Rossini's

Rediscovered Duets Series

WP119

William Tell Overture

arranged by Louis Moreau Gottschalk

for one piano, four hands

edited by Weekley and Arganbright

Preface

Louis Moreau Gottschalk (or "Moreau," as he was called by his family) was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1829. His father was from London and his mother had been born in New Orleans of French descent. By the age of twelve Moreau had absorbed all that the local teachers had to give, so his affluent parents sent him to Paris. Three years after his arrival there he made his debut as a pianist, becoming the rage of the salons almost instantly. The novelty of his birth in far-off Louisiana, combined with his good looks, charming manners, and extraordinary performing skills, gained him attention and praise from Chopin, Berlioz, and Kalkbrenner. According to Gottschalk's sister Clara, Chopin said, "Give me your hand, my child, I predict you will become the king of pianists." Chopin's prediction was very nearly accurate. Berlioz gave him some guidance in composition, strongly promoted his music, and later corresponded with the American artist.

Shortly after Gottschalk's debut as a performer, he began composing piano pieces based upon melodic and rhythmic ideas derived from Creole, Negro, and Latin-American music. Because of this, his compositions were compared to Chopin's *Mazurkas* and Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. It is no wonder that Gottschalk's music elicited such lavish praise. Not only was he the first important American pianist in Paris, but also the first American composer of significance there, with a fresh style that was a mixture of European and American ideas. Some of his most successful works came as early as age sixteen. The cakewalk rhythm, later to be of significance in the development of ragtime, came from his early period.

Public piano recitals as we know them today were a new phenomenon, and Gottschalk learned very early how to appeal to popular tastes in such recitals. He experienced triumph after triumph touring France, Switzerland, Spain, the United States, Canada, the West Indies, and South America, playing hundreds of recitals. Upon his return to the U.S. in 1853 he was overwhelmed with attention from his countrymen. The famous P.T. Barnum offered Gottschalk a three-year contract to tour for him at a fee of $20,000 a year, plus expenses. Gottschalk refused his offer, thinking he could fare even better on his own. Unfortunately, he was mistaken. He did play many concerts (more than 1500 between 1862 and 1864), but the fees were not as impressive as Barnum's offer. It was on a concert tour of Brazil that he died in 1869 at the age of forty. His remains were returned to America and buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York.

Following his death, Gottschalk's music, with the exception of a few sentimental examples of "household music," was gradually forgotten until fairly recently when the revival of interest in America's past has included an exciting rediscovery of the more significant pieces.

Piano transcriptions of selections from operas were very popular with the concert-going public during Gottschalk's time. For one of his earliest concerts, in 1845, the sixteen-year-old artist dazzled his audience with Thalberg's transcription of excerpts from Rossini's *Semiramide*. It is very likely that he flattered the Swiss in 1851 with this four-hand arrangement of Rossini's *William Tell Overture*. With the combination of Rossini's attractive tune and Gottschalk's brilliant arrangement we have a composition which is sure to please late intermediate and early advanced duettists.

The editors have deleted the long and generally less familiar opening section, beginning with the familiar "Lone Ranger" section. To facilitate performance they have redistributed some of the notes among the four hands, and have included some octave doublings which are justified by the fact that Gottschalk's keyboard had a narrower range.

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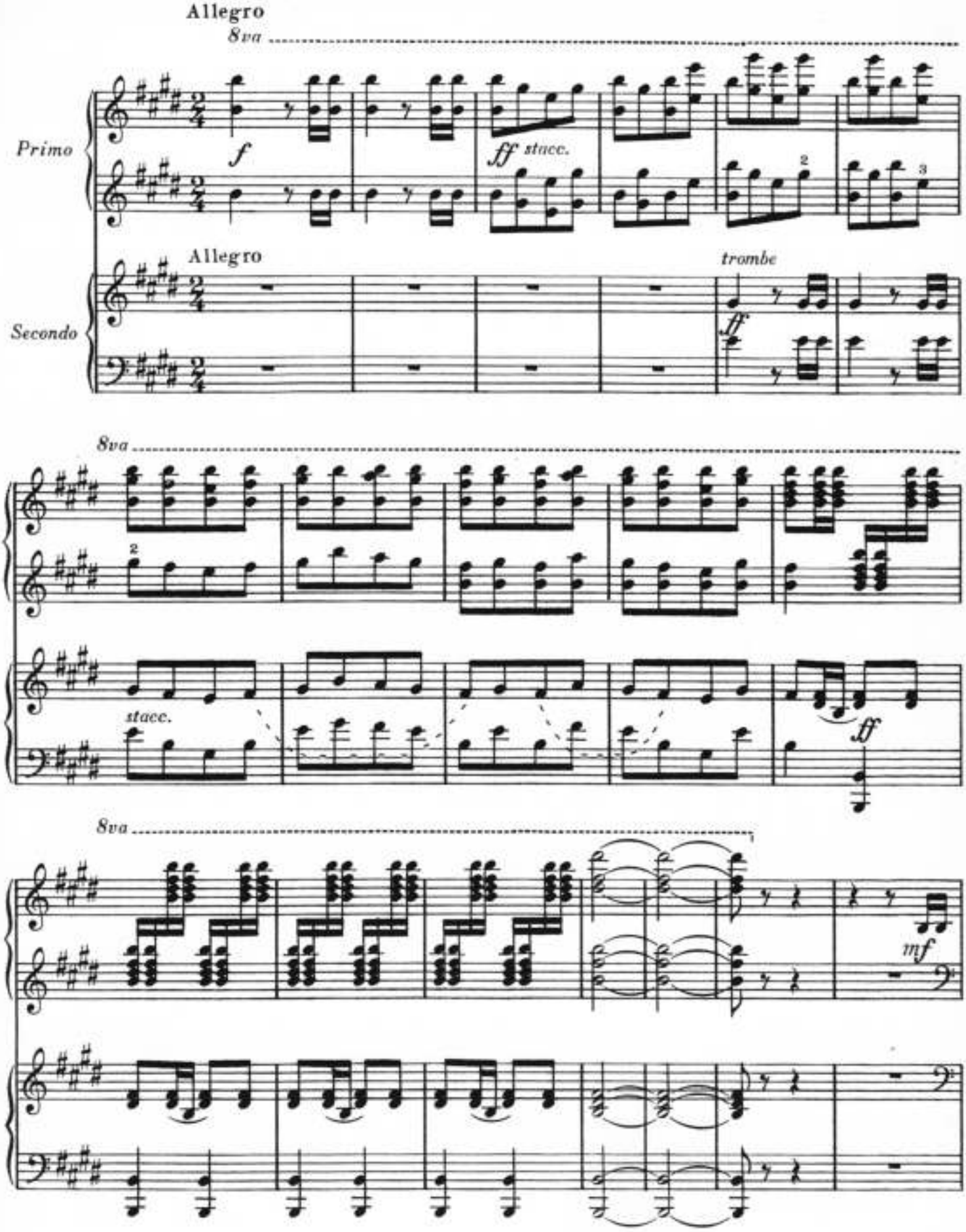
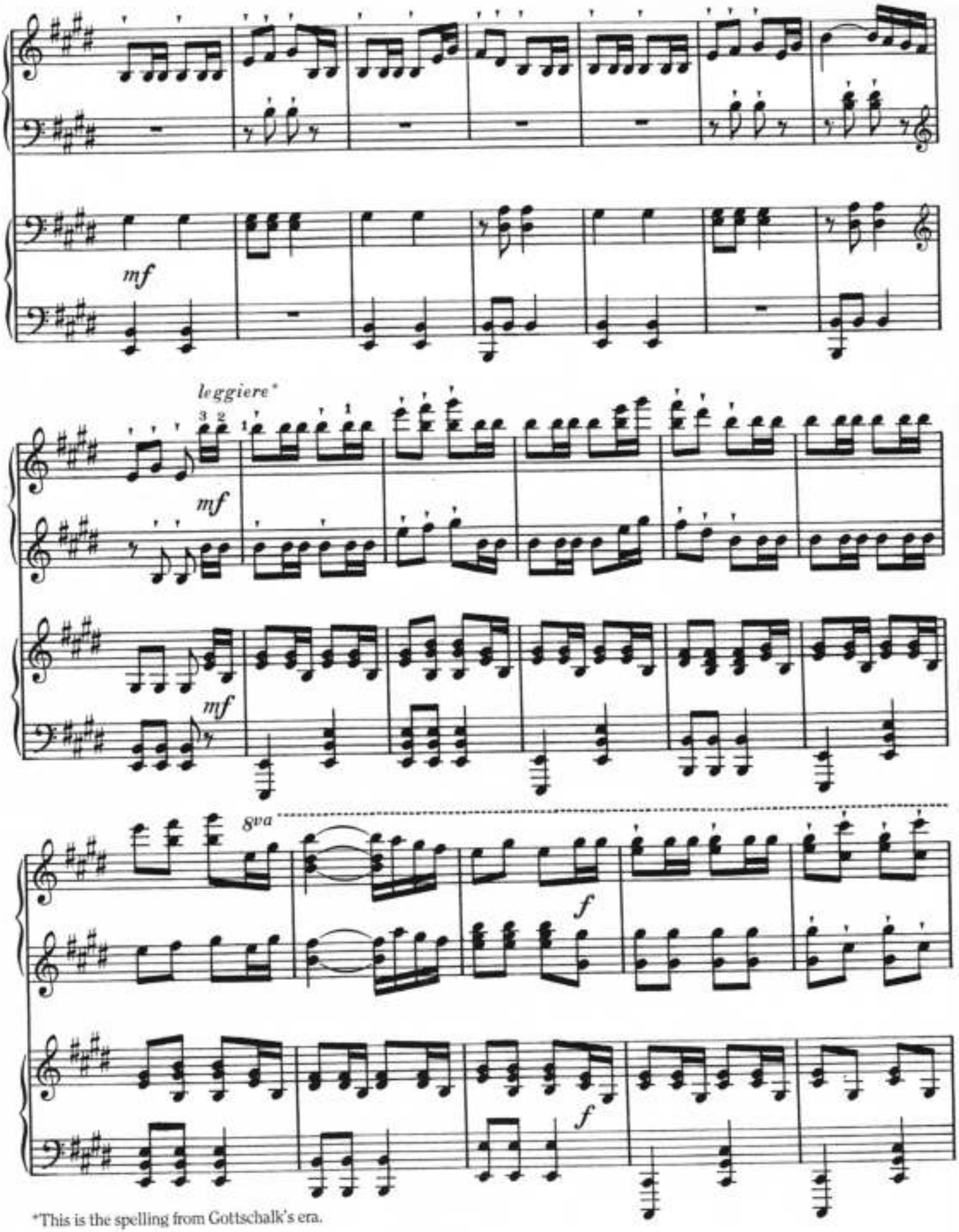
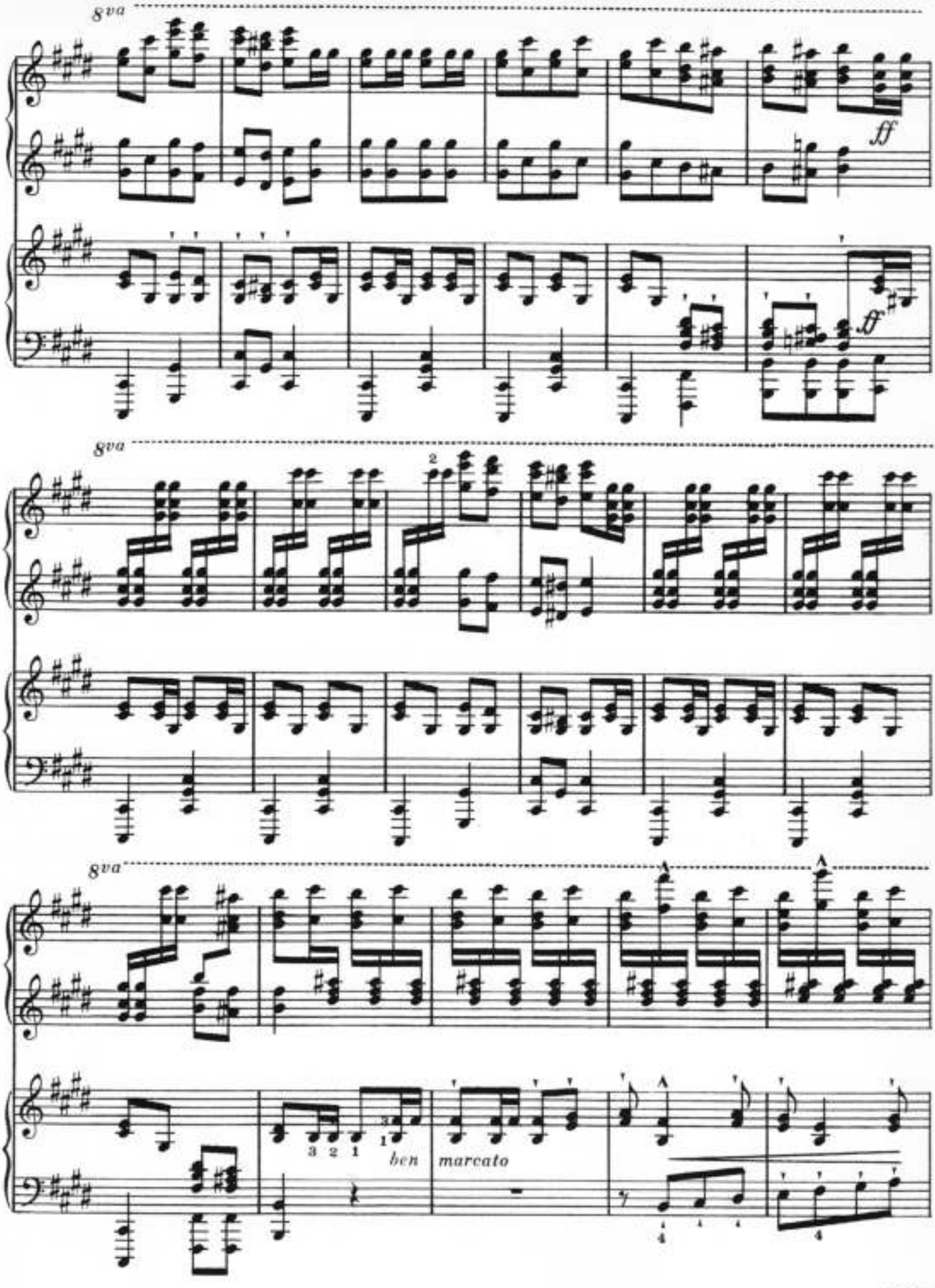




*This is the spelling from Gottschalk's era.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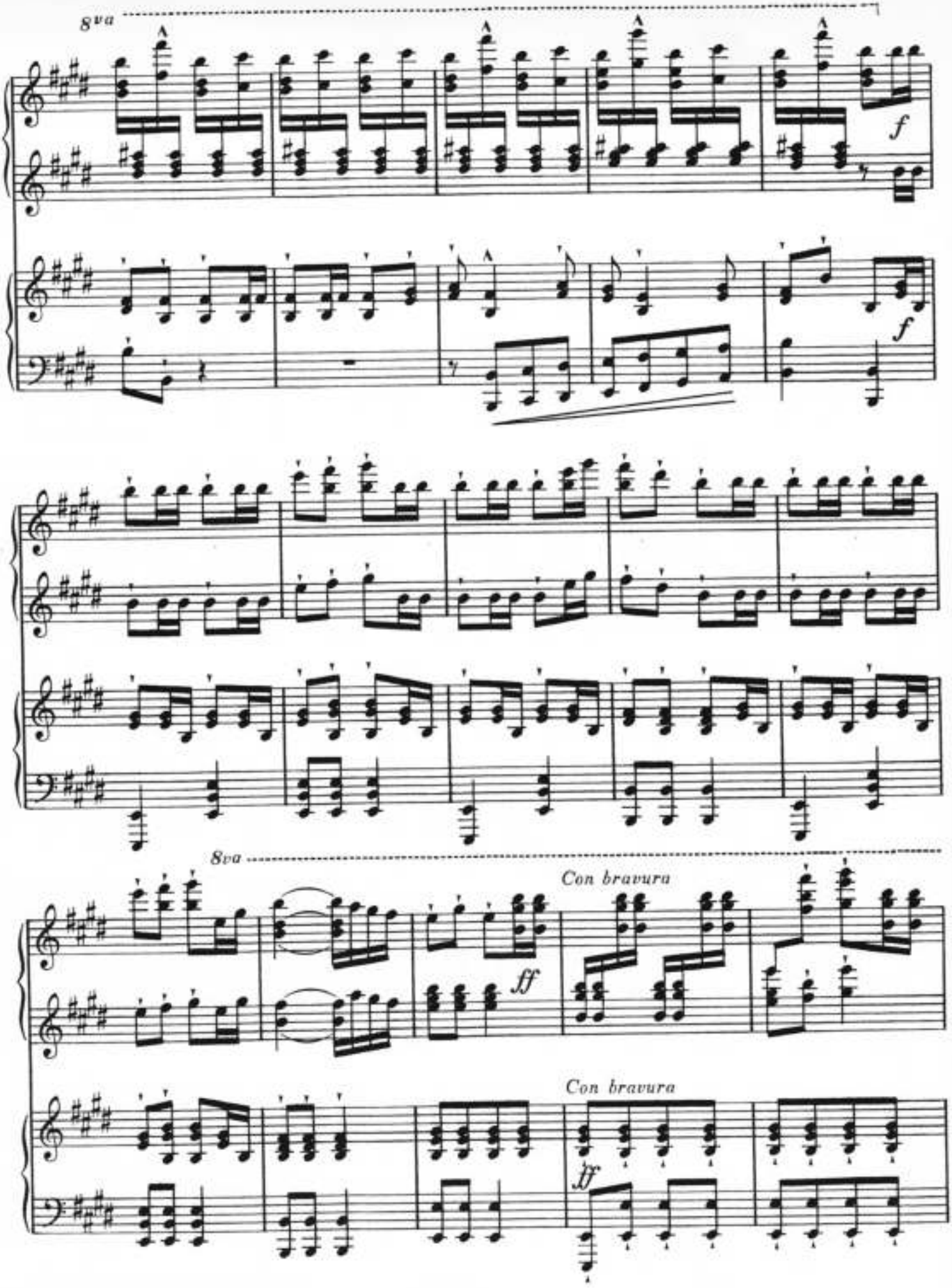
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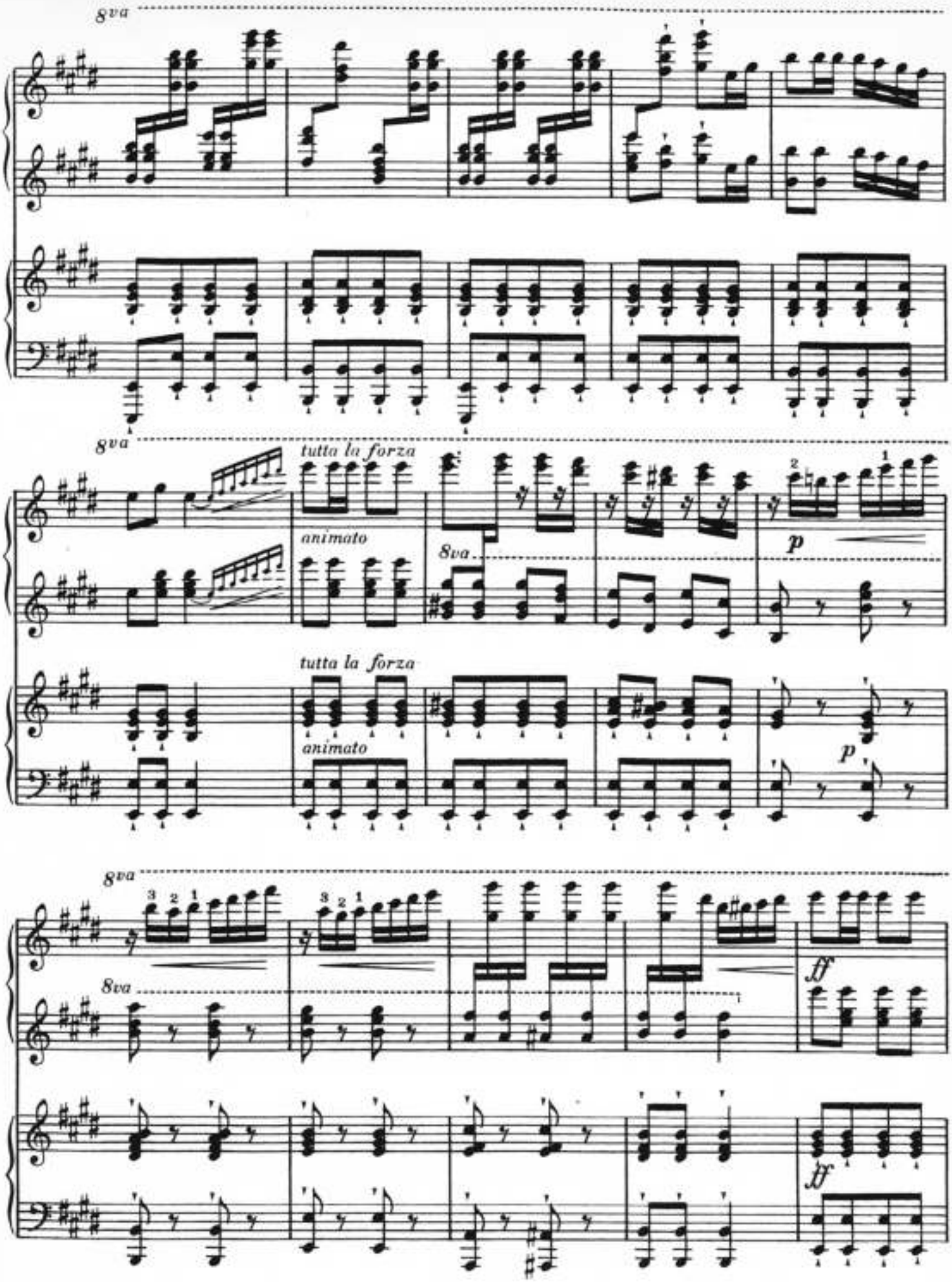
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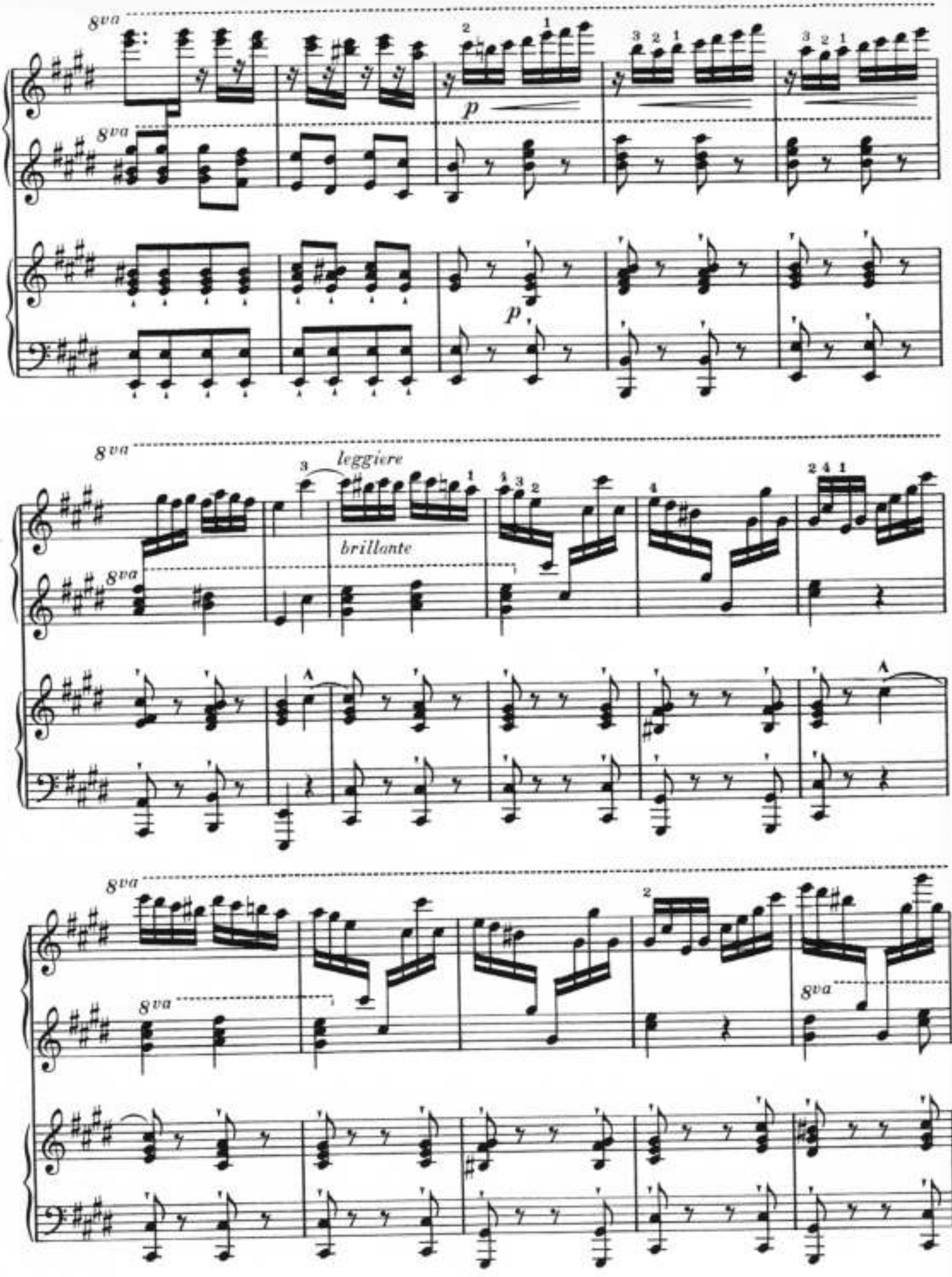
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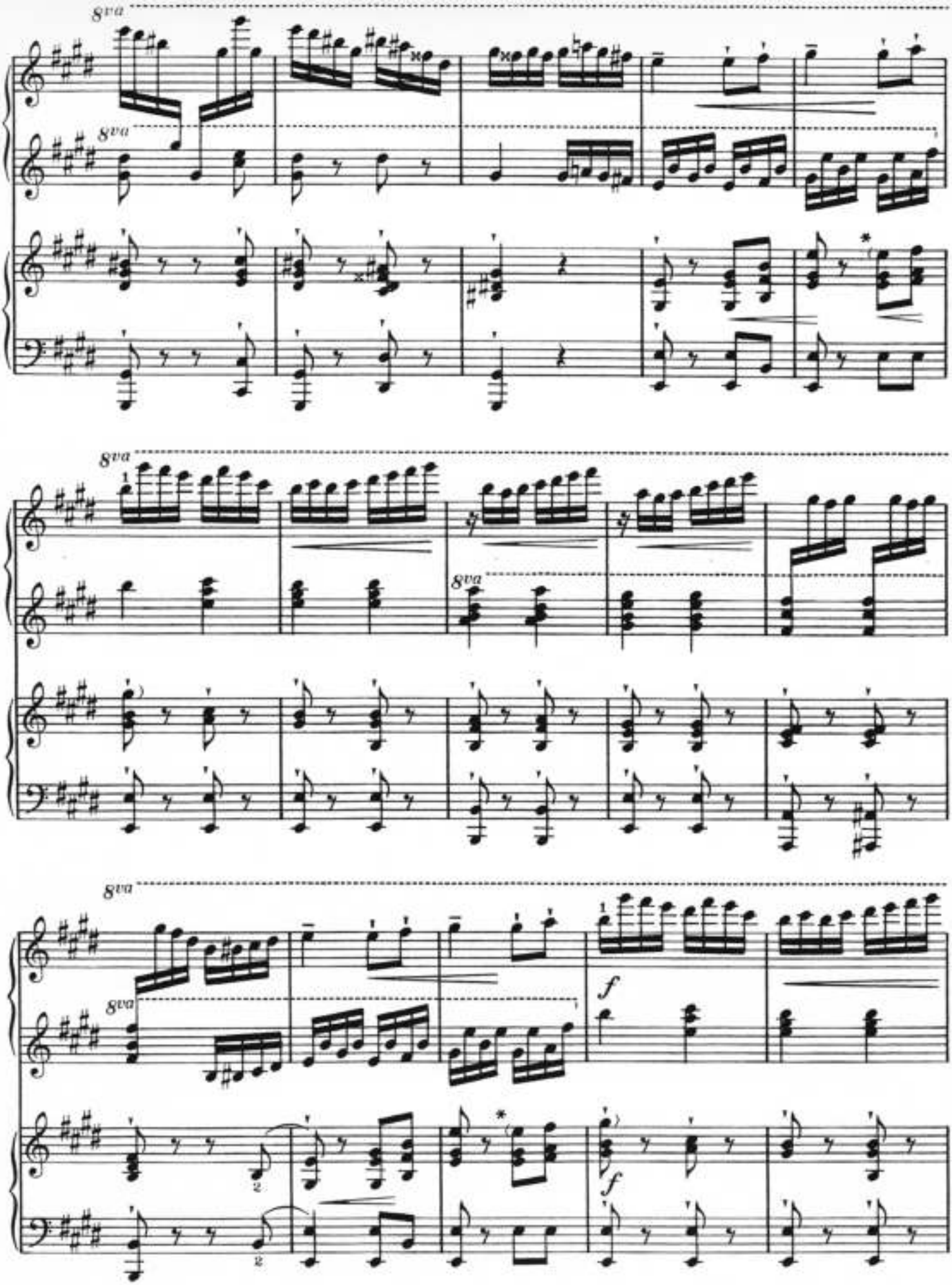
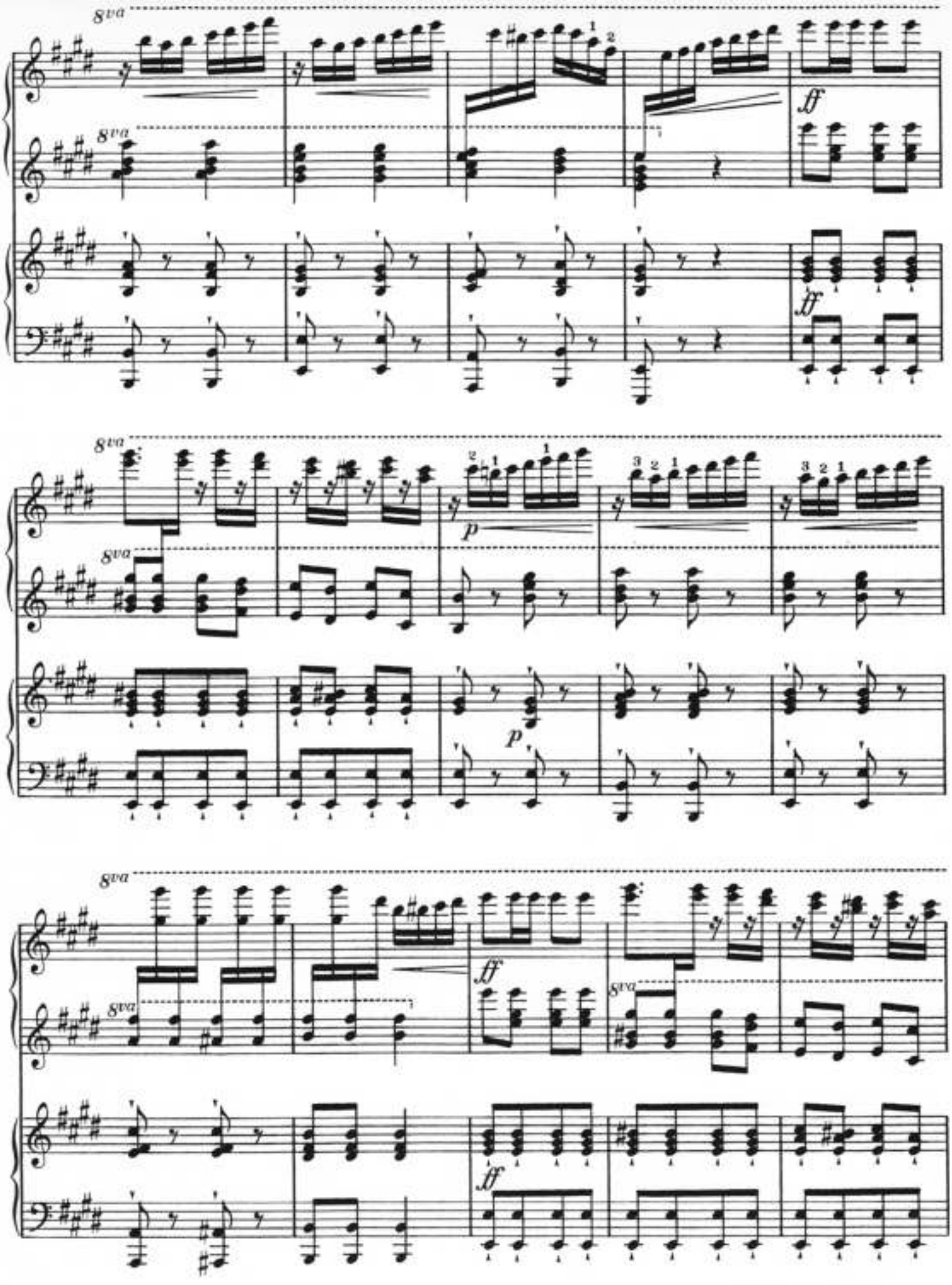


*Small hands may omit.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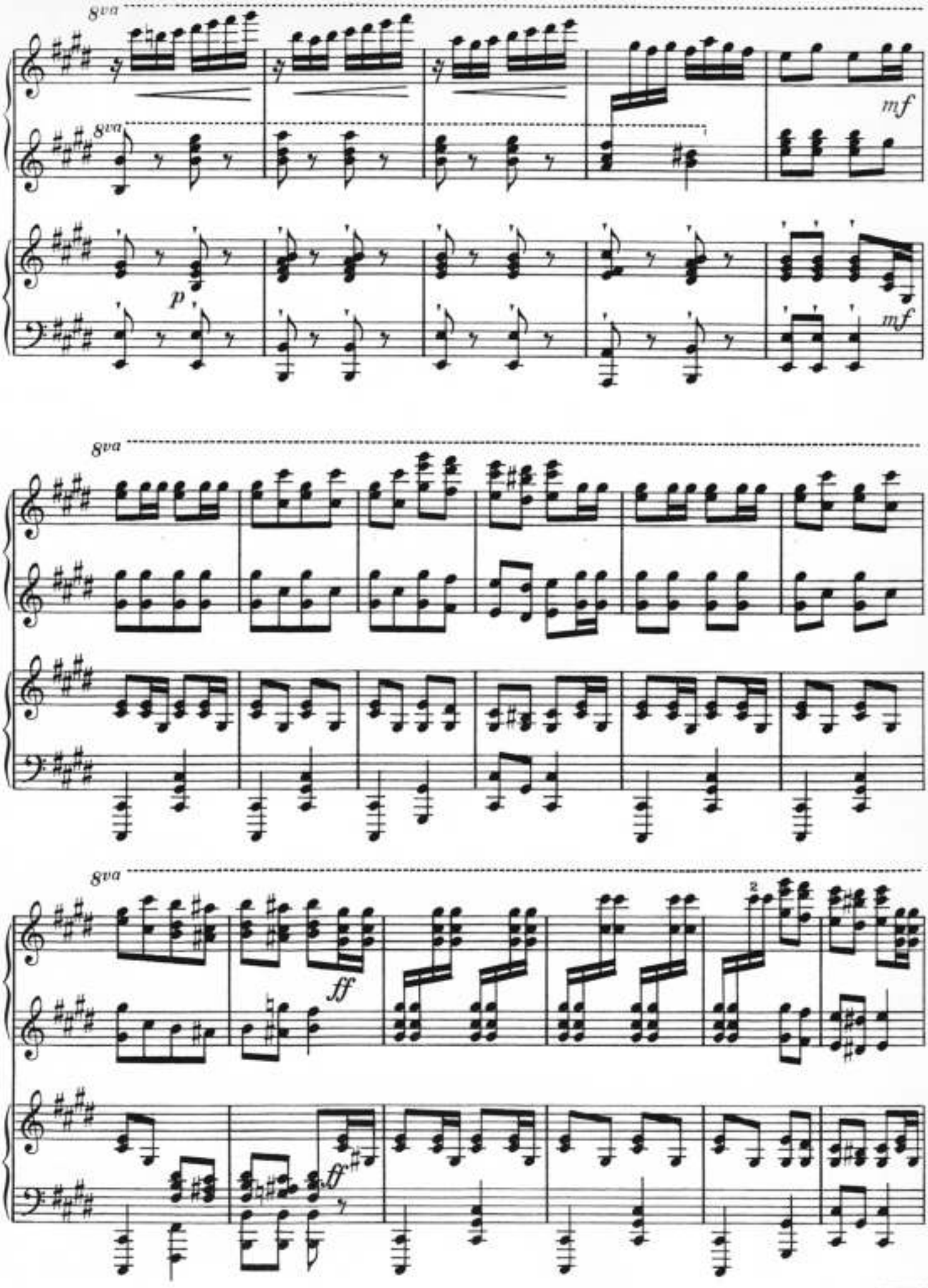
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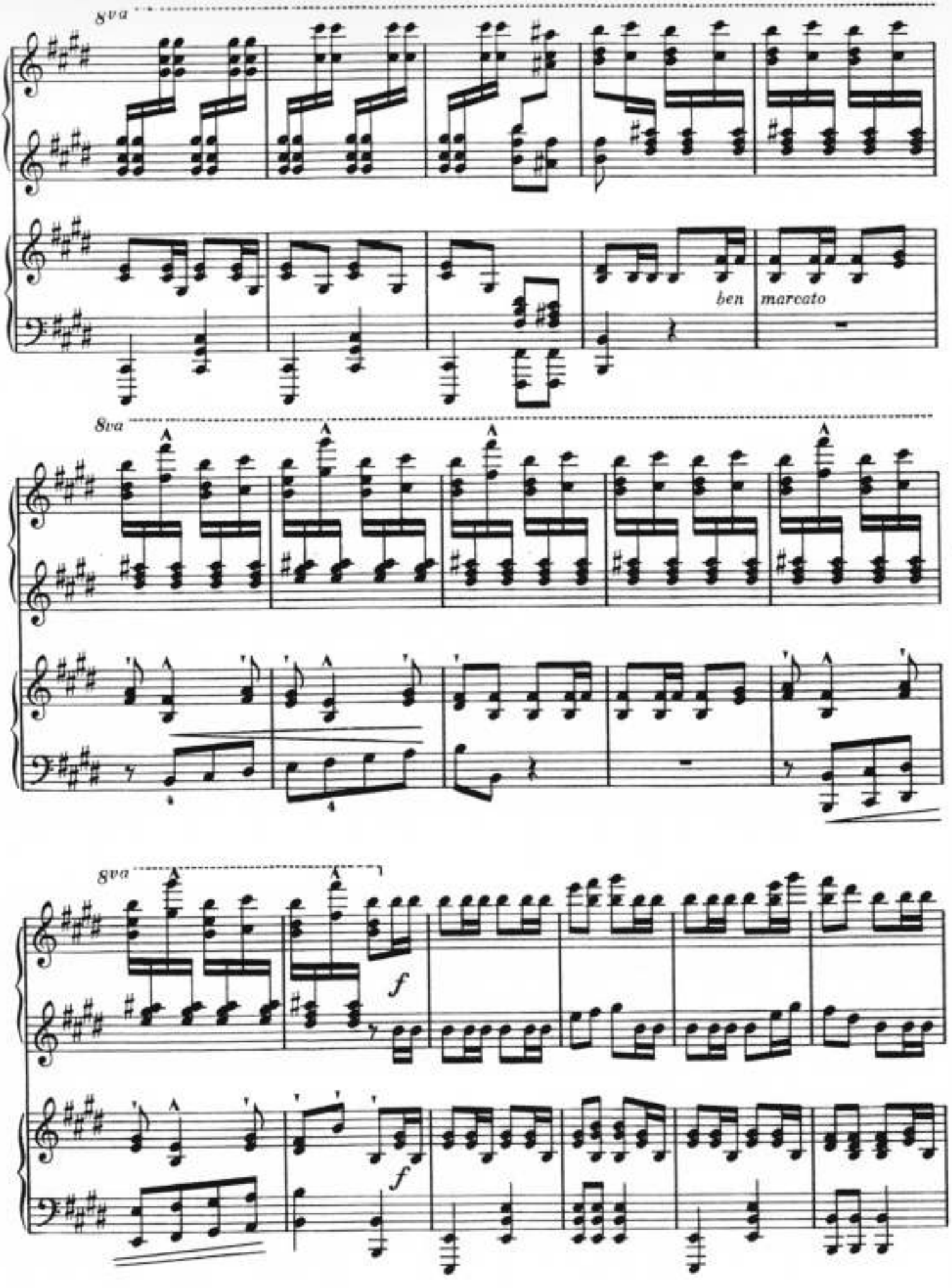
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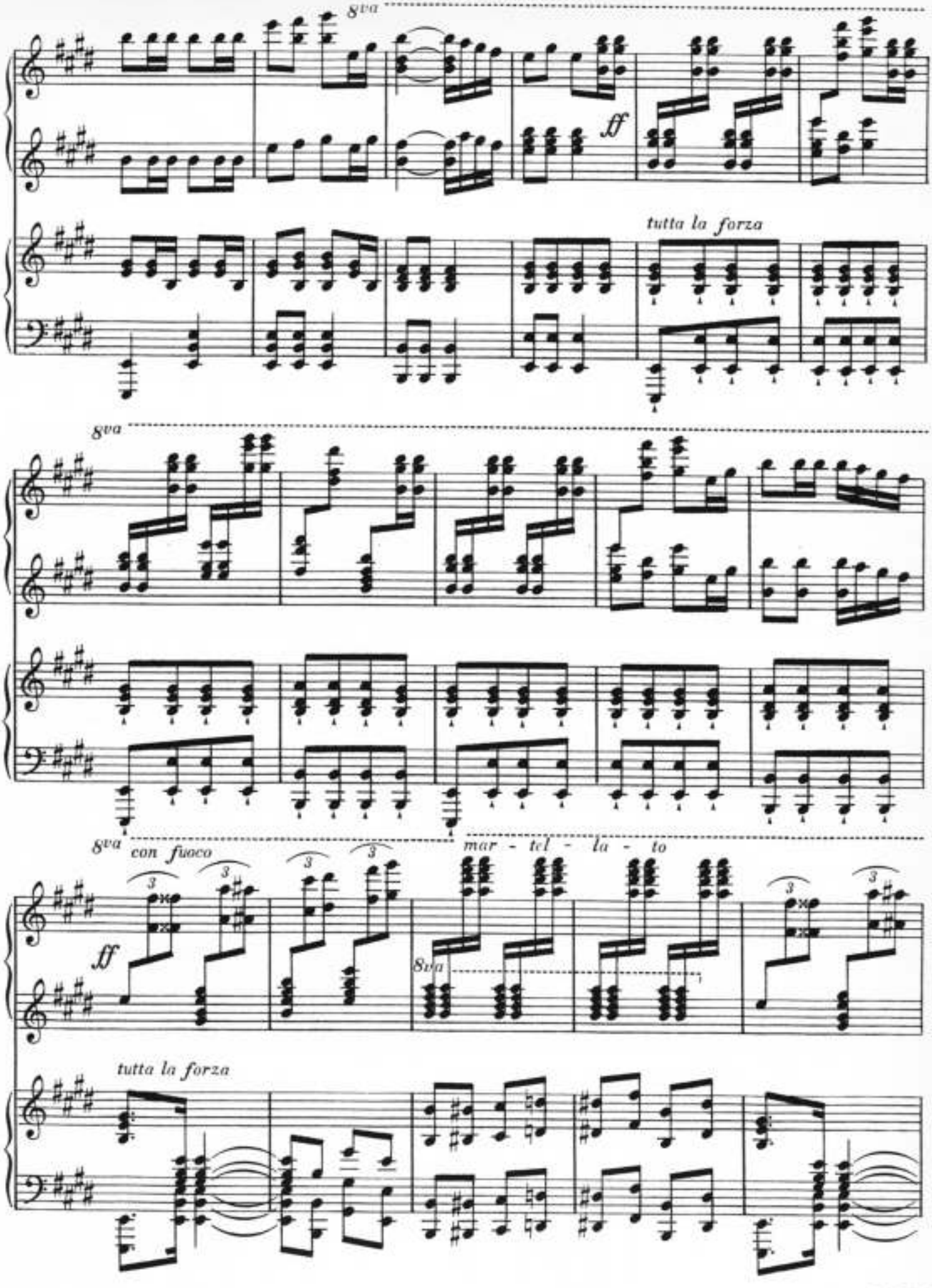
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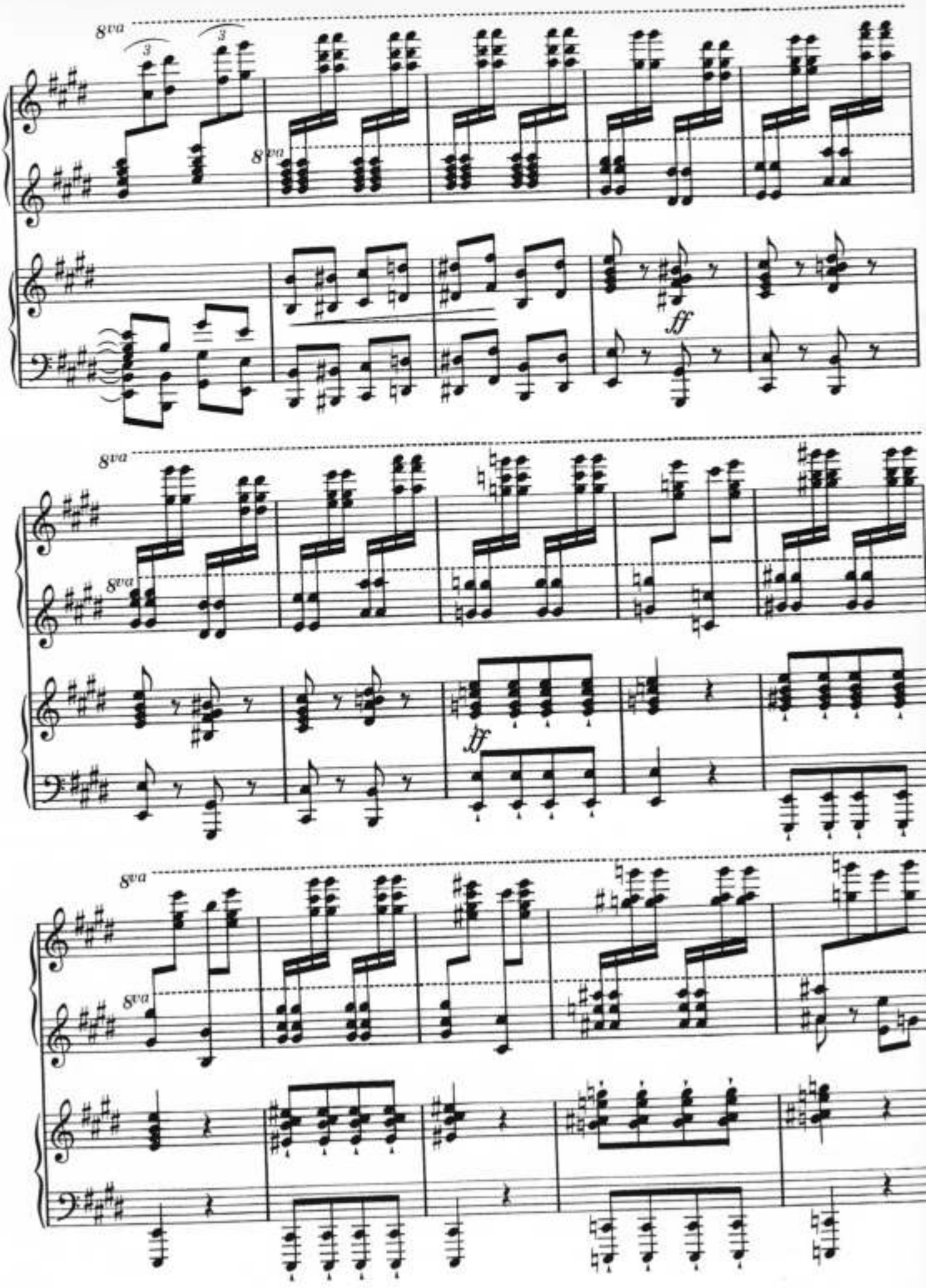
tutta la forza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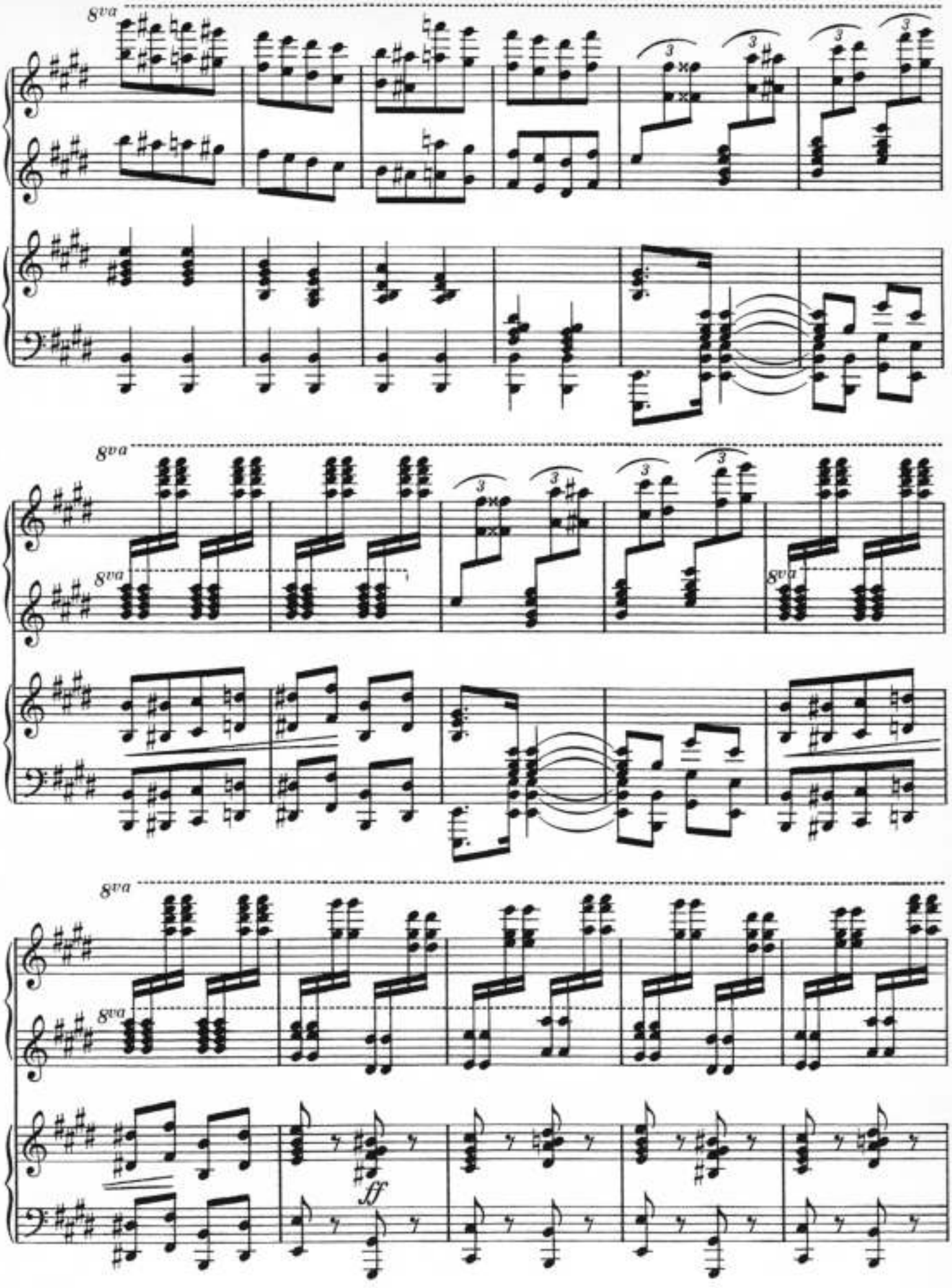
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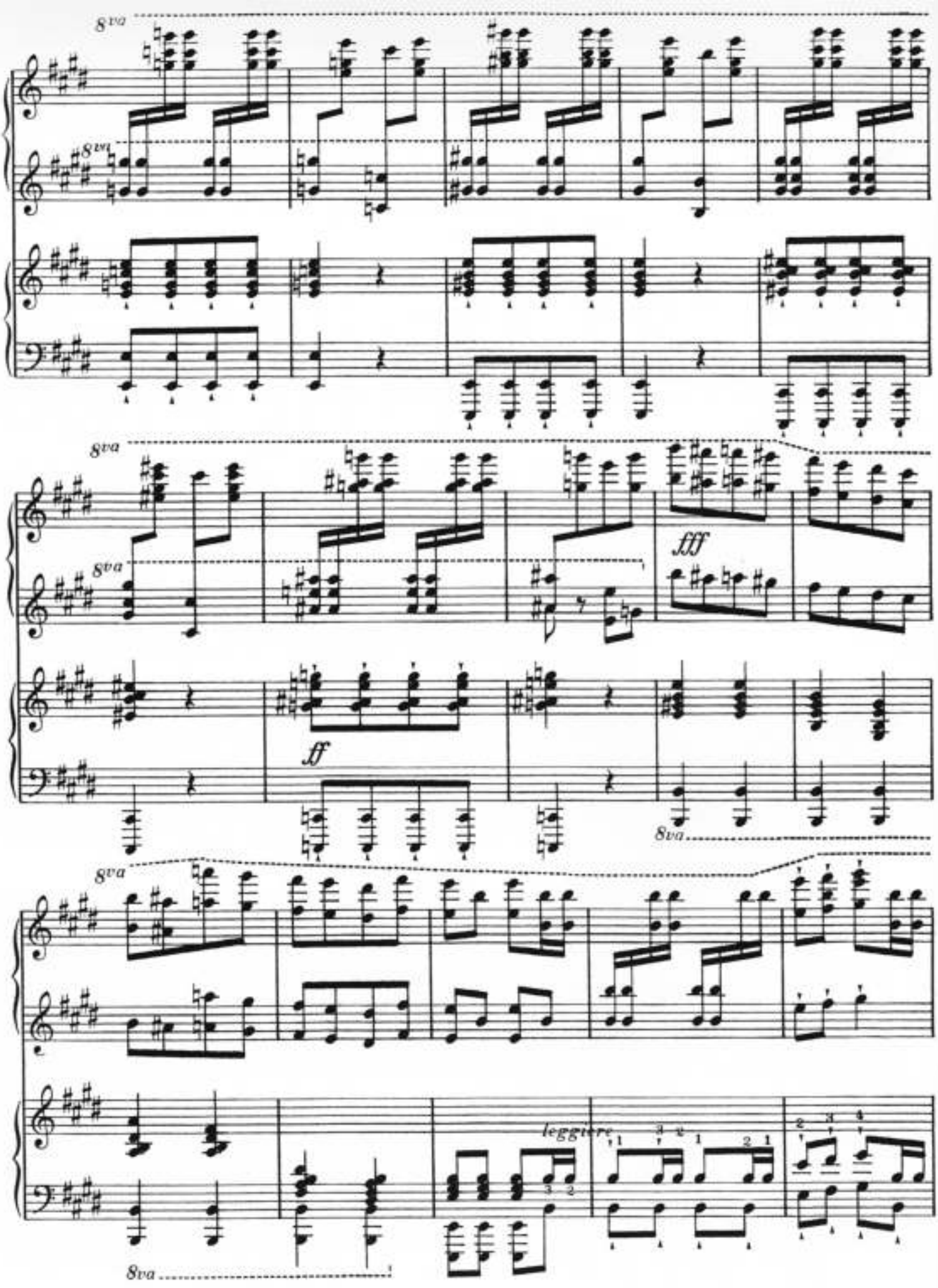
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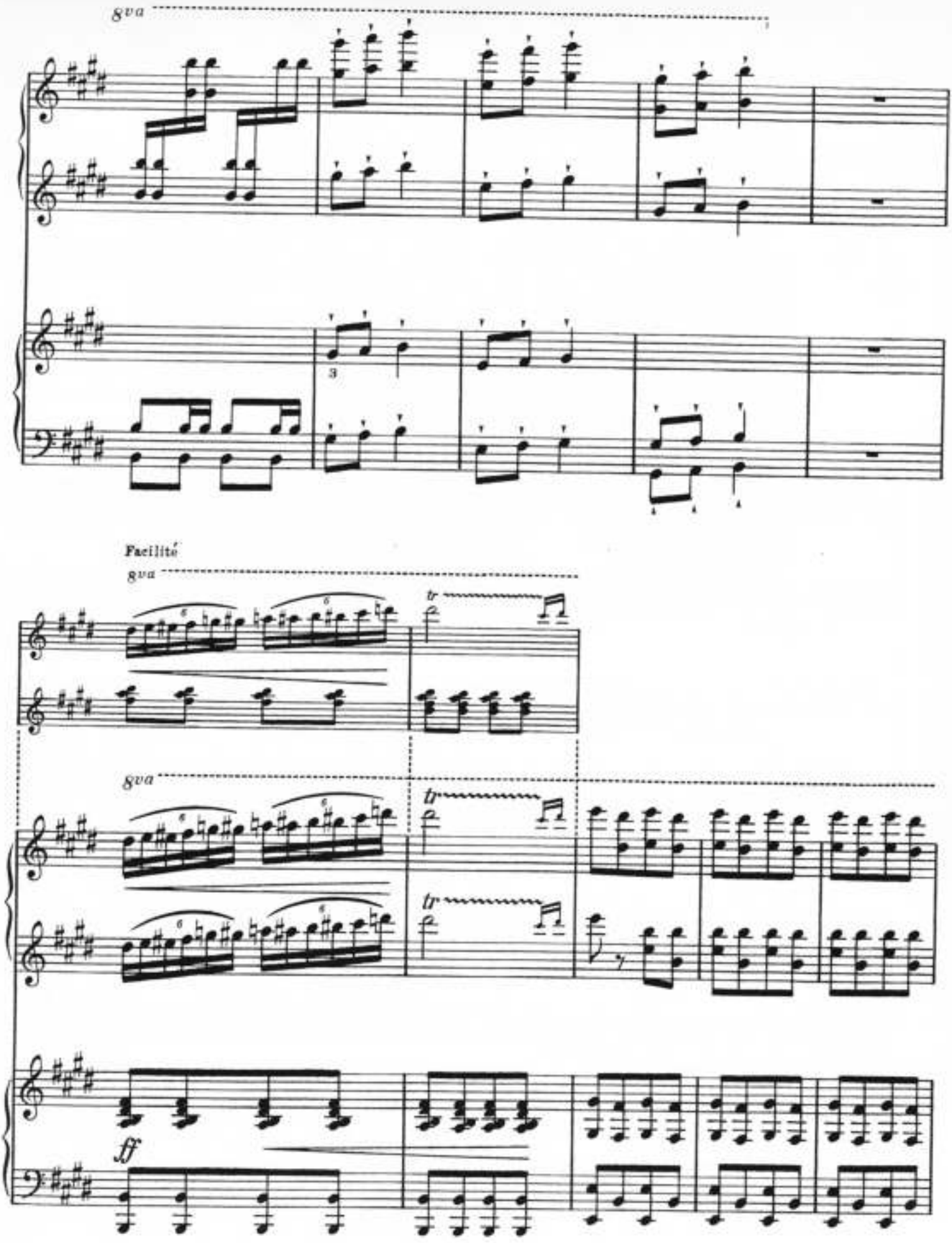
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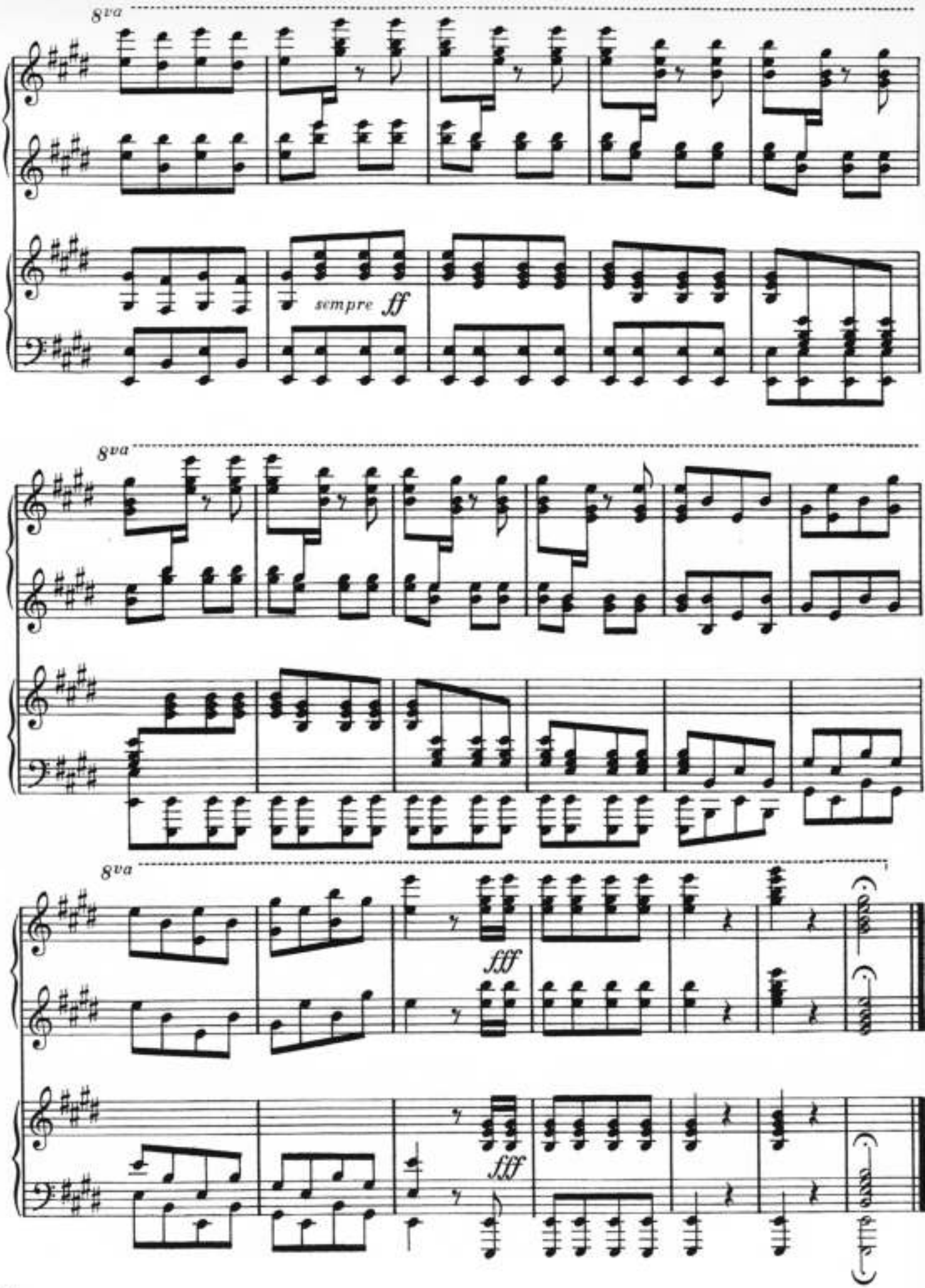
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Photo courtesy of Roger Grant

About the Arrangers

Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright Weekley are largely responsible for a revival in both listening to and performing piano four-hand literature. Piano four-hand music had its beginning in the 18th century and since that time Weekley & Arganbright have presented more piano duet concerts than any other four-hand duo in the history of this medium.

They have dedicated their lives to sharing this love of four-hand music with others by performing hundreds of concerts in the United States and throughout the world, and through their publications, their recordings, and annual "four-hand fests."

Weekley and Arganbright's editions make it possible for pianists to play and appreciate the magnificent scope of the repertoire for piano four hands, to hear and enjoy the added dimension in sound and expression available through this medium, and to be part of an exciting and rewarding experience.