Two Preludes Op. 67

by Alexander Scriabin

Edited by Peter Billam

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Two Preludes, Alexander Scriabin op.67, 1912-3

Danilewitsch quotes Scriabin: "my melody is a decomposed harmony, and my harmony is condensed melody." Indeed, the harmony notes are not a subset, selected for lower tension, of the melody notes; they are all of them. The euphony desirable in longer notes is attained by careful spacing; this in turn encourages some arpeggiation, that further blurs the border between the harmonic and melodic realms. The following observations on the harmonic and rhythmic construction are mostly gleaned from Manfred Kelkel's book *Alexandre Scriabine: Sa vie, l'ésotérisme et le langage musical dans son oeuvre*, Éditions Honoré Champion, 7 quai Malaquais, Paris, 1978.

At the time of Op. 67, Scriabin was using the eight-note scale 1+2+1+2+1+2+1+2 semitones. Since the pattern repeats every three semitones, it has only three distinct transpositions. In the second movement, the first bars are made from *C Db Eb En F# G A Bb*; in bar 1 *Db* and *En* are omitted, in bar 2 the first half has *En* and *G* omitted, and the second half has *G* and *Bb* omitted, a simple rising pattern.

In the slower first movement, this eight-note scale is expanded to a nine-note scale. In the first bar, an *Ab* is added on the barline. In bar 15, using the second transposition *C# D E F G G# A# B*, an *F#* is added on the barline, and the scale-note *G* is omitted in bar 15 but mentioned in bar 16. By simple changes of this kind, Scriabin maintains harmonic rhythm, and harmonic movement from bar to bar.

Both movements are 35 bars long. The rhythmic structure of the first is most easily read by counting the left hand chords in eigth-notes: there is a six-bar phrase and its repetition, then a four-bar phrase and its repetition a semitone down, then a six-bar phrase and its repetition six semitones down extended to eight bars.

6 bars: 3+2, 3+2, 3+7, 3+7; 6 bars: 3+2, 3+2, 3+7, 3+5+2
4 bars: 8+2, 10; 4 bars: 8+2, 10
6 bars: 3+7, 3+17
8 bars: 3+2, 3+2, 3+5+2, 3+17
last bar: 5

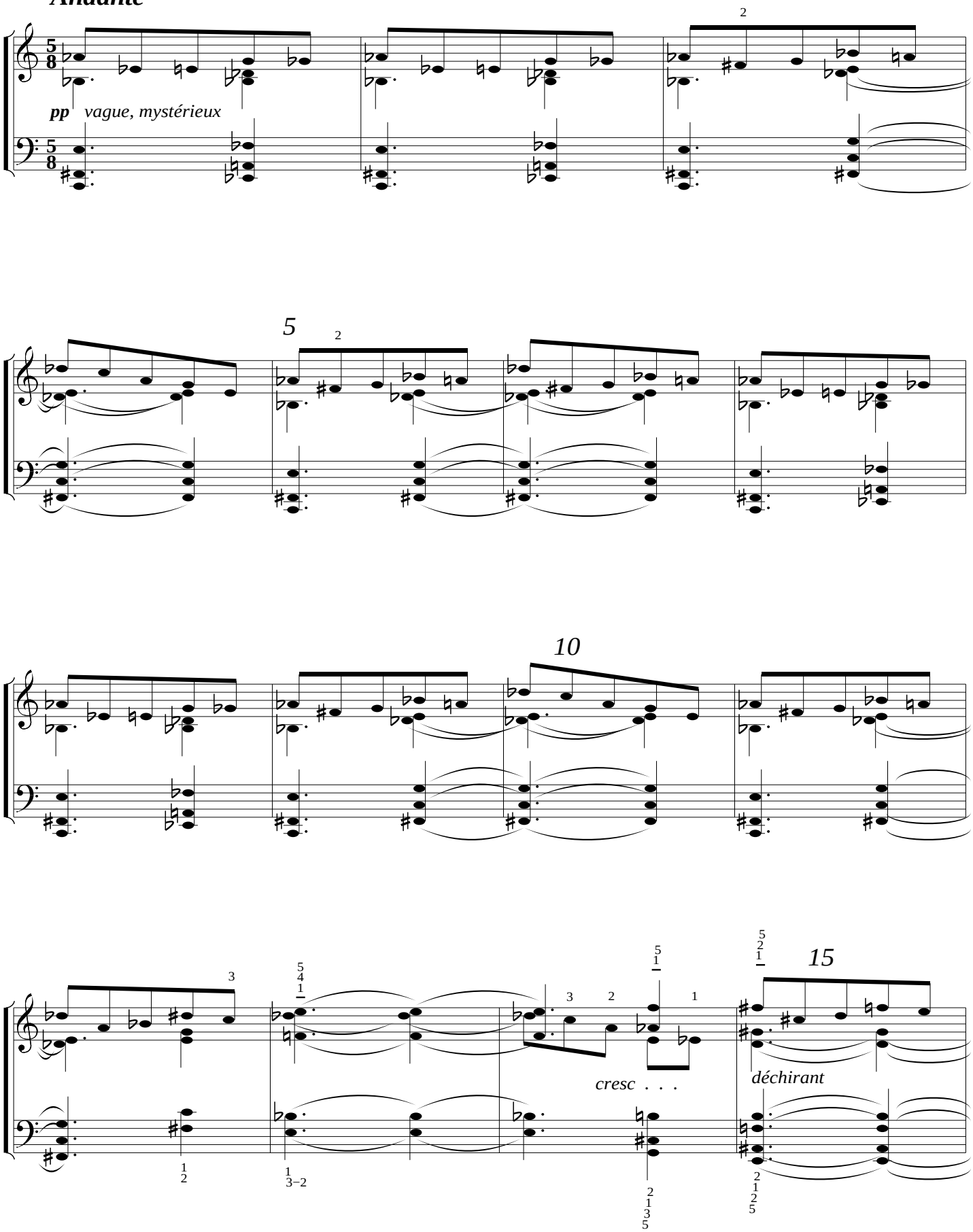
The sections of the second movement are counted in bars. First there is a ten-bar section (4+2+4), then a twelve-bar section (4+2+4+2), then a recapitulation of the ten-bar section (4+2+4), and then a three-bar conclusion.

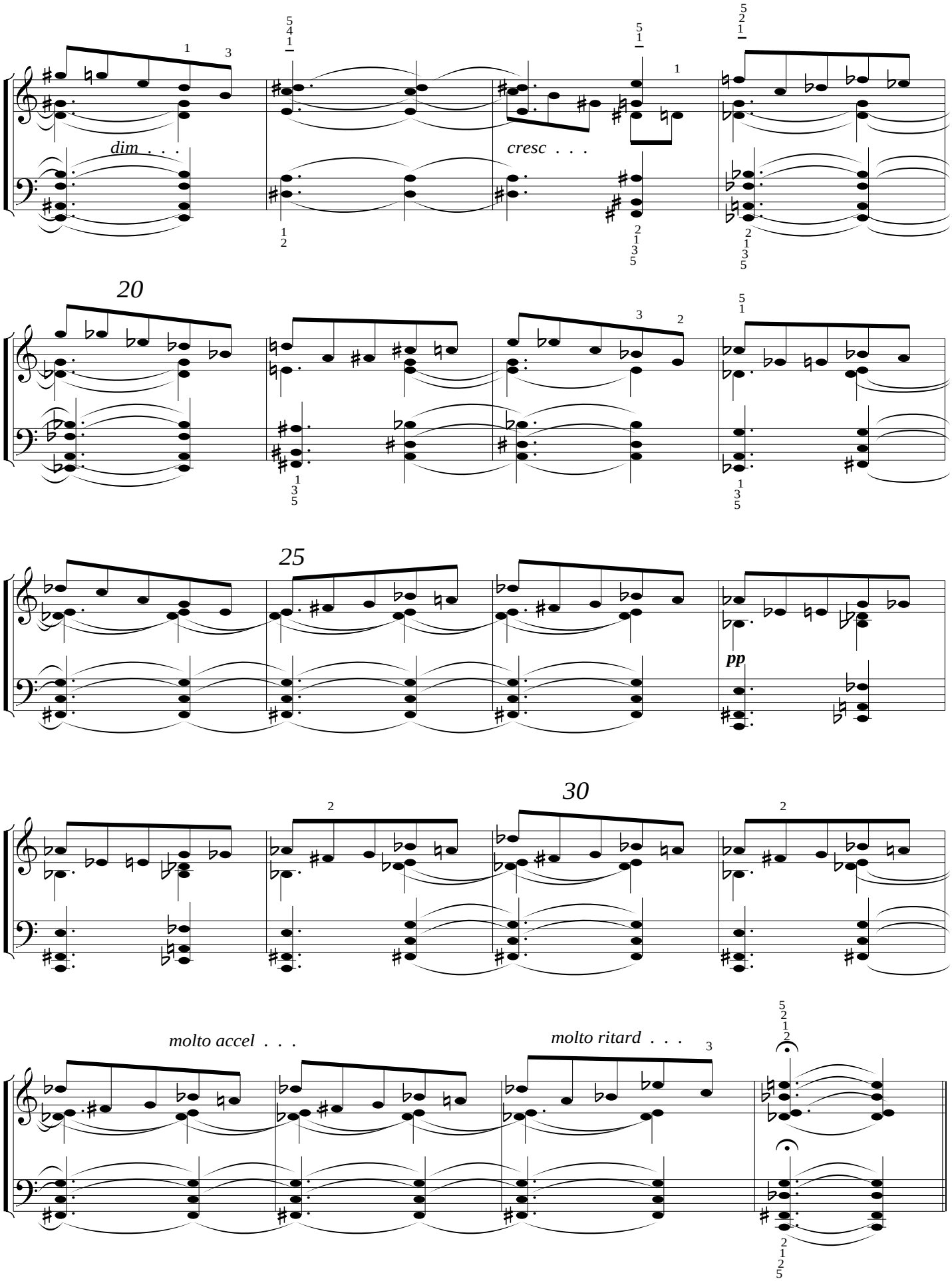
In this edition the notes are right but many expression marks are not, partly through the constraints of my music-typesetting software *muscript*. Long slurs have been omitted, and the arpeggiation symbols are missing. If you're considering playing these pieces, make sure you consult Peters or Dover or some other more authoritative edition. The fingering is editorial only; it may help, but can be ignored.

Peter Billam, *www.pjb.com.au*

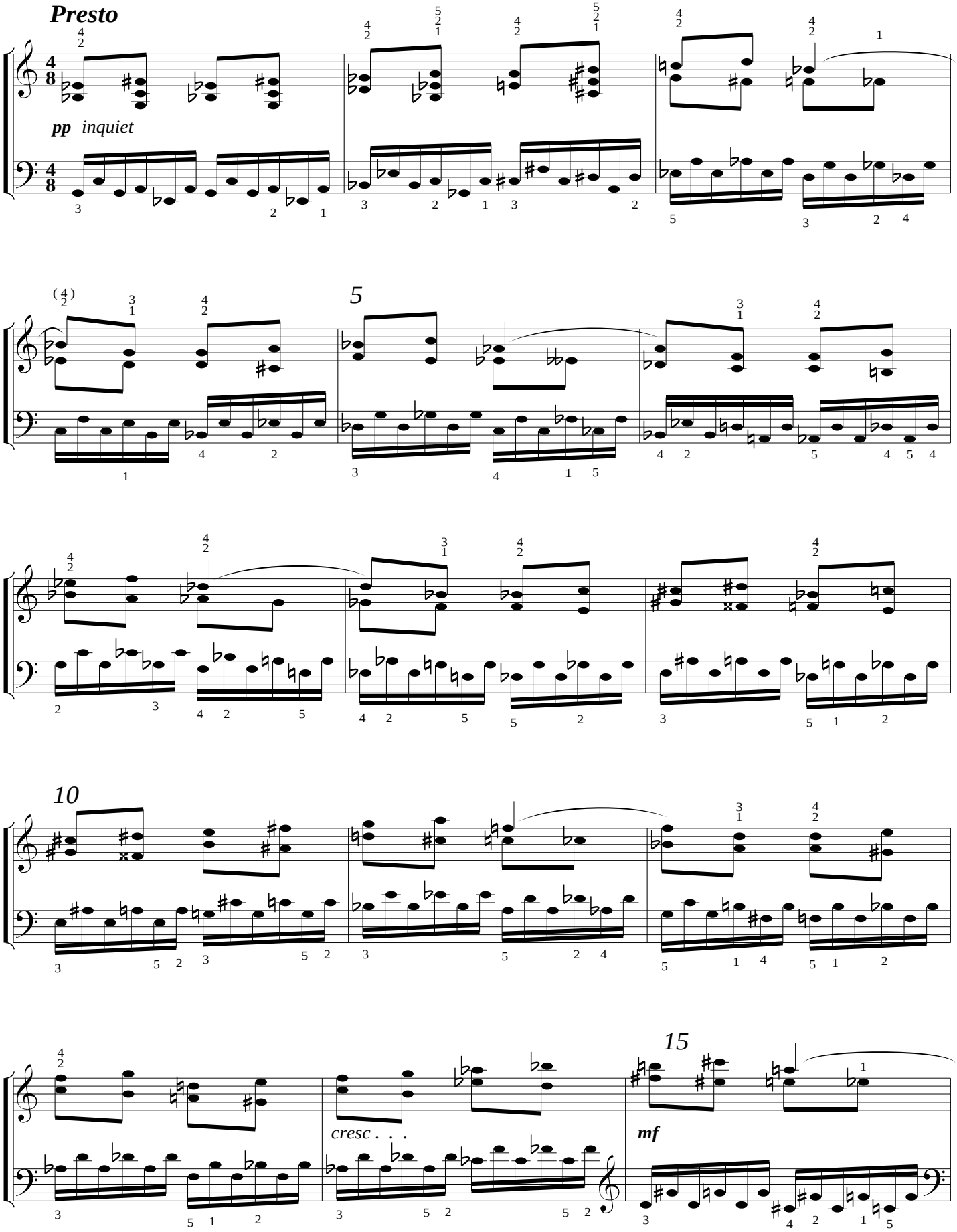
Two Preludes, Op. 67 (1912−1913)

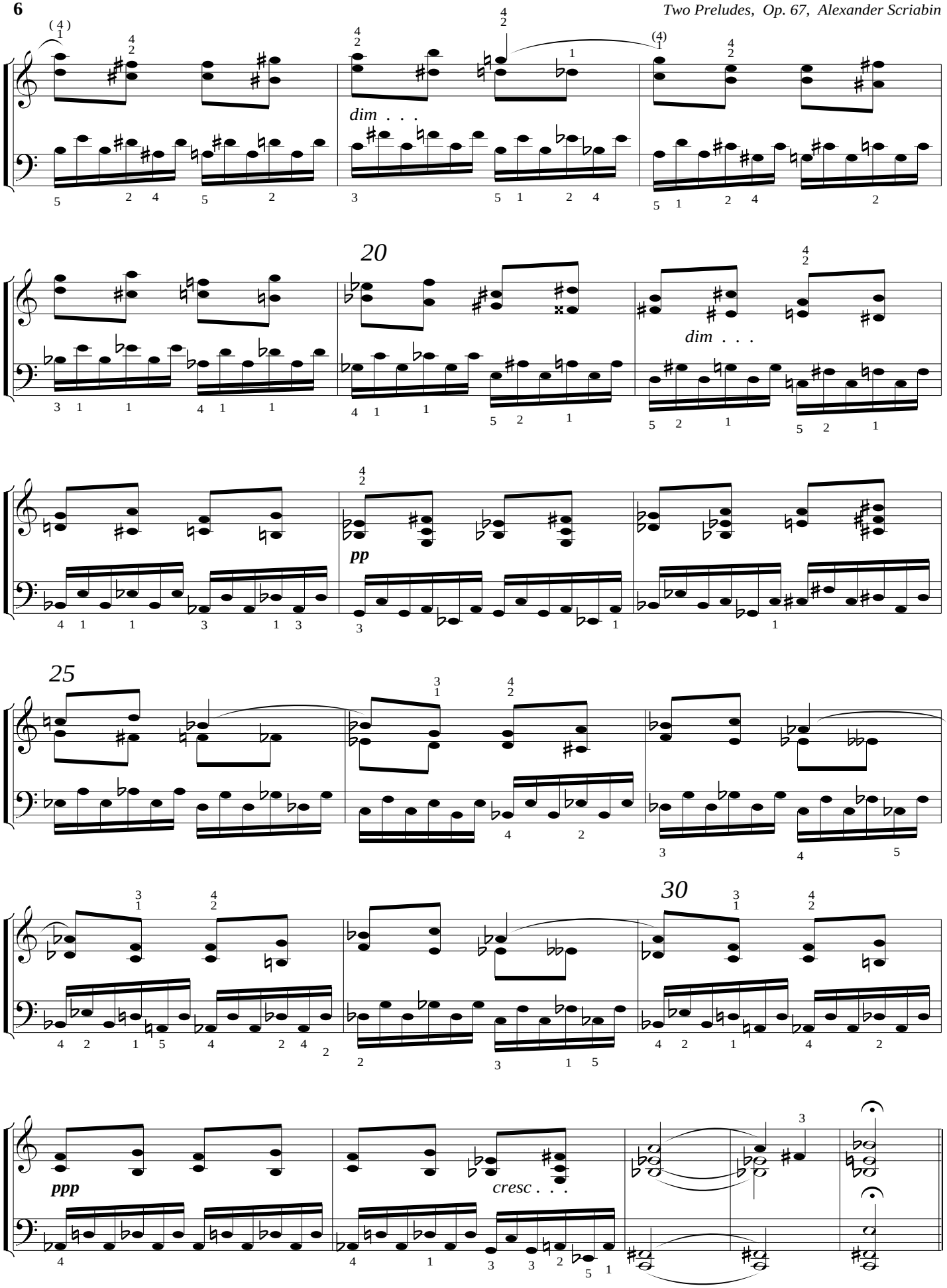
Andante




dim . . .
cresc . . .
20
25
pp
30
molto accel . . .
molto ritard . . .

No. 2




dim . . .
20
dim . . .
pp
25
30
ppp
cresc . . .

Peter Billam was born in London in 1948, studied piano, and lived in Switzerland from 1973 to 1983, where he studied composition, classical guitar, flute and voice, worked as Musical Director of the *Théâtre Populaire Romand*, and as recording engineer, record producer and computer programmer. He moved to Tasmania in 1983, and lectured in composition at the Conservatorium. He founded **www.pjb.com.au**, becoming the first composer to sell scores on-line, taking scores from Composer to Performer in one immediate step. *Www.pjb.com.au* offers a new approach to music publishing. These pieces are **written to be read, made to be played !**

Compositions at *www.pjb.com.au* include: *Five Short Pieces*, guitar, 1979; *Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute and guitar, 1980; *De Profundis* and *Nacht*, on poems by Lama Anagarika Govinda, voice and piano, 1980; *Fünf Bagatellen*, piano, 1980; *Five Rounds*, choir, 1986; *Go Forth and Multiply*, choir, 1986; *Three Violin Duets*, 1987; *Fable*, for piano, 1987; *To Erich Jantsch*, SAATTB recorders, 1988; *A Suite of Curves*, trombone (or horn) and piano, 1990; *Two Recorder Duets*, alto recorders, or other melody instruments, 1991; *Trombone Quintet*, trombone, flute, piano, bass, and percussion, 1994; *Three Songs*, on poems by Jack Kerouac, Vikram Seth and Dylan Thomas, voice and piano (only the first and third of these are available), 1994; *Piano Study*, piano, 1994; *Four Dances*, various ensembles including recorder quartet, string quartet, 1995; *The Poet in the Clouds*, on a poem by S. T. Coleridge, SATB choir, 1995; *Tres Casidas del Diván del Tamarit*, on poems by Federico García Lorca, voice and piano, 1997; *Three Suites*, for the solo line, piano, and piano and a solo line, 2000; *Die Zeiten*, on poems by Kästner, Bachman and Jünger, choir (only the second and third of these are available), 2000; *Three Duets* for flutes, 2001; *For Four Hands* for piano four hands, 2002; *Three Preludes* for piano, 2003; *Second Solo Suite* for flute, violin, viola or cello, 2003; *Guitar Duet* for two guitars, 2006; *We Who Mourn* for choir, 2007; *Trio With Guitar* for guitar and two clarinets or two recorders or two violas, 2008; *Canons* for two- and four-hand piano, 2009; *Flute Trio*, 2012; *Twenty Studies* for piano, 2013-14; *Music for Strings* and *Two Encores for Strings* for 2vln, 2vla, 2vlc, 2015.

Arrangements include: By J. S. Bach: *Trio BWV 655*, piano and flute; *Vor deinen Thron BWV 668*, piano; *Fugue in F minor BWV 689*, SATB recorders; *Four Duets BWV 802-5*, keyboard; *Six Preludes and Fugues* from Book I, keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1031* transposed into G major for alto recorder and keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1032* completed by Peter Billam for flute and keyboard, also in C major for alto recorder, and in G major for descant; *Ricercare a 3, from the Musikalisches Opfer* for keyboard; *Ricercare a 6*, for sSATBG recorders, or strings, or two keyboards; and *Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente*; from the *Art of Fugue*: *Contrapuncti 1*, *4* and *9* for keyboard, and *Contrapunctus 14* as completed by D. F. Tovey, for keyboard, or for SATB recorders, or for strings; *Passacaglia and Fugue in c* for piano four hands; *Chorales with Descant* for melody instrument and piano; *Cello Suites I*, *II* and *III* for flute or alto recorder, *Forty Chorales* for piano, *Der Geist hilft* for SATB-SATB recorders. By Brahms: *Fugue in Ab minor for organ*, for SATB recorders and gamba, in A minor; *Choralvorspiele for organ* plus settings by Isaac, Bach, Praetorius, recorders. *John Carr, Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute or recorder and guitar. Franz Liszt, *Late piano pieces*, G.F. Händel: *Concerto Grosso in A minor* op 6 no 4, harpsichord and recorders; *Recorder Sonata in Bb* no 5, in G for tenor recorder and keyboard. Claudio Monteverdi, *Ecco Mormorar l'Onde*, SSATB recorders. Arnold Schoenberg: *Verklärte Nacht* for piano. Franz Schubert: *Four Songs*, voice and guitar; *Dances*, recorders and guitar, *Dances*, piano 4 hands. Scriabin, *Two Preludes op.67; Five Preludes op.74*, piano. Telemann, *Twelve Flute Fantasias*, recorder. Wilbye, *Draw on sweet Night*, SSATTB recorders, and for flute choir. *Twelve Italian Songs*, voice and guitar; *Seven English Songs*, voice and guitar; *Fourteen Folk Dance Tunes*, recorder and guitar; *Bushband Dances*, violin, accordeon and banjo; *Easy Classical Pieces*, Bb trumpet and piano; *Famous Beginnings*, for piano.

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