Alexander Scriabin:

Piano Concerto in F sharp minor, Op. 20

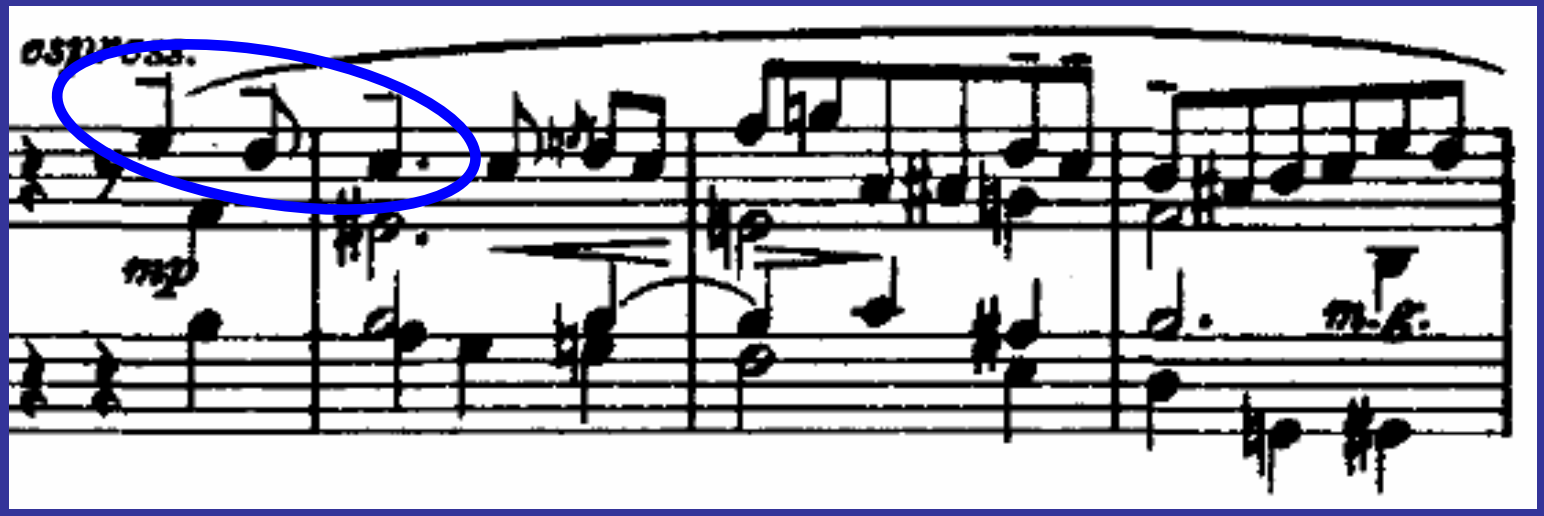
1. ***Allegro***
2. ***Andante***
3. ***Allegro moderato***

Alexander Scriabin

- Scriabin was brought up by his aunt, great aunt and grandmother
- His romantic early works earned him the title ‘the Russian Chopin’
- His first piano sonata (1892) ends in a funereal slow movement that anticipates the finale of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony
- From 1903 his music became more complex and chromatic
- His best works include the Third Symphony (*The Divine Poem*) and the *Poem of Ecstasy*.

I. *Allegro*

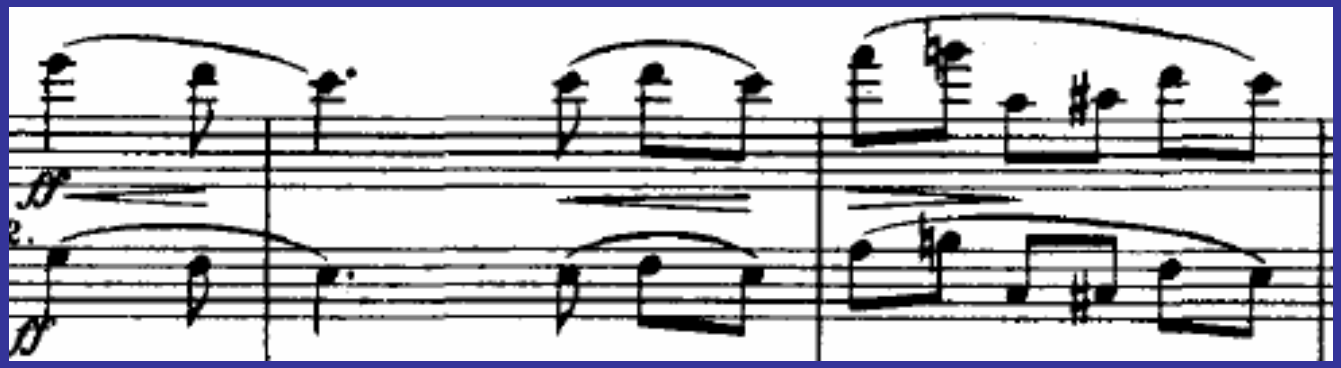
- The piano introduces the main theme:



- The orchestra takes up the theme while the piano accompanies in octaves.
- The 3-note falling phrase is important throughout this movement.

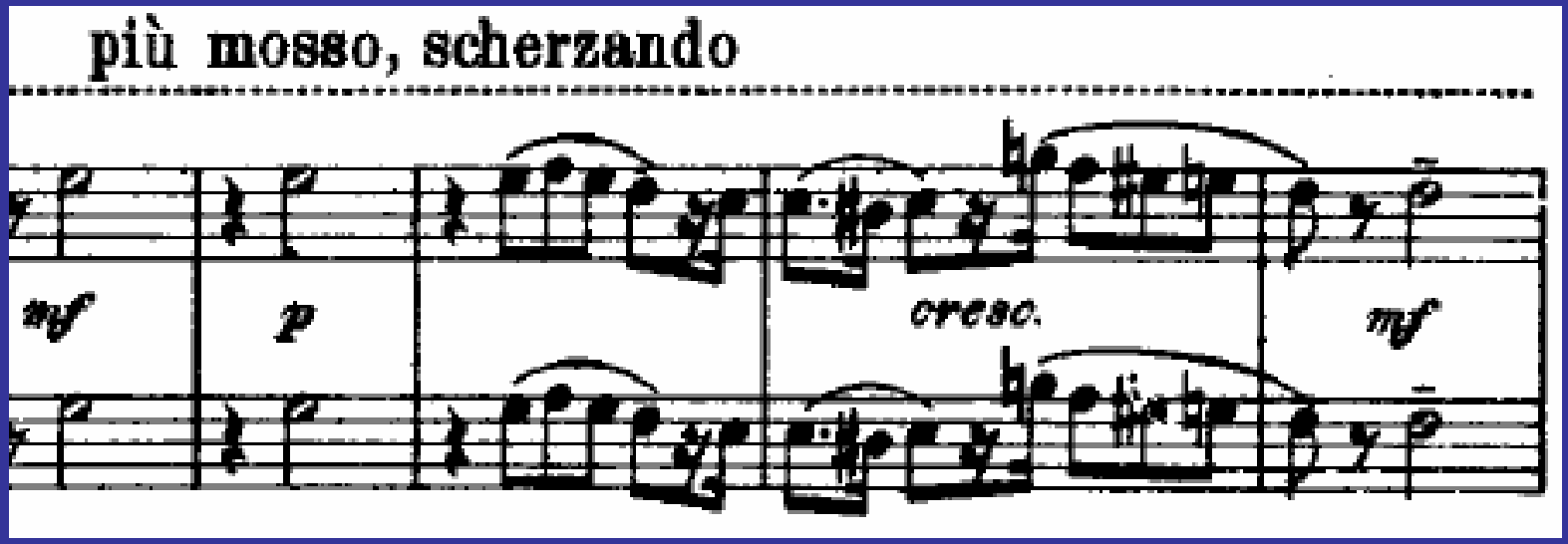
I. *Allegro*

- After a series of the 3-note fragments, the main theme provides a major climax of the movement



I. *Allegro*

- **The second theme, with its lilting mazurka-like inflections, provides a contrast to the opening material**



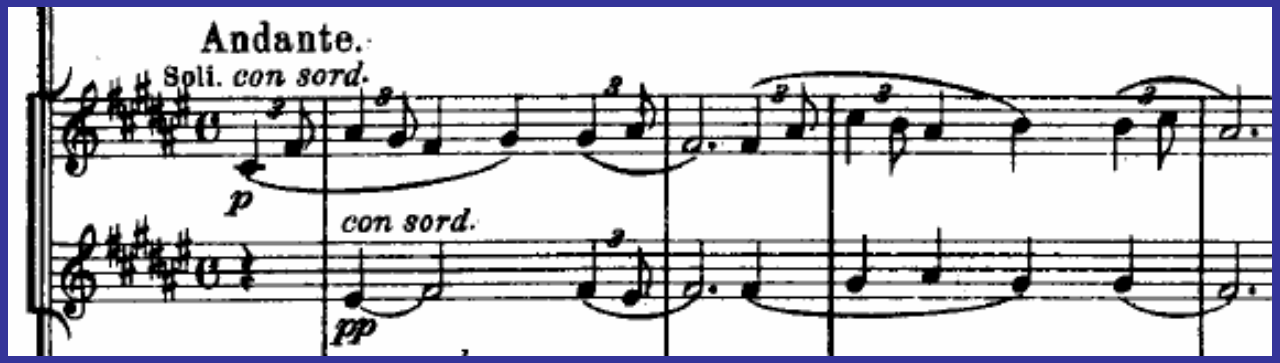
più mosso **= faster;** ***scherzando*** **= playfully**

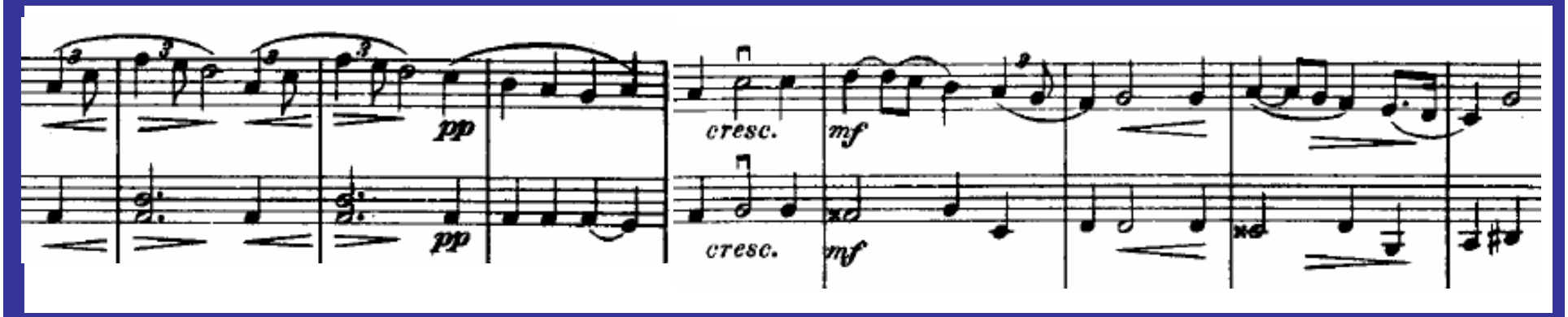
I. *Allegro*

- **The varied moods of the first two movements mirror those of the composer: *"Sometimes I am filled with anxiety. Sometimes at the height of bliss. At moments I fall into depths of despair."***

II. *Andante – theme and variations*

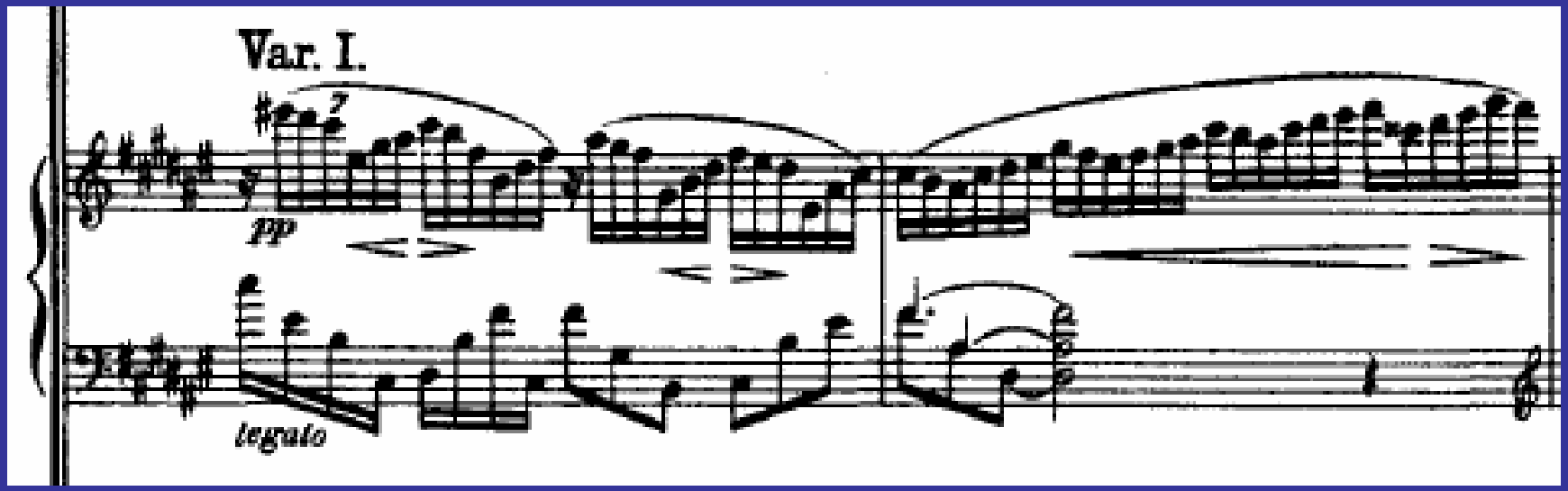
- The *Andante* begins in F-sharp major. The orchestra quietly introduces the theme.





II. *Andante – theme and variations*

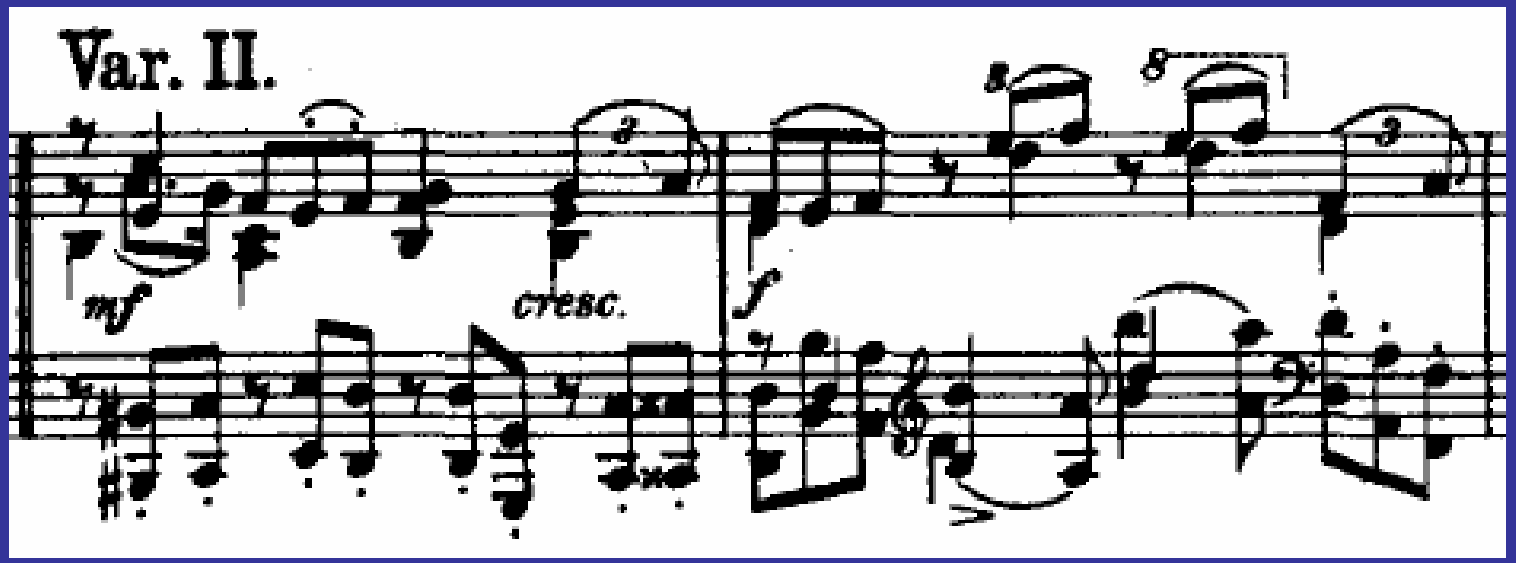
- The piano enters with the first variation, accompanying the orchestra's theme with arpeggios in shifting polyrhythms.



II. *Theme and variations*

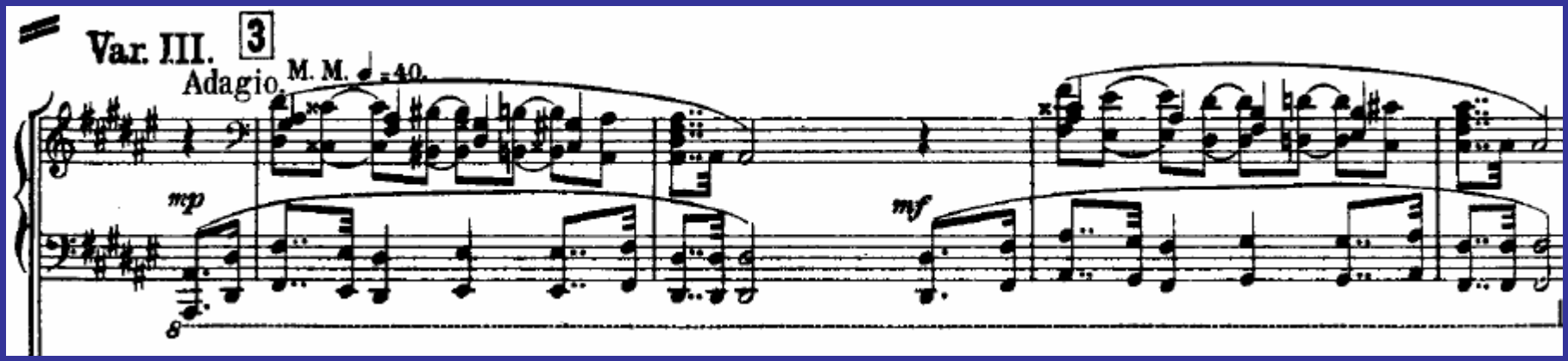
- The second variation is marked *Allegro scherzando*, so is much faster

  (♩ = 108 compared to ♩ = 46 for the *Andante*)



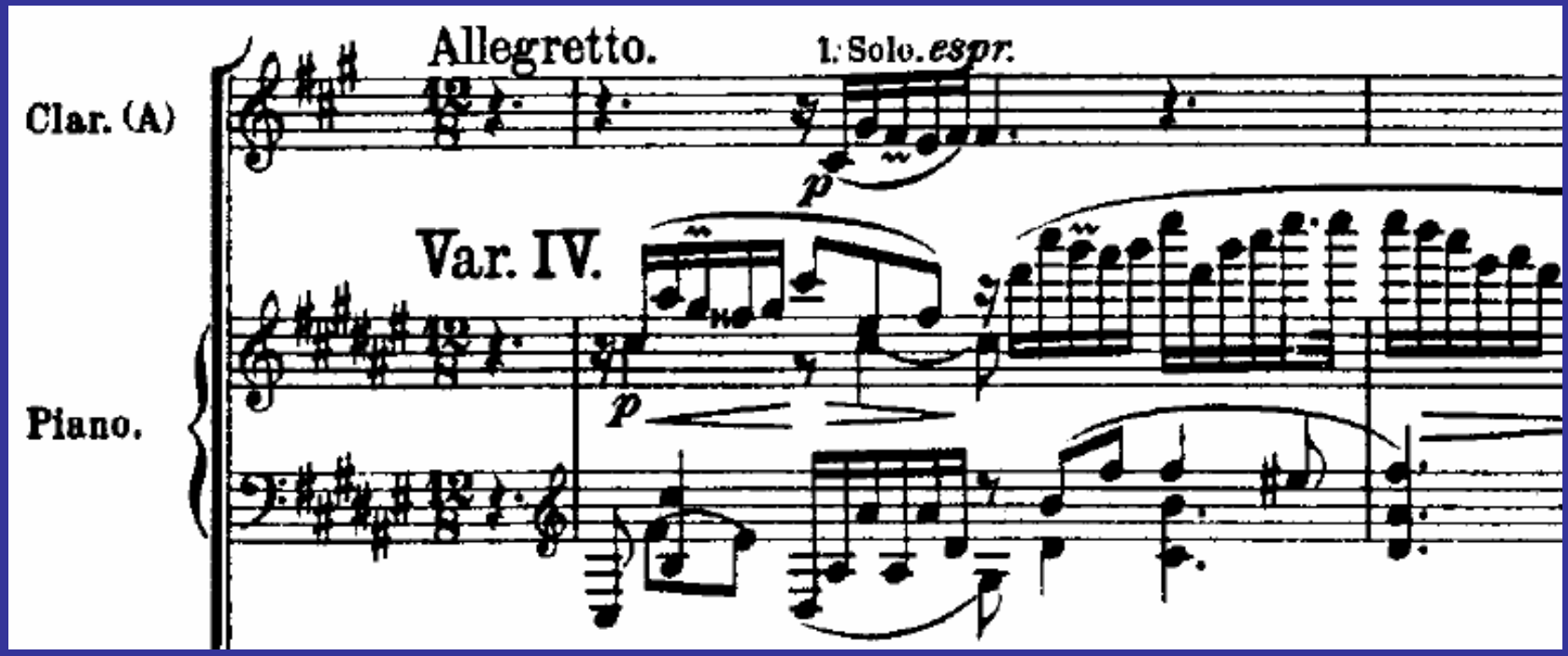
II. *Theme and variations*

- **The third variation is a slow funeral march marked *Adagio* (♩ = 40)**



II. *Theme and variations*

- The 4th variation (*Allegretto*) features intricate ornamentation. The clarinet introduces the melody, and interweaves counterpoint with the soloist.



II. *Andante – theme and variations*

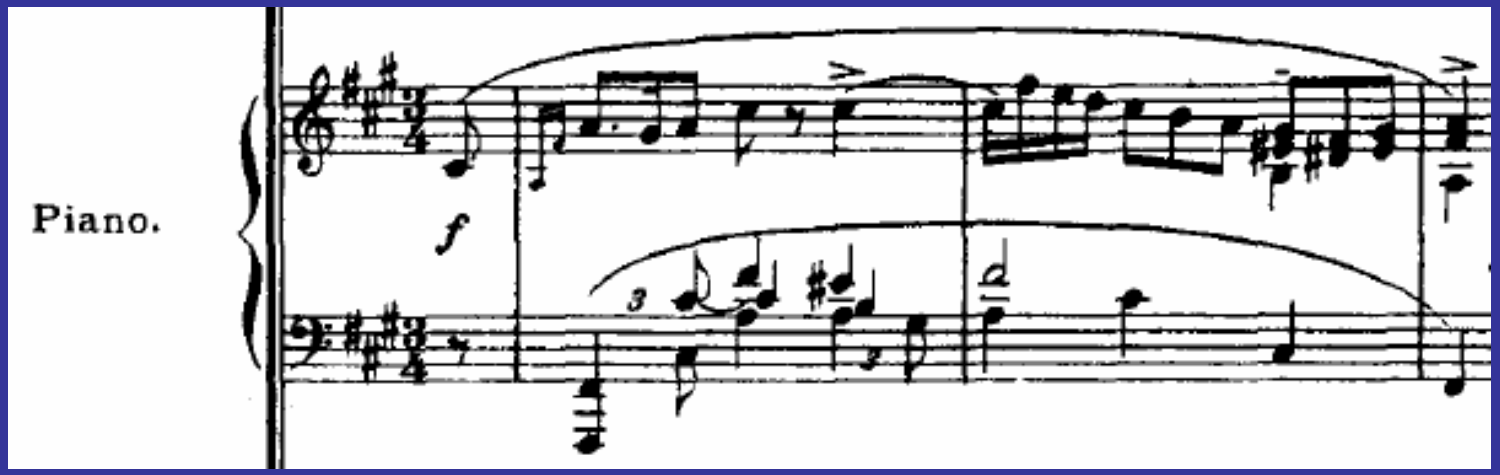
- The movement ends with return of the theme to the orchestra, almost identical to the first variation:

  Tempo I (*Andante*)

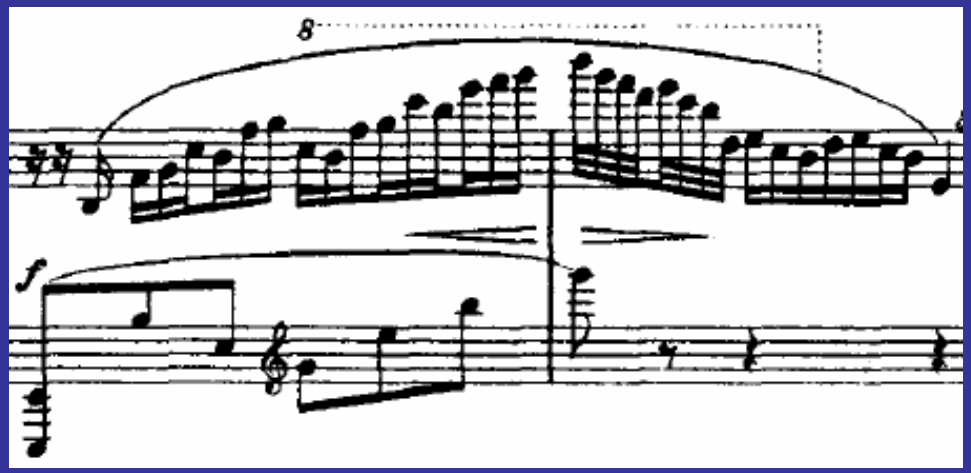
  with a return to the sleepy mood of the movement's opening bars.

III. *Allegro moderato*

- The first movement's theme is condensed into the first two bars

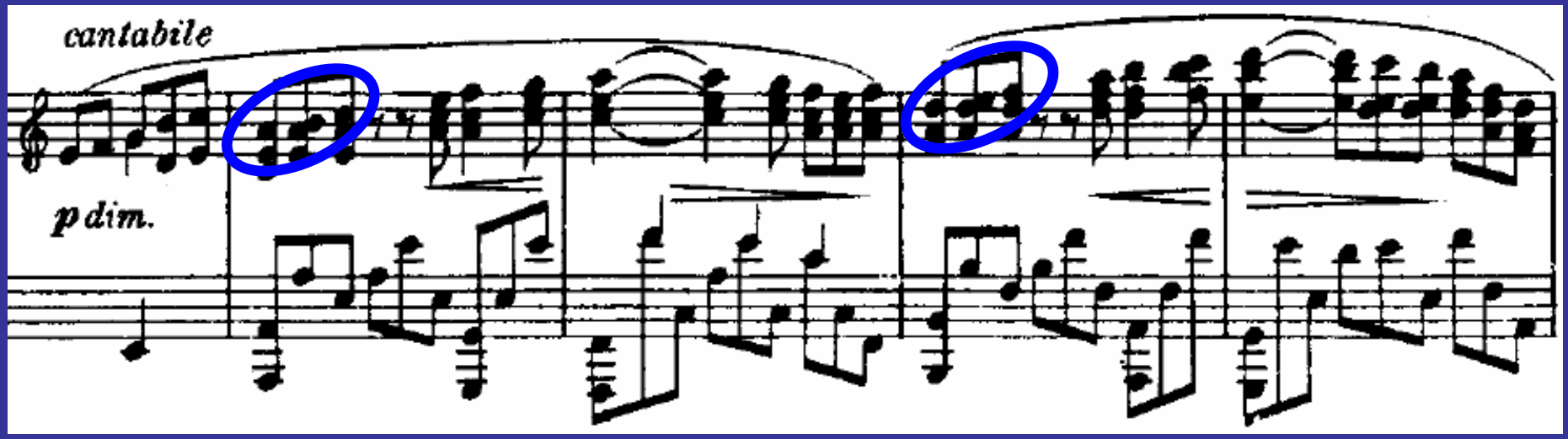


followed by arpeggios that fly up to the high end of the piano and back



III. *Allegro moderato*

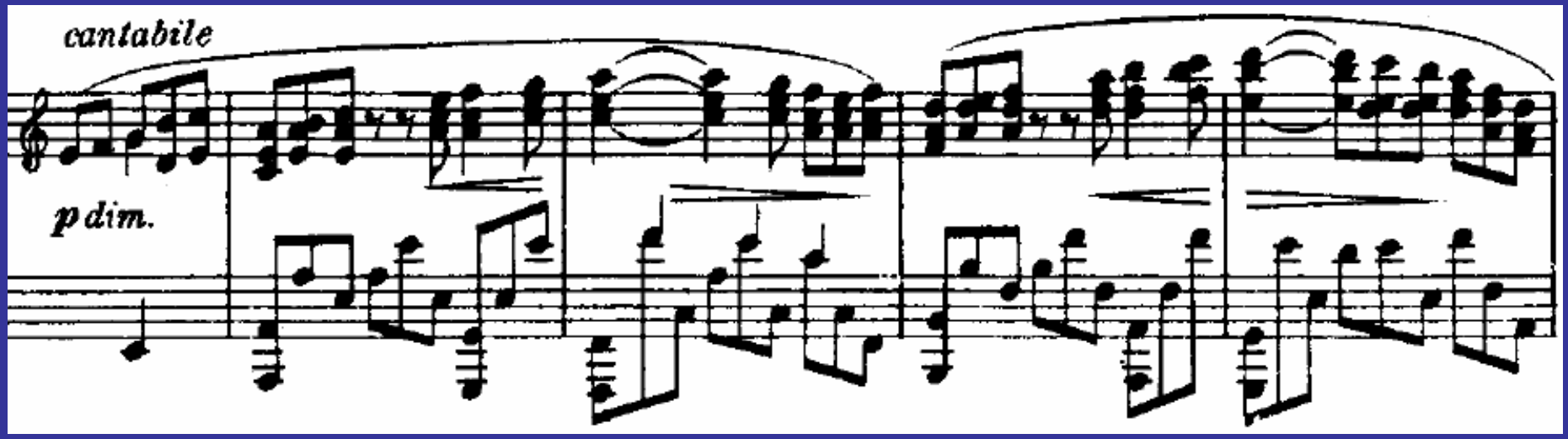
- The beautiful, slower second theme (*Cantabile*) is a song without words



- ***The rising 3-note fragment is an inversion of the first movement's falling 3-note theme***

III. *Allegro moderato*

- The beautiful, slower second theme (*Cantabile*) is a song without words



- *Cantabile* = "In a singing style"

  i.e. with the melody smoothly performed and well brought out

2. Alexander Scriabin:

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"Look at this filth! I am in no condition to cope with such as mush-headed genius!" **- Rimsky Korsakov**

Perhaps we should listen to Rimsky Korsakov's own Piano Concerto one day….

Recordings of Scriabin's Piano Concerto

- Konstantin Scherbakov with Moscow SO/ Golovchin (Naxos)

Nikolai Demidenko with BBCSO/Lazarev (Hyperion-Helios)

Vladimir Ashkenazy with LPO/Maazel (Decca-London)