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CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEDALLING
DEBUSSY'S PIANO MUSIC

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DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

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DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....	iii
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
DECLARATION.....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1 -The Piano ‘Without Hammers’: Pianos in Debussy’s Time.....	7
CHAPTER 2 - Gamelan Music and the ‘Vibrations in the Air’.....	15
CHAPTER 3 – ‘Faites Confiance à Votre Oreille’: Pedalling Techniques in Debussy’s Piano Music.....	29
CHAPTER 4 - Debussy’s Use of the Pedals in the Welte Mignon Piano Rolls...	57
CHAPTER 5 - Debussy’s Scores: Indications for Pedalling.....	75
CHAPTER 6 - Pedalling in ‘La Cathédrale engloutie’.....	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	107
DISCOGRAPHY.....	113
APPENDIX 1 - Musical Examples.....	115
APPENDIX 2 - Transcriptions of Debussy’s Welte Recordings.....	137

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE I..... 82

TABLE II..... 82

FIGURE 1..... 117

FIGURE 2..... 127

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example 1. From Michael David Schmitz, <i>Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Debussy</i> (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1995), 86.....	116
Example 2. ‘Toccata’ from <i>Pour le Piano</i> , bars 81-93.....	116
Example 3. ‘Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut’ from <i>Images</i> Book II, bars 23-29.....	117
Example 4. ‘Pagodes’ from <i>Estampes</i> , bars 1-9.....	118
Example 5. ‘Cloches à travers les feuilles’ from <i>Images</i> Book II, bars 1-5.....	118
Example 6. ‘Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut’ from <i>Images</i> Book II, bars 1-9.....	119
Example 7. ‘Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut’ from <i>Images</i> Book II, bars 28 – 31.....	120
Example 8. Franz Liszt, <i>Piano Concerto No. 1</i> , bars 41-43 and <i>Piano Concerto No. 2</i> , bars 64-66.....	120
Example 9. ‘La Cathédrale engloutie’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 31-45.....	121
Example 10. ‘Les Collines d’ Anacapri’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 1-4.....	121
Example 11. ‘Pour les accords’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 93-94.....	121
Example 12. ‘Voiles’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 62-64.....	122
Example 13. ‘Brouillards’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 13-17.....	122
Example 14. Brouillards’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 38-45.....	123
Example 15. ‘La sérénade interrompue’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 19-31.....	123
Example 16. ‘Pour les octaves’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 57-69.....	124
Example 17. ‘Pour les sonorités opposées’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 9-12.....	124
Example 18. ‘Ondine’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 44-45.....	124
Example 19. ‘Voiles’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 49-51.....	125
Example 20. ‘Pour les sonorités opposées’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 1-4.....	125
Example 21. ‘Hommage à Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 1-4....	125
Example 22. ‘Feux d’ artifice’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 89-93.....	125

Example 23. ‘Voiles’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 33-35.....	126
Example 24. ‘Pour les arpèges composés’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 15-16.....	126
Example 25. ‘Feux d’artifice’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 50-51.....	126
Example 26. ‘Canope’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 9-12.....	126
Example 27. ‘Reflets dans l’eau’ from <i>Images</i> Book I, bars 1-3.....	127
Example 28. ‘Voiles’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 33-35.....	127
Example 29. ‘Ondine’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 38-40.....	127
Example 30. ‘Danseuses de Delphes’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 1-3.....	128
Example 31. ‘Feuilles mortes’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 10-14.....	128
Example 32. ‘Feux d’artifice’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 57-59.....	128
Example 33. ‘Le vent dans la plaine’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 9-12.....	129
Example 34. ‘Les fées sont d’exquises danseuses’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 8-10.....	129
Example 35. ‘Pour les sixtes’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 40-41.....	129
Example 36. ‘La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 1-2.	129
Example 37. ‘Des pas sur la neige’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 33-36.....	130
Example 38. ‘Canope’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 30-33.....	130
Example 39. ‘Minstrels’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 36-40.....	130
Example 40. ‘Danseuses de Delphes’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 10-12.....	130
Example 41. ‘Le vent dans la plaine’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 1-2.....	131
Example 42. ‘La sérénade interrompue’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 21-30.....	131
Example 43. ‘Les fées sont d’exquises danseuses’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 116-127.	131
Example 44. ‘Pour les arpèges composés’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 25-26.....	132
Example 45. ‘Brouillards’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 49-52.....	132
Example 46. ‘Pour les accords’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 1-5.....	132
Example 47. Les fées sont d’exquises danseuses’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 121-127..	132
Example 48. ‘Pour les quarts’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 57-58.....	133

Example 49. ‘Pour les octaves’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 9-12.....	133
Example 50. ‘Ce qu’ a vu le vent d’ ouest’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 42-43.....	133
Example 51. ‘Pour les octaves’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 80-83.....	133
Example 52. ‘Pour les cinq doigts’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 67-69.....	134
Example 53. ‘Pour les cinq doigts’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 101-102.....	134
Example 54. ‘Voiles from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 41-44.....	134
Example 55. ‘Les Collines d’ Anacapri’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 80-82.....	134
Example 56. ‘Ce qu’ a vu le vent d’ ouest’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 76-79.....	135
Example 57. ‘La Cathédrale engloutie’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book I, bars 26-30.....	135
Example 58. ‘Pour les octaves’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 113-116.....	135
Example 59. ‘General Lavine-eccentric’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 62-66.....	135
Example 60. ‘Pour les quartes’ from the <i>Etudes</i> , bars 61-63.....	136
Example 61. ‘Ondine’ from <i>Préludes</i> Book II, bars 71-74.....	136

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this document to the memory of my father whose love and advice have stood beside me throughout all my life.

DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The importance of the pedals in Debussy's piano music has been emphasised in a wide range of literature concerning Debussy and French piano music in general. However, and despite the obvious absence of pedalling indications in Debussy's piano scores, no dedicated study has been made in identifying a possible meaning behind their absence.

This study will attempt in developing suggestions for pedalling Debussy's piano music based on written as well as sound sources directly associated with the composer. This attempt is developed in two stages: firstly, by providing evidence that Debussy was always seeking to extract a continuous sonority from the piano, feasible only through the application of the pedal and secondly, by making cross reference of this evidence and Debussy's own use of the pedals in his piano roll recordings. Ultimately, it is revealed that Debussy was making extensive use of both the *una corda* as well as of the damper pedal.

Any obvious conclusions in this study are not meant to be used as a guide for pedalling but as a source of reference that may assist the informed performer in his/her continuous search into Debussy's musical world.

Introduction

Debussy's statements about the sound he wanted for his piano music are notoriously difficult to interpret. Comments such as 'the piano should sound as if it were without hammers'¹ and 'notes on the piano should be struck in a peculiar way, so as to be able to hear the vibrations in the air'² suggest that perhaps he was searching for an ideal sound with no connection to the mechanisms of the instrument. But it is also possible that he had in mind a specific performance technique based on certain qualities or even limitations the piano presented to him as an instrument. This dissertation will attempt to interpret the implied meaning of these enigmatic statements. More specifically, by exploring an abundance of sources, both written and recorded, I will suggest that the sound Debussy was looking for when writing for the piano was a kind of continuous sonority – a sustained, non-percussive and vibrating sound. I will agree, ultimately, that since this type of sound is achievable on the piano only when the dampers are off the strings, the use of the pedal in Debussy's piano music is essential.

The literature on Debussy's piano music refers extensively to the role of the pedal. Performers and scholars emphasise the importance of the pedal for the correct interpretation not only of Debussy's music but also of the whole nineteenth century

¹ Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Debussy* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972), 13.

² Marguerite Long, in Roger Nichols, *Debussy Remembered* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 172.

piano repertoire.³ However, although it is common knowledge that Debussy rarely marked pedalling indications in his piano scores (there are only nine conventional pedalling indications in his entire piano *oeuvre*), the reasons for this have scarcely been examined. Moreover, given that Debussy is also well known for being very precise in indicating his instructions for dynamics, articulation markings and notation in general, it is astonishing that there is no study dedicated to pedalling indications - and their notable absence - in Debussy's music. Of course, there are numerous suggestions and comments in books, articles and dissertations but these either refer to isolated examples of Debussy's piano music or they provide personal views on the issue without placing pedalling within the context of Debussy's compositional style or performance practice, or his experience of music in Paris at the *fin de siècle*.

Most authors have either presented historical evidence about performance without really investigating its relevance to the specific topic of pedalling, or they have made performance suggestions that do not always do justice to Debussy's piano music. For example, David Rowland deals with the pedal mechanism and describes its use in the history of piano music but devotes only one page or so to Debussy.⁴ Despite the interpretative dimension stemming from this information, Rowland's book investigates in essence only the historical importance of pedalling without any further reference to the implications his information may have on performance. Given that, this book is of limited value to any pianist wishing to find some guidance of the use of the pedals in the interpretation of Debussy's piano music.

³ See, for example, Alfred Cortot, *The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (London: J. & W. Chester Ltd., 1922); Maurice Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy* (New York: Schroeder & Gunther Inc., 1932); Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, Virginia Raad, *The Piano Sonority of Claude Debussy* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994) and Ellie R. Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce Publishers, 1950).

⁴ David Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

In contrast, *The Pianist's Guide to Pedalling*, edited by Joseph Banowetz,⁵ is a performance guide based on the opinions of various contributors who make suggestions for pedalling the music of different composers. The book aims to provide solutions for pedalling problems in the piano repertoire by consulting other musicians' performance experience. Dean Elder's contribution 'Giesecking's pedalling in Debussy and Ravel' presents us with a masterclass by Giesecking.⁶ The chapter discusses various passages of Debussy's piano music that include pedalling indications, as applied by Giesecking in his performances. Elder idealises Giesecking as a Debussy performer based on his reputation for producing a colourful and sonorous sound in his performances of the French repertoire. However, because there are no sources that mention Giesecking having direct links either with Debussy himself or with any of the composer's disciples, this book, although interesting for presenting the personal opinions of eminent pianists and musicologists, can ultimately only be consulted by admirers of these certain pianists and is not addressed to historically informed performers.

Since my aim is to interpret the possible significance of pedalling indications and their absence in Debussy's piano music, I have ensured that all sources examined pertain specifically to the interpretative issue of pedalling and any writings taken into account are historically informed. Particularly valuable in this regard is the work of Arthur Tollefson which stands out for its specific reference to the interpretative issue of pedalling and for the author's effort to examine Debussy's piano scores in relation to the production of sound.⁷ Tollefson examines the use of notation and articulation markings employed by the composer and their role in relation to the application or

⁵ Joseph Banowetz, *A Pianist's Guide to Pedalling* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

⁶ Dean Elder, 'Giesecking's Pedalling in Debussy and Ravel', in Banowetz ed., *A Pianist's Guide to Pedalling*, 230-287.

⁷ Arthur Tollefson, *Pedalling Technique in the Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (DMA diss. Stanford University, 1968) and 'Debussy's Pedalling', *Clavier* 9 (1970), 22-33.

non-application of the pedal. He also comments that Debussy's piano roll recordings offer some essential information, but only to a point, since the mechanism of the rolls was not able to register fractional pedalling. This is true; but one can still draw some important conclusions from the composer's use of the pedal as registered in these recordings. Indeed, in my dissertation I hope to contribute a new perspective on this important resource. In my fourth chapter 'Debussy's use of the pedals in the Welte Mignon Piano Rolls', I present some important information regarding the composer's own use of the pedal, based on a detailed examination of the only available archive containing the complete collection of the Debussy piano rolls, held in Sydney, Australia. Most importantly, I discovered how frequently Debussy used the pedal in these recordings. Evidence from the piano rolls thus strengthens my argument that Debussy was seeking a continuous and rich sonority from the piano.

But before we can consult evidence of Debussy's playing, it is essential to examine the instruments and performance styles used during the composer's lifetime. Such matters are presented in Chapter 1, while Chapter 2 presents major influences on the formation of Debussy's sound world, such as his relationship with gamelan music. The role of Debussy's musical education, as discussed by the composer himself as well as by musicians or friends directly associated with him, is presented in Chapter 3. In the last section of the same chapter there is also a discussion of pedalling trends with which Debussy may have been acquainted. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the composer's performance of his own piano works in the piano roll recordings. Chapter 5 contains a more detailed examination of Debussy's scores with an account of explicit and implicit indications for pedalling. The dissertation ends with a brief 'case study' (Chapter 6) in which I draw some conclusions about the application of the pedals in Debussy's piano music. My conclusions are not intended to be used as a

guide for pedalling but as a starting point for further research on this particular performance practice issue. More importantly, I hope that any new information that emerges in my research will be used to assist further the informed and critical performer of Debussy's piano music.

CHAPTER 1

The Piano ‘Without Hammers’: Pianos in Debussy’s Time

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, sound began to take on a new meaning for composers, a meaning which developed with new instruments. Ranges were increased and existing instruments were improved; this resulted in profound changes in the nature and scope of musical sonorities – what we may call the *climate of sound*. Responding to these changes, composers began to experiment with this new *climate of sound*, leading to a situation where the essence of an individual instrument’s sound became the musical meaning, the message.⁸

This was especially true for the piano in the nineteenth century. One of the main developments was the increase of sustaining ability. This began in the early part of the nineteenth century when pianists endeavoured to produce a ‘singing tone’ and ‘systematically accepted the doctrine that the sounds of the piano were equivalent in value to the sounds of sustaining instruments’.⁹ Realising that notes on the piano cannot in reality reach the sustaining level of sounds possible in other instruments but can only be suggestions of them, Chopin and Liszt eventually established a different tradition. Their styles, examined in Chapter 3, were based on a realisation of the fact that as the hammer strikes the strings, notes are created percussively and their duration can therefore be maintained only in an artificial way – through the application of the pedal. Debussy boldly developed this ability of the piano to create

⁸ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 13.

⁹ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 45.

an illusion and tried to describe it when coaching Marguerite Long, by insisting that the piano was to sound as if it were 'without hammers'.¹⁰

The sustaining power of the piano in Debussy's time was not as great as it is today. Because the sound of nineteenth-century instruments decayed rapidly, the illusion could only have been created through the assistance of the pedal. Moreover, the French makes of that period were still parallel-strung, in contrast to pianos of other makers in Europe which were cross-strung. Cross-stringing, in which the longer bass strings were crossed over other strings, produced sympathetic vibrations among the strings that were not being struck when the bass string was being played. This produced a more resonant and muffled tone. But French pianists valued clarity and brilliance over maximum resonance and so they favoured a parallel-strung instrument. There were some differences in construction even between different makes of French pianos. Therefore, before examining Debussy's possible preferences in pianos, we need to examine the French piano more closely in order to understand the sonority Debussy was seeking when writing for this instrument.

The main piano manufactures in France at that time were Érard and Pleyel. The first piano made in France by Sébastien Érard combined parallel stringing with a thin and elastic soundboard near the hammer coverings, which helped to create a clear and brilliant sound. The length of the Érard was greater than that of the Pleyel, it had more tension on the frame, and was more robust in sound: it was designed for the concert stage. In contrast, the Pleyel had a shorter frame with shorter strings and less tension on the frame: it was designed as a drawing-room instrument. Also, considering that the hammer could strike the key either near its centre or near its end, the sound was considerably influenced by the striking point. If struck near the centre, it produced

¹⁰ Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Debussy* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972), 13.

more fundamentals, responded more quickly and required less energy to activate; if struck near its end, it produced more upper partials. In the Pleyel, the striking point was near the end, with a light hammer and so more upper partials and an ethereal, silver quality was obtained. Due to the difference in the striking point, the Érard had a more powerful, brilliant tone and the Pleyel a more intimate and varied tone.

The delicate and silvery tone in the Pleyel was produced by the shape of its hammers which were small, needle-shaped and covered by buckskin on the outside, creating an emphasis on the upper-partial. Its dampers were very light and narrow, relying only on gravity to pull them down and so they left behind a discreet veil of sound even in passages where no sustaining pedal was used. In contrast, the hammers of the Érard had alternating layers of buckskin and felt, and the damping system was spring loaded to suppress the tone quickly and therefore left no veil of sound behind.

People who visited Debussy at his house from time to time recorded his preference in instruments, and so we know that of all the French makes he preferred the Pleyel. In Louis Laloy's article describing his first meeting with the composer, he mentioned that Pleyel had offered Debussy one of their pianos, which 'he joyfully showed and played to me'.¹¹ However, Debussy did not confine himself to French pianos. He also had a particular liking for German pianos and owned a Bechstein upright as well;¹² later, he acquired a Blüthner grand which had a special patent and 'the tone of which had particularly pleased him'.¹³ According to Dolly de Tinan, Debussy's stepdaughter, this Blüthner (now in the Musée Labenche in Brive) was purchased in

¹¹ Deborah Priest, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky* (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1999), 48.

¹² Alfredo Casella in Roger Nichols, *Debussy Remembered* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 172.

¹³ Maurice Dumensil in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 158.

1904.¹⁴ Maurice Dumesnil, who had visited Debussy to receive some coaching, also confirms its presence in his house:

He was proud of his grand piano, and before I played he showed me a device invented by Blüthner; an extra string set on top of the others. Although not touched by the hammers, it caught the overtones, thus increasing the vibrations and enriching the sonority. This was a piano he had rented during a stay in Bournemouth and liked so well that he had bought it and had it shipped to Paris.¹⁵

The patent described by Dumesnil was the 'Aliquotsaiten-System' and consisted of a sympathetic string added to each note in the treble octaves. This undamped string added colour to a note by vibrating sympathetically with its adjacent tuned, damped and hammered strings.¹⁶ Also, the fact that this Blüthner was cross-strung suggests in yet another way Debussy's interest in a richer sonority rather than the clear sound produced by the parallel-strung French pianos of that period. Roy Howat identifies an indication of the Blüthner's influence on Debussy in 'Les sons et les parfums' from the *Préludes*; in the final system of the piece the A in the bass gives a particularly rich sound and a transparent resonance possible only on this make of piano.¹⁷ One can imagine that for Debussy, the sound of this piano was particularly close to his liking and would have allowed him to achieve his musical goals much better than the French pianos widely available in the country at that time. Evidence of Debussy's quest for maximum sonority is also recorded by Dumesnil, who was advised by the composer to depress the pedal before starting the 'Claire de Lune' from the *Suite Bergamasque*, so that the overtones would vibrate immediately upon contact between the hammer and the strings.¹⁸ It would not be an exaggeration to conclude at this stage, that the sound Debussy was seeking to extract from the piano was definitely not the damped

¹⁴ Speech given in 1972, preserved in the National Sound Archive-British Library.

¹⁵ Maurice Dumesnil in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 158.

¹⁶ Martha Clinksale, *Makers of the Piano* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36.

¹⁷ Roy Howat, 'Debussy's Piano Music: Sources and Performance', in Richard Langham Smith ed., *Debussy Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100.

¹⁸ Maurice Dumesnil in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 159.

but the pedalled sound, since this is the only way to increase the sonority and resonance in a piano. Furthermore, considering that the Pleyel could preserve a veil of sound even in the unpedalled passages (as described earlier), Debussy's preference of this make over the Érard further supports this view. Of course, this is not to imply that all passages in Debussy's piano music have to be pedalled; but it might convey an idea of the *kind* of sound he preferred and which can be achieved when the strings are not dampened.

As Maurice Richard has shown, French piano manufacturers in the nineteenth century were not less inventive than their German counterparts. Efforts to construct devices that would help towards sustaining and enriching the piano tone had begun in France in the early decades of the century. Debussy might have been familiar with these developments as well. As early as 1842, Matthieu-François Isoard devised a scheme in which a movable box containing as many compartments as there were strings to be vibrated was positioned beneath the strings, each compartment being connected by means of a valve to a wind box. A separate container took in compressed air from a double bellows operated by keys which likewise controlled the passage of air out of the bellows and over the strings. More curious yet was an instrument invented by Henri Pape, also in Paris, which dispensed with the strings altogether, substituting various springs of steel, copper, brass and any number of other materials, depending on the quality of tone desired. For as long as the sustained tone of a given note was required, the springs would be kept in a state of almost uniform vibration by means of a toothed barrel whose speed of repetition far exceeded the capacity of the human hand. The result apparently resembled a vocal or violonistic vibrato.¹⁹ These mechanical devices were not included in pianos and did not attract as

¹⁹ Richard Maurice, 'Parisian Pioneers', *The Piano Magazine* (July/August 1999), 15.

much attention from composers as the traditional instruments did. However, their presence and the aim for which they were constructed can confirm that the aesthetic movement in France during that period created a climate of experimentation. Regarding the production of piano sound in particular, this experimentation manifested itself in an effort to extract a sustained and vibrating sound from the instrument.

Any discussion of the pedal is intimately connected to one of the particular makes of pianos, and especially so in the case of Debussy because of the nature of both his music and the instruments of the period. 'Pedalling cannot be written down, it varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall to another' he explained.²⁰ French pianos at the turn of the century were very different from the highly resonant modern-day Steinways, which is not to say that our Steinways are inappropriate for Debussy's music. Rather, it is a reminder that we should be aware of and sensitive to Debussy's concept of sound not only when playing on our modern instruments but also when adapting a performance to an unfamiliar instrument. When Debussy says that pedalling cannot be written down because 'it varies from one instrument to another', he is referring to the different pianos one is called to perform on. Every pianist knows that the piano is not a product of mass production. Each individual instrument, even if it comes from the same manufacturer, is always a new experience. It is not only the specific 'individuality' of a particular instrument that a pianist has to deal with, but also the kind of material it is made from as well as the process of construction the instrument has gone through; in short, this results in the difference in quality between pianos. Debussy also refers to the different performance spaces that would also affect pedalling decisions: even when using the same piano to perform in

²⁰ Maurice Dumesnil, 'Coaching with Debussy', *Piano Teacher* (Sept./Oct. 1962), 10-13.

different concert halls, the instrument will sound differently in every different space. Also, the characteristics of every hall, its bigger or smaller echo, the brilliance, transparency or ability of the sound to expand in any particular space, will affect the pianist's technique as well. There are halls that absorb the sound completely and there are other halls that may demand a continuous *non legato* playing.

Therefore, it is impossible to give indications for pedalling that would always be valid in each of the different circumstances a pianist is called to perform at. Debussy's ultimate overriding advice was 'Faites confiance à vos oreilles' [trust your ear].²¹ He expected the foot to be intimately attuned to the ear and for the performers, to possess a rich sound palette. As mentioned before, he advised performers 'to depress the pedal before starting to play, so that the overtones would vibrate immediately upon contact.'²² Because Debussy's pianos were not as sonorous and had less sustaining power than the modern piano, long pedals were more appropriate then, even though the composer warned pianists, in no uncertain terms, not to overdo it. This is to say that on the contemporary Steinway such long pedals may obliterate the clarity and harmonic subtleties in this music. The bass in particular, is overpowering compared to the turn-of-the-century Pleyel, Érard and even their German contemporaries like Bechstein and Blüthner. Therefore, long pedals must be understood as half and quarter pedals and all shades in between. In effect, what seems to be appropriate is a flexibility and a variety in the pedalling technique when performing Debussy on a modern piano in order to achieve a transparent sonority - a sound characteristic that he seemed at pains to seek.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Maurice Dumesnil in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 159.

CHAPTER 2

Gamelan Music and the 'Vibrations in the Air'

Debussy's perennial quest to make the performer and listener forget that the piano has hammers might seem to be a kind of battle against the intrinsic character of the piano, a percussive instrument by nature. We have just seen that the challenge of creating the illusion of a capability for a sustained tone can be partly met by the frequent use of the pedal which releases all dampers simultaneously and allows notes to decay more gradually. But it was probably Debussy's experience of listening to gamelan music at the Paris Expositions of 1889 and 1900 that was the crucial catalyst for his development of new compositional techniques to assist him in his effort to extract a sustained sound from the piano. The gamelan, like the piano, is percussive, but the sounding effect of its tone is more smooth and resonant. The most compelling evidence of the influence of gamelan on Debussy will be examined later in this chapter where the texture of his piano music is compared with that of gamelan music. But first, I would like to describe the context within which Debussy's encounter with the gamelan took place.

The pianist Elie Robert Schmitz, who was coached by Debussy in 1908-1915, stated that 'Debussy regarded the piano as the Balinese musicians regarded their gamelan orchestra' and that 'notes on the piano should be struck in a peculiar way, otherwise the sympathetic vibrations of the other notes will not be heard quivering

distantly in the air'.²³ These 'vibrations in the air' were generated by the percussion instruments of the gamelan orchestra which performed in the Dutch section of *L'Exposition Universelle* of 1889. We know that Debussy was interested in them from the following account by his friend, Robert Godet:

Many fruitful hours for Debussy were spent in the Javanese *kampong* of the Dutch section listening to the percussive rhythmic complexities of the gamelan with its inexhaustible combination of ethereal, flashing timbres, while with the amazing Bedayas the music came visually alive.²⁴

Debussy's own recollections of Javanese music are first documented in a letter to Pierre Louÿs on 1895: 'Do you remember the Javanese music, able to express every shade of meaning, even unmentionable shades, and which make our tonic and dominant seem like ghosts?'²⁵ Debussy further acknowledged the potency of the exotic influence after the Exposition of 1900:

There were and still are, despite the evils of civilisation, some delightful native peoples for whom music is as natural as breathing. Their conservatoire is the eternal rhythm of the sea, the wind among the leaves and the thousand sounds of nature which they understand without consulting an arbitrary treatise.²⁶

Debussy seems to be making a statement here about French music education. He appears to be sceptical of the prevailing harmonic 'rules' that governed Western music. His disdain about 'textbook harmony' and resistance over the teachings of a traditional classroom were known since his student years at the Conservatoire.²⁷ His preference for unorthodox harmony in particular, caused friction between him and his professors. He was often at odds with the faculty for encouraging other students to

²³ Ellie Robert Schmitz in Roger Nichols, *Debussy Remembered* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 171.

²⁴ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 115.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, trans. Richard Langham Smith (London: Secker & Warburg, 1977), 278.

²⁷ Maurice Emmanuel, 'Conversations', in William W. Austin ed., *Prelude to 'The Afternoon of a Faun'* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970), 128-131.

consider the use of dissonance in bolder ways.²⁸ Debussy wrote a lot about France's premier school of music, both in his own name and in the voice of Monsieur Croche.²⁹ He was especially critical of the Conservatoire's instruction in harmony, asserting that 'the teaching of harmony seems to me altogether faulty. I can assure you that I did very little when I attended the harmony classes'.³⁰ More important, this criticism underscores his belief that much standardised instruction in harmony was both useless and harmful.

Debussy also seems to support the musical sense and knowledge inherent in the tradition of another civilisation, a position not shared by all authors who commented on the Exposition Universelle. The exotic music that accompanied the different dances and representations in the colonial part of the Exposition were perceived by many of the Parisian ears as 'strange', 'bizarre', 'ferocious', and even 'atrocious'.³¹ According to Timothy Mitchell, the function of the colonial exhibition within the Exposition was to show the might of France as colonial power and it allowed the visitors to contrast the refined culture of the French capital and her exhibited products with the 'inferior industry and lesser, albeit exotic, culture of the colonised countries'.³² Admittedly, within its carefully articulated order, the main purpose of the Exhibition was to 'signify the dominant relation to power'.³³ Debussy doesn't seem to share this Western view. The forms through which non-Western cultures were represented and the knowledge produced by the Exposition did not affect his judgement on music, as it did other critics who attended this event; to his ears, the

²⁸ Michael David Schmitz, *Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1995), 16.

²⁹ Debussy, *Debussy on Music*.

³⁰ Gail Hilson Woldu, 'Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy and Conceptions of the Artist', in Jane F. Fulcher ed., *Debussy and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 235-253.

³¹ Julien Tiersot, 'Promenades musicales à l'Exposition', *Le Ménestrel* (14 July, 1889), 220-22.

³² Timothy Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order', in Nicholas B. Dirks ed., *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 289-317.

³³ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), 144.

music from Java was not merely exotic noise but a kind of music that is superior to that taught at the Conservatoires of the West.

Asian art had already interested Debussy, even before the performances of 1889 and 1900. That Debussy was so receptive to the exotic music heard at the Expositions could be due to the fact that he was already somewhat accustomed to this repertory through the Conservatoire de Paris that had its own set of gamelan instruments.³⁴ While Debussy was still a student in 1887,³⁵ the Paris Conservatoire received a complete set of gamelan instruments from the Dutch government. André Schaeffner has suggested that Debussy enjoyed tinkering with these percussion instruments with Bourgault-Ducoudray, professor of musical history at the Conservatoire.³⁶ Therefore, he was familiar with the tuning and different timbres of the gamelan, but not with any actual music as yet. He could only imagine at that time what possibilities existed in these fascinating instruments.

One indication of Debussy's enchantment with the Far East is found in his use of pentatonic and whole-tone scales in the early pieces *L'enfant Prodigue* (1884) and *La Demoiselle élue* (1887). Debussy had only played with the Conservatoire's gamelan instruments, but his fascination with the Orient was already affecting his compositional style even at this early stage. It is no wonder that hearing the gamelan at the Exposition was a pivotal experience. After reflecting on the exotic counterpoint, flashing timbres, and novel tuning, he adopted some of these new sonorities within a Western context.³⁷ In the years following the last of the Expositions in 1900, this experience proved to have left an indelible imprint on the style of his later

³⁴ Richard Mueller, 'Debussy's *Fantaisie*', *19th Century Music* 11 (1986), 157-186.

³⁵ Debussy's music education is examined in the next chapter.

³⁶ Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, 116.

³⁷ Elaine Brody, *Paris: The Musical Kaleidoscope* (New York: Braziller, 1987), 60-76.

compositions. What exactly did Debussy hear at the Expositions of 1889 and 1900, and what are the ramifications for his piano works?

Gamelan gets its name from the Javanese word 'gamel', which means a type of hammer, like a blacksmith's hammer. The name 'gamelan' refers to the method of playing the instruments - by striking them – as they are almost entirely percussion. In a complete gamelan orchestra there are about twenty different types of instruments. However, the instruments may number as many as seventy-five, as there needs to be a collection of at least two from each kind of instruments. There is an array of metallic instruments, ranging in pitch from low to high: a stringed instrument, a flute, drums, zithers and various singing voices. The array from the lowest gong to the brightest metallophone is about the same in range as in a modern grand piano; seven octaves. The instruments of the gamelan are generally arranged with the largest and lowest instruments at the back and with the higher instruments towards the front.

The largest and lowest instrument is the *gong ageng*. Hung in its own massive frame, it marks the end of sections with a powerfully resonating presence, including thus every gamelan note in its overtones. The *kenong* is a set of smaller pot gongs. This medium sized instrument plays a melody that moves at medium speed. The *bonang* is perhaps the most interesting instrument. It is literally a gong-chime, with two rows of knobbed gongs placed on ropes on a wooden frame. It is played with two padded sticks and comes in three sizes; *panembung*, *barung* and *panerus*. Although the *bonang* is often employed to play elaborate passages, it belongs to the family of timekeepers, along with the *kethuk*, *kempul*, *kenong* and *gong*. Two *bonang* instruments often play complicated interlocking patterns. The most prominent instruments are the bronze metallophones, called *sarons* and have bronze keys placed over a resonator box. They are played with wooden mallets, although sometimes bone

is used as well. *Sarons* come in three sizes; the largest is known as the *saron demung*, the middle sized is the *saron barung*, while the smallest is called *saron panerus* or *saron peking*. The *saron peking* is used in a more florid and embellishing fashion than its larger relatives and as one of the higher instruments, plays a faster moving melody. The *gender* covers a range of two octaves and is a series of thin bronze keys suspended over tube-resonators by string. The largest, the *gender panembung* or *slentem*, is played in the same manner as the *saron*, but with a padded disc attached to a long stick. The *gambang kayu* is similar to the *saron*, but its keys are wooden and it uses padded mallets like the *gender*.³⁸

The similar characteristics in the construction of the gamelan orchestra and the piano are obvious. Firstly, they share the same range of pitch. Secondly, the construction of the padded hand mallets resembles that of the hammers of the piano, also padded with felt. Moreover, careful attention to a performance of gamelan music may also help us to begin to understand what Debussy meant when he was referring to the 'vibrations in the air'. His instruction to strike a note on the piano in a 'peculiar way' could be understood in the context of the sound of a padded mallet striking the gamelan.³⁹

Notes struck with the padded mallets on the percussion instruments of the gamelan orchestra leave a very rich and resonant aftersound that decays slowly. Of course, decay time depends on the size of the instrument, but nevertheless a note struck on the gamelan percussion is sustained much longer than a note struck on the piano in the normal way (where no pedalling is involved). However, if the dampers are lifted, the sound is sustained for longer and at the same time it becomes richer because of the added resonance given by the sympathetic vibrations of all other strings. Therefore,

³⁸ Jennifer Lindsay, *Javanese Gamelan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 9-33.

³⁹ Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, 45.

the pedal obviously becomes an essential device for emphasising the similarities in sound between the piano and the gamelan.

In the remainder of his account of Debussy's attraction to gamelan music, Schmitz explains this acoustical phenomenon further:

He [Debussy] was interested not so much in the single tone that was obviously heard when a note was struck, as in the patterns of resonance which that tone set up around itself. Many of his pieces are built entirely on this acoustical sense of the piano. Played badly, without a consciousness of the fine, almost inaudible, background of overtones, they are mere skeletons. The warm, indefinable, sensitive, inner beauty – the real quality of Debussy – is totally lacking [...] one must learn to play Debussy's music as he played it himself, striking each note as though it were a bell, listening always for the hovering clusters of vibrating overtones above and below it.⁴⁰

Schmitz clearly describes the kind of sound Debussy was seeking to extract from the piano and it is the best link to the gamelan model we could possibly cite here; a bell-like sound surrounded by overtones has direct reference to the application of the pedal – the only way to achieve this quality of sound on the piano. This quotation also highlights in a remarkable way one of the common features of the gamelan and the piano; the manner of producing a sound that is as much a percussive phenomenon as it is one of resonance.

Lockspeiser suggests Debussy may have been familiar with the *Les Musiques bizarres de l'Exposition* by Louis Bénédictus, a piano transcription of the gamelan music heard at the first Exposition and published in 1889 by Debussy's publisher and benefactor Georges Hartmann.⁴¹ Bénédictus tried to convey the different layers of sound produced by each percussion instrument (Ex. 1, p.116).⁴² Melodic lines that move independently and are mainly described through different articulation markings, occur very frequently in Debussy's piano music as well. For instance, in the 'Toccata' from *Pour le Piano* (Ex. 2 / bb.81-93, p.116), Debussy introduces three parts: a low

⁴⁰ Ellie Robert Schmitz in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 171.

⁴¹ Schmitz, *Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 86.

⁴² For all Music Examples and Figures from this point onwards, please refer to Appendix 1 (p.115).

sustained pedal point which functions as a *gong* tone, a rhythmically repeated *staccato* note which acts like a *kempul*, and an upper arpeggiated figure which is like a *bonang*. After a three-bar *diminuendo* the main melody comes in, mostly in half notes (b.81); the combination of the *tenuti* articulation and the long note values could be compared to the timbre of a *saron*. The *kempul* line continues, taking on the exact pitch of the melody in every bar. The *bonang* voice that ornaments the melody and the top note in every bar resembles the tone as found in the *saron* and *kempul* lines. Debussy's polyphonic texture at this point contains four distinct musical lines, just as in gamelan music.

Some of the best examples of Debussyan polyphony are found in his later piano works, where he utilises three staves in order fully to distinguish melodic lines or fragments. In 'Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut' from *Images II* there are different articulation markings between the top two staves (Ex. 3 / bb.25-29, p.117). At the same time there are *staccato* and *tenuto* marks exchanged between bars, suggesting an effect similar to that of percussion instruments alternating parts. In respect of the *tenuto* marking in particular, we have specific directions for its execution given by Louis Laloy in his biography of Debussy (1909):

Often notes are accompanied by a sign which was quite rarely used up to now, which is a small dash [...] what is asked for is a transparent sonority; it can be achieved by a clean and never harsh attack, which is prolonged by the pedal, with the finger leaving the key immediately.⁴³

Apparently, Debussy himself approved of what Laloy had written, for in a letter to him dated 27 July 1909, he wrote: 'There's no need to alter anything in the advice you've given for playing my music. It remains simply to read and understand'.⁴⁴

Given Debussy's approval, we can take Laloy's performance directions for granted

⁴³ Deborah Priest, *Louis Laloy on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky* (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1999), 108.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

and respond to the *tenuto* markings in Debussy's piano music in the same way as described above, with the application of the pedal. This technique of playing notes, octaves or even chords may also be relevant to the 'peculiar way of striking the note' needed in Debussy's piano music, as described earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, the effect resembles the sound produced by the striking of a gamelan instrument with a padded mallet – a resonant and sustained sound.

The profound effect of gamelan music on Debussy can be further observed by a comparison of the structure of this repertory and the compositional techniques in his piano music. Obvious similarities in scoring can be seen by comparing the rhythmic interlocking of the percussion instruments in the gamelan (Figure 1, p.117) and the rhythmic arrangement found in many examples of Debussy's piano music. As can be seen in Figure 1, instruments are arranged in order of pitch and resonance from lower to higher, so that the more resonant the instrument is, the less frequent it becomes necessary to strike a new note. In Debussy's 'Pagodes' from the *Estampes* (the most frequently cited example in all literature about his indebtedness to gamelan),⁴⁵ he makes exclusive use of pentatonic scales for the composition of melodic material (Ex. 4 / bb.3-8, p.118). From the very opening of the piece, each different layer (from the lowest to the higher in pitch) employs a texture relevant to the resonant power of its corresponding register. The prevailing texture consists of a slow moving bass, a moderately moving tenor and a fast moving treble, all suggesting the structure of the gamelan orchestra as seen in Figure 1. The bass note B, would naturally produce the loudest sound and is therefore indicated only once. The tenor voice would produce the next less loudest sound and so it involves more notes but at the same time is not as

⁴⁵ Relevant literature includes: Roy Howat, 'Debussy and the Orient' in *Recovering The Orient*, ed. Andrew Gerstle and Anthony Milner (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), 45-81; Lockspeiser, *Debussy*; Virginia Raad, *The Piano Sonority of Claude Debussy* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994); Schmitz, *Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Debussy*.

busy as the soprano which projects evenly because it decays faster than the other lower voices. This particular texture could be regarded as a model for Debussy's compositional technique and can be found in many examples in his piano music.⁴⁶ The lower voice in the bass that normally moves in the slower speed and is reminiscent of the *gong ageng*, is also the most common way in Debussy to suggest an indirect indication for pedalling.⁴⁷

These low pedal points, which are used to mark the beginnings of phrases in the Javanese style, appear in much of Debussy's music. The low bass usually involves single notes, fifths or octaves, thus creating a particularly open and resonant sonority. Interestingly enough, Debussy almost always places these pedal points in such a way as to make it impossible for the pianist to hold them with the fingers alone, thus forcing the performer to apply the pedal in order to sustain them for their nominal value. Furthermore, notes or chords in the low bass are often followed by a slur that goes through the bar, thus indicating a maximum possible sustaining of that sound. Considering the danger of creating a blur due to the simultaneous sounding of the many layers of the interrelated parts moving above the bass, the application of the damper pedal should be made with care. In order to avoid creating an unpleasant blur, small changes of pedal which would clear up the sound without losing the long-held bass at the same time, would seem appropriate. In any case, it is useful to know that different parts in gamelan music are not related harmonically as in Western music, but melodically. The overlapping and interlocking layers can move simultaneously in an independent manner similar to counterpoint.⁴⁸ Therefore, any excess of a blur can be acceptable as long as these different layers can be heard clearly.

⁴⁶ Many such passages can be found in both books of *Images* and in *Préludes* Book II.

⁴⁷ This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

⁴⁸ Lindsay, *Javanese Gamelan*, 32.

Debussy frequently employs varied articulation markings in each layer to suggest different gamelan effects and a contrapuntal texture. I should like to consider a few of the many examples of this technique. In bars 3–4 of ‘Cloches à travers les feuilles’ from *Images II* there are four different sound levels, each level having its own articulation markings (Ex. 5, p.118). Debussy uses three staves in order to distinguish the separate dynamic and articulation marks for each sound layer, allowing for different timbres to be controlled independently. The lowest voice consists of a single minim A accompanied by a *tenuto* mark. Above this, the tenor continues the five-note pattern from the proceeding two bars with each note marked *staccato* under a phrase line. Debussy’s direction to play this passage ‘*doucement sonore*’ [gently sonorous] accompanied by the *tenuto* mark is another indirect reference to the application of the pedal. The ringing effect resembles that of a metallophone played with padded hammers.

The next piece from *Images II*, ‘Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut’, contains some of the best examples of Debussy’s gamelan assimilations (Ex. 6 / bb.1-9, p.119). The title itself (‘And the moon descends on the temple that was’) suggests the serenity and atmospheric ‘gamelanesque’ quality of the piece. Instrumental effects are created here through the precisely employed articulation and dynamic markings. The effect of the bass line at b. 6 (a *tenuto* BB echoed by EE-BBB-EEE) creates a marvellous impression of the pulsating *gong ageng* struck lightly with a padded hammer. The upper melodic chords are marked *piano* and *portato*. The gentle firmness of the struck notes combined with the pedalled sonority (required by the slurs in the bass going through the bar) closely resembles the sonority of the bright *saron*. Perhaps the most impressive example with specific articulation marks is that found in bb. 29-30 where the right hand plays a combination of *legato* and *staccato* and the left hand is playing

tenuto (Ex. 7, p.120) This occurs while the pedal is applied to distinguish the *tenuto* melody which actually is directed by the composer to be played prominently (*en dehors*). The texture in this passage once again resembles that of a gamelan orchestra. It seems that by employing all these different articulation markings, Debussy is trying to evoke impressions of different instruments struck with padded or wooden hammers.⁴⁹

Debussy's fascination with the gamelan music is not discussed here in order to characterise him as a literal imitator. As shown by other authors, any particular trait in his music can often be traced back to several sources and even when a single source is isolated, it is usually only one of several strands blended to produce something that sounds distinct from any single model.⁵⁰ The intention of this chapter has been rather to observe relationships - sometimes precise, sometimes profound - for the insights they may bring in the quest for the kind of sonority most suited to Debussy's piano music. The aim of the above examples was to show that the application of the pedal not only assists with the sustaining of pedal points, but also becomes necessary for interpreting Debussy's different articulation markings. Based on the gamelan structure as a model, Debussy employs note values and meticulous articulation markings in such a way as to succeed in extracting resonance from the piano's strings and the soundboard, rather than from the strike of the hammer itself. In this way, Debussy's piano seems at times to be an instrument so miraculously receptive that it need be barely touched, scarcely breathed upon, to set up an infinity of vibrations. Through the employment of specific notation, Debussy succeeds in creating a 'carpet of sound',⁵¹ an effect which further strengthens the illusion of a sustained sound on an

⁴⁹ See also my reference to articulation markings in Chapter 5.

⁵⁰ For example, for a range of influences in Debussy's *L'Isle Joyeuse*, see Roy Howat, 'Debussy, *Masques*, *L'Isle Joyeuse*, and a lost *Sarabande*', *Musicology Australia* 10 (1987), 16-30.

⁵¹ Howat, *Debussy and the Orient*, 57.

essentially percussive instrument. His affinity with the gamelan in particular, confirms an intention to explore the resonance created *after* the impact of the hammer, as the sounds are dying away. Debussy's unorthodox exploration of sound in piano playing not only adds new importance in the role of the sustaining pedal but also places him as a master of illusion among all other composers that had preceded him.

CHAPTER 3

'Faites Confiance à Votre Oreille': Pedalling Techniques in Debussy's Piano Music

It has often been claimed that composers are not always the best interpreters of their own music. However, according to Harold Schonberg, 'it is not generally remembered that Claude Debussy was a fine pianist who could have had a professional career had he so wished. All composers, of course, know something about the piano, but Debussy's equipment was of top-notch quality'.⁵² Accounts of Debussy as a pianist as well as sources that pertain to his preferences in piano playing and pedalling in particular will be discussed later in this chapter. But first we should consider information passed on to us by other pianists and acquaintances who had direct connection with the composer. Reports about Debussy's playing should not be looked at as performance instructions but as another source of information that could bring us closer to his sound world.

Debussy trained in early childhood with Mme Mauté de Fleurville, a pupil of Chopin, who prepared him for the Conservatoire. The Conservatoire system of teaching based all its assessments upon competition. Debussy entered the advanced piano class of François Marmontel in the autumn of 1873. In July 1874, at the age of twelve, and after only eight months of study at the Conservatoire, he performed in the advanced piano competition playing the required piece, the Chopin Piano Concerto No.2 in F Minor and received second 'honourable mention'. Debussy's rapid progress

⁵² Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 363.

in the first three years in the piano class meant that in the fall of 1875, when he was just thirteen years old, he was able to negotiate works rated by Marmontel as of 'maximum difficulty'.⁵³ In 1875 he won first 'honourable mention' for a performance of the Chopin *Ballade* No.2 and in 1876 he won no prize, the test piece that year being the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata, Op. 111. Year 1877 marked the high point in Debussy's piano studies at the Conservatoire, for he shared second prize with fellow student Camille Bellaigue for his performance of the Schumann Piano Sonata in G Minor. The report Debussy 'received from the Director of the Conservatoire at that time, Ambroise Thomas, mentioned, among other flattering comments, that 'on fire [he has] fingers'.⁵⁴ Debussy did well enough that the editor of the *Journal de Musique* predicted that he would win first prize the following year.⁵⁵ However, he did not win in 1878 with the Weber Piano Sonata in A-flat or in 1879 with the Chopin *Allegro de Concert*.⁵⁶ Marcel Dietschy considers these pianistic defeats as positive, revealing something of the nature of his real genius in a rejection of the essence of virtuosity, which 'implies technique and method'.⁵⁷ Another explanation could be that having already received the second prize, the only recompense he could henceforth obtain in the piano competitions was first prize; therefore, it is possible that Debussy played quite well in these competitions, but received no award.

In 1876 the young Debussy had taken part in a chamber music concert given at Chauny and received a glowing review:

⁵³ John R. Clevenger 'Debussy's Paris Conservatoire Training', in Jane F. Fulcher ed., *Debussy and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 299-361.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 343.

⁵⁵ Leon Vallas, *The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Francais*, trans. M. O'Brien (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 7.

⁵⁶ Marcel Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, trans. W. Ashbrook & M. G. Cobb (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 25.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Mlle Mendés and M. Samary will return to Chauny ... and so, even more decidedly, will De Bussy, who carries so much courage inside such a small body. What verve! What enthusiasm! What real spirit! Never again can it be said that the piano is a cold instrument, that the finger which strikes the key is such a long way from the string that vibrates, that its life is lost along the way or that the sound is dead! This little budding Mosart [sic] is a veritable tearaway. When he takes over the piano, he imbues the strings with his whole soul.⁵⁸

But the impression he gave to his classmates seems to be quite different. In 1921, Camille Bellaigue remembered the 13 or 14-year-old Debussy:

Amongst the rank and file of Marmontel's class there was one pupil, concerning whom, his comrades had few illusions. Or rather, they had many, all of them unflattering ... I remember in particular, the nervous habit he had of emphasising the strong beats by a kind of panting or raucous breathing. This exaggerated marking of the rhythm was certainly the very last thing of which he could have been accused later on as a composer, even if it applied to him as a pianist. You will agree with him when you hear his name. He was Claude Debussy.⁵⁹

According to Henri Constant Gabriel Pierné, another of Debussy's fellow students:

In Marmontel's piano class he used to astound us with his bizarre playing. Whether it was through natural maladroitness or through shyness I didn't know, but he literally used to charge at the piano and force all his effects. He seemed to be in rage with the instrument, rushing up and down it with impulsive gestures and breathing noisily during the difficult bits. These faults gradually receded and occasionally he would obtain effects of an astonishing softness. With all its faults and virtues, his playing remained something highly individual.⁶⁰

Paul Vidal, who remembered him from 1878, also described Debussy's playing:

His playing, although very interesting, was not technically perfect. He played trills with difficulty, but his left hand was wonderfully agile and had an extraordinary stretch. His talents as a pianist became evident during the following years in Bazille's accompaniment class, where he distinguished himself signally.⁶¹

Marguerite Long also describes what his fellow pupils at the Conservatoire had to say about his playing:

⁵⁸ Review, in Roger Nichols, *Debussy Remembered* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 5.

⁵⁹ Vallas, *The Theories of Claude Debussy*, 6.

⁶⁰ Gabriel Pierné, in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 4.

⁶¹ Vallas, *The Theories of Claude Debussy*, 7.

His playing was sometimes hard and heavy, but at other times of an extraordinary sweetness ... Above all, he followed his own ideas and did not hesitate to scandalise professors and fellow pupils, with his innovations.⁶²

What can be derived from the above accounts is a description of Debussy as a pianist with extreme idiosyncrasies in his playing. It is particularly interesting that he was able to obtain very subtle effects but at the same time he could also give the impression that he was struggling with the instrument. It is possible that during these years when Debussy was still a student, he liked to experiment with the piano and may have not been satisfied with a traditional approach in technique. Furthermore, it also seems that his gifts led him toward his own discoveries and a very personal style as a pianist. For this reason, it is important to consider the sources of these stories and the passage of considerable time beyond which the events were being recalled. Debussy's taste for mischief at the Conservatoire, although most often remembered and probably important, deserves less attention than the fact that those seven years of training served as the basis of his piano technique. François Marmontel's approach very definitely followed what we call today 'the old French school' of piano instruction. Erik Satie wrote of Debussy that 'he was truly a victim of his place of education, even though he put a lot of energy into correcting its faults as far as he could'.⁶³ While Debussy did not endorse all things in the Conservatoire training, the fact that he went through the 'system' does prove he assimilated that pianistic tradition.

There are not many accounts of Debussy's playing or of his interpretative ideas prior to the final few years of his life but those few who heard him play marvelled at the quality of sound he could produce. Marguerite Vasnier, the daughter of Marie-Blanche Vasnier, with whom he fell in love in the 1880s, briefly described Debussy's

⁶² Marguerite Long, *At the piano with Debussy* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972), 50.

⁶³ Erik Satie, in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 103.

playing at the time: 'His hands were strong and bony with square fingers; his touch on the piano was sonorous, rather percussive, but also sometimes very gentle and cantabile'.⁶⁴ The pianist Alfredo Casella had more to add on the composer's individual touch: 'His sensibility of touch was incomparable; he made the impression of playing directly on the strings of the instrument with no intermediate mechanism; the effect was a miracle of poetry.'⁶⁵ In 1894, Gustav Doret went to Paris to conduct the première of *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. His experience of listening to Debussy performing this orchestral work on the piano is very revealing:

Anyone who has never heard Debussy himself play his works at the piano in private cannot quite do justice to the Debussyesque art, an art so incorporeal, so subtle that only the author, with his extraordinary hands guided by his profound sensibility, could give it its perfect interpretation.⁶⁶

From the above accounts, it emerges that Debussy had always been a capable pianist. More importantly, his individual technique shows a sensual attitude to pianism and an exploration of touch and tone above any intention for attracting admiration or indeed any effort to impress. Any idiosyncrasies in his playing presented as such, can probably be interpreted as part of a continuous quest for an improved sonority in piano playing, something that the Conservatoire did not include as a priority in the training method for its piano students. It has been widely documented that piano instruction at the Conservatoire throughout the nineteenth century was orientated first and foremost toward turning out virtuosos, a type of performer that Debussy would never approve.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Marguerite Vasnier, in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 17.

⁶⁵ Alfredo Casella, in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 96.

⁶⁶ Gustav Doret, 'The First Performance of the Faun', in William W. Austin ed., *Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970), 139.

⁶⁷ John R. Clevenger, 'Debussy's Conservatoire Training', in Fulcher, *Debussy and His World*, 299-361.

In his later years, Debussy expressed very definite opinions, of both a general and specific nature, not only about other performers but also of himself as a pianist, as well. In an interview in February in 1914, Debussy admitted: 'I am not a great pianist'. When his interviewer argued that people believe 'your *Préludes* when you perform them, are a...revelation!' Debussy retorted: 'Let them talk ... It's true that I can adequately perform some of the *Préludes*, the easiest ones. But the others ... make me quiver.'⁶⁸

It seems though, that Debussy's evaluation of himself as a pianist was hardly more forgiving than his evaluation of other pianists. His perspective on virtuosos is revealed in a 1901 concert review published in *Revue blanche*:

This year, Monsieur Colonne certainly showed great 'spirit' in livening up his programmes with a handsome bunch of virtuosi, so one could let oneself be overwhelmed by a feeling of the international. Even so, I think I can safely say that our devoted music lovers still had to put up with neighbours more interested in the orchestral pantomime than in anything really artistic. The attraction that binds the virtuoso to his public, seems much the same as that which draws the crowds to the circus: we always hope that something dangerous is going to happen; M. Ysaÿe is going to play the violin with M. Colonne on his shoulders. Or M. Pugno will finish by seizing the piano between his teeth. ...None of these acrobatics materialised.⁶⁹

This was a time when the public considered pianists to be glamorous stars. Debussy's comparison of them with circus performers has to do with that perspective. By guarding against the kind of performance that concentrates on the showing off and the visual impression, Debussy underlines the importance of content versus style.

Debussy kept this perspective on virtuosos throughout his life. Critical references to pianists appear in his writings most frequently in his last decade or so. As his letter of 1910 to Edgard Varèse reveals, by then, his piano music was being played often

⁶⁸ François Lesure, 'Une interview romaine de Debussy (Fevrier 1914),' *Cahiers Debussy* 2 (1987), 4. 'Les permettre de parler ... C'est vrai que je peux exécuter suffisamment certains des *Préludes*, l'une la plus facile. Mais les autres ... font me frémir.'

⁶⁹ Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, trans. Richard Langham Smith (London: Secker & Warburg, 1977), 26.

and not always according to his wishes: 'One is so often betrayed by so-called pianists! I mean it - I can't tell you the extent to which my piano music has been deformed; so much so that often I have a job to recognise it! Forgive this personal outburst, but there are good reasons for it.'⁷⁰

It cannot be determined who, if anyone, inspired this complaint but there definitely were certain pianists whose playing he did not like. Marguerite Long recounted some comments he once made after hearing a performance of *Pour le Piano*:

Some time in 1917 Debussy went to hear the Suite played by a famous pianist. - How was it? I asked him on his return. - Dreadful. He didn't miss a note. - But you ought to be satisfied. You who insist on the infallible precision of every note. - Oh, not like that.' Then emphatically, *Not* like that. How paradoxical! How difficult to please! At times I recall some of his blistering comments on even the best known of virtuosi, such as: - He grated like a rope in a well! or - He plays like a water-carrier!⁷¹

This story reveals Debussy's dissatisfaction with a performance of his music that was merely preoccupied with accuracy. The following citation about a particular cellist can also be applied to virtuoso pianists:

M. Louis Rosoor the cellist comes not from Bordeaux but from Lille and won a first prize at the Paris Conservatoire. That doesn't stop him from having his own individual understanding of my music ... If the world's now coming to 4 place de la Madeleine to buy my music and treating it any old how, that doesn't worry me, but when self-styled 'virtuosi' spread error and desolation in so-called 'concert' halls, I continue to find that irritating. But if you don't see anything wrong, well say no more about it.⁷²

These are not the words of a composer who sees his music as a vehicle for the performer's individual expression. Raoul Bardac, Debussy's stepson, wrote about Debussy's general feelings toward music and linked them to his rejection of egotism:

The great, supreme and constant passion of his life was always music, which he loved for its own sake and which he could not bear to see brutalised or cheapened or made the vehicle of empty pomposity. He had never imagined that it would lead him to fame, and had expected even that he would remain

⁷⁰ Letter to Edgard Varèse, (1910), in Claude Debussy, *Letters*, trans. & ed. by François Lesure and Roger Nichols (London: Faber & Faber, 1987), 222.

⁷¹ Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, 24.

⁷² Letter to Jaques Durand, (1916), in Debussy, *Letters*, 319.

more or less unknown. He loved music in its entirety, and responded to its most diverse manifestations, as long as it was true music.⁷³

Debussy's attitude toward pianistic interpretation amounted to far more than disgust with the crowd-baiting tactics of certain virtuosos. His real objective was nothing less than a new approach to piano playing containing the seeds of a revitalised art: 'Debussy's horror of all pomposity has been beneficial to the instrument, which, the composer said, is "of a special alchemy to which must be sacrificed one's own tranquillity and perhaps an aspect of one's personality"'. This reveals an objectivity in complete contrast to the romantic egocentric attitude'.⁷⁴

In 1909, Arnold Bax accompanied some songs by Debussy at a concert which the composer attended. The following assessment demonstrates Debussy's wit and irony:

Evans passed on to me the composer's remark that I had interpreted his songs very sensitively, but in rather too a pianistic fashion. This verdict interested me deeply, for never before had I been arraigned on the count of playing like a pianist.⁷⁵

From Debussy's own views about performers and piano performance as given above, it seems that from about 1908 on, Debussy expended much effort in clarifying how his piano music should be played. In these years, it appears that he sought out a number of pianists in order to work with them. He seemed very concerned that the correct manner of performance of his music should be clearly understood. As to whether his coaching turned out to be helpful, opinions differed. Much later, Paul Loyonnet had something to say about it:

I went to his house and played some of his *Préludes* for him. He wasn't always in agreement with me in some matters of tempo and sonority. In one of the pieces he said my tempo was too fast, so I said, 'give me your tempo', and when I played it again in his tempo, he said, 'No, it's decidedly too slow!' And

⁷³ Raoul Bardac, in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 196.

⁷⁴ Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, 45.

⁷⁵ Arnold Bax, *Farwell, My Youth and Other Writings* (Bookfield: Ashgate, 1992), 51.

I remember that when I played 'La Cathédrale engloutie', Debussy said, 'Well, it's too engloutie!'⁷⁶

There is no doubt that Debussy's high artistic standards and occasionally cynical temperament did not allow him to assess, much less praise, others' attempts to perform his works in an objective manner. Of all performing artists, it seems as though pianists were prime targets. From the above accounts it becomes evident that for the Debussy pianist it is sound – timbre, texture, colour – rather than muscular acrobatics that presents the greatest technical challenge. Sound on the piano is immediately related to the pedal, and it is clear that to begin with, many pianists had little idea what kind of pedalling Debussy's music required. There are very few kind words that can be found toward pianists in Debussy's correspondence and his comments express great sarcasm at best. The only known exceptions include comments addressed to Marguerite Long, Walter Rummel and Ricardo Viñes. These pianists are interesting to look at not only because of their direct contact with the composer, but also because for Debussy, 'once a pianist's credentials as a Debussy performer were established, his performances were accepted by the composer as being no less authoritative than his own.'⁷⁷ Evidence of these pianists' playing has been left to us through the early days of the phonograph.

It is not certain when Rummel first met Debussy, but it was probably in late 1908 or early in the following year.⁷⁸ From then on, until Debussy's death almost ten years later, we can document an enduring friendship. In Stockbridge, Massachusetts on 26 July 1910, Rummel played the first American performance of four *Préludes*, two of

⁷⁶ Quoted in Charles Timbrell, *French Pianism – A Historical Perspective* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1992), 144.

⁷⁷ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 54.

⁷⁸ *The Monthly Musical Record*, (November 1911), 285.

which received premieres on this occasion.⁷⁹ Three years later, in 1913, he played the first performance in England of the complete set of the *Préludes*. This was the only known complete public performance of either Book of *Préludes* during Debussy's lifetime. In Paris, on 14 December 1916, Rummel also gave the first performance of the *Douze Etudes*.

Debussy's correspondence with Rummel was regular during those years. In a letter of 28 June 1917, Debussy apologises for not seeing Rummel after his concert devoted to works of Bach and Debussy:

It's hard to say that kind of thing in public ... One doesn't congratulate a sunset, does one, or the sea on being more beautiful than any cathedral? You are a force of nature ... like her you go from the great to the little with no visible effort. You therefore understand both the great Sebastian Bach and the little Claude Debussy, so that for a moment they stand together in the public's mind ... My thanks for that and for everything.⁸⁰

It is regrettable that Rummel did not record any music by Debussy. Still, from his existing recordings we can confirm that he played in a highly romantic manner and with a very colouristic approach to his sound. Most striking though is his sense of *rubato* in Chopin's *Waltzes*, where the rhythmic lilt is very subtle, with an avoidance of strong downbeats. Melodic lines are long and singing, and textual variety is achieved by deft pedalling and contrasting types of touch. Repeated sections are never played in quite the same way, and the inflections sound spontaneous, not self-conscious.⁸¹

What Rummel and Marguerite Long have in common is the fact that their contact with Debussy spanned over the last years of his life. And although Long did make recordings of Debussy's music, these are still very few. They include only 'Jardins sous la pluie' from *Estampes*, *La plus que lente* and the two *Arabesques*. It is indeed

⁷⁹ *The Musical Leader* (August 1910), 6.

⁸⁰ Letter to Walter Rummel (1917), in Debussy, *Letters*, 239.

⁸¹ Walter Rummel, *Chopin Waltzes*, Deutsche Grammophon 68063; MX2219-GE-9.

regrettable that the two pianists who succeeded in earning Debussy's approval neglected to record his music.

The summer of 1917 brought Long and Debussy together in the southwestern coastal town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where Debussy's family was spending several months. There, they worked on much repertoire: *Images*, *Estampes*, several *Préludes*, some *Etudes* and *Pour le Piano*. Believing that Debussy had revolutionised piano music, Long had wished to learn with Debussy: 'His hands were deep into the keys, but always gentle, creating a wide range of colours. Without any harshness, ever, his sound was always full and intense, yet keeping to the dynamic range between pianissimo and forte.'⁸² In Long's recording of 'Jardins sur la Pluie', we can admire the evenness and clarity in her playing. Played in barely three minutes, it is one of the fastest performances in existence.⁸³ Pedalling is crucial in that it merely highlights important melodic notes but never drowns passage works in washes of sound. For example, the cadenza-like descending arpeggios in b. 118 indicated *rapide* are played without pedal; the following trills are also played with no pedal. Whenever possible, Long holds on to bass notes with her fingers rather than with the pedal, ensuring therefore a *pianissisimo* as well as a light and clean semiquaver accompaniment. In this, as well as in the other recordings Long made of Debussy's piano works, she comes across as a master of the pedal, but the wide range of touch and articulations she uses, are also characteristic of her style.

Another celebrated pianist contemporary of Debussy, was Ricardo Viñes. Viñes introduced almost the entire piano repertory of Debussy as well as that of Ravel. This in itself was a phenomenal achievement, and though it is difficult to discover the extent to which Debussy's novel conception of keyboard-writing was inspired by the

⁸² Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, 37.

⁸³ Marguerite Long, *Works by Ravel, Debussy and Milhaud*, EMI GR 2171.

style of Viñes' piano playing, his association with Debussy was so close that we must at least endeavour to reconstruct this pianist's artistic character and principles. His manner of playing in particular, was based on a subtle and complex use of the two pedals. The Spanish pianist Gonzalo Soriano claimed that Viñes was double-jointed, and this, it was said, enabled him to strike the keys in a way that produced an unusually evocative tone.⁸⁴ Poulenc, who had Viñes as his piano teacher recalls him with affection: 'No one could teach the art of using the pedals, an essential feature of modern piano music, better than Viñes ... he somehow managed to extract clarity from the very ambiguities created by the pedals'.⁸⁵

Debussy showed his admiration to Viñes by dedicating 'Poissons d'or', the third movement of *Images II*, to him. This represents a significant gesture as it was the only dedication Debussy ever made to a living musician. The other musical dedications he made are addressed to composers of previous generations: Chopin (*Douze Etudes*) and Rameau ('Hommage à Rameau'). Once again, it is disappointing to have only 'Poissons d'or' and 'Soirée dans Grenade' engraved on record among all the Debussy works that Viñes championed. His recordings of Scarlatti, made in 1930, show delicacy and purity.⁸⁶ His Albeniz recordings are fantastically rhythmic but light-footed, effortless, spirited and exhibiting great ease. The recording of 'Poissons d'or' itself is dazzling. The lightness and clarity of the figuration as well as the control of dynamics in the opening *pianissimo*, the subtle shades of colour and the elusive character of this work, are all handled admirably. His handling of both the *una corda* as well as of the damper pedal shows extreme delicacy and it is through the constant use of both pedals that Viñes achieves so many different shades of colour. Also,

⁸⁴ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 34.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁶ Ricardo Viñes, *Re-issue of Recordings*, EMI 1731791.

despite the thick writing of the score in numerous passages throughout the piece, it sounds as if it were 'floating', owing obviously to a light-footed use of the damper pedal combined with sparkling finger dexterity.

It should be stressed at this point, that merely having played in private for Debussy did not guarantee a pianist's insight into or empathy for the composer's ideas. Debussy's general attitude about performers who felt their interpretative role obliged them to tamper with his score is revealed in an account given by Long:

Debussy has left us all the indications possible for the execution of his work. He regarded this with the utmost care, and at times was almost fierce about it. I often heard him tell - somewhat angrily - this story. A pianist once came to play to him some of his pieces. He stopped at a certain passage and said: 'Master, according to me this should be 'free'. Recalling this, Debussy would say: 'There are some who write music, some who edit it, and then there is that gentleman who does what he pleases'. It illustrates the same intransigent attitude that, when Debussy was offered an artist of genius to sing the part of Mélisande, made him reply: 'A faithful interpreter is sufficient'.⁸⁷

It would be interesting to know that pianist's identity. Then again, it probably does not matter much, since Debussy apparently felt the same way about most of the famous virtuosos of the day. Some years later, Alfredo Casella tried to explain why:

Debussy was extremely exacting of interpreters. Rarely indeed have I seen him satisfied with a performance. He detested almost all the great virtuosi, who are generally quite unmusical; on the other hand he was well-disposed towards certain cultivated and intelligent interpreters who enjoyed no clamorous reputation, but who loved music with the same disinterested sacred love as he.⁸⁸

The phrase 'disinterested sacred love' suggests a deeply held attitude toward music and its interpretation. For Debussy, this required a different musical standard of execution than obtained among most of the famous virtuosos of his time. Apparently, the pianists who had earned his disapproval were the ones who could not understand that his music demanded an adherence to a very specific pianistic approach, something they may have not been accustomed to yield to a composer up to then. The

⁸⁷ Long, *At the piano with Debussy*, 13.

⁸⁸ Alfredo Casella, 'Claude Debussy', *Monthly Musical Record* 113 (1933), 2.

main characteristics in this new approach in piano playing, as also applied by Debussy's above mentioned preferred pianists, regard smoothness, colour and lightness; characteristics not necessarily found in a virtuoso performance.

The information on performance related issues stemming from written sources directly linked with Debussy is very little. More specifically, the interpretative issue that is probably the most absent from these sources, is pedalling. Although there is little written (or spoken) information which has survived on how Debussy handled the pedal in particular, he did nevertheless comment himself on both Liszt and Chopin's use of the pedal. It is also interesting that Ricardo Viñes, the main interpreter of Debussy's piano music, was part of a tradition of performance that went back to Liszt and Thalberg. How well Debussy knew the individual approach to pedalling linked to these pianists and how each one of these may have influenced him, deserves careful study.

An important source of written information about Debussy's interest in pedalling is a letter to his publisher, Jacques Durand. In this letter, Debussy comments on a statement made by Saint-Saëns about pedalling in Chopin:

Despite my respect for Saint-Saëns's great age, what he says about Chopin's pedalling isn't entirely true. I have very clear memories of what Mme Mauté de Fleurville told me. He [Chopin] recommended practising without pedal and, in performance, not holding it on except in very rare instances. It was the same way of turning the pedal into a kind of *breathing* which I observed in Liszt when I had the chance to hear him in Rome. I feel Saint-Saëns forgets that pianists are poor musicians, for the most part, and cut up music into unequal lumps, like a chicken. The plain truth perhaps is that abusing the pedal is only a means of covering up a lack of technique, and that making a lot of noise is a way to drown the music you are slaughtering! In theory we should be able to find a graphic means of representing this 'breathing' pedal ... it wouldn't be impossible. Come to think of it, isn't there a work on the subject by Mme Marie Jaëll, who was severe on the matter of piano technique?⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Letter to Jacques Durand (1915), in Debussy, *Letters*, 301.

Jaëll had been a pianist, a pedagogue, as well as personal assistant to Franz Liszt. Although Debussy mentions her as if he had only a vague memory of her writings,⁹⁰ he still may have come across her writings on pedalling where she stresses the importance of making decisions not only on when to apply the pedal but also when *not* to do so:

The most useful function of the pedal consists, in principle, in the procedure through which it remains depressed for as long as it can be raised [...] It's true to say that the performer must expect that the results of raising the pedal are as important as those of when it is depressed. Therefore, to be able to arrive at this conception, one has to concentrate his attention on the function of the pedal at the moment of raise and not of depress [...] it springs in mind that the abuse of the pedal exists as a chronic problem with most performers. It is [the pedal] equally capable of hiding their qualities as well as their defects.⁹¹

The kind of technique mentioned here by Jaëll probably refers to a constant depression of the pedal with a very careful control especially when lifting is required. This technique may also be related to Liszt's way of pedalling, described by Debussy as 'breathing', something which would result in a continuous and non-interrupted sonority. Debussy's thoughts about producing a graphic representation of this pedalling technique would have been very interesting for us to have today and it is regrettable that he did not realise his idea of producing such a graph.

As for Debussy's first teacher, Mme de Fleurville, although he seemed to respect her opinion, we should retain some doubts about her reliability as a source of information on Chopin's practice regimen. The phrase, 'not holding it on except in very rare instances', seems equivocal. Apparently, by 'holding it on', he simply

⁹⁰ Marie Jaëll, *La musique et la Psychophysiologie* (Paris: unknown publisher, 1896) ; *Le Mechanisme du Toucher* (Paris: u.p., 1897) ; *L'Intelligence et le Rythme dans le Mouvements Artistique* (Paris: u.p., 1904) ; *La Resonance du Toucher et la Topographie des Pulpes* (Paris: u.p., 1912).

⁹¹ Jaëll, *La musique et la Psychophysiologie*, 109-116. 'Le fonctionnement le plus utile de la pédale consiste, en principe, dans le procédé par lequel elle reste aussi longtemps enfoncée que soulevée [...] A vrai dire, l'exécutant doit escompter les effets du soulèvement de la pédale comme étant aussi importants que ceux de l'enfoncement. Afin d'arriver à cette conception, il doit s'astreindre à commencer son orientation pour le fonctionnement de la pédale au moment de la soulever et non au moment de l'enfoncer [...] il ressort de là que l'abus de la pédale existe à l'état chronique chez la plupart des exécutants. Il faut dire qu'il est aussi apte à cacher leurs qualités qu'à cacher leurs défauts.'

means depressing it for long periods of time. The idea that poor pianists handle the pedal in such a way that they 'cut up music into unequal lumps', suggests that their problem derives not from the excessive use of the pedal, but rather from a lack of sensitivity in its application. This reference should not be interpreted as to imply that Debussy preferred little pedal to be applied in his piano music; it rather suggests that he pleads for improvements in the refinement of pedal technique.

The description of Liszt and Ludwig Deppe's pedalling by the pianist Amy Fay may reveal something similar to what Debussy had experienced when he had heard Liszt playing in Rome:

Remember that I wrote you that one of Liszt's effects was his use of the pedal, and how he has a way of disembodiment a piece from the piano and seeming to make it float in the air? He makes a spiritual form of it so perfectly visible to your inward eye, that it seems as if you could almost hear it breath! Deppe seems to almost have the same idea, though he has never heard Liszt play. 'The pedal', he said, 'is the *lungs* of the piano'. He played a few bars of a sonata, and in his whole method of binding the notes together and managing the pedal, I recognised Liszt. The thing floated! Unless Deppe wishes a chord to be very brilliant, he takes the pedal *after* the chord instead of simultaneously with it. This gives a very ideal sound.⁹²

Fay seems to be referring to syncopated pedalling (also known as 'overlapping pedalling') as if it were something special, suggesting that it was still not widely known. While all the basic techniques of modern pedalling had essentially been established by the middle of the nineteenth century, their dissemination did not occur rapidly or completely. Good and mediocre, progressive and conservative piano teachers were active, and even in the early twentieth century some failed to teach thoroughly a basic pedalling technique. As late as 1873, Amy Fay claimed that none of her three teachers, Liszt, Kullak or Taubert, paid much attention to pedalling in her lessons.⁹³

⁹² Amy Fay, *Music Study in Germany* (London: Macmillan, 1885), 297-8.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Debussy received his training as a pianist in the 1870s. Given that he was at the Conservatoire, he may not have been exposed to syncopated pedalling before his visit to Rome in 1885.⁹⁴ Therefore, the 'breathing' he was referring to, could simply be Liszt's syncopated pedalling, a technique enough in itself to impress him. Liszt himself is found to be using indications for pedalling in his piano scores very frequently. Many of these indications ask for the application of the pedal to be kept the same throughout many bars. This fact easily leads us to the conclusion that if these indications were to be interpreted literally, they would result in an unbearable blur. Therefore, it seems impossible that Liszt himself was depressing the pedal throughout without making at least some partial changes to clear up the sound. Given his own pedalling indications in the two *Piano Concertos*, the chances are that Liszt did use syncopated pedalling, so as to clear any excess of blurring without interrupting the sonority (Ex. 8, p.120).

However, the use of respiration as an image for syncopated pedalling predates both Debussy and Fay. Charles Chaulieu had used it as early as 1834:

Composers in general, are not very careful as regards the indication of the pedals, and particularly so when marking its release. There is, moreover, a very important movement of the foot, which could be called Breathing, in comparison with the action of the singer's lungs. This movement is performed by rising and putting down the foot again immediately, in such a manner that the confusion ceases while the action of the pedal appears uninterrupted.⁹⁵

The pianist Maurice Dumesnil, who was coached by Debussy, claims that the composer advocated syncopated pedalling. Like Amy Fay, he describes it as if it were a new, special technique:

I realise how many interpreters are misled by the famous blur so often associated with Debussy's piano music. He wanted the pedal used in long harmonic strokes, without breaks or confusion. Occasionally he allowed the

⁹⁴ For a discussion of Debussy's encounter with Liszt see: Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, 81-3.

⁹⁵ David Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 114.

pedal to encroach a tiny fraction from one harmony to the next, similarly to what one does when practising the five-finger exercise C, D, E, F, G *legato*, by lifting one finger just an instant after one plays the next. In any case, the blur should be used only for special effects, and with utmost discretion. It was the blur of course, that caused Debussy to be called an Impressionist. Whenever the term was mentioned in his presence however, he became irritated and would have nothing of it, claiming that, on the contrary, he descended from the eighteenth-century French harpsichordists.⁹⁶

Therefore, syncopated pedalling as a new technique, could well have been misinterpreted by performers at that time. Apparently, what Debussy wished for, was a continuous sonority but without an indiscriminate use of the pedal that would result in a chaotic fusion of sounds. Later, Dumesnil discusses Debussy's ideas about the use of the pedal in relation to sonority; he claims that in 'Clair de Lune', Debussy advised performers that 'the left-hand arpeggios should be fluid, mellow, drowned in pedal, as if played by a harp on a background of strings'. Dumesnil goes on to add that 'Debussy did not tolerate any confusion and insisted on the purity of each harmonic pattern'.⁹⁷

Debussy's statements about pedalling at least suggest that he might not have been averse to the idea that it could be controlled by the composer. Considered superficially, his interest in the notation of pedalling seems peculiar, since his piano works contain very few pedal markings. This is Dumesnil's recollection about Debussy's view on this issue:

It has been noted that Debussy's pedal indications are extremely scarce. In fact, their presence in his list of compositions for the piano can be counted on the fingers of both hands. 'Pedalling cannot be written down', he explained. 'It varies from one instrument to another, from one room or hall, to another. So he left it to his interpreters: *Faites confiance à votre oreille*' (trust your ear), a remark that is not surprising from a musician whose aim had always been the pleasure of the ear as against rigid rules and pedagogic pedantry.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Maurice Dumesnil, in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 158-163.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Debussy's view makes sense; pedalling cannot be written down because it varies with the instrument at hand, as well as with the performer (a view also discussed in Chapter 1); any pianist would agree. Another possible reason for the lack of pedalling indications in Debussy's piano works might have been an intrinsic complexity in his ideas about pedalling, but there is no mention of this in Dumesnil's writings. The information we have to regard as important in these sources, is Debussy's preference and awareness of the possibility to achieve a refined pedalling technique that would create a continuous and smooth sonority in piano playing.

It is interesting to look at this point at how familiar Debussy may have been with any other knowledge about pedalling techniques shared between other pianists and teachers at that time. Further to Debussy's mention of Marie Jaëll, Edward Lockspeiser suggests that, rather than intending Jaëll in the earlier quotation, Debussy may actually have been referring to a treatise by the composer Georges Falkenberg, entitled *Les Pédales du piano*.⁹⁹ Falkenberg makes a strong point out of the pedal notation issue in this book. He strongly emphasises the fact that a precise notation for pedalling is impossible because of varying conditions including the room, the instrument, and size of the audience. Falkenberg also describes syncopated pedalling in a careful manner, but without naming it though and using the word 'colour' instead to describe some pedal effects, while discussing the use of the pedal in scales or other kinds of passages.¹⁰⁰

Debussy is often considered to have made significant innovations in the use of 'fractional' or 'half' pedalling. But few descriptions of Debussy's use of this technique exist. Some assume that this kind of pedalling technique had been a very

⁹⁹ Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, 46-7.

¹⁰⁰ Georges Falkenberg, *Les Pédales du piano*, (Paris: Durand, 1893), 72-81.

important part of French pianism for a long time, but without strong evidence.¹⁰¹ It seems that most of the famous late nineteenth-century French piano teachers paid little or no attention to the pedal. Eric Heidsieck, one of Cortot's students, denies that subtle pedalling played a role of central importance to French pianism:

Until a few years ago it certainly was not! Maybe when people think of French pianism they are thinking of Giesecking, but he was a German trained in Germany. No. Very clean finger work has always been at the heart of the French school, and only sparse use was made of the pedal.¹⁰²

However, there is evidence that this is not entirely true. Charles de Bériot, notably the teacher of both Viñes as well as of Maurice Ravel, was known for his careful attention to pedal technique.¹⁰³ But even earlier than de Bériot, his teacher, Sigismond Thalberg, used the pedal in a way aimed to carefully avoid blurring. Albert Lavignac's *L'Ecole de la pédale* of 1889 which was the first major work in the French language on the issue of pedalling, contains an eyewitness account of Thalberg's playing:

I remember being immensely astonished at first, observing that Thalberg was afraid, that his foot trembled on the pedal to the extent that he could not hold it down for half a second. But this delusion did not last long; it could not have done. The calm style of Thalberg's playing, majestic, sober, imposing, perfectly correct and perhaps a little cold, by no means accorded with the notion of a paralytic emotion. Thalberg was not afraid, but he used the pedal admirably with very brief touches brilliantly distributed just at the required moment and with such frequent repetition that at first, a little naively, I had thought it a trembling.¹⁰⁴

Apparently, the quick and frequent changes of pedal described in Thalberg's playing above, refer to the use of a half-pedalling technique. Lavignac goes on to claim that other pianists had also adopted this technique:

There are those who use these rapid and almost imperceptible movements in such a way that it could be said that not a single note of the piece has been played without the pedal; but in that case the movements are so frequent and

¹⁰¹ For example see: Sandra P. Rosenblum, 'Pedalling the Piano: A Brief Survey from the 18th Century to the Present', *Performance Practice Review* 6/2 (1993), 158-178, and Maurice Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy* (New York: Schroeder & Gunther, 1932).

¹⁰² Timbrell, *French Pianism*, 85.

¹⁰³ Timbrell, *French Pianism*, 135-141.

¹⁰⁴ Rowland, *A History of Pianoforte Pedalling*, 116.

so close together that the pedal is renewed on almost every note, in such a manner that could not cause any trouble in the harmony.¹⁰⁵

More importantly, Marmontel, Debussy's teacher, was also aware that Thalberg's pedalling technique was advanced and subtle:

Thalberg, famous master and model virtuoso, employed the pedals with a wonderful touch. Following his example, pianists of the French school are also distinguished by the use that they made of this method. ... Like Chopin, Thalberg constantly used the soft and loud pedals in an alternating or simultaneous manner, but with so perfect a touch that the most sensitive ear could not perceive any abnormal resonance.¹⁰⁶

A systematic discussion of fractional or half-pedalling was set out in a series of lectures given in 1875 at the Conservatory of Music in Vienna by Hans Schmitt.

Although Schmitt's reference to the subject is short, he mentions some general rules for pedalling:

The pedal must be partially released in the following cases:

1. With pedal points which the hand cannot sustain
2. When it is desired to renew the tone
3. When the tone is to be vibrated

The foot must trill the pedal when a pedal point occurs in connection with rapid scales or ornaments; or when it is desired to use the pedal with tones not harmonically related. The partial release and the trilling of the pedal are allowable in no case when the tones are to be completely silenced; nor, generally speaking, with changes of harmony in the middle and the bass tones.¹⁰⁷

The description of the specific technique mentioned by Schmitt causing the pedal to be 'partially released', is not very clear. A broader explanation of 'trilling' the pedal (otherwise known as 'flutter pedalling') is given later in the same text. Schmitt describes the technique of 'vibrating' the tones as a series of fast dampings with the pedal, while the hands sustain the sonority. However, he does not suggest that any of these techniques might be used specifically to produce a 'partially damped' or 'muffled' sonorous effect.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 123.

¹⁰⁷ Hans Schmitt, *The Pedals of the Pianoforte*, trans. F. S. Law (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1893), 98.

On the other hand, Falkenberg describes how, in certain instances, low notes sustained by the pedal during changes of harmony may not have to disappear completely:

One is able to prolong the sound of a note or of an octave which the hand is unable to hold; and during which will be executed a succession of notes or of chords belonging to successive harmonies. In this case, it is necessary, as one has seen often enough, to release the pedal the least possible amount in order to conserve the sound of the prolonged note; to release it just so much as is indispensable so as to not produce confusion between the different harmonies. That prolonged note is what in harmony is called a pedal.¹⁰⁸

Falkenberg presents three examples, one of which contains pedalling directions of a particular interest. Here follows his second example:

The pedals have been indicated in such a manner that in whatever space, and with whatever instrument, there should not be a blending between the sounds which ought not to vibrate together; but one can often suppress some of them, on condition that he listens attentively so as to act accordingly to the circumstances; the two octaves at the beginning being *ff*, and all of the rest being *p* with *una corda*, it can happen that one is not obliged to release the pedal at the places where they are between parentheses, or if not all, at least at some of them.¹⁰⁹

The claim that the above excerpt could be played with the pedal depressed throughout suggests that some contemporary pianists were using effects exploiting the pedal blur.

Later in his book, Falkenberg describes a performance of the Chopin *Berceuse* by Nicolas Rubinstein in the hall of the Fêtes du Trocadéro, seating six thousand, in which the pianist held the pedal down throughout the entire piece.¹¹⁰ What Falkenberg seems to be suggesting, is optional quick pedal changes that would result in a kind of

¹⁰⁸ Falkenberg, *Les Pédales du Piano*, 87. 'L'un peut prolonger le son d'une note ou d'un octave que la main est incapable de tenir; et pendant qui sera exécuté une succession de notes ou de cordes appartenant aux harmonies successives. Dans ce cas, c'est nécessaire, comme l'un a vu souvent assez, relâcher la pédale que la moins de quantité possible afin de préserver le son de la note; pour le relâcher si beaucoup comme est juste indispensable pour ne pas pour produire la confusion entre les harmonies différentes. Cela a prolongé la note est ce que dans l'harmonie est appelée une pédale.'

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 'Les pédales ont été indiquées dans une telle manière qui dans quoi que l'espace, et avec quoi que l'instrument, il ne doit pas y avoir de coupage entre les sons qui ne devraient pas vibrer ensemble; mais l'un peut éliminer souvent certains d'eux, à condition qu'il écoute attentivement si comme agir en conséquence aux circonstances; Les deux octaves au commence à être *ff*, et tout le repos est *p* avec *una corda*, il peut arriver que l'un n'est pas obligé à relâcher la pédale aux endroits où ils sont entre les parenthèses, ou si pas tout, au moins à certains d'eux.'

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 81.

half pedal technique in which the sound could be 'cleaned up' without losing the sonority of the low notes completely. There are some passages in Debussy's piano music whose context resembles the above given example by Falkenberg. More specifically, all the examples mentioned in the previous chapter about the influence from the gamelan, could be applied here to make comparisons. The most striking similarities can be observed when comparing extended passages in 'La Cathédrale engloutie' from *Préludes Book I* (Ex. 9 / bb.31-41, p.121).

In his discussion of 'La Cathédrale engloutie', Lockspeiser quotes York Bowen's book, *Pedalling the Modern Pianoforte*, which dates from 1936:

There are occasions, he [Bowen] says, when we have deliberately to use a truly unclean form of pedalling. There are numerous examples in modern French music where it is essential to hold the pedal through passages of mixed harmonies. ... The strangest of them is Debussy's 'Cathédrale engloutie' where all kind of diatonic combinations of notes are intended to be merged together. Indeed, in order that the last page should create the illusion of something seen hazily through a depth of water, the pedal is hardly changed at all – at any rate not fully – and an occasional 'flick' pedal is all that is necessary.¹¹¹

Bowen's 'flick' term seems to be essentially the same technique described also by Falkenberg and Matthay.

More information about 'half-damping' or 'half-pedalling' can be drawn from the writings of Tobias Matthay, an important and prominent piano pedagogue. In 1913, he describes a half-pedalling effect seeming to parallel that of Falkenberg, produced by a particularly fast up-down motion of the pedal rather than a partial lifting of the foot in which the dampers lightly touch the strings. Matthay's book presents a substantial discussion on the use of the pedals with no mention though on the latter technique.¹¹² His description refers to the registers of the piano, and to the issue of

¹¹¹ Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, 47.

¹¹² Tobias Matthay, *Musical Interpretation: Its Laws and Principles, and Their Application in Teaching and Performing* (Boston: Boston Music, 1980), 135.

sustaining low notes. However, he never mentions a deliberately partially damped sonorous effect.

Another important written source with a pedagogical purpose is Dumesnil's book *How to Play and Teach Debussy* which includes several quotations from Debussy as well as descriptions of his playing. It bears the marking 'Endorsed by Madame Claude Debussy' which is some kind of indication of the authenticity of the information it contains. However, reports of the composer's playing and comments in this book are mixed with the author's conception of various elements of technique. Although it is possible that Dumesnil's perspective on an issue may well be very close or identical to that of Debussy (since he had received coaching from the composer), it is important to maintain the distinction between them. Dumesnil cites his own definition of an important pedal technique:

There is a subtle way of using the damper pedal as a 'tone modifier' instead of using it merely to *sustain* the tone, or to *suppress* it entirely. After striking a chord 'fortissimo' with the damper pedal on, modify the tone *twice*, by a *very quick* action of the ankle (just a slight shaking), lifting the foot only one fifth of an inch or so. When doing this, the dampers will be allowed to come and touch the vibrating strings very *quickly* and *lightly*. For this reason, the contact will not be sufficient to eliminate the vibration entirely. It will only suppress *part* of it. Once thoroughly mastered, this way of pedalling will enable the interpreter to model his tone in the same way as a sculptor models his clay. It will be an invaluable asset for the infinitesimal delicacy of colouring, so characteristic of Debussy's music.¹¹³

Dumesnil promotes here a clear relationship between a partial damping pedal technique and 'colour' in Debussy's piano music. The use of this technique as a 'tone modifier' diverges from the purposes given by Schmitt, Falkenberg, Matthay and Bowen, though all of these techniques differ radically from Lavignac's description of Thalberg's pedalling.

¹¹³ Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy*, 12.

In another place, Dumesnil provides a further description of what he means by the 'blur' and of the technique and application of fractional pedalling in Debussy:

Those who were fortunate enough to hear the master play his *Images*, his *Préludes*, or the *Children's Corner* will never forget the elusive and aristocratic sonorities which he drew from the instrument ... In this so-called blurring, extreme tact and discretion should be observed; otherwise the result would be far from gratifying, and would turn to undesirable confusion. Treating the arpeggios of the same tonality in the manner of a wave of tone cannot be called blurring; it is simply a pedal process. But here is a definition of the word, such as my recollections of Debussy's own playing suggests: it consists of changing the pedal just a little too late after each chord or each harmony, or group of chords of harmonies, in such passages that warrant this sort of 'encroaching' process. Remarkable examples of this instance are found in 'Reflets dans l'eau' and 'La Cathédrale engloutie' ... But the very nature of this effect makes it a tremendously arduous one to achieve successfully; the pedal must at times be used quickly, at one-half, one-third, or less of its course; otherwise all will be lost and the result may well be what one plainly calls 'a mess'.¹¹⁴

In this discussion of pedalling, Dumesnil, as an eyewitness of Debussy's playing, brings the two areas of half pedalling and syncopated pedalling together as being related techniques. The 'blur' is defined as a refinement of syncopated pedalling and the 'encroaching' pedal seems to be a relatively simple concept in which harmonies are allowed to overlap somewhat more than is usual in syncopated pedalling. The up-down motion of the foot occurs 'just a little too late'. Dumesnil stresses the subtlety of the effect, yet emphasises its importance for the style. Also useful is his mention of that sometimes the pedal should, in this manner, be changed not only 'after each chord or each harmony' but also after each 'group of chords or harmonies'. This suggests that in some places, a relatively extreme 'blur' should be applied. His choice of examples including 'Reflets dans l'eau' and 'La Cathédrale engloutie', are certainly suggestive. Apparently, the effect also involves a certain kind of touch, which maintains a close relationship with the pedalling: 'Playing in a muffled,

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

floating, caressing, groping, lingering manner; all of which, combined with a slight pedal overvibration, will produce exactly the effect sought for, the 'blur'.¹¹⁵

When, and how 'slightly' the pedal should produce this blur remains unclear, though the ensuing paragraph does give some advice which goes quite a way towards clarifying the point. Apparently, in some places the blur may need to be discreetly cleared, presumably by applying a half-pedal technique like that as described by Falkenberg, Matthay and Bowen. Dumesnil's emphasis on the difficulty of the technique serves to further clarify this; quick and variously tiny motions of the foot are clearly prescribed. The notion of a 'mess', meaning too much blur, delimits the acceptable limit of the effect. How much is *too* much, ultimately remains subject to the taste and discretion of the pianist. It has to do exactly with what Debussy meant when he said to Dumesnil: 'Faites confiance à votre oreille'.

George Copeland, another pianist coached by Debussy, describes a pedal technique that seems, at first glance, to suggest partial damping through very small motions of the foot:

The sustained sound and the transparency of tone and colour timbre are induced by the almost continuous use of overlapping pedals, raising the foot a fraction from the damper pedal, and depressing it again immediately to preserve the continuity. In other words, the pedals are played in levels in order to get air under the tone; for, if tone is there, it must rest on something. *Legato* is played almost invariably in this way, and the arpeggios are 'light and luminous' instead of defined and aggressive as in the German manner.¹¹⁶

In spite of the fact that this paragraph follows immediately after a reference to several Debussy citations, Copland does not state clearly whether Debussy used or even accepted the technique he describes. What specific pedalling technique Copland refers to by the term 'levels' remains open to different interpretations. It may be that he means fractional pedalling of various degrees of damping but his description only

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹¹⁶ George Copeland, 'Debussy, the Man I Knew', *Atlantic Monthly* 195 (1955), 34-8.

refers to 'continuous use of overlapping pedals, raising the foot a fraction' and then 'depressing it again immediately', which could simply imply syncopated pedalling. How much differentiation he suggests between various degrees of damping remains unclear. It may simply be the same technique as described by Matthay and Bowen but even that, is not clear enough. It seems that the passage is not intended to describe a complete approach to pedalling Debussy, but rather to focus on a kind of pedalling to be used at times.

Another article by Copeland of a similar context published in 1944, maintains a much clearer distinction between Debussy's words and Copeland's ideas, than the 1955 article does:

Some readers may be interested in a few of my ideas on how Debussy's piano music should be played. It demands a vastly different technique from Chopin, Bach or Schumann, for example. It is played on planes and levels. *Legato* is almost always obtained with pedals, not fingers. Then, in some compositions like 'Feuilles Mortes' or 'Reflets dans l'eau', in order to 'get air over and under the tone', one literally strokes the keys, not strikes them. This gives transparency to the sound. Runs and arpeggios should never sound like a succession of notes; they should have a streaming sound, almost like a glissando. The pianissimo also requires a special type of handling. It is not a question of playing softly only, but also of creating an impression of great distance and height, of tremendous remoteness and an eerie proximity. Debussy's piano style calls for the tempering of touch to the point where the percussion sensation is transmuted into a sort of caressing contact with the key.¹¹⁷

The paragraph is clearly intended to represent Copeland's own ideas. He is employing some of the same words in both articles, but with substantial differences in meaning; here, the phrase 'planes and levels', does not clearly refer to pedalling. Notably, he emphasises refinement of touch and uses the word 'caressing', though with no mention of the role of the pedal in getting 'air over and under the tone'. That phrase and the mention to the 'transparency' of sound, probably have to do with touch.

¹¹⁷ George Copeland, *The First and Last Times I Saw Debussy* (Milwaukee: Kalmbach, 1944), 6-9.

In conclusion, the clearest description of fractional pedalling applied in Debussy's music by a pianist who studied with the composer comes from Dumesnil's writings, which describe a very fast and light up-down motion of the foot working as a means of thinning either a single harmony or the 'blur'. Other usages of half pedal techniques such as Thalberg's, neither occur nor are clearly implied in either Dumesnil's or Copeland's writings. By contrast, Debussy's preference of pedalling in 'long harmonic strokes, without breaks or confusion', that is, syncopated pedalling, emerges fairly clearly. The preoccupation with various pedalling techniques as found in pedalling treatises and writing of pianists and pedagogues of Debussy's time, show that although refined and sonority-related pedalling techniques were not widely taught or discussed, they still existed and were applied in piano performance.

Essentially, all the above given information brings a new insight into the use of the pedal in Debussy. Its role is not any more merely to sustain, but more importantly, to modify and *diffuse* the sound according to individual performance circumstances. This new role of the pedal is impossible to indicate, as it varies according to each different occasion and all the factors influencing the sound result (acoustics, instrument, performer etc.). Nevertheless, the specific pedalling techniques described in this chapter can be regarded as indispensable for performing Debussy's piano music. In the examination of the composer's own playing as recorded in the Welte Mignon Piano Rolls that follows, Debussy's own use of the pedal will reveal that he applied many of the pedalling techniques mentioned in this chapter to the performance of his piano music as well.

CHAPTER 4

Debussy's Use of the Pedals in the Welte Mignon Piano Rolls

Piano Rolls are a much-debated source of information amongst researchers of performance practice issues such as tempo, dynamics or pedalling.¹¹⁸ Ideally, each of these issues should be researched separately, as they are all related to different aspects of the shortcomings in the rolls' playing mechanism. This means that the validity of this recorded sound source cannot be judged easily. Only after one has spent a considerable amount of time examining the function and intricacies of this historical source, can they yield important information about issues such as *tempo* or pedalling. My visit to Denis Condon in Sydney, Australia in order to examine the fourteen pieces Debussy recorded for the Welte system held in Condon's private collection of piano rolls, was a revelation. In short, my views on Debussy's preferences about sonority and pedalling technique were confirmed by an examination of the composer's own use of the pedal in these rolls. Indeed, Debussy's recordings show clearly how dedicated he was to extracting a continuous sound from the piano. Exactly how he did this will be examined below. But first, I would like to give some information about the mechanics of the Welte system.

Debussy recorded fourteen of his own compositions on piano roll for the Welte-Mignon reproducing system. These are: 'La soirée dans Grenade' from the *Estampes* of 1903 (roll no.2735), *D'un cahier d'esquisses* of early 1904 (roll 2734), the six

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Roy Howat, 'Review', *The Pianola Journal* 13 (2000), 37-44, Arthur Tollefson, 'Debussy's Pedalling', *Clavier* 9 (1990), 22-33.

pieces of his *Children's Corner* of 1908 (roll 2733), the humorous waltz *La plus que lente* of 1910 (roll 2736), and five *Préludes* from Book I of 1909-1910 (three on roll 2738 and two on roll 2739). Although it has often been assumed that Debussy made these recordings in 1913, Roy Howat believes that there are various factors suggesting an earlier date: Howat maintains that had Debussy recorded in 1913, he would surely have included something from his second book of *Préludes* completed early in that year.¹¹⁹

The reproducing piano system Debussy recorded upon was a significant development in the player-piano history itself. Whereas its predecessor, the foot-impelled player piano, required a certain degree of skill on the part of the operator to impart musical expression and phrasing, the reproducing piano was designed to achieve this without any manual intervention. Its function was to reproduce faithfully the performances of pianists who recorded their work for the music roll medium. For the listener, a well-adjusted instrument should create an impression that the original recording artist is present in the room, playing the piano himself.

The German company Welte-Mignon introduced the first instrument of this type in the early twentieth century. Their system was the most sophisticated among reproducing piano systems available at that time. In order to record a music roll, the pianist played on an ordinary grand piano that had electric wires attached to the keys. The wires led to a row of either pencil or ink markers above a paper roll which was pulled at a constant speed. As long as the key was down, a marker drew a line on the paper. Afterwards, the master roll was perforated wherever the melographic traces were visible. Other systems had perforating machines hooked up to the recording piano; as the keys were pressed, the moving paper roll was punched simultaneously.

¹¹⁹ Roy Howat, 'Debussy and the Welte', *The Pianola Journal* 7 (1994), 3.

The length of each perforation was determined by the time the key was held down, while the spaces between columns of perforations corresponded to musical rhythm. The perforations of the master roll were precisely duplicated and copies were sold along with reproducing pianos. In these instruments, the perforated paper was pulled from one spool onto another, sliding across a tracker bar situated between the two spools. Air was admitted to the partial vacuum inside the instrument, through the perforations. A system of bellows was thus set into motion and it activated the piano hammers. In addition to pitch, rhythm and tempo, the Welte-Mignon recorded dynamic nuances and pedalling. These two features were transmitted into two separate rows of perforations on both margins of the music roll. During the playback, some of these perforations regulated the power with which the hammers struck the strings, while others activated the pedals (damper and *una corda*). The reproducing Welte-Mignon mechanism existed in two versions; one was built into a piano, while the other was constructed as a separate cabinet, sitting in front of the piano (the Welte *Vorsetzer*).¹²⁰

By 1910, the effect of the recreated piano performance had become extremely popular, its era eventually coming to an end in the early 1930s, with sales of instruments all but ceasing during and after the Depression. The Welte-Mignon replayed with great accuracy the most rapid notes, the most complex rhythms, and the most subtle *tempo* changes. These capabilities attracted great interest from eminent pianists of the player piano era. Understandably, many considered the music roll to be an excellent alternative to the phonograph, which at the time could provide little more than low fidelity sound. Great pianists and composers such as Ferruccio Busoni, Edvard Grieg, Josef Hofmann, Gustav Mahler, Egon Petri, Emil Sauer, Alexandre

¹²⁰ Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume, *Pianola: A History of the Self-Playing Piano* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984).

Scriabin and many others, recorded for Welte and also wrote testimonials for its system. Even the hypercritical Debussy was most pleased with his Welte-Mignon recordings (his *only* solo piano recordings). He wrote to Edwin Welte, the inventor of the system: 'Dear Sir, it is impossible to attain a greater perfection of reproduction than that of the Welte apparatus. I am happy to assure you in these lines of my astonishment and admiration of what I heard. I am, Dear Sir, Yours faithfully, Claude Debussy'.¹²¹

Despite the strengths of the rolls as a source of information, there are those who considered them to be unreliable and inaccurate. For example, Mme de Tinan, Debussy's own stepdaughter said that except for 'La Soirée dans Grenade', the first transfer of the Debussy piano rolls to audio disc failed to give a 'genuine impression of his interpretations'.¹²² The causes of this poor technical quality require clarification; to what extent did it result from the original process and how did it affect aspects of performance such as pedalling?

In the case of the Welte-Mignon piano rolls, a large part of the problem seems to stem from inadequate care taken in the transfer to audio disc. Some of the most serious problems can be localised; during times when the rolls had been originally mass-produced, they suffered from errors resulting from poorly maintained pneumatic roll copying machines. The most frequent errors concerned pedalling, dynamics and repeated notes. A hole controlling the pedal could sometimes slip to an inaccurate position, producing a similarly inaccurate pedalling. When this occurred, the pedal would partially or completely fail to 'catch' the note or chord to be sustained. Similarly, an incorrectly placed hole cancelling the dynamic setting might cause the

¹²¹ Booklet in CD recording, *Claude Debussy; The Composer as Pianist-All his Known Recordings*, Pierian Records (512) 327 5443.

¹²² Information communicated to Roy Howat in 1979 by Mme de Tinan. The recording Mme de Tinan is referring to is: *Claude Debussy, Great Composers' Own Performances*, LP – Telefunken, GMA 65, 79.

mechanism to act a moment before the striking of the intended note, causing a faulty dynamic for that note. At other times, holes for fast repeated notes such as trills, were punched too close together and this resulted in notes that did not repeat.

Today, it is possible to detect any errors by checking individual rolls against other copies of the same rolls. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to make this comparison: I compared the use of the pedals as recorded in the copies of the rolls No.2733 and 2738 held in Dr John Spencer's collection in Nottingham, with the corresponding ones held in Denis Condon's collection in Sydney. To my relief, since these copies had exactly the same perforations with regard to Debussy's pedalling, I was able to transcribe the composer's use of the pedals in these rolls, without any doubts about their accuracy. A complete transcription of Debussy's use of the pedals (damper and *una corda*) as recorded in this collection of Welte-Mignon piano rolls, can be found in Appendix 2 of this dissertation (p.137).

There are many other problems inherent in the Welte mechanism; accuracy of *tempo* is one of the issues that can cause great concern. The Welte-Mignon originally used an air motor. Though the motors were good, they are still subject to a number of technical problems that could affect the tempo. Today, the motors can be substituted by electric motors which are more reliable. To complicate matters, though the great majority of Welte rolls require a single speed, there are a few long rolls that require a slow speed. In those instances, there is a special indication given on the rolls (choice of the correct speed can also depend on good care and a thorough knowledge of the system). Another issue affecting speed, is the kind of the paper used in the rolls. At the time of the Debussy rolls' release, Welte rolls had a relatively thin, fragile paper. In copies issued in later years in America under the Licensee label, the paper was thicker; and in copies issued in the 1920s in Germany the thickness of the paper fell

somewhere between the two. Differing paper in rolls can affect the tempo because as the paper winds onto the take-up reel, increased thickness will increase its speed. This problem surfaces in reissues of long rolls such in Debussy's *Children's Corner*; transfers sometimes use a copy of the original roll because of the fragile condition of the earliest paper. If it has a different thickness, such a copy will produce different tempi.¹²³ It needs to be emphasised here, that each reproducing piano system possessed unique features, so each must be assessed separately. The history and the quirks of the Welte-Mignon system differ enormously from any other reproducing piano. Perhaps the full complexity of these machines and the amount of detailed adjustment they require may be the reason why so few modern transfers of Welte-Mignon piano rolls to disc achieve a really high quality.¹²⁴

One of the shortcomings of the Welte-Mignon reproducing system was the dynamic range which was considerably narrower than that which a live performer can produce. Lacking sensitivity to the fingertip in *pianissimo* and to the full upswing of the pianist's hand in *fortissimo*, the reproducing piano covered only the middle range of the dynamic span of a concert grand. While it was possible to reproduce the artist's dynamics, it could only do so in a limited sense; it missed the minute, barely perceptible nuances that are crucial for expressive delivery. Also, because the diapason of the Welte was divided into two halves, it was particularly difficult to differentiate between various layers of musical texture. Each half (above or below the F sharp in the middle register) had an independently operating mechanism for dynamics. As long as the treble and the bass did not cross the F sharp borderline in the middle, they could be performed with autonomous dynamics. But voicing two parts differently was impossible if they both moved within the same half of the diapason.

¹²³ Personal communication from Denis Condon, March 2002.

¹²⁴ Denis Hall, 'The Player Piano on Record – a Discography', *Pianola Journal* 3-4 (1990), 25-39.

The thicker the texture, the more dynamically distorted became the dynamics in the recording. For Debussy, the lack of thunderous *fortissimo* on the reproducing piano was perhaps not as damaging as it was for other pianists. However, almost everyone who heard him play noted that his *pianissimo* was exceptionally refined and that awareness of different layers both in his music as well as in his playing were essential to the effect of the music.¹²⁵ It is no surprise therefore, that Mme Tinnin expressed dissatisfaction the first time she heard the recording of Debussy's playing. Not all the elements so essential to his particular way of playing could be depicted through the Welte mechanism, which was unable to reconstruct a broad enough range of dynamics or colour. It is clear that the 'wooden fingers' of the Welte-Mignon were incapable of capturing the subtleties of Debussy's touch.

Beyond the question of technical adjustments there are other performance factors that cannot be recreated. Every piano is different and a pianist will always adjust to the instrument at hand. Pianists have to be particularly pliable in this regard since they play on so many different instruments. The piano used in the original recording in its original condition can never be fully restored. But we can find an instrument of the same make and period, with similar sound characteristics to the original. In modern transfers of piano rolls, a modern piano is often used; some would find this problematic due to the substantial differences between our pianos and those of eighty or more years ago.¹²⁶ Pianists will always adjust to another important factor; the acoustical environment of the original room. It seems unlikely that this could ever be reconstructed.

¹²⁵ See Chapter 3.

¹²⁶ See discussion on pianos in Chapter 1.

In this respect, the most recently released transfer of the Debussy rolls onto CD gives the best possible account of the rolls, given present resources.¹²⁷ This CD was produced in Austin, Texas by Kenneth Caswell, a well-known collector of piano rolls. The recording took place in his home where he used a carefully restored 1923 Feurich Welte piano. Caswell believes that the recording method he followed by recording directly from the Welte roll played on a Welte piano, achieves the most accurate reproduction of an artist's playing. Following its release, this CD received good reviews not only from Roy Howat: 'This remarkable recording bears witness to the composer's keen and highly personal artistic style.'¹²⁸ I was fortunate enough to find that among the many different makes of reproducing pianos held in Denis Condon's collection in Sydney, he also possessed a Welte Steinway on which I could listen to the Debussy piano rolls in Red T-100 format.¹²⁹ The rest of the Debussy rolls in Condon's collection were under the Licensee format and I played them on a Steinway B grand.¹³⁰ Condon makes every effort to ensure that all pianos in his collection are carefully adjusted and preserved, as they are often used for concerts of piano roll performances in his house.

The pedalling mechanism in the Welte-Mignon mechanism presents us with yet another shortcoming; although it could indicate precisely just when the damper and *una corda* pedals were on or off, it could not register though the exact degree the damper pedal was pressed or released. Furthermore, a successful reproduction of how the artist played depended on how decisively he/she played in terms of touch and pedalling. This is because the Welte mechanism operates in a binary way; first, by identifying each note and pedal as either up or down at any moment and second, by

¹²⁷ *Claude Debussy – The Composer as Pianist – All his Known Recordings*. Pierian Records (512) 327 5443.

¹²⁸ Howat, 'Review', *The Pianola Journal* 13 (2000), 37-44.

¹²⁹ Rolls No. 2738 and 2739.

¹³⁰ Rolls No: 2733, 2735 and 2736.

identifying dynamics as either static, increasing or decreasing. In that way, a pianist who played with a very decisive touch and pedalling can be well reproduced without much difficulty; many of Welte's recordings of virtuosi attest to this. However, if a pianist's touch plays with subtle half-tints, half-pedalling, and all sorts of voicing within parts and chords responding to the inner balance points of the action, the rolls cannot capture these details. This was the sort of playing that Debussy was remembered for; a pianist whose individual technique lay in the gentleness extracted through a 'continuous pressure' of touch,¹³¹ uninterested in velocity or cold clarity *per se*, and who preferred to explore all shades of colour and nuance in a piano, as his music does. Even if replayed on the instrument originally used for the recording (which is long gone), such nuanced playing must have been missed by such a recording mechanism because it played constantly on its binary dividing points. These are probably the reasons why those who remembered Debussy's playing were disappointed by the rolls. Mme de Tinan claimed that only the roll of 'La soirée dans Grenade' came near the subtlety she could remember from his playing.

The simplistic pedalling of the Welte-Mignon could hardly have captured Debussy's technique of half, quarter, flutter, or indeed any level of depressing the pedal. However, despite the primitive pedal operation in the Welte recording system, we can still extract some important information about Debussy's pedalling. What appears to be most frequently the case in Debussy's use of the pedal in these rolls, is that he seems to hold a single pedal for several bars or even for a succession of many different harmonies. As can be seen from the my transcription in Appendix 2, this happens so often and in so many different pieces, that it could lead us to believe that Debussy either habitually forgot to lift his foot, or aimed at a blurred effect as often as

¹³¹ Marguerite Long, in Roger Nichols, *Debussy Remembered* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 172-179.

he could. Examples of passages in this category include: 'La vent dans la plaine' bb. 21-23, 24-26, 29-34, 35-41, 44-59 (p.208-214), 'La Cathédrale engloutie' bb. 16-21, 22-27, 28-39, 40-47, 55-59 (p.195-200), 'La danse de Puck' bb. 11-15, 33-37, 38-44, 49-52, 57-60, 63-66, 79-86 (p.201-206), *La plus que lente* bb. 29, 68-71, 104-110 (p.186-191), *D'un cahier d'esquisses* bb. 47-49 (p.170-175), 'Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum' bb. 57-61, 62-64, 67-72 (p.139-144), 'Serenade for the Doll' bb. 24-28 (p.149-154).

Given the dynamic marking and the register of the piano indicated in these passages, keeping a fully depressed pedal throughout would result in an unbearable blur. Thus, Debussy's long-held pedals registered in the Welte mechanism as foot-down/foot-up should be interpreted as either half, vibrating or a partial depress of the pedal. This is also the case in passages containing different harmonies registered under one pedal, where a quick change of a half-pedalling type would have been more appropriate. These include: 'Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum' bb. 4-6 (p.139), 'The snow is dancing' bb. 34-36 (p.158), 'Golliwogg's cake walk' bb.71-72 (p.166), 'Soirée dans Grenade' bb. 130-131 (p.184), 'Minstrels' bb. 26-27, 69-71 (p.216, 218). Interestingly enough, in b. 131 of 'La Soirée dans Grenade', Debussy actually 'disobeys' his own marking in the score for a change and maintains the same pedal from the previous bar. One would think that since in b. 131 there is a new harmony, a pedal change would have been necessary. However, if Debussy made a small or quick change (suitable for this passage, where the bass is kept the same), Welte's mechanism would have failed once again to capture this movement.

These examples suggest that even though we may not be supplied with the correct information as to when Debussy may have applied a half, flutter or vibrating pedal, we can still learn how often he did use it. Perhaps he would have applied the pedal

differently on another occasion or in another recording studio, with a different piano. But given his interest in a sonorous and vibrating sound, as discussed in previous chapters, it is unlikely he would have abandoned this primary aim during the Welte recordings.

As Welte's system was unable to register the many different pedalling techniques known to Debussy, in the same way it may also have misinterpreted the half-pedalling applied in some passages as a full change of pedal. A fast and deep movement of the foot linked with the half pedalling technique would be appropriate for passages where a low bass note or octave needs to be maintained while other harmonies of a higher register move above. It is very possible that this is what Debussy had chosen to do in the following places: 'Doctor Gradus as Parnassum' bb. 43-44 (p.142), *D'un cahier d'esquisses* bb. 10, 23-28 (p.170-172), 'Soirée dans Grenade' b. 95 (p.182), 'Danseuses de Delphes' bb. 4, 9, 12, 14 (p.193-194), 'La Cathédrale engloutie' bb. 13, 40, 52, 54 (p.196-198), *La plus que lente*, bb. 61, 62, 65 (p.188).

Bars 4, 9, 12 and 14 of 'Danseuses de Delphes', further confirm the view that half-pedalling was misinterpreted by the recording machine as a full change of pedal. The score requires that the bass is maintained for its full value until the end of the bar, while chords of different harmonies move above. The only way to avoid an unpleasant blur would be to make some half pedal changes on the way before reaching the end of the bar. Therefore, if Debussy was making full changes on each of these chords, as the Welte mechanism has registered, the sound in the bass would have been lost very early. Furthermore, the inconsistency with which Debussy makes pedal changes in these four bars of a similar texture confirms that half-pedalling was used by Debussy but always misinterpreted by Welte's mechanism as a full change.

A further amplification of this point is that Debussy may have used half-pedalling more often than the clear, full change, as registered by Welte. This fact in itself would confirm once again his quest to extract a sustained and sonorous sound from the piano. Further examples with passages of similar texture where an inconsistency in the use of the pedal appears can be found in 'Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum' bb. 1-11 compared to bb. 45-55, 17-18/19-20 (p.139-144), 'Serenade for the Doll' bb. 14-16/17-19 (p.149-154), 'Golliwogg's cake walk' bb. 9-13/18-21/98-101 (p.163-168), 'Soirée dans Grenade' bb. 109-112/115-118 (p.177-184), 'La vent dans la plaine' bb.3-4/15-16/19-20 (p.208-214).

The function of the *una corda* is usually thought to help the performer play more softly. It can also be used to enhance the mellowness of the sound and to eliminate any percussiveness in the tone quality, thus creating colour. This can be explained by a description of its mechanism in a grand piano; as the *una corda* is depressed, the entire set of hammers shifts slightly to the right, so that on the majority of notes, two instead of three strings are struck. Although the quantity of sound is reduced, the tone quality is also altered by the reduced impact of the hammer because it strikes with a softer part of its surface. Equally important is the light vibration in the unused string, which results from this action. The creation of partials adds a veiled tone to the overall sonority. This description of a mellow and non-percussive sound that is created through the application of the *una corda*, matches very well with Debussy's preference for the kind of sound as described in earlier chapters. It is of no surprise therefore, that he used the *una corda* in his own performances for the Welte system.

However, Debussy's general *una corda* technique is thought impossible to determine without much information concerning the tonal properties of the pianos

with which he worked. Many soft pedals on today's pianos change or muffle the tone, thus excluding a richness of sound. Because Debussy's sound ideal involved a resonant sonority in soft passages,¹³² this covered sound should be used with care. However, the Pleyel and Érard pianos that were prevalent in France at the time had a soft pedal mechanism that modified the tone without dulling the quality, which allowed Debussy to have employed the *una corda* as frequently as he did, without sacrificing a resonant sonority at the same time.¹³³

Debussy's affinity with the *una corda* can be further explained when we look back to his education where a special link with Chopin can be found. His fondness for Chopin's music can be traced back in 1871, when the nine-year-old Debussy received his piano lessons from Mme de Fleurville, an early Chopin student. While her claim has never been proved (or disproved), Debussy appeared to accept it, when referring to her in his letter of 1915 to his publisher, Durand (cited in Chapter 3).¹³⁴ Even more important to this respect was Debussy's teacher, Antoine Marmontel. His association with Debussy spanned a much longer period during Debussy's studies at the Paris Conservatoire. Although not a Chopin pupil, Marmontel was enormously influenced by having heard Chopin play. As well as publishing four volumes of selected works by Chopin (*Oeuvres Choiesies*) as part of his *Ecole Classique du Piano*,¹³⁵ he owned the famous portrait of the composer by Delacroix (later bequeathed to the Louvre by Marmontel's son, Antonin).

As described by Debussy's fellow students at the Conservatoire, his musical education had been based mainly on nineteenth-century piano repertoire. Paul Vidal had said that 'Debussy's tastes were largely formed by the repertoire of Marmontel's

¹³² Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Debussy* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1972), 13.

¹³³ Tollefson, 'Debussy's Pedalling', 22 (see also Chapter 1).

¹³⁴ Letter to Jacques Durand, in Debussy, *Letters* trans. Roger Nichols (London: Faber & Faber, 1987), 301-2.

¹³⁵ Antoine-François Marmontel, *Ecole Classique du Piano* (Paris: Heugel, 1859).

class; there was considerable emphasis on the music of Chopin and Schumann, for whom Debussy had a special affection and a great deal of Alkan and Heller was also played'.¹³⁶ This testimony was complimented with one by Raymond Bonheur, who said that 'it was only when he [Debussy] had the opportunity to study their works in his piano classes that he came into contact with the great Romantics who were to be his real initiators into music; Schumann, Liszt and Chopin – and particularly Chopin, who left an indelible imprint on him'.¹³⁷ As registered in the Conservatoire's archives, among the twenty-three compositions that Debussy played during his years in Marmontel's class, by far the greatest number – seven – were by Chopin.¹³⁸ This information may reflect either Debussy's enthusiasm of Chopin's piano music or the esteem in which his music was held by Marmontel, or possibly both. Either way, given that Debussy was virtually immersed in the music of Chopin during his years at the class, it seems logical that he would have drawn from this prolonged contact with the Polish master a deep and lasting formative influence.

Furthermore, it seems that Marmontel knew most of the pianists of his time; comments on their playing can be found in his books *Les Pianistes Célèbres* and *Virtuoses Contemporains*.¹³⁹ We may guess the effect on the adolescent Debussy of a piano teacher in the late 1870s and early 1880s who went on to publish the following lines in 1878:

No pianist before [Chopin] employed the pedals alternately or simultaneously with so much tact and skill. With most modern virtuosos, excessive, continuous use of the pedal is a capital defect, producing sonorities eventually tiring and irritating to the delicate ear. Chopin, on the contrary, while making constant use of the pedal, obtained ravishing harmonies, melodic whispers that charmed and astonished [...] and to envelop melodic phrases and ingenious

¹³⁶ Paul Vidal, in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 96-7.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ John R. Clevenger, 'Debussy's Paris Conservatoire Training', in Jane F. Fulcher ed., *Debussy and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 299-361.

¹³⁹ Antoine-François Marmontel, *Les Pianistes Célèbres* (Paris: A. Chaix, 1878) and *Virtuoses Contemporains* (Paris: Heugel, 1882).

arabesques in a half-tint, has something of both dream and reality: this is the pinnacle of art; and this was Chopin's art.¹⁴⁰

It appears from Marmontel's accounts that Chopin made frequent, highly diversified and refined use of both pedals and that he resorted to the use of the *una corda* not merely to soften the sound but also for its quality of timbre. As far as we can tell from accounts by other people that knew Debussy, like Marguerite Long, Chopin's use of the pedal set an example for Debussy, who took particular pleasure in what he called 'l'alchimie sonore':

Like Chopin, too, Debussy had a preoccupation with the role of the pedal, and wrote on the subject to his publisher [Jacques Durand], who remembers the dazzling use Debussy made of it, especially in mixing and contrasting the *ff* and *pp* pedals.¹⁴¹

Long, who studied with Debussy in 1914 and 1917, is considered to be a very good source of information on the composer's expectations and interests in piano sonority. She frequently mentioned the profound influence of Chopin on Debussy's playing, as when she was recounting her intensive work with him:

Chopin, above all, was a subject he never tired of. He was impregnated, almost inhabited, by his pianism. His own playing was an exploration of all he felt were the procedures of that master to us all ... [Debussy] played nearly always in half-tints, but with a full, intense sonority without any hardness of attack, like Chopin, and was preoccupied by the latter's phrasing ... Chopin is the greatest of them all, [Debussy] used to say, - for through the piano alone he discovered everything.¹⁴²

There is also an important account of the connection between Debussy and Chopin by Alfredo Cassela, who had also studied at the Conservatoire at the same time as Debussy:

It is one of the happiest and lively memories of my artistic life to have heard Debussy play a number of Chopin's pieces, Chopin being a composer of his particular predilection and one whose every secret he marvellously divined. Until he informed me of this fact one day I was utterly unaware that in his youth he had worked long at the pianoforte with a pupil of Chopin's and he

¹⁴⁰ Marmontel, *Les Pianistes Célèbres*, 67.

¹⁴¹ Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, 25-26.

¹⁴² Ibid.

explained to me how considerable a part this instruction had played in his musical formation, not only as a pianist but also as a creator.¹⁴³

All above information re-affirms that the influences stemming from Debussy's education (including his experiences and encounters with other composers and performers) contributed to the formation of his sound ideals. More importantly, Marmontel's admiration of Chopin's playing resulted in Debussy inheriting Chopin's tradition in the quest for new sonorities in piano playing, possible through the combined use of both pedals.

Debussy's use of the *una corda* pedal in the Welte piano roll recordings was as generous as his application of the damper pedal; in the fourteen pieces he recorded for Welte, the *una corda* is used not only in soft passages, but also in loud, as well as in passages of a similar texture, in order to create contrast. The passages indicated *forte* or *sforzando*, where Debussy applies the *una corda*, are: 'Serenade for the Doll' bb. 8, 12-23 (p.149-150), *D'un cahier d'esquisses* b. 37 (p.173), 'Soirée dans Grenade' b. 84 (p.181), *La plus que lente* b. 66 (p.188), 'La Danse du Puck' bb. 12, 53, 79 (p.201, 204, 206), 'La vent dans la plaine' b. 13 (p.209), 'Minstrels' bb. 18, 46, 58 (p.215, 217). Debussy also applies the *una corda* for the special colour it can create. This is mostly effective in passages of a similar texture, where a contrast in sound can be created. These passages include: 'Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum' bb. 28/29 (p.141), 52/53/54 (p.143), 'Serenade for the Doll' bb. 90-91/92 (p.153), 'The little Shepherd' bb. 3/4 (p.161), 'Golliwogg's cake walk' bb. 111/112 (p.168), *D'un cahier d'esquisses* bb. 25/26 (p.172), 'La Soirée dans Grenade' bb. 35/36 (p.178-179), *La plus que lente* bb. 78/79/80 (p.189), 'La danse du Puck' bb. 77/78 (p.205), 'Minstrels' bb. 45/46/47, 83/84/85 (p.217, 218).

¹⁴³ Alfredo Cassela, in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, 12.

It is interesting to note at this point that in the 'Serenade for the Doll', although Debussy has given an indication himself for the *una corda* to be applied throughout the piece ('even in loud passages'),¹⁴⁴ he actually releases it in some places during his own performance (bb. 24, 51, 53, 76, 90, 105, 111, p.149-154). This should not necessarily be interpreted as an unfaithful approach on the part of Debussy towards his own indications. Perhaps he was trying to compensate for a piano that had a dull sound and he needed more brightness in these passages, most of which have a loud dynamic. In the same way, in 'Jumbo's Lullaby', Debussy decided to follow his own indication for the application of the *una corda*, which corresponds to a *pianissimo* passage (bb. 9-14, p.145). In any case, we should try to keep in mind Debussy's statement that the pedal cannot be written down and that everyone has to 'trust their own ear' before making decisions about pedalling.¹⁴⁵

Although Debussy's music requires an extensive use of the two pedals, there is no indication that he composed with the third, *sostenuto* pedal in mind. The *sostenuto* pedal can sustain bass notes through changing harmonies in such a way that damper pedal changes can take place more frequently. Employing this pedal also allows certain selected sounds to continue while leaving the hands free to play elsewhere. The capabilities of the *sostenuto* pedal make it seem like an easy solution to certain pedalling problems. However, Debussy achieved all of his pedal effects without the assistance of this pedal. In his music, using all of the pedals may require to operate both the *sostenuto* and *una corda* pedals with the left foot. The best reason for not using the *sostenuto* pedal is the resulting tone quality; the difference between using the *sostenuto* pedal and using only the damper pedal to sustain harmonies is that the

¹⁴⁴ Bottom of the first page in the score.

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter 3.

latter allows for a much richer sonority. Although the controversial use of the *sostenuto* pedal still needs to be explored, my opinion is that the desired sustaining effects can be produced by using the damper pedal alone.

As we have seen, Debussy's performances in piano roll recordings provide us with precious insights that cannot be gained simply by studying his scores. In particular, the combined use of both pedals proves to be a major ingredient in Debussy's performance style and the extent to which he used them in these recordings shows that pedalling is an important element in the performance of his piano music. However, the specific passages presented in this chapter where Debussy is found to apply the damper or *una corda* pedals in these recordings should not be imitated in performance. Any mention of Debussy's use of the pedals is not meant to be used as a guide for pedalling his music; it is rather presented here as a source which further confirms not just the frequency, but also the importance Debussy attributed to the pedals in his own performances.

Despite the limitations of the mechanism, the data contained in the Welte-Mignon piano rolls is directly pertinent to the interpretation of Debussy's music. Because the information that they supply is not found in any other source, these rolls become valuable to any researcher of performance practice. In relation to the topic of this dissertation in particular, Debussy's registered use of the pedals is not only a starting point for confirming his preferences in the production of piano sound; it also forms the basis for a cross examination of all other sources that further confirm his interest in a continuous sonority.

CHAPTER 5

Debussy's Scores: Indications for Pedalling

Apart from Debussy's recordings of some of his own works and the many comments about his preferences on pedalling techniques a further category of evidence also pertains to pedalling in his work; the notation and performance instructions in his scores which often indirectly dictate the need for pedalling. From the more abstract sources of information presented in previous chapters, we are now led in this chapter to the most obvious source of information about pedalling decisions in Debussy: the scores. The present chapter introduces a concluding 'case study', which asks whether Debussy's use of the pedals in the Welte recordings (alongside his preferences in piano sound as presented in previous chapters) can also be confirmed through the directions and the specific notation the composer employs in his scores.

Although Debussy marked traditional pedalling indications in only nine places throughout his entire piano *oeuvre*, there is evidence that he was concerned with pedalled sonority. In the following statement, we can see that he recognised the dangers of over-pedalling: 'The simple truth is, perhaps, that the abuse of the pedal is only a means of covering up a lack of technique, and it is also useful in making a great deal of noise, thus preventing people from realising how the music is massacred.'¹⁴⁶ However, many of Debussy's musical goals can be realised only through the use of the damper pedal. For example, his interest in the evocative possibilities of the piano was often manifest in suggestions of natural elements such

¹⁴⁶ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 46.

as wind, water and fog. Such figurative patterns need the richness of the damper pedal to be successful.¹⁴⁷ According to Paul Roberts, the art of 'suggestion' in Debussy's music is related to Symbolism and it is through the piano's capacity for blending and blurring sounds via the assistance of the damper pedal that any illusion of a sustained sonority can be created. With the exploitation of overtones achieved through the constant use of the damper pedal, the sounds then acquire an almost physical presence (although, as Roberts clarifies, 'it is rarely held down for long stretches').¹⁴⁸ Also, many of Debussy's terms, such as '*sonore*' or '*armonioso*' often imply a pedalled tone quality. For example, in the *Etude* 'Pour les agréments' the term *dolce sonoro* in b. 17 is indicated in the lower system where the melody is introduced in the left hand. Because the required *legato* here (indicated by the slurred melody) is not possible by fingers alone, the pedal should be applied to assist in this direction. Another example where terminology implies the use of the pedal can be found in b. 58 of 'Pour les notes répétées' where the term *armonioso* is introduced in order to differentiate between the *portato* in the right hand requiring a more sustained sound and the *staccato* character of the preceding bars.

Although Debussy chose not to develop a new system of pedal notation or to work with the old one, he did however employ a few notational devices. For example, the long note values which are used for certain textural elements and pedal tones, are interpreted as pedal markings. In addition, his texture is often made up of widely spaced layers of sound that require the use of the pedal to sustain the separate lines involved. These notational devices, alongside the musical terms indirectly referring to a sustained and sonorous sound, are what I call implicit indications for pedalling in

¹⁴⁷ Maurice Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy* (New York: Schroeder & Gunther Inc., 1932), 12.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Roberts, *Images, The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 30-33.

Debussy. In this category, belong terms such as *laissez vibrer* (let vibrate), which indicates that a sound should be sustained with the pedal. The term appears for example, in the last B flat in 'Le vent dans la plaine' (p.214). In 'Les Collines d'Anacapri', b. 2 and 4 (Ex. 10, p.121), the sonority should be sustained while the hands lift from the keyboard, as described by the instruction *quittez, en laissant vibrer* (release, letting it vibrate). Debussy also employs slurs to indicate the sustaining of sound by means of the pedal. In Ex. 10, slurs are found to be used in conjunction with *laissez vibrer* to picture graphically notes that are extended beyond their nominal value. Another characteristic effect achieved through the employment of the slurs, is when Debussy indicates to hold one level of sound through another, as in 'Pour les accords' (Ex. 11 / bb.93-94, p.121). But before going into forming a complete list of the implicit indications for pedalling in Debussy's piano music, we should single out the explicit ones, since they are much fewer in number.

1. Explicit Indications for Pedalling

Out of the nine recognisable indications for pedalling that Debussy gives in his piano music, there are only three conventional pedal markings found in the *Préludes* ('Voiles' and 'Brouillards') and one in the *Etudes* ('Pour les Octaves'). These indications do not reflect his general pedalling technique but, like Beethoven's pedalling markings, are used for exceptional effect.

In 'Voiles', the last three bars are marked to be pedalled throughout (Ex. 12 / bb.62-64, p.122). Many famous performers of Debussy's music do not observe this instruction. They choose to clarify the rhythmic traits by changes of pedal on the notes which descend by major seconds. However, the pedalled whole-tone scale is not

obtrusive if the pianist plays very lightly and decrescendos during the ascending scale. The resulting tone quality has an appropriately veiled and misty sound.

The next two examples of conventional pedal markings in the *Préludes* occur in 'Brouillards'. The pedal is used for a sustained F sharp melody note to clarify the need for retaining the melodic interest in the right hand as the left-hand triads begin to move (Ex. 13 / bb.14-15, p.122). Because too much sound held by the pedal will cover the sustained melodic note, the pianist must play the accompanying material softly. If the sound becomes too thick, the pedal should be slightly lifted in b. 15. The next pedal marking in 'Brouillards' produces three changes in tone quality (Ex. 14 / bb.41-42, p.123). The left-hand melody under a sustained right-hand chord, remains dry until the final E of the bar. This note is pedalled and tied into the next bar where it becomes a part of the sustained chord. A new line consisting of an E one octave lower which then descends to C, completes the melody. The pedal is changed on the last note to clear the sonority and emphasise the melodic significance of the line.

Regarding the *una corda*, Debussy explicitly calls for it in several compositions. He indicates for example, that it be used throughout the 'Serenade for the Doll', even in the forte passages (p.149). Also, several *Préludes* and *Etudes* include instructions that suggest its use. 'La sérénade interrompue' contains an introductory passage of repetitive semiquavers (Ex. 15 / bb.25-31, p.123) which is coloured by the instruction for the use of both pedals (*les deux pédales*). Debussy also marks the constant use of the soft pedal in 'Pour les octaves'; the beginning of the section in b. 49 is indicated *con sordino* (with mute, that is, *una corda*). At b. 59 the instruction is *gardez la sourdine, la pédale forte sur chaque temps* (keep the *una corda* and the damper pedal in use for each beat). A new section beginning in b. 68 is more agitated (as indicated by *sourdement tumultueux*) but still retains the *una corda*. The need for an extensive

use of the pedals in this *Etude* is further confirmed with the only conventional indication for pedalling found in the whole of the *Etudes* (Ex. 16 / bb.64-67, p.124).¹⁴⁹

All in all, the complete list of explicit pedalling indications in Debussy's piano music, is as follows:

1. *Etude* 'Pour les octaves' bb. 79-82
2. *Prélude* 'Voiles' bb. 62-64
3. *Prélude* 'Brouillards' bb. 14-15, 41-42
4. *Children's Corner* 'Jumbo's Lullaby' bb. 9-14, 'Serenade for the Doll' bb. 121-123
5. *Estampes* 'Pagodes' b. 1, bb. 11-14, 27-31, 'La soirée dans Grenade' b. 130, 131, 132, 133-136, 'Jardins sous la pluie' bb. 155-157
6. *Masques* bb. 174-177, 194-197, 198-201

There are also some explicit indications for pedalling (or for not pedalling), given by the composer in a descriptive way. These are:

1. *Con sordina* (with the *una corda*), in 'Pour les octaves' b. 49, 'Clair de lune' b.1 and 'Mazurka' b. 46
2. *Garder la sourdine, la pédale forte sur chaque temps* (hold down the *una corda* and change the damper pedal on each beat), in 'Pour les octaves' b. 59
3. *Il faut mettre la pédale sourde pendant toute la durée de ce morceau, même aux endroits marqués d'un f* (use the *una corda* throughout the piece, even in passages marked *forte*), in 'Serenade for the Doll' b. 1
5. *Les deux pédales* (apply both pedals), in 'La sérénade interrompue' b. 25

¹⁴⁹ Another amplification emerging from the above examples, is the confirmation that Debussy was aware of the tonal effects accomplished through the combined use of the damper and *una corda* pedals (see Chapter 4).

Regarding the few indications for pedalling mentioned above, it is interesting to note that these were not marked in the autograph manuscript but were added later by Debussy either in the first edition or the corrected reprints of the corresponding pieces. More specifically, the pedalling indications in *Masques*, 'Jardins sur la pluie' and 'Jumbo's Lullaby' are missing from the autograph manuscript. In 'La soirée dans Grenade' the indications for pedalling are marked on the manuscript with red ink in contrast with the rest of the music marked in black ink, suggesting a later annotation by the composer. In 'Voiles', the pedalling indication appears only in the first edition and all later reprints.¹⁵⁰ The later addition of pedalling markings does not necessarily suggest that the corresponding passages marked by Debussy to be pedalled are in need of special consideration. It seems that some external factors that had occurred in the time between the completion of the autograph manuscript and the first edition may have led Debussy to decide to make these annotations. These factors are most likely to be related to the occasion of a performance of these pieces by another pianist (pupil or colleague), where Debussy had to underline the importance of that passage to be pedalled, by marking its use on the copy of the score at hand.¹⁵¹ Therefore, these indications should not be interpreted as a general guideline for pedalling Debussy's piano music. More importantly, their existence should not imply the use or non-use of the pedal in other passages of a similar or different texture; they should only be treated as additional information for making pedalling decisions alongside the implicit indications for pedalling given by Debussy, to be examined below.

¹⁵⁰ Claude Debussy, *Oeuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy*, ed. Roy Howat (Paris: Durand-Costallat, 1985 -).

¹⁵¹ See Critical Notes in *Oeuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy*.

2. Implicit Pedalling Indications

It is the implicit indications for pedalling found in Debussy's music scores that are the most interesting. These can be discussed under three main categories:

- a) Articulation markings
- b) Terminology directly referring to type or quality of sound. This category is divided into two sub-categories: a) sustained sound and b) short/clear sound
- c) Notation (bass notes, ties off-bass notes and slurs through bar-lines).

a) Articulation markings

Debussy's innovative approach to articulation extended the contemporary idea of piano sonority. Not only did he use conventional markings (i.e. *tenuto*, *portato*, etc.) with more frequency than his predecessors, but also his reasons for using these articulations are often different from those of his contemporaries. He sometimes marks every note with an articulation and employs individual and combined touches to single out phrases and to produce specific textural sounds. The articulations deal strictly with keystroke and are used at any dynamic level. The elements which are varied include the speed of attack and release, the weight of attack, the colouring provided by the pedal and the type of note connection.

As seen earlier in this dissertation, the influence of the gamelan on Debussy resulted in the employment of articulation markings to differentiate the simultaneous sounding of many layers of sound. Subsequently, many of Debussy's tonal preferences are revealed through his articulation markings. A study of these articulations and a survey of written comments about the markings should help the performer understand why they were employed and how they ought to be executed. A

complete list of articulation markings employed by Debussy is shown in Tables I and II.

TABLE I
SINGLE ARTICULATIONS

Term	Sign
Tenuto	—
Portato	
Staccato	..
Accent 1	>
Accent 2	^

TABLE II
COMBINED ARTICULATIONS

Term	Sign
Tenuto and Staccato	—.
Accent 1 and Tenuto	>—
Accent 1 and Staccato	>..
Accent 2 and Tenuto	^—
Accent 2 and Staccato	^..

1. The *tenuto*

Debussy often writes a *tenuto* over or below a note. Marguerite Long's explanation of this sign is: 'According to Louis Laloy, a magnificent interpreter of Debussy, what is intended is a transparent sonority. In my opinion, this particular mark signifies 'attack', 'weight' or 'change of sonority', according to the piece in which it occurs'.¹⁵² As seen earlier in my chapter about the 'gamelan', Louis Laloy had clearly stated that the *tenuto* should in all cases be accompanied by the application of the pedal.¹⁵³

The *tenuto* often marks vertical sonorities or pedal tones, all the notes of a phrase, or certain notes within a melody. Vertical sonorities marked with this sign need a clear, penetrating sound. Notes with larger rhythmic value require more volume to carry the sonority for the prescribed time. The chords in 'Pour les sonorités opposées' (Ex. 17 / bb.9-12, p.124) and the fifths in 'Ondine' (Ex. 18 / bb.44-45, p.124) need a resonant sound produced by more volume. Pedal tones marked with a *tenuto* also require this tone quality. In 'Voiles' bb. 48-49 (Ex. 19 / bb.49-51, p.125), a bass pedal tone in need of this sound is distinguished with *tenuto*, while in 'Pour les sonorités opposées' a treble pedal tone requiring a similar *timbre* can be found (Ex. 20 / bb.1-3, p.125).

The *tenuto* is sometimes used for all the notes of a melody, indicating that it should be brought out. These notes need a clear and resonant sound to distinguish them from the rest of the texture. A *tenuto* may also be employed for melodic lines at various dynamic levels. At the beginning of 'Hommage à Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.', a *forte* melody in the bass register is marked *tenuto* (Ex. 21 / bb.1-4, p.125). In this

¹⁵² Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Debussy* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972), 20.

¹⁵³ See footnote 43, p.22.

composition, increased resonance is also indicated by the term *sonore*. The *tenuto* is then used for the 'Marseillaise' fragment in 'Feux d'artifice' (Ex. 22 / bb.90-93, p.125) which is marked *pianissimo* and *de très loin* and also in 'Voiles', to mark a melody which is surrounded by a texture consisting of three additional layers (Ex. 23 / bb.33-35, p.126).

Debussy often employs the *tenuto* to indicate the stressed notes within a phrase. These may occur in metrically weak positions such as the anacrusis and last note of a phrase. Because stressing rhythmically weak notes often results in agogic accents, the *tenuto* found in these places will sometimes involve a lengthening of the beat. In 'Pour les arpèges composés' (Ex. 24 / b.16, p.126), the anacrusis will have more volume and perhaps a longer note value, while in 'Feux d'artifice' (Ex. 25 / bb.50-51, p.126) the last note of the motive will be louder and longer. In 'Canope', two high points of a phrase are indicated (Ex. 26 bb.9-10, p.126); the first note is stressed, then the line marked with lighter *staccato* notes continues to the second quaver of b. 10, which should be slightly louder and perhaps lengthened.

From the previous discussion, it becomes clear that the execution of this articulation marking depends on the musical context as far as the length of the note involved and the amount of volume necessary are concerned. Also, given that the *tenuto* always involves weight, it will result in more volume and resonance. When executed properly, material marked with *tenuto* will have the correct sonority, melodic lines will be fuller, long notes will last for the required time and notes within a phrase will be heard as high points.¹⁵⁴

If we were to consider the terms 'attack' and 'weight', used by Long to describe the technique of playing a *tenuto*, it appears that a direct finger stroke with an

¹⁵⁴ Howard Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 161-8.

appropriate amount of weight should be used. Whether these notes are held by the hand or the pedal depends upon the context. On the other hand, if we were to follow Laloy's instructions, it would seem correct to play and release the longer vertical sonorities sustaining them with the pedal and to connect the melodic lines with legato fingering.

2. The *portato*

Portato articulations are frequently used throughout Debussy's piano compositions. The meaning of this sign was discussed by his student, Dumesnil.¹⁵⁵ His view on the execution of this articulation is illustrated in Figure 2 (p.127). Dumesnil states that this stroke involves a flexible and sensitive touch. If his opinion is correct, we could consider that what Debussy expected here, was a slow attack and slow release.¹⁵⁶ Because the hand will lift away from the keyboard, all legato passages using *portato* would have to be connected by the pedal. This would be the case, for instance, in Ex. 27 and Ex. 28 (p.127). The resulting tone will have a resonant, airy quality that contrasts with the clearer, more weighty sound of notes marked with *tenuto* or the shorter, more pointed sound of *staccato*.

Debussy used *portato* for a variety of accompaniments, for complete melodies and for notes within a phrase. The special timbre created by this key attack contributes to textural clarity and phrase nuances. Accompaniments made of chords, single lines, and *ostinato*, are usually marked with *portato*. In 'Ondine' for example (Ex. 29 / bb.38-39, p.127), a *portato* chordal accompaniment contrasts with a slurred melody played with a direct keystroke and a *staccato* alto line. A similar tonal differentiation

¹⁵⁵ Maurice Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy* (New York: Schroeder & Gunther Inc., 1932).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

of layers occurs in 'Danseuses de Delphes' (Ex. 30 / bb.1-2, p.128), in which Debussy surrounds a *legato* melody in an inner voice with a *portato* chordal accompaniment. *Ostinato* accompaniments marked with *portato* are found in various ranges in Debussy's piano music. A high-register *ostinato* marked with *portato* is also found in 'Feuilles mortes' (Ex. 31 / bb.12-14, p.128). The *portato* attack here contrasts with the chords marked with *tenuto* and with the *staccato* bass pedal.

The *portato* may be used for high-pitched melodic material consisting of blocks of chords. The airy sound produced by this keystroke is effective, for example, for the high notes in 'Feux d'artifice' (Ex. 32 / 57-59, p.128). This timbre is contrasted with an arpeggiated accompaniment marked with slurs and with the low G sharp pedal tones marked *tenuto*. Another example of this kind is found in 'Le vent dans la plaine' (Ex. 33 / bb.9-12, p.129) which includes a soft chordal passage marked *portato*.

Debussy will also use the *portato* in anacruses, ends of phrases or slurs, and unstressed notes within a phrase. An example of a *portato* up-beat is found in 'Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses' (Ex. 34 / b.9, p.129), in which the two-note anacrusis is marked in this manner. In 'Pour les sixtes', bb. 40-41 (Ex. 35, p.129), the softer last note of each slur is marked with this articulation. An example of *portato* used for unstressed notes of a melody occurs in the first bar of 'La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune' (Ex. 36 / b.1, p.129). These *portato* melodic notes lead to a stressed chord marked with *tenuto*.

There is also the case where *portato* is found at the ends of several compositions because the light tone produced by an indirect keystroke is complementary to a gradually decreasing volume. In the last three bars of 'Des pas sur la neige' (Ex. 37 / bb.34-36, p.130), a descending line marked *portato* gradually fades into a final chord marked *ppp*. In 'Canope', a blending of two layers of sounds takes place at the end of

the piece (Ex. 38 / b.32-33, p.130). The last three notes are *portato* and will eventually fade into a decreasing sonority of a sustained chord that was played on the first beat of b. 32.

The examples which have been discussed have a *legato* character achieved through the use of the pedal. In compositions with more of a *staccato* character, breaks may occur between the *portato* notes. For example, because of the *staccato* character of 'Minstrels' which extends to a *portato* articulation, the relevant passages in this piece should be unpedalled and dry in sonority (Ex. 39 / bb.37-38, p.130). The mood of this passage indicated *moquer*, will necessitate the use of more weight and a quicker key attack to create a more pointed sound, suited to this particular mood.

If Dumesnil's diagram for an indirect keystroke is applicable to *portato* (Figure 2), the sign should be interpreted to produce a tone quality that is usually lighter and more evanescent than the *tenuto*. The pedal ought to be used to add resonance and connect the notes of *portato* passages. An exception to this is found in faster *staccato* passages where the *portato* may have a more pointed sound and breaks between the notes. Because this articulation is found in loud as well as in soft passages, the performer must vary the amount of weight and speed of keystroke while maintaining an indirect key attack.

3. The *staccato*

Debussy employs the *staccato* for various articulations ranging from a slow, indirect attack and release, to a fast, direct attack and release. Dumesnil cites a slow passage containing *staccato* in 'Danseuses de Delphes' (Ex. 40 / bb.11-12, p.130) as one which should also be played with an 'indirect, caressing' attack. Considering the slow *tempo* of this piece, the slow keystroke which he suggests for these bars is the

same as that recommended for passages indicated *portato*.¹⁵⁷ The use for this type of attack is rare. The *staccato* appears more often in faster *tempi* and needs a crisp sound produced by a faster keystroke.

Like the *portato* sign, the *staccato* may be used for both accompanimental and melodic elements. In accompaniments, they may be used for pedal tones, sonorous repeated patterns, broken chords, scale passages, and repeated notes. The beginning of 'Le vent dans la plaine' for example, (Ex. 41 / bb.1-2, p.131) contains two textural elements which are differentiated by articulation; *staccato* is used for the repeated B flat pedal tones, and slurs are used for repeated groups of semi-quaver notes.

Debussy sometimes combines the *staccato* with the damper pedal for a sonorous accompaniment pattern. In 'La sérénade interrompue' (Ex. 42 / bb.25-30, p.131) the *staccato* accompaniment is played with a quick attack and release, while applying the indicated damper pedal. This creates a blurred accompaniment that has some point to the sound. He also uses *staccato* for complete melodies, to help indicate phrase nuances and in a few cases, to provide the main articulation of a composition. He also utilises *staccato* and the damper pedal for several sonorous melodic effects; for example, the final melodic element in 'Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses' (Ex. 43 / bb.117-121, p.131) consists of a high *staccato* line, played while holding the damper pedal. *Staccatos* may be further employed for unaccented parts of a melody. They require quick, light finger strokes that lead to stresses usually marked with *tenuto* or accents. Such indications occur in the *Etude* 'Pours les arpèges composés' (Ex. 44 / b.26, p.132).

In several *Préludes and Etudes*, the main articulation of either the whole or the major portion of the composition is the *staccato*. This usually occurs in pieces based

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 21

on dance rhythms such as 'Minstrels', 'La sérénade interrompue', 'General Lavine-eccentric', and the middle section of 'Pour les arpèges composés'. The toccata-like character of 'Pour les notes répétées' is also emphasised by the large number of *staccato* markings. There is also the case where Debussy employs a *staccato* on the final note of a chord of a composition. The effect will be either soft and pedalled or soft and dry, depending on the musical context. The first case often happens at the end of a phrase where the terminology indicates a fading conclusion, as in 'Brouillards' bb. 50-52 (Ex. 45, p.132), marked *presque plus rien* (almost nothing left). A sustained chord in b. 50 is held through two concluding *staccato* chords. Because of the previous blending of sound in this example, the last chords will probably be played with an indirect attack and with the use of the pedal. Situations favouring a *staccato* with a soft and dry sound may be seen in the conclusions of 'Feux d'artifice', 'Pour les degrés chromatiques', and 'Pour les notes répétées'. In these works the style suggests a pedal is not needed. In 'Feux d'artifice' the subject matter lends itself to a sudden extinction of tone, and the more *staccato* character of the two *Etudes* make them conducive to a dry conclusion.

The *staccato* may also be used for a variety of accompanimental or melodic effects. Like the *portato* and *tenuto*, Debussy uses this marking throughout several compositions. As we have seen in Ex. 42 and 43, Debussy's experiments with specific sonorities include the combination of *staccato* and pedal. Another individual usage occurs at the ends of several compositions, in which a final *staccato* provides a definite point of termination to a fading sound.

As a general rule for employing the pedal in *staccato* passages, we could claim that it applies more to slow than to the faster *staccato* passages. Given the fact that since the principle for the type of sound sought in Debussy's piano music is a sustained

sound, in slow *staccato* passages where the decay of sound would be more obvious than if it were not *staccato*, the application of the pedal would also make sense. This view is also confirmed through Debussy's own performances recorded on piano roll.

In conclusion, we could say that Debussy does not apply a new technical meaning to the *staccato* sign. He rather exploits the possible types of *staccatos*. The proper execution of *staccato* articulation in his piano music is therefore dependent upon the pianist's technical ability and on an understanding of the composer's creative use of *staccato* techniques.

4. The combined *tenuto* and *staccato*

Debussy sometimes combines the *tenuto* with the *staccato*. A literal combination of the two signs results in a direct keystroke that is held for part of the note value and then is lifted. A series of notes marked this way, will be played with small breaks between lines. This type of note separation corresponds more closely to the traditional definition of *portato*, a manner of performance halfway between *legato* and *staccato*, than does the indirect attack and release which is almost always connected with the pedal. Even notes marked $\text{—} \text{—}$ which require to be linked with the pedal, will sound more separated than those indicated *portato* because the key attack of the former results in a more pointed sound.

Although the *tenuto* plus *staccato* is employed less than the previously discussed signs, it is nevertheless fairly common and employed in a variety of ways. It occurs in unstressed portions of phrases, and aims at producing a soft conclusion. Because the *tenuto* plus *staccato* involves a direct key stroke, even the unstressed elements will have more volume than *portato* articulations used in similar places. Debussy often indicates a louder phrase inflection through $\text{—} \text{—}$ markings that lead to stressed notes

marked as accents. In 'Pour les accords' for example, (Ex. 46 / bb.1-5, p.132) this articulation is utilised for upbeats which lead to an accented down beat marked ♩ . The sign is also used to shape softer phrases as illustrated by the last two *pianissisimo* notes of 'Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses' which should be slightly stressed (Ex. 47 / bb.124-125, p.132). The signs, which are used after a fading D flat, indicate the use of more volume to prevent an extreme *decrescendo*. This sign is also used for stressed notes of a phrase, accompanimental elements, and complete melodies. In 'Pour les quartes' (Ex. 48 / b.58, p.133) it is used alongside *portato* and *tenuto* to describe the phrase inflection. The first chord marked with a *tenuto*, is stressed; the next *portato* notes are unstressed and lead to notes marked ♩ which are gradually louder, as indicated by the *crescendo*.

When accompanying octaves or chords of a loud dynamic implying the application of the pedal (due to the impossibility of holding by fingers alone within the given texture), the combined *tenuto* and *staccato* contribute to the desired effect of a sustained and ringing sound. For example, loud octaves that will be separated are indicated by ♩ in the left hand accompaniment of 'Pour les octaves' (Ex. 49 / bb.11-12, p.133) and in 'Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest' (Ex. 50 / bb.42-43, p.133), where the chordal melody which is marked *forte* and *très en dehors*, is articulated with ♩ . Here, the breaks between chords are not realised due to the use of the pedal becoming necessary for maintaining the chords for their indicated nominal value.

5. Accents

Debussy employs the articulation markings ♩ and ♩ for accents. Although both are used mainly for emphasis, Debussy employs ♩ for places in need of the greater stress. In general, ♩ involves a weight accent while ♩ indicates a more percussive attack.

These, are often combined with *tenuto* $\underline{\wedge}$ or *staccato* $\wedge$. The former is stressed and held while the latter is stressed and released.

These articulations are employed for accented accompanimental and melodic material. The more percussive of the two accents $\underline{\wedge}$, is usually used for pedal tones used at a loud dynamic level as found in 'Pour les octaves' (Ex. 51 / bb.80-82, p.133), where the repeated F flats marked $\underline{\wedge}$ and *fortissimo*, should be accented and ringing. Both accents are used to control the relative stress of notes or chords within a melodic line. They indicate the nuance of a slur, the high point of a phrase, or stresses on metrically weak parts of a phrase. For example, accents employed for slur nuances are found in 'Pour les cinq doigts' (Ex. 52 / bb.67-68, p.134). Two progressively louder accents are notated through the use of the louder accent and *staccato* $\wedge$ on the first note and the louder accent and *tenuto* $\underline{\wedge}$ on the second note. Later in this composition (Ex. 53 / bb.101-102, p.134) the nuance remains the same but less force is specified by the use of the weight accent on each note. A more common use of $\leq$ is found in 'Voiles', b. 42 (Ex. 54, p.134), where it is used for the highest note of an arpeggiated passage, which serves as the climax of the phrase.

Debussy may utilise accents for every note of a melody in several loud thematic statements. In 'Les collines d'Anacapri' (Ex. 55 / bb.81-82, p.134), the *forte* melody notes are marked with accent and *tenuto* $\leq$ and in the last three bars of 'Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest' (Ex. 56 / bb.77-79, p.135), the final *fortissimo* entrance of the second theme is marked with the more percussive accent and *tenuto* $\underline{\wedge}$. The latter accent is sometimes used for short motives needing heavy accents as in 'La Cathédrale engloutie' b. 28 (Ex. 57, p.135), where *fortissimo* notes are imitative of cathedral bells.

Accents used on unstressed beats of a bar cause a syncopated effect. Some examples include 'Pour les octaves', where the half-beat of count one is marked < and the half-beat of count two and first of count three are marked ≥ (Ex. 58 / bb.113-114, p.135) and 'Genereal Lavine-eccentric', where the half-beat of count one utilises the louder accent and *tenuto* $\overset{\wedge}{\text{—}}$ (Ex.59 / bb.65-66, p.135).

In several places, Debussy employs the accent $\overset{\wedge}{\text{—}}$ for an interval or chord which is marked *piano*. This happens for instance in 'Pour les quartes' (Ex. 60 / b.62, p.136) after a long *crescendo*. Another example of this kind is found in 'Ondine' which ends with a third that is designated piano and accompanied by $\overset{\wedge}{\text{—}}$ (Ex. 61 / b.72, p.136). In these places, the accent indicates that some weight is needed while maintaining a soft dynamic level. If this sign is used for soft notes immediately after a louder volume, such a marking may also involve a pause causing an agogic stress.

Debussy's accents, which occur by themselves or combined with *tenuto* or *staccato*, are used to mark material with maximum emphasis. Despite though the stress they should create on the notes or chords they accompany, the resulting sound should not be a harsh but a sonorous one. For this reason, the application of the pedal should be called for in these places to assist in controlling the resulting effect. The amount and duration of the pedalled sonority should be decided depending on the texture, register and dynamic involved in each corresponding passage.

b) Terminology

Some descriptive terms directly influence the sound quality in Debussy's music. More specifically, terms may describe the use or non-use of the pedals when no traditional pedalling marking is written. These terms could be divided in two categories: 1) Debussy implying the employment of the damper pedal by requesting a

sustained/resonant sound or 2) Debussy implying the non-use of the pedal by requesting a short/clear sound. Below is a complete list of each of these categories, as found in Debussy's piano music:

1. Sustained or resonant sound

Armonioso (harmonious) in 'Pour les notes répétées' b. 58, *Arabesque* b. 82

Comme une buée irisée (like an iridescent mist) in 'Cloches à travers les feuilles' b. 13

Comme une lointaine sonnerie de cors (like a distant ringing of horns) in 'Les sons et les parfums...' b. 50

Dans une brume doucement sonore (in a gently resonant mist) in 'La Cathédrale engloutie' b. 1

Dans une sonorité harmonieuse et lointaine (in a harmonious and faraway sonority) in 'Reflets dans l'eau' b. 81

Doucement soutenu (gently sustained) in 'Hommage à Rameau' b. 1, 'La Danse du Puck' b. 32, 'Feuilles mortes' b. 1, 'Bruyères' b. 46

Estompé (blurred, hazy) in 'The Snow is Dancing' b. 1, 'La sérénade interrompue' b. 32

Faites vibrer (make resonate), in 'Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut' b. 57

Flottant (floating, indeterminate) in *D'un cahiers d'esquisses* b. 16, 'Les sons et les parfums...' b. 41

Flottant et sourd (floating and muffled) in 'La Cathédrale engloutie' b.72

Harmonieux or *armonioso* (harmonious, ringing softly and colourfully) in 'Feux d'artifice' b. 65, 'Les sons et les parfums...' b. 1, 'La sérénade interrompue' b. 113,

'Pour les notes répétées' b. 58, *Arabesque II* b. 82

Harmonioso (harmonious) in 'Pour les notes répétées' b.58, *Arabesque II* b. 82

Ici les harpes imitent à s'y méprendre les paons faisant la roue, ou les paons imitent les harpes (comme il vous plaire!) et le ciel redevient compatissant aux toilettes claires (Here, one can hardly distinguish the harps from the peacocks fanning out their tails, or peacocks imitating harps (whichever you prefer!) and the sky smiles down on summery dresses) in *Images* (1894) 3rd movement b. 64

Laissez vibrer (leave to resonate), in 'Pagodes' b. 98, 'Mouvement' b. 34, 'Le vent dans la plaine' b. 59, 'Feux d'artifice' b. 53-54, 'Pour les arpegés composes' b. 65, 'Six Epigraphes Antiques' b. 25

Les basses légères et harmonieuses (with the lower notes light and harmoniously coloured) in 'Feux d'artifice' b. 59

Les notes marquées du signe - doucement timbrées (the notes marked with the sign – should resonate softly) in 'Les tierces alternées' b. 11

Peu à peu sortant de la brume (gradually coming out of the mist) in 'La Cathédrale engloutie' b. 16

Quittez, en laissant vibrer (release [the keys], allowing the sounds to resonate [in the pedal]), in 'Les collines d'Anacapri' b. 2 and 7

Sonore or *sonoro* (resonant) in 'Pour les agréments' b. 17, 35, 'Pour les degrés chromatiques' b. 47, 'Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq.' b.1, 'La Cathédrale engloutie' b. 28

Sourd et en s'éloignant (muffled and receding) in *Masques* b. 361

Soutenu or *sostenuto* (sustained) in 'Sarabande' b. 34, *Hommage à Haydn* b. 31, *Berceuse Héroïque* b. 1, 'Mouvement' b. 89, 'Hommage à Rameau' b. 1, 20, 'Danseuses de Delphes' b. 1, 'Les sons et les parfums...' b. 34, 'Menuet' b. 83, 'Pour

les Tierces' b. 1, 'Pour les quartes' b. 44,65, 'Pour les sixtes' b. 1, 'Pour les octaves' b. 109, 'Pour les accords' b. 92, 'Pour les agréments' b. 27

Toutes les notes marquées du signe – sonores, sans dureté, le reste très léger mais sans sécheresse (all the notes marked with the sign – sonorous without hardness, the rest very light but not dry) in 'Mouvement' b. 67

Une cloche qui ne garde aucune mesure (a bell that sounds out of time) in *Images* (1894) b. 133

2. Short or clear sound

Acuto (sharp, acute) in 'Pour les degrés chromatiques' b. 57

Détaché (detached) in 'Les tierces alternées' b. 11, 'Minstrels' b. 9, *Masques* b. 1

Sec (dry, dryly), in 'Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest' b. 71, 'Minstrels' b. 88, 'Pour les arpeges composes' b. 25, 'General Lavine' b. 2, 10, 18, 77, 109, 'Pour les accords' b. 181, 'Pour les octaves' b. 29, 'Golliwogg's cake walk' b. 10

Sécheresse (dryness), in 'Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum' b. 1

Staccato (staccato) in 'General Lavine-eccentric' b. 29, 'Pour les octaves' b. 29, 43, 45, 68, 'Pour les arpèges composés' b. 27

c) Notation

The implicit indication for pedalling mostly used by Debussy regards the notation of note values. In general, under this category fall all passages with slurs going through bar-lines, long bass notes and notes or chords that cannot be sustained by fingers alone. The case involving the long bass notes is the most common one. The

famous Debussy interpreter, Walter Giesecking, stated that ‘often, the pedal sign in Debussy is the bass note’.¹⁵⁸

As we saw in Chapter 2 when discussing the gamelan, Debussy often arranged the texture in his piano music so that the long bass notes could not be sustained for their nominal value by the fingers alone. This fact in turn, makes the application of the damper pedal necessary. This method of indicating the need for pedalling is more often met in Debussy’s later works. For instance, by comparing the two books of the *Préludes*, we find that long bass notes above which other levels of texture are superimposed occur in just four *Préludes* in Book I (1910) and in ten *Préludes* in Book II. Other similar examples include, among many, ‘Reflets dans l’eau’ bb. 25-35, ‘Cloches à travers les feuilles’ bb. 26-38, *D’un cahier d’esquisses* b. 23-28, ‘Danseuses de Delphes’ bb. 11-14, ‘La Cathédrale engloutie’ in almost every bar.

Debussy indicates sometimes that notes or chords should be sustained beyond their nominal value, by indicating slurs that go through bars or bar-lines. The application of the pedal is also implied in this case, since it usually involves values not possible to sustain by fingers alone: for example, ‘Pour les arpèges composés’ bb. 62-67, ‘Cloches à travers les feuilles’ bb. 33-34, ‘Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut’ bb. 6-9, ‘Les collines d’Anacapri’ bb. 6, 68-71, ‘Brouillards’ bb. 50-52.

Although in the majority of cases it is the bass that dictates the need for the application of the pedal, Debussy’s arrangement of texture may also create the same need through the use of long note values in the middle or upper register. The necessity for the application of the pedal in this latter case becomes more evident in later works and can often be combined with the indication of a long bass note at the same time: ‘Brouillards’ bb. 10-15, ‘Feuilles mortes’ throughout the piece, ‘La terrasse des

¹⁵⁸ Dean Elder, ‘Giesecking’s Pedalling in Debussy and Ravel’, in Joseph Banowetz ed., *The Pianist’s Guide to Pedalling* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), 148.

audiences du clair de lune' bb. 1-3, 'Canope' bb. 7-9, 'Cloches à travers les feuilles' bb. 20-23, 'Poissons d'or' bb. 86-93, etc.

Whether Debussy chooses to employ articulation markings, terminology or notational devices to imply the use (or non-use) of the pedal, he still is not specific about the exact duration or volume of sonority he aims to extract from each corresponding passage. All indications for pedalling, whether explicit or implicit, have to be adjusted to the ever-changing factors regarding the instrument, acoustics and the performer involved. For this reason, although the performer should be able to recognise and remain faithful to any such given indications, he/she should not forget that all factors mentioned above would influence the final result in each different situation. To what degree the notes, melodies or chords need to be 'melted' for producing a sonorous result without passing from the level of music to the level of noise, remains to be decided by the pianist.

CHAPTER 6

Pedalling in 'La Cathédrale engloutie'

Given Debussy's interest in a continuous piano sonority, it seems appropriate at this point to ask whether or not the composer's performance of his own music, as registered in his recordings for the Welte system, employed a pedalling technique in line with his use of explicit and implicit pedalling indications in his scores. Out of the fourteen pieces Debussy recorded for Welte, I have chosen the *Prélude* 'La Cathédrale engloutie'¹⁵⁹ as a 'case study' for examining Debussy's use of the damper and *una corda* pedals in performance. This piece includes a more extended use of the damper pedal than in any of the other pieces he recorded for the piano roll medium. Furthermore, it contains some particularly characteristic notational devices to suggest the application of the damper pedal in an implied manner. The extent to which these notational devices are used by Debussy in this piece allows us insight into his sound world. Indeed, I would like to suggest that in many ways 'La Cathédrale engloutie' depicts the composer's ideal in the production of piano sonority.

What immediately strikes us when examining Debussy's registered use of the damper pedal in this piece is that out of the total of 89 bars, there is not a single bar that is not pedalled. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, as we have seen, it is the deficiency of the Welte system to capture fractional or half-pedalling techniques, which it then misinterprets as one continuous pedal. Secondly, and more importantly,

¹⁵⁹ See Appendix 2, p.195-200.

the extended employment of long bass notes act as pedal points in almost half of the total number of bars; pedal points are the most frequent implicit indication for pedalling in Debussy's piano music. The examination of 'La Cathédrale engloutie' that follows explains this in more detail.

Starting from the first bar, Debussy establishes the sound world of this piece by using two chords in the lower and higher registers of the piano; they need to be played while other chords in the middle register continue for the remainder of the bar. The extended value of the last chord, indicated by the ties going across the bar line, also calls for the application of the pedal. Furthermore, the *portato* notes in the bass of the second bar also confirm the necessity for a sonorous result. Debussy holds one pedal for both bars and then makes a change in b. 3 for the new harmony. The next two bars are pedalled likewise, since they are of a similar texture.

After the change in b. 5, the pedal remains the same until b. 9. Although there is no bass to be sustained here, it is the E marked *tenuto* throughout bars 5-12 that requires a sonorous sound. Debussy plays these bars by utilising one continuous pedal; the changes occurring in bars 9-12 could be interpreted as quick changes to avoid confusion between the prominent Es and the melody belonging to the same register. Debussy cleans the sound even further in b. 13, where the *diminuendo* acts as a preparation for the beginning of a new section. The indication *sans nuances* in bb. 13-14 alongside the chords in the extreme registers of the piano that need to be held calls for the application of the pedal. Debussy pedals these bars and then makes a full change in b. 16 where a completely new harmonic sequence is introduced. Despite the harmonic change in b. 19, the Welte system has registered Debussy's pedalling in bb. 16-21 as one continuous pedal. Given that the texture in these bars gets gradually louder and thicker, sustaining the whole of this passage in one pedal would result in

over-blurring. Therefore, we can assume that Debussy used fractional or half changes of pedal in some places in this passage, which were not captured due to the limitations of the rolls' mechanism.

The same explanation could be suggested for bb. 22-27; the *crescendo* indicated in b. 20 leads to a *forte* in b. 22 where Debussy makes a full change but then keeps the same pedal until b. 27, despite the loud octaves of bb. 25-27 which would undoubtedly cause a sound confusion if held in the same pedal. Also, since the *tenuti* in the left hand call for stressing each octave, it would seem appropriate to pedal each one separately. Given the *legato* character of this passage, reinforced by the need for pedalling the notes marked *tenuto*, it seems that Debussy may have employed some fractional changes that once again, the Welte system failed to capture.

The texture of bb. 28-41 contains a C in the bass which is repeated in places where preceding chords need to be maintained at the same time as well. The application of the pedal here becomes necessary because of the left hand that has to leave these chords in order to repeat the C. In the Welte recording, Debussy holds one pedal throughout bb. 28-40. Given that these bars are *fortissimo* and the movement of the chords is in parallel motion, a continuous pedal would result in a building up of sound that would become extremely muddy. What would seem an appropriate pedalling solution for this passage is some thinning of the sound; this can be achieved through half-pedalling in the places where the C is repeated. In this way, the Cs in the bass would not be interrupted and the required sonority in this passage, also indicated by the term *sonore sans dureté*, could be achieved without creating an unpleasant blur. It is possible that Debussy used this pedalling technique himself, but the Welte mechanism did not pick it up.

The melody that follows the pedal change in b. 40 is marked with a combined *tenuto* and accent articulation marking. Debussy applies the pedal to accompany these notes and then continues to envelop the *tenuto* chords of bb. 42-46 in the same pedal. Regarding the rests in these bars, it is possible that Debussy did a very quick pedal change in the first beat so as to clear the sound enough to observe these rests; this would avoid creating an abrupt gap in the sonority created by the *tenuti* of the previous bar (a pedalling technique that Welte could not have registered either). The character of the passage starting in b. 47 is expressive and *legato*. The repeated G sharp in the bass that needs to be maintained alongside the superimposed chords in both hands starting at b. 51, makes the use of the pedal necessary. Debussy's pedal changes in b. 52 and 54 should be interpreted as half changes, since a full change would result in losing the G sharp in the bass held from the previous bar. The first chord of b. 60, introduced with a new pedal, belongs to that kind of situation where a note or chord in the middle register needs to be maintained while the hands are busy playing in other registers of the piano. In this case, the function of the pedal is the same as in passages where this situation occurs in the bass (e.g. bb. 47-54).

In bb. 62-66, Debussy makes a full pedal change with each chord. It is interesting to note here that although there is no bass involved in these bars and the sound also thins out because of the *diminuendo*, the application of the pedal is still necessary for playing *legato* (not possible with fingers alone) and for interpreting the chords marked *tenuto*. From b. 70 until b. 83, the texture consists of an ostinato quaver pattern in the bass and a *legato* melody in the middle register formed by the succession of chords. The application of the pedal is essential in this passage not only for achieving the *legato* in the right hand (which is otherwise impossible due to the changes in position), but also for creating the sonorous effect in the bass indicated by Debussy's

direction *flottant et sourd*. In his own performance, Debussy keeps the pedal down throughout these bars and does a few changes to clear the sound in places where it would obviously become too blurred for the melody to be heard clearly. The pattern in the left hand acts more like an accompaniment, aiming to create a quiet and atmospheric background for the melody in the right hand. Passages of this nature are well projected through the use of a flutter or partially depressed pedal that would produce a continuous and uninterrupted sound, without being too blurred at the same time. It is possible that Debussy may have employed this technique in this passage but the rolls' mechanism picked it up only in those places where the foot was depressing the pedal just a little deeper than the point of registration.

The texture of bars 84 and 85 is similar to that of the beginning; the chords in the first beat of the bar need to be sustained while there are other harmonies moving in the middle register at the same time. Debussy employs the pedal according to the need created by this kind of texture, in the same manner as in the beginning of the piece. In bars 86 and 87 the pedal becomes necessary to maintain the chords in the middle register until the end of the bar, while the left hand plays another chord in the bass. The rest indicated in the left hand part of the first beat is not literally observed by Debussy, as it is more an indication for underlining the different levels of texture than for creating a gap in sound. Debussy then holds the pedal until the last bar where, through the employment of ties, all three different levels of texture are indicated to sound together.

The *una corda* is used extensively by Debussy in this piece, as is the damper pedal. As described in earlier chapters, the *una corda* is not used only for soft passages but also for the special timbre it can create. For this reason, apart from all the soft passages in 'La Cathédrale engloutie' marked *piano* or *pianissimo*, Debussy

also applies the *una corda* in places where he wants to create contrast or to emphasise passages of expressive or harmonic interest. For example in b. 15, although the dynamic is still marked *pianissimo*, Debussy lifts the *una corda* and then brings it back at the end of b. 18. In this way, he emphasises the harmonic change in b. 19, introduced after three bars consisting of the same harmony throughout (bb. 16-18).

Using a composer's recorded performance as an indication for proper performance practice is controversial. Indeed, when comparing documented recordings where composers perform the same piece more than once, we find that these recordings can vary with regard to the text, tempo or dynamics. More specifically, composers like Prokofiev, Stravinsky and Debussy, made recordings that contradict their own indications in the text. Thus we have to face the question of whether the composers' intentions can be known at all.¹⁶⁰

However, regarding the particular issue of pedalling in Debussy, we are able to find the solution to this problem since we have sufficient information on how the Welte's mechanism functioned and why it failed accurately to register the composer's pedalling technique. As discussed in an earlier chapter, although the rolls' mechanism could not register quick or fractional movements of the foot, it was still able to register these as a continuous pedal. In the case of the present research, where my overriding claim is that the kind of sound Debussy was always seeking to extract from the piano was a sonorous and vibrating one, I consider the information about the composer's use of the pedal registered in these recordings important enough to support this claim. Furthermore, my discussion of Debussy's use of the pedal in 'La Cathédrale engloutie' alongside the notation, articulation markings and terminology

¹⁶⁰ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 53-55.

indicated in the score, shows that even in the places where Debussy's use of the pedal is not accurately reproduced by Welte, the text itself steps forward to call for its application. In this sense, my aim has never been to use the rolls as a guide for pedalling Debussy: pedalling is sometimes implied and sometimes explicitly called for by the composer's notational practice; his use of the pedal in the Welte recordings confirms the information given in his scores. For this reason, a knowledge of all sources, written and recorded, becomes essential for any pianist wishing to interpret Debussy's sound world.

More importantly, when performing Debussy, we should try to interpret the particular method he is applying to indicate the use of the pedal through notation. The advantage of Debussy notating his pedalling intentions in this implied manner is that there is no particular pedalling technique required: pedalling can be executed according to the different circumstances involving the tastes and ability of the performer, the instrument at hand and the acoustics of the room. Every performer would agree that since these are ever changing factors, it would have been inappropriate if the composer had chosen to give pedalling indications in the conventional way. Therefore, a flexible and imaginative pedalling technique that is guided both by the ear and by the performer's understanding of Debussy's particular notational practice seems necessary for a good performance of these works. The more powerful sonority of modern pianos compared to those in Debussy's time presents the pianist with yet another challenge; this too will influence any adjustments and decisions about a given performance situation. For all these reasons, it becomes obvious that there can be no hard or fast rules of where or how to pedal. In performing Debussy it is essential to listen and to be guided by the principles governing his piano

music, that the pedals are an integral part of the instrument and are thus in constant use. Constancy, however, does not preclude discretion.

This brings us back to Debussy's statement '*faites confiance à votre oreille*', which, I would argue can be considered as the guide for every pianist seeking to find a suitable approach to the absence of pedalling indications in Debussy's piano music. I regard the precision with which Debussy indicates his intentions through articulation markings, terminology and other notation as a confirmation that the lack of traditional indications for pedalling in his music does not suggest that information is missing. Rather, it invokes a need on the part of the performer to understand Debussy's musical world. This dissertation is one possible exploration of that world. Through the cross-examination of a variety of relevant sources, I have attempted to throw new light on the issue of pedalling Debussy's piano music. The hope is that any new information presented in this study will form the starting point for further research into Debussy's expressiveness in sound.

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Appendix 1

MUSICAL EXAMPLES



Example 1. From Michael David Schmitz, *Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1995), 86

Example 2 is a musical score for 'Toccata' from *Pour le Piano*, bars 81-93. It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The notation includes various dynamic markings (pp, p, cresc., mf) and performance instructions like 'très léger' and 'les notes marquées du signe - expressives et un peu en dehors'.

Example 2. 'Toccata' from *Pour le Piano*, bars 81-93

Délicatement et presque sans nuances

Modérément animé

pp *m.d.* *m.g.*

(2^{da})

a Tempo

Rit. ... Rit. ...

a Tempo

Rit. ...

a Tempo

Example 4. 'Pagodes' from *Estampes*, bars 1-9

Lent (M.M. 92 = ♩)

(un peu en dehors)

(Dolcemente sonore)

pp *m.g.*

pp *m.g.*

Example 5. 'Cloches à travers les feuilles' from *Images Book II*, bars 1-5

Lent (♩ = 66)
doux et sans rigueur

PIANO

p *pp* *pp*

4 *pp* *p* *pp* *m.d.* *m.g.*

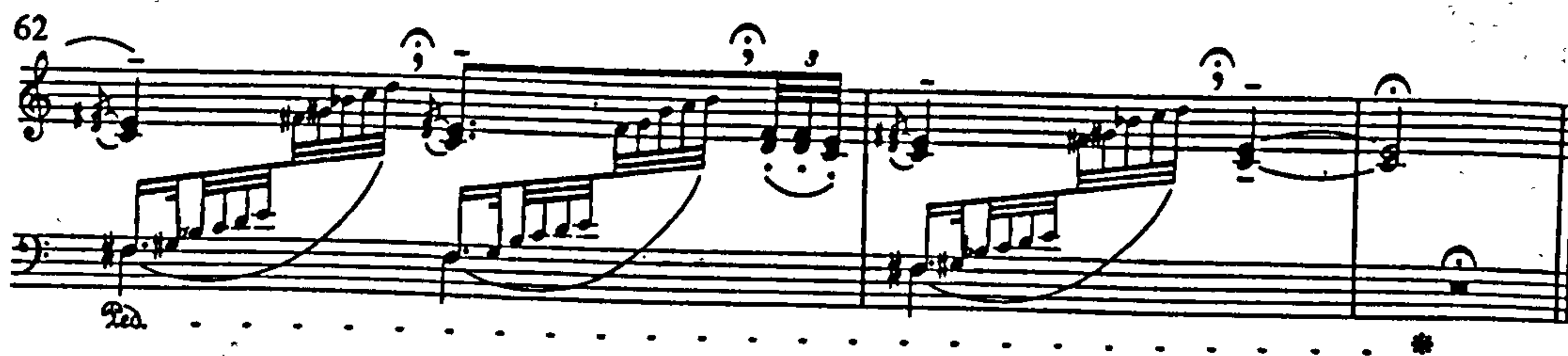
7 *pp* *p* *pp* *m.d.* *m.g.*

Example 6. 'Et la lune descend sur la temple qui fut' from *Images* Book II, bars 1-9

Example 9. 'La Cathédrale engloutie' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 31-45

Example 10. 'Les Collines d'Anacapri' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 1-4

Example 11. 'Pour les accords' from the *Etudes*, bars 93-94



Example 12. 'Voiles' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 62-64

Example 13. 'Brouillards' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 13-17

38

pp

pp

un peu marqué

8^a bassa

42 Cédez . . . Mouvt, en retenant et en s'effaçant

pp

pp

8^a bassa

Example 14. Brouillards' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 38-45

19 a Tempo

pp

p

25 pp

più pp

les deux pédales

Example 15. 'La sérénade interrompue' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 19-31

57 *rinf. poco - - - //*

pp *pp*

Garder la sourdine,
la pédale forte sur chaque temps.

61 **Strepitoso**

ff *ff*

les 2 *tes.*

65 **1er Mouvt**

Example 16. 'Pour les octaves' from the *Etudes*, bars 57-69

9

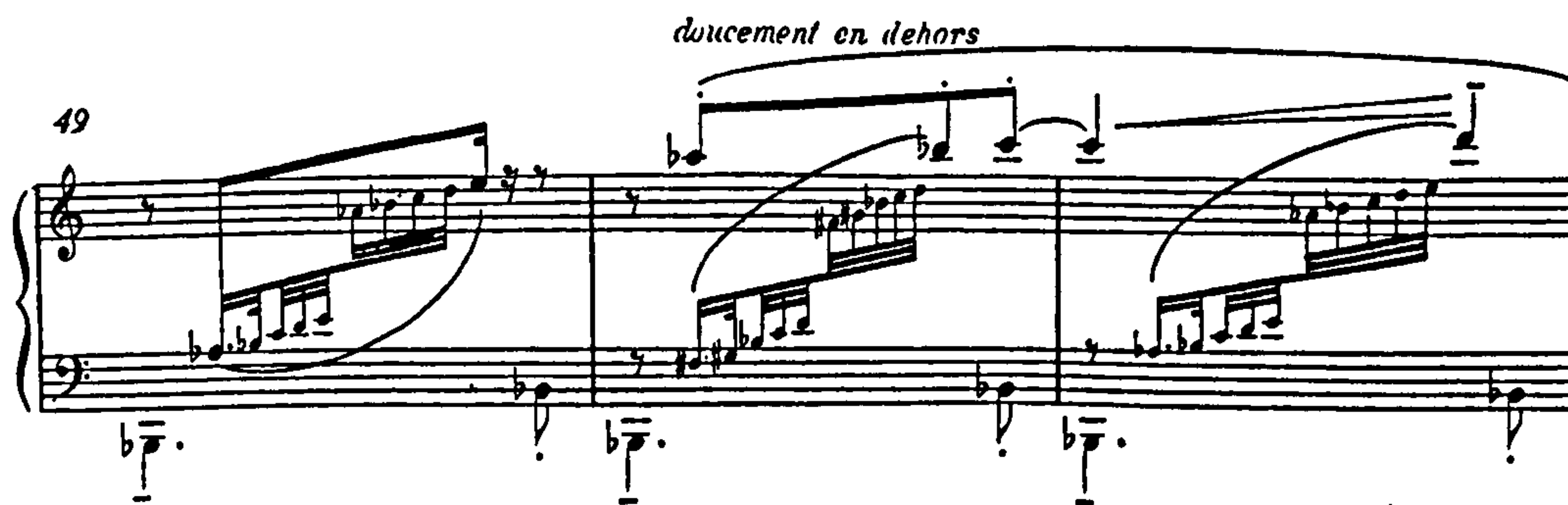
p poco cresc.

Example 17. 'Pour les sonorités opposées' from the *Etudes*, bars 9-12

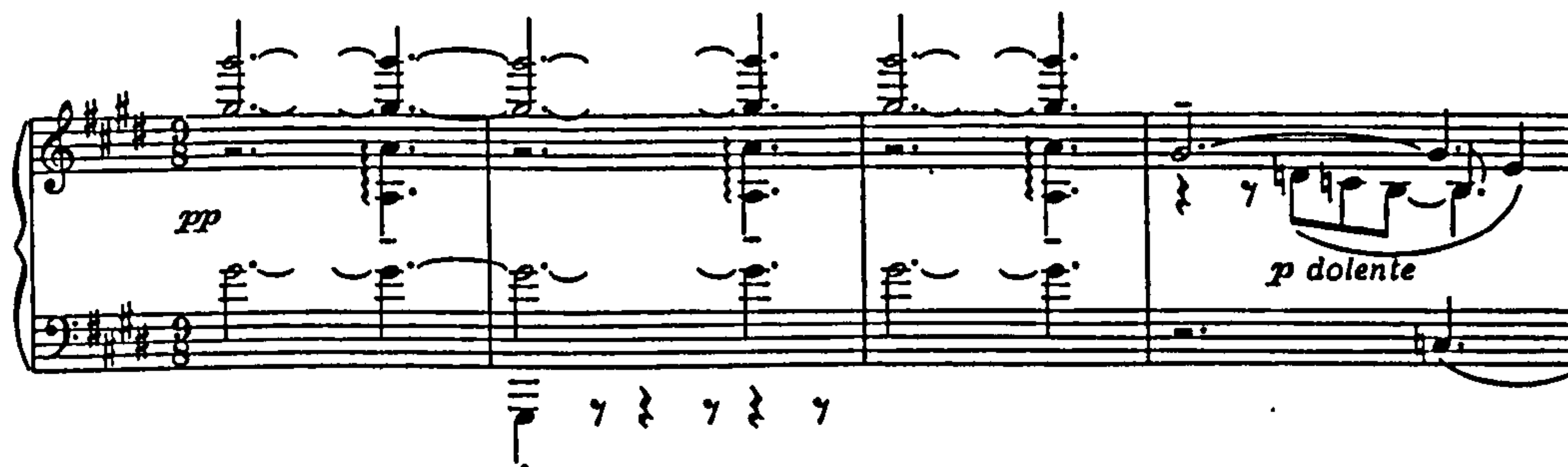
44

pp mormorando

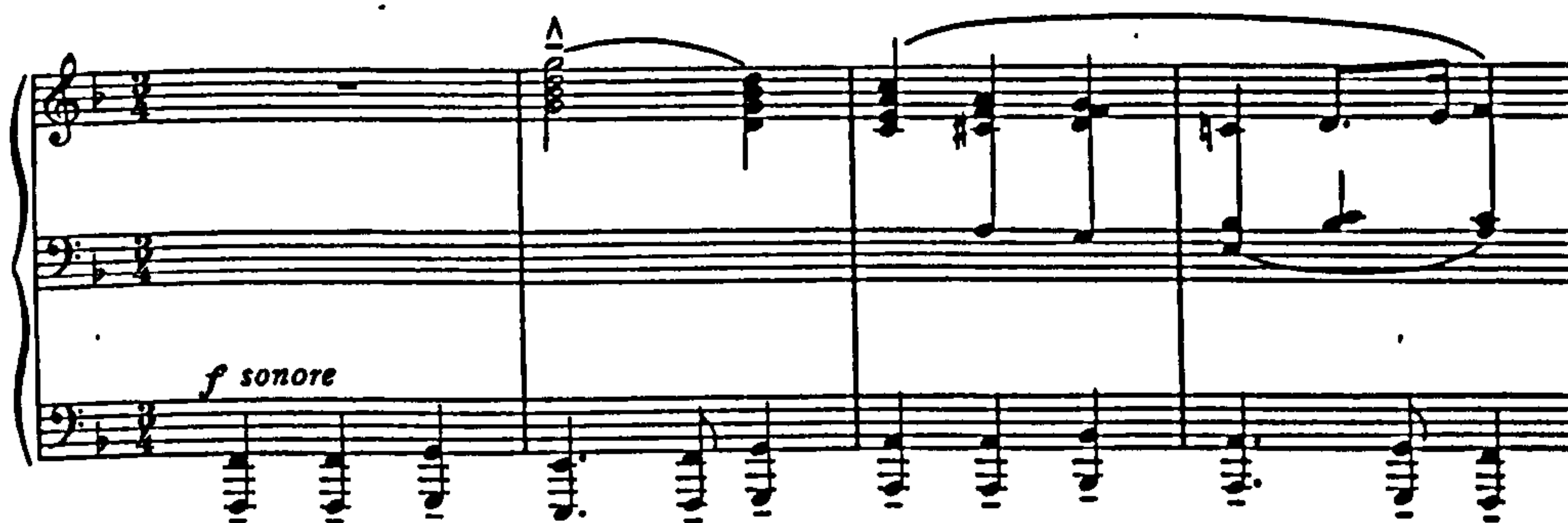
Example 18. 'Ondine' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 44-45



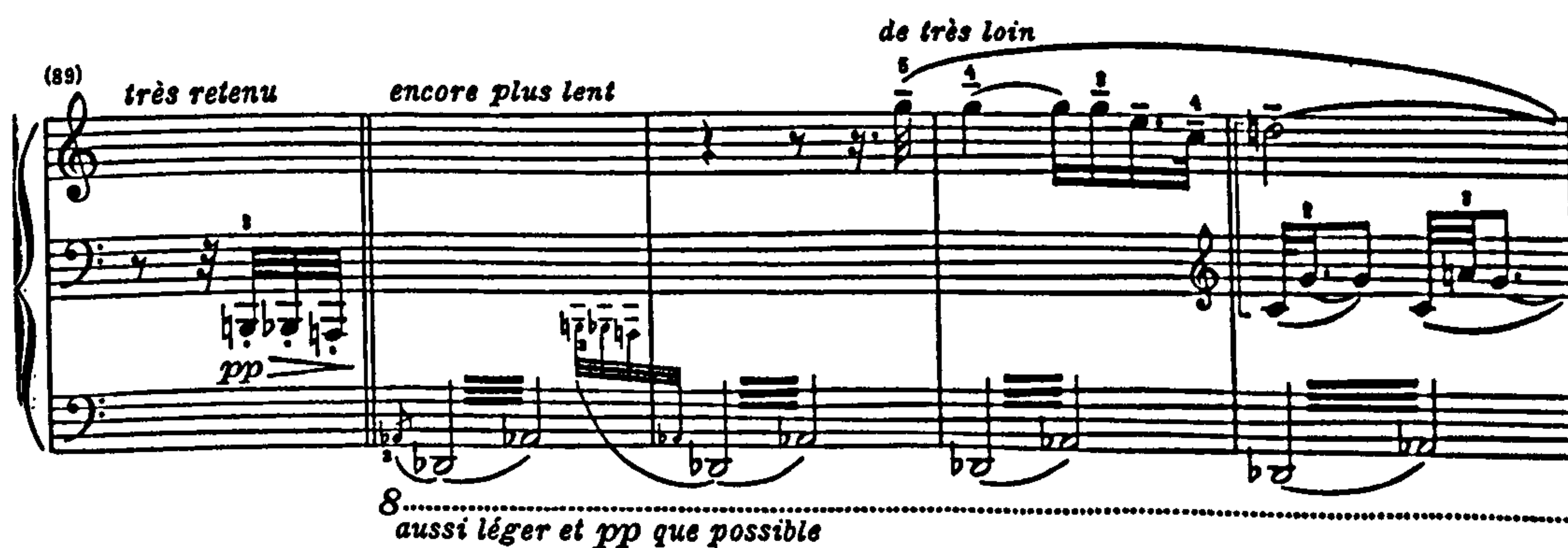
Example 19. 'Voiles' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 49-51



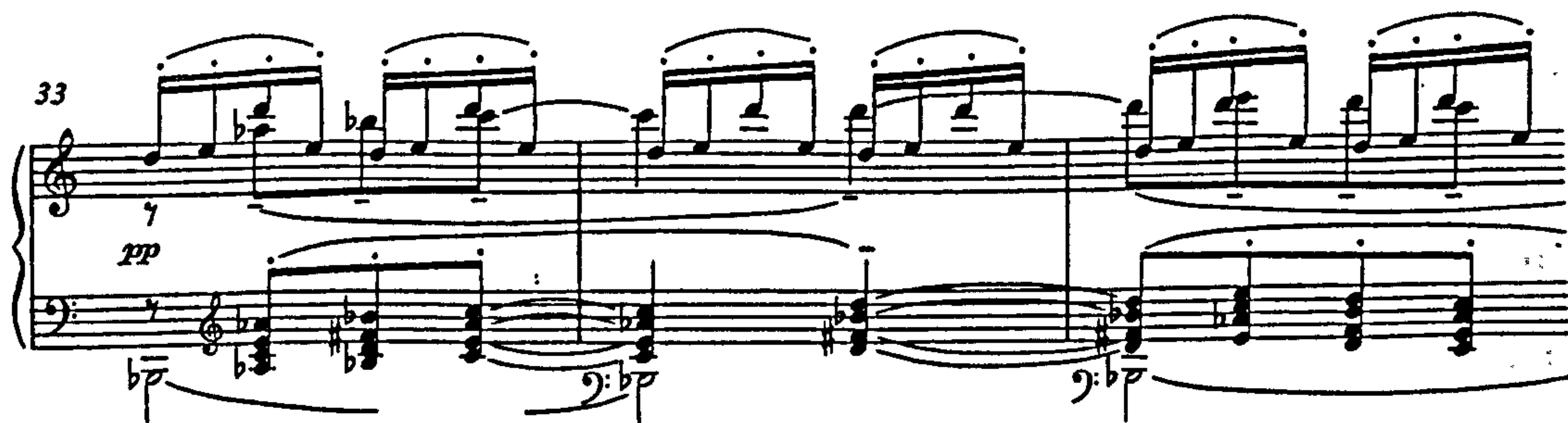
Example 20. 'Pour les sonorités opposées' from the *Etudes*, 1-4



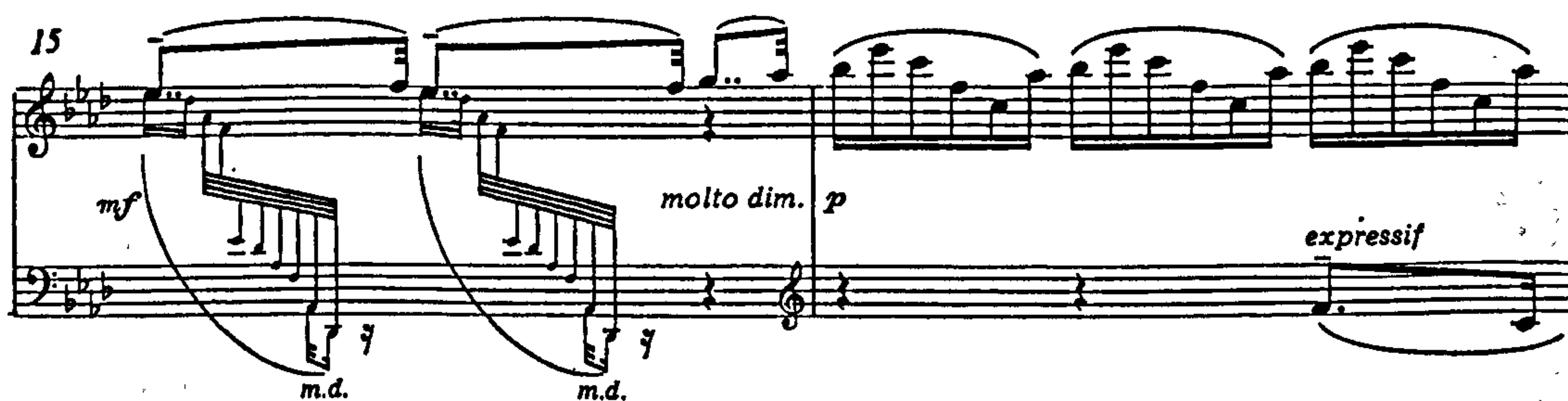
Example 21. 'Hommage à Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 1-4



Example 22. 'Feux d'artifice' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 89-93



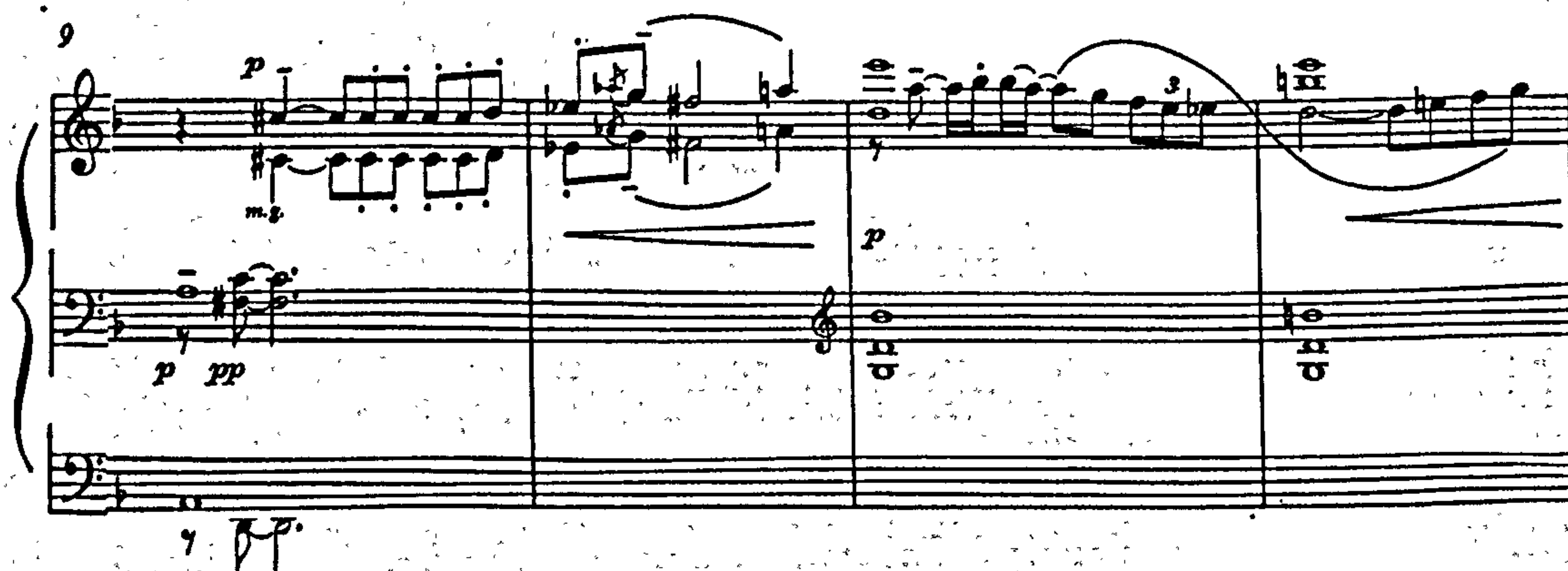
Example 23. 'Voiles' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 33-35



Example 24. 'Pour les arpèges composés' from the *Etudes*, bars 15-16



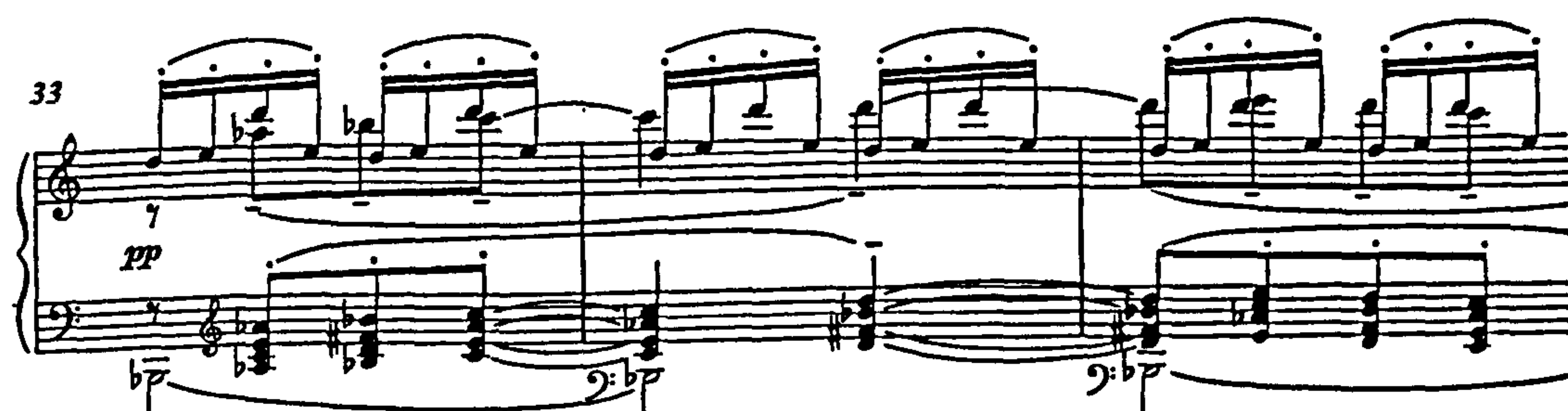
Example 25. 'Feux d'artifice' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 50-51



Example 26. 'Canope' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 9-12



Example 27. 'Les sons et les parfums...' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 6-10



Example 28. 'Voiles' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 33-35

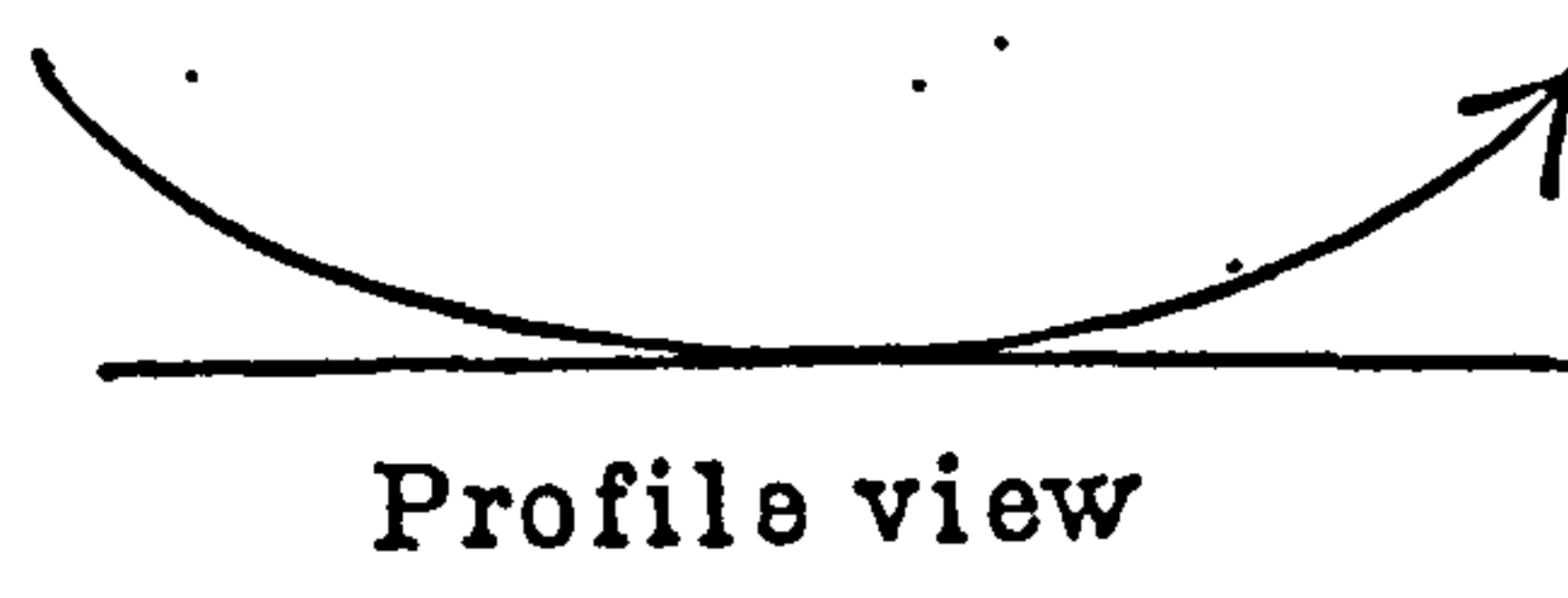
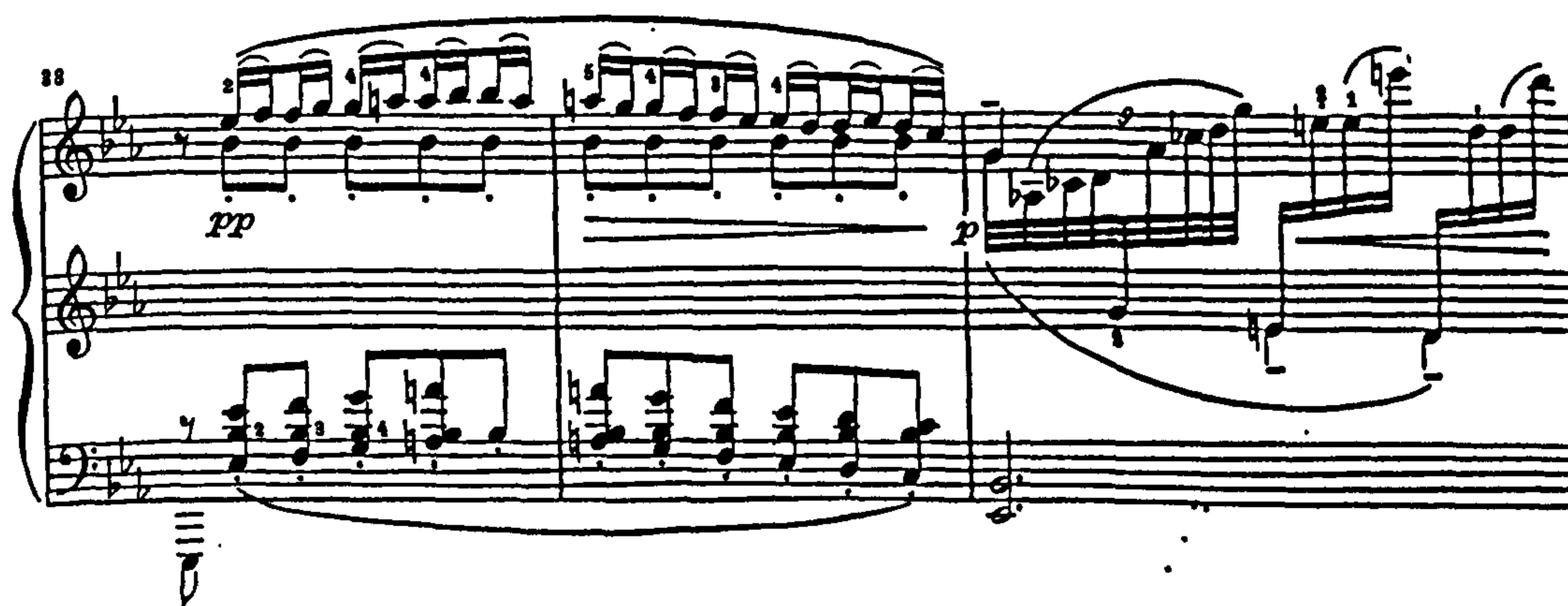
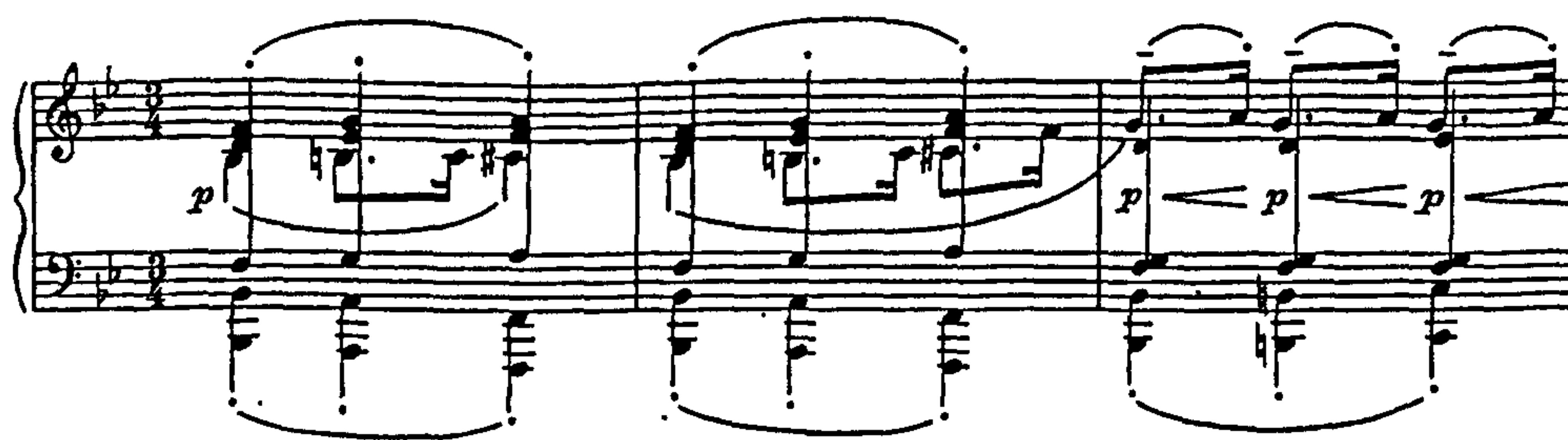


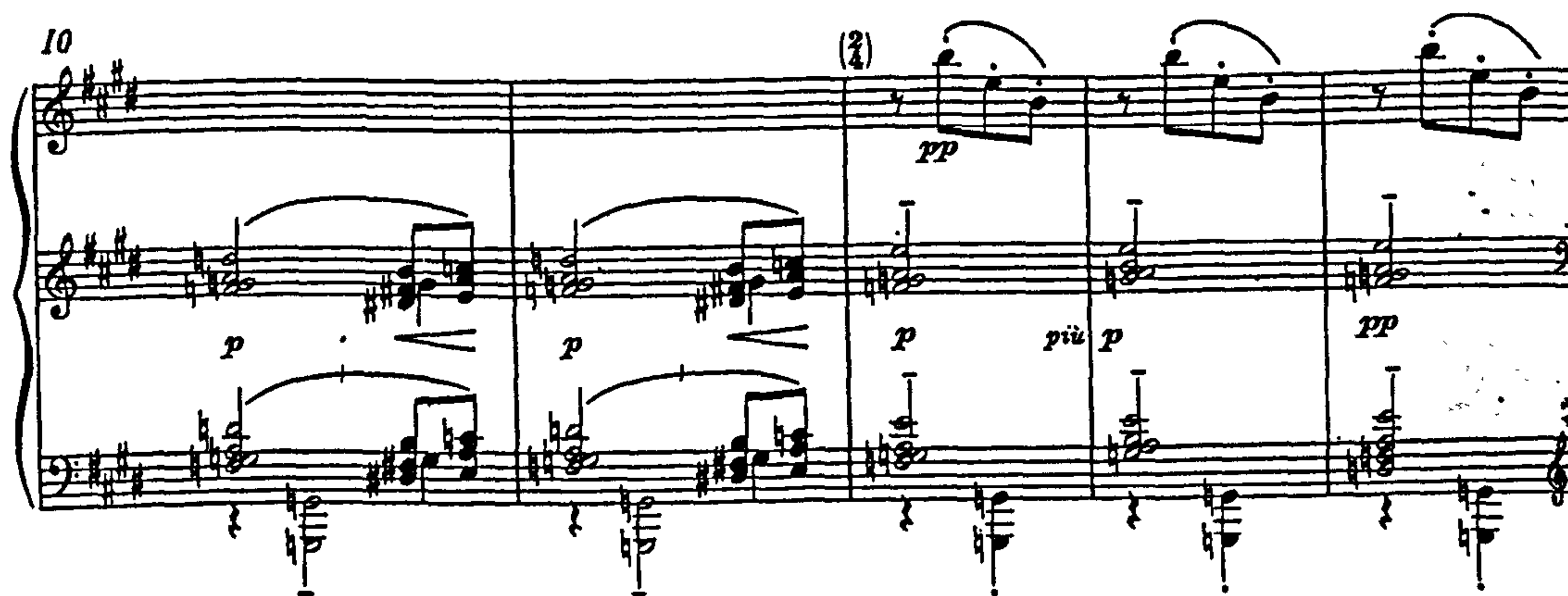
Figure 2. From Maurice Dumensil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy* (New York: Schroeder & Gunther Inc., 1932), 7



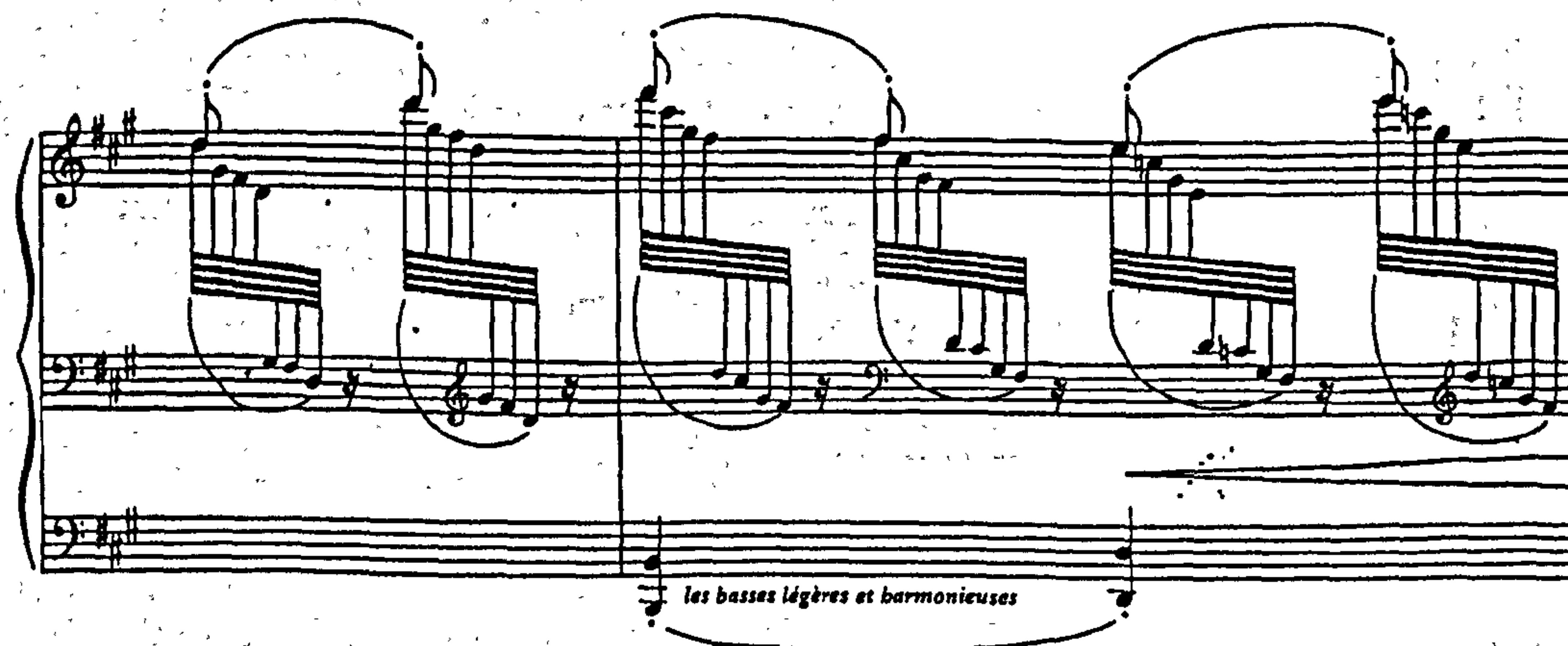
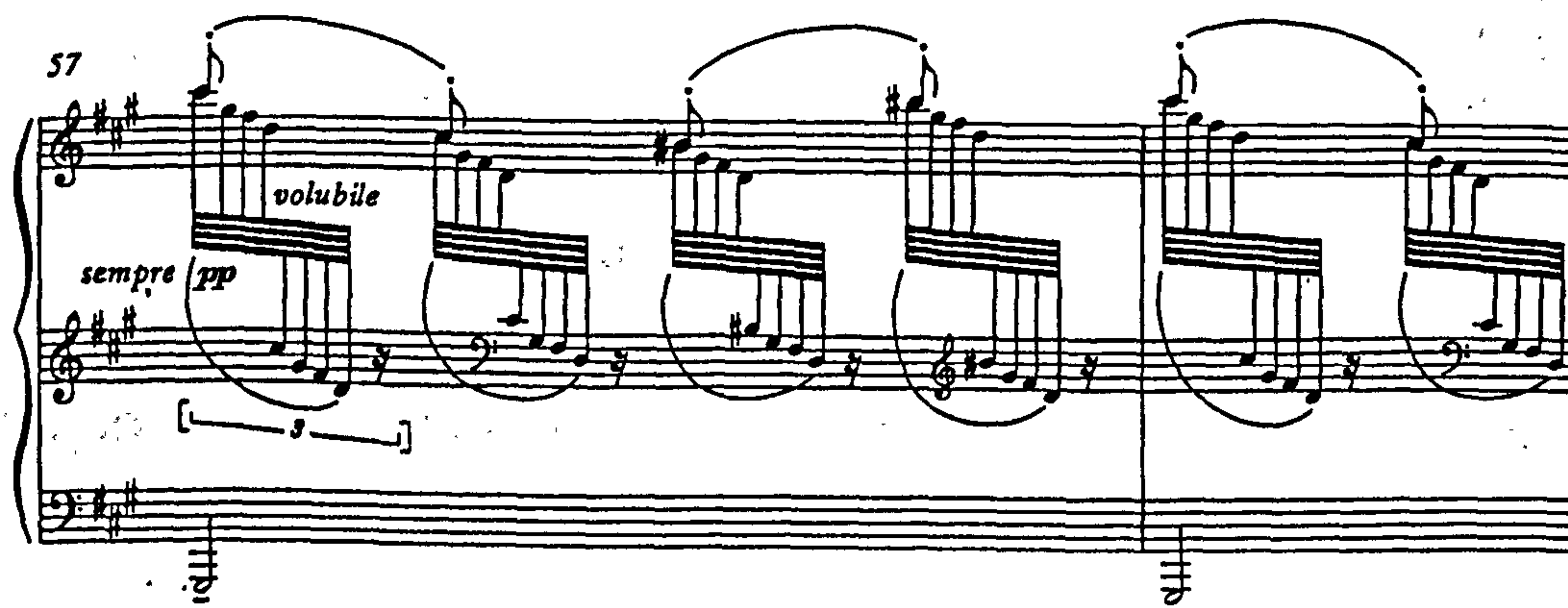
Example 29. 'Ondine' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 38-40



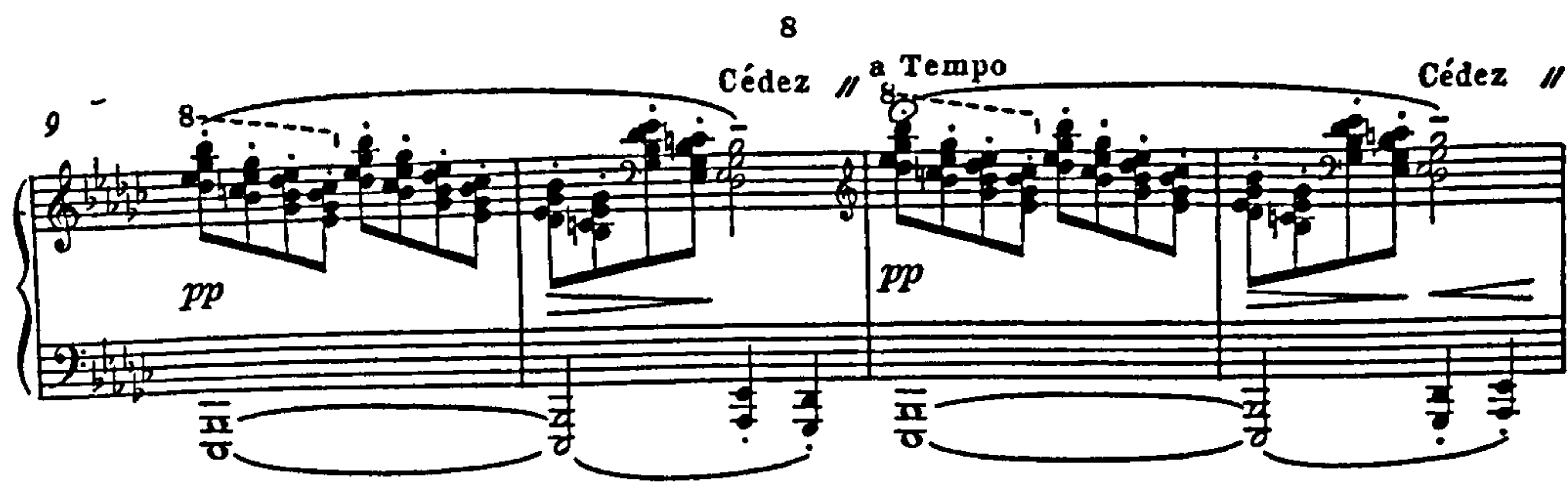
Example 30. 'Danseuses de Delphes' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 1-3



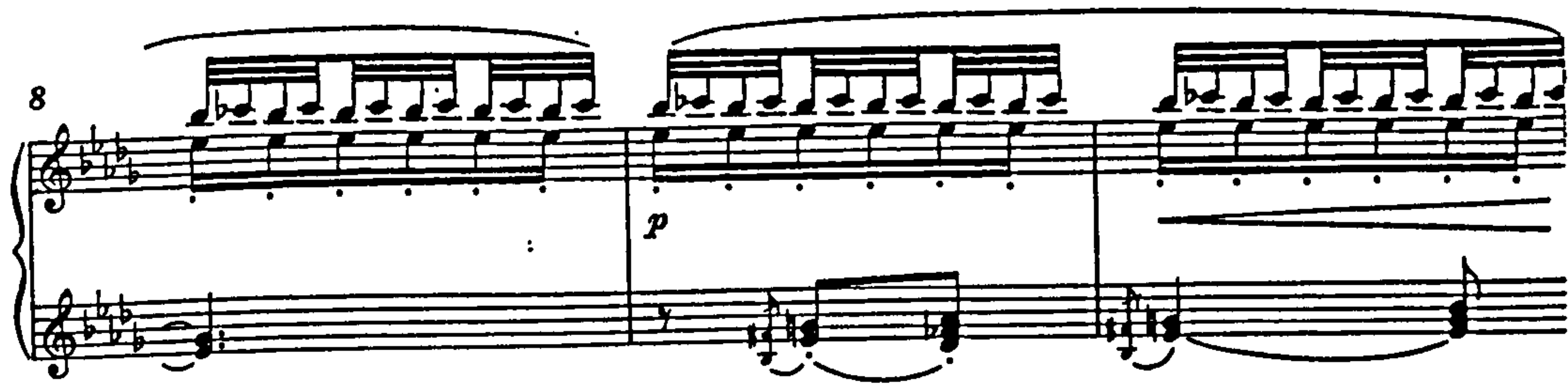
Example 31. 'Feuilles mortes' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 10-14



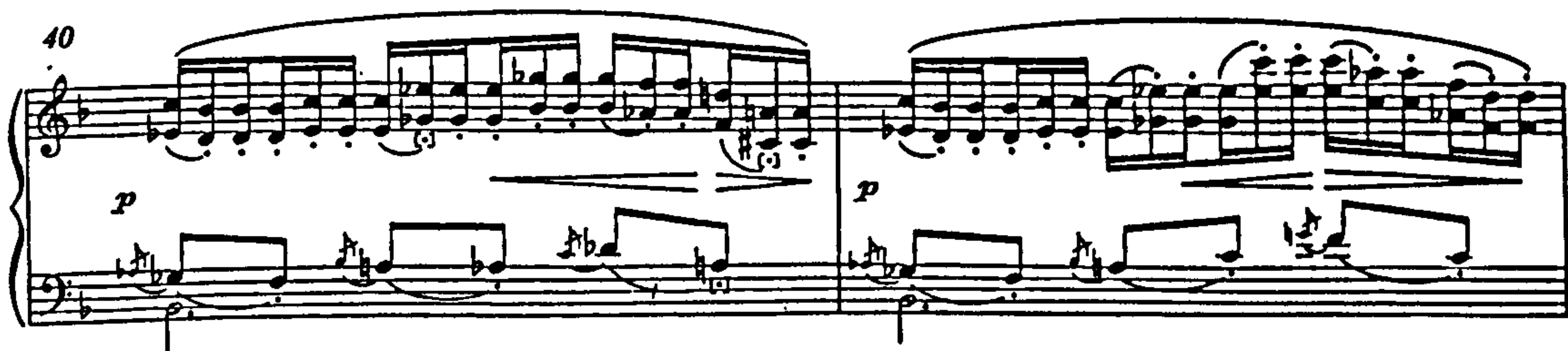
Example 32. 'Feux d'artifice' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 57-59



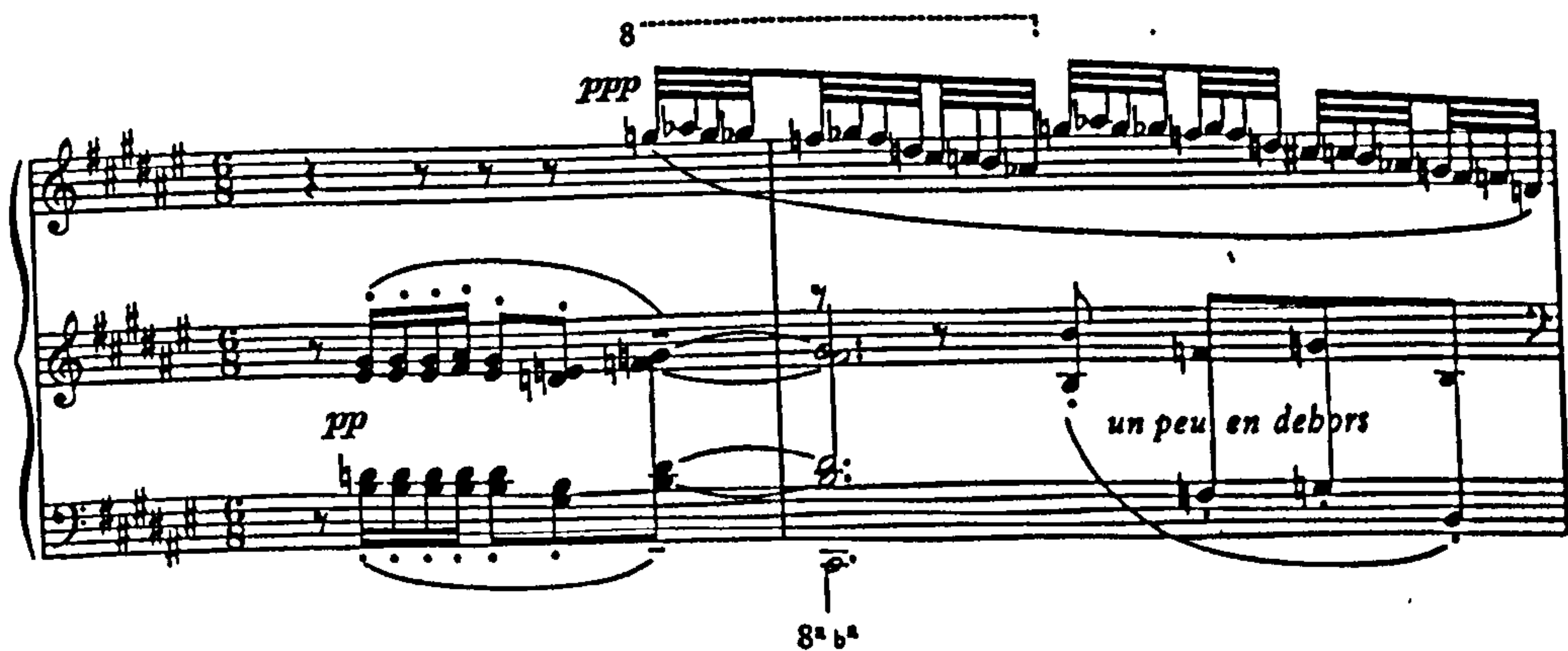
Example 33. 'Le vent dans la plaine' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 9-12



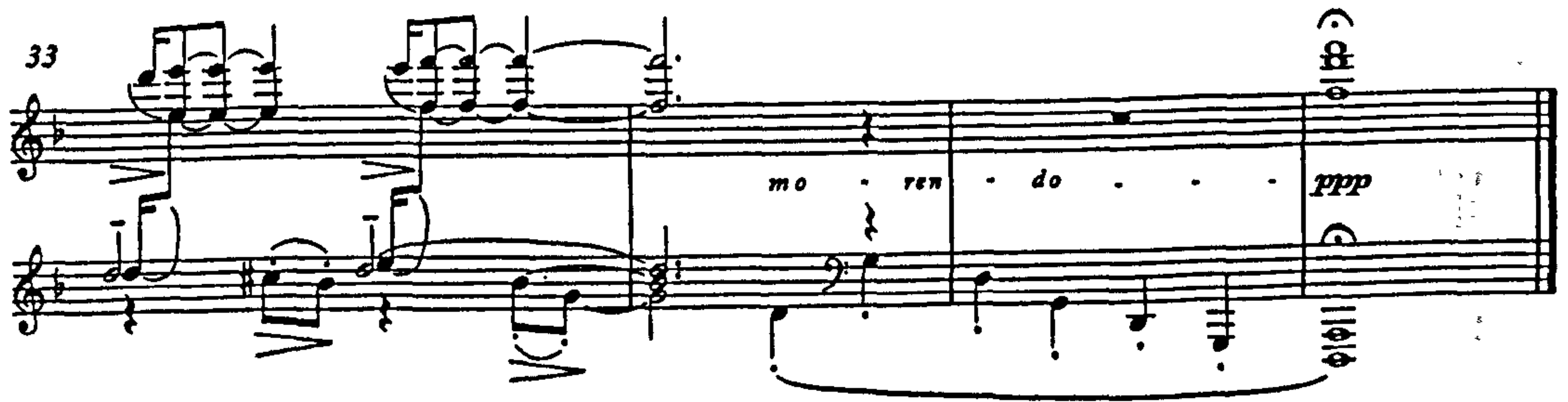
Example 34. 'Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 8-10



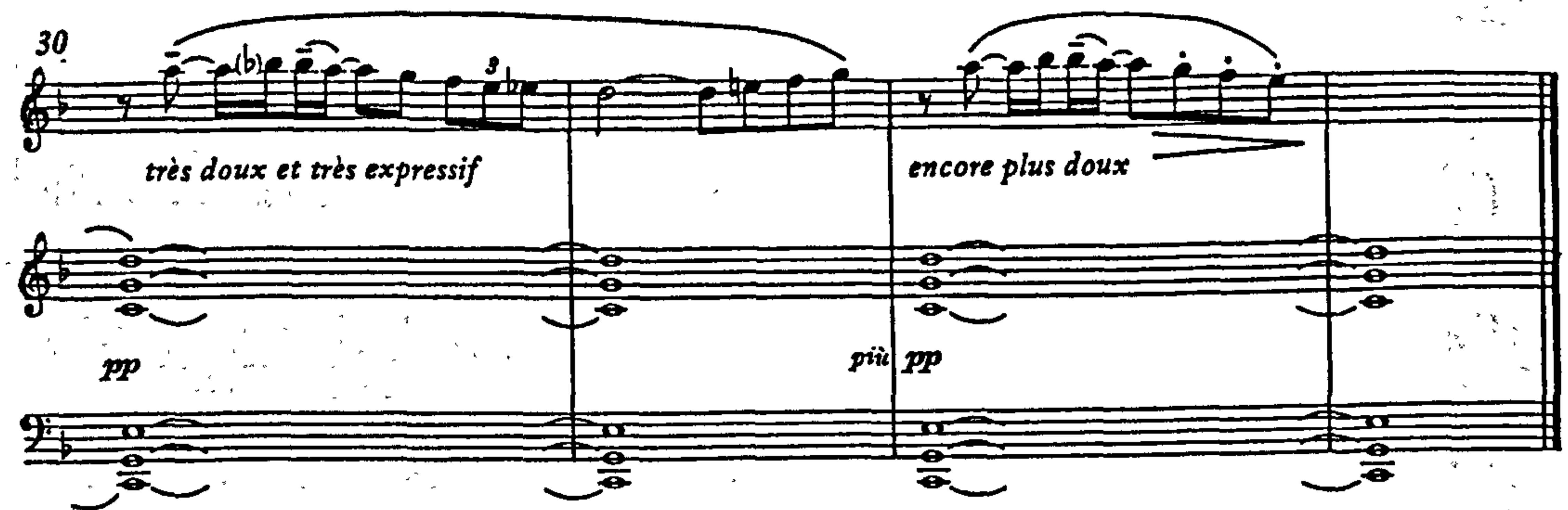
Example 35. 'Pour les sixtes' from the *Etudes*, bars 40-41



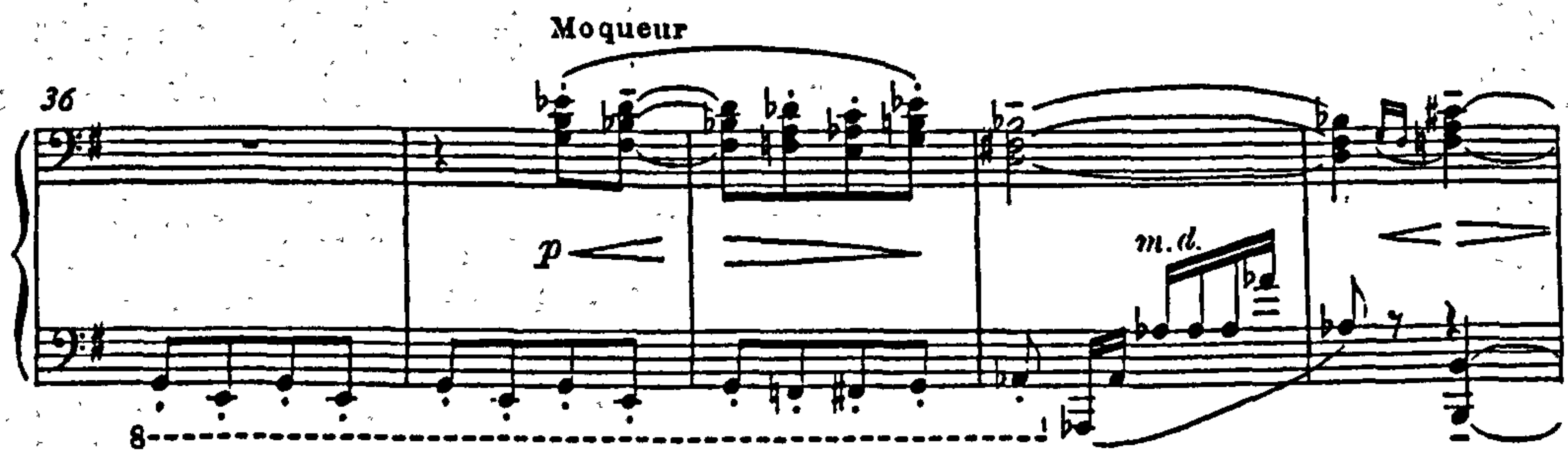
Example 36. 'La terrasse des audiences du calir de lune' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 1-2



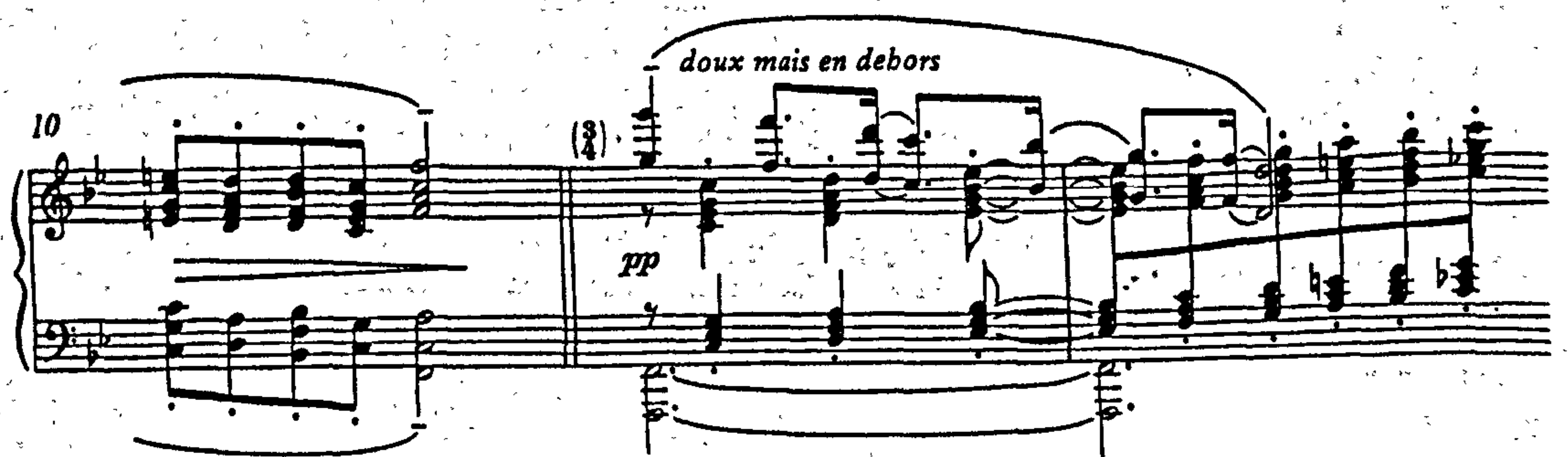
Example 37. 'Des pas sur la neige' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 33-36



Example 38. 'Canope' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 30-33



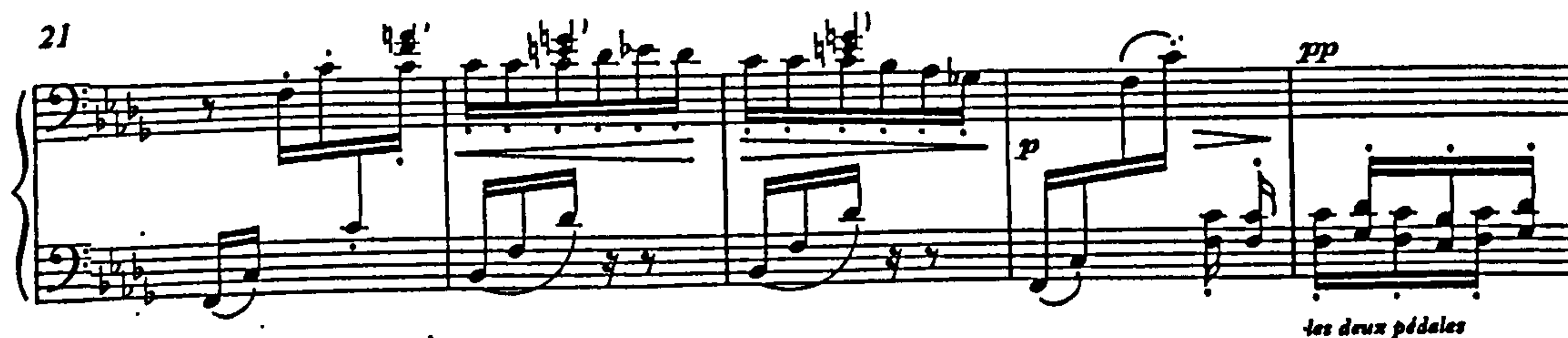
Example 39. 'Minstrels' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 36-40



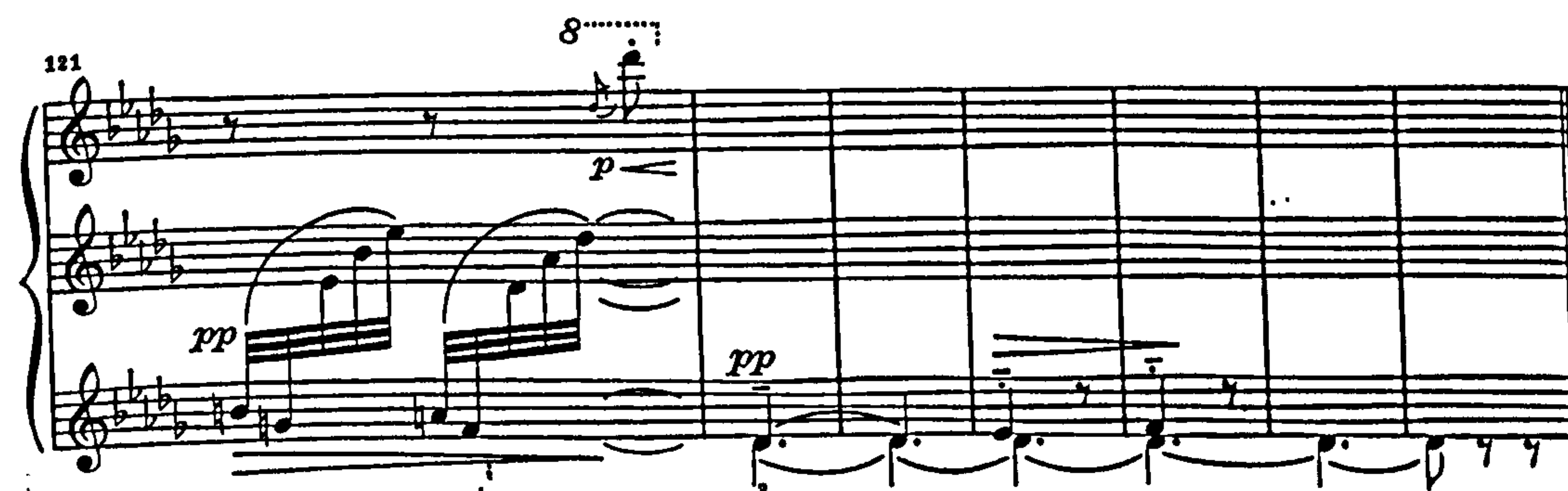
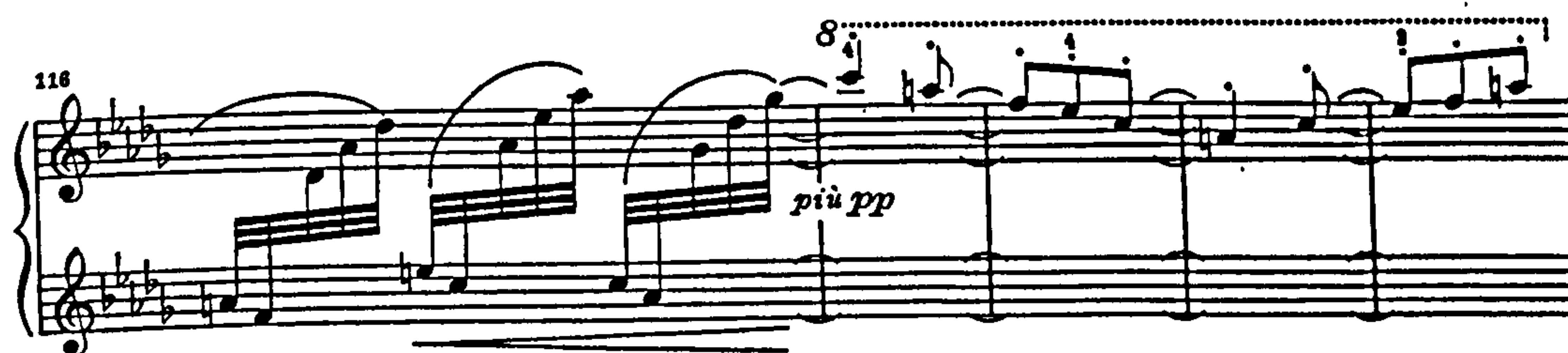
Example 40. 'Danseuses de Delphes' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 10-12



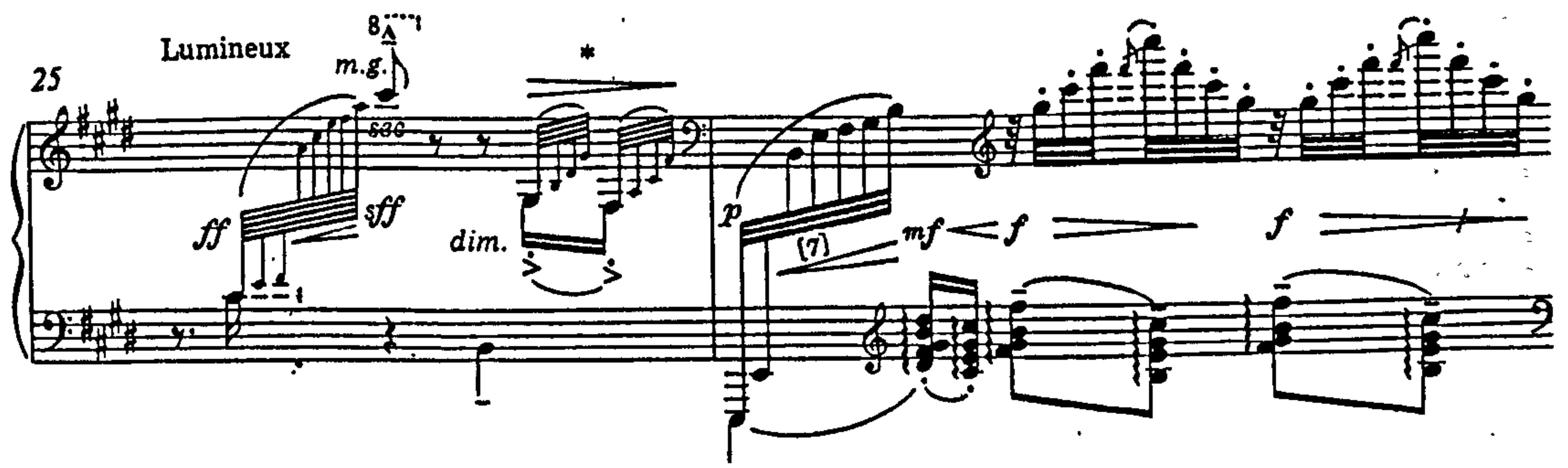
Example 41. 'Le vent dans la plaine' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 1-2



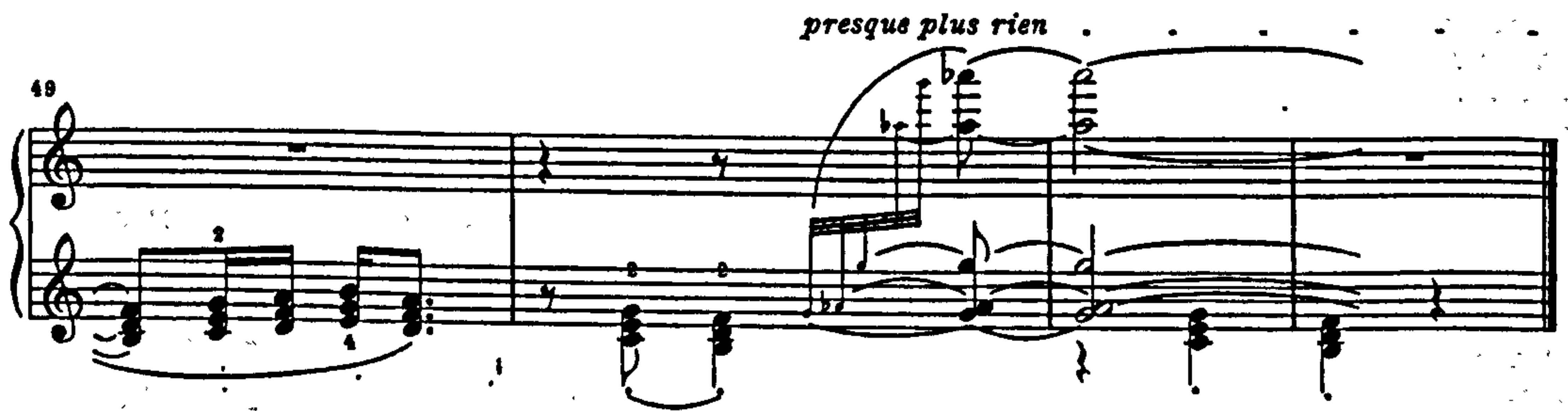
Example 42. 'La sérénade interrompue' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 21-30



Example 43. 'Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 116-127



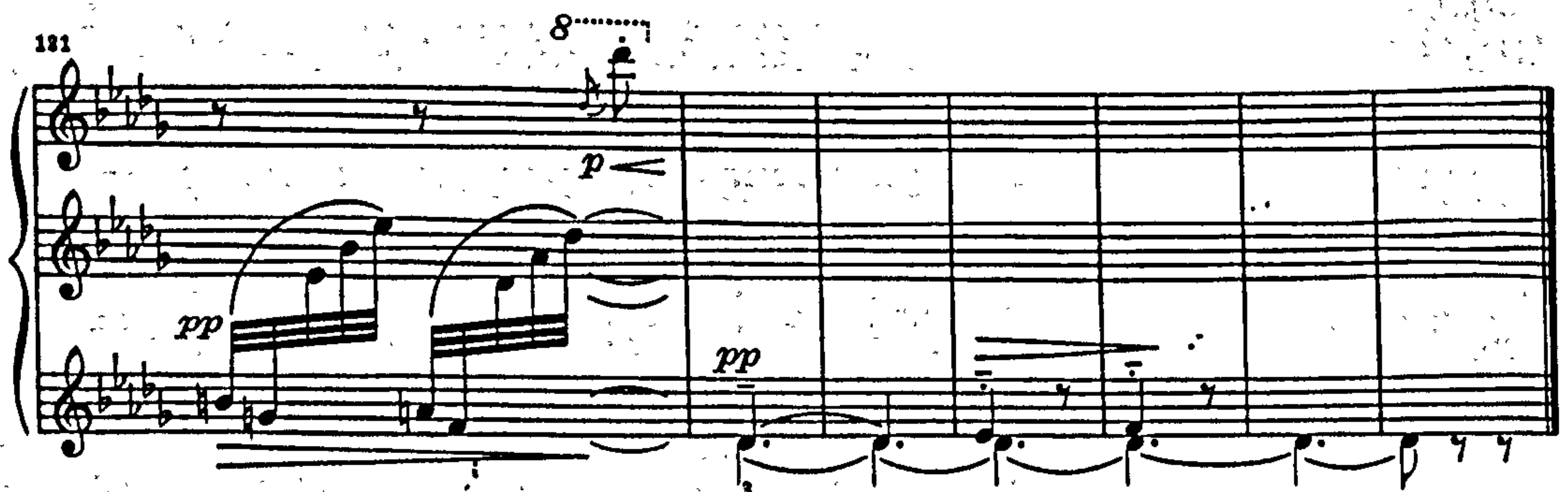
Example 44. 'Pour les arpèges composés' from the *Etudes*, bars 25-26



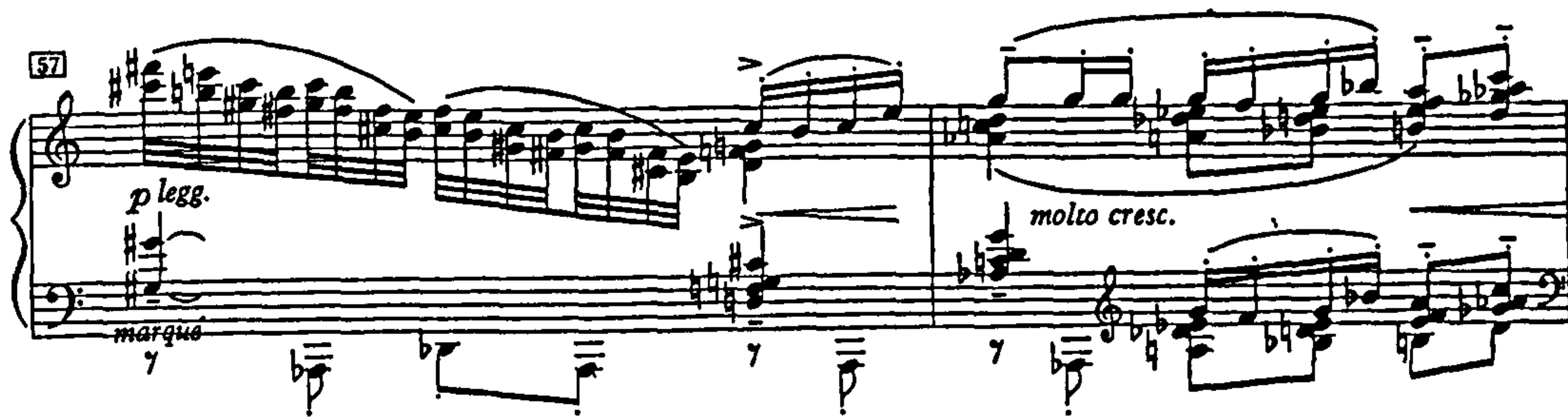
Example 45. 'Brouillards' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 49-52



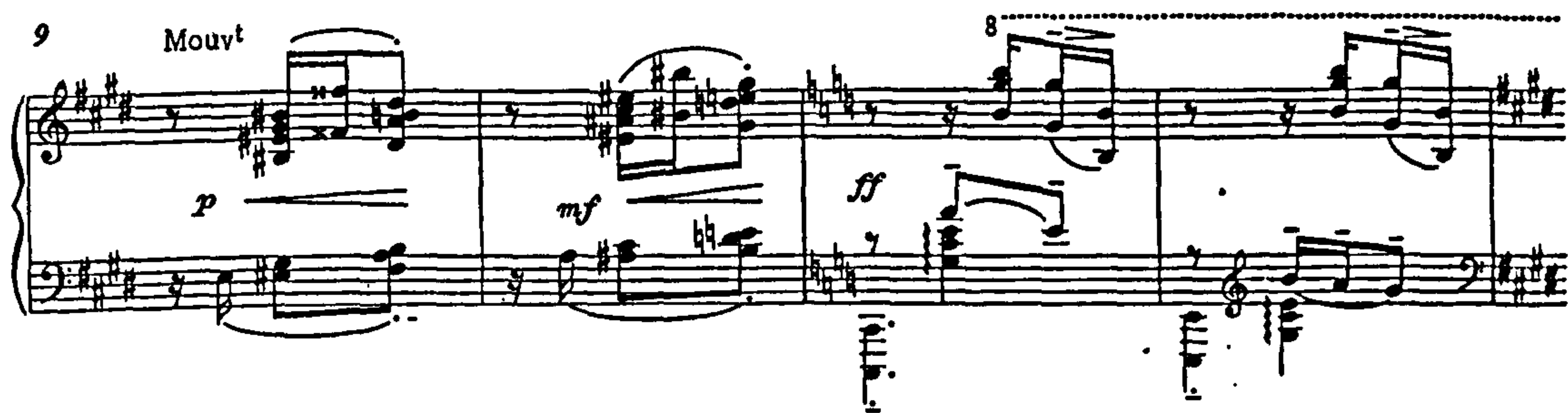
Example 46. 'Pour les accords' from the *Etudes*, bars 1-5



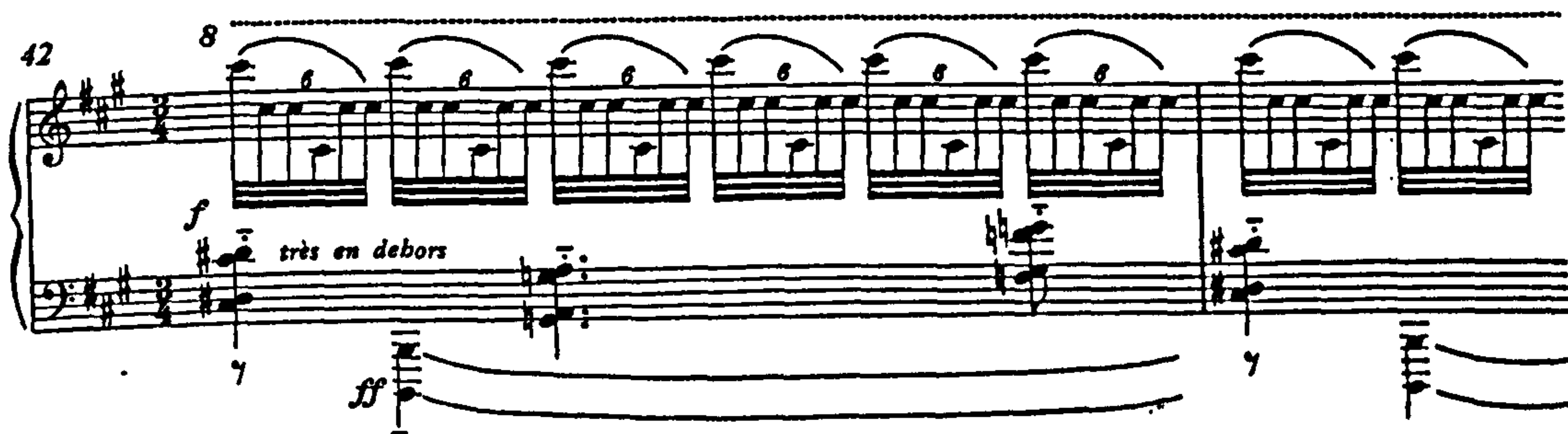
Example 47. 'Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 121-127



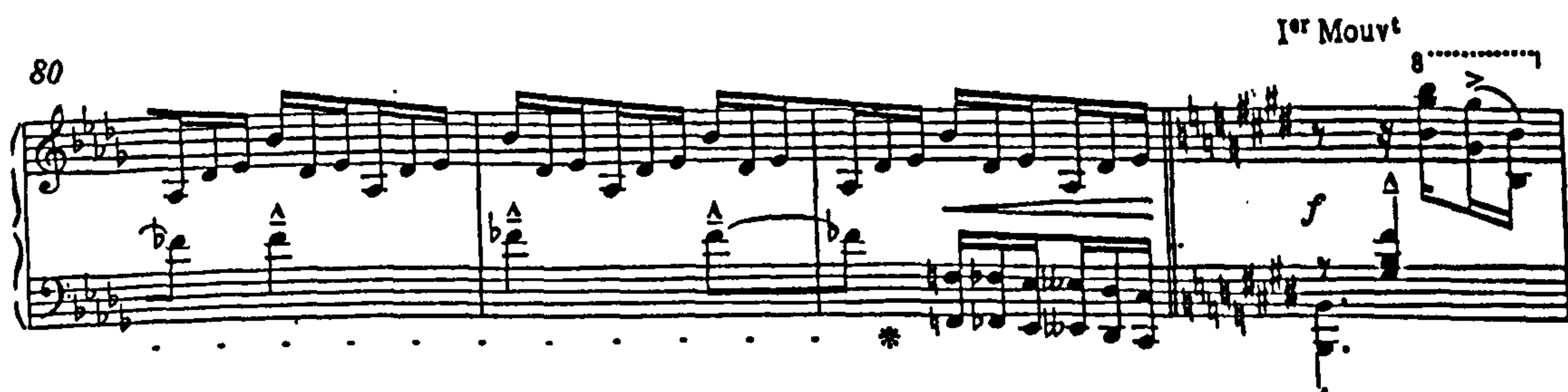
Example 48. 'Pour les quartes' from the *Etudes*, bars 57-58



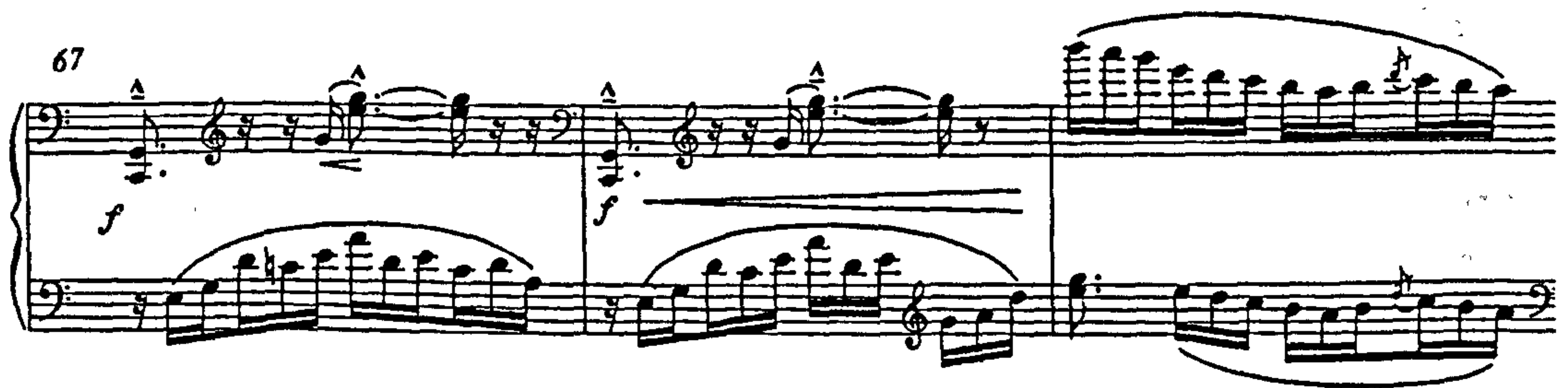
Example 49. 'Pour les octaves' from the *Etudes*, bars 9-12



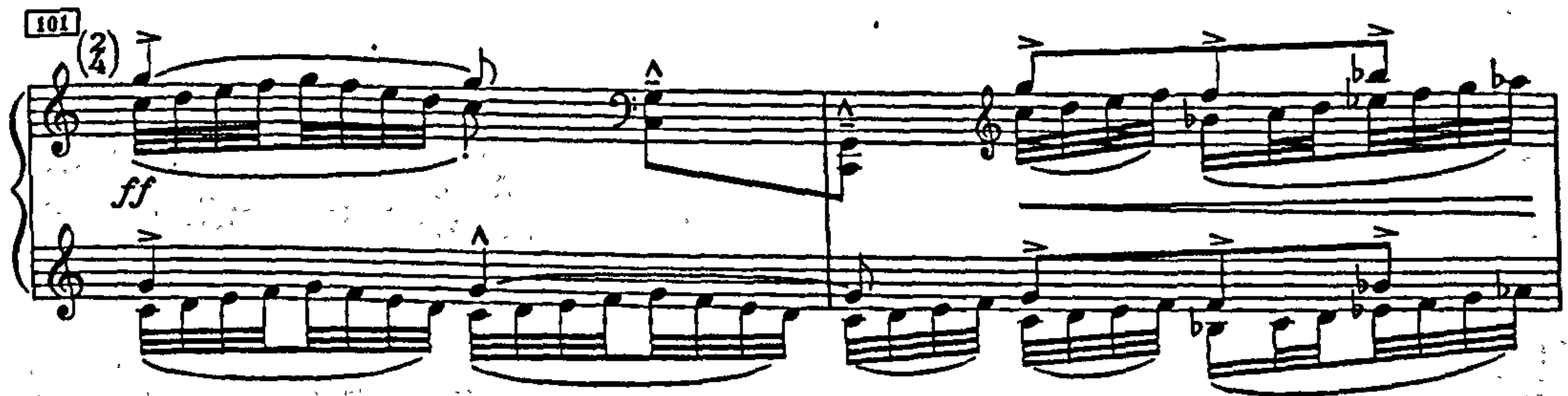
Example 50. 'Ce qu' a vu le vent d' ouest' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 42-43



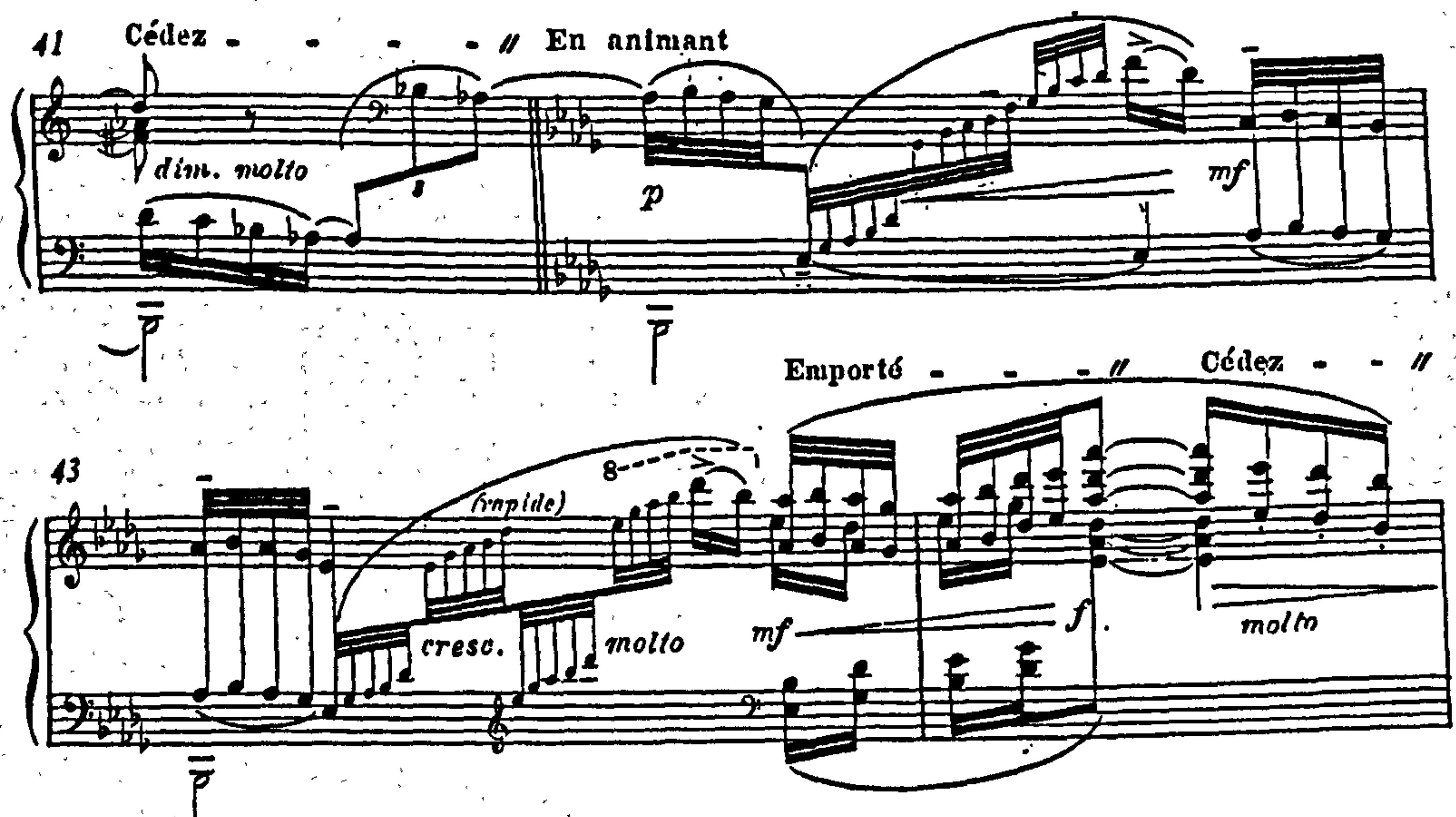
Example 51. 'Pour les octaves' from the *Etudes*, bars 80-83



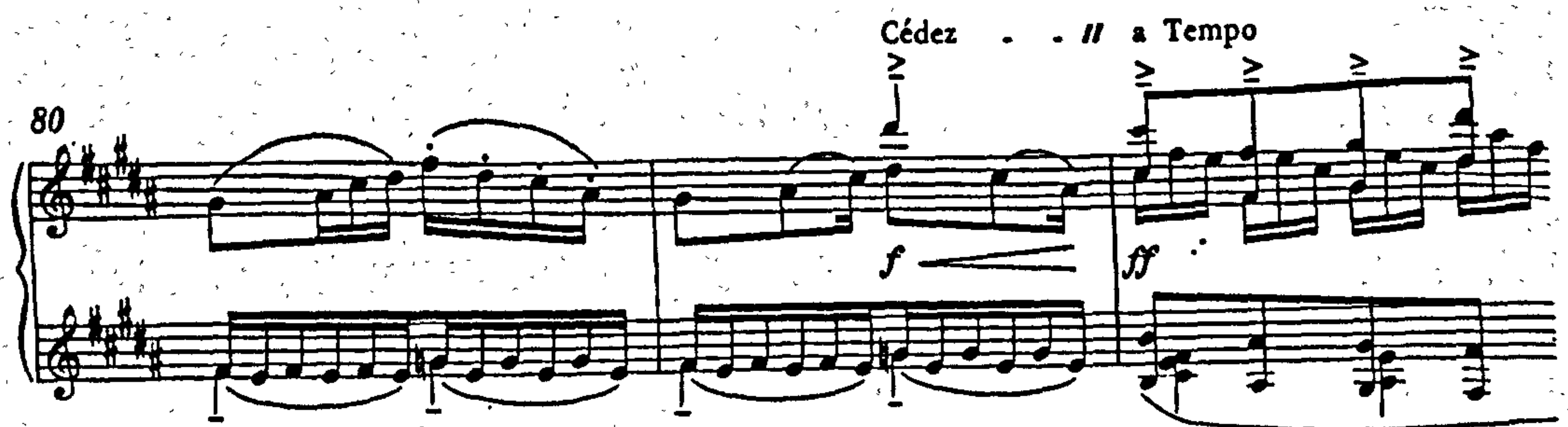
Example 52. 'Pour les cinq doigts' from the *Etudes*, bars 67-69



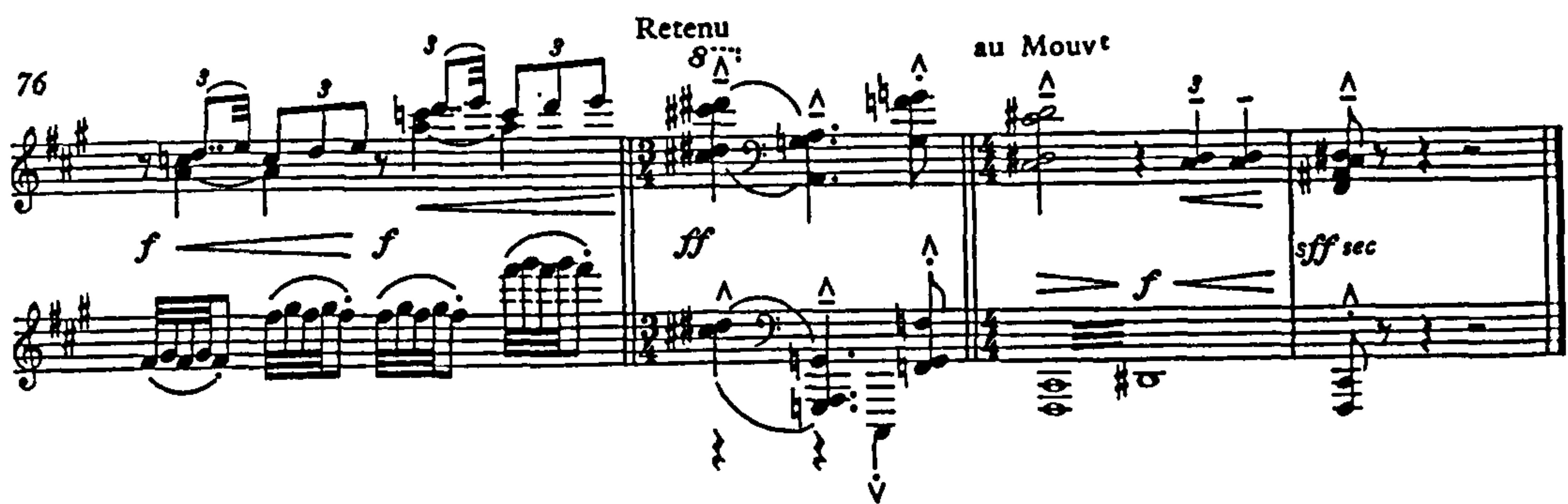
Example 53. 'Pour les cinq doigts' from the *Etudes*, bars 101-102



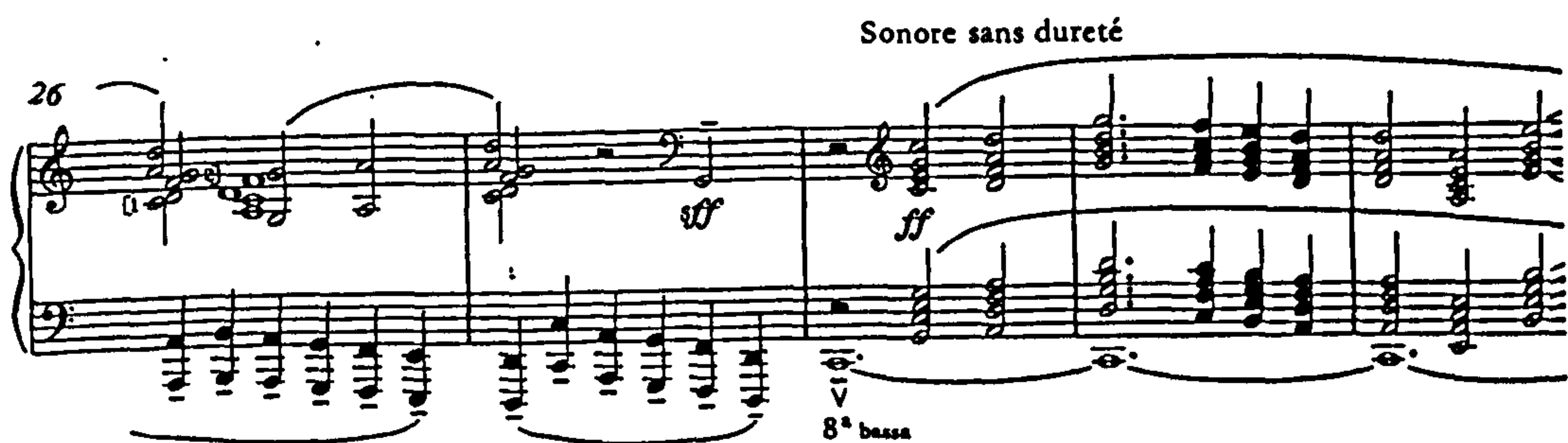
Example 54. 'Voiles' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 41-44



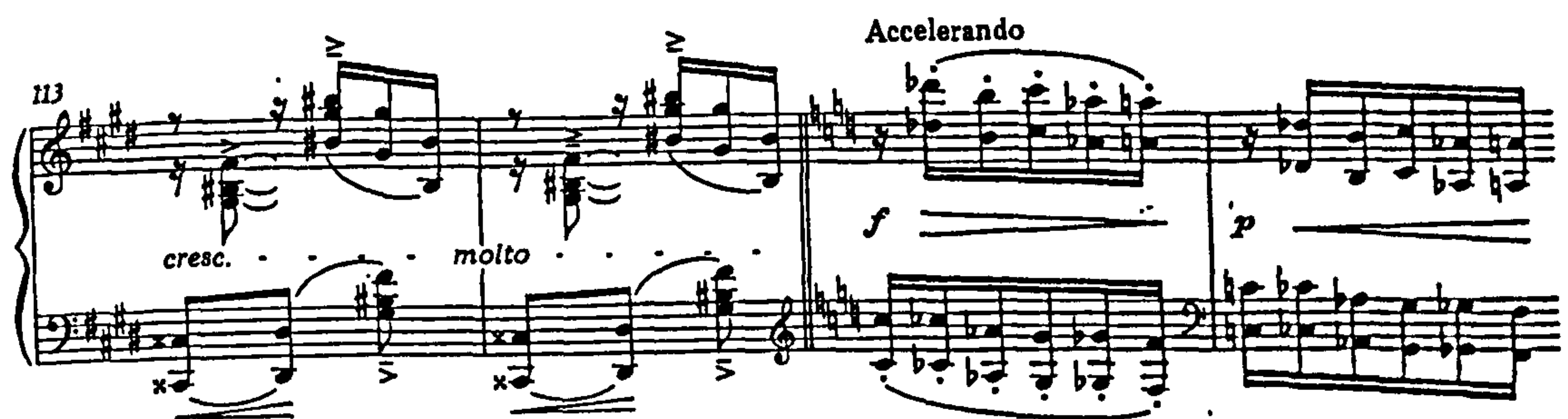
Example 55. 'Les Collines d' Anacapri' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 80-82



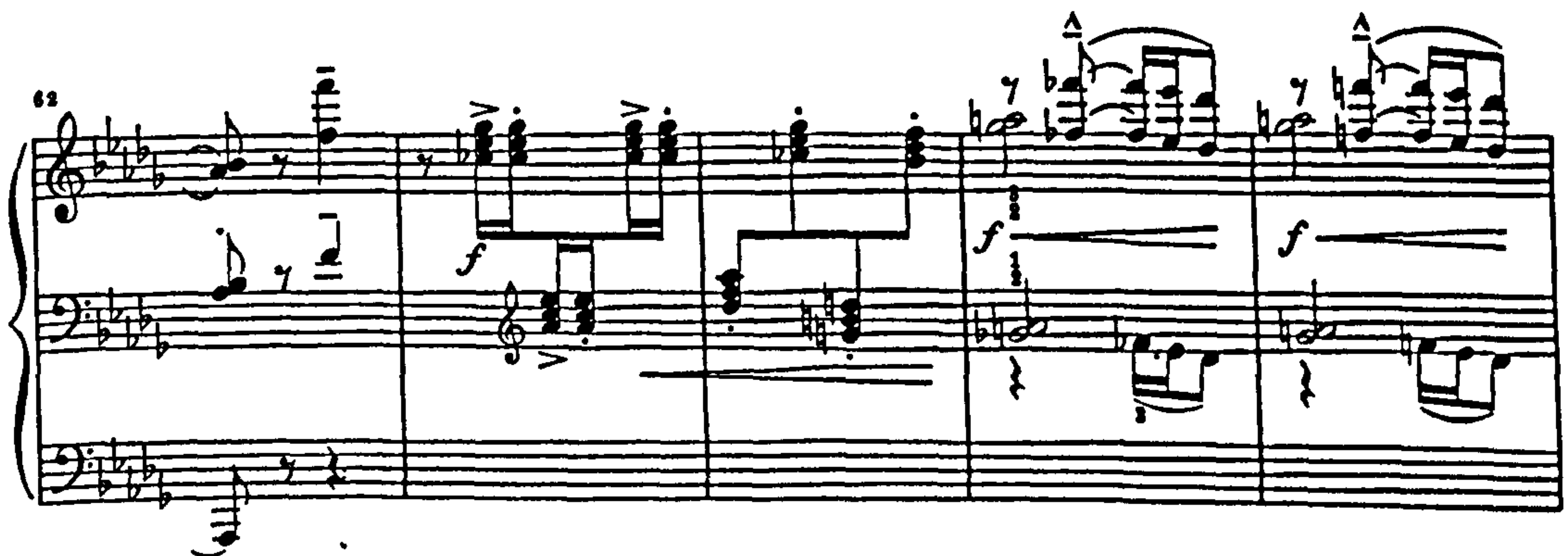
Example 56. 'Ce qu' a vu le vent d' ouest' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 76-79



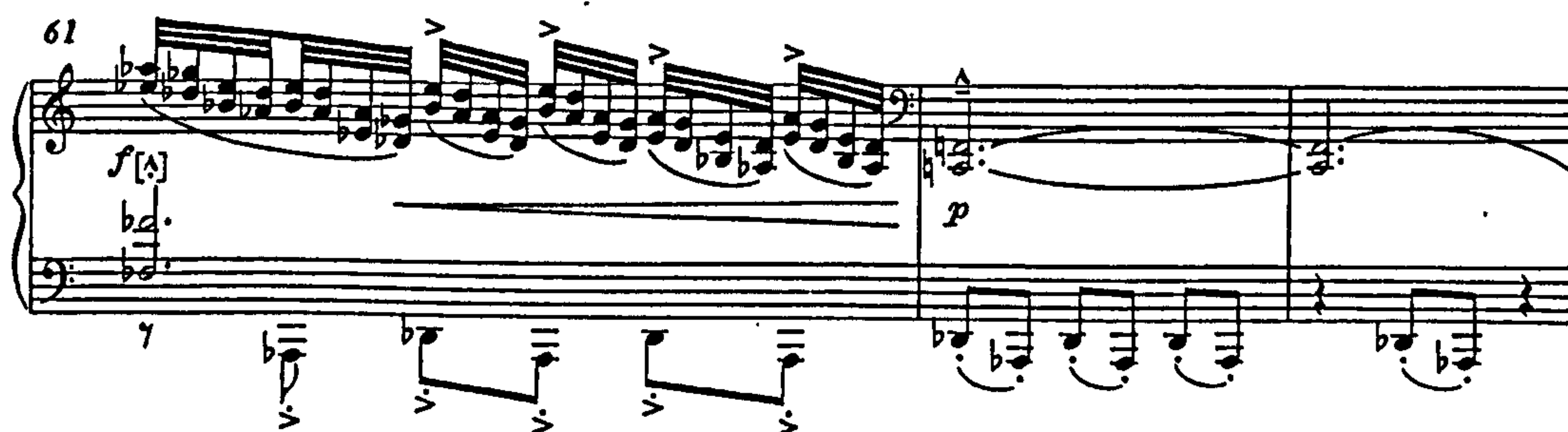
Example 57. 'La Cathédrale engloutie' from *Préludes* Book I, bars 26-30



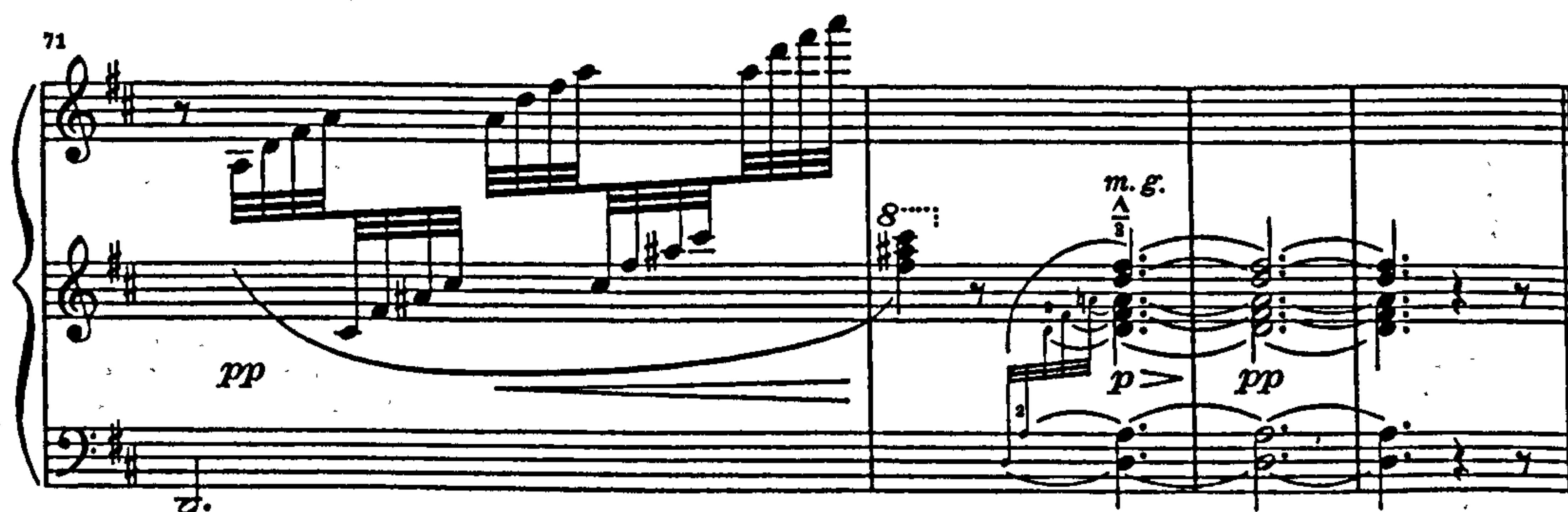
Example 58. 'Pour les octaves' from the *Etudes*, bars 113-116



Example 59. 'General Lavine-eccentric' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 62-66



Example 60. 'Pour les quartes' from the *Etudes*, bars 61-63



Example 61. 'Ondine' from *Préludes* Book II, bars 71-74

Appendix 2

Transcriptions of Debussy's use of the *damper* and *una corda* pedals, as recorded in the Welte Mignon Piano Rolls No. 2733, 2734, 2735, 2736 (Licensee) and 2738, 2739 (Red T-100)

Notes on transcriptions:

- The use of the *damper* pedal is indicated by a straight horizontal line under the stave.
- The use of the *una corda* pedal is indicated by the initials U.C. for its application and T.C. for its release.
- All transcriptions were based on the Piano Rolls held in Denis Condon's private collection in Sydney, Australia

Piano Roll No.2733

Children's Corner

Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum

Jumbo's Lullaby

Serenade for the Doll

The snow is dancing

The little Shepherd

Golliwogg's cake walk

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TEXT IN ORIGINAL IS
CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF
THE PAGE

I. — Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum

Modérément animé

First system of musical notation. The treble clef staff contains a continuous eighth-note melody. The bass clef staff contains a single half note. The dynamic marking *p* égal et sans sécheresse is written below the treble staff.

U.C. 1

Second system of musical notation, starting with a measure number 3. The treble clef staff features a triplet of eighth notes followed by eighth-note patterns. The bass clef staff contains a simple eighth-note accompaniment.

Third system of musical notation, starting with a measure number 6. The treble clef staff has a melodic line with slurs. The bass clef staff features a series of descending eighth-note patterns. Dynamic markings *p* and *pp* are present.

Fourth system of musical notation, starting with a measure number 9. The treble clef staff continues the melodic line. The bass clef staff features descending eighth-note patterns. Dynamic markings *pp* and *cresc.* are present.

T.C.

12

15

18

21

Un peu retenu (- - -) // a Tempo

24 *m.g.*

T.C.

27 *expressif* *m.g.*

U.C. T.C.

30

Retenu dim. U.C.

33 1° Tempo

p *expressif* *più p*

37 *Animez un peu*

pp *expressif* *expressif*

41 *Retenu* - - - - -

pp *expressif* *pp* *expressif*

T.C. U.C.

45 *1° Tempo*

pp *pp*

48

pp

51

pp

T.C.

54

pp

cre - - - scen - - - do - - -

U.C.

T.C.

En animant peu à peu

57

f

60

f

63

66

Très animé

69

72

più f

ff

II. — Jumbo's Lullaby

Assez modéré

p doux et un peu gauche

U.C.

R:

pp >

pp

les 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

14

p *pp* *ppp*

pp *ppp*

19

un peu en dehors

23

27

31

35

* Un peu plus mouvementé

39

Measures 39-42 of a musical score. The piece is in B-flat major (two flats). Measure 39 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with a long, expressive slur spanning measures 39 and 40, and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 41. The left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The system concludes with a repeat sign.

43

Measures 43-46 of a musical score. Measure 43 begins with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 45, marked with the word "marqué". The left hand continues with an eighth-note accompaniment. The system ends with a repeat sign and the marking "T.C." (Tutti Coda).

47

Measures 47-50 of a musical score. Measure 47 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features a complex, rapid melodic line with many beamed sixteenth notes. The left hand plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The system concludes with a repeat sign and the marking "U.C." (Uitendacle).

51

Measures 51-54 of a musical score. Measure 51 begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 53, marked with the word "R:". The left hand plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The system concludes with a repeat sign and the marking "p" (piano).

55

Measures 55-58 of a musical score. Measure 55 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with a slur and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 57. The left hand plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The system concludes with a repeat sign and the marking "p" (piano).

59 *p* *p* Retenu

p *più p*

63 1° Tempo

pp

67

pp

71 *sempre pp et sans res.*

pp

75

pp mo - ren - do

8^a bassa

III. — Serenade for the Doll

Allegretto ma non troppo

* Très léger et gracieux

pp

(la m.g. un peu en dehors)

U.C.

5

9

(la m.d. un peu en dehors)

p pp

13

f p

* Il faudra mettre la pédale sourde pendant toute la durée de ce morceau, même aux endroits marqués d'un *f*
[Note de Debussy. Note by Debussy]

17 *poco a poco*

21 *crescendo*

25 *Un peu retenu*

29 *a Tempo*

33 *p e dim.*

37

più p

41

Cédez - - - a Tempo

pp

45

pp

p expressif

49

p

T.C. U.C.

53

En animant un peu

p

T.C.

57

p

61

a Tempo

pp

66

p *pp*

71

p *sf* *pp*

75

sf *p* *sf* T.C.

Sans retarder

79

Measures 79-83. The score is in G major (one sharp). Measure 79 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measures 80-82 feature a fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic with a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking, leading to a *molto* marking in measure 83. The piece concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

V.C.

84

Measures 84-88. The score continues in G major. Measure 84 begins with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The melody in the treble clef is characterized by eighth-note patterns. The bass line continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

89

Measures 89-92. The score continues in G major. Measure 89 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 90 features a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. Measure 91 returns to piano (*p*). Measure 92 concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The bass line continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

T.C.

V.C.

93

Measures 93-97. The score continues in G major. Measure 93 starts with a *più p* (pianissimo) dynamic. Measure 94 features a piano (*p*) dynamic with the instruction *expressif*. Measure 95 continues with piano (*p*). Measure 96 features a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 97 concludes with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The bass line continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

R:

98

Measures 98-102. The score continues in G major. Measure 98 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 99 features a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 100 continues with piano (*p*). Measure 101 features a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 102 concludes with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The bass line continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

R:

102

p *pp* *ff* *p*

T.C. U.C.

107

p *mf*

111

p *mf* *p* *mf*

T.C. U.C.

115

più p *pp*

119

più pp *p*

8va 8va

IV. _ The snow is dancing

Modérément animé

pp doux et estompé

p

This system of music is written for piano in 4/4 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'Modérément animé'. The first measure is marked 'pp doux et estompé' and the second measure is marked 'p'.

U.C.

4

p

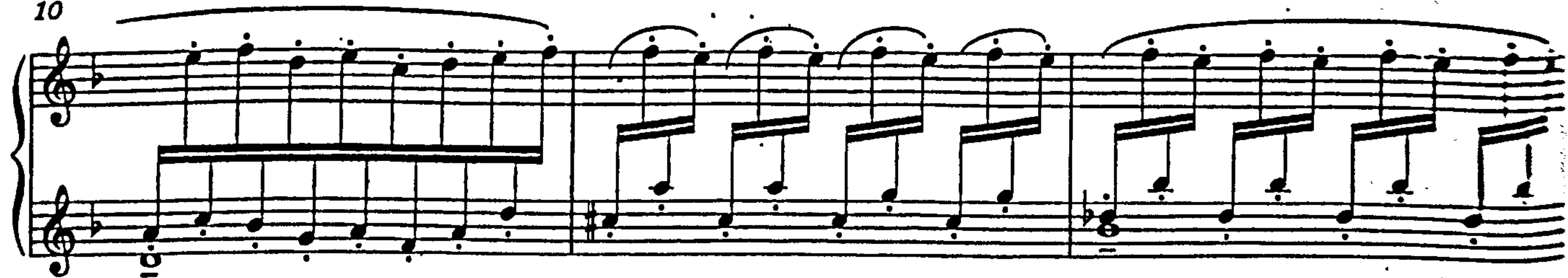
This system of music continues the piece. The right hand has a melodic line with eighth notes, and the left hand has a harmonic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'Modérément animé'. The first measure is marked 'p'.

7

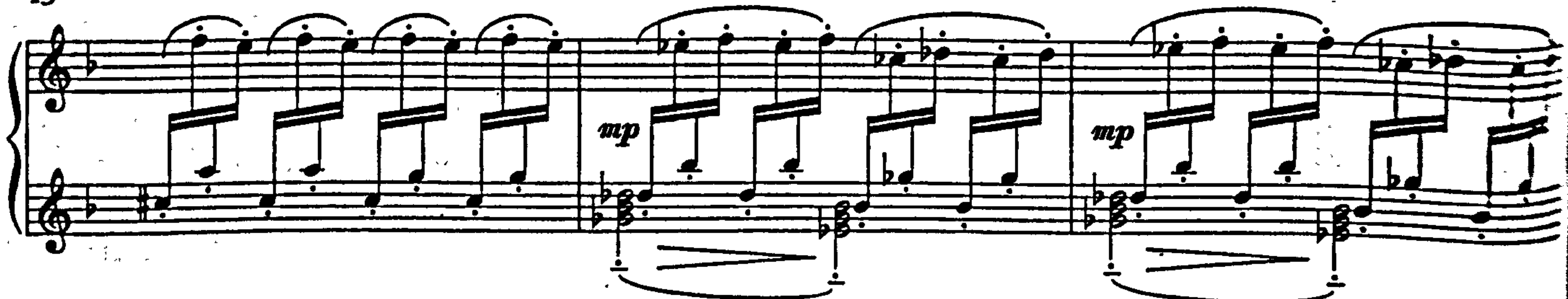
più pp

This system of music continues the piece. The right hand has a melodic line with eighth notes, and the left hand has a harmonic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'Modérément animé'. The first measure is marked 'più pp'.

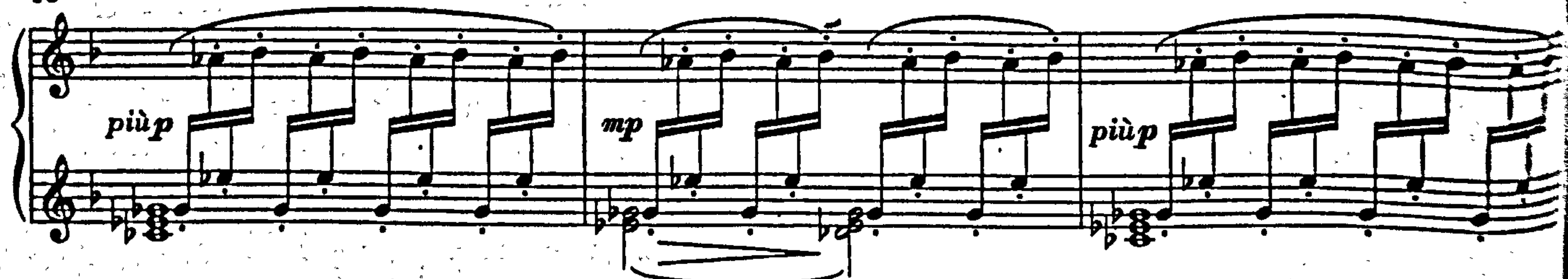
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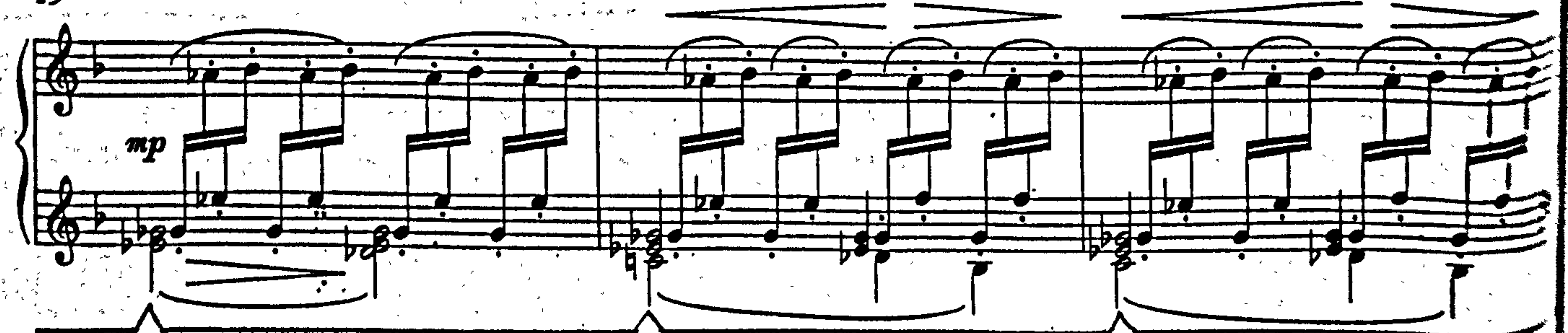
13



16



19



22 *doux et triste*

25 *più p*

28 *pp*

31 *pp*

34 Cédez un peu

p (un peu en dehors)

pp

au Mouvt

37

sf

p *pp*

pp

T.C.

U.C.

40

pp

p léger, mais marqué

pp

p

R:

T.C.

43 Cédez un peu

p

U.C.

46 *au Mouvt*

T.C.

49

52 (2/4)

U.C.

55

58

61

64

sempre pp

67

molto pp e perdendosi

8

70

8

ppp

pp

pp

72

8

Sans retenir

ppp

pp

V. - The little Shepherd

Très modéré

p très doux et délicatement expressif

U.C. T.C. U.C.

Plus mouvementé

p *poco*

au Mouvt

Cédez - - - //

p *più p* *pp* *ppp*

au Mouvt

p *p*

T.C. U.C.

15 . Cédez - - - // *ppp*

più p *pp* *ppp*

19 au Mouvt Plus mouvementé

un poco più forte *p*

T.C. U.C.

22 Poco animato - - - - - [au Mouvt]

cre - - - scen - - - do - - - *mf* *p*

T.C. U.C.

25 Un peu retenu (en conservant le rythme)

p *più p* *pp* *pp*

28 Cédez - - - //

p *pp* *ppp*

VI. — Golliwogg's cake walk

Allegro giusto

First system of music (measures 1-4). The piece is in 2/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Allegro giusto'. The first staff (treble clef) contains the melody, and the second staff (bass clef) contains the accompaniment. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *più f* (further forte). There are several accents and slurs. A 'T.C.' (Tutti Coda) marking is present below the first staff.

Second system of music (measures 5-10). The first staff (treble clef) continues the melody, and the second staff (bass clef) continues the accompaniment. Dynamics include *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and *pp* (pianissimo). The instruction 'Très net et très sec' (Very clear and very dry) is written above the first staff. A 'T.C.' (Tutti Coda) marking is present below the second staff.

Third system of music (measures 11-15). The first staff (treble clef) continues the melody, and the second staff (bass clef) continues the accompaniment. Dynamics include *sf* (sforzando), *p* (piano), and *ff* (fortissimo). There are several accents and slurs.

Fourth system of music (measures 16-20). The first staff (treble clef) continues the melody, and the second staff (bass clef) continues the accompaniment. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *molto* (much). There are several accents and slurs.

21

p cre - scen do - - - *f* *ff*

U.C. T.C.

26

p *p* *p*

U.C. T.C.

31

più p *f* *ff* *p*

U.C. T.C.

36

p *f* *f*

U.C. T.C.

41

p *p* *p* *più p*

U.C. T.C.

* See Variant Readings

Un peu moins vite

47

pp *<pp>*

51

55

pp *<pp>*

59

Cédez
p avec une grande émotion

63

a Tempo

Cédez - - - a Tempo

p *pp* *pp* *p* *pp*

T.C.

68 Cédez - - - - - a Tempo

mf f

73 Cédez - - - - - a Tempo Cédez

p pp p

V.C.

77 - - - - - a Tempo Cédez - - - - - a Tempo

p pp f ff

T.C.

82

dim. p

V.C.

86 Retenu - - - - - pp pp

p più p pp

• See Variant Readings

Toujours retenu - - - - - // Tempo 1°

pp

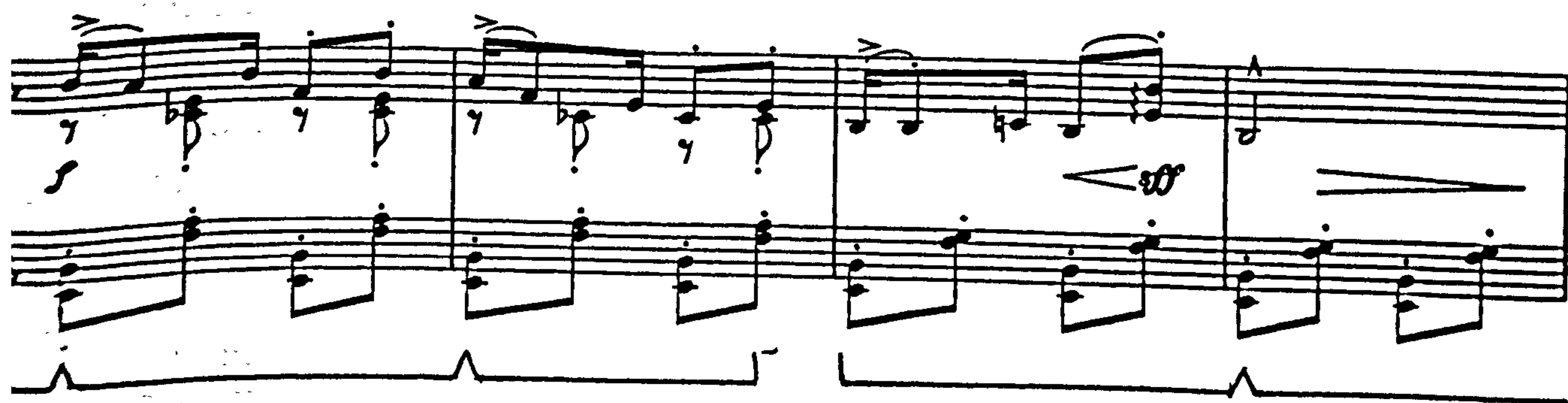
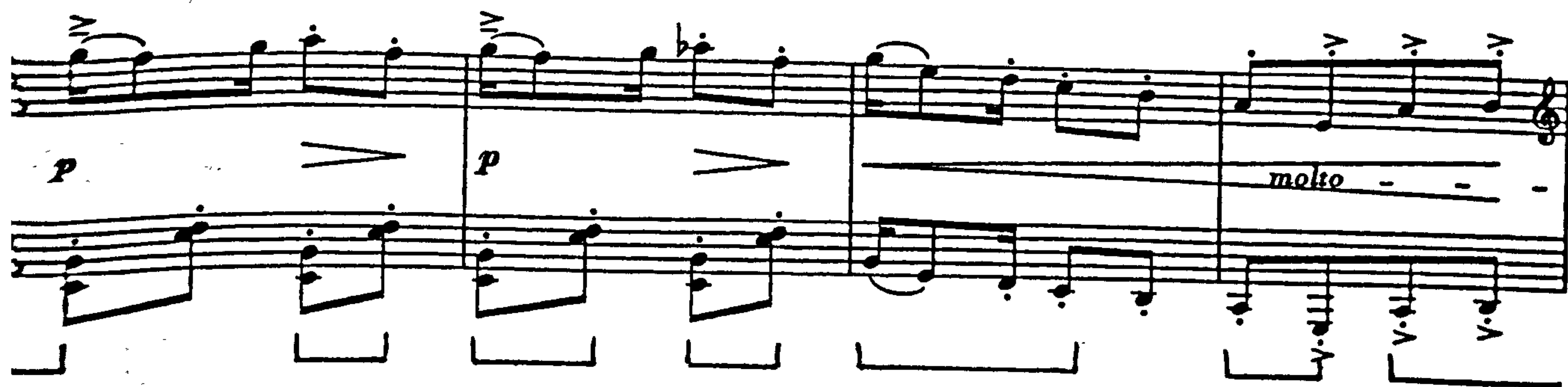
T.C.



p

p

molto



p cre - - - - - scen - - - - - do - - - - -

f

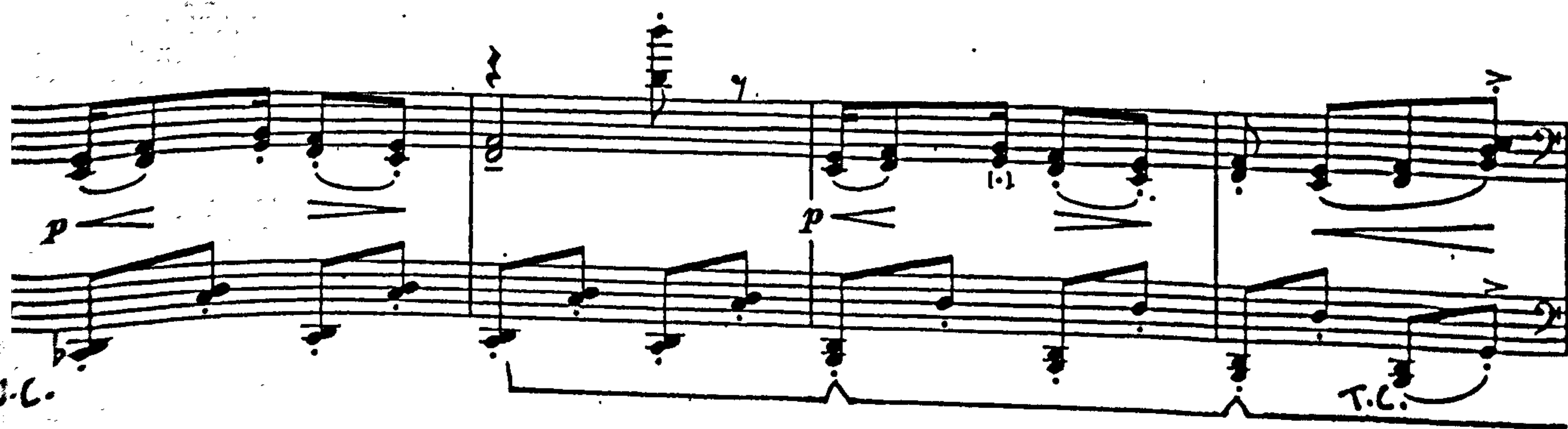
ff



p

p

T.C.



110

p *f* *sf*

U.C. T.C.

114

p *f*

119

f *sf* *p* *p*

U.C.

124

p *f* *sf* *sf*

T.C.

Piano Roll No.2734

D'un cahier d'esquisses

... D'un cahier d'esquisses

* Très lent (sans rigueur)

First system of musical notation, measures 1-4. The score is written for piano in a key with three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The tempo is marked "Très lent (sans rigueur)". The dynamics are *pp* (pianissimo) at measure 1, *ppp* (pianissimissimo) at measure 2, and *pp* at measure 4. The notation includes a variety of note values, rests, and slurs. A wavy line at the bottom indicates a continuous pedal point.

Second system of musical notation, measures 5-8. The score continues with the same key signature. The dynamics are *p* (piano) at measure 6 and *p* at measure 8. The notation features more complex rhythmic patterns and slurs. A wavy line at the bottom indicates a continuous pedal point.

Third system of musical notation, measures 9-12. The score continues with the same key signature. The dynamics are *p* (piano) at measure 10, *pp* (pianissimo) at measure 11, and *ppp* (pianissimissimo) at measure 12. The tempo is marked "Retenu" (retained) at measure 10 and "au Mouvt (douxment expressif)" (to the movement, softly expressive) at measure 11. The notation includes a variety of note values, rests, and slurs. A wavy line at the bottom indicates a continuous pedal point.

Rubato - - - -

Rubato - - - -

pp *ppp* *pp*

pp *ppp* *pp*

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is marked with 'Rubato' and includes dynamic markings of *pp* (pianissimo), *ppp* (pianississimo), and *pp*. The notation includes various chords and melodic lines with slurs and ties.

au Mouvt

p

(la basse toujours un peu flottante)

The second system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is marked with 'au Mouvt' (allegretto) and includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). A note in the bass staff is marked with '(la basse toujours un peu flottante)' (the bass is always a little floating). The notation includes various chords and melodic lines with slurs and ties.

En animant peu à peu

poco a poco cresc.

The third system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is marked with 'En animant peu à peu' (gradually increasing animation) and includes a dynamic marking of *poco a poco cresc.* (poco a poco crescendo). The notation includes various chords and melodic lines with slurs and ties.

24

mf

p dim.

T.C. U.C.

27

Retenu - - au Mouvt

p

pp mf

p dim. -

T.C.

30

En animant

f

p

più p dim. -

m.g.

p

U.C. T.C.

(en dehors)

p *mf* *f* *dim.*

U.C.

Rubato

pp *ppp* *[pp]* *pp*

ad libitum

pp *f* *p*

T.C. U.C.

(43)

8

ppp

pp

44

(J = J.)

pp

ppp

expressif (un peu en dehors)

46

p

p

Musical score system 1, measures 1-4. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth notes, some marked with a '7' (seventh) and others with a '51' (51st). The middle staff is in bass clef and contains a series of triplet eighth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a single eighth note. The dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) is present. A repeat sign is at the end of the system.

Musical score system 2, measures 5-8. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth notes, some marked with a '7'. The middle staff is in bass clef and contains a series of triplet eighth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a series of triplet eighth notes. The dynamic marking *pp* is present. The instruction "Encore plus lent et plus lointain" is written above the staff. A repeat sign is at the end of the system.

Musical score system 3, measures 9-12. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth notes, some marked with a '7'. The middle staff is in bass clef and contains a series of triplet eighth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a series of triplet eighth notes. The dynamic marking *pp* is present. A repeat sign is at the end of the system.

Piano Roll No.2735

‘La soirée dans Grenade’

(from *Estampes*)

La soirée dans Grenade . . .

Mouvement de Habanera
(Commencer lentement dans un rythme nonchalamment gracieux)

U.C.

ppp

ppp

pp expressif et lointain

Retenu - - - - - Tempo giusto

ppp

pp

19

pp

pp

R:

23

Tempo rubato

p *expressif*

dim.

Retenu

28

p

Tempo giusto

pp

pp

32

mf

dim.

R:

T.C.

Très rythmé
mf en augmentant beaucoup

p

U.C. T.C.

dim. - - - - - *più dim.*

53

V.C.

57

p *p* *pp* *p*

61

Tempo rubato
p *expressif*

pp

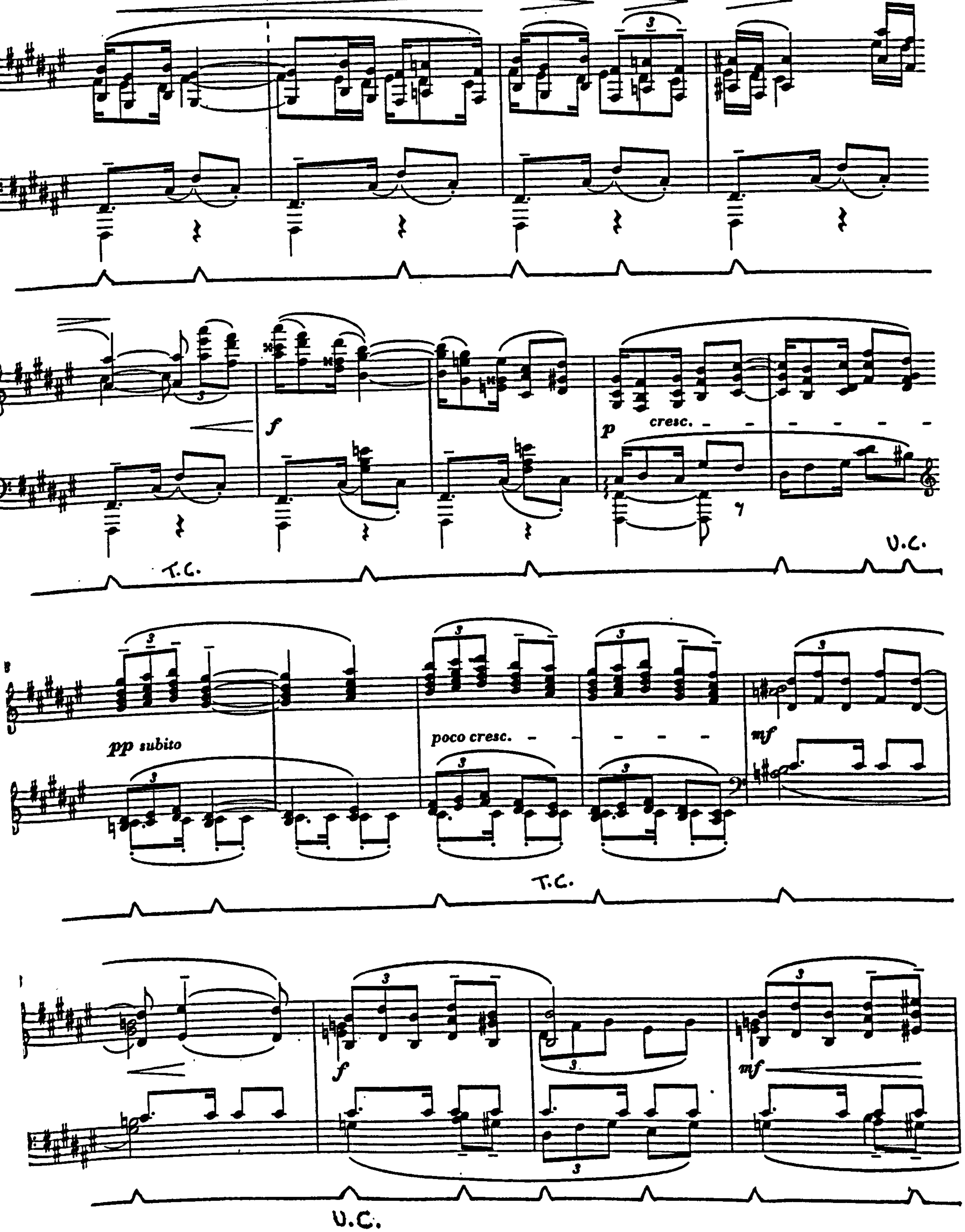
65

dim. *p*

Tempo 1° (avec plus d'abandon)

Retenu *pp*

R: 



pp subito *poco cresc.* *mf* *f* *mf*

T.C. V.C. T.C. V.C.

87 *dim.* - - - *p*

pp

92 *Tempo giusto*

pp *pp* T.C.

96

pp *pp* V.C.

99

8

23 8

Léger et lointain

(la ♩ de la mesure précédente)

26 8

29

Léger et lointain

(la ♩ de la mesure précédente)

Tempo 1^o

32

117

8 3

Tempo 1^o

più pp

p

dim.

Mouv^t du début

121

ppp

m.d.

m.g.

più dim.

pp

125

m.d.

m.g.

m.d.

m.g.

m.d.

en allant se perdant -

130

Red.

** Red.*

** Red.*

** Red.*

Piano Roll No.2736

La plus que lente

La plus que lente

WALZE

Lent (Molto rubato con morbidezza) ♩ = 104

2

pp

V.C.

6

3 5

mf

T.C. V.C.

11

Retenu

p *più p*

17

Mouvement

pp

Animez un peu

First system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, including a triplet of eighth notes. Bass staff contains a supporting line with notes and rests. A 'T.C.' (Tutti) marking is present below the bass staff. A 'mf' (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking is present above the bass staff.

En serrant

Retenu

molto dim.

Second system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, including a triplet of eighth notes. Bass staff contains a supporting line with notes and rests. A 'molto dim.' (molto diminuendo) dynamic marking is present above the bass staff.

Rubato

p

p

p

p

p

Third system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, including a triplet of eighth notes. Bass staff contains a supporting line with notes and rests. A 'U.C.' (Un poco) marking is present below the bass staff. A 'p' (piano) dynamic marking is present above the bass staff.

Rubato

En serrant

crescendo.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, including a triplet of eighth notes. Bass staff contains a supporting line with notes and rests. A 'crescendo.' marking is present above the bass staff. A 'T.C.' (Tutti) marking is present below the bass staff.

Appassionato

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, including a triplet of eighth notes. Bass staff contains a supporting line with notes and rests. A 'p' (piano) dynamic marking is present above the bass staff. A 'mf' (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking is present above the bass staff. A 'f' (forte) dynamic marking is present above the bass staff.

47

ff

52

p

57

Retenu

Mouvement (Rubato)

cresc.

dim. molto

pp

U.C.

62

f

67

En serrant

dim.

p

léger

T.C. U.C.

T.C.

Retenu **En animant**

p *pp* *p*

1 2 5 3 2

V.C.

T.C. V.C.

Cédez **Cédez encore plus** **Tempo animé**

p *p* *f*

T.C.

Moins animé

p

V.C.

Animé

f

V.C.

98 En retenant Très retenu

p *più p*

103 1er Mouvement (En animant peu à peu)

pp T.C. *pp*

108

p *f*

113 En retenant

p T.C.

Tempo animé

118

p *mf* T.C.

123

f

En serrant

Cérif₂

128

p

léger

132

p

Retenu -

pp

Plus lent

U.C.

De plus en plus lent et *pp* jusqu'à la fin

137

pp

142

morendo

8va

Piano Roll No.2738

**‘Danseuses de Delphes’
‘La Cathédrale engloutie’
‘La danse de Puck’**

(from *Préludes* Book I)

- I.

Lent et grave (♩ = 44)

doux et soutenu

U.C.

4 (1) 7 pp T.C. U.C.

7 7 (1) 7 T.C.

doux mais en dehors

10 (1) 7 pp U.C.

Detailed description: This is a musical score for piano, consisting of four systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-3) is marked 'doux et soutenu' and features a melody in the right hand with a piano (p) dynamic and a sustained bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 4-6) includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand, marked 'pp' (pianissimo), and a 'T.C.' (Tutti) marking. The third system (measures 7-9) continues the melodic development with a 'T.C.' marking. The fourth system (measures 10-12) is marked 'doux mais en dehors' and features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand, marked 'pp'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

13

T.C.

16

U.C.

19

23

27

T.C.

R: dernier accord m.d., mes. 25, 8^{me}
 R: last r.h. chord of bar 25 8th

(... Danseuses de Delphes)

- X.

Profondément calme (Dans une brume doucement sonore)

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system consists of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a vocal line (V.C.). The piano part features a series of chords and arpeggiated figures, with a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo). The vocal line is marked with an 8-measure rest. The second system continues the piano part with more complex arpeggiated patterns and includes a performance instruction: *[♩=♩] Doux et fluide* (Doux et fluide). The vocal line also continues with a melodic line. The third system shows the piano part with further arpeggiated figures and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The vocal line continues with a melodic line. The score is written in a style typical of early 20th-century French music.

[♩ = ♩]

13 *pp*

8.....

pp (sans nuances)

T.C.

(Peu à peu sortant de la brume)

16

sempre pp

p marqué

pp

18

p marqué

pp

p

U.C.

T.C.

marqué

Augmentez progressivement (Sans presser)

20

R.

R.

[♩ = ♩]

12

8

più f

26

Sonore sans dureté

8^a basse

31

8^a basse

8^a basse

36

8^a basse

8^a basse

8^a basse

8^a basse

41

p *più p* *pp* *più pp*

U.C.

Un peu moins lent (dans une expression allant grandissant)

46

pp *expressif et concentré*

51

pp

T.C.

56

p *f*

R.

60

8

ff

molto dim.

V.C.

R.

64

p

70

pp

au Mouvt

pp (Comme un écho de la l
entendue précédemme

(Flottant
et sourd)

8^a bassa

73

8^a bassa

76

8^a bassa

79

8^a bassa

82

Dans la sonorité du début [♩ = ♩]

più pp *pp*

8^a bassa

85

8^a bassa

(... La Cathédrale engloutie)

- XI.

Capricieux et léger (♩ = 138)

First system of musical notation, measures 1-3. Treble and bass staves. Treble staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. Bass staff has a *U.C.* (Unaccompanied) marking. The music features eighth and sixteenth notes with slurs.

Second system of musical notation, measures 4-6. Treble and bass staves. Treble staff has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking and a *Retenu* (Retained) marking. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and slurs.

Third system of musical notation, measures 7-9. Treble and bass staves. Treble staff has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking and a *Mouvt* (Mouvement) marking. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and slurs.

Fourth system of musical notation, measures 10-12. Treble and bass staves. Treble staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and slurs.

Fifth system of musical notation, measures 13-15. Treble and bass staves. Treble staff has a *Pressez* (Press) marking. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and slurs.

16 *Retenu . . . // Mouvt*

dim. *pp*

U.C.

21

pp

R.

26

R.

29

pp aérien

pp

32

p doucement soutenu

First system of musical notation, measures 1-5. The upper staff features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The lower staff contains a bass line with sustained notes and a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking.

Second system of musical notation, measures 6-10. The upper staff continues the melodic pattern. The lower staff shows a bass line with a *p* (piano) dynamic marking.

Third system of musical notation, measures 11-15. The upper staff continues the melodic pattern. The lower staff shows a bass line with a *più p* (pianissimo) dynamic marking.

Fourth system of musical notation, measures 16-20. The upper staff continues the melodic pattern. The lower staff features a bass line with triplets and a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking.

Fifth system of musical notation, measures 21-25. The upper staff continues the melodic pattern. The lower staff features a bass line with triplets and a *p* (piano) dynamic marking.

Cédez // Mouvt

47

pp

51

p

T.C.

V.C.

56

p

pp

8

58

p

6

p

50

p

pp

pp

Cédez . . . //

Mouvt

63

pp un peu en dehors

66

pp

T.C.

En cédant

69

mf *p*

U.C.

Mouvt

73

p *pp* 12

m.g. *m.d.*
(en dehors)

U.C.

Cédez . . . // Mouvt

76

p *sfz*

T.C. U.C.

80 *p*

pp

Retenu

83

// Dans le mouv^t "Retenu"

86 *pp*

tr *pp*

6 *pp*

expressif

Plus retenu

89

6

p marqué

pp

R.

Rapide et fuyant

93

pp

7

10

8

10

(... La danse de Puck)

Piano Roll No.2739

**‘Le vent dans la plaine’
‘Minstrels’**

(from *Préludes* Book I)

- III.

Animé (♩ = 126)

aussi légèrement que possible

pp

U.C.

3

5

R :

7

pp

Cédez // a Tempo

Cédez //

First system of musical notation. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of chords, many of which are beamed together in groups of eight, indicated by a bracket and the number '8'. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a series of chords, some of which are beamed together. The dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) is present at the beginning of the system.

Second system of musical notation. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of chords, many of which are beamed together in groups of six, indicated by a bracket and the number '6'. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a series of chords, some of which are beamed together. The dynamic marking *a Tempo* is present at the beginning of the system.

Third system of musical notation. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of chords, many of which are beamed together in groups of six, indicated by a bracket and the number '6'. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a series of chords, some of which are beamed together. The dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) is present at the beginning of the system.

Fourth system of musical notation. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of chords, many of which are beamed together in groups of six, indicated by a bracket and the number '6'. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a series of chords, some of which are beamed together. The dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) is present at the beginning of the system.

19

T.C.

U.C.

21

23

25

27

T.C.

R: *(e sempre simile)*

U.C.

29

T.C.

31

U.C.

T.C.

33

U.C.

35

dim. molto p

This system contains measures 35 and 36. Measure 35 features a piano melody with a descending eighth-note line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The dynamic is marked *dim.* (diminuendo). Measure 36 continues the melody, marked *molto* (molto). The system concludes with a *p* (piano) dynamic marking.

37

p

This system contains measures 37 and 38. Measure 37 continues the piano melody from the previous system. Measure 38 features a more complex texture with a descending eighth-note line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The dynamic is marked *p* (piano).

39

p

This system contains measures 39 and 40. Measure 39 continues the piano melody. Measure 40 features a more complex texture with a descending eighth-note line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The dynamic is marked *p* (piano).

41

p

This system contains measures 41 and 42. Measure 41 continues the piano melody. Measure 42 features a more complex texture with a descending eighth-note line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The dynamic is marked *p* (piano).

R.

più p

p

p

pp

p

p

pp

This musical score is for a piano piece, likely in a minor key given the presence of flats. It consists of four systems of staves. The first system includes a right-hand part (R.) at the top. The main body of the score is written for the left hand, with complex, rapid melodic lines often beamed in groups of six or eight notes. Dynamic markings include *più p* (first system), *p* (second, third, and fourth systems), and *pp* (fourth system). The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and fingerings (e.g., 7, 8). The score is presented in a clean, black-and-white format.

Cédez . . . II a Tempo

51

pp

8

Cédez . . . II a Tempo

53

p

55

p

pp

Un peu retenu

57

piu pp

ppp [3]

(laissez vibrer)

(... Le vent dans la plaine)

- XII.

Modéré (Nerveux et avec humour)

p (les "gruppetti" sur le temps)

U.C.

4 Cédez . // Mouvt

pp *p* *p*

8 Cédez . // Mouvt (un peu plus allant)

pp *p* (très détaché)

13

pp *f*

T.C.

18

f *p*

U.C. T.C. U.C.

22

Musical score for measures 22-26. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff contains a complex melodic line with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. Dynamic markings include *pp* (pianissimo) and *f* (forte). The system concludes with the instruction "T.C." (Tutti Chorus).

27

Musical score for measures 27-30. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff features a melodic line with frequent beamed notes. The lower staff has a more rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *f* (forte).

31

Musical score for measures 31-35. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff has a melodic line with some rests. The lower staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and *pp* (pianissimo). The instruction "En cédant" (yielding) is written above the upper staff. The system concludes with the instruction "U.C." (Un Chorus).

16

Musical score for measures 16-21. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff has a melodic line with some rests. The lower staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano) and *m.d.* (moderato). The system concludes with the instruction "U.C." (Un Chorus).

11

Musical score for measures 11-15. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff has a melodic line with some rests. The lower staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *m.d.* (moderato) and *p* (piano). The system concludes with the instruction "T.C." (Tutti Chorus).

45 Mouvt

p *f* *p* *f*

T.C. V.C. T.C.

49

p *pp*

T.C. V.C. T.C.

54

pp *pp* *ppp* *f* (Quasi Tamburo)

V.C.

59

dim.

63

Expressif

p

V.C.

68

mf

f

(en dehors)

T.C.

R.

73

f

(en dehors)

<f

<f

U.C.

Tempo 1°

78

p

p

pp 3

82

Mouv< (plus allant)

T.C.

86

m.g.

f

ff

Serrez

Sec et retenu

(... Minstrels)