Sergei RACHMANINOV

PRELUDES

Opus 23 N° 9 E♭ minor

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Sergei RACHMANINOV

1873 - 1943

PRELUDES Opus 23 N° 9 E♭minor

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 chromatic study in double notes has been negatively described as worthless, or one of the least musically interesting from this opus. However, I feel that it is an inspired piece of atmospheric music and technically has as much to offer as for example Chopin's Op 10 N° 7 in C. It can also be compared to Liszt's *Feux Follets*. The left hand requires a wide stretch and is a rewarding pianistic challenge.

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 132 is more realistic.

22 editorial ossia

35 possible misprint

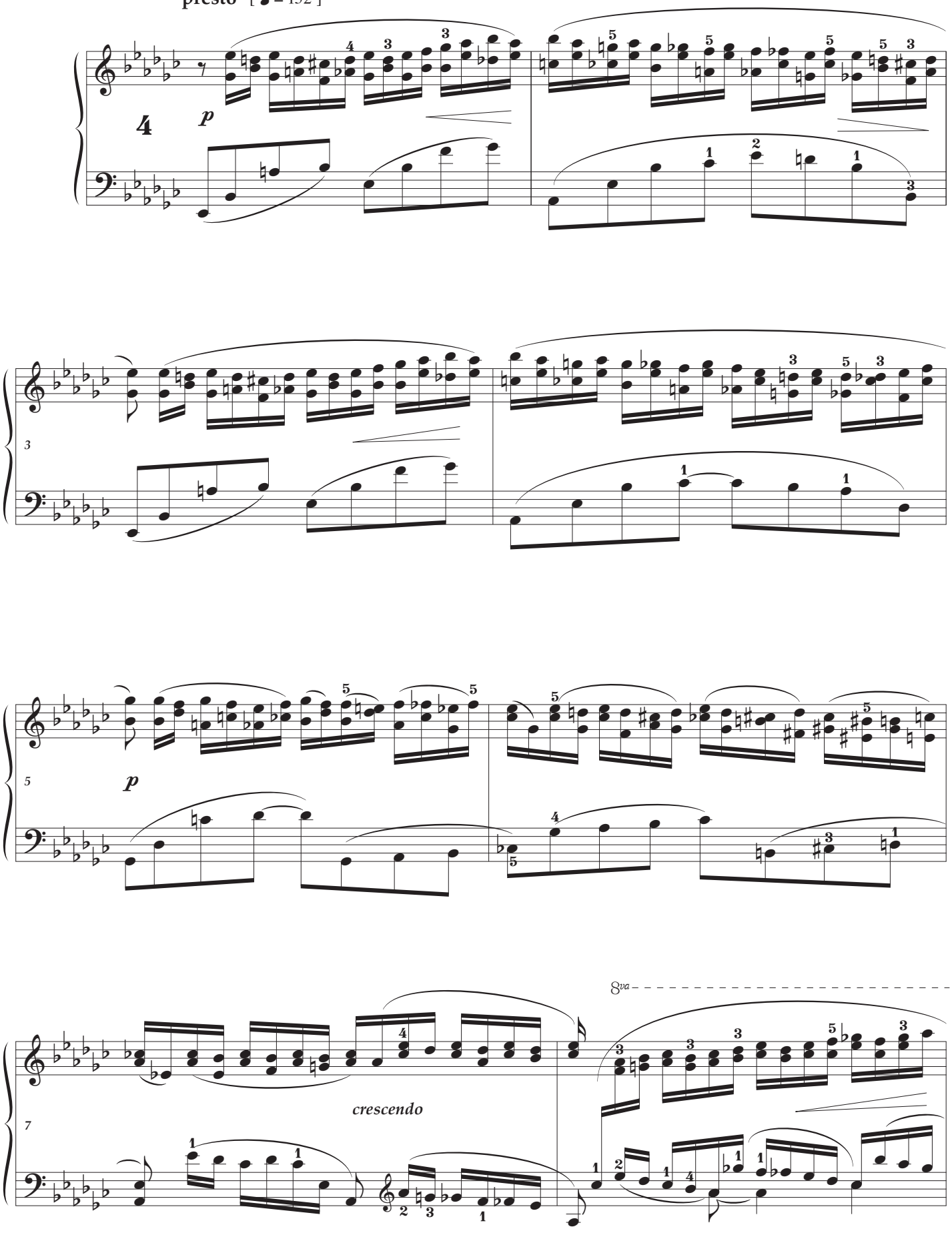
39 two modifications

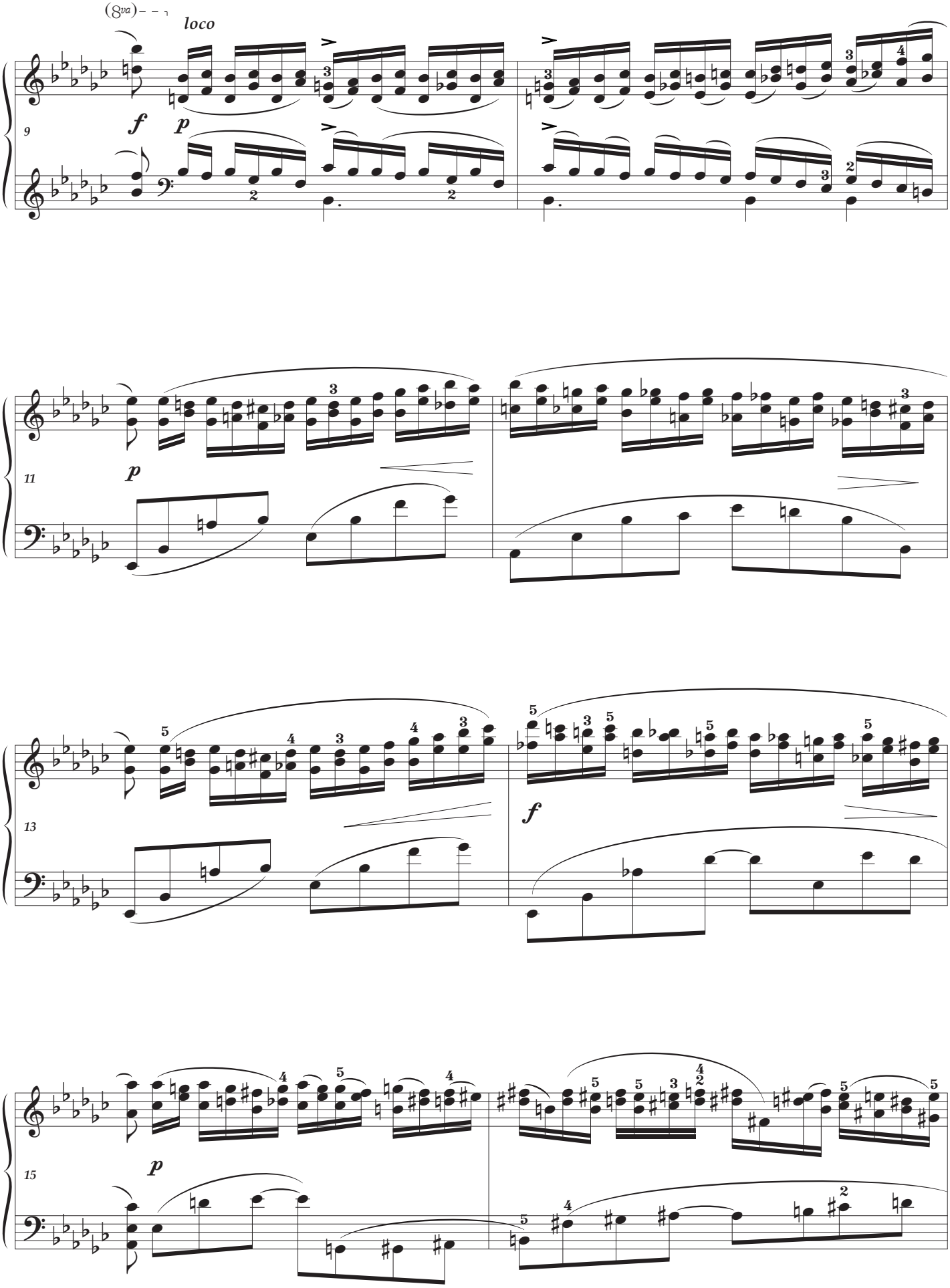
PRELUDE

Op 23 Nº 9

*

presto [♩ = 152]

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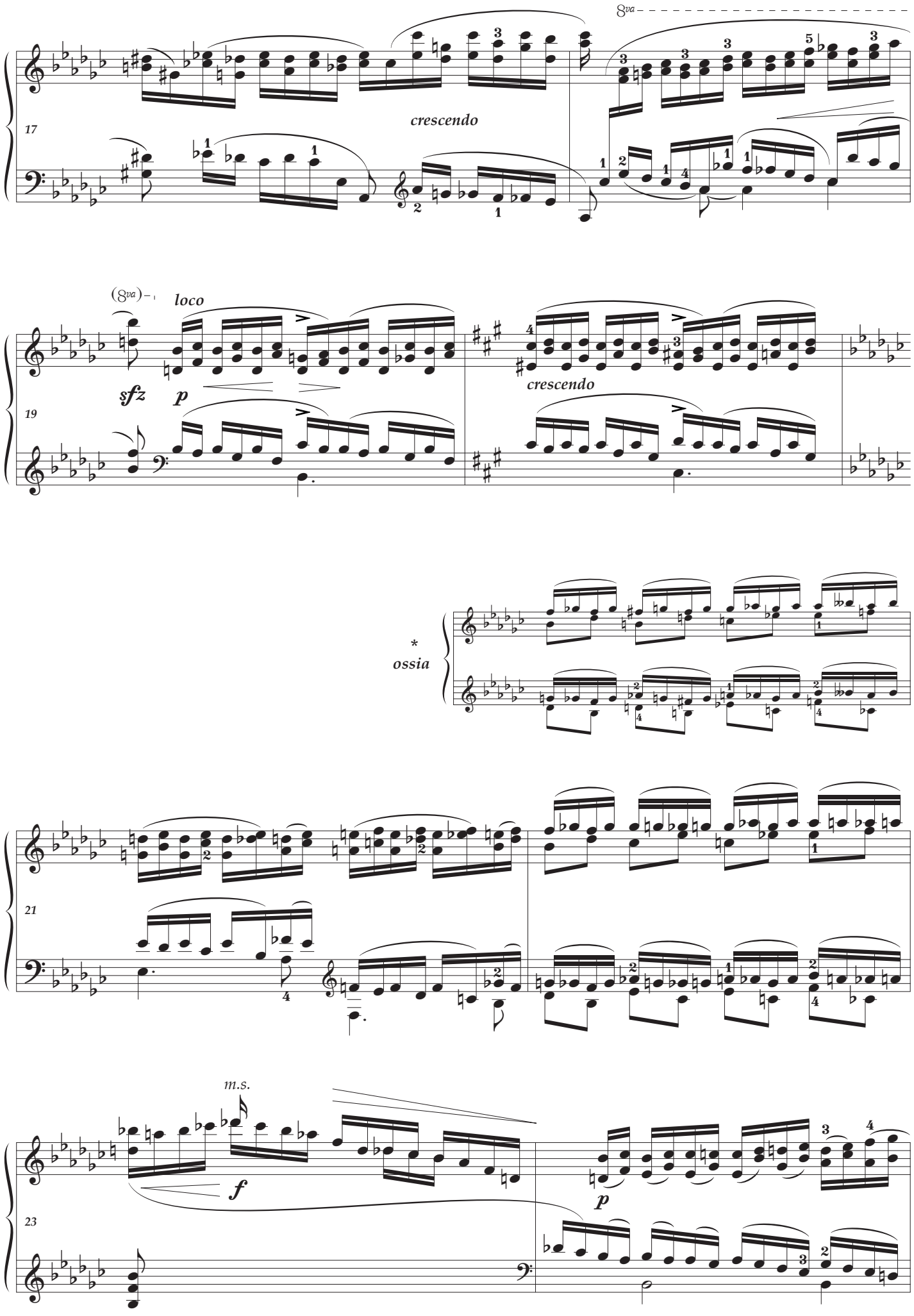
loco
9
f
p
11
p
13
f
15
p


8va
crescendo
17
(8va)
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p
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19
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21
m.s.
f
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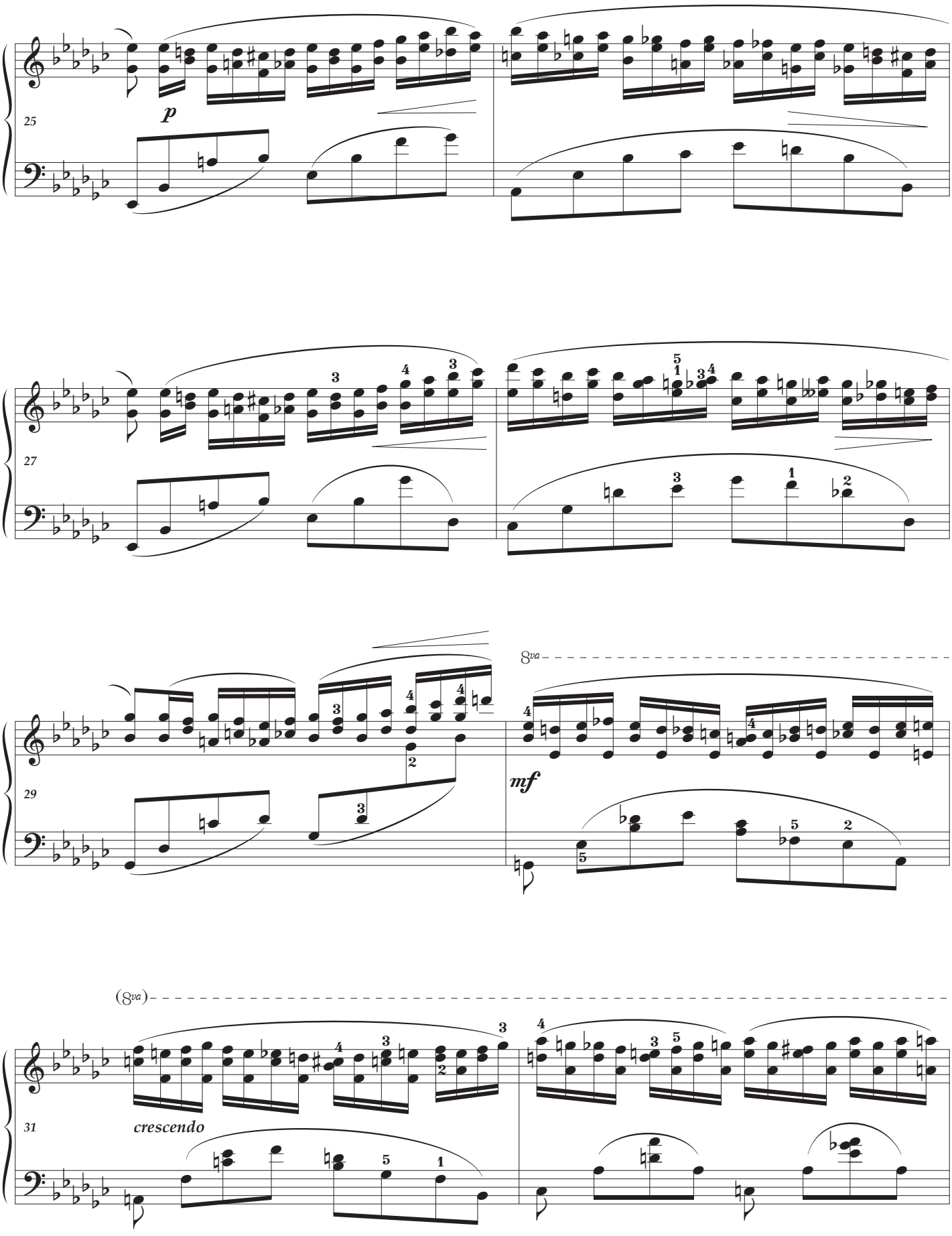
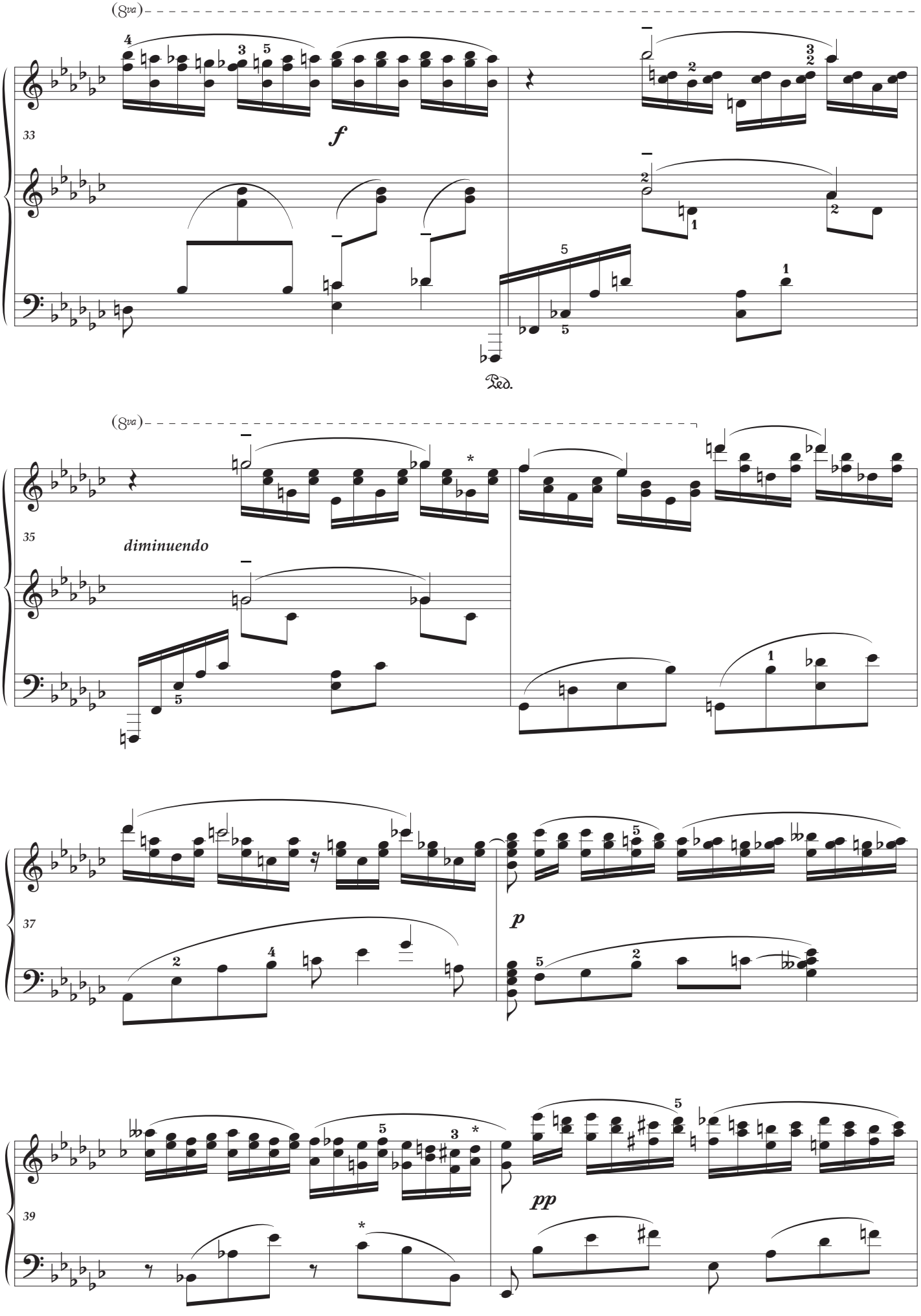
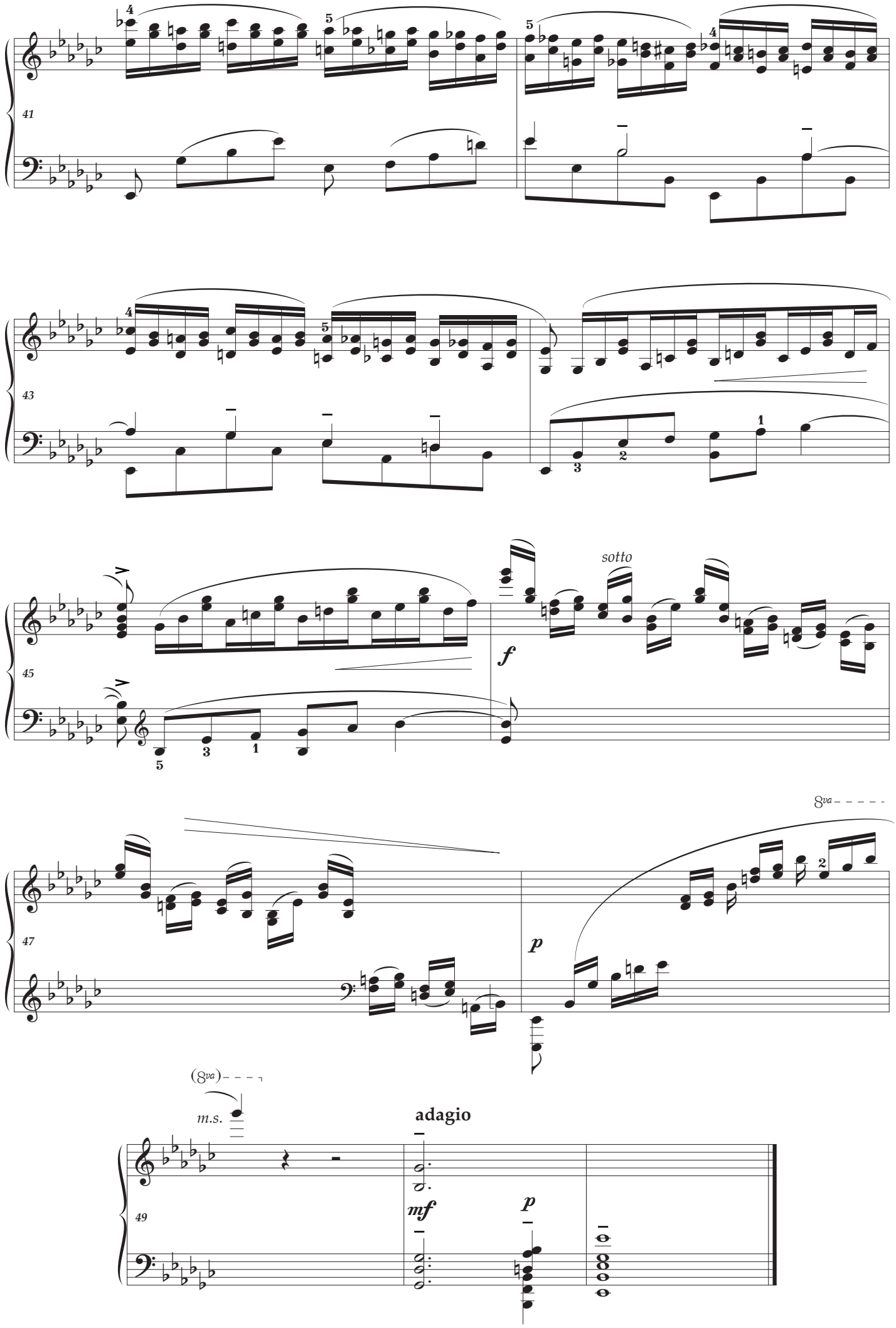
23


25
p
27
29
8va
mf
(8va)
31
crescendo


(8va)
33
f
Ped.
(8va)
35
diminuendo
37
p
39
pp


41
43
45
sotto
f
47
8va
p
(8va)
m.s.
adagio
49
mf
p

RACHMANINOV

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