Sergei RACHMANINOV

PRELUDES

Opus 23 N° 6 E♭ major

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Sergei RACHMANINOV

1873 - 1943

PRELUDES Opus 23 N° 6 E♭ major

The composition of 24 preludes covering all the major and minor keys is a huge challenge and Rachmaninov's contribution was spread over 20 years. As an active and successful stage artist at the piano and on the podium, time for composing was no doubt limited, unlike Debussy who completed his 24 Preludes in less than 6 months.

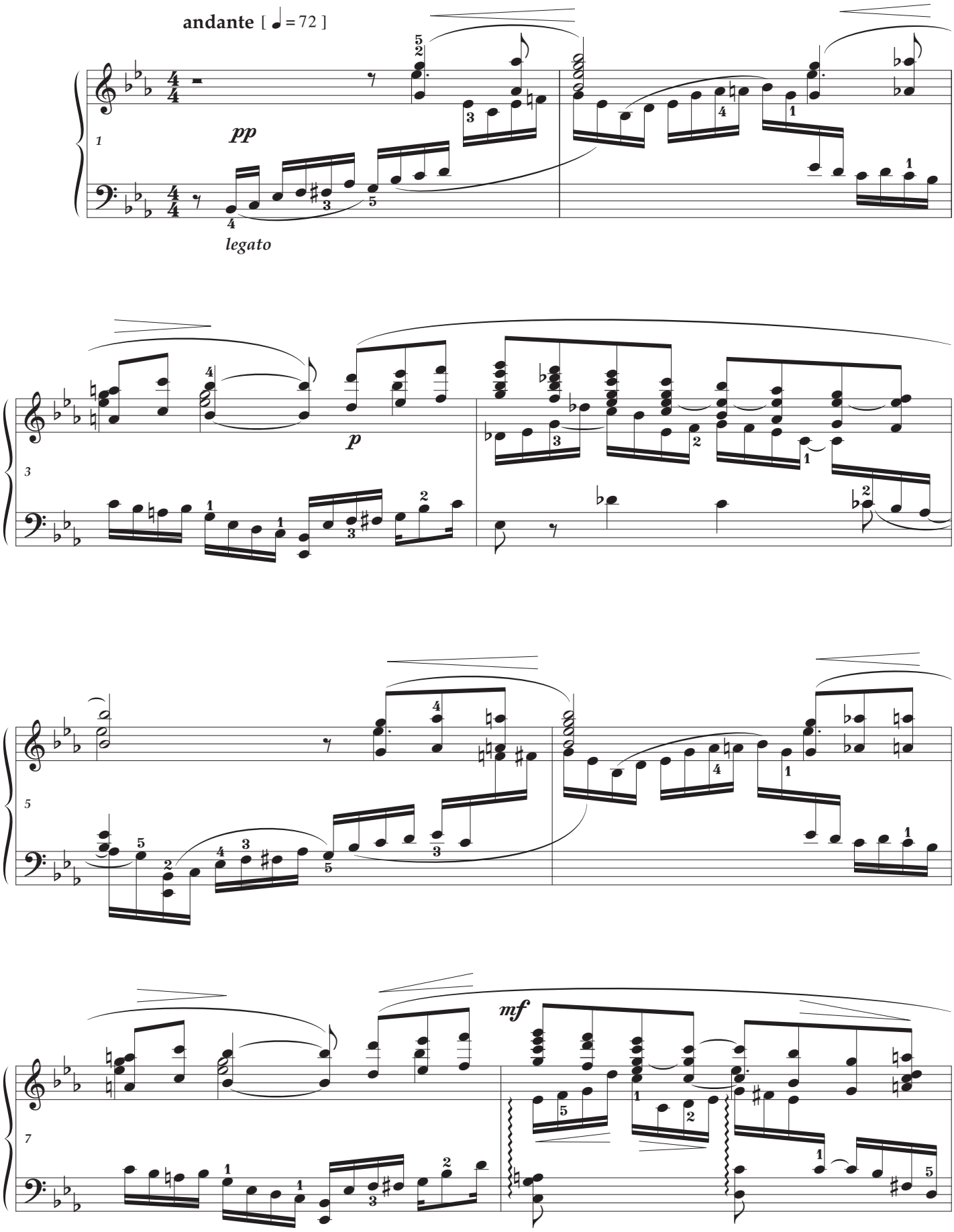
The ten works which comprise opus 23 were created over two years in the early 1900s whilst staying at the Hotel America in Moscow. Dedicated to his mentor and colleague Alexander Siloti, Rachmaninov believed that these works were far superior to his youthful first prelude, but audiences always clamoured for the "Bells of Moscow", much to his intense irritation.

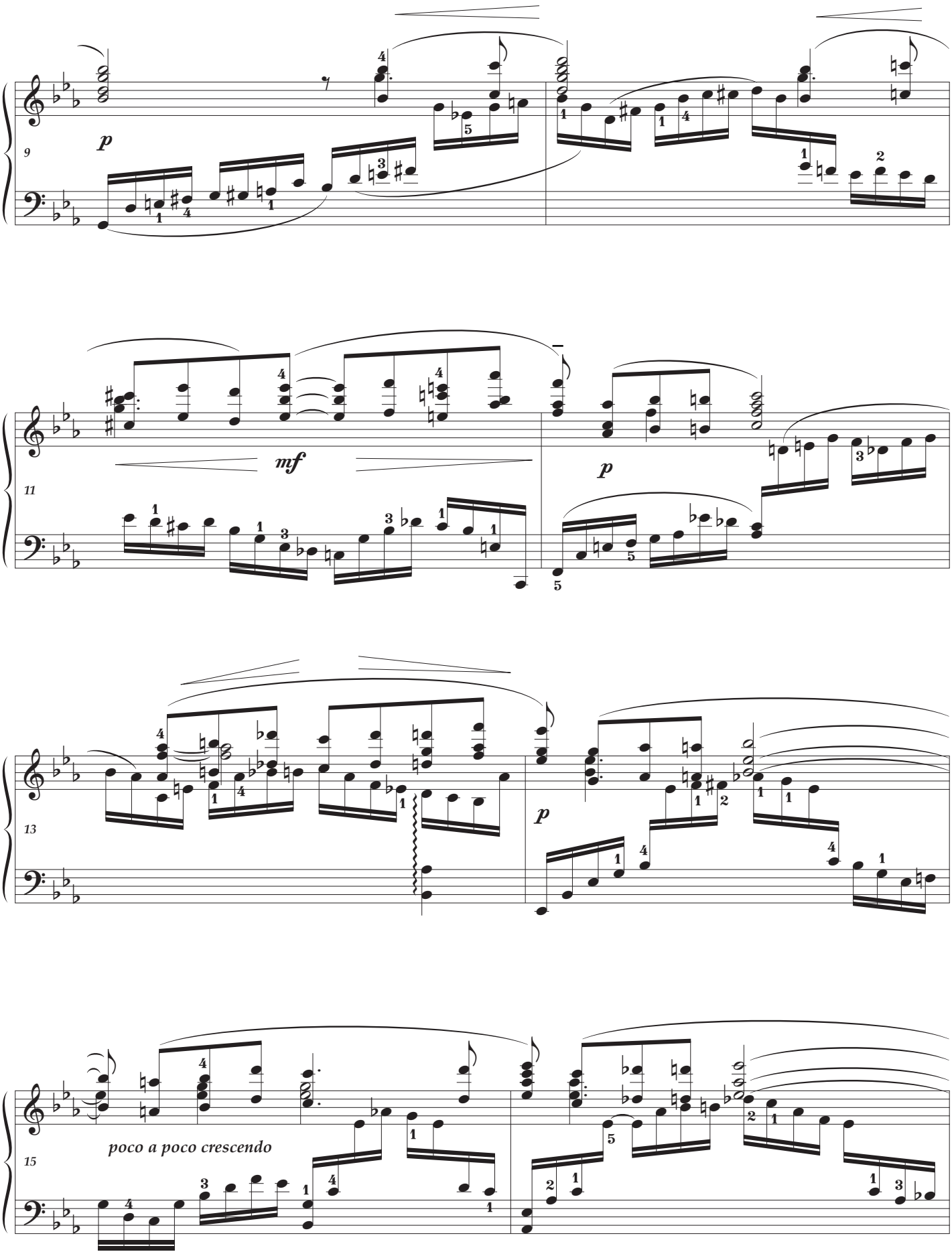
In the style of a nocturne, this prelude has a lyrical melody in octaves and an expressively elegant accompaniment; there is a danger that its intense chromaticism may easily descend into an early Hollywood movie soundtrack, and should therefore be somewhat understated. I love the ecstatic central section and the coda's tranquil intimacy. Combined sostenuto and sourdine pedals can underline effectively the soft E flat pedal point **(28 - 34)**.

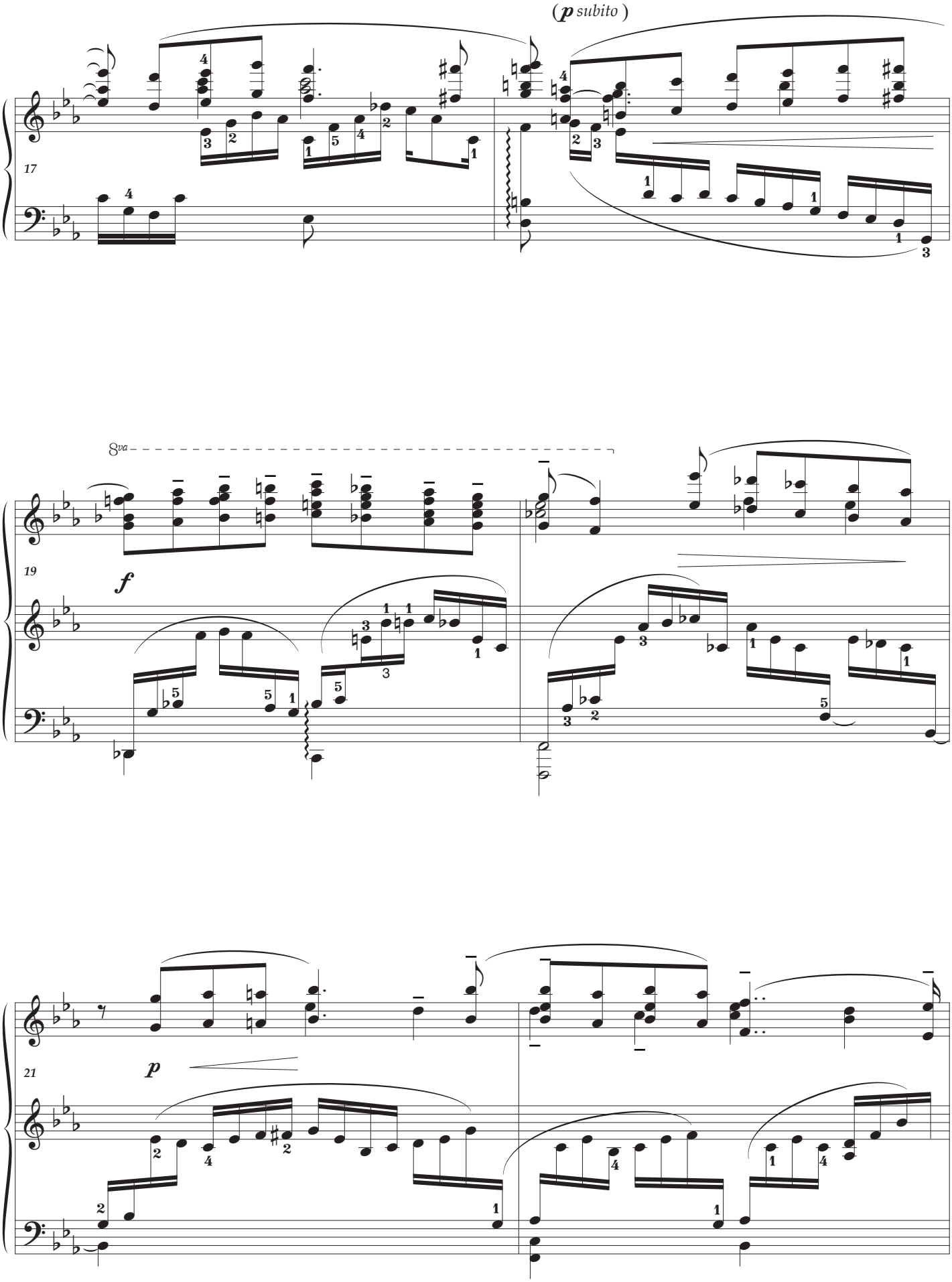
Given that the composer was born in 1873, an age of great artistic individuality, it is not surprising that he typically performed without wholly respecting the score. His choice of tempi are quite idiosyncratic and this edition reflects some of the more effective deviations, and the editor's preferences, sometimes indicated with an asterisk*. When the composer makes minor alterations to the text for repetition, they are not included in this edition; their absence is hardly audible and they are particularly awkward to memorise. In addition, some of the phrasing, dynamics and agogic markings have been sometimes modified; a zealous student will need to consult the original Russian publication by Gutheil or Robert Threlfall's Boosey & Hawkes 1992 edition. The bracketed metronome speeds are copied from the original edition. Use of the sostenuto pedal is entirely editorial.

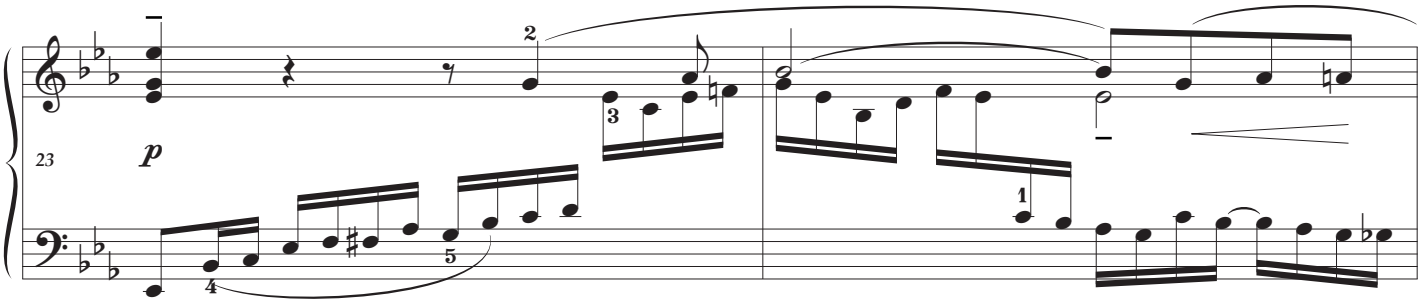
PRELUDE

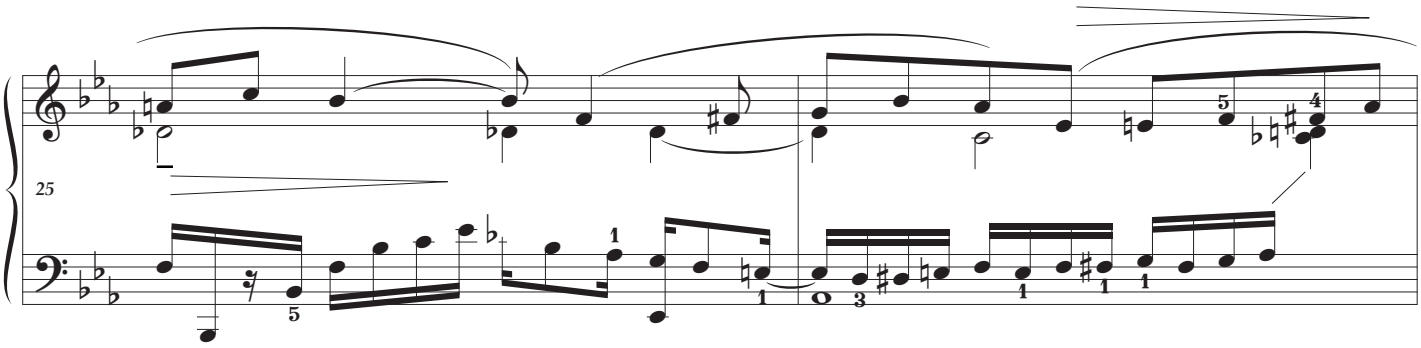
Op 23 Nº 6

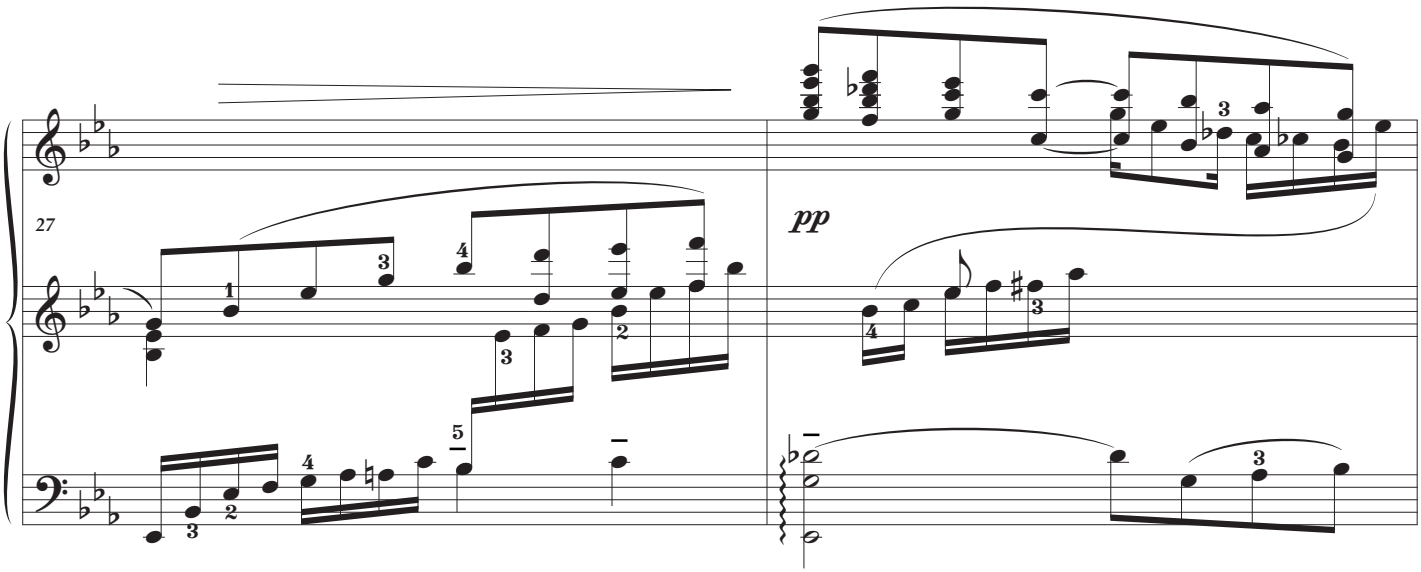



9
p
11
mf
p
13
p
15
poco a poco crescendo

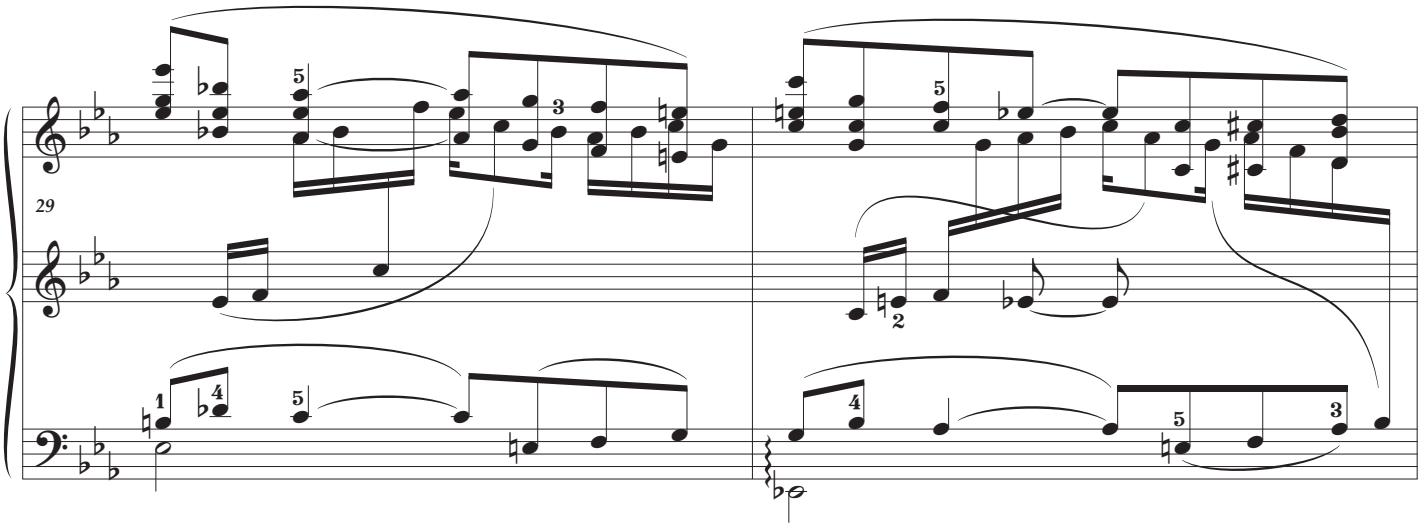

(p subito)
17
8va
19
f
21
p







* *Sost. Ped and sourdine*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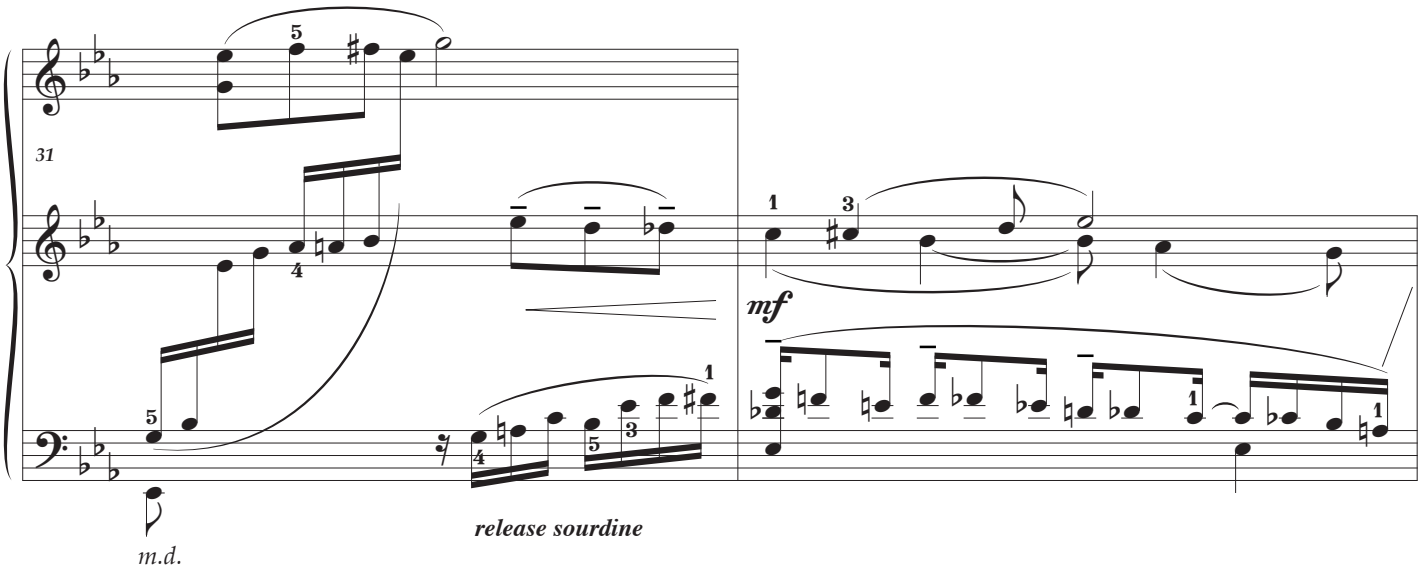
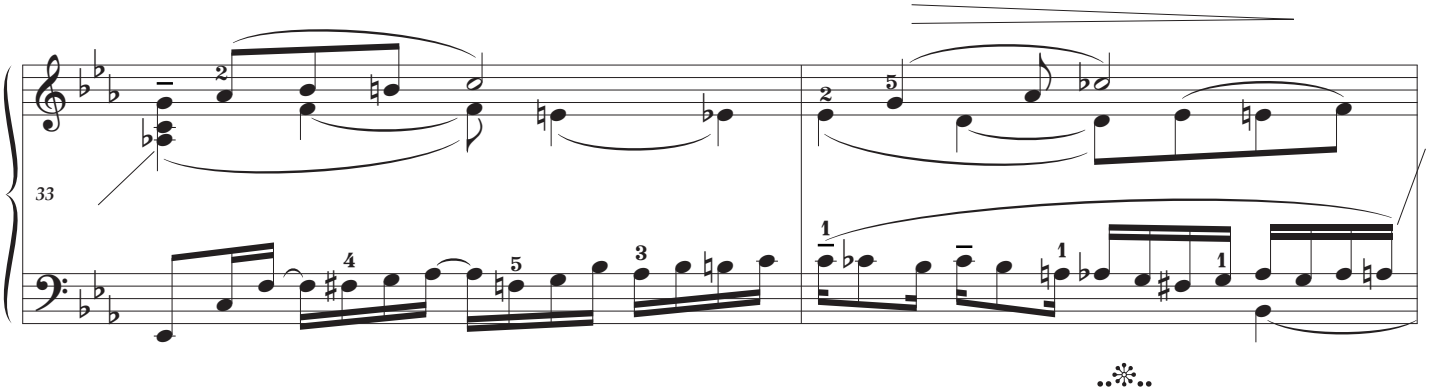

31
mf
m.d.
release sourdine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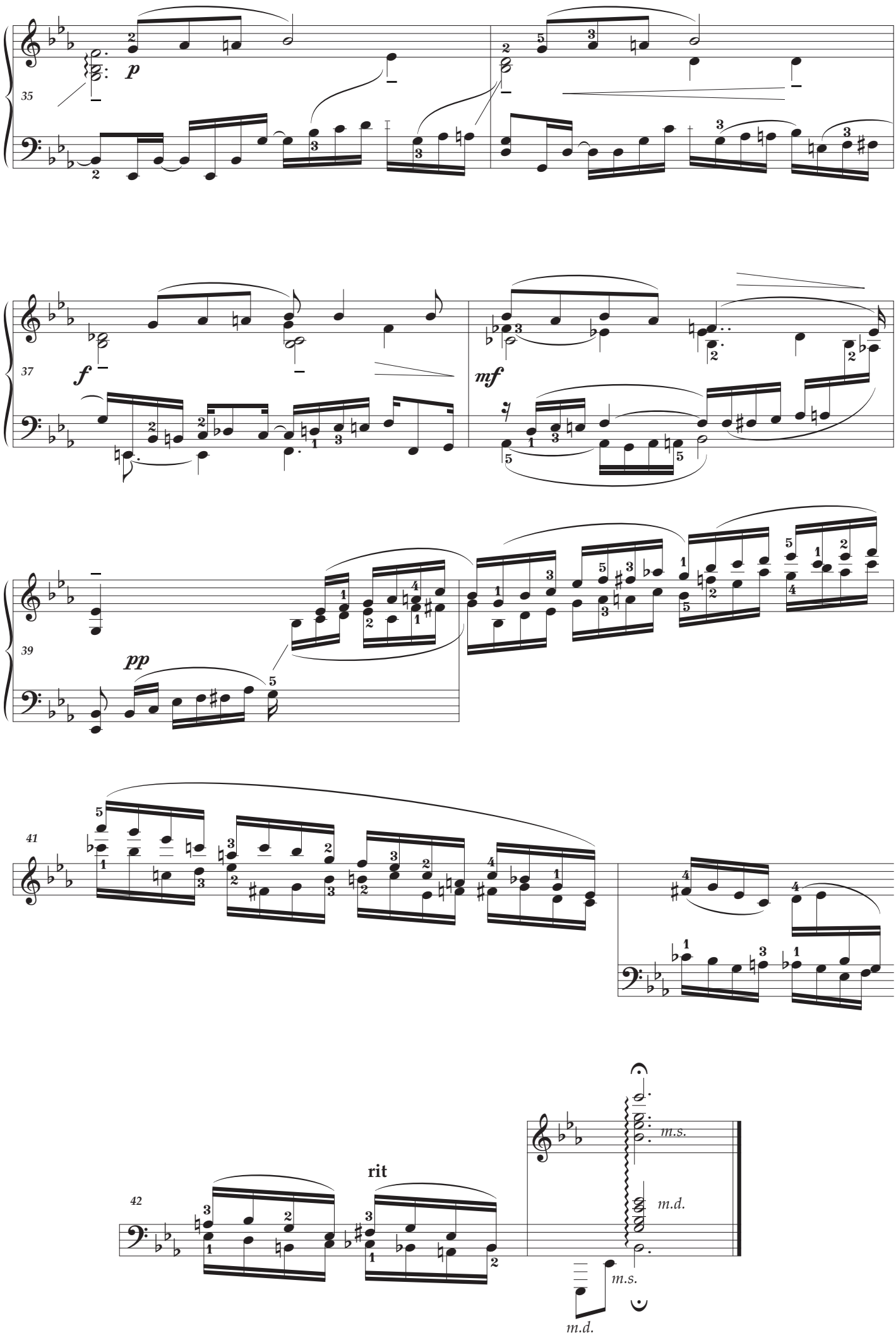
35
p
37
f
mf
39
pp
41
42
rit
m.s.
m.d.
m.s.
m.d.