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POINTS ON JAZZ

D7

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NOTES ON THE MUSIC

By Dave Brubeck

POINTS ON JAZZ is a ballet suite which was composed for two pianos as a set of rhythmic variations on a theme. Some of the variations are based on jazz concepts, others are derived from the classics.

The history of POINTS ON JAZZ began on a cold day in March, 1958. Travelling through Poland between the cities of Llodz and Poznan, I jotted down a romantic, melancholy theme that seemed to express the feeling of those who sat with me on the train, staring out at the barren winter landscape. My Quartet was on a State Department sponsored tour behind the Iron Curtain and our final concert in Poland was scheduled for the following evening in Poznan. That night at concert intermission I played the theme for the members of my group and suggested to our announcer-interpreter friend, Roman Waschko that as a dedication to the people of Poland we would play the new piece as an encore. To express in some measure our gratitude for the warmth with which we had been received in their country, I called the piece "Dziekuye," the Polish word for "thank you."

The audience responded with a stunned hush, followed by applause mingled with tears. When I returned to the United States in the spring, I sent copies of the piece back to Poland, and the printed music appeared as the cover of the Polish jazz magazine. Soon the piece was being performed by Polish jazz musicians. "Dziekuye" was often played by my Quartet on our concert tours of the United States and Europe, and finally was recorded in the Quartet album "Jazz Impressions of Eurasia." (CL 1251).

When Dania Krupska, an American choreographer of Polish descent, heard "Dziekuye" on the album, she immediately wired to ask if I would use the theme to write music for a jazz ballet she was preparing. At our first meeting she told me the story of the ballet and the variations in rhythms she had outlined for her dancers. As the story unfolded I improvised variations on the theme "Dziekuye." These impromptu variations later became the basis for the composition commissioned by the American Ballet Theater.

"The Boy is the Theme. He is all alone on the stage—detached. Gradually movement begins. The Girls make their entrances. He tries to reach out and make contact with them, but cannot. Dania's description produced the first variation, PRELUDE.

"Now The Girl enters. She is fresh, gay, bubbling with life." The GIRL is the SCHERZO with bright arpeggios and a pounding, rhythmic pulse.

"Here comes The Temptress." She is a slow BLUES. "She entices The Boy, then leaves him to summon other men to gather around her. They fight for her in a primitive dance and she is tossed wildly from one man to another." The BLUES tempo quickens. "Then The Temptress snaps her fingers and walks out on the men." End of BLUES variation.

The FUGUE was designed as a choreographed "chase" with entrances of the dancers corresponding to the musical entrances.

"Now The Girls and The Boys are happily together again. They are wacky, happy Couples." The RAG.

"Their happiness makes The Boy feel even more alone." The Boy's theme in a CHORALE variation.

"The Girl reaches out for The Boy. She wants to comfort him." Introduction to WALTZ variation. "He recognizes her as The Girl of the SCHERZO. They dance a romantic pas de deux." The SCHERZO theme in 2/4 and The Boy's theme in 3/4 meet in the WALTZ variation.

"The Girl is overjoyed. She must call everyone to share her happiness." A LA TURK variation and FINALE. "In the confusion of their celebration, The Boy and The Girl are separated. After a climactic search they find each other, embrace and walk away arm in arm."

NOTES ON PERFORMANCE

By Howard Brubeck

The notation of Dave's POINTS ON JAZZ has been of great interest to me. It would seem that there is much of the universal in jazz which can occupy a position of significance in music. But before this can occur, there must be an effort to express in definite note values those rhythmic and melodic practices which are inherent in the various styles of jazz. In the past, the approach to notation of jazz figures has been quite acceptable to the initiated, but quite remote from representing the fine points. That the fine points **can** be notated accurately is questioned by some. It is my feeling that our traditional system of notation **does** permit a reasonably accurate representation, and that once understood, the job of reading it will not be too difficult for the traditionally trained musician.

This work is directed primarily to students and performers of music who, even though they be not particularly jazz oriented, may wish to play a composition which employs the jazz styles. The plural (styles) is used because in this work one finds allusions to the "Blues," both fast and slow, Rag Time, "Le Jazz Hot" (and cool), the popular ballad (on which the work is based), jazz counterpoint, and even a Chorale with variations using jazz associated harmonies.

When preparing this composition, the performer will soon realize the importance of a steady beat and of the triplet in jazz rhythm. Since jazz from its inception has been closely associated with music for dancing (even marching), one finds an adherence to the beat quite prevalent: it is a foundation point. However, a certain element of rebellion against the primacy of a steady, unchanging beat is a natural part of the jazz musician's make-up. His solution is a typically American one: In the lower pitched rhythm instruments (String Bass, Bass Drum, bass of the Piano) he permits the beat to be heard with strength. He wants the listener to feel the beat – to know it's there, like the Constitution. But at the same time he **challenges** the beat. He rhythmically bends **away** from it notes which would normally be heard **on** it. In the melody, and perhaps in some accompanying parts, he frequently plays **off** the beat. When he plays off the beat, the note which one would expect to hear **on** it is played slightly **ahead** of the beat. In the majority of cases (but not always) the displaced note is heard as the last sound of a triplet imputed to the **preceding** beat. A good portion of the quality normally referred to as "swing" comes from this triplet feeling.

The performer will find that the notation makes frequent use of the accent mark. Sometimes it is given in parentheses, to indicate that the accent should be at least **felt** by the performer, if not actually **heard** by the listener.

The fingerings supplied should be treated only as guides, since the jazz pianist often uses fingerings which may take the more traditional pianist by surprise. The only criterion for the selection of a particular fingering is whether its use results in the desired sound.

The suggestion most often needed by the traditionally trained musician to help him in his effort toward jazz is to relax. Regardless of how agitated and rhythmically invigorating jazz may sound (and its protagonists appear!), it is usually best performed by those who are alert mentally while at the same time quite relaxed physically. The physical effort can be great, but it should be no more than that which is the natural result of permitting one's body to be used as needed in the execution of an idea.

Since this work is in the "Theme and Variations" tradition, the performer may expect a good deal of variety in styles. Some variations are "swingers," others drive hard. Some are in a broad, grand style, while others seem personal and intimate. There is variety in the tempi, in the textures, in the degree of harmonic complexity and emotional intensity. One parting suggestion to the performer: listen to the recording.* And continue with the recording, after the marvellous Gold and Fizdale performance, to include the vocal version with Carmen McRae and Dave's own improvisations. In each of these different conceptions will be found clues to the essence, the nature, and meaning of the music, which will serve as a base for one's own interpretation.

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*Gold and Fizdale play Dave Brubeck's Jazz Ballet, **POINTS ON JAZZ**, Columbia CL 1678 and CS 8478.

Printed in U.S.A. Available for sale in the United Kingdom

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M 34.80

2902

The Original Two-Piano Score of

POINTS ON JAZZ

A Ballet by Dave Brubeck
(commissioned by the American Ballet Theatre)

I—Prelude • II—Scherzo • III—Blues • IV—Fugue • V—Rag • VI—Chorale • VII—Waltz • VIII—A La Turk

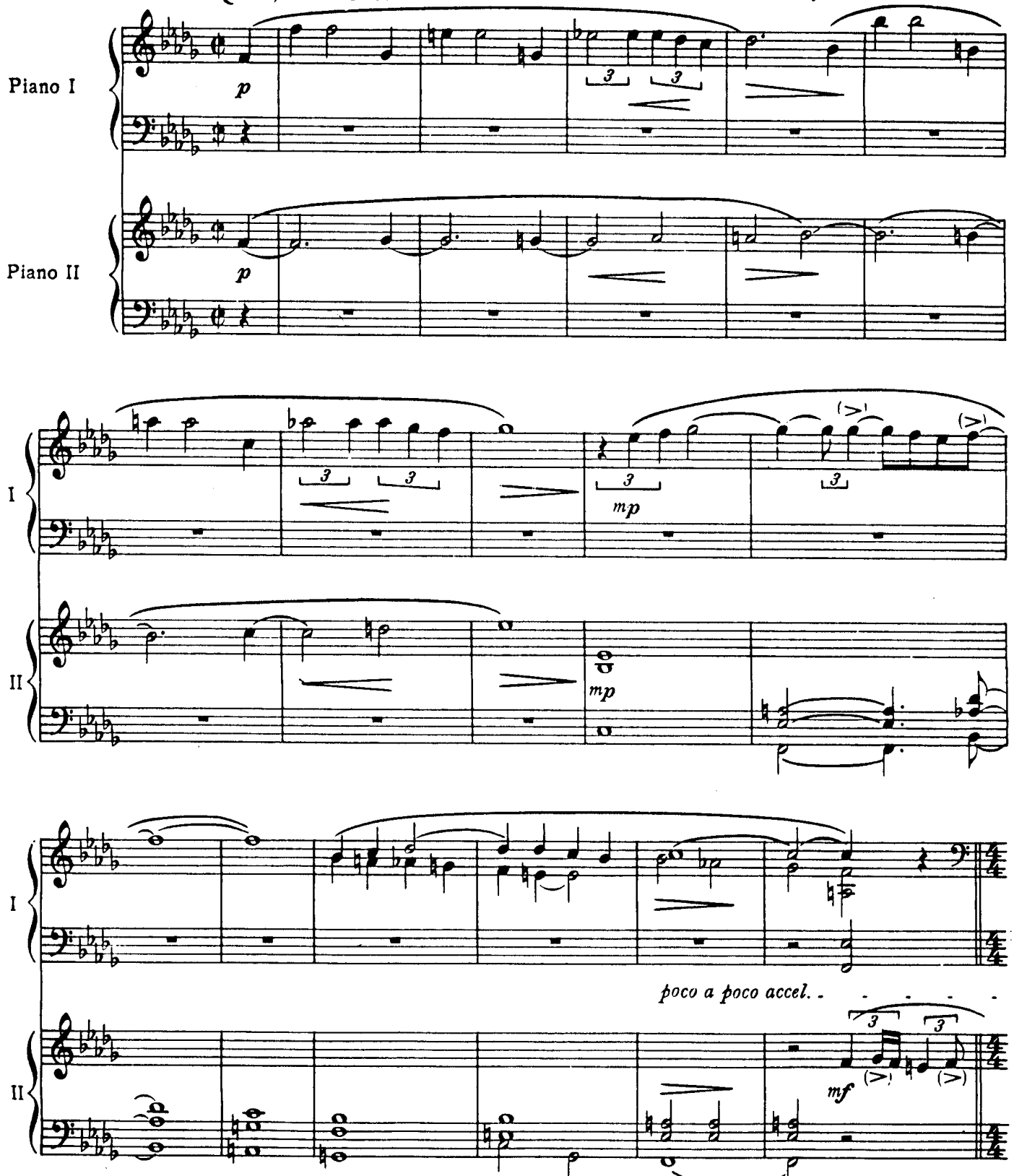
I. PRELUDE

Quiet, Calm ♩= 56

transcribed by Howard Brubeck

Piano I

Piano II



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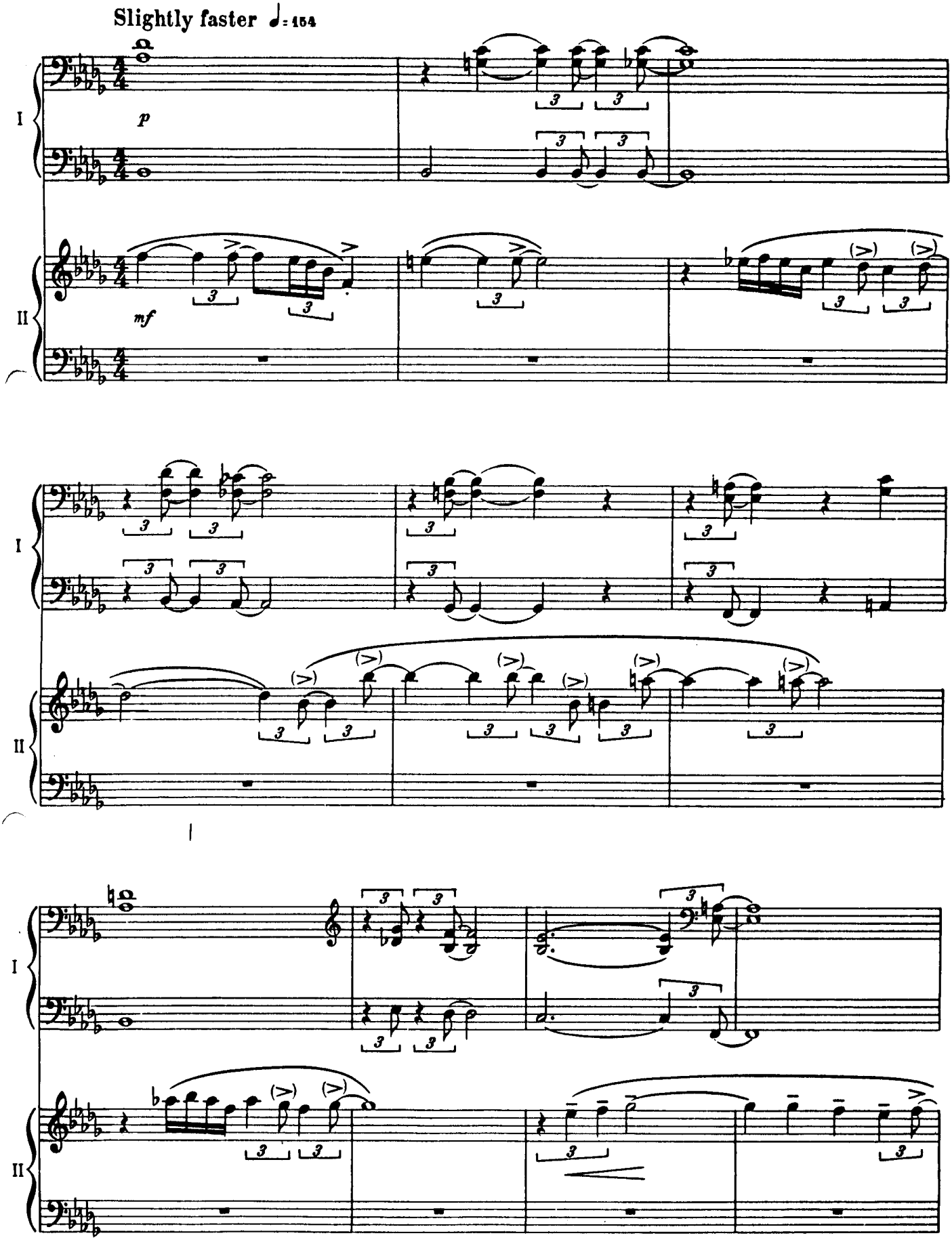
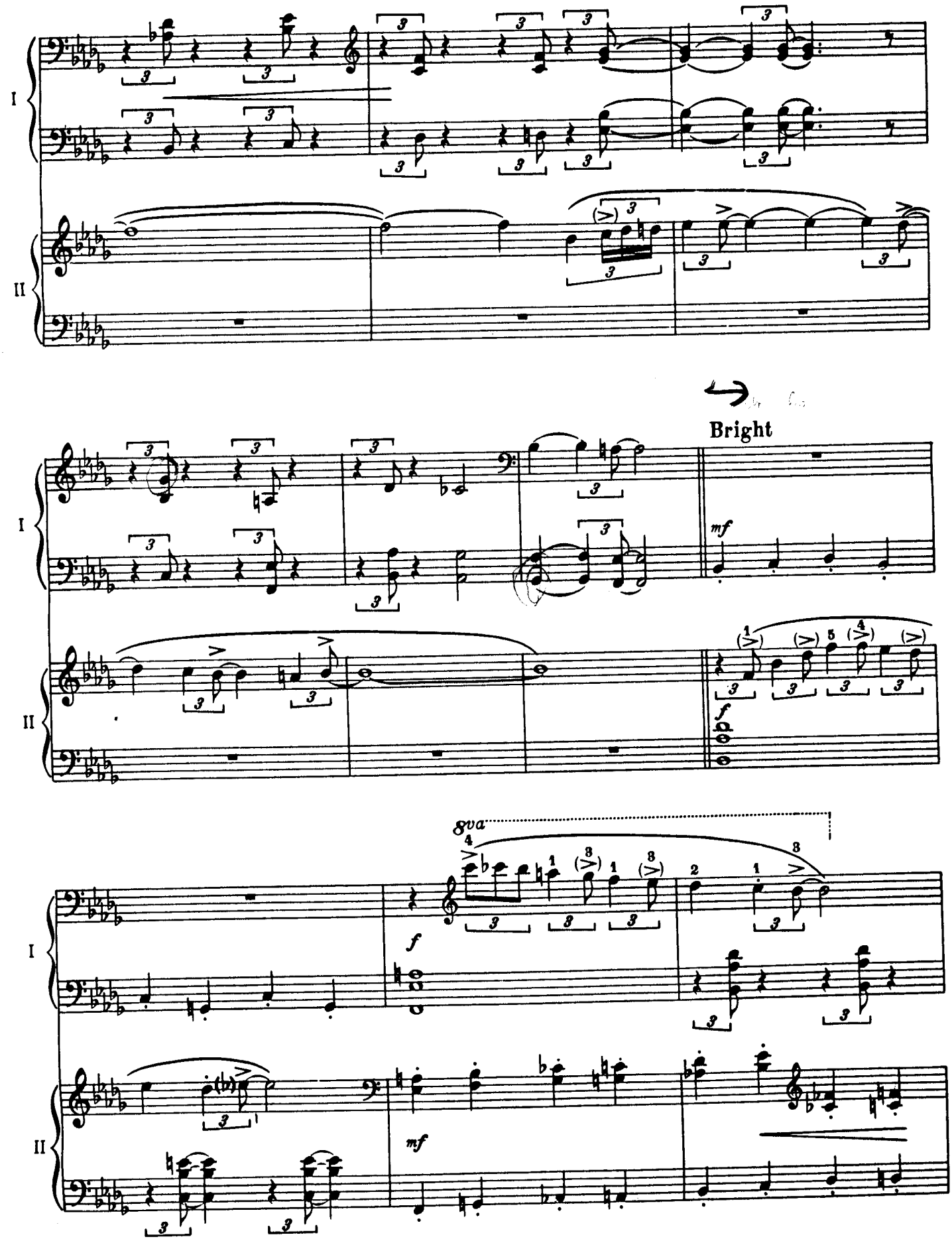
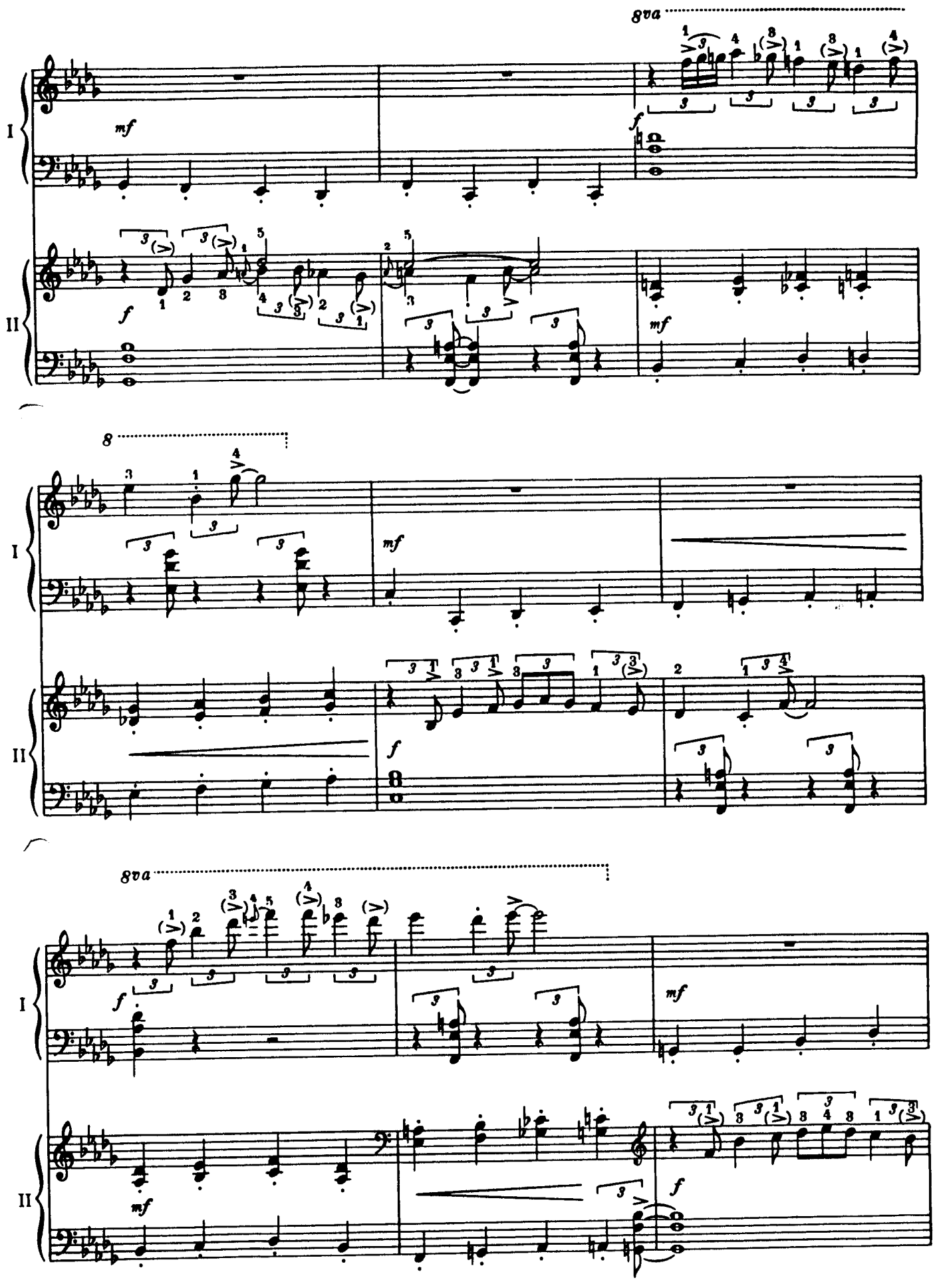

Slightly faster ♩= 154
I
II
p
mf

2904

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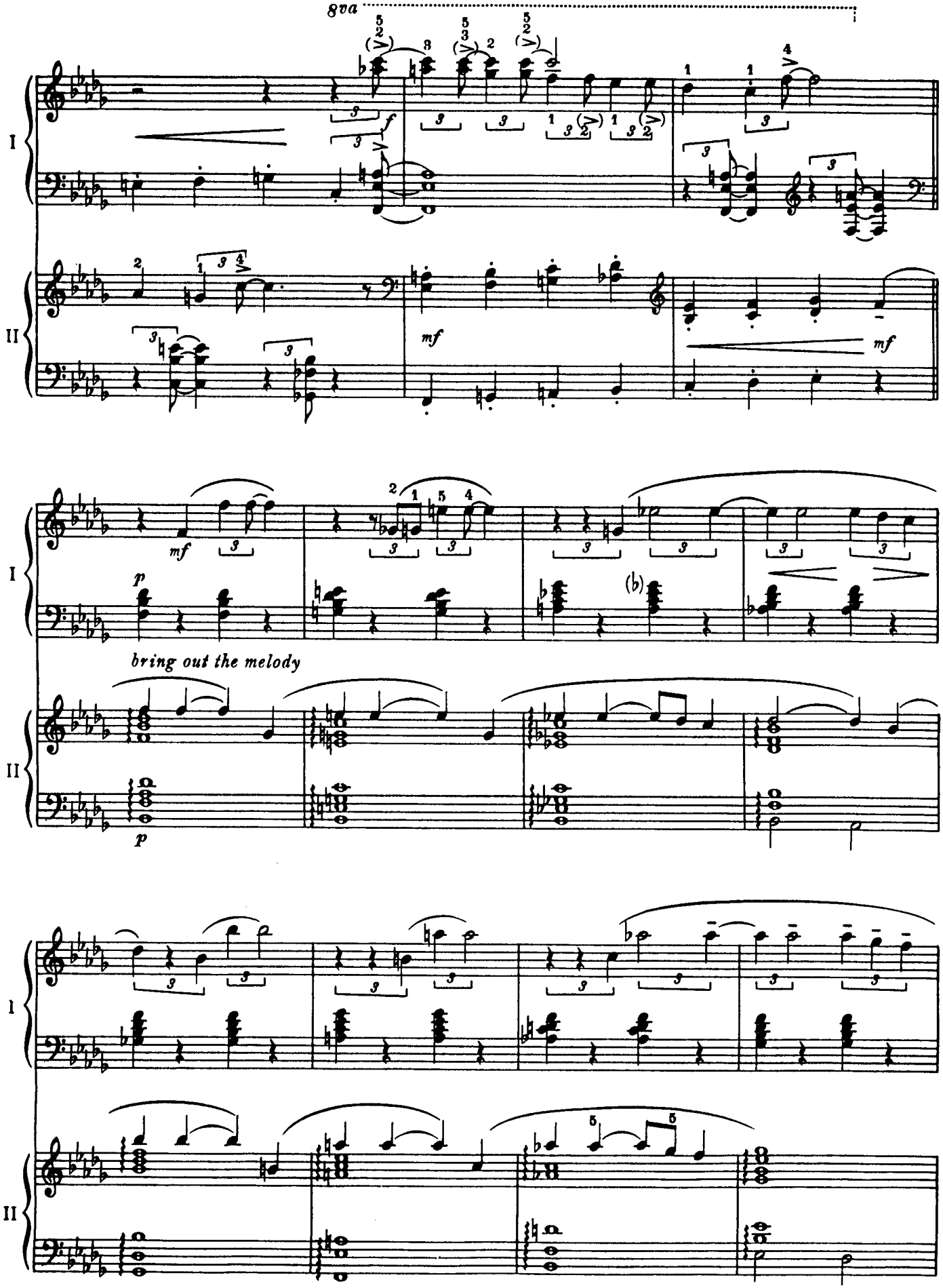
8
8va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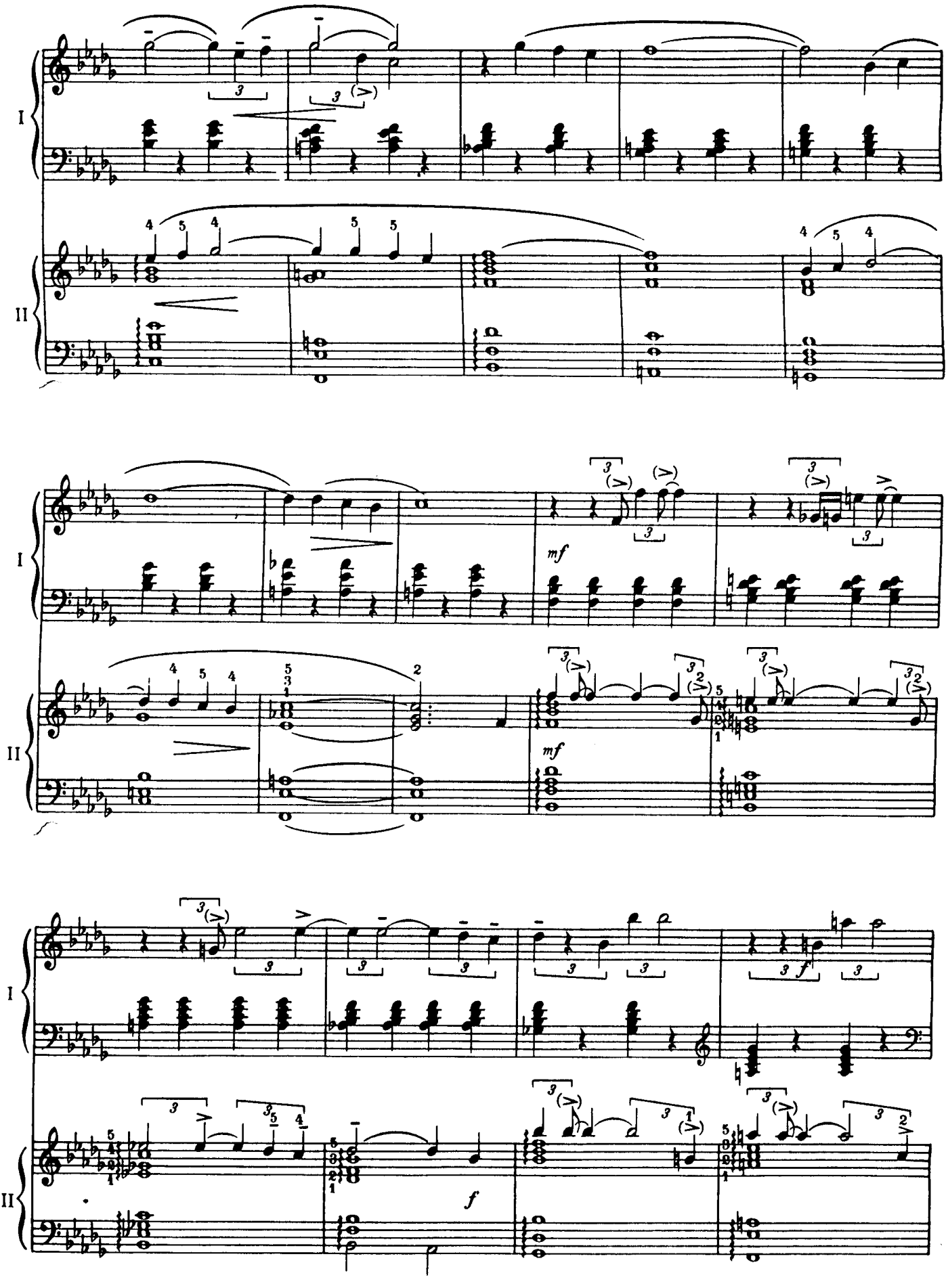
I
II
f
mf
mf
mf
p
bring out the melody
p
I
II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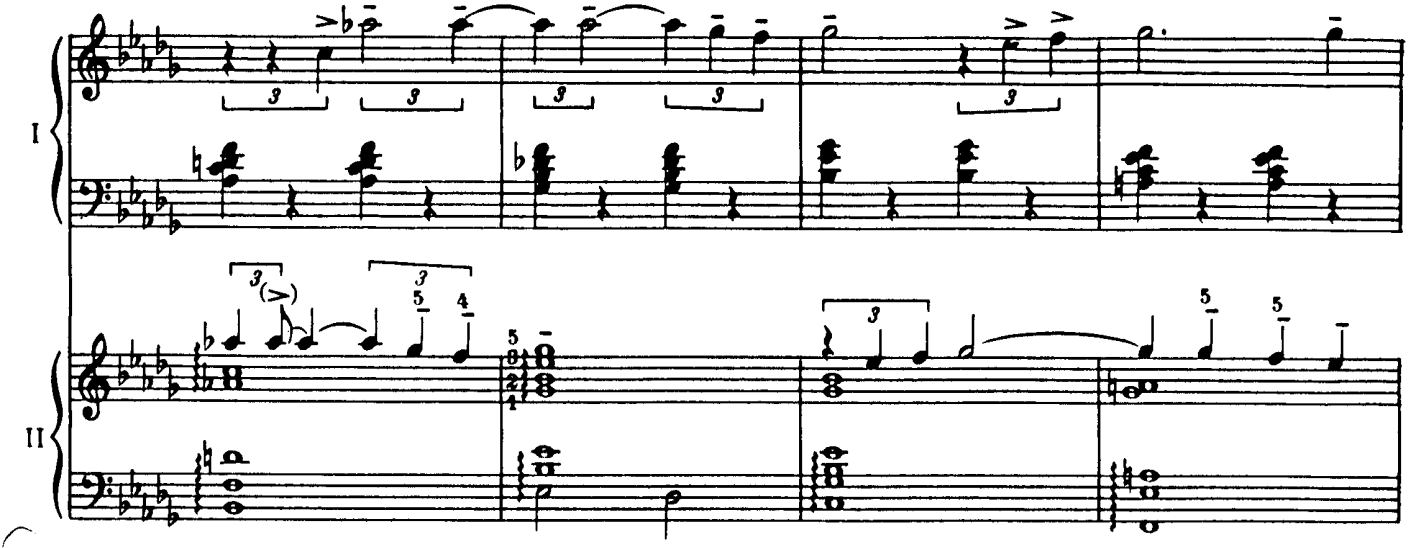
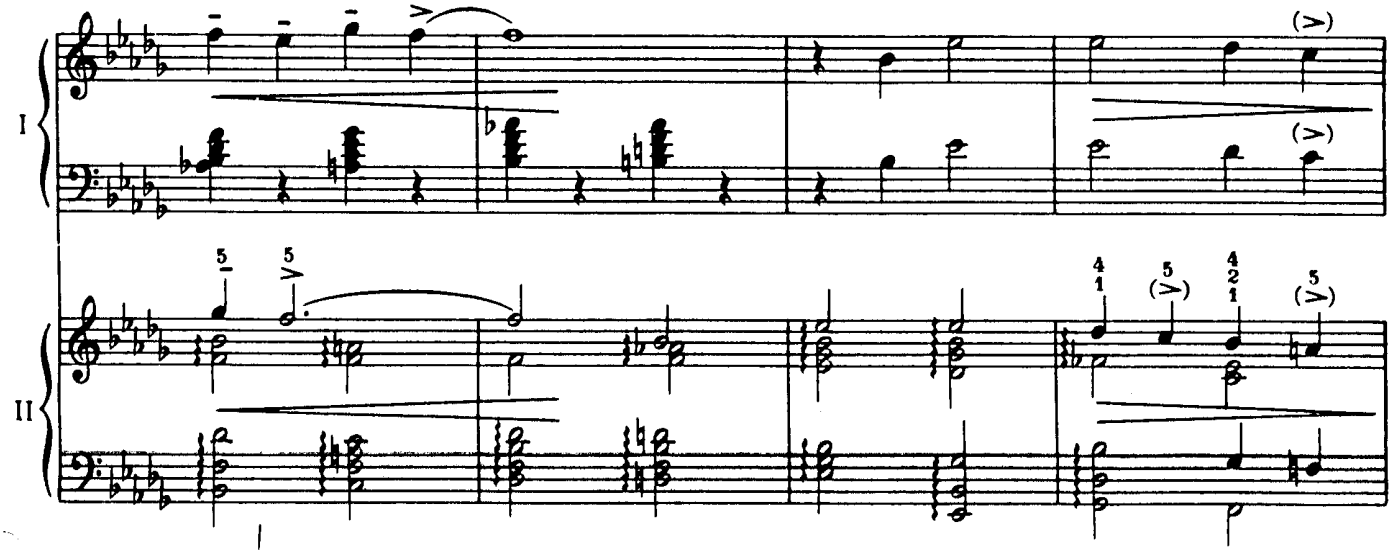
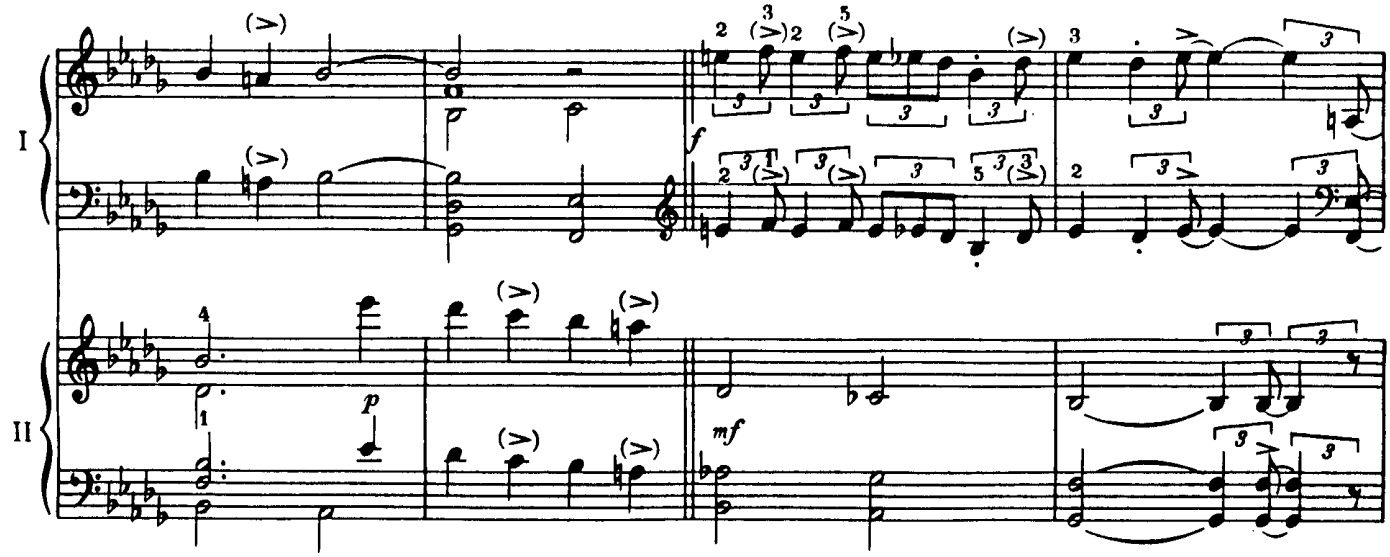
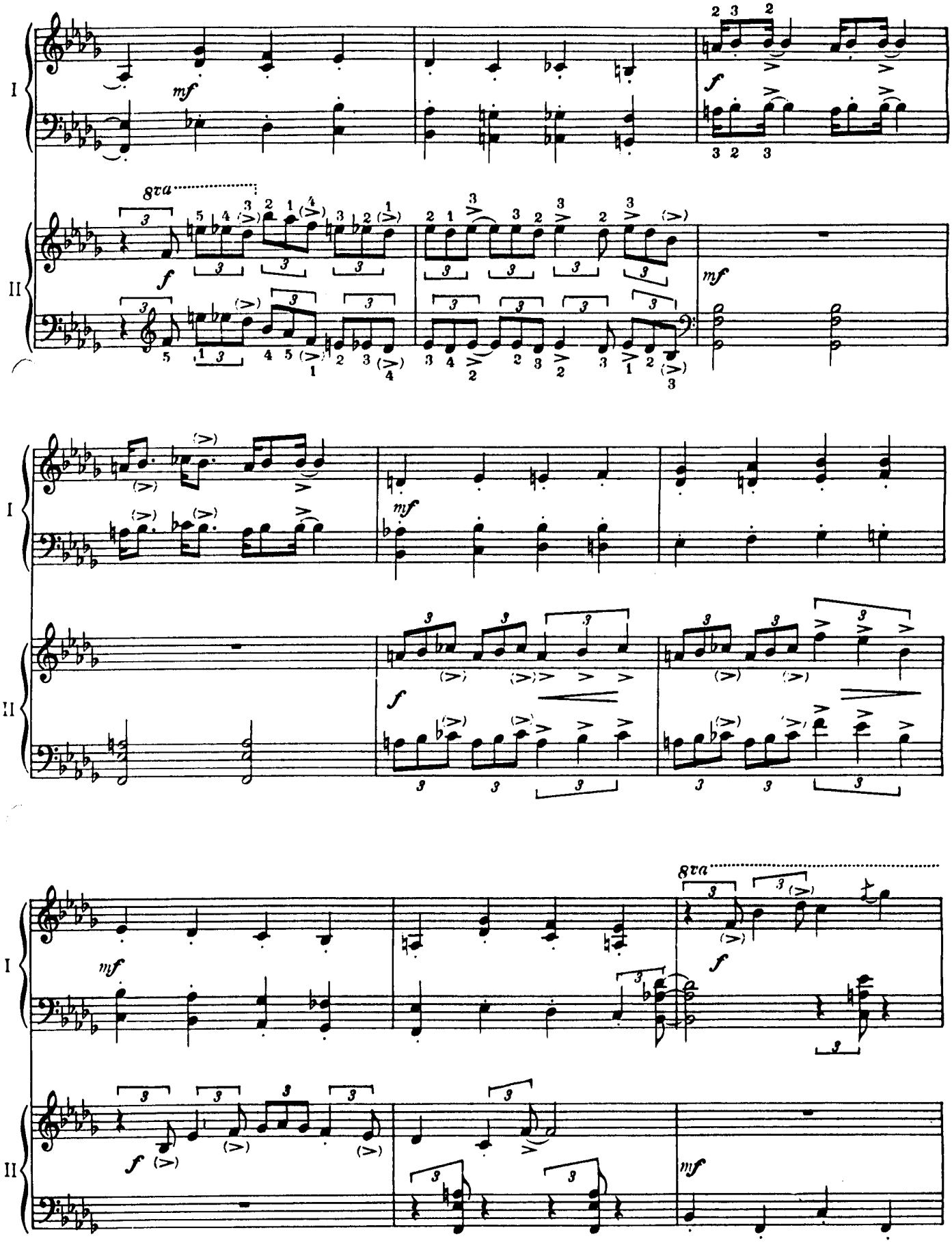




Brighter




I
II
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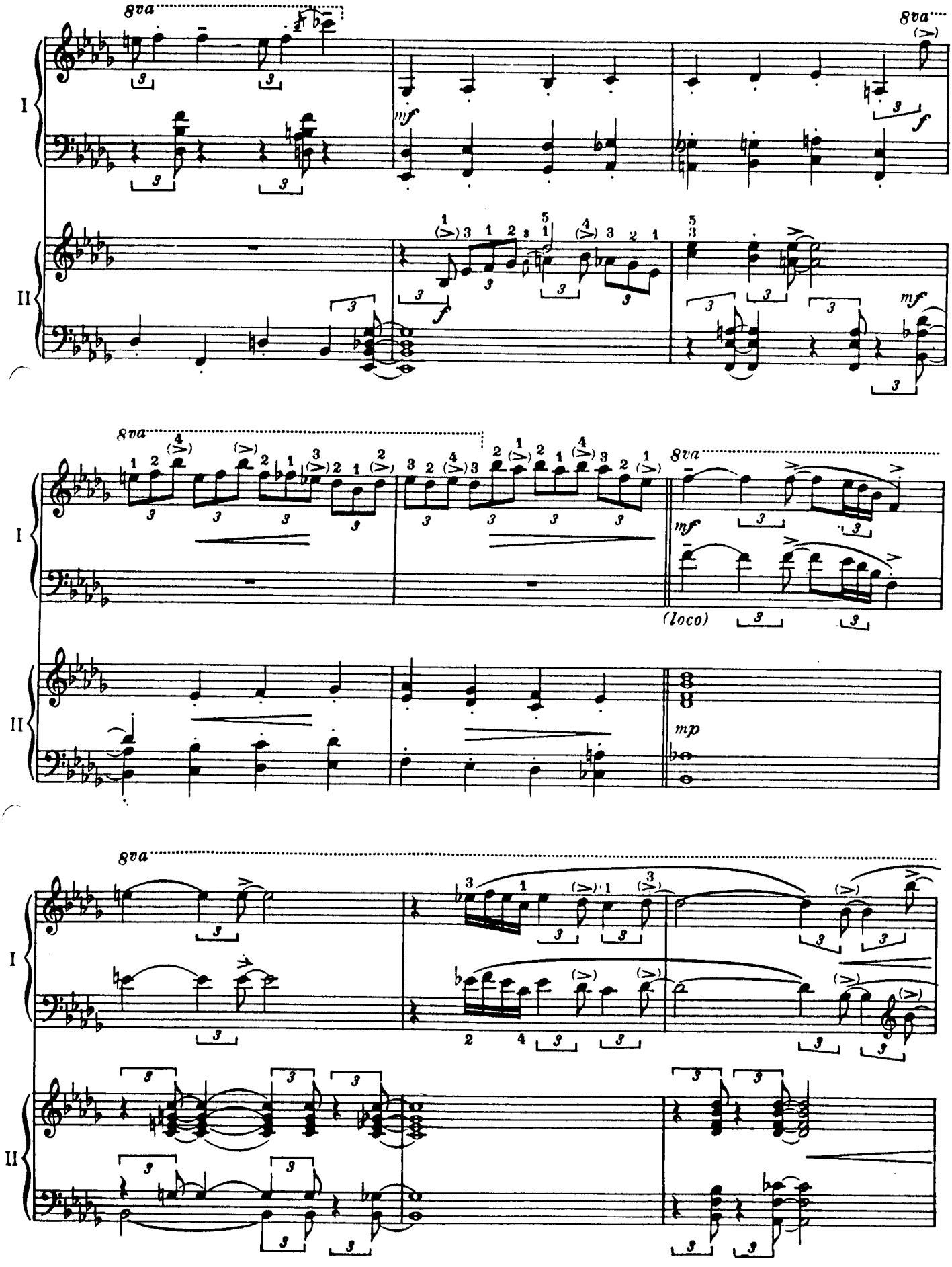
8va


8va
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8va
I
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(loco)
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8va
I
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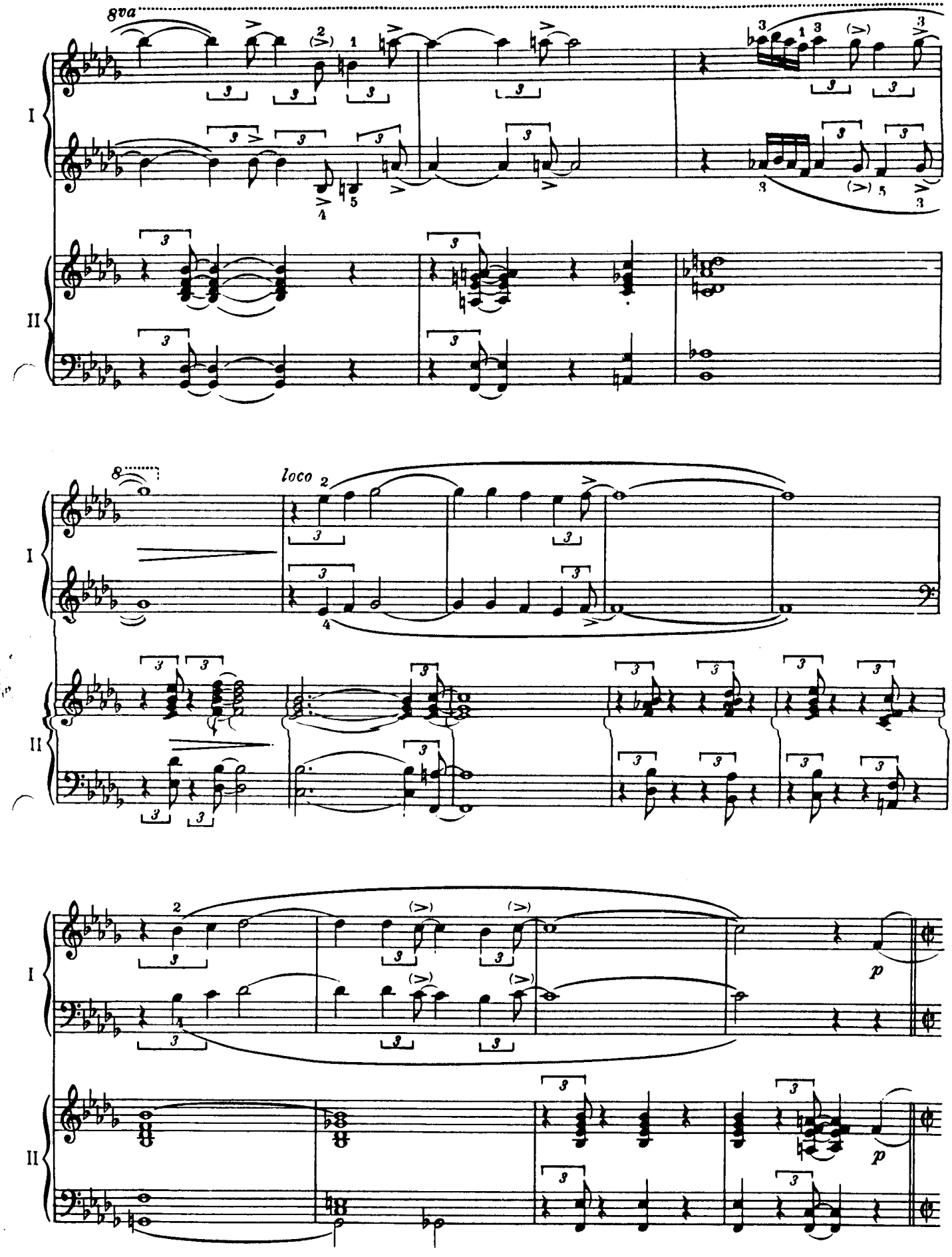
8va
I
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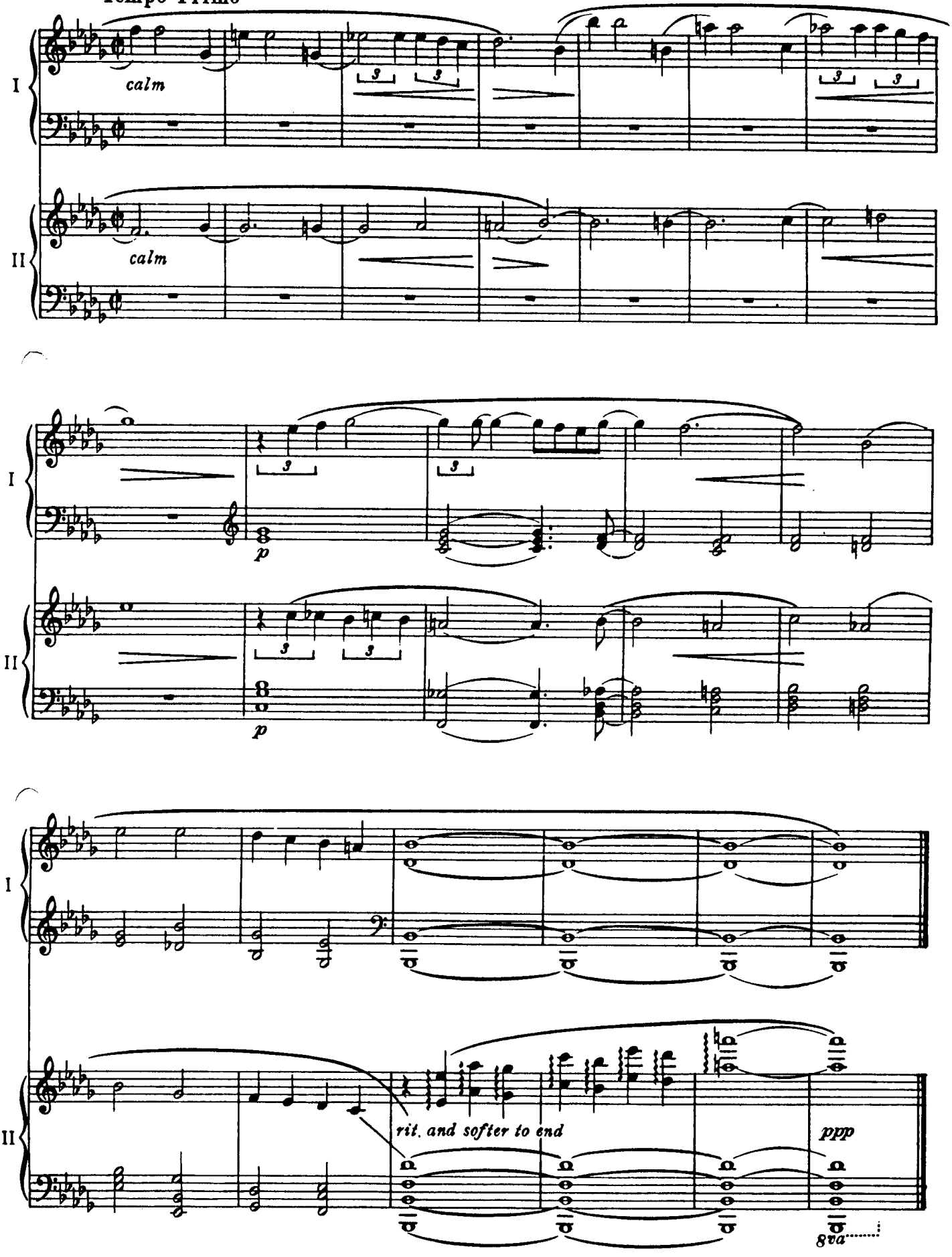
8
loco
I
II
I
II
p
p

2912

Tempo Primo



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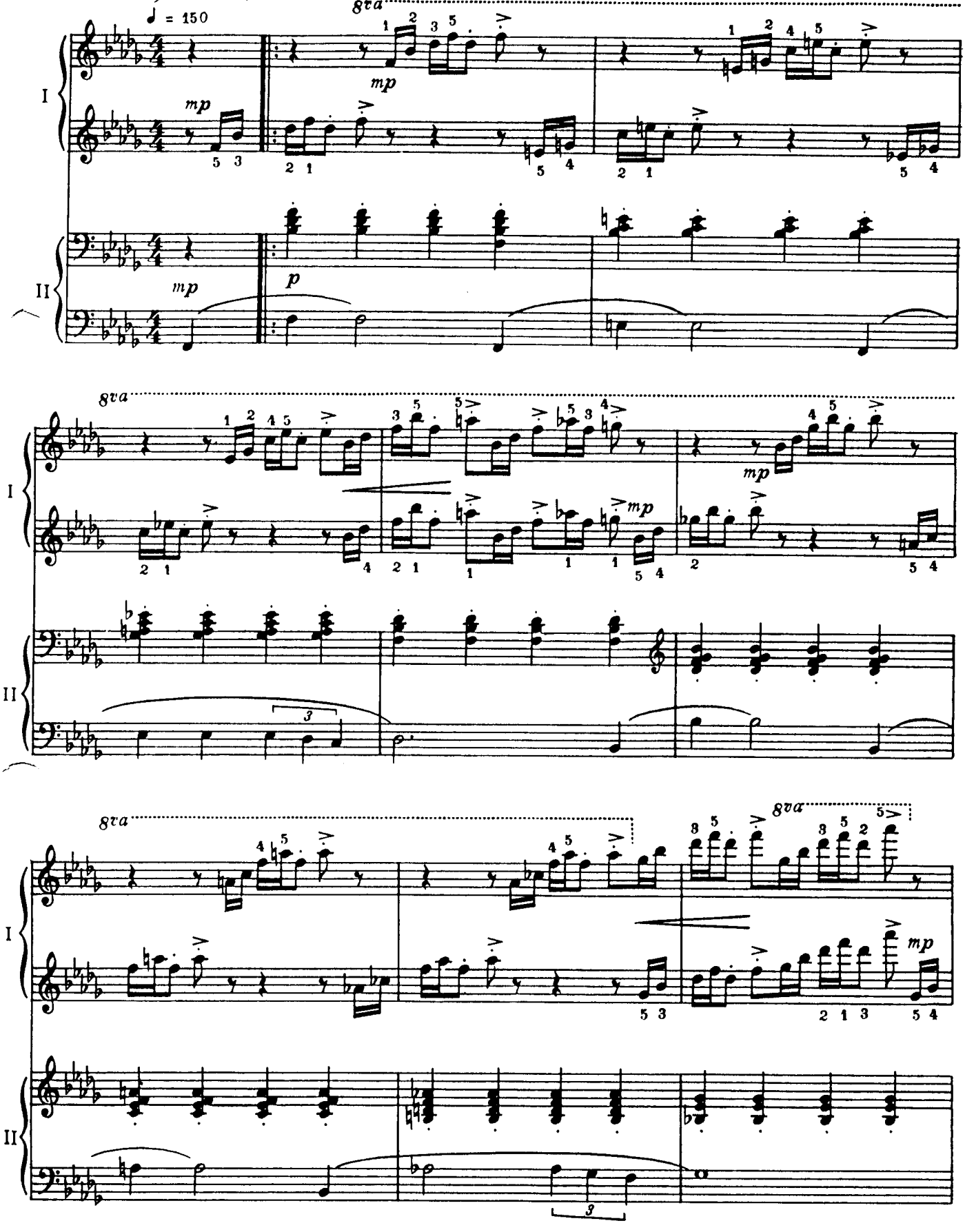

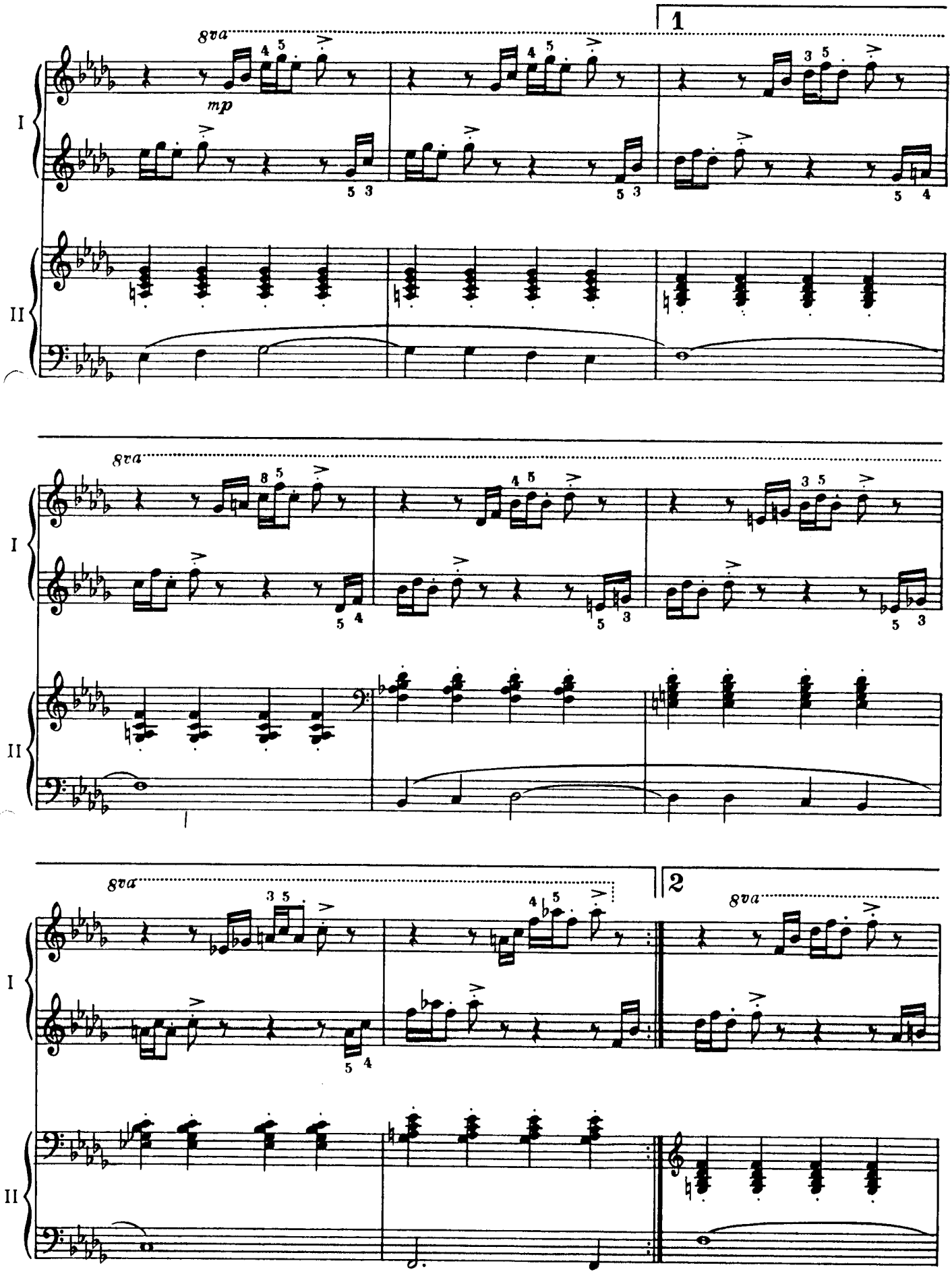
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I
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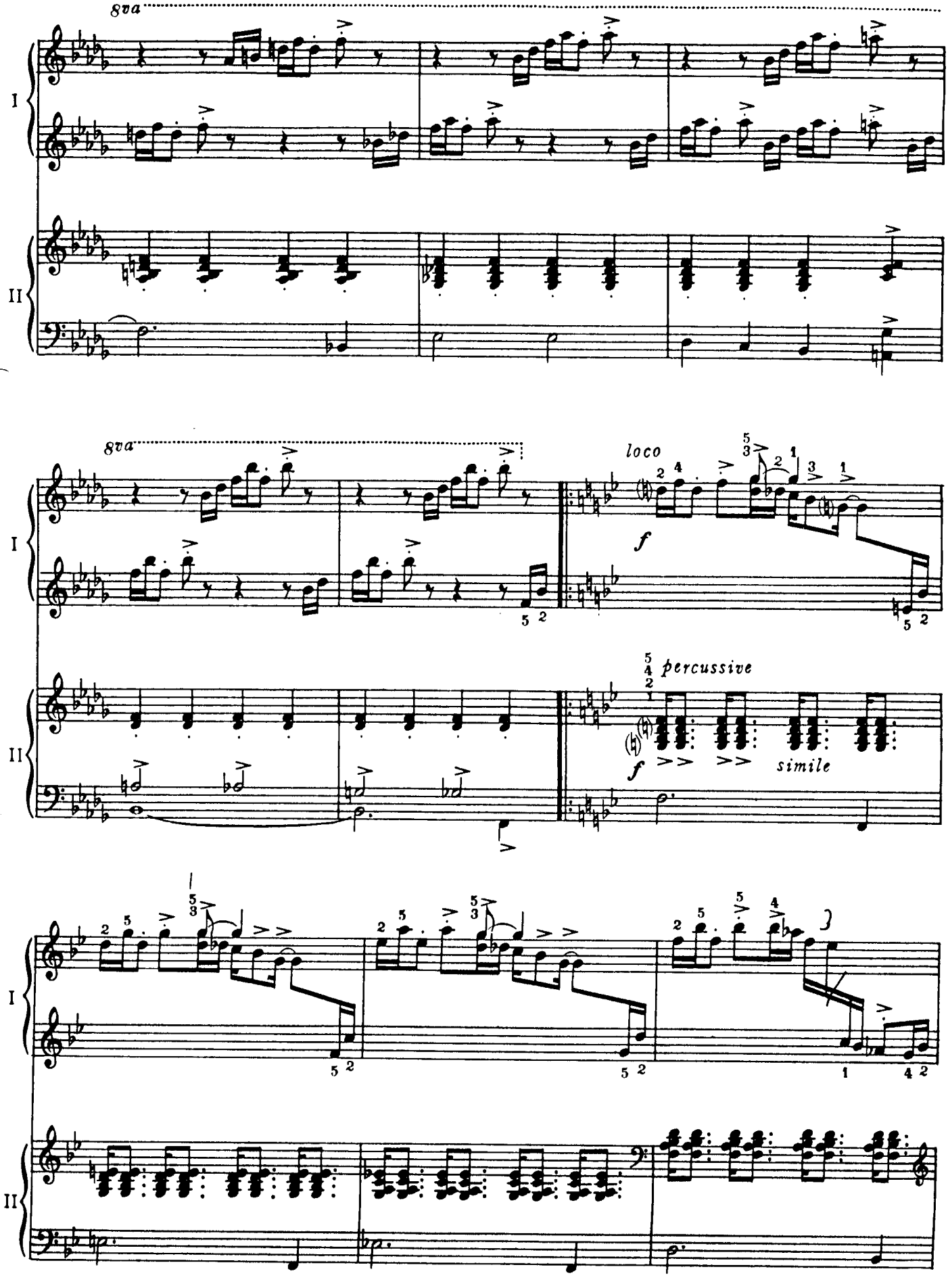
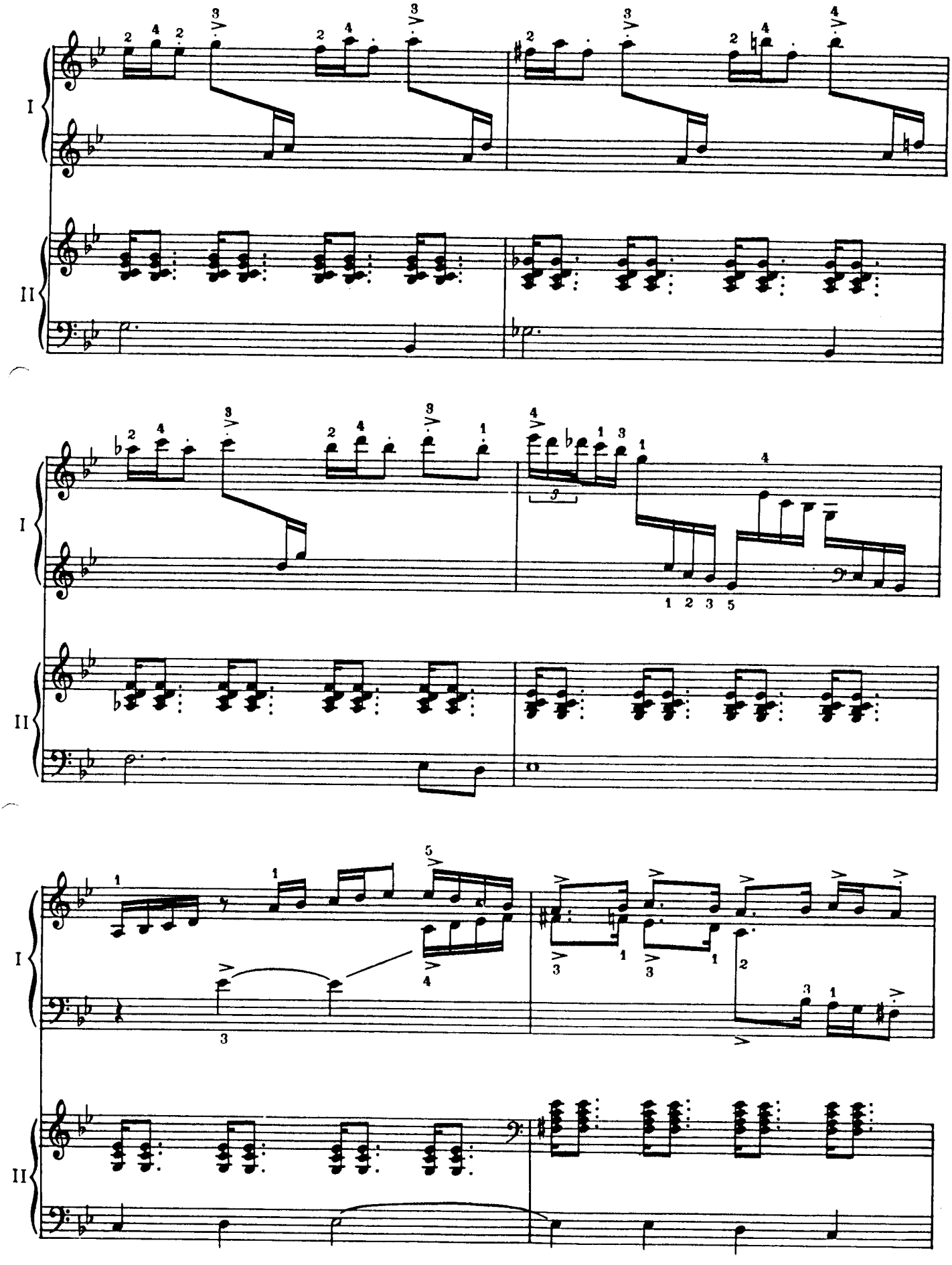

8va
I
II
8va
loco
f
percussive
simile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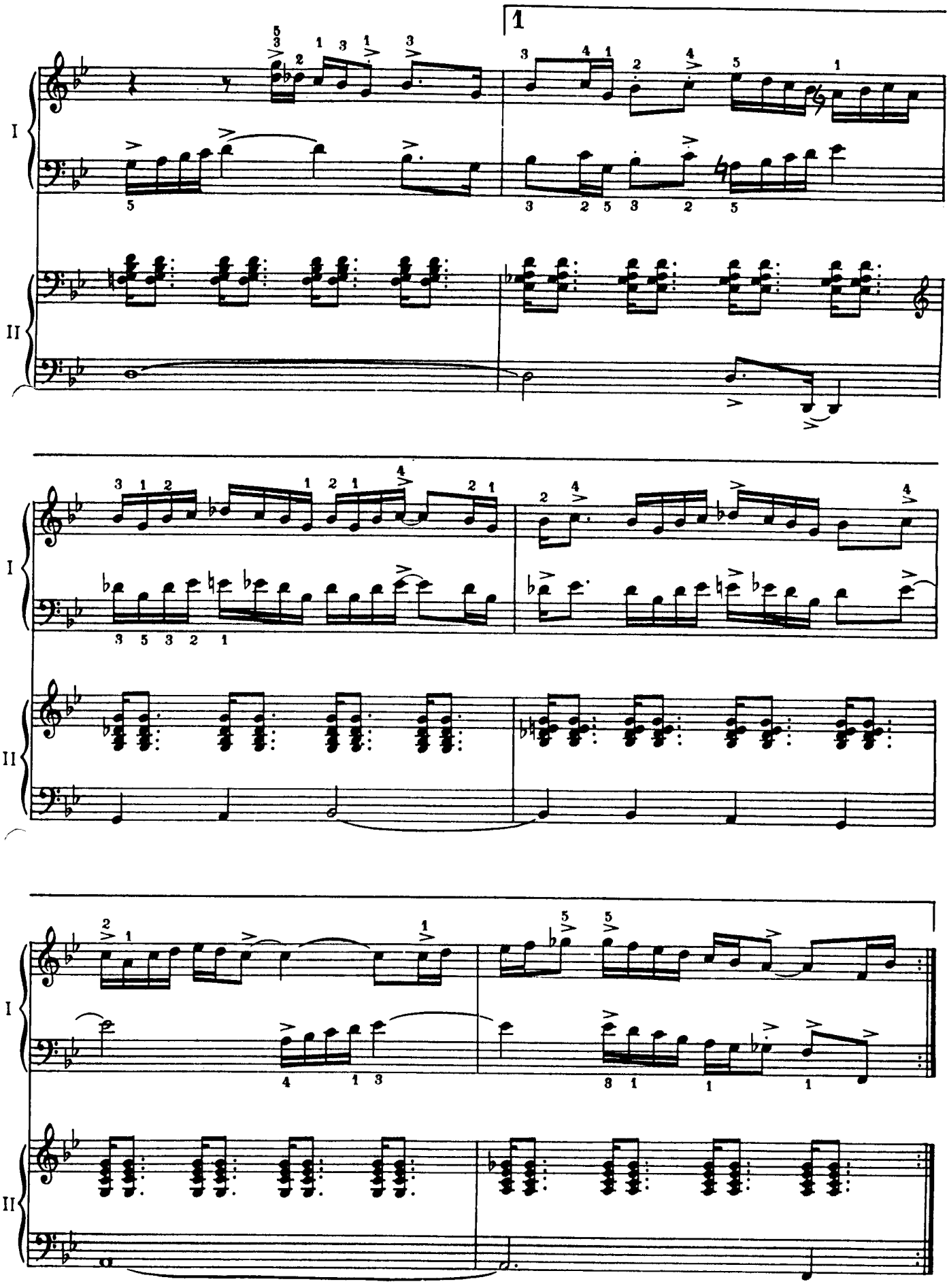
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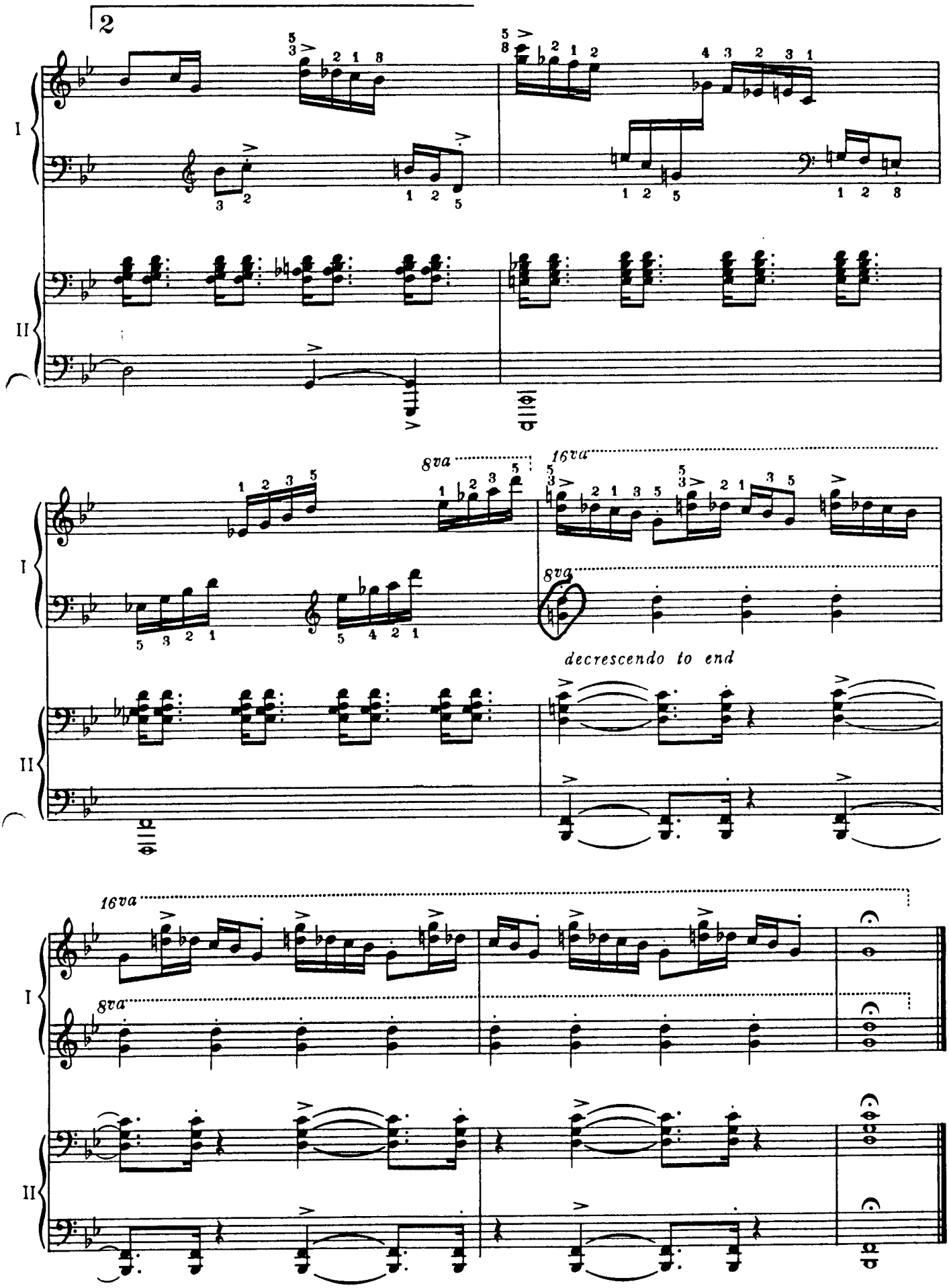
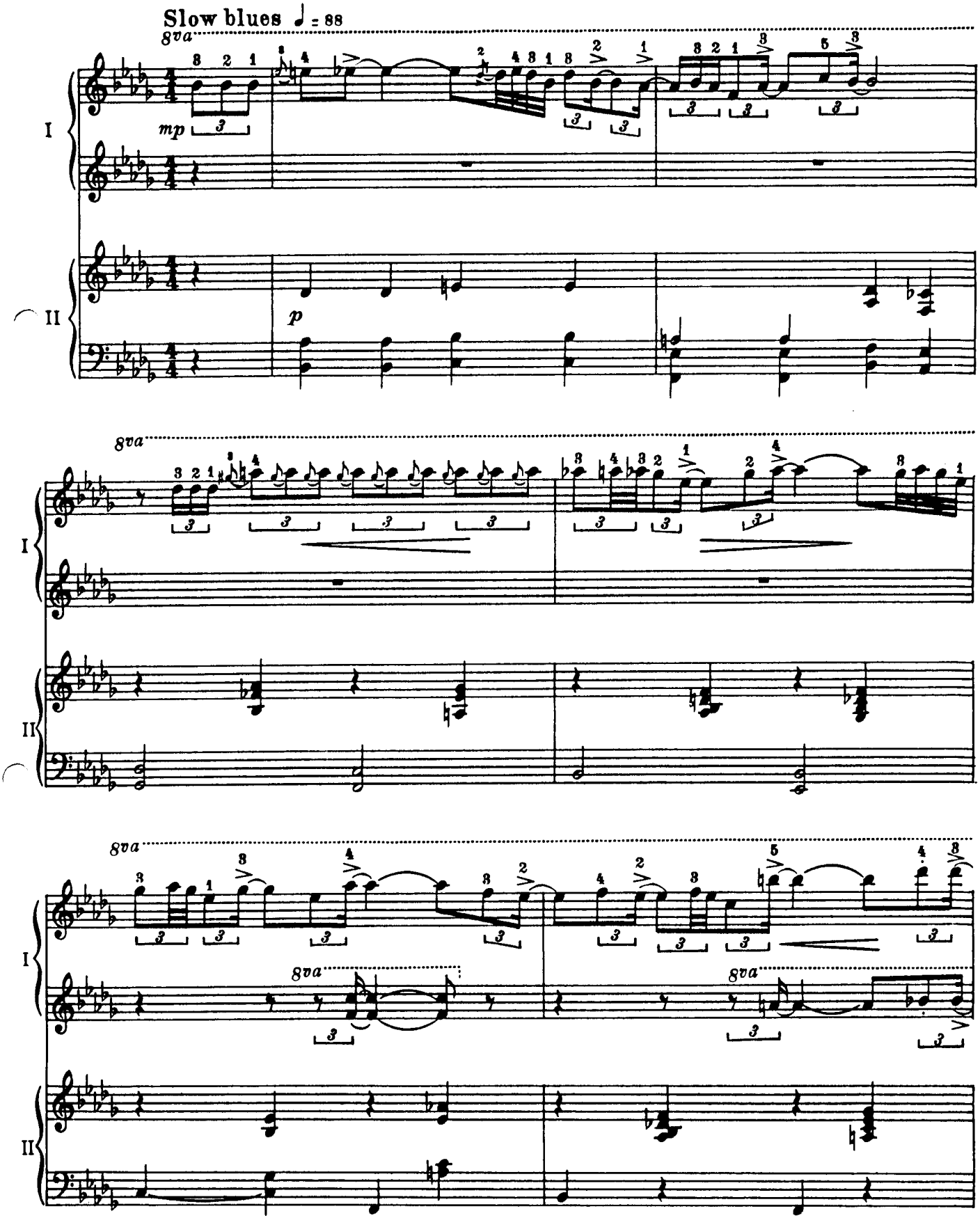
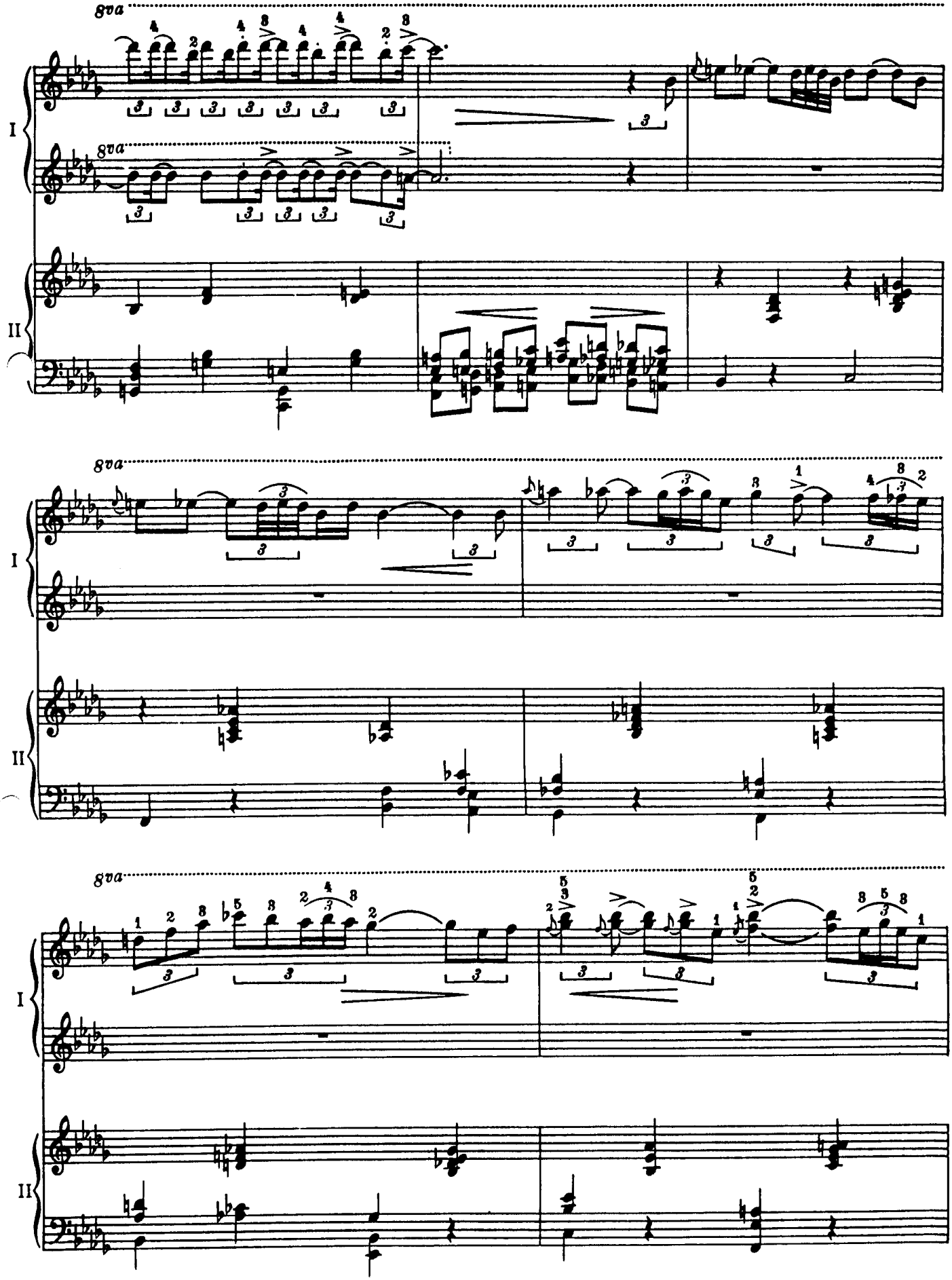

2
I
II
8va
16va
8va
decrescendo to end
16va
8va
I
II

III. BLUES




8va
I
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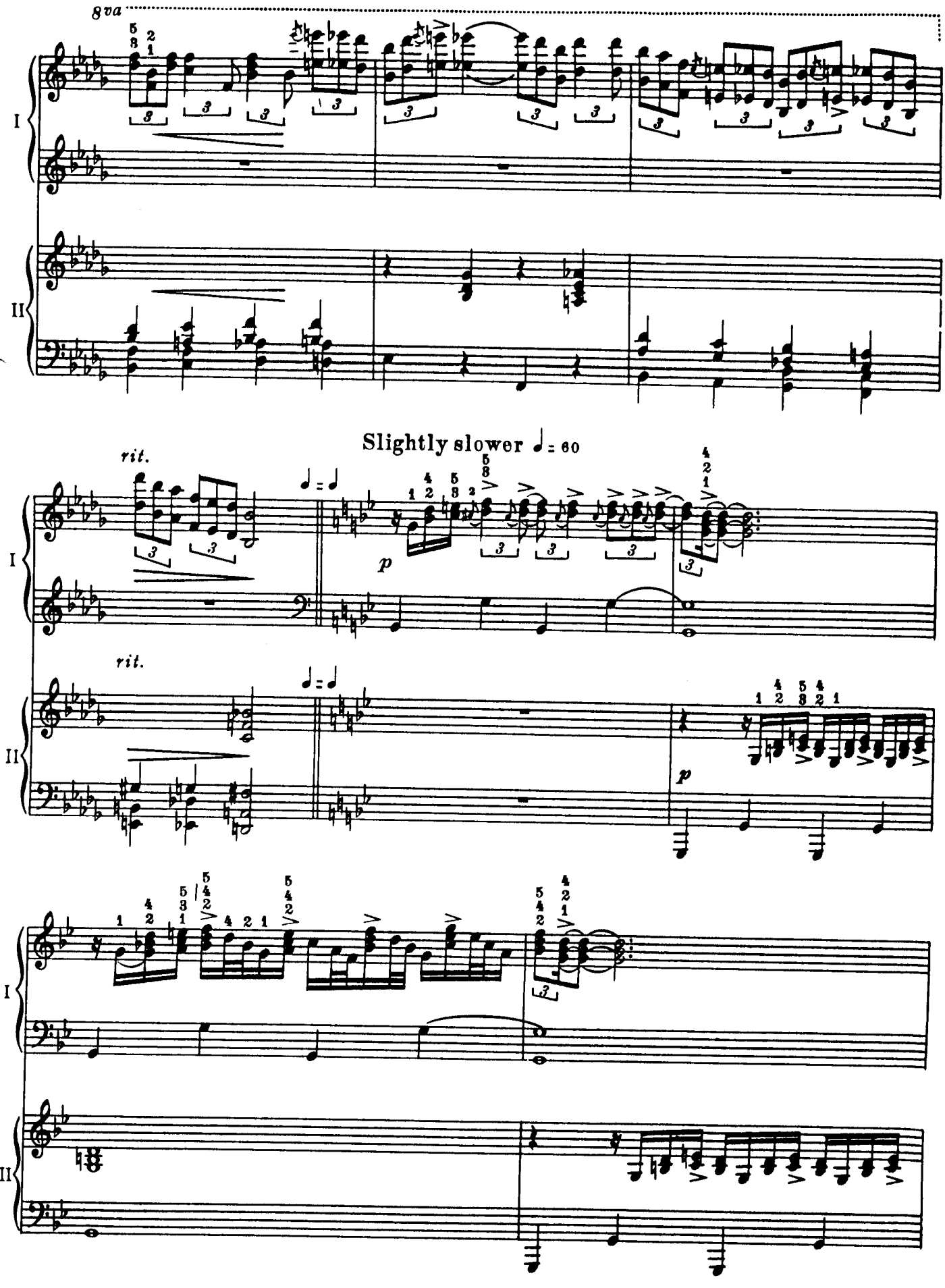
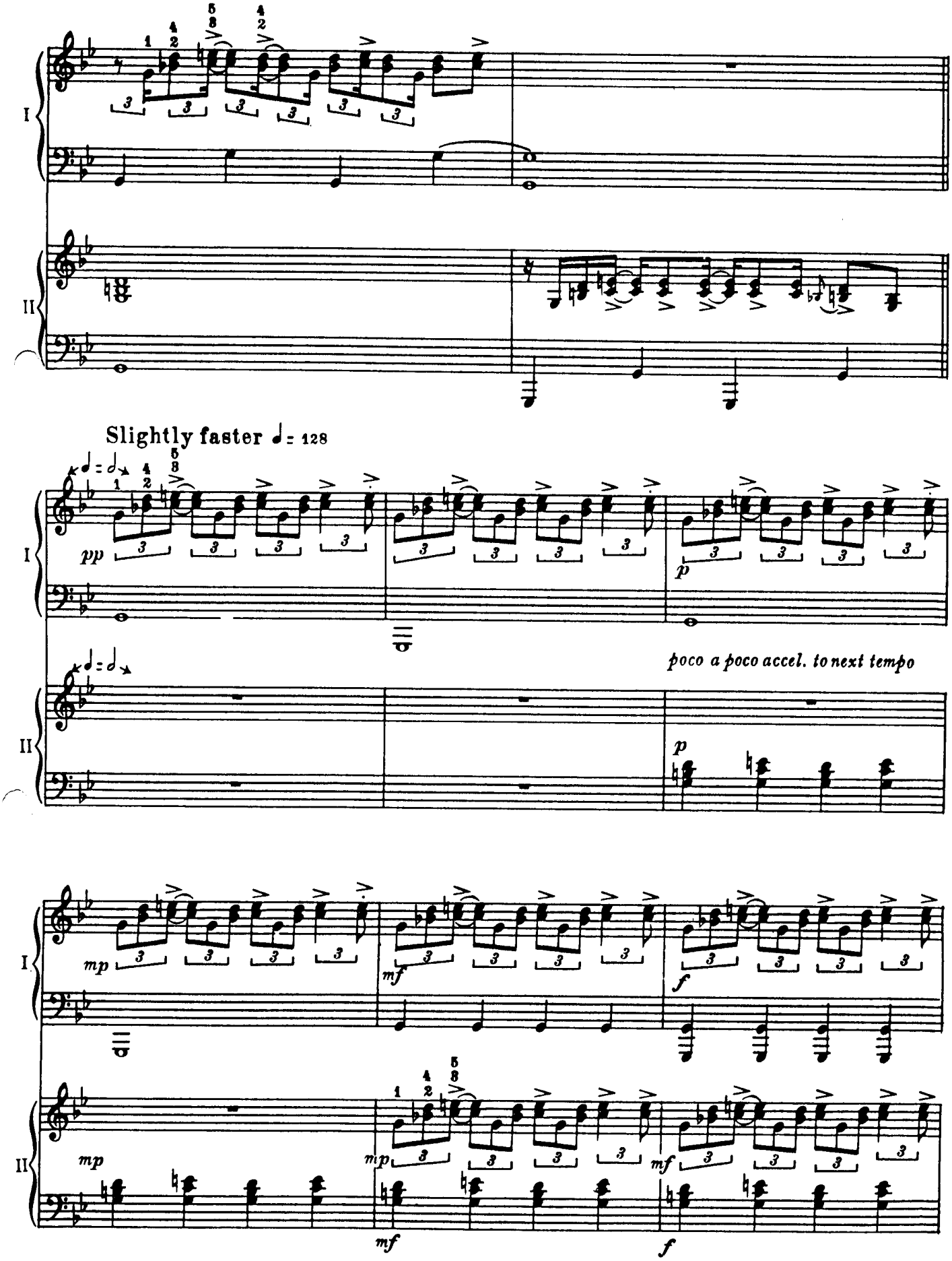
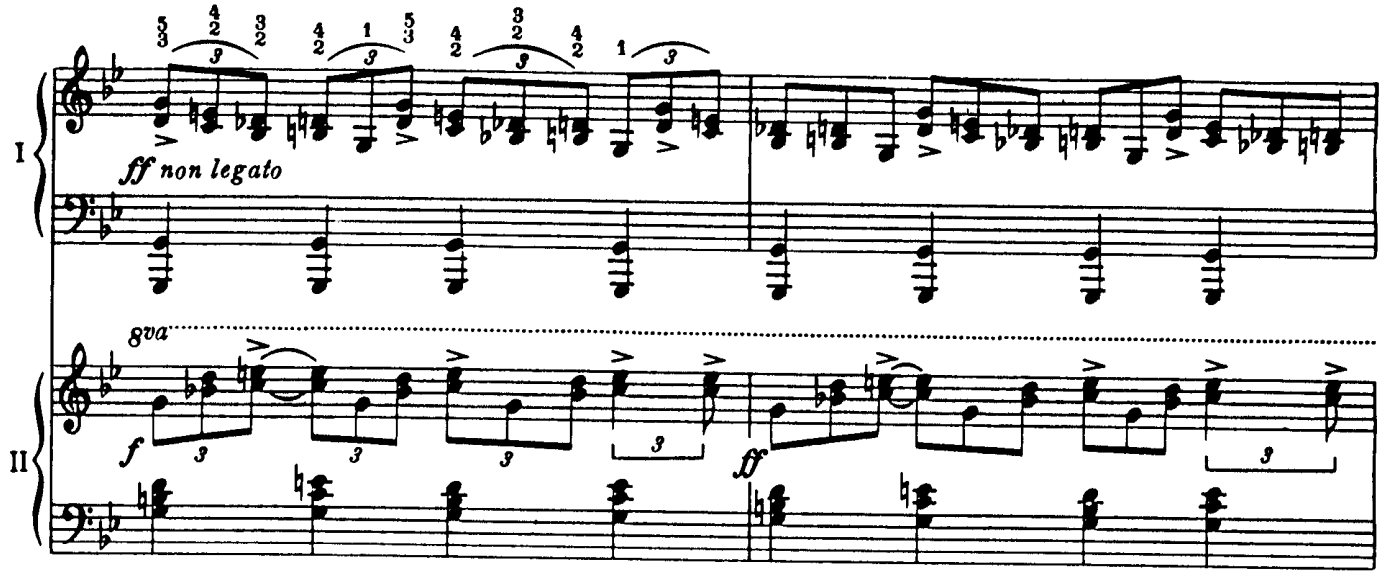
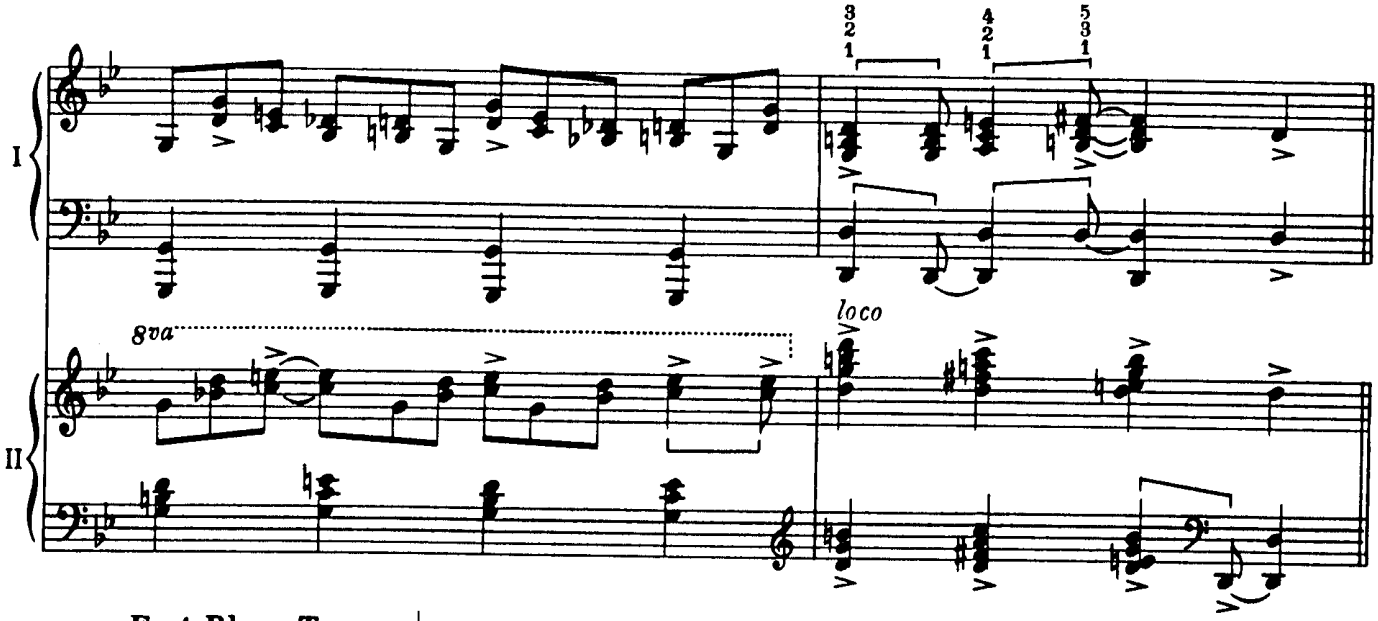
II


8va
I
II
Slightly slower ♩= 60
rit.
p
rit.
p

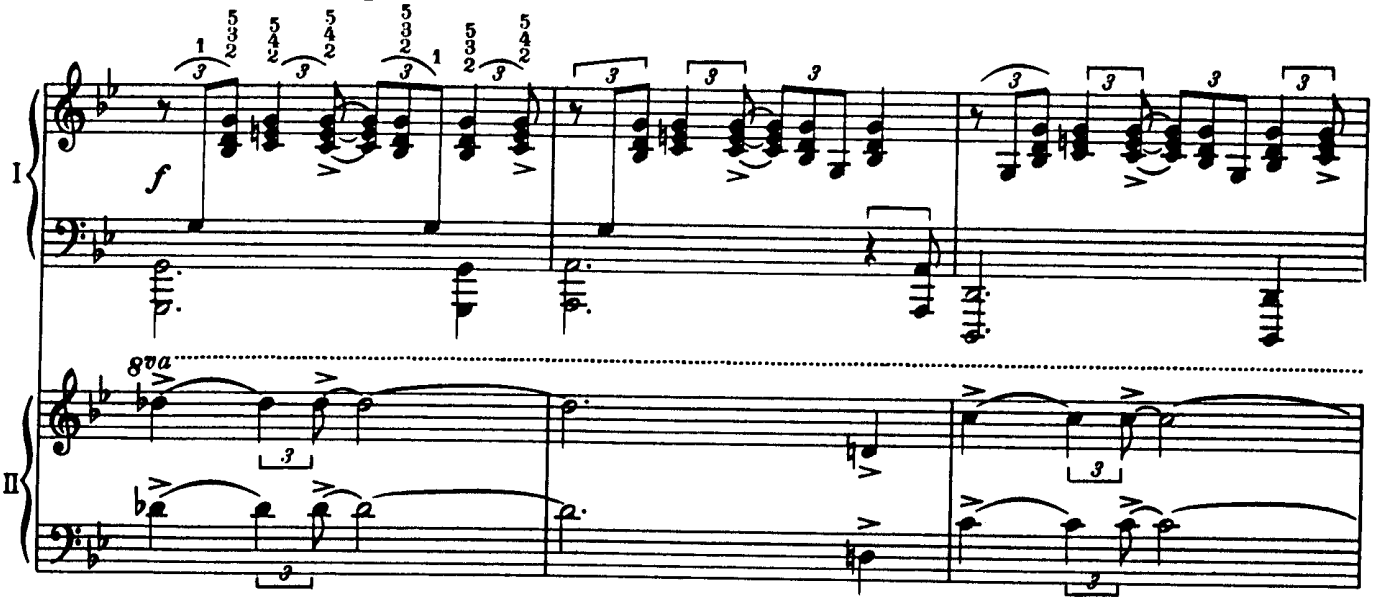
Q922

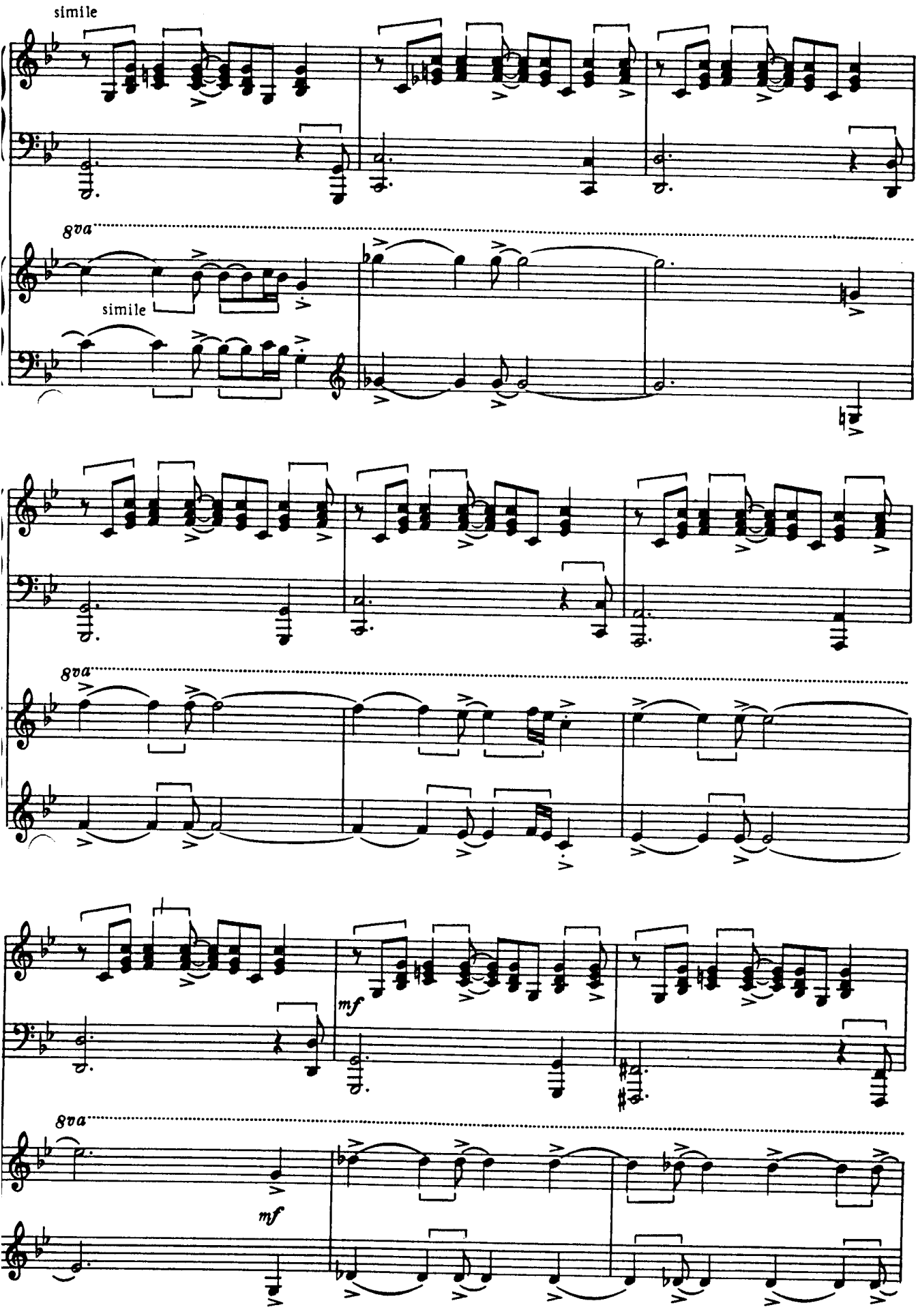

I
II
Slightly faster ♩= 128
pp
p
poco a poco accel. to next tempo
mp
mf
f

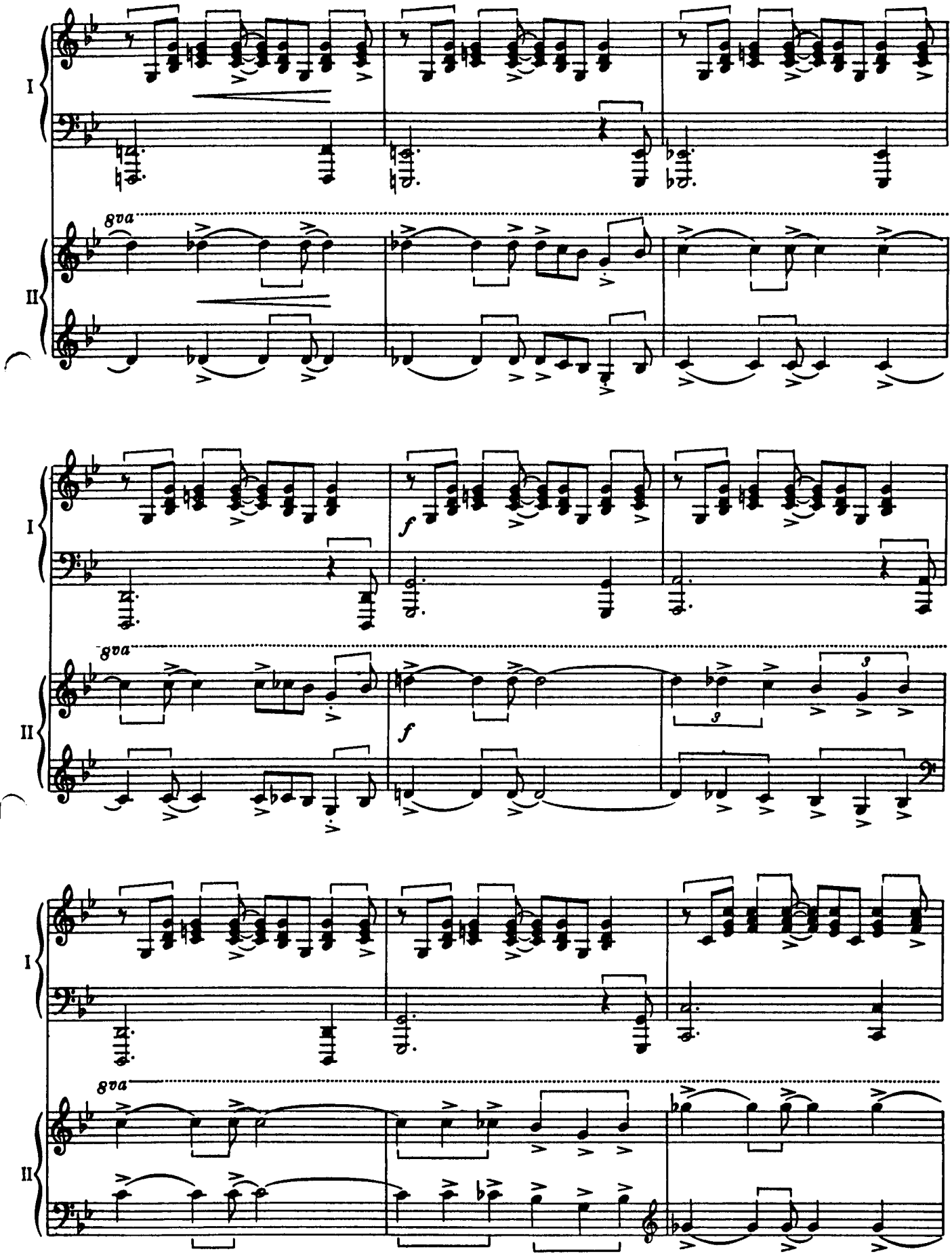


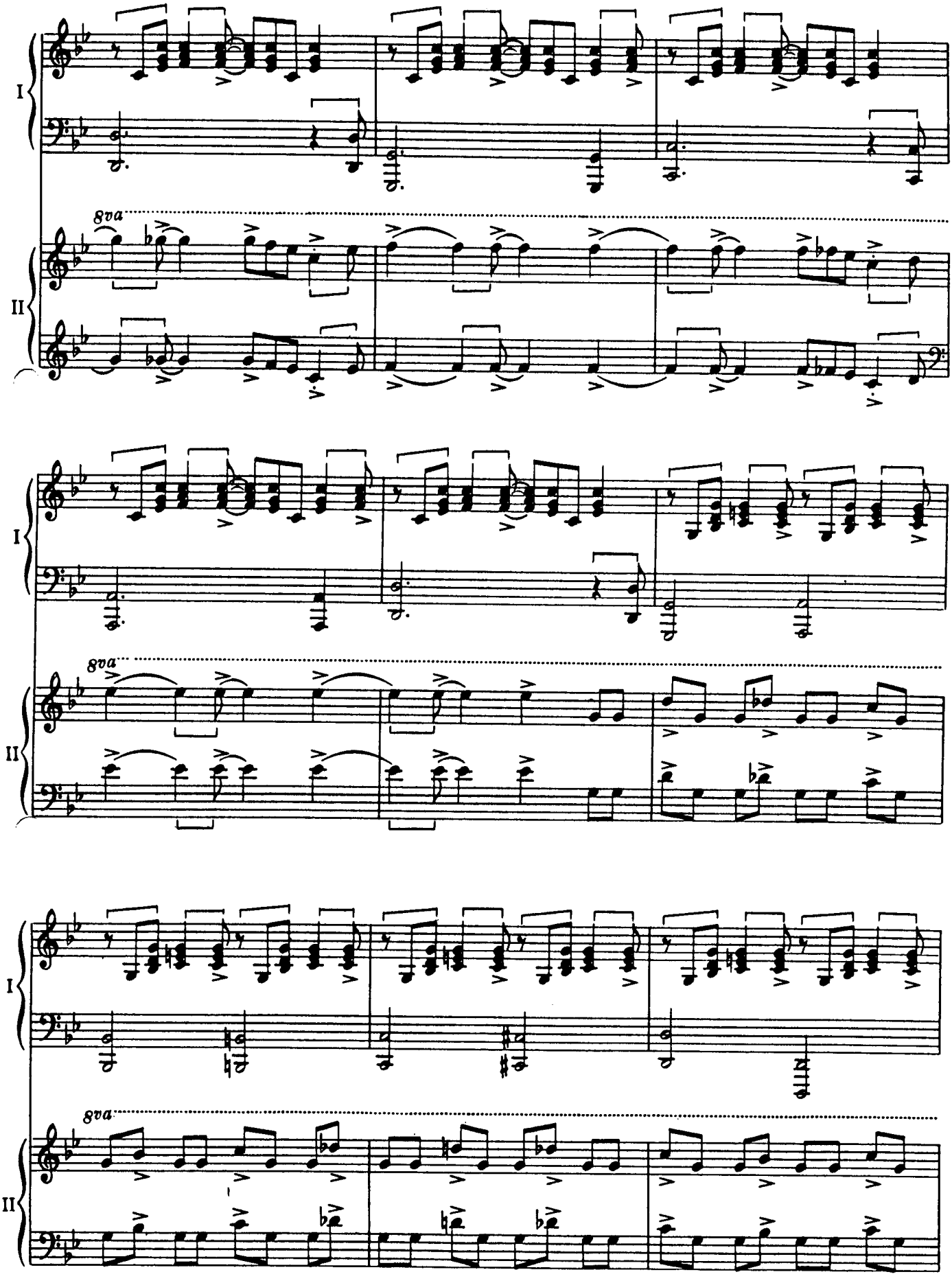


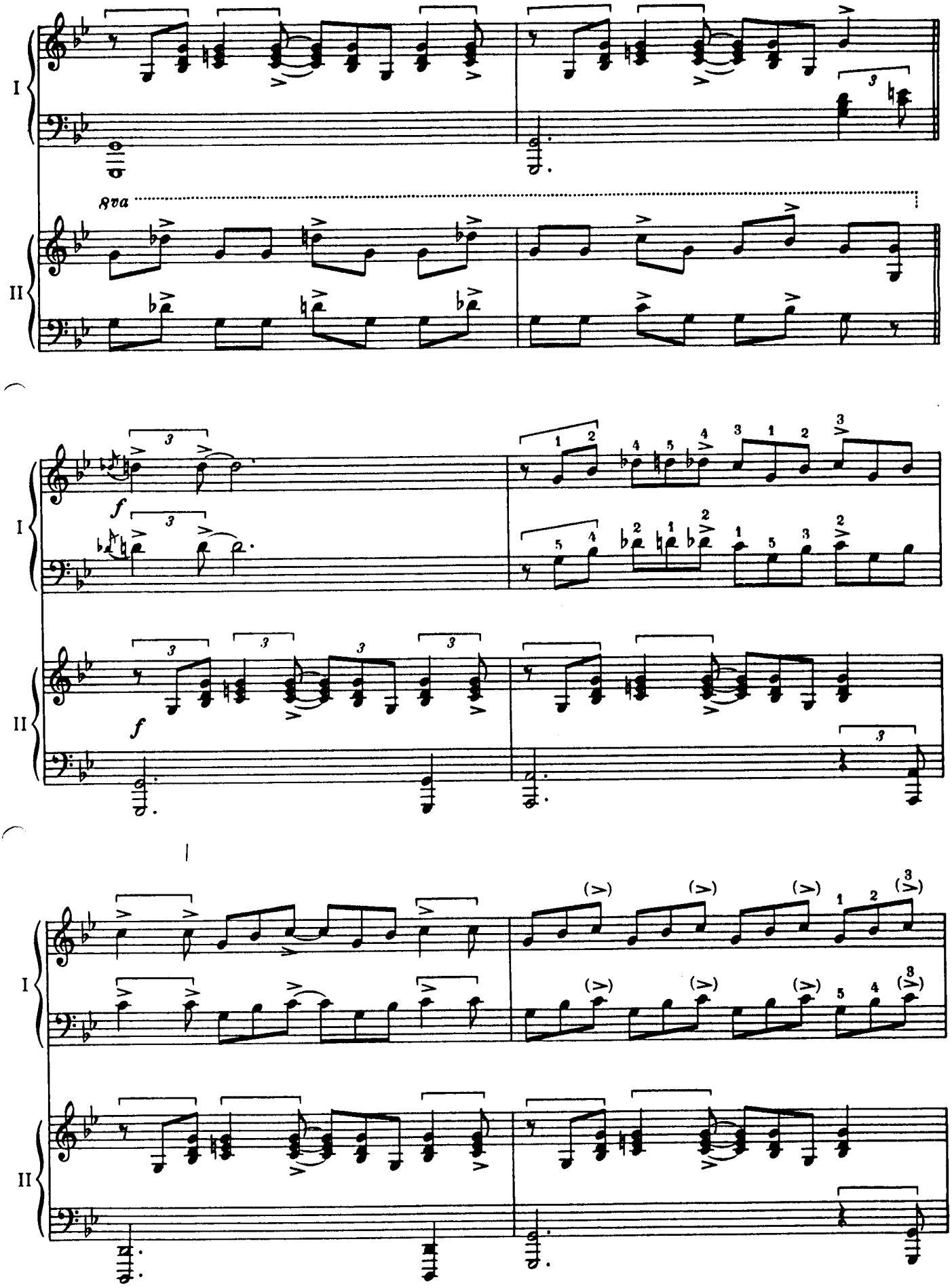
Fast Blues Tempo ♩ = 138

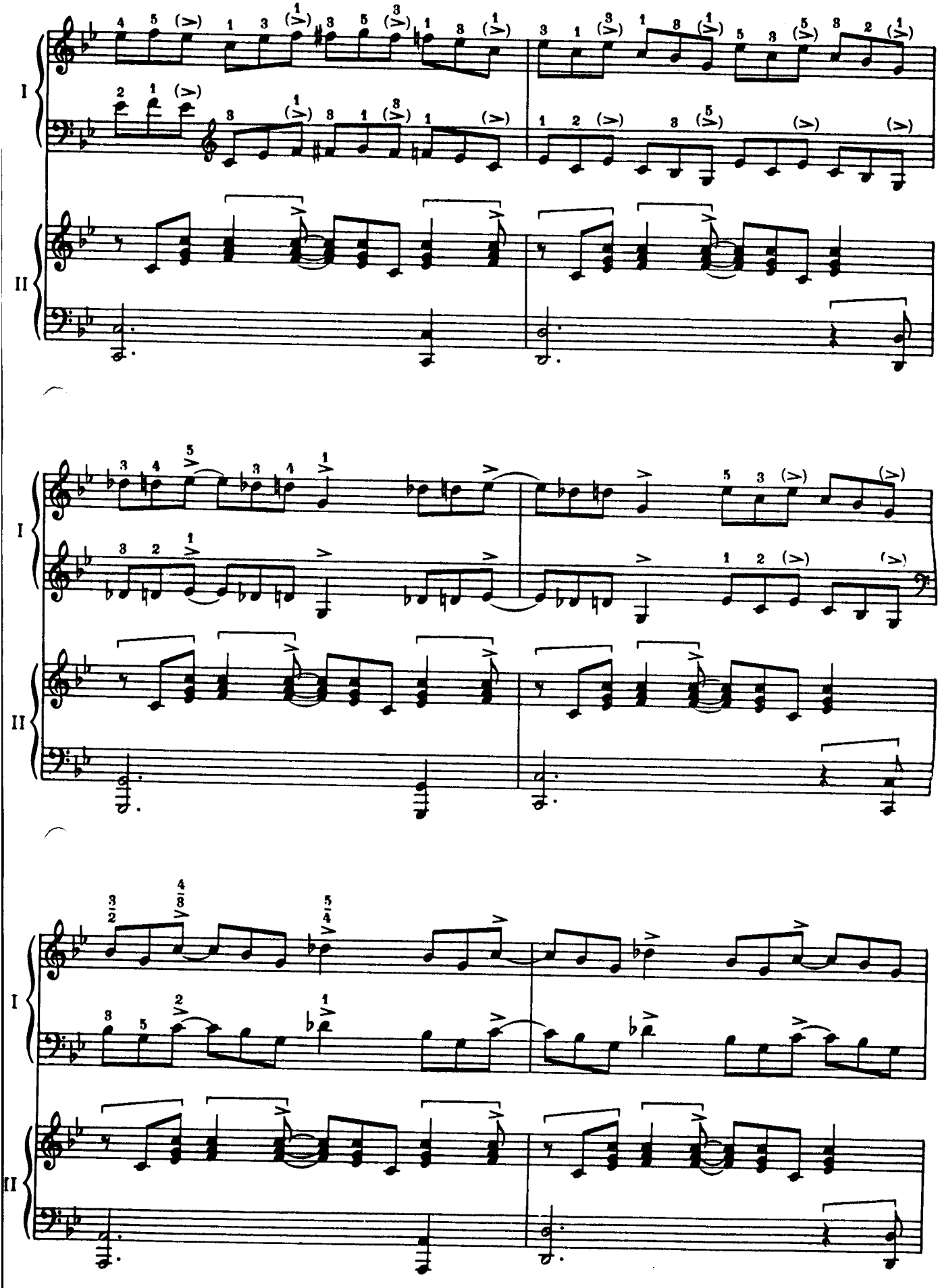



simile
8va
simile
8va
mf
8va
mf


I
II
8va
f
3


I
8va
II
I
8va
II
I
8va
II


I
II
8va
f
f


I
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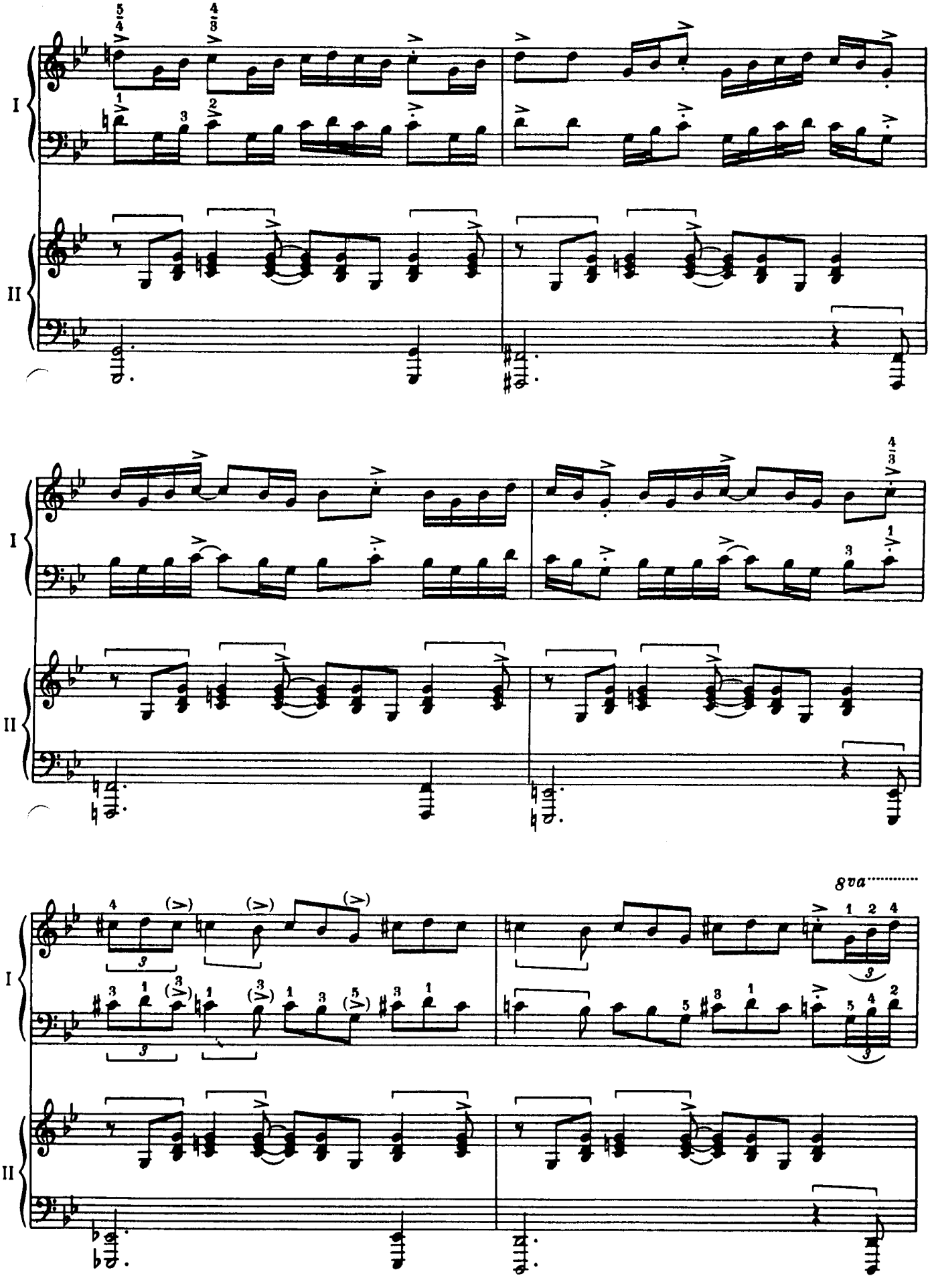
II


I
II
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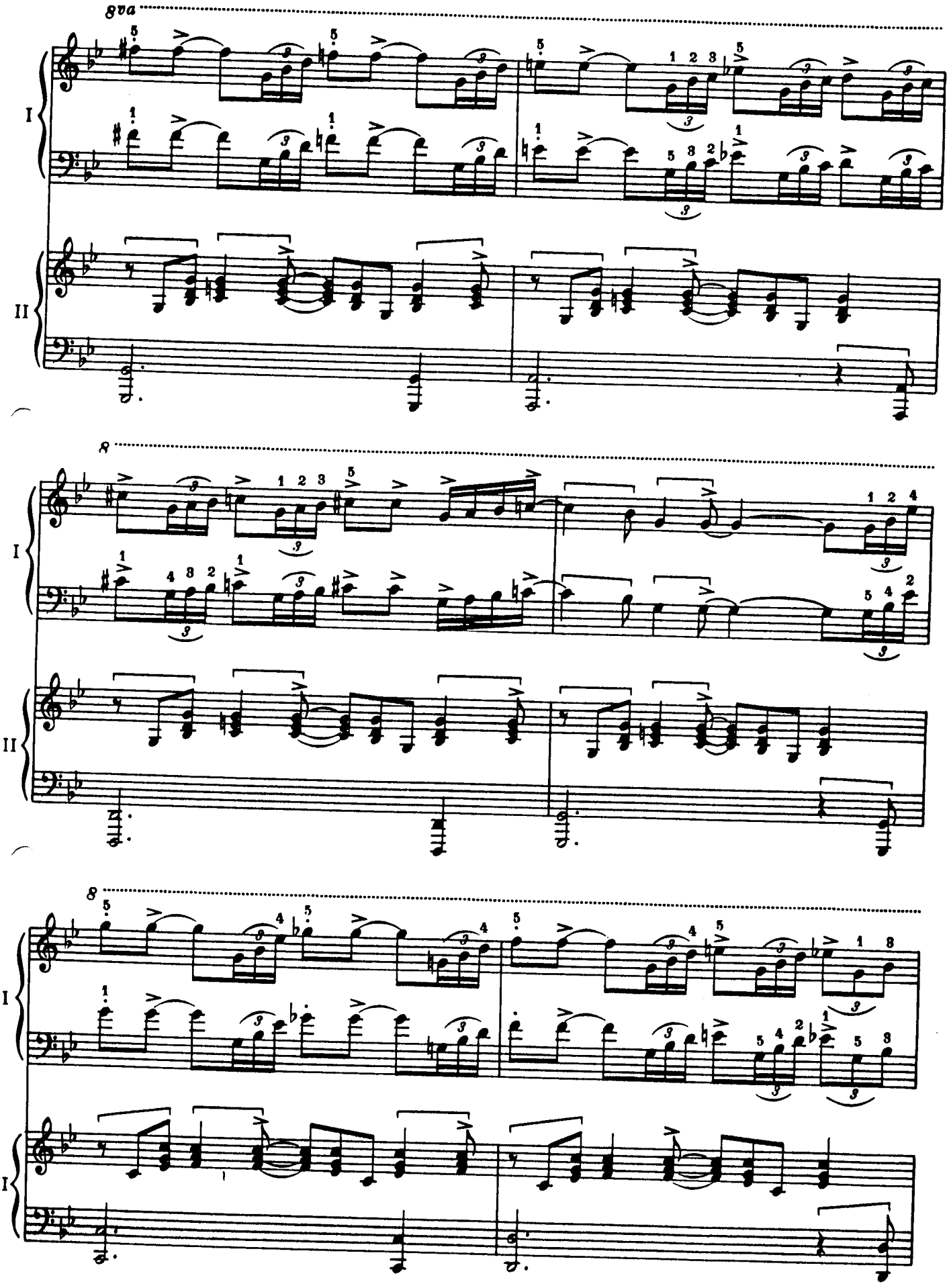
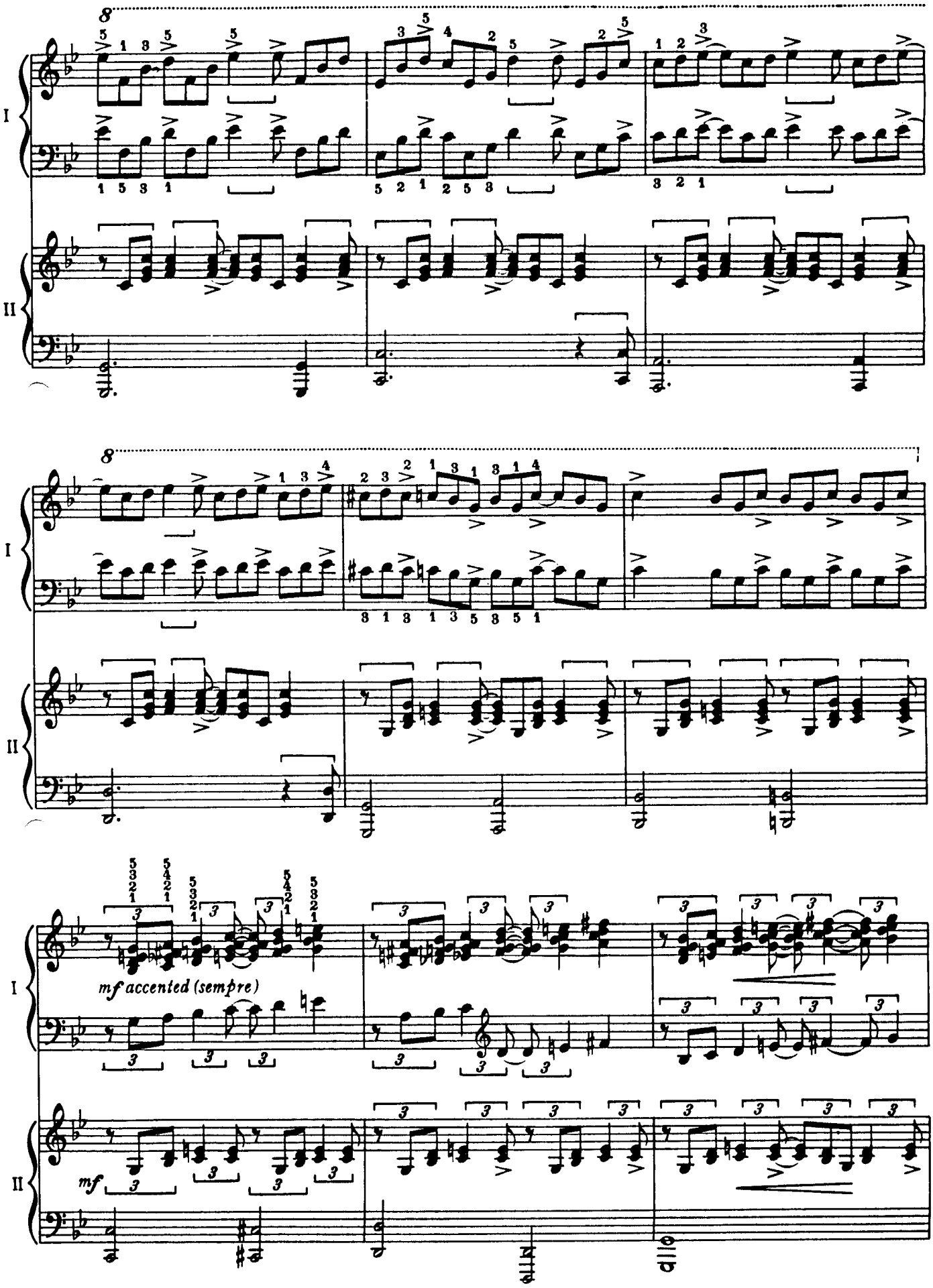
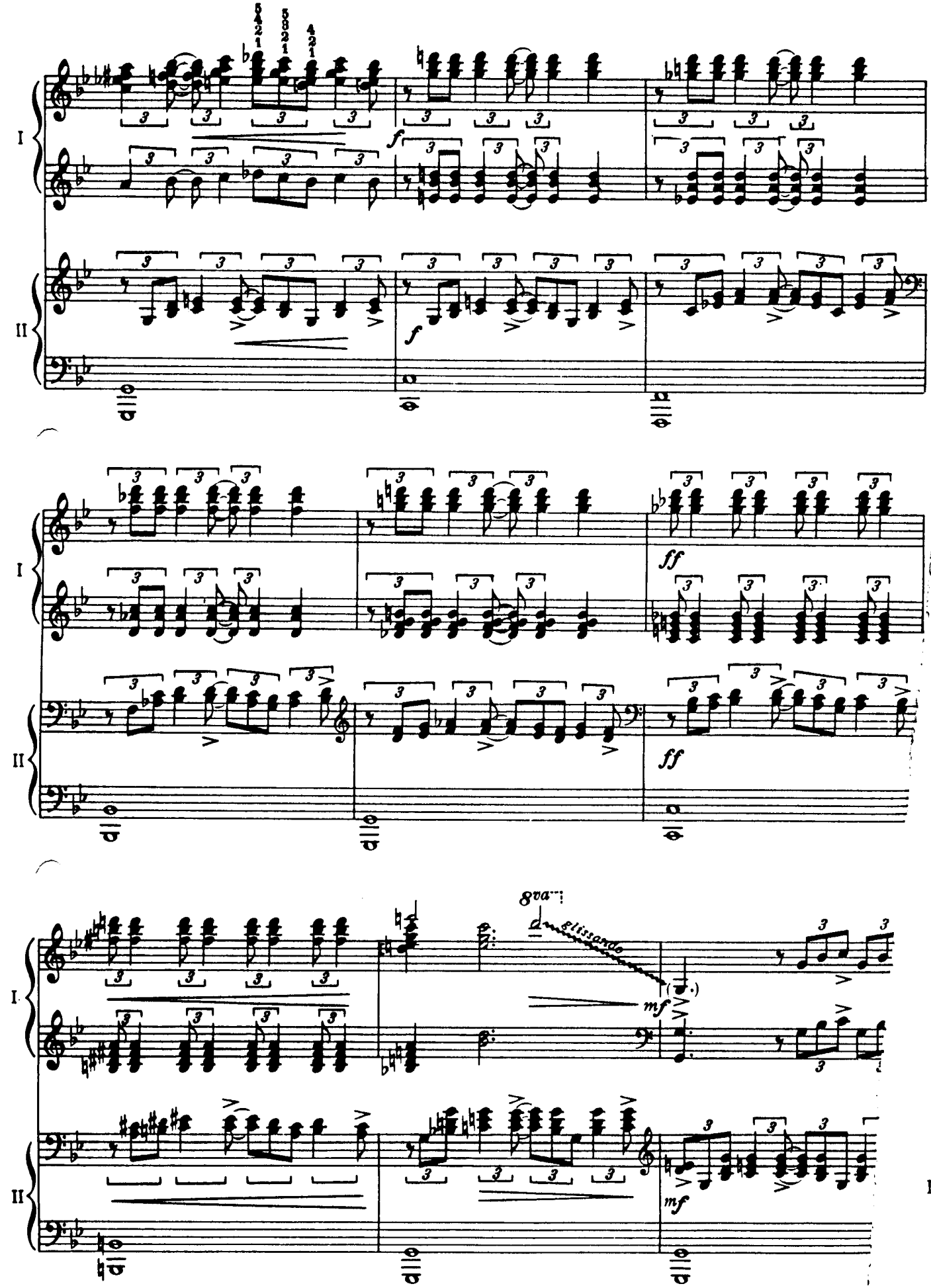
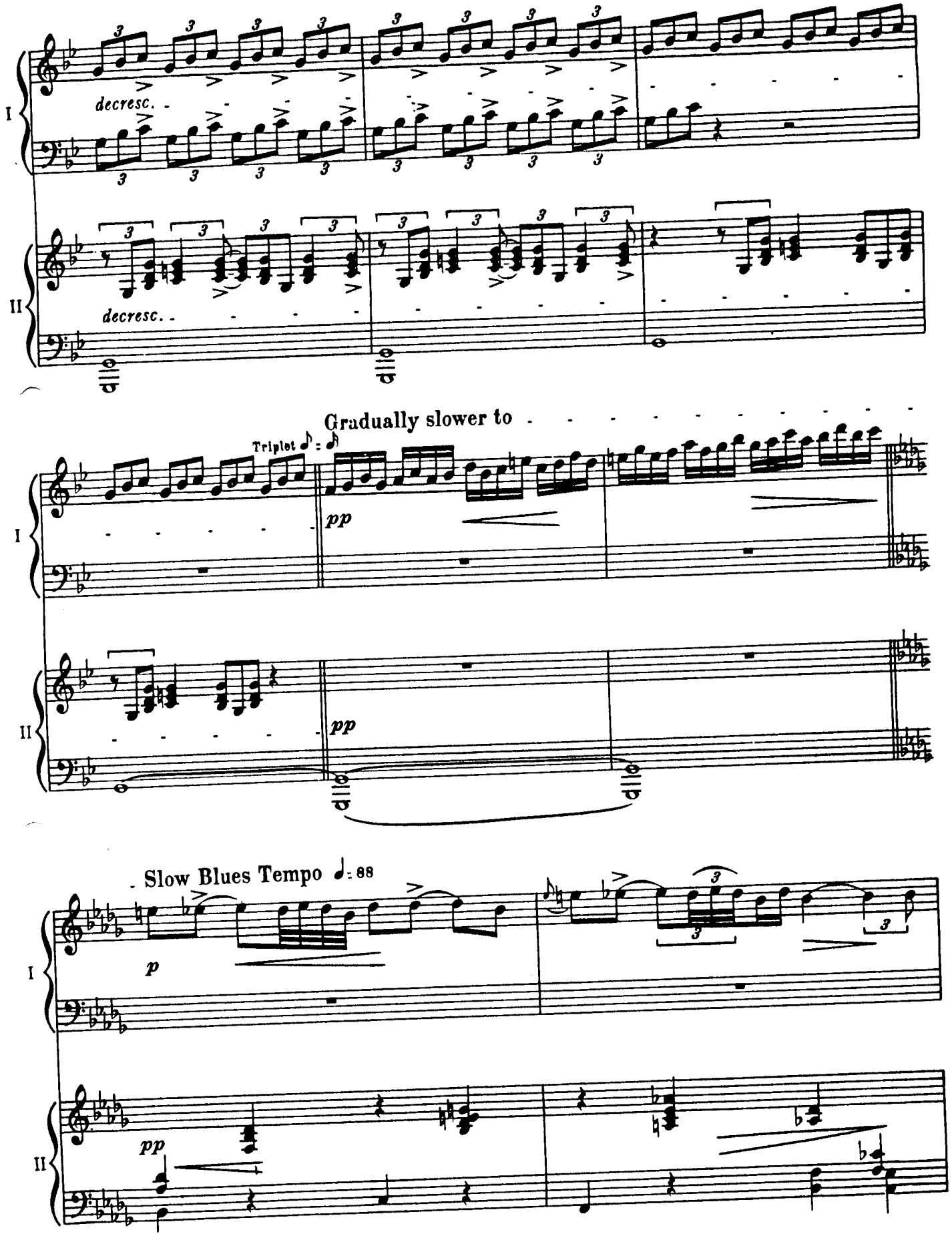
II

2530

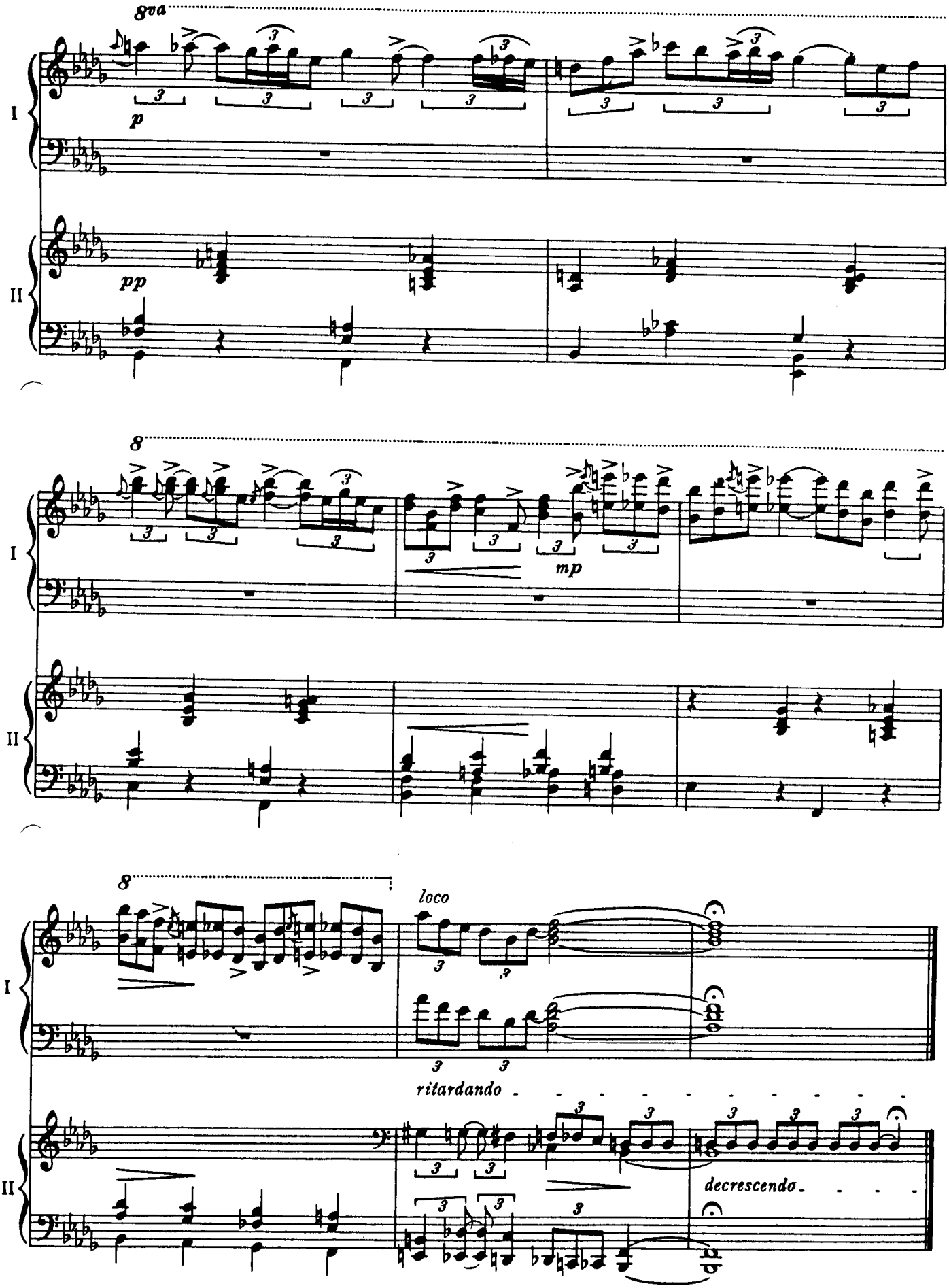



I
II
mf accented (sempre)
mf


I
II
f
ff
mf
8va
glissando

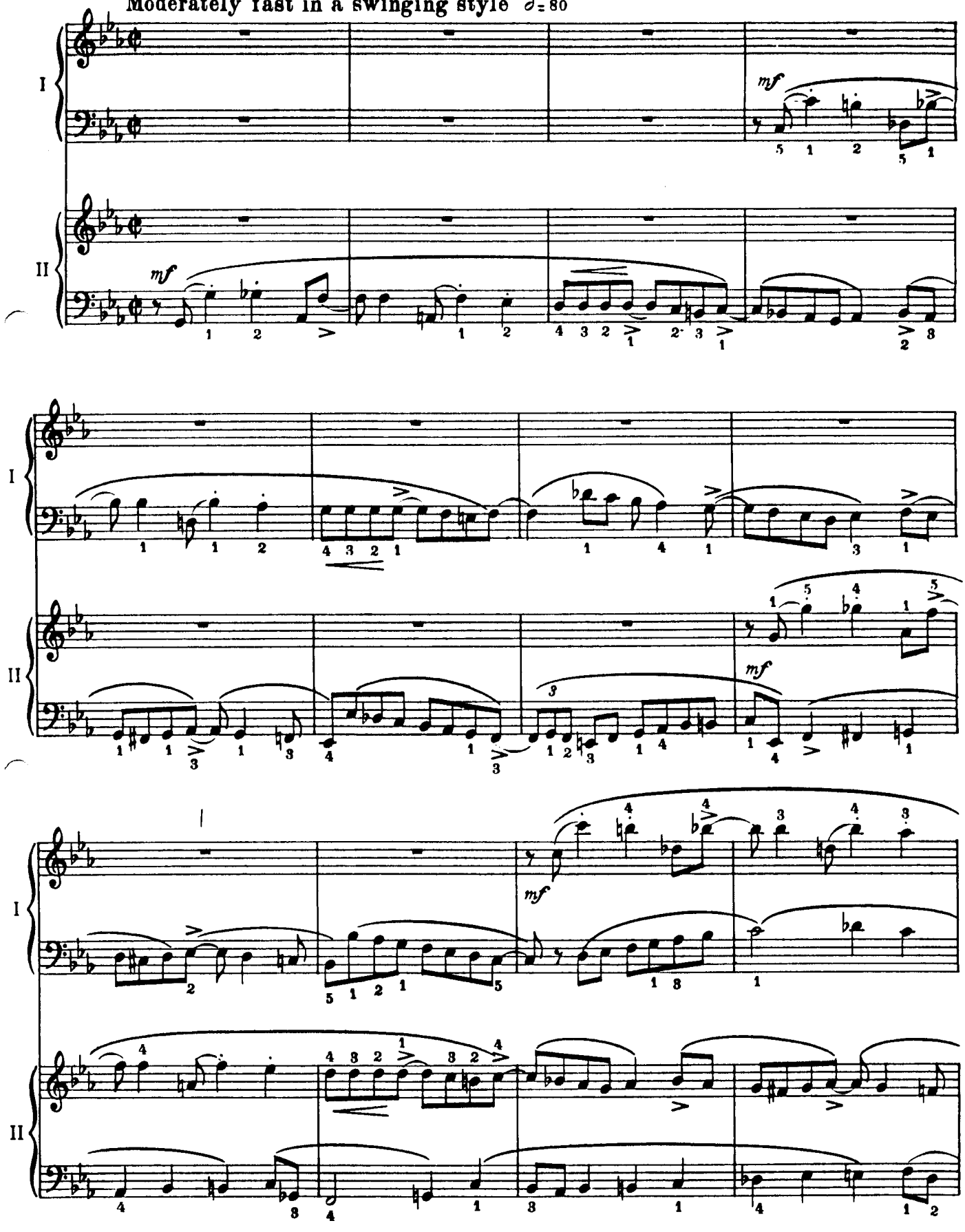

decresc.
decresc.
Gradually slower to
Triplet
pp
pp
Slow Blues Tempo ♩= 88
p
pp

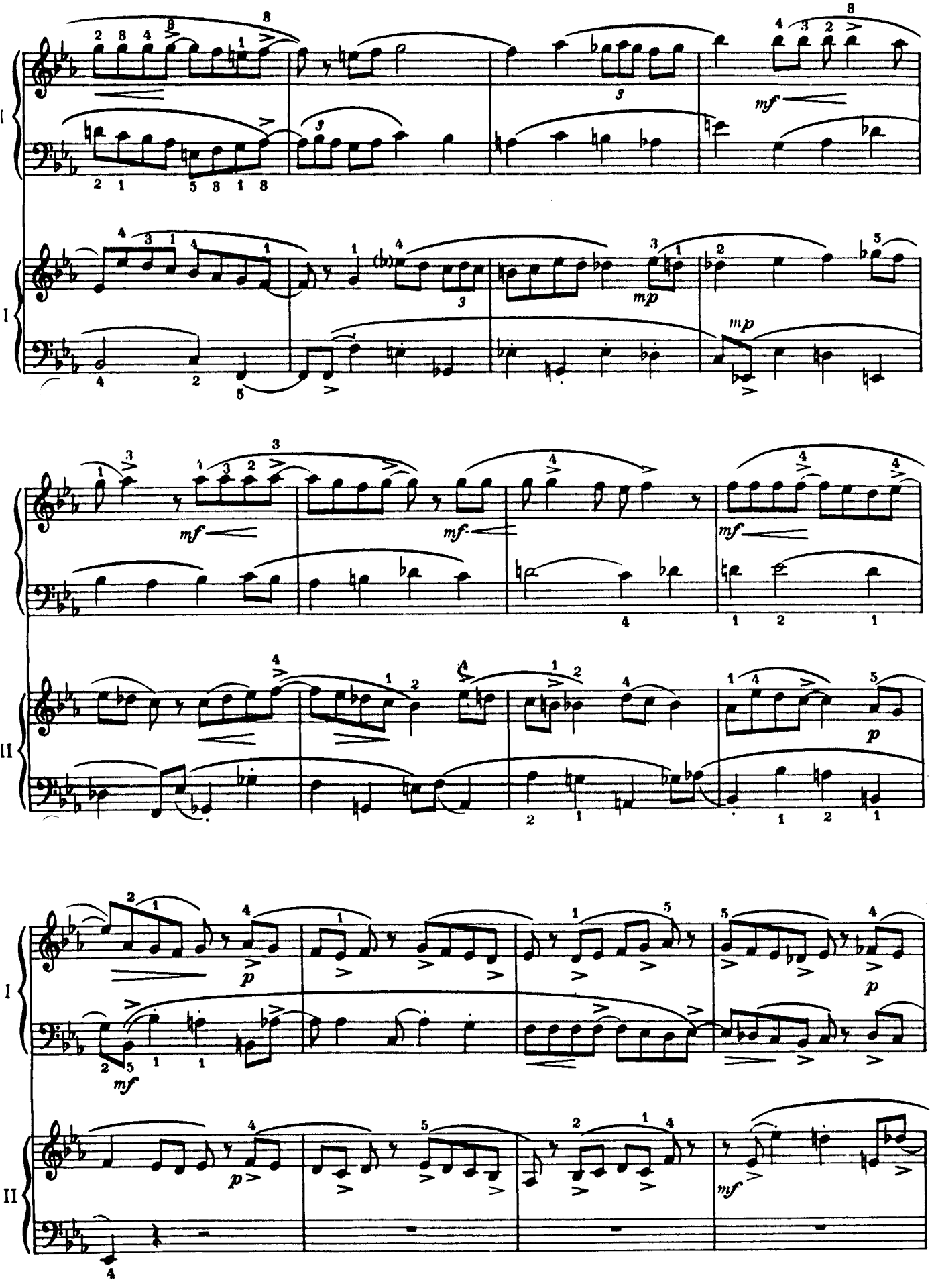
2934

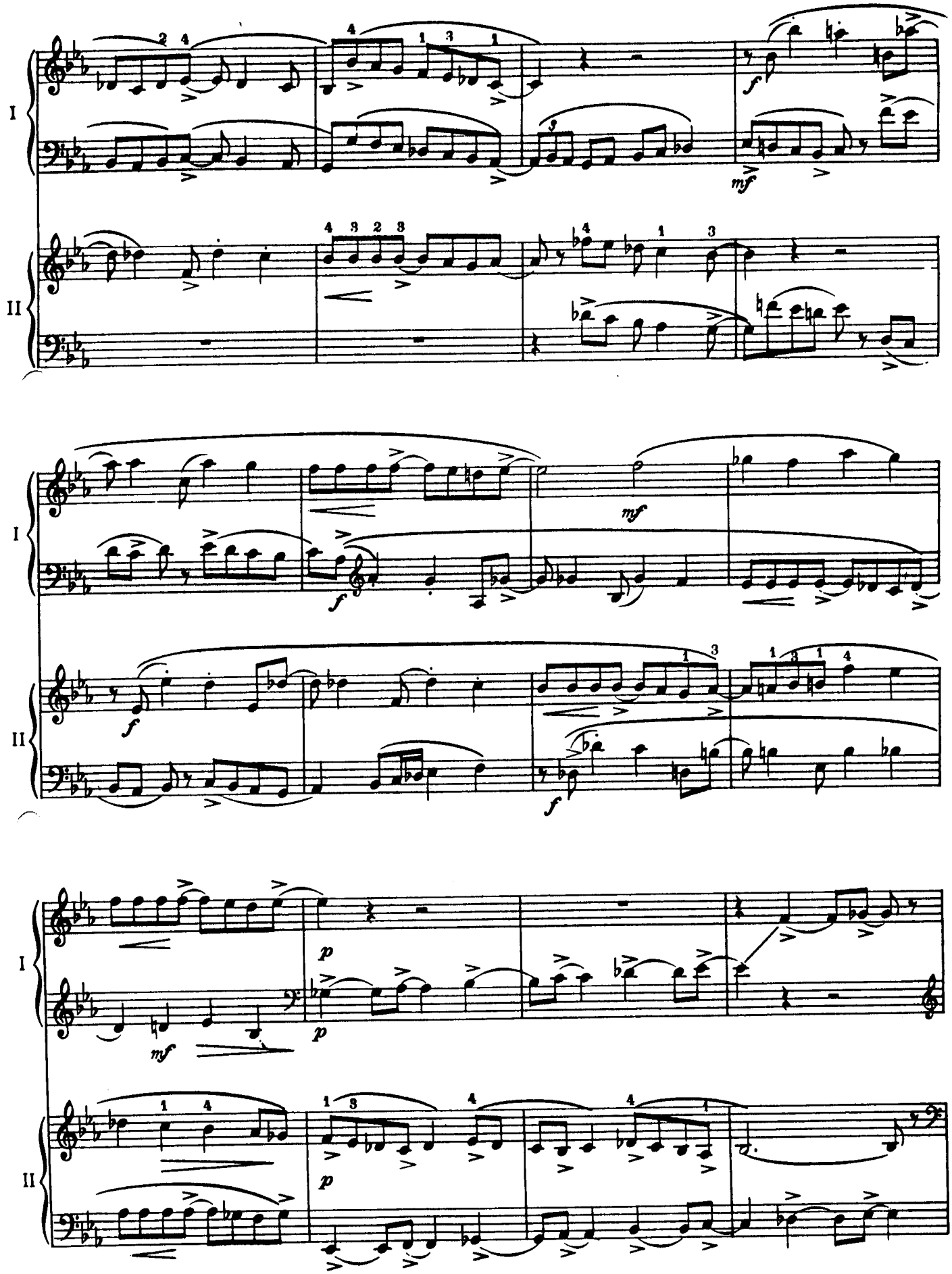


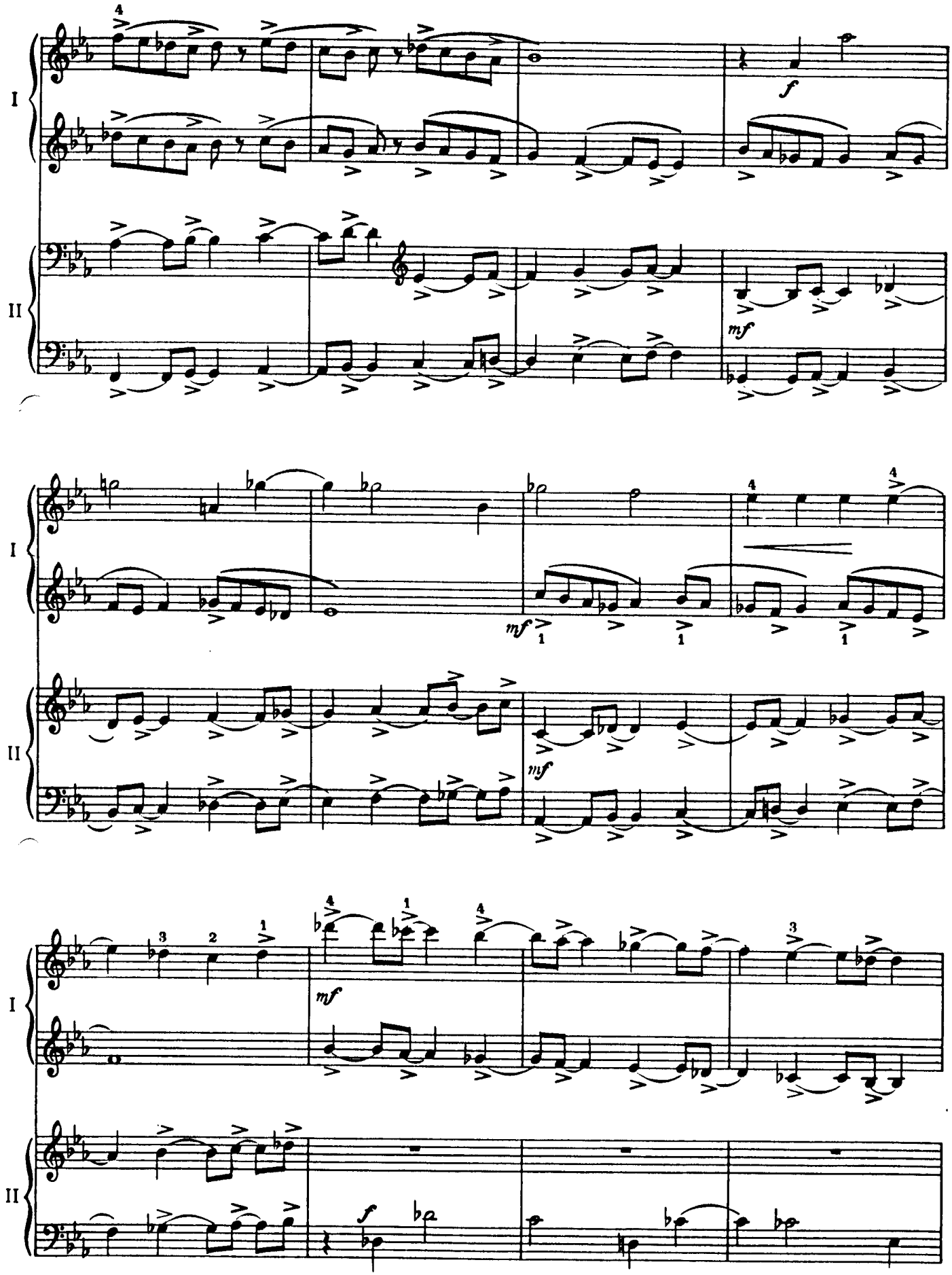
IV. FUGUE

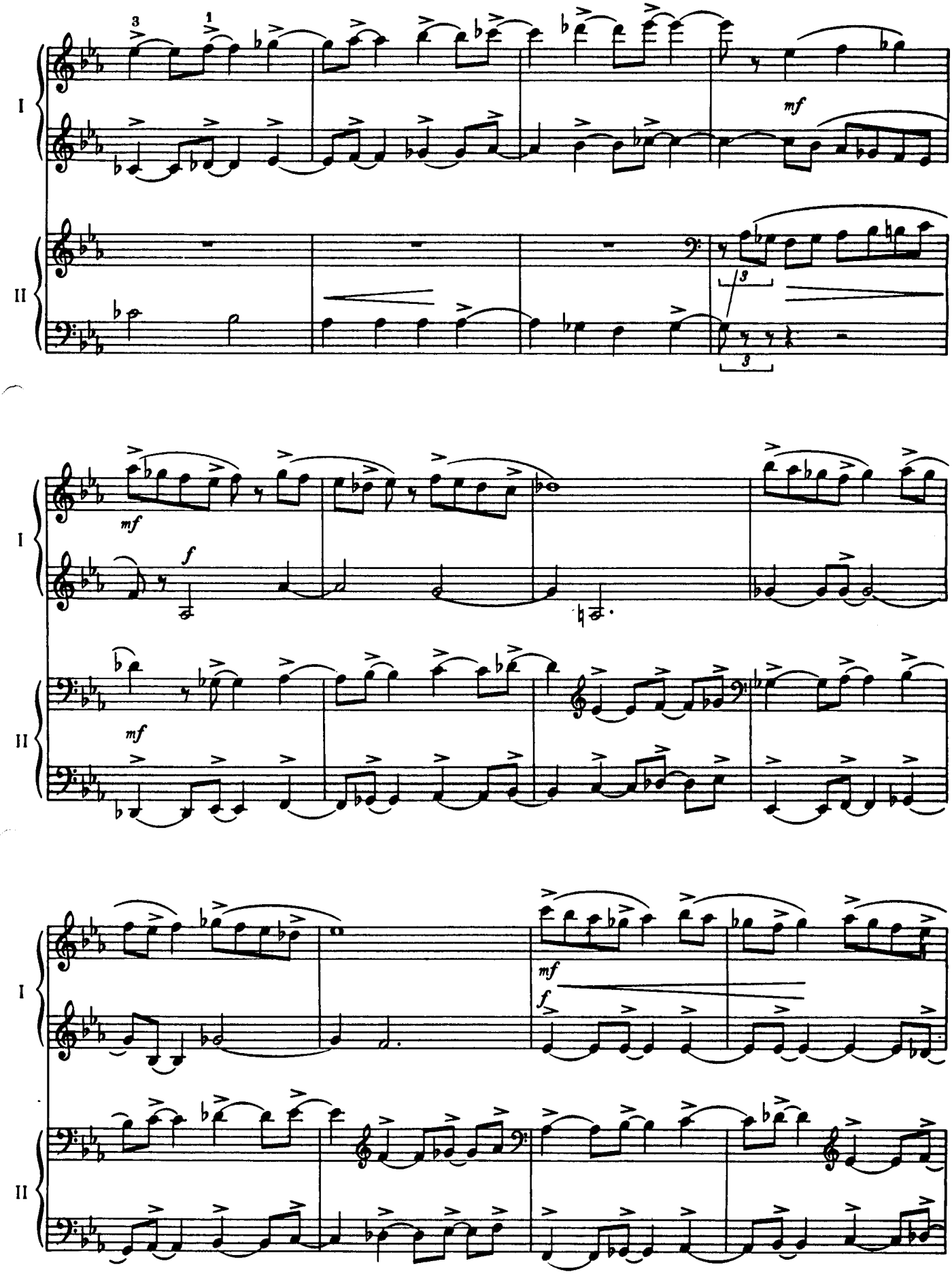
Moderately fast in a swinging style ♩= 80



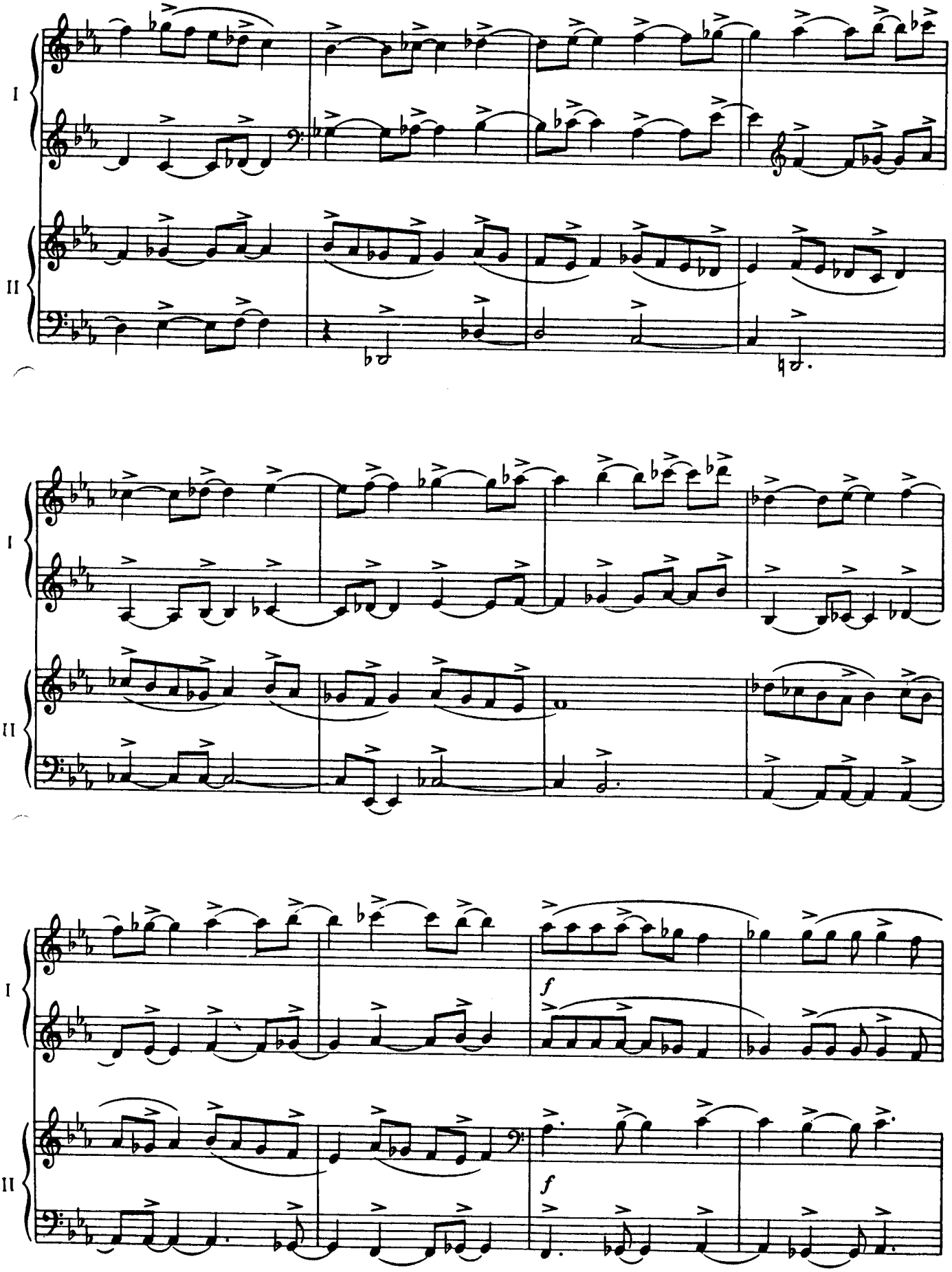

I
I
II
I
II
mf
mp
mf
mf
mf
p
p
mf
p
mf

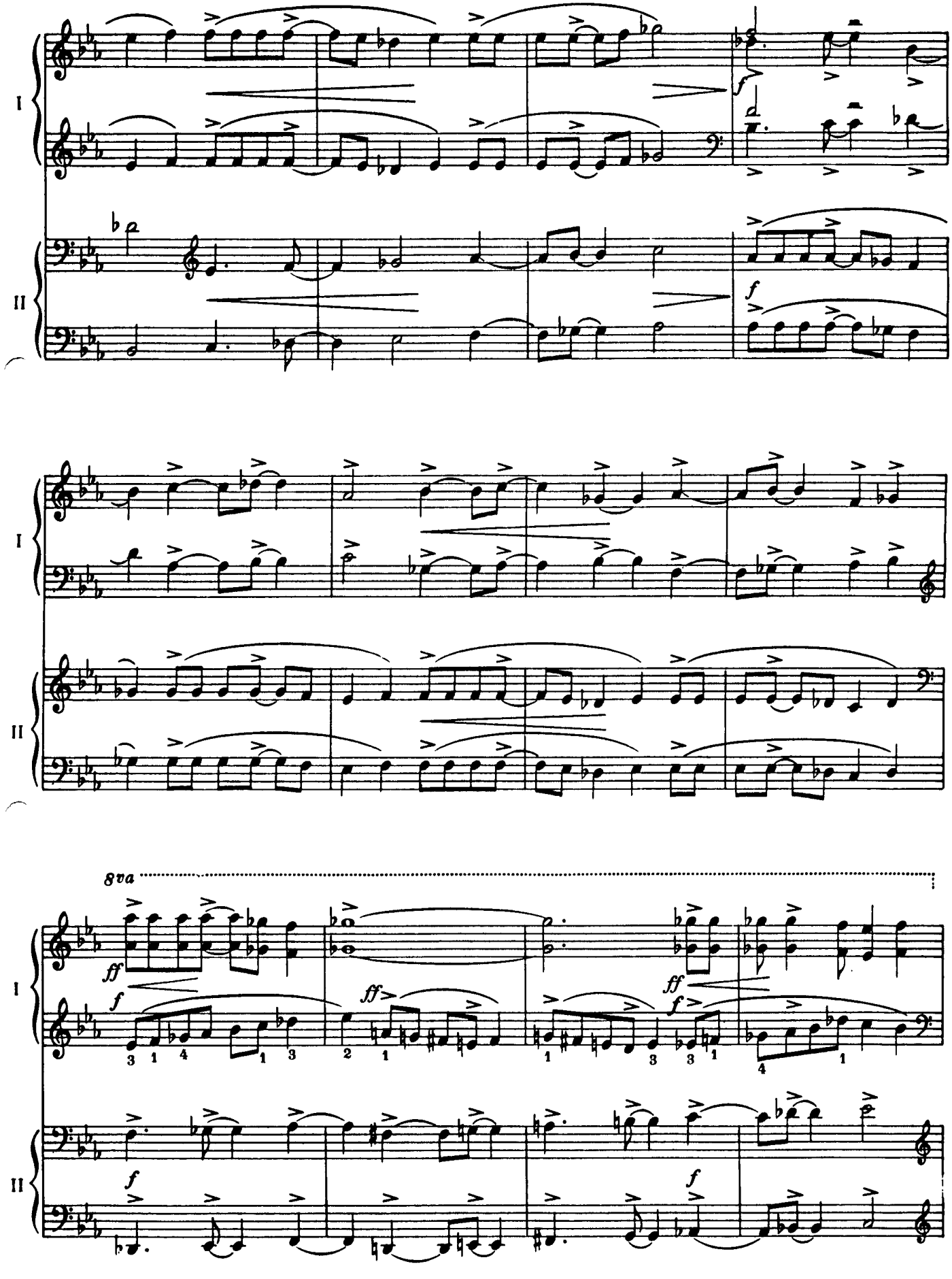

I
II
f
mf
p


I
II
f
mf
mf
mf
f

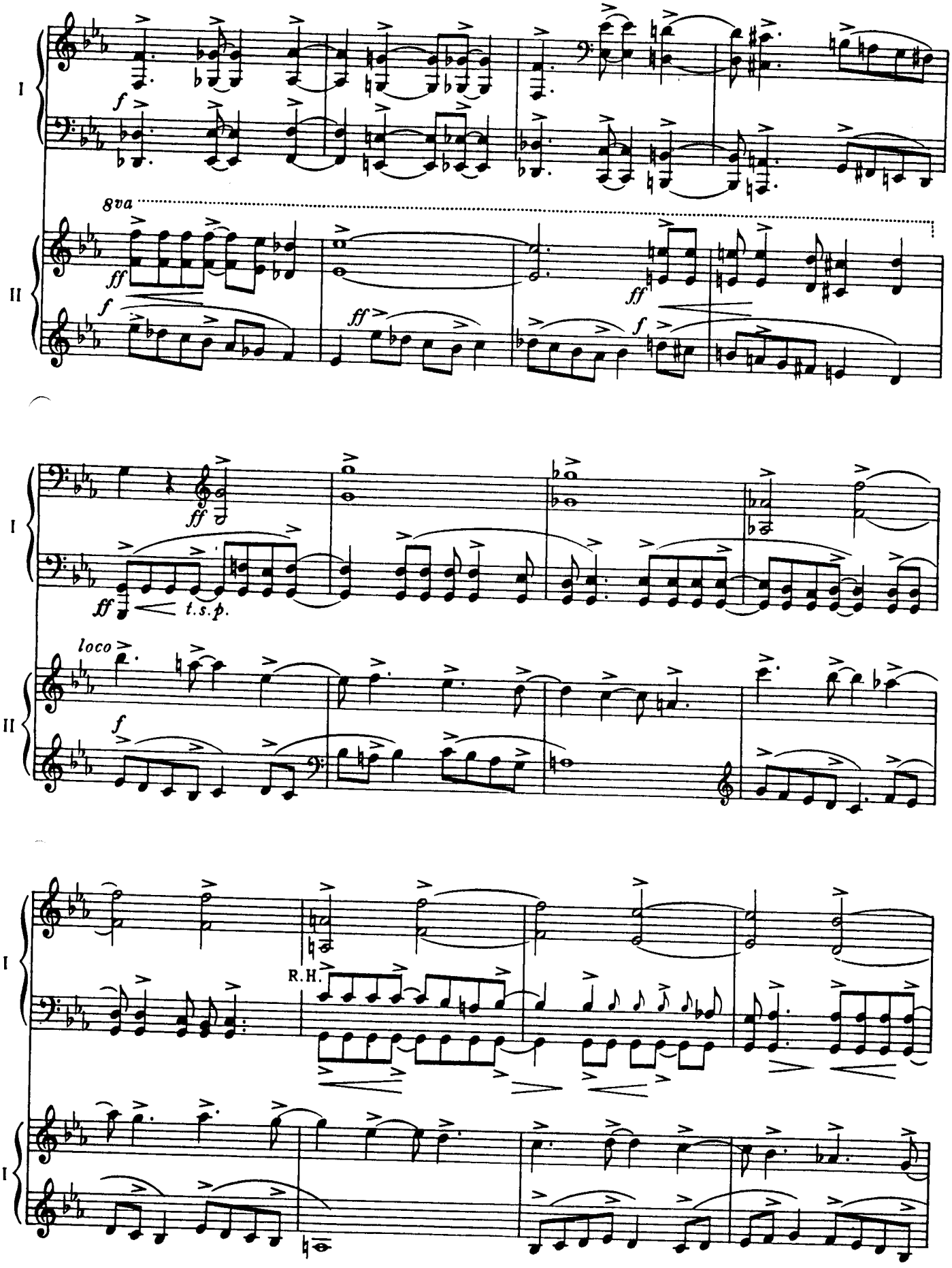

I
II
mf
f
mf
mf
f

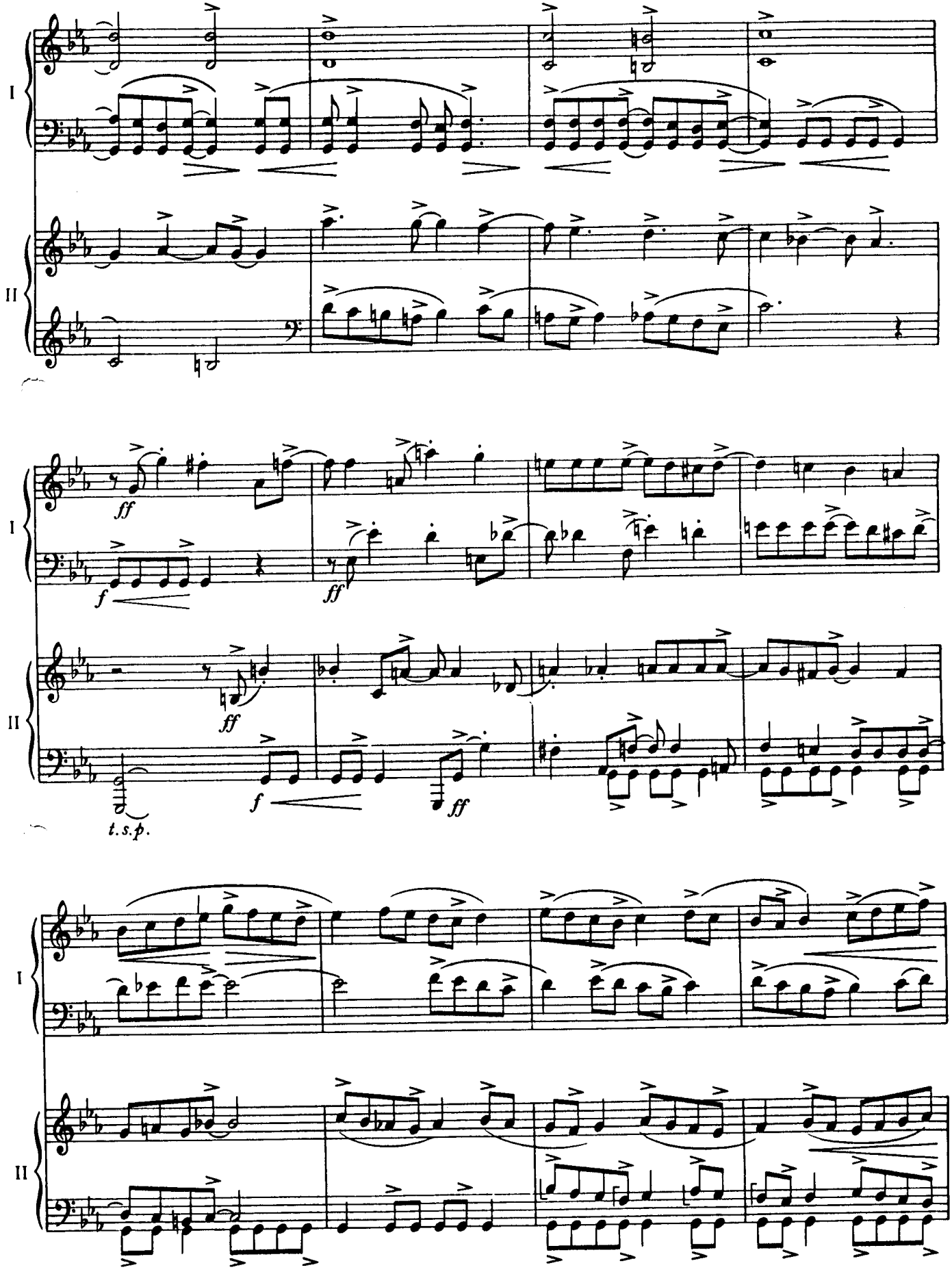
1940



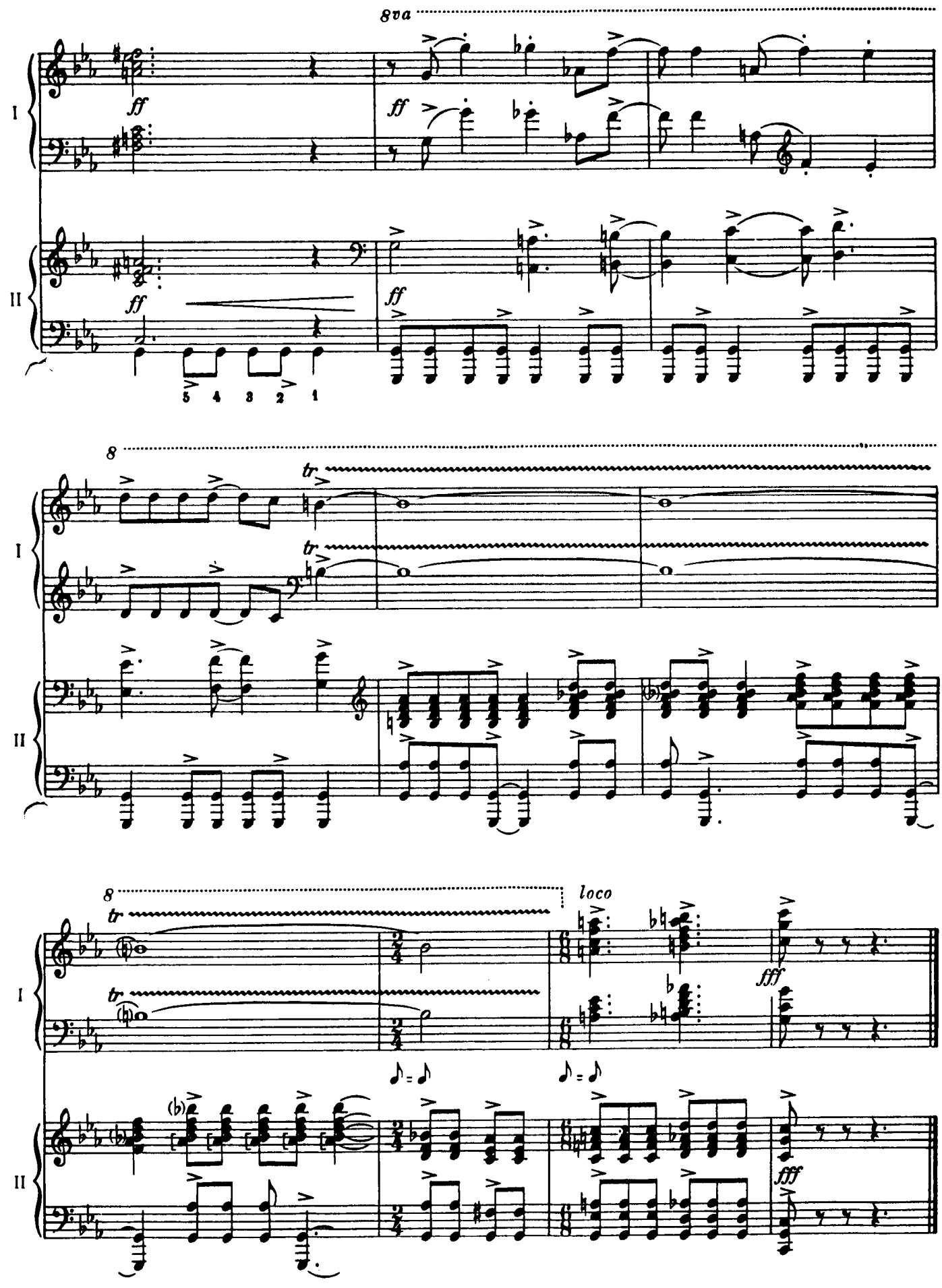

I
II
f
I
II
8va
ff
f
ff
ff
f
I
II
f
f

2942

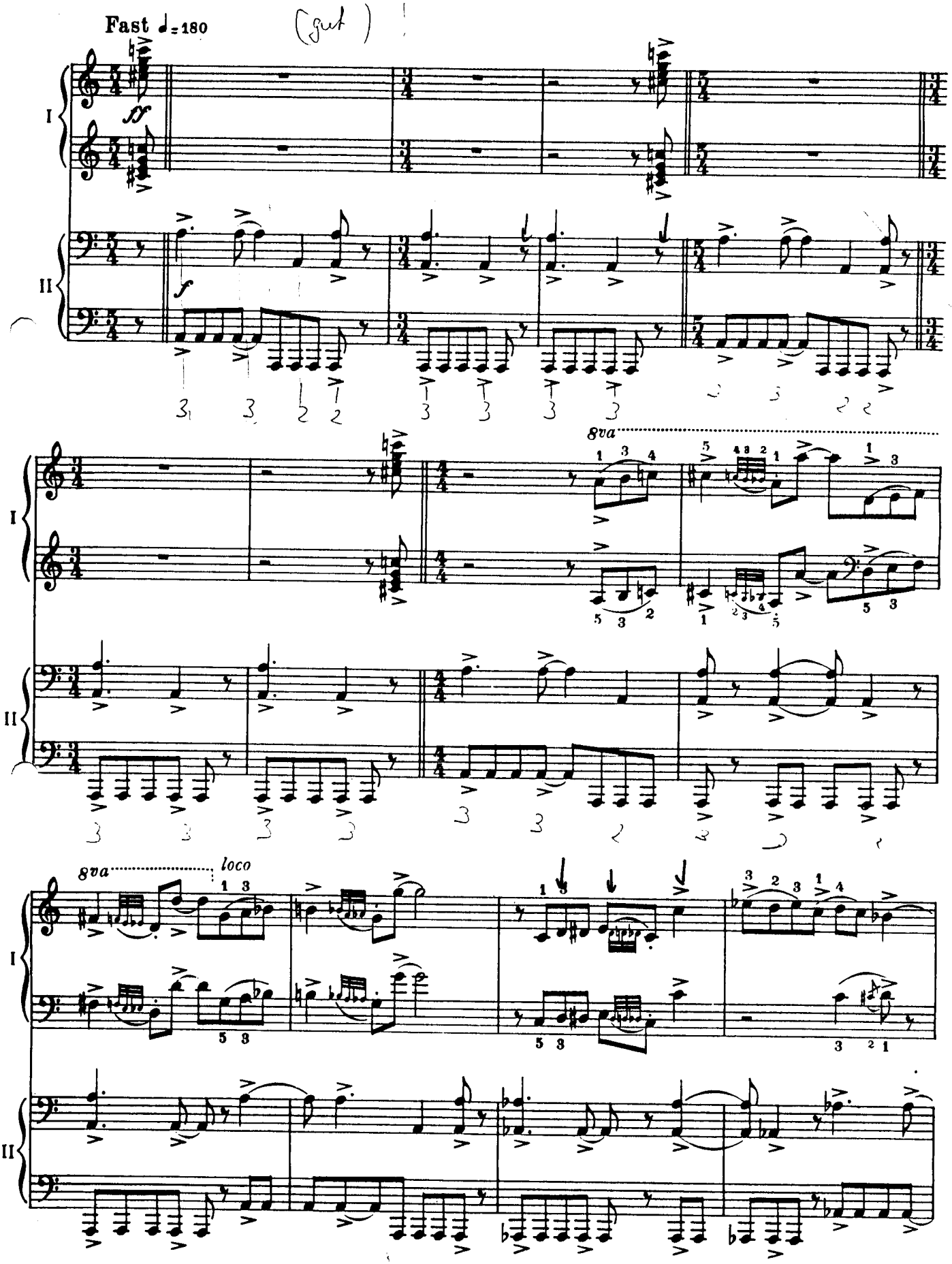



I
II
ff
f
ff
t.s.p.

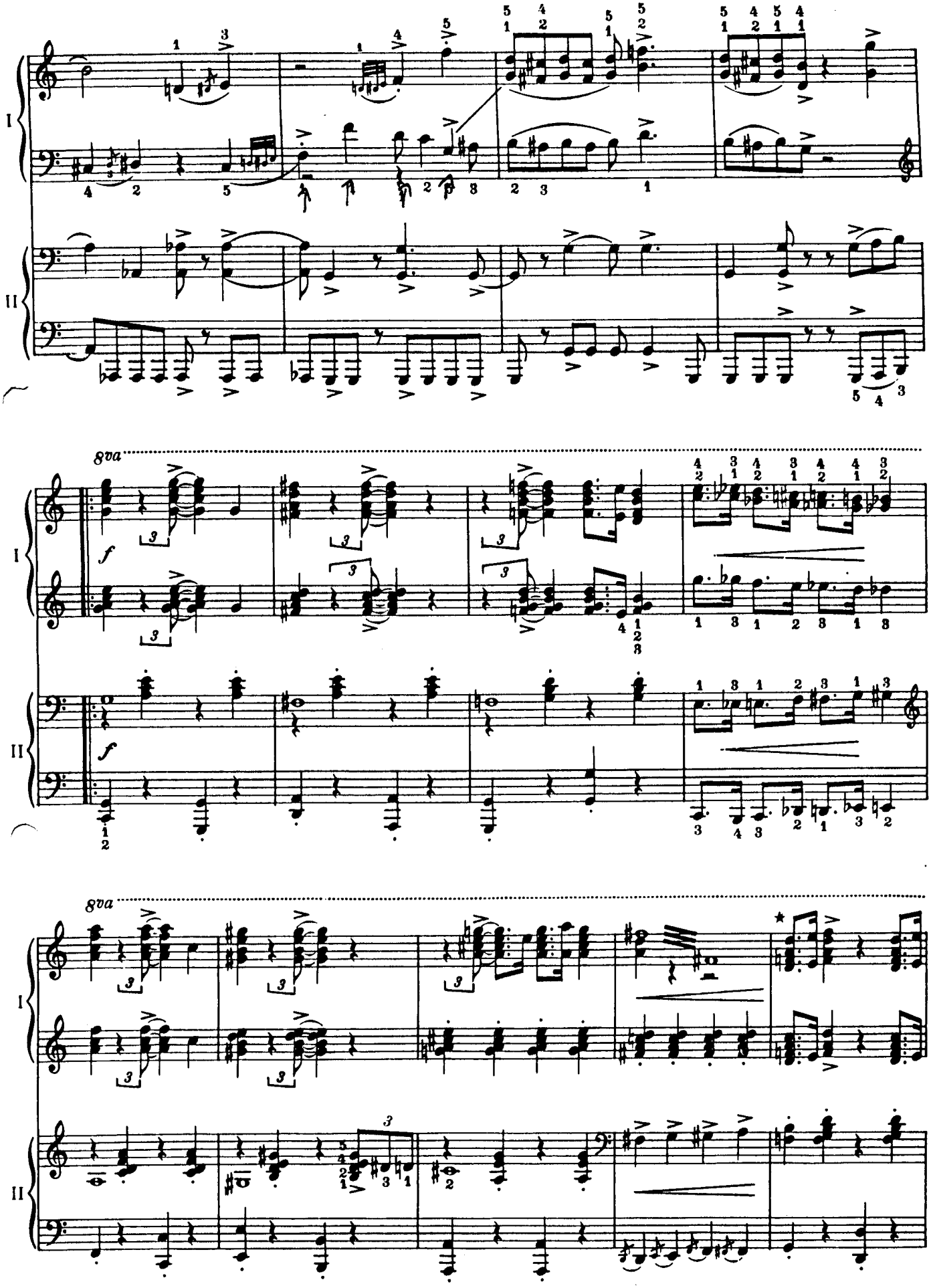
2944



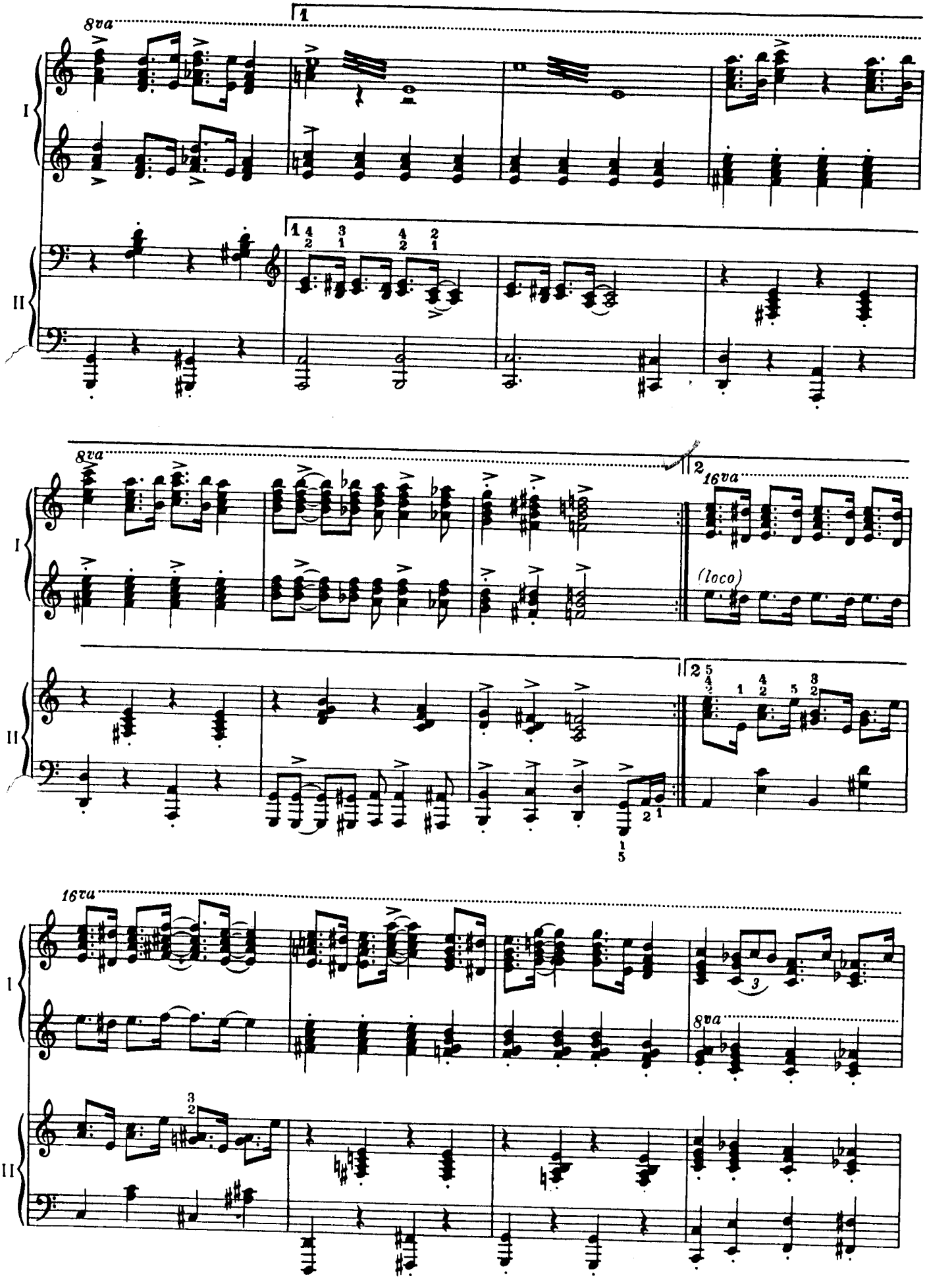
V. RAG

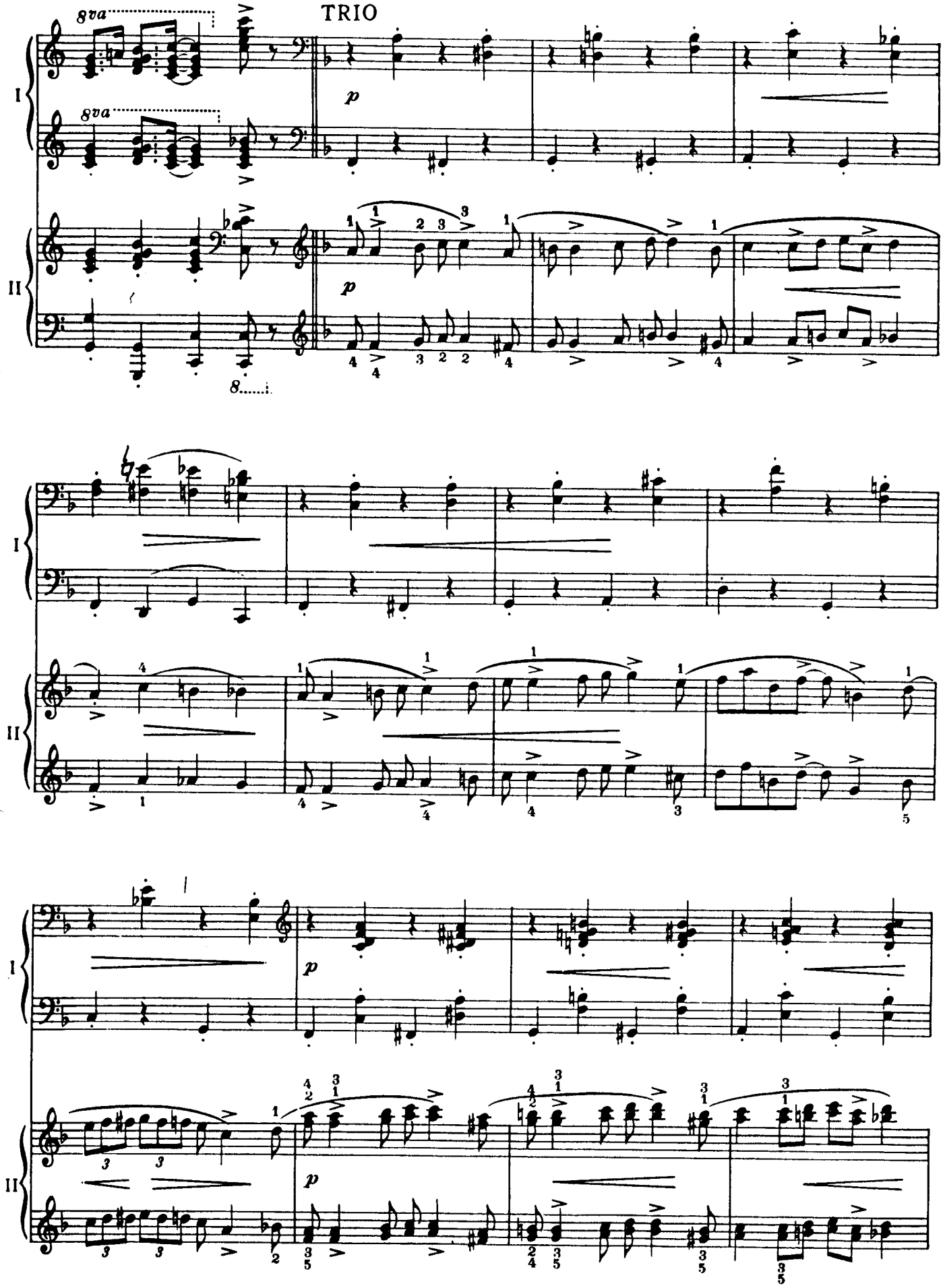


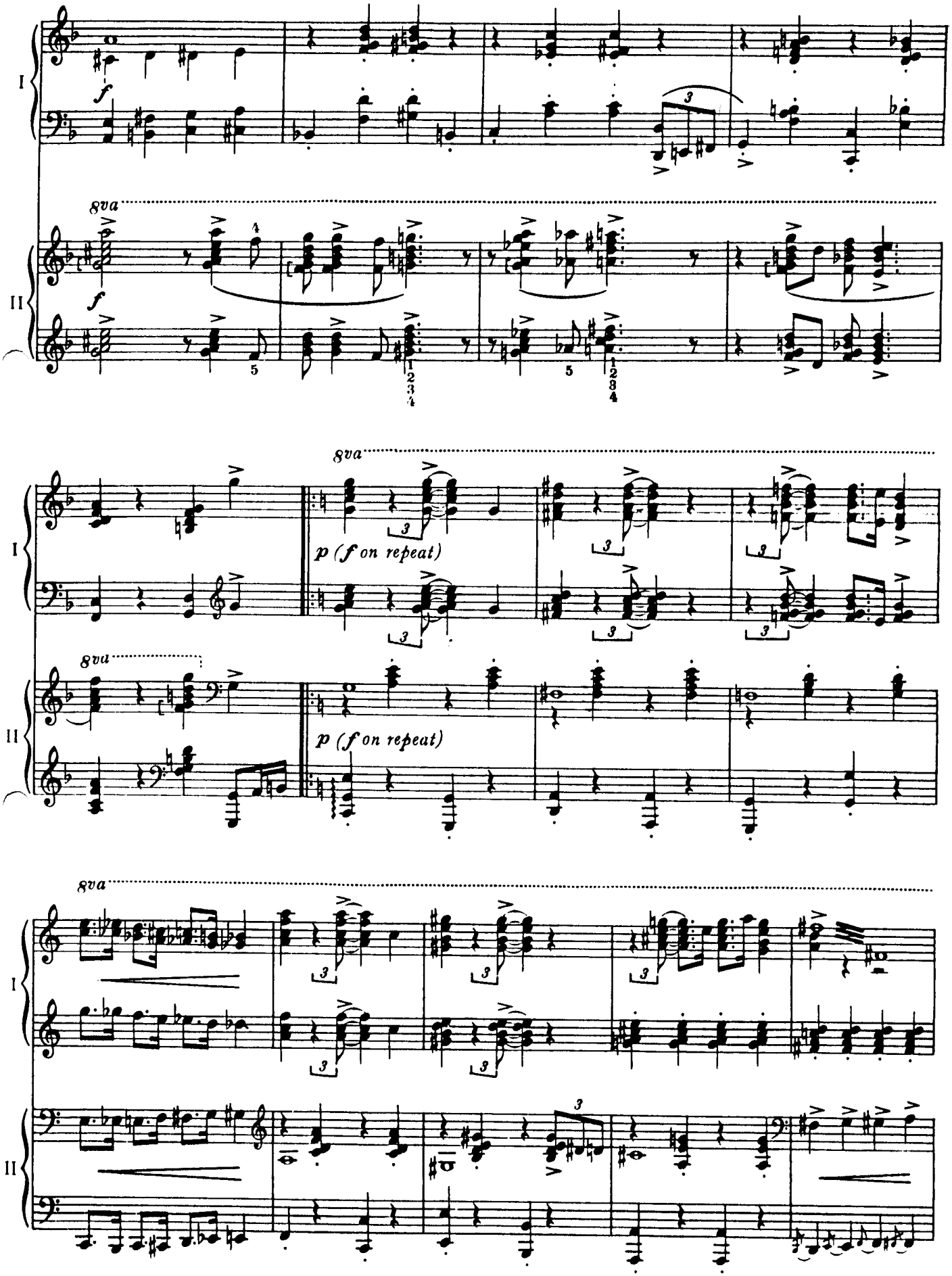
2996

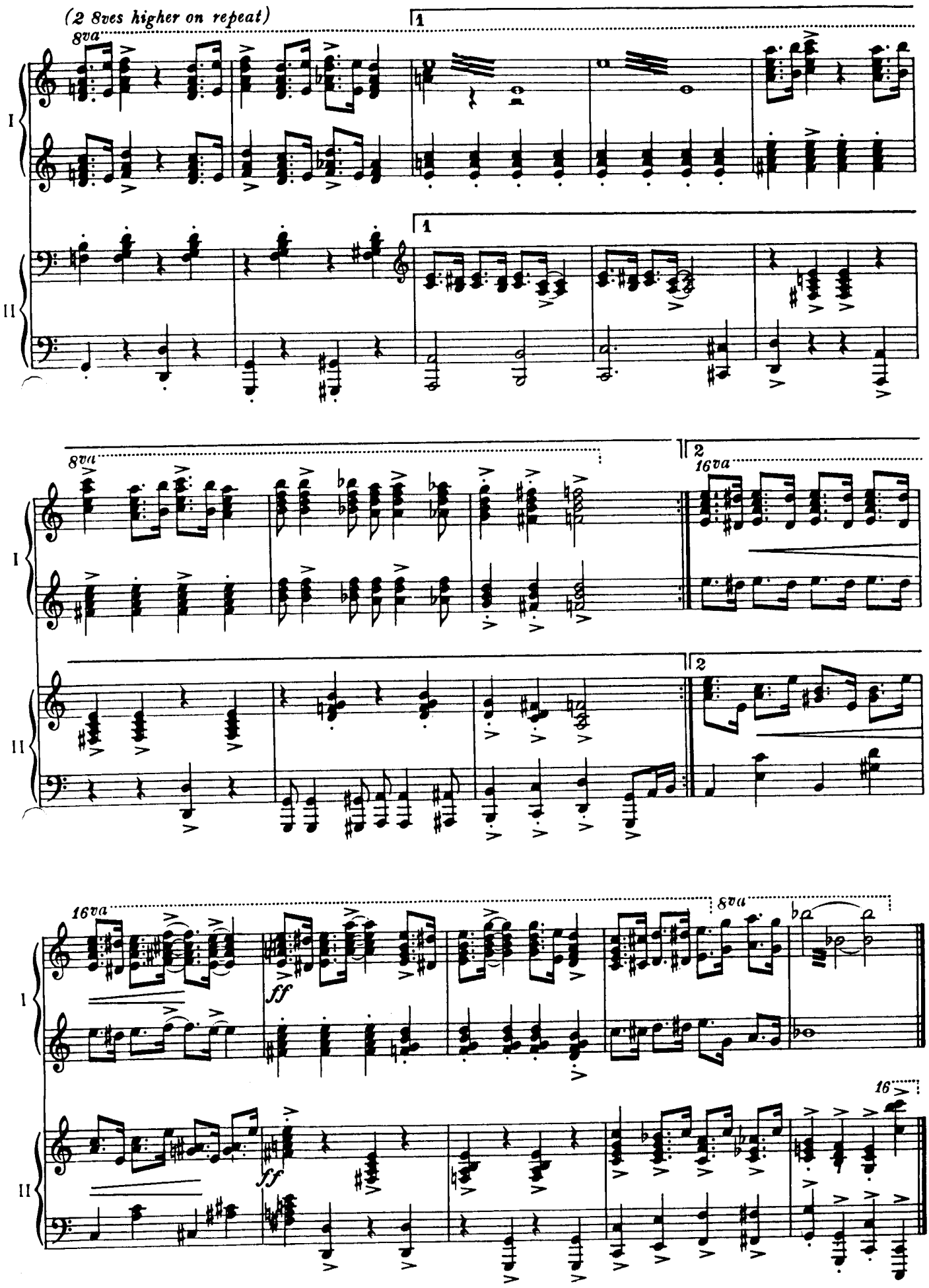


* *On repeat* play *2* octaves higher through 2nd ending *(left hand as is)*

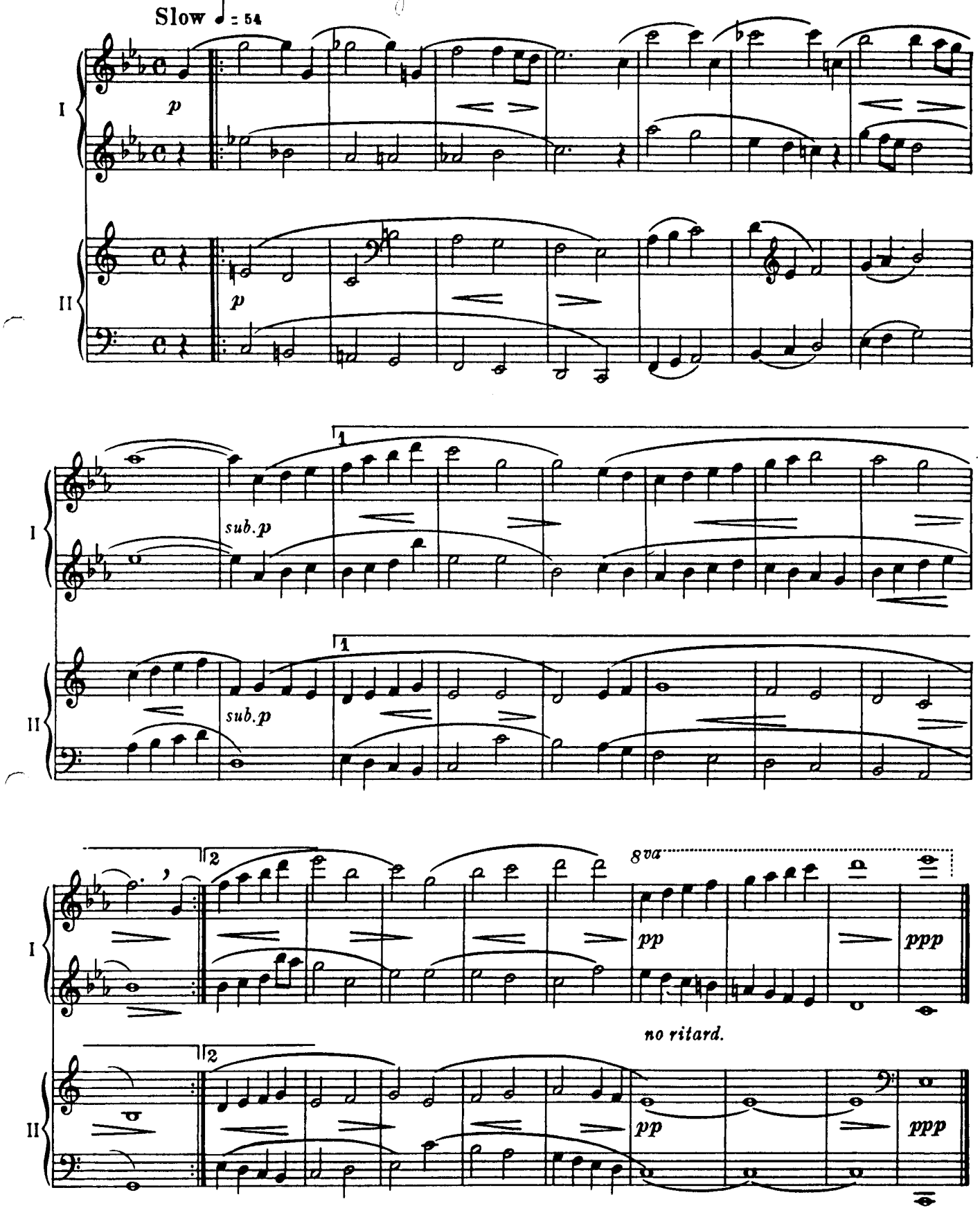

8va
1
I
II
8va
2
16va
(loco)
16va
8va


TRIO
8va
8va
8va
p
p
p
p
I
II
I
II
I
II


I
II
f
8va
p (f on repeat)

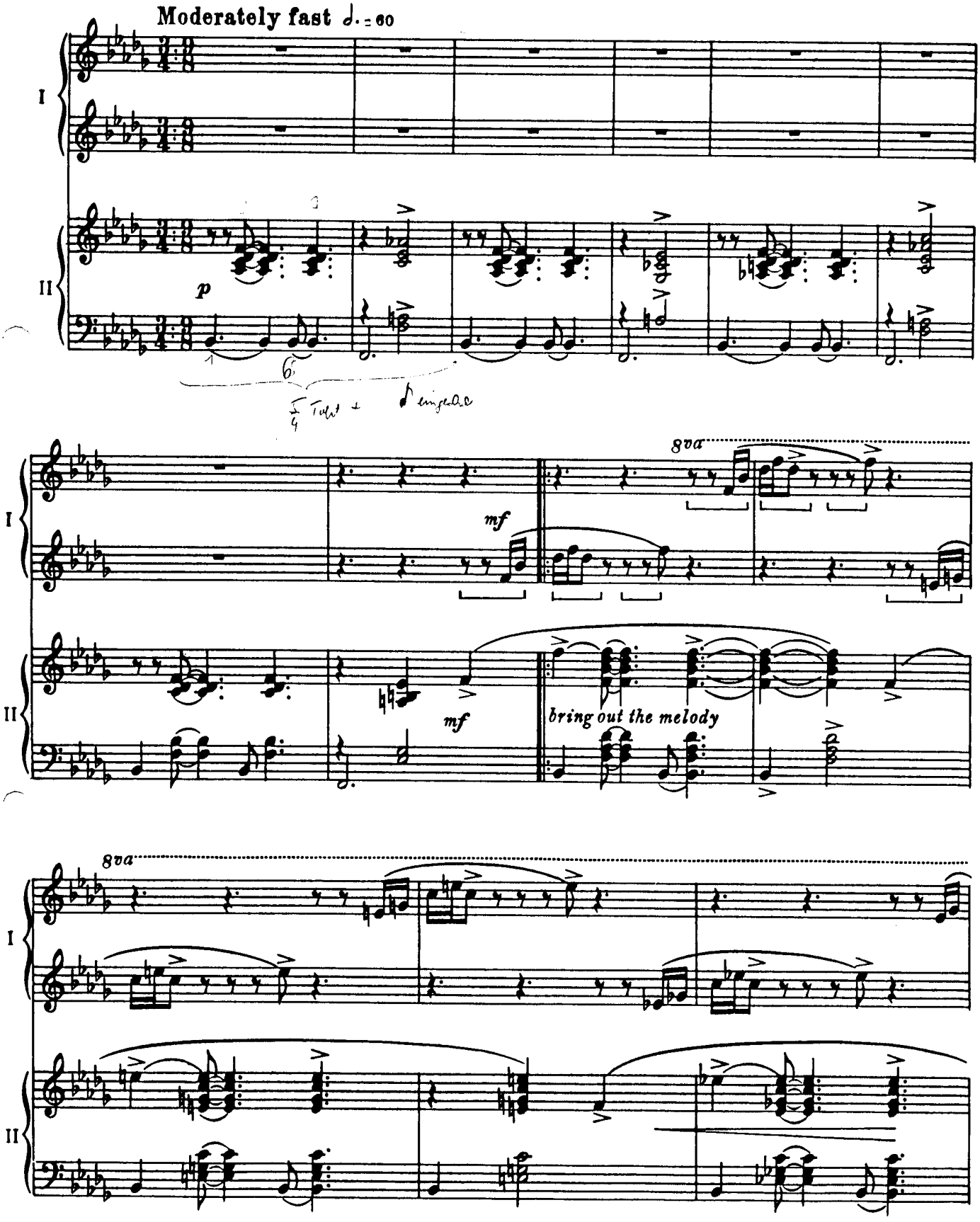

(2 8ves higher on repeat)
8va
1
I
II
8va
2
16va
16va
8va
ff
ff
16

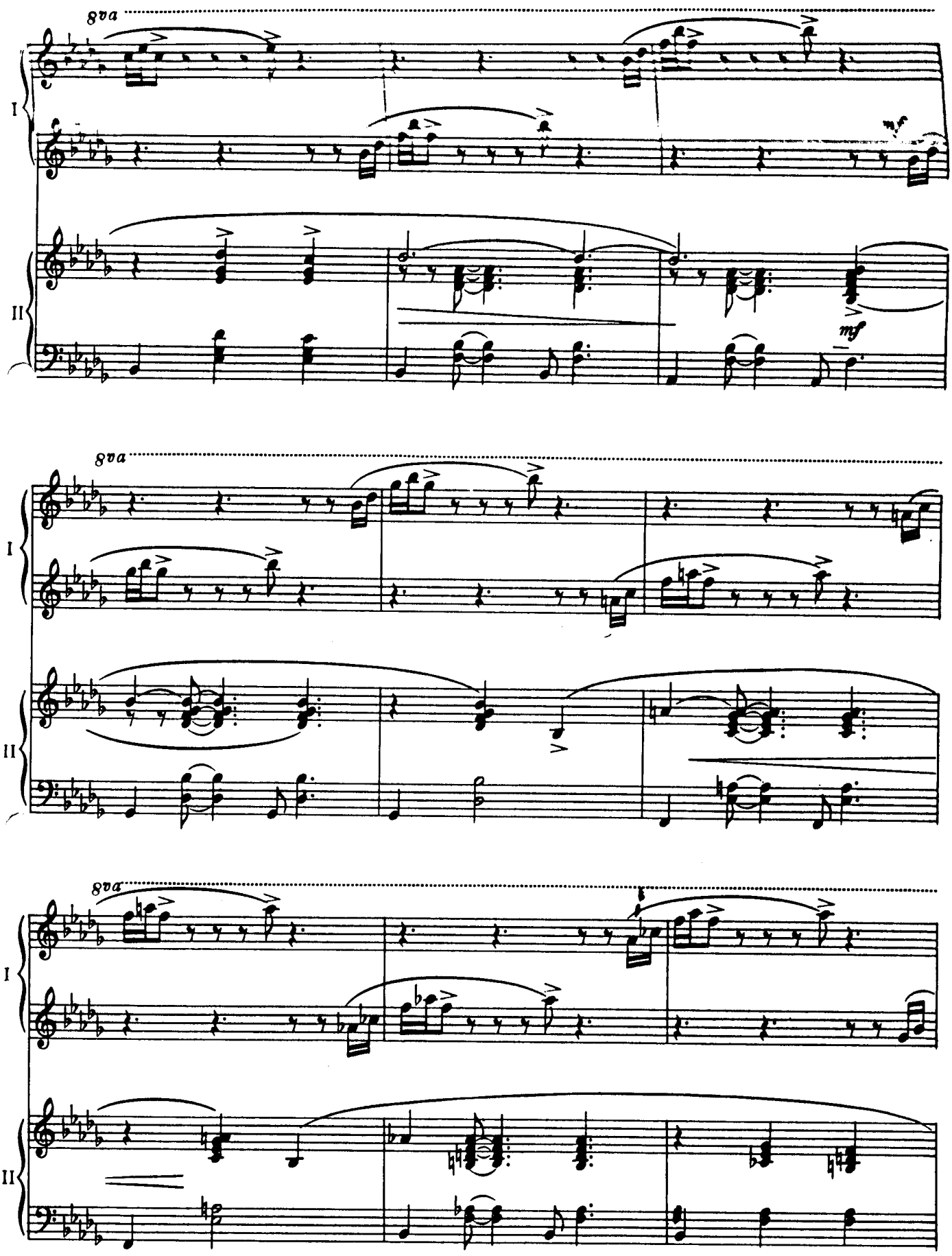
VI. CHORALE

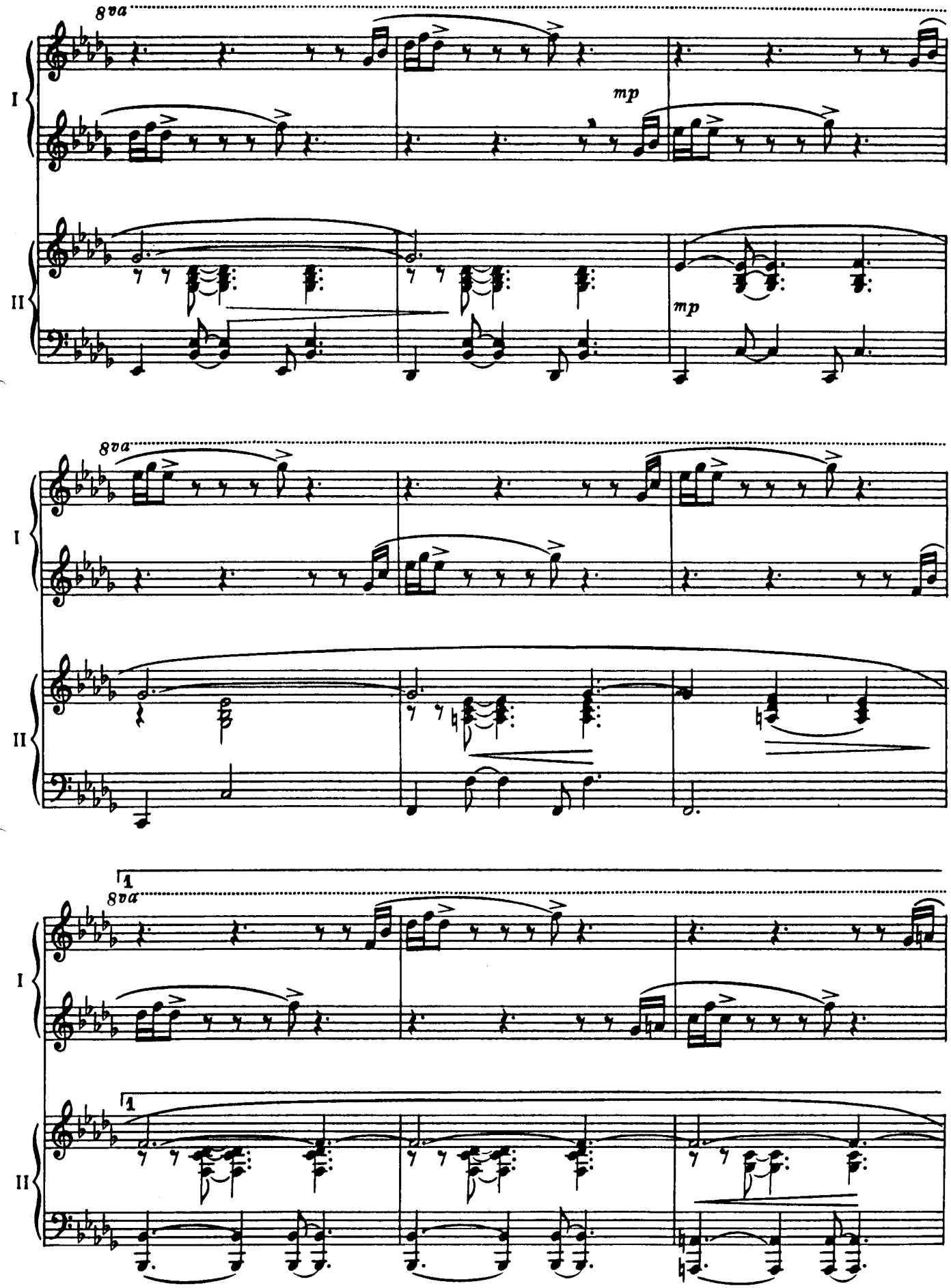


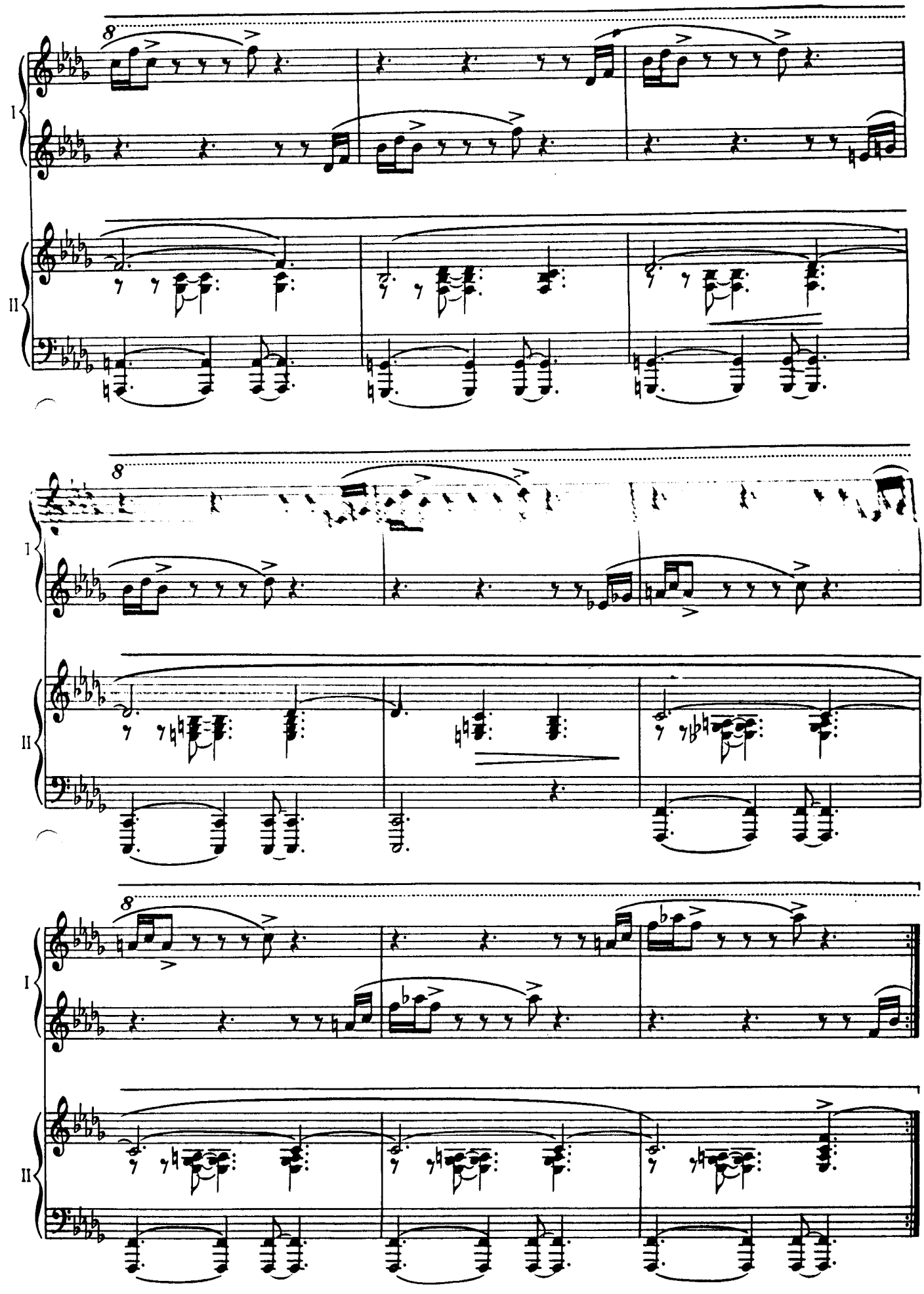
2952

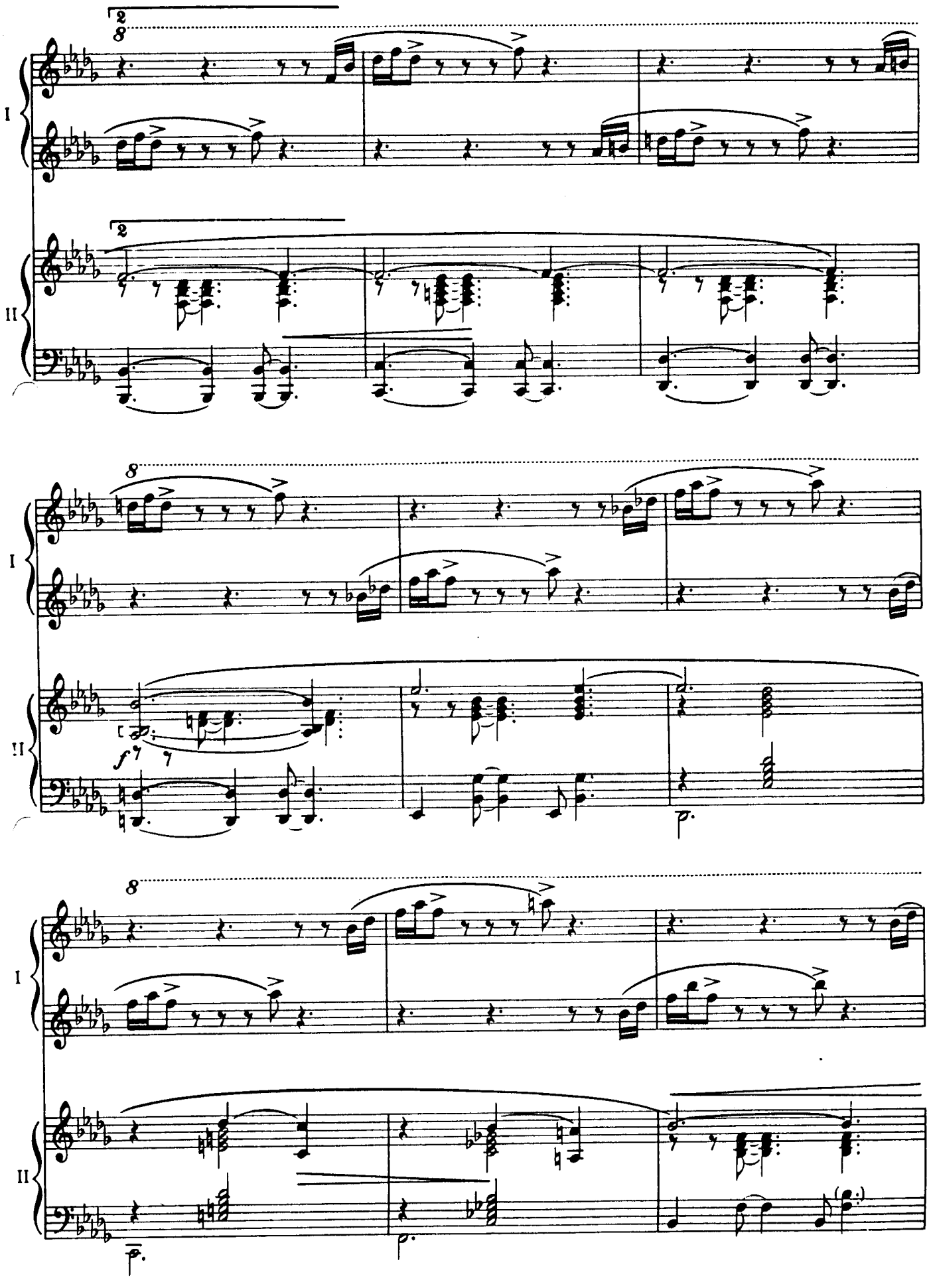
VII. WALTZ

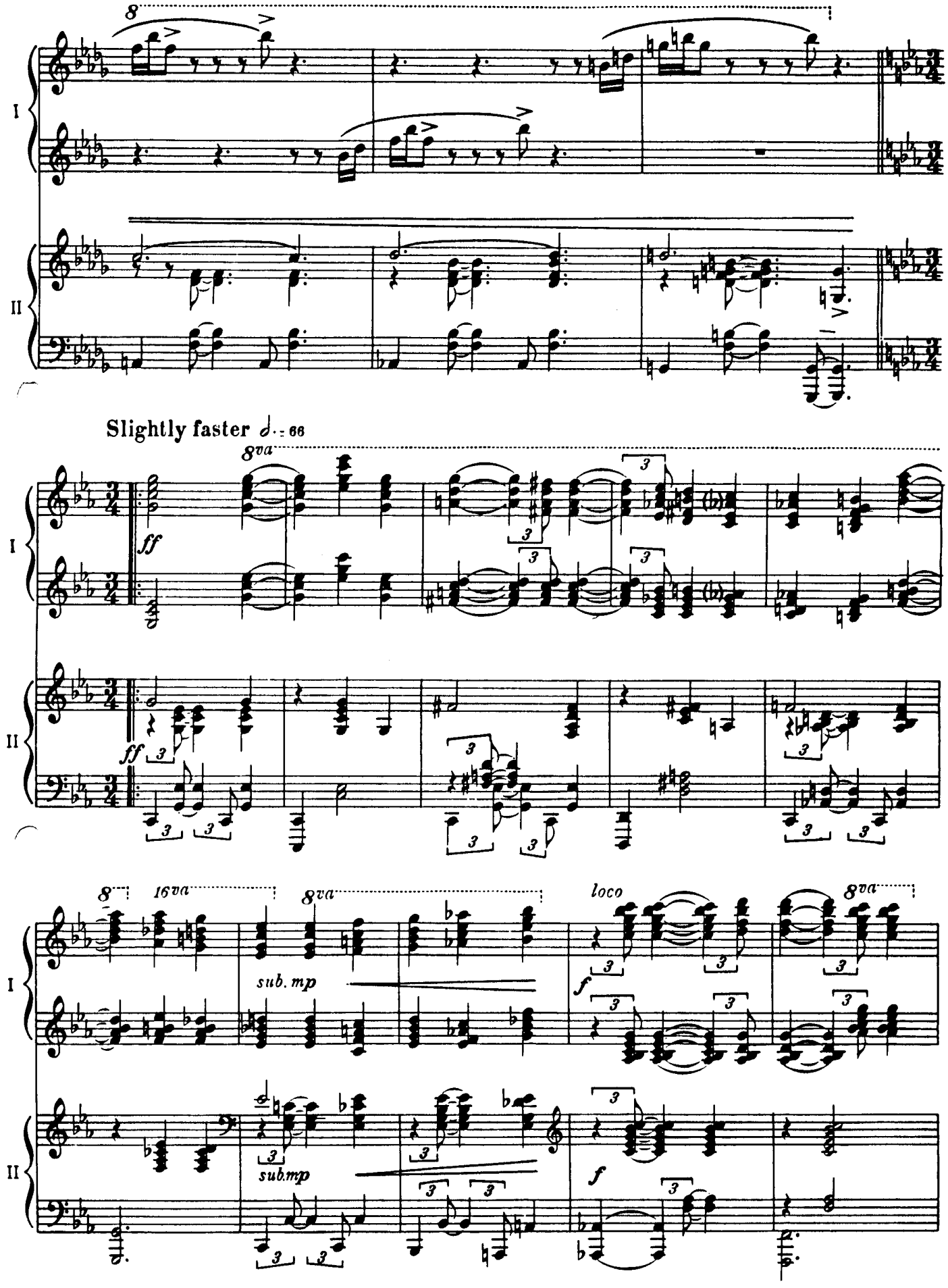



8va
I
mf
II
mf
8va
I
II
8va
I
II

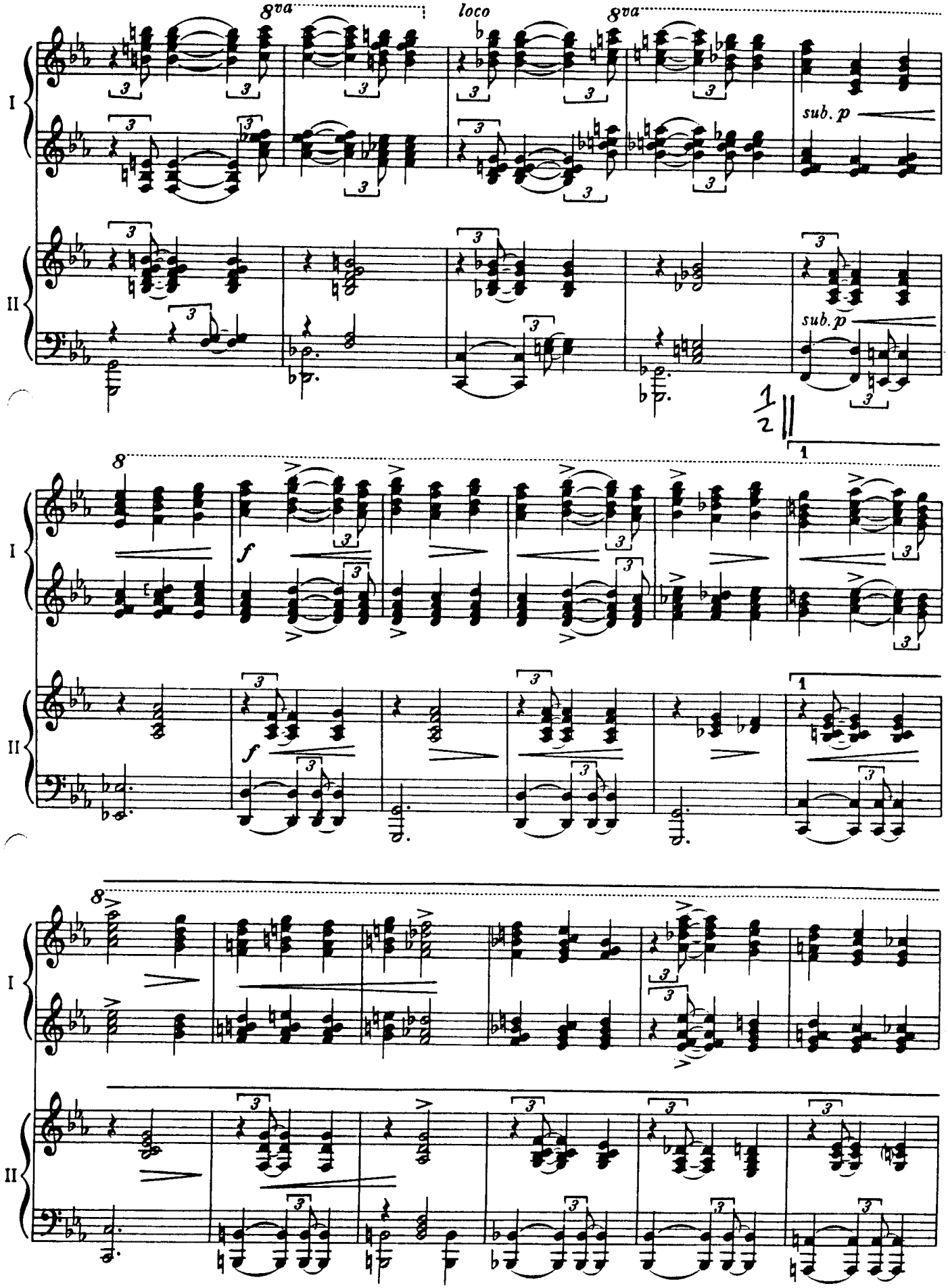

8va
I
mp
II
mp
8va
I
II
1
8va
I
1
II

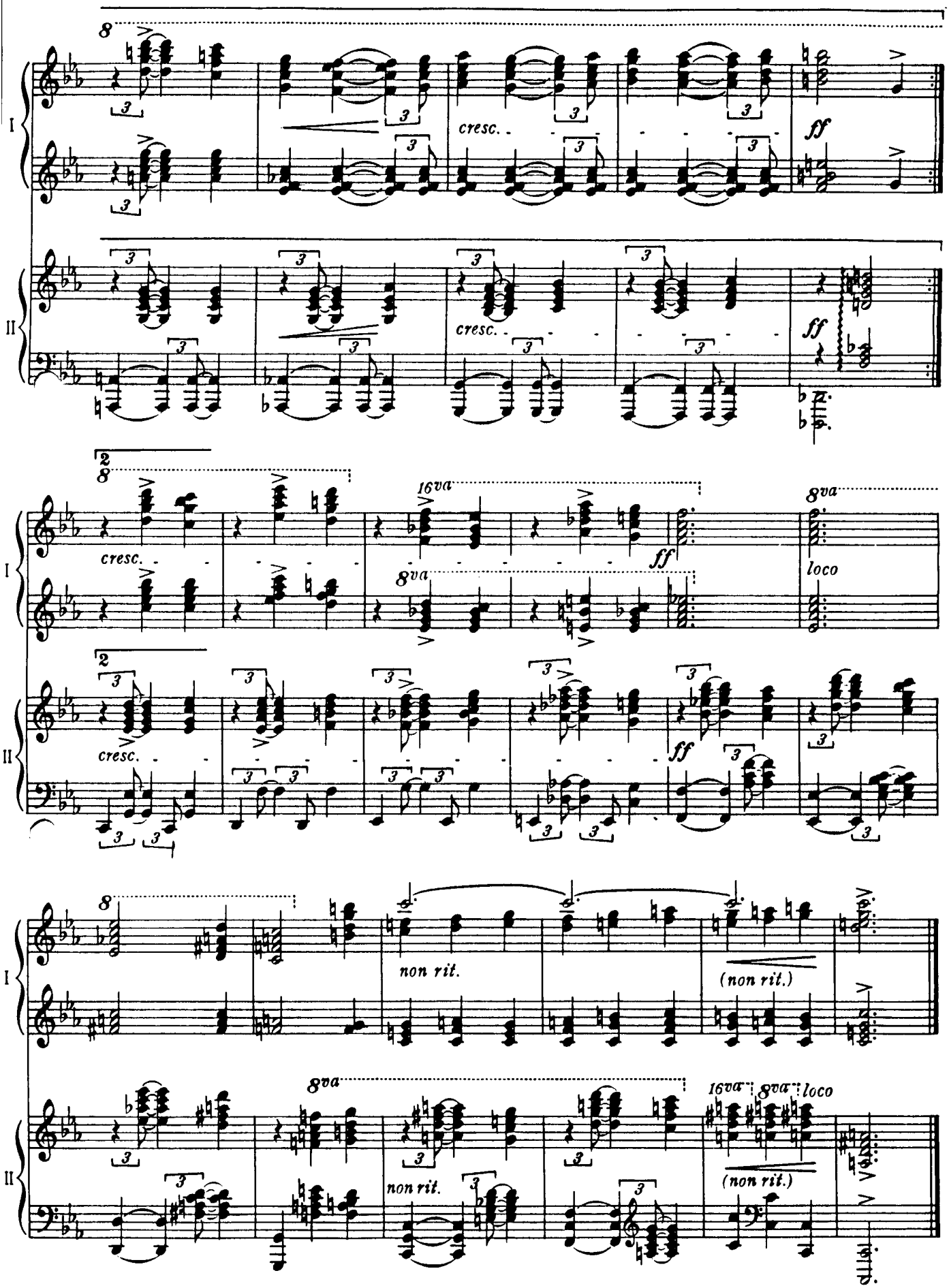

8
I
II
8
I
II
8
I
II


I
II
2
8
f
p

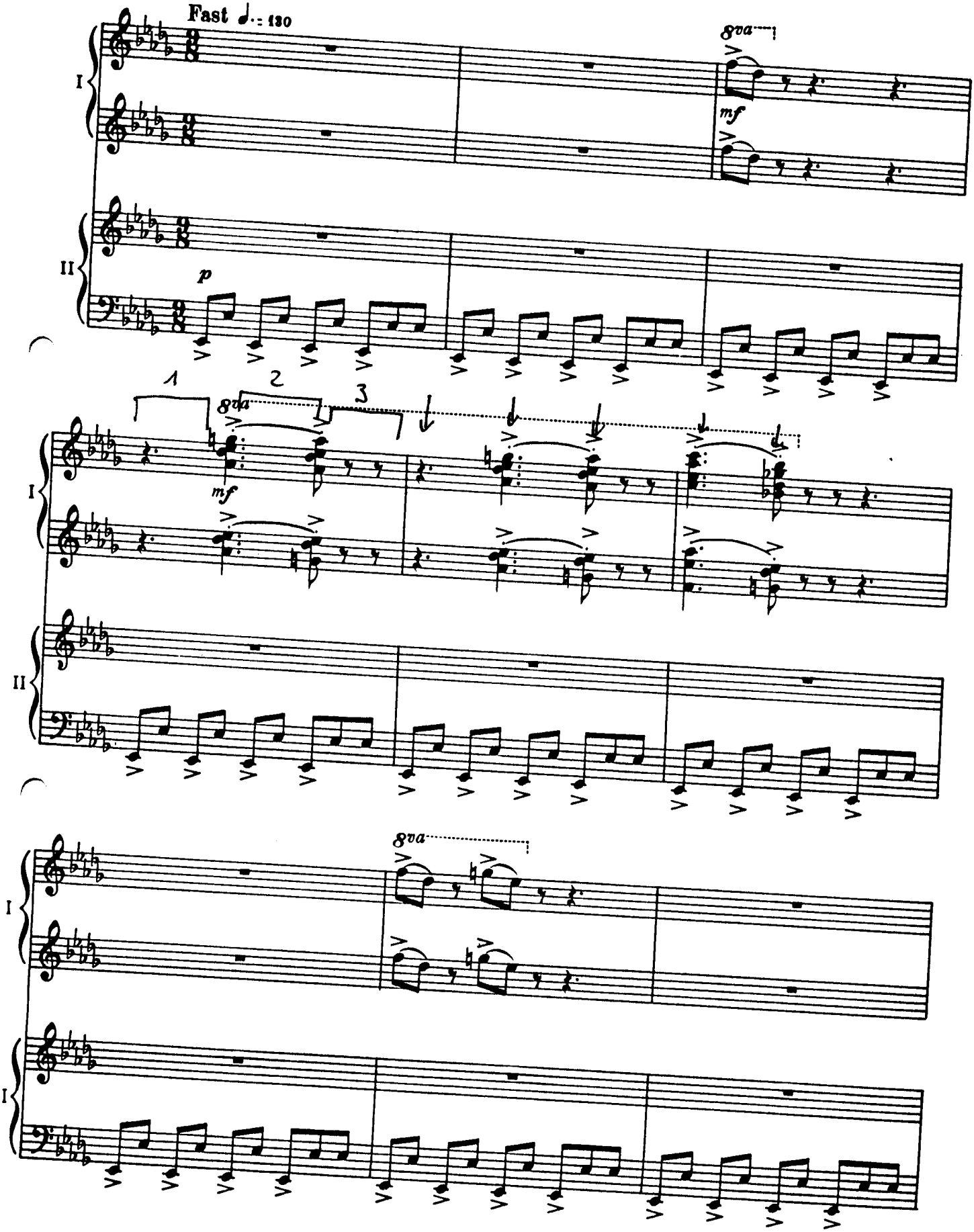

8
I
II
Slightly faster ♩ = 66
8va
ff
3
16va
sub. mp
loco
f
sub.mp

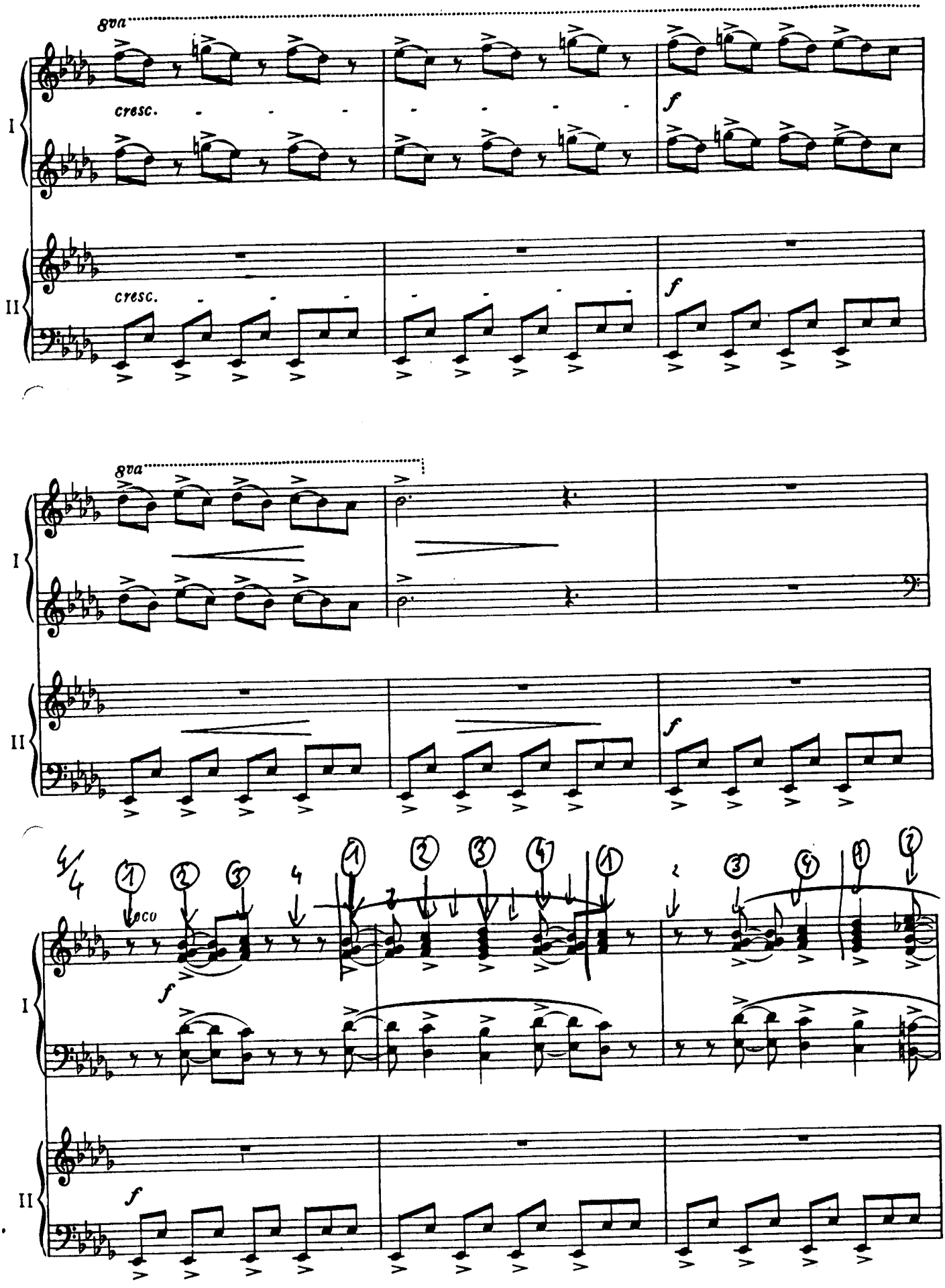
2958

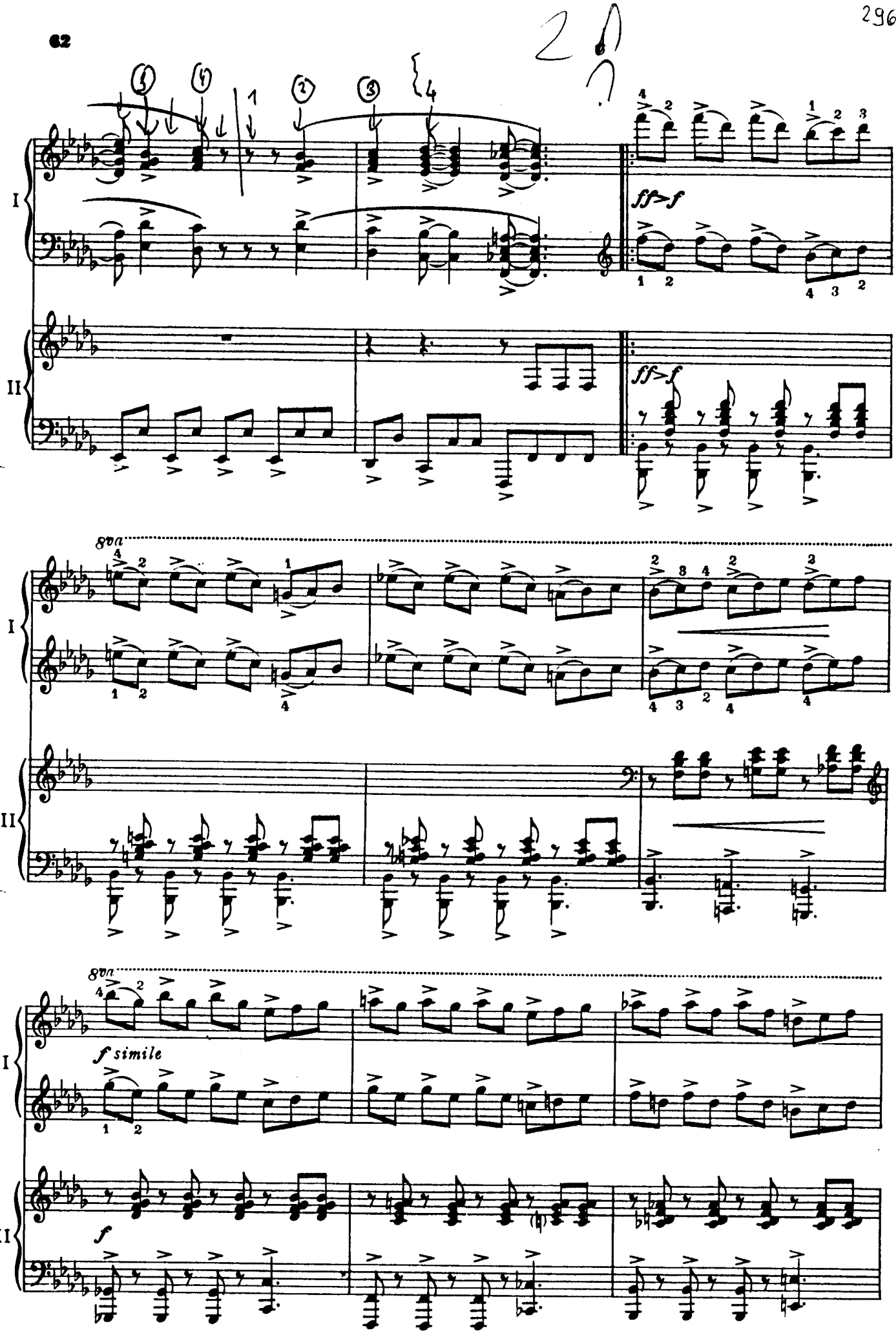


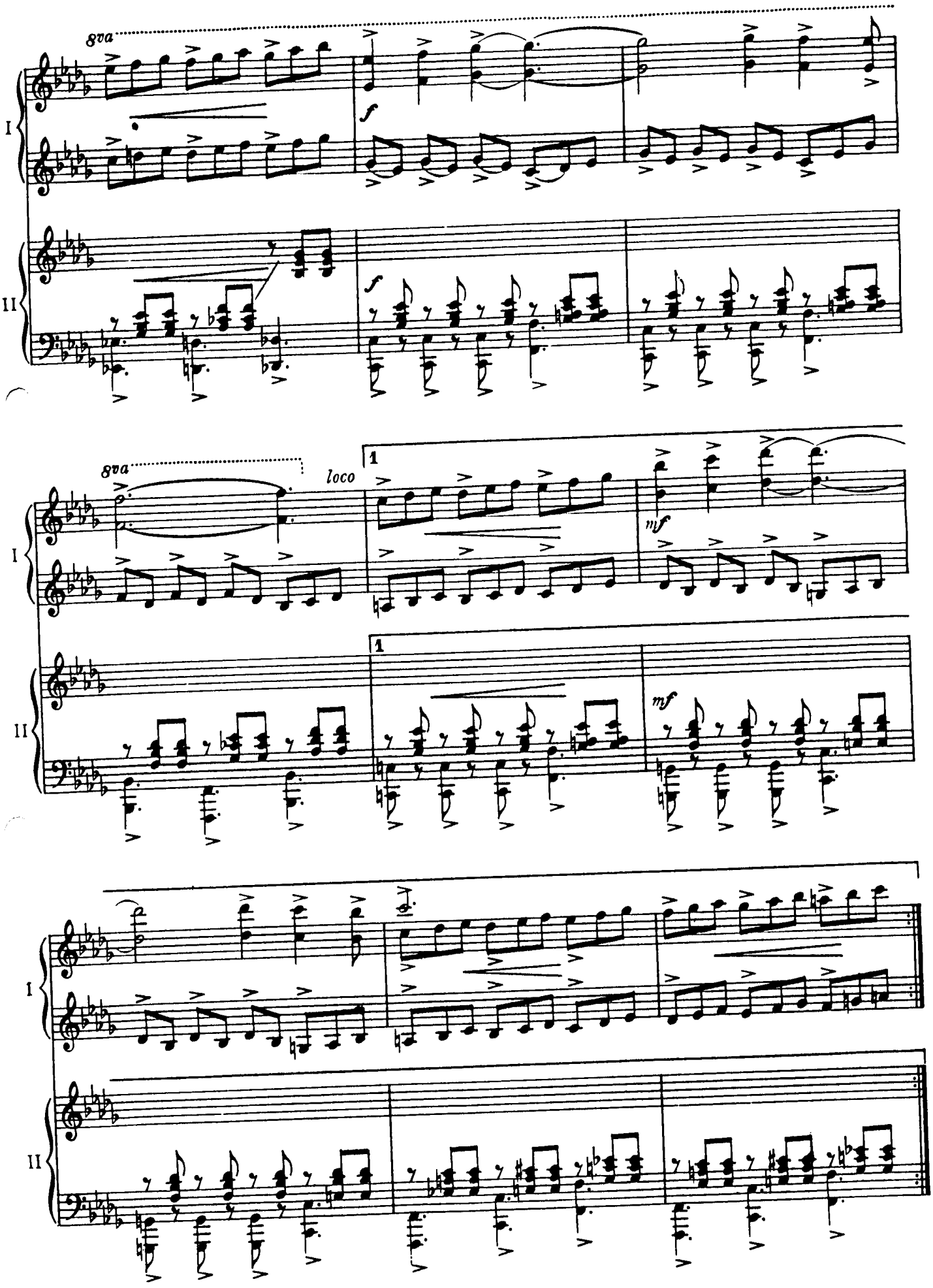

I
II
cresc.
ff
16va
8va
loco
non rit.
(non rit.)

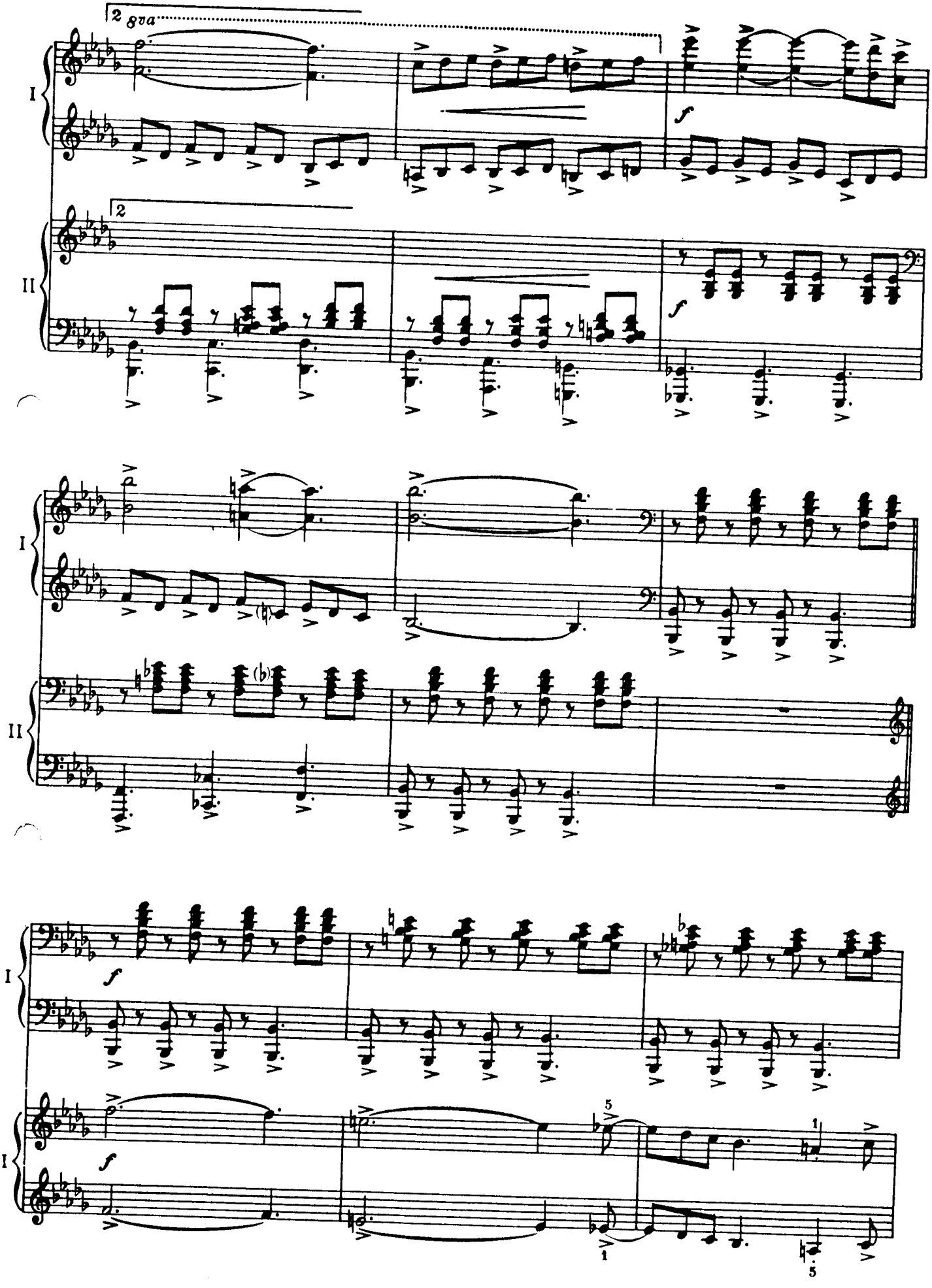
VIII. A LA TURK

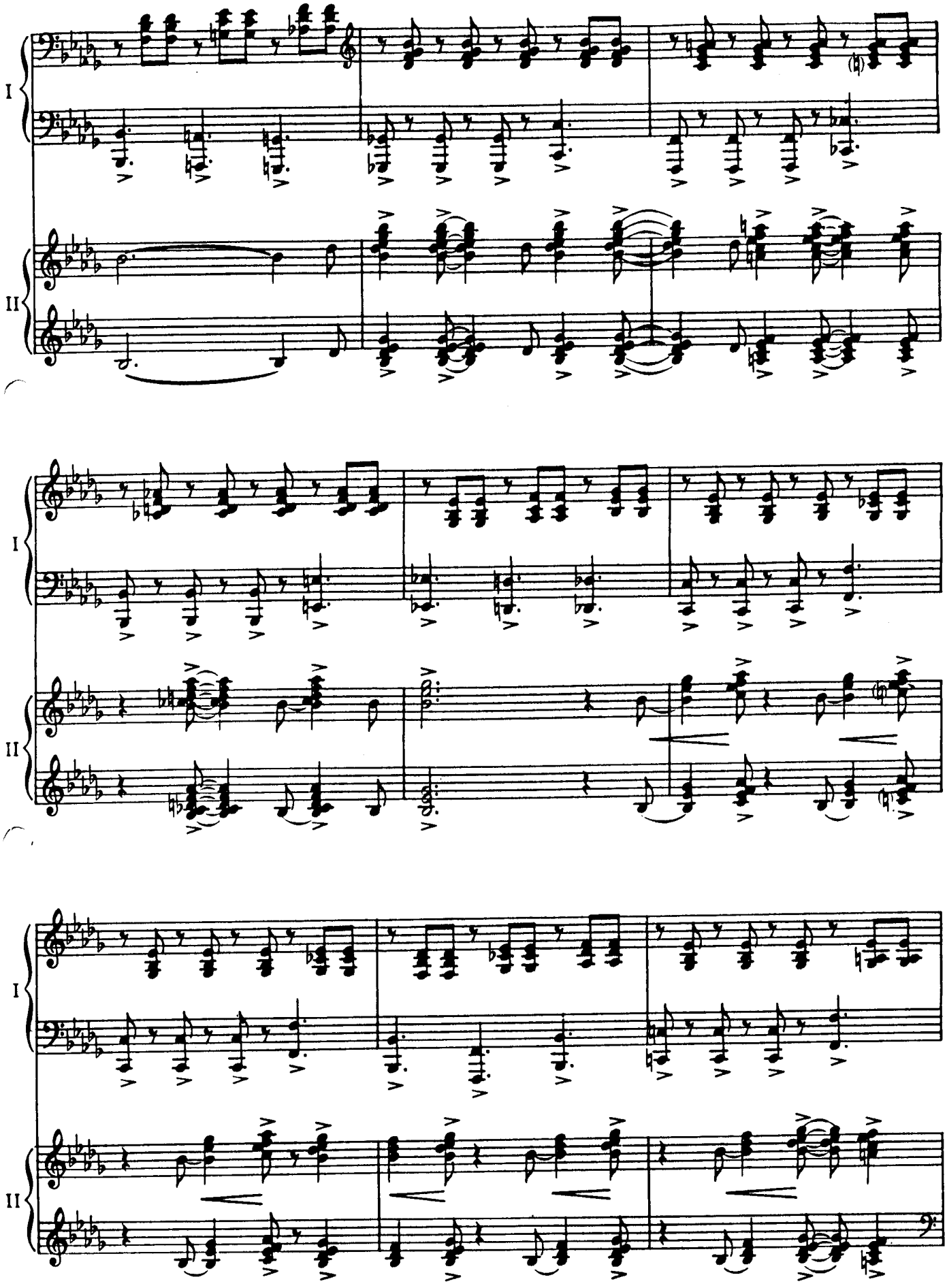


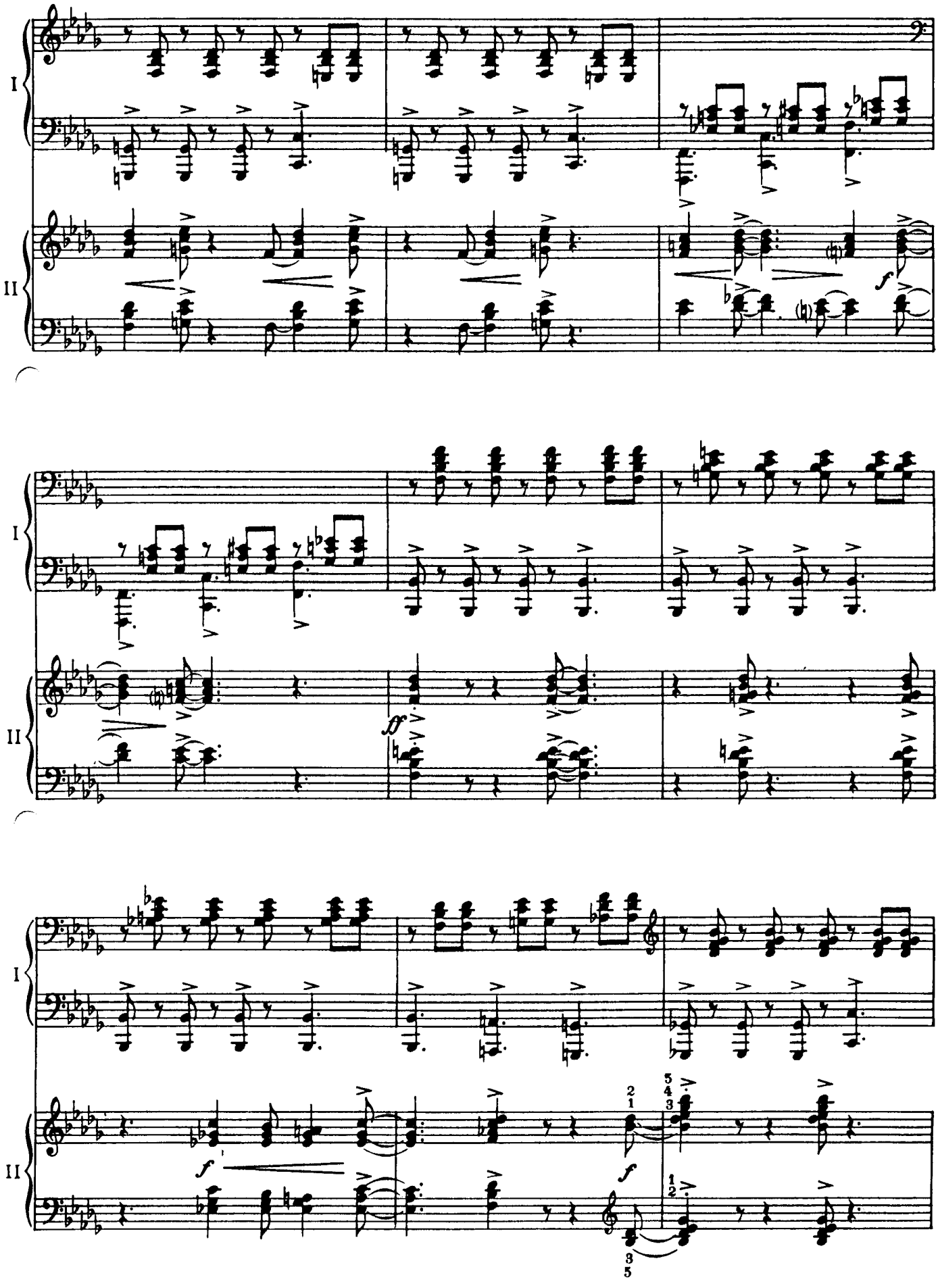

8va
cresc.
f
I
II
8va
f
4/4
loco
f

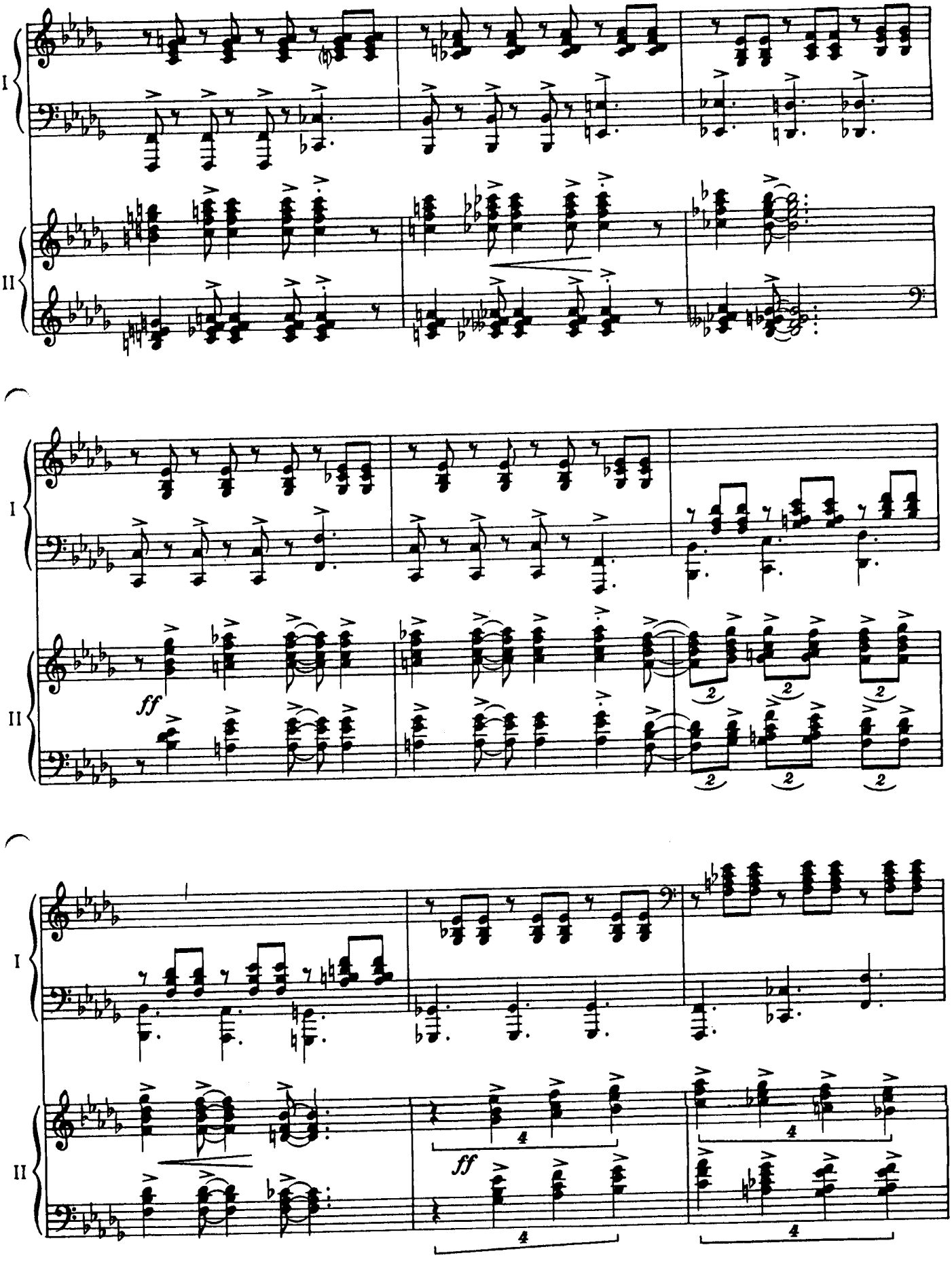

I
II
ff>f
8va
f simile
f


8va
I
II
f
f
8va
loco
1
mf
1
mf

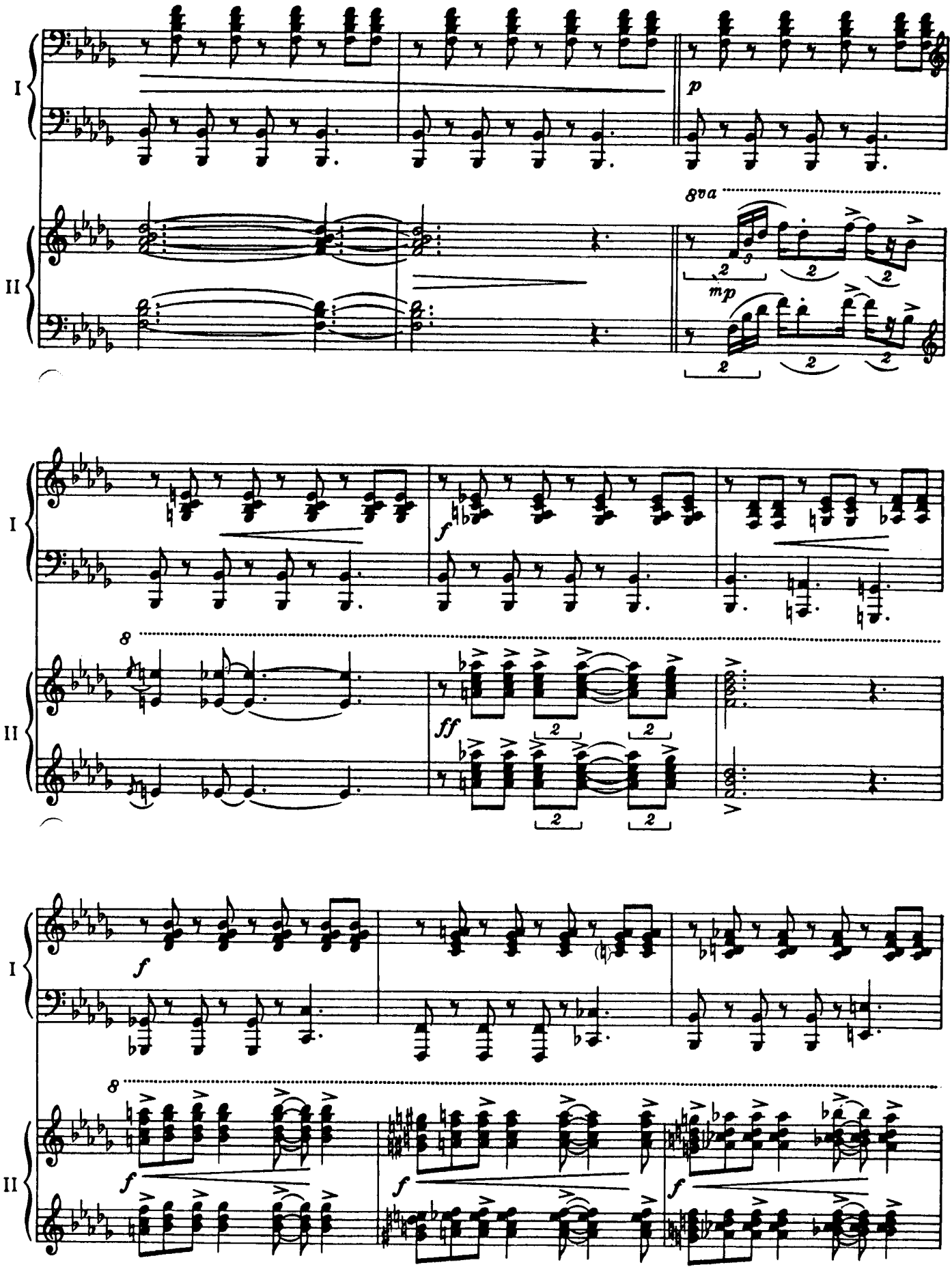

2 8va
I
II
f
2
(b)
5
1

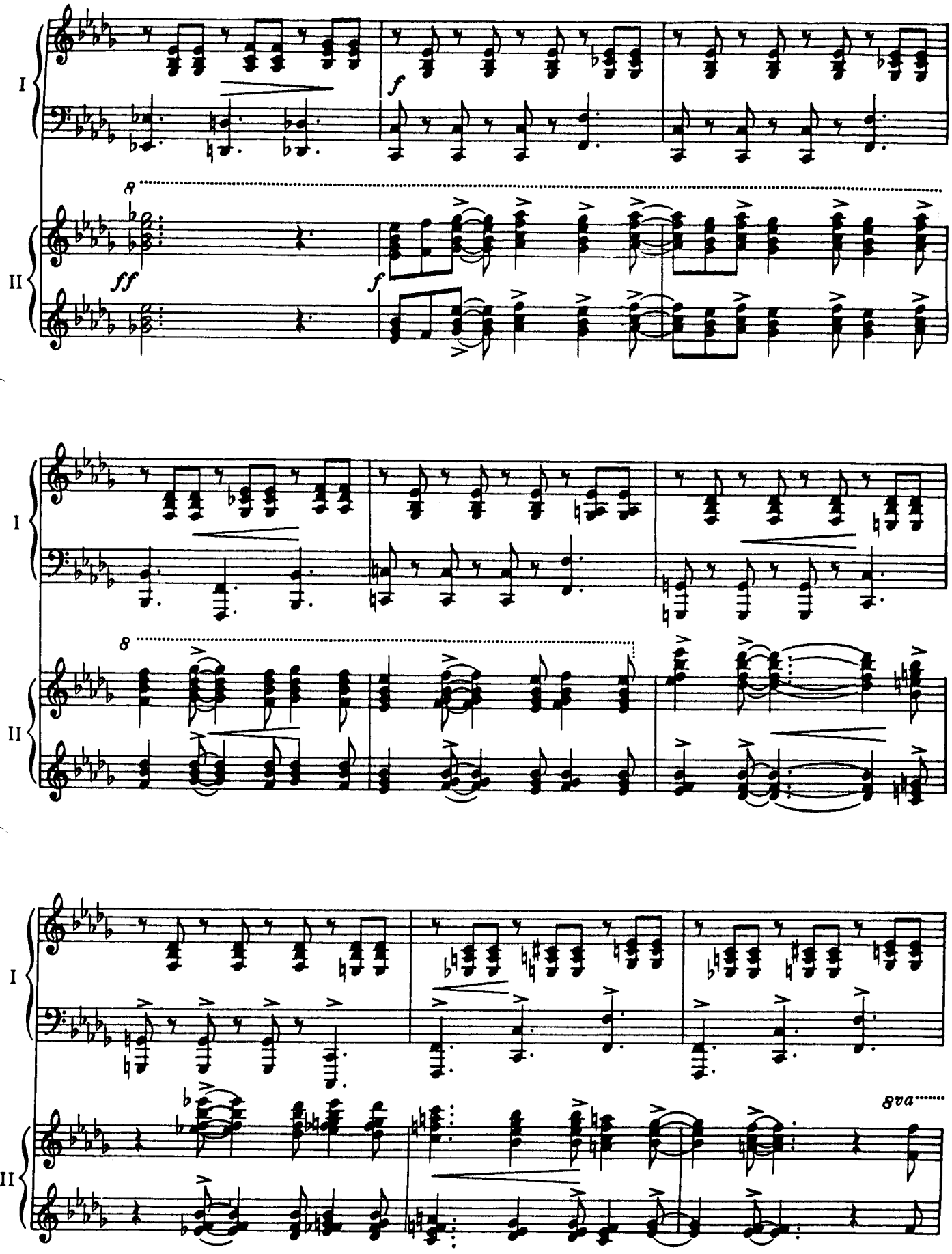

I
II
I
II
I
II

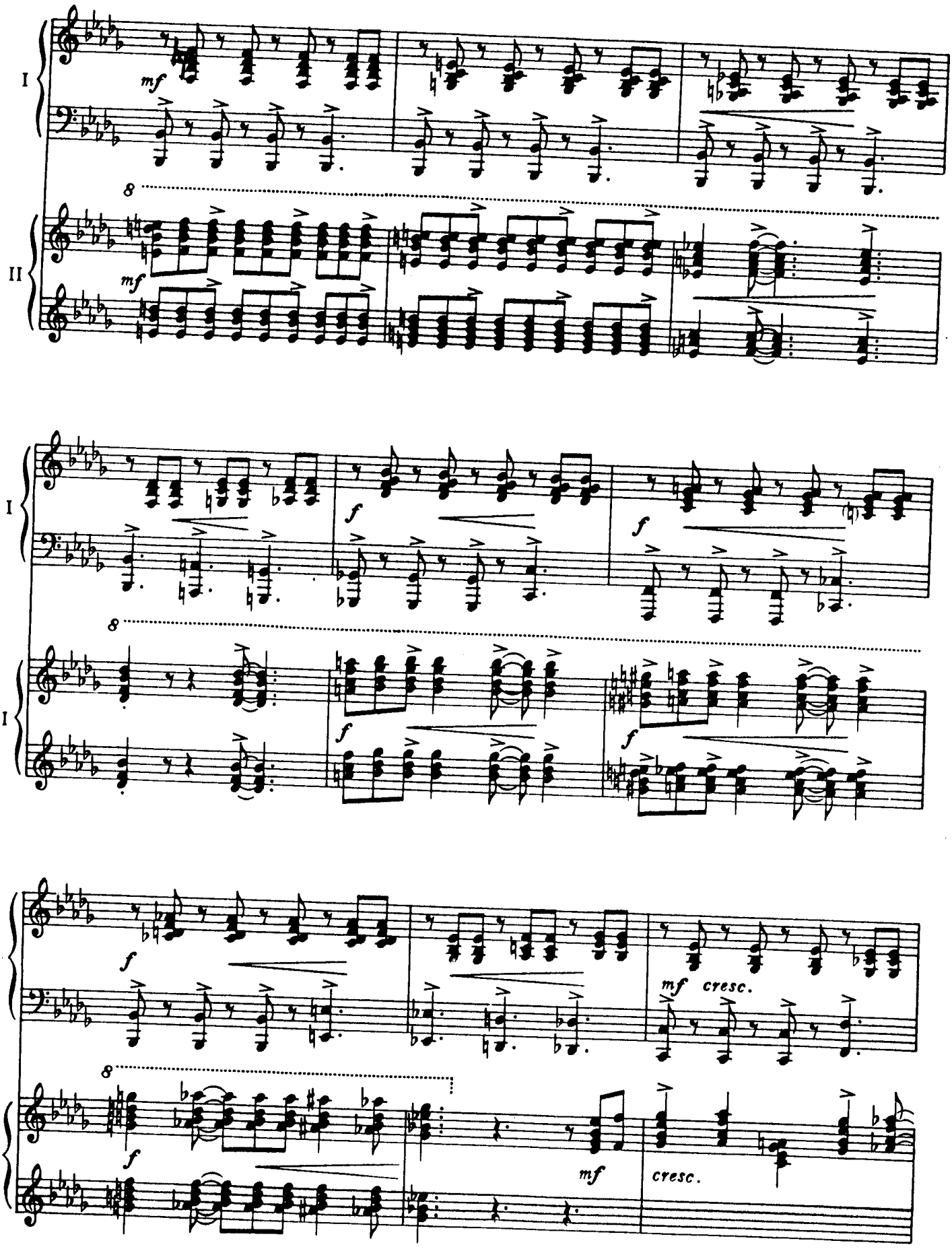

I
II
f
ff
f
f

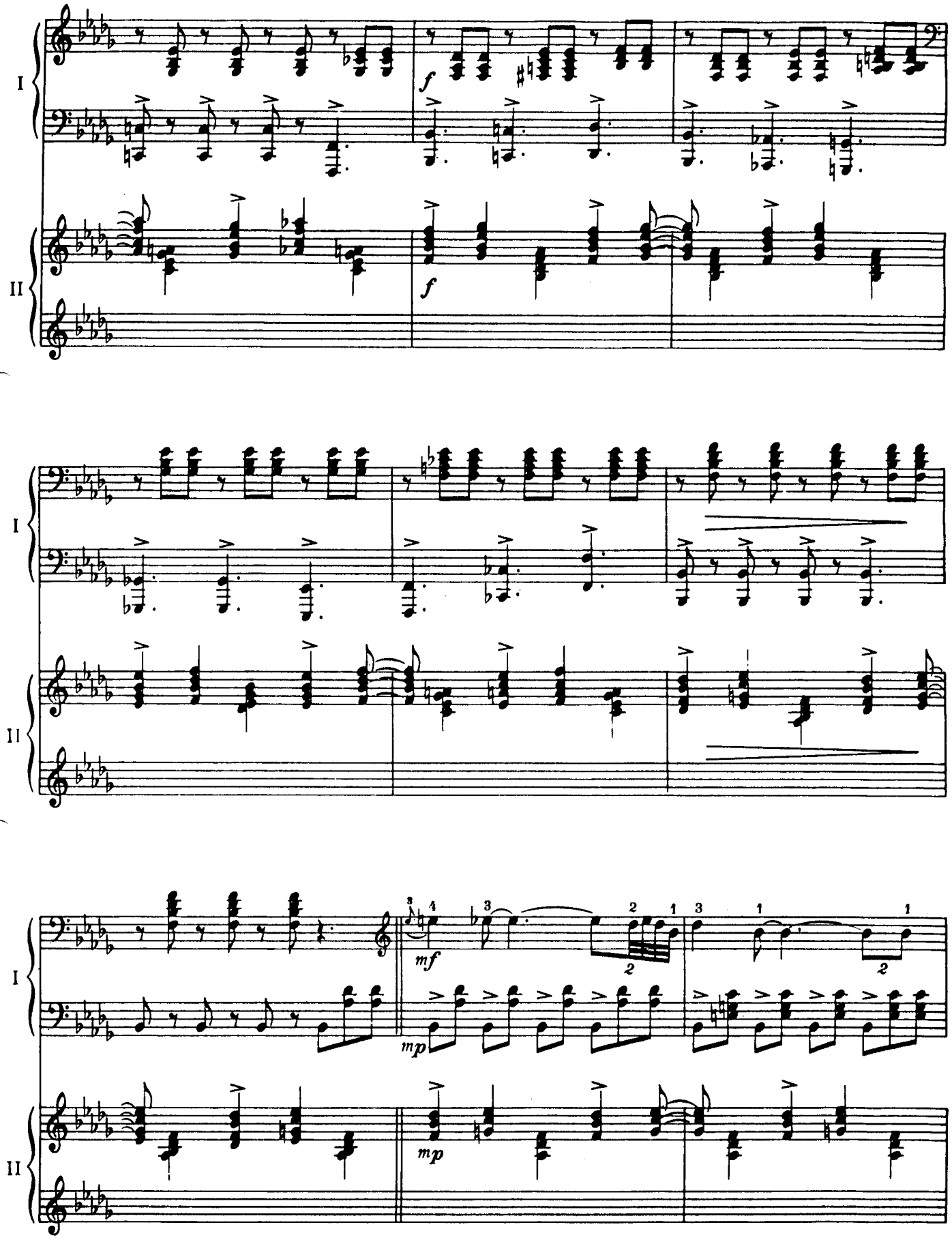

I
II
ff
2
2
2
2
2
2
ff
4
4
4
4

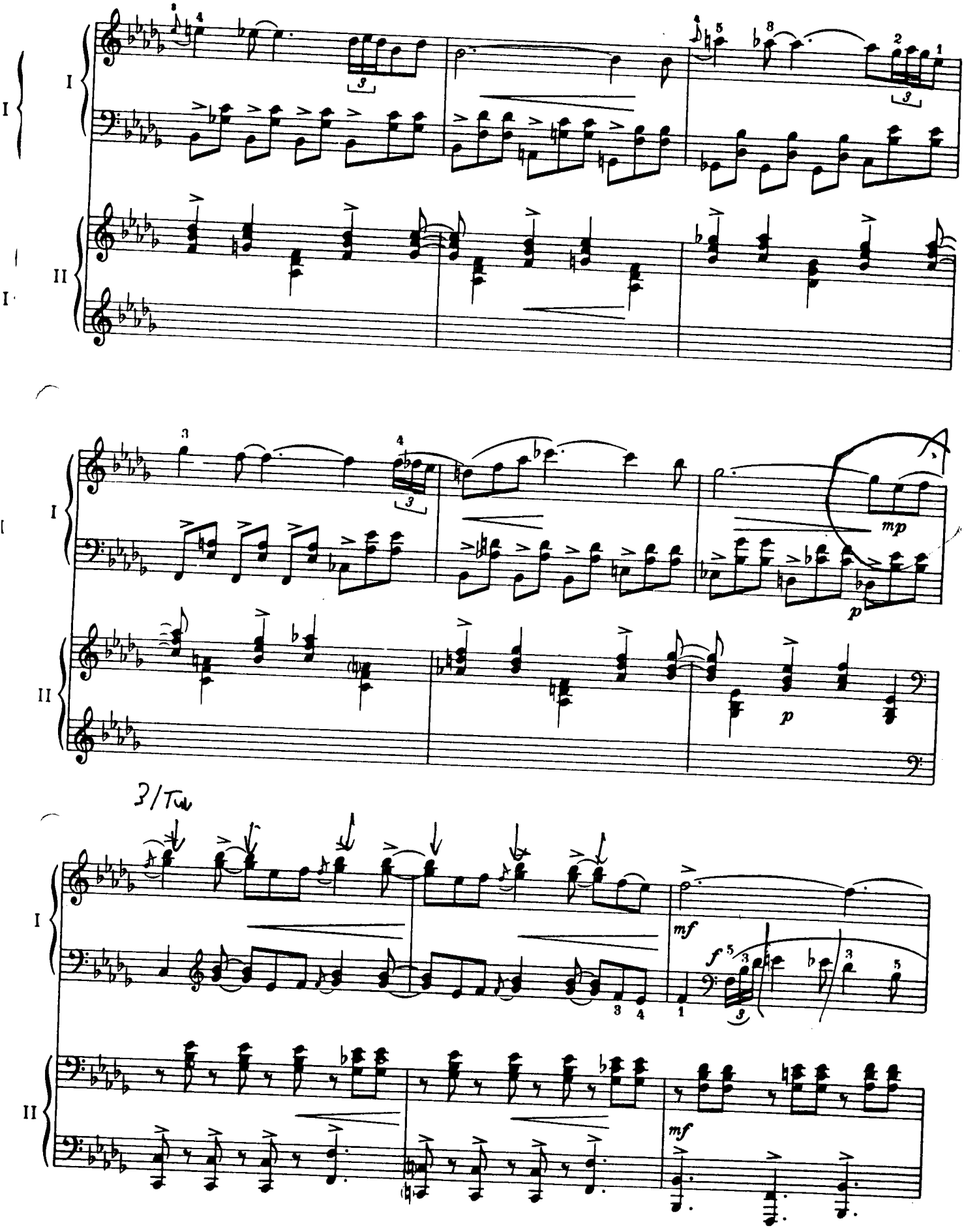
2968

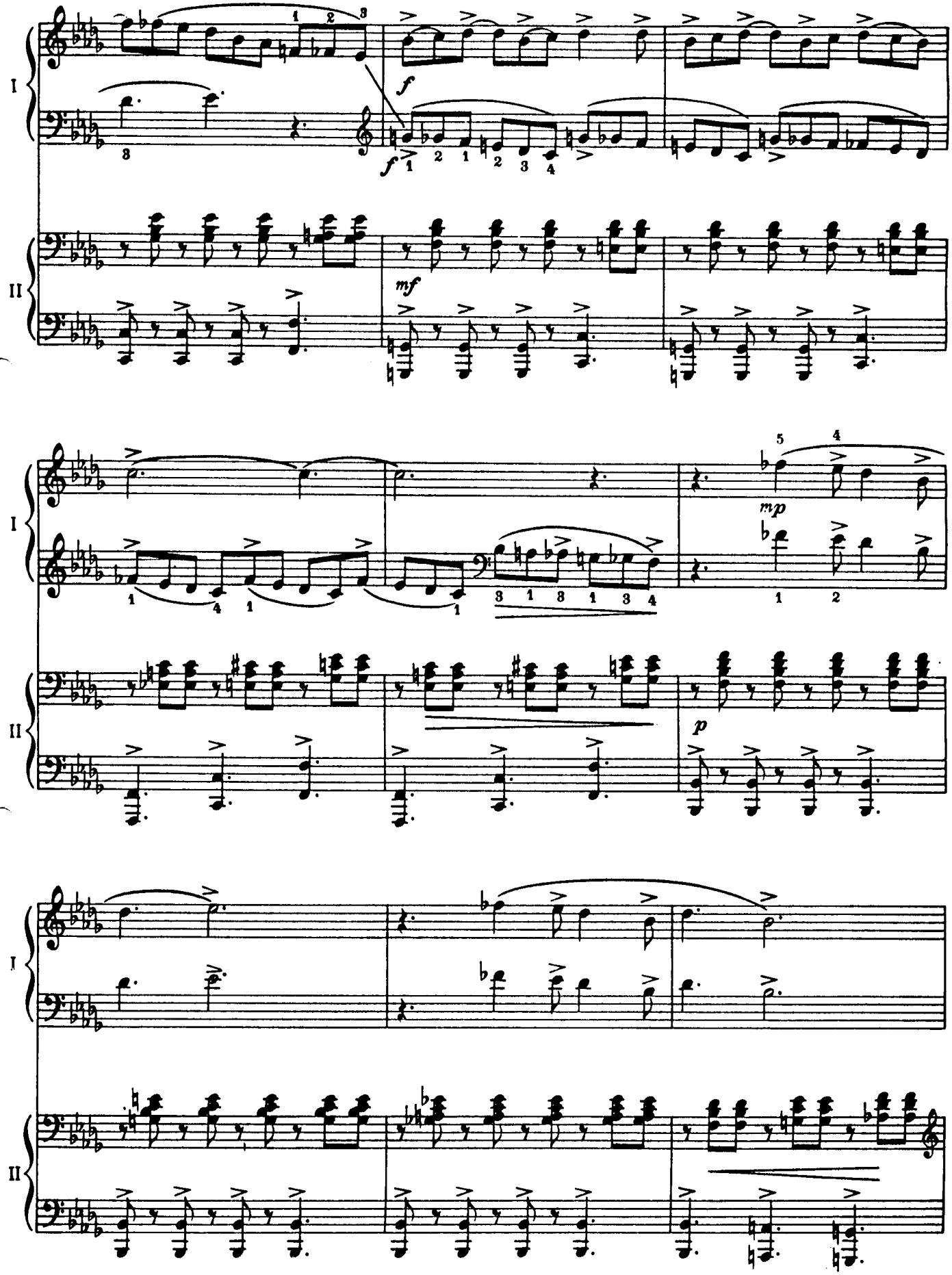



I
II
8
ff
f
8va

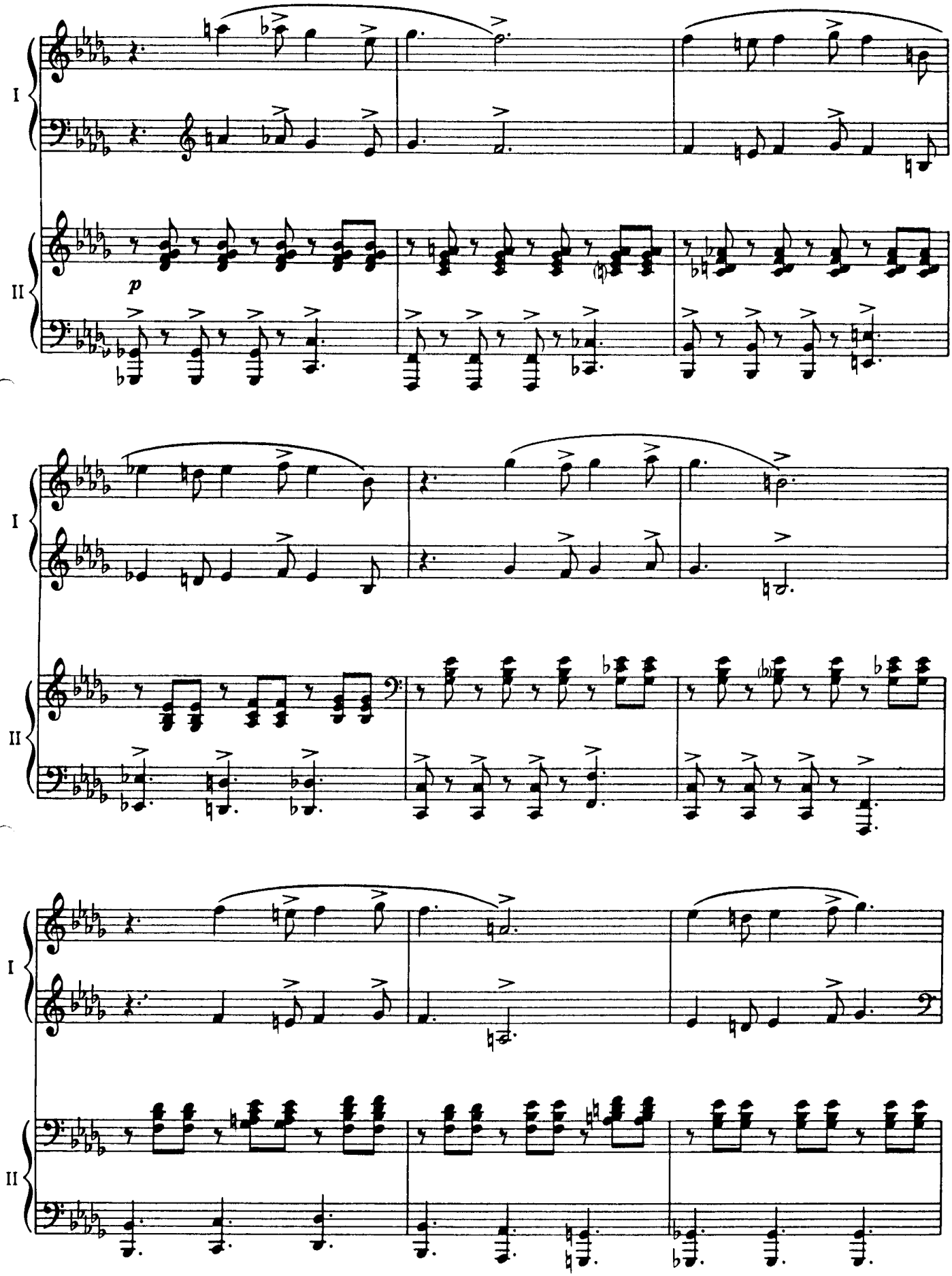

I
II
mf
8
f
mf cresc.
cresc.

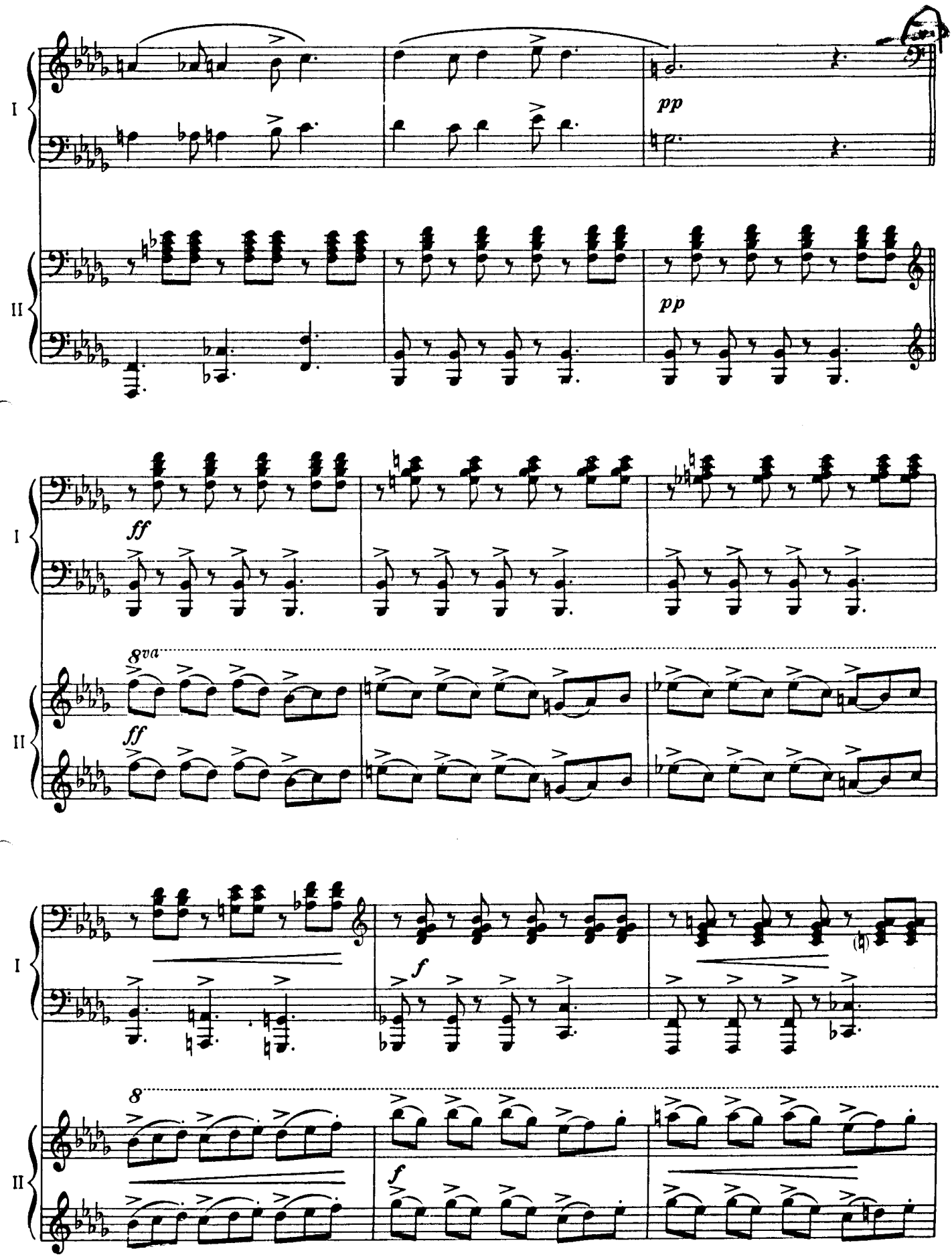

I
II
f
f
I
II
I
II
mf
mp
mp

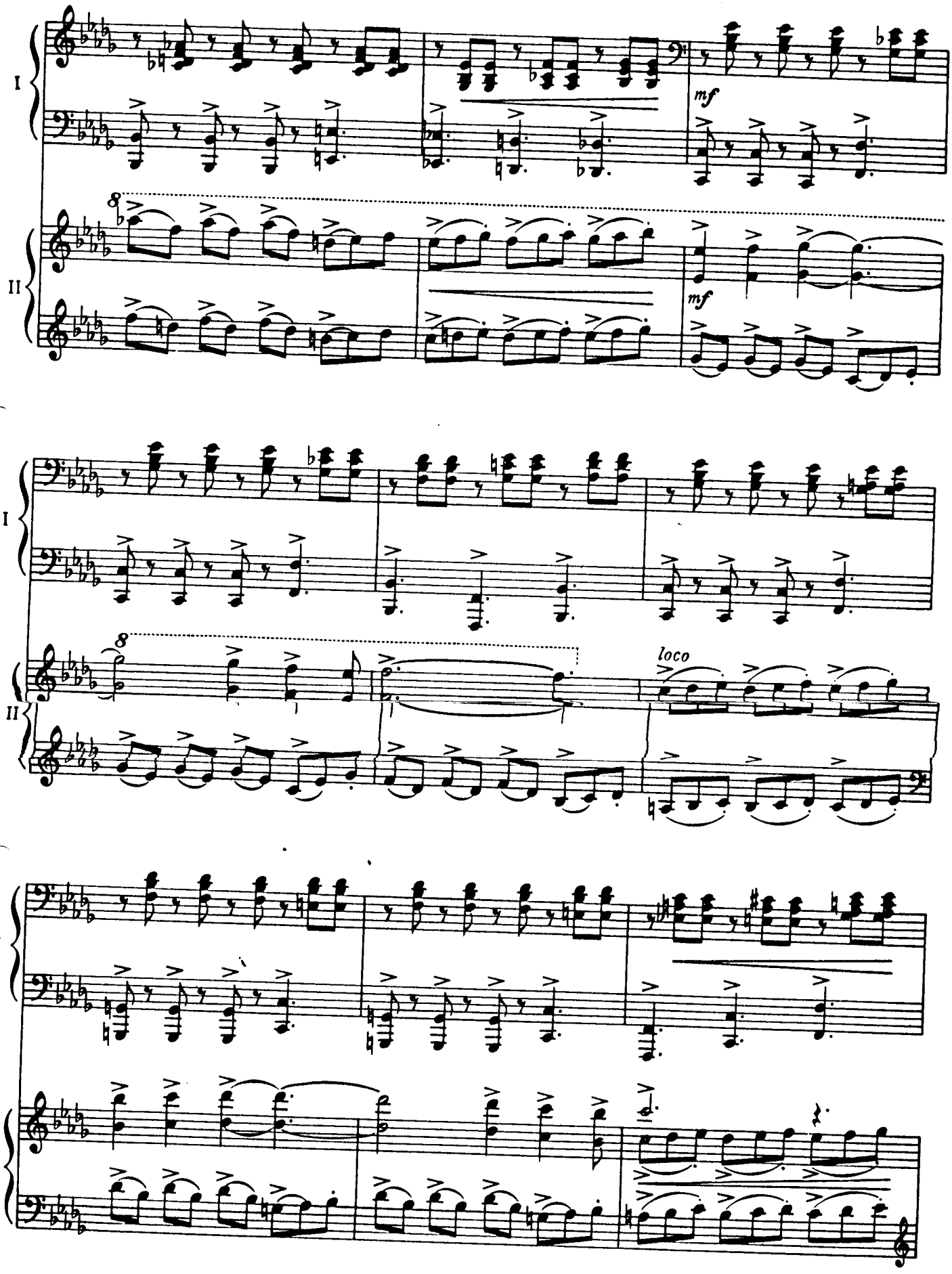

I
II
mp
p
3/Tw
mf
f


I
II
f
mf
mp
p

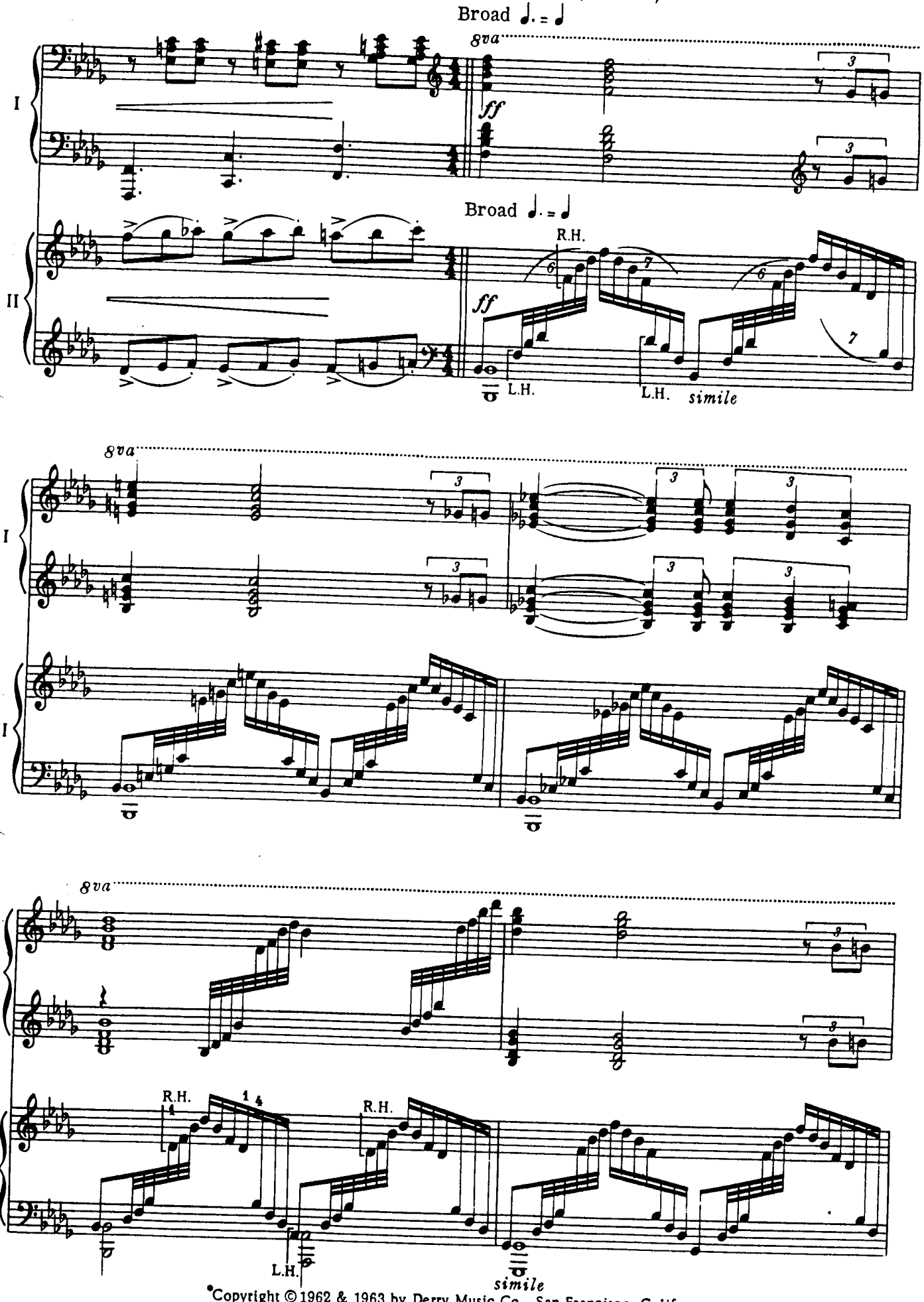
2974




I
II
pp
pp
ff
ff
8va
f
f
8


I
II
mf
mf
8
8
loco

*FINALE (Theme)



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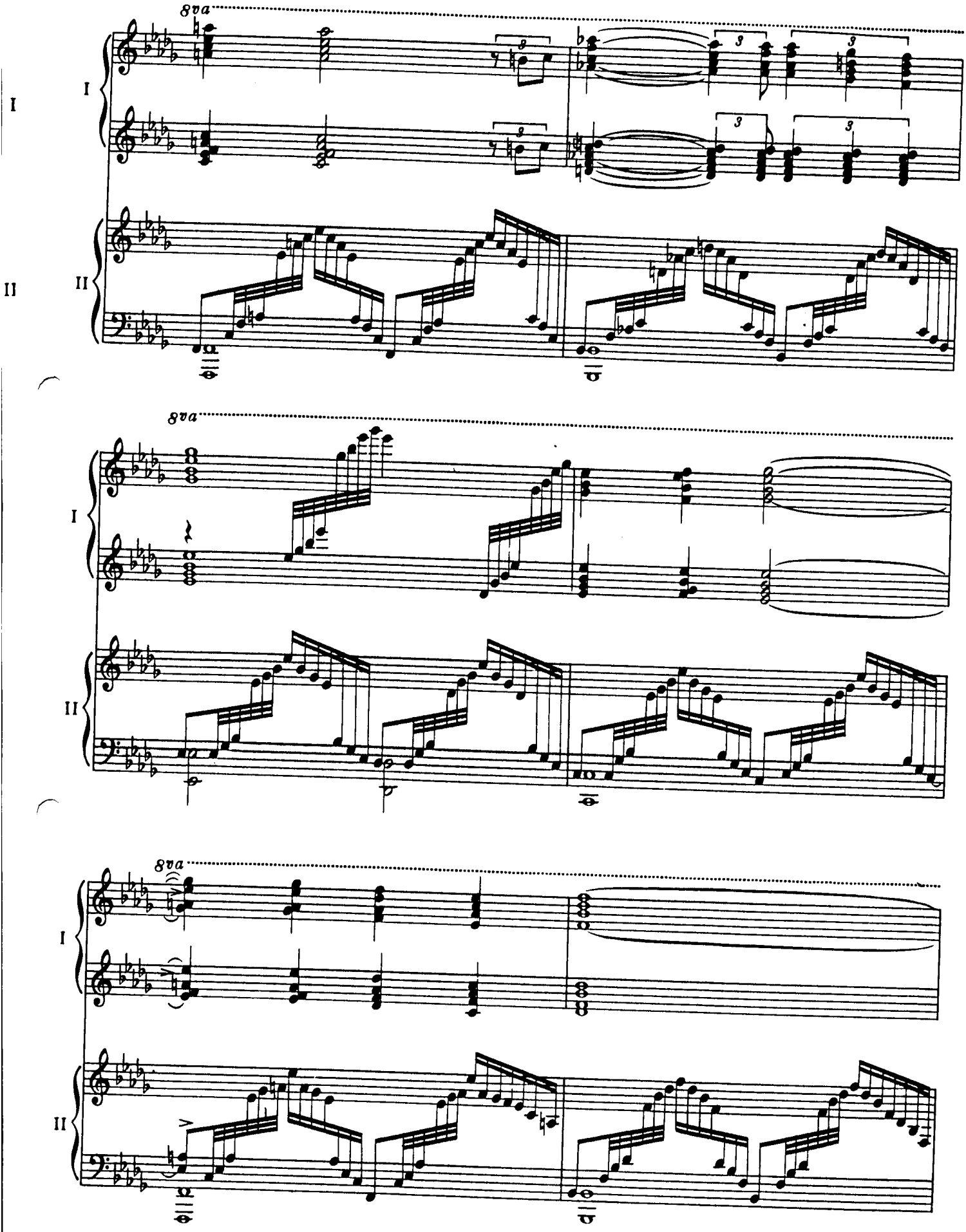
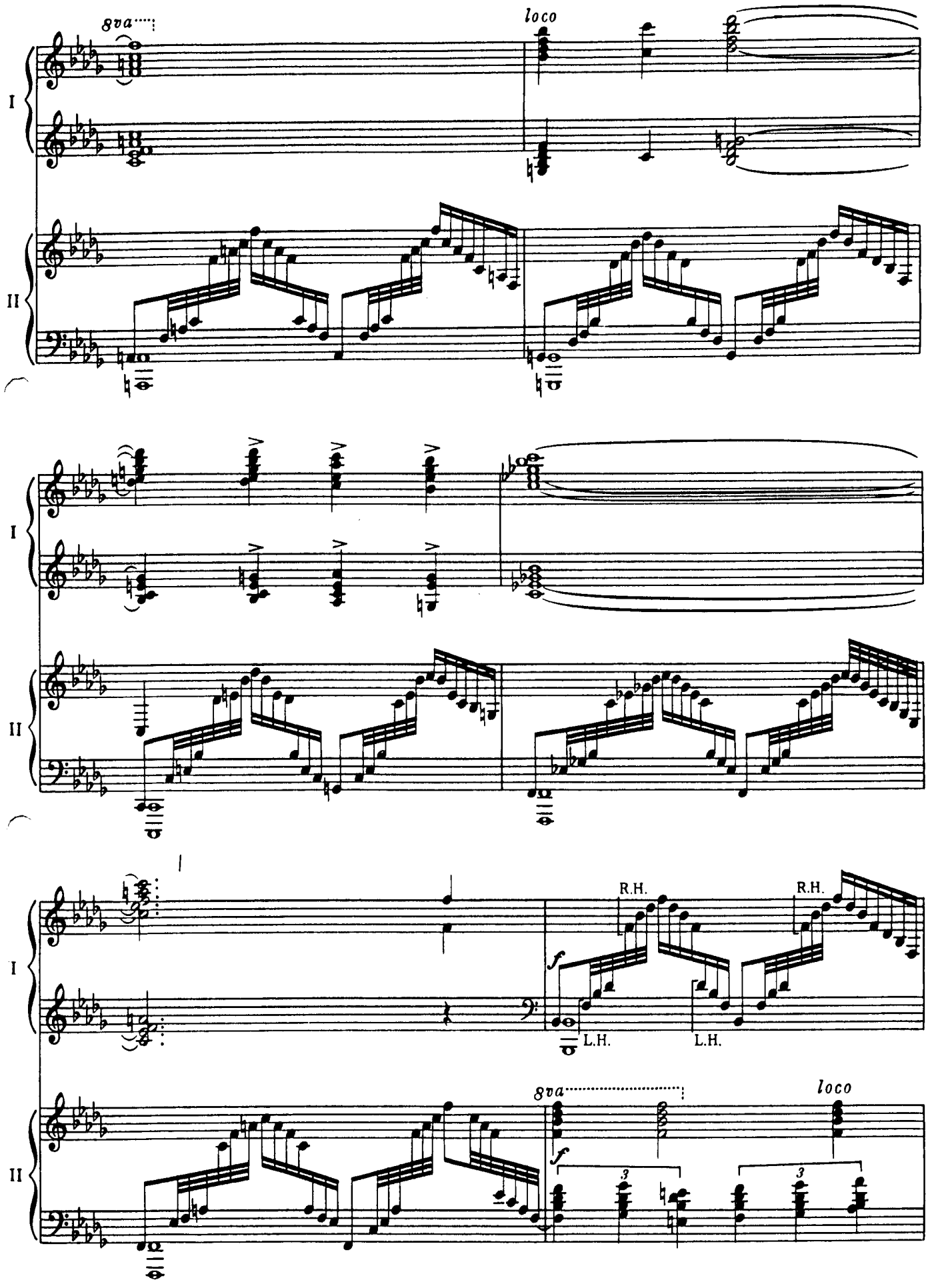
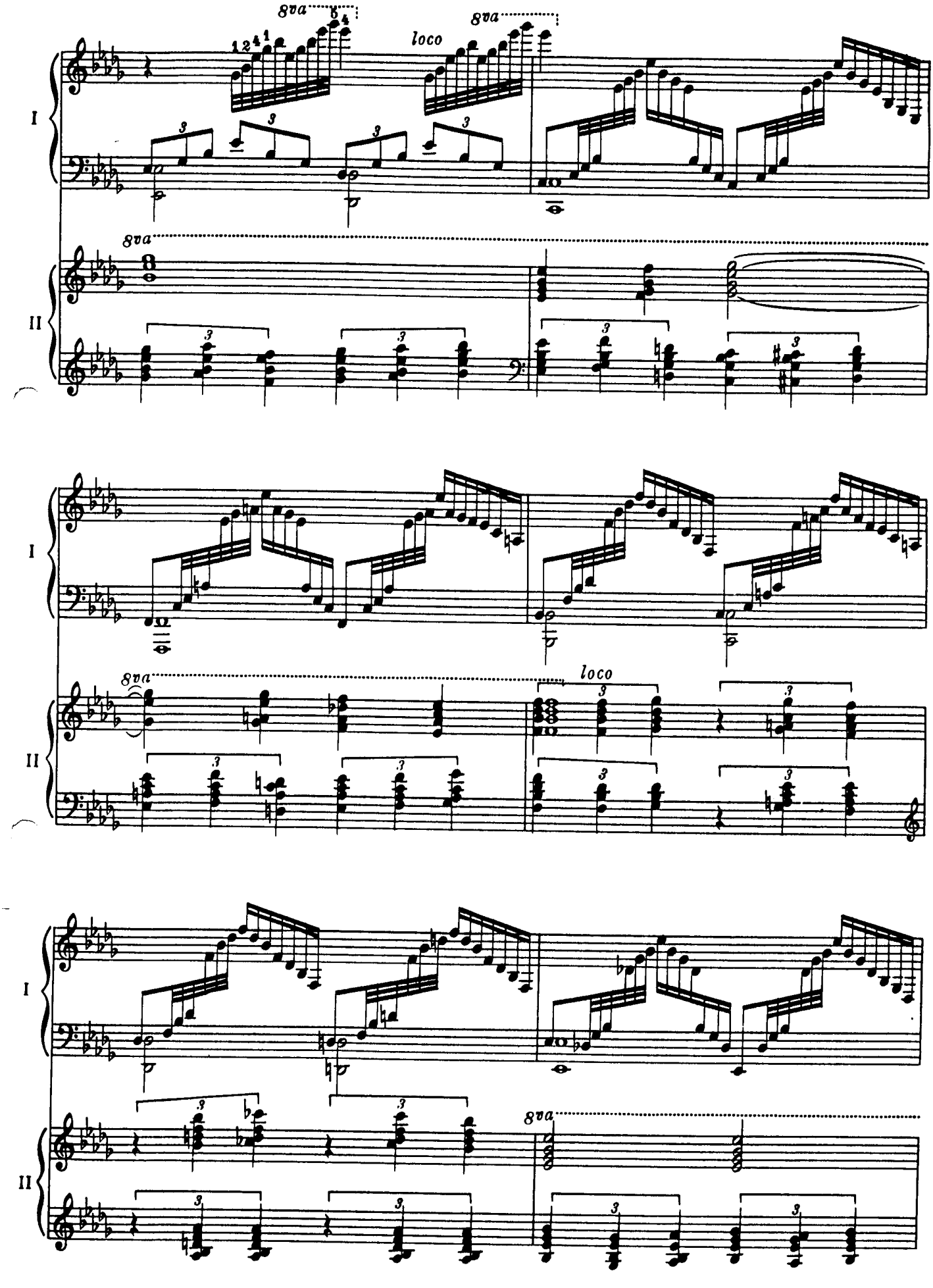
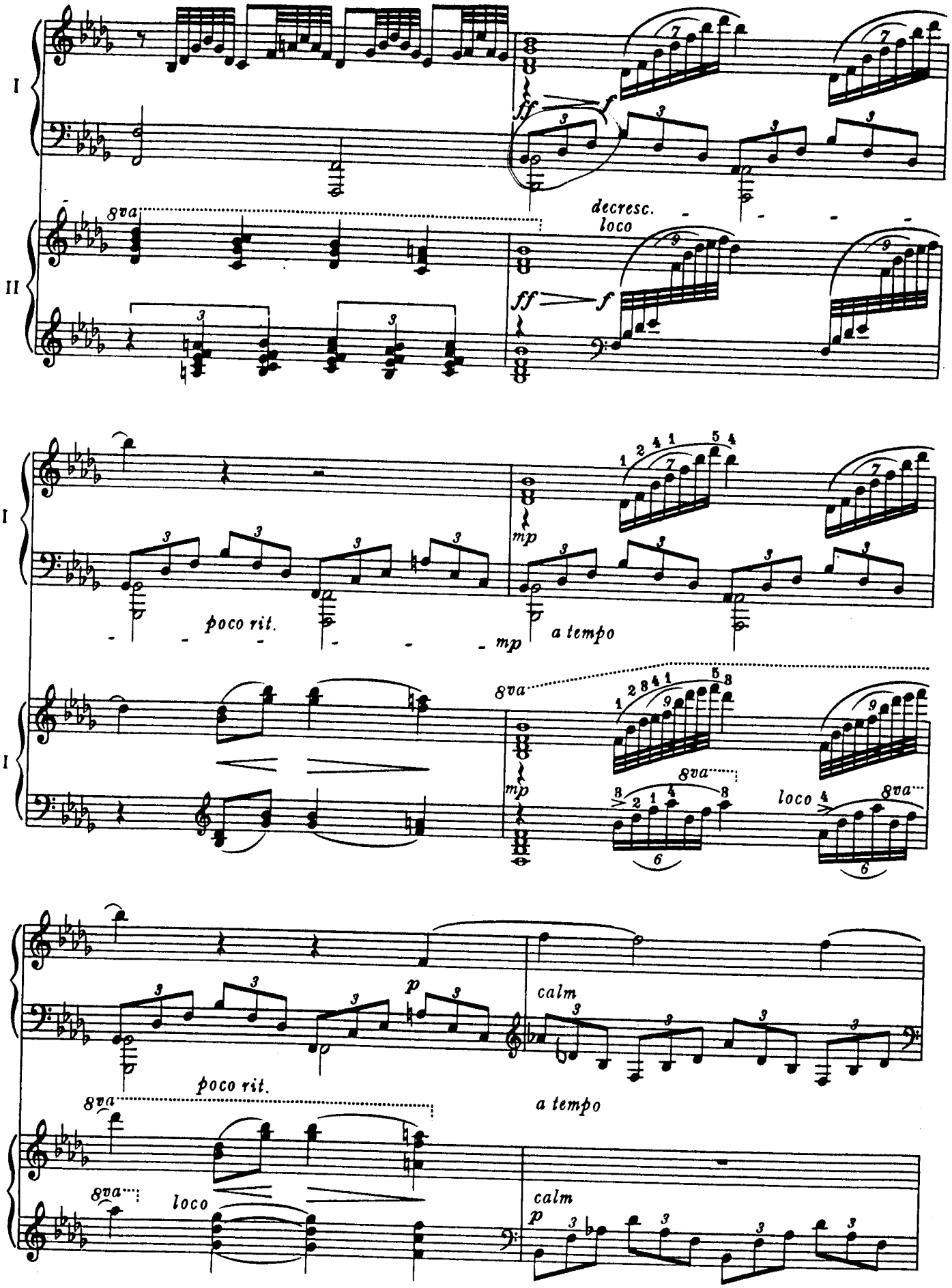
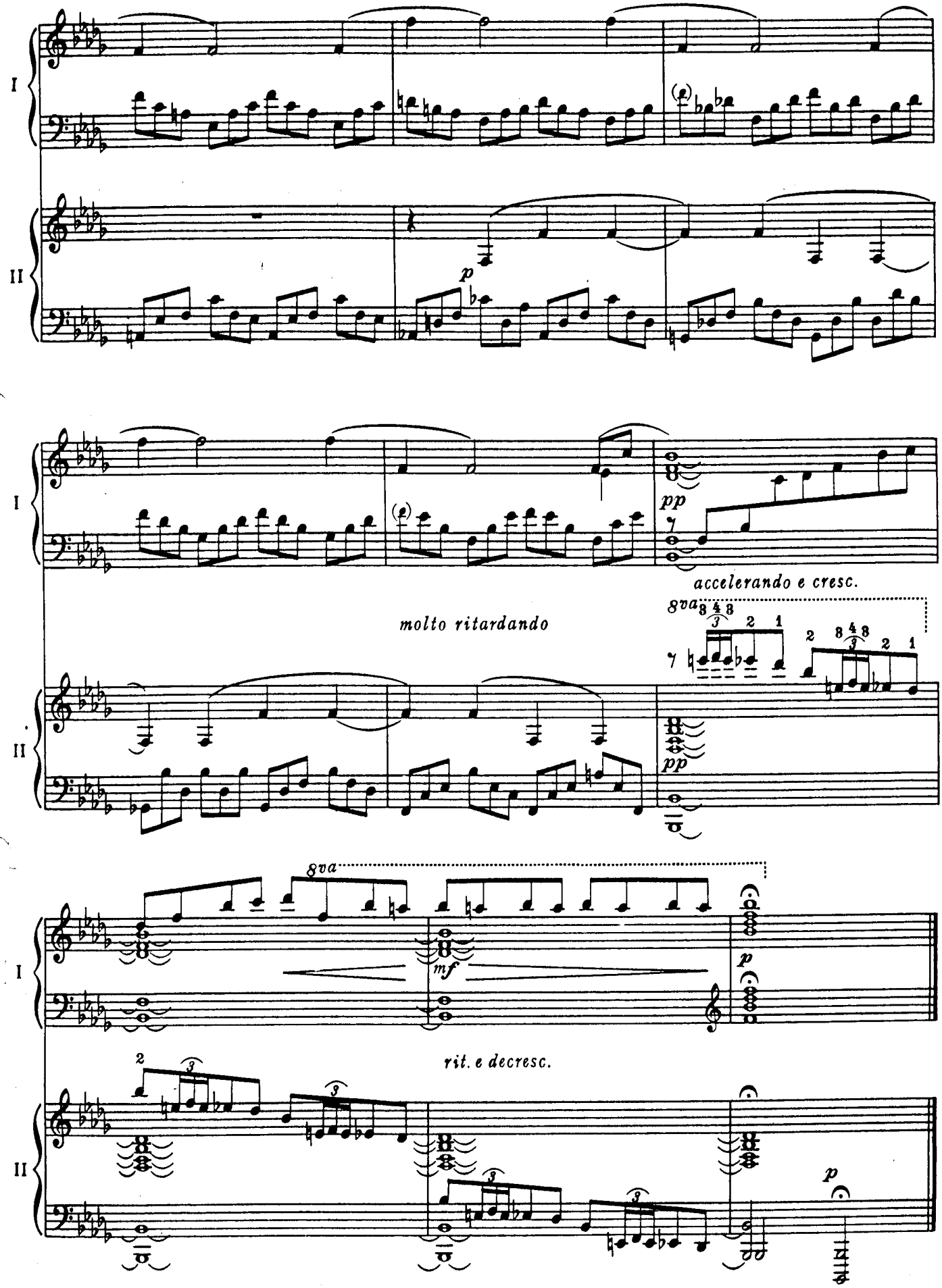

8va
I
II
8va
I
II
8va
I
II


8va
loco
I
II
I
II
I
R.H.
R.H.
f
L.H.
L.H.
II
8va
loco
f
3
3

2980


8va
loco
8va
I
II
8va
8va
loco
I
II
I
8va
II


I
II
8va
ff
f
decresc.
loco
mp
poco rit.
a tempo
loco
p
calm


I
II
p
pp
accelerando e cresc.
molto ritardando
8va
mf
rit. e decresc.