The MAYRON COLE PIANO METHOD

Romantic Era

Larghetto, Opus 15

Clara Wieck Schumann
1819-1896



Clara Wieck (pronounced "Veek") was born in Leipzig Germany. As a child, Clara did not speak and had symptoms of also being deaf. But her deafness and inability to speak were most probably caused from the chaos in her family: her mother, Marianne, was divorcing Clara's domineering and difficult father, Friedrich. (Friedrich was a highly regarded piano teacher and owner of a piano store in Leipzig.) Not only was Marianne divorcing Friedrich, but according to German law, she had to handover her little girl to be raised by the father.

Friedrich took Clara to many doctors, and all of them stated that Clara should be institutionalized. But Friedrich would not allow that, and he would not give up. Finally, one day, at the age of four, Clara began talking. And it turns out she could hear quite well, also. So the piano lessons began. Friedrich was convinced that with his piano method, he could turn his little girl into the next Mozart.

When Clara was eight, she was invited to perform at a casual Sunday afternoon recital at the home of Dr. Ernst Carus. And at that recital, Clara met a darling seventeen-year old young man, Robert Schumann, who was a house guest of the Caruses.

Clara was highly intelligent, focused, could practice the piano for hours on end, had a memory like a sponge, was sensitive to musical nuances, loved to perform, and was driven to succeed. She had it all! And Friedrich was the perfect teacher and mentor to enable her to succeed. Soon, little Clara was concertizing all over Europe, and Friedrich was her concert manager. Thousands attended her concerts. Often, there were fist-fights as patrons fought over tickets to hear the amazing Clara Wieck. Soon she was the child-star of Europe's musical scene and was being feted by European royalty. And Friedrich Wieck was earning tremendous amounts of money from his darling daughter's talent.

In 1830, when Clara was eleven, Robert Schumann came back into her life. He had been studying law in Heidelberg, Germany, but had given up that career path in order to study piano. And he wanted the

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great Friedrich Wieck to be his piano teacher. Friedrich had by this time remarried, and he and his wife Clementine welcomed Robert to their home.

Friedrich taught Robert a piano lesson whenever Friedrich had the time, and Robert lived in the Wieck's spare room in the attic where he composed and wrote for a music magazine he owned. Robert was a fun houseguest, and Clara thoroughly enjoyed his teasing and humor. But all the while she was slowly falling in love with Robert. Robert, on the other hand, was dating every woman in Leipzig and all the surrounding villages. He even became almost-engaged to a Bohemian baron's daughter. But since he had no means to support a wife, the baron cancelled the engagement. Clara could not have been happier.

By the time Clara was twelve, she and Friedrich regularly toured all over Germany and finally toured into France. In Paris Clara achieved great success. One night, she met Felix Mendelssohn backstage after one of her concerts. Felix conversed with Clara and Friedrich and mentioned that he would most probably take a position as orchestra conductor for the Leipzig orchestra.

But at that time, a cholera epidemic was beginning to sweep through Paris. Friedrich, who hated cancelling any of Clara's lucrative concerts, finally had to see the danger that was looming all around as bodies were being hauled off in wagons and houses were being burned. He and Clara barely made it out of Paris before the city fell to anarchy.

When Clara turned sixteen, Robert began to notice how attractive Clara was becoming. Friedrich could see the flirtations going on between Robert and Clara, and he was becoming frustrated with Clara's crush on Robert Schumann. Finally, Friedrich became more than frustrated and threatened to shoot Schumann on sight if he ever came around Clara again. So the couple began meeting in secret.

In 1837 Clara was seventeen and performing in Vienna; while there she won the prestigious Austrian Emperor's Award as the leading virtuoso pianist in Austria. This award was usually given to a Catholic male who was Austrian. Clara was female, Lutheran, and German, which made winning the award more thrilling for Clara. She wrote Robert about the award and also told him that restaurants in Vienna were creating desserts named after her. Clara was giddy with happiness.

But Clara was no longer a complacent puppet that Friedrich could manipulate. She was a strong young woman who knew how much Friedrich depended on her to earn money for him, his piano store, and his home. She knew her power, and she wanted Robert Schumann. But German law would not allow Clara and Robert to marry without Friedrich's consent since Clara was younger than twenty-one.

At the age of eighteen, an angry Clara decided to fire Friedrich and to henceforth manage her own concert tours. She and some of her female friends created a concert tour that would take her back to Paris in 1839. Clara and her friends hung publicity posters about the various cities; Clara contacted local newspapers and gave them stories about her upcoming concerts; Clara's friends stood in front of the concert halls and sold tickets; and Clara performed beautifully at every concert while Friedrich was back in Leipzig seething with anger.

During all of those young years, Clara was trying her hand at composing. Her compositions were well-written, but there are few of them because she was very busy concertizing night after night after night.

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Of course her concerts were making Robert Schumann's and Felix Mendelssohn's compositions famous all over Europe.

In 1840, two days before Clara turned twenty-one, she and Robert Schumann were married in a civil ceremony in Leipzig. Her father and step-mother did not attend the ceremony, but her birth-mother, Marianne, came to Leipzig for the service.

Clara and Robert had a loving marriage. She gave concerts with Felix Mendelssohn at the Leipzig Gewandhaus Performance Hall almost nightly. (Clara Wieck Schumann still holds, to this day, the record for the most concerts performed at the Gewandhaus.) Audiences were craving more and more of Robert Schumann's music and Felix Mendelssohn's music.

Clara eventually had eight children, but the children did not stop her concert career as she was the sole support of her husband and babies. Because of Clara's high income, Robert could continue to compose and write for his music magazine. But there are trade-offs in every situation: Because Clara took over the responsibility of supporting her large family, she had very little time to compose. And this is our loss for the small number of compositions she completed reflect a great deal of creativity.

In 1853, the family moved to Dusseldorf, Germany. That same year, a handsome twenty-year old Johannes Brahms knocked on the Schumann's door. Brahms had been sent to the Schumann's by Clara's good friend, violinist Joseph Joachim. Clara and Robert welcomed Brahms into their home and invited him to move into their spare room in the attic. Brahms mentioned that he could help with all the children running about if Clara needed help. And Clara did need help because she was still performing nightly concerts. Clara also realized that there was something going wrong with Robert, and it was getting worse. Regretfully, eight years into their marriage, Clara's precious and sensitive Robert was slowly going insane.

In 1854 Robert Schumann attempted suicide by throwing himself into the freezing Rhine River. After he was rescued, he begged a doctor to commit him to a mental hospital. Robert was terrified that he would, in a delusion, attack his dear Clara. Robert spent the last two years of his life in the asylum, and for some weird reason Clara was not allowed by the doctors to visit Robert. He died in the hospital in 1856.

Although fourteen years younger than Clara, Johannes Brahms fell in love with her. At first, Clara was embarrassed by the young man's obvious adoration toward her. Brahms repeatedly asked Clara to marry him, and she declined every time. But Johannes and Clara did remain close friends for the rest of Clara's life. They often traveled together and vacationed together. And Clara continued to make other composers famous with her concerts. The magnificent concert pianist, Clara Wieck Schumann, permanently changed the format of piano recitals: she played all of the music by memory.

Clara continued to perform concerts until 1891. The last composition she played in her last concert was one of Johannes Brahms'. She died of a stroke on May 20, 1896. It was raining the day she was buried beside her darling Robert's grave. Johannes Brahms stayed beside her grave all night and died a short time later of pneumonia.

Essay by Mayron Cole

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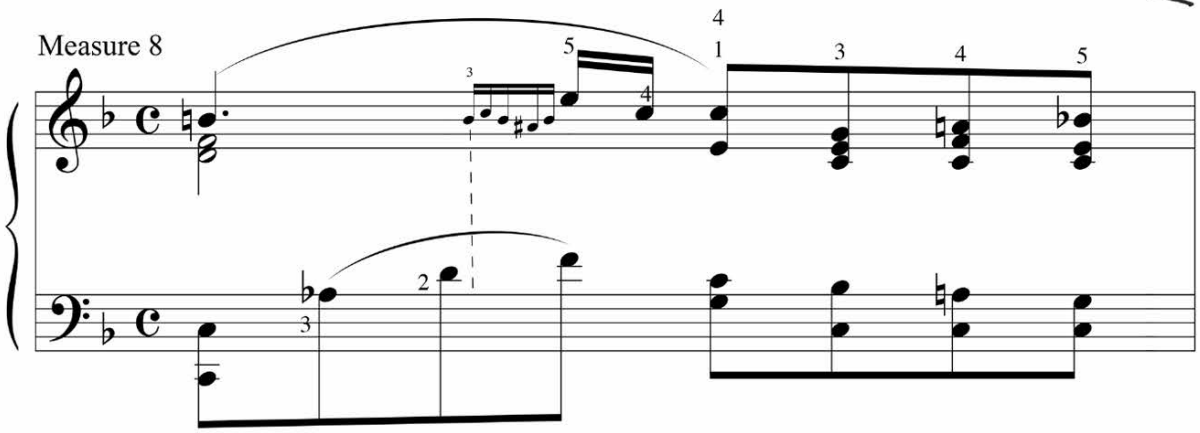
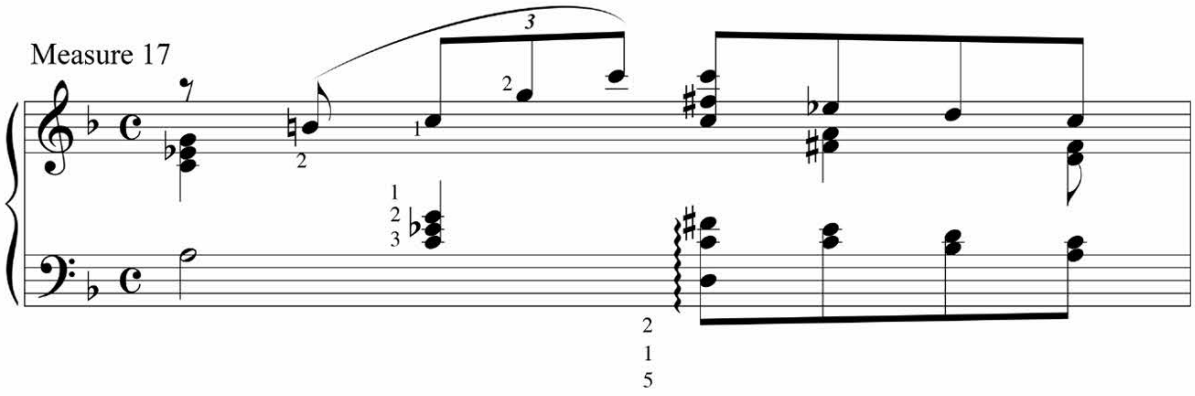
Larghetto, Opus 15
Theory



The small notes you see in Measure 8 below are called a TURN. The small notes indicate that the "turn" is not part of the beat's count and must be squeezed into the music without slowing or altering the rhythm's steady beat. The dotted lines have been added to show you where to play the turn. As you can see, the turn is played AFTER you strike the left-hand D key. Play Measure 8 below three times.



In Measure 17 below, the third-beat chord in the left hand is too big of a stretch for the average pianist's hand. So use the fingering indicated: After your thumb plays Middle C, quickly cross over to play inner-ledger note F#. Practice playing this chord three times.



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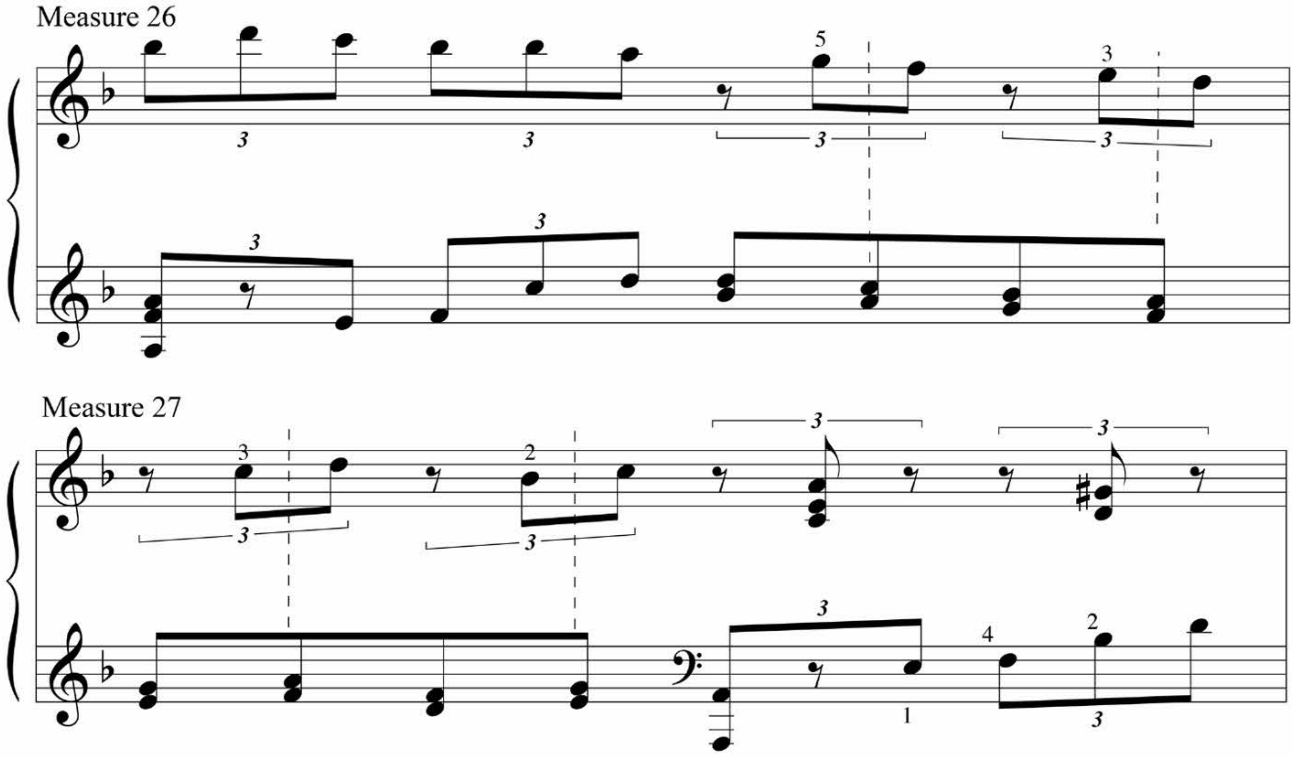
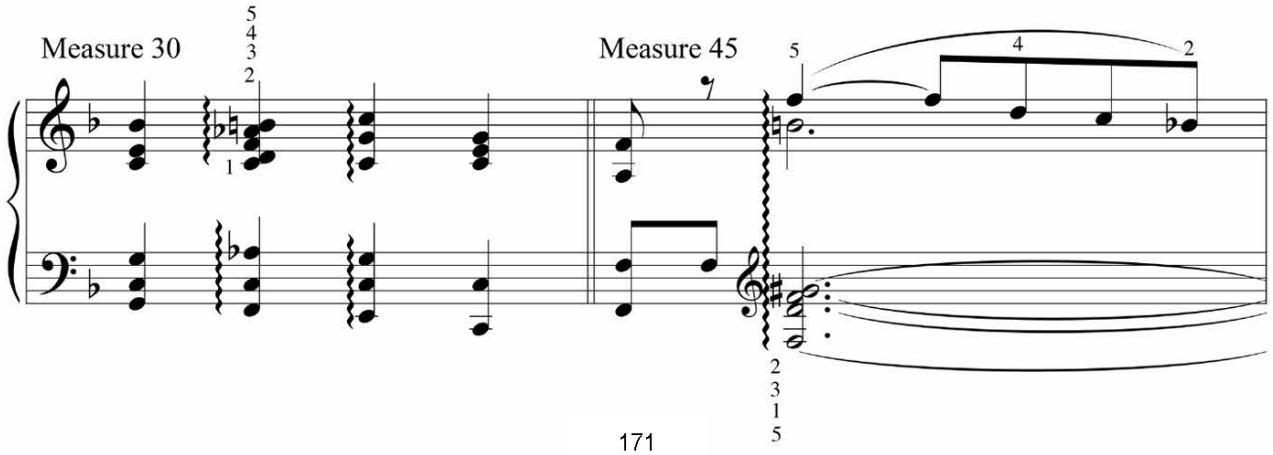
In previous levels of The Mayron Cole Piano Method, we learned how to play three-against-two, so you are of course very familiar with counting and playing the rhythms in Measures 26 and 27 below. As a review, play these measures three times.



In Measure 30 you see the broken chord lines are separated with a space, which we learned in previous levels of The Mayron Cole Piano Method tells you to break both chords simultaneously. In Measure 45 you see a long, continuous wavy line between the broken chords in both staffs which tells you to break the chords starting with the lowest tone of the bass clef chord then continue breaking the tones through the right hand interval. Your pedal will help you to sustain the tones of the chords. Also in Measure 45, pay attention to the LH fingering of the broken chord. Please use the fingering indicated.



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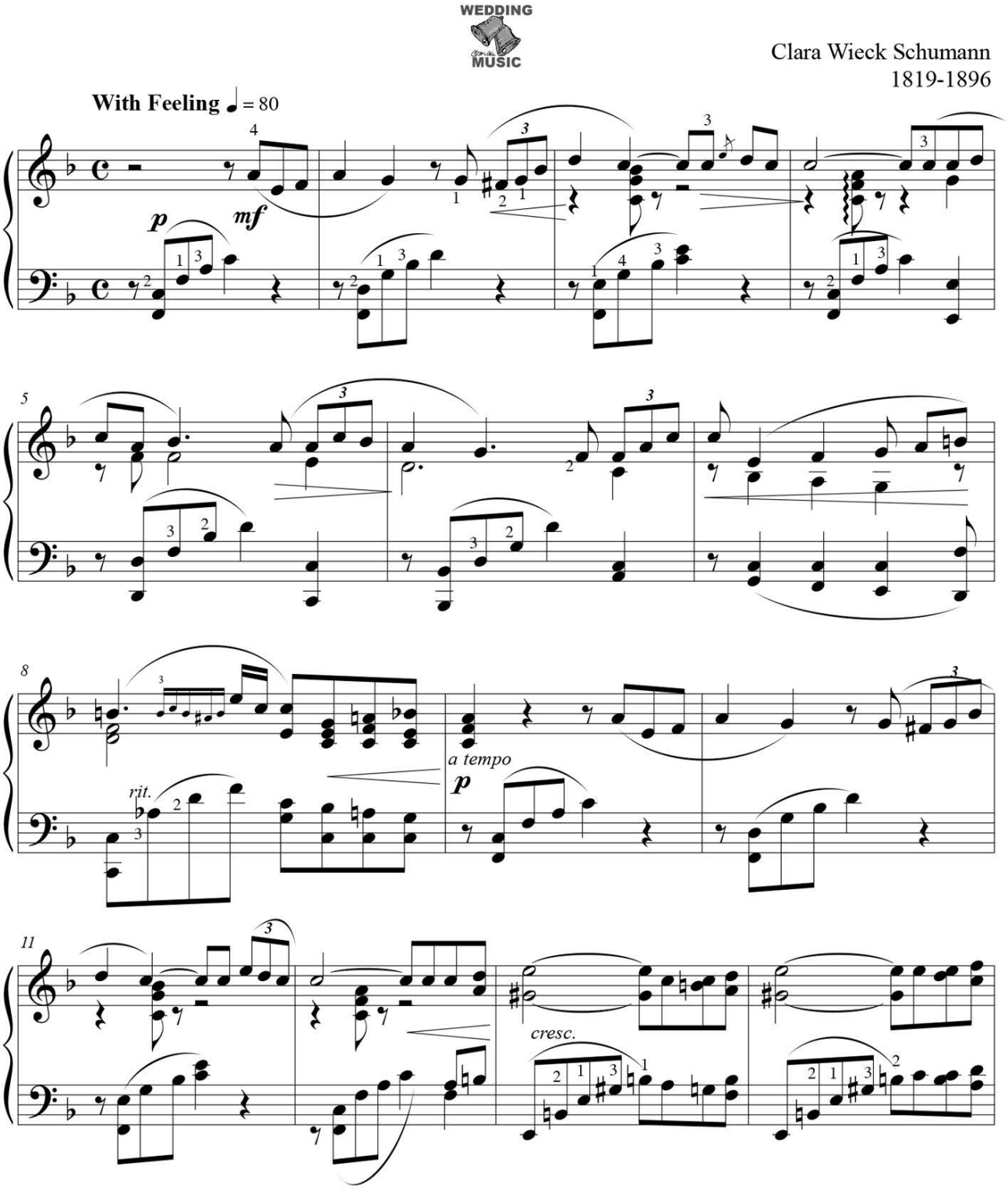
Larghetto, Opus 15

(orchestrated accompaniment has a 2 measure count-in)



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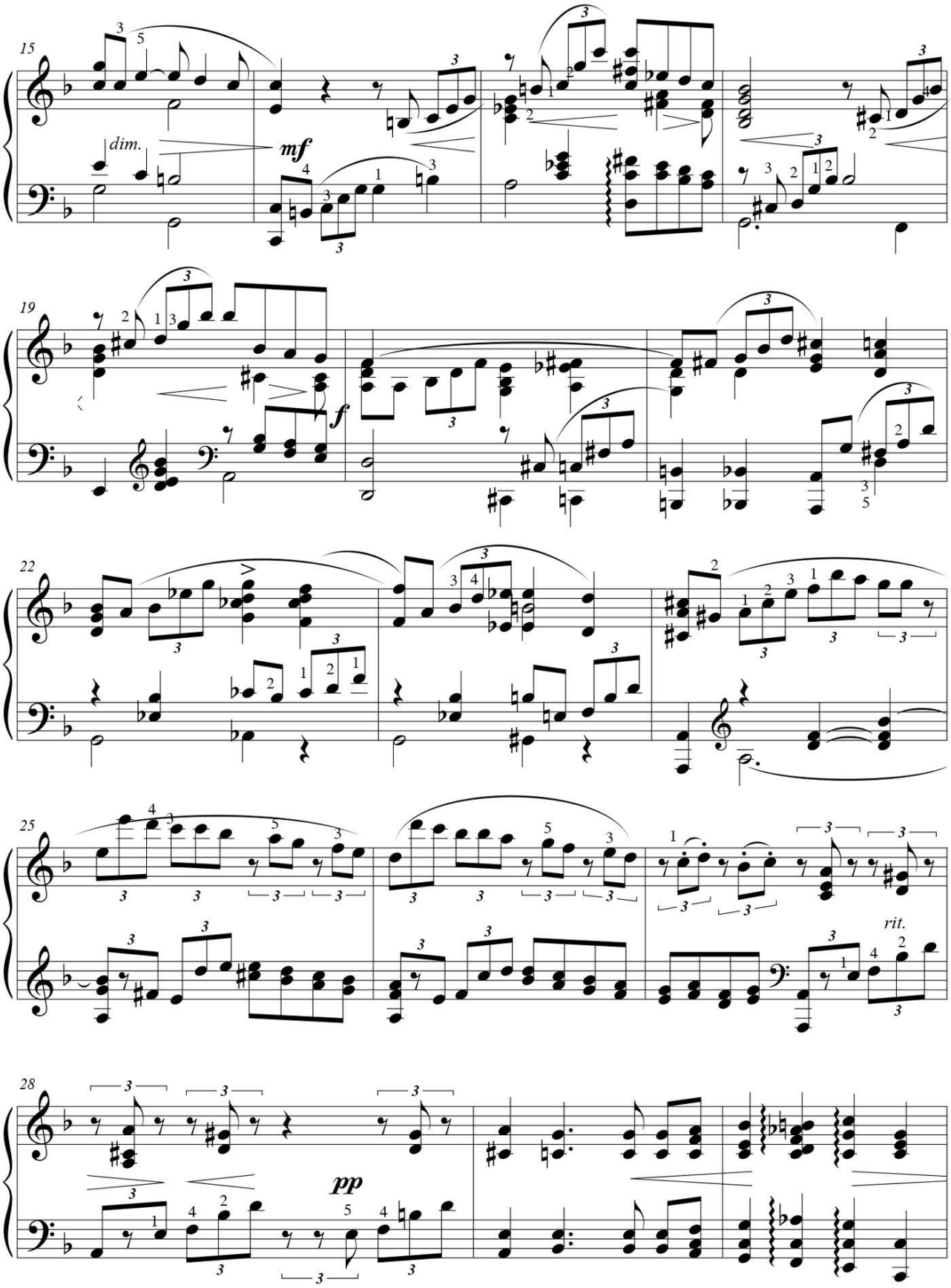

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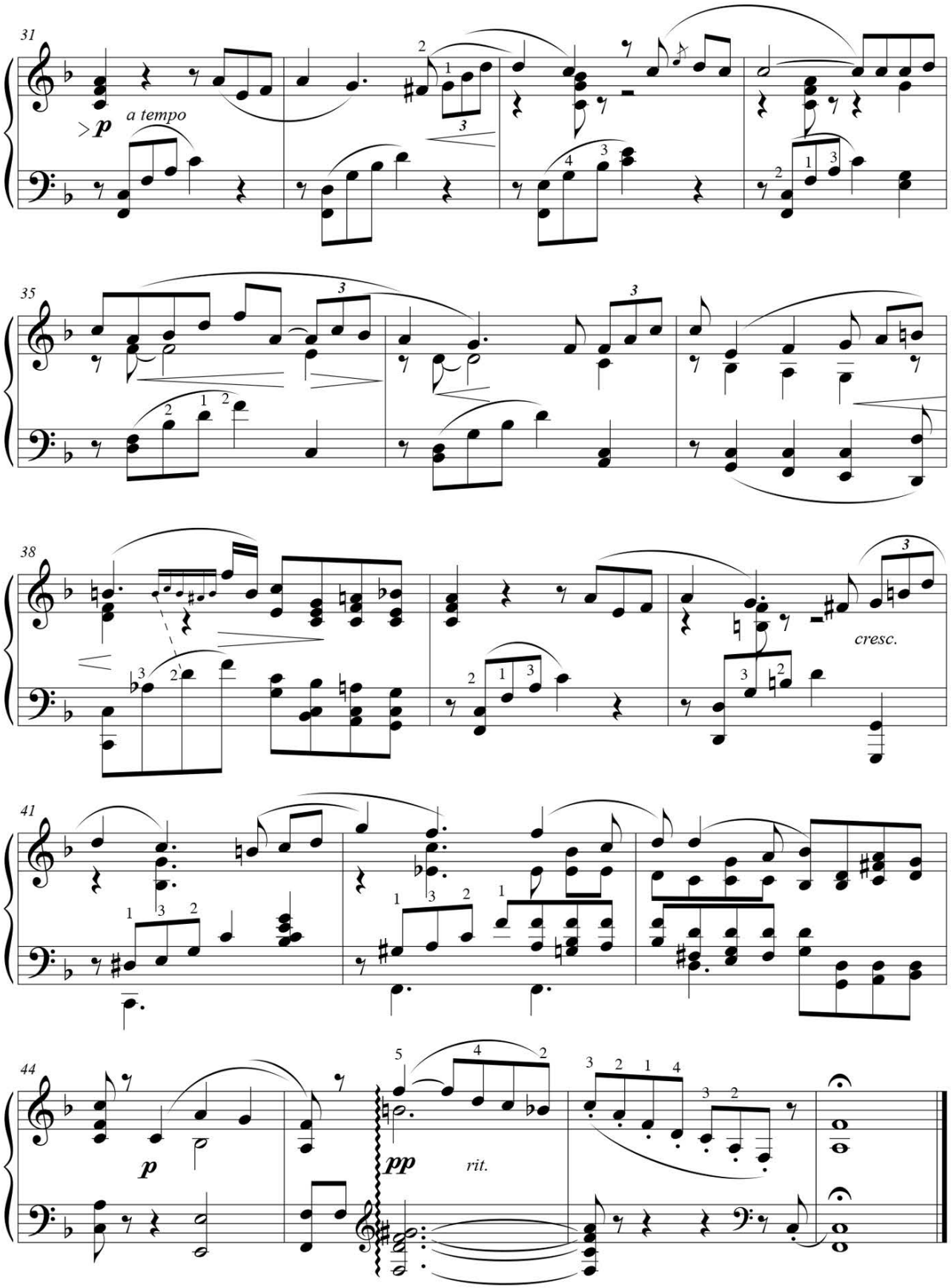

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