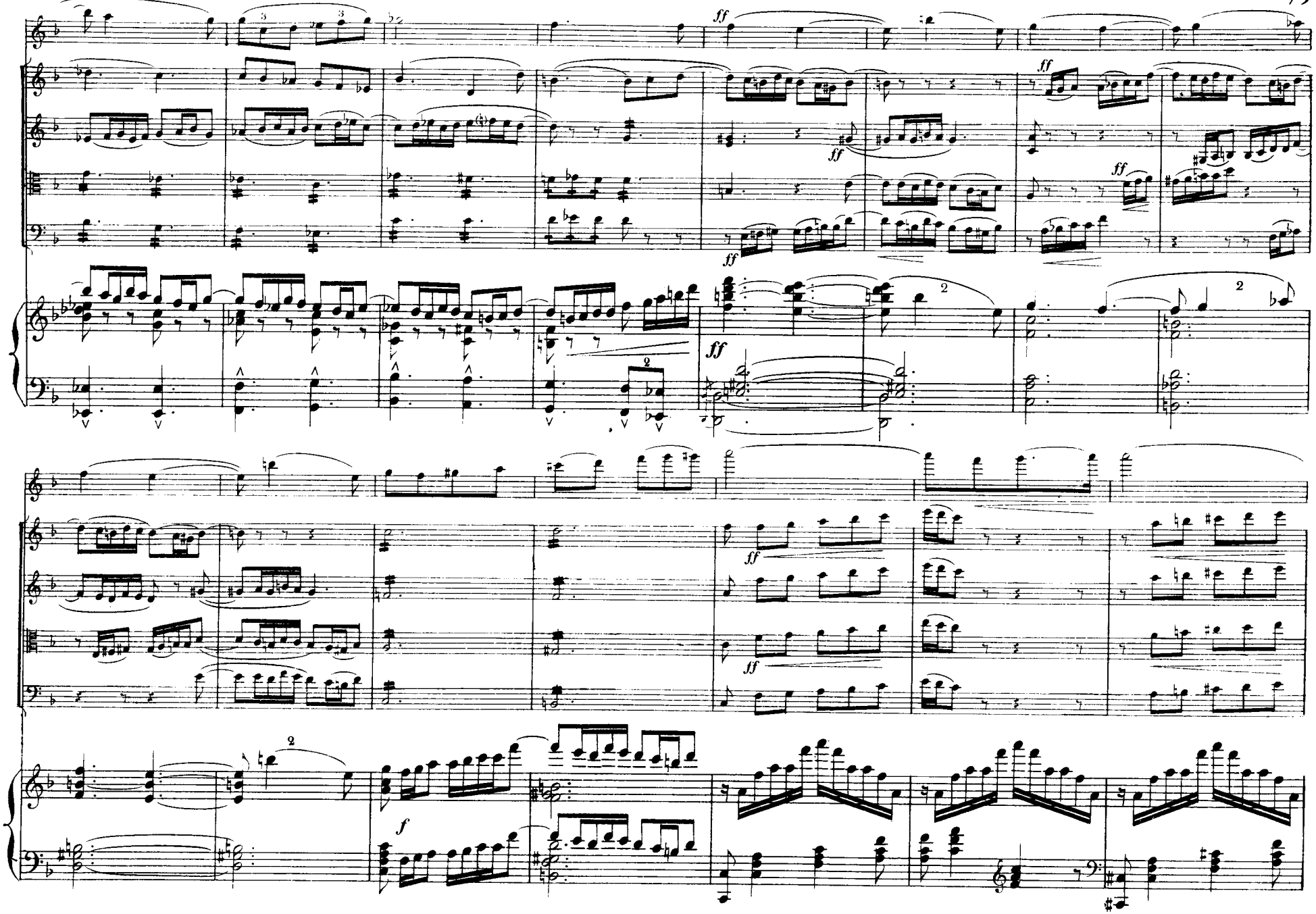

en augmentant peu à peu
mf
f
I
pizz
archet
p


J
en augmentant et un peu pressé
pizz.
en augmentant et un peu pressé
archet.
cresc.


en revenant au mouvement
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
f
f
f
f
en revenant au mouvement
mf
mf
8
8
8
3


8
K
p
K
p
ff


L
ff
f
pp
mf
p
L
mf


ff
ff
ff
ff
ff
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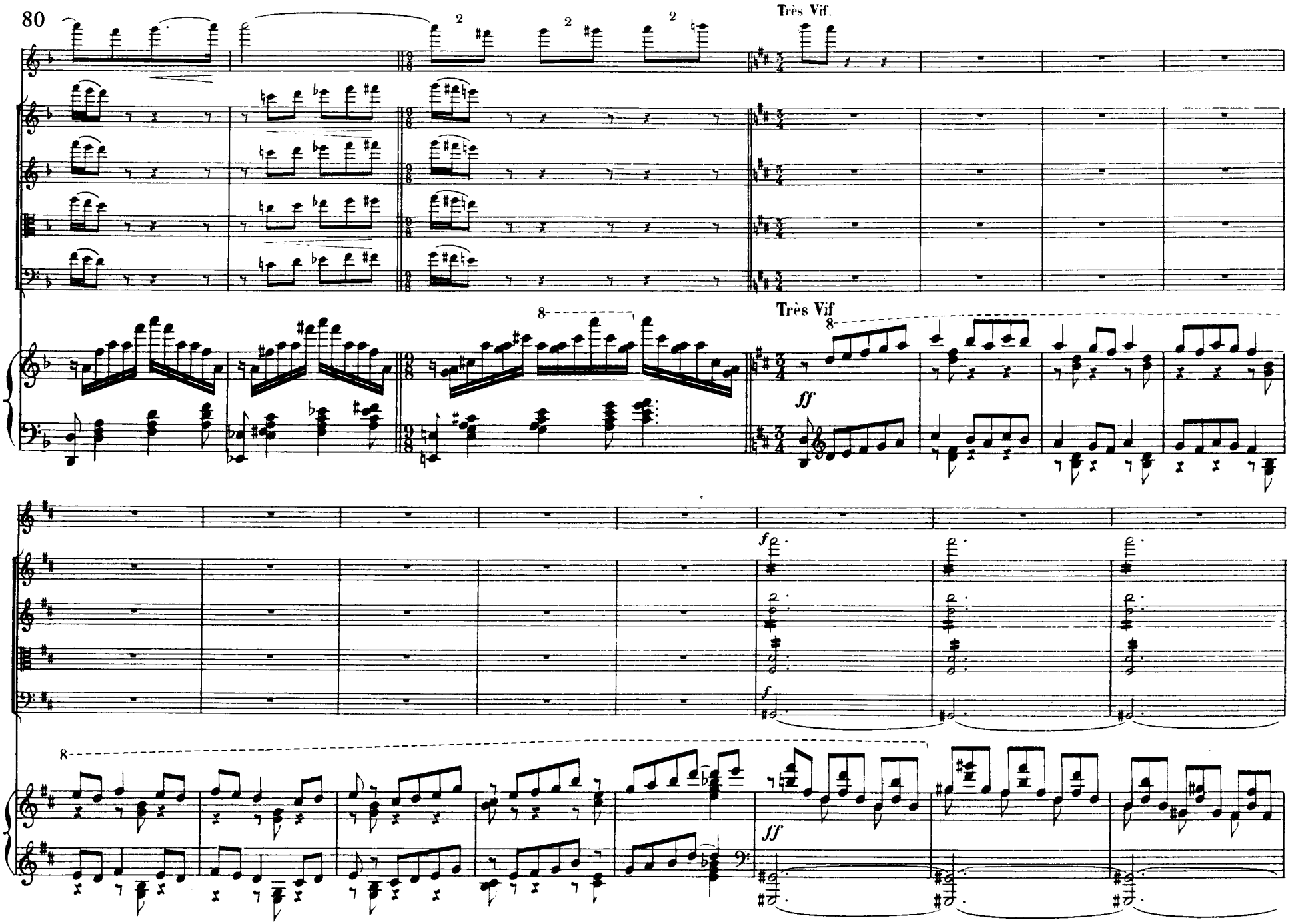
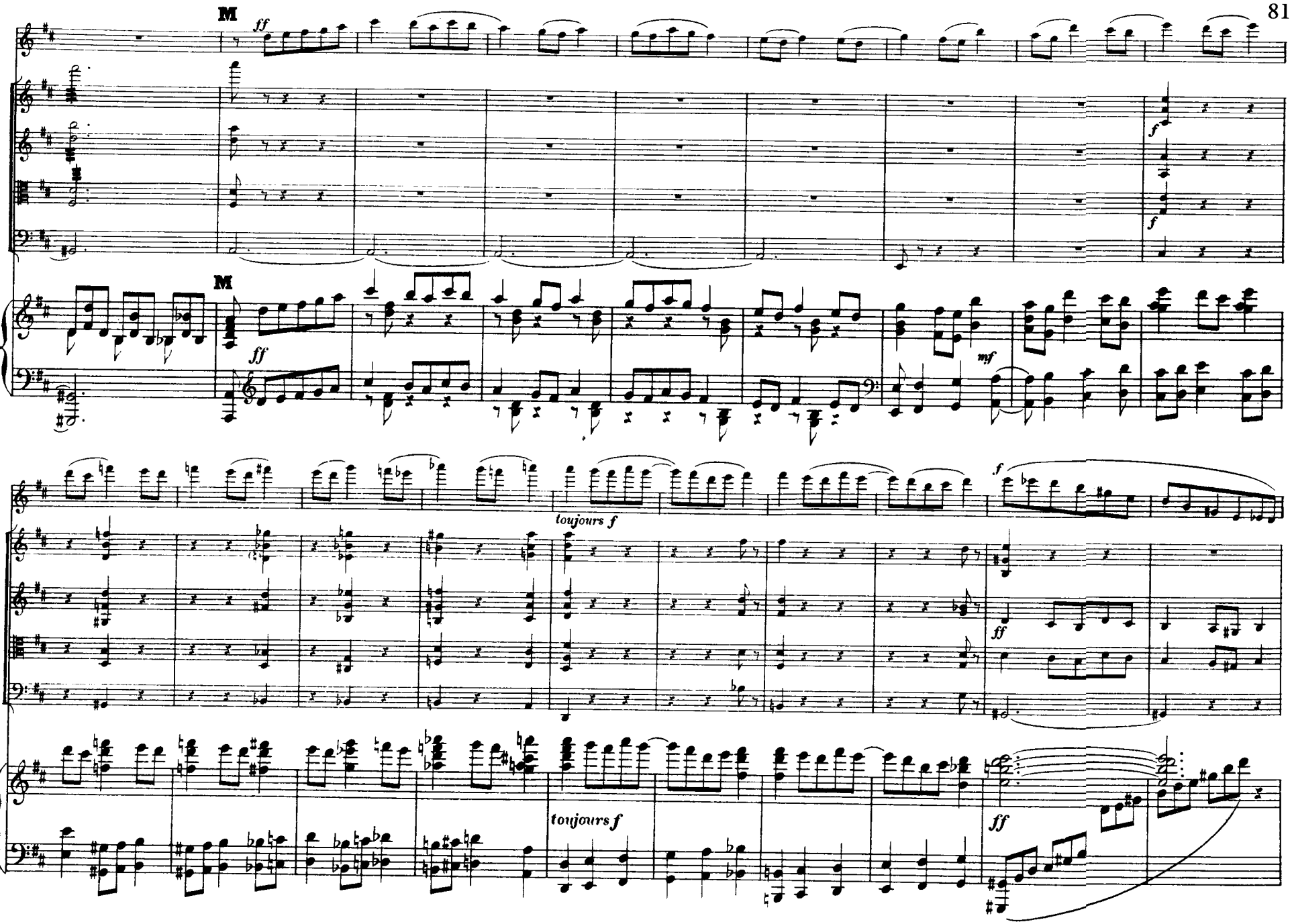
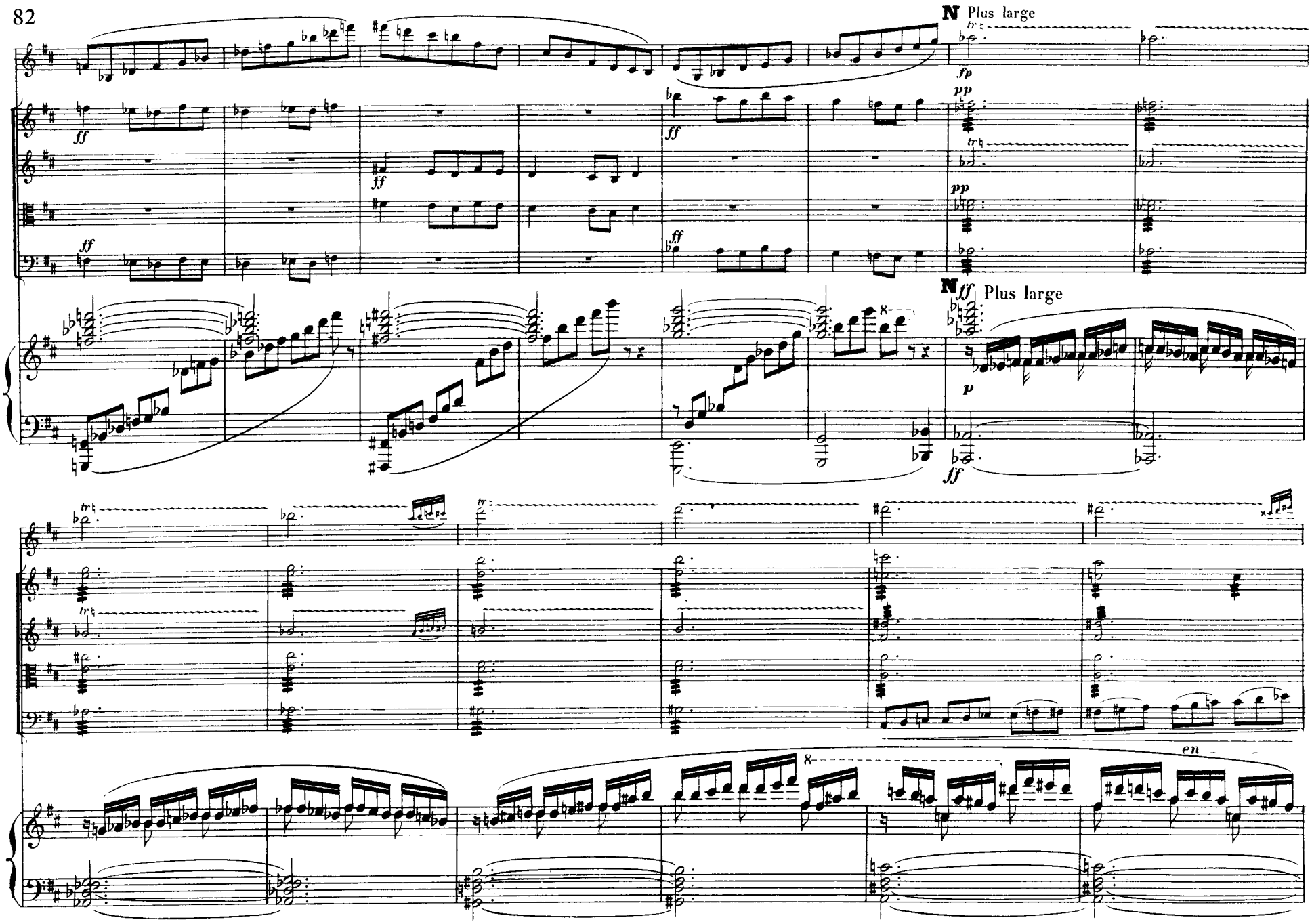
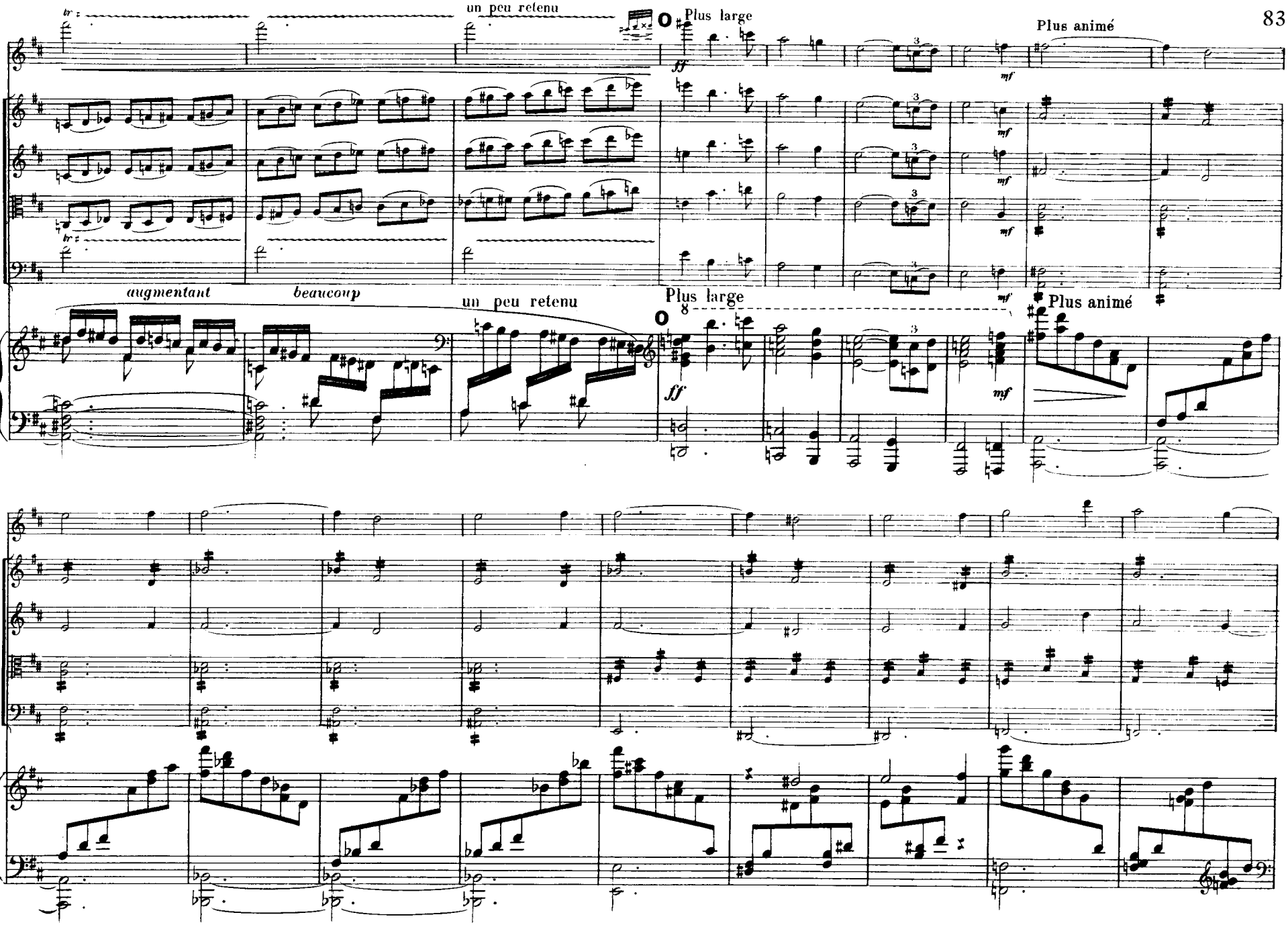
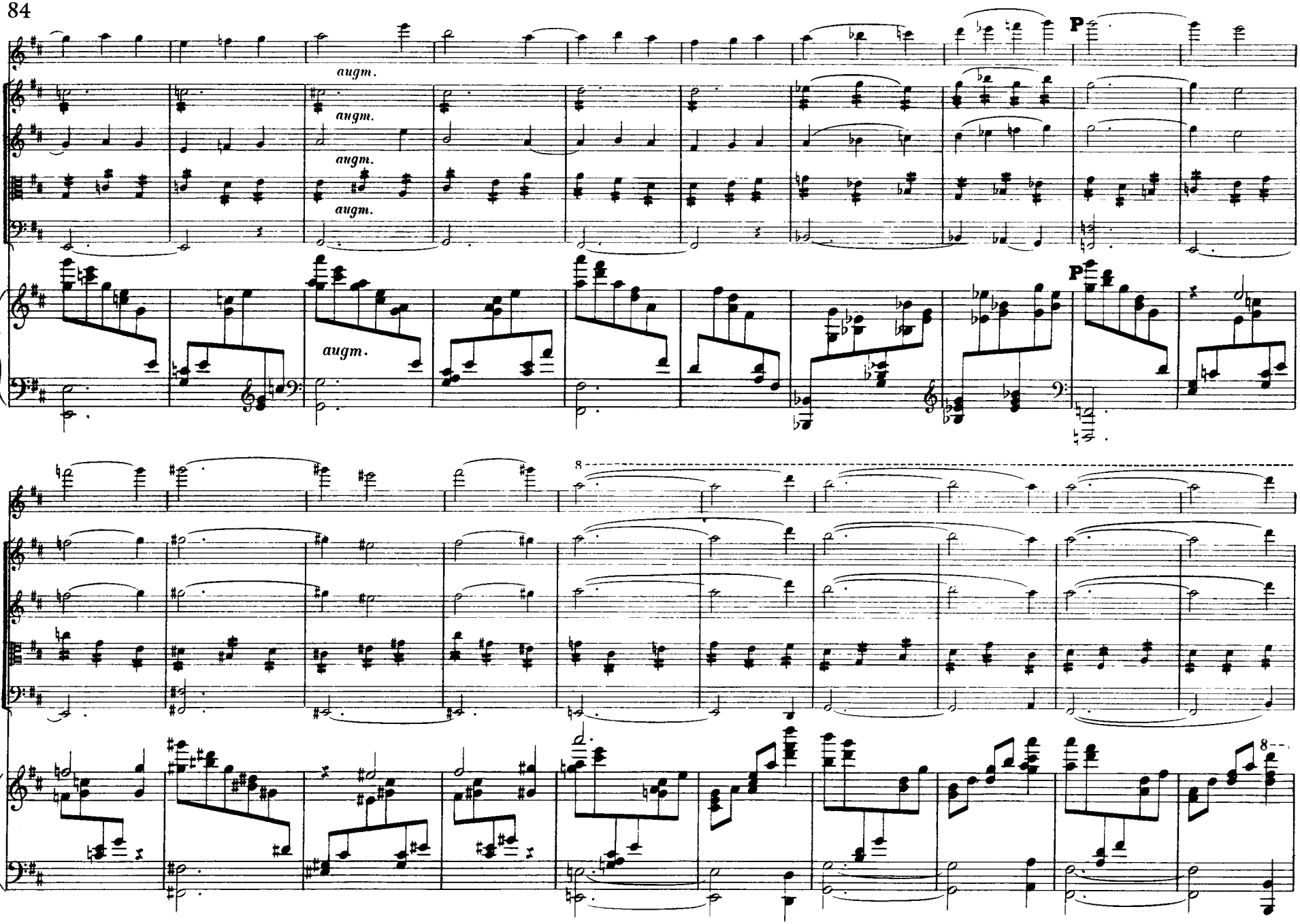
ff
ff
f


80
Très Vif.
Très Vif
ff
f
ff


M
ff
f
f
M
ff
mf
toujours f
f
ff
toujours f
ff


N Plus large
fp
pp
ff
N ff Plus large
p
en


un peu retenu
Plus large
Plus animé
augmentant
beaucoup
un peu retenu
Plus large
Plus animé


augm.
augm.
augm.
augm.
augm.
P
P
8
8

8

un peu retenu 1er Mouvt

un peu retenu 1er Mouvt

ff

ff

8

8

END OF EDITION