JOSEPH BABER

SIX PRELUDES

for Virginia Bodman

for Piano

Op. 14

Edited by Ian M. Stewart

DANIEL ARNOLD
MUSIC SERVICES

Notes from the Composer

Virginia Bodman, wife of my Viola Professor, Lyman Bodman, was a piano accompanist of extraordinary musical depth and power. She also had a phenomenal ability to read music at sight, a skill she graciously used to assist me in my composition assignments at Michigan State University.

As a sight-reading pianist she had a friendly competitor, Warren Martin, assistant director in those days of the Westminster Choir in New Jersey, and something of a musical legend at the Westminster Choir College and at Princeton. These two friends loved nothing better than to challenge one another's acumen with unknown music. So, on one of Martin's many visits to their home, he was given one of my assignments as a challenge. They had so much fun using what I had written that I composed new works specifically for his future visits.

The results, assembled later, are this set of six Preludes, all but one written between January 1959 and June 1962. (The one exception is No. 5, which was amended from a Gottschalk study I had made at the University of Miami in 1956-57 when I was studying with Renée Longy.) For the most part, these pieces were child's-play for such adept pianist as these two were, so in No. 3 I set out to perpetrate a nearly unplayable piece, consisting of a sublimely-innocuous, right-hand melody linked to an asymmetrical, left-hand accompaniment filled with almost-impossible leaps. The right and left hands reverse this arrangement on alternating phrases.

–Joseph Baber

Notes from the Editor

Editing Methodology

All fingering and pedaling is editorial. Various interpretational markings (e.g., voicing) have been added to the score with the composer's approval.

Interpretive Suggestions

NOTE: The following notes are meant to aid in interpretation of the pieces contained within this volume. They contain interpretive suggestions from the composer and myself (as his designated performer). These notes are intended for anyone looking for an interpretive aid, but especially non-professional pianists. They are strictly optional, and do not have to be followed.

All of the Bodman preludes (except for #5) rank between 6 and 9 on the Henle difficulty scale – roughly the equivalent of Chopin's etudes. Like etudes, each piece is an exercise in a different technique, as summarized below.

In the original manuscripts, each prelude had a more programmatic title. All but "Gottschalk" were later struck out to avoid them being taken as literal directions. These titles are also provided below.

None of these pieces explicitly requires the sostenuto pedal; however, "Gottschalk" will benefit from its use.

1 – "Toccata" – Emphasizing notes in a fast accompaniment to create a slow melody
2 – "Toccata" – Various techniques used in toccatas, such as repeated notes
3 – "Etude" – Jumps in both hands
4 – "Gottschalk" – "Stylistic" etude, symbolizing a 19th century view of the American South, or as the composer put it, "the type of piece that everyone *thinks* Gottschalk writes, instead of the type that he actually writes."
5 – "Interlude" – Sustaining a long melody
6 – "Scarlatti" – Light, rapid scales/runs

–Ian M. Stewart

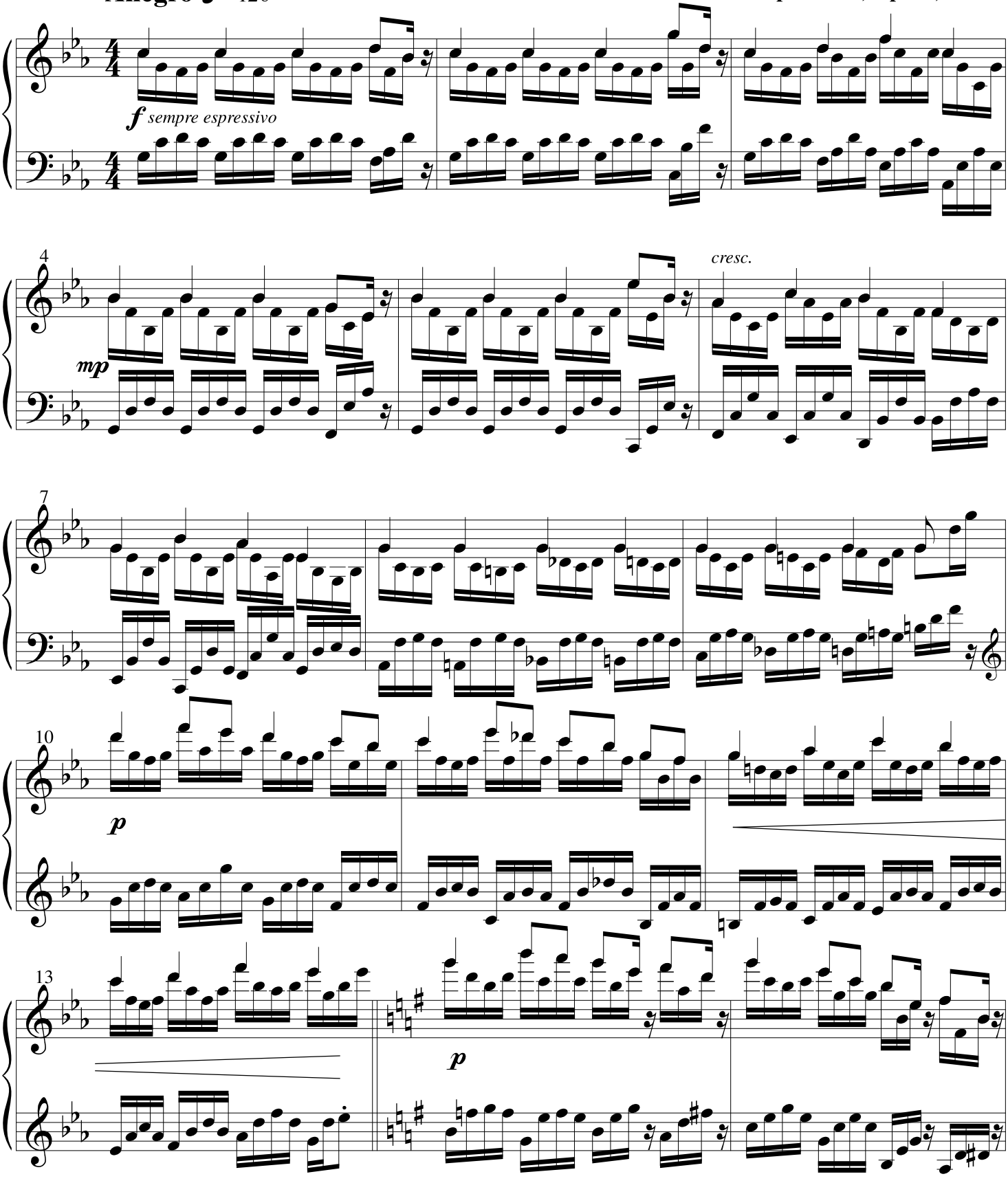
Six Preludes

for Virginia Bodman

Prelude No. 1

Allegro ♩ = 120

Joseph Baber, Op. 14, No. 10



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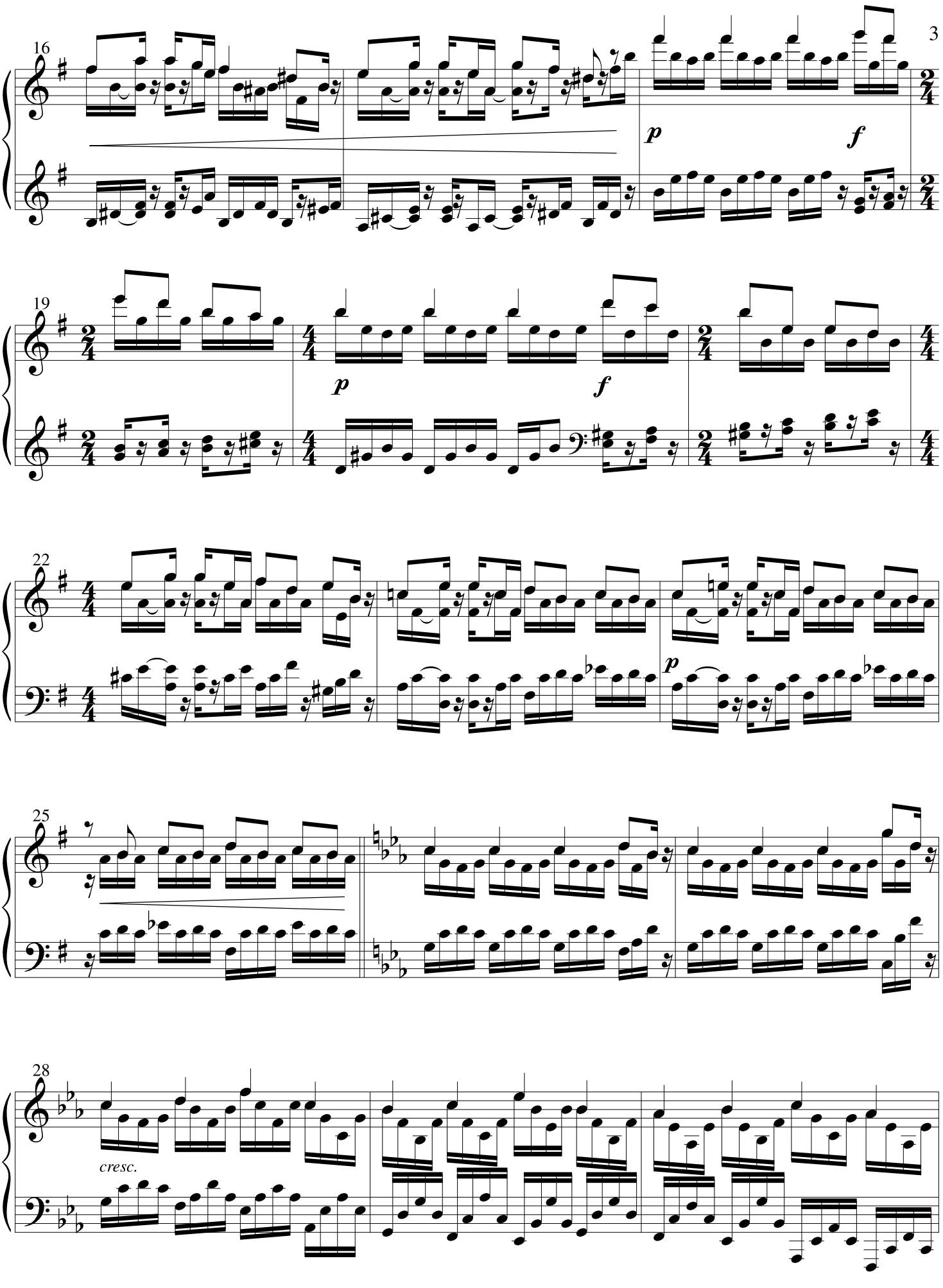
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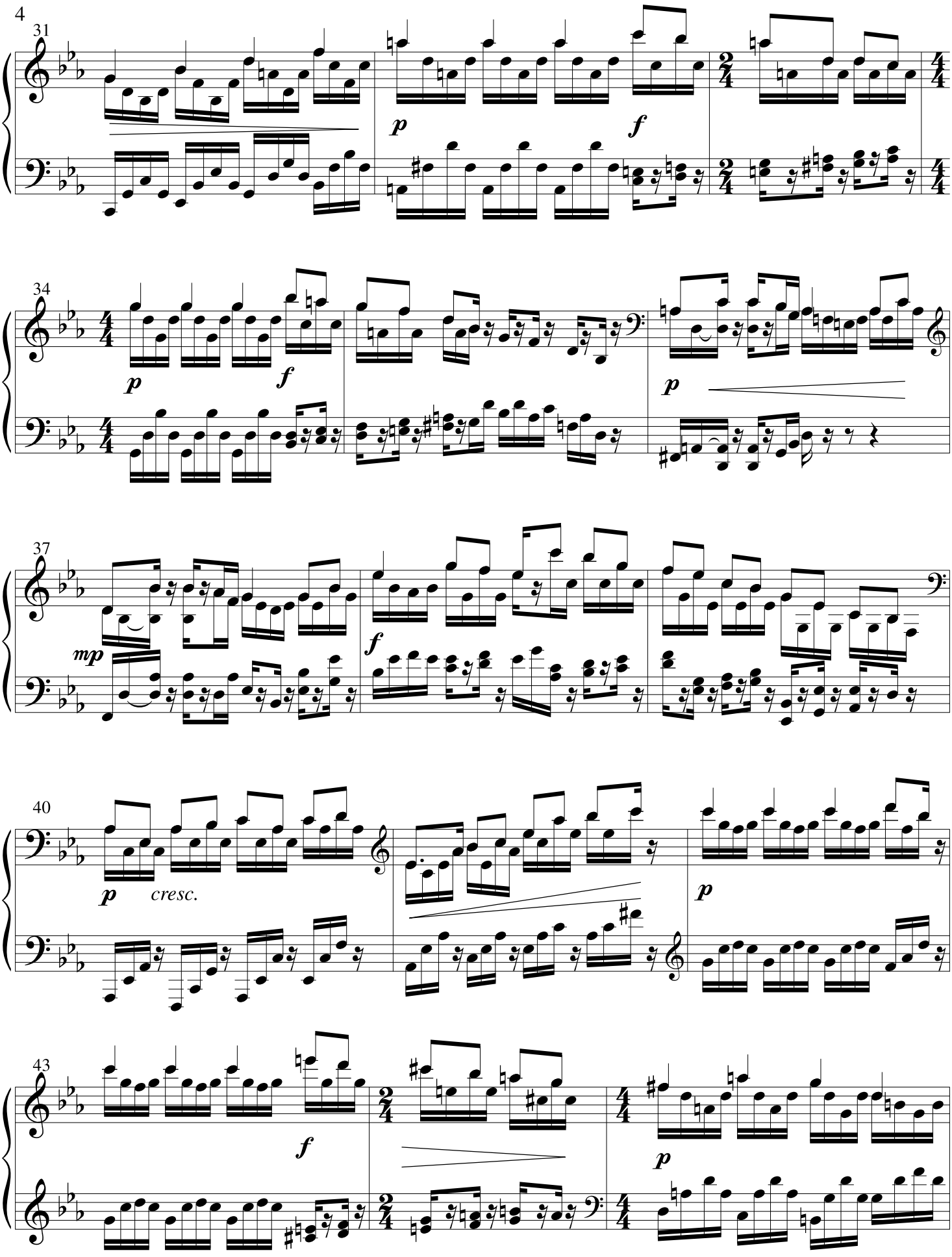
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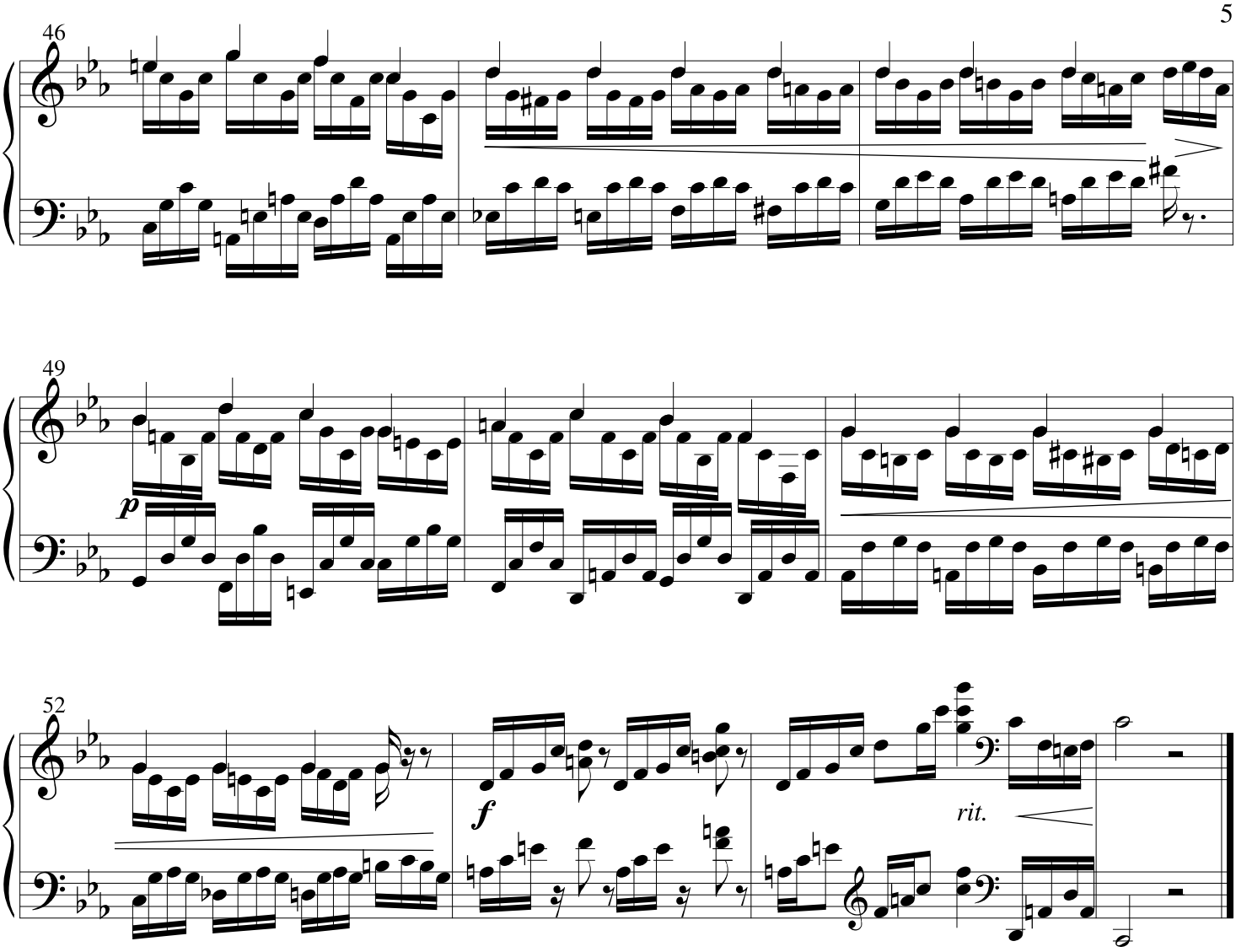
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