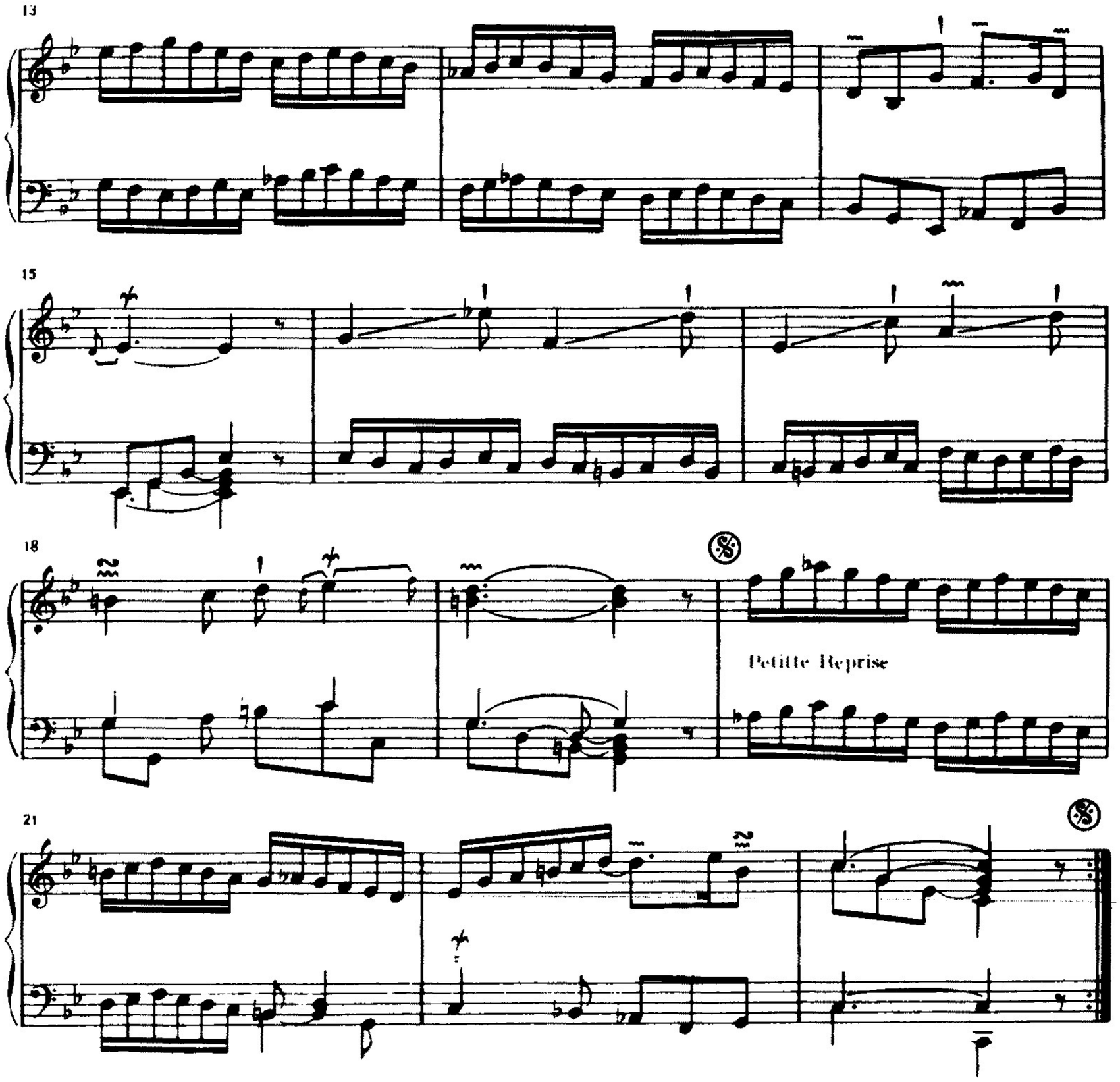
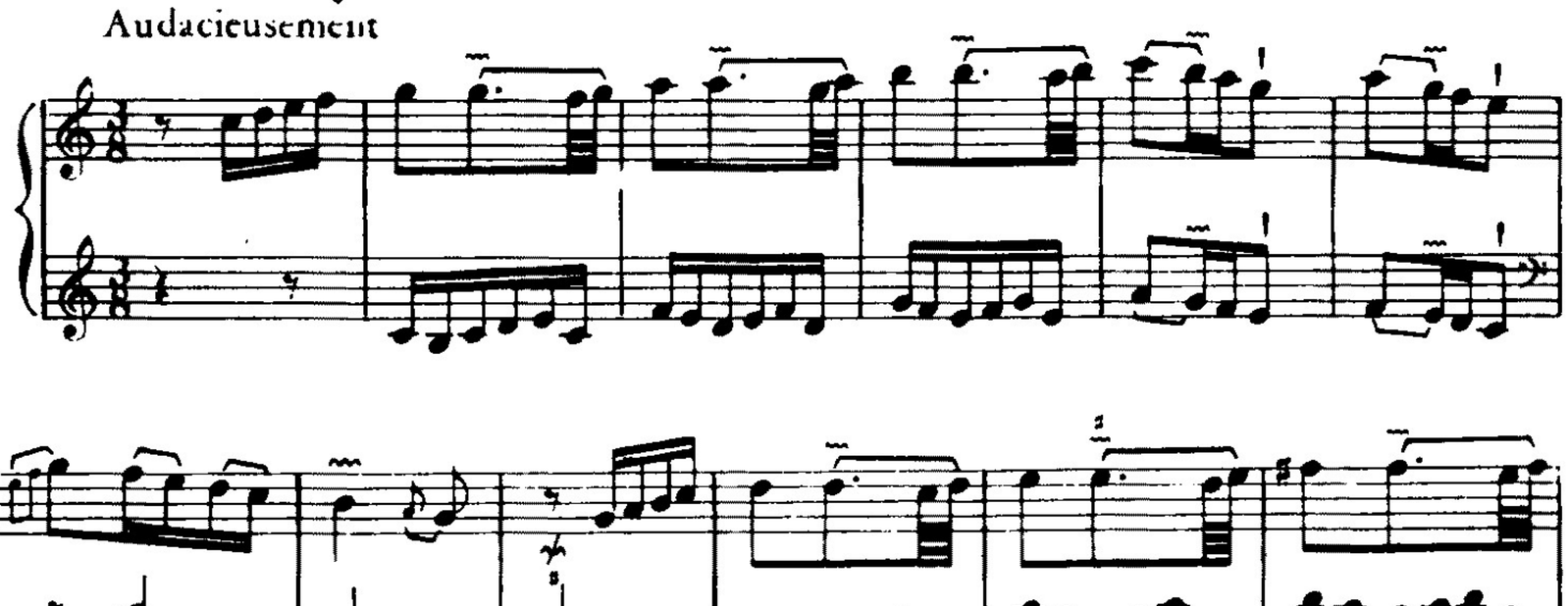


d) *La Muse victorieuse* CD 5 CD 2

24 34



13

19

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31 1. 2. REPRISE

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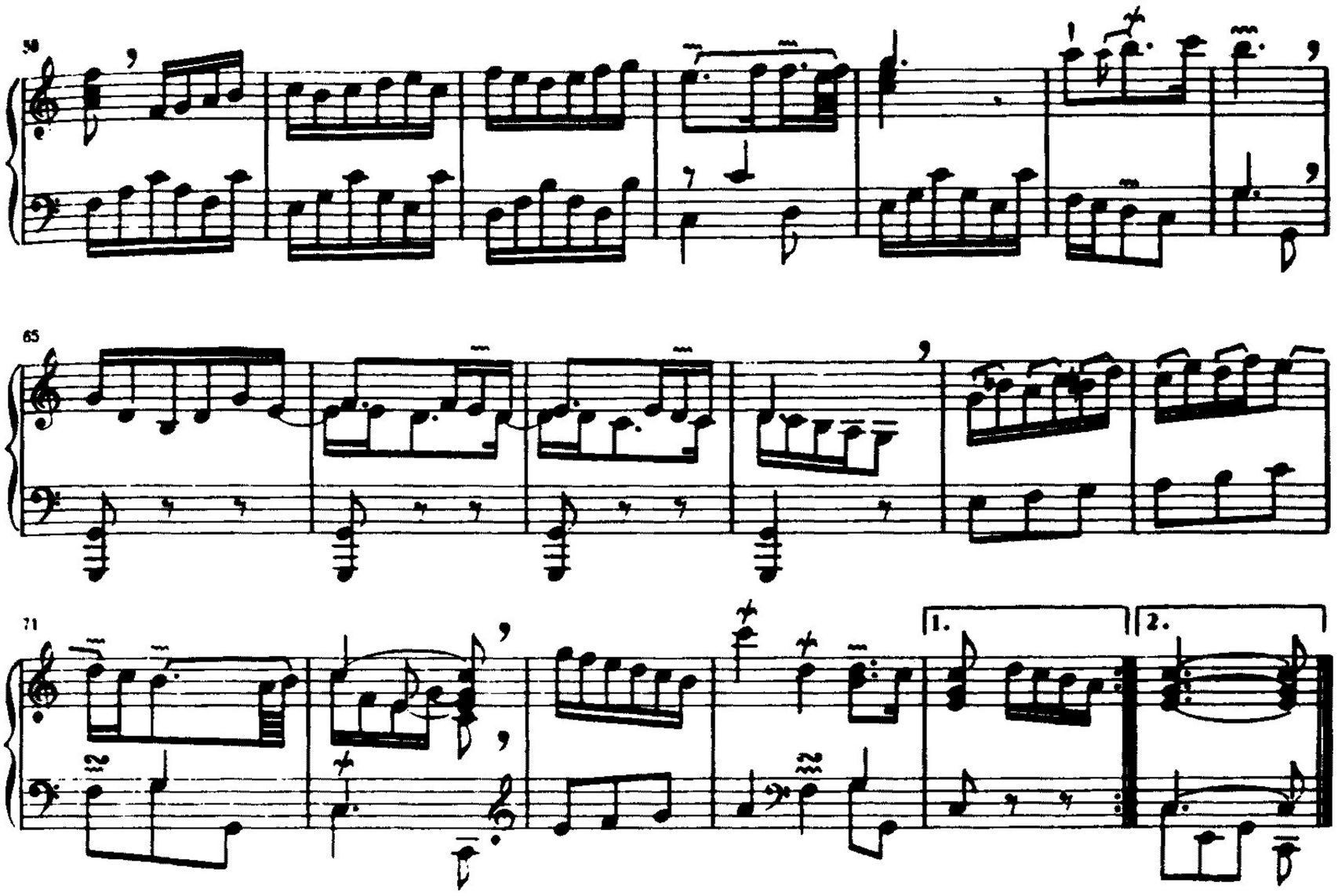

e) *Les Ombres errantes* CD 5

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REPRISE

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François Couperin published twenty-seven *ordres*, or groups of pieces, for harpsichord between 1713 and 1730. They were intended for amateurs to amuse themselves at the harpsichord. This set, the twenty-fifth, appeared in 1730 in the fourth book, along with seven others. The ordres were made up mostly of stylized dances in binary form, like the suites written by German composers, but the dances did not follow any particular sequence. Couperin gave the numbers fanciful and suggestive titles, such as those in this ordre: *La Visionaire* (The Dreamer), *La Misterieuse* (The Mysterious One), *La Monflambert* (a gigue, probably named after Anne Darboulin, who married Monflambert, the king's wine merchant, in 1726), *La Muse victorieuse* (The Victorious Muse), and *Les Ombres errantes* (The Roving Shadows).

La Visionaire, the first movement of this ordre, is a rather whimsical French overture. After reaching the dominant in measure 13, the first half passes into the dominant minor for a moment's meditation. The second half, after a few imitations between the two hands—a passing bow to the obligatory fugue—lapses into an allemande, haunted by memories of the majestic first half.

La Misterieuse, in C major, is a more proper allemande in $\frac{4}{4}$, mainly with steady sixteenth-note motion. It has the typical binary dance form, the first half modulating to the dominant by way of a pedal point on *D* that imitates the sound of a musette, or French bagpipe, and ending in a full cadence on G major. The second section, somewhat longer than the first, touches on some related keys—E minor and A minor. A return to the dominant occurs in the bass through half steps down a fifth from *A* to *D* (measures 17–19), while the upper voices pass through some strained harmonies that may well have suggested the title.

La Monflambert is a gigue in $\frac{6}{8}$ and, like the final piece of the ordre, in minor. It was probably a favorite of the person after whom it was named. *La Monflambert* consists entirely of four-measure phrases. After the second part is played for the second time, the last four bars are repeated as a coda.

La Muse victorieuse displays a formal device characteristic of binary movements of Couperin and, later, Domenico Scarlatti: the last eleven measures of the first half are paralleled in the close of the second half, except that in the former the progression is to the dominant, while in the latter it is from the dominant to the tonic.

Les Ombres errantes may owe its title to the syncopated middle voice, which seems to shadow the top voice erratically, forming chains of suspensions, some of which resolve upward. Marked *languissamment*, this piece, as well as *La Misterieuse*, combines restrained emotionalism with controlling harmonic and melodic logic, exhibiting the sentimental elegance so appealing to the courtiers and amateurs of this age.