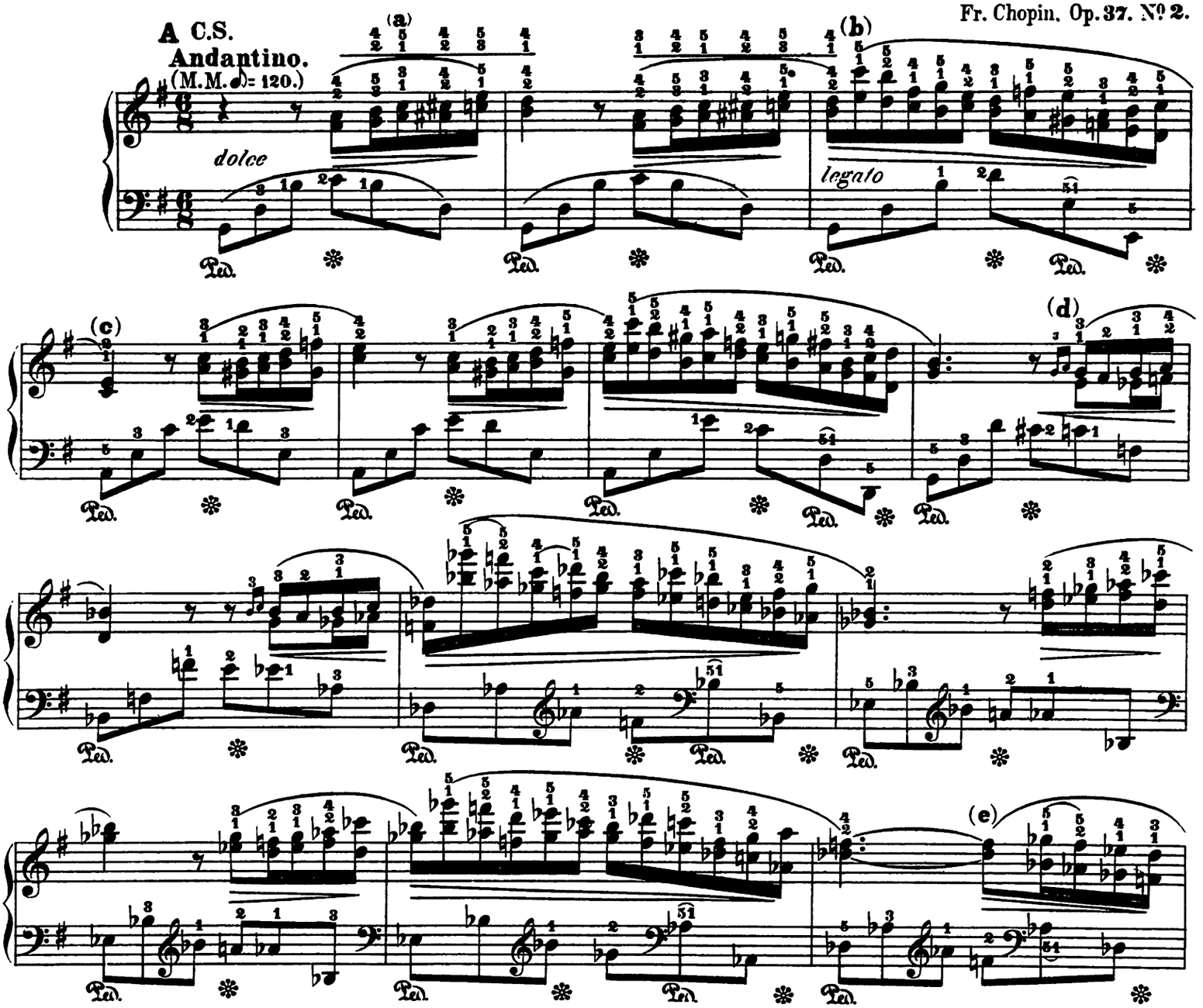
NOCTURNE.

Th. Kullak.

Fr. Chopin. Op. 37. № 2.



The nocturne consists of a chief subject and a secondary subject which repeat in alternation. The chief subject is altogether figurative in style. The thematic kernel is formed of the first four-measure section, in which a little motive (a), after repeating, is combined with a second (b) so as to form a passage which concludes at (c). a and b are related to each other (of course quite in miniature) like first and responsive sections (Vordersatz and Nachsatz). In place of a and b, other motives indeed appear here and there in the course of the chief subject, but they are always exactly like them in rhythm and form or else similar to them (see d.e.), so that their derivation is always to be traced back to a and b again.

As, furthermore, richest changes of modulation appear in the repetitions, the chief subject may be compared to a texture which, by reason of its costly stuff, its graceful design, and its rich yet harmonious splendor of color, enrapture the spectator.

In contrast to the figurative, mobile character of the chief subject, the secondary subject B-C presents a Cantilena in which everything breathes repose, peace, and deepest fervor of feeling. It is, as Karasowski says, "perhaps the most beautiful melody that Chopin invented." At C the chief subject is repeated, first with an organ-point (on the dominant); from D to E, the secondary subject; this subject after richest changes of modulation, is relieved at E by a fragment of the chief subject. The contents of the coda F are taken from the secondary subject.

In discussing the present nocturne and the preceding one (Op. 37 №1), says Robert Schumann: "The two nocturnes differ from his earlier ones chiefly through greater simplicity of decoration and more quiet grace. We know Chopin's fondness in general for spangles, gold-trinkets and pearls. He has already changed and grown older; decoration he still loves, but it is of a more judicious kind, behind which the nobility of the poetry shimmers through with all the more loveliness: indeed, taste, the finest, must be granted him." (R. Schumann: Gesammelte Schriften II 226).

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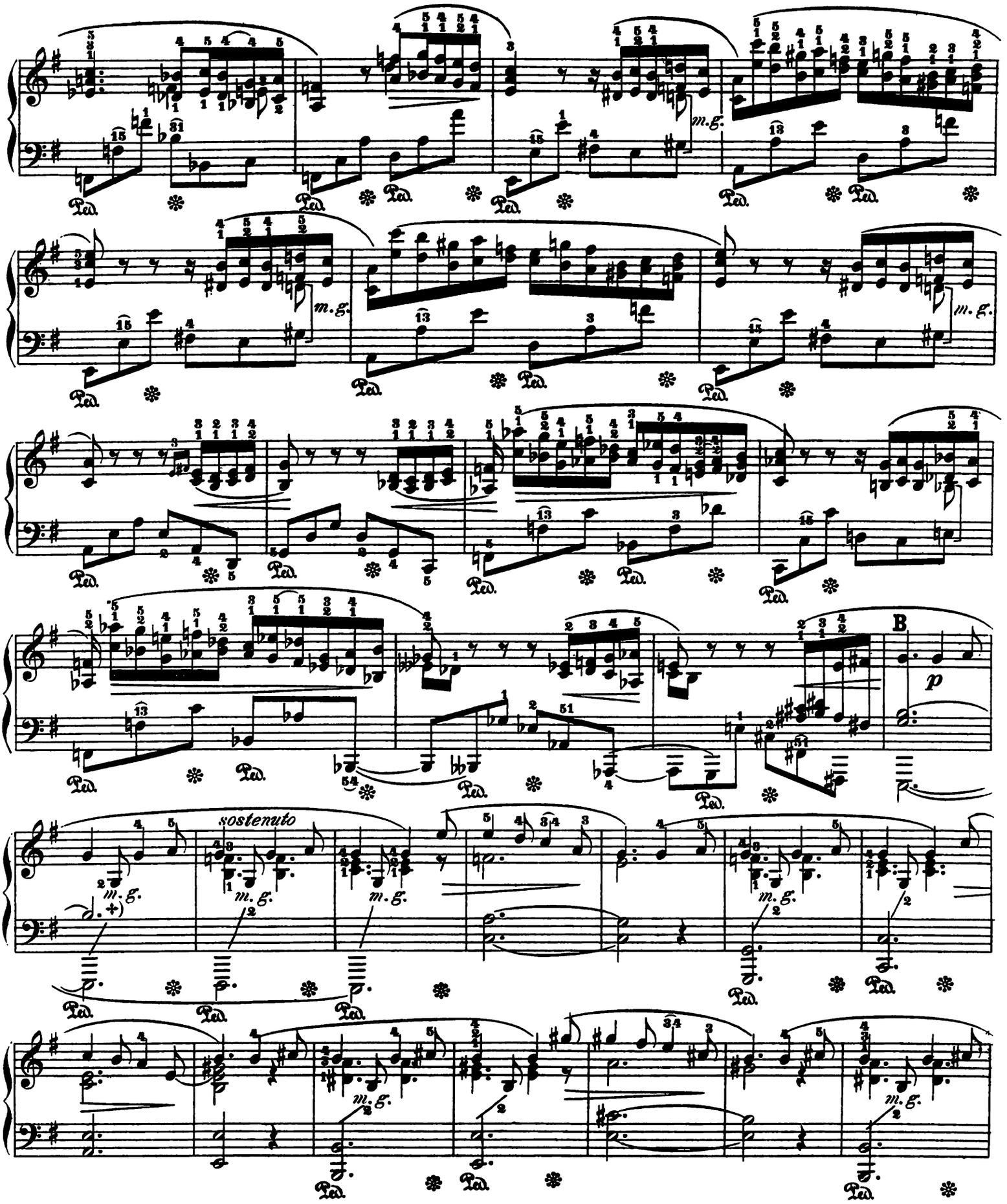
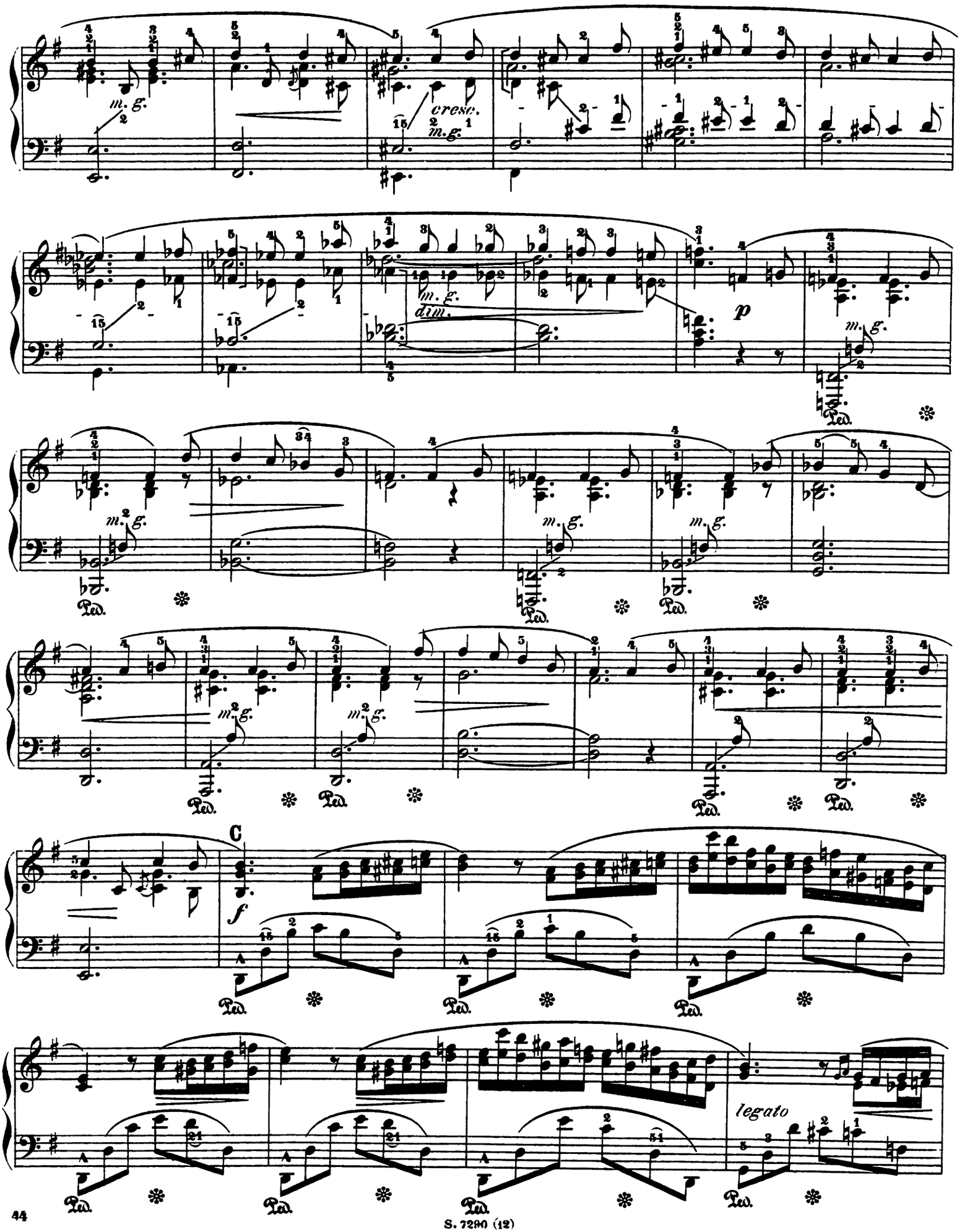


+) It will be found a great facilitation, especially for smaller hands, to take the third eighth g in this and the following measures with the left hand; only, the pedal must be used as marked, because otherwise the sound of the lowest base-note would be too short.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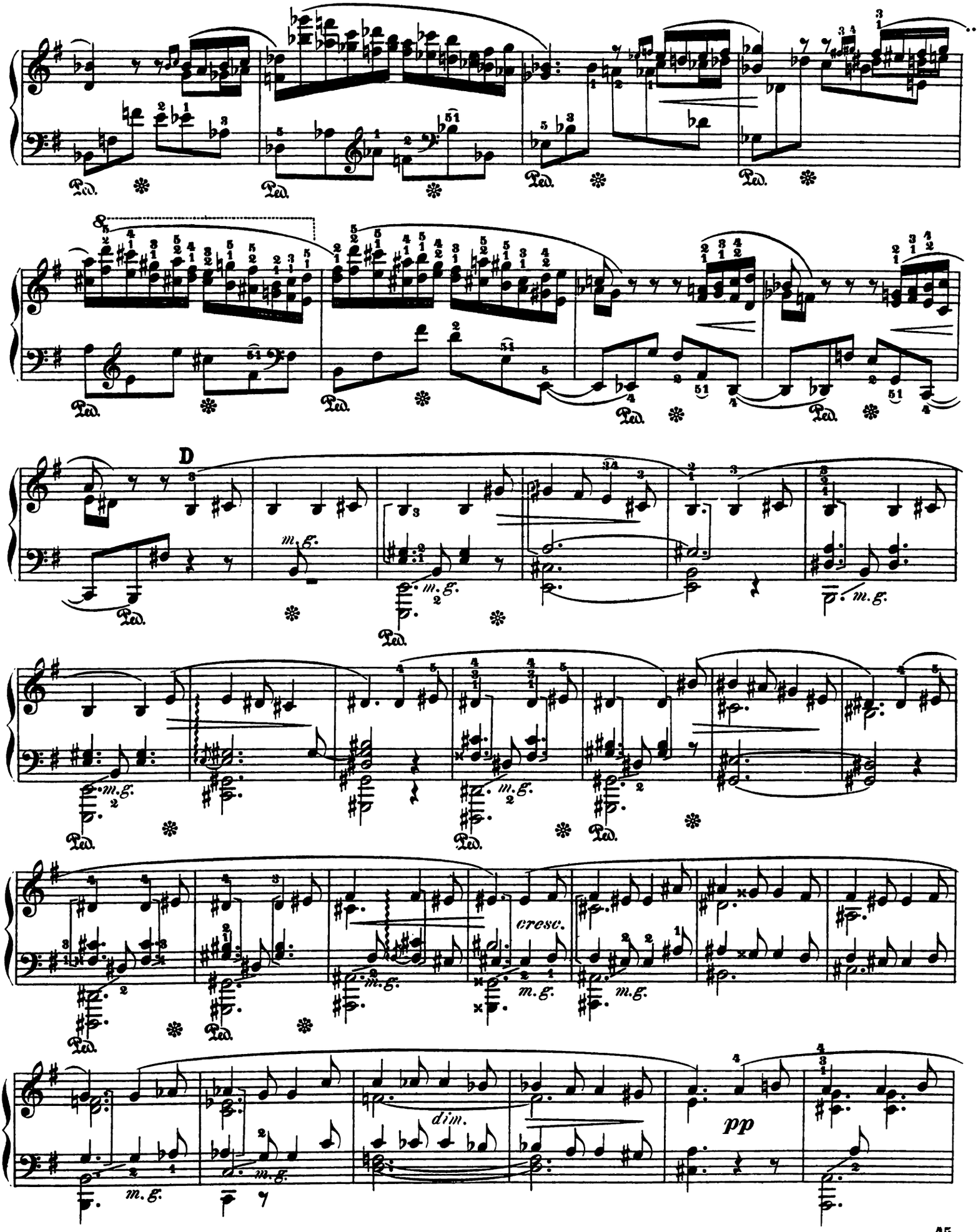
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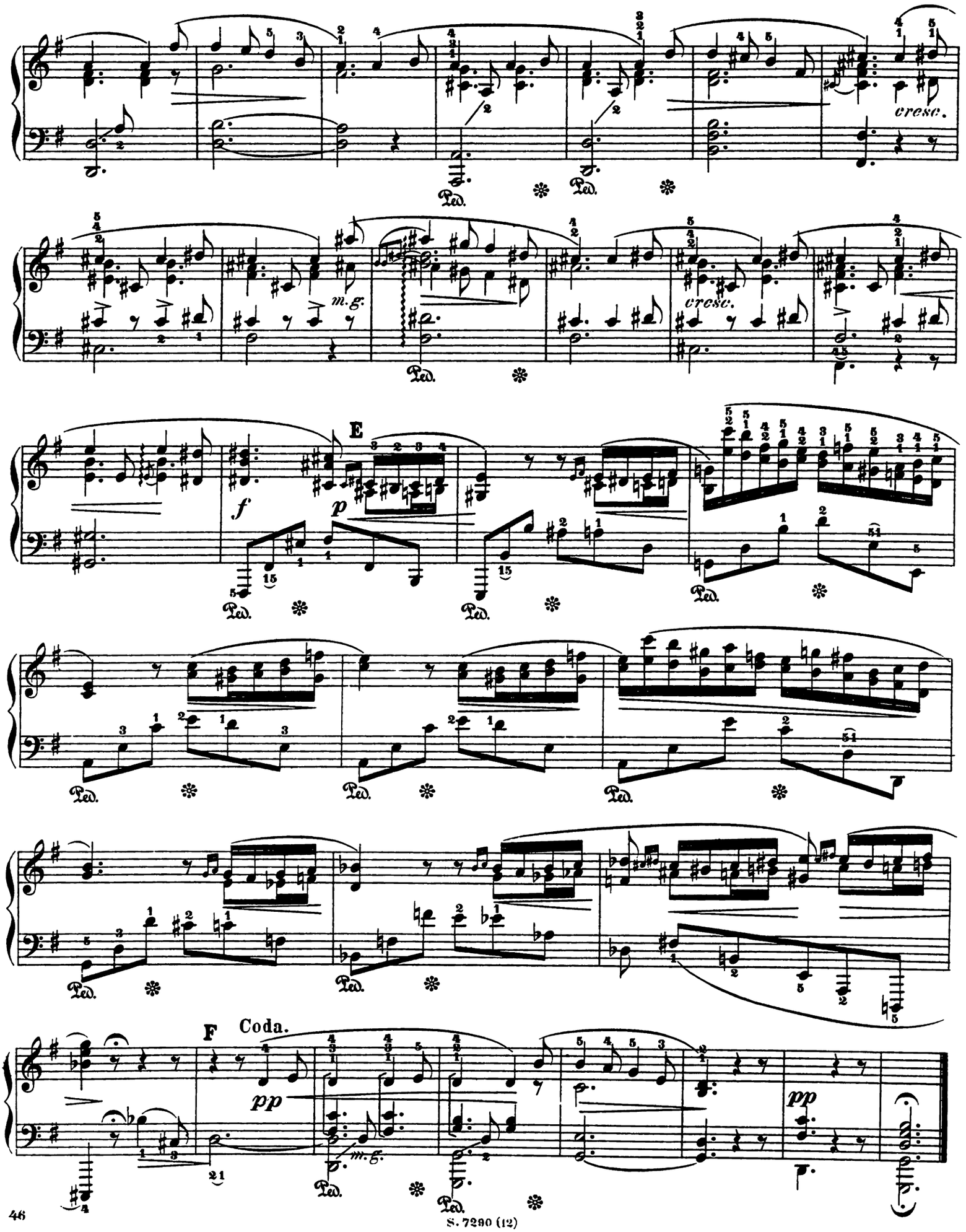
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