Contemporary Piano Literature BOOK 4

Selected and Correlated by Frances Clark
Edited by Louise Goss
Stories by Adele deLeeuw

Preface

The *Contemporary Piano Literature* series is devoted to choice smaller keyboard works written by some of the composers who have achieved prominence in our time.

This series was designed as a companion to *Piano Literature of the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries.* Together, the two sets form a representative collection of easier keyboard literature from the time of Bach to the present day.

Many of the pieces in the *Contemporary Piano Literature* books were written on commission for the *Frances Clark Library for Piano Students.* Others were taken from the repertoire of available contemporary works.

Frances Clark

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Alexander Tcherepnin
1899–1977

From his earliest days, Alexander Tcherepnin heard beautiful operas in his home, for his father, Nicolai Tcherepnin, was one of the most famous Russian composers and conductors of his day. Young Alexander was destined for a musical career and studied piano and composition at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. While he was still a very young man, he made a name for himself as a pianist and composer.

When he was twenty-one, he moved to France to continue his studies at the Paris Conservatory. He lived in France until 1949, making frequent concert tours to many countries. While he toured the Orient, he had a special opportunity to listen to the traditional and popular music of China and Japan and to delve into the folklore of these countries.

His reputation was established early in Europe, for his music was familiar to concert-goers and his operas and ballets were frequently produced. But in the United States, people did not know of him until the famous ballerina Anna Pavlova danced to his ballet, *Ajanta's Frescoes,* on her coast-to-coast tour. After that, his works were widely performed in this country.

During the war years, Tcherepnin stayed in Paris, but as soon as possible he went touring the world giving concerts. When he came to the United States again, he was invited by DePaul University in Chicago to teach piano and composition. He liked it so well in this country that he decided to make his home here and later became an American citizen.

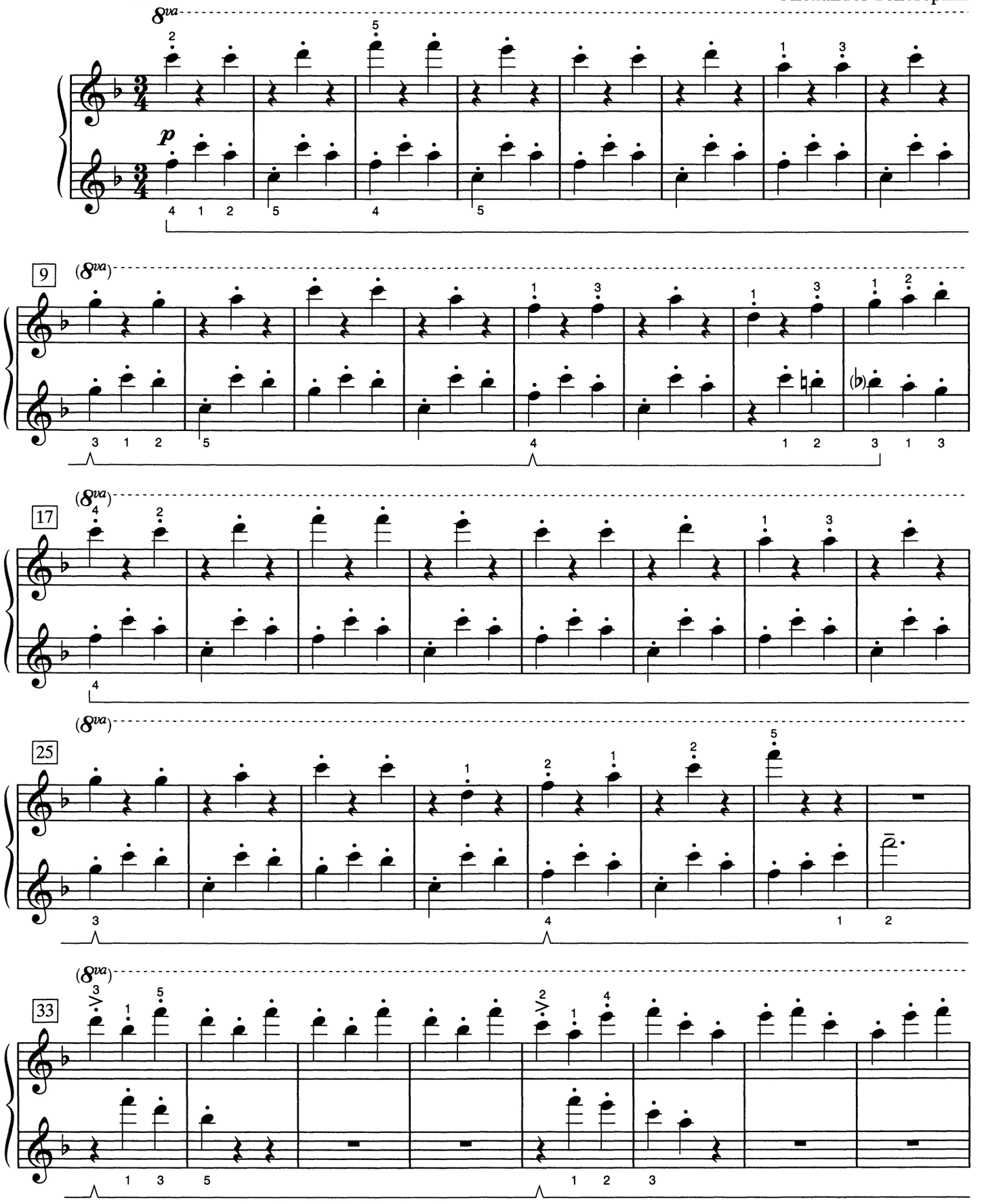
Tcherepnin wrote compositions for almost every solo instrument, many songs, operas, ballets, and works for orchestra. Ever since he first began to compose, he specialized in music for piano, some of it pieces for children and studies for young students.

The three pieces in this collection were commissioned for the *Frances Clark Library for Piano Students.*

Merry-Go-Round

Fast

Alexander Tcherepnin



Alexander Gretchaninov
1864–1956

Alexander Gretchaninov began his serious musical training fairly late—when he was seventeen. His father, a shopkeeper, had frowned on his son's musical inclinations and wanted him to become a merchant as he was. But the desire to play and compose was so strong that Gretchaninov concentrated on it at the expense of some of his other studies at school. When he had a chance to enter the Moscow Conservatory, he promised that if he were allowed to specialize in music, he would make up for the other subjects by teaching himself.

One of his teachers was the famous Arensky, who failed to see any great talent in the young composer; so Gretchaninov transferred to the conservatory at St. Petersburg and there fell under the guidance of Rimsky-Korsakov, who encouraged and helped him.

In the capital, too, he met a number of choral singers and was inspired to compose a series of sacred songs. He had an unusual understanding of the possibilities of the human voice and used it with great effectiveness. He was skilled at counterpoint, knew how to create strong choral effects, and had deep religious feeling. These qualities combined put his religious songs on a high plane.

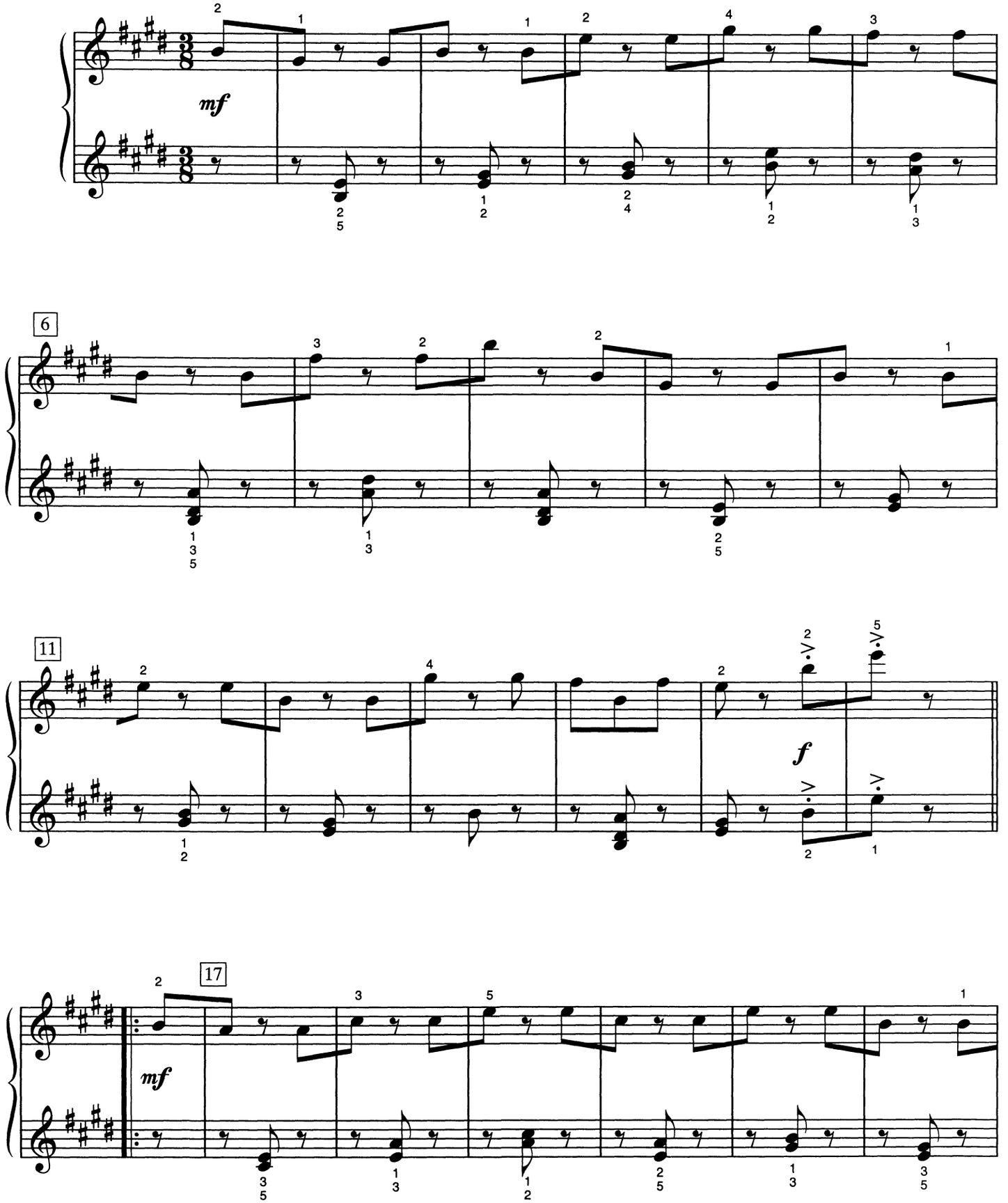
When he became interested in folk songs, he used with telling result the melodies from Scotland and Bulgaria and his native Russia. In the music of his homeland, there is tenderness and understanding—the ancient mysterious buildings, the wild mountains, and windswept plains are all there.

Gretchaninov had the satisfaction of hearing many of his compositions performed by leading orchestras, and he himself traveled all over the world giving concerts. When the Revolution came, he did not see eye-to-eye with the new Russian rulers and left for a sojourn in France. When he came to America, he fell in love with this country and decided to make it his home. He lived in New York until his death in 1956 at the age of 91.

The pieces in our collection are taken from a piano album called *Glass Beads*.

On the Bicycle

From *Glass Beads, Op. 123*

Sprightly

Alexander Gretchaninov