Sergei RACHMANINOV

MORCEAUX de FANTAISIE

Opus 3 N° 2

Prelude in C♯ minor

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Prelude Opus 3 N° 2 C♯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. Created in 1892 the celebrated C♯ minor prelude gained so much success that his public would not allow him to leave the recital stage unless he performed it, yet again, as an encore. He believed that any of the 23 preludes following this youthful first essay in the genre were far superior, although it has to be admitted that he had certainly hit upon a unique formula to excite his audiences. However, the "Bells of Moscow" would cause him intense irritation throughout his life. At the age of 19, after graduating from the Moscow Conservatoire in 1892, this work was one of the first Rachmaninov composed as a "Free Artist"; he gave its first performance on 26 September at the Moscow Electrical Exhibition. That same year he finalised his first piano publication including the Prelude with four other pieces under the collective title *Morceaux de Fantaisie,* dedicated to his professor of composition, the composer Anton Arensky: *Élégie* in E♭ minor, *Mélodie* in E, *Polichinelle* in F♯ minor and *Sérénade* in B♭ minor.

In 1898 his cousin Alexander Siloti toured Western Europe and the United States giving the world premiere of the 2nd concerto, and performing a recital programme that included the Prelude. English and American publishers were quick to print many editions giving it fanciful titles such as *The Burning of Moscow*, *The Day of Judgement*, *The Moscow Waltz* and *The Bells of Moscow.* Rachmaninov once said : "Many, many times I wish I had never written it. I wrote it – but there are no *Bells of Moscow* — I never had any bells in mind while writing it, I assure you. As for its inspiration, one day the prelude simply came and I put it down; it came with such force that I could not shake it off even though I tried to do so. It had to be — so there it was".

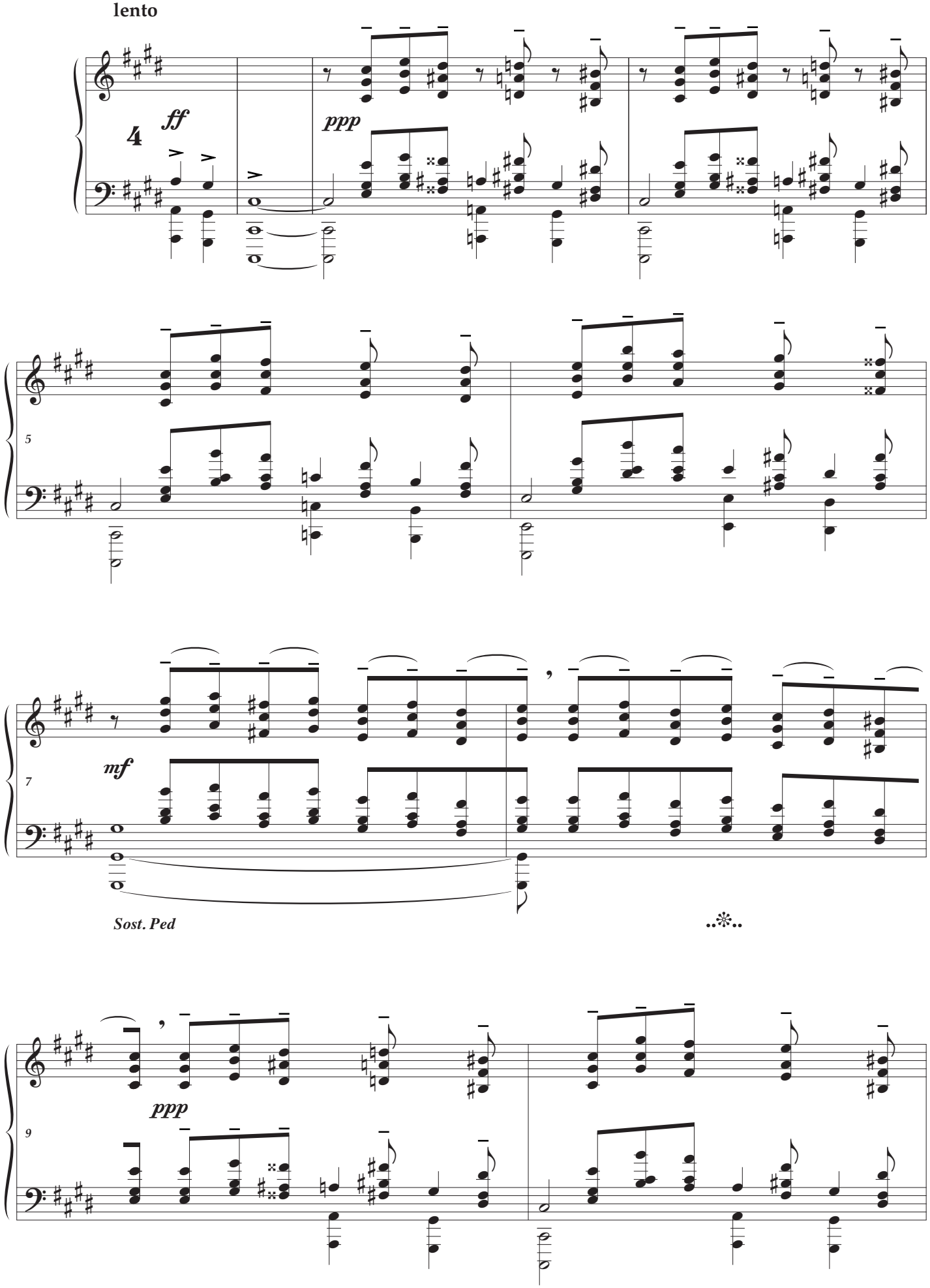
The early prelude opening section seems inspired by a religious ceremony whereas the contrasting *agitato* becomes almost hysterical. Godowsky observed: "when the first theme returns, it is in a mood of grandeur and power, as if illustrating the inevitable survival of some great and mighty truth". This first prelude inevitably displays the extravagance of youth: four staves and exuberant dynamics (*ppp fff*).

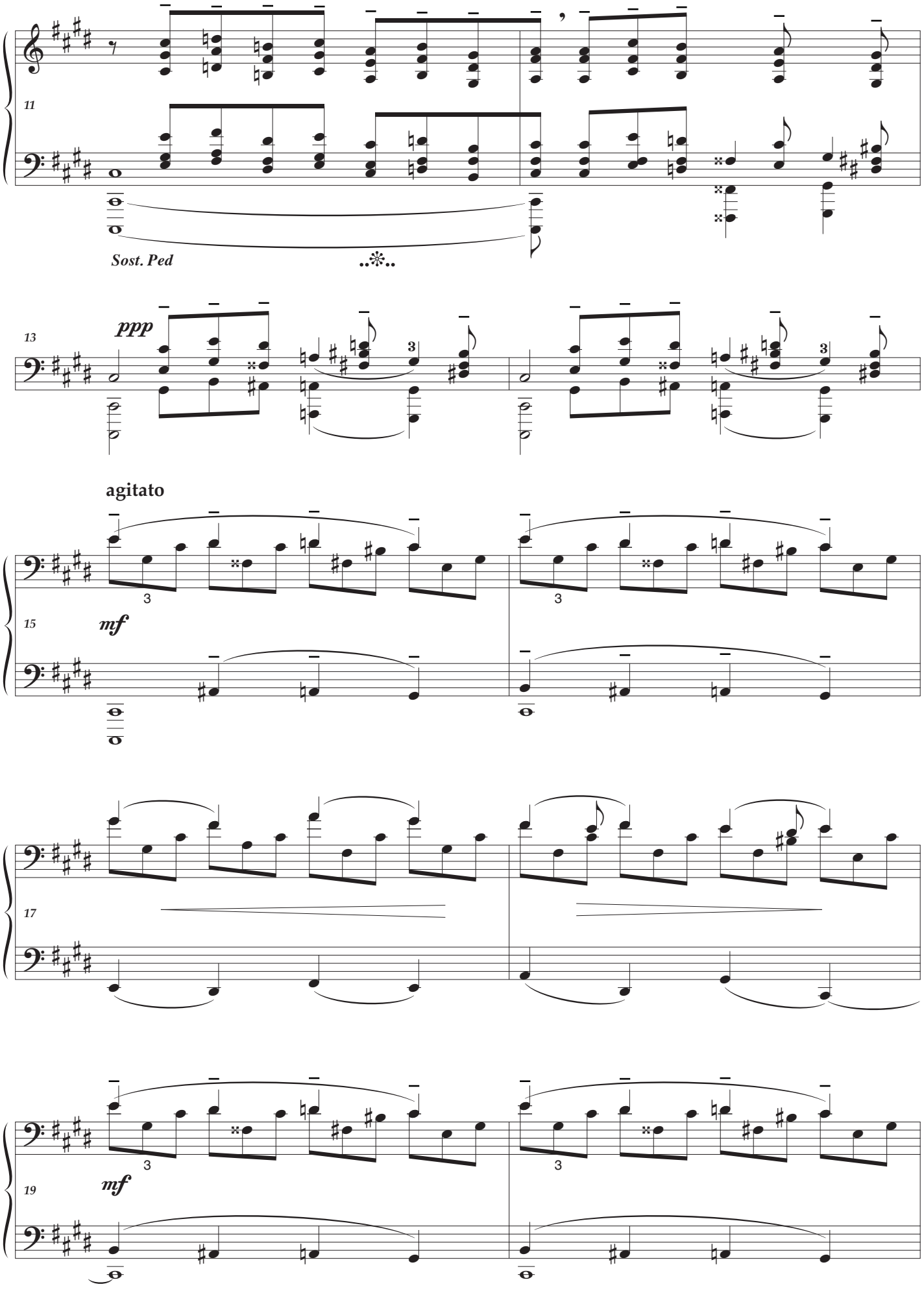
34-45 bar-lines and time signatures have been modified

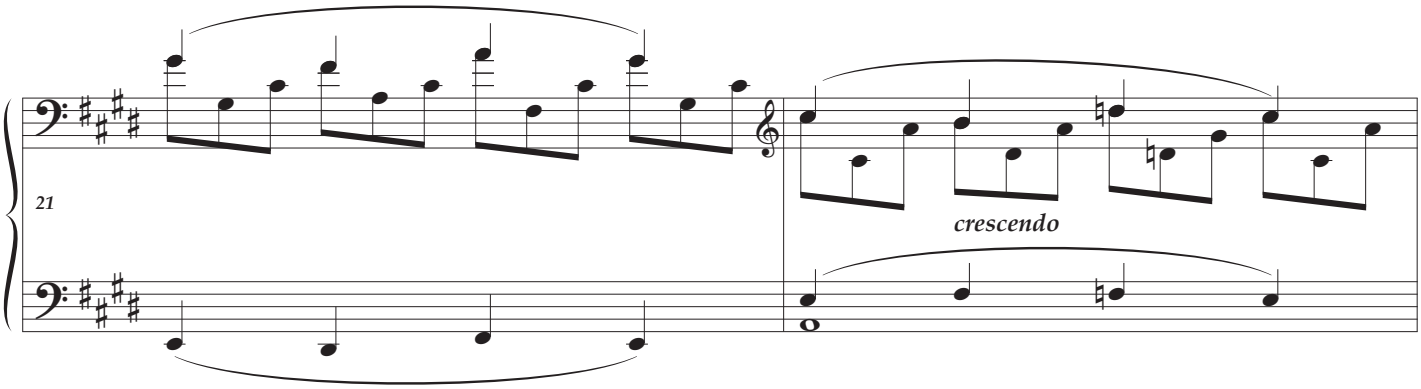
all sostenuto pedal suggestions are editorial

PRELUDE

Op 3 Nº 2




11
Sost. Ped
13
ppp
agitato
15
mf
17
19
mf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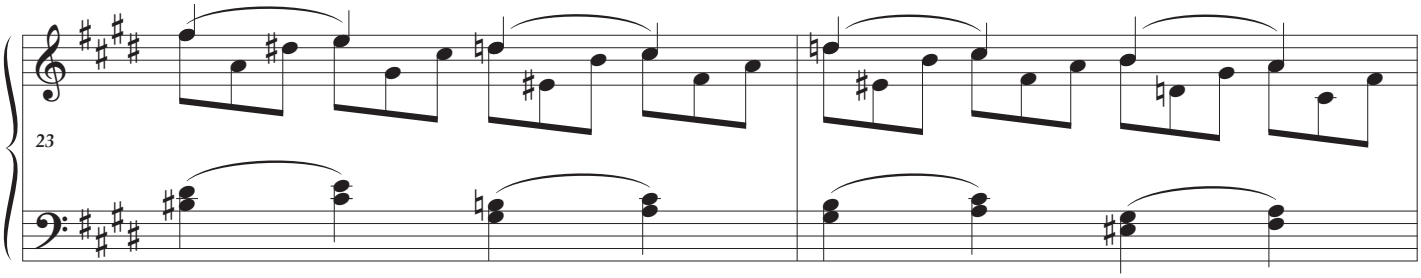
crescendo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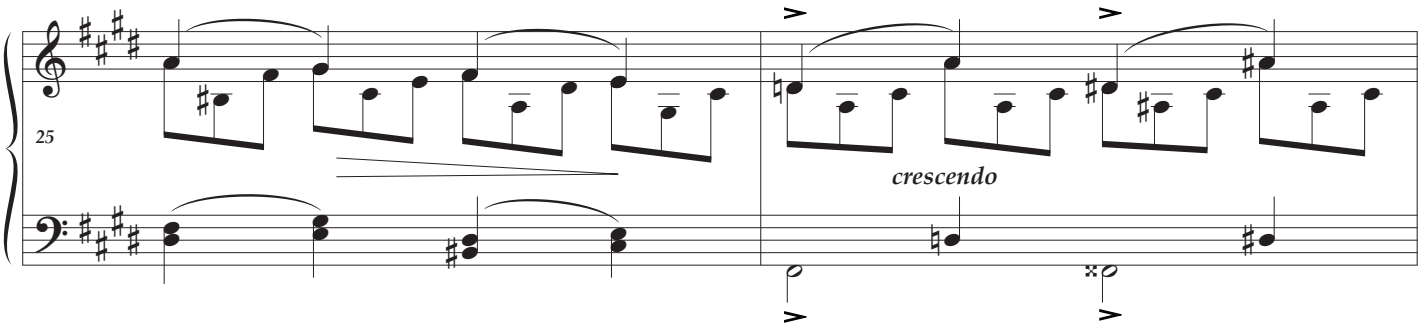
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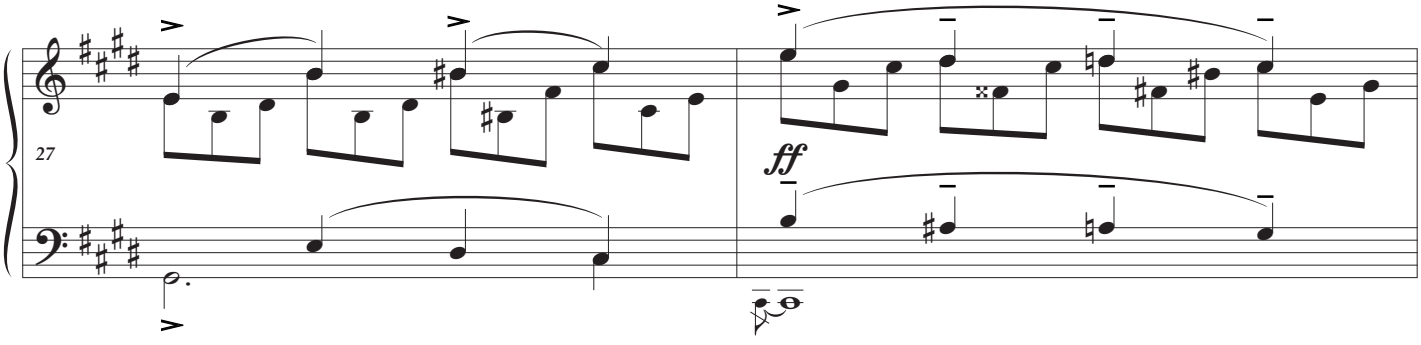
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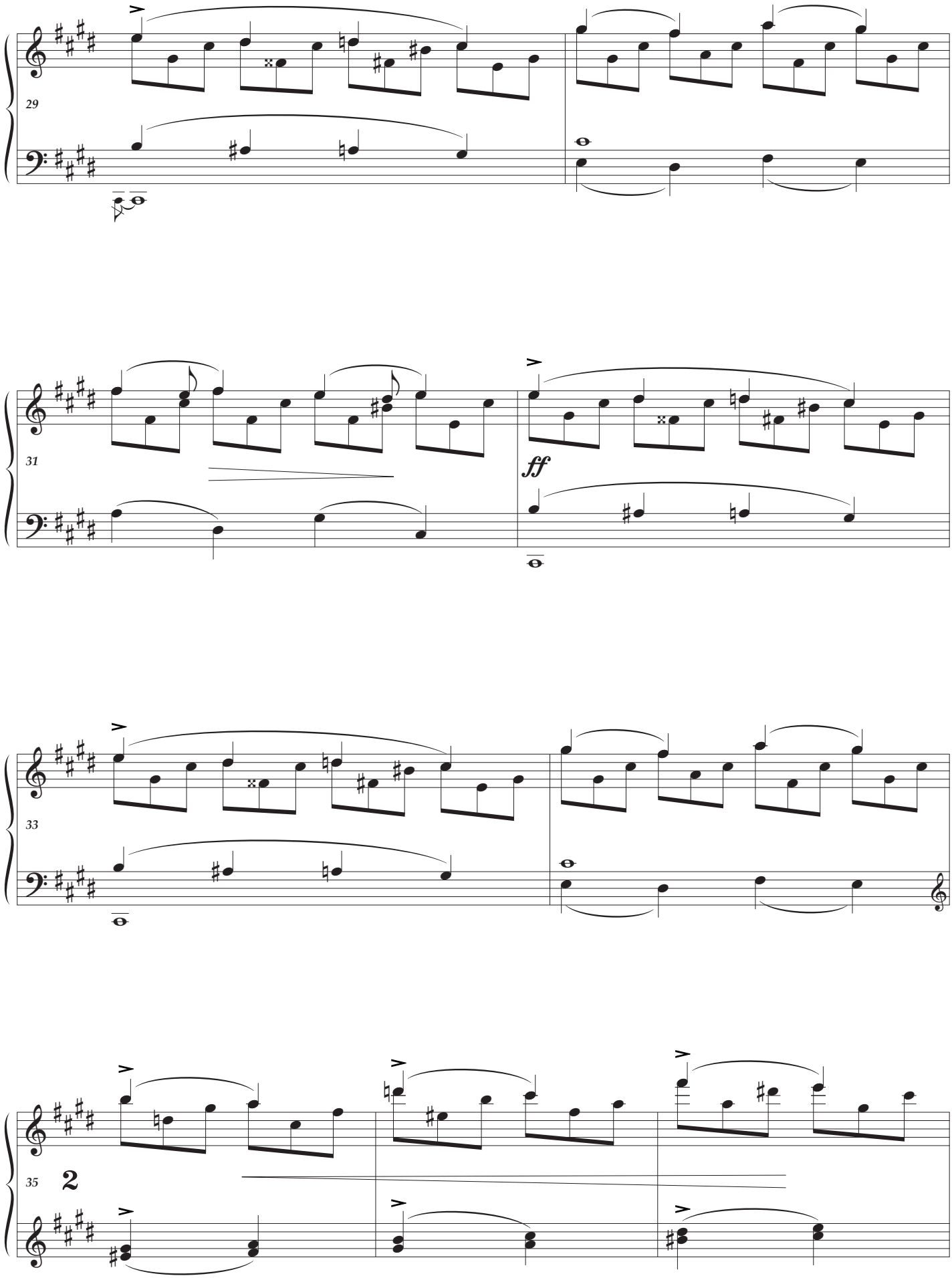
ff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31
ff
33
35
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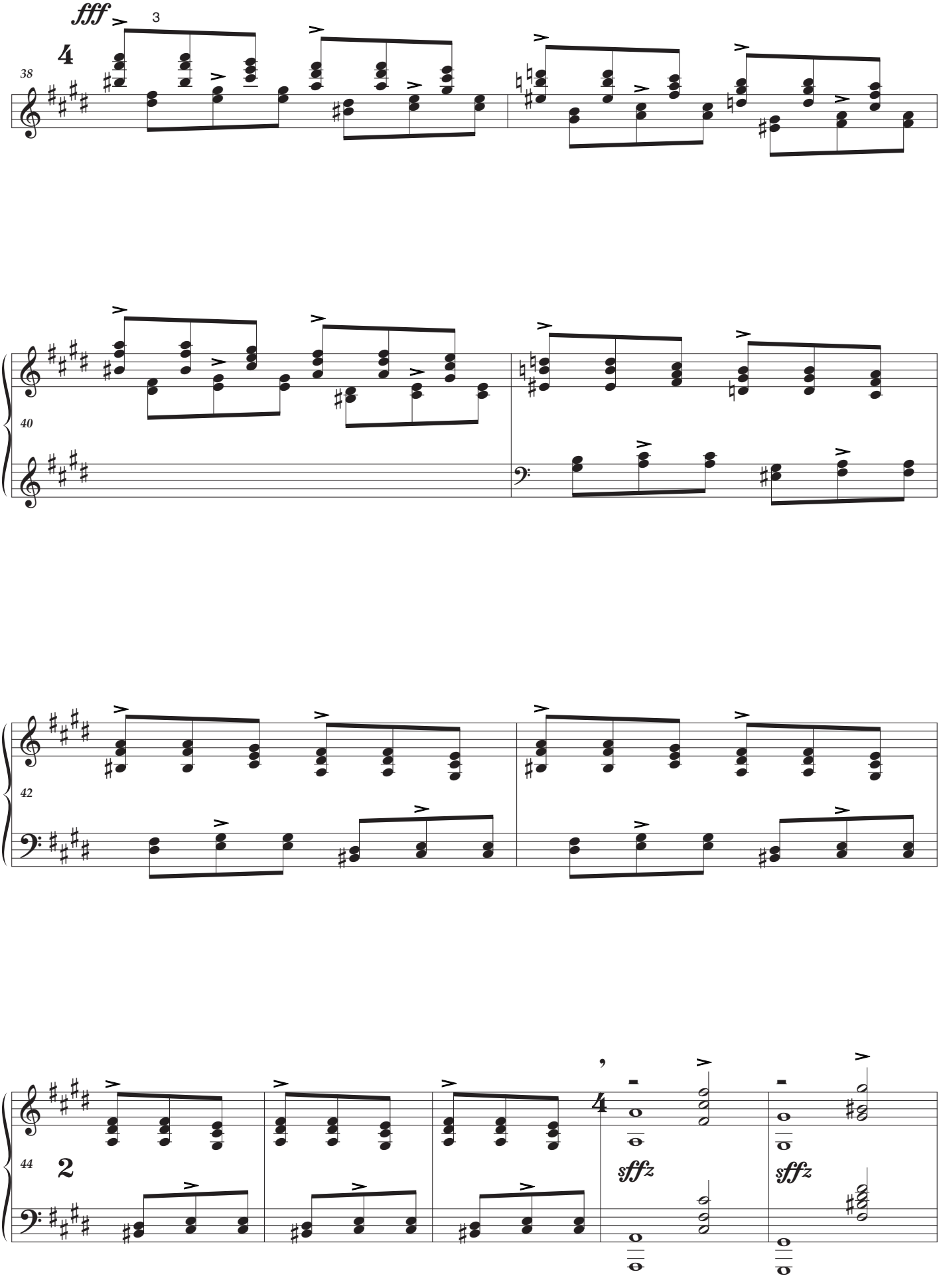
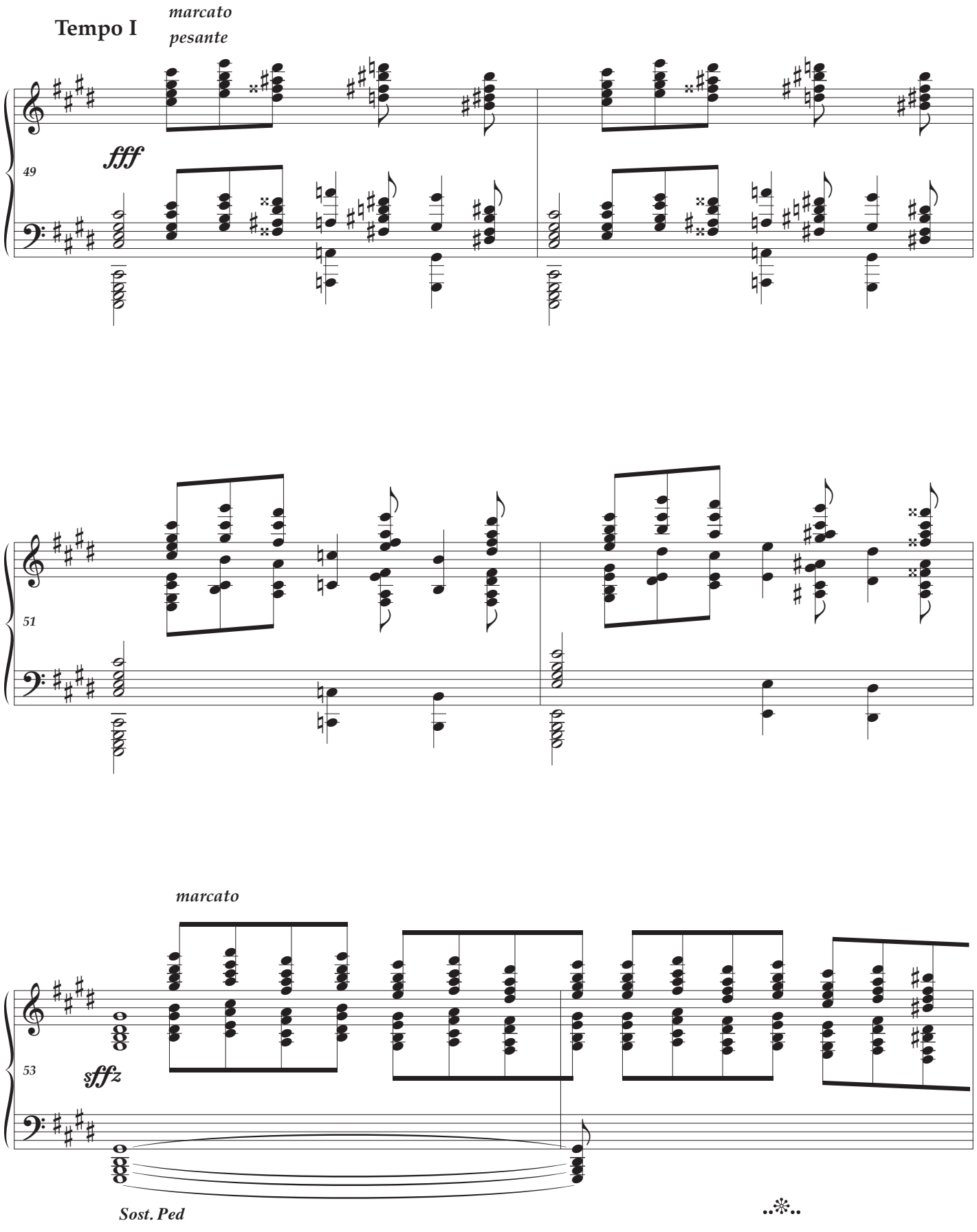
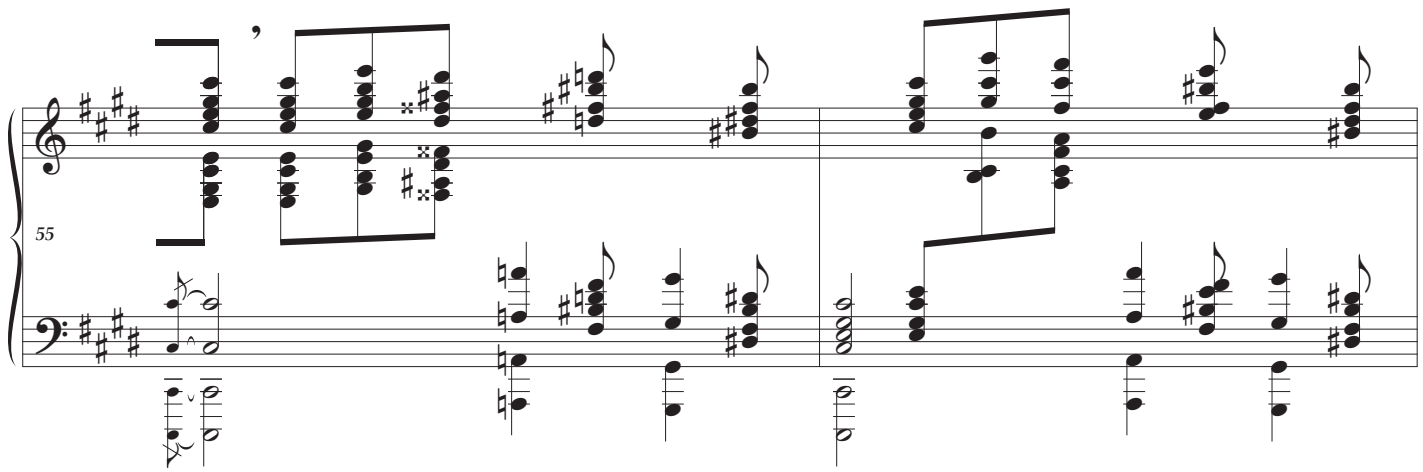

fff
3
4
38
40
42
44
2
4
sffz
sffz


Tempo I
marcato
pesante
fff
49
51
marcato
sffz
53
Sost. Ped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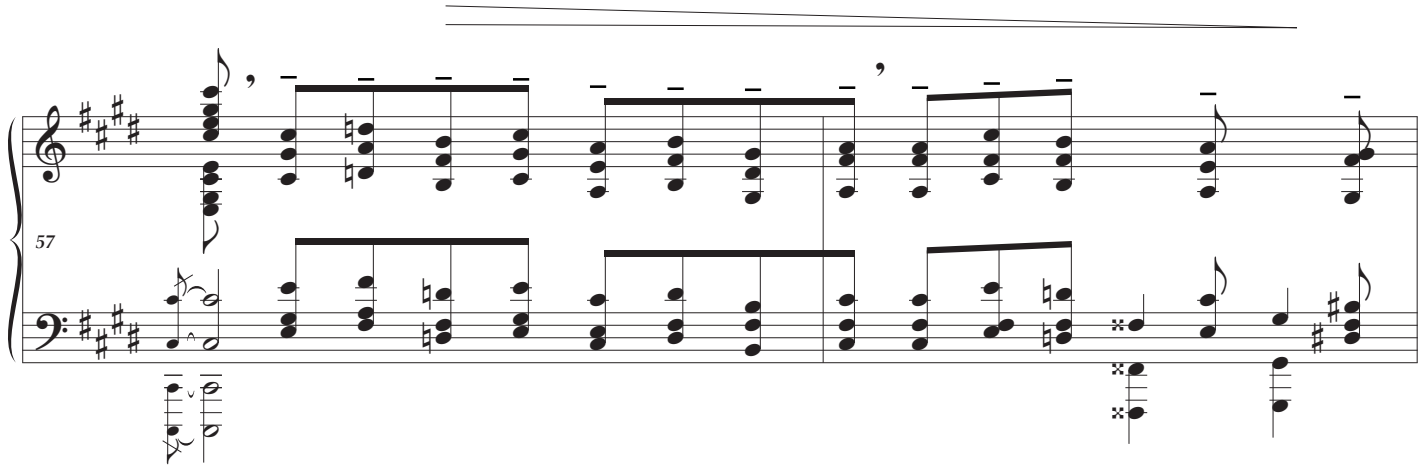
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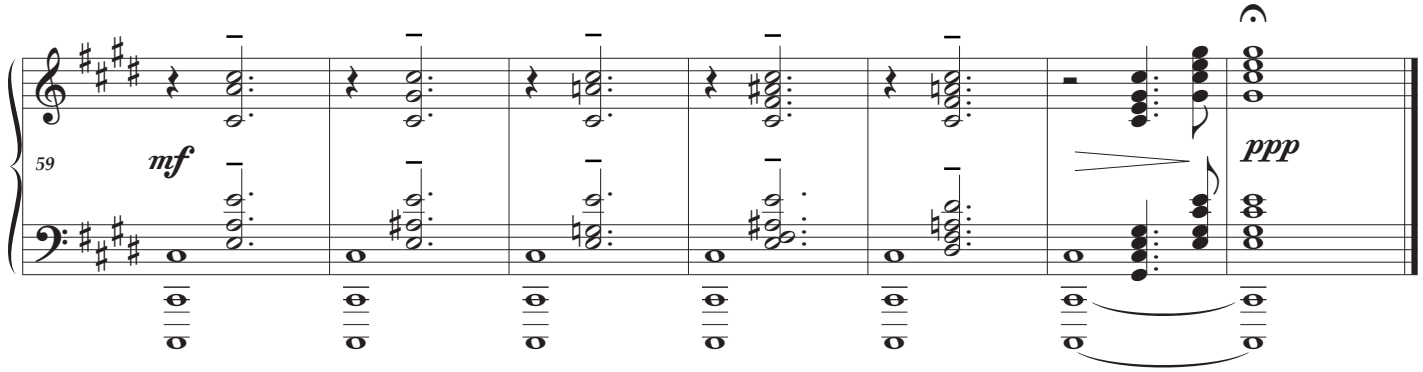
59
mf
ppp

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