Sergei RACHMANINOV

PRELUDES

Opus 23 N° 10 G♭ 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° 10 G♭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.

Siloti & Rachmaninov

With a palette reminiscent of Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov closes the opus 23 preludes with a lyrical nocturne. Moving between solo, duet and trio, we encounter Bach-like problems of counterpoint whilst projecting long and delicate melodies, a challenge which should not be underestimated. At **44-53** the final reflective utterance over the tonic pedal point is divinely inspired.

This final prelude, sharing the same tonic as the first, is relatively brief, its brevity underlining a statement made by the composer some thirty years later, in December 1941, when he gave a pertinent interview to a music magazine named *The Etude*: "When composing, I find it of great help to have in mind a book just recently read, or a beautiful picture, or a poem. Sometimes a definite story is kept in mind, which I try to convert into sound without disclosing the source of my inspiration. I find that musical ideas come to me more easily when I have a definite non-musical subject to describe. This is particularly true in writing a shorter piece for the piano. A small piece can become as lasting a masterpiece as a large work. The artist learns, after long experience, that it is more difficult to be simple than to be complicated."

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 at **40** and **58** this edition includes some of the more effective deviations. 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.

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metronome bracketed tempo from the original edition

12 & **16** editorial acciaccatura

27-28 modification of time signature

39-41 modification of time signature

40 logical repetition of B flat according to the composer's recording

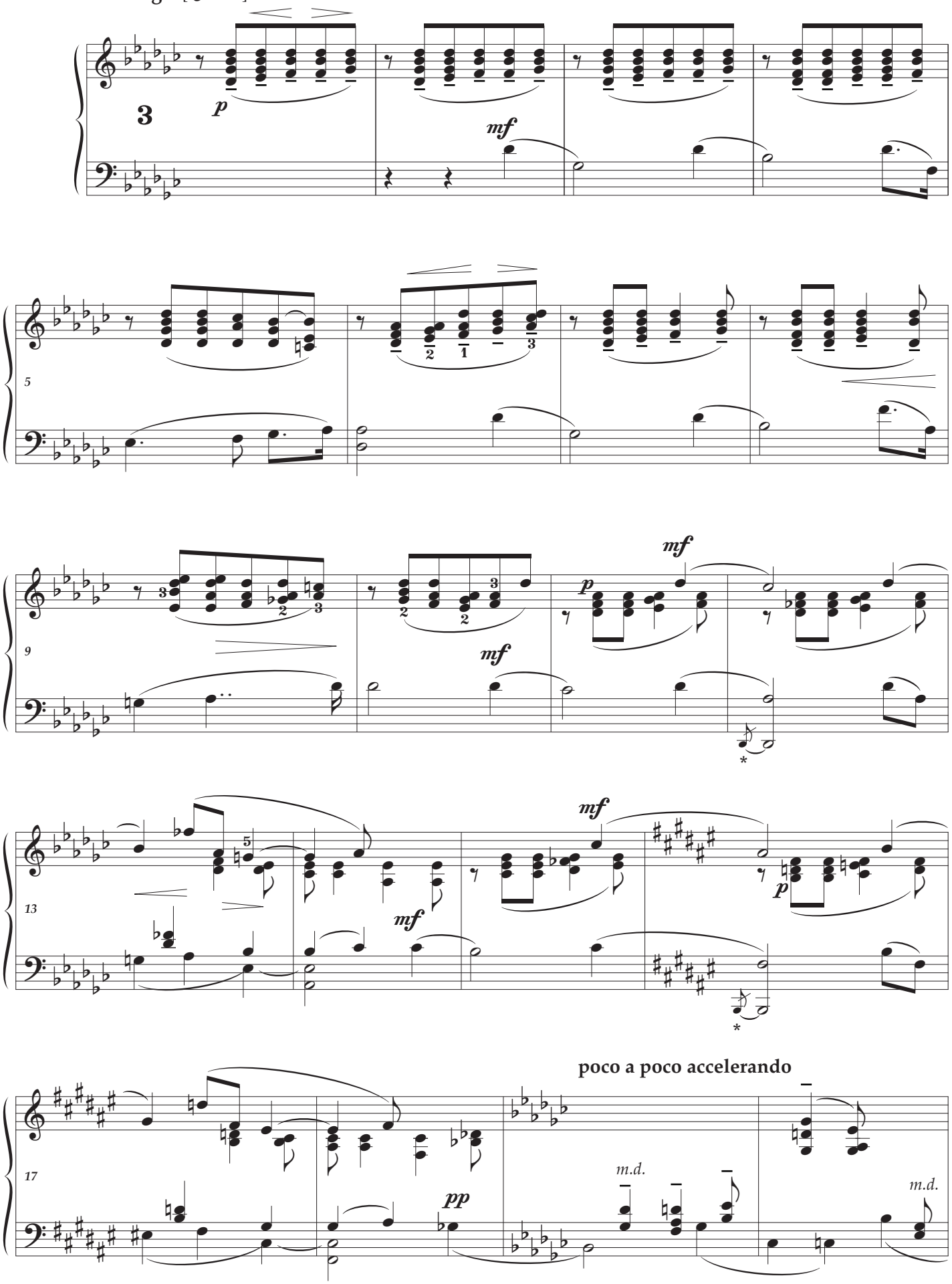
44 editorial bass octave addition with sostenuto pedal

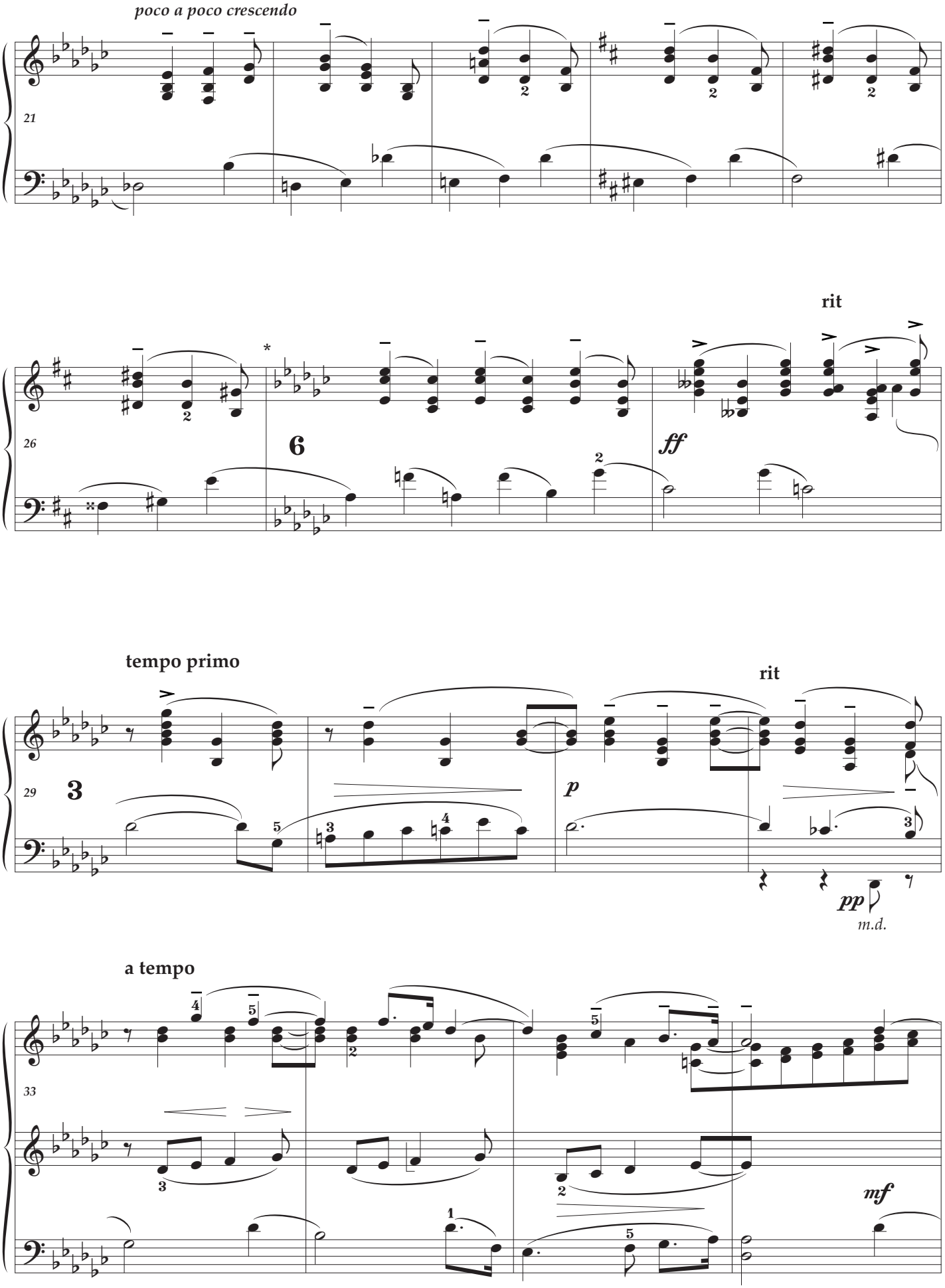
58 dynamic according to the composer's recording

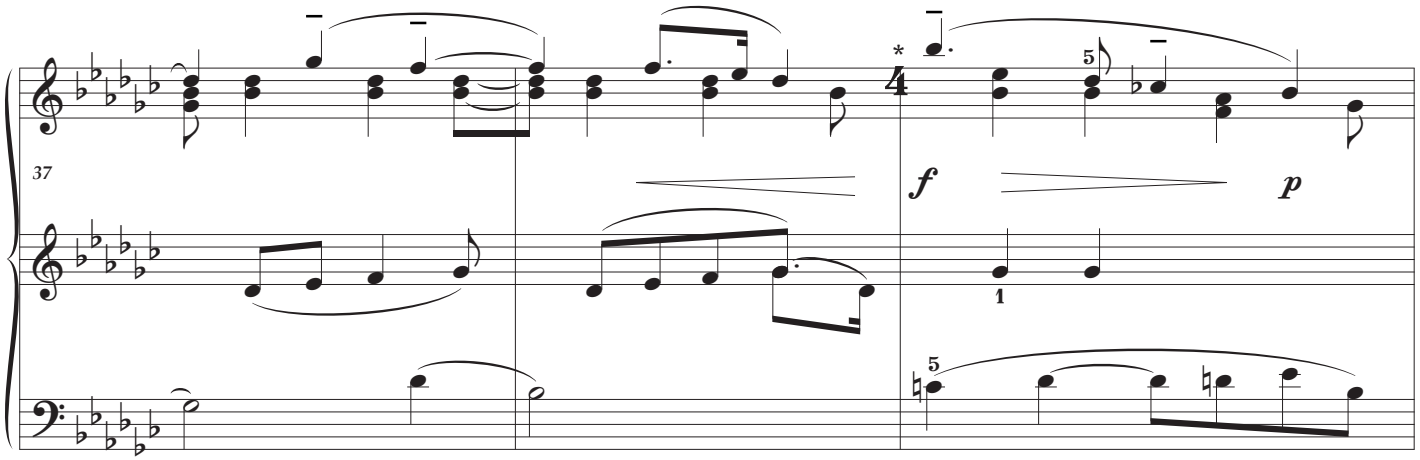
PRELUDE

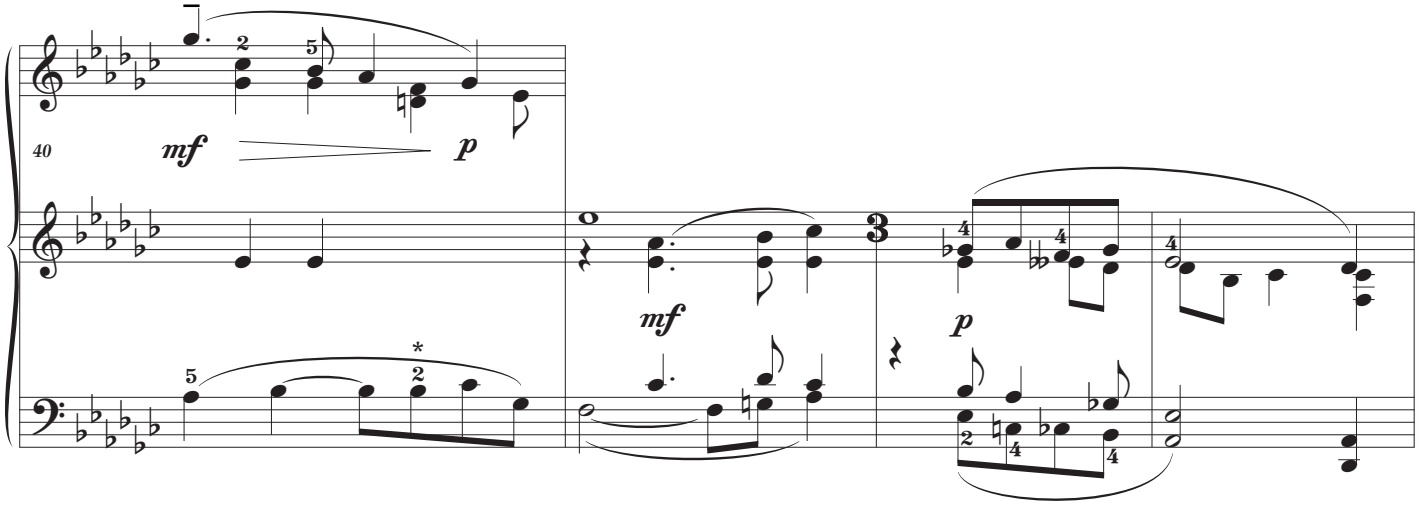
Op 23 Nº 10

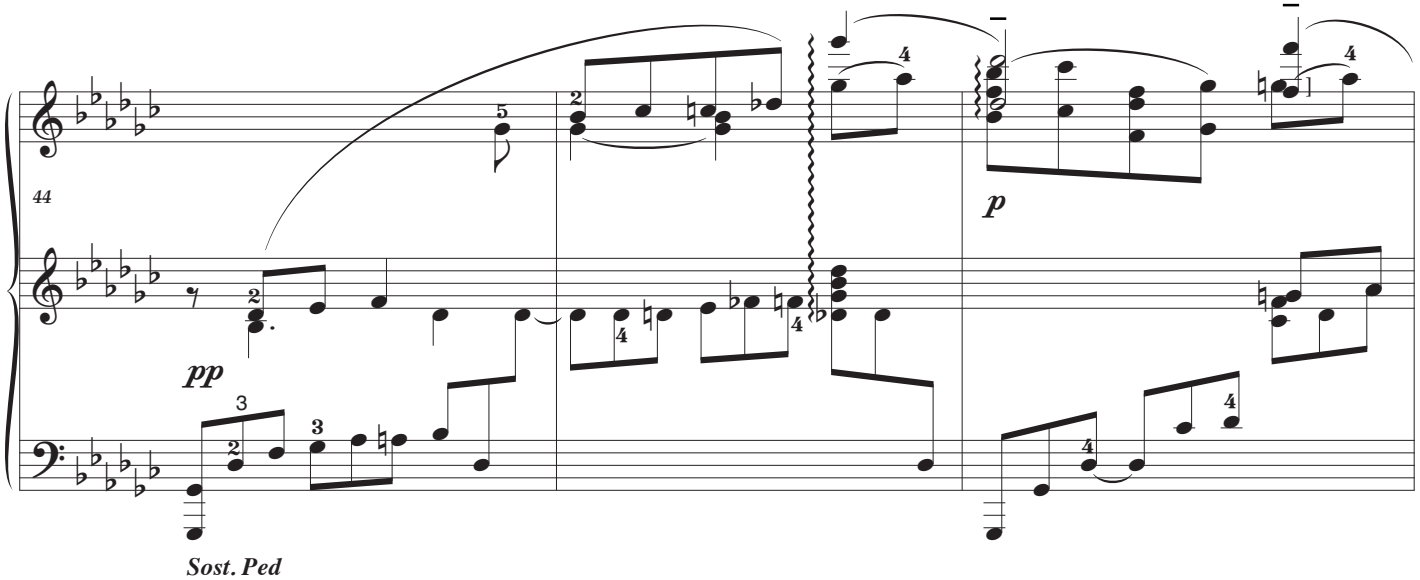
largo [♩ = 50]

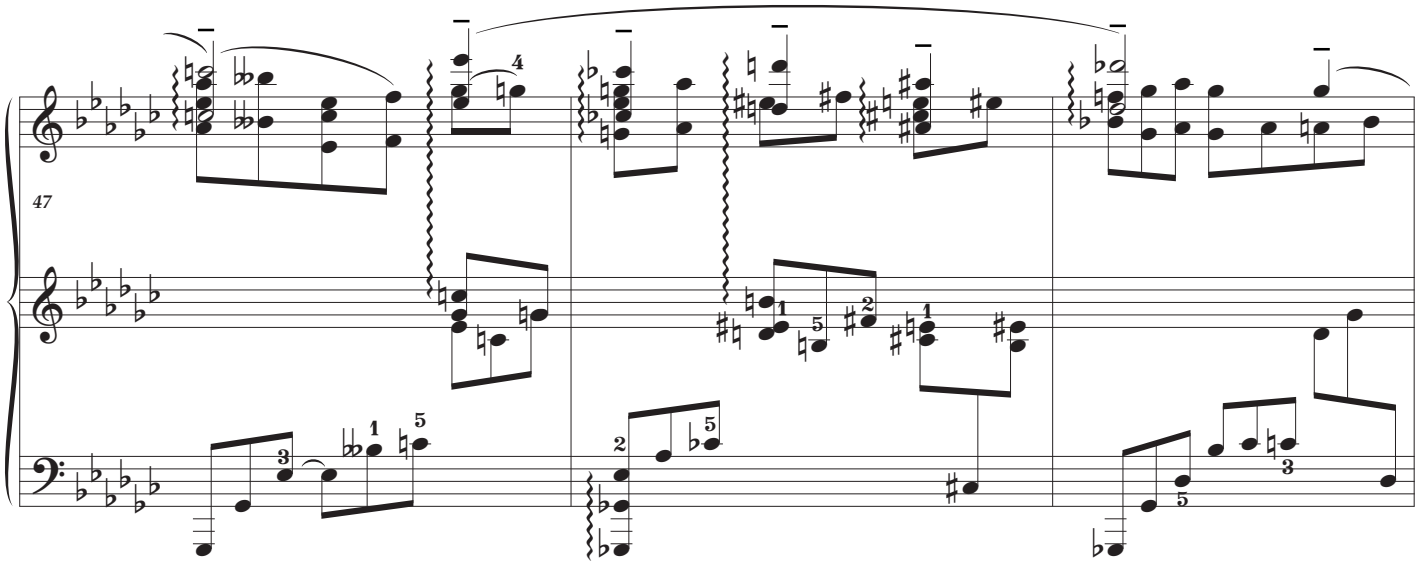



poco a poco crescendo
21
rit
26
6
ff
tempo primo
rit
29
3
p
pp
m.d.
a tempo
33
mf


37
f
p


40
mf
p
mf
p


44
p
pp
Sost. Ped
*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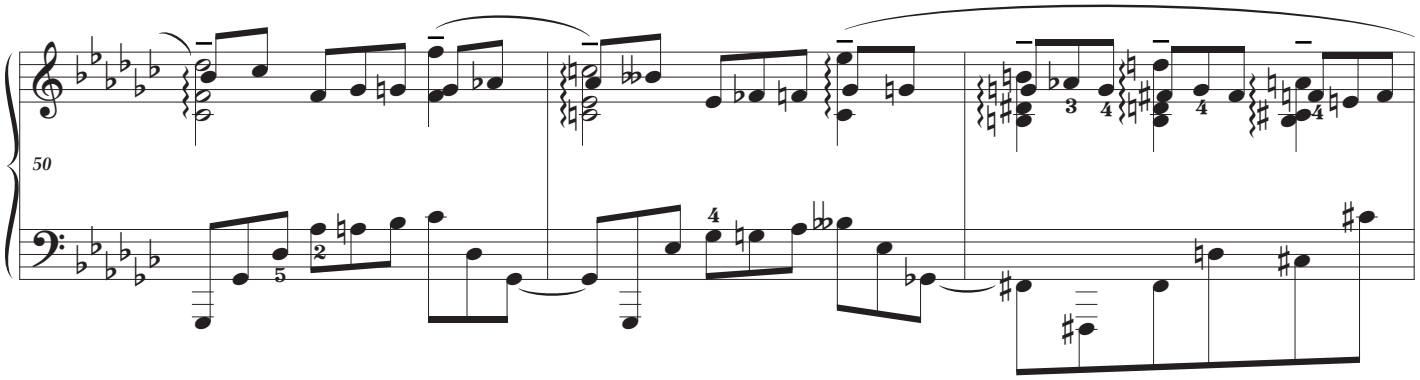
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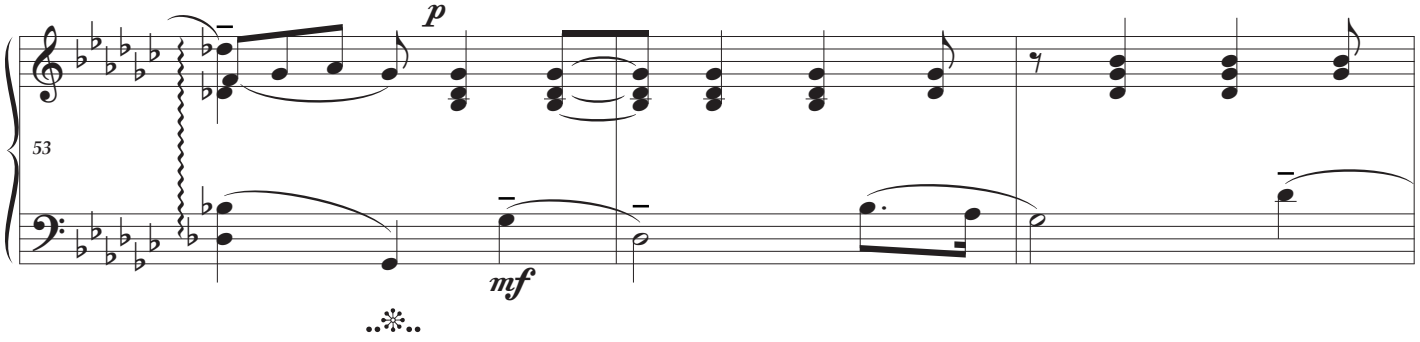
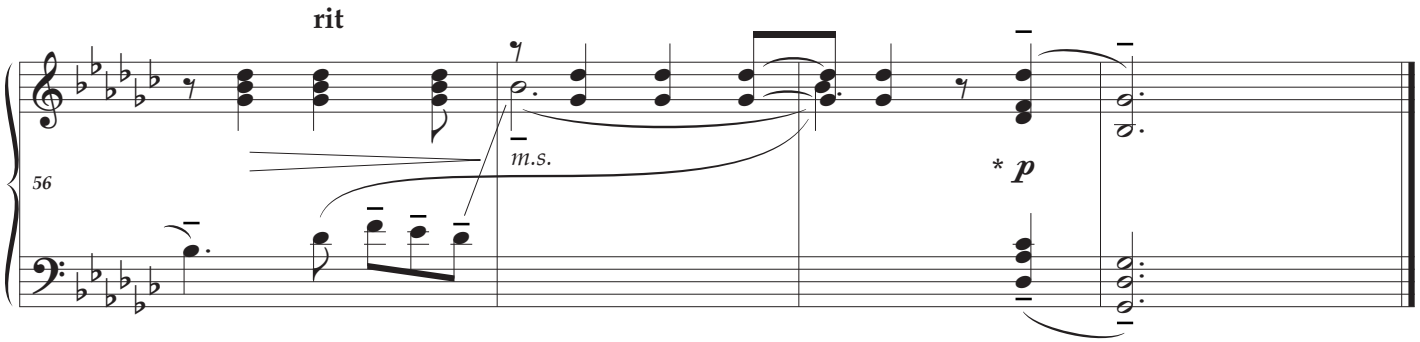

53
p
mf


rit
56
m.s.
* p

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