II^ND STUDY

(Op. 25)

Fr. CHOPIN

The at once natural and refined interpretation of this study does not imply any enhancing of particular notes, any setting forth of such virtuosity that we have considered as a feature necessary to the execution of the Study Op. 10, N° 5.

Perfection should here, on the contrary, be sought by only sustaining a softly poetical ecstasy, a discreet sentimentality, a sort of delicate evocation of Virgil's « *fugit ad salices* ».

It is but a superior virtuosity that can veil the apparent virtuosity, by keeping, nevertheless, the rapid design of the right hand charmingly sonorous, wingedly light and aristocratically graceful.

It will therefore be necessary, before setting to work out the study proper, to secure, by the following exercises, the lightness and exclusive use of the fingers, the steady quietness of the hand, the flexibility of the wrist, which will afterwards direct its perfect execution.

1° For equality of touch and steadiness of the hand :

A. *r. h.*

play on chromatically

The breves illustrate the position of the fingers on the key-board, keys being left unpressed. Practise legato and staccato, alternately, gradually quickening the tempo as the *pp* increases to *mf*. The fingers should keep constantly close to the keys, avoiding any excessive articulation.

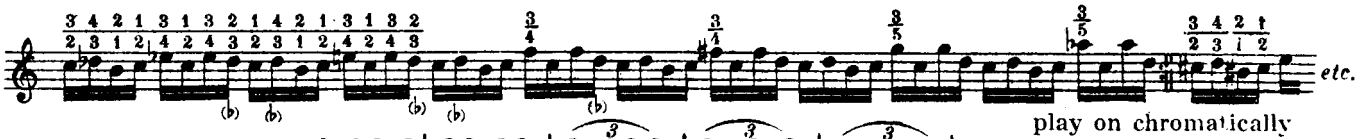
Variants of the same exercise :

A^bis

With extension of the 5th finger :

A^ter

2° For the suppleness of the wrist and the steadiness of the hand, in spite of extension :



play on chromatically

Make use of figures :

3° For the substitution of fingers on the same key and the equalization of their action :

play on chromatically

The last three positions of this exercise (in fourths and fifths) should be used only if their practice does not overstrain the hand or cause an undue stretch of the fingers.

4° For the lightness and legato of the thumb and 2nd and 3rd fingers of the right hand, the succession of which will be frequently made use of in the fingering of this study :

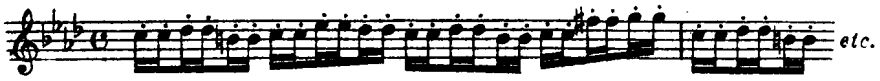
A.

B.

play on chromatically

Practise the whole right hand part in periods of a few bars that shall be afterwards progressively connected with each other. Repeat each period about ten times with the following rhythms :

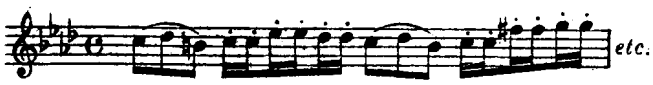
Further, in order to develop lightness in the action of the fingers :



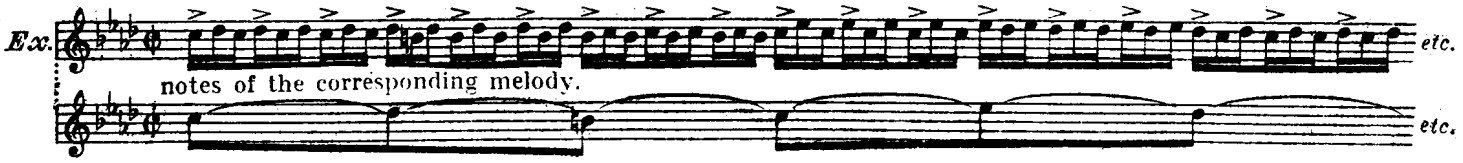
And combining staccato and legato :

A.

B.

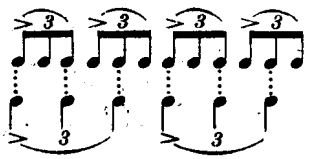


And, lastly, tying each note to the next by a ternary shake which will equalize the connection between the different successions :



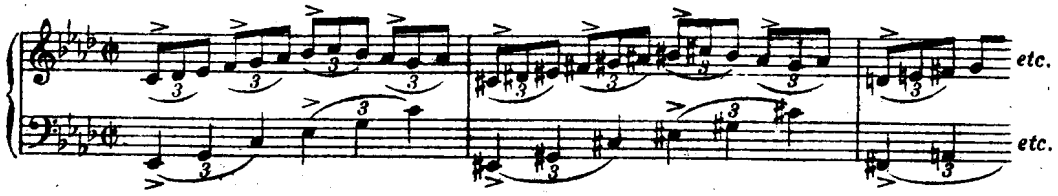
Very carefully watch light and correct passing of the thumb during the practice of the above exercises. Any brisk motion or untimely accentuation would badly affect the character of the piece and the quality of the study.

Before combining both hands for the definite study of these pages, get accustomed to the slight difficulty arising from the superposition of two different rhythms:



and, in spite of the unobtrusive part played by the left hand, endeavour to secure the most perfect regularity for the triplets in crotchets which constitute its individual form.

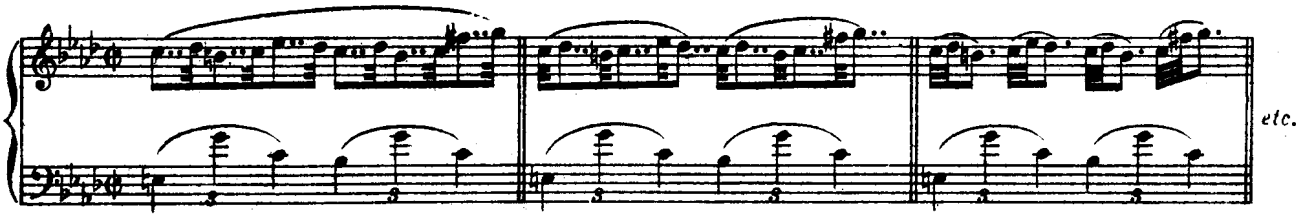
Practise first as follows :

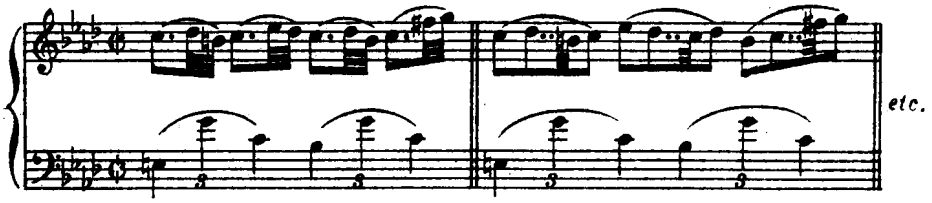


play on chromatically in all major keys.

The accents, which are very precise, will be set forth exclusively by the fingers. When this study is performed, these accents should, of course, be somewhat attenuated and blended, and not come out otherwise than as the expressions of an inward rhythmic feeling, without altering at all the melodic outline.

For the study of both hands combined, we would suggest the following variants :





We cannot insist too much on recommending, as well for the practice of the above exercises as for the final adjustment of the study as it is written, the application of a few rules, given by J. Ph. Rameau in his

essay on « Mechanism of the fingers on the Harpsichord », which, happily, are well suited to the manner of performance we recommend for this work.

He says first :

« The thumb and the fifth finger, lying on the edge of the keys, oblige the other fingers to bend in « order to be even with the former on the edge of the keys ; but if the hand is allowed to fall as has been « said, the fingers naturally bend to the necessary curve : they should not, at this point, be allowed anymore « to bend or to unbend except in some particular cases when this cannot be helped. The articulation of the « wrist ought always to be supple, such suppleness, which then passes into the fingers, endowing them with « all the necessary freedom and lightness; and the hand, which through this means becomes, so to say, pas- « sive, does no more but support the fingers attached to it and lead them to the places of the key-board that they could not reach by their own motion. »

And, later :

« The wider motion ought not to be resorted to unless a lesser one does not suffice: moreover, as long « as a finger can reach a key without shifting the hand, by merely stretching or opening, care should be « taken not to waste motion beyond what is needed. The fingers should press the keys, not strike them ; « besides, they are, so to say, to glide from one key to another successively, and this intimates how soft the « action should be in the beginning. »

Again :

« Remember letting each finger act by its own motion ; and mark that the finger that leaves a key « should in any case be so near it that it seems to touch it. »

« Never give, by an effort of your hand, too much weight to the touch of your fingers; on the contrary, « let your hand support your fingers and, by so doing, lighten their touch : this is of great importance. »

At the time Rameau wrote this, in 1724, he had in mind the mechanism of the fingers « generally speaking », that is to say, by extension of the term, the performance of all works for the Harpsichord. And, in spite of the wisdom of these rules and the modesty of their requirements, it seems that up to Ph. Emm. Bach, and even to Mozart, they may have been sufficient for the training and improvement of the execution of the best harpsichordists.

The pianoforte was necessary, with its key resistance greater than that of the harpsichord, with its sustaining power, with its richness and infinite variety of timbre due to different degrees of touch, and to the use of pedals ; the advent of Beethoven, Weber, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, was necessary in order that the piano might render all kinds of emotion, ennoble it with all kinds of enthusiasm, adorn it with all kinds of picturesqueness, require of it the interpretation of all human feelings, so that the pianistic technique might widen the frame in which it had been kept, if not by musical composition at least by school traditions, and by the limited resources of the 18th century, in order also that the execution might not be exclusively submitted to considerations of clearness, evenness and elegance; lastly in order to legitimatise every freedom, every boldness, every manner of producing sound, with the sole restriction that they should interpret truly the thought of the composers.

Now, although these achievements and this invaluable enrichment have been acquired by the best-disposed masters and the most-talented disciples, it may, nevertheless, be regretted that, at the same time, these same artists, carried away by the freedom at last open to them, considered, for too long a time, that they might disregard, for the sake of orchestral colour and expression of feelings, and in aid of the hasty development of an often insecure virtuosity, such qualities as were formerly considered essential ornaments of talent, and that they regarded the principles that were the very foundations of the use of the key-board, as accessory and secondary rules.

The acknowledgment that this has been more than neglect, namely an actual mistake, is one of the improvements of modern technique.

And it would be sufficient to investigate why the interpretation by the best masters of this time is more piquant, their playing more natural, their tonal palette richer in colour and more delicate than that of their rivals, in order to find at the very foundation of their technique the simple, terse and modest rules given by J. Ph. Rameau, but enriched with all the improvements due to modern ingenuity.

ALFRED CORTOT

STUDY II

(Op. 25)

Fr. CHOPIN

Presto

PIANO

p

molto legato

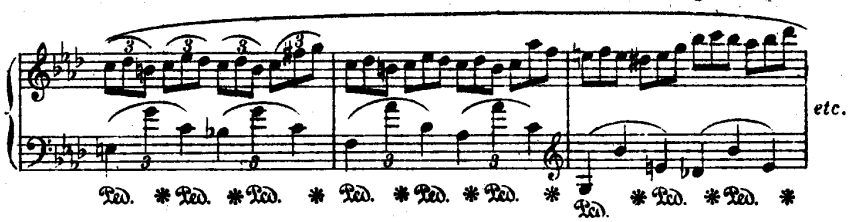
(una corda)

Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻ Ped. ✻

The original editions indicate, at the beginning of every bar, the forte pedal as having to be used during the whole bar, except when the harmony changes.

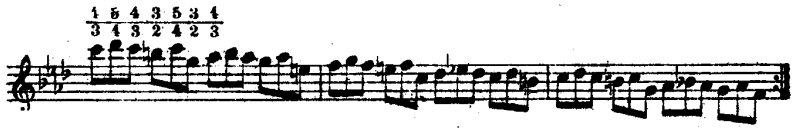
Taking into consideration the sonority of modern instruments, we have thought we might make free to break this pedal part by eventual interruptions.

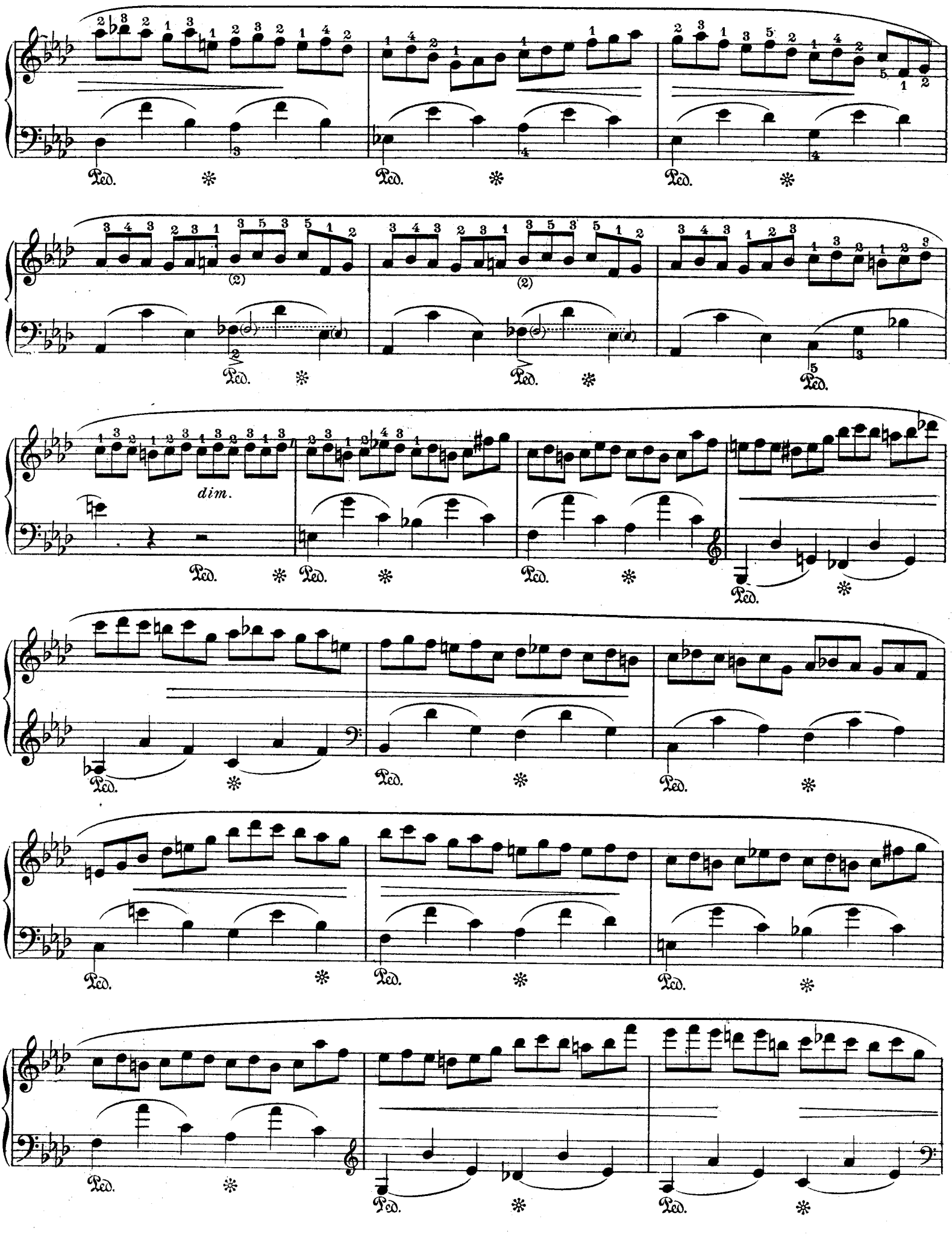
In case a sufficient virtuosity of the foot should have been gained, we recommend the following changes :

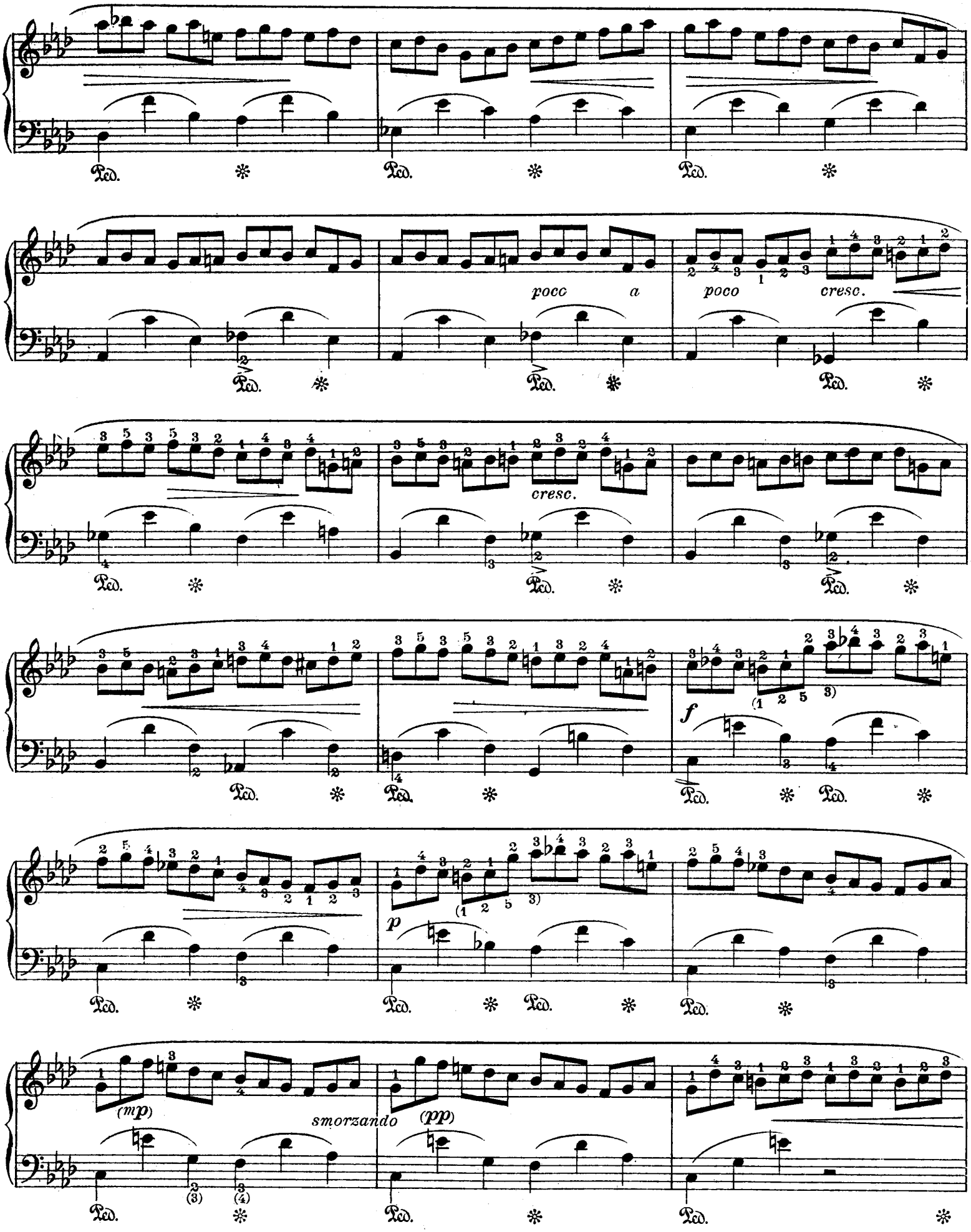


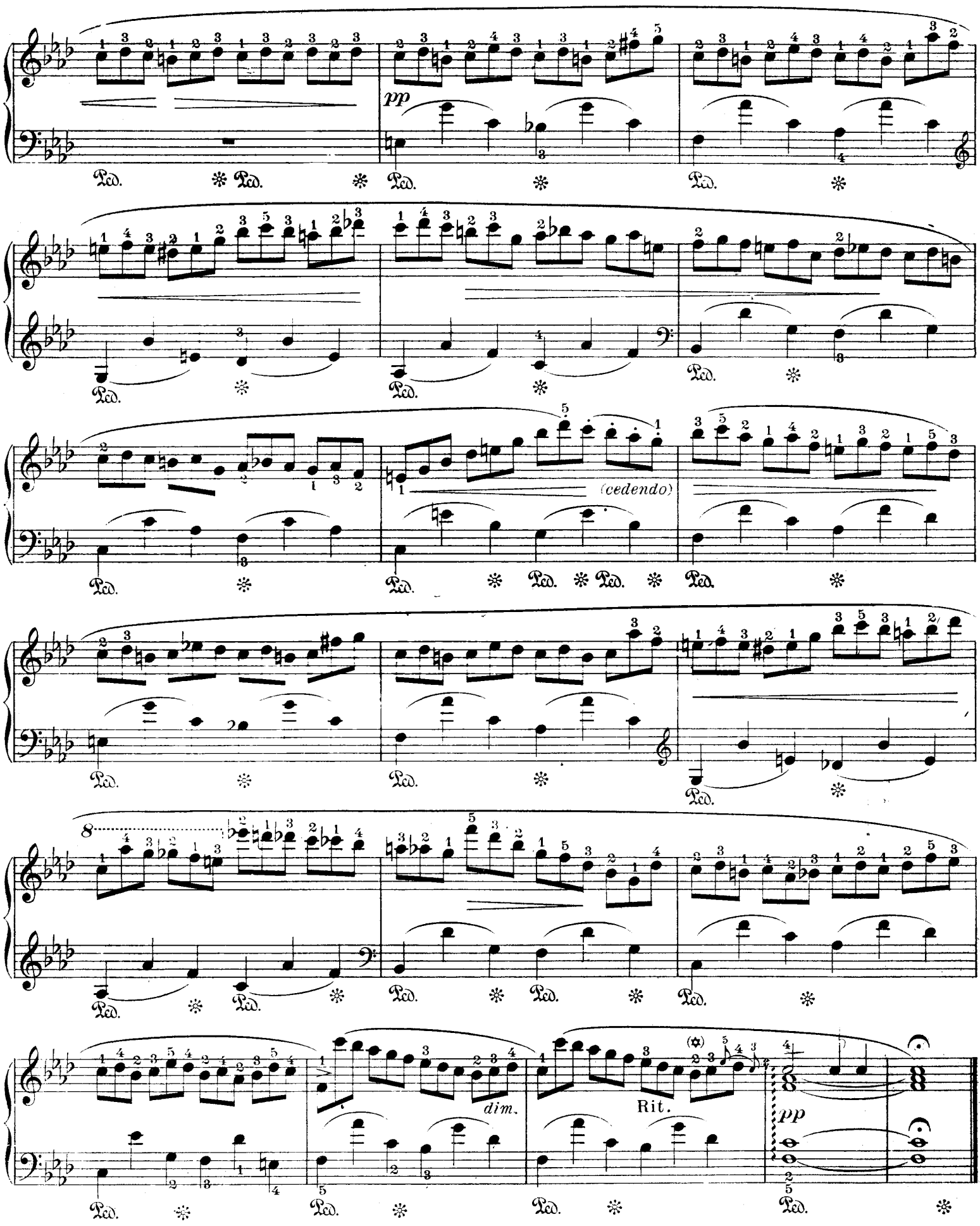
that, beside giving the harmony the caracter of impalpability well fitted for the interpretation of this study, will constitute an excellent rhythmic means of training.

(✲) Practise also with the following fingers : :




Ped.
(2)
dim.


Ped.
poco a
poco cresc.
cresc.
f
p
(mp)
smorzando
(pp)



(✡) exécution: rit.