RACHMANINOFF

PRELUDE IN C-SHARP MINOR

OPUS 3, NO. 2
FOR THE PIANO

EDITED BY MURRAY BAYLOR

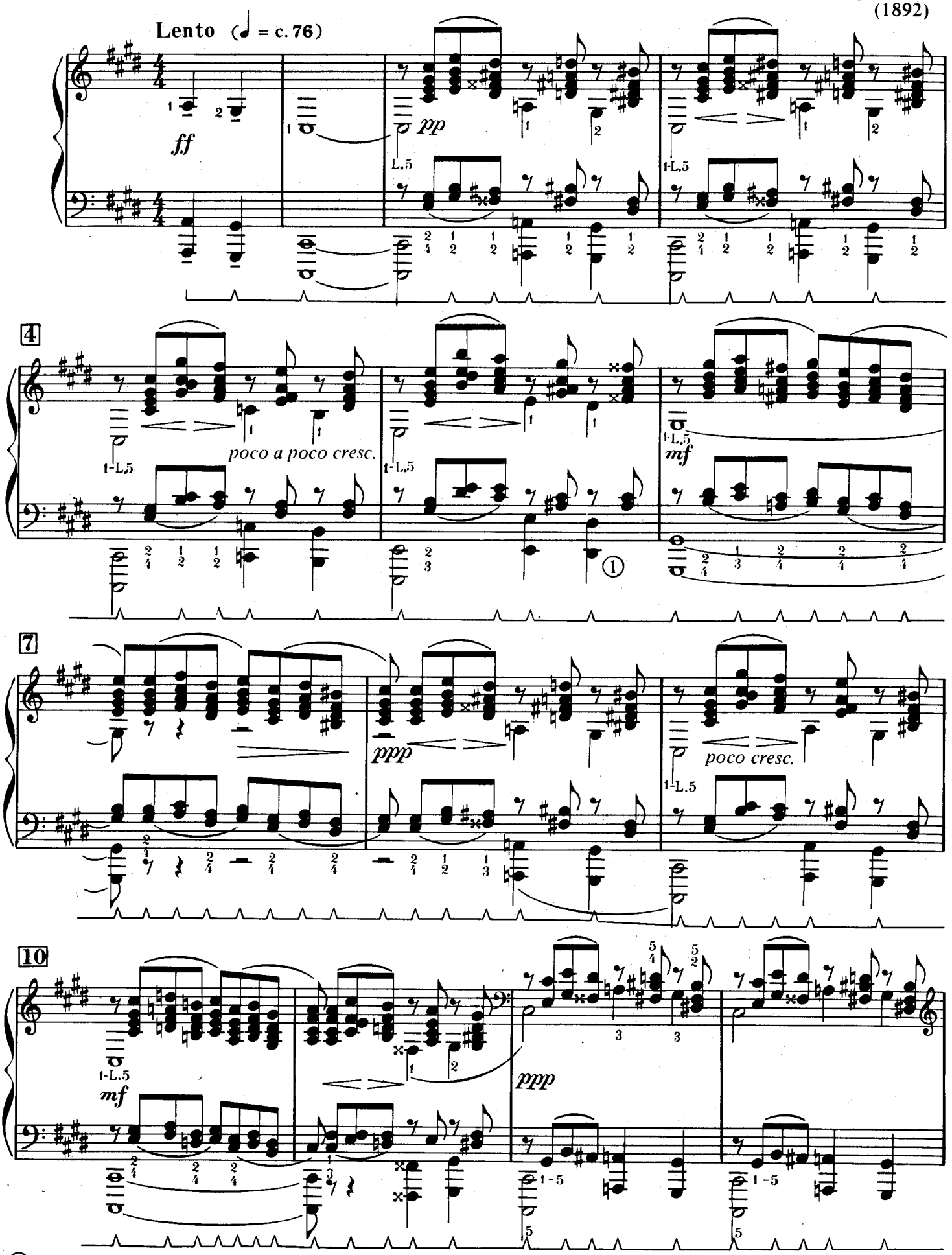
AN ALFRED MASTERWORK EDITION

Alfred

The first 13 measures for pianos without a sostenuto pedal—half-pedal carefully

PRELUDE in C-sharp minor

Op. 3, No. 2
(1892)



① Although it has often been printed, recorded, and misread as D natural, the D-sharp in the left hand, here and in measure 48, is correct.

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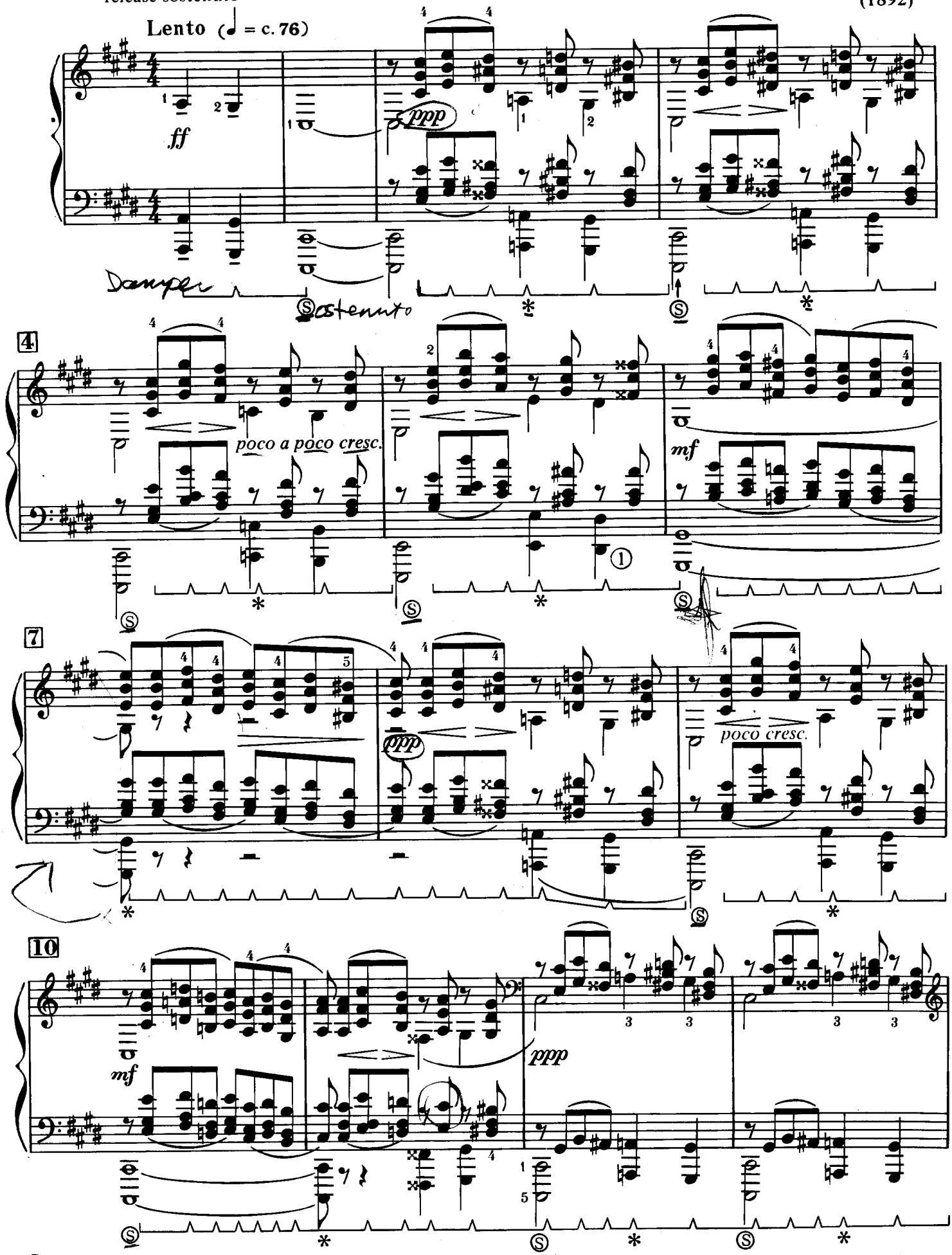
For pianos with a sostenuto pedal

PRELUDE in C-sharp minor

Op. 3, No. 2
(1892)

Ⓢ = depress sostenuto after keys are down
* = release sostenuto



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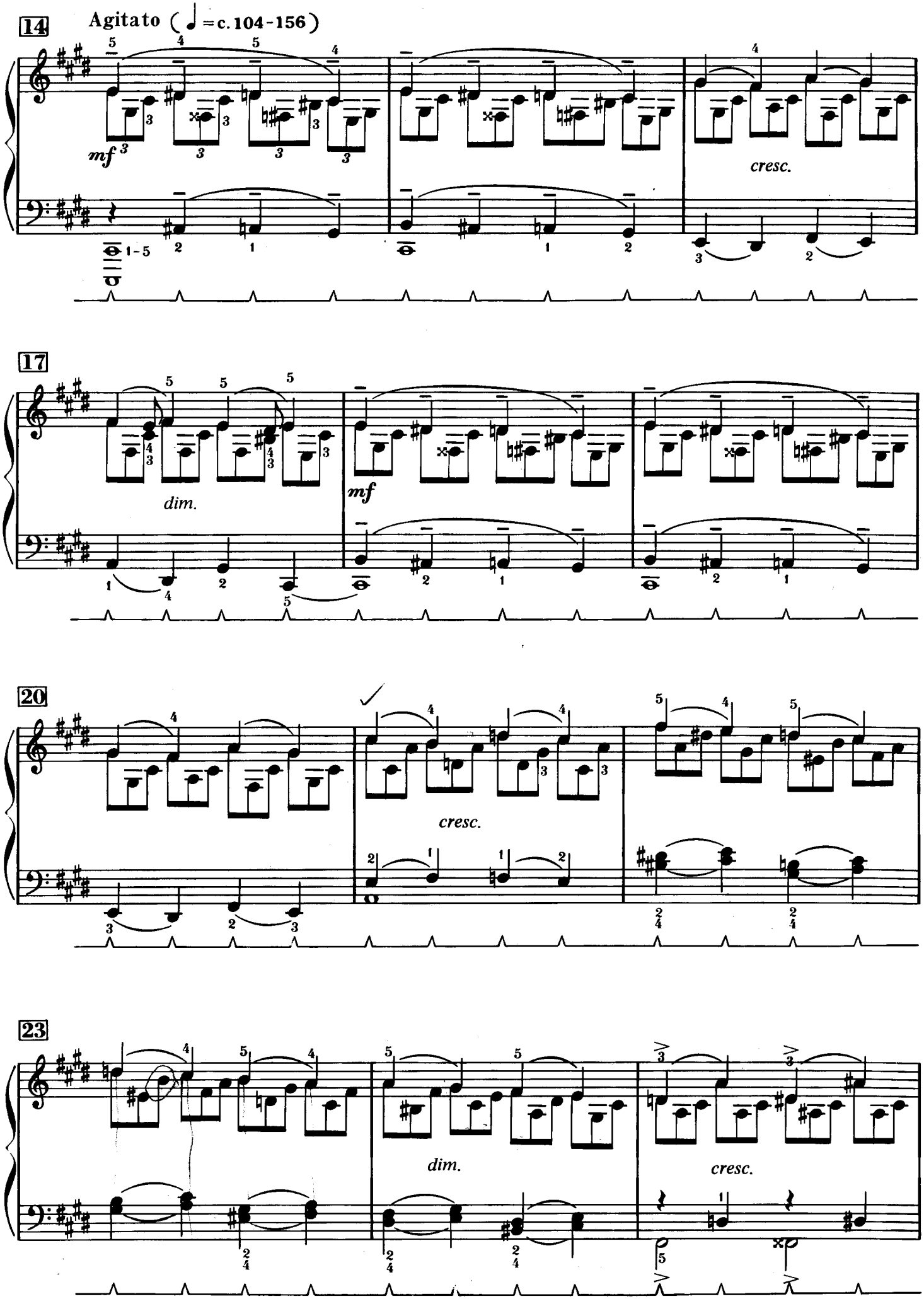
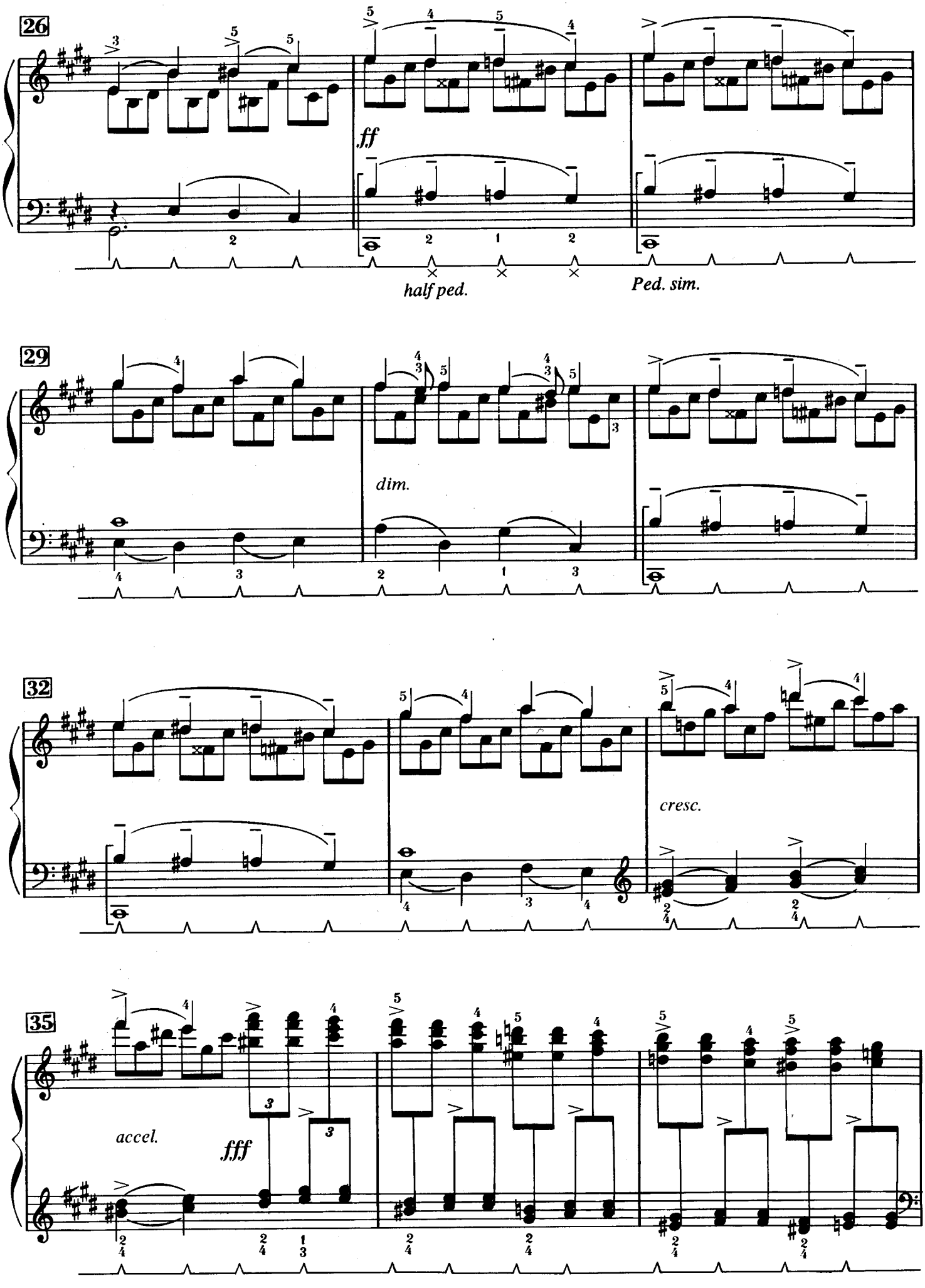
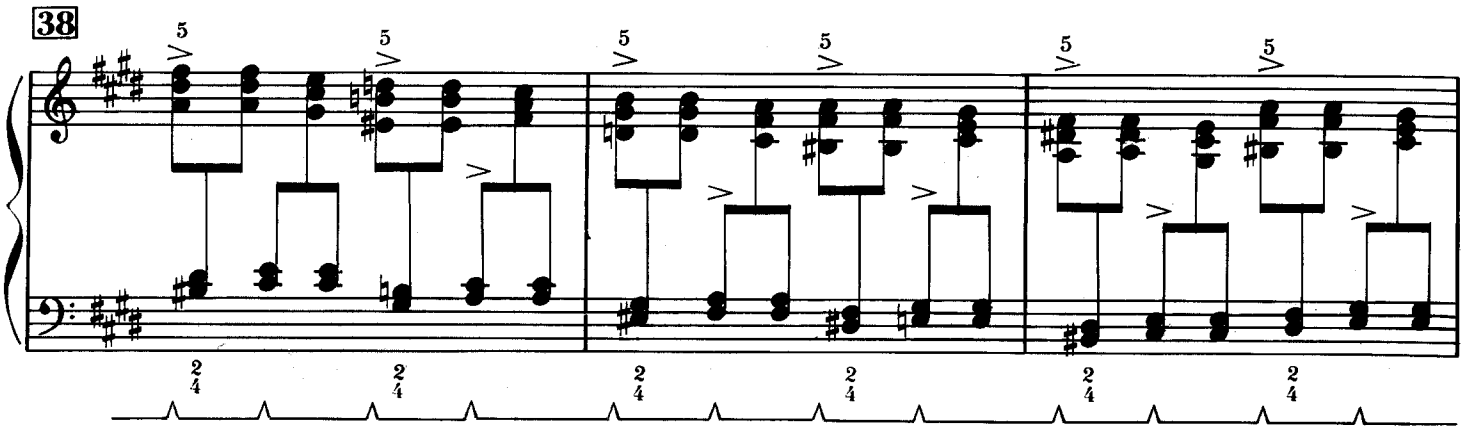
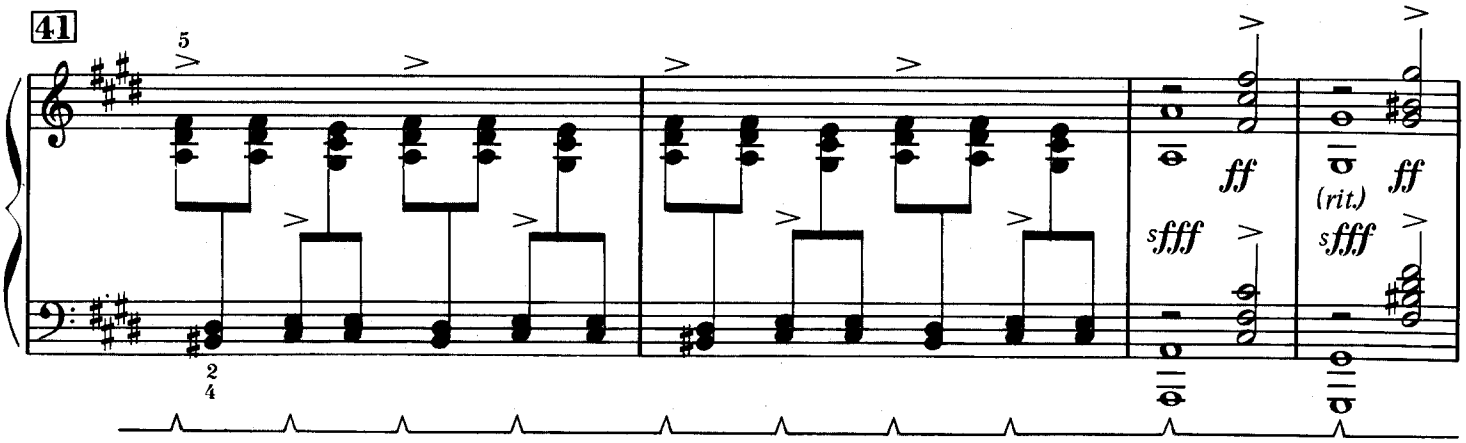
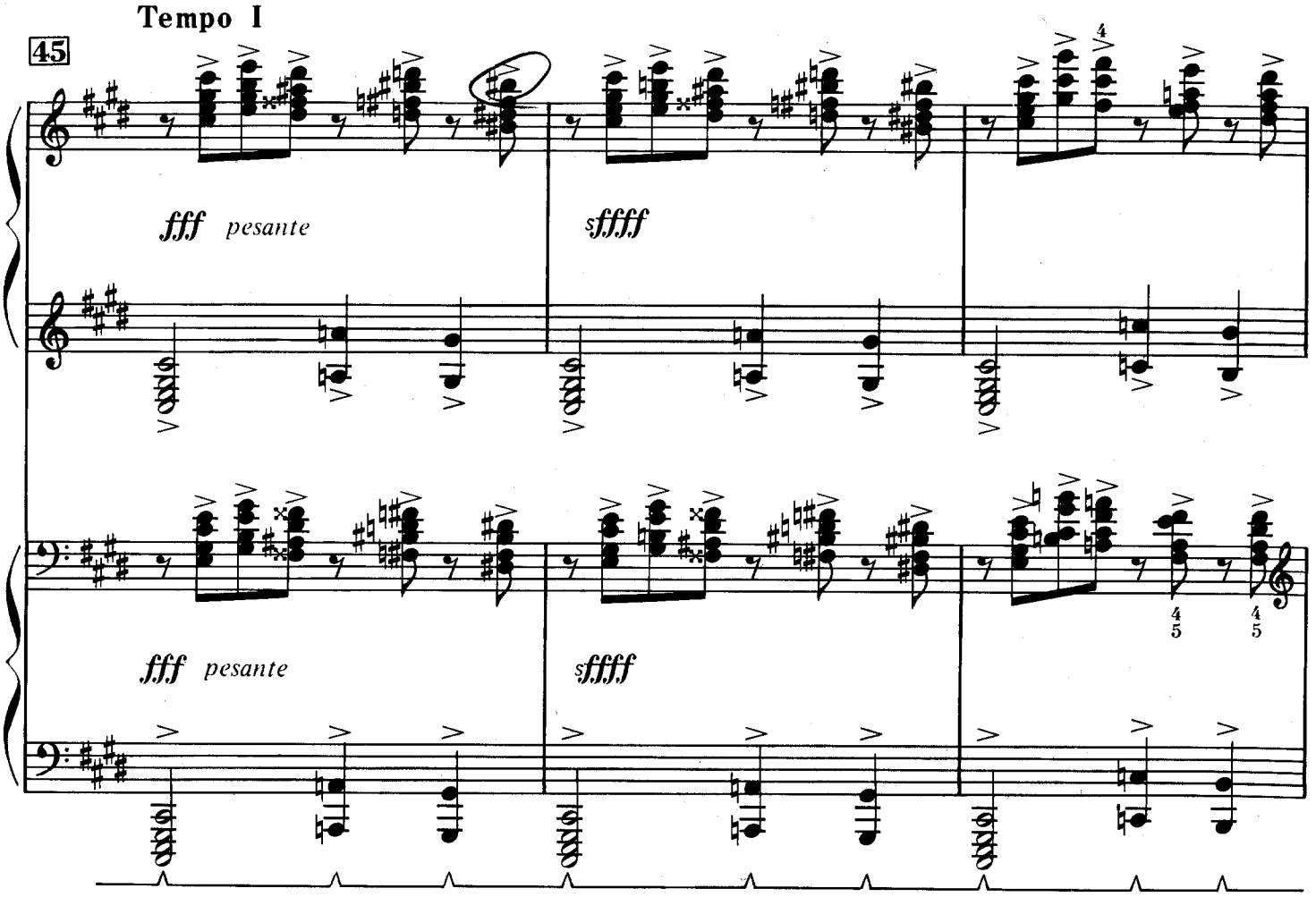
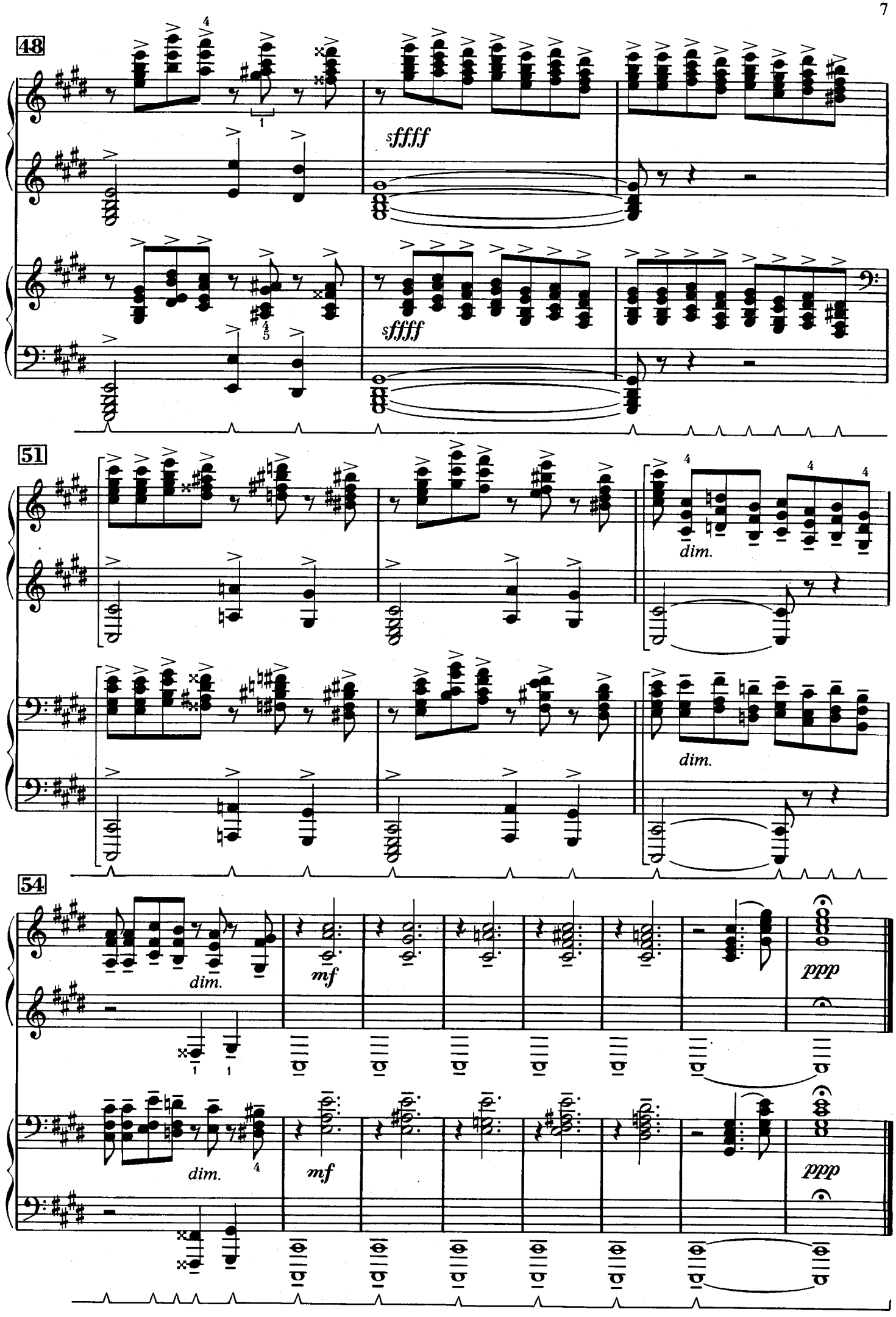

14
Agitato (♩=c.104-156)
mf
cresc.
17
dim.
mf
20
cresc.
23
dim.
cresc.


26
ff
half ped.
Ped. sim.
29
dim.
32
cresc.
35
accel.
fff


38


41
ff
(rit.)
ff
sfff
sfff


Tempo I
45
fff pesante
sffff
fff pesante
sffff


48
sffff
sffff
51
dim.
dim.
54
dim.
mf
ppp
dim.
mf
ppp

$3.50 in USA

THIS EDITION

This edition of the *Prelude in C-sharp Minor* is based on the first editions corrected by the composer and the versions found in *The Complete Works of Rachmaninoff* published in the Soviet Union since 1949. Most of the existing autographs of Rachmaninoff's works are in libraries in Russia, and Soviet librarians are uncooperative about letting foreigners have access to them. The editors of the Russian complete edition who had the use of the manuscripts, however, were very competent and have produced a valuable Urtext, though there are misprints, and the number of copies is severely limited. Obvious errors have been corrected without comment in this edition.

Rachmaninoff seldom wrote metronome marks for his piano music except for the preludes of opus 23. Both before and after that publication of 1903 he apparently thought it better not to be specific as possible about tempos. Most musicians agree that the precise tempo for a performance should be governed to a degree by the instrument, the resonance of the room, and the taste and skill of the player. Rachmaninoff probably would have accepted modifications of his metronome marks.

For these pieces that have no metronome marks from the composer the suggested metronome marks are indicated thus: (♩ = c. 80). The fingering given here is largely new. Rachmaninoff wrote fairly complete fingerings for a few of his pieces, but for the most part he wrote fingering only for unusual or particularly complex passages. The fingering offered here is servicable for the average size hand, and some facilitations incorporated in this edition will ease some of the playing difficulties. Fingerings from any source should be regarded as suggestions for a convenient, efficient way of reaching the best musical results.

A story is told about a woman at a cocktail party who asked a rising young pianist about his forthcoming New York recital. When he told her that his program would include a group of Rachmaninoff preludes she replied, "Did you say Rachmaninoff preludes? Oh, did he write more than one?" The story may not be true, but it points up the fact that when many people hear Rachmaninoff's name they think of the famous C-sharp minor prelude, and sometimes they know little more about his music. This piece, written when the composer was just out of the conservatory, brought him early international fame, and it has become one of the most popular piano pieces written in the last hundred years. Its immediate success can be explained in part by the fact that it was sold outright, for a fee worth about $20, to a publisher who didn't get an international copyright. In a short time and ever since, it has appeared in all kinds of editions—some of them titled *The Bells of Moscow, The Burning of Moscow, The Moscow Waltz,* and even *That Moscow Rag.* For a time the piece was played too frequently—often quite badly—and its composer grew to dislike playing it because it was demanded as an encore at all his piano recitals before the audience would leave the hall. But there are reasons for its popularity other than its ready availability. It is clearly an original, striking, effectively developed musical idea which makes a dramatic impact on the listeners when it is beautifully played.

Rachmaninoff denied that he had any descriptive idea in mind when he wrote this prelude, though it is not surprising that people have thought so, because the music immediately establishes a mood of great seriousness. Sustaining the whole and half notes on the first page is a problem best solved by the use of the sostenuto pedal, but since many pianos do not have this expensive device, the first page is printed here with an alternate version in which the left hand little finger can quickly take one of the low notes played by the right hand, to hold it while half pedaling retains part of the sound of the lowest bass notes.

The tempo set by the three opening notes should be held steady up to measure 14. The middle section is faster as indicated, and the up-stemmed melody notes should stand out against the bass line while the second and third notes of the triplet are softer. The right hand part can be practiced by blocking the chords—playing all the notes on one beat at the same time (except for those places as in measure 17 where there is an up-stemmed eighth note, which can be played after the chord)—as far as the middle of measure 35. At the end of measures 27, 28, 30, and 31 it is necessary to broaden the beats so that the long jump for the left hand won't give the rhythm a disturbing wrench. The cadenza of interlocked chords which begins in measure 35 can also be practiced by playing simultaneously all the notes on one beat. By this means the sound of the chords and the feel of the keyboard positions are clearly established in the student's mind before the accents alternating between the hands introduce a further complication. Measures 43 and 44 establish by augmentation the opening motif and should re-establish the original tempo.

From measure 45, when four staves are used simultaneously, maximum sonority can be achieved only by using maximum weight of the arm. Again at the end of measure 50 and measure 52 the tempo must be broadened so that the continuity of the pulse is bent but not broken, as both hands move from the low to the high chords written on the first beat. The coda, which begins at measure 55, may be done with a diminuendo; since all the chords have C-sharps in addition to the low C-sharps (the pedal-point in the bass), the new elements in each chord may be stressed lightly.

Alfred

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