Sergei RACHMANINOV

PRELUDES

Opus 23 N° 2 B♭ major

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Musical Health Warning : please be aware that these editions are definitely not urtext and should be consulted together with a traditional version. They have been devised purely to help solve musical and technical problems at the piano.

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Sergei RACHMANINOV

1873 - 1943

PRELUDES Opus 23 N° 2 B♭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.

Written in 1903, this thundering prelude in B flat has become a dynamic virtuoso showpiece, Rachmaninov giving its first performance in Moscow that same year. A magnificent example of the composer's skill in writing for the piano, where, in the central section, the triumphant right-hand theme is transformed into an accompaniment to the left, a descant for one of his most beautiful tenor melodies.

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 is quite idiosyncratic and this edition reflects some of the more effective deviations, and the editor's preferences, sometimes indicated with an asterisk*. 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.

Metronome bracketed tempo from the original edition; perhaps 74 is more realistic.

21 & **25** Editorial silent repetition and pedal change at 3rd beat. Modification of rhythm.

27-29 modification of time signatures

31 E♮ added

34-35 modification to avoid repeated C

53 editorial tie

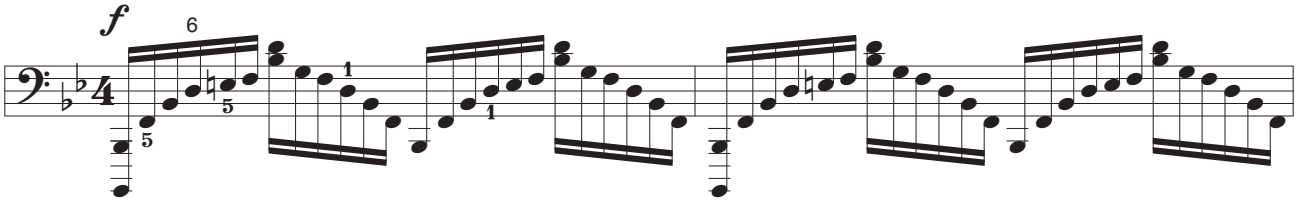
PRELUDE

Op 23 Nº 2

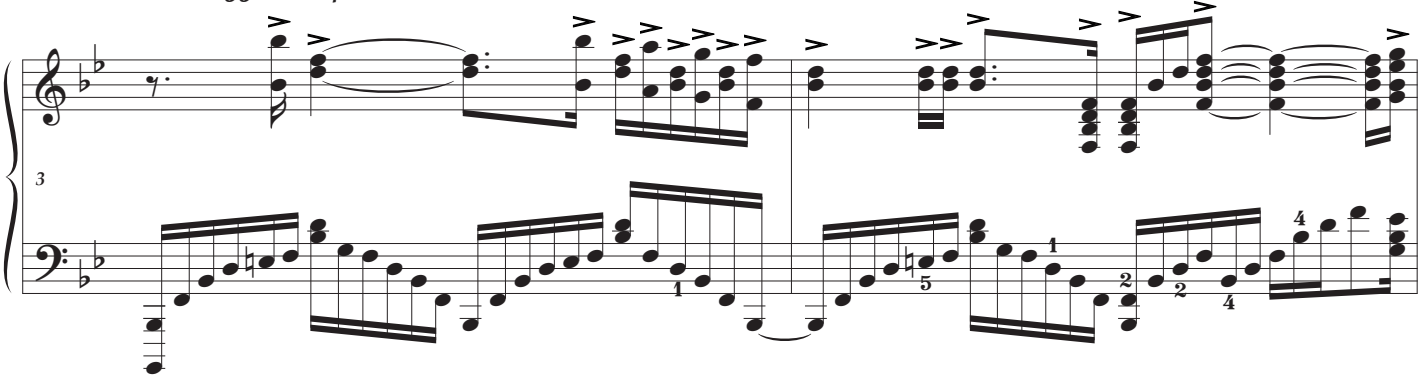
*

maestoso [♩ = 80]

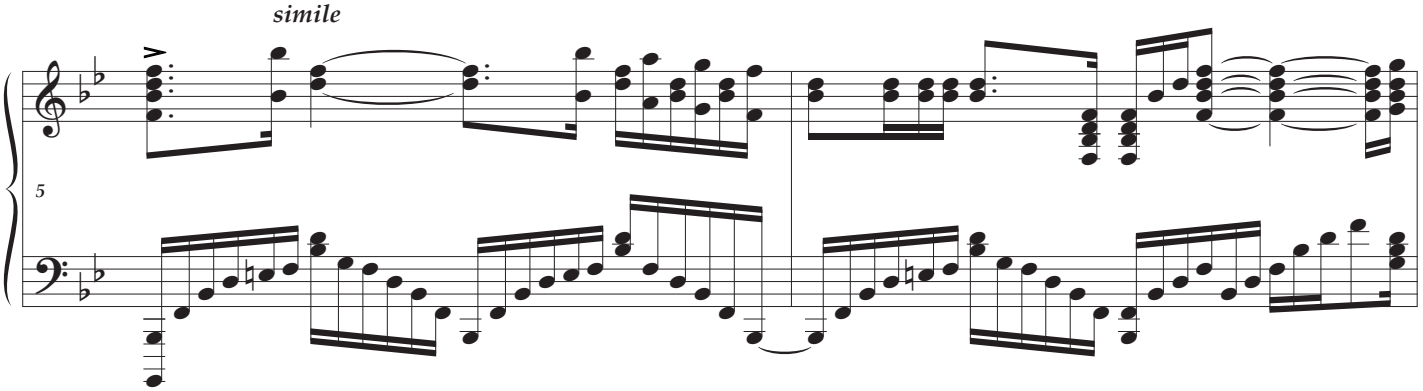
f

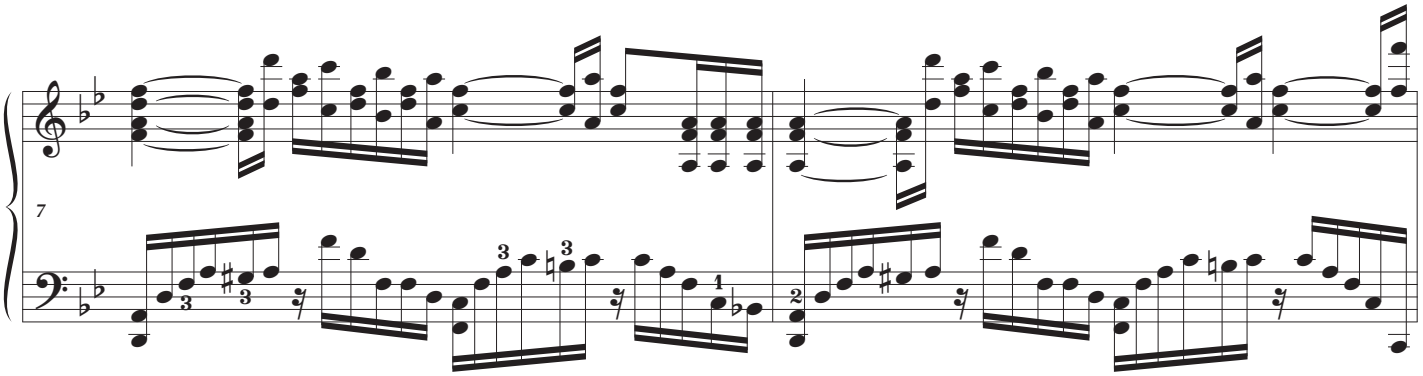


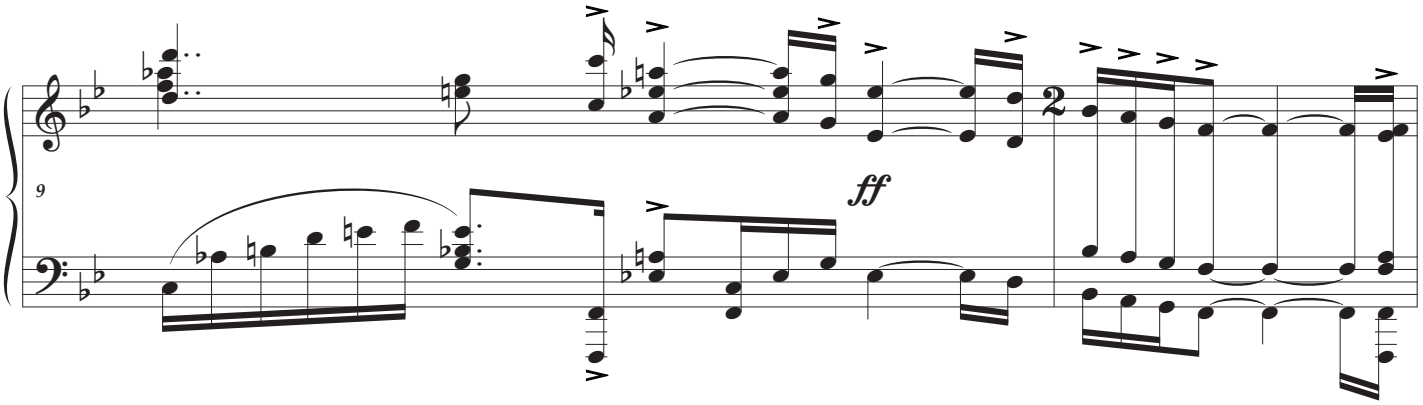
ff *sempre marcato*

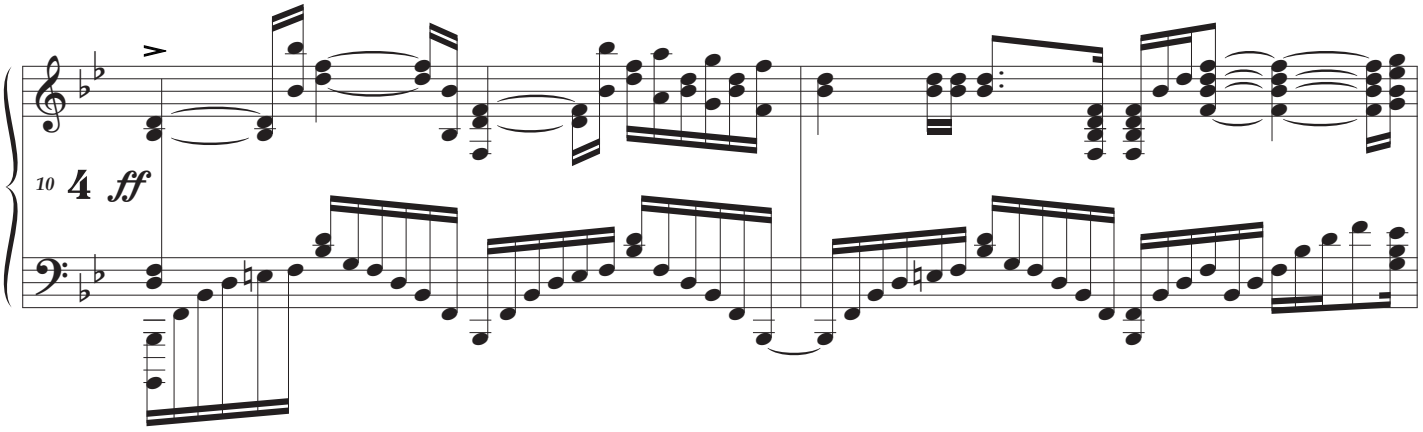


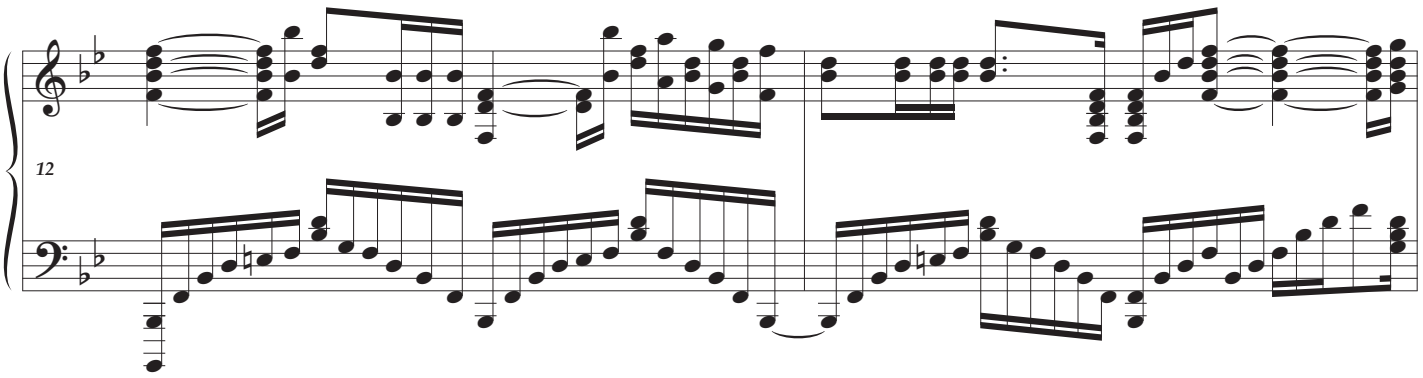
simile



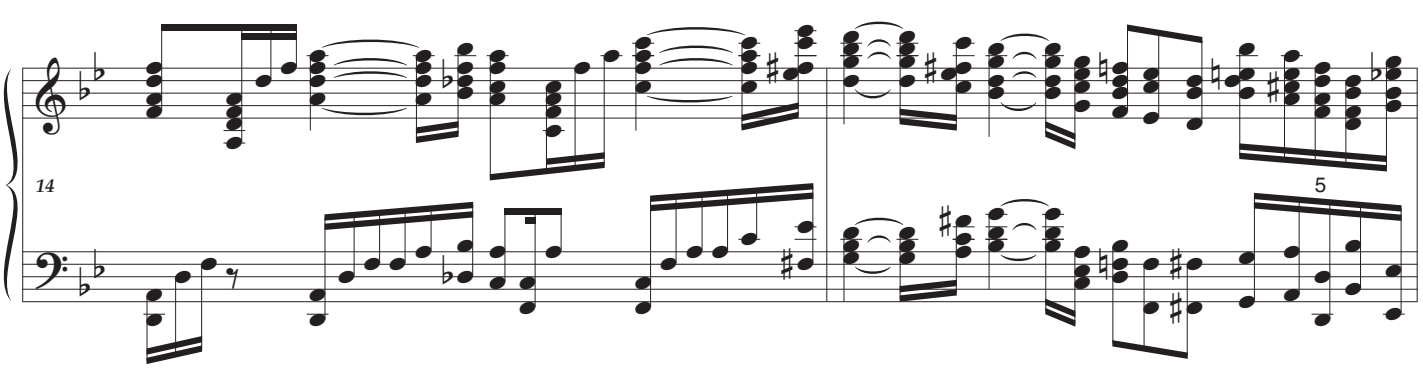


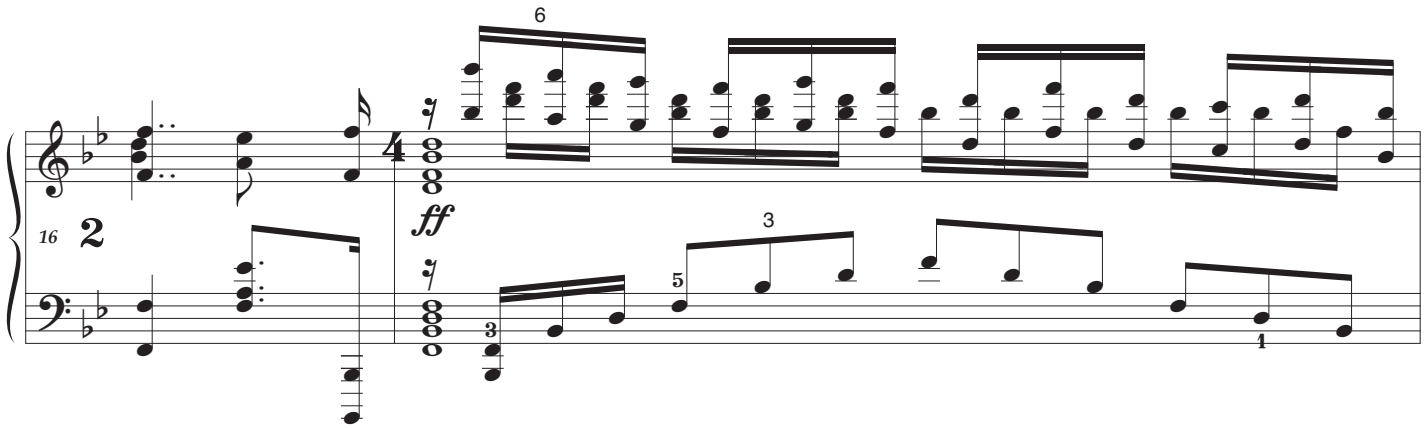






sempre marcato

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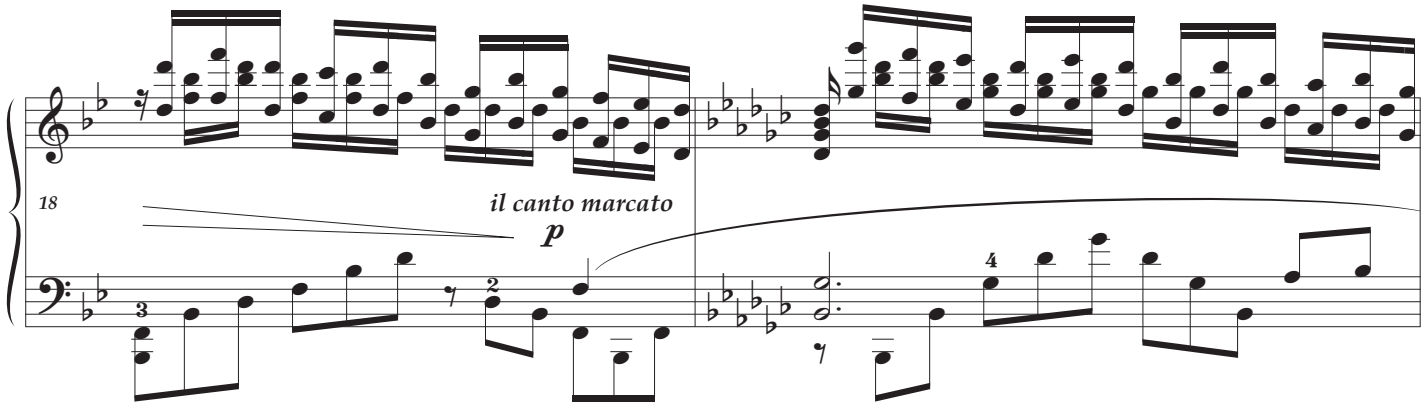
2
4
ff
6
3
5
3
1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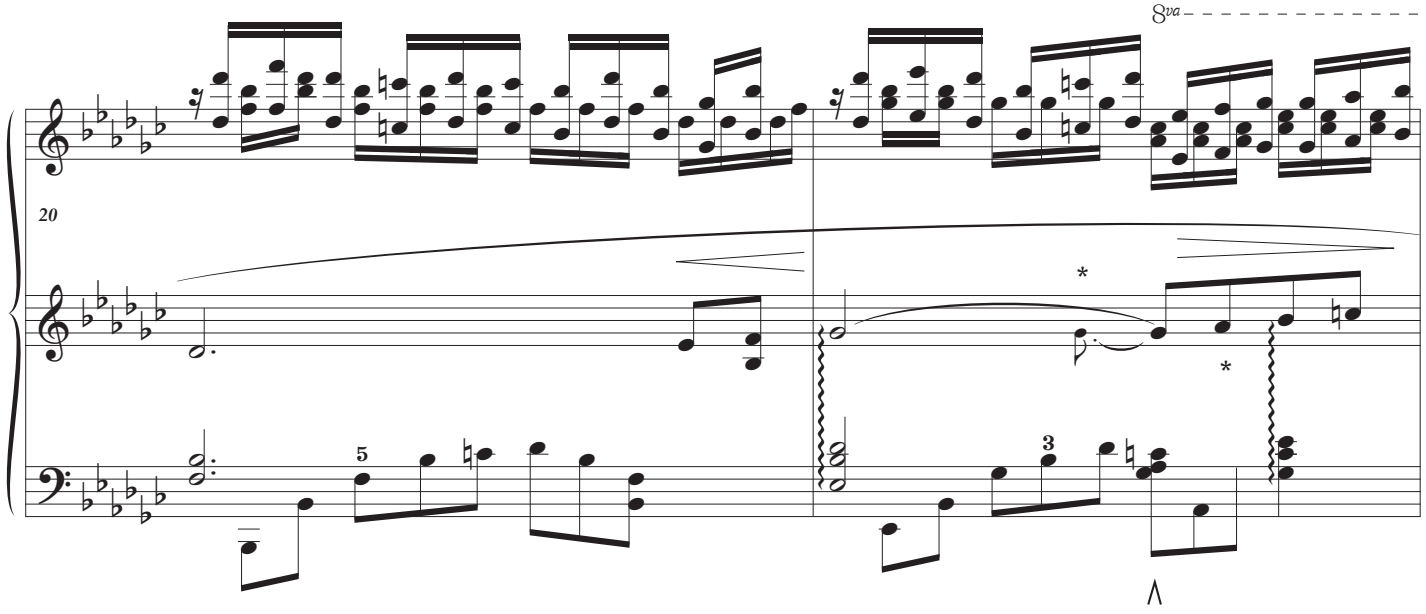
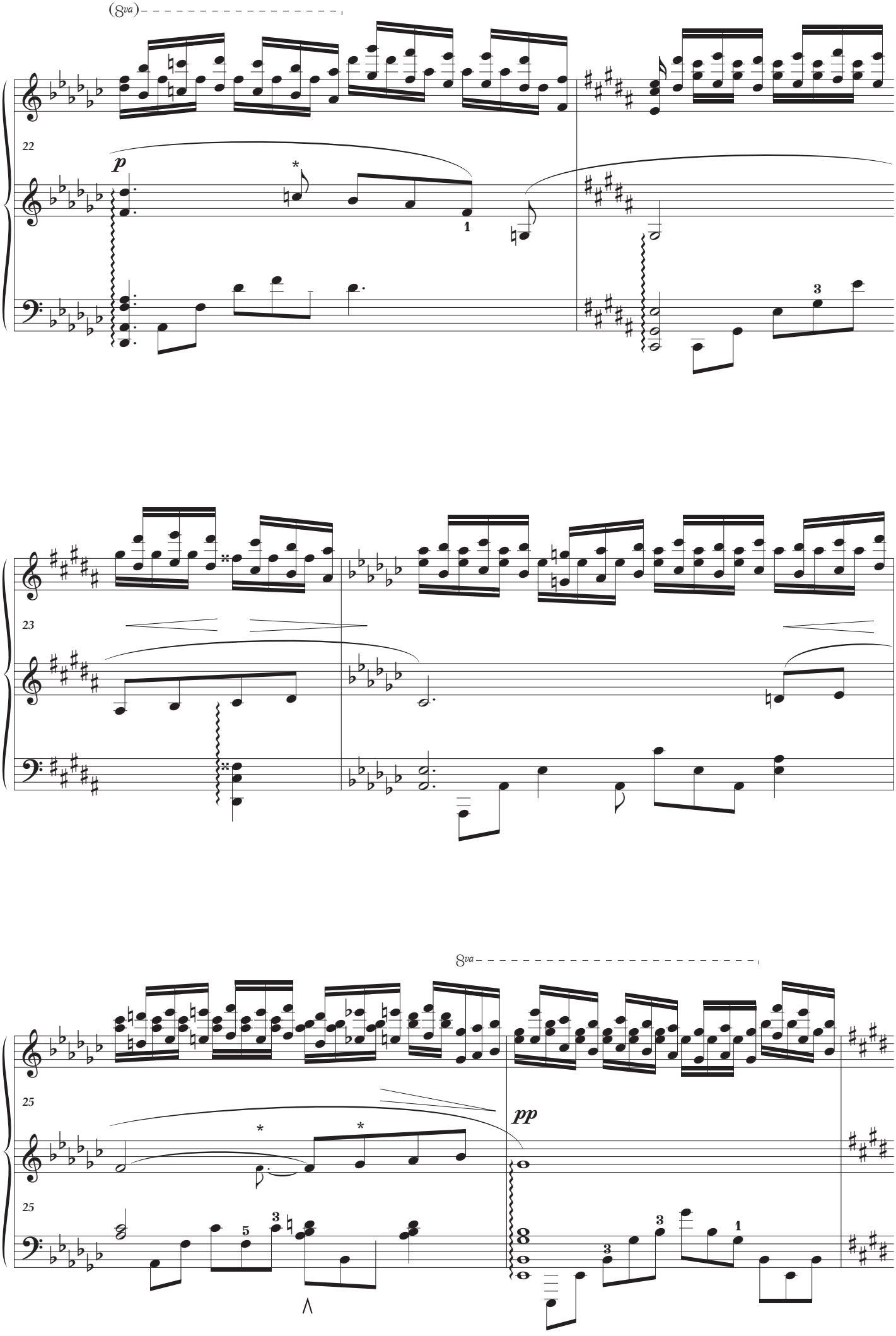
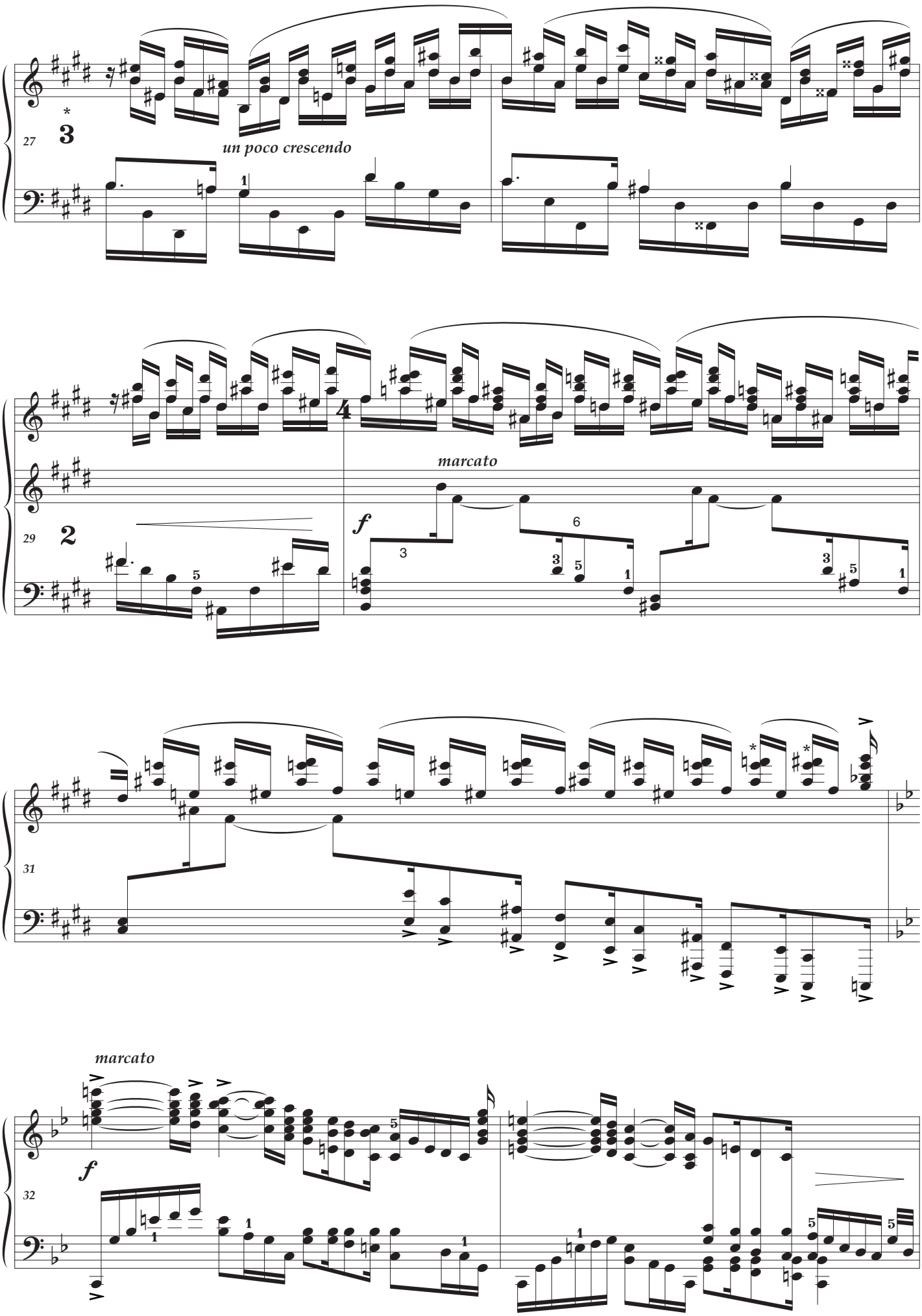
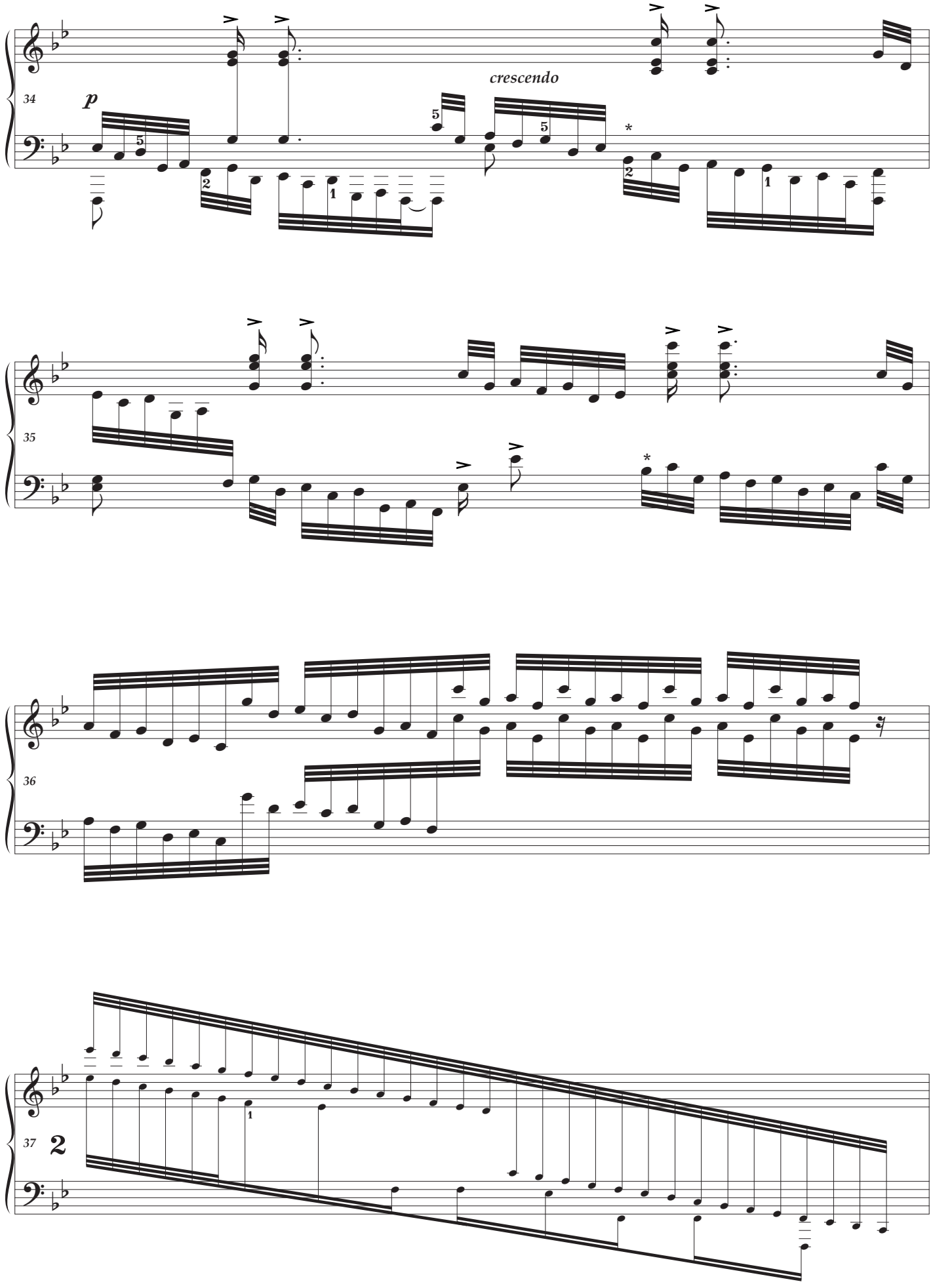
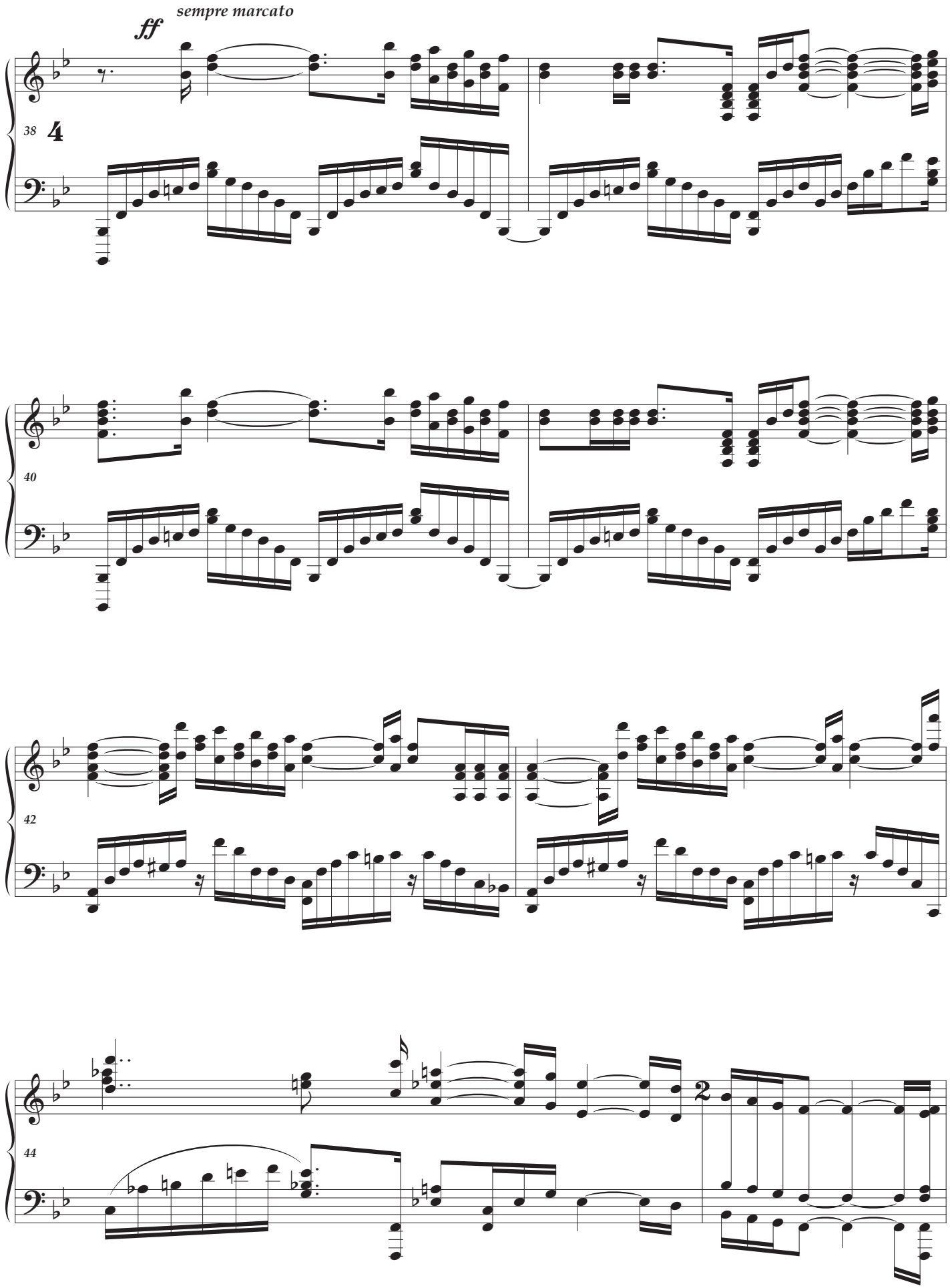
il canto marcato
p
3
2
4

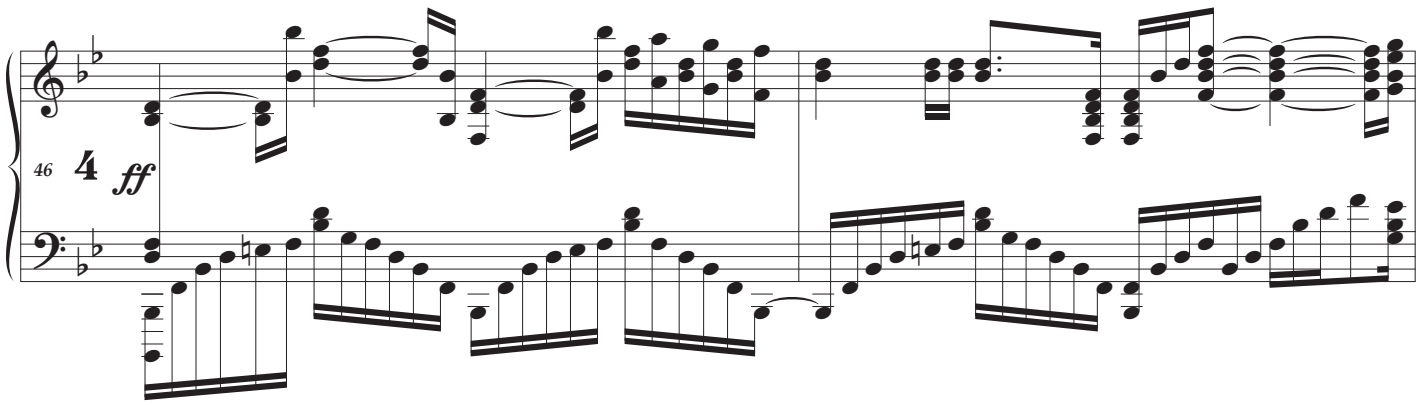

8va
20
5
3
*
*

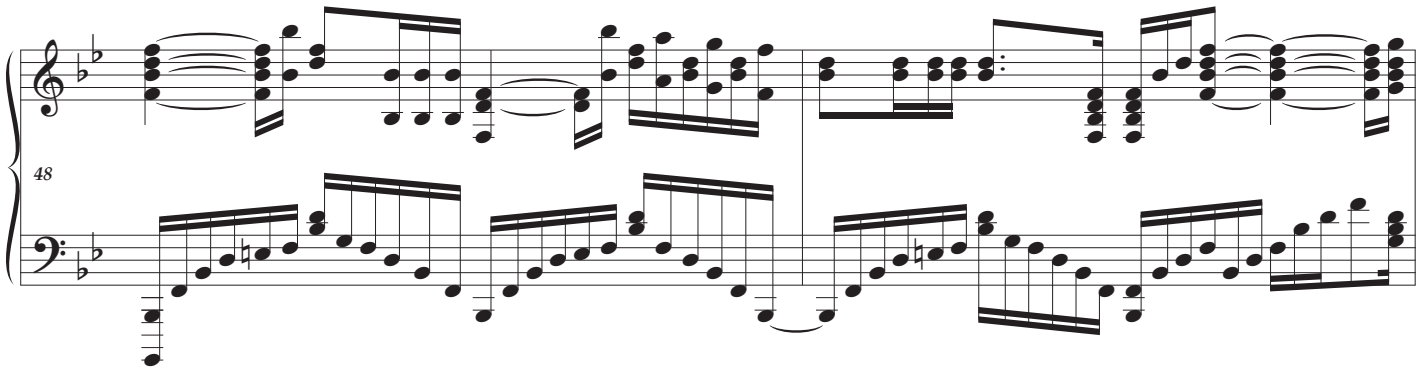

(8va)
22
p
23
8va
25
pp
25


27
un poco crescendo
29
marcato
f
31
32
marcato
f


34
p
crescendo
35
36
37
2


ff
sempre marcato
38
4
40
42
44
2


46
4
ff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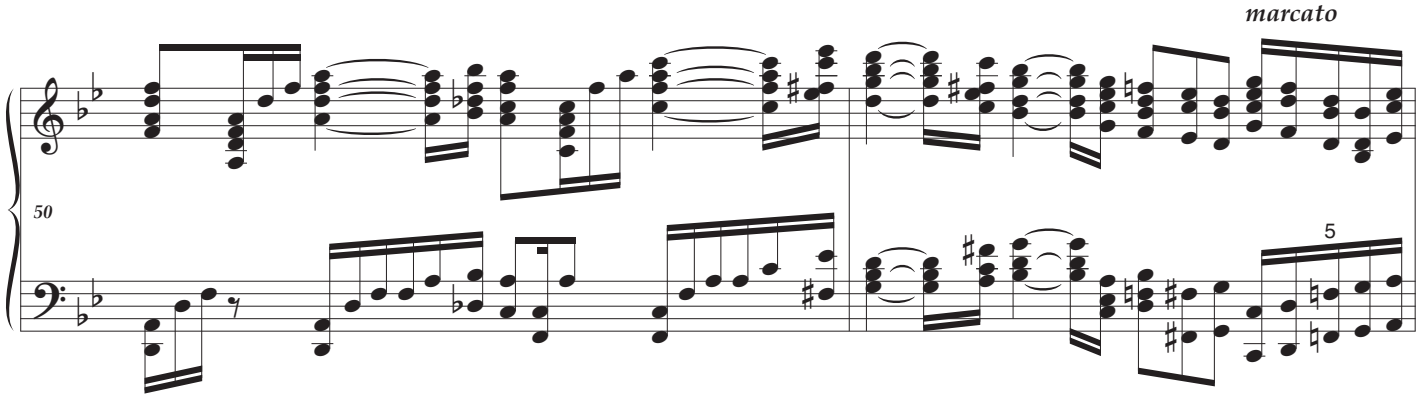
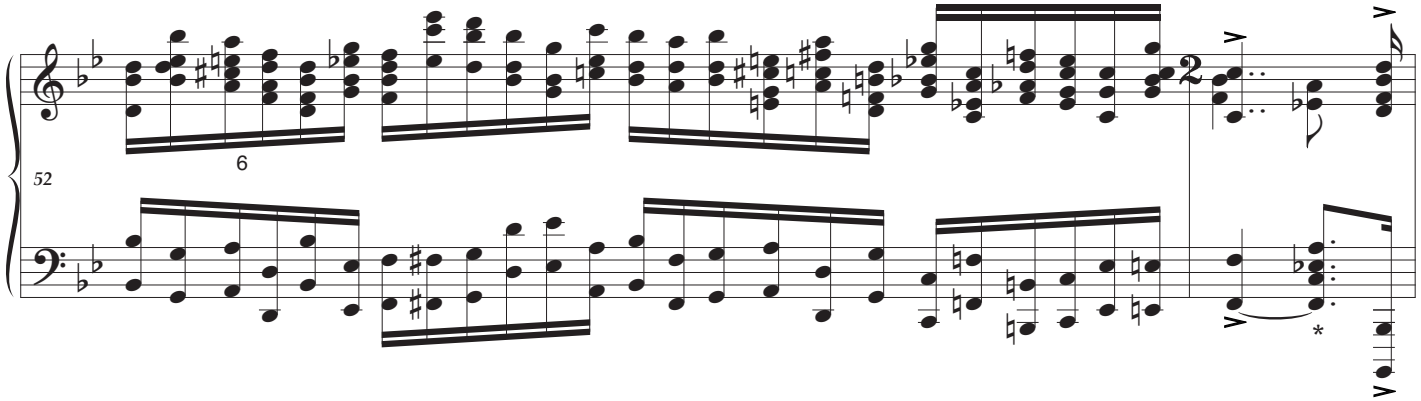

marcato
50
5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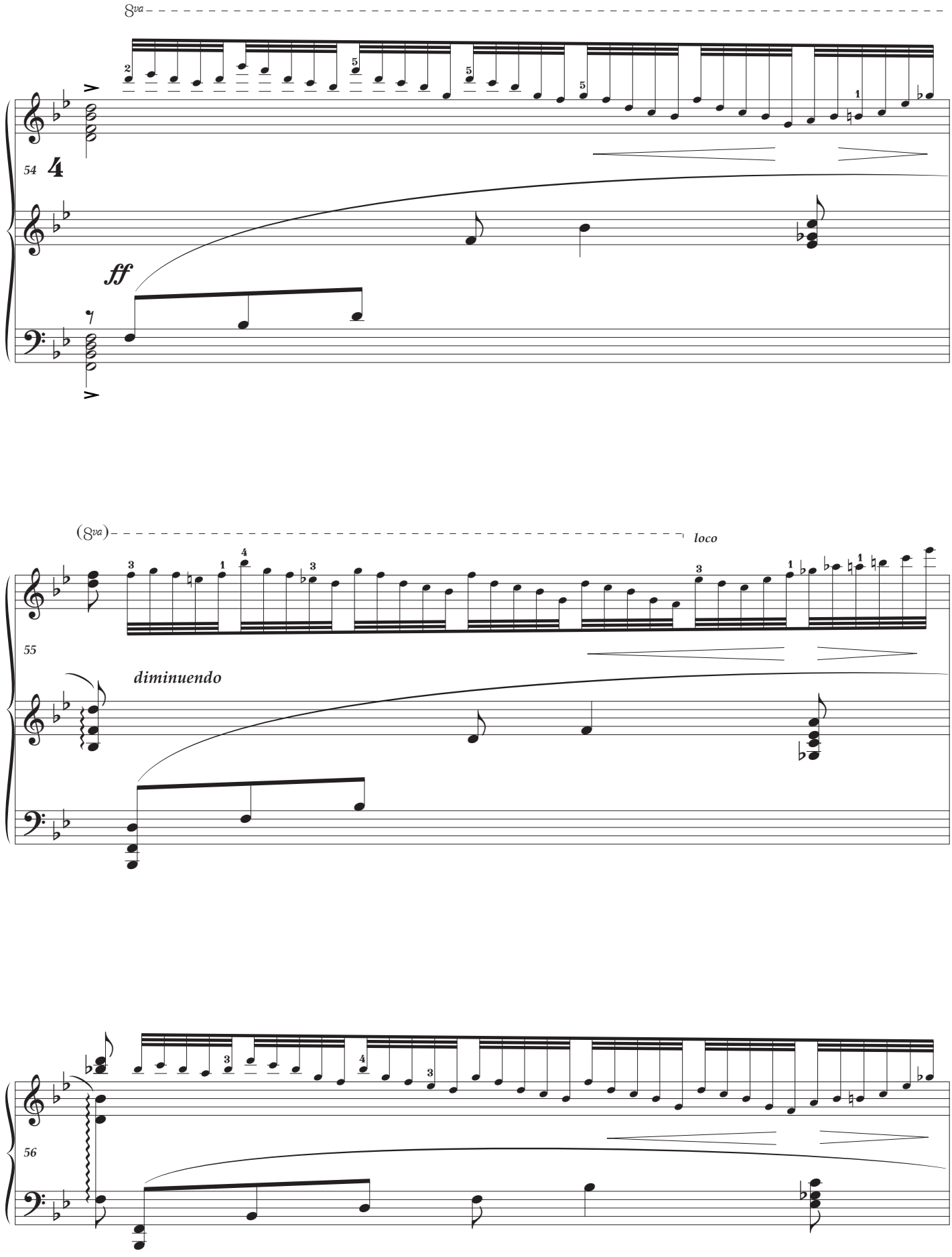
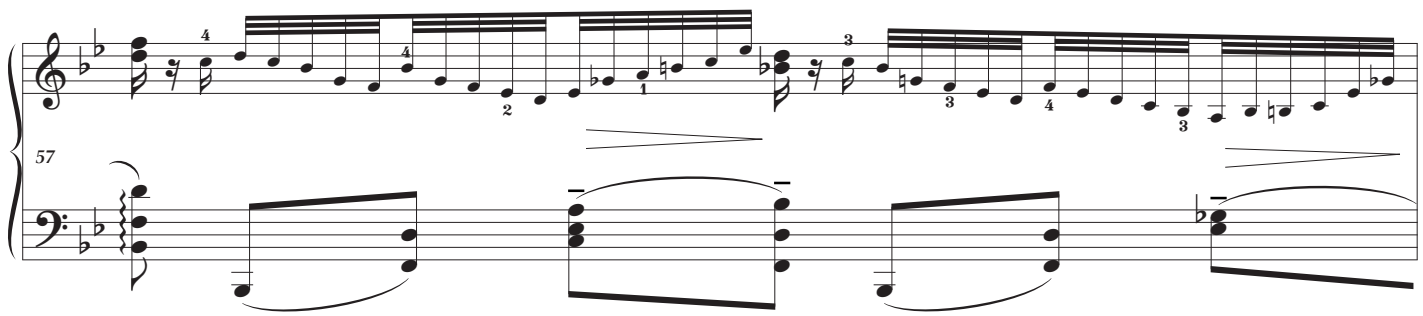

8va
54
4
ff
(8va)
loco
55
diminuendo
56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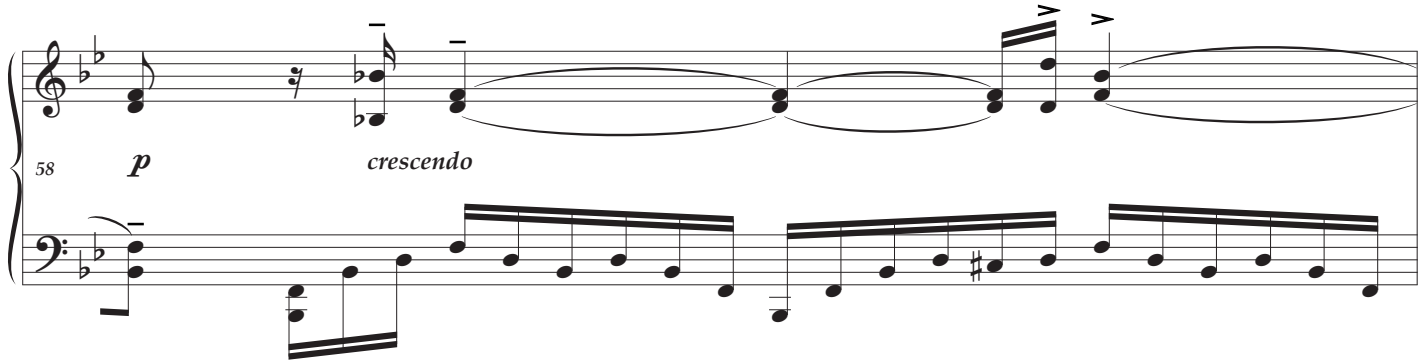
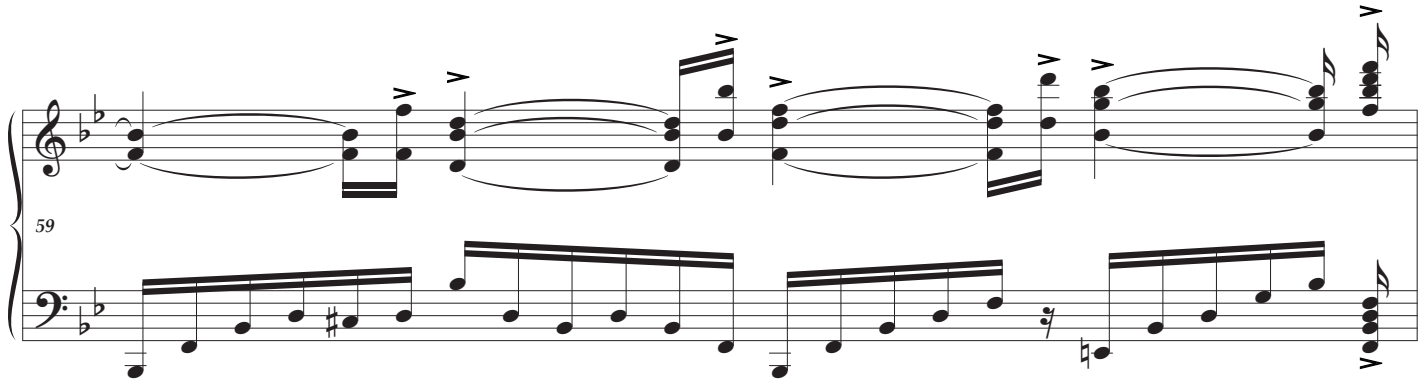

58
p
crescendo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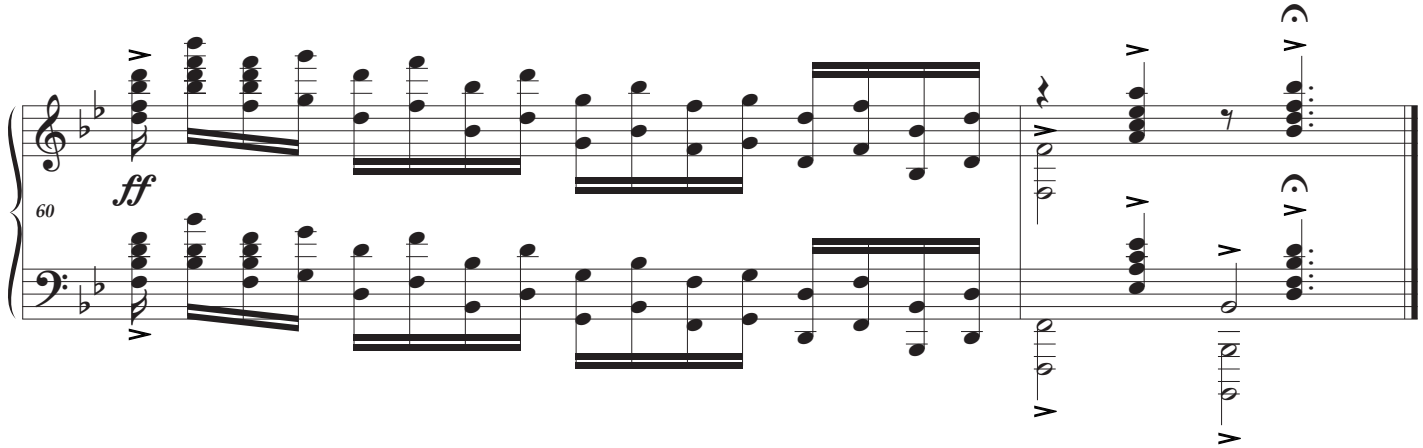
60
ff

RACHMANINOV

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